



Fraser Coast Youth Survey 2025

Outcomes Report





SOCIAL
SHIFT
INSTITUTE



HBNC
Creating Connected Communities

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

HBNC is located on the country of the Butchulla people, in the Great Sandy region on the South East Coast of Queensland.

Executive Summary

The Fraser Coast Youth Survey 2025 marks the seventh consecutive year that the Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre (HBNC), in partnership with local high schools and youth service providers, has gathered insights from young people across the Fraser Coast region. Conducted between May and September 2025, the survey engaged 2,263 students from Years 7 to 12. Delivered under the Social Shift Institute—HBNC’s research, innovation and community development arm—the survey continues to build a valuable multi-year dataset that highlights the issues, challenges, and lived experiences of local youth.

The survey provides critical information on topics including homelessness, safety, mental health, alcohol and other drugs (AOD), and other key social issues, helping to address the ongoing lack of local evidence in the youth sector.

Key findings from the 2025 survey include:

- **Homelessness:** The proportion of young people currently experiencing homelessness has seen a small increase to 2%, while the overall number who have ever experienced homelessness remains steady at 15%. There was, however, a 10% decrease in the number of youth who reported knowing where to get help if they were unable to go home, and a 2% decrease in young people reporting they had run away from home.
- **Safety:** Reports of young people feeling unsafe at home increased by 2% compared to 2024.
- **Economic Disadvantage:** A 2% increase was observed in the number of young people whose families accessed food bank assistance, potentially influenced by rising cost of living pressures.
- **Mental Health:** There was a significant 11% drop in the number of students who accessed mental health services. This may reflect both positive developments—such as improved awareness and wellbeing strategies—and ongoing challenges such as service capacity and accessibility.
- **Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD):** Usage rates remained relatively consistent. 20% of youth reported drinking alcohol (the same as last year), 6% reported using other drugs (a 1% decrease), and 9% said they either smoked, vaped, or did both (unchanged from 2024).
- **Top Community Concerns:** The leading issues identified by young people were Cost of Living (69%), followed by Safety & Crime (55%) and Mental Health (53%).
- **Top Personal Challenges:** The main personal challenges reported were School, followed by Mental Health, and Relationship Challenges.

How are youth doing?



MENTAL HEALTH

- 29% of youth have accessed mental health services
- 59% of those who accessed services were supported for anxiety
- 43% were supported for depression
- 44% were supported for stress

1



LIVING SITUATION

- 2% of youth were currently homeless
- 15% of youth report experiencing homelessness at some point in their life
- 51% said they didn't know where they would get help from if they were ever in a situation where they couldn't go home
- 13% of youth said they had run away from home at some point
- 12% of youth had felt unsafe at home

2



ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS

- 20% of youth report drinking alcohol
- 7% of those feel that alcohol is a problem for them
- 6% of youth report using drugs
- 15% of those feel that drugs are a problem for them
- 9% of youth report they smoke or vape
- 29% of those who do feel it is a problem for them

3



TOP 5 CONCERNS YOUTH HAVE ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

1. Cost of Living
2. Safety & Crime
3. Mental Health
4. Housing & Homelessness
5. Environment

4



TOP 3 PERSONAL CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH

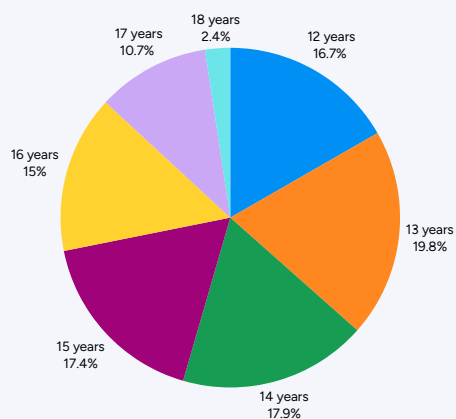
1. School Challenges
2. Mental Health Challenges
3. Relationship Challenges

5

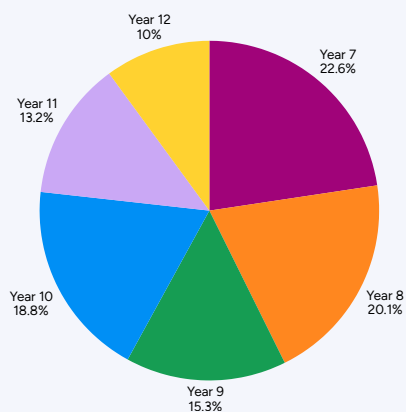
FC Youth Survey 2025

Participant Demographics

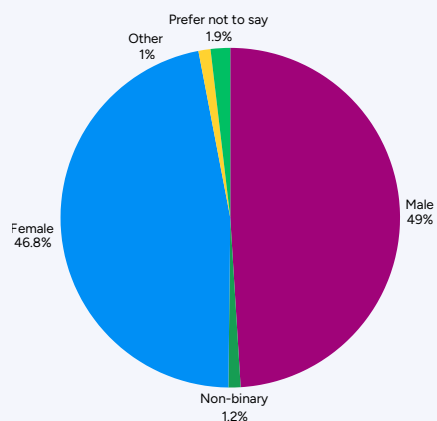
Age



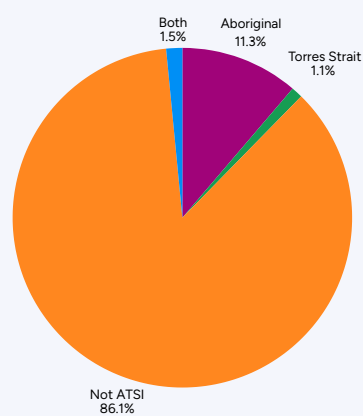
Year Level



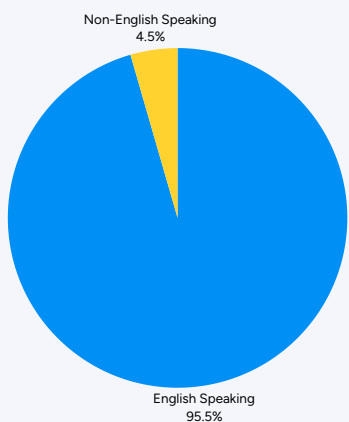
Gender



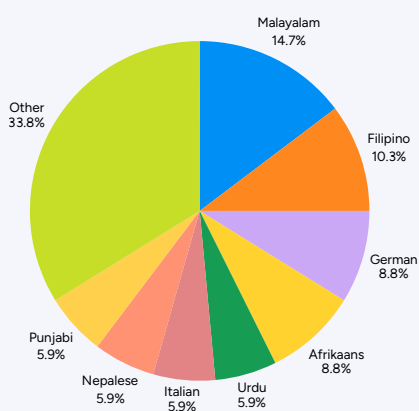
First Nations



English as first language



Other languages



Living Situation



12%

Of total youth respondents are currently homeless, 98% live at home
(1% increase from 2024)



51%

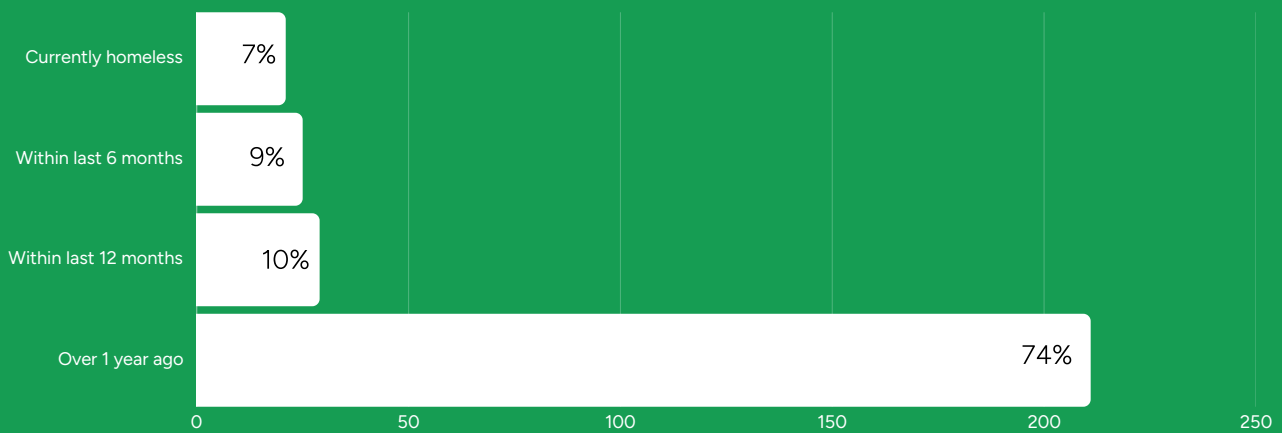
Of youth don't know where to go if they are homeless & can't go home
(10% decrease from 2024)



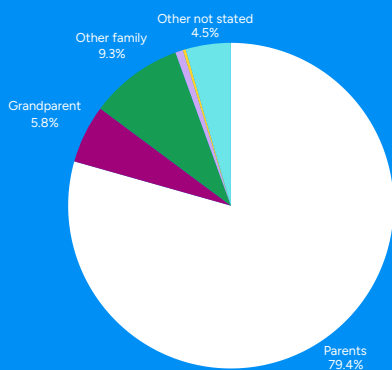
14%

Of youth report being homeless at some point in their life
(1% decrease from 2024)

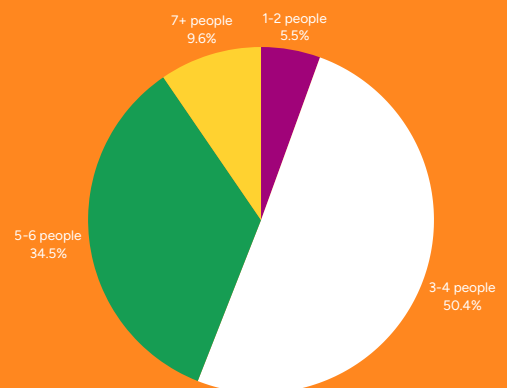
When youth experienced homelessness (of those who ticked yes)



Where youth are living



House hold size



Safety

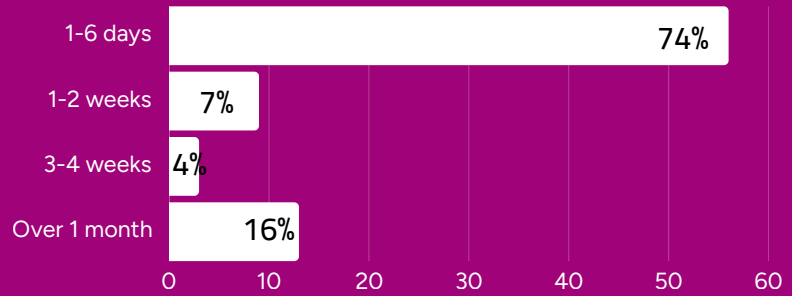


13%

Of youth report they have run away from home at some point
(2% decrease from 2024)

How long youth ran away for

(of those who answered yes)

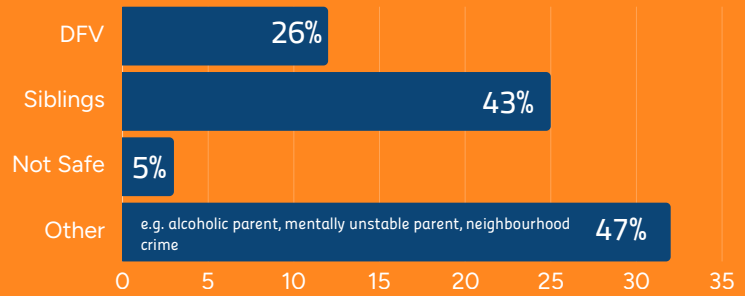


12%

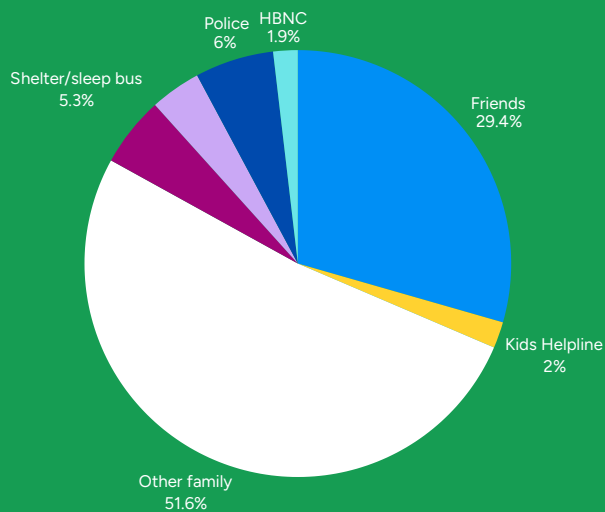
Of youth report they have felt unsafe at home
(2% increase from 2024)

Reasons for feeling unsafe at home

(of those who answered yes)



Where youth would seek help from if they can't go home or it is unsafe



Majority of students reported they would seek help from other family, followed by friends and the police.

Other 29% included Centrelink, PCYC, Headspace, and school.

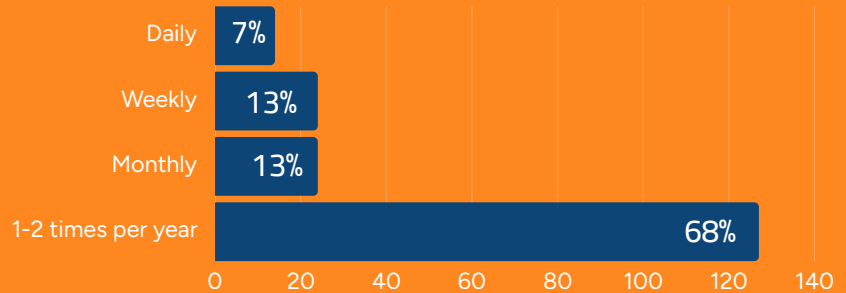
Disadvantage



9%

Of youth report they have received support from a food bank (2% increase from 2024)

How often youth receive support from food bank



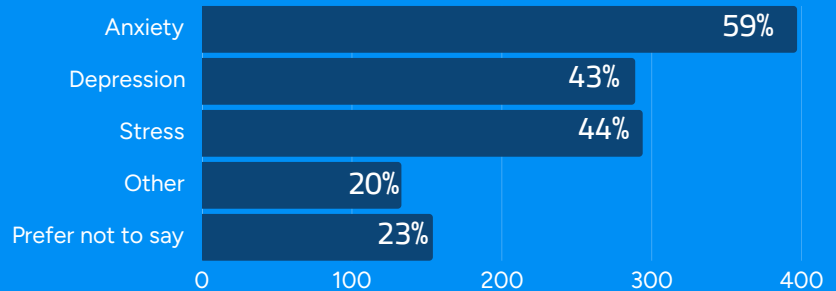
Mental Health



29%

Of youth report they have used mental health services (11% decrease from 2024)

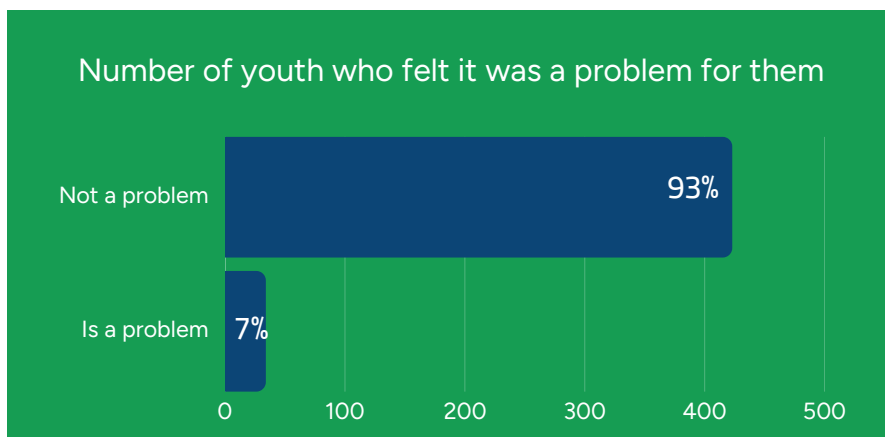
Mental Health issues experienced



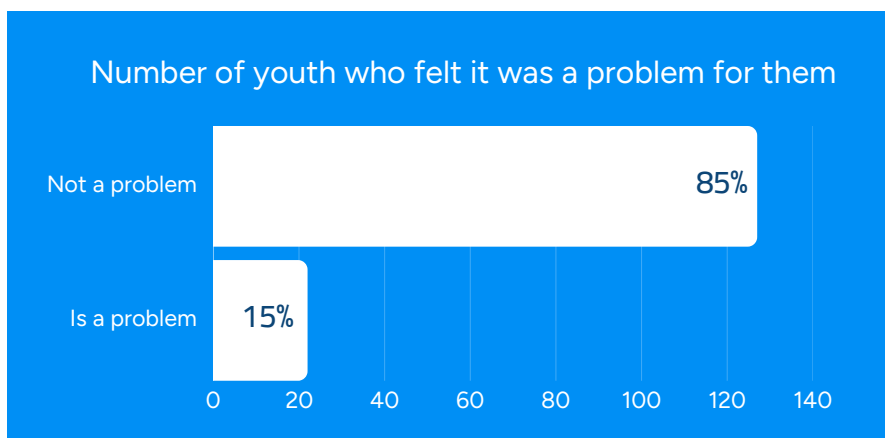
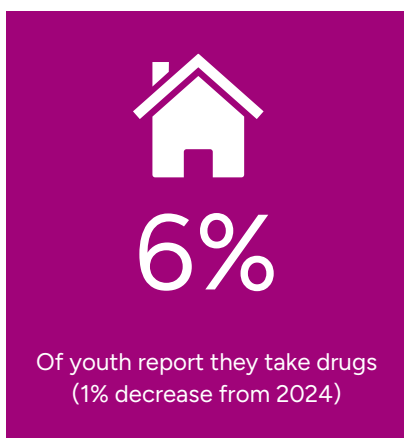
Mental Health Issues listed in "Other"

- Anger management
- Grief & loss
- PTSD
- Parents separating
- Neurodiversity
- Eating disorders
- Various mental health conditions

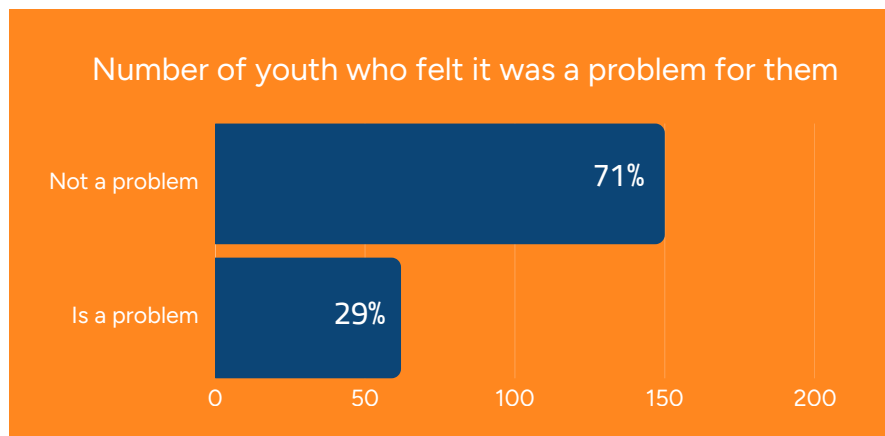
Alcohol



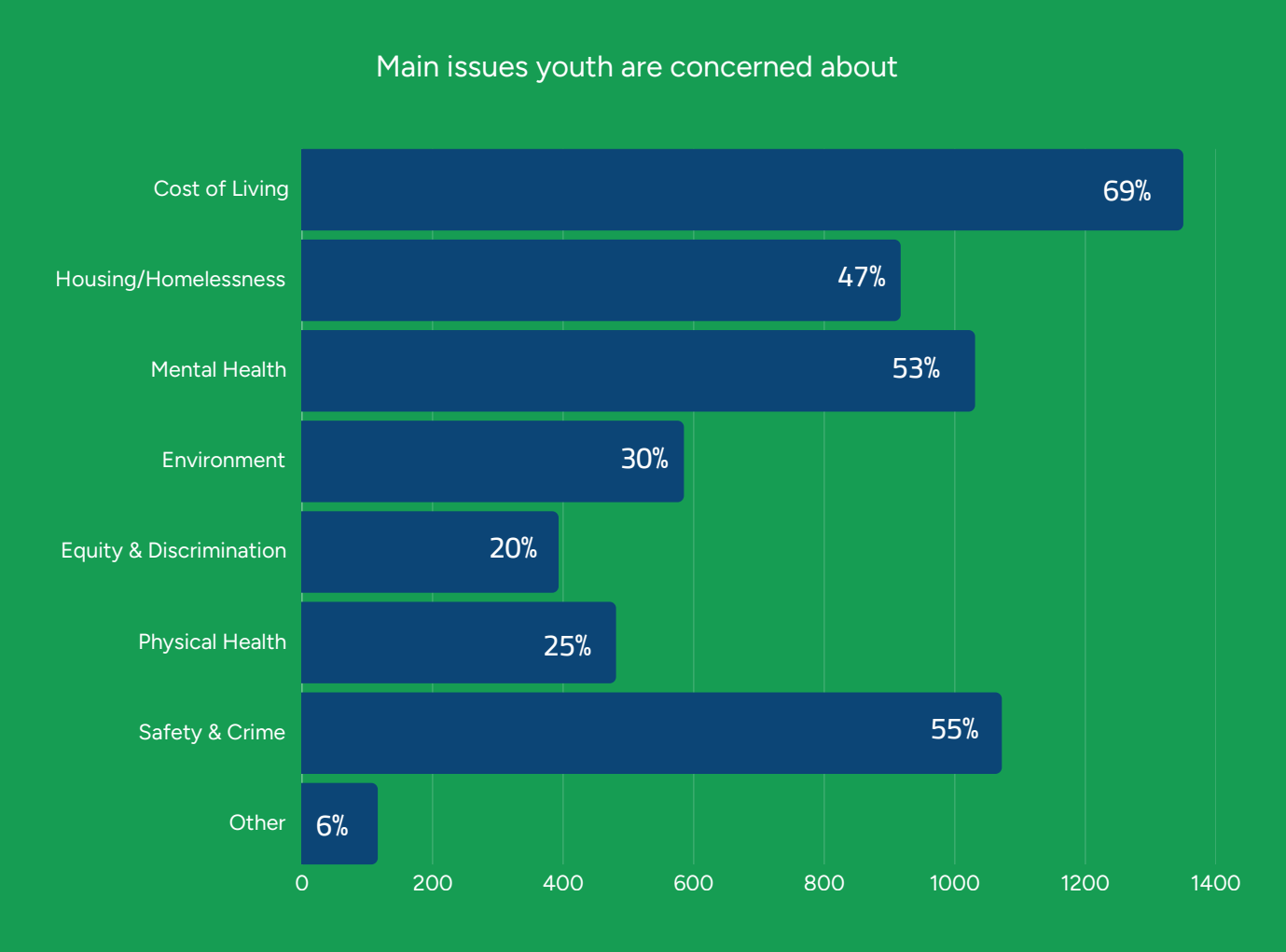
Drugs



Smoking & Vaping

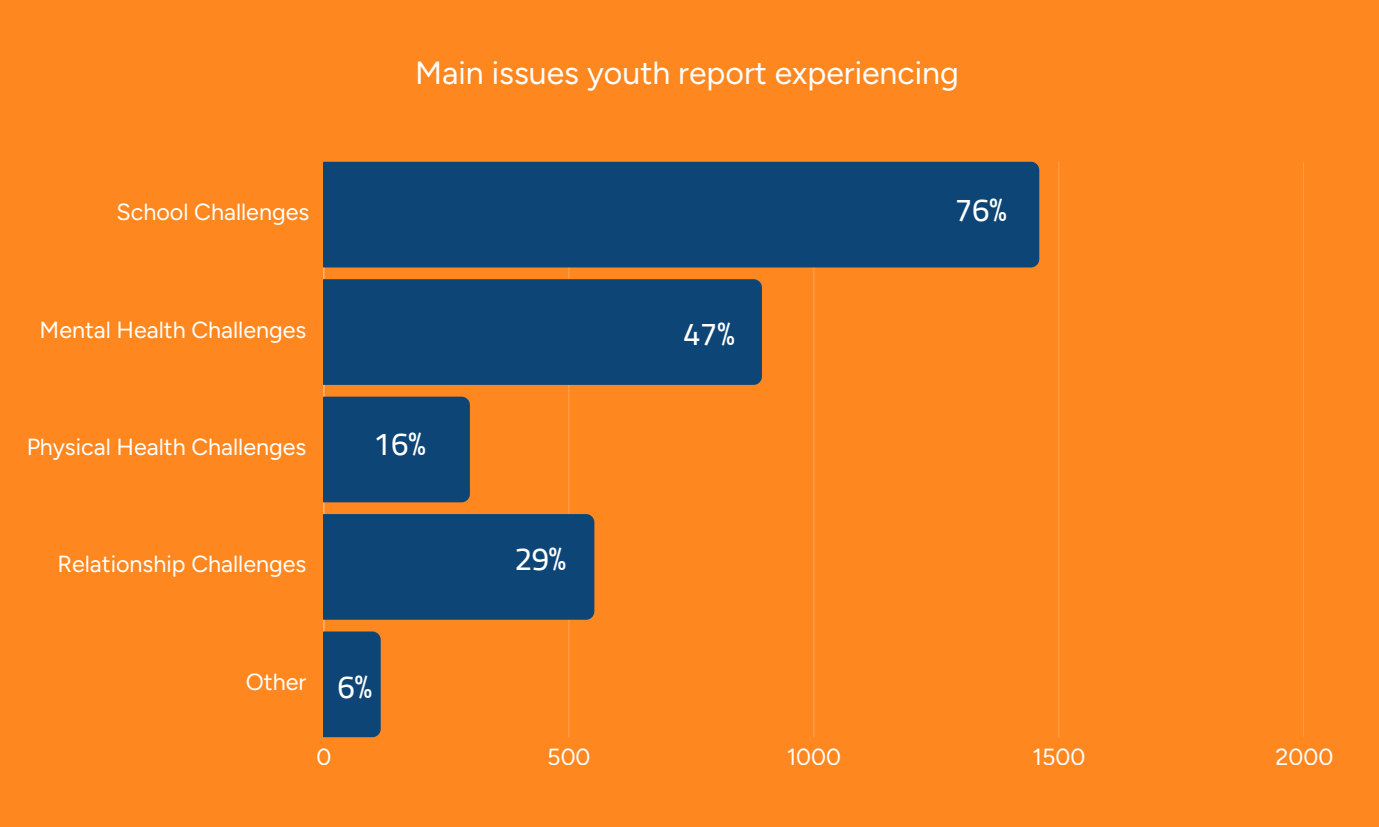


Main issues youth are concerned about in the local community



Young people were asked to share their biggest concerns within the community. This year, “Cost of Living” was added as a new category in response to the high number of comments about it last year. It emerged as the top concern, with 69% of students selecting it. The second most common concern was safety and crime, chosen by 55% of respondents, followed by mental health, which 53% identified as a key issue.

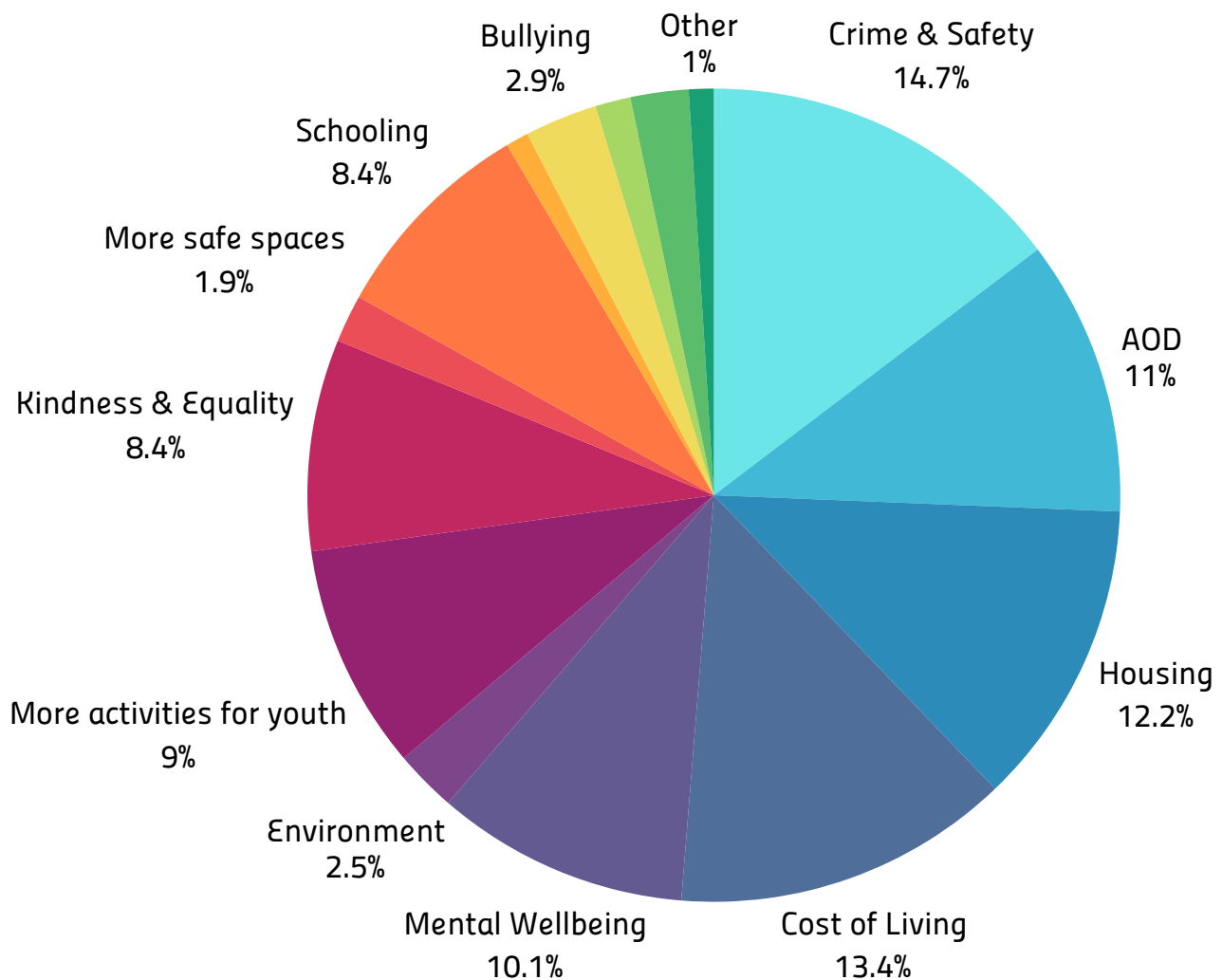
Main challenges youth are experiencing



Youth were asked what are the main challenges they are experiencing in their lives. School challenges (e.g. study, high workload) was the main challenge reported, followed by mental health relationship challenges, which were the same top 3 concerns from 2024. In "other", many students were focused on sport challenges as presented in the word cloud below.

home
sport family
injury work

What would youth change in our local community?



Young people were asked, "If you could change one thing for youth in our community, what would it be?" A total of 1,208 categorisable responses were received. The main areas identified by youth included Cost of Living (163 responses), Safety and Crime (178), Housing and Homelessness (148), Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) (133), Mental Health and Wellbeing (122), and Kindness and Equality (102).

It's clear that young people have many ideas and suggestions for making our community a better place. They proposed a range of improvements, such as providing more activities for youth, creating safe spaces to go after school, making changes to the schooling system, increasing access to support services, improving infrastructure, and enhancing environmental supports.

"Change school to less results orientated and more individually drives. Look at Norway's school system"

"I would make more childcare for DV survivor's kids and more houses."

"More places to perform music for gigs and such"

"Provide more education on opportunities outside of Maryborough"

"How people are viewed and accepted. Particularly the 'challenging ones' are not just bad kids but people with hard circumstances."

"More bubblers on Boundary Road...and more opportunities for activities and to meet people"

"Make it easier to get around with safe and cheap public transport. And in general make the city more accessible for people before they get their P's"

"Restricted access to electric vehicles. e.g. electric shooters. Or to treat the selling of these vehicles like cars"

"A little place where if people need a place to stay there are little cubes that you can rent out and have a warm and safe place to stay with it, like \$5 a night for homeless and for people who ran away from home"

"I would attempt to put more focus on teenage social interaction by providing spaces for recreation...This could include better social seating areas and housed spaces for clubs and other groups...The main problem I find is that shopping centres are the most popular areas for social interactions instead of the esplanade, and the recreational areas are all catered for kids while remaining far too spread out"

"To not start all the exams and assignments in the same week because there is so much to remember to do"

"Free housing and more food banks"

"Making mental health services free and less judgemental"

"To provide more work experience programs and initiatives"

"Jobs and apprenticeships at younger ages"

"Pads and tampons should be free"

"Cost of living and the availability of free mental health care"

"Improve sporting facilities and communities"

"More pathways into different occupations and more unis"

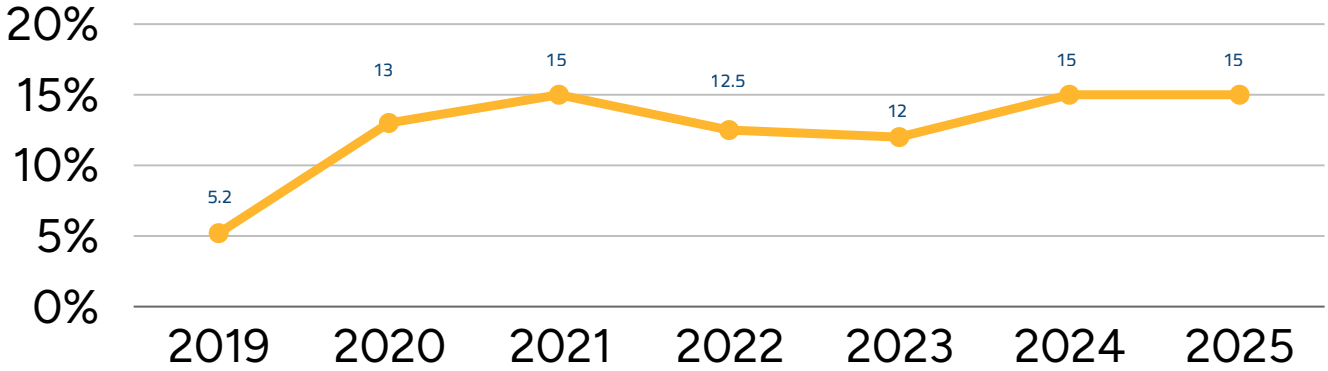
"More services to Howard, either rail or bus"

"Free schooling and better foster care systems"

"Better police process"

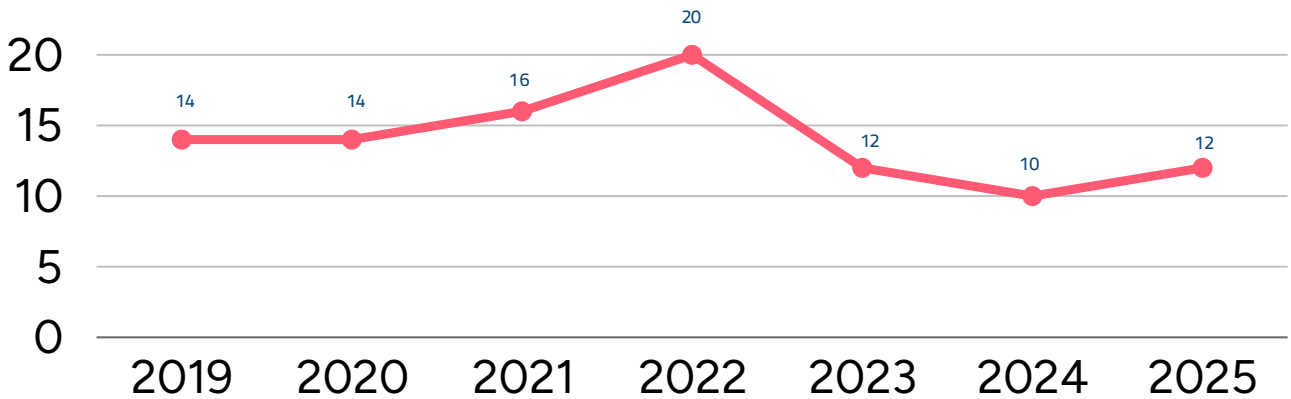
6 Year Comparison

Reported Youth Homelessness



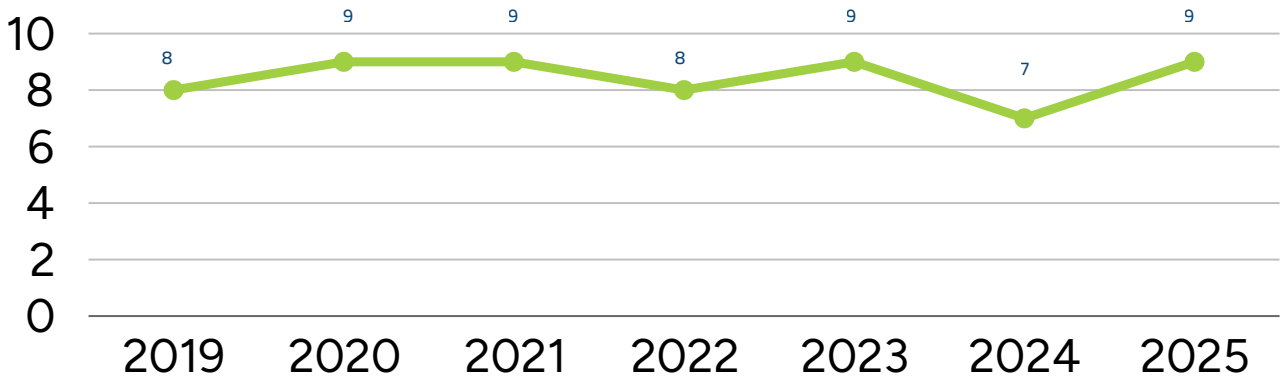
% of youth who reported they had experienced homelessness

Safety



% of youth who reported they had felt unsafe at home

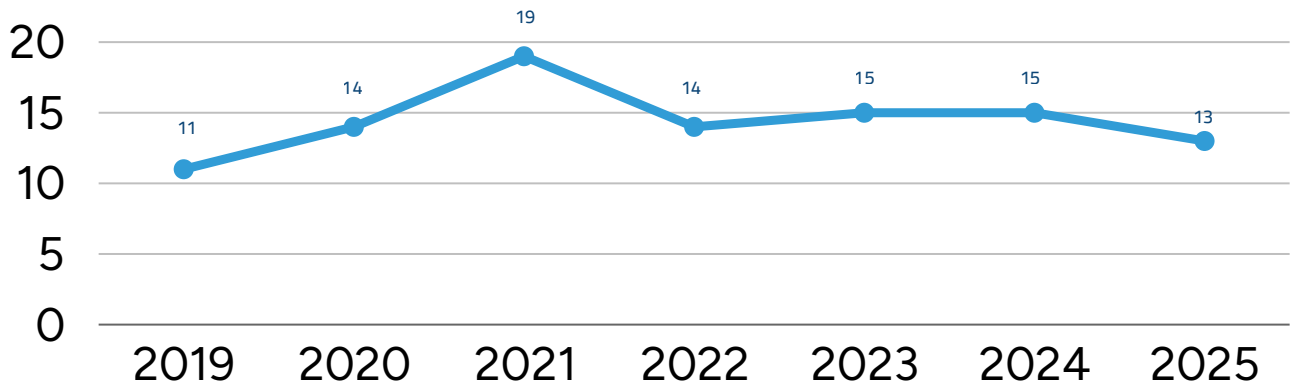
Disadvantage



% of youth who reported they had accessed food bank assistance

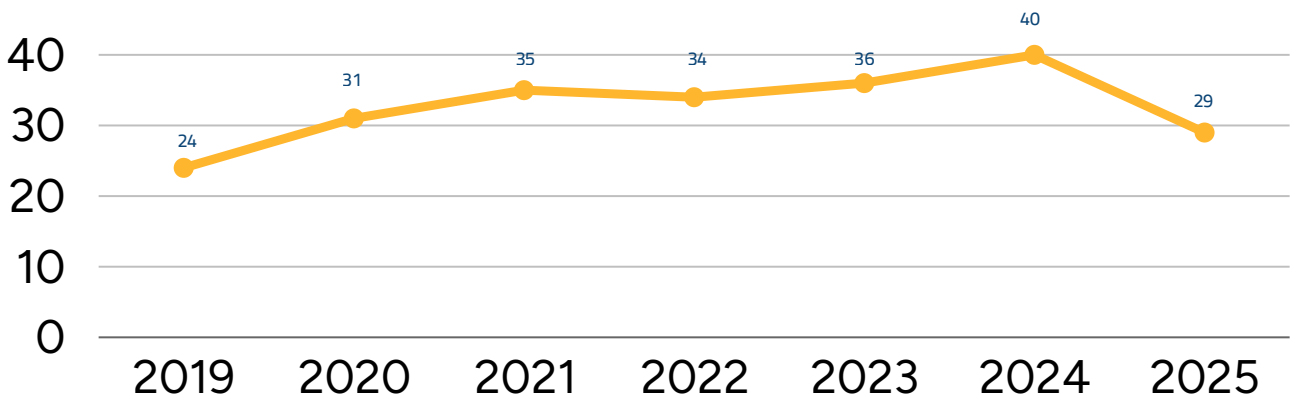
6 Year Comparison

Run Away From Home



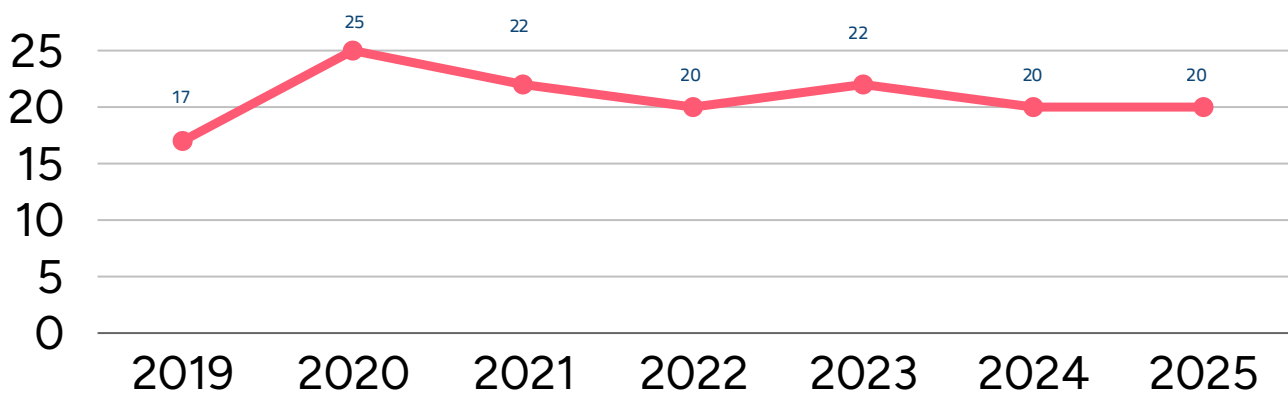
% of youth who reported they had run away from home

Mental Health



% of youth who reported they had accessed mental health services for support

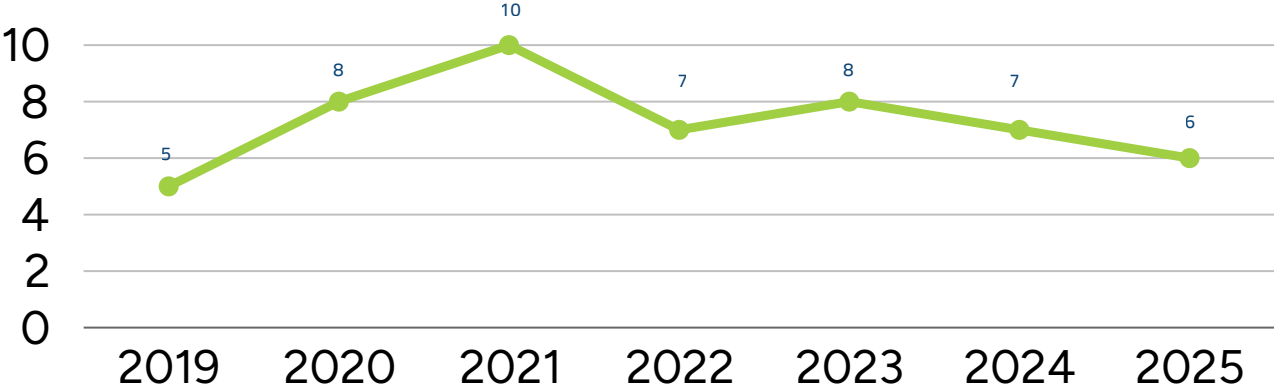
Alcohol



% of youth who reported they drink alcohol

6 Year Comparison

Drugs



% of youth who reported they use drugs

Recommendations:

- TBC

Fraser Coast Youth Survey 2026

School Information Brochure



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What is the survey?

Every year, the HBNC partners with local high schools to run the Fraser Coast Youth Survey. The survey is aimed at finding out what issues youth 12-18 y.o. are experiencing in their lives. This helps us to create a snapshot of youth in our region to help direct local community resources to where they are needed most. 2026 is our 8th year of running the survey. The survey is run by the Social Shift Institute of HBNC.

How do schools implement the survey with students?

Social Shift Institute will send schools a link to the online survey where students can anonymously complete the survey. Alternatively, we can deliver paper copy surveys if that is easier for schools. We will liaise with you as to what suits best. We recommend schools do the survey in form class for better completion rates. We can also provide support if required.

Survey Timeline

March : Liaise with schools to prep to do survey



May-June: Schools implement survey with Years 7-12



July: Data collection of all completed surveys



August: Collected data is analysed



November- FC Youth Survey Report completed and released to schools

For more information please contact: socialshift@hbnc.com.au



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