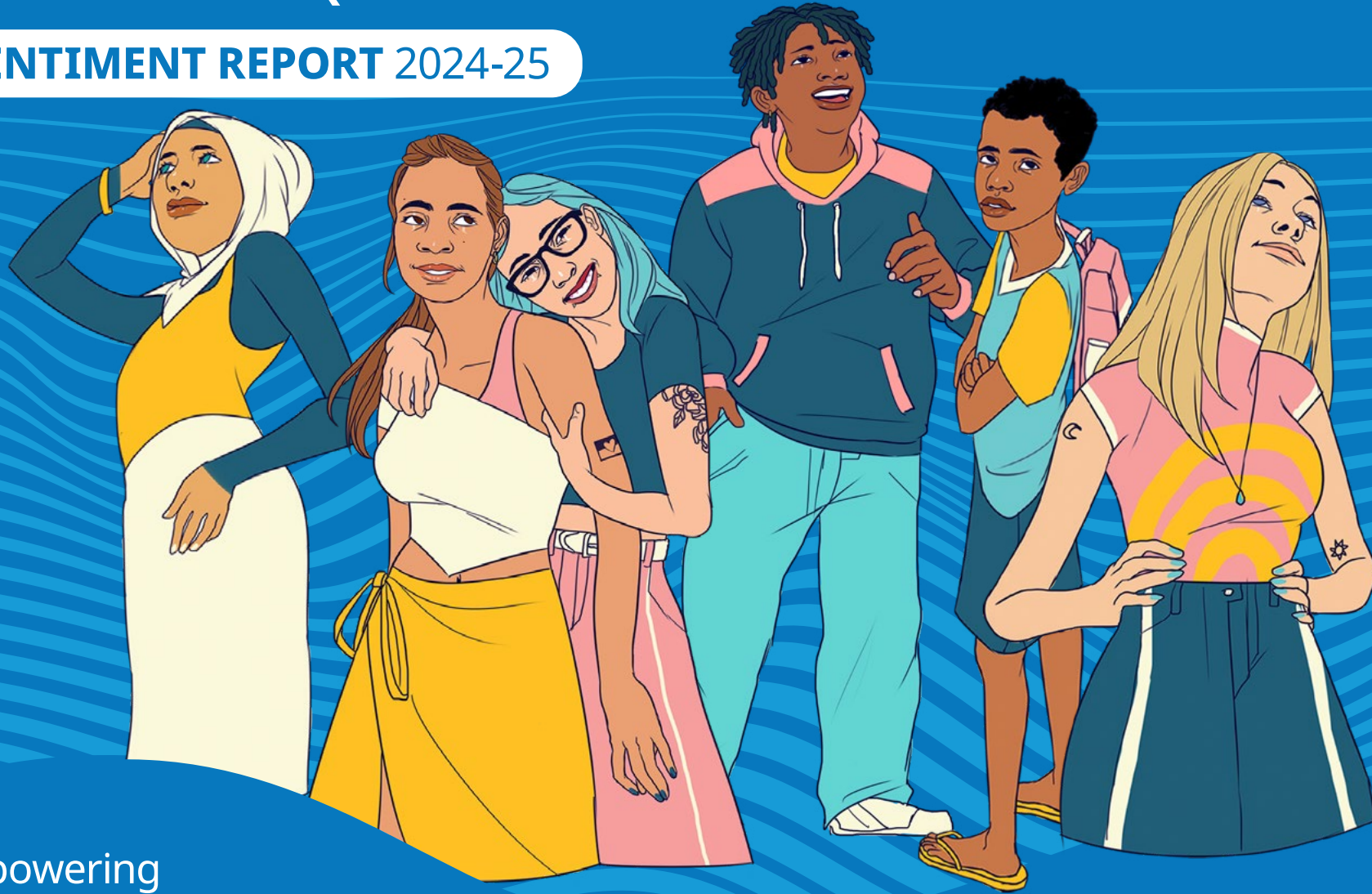


YOUNG QUEENSLANDERS

SENTIMENT REPORT 2024-25



Empowering
young Queenslanders
for a bright future

DELIVERING
FOR QUEENSLAND



Queensland
Government

Young Queenslanders Sentiment Report 2024-25

Interpreter statement



The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty in understanding this document, you can contact us within Australia on 13 QGOV (13 74 68) and we will arrange an interpreter to effectively communicate the document to you.

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Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land. We extend our respect to Elders, past, present, and emerging, and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this Country. We acknowledge the continuation of diverse cultural practices and knowledge systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Traditional Smoking Ceremony at the 2024 Queensland Indigenous Youth Leadership Program opening.



Artwork and artist acknowledgment

Our artwork was created by [Tori-Jay Mordey](#), an established Indigenous Australian illustrator and artist based in Meanjin/Brisbane. Growing up, Tori-Jay openly shared both her Torres Strait Islander and English heritage, which is often reflected in her contemporary Indigenous art practice.

Tori-Jay produces work based around her family and siblings as a way of understanding herself, her appearance and racial identity. Despite moving to the big city for her artistic practice, Tori-Jay still considers Thursday Island her home—amongst the smell of the salt water and the feeling of sand underneath her feet.

Learn more about Tori-Jay at www.tori-jaymordey.com

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Introduction

Every young person carries a story.
A journey shaped by challenges, hopes,
disruptions, and possibility.

Over the past 12 months, many young Queenslanders have walked through moments they never expected: the force of Cyclone Alfred, floods that redrew familiar landscapes, and shifting horizons in digital rules and daily life. Alongside these challenges, they have also witnessed moments of hope—from the inclusion of Gen Z popularised terms in the Cambridge dictionary to the announcement of the Brisbane 2032 Olympics legacy investments—fuelling aspirations and sparking ideas about the kind of future they want to shape.

These are not just events in the news. They are lived. They are felt. They leave traces on how young people think of home, safety, connection, identity, and how they imagine what comes next.

From the increasing international political tensions and devastation of natural disasters, which displaced communities and tested emergency responses, to ongoing pressures from the rising cost of living, disruptions in housing access, and concerns around climate and environmental uncertainty, young people are navigating a world that continues to shift beneath their feet but continue to rise to meet these times with creativity, insight, and courage.

These experiences don't sit in isolation. They influence how young people see themselves, how they connect with others, and what they need to thrive. At every step, their development is shaped by the opportunities and barriers around them: in their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities.

Why this matters

This Young Queenslanders Sentiment Report is a pulse-check, an insight into the lived realities, priorities and expectations of young people across Queensland in 2024-25. It is designed to help government, community organisations, and decision-makers better understand what young people are going through and how we can respond in meaningful, timely and effective ways.

What makes this report powerful is that it is built not just on statistics, but on stories.

We've heard directly from thousands of young Queenslanders through Speak OUT surveys, workshops, and youth-led conversations. Their perspectives are reflected throughout this report in their own words. Sometimes raw, sometimes hopeful, always real.

This report does not present a single narrative, but a chorus of voices that reflect the diversity, depth, and complexity of young people's lives. It captures emerging trends in wellbeing, participation, equity, identity, and safety, and includes quantitative data, qualitative insights and thematic analysis of young people's own contributions drawn from survey data and other external sources.

Throughout this report, direct quotes from young Queenslanders have been included to ground key themes in lived experience. Some quotes have been lightly edited to improve comprehension and accessibility; no changes were made to the words chosen, their meaning or authenticity.

Our commitment

The Queensland Government is dedicated to creating meaningful opportunities for young people to engage with the issues that matter most to them. Through the *Young Queenslanders Strategy and Action Plan (2024–2026)*, we will continue to work across government and with non-government partners to share their priorities, co-design solutions, and turn ideas into action.

This report is part of our ongoing effort to share power, reimagine systems, and build a Queensland where every young person feels safe, supported, connected, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Trigger warning

This sentiment snapshot contains quotes from young people discussing their experiences, including sensitive topics such as domestic and family violence, mental health challenges (including a reference to suicide) and discrimination. These quotes may be distressing or triggering for some readers.

We encourage caution and self-awareness while engaging with this content. If you find these discussions upsetting, please consider your wellbeing and choose whether to proceed with reading the remainder of the report. Support services are available for those who may need assistance:

Lifeline's 13 11 14 crisis support service

- ▶ Anyone in Australia can speak to a trained crisis supporter over the phone, any time of the day or night 24/7.
- ▶ Speak to a crisis support worker by telephone on 13 11 14, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- ▶ Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Website: www.lifeline.org.au/131114

Kids Helpline

- ▶ A free and confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.
- ▶ Call 1800 55 1800 anytime, for any reason. No problem is too big or too small.
- ▶ Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- ▶ Join My Circle, a free and confidential social media platform for 12-25 year olds.

Website: www.kidshelpline.com.au

13YARN

- ▶ Confidential one-on-one support from a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis supporter, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- ▶ Call 13YARN on 13 92 76 (24 hours/7 days).
- ▶ 13YARN empowers communities with the opportunity to yarn without judgement and provide a culturally safe space to speak about their needs, worries or concerns. The website provides a range of culturally safe fact sheets and resources.

Website: www.13yarn.org.au

Beyond Blue

- ▶ Beyond Blue provides free mental health support and counselling services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by phone and online chat.
- ▶ Call 1300 224 636 for counselling services.
- ▶ Beyond Blue also provides online community support and a range of mental health resources including further information and multiple-choice self-assessments.

Website: www.beyondblue.org.au

1800RESPECT

National domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support services.

- ▶ 1800RESPECT offers support for those affected by sexual assault or domestic and family violence and abuse.
- ▶ Call 1800 737 732, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- ▶ Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Website: www.1800respect.org.au

National eSafety Commissioner

- ▶ The National eSafety Commissioner provides resources and information to help young people stay safe online. This includes where technology is being used to target or pressure young people into doing something they do not want to do, and how to determine whether online content is trusted information.
- ▶ The eSafety Commissioner investigates complaints about some specific types of illegal and restricted online content.

Website: www.esafety.gov.au

Preamble

Young Queenslanders are one of our state's greatest assets. While it's well recognised that young people will be the leaders of tomorrow, they are also active participants in shaping Queensland today. From working and studying to volunteering, caregiving, and building businesses, young people are making vital contributions in every corner of our state.

With nearly one in five Queenslanders aged between 12 and 25¹, their ideas, energy and aspirations form a core part of the social, cultural and economic fabric of our state. When young people do well, Queensland does well. Yet too often, the way we speak about young people fails to reflect their true role in our society.

For too long, public discourse has leaned on outdated narratives—portraying young people as disengaged, dependent or even dangerous.² These generalisations don't match reality. And worse, they risk influencing public attitudes and policies that limit, rather than unlock, young people's potential.

As government and community leaders, we can speak and act in ways that recognise young Queenslanders as partners in our progress: resilient, capable, and committed to their communities.

Language matters. The way we talk about young people influences the way we invest in them. Research from the [Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership](#) and [FrameWorks Institute](#),³ shows that when young people are framed as contributors—rather than as problems to be fixed—public support for smart, long-term solutions increase. And that benefits everyone.

Yes, we expect all Queenslanders to take responsibility for their choices—including young people. But fairness demands that we also equip them with the tools, support and opportunities they need to succeed. When we do that, we don't just change individual outcomes—we strengthen families, communities, and the economy.

Right now, young people are navigating complex challenges: the rising cost of living, housing pressures, climate uncertainty, mental health stress, and disruptions in the job market. These aren't issues of their own making—but they are stepping up to face them. They are running local initiatives, mentoring their peers, joining climate adaptation efforts, and driving innovation in schools, TAFEs and universities.

This report shares insights directly from young Queenslanders themselves—what matters to them, what's getting in the way, and where they see opportunity for improvements. These insights help us understand what policies are known and utilised by young people—and where changes are needed to be made across industries, organisations, not-for-profit sectors, and across different levels of government.

This is about recognising that secure, connected, and engaged young people become the backbone of strong communities and resilient economies.

When we provide clear pathways, consistent support, and stable systems, young people thrive—and they give back in spades. They don't need to be saved. They need access, opportunity, and belief.

Strong communities and strong economies go hand-in-hand. Supporting young people is a practical way to ensure our future workforce is skilled, motivated, and connected to community.

Let's shift the conversation toward evidence-informed, cost-effective, and community-driven solutions that equip young Queenslanders to reach their full potential. When we listen to and back our young people, we invest in Queensland's future—one that is prosperous, inclusive and built to last.



1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2021 Census Community Profiles: Queensland*, Australian Government, 2021.

2. S Riddle, A Hickey, C Pocock, A McKee, D Skye and R Wallis, 'Moving beyond deficit media figurations of young people: troubling the contemporary 'youth crime crisis', *Continuum*, 2023, 37(6): 756-769, doi:10.1080/10304312.2024.2313565.

3. Frameworks Institute, *Connections and Communities: Reframing How We Talk About Opportunity Youth A FrameWorks Strategic Brief*, Frameworks Institute, 2024.

We listened to young Queenslanders

The Queensland Government remains steadfast in its commitment to amplifying the voices of young people, ensuring their perspectives shape the policies and programs that impact their lives.

In 2024–25, we engaged with over 3,700 young Queenslanders through 28 Speak OUT events held across the state, including Bamaga, Mount Isa, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, and the Sunshine Coast. These events provided a platform for young people to share their priorities, propose innovative solutions, and influence government decision-making.

How we did it: meeting young people where they are

Speak OUT events are delivered through a variety of mediums, including interactive stalls at youth-focused events like university O-Weeks, NAIDOC celebrations, and Schoolies, as well as targeted workshops and online discussions. These sessions were designed to be flexible, inclusive, and agenda-free, allowing young people to engage in ways that felt most comfortable to them—whether through talking, drawing, or writing.

In addition to in-person engagement, the Speak OUT online survey provided another avenue for young people to have their say. In 2024–25, 2,674 young people completed the survey, identifying their top five priority issues, selecting the single most important issue to them, and proposing actionable solutions for government consideration.

Young people aged 12-15 are less likely to complete an online survey due to parental controls and social media restrictions. To address these barriers, young people aged 12-15 were

engaged more heavily through in-person events at schools, which provided a more accessible and effective way to include their voices.

This report provides highlights of the most frequent, interconnected and/or significant issues raised by the young people we engaged and offers valuable insights and solutions.

Insights and impact

The insights gathered through Speak OUT events and surveys were routinely shared with relevant Queensland Government agencies to inform policy and program development. Some collaborations in 2024-25 included:

- ▶ Supporting young people to contribute to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering, car safety initiatives with the Department of Transport and Main Roads, and facilitated discussions on the unique challenges faced by rural and regional communities.
- ▶ Partnering with the Office of the Night-Life Economy Commissioner, gathering over 400 responses from young people on barriers to nightlife participation and ideas to encourage safe and inclusive engagement.

- ▶ Collaborating with the Office of Fair Trading to develop life skills and financial literacy modules for young people.
- ▶ Partnering with Health and Wellbeing Queensland to create a tailored youth social media campaign targeting healthier snacking habits.
- ▶ Collating environmental and climate change issues facing young Queenslanders at an EcoMarines CHECK event, including their solutions.
- ▶ In-depth Speak OUT activation events with participants of the Queensland Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (on financial and general life skills resources; including a guide for young people to apply for grants and drive change in our communities) and the Queensland Youth Parliament (causes, impacts, and proposed solutions to the top issues experienced by the cohort; and developing civic education content).

Why it matters: the value of youth engagement

Research consistently shows that initiatives encouraging civic participation help young people develop critical skills such as self-esteem, confidence, and optimism. These programs also play a vital role in preventing issues like homelessness, mental health crises, and youth offending. By investing in youth engagement, we are not only empowering young Queenslanders, but also building stronger, more resilient communities.



Participant profile – online survey

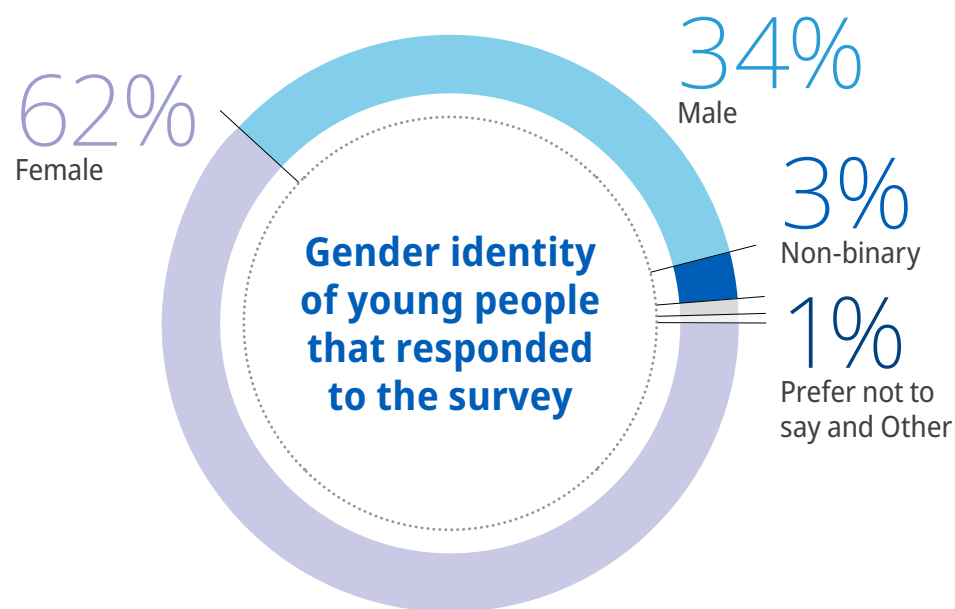
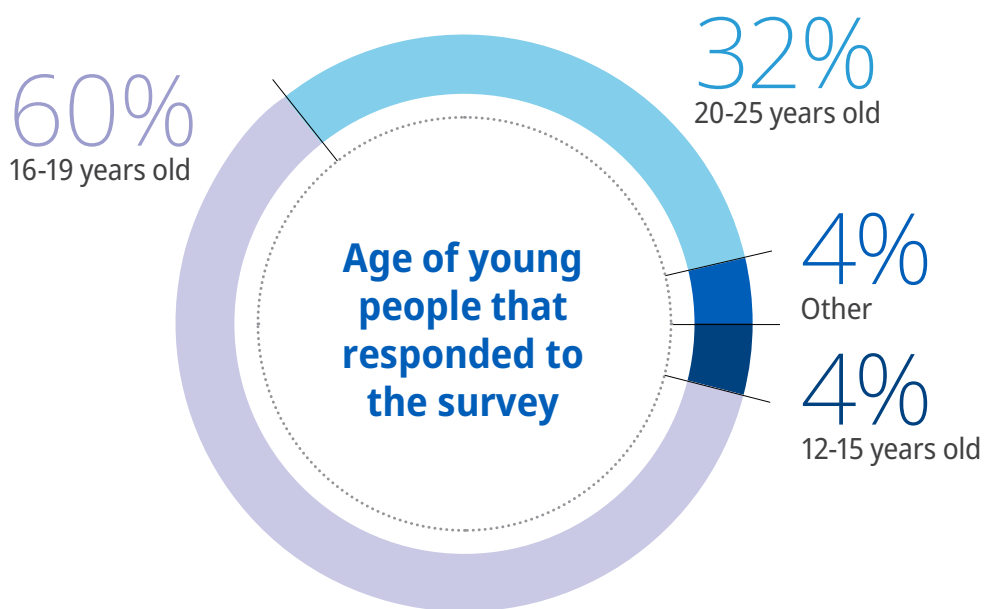
Participating in the survey was voluntary and open to all young Queenslanders, therefore the results reflect only the views of those who chose to participate and may not be representative of the broader population of young people in Queensland.

The following participant profile reflects the Speak OUT online survey participant information and does not account for all the young people engaged across the Speak OUT activities. The online survey results primarily represent 16–19-year-old participants accounting for 60% of respondents, while young people aged 12–15 accounted for only 4%.

Studies have shown there are trends in who chooses to respond to a survey.⁴ Generally, individuals who are more educated and affluent are more likely to respond to surveys compared to those with lower levels of education and less affluence. Similarly, those who identify as women tend to

respond more than men and individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are less likely to respond than those from non-CALD backgrounds.

The majority of young people who completed the online survey identified as female, representing 62% of the respondents, while 34% identified as male. The remaining respondents identified as non-binary (3%), and 1% selected “prefer not to say” or “other”. In addition to providing their ages, young people were asked if they identified with a variety of lived experiences when completing the online survey.



4. G Smith, 'Does gender influence online survey participation? A record-linkage analysis of university faculty online survey response behavior', ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 501717, San Jose State University, 2008.

Of the 2,674 young people who responded to our online survey questions:⁵

483

identified as being religious or a person of faith

483

are from a regional, remote, or rural area

422

identified as LGBTQIA+

145

identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

317

identified as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)

434

have experienced or are experiencing mental ill-health

309

identified as neurodivergent

171

have experienced or are experiencing a chronic health condition

162

are from a low socioeconomic background

136

identified as having a disability

108

identified as a parent or guardian

73

identified as a carer for someone other than their own child

66

have experienced or are experiencing homelessness

54

identified as a refugee or migrant

45

have experienced or are experiencing out-of-home care

29

identified as being deaf or hard of hearing

29

have experienced or are experiencing the youth justice system

24

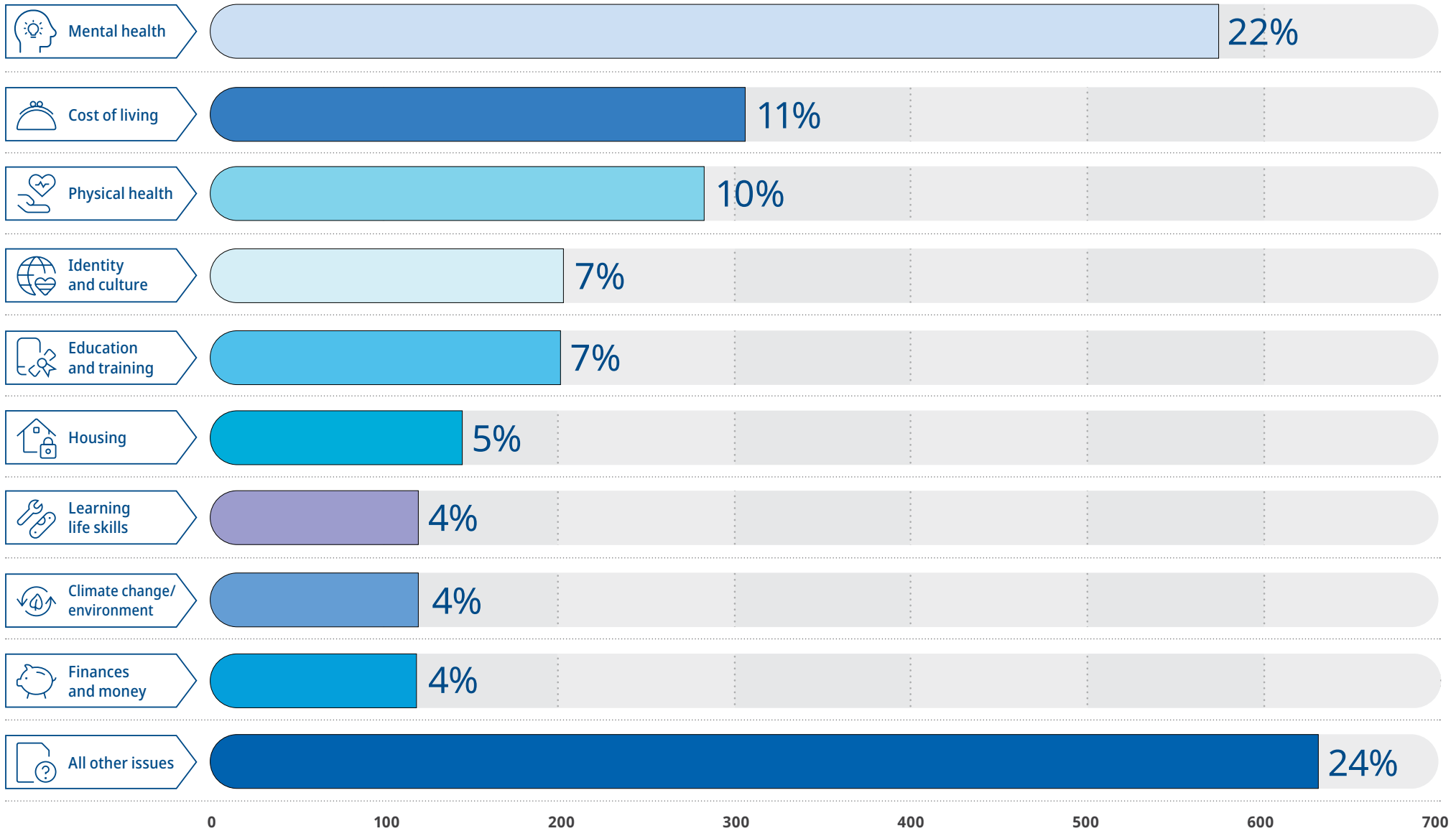
have experienced or are experiencing the adult justice system

1,154

identify with none of the above

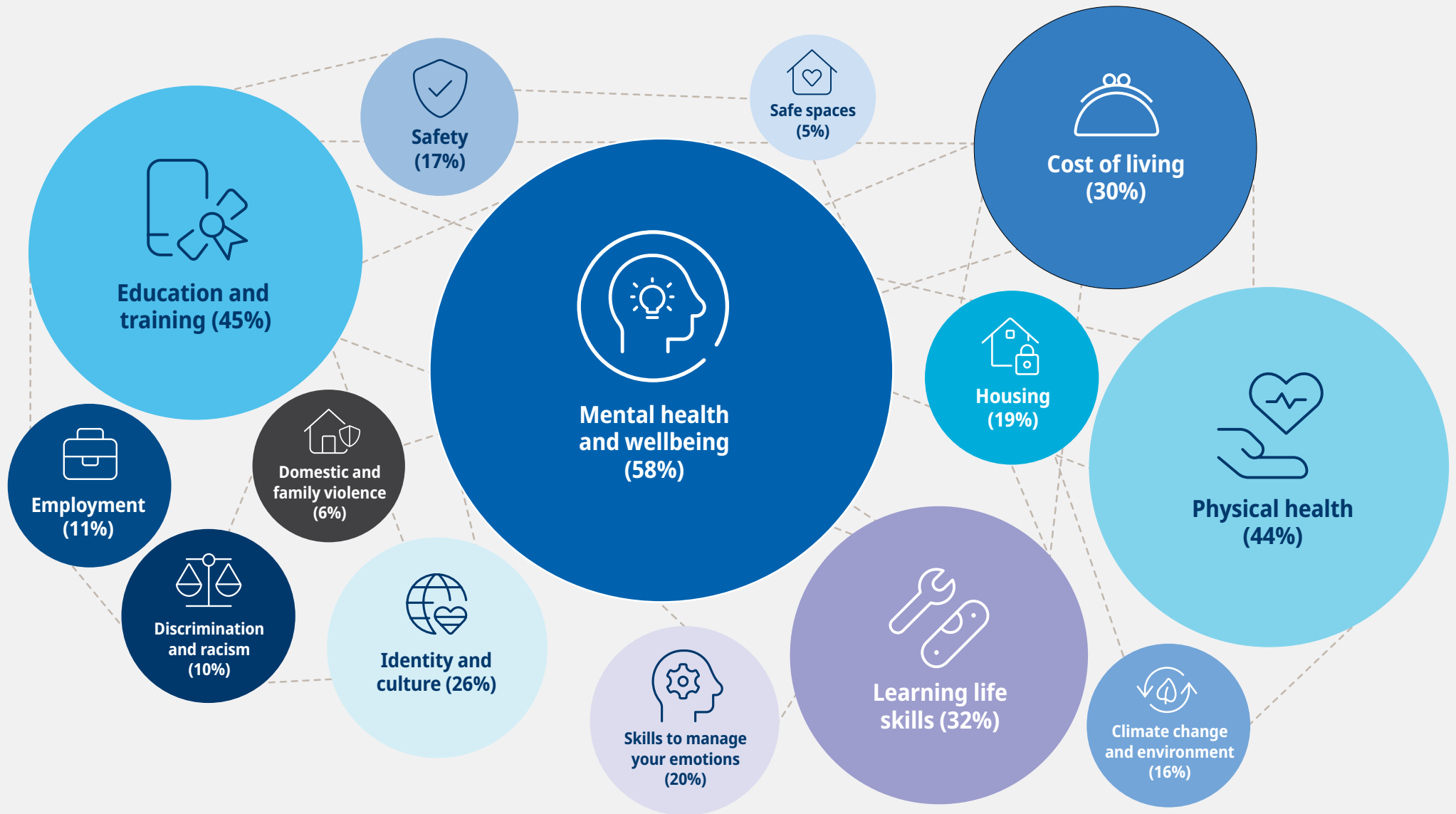
5. Young people may identify with more than one lived experience or identity.

What's important to young people (top issue)



Please note: This graph outlines the single most important issue identified by each respondent. Percentages shown here will differ from the rest of the report. The remainder of the report analyses responses based on the top five issues selected by each respondent.

What's important to young people (top 5)





Mental health and wellbeing

including support services

Availability

Accessibility

Affordability

Culturally appropriate support

Education and awareness

Community and connection

Systemic and financial support

Reduction of stigma

The greatest proportion of young people (58%) expressed an urgent need for accessible, affordable, and inclusive mental health services. Many called for free or subsidised counselling and therapy, with suggestions to expand Medicare coverage to all mental health services. They emphasised reducing wait times for psychologists and counsellors, especially in rural and remote areas with limited access. Culturally appropriate services, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander providers and on-country programs, were also highlighted as essential for meeting the needs of diverse communities. Creating safe spaces for open, judgment-free discussions about mental health was another key priority.

Financial stress and systemic challenges were frequently linked to mental health struggles. Young people cited the rising cost of living, housing affordability, and financial pressures of transitioning into adulthood as major contributors. They called for more affordable housing, financial aid, and free or low-cost community programs. Broader systemic issues, such as climate change, bullying, and economic inequality, were also seen as drivers of anxiety, stress, and, in some cases, suicide.

Education and awareness were identified as critical to improving mental health outcomes. Respondents advocated for more mental health education in schools and universities, including life skills, stress management, and accessing support services. Many suggested campaigns to

reduce stigma and normalise mental health conversations, encouraging help-seeking as a sign of strength. They also called for community events, wellness programs, and youth-focused initiatives to foster connection, reduce loneliness, and promote belonging. Addressing these needs holistically could significantly enhance the mental health and wellbeing of young people across Queensland.

National mental health and wellbeing snapshot (ages 16-24)⁶

40% of young people have experienced a mental health concern in the previous 12 months.

47% of young women identified a mental health concern of >12-month duration compared to **31% of young men.**

Across all ages, standardised prevalence of mental and behavioural problems was

18.3% higher in Queensland than Australia overall.



Substance use disorders were more frequent in young people and reported **2.3 times more by males.**

From 2014–15 to 2022, mental and behavioural conditions increased

72.2% in Queensland and were the most commonly reported chronic condition in 2022.



Ideas from young Queenslanders

- Free or subsidised mental health services, including therapy and counselling, with expanded Medicare coverage and more funding to ensure accessibility and quality across Queensland.
- Reduced wait times for psychologists and counsellors, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- Affordable housing and financial aid to ease the cost of living and reduce economic stress.
- Culturally appropriate mental health support, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander providers and on-country programs.
- Safe and inclusive spaces, such as youth hubs and community centres, to foster connection, reduce loneliness, and provide access to support.
- Mental health education in schools and universities, teaching life skills, stress management, and how to seek help, alongside campaigns to reduce stigma and normalise conversations about mental health.
- Holistic approaches to address systemic pressures like climate change, bullying, and economic inequality.

“Help prevent the stigma around mental health and show young people that asking for help is okay.”

“Reduce the cost of living! Please! Just make it easier for us to transition into adulthood.”

“Offer more activities like sports, arts, and cultural programs to help us connect and reduce loneliness.”

6. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing*, Australian Government, 2020-2022.



Education and training

including accessibility and financial assistance

Financial assistance and scholarships

Flexible and accessible pathways

Increasing regional and remote education opportunities

Support for students with disabilities and learning differences

Cultural education and First Nations teacher representation

Inclusion and support for international students

Targeted training for high-demand careers

Nearly half (45%) of young people repeatedly described education and training as essential for their future, career aspirations, and personal growth. For many, education was seen as “the key to opportunity” and a pathway to achieving freedom, financial security, and the ability to contribute to society. A strong focus was placed on the importance of acquiring skills that lead to well-paying, interesting, stable and secure jobs.

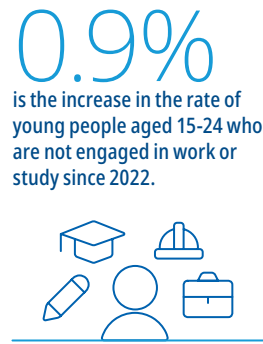
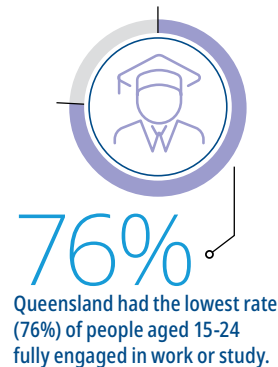
A significant concern was cost — from university or vocational tuition fees to relocation expenses for those in rural and remote areas. Many felt that tertiary education, while essential, was becoming “somewhat unachievable” due to high fees, limited scholarships, and insufficient financial assistance. Young people in regional areas spoke about the burden of having to relocate to access certain courses, while others called for more flexible and accessible online options so they could study without leaving their communities.

Accessibility was also raised in terms of inclusion and support in both secondary and tertiary education. Some young people highlighted the need for earlier and more targeted support for students with learning disabilities, dyslexia, or special needs, while others emphasised the importance of including cultural perspectives in education. First Nations young people wanted more First Nations teachers and culturally considerate and relevant curriculum

content. While international students sought greater inclusion and support, as well as flexibility and recognition by the education system (especially in specialist fields such as healthcare and cybersecurity).

Many considered education as more than just formal qualifications — it was also about gaining life skills, improving confidence, and ensuring all young people have the tools to succeed. They called for better communication by the education department, improved facilities, increased training opportunities in high-demand sectors, and investment in programs that address current and future workforce needs.

Education and training fast facts⁷



Ideas from young Queenslanders

- ▶ More scholarships and financial assistance for students, especially those from regional areas.
- ▶ Lower or subsidised fees for school, university, and vocational training.
- ▶ More online course options to reduce the need for relocation.
- ▶ Increased education and training opportunities (including school-based apprenticeships) in regional and remote areas.
- ▶ Greater support for students with disabilities and learning differences.
- ▶ More cultural education in schools and increased representation of First Nations teachers.
- ▶ Better inclusion and support for international students.
- ▶ Improved access to facilities and resources.
- ▶ More flexible education pathways and course delivery options.
- ▶ Targeted training for high-demand careers (e.g., healthcare, teaching, cybersecurity).

“More uni courses available to remote areas online — we often have to relocate to Townsville or Brisbane to do courses we want.”

“Because it is essential but somewhat unachievable in cost.”

“I feel like i could put more effort into my education and training if i didn't have to worry too much about having a job and paying bills... Alleviate some of the stress of bills will help. Like the energy rebate is really nice.”

“Cuz there's no way one can achieve anything without a decent degree.”

“Create conditions where every citizen has an opportunity to study regardless their financial situation”

7. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Education and Work, Australia*, Australian Government, 2025.



Physical health

including nutrition, accessibility and active living

Affordable access

Affordable nutritional options

Recreation and community activity hubs

Injury prevention and rehabilitation support

Initiatives promoting active lifestyles

Improved access to support services

Education and awareness

Support for diverse needs

Almost half of young people (44%) emphasised that physical health is essential for individual wellbeing and participating in the community. Many viewed staying active and fit as key to “living life normally” and “flourishing.” However, they reported that competing priorities like work and study often take precedence, leading to a decline in physical health. While many wanted to establish regular exercise routines, they felt limited by a lack of time, energy, or accessible facilities. There was a strong call for more community sports spaces, outdoor courts, and affordable exercise programs to encourage regular physical activity.

Access and affordability were consistent barriers. Young people noted that gyms, sports programs, and health services are often expensive, deterring participation, especially for those on tight budgets. Some delayed treatment for injuries or chronic conditions due to cost, while others highlighted ambulance ramping and hospital wait times as challenges to timely care. Those recovering from injuries stressed the need for accessible rehabilitation services, such as physiotherapy, to prevent further harm. Chronic health conditions, like lung disease or mobility issues, were also cited as reasons why physical health support must be adaptable to diverse needs.

Food and nutrition emerged as a major factor shaping positive physical health outcomes. Young people felt that eating healthy is often more expensive and less accessible than fast food, especially for those in low-income households or regional areas. They described how this cost made it harder to maintain healthy

eating habits, with some calling for government action to lower healthy food prices and incentivise better nutrition choices. There was a clear desire for interventions that not only make healthy food more affordable but also improve education on nutrition and long-term wellbeing.

A number of young people also connected physical health to mental health, highlighting the benefits of exercise in managing stress, building resilience, and improving mood. They felt that a fit and active population would help reduce the risk of chronic illnesses and improve overall quality of life, both for individuals and for the broader population. The message was consistent: young people want government action that makes active, healthy living both possible and affordable for everyone.

Physical health fast facts⁸

In 2024, adults living in the most advantaged areas were **40.3% more likely to be sufficiently active.**

Among young people aged 12-17 years:

29.5% were classified as overweight,

22.9% were classified as obese.

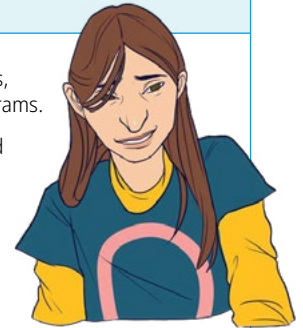
GP bulk-billing rates in Queensland declined from 85% to

75.8% from 2021 to 2024.

The proportion of Queenslanders consuming the recommended daily serves of fruit is not improving and vegetables continues to fall.



Ideas from young Queenslanders



- Lower cost or free access to gyms, sports facilities, and fitness programs.
- More affordable healthy food and incentives to help make healthy choices easier.
- More sports courts, recreational spaces, and community activity hubs.
- Injury prevention programs and funded physiotherapy or rehabilitation.
- Government-led initiatives promoting active lifestyles.
- Solutions to ambulance ramping and faster access to medical care for all.
- Physical health education embedded in schools, universities, and community programs.
- Better support for people with chronic conditions or disabilities to stay active.
- Initiatives linking physical health with mental wellbeing.
- Localised programs in both urban and regional areas to encourage daily exercise.

“People need to be encouraged to do physical activity.”

“Physical health is important as a fit population will decrease the likelihood of serious health effects in our country.”

“I feel that to get access to healthy foods and gyms is expensive — it’s easier to resort to fast food and being unhealthy.”

8. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Medicare bulk billing and out-of-pocket costs of GP attendances over time: Patterns in GP bulk billing rates across states and territories, Australian Government, 2024; Queensland Health, The health of Queenslanders: Report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland, Queensland Government, 2025.



Life skills

including the transition to adulthood and emotional intelligence for resilience

Life skills and transition support

Financial literacy and advice

Mental health and wellbeing support

Emotional intelligence development

Tailored programs for diverse needs

Resources and support for school leavers

Stress management and coping strategies

Social connection and networking opportunities

Life skills were described as ‘essential for the future’ and a key factor in preparing for independence by 32% of young people. Many said that while they valued academic learning, they felt unprepared for the realities of adulthood — from managing finances and securing housing to navigating workplaces and building healthy relationships. This lack of preparation was seen as especially daunting during major life transitions, such as leaving school, moving out of home, starting tertiary education, or entering the workforce.

For some, the transition to adulthood was described as “scary” or “overwhelming,” especially when combined with financial pressures, moving away from family, or becoming a young parent. Many felt there was a “gap” in the education system, where students graduate without knowing basic adult responsibilities like paying bills, understanding tax, or managing household tasks. This gap was seen as not just practical but also emotional — young people said they needed tools to manage stress, anxiety, and uncertainty during this period.

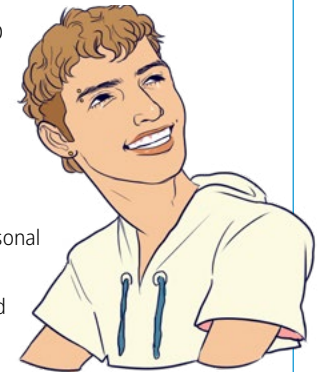
Managing emotions and developing emotional intelligence were often raised alongside life skills. Some spoke about struggling to express themselves appropriately, deal with conflict, or cope with stress in ways that didn’t damage relationships or career prospects. Young people recognised that emotional regulation was essential for “every aspect of your social and independent life” and wanted it embedded into education in the same way as academic subjects. Those with disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) emphasised the importance of tailored strategies for managing outbursts, sustaining employment and preventing burnout.

Underlying these comments was a strong desire for education that treated life skills, emotional intelligence, and practical adulthood preparation as interconnected. Many called for these skills to be taught consistently from early high school, supported by real-world learning opportunities and accessible community-based programs.



Ideas from young Queenslanders

- ▶ Compulsory life skills and transition-to-adulthood classes in schools, including practical lessons on budgeting, taxes, housing, cooking, job readiness, and navigating government systems.
- ▶ Emotional intelligence and communication skills to be taught in school alongside academic subjects.
- ▶ Peer mentoring and community programs to help build social confidence and resilience.
- ▶ Access to free or low-cost mental health support, including courses on managing emotions.
- ▶ More online and in-person workshops for school leavers and young adults.
- ▶ Tailored programs for young people with disabilities, ADHD, and ASD to build independent living skills.
- ▶ Targeted support for young parents, including parenting skills and financial literacy training.
- ▶ Resources for managing stress and uncertainty during major life transitions.
- ▶ Social activities and networking opportunities to help build interpersonal skills and community connections.
- ▶ Government-backed campaigns to promote emotional wellbeing and healthy coping mechanisms.



“Louder support and support services for the transition into adulthood.”

“I find it hard to be a young parent and to transition to adulthood.”

“Emotional intelligence affects every aspect of your social and independent life.”

“Going into adulthood with no skills is scary.”

“Schools don’t really teach us basic concepts of adulthood like taxes and housing.”

“I want to learn how to properly conduct myself in [the] adult world.”

“[Transition to adulthood is the most important issue] because I am starting that process right now and I don’t feel prepared or have much help with transitioning and is similar with lots of people I know.”

“It’s nice to be taught how to budget and manage taxes etc.”



Cost of living

including employment and affordability

Rental regulation

Price caps on goods and services

Wage indexation

Centrelink support

Affordable housing

Streamlined payments

Consumer protection for inflation

Disability support

The cost of living was identified as a critical issue by 30% of young people, with the disconnect between wages and expenses emerging as a recurring theme.

Young people expressed significant anxiety about the rising cost of living, describing it as a constant source of stress and a major barrier to independence. Many felt trapped — unable to move out, buy a home, or save for the future. Housing affordability and escalating rent prices were the most commonly cited concerns, with multiple participants saying home ownership feels “nearly impossible” in the current economic climate.

A recurring theme was the disconnect between wages and expenses. Young people reported that even with jobs, they could not keep up with the cost of essentials such as food, utilities, and transport. For students, both domestic and international, the high cost of living meant balancing long working hours with study, often at the expense of academic performance. Some noted delays in receiving government payments, such as the Tertiary Access Payment, which worsened their financial pressure.

The challenge is real: in 2024, a single student household needed \$672.43 a week to meet a basic standard of living.⁹ Most of the expenditure needs are allocated to housing (43%), with food and drink, as well as household goods and services each accounting for 13% of the weekly expenditure. With an income through Youth Allowance (\$206.35 per week) and casual work (\$451.88 per week), the household is just able to meet a basic standard of living (with a surplus of \$2.72), putting significant pressure on household budgeting skills and continuation of Government rebates (e.g. travel and electricity) to keep costs lower.

Several young people spoke about the strain on mental health caused by financial stress, with some linking it to other issues like homelessness, healthcare access, and even crime rates. International students and young people from rural areas described the shock of moving to cities and facing much higher costs, while others pointed to the added disadvantage for people with disabilities who have fewer employment options.

Many respondents called for systemic change, including stricter regulation of rent increases, price caps on essential goods, and more financial support for young people. They emphasised the need for accessible government assistance not tied to parental income, faster payment processing, and more targeted subsidies (including housing and food supports) to make independent living an achievable goal.

Money matters: Young people described finances and money as central to their independence, stability, and ability to participate in education, work, and community life. Many reported struggling to cover daily expenses, especially those working casually or with limited shifts. For students, particularly those studying full time, the cost of rent, food, tuition, and other commitments created significant financial pressure.



Ideas from young Queenslanders

- ▶ Regulation of rental prices and protection against unjustified rent increases.
- ▶ Price caps on essential goods, including food, fuel, and childcare.
- ▶ Higher wages or wage indexation in line with inflation.
- ▶ Increased and more accessible Centrelink payments, especially for students and those under 25.
- ▶ Housing assistance and more affordable student accommodation.
- ▶ Faster processing of government payments and easier access to scholarships and relocation grants.
- ▶ Financial support for international students and people relocating from rural areas.
- ▶ Specific cost-of-living relief measures for young people with a disability.
- ▶ Legislation to address price gouging and reduce inflation impacts.

“It’s too difficult for children coming from low-income families to get a head start in life. Housing costs are far too high, and incomes is far too low.”

“I’m barely making enough money to afford my daily expenses as I am a casual worker and only work 1–2 days a week.”

“It is getting so expensive that people are becoming homeless and it’s getting out of hand.”

“As a young adult looking to live independent, the biggest thing in my way is the cost of living and rent prices compared to our wages.”

9. Queensland Council of Social Service, *Living Affordability in Queensland 2024*, Brisbane, 2024.



Safety

including safe spaces, domestic and family violence and gender-based violence

Foundational condition

Safe spaces

Stronger protection and support services

Culturally safe services

Upholding safety as a shared responsibility

Preventative and early intervention education

Compounding issue of socioeconomic disadvantage

Safety captures the issue of safety, safe spaces and domestic and family violence with 28% of young people advising that feeling safe, both physically and emotionally, is essential for being able to fully participate in life, explore their identities, and connect with others. They described safety not just as a basic need, but as a foundational condition that supports growth, learning, and wellbeing.

While many young people already feel supported in their communities, others shared experiences where safety is not guaranteed. Their insights reveal both the opportunities and challenges young Queenslanders face and highlight the importance of responsive systems and environments that uphold safety as a shared responsibility.

Young people spoke about the importance of creating environments where everyone can move freely without fear or harassment. This was particularly highlighted by young women and gender-diverse people, who described feeling vulnerable when walking alone, going out at night, or using public transport. Everyday harassment, such as catcalling, being followed, or drink spiking was described as disturbingly common, to the point that some felt it had become normalised.

Young people emphasised that safety should be a right, not a privilege—and that safer communities benefit everyone. They suggested public infrastructure improvements, such as better lighting and emergency systems, and increased police visibility in high-risk areas.

Young Queenslanders expressed serious concern about the ongoing impacts of domestic, family, and gender-based violence, describing it as a widespread and urgent issue affecting individuals, families, and whole communities. Many shared lived experience, highlighting the emotional and logistical difficulties of seeking help, and the barriers they encountered when trying to access protection or support services.

Some described systemic gaps such as delays in processing protection orders or requiring court documentation before accessing services—that left them feeling unsupported. Others raised the need for stronger legal protections and community education to break the cycle of violence.

Young people drew attention to the ways in which safety can be affected by broader social conditions. They noted that those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage often

face greater risks due to limited access to safe housing, crisis services, or legal support.

Young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities highlighted the need for culturally safe services, locally led solutions, and greater investment in community-designed responses. They also spoke about the need to address underlying contributors to harm, including housing stress, discrimination, and service inaccessibility.

Many young people talked about the importance of education—both in schools and in communities, as a way to prevent violence and bullying, shift attitudes, and support people to recognise unhealthy dynamics. They expressed a desire for early intervention and learning opportunities that build respectful relationships, gender equality, and safe conflict resolution.

There was a clear call for education programs that start early, are inclusive of all genders and identities, and are grounded in real-life experiences. Young people saw this as essential for interrupting harmful patterns and helping their peers feel equipped to seek help or support others.

“The issue of safety is of paramount importance to me, particularly because of how pervasive the sense of fear and vulnerability is among young women during routine activities like walking alone or going out at night.”

“It’s a terrifying time to be a woman with the insane rates of gender-based violence around the country.”

“A woman should never have to feel anxious or fearful simply because she is alone.”

“I very nearly died multiple times from my family... dad has breached the order 13 times... I never feel safe.”

“A lack of safety is an issue that affects everyone at some level and individuals shouldn’t have to feel threatened by existing/living.”



Safety

including safe spaces, domestic and family violence and gender-based violence (continued)

2024 Queensland safety fast facts¹⁰

33%

A third of sexual assault victims were aged between 10 and 17 years at the date of incident.

7%

decrease in robberies were recorded since the previous year, with most victims aged between 10-17 years.

9,326

victims of sexual assault were recorded in Queensland, an 11% increase from the previous year and 85% were female victims. This is the largest number in the thirty-two year time series.

For victims of homicide and related offences the most common age group was between 18 and 34 years,

40%

94

victims of homicide and related offences, a decrease of 17 victims from 2023.

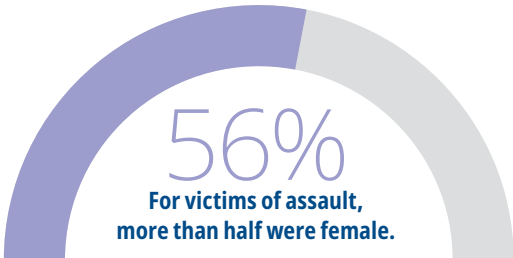
The number of victims of assault recorded increased by

5%

from the previous year.

60%

Three in five assaults were domestic and family violence related.



Ideas from young Queenslanders

- Stronger enforcement of protection orders, with effective consequences for breaches.
- Accessible support services that don't require formal legal processes to permit engagement.
- Safe, affordable housing and emergency shelter options, available across urban and regional areas.
- Education programs in schools and communities to promote respectful relationships and prevent domestic and family violence.
- Culturally appropriate, community-led responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- Law reform to ensure bail is not granted in serious domestic and family violence cases.
- More responsive and approachable police interactions with young people.
- Improved public infrastructure, including lighting, CCTV, and safety alert systems.
- Public awareness campaigns to challenge harassment and promote respectful cultural change.
- Support for kinship care and action on overcrowded housing in First Nations communities.
- Inclusive and culturally sensitive support services for young people of all backgrounds.
- Programs addressing bullying and discrimination in schools.
- Opportunities for young people to learn about safety, coping strategies, and how to seek support for both victims and those with abusive tendencies.

"Obtaining a Domestic Violence Order is... slow and difficult... needing official orders to get a social worker and needing a social worker to get official orders."

"...you have to be safe to be able to do anything else."

"Bullying — not enough is done in schools."

"Safety is unfortunately an issue in every city and shouldn't be in this day and age."

10. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Recorded Crime - Victims*, Australian Government, 2024.



Identity and culture

including belonging, sense of self and diversity

Cultural preservation and practice

Cultural education and awareness

Safe spaces for cultural expression

Mentorship and community support

Diversity and inclusion policies

Anti-racism and discrimination initiatives

Support for immigrants and international students

Funding for community-led cultural programs

A quarter (26%) of young people identified identity and culture as their top issue. Young people emphasised that identity and culture are core to who they are, shaping their values, sense of belonging, and how they move through the world. For many, being proud of their cultural heritage was central to their self-esteem and wellbeing. Some described their identity as something to be nurtured and protected, while others felt it was an evolving journey — “still trying to figure out who I am” — especially during major life transitions like finishing school or starting university.

Several respondents shared that navigating multiple or conflicting cultures created tension and uncertainty. International students and those from multicultural backgrounds described the challenge of balancing “sticking to your roots” while adapting to a new cultural environment and how this affected their social life, priorities, and even mental health. Some young people expressed the need for more visibility and celebration of cultural diversity, including for Pacific communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and other minority groups.

A number of young people expressed experiences of cultural disconnection. This included those who had lost touch with their heritage due to family history, relocation, or systemic barriers. Disconnection was described as having a “missing part” of themselves, and young people wanted pathways to reconnect — such as support to trace family bloodlines

and connect with community. Cultural mentoring in schools was also suggested as a way to guide young people through identity challenges and strengthen ties to heritage.

Young people also raised the role of education and public spaces in valuing and respecting culture. They wanted more cultural content in school curriculum, more inclusive policies at universities, and safe spaces where people of all backgrounds could practise their values. There were also calls for broader community understanding, policy change to support diversity, and actions that challenge discrimination, making Queensland a place where “people accept you no matter what.”

Queensland's diverse population (2021)¹¹

190+ overseas languages are spoken at home



>10% speak a language other than English at home

110 religions from more than 220 countries and territories



Slightly more than 40% were either born overseas or at least one of their parents were



Ideas from young Queenslanders

- ▶ More opportunities to practise cultural values and traditions.
- ▶ Cultural education and awareness in schools, universities and workplaces.
- ▶ Spaces for cultural expression, performance, and celebration.
- ▶ Cultural mentors in schools and communities.
- ▶ Programs that help people reconnect to heritage and family bloodlines.
- ▶ Greater visibility for minority and underrepresented cultural groups.
- ▶ Policy changes to support diversity and inclusion.
- ▶ Initiatives that address racism and discrimination.
- ▶ Support for immigrants and international students to integrate without losing cultural identity.
- ▶ Funding for community-led cultural programs and events.

“Help people connect to their family bloodlines. Help people find out who they are and connect them with people in that community.”

“It defines who I am — by allowing people of all cultures to practise their values.”

“As a young woman straight out of high school, I am still trying to figure out who I am.”

“In a world of social media and connection I feel that people are actually more isolated than ever.”

“I want cultural mentors at school.”

11. Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, Queensland Multicultural Action Plan 2024-25 to 2026-27, Queensland Government, 2024.



Housing

including safe places, affordable housing and support services

Affordable availability

Accessibility

Inclusive housing services

Long waitlists

Housing co-design and safe places

Emergency housing options

Support for first home buyers

Affordable housing policies

Nearly one in five young people (19%) expressed significant concerns about housing, describing it as both unaffordable and inaccessible, with many doubting they would ever be able to own a home. For some, the dream of independence felt completely out of reach, with rising costs forcing them to stay in the family home well into adulthood. Many shared that even when living arrangements were affordable, they came at the expense of other essentials, such as food, study, and transport.

Those trying to rent described facing discrimination from landlords and agents, with age and income creating barriers. Some felt judged simply for being young, while others saw landlords as reluctant to lease to them due to stereotypes around reliability and trustworthiness. The rental market was seen as competitive, expensive, and often inaccessible without strong financial backing or family support.

For young people in crisis, the lack of available and appropriate housing was a key concern. They spoke of social housing waitlists stretching out for years, even in cases involving disability or domestic and family violence.

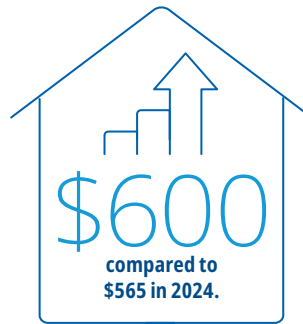
In regional and remote areas, the lack of housing co-designed with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was seen as contributing to cultural

disconnection and ineffective housing solutions (e.g. not suitable for multi-generational households).

Young people called for genuine engagement and co-design, believing that communities themselves know what housing solutions would work best. They stressed that safe, secure, and affordable housing is not just a personal aspiration, but a human right.

Housing fast facts¹²

In Queensland, the **average median weekly rent for new tenancies in 2025 was ...**



In Australia, between 2012 and 2024, the **mean price of residential dwellings increased by**

104%

compared to only a **56% rise in median household disposable income.**



Ideas from young Queenslanders

- ▶ An increase in the supply of public, social, and affordable housing.
- ▶ Policy changes and subsidies to reduce housing and rental costs.
- ▶ Housing solutions that are co-designed with communities, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- ▶ Discrimination in the rental market addressed and more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in housing services employed.
- ▶ Housing assistance for young parents to help family reunification.
- ▶ Emergency and safe housing for survivors of domestic and family violence.
- ▶ Targeted support for first home buyers, especially younger people.
- ▶ Shortening of wait times for social housing allocations.
- ▶ Government to actively consult with communities to design housing policies that reflect local needs.

"...maybe set up something like we have for uni, the HECS debt, but for housing."

"From personal experience as a young person, [property] owners are very hesitant to lease due to assumptions that we are untrustworthy."

"Renting crisis is affecting young people. From experience, renting is harder because rentals are more likely to accept someone that is more established and are also more willing to accept rent up front, which many young people are unable to provide."

"It would be great to have a space for our youth to come and hang out. For a lot of kids here, school doesn't work for them - so there need to be other options. Even a place to teach the young ones how to do their laundry or mow their lawns. If there is a safe space for young people, all of the [support] services can also be accessed from there."

12. Residential Tenancies Authority, *Annual Report 2024-25*, Queensland Government, 2025; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Home ownership and housing tenure*, Australian Government, 2025.



Climate change and the environment

including intergenerational responsibilities, sustainability and climate anxiety

- Climate change as a foundational issue
- Intergenerational responsibility
- Corporate accountability of emissions
- Protecting ecosystems and biodiversity
- Investment in sustainable science and innovation
- Education and civic responsibility
- Strengthening environmental regulations
- Climate action across government

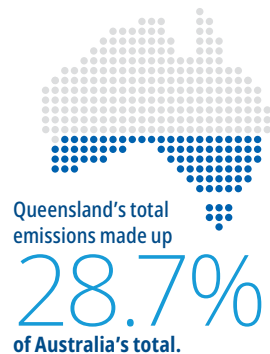
While it was selected less frequently than in recent years, the 16% of young people who did prioritise it, consistently described climate change as “the most important issue” emphasising that it underpins every other challenge they face. Many felt that without urgent action to curb global warming, problems like housing, health, and economic stability would become irrelevant in the face of environmental collapse. Some emphasised that they had grown up aware of the climate crisis.

A strong sense of intergenerational responsibility emerged. Young people felt they were inheriting an environmental crisis they did not create, while political and corporate leaders failed to act decisively. They expressed concern that older generations may deprioritise climate action because they will not face the long-term consequences. Several described the situation as “defining our future” and emphasising their fears of worsening extreme weather, rising sea levels, biodiversity loss, and threats to food security.

Corporate accountability and government leadership were seen as critical. Participants called for legislation to cap or tax greenhouse gas emissions, the removal of subsidies for fossil fuel industries, and a rapid shift to renewable energy sources. Others wanted investment in environmental science, including fusion energy research, anti-plastic innovation, and large-scale conservation programs to protect the Great Barrier Reef, wetlands, and rainforests.

Environmental education and local action were also seen as priorities. Young people wanted climate change integrated more into school curriculums, not just as science content but linked to civic responsibility and sustainable living. Many emphasised the role of community conservation efforts, sustainable agriculture, and public transport as ways to reduce emissions at a local level, while also empowering individuals to be part of the solution.

Climate change and the environment fast facts¹³



Particle pollution is Queensland's most significant air quality issue. Windblown dust has been responsible for **over 70% of all exceedances of the Ambient Air Quality.**

Between 2005 and 2022, Queensland's emissions decreased by **35%**.

Emissions from the **transport sector contributed 17.3%** of Queensland's total emissions and increased by **20.2%** between 2005 and 2022 (due to population and commercial activity growth).

Queensland experienced **eight severe tropical cyclones between 2020 and 2024** and more than five cyclones of other intensities. Observations generally suggest a rise in extreme severe weather events due to climate change.



Ideas from young Queenslanders

- End subsidies for coal, oil, and gas industries.
- Rapid investment in renewable energy and sustainable green technologies.
- Stronger legislation to hold large companies accountable for emissions.
- Protection and restoration of natural ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Expansion of public transport and restrictions on high-emission vehicles.
- Funding for environmental and sustainability research, including innovative solutions like fusion energy and plastic alternatives.
- Stronger environmental regulations and enforcement.
- Integration of climate action into all levels of government policy.
- Public education campaigns on climate change and sustainable living.
- Funding for community-led conservation and climate projects.

“It overpowers all the other issues — if it prevails, none of the other issues will need to be addressed.”

“The state of the environment affects every single living creature on this planet, including all humans. We need a liveable planet before we can address other problems.”

“My little sister can't sleep at night because she worries about climate change. I want to do as much as I can to help out, but I recognise that so much is out of my control.”

“It is defining our future and our wellbeing, and the older generations don't care.”

“Because the climate crisis will dictate our future - including safety, housing, and cost of living etc.”

13. Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, *Queensland: State of the Environment Report 2024*, Queensland Government, 2025.

First Nations young people

Strengthening cultural connection

Housing and overcrowding

Safe spaces

Co-design

Education and employment

Mental health support and services

A boriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people shared personal insights that highlighted their rich cultural identities, lived experiences, and the systemic challenges they face. A strong desire to strengthen their connection to culture and heritage emerged as a central theme, with many calling for cultural education in schools, access to cultural mentors, and programs that support reconnection with family bloodlines and communities. They emphasised the importance of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture into the curriculum to foster pride and understanding, not only for themselves but for all young people. This cultural grounding was seen as essential for building a strong sense of identity and belonging.

Housing and overcrowding were also significant concerns, with many young people raising issues such as long waiting lists, unaffordable housing, and overcrowded living conditions. These challenges were often linked to broader social factors, including domestic and family violence, youth justice issues, and family instability. Respondents called for co-designed solutions that reflect the specific needs and aspirations of their communities. They also highlighted the importance of safe spaces where young people can gather, participate in activities, access services (including mental health support), and feel empowered, particularly in addressing challenges such as crime and substance use.

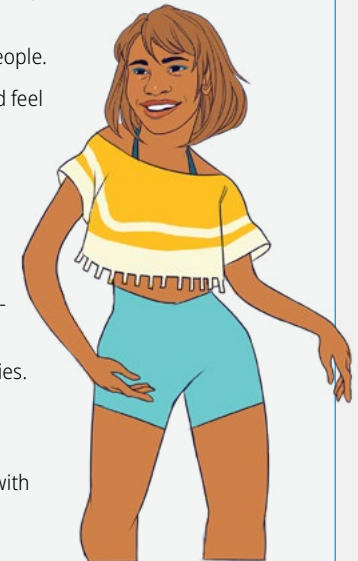
Education and employment opportunities were identified as critical pathways to achieving a brighter future. Young people called for improved access to education in remote areas, more school-based apprenticeships, and free university courses for First Nations students to encourage pathways into teaching and other professions. Employment was another key concern, with respondents advocating for more entry-level jobs, higher-paying roles, and economic opportunities within their communities.

Many young people also expressed frustration at being excluded from decision-making processes. They called for genuine engagement and co-designed solutions that reflect their lived experiences, aspirations, and needs.



Ideas from young First Nations Queenslanders

- ▶ Cultural education in schools and programs to reconnect with family bloodlines and heritage.
- ▶ Cultural mentors and role models to guide and inspire young people.
- ▶ Safe spaces for young people to gather, engage in activities, and feel supported.
- ▶ Affordable housing options to address overcrowding and long waiting lists.
- ▶ Free university courses for First Nations students to encourage pathways into teaching and other professions.
- ▶ Improved access to education in remote areas and more school-based apprenticeships.
- ▶ More entry-level jobs and economic opportunities in communities.
- ▶ Culturally appropriate mental health services that address intergenerational trauma and systemic issues.
- ▶ Genuine engagement and co-design of programs and policies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



“Not enough First Nations teachers and teacher aides in schools. Make university courses free for young First Nations people to become teachers.”

“Because of disconnection, I have lost part of myself culturally. It’s hard to feel like a whole person when part of you is missing. Help people connect to their family bloodlines and communities.”

“Everything for me was a by-product of generational drugs and alcohol abuse from generations, and it passed to me. Having my kids has helped me turn my life around. We cannot be what we can’t see—use lived experience role models in schools to help our young ones learn from our mistakes instead of making them themselves.”

LGBTQIA+ young people

Discrimination

Safety

Mental health

Inclusive services

Cost of living

Community connection

Young people who identified as LGBTQIA+ shared personal experiences that highlighted the unique challenges they face. Discrimination experienced in workplaces, schools, and public spaces was a recurring theme, often leading to these young people outlining they feel unsafe and unsupported. Many called for stronger anti-discrimination laws, inclusive policies, and the creation of safe spaces where they can feel accepted and valued. Beyond legal protections, they emphasised the importance of culturally and gender-inclusive services, such as mental health providers trained to support LGBTQIA+ individuals and spaces that welcome all gender identities.

Mental health was another significant concern, with many LGBTQIA+ respondents reporting struggles that are often exacerbated by stigma and limited access to appropriate care. They highlighted the urgent need for free or subsidised mental health services, shorter wait times for psychologists, and support systems that are sensitive to their identities.

Community and connection emerged as vital priorities, with respondents calling for more youth hubs, events, and programs that foster belonging and reduce isolation. They also stressed the importance of education and awareness campaigns to combat stigma and promote understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues, particularly in schools that represent a broader community.

Financial stress and the rising cost of living were also key issues, particularly for those who lack family support due to their identity. LGBTQIA+ young people linked these financial pressures to difficulties in achieving independence and securing safe, affordable housing. While their concerns often aligned with broader youth issues, LGBTQIA+ young people placed a stronger emphasis on the need for safe, culturally appropriate and gender-inclusive services and spaces.



Ideas from young LGBTQIA+ Queenslanders

- ▶ Stronger anti-discrimination laws and policies to protect LGBTQIA+ individuals in workplaces, schools, and public spaces.
- ▶ Free or subsidised mental health care, with services that are inclusive and sensitive to LGBTQIA+ identities.
- ▶ Safe spaces and community hubs where LGBTQIA+ young people can connect, feel supported, and belong.
- ▶ Shorter wait times for psychologists and mental health services.
- ▶ Education campaigns to reduce stigma and raise awareness about LGBTQIA+ issues in schools and the broader community.
- ▶ Affordable housing and financial support, particularly for those without family support.
- ▶ Gender-inclusive services, such as mental health providers trained to support diverse identities.
- ▶ Programs and events that foster connection and celebrate LGBTQIA+ identities.
- ▶ Targeted support for the transition to adulthood, including financial aid options and life skills education.
- ▶ Recognition and visibility of LGBTQIA+ voices in government policies and initiatives.

“Working in retail, and in my electorate, the amount of discrimination myself and others have faced is horrendous. Raising awareness and educating people on different backgrounds.”

“I have experienced too much discrimination for being LGBTQ+, neurodivergent, etc. [we need] more safe spaces and better laws.”

“I struggle with a lot of mental health issues and have found care expensive and inaccessible. Subsidise mental health care and open more government clinics”.

“It [discrimination] affects such a large group of people, especially minorities. Most of the time, it’s avoidable, and can better help people if they can feel welcomed and brave enough to speak up.”

Young people living in regional, rural and remote areas

Access to education and employment

Community infrastructure

Safe spaces

Housing affordability

Cost of living support

Mental health services

Co-design

Young people from regional, rural, and remote areas shared a unique perspective shaped by the challenges of geographic isolation and realities of limited access to services. A recurring concern was the difficulty of accessing education and employment opportunities. Many respondents highlighted the need to relocate to urban centres to pursue higher education or find suitable jobs, which often comes with significant financial and emotional strain. They called for more remote learning options, scholarships, and financial support to ease the burden of relocation. Employment opportunities were also a key issue, with young people seeking more entry-level jobs and pathways to economic stability within their local communities.

Another prominent theme was the lack of community infrastructure and safe spaces. Many young people expressed feelings of isolation and boredom, noting that their towns often lack spaces where they can connect, engage in activities, and feel supported. They called for government investment in community hubs, youth programs, and events to foster connection and reduce social isolation. Safe spaces were particularly important for preventing and addressing issues such as domestic and family violence, crime, and substance abuse, which were seen as prevalent in some communities.

The cost of living and housing affordability were also significant concerns for regional, rural, and remote young people. Many respondents noted the financial strain of living independently, particularly when combined with the high costs of housing, transport, and basic necessities. They called for more affordable housing options, increased financial support for students and young workers, and targeted initiatives to address the unique challenges of rural living. Respondents wanted to ensure regional areas are not ‘forgotten’.



Ideas from young Queenslanders living in regional, rural and remote areas

- ▶ More remote learning options and scholarships to make higher education accessible without relocation.
- ▶ Entry-level jobs and economic opportunities in regional areas to support young people to stay in their communities.
- ▶ Community hubs and safe spaces where young people can connect, engage in activities, and feel supported.
- ▶ Affordable housing options to ease the financial strain of living independently.
- ▶ Increased financial support for students and young workers, including easier access to Centrelink payments.
- ▶ Youth programs and events to reduce isolation and foster connection.
- ▶ Mental health services with shorter wait times and better accessibility in rural areas.
- ▶ Government consultation and co-designed solutions that reflect the realities of regional and remote life.
- ▶ Investment in local infrastructure to support community development and sustainability.



“Young people are struggling to find accommodation, jobs, and degrees which suit their current wages. It’s becoming more and more unachievable, especially for rural Queenslanders moving to urban areas.”

“I have always gone to regional schools and experienced the consequences of being regional.”

“Create local government-operated events that develop small rural communities to be better self-sustaining and reconnect with local Aboriginal communities.”

“Provide more support options and cheaper mental health services for people in rural areas.”

“Young Queenslanders are BORED, and we deserve to have third spaces that are super accessible, safe, and fun. Fund third spaces to get young people out and about.”

Young people living with disability

Cost of living

Financial support

Service reform

Inclusive education
and workplaces

Accessible infrastructure
and services

Stigma reduction

Young people with disability, deaf or hard of hearing, and neurodiversity shared deeply personal insights into the barriers they face in their daily lives. Highlighting the intersection of disability with systemic challenges like housing, cost of living, and access to services. A recurring theme was the financial strain they experience, with many noting that current forms of financial assistance are insufficient to cover the rising costs of housing, food, and medical care. Respondents called for better cost-of-living measures, including regulating house prices, increased financial support, and more accessible housing options tailored to their needs.

Another significant concern was access to appropriate services and support systems. Many disabled young people reported difficulties accessing mental health care, education, and employment opportunities. They emphasised the need for more inclusive workplaces, better funding for mental health services, and tailored support for neurodivergent individuals and those with learning disabilities. Respondents also highlighted the gaps in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), with some expressing frustration over inefficiencies that prevent them from receiving timely and adequate support.

The lack of accessible infrastructure and inclusive environments was another key issue. Disabled young people called for schools, universities, and workplaces to be more accommodating, with better physical access and tailored programs to meet their needs. They also stressed the importance of addressing discrimination and stigma, both in public spaces and within service systems.



Ideas from young Queenslanders living with disability

- ▶ Better cost-of-living measures, including regulated housing, food, and medical costs.
- ▶ Increased financial support, such as higher Disability Support Pension (DSP) payments and easier access to Centrelink.
- ▶ Accessible housing options tailored to the needs of disabled young people.
- ▶ Improved mental health services, with more funding and shorter wait times.
- ▶ Inclusive education systems, with tailored support for neurodivergent students and those with learning disabilities.
- ▶ More accessible workplaces, with inclusive hiring practices and accommodations for disabled employees.
- ▶ Reform of the NDIS, addressing inefficiencies and ensuring timely, adequate support.
- ▶ Programs to reduce stigma and discrimination, fostering more inclusive public spaces and services.
- ▶ Accessible infrastructure in schools, universities, and workplaces to meet the needs of disabled individuals.
- ▶ Targeted support systems, particularly for those transitioning into adulthood and independence.

“I’ve always struggled with education as I missed my early education and also have really bad dyslexia, making education so much harder. Make schools and universities more accessible for people with learning disabilities.”

“I am on the autism and ADHD spectrums and have a hard time managing emotions. Specifically, behaviours like outbursts and burnout. Education on coping mechanisms and alternatives would help.”

“As someone who is disabled and struggling to find work that is accessible, the cost of living is completely unaffordable for an everyday young Australian, let alone a disabled one.”

“...I don’t want me and my family to be homeless. Affordability on rental in the public sector is not great, and the waiting list for social housing is years long, even for disabled families.”

Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Cost of living

Housing affordability

Financial support

Social and political inclusion

Cultural expression

Mental health services

Employment opportunities

Discrimination

Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, including refugees and recent migrants, shared unique perspectives shaped by their experiences of navigating life in a multicultural society. A recurring theme was the financial strain they face, particularly for international students and recent migrants. Many highlighted the high cost of living, tuition fees, and housing as significant barriers to achieving stability. They called for measures such as lower tuition fees, rental limits on student housing, and financial aid to alleviate these pressures. Some also noted the difficulty of balancing work and study, with limited access to financial support programs like youth allowances through Centrelink.

Another key concern was social inclusion and belonging. Many CALD young people expressed challenges in fitting into Australian society, citing cultural differences or a lack of opportunities to connect with others. They called for more inclusive spaces and programs that celebrate diversity and provide opportunities for cultural expression. Respondents also emphasised the importance of addressing discrimination and fostering a more welcoming environment which promotes greater understanding of diverse cultures.

Mental health was also a significant issue for CALD young people, with many linking their struggles to financial stress, social isolation, and the pressures of adapting to a new culture. They called for accessible and culturally appropriate mental health services, including free therapy and psychological support for young adults. Respondents also highlighted the need for more awareness campaigns to reduce stigma around mental health, particularly within CALD communities.



Ideas from young CALD Queenslanders

- ▶ Rental limits on student housing to make accommodation more affordable.
- ▶ Accessible financial support programs, such as youth allowances that don't require living out of home.
- ▶ Culturally appropriate mental health services, including free therapy and psychological support.
- ▶ Inclusive spaces and programs that celebrate cultural diversity and provide opportunities for connection.
- ▶ Awareness campaigns to reduce stigma around mental health in CALD communities.
- ▶ Employment opportunities tailored to international students and recent migrants.
- ▶ Greater visibility for cultural groups, such as Pacifica and other underrepresented communities.
- ▶ Anti-discrimination initiatives to foster a more welcoming and inclusive society.
- ▶ Representation in decision-making, ensuring CALD voices are heard in government policies and programs.

“Mental health access is highly limited and expensive. Making it more affordable would help.”

“This issue is my top concern because it is very real and important within my community. A lot of my people fall behind in society because they are plagued by the consequences of plummeting mental health.”

“I feel like I could put more effort into my education and training if I didn't have to worry too much about having a job and paying bills. Alleviating some of the stress of bills will help.”

“I am finding it hard to fit in with society because I am not so outgoing and I am introverted. Sometimes I don't know how to interact.”

“Everyone needs to know their identity. Accepting everyone's opinions and not judging, especially international students, would make a difference.”

Young people with experience of homelessness, youth justice or the care system

Trauma and violence

Suitable housing

Cost of living

Mental health

Justice reform

Discrimination

Employment opportunities

Support for young adults

Support services and programs

Young people from these groups shared deeply personal accounts of systemic failures and barriers that have shaped their lives. A recurring theme was the intergenerational cycles of trauma, violence, and substance abuse, which many felt were perpetuated by inadequate support systems. Some described how overcrowded housing, domestic and family violence, and a lack of accessible services left them feeling trapped in harmful environments. Others emphasised the need for role models with lived experience to help young people break these cycles, particularly in schools and community programs. For many, the justice system was seen as punitive rather than rehabilitative, with calls for a greater focus on education, support, and pathways to reintegration for young offenders.

The lack of affordable housing and rising cost of living were central concerns, particularly for those transitioning out of home care or experiencing homelessness. Many young people described the difficulty of finding safe and stable housing, with long waiting periods for social housing and high rental costs leaving them vulnerable. Some shared how housing instability exacerbated other challenges, such as mental health struggles, domestic and family violence, and difficulty accessing education or employment. Young parents highlighted the need for housing options that would allow them to reunite with their children.

Mental health was another critical issue, with many young people describing how systemic barriers left them without the support they needed. Some shared experiences of being unable to access mental health services due to long wait times, high costs, or a lack of culturally appropriate care. Others highlighted the gap in services for young adults, who often age out of youth-focused programs but do not feel safe or supported in adult systems. For those in the justice system or transitioning out of care, the lack of tailored mental health support was seen as a significant barrier to rebuilding their lives. Across all groups, young people called for greater investment in trauma-informed care, anti-discrimination initiatives, and community-based solutions that address the root causes of these challenges.



Ideas from young Queenslanders with experience of homelessness and the youth justice and care systems

- ▶ Affordable housing options, particularly for young parents, young people transitioning out of care or experiencing homelessness.
- ▶ Trauma-informed mental health services, with tailored support including culturally appropriate services.
- ▶ Rehabilitation-focused justice reforms, prioritising education, support, and reintegration for young offenders.
- ▶ Lived experience role models in schools and community programs to inspire and guide young people.
- ▶ Support for domestic and family violence survivors, including faster access to services, housing options, and protections (including justice reform).
- ▶ Anti-discrimination initiatives, addressing racism, stigma, and bias in housing, justice, and workplaces.
- ▶ Entry-level job opportunities and pathways to stable employment for young people in vulnerable situations.
- ▶ Programs to break cycles of trauma, addressing intergenerational substance abuse, violence, and poverty.
- ▶ Community-based solutions, co-designed with young people to address systemic challenges like housing, justice, and care.

“Assist with overcrowding of houses. It started due to having to house those released from prison because they couldn’t be sent back to the community.”

“I very nearly died multiple times from my family. I never feel safe and like I can breathe out.”

Being consulted and contributing to the actions of government

including civic education and information transparency

Meeting young people where they are

Surveys and workshops for engagement

Accessibility and understanding of resources

Co-design plans, decisions and legislation with young people

Advocacy and civic education

Political engagement opportunities

Young people across Queensland have expressed a strong desire to advocate for their lived experiences and play an active role in shaping their future. They are seeking meaningful inclusion in conversations and decisions that impact them, emphasising the importance of genuine, two-way dialogue with the Queensland Government to ensure their voices are acknowledged and their needs addressed.

In addition to being heard, young people have highlighted the importance of practical, hands-on opportunities that help them build their own skills and understanding. They value initiatives that allow them to contribute meaningfully while also fostering personal development. Programs that combine involvement in government decision-making with opportunities to develop leadership, mentoring, and career pathways were particularly appreciated, as young people see these as tools to drive positive change in their communities.

While co-design and consultation was not labelled as a standalone theme in the Speak OUT surveys, 2% of respondents identified politics and/or the actions of government as their top issue, with 6% listing it in their top five issues. Many survey answers incorporated themes of communication, information sharing and consultation with government throughout their written answers, proving its importance to their cohort.

Young people highlighted a particular desire for clear and easily accessible information about programs and resources available to them, and education on the role of government. When asked how the Queensland Government could help with the mental health and wellbeing of young Queenslanders, many young people were completely unaware of or had limited knowledge of the breadth of services and programs provided by government. Combined with the call for transparent and accessible information on the services available to them, young Queenslanders are also calling for increased advocacy and civic education.

Other suggestions entailed increased public recognition and engagement between the Queensland Government and young people, including involvement with the

implementation of legislation, new plans and decisions. Young people want to know that they are heard, and their needs are being taken seriously.

The findings of the online survey indicated a preference for digital and in person communication channels and engagement. There was particular interest in the continuation of workshop and event-based survey outreach, and increased video formatting of information sharing. The outreach and promotion of valuable information rely on methods of communication that young people will actively and voluntarily engage with.



Ideas from young Queenslanders

- ▶ To be met where they are including more effective communication of services and supports available to them in formats they relate to (online and multimedia).
- ▶ Elected representatives to engage directly with them through public visits, talks, and community events.
- ▶ Co-design processes that involve them in shaping policy, programs and services.
- ▶ Accessible and transparent information about government resources and services.
- ▶ Civic education to build their understanding of government and advocacy.
- ▶ Tangible government action to demonstrate that their voices are heard and their needs are being addressed.

“There needs to be more engagement with youth. Not just through the Office for Youth... but also providing more opportunities [for] elected representatives to engage with youth.”

“The issue I named is most difficult because the systems and programs we have in place aren’t widely known.”

“Meet us in community where we are!”

“...[publicly] showing that you are listening to young people is a good idea, rather than it being a slightly hidden niche thing... I think we need... tangible action to be shown.”

“Organise more public activities, encourage young people [to] talk about themselves.”

For all young people

Young Queenslanders' diverse identities and experiences make our state stronger, fairer, and more inclusive. Whether they live in regional, rural and remote areas, live with disability, are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, are from First Nations communities, identify as LGBTQIA+, or have experienced homelessness, out-of-home care or the youth justice system—every voice matters, and every story deserves to be heard.

Understanding the needs of young Queenslanders starts with listening—deeply and respectfully. It means recognising that many young people live at the intersections of multiple identities, and that their experiences are shaped not just by who they are, but by how they are seen, supported, or excluded by the systems around them. Their stories are complex and multifaceted, and so too must be our responses.

Through the *Young Queenslanders Strategy*, we've committed to meaningful, ongoing engagement—meeting young people where they are and making space for real conversations. Just as importantly, we're closing the loop by showing how their input shapes decisions and drives change. This is about respect, trust, and making systems that truly serve.

Informed by 2024-25 consultation and engagement data, this work continues to focus on the needs of young people who often face additional or systemic barriers. This includes First Nations young people, LGBTQIA+ young people, those living in regional, rural and remote areas, young people living with disability, CALD young people and those with experiences of homelessness, out-of-home care or the youth justice system.

Across Queensland, we have heard that young people are asking for meaningful change through connection to culture and opportunities for self-determined leadership; environments that are safe, inclusive, and affirming; systems that respect and reflect cultural diversity; and spaces that offer not just access, but belonging and agency.

By listening—and acting—we're working towards a Queensland where every young person is seen, valued, and empowered to lead the future.



Recognising the voices of young Queenslanders

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the young people who generously shared their time, insights and experiences through the online survey and in-person events. Your contributions are insightful, important and play a vital role in shaping the future of Queensland.

To those who contributed, by sharing your perspectives, you have helped bring important topics that reflect the needs and aspirations for young Queenslanders to the forefront of government discussion and policy development. This information not only informs our work but also enables us to share these insights with other departments and beyond, ensuring that the voices of young Queenslanders are represented across a broad range of initiatives. Your input is invaluable and serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of collaboration and engagement in building a brighter future for all.

This is not the end of the discussion. Your continued engagement is essential to ensuring these conversations remain active and impactful. Together, we can create meaningful change.

If you are a young person in Queensland, please share your voice by scanning the QR code below to access our online Speak OUT survey. If you're not a young person but know someone who is, please encourage them to take part and have their voice heard across government.

Take our
Speak OUT survey





qld.gov.au/youth

YOUNG QUEENSLANDERS

SENTIMENT REPORT 2024-25

DELIVERING
FOR QUEENSLAND



Queensland
Government