

February 2020



# Speaking Out Survey 2019

The views of WA children and young people on their wellbeing  
- a summary report



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

## **Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People**

The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA acknowledges the unique culture and heritage of our Aboriginal peoples and the contributions Aboriginal peoples have made and continue to make to Western Australian society. For the purposes of this publication, the term 'Aboriginal' is intended to encompass Western Australia's diverse cultures and identities of the First Peoples of Western Australia and also recognise those of Torres Strait Islander descent who call Western Australia home.

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The images of Western Australian children and young people used in this report are generic and do not infer a particular school or student's involvement in the Speaking Out Survey.

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# Message from the Commissioner

I am honoured to present the findings from the most comprehensive survey of children and young people's views to be undertaken in Western Australia.

The inaugural Speaking Out Survey has provided thousands of children and young people from all regions of WA an opportunity to share their views on their health, safety, family and school life, and how they see their place in our society.

While I am encouraged that the majority of WA's children and young people have reported that they feel healthy, have their material needs met and are engaged at school, many children have raised concerns for their safety and mental health that must be heard.

What the 4,912 children and young people have told us through this survey is a reflection of our community as a whole.

Too many WA children have said that they do not always feel safe, whether that be at home, at school or in their community, that they are not getting the help that they need and that they are not as mentally well as they could be.

This is how they see their world, and we need to listen to their views.

The Speaking Out Survey had a working title of SOS and in reading the results, some children and young people have sent an SOS that they need support.

I have a particular concern for how female students have responded, scoring their wellbeing lower than male students and rating their mental health, relationships, safety and independence lower than their male cohorts. We need to look closely at how they perceive themselves within our society to better understand why this is and what the broader community can do to address this.

While the challenges Aboriginal children and young people continue to face are well documented and concerning, I am encouraged that many Aboriginal students

who took part in this survey also reported high self-esteem and a strong sense of belonging in their community.

The Speaking Out Survey directly links to my legislated role to conduct research into matters that relate to the wellbeing of children and young people and to ensure that they have their views heard.

There has been an identified need for stronger data on children and young people's wellbeing in WA. Policies and services that can improve children and young people's wellbeing span many government portfolios and the non-government sector, and we must have a cohesive response that is informed by the views expressed by children and young people themselves.

It is my aim that the Speaking Out Survey be repeated every three years to measure progress in improving the wellbeing of our children and young people. I thank the Departments of Education, Health, Justice and Communities for recognising the value of such a resource and providing funding support for the 2019 survey.

A survey of this size involves the input of many individuals and organisations. I thank the schools who allowed us into their classrooms to undertake the survey and to the staff at the Telethon Kids Institute for their rigorous data analysis.

I would also like to acknowledge my own team, who undertook all the survey field work throughout 2019.

Most importantly, I thank the students who completed the survey, some of whom shared difficult information. Each and every student has contributed to a valuable collective voice that will guide us in delivering better outcomes for all WA children and young people.



**Colin Pettit**

Commissioner for Children and Young People

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# Letter from Telethon Kids Institute

As an organisation committed to improving the health, development and lives of children and young people, the Telethon Kids Institute knows only too well the importance of gathering reliable data. Robust data are not only essential to research and to inform our ongoing research priorities, but more importantly are vital to ensure decision-makers in government and non-government organisations are investing in policies, programs and services which will achieve meaningful change.

Before any organisation can hope to make a difference to a child or young person's life, it must first understand that person's experience and what is most important to them. There is no point in formulating an approach that fails to understand the very people it hopes to reach. This is a commitment Telethon Kids has pursued for almost 30 years, and one which has helped us to develop one of the strongest community involvement programs in the world. The need to consult with and involve communities affected by or interested in research is now woven into the very fabric of the Institute, and is something which guides almost every project we undertake.

This kind of information can be gathered in multiple ways, the most direct of which is to go straight to the source. Ask people to tell us about themselves: who they are, what they need, what would make a difference. And then listen. The Telethon Kids Institute is proud to have played an integral part in the inaugural Speaking Out Survey, a project which, using the latest methodology and rigorous analysis, sought to do both of those things for our children and young people: to ask, and to listen.

The data provided by this proof of concept study – which we, like the Commissioner, hope will be supported by Government and repeated regularly in the future – provide a valuable baseline and have the potential to inform our knowledge and understanding of our state's most precious resource, our children and young people, for many decades to come.

While the overall positive outcomes reported by many children are to be celebrated, findings around the stress and mental health concerns of high school-aged participants, and the lower sense of wellbeing and poor perceptions of personal safety reported by young women, provide a sober insight into some of the fears and vulnerabilities of our youth. These and many other findings will help to guide our future research efforts as an Institute.

More importantly, we hope this survey will be seen by policymakers and others in influential roles as a solid and reliable foundation upon which to make decisions, build programs and policies and, most importantly, offer the support our children and young people have told us they need.

I thank the Commissioner for inviting Telethon Kids to help deliver this important piece of work, and look forward to working with him on future surveys.



**Professor Jonathan Carapetis AM**  
Director

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# Executive summary

The Commissioner for Children and Young People undertook the inaugural Speaking Out Survey in 2019 (SOS19) with the aim of capturing the views of a representative sample of children and young people in Western Australia (WA) to develop a robust data source relating to the wellbeing of children and young people in our state.

SOS19 was conducted in collaboration with Telethon Kids Institute and with the support of and funding contributions from the Departments of Education, Health, Justice and Communities.

A total of 4,912 Year 4 to 12 students from 125 schools in all regions of WA consented to participate. After removing incomplete responses, the final sample included 1,961 Year 4 to 6 and 2,440 Year 7 to 12 students.

Higher student sampling rates were applied for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students to generate accurate data on the wellbeing of both student cohorts. This sampling approach resulted in the participation of 957 Aboriginal students across Years 4 to 12.

Student responses were weighted so that survey results are representative of the population of students enrolled in Years 4 to 12 in government, independent and independent Catholic schools throughout WA.

A unique strength of this survey is its independent administration by the Commissioner and his staff which increased student anonymity.

SOS19 was established as a proof of concept study and following its successful completion, the Commissioner will now advocate for ongoing funding on a triennial basis for this survey that will provide much needed trend data and information on the wellbeing of children and young people to monitor wellbeing over time.

This report summarises preliminary SOS19 results for most survey questions disaggregated by year group and gender.

Additionally, this report includes separate chapters with information and key findings for students in regional and remote areas as well as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Further in-depth analysis and exploration of SOS19 results will be carried out in 2020.

## Key findings

### **Children and young people in WA report generally positive outcomes**

Most students report they are physically and mentally healthy, their basic material needs are met and they like school. Many children and young people also say their relationships with family, friends and teachers are positive, that they feel loved and supported by the people around them and feel connected to their community.

In many cases, students' self-reported views on their wellbeing are broadly consistent for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, male and female students and for students living in regional and remote areas.

### **Mental health is a critical issue for many children and young people**

Across all essential outcomes for children and young people, there is a considerable percentage of children who do not view their lives so positively, with both older students and female students more broadly reporting low wellbeing scores. Mental health is a critical issue with a substantial number of Year 7 to 12 students reporting poor life satisfaction, low self-esteem, high levels of stress and the feeling they can't cope with life's challenges.

### **Female students rate their wellbeing less favourably than male students**

This is a significant result from the survey. Female students, and particularly those in Years 7 to 12, rate their wellbeing less favourably than male students, particularly in areas relating to mental health, self-perception, conflict, relationships, personal safety and independence.

### **Perceptions of safety**

Many children and young people said they do not always feel safe at home, at school or in their community. The survey findings offer important insights into students' views of their personal safety, yet more research will be required to better understand the drivers behind these perceptions and how they relate to children's 'real-life' experiences of violence.

### **Physical activity and nutrition is a concern for many older students**

Many older students said they worry about their weight, skip regular meals and do not participate in any sport activities outside of school. Daily engagement in screen-based activities is the norm, particularly for older students, and this stands in contrast to the amount of time students spend 'hanging out' with family and friends or doing physical or other leisure activities.

### **Feeling connected**

Some students indicated that they do not feel like they belong in their community, there were no fun things for them to do and that they have little autonomy over their lives. Often this has to do with access, independent mobility and the need to be driven places by an adult.

### **Engagement in school and learning**

A significant difference was measured between younger and older students' views on school and learning. While the majority of students in Years 4 to 6 reported liking school and learning, many students in Years 7 to 12 said they do not like learning, do not feel like they belong at school and feel it is less important to attend regularly.

### **Younger students have a more positive outlook**

Across most wellbeing indicators, Year 7 to 12 students reported fewer positive outcomes than Year 4 to 6 students. In some circumstances, students in Years 10 to 12 responded more positively than those in Years 7 to 9. Some of the survey responses could reflect higher levels of maturity or their opportunities for greater independence.

### **Many Aboriginal students report high self-esteem and sense of belonging**

Aboriginal students fared less well than non-Aboriginal students in terms of their material needs, family stability or expectations for further education, but otherwise they were broadly on par with their non-Aboriginal peers on most wellbeing indicators and overall, very positive about their lives. The survey found that Aboriginal students have a greater likelihood than non-Aboriginal students of having high self-esteem and a strong sense of belonging in their community.

### **Regional students' connection to community**

According to the SOS19 results, many students in regional and remote areas feel there is less to do where they live but they are often better connected in their communities and have stronger relationships than students in the metropolitan area.

Overall, SOS19 provides a unique and invaluable insight into the lives of WA children and young people. The survey responses provide robust data to inform the Commissioner's Wellbeing Monitoring Framework and his work more broadly. It is hoped that the value of this information will be recognised across all government and non-government sectors working to support children and young people, and that it will be used to inform policy and service delivery to improve the wellbeing of children and young people who need it most.

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# Introduction

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# 1 Introduction

The Commissioner for Children and Young People developed the Wellbeing Monitoring Framework (the Monitoring Framework) to monitor and report on the wellbeing of Western Australian children and young people. The Monitoring Framework is informed by the long-term vision of the Commissioner:

*All children and young people are heard, are healthy and safe, reach their potential and are welcomed as valued members of the community and in doing so we build a brighter future for the whole community.*

In line with this vision, the Monitoring Framework establishes key wellbeing indicators for children and young people that influence and guide the work of the Commissioner's office, other key agencies and broader policy, service and program development for children and young people. The Monitoring Framework is informed by existing data sources where possible and uses measures that have a short causal chain to provide timely information. It is focused around the outcomes of three interlinking domains: Healthy and connected, Safe and supported and Learning and participating.

While some elements of the Monitoring Framework can be informed by existing data sources, many have insufficient data available to adequately monitor progress. The 2019 Speaking Out Survey (SOS19) was developed to address these data needs and to develop a robust evidence base relating to the wellbeing of children and young people across WA.

Listening to the voices of children and young people through their self-reported views is critical to our understanding and monitoring of their wellbeing.

Established as a 'proof of concept', SOS19 is a whole-of-government initiative undertaken by the Commissioner with funding contributions from the Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and the Department of Communities.

The Commissioner contracted Telethon Kids Institute to develop the survey methodology and to provide the analysis of the data. The survey was designed to capture, for the first time in WA, the self-reported wellbeing of children and young people in Years 4 to 12 involving a sample of students large enough to generate reliable estimates of wellbeing of the full student population in WA.

Following the successful completion of the 'proof of concept' study, the Commissioner will now advocate for ongoing funding on a triennial basis for this comprehensive survey that will provide much needed trend data and information on the wellbeing of children and young people and allow for the tracking of progress and change over time.

The modules and questions of SOS19 are guided by the Monitoring Framework, focusing on obtaining data on outcomes, indicators and risk and protective factors for children and young people that are not available in other data sources. SOS19 was also informed by what children and young people have told the Commissioner in consultations across WA about what is important to their wellbeing. Feedback from students about the questions in the survey was gathered and a summary of their responses are included in this report.

Two main outputs have been generated from the students' responses in SOS19: wellbeing data across three interlinking domains that are representative of the study population of WA children and young people, and separate data on wellbeing for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Further analysis of the data will be conducted by the Commissioner to inform both the future work of his office and broader policy and service development relating to the wellbeing of children and young people in WA. The technical SOS19 results will be made available to the four co-funding agencies following further analysis.



# Governance

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## 2 Governance

The Speaking Out Survey is a research project undertaken by the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA. The research was approved by the WA Government as a 'proof of concept' study for a statewide children and young people wellbeing survey. The Speaking Out Survey was conducted with the support of and funding contributions by the Departments of Education, Health, Justice and Communities and in collaboration with Telethon Kids Institute.

### 2.1 Project Steering Group

A Project Steering Group was established to inform the development and implementation of the survey. The Steering Group comprised the following members:

**Mr Colin Pettit**

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA (Chair)

**Dr Laura Kirkland**

Principal Epidemiologist, Department of Health

**Ms Billie Webb**

Principal Policy Officer, Department of Health

**Ms Paulina Motlop**

Director, Aboriginal Education Teaching and Learning, Department of Education

**Mr Alan Dodson**

Director, System and School Performance, Department of Education

**Mr Paul Russell**

Senior Consultant Wellbeing and Engagement, Association of Independent Schools Western Australia

**Mr Michael Bosley-Smith**

Manager, Reporting Analysis and Evaluation, Department of Communities

**Ms Lesleigh Hayes**

Aboriginal Housing Tenancy Coordinator, Department of Communities

**Ms Clare Harvey**

Senior Policy Officer, Department of Justice

**Mr Matthew Abrahamson**

Senior Project Officer, Department of Justice

**Mr Francis Mitrou**

Program Head, Population Health, Telethon Kids Institute

**Dr Kirsten Hancock**

Life Course Centre Research Fellow, Telethon Kids Institute

**Ms Emma Adams**

Research Officer, Telethon Kids Institute

**Ms Marketa Reeves**

Manager Wellbeing, Data and Research, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA.

The Steering Group met six times and provided advice outside of the meetings.

## 2.2 Expert Panel

An Expert Panel was established to support the research by providing expert advice on ethical and research aspects of the project. The Expert Panel comprised the following members:

**Professor Gervase Chaney**

Dean of Medicine, The University of Notre Dame

**Professor Donna Cross**

Head, Health Promotion and Education Research; CoLab Director, Telethon Kids Institute and Ambassador for Children and Young People

**Professor Barry Down**

School of Education, Murdoch University

**Professor Pat Dudgeon**

School of Indigenous Studies, The University of Western Australia

**Dr Theresa Fleming**

Senior Lecturer; Principal Investigator NZ Youth2000 Survey Series, The University of Auckland

**Dr Carmen Lawrence**

School of Psychological Science, The University of Western Australia

**Professor Bill Loudon**

Emeritus Professor, Graduate School of Education, The University of Western Australia

**Professor Rhonda Marriott**

School of Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing, Murdoch University

**Professor Helen Milroy**

Medical School, The University of Western Australia

**Professor Stephen Zubrick**

Research Focus Area Head, Brain and Behaviour, Telethon Kids Institute and Ambassador for Children and Young People

**Dr Erich von Dietze**

Manager Research Ethics and Integrity, Murdoch University.

## 2.3 Research Working Group

**Mr Francis Mitrou**

Program Head, Population Health, Telethon Kids Institute

**Dr Kirsten Hancock**

Life Course Centre Research Fellow, Telethon Kids Institute

**Ms Emma Adams**

Research Officer, Telethon Kids Institute

**Ms Marketa Reeves**

Manager Wellbeing, Data and Research, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA.



**"I believe that this survey gives people the opportunity to speak out for themselves and possibly make them realise they need help - if it is needed."**

Response from survey participant



# Methodology

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## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Sampling strategy

#### 3.1.1 Overview

A sampling methodology was designed to select a random and representative sample of students in Years 4 to 12 across WA, with the sample size large enough to generate accurate results for both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students.

To maximise fieldwork efficiency, a two-stage stratified random sampling methodology was employed. In the first stage, schools were randomly selected and invited to participate. Schools were stratified by sector (government, Catholic, independent) and region (major city, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote). In the second stage, a random selection of students within participating schools were selected.

Opt-out consent procedures were adopted for the survey, where parents and caregivers were notified about the survey and could withdraw consent for their child to participate. Written parental consent was not required for students to participate. Opt-out consent was an integral part of the study design to ensure that survey responses were representative of the student population.

Originally, the population of interest included students in Years 4 to 12 in government, Catholic and independent schools. However, in November 2018, Catholic Education Western Australia advised the Commissioner that their schools would not participate in the survey due to its use of opt-out consent procedures.

After the withdrawal of Catholic Education, it was determined that the Catholic schools selected for participation (N=27) would

be replaced through additional sampling, rather than by selecting an entirely new sample. At this stage, a decision was also made to redefine 13 independent schools as 'independent Catholic' schools, to ensure that some Catholic schools (operating independently) could still be invited to participate in the survey. None of the schools classified as independent Catholic had been selected in the initial random draw of schools.

#### 3.1.2 Survey frame and scope

The sampling frame was based on a school list that was created by merging publicly available information from the Department of Education Western Australia (DoE) and the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA). The frame included a full list of schools in WA, along with the number of enrolled students in each year level and the proportion of students who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Education Support Centres and schools that only served students in Kindergarten to Year 3 were out of scope and excluded from the frame.

#### 3.1.3 Student sampling

The second stage of sampling was to randomly select students within schools.

The original survey methodology set out sampling rates of 15 per cent for non-Aboriginal students and 70 per cent for Aboriginal students to achieve minimum samples for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students.

### 3.2 Survey development

The SOS19 questionnaire was adapted from the New Zealand Youth2000 Survey series with input from the Steering Group and the Expert Panel. Where it was identified that additional or more appropriate questions were needed, these were either provided by members of these groups or sourced from alternate existing surveys with similar participant ages. All questions were mapped to the Commissioner's Monitoring Framework.

Separate surveys were created for Years 4 to 6 and for Years 7 to 12. The development process included a pilot test in 2018 and a dress rehearsal in 2019, through which the surveys were substantially shortened. For Years 4 to 6 (Child Survey), there were a total of 123 questions in the final survey; for Years 7 to 12 (Young People Survey), there were 203 questions.

#### 3.2.1 Ethics and research approvals

Independent ethics advice for SOS19 was sought from the Research Ethics Department at Murdoch University.

Research approval for the survey to be conducted on DoE sites was sought and subsequently granted in November 2018 by the DoE's System and School Performance division.

Research approval for non-government school sites was granted by participating non-government schools as per each school's individual consent.

Further, the SOS19 project complied with the research approval processes of the following organisations:

- Kimberley Aboriginal Health Planning Forum (KAHPF)
- Pilbara Aboriginal Health Planning Forum (PAHPF)
- Western Australian Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (WAAHEC).



## 3.3 Data collection and fieldwork

Staff from the Commissioner's office contacted all selected schools by email and/or phone to invite them to participate in the survey. Upon receiving school consent, the random selection of students within those schools proceeded. For government schools, student selection was undertaken by the DoE to maintain confidentiality of student information and student names were passed directly to the school. Non-government schools were provided a Microsoft Excel workbook containing a macro to randomly select the required number of students from their student list.

The survey was implemented online through a customised survey platform. This platform enabled survey branching, audio recordings of questions and answer options and capability to link individual students to their school. Due to survey branching, students only saw the core questions and questions that were relevant to their previous answers.

To conduct the surveys, the Commissioner's staff attended the schools with tablets and Wi-Fi modems. Each student was provided a unique, randomly generated password to access the survey.

These survey administration processes were an important element of the survey methodology and integrity of survey data. The introduction to the survey, survey supervision and responses to any questions from students were all carried out by the Commissioner's staff. At least one member of school staff was also present in the room for duty of care purposes and to assist with behaviour management. All students completed their surveys on individual tablets and mostly in rooms enabling an exam-like setup. There was no pressure from teachers or staff for students to answer questions in particular ways and the students were confident that their responses were private.<sup>1</sup> These processes reduce the likelihood of students responding in socially desirable ways.

### 3.3.1 Consent

The SOS19 employed the use of an opt-out consent procedure. Invited students were provided with information about the survey, including parental and student non-consent forms. If the parent or caregiver did not wish their child to participate in the survey, they could return the form to the school and the student would be removed from the selection list. The same applied to completed student non-consent forms. At the start of each survey session, students were advised that they could opt-out of the survey at any time if they wanted to.

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<sup>1</sup> This is evident from student feedback in the post enumeration section of the survey as well as from verbal feedback given to the Commissioner for Children and Young People's staff administering the survey.

## 3.4 Data analysis

### 3.4.1 Data processing

Data collection was monitored on a weekly basis including monitoring and comparison of the number and proportion of participating students by region, sector, year level, gender and Aboriginal status. The number and proportion of completed surveys was also monitored weekly, along with length of time spent in the survey and any other concerns that arose during fieldwork.

After the conclusion of fieldwork, all data was exported from the web application and imported to an analytical software for data processing and analysis.

### 3.4.2 Estimates and confidence intervals

This summary report provides the distribution of survey questions (eg the proportion of students saying they 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree' to a given question). These proportions are what is statistically referred to as 'estimates', however, for the purpose of this report they are called 'results'.

In all surveys, when drawing a sample from a population of students, there is a degree of uncertainty associated with the results, meaning they would be somewhat different if a different sample of students had been selected. Therefore, there is also a margin of error around the results that needs to be considered. These are referred to as confidence intervals. The confidence intervals for the survey results have not been included in this report, however, they will be published at a later stage as part of further reporting.

In complex random sampling like SOS19, additional errors can be introduced because there are two stages to random sampling. Two-stage sampling adds a small degree of additional uncertainty about how representative the results are of the student population, because there is additional uncertainty about how representative the participating schools are of other schools.

The confidence intervals produced from SOS19 have been adjusted to account for the clustering of students within schools.

### 3.4.3 Survey weights

Purposeful oversampling of Aboriginal students resulted in a higher proportion of Aboriginal students in the sample than exists in the broader student population. Reporting on all students together would therefore be biased towards the responses of Aboriginal students and would not provide an accurate representation of the full student population. Therefore, a survey weighting strategy was developed. This process uses probability methods to assign more weight to students who are under-represented and less weight to students who are over-represented, allowing the samples to be combined for reporting.

### 3.5 Strengths and limitations

The survey employed a sampling methodology which means the results are representative of the target population, that is, of Year 4 to 12 students enrolled in government, independent, or independent Catholic schools in WA.

However, approximately 20 per cent of the student population in WA attend Catholic schools which did not participate in the survey and therefore the results are not representative of the whole WA student population.

The sample size was sufficient to generate results for most questions. However, where branching existed or there were many

response options, the number of students in some population sub-groups was small. The resulting confidence intervals are wide, and therefore, the reliability of some results is limited. For some questions, results were unable to be reported for some groups due to the small sample size. It is recommended that for future surveys the sample size is increased.

A unique strength of this survey is its independent administration by the Commissioner and his staff which increased student anonymity.





# Participants

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## 4 Participants

### 4.1 Schools

The survey included a random sample of 201 schools across WA, stratified by school sector and region, of which 125 schools consented to participate. This represents a school participation rate of 62 per cent, close to the expected 65 per cent. There were 94 schools that participated in the Child Survey, 51 schools that participated in the Young People Survey, with 20 schools participating in both surveys. Three combined schools participated in only the Child Survey.

The schools participating in the survey had a similar sector (government or independent) distribution to the full sample frame of schools in WA. There was a slightly higher proportion of regional and remote participating schools compared to the full frame.

### 4.2 Students

After removing incomplete responses, the final sample included 1,961 Year 4 to 6 students and 2,440 Year 7 to 12 students (total of 4,401 students). The representation of genders was similar in both surveys, with 51 per cent of students identifying as male, 47 per cent as female and two per cent as other. In the Child Survey, half the students attended regional or remote schools, while for the Young People Survey, one-third of students attended regional or remote schools. Twenty per cent of the Young People Survey participants identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, for Child Survey participants this was 29 per cent. These are the unweighted numbers and proportions of all students who consented to participate in the survey, regardless of completion.

#### 4.2.1 Participation rates

The expected participation was 75 per cent of students who were invited from the initial and replacement samples.

For the Child Survey, the participation rate was as expected, with 74.2 per cent of invited students participating. Participation was similar across locations, school sectors and Aboriginal status.

For the Young People Survey, the overall participation rate was 44.9 per cent of invited students. The lower than expected participation rate by Year 7 to 12 students led to a selection of a top-up sample part way through data collection. Participation rates for Years 7 to 12 were higher among regional students (55.7% of invited) than for metropolitan or remote students (42.3% and 46.7%, respectively). The differences in response rates are accounted for in the survey weighting strategy.

The average time to finish the survey was 31 minutes for Years 4 to 6 and 36 minutes for Years 7 to 12. For each survey, nearly all students finished within 50 minutes (96.0% for Years 4 to 6 and 92.2% for Years 7 to 12).



# Summary of findings

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## 5 Summary of findings

### 5.1 Main findings

Most students report they are physically and mentally healthy, their material needs are covered and they like school. Many children and young people also say their relationships with family, friends and teachers are positive overall and that they feel like they belong in their community.

Across all essential outcomes for children and young people, however, there is a substantial percentage of students who do not view their lives so positively, with older students and female students in particular reporting lower wellbeing scores.

#### Physical and mental health

Survey responses show that almost 12 per cent of students rated their health as 'fair' or 'poor', one-quarter had a long-term health problem and a substantial proportion of Year 10 to 12 students do not get enough sleep. More than two-thirds of female Year 7 to 12 students worry about their weight and are much less likely than male students to eat regular meals. Year 4 to 6 students are more likely to care very much about being physically active and eating healthy food than older students. Among Year 7 to 12 respondents, one-in-two female students reported a high score for life satisfaction compared with two-in-three male students. One-in-ten said they cannot achieve their goals or cope with life's challenges and 44 per cent of female and 20 per cent of male students said they do not feel good about themselves.

#### Healthy behaviours

Nearly three-quarters of students think people their age should not use alcohol and drugs, one-half of Year 7 to 9 students and one-quarter of Year 10 to 12 students feel they don't know enough about sexual health and pregnancy, and among Year 9 to 12 students, one-half of female and one-quarter of male students have been sent unwanted sexual material. One-quarter of Year 7 to 12 students either aren't sure or don't know where to go if they needed help for something about smoking, drinking, or other drugs.

#### Feeling connected and respected in culture and community

The majority of students (62%) spent time with family every day, 59 per cent spent time with friends at least once a week and two-thirds regularly played or practised a sport. One-half of male students play electronic games every day and one-third of Year 10 to 12 students hardly ever or never practise or play a sport. One-quarter of students say they can't always access support for health worries when needed. Among Year 7 to 12 students, 57 per cent agreed they feel like they belong in their community but one-in-three think there is nothing fun to do where they live. One-in-five female students said they often go without eating or sleeping because of their mobile phone.

### **Safe and healthy relationships**

More than one-half of students feel they are very good at making and keeping friends and one-third say they are okay at it. Yet one-in-five Year 10 to 12 students feel they do not have enough friends. Seventy-two per cent of students feel their dad and 82 per cent feel their mum cares about them a lot. Among Year 7 to 12 students, one-in-ten said they do not live with a parent or adult they can talk to about their problems and for female students, one-quarter said they do not live with a parent who will listen to them if they have something to say, and one-in-ten say their family gets along badly.

### **Material needs**

Most (80%) Year 4 to 6 students and 90 per cent of Year 7 to 12 students have their own bedroom. Nearly one-third of Year 4 to 6 students moved house in the last 12 months. One-in-ten students reported that there is only sometimes enough food for them to eat at home and one per cent said never. Among Year 7 to 12 students, one-in-three reported they had not been on a family holiday in the last 12 months and four per cent said their family did not own a car used for family transport. Almost all (96%) of Year 10 to 12 students own a mobile phone.

### **Feeling physically and emotionally safe**

Survey responses show that three per cent of students feel safe at home only a little bit of the time or never. Among Year 7 to 12 students, more than one-half worry that someone in their family will be fighting with one-in-ten worrying a lot about this. For female students, one-in-three reported feeling safe in their local area and on public transport only sometimes or less. One-half of Year 9 to 12 students had been hit or physically harmed by someone on purpose, with female students being more likely to have been harmed at home and male students at school or other public places.

### **Engaged and supported in education**

Survey responses show that twice as many students in Years 4 to 6 than in Years 7 to 12 like school a lot. Among Year 7 to 12 students, male students are more likely to say they like school, while one-half of female students say they do not feel like they belong at school and one-quarter do not like school. Around three-quarters of students feel teachers care, believe and listen to them with the remainder saying this is not true for them. Most students feel safe at school but almost one-in-five feel safe only sometimes or less, especially Year 7 to 9 students. One-half of Year 4 to 12 students say they have been bullied and 17 per cent of female and 10 per cent of male Year 7 to 12 students have been both bullied and cyber bullied.

### **Having an active voice and being listened to**

Four-in-five students agree they are involved in making decisions affecting them, however, female students agree less. Most Year 7 to 12 students are allowed to go some places other than school without adult supervision but many students are not, especially female students.

### 5.2 Year group differences

Across most wellbeing indicators, older students reported less positive outcomes than younger students. When asked to rate their life satisfaction on a scale of 1-to-10, for example, the proportion of students rating their life satisfaction between 7 and 10 was 79 per cent for Years 4 to 6, 69 per cent for Years 7 to 9 and only 55 per cent for Years 10 to 12.

In some circumstances, students in Years 10 to 12 responded more positively than those in Years 7 to 9. Some of the survey responses could reflect higher levels of maturity or their opportunities for greater independence. For example, students in Years 10 to 12 were more positive about their relationships with teachers than those in Years 7 to 9. These differences could reflect the additional time that older students have had to form relationships with their teachers, or that younger students may be struggling with the transition to the early years of secondary school.

### 5.3 Gender differences

Male and female students in Years 4 to 6 had very similar responses to most survey questions. For Year 7 to 12 students, however, there were substantial and consistent differences across multiple wellbeing domains. As per the year group differences, these patterns are consistent with developmental expectations and the findings of surveys in other settings. Some examples include:

- Female students were less likely than male students to rate their health as 'excellent' and more likely to rate it as 'good'.
- Female students were less likely than male students to eat regular meals every day.
- Female students had lower ratings of mental wellbeing than male students. More male than female students reported a life satisfaction score of 7 to 10 (71.2% male vs 53.5% female). Conversely, female students in Years 7 to 12 were more likely to rate their life satisfaction a 5 or 6 (29.2% female vs 17.8% male) or between 0 and 4 (17.3% female vs 11.1% male).
- Female students were more likely than male students to identify the following factors as a source of stress: school or study problems (91.4% female vs 77.7% male), body image (66.3% female vs 24.1% male), mental health and wellbeing (53.4% female vs 29.1% male), family conflict (60.1% female vs 31.1% male), problems with friends (57.9% female vs 26.9% male) and personal safety (15.5% female vs 8.1% male).
- More female students (35.0%) than male students (17.7%) reported that in the past year they needed to see someone for their health but were not able to.
- Female students were less likely than male students to say that their parents listen to them or that they can talk to parents about problems.
- Fewer female than male students reported that they felt safe at home all the time (68.4% male vs 54.2% female), whereas more female than male students said they felt safe at home sometimes (6.9% female vs 3.0% male) or most of the time (34.2% female vs 24.0% male).
- More male than female students reported they had ever been hit or physically harmed on purpose (55.7% male vs 44.7% female). Of those who had been harmed, male students were more likely to have been harmed at school (57.4% male vs 27.7% female), whereas female students were more likely to have been harmed in the home (72.5% female vs 38.2% male).

### 5.4 Children and young people in regional and remote areas

Students in regional and remote areas do less well on a number of health measures such as dental health, prevalence of long-term health conditions and weight, however, they have a greater likelihood of having a strong sense of belonging in their community, they are better connected with their friends and family, know where to go for support and, particularly for students in remote areas, report greater life satisfaction.

The survey also found that similar proportions of students in remote, regional and metropolitan areas reported feeling supported by their family and their friends and not being worried about family trouble. Students in remote areas were more likely than other students to feel safe in their homes and communities but, somewhat contradictorily,

they were more likely to have been physically harmed and to have stayed away from home because of trouble. These results call for more research to further explore these issues.

Overall, there were few differences between the views of students in regional and metropolitan areas about their experiences with school and learning, but students in remote schools spoke less favourably about this critical area of wellbeing. Remote school students were more likely to have poorer relationships with peers and teachers and to be exposed to bullying at greater levels than their regional or metropolitan counterparts. Conversely, students in remote areas reported having greater independence with respect to mobility and travel than students in the metropolitan area.



### 5.5 Aboriginal children and young people

The survey found that Aboriginal students have a greater likelihood than non-Aboriginal students of having a strong sense of belonging in their community, of having high self-esteem and to feel good about themselves. Three-quarters of Aboriginal students reported knowing their family's country but only one-third said they speak their Aboriginal language more than just a little. Aboriginal students, particularly female Aboriginal students, spent more time practising or playing a sport regularly compared to their non-Aboriginal peers.

In terms of material basics, Aboriginal students fared less well than non-Aboriginal students in this respect, but a higher proportion of Aboriginal students reported living with extended family and said they feel that other family members (including their brothers and sisters) care a lot about them. A higher proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students are worried a lot about someone in their family hurting somebody, hurting themselves or getting arrested.

Fewer Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students said that their parents often ask about school work or homework. More Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students said it was very much true that a teacher or another adult at their school really cares about them but, fewer Aboriginal students reported usually getting along with class mates. Smaller proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students thought they were doing far above or above average in their school results and reported wanting to finish university.



# Speaking Out Survey results

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## 6 Speaking Out Survey results

The results presented in this report are structured according to the Commissioner's Monitoring Framework and its three interlinking domains of Healthy and connected, Safe and supported and Learning and participating. The three domains are important because children and young people across WA have told the Commissioner that these things make a big difference to their lives and make them well and happy. It is important to note that the indicators in each of the domains are linked to each other and that the data in one domain cannot be fully considered without also considering the information in the other two domains.

### 6.1 Healthy and connected

Physical and mental health, as well as connection to culture and community are critical to a child or young person's wellbeing. The essential outcomes in this domain are that students in Years 4 to Year 12 are physically and mentally well, that they develop and engage in positive health behaviours, and that they feel connected and respected in their culture and community.

The survey used a range of indicators to measure these outcomes including questions about students' physical health and activity, their mental wellbeing, resilience, stress and use of alcohol and drugs. It also asked respondents to report on their cultural background, their activities outside of school and their access to support.

**12% of students in Years 4-12 rated their health as fair or poor. Highest for Year 10-12 students: 1-in-5 said their health was fair or poor.**

### 6.1.1 Physical health

Physical health is a basic building block for children’s current wellbeing as well as future life outcomes. Being physically healthy includes being physically active, having a good diet and being in the healthy weight range.

Students in Years 4 to 12 are in a critical phase for establishing positive health behaviours to support strong wellbeing outcomes over the course of their lifetime and deter negative health practices.

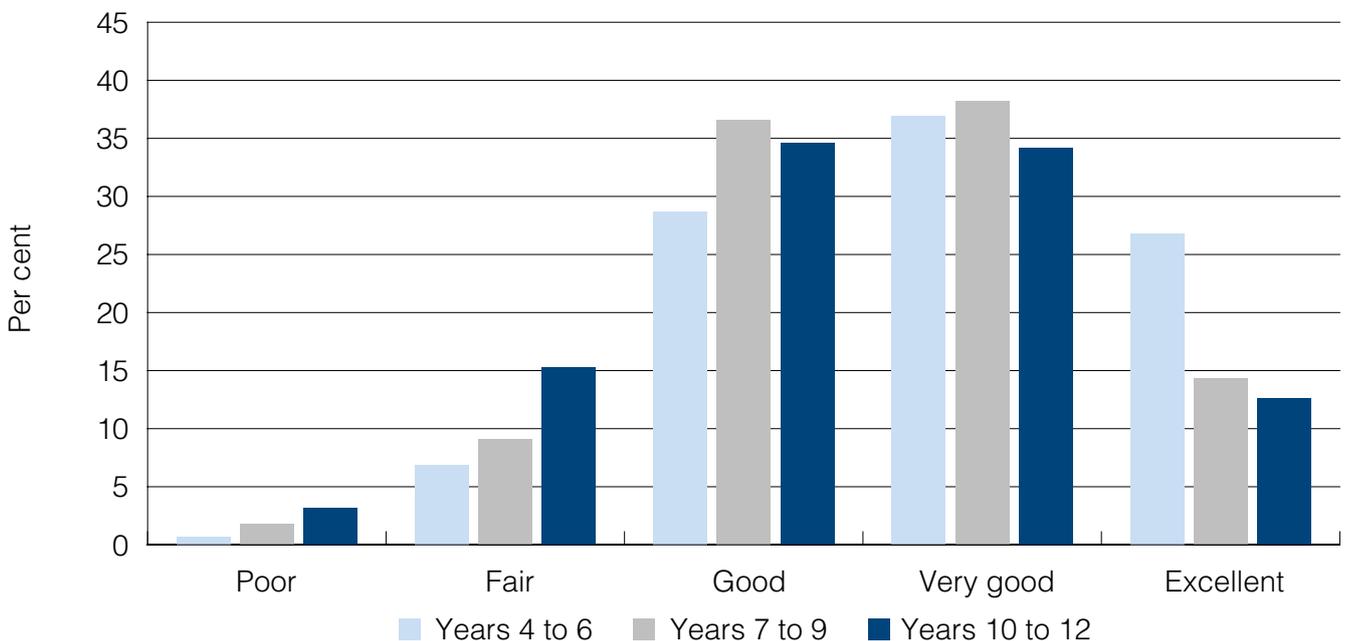
### General health

A little more than one-half of students in Years 4 to 12 rated their health as excellent or very good (18.5% excellent and 36.5% very good) while 11.9 per cent said their health was only fair or even poor (10.1% fair and 1.8% poor).

Students in Years 4 to 6 were more likely than students in Years 7 to 12 to rate their health as excellent or very good (63.7% Years 4–6 vs 49.8% Years 7–12).

Female students in Years 7 to 12 were less likely than male students to report that their general health was excellent or very good (43.1% female vs 57.0% male).

**Graph 6.1.1: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying their health is excellent, very good, good, fair or poor, by year group**



### Dental health

Good oral health is fundamental to overall health and wellbeing. Without it, a person’s general quality of life and the ability to eat, speak and socialise is compromised, resulting in pain, discomfort and embarrassment.<sup>2</sup>

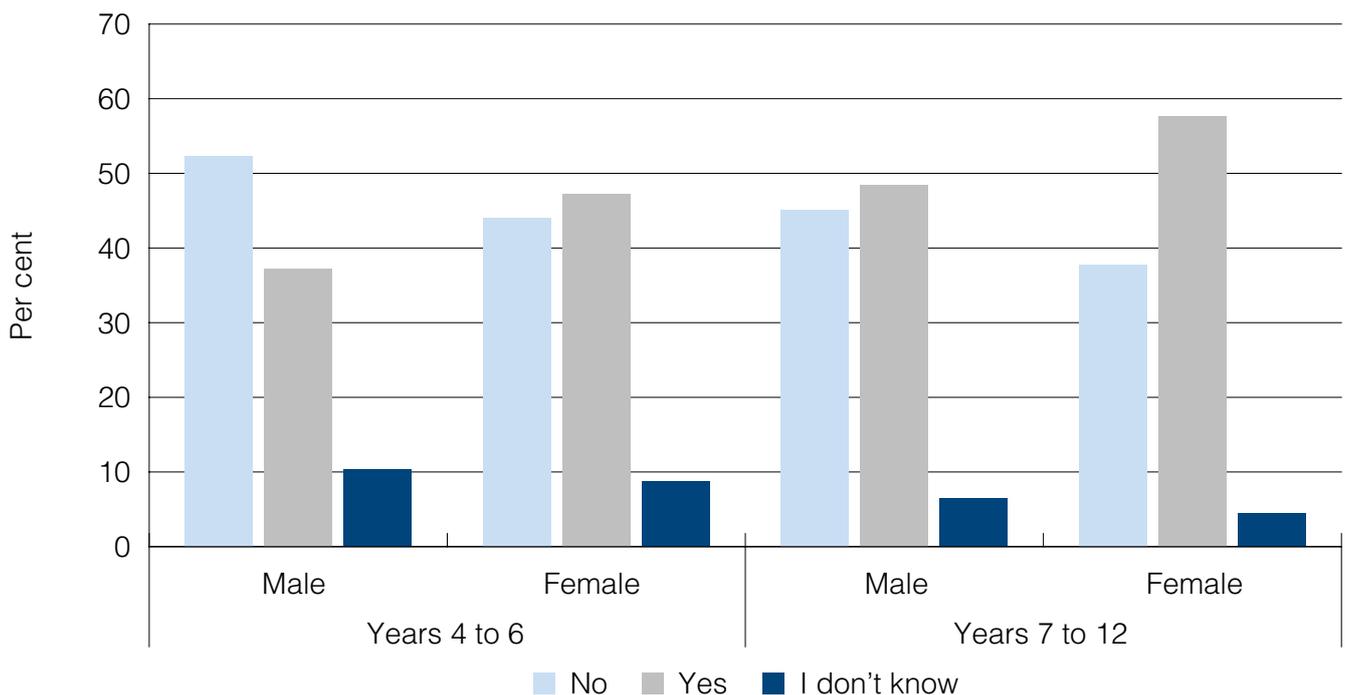
One-half of students (48.8%) in Years 4 to 12 reported having ever had a filling. The proportion was highest for Year 10 to 12 students (60.7% vs 45.8% Years 7–9 and 42.0% Years 4–6) and was also higher for female than male students across all age groups (Years 4–6: 47.2% female vs 37.2% male; Years 7–12: 57.6% female vs 48.4% male). This is despite female students being more likely to report brushing their teeth twice daily (67.7% female vs 59.1% male).

Overall, nearly two-thirds (63.2%) of students in Years 4 to 12 reported brushing their teeth twice the previous day. One-quarter (25.8%) brushed once and 5.7 per cent said they did not brush their teeth.

**48% of students in Years 4-12 reported having ever had a filling.**

**Female students were more likely than male students to brush twice daily but were also more likely to say they have ever had a filling.**

**Graph 6.1.2: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they have or have not ever had a filling, by year group and gender**



<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2019, *Oral health and dental care in Australia*, Cat. no. DEN 231, AIHW.

### Usual meal consumption

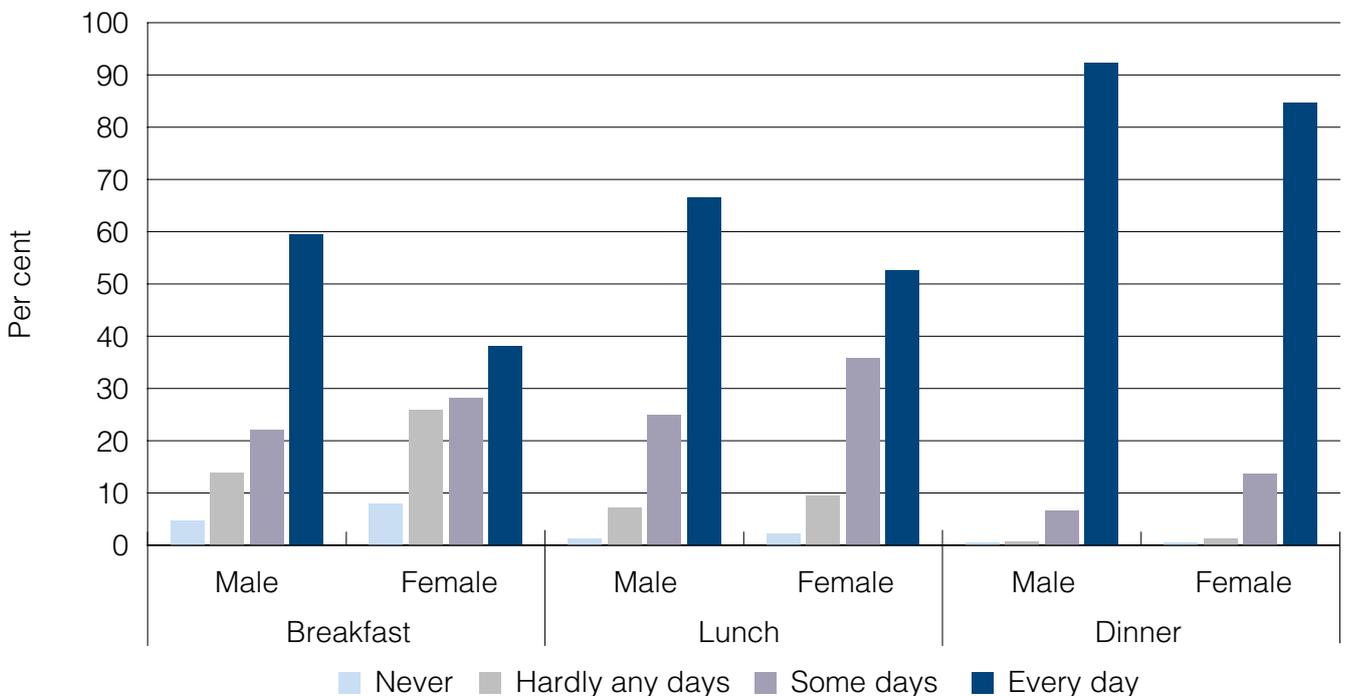
Eating regular meals is important because eating irregularly can have an adverse impact on general health and wellbeing, can increase risk of the development of an eating disorder<sup>3</sup> and has been linked with a higher risk of diseases such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and obesity.<sup>4</sup> Students in the survey were asked how often they usually ate breakfast, lunch and dinner.

For all students in Years 4 to 12, 58.5 per cent reported eating breakfast, 66.6 per cent reported eating lunch and 90.2 per cent reported eating dinner every day. Generally, the proportion of students eating regular meals was higher for students in Years 4 to 6 than Years 7 to 12.

Across all three regular meal categories, female students in Years 7 to 12 were less likely than male students to say that they usually ate these meals every day. Most noticeably, 61.9 per cent of female students said they do not eat breakfast every day and 47.5 per cent do not eat lunch every day.

**Male Year 7-12 students are significantly more likely than female students to eat regular meals every day.**

**Graph 6.1.3: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they eat breakfast, lunch and dinner every day, some days, hardly any days or never, by gender**



3 O'Connor M et al 2017, 'Eating problems in mid-adolescence', *LSAC Annual Statistical Report 2017*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, pp. 113-124.  
 4 Pot G et al 2016, 'Meal irregularity and cardiometabolic consequences: Results from observational and intervention studies', *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, Vol 75 No 4, pp. 475-486.

### Caring about eating well, being active and how they look

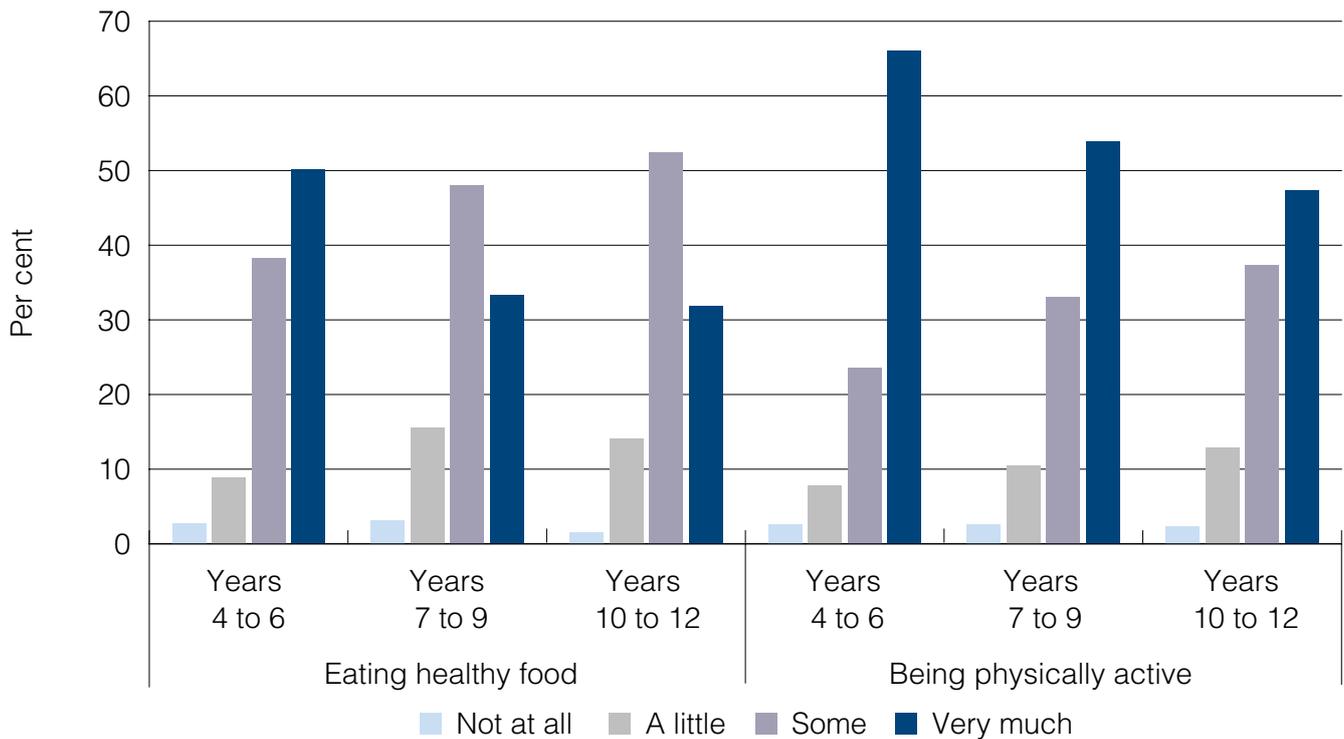
Students were asked how much they cared about eating healthy food, being physically active and how they looked.

For all students in Years 4 to 12, 39.1 per cent reported caring about eating healthy food very much and a further 45.7 per cent reported caring some. In regards to being physically

active, 56.4 per cent reported caring about this very much and a further 30.8 per cent said they cared some.

The proportion of students caring very much about both these factors was significantly higher for students in Years 4 to 6 than Years 7 to 12 (healthy eating: 50.1% Years 4–6 vs 32.6% Years 7–12, being physically active: 66.0% Years 4–6 vs 50.8% Years 7–12).

**Graph 6.1.4: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they care about eating healthy food and being physically active very much, some, a little or not at all, by year group**

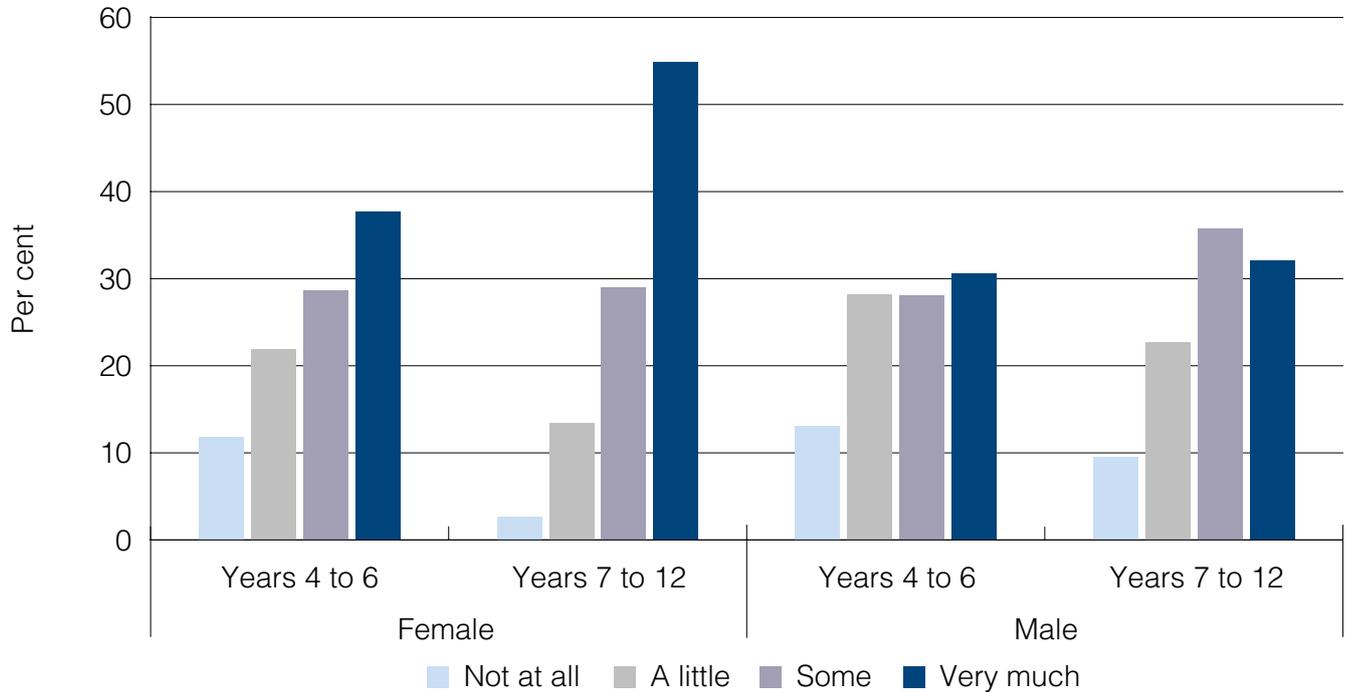


The survey found that 39.5 per cent of all Year 4 to 12 students cared very much about how they look with a further 30.9 per cent caring some.

Female students were more likely than male students to care very much about the way they look (48.6% female vs 31.5% male). The proportion of male students who said they care very much about the way they look was largely the same for both measured age groups (30.6% Years 4–6 vs 32.1% Years 7–12), however, for female students the proportion increased significantly for older students (37.7% Years 4–6 vs 54.9% Years 7–12).

**Year 4–6 students are more likely to care very much about being physically active and eating healthy food than older students.**

**Graph 6.1.5: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they care about the way they look very much, some, a little or not at all, by year group and gender**



## Sleep patterns

Regular and sufficient sleep is especially important for children and young people as it directly impacts mental and physical development. In general, school-aged children and young people need between eight and 11 hours of sleep. Students in the study were asked about what time they usually went to bed on a school night and what time they usually woke up on a school day.

Most students in Years 4 to 6 reported usually going to sleep by 9pm (73.8%) on a school night and waking up by 8am (97.3%) on a school day.

For Year 7 to 12 students, less than one-half of students (44.8%) reported usually going to sleep by 10pm on a school night and 28.5 per cent said they go to sleep later than 11pm.

Students in Years 10 to 12 were most likely to say they go to sleep later than 11pm (11pm to midnight: 26.9% and after midnight: 12.9%). Considering that 94.9 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students reported waking up before 8am this suggests that many Year 10 to 12 students are not getting enough sleep.

**Many Year 10-12 students are not getting enough sleep.**

## Long-term health problems or disability

Long-term health conditions and disability are often inter-related. Long-term health issues and disability can both result in a functional limitation which impacts everyday life for children and young people. People with disability are also more likely to develop long-term health conditions and people with long-term health conditions are more likely to develop disability.<sup>5</sup>

The most common long-term health issues for children are asthma, diabetes and cancer.<sup>6</sup>

Students in Years 7 to 12 were asked if they had any long-term health problems or a long-term disability and whether this caused difficulties with everyday activities, communicating, other activities, or no difficulties. It should be noted that students at Education Support Centres, those with a condition that prevents them from participating in mainstream education programs, or students who were absent on the day of the survey because of a health condition did not participate in the survey. The true proportion of students with disability and/or a long-term health problem is therefore higher than the proportions calculated based on the responses of students in this survey.

More than one-quarter (26.5%) of students in Years 7 to 12 reported having a long-term health problem or condition lasting six months or more and 11.4 per cent reported having a long-term disability. In addition, 13.3 per cent were unsure if they had a long-term health problem and 6.6 per cent were unsure if they had disability.

5 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2015, *Chronic conditions and disability* 2015, Cat. no. CDK 8, AIHW.

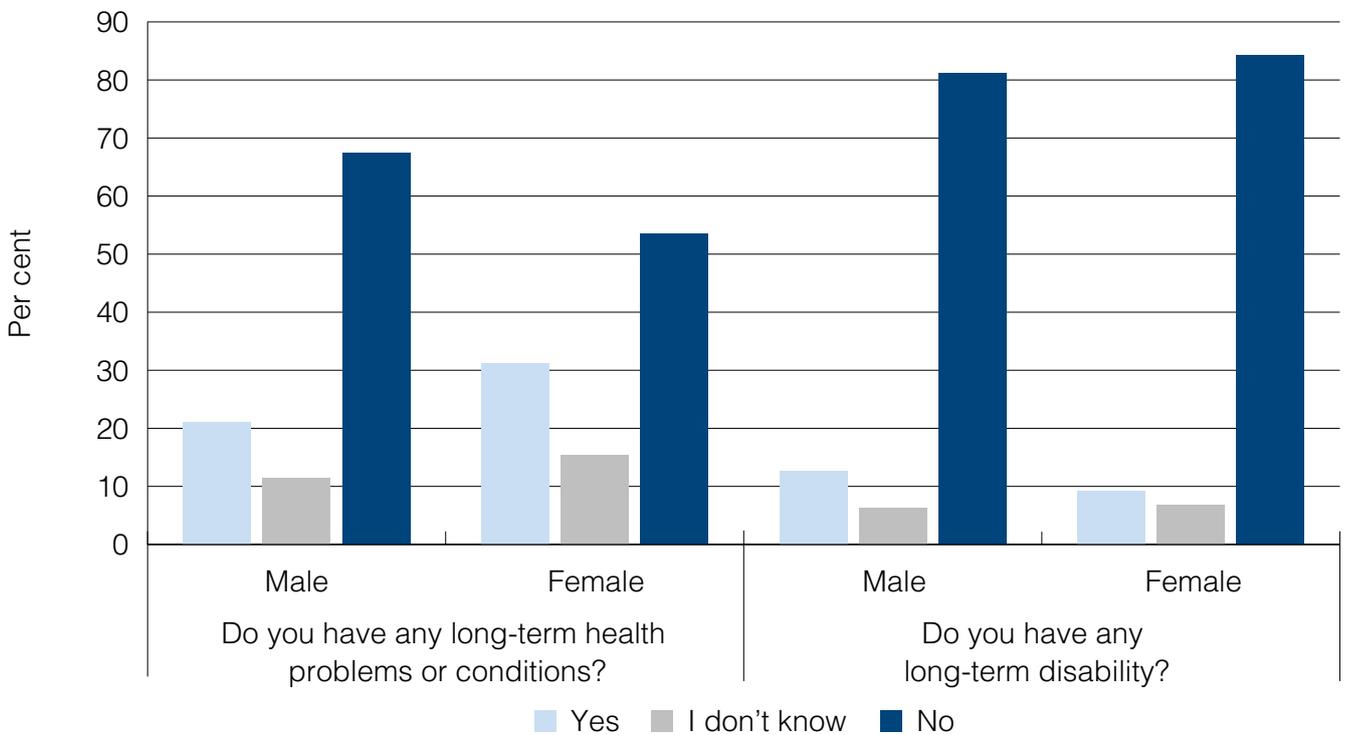
6 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2005, *Selected chronic diseases among Australia's children*, Cat. no. AUS 62, AIHW.

Among students who reported having a long-term health problem or condition, 39.2 per cent reported their health condition caused difficulties with communicating, talking or socialising and 21.5 per cent reported their condition caused difficulties with everyday activities that other young people can usually do.

With respect to students who reported having a long-term disability, 22.8 per cent reported their disability caused difficulties with communicating, talking or socialising and 19.8 per cent reported difficulties with common everyday activities.

**26% of Year 7-12 students in mainstream education say they have a long-term health problem or condition and 11% say they have a long-term disability.**

**Graph 6.1.6: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students responding to the questions ‘Do you have any long-term health problems or conditions?’ and ‘Do you have any long-term disability?’, by gender**



### Fruit and vegetable consumption

Children and young people need a nutritious and balanced diet that allows them to grow and develop in a healthy way and to reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases later in life. Research shows that eating a wide variety of nutritious foods and limiting consumption of fatty and sugary foods is critical to healthy development and growth.<sup>7</sup>

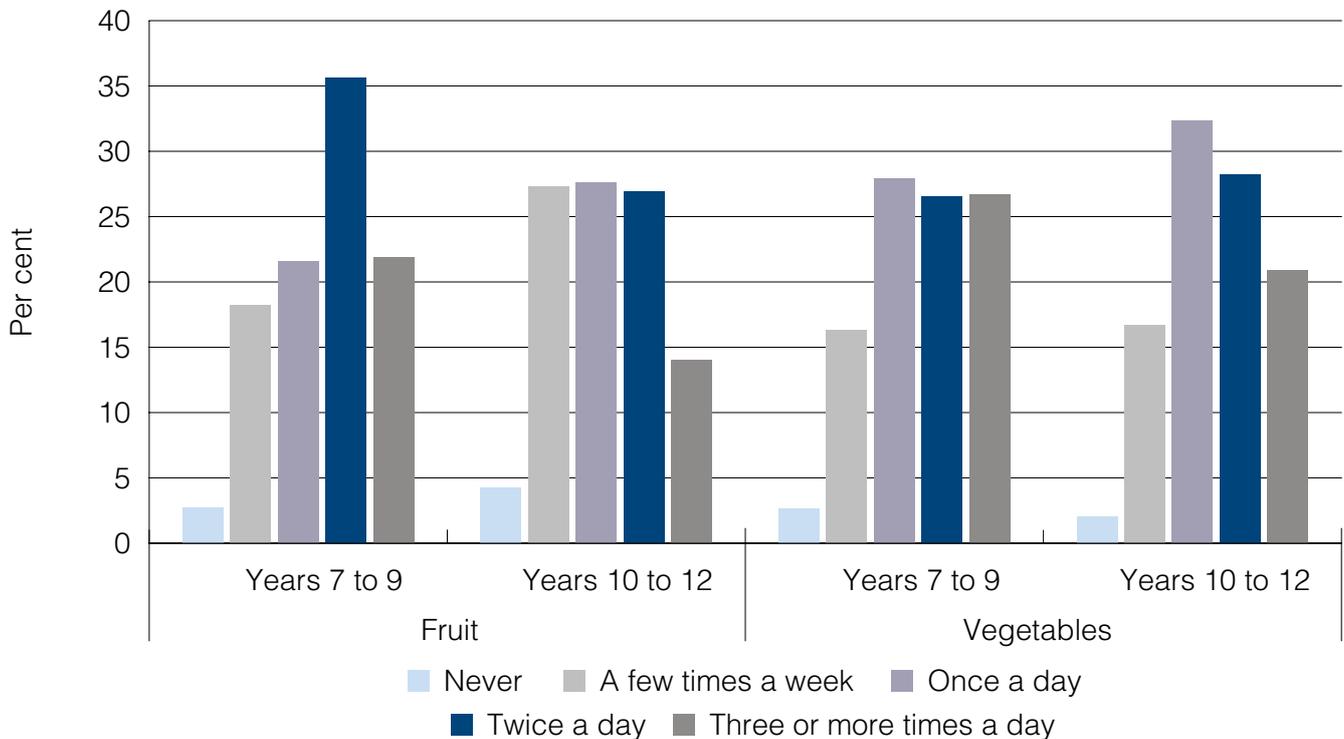
Three-quarters of students (74.1%) in Years 7 to 12 said they ate fruit at least once a day but 22.5 per cent ate it only a few times a week and 3.4 per cent never ate fruit.

Most students (81.1%) ate vegetables at least once a day but 16.5 per cent only ate them a few times a week and 2.3 per cent never ate vegetables.

Reports of fruit and vegetable consumption varied by year group with older students being less likely than younger students to eat fruit or vegetables twice a day or more.

**31% of Year 10-12 students do not eat fruit and 19% do not eat vegetables at least once a day.**

**Graph 6.1.7: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they eat fruit and vegetables three or more times a day, twice a day, once a day, a few times a week or never, by year group**



<sup>7</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council 2013, *Australian Dietary Guidelines: Providing the scientific evidence for healthier Australian diets*, National Health and Medical Research Council.

### Body weight and obesity

Being overweight or obese increases a child’s or young person’s risk of poor physical health in both the short and long term. Children and young people who are overweight or obese are more likely to be overweight or obese in adulthood<sup>8</sup> and face a higher risk of developing coronary heart disease, diabetes, certain cancers, gall bladder disease, osteoarthritis and endocrine disorders.<sup>9</sup>

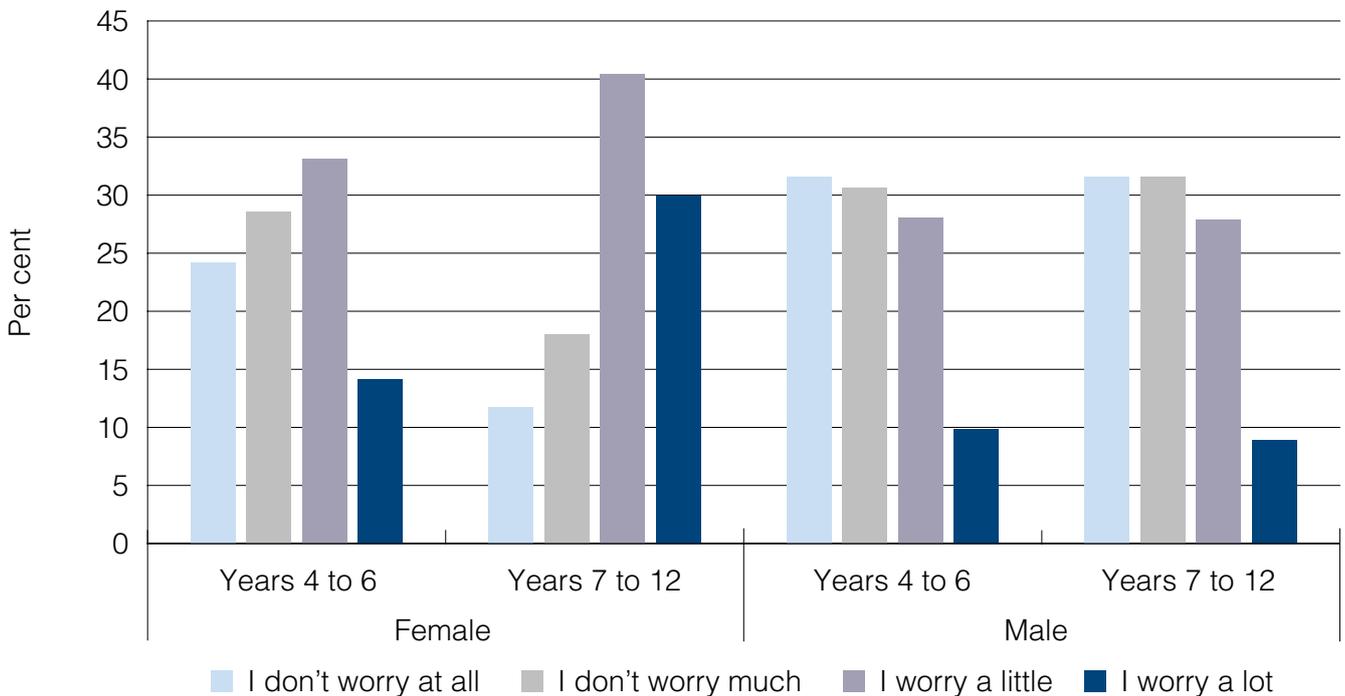
Obesity in young people is also associated with a number of psychosocial problems, including social isolation, discrimination and low self-esteem.<sup>10</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, some children and young people who are underweight are experiencing difficulties related to poor body image and eating disorders.

For all students in Years 4 to 12, one-half reported they either don’t worry at all about their weight (24.3%) or they don’t worry much (26.2%), while 32.8 per cent worry a little and 16.7 per cent reported they worried a lot about their weight.

The proportion of Year 7 to 12 students who worry a lot about their weight was significantly higher for female than male students (29.9% female vs 8.9% male).

**Graph 6.1.8: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they worry a lot, a little, not much or they don’t worry at all about their weight, by year group and gender**



8 Venn AJ et al 2007, 'Overweight and obesity from childhood to adulthood: a follow-up of participants in the 1985 Australian Schools Health and Fitness Survey', *The Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol 186, No 9, pp. 458-460.

9 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2012, *A picture of Australia's children 2012*, Cat. no. PHE 167, AIHW.

10 Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) 2008, *ARACY Report Card, Technical Report: The Wellbeing of Young Australians*, ARACY.

With respect to body weight perception among Year 7 to 12 students, 52.7 per cent thought they were about the right weight, 25.8 per cent thought they were slightly overweight and 15.8 per cent reported thinking they were slightly underweight.

Female students were more likely to think they were slightly overweight (31.7% female vs 20.3% male) while male students were more likely to say they were slightly underweight (20.0% male vs 11.0% female).

**70% of female Year 7-12 students worry about their weight compared to 37% of male students.**

**Table 6.1.1: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students responding to the question ‘Which of these do you think you are?’, by year group and gender**

		Very underweight	Slightly underweight	About the right weight	Slightly overweight	Very overweight
Year group	Years 7 to 9	3.4	16.9	51.9	25.7	2.1
	Years 10 to 12	2.2	14.6	53.5	26.0	3.8
Gender	Male	3.5	20.0	53.9	20.3	2.3
	Female	2.0	11.0	52.2	31.7	3.0

**6.1.2 Mental health**

Good mental health is an essential component of wellbeing and means that children and young people are more likely to have fulfilling relationships, be able to cope with adverse circumstances and adapt to change.

Poor mental health is associated with behavioural issues, a diminished sense of self-worth and a decreased ability to cope. This has adverse effects on a child or young person’s quality of life and emotional wellbeing as well as their capacity to engage in school and other activities.<sup>11</sup>

**Positive outlook - life satisfaction**

Research shows that an optimistic or positive outlook on life can be a protective factor for mental health issues, in particular anxiety and depression.<sup>12</sup> A positive outlook is also important for children and young people as they develop their identity and imagine their future selves. Evidence shows that having the ability to imagine a positive version of a future self is linked to better health and educational outcomes, including reduced drug use, less sexual risk-taking behaviours and less involvement in violence.<sup>13</sup>

11 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2012, *Establishing a Level Foundation for Life: Mental Health Begins in Early Childhood: Working Paper No 6*, Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University.

12 Conversano C et al 2010, ‘Optimism and Its Impact on Mental and Physical Well-Being’, *Clinical Practice & Epidemiology in Mental Health*, Vol 6, pp. 25-29.

13 Johnson SL et al 2014, ‘Future Orientation: A Construct with Implications for Adolescent Health and Wellbeing’, *International Journal of Adolescent Mental Health*, Vol 26, No 4, pp. 459-468.

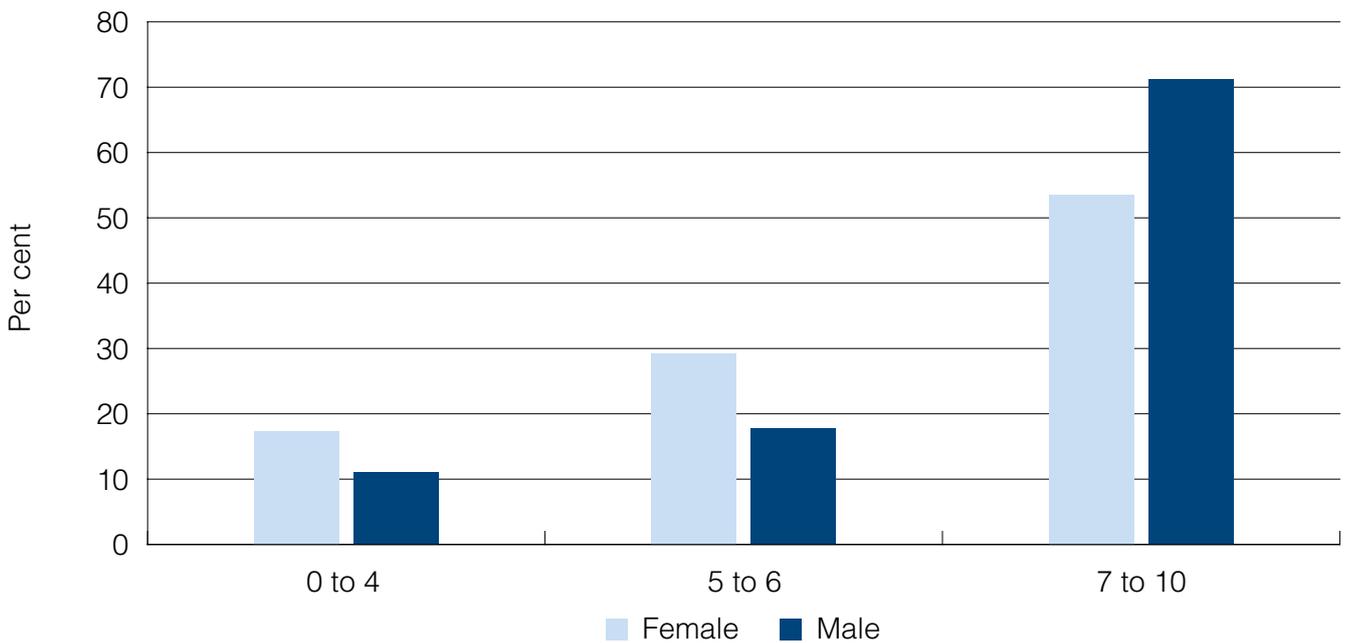
Students were asked to rate on a scale from 0 to 10 where they felt their life was, from the worst to best possible life. For all students in Years 4 to 12, the mean life satisfaction was 7.2. Average ratings were higher for students in Years 4 to 6 than in Years 7 to 9 and 10 to 12 (7.8 Years 4–6 vs 7.1 Years 7–9 and 6.5 Years 10–12).

Female students in Years 7 to 12 recorded the lowest average rating for life satisfaction with a score of only 6.4.

With respect to grouped ratings (0 to 4, worst; 5 or 6; and 7 to 10, best), the proportion of students reporting a life satisfaction score of 7 to 10 was higher for Year 4 to 6 than Year 7 to 12 students (76.9% Years 4–6 vs 59.0% Years 7–12).

Only one-in-two female Year 7 to 12 students reported a score of 7 to 10 compared to two-in-three male students (53.5% female vs 71.2% male). Of great concern is the 17.4 per cent of female Year 7 to 12 students who rated their life satisfaction 0 to 4.

**Graph 6.1.9: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students rating their life satisfaction on a scale of ‘0’ to ‘10’ where ‘0’ is the worst possible life and ‘10’ the best possible life, grouped responses by gender**



**One half of female Year 7-12 students reported a high score for life satisfaction compared with 2-in-3 male students. Almost 1-in-5 female students reported a very low score.**

### Resilience

Resilience is the ability to cope and thrive in the face of negative events, challenges or adversity. Key attributes of resilience in children and young people include social competence, a sense of purpose or hope for the future, effective coping style, a sense of self-efficacy and positive self-regard.<sup>14</sup>

Year 7 to 12 students were asked a range of questions about their resilience. On average, about three-quarters of students agreed with each of the following statements:

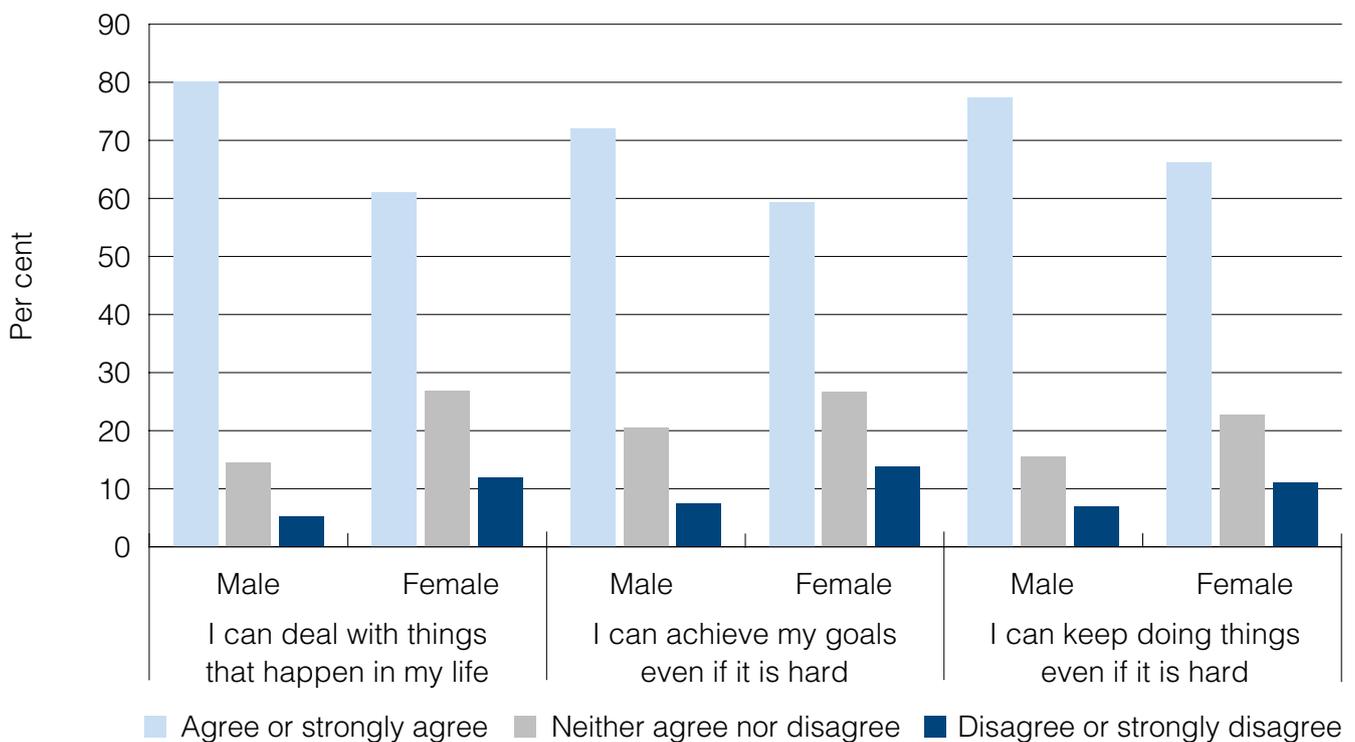
- 48.4% agreed and 22.1% strongly agreed they could deal with things that happened in life.
- 46.3% agreed and 19.1% strongly agreed they could achieve their goals even if it is hard.

- 47.7% agreed and 24.0% strongly agreed they could keep doing things even if it is hard.

A higher proportion of male than female students agreed or strongly agreed with all three statements about their resilience. In general, only about 60 per cent of female students agreed they can achieve their goals and cope with life’s challenges.

**Most students feel resilient but 1-in-10 said they cannot achieve their goals or cope with life’s challenges.**

**Graph 6.1.10: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students agreeing, disagreeing or neither with statements about their resilience, by gender**



<sup>14</sup> Cahill H et al 2014, Building Resilience in children and young people, *A Literature Review for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)*, Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, p. 5.

### Depression

Mental health issues such as depression impact children and young people's ability to form healthy relationships, participate in learning and cope with adversity.

Young people often face mental health challenges, including in areas such as sexual health, alcohol and drug use, body image and risk-taking behaviours, that stem from the physical, behavioural, psychological and cognitive changes they are experiencing.<sup>15, 16</sup>

Students in Years 9 to 12 were asked if during the past 12 months they had ever felt sad, blue or depressed for two weeks or more in a row.

For all students in Years 9 to 12, 60.0 per cent reported they had felt sad, blue or depressed for two or more weeks in a row in the last 12 months. Female students were more likely than male students to report a recent depressive episode (69.9% female vs 49.7% male).

It is important to note that the question used in the survey is not a tool used for diagnosing depression and further information from students is unavailable. The proportions of students reporting a recent depressive episode in SOS19 are higher than in other surveys of Australian adolescents and further research is required to explore the results in more detail.

### Sources of stress

Children and young people learn how to respond to stress as they grow and develop. Many stressful events that an adult can manage will cause stress in a child or young person. As a result, even small changes can impact a child or young person's feelings of safety and security.

Common stressors may include worrying about schoolwork or grades, juggling responsibilities, problems with friends, bullying, going through body changes, family conflict or experiencing material and social disadvantage.

The survey found that school or study problems were the most frequently reported source of stress for students in Years 9 to 12 with 84.5 per cent of students saying they were affected by this.

More female than male students reported being affected by all listed sources of stress with the top three stressors being school or study problems (91.4%), body image (66.3%) and family conflict (60.1%).

<sup>15</sup> Mission Australia 2017, *Youth mental health report: Youth Survey 2012-2016*, Mission Australia.

<sup>16</sup> World Health Organisation (WHO) 2018, *Adolescent Mental Health Fact Sheet*, retrieved from: <<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>>.

**Table 6.1.2: Proportion of Year 9 to Year 12 students selecting multiple response items that were a source of stress for them in the past year, by gender**

	Female	Male	Total
School or study problems	91.4	77.7	84.5
Family conflict	60.1	31.1	46.1
Body image	66.3	24.1	45.0
Problems with friends	57.9	26.9	42.6
Mental health and wellbeing	53.4	29.1	41.7
Relationship problems	36.1	26.4	31.5
Bullying	15.1	10.7	13.6
Personal safety	15.5	8.1	12.2
Alcohol	10.2	5.8	8.2
Other	7.2	8.8	8.3

School and study problems are the single most common source of stress for students in Years 10-12, with **91% of female students** and **77% of male students** affected by this.

**Positive outlook - identity**

Year 4 to 12 students were asked a range of questions about their view of themselves. On average, around 80 per cent of students agreed with each of these statements:

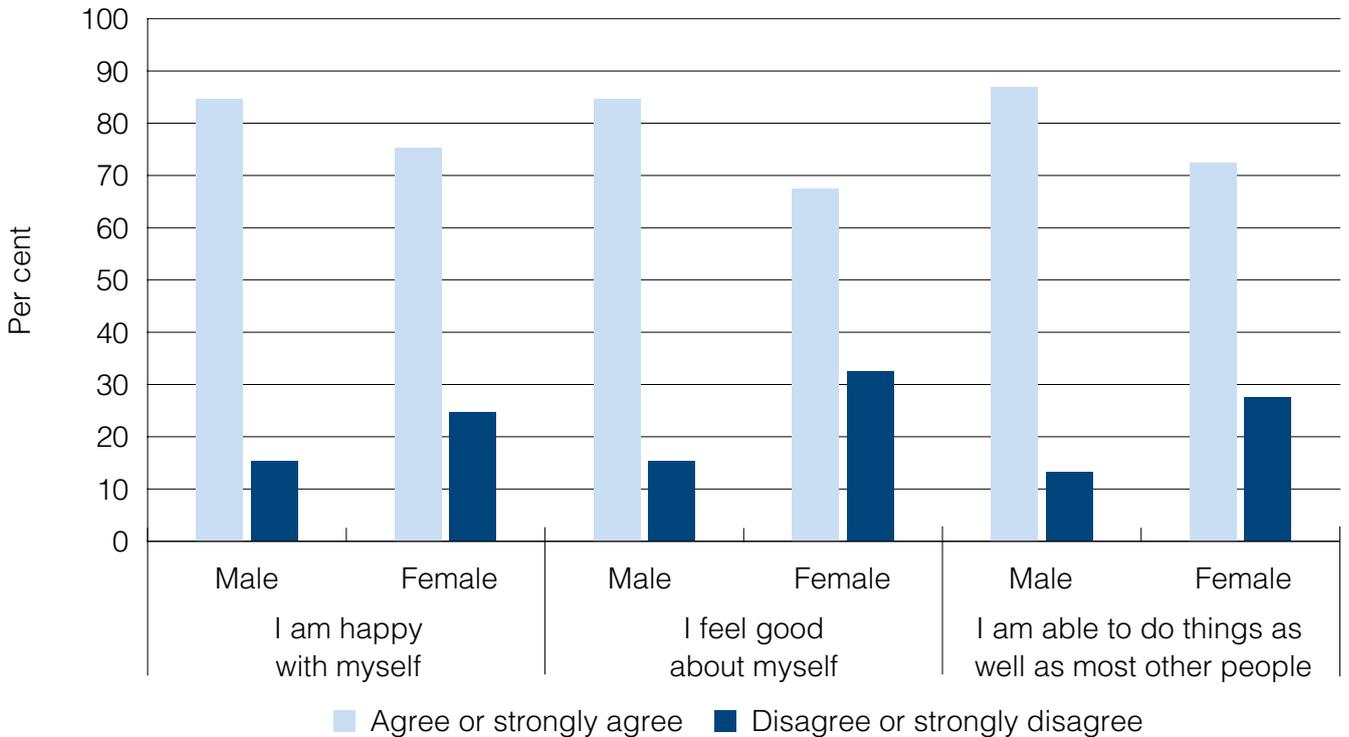
- 48.8 per cent of students agreed and 30.9 per cent strongly agreed they were happy with themselves.
- 51.5 per cent agreed and 28.1 per cent strongly agreed they could do things as well as most other people.
- 43.9 per cent agreed and 32.2 per cent strongly agreed they felt good about themselves.

However, students in Years 10 to 12 and female students overall were more likely to disagree with any of the three statements:

- 44 per cent of female students in Years 7 to 12 disagreed they felt good about themselves and 38.2 per cent disagreed they were happy with themselves.
- 39.6 per cent of all Year 10 to 12 students disagreed they felt good about themselves.

**Younger students and male students overall are more likely to have a positive view of themselves.**

**Graph 6.1.11: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students agreeing or disagreeing with statements about their identity, by gender**



**Just over one-half (56%) of female Year 7-12 students say they feel good about themselves and less than two-thirds (62%) are happy with themselves.**

### 6.1.3 Healthy behaviours

Healthy behaviours, such as eating well or exercising, contribute to young people's wellbeing.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, risky behaviours, such as the use of alcohol and drugs or engaging in unsafe sexual activity, may have a negative effect on young people's health and wellbeing. The impact is not only on the children and young people themselves, but also on their families and communities who may be affected by these behaviours.

Parents, schools and communities all have an important role to play in teaching children and young people about healthy behaviours.

Drug and alcohol education are part of the school curriculum in order to provide students with information and knowledge about these topics, increase communication and reduce consumption and harm.

#### Alcohol, smoking and other drugs

Most students in Years 7 to 12 reported having learnt some or a lot about alcohol (77.1%) and cigarettes/smoking (70.6%) at school, with fewer students saying they learnt some or a lot about marijuana (53.1%) and other drugs (58.2%). In contrast, one-in-five (20.4%) Year 7 to 12 students said they had learnt nothing about marijuana and 14.1 per cent had learnt nothing about other drugs at school.

While most students felt they knew enough about the health impacts of cigarettes/smoking (90.6%) and alcohol (87.9%), some students felt they did not know or were unsure if they knew enough about marijuana (21.9% no and 12.5% unsure) and other drugs (16.8% no and 12.3% unsure). A higher proportion of male than female students reported feeling like they knew enough about the health impacts of marijuana and other drugs.

### Perceptions of substance use

Nearly three-quarters (72.6%) of students in Years 7 to 12 thought people their age should not use any substances including cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana or other drugs.

There were significant differences between age groups. For students in Years 7 to 9, less than 10 per cent of students endorsed the use of any of the listed substances and 84.2 per cent thought people their age should not use any substances.

However, for students in Years 10 to 12, 30.9 per cent endorsed the use of alcohol and 26.1 per cent endorsed the use of marijuana for people their age with cigarettes/smoking (12.7%) and other drugs (7.6%) being less accepted.

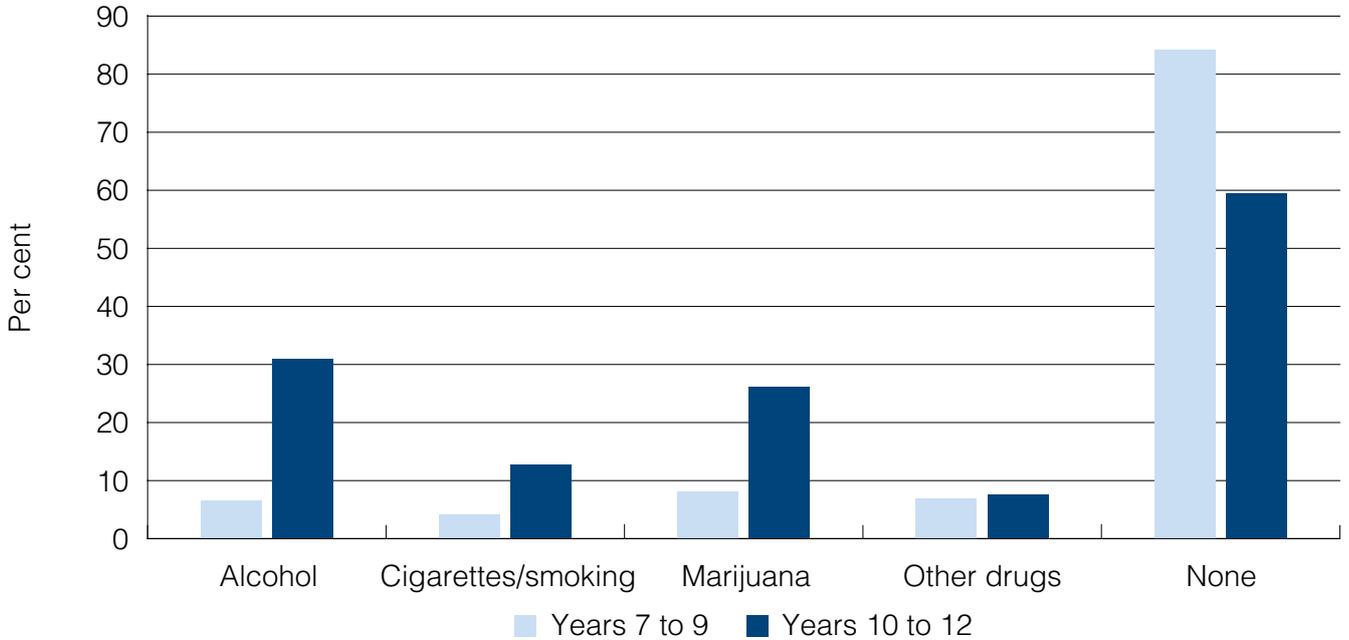
**20.4% of students** reported they had learnt nothing about marijuana at school and **14.1%** said they had learnt nothing about other drugs.

**Nearly three-quarters (72.6%)** of students in Years 7-12 think people their age should not use alcohol and drugs.

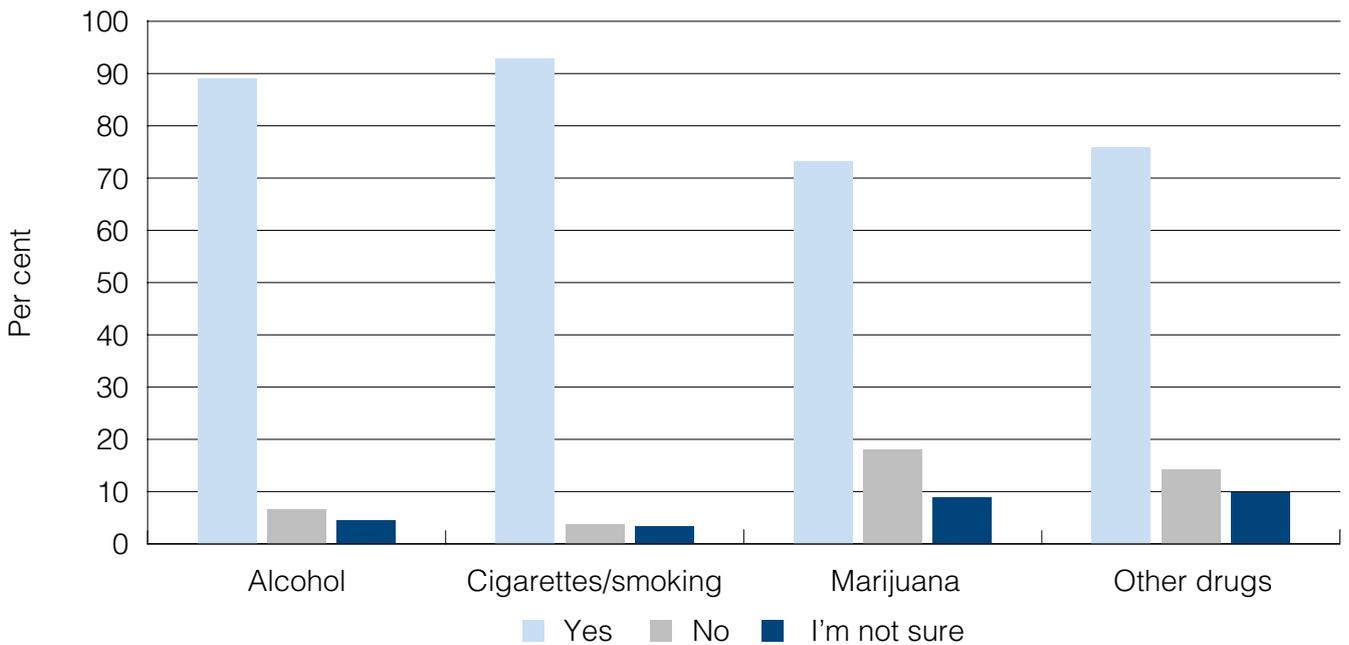
**One-third of Year 10-12 students** think it is okay for people their age to drink alcohol and one-quarter think it is okay to use marijuana.

<sup>17</sup> Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) 2018, *ARACY Report Card 2018: The Wellbeing of Young Australians*, ARACY, p. 30.

**Graph 6.1.12: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they think it is okay for someone their age to use various substances, by year group**



**Graph 6.1.13: Proportion of Year 10 to Year 12 students responding to the question ‘Do you feel like you know enough about the health impacts of...?’, by substance type**



### Getting help for alcohol or drugs

Across Years 7 to 12, 72.1 per cent of students reported they knew where to go if they needed help for something about smoking, drinking, or other drugs. More male than female students reported knowing where to go if they needed such help (77.2% male vs 67.0% female).

### Use of alcohol

The rates for students reporting having ever drunk alcohol were 58.1 per cent of Year 10 to 12 and 20.7 per cent of Year 7 to 9 students.

Among students who had ever drunk alcohol, 49.0 per cent of Year 10 to 12 and 25.0 per cent of Year 7 to 9 students reported having drunk alcohol in the last four weeks.

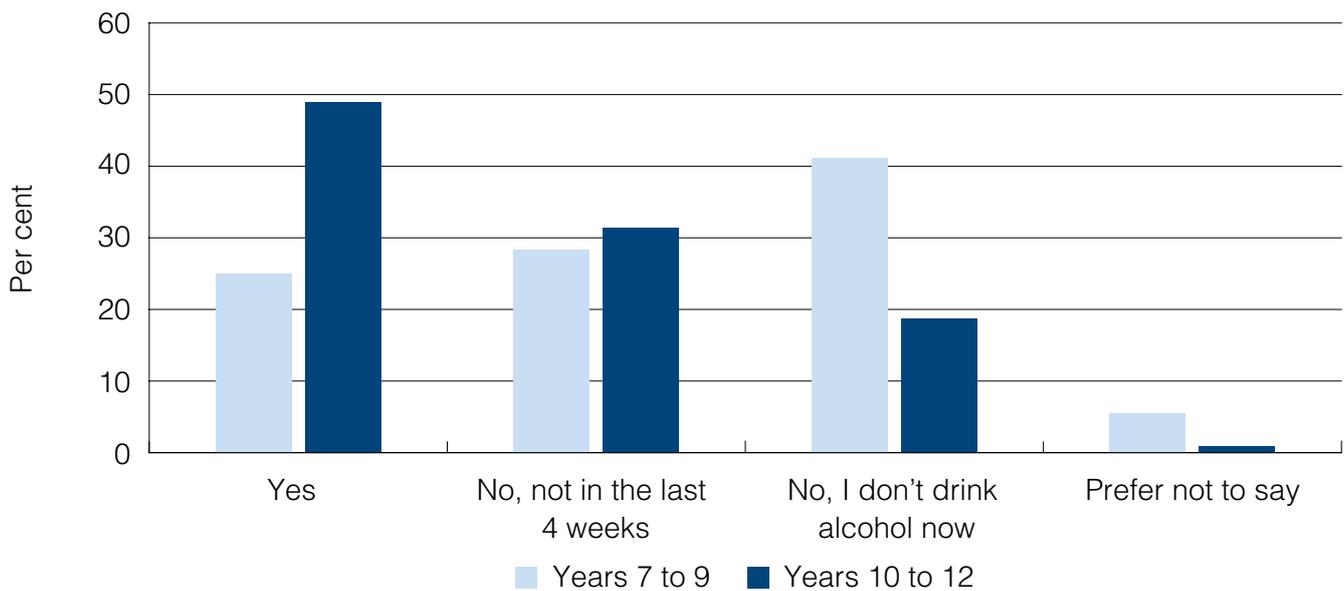
For students in Years 7 to 12, 81.2 per cent of students who had ever drunk alcohol reported they usually drink with friends, 40.2 per cent usually drink with family and 17.6 per cent reported they usually drink by themselves.<sup>18</sup>

**29% of Year 7-12 students** either aren't sure they know or don't know where to go if they needed help for alcohol or drugs.

**4-in-5 Year 7-9 students and 2-in-5 Year 10-12 students** have never tried alcohol.

**One-half of Year 10-12 students** who had ever drunk alcohol reported having drunk alcohol in the last 4 weeks.

**Graph 6.1.14: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students who have ever drunk alcohol responding to the question 'In the last 4 weeks, did you drink alcohol?', by response category and year group**



<sup>18</sup> The SOS19 results for students' experiences with alcohol are broadly consistent with results from the annual *Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD)* survey. For further information refer to Guerin N & White V 2018, *ASSAD 2017 Statistics & Trends: Australian Secondary Students' Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, Over-the-counter Drugs, and Illicit Substances*, Cancer Council Victoria, pp. 23-27.

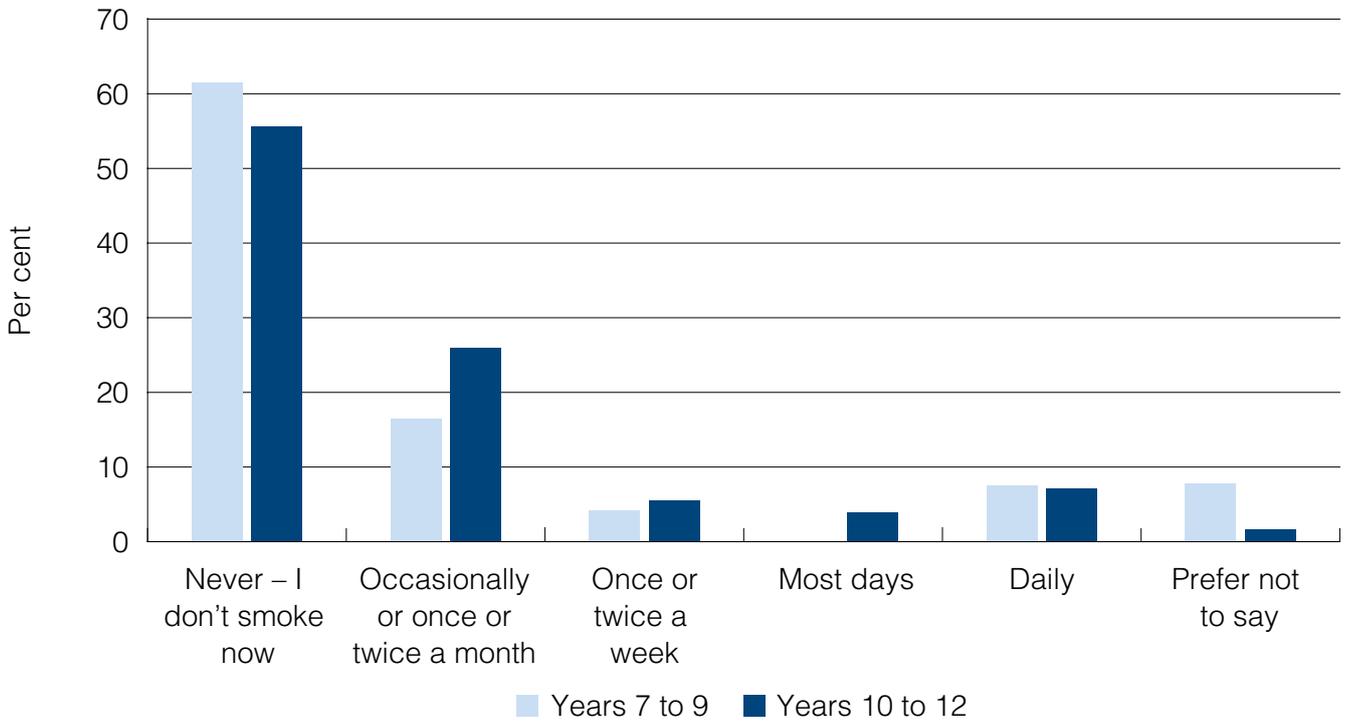
### Smoking

Thirty per cent of Year 10 to 12 and 10.4 per cent of Year 7 to 9 students reported they had ever tried cigarette smoking.

Among Year 10 to 12 students who had ever tried smoking, 5.6 per cent smoke once or twice a week and 11.1 per cent smoke most days or daily.<sup>19</sup>

**9-in-10 Year 7-9 students and more than two-thirds of Year 10-12 students have never tried cigarette smoking.**

**Graph 6.1.15: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students who have ever tried cigarette smoking responding to the question ‘How often do you smoke cigarettes?’, by year group**



**11% of Year 10-12 students who had ever tried cigarette smoking (30%) reported smoking most days or daily.**

<sup>19</sup> The SOS19 results for students' experiences with cigarette smoking are broadly consistent with results from the annual *Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) survey*. For further information refer to Guerin N & White V 2018, *ASSAD 2017 Statistics & Trends: Australian Secondary Students' Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, Over-the-counter Drugs, and Illicit Substances*, Cancer Council Victoria, pp. 14-22.

### Smoking in the home

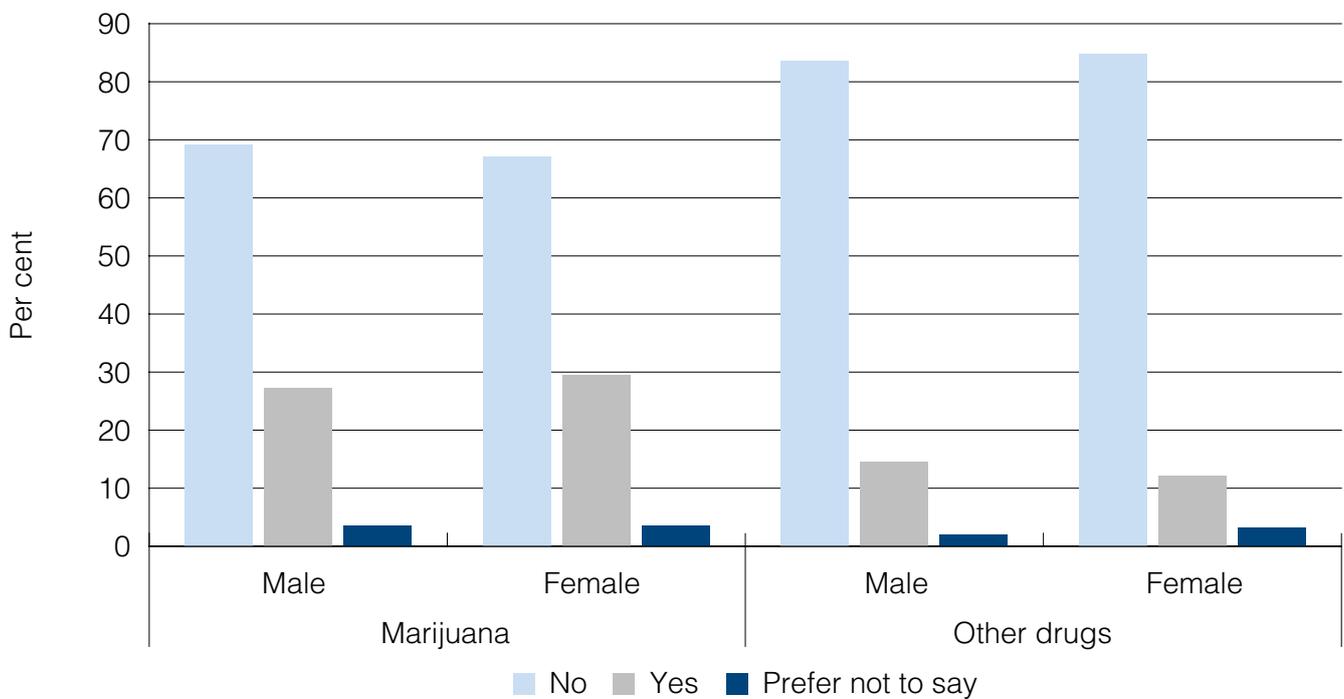
For all students in Years 4 to 12, one-quarter (25.4%) reported someone in their home smoked cigarettes at least once a day. This proportion was higher for students in Years 7 to 12 than in Years 4 to 6 (29.6% Years 7–12 vs 18.5% Years 4–6).

### Use of marijuana and other drugs

In Years 9 to 12, 28.4 per cent of all students reported they had ever had any experiences with marijuana. Experiences with other drugs were less common with 13.4 per cent of all students in Years 9 to 12 reporting they had ever had any experiences with other drugs. The response patterns were similar for male and female students.

**28% of Year 9-12 students have experiences with marijuana.**

**Graph 6.1.16: Proportion of Year 9 to Year 12 students responding to the question ‘Have you ever had any experiences with marijuana / other drugs?’, by substance type and gender**



**Safe sexual activity**

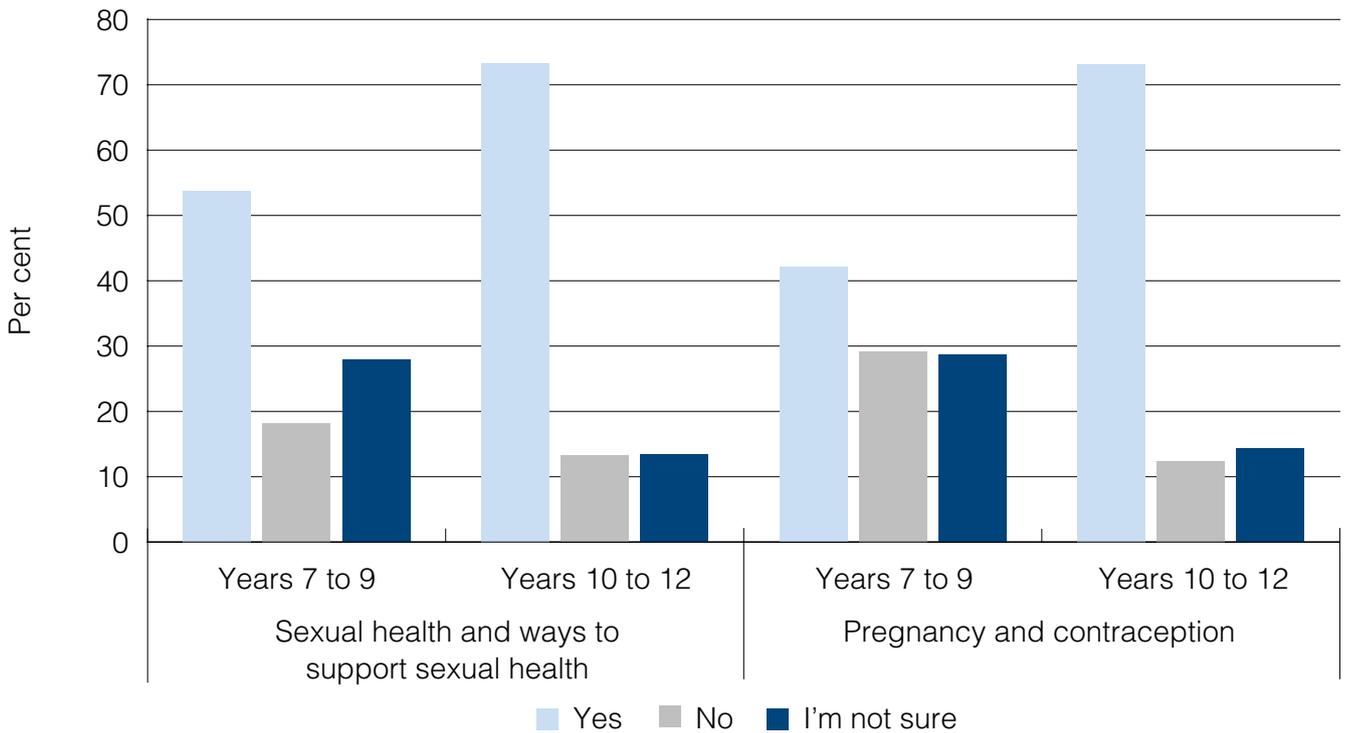
Sexuality education programs are included in primary and secondary schools with the aim of building on knowledge, skills and behaviours, thus enabling young people to make responsible and safe choices leading into a sexually healthy adulthood.<sup>20</sup>

More than two-thirds (68.1%) of students in Years 7 to 12 reported having learnt some or a lot at school about sexual health and ways to support sexual health and 57.5 per cent had learnt some or a lot about pregnancy and

contraception. In contrast, one-in-ten (9.8%) said they had learnt nothing about sexual health and one-in-five (20.0%) had learnt nothing about pregnancy and contraception.

While most students felt they knew enough about sexual health (63.0%) and pregnancy and contraception (56.8%), some students felt they did not know enough or were unsure if they knew enough about these topics (sexual health: 15.9% no and 21.2% unsure; pregnancy: 21.3% no and 22.0% unsure).

**Graph 6.1.17: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students responding to the question ‘Do you think you know enough about sexual health / pregnancy?’, by year group**



**One-half of Year 7-9 students and one-quarter of Year 10-12 students feel they don't know enough about sexual health and pregnancy or they aren't sure.**

<sup>20</sup> Department of Education and Training Victoria, *Sexuality teaching programs*, retrieved from: <<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/physed/Pages/teachprog.aspx>>.

**Seeking help for reproductive or sexual health**

Less than two-thirds (62.0%) of Year 7 to 12 students reported knowing where to go if they needed help for something about their reproductive or sexual health. Conversely, 23.2 per cent weren't sure they knew where to go and 14.8 per cent reported not knowing where to go if they needed help for something about their reproductive or sexual health.

Of the students who had received unwanted sexual material, 39.6 per cent reported they had received it three or more times in the last 12 months and 34.2 per cent reported it had happened once or twice.

Most students who had been sent unwanted sexual material reported they had received it on social media (92.9%), while a much smaller proportion received it by text message (15.8%).

**Ever had sexual intercourse**

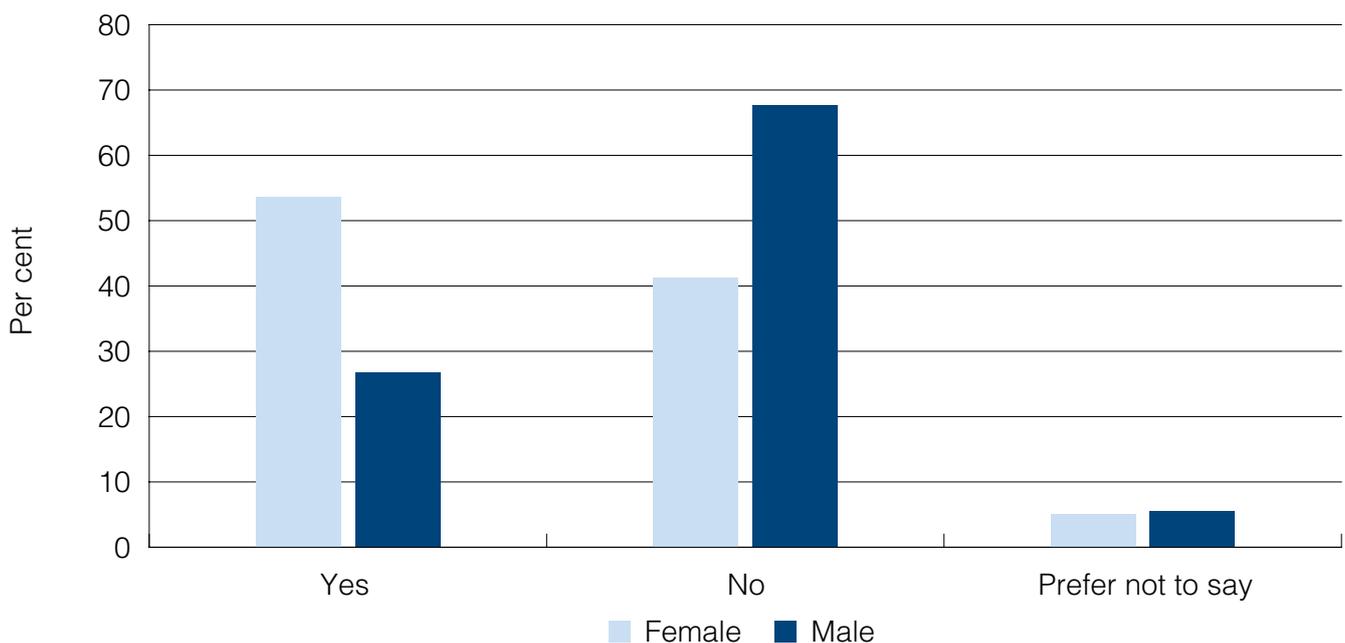
For all students in Years 9 to 12, one-quarter (24.1%) had ever been with someone in an intimate way that included having sexual intercourse.

**Unwanted sexual material**

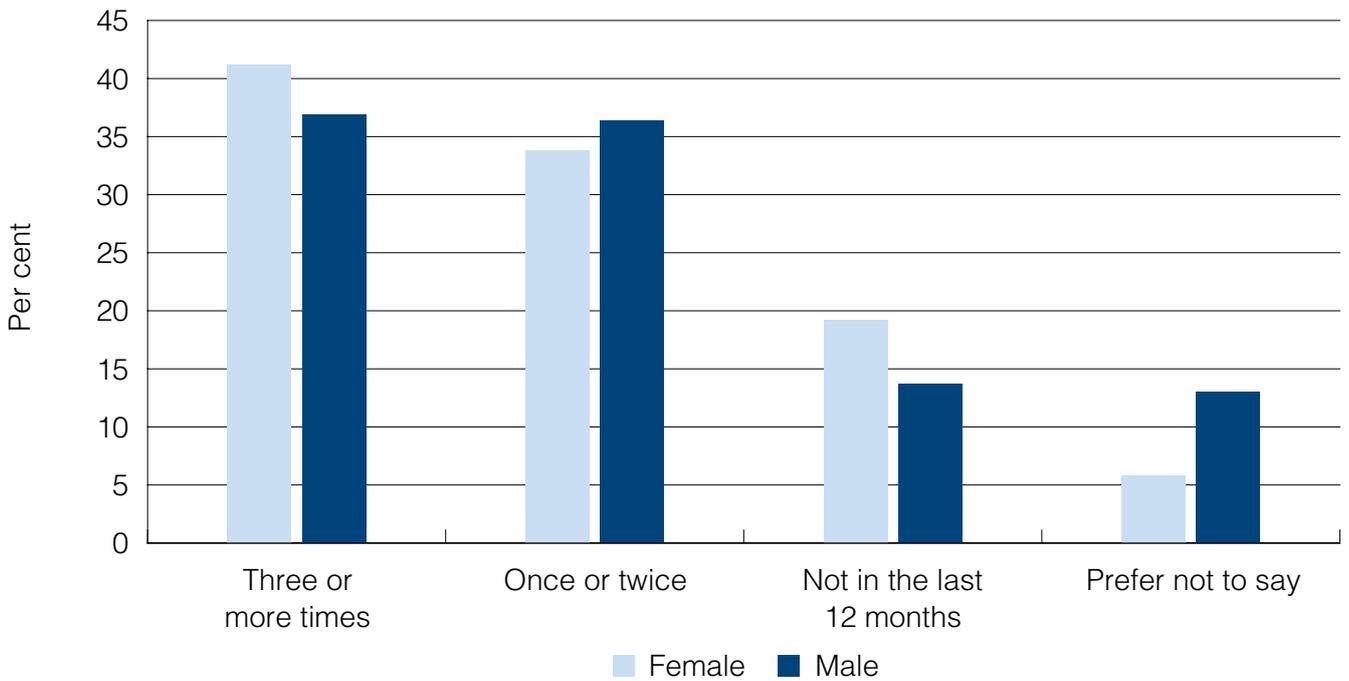
More than one-half (53.6%) of female students and one-quarter (26.7%) of male students in Years 9 to 12 reported they had ever been sent unwanted sexual material, such as pornographic pictures, videos, or words.

**38% of Year 7-12 students either don't know or aren't sure they know where to go if they needed help for something about their reproductive or sexual health.**

**Graph 6.1.18: Proportion of Year 9 to Year 12 students responding to the question 'Have you ever been sent unwanted sexual material?', by gender**



**Graph 6.1.19: Proportion of Year 9 to Year 12 students who have ever been sent unwanted sexual material responding to the question ‘In the last 12 months, how often have you been sent unwanted sexual material?’, by gender**



**More than one-half of female and one-quarter of male Year 9-12 students have been sent unwanted sexual material.**

## 6.1.4 Connection to community and culture

### Connection to culture

Feeling connected to culture is critical for children and young people's sense of belonging and identity. Cultural connectedness encourages a positive sense of identity and the development of respectful and responsive relationships.

A sense of belonging and connectedness can be strengthened in multiple ways including participation in cultural-based activities, spending time with grandparents and other family members and learning about family history, language and traditions.

In the Commissioner's previous consultations, Aboriginal children have explained how culture is particularly important for their wellbeing.<sup>21</sup> This includes being connected to country, learning and speaking their own language, respect for elders, sharing and being close to family, listening to stories about culture and taking part in traditional activities and cultural events.

### Languages spoken at home

Most students (91.8%) in Years 4 to 12 reported speaking English at home and one-in-five (18.0%) reported speaking other language(s) at home.

**23% of Year 4-12 students were born overseas and 1-in-5 speak language(s) other than English at home.**

### Cultural background and country of birth

Two-thirds (65.7%) of students in Years 4 to 12 reported having an Australian cultural background.

Having an English cultural background (31.3%) was the most common background besides Australian. Smaller proportions of students reported having Scottish (13.4%), Irish (10.6%), Italian (8.3%), Indian (4.7%) and Chinese (4.5%) backgrounds.

Three-quarters (76.8%) of students in Years 4 to 12 reported being born in Australia.

### Aboriginal cultural background

For all students in Years 4 to 12, 6.6 per cent reported having an Aboriginal Australian cultural background, with 74.2 per cent of Aboriginal students reported knowing their family's country and 19.2 per cent were not sure. In regards to talking their Aboriginal language, 8.4 per cent said they talk the language a lot, 18.2 per cent some, 38.8 per cent a little and 34.6 per cent reported they did not talk Aboriginal language.

For more information on the results for Aboriginal students refer to chapter 6.5 Aboriginal children and young people's wellbeing.

### Connection to community

Connection to community is critical for children and young people's health and wellbeing as, similarly to connection to culture, it provides a positive sense of identity and belonging.

Children and young people thrive when they have opportunities to participate in activities that enable them to build relationships with people outside of their immediate family. In addition, they learn and grow through their experiences and contributions in their communities.

<sup>21</sup> Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2015, "Listen To Us" Using the views of WA Aboriginal children and young people to improve policy and service delivery, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA.

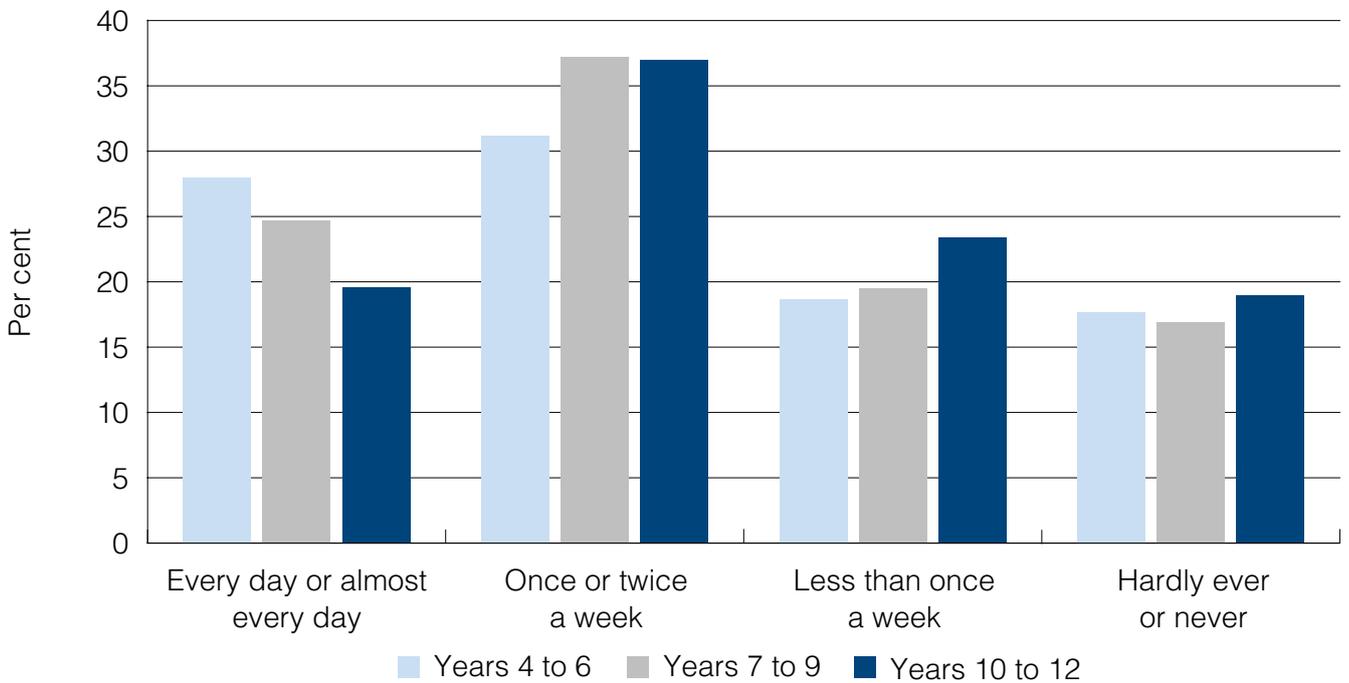
### Spending time with friends

Overall, one-quarter (24.4%) of students reported spending time with friends every day or almost every day when they are not at school and 34.9 per cent said they did this once or twice a week. Younger students were more likely than older students to say they spend time with friends every day (28.0% Years 4–6) while older students were more likely to spend time with friends once or twice a week (37.1% Years 7–12).

Around one-in-five students never spend time with friends outside of school and this proportion remained the same across age groups (around 18%).

Most students spend time with friends outside of school at least once a week but 1-in-5 never do this and this proportion remained the same across age groups (around 18%).

**Graph 6.1.20: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students spending time hanging out with friends, by frequency and year group**



### Housework

Most students reported they help with housework every day or almost every day (48.2%) or once or twice a week (33.8%).

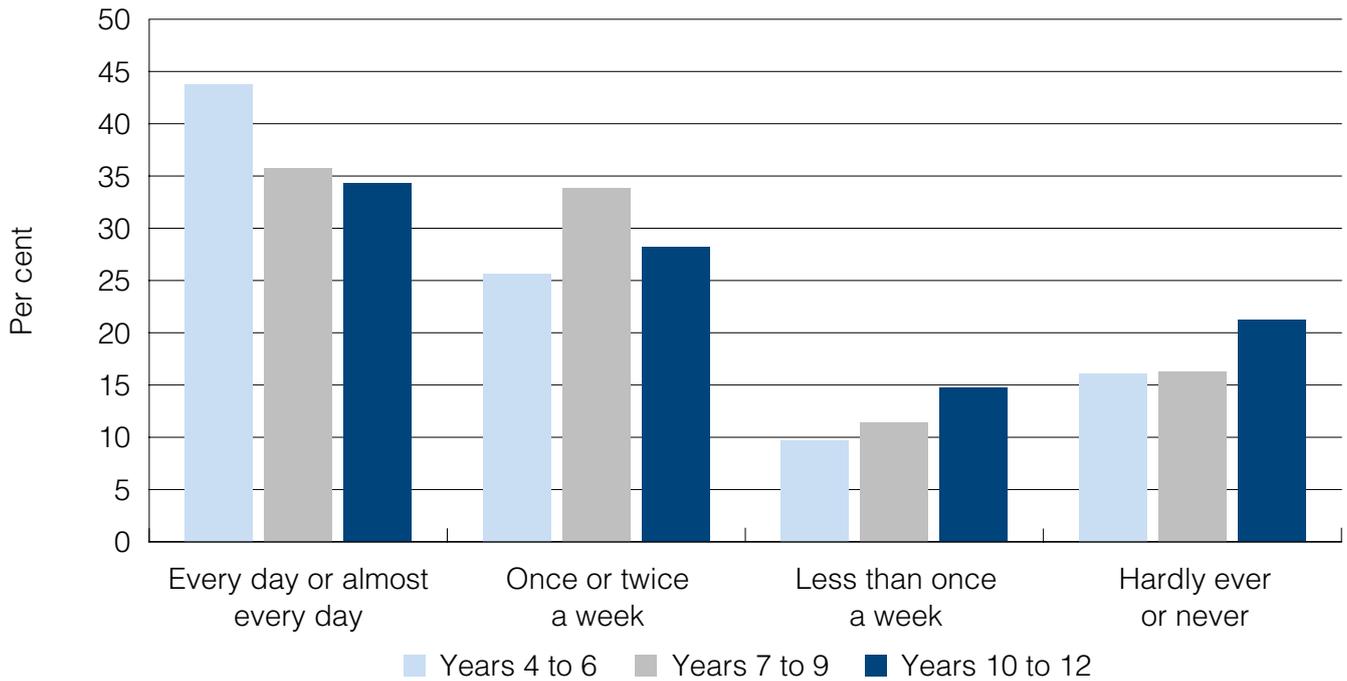
Students in Years 7 to 12 (51.2%) and female students overall (51.3%) were most likely to report they spend time doing housework every day or almost every day.

### Homework

For all students in Years 4 to 12, 38.3 per cent reported they spend time doing homework every day or almost every day, 29.1 per cent do this once or twice a week and 17.7 per cent said they hardly ever or never spend time doing homework.

Students in Years 4 to 6 were more likely than older students to say they spend time doing homework every day (43.8% Year 4–6 vs 35.7% Year 7–9 and 34.3% Year 10–12).

**Graph 6.1.21: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students spending time doing homework, by frequency and year group**



### Spending time with family

Most students spend time with their family every day or almost every day (61.6%) or once or twice a week (23.4%). A higher proportion of Year 4 to 6 than Year 7 to 12 students reported they spend time hanging out with family every day or almost every day when they are not at school (75.0% Years 4–6 vs 59.5% Years 7–9 and 47.2% Years 10–12).

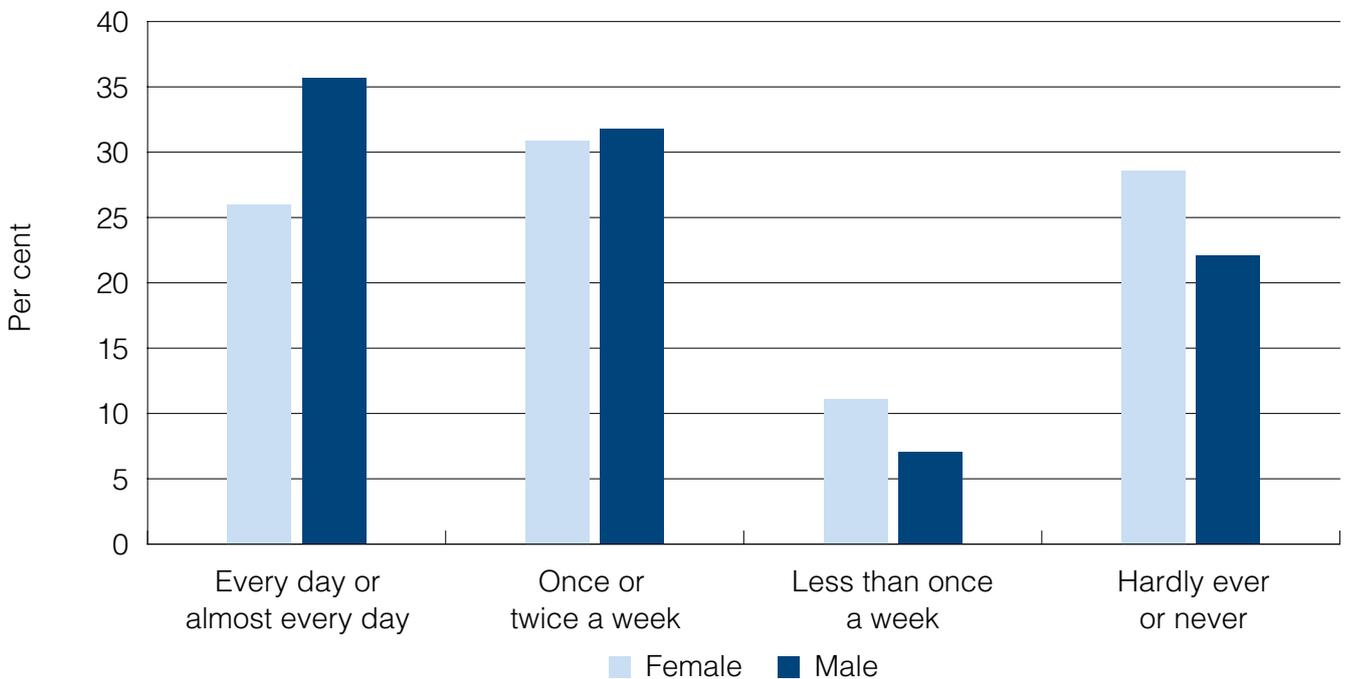
### Playing a sport

Among all students in Years 4 to 12, one-third (33.5%) said they spend time practising or playing a sport every day or almost every day (outside of school) while another one-third (33.2%) said they do this once or twice a

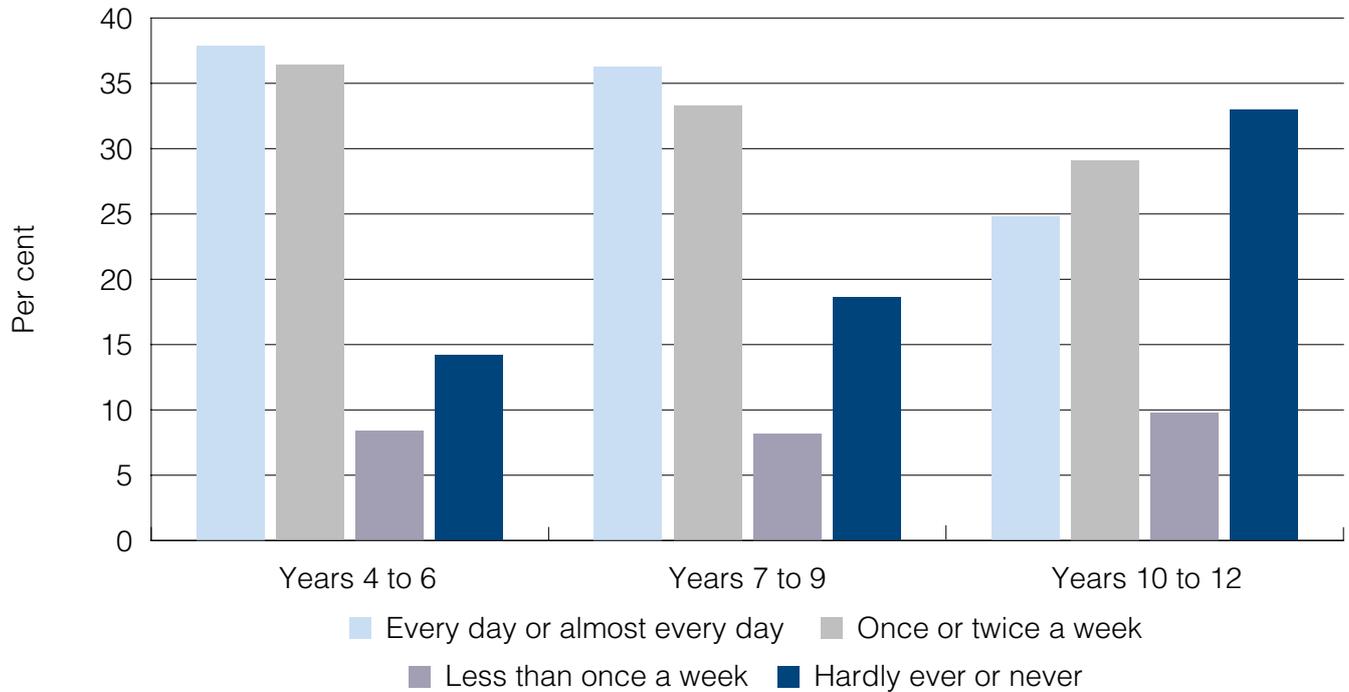
week. Nine per cent did sport less than once a week and one-in-five Year 4 to 12 students (21.3%) said they hardly ever or never spend time practising or playing a sport.

Only one-in-four Year 10 to 12 students (24.8%) and one-in-four female Year 7 to Year 12 students (26.0%) reported practising or playing sport every day. The majority of Year 10 to 12 students said they hardly ever or never do this or they play sport less than once a week (Year 10–12 students: 33.0% hardly ever/never, 9.8% less than once a week). For female Year 7 to 12 students, 28.6 per cent hardly ever or never practise or play a sport and 11.1 per cent do it less than once a week.

**Graph 6.1.22: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students spending time practising or playing a sport, by frequency and gender**



**Graph 6.1.23: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students spending time practising or playing a sport, by frequency and year group**



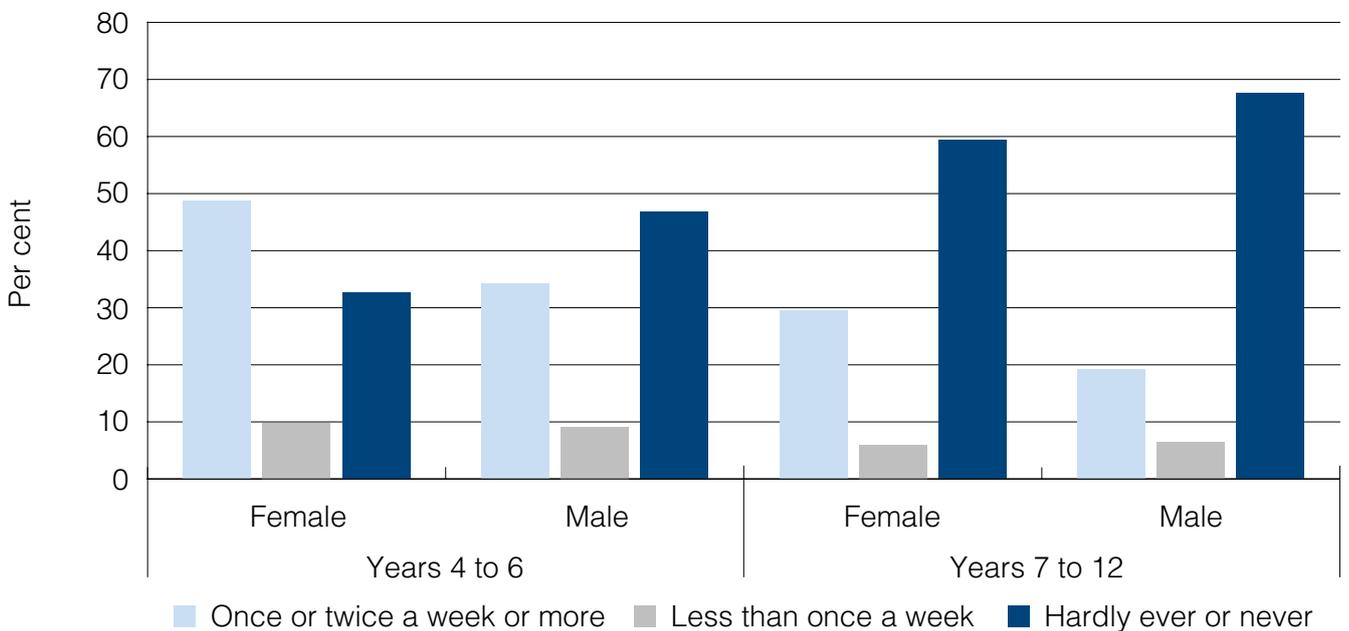
**One-third of Year 10-12 students** hardly ever or never spend time practising or playing a sport (when they are not at school).

**Taking lessons**

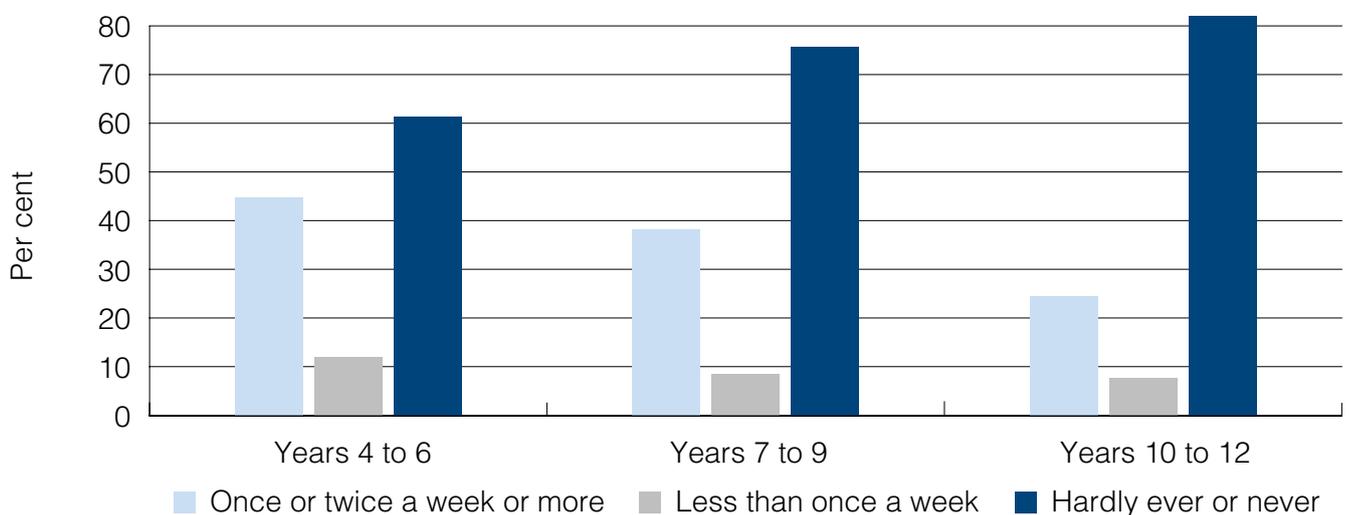
Around one-third (30.6%) of students reported taking lessons like music, dancing, or languages once or twice a week or more. Over one-half of students (54.9%) hardly ever or never did this.

Female students were more likely than male students to report taking lessons: Almost one-half (48.7%) of female Year 4 to 6 students and 30 per cent of female Year 7 to 12 students reported taking lessons once or twice a week or more.

**Graph 6.1.24: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students spending time taking lessons such as music, dancing or languages, by frequency, year group and gender**



**Graph 6.1.25: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students spending time taking lessons such as music, dancing or languages, by frequency and year group**



### Internet

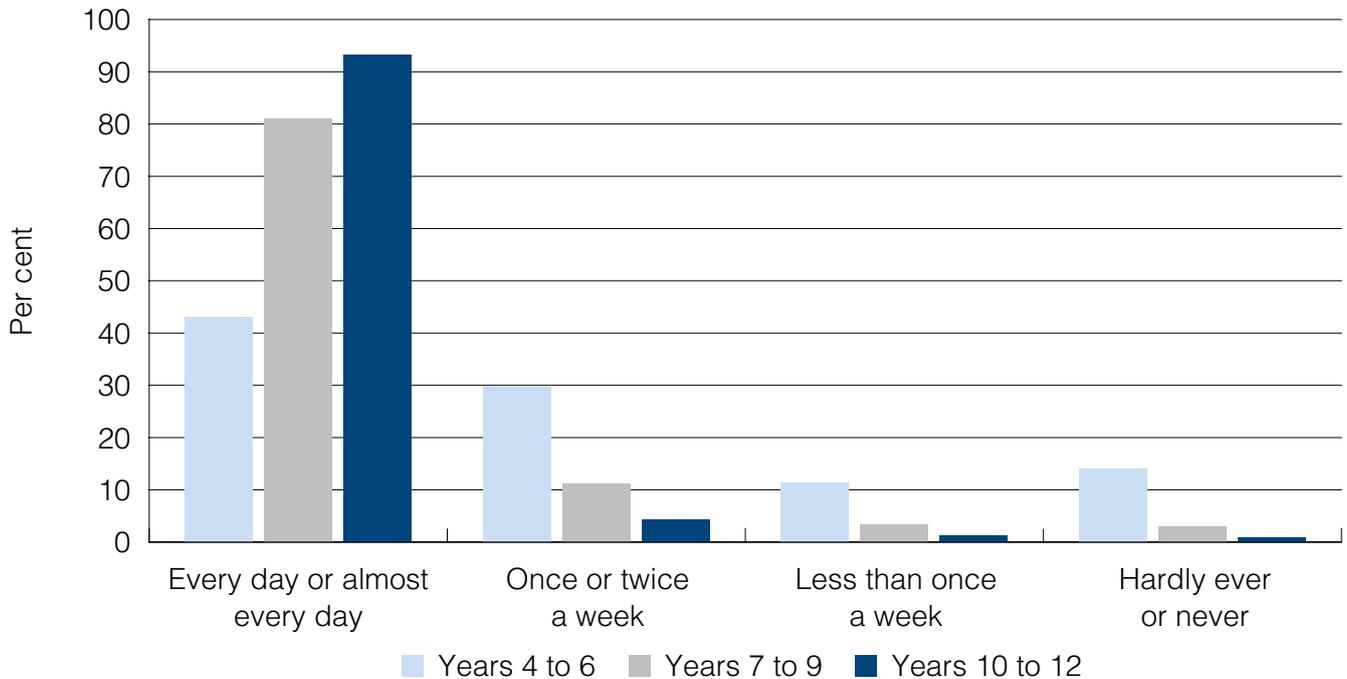
The vast majority of students used the internet on a smartphone or computer every day or almost every day.

There were clear differences between age groups. For Year 4 to 6 students, less than one-half (43.0%) of students reported using the internet every day, while 29.4 per cent said once or twice a week and 14.0 per cent said they hardly ever or never used the internet.

For older students, four-in-five (81.1%) Year 7 to 9 students and more than nine-in-ten (93.2%) Year 10 to 12 students reported using the internet on a smartphone or computer every day or almost every day. Very few students reported using the internet on a smartphone or computer less than once a week or never.

**Nearly all Year 10-12 students use the internet on a smartphone or computer outside of school every day.**

**Graph 6.1.26: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students spending time using the internet, by frequency and year group**



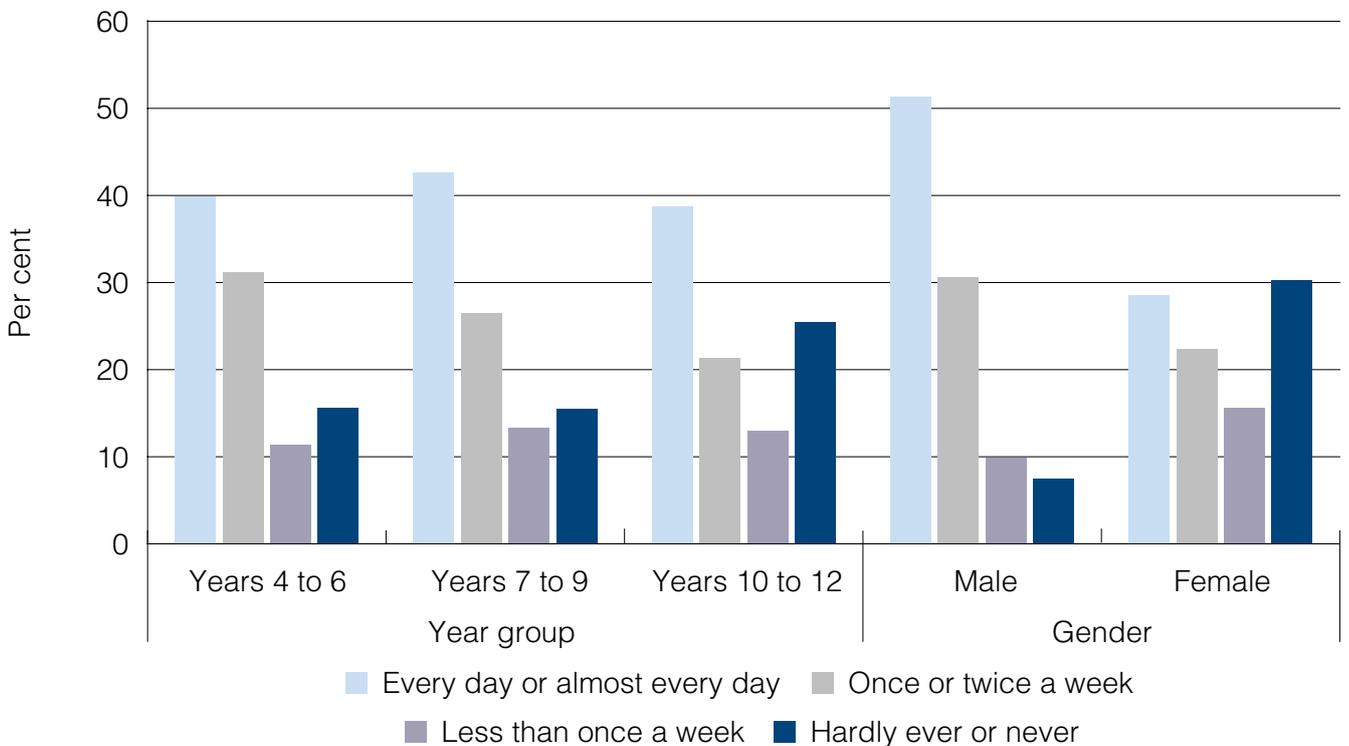
### Electronic games

One-half (51.4%) of male and more than one-quarter of female (28.6%) Year 4 to 12 students reported playing games on a game console, computer, or tablet every day or almost every day when they are not at school. A further 30.6 per cent of male and 22.4 per cent of female students reported playing once or twice a week.

The proportion of students playing every day remained largely the same across age groups (Years 4–6: 47.2% male vs 32.4% female; Years 7–12: 53.8% male vs 26.4% female). However, older students were more likely than younger students to say they never play electronic games (25.5% Years 10–12 vs 15.5% Years 7–9 and 18.5% Years 4–6).

**One-half of male students in Years 4-12 reported playing electronic games every day.**

**Graph 6.1.27: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students spending time playing electronic games, by frequency, year group and gender**



### Watching television

A little less than one-half (46.7%) of Year 4 to 12 students reported watching television every day or almost every day and a further 28.3 per cent did this once or twice a week.

Younger students were more likely than older students to say they watch every day (51.0% Years 4–6 vs 47.3% Years 7–9 and 40.8% Years 10–12).

### Reading a book

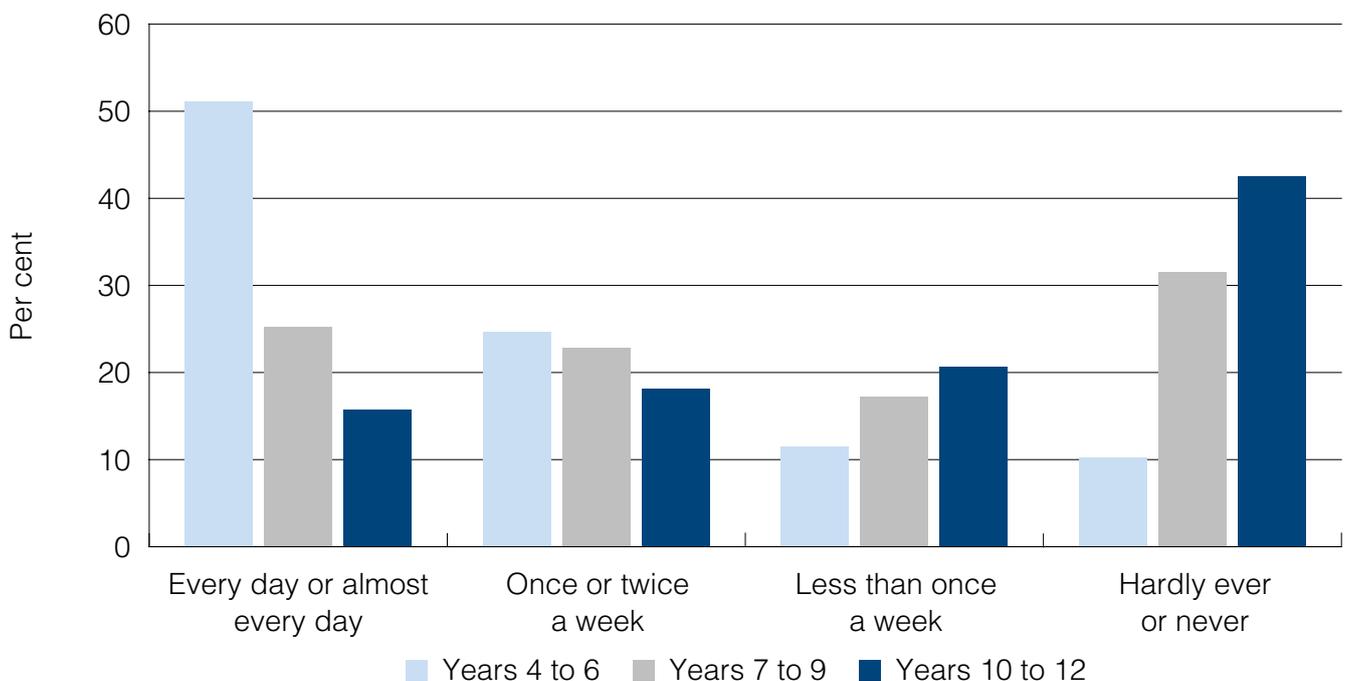
One-half (51.1%) of Year 4 to 6 students reported spending time reading every day or almost every day when they are not at school. For Year 7 to 12 students this was significantly less: One-quarter (25.3%) of Year 7 to 9 students and only 15.7 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students reported spending time reading every day or almost every day.

The proportion of students who never read a book outside of school increased with age: 31.6 per cent of Year 7 to 9 students and 42.5 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students said they hardly ever or never spend time reading a book.

**Younger students** are more likely than older students to read every day.

**2-in-5 Year 10-12 students** never spend time reading a book.

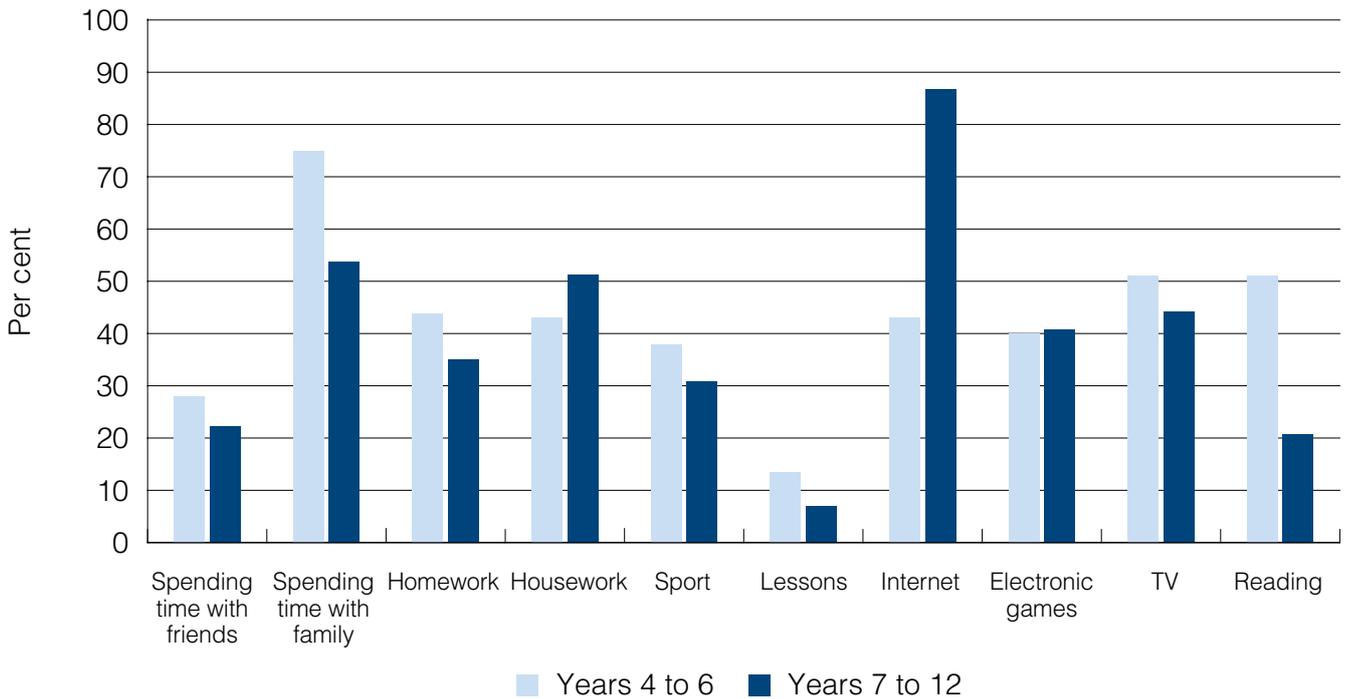
**Graph 6.1.28: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students spending time reading a book, by frequency and year group**



In terms of most common activities, for Year 4 to 6 students, three-quarters (75.0%) spend time with family every day and about one-half watched TV and read a book every day (51.0% and 51.1% respectively). For Year 7 to 12 students, the vast majority used the internet (86.8%) every day and about one-half spend time with family and helped with housework every day (53.7% and 51.2% respectively). For both age groups, less than one-half spend time every day practising or playing a sport, taking lessons or spending time with friends outside of school.

**Three-quarters of Year 4-6 students spend time with family every day and about one-half watched TV and read a book every day (51% and 51% respectively).**

**Graph 6.1.29: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students selecting activities they spend time doing every day, by activity type and year group**



**Most Year 7-12 students used the internet (87%) every day and about one-half spent time with family and helped with housework every day (54% and 51% respectively).**

### Perceptions about local area

Students were asked a range of questions about their local area. Around three-quarters of students agreed they have friends who live nearby (75.8% Years 4–6 vs 74.4% Years 7–12), more than 80 per cent agreed they like where they live (87.7% Years 4–6 vs 80.8% Years 7–12) and almost 90 per cent agreed there are outdoor places to go in their local area (88.4% Years 4–6 vs 86.6% Years 7–12).

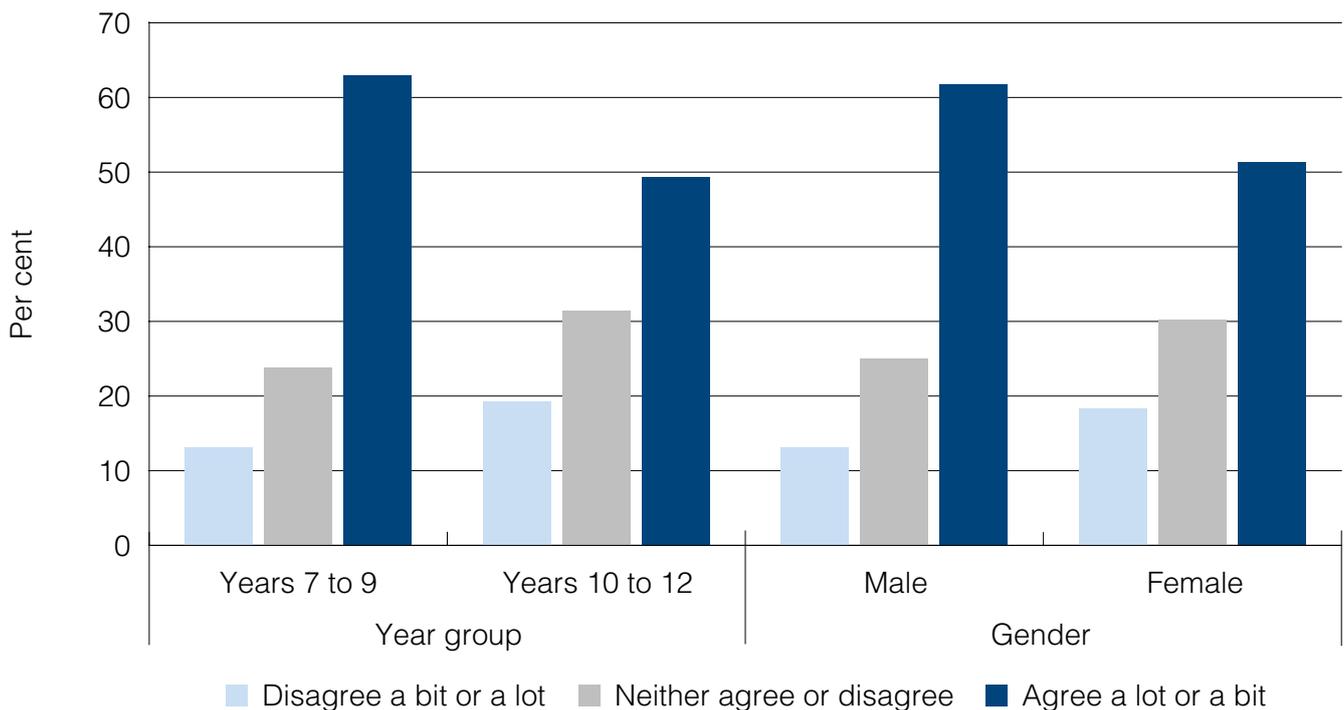
The majority of Year 4 to 6 students also agreed they have friendly neighbours (74.2%), they feel they belong in their community (73.1%) and that there are fun things to do in their area (70.3%).

Smaller proportions of Year 7 to 12 students than Year 4 to 6 students agreed that their neighbours are friendly (64.3% Years 7–12), that they belong in their community (56.6% Years 7–12) and that there are fun things to do in their area (45.8% Years 7–12).

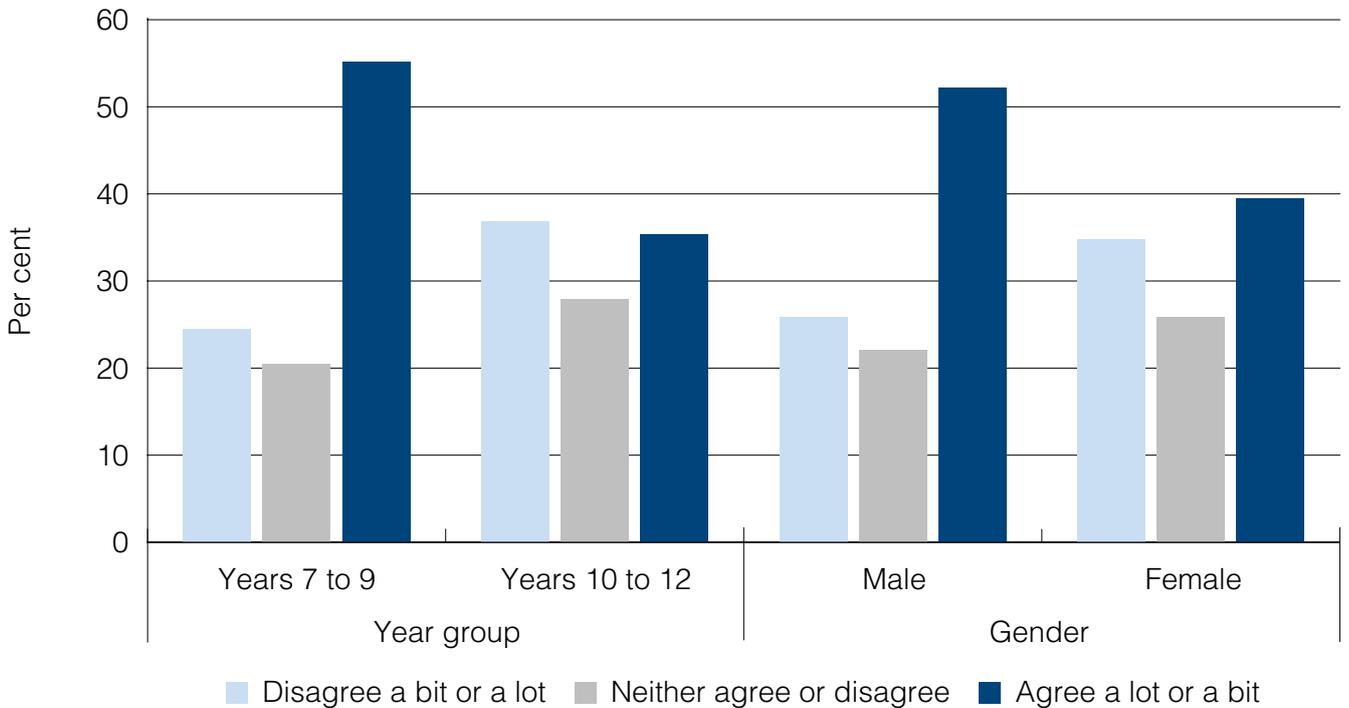
Many Year 10 to 12 students were undecided or disagreed that they belong in their community (50.7%) and that there are fun things to do for them (64.7%). Accordingly, they were more likely to agree that there is nothing to do in their local area (39.7% agreed with this and a further 22.7% neither agreed nor disagreed).

With regards to gender, one-half (48.7%) of female students either disagreed or were undecided if they belong in their community and three-in-five were undecided or disagreed that there are fun things to do for them (60.5%). One-in-three (35.5%) agreed there is nothing to do in their area.

**Graph 6.1.30: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students agreeing or disagreeing with the statement ‘I feel like I belong in my community’, by year group and gender**



**Graph 6.1.31: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students agreeing or disagreeing with the statement ‘There are lots of fun things to do where I live’, by year group and gender**



**1-in-2 female Year 10-12 students are not sure they belong in their community and 1-in-3 say there is nothing to do in their area.**

**Problematic behaviours associated with using the internet, playing electronic games and using mobile phones**

Around one-third (32.7%) of Year 4 to 12 students said they feel bothered fairly often or very often when they cannot be on the internet and one-quarter (24.5%) feel bothered when they cannot play electronic games. Older students were more likely to feel bothered about not being on the internet (25.6% Years 4–6 vs 33.7% Years 7–9 and 38.7% Years 10–12) while younger students were more likely to feel bothered when they cannot play electronic games (28.0% Years 4–6 vs 27.1% Years 7–9 and 18.1% Years 10–12).

A higher proportion of female than male students in Years 4 to 12 reported they never or almost never felt bothered when they cannot play electronic games (49.4% female vs 24.6% male).

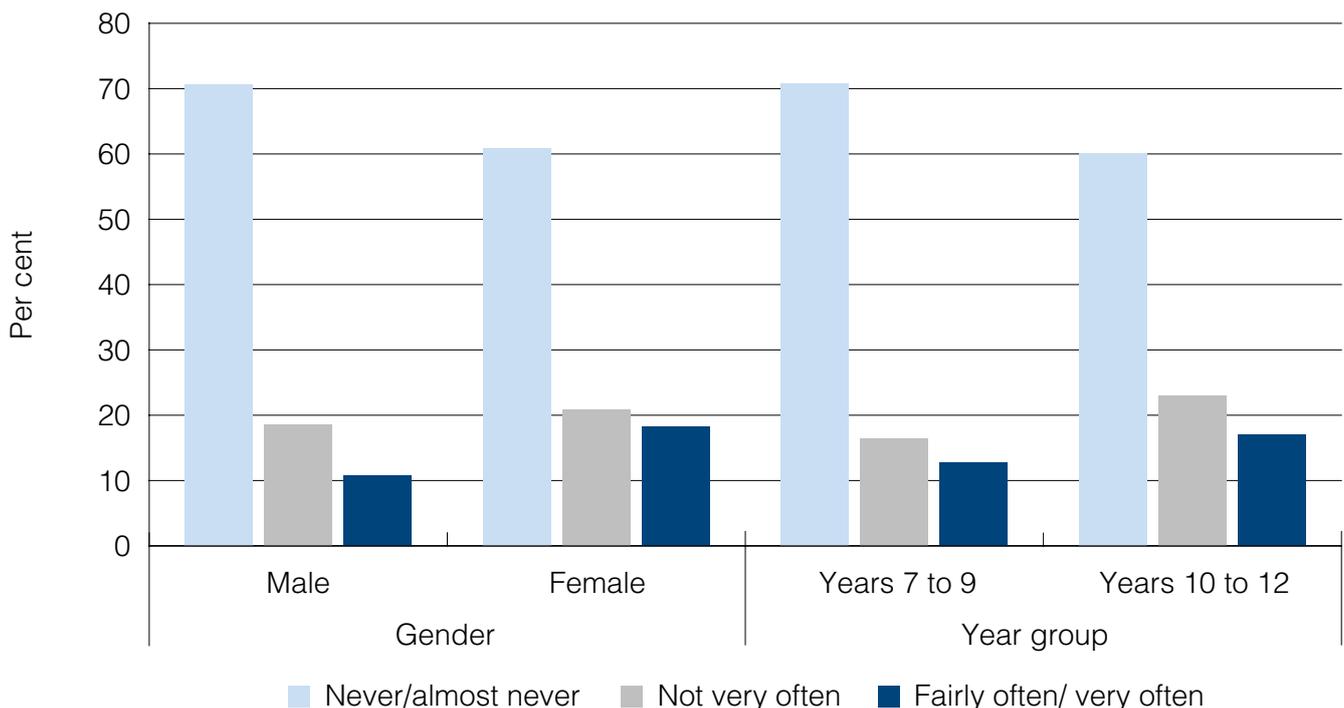
Around one-in-ten students reported they went without eating or sleeping because of the internet or electronic games (Years 4–6: 4.2% fairly often and 4.3% very often; Years 7–12: 7.7% fairly often and 4.4% very often).

For students in Years 7 to 12, more than one-third (37.8%) reported they felt bothered either fairly often or very often when they cannot use their mobile phone. This proportion was higher for Year 10 to 12 than Year 7 to 9 students (34.2% Years 7–9 vs 41.7% Years 10–12) and also higher for female students than male students (44.3% female vs 31.5% males).

Two-thirds (65.6%) of Year 7 to 12 students never go without eating or sleeping because of their mobile phone, but 14.8 per cent say this happens to them either fairly often or very often. Female students are most likely to be affected with one-in-five students (18.3%) reporting this.

**1-in-5 female students often go without eating or sleeping because of their mobile phone.**

**Graph 6.1.32: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students going without eating or sleeping because of mobile phone, by frequency, year group and gender**



### Access to support

In addition to feeling a connection to culture and community, children and young people need relationships with adults that are stable, caring and supportive, enabling them to ask for help if they have any worries or concerns. For older children and young people it is also important to know how to access help and support from available programs and services.

Emotional and health concerns have the potential to impact young people's behaviours, relationships and ability to learn. Being able to ask for help is a critical skill that supports young people's mental health and can reduce risk-taking behaviours.<sup>22</sup> However, research shows that young people are often hesitant to ask for help.<sup>23</sup>

### Health information

For students in Years 7 to 12, the top five most frequently reported helpful sources of information about their health were:

- Doctor (74.1%)
- Parent, or someone who acts as their parent (62.8%)
- Friend (52.6%)
- Teacher (41.1%)
- Other family (34.0%).

In general, Year 10 to 12 students were more likely than Year 7 to 9 students to report they found a friend (58.2%), internet websites (42.6%), a boyfriend or girlfriend (23.6%), or a mental health service (23.7%) a helpful source of information about health.

Few students in Years 7 to 12 reported they found a school psychologist (12.9%), counsellor (11.0%) or chaplain (10.9%) a helpful source of information and even fewer mentioned telephone helplines or online counsellor (5.7%).

With respect to being unable to access support such as seeing a health professional, one-quarter (26.8%) of students in Years 7 to 12 reported there had been a time in the last 12 months when they wanted or needed to see someone for their health but were not able to. This proportion was higher for Year 10 to 12 than Year 7 to 9 students (30.8% Years 10–12 vs 23.2% Years 7–9) and also higher for female than male students (35.0% female vs 17.7% male).

**1-in-4 students**  
say they can't  
always access  
support for  
health worries  
when needed.

<sup>22</sup> Barker F et al 2017, 'Alcohol, drug and related health and wellbeing issues among young people completing an online screen', *Australasian Psychiatry*, Vol 25 No 2, p. 130-134.

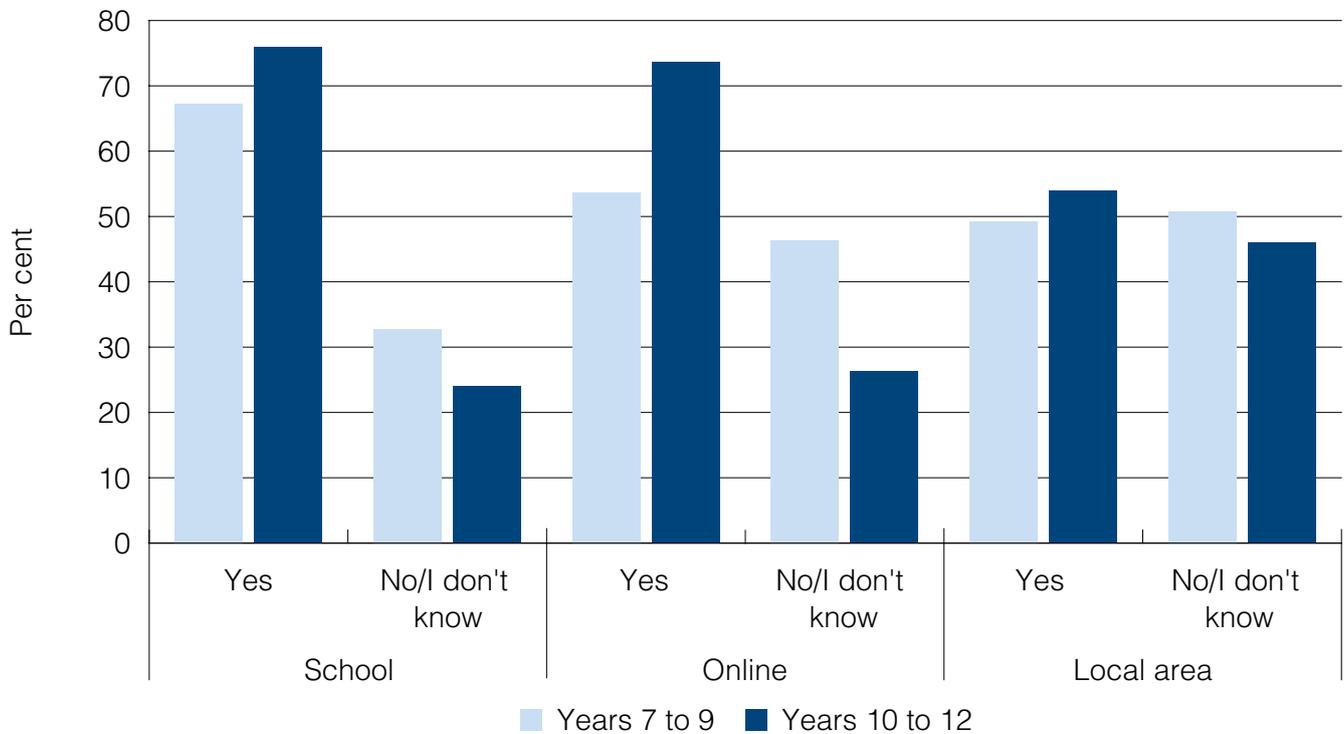
<sup>23</sup> Rickwood DJ et al 2007, 'When and how do young people seek professional help for mental health problems?', *Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol 187 No 7, pp. 35-39.

### Knowledge of mental health supports

Most students in Years 7 to 12 said they know where to get support for stress, anxiety, depression, or other emotional health worries if needed. More than 70 per cent (71.4%) know where to get mental health support in their

school, two-thirds (63.0%) know where to get support online and one-half (51.5%) said they know where to get support in their local area. In general, Year 10 to 12 students were more likely than Year 7 to 9 students to say they know where to get support.

**Graph 6.1.33: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students knowing where to get mental health support at school, online and in their local area, by year group**



One-third (35.1%) of Year 7 to 12 students reported they had gotten help for any problems with stress, anxiety, depression, or other emotional health worries in the last 12 months and this proportion was higher for female than male students (41.1% female vs 28.6% male).

For students who had sought mental health support in the last 12 months, the top five most frequently reported sources they found helpful for emotional health worries were:

- Friend (57.4%)
- Parent (49.6%)
- Doctor (33.5%)
- Mental health service (24.4%)
- Teacher (24.3%).

Older students were more likely than younger students to say they found a boyfriend or girlfriend (26.2% Years 10–12), school psychologist (21.9% Years 10–12) or school counsellor (16.5% Years 10–12) helpful for emotional health worries.

Different to general health concerns for which three-quarters (74.1%) of Year 7 to 12 students seek support from a doctor, for mental health worries only around one-third (33.5%) found a doctor helpful.

**41% of female and 29% of male students reported they had sought help for mental health worries in the last 12 months.**

**A doctor is the most commonly reported source of information for health worries, however, for mental health concerns most students seek help from a friend.**

## Snapshot

### Physical and mental health

- 12% of students in Years 4–12 rated their health as fair or poor. Highest for Year 10–12 students: 1-in-5 said their health was fair or poor.
- **26.5% of Year 7–12 students said they have a long-term health problem or condition and 11.4% have a long-term disability.**
- Year 4–6 students are more likely to care very much about being physically active and eating healthy food than older students.
- **Many Year 10–12 students are at risk of not getting enough sleep.**
- Male Year 7–12 students are significantly more likely than female students to eat regular meals every day.
- **31.5% of Year 10–12 students do not eat fruit and 18.7% do not eat vegetables at least once a day.**
- 70.3% of female Year 7–12 students worry about their weight compared to 36.8% of male students.
- **1-in-2 female Year 7–12 students reported a high score for life satisfaction compared with 2-in-3 male students while almost 1-in-5 reported a very low score.**
- Most students feel resilient but 1-in-10 said they cannot achieve their goals or cope with life's challenges.
- **School and study problems are the single most common source of stress for students in Years 9–12: 91.4% of female students and 77.7% of male students report being affected by this.**
- Younger students and male students overall are more likely to have a positive view of themselves.

### Healthy behaviours

- Nearly three-quarters (72.6%) of students in Years 7–12 think people their age should not use any substances.
- **27.9% of Year 7–12 students either aren't sure they know or don't know where to go if they needed help for something about smoking, drinking, or other drugs.**
- 4-in-5 Year 7–9 students and 2-in-5 Year 10–12 students have never tried alcohol.
- **One-half of Year 10–12 students who had ever drunk alcohol reported having drunk alcohol in the last four weeks.**
- 9-in-10 Year 7–9 students and more than two-thirds of Year 10–12 students have never tried cigarette smoking.
- **11% of Year 10–12 students who had ever tried cigarette smoking (30.1%) reported smoking most days or daily.**
- 28.4% of Year 9–12 students have experiences with marijuana.
- **One-half of Year 7–9 students and one-quarter of Year 10–12 students feel they don't know enough about sexual health and pregnancy or they aren't sure.**
- More than one-half of female and one-quarter of male Year 9–12 students have been sent unwanted sexual material.

## Feeling connected and respected in culture and community

- Just over one-quarter (26.6%) of Aboriginal students said they talk their Aboriginal language a lot or some.
- **23% of Year 4–12 students were born overseas and 1-in-5 speak a language other than English at home.**
- Most students spent time with friends outside of school at least once a week but 1-in-5 never do this and this proportion remained the same across age groups (around 18%).
- **One-third (33.0%) of Year 10–12 students hardly ever or never spent time practising or playing a sport.**
- Nearly all Year 10–12 students use the internet on a smartphone or computer outside of school every day.
- **One-half of male students in Years 4–12 play electronic games every day.**
- Younger students are more likely than older students to read regularly.
- **Three-quarters of Year 4–6 students spent time with family every day and about one-half watched TV and read a book every day (51.0% and 51.1% respectively).**
- Most Year 7–12 students used the internet (86.8%) every day and about one-half spent time with family and helped with housework every day (53.7% and 51.2% respectively).
- **1-in-2 female Year 10–12 students are not sure they belong in their community and 1-in-3 say there is nothing to do in their area.**
- 1-in-5 female students often go without eating or sleeping because of their mobile phone.
- **One-quarter of students say they can't always access support for health worries when needed.**
- 41% of female and 29% of male students had gotten help for mental health worries in the last 12 months.
- **A doctor is the most commonly reported source of information for health worries, however, for mental health concerns most students seek help from a friend.**

## 6.2 Safe and supported

Feeling safe and supported involves positive family relationships and connections with other adults, along with personal and community safety. Every child or young person has the right to be loved and to feel safe and supported. The essential outcomes in this domain are that students in Year 4 to Year 12 are supported by safe and healthy relationships, that they are physically and emotionally safe, engage in safe behaviours and that their material needs are met.

The survey used a range of indicators to measure these outcomes including questions about students' relationships with their parents and other adults in their lives, their material basics such as housing, transport and food and if there were any family problems that worried them. It also asked respondents to report on their feelings of safety at home, in their community and about their experiences of violence and harm.

### 6.2.1 Supportive relationships

Children and young people who are supported by safe and positive relationships are more likely to have good mental health, be resilient, able to learn and sustain healthy relationships into the future.

#### Dependable relationships with adults

Year 4 to 12 students were asked a series of questions about their relationship with their parents and how much they felt their family cared about them.

On average, more than three-quarters of students reported they felt each of the following statements were true:

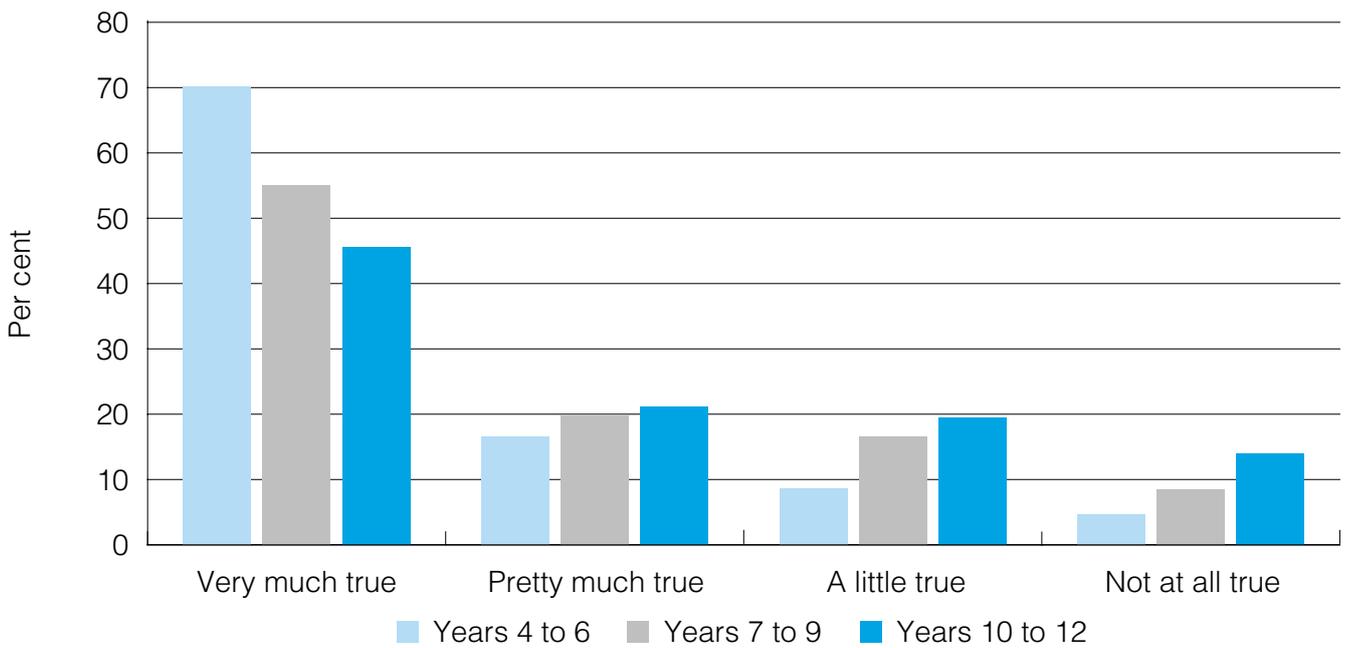
- 90.6 per cent reported it was true they lived with a parent or another adult who believes they will achieve good things (69.7% very much true and 20.9% pretty much true).
- 81.5 per cent reported it was true they lived with a parent or another adult who listens to them when they have something to say (52.1% very much true and 29.4% pretty much true).
- 82.6 per cent reported their mum (or someone who acts as their mum) cares about them a lot (7.9% said their mum cares 'some').
- 72.1 per cent reported their dad (or someone who acts as their dad) cares about them a lot (11.7% said their dad cares 'some').
- 78.6 per cent reported their family gets along well or very well (37.6% very well and 41.0% well).
- 76.8 per cent reported it was true they lived with a parent or another adult they can talk to about their problems (57.8% very much true and 19.0% pretty much true).
- 61.9 per cent reported other family cares about them a lot (20.2% said other family cares 'some').
- 49.0 per cent reported their brothers/sisters care about them a lot (26.2% said their siblings care 'some').

**72% of students** feel their dad cares about them a lot and **82% feel** their mum cares about them a lot.

For some of these statements, there were significant differences between younger and older students. Older students were less likely than younger students to report it was very much true they lived with an adult they can talk to about their problems (70.2% Years 4–6 vs 55.0% Years 7–9 and 45.6% Years 10–12).

Congruently, a higher proportion of Year 10 to 12 than Year 4 to 6 students (13.9% vs 4.7%) reported it was not at all true they lived with an adult they can talk to about their problems. While these differences were found for both male and female students, the change was more substantial for female Year 7 to 12 students of whom 14.3 per cent said this was not at all true.

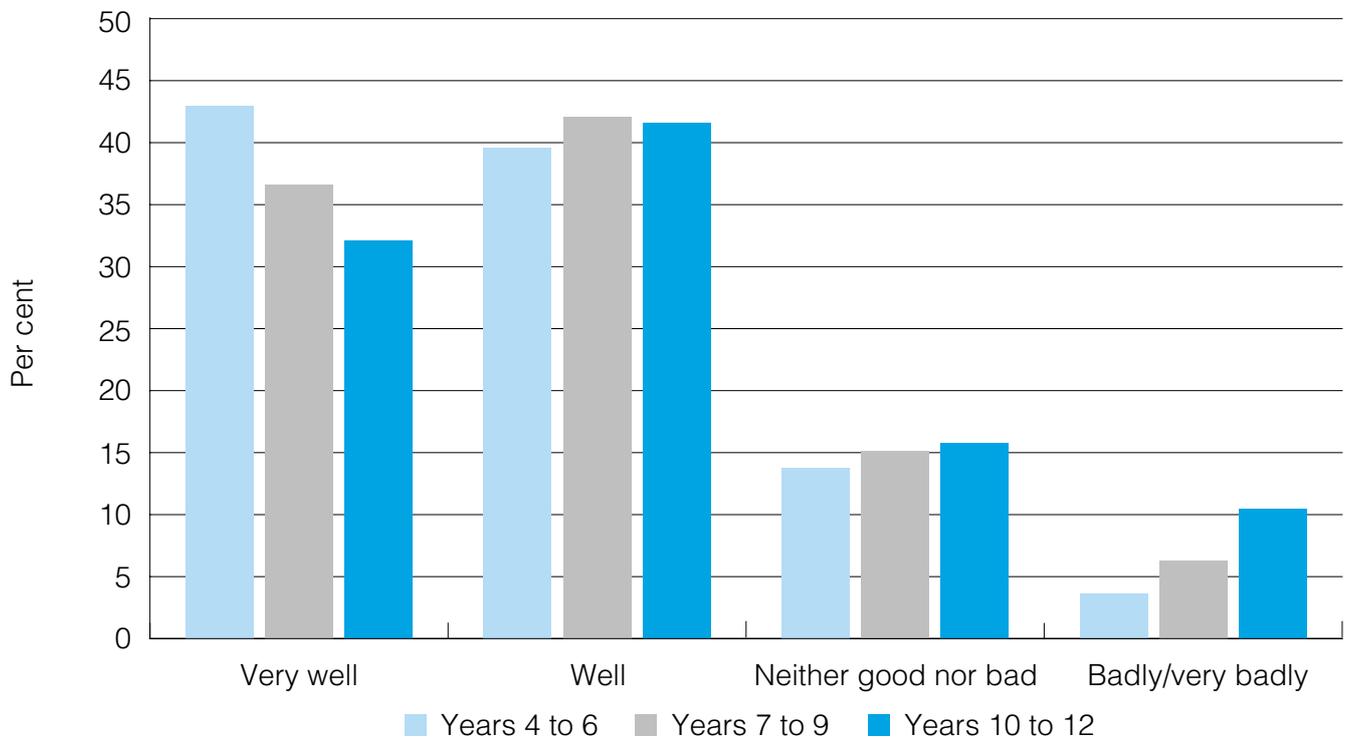
**Graph 6.2.1: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying the statement ‘Where I live, there is a parent or adult who I can talk to about my problems’ is very much true, pretty much true, a little true or not at all true, by year group**



Similarly, a smaller proportion of Year 7 to 12 than Year 4 to 6 students reported their family gets along very well (32.1% Years 10–12 and 36.6% Years 7–9 vs 43.0% Years 4–6). Female Year 7 to 12 students were less likely

than male students to say their family gets along well and correspondingly, almost one-in-ten (9.4%) said their family gets along badly or very badly.

**Graph 6.2.2: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying their family gets along very well, well, neither good nor bad, badly/very badly, by year group**



**1-in-10 Year 7-12 students** do not live with a parent or adult they feel they can talk to about their problems.

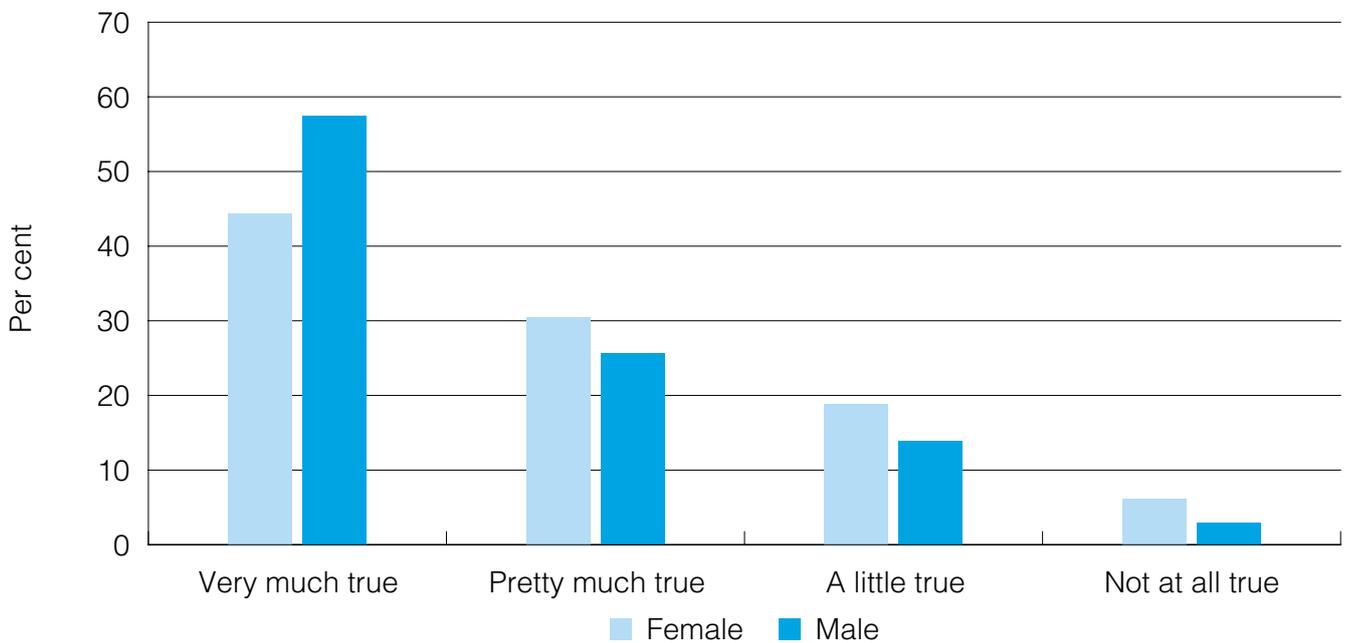
**1-in-10 female Year 7-12 students** said their family gets along badly.

A higher proportion of male than female Year 7 to 12 students said it was very much true that they lived with a parent or another adult who listens to them when they have something to say (57.5% male vs 44.4% female). Similarly, a higher proportion of female students said it was not at all true (6.2% female vs 3.0% male).

Similar proportions of male and female Year 4 to 6 students and male Year 7 to 12 students reported their dad cares about them a lot, however, a smaller proportion of female Year 7 to 12 students said the same (Years 4–6: 74.2% male and 77.1% female, Years 7–12: 73.7% male vs 66.7% female).

**One-quarter of female Year 7-12 students do not feel confident they have a parent who will listen to them when they have something to say.**

**Graph 6.2.3: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying the statement ‘Where I live, there is a parent or adult who listens to me when I have something to say’ is very much true, pretty much true, a little true or not at all true, by gender**



### Friendships

Relationships with friends are critical for children and young people as they provide social and emotional support and can be a protective factor against bullying and mental health issues.<sup>24, 25, 26</sup> Supportive relationships with friends also help children and young people develop patterns of persistence and motivation in their schooling.<sup>27</sup> During adolescence, young people increase their independence from family and friendships become more important.

The Commissioner's consultations with children and young people across WA have consistently found that having friends is one of the most important things to them.

Year 4 to 12 students were asked a range of questions about making and keeping friends, having enough friends and how much they think their friends care about them.

For all students in Years 4 to 12, the survey found:

- 54.5 per cent of students felt they are very good at making and keeping friends and a further 37.7 per cent said they are okay at this.
- 85.2 per cent reported they felt they have enough friends.
- 46.5 per cent of students felt their friends care about them a lot and 43.0 per cent said some.

For some of these statements there were significant differences between younger and older students. Year 4 to 6 students were more confident than Year 7 to 12 students about their ability to make and keep friends with 60.5 per cent reporting they are very good at this compared to 54.8 per cent of Year 7 to 9 students and only 46.7 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students.

Younger students were also more likely to report that they feel their friends care about them a lot (50.8% Years 4–6 vs 45.4% Years 7–9 and 42.4% Years 10–12). With regards to having enough friends, whilst the majority of all students felt they have enough friends, 18.5 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students did not feel they have enough friends.

In general, female Year 7 to 12 students were less confident than male students about their ability to make and keep friends (46.4% female very good vs 55.9% male very good) and more likely to feel that they do not have enough friends (17.8% female vs 11.7% male).

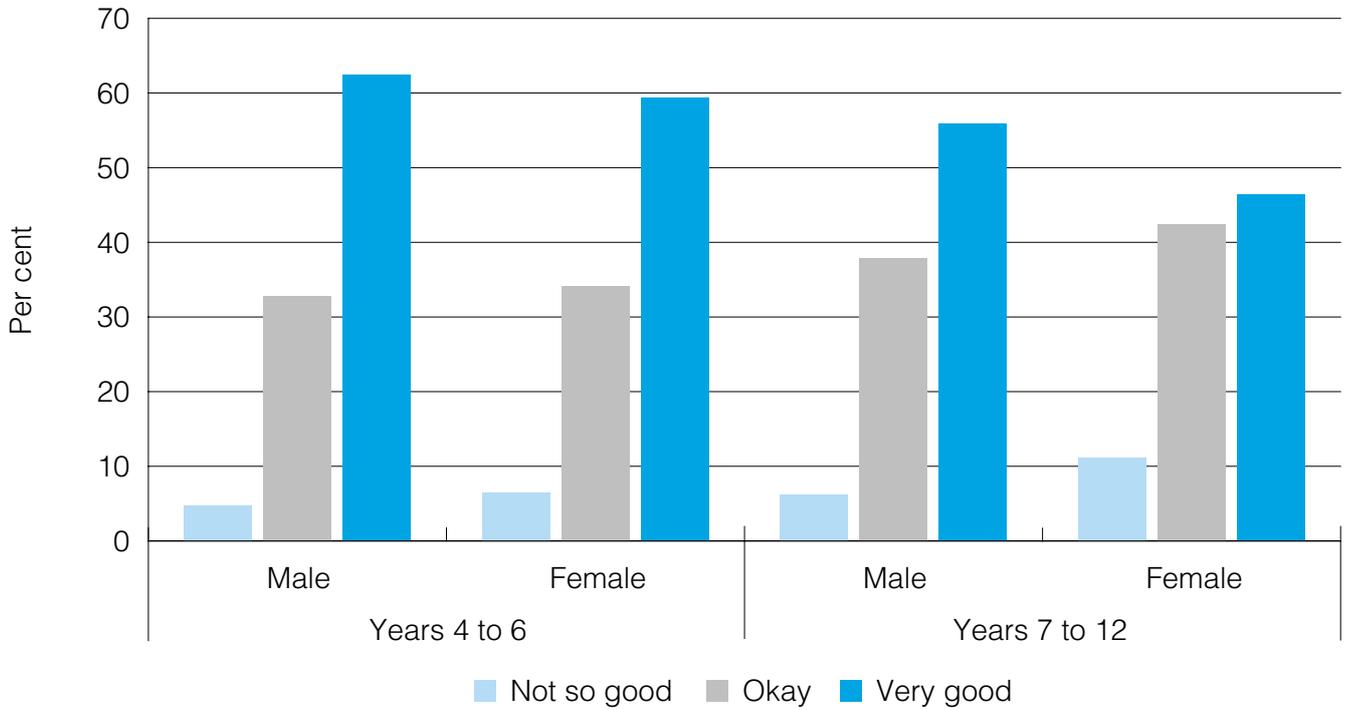
24 Healy KL & Sanders MR 2018, 'Mechanisms Through Which Supportive Relationships with Parents and Peers Mitigate Victimization, Depression and Internalizing Problems in Children Bullied by Peers', *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, Vol 49, pp. 800-813.

25 Bayer J et al 2018, 'Bullying, mental health and friendship in Australian primary school children', *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, Vol 23, No 4, pp. 334-340.

26 Gray S et al 2018, 'Adolescents relationships with their peers', *LSAC Annual Statistical Report 2017*, Vol 8, Australian Institute of Family Studies, p. 47.

27 Martin A & Dowson M 2009, 'Interpersonal Relationships, Motivation, Engagement and Achievement: Yields for Theory, Current Issues and Educational Practice', *Review of Educational Research*, Vol 79 No 1, pp. 327-365.

**Graph 6.2.4: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they are very good, okay or not so good at making friends, by gender and year group**



**More than one-half (54%)** of students feel they are very good at making and keeping friends and one-third (**38%**) say they are okay at it.

**1-in-5 (18%)** Year 10-12 students feel they do not have enough friends.

### 6.2.2 Material basics

Material circumstances of the family are a significant contributor to a child or young person's health and wellbeing. Access to basic material needs such as adequate food and security of housing protects against the risks of ongoing disadvantage.

In general, children and young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds are at greater risk of poor health over their lifetime, including higher rates of illness, disability and death.<sup>28</sup> Young people experiencing material deprivation, social exclusion or homelessness are also more likely to have poor mental health, high risk of alcohol and substance misuse and low educational and employment outcomes over the longer term.<sup>29, 30</sup>

Students in the survey were asked several questions about their house amenities and family and personal resources.

#### Number of homes

For all students in Years 4 to 12, 79.5 per cent reported living in one home and 20.5 per cent said they live in two or more homes. A higher proportion of Aboriginal (9.9%) than non-Aboriginal students (4.1%) reported living in more than two homes.

With regards to who they live with in their main home, most students reported living with their mother (91.4%), father (74.6%) and brothers/sisters (72.2%). Smaller proportions lived with other people in their main home such as grandparents (8.3%).

A higher proportion of Year 4 to 6 than Year 7 to 12 students reported they live with their father in their main home (79.3% Years 4–6 vs 71.8% Years 7–12).

### Second home

For students who reported having a second home, one-half (47.8%) of Year 4 to 6 but only about one-quarter (27.7%) of Year 7 to 12 students reported living in this home half of the time.

A higher proportion of Year 10 to 12 than Year 7 to 9 and Year 4 to 6 students reported living in their second home 'hardly ever' (26.5% Years 10–12 vs 14.2% Years 7–9 and 9.5% Years 4–6). In other words, older students spent less time living in their second home than younger students.

Most commonly, students who reported having a second home lived there with their father (63.7%) and brothers/sisters (44.7%). One-third (35.3%) of students lived in their second home with their mother.

For all students in Years 4 to 12 who live in a second home, 18.5 per cent reported they live with their step-mother, 12.5 per cent with step-brothers/step-sisters, 10.2 per cent with aunts/uncles, 14.5 per cent with grandparents and 5.1 per cent reported they live with other relatives. A higher proportion of Aboriginal (11.5%) than non-Aboriginal students (4.5%) reported living with other relatives.

### Bedrooms in the home

Most students reported having their own bedroom (80% of Year 4 to 6 students and 90% of Year 7 to 12 students). This year level difference was observed for both male and female students.

**80% of Year 4–6 students and 90% of Year 7–12 students have their own bedroom.**

28 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2018, *Australia's health 2018*, Cat. no. AUS 221, AIHW.

29 Saunders P et al 2019, 'Child deprivation in Australia: A child-focused approach', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol 54, Issue 1, pp. 4-21.

30 Barnett M 2008, 'Economic Disadvantage in Complex Family Systems: Expansion of Family Stress Models', *Clinical child and family psychology review*, Vol 11, No 3, pp. 145-161.

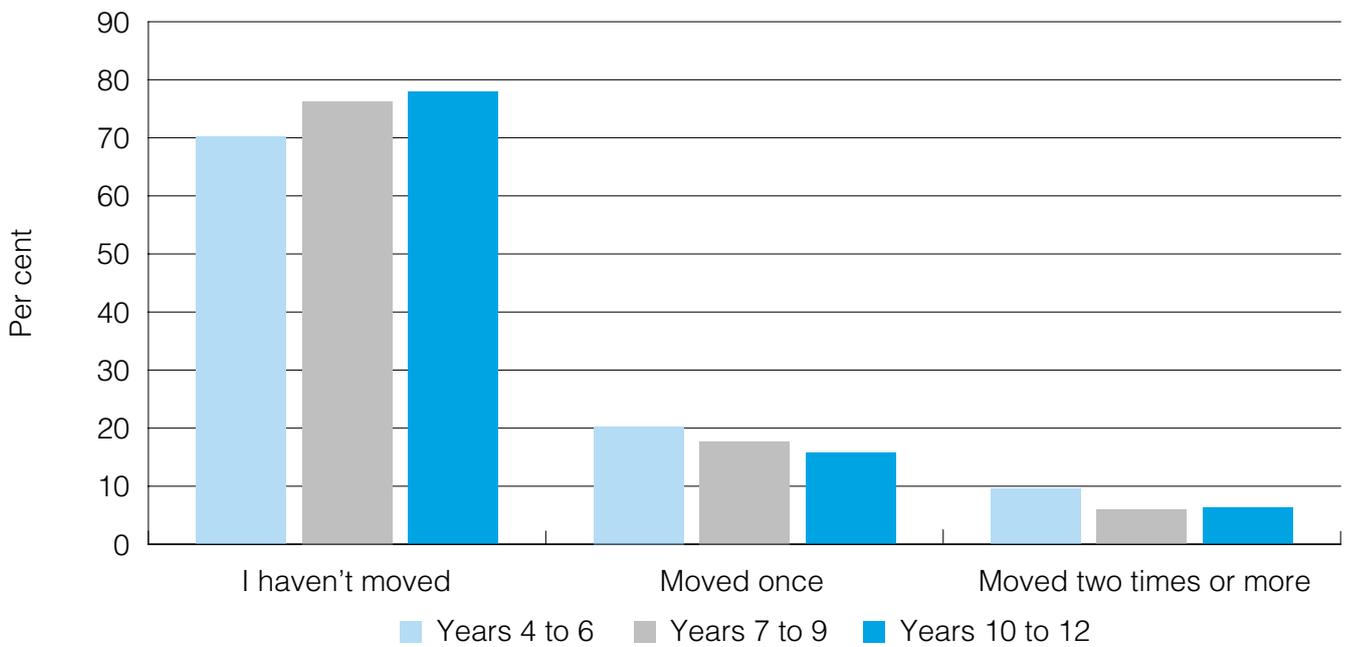
### Moving house

The majority of students (74.5%) reported they had not moved house in the last 12 months.

A higher proportion of students in Years 4 to 6 than in Years 7 to 12 had moved house in the last 12 months: 20.3 per cent of Year 4 to 6 students had moved once and 9.5 per cent had moved twice or more (compared to Years 7–12: 16.8% once and 6.2% twice or more).

**Nearly one-third of Year 4–6 students moved house in the last 12 months.**

**Graph 6.2.5: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they haven't moved, moved once or moved two times or more in the last 12 months, by year group**



### Family car

For students in Years 4 to 12, 3.9 per cent reported their family did not own a car used for family transport, 23.8 per cent had one car and 72.2 per cent reported their family had two or more cars.

A higher proportion of students in Years 7 to 12 reported their family had two or more cars compared to Years 4 to 6 (74.4% Years 7–12 vs 68.6% Years 4–6) and a lower proportion reported their family did not have a car (2.8% Years 7–12 vs 5.9% Years 4–6).

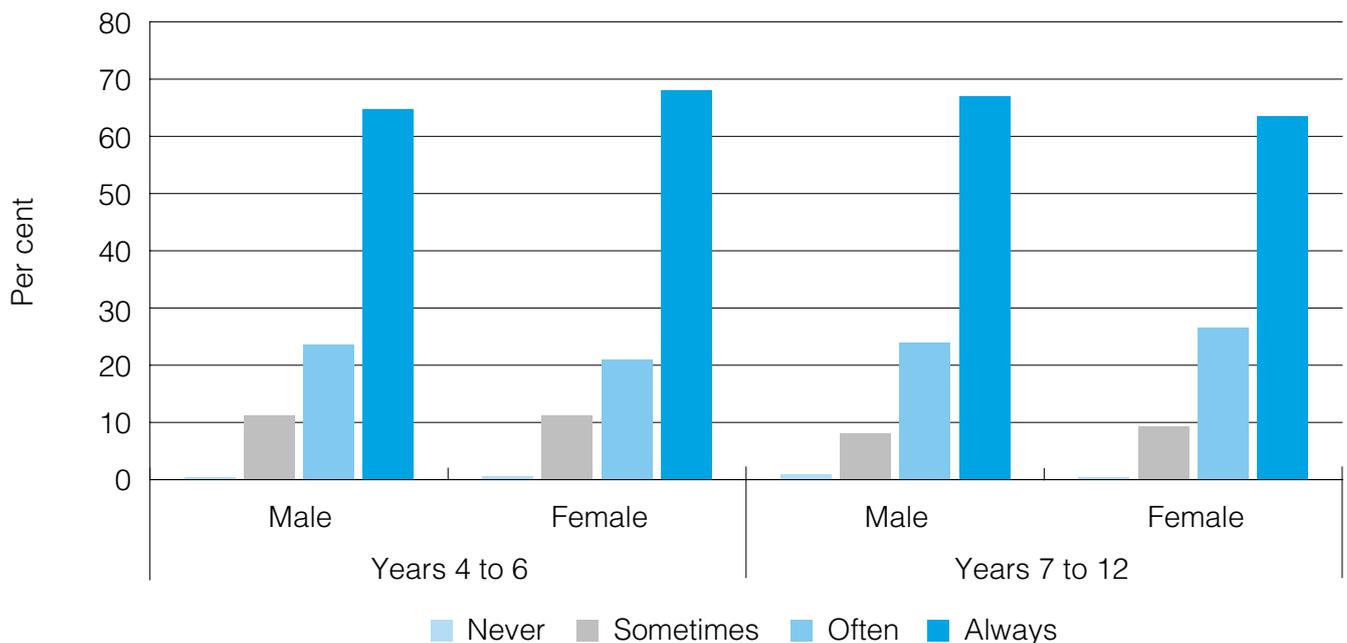
For all students in Years 4 to 12 who reported their family had at least one car, 3.7 per cent reported their family did not have enough money to put fuel in the car when needed and 5.9 per cent did not know. The majority of students (89.0%) reported their family had enough money to put fuel in the car when needed.

**4% of students reported their family did not own a car used for family transport.**

### Food at home

Two-thirds (65.4%) of students in Years 4 to 12 reported that if they were hungry there was always enough food for them to eat at home. Another 24.3 per cent reported there was often enough food to eat at home but one-in-ten (9.6%) said there was only sometimes enough food to eat at home and 0.8 per cent said never.

**Graph 6.2.6: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting there is always, often, sometimes or never enough food for them to eat at home when they are hungry, by year group and gender**



### Family holidays<sup>31</sup>

For Year 4 to 6 students, 20.6 per cent reported they had not been on a family holiday in the last 12 months. For Years 7 to 12, this proportion was higher, at 30.7 per cent. Conversely, a higher proportion of Year 4 to 6 than Year 7 to 12 students had been on a family holiday three or more times (32.5% Years 4–6 vs 19.4% Years 7–12).

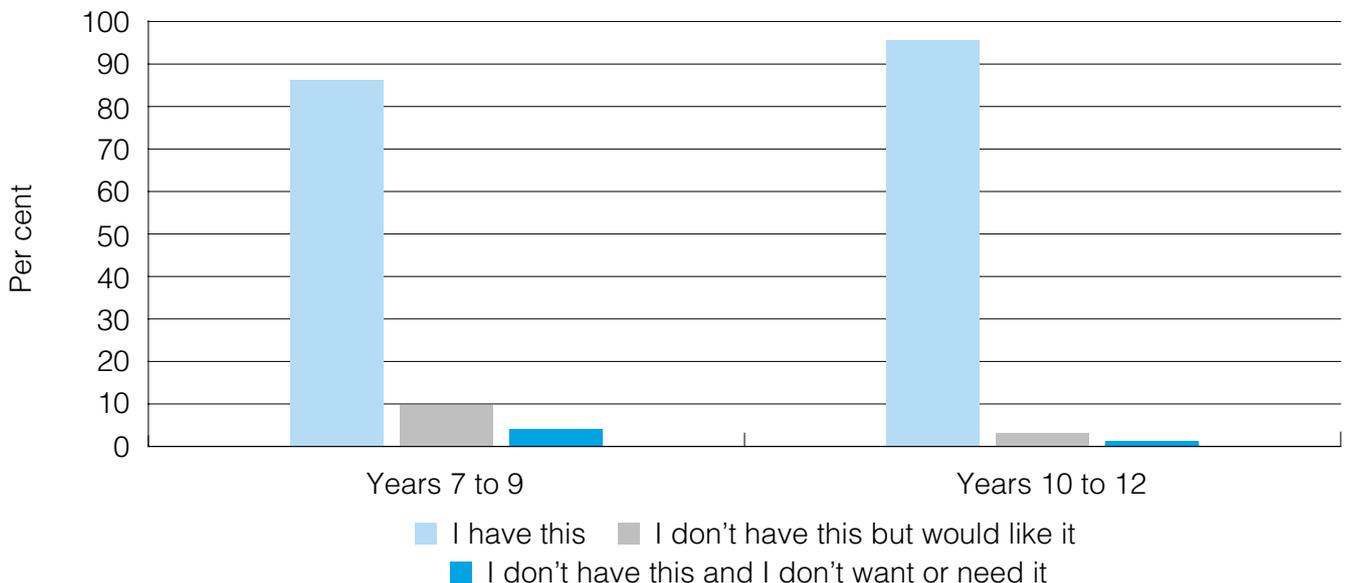
### Material deprivation

A number of questions asked students about whether they owned a series of items, or whether they would like to have it if they did not own the item.

- The vast majority of students (94.5%) reported they had access to the internet at home and 4.0 per cent reported they didn't have but would like this.
- Nearly all (95.6%) Year 10 to 12 students and 86.3 per cent of Year 7 to 9 students reported having their own mobile phone. 10 per cent of Year 7 to 9 students reported they didn't have but would like their own mobile phone.

- Almost 90 per cent of students reported there was enough money in their family for them to go on a school excursion or camp. A higher proportion of students in Years 10 to 12 than in Years 7 to 9 reported they didn't have but would like enough money in their family to go on a school excursion or camp (10.0% Years 10–12 vs 6.0% Years 7–9).
- Two-thirds of students (66.1%) reported they had some pocket money they could save each month and one-quarter (24.8%) reported they didn't have but would like this.
- Almost 90 per cent (88.9%) reported they had 'the right kind of clothes' and 7.2 per cent reported they didn't have but would like this.
- 80 per cent of Year 4 to 6 students and 60 per cent of Year 7 to 12 students reported having an iPad or tablet. 13.5 per cent reported they didn't have but would like an iPad or tablet.

**Graph 6.2.7: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they have or do not have their own mobile phone, by year group**



31 The variable 'family holiday' included weekends away and short and long trips.

### 6.2.3 Safe in the home

Feeling safe and being safe at home are critical for children and young people’s healthy development. A safe and supportive family provides a sense of security, fosters self-esteem and responds appropriately to young people’s needs.<sup>32</sup>

Conversely, children and young people who experience family violence, abuse and neglect are more likely to have poor outcomes including poor physical health, learning and developmental difficulties, higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse, mental illness, criminality, homelessness, later parenting issues and suicide.<sup>33</sup>

#### Feeling safe at home

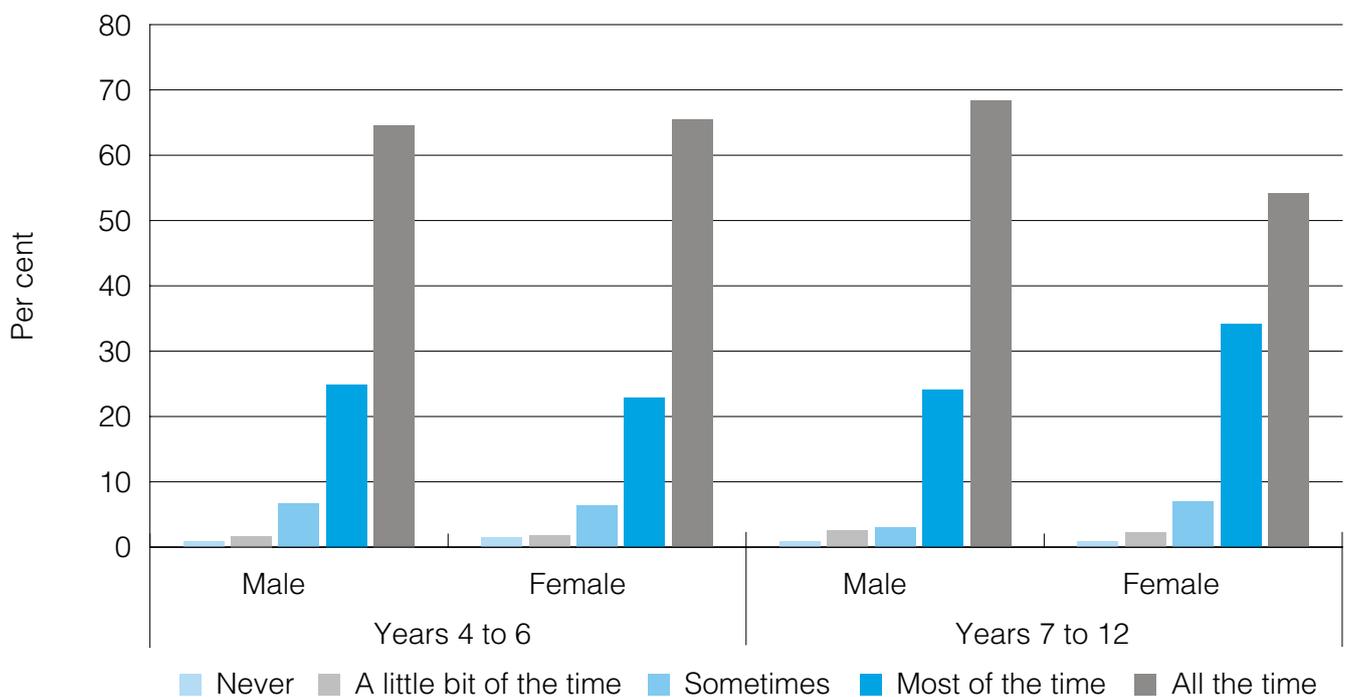
For all students in Years 4 to 12, 62.8 per cent reported they felt safe at home all the time and 27.4 per cent felt safe most of the time,

although three per cent of students reported feeling safe at home only a little bit of the time or never.

There was little difference between male and female Year 4 to 6 students, however, among Year 7 to 12 students female respondents were significantly less likely than male respondents to report feeling safe all the time (54.2% female vs 68.4% male).

**Nearly 1-in-2 female Year 7-12 students do not always feel safe at home.**

**Graph 6.2.8: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they feel safe at home all the time, most of the time, sometimes, a little bit of the time or never, by year group and gender**



32 Mullan K & Higgins D 2014, *A safe and supportive family environment for children: key components and links to child outcomes – Occasional Paper No 52*, Department of Social Services, p. 2.

33 Hunter C 2014, *Effects of child abuse and neglect for children and adolescents*, National Child Protection Clearinghouse Resource Sheet, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

**Staying away from home because of a problem**

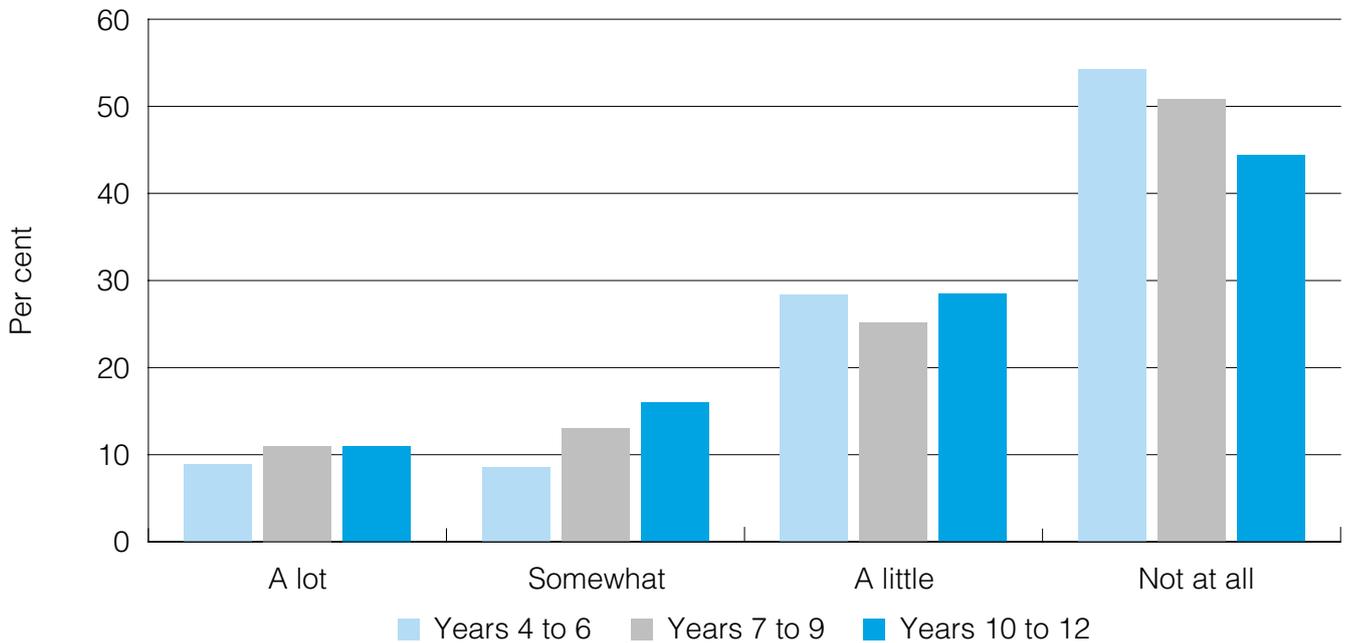
Thirty per cent of Year 7 to 12 students (30.3%) reported they had ever stayed away from home overnight because of a problem. A higher proportion of female than male students reported they had ever done this (36.3% female vs 23.7% male).

Among the students in Years 7 to 12 who reported they had stayed away from home overnight, 35.6 per cent reported they did this once and 31.7 per cent reported they did this more than once in the last 12 months.

**Family worries**

One-half of students (49.4%) in Years 4 to 12 reported they were not at all worried that someone in their home or family will be fighting. However, more than one-quarter (27.7%) were a little worried, 11.9 per cent were somewhat worried and 11.0 per cent were worried a lot. Older students were more likely than younger students to report being somewhat worried about this (14.4% Years 7–12 vs 7.6% Years 4–6).

**Graph 6.2.9: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting they worry a lot, somewhat, a little or not at all that someone in their home or family will be fighting, by year group**



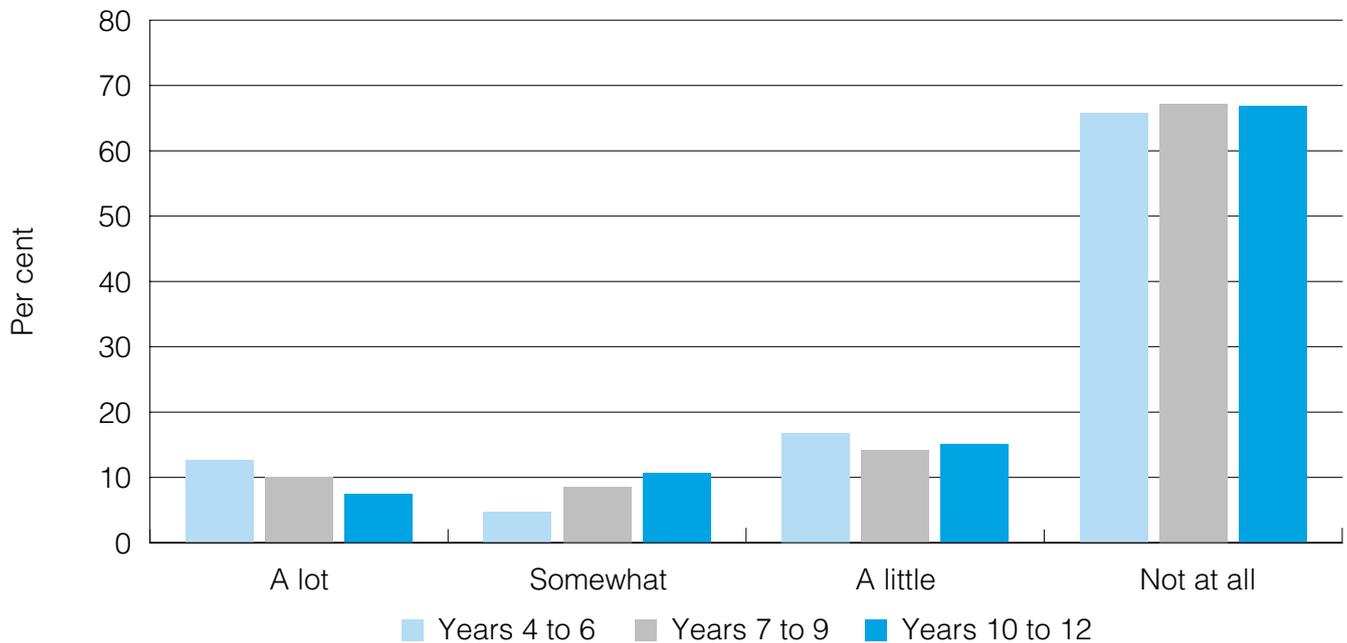
**3% of students feel safe at home only a little bit of the time or never.**

Two-thirds of students in Years 4 to 12 (66.6%) reported they were not at all worried that someone in their home or family will hurt somebody. However, 15.4 per cent were a little worried, 7.8 per cent were somewhat worried and 10.2 per cent were worried a lot.

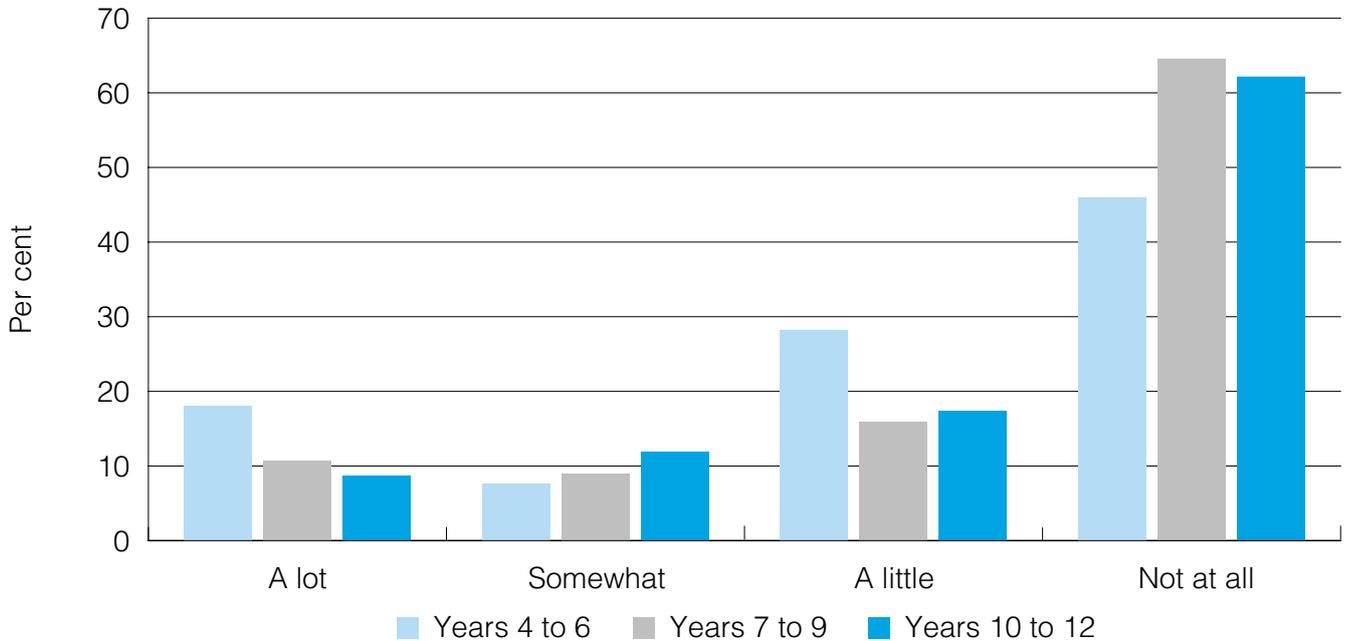
More than 60 per cent of Year 4 to 12 students (62.0%) reported they were not at all worried that someone in their home or family will move away; 18.6 per cent were a little worried, 8.1 per cent were somewhat worried and 11.3 per cent were worried a lot. Younger students were more likely than older students to be worried about this a lot (14.6% Years 4–6 vs 9.3% Years 7–12).

With regards to someone in their home or family hurting themselves, Year 4 to 6 students were more likely than Year 7 to 12 students to be worried about this a lot (18.1% Years 4–6 vs 9.7% Years 7–12). Correspondingly, less than one-half of students in Years 4 to 6 (46.0%) were not at all worried about this compared with 63.4 per cent of Year 7 to 12 students. It is possible that the difference between younger and older students is due to younger students interpreting this question differently to older students, whereby being hurt may include being accidentally hurt or injured, as opposed to behaving in a way that would purposefully result in injury.

**Graph 6.2.10: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting they worry a lot, somewhat, a little or not at all that someone in their home or family will hurt somebody, by year group**



**Graph 6.2.11: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting they worry a lot, somewhat, a little or not at all that someone in their home or family will hurt themselves, by year group**



More than 70 per cent of Year 4 to 12 students (72.3%) reported they were not at all worried that someone in their home or family will get arrested. However, 11.4 per cent were a little worried, 6.2 per cent were somewhat worried and a further 10.1 per cent were worried a lot. Younger students were more likely than older students to be worried a lot about this (14.6% Years 4–6 vs 7.5% Years 7–12). Again, the intent of this question may have been interpreted differently among younger and older students.

In general, female students across all year levels were more likely than male students to report being worried about any of the family worries included in the survey.

**More than one-half of Year 7-12 students worry that someone in their family will be fighting and 1-in-10 worry a lot.**

Younger students worry about someone in their home or family hurting themselves or moving away while older students worry about someone in the family fighting.

### 6.2.4 Safe in the community

Feeling safe in their neighbourhood and other communities or groups is essential for children and young people to develop their independence, engage in physical activity outside their home and build positive relationships with other adults and peers.<sup>34</sup>

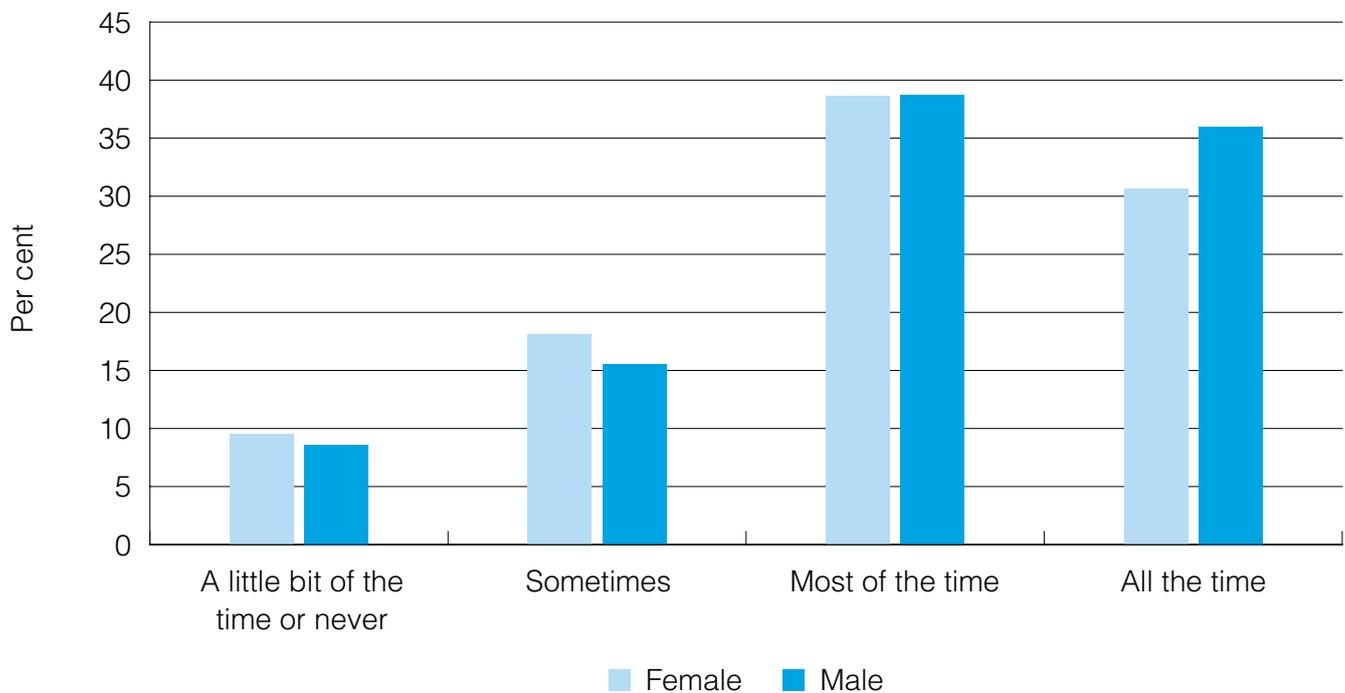
Children and young people who feel unsafe in their community are more likely to experience negative long-term outcomes including anxiety-related disorders, alcohol and drug misuse and behavioural difficulties.<sup>35</sup>

Students in the survey were asked about feeling safe in their local area and if they had an adult they could talk to.

Only one-quarter of Year 7 to 12 students (24.6%) and one-third of Year 4 to 6 students (33.1%) reported feeling safe in their local area all the time. Conversely, one-third of Year 7 to 12 students (32.5%) and one-quarter of Year 4 to 6 students (25.9%) felt safe only sometimes or less.

Female students reported feeling safe less often than male students. One-in-three female students reported feeling safe in their local area sometimes or less (21.0% sometimes and 13.5% a little bit of the time or never) and only one-quarter (24.0%) said they feel safe all the time.

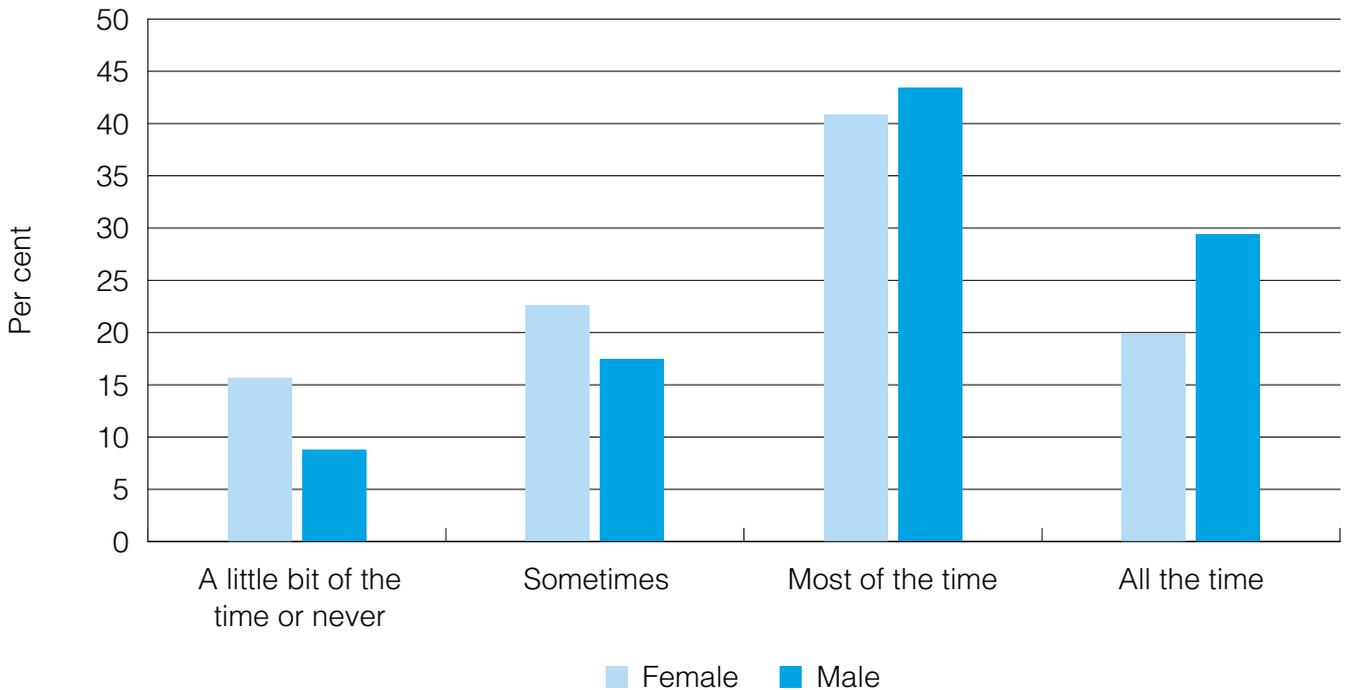
**Graph 6.2.12: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 6 students reporting they feel safe in their area all the time, most of the time, sometimes or a little bit of the time, by gender**



34 Mullan K & Higgins D 2014, *A safe and supportive family environment for children: key components and links to child outcomes – Occasional Paper No 52*, Department of Social Services, p. 2.

35 Hunter C 2014, *Effects of child abuse and neglect for children and adolescents*, National Child Protection Clearinghouse Resource Sheet, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

**Graph 6.2.13: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students reporting they feel safe in their area all the time, most of the time, sometimes or a little bit of the time, by gender**



With regards to feeling safe on buses or trains, 13.8 per cent of students in Years 7 to 12 reported they feel safe on buses or trains all the time and 36.0 per cent felt safe most of the time. However one-quarter of students (23.5%) felt safe only sometimes, 15.4 per cent a little bit of the time and 7.1 per cent said they never felt safe.

One-in-three female students reported never feeling safe on buses and trains or only a little bit of the time (9.6% never and 20.8% a little bit of the time).

Around four-in-five students said that if they were having any serious problems, there was an adult they would feel okay talking to. Younger students were more likely than older students to say this (82.9% Years 4–6 and 76.4% Years 7–12).

A high proportion of female Year 7 to 12 students did not feel they had an adult they would feel okay talking to, with 14.5 per cent responding no to this question and a further 13.6 per cent being unsure about this.

**1-in-3 female students** reported feeling safe in their local area sometimes or less.

**1-in-2 students** feel safe on buses and trains sometimes or less. The proportion is even greater for female students.

**1-in-3 female students** are not certain they have an adult they would feel okay talking to about serious problems.

### 6.2.5 Experiences of violence

Every child or young person has the right to live free from violence, abuse and neglect.<sup>36</sup> Most children and young people live in safe and supportive homes, however, for some home can be a place of conflict and distress as a result of family and domestic violence. Equally, some children and young people are exposed to violence in the community, commonly referred to as violence that is not perpetrated by a family member and is intended to cause harm.<sup>37</sup>

Living with family and domestic violence has short and long-term impacts on children and young people's health and wellbeing. These include mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, difficulties at school, behavioural issues including violent behaviour, a higher likelihood of alcohol and drug misuse and greater risk of homelessness.<sup>38, 39</sup>

Children and young people who experience violence in the community are also at higher risk of negative long-term outcomes including substance abuse, anxiety-related disorders and exhibiting future violent behaviour. Exposure to violence in the community can also contribute to problems forming positive and trusting relationships and is strongly associated with young people exhibiting conduct problems.<sup>40</sup>

The survey asked Year 9 to 12 students a series of questions about being physically harmed.

One-half of students (50.8%) reported they had ever been hit or physically harmed by someone on purpose.

A higher proportion of male than female students reported they had ever been hit or physically harmed by someone on purpose (55.7% male vs 44.7% female).

For students in Years 9 to 12 who reported they had ever been physically harmed on purpose, 30.4 per cent reported this happened once or twice in the last 12 months, 12.8 per cent reported this happened three or four times and 14.8 per cent reported this happened five or more times in the last 12 months.

The most frequently reported locations for this to occur were at home (53.2%) and at school (43.6%).

Female students were most likely to be physically harmed at home with almost three-quarters of respondents (72.5%) saying this. Male students on the other hand were most likely to be physically harmed at school (57.4%).

**One-half of Year 9–12 students (50.8%) reported they had been hit or physically harmed by someone on purpose.**

**Female students are most likely to be physically harmed at home while male students are most likely to be physically harmed at school and other public places.**

36 Article 19 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* [website], retrieved from: <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>>.

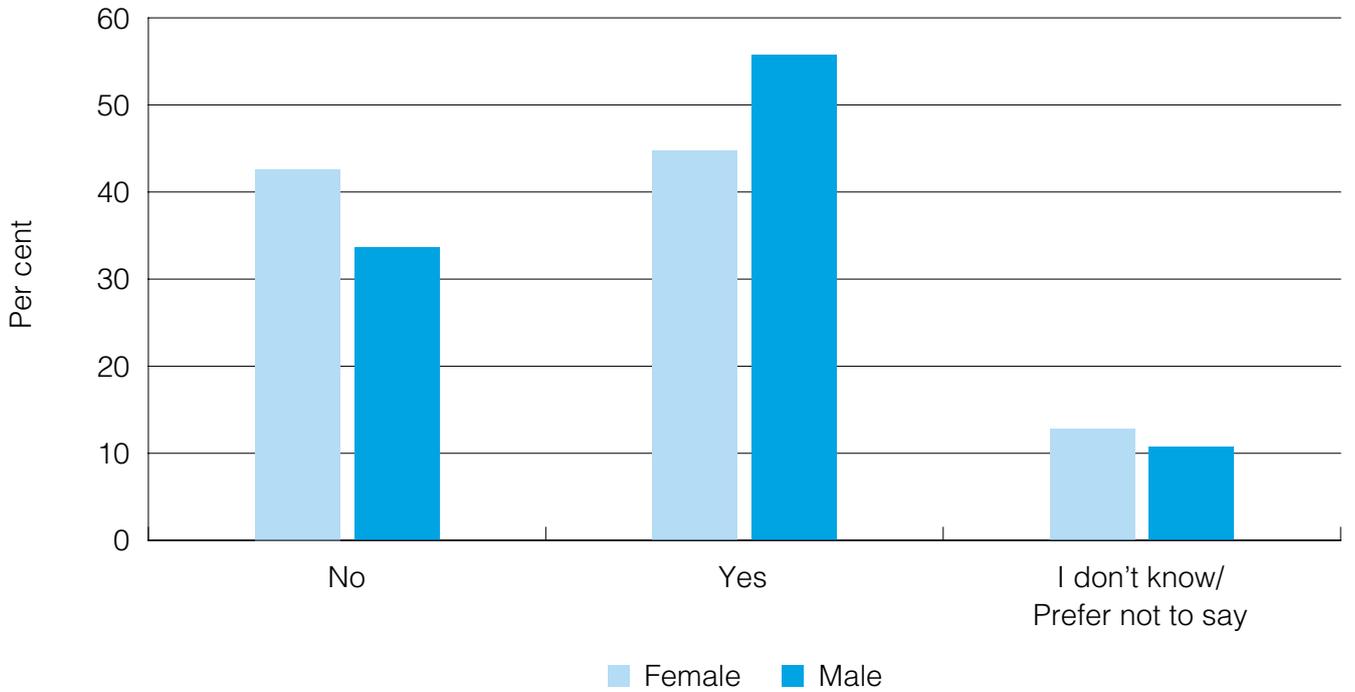
37 Guerra NG & Dierkhising C 2011, *The Effects of Community Violence on Child Development*, Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, retrieved from: <<http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/social-violence/according-experts/effects-community-violence-child-development>>.

38 Campo M 2015, *Children's exposure to domestic and family violence: CFCA Paper No. 36*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, p. 6.

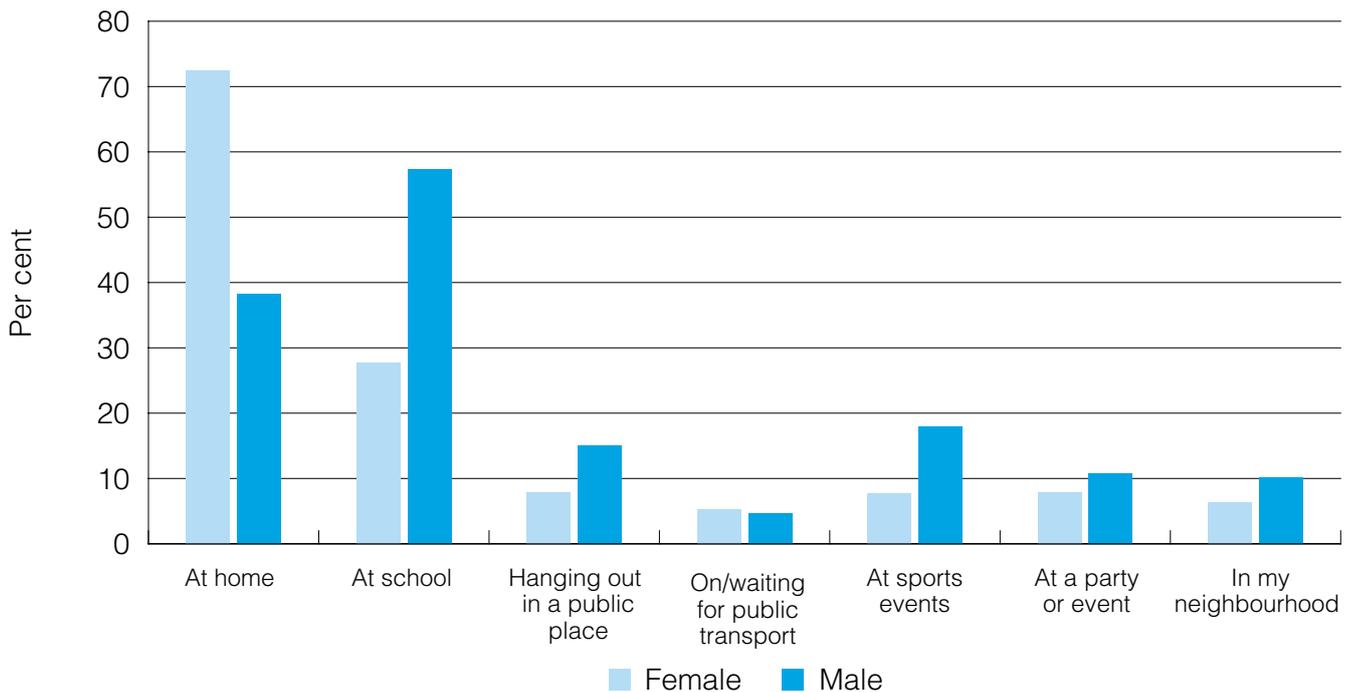
39 Richards K 2011, 'Children's exposure to domestic violence in Australia', *Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice*, No 419, Australian Institute of Criminology, p. 3.

40 Kersten L et al 2017, Community Violence Exposure and Conduct Problems in Children and Adolescents with Conduct Disorder and Healthy Controls, *Frontiers in Behavioural Neuroscience*, Vol 11.

**Graph 6.2.14: Proportion of Year 9 to Year 12 students saying they have or have not ever been physically harmed by someone on purpose, by gender**



**Graph 6.2.15: Proportion of Year 9 to Year 12 students identifying location/s where they have been physically harmed by someone on purpose, by gender**



## Snapshot

### Safe and healthy relationships

- More than one-half (54.5%) of students feel they are very good at making and keeping friends and one-third (37.7%) say they are okay at it.
- **1-in-5 Year 10–12 students said they feel they do not have enough friends.**
- 72% of students feel their dad and 82% feel their mum cares about them a lot.
- **1-in-10 Year 7–12 students do not live with a parent or adult they feel they can talk to about their problems.**
- 1-in-10 female Year 7–12 students said their family gets along badly.
- **One-quarter of female Year 7–12 students do not feel confident they have a parent who will listen to them when they have something to say.**

### Material needs

- 80% of Year 4–6 students and 90% of Year 7–12 students have their own bedroom.
- **Nearly one-third of Year 4–6 students moved house in the last 12 months.**
- 4% of students reported their family did not own a car used for family transport.
- **1-in-10 students reported that only sometimes is there enough food for them to eat at home when they are hungry and 1% said there is never enough food.**
- 1-in-3 Year 7–12 students reported they had not been on a family holiday in the last 12 months.
- **96% of Year 10–12 students own a mobile phone.**

### Feeling physically and emotionally safe

- Nearly 1-in-2 female Year 7–12 students do not always feel safe at home.
- **3% of students feel safe at home a little bit of the time or never.**
- More than one-half of Year 7–12 students worry that someone in their family will be fighting and 1-in-10 worry a lot.
- **Younger students worry about someone in their home or family hurting themselves or moving away, while older students worry about someone in the family fighting.**
- 1-in-3 female students reported feeling safe in their local area sometimes or less.
- **1-in-2 students feel safe on buses and trains sometimes or less. The proportion is even greater for female students.**
- 1-in-3 female students are not certain they have an adult they would feel okay talking to about serious problems.
- **One-half of Year 9–12 students (50.8%) reported they had been hit or physically harmed by someone on purpose.**
- Female students are most likely to be physically harmed at home, while male students are most likely to be physically harmed at school and other public places.

### 6.3 Learning and participating

Students' experiences with school and learning and the level of autonomy they are given in childhood and adolescence are critical determinants of their lifetime wellbeing. The essential outcomes in this domain are that students in Year 4 to Year 12 are engaged and supported with learning, that they transition to high school successfully, feel prepared for and feel positive about their future and that they have an active voice and are listened to as is every child's right.

The survey used a range of indicators to measure these outcomes including questions about students' views on the importance of regularly attending school, their relationships and sense of belonging at school and support for learning. It also asked respondents to report on their opportunities to learn and develop useful skills, their emerging autonomy and being heard.

#### 6.3.1 Attendance

Regular attendance and engagement in school is important for the development of intellectual and social emotional skills and contributes significantly to not only educational outcomes but outcomes across the life course. While engagement with school and learning is a multifaceted concept, absence can be considered a marker of disengagement.<sup>41</sup>

In the survey, students were asked about the number of schools they had attended. About one-half (48.7%) of Year 4 to 6 students had attended just one school between Pre-Primary and their year level and 30.8 per cent had attended two schools. Five per cent (4.6%) of Year 4 to 6 students reported having attended five or more schools.

For students in Years 7 to 12, more than two-thirds (69.4%) reported attending one school since starting high school, 19.7 per cent had attended two schools and 11.0 per cent had attended three or more schools.

All students were asked how important it was to them and their parents that they go to school every day: 62.4 per cent of students said it was very important to them to be at school every day, 31.9 per cent said it was somewhat important and 5.7 per cent said it was not very important.

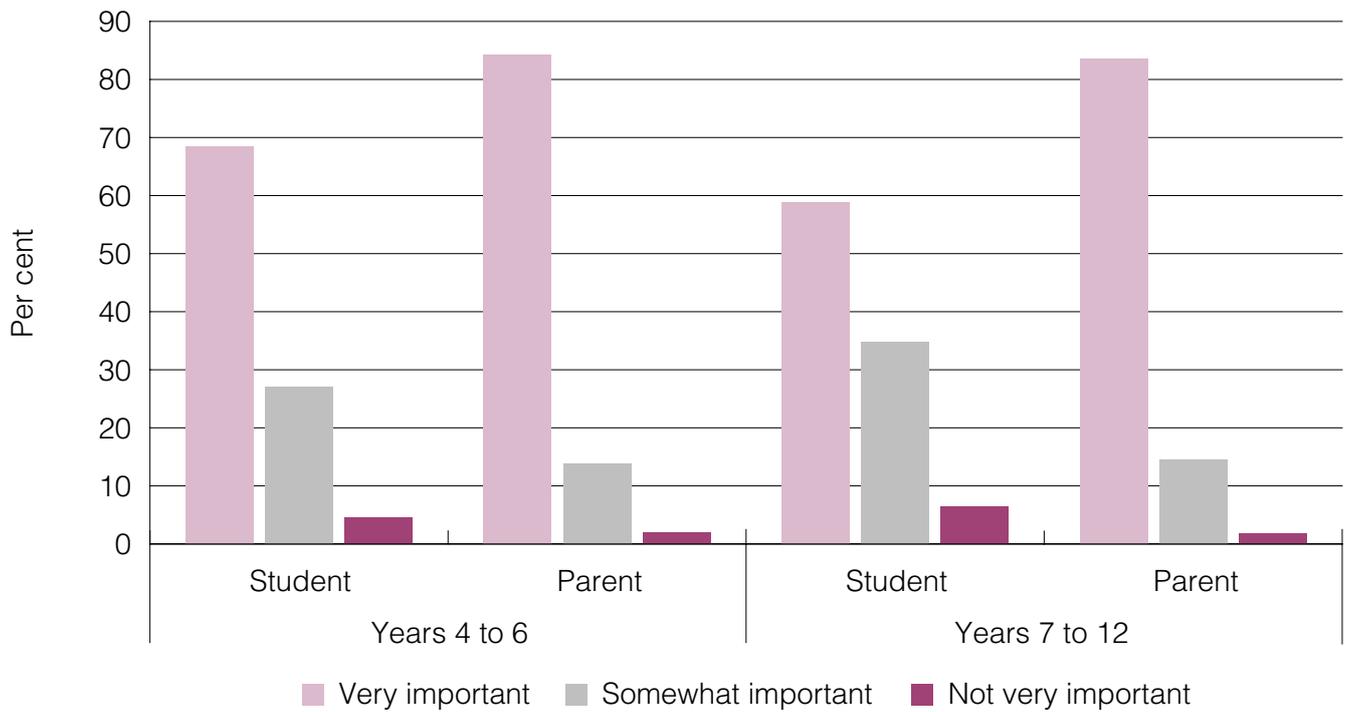
The proportion of students reporting that it was very important to be at school every day was lower among Year 7 to 12 students (58.8%) than Year 4 to 6 students (68.4%).

With regards to parents, 83.6 per cent of students said it was very important to their parents that they go to school every day, 14.3 per cent said it was somewhat important and 1.9 per cent said it was not very important.

**One-half of Year 4-6 students  
have attended one primary school.  
5% have attended five or more.**

<sup>41</sup> Hancock K & Zubrick S 2013, *Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts*, Report for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Centre for Child Health Research and University of Western Australia.

**Graph 6.3.1: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying it is very important, somewhat important or not very important to them or their parents that they go to school every day, by year group**



Students were also asked if they felt worried when they miss school (Year 4–6 students) and whether they had wagged school this year (Year 7–12 students): one-third of Year 4 to 6 students (33.2%) did not worry about missing school while one-half (54.4%) worried a little and one-in-ten (12.4%) worried lots.

With regards to wagging, one-in-ten Year 7 to 12 students reported having wagged school with the proportion being higher among Year 10 to 12 than Year 7 to 9 students (15.7%

Years 10–12 vs 8.8% Years 7–9). For the students who reported wagging school, one-quarter had wagged six days or more (12.0% 6–10 days and 17.7% 10 days or more).

Some 15 per cent of Year 7 to 12 students reported ever being suspended from school with male students being more likely than female students to report this (19.7% male vs 9.1% female).

### 6.3.2 Liking school and sense of belonging

Sense of belonging is a basic human need such as food or shelter and is critically important to a child or young person’s healthy physical and mental development. Sense of belonging at school can be referred to as ‘the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school environment’.<sup>42</sup>

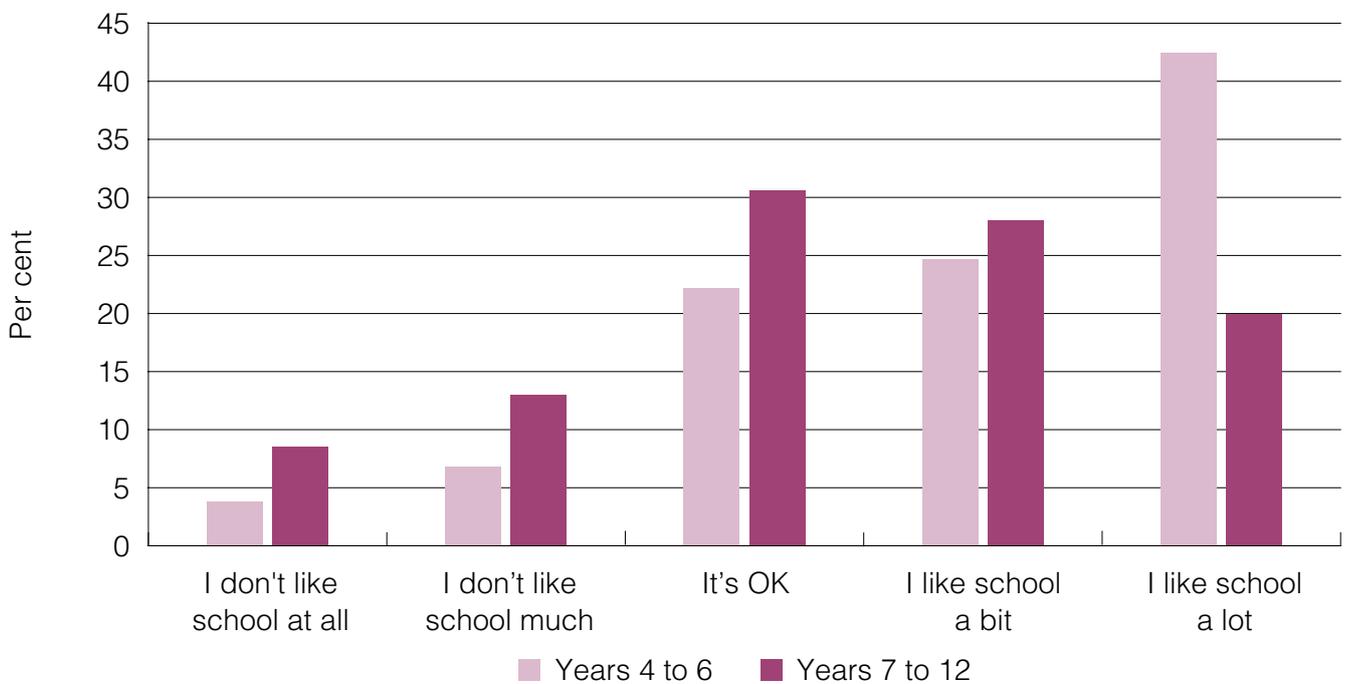
Research suggests that sense of belonging at school and the degree to which students report liking school has an important influence on students’ academic motivation, engagement and participation and that unless students identify well with their schools, their educational outcomes will be limited.<sup>43</sup>

### Feelings towards school

Feelings about school varied substantially for students in Years 4 to 6 and Years 7 to 12.

Twice as many students in Years 4 to 6 than in Years 7 to 12 reported liking school a lot (42.5% Years 4–6 vs 20.0% Years 7–12). Correspondingly, twice as many Year 7 to 12 than Year 4 to 6 students reported that they don’t like school much (13.0% Years 7–12 vs 6.8% Years 4–6) or they don’t like school at all (8.5% Years 7–12 vs 3.8% Years 4–6).

**Graph 6.3.2: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting they like school a lot, a bit, it’s OK, they don’t like school much or not at all, by year group**



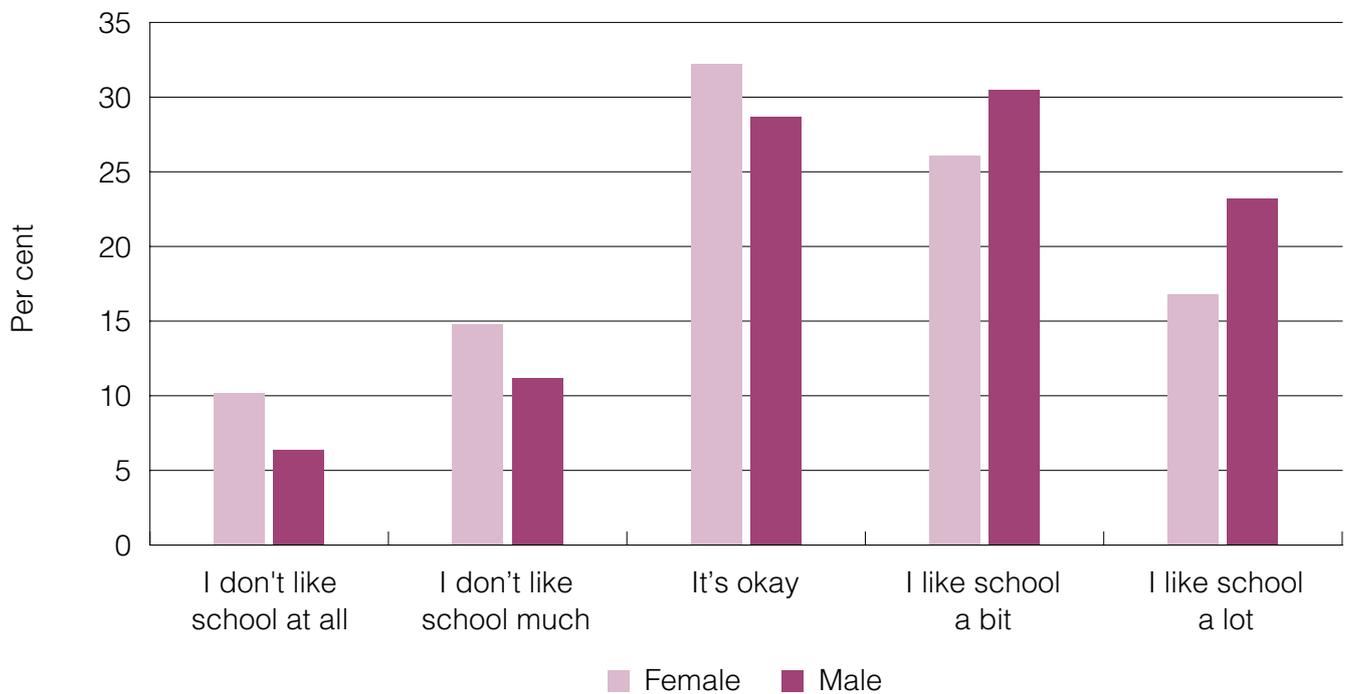
42 Goodenow C 1993, ‘The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates’, *Psychology in the Schools*, Vol 30 No 1, pp. 79-90, p. 80.

43 Goodenow C & Grady KE 1993, ‘The Relationship of School Belonging and Friends’ Values to Academic Motivation among Urban Adolescent Students’, *The Journal of Experimental Education*, Vol 26 No 1, pp. 60-71.

Among Year 7 to 12 students, a higher proportion of male than female students reported liking school a lot (23.2% male vs 16.8% female) and a higher proportion of female (10.2%) than male (6.4%) students reported they did not like school at all.

The difference between younger and older students liking school a lot is particularly significant for female students: 44.1 per cent of female Year 4 to 6 students reported liking school a lot compared to only 16.8 per cent of female students in Years 7 to 12.

**Graph 6.3.3: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students reporting they like school a lot, a bit, it's okay, they don't like school much or not at all, by gender**



More male students reported liking school a lot while more female students reported they did not like school at all.

**One-quarter of female Year 7-12 students (25.0%) do not like school and less than 1-in-5 like it a lot.**

6. Speaking Out Survey results

Nine-in-ten students in Years 4 to 6 agreed they feel happy at school (39.8% agreed and 50.8% strongly agreed) and they like learning at school (42.1% agreed and 46.2% strongly agreed).

Twice as many male than female students disagreed that they like learning at school with 15 per cent of male students saying this compared to eight per cent of female students (male: 10.5% disagree and 5.2% strongly disagree vs female: 4.9% disagree and 3.0% strongly disagree).

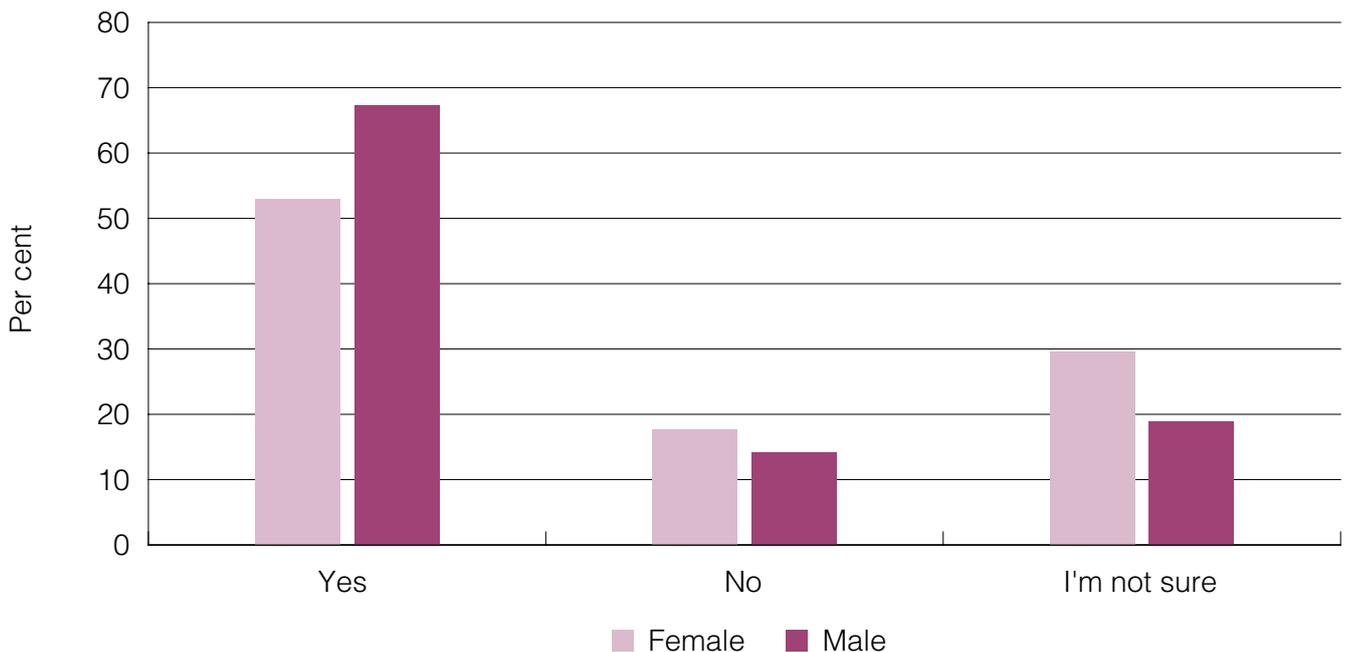
Three-in-five students in Years 7 to 12 (59.7%) agreed they feel like they belong to their school with one-in-four (24.1%) being unsure and 16 per cent saying they don't feel like they belong.

Male students were significantly more likely than female students to feel like they belong to their school (67.2% male vs 52.9% female). Female students were more likely to be unsure about this (29.5% female vs 18.8% male).<sup>44</sup>

**9-in-10 female Year 4-6 students are happy at school and like learning while only 1-in-2 female students in Year 7-12 say they like school.**

**Two-thirds of male Year 7-12 students feel like they belong at their school compared to one-half of female students who feel the same.**

**Graph 6.3.4: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they do, do not or they are not sure if they feel like they belong to their school, by gender**



<sup>44</sup> The SOS19 results for students' feelings towards school and their views of school and learning more broadly are comparable to the results of the Commissioner's *School and Learning Consultation* undertaken in 2016. For further information and results refer to Commissioner for Children and Young People 2018, *School and Learning Consultation: Technical Report*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth, pp. 31-35.

### Relationships at school

Quality interpersonal relationships have been identified through the Commissioner’s School and Learning Consultation<sup>45</sup> as the foundation for student engagement with school and in learning activities. Relationships with peers, teachers and other school staff foster in students a sense of belonging and of feeling valued. Through relationships, students are more likely to develop patterns of persistence and motivation and have access to a support network.<sup>46</sup>

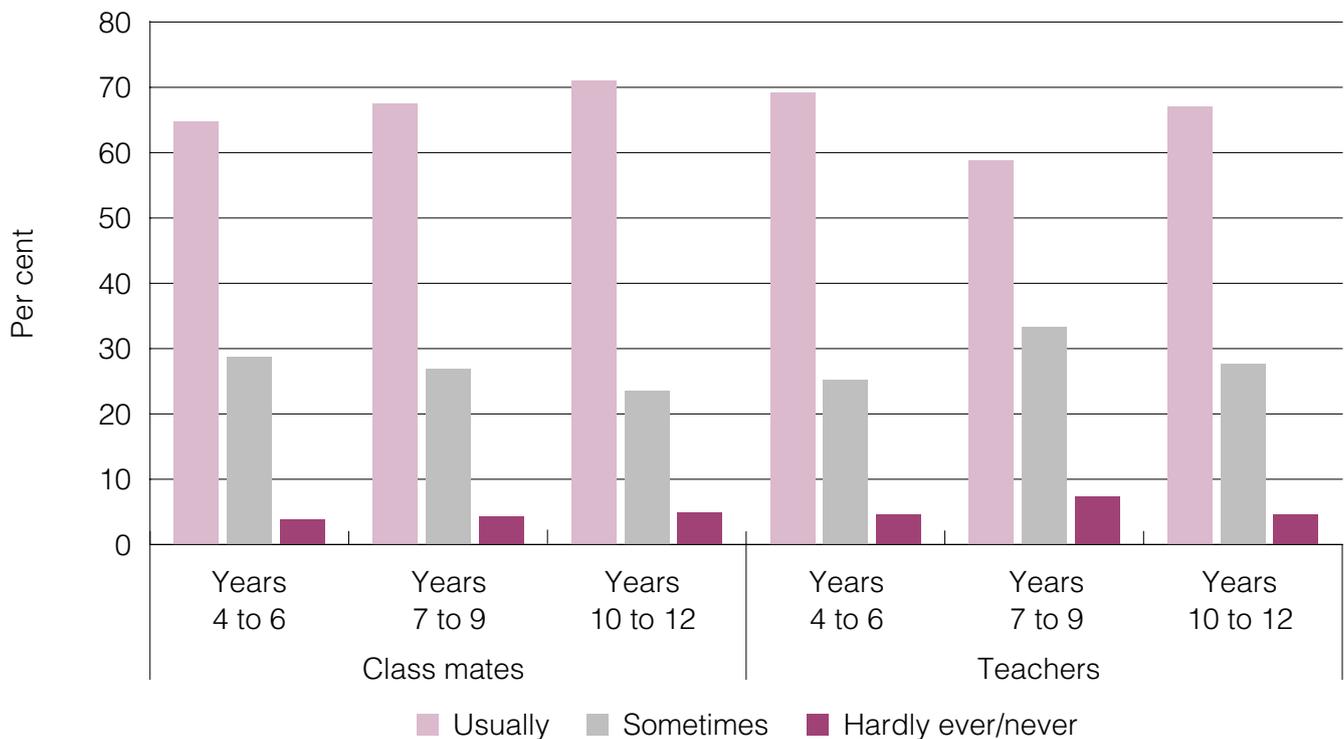
Two-thirds of students said they usually get along with class mates (67.6%) and with their teachers (66.8%). Conversely, around one-third of students reported getting along with their class mates and teachers sometimes or less (31.0% and 31.7% respectively) including around five per cent of students who said

they hardly ever or never get along with class mates or with their teachers.

Male and female students across all year levels gave similar ratings except for students in Years 4 to 6, where a significantly higher proportion of female than male students said they usually get along with teachers (79.4% female vs 68.3% male).

Year level played an important role for relationships with teachers: Year 4 to 6 students were most likely to say that they usually get along with their teachers followed by students in Years 10 to 12. Students in Years 7 to 9 were least likely to say this (58.8% Years 7–9 vs 73.8% Years 4–6 and 67.1% Years 10–12).

**Graph 6.3.5: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they usually, sometimes or hardly ever/never get along with their class mates or teachers, by year group**



45 Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2018, *School and Learning Consultation: Technical Report*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, pp. 46-62.

46 Martin A & Dowson M 2009, 'Interpersonal Relationships, Motivation, Engagement and Achievement: Yields for Theory, Current Issues and Educational Practice', *Review of Educational Research*, Vol 79 No 1, pp. 327-365.

Students were also asked a series of questions about whether there is a teacher or another adult at their school who believes in them, listens to them and cares about them.

On average, around three-quarters of Year 4 to 12 students reported they felt the following statements were true:

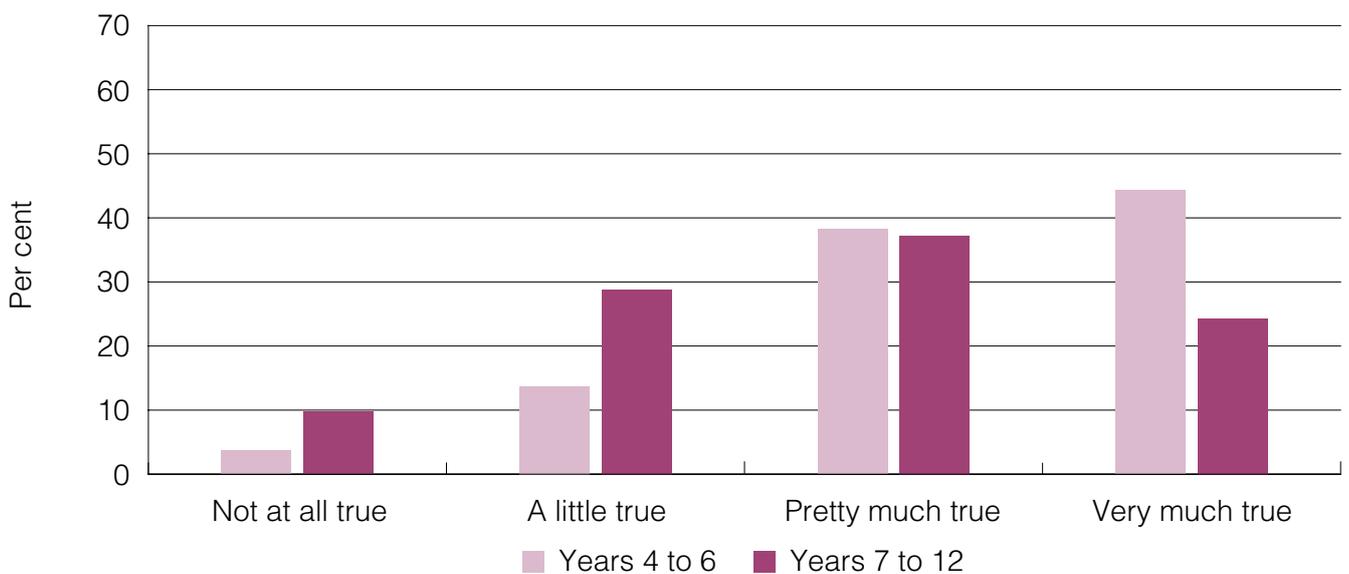
- 81.3 per cent reported it was true there is a teacher or another adult in the school who believes the student will achieve good things (46.3% very much true and 35.0% pretty much true).
- 79.3 per cent said it was true that teachers listen (45.2% very much true and 34.1% pretty much true).
- 69.3 per cent said it was true that a teacher or another adult at their school really cares about them (31.7% very much true and 37.6% pretty much true).

Responses were more positive among Year 4 to 6 students than those in Years 7 to 12. Fewer students in Years 7 to 12 answered that these statements were very much or pretty much true and instead reported they were a little true or not at all.

Most notably, a higher proportion of students in Years 4 to 6 than in Years 7 to 12 said it was very much true that there is a teacher or other adult at their school who really cares about them (44.3% Years 4–6 vs 24.3% Years 7–12). Conversely, twice as many Year 7 to 12 than Year 4 to 6 students said it was only a little true (28.8% Years 7–12 vs 13.7% Years 4–6) or not at all true (9.8% Years 7–12 vs 3.7% Years 4–6).

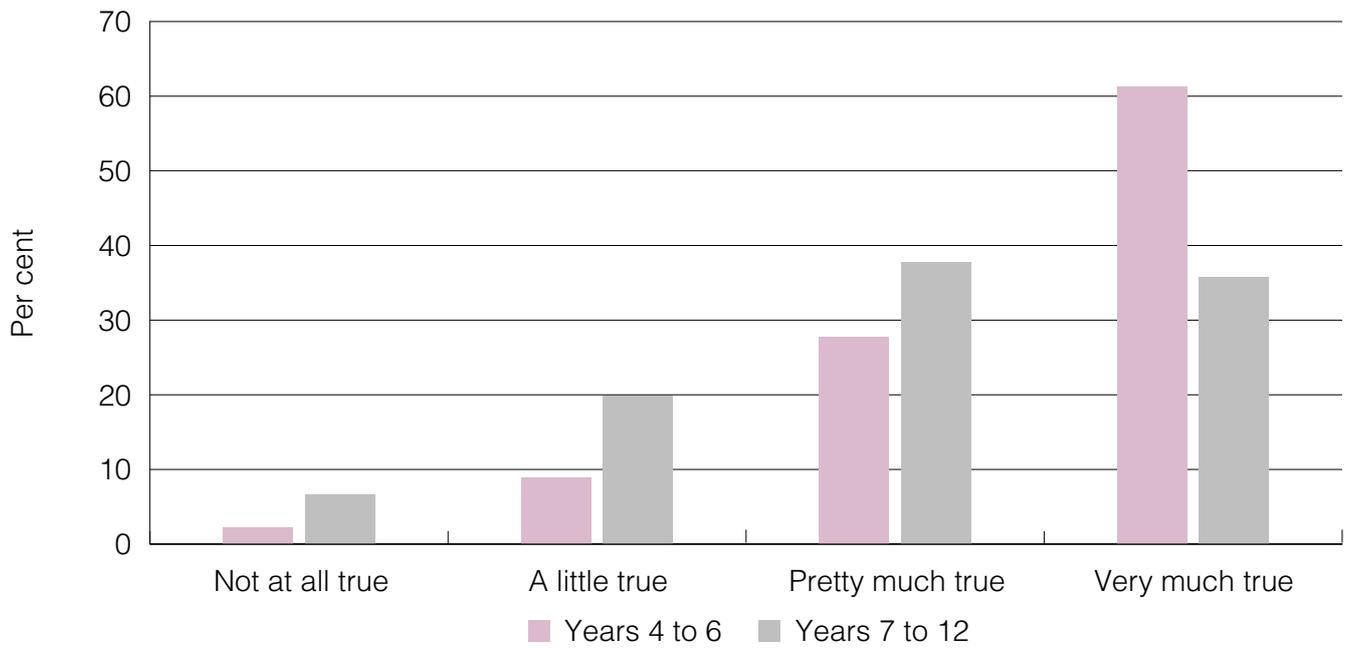
Similar response patterns were found for the remaining statements about students' relationships with teachers and responses did not vary by gender.<sup>47</sup>

**Graph 6.3.6: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting it is very much, pretty much, a little or not at all true that at their school there is a teacher or another adult who really cares about them, by year group**



<sup>47</sup> The SOS19 results for students' views on their relationships at school are broadly consistent with the results of the Commissioner's *School and Learning Consultation* undertaken in 2016. For further information refer to Commissioner for Children and Young People 2018, *School and Learning Consultation: Technical Report*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth, pp. 46-62 and pp. 63-89.

**Graph 6.3.7: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting it is very much, pretty much, a little or not at all true that at their school there is a teacher or another adult who listens to them when they have something to say, by year group**



Most students feel teachers care, believe and listen to them but **almost one-third of Year 7-12 students** feel this is not or only a little true for them.

### Feeling safe at school

Within schools, feeling and being safe is essential for students to be ready and able to engage with learning. When students do not feel safe it affects their behaviour and their feelings towards school and learning.

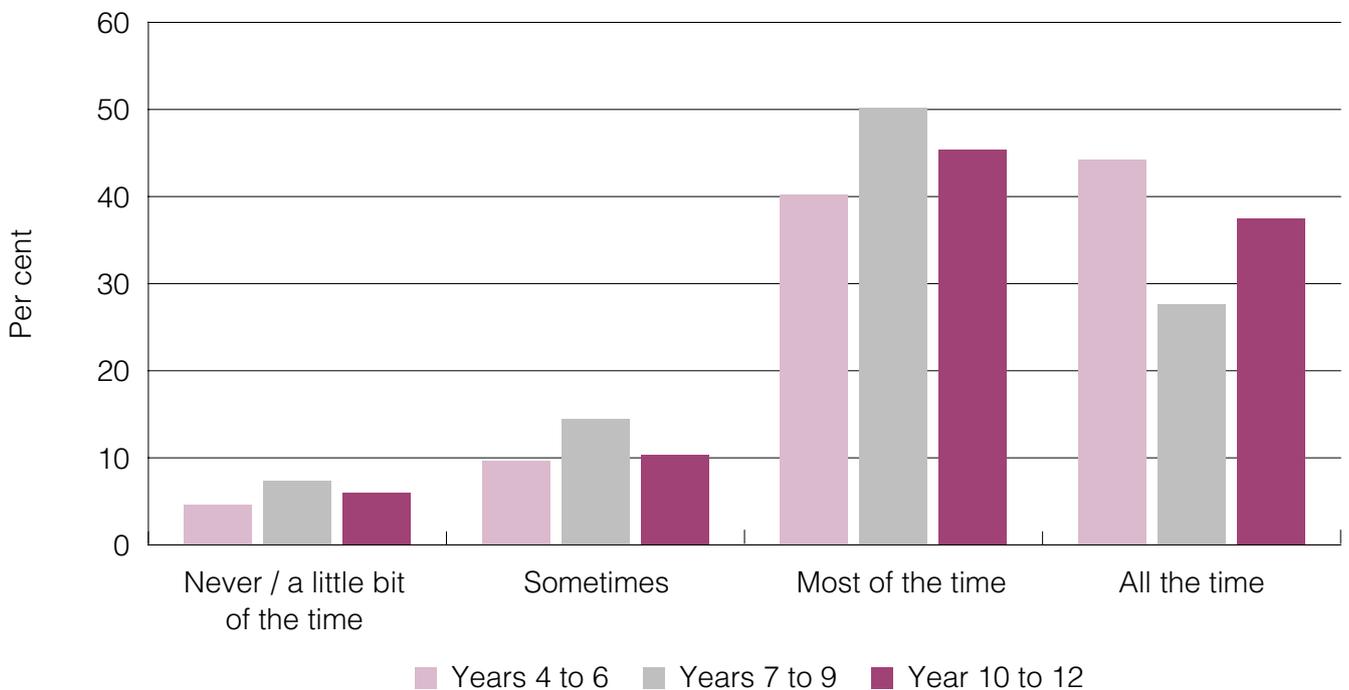
Evidence suggests that children and young people who feel safe are more resilient, confident and have a stronger sense of self-identity.<sup>48</sup>

Across Years 4 to 12, 36.7 per cent of students felt safe all the time, 45.0 per cent most of the time, 11.5 per cent sometimes, 4.1 per cent a little bit of the time and 1.8 per cent never.

Students in Years 7 to 9 were least likely to say they feel safe all the time compared to other age groups (27.6% Years 7–9 vs 44.2% Years 4–6 and 37.5% Years 10–12). Correspondingly, more than 20 per cent of Year 7 to 9 students reported feeling safe only sometimes or less (14.5% sometimes, 4.8% a little bit of the time and 2.6% never).<sup>49</sup>

Most students feel safe at school, however, **almost 1-in-5** feel safe only sometimes or less, especially Year 7-9 students.

**Graph 6.3.8: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they feel safe at school all the time, most of the time, sometimes or a little bit of the time/never, by year group**



48 Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) 2014, *The Nest action agenda: Technical document*, ARACY.

49 The SOS19 results for students' feelings of safety at school and their experiences of bullying are broadly consistent with the results of the Commissioner's *School and Learning Consultation* undertaken in 2016. For further information refer to Commissioner for Children and Young People 2018, *School and Learning Consultation: Technical Report*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, pp. 160-176.

### Bullying

Students were asked several questions relating to if and how often they had been bullied or cyber bullied by students from their school.

Overall, a little less than one-half (47.5%) of students across Years 4 to 12 reported they had never been bullied, over one-quarter (27.6%) had ever been bullied, 2.6% had ever been cyber bullied, 11.4% had been both bullied and cyber bullied. 7.5% of students did not know if they had been bullied and 3.3% preferred not to say.

The proportion of students saying they had never been bullied was similar for students in Years 4 to 6 (46.9%) and Years 7 to 12 (47.9%), but the form of bullying varied by year group. A higher proportion of students in Years 4 to 6 than in Years 7 to 12 reported they had ever been bullied (33.8% Years

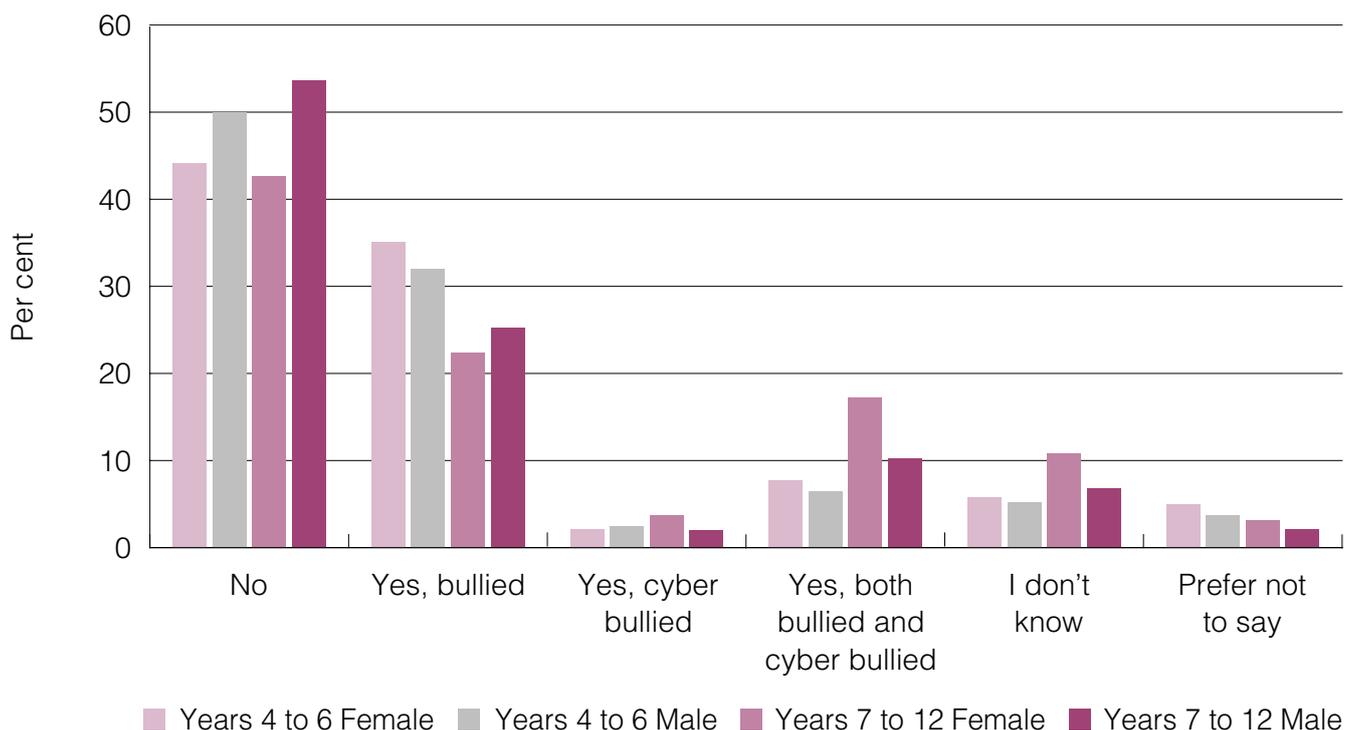
4–6 vs 24.0% Years 7–12), while a higher proportion of Year 7 to 12 students reported being both bullied and cyber bullied (14.0% Years 7–12 vs 7.1% Years 4–6).

For Year 7 to 12 students, a higher proportion of female than male students had been both bullied and cyber bullied (17.2% female vs 10.2% male), or were unsure if they had been bullied (10.8% female vs 6.8% male).

**One-half of Year 4-12 students said they have been bullied.**

**17% of female and 10% of male Year 7-12 students have been both bullied and cyber bullied.**

**Graph 6.3.9: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting they have or have not been bullied, cyber bullied or both by students from their school or they don't know, by year group and gender**



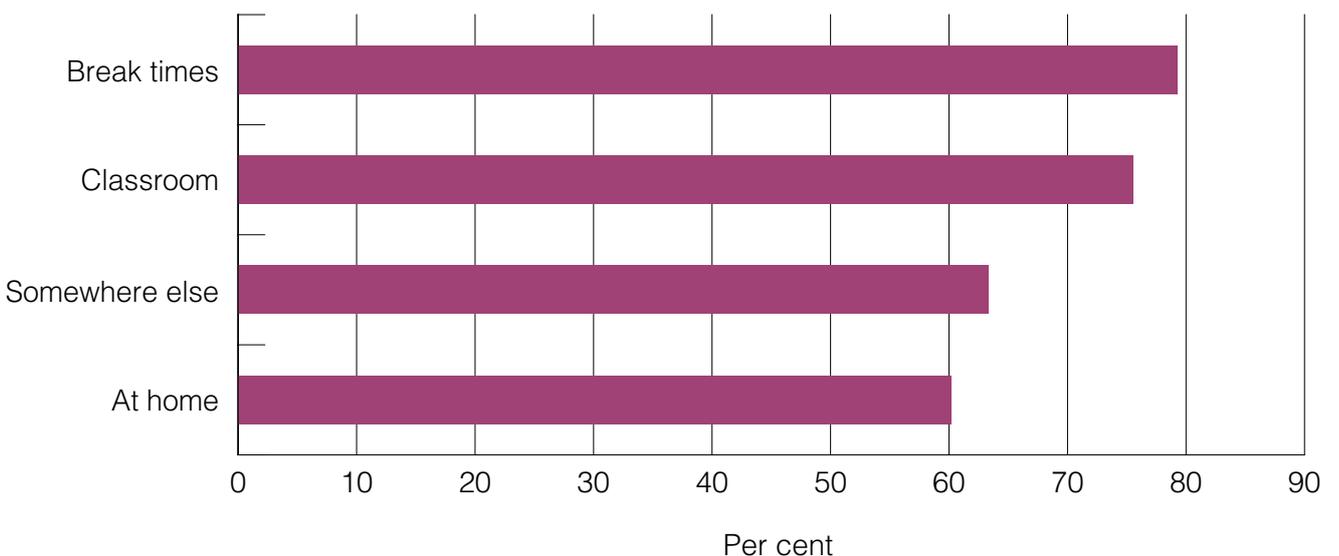
Among students who reported having ever been bullied, around one-third (37.9%) reported having been bullied within the past three months. This equates to 15.7 per cent of all students having been bullied within the past three months.

Students in Years 4 to 6 were most likely to have been bullied followed by students in Years 7 to 9 (32.5% Years 4–6 and 29.3% Years 7–9 vs 13.5% Years 10–12). Students in Years 10 to 12 were least likely to have been bullied, indicating that bullying is less common among students in senior secondary school years.

With regards to where the bullying or cyber bullying has occurred, Year 4 to 12 students who had been bullied or cyber bullied within the last three months reported:

- 79.8 per cent had been bullied at least once during break times, with 33.0 per cent bullied at break times once a week or more.
- 62.9 per cent had been bullied at least once in the classroom, with 27.6 per cent saying they were bullied in the classroom once a week or more.
- 45.2 per cent had been bullied somewhere else, with 17.2 per cent bullied somewhere else once a week or more.
- 38.4 per cent had been bullied at home by other students from their school, with 16.3 per cent saying this happened once a week or more.
- 31.7 per cent had been bullied on the way to or from school, with 11.9 per cent being bullied on the way to or from school once a week or more.

**Graph 6.3.10: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students who had been bullied in the last 3 months reporting where the bullying has occurred, by location**



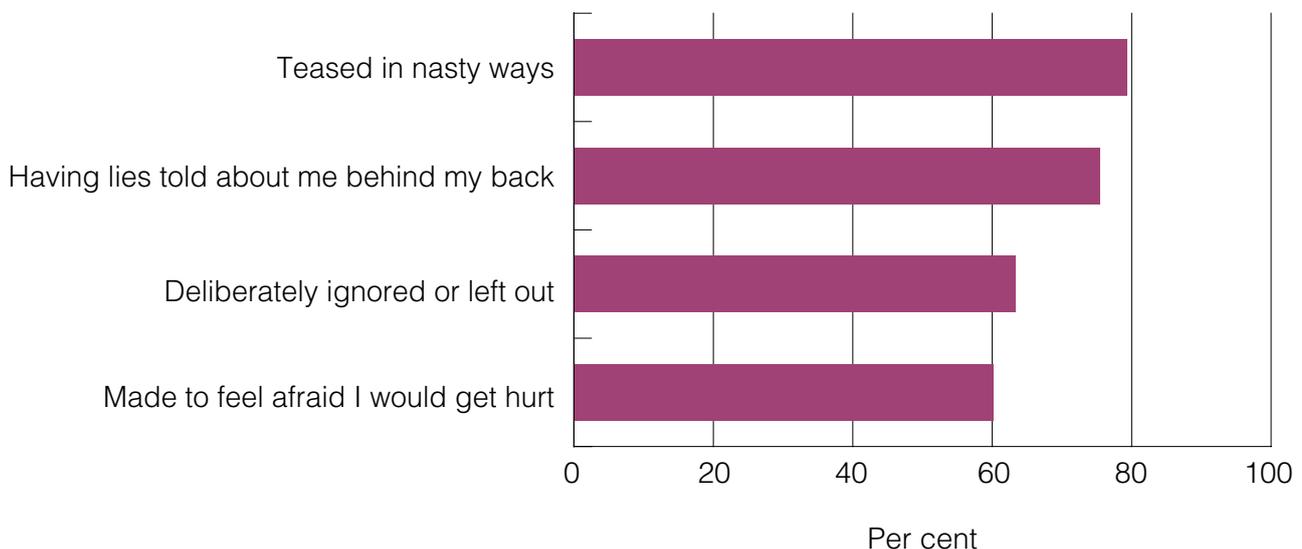
With regards to the type of bullying they had experienced, Year 4 to 12 students who had been bullied or cyber bullied within the last three months reported:

- 79.3 per cent had been teased in nasty ways, with 34.5 per cent reporting this happened once a week or more.
- 75.5 per cent reported having lies told about them behind their back, with 34.7 per cent saying this happened once a week or more.
- 63.3 per cent of students had been deliberately ignored or left out, with 24.7 per cent reporting this happened once a week or more. For Year 7 to 12 students, a higher proportion of male than female students had not been bullied this way (46.3% male vs 30.5% female).
- 60.2 per cent reported they had been made to feel afraid they would get hurt, with 26.6 per cent of students reporting this happened once a week or more.
- 40.1 per cent reported that a group had ganged up on them, with 16.9 per cent

reporting this happened once a week or more. A higher proportion of Year 4 to 6 than Year 7 to 12 students reported that a group had ganged up on them once or twice (23.3% Years 4–6 vs 13.6% Years 7–12).

- 34.1 per cent of students had been teased about their cultural background, skin colour, or religion, with 10.8 per cent saying this happened once a week or more. A higher proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported they had been teased at least once (52.4% Aboriginal vs 33.1% non-Aboriginal).
- 36.8 per cent had been sent nasty messages by email, mobile phone, or on the internet, with 14.5 per cent reporting they had been sent nasty messages once a week or more.
- 29.8 per cent reported that nasty messages or pictures about them had been sent to other students via mobile phone, internet, or email, with 11.3 per cent reporting this had happened once a week or more.

**Graph 6.3.11: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students who had been bullied in the last 3 months reporting what type of bullying has occurred, by type of bullying**



### Fear of bullying

Of all Year 4 to 12 students, 15.1 per cent had missed school because they were afraid they would be bullied. Female Year 7 to 12 students were most likely to report this with one-in-five saying they had missed school in the past due to fear of being bullied (21.0% female Years 7–12 vs 10.7% male Years 7–12).

Three-quarters of Year 7 to 12 respondents (74.7%) said they had not ever bullied other students. In total, 14.8 per cent had either bullied or cyber bullied or both and 8.0 per cent were unsure if they had.

Of the students who had reported ever bullying other students, 39.4 per cent had done so in the last three months, with 10.2 per cent saying they did this once a week or more.

**15% of students had ever missed school because they were afraid they would be bullied.**



### 6.3.3 Achievement

#### Academic achievement

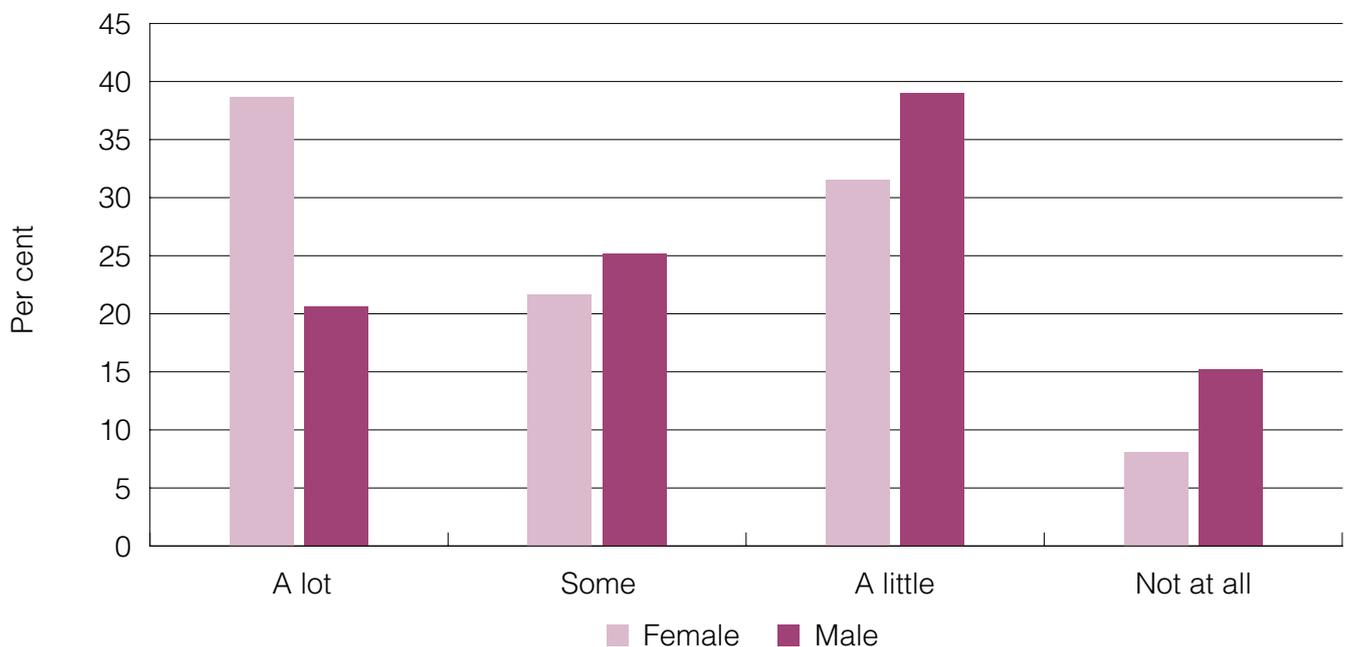
Academic achievement is one of the central goals of education and generally describes the extent to which a student has achieved their educational goals. Cognitive as well as non-cognitive factors such as self-efficacy, motivation and self-control influence academic achievement. Academic performance and improvement, appropriate to each student’s capabilities, is also a determinant of children and young people’s lifetime wellbeing.

Students in the survey were asked to self-assess their academic achievement by saying how well they were doing at school. The survey did not ask students for their actual grades or marks. The response options differed for Year 4 to 6 and Year 7 to 12 students.

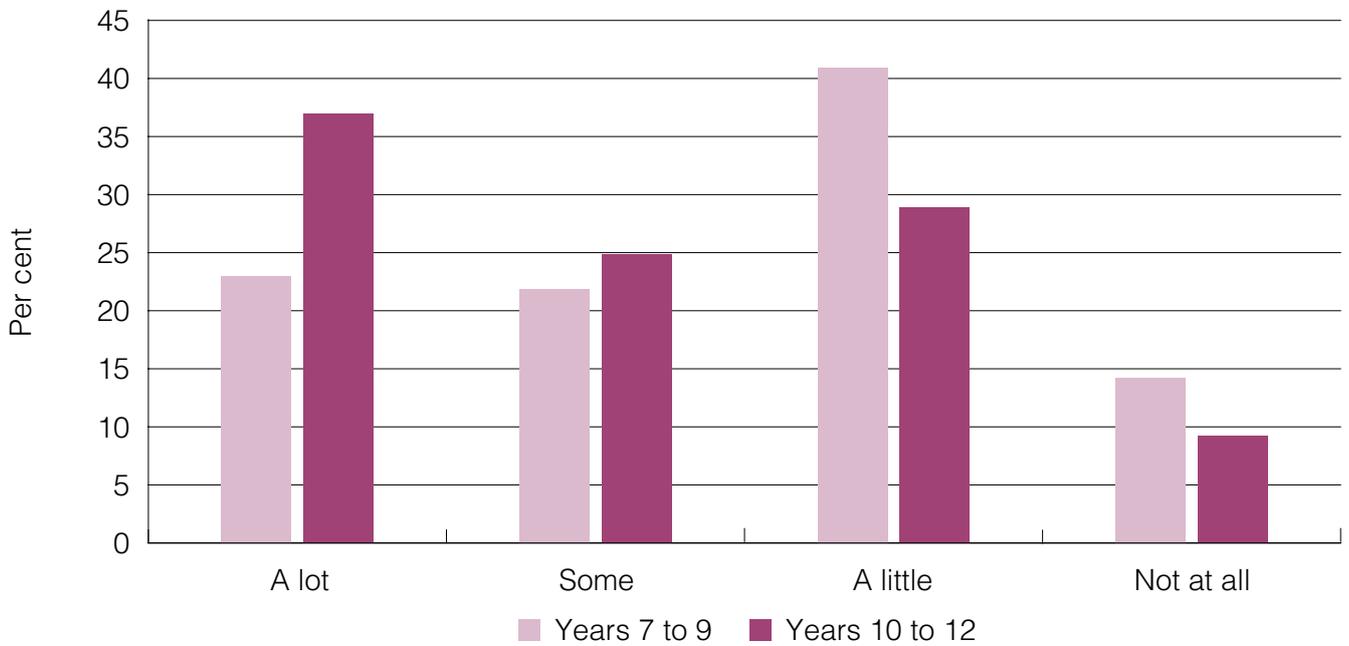
- Among Year 4 to 6 students, 48.3 per cent thought they were doing well or very well, 42.0 per cent were doing okay, 6.0 per cent not so well and 3.6 per cent were not sure.

- Among Year 7 to 12 students, 11.4 per cent thought they were far above average, 37.3 per cent above average, 35.8 per cent about average, 10.1 per cent below average and 2.9 per cent far below average.
- With regards to pressure about school work, 29.6 per cent of students in Years 7 to 12 said they felt a lot of pressure, 23.3 per cent felt some pressure, 35.2 per cent felt a little pressure and only 11.8 per cent felt no pressure at all.
- Students in Years 10 to 12 felt more pressure than those in Years 7 to 9, with more than one-third (37.0%) of Year 10 to 12 students feeling a lot of pressure, compared to 23.0 per cent of Year 7 to 9 students. Female students were almost twice as likely as male students to feel a lot of pressure about schoolwork (38.7% female vs 20.6% male).

**Graph 6.3.12: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students reporting they feel a lot, some, a little or not at all pressured by the school work they have to do, by gender**



**Graph 6.3.13: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students reporting they feel a lot, some, a little or not at all pressured by the school work they have to do, by year group**



**Help for learning**

Students require different levels and types of support to assist them with their learning and to enable their ongoing engagement with education. Teachers who provide help for learning are valued by students as it enables improved access to the curriculum, reduced anxiety and facilitates experiences of success.

Further, family processes and practices are strongly related to students’ academic, social, emotional and behavioural outcomes. Studies have shown that when families are interested in their child’s education and engaged with their school, student outcomes are improved.<sup>50, 51</sup>

**37% of Year 10-12 students feel a lot of pressure about school work and female students feel more pressured than male students.**

50 Emerson L et al 2012, *Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from research*, A report by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) for the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau.

51 Desforges C & Abouchaar A 2003, *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A Literature Review*, Research Report No 433, Department for Education and Skills UK.

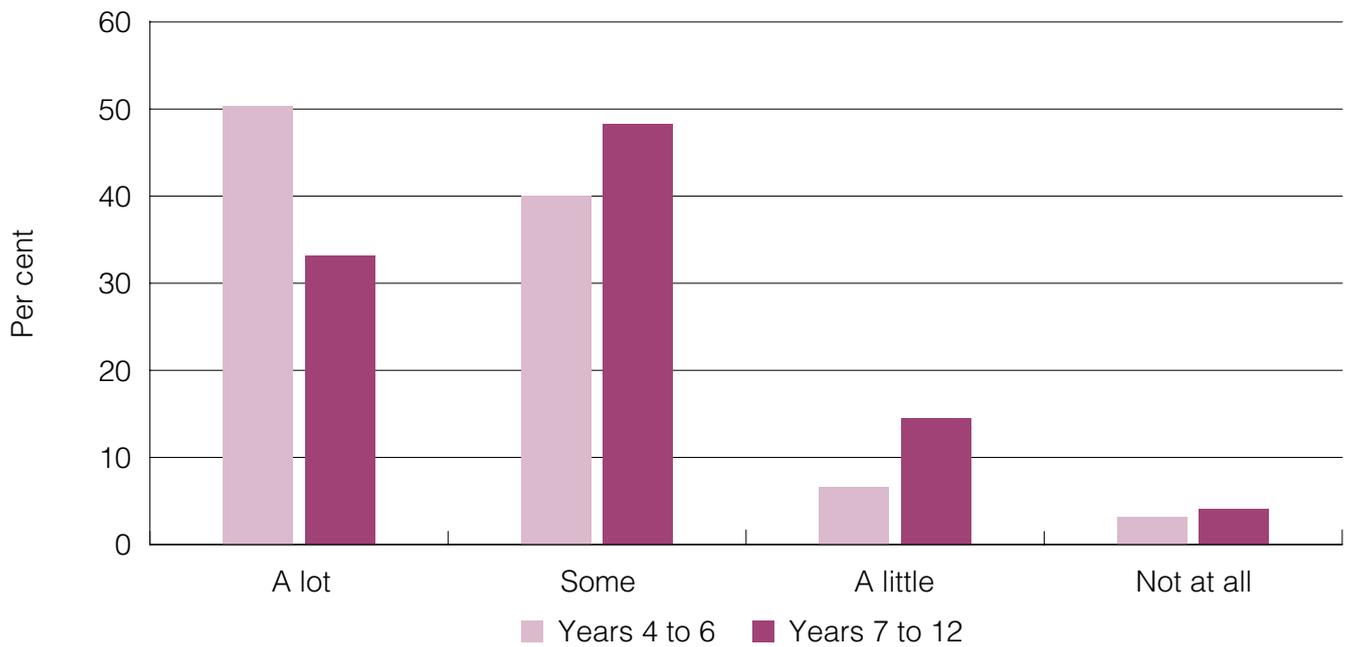
### Help from teachers

One-half (50.3%) of Year 4 to 6 students but only one-third (33.1%) of Year 7 to 12 students reported they would almost always get help from teachers in class, if needed. Conversely, a higher proportion of students in Years 7 to 12 than in Years 4 to 6 reported they almost never get extra help from teachers (14.5% Years 7–12 vs 6.6% Years 4–6).

When asked if there is a teacher or another adult at school who expects them to do well, two-thirds (65.9%) of Year 4 to 6 and one-half (51.1%) of Year 7 to 12 students reported this was very much true.

**One-half (50.3%) of Year 4–6 students and one-third (33.1%) of Year 7–12 students almost always get help from teachers in class if needed.**

**Graph 6.3.14: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they almost always, sometimes or almost never get extra help from teachers if they need it or they don't know, by year group**



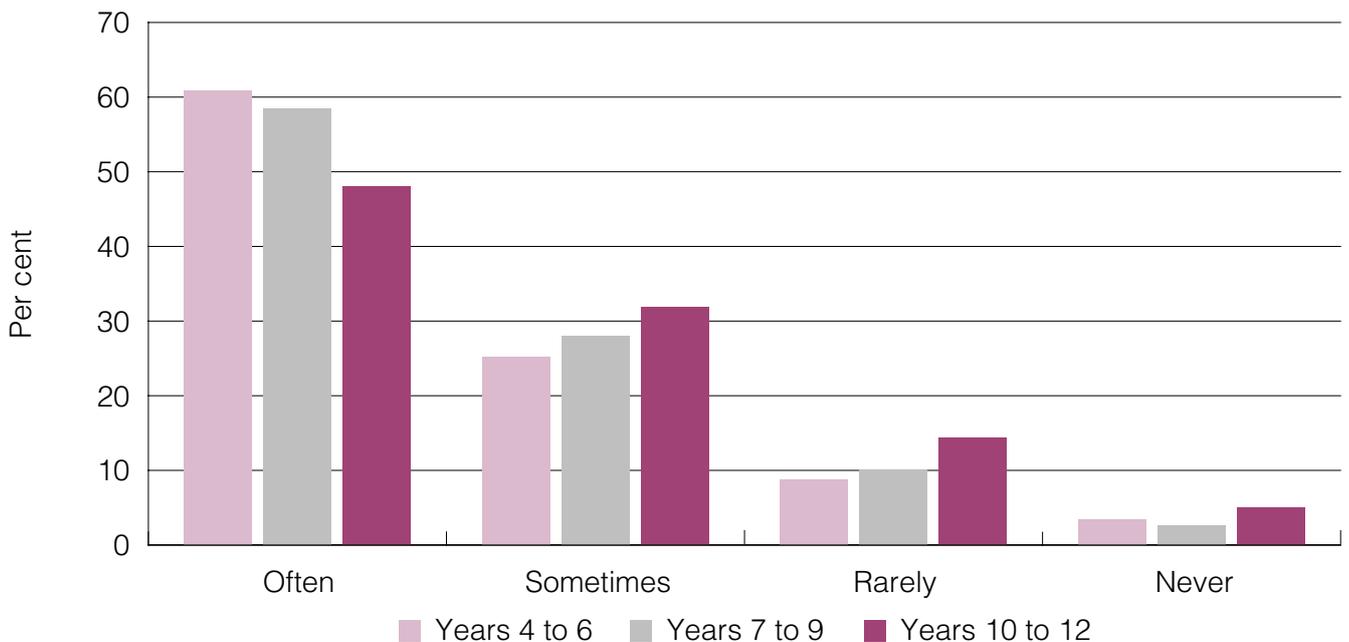
### Parent involvement in education

Research shows that there is a strong relationship between parental aspirations and expectations and the child’s actual academic outcomes.<sup>52</sup> In the Commissioner’s School and Learning Consultation<sup>53</sup>, high expectations from family members were generally seen as a positive influence for school and learning. Low expectations or disinterest from family members were discouraging and hurtful for students and not helpful for how they felt about attending school and learning.<sup>54</sup>

More than one-half (56.2%) of students in Years 4 to 12 said their parents often ask about school or homework while 28.1 per cent were being asked sometimes. One-in-ten students (10.8%) reported their parents ask rarely and 3.6 per cent said their parents never ask.

**Most students say their parents regularly ask about their school or homework but 1-in-10 report their parents rarely or never do this.**

**Graph 6.3.15: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying their parents or someone in their family often, sometimes, rarely or never ask about school or homework, by year group**



52 Emerson L et al 2012, *Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from research*, A report by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) for the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau.

53 Commissioner for Children and Young People 2018, *School and Learning Consultation: Technical Report*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, p. 104.

54 Commissioner for Children and Young People 2018, *School and Learning Consultation: Technical Report*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, p. 104.

### 6.3.4 Transition from school

The transition from compulsory and structured schooling to either employment or less structured education formats such as tertiary education requires young people to have developed the ability to work independently and with a commitment and enthusiasm for their chosen path. A sense of optimism and opportunity is important for young people to manage this transition successfully.

#### Opportunities to learn and develop useful skills

The majority of Year 7 to 12 students (57.8%) reported they would like to finish university, 8.9 per cent preferred a TAFE certificate and 5.0 per cent a trade qualification (apprenticeship). A further 12.4 per cent wanted to finish Year 12 and 4.1 per cent Year 10 or 11.

Two-in-five (41.8%) Year 10 to 12 students and one-in-ten (11.4%) Year 7 to 9 students had a regular part-time job.

Of the students who reported having a regular part-time job, the main reasons they worked were:

- to have money to spend on things they want (64.1%)
- to get skills and experience (12.3%)
- because their parents (or other people who look after them) wanted them to (5.8%)
- to save for study (4.2%).

### Independent travel

Active and independent travel is important for children and young people in that it contributes to physical activity, social and emotional development and other health-related outcomes.<sup>55</sup> The term children's independent mobility is defined as the freedom of children to travel around children's independent mobility in their neighbourhood or city without adult supervision.<sup>56</sup> The levels of children's independent travel have declined over the last twenty years due to increasing motorisation, urban sprawl and traffic safety.

**Most Year 7-12 students are allowed to go some places without adult supervision but many students are not, especially female students.**

**1-in-5 female Year 7-12 students are not allowed to go places other than school without adult supervision and 1-in-3 are not allowed to cycle along a main road without an adult.**

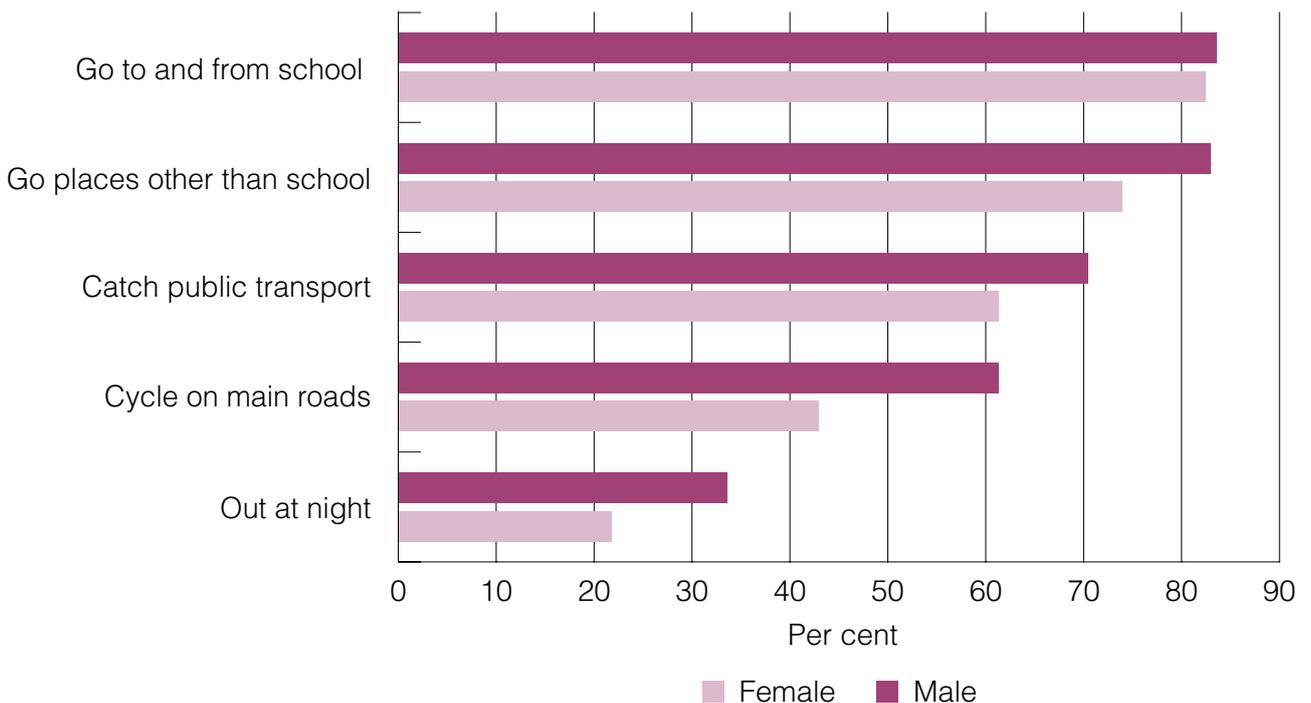
55 Marzi I & Reimers AK 2018, 'Children's Independent Mobility: Current Knowledge, Future Directions, and Public Health Implications', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Vol 15 No. 11.

56 Hillman M, Adams J, Whitelegg J 1990, *One False Move: A Study of Children's Independent Mobility*, Policy Studies Institute, London, UK.

Students in Years 7 to 12 were asked a series of questions concerning their independent mobility. In general, Year 10 to 12 students and male students reported higher rates of being allowed to engage in independent mobility:

- 77.4 per cent of Year 7 to 9 and 89.3 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students said they were allowed to go to and from school on their own.
- 71.0 per cent of Year 7 to 9 and 87.8 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students said they were allowed to go places other than school on their own. The proportion of students who said they were allowed to do this was higher among male than female students (83.0% vs 74.0%).
- 52.9 per cent of Year 7 to 9 and 80.8 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students were allowed to catch public transport alone. The proportion of students allowed to catch public transport alone was higher for male than female students (70.5% vs 61.3%).
- 44.9 per cent of Year 7 to 9 and 60.7 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students were allowed to cycle on main roads without an adult. The proportion of students who said they were allowed to cycle on main roads was higher among male than female students (61.3% vs 43.0%).
- 17.4 per cent of Year 7 to 9 and 39.3 per cent of Year 10 to 12 students reported they were allowed out alone at night. The proportion of students who said they were allowed out alone at night was higher among male than female students (33.6% vs 21.8%).

**Graph 6.3.16: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they are allowed to do selected activities without an adult, by gender and activity**



### Making decisions

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have a right to give their opinion and be listened to by the adults around them. Giving young people a voice and encouraging them to be involved in decisions affecting them contributes to the development of self-esteem and identity. It also enables young people to learn how to develop and articulate opinions and make choices which can influence events.

Students in Years 7 to 12 were asked a series of questions about making decisions and in general four-in-five agreed with the following statements:

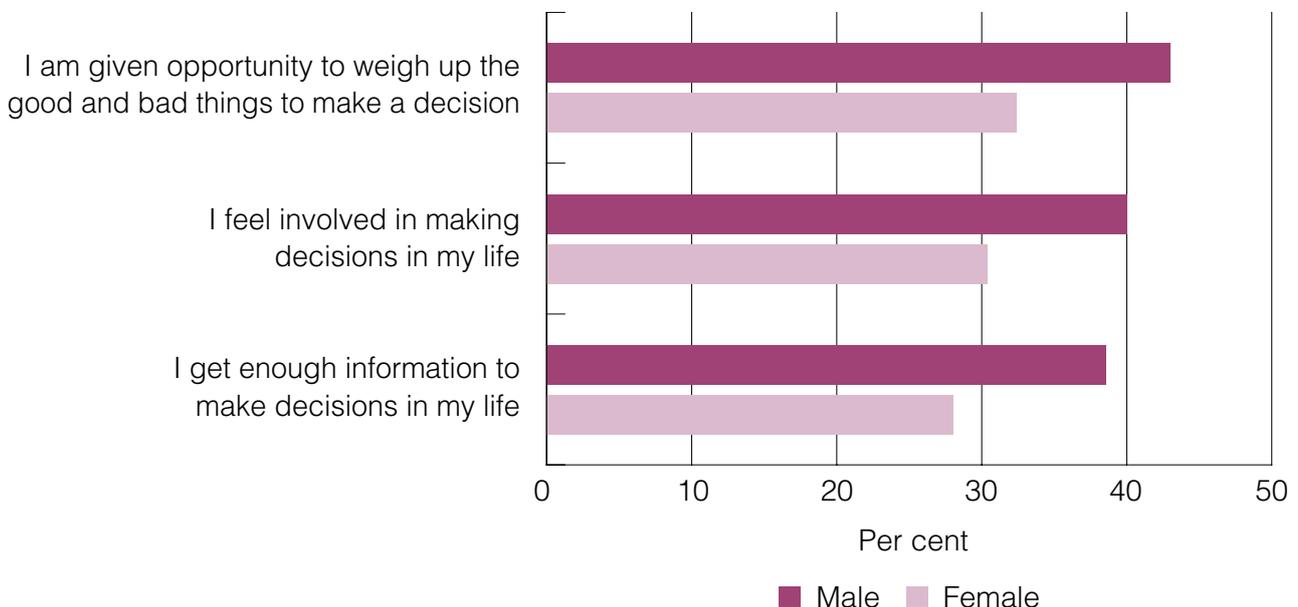
- 83.7 per cent of students agreed that they get enough information to make decisions in their life (50.5% agreed and 33.2% strongly agreed). 11.5 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed and 4.8 per cent disagreed.
- 82.6 per cent of students agreed that they feel involved in making decisions about their life (35.1% strongly agreed and 47.5% agreed). 11.5 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed and 5.9 per cent disagreed.

- 83.4 per cent of students said that they are given opportunities to weigh up decisions (45.9% agreed and 37.5% strongly agreed). 12.2 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed and 4.4 per cent disagreed.

Female students were less likely than male students to strongly agree with any of the three statements and instead were more likely to say they neither agree nor disagree.

**4-in-5 students agree they are involved in making decisions affecting them, however, female students agree less.**

**Graph 6.3.17: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they strongly agree with selected statements about making decisions, by gender**



## Snapshot

### Engagement in school and learning

- One-half of Year 4–6 students have attended one primary school and 5% have attended five or more.
- **Two-thirds of Year 7–12 students have attended one school since starting high school but 1-in-10 have attended three or more.**
- One-quarter of female Year 7–12 students (25.0%) do not like school and less than 1-in-5 like it a lot.
- **9-in-10 female Year 4–6 students are happy at school and like learning while only 1-in-2 female students in Year 7–12 say they like school.**
- Two-thirds of male Year 7–12 students feel like they belong at their school compared to one-half of female students who feel the same.
- **Most students feel teachers care, believe and listen to them but almost one-third of Year 7–12 students feel this is not or only a little true for them.**
- More male than female students like school a lot while female students are more likely to say they don't like school.
- **One-quarter of female Year 7–12 students (25.0%) do not like school and less than 1-in-5 like it a lot.**
- Most students feel safe at school but almost 1-in-5 feel safe only sometimes or less, especially Year 7–9 students.
- **One-half of Year 4–12 students say they have been bullied.**

- 17% of female and 10% of male Year 7–12 students have been both bullied and cyber bullied.
- **15% of students have ever missed school because they were afraid they would be bullied.**

### Feeling prepared for and positive about the future

- 37% of Year 10–12 students feel a lot of pressure about school work and female students feel more pressured than male students.
- **One-half (50.3%) of Year 4–6 students and one-third (33.1%) of Year 7–12 students almost always get help from teachers in class if needed.**
- Most students say their parents regularly ask about their school or homework but 1-in-10 report their parents rarely or never do this.
- **Most Year 7–12 students are allowed to go some places without adult supervision but many students are not, especially female students.**
- 1-in-5 female Year 7–12 students are not allowed to go places other than school without adult supervision and 1-in-3 are not allowed to cycle along a main road without an adult.
- **4-in-5 students agree they are involved in making decisions affecting them, however, female students agree less.**

## 6.4 Regional differences

Across many of the wellbeing areas, students in regional and remote areas reported very similar views and opinions about their wellbeing as students in the metropolitan area<sup>57</sup> and students overall. This chapter highlights some of the differences found between the different groups of students.

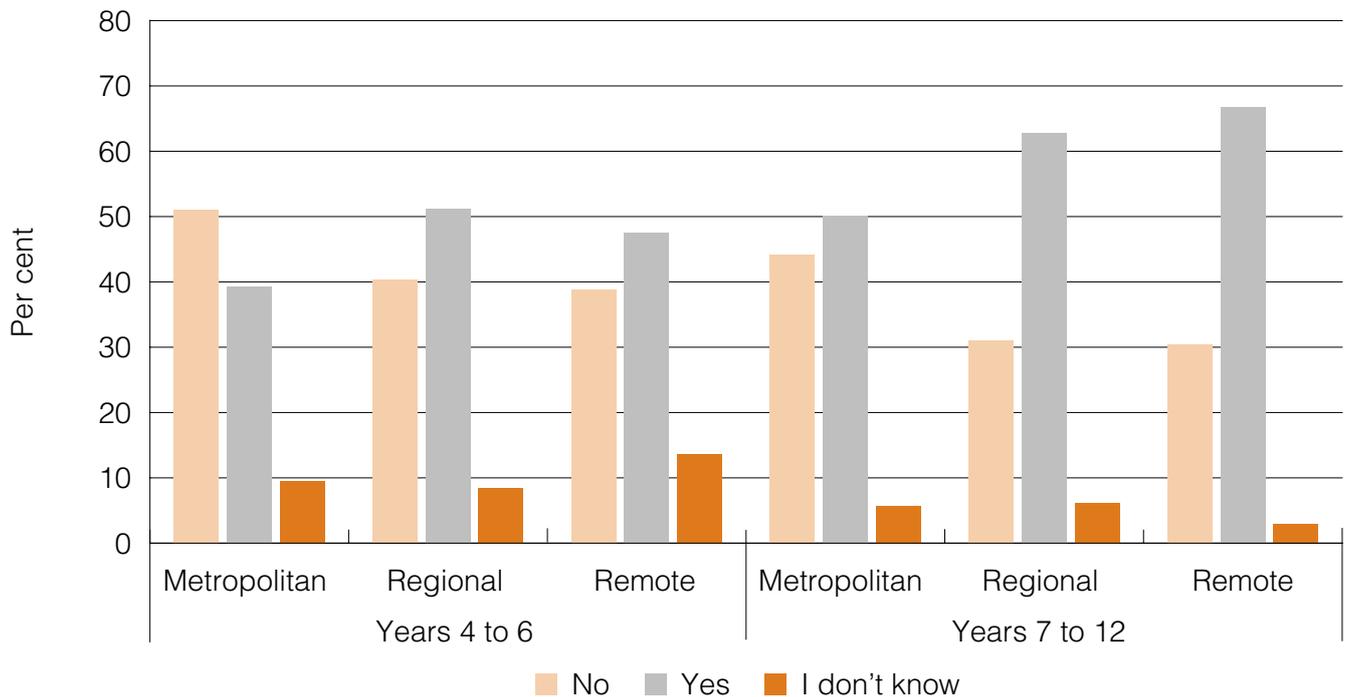
### 6.4.1 Healthy and connected

While students in regional and remote areas do less well on a number of health measures such as dental health, prevalence of long-term

health conditions and weight, they have a greater likelihood of having a strong sense of belonging in their community, they are better connected with their friends and family, know where to go for support and, particularly for students in remote areas, report greater life satisfaction.

With respect to their dental health, students in remote and regional areas were more likely to have ever had a filling than students in the metropolitan area (58.0% regional and 58.1% remote vs 46.3% metropolitan area).

**Graph 6.4.1: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they have or have not ever had a filling, by year group and region**



<sup>57</sup> For the purpose of this report the term 'metropolitan' is used to describe students attending a school located in the Perth metropolitan area that is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as 'major city'. This includes places not normally classified as the metropolitan area such as Mandurah, Mount Helena, Bickley, Mundaring and the like. The remoteness classifications are based on physical remoteness from goods and services. In the case of WA, there are no areas outside of the capital city area that are defined as a major city. For further information on the Australian Standard Geographical Classification of Remoteness Area developed by the ABS refer to <<https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/remoteness+structure>>.

Regional students were more likely to report a long-term health condition (31.0% regional vs 25.9% metropolitan and 24.0% remote) and to say that they worry lots about their weight (24.2% regional vs 18.2% metropolitan and 15.1% remote).

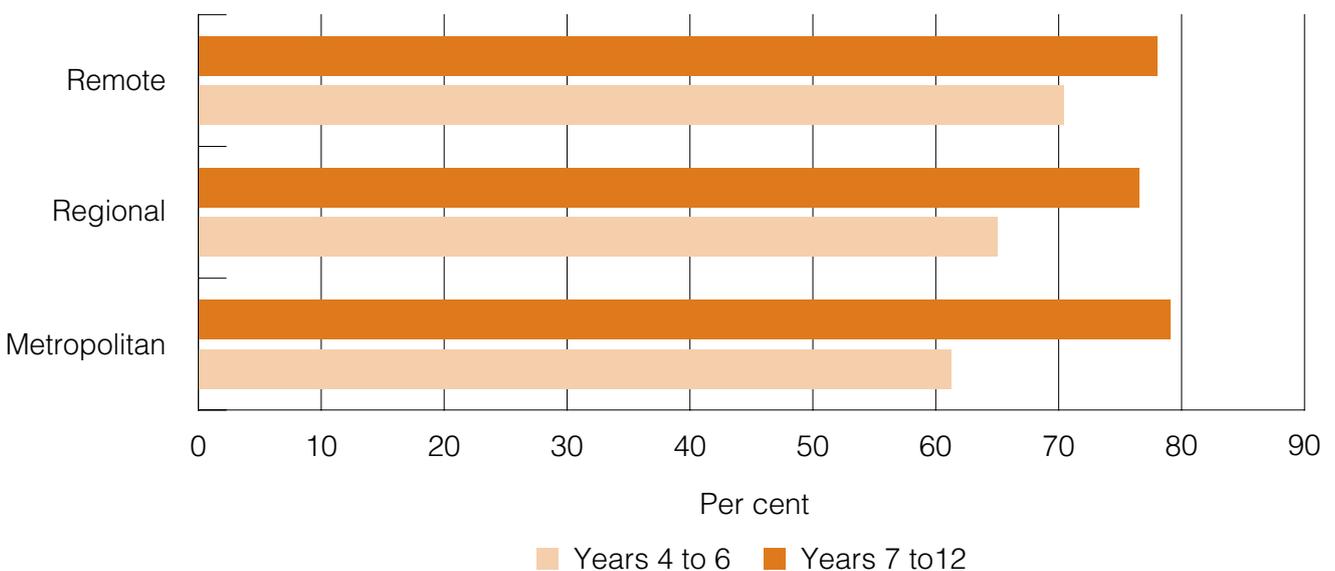
A higher proportion of Year 7 to 12 students in regional and remote areas than in the metropolitan area reported having ever drunk alcohol (49.0% regional and 40.6% remote vs 36.3% metropolitan) or having ever tried smoking (30.5% remote and 27.3% regional vs 17.6% metropolitan). Among those students who have ever drunk alcohol, students in regional areas were less likely to say that they don't drink alcohol now (17.8% regional vs 26.7% metropolitan and 28.8% remote).

With regards to life satisfaction, while the survey results showed a decrease in life satisfaction scores from Year 4 to 6 students to Year 7 to 12 students across all regions

(78.6% Years 4–6 vs 62.3% Years 7–12), the percentage difference was smallest for students in remote areas indicating that a greater proportion of Year 7 to 12 students in remote areas are satisfied with their life compared with students in other areas.

Similarly, students in remote areas were somewhat less likely to be affected by some sources of stress that were significant for students in other areas. For example, fewer students in remote areas reported being affected by school or study problems (75.6% remote vs 84.9% regional and 84.9% metropolitan) and by worries about mental health and wellbeing<sup>58</sup> (31.0% remote vs 41.7% metropolitan and 44.8% regional). On the other hand, students in remote areas were more likely to identify bullying as a source of stress (25.6% remote vs 12.3% metropolitan and 16.7% regional).

**Graph 6.4.2: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students rating their life satisfaction as very high ('7'-'10') on a scale of '0' to '10' where '0' is the worst possible life and '10' the best possible life, grouped responses by year group and region**



<sup>58</sup> The Commissioner recognises that Aboriginal people have a holistic view of mental health – a view that incorporates the physical, social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of individuals and their communities and the importance of connection to the land, culture, spirituality, ancestry, family and community. For more information refer to Dudgeon P et al (eds) 2014, *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice – Second edition*, Australian Government.

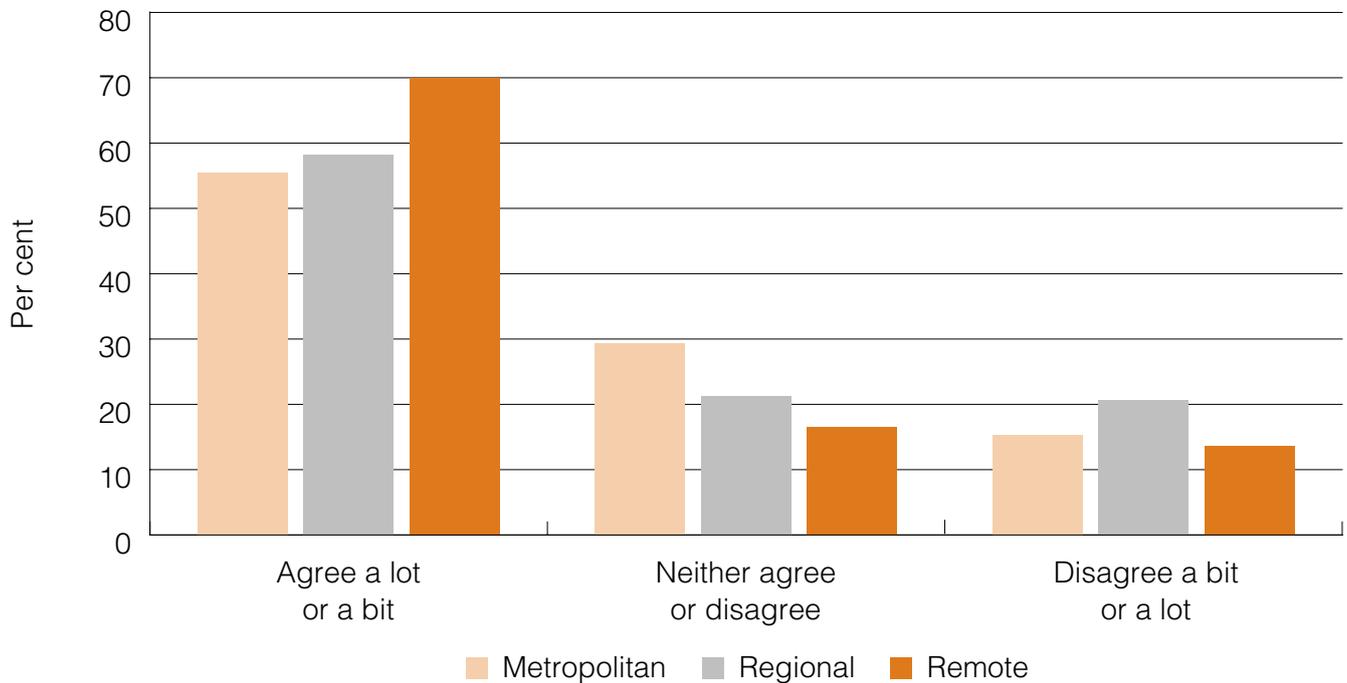
A number of differences were found with respect to culture and cultural background. Students in regional areas were less likely to speak a language other than English at home (6.5% regional vs 12.3% remote and 20.7% metropolitan) and more likely to report having an Australian cultural background (77.2% regional vs 65.2% remote and 63.5% metropolitan). The proportion of students with an Aboriginal Australian cultural background was highest in remote areas (30.0%), lower in regional areas (9.7%) and lowest in the metropolitan area (4.3%).

Students in remote areas were more likely than students in regional and metropolitan areas

to say they spend time with friends every day (42.4% remote vs 26.6% regional and 22.6% metropolitan) and less likely to report spending time using the internet every day (57.6% remote vs 65.9% regional and 72.5% metropolitan).

Most noteworthy, students in remote areas were more likely to say they feel like they belong in their community compared to students in metropolitan and regional areas: 69.9 per cent of students in remote areas agreed with this statement compared with 58.2 per cent of regional and only 55.5 per cent of metropolitan students.

**Graph 6.4.3: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students agreeing or disagreeing with the statement 'I feel like I belong in my community', by year group and region**



Students in regional and remote areas reported there were fewer places to go in their local area (79.2% remote and 80.5% regional vs 88.1% metropolitan), but a higher proportion of regional and remote students, compared to those in the metropolitan area, reported they have friends who live nearby (53.0% remote vs 42.1% regional and 42.9% metropolitan) and know where to get support in their local area for help with stress, anxiety, depression, or other emotional health worries (64.3% regional and 61.5% remote vs 48.6% metropolitan).

Overall, the survey results suggest that while students in regional and remote areas may feel there is less to do, they are better connected with their friends, family and the broader community.

**Fewer students in remote areas reported being affected by school or study problems and by worries about mental health and wellbeing.**

**70% of students in remote areas said they feel like they belong in their community compared to 58% of students in regional and 56% in metropolitan areas.**

### 6.4.2 Safe and supported

The survey found that similar proportions of students in remote, regional and metropolitan areas reported feeling supported by their family and their friends and not being worried about family trouble. Students in remote areas were more likely than other students to feel safe in their homes and communities but, somewhat contradictorily, they were more likely to have been physically harmed and to have stayed away from home because of trouble. These results call for more research to further explore these issues.

A somewhat greater proportion of Year 4 to 12 students in remote and regional areas reported living in more than one home compared to students in the metropolitan area (24.3% remote, 22.1% regional and 19.8% metropolitan). Students in remote areas who lived in more than one home were more likely than other students to live in their second home with their mother (55.1% remote vs 35.8% regional and 33.4% metropolitan).

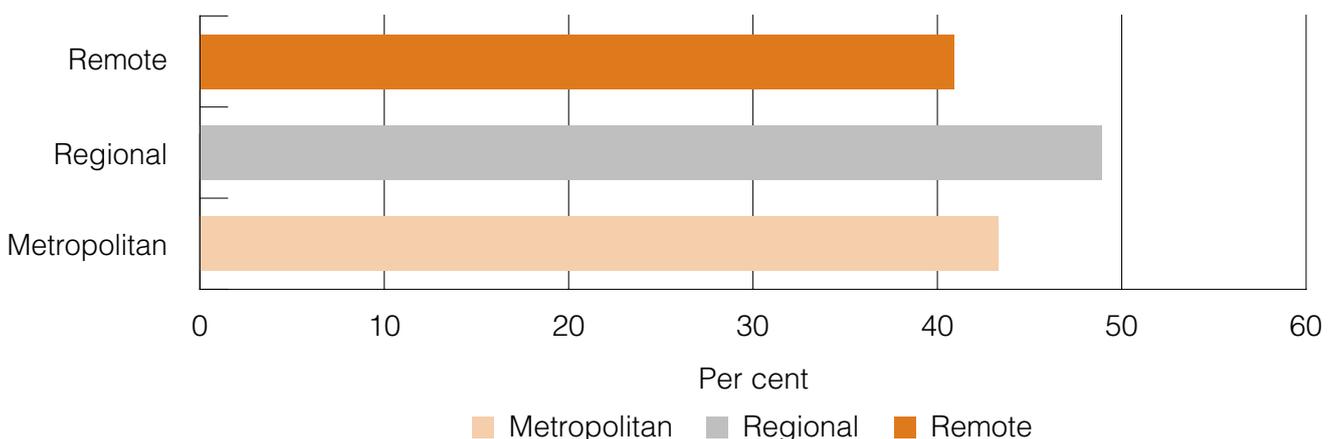
Two-in-five remote area students had moved house in the last 12 months (39.0% remote vs 24.0% regional and 24.8% metropolitan) with 13.7 per cent having moved two times or more.

Few significant differences were found in regards to material basics but a lower proportion of students in remote areas reported having their own bedroom for themselves (78.8% remote vs 84.8% regional and 88.8% metropolitan), a higher proportion indicated that there was only sometimes enough food for them to eat at home (13.6% remote vs 10.0% regional and 9.2% metropolitan) and fewer Year 7 to 12 students in regional and particularly remote areas reported having access to the internet at home (86.7% remote and 92.8% regional vs 96.6% metropolitan).

With respect to family holidays,<sup>59</sup> students in remote areas were more likely than other students to report having been on three or more family holidays (44.0%), followed by students in regional areas (30.1%) and metropolitan areas (21.6%). The proportion of students saying they had not been on a family holiday in the past 12 months was highest among students in the metropolitan area (28.5% metropolitan vs 23.9% regional and 13.9% remote).

Among Year 7 to 12 students, a higher proportion of regional than metropolitan and remote area students reported they feel their friends care a lot about them (48.9% regional vs 43.3% metropolitan and 40.9% remote).

**Graph 6.4.3: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students agreeing or disagreeing with the statement ‘I feel like I belong in my community’, by year group and region**



<sup>59</sup> The variable ‘family holiday’ included weekends away and short and long trips.

The survey found that students in remote areas were somewhat more likely than students in the metropolitan area to say they always feel safe at home, on public transport and in their local area. This difference was particularly evident for younger students.

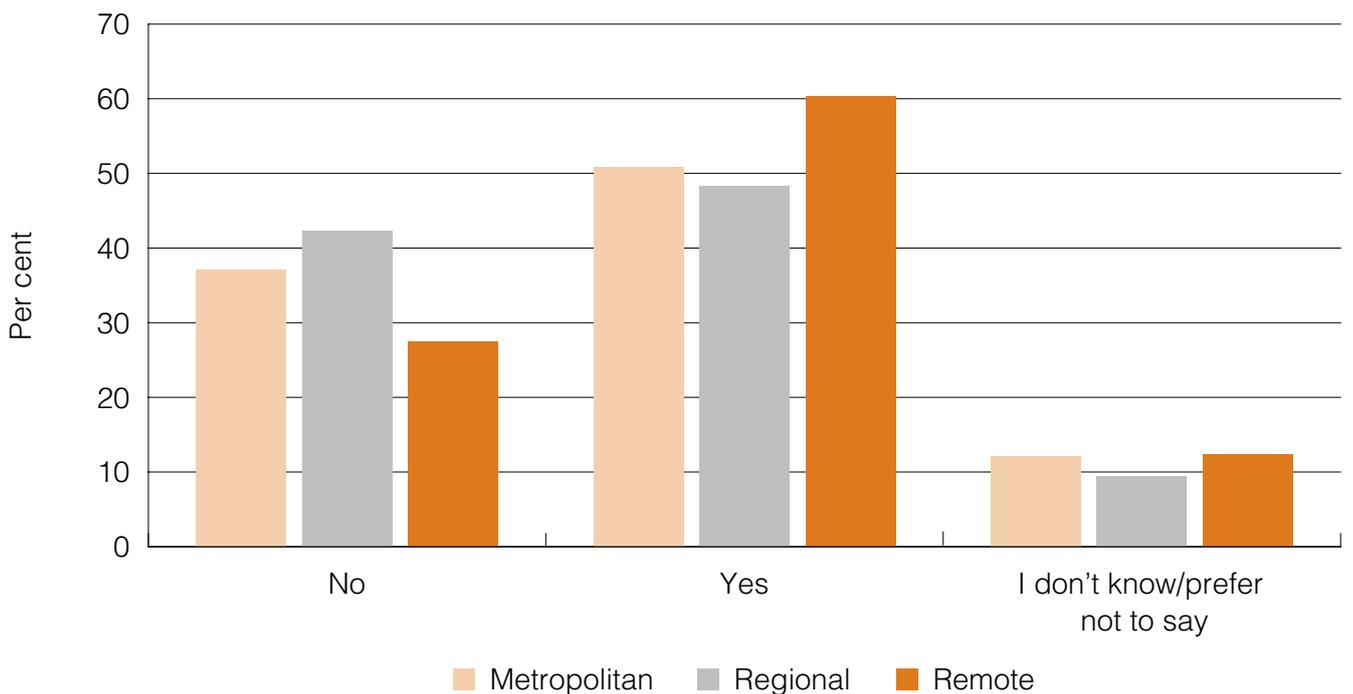
However, the proportion of Year 7 to 12 students saying they had ever stayed away from home overnight because of a problem was higher among remote and regional students than students in the metropolitan area (39.0% remote and 38.1% regional vs 28.3% metropolitan) and Year 9 to 12 students in remote areas were least likely to say they had never been hit or physically harmed on purpose (27.4% remote vs 42.3% regional and 37.1% metropolitan) and most likely to say this has happened within the last 12 months. Students in remote areas identified schools as the most common place for them to have been harmed.

More research with a greater student sample is required to strengthen these findings.

**Two-in-five remote area students** had moved house in the last 12 months.

**The proportion of Year 7-12 students saying they had ever stayed away from home overnight** because of a problem was higher among remote and regional students than students in the metropolitan area.

**Graph 6.4.5: Proportion of Year 9 to Year 12 students saying they have or have not ever been physically harmed by someone on purpose, by region**



### 6.4.3 Learning and participating

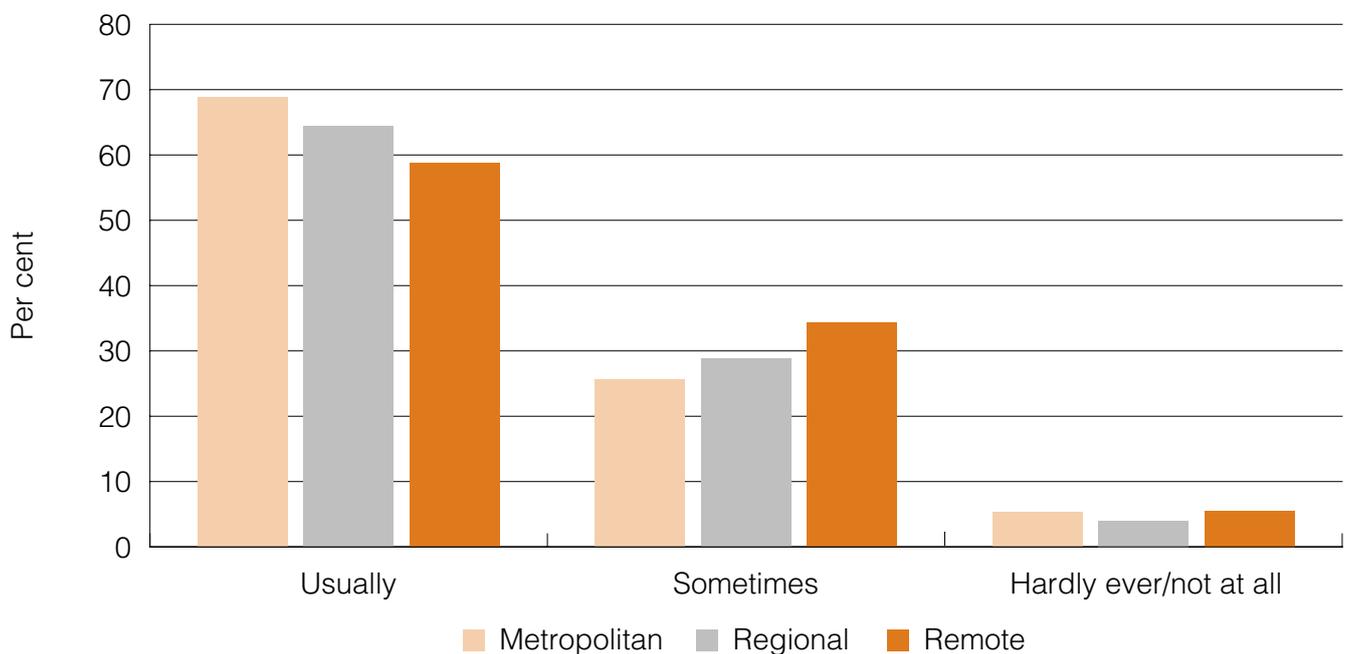
The survey found that overall there were few differences between the views of students in regional and metropolitan areas about their experiences with school and learning, but students in remote schools spoke less favourably about this critical area of wellbeing. Remote school students were more likely to have poorer relationships with peers and teachers and to be exposed to bullying at greater levels than their regional or metropolitan counterparts. However, students in remote areas reported having greater independence with respect to mobility and travel than students in the metropolitan area.

Students in regional and remote areas were more likely to have changed schools. The proportion of students who had attended more than one school was higher among students in regional and remote schools for both Year 4 to 6 (56.4% regional and 65.5% remote vs 48.8% metropolitan) and Year 7 to 12 students (44.5% regional and 37.2% remote vs 27.8% metropolitan).

Year 4 to 12 students attending remote schools were less likely than students in the metropolitan area to say they usually get along with class mates (58.7% remote vs 68.8% metropolitan) or teachers (60.8% remote vs 67.4% metropolitan) and more likely to say they get along sometimes (class mates: 34.3% remote vs 25.6% metropolitan, teachers: 31.8% remote vs 26.9% metropolitan). These differences were not observed for students in regional schools.

Students in regional and remote areas were **more likely to have changed schools** than students in the metropolitan area.

**Graph 6.4.6: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they usually, sometimes, or hardly ever/never get along with their class mates or teachers, by region**



Year 7 to 12 students in remote schools were more likely than students in the metropolitan area to report having been bullied in the past three months (33.8% remote vs 20.5% metropolitan) and, specifically, having had lies told about them (41.5% remote vs 33.3% metropolitan) or having been teased about their cultural background once a week or more.

For regional students, a higher proportion of Year 4 to 12 students in regional schools than in remote or metropolitan schools reported that they almost always get extra help from teachers if they need it (42.2% regional vs 39.2% metropolitan and 36.1% remote) and among Year 4 to 6 students, respondents in regional schools were more likely than those in metropolitan schools to say that it was very much true that there is a teacher or another adult who expects them to do well (73.7% regional vs 64.0% metropolitan).

The proportion of students wanting to finish university was substantially lower for students in remote schools than in the metropolitan area (34.7% remote vs 60.0% metropolitan). Conversely, a higher proportion of students in remote schools wanted to finish a trade qualification (11.5% remote vs 4.0% metropolitan) or Year 12 only (29.8% remote vs 11.1% regional and 11.5% metropolitan).

Students attending remote schools were less likely than students in the metropolitan area to say they usually get along with class mates or teachers.

**Graph 6.4.7: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students nominating the highest level of education they would like to finish, by region**



Students in remote schools were more likely to have worked for pay in the last year (54.6% remote vs 40.0% metropolitan) and while the proportion of students with a regular paid job was similar for students in metropolitan and remote schools, a higher proportion of students in remote schools had either worked during school holidays (18.3% remote vs 9.0% metropolitan) or sometimes worked during the school term (17.8% remote vs 9.7% metropolitan).

Students in remote areas reported having greater independence with respect to mobility and travel compared with students in the metropolitan area. More remote students were allowed to go to places other than school on their own (85.0% remote vs 80.7% regional and 78.2% metropolitan), to travel independently on public transport (37.9% remote vs 52.0% regional and 37.9% metropolitan) and to cycle without an adult on main roads (63.2% remote vs 58.5% regional and 50.6% metropolitan).

Regional students were **more likely** than other students to report that they almost always get extra help from teachers if they need it.

Students in remote areas reported **greater independence** with respect to mobility and travel compared with students in the metropolitan area.



## 6.5 Aboriginal children and young people’s wellbeing

In general, Aboriginal students fared less well than non-Aboriginal students in terms of their dental health, material basics, family stability or expectations for further education. In other respects, Aboriginal students were more positive than non-Aboriginal students in terms of their self-perception, connection to community and feeling safe in the community.

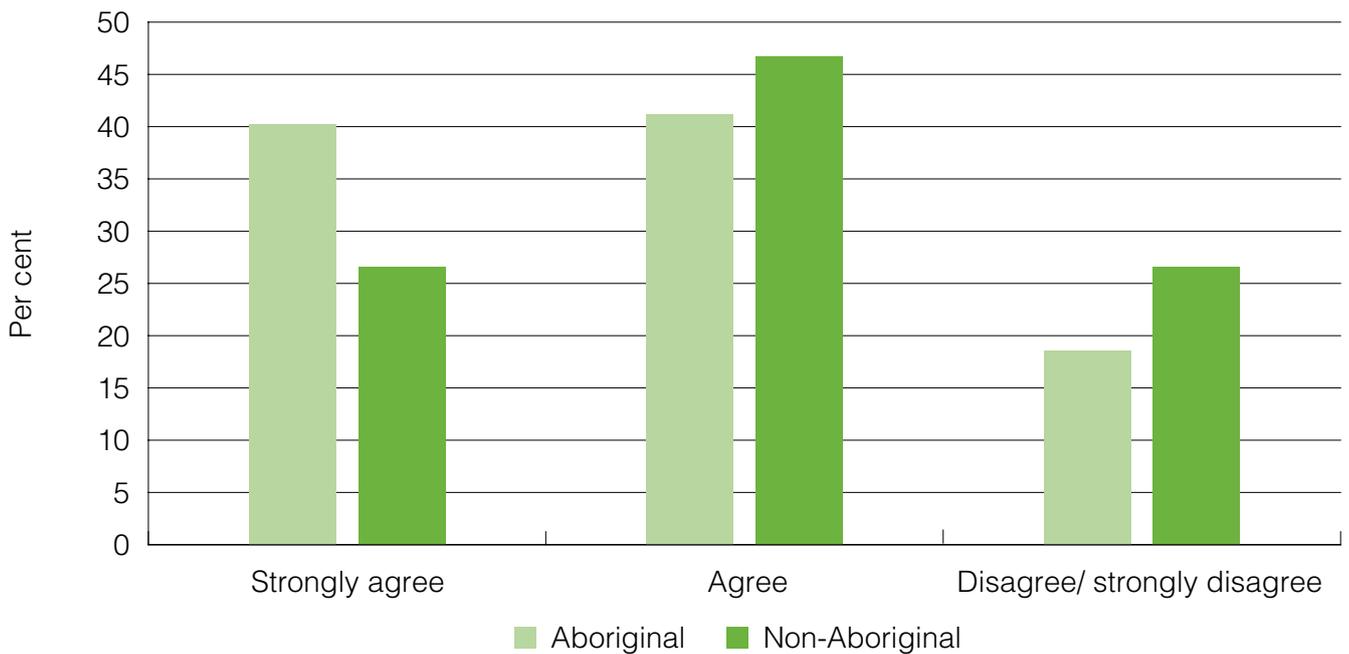
### 6.5.1 Healthy and connected

While subjective health ratings were similar for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, a higher proportion of Aboriginal students in Years 4 to 12 reported having ever had a filling (57.1% Aboriginal vs 47.7% non-Aboriginal) with nearly two-thirds of Aboriginal Year 7 to 12 students reporting this compared to just over one-half of non-Aboriginal students (62.7% Aboriginal vs 52.2% non-Aboriginal).

With respect to self-perception and happiness, more Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 12 strongly agreed that they feel good about themselves (30.6% Aboriginal vs 21.1% non-Aboriginal) and are happy with themselves (41.9% Aboriginal vs 31.5% non-Aboriginal). The group of students most likely to strongly agree with the statement ‘I am happy with myself’ were Aboriginal students in remote areas (47.4% Aboriginal remote vs 38.5% Aboriginal regional and 39.8% Aboriginal metropolitan).

Importantly, the differences with regard to self-perception between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students were particularly significant for female students: 40.2 per cent of Aboriginal female students in Years 7 to 12 strongly agreed they are happy with themselves compared to only 26.6 per cent of non-Aboriginal female students.

**Graph 6.5.1: Proportion of female Year 7 to Year 12 students agreeing or disagreeing with the statement ‘I am happy with myself’, by Aboriginal status**



Further, a higher proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 12 agreed a lot that when they went to the shops, people there are friendly (40.1% Aboriginal vs 30.5% non-Aboriginal) and that they felt like they belong in their community (37.7% Aboriginal vs 27.2% non-Aboriginal).

A higher proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal Year 7 to 12 students reported having ever tried cigarette smoking (32.6% Aboriginal vs 18.9% non-Aboriginal) and fewer Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported not having had any experiences with marijuana (55.6% Aboriginal vs 68.8% non-Aboriginal).

Twice as many Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students also reported someone in their home smoked cigarettes at least once a day.

While largely equal proportions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 12 reported knowing where to go for alcohol and drug related help (69.7% Aboriginal and 72.3% non-Aboriginal), more Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students said they are unsure if they know enough about sexual health and ways to support it (26.6% Aboriginal vs 20.9% non-Aboriginal) and one-in-three Aboriginal students were unsure they knew enough about pregnancy and contraception (30.4% Aboriginal vs 21.5% non-Aboriginal).

Three-quarters (74.2%) of Aboriginal students reported knowing their family's country but one-in-five (19.2%) were not sure and the remainder said they did not. Of the students who reported knowing their family's country, 79.9 per cent reported having spent time on their family's country.

With regards to speaking their Aboriginal language, 8.4 per cent said they talk the language a lot, 18.2 per cent some, 38.8 per cent a little and 34.6 per cent reported they did not speak their Aboriginal language.

The proportion of Aboriginal students who reported not speaking Aboriginal language was lowest in remote areas (20.7%) and higher in regional (41.0%) and metropolitan areas (40.9%). In other words, Aboriginal students in remote areas were significantly more likely to speak their Aboriginal language than Aboriginal students in regional or metropolitan areas.

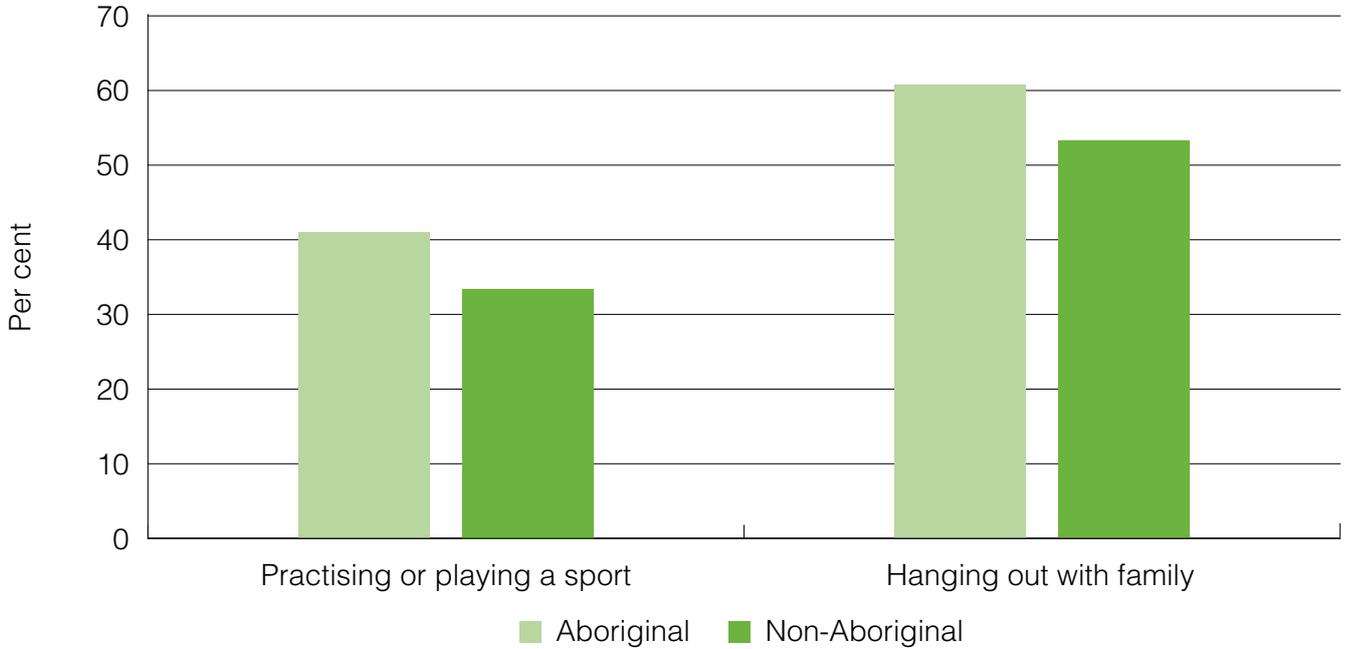
One-half (49.1%) of Aboriginal students in Years 4 to 12 reported doing cultural or traditional activities with their family.

Aboriginal students in Years 4 to 12 were more likely than non-Aboriginal students to report spending time hanging out with family and practising a sport every day (spending time with family: 60.7% Aboriginal vs 53.3% non-Aboriginal; practising a sport: 41.0% Aboriginal vs 33.4% non-Aboriginal). Especially Aboriginal female students were significantly more likely to report practising or playing a sport every day compared to their non-Aboriginal female peers.

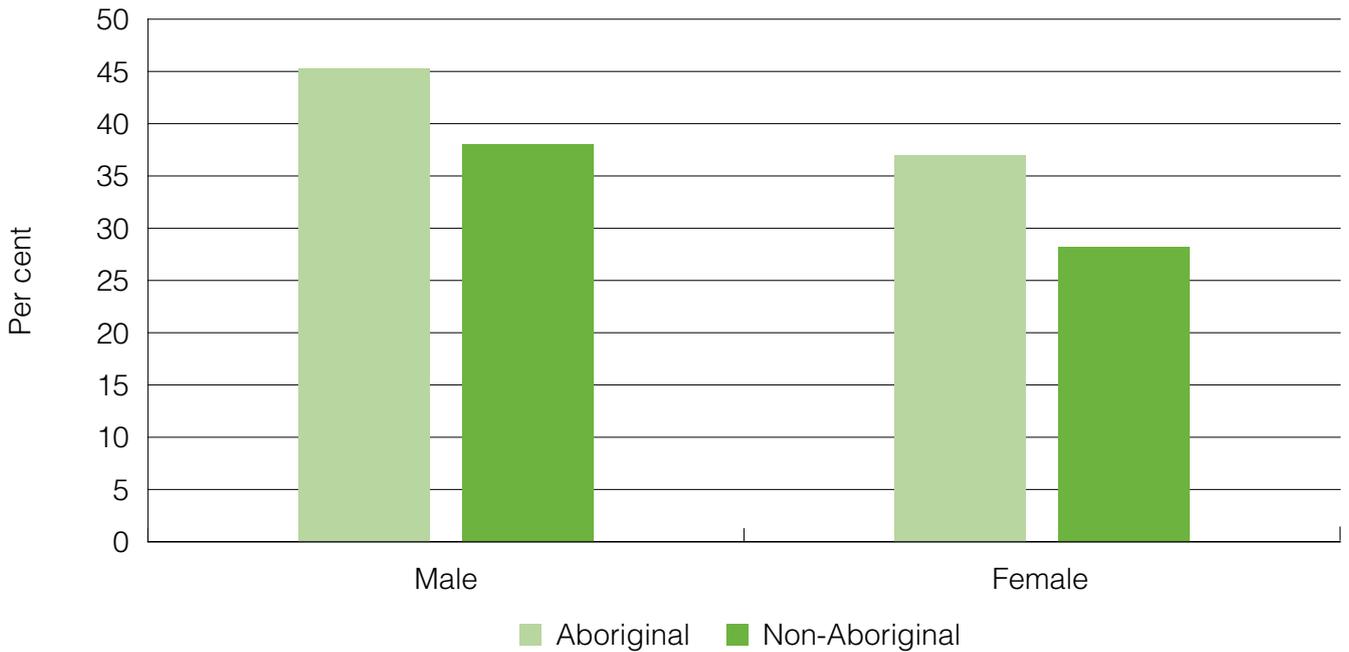
**One-third of Aboriginal students talk their Aboriginal language a lot or some, one-third a little and one-third not at all.**

**Three-quarters of Aboriginal students reported knowing their family's country.**

**Graph 6.5.2: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students saying they do these activities every day/almost every day, by Aboriginal status**



**Graph 6.5.3: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students spending time practising or playing a sport every day/almost every day, by Aboriginal status and gender**



Fewer Aboriginal students spend time using the internet on a smartphone or computer (87.6% non-Aboriginal vs 74.0% Aboriginal) but a higher proportion spent time watching TV every day (55.5% Aboriginal vs 43.6% non-Aboriginal).

When asked about where they had gotten help or advice about health in the past, Aboriginal Year 7 to 12 students were less likely than non-Aboriginal students to identify a parent as a helpful source of information in this regard and instead were more likely to nominate other family members (parent: 50.2% Aboriginal vs

63.5% non-Aboriginal; other family member: 42.5% Aboriginal vs 33.5% non-Aboriginal).

Nearly one-in-three Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 12 found an Aboriginal Health Worker (29.5%) and one-quarter an Aboriginal Medical Service (24.6%) a helpful source of information about their health. With respect to knowledge about where to get help for stress, anxiety, depression, or emotional health worries, fewer Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported they would know where to get such support online (49.3% Aboriginal vs 63.8% non-Aboriginal).

More Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students in Years 7-12 strongly agreed that they feel good about and are happy with themselves and that they feel like they belong in their community.

Aboriginal female students were significantly more likely to report practising or playing a sport every day compared to their non-Aboriginal female peers.

### 6.5.2 Safe and supported

Aboriginal students fared less well in terms of material basics and family stability but they were somewhat more positive about feeling safe in the community.

More Aboriginal (9.9%) than non-Aboriginal (4.1%) students said they lived in three or more homes and said that seven or more people lived in their main home (26.5% Aboriginal vs 7.4% non-Aboriginal). Aboriginal students were also less likely to have their own bedroom (Years 4–6: 69.7% Aboriginal vs 82.5% non-Aboriginal; Years 7–12: 80.5% Aboriginal vs 91.8% non-Aboriginal).

For both Years 4 to 6 and Years 7 to 12, a higher proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported they lived with aunts/uncles in their main home (Years 4–6: 14.8% Aboriginal vs 6.4% non-Aboriginal; Years 7–12: 14.8% Aboriginal vs 2.4% non-Aboriginal) and about twice as many Aboriginal as non-Aboriginal students reported they lived with grandparents in their main home (Years 4–6: 20.9% Aboriginal vs 9.6% non-Aboriginal; Years 7–12: 19.6% Aboriginal vs 6.3% non-Aboriginal).

These findings reflect the definition of ‘family’ in Aboriginal communities that is based on a kinship system which is much broader

than a traditional Western concept of family. Extended family members (grandparents, aunties, uncles, cousins etc) and other community members are heavily involved and provide significant support to Aboriginal parents and children.<sup>60</sup>

When asked about care and support in their family, more Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported that other family members or their brothers and sisters cared a lot about them (other family: 69.8% Aboriginal vs 62.4% non-Aboriginal; siblings: 57.7% Aboriginal vs 48.6% non-Aboriginal) while fewer Aboriginal students said the same about their mother or father (mother: 71.1% Aboriginal vs 83.3% non-Aboriginal; father: 58.1% Aboriginal vs 73.3% non-Aboriginal).

In terms of material basics, the survey found similar response patterns for the majority of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Years 4 to 12, but one-in-ten Aboriginal students reported that their family did not have a car (10.3% vs 3.7%), one-in-five said that they only sometimes had enough food to eat at home (20.2% Aboriginal vs 10.2% non-Aboriginal) and one-in-ten also reported not having enough money to go on school excursions (13.0% Aboriginal vs 7.5% non-Aboriginal).

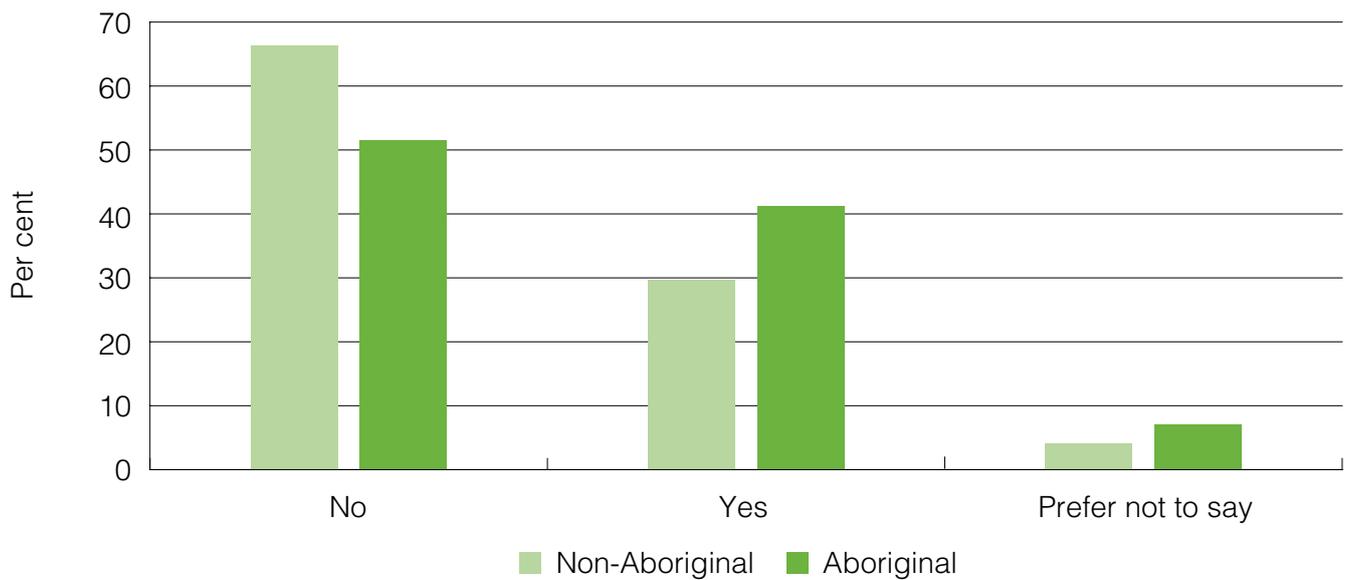
A higher proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported they **lived with aunts/uncles and grandparents** in their main home and said that other family members including their brothers and sisters cared a lot about them.

<sup>60</sup> Lohoar S et al 2014, *Strengths of Australian Aboriginal cultural practices in family life and child rearing*, CFCA Paper No 25, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

A higher proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal Year 4 to 12 students reported they worried a lot about someone in their family hurting somebody (14.2% vs 10.2%), hurting themselves (19.0% vs 12.9%) or getting arrested (15.7% vs 10.1%). Aboriginal Year 7 to 12 students were also more likely to report having ever stayed away from home overnight because of a problem compared to non-Aboriginal students (41.3% Aboriginal vs 29.7% non-Aboriginal).

With regards to feeling safe in the local area, Aboriginal students in Years 4 to 12 were somewhat more positive about this than their non-Aboriginal peers: 38.6 per cent reported feeling safe in their local area all the time and 18.2 per cent felt safe on public transport all the time. Non-Aboriginal students were more likely to report feeling safe most of the time.

**Graph 6.5.4: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they have or have not ever stayed away from home overnight because of a problem, by Aboriginal status**



In general, **Aboriginal students** fared less well in terms of material basics.

A higher proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported they were **worried a lot** about someone in their family hurting somebody, hurting themselves or getting arrested.

### 6.5.3 Learning and participating

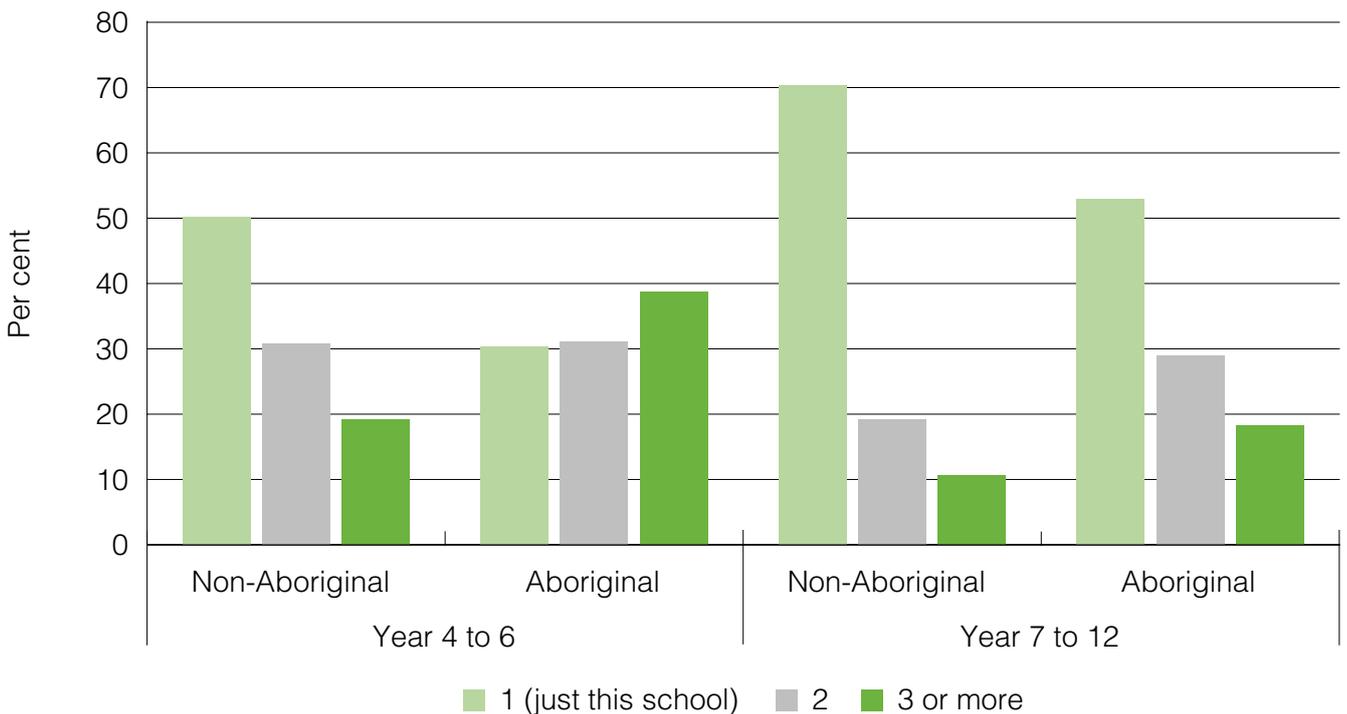
The majority of Aboriginal students like school, want to be at school and say they feel cared for and supported at school. However, a considerable proportion of Aboriginal students reported having to deal with challenges such as frequently changing schools, unstable relationships with class mates and teachers, high rates of suspension and, similar to non-Aboriginal students, high rates of bullying.

For both Year 4 to 6 and Year 7 to 12 students, Aboriginal students were less likely than non-

Aboriginal students to have attended only one school and more likely to have attended three or more schools.

More than one-in-ten Aboriginal students in Years 4 to 6 had attended five or more primary schools (12.4% Aboriginal vs 4.0% non-Aboriginal) and 6 per cent of Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 12 had attended five or more high schools (5.5% Aboriginal vs 1.7% non-Aboriginal).

**Graph 6.5.5: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting they have been to one, two or three or more primary/high schools, by year group and Aboriginal status**



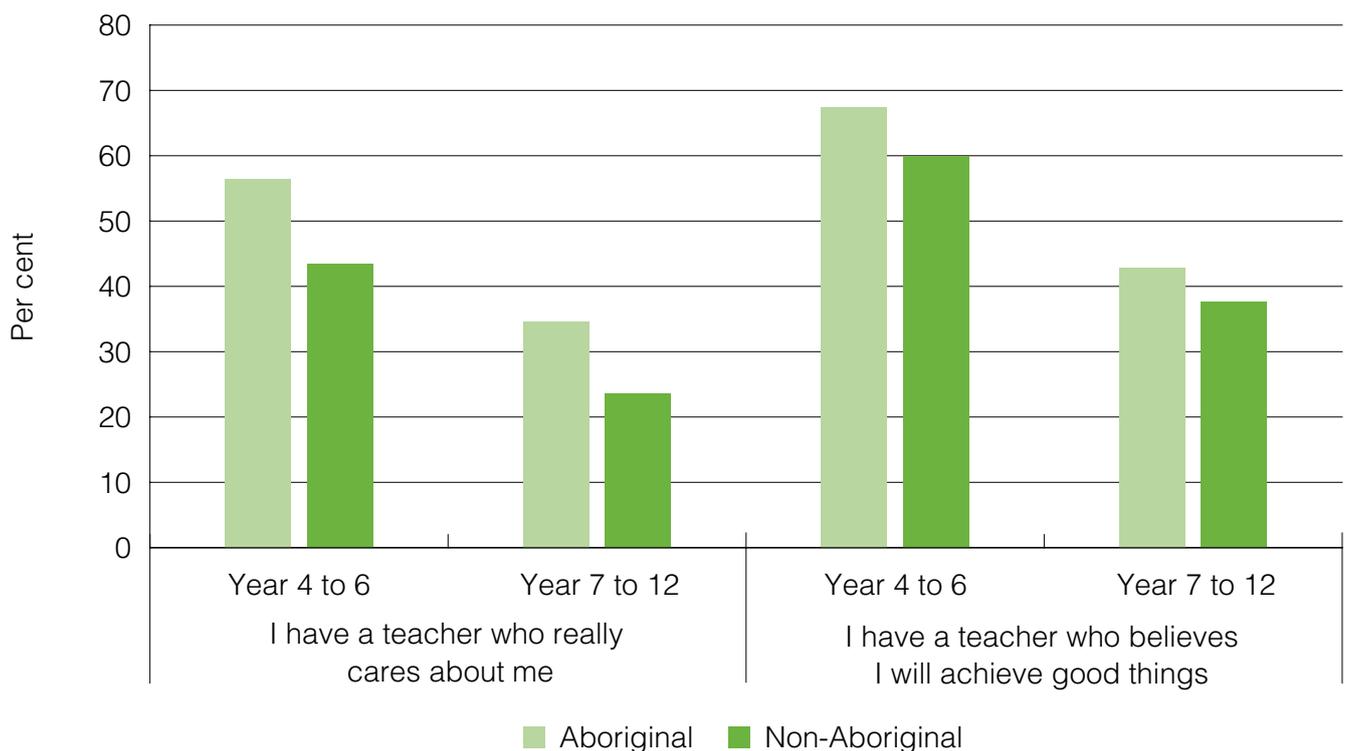
Equal proportions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 12 reported that being at school every day was very important to them (58.4% Aboriginal vs 58.8% non-Aboriginal) and that they liked school (43.3% Aboriginal vs 48.3% non-Aboriginal) but fewer Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students said that it was very important to their parents that they went to school every day (75.8% Aboriginal vs 84.1% non-Aboriginal) and that their parents often ask about school work or homework (45.7% Aboriginal vs 57.3% non-Aboriginal).

The survey found that while the majority of Aboriginal Year 7 to 12 students liked school and believed it was important to attend every day, one-in-five had wagged school (21.8% Aboriginal vs 11.5% non-Aboriginal) and, most worryingly, nearly 30 per cent had ever been suspended (28.1% Aboriginal vs 14.1% non-Aboriginal).

A smaller proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported usually getting along with class mates.

Fewer Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students said that their parents often ask about school work or homework.

**Graph 6.5.6: Proportion of Year 4 to Year 12 students reporting it is very much true that at their school there is a teacher or another adult who really cares about them or who believes they will achieve good things, by year group and Aboriginal status**



When asked about their relationships at school, more Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students said it was very much true that a teacher or another adult at their school really cares about them (Years 4–6: 56.4% Aboriginal vs 43.4% non-Aboriginal; Years 7–12: 34.6% Aboriginal vs 23.6% non-Aboriginal) and that there is a teacher or another adult in their school who believes the student will achieve good things (56.5% Aboriginal vs 46.8% non-Aboriginal). These differences were mostly driven by the experiences of Year 4 to 6 students.

Smaller proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported usually getting along with class mates or with teachers (class mates: 58.6% Aboriginal vs 67.9% non-Aboriginal; teachers: 59.6% Aboriginal vs 67.9% non-Aboriginal).

Safety was an important issue for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students with about one-half of both groups of students reporting experiences with bullying, cyber bullying or both. However, when asked about how safe students feel at school, more Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students reported feeling safe all the time (46.4% Aboriginal vs 36.8% non-Aboriginal).

Fewer Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students thought they were doing far above or above average in their school results (30.1% Aboriginal vs 49.8% non-Aboriginal) and fewer reported wanting to finish university (29.3% Aboriginal vs 59.4% non-Aboriginal), while a higher proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students wanted to finish Year 12 only (34.5% Aboriginal vs 11.1% non-Aboriginal).

Lastly, four-in-five Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Year 7 to 12 students either agreed or strongly agreed that they are involved in making decisions (81.4% Aboriginal vs 82.7% non-Aboriginal) and are given opportunity to weigh up decisions in their life (79.3% Aboriginal vs 83.6% non-Aboriginal).

More Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students said it was very much true that a teacher or another adult at their school really cares about them.

Fewer Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students thought they were doing far above or above average in their school results and reported wanting to finish university.

## 6.6 Qualitative survey responses

At the end of the survey, additional questions were asked for feedback on the survey itself. This included questions about sections of the survey that students didn't know how to answer, that were upsetting, or that they would want removed. Overall, the majority of students who completed the survey indicated there were no sections they did not know how to answer, that were upsetting or that they would want removed.

Students were also asked if there was anything else that was important to themselves or other young people that should be included in the survey. Approximately 10 per cent of students (400+) responded to this question and either suggested additional topics they would like to see included or mentioned that they would like to be asked more about some of the topics already included in the survey. The top four most suggested wellbeing areas students wanted to be asked about or asked more about were:

1. Mental health including stress, depression, self-harm, anxiety and self-confidence.
2. School and teachers including experiences with teachers, homework and study.
3. Family and parents including family break ups, arguments and fights, relationships with siblings and guardians/carers.
4. Sexuality and personal relationships including navigating personal and/or sexual relationships, sexual orientation, gender identity and feeling safe in regards to gender.

*“Our mental health should be looked into more and how much pressure is put on us by everyone (that is my opinion and my feelings).”*

*“If [students] feel welcomed in their community, home life, school and social lives if they are part of the LGBTQ+ community. If they feel ok about coming out or if they are scared.”*

*“I want you guys... at the end of the survey to tell students and people how valid they are and that they are worth more than they think. People deserve that.”*

*[Ask] “Do you like going home everyday?”*

The last question asked students to give an evaluation of their experience with the survey. Approximately one-quarter of participating students (1000+) responded to this question. Of those students who responded to this question, most (80%) made a positive comment such as saying that the survey was great, interesting, fun, enjoyable, relevant and/or they were thankful for having been given the opportunity to participate. Some students said they found the survey helpful or that it helped them in some way.

A small number of students (7%) commented that the survey was long and/or boring.

*“Very inspiring and also expressing who I am and being able to tell someone about myself and how I feel.”*

*“This survey was well written in its questions, blunt and straightforward but gentle enough not to be too upsetting. I believe that this survey gives people the opportunity to speak out for themselves and possibly make them realise they need help - IF it is needed.”*

*"Its being done for a good cause so the whole school should be a part of this to get more accurate results."*

*"It is a very good test just please keep all the [answers] a secret."*

*"It was helpful in getting to know students and what they deal with and how they feel when it comes to school and outside of school activities."*

*"It was good to get this off my chest."*

*"It is good that us kids get a say and not just adults."*

*"I think it is a really good idea to hear from young people."*

*"I feel that you should not remove anything as this [survey] is good."*

*"I really liked this survey. I thought it had a good variety of questions and although some questions were slightly upsetting to answer, I think they were good topics to be asked about."*

Some students took the opportunity to make suggestions for change in their local area. Here are some of their ideas:

*"Better roads, footpaths on every block, bus to Perth [...], better youth centre...whoever reads this we want a grant for our youth centre and a new skate park."*

*"I would definitely make more places for kids to play together (e.g parks, sport grounds)."*

*"[...] free unlocked basketball and netball courts."*

*"I wish they didn't have to build the new development. I wish the people there would accept that I have a problem and need help.....and just help...me."*

*"That more of my friends that live in different areas that are far away would live closer so we could hang out more."*

*"A girls' football game [...] where all girls football teams could play at night or day."*

*"More walkways for me to get to places without having to be driven."*

*"[Change...] the library there isn't very many good books."*

*"My neighbourhood is [...] we wouldn't usually get a lot of benefits to our suburb just because we have high crime rates. [There are] not many playgrounds or gyms or just safe places my parents wouldn't worry about me going to."*

*"I would try to get more security and some way to feel safe."*





# Next steps

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## 7 Next steps

This report summarises the first SOS19 results for most survey questions disaggregated by year group and gender. These results are unique in that for the first time a broadly representative sample of children and young people in WA has spoken out about matters influencing their wellbeing.

Many of the findings raise questions that will be subject to further analysis that will be undertaken by the Commissioner in 2020. The research team will explore correlations between particular student cohorts and students who share similar views and experiences. Findings will be examined in their relevant research and policy context in order to better understand the implications and actions required.

More work also needs to be done to further develop the survey. This work will include the identification of gaps in the data, the re-examination of survey questions and their wording as well as re-consideration of data items that were previously suggested for SOS19 but excluded in the final version. It is hoped that SOS will become a regular triennial survey of WA children and young people that will deliver accurate and robust data and information on their wellbeing.

Triennial administration of the survey will allow for analysis of trends and changes over time and further provide the opportunity to include topical survey items or involve particular cohorts of students on a one-off basis. Consideration will also be given to the involvement of students who were out of scope for SOS19 such as students in Education Support Centres and students in Kindergarten to Year 3.

The Commissioner will consult the co-funders for this project, the Departments of Education, Health, Communities and Justice to seek their responses to the first findings of SOS19 and to shape the next stage of the project. Subsequently, the Commissioner will prepare a case for the WA Government requesting its commitment for future funding for the SOS with the view for the next survey to be administered in 2022.

The results and data outputs of SOS19 form a unique and robust information source that will be used to critically inform the Commissioner's work. It is hoped that government and non-government authorities recognise the strength and opportunity of this information and carefully consider the views expressed by children and young people.



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## 9 Letter from Attorney General Hon John Quigley LLB JP MLA



### Attorney General; Minister for Commerce

Our Ref: 67-15681

Mr Colin Pettit  
Commissioner for Children and Young People WA  
Ground Floor  
1 Alvan Street  
SUBIACO WA 6008

Dear Mr Pettit

#### DRAFT REPORT – SPEAKING OUT SURVEY 2019

Thank you for your letter dated 10 January 2020, enclosing the draft report *Speaking Out Survey 2019*.

The draft report reflects a substantial body of work and your office is to be commended for its efforts.

My only comments regarding the draft report relate to the possible lack of dispersion of the survey into vulnerable population groups, given that the survey was administered in a school setting. Arguably, children and young people that attend school regularly have a higher level of social functioning than those who do not. Therefore, the survey sample may have excluded the most vulnerable segments of the population that do not attend school regularly.

I understand that it is your intention, if possible, to continue to develop the survey to identify gaps in the data, re-examine the survey questions, and also re-consider some of the data items that were left out of the final version of the 2019 survey. I look forward to the Department of Justice playing an active role in these discussions.

Again, your office should be commended for its efforts.

Yours sincerely

Hon. John Quigley MLA  
ATTORNEY GENERAL; MINISTER FOR COMMERCE

13 FEB 2020





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