



kidshelpline
Anytime | Any Reason

insights2018

Kids Helpline
National Statistical Overview
Insights into young people in Australia

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Abbreviations

ASGS Australian Statistical Geography Standard
CALD Culturally and linguistically diverse
KAS/KH@S Kids Helpline @ School
KHL@HS Kids Helpline @ High School

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Executive summary

About this report

This report provides a statistical overview of the Kids Helpline service for 2018, including the:

- Kids Helpline counselling and support service
- Kids Helpline website and other resources for self-help, and
- Kids Helpline @ School program.

It presents 2018 and, where relevant, short- and longer-term trend data in relation to:

- client characteristics
- client needs and concerns
- client communication preferences
- types of help-seeking, and
- client satisfaction and perception of service impact.

Kids Helpline today

To provide context for the service data presented in the report and to address a range of common misconceptions about Kids Helpline, as with the previous edition, this edition of KHL Insights incorporates a chapter (Chapter 2), describing the scope and focus of Kids Helpline's work and its role in supporting and protecting children and young people in Australia, both at an individual and systemic level.

At the individual level, Kids Helpline employs a therapeutic framework focused on empowering children and young people to deal with issues in their lives by identifying and developing their personal resources. It delivers confidential, non-judgemental counselling and support via a range of communication modalities (phone, email and web chat) to support children's sense of trust and comfort in using the service and their ability to access it freely from anywhere. Kids Helpline's needs-based intervention model overlays this therapeutic framework and helps to ensure that the provision of specific supports, interventions and resources to children and young people is tailored to each individual's level and complexity of need.

At the systemic level, Kids Helpline protects and supports children and young people by:

- serving as a portal into specialist support systems that often overlook the particular developmental and structural vulnerabilities of children, ensuring that there is 'no wrong door' into these support systems
- providing children and young people with 24/7 access to qualified counsellors to provide a support and counselling safety net where mainstream services are either not broad enough in scope or are limited in their availability,
- providing a range of support and self-help resources and services tailored to the preferences of children and young people, in terms of issues, interactional modalities and technologies, and
- giving voice to the needs, concerns and experiences of children and young people in policy and research.

The complex and multifaceted role that Kids Helpline plays in two key social support systems – the child protection and mental health systems – is outlined to demonstrate some of the ways Kids Helpline enhances service system cohesion and functionality to better meet the needs of children and young people and provide them with a safety net.

Kids Helpline counselling and support service

Chapter 3 presents a wide range of information about the characteristics, needs, concerns, communication preferences and types of help-seeking of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline. The service, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, aims *to listen and respond to the needs of children and young people anytime and for any reason, and where appropriate support children and young people to develop strategies and skills to better manage their lives*. Counselling and support services are provided by tertiary-qualified counsellors via telephone, email and web chat.

Contact characteristics

Current period

Of the 147,351 inbound contacts responded to by Kids Helpline in 2018, 143,481 were known to be from children and young people aged 5-25 years – Kids Helpline’s target population. Key demographic characteristics of these contacts include the following:

- *Gender.* Roughly four out of five (77%) contacts responded to were from females while approximately one in five (21%) were from males. In 2015, Kids Helpline introduced a new category for gender – intersex, trans and gender-diverse. A total of 2,467 contacts, or 2%, were from children and young people identifying with this third gender category;
- *Age.* More than half (56%) of all contacts responded to were from children and young people aged 13-18 years, three in ten (31%) were from 19-25-year-olds, and about one in seven (13%) were from 5-12-year-olds;
- *Cultural background.* Where information was available on cultural background (25% of contacts), 4% of contacts were from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, 37% from other culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and 59% from Caucasian children and young people in Australia;
- *Location.* Contacts were received from all states and territories closely in proportion to the state breakdown of the Australian population of children and young people aged 5-25 years. Where the child or young person’s postcode was known (89% of contacts), most were living in Major Cities (76%), one in five (17%) was living in an Inner Regional locality, and one in twelve (8%) was living in an Outer Regional or Remote locality;
- *Type of support relationship.* Where the child or young person’s relationship with the service was recorded (50% of all contacts), just over one third (37%) of contacts was from children or young people contacting the service for the first time and just under two thirds (63%) were from those receiving occasional or ongoing support.

Trends in contact characteristics

While there has been much continuity in Kids Helpline contact characteristics over the last decade, the following changes are apparent:

- the proportion of contacts from females compared with males is gradually increasing. The proportional imbalance observed in 2018 between males and females is long-standing in nature, with males consistently comprising a minority of Kids Helpline contacts. While the proportional breakdown of contacts from males and females fluctuates from year to year, there would appear to be a growing proportion of contacts from females compared with males (**in 2018 the proportion of contacts from males is one-fifth of the total**);
- the proportion of contacts from children and young people aged 19-25 years has stabilised over the last five years, after initial growth since the service extended its reach to this age group, and the proportions in the other age groups are also stabilising over the 5-year trend at around one-third 19-25 years, one half 13-18 years, and one eighth 5-12 years;
- contacts from children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have gradually increased as a proportion of all contacts responded to while contacts from Caucasian children or young people in Australia have decreased proportionally;
- though the proportion of contacts from outer regional and remote locations is fairly stable (at about one tenth of the total) the proportion from major cities continues to grow and in 2018 stands at three-quarters of all contacts (76%); and
- over the last five years, the proportion of first-time contacts has been gradually increasing relative to repeat contacts.

The proportion of contacts from males continues to decline. Since 2007 it has gone from about one-third to one-fifth of contacts.

Contacts by type of help-seeking

Contacts responded to by Kids Helpline can be grouped into two broad categories of help-seeking: contacts from children and young people seeking counsellor assistance for a particular concern or problem (these

support sessions are called *counselling contacts*), and contacts from children and young people seeking information, referral to other services, or some other form of non-counselling support, like general conversation or playful engagement (these support sessions are called *non-counselling contacts*, or *information, referral and other contacts*).

Current period

- In 2018, 67,264 (or 47%) contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years were for counselling support while 76,217 (or 53%) were for information, referral or other non-counselling support.

Trends in type of help-seeking

- Over the last decade, the number and proportion of counselling contacts have gradually increased while the number and proportion of non-counselling contacts have decreased.
- The nature of non-counselling contacts is also changing, at least over the short term. Since 2012, the relative frequency with which children and young people have contacted Kids Helpline for the purpose of 'reconnecting or re-engaging' with the service or 'engaging in other ways' has decreased, while the frequency of 'non-conversational' contacts has increased (see section 3.2.3 for definitions of non-counselling contact types).

Medium of contact

- In 2018, half of all counselling contacts (51%) from children and young people aged 5-25 years were answered by phone, 36% by web chat and 13% by email.
- Over the last five years, the proportion of counselling contacts answered by web chat has steadily increased.
- Taken together, web and email are almost on par, proportionally, with phone as a medium of contact.

Although half of counselling contacts are via phone, the preference for web-chat continues to grow, and taken together email and web are almost on par, proportionally, with phone.

Issues for which children and young people most commonly sought counselling

Current period

- During 2018, Kids Helpline counsellors responded to 67,264 contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years who were seeking help about specific problems or concerns (i.e. *counselling contacts*).
 - Roughly, one in four counselling contacts (27%) was in relation to mental health problems – the child or young person's own mental health or that of another person.
 - One in five contacts was about emotional wellbeing (20%) or family relationship issues (18%).
 - About one in seven (15%) contacts involved the child or young person seeking help for suicide concerns.
 - One in 10 contacts concerned dating and partner relationships (9%) or friend/peer relationships (9%).
 - One in 12 (8%) contacts focused on self-injury concerns.
 - One in 13 (7%) contacts was about child abuse.
 - One in 20 (5%) contacts was about bullying.
 - One in 25 (4%) contacts was in relation to study and education issues.
- The concerns of children and young people contacting Kid Helpline in 2018 were found to vary:
 - greatly according to the child or young person's age group and cultural background
 - moderately according to their gender.

Mental health concerns, emotional wellbeing, family relationship issues, and suicide-related concerns are the top four concerns discussed in counselling.

Remoteness classification appeared to have negligible association with the concerns for which children and young people were seeking counselling support.

Trends in client concern

- The relative frequency with which Kids Helpline has been contacted about most of these issues over the last seven years has remained consistent with only unsystematic and small variations (i.e. both increases and decreases are observed, and fluctuations are of 2% or less in magnitude). Three exceptions are emotional wellbeing (up 5% since 2012) suicide-related contacts (up 3% since 2012) and mental health-related concerns (up 4% since 2012).
- Delving into Kids Helpline's data archive, however, it is possible to observe considerable change as well as continuity in the frequency with which particular concerns have been brought for counselling. Most notably, there has been an increase in help-seeking related to mental and/or emotional health or illness, including self-injury, and suicide.

Over the last seven years the proportion of contacts about the top 10 concerns is fairly stable, but the proportion of contacts about emotional wellbeing, suicide and mental health have increased in that time.

Sub-categories of the main concerns clients contact the service about

For each of the top four concerns *mental health*, *emotional wellbeing*, *family issues*, and *suicide* the sub-categories counsellors use to record the details of their interactions with clients was used to "drill down" to a more granular view of counselling contacts. For each of the top four, the most frequently occurring sub-categories were chosen for this analysis. These were:

- Suicide – suicidal thoughts or fears;
- Mental health – Seeking support and/or strategies to manage established disorder or diagnosis;
- Emotional wellbeing – Exploring or recognising themes/patterns in their thoughts or feelings; and
- Family relationships – (two were selected as they had similar proportions):
 - Wanting more attachment / connection / time / acceptance / understanding / affection; and
 - Conflict or arguments with parent or parents.

Contacts about suicidal thoughts or fears, dealing with mental health diagnoses, and exploring / recognising patterns in thoughts and feelings have grown between 2012-2018 both in proportion and in raw frequencies.

Trends in client concern

Across the 5 chosen sub-categories, three have risen slightly, in the period 2012-2018, both in proportion, and in raw count; they are: suicidal thoughts or fears (**suicide**); seeking support with an established diagnosis (**mental health**) and exploring / recognising patterns in thoughts and feelings (**emotional wellbeing**). The family relationships sub-categories are static in their proportions, and declining slightly in terms of raw frequency.

Referral to further support and duty-of-care interventions

Kids Helpline endeavours to provide a holistic service to children and young people, linking them whenever appropriate and possible to other support services that may assist them to address issues causing them concern. In addition, there are times when counsellors contact external agencies directly to engage support for a client and/or to protect a client who is experiencing harm or who is at imminent risk of harm.

Current period

- In 2018, there were 1,825 records of counsellors attempting to contact an external agency, or agencies, to support a child or young person and/or to protect them from significant harm or imminent risk of significant harm. Eight out of ten of these records (1,475, or 81%) concerned a duty-of-care intervention.
- Child abuse and suicide attempts were by far the most common reasons for duty-of-care interventions in 2018 (37% and 38% respectively).

Trends in duty-of-care interventions

- From 2013 to 2018, there has been:
 - a 4% decrease in the total number of duty-of-care interventions initiated by counsellors, after a steady increase during the period 2013-2017;
 - a ten percentage point increase in the proportion of interventions precipitated by concern about child abuse in that same period (27% to 37%).

Child abuse and suicide concerns are still the main precipitating concerns for Duty-of-Care interventions.

Although the number of contacts triggering Duty-of-Care responses has decreased 4% since 2013, in that same period there has been a ten percentage point increase in the proportion of interventions precipitated by concern about child abuse.

Counselling contacts about cyber-safety issues

Cyber-safety is an issue of contemporary social policy concern. To support its growing role in responding to the cyber-safety concerns of children and young people, Kids Helpline collects data to gauge the frequency of cyber-safety issues being discussed in counselling sessions.

- In 2,701 (4%) of the 67,264 counselling contacts responded to by Kids Helpline counsellors, the child or young person disclosed experiencing cyber-safety issues to the counsellors.
- The help-seeking concerns of children and young people, in contacts where cyber-safety issues are also indicated, were found to differ considerably from those recorded for children and young people in other counselling contacts where no cyber-safety concerns were expressed. These differences may offer insight into the nature of children and young people's cyber-safety issues. Some of these are outlined below.
- By far the most common concern of those disclosing cyber-safety issues was bullying, with one in three (33%) of these counselling sessions focusing on bullying. By comparison, bullying was recorded as a concern of the child or young person in 4% of other counselling sessions.
- In addition to bullying, counselling sessions where cyber-safety issues were disclosed were more likely than other counselling sessions to be focused on the following issues:
 - dating and partner relationships (13% c.f. 10%) and
 - friend and peer relationships (15% c.f. 9%).
- Counselling sessions where cyber-safety issues were disclosed were *less likely* than other counselling sessions to be focused on the following issues, however:
 - mental health issues (16% c.f. 27%)
 - emotional wellbeing (12% c.f. 20%)
 - family relationship issues (10% c.f. 18%) and
 - study and education issues (1% c.f. 4%).

4% of counselling contacts related to cyber-safety issues

Kids Helpline self-help resources

In addition to the counselling and support service, Kids Helpline operates a website for self-directed help-seeking by children, young people and adults (www.kidshelpline.com.au). The self-help resources provided on

the website, and in particular the *Issues Articles* for *kids, teens, young adults, and parents & carers*, have been developed by counselling centre staff and researchers. These resources are intended to provide information and strategies to assist users in responding to common issues and concerns.

Service demand

- In 2018 there were 843,753 unique visitors to the Kids Helpline website who collectively participated in 1,109,245 web sessions.
- From 2009 to 2015, web sessions increased by 403% and unique visitors by 381%.
- Between 2015 and 2018, web sessions increased by 21% and unique visitors increased by 17%.
- From 2017-2018 the visitor count increased again (by 39%) and the sessions count also increased (by 38%).

The Kids Helpline website had 843,753 unique visitors who collectively participated in 1,109,245 web sessions, in 2018.

The break in continuous growth in demand for these resources in 2016 relates to the establishment of the new Kids Helpline URL and website, resulting in a drop in organic search traffic which is expected to normalise over the coming year and ultimately increase. The URL was re-instated in October 2016, and traffic has increased for all sub-sites and resources.

Key concerns of website visitors

Demand for Issues Articles on various topics

Demand for particular information resources, like *Issues Articles*, provides some insight into the concerns and interests of website visitors.

- Kids
 - In 2018, Kids' Issues pages accrued a total of 125,579 page-views.
 - 40% of all kids' Issues page-views were in relation to five topics – online safety, peer conflict, loneliness, self-harm, and bullying.
 - On-line safety and friend/peer conflict were the most heavily visited resource areas, with 14,584 and 14,176 page-views respectively, which is nearly 1.6 times as many views as the next most popular Issues pages.
- Teens
 - During 2018, Issues pages targeted at teenagers received a total of 616,150 page-views.
 - 43% of all teens' Issues page-views were in relation to five topics – bullying, sadness, sexting, suicide and cyberbullying.
 - One in every 7 page-views (14%) was in relation to information resources on bullying, and
 - One in 9 page-views (11%) is about online life (cyberbullying and sexting).
- Young adults
 - During 2018, Issues pages targeted at young adults received a total of 70,034 page-views.
 - The most popular resources pertained to relationship matters generally, and family relationships in particular.
- Parents/carers
 - During 2018, Issues resources targeting parents and carers received a total of 150,549 page-views.
 - The top two most frequently visited resources were about a child contemplating suicide or seeking help with parenting.

The most frequently viewed website pages are:

Kids:

- *online safety, conflict with peers, loneliness self-harm and bullying.*

Teens:

- *bullying, sadness, sexting, and suicide.*

Young adults:

- *relationship matters.*

Parents/Carers:

- *children contemplating suicide and parenting help generally.*

“Star” ratings of Issues Articles

Evaluation of Issues articles was facilitated by the provision of “star” ratings opportunities to those who visited Article pages.

- *Issues Articles* were evaluated by the majority (range: 67-74%) within each age group to have been helpful/useful.

Evaluation and perceived impact of Issues Articles

The majority of respondents believed the Kids Helpline website resources were interesting (91% mid-point or above) and helped them gain an understanding of the issue being addressed (83% mid-point or above). Two thirds found the article motivated them to read the article, and that it gave them ideas to try out, and a little over half agreed that reading the article improved their capability to handle their issues

After reading an *Article*:

- about two thirds of respondents believed the Kids Helpline website resources were effective in increasing their ability to deal with their issue/s (66%); and
- two-in-three said the resources gave them new ideas to help them address their issue/s (66%).

Referrals from other websites

Referrals from other organisations' websites are another source of information about the needs and concerns of website visitors.

Of the 40,228 referrals to the Kids Helpline website received from the top 20 referring websites in 2018:

- Over 16,210 came from youth specialist, or generalist mental health and counselling websites (primarily ruok.org.au, blackdog.org.au, ncab.org.au, headtohealth.gov.au, getrealwithyourfeels.com, lifeline.com.au, healthdirect.gov.au, reachout.com.au); and
- 2,340 referrals were received from the Australian Government's eSafety website.

Comics – suicide and child abuse

During 2018, four comics were produced for consumption by teens (aged 13-18) and kids (aged 5-12). The comics dealt with two themes of contemporary interest – suicide and child abuse. Two different story-lines covered each of the themes, and for child abuse one of the story-lines specifically targeted the “kids” age group (5-12). The other story-lines targeted teens. Evaluation results indicate that these resources were rated well by teachers who requested them. In 2018, a total of 11,557 comics (across the 4 storylines) were distributed to various organisations, mainly schools, but including government departments. The comics were made available on the website. Comics dealing with suicide prevention were downloaded/viewed 4,235 times, and those dealing with abuse were downloaded or viewed 426 times (4,661 views/downloads in total).

In 2018, a total of 11,557 comics (across 4 storylines) were distributed to various organisations, mainly schools, but including government departments. These resources were viewed on the web 4,661 times.

App library

The Kids Helpline website hosts links to apps that have been developed by others, appraised as safe by Kids Helpline counsellors, and designed to help children and young people self-manage a variety of issues and concerns. In total in 2018 there were 3,635 page-views across 35 apps pages in this section of the website.

In total in 2018 there were 3,635 page-views across 35 apps pages in the App Library section of the Kids Helpline website.

KHL Circles

KHL Circles is a purpose-built, counsellor moderated mental health and emotional wellbeing social network that's safe, free and private for children and young people. It encourages peer-to-peer support and delivers expert group counselling supported by professional Kids Helpline counsellors 24/7.

The partnership between Kids Helpline and the University of Sydney has produced new knowledge on the delivery of e-mental health services. FGX has also partnered with Kids Helpline in the KHL Circles project. FGX is Australia's first philanthropic investment vehicle creating wealth for shareholders and supporting children at risk.

KHL Circles, a counsellor-facilitated, peer-support program was rolled out during 2018, in partnership with FGX.

Niggle App

Kids Helpline, in a co-design collaboration with children and young people and partners at QUT School of Creative Design, and The University of Qld, is developing its own App for use by children and young people (aged 13-25).

The App will provide links to self-help resources in three categories of media (text, video, pod-casts), self-administered standardised test surveys for common emotional health concerns (anxiety, depression), capability for diarising and monitoring of self-managed positive steps or actions towards improvement and empowerment, and the capacity to store self-ratings of mood and severity of concern over time for self-monitoring of progress. The self-help resources are tailored to the "issues" or concerns of the young person using the App.

Kids Helpline is developing, testing and in 2019 will launch its own App to support young people self-manage across a variety of issues that concern them.

During 2018 the App was developed and pilot testing, safety research and public release is scheduled for 2019.

Kids Helpline @ School program

Kids Helpline @ School (KAS) is an early intervention and prevention program for primary school-aged children that has been operating since 2013. The program offers primary schools a professional counsellor-facilitated classroom session via video technology to discuss topics impacting on the lives of students with the objectives of building children's mental health literacy, resilience and capacity to seek help when required. The KAS program is largely supported through corporate sponsorship partnerships with BUPA (supporting the wellbeing modules of the program) and Optus (supporting digital literacy and citizenship).

- In 2018, we delivered 881 sessions into 285 schools. A total of 27,177 primary school students participated in these sessions.
- Schools participated from every state and territory, and one third (33%) of participating schools were located in regional or remote localities.
- Teachers made extensive use of online educational resources developed by Kids Helpline to support schools' participation in the program, with over 44,393 page-views of these resources, and 32,515 visits to the KAS website home page.

27,177 primary school students from 285 schools participated in a total of 881 classroom sessions with a Kids Helpline counsellor.

- We continued to offer the digital literacy and safety curriculum components of the KAS program, with the financial support of Optus (the Digital Thumbprint Program). These sessions focus on assisting children to engage positively and safely in online environments, teaching them principles of 'digital citizenship' and how to speak out when they, or others, have negative online experiences.
- In 2018, BUPA, provided support for the Kids Helpline @ School Wellbeing Program, which focuses on a range of topics including Leadership at school, Peer pressure, Staying safe / personal safety, Bullying, Friendships, Developing resilience, and Managing emotions. 15,000 school children participated in the sessions in the Wellbeing Program.

Over 11,000 children and young people participated in Kids Helpline at School sessions related to digital citizenship.

Over 15,000 children and young people participated in Kids Helpline @ School session related to wellbeing.

Kids Helpline @ High School program

On the 1st July 2018, **yourtown** was funded to develop and deliver the pilot Kids Helpline @ High School North QLD program, supported by the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN). This program aims to increase the knowledge of mental wellness and help-seeking of high school students in the NQPHN region.

From the 1st of October, the pilot began delivering sessions and connected with 1401 participants across a total number of 21 sessions. The topics available to students include the following: Introduction to Kids Helpline, School Transitions, Emotional Intelligence, Respectful Relationships and Developing Resilience.

1,401 high school students participated in a total of 21 Kids Helpline @ High School sessions in 2018.

The program is funded to run until 30th of June 2019; after that time the efficacy of the pilot will be evaluated and future opportunities for potential expansion of the program to other areas will be explored.

Kids Helpline annual counselling client satisfaction and outcome survey

yourtown believes that service users provide an essential perspective in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of Kids Helpline services. One way that **yourtown** engages the views of Kids Helpline service users is through an annual client satisfaction and outcome survey.

Methodology

A brief online survey, comprising a combination of open- and fixed-response items, was conducted over nine weeks from November 2018 to January 2019. The survey was open to any individual who had accessed the Kids Helpline counselling and support service or visited the Kids Helpline website within the last 12 months. Survey respondents were asked about their engagement with the Kids Helpline counselling and support service and website over the last 12 months.

Key findings

Sample

A total of 1,246 individuals provided complete responses to the survey, 99% of whom (1,227) were aged 5-25 years. The sample includes children and young people from all states and territories and is broadly representative of Kids Helpline contacts in 2018 with a few exceptions.

After counselling, in responses to a survey:

70% reported feeling supported

68% of respondents reported feeling less distressed

75% reported feeling more capable of dealing with their issue/s

77% agree that they had more ideas for dealing with their issue/s

Type of engagement with Kids Helpline in the last 12 months

Of the total of 1,246 respondents 499 had contacted the counselling and support service only, 268 had used the website resources only, and the balance (479) had both contacted the counselling service and visited the website.

Perceived impact of Kids Helpline counselling and support service

After speaking to a counsellor:

- Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents reported improved affect after counselling;
- Counselling had a medium to large positive impact on the anxiety levels of respondents;
- Seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents report increased confidence in dealing with their problem, as a consequence of the counselling they received; and
- Seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents said that as a result of counselling they had gotten idea that could help them with their issue/s.

Counselling quality and approach

As to the approach to counselling, respondents were asked to comment on whether the approach taken by their counsellor was a “good fit” for them, whether they felt heard, and whether they got to talk about the issues they wanted to discuss. These aspects of the counselling interaction are constitutive of “quality” counselling. The results indicate that:

- Eighty-nine percent (89%) felt heard and respected;
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) felt the fit between themselves and the counsellor was a good one; and
- Eighty-nine percent (89%) said they got to discuss the things they wanted to discuss during the counselling session.

Overall satisfaction

To gauge overall satisfaction with the Kids Helpline counselling service, respondents were asked two questions: *How satisfied are you with Kids Helpline? (five-point response scale)*, and *Would you recommend Kids Helpline to a friend? (yes/no)*.

- Eighty-five percent (85%) of those who only used counselling were moderately satisfied (or better) with their experience and
- Ninety percent (90%) would recommend Kids Helpline to a friend.

Key themes arising from this report

Five key themes emerge from reviewing the data presented in the 2018 Kids Helpline Insights report.

Theme 1 Kids Helpline consistently implements its model of support for children and young people

The model of support implemented by Kids Helpline has two aspects:

- *Any time, any reason* – The cornerstone of Kids Helpline’s approach to supporting children and young people is that they can contact the service, about any issue or concern, at any time. This model or approach requires that counselling interactions with children and young people are supportive, respectful, versatile, and appropriate for their needs, allowing clients to explore any issues of concern in a safe environment and in appropriate ways. The data from the evaluation study show that:
 - our clients feel “heard and respected” by counsellors,
 - they got to talk about the things they wanted to talk to the counsellor about, and
 - the counsellor was a good fit for them.
- Kids Helpline counsellors work simultaneously to
 - address the immediate concerns of the client, addressing risk of harm, and staying focused on exploration of the specific issues of concern,
 - when appropriate begin working with the client to develop their “emotional literacy”, that is, their ability to understand, identify and speak about their emotions and their reactions to the circumstances or concerns, and
 - provide appropriate care, case planning and management, and referral, according to the needs of the client.

Theme 2 Kids Helpline helps children and young people develop their capability for self-management and autonomy in dealing with their issues

- Building on the relationship base established through the counselling model, and the approach taken to both counselling and to the provision of self-help resources, engagement with Kids Helpline helps children and young people to develop an understanding and acceptance of their feelings, thoughts and reactions, and helps them to deal with their specific presenting concerns. Outcomes include:
 - an increase in their “emotional literacy” – helping them understand and articulate their feelings; and
 - an increase in their capability for dealing with their concerns – helping children and young people explore options for independently handling the things that concern them, by identifying possible courses of action, or resources for further learning or further support (including specialised support as appropriate).
- The data from the evaluation study show that:
 - counselling
 - reduces self-reported anxiety,
 - provides ideas for dealing with issues,
 - helps make clients feel better, and
 - makes them more confident to deal with their issue/s; whilst
 - resources (specifically the Issues Articles on the Kids Helpline website) made clients more capable of dealing with their issue/s by:
 - increasing their understanding of their issues,
 - giving them ideas for getting further help,
 - motivating them to address their issue/s, and
 - prompting planned or actual behavioural change towards addressing their issue/s.
- The *any time, any reason* philosophy means that the profile of concerns which counsellors explore with children and young people is a fair barometer of the range of issues that concern them. The greater frequency of occurrence of some concerns over others does not negate the importance of any other concerns with a lower frequency of occurrence. In this report, we identified the top four concerns based on

their frequency of occurrence, and conducted a closer analysis of these, at the level of “sub-category”. This is not done, however, to imply that any issue a young person discusses with a counsellor is less important than any other. What such an approach does tell us is what the core activities of the broader service are, measured in terms of sheer volume. In this way the data tell their own story about what are the more common, not more important concerns, raised by children and young people. The four key concerns and their attendant sub-categories were: **emotional well-being** (*exploring themes or patterns in clients’ behaviours*), **mental health** (*seeking support and/or strategies to manage established disorders or diagnoses*), **suicide** (*having suicidal thoughts or fears*), and **family relationship matters** (*wanting more attachment/connection/time/ acceptance/ understanding/ affection, and conflict or arguments with parent or parents*). These are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Theme 3 Kids Helpline is a key support for children and young people in relation to emotional wellbeing, mental health, suicide, and family relationship issues.

Emotional wellbeing, mental health, and suicide, are issues where contact frequency *and* proportion are growing.

- *Emotional wellbeing* - contacts exploring themes or patterns in clients’ behaviours have risen 34% since 2012. Core to the work of Kids Helpline counsellors, working with children and young people on emotional wellbeing occurs when a client recognises themes or patterns in relation to their emotional responses, the way they cope or the way they manage their emotions across a number of situations (for example, when seeking help about general sadness, feeling down, loneliness, worry/anxiety, stress, distress, anger, upsetting dreams, problems sleeping, or other negative emotions that are not specifically associated with a person/situation/event). In working with children and young people on their emotional wellbeing, counsellors are focusing on one of the main aspects of their work, which is the development of “emotional literacy” and helping their clients find ways to understand, describe and manage their emotional worlds. This plays an important preventive function in that it aims to develop resilience and resourcefulness, which underpin the capability for independently managing emotional distress, and help prevent escalation into more serious mental health consequences.
- *Mental health* - contacts providing support and/or strategies to manage established disorders or diagnoses have risen 25% since 2012. One of the ways Kids Helpline services support the broader mental health system, the second-most-frequently occurring sub-category analysed is about the support counsellors offer to children and young people who already are using mental health services, at least to the extent that they have a diagnosis of their mental health symptomology. The support counsellors provide is in helping their clients develop strategies for managing an established disorder or diagnosis.
- *Suicide* - contacts about suicidal thoughts or fears have risen 18% since 2012. Suicidal ideation (suicidal thoughts or fears) is a significant risk factor in suicide and Kids Helpline handled 22 such contacts each day, from children and young people, in 2018. The goal of counselling in these cases is in the first instance to reduce perturbation in order to lower the risk of suicide. In the longer term, the goals extend to prevention through helping the young person identify and understand their “triggers” and to reduce reactions to those triggers into the future.
- *Family relationship matters* - Strengthening family relationships is a key outcome for children and young people. Although the count of contacts about family relationship matters (*Wanting more attachment/connection/time/ acceptance/ understanding/ affection and Conflict or arguments with parent or parents*) has gone down (8% and 22% respectively 2012-2018), their relative frequency amidst the other sub-categories remains stable (at about 4%). Taking age into account, we observe that though the numbers in both these sub-categories has decreased 2012-2018 for the 13-18 and 19-25-year-olds, for the 5-12-year-olds the numbers have increased in the same period (25% for wanting more connection, and 12% for conflict). Thus, in spite of the decline in total numbers over the past 7 years, family relationships continue to be one of the top concerns of children and young people, especially those in the younger age group (5-12 years).

Theme 4 Contact attempts continue to show a decline in preference for phone and an increase in e-mediated modes of contacting the service, especially webchat

Although telephone is still the predominant medium of contact, there continues to be a gradual but steady shift in children and young people’s medium of preference for contacting a counsellor – away from telephone and email towards web chat.

Kids Helpline has been responding to children and young people's shifting preferences for particular communication media by:

- extending web chat operating hours to 24/7 in 2018
- maintaining a mobile-friendly interface for the delivery of web counselling, and
- providing extra counselling staff to the service with the injection of \$1 million additional funding aimed at meeting the online demand.

Theme 5 Kids Helpline's provision of a web-mediated resource suite through its website serves contemporary children and young people's independent help-seeking

There continues to be substantial engagement with and a growth in children and young people's use of Kids Helpline website resources and e-mediated approaches to help-seeking.

Kids Helpline has been responding to children and young people's shifting preferences for particular communication media by:

- upgrading the Kids Helpline website to optimise usage by mobile devices, and
- expanding the range of self-help resources and issues-based content provisioned through the website to include an App Library which provides links to Apps (both general wellbeing and specific issue Apps) that have been vetted by Kids Helpline.
- Kids Helpline offers children and young people a professionally facilitated, e-mediated, peer-support program: Circles; the provision of e-mediated, on-line help and resources is one way in which Kids Helpline is responding to their changing preferences.

Use of the Kids Helpline website continues to grow:

- Unique visitor numbers have grown 17% since 2015 (up 39% since 2017) , and
- Web session numbers are up 21% since 2015 (38% since 2017).

Looking to the future, Kids Helpline has developed an App for children and young people to use to help them self-manage a wide variety of concerns and issues (the "Niggle" App) which will be piloted and launched in 2019.

1. Introduction

Welcome to *Kids Helpline Insights 2018: National Statistical Overview* – a report documenting the work of the service for the 2017 calendar year.

1.1 What is Kids Helpline?

Kids Helpline is a free, confidential counselling and support service for children and young people across Australia aged 5-25 years. The objective of the service is *to listen and respond to the needs of children and young people anytime and for any reason, and where appropriate support children and young people to develop strategies and skills to better manage their lives*. To achieve this end, counselling and support services are provided by tertiary-qualified counsellors via telephone, web chat and email.

Telephone, web, and email counselling are available 24/7. Children and young people can contact the service at any time about any matter. In the years since it began Kids Helpline has responded to over 8 million contacts from children and young people. Demand exceeds capacity, however, and many attempts to contact the service go unanswered.

Kids Helpline is Australia's only 24/7 generalist counselling and support service for children and young people. It is a service of **yourtown** (previously known as BoysTown), a not-for-profit organisation with over 55 years' experience helping disadvantaged children and young people overcome the challenges they face through counselling, support, employment and training services.

In addition to the counselling and support service, Kids Helpline operates a substantial website with a diverse range of resources for self-directed help-seeking by children, young people and parents/carers. Through funding from FGX, Kids Helpline offers young people a professionally facilitated, e-mediated, peer-support program: *Circles*. The provision of e-mediated, on-line help and resources is one way in which Kids Helpline is responding to the changing preferences of young people.

Kids Helpline also delivers an early intervention and prevention programs in primary schools called *Kids Helpline @ School* (KAS), (the Optus Digital Thumbprint Program and the BUPA Wellbeing Program).

On the 1st July 2018, **yourtown** was funded to develop and deliver the pilot Kids Helpline @ High School North QLD program, supported by the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN). This program aims to increase the knowledge of mental wellness and help-seeking of high school students in the NQPHN region through ongoing collaboration with schools and the delivery of free personalised video-linked educational sessions.

In 2018 Kids Helpline cost \$11.3 million to run. **yourtown** provided 75% of the funding thanks to the generosity of supporters of the Art Unions and donations, while the Australian, Queensland and Western Australian Governments, and corporate partners, contributed the remaining 25% (see Figure 68).

1.2 What this report is about and who it is for

Kids Helpline is uniquely positioned to inform governments, researchers and the general public about the help-seeking needs and concerns of children and young people in Australia today. It is custodian of valuable information about how these needs and concerns trend over time in response to changing social, cultural, economic and technological circumstances. **yourtown** believes that sharing this information with the community is important because it has the potential to inform the development of more timely, appropriate and effective responses to the mental health and other needs of children and young people in our community.

To that end, this report provides a national statistical overview of the Kids Helpline service for 2018. It has been written especially for people working in social policy and research roles but will also be valuable to a wide range of organisations and professionals working with vulnerable children and young people in the community. Similarly, journalists and others in the community interested in understanding and documenting the current and changing needs and concerns of children and young people in Australia today will find the information useful.

The report has six further chapters and an appendix.

- *Chapter 2* outlines in some detail the scope and focus of the Kids Helpline service and describes the integral role it plays in supporting and protecting children and young people.
- *Chapter 3* presents data in relation to the Kids Helpline counselling and support service. This includes data about client characteristics, types of help-seeking, modes of engagement with the service, most common concerns of children and young people receiving counselling, information about the specific needs of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline.
- *Chapter 4* presents data regarding client engagement with, and evaluation of, the Kids Helpline self-help resource suite, which includes a website with multiple age-targeted micro-sites, an app library, and comics on specific themes; the Chapter also reports trends emerging in demand for self-help resources.
- *Chapter 5* reports on the evaluation of the Kids Helpline counselling service based on data collected in the annual client satisfaction and outcomes survey.
- *Chapter 6* describes the main activities and outcomes of the Kids Helpline @ School and Kids Helpline @ High School programs.
- *Chapter 7* brings the report to a close by drawing out a handful of key themes from the data presented in the report for further reflection.

The report concludes with an appendix that provides essential background information on data collection, analysis and interpretation.

1.3 Where to get more information

This report has been compiled by **yourtown's** Strategy and Research unit. For further information, please contact **yourtown** on 07 3368 3399, email yourtown@yourtown.com.au or visit www.yourtown.com.au. For media enquiries contact Tracy Gillinder, Head of Marketing and Fundraising: tgillinder@yourtown.com.au or the Corporate Affairs and Media Advisor via email at: media@yourtown.com.au.

2. Kids Helpline today

This chapter outlines in some detail the contemporary scope and focus of the Kids Helpline service and its integral role in supporting and protecting children and young people. In articulating this role, we hope to address a range of common misconceptions about what Kids Helpline does, and provide context for understanding the service data presented in the remaining chapters of the report.

2.1 Overview of scope and focus

On the twenty-fifth of March 1991, Kids Helpline first opened its phone line in Brisbane to children and young people aged 5-18 years. Its vision then, which has remained unchanged over time, was to offer a supportive, child-focused response to any child or young person, any time about any issue. Within two and a half years, Kids Helpline was operating in every Australian state and territory, and in its second full year of operation, it responded to close to half a million phone calls from children and young people across the country.

Twenty-seven years on, Kids Helpline is an integral part of Australia's social support system for children and young people, playing a unique and critical role in various specific support systems including the child protection, mental health, homelessness and e-safety systems. In addition to providing professional support and counselling 24-7 via phone, web and email, it also continues to provide support to young adults aged up to 25 years (since 2003, when the age of young people supported was expanded to 25 years).

As of 31 December 2018, the Kids Helpline counselling and support service had responded to more than 8 million (8,018,717) contacts from children and young people, as shown in Figure 1. Ninety-four (94%) percent (7,527,796) of these contacts were received via phone and the remainder by email (229,256) or web chat (261,665).

This is equivalent to responding to a contact from a child or young person every 1.8 minutes continuously for 28 years.

Almost a third of contacts (29%) were seeking help for a particular problem (*counselling contacts*), while the remainder (71%) were seeking information, referral or other forms of non-counselling support. Almost all counselling contacts (99%) were from children and young people aged 5-25 years.

As a complement to its counselling and support service, Kids Helpline has developed a substantial website with four micro-sites for independent help-seeking by children (5-12 years), teenagers (13-18 years), young adults (19-25 years) and parents/carers. Within these pages Kids Helpline provides resources to support children and young people to self-manage a variety of issues that concern them. Resources include written articles, age appropriate and issue-focused comics, and links to phone apps that address specific concerns or general mental health and wellbeing.

Kids Helpline also offers an early intervention and prevention program for primary school-aged children – Kids Helpline @ School (KAS). KAS provides primary schools around Australia with the opportunity to have counsellor-facilitated classroom sessions via video technology which focus on building children's resilience and wellbeing. Our corporate partners provide additional support. Optus provides funding for a subprogram of KAS focused on digital safety (Optus Digital Thumbprint) and BUPA provides funding for a subprogram of KAS focused on wellbeing (the Wellbeing Program).

On the 1st July 2018, **yourtown** was funded to develop and deliver the pilot Kids Helpline @ High School North QLD program, supported by the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN). This program aims to increase the knowledge of mental wellness and help-seeking of high school students in the NQPHN region through ongoing collaboration with schools and the delivery of free personalised video-linked educational sessions. Key stakeholders in the pilot development include the Department of Education QLD, Catholic Education, Be You, and the Ed-LinQ Child and Youth Mental Health Services.

A further innovation at Kids Helpline is the trialling of Kids Helpline *Circles* – a counsellor-facilitated social network to support young people living with family conflict, and other priority concerns. KHL Circles was developed in partnership with the University of Sydney and is supported through funding from FGX. It has long been known that peer to peer support and counselling are effective in resolving some mental health and

wellbeing concerns of children and young people. Social networking and social media have also been used in responding to mental health via YouTube messages, Forum Discussions, posting of Photo Messages and resource links i.e. Mental Health Webs. However, it has not been used much if at all, for peer-to-peer support groups, monitored by expert counsellors.

Circles is an attempt to integrate these capabilities to improve youth mental health management. The Circles counselling model supports the traditional, one-on-one, counselling intervention by providing young people access to a social networked support group. This peer-to-peer social network group further supports young people through the mutual sharing of stories, playing games, and engaging in group counselling, in order to bolster their ability to self-manage their concerns, whilst retaining the option of individual counselling interventions as needed.

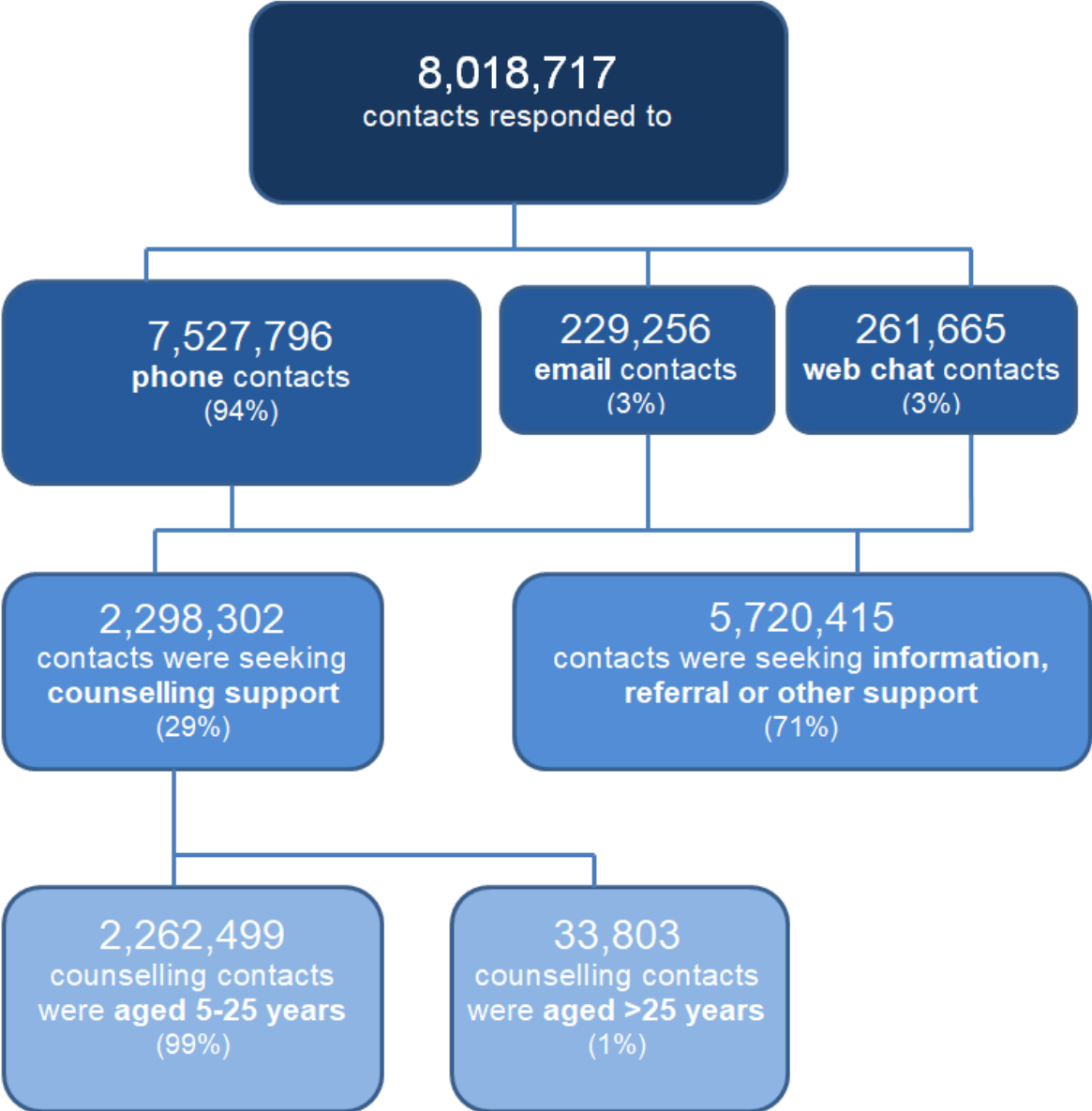
Various other service innovations and e-mental-health tools are also under development in partnership with different research institutions, corporate sponsors and with the support of philanthropic donors.

One such development is the Niggle App – an ARC-funded collaboration with QUT School of Creative Design, and The University of Qld, continues to progress the creation of a youth-friendly self-help App, co-designed with young people, which will provide links to self-help resources in three categories of media (text, video, pod-casts), self-administered standardised tests and features the capability for diarising and monitoring of self-managed positive steps or actions towards improvement and empowerment. The App will be Pilot-tested and launched in 2019.

Despite the breadth of Kids Helpline's service provision and its high brand awareness, many people remain confused or uninformed about what Kids Helpline does, and accordingly may not appreciate what the Australian community might be like without Kids Helpline. This is not a problem exclusive to Kids Helpline. Child helplines around the world report facing this challenge because what they do in their communities is unique.

A common misconception of Kids Helpline is that it is a crisis service for children and young people, like a children's version of Lifeline. While Kids Helpline *does* provide crisis responses *when necessary*, this is just one of many interventions offered depending on the presenting needs and objectives of the child or young person. In fact, crisis intervention makes up a relatively small part of the support Kids Helpline provides to children and young people (see section 3.6.1).

Figure 1. Contacts responded to by Kids Helpline – 1991 to 2018

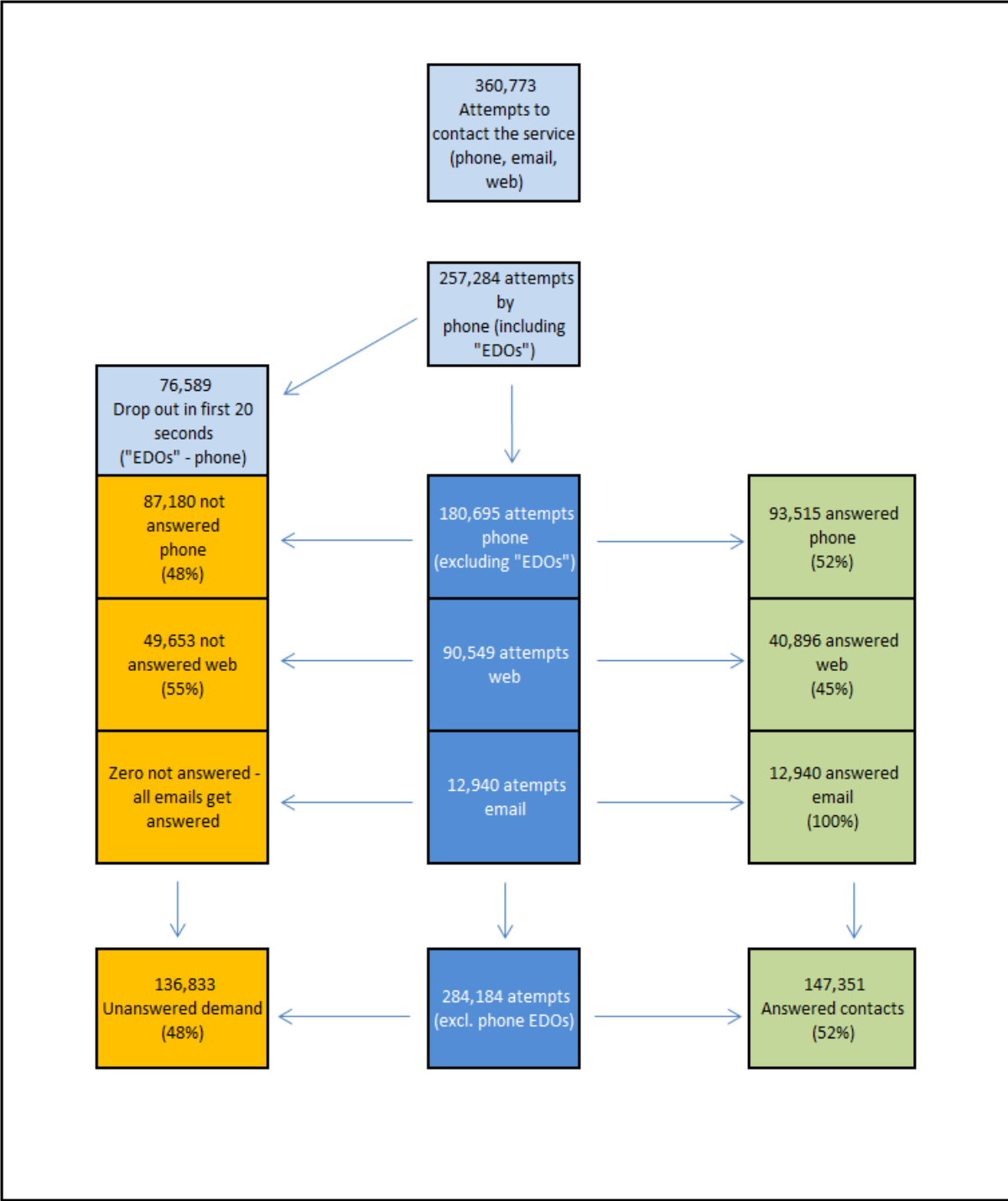


Responding to concerns children and young people have in relation to their mental health is another major area of Kids Helpline’s work, along with responding to concerns about identity and self-concept, school and education, and health and development issues. Many children also contact because they are experiencing abuse or violence including bullying, while some have concerns about how to manage addictive behaviours, and others contact for help because they are experiencing homelessness or material deprivation. Counsellors also respond to many calls from children and young people who are simply lonely or have no one else with whom to share their news or experiences.

2.1.1 Meeting demand

Kids Helpline receives many more attempted contacts than the service can respond to each year. In 2018, for instance, there were 360,773 attempts to contact the service. Of these, where the contact attempt is via phone, about 21% (76,589) “drop out” before the 20 second information privacy message has been played (“early drop outs”, or “EDOs”). That means that there are 284,184 attempts to contact the service (email, web and phone attempts that persist past this “early drop out” point), and of these only half (52%) get answered by a counsellor (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Demand and Response



This means that, on average, every day, 375 contact attempts are not answered (when early drop-outs are not included in the total count of demand). This is not to say that each of these unanswered contact attempts represents individual children or young people – many people will persist, attempting to contact multiple times before finally “getting through”.

Others of course, may give up in the efforts to speak with a counsellor. It is not possible for us to know how many individual children and young people are represented in the 136,833 unanswered contacts, but it is nonetheless a large number of contacts, likely representing a large amount of unmet need.

Figure 3: Summary of demand, response, response rates ("answered rate") – by medium – and totals (with and without phone EDOs included in the denominator)

	Demand	Answered	Unanswered	Answered Rate	Unanswered per week	Unanswered per day
Phone (including EDOs)	257,284	93,515	87,180	36%	1,677	239
EDOs (phone)	76,589	-	76,589	0%	1,473	210
Phone (no EDOs)	180,695	93,515	87,180	52%	1,677	239
WebChat	90,549	40,896	49,653	45%	955	136
email	12,940	12,940	-	100%	-	-
Totals (where EDOs excluded)	284,184	147,351	136,833	52%	2,631	375
Totals (where EDOs included)	360,773	147,351	213,422	41%	4,104	585

Figure 3 shows a summary of all demand and response figures, and response rates, by medium. Total demand is calculated, both with and without telephone EDOs included. These data show that the response rate with EDOs included in the calculation is 41% overall (36% for telephone), and without EDOs included in the calculation the response rate is 52% overall (coincidentally 52% for phone contacts also). The figure also shows how many potential contacts are not answered each week and each day, in two scenarios – one assuming that EDOs are all potential contacts (e.g., 585 contacts a day not answered – including EDOs in the total demand figure), and one assuming that none of them are (e.g. 375 contacts a day not answered – excluding EDOs from the total demand figure).

2.2 Kids Helpline's role in supporting and protecting young people in Australia

To explain more fully Kids Helpline's contemporary role in protecting and supporting children and young people, it is necessary to think about its work at two different levels – its interventions to protect and support children and young people at an *individual level* and at a broader *systemic level*.

2.2.1 Program theory

In terms of supporting and protecting children and young people at an individual level, Kids Helpline's practice is guided by a specific therapeutic framework and intervention model intended to help the service achieve its objective. This objective is: to listen and respond to the needs of children and young people anytime and for any reason, and where appropriate support children and young people to develop strategies and skills to better manage their lives.

Kids Helpline's therapeutic framework

Kids Helpline employs counsellors with relevant experience and tertiary qualifications and then trains them in the core skills and practice values the service believes are essential to achieving its objective. Counsellors are also provided with intensive professional supervision and support.

The therapeutic framework counsellors are inducted into is relationship-based and child-centred. It focuses on empowering children and young people to deal with issues in their lives by helping them identify and develop their strengths and resources. The therapeutic framework requires counsellors to actively listen and explore, to teach, collaborate with, encourage, validate, and gently challenge the children and young people who contact Kids Helpline. It also requires of them a non-judgmental attitude towards their clients.

The strengths-focused approach is adopted that is designed to empower children and young people by supporting them to:

- Understand the consequences of particular actions
- Help identify their own resources and inform them about other resources available
- Help develop a sense of control in their life
- Utilise their strengths
- Develop options for change

The approach to practice is child-centred, supporting and working with young people through:

- Listening to and respecting what the young person has to say
- Focusing on their needs
- Seeing the world from their perspective
- Believing that the young person is the client
- Respecting the young person

Underpinning practice are 5 principles:

- Privacy and confidentiality
- All young people are treated with respect
- All young people can choose the gender of the counsellor they speak to
- Young people are able to access the same counsellor if they wish to call back
- Young people are encouraged to give feedback about Kids Helpline & the service they receive.

Providing a range of communication modalities, including web chat and email, also helps children build their sense of safety and trust with counsellors, giving them greater control over how they interact with counsellors and how much of themselves they disclose at any one time. At Kids Helpline, we strongly believe it

is through the trusting relationships children and young people form with our counsellors that the service is able to have the positive impact it does on their wellbeing.

2.2.2 At a systemic level

To appreciate more fully Kids Helpline's contemporary role in protecting and supporting children and young people, it is necessary to also take a system-level perspective. From that vantage point, it is evident that Kids Helpline performs various unique and critical roles. Among other things, it:

- provides a safety net for children and young people who might otherwise fall through the cracks of other social support systems, ensuring there is 'no wrong door' into these support systems and that they can get their needs met;
- provides a 24/7 service to children and young people and
- gives voice to the needs, experiences and views of children and young people in policy and research.

Providing a safety net

National virtual service with 'no wrong door'

Kids Helpline provides a 24/7 safety-net for children and young people in a broader social support system that often overlooks the particular developmental and structural vulnerabilities and needs of children. One way in which Kids Helpline acts as a safety net is by promoting itself as 'there for anyone at any time about anything', and without a requirement for clients to disclose their identities. In this way Kids Helpline casts a very wide net.

This net is cast even more expansively by the fact that the service is accessible from any geographical location, being a 'virtual' service, and at any time, being 24/7 in its operation. Kids Helpline's child-centred and relationship-based intervention style further complements this accessibility by increasing children's sense of safety to name, define and explore their concerns and identify the help they need.

At Kids Helpline we are always developing innovative ways to support children and young people. In 2018 we continued to develop an app that children and young people can use to create, sustain, inform and monitor their own personalised recovery journeys. We also have developed and are trialling virtual support 'circles' in which children and young people can share with others their stories and through which they can support each other, facilitated by a counsellor.

Our evaluation data indicate that the service helps young people to feel less upset or anxious, more confident and able to address their issues, gives young people ideas to help them manage their concerns, and motivates them to take steps to address their issues, and gives them hope that things will improve. The service achieves this by its client-centred, and increasingly collaborative, approach to service development, and its person-centred approach to service delivery. Our data from 28 years of service delivery inform decisions about what counts most to young people, and our professional staffing model ensures an evidence-based approach to service design and delivery is always central.

Portal into specialist support systems

Another way in which Kids Helpline serves as a safety net is by actively connecting children and young people to the specialist services they require. In 2018, 31% of counselling contacts were identified as in need of a generalist or specialist referral which counsellors provided wherever possible (see section 3.6). Like other child helplines around the world, Kids Helpline is not itself a specialist service but plays a critical role in facilitating children and young people's access to specialist services and support systems that may be confusing, alienating or even frightening for them to find, navigate and use alone. Counsellors help children and young people explore their needs, identify the right services for them using an extensive service provider database, and then actively connect them to those services where this is what the child or young person wants. Kids Helpline is effectively a *portal* for children and young people into child protection, mental health, homelessness and e-safety support systems, among others.

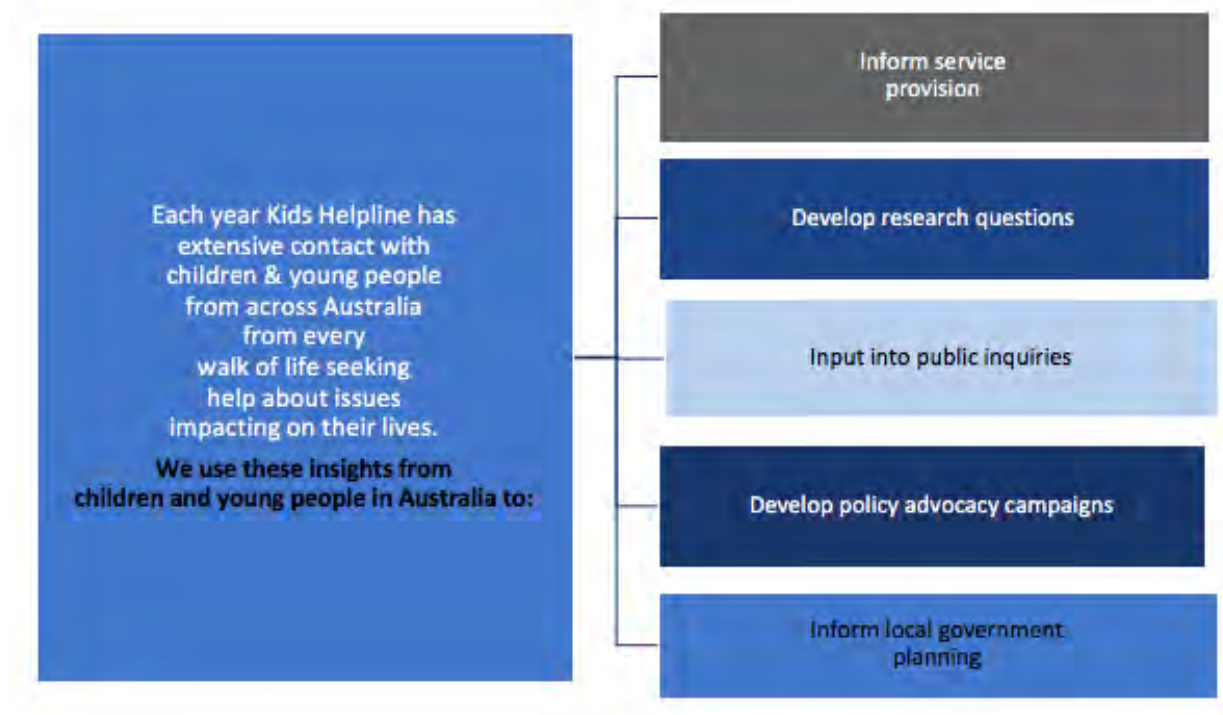
Not only does Kids Helpline actively facilitate children's and young people's access to these systems, but it also helps them get their needs met in these systems by providing individual advocacy when a child or young person's needs are not being met adequately or appropriately by an existing service provider.

‘Giving voice’ to children and young people

Kids Helpline’s system-level role in supporting and protecting children and young people in Australia includes ‘giving voice’ to their needs, concerns and experiences. This is with a view to improving children and young people’s circumstances, both as individuals and as a vulnerable population.

Each year, Kids Helpline responds to a large number of contacts from children and young people nationally (almost 150,000 contacts in 2018, see section 3.1).

Figure 4: Advocacy for children and young people



Many times that number will visit our website to seek self-help resources or engage with us in other ways, like through completing surveys or submitting their own stories (in 2018 almost a million unique visitors participated in over 1.1 million information gathering sessions on the Kids Helpline, see section 4.1). Counsellors respond to children and young people from every state and territory, from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, to children who identify as male, female or neither, and to those who are as young as 5 years and as old as 25 (see section 3.1). Both in the counselling and support service, and on the website, Kids Helpline responds to diverse information needs and concerns from this population – concerns about family relationship issues, bullying, mental health problems, study and education, issues with identity and belonging, and concerns about child abuse and family violence.

The scope of this contact with children and young people in Australia uniquely positions Kids Helpline to give voice to children and young people’s experiences, interests and concerns. From the information we gather from children and young people who use the counselling and support service and website we glean invaluable insights into key issues affecting children and young people in Australia today. Each year we publish this *National Statistical Overview* documenting some of this information to inform policy, research and service provision.

We also use these data to input into a wide range of social policy forums, debates and public inquiries. The data inform our own and others’ social policy advocacy campaigns aimed at improving responses to the needs of vulnerable children and young people. Similarly, this information helps **yourtown** develop relevant research questions to delve more deeply into specific issues affecting children and young people today. Some of this research is undertaken by **yourtown**’s Strategy and Research unit while other research is conducted with the support of partner agencies and research institutions (see Figure 4).

Kids Helpline also routinely shares data with local governments and community groups concerned about the provision of services in their local area. Typically, these groups want to know about the demographic profile

of Kids Helpline contacts in their area, and what the most common concerns of these children and young people are, in order to inform local service planning.

2.3 Summary

This chapter has described the scope and focus of the Kids Helpline service and the integral role it plays in supporting and protecting children and young people at the individual and systemic levels.

At the individual level, Kids Helpline employs a therapeutic framework focused on empowering children and young people to deal with issues in their lives by identifying and developing their personal resources. It delivers confidential, non-judgemental counselling and support via a range of communication modalities to support children's sense of trust and comfort in using the service and their ability to access it freely from anywhere. Kids Helpline's needs-based and strengths-focused intervention model overlays this therapeutic framework and helps to ensure that the provision of specific supports, interventions and resources to children and young people is tailored to the level and complexity of their need.

At the systemic level, Kids Helpline protects and supports children and young people by:

- serving as a portal into specialist support systems that often overlook the particular developmental and structural vulnerabilities of children and young people, ensuring that there is 'no wrong door' into these support systems
- providing mainstream services a child/youth specialist to which they can refer their clients for age-specific information and counselling, and
- giving voice to the needs, concerns and experiences of children and young people in policy and research.

This background information hopefully addresses a range of common misconceptions about Kids Helpline and gives useful context for interpreting the service data presented in the remaining chapters of this report.

3. Kids Helpline counselling and support service

This chapter presents a wide range of information about the current characteristics, needs, concerns, communication preferences and types of help-seeking of children and young people contacting the Kids Helpline counselling and support service. Understanding this population is important for **yourtown** in continuously improving Kids Helpline. However, it is also valuable to a wide range of community and government agencies providing, designing or advocating for support services or mental health interventions for vulnerable children and young people.

To help build understanding about children and young people's contemporary needs and concerns, current (2018), short-term (3 to 5 years) and longer-term (10 years) trend analyses are presented in this chapter in relation to the following aspects of the Kids Helpline counselling and support service:

- contact characteristics (section 3.1)
- types of help-seeking (section 3.2)
- preference of for medium of contacting Kids Helpline – phone, web chat or email (section 3.3)
- the most common issues for which children and young seek help, including analysis of contacts about these issues by medium of contact, age group, gender, cultural background, and geographical remoteness (section 3.4); this section also includes a new sub-section dealing the sub-categories within the top four issues children and young people contact about, with analyses by age, gender, cultural background, and remoteness (section 3.4.9 ff.).
- referral of clients to further support and information about duty-of-care interventions taken to protect clients from significant harm (section 3.6), and
- estimates of the frequency with which cyber-safety issues are being identified in counselling sessions (section 3.7).

3.1 Contact characteristics

This section describes Kids Helpline contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years in 2018, including the number and proportion of contacts by gender, age group, cultural background, state of residence, remoteness classification and type of support relationship with the service. Trend data in relation to each of these characteristics are then presented for the last 10 years to highlight continuity and change in the characteristics of those contacting Kids Helpline for assistance.

3.1.1 Kids Helpline's *Record-a-Contact* database

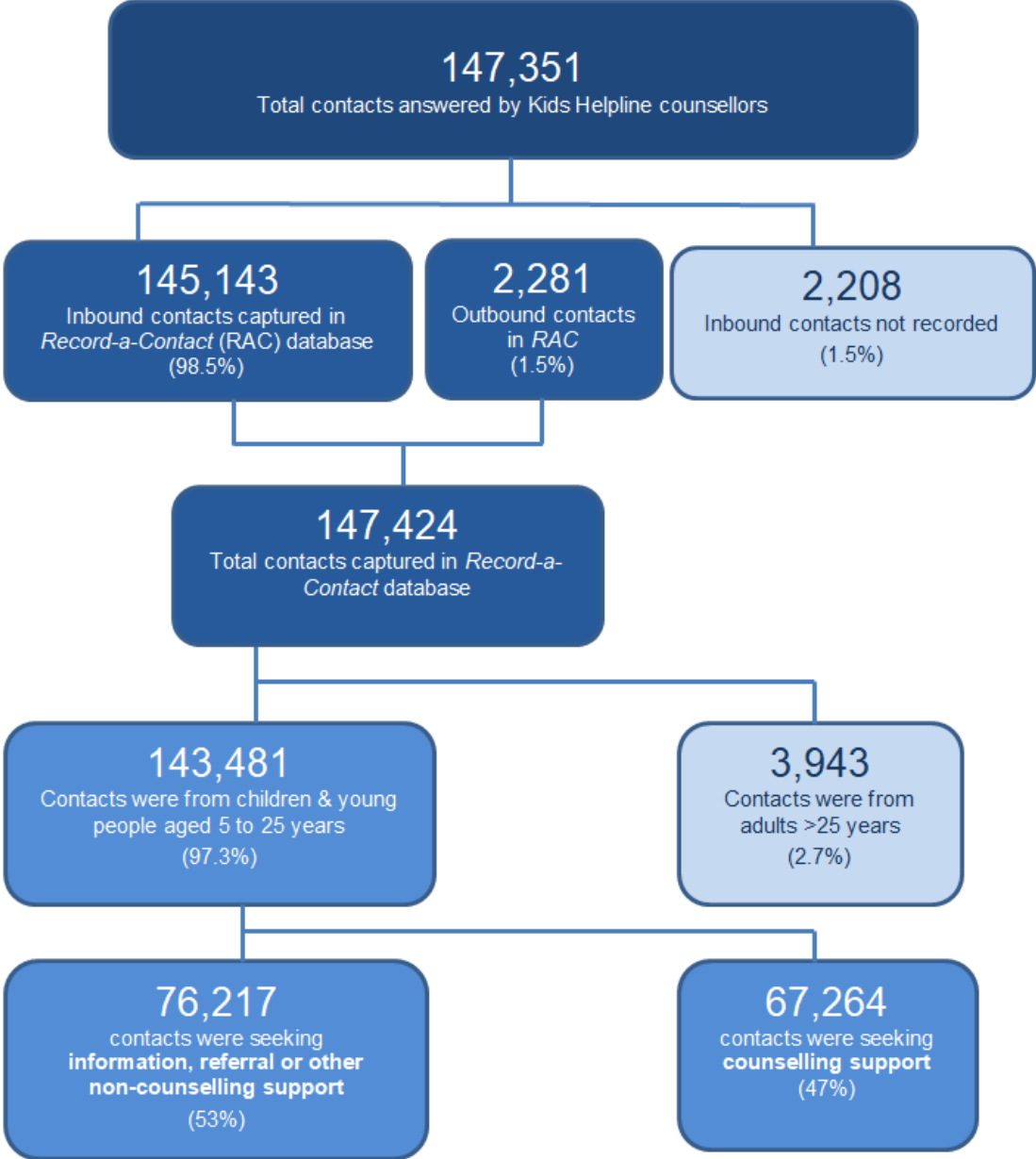
When children and young people contact Kids Helpline, counsellors record information about the child or young person in a dedicated database. The data presented throughout most of Chapter 3 (sections 3.1 to 3.8) come from this *Record-a-Contact* database.

As shown in Figure 5, the *Record-a-Contact* database contains records for 145,143 of the 147,351 inbound contacts received by Kids Helpline in 2018. Each year a small number of contacts fail to be recorded by counsellors, either due to technical issues (system outages), counsellor error or because they were non-client contacts (e.g. contacts from external professionals). In 2018, there were 2,208 of these (1.5%). Counsellors also record a number of outbound contacts in the *Record-a-Contact* database. In 2018 there were 2,281 of these, bringing the total number of recorded supportive actions recorded in the *Record-a-Contact* database to 147,424.

Of those contacts, 3,943 (1.5%) were received from adults aged 26 years or older (outside Kids Helpline's target age range) and 143,481 were received from children and young people aged 5-25 years. Of the 143,481 contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years, 67,264 (47%) were seeking counselling support, and 76,217 (53%) were seeking information, referral or other non-counselling support.

This chapter will describe the characteristics of these 143,481 contacts and then focuses in on the characteristics, needs and concerns of the sub-population of children and young people who contacted Kids Helpline for counselling support in 2018 as more complete and detailed information is available for this cohort.

Figure 5. Kids Helpline contacts in 2018



3.1.2 Contact characteristics in 2018

Table 1 summarises demographic and other characteristics of contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years responded to by Kids Helpline in 2018. Key observations from the data include the following:

- **Gender.** Almost eight out of ten contacts responded to (77%) were from females while two in ten (21%) were from males. A total of 2,467 contacts, or 2%, were recorded inter-sex/trans or gender-diverse.
- **Age.** More than half (56%) of all contacts responded to were from individuals aged 13-18 years, three in ten (31%) were from 19-25 year-olds, and one in eight (13%) was from 5-12 year-olds.
- **Cultural background.** Where information was available on cultural background (25% of contacts), 4% of contacts were from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, 37% from other culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and 59% from Caucasian young people.
- **Location.** Contacts were received from all states and territories. As shown in Table 2, the proportional state breakdown of Kids Helpline contacts in 2018 closely approximates that for the Australian population aged 5-25 years estimated at 30 June 2018. Where the child or young person's postcode was known (43% of contacts), most were living in Major Cities (76%), one in five (17%) was living in an Inner Regional locality, and one in twelve (8%) was living in an Outer Regional or Remote locality.
- **Type of support relationship.** Where the child or young person's relationship with the service was recorded (50% of all contacts), just over one third (37%) of contacts was from children or young people contacting the service for the first time and just under two thirds (63%) were from those receiving occasional or ongoing support.
- **Medium of contact.** Two thirds of contacts (64%) were received by phone, while 28% were received by web chat and 9% by email.

Table 1. Characteristics of 2018 Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years¹

Contact characteristics	2018 (N = 143,481)	
	n	col. %
Gender		
Female	79,404	77%
Male	21,918	21%
Intersex, trans & gender-diverse	2,467	2%
Total	103,789	100%
Unknown	39,692	
Age group		
5-12 years	12,596	13%
13-18 years	53,788	56%
19-25 years	30,443	31%
Total	96,827	100%
<26 but age unknown	46,654	
Cultural background²		
Aboriginal &/or TSI	1,354	4%
CALD	13,138	37%
Neither Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander nor CALD	20,883	59%
Total	35,375	100%
Unknown	108,106	
State		
ACT	3,408	3%
NSW	41,423	32%
NT	1,149	1%
QLD	25,439	20%
SA	8,615	7%
TAS	4,483	3%
VIC	33,009	26%
WA	10,638	8%
Total	128,164	100%
Unknown	15,317	
Remoteness		
Major Cities	46,689	76%
Inner Regional	10,399	17%
Outer Regional/Remote	4,697	8%
Total	61,785	100%
Unknown	81,696	
Relationship with Kids Helpline		
First contact	26,643	37%
Occasional/Ongoing support	45,236	63%
Total	71,879	100%
Unknown	71,602	
Medium of contact		
Phone	91,135	64%
Web chat	39,927	28%
Email	12,419	9%
Total	143,481	100%

1. Where column percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

Table 2. Proportional state breakdown of 2018 Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years compared with Australian population estimates at 30/6/2018

State	Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years 2018		Australian residents aged 5-25 years ¹	
	n	col. %	N ('000)	col. %
ACT	3,408	3%	118	2%
NSW	41,423	32%	2,126	32%
NT	1,149	1%	71	1%
QLD	25,439	20%	1,393	21%
SA	8,615	7%	448	7%
TAS	4,483	3%	134	2%
VIC	33,009	26%	1,737	26%
WA	10,638	8%	692	10%
Total	128,165	100%	6,602	100%
Unknown	15,317			

1. Population estimates from Australian Bureau of Statistics – Population by Age and Sex Tables.

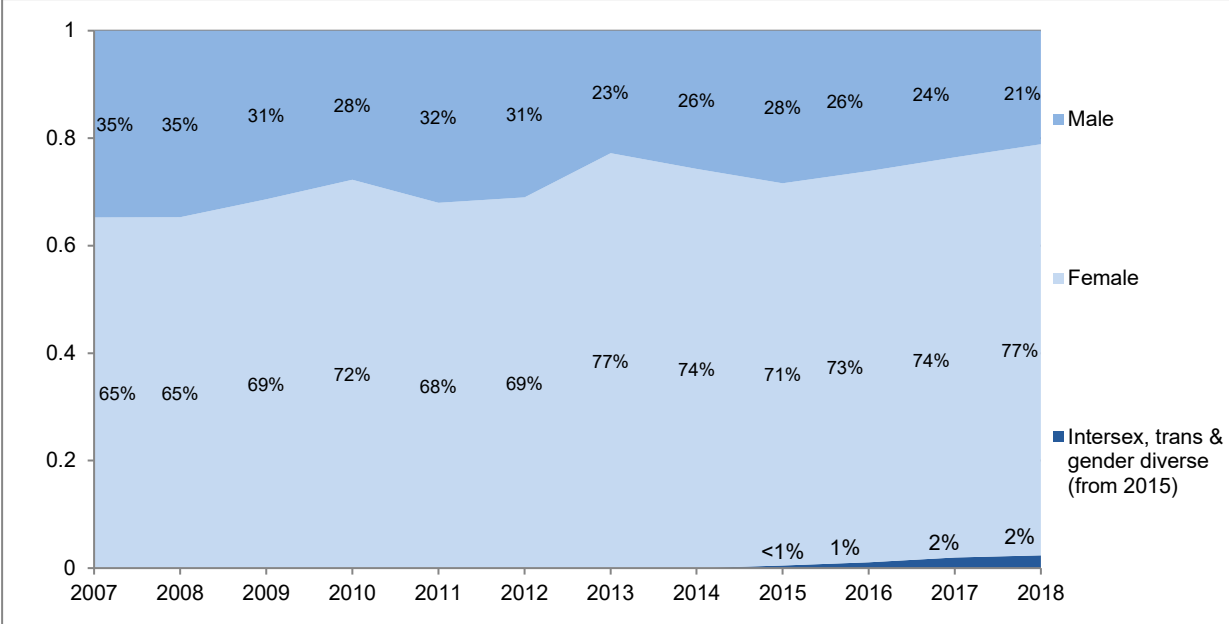
3.1.3 Trends in contact characteristics

In order to consider shifts in the characteristics of Kids Helpline contacts over time, it is helpful to look back over the medium to longer term. This section summarises trends in the gender, age group, cultural background, locality, and type of support relationship of all Kids Helpline contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years over the last decade where information was recorded in the *Record-a-Contact* database.

Gender

Figure 6 shows the proportional gender breakdown for Kids Helpline contacts where gender was known in each year from 2007 to 2018.

Figure 6. Proportional gender breakdown of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by year (2007-2018, where gender is recorded)¹



1. From 2007 to 2018, gender data were available for 59% of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years. Data for intersex, trans and gender-diverse category only collected from 1 January 2015.

Two key observations are apparent from the data in Figure 3:

- The proportional imbalance observed in 2018 between males and females is long-standing in nature, with males consistently comprising a minority of Kids Helpline contacts.
- While the proportional breakdown of contacts from males and females fluctuates from year to year, there would appear to be a growing proportion of contacts from females compared with males. In 2007/2008, more than a third of all contacts were from males; from 2013 through to 2017, roughly a quarter of all

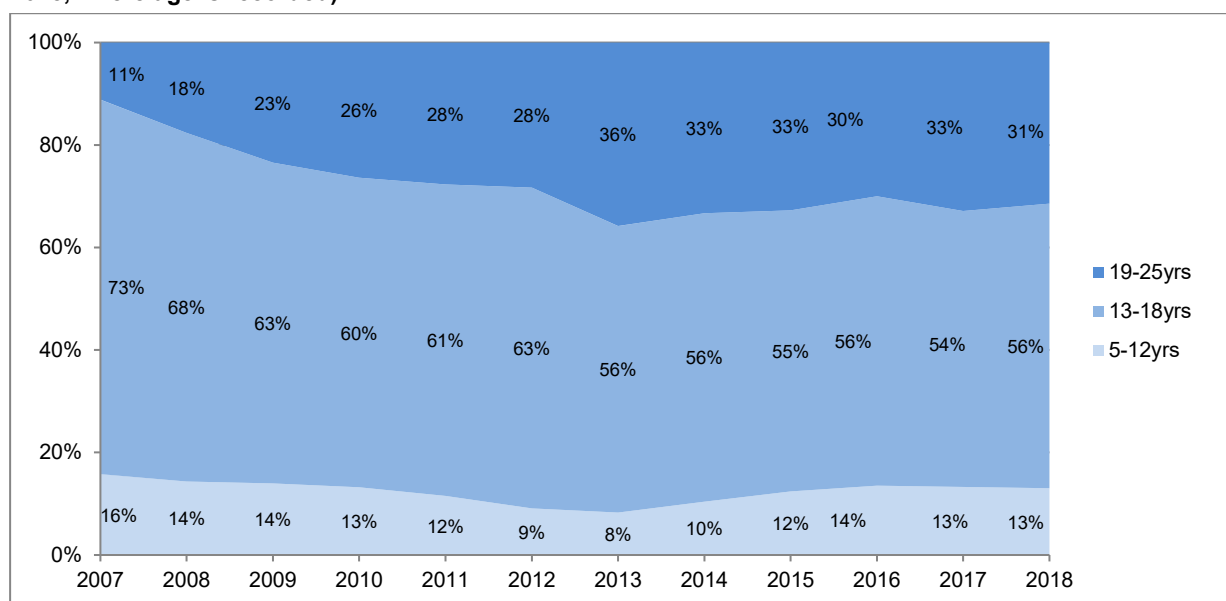
contacts have been from males, **but in 2018 the proportion of contacts from males is one-fifth of the total.** This trend may correspond to changes in the proportion of contacts seeking counselling-type support over the last decade, as females are more likely than males to seek counselling-type support (see Section 3.5, Table 4).

Age group

Figure 7 shows the proportional breakdown of age group for Kids Helpline contacts where age was known in each year from 2007 to 2018. Key observations from the data in Figure 7 include the following:

- *5-12 year-olds.* Children have consistently made up less than one sixth of contacts responded to by Kids Helpline over the last decade. The relative proportion of this age group among Kids Helpline contacts reduced by half from 2007 to 2013 (from 16% to 8%); since 2014 this proportion has been on the rise, however it appears to be levelling out in 2017-2018.
- *13-18 year-olds.* Of the three age groups, teens have comprised the largest proportion of contacts in each year over the last decade; however, their relative proportion has declined gradually over this period, from 73% of all contacts in 2007 to 56% in 2018.
- *19-25 year-olds.* In 2003, Kids Helpline expanded its service to include young people aged 19-25 years. Since that time, young adults have gradually become a major client group of the service. From 2007 until 2013, young adults grew as a proportion of contacts responded to from 11% to 36%. Since 2014, this proportion has reduced slightly, to around one third of all contacts.

Figure 7. Proportional breakdown of age group of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by year (2007-2018, where age is recorded)¹



1. From 2007 to 2018, age data were available for 44% of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years.

Cultural background

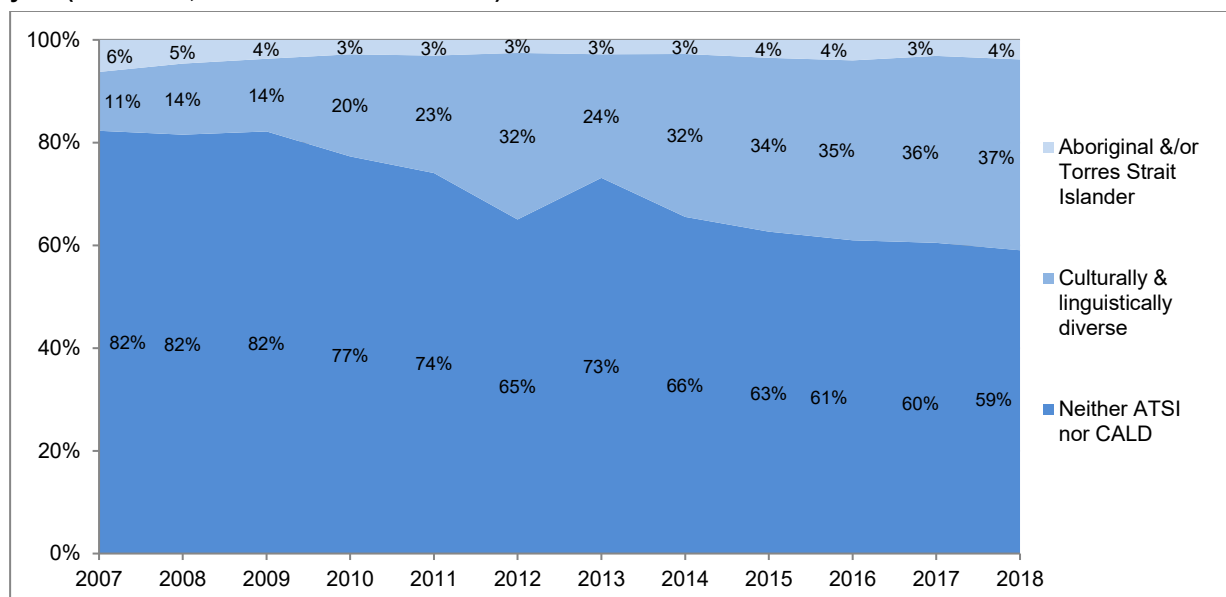
Figure 8 shows the proportional breakdown of cultural background for Kids Helpline contacts where cultural background was known in each year from 2007 to 2018. It is important to note in considering the reliability of these data that cultural background information was only recorded for 20% of all contacts over the period.

Key observations from the data in Figure 8 include the following:

- *Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders.* Over the last decade, contacts from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have consistently made up between 3% and 6% of all contacts responded to.
- *Culturally and linguistically diverse.* Contacts from children and young people from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have steadily grown as a proportion of total contacts over the last decade, from 11% in 2007 to 37% in 2018.
- *Caucasian Australian.* Contacts from neither Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (i.e. Caucasian young people) have comprised the largest cultural

grouping among contacts over the last decade; however, since 2009 they have gradually declined in proportion relative to other cultural groups, from 82% in 2009 to 59% in 2018.

Figure 8. Proportional breakdown of cultural background of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by year (2007-2018, where culture is recorded)¹



1. From 2007 to 2018, cultural background data were available for 20% of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years.

Location

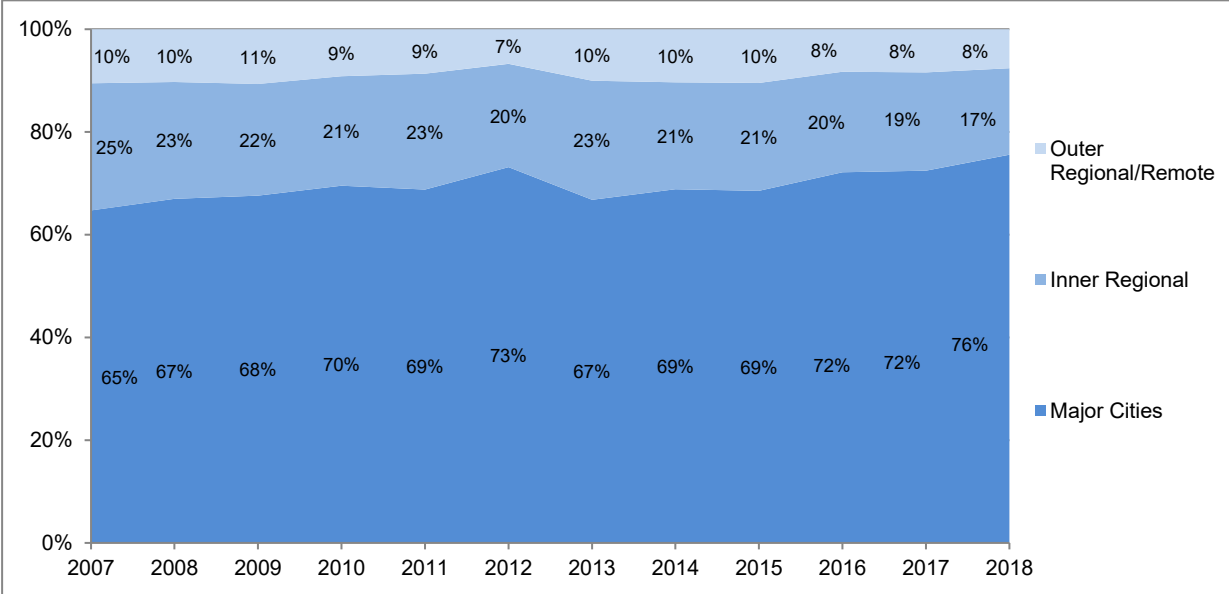
Figure 9 shows the proportional breakdown of remoteness classification for Kids Helpline contacts where postcode was known in each year from 2007 to 2018.¹ It is important to note in considering the reliability of these data that postcode information was only recorded for 23% of all contacts over the period 2007-2018.

Key observations from the data in Figure 9 include the following:

- *Outer Regional/Remote.* Over the last 11 years, contacts from children and young people identified as living in Outer Regional or Remote localities have consistently made up around a tenth of all contacts responded to each year over the period 2007-18.
- *Inner Regional.* Contacts from children and young people identified as living in Inner Regional localities have made up between a fifth and a quarter of contacts responded to each year, until 2017, but in 2018 this proportion has reduced to 17%.
- *Major Cities.* Contacts from children and young people living in Major Cities have consistently over the last decade comprised the largest group of contacts responded to – between 65% and 76% of contacts responded to each year. Since 2013, there would appear to be a slight upward trend in this proportion, from 67% to 76%, but caution should be applied to this observation in light of the substantial missing data on this variable.

¹ The remoteness classification system used by Kids Helpline has been adapted from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Australian Geographical Standard (ASGS). See Appendix for more information.

Figure 9. Proportional breakdown of remoteness classification of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by year (2007-2018, where location is recorded)¹



1. From 2007 to 2018, postcode data were available for 23% of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years.

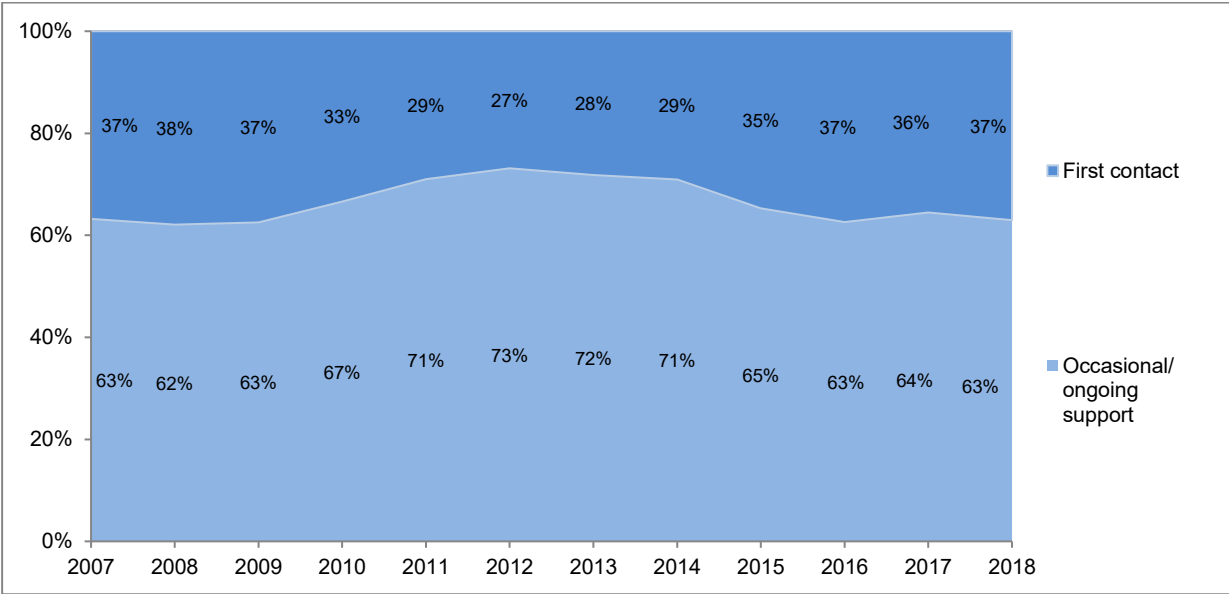
Relationship with service

Figure 10 shows the proportional breakdown of Kids Helpline contacts by their relationship with the service – either as first time contacts or occasional/ongoing support contacts – where information was known in each year from 2007 to 2018.

Two key observations from the data in Figure 10 are apparent:

- A majority of contacts received by Kids Helpline each year over this period (between 62% and 73%) have been from children and young people who have contacted Kids Helpline before, and were receiving occasional or ongoing support from the service including, in some instances, case management.
- In the first half of the decade, there would appear to be a gradual increase in the proportion of repeat contacts, and a corresponding decrease in first time contacts. This pattern reverses in the second half of the decade.

Figure 10. Proportional breakdown of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years according to type of support relationship with the service: first contact or occasional/ongoing support – by year (2007-2018, where relationship type is recorded)¹



1. From 2007 to 2018, relationship with the service was recorded for 33% of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years.

3.1.4 Summary

This section has described the characteristics of 2018 Kids Helpline contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years in terms of the number and proportion of contacts by gender, age group, cultural background, state of residence, remoteness classification and type of support relationship with the service. Trend data in relation to each of these characteristics were then presented for the last 12 years to highlight continuity and change in the characteristics of contacts responded to by the service.

While there has been much continuity in contact characteristics over the last 12 years, the following changes are apparent:

- the proportion of contacts recorded from females compared with those from males is increasing;
- the proportion of contacts from young people aged 19-25 years has grown steadily (11% in 2007 to 31% in 2018), but in the last year has decreased marginally; the proportion of contacts from 5-12-year-olds has decreased (16% to 13%), as has the proportion of 13-18 year-olds (73% to 56%) in the same time period;
- contacts from children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have steadily increased as a proportion of all contacts responded to, while contacts from Caucasian young people have decreased proportionally; and
- over the last five years, the proportion of first-time contacts has been gradually increasing relative to repeat contacts, though this trend may be weakening.

3.2 Contacts by type of help-seeking

Contacts responded to by Kids Helpline can be grouped into two broad categories of help-seeking:

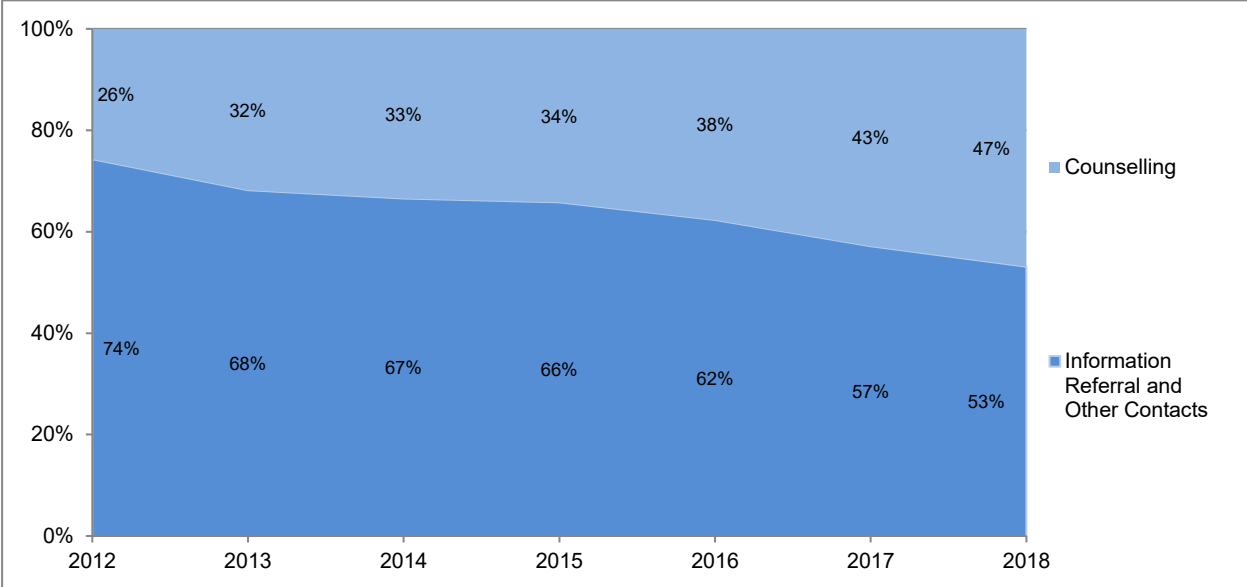
- *counselling contacts* – these are contacts from children and young people seeking counsellor assistance for a particular concern or problem, and
- *non-counselling contacts, or information, referral and other contacts* – these are contacts from children and young people seeking information, referral to other services, or some other form of non-counselling support, like general conversation or playful engagement.

Trends in demand for different types of support over the period 2012-2018 are presented in Figure II followed by presentation of trends in sub-categories of non-counselling contacts.

3.2.1 Counselling and non-counselling contacts in 2018

In 2018, 67,264 (or 47%) contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years were for counselling support while 76,217 (or 53%) were for information, referral or other non-counselling support. Figure II shows the trends 2012-2018 in the mix of counselling and information/referral support categories.

Figure 11. Proportional breakdown of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years according to type of interaction with the service: counselling or information/referral support – by year (2007-2018).¹

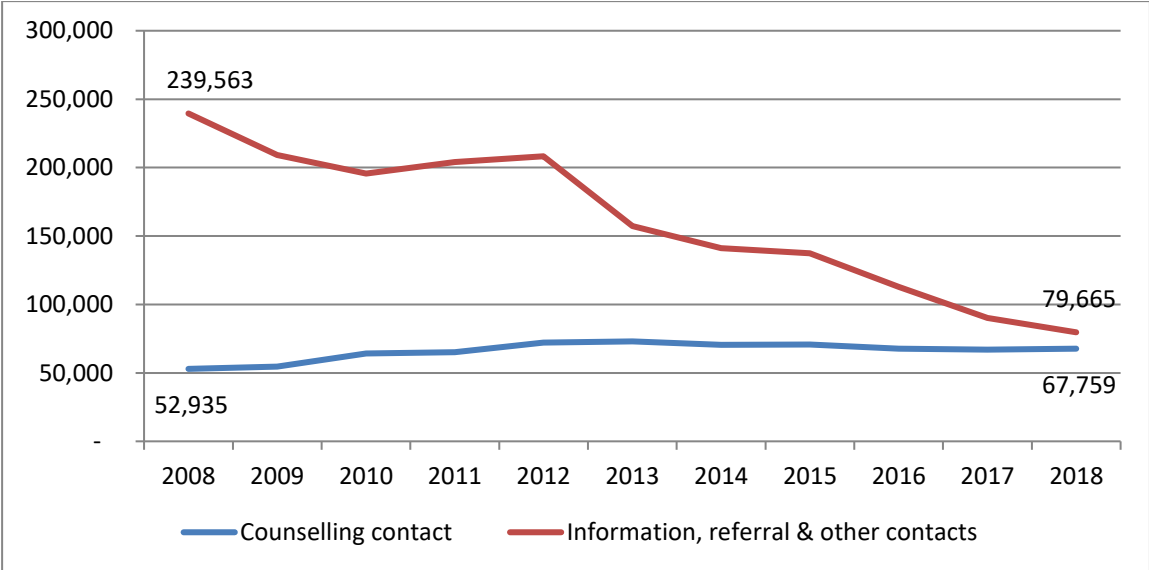


3.2.2 Trends in help-seeking – counselling versus non-counselling support

Figure 12 shows trends in Kids Helpline contacts by type of help-seeking – counselling or non-counselling – by year (2008-2018). Non-counselling contacts are made up of information-seeking and referral-seeking contacts. Over the past decade the number of information/referral-seeking (non-counselling) contacts has steadily declined, and at a greater rate than the number of counselling contacts has grown.

The number of counselling contacts has increased by about a third in the last decade (28% from 52,935 in 2008 to 67,759 in 2018 (all ages) or 50,979 in 2008 to 67,264 in 2018 (5-25-year-olds)). Contacts from those seeking information, referral or other non-counselling support, on the other hand, have decreased markedly both in number and as a proportion of all contacts during this period.

Figure 12. Type of assistance sought: counselling versus non-counselling contacts (all ages, (2012-2018))



Support type sought	Number of contacts per year											chang e 08-18
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Info/referra	239,563	209,162	195,638	204,016	208,351	157,298	141,032	137,302	112,732	90,243	79,665	-67%
Counselling	52,935	54,632	64,248	65,217	72,131	73,010	70,506	70,725	67,590	66,907	67,759	28%
All contacts	292,498	263,794	259,886	269,233	280,482	230,308	211,538	208,027	180,322	157,150	147,424	-50%
% (Info/ref)	82%	79%	75%	76%	74%	68%	67%	66%	63%	57%	54%	
% (couns.)	18%	21%	25%	24%	26%	32%	33%	34%	37%	43%	46%	

1. Data presented in this figure are sourced from Kids Helpline’s Record-a-Contact database.

3.2.3 Trends in help-seeking – types of non-counselling contacts

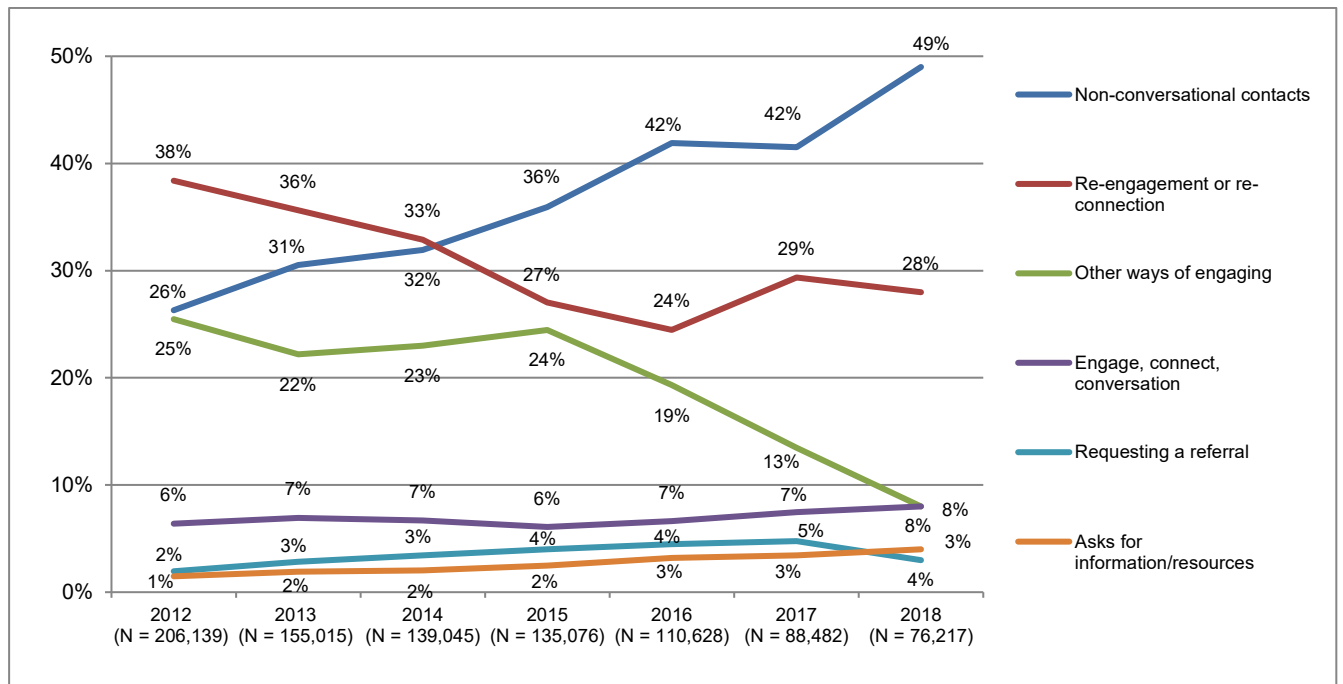
Contacts from children and young people seeking non-counselling types of support can be grouped into six categories according to the particular sort of assistance or engagement they are seeking:

- *Non-conversational contacts.* These include silent contacts, hang ups, noise without verbal content, and in the we7 chat context, opening a session but not responding.
- *Re-engagement or re-connection.* These are contacts from children or young people who have previously contacted Kids Helpline. They may include general or specific feedback and thanks, reporting-in with a regular counsellor without discussing any specific issue or concern, arranging for a particular counsellor to contact them, and/or challenging or testing access arrangements put in place by Kids Helpline.
- *Other ways of engaging.* These contacts include engaging in resourceful, inventive, unusual, challenging or creative ways, such as joking, singing, giggling, swearing, playing recordings, role-playing, story-telling, and communicating sexual themes with unknown agendas.
- *Engage, connect, conversation.* These contacts are where a child or young person contacts through conversation and no issues or concerns are presented. They may include general conversations, conversations about the counselling process, sharing personal news, exploring ideas, and therapeutic and/or strength-based conversations.
- *Requesting a referral.* These are contacts where the client requests information or contact details for other support services, not related to a particular problem.
- *Asks for information/resources.* These contacts are for information or resources that are not related to a particular problem or issue, such as requests for information about Kids Helpline competitions or campaigns. They exclude referral requests.

Figure 13 presents the relative frequency with which each type of non-counselling help-seeking occurred in each year from 2012 to 2018. Key observations from the data in Figure 13 include the following:

- The most common type of non-counselling contact in 2018 was non-conversational exchanges, accounting for half of non-counselling contacts (49%). The next most common type was re-engagement or reconnection (29%).
- There has been an increase in the proportion of non-counselling contacts where the child or young person is engaging in non-conversational exchanges, from 26% in 2012 to 49% in 2018.
- There has been a corresponding decrease in the proportion of non-counselling contacts where the client is re-engaging or re-connecting with the service, from 38% in 2012 to 28% in 2018.
- Similarly, there has been a decrease in the proportion of non-counselling contacts where the client engages in 'other ways' (from 25% in 2012 to 8% in 2018).
- The relative frequency of other types of non-counselling contacts has remained fairly constant over the five-year period.

Figure 13. Relative frequencies of non-counselling contacts aged 5-25 years by year (2012-2018)



3.2.4 Summary

This section has described and compared two groups of Kids Helpline contacts in 2018 reflecting two broad types of help-seeking – *counselling* and *non-counselling*.

The number and proportion (relative to counselling contacts) of non-counselling contacts has decreased markedly in the last decade (down by 67%) whilst the number of counselling contacts has rising in the same period by 28%.

The *nature* of non-counselling contacts is also changing, at least over the short term. Since 2012, the relative frequency with which children and young people have contacted Kids Helpline for the purpose of ‘reconnecting or re-engaging’ with the service or ‘engaging in other ways’ has decreased, while the frequency of ‘non-conversational’ contacts has increased.

3.3 Medium of contact

Kids Helpline provides three communication modalities (media) by which clients can engage counselling or other support – phone, web chat and email. This section explores patterns in children and young people’s communication preferences – for example, whether or not particular subgroups prefer to engage via particular media and whether or not there is a relationship between the child or young person’s type of help-seeking and their preferred communication medium. Such information is useful for developing new and targeting existing support services more effectively to different subgroups of vulnerable children and young people.

3.3.1 Phone, web chat and email contacts in 2018

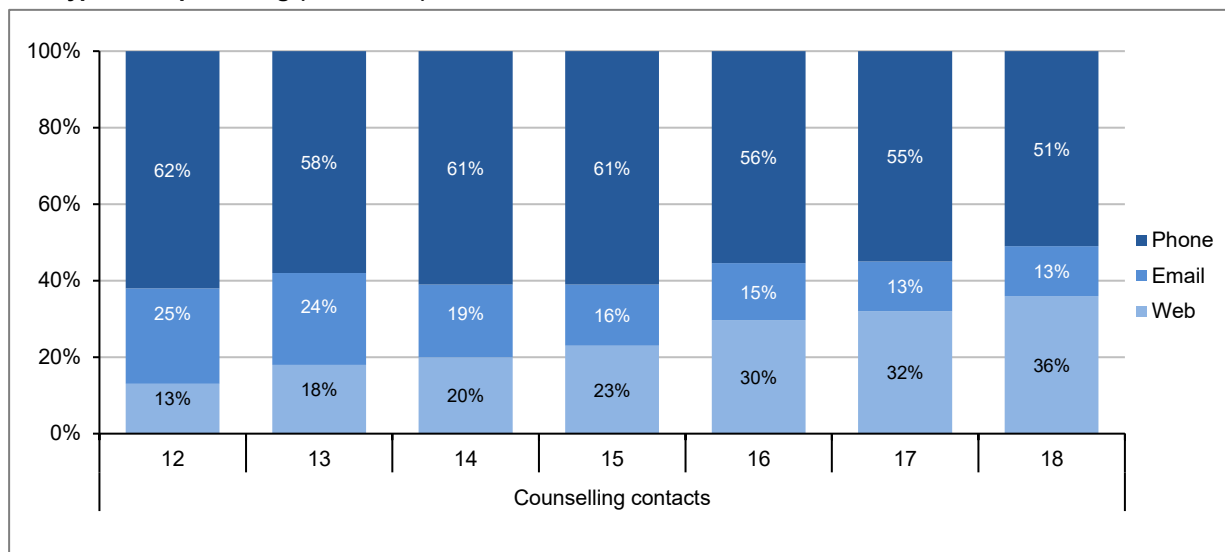
3.3.2 Trends in medium of contact

Figure 14 shows the proportion of Kids Helpline counselling contacts engaging with the service via each medium, over the last seven years. Key observations include the following:

- there has been a steady increase in engagement via web chat and a decrease in engagement by email;
- engagement by phone appears to be declining in favour of web chat. This may relate to efforts by the change to 24/7 availability of webchat in 2018 as well as to client preferences for webchat; and

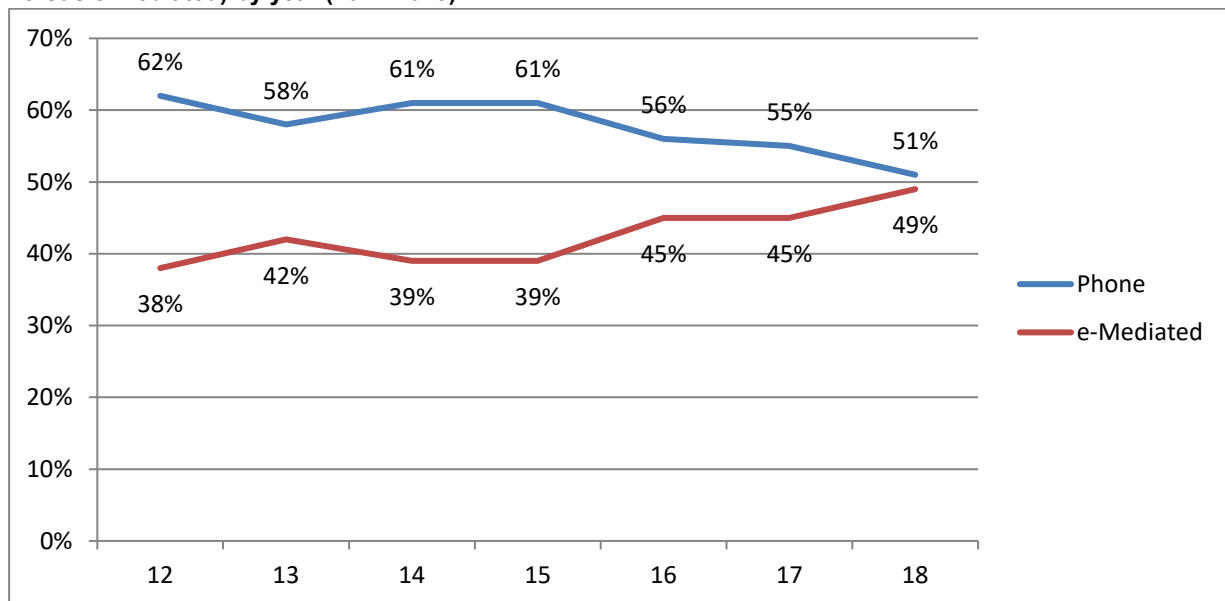
- service developments to make webchat more efficient, such as enhancing information collection during the time the young person waits to be answered by a webchat counsellor, which facilitates more information getting to the counsellor before the session commences.

Figure 14. Percentage of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – medium of contact by year and type of help-seeking (2012-2018)¹



1. Population sizes as follows: Information/referral/other contacts – $N(2012) = 206,140$, $N(2013) = 155,015$, $N(2014) = 139,045$, $N(2015) = 135,076$, $N(2016) = 88,628$, $N(2017) = 88,482$, $N(2018) = 76,217$. Counselling contacts – $N(2012) = 71,298$, $N(2013) = 72,416$, $N(2014) = 69,959$, $N(2015) = 70,210$, $N(2016) = 66,963$, $N(2017) = 66,386$, $N(2018) = 67,264$. Where stacked bar percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

Figure 15. Percentage of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – medium of contact (phone versus e-mediated) by year (2012-2018)¹



1. Population sizes as follows: Counselling contacts – $N(2012) = 71,298$, $N(2013) = 72,416$, $N(2014) = 69,959$, $N(2015) = 70,210$, $N(2016) = 66,963$, $N(2017) = 66,386$, $N(2018) = 67,264$. Where stacked bar percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

Figure 15 shows that, when combined together, the e-mediated modes of engagement (email and web) are becoming almost equal proportionally with phone, in our *answered* contact. However, this observation is not independent of our service provision, and is a function of the contact attempts that the service *answers*. Figure 17 below shows the trends in contact attempts, which more accurately represents the preferences of children and young people attempting to contact the service.

Figure 16. Percentage of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – medium of contact by year (2000-2018)

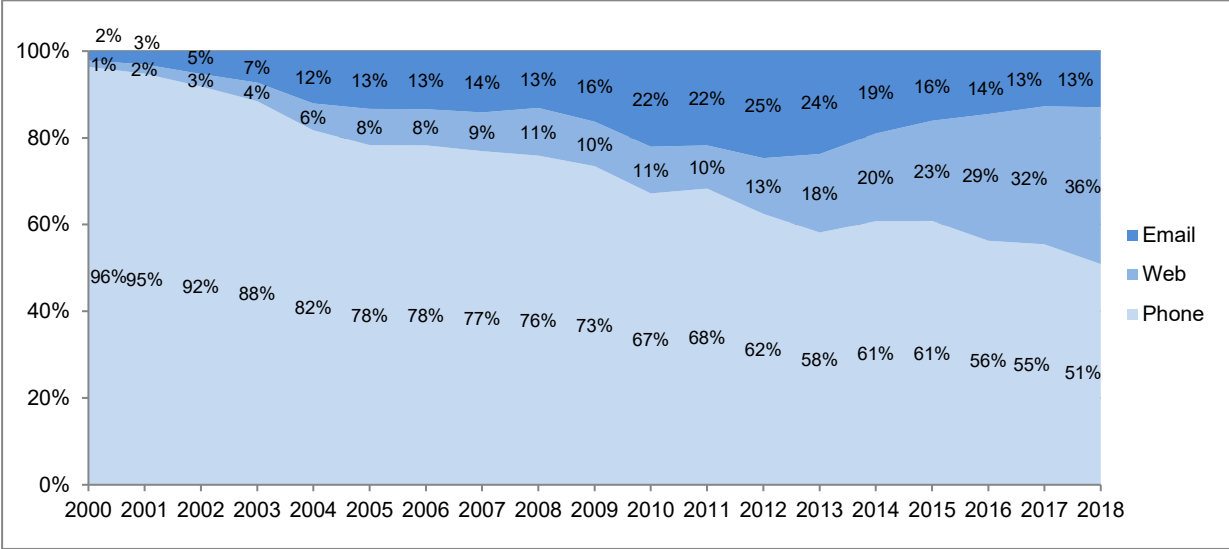
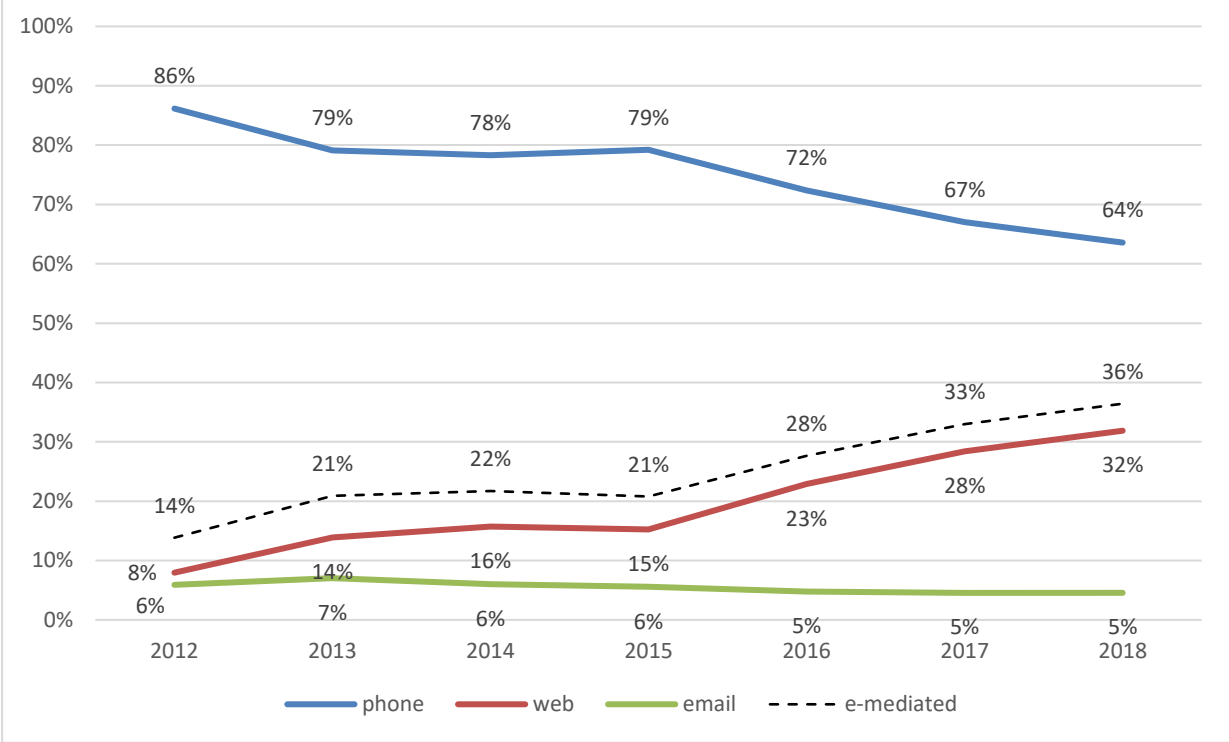


Figure 17: Trends in contact attempts 2012-2018¹



¹Dotted line is sum of proportions for email and web counselling service modes.

Taken together, the pattern of both answered contacts and attempted contacts, show a gradual but continuous decrease in preference for phone engagement, and steady increase in email and webchat engagement. Noteworthy is the decline in more recent years (since 2015) in attempts via email, and the more marked increase in webchat attempts. Thus, although phone is still the preferred modality, e-mediation (especially via webchat) shows steady growth.

3.3.3 Summary

This section has identified preferences for engagement via particular communication modalities. The data indicate an ongoing trend in the preference for e-mediated modalities of engagement with the service, in both attempts and answered contacts. Telephone is still the preferred medium of contact, based on the count of attempts, but by 2020 it is likely that the number of answered contacts via e-mediated means (web and email) will equal that of those via phone. There are important implications of this trend:

- Web counselling is more time consuming than phone in that it takes more time per contact, which means that the service may need further funding to support a shift towards webchat that does not further compromise challenging levels of service response;
- Webchat requires a reasonable internet connection – previous years’ analyses of Kids Helpline data indicate that phone is slightly preferred in more remote locations;
- Phone requires access to phones, and with the increasing trend away from landline infrastructure in favour of mobile phone infrastructure, there is an increasing need for young people who want to connect via phone to have mobile devices, which themselves bring a burden of cost to the individual.

These implications all place an impost on the young people we serve – either through personal expense or degraded access – and these imposts may affect different groups more than other (e.g., remotely located children, or younger children). **yourtown** is constantly advocating for enhanced funding from government and, where appropriate, corporate partners, to help the service meet the needs of its target population – children and young people in Australia.

3.4 Issues for which children and young people most commonly sought counselling support

During 2018, Kids Helpline counsellors responded to 67,264 contacts from children and young people who were seeking help in relation to a specific problem or concern (i.e. counselling contacts). Analysis of counselling contacts by the types of issues for which the child or young person is seeking help provides valuable insights into the contemporary help-seeking concerns of children and young people in Australia.

Each time a child or young person contacts the service, counsellors can record up to four different concerns of the child or young person, taking these from a classification inventory of 49 different concern or problem types. Each concern type has a specific set of subcategories, which allow for more in-depth capturing of the child or young person's concerns.

This section:

- identifies the most frequently recorded concerns in Kids Helpline counselling sessions in 2018
- provides analysis of these concerns by contact characteristics, like medium of contact, gender, age group, cultural background, and remoteness, to identify patterns in children and young people's help-seeking, and
- presents trend analysis of the most common issues for which children and young people have sought counselling over both the short-term (7 years) and the longer-term (22 years) to identify any notable shifts in the issues counsellors are most commonly responding to.

Related subsequent sections include:

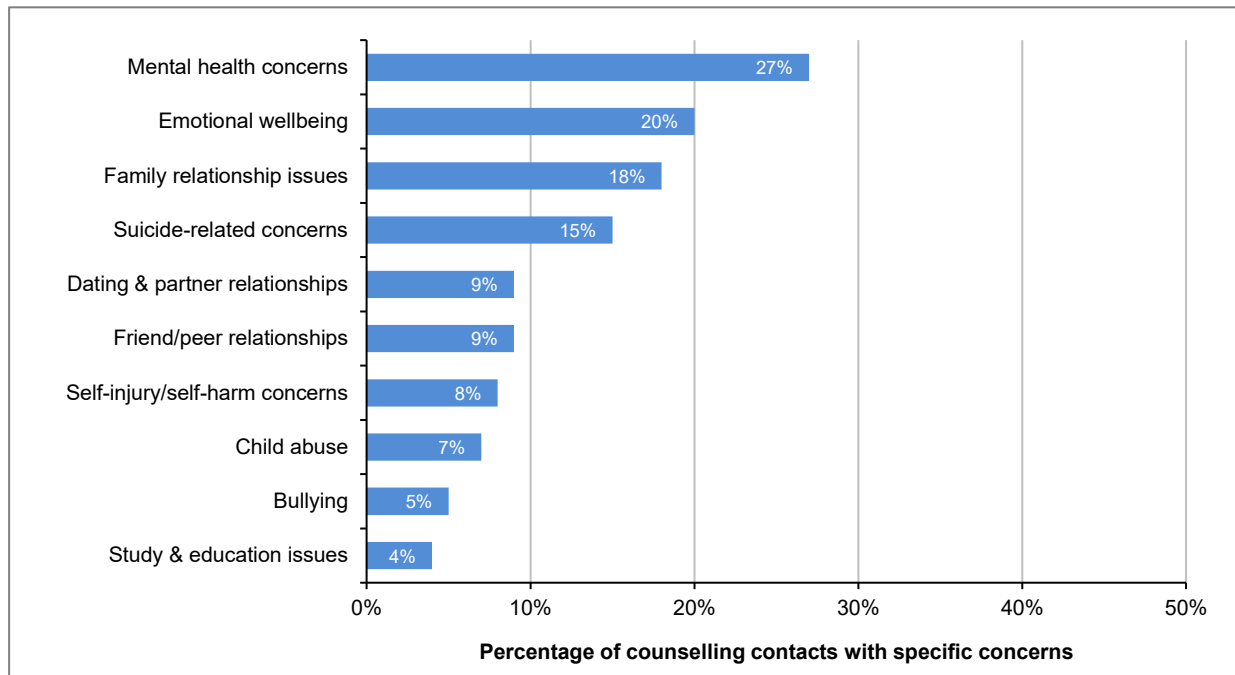
- Section 3.5, which presents 2016–2018 data on all the concern categories in the Kids Helpline classification system, not just the most common
- Chapter 5, which reports children and young people's views regarding the impact that talking to a counsellor about their concerns, has on their ability to deal with these issues in their lives.

3.4.1 All counselling contacts

Figure 18 shows the relative frequency with which counsellors recorded specific concerns of children and young people contacting the service for counselling support in 2018. It reveals that:

- almost one in 3 counselling contacts (27%) was in relation to mental health problems – the child or young person's own mental health or that of another person;
- one in 5 contacts was about family relationship issues (18%) or emotional wellbeing (20%);
- about one in 6 (15%) contacts involved the child or young person seeking help for suicide concerns;
- one in 10 contacts concerned dating and partner relationships (9%) or friend/peer relationships (9%);
- one in 12 (8%) contacts was about self-injury concerns;
- one in 14 (7%) contacts focused on child abuse;
- one in 20 (5%) contacts was about bullying; and
- one in 25 (4%) contacts was in relation to study and education issues.

Figure 18. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2018 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years (N = 67,264)¹



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

3.4.2 By age group

Kids Helpline targets a broad age range – from 5-25 years. This age range spans numerous developmental periods and life stages. Understanding the ways in which age influences the help-seeking needs of children and young people contacting the service is valuable both in terms of developing age-appropriate responses but also in undertaking targeted policy advocacy where required.

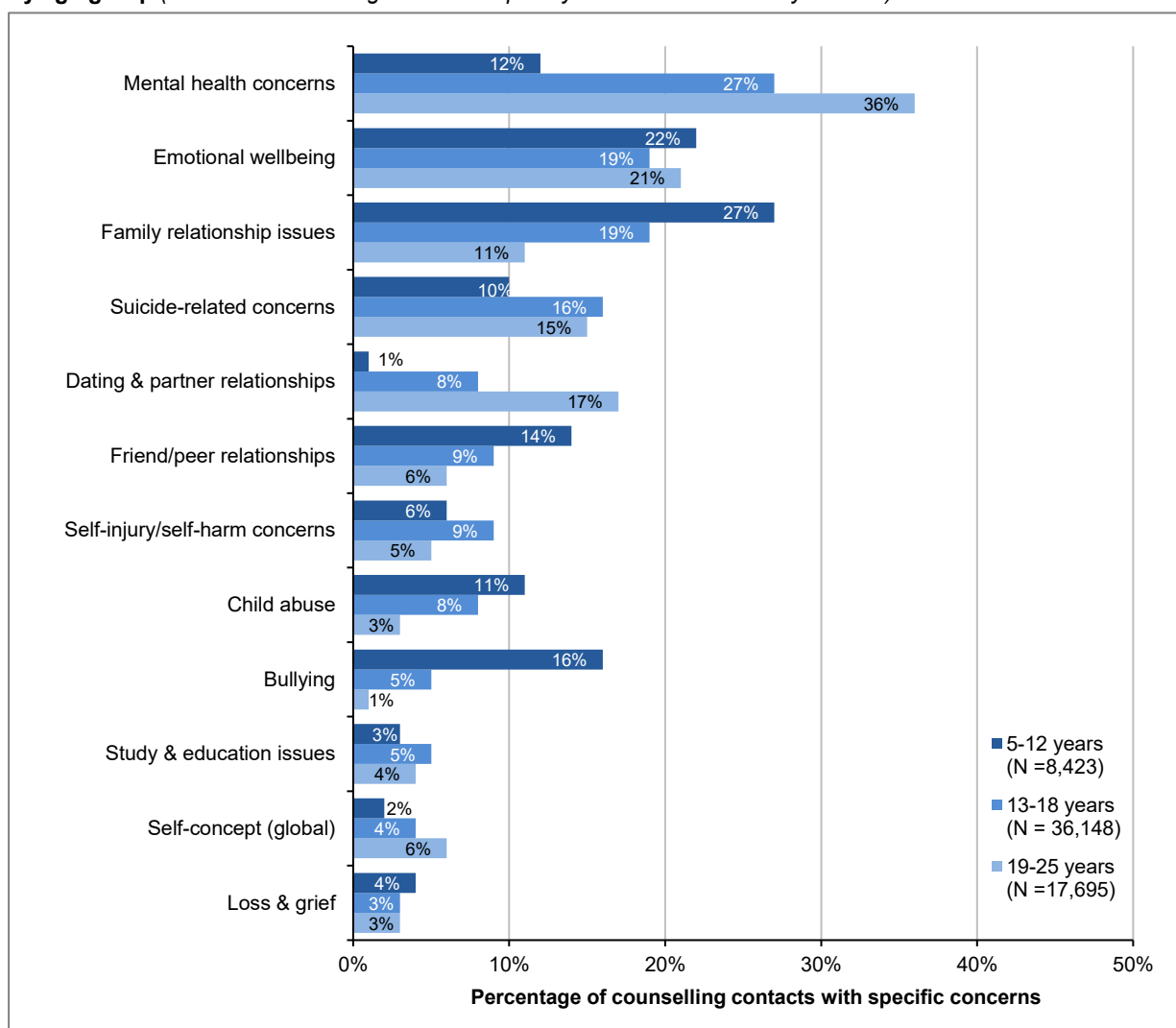
For the purposes of identifying broad patterns in age-related concern, counselling contacts are divided into three groups according to the child or young person's age – *kids* (5-12 year-olds), *teens* (13-18 year-olds) and *young adults* (19-25 year-olds). *Age has a major influence on children and young people's concerns.* The relative frequency with which a majority of concerns were discussed in counselling sessions in 2018 can be seen to be related to the age group of the child or young person contacting the service; in many cases, the age-related differences in frequency are moderate to large. Figure 19 compares the relative frequency with which the 12 most common concerns of 2018 counselling contacts were raised according to age group.

Key observations from Figure 19 include the following:

- *Mental health concerns.* Concern with mental health increases sharply with age. While one in 8 contacts (12%) from children aged 5-12 years was in relation to mental health concerns, one in four (27%) came from 13-18 year-olds, and one in three (36%) contacts from young people aged 19-25 years was about mental health issues.
- *Family relationship issues.* Concern about family relationships decreases by age. One in three contacts (27%) from children aged 5-12 years was about family relationship issues while one in five (19%) are from 13-18-year-olds, and roughly one in 9 (11%) contacts from young people aged 19-25 years was about this concern.
- *Suicide-related concerns.* Concern about suicide was almost 1.6 and 1.5 times more common (respectively) among contacts from young people aged 13-18 years (16%) or 19-25 years (15%) than it was among contacts from children aged 5-12 years (10%).
- *Dating and partner relationships.* Concern with dating and partner relationships increases with age. Only one in 100 contacts (1%) from 5-12 year-olds were about this issue compared with roughly one in six (17%) contacts from 19-25 year-olds.

- *Friend and peer relationships.* Concern about friend and peer relationships decreases with age, with 14% of contacts from 5-12 year-olds being about these types of relationships compared with 6% of contacts from 19-25 year-olds.
- *Child abuse.* Concern about child abuse decreases with age. Child abuse was a concern discussed in 11% of contacts from 5-12 year-olds compared with 8% from 13-18 year-olds, and 3% of contacts from 19-25 year-olds.
- *Self-injury concerns.* Contacts from 13-18 year-olds were almost twice as likely to be about self-injury concerns (9%) compared with either younger contacts (5%) or older contacts (6%).
- *Bullying.* Bullying is a concern discussed primarily in contacts from 5-12 year-olds, with 16% of these contacts being about bullying in 2018. Concern with bullying decreases to 5% of contacts from teenagers and to 1% of contacts from young adults. It is worth noting, however, that teenagers are a major audience for bullying-related content on the Kids Helpline website (see section 4.2.1).

Figure 19. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2018 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by age group (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2018)¹

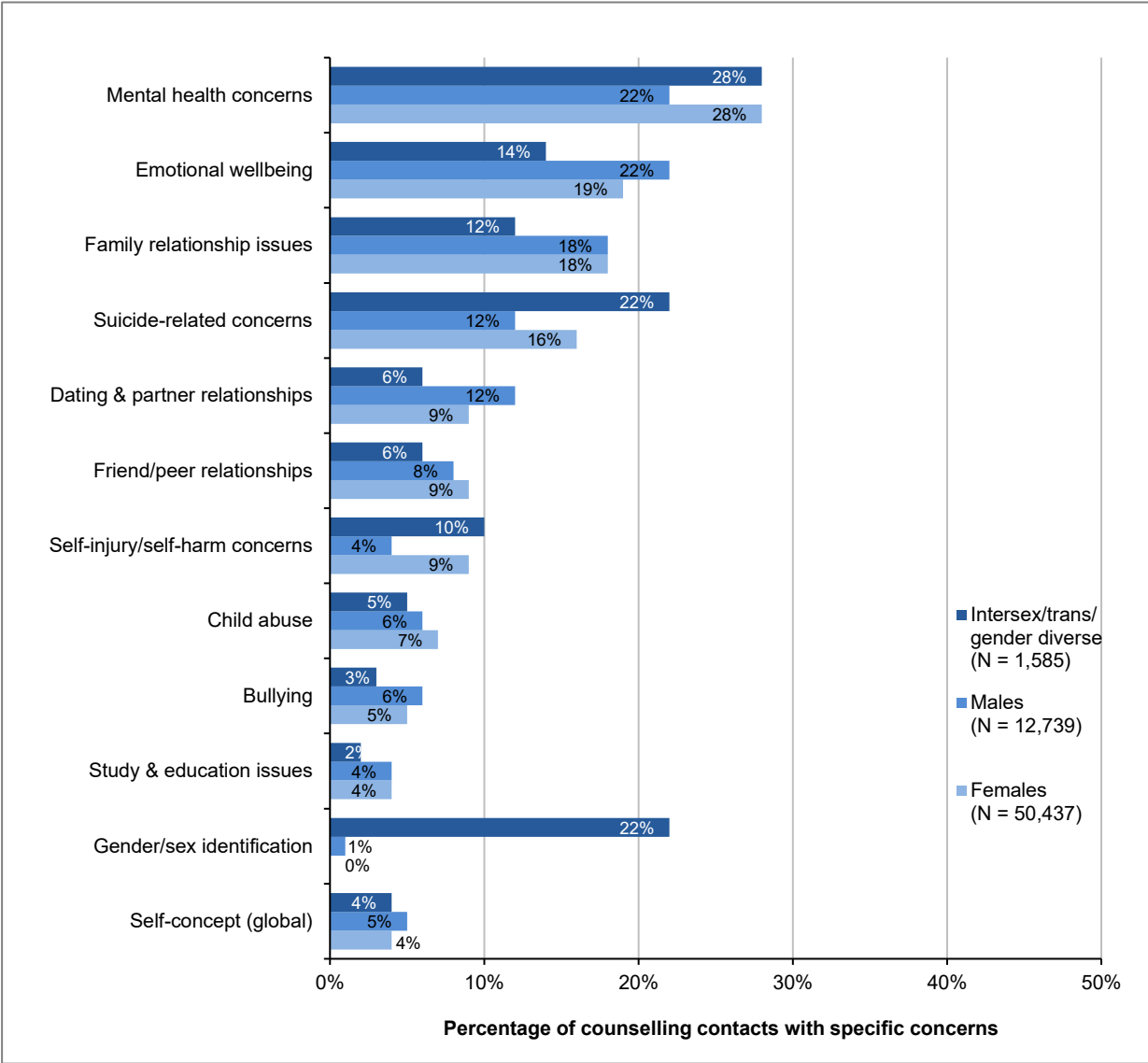


1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

3.4.3 By gender

Figure 20 compares the relative frequency with which concerns were discussed in counselling sessions in 2018 according to the child or young person’s gender.

Figure 20. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2018 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by gender (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2018)^{1,2}



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%. 2. Included in top 12 listed are concerns in the top 5 for any particular gender group not otherwise included if the listing done only on national figures (thus the inclusion of “gender/sex identification which is a key concern for one gender group).

Key observations from the data include the following:

- There are a number of differences in the relative frequency with which particular concerns were discussed in counselling contacts depending on the gender of the child or young person. These differences are generally small in size between contacts from males and females but often moderate to large between contacts from those identifying as intersex, trans or gender-diverse and contacts from those identifying as either male or female.
- *Intersex, trans and gender-diverse.* Children and young people identifying as intersex, trans or gender-diverse were much more likely to be contacting in relation to concern about gender/sex identification than males or females (22% c.f. 1% for males and <1% for females). Children and young people identifying as intersex, trans or gender-diverse also contact about mental health concerns more than males and at the same rate as females (28% c.f. 22% for males and 28% for females).
- Along with their relatively greater focus on sexual and gender identity issues, contacts from intersex, trans and gender-diverse clients were more likely than either males or females to be about suicide (22% c.f. 16%

females and 12% males), and as likely as females to be about mental health issues (28% c.f. 28% females and 22% males) and self-harm (10% c.f. 9% females and 4% males). This observation makes sense in light of numerous studies that indicate that individuals who are same-sex attracted, or intersex, trans, or gender-diverse, are more likely than heterosexual or cisgender individuals to experience mental health disorders (Roberts *et al.*, 2013; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Meyer, 2003), suicidal thoughts and behaviours (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2005; LeVassuer *et al.*, 2013; Mueller *et al.*, 2015; Russell & Joyner, 2001; Stone *et al.*, 2014; Walls, Potter & Van Leeuwen, 2009) and/or bullying (LeVassuer *et al.*, 2013; Reisner *et al.*, 2015).

- *Males and females.* Differences in the most common concerns of males and females in 2018 are limited to four areas of concern – mental health, self-injury, suicide-related concerns, and dating & partner relationships. Females were more likely than males to contact about mental health issues (28% c.f. 22%), suicide-related concerns (16% c.f. 12%), and also more likely than males to contact for help with self-injury issues (9% c.f. 4%). Males were more likely to contact about dating and partner relationships than females (12% c.f. 9%).

3.4.4 By age group and gender

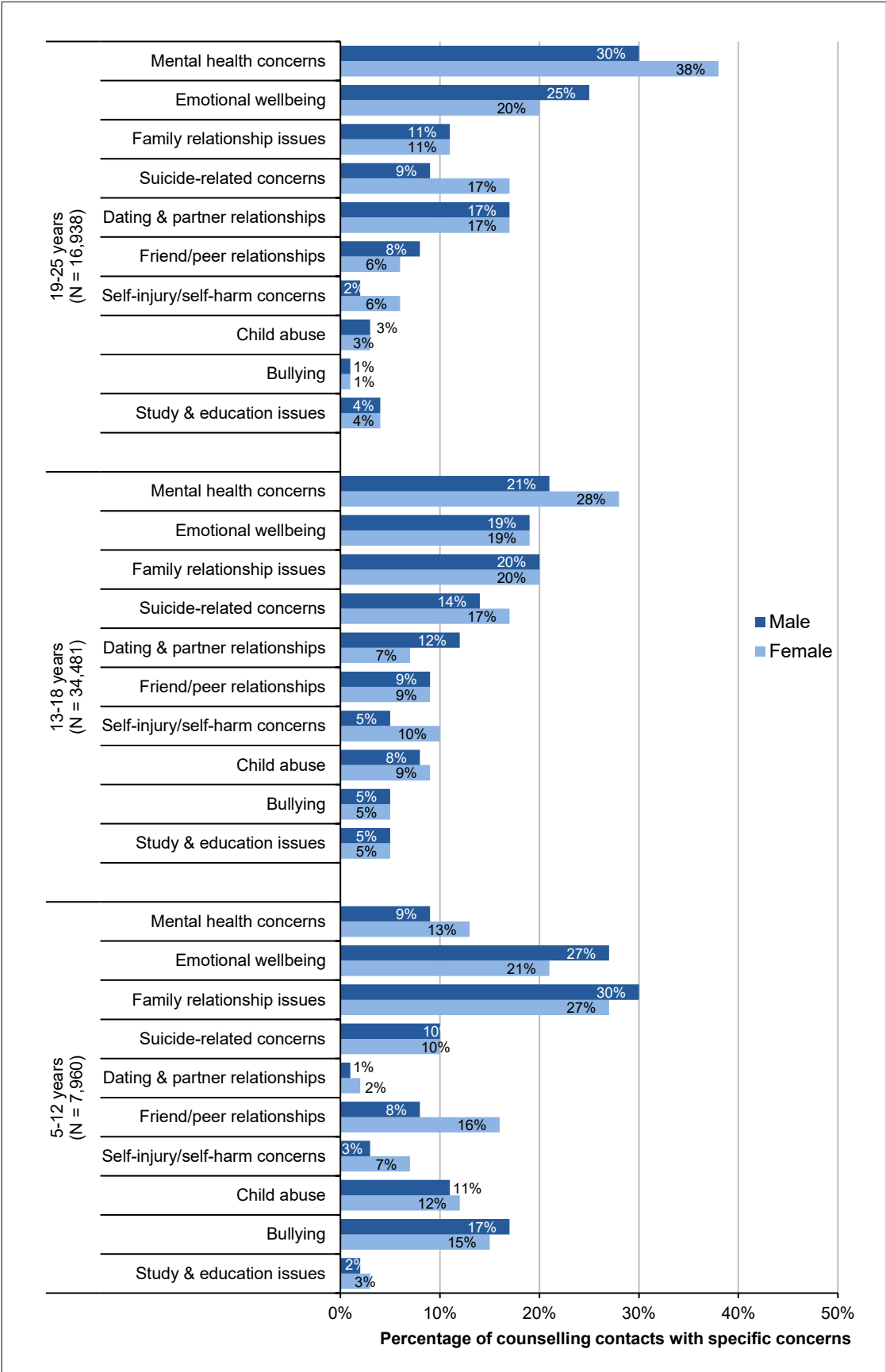
Figure 21 presents the most frequently recorded concerns of Kids Helpline counselling contacts in 2018 by both age group and gender to see if gender differences in the concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline vary according to age group.

Due to the very small number of contacts from clients identifying as intersex, trans and gender-diverse, particularly in certain age groups, this gender category has been excluded from the analysis to avoid potentially presenting unreliable or unrepresentative insights into the age-related concerns of this group in the population. With very small sub-populations, moreover, the distorting impact of repeat contacts on relative frequencies can be substantial.

Key observations from Figure 21 include:

- *Age does not change the gender patterns for proportions of issues for:*
 - *Mental health* – the importance of this concern is slightly larger for females than for males, and that pattern does not vary with age.
 - *Family relationships* – the importance of this concern to males and females is about equal, and that pattern does not vary with age.
 - *Self-injury / self-harm* – the importance of this concern is slightly larger for females than for males, and that pattern does not vary with age.
 - *Child abuse* – the importance of this concern to males and females is about equal, and that pattern does not vary with age.
 - *Bullying* – the importance of this concern to males and females is about equal, and that pattern does not vary with age.
 - *Study & education* – the importance of this concern to males and females is about equal, and that pattern does not vary with age.
- *Age does change the gender patterns for proportion of issues for:*
 - *Emotional wellbeing* – the importance of this concern is slightly larger for females than for males, in the 5-12 and 19-25 age groups, but importance is about equal in the 13-18 age group.
 - *Suicide* – the importance of this concern to males and females is about equal in the 5-12 group, but of greater importance for females than for males in the 13-18 and 19-25 age groups.
 - *Dating and partner relationships* – the importance of this concern to males and females is about equal in the 5-12 and 19-25 age groups, but of greater importance for males than for females in the 13-18 age group.
 - *Peer and friend relationships* – the importance of this concern to males and females is about equal in the 13-18 and 19-25 age groups, but of greater importance for females than for males in the 5-12 age group.

Figure 21. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2018 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by age group and gender (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2018)¹



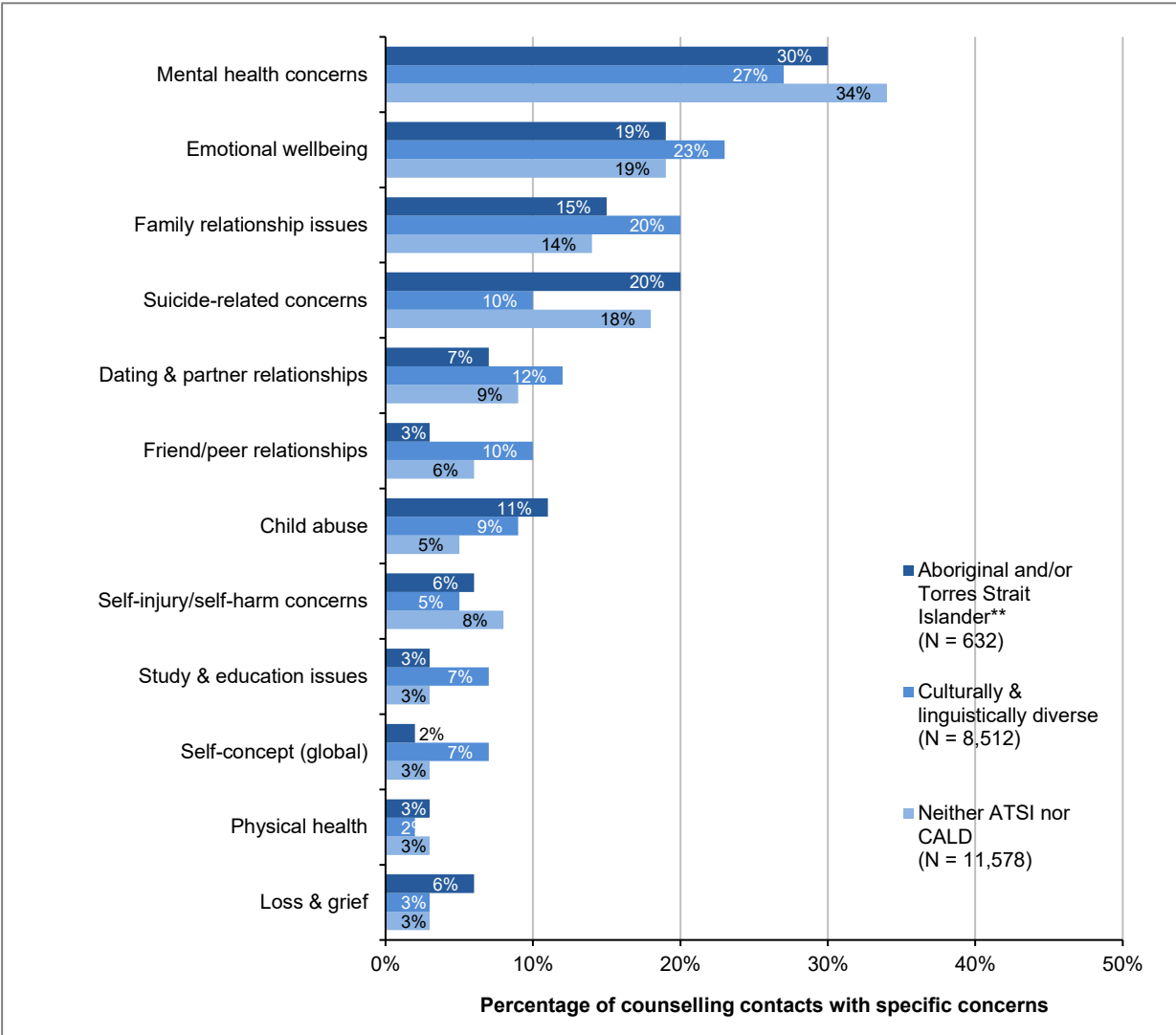
1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages for gender within an age category may sum to more than 100%. For 5 – 12 year old contacts, N (males) = 1,889, N (females) = 6,071. For 13 to 18 year old contacts, N (males) = 5,924, N (females) = 28,557. For 19 to 25 year old contacts, N (males) = 4,101, N (females) = 12,837.

3.4.5 By cultural background

In terms of developing culturally sensitive and appropriate services for children and young people seeking help, it is valuable to consider the influence of cultural background on the kinds of issues for which children and young people seek counselling support. To this end, Figure 22 compares the relative frequency of the 12 most common concerns of counselling contacts in 2018 according to the child or young person's cultural background – in particular, whether they were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, from other culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), or from neither Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander nor CALD backgrounds (i.e. Caucasian Australian).

Unfortunately, cultural background information is only available for approximately one third (31%) of counselling contacts in 2018 and there are likely to be biases associated with missing and known data (see Appendix). These factors will impact on the reliability of the cultural background analysis presented in this section and care therefore needs to be taken with how these data are interpreted and used.

Figure 22. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2018 Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by cultural background (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2018)^{1, 2}



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%.
 2.** Interpret data for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander contacts with caution. These contacts comprise a very small subgroup of Kids Helpline counselling contacts. Moreover, the data presented pertain to contacts, not individuals, such that multiple contacts may be received from a single individual. Accordingly, the data presented here in relation to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander contacts may not be representative of the population of Kids Helpline service users from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Key observations from Figure 22 include the following:

- *Cultural background has an influence on children and young people's concerns.* The frequency with which 10 of the 12 most common concerns were discussed in counselling contacts in 2018 would appear to be related to the cultural background of the child or young person where known.

- *Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander counselling contacts.* Contacts from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people were more likely than contacts from children and young people of other cultural backgrounds (either CALD or Caucasian Australian) to focus on:
 - suicide-related issues (20% c.f. 11% CALD but about the same as Caucasian at 18%)
 - child abuse (11% c.f. 9% or 5%),
 - loss and grief (6% c.f. 3% and 3%).
- *CALD counselling contacts.* Contacts from children and young people from CALD backgrounds appeared slightly or moderately more likely than those from either Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander/CALD children and young people to focus on:
 - emotional wellbeing issues (23% c.f. 19% or 19%)
 - family relationship issues (20% c.f. 15% or 14%)
 - dating and partner relationships (12% c.f. 7% or 9%)
 - friend and peer relationships (10% c.f. 6% or 6%)
 - study and education issues (7% c.f. 3% or 3%), and
 - self-concept (7% c.f. 2% or 3%).
- *Counselling contacts who were neither Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander nor CALD.* Contacts from children and young people who were known to be neither Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander nor CALD were slightly more likely than contacts from children and young people known to be either Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or CALD to be about:
 - mental health issues (34% c.f. 30% or 27%); and
 - self-injury concerns (8% versus 6% and 5%).

3.4.6 By remoteness

Kids Helpline services all localities across Australia. It is possible that distance from metropolitan areas will impact on the experiences and/or concerns of children and young people contacting the service. Understanding these differences is therefore important in delivering a responsive service to children and young people across the continent.

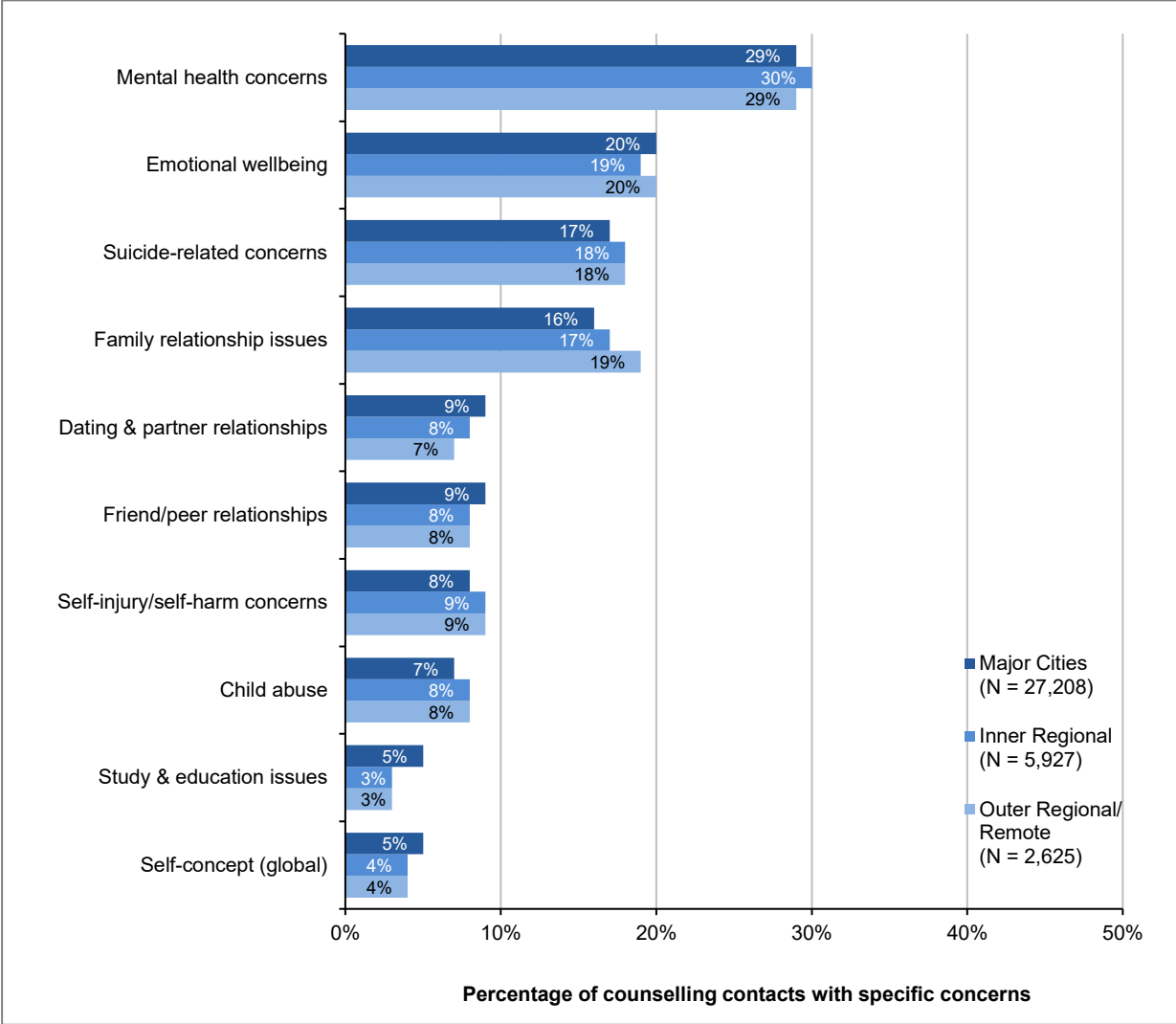
Figure 23 compares the relative frequency with which concerns were raised by counselling contacts in 2018 according to their remoteness classification – in particular, whether they were living in *Major Cities*, in *Inner Regional* localities, or in *Outer Regional/Remote* contexts. The remoteness classification system used by Kids Helpline has been adapted from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Australian Geographical Standard (ASGS). See Appendix for more information.

Unfortunately, locality information is only available for half (53%) of counselling contacts in 2018 and there may be biases associated with missing and known data. These factors will impact on the reliability of the remoteness analysis presented in this section and care therefore needs to be taken with how these data are interpreted and used.

Key observations from the data in Figure 23 include the following:

- In 2018, there is no substantial difference apparent in the frequency with which the 10 most common client concerns were discussed in counselling sessions according to the child or young person's remoteness classification.
- Data reliability issues may obscure actual differences.

Figure 23. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2018 Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by remoteness (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2018) ¹



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

3.4.7 Trend analysis of client concerns

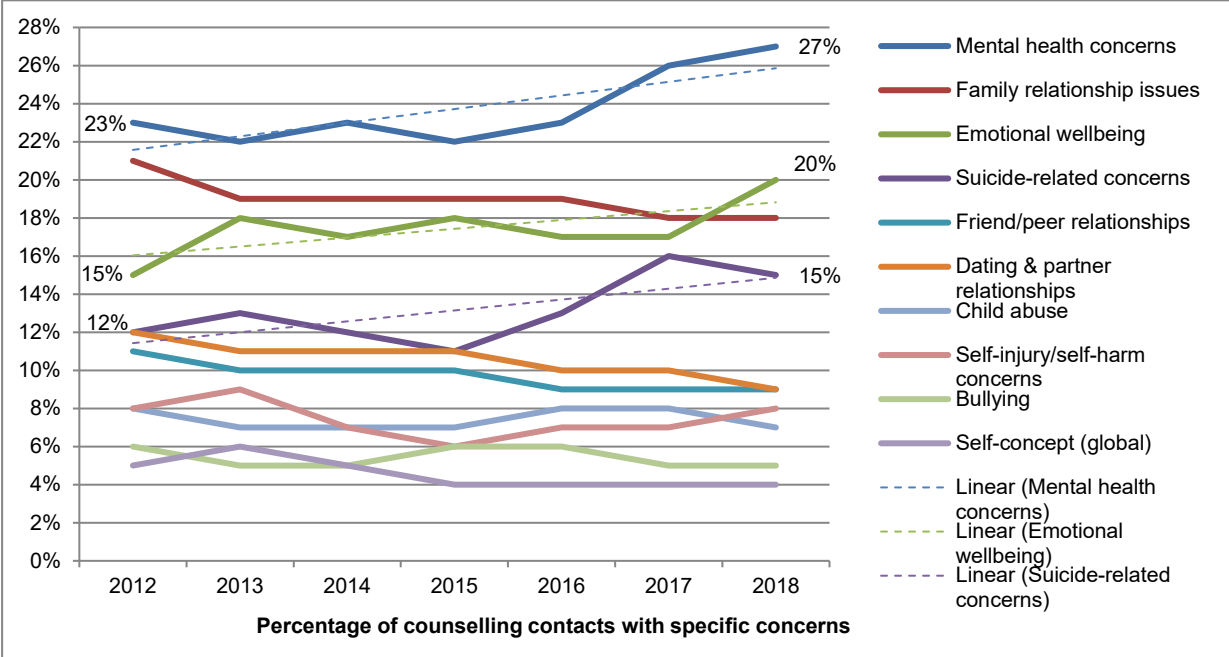
It is interesting to consider whether or not the issues that children and young people most commonly contact Kids Helpline about have changed over time. This section provides short term trend analysis of client concern from 2012, when Kids Helpline’s most recent concern classification system was established, through to the end of 2018. This is then supplemented with longer-term trend analysis (20 years) through interrogation of Kids Helpline’s data archive.

3.4.7.1 Short term analysis

Figure 24 shows the 10 most common concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline for counselling support over the last seven years to consider any short-term trends in the concerns of counselling contacts.

The key observation apparent from the data is that the relative frequency with which children and young people are contacting Kids Helpline about most of these top issues has remained stable over the period, with three exceptions (mental health, emotional wellbeing, and suicide related concerns) which have all had modest increases over the period of time (4%, 5%, and 3% respectively).

Figure 24. Relative frequency of the most frequently recorded concerns of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by year (2012-2018)¹



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

3.4.7.2 Long term analysis

It is possible to investigate trends in help-seeking over a longer period of time by analysing data from Kids Helpline’s data archive. Since 1996, there have been two classification systems used for recording the help-seeking concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline, one operating from 10 May 1996 until 31 December 2011, and a new classification system introduced from 1 January 2012. A number of concern categories are sufficiently similar to permit analysis of trends over the entire period from 1996 to 2018. Others can also be recoded into *continuous concern categories* by joining various concern types together during and across the two periods based on concern definitions.

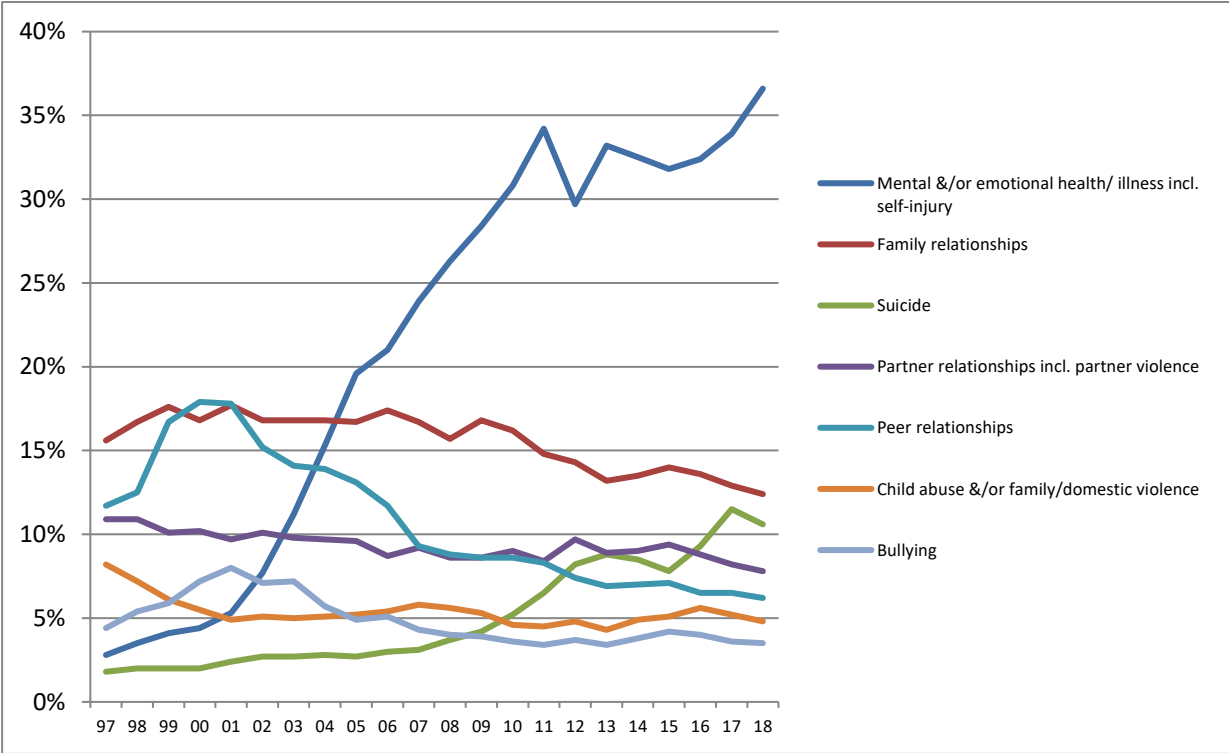
For example, in order to analyse concerns about mental health over time, it is necessary to amalgamate three contemporary concern categories related to mental health – mental health concerns, emotional wellbeing concerns, and concerns about self-injury. The composite concern category is accordingly called *mental and/or emotional health/illness concerns, including self-injury* and it is inaccurate and misleading to abbreviate it to *mental health concerns*.

A total of fourteen continuous concern categories can be generated in these ways and analysed over time.

Because there have been different numbers of fields for recording client concerns over the years – from one field initially, to two in 2002, to four in 2012, analysis of concerns beyond the last six years (since 2012) is necessarily limited to the *primary* or *main* concern recorded.

Figure 25 provides a visual representation of this continuity and change in main client concerns, focusing on the seven most frequently recorded of the fourteen continuous concern categories. Rather than presenting *raw count*, it presents the *relative frequency* with which particular main concerns were discussed in counselling sessions each year. This helps to show changes in the frequency of client concerns relative to each other, notwithstanding increases or decreases in the total number of counselling contacts responded to from year to year.

Figure 25. Relative frequency of the most frequently recorded main concerns of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by year (1997-2018)



1. Data provided for the seven most common of 14 continuous concern categories from 1997-2018.

3.4.8 Summary (Counselling Concerns)

During 2018, Kids Helpline counsellors responded to 67,264 contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years who were seeking help about specific problems or concerns (i.e. counselling contacts). The concerns most commonly discussed in counselling sessions, in order of relative frequency, mental health, family relationships, emotional wellbeing, suicide, dating and partner relationships, friend and peer relationships, child abuse, self-injury, bullying and study and education issues.

The concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline in 2018 were found to vary:

- greatly according to contacts’ age group and cultural background and
- moderately according to their gender.

Remoteness classification appeared to have negligible association with the concerns for which children and young people were seeking counselling support.

The relative frequency with which Kids Helpline has been contacted about each of these issues over the last six years has remained fairly consistent, although there is some evidence of an increase in the relative frequency of mental health, emotional wellbeing, and suicide related contacts since 2012. It is not surprising that the emotional wellbeing frequency is high, given the definition is very broad, and is a catch-all for any conversations about emotional perturbation that do not reference specific issues or situations or relationships that can cause the contact to be coded under these other constructs (see Box).

Clients seeking help or concerned about their own or others emotional wellbeing. This is specific to when a client recognises themes or patterns in relation to their emotional responses, the way they cope or the way they manage their emotions across a number of situations. For example, when seeking help about general sadness, feeling down, loneliness, worry/anxiety, stress, distress, anger, upsetting dreams, problems sleeping, or other negative emotions that are not specifically associated with a person/situation/event. Exclude concerns about emotional responses related to specific relationships, situations or events. Exclude when these concerns are considered part of mental health symptomatology. Exclude loss and grief; self-injury; and suicidality concerns (classified elsewhere).

Commensurate with Kids Helpline’s operational philosophy of “Anytime. Any reason.” It should be no surprise that many contacts are coded as emotional wellbeing, even when they are also coded for particular other matters discussed or explored (recall that counsellors can record up to 4 concerns/issues that were explored during the contact).

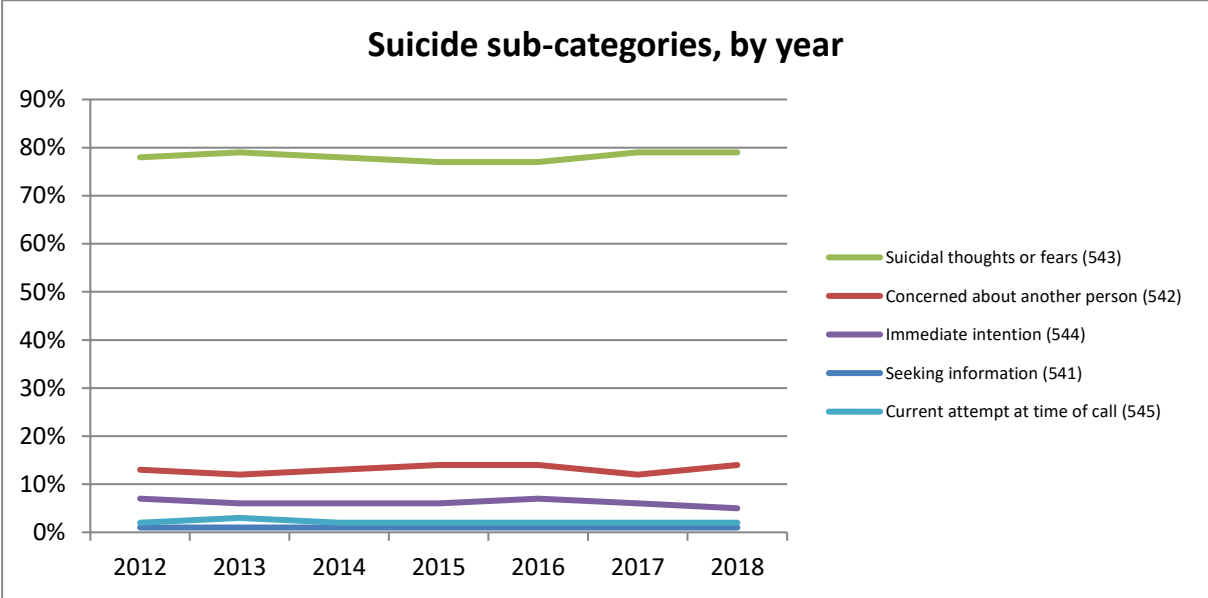
3.4.9 Sub-categories of Counselling Concerns

Each time a counsellor records a concern category they must also indicate at a more granular level a sub-category classification for the concern/issue that was discussed. The sub-categories of concerns vary by concern in both how many are available for use and what they represent in terms of their content or meaning.

3.4.10 Sub-categories of Top 4 Counselling Concerns

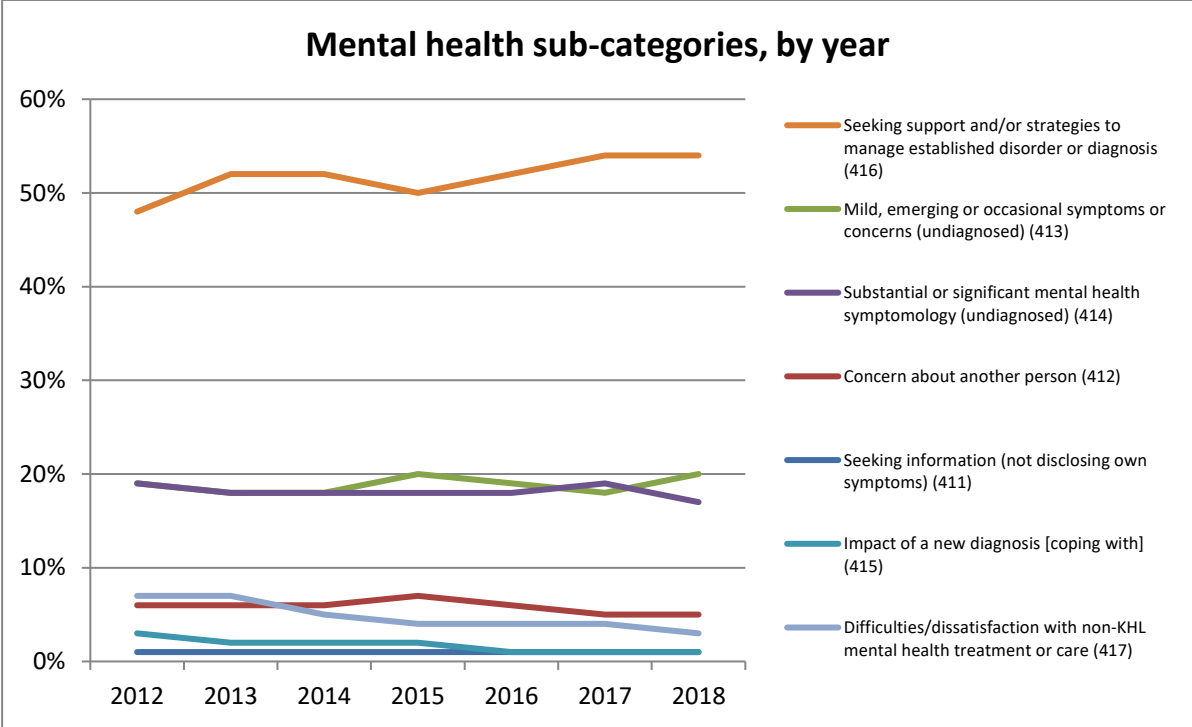
The top four counselling concerns in 2018 are *mental health, emotional wellbeing, family issues, and suicide* related concerns (as indicated in the chart in section 3.4 above). The relative frequencies (proportions) of the sub-categories of each of the top four concerns is plotted in the charts that follow (Figure 26 through Figure 29), for the years 2012-2018, to show both which are the predominant sub-categories within each of the top four concerns, and to demonstrate the stability in these relationships over time.

Figure 26. Relative frequencies of sub-categories for the main concern “suicide” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by year (2012-2018)¹



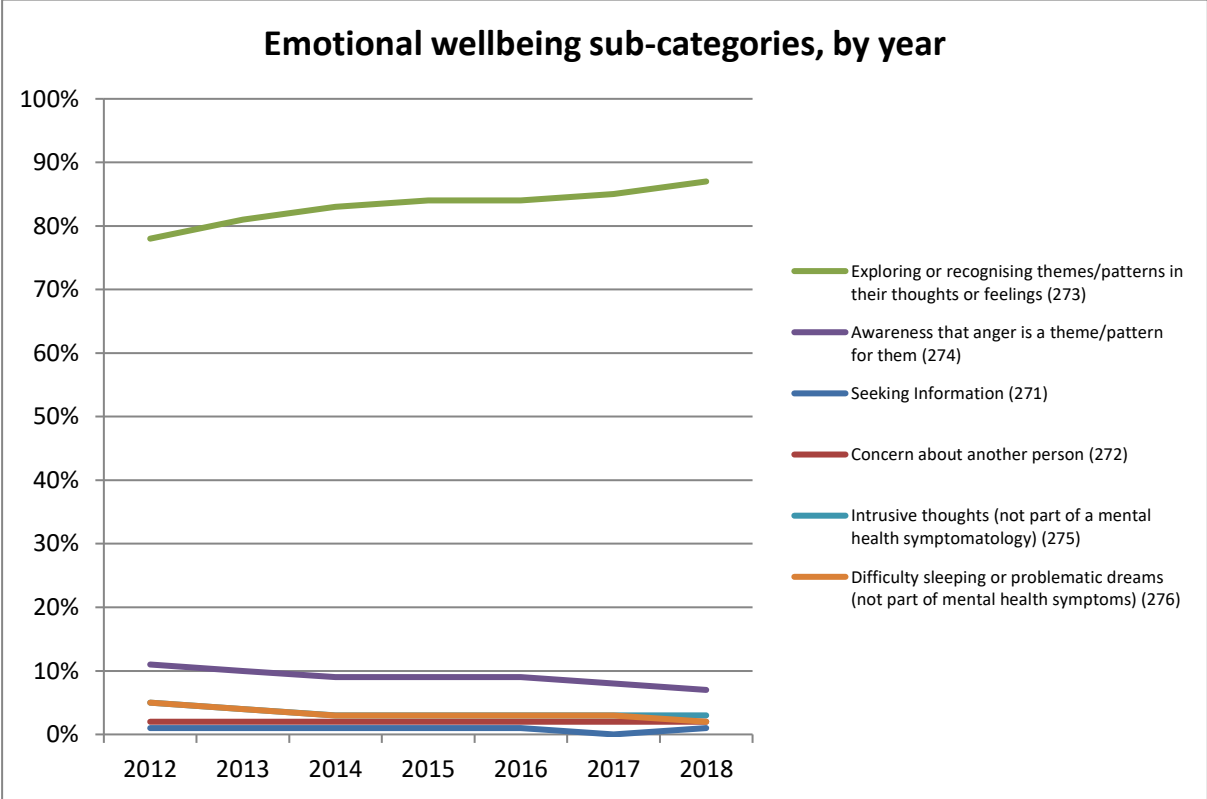
1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%. Numbers in brackets represent the unique code for each sub-category, not a count.

Figure 27. Relative frequencies of sub-categories for the main concern “mental health” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by year (2012-2018) ¹



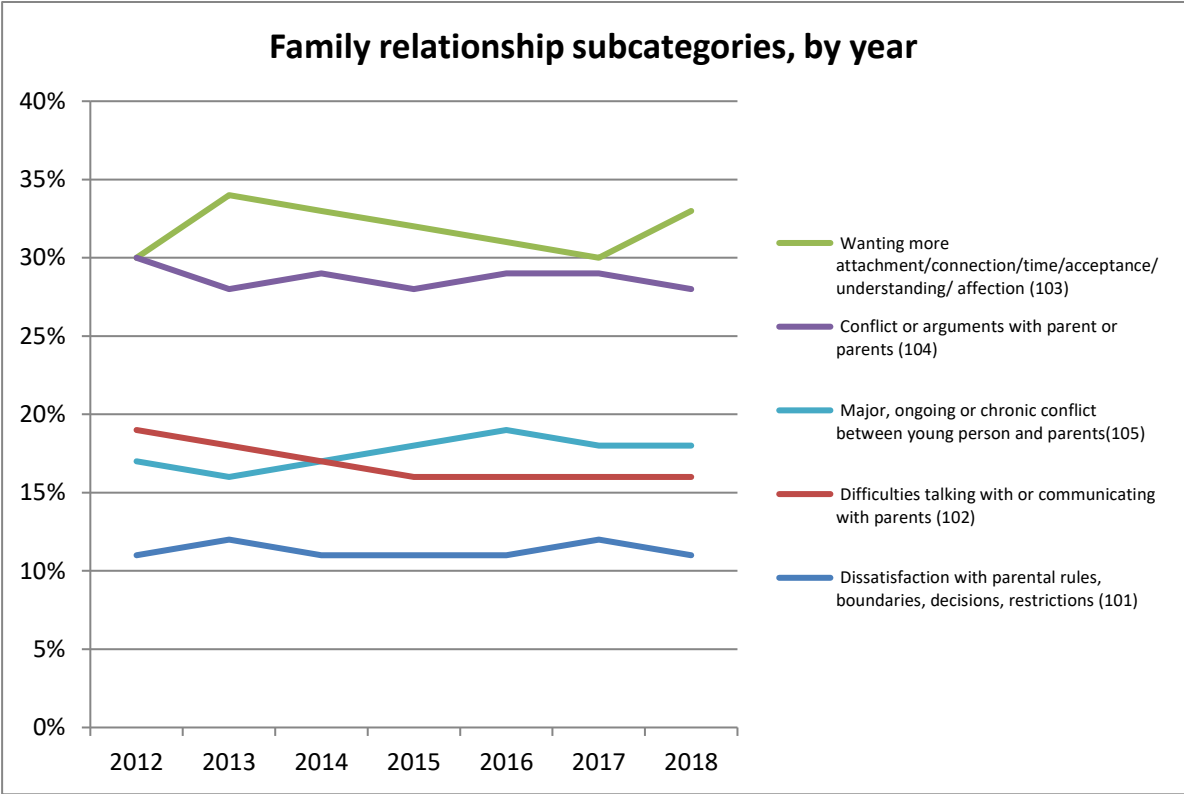
1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%. Numbers in brackets represent the unique code for each sub-category, not a count.

Figure 28. Relative frequencies of sub-categories for the main concern “emotional wellbeing” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by year (2012-2018) ¹



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%. Numbers in brackets represent the unique code for each sub-category, not a count.

Figure 29. Relative frequencies of sub-categories for the main concern “family relationships” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by year (2012-2018)¹



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%. Numbers in brackets represent the unique code for each sub-category, not a count.

In the analyses which follow (sections 3.4.11-3.4.16) the variables of interest will be the most frequently occurring sub-categories within each of the top 4 main concerns, that is:

Suicide	Suicidal thoughts or fears (543) ¹
Mental health	Seeking support and/or strategies to manage established disorder or diagnosis (416)
Emotional wellbeing	Exploring or recognising themes/patterns in their thoughts or feelings (273)
Family	Wanting more attachment/connection/time/acceptance/understanding/affection (103)
Relationships ²	Conflict or arguments with parent or parents (104)

¹ The numbers in brackets after each sub-category label uniquely identify each subcategory.

² Because for family relationships there are two almost equally frequently occurring sub-categories, but of these will be reported in the subsequent analyses.

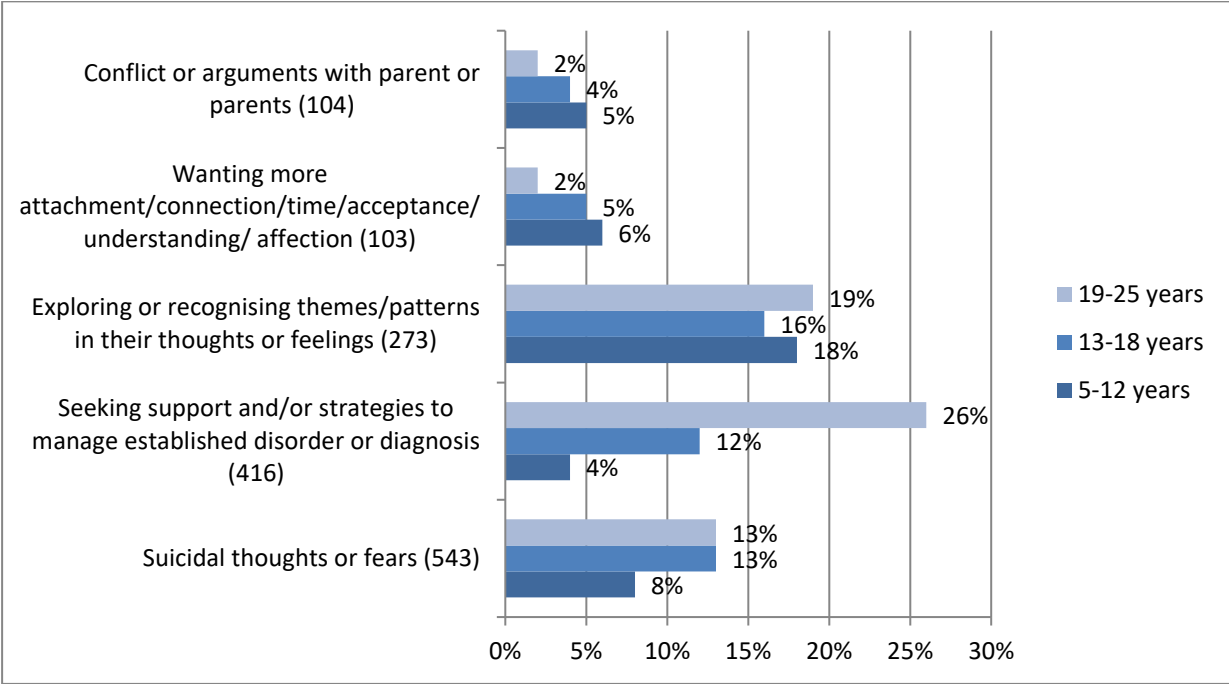
In the analyses that follow, the proportions of the selected sub-categories (from among all possible sub-categories) is examined for each sub-group of the variable of interest (e.g. age group, gender).

3.4.11 By Age Group

Age group analysis (Figure 30) indicates that:

- *Exploring or recognising themes/patterns in thoughts/feelings* – is more-or-less equally important to all the sub-groups of age.
- *Family relationship matters* (conflict with parents, or wanting more connection with parents) – are more important for younger clients than for older clients.
- *Seeking support for an existing (mental health) diagnosis* – is strongly related to age, becoming more important with each older age sub-group (26%, for the 19-25 year-old clients c.f. 12% and 4%), and
- *Suicidal thoughts/fears* – is less likely to be raised by 5-12 year-old clients (8% c.f. 13% and 13%).

Figure 30. Relative frequencies of target sub-categories for the main concerns “suicide”, “mental health”, “emotional wellbeing” and “family relationships” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by age group (2018).

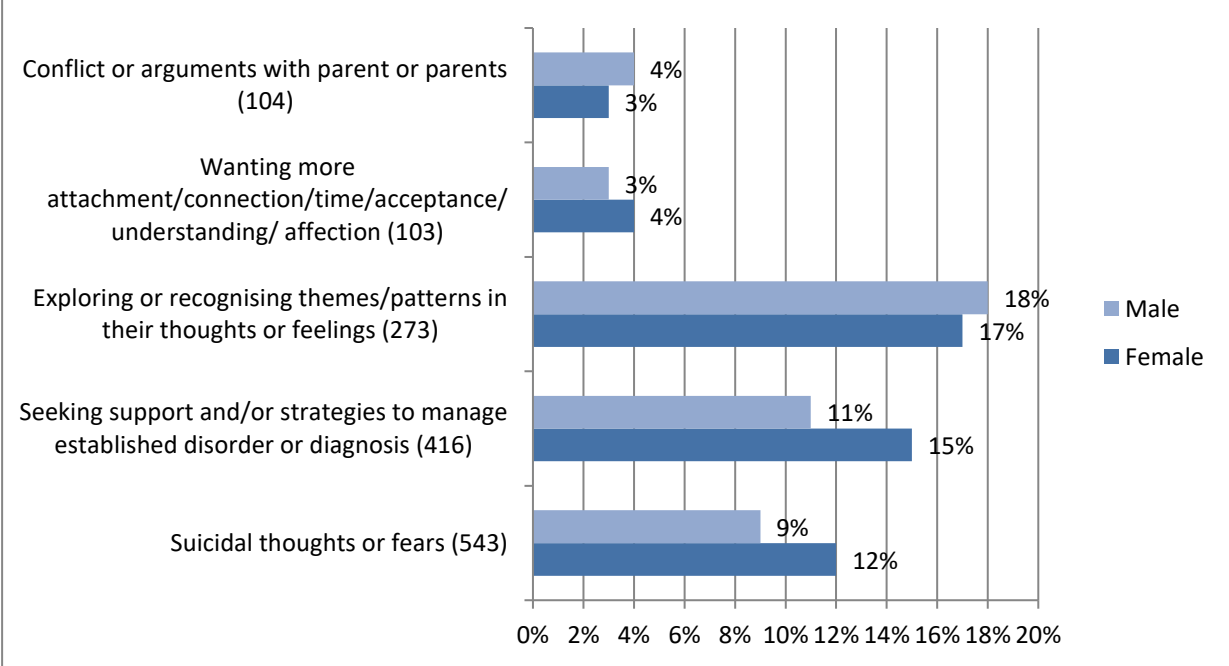


3.4.12 By Gender

Gender analysis (Figure 31) indicates that:

- The proportions for three of the selected sub-categories is about equal for males and females (*conflict with parents; wanting more connection with parents; and exploring or recognising themes/patterns in thoughts/feelings*)
- *Seeking support for an existing (mental health) diagnosis* – is more important among all the sub-categories for females than it is for males (15% c.f. 11%), and
- *Suicidal thoughts/fears* – is more important, relative to all other sub-categories, for females than it is for males (12% c.f. 9%).

Figure 31. Relative frequencies of target sub-categories for the main concerns “suicide”, “mental health”, “emotional wellbeing” and “family relationships” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by gender¹ (2018).



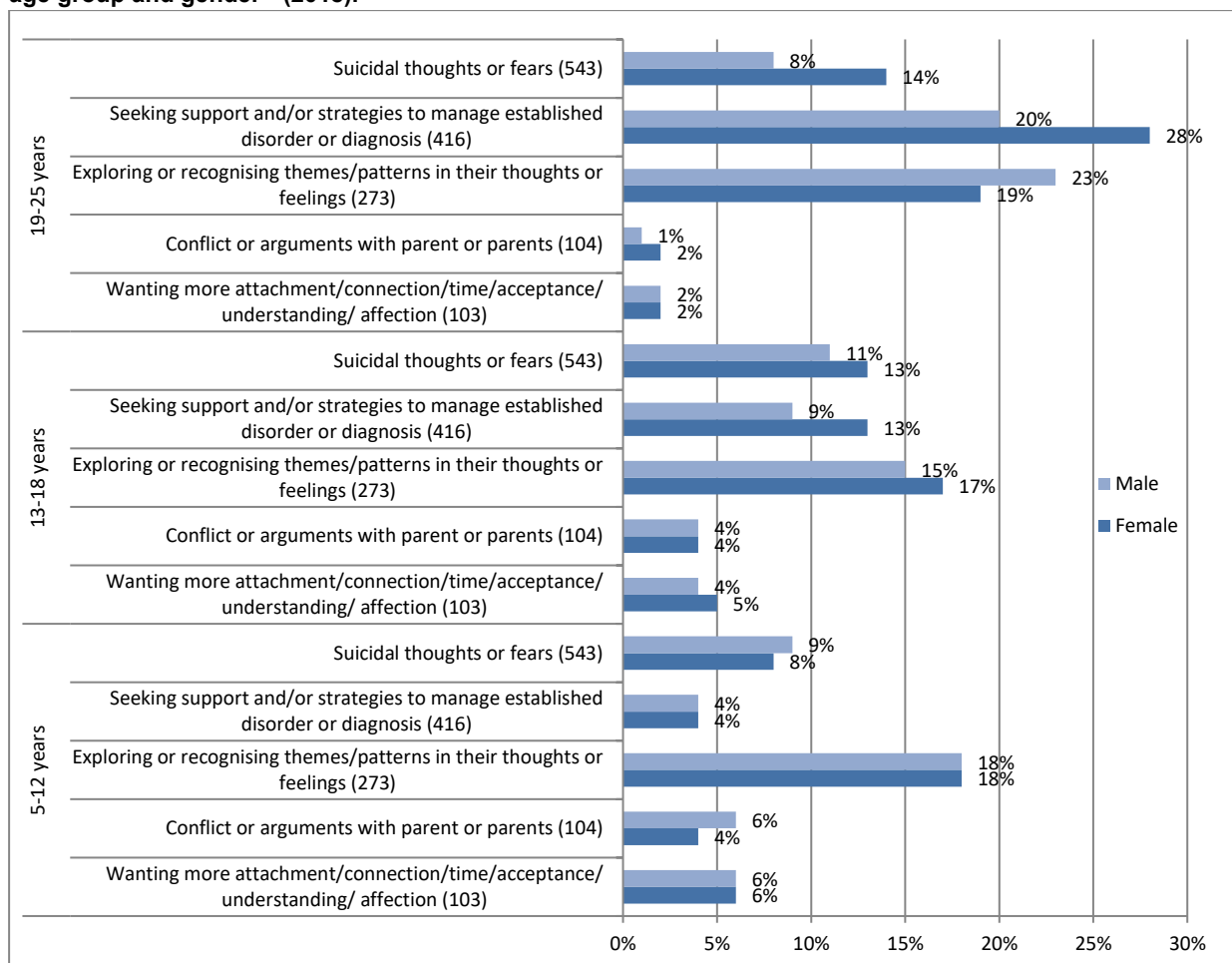
1. Due to the infrequency of occurrence of contacts coded as Intersex, Trans and Gender Diverse in the Gender variable only those coded "Male" or "Female" are included.

3.4.13 By Age Group and Gender

Gender analysis by age (Figure 32) seeks to discover if gender patterns are the same for different age groups. Analysis indicates that:

- *Suicidal thoughts/fears* – the disparity between female and male proportion of suicidal thoughts/fears gets stronger with age, from roughly equal among 5-12 year-old clients – 9% male c.f. 8% female – to marked in the 19-25 year-old client group – 8% male c.f. 14% female.
- *Seeking support for an existing (mental health) diagnosis* – the disparity between female and male proportions for *support for an existing (mental health) diagnosis* gets stronger with age (from equal among 5-12 year-old clients – 4% for both male and female – to marked in the 19-25 year-old client group – 20% male c.f. 28% female).
- *Exploring/recognising themes/patterns in thoughts/feelings* – the proportions of this sub-category for female and male contacts varies with age, from equally important in the 5-12 group (18% both genders) to being slightly more important to females in the 13-18 year-old group (17% female c.f. 15% males) to being more important to males than to females in the 19-25 year-old group (23% males c.f. 19% females).
- *Family relationship concerns* (both conflict with parents and wanting more connection with parents) – are of equal importance to the gender in all three age sub-groups, with the exception that in the 5-12 year-old group, conflict is slightly more likely to be of importance to males (6% c.f. 4% for females).

Figure 32. Relative frequencies of target sub-categories for the main concerns “suicide”, “mental health”, “emotional wellbeing” and “family relationships” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by age group and gender¹ (2018).



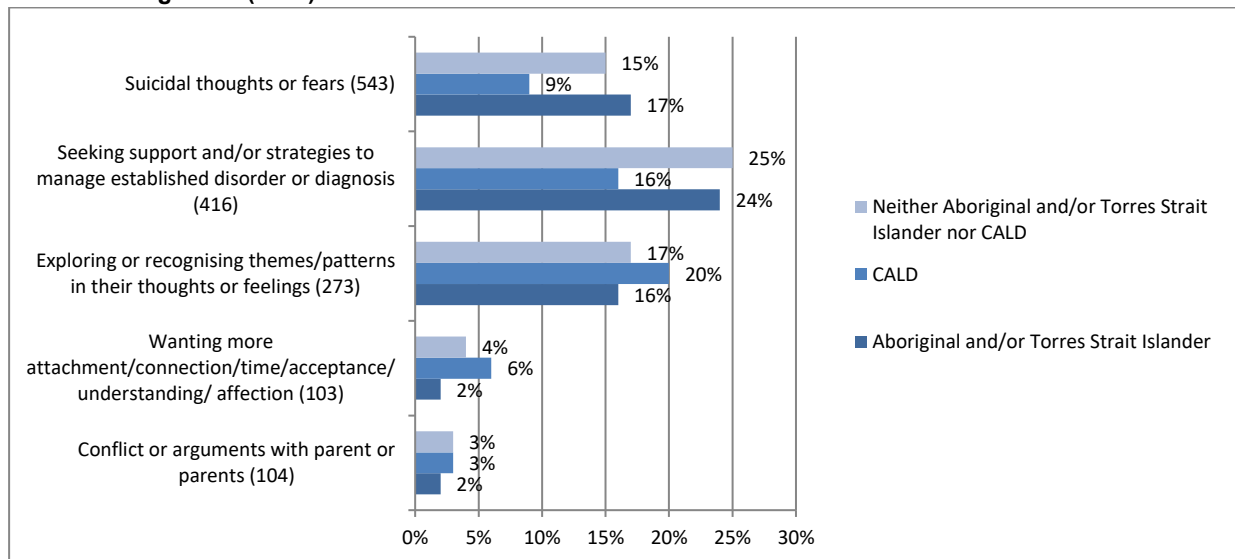
1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded and for each a sub-category can be recorded. Accordingly, percentages for gender within an age category may sum to more than 100%. For 5 – 12 year old contacts, N (males) = 1,889, N (females) = 6,071. For 13 to 18 year old contacts, N (males) = 5,924, N (females) = 28,557. For 19 to 25 year old contacts, N (males) = 4,101, N (females) = 12,837.

3.4.14 By cultural background

Analysis of the relative frequency of occurrence of sub-categories, by cultural background of client (Figure 33), seeks to discover if some sub-categories are of greater importance to contacts from different cultural backgrounds. Analysis indicates that:

- *Suicidal thoughts/fears* – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders and those who are neither CALD nor Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander are more likely to discuss suicidal thoughts/fears than are CALD clients (15% and 17% c.f. 9%).
- *Seeking support for an existing (mental health) diagnosis* – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders and those who are neither CALD nor Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander are more likely to discuss support for an existing (mental health) diagnosis than are CALD clients (24% and 25% c.f. 16%).
- *Exploring/recognising themes/patterns in thoughts/feelings* – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders and those who are neither CALD nor Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander are less likely to discuss exploring/recognising themes/patterns in thoughts/feelings than are CALD clients (17% and 16% c.f. 20%).
- *Family relationship concerns (wanting more connection with parents)* – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders and those who are neither CALD nor Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander are less likely to discuss wanting more connection with parents than are CALD clients (4% and 2% c.f. 6%).
- *Family relationship concerns (conflict with parents)* – each cultural background group is just as likely as the others to discuss conflict with parents.

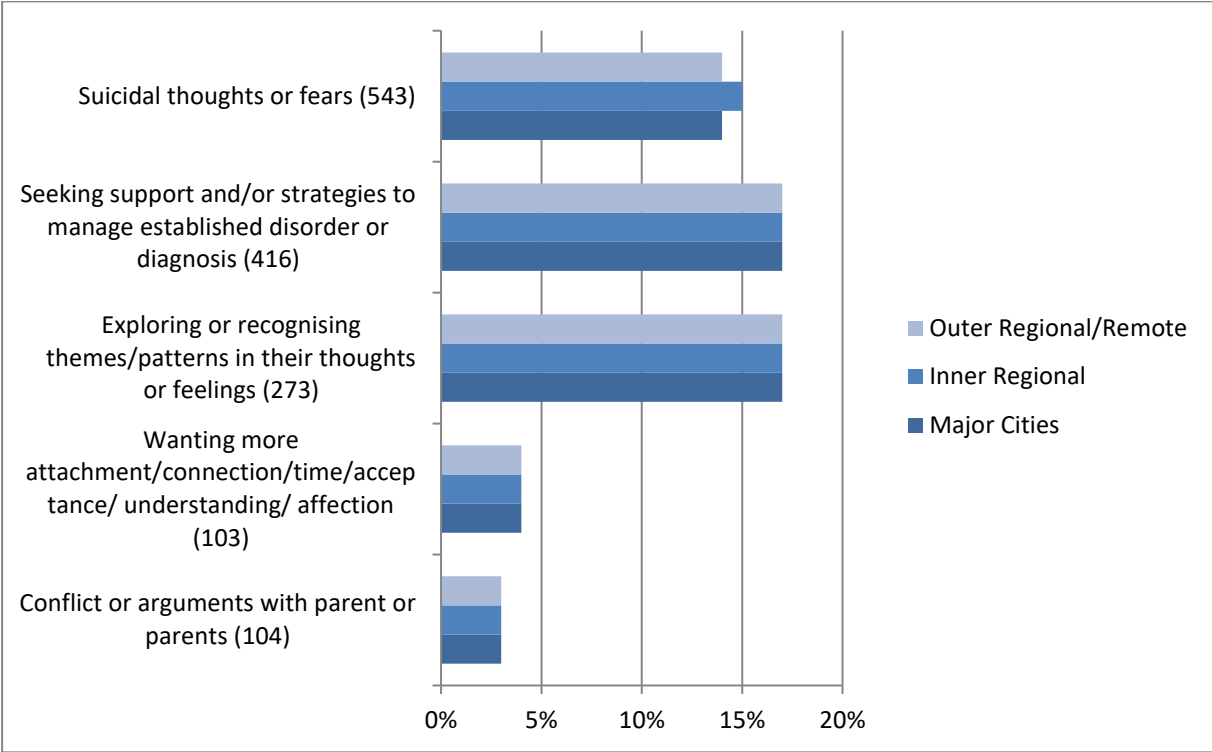
Figure 33. Relative frequencies of target sub-categories for the main concerns “suicide”, “mental health”, “emotional wellbeing” and “family relationships” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by cultural background (2018).



3.4.15 By remoteness

Analysis of the relative frequency of occurrence of sub-categories, by cultural background of client (Figure 34), seeks to discover if some sub-categories are of greater importance to contacts from different cultural backgrounds. Analysis indicates that all remoteness sub-groups have relative frequencies across all five sub-categories.

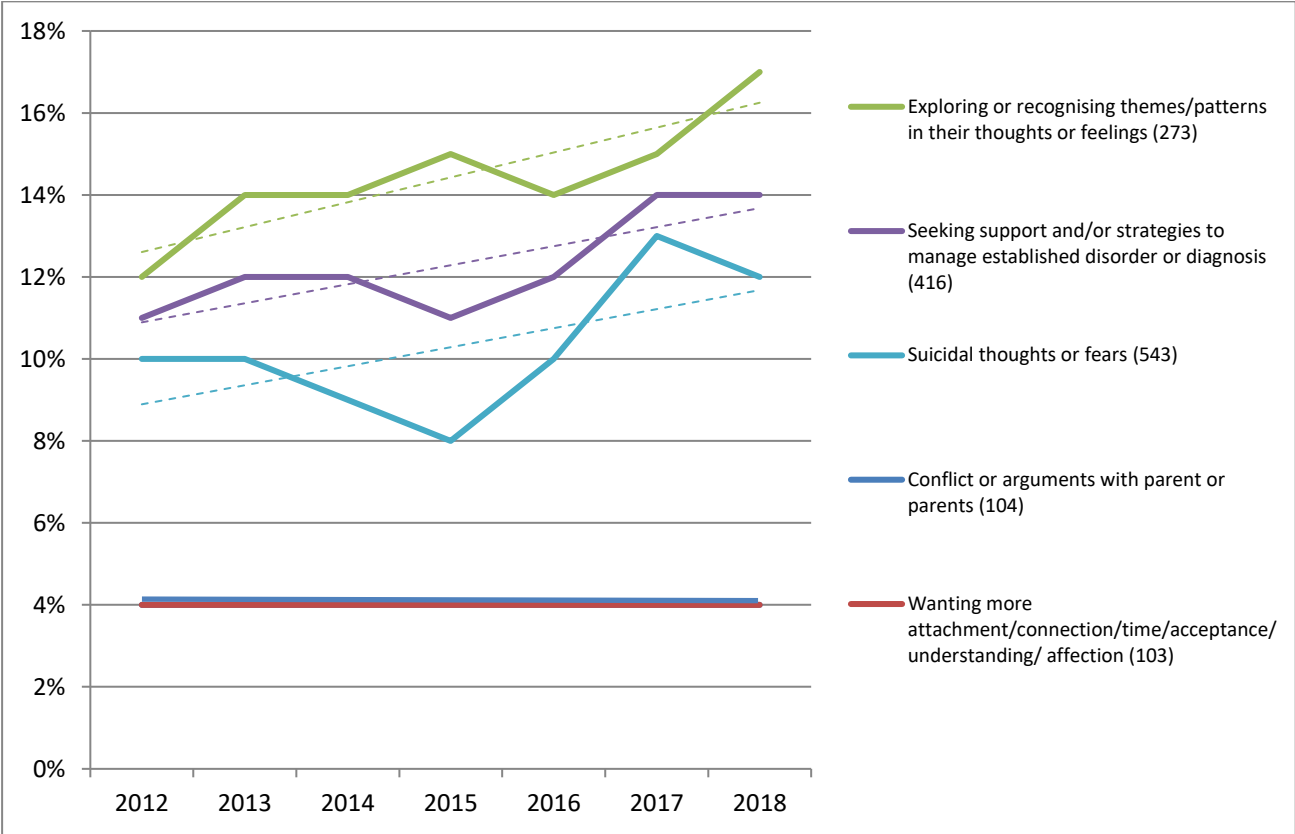
Figure 34. Relative frequencies of target sub-categories for the main concerns “suicide”, “mental health”, “emotional wellbeing” and “family relationships” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by remoteness (2018).



3.4.16 Trends in Sub-categories of Top 4 Counselling Concerns

It was noted above that the relative frequencies of each of these target sub-categories (relative to the concern categories within which they sit), is quite stable over time. In the chart below, we see, in Figure 35, that the family relationship sub-categories are stable over time *as a proportion of the entire set of sub-categories*, whereas there is apparent, though gentle, growth in the proportions of contacts related to mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide sub-categories.

Figure 35. Relative frequencies of target sub-categories for the main concerns “suicide”, “mental health”, “emotional wellbeing” and “family relationships” (Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years) – by year (2012-2018).

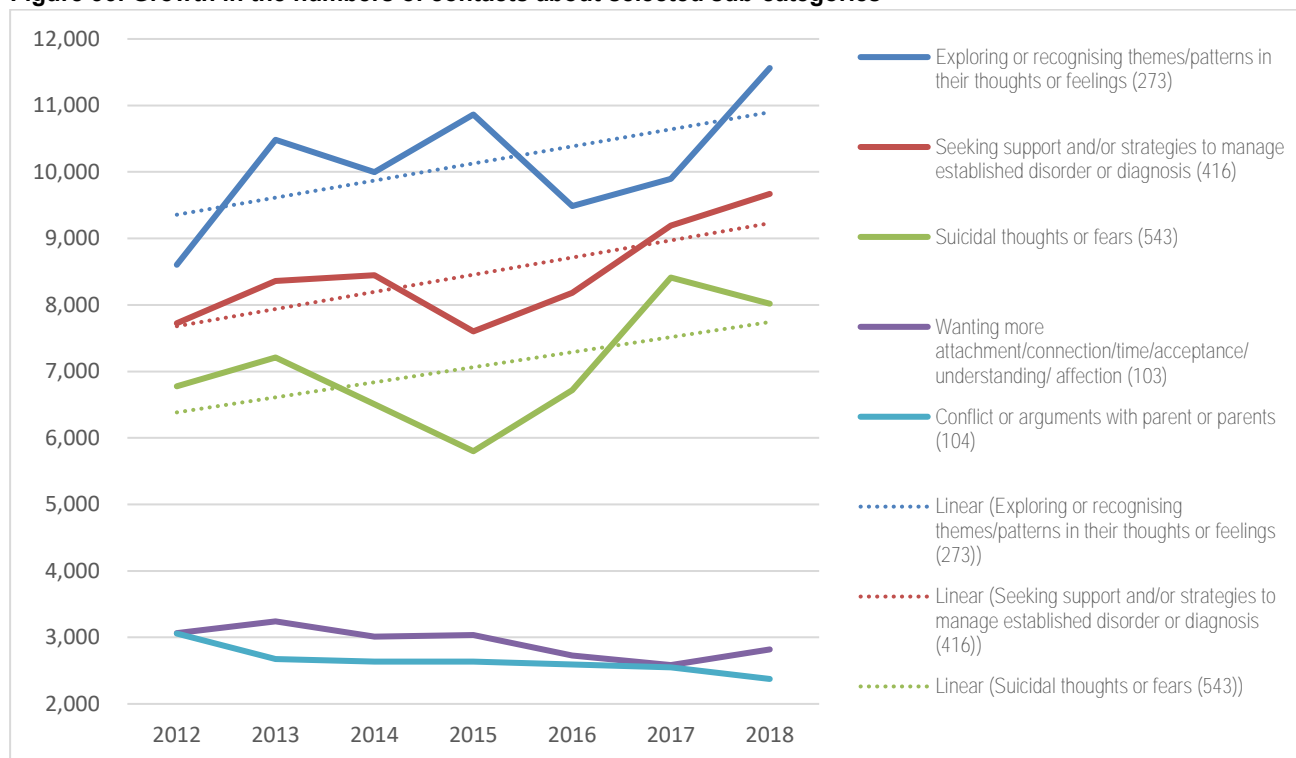


The growth in these sub-categories is not merely growth relative to other sub-categories; as shown in Figure 36, the number of these sub-categories of contact is growing in absolute terms also; it should be borne in mind however that such growth may be in line with general population growth. Table 3 shows the count of contacts for each sub-category and the growth in each for the period 2012-2018.

Table 3: Count for each sub-category, by year, and the change in the count 2012-2018

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	delta 12-18
Exploring or recognising themes/patterns in their thoughts or feelings (273)	8,604	10,483	9,996	10,866	9,485	9,896	11,563	34%
Seeking support and/or strategies to manage established disorder or diagnosis (416)	7,727	8,360	8,447	7,602	8,183	9,192	9,670	25%
Suicidal thoughts or fears (543)	6,777	7,209	6,509	5,800	6,719	8,412	8,018	18%
Wanting more attachment/connection/time/acceptance/understanding/affection (103)	3,065	3,241	3,010	3,034	2,728	2,584	2,818	-8%
Conflict or arguments with parent or parents (104)	3,058	2,676	2,634	2,638	2,592	2,551	2,375	-22%

Figure 36: Growth in the numbers of contacts about selected sub-categories



3.4.17 Summary (Sub-categories of Counselling Concerns)

The proportions of three of the five selective sub-categories have risen slightly since 2012, whilst the proportions for the family relationship concern sub-categories (both conflict with parents and seeking more connection with parents) have remained stable.

Analysis of the proportions of the selected sub-categories by gender, remoteness, age, gender-by-age, and cultural back ground revealed some patterning for the five selected sub-categories to various sub-groups:

- Different cultural sub-groups lay different importance on some of the sub-categories
- The proportions of three of the five sub-categories are more-or-less equal for males and females but there are differences in suicidal thoughts/fears and seeking support for an existing diagnosis.
- Age has an impact on how relatively important four of the five selected sub-categories are.
- There is an interaction effect of age and gender so that the gender patterns observed for each of the five selected sub-categories is changed / modified with age.

The absolute count of contacts about the five selected sub-categories, 2012-2018, shows growth in suicidal thoughts or fears (18%), exploring or recognising themes/patterns in their thoughts or feelings (34%) and Seeking support and/or strategies to manage established disorder or diagnosis (25%). In contrast, the number of contacts about wanting more attachment/connection/time/acceptance/ understanding/ affection has gone down 8% and those dealing with conflict or arguments with parent or parents has decreased 22% in the same period.

The issues dealt with in contacts about these sub-categories are of significance to the children and young people who contact Kids Helpline. The numbers give an indication of the daily volume of contacts on these important issues.

- Exploring or recognising themes/patterns in their thoughts or feelings – about 32 a day
- Seeking support and/or strategies to manage established disorder or diagnosis – about 26 a day
- Suicidal thoughts or fears – about 22 a day
- Wanting more attachment/connection/time/acceptance/ understanding/ affection – about 8 a day
- Conflict or arguments with parent or parents – about 7 a day.

3.5 All concerns of children and young people who received counselling

Section 3.4 provided analysis of the *most commonly reported* concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline in 2018. Children and young people contact Kids Helpline about a very wide range of concerns, however, and focusing on the 10, 12 or 14 most common concerns can obscure that diversity and the emergence of trends in other areas of less common client concern.

To address this issue, the current section reports the frequency with which *every concern* in the Kids Helpline's concern classification system was raised by counselling contacts in 2018 and compares this with the frequency with which the concern was raised in 2016 and 2017.

This analysis is presented in Table 4 It shows:

- the complete list of 49 individual issues that counsellors use to classify the concerns of children and young people contacting the service for counselling support and the frequency with which each concern was discussed in counselling sessions in the period 2016-2018
- aggregated totals for 11 concern classes which group a number of concerns together conceptually, thereby giving a sense of the overall frequency with which broad groupings of concern are arising in the population, and
- trend data for the last three years to enable analysis of short-term changes in the relative frequency with which different issues are being discussed in counselling contacts.

Counsellors can record up to four concerns each time a child or young person contacts the service. As a consequence:

- column percentages will sum to more than 100% for each year, and
- totals provided for concern class will be less than the sum of the individual concerns that make up that class due to the fact that multiple concerns within the class may have been identified in a single contact.

The key observation to be noted from the data in Table 4 is that the relative frequency with which children and young people have been contacting Kids Helpline about all these different concerns, and classes of concern, is remarkably consistent over the short-term. Based on the data presented in section 3.4.7.2 showing trends in the most common client concerns over 20 years, this observation is somewhat to be expected. The analysis in section 3.4.7.2 highlighted that trends in client concerns are difficult to identify in the short or medium term and a longer-term analysis is necessary. Unfortunately, owing to a major overhaul of Kids Helpline's concern classification system in 2012, the data that are the basis of Table 4 are only available going back as far as 2012.

Consistent with the observations already made two areas of concern in which growth has occurred (both in raw N of contacts and in proportions relative to all contacts for each year) are suicide and mental health related concerns.

Table 4 Number and proportion of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years with particular concerns and classes of concern – by year (2016-2018)¹

Concern and concern class	2016 (N = 66,963)		2017 (N = 66,386)		2018 (N = 67,264)	
	n	col. %	n	col. %	n	col. %
Mental health & emotional wellbeing	35,774	53.4%	38,334	57.7%	39,812	59.2%
Mental health concerns	15,709	23.5%	17,115	25.8%	17,855	26.5%
Emotional wellbeing	11,300	16.9%	11,596	17.5%	13,322	19.8%
Suicide-related concerns	8,750	13.1%	10,636	16.0%	10,166	15.1%
Self-injury/self-harm concerns	4,431	6.6%	4,545	6.8%	5,124	7.6%
Loss and grief	1,967	2.9%	2,154	3.2%	2,122	3.2%
Friends, peers, partners & dating	12,495	18.7%	12,381	18.7%	12,032	17.9%
Dating and partner relationships	6,718	10.0%	6,460	9.7%	6,306	9.4%
Friends/peer relationships	6,079	9.1%	6,234	9.4%	6,040	9.0%
Family relationships	12,523	18.7%	12,153	18.3%	12,052	17.9%
Child-parent relationships	8,907	13.3%	8,695	13.1%	8,506	12.6%
Other family relationships	2,673	4.0%	2,486	3.7%	2,664	4.0%
Changing family structures	1,644	2.5%	1,545	2.3%	1,477	2.2%
Parenting own children	160	0.2%	192	0.3%	151	0.2%
Identity & self-concept	4,882	7.3%	4,827	7.3%	5,446	8.1%
Self-concept (global)	2,426	3.6%	2,577	3.9%	2,776	4.1%
Body image	839	1.3%	881	1.3%	967	1.4%
Sexual orientation	870	1.3%	635	1.0%	947	1.4%
Gender/sex identification	599	0.9%	578	0.9%	633	0.9%
Disability-related concerns	206	0.3%	182	0.3%	234	0.3%
Cultural identity	147	0.2%	157	0.2%	135	0.2%
Violence & abuse (non-family)	5,819	8.7%	5,483	8.3%	5,340	7.9%
Bullying - school related	3,217	4.8%	2,942	4.4%	3,074	4.6%
Bullying - other	650	1.0%	615	0.9%	544	0.8%
Sexual assault or abuse (non-family)	1,000	1.5%	1,064	1.6%	903	1.3%
Dating and partner violence	509	0.8%	455	0.7%	355	0.5%
Harassment and assault (non-sexual)	317	0.5%	290	0.4%	278	0.4%
Sexual harassment	251	0.4%	240	0.4%	302	0.4%
Child abuse & family violence	5,387	8.0%	5,173	7.8%	4,865	7.2%
Physical abuse	2,809	4.2%	2,593	3.9%	2,413	3.6%
Sexual abuse	943	1.4%	931	1.4%	753	1.1%
Emotional abuse	1,451	2.2%	1,533	2.3%	1,632	2.4%
Neglect of child	282	0.4%	267	0.4%	253	0.4%
Exploitation by family member	10	0.0%	10	0.0%	5	0.0%
Exposure to family violence	563	0.8%	585	0.9%	527	0.8%
Living-in-care issues	174	0.3%	213	0.3%	162	0.2%
School, education & work	3,949	5.9%	3,968	6.0%	4,110	6.1%
Study and education issues	2,807	4.2%	2,857	4.3%	2,879	4.3%
Employment issues	846	1.3%	862	1.3%	944	1.4%
School authority issues	359	0.5%	319	0.5%	365	0.5%
Physical or sexual health & development	3,341	5.0%	3,035	4.6%	2,890	4.3%
Physical health concerns	1,601	2.4%	1,602	2.4%	1,482	2.2%
Pregnancy-related concerns	804	1.2%	630	0.9%	608	0.9%
Sexual activity	778	1.2%	678	1.0%	685	1.0%
Physical/sexual development	120	0.2%	108	0.2%	90	0.1%
Contraception/safe sex	124	0.2%	74	0.1%	69	0.1%
Homelessness & basic needs assistance	1,888	2.8%	1,459	2.2%	1,363	2.0%
Homelessness	1,028	1.5%	786	1.2%	684	1.0%
Practical/material assistance	681	1.0%	490	0.7%	509	0.8%
Financial assistance/concerns	223	0.3%	215	0.3%	207	0.3%
Substance use, addictions & risk-taking	1,363	2.0%	1,216	1.8%	1,141	1.7%
Drug use	812	1.2%	672	1.0%	637	0.9%
Alcohol use	401	0.6%	403	0.6%	376	0.6%
Addictive behaviours (not drugs/alcohol)	152	0.2%	154	0.2%	145	0.2%
Physical risk-taking	20	0.0%	28	0.0%	26	0.0%
Gang/cult involvement	23	0.0%	16	0.0%	9	0.0%
Offending, abusive or violent actions	645	1.0%	650	1.0%	609	0.9%
Illegal/offending behaviour	283	0.4%	298	0.4%	306	0.5%
Abusive or violent actions	338	0.5%	312	0.5%	273	0.4%
Sexual violence/offending actions	33	0.0%	45	0.1%	43	0.1%

1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Totals provided for class of concern will be less than the sum of the individual concerns for that class due to multiple concerns within the class being identified in a single contact.

3.6 Referral to further support and duty-of-care actions

This section provides information about the number of attempts made by counsellors to contact external agencies to support or protect clients in 2018. This includes the number of duty-of-care interventions that counsellors initiated and the reasons for these interventions. Short-term trend analysis of external contacts is also provided to consider shifts in client need.

3.6.1 External contacts and duty-of-care interventions

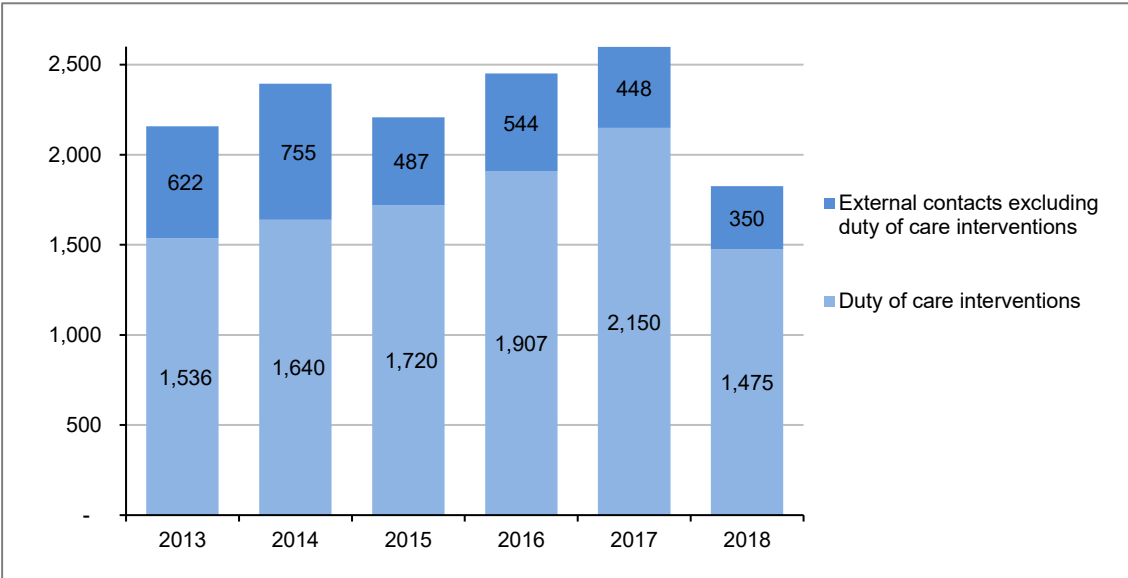
Another way in which Kids Helpline acts as a safety-net for vulnerable children and young people is by directly contacting external agencies to provide support to them when needed. In 2018, there were 1,825 records of counsellors attempting to contact an external agency, or agencies, to support a child or young person and/or to protect them if, at the time of the contact, they were experiencing significant harm or were at imminent risk of significant harm. Eight out of ten of these records (1,475 or 81%) concerned a duty-of-care intervention to protect a child from significant harm, as shown in Figure 37.

Duty-of-care contact attempts have decreased in 2018, returning to 2013 levels; suicide and child abuse are the main reasons for duty-of-care interventions.

Figure 37 also shows the number of external contact attempts from 2013 to 2018. Over the five-year period (2013 to 2017), there had been a 20% increase in all external contact attempts by Kids Helpline counsellors. Duty-of-care interventions increased by 40% over the same period. 2018 has seen a decline in numbers of both the total External Contact attempts (down 30% from 2017, 15% from 2013) and those related to Duty-of-Care (down 31% from 2017, 3% from 2013).

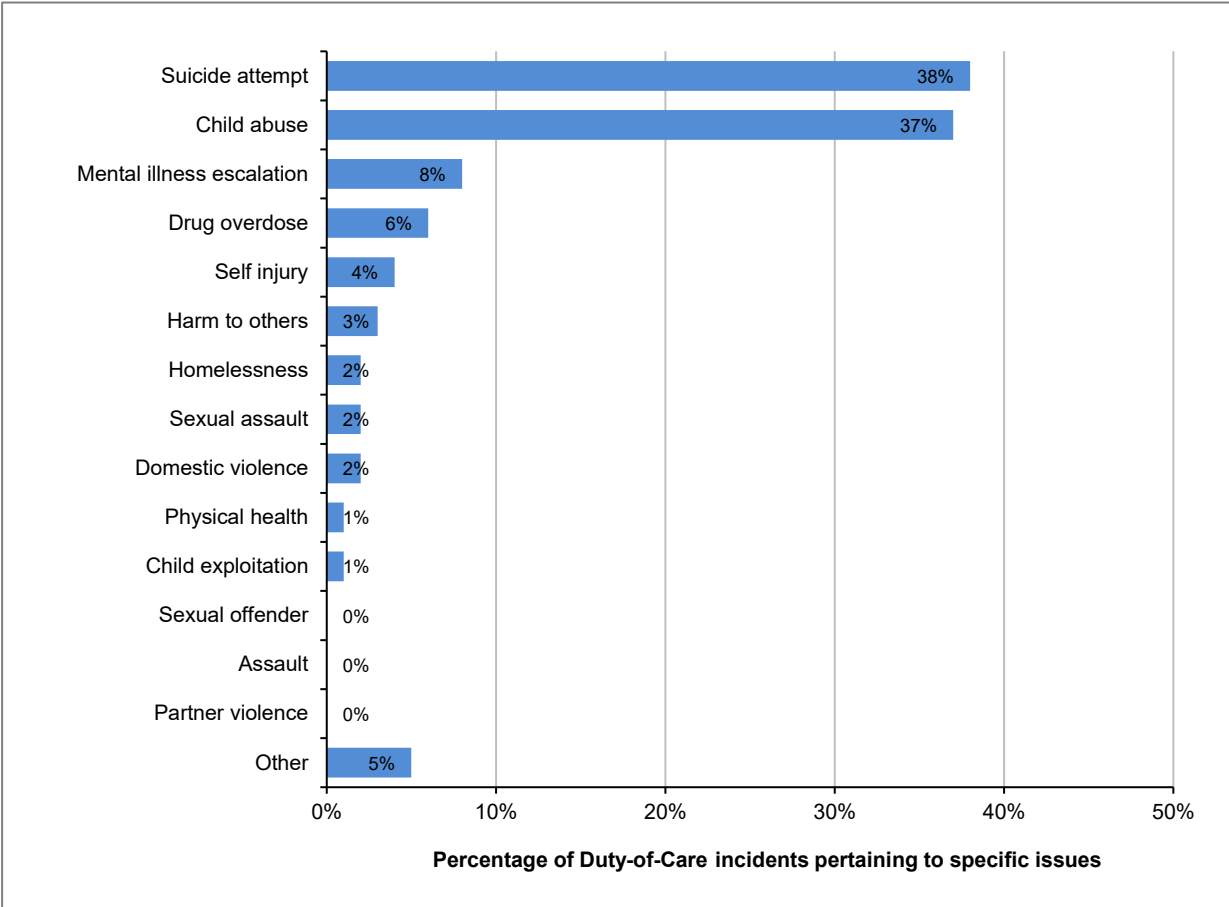
An explanation for declining numbers of external referrals over the past year, is an increase in the counselling centre staff working more proactively with clients in an enhanced case management process. When case-managed clients contact in crisis, counsellors work to empower them to manage their own risk according to their crisis management / safety plans, by contacting their afterhours mental health teams, and contacting emergency services themselves. Thus, counsellors increasingly are working in a *preventative* manner rather than in a more *reactive* way. Our evaluation data (see Section 5.5.3) indicate that this approach is highly successful. In any case, where a client cannot contact external agencies themselves, or if risk has not been reduced, an external liaison will be done on their behalf.

Figure 37. Number of external contact attempts by Kids Helpline counsellors, including duty-of-care interventions – by year (2013-2018)



Counsellors are able to record up to four different reasons for a duty-of-care action being taken. Figure 38 shows the frequency with which different reasons for duty-of-care interventions were recorded in 2018; it reveals that child abuse and suicide attempts were by far the most common reasons for duty-of-care interventions in 2018 (37% and 38% respectively).

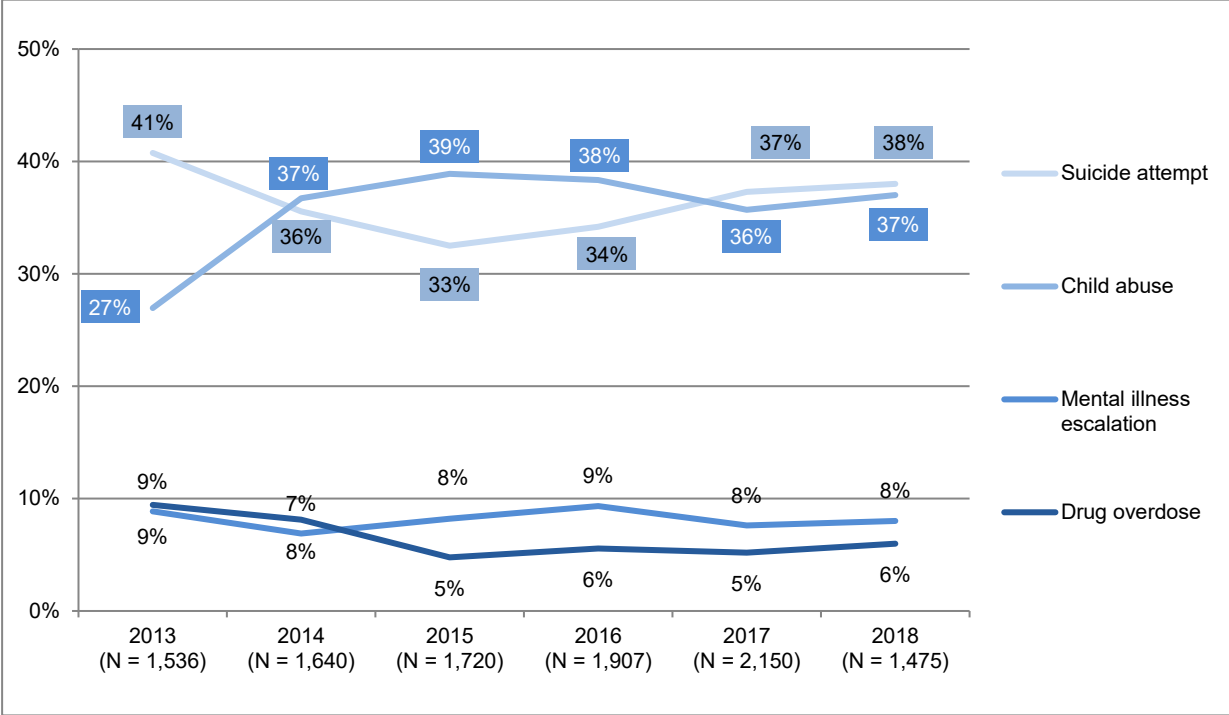
Figure 38. Reasons documented by Kids Helpline counsellors for duty-of-care interventions (2018)



1. Up to four issues may be recorded for each duty-of-care intervention. Accordingly, percentages sum to more than 100%.

It can be interesting to know if the issues precipitating duty-of-care actions are changing over time. Analysis over the last seven years of the top four of the 15 issue-categories shown in Figure 39 indicates that, in spite of changes earlier in the period, the four have stabilised in their relative frequencies over the past few years. Figure 39 presents these trends in relative frequency for the four issues.

Figure 39. Relative frequency of particular reasons being documented by Kids Helpline counsellors for initiating duty-of-care interventions – by year (2012-2018)¹



1. Up to four issues may be recorded for each duty-of-care intervention. Accordingly, if all 15 issue-categories from Figure 24 were shown, percentages would sum to more than 100%. In Figure 25, Percentages sum to less than 100%, however, because only four issue-categories are presented.

3.6.3 Summary

In 2018, about 35 times every week, Kids Helpline counsellors attempted to contact an external agency or agencies to support and/or protect a child or young person at risk of harm.

Eight out of every ten of these attempts concerned a duty-of-care intervention – an action to protect a child or young person experiencing, or at imminent risk of, serious harm.

Child abuse and suicide attempts were by far the most common reasons for such interventions in 2018.

2018 has seen a decline in numbers of both the total External Contact attempts (down 30% from 2017, 15% from 2013) and those related to Duty-of-Care (down 31% from 2017, 3% from 2013). As well there has been:

- a ten percentage point increase in the proportion of interventions precipitated by concern about child abuse (27% in 2013 to 37% in 2018);
- a three percentage point decrease in the proportion of interventions precipitated by drug overdose (9% in 2013 to 6% in 2018);
- a three percentage point decrease in the proportion of duty-of-care interventions precipitated by suicide attempts (41% in 2013 to 38% in 2018).

3.7 Counselling contacts about cyber-safety issues

3.7.1 Enhancing data collection on cyber-safety issues

Kids Helpline continues to play an expanding role in protecting children and young people from online harm. To this end, Kids Helpline has formed an active partnership with the Australian Office of the eSafety Commissioner. This partnership ensures that children and young people experiencing concerns arising from their online environment are provided with counselling and support through Kids Helpline. Children and young people can receive priority access to Kids Helpline web counselling via the eSafety website or can be referred directly.

The eSafety Commission in turn has provided Kids Helpline counsellors with specialist training in responding to cyber-safety issues, including procedures for raising formal complaints with relevant social media platforms and internet service providers where a young person seeks this kind of support.

Kids Helpline has also been working to protect children from online harm through the development of a digital safety curriculum as part of the Kids Helpline @ School, Optus Digital Thumbprint program (see Chapter 5).

To support Kids Helpline's growing work in this area, Kids Helpline counsellors record, for every counselling session, whether or not the child or young person indicated concern, worry and/or feeling unsafe as a result of online or texting activity. 'Online or texting activity' that falls into Kids Helpline's definition of 'cyber-safety issues' includes (but is not limited to):

- receiving unwanted contact;
- participating in sexting;
- bullying;
- uncontrolled/excessive use of internet, e.g. gaming, social networking, etc.;
- viewing of disturbing content;
- disclosure of personal information (passwords, address, etc.);
- harassment/blackmail/solicitation/suspected grooming; and/or
- the client's own online behaviour ('digital reputation').

While this definition is quite broad, the estimate of the prevalence of these issues in counselling sessions will be conservative as counsellors do not ask children and young people for this information directly. Rather, they are instructed to record disclosure by the child or young person in the course of the counselling session of any level of concern or worry about these types of activities. They are asked to include cases where the client's cyber concern relates to the past but was discussed in the current session. However, when online or texting activity is reported by a child or young person without indications of concern or worry, counsellors are instructed to exclude these cases from the record of contacts with cyber-safety issues.

3.7.2 Frequency of cyber-safety issues being discussed in counselling contacts

In 2,701 (4%) of the 67,264 counselling contacts responded to by Kids Helpline counsellors, the child or young person disclosed experiencing cyber-safety issues to the counsellor (Figure 40).

Compared with other counselling contacts, those where cyber-safety issues were disclosed were more likely to be from children and young people aged 13-18 years (63% c.f. 58%) and less likely to be from young people aged 19-25 years (21% c.f. 29%) (Figure 41).

This observation may suggest that children and young people's vulnerability to cyber-safety issues is greater in the teenage years. Alternatively, it may suggest that teenagers are more willing to seek help from Kids Helpline in relation to these issues than other age groups.

Figure 40. Percentage of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by disclosure of cyber-safety issues (N = 67,264 in 2018)

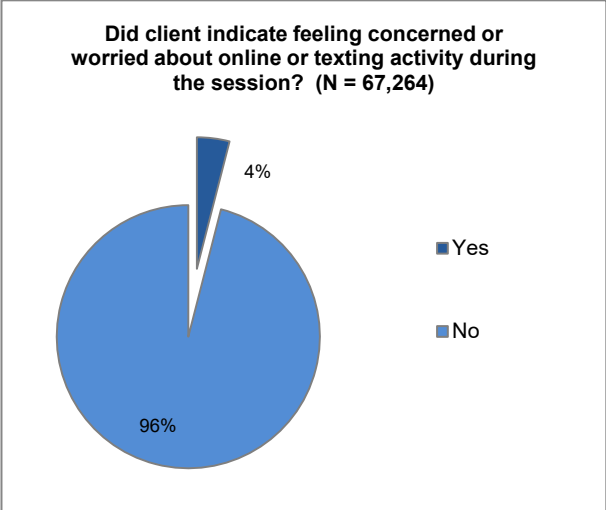
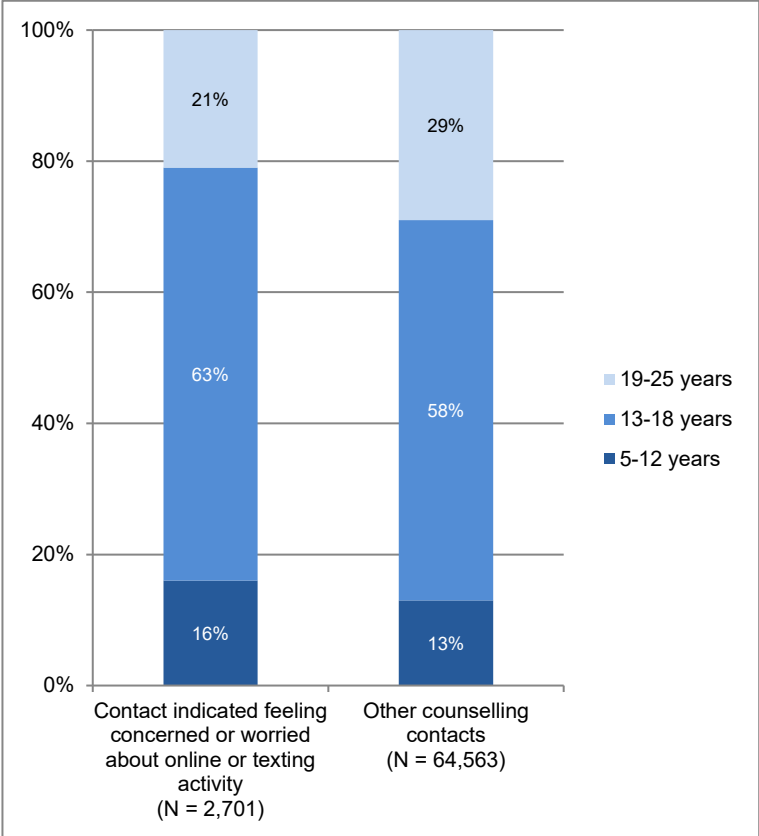


Figure 41. Age group of Kids Helpline counselling contacts by whether or not they disclosed experiencing cyber-safety issues (2018)



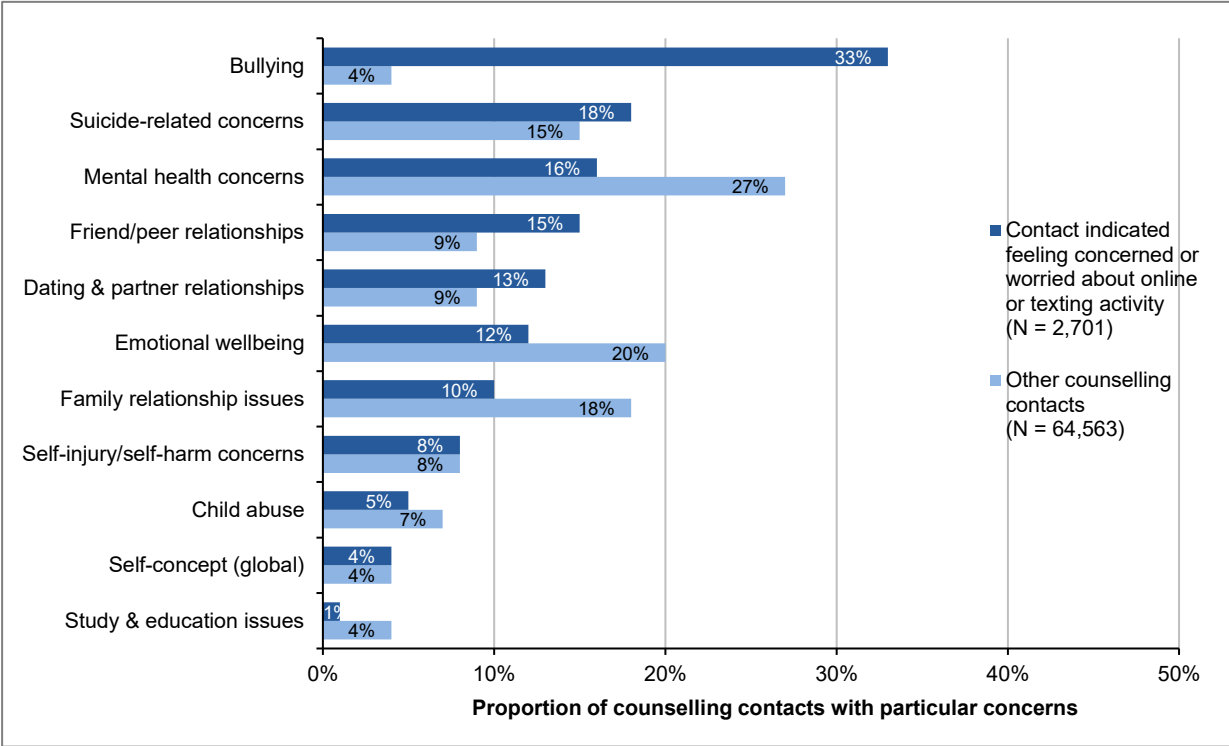
3.7.3 Help-seeking concerns of contacts disclosing cyber-safety issues

Counsellors are not currently asked to record the nature of the child or young person’s cyber-safety worries, although some will have recorded this in open-ended contact notes. More systematic classification of these issues may be undertaken in the future. In the interim, however, in order to glean some insight into the nature of cyber-safety issues that children and young people are experiencing, it may be helpful to look at the most commonly recorded help-seeking concerns of children and young people in counselling sessions where cyber-safety issues are disclosed and compare this with the frequency with which these issues are the focus in other counselling contacts.

Figure 42 presents this analysis; it reveals the following:

- By far the most common help-seeking concern of those disclosing cyber-safety issues was bullying, with one in three (33%) of these counselling sessions focusing on bullying. By comparison, bullying was recorded as a concern of the child or young person in 4% of other counselling sessions.
- In addition to bullying, counselling sessions where cyber-safety issues were disclosed were more likely than other counselling sessions to be focused on the following issues:
 - friend and peer relationships (15% c.f. 9%)
 - dating and partner relationships (13% c.f. 9%)
- Counselling sessions where cyber-safety issues were disclosed were less likely than other counselling sessions to be focused on the following issues, however:
 - mental health issues (16% c.f. 27%)
 - emotional wellbeing (12% c.f. 20%)
 - family relationship issues (10% c.f. 18%), and
 - Study and education issues (1% c.f. 4%).
- These observations may suggest the following:
 - that online or electronic bullying (cyberbullying) is the most common type of cyber-safety issue worrying children and young people contacting Kids Helpline, and
 - that cyber-safety issues are experienced more commonly in the context of peer and romantic relationships than family relationships.

Figure 42. Most frequently recorded concerns of counselling contacts indicating worry about cyber-safety issues compared with other counselling contacts (2018)¹



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

As well as the insights described above, the service receives on average about 150 contacts a year from children and young people concerned specifically about online/texting sexual activity (e.g., distributing images of self). The majority of these (average 88% across 6 years) come from 13-18 year-olds. Our web resource on sexting is the third-most-frequently visited page in the *Teens* micro site on the Kids Helpline website. Thus, though sexting is a less-frequently-occurring concern, among all other concerns, it is one that is mainly an issue for teens.

3.7.4 Summary

To support its growing role in responding to the cyber-safety concerns of children and young people, Kids Helpline includes this issue in its data collection to gauge the frequency of cyber-safety issues being discussed in counselling contacts.

In 2018, cyber-safety issues were disclosed by children and young people once in every 25 counselling sessions.

The help-seeking concerns of children and young people in these contacts were found to differ considerably from those recorded for children and young people in other counselling contacts. These differences may offer insight into the nature of children and young people's cyber-safety worries and context. In counselling sessions where cyber-safety concerns were disclosed, bullying was by far the most common issue for which children and young people sought help, suggesting that online or electronic bullying (cyberbullying) is the most common type of cyber-safety issue worrying children and young people contacting Kids Helpline.

4. Kids Helpline self-help resources

In addition to its counselling and support service, Kids Helpline creates and curates a variety of resources and opportunities for children and young people to engage in self-help. In 2018 these included:

- a website for self-directed help-seeking by children, young people and parents/carers/teachers (www.kidshelpline.com.au) – the self-help resources provided on the website, and in particular the Issues Articles pages for kids, teens and parents & carers, have been developed by counselling centre staff and researchers. They are intended to provide information and strategies to assist users in responding to common issues and concerns. The website has separate micro-sites for kids (5-12) teens (13-18), young adults (ages 19-25) and parent/carers. There is also a microsite to facilitate schools' access to Kids Helpline @ School (more on this in Chapter 5).
- Comics – Kids Helpline counselling centre and the **yourtown** Marketing team collaborated on the production of four comic-strip-style resources dealing with issues of child abuse and suicide. Two different scenarios were produced for each of the issues.
- App Library – Kids Helpline's website also features a sub-site devoted to apps that children and young people may find useful in helping them deal with a variety of issues. Thirty-five apps, which have been appraised as appropriate for children and young people, are made available through this microsite.

Children and young people's views about current *website resources* (their perception of how effective the *Issues Articles* are in helping them with problems) were captured in two sources of data:

- "Star" ratings they were able to give to resources they encountered on the website, and
- the 2018 Kids Helpline evaluation survey (client satisfaction and outcomes).

"Star" ratings analyses along with selected findings from the evaluation survey, relating to web resources, are reported later in this chapter.

Findings of the counselling services evaluation (which also was derived from the evaluation survey) are reported in Chapter 5.

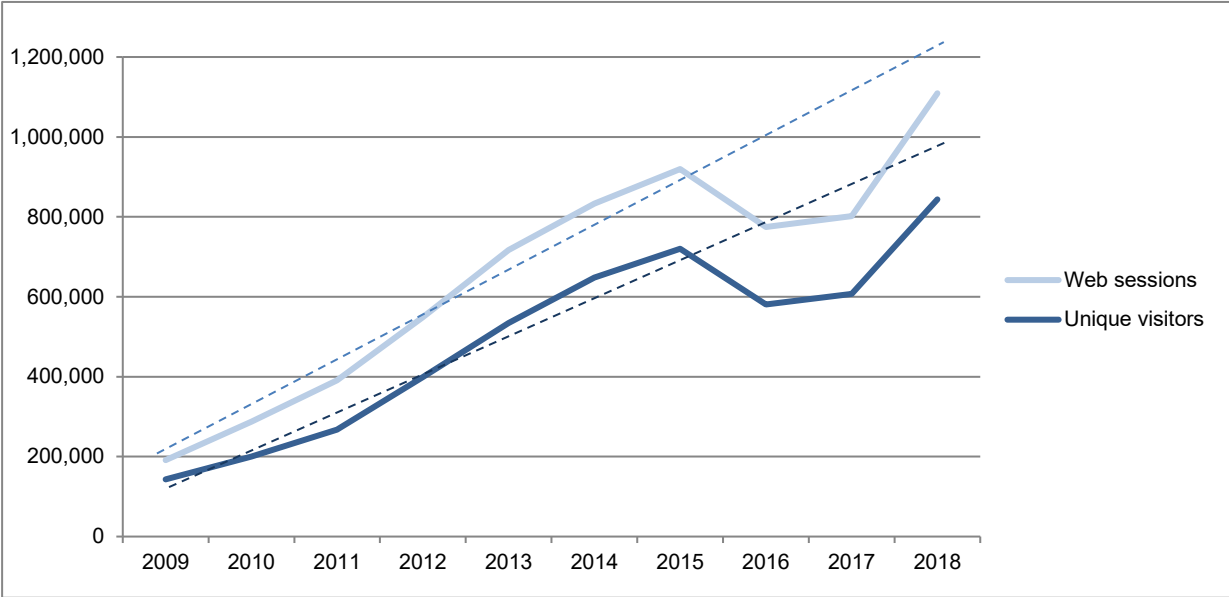
4.1 Website

4.1.1 Service demand

Understanding patterns in website use and demand are important in terms of continuing to develop this aspect of the service and to ensure that the materials provided are being used. This section first analyses demand for various types of self-help resources and then considers the issues or topics that appear to be of greatest interest or concern to website visitors.

Figure 43 presents data in relation to two key measures of website demand/engagement and compares these over the full period for which data are available (nine years) to identify medium-term trends in demand for website resources. A data table is supplied to assist with analysis.

Figure 43. Kids Helpline website – number of unique visitors and website sessions – by year (2009-2018)



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% change 2009-2015	% change 2015-2018
Web sessions	191,271	287,559	391,298	548,904	717,138	833,342	919,589	774,551	801,810	1,109,245	381%	21%
Unique visitors	143,122	199,975	267,641	399,214	534,377	648,343	720,077	580,562	607,634	843,753	403%	17%

1. Data courtesy of Google Analytics.
 2. Due to technical difficulties with Google Analytics, website activity was not recorded from 1-11 October 2015. Accordingly, all website activity measures for 2015 will be undercounts.
 3. From 2016, a new filter has applied to analysis of Google Analytics data to remove ghost-spam and other instances of artificially-generated website activity. This filter very slightly reduces counts of all measures of website engagement reported in this chapter. As a result of applying this filter, data from 2016 onwards are not strictly comparable to previous years' data.
 4. The dramatic decline, in 2016, from seven years of continuous and substantial growth in both measures of website engagement, relates to the introduction in February 2016 of a new URL and website for Kids Helpline (formerly www.kidshelp.com.au). This innovation unavoidably resulted in a drop in organic search traffic due to delay by Google in re-indexing the site based on the new site structure. Google organically re-indexes the site over time, however, so it is anticipated that organic search traffic will normalise in the coming year and ultimately increase (based on the new site's stronger SEO domain authority). The old URL was again put into use from 27 September 2016. A further disruption to the website and associated data occurred in 2017 with the advent of a new website, active since 27 November 2017; the original URL has been retained for the new website.
 5. A "web session" is a group of user interactions with your website that take place within a given time frame. For example a single session can contain multiple page views, events, social interactions, and ecommerce transactions. By default, a session lasts until there's 30 minutes of inactivity.

Key observations from Figure 43 include the following:

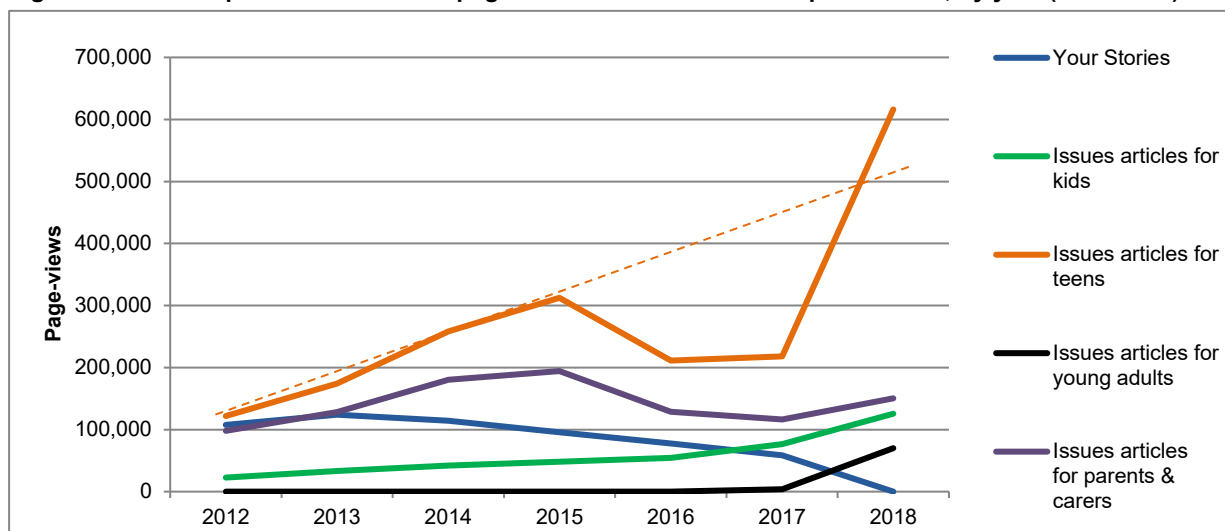
- in 2018 there were 843,753 unique visitors to the Kids Helpline website who collectively participated in 1,109,245 web sessions.
- from 2009 to 2015, web sessions increased by 403% and unique visitors by 381%.
- between 2015 and 2018, the number of web sessions increased by 21% and the number of unique visitors increased by 17%
- from 2017-2018 the visitor count increased again (by 39%) and the sessions count also increased (by 38%).
- the sharp increases, in both sessions and visitors, during 2018, sees web usage approaching the values predicted by the trends that were emerging in the years 2009-2015 (see dotted trend lines in Chart).

Figure 44 presents data in relation to demand for key self-help resources on the Kids Helpline website and compares this from 2012 to 2018 to identify short-term trends in demand for website resources. Key observations from the data include the following:

- from 2012 to 2015 there was rapid and continuous growth in demand for all self-help resources, except for Your Stories – children and young people's self-submitted stories about different issues and successful help-seeking. Your stories was not available during 2018.
- from 2015-2017 demand fell off for micro-sites for parents/carers and for teens

- between 2017 and 2018 demand has recovered for both parents/carers and teens microsites, but page-views for the teens microsite in particular have surged so that they are at levels they would have been at had the 2012-2015 growth continued unabated.
- the break in continuous growth in demand for these resources in 2016 relates to the establishment of the new Kids Helpline URL and website, resulting in a drop in organic search traffic which is normalising over the course of time – the URL was re-instated in October 2016, and traffic has increased for all sub-sites and resources.

Figure 44. Kids Helpline website – N of page-views of different self-help resources, by year (2012-2018)



Resource type ^{1,2,3}	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% change 2012-15	% change 2016-18	% change 2012-18
<i>Your Stories</i> ⁴	107,639	124,044	114,335	95,455	77,869	58,337	0	-11%	-100%	-100%
<i>Issues for kids</i>	22,668	33,344	41,980	48,033	54,394	76,818	125,579	112%	131%	454%
<i>Issues for teens</i>	121,854	174,297	258,269	312,619	211,346	218,006	616,150	157%	192%	406%
<i>Issues for young adults</i> ⁵	0	0	0	0	0	3,861	70,034	NA	NA	NA
<i>Issues for parents & carers</i>	97,994	127,987	180,102	194,336	128,938	116,239	150,549	98%	17%	54%
Total Issues page-views	242,516	335,628	480,351	554,988	394,678	414,924	962,312	129%	144%	297%
Total page-views	2,220,729	2,645,463	2,747,033	2,714,829	2,104,298	2,051,601	2,912,200	22%	38%	31%

1. Data courtesy of Google Analytics.

2. Due to technical difficulties with Google Analytics, website activity was not recorded from 1-11 October 2015. Accordingly, all website activity measures for 2015 will be undercounts.

3. From 2016, a new filter has applied to analysis of Google Analytics data to remove ghost-spam and other instances of artificially-generated website activity. This filter very slightly reduces counts of all measures of website engagement reported in this chapter. As a result of applying this filter, data from 2016 are not strictly comparable to previous years' data.

4. The capacity for visitors to submit their own stories for publication in the "Your stories" section of the site was disabled in June 2017, so after that no new stories were published. Further the new site, activated on 27 November 2017, has no "Your stories" section.

5. The client age category "young adults" (19-25) was introduced for the first time on the new website from its launch on 27/11/17.

6. A page-view is the act of viewing a page. Page-views are the total number of times the page on the website has been viewed. If one person clicks on your page multiple times, Google Analytics will count each viewing as a page-view.

4.1.2 Key issues of interest to website visitors, and their usefulness to clients

Understanding the interests and needs of website visitors is important in terms of developing relevant and effective self-help resources. Three sources of insight into the issues of concern to website visitors are:

- the most commonly visited self-help resources, and in particular Issues topics for kids, teens, young-adults and parents/carers (Section 4.1.2.1);
- "star" ratings of usefulness that users have given resources (Section 4.1.2.2); and
- the most common sources of referral to the Kids Helpline website (Section 4.1.3).

4.1.2.1 Issues of interest, by age group

Kids

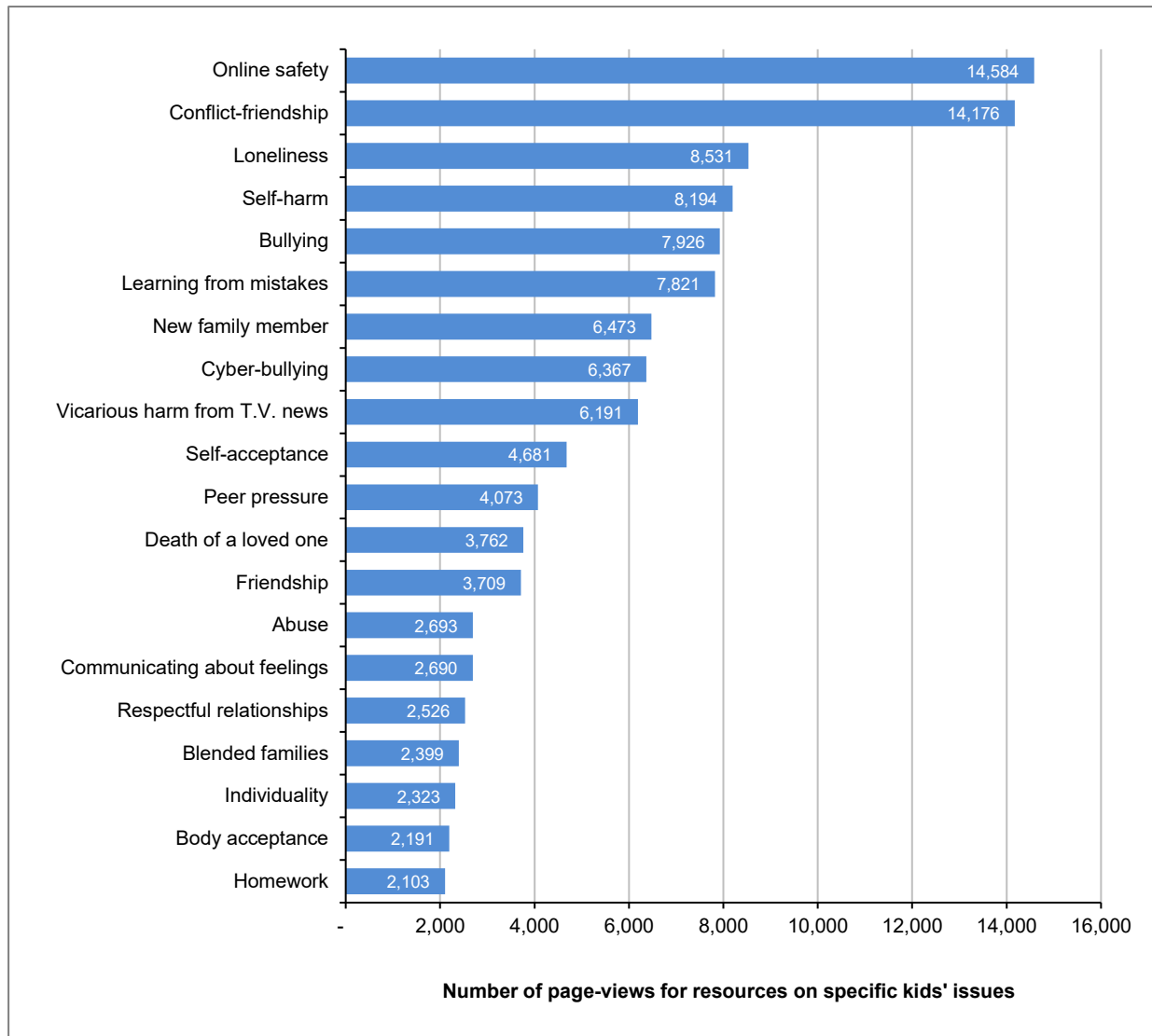
During 2018, Kids' Issues Articles accrued a total of 125,579 page-views.

Figure 45 shows the frequency with which the 20 most popular of these resources were accessed.

Key observations from the data in this figure include the following:

- 40% of all kids' Issues Articles page-views were in relation to five topics – online safety, peer conflict, loneliness, self-harm, and bullying.
- On-line safety and friend/peer conflict are the most heavily visited resource areas, with 14,584 and 14,176 page-views respectively, which is nearly 1.6 times as many views as the next most popular Issues Article pages.

Figure 45. Most frequently visited kids' Issues Article topics in 2018¹



1. Total kids' Issues Articles page-views in 2018 = 125,579.

Teens

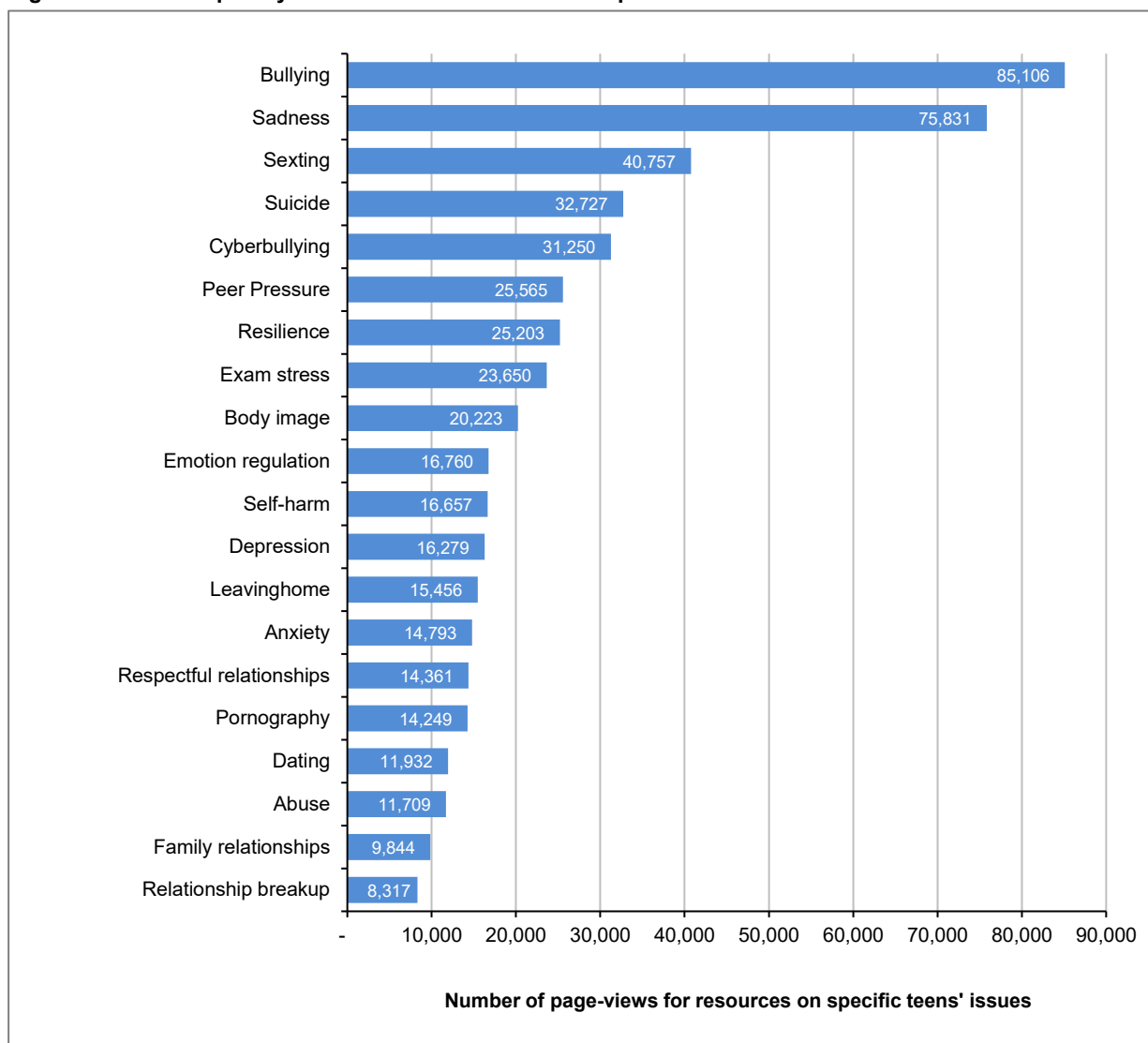
During 2018, *Issues Article* pages targeted at teenagers received a total of 616,150 page-views.

Figure 46 shows the frequency with which the 20 most popular of these resources were accessed.

Key observations from the data in this figure include the following:

- 43% of all teens' *Issues Article* page-views were in relation to five topics – bullying, sadness, sexting, suicide and cyberbullying;
- One in every seven page-views (14%) was in relation to information resources on bullying; and
- One in nine page-views (11%) is about online life (cyberbullying and sexting).

Figure 46. Most frequently visited teens' *Issues Article* topics in 2018¹



1. Total teens' *Issues Article* page-views in 2018 = 616,150.

Young adults

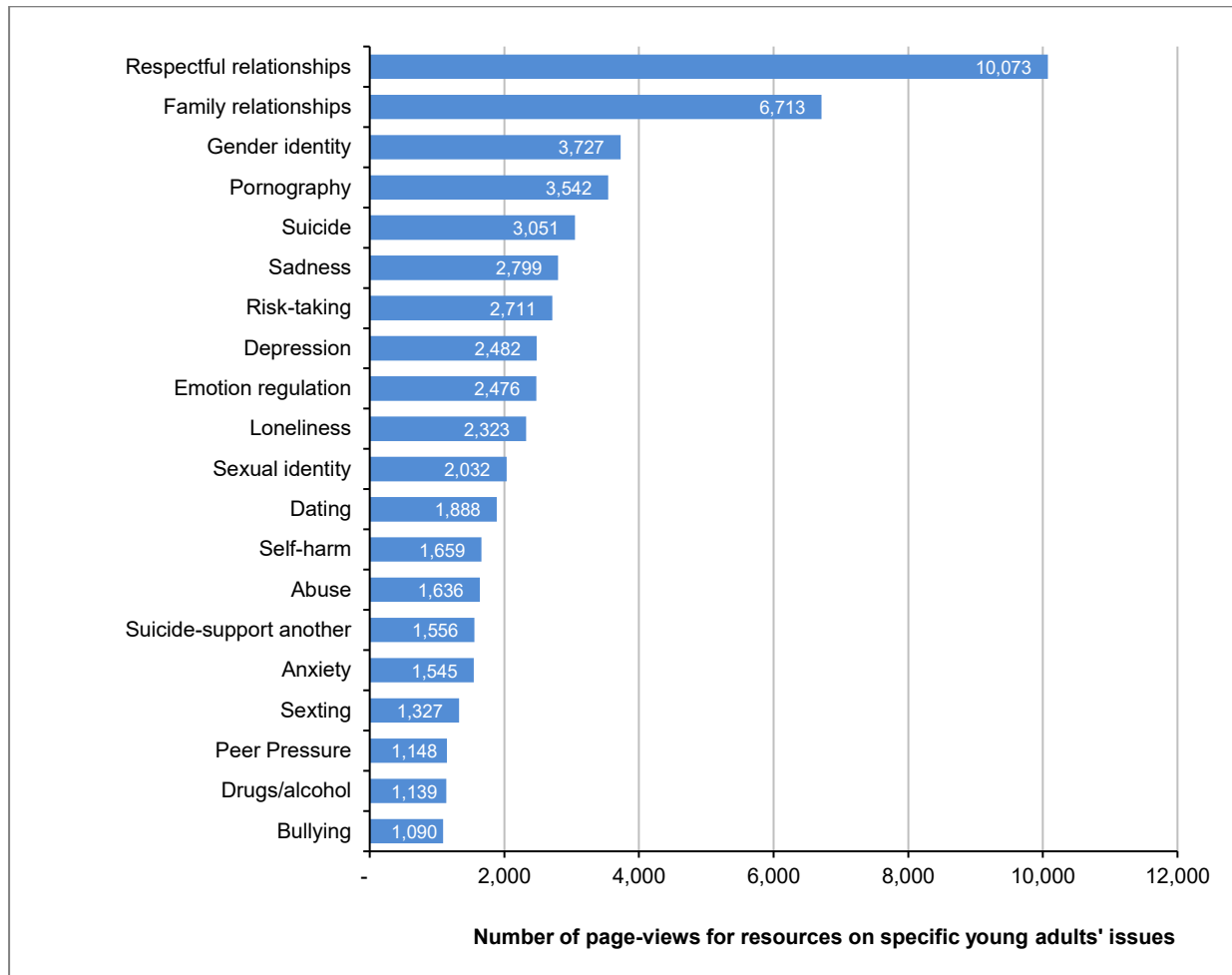
During 2018, *Issues* Articles targeted at young adults received a total of 70,034 page-views.

Figure 47 shows the frequency with which the 20 most popular of these resources were accessed.

Key observations from the data in this figure include the following:

- The most popular resources (with 24% of total page-views) pertained to relationship matters.

Figure 47. Most frequently visited young adults' *Issues* Article topics in 2018¹



1. Total young adults' *Issues* Article page-views in 2018 = 70,034.

Parents/carers

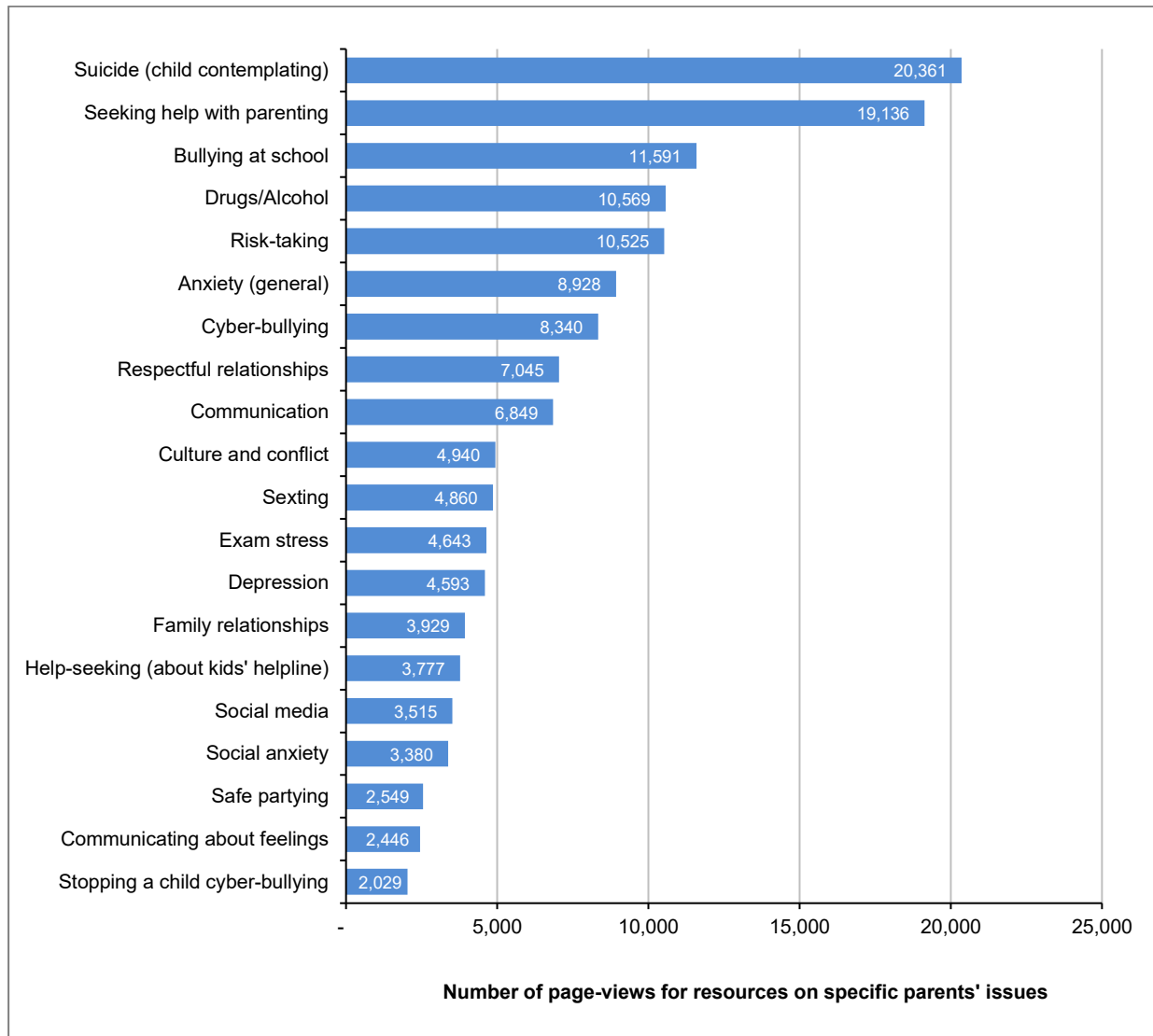
During 2018, Issues Articles targeting parents and carers received a total of 150,549 page-views.

Figure 48 shows the frequency with which the 20 most popular of these resources were accessed.

Key observations from the data in this figure include the following:

- The top two most frequently visited resources (27%) were about a child contemplating suicide or seeking help with parenting.

Figure 48. Most frequently visited parents' / carers' Issues Article topics in 2018¹



1. Total parents'/carers' Issues Article page-views in 2018 = 150,549.

4.1.2.2 Evaluation data – Star ratings of Issues Articles

When website Issues Articles are visited, an opportunity is offered for clients to give feedback about the usefulness of the resource, by way of a Star-rating. The response scales provided for these ratings were: Kids – “Did this help?” (Yes (=5) a Bit... (=3) No (=1)); other age groups – “Was this useful?” (with a 5-point scale with no semantic anchors). Thus 5-stars is a “good” rating, and 1 star is “poor”, and 3 stars is average/mediocre.

One hundred and forty-seven (147) articles were rated on 10 or more occasions (it is not certain that this is the same as saying “by ten or more people”, because some articles may have been rated more than once by the same individual).

The mean scores on the 147 articles ranged from 2.8 (N=1,814; SD=1.59) to 5.0 (N=10; SD=0.00). Fifty percent (50%) of articles were rated at 3.89 or above, and 75% were rated at 4.11 or above. 25% were rated 3.57 or below.

Examining data on the two *most-visited* Issues Articles for *each* of the 4 client/user sub-groups (kids, teens, young-adults, and parents) we see (Table 5) that the mean ratings are all above the half-way mark on the response scales (note: the kids response scale has only three values – in response to the question “did this help?” responses are “yes”, “a bit” and “no”; however also note that the responses are scored 5, 3 and 1 respectively).

Table 5. Mean ratings of Issues articles for the top 2 ranked articles in each age group, and for all articles pooled¹

	Top Issues Articles by Age Group	Mean	N (ratings)	Std. Deviation
Kids (1 st)	On-line safety	3.75	1,437	1.597
Kids (2 nd)	Friendship conflict	3.30	2,601	1.601
Teens (1 st)	Bullying	3.93	2,900	1.574
Teens (2 nd)	Sadness	3.88	1,767	1.472
Young-adults (1 st)	Respectful relationships	3.71	310	1.629
Young-adults (2 nd)	Family Relationships	3.25	73	1.673
Parents (1 st)	Child contemplating suicide	3.96	196	1.481
Parents (2 nd)	Seeking help with parenting	3.91	92	1.538
All	Total	3.63	43,862	1.606

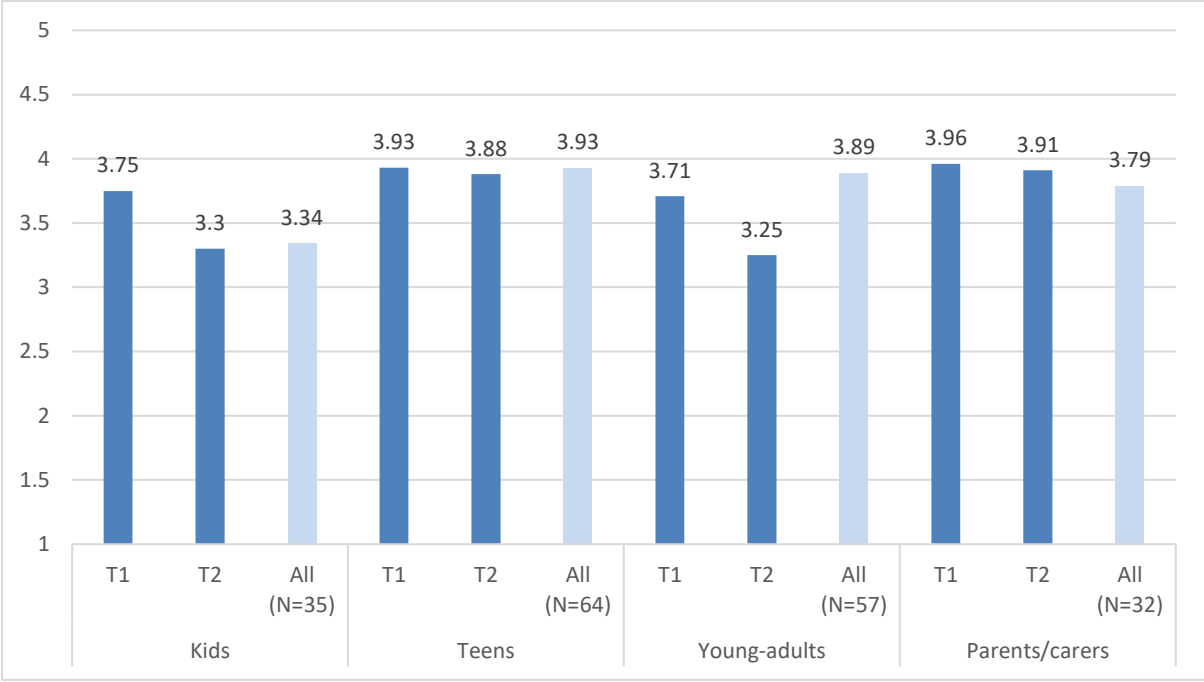
Considering age-group-related Issues Articles altogether for each client sub-group we see that ratings of the kids’ resources (presumably by kids in the age range specified for the group (5-12) are lower than the ratings of the other groups’ resources (Table 6).

Table 6. Mean ratings on Issues Articles by age group¹

Age Group	Mean	N (ratings)	Std. Deviation
Kids	3.34	21,319	1.631
Teens	3.93	19,002	1.518
Young-adults	3.89	1,565	1.558
Parents	3.79	1,970	1.601

¹ Kids’ rated resources with only three response values – “yes”, “a bit” “no”. Other client age groups rated with 5 stars, but with no semantic anchoring.

Figure 49. Mean ratings within each age-group of the top 2 most-frequently-viewed Issues Articles and all Articles (pooled, per age group) for the age group (2018)¹



¹T1 = Top-ranked resource based on N of page-views; T2 = second-ranked resource based on N of page-views. Ns for “all” are the number of resources in the collection for that age-group.

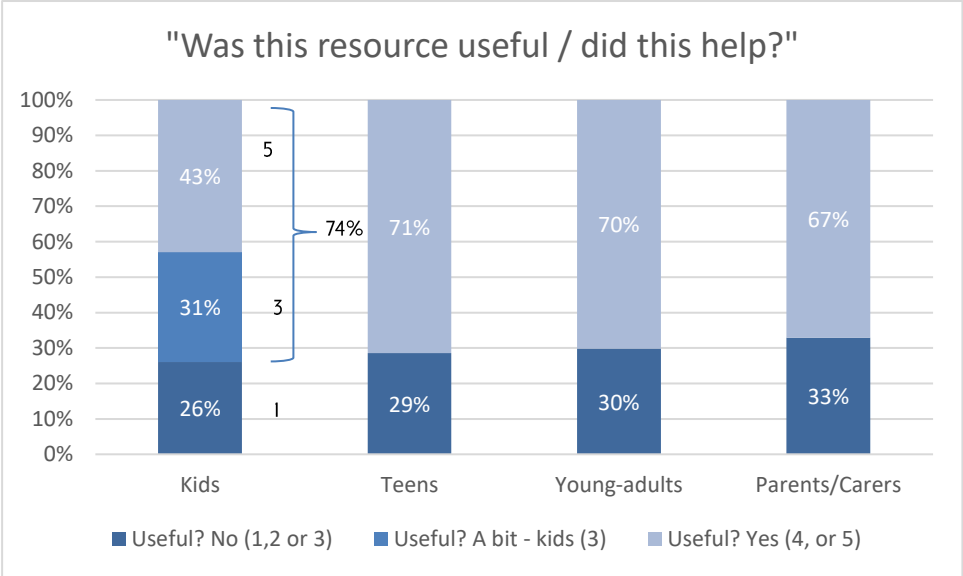
Figure 49 shows the mean ratings for the top two resources for each group, and that group’s total (pooled) resource-rating means.

Analysis shows that:

- for kids and parents, the ratings of the most-frequently used resources are higher than all resource ratings for that sub-group, and for parents (but not kids) that is true also of the second most frequently used resource;
- For teens the ratings of their top two most frequently used resources is on par with all their resource ratings;
- For young adults, the ratings of their top two most visited resources were lower than all their sub-group resources together.

Another way to look at the usefulness of these resources for each age group is to examine the proportion of ratings that indicate broad agreement that the resources were useful. Figure 50 shows the proportions of ratings in the agreement and disagreement with the evaluation questions. In recognition of the fact that the rating value “3” for Kids meant “a little” then, pooling across “5” and “3” for kids gives 74% agreement for Kids’ ratings, commensurate with other age groups ratings (where only “4” and “5” scores were pooled). This analysis shows that the majority in all three age groups regarded the resources they rated as useful.

Figure 50. Percentage “agreement” with evaluation questions “Was this resource useful / did this help?”, across all resources, by age-group (2018)¹



In summary, the Issues Articles, covering a wide variety of issues and tailored to each of the Kids Helpline client age groups (kids – 5-12; teens – 13-18; young-adults – 19-25; and parents/carers) are deemed by the majority (range: 67-74%) within each age group to have been helpful/useful.

Across all age groups except young adults, the top two most frequently-viewed resources for each age group were rated equal to, or better than, all the resources for that age group.

4.1.3 Evaluation study data (website)

4.1.3.1 Method and sample

A survey was conducted to support the evaluation of the counselling services and website resources. Survey respondents were asked about their engagement with the Kids Helpline counselling and support service and website over the last 12 months. A total of 1,246 individuals provided complete responses to the survey, 99% of whom (1,227) were aged 5-25 years.

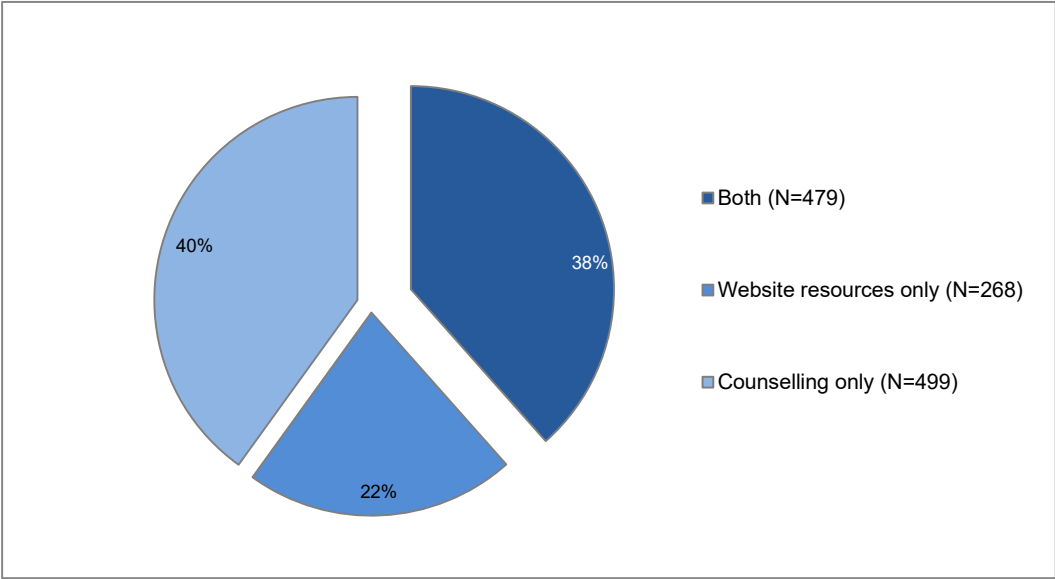
4.1.3.2 Respondent engagement with the service in the past 12 months

As shown in Figure 51, four in ten of the respondents (40%) had contacted the counselling and support service but not browsed the website, while a similar proportion (38%) had contacted the counselling and support service *and* browsed the website. About two in ten (22%) had visited the website but not contacted the counselling and support service.

The next sections deal with the evaluation of the website resources; the subsequent Chapter, Chapter 5, deals with the evaluation of the counselling services.

Except where explicitly mentioned the following analyses are based on the pooled responses of those who had used website resources one or both website and counselling services (N=747).

Figure 51. Respondents' engagement with Kids Helpline in last 12 months (n = 1,246) (2018)

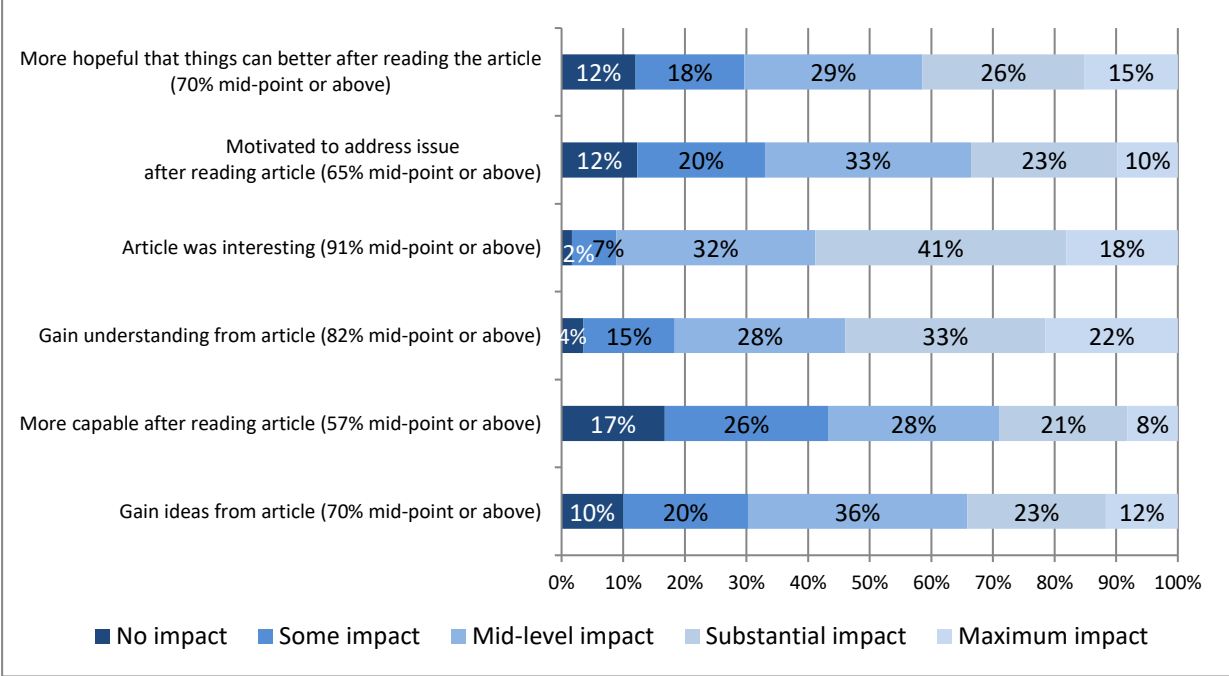


4.1.3.3 Quality of resources and their impact on respondents

Figure 52 indicates that the majority of respondents believed the Kids Helpline website resources were interesting (91% mid-point or above) and helped them gain an understanding of the issue being addressed (83% mid-point or above).

Two thirds found the article motivated them to read, and that it gave them ideas to try out, and a little over half agreed that reading the article improved their capability to handle their issues (Figure 52).

Figure 52. Interest and motivation value of resources and their impact on respondents' understanding, capability and resources for addressing their issue/s (N varies per question) (2018)



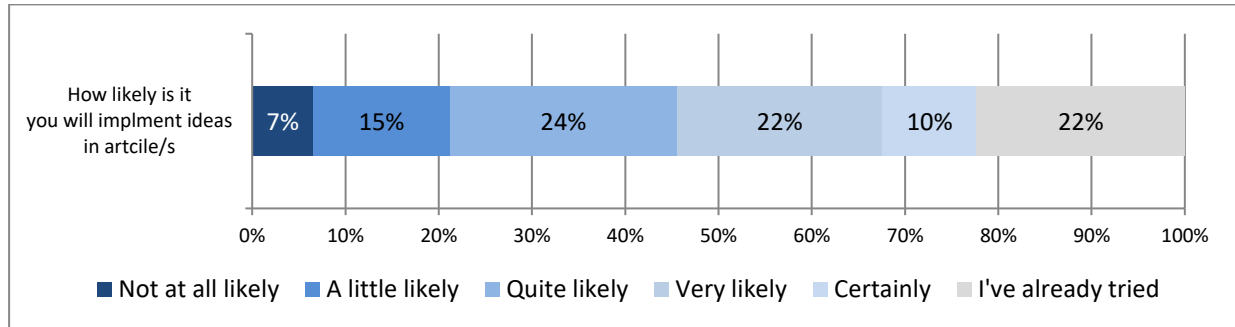
These data show specifically that:

- Issues Articles are interesting (91% mid-point and above) and generate understanding (82% mid-point or above), and also, though to a lesser extent
- Motivate readers to address their issue/s after reading article (65% mid-point or above), increase capability (57% mid-point or above), gave them hope things would improve (70% mid-point or above), and give ideas to help deal with issues (70% mid-point or above).

Outcomes

In terms of outcomes from reading the Issues Articles, Figure 53 shows that 78% of respondents said they will quite likely try ideas from articles or had already done so (22%).

Figure 53: Likelihood that Issues Article suggestions would be tried.

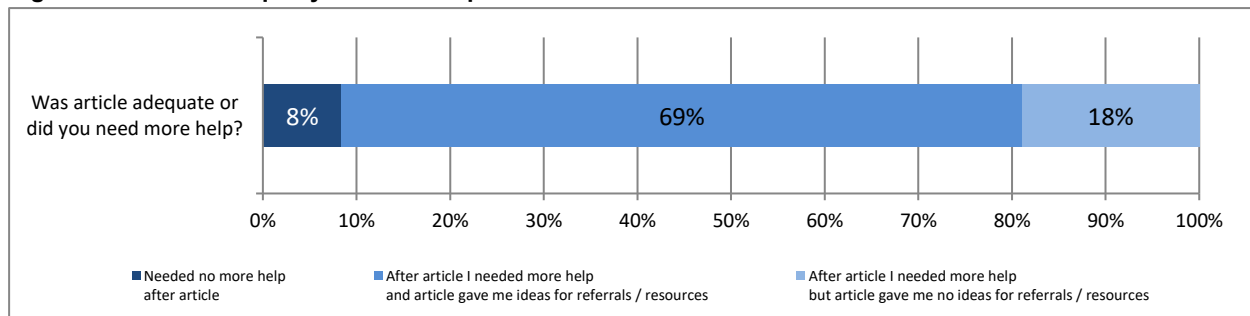


In terms of the Issues Articles' effectiveness or usefulness as a self-help resource,

Figure 54, shows that:

- 69% said that the article was helpful in guiding them in seeking further help
- 8% said that the article alone was all the help they needed
- 18% felt the article left them needing more help, and also gave no guidance as to what referrals or recourse to seek

Figure 54: Article adequacy as a self-help resource.



Satisfaction

Satisfaction with the Kids Helpline service was measured by a satisfaction item (“How satisfied are you, overall, with Kids Helpline?”) and a recommendation item (“Would you recommend Kids Helpline to a friend?”). Analyses of these items (see

Figure 55) reveal overall high levels of satisfaction, whether respondents used only the website resources, only spoke to a counsellor or had done both of these.

Of those who only used resources on the website:

- The majority (88%) were moderately to very satisfied with Kids Helpline, and
- 94% would recommend Kids Helpline to a friend.

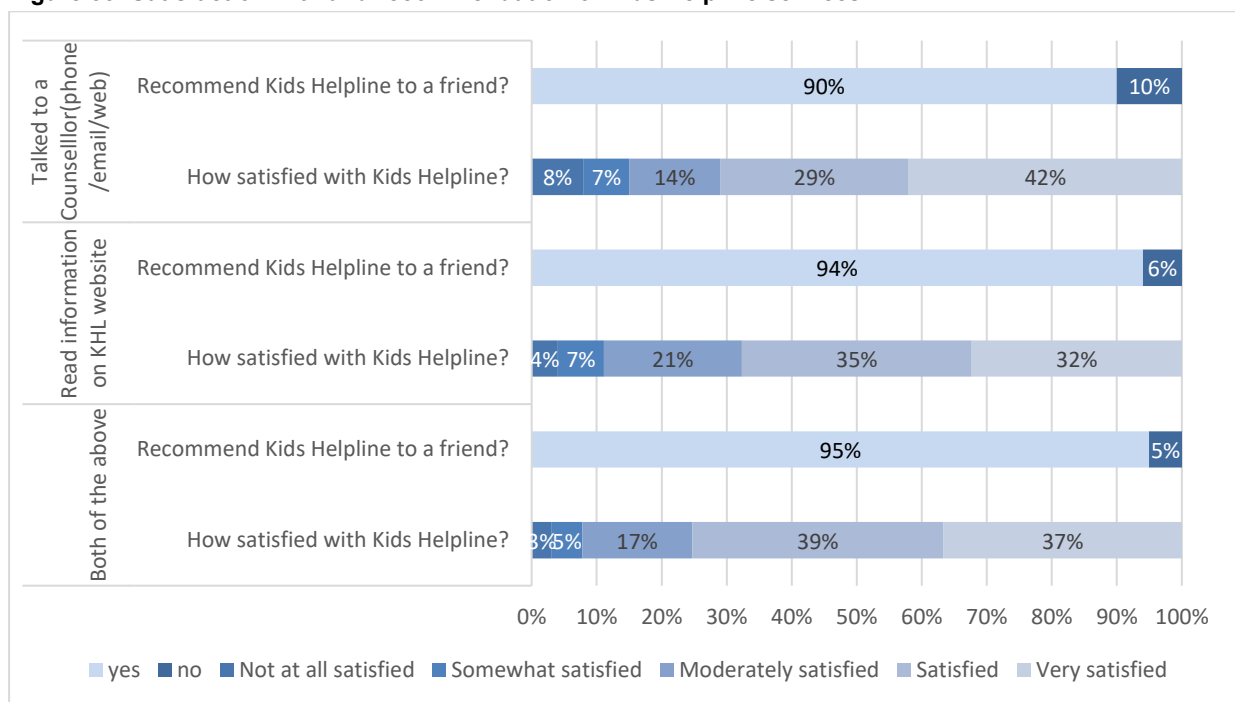
Of those who had only spoken with a counsellor:

- The majority (85%) were moderately to very satisfied with Kids Helpline, and
- 90% would recommend Kids Helpline to a friend.

Of those who had done both used resources on the website and spoken to a counsellor:

- The majority (93%) were moderately to very satisfied with Kids Helpline, and
- 95% would recommend Kids Helpline to a friend.

Figure 55: Satisfaction with and recommendation of Kids Helpline services



4.1.3.4 Summary

The information resources (Issues Articles) made available to children and young people via the Kids Helpline website are useful and effective for the majority of users, and are associated with high levels of satisfaction with the Kids Helpline service.

Evaluation of the counselling experience is reported in Chapter 5. The remainder of this Chapter maintains focus on the self-help resources provided by Kids Helpline.

4.1.4 Referrals from other websites

Referrals from other websites

Referrals from other organisations' websites are another source of information about the needs and concerns of website visitors.

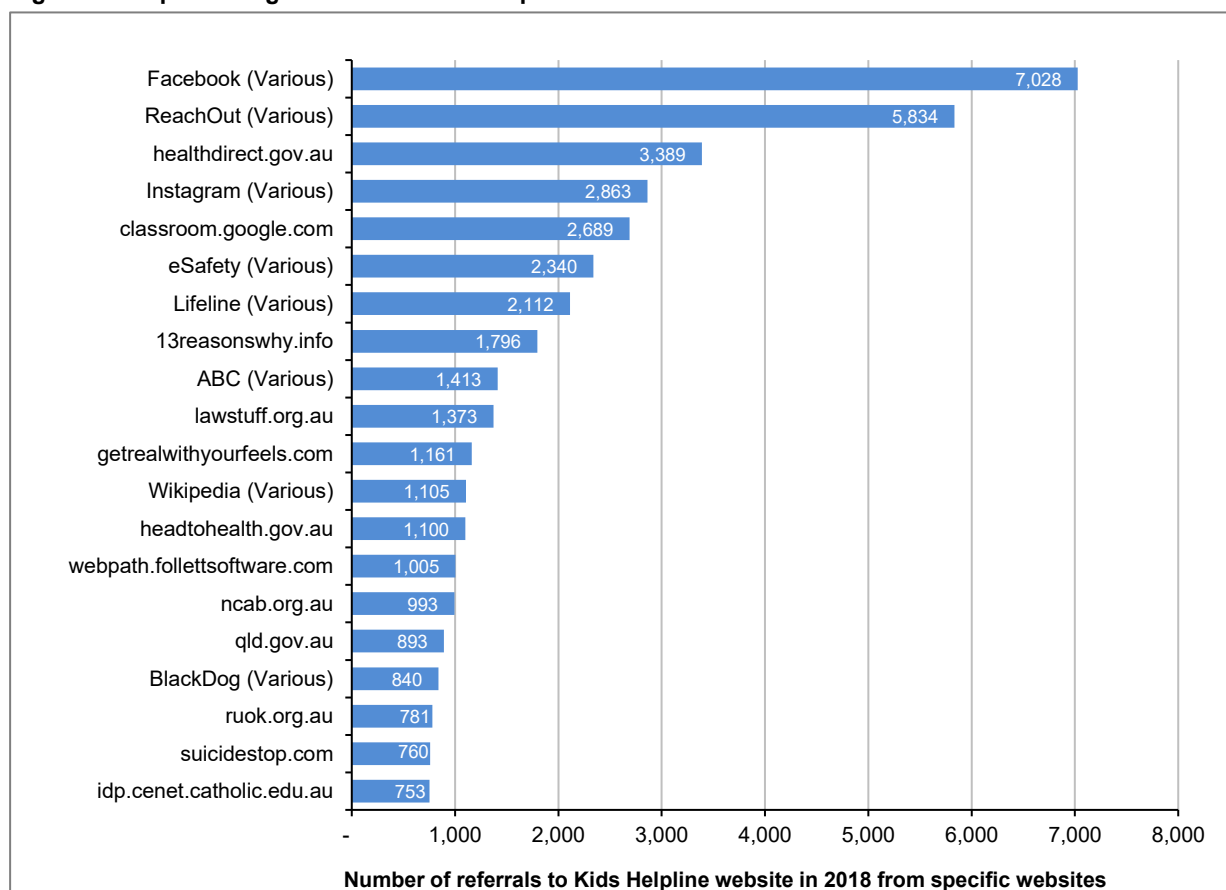
The pathways by which website visitors find and access the site are also important for understanding and responding effectively to their interests and needs.

Figure 56 shows the websites that most frequently referred people to the Kids Helpline website during 2018.

Key observations from the data include the following:

- Of the 40,228 referrals to the Kids Helpline website received from the top 20 referring websites in 2018:
 - Over 16,210 came from youth specialist, or generalist mental health and counselling websites (primarily ruok.org.au, blackdog.org.au, ncab.org.au, headtohealth.gov.au, getrealwithyourfeels.com, lifeline.com.au, healthdirect.gov.au, reachout.com.au).
- 2,340 referrals were received from the Australian Government's eSafety website.

Figure 56. Top referring websites to Kids Helpline website in 2018¹



1. Excludes referrals from search engines and Kids Helpline website.

4.2 Comics – suicide and child abuse

During 2018, 4 comics were produced for consumption by teens (aged 13-18) and kids (aged 4-12). The comics dealt with two themes of contemporary interest – suicide and child abuse. Two different story-lines covered each of the themes, and for child abuse one of the story-lines specifically targeted the “kids” age group (5-12). The other story-lines targeted teens.

Figure 57: Comic covers



The table below shows the number that were distributed by Kids Helpline, during 2018, and the number of organisations that distributed the comics to children and young people.

Table 7: Distribution data for Comics

Comic type	No. of orders/ organisations	Total Qty distributed	Order period
Suicide Prevention - Oliver & Connor (13+ years)	154	4,742	20 April 2018 – 31 December 2018
Suicide Prevention - Sarah & Clare (13+ years)	136	3,294	20 April 2018 – 31 December 2018
Child Abuse - Alex, Jess & Sacha (5-12 years)	106	4,092	4 September 2018 – 31 December 2018
Child Abuse - Quinn & Morgan (13+ years)	84	4,144	4 September 2018 – 31 December 2018

The majority of the comics were ordered by schools, however there are also Government departments and other community organisations requesting them.

A survey was conducted of those who distributed the comics, to evaluate their usefulness, and although the number of responses was very low (N=10) the results were consistently positive, with comments like:

They seem to like this style of writing/reading

They are reading them on their own terms and starting conversations with Support Staff which historically has not happened

I ... can see how they will go well with the kids due to relatability / easy examples.

The students found them very engaging

The ease and novelty of reading a comic make getting the students to read them much easier. The simple but expressive graphics were easy to decipher and the format of a comic makes it easier for some students to digest the information they contain.

In addition to these distribution numbers, nearly 200 of the comics were sent to a variety of conferences including the BUPA Roadshow, a National Suicide Prevention Conference, and an Anti-Bullying Conference.

The comics were made available via the kids Helpline website. Between 18 April and 31 December 2018 comics dealing with suicide prevention were downloaded/viewed 4,235 times. Between 3 September 2018 and 31 December 2018, the comics dealing with abuse were downloaded or viewed 426 times. The Table below contains details of these views/downloads.

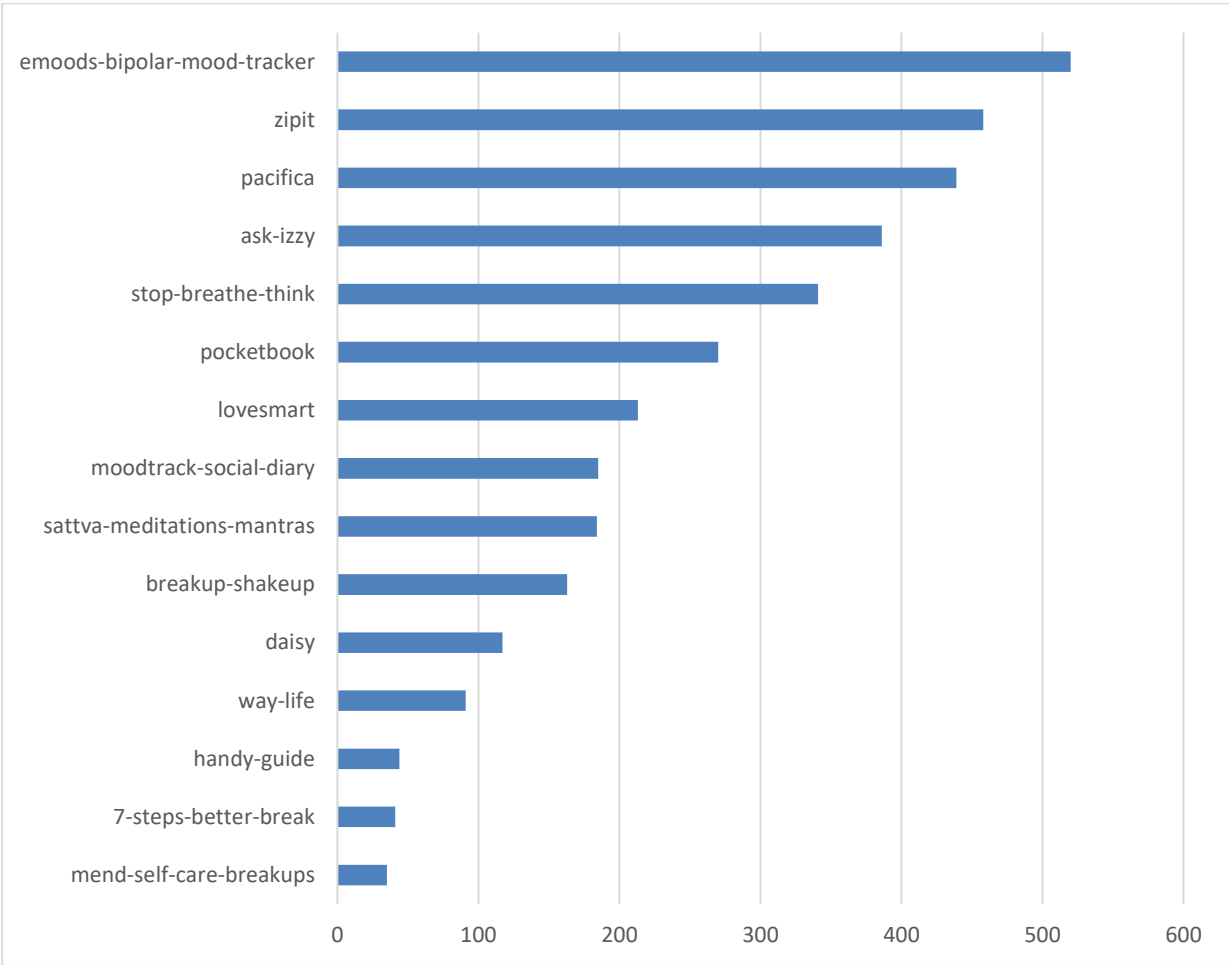
Table 8: Website download/pageview data for Comics

Comic type	Availability period (2018)	Total downloads / pageviews
Suicide Prevention - Oliver & Connor (13+ yrs)	18 Apr. – 31 Dec.	1,789
Suicide Prevention - Sarah & Clare (13+ yrs)	18 Apr. – 31 Dec.	2,446
Child Abuse - Alex, Jess & Sacha (5-12 yrs)	3 Sept. – 31 Dec.	237
Child Abuse - Quinn & Morgan (13+ yrs)	3 Sept. – 31 Dec.	189
Suicide prevention	Sub-total	4,235
Child abuse	Sub-total	426
Grand total across both themes	Total	4,661

4.3 App library

The Kids Helpline website hosts links to apps that have been developed by others, and appraised as safe by Kids Helpline counsellors, that are designed to help children and young people self-manage a variety of issues and concerns. Figure 58, shows the number of times each of the app pages was viewed by visitors to the website, for the top 15 apps, for 2018.

Figure 58. Apps resource page hits – top 15 (2018)¹.



1. In total there were 3,635 page-views across 35 apps pages in 2018.

The App library is one of the ways Kids helpline develops resources tailored to the needs and preferences of the children and young people it serves. Recognising the importance to young people of using smart phone apps to provide self-help resources, strategies and ideas for psycho-education, Kid Helpline, in partnership with QUT School of Creative Design, and The University of Qld, is developing its own app to serve children and young people

4.4 KHL Circles

KHL Circles is a purpose-built, counsellor moderated mental health and emotional wellbeing social network that’s safe, free and private for young people. It encourages peer-to-peer support and delivers expert group counselling supported by professional Kids Helpline counsellors 24/7. The partnership between Kids Helpline and the University of Sydney has produced new knowledge on the delivery of e-mental health services. FGX has also partnered with Kids Helpline in the KHL Circles project. FGX is Australia’s first philanthropic investment vehicle creating wealth for shareholders and supporting children at risk.

Feedback from users is positive. For example, the following are some comments made about the experience of being part of Circles:

It’s nice to be able to talk to people your own age. Especially if you are having trouble making friends at school.

Although I didn’t post on here often when I did I was put at ease to know that many people feel the same or similar to how I do/did in certain situations....I can honestly say it’s been wonderful being a part of this group and it’s an experience I won’t ever forget. Being here has made me reflect upon the ways I deal with things and who I am as person. Each week a question was

given and that question always gave insight into our personalities. Thank you all for being such a supportive group and I wish you all the best for the future :)

[It's good to]... know there are others going through the same things as me.

I think knowing there are other kids my age going through the same thing. And that I'm not alone or weird in doing this. All the people I have talked to [were] really nice and I feel like we all really make an effort to help and support each other in any way we can. It's not really the purpose of the circle, but I've also met people with similar interests to me.

I like just having the space and opportunity to like-minded people, as people in my everyday life may not understand. These people don't know me personally and therefore do not judge, and there are no real consequences for speaking the truth.

KHL Circles is another way that Kids Helpline tailors the kinds of support models it offers to the young people who will use them.

4.5 Niggle App

The Australian Research Council (ARC) project, in partnership with QUT School of Creative Design, and The University of Qld, continues to progress the creation of a youth-friendly self-help App, co-designed with young people, to enhance the effectiveness of the KHL mental health and well-being related content currently available on the KHL website, and to help young people to learn about and engage in self-help and self-management for appropriately low-to-moderate-risk, low-intensity concerns and issues.

The App will provide links to self-help resources in three categories of media (text, video, pod-casts), self-administered standardised test surveys for common emotional health concerns (anxiety, depression), capability for diarising and monitoring of self-managed positive steps or actions towards improvement and empowerment, and the capacity to store self-ratings of mood and severity of concern over time for self-monitoring of progress. The self-help resources are tailored to the "issues" or concerns of the young person using the App.

This project aims to promote mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Australia by designing and evaluating a first integrated model of e-mental health that links a new mobile-based tool-kit with traditional forms of counselling. 60% of direct contacts to Kids Helpline are unanswered, leading to increased use of stand-alone resources. The project will impact new understanding of how children and young people use technology in help-seeking and influence development of similar models across the sector.

During 2018 the App was developed and pilot testing, safety research and public release is scheduled for 2019.

4.6 Summary – self-help resources

The Kids Helpline website continued in 2018 to provide a wide range of resources for self-directed help-seeking by children, young people and parents/carers.

The number of referrals to the website received from mental health and counselling websites, and the frequency with which Kids Helpline website visitors of all age groups consulted *Issues* topics on mental health (e.g. anxiety, depression, body image, stress, resilience, self-harm, suicide, etc.) suggest that is another major area of contemporary concern to children and young people in Australia and their parents and carers. Similarly, the number of visits to resources on on-line safety, sexting, and cyber-bullying indicate the cyber-safety issues of concern for Kids Helpline website users.

Another theme of interest across age groups is how to manage important relationships – relationships with parents, siblings, friends, peers and in later years, with intimate partners.

The majority of web resource users in an evaluation survey said they found the resources interesting, said they motivated them to use them, that they were adequate even if further help was needed, gave them ideas to help them address their issue/s, and gave them a better understanding of the issue/s and greater capacity to deal with their issue/s.

New resources, such as the four comics on the themes of child-abuse and suicide prevention were very widely used in the community and though the data are limited, they have been positively evaluated.

Visits to the App Library, where Apps that have been appraised as appropriate for children and young people, and which deal with issues of concerns to those people, indicate a strong interest in this kind of provision.

The a purpose-built, counsellor moderated mental health and emotional wellbeing social network, KHL Circles, has provided 24/7, peer-to-peer support and delivers expert group counselling with professional Kids Helpline counsellors.

The Niggle App, an initiative of Kids Helpline, continues to develop service provision that targets the needs and preferences of children and young people.

5. Kids Helpline @ School & Kids Helpline @ High School

5.1 What is Kids Helpline @ School?

Kids Helpline @ School (KAS) is a free early intervention and prevention program available to all primary schools Australia-wide, operating since 2013. The program offers primary schools a professional counsellor-facilitated classroom session via video technology to discuss curriculum-aligned topics impacting on the lives of students. Sessions have been developed in line with the most common issues for which primary school students contact Kids Helpline for help.

Optus continues to partner with **yourtown** to support the Kids Helpline @ School Optus Digital Thumbprint program with a specific focus on delivering a digital citizenship curriculum which aims to assist students to think critically about digital safety, media messages, maintain a positive digital reputation, develop online resilience strategies and engage online in ways that are responsible, respectful and empathetic. As well the curriculum helps students feel more confident to speak out when they, or others, have negative online experiences.

During 2018 BUPA became a partner and began supporting the Wellbeing Program which focusses on general psychological wellbeing for children. This program focuses on a range of issues related to children's and young people's social relationships and psychological health, in a school context. These issues include bullying, peer and friend relationships, family relationships and emotional wellbeing. Sessions are designed to raise awareness of issues related to mental health and wellbeing and encourage discussion about these topics. Sessions are designed to improve students' mental health literacy, resilience, wellbeing and emotional intelligence, as well as enhancing student's communication skills within interpersonal relationships, and normalize and encouraging help-seeking behaviours.

All sessions are facilitated by a tertiary qualified Kids Helpline counsellor who works collaboratively with the teacher/school counsellor to tailor each session to the needs of the school/class. Sessions are evidence based, interactive and fun. They are designed to introduce students to the Kids Helpline service and create a space for safe, open discussions around a range of issues impacting on students' lives.

This chapter of the report describes the main activities and outputs of the KAS program in the 2018 calendar year.

5.2 Key program activities and outputs for 2018

5.2.1 Sessions booked and delivered and participants involved

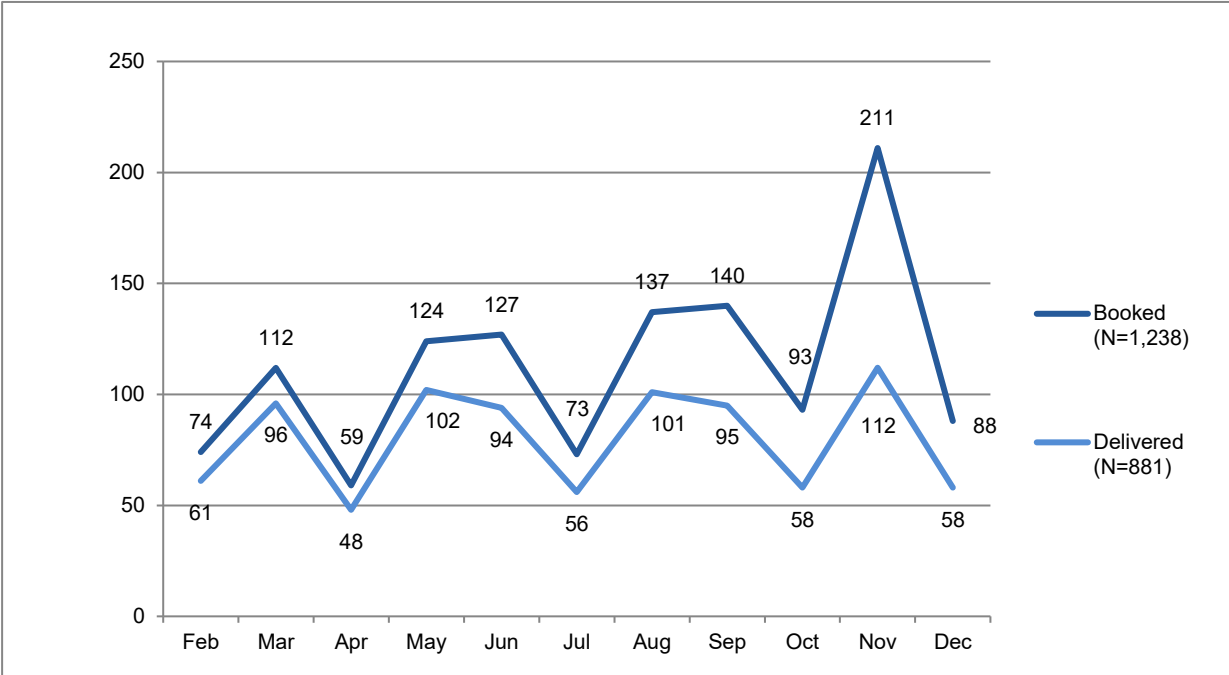
In 2018, 285 schools booked 1,238 sessions and delivered 881 of these booked sessions (Figure 59). A total of 27,177 primary school students participated in these sessions (Table 9).

Three-hundred and fifty-seven (357) sessions were cancelled for reasons ranging from school technology faults and firewall issues, teacher illness or class unavailability due to timetable clashes.

There were very few sessions booked or held during January 2018 due to school holidays. Other months affected by school holidays in 2018 were April, July, October and December.

From Dec 2017 program officers instituted a new process to control and reduce the resources committed to multiple re-scheduling of booked sessions (a practice previously the norm). The new procedure cancels the session after three attempts to re-schedule it. This procedure has an impact on both numbers of bookings (because diary space is created with each cancellation) and cancellations.

Figure 59. Number of 2018 Kids Helpline @ School sessions booked and delivered – by month



5.2.2 Topics of discussion

In 2018, sessions were conducted on 15 different topics in two separate programs. Table 9 shows the number and percentage of students who participated in sessions on each topic and the number of sessions held on that topic. The topics most frequently requested by teachers for discussion in the Digital Thumbprint program were: *digital identity*, *life balance*, and *positive use of technology*. In the Wellbeing program the topics most frequently requested by teachers for discussion were: *leadership*, *peer pressure*, *personal safety*, and *bullying*.

Table 9. 2018 Kids Helpline @ School participants and sessions by session topic and program

Program	Topic	N students participated	% of total participants	N of sessions competed
Digital thumbprint (Optus)	Digital identity	3,255	12%	115
	Life balance	2,441	9%	78
	Positive use of technology	2,310	8%	70
	Managing on-line relationships	1,454	5%	39
	Introduction to KHL	1,130	4%	35
	Cyber-bullying	865	3%	27
	Staying safe on-line	531	2%	17
	Sub-total	11,986	43%	381
Wellbeing Program (BUPA)	Leadership at school	3,357	12%	107
	Peer pressure	2,873	11%	104
	Staying safe / personal safety	2,669	10%	96
	Bullying	2,004	7%	64
	Transition to high-school	1,817	7%	58
	Friendships	1,252	5%	33
	Developing resilience	683	3%	19
	Managing emotions	536	2%	19
Sub-total	15,191	57%	500	
Total		27,177	100%	881

5.2.3 Geographical reach

Almost two in three schools (61%) participating in the program in 2018 were located in either Victoria or New South Wales, as indicated in Figure 60. These states also held the largest number of sessions, accounting for 62% of the total number of sessions held.

Figure 60. Number of 2018 Kids Helpline @ School participating schools and sessions – by state

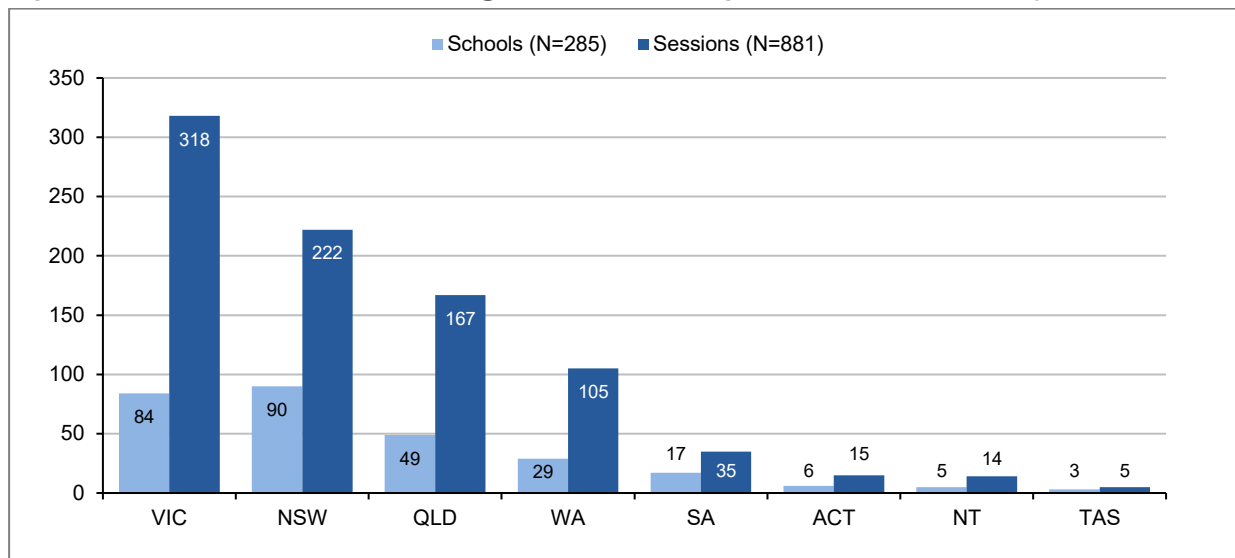
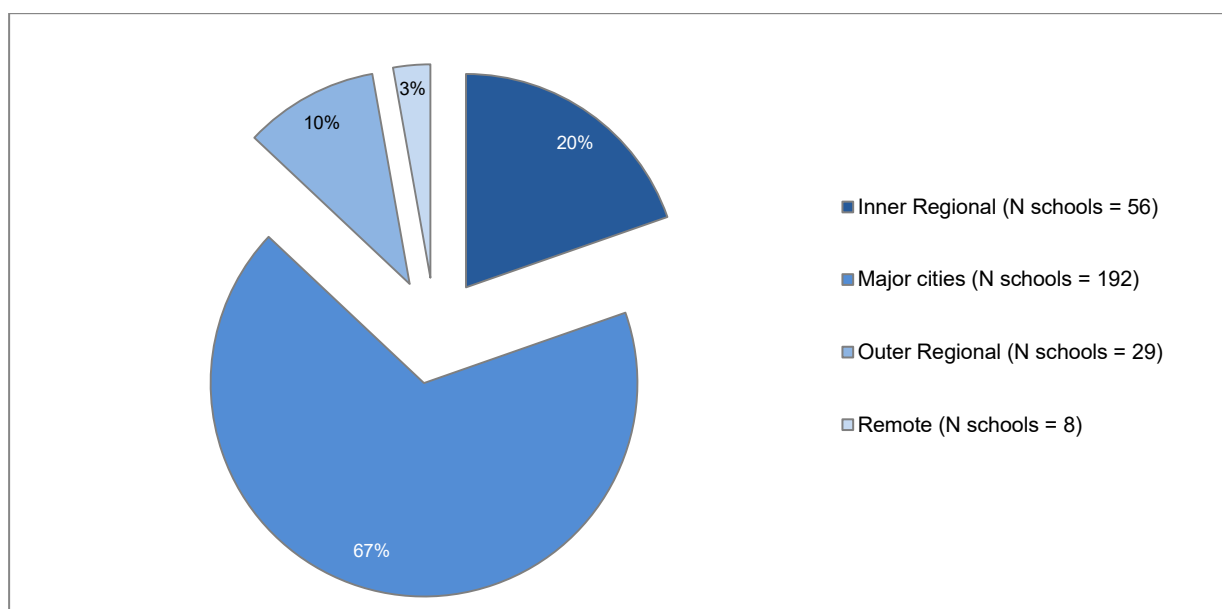


Figure 61 reveals the proportion of participating schools by remoteness classification (see Appendix for more on Kids Helpline’s remoteness classification system). Two out of three schools (67%) were situated in Major Cities, while 13% were based in Outer Regional or Remote locations. Almost a fifth (20%) were based in an Inner Regional location.

Figure 61. Proportion of 2018 Kids Helpline @ School participating schools – by remoteness (N = 285)¹



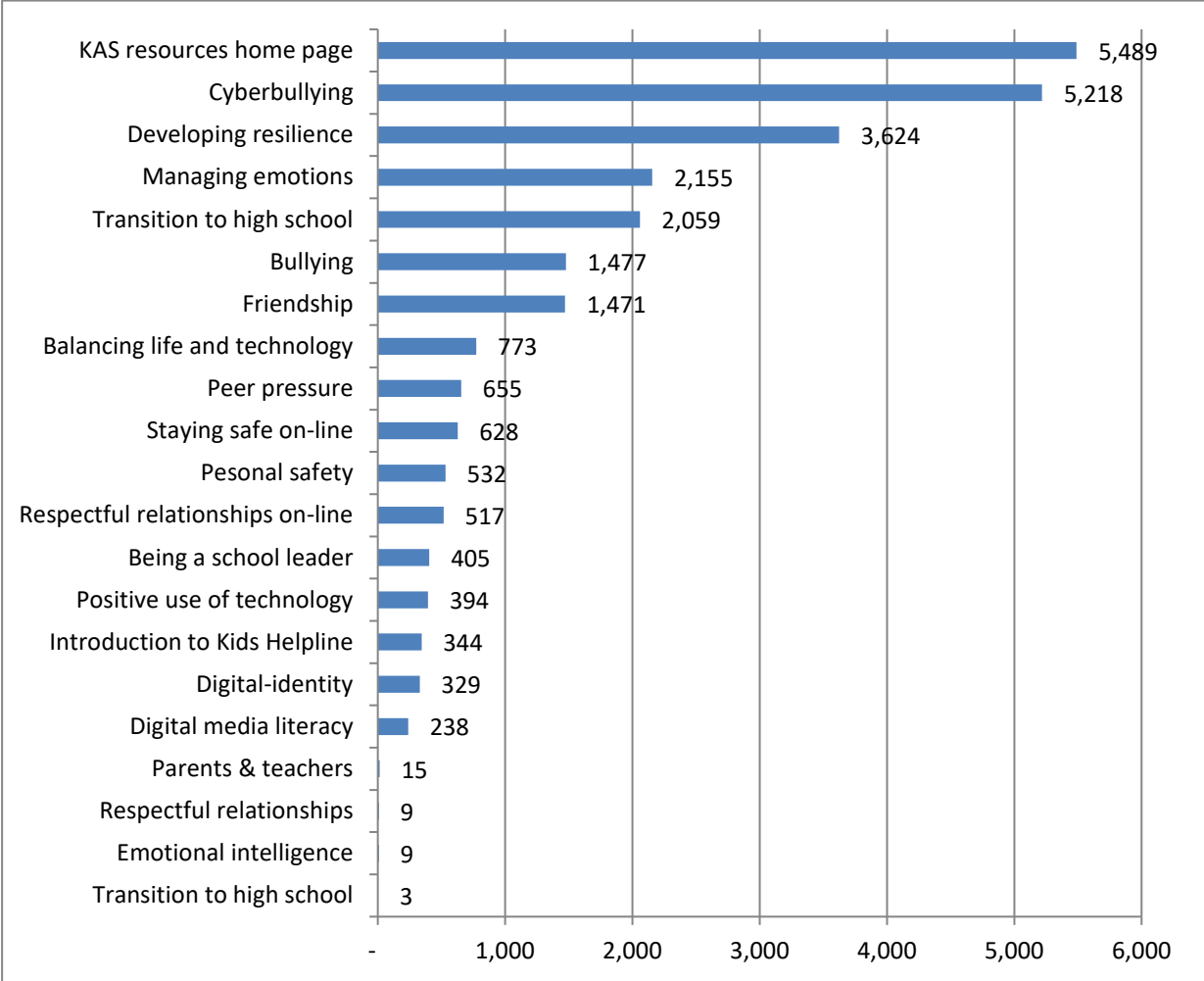
1. Where percentages sum to greater or less than 100 it is due to rounding.

5.2.4 Use of teacher resource materials

During 2018, teachers made substantial use of educational material uploaded to the KAS micro-website with 32,515 views of the KAS microsite landing page. Figure 62 shows the number of views of pages containing

specific information or educational material available to teachers on the microsite to support their participation in the KAS program.

Figure 62. Number of page-views to Kids Helpline @ School micro-website resources for teachers in 2018



1. Total page-views of KAS teacher resources in 2018 = 44,393; visits to the KHAS front page 32,515; total views = 76,908.

5.2.5 Kids Helpline @ School (KAS) Optus Digital Thumbprint program - evaluation results

Optus, a key strategic partner in the development of digital literacy and on-line safety, funds the Optus Digital Thumbprint part of KAS school sessions focused on cyber-safety issues. This most recent evaluative study (2017-2018 financial year) demonstrated that KAS Optus Digital Thumbprint effectively conveys information designed to assist primary school aged children to conduct their online lives safely and constructively. Students were able to report key messages gained from their sessions, including ideas about how to avoid or resolve digital life problems and knowledge of how and where to seek help if needed.

The study also presented evidence of high levels of student willingness to contact Kids Helpline for support if required following their session.

Evaluation methodology

Participants and Procedures

A total of 1,189 stakeholders from two groups, teachers and students, contributed to program impact measurement.

Teachers

Following their session all participating teachers were emailed a link to an online survey which was open for the full financial year 2017-2018. Teacher responses were received from 102 teachers in 69 schools holding 108

sessions. Seven topics were represented, with Digital Media Literacy not represented. This was an expected result as only two Digital Media Literacy sessions were held throughout the year

Students

The student stakeholder group was divided into younger (Grades 1-3) and older (Grades 4-6) children, and feedback gathered from each cohort using two age appropriate paper surveys aiming to measure similar constructs. These surveys were mailed out to schools between January and June 2018 along with Optus Digital Thumbprint with Kids Helpline program promotional rulers to be distributed by teachers to student participants. Teachers were requested to mail completed paper surveys back in prepaid return envelopes.

Responses were received from 1,087 students in 28 schools holding 49 sessions and all but one topic (Digital Media Literacy) was included.

The listing below outlines the numbers of responses from each stakeholder group:

- Number of teachers surveyed: **102**
- Number of Grades 1-3 students surveyed: **154** from 12 sessions
- Number of Grades 4-6 students surveyed: **933** students from 41 sessions
- Total number of sessions represented in student survey results: **49***
- Total number of sessions represented in teacher surveys: **108**

**Four sessions were held with classes that contained students from both Grades 1-3 and Grades 4-6*

Survey results (for students only) for selected key indicators are in Table 10. Results indicate high levels of awareness of topic content and help-seeking resourcefulness post-session.

Table 10. 2017-18 Kids KAS (Optus Digital Thumbprint component) results (2016-17 financial year)

Grades 1-3	post session at least one source of help available to them	99%
Grades 4-6	post-session awareness of where to go for help	89%
	gaining ideas about how to use technology in positive ways	86%
	reporting increased confidence to use technology	76%
All students	would consider contacting Kids Helpline if they were concerned about a cyber issue	90%

Selected results show that

- 99% of students in Grades 1-3 can identify at least one source of help available to them for cyber-safety issues, and
- students in Grades 4-6 are more aware of sources of help (89%), had gained some ideas of how to use technology in positive ways (86%) and had greater confidence in their ability to deal with cyber-safety issues (76%) after the session they had attended.

5.3 Kids Helpline @ High School program

On the 1st July 2018, **yourtown** was funded to develop and deliver the pilot Kids Helpline @ High School North QLD program, supported by the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN). This program aims to increase the knowledge of mental wellness and help-seeking of high school students in the NQPHN region through ongoing collaboration with schools and the delivery of free personalised video-linked educational sessions. The NQPHN has provided \$150,000 in funding to support the program.

Key stakeholders in the pilot development include the Department of Education QLD, Catholic Education, Be You, and the Ed-LinQ Child and Youth Mental Health Services.

The first three months of the program involved consulting with partner schools and organisations to develop and create content material for the educational sessions. Ten schools were involved in the consultation, with 429 students participating in 28 consultation sessions.

From the 1st of October, the pilot began delivering sessions and connected with 1,401 participants across a total number of 21 sessions. The topics available to students include the following: Introduction to Kids Helpline, School Transitions, Emotional Intelligence, Respectful Relationships and Developing Resilience.

The program is funded to run until 30th of June 2019; after that time the efficacy of the pilot will be evaluated and future opportunities for potential expansion of the program to other areas will be explored.

5.4 Summary

Kids Helpline continued its innovative KAS program, with components Digital Thumbprint (Optus) and *Wellbeing* (BUPA), in 2018, reaching 27,177 primary school students from 285 schools through participation in 881 classroom sessions.

The program continued to engage schools from every state and territory, and one third of participating schools in 2018 were located in regional or remote localities.

Teachers made extensive use of online educational resources developed by Kids Helpline to support schools' participation in the program, with over 44,000 page-views of these resources.

With the assistance of Optus, Kids Helpline was able to continue to deliver in 2018 its curriculum focussed on digital safety. With additional support from BUPA, Kids Helpline was able to continue to offer its curriculum in *Wellbeing*.

Kids Helpline @ High School was commenced in 2018, with funding support from the NQ PHN, and will be evaluated in mid-2019. Key stakeholders its development included the Department of Education QLD, Catholic Education, Be You, and the Ed-LinQ Child and Youth Mental Health Services.

6. Kids Helpline 2018 counselling client satisfaction & outcome survey

yourtown believes that service users provide an essential perspective in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of Kids Helpline services. One way that **yourtown** engages the views of Kids Helpline service users is through an annual client satisfaction and outcome survey. This chapter provides a summary of selected findings from the 2018 survey.

6.1 Objectives

The objectives of the Kids Helpline annual client satisfaction and outcome survey are to:

- gauge the satisfaction of children and young people who use the Kids Helpline counselling and support service and/or Kids Helpline website, and
- gain feedback about the service, including the impact service users perceive the service has had on them.

This information is collected both to inform ongoing service development and for the purpose of reporting to funding bodies and sponsors.

6.2 Methodology

A brief online survey, comprising a combination of open and fixed response items, was conducted over nine weeks from November 2018 to January 2019. The survey was open to any individual who had accessed the Kids Helpline counselling and support service or visited the Kids Helpline website within the last 12 months.

A hyperlink to the survey was placed on the Homepage of the Kids Helpline website. In addition, the survey was promoted to potential respondents through invitations to participate, including:

- on the exit page following web chat counselling sessions;
- at the bottom of counsellors' emails;
- during the phone call wait message for children and young people waiting to speak to a counsellor;
- by counsellors to children and young people who participated in phone counselling (this was at the counsellor's discretion, however).

6.3 Key findings

6.3.1 Sample

A total of 1,246 individuals provided complete responses to the survey, 99% of whom (1,227) were aged 5-25 years.

Table II provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of respondents. It also compares respondents' characteristics with those of Kids Helpline service contacts aged 5-25 years in 2018 to assess how representative the sample may be of those using the counselling service.

As shown in Table II, the majority (73%) of these respondents indicated that they were aged 13-18 years. It is typical of the Kids Helpline contact data to be predominantly from the 13-18 year age group, though the proportion is slightly higher than in the contact data (73% c.f. 56%).

- *Gender.* The majority of survey respondents were female (82%). Survey respondents were more likely to be female than were counselling and support service contacts in 2018 (82% c.f. 77%). Respondents were also more likely to be intersex, trans-gender or gender-diverse (6% c.f. 2%)
- *Age.* The sample over-represented the 13-18 year-old service users (73% c.f. 56%) and under-the 19-25 year-old clients (12% c.f. 31%).
- *Cultural background.* Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders were represented in the survey sample in higher proportion to counselling and support service contacts in 2018 (8% to 4%); however, those from

CALD backgrounds were comparatively under-represented (13% c.f. 37%) and those from non- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander /CALD backgrounds were comparatively over-represented (79% c.f. 59%)

- *State.* Survey respondents were represented from every state and territory in close proportion to the state breakdown for counselling and support service contacts in 2018.

Table 11. Characteristics of 2018 Kids Helpline counselling client satisfaction and outcome survey respondents compared with 2018 Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years¹

Respondent characteristics	2018 Kids Helpline counselling client satisfaction & outcome survey respondents (n = 1,246) ¹		2018 Kids Helpline counselling & support service contacts aged 5-25 years (N = 143,481)	
	n	col. %	n	col. %
Gender				
Female	1,019	82%	79,404	77%
Male	152	12%	21,918	21%
Intersex, trans or gender-diverse	72	6%	2,467	2%
Total	1,243	100%	103,789	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	3		39,692	
Age group				
5-12 years	172	14%	12,596	13%
13-18 years	909	73%	53,788	56%
19-25 years	146	12%	30,443	31%
26 +	19	2%	NA	-
Total	1,246	100%	96,827	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	0		46,645	
Cultural background²				
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	96	8%	1,354	4%
CALD	168	13%	13,138	37%
Neither Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander nor CALD	981	79%	20,883	59%
Total	1,245	100%	35,375	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	1		108,106	
State				
ACT	41	3%	3,408	3%
NSW	382	31%	41,423	32%
NT	12	1%	1,149	1%
QLD	241	19%	25,439	20%
SA	103	8%	8,615	7%
TAS	32	3%	4,483	3%
VIC	326	26%	33,009	26%
WA	105	8%	10,638	8%
Total	1242	100%	128,164	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	4		15,317	

1. Where column percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

2. CALD = culturally and linguistically diverse.

6.3.2 Type of engagement with Kids Helpline in last 12 months

As shown in Figure 51, 978 respondents had used the counselling services (499 had used only the counselling services and 479 had used both counselling service and self-help *Articles* resources).

The results reported here are from those who used the counselling services either alone or in addition to website resources. The results reported here focus on the counselling services: evaluation of the web resources is to be found in section 4.1.4.

6.3.3 Perceived and measured impact of Kids Helpline counselling and support service

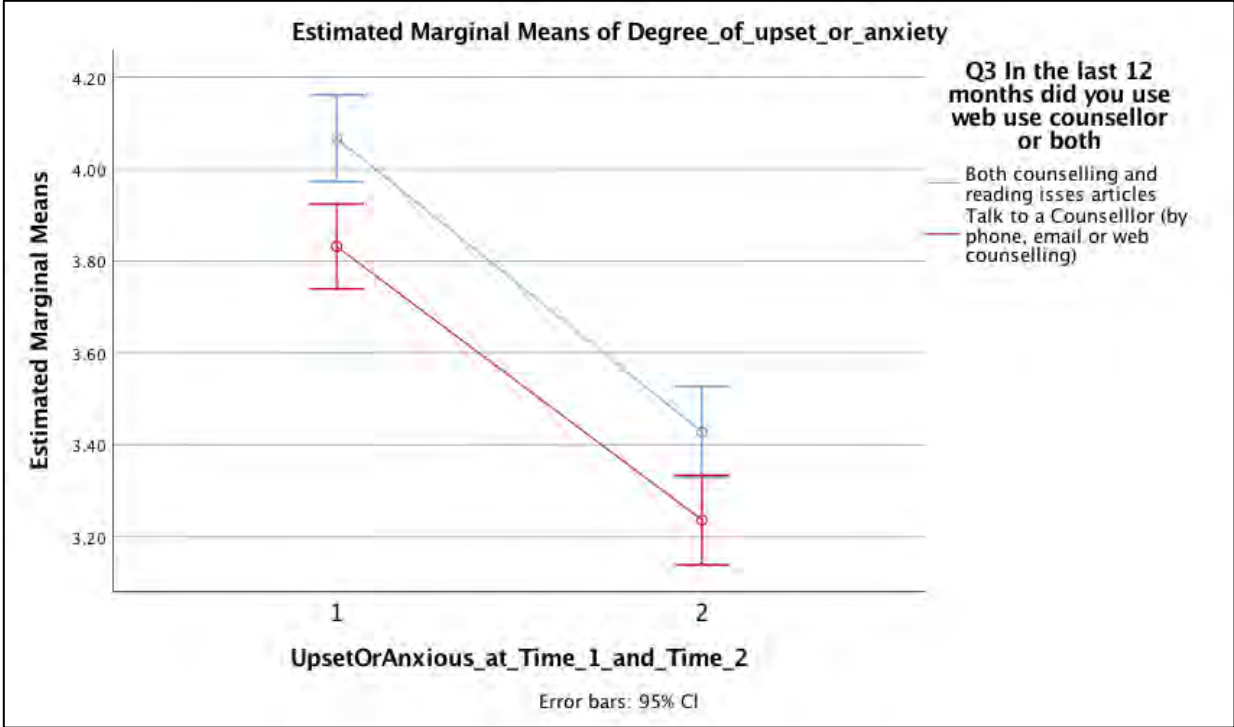
Goals of counselling include, *inter alia*, the reduction of stress and provision of a supportive professional relationship context for a client.

Reduction of stress

Respondents were asked to report the frequency with which they experienced anxiety before counselling (a retrospective measure) and after counselling, on a 5-point scale (“never” through to “all the time”). Respondents were allocated into two groups according to whether they reported using counselling support only or reported using both counselling support and issue articles on the website.

A 2-way mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (where one condition was *group*: whether used just counselling or both counselling and issues articles and the other condition was a *measure*: anxiety at time 1 (before counselling) and time 2 (after counselling)) revealed that counselling had a medium to large ($\eta^2=.228$) positive effect on both groups. That is, anxiety was reduced significantly for both groups. The amount of reduction was similar in both groups, and, though the group that did both counselling and used the issues articles was more anxious both before and after counselling, the difference between these groups was reduced slightly after counselling (Figure 63).

Figure 63: Effect of counselling on frequency of upset/anxiety¹ in two groups² (counselling only and both counselling and articles)

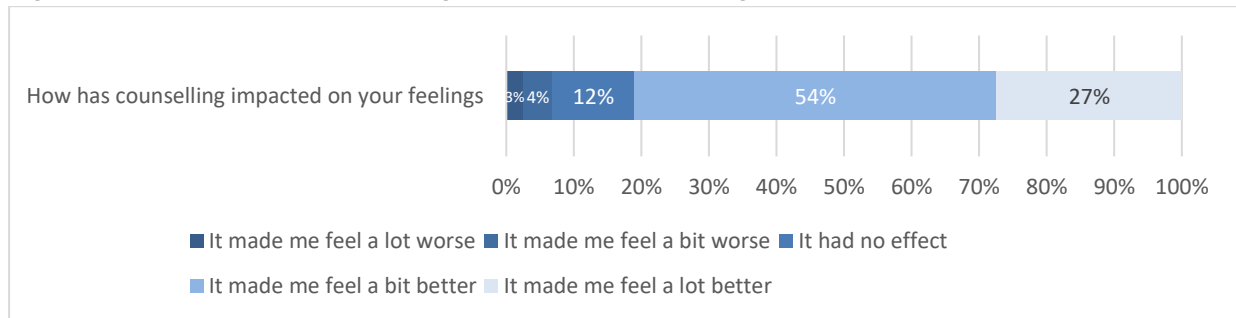


1. Frequency of upset/anxiety measures were subjective; pre-counselling and post-counselling measures were retrospective (and subjective).
 2. Allocation to groups is non-random.

Building capability and resourcefulness

Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents said that counselling made them feel better (Figure 64).

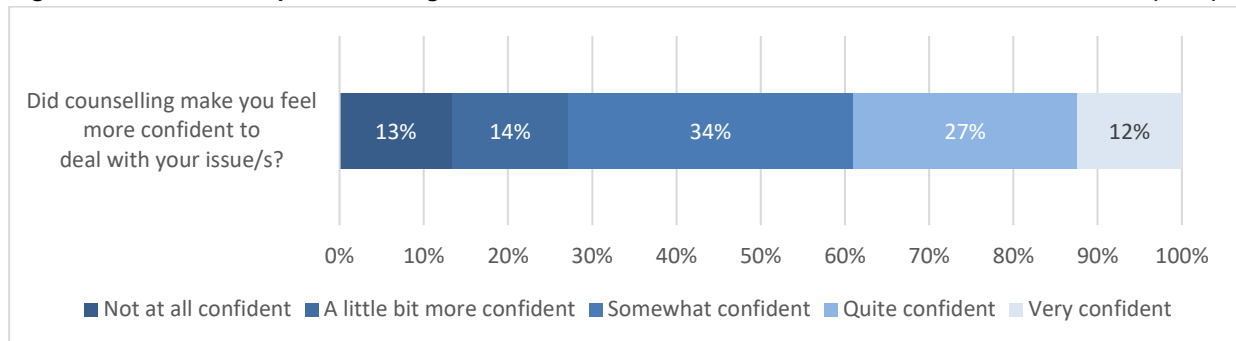
Figure 64. Perceived impacts of talking to a counsellor on feelings (2018)¹



1. Where percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

Eighty-seven percent (87%) of respondents report increased confidence as a consequence of the counselling they received (Figure 65).

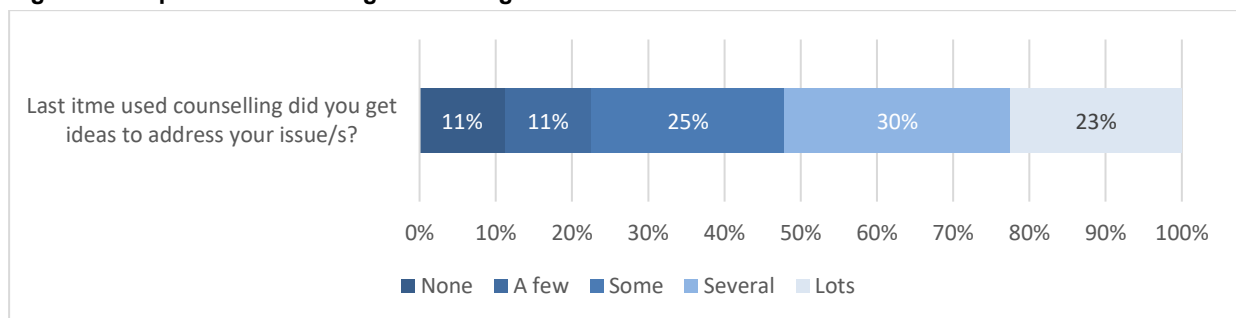
Figure 65. Perceived impact of talking to a counsellor on confidence to deal with issue/s of concern (2018)¹



1. Where percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents said that as a result of counselling they had gotten ideas that could help them with their issue/s (Figure 66).

Figure 66: Impact of counselling on building resourcefulness to deal with issue/s

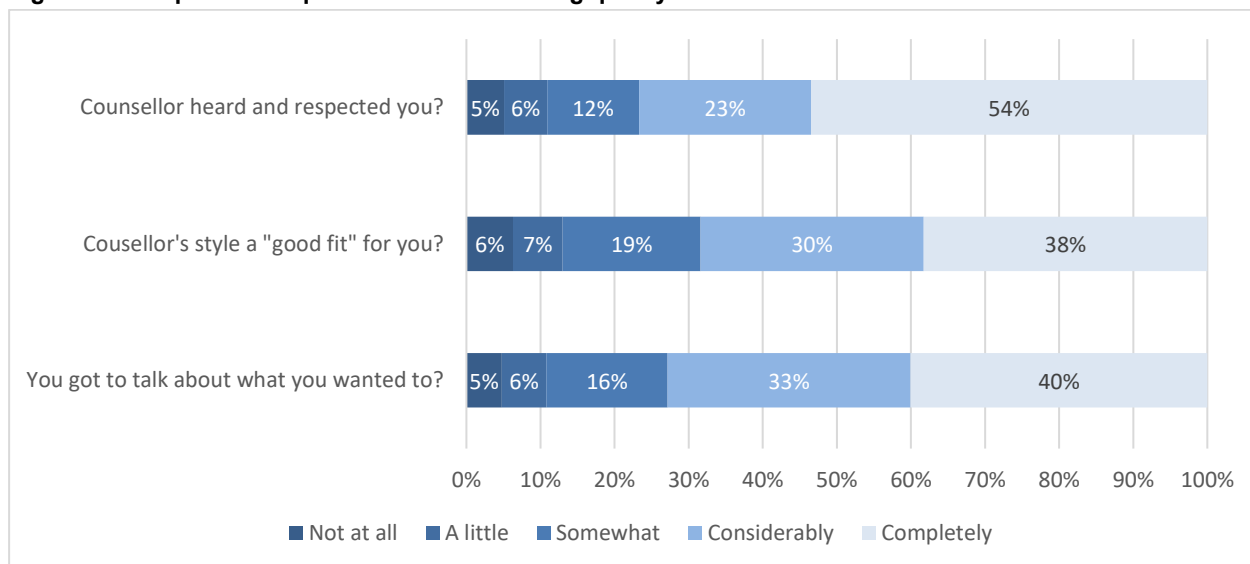


Counselling quality - provision of a supportive professional relationship

As to the approach to counselling, respondents were asked to comment on whether the approach taken by their counsellor was a “good fit” for them, whether they felt heard, and whether they got to talk about the issues they wanted to discuss. These aspects of the counselling interaction are constitutive of “quality” counselling. The results, presented in Figure 67 show that:

- eighty-nine percent (89%) felt heard and respected;
- eighty-seven percent (87%) felt the fit between themselves and the counsellor was a good one; and
- eighty-nine percent (89%) said they got to discuss the things they wanted to discuss during the counselling session.

Figure 67: Responses to questions on counselling quality



1. Where percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

6.3.6 Overall satisfaction with the Kids Helpline counselling and support service

Satisfaction

To gauge overall satisfaction with the Kids Helpline counselling service, respondents were asked two questions:

- How satisfied are you with Kids Helpline? (five-point response scale)
- Would you recommend Kids Helpline to a friend? (yes/no)

Eighty-five percent (85%) of those who only used counselling were moderately satisfied (or better) with their experience and ninety percent (90%) would recommend Kids Helpline to a friend (Figure 55).

6.4 Summary

Kids Helpline received an adequate response to its annual client satisfaction and outcomes survey with 1007 respondents providing completed surveys. The sample includes children and young people from all states and territories and is broadly representative of Kids Helpline contacts in 2018 with a few exceptions.

Roughly three out of four respondents who had spoken to a counsellor reported having more ideas or feeling more capable to deal with their problem as a result.

Nine out of ten respondents indicated satisfaction with the service and a similar proportion said they would recommend the service to a friend.

7. Conclusion

This report has provided a comprehensive statistical overview of the activities of Kids Helpline during 2018, presenting a wide range of information about services delivered, demand for services, client needs and characteristics, and client satisfaction and perception of service impact. It has also provided trend analysis on a number of measures to help identify emerging issues in service demand and delivery.

This concluding section:

- draws together key themes from the data
- highlights other publications in the series that may be of interest to readers, and
- invites readers to assist Kids Helpline to continue and extend the critical support it provides to vulnerable children and young people in Australia.

7.1 Key themes from the data

Five key themes emerge from reviewing the data presented in the 2018 Insights report.

Theme 1 Kids Helpline consistently implements its model of support for children and young people

The model of support implemented by Kids Helpline has two aspects:

- *Any time, any reason* – The cornerstone of Kids Helpline’s approach to supporting children and young people is that they can contact the service, about any issue or concern, at any time. This model or approach requires that counselling interactions with children and young people are supportive, respectful, versatile, and appropriate for their needs, allowing clients to explore any issues of concern in a safe environment and in appropriate ways. The data from the evaluation study show that:
 - our clients feel “heard and respected” by counsellors,
 - they got to talk about the things they wanted to talk to the counsellor about, and
 - the counsellor was a good fit for them.
- Kids Helpline counsellors work simultaneously to
 - address the immediate concerns of the client, addressing risk of harm, and staying focused on exploration of the specific issues of concern,
 - when appropriate begin working with the client to develop their “emotional literacy”, that is, their ability to understand, identify and speak about their emotions and their reactions to the circumstances or concerns, and
 - provide appropriate care, case planning and management, and referral, according to the needs of the client.

Theme 2 Kids Helpline helps children and young people develop their capability for self-management and autonomy in dealing with their issues

- Building on the relationship base established through the counselling model, and the approach taken to both counselling and to the provision of self-help resources, engagement with Kids Helpline helps children and young people to develop an understanding and acceptance of their feelings, thoughts and reactions, and helps them to deal with their specific presenting concerns. Outcomes include:
 - an increase in their “emotional literacy” – helping them understand and articulate their feelings; and
 - an increase in their capability for dealing with their concerns - helping children and young people explore options for independently handling the things that concern them, by identifying possible courses of action, or resources for further learning or further support (including specialised support as appropriate).
- The data from the evaluation study show that:
 - counselling
 - reduces self-reported anxiety,

- provides ideas for dealing with issues,
 - helps make clients feel better, and
 - makes them more confident to deal with their issue/s; whilst
- resources (specifically the Issues Articles on the Kids Helpline website) made clients more capable of dealing with their issue/s by:
 - increasing their understanding of their issues,
 - giving them ideas for getting further help,
 - motivating them to address their issue/s, and
 - prompting planned or actual behavioural change towards addressing their issue/s.
- The *any time, any reason* philosophy means that the profile of concerns which counsellors explore with children and young people is a fair barometer of the range of issues that concern children and young people. The greater frequency of occurrence of some concerns over others does not negate the importance of any other concerns with a lower frequency of occurrence. In this report, we identified the top four concerns based on their frequency of occurrence, and conducted a closer analysis of these, at the level of “sub-category”. This is not done, however, to imply that any issue a young person discusses with a counsellor is less important than any other. What such an approach does tell us is what the core activities of the broader service are, measured in terms of sheer volume. In this way the data tell their own story about what are the more common, not more important concerns, raised by children and young people. The four key concerns and their attendant sub-categories were: **emotional well-being** (*exploring themes or patterns in clients’ behaviours*), **mental health** (*seeking support and/or strategies to manage established disorders or diagnoses*), **suicide** (*having suicidal thoughts or fears*), and **family relationship matters** (*wanting more attachment/connection/time/ acceptance/ understanding/ affection, and conflict or arguments with parent or parents*). These are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Theme 3 Kids Helpline is a key support for children and young people in relation to emotional wellbeing, mental health, suicide, and family relationship issues.

Emotional wellbeing, mental health, and suicide, are issues where contact frequency *and* proportions are growing.

- *Emotional wellbeing* - contacts exploring themes or patterns in clients’ behaviours have risen 34% since 2012. Core to the work of Kids Helpline counsellors, working with children and young people on emotional wellbeing occurs when a client recognises themes or patterns in relation to their emotional responses, the way they cope or the way they manage their emotions across a number of situations (for example, when seeking help about general sadness, feeling down, loneliness, worry/anxiety, stress, distress, anger, upsetting dreams, problems sleeping, or other negative emotions that are not specifically associated with a person/situation/event). In working with children and young people on their emotional wellbeing, counsellors are focusing on one of the main aspects of their work, which is the development of “emotional literacy” and helping their clients find ways to understand, describe and manage their emotional worlds. This plays an important preventive function in that it aims to develop resilience and resourcefulness, which underpin the capability for independently managing emotional distress, and help prevent escalation into more serious mental health consequences.
- *Mental health* - contacts providing support and/or strategies to manage established disorders or diagnoses have risen 25% since 2012. One of the ways Kids Helpline services support the broader mental health system, the second-most-frequently occurring sub-category analysed is about the support counsellors offer to children and young people who already are using mental health services, at least to the extent that they have a diagnosis of their mental health symptomology. The support counsellors provide is in helping their clients develop strategies for managing an established disorder or diagnosis.
- *Suicide* – contacts about suicidal thoughts or fears have risen 18% since 2012. Suicidal ideation (suicidal thoughts or fears) is a significant risk factor in suicide and Kids Helpline handled 22 such contacts each day, from children and young people, in 2018. The goal of counselling in these cases is in the first instance to reduce perturbation in order to lower the risk of suicide. In the longer term, the goals extend to prevention through helping the young person identify and understand their “triggers” and to reduce reactions to those triggers into the future.
- *Family relationship matters* – Strengthening family relationships is a key outcome for children and young people. Although the count of contacts about family relationship matters (*Wanting more*

attachment/connection/time/ acceptance/ understanding/ affection and Conflict or arguments with parent or parents) has gone down (8% and 22% respectively 2012-2018), their relative frequency amidst the other sub-categories remains stable (at about 4%). Taking age into account, we observe that though the numbers in both these sub-categories has decreased 2012-2018 for the 13-18 and 19-25-year-olds, for the 5-12-year-olds the numbers have increased in the same period (25% for wanting more connection, and 12% for conflict). Thus, in spite of the decline in total numbers over the past 7 years, family relationships continue to be one of the top concerns of children and young people, especially those in the younger age group (5-12 years).

Theme 4 Contact attempts continue to show a decline in preference for phone and an increase in e-mediated modes of contacting the service, especially webchat

Although telephone is still the predominant medium of contact, there continues to be a gradual but steady shift in children and young people's medium of preference for contacting a counsellor – away from telephone and email towards web chat.

Kids Helpline has been responding to children and young people's shifting preferences for particular communication media by:

- extending web chat operating hours to 24/7 in 2018
- maintaining a mobile-friendly interface for the delivery of web counselling, and
- providing extra counselling staff to the service with the injection of \$1 million additional funding aimed at meeting the online demand.

Theme 5 Kids Helpline's provision of a web-mediated resource suite through its website serves contemporary children and young people's independent help-seeking

There continues to be substantial engagement with and a growth in children and young people's use of Kids Helpline website resources and e-mediated approaches to help-seeking.

Kids Helpline has been responding to children and young people's shifting preferences for particular communication media by:

- upgrading the Kids Helpline website to optimise usage by mobile devices, and
- expanding the range of self-help resources and issues-based content provisioned through the website to include an App Library which provides links to Apps (both general wellbeing and specific issue Apps) that have been vetted by Kids Helpline.
- Kids Helpline offers children and young people a professionally facilitated, e-mediated, peer-support program: Circles; the provision of e-mediated, on-line help and resources is one way in which Kids Helpline is responding to their changing preferences.

Use of the Kids Helpline website continues to grow:

- Unique visitor numbers have grown 17% since 2015 (up 39% since 2017) , and
- Web session numbers are up 21% since 2015 (38% since 2017).

7.2 Other publications on Kids Helpline in 2018

This report is part of a suite of publications produced by **yourtown** about Kids Helpline in 2018. In addition to this *National Statistical Overview* report, **yourtown** routinely publishes *research articles, information sheets and policy advocacy papers* based on analysis of specific Kids Helpline data as appropriate to the topic

All publications are available from the **yourtown** website.

7.3 Kids Helpline – unmet need

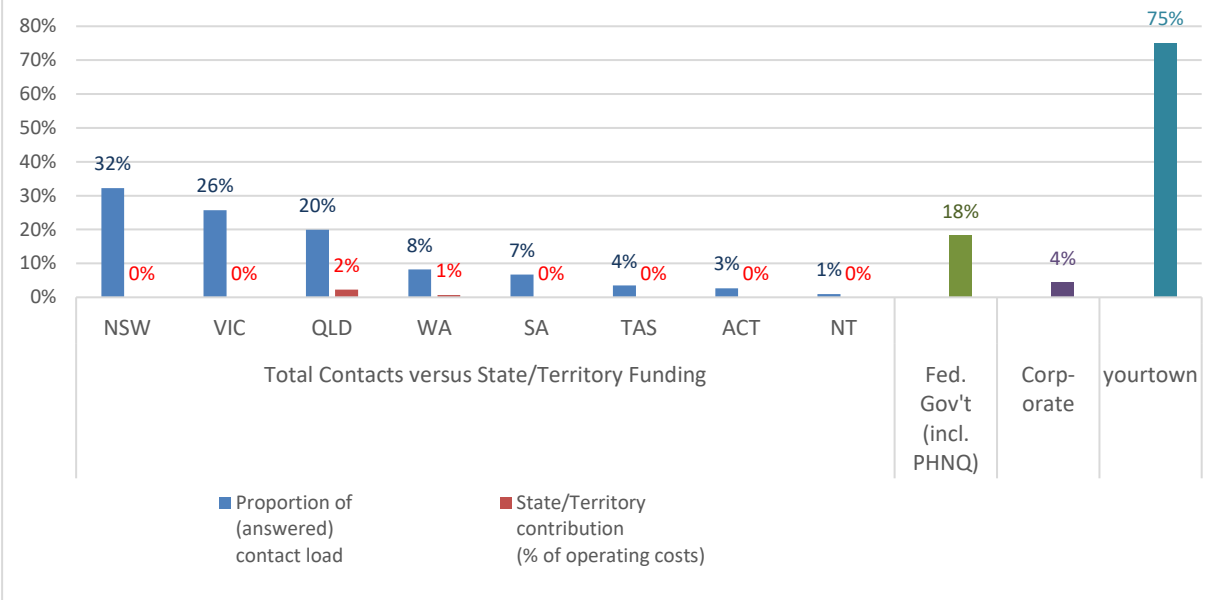
As demonstrated in 2.1.1, 136,833 attempts to contact Kids Helpline (that persisted beyond the 20 second privacy message, in the case of phone) went unanswered in 2018. This is a result of the resource capacity of the service being unable to match the demand from children and young people. On average, an attempt is made to contact Kids Helpline about every 110 seconds, but we are unable to respond to almost half (48%) of these contact attempts (in 2018 that’s almost 400 a day!).

7.4 How is the service funded?

In 2018 Kids Helpline cost \$11.3 million to run. **yourtown** provided 75% of the funding thanks to the generosity of supporters of the Art Unions and donations, while the Australian, Queensland and Western Australian Governments, and corporate partners, contributed the remaining 25%.

Figure 68 shows the contributions to these operating costs from various sources including **yourtown**, State/Territory and Federal Governments, and corporate partners, as proportions of operating costs, in 2018. Figure 68 also shows State/Territory service usage as proportions of (answered) contacts, in 2018.

Figure 68: Contributions to operating costs in 2018 – States/Territories, Federal Gov’t, corporate partners and yourtown



Acknowledgements

yourtown provided 75% of the funding for Kids Helpline in 2018 thanks to the generosity of supporters of the **yourtown** Art Union and donations.

Australian, Queensland and Western Australian Governments along with Corporate support, including Optus' support of the Digital Thumbprint Program and BUPA's support for the Wellbeing Program (both part of Kids Helpline @ School), provided 25% of the service's funding.

FGX provides support for KHL Circles, and the North Queensland Public Health Network supports Kids Helpline @ High School.



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Local Government and Communities**



OPTUS

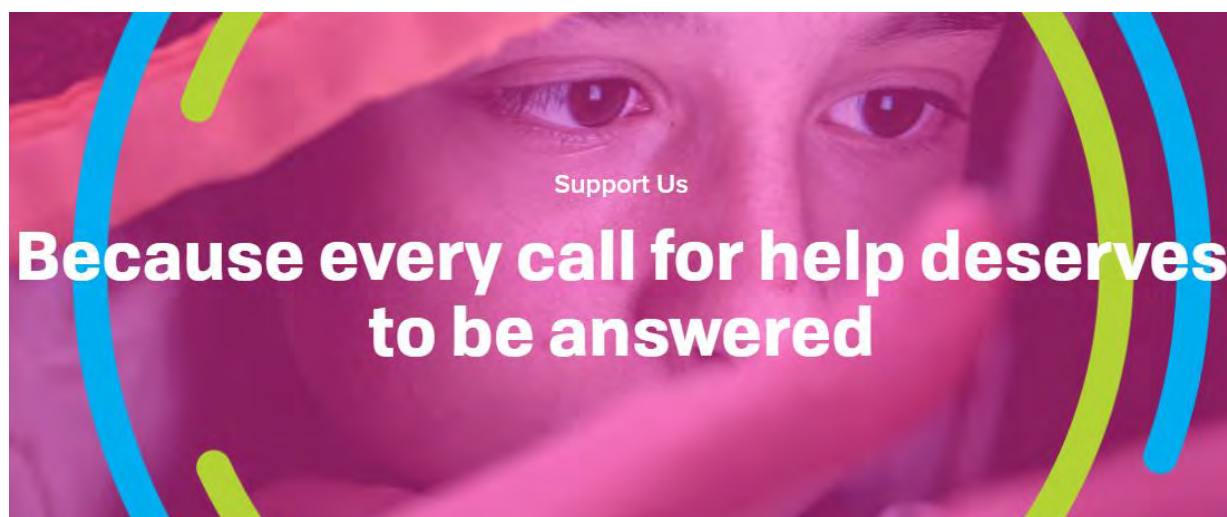


7.5 How can you support Kids Helpline?

Despite the generosity of the community, Kids Helpline is unable to meet the current demand from children and young people for counselling and other support.

'We are here any time and for any reason.' This is the promise Kids Helpline has made to the children and young people of Australia. Please help us to keep this promise by donating today:

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/about/support-us>



8. Appendix

8.1 Notes regarding data collection, analysis and interpretation

8.1.1 Limitations on counselling service data collection

Kids Helpline counsellors record information at the end of every telephone, web chat or email session. There are a maximum of 39 different fields where data may be logged; however, only 11 are mandatory (including date, time, length of session, frequency of contact, main concern or problem, problem severity, referral, and whether or not the child or young person was experiencing current thoughts of suicide, was engaged in deliberate self-injury or was assessed to have a mental health disorder or symptoms consistent with a mental health disorder, and whether or not the person was concerned about online or texting activity).

Ideally, counsellors enter information for each field. In reality, however, the amount of information recorded about each session varies due to the following:

- *Privacy and confidentiality* – Kids Helpline offers itself to children and young people as a private and confidential service. Frequently clients choose not to reveal details about themselves, particularly those that might compromise their anonymity.
- *Sensitivity of information* – the nature of some contacts is such that direct information gathering is not advisable, appropriate or possible.
- *The length or nature of the call* – at times even basic data collection is impossible or irrelevant.

Percentages and proportions presented in this report are based on those contacts for which information is available. Most tables indicate the number of contacts where data are missing and all figures report the size of the population or subpopulation for which data are available (*N*). Where missing data are substantial, this can therefore be identified.

8.1.2 Analysis

Most of the analyses presented in this report are in the form of frequencies and/or percentages of Kids Helpline contacts meeting particular criteria. Sometimes percentages in tables are calculated by row and sometimes by column depending on the purpose of the analysis. This will be indicated in the table header (either *col. %* or *row %*). Percentages are almost always provided as rounded integers, so where column or row percentages sum to slightly more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

Another reason that percentages may sum to more than 100% is where data collection fields permit multiple responses. Many of the figures presented in the report show the percentage of groups of counselling contacts with specific concerns. Because counsellors can record up to four concerns per contact, percentage frequencies in these figures will exceed 100% in most cases.

Subgroup analysis

Subgroup analysis is undertaken extensively in Chapter 3, comparing Kids Helpline counselling contacts by age group, gender, cultural background, remoteness of locality, type of support relationship to the service, and so on. Note that statistical significance is not reported for any subgroup comparisons as all the data in this chapter pertain to the population of Kids Helpline contacts in 2018, not samples of this population.

Trend analysis

Changes in a range of client characteristics, client demand and service delivery variables are analysed over the last three years (2016-2018), seven-year (2012-2018) or eleven years (2008-2018) for the most part. Occasionally trends are analysed over a longer period of time where this is possible and necessary to understanding shifts occurring in service delivery. Again, statistical significance is not reported in these analyses as the data analysed concern the population of Kids Helpline contacts during this period, not random samples of this population.

Remoteness analysis

Throughout Chapter 3, client characteristics and concerns are analysed by remoteness of locality. This analysis is based on an adaptation of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) currently used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This adaptation involves attributing a categorical descriptor of remoteness to each Australian postcode – *Major City, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, and Very Remote* – based on the majority categorisation of the postcode under the ASGS. So where a postcode may have been classified under the ASGS as 45% Inner Regional and 55% Outer Regional, in the current analysis the postcode would be classified as Outer Regional. Accordingly, the analysis of remoteness is approximate and may potentially obscure or misrepresent location-based differences.²

In addition, postcode information is available for half (52%) of counselling contacts in 2018 and there are likely to be biases associated with missing data. These factors will impact on the reliability of the remoteness analysis presented in Chapter 3 and care therefore needs to be taken with how these data are interpreted and used.

8.1.3 Other issues in interpretation

Describing but not explaining observations in the data

Throughout this report we have endeavoured to present data objectively, describing and summarising key observations for readers. With the exception of the conclusion and parts of Chapter 3 discussing trends service demand and client concerns, we have tried to avoid offering explanations for phenomena observed in the data. This is because there may be various explanations for these and without thoroughly considering other relevant sources of information and research – something that is beyond the scope of this report – explanations offered may be misleading or incorrect.

Deciding when observed differences are meaningful

There is likely to be random variation in the data collected from year to year in addition to non-random variation. In this report, variations of less than 4% over a time period of 3 to 10 years are not interpreted as meaningful and not specifically referred to.

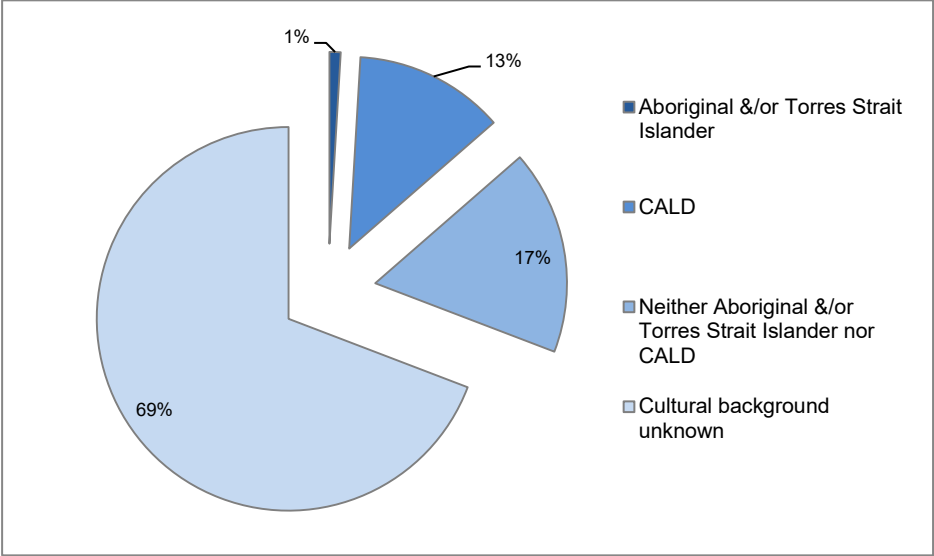
Dealing with missing data

The extent of random variation is likely to increase with the proportion of missing data and to decrease with the size of the subpopulation being analysed. Where substantial proportions of missing data exist, and/or where the subpopulation is very small, this is noted in the text along with caution about interpretation and use of the data.

For example, as shown in Figure 69 below, cultural background information is only available for 32% of counselling contacts from children and young people 5-25 years of age in 2018. Accordingly, when changes over time in the concerns of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander contacts are analysed, a substantial amount of the variation observed may be attributable to the incomplete picture we have of this very small subpopulation. There may also be biases associated with missing and known data. For example, we are more likely to know the cultural background of ongoing clients, or clients with more significant mental health concerns.

² For more information on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure refer to [http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/australian+statistical+geography+standard+\(asgs\)](http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/australian+statistical+geography+standard+(asgs)).

Figure 69. Percentage of 2018 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by cultural background (N = 67,264)



The impact of repeat contacts

Another issue that needs to be considered when interpreting the data in this report is the issue of repeat contacts. Children and young people are free to contact Kids Helpline as often as they need. Therefore, data reported may include repeat contacts from the same individuals over a period of time. This can result in the data not being reasonably representative of children and young people in a subpopulation, particularly when a subpopulation is very small or where there is a large amount of missing data related to that data collection field – for example, the client’s remoteness classification or cultural background. It may also result in the appearance of trends that are not reflective of genuine changes in the characteristics or needs of the subpopulation. Similarly, it may result in failure to identify trends that really do exist.

The existence of repeat contacts in the population of contacts analysed is another reason why statistical significance tests are avoided as these assume unique randomised sampling of a population.

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