

## Young people risk more mental health issues as wellbeing declines

**New headspace research reveals one in two young Australians are struggling to carry out everyday activities**

**Wednesday 21 October, 2020**

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation has revealed the serious impact 2020 is having on the wellbeing and mental health of young Australians, with concerning new data showing rates of psychological distress remain high or very high<sup>1</sup>, and there's an overall decline in wellbeing<sup>2</sup>.

The research was announced to coincide with the fifth annual headspace Day – a national event held during Mental Health Month that aims to support the mental health and wellbeing of all young Australians.

Jason Trethowan, CEO of headspace says, “What’s highly concerning is that one third of young Aussies are already reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress, treble what they were in 2007, but we’re also seeing the impacts of a really challenging year affecting their sense of general wellbeing.”

“Young people are telling us COVID-19 has impacted their lives significantly. They’ve missed out on many of the usual social connections and school milestones this year– and this comes on top of some of the worst natural disasters our country has faced including drought, floods and the bushfire crisis.”

“We’ve seen a drop in their ability to manage their daily activities at school, home and work and that’s affecting their sense of wellbeing, their relationships and how they cope.”

“We know there’s a direct correlation between decline in functioning over a sustained period and bigger mental health challenges, so it’s crucial we help them get on top of things now”.

“That’s why we’re using headspace Day this year to encourage all young people to think about the small steps they can take – every day – to build in some strategies to support wellbeing,” says Mr Trethowan.

“It’s a crucial part of managing mental health – whether its 15 seconds or 5 minutes, make it a habit and create some time and space to focus on the everyday things that make you smile or simply slow down and breathe a little easier.”

Emma, a member of the headspace National Youth Reference Group member shares the small steps she does every day to get through tough times, “Something I try and do every day for my mental health is putting some time aside to exercise, that might be yoga, a full work out, or even a short walk. Giving myself this time and doing something I love has been really helpful for me”.

**-ENDS-**

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<sup>1</sup> headspace National Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey. K10 Psychological Distress Score, 2020

<sup>2</sup> headspace National Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey. MyLifeTracker 2020 (May 25 – June 21)

## Notes to Editor:

[Link to insights paper can be found here](#)

### headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey 2020 (national data)

- One third of young Aussies (34%) report high or very high levels of psychological distress, higher among young women, than young men.
- Rates of high/very high psychological distress have risen among 15-17 year old young men (from 20% in 2018 to 29% in 2020).
- One in two young people (51%) were unable to carry out their daily activities on at least one day in the previous 2 weeks (41% in 2018).
- Rates of coping or 'dealing with life' have significantly dropped among 12-14 year olds (72% cope well in 2018, down to 63% in 2020), and among 22-25 year olds (54% cope well in 2018, down to 47% in 2020).

### headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey 2020 (state based data)

#### NSW:

- Three in ten young people (31%) report high or very high levels of psychological distress, higher among young women (35%), than young men (27%).
- One in two young people (48%) were unable to carry out their daily activities on at least one day in the previous 2 weeks (40% in 2018).

#### VIC:

- One in three young people (33%) report high or very high levels of psychological distress, higher among young women (44%), than young men (22%).
- One in two young people (50%) were unable to carry out their daily activities on at least one day in the previous 2 weeks (44% in 2018).

#### WA:

- Two in five young people (39%) report high or very high levels of psychological distress.
- One in two young people (52%) were unable to carry out their daily activities on at least one day in the previous 2 weeks (44% in 2018).

#### SA:

- Just over one in three young people (36%) report high or very high levels of psychological distress.
- One in two young people (51%) were unable to carry out their daily activities on at least one day in the previous 2 weeks (42% in 2018).

#### QLD:

- One in three young people (34%) report high or very high levels of psychological distress, rates are comparable between young women (35%) and young men (34%).
- Just over one in two young people (53%) were unable to carry out their daily activities on at least one day in the previous 2 weeks (38% in 2018).

**headspace collaborated with young people throughout Australia to develop the following tips to help get started on the Small Steps everyday:**

1. get in to life (and do the things you love to do)
2. learn skills for tough times
3. stay active

To get involved, follow headspace on social media and share your favourite tip or illustration using #headspacedaytips. For healthy headspace tips visit [headspace.org.au/tips](https://headspace.org.au/tips) or [headspace.org.au/parents](https://headspace.org.au/parents)

Remember, if you, or a young person you know is struggling they can seek support at headspace through face-to-face, online or telephone services.

## Media contact

For more information, call the headspace national media team's **Sasha Fox** - 0431 289 886 or send an email to [media@headspace.org.au](mailto:media@headspace.org.au)

## About headspace

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds. Each year, headspace helps thousands of young people access vital support through our headspace centres in 124 communities across Australia<sup>[1]</sup>, our online and phone counselling services, our vocational services, and our presence in schools. headspace can help young people with mental health, physical health (including sexual health) alcohol and other drug services, and work and study support. Centre details, as well as factsheets and resources for young people and their families and friends, can be located on the headspace website: [headspace.org.au](https://headspace.org.au)

<sup>[1]</sup> As at September 2020 and inclusive of licensed headspace centres, satellites and outposts

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