

# The Coddling of the Australian Mind?

**[THIS IS AN OLD VERSION OF THIS DOCUMENT. PLEASE SEE  
UPDATED VERSION HERE](#)**

An ongoing open-source literature review posted and curated by [Jonathan Haidt](#) (NYU-Stern) and [Zach Rausch](#) (NYU-Stern), with research assistance from Emma Park and Jacob Lebwhol.

The Questions: Are the trends documented in [The Coddling of the American Mind](#) (COTAM) coming to Australia, with a delay? Overprotected kids, [rising anxiety/depression](#), callout-culture on campus, political polarization... or are Australian universities, and Australian Gen Z, different from their American counterparts? (For companion documents for New Zealand and other countries, [click here](#).)

Because of the ubiquity and power of confirmation biases and motivated reasoning, we particularly welcome input from critics who can find evidence that the trends are NOT coming to Australia. Please add comments by clicking the “add comment” button that appears in the right-hand margin. Add your name if you want credit for the source, or for finding evidence. Links to empirical research or high quality journalism would be most appreciated.

The first draft of this document was created by Jonathan Haidt, with assistance from Chris Frka, Sholom Gutfreid, Cameron How, Henry Matthews, and Callum Newton.

Last updated: Dec 2, 2024.

## Notes:

- See our companion reviews:
  - [Adolescent mood disorders since 2010: A collaborative review](#) [with Jean Twenge]
  - [Social Media and Mental Health: A Collaborative Review](#) [with Jean Twenge]
  - See also [additional Google docs](#) laying out evidence for trends in mental health and social media use in Canada, New Zealand, Japan and other countries.

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# 1. MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS?

The Question: Is there a rise in rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicide, beginning just after the majority of Australian teens become active daily users of social media? [See here](#) for evidence of such a rise in the US and UK.

## 1.1 JOURNALISM ABOUT SUCH A RISE

[We bear in mind that such articles may reflect “moral panic” and are not decisive evidence of a rise]

**1.1.1** [Karp P. \(2019\)](#) Coalition vows to 'break the curse of youth suicide' with mental health package by The Guardian.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Coalition promises \$42m on mental health initiatives for young and Indigenous Australians.

NOTES: 1. The Coalition, also known as the [Liberal-National Coalition](#), is an alliance of centre-right political parties that forms one of the two major groupings in Australian federal politics (see 7.1 for more details) .

2. The Coalition **pledged \$42m** on top of \$461m in budget for mental health and suicide prevention for young and indigenous Australians.

3. Scott Morrison (the Prime Minister of Australia and leader of the Liberal Party) said he would do “**whatever it takes and whatever we can to break the curse of youth suicide in our country** and ensure young people get the support they need.”

COMMENT: It is important to note that this article talks about access to appropriate mental healthcare being the problem, not social media.

1.1.2 [Novak \(2016\)](#). Crying out for help — young South Australians self-harming to deal with their emotional pain. *The Advertiser*.

1.1.3 [Longbottom \(2016\)](#) Suicide rates for young Australians highest in 10 years, researchers call for new prevention strategies. *ABC News*.

ABSTRACT: Suicide rates among young Australians are at their highest level in 10 years, despite a range of prevention strategies and investment from government, according to new research.

FIGURES:

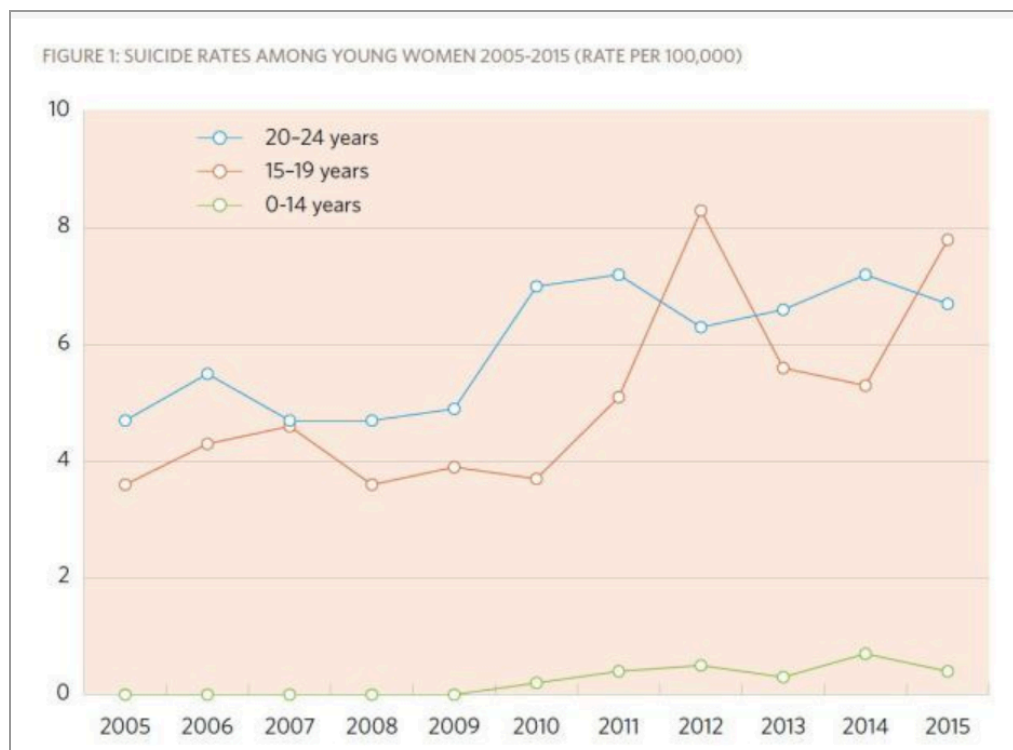


Figure 1: There was substantial rise in the suicide rates of young women in Australia from 2005 to 2015. Most noticeably, the suicide rate of Australian women 15-19 nearly doubled in that time.

NOTES: 1. The report was carried out by youth mental health service **Orygen**.



2. The report highlighted that although **suicide rates among young men were still higher** than women, **female suicide rates had doubled over the past 10 years.**
3. It also found **youth suicides were twice as likely to happen in clusters than adult suicides.** For example, one cluster included 21 young people had taken their lives in a remote town in central Queensland between 2010 and 2012.
4. Dr Richard Burns from the Australian National University, warned the **alarming figures should be viewed with caution.** "Most of the purported doubling in rates amongst teenage females occurred with a sudden increase in 2015, it will **take several years to confirm that this is a trend,**" he said. [See 1.3.4, below; the rate for girls dipped in 2016, but was back up near the top in 2017]

**1.1.4 [Novak L. \(2016\)](#)** Mission Australia's latest Youth Survey puts mental health in top three concerns after alcohol and drug use

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Mental health concerns have, for the first time, risen into the top three issues that most worry young Australians, a national youth survey shows.

NOTES: 1. The [15th annual Youth Survey by Mission Australia](#) shows that the top 3 issues are alcohol and drug use, discrimination, and mental health

**1.1.5 [Two mental health staff to be sent to every NSW school \(2019\)](#)**

ABSTRACT: Two dedicated mental health staff will be sent to every public high school in NSW under a state government plan to help young people struggling with bullying and stress.

NOTES: 1. "The experts will be on hand to offer extra support and advice for students struggling with **anxiety, stress and bullying.** They will also determine if students need to be referred to experts outside the school environment."

2. NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian said, "We know in this **social media** age the challenges are huge, whether it's dealing with bullying, whether it's dealing with relationships, whether it's dealing with a whole range of other issues. Often teenagers need that extra support."

**1.1.6 [Paine M. \(2015\)](#)** Public school parents fear for students' mental health

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Parents are demanding more psychologists and social workers in public schools amid fears of **increasing anxiety and a backlog of cases.**

NOTES: 1. President of the Tasmanian Association of State School, Jenny Eddington, said “Teachers have reported for a long time there are increasing **numbers of kids coming through suffering trauma** of one sort or other, affecting their health and learning and that anxiety disorders are on the increase.”

**1.1.7** [Bahr \(2024\)](#). Visualised: How the mental health of Australians is ‘getting worse’. *SBS News*.

EXCERPT: Samuel Harvey, executive director at the Black Dog Institute, said mental health in Australia has become worse over the past decade.

“We’ve got a situation now where mental illness is the number one reason people are visiting GPs across Australia and suicide is the number one cause of death amongst young Australians,” he said.

“We know it’s getting worse, but we don’t know why.”

[NOTE from Emma Park: The article includes data from the Household Income Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey and the 2020-2022 National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Both studies are linked in the section below.]

**1.1.8** [Australian Associated Press \(2023\)](#). Victoria’s coroner alarmed by marked rise in youth suicides. *The Guardian*.

EXCERPT: Thirteen young Victorians have killed themselves in the first three months of 2023, with the state’s coroner saying the community needs to do more to intervene. In figures released by the coroners court on Wednesday, nine of the 13 deaths were males and four were females between the ages of 13 and 17 years old. There were between two and six deaths for the same three-month period in the four years previous. The total number of suicides for the age group in the four years prior ranged between 15 to 23.

**1.1.9** [Gillespie \(2024\)](#). With youth suicide rates rising in Queensland, parents who have lost children are speaking out. *The Guardian*.

EXCERPT: In the past five years, 128 children have died by suicide, with the rate increasing by 1.9% each year over that period, according to an annual report by the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for those aged 10–17 years, with 20 children dying of suicide in 2022-3, the report says. This is largely due to the number of traffic deaths, which was previously the primary cause of death, reducing for children, according to Prof Kairi Kolves, from the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention at Griffith University.

But Prof Jo Robinson, who leads the youth suicide prevention team at Orygen, says **the rates of child suicide increased from 2009 to 2020** on a national scale. Reliable data for subsequent years is not yet available.

“Queensland is not alone in this problem,” she says. **“We’re seeing rising mental health crisis across the country and it really just needs to be addressed by federal and state governments.”**

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

## 1.2 JOURNALISM SKEPTICAL OF SUCH A RISE

[None found yet]

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

## 1.3 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF SUCH A RISE

### 1.3.1 [Student stress on the rise - report \(2018\)](#). *The Educator*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: New research shows that the **mental health and well-being of Australian students is significantly worse than it was 15 years ago**, suggesting a worrying trend that schools and parents need to address.

NOTES: 1. The large-scale study, conducted by the [Australian Council for Educational Research \(ACER\)](#) and Melbourne University educational psychologist, Michael Bernard,

surveyed 135,000 young people in 700 schools about their social and emotional well-being. Findings (2017):

1a. **~50%** of Australian students reported feeling “**very stressed**”, **up from 28% in 2003** when the study began.

1b. Students’ confidence doing difficult school work fell from **76% to 59%**.

1c. **38%** admitted to “**giving up**” when they became confused or bored in the classroom.

1d. **70%** of students felt they could improve their school work

2. Professor Bernard told The Australian that one of the report’s more concerning findings was a **lack of resilience** observed among a growing number of young people.

2a. “We see students who are unable to stand up to pressure - be it a NAPLAN test or simply schools expecting lots more of them - **because parents tend to helicopter.**”

2b. “**Over-involved, very concerned parents** are trying to do everything for their children, taking on too much responsibility on their behalf, and as a result kids lack confidence.”

3. [Mission Australia’s Youth Survey 2017](#) found that mental health issues topped the list of issues for the first time in the survey’s history. The report surveys a record 24,055 people aged 15-19.

3a. **33.7%** identified **mental health as a national concern**, more than doubling since 2015 (14.9%)

### 1.3.2 [Psychological Distress in Young People in Australia Fifth Biennial Youth Mental Health Report: 2012-2020](#)

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: The Mission Australia Youth Survey is the largest annual survey of young people of its kind in Australia. In 2020, Mission Australia conducted its 19th annual survey, receiving 25,800 responses from young people aged 15 to 19 years. The 2020 Youth Survey was conducted between April and August 2020, when much of the country was subject to restrictions on movement and activities due to COVID-19...

**In 2012, close to one in five (18.6%) young people report psychological distress and in 2020, it is over a quarter (26.6%).** Statistical tests confirmed that proportions of psychological distress have generally increased over the period between 2012 and 2020. **There were no significant differences between 2019 and 2020 proportions ( $p > .14$ )... twice as many females compared to males experienced psychological distress since 2012.** While both proportions have risen between 2012 and 2020, the proportion of females with psychological distress has shown a much greater increase (11.7%) — from over one fifth (22.4%) in 2012 to over one third (34.1%) in 2020.

Comparatively, the proportion of males with psychological distress has seen a much smaller increase (2.7%) — from 12.6% in 2012 to 15.3% in 2020. Statistical tests confirmed that proportions of psychological distress have increased to a greater extent for females compared to males from 2012 to 2020

### Psychological Distress, Australia (Ages 15-19)

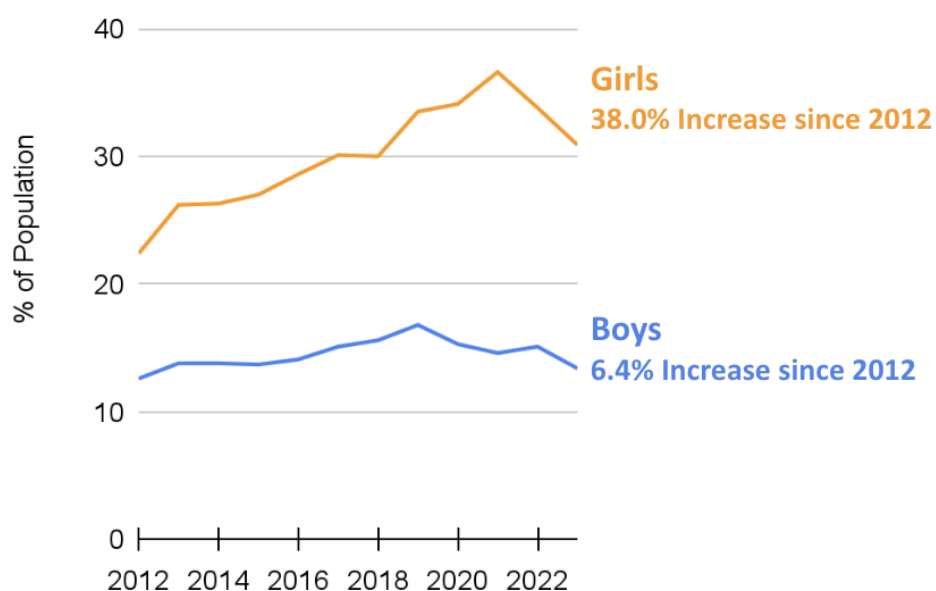


FIGURE: Psychological distress in young people aged 15-19, by gender, 2012-2020. Graphed by Zach Rausch, from the data in the report. “Psychological distress” is based on a widely accepted measure of non-specific psychological distress, the **Kessler 6**.

#### 1.3.3 [The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey](#) (HILDA). Melbourne Institute.

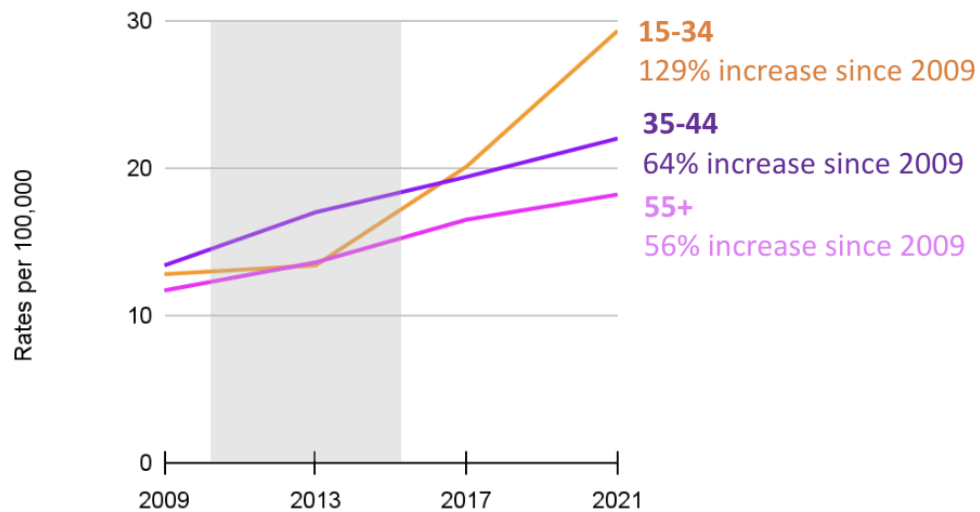
See p. 127 of report for stats on depression and anxiety:

**Table 8.1: Prevalence of selected serious illness conditions, by sex and age group, 2009, 2013 and 2017 (%)**

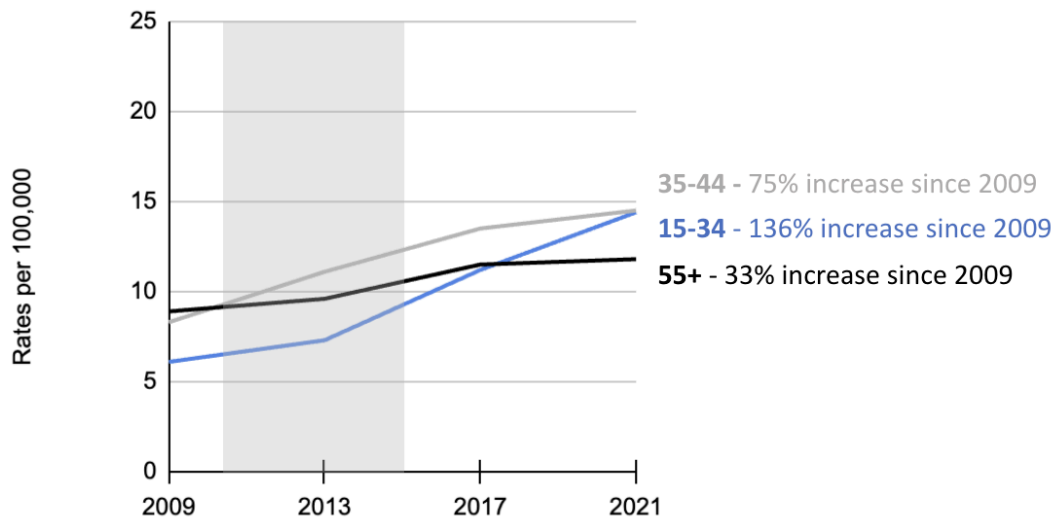
	<i>Males</i>			<i>Females</i>		
	<i>15-34</i>	<i>35-54</i>	<i>55 and over</i>	<i>15-34</i>	<i>35-54</i>	<i>55 and over</i>
<b>2009</b>						
Arthritis or osteoporosis	1.4	9.2	29.7	1.6	12.6	47.9
Asthma	11.7	7.1	7.8	14.1	11.3	12.7
Any type of cancer	0.3	1.5	8.8	0.5	2.2	5.8
Chronic bronchitis or emphysema	0.2	0.9	5.6	0.6	1.7	4.4
Type 1 diabetes	0.7	0.8	1.8	0.7	0.7	1.0
Type 2 diabetes	0.8	3.1	15.0	0.6	3.4	9.1
Depression or anxiety	6.1	8.9	8.3	12.8	13.4	11.7
Other mental illness	1.5	1.3	2.0	1.3	1.5	1.0
Heart disease	0.3	2.0	13.6	0.2	1.6	11.1
High blood pressure	2.1	11.8	36.3	1.9	11.1	43.0
Any other serious circulatory condition (e.g., stroke, hardening of the arteries)	0.1	1.4	7.0	0.4	1.4	5.8
<b>2013</b>						
Arthritis or osteoporosis	1.5	8.7	28.6	2.4	11.8	47.1
Asthma	9.4	6.9	9.5	11.6	10.5	12.1
Any type of cancer	0.8	1.9	9.4	0.4	1.7	5.0
Chronic bronchitis or emphysema	0.1	0.9	4.5	0.3	1.4	4.6
Type 1 diabetes	0.4	0.8	2.4	0.5	0.6	1.5
Type 2 diabetes	0.3	3.4	15.1	0.3	3.1	10.0
Depression or anxiety	7.3	11.1	9.6	13.4	17.0	13.6
Other mental illness	2.5	1.8	1.0	1.9	1.8	1.1
Heart disease	0.1	2.1	14.7	0.2	1.1	10.6
High blood pressure	1.7	11.7	40.8	0.9	10.1	44.3
Any other serious circulatory condition (e.g., stroke, hardening of the arteries)	0.3	1.8	7.3	0.8	1.4	5.6
<b>2017</b>						
Arthritis or osteoporosis	1.1	9.2	27.6	1.6	11.2	45.9
Asthma	10.0	8.0	9.0	11.5	11.7	12.9
Any type of cancer	0.2	2.0	9.1	0.4	2.5	5.6
Chronic bronchitis or emphysema	0.4	0.7	4.4	0.2	1.5	4.6
Type 1 diabetes	0.5	0.8	2.0	0.4	0.9	1.2
Type 2 diabetes	0.5	3.3	15.2	0.5	3.1	10.3
Depression or anxiety	11.2	13.5	11.5	20.1	19.4	16.5

When we graph these numbers for the “Depression or anxiety” line, for males and females separately, we see that the lines are rising for all age groups, for both sexes, but we also see confirmation that something is happening to Australian teens: the rise since 2013 is much sharper, compared to other age groups, for both sexes:

### Australian Females: Depression and Anxiety Rates



### Australian Males: Depression and Anxiety Rates



Source: [The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey](#) (HILDA). Melbourne Institute. Data graphed by Cameron How & Jon Haidt, from p. 127. The graph includes the most recent data from 2021 as well.

COMMENT: The above report illustrates an increase in the prevalence of depression among 12-17 year olds from 2.9% in 1998, to 5.0% in 2014. **There was a higher base rate and increase for girls in this age range, from 3.1% to 5.8% than there was for boys, at 2.7% to 4.3%.** The prevalence of depression remained constant at 1.4% for 6-11 year olds between 1998 and 2014.

**1.3.4** [Australia's Health Snapshots 2022: Mental Health of Young Australians \(2022\).](#)  
*AIHW.* (Chapter 8 in [Australia's Health 2022](#))

FIGURES:



**Figure 8.1: Persons aged 16 and over reporting high or very high psychological distress, by age group and sex, 2002 to 2020**

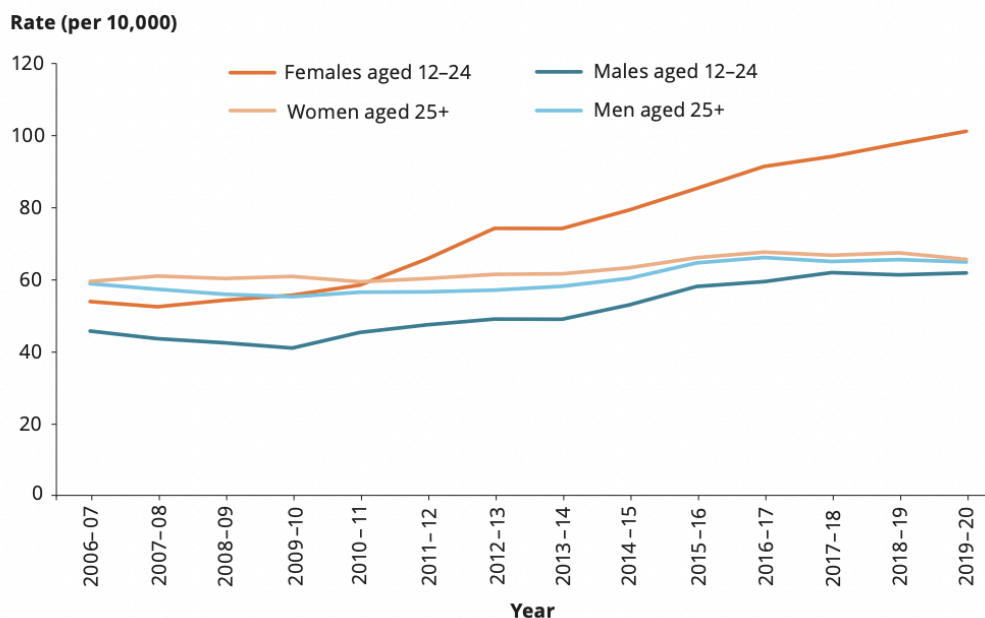


**Notes**

1. K10 is a 10-item questionnaire that measures anxiety, depression, agitation, and psychological fatigue in the most recent 4-week period.
2. People whose responses had a K10 score of 22 or above were indicated to have high or very high distress.
3. The K10 questions were included in the NSW Population Health Survey every year between 2002 and 2011. After 2011 and until 2019, they were included every second year. The questions were also included in the 2020 survey.
4. The indicator shows self-reported data collected through Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing. To counter diminishing coverage of the population by landline telephone numbers (<85% since 2010), a mobile phone number sampling frame was introduced in the 2012 survey.
5. The inclusion of mobile phone numbers has substantially increased the Aboriginal sample and this change in design means that the 2012 NSW Population Health Survey estimates reflect both changes that have occurred in the population over time and changes due to the improved design of the survey.
6. Estimates were weighted to adjust for differences in the probability of selection among respondents and were benchmarked to the estimated residential population using the latest available ABS mid-year population estimates.

Source: CEE 2020.

**Figure 8.2: Overnight admitted mental health hospitalisation rate (per 10,000 population) with specialised care, by age group and sex, 2006–07 to 2019–20**

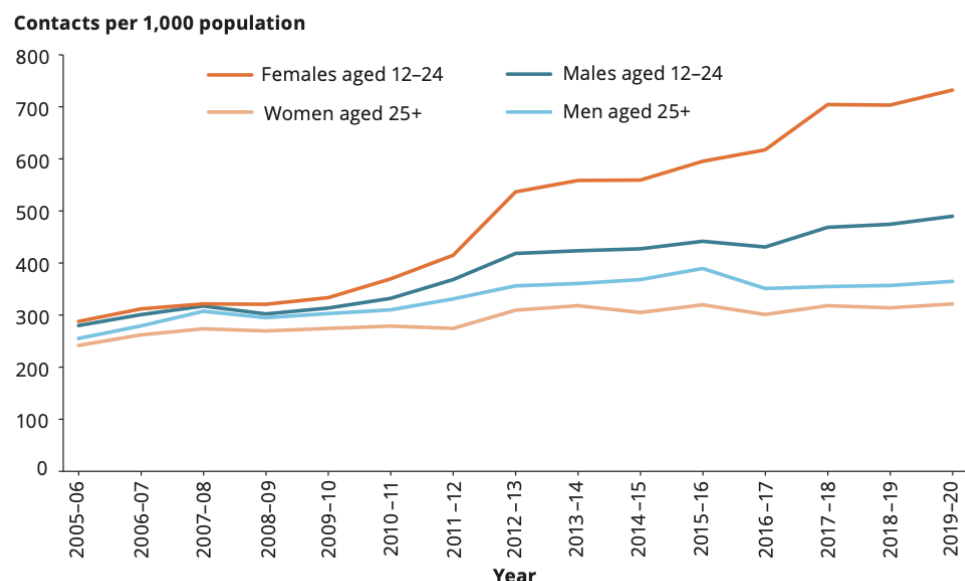


Notes

1. Hospitalisations with a care type of Newborn (without qualified days), and records for Hospital boarders and Posthumous organ procurement have been excluded.
2. The details of the process for categorising a hospitalisation as being related (or not) to mental health can be found in the online Classification codes section of the Mental health services in Australia report (AIHW 2021i).<sup>1</sup>
3. The data do not include records for which demographic information was missing or not reported.

Source: AIHW 2021h.

**Figure 8.3: Community mental health care service contacts per 1,000 population, by age group and sex, 2005–06 to 2019–20**

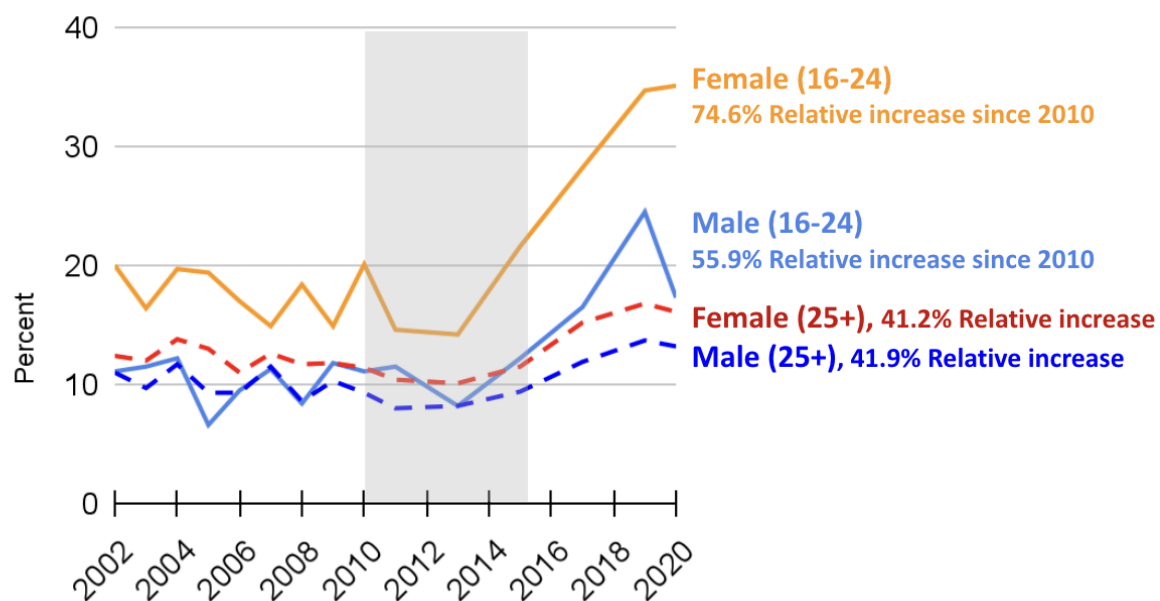


**Notes**

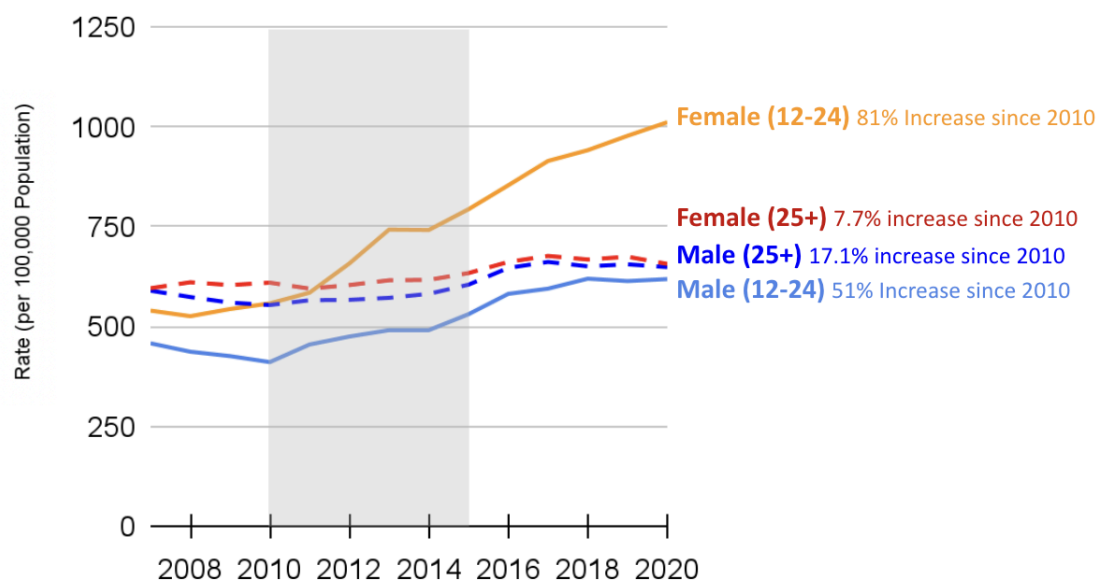
1. Rates for specific age groups, sex and jurisdictions are crude rates based on the 2011 Census estimated resident populations as at 31 December of the reference year.
2. Queensland transitioned to new clinical information systems in 2008–09, which affected activity data reporting.
3. Changes to South Australian legislation and data collection methods for involuntary care resulted in an increase in the number of contacts with involuntary legal status in 2010–11. Time series comparisons should therefore be made with caution. South Australia transitioned to a new hospital-based system during 2013–14 which had an impact on activity data reporting for a small number of hospital-based services.
4. In 2011–12 and 2012–13, protected industrial action in Victoria caused service level collection gaps. Victoria required that data for 2011–12 and 2012–13 be excluded from all totals, with no proxy data included for Victoria when calculating national totals. Therefore, any calculations involving national totals during these reporting years are not valid. Rates for 2011–12 and 2012–13 were calculated using adjusted population data, which accounts for missing data as detailed in the classifications and technical notes section of the Mental health services in Australia report (AIHW 2021i). Comparisons over time should be made with caution.
5. Industrial action in Tasmania in 2011–12, 2012–13 and 2018–19 affected the quality and quantity of Tasmania's data. For more details, see the Data source and key concepts section within the Community mental health care services section of Mental health services in Australia report (AIHW 2021i). Industrial action for 2018–19 lasted from September 2018 to September 2019, partially affecting 2019–20 reported data.
6. Tasmania transitioned to a new clinical information system in 2013–14; this had an impact on activity data reporting.
7. Victorian data were affected by industrial activity in 2015–16 and 2016–17, but there was no reduction in actual services. The collection of non-clinical and administrative data was affected, with impacts on community mental health service activity and client outcome measures (see the data quality statement for the 2019–20 Community mental health care National Minimum Data Set at <https://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.html/itemid/600075>).

Regraphed by Zach Rausch (See [spreadsheet](#))

## Psychological Distress, Australia



## Overnight Psychiatric Emergency Department Visits, Australia

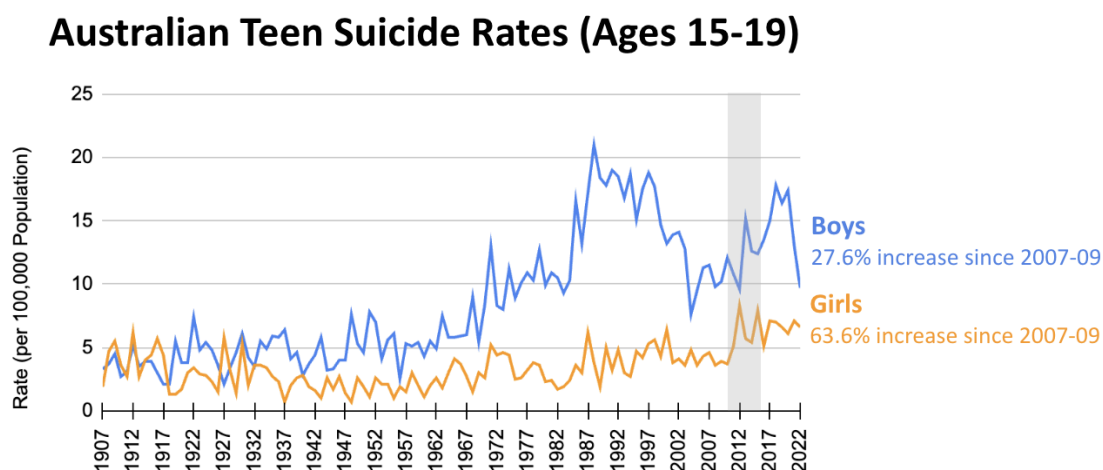


% change since between 2020 to 2010			
	2010	2020	% Change

Male (12-24)	41	61.9	50.98%
Female (12-24)	56	101.2	80.7%

**1.3.5** [The mental health of children and adolescents, part 5. \(2015\)](#). Australian Government Department of Health.

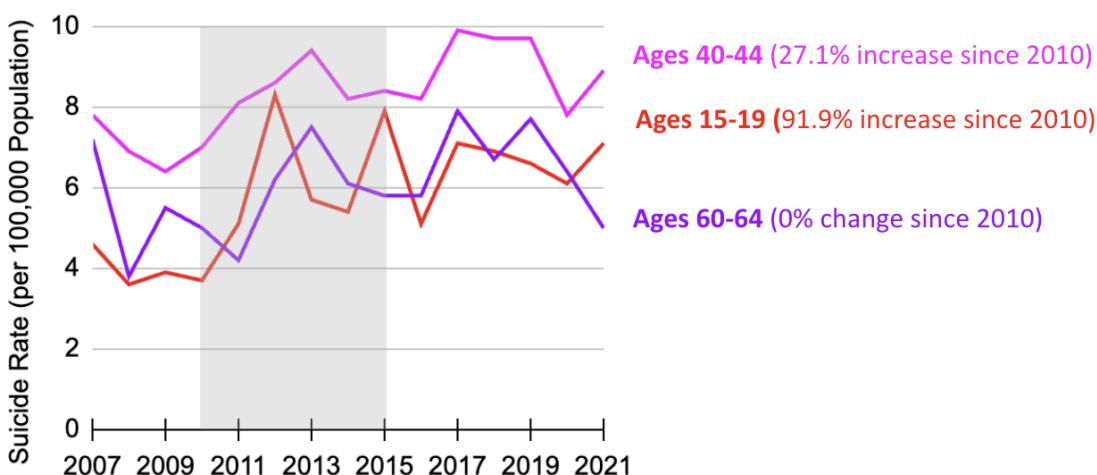
**1.3.6** [Suicide and Self-harm Monitoring](#). Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Datasets can be downloaded [here](#). Graphed by Zach Rausch — you can see his spreadsheet [here](#).



SOURCE: Australia Institute of Health and Welfare

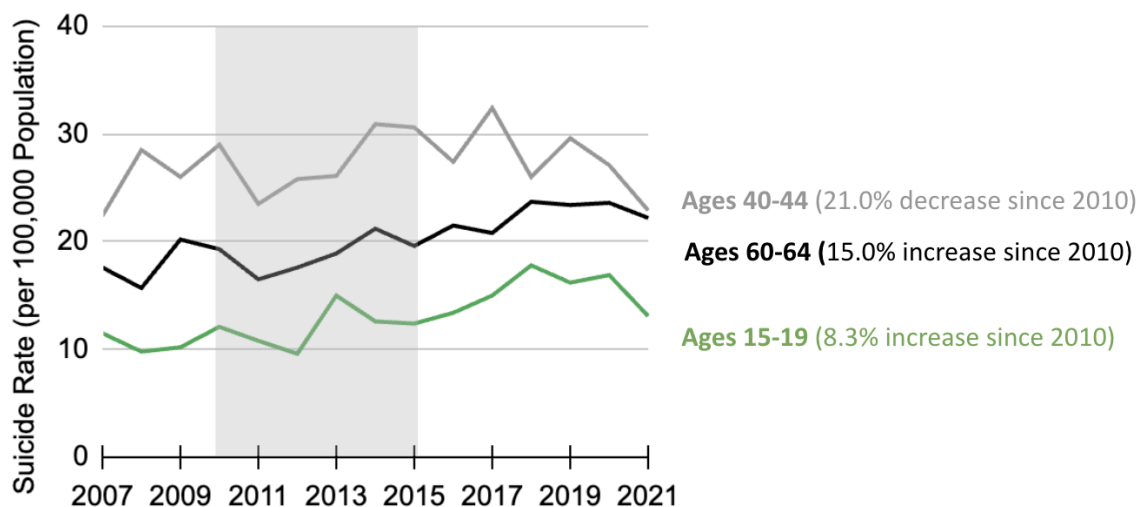
From [Australia Bureau of Statistics](#), from the individual yearly reports from 2007 - 2020 (Data from 2010 - 2020 came from the [2020 Causes of Death, Australia](#) report, Data from 2007 - 2009 came from the [2012 Causes of Death, Australia](#) report)

## Australian Female Suicide Rates



Here's a look at this same dataset but broken down by different age groups (Male only).

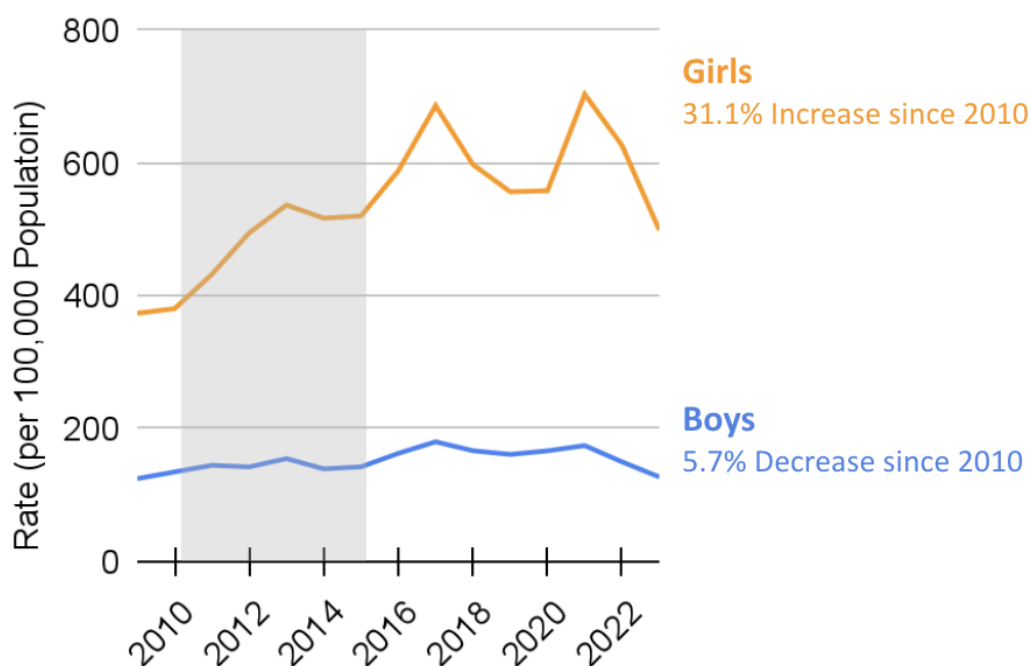
## Australian Male Suicide Rates



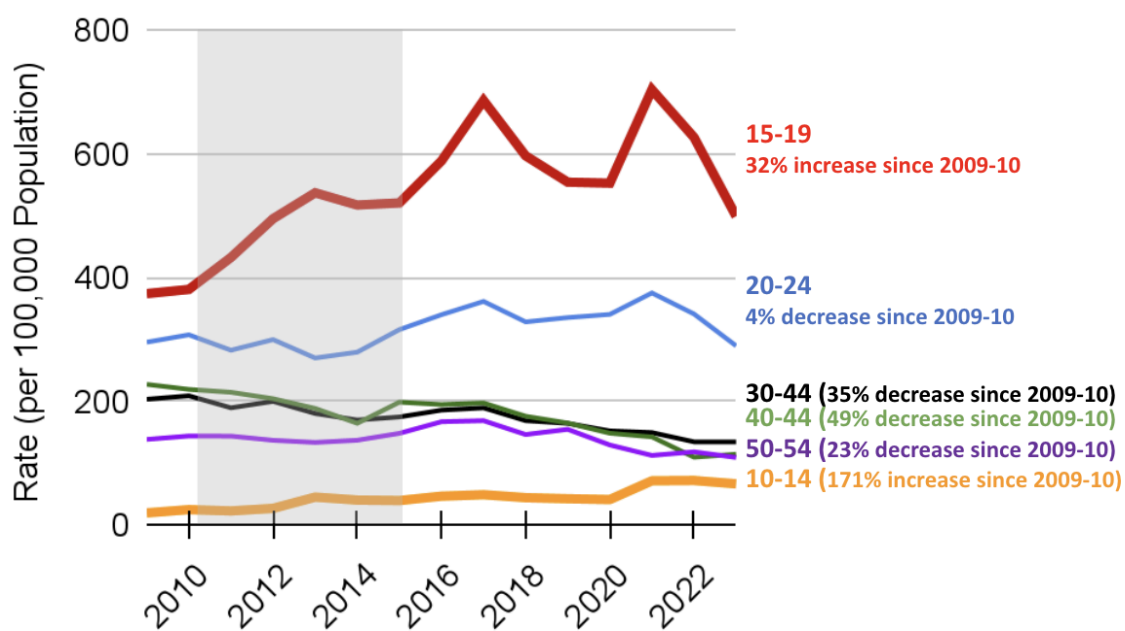
**1.3.7** [2020–21 National Hospital Morbidity Database—Intentional self-harm hospitalisations](#). Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Datasets can be downloaded [here](#). Graphed by Zach Rausch — you can see his spreadsheet [here](#).



## Self-Harm Hospitalizations, Australian (Ages 15-19)



## Self-Harm Hospitalizations, Australian Females

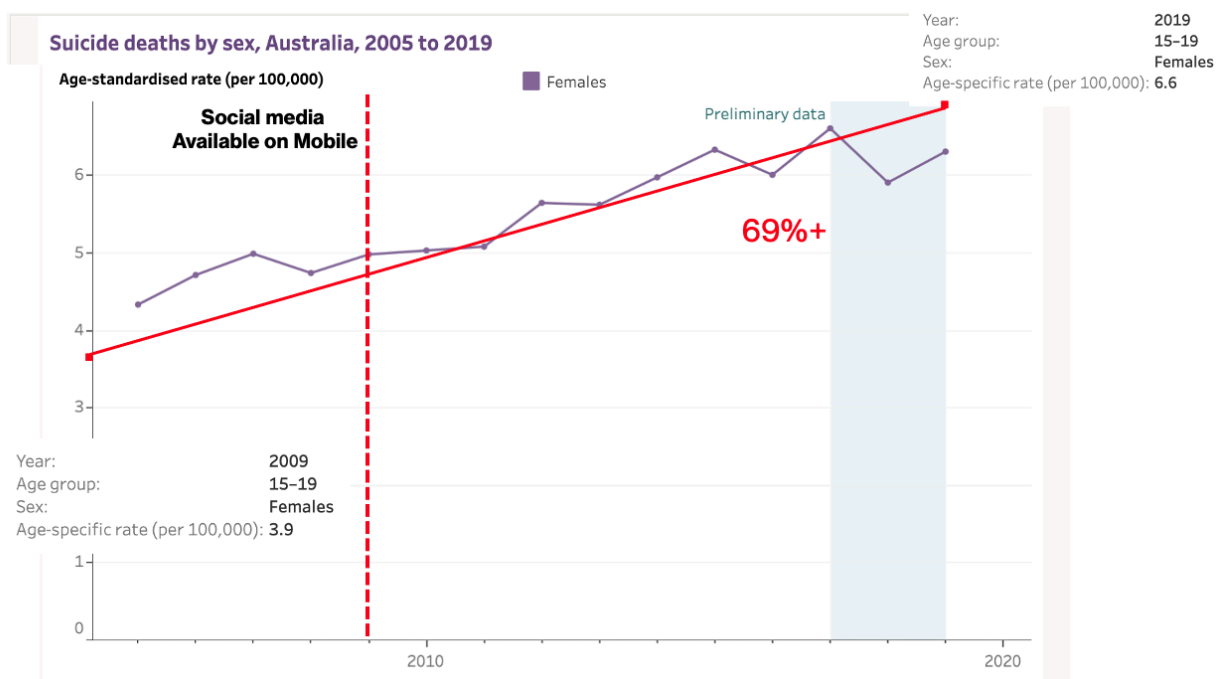


SOURCE: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

### 1.3.8 Information on Australian Female Suicide, Self-Harm, and Developments in Social Media [Thanks to Jade Hutchinson, who added this whole section]

#### ***Suicide, females, aged 15-19***

Statistical data gathered by the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#) shows that Australian female suicide for ages 15 to 19 have increased by 69-70% since social media became globally available on mobile phones in 2009 until 2019 (Figure. 1).

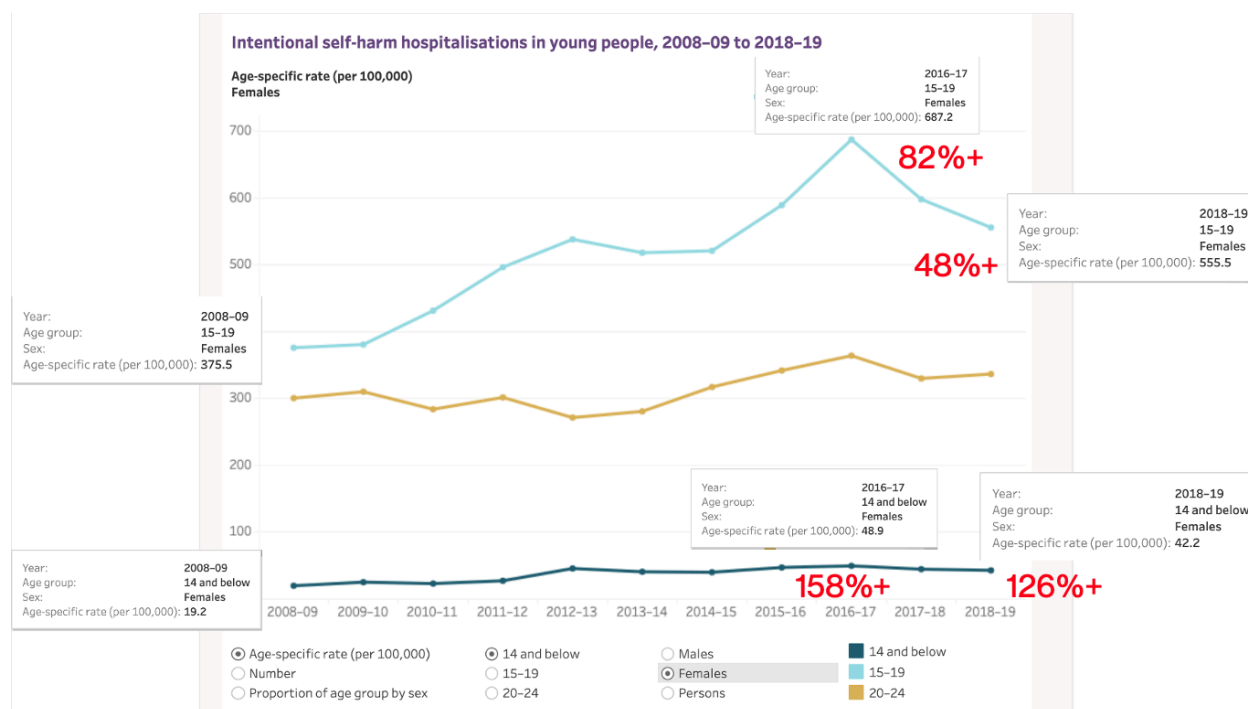


**Figure 1.** illustrates an overall, upward trend in Australian female suicide from 2005 to 2019, specific to ages 15-19

#### ***Intentional Self-harm, females, aged 15–19 and 14 or below***

From 2009 to 2019, there was a 48% increase in hospitalizations for self-harm among females aged 15–19, peaking in 2016/2017 with an 82% increase. For females aged 14 or younger there was a 126% increase in hospitalizations for self-harm, similarly, peaking in 2016/2017 with an 158% increase (Figure. 2). While rates of self-harm seem to decline from 2018 to 2019, this overwhelming, overall upward trend matches that of other countries like the United States.



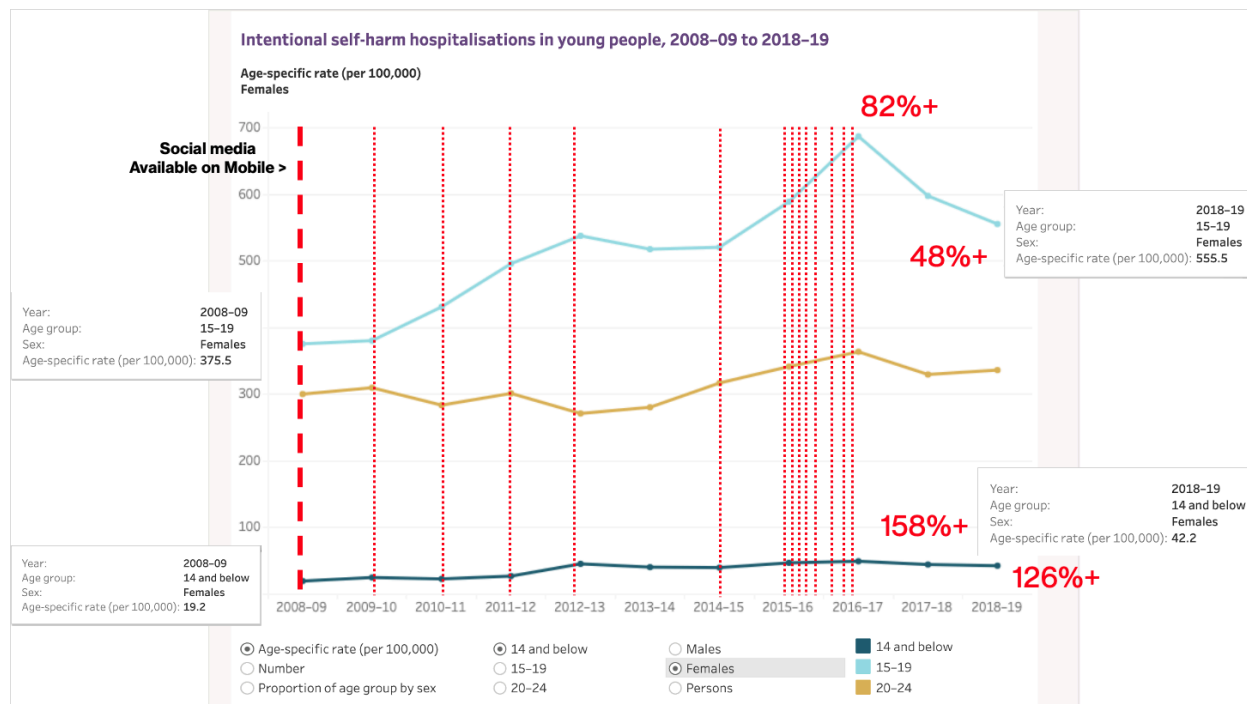


**Figure 2.** illustrates an overall, upward trend in Australian female self-harm from 2008 to 2019, specific to ages 14 and below and 15-19.

During these peak periods in Australian female suicide, between 2009 – 2012 and 2015 – 2017, there were several major developments in social networking technology (Figure. 3). While it is not possible to prove causation, there exist straightforward correlations between rates of Australian female self-harm and developments in social media. For instance, the following are few of many developments during the aforementioned peak periods:

- In 2009, social media became globally available on mobile phones.
- In 2009, Facebook added the 'Like' button to the platform's interface.
- In 2010, the iPhone 4 was released with a built-in, front-facing camera.
- In 2010, Facebook became the most popular social media site.
- In 2011, Instagram introduced 'filters', allowing users to easily alter their photos.
- In 2012, YouTube launched their new interface and altered the platform's algorithm from a view-based to a watch time-based system.
- By 2012 and 2013, over half of the total Australian population were now signed up to Facebook and watching YouTube, and two-thirds of Australian women surveyed aged 18–35 took selfies as the most common purpose for posting on Facebook.
- In 2015, Discord was launched, Snapchat introduced selfie and geo-location filters, and a new way to view content from selected influencers.

- In February 2016, Facebook introduced Reactions, Twitter adopted Facebook's infinite timeline algorithm, Instagram allowed users to create and consume content with multiple accounts.
- In March 2016, Instagram replaced their timeline feed for one similarly dictated by a watch time-based algorithm.
- In April 2016, Facebook introduced Live streaming.
- In August 2016, Instagram adopted Snapchat's 'stories' and Twitter introduced features to filter user content on their timeline.
- In September 2016, Facebook's Messenger also adopted the 'stories' feature.
- In October 2016, Facebook launched Marketplace.
- From October to December 2016, Boomerang was added to Instagram, users can tag each other, save posts, and post live streams on Instagram.
- In early 2017, Tik-Tok was launched.

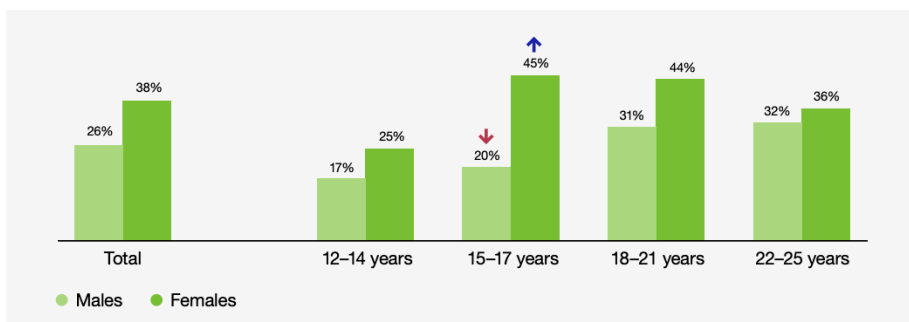


**Figure 3.** illustrates an overall, upward trend in Australian female self-harm from 2008 to 2019, specific to ages 14 and below, 15-19, and 20-24. While the larger, dashed line represents when social media first became globally available on mobile phones, each smaller, dotted line represents the approximate timing of each above-mentioned development in social networking technology. This figure does not illustrate causation but straightforward correlations between rates of Australian female self-harm and major developments in social media technology.

### 1.3.9 [headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey 2018](#)

**Insight 1**

**Rates of psychological distress are higher among young females, particularly among those aged 15-17 and 18-21 years.**

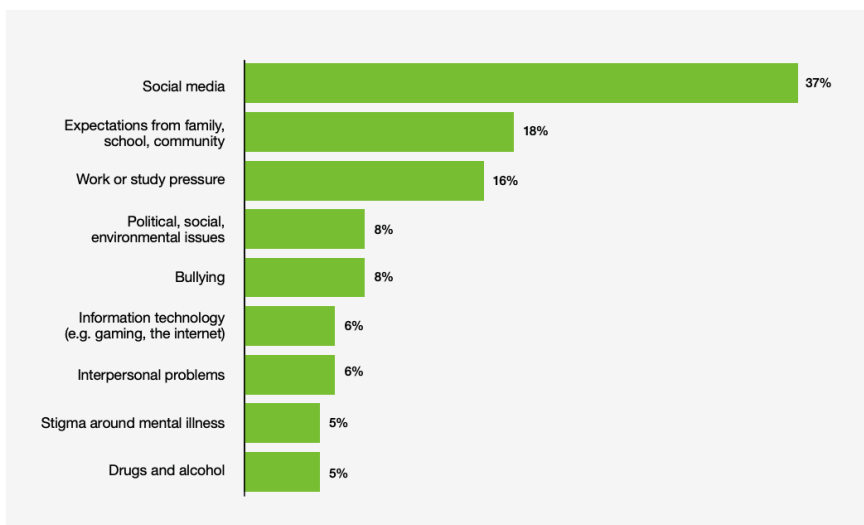
**Figure 3.**

Psychological distress –  
% high or very high  
Gender

from p. 12 of the report.

**Insight 34**

**Young people think social media is the main reason youth mental health is getting worse.**

**Figure 55.**

Reasons for the opinion that  
the mental health of young  
people is getting worse

From p. 52 of the report

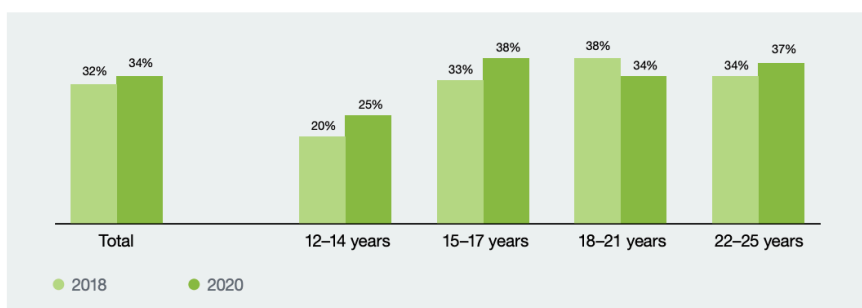
**2020 UPDATE:** [Insights: youth mental health and wellbeing over time](#). headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey 2020.

**EXCERPT: In June 2020, rates of psychological distress remain high among Australian young people, with one in three reporting high or very high levels of distress (34%). This is comparable to the rate seen in 2018 (32%).** At the community level, young people's mental health (in terms of symptoms of depression and anxiety) does not appear to have been affected in early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, however their wellbeing does appear to be impacted.

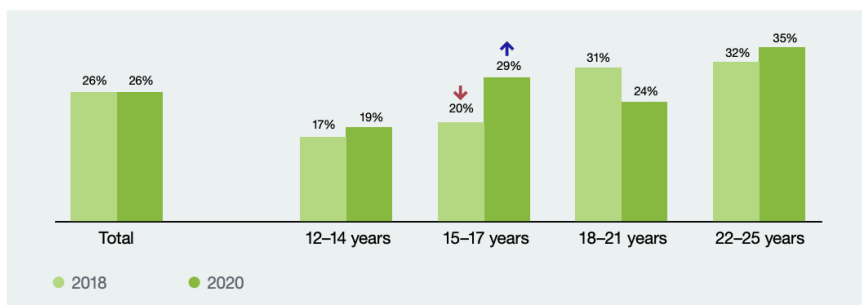
#### SELECT FIGURES:

##### Insight 1:

**Rates of high/very high psychological distress have risen among 15–17 year old young men, but remain stable among all other groups.**



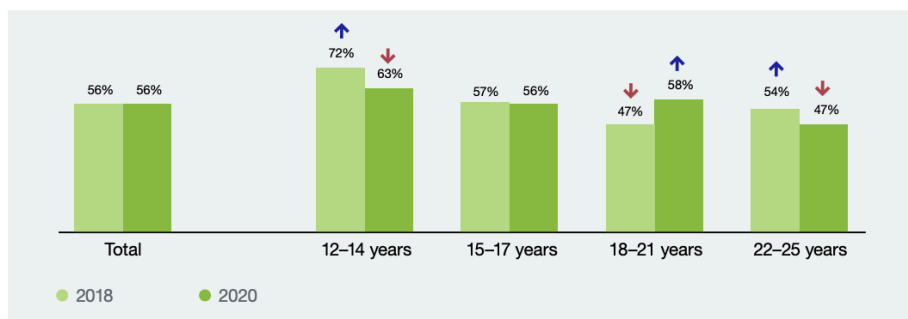
**Figure 1.**  
Psychological distress  
% high or very high  
Young people



**Figure 2.**  
Psychological distress  
% high or very high  
Young men

**Insight 2:**

**In 2020, 12–14 year olds and 22–25 year olds are coping or dealing with life less well than they were in 2018.**



**Figure 4.**  
My Life Tracker: Coping –  
% High (80-100)  
Young people

**2022 UPDATE:** [headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey 2022.](#)



**New research from headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation shows almost two-thirds of young people feeling left out often or some of the time (62%), with many feeling they are cut off from the world.**

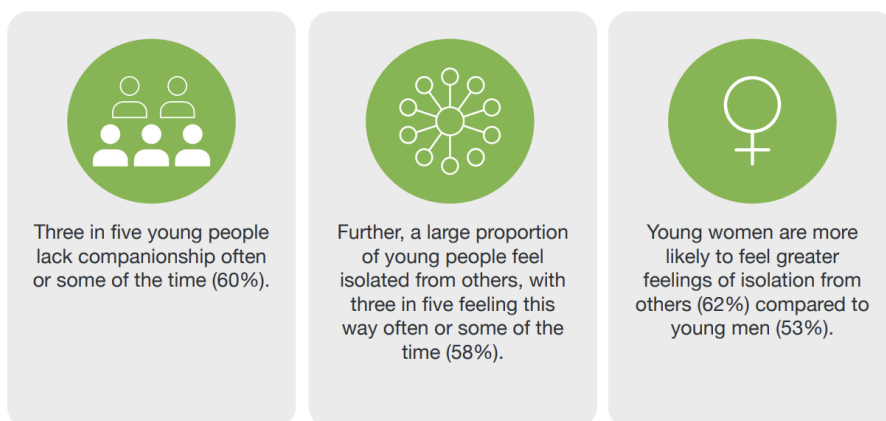


Figure from the infographic for 2022 Insights: Loneliness

[NOTE from Emma Park: Doesn't directly address whether rates of loneliness have risen across time.]

**1.3.10 [Parkinson \(2011\)](#). *For Kid's Sake: Repairing the Social Environment for Australian Children and Young People* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 1967243).**

**ABSTRACT: This Report demonstrates from a large body of research evidence, that there has been a very serious deterioration in the wellbeing of children and young people in Australia in the last ten-fifteen years. The speed of that deterioration is startling. The most serious concerns relate to the wellbeing of adolescents, particularly teenage girls. The evidence for the deteriorating mental health of adolescents is consistent with findings from a large body of research from North America and Europe. The decline in the mental health of adolescents has long-term implications for future generations of children.**

There are multiple reasons for these adverse trends, but a major cause is likely to be the substantial increase in family conflict and family breakdown over the last 30 years. In Australia, the likelihood that a child will not be living with both biological parents by the age of 15 has almost doubled within a generation. This is for two reasons. First, many more children are now being born into single mother families, and secondly, there has been a substantial increase in cohabiting couples having children. The odds of such cohabiting relationships breaking up are many times higher than for married couples. Children are affected both by family conflict and parental separation. They are indeed connected, because conflict between parents does not end on separation. Family breakdown also exposes children to an increased risk of child abuse, for example perpetrated by new male partners of the mother.

The report makes recommendations for how to repair the social environment in order to strengthen family life. These recommendations include a major new initiative in relationship education, primarily by volunteer instructors supported by the major relationship counselling organisations; the establishment of community trusts to fund family support programs in local communities; and the creation of a Families Commission at the federal level.

[NOTES from Patrick Parson: Chapter 1 is on the child protection data – kids in out of home care more than doubled across the country between 1998 and 2010 (see p.17). I have mapped it somewhat since 2010 and it continues on an upward trajectory without abatement. Yes, there has been some population growth in men and women of child-bearing age over those years, but this does not remotely explain the increases. Nor do changes in law or policy. Trying to keep kids with their parent(s) is a survival mechanism for over-stretched child protection services.

Chapter 2 is on teenage mental health and risky behaviours. The self-harm data from 1996-2006 is on pp. 30-32, and at the end of the chapter, I made international comparisons to show these trends, citing research literature from all over Europe as well as the US.

Chapters 3 and 4 make the case for some of this effect being due to family breakdown, and I suggest some causal pathways.

From more recent work:

25% of teenagers born between 1981 and 1985 were born to single mothers or experienced their parents separating by the time they were 15. By 2013, this figure (for 15-17 year olds), had reached 40%.

And this is our best data, from 2015, on the correlation between family structure and mental health disorders: Second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2015) – also attached.]

**Table 2-3: 12-month prevalence of mental disorders among 4-17 year-olds by family type and sex**

Family type	Males (%)	Females (%)	Persons (%)
Families with two parents or carers	13.9	9.6	11.8
Original family	12.4	8.4	10.4
Step family	21.1	15.6	18.3
Blended family	24.0	16.4	20.2
Other family (a)	29.5	18.4	23.7
Families with one parent or carer	25.3	19.2	22.4

'Original family' has at least one child living with their natural, adoptive or foster parents, and no step children.

'Other family' is where all children are not the natural, adopted, foster or step child of one or both carers.

(a) Data to be treated with caution due to low respondent numbers in this category.

### 1.3.11 [Cairns, Karanges, Wong, Brown, Robinson, Pearson, Dawson, & Buckley \(2019\).](#)

Trends in self-poisoning and psychotropic drug use in people aged 5–19 years: A population-based retrospective cohort study in Australia. *BMJ Open*.

**ABSTRACT: OBJECTIVES:** To characterise trends in self-poisoning and psychotropic medicine use in young Australians.

DESIGN: Population-based retrospective cohort study.

SETTING: Calls taken by the New South Wales and Victorian Poisons Information Centres (2006–2016, accounting for 70% of Australian poisoning calls); medicine dispensings in the 10% sample of Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme data (July 2012 to June 2016).

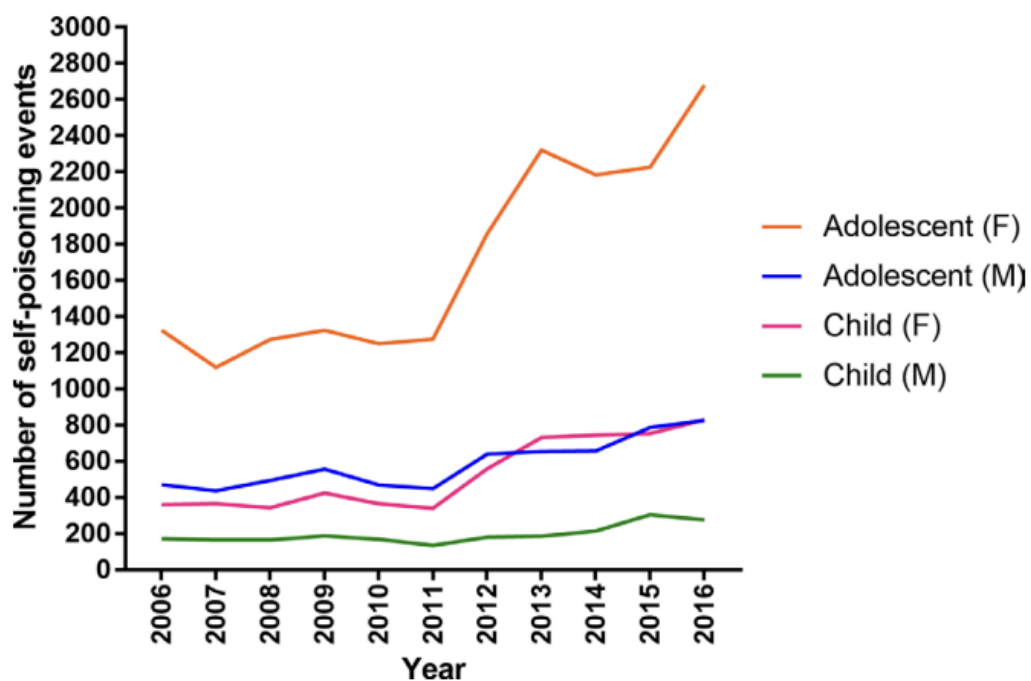
PARTICIPANTS: People aged 5–19 years.

OUTCOME MEASURES: Yearly trends in intentional poisoning exposure calls, substances taken in intentional poisonings, a prevalence of psychotropic use (dispensing of antidepressants, antipsychotics, benzodiazepines and medicines for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)).

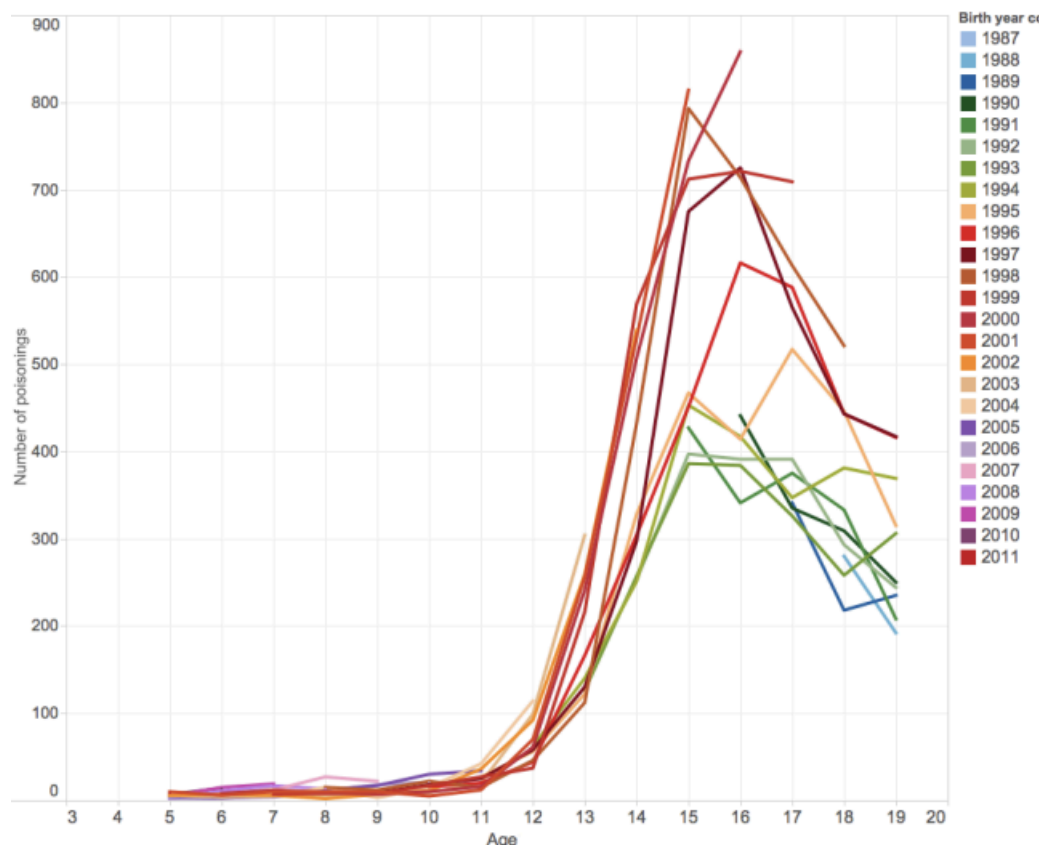
RESULTS: There were 33 501 intentional poisonings in people aged 5–19 years, with **an increase of 8.39% per year (95% CI 6.08% to 10.74%,  $p < 0.0001$ ), with a 98% increase overall, 2006–2016. This effect was driven by increased poisonings in those born after 1997, suggesting a birth cohort effect. Females outnumbered males 3:1.** Substances most commonly taken in self-poisonings were paracetamol, ibuprofen, fluoxetine, ethanol, quetiapine, paracetamol/opioid combinations, sertraline and escitalopram. Psychotropic dispensing also increased, with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) increasing 40% and 35% July 2012 to June 2016 in those aged 5–14 and 15–19, respectively. Fluoxetine was the most dispensed SSRI. Antipsychotics increased by 13% and 10%, while ADHD medication dispensing increased by 16% and 10%, in those aged 5–14 and 15–19, respectively. Conversely, dispensing of benzodiazepines to these age groups decreased by 4% and 5%, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS: Our results signal a generation that is increasingly engaging in self-harm and is increasingly prescribed psychotropic medications. These findings indicate growing mental distress in this cohort. Since people who self-harm are at increased risk of suicide later in life, these results may foretell future increases in suicide rates in Australia.





**Figure 1** Trends in intentional poisonings in children and adolescents reported to the NSWPIC and VPIC, 2006–2016. NSWPIC, New South Wales Poisons Information Centre; VPIC, Victorian Poisons Information Centre.



**Figure 2** Number of intentional poisonings by birth year cohort at ages 5–19 years, 2006–2016.

**1.3.12** [Sara, Wu, Uesi, Jong, Perkes, Knight, O'Leary, Trudgett, & Bowden \(2023\).](#)

Growth in emergency department self-harm or suicidal ideation presentations in young people: Comparing trends before and since the COVID-19 first wave in New South Wales, Australia. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*.

**ABSTRACT: INTRODUCTION:** Self-harm presentations in children and young people have increased internationally over the last decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to worsen these trends.

**OBJECTIVE:** To describe trends in emergency department self-harm or suicidal ideation presentations for children and young people in New South Wales before and since the COVID-19 pandemic.

**METHODS:** We studied presentations for self-harm or suicidal ideation by 10- to 24-year-olds to New South Wales emergency departments, using interrupted time series analysis to compare annualised growth before COVID (2015 to February 2020) and since COVID (March 2020 to June 2021). Subgroup analyses compared age group,

gender, triage category, rurality and disadvantage. Time series decomposition via generalised additive models identified long-term, seasonal and short-term trends.

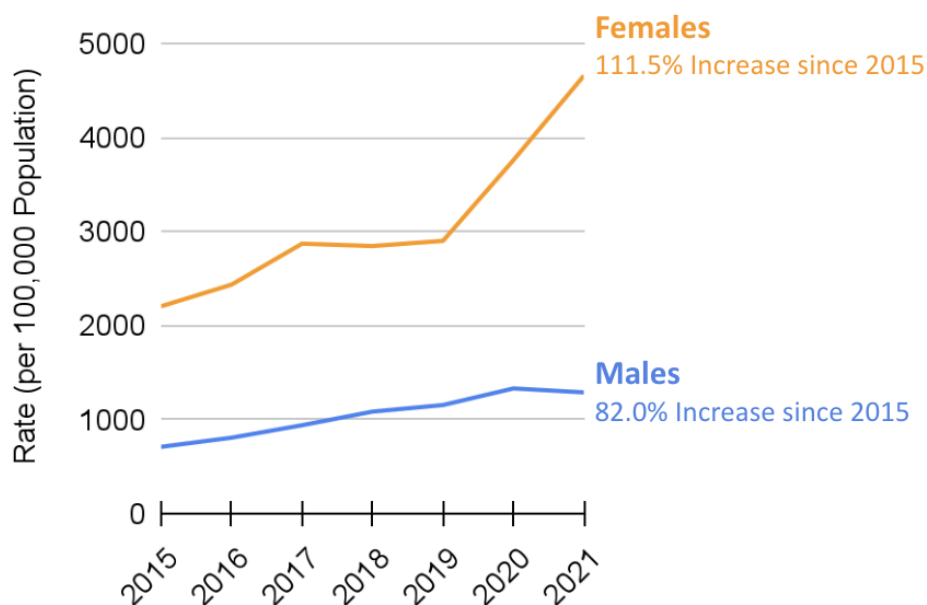
#### RESULTS:

**Self-harm or suicidal ideation presentations by young people in New South Wales increased by 8.4% per annum pre-COVID. Growth accelerated since COVID, to 19.2% per annum, primarily due to increased presentations by females aged 13–17 years (47.1% per annum since COVID, from 290 per 10,000 in 2019 to 466 per 10,000 in 2021).** Presentations in males aged 10–24 years did not increase since COVID (105.4 per 10,000 in 2019, 109.8 per 10,000 in 2021) despite growing 9.9% per annum before COVID. Presentation rates accelerated significantly in socio-economically advantaged areas. Presentations in children and adolescents were strongly linked to school semesters.

CONCLUSION: Emergency department self-harm or suicidal ideation presentations by New South Wales young people grew steadily before COVID. Understanding the sustained increase remains a priority. Growth has increased since COVID particularly for adolescent females, but not among adolescent males. Surprisingly, the largest post-COVID increases in annual growth occurred in socio-economically advantaged and urban regions. The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have added new challenges, particularly in females in the developmentally critical early adolescent and teenage years.

FIGURE (See Zach's [spreadsheet](#)):

## Hospitalization Rates for Self-harm or Suicidal Ideation, Ages 13-17, New South Wales



**1.3.13** [Hiscock, Neely, Lei, & Freed \(2018\)](#). Paediatric mental and physical health presentations to emergency departments, Victoria, 2008–15. *Medical Journal of Australia*.

**ABSTRACT:** Objectives: To identify trends in presentations to Victorian emergency departments (EDs) by children and adolescents for mental and physical health problems; to determine patient characteristics associated with these presentations; to assess the relative clinical burdens of mental and physical health presentations.

**DESIGN:** Secondary analysis of Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD) data.

**PARTICIPANTS:** Children and young people, 0–19 years, who presented to public EDs in Victoria, 2008–09 to 2014–15.

**MEASURES:** Absolute numbers and proportions of mental and physical health presentations; types of mental health diagnoses; patient and clinical characteristics associated with mental and physical health presentations.

**RESULTS:** Between 2008–09 and 2014–15, the number of mental health presentations increased by 6.5% per year, that of physical health presentations by 2.1% per year; the proportion of mental health presentations rose from 1.7% to

**2.2%.** Self-harm accounted for 22.5% of mental health presentations (11 770 presentations) and psychoactive substance use for 22.3% (11 694 presentations); stress-related, mood, and behavioural and emotional disorders together accounted for 40.3% (21 127 presentations). **The rates of presentations for self-harm, stress-related, mood, and behavioural and emotional disorders each increased markedly over the study period.** Patients presenting with mental health problems were more likely than those with physical health problems to be triaged as urgent (2014–15: 66% v 40%), present outside business hours (36% v 20%), stay longer in the ED (65% v 82% met the National Emergency Access Target), and be admitted to hospital (24% v 18%).

**CONCLUSIONS:** The number of children who presented to Victorian public hospital EDs for mental health problems increased during 2008–2015, particularly for self-harm, depression, and behavioural disorders.

#### 1.3.14 [Sara, Wu, Uesi, Jong, Perkes, Knight, O'Leary, Trudgett, & Bowden \(2023\).](#)

Growth in emergency department self-harm or suicidal ideation presentations in young people: Comparing trends before and since the COVID-19 first wave in New South Wales, Australia. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*.

**ABSTRACT:** Self-harm presentations in children and young people have increased internationally over the last decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to worsen these trends.

**OBJECTIVE:** To describe trends in emergency department self-harm or suicidal ideation presentations for children and young people in New South Wales before and since the COVID-19 pandemic.

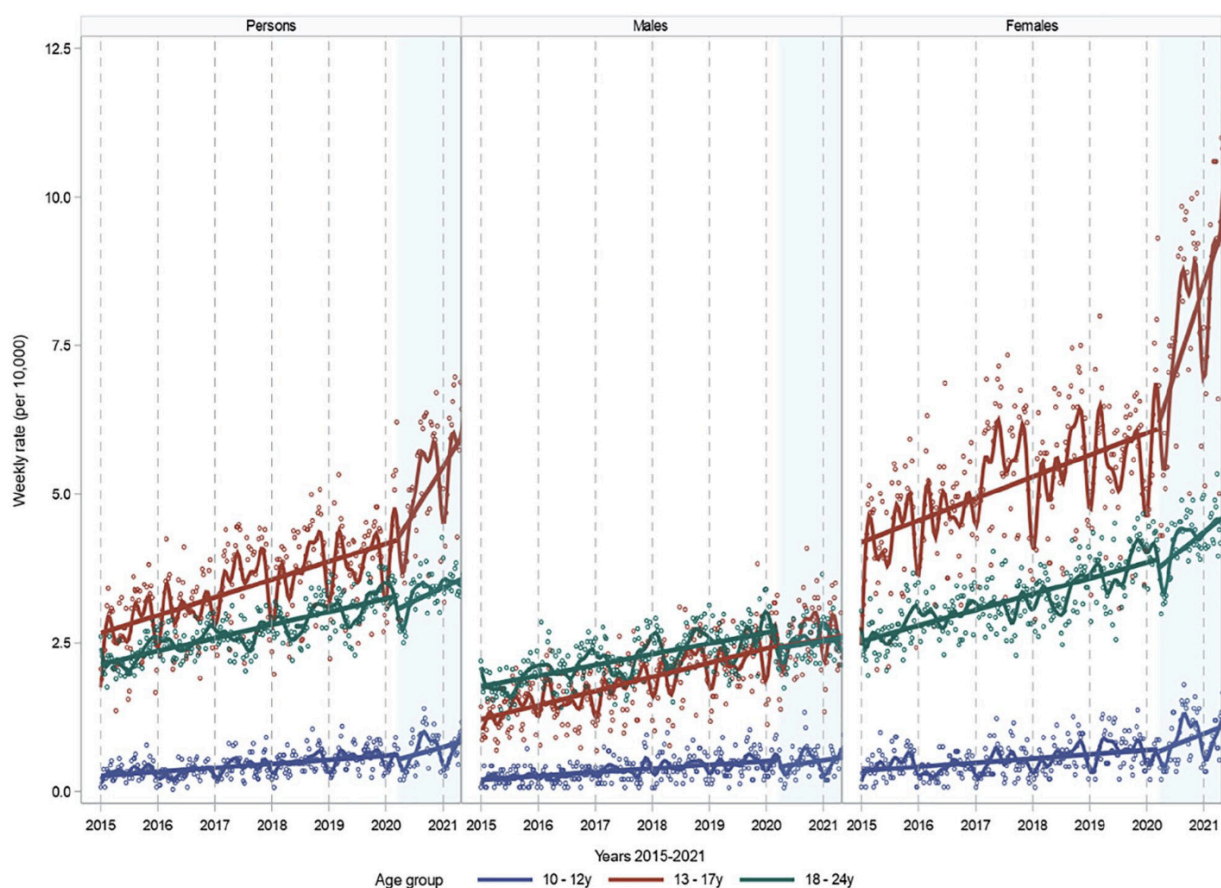
**METHODS:** We studied presentations for self-harm or suicidal ideation by 10- to 24-year-olds to New South Wales emergency departments, using interrupted time series analysis to compare annualised growth before COVID (2015 to February 2020) and since COVID (March 2020 to June 2021). Subgroup analyses compared age group, gender, triage category, rurality and disadvantage. Time series decomposition via generalised additive models identified long-term, seasonal and short-term trends.

**RESULTS:** Self-harm or suicidal ideation presentations by young people in New South Wales increased by 8.4% per annum pre-COVID. Growth accelerated since COVID, to 19.2% per annum, primarily due to increased presentations by females aged 13–17 years (47.1% per annum since COVID, from 290 per 10,000 in 2019 to 466 per 10,000 in 2021). Presentations in males aged 10–24 years did not increase since COVID (105.4 per 10,000 in 2019, 109.8 per 10,000 in 2021) despite growing 9.9% per annum before COVID. Presentation rates accelerated significantly in

socio-economically advantaged areas. Presentations in children and adolescents were strongly linked to school semesters.

**CONCLUSION:** Emergency department self-harm or suicidal ideation presentations by New South Wales young people grew steadily before COVID. Understanding the sustained increase remains a priority. Growth has increased since COVID particularly for adolescent females, but not among adolescent males. Surprisingly, the largest post-COVID increases in annual growth occurred in socio-economically advantaged and urban regions. The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have added new challenges, particularly in females in the developmentally critical early adolescent and teenage years.

FIGURE



**Figure.** Growth in self-harm or suicidal ideation presentation rates before COVID and since COVID-19 first wave in NSW. Interrupted time series analysis showing weekly emergency department self-harm or suicidal ideation presentation rates (per 10,000) and linear trends before and since COVID-19 in people aged 10–24 years in NSW, January 2015 to June 2021. Spline curve included for visualisation.

**1.3.15** [Torok, Burnett, McGillivray, Qian, Gan, Baffsky, & Wong \(2023\)](#). Self-harm in 5-to-24 year olds: Retrospective examination of hospital presentations to emergency departments in New South Wales, Australia, 2012 to 2020. *PLOS ONE*.

**ABSTRACT:** There is some evidence that self-harm presentations in children and young people have increased over the past decade, yet there are few up-to-date studies examining these trends. This study aims to describe trends in the rates and severity of emergency department self-harm presentations for youth aged 5–24 years in New South Wales, Australia between 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2020. We analysed self-harm hospital presentations using join point analysis to compare quarterly growth in rates and urgency of presentation since 2012 by age group and sex. Binomial logistic modelling was used to identify risks for re-presentation for self-harm, including age group, sex, country of birth, mode of arrival, inpatient status, triage category, rurality, and socio-economic disadvantage. In total, 83,111 self-harm presentations for 51,181 persons were analysed. **Overall rates of self-harm among those aged 5–24 years increased by 2.4% ( $p < .001$ ) per quarter in females and 1.6% ( $p < .001$ ) per quarter in males, with statistically significant average quarterly increases observed across all age groups.** Overall and age-specific self-harm triage urgency rates increased statistically significantly for potentially serious, and potentially- and immediately life-threatening categories. A higher likelihood of re-presentation to any emergency department for self-harm was associated with younger age, female, residing in a regional area, arriving by ambulance, admitted as an in-patient, and a more severe index self-harm presentation. Hospital self-harm presentations have been growing steadily over the past decade, with the greatest growth in the youngest people. Understanding the reasons for these sustained upward trends is a priority for suicide prevention.

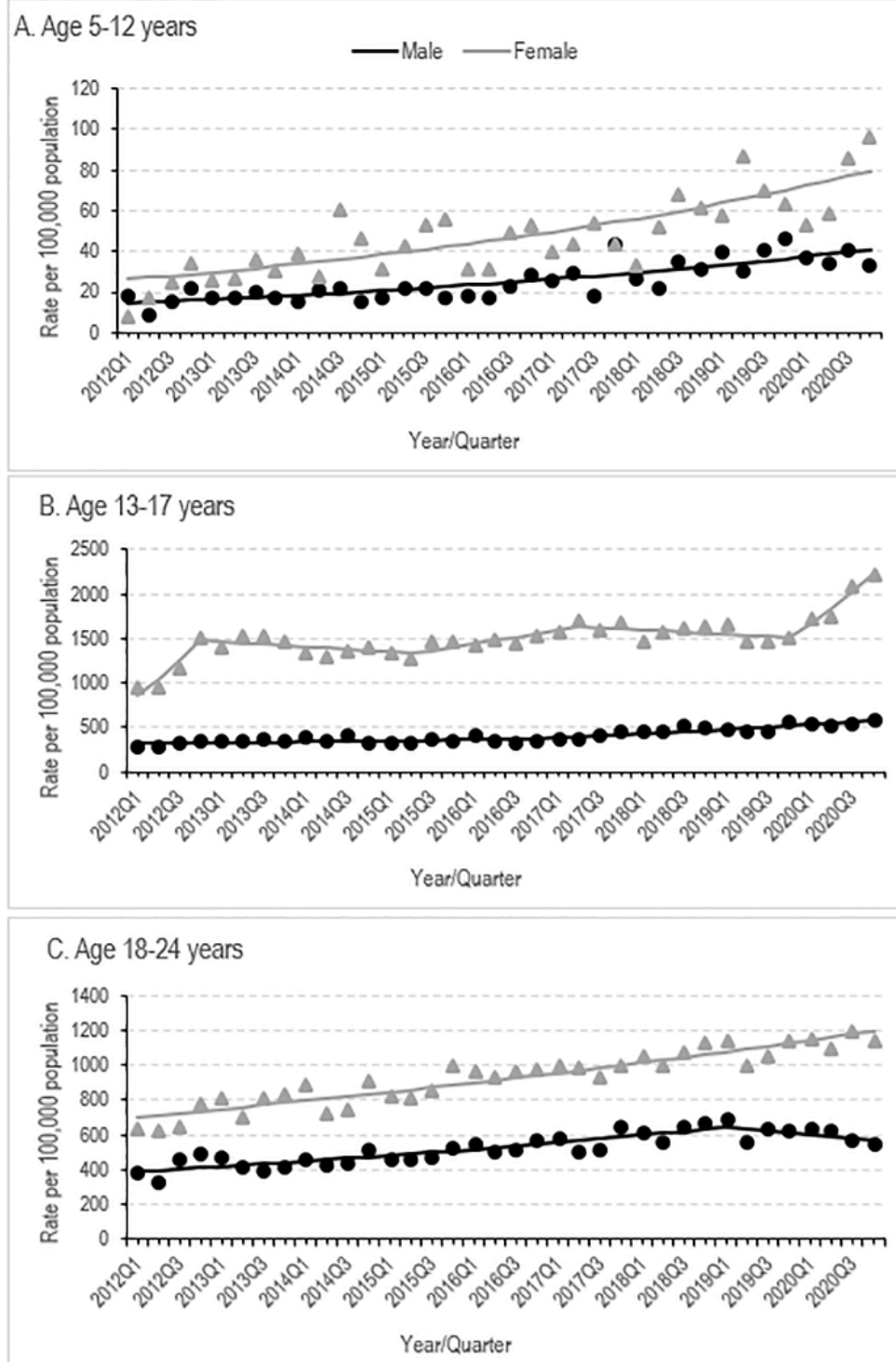


Fig. Emergency department self-harm presentations rates from 2012 to 2020 for males and females: Rates (symbols) and estimated trends (lines).



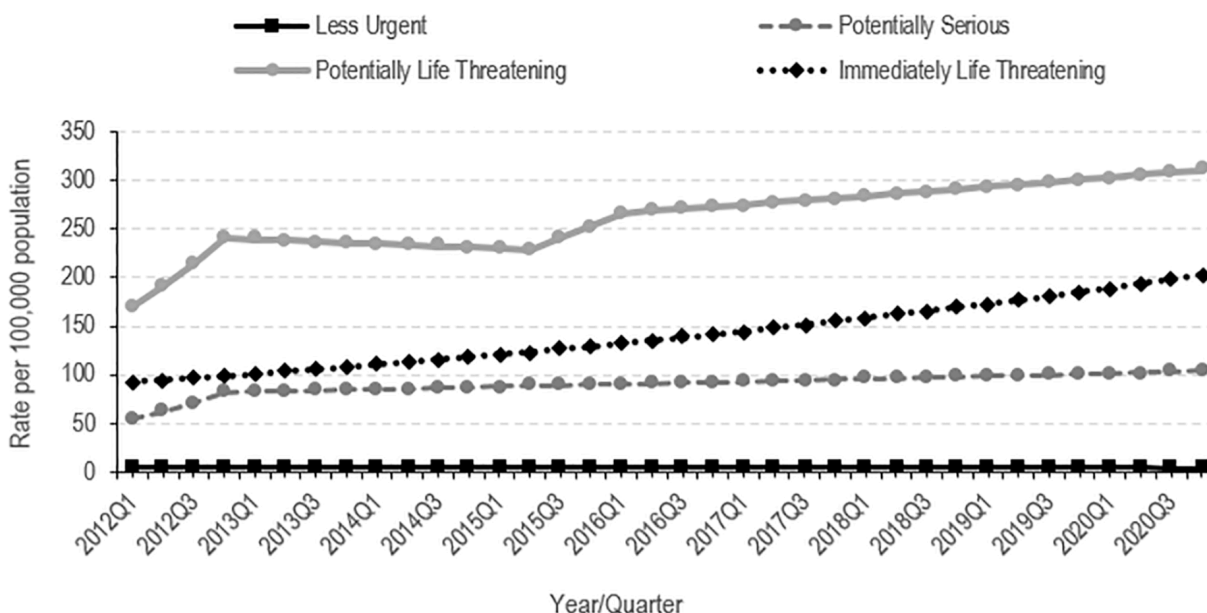


Fig. Emergency department self-harm presentations rates from 2012 to 2020 by triage category severity: Rates (symbols) and estimated trends (lines).

**1.3.16** [McGorry, Coghill, Berk \(2023\)](#). Mental health of young Australians: dealing with a public health crisis. *The Medical Journal of Australia*.

**EXCERPT: The mental health of young Australians is rapidly declining. The evidence for this is increasingly solid and reflects a worldwide trend. This steady erosion of our collective mental wealth is not only a human tragedy but an economic one.** Yet despite this worldwide megatrend, public and media discourse is muffled. Health and social care systems remain asymmetrically focused on physical illness and disability. Despite the erosive effect of mental illness, public pressure, and consequently, the political will for a response, in proportion to the scale and urgency of the crisis, are yet to materialise.

**1.3.17** [Deaths of children and young people Queensland 2022-23](#). *Queensland Family & Child Commission*.

DATA SOURCE: [Queensland Government Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages](#)

**EXCERPT:** Twenty children and young people died by suicide in 2022–23, consistent with the 20 deaths in the previous reporting period. Nine deaths in the 2022–23 period were classified as confirmed suicides and 11 deaths were probable suicides (i.e. more

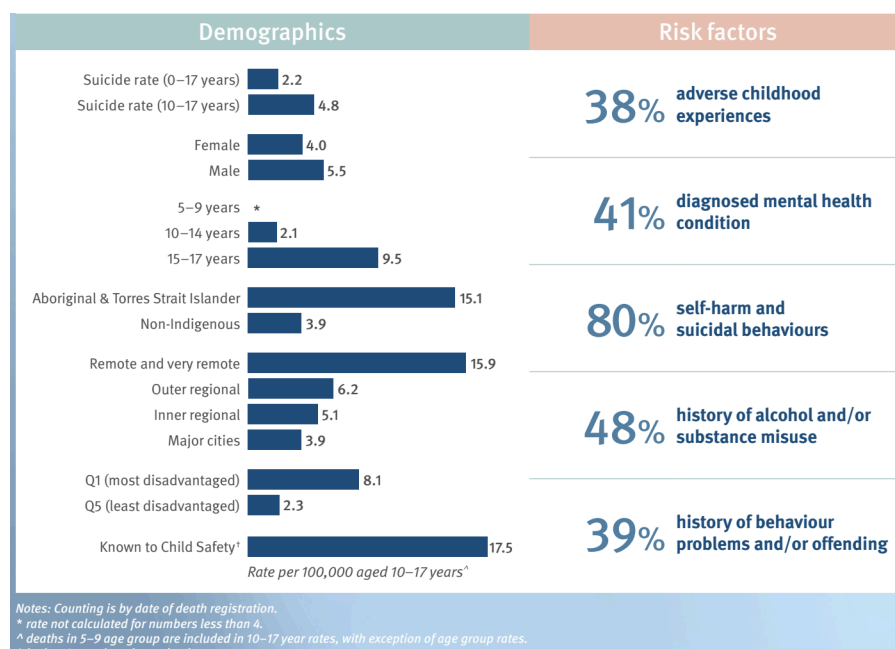
consistent with suicide than any other means). A total of 128 young people have died by suicide over the last 5 years, with an average of 26 deaths per year. **A slowly increasing trend in youth suicide rates is evident over time. Between 2004–07 and 2018–23 the rate of suicide increased from 4.2 to 4.8 per 100,000 young people aged 10–17 years.** As reported in Chapter 1, the increase in suicide rates may have slowed as the 20 suicides in 2021–22 and 2022–23 were below the high numbers recorded in 2018–19 and 2020–21 (37 and 30 respectively). **Suicide was the leading overall cause of death for both young people aged 10–14 years and 15–17 years over the 5-year period.**

### SELECT FIGURES:

Table 1.1: Top 4 leading causes of death by age (rate per 1,000/100,000), 2018–19 to 2022–23

Age category	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
0–27 days	Perinatal conditions (2.0)	Congenital anomalies (0.7)	SIDS and undetermined causes (0.06)	Cancers and tumours (0.02)
28–364 days	SIDS and undetermined causes (0.3)	Congenital anomalies (0.3)	Perinatal conditions (0.2)	Nervous system diseases (0.06)
Under 1 year	Perinatal conditions (2.1)	Congenital anomalies (1.0)	SIDS and undetermined causes (0.4)	Nervous system diseases (0.07)
1–4 years	Drowning (2.5)	Cancers and tumours (2.3)	Transport (2.1)	Congenital anomalies (1.8)
5–9 years	Cancers and tumours (2.0)	Transport (1.2)	Nervous system diseases (1.0)	Drowning (0.6)
10–14 years	Suicide (2.1)	Cancers and tumours (2.0)	Transport (1.7)	Nervous system diseases (1.1)
15–17 years	Suicide (9.5)	Transport (6.2)	Cancers and tumours; Nervous system diseases (2.2)	Other non-intentional injury (1.5)
0–17 years	Perinatal conditions (11.4)	Congenital anomalies (6.1)	SIDS and undetermined causes (2.3)	Transport (2.3)

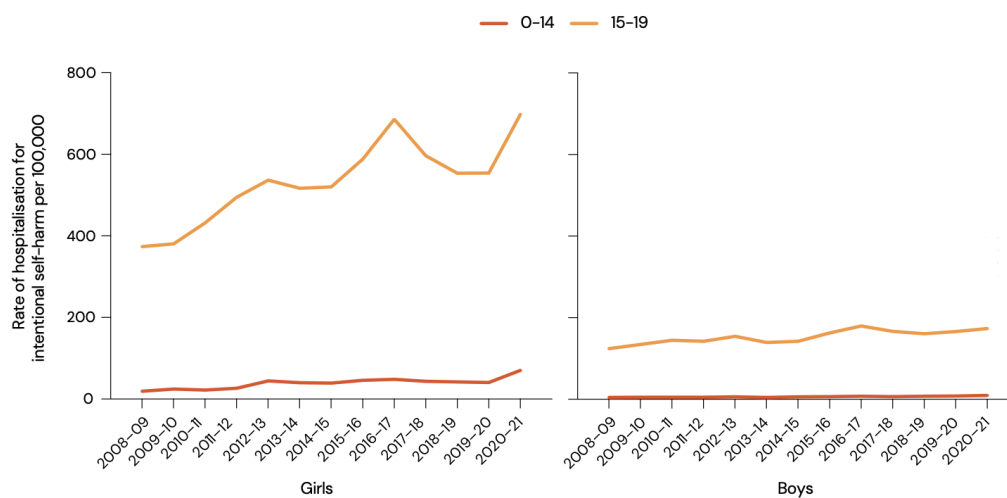
Table 1.1 shows that suicide was the leading cause of death for 10-17 year olds



Graphic on page 41.

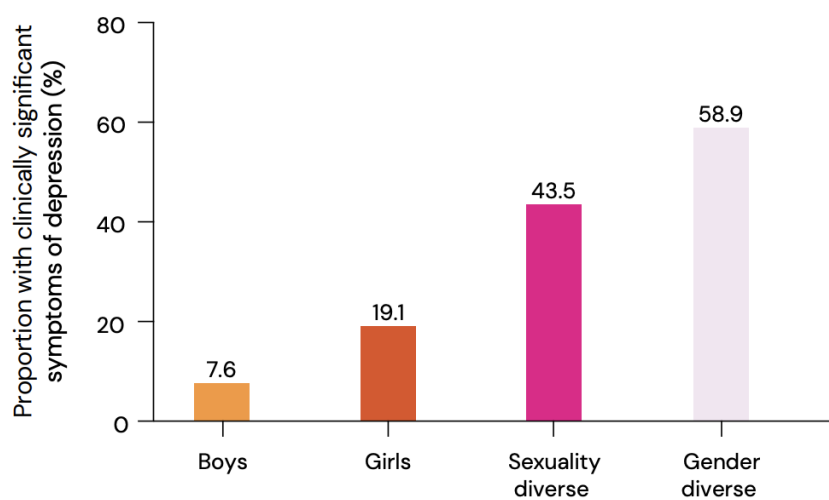
### 1.3.18 [Turning the tide on depression \(2022\)](#). The Black Dog Institute.

SELECT FIGURES:

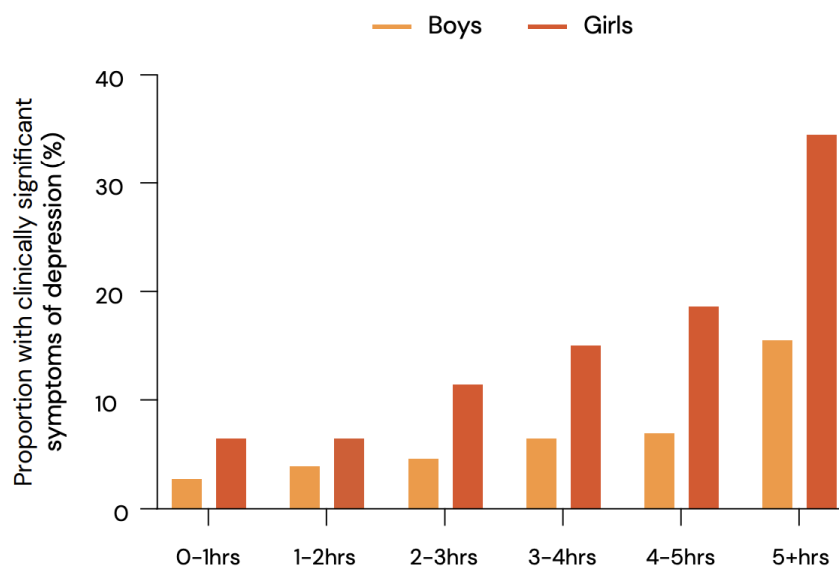


**Figure 2.** Rate of hospitalisation for intentional self-harm from 2008 to 2020–21 among girls (left) and boys (right) under age 20.

**Data source:** Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020–21 National Hospital Morbidity Database – Intentional self-harm hospitalisations.



**Figure 3.** Proportion of Year 8 adolescents in the Future Proofing Study sample who reported clinically significant symptoms of depression on the PHQ-A.



**Figure 5.** Proportion of adolescent boys and girls with clinically significant symptoms of depression (PHQ-A) plotted according to the average number of daily hours they spend on screen time. The relationship between greater amounts of screen time and depression was stronger for girls than boys.

NOTE: Figures are from Chapter 2 of the report.

[Other studies? What have we missed?]

## 1.4 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE THAT DOES NOT SHOW SUCH A RISE

[Other studies? What have we missed?]

## 1.5 UNCATEGORIZED MENTAL HEALTH DATA

**1.5.1** [Terhaag \(2020\)](#). Suicidality and help seeking in Australian young people.  
*Australian Institute of Family Studies.*

EXCERPT: **Suicide is the leading cause of death for young Australians and a national public health priority.** Repeat suicide attempts increase the risk for dying by suicide; however, thoughts and behaviours related to suicide often go undetected and unreported. This short article presents the findings of Australian longitudinal research into suicidality and help-seeking behaviours, and provides strategies to guide practitioners working with young people.

Between ages 12–18, many young people first start self-injuring and may repeatedly do so. **Recorded suicides among Australian children younger than 14 are rare but from 14 years onwards mental health issues, including self-injury, increase.** Many young people who think about suicide or hurt themselves do not seek help, and more information is needed on their contact with formal and informal sources of help.

**Particular groups are known to be at higher risk for attempting suicide in Australia: girls; those from low socio-economic backgrounds; and Indigenous children.** These groups may require more targeted prevention or intervention. This research identified how many young people struggle with suicidal thoughts or attempt suicide and help seeking for emotional difficulties.

[Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children \(LSAC\)](#) is a nationally representative cohort study that has followed over 10,000 children since birth (B cohort) and age 4–5 (K cohort) since 2004. Every two years, these children and their parents answer questions relating to their health and wellbeing, relationships and school experiences. Longitudinal data can help us gain better insights into how patterns of self-injury, including thoughts and behaviours, may or may not change over time, in order to identify how and where to best intervene.

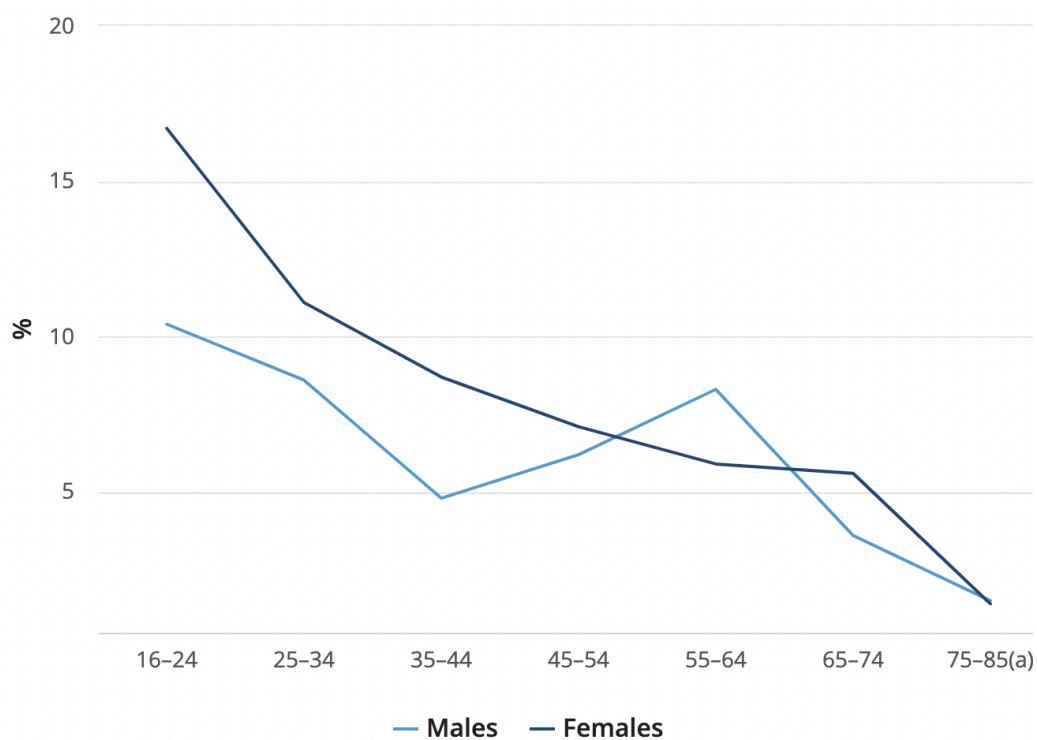
[NOTE from Emma Park: Doesn't directly address whether rates have risen across time.]

### 1.5.2 [National study of mental health and well-being](#). Australian Bureau of Statistics.

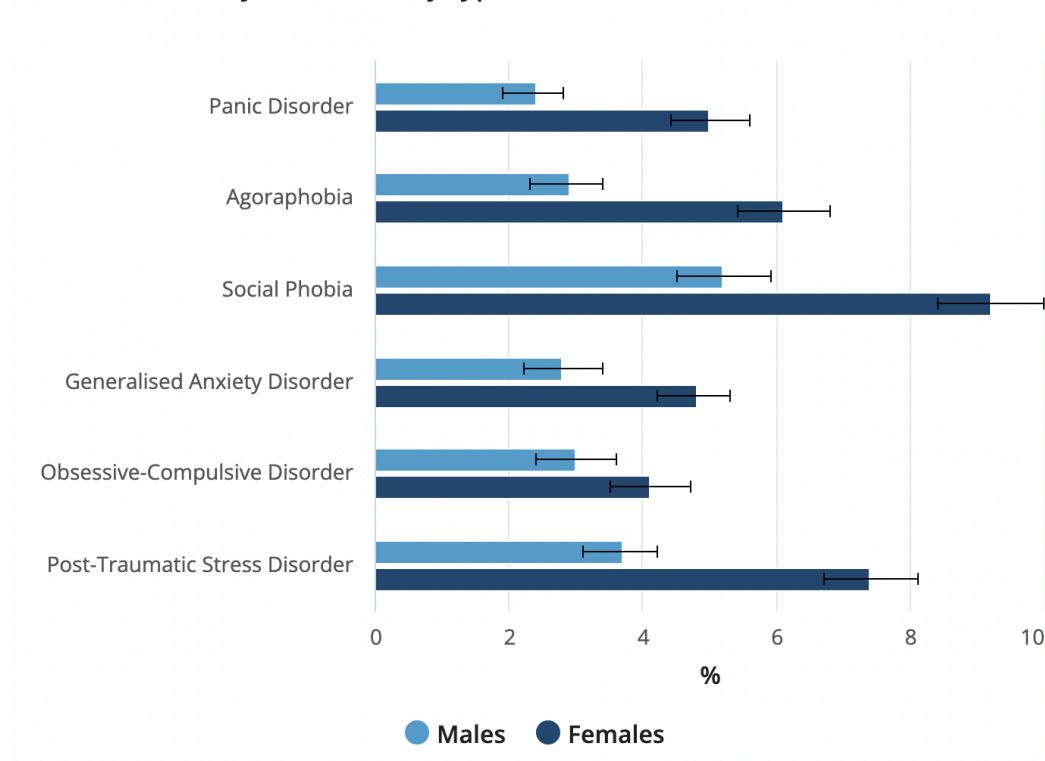
EXCERPT: Females were more likely than males to have had a 12-month Anxiety disorder (21.1% compared with 13.3%).

- Almost one in three people (31.8%) aged 16–24 years had a 12-month Anxiety disorder
- Two in five females (40.4%) aged 16–24 years had a 12-month Anxiety disorder
- One in two people (50.3%) who described their sexual orientation as Gay or Lesbian, Bisexual or who used a different term had a 12-month Anxiety disorder
- One in four people (25.6%) living in one parent family households with dependent children had a 12-month Anxiety disorder
- Females experienced higher rates of Social Phobia (9.2% compared with 5.2%) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (7.4% compared with 3.7%) than males.

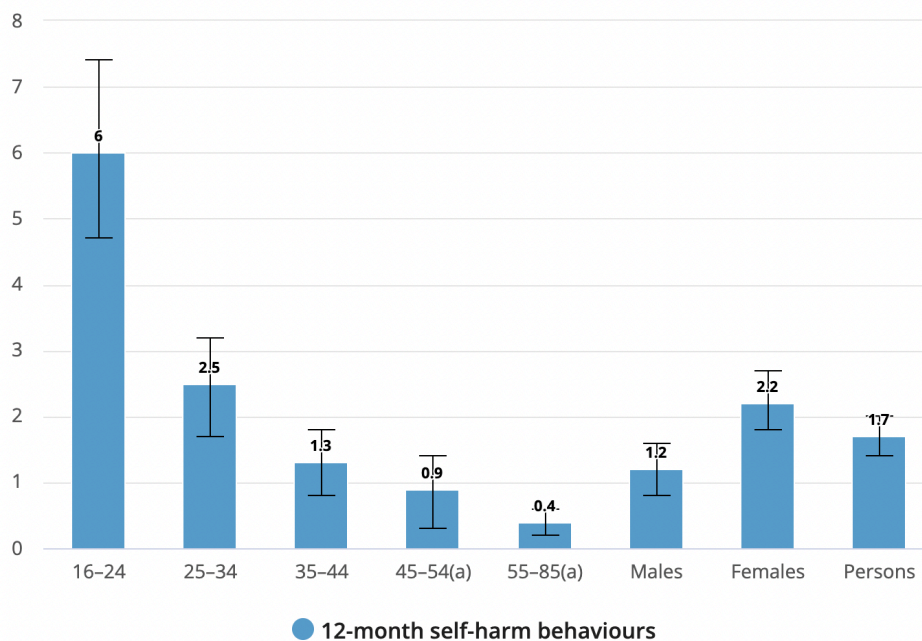
Any 12-month Affective disorder, by age and sex, 2020–2022



### 12-month Anxiety disorders, by type of disorder and sex, 2020–2022



### 12-month self-harm behaviours, by age then sex, 2020–2022



a. Proportions for persons aged 45–54 and 55–85 have a relative standard error of 25–50% and should be used with caution.



### 1.5.3 [The Young Australian Loneliness Survey \(2015\)](#). VicHealth.

EXCERPT: Key findings 1. **More than one in four young Victorians reported problematic<sup>1</sup> levels of loneliness**, specifically, one in six adolescents and one in three young adults. Overall, adolescents reported significantly lower levels of loneliness than young adults. 2. **Almost one in three young Victorians reported themselves to be of high social isolation risk which was measured via frequency of contact with family and friends**. Overall, adolescents also reported less social isolation risk than young adults. 3. Those who are lonelier are at an increased risk of poorer mental health outcomes. Loneliness is associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing higher depression and social anxiety. 4. Adolescents compared with young adults consistently performed better on various factors. Adolescents reported lower depression, social anxiety, negative affect, and more positive affect when compared with young adults. 5. Overall, social isolation risk, mental health symptom severity, affect, and emotion regulation all significantly predicted loneliness across the entire sample.

[NOTE from Emma Park: Doesn't directly address whether rates of loneliness are rising across time.]

[Other studies? What have we missed?]

\* \* \* \* \*

## 2) SOCIAL MEDIA USE?

The Question: Are Australian teens using social media in high numbers, at an early age (before 13), and are Australians talking about the link between social media and mental health?

### 2.1 JOURNALISM ABOUT TEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USE (AND DEVICE USE MORE GENERALLY)

**2.1.1 [Viva! Communications \(2019\)](#)**. Smartphones driving mental health crisis among young Australians.

COMMENT: Professor Patrick McGorry, a founder of Headspace, the Australian government funded National Youth Mental Health Foundation, believes there is a



relationship between the boom in smartphone use, and the rise of anxiety and depression in young people.

**2.1.2 [Huntsdale \(2017\)](#).** Social media monitoring apps shine spotlight on internet addiction. *ABC News*.

COMMENT: This article expresses concern over adolescent social media/ smartphone use, and the growing prevalence of technology utilization in schools.

**2.1.3 [Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools \(2018\)](#).** *NSW Government*.

EXCERPT: “Mobile devices will be banned during school hours in NSW public primary schools and high schools will have the choice to opt in to a ban or introduce measures to more tightly restrict the use of devices during school hours.” A link to the full report is included in section 2.2.

**2.1.4 [Selwyn, Nemorin, Bulfin, & Johnson \(2017\)](#).** Left to their own devices: The everyday realities of one-to-one classrooms. *Oxford Review of Education*.

ABSTRACT: The past decade has seen the expansion of personal digital technologies into schools. With many students and teachers now possessing smartphones, tablets, and laptops, **schools are initiating one-to-one and ‘Bring Your Own Device’ (BYOD) policies aiming to make use of these ‘personal devices’ in classrooms.** While often discussed in terms of possible educational benefits and/ or organisational risks, the actual presence of personal devices in schools tends to be more mundane in nature and effect. Drawing upon ethnographic studies of three Australian high schools, this paper details ways in which the proliferation of digital devices has come to bear upon everyday experiences of school. In particular, the paper highlights the ways in which staff and students negotiate (in)appropriate technology engagement; the ordinary (rather than extraordinary) ways that students make use of their devices in classrooms; and the device-related tensions now beginning to arise in schools. Rather than constituting a radically ‘transformational’ form of schooling, the paper considers how the heightened presence of personal technologies is becoming subsumed into existing micropolitics of school organisation and control.

**2.1.5 [Griffiths M. \(2018\)](#).** Parents fear social media and technology more than drugs, alcohol or smoking. *ABC News*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Australian parents are **more worried about their children using social media and technology** than drugs, alcohol or smoking, according to new research.

NOTES: 1. The youth mental health support service ReachOut surveyed parents of 12 to 18-year-olds about their concerns and found that **45% were worried about their children's use of social media**. Technology closely followed at 42%. Comparatively, 25% of parents were worried about their children using drugs, alcohol, or smoking.

2. ReachOut chief executive Jono Nicholas said, "We're certainly calling on the social media companies to do more to **make those environments safer, particularly for children and young people.**"

2a. "They (social media) carry very significant risks and what we're calling for is to make that **device as safe as we can.**"

2b. The study showed that parents' number one concern for their children was education and **study stress**. "What it shows you is that for many families it's the everyday, what we would call kitchen-table mental health issues that are causing them the most stress," Mr Nicholas said.

2c. Mr. Nicholas also urged schools and the education system had made changes to **relieve pressure on students** but that more needed to be done.

**2.1.6 [Carey, A. \(2019\)](#).** Instagram makes way for Uno, tiggy as students adapt to phone ban. *The Age*.

EXCERPTS: [A high school in Victoria bans phones -- they must be stored in a locker during the school day -- and gets good results:] The ban has had a profound effect on how students interact, says the school's co-captain Devika Moss. In the past, girls in her group would chat for five or 10 minutes at lunch before retreating to their phones and silently scrolling on social media. "It was kind of this environment where it didn't really feel like we were chatting with each other and hanging out, just sort of sitting together," she said. "We play Uno together now and we actually chat and we've really improved our relationships."... Almost 70 per cent of students said phones were a source of distraction in every lesson and 90 percent of teachers agreed. "So once we presented the data to the students and said we are implementing a ban from the first bell and last bell, we just ensured that we had consistency in the way that we did it in our school," Ms Karvouni said. The ban was promoted with the motto: disconnect to connect.

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

## 2.2 EMPIRICAL DATA ABOUT TEEN SOCIAL MEDIA (AND DEVICE USE MORE GENERALLY)

### 2.2.1 [Rhodes A. \(2017\)](#). Screen time and kids: What's happening in our homes. *Australian Child Health Poll*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: In a survey fielded from late March to early May 2017, Australian parents were asked a series of questions about their behavior, experience, and opinions in relation to their use of screen-based media in their households over the preceding month. In this survey, the term 'screen-based device' was defined as including television, computers, laptops, gaming consoles, iPhones, smartphones, iPads and other tablet devices.

FIGURES:

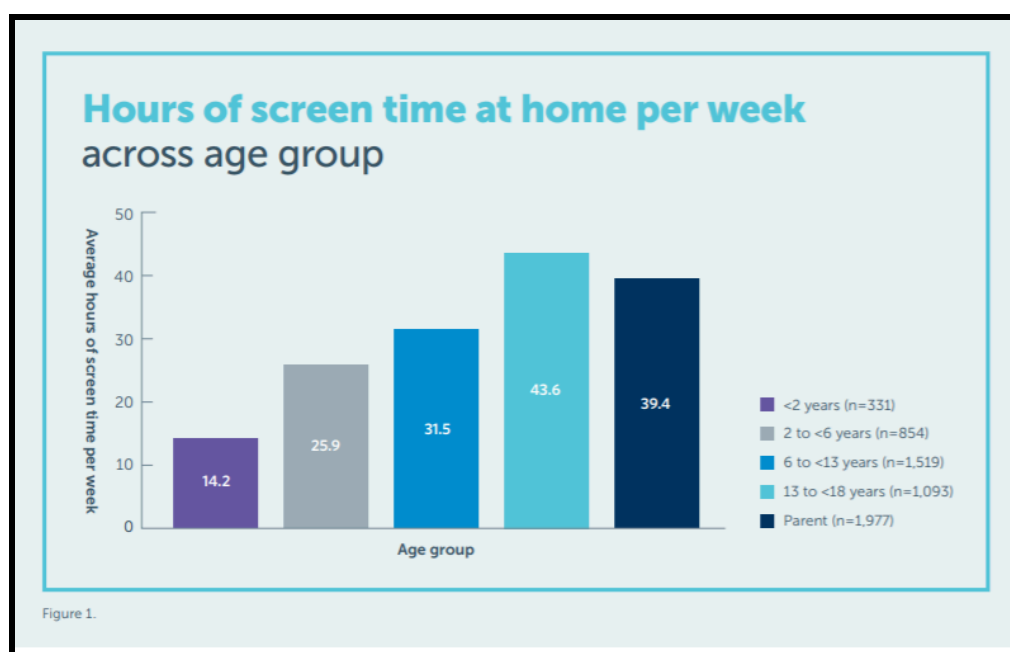


Figure 1: 13 to 18 year olds have the most hours of screen time at home per week at **43.6 hours**; more than 6 hours a day.

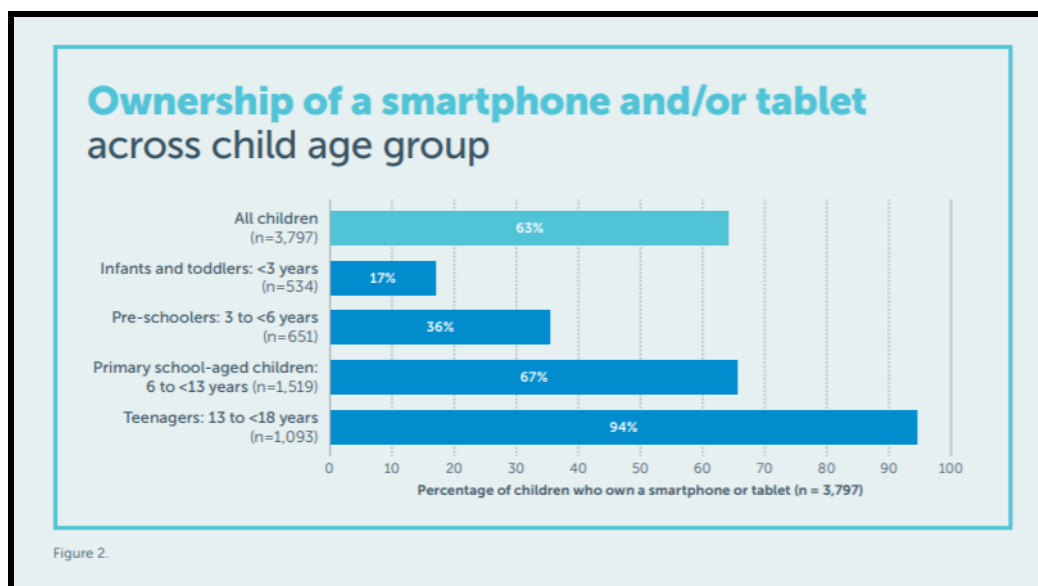


Figure 2: In 2017, **94%** of all Australian teens had a smartphone and/or tablet.

NOTES: 1. The majority of Australian children, across all age groups, are **exceeding the current national recommended guidelines for screen time**.

2. **50%** of toddlers and preschoolers use screen-based devices on their own without supervision and the majority of parents of young children report using screen to occupy their kids so they can get things done

3. **62%** of parents report family conflict due to the use of screen-based devices

COMMENT: This data does not show changes over time. However, if we compare these rates to the rates shown in 2.2.2, we can see a steady rise in smartphone use from 2011 through 2017.

### 2.2.2 [Aussie teens and kids online \(2016\)](#). *The Australian Communications and Media Authority*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: The internet is an integral part of the lives of young people in Australia, with most going online regularly to learn, keep in touch with friends and have fun. Born into an already web-connected world, many teens have been using the internet for the majority of their lives and fear not having access to the digital environment.

FIGURES:

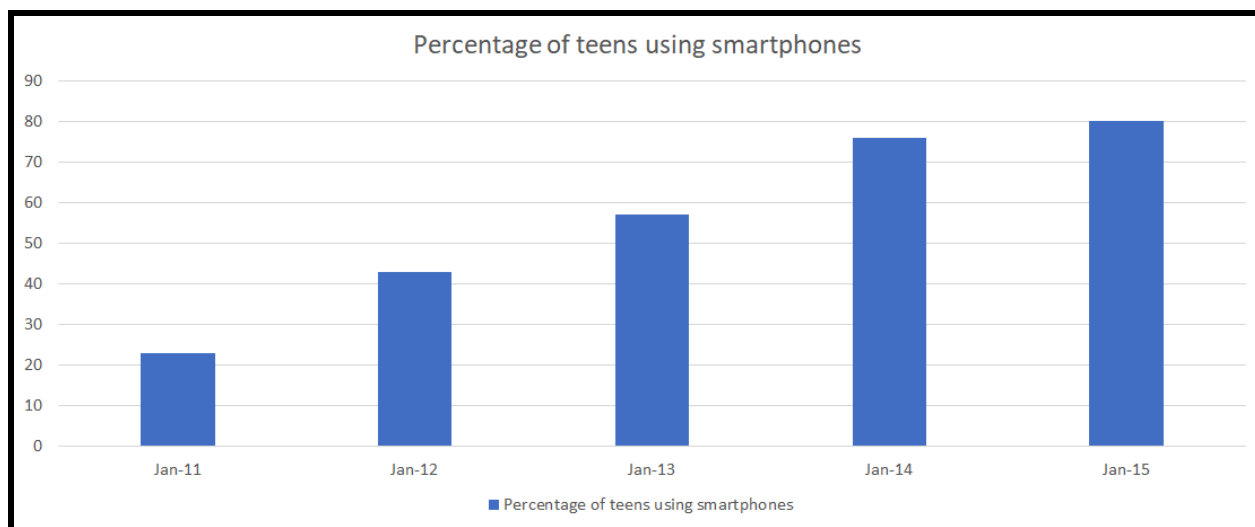


Figure 1: At June 2011, smartphones were used by **23%** of teens. 4 years later, in June 2015, **80%** of all Australian teens used a smartphone.

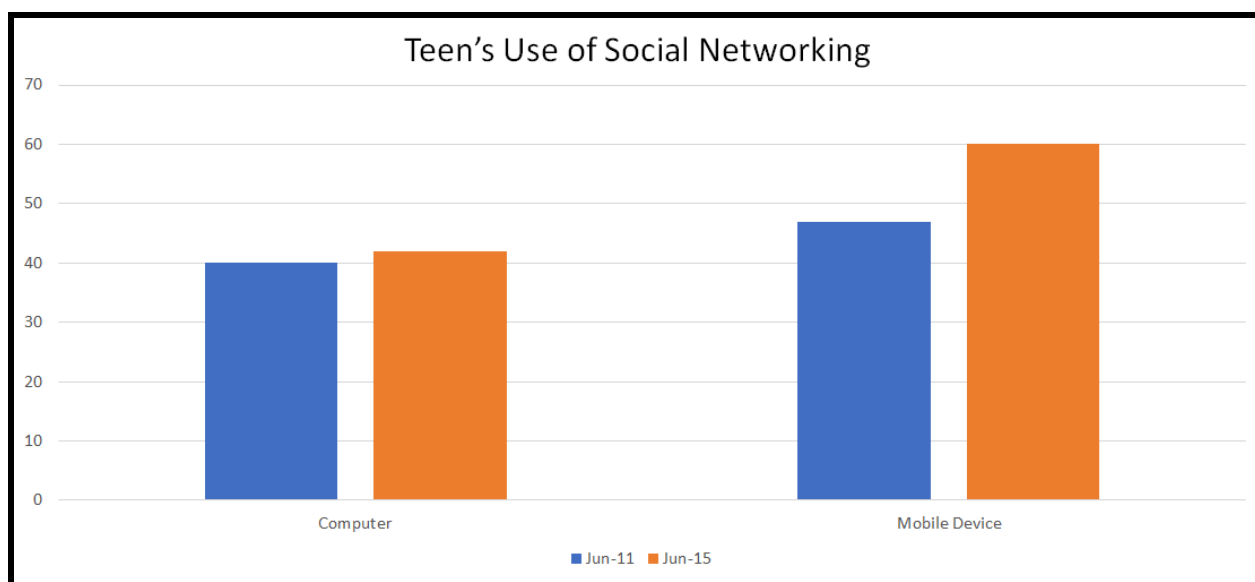


Figure 2: Teen's use of social networking on computers moved from 40% in 2011 to 42% in 2015. On mobile devices, social networking jumped from **47%** in 2011 to **60%** in 2015.

0

NOTES: 1. In June 2015, over 935,000 teens had gone online in the previous four weeks. That's **82%** of all teens, up from **74%** four years earlier.

2. **Teenage girls are more likely to have been online than boys**, while those living in cities were more likely to have accessed the internet than their regional counterparts.

COMMENT: “Social media” is not explicitly mentioned here. However, the increase in the use of the internet and social networking are great indicators that social media use increased as well.

### 2.2.3 [Forlani C. \(2019\)](#). Digital in 2019: Australia social media usage is growing. *We Are Social*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: (This) comprehensive global report sheds light on the **digital and social landscape during the past 12 months**. For the 2019 report we analysed 100,000 points of data, compiled into over 7,000 charts, covering over 230 countries - including Australia. Collecting and analysing this data year-on-year means we can see changes in online populations, internet use, social media behaviours and platform fluctuations.

FIGURES:

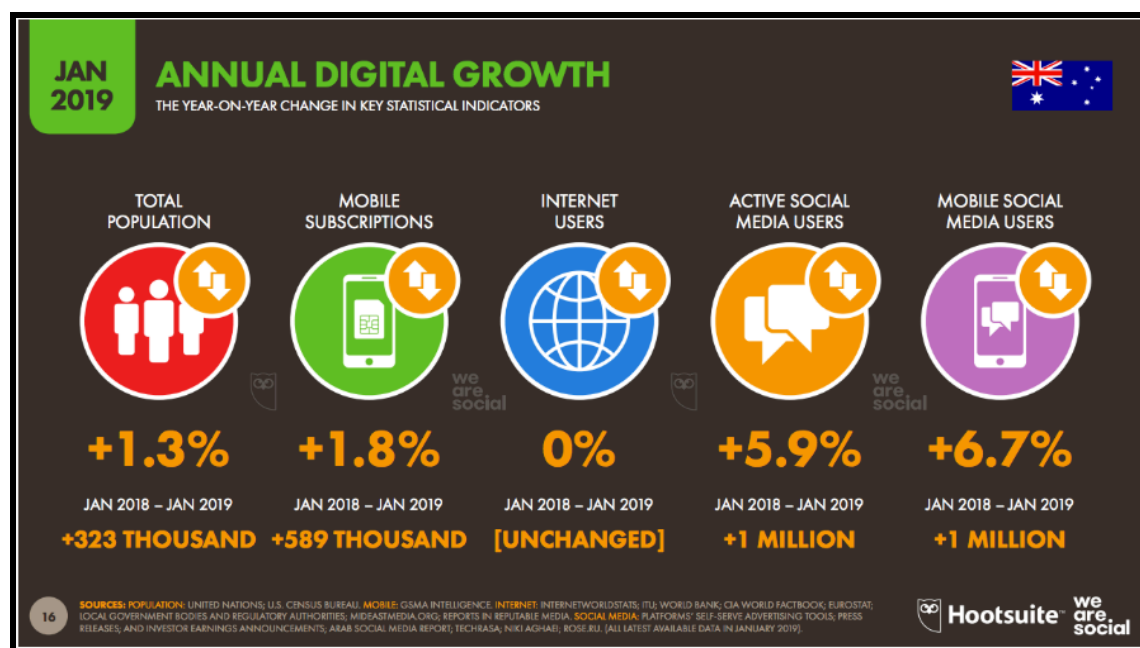


Figure 1: From 2018 to 2019 the number of active social media users increased by **+5.9%** and the number of mobile social media users has increased by **+6.7%**.

COMMENT: This data does not break down the age demographics of active or mobile social media users though it does display a general upward trend.

### 2.2.4 [Hoare, Milton, Foster, Allender \(2017\)](#). Depression, psychological distress and

Internet use among community-based Australian adolescents: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*.

**ABSTRACT: BACKGROUND:** There has been a rapid increase in time spent using the Internet as a platform for entertainment, socialising and information sourcing. This study aimed to evaluate the relationship between duration of time spent using the Internet for leisure, depressive symptoms, and psychological distress among Australian adolescents.

**METHODS:** Depressive symptoms were indicated by the youth self-report module from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Version IV criteria, and psychological distress was measured by Kessler Psychological Distress scale. Internet use was self-reported based on use on an average weekday, and an average weekend day. Multivariate logistic regression models were used to examine the relationship between Internet use and mental health outcomes. Models were adjusted for potential confounders: age; relative level of socio-economic disadvantage, and body mass index. **RESULTS:** Adolescents were aged 11–17 years ( $M = 14.5$  years,  $SD = 2.04$  years).

**Greatest time spent using internet ( $\geq 7$  h a day) was significantly associated with experiencing depressive symptoms among females ( $OR = 2.09$ ,  $95\% CI = 1.16, 3.76$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and high/very high levels of psychological distress for male ( $OR = 2.23$ ,  $95\% CI = 1.36, 3.65$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and female ( $OR = 2.38$ ,  $95\% CI = 1.55, 3.67$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) adolescents.**

**CONCLUSION:** With current initiatives to improve health behaviours among adolescents to improve physical health outcomes such as overweight or obesity, it is imperative that the reciprocal relationship with mental health is known and included in such public health developments. Internet use may interact with mental health and therefore could be a modifiable risk factor to reach and improve mental health outcomes for this age group. Caution is advised in interpretation of findings, with some inconsistencies emerging from this evidence.

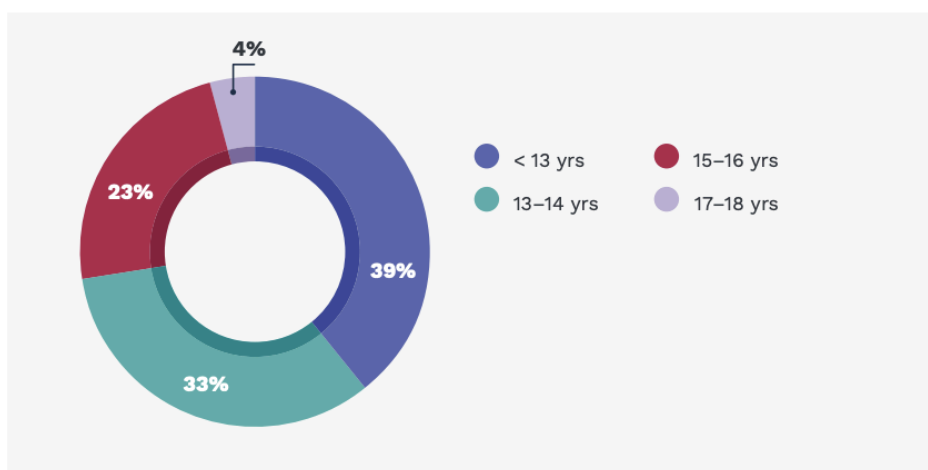
## 2.2.5 [Accidental, unsolicited and in your face \(2023\)](#). eSafety Commissioner.

**EXCERPT:** Many young people unintentionally encounter online pornography, often before the age of 13. Young people described unintentional encounters with online pornography as frequent, unavoidable and unwelcome. Of the young people who had encountered online pornography, 58% reported they had unintentionally encountered content at least once. **One in three (30%) young people who had seen online pornography first encountered content unintentionally before the age of 13.** Young people reported that the experience of unintentionally coming across porn felt

intrusive and disempowering and made them feel uncomfortable. Some participants suggested that such encounters were so pervasive that young people have become desensitised to the content. Seven in 10 (71%) young people who unintentionally encountered online pornography ignored it.

#### SELECT FIGURES:

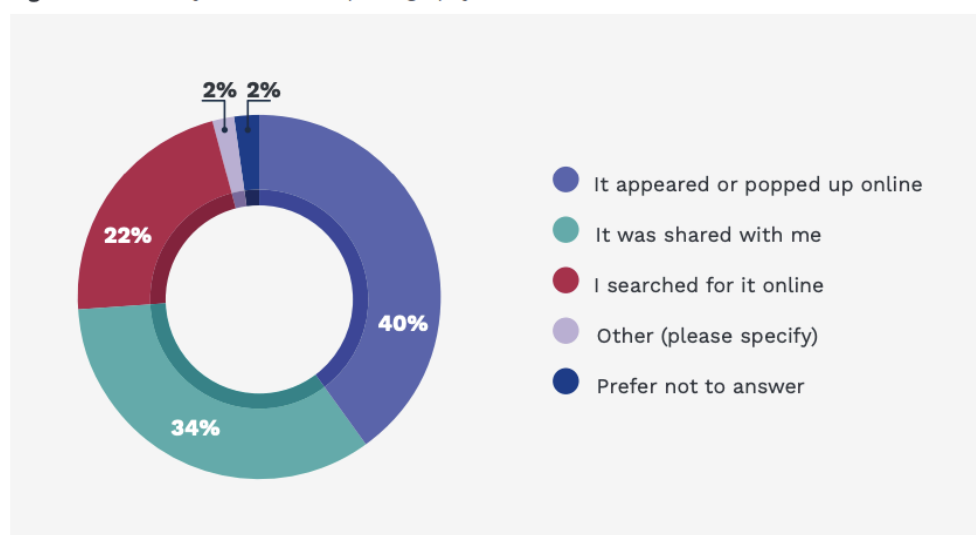
**Figure 3.** How old were you when you saw online pornography for the first time?



(Survey sample, unweighted, young people who have seen online pornography n=751)

**Figure 3:** Age at which young people saw pornography for the first time.

**Figure 5.** How did you see online pornography for the first time?



(Survey sample, unweighted, young people who have seen online pornography n=751)



Figure 4: How young people saw online pornography for the first time

**Figure 15.** To what extent do you think online pornography has a positive or negative effect on the following?

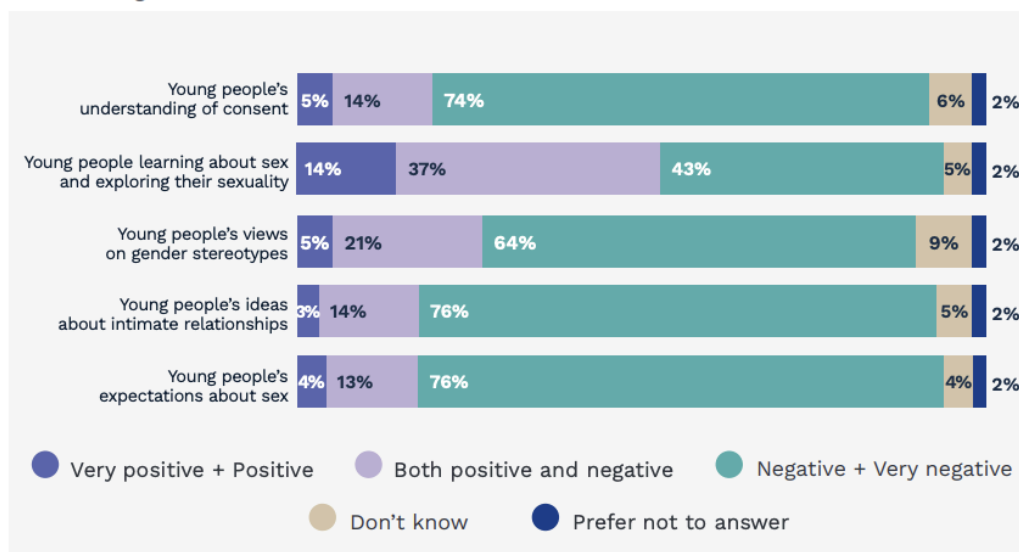


Figure 15: Young people's perspectives on the effects of online pornography

## 2.2.6 [The digital lives of Aussie teens \(2021\)](#). eSafety Commissioner.

EXCERPT: While teens' increased use of technology offers many benefits such as being able to research topics of interest and connect with family and friends, there is a downside – teens continue to deal with negative online experiences including unwanted contact, cyberbullying and harassment. We can see from this research (when compared to 2017) that teens are proactively taking some form of action after a negative online experience whether that is managing it themselves, such as reporting, or speaking to friends and family. However, more work needs to be done to drive behavioural change given a large percentage of teens continue to ignore potentially harmful experiences or believe nothing will change.

A surprising finding was that Australian teens are active in helping build positive and inclusive online relationships, which could help others when dealing with similar issues online. This was even more apparent with teens who had previously had a negative online experience. This is a heartening result and something to be further nurtured to

help build a safer and more positive online world. This is particularly important when the downsides of online engagement are often the focus of attention in the media.

## FIGURES:

**Table 1:** Teens' online activities (%)

	Total	Gender		Age (years)	
		Male	Female	12 to 13	14 to 17
Researching things that interest me	95	96	94	93	95
Watching videos, movies or TV	93	94	92	90	94
Chatting with friends	93	94	93	90	95
Listening to music	92	91	94	89	94
Playing games online with others	77	87	66	80	75
Responding to others' comments	72	72	72	65	75
Making video calls	72	70	74	67	74
Posting photos/videos online	68	66	69	60	71
Accessing news	62	67	56	48	69
Banking or shopping online	54	51	56	30	65
<b>Base (number)</b>	627	313	314	191	436

Q1: Thinking now about what you do online, please indicate which activities you do online?

**Table 1:** Teens' online activities by gender and age. Q: Thinking now...

**Table 2:** Social media services currently used by gender and age (%)

	Total	Gender		Age (years)	
		Male	Female	12 to 13	14 to 17
YouTube	72	75	70	66	76
Instagram	57	54	60	39	66
Facebook	52	53	50	42	57
Snapchat	45	39	51	26	54
Facebook Messenger	39	39	40	34	42
Tik Tok (formerlyMusical.ly, established 2014)	38	32	43	30	41
WhatsApp	30	35	26	28	32
Twitter	22	22	21	11	27
Discord (established in 2015)	19	27	11	12	23
Skype	16	13	18	12	17
<b>Base (number)</b>	627	313	314	191	436

Q2: Which social media platforms or apps do you currently use?

**Table 2:** Teens' social media usage by gender and age**Table 3:** Negative online experiences in the six months to September 2020, by gender and age (%)

	Total	Gender		Age (years)	
		Male	Female	12 to 13	14 to 17
I was contacted by a stranger/someone I didn't know	30	26	35	19	36
I was sent inappropriate unwanted content*	20	20	20	13	23
I have had other negative experiences online in the past six months	16	14	18	14	17
I was deliberately excluded from events/social groups	16	16	17	11	19
Things were said about me to damage my reputation	15	16	13	12	16
I received online threats or abuse	15	18	11	14	15
Someone misused my personal information/photos online in a mean way	8	9	6	5	9
<b>At least one negative online experience</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Base (number)</b>	627	313	314	191	436

**Q3:** Have you experienced any of the of the following [negative online experiences] in the past 6 months? \*e.g. pornography or violent content.

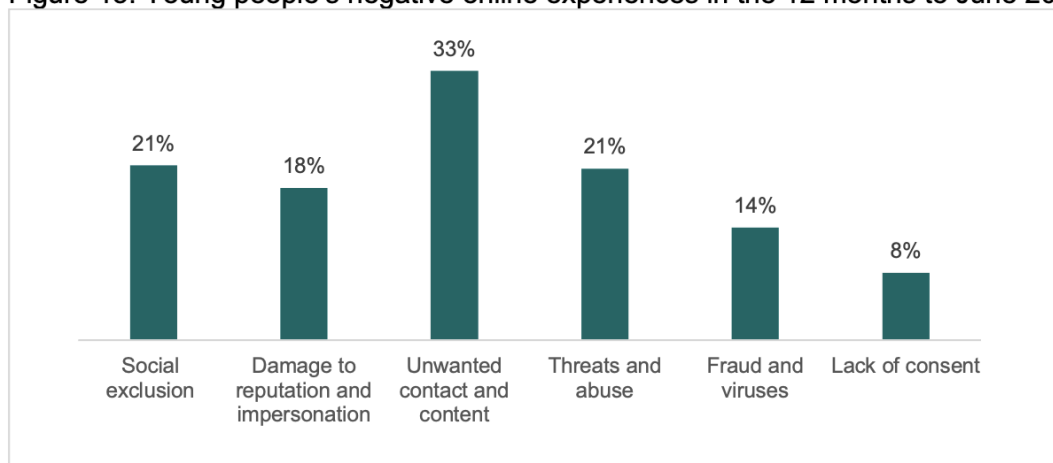
**Table 3:** Teens' negative online experiences by gender and age

## 2.2.7 [State of Play—Youth, Kids and Digital Dangers \(2018\)](#). Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

EXCERPT: This report highlights a number of key themes in relation to the online challenges facing young people age 8–17: **They are exposed to a wide range of issues online from unwanted contact to bullying and deal with these issues in a range of ways. While negative experiences can be hurtful, young people also report positive outcomes from these experiences in terms of increased awareness of online risks and ways of dealing with issues when they arise.** Young people are not alone in having to deal with the unpleasant aspects of online participation with adults also experiencing similar challenges. This is a reflection of the importance of ongoing learning to build digital resilience and respect online.

FIGURE:

Figure 15: Young people's negative online experiences in the 12 months to June 2017



NOTE: Figure from page 20 of the report

**2.2.8** [Allen, Ryan, Gray, McInerney & Waters \(2014\)](#). Social media use and social connectedness in adolescents: The positives and the potential pitfalls. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*.

**ABSTRACT:** As social media use is rising among adolescents, the issue of whether this use leads to positive or negative outcomes warrants greater understanding. This article critically reviews the literature related to this important topic. Specifically, we examine how social media use affects social connectedness in terms of three elements of adolescent development: sense of belonging, psychosocial wellbeing, and identity development and processes. Mixed findings are reported regarding the role that social media plays in fostering social connectedness, which suggests that young people may experience both positive and negative psychological outcomes. **As a result, this article argues that online tools create a paradox for social connectedness. On one hand, they elevate the ease in which individuals may form and create online groups and communities, but on the other, they can create a source of alienation and ostracism.** This article contributes to ongoing discourse in the area of educational and developmental psychology, and has implications for researchers and practitioners working with adolescents.

[NOTE: The journal in which this article was published was formerly known as The Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist. The first two authors, Allen and Ryan, are affiliated with Australian universities.]

**2.2.9** [Bonetti, Campbell, Gilmore \(2010\)](#). The relationship of loneliness and social anxiety with childrens' and adolescents' online communication. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*.

ABSTRACT: Children and adolescents now communicate online to form and/or maintain relationships with friends, family, and strangers. Relationships in "real life" are important for children's and adolescents' psychosocial development; however, they can be difficult for those who experience feelings of loneliness and/or social anxiety. The aim of this study was to investigate differences in usage of online communication patterns between children and adolescents with and without self-reported loneliness and social anxiety. **Six hundred twenty-six students ages 10 to 16 years completed a survey on the amount of time they spent communicating online, the topics they discussed, the partners they engaged with, and their purposes for communicating over the Internet.** Participants were administered a shortened version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale and an abbreviated subscale of the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A). Additionally, age and gender differences in usage of the online communication patterns were examined across the entire sample. **Findings revealed that children and adolescents who self-reported being lonely communicated online significantly more frequently about personal and intimate topics than did those who did not self-report being lonely.** The former were motivated to use online communication significantly more frequently to compensate for their weaker social skills to meet new people. Results suggest that Internet usage allows them to fulfill critical needs of social interactions, self-disclosure, and identity exploration. Future research, however, should explore whether or not the benefits derived from online communication may also facilitate lonely children's and adolescents' offline social relationships.

[NOTE from Emma Park: According to Allen et al (2014), the 626 participants were Australian students.]

**2.2.10** [Mind the Gap](#) – Parental awareness of children's exposure to risks online (2022). eSaftey Commissioner.

EXCERPT: Overall, the data shows that children experience many benefits from using the internet, and that those who have had negative experiences online feel empowered and knowledgeable about the actions they can take in response. Parents have an important role to play, and they are rising to the challenge, with parental awareness and digital parenting having increased since 2016. **However, there remain significant gaps in parental awareness of children's online lives – particularly in relation to**

**children's exposure to potentially harmful online content.** The findings suggest that digital parenting needs to evolve as children grow older, in order to better respond to children's encounters with harmful content online.

**2.2.11** [Being a young man online \(2024\)](#). eSafety Commissioner.

EXCERPT: The discussions and stories of young men in this study reveal that there are complex tensions when they describe their online experiences between freedom and anxiety, intimacy and caution, and connection and harm. In navigating these tensions, the young men we spoke to grapple with what it means to be a man in the digital age – sometimes conforming with harmful beliefs about manhood and masculinity, and at other times rejecting them.

**2.2.12** [The digital lives of young LGBTIQ+ people \(2024\)](#). eSafety Commissioner.

EXCERPT: For LGBTIQ+ teens, the internet offers a space where they can hang out, have fun, explore, and express themselves safely and, often, anonymously. In a world in which differences can be both celebrated and shunned, online spaces can offer connection with others in the LGBTIQ+ community, which enables support, learning and friendship. However, **the digital environment isn't without risk, with the survey finding that LGBTIQ+ young people are more likely to have negative online experiences than Australian young people overall.** Many LGBTIQ+ young people possess a level of digital literacy that enables them to respond to these experiences quickly and effectively, though the impact of negative online experiences can be significant.

**2.2.13** [The risks and benefits of online gaming for children and young people \(2024\)](#). eSafety Commissioner.

EXCERPT: Overall, the study found that most young people who play online games have positive experiences. The vast majority of them believe they benefit from online gaming in one or more ways, including feeling more connected to others. However, a significant minority of the children in our study had negative experiences while gaming, and around half of the teen gamers had potentially harmful experiences or had been exposed to potentially harmful ideas while gaming, or both.<sup>1</sup> It was relatively common for these experiences to have detrimental effects on these young gamers' self-esteem

or other aspects of their emotional wellbeing. Significantly, this study found that being more actively engaged in online gaming was associated with both higher risk and higher reported benefits. Young gamers in the study emphatically wanted their parents and carers to understand what gaming is like for them, and we found that many would welcome the opportunity to game with the adults in their lives.

**2.2.14** [A new playground: The digital lives of young people with disability \(2023\)](#).  
eSafety Commissioner.

EXCERPT: Our survey found that, for many children with disability, the internet forms a virtual playground, one in which they can play games with others, have fun and just hang out with friends old and new. For teens with disability, the internet also provides crucial information on physical, sexual and mental health, and is a place to gather emotional support and to seek social interaction with like-minded peers. As such, many young people with disability have taken to the internet with enthusiasm, feeling a greater level of self-confidence while in the digital world than offline and spending more time online than the national average of children and young people. **However, the digital environment is not without risk, with the survey finding that young people with disability are more vulnerable to negative online experiences than Australian young people overall.** Many young people with disability possess a level of digital literacy that enables them to respond to these experiences quickly and effectively, though the impact of negative online experiences can be profound.

SELECT FIGURES:

**Figure 11: Experiences connected to the time young people with disability spent online – comparison with the national average (% past 12 months)**

Experience	Young people with disability (%)	National average* (%)
I have experienced conflicts with family or friends because of the time I spent on the internet	70 ↑	63
I think the amount of time I spend on the internet causes problems for me	61 ↑	55
I have tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet	59 ↑	55
I have gone without eating or sleeping because of the time I spent on the internet	52 ↑	41
My grades have dropped because of the time I spent on the internet	45 ↑	38

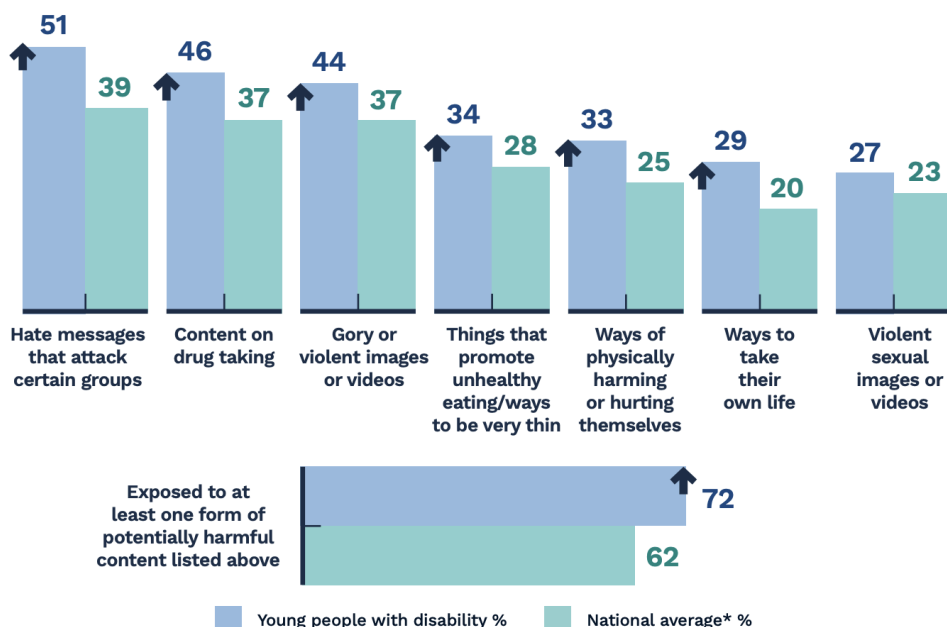
\*Average among Australian young people aged 8–17.

Question F3: In the past year, how often have these things happened to you?

Bases: Young people with disability (8–17 years) (n=972); Australian young people (8–17 years) (n=3,590).

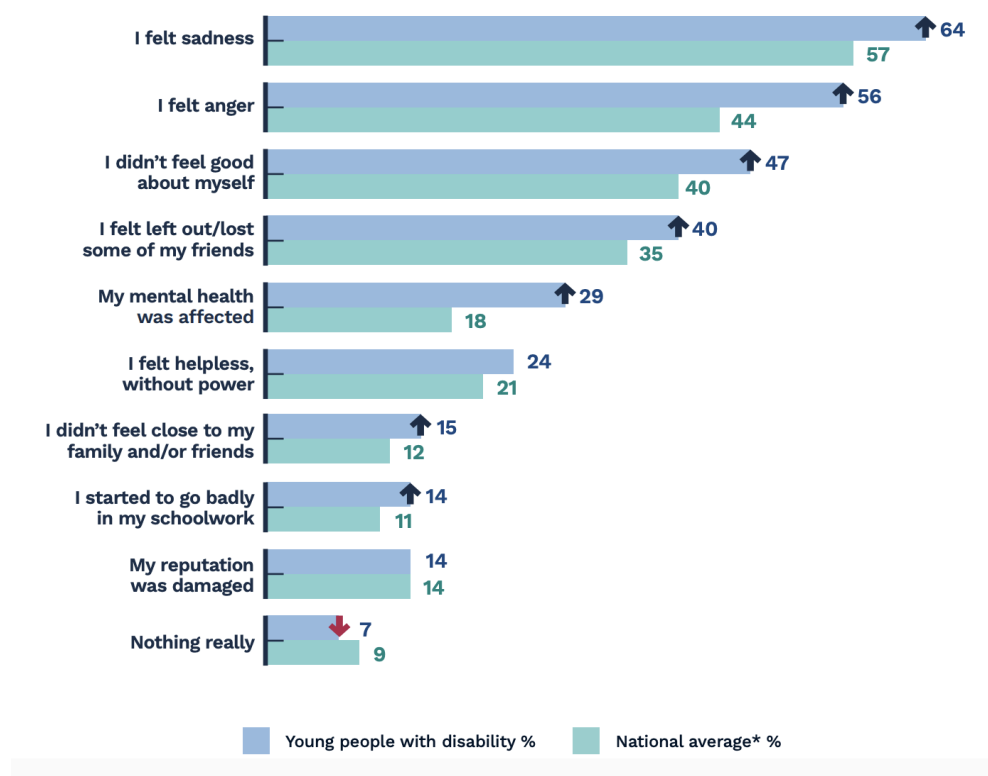
Note: Arrows denote results with a statistically significant difference.

**Figure 14: Exposure by teens with disability (aged 14–17) to potentially harmful content in the past year – comparison with the national average (% past 12 months)**





**Figure 16:** Consequences of the most recent hurtful or nasty online experience among young people with disability – comparison with the national average (% past 12 months)

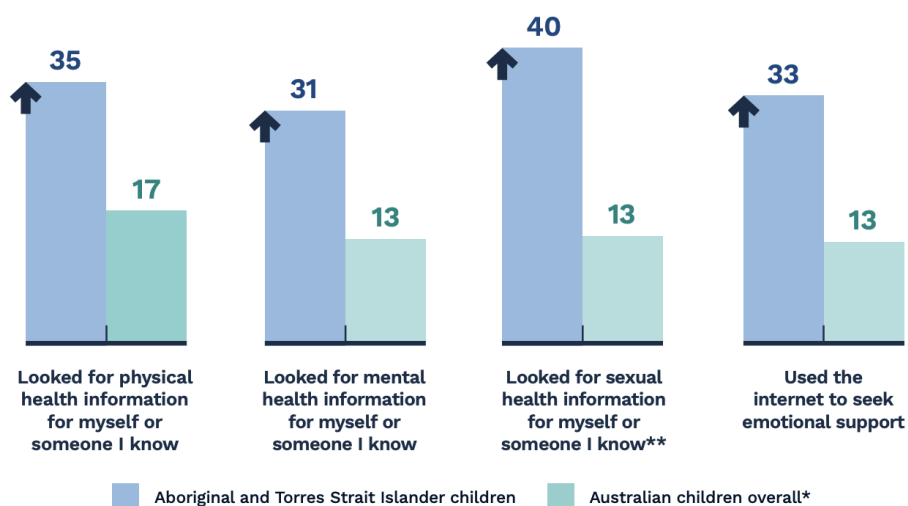


### 2.2.15 [Online experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their parents and caregivers \(2023\)](#). eSafety Commissioner.

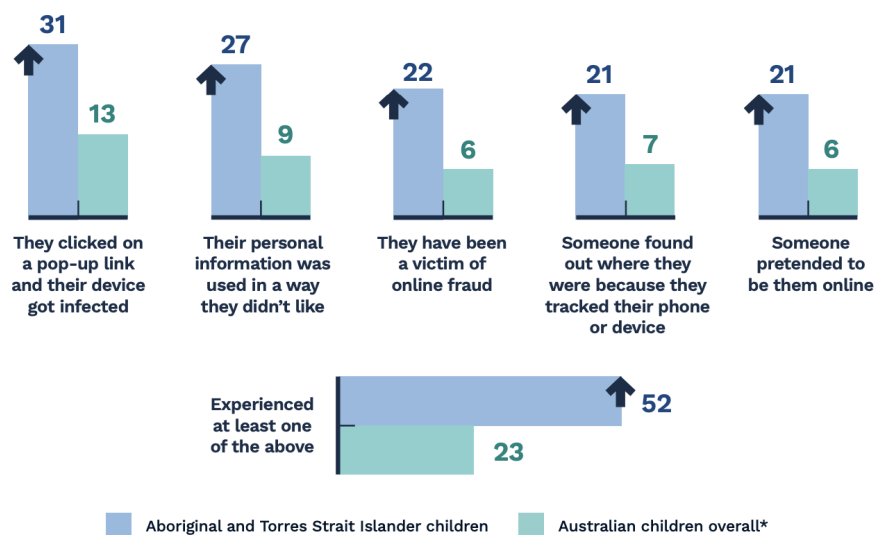
**EXCERPT:** This report finds that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more likely than the wider Australian population to have negative experiences online, such as being the target of hate speech and cyberbullying. However, these same children are relatively proactive and knowledgeable about the actions they can take to reduce harm. Parents and caregivers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are closely engaged with their child's internet use and are highly likely to explore strategies for safer internet use with their child.

SELECT FIGURES:

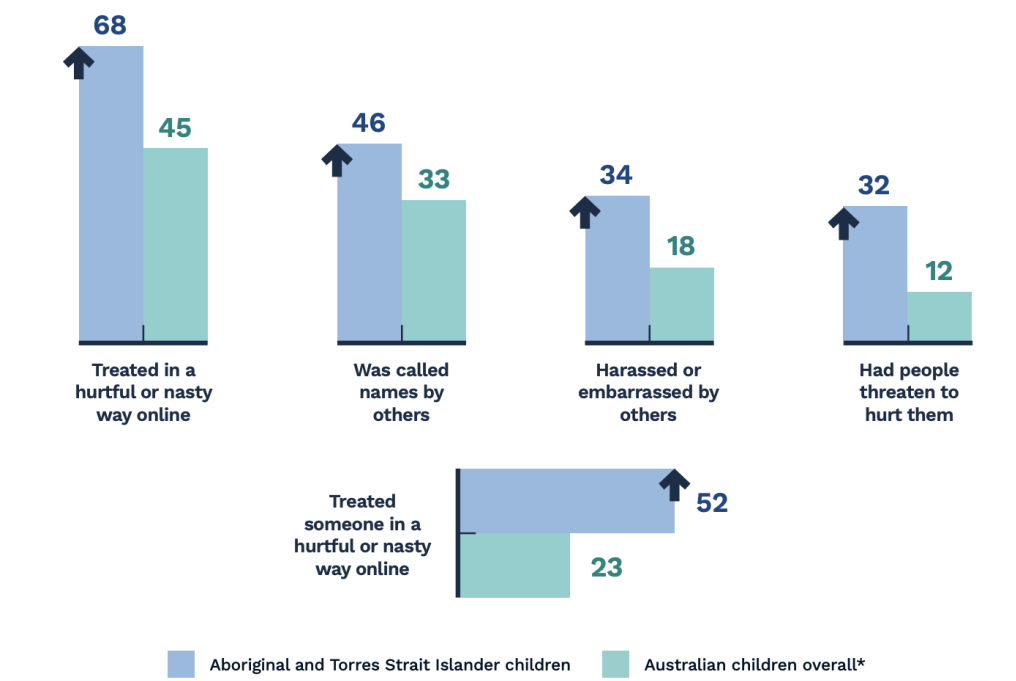
**Figure 5:** Use of the internet by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to look for health information and to seek emotional support – comparison with Australian children overall (% weekly or more often)



**Figure 8:** Experiences of compromised security by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children – comparison with national average



**Figure 9: Experienced or perpetrated bullying behaviour by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children – comparison with Australian children overall (% past 12 months)**



#### 2.2.16 [Youth engagement and online safety \(2022\)](#). eSafety Commissioner.

**EXCERPT: Young people’s main online safety concerns relate to interactions with others online (e.g. catfishing, fake accounts, and contact from unknown people), privacy issues (exposure of personal information, photos, and stolen identities), and security issues (hackers, scams, and malware).** Cyberbullying is also a concern among young people. However, they generally feel that there is an oversaturation of cyberbullying education and messaging in schools and at home. Other key concerns include sexual exploitation (grooming, predators), accessing or being exposed to inappropriate content (pornography, violence), misinformation and fake news, commercial advertising (sexual or false advertising, sale of illegal or inappropriate goods), receiving judgement from peers about their opinions online, and the heightened vulnerability of particular groups (e.g. minorities) to a range of online safety issues.

#### 2.2.17 [Adolescents online \(2021\)](#). Growing Up in Australia LSAC Snapshot Series.

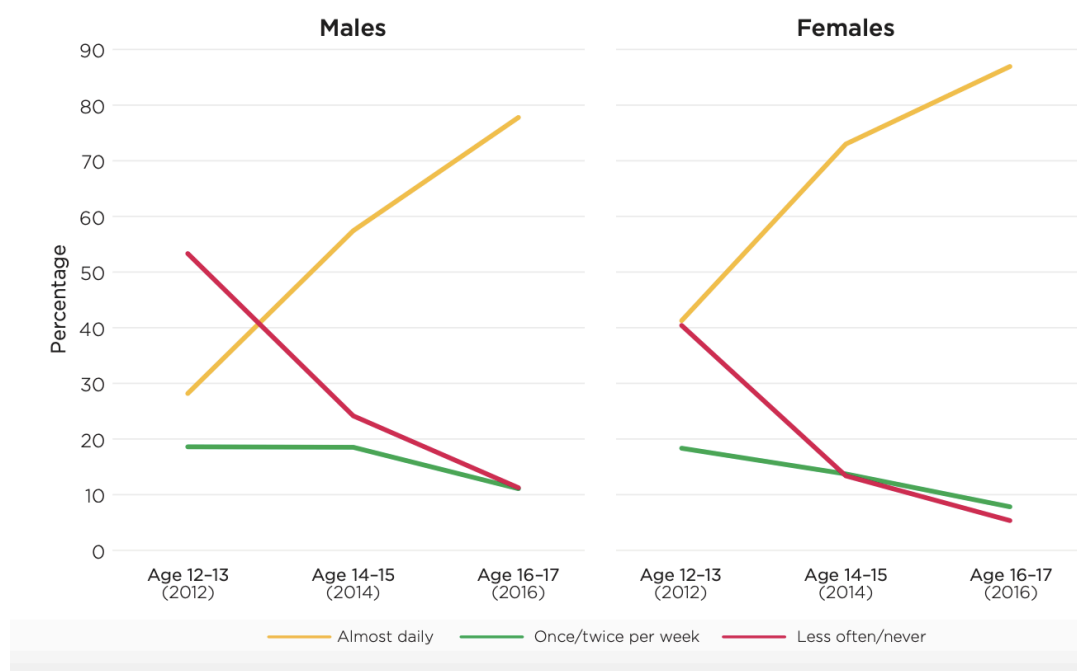
FIGURES:

## How often do young people use social networking sites (SNS)?

Use of SNS is common for the majority of 16-17 year olds. By this age most adolescents (78% of males and 87% of females) were using SNS almost daily. Females adopted SNS use earlier and their frequency of use was higher than males' at every age (Figure 3).

However, some adolescents are not as engaged with SNS. At age 16-17, close to a third of teens with autism (36%) reported that they never used SNS, and 8% of those with long-term health conditions and 7% of other adolescents reported that they were not daily users of SNS.

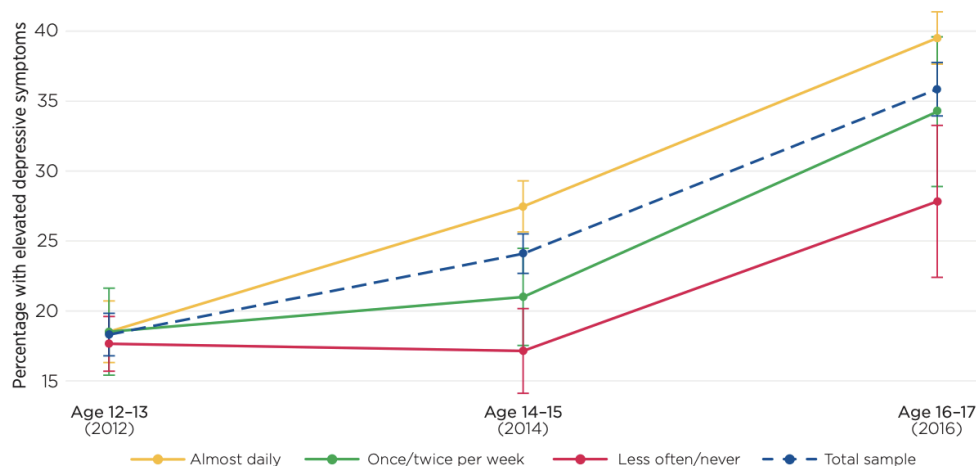
**Figure 3:** Frequency of use of social networking sites by sex between ages 12-13 and 16-17



## Is SNS use related to mental health?

Increased frequency of SNS use over time is associated with greater levels of depressive symptoms, and this association is stronger at older ages (Figure 4).<sup>7</sup> The risk of experiencing elevated depressive symptoms increased significantly among adolescents who went from using SNS weekly or less than weekly to almost daily over time. Increased frequency of SNS use was also associated with a higher risk of elevated anxiety symptoms.<sup>8</sup>

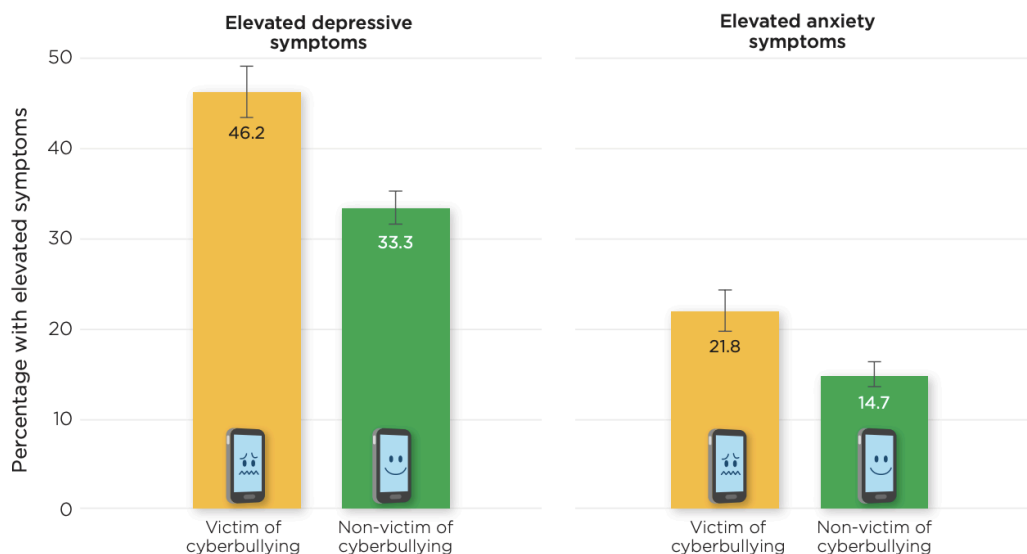
**Figure 4:** Mean trajectories of elevated depressive symptoms by frequency of SNS use from ages 12–13 to 16–17



**Notes:** Average trajectories based on multi-level mixed-effects logistic regression model of risk of elevated depressive symptoms (final model with time interaction). Models controlled for socio-demographic characteristics, temperament, relationships with peers and parents, parental mental health, experiences of bullying and cyberbullying.

**Source:** LSAC K cohort, Waves 4–7 (ages 10–11 to 16–17).

**Figure 5:** Predicted percentage of adolescents with mental health problems by experiences of cyberbullying (age 16–17)



**Notes:** Predicted probabilities based on multi-level mixed-effects logistic regression models of depression (final model with time interaction) and anxiety (full model) from ages 12–13 to 16–17, controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, temperament, relationships with peers and parents, parental mental health, and SNS use. 95% confidence intervals are shown by the 'I' bars at the top of each column.

**Source:** LSAC K cohort, Waves 4–7 (ages 10–11 to 16–17)

**NOTE:** Figures from pages 6–8 of the report

**2.2.18 [Evans-Whipp & Gasser \(2018\)](#).** 4. Are children and adolescents getting enough sleep? LSAC Annual Statistical Report 2018.

EXCERPT: The LSAC data did not find any difference in the proportion of adolescents not meeting the minimum sleep guidelines at either 12–13 or 16–17 years of age according to the amount of TV they watched or time spent on electronic gaming. TV viewing has been found to be the least likely media device to be related to lack of sleep (Hale & Guan, 2015). **However, internet access was related to the likelihood of not meeting minimum sleep guidelines with over 28% of those in the 12–13 year age group and 27% of those in the 14–15 year age group with internet access in their bedrooms not meeting guidelines, compared to 23% and 15%, respectively, of those without bedroom internet (Table 4.8). For 16–17 year olds, the likelihood of not meeting sleep guidelines increased with increasing time spent on the internet. Almost two-thirds of 16–17 year olds who spent eight or more hours a day on the internet were not meeting sleep guidelines, compared to just over a third who spent less than two hours a day on the internet.** Almost one in five 16–17 year olds (18%) spent eight or more hours per day on the internet. Two thirds (68%) spent between two and eight hours per day, and over half of this group were not meeting minimum sleep guidelines.

**2.2.19 [Yu & Baxter \(2015\)](#).** 5. Australian children's screentime and participation in extracurricular activities. LSAC Annual Statistical Report 2015.

EXCERPT: Australian children's screen time increased from ages 4-5 to 12-13 years. **On average, by 12-13 years, children spent 3 hours per weekday and almost 4 hours per weekend day using screens, which equates to around 20% of their waking time on weekdays and 30% on weekends.** The increase in screen time as children grew may be partly due to the rapid development of technology in the past decade, along with the growing availability of portable and affordable media devices. It is also likely to reflect children's needs and desires for exploration and acquisition of new knowledge and skill as they grow older. Throughout this chapter we compared children's total screen time to the recommended limit of no more than 2 hours per day screen time for entertainment. Consistent with other Australian and international studies, the analyses of LSAC presented here showed that children very often exceed the recommended amount of screen time (see Houghton et al., 2015; Melkevik et al., 2010).

**2.2.20** [Oviedo-Trespalacios et al \(2019\)](#). Problematic Use of Mobile Phones in Australia...Is It Getting Worse? *Frontiers in Psychiatry*.

ABSTRACT: Rapid technological innovations over the past few years have led to dramatic changes in today's mobile phone technology. While such changes can improve the quality of life of its users, problematic mobile phone use can result in its users experiencing a range of negative outcomes such as anxiety or, in some cases, engagement in unsafe behaviors with serious health and safety implications such as mobile phone distracted driving. The aims of the present study are two-fold. First, this study investigated the current problem mobile phone use in Australia and its potential implications for road safety. Second, based on the changing nature and pervasiveness of mobile phones in Australian society, this study compared data from 2005 with data collected in 2018 to identify trends in problem mobile phone use in Australia. **As predicted, the results demonstrated that problem mobile phone use in Australia increased from the first data collected in 2005. In addition, meaningful differences were found between gender and age groups in this study, with females and users in the 18–25 year-old age group showing higher mean Mobile Phone Problem Use Scale (MPPUS) scores.** Additionally, problematic mobile phone use was linked with mobile phone use while driving. Specifically, participants who reported high levels of problem mobile phone use, also reported handheld and hands-free mobile phone use while driving.

[Other studies? What have we missed?]

\* \* \* \* \*

## 2.3 COMMENTS ON THE 2024 SOCIAL MEDIA MINIMUM AGE BILL

**2.3.1** [Pal & Hsu \(2024\)](#). Australia's world-first social media ban for children under 16 attracts mixed reaction. *Reuters*.

EXCERPT: "I think that's a great idea, because I found that the social media for kids (is) not really appropriate, sometimes they can look at something they shouldn't," said Sydney resident Francesca Sambas.

Others were more scathing.

"I'm feeling very angry, I feel that this government has taken democracy and thrown it out the window," said 58-year-old Shon Klose.

"How could they possibly make up these rules and these laws and push it upon the people?"

Children, meanwhile, said they would try to find a way around the ban.

"I feel like I still will use it, just secretly get in," said 11-year-old Emma Wakefield.

EXCERPT 2: A spokesperson for TikTok, which is hugely popular with teen users, said on Friday the process had been rushed and risked putting children into greater danger. "We're disappointed the Australian government has ignored the advice of the many mental health, online safety, and youth advocacy experts who have strongly opposed the ban," the spokesperson said.

"It's entirely likely the ban could see young people pushed to darker corners of the internet where no community guidelines, safety tools, or protections exist."

Albanese said on Friday passing the bill before the age verification trial has been completed was the correct approach.

"We are very clearly sending a message about our intentions here," he said.

"The legislation is very clear. We don't argue that its implementation will be perfect, just like the alcohol ban for under 18s doesn't mean that someone under 18 never has access, but we know that it's the right thing to do.

### **2.3.2** [Guo, Jett, Cheng \(2024\)](#). Australia passes landmark for children under 16. *NBC News*.

EXCERPT: Australian lawmakers on Thursday approved a landmark ban on social media for children under 16 in some of the world's toughest such controls.

The ban, which aims to address the impact of excessive social media use on children's physical and mental health, affects social media platforms including X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Reddit, but not YouTube.



EXCERPT 2: Supporters of the ban have cited the effect of harmful depictions of body image on girls and the effect of misogynistic content on boys. Its passage comes after a series of Australian teenagers died by suicide over what their families said was online bullying.

“The basis for this is that there is a feeling amongst the majority of Australians that social media does more harm than good,” said Rob Nicholls, a senior research associate in media and communication at the University of Sydney.

EXCERPT 3: Outside the legislature, the ban has come under heavy scrutiny from parents and scholars who say social media can be a crucial source of support for young people, especially those who feel marginalized.

“Social media provides vital connections for many young Australians, allowing them to access mental health resources, peer support networks, and a sense of community,” Christopher Stone, executive director of Suicide Prevention Australia, said in a statement Wednesday. “Cutting off this access risks exacerbating feelings of loneliness and isolation.”

**2.3.3** [Kim \(2024\)](#). Australia Has Barred Everyone Under 16 From Social Media. Will It Work? *The New York Times*.

EXCERPT: Australia has imposed a sweeping ban on social media for children under 16, one of the world’s most comprehensive measures aimed at safeguarding young people from potential hazards online. But many details were still unclear, such as how it will be enforced and what platforms will be covered.

After sailing through Parliament’s lower house on Wednesday, the bill passed the Senate on Thursday with bipartisan support. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has said that it puts Australia at the vanguard of efforts to protect the mental health and well-being of children from detrimental effects of social media, such as [online hate or bullying](#).

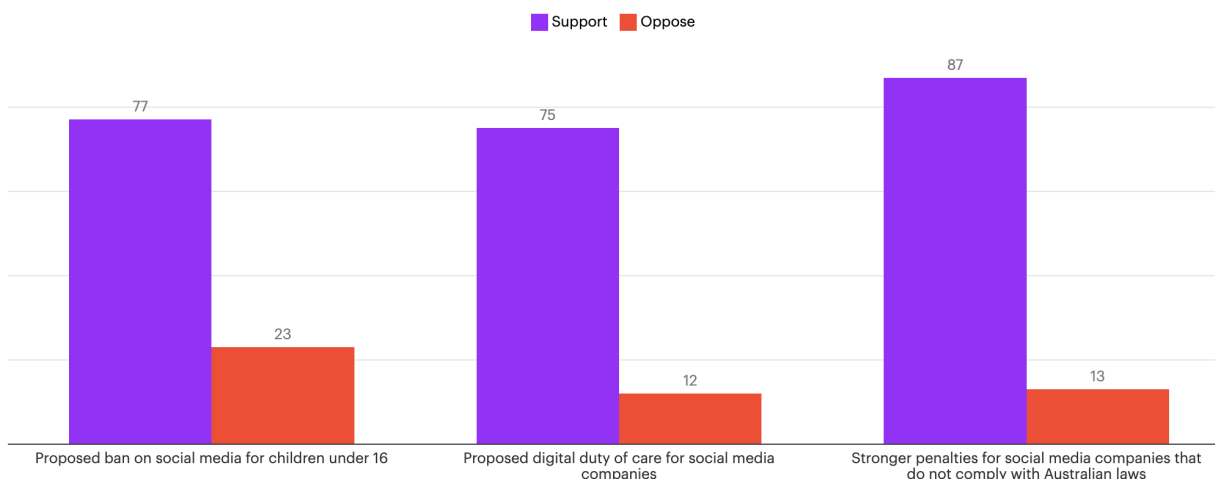
**2.3.4** [YouGov \(2024\)](#). Support for under-16 social media ban soars to 77% among Australians.

EXCERPT: YouGov survey found that 77% of Australians back the under-16 social media ban, a significant increase from the 61% support found in an August poll prior to the government's official announcement. Only 23% oppose the measure.

FIGURE:

### Australians shows strong support across all aspects of the government's proposed social media regulations

% of Australians who support or oppose each (excluding don't know)



#### 2.3.5 [Chair's Foreword](#). Parliament of Australia.

EXCERPT: Social media offers young Australians opportunities for connection, learning, and creativity, but it is also a space fraught with risk. In an era where social media is as integral to daily life as the telephone or television once was, we must ask whether the environment it creates is fit for our most vulnerable citizens: our children and young people. **Alarming, almost two-thirds of 14- to 17-year-olds report encountering extremely harmful content, including drug abuse, suicide or self-harm, as well as violent material, and a quarter have been exposed to material that promotes unsafe eating habits.**<sup>[1]</sup> These statistics are not just numbers; they represent young lives affected in ways that can have enduring consequences.

Parents are at the frontline of these challenges. **Research conducted by the eSafety Commissioner shows that 95 per cent of Australian caregivers consider online safety one of the hardest parts of parenting today.**<sup>[2]</sup> The committee heard about the anxiety and even despair experienced by parents. Parents have describing feelings of

being overwhelmed and unsure how to protect their children in a digital world evolving faster than most can comprehend. Their voices demand our attention and action.

**The Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 will amend the *Online Safety Act 2021* by introducing a minimum age of 16 to have an account on age-restricted social media platforms, protecting young Australians at a critical stage of their development.** It reflects the Australian Government's commitment to holding platforms accountable for the safety of their users, particularly our young people.

**2.3.6 [Bohannon \(2024\)](#).** No Social Media For Anyone Under 16: What To Know About Australia's New Ban. *Forbes*.

EXCERPT: "This Bill puts the onus on social media companies—not young people, not their parents," Albanese wrote in his opinion piece. He added the bill is about "making it clear that social media companies have a social responsibility. And sending a message to all those Mums and Dads who are worried about the impact that social media is having on their children's wellbeing, their mental health, their confidence and sense of self."

Earlier this week, social media companies filed submissions with the Australian government urging it to delay the bill. Google and Meta asked them to wait until they complete an age-verification trial and said without more information on how to enforce such an age cutoff the "bill is inconsistent and ineffective," Reuters reported. TikTok said in a statement it saw "a range of serious, unresolved problems" with the bill that could have "unintended consequences for all Australians." Last Thursday, X's owner Elon Musk said on the platform the bill "seems like a backdoor way to control access to the Internet by all Australians."

**2.3.7 [Whiteman \(2024\)](#).** Tech companies put on notice as Australia passes world-first social media ban for under-16s. *CNN*.

EXCERPT: The bill was backed by most members of Australia's main opposition party, the Liberal Party, with Liberal Sen. Maria Kovacic describing it as a "pivotal moment in our country."

“We have drawn a line in the sand. The enormous power of big tech can no longer remain unchecked in Australia,” she said Thursday before the vote.

But it met fierce opposition from some independents and smaller parties, including Greens Sen. Sarah Hanson-Young, who accused the major parties of trying to “fool” Australian parents.

“This is a disaster unfolding before our eyes,” she said. “You couldn’t make this stuff up. The prime minister says he’s worried about social media. The leader of the opposition says, ‘Let’s ban it.’

“It’s a race to the bottom to try and pretend who can be the toughest, and all they end up with is pushing young people into further isolation and giving the platforms the opportunity to continue the free-for-all, because now there’s no social responsibility required.

“We need to make social media safer for everybody.”

**2.3.8** [Albanese & Rowland \(2024\)](#). Albanese Government delivers world-leading legislation to protect children online. *Prime Minister of Australia*.

EXCERPT: Quotes Attributable to Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese:

“We know social media is doing social harm

“We want Australian children to have a childhood, and we want parents to know the Government is in their corner

“This is a landmark reform. We know some kids will find workarounds, but we're sending a message to social media companies to clean up their act.”

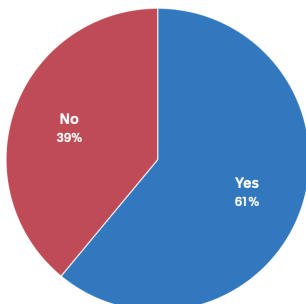
**2.3.9** [Whittaker, J \(2024\)](#). License them, censor them and make them pay: What Australians really think about social media. *ABC News*.

EXCERPT: Australians overwhelmingly support regulating social media and censoring harmful content, with six in 10 people polled backing an unproven proposal to ban access to children, exclusive research for the ABC’s Q+A shows.

## SELECT FIGURES:

**Q+A/YouGov poll: Youth social media access**

Should government ban the use of social media platforms for Australians younger than 17?

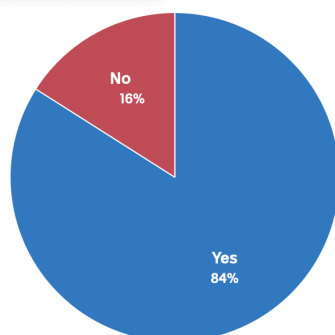


Survey: August 9-14 / Respondents: 1,533

**Q+A/YouGov poll: Social media licences**

Should social media platforms be licenced and subject to a code of conduct like broadcasters?

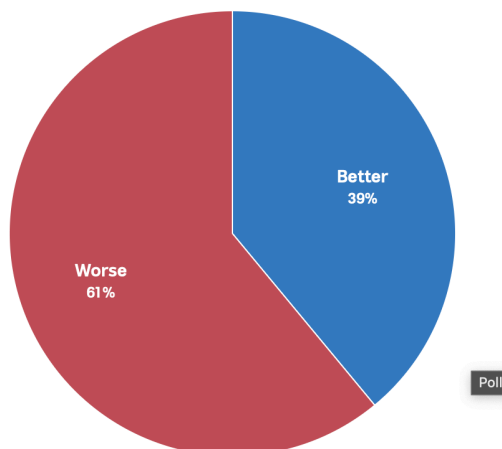
Poll 19082024 - Graph 3



Survey: August 9-14 / Respondents: 1,533

### Q+A/YouGov poll: Social media value

Social media platforms have made my personal life ...



Survey: August 9-14 / Respondents: 1,533

### 2.3.10 [Can teenagers outwit Australia's social-media ban?](#) (2024). *The Economist*.

### 2.3.11 [McGuirk \(2024\)](#). Australia's plan to ban children from social media proves popular and problematic. *AP News*.

EXCERPT: "The leaders of all eight Australian states and mainland territories have unanimously backed the plan, although Tasmania, the smallest state, would have preferred the threshold was set at 14.

But a vocal assortment of experts in the fields of technology and child welfare have responded with alarm. More than 140 such experts signed an open letter to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese condemning the 16-year age limit as "too blunt an instrument to address risks effectively."

[NOTE from Emma Park: The link included to the open letter leads to a 404 page. I found the Open Letter and have linked it below]

### 2.3.12 [Open Letter](#) (2024). *Australian Child Rights Taskforce*.

EXCERPT: Any restrictions in the digital world must therefore be designed with care and we are concerned that a 'ban' is too blunt an instrument to address risks effectively.

Some concerns include:

- Bans affect rights to access and participation: The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child states that ‘national policies should be aimed at providing children with the opportunity to benefit from engaging with the digital environment and ensuring their safe access to it.’
- Parental consent does not x unsafe products. Placing requirements on parents to consent to the use of ‘unsafe’ products does not drive up safety.
- Parents and carers often are not ‘the experts’, but will still be asked to make informed decisions. Placing responsibility on parents to provide consent, without adequate guidance and support, is unfair. Not all parents will be able to manage the responsibility of protection in the digital world.
- Implementing a ban effectively remains a challenge. There are not yet effective techniques for age assurance nor to verify parental consent, and privacy concerns remain.
- It creates even more risks for children who may still use platforms. Platforms would be disincentivised from offering child safety features for any younger users that do still ‘slip onto’ a platform via ineffective age assurance.
- It fails to drive up safety standards on platforms children will be allowed to use. Some social media ‘type’ services appear too integral to childhood to be banned, for example short form video streamers. But these too have safety risks like risks of dangerous algorithms promoting risky content. A ban does not function to improve the products children will be allowed to use.

### 2.3.13 [Leigh \(2024\)](#). Why Australia is Setting a Minimum Age of 16 for Creating a Social Media Account. *After Babel*.

EXCERPT: Australia’s social media age minimum will reduce the online harms that are affecting young people. **Like phone-free schools, keeping social media out of the lives of under-sixteens will help reduce cyberbullying and online exploitation, and it will improve mental wellbeing.** It will encourage more young Australians to step out of the cycle of social media addiction and experience the many joys and opportunities of the physical world and face-to-face communication. And it will stop social media companies from continuing to use predatory business practices to take advantage of vulnerable young people. Australians pride ourselves on our beaches and parks, our love of playing sports and socializing with friends. Less doom-scrolling means more chances to spend our precious hours relishing the remarkable world around us.

**2.3.14 [Conroy \(2024\)](#).** Governments are banning kids from social media: will that protect them from harm? *Nature*.

EXCERPT: Studies suggest that children are already finding ways around existing age limits. A [2022 report](#) by the UK government's Office of Communications found that 60% of children aged between 8 and 11 who use these platforms have their own profiles, despite most platforms having an age limit of 13 years old. Furthermore, young users do not need an account to browse some social-media sites, such as TikTok, and can use their parents' logins to access content on more restrictive sites, says Stephanie Wescott, a researcher at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, who focuses on gender-based violence in schools. "There are huge enforceability issues," she says.

**2.3.15 [Amnesty International \(2024\)](#).** Australia: Authorities must effectively regulate social media instead of banning children and young people.

EXCERPT: Responding to [proposals](#) by the Australian government to ban social media access for children under the age of 16, Amnesty International Australia Campaigner Nikita White, said:

"Rather than banning children and young people from social media, the Anthony Albanese led government should regulate to enhance the protection of children's privacy and personal data while prioritizing their human rights.

"The government should put in place safeguards to ensure that content-shaping algorithms used by online platforms doesn't use profiling by default.

**2.3.16 [Esfandiari \(2024\)](#).** Australia's social media ban is a flawed approach to protecting children. *The Hill*.

EXCERPT: The law's implementation challenges are considerable. Age verification is technologically possible, but still a complex and imperfect process. Social media platforms will face significant difficulties in ensuring that children under 16 cannot access their services without compromising user privacy or introducing security vulnerabilities. Children who are determined to access social media will likely find ways to bypass restrictions, raising the question of how effective the ban will actually be.



The law also risks isolating young people from a range of opportunities. Social media platforms are not just for entertainment; they are essential tools for education, connection and exploration. More importantly, they are integral to understanding and engaging with the future world that is unfolding — denying young people access to these platforms effectively forces them to remain in the past.

**2.3.17 [Truu \(2024\)](#).** Children and teenagers under 16 to be banned from social media after parliament passes world-first laws. *ABC News*.

EXCERPT: The bill was introduced to parliament last Thursday and was referred for a Senate inquiry the same day. Submissions to the inquiry closed on Friday, a three-hour hearing was held on Monday, and the report was tabled on Tuesday.

Almost all the submissions raised concerns about the "extremely short" consultation period, the committee report noted.

"Legislation is a necessary tool, but it is not a panacea," Labor senator Karen Grogan wrote.

"Young people, and in particular diverse cohorts, must be at the centre of the conversation as an age restriction is implemented to ensure there are constructive pathways for connection."

During the public hearing, witnesses with experience working with young people on their mental health offered a mix of views on the ban.

Danielle Einstein, a clinical psychologist who has supported the campaign to raise the age at which kids can access social media, said social media offered no mental health benefits for young people as far as she could see.

But Nicole Palfrey from mental health organisation Headspace was more circumspect, telling the inquiry there was a need to balance any harms from social media with the benefits of connection and "help-seeking" online — especially for kids who live in remote or rural areas.

"When we hear from psychologists and parents they are very much confronted with [the] pointy end, they only see the harms and I think that's incredibly valid," Lucy Thomas from anti-bullying organisation Project Rockit said.

"But as people working with young people every day, we also see the benefits.

"We need to tread very carefully or we risk dialling back young peoples' rights and pushing them into more isolated, less supported places."

**2.3.18** [Ortutay \(2024\)](#). Could Australia's ban on social media for people under 16 work in other countries? *PBS*.

EXCERPT: Many major initiatives, particularly those aimed at social engineering, can produce side effects — often unintended. Could that happen here? What, if anything, do kids stand to lose by separating kids and the networks in which they participate?

Paul Taske, associate director of litigation at the tech lobbying group NetChoice, says he considers the ban "one of the most extreme violations of free speech on the world stage today" even as he expressed relief that the First Amendment prevents such law in the United States

"These restrictions would create a massive cultural shift," Taske said.

"Not only is the Australian government preventing young people from engaging with issues they're passionate about, but they're also doing so even if their parents are ok with them using digital services," he said. "Parents know their children and their needs the best, and they should be making these decisions for their families — not big government. That kind of forcible control over families inevitably will have downstream cultural impacts."

David Inserra, a fellow for Free Expression and Technology, Cato Institute, called the bill "about as useful as an ashtray on a motorbike" in a recent blog post. While Australia's law doesn't require "hard verification" such as an uploaded ID, he said, it calls for effective "age-assurance" that includes an array of ways companies can estimate someone's age. He said no verification system can ensure accuracy while also protecting privacy and not impacting adults in the process.

Privacy advocates have also raised concerns about the law's effect on online anonymity, a cornerstone of online communications — and something that can protect teens on social platforms.

“Whether it be religious minorities and dissidents, LGBTQ youth, those in abusive situations, whistleblowers, or countless other speakers in tricky situations, anonymous speech is a critical tool to safely challenge authority and express controversial opinions,” Inserra said. “But if every user of online platforms must first identify themselves, then their anonymity is at risk.”

EXCERPT #2: Parents in Britain and across Europe earlier this year organized on platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram to promise not to buy smartphones for children younger than 12 or 13. This approach costs almost no money and requires no government enforcement. In the United States, some parents are keeping kids off social media either informally or as part of an organized campaign such as Wait Until 8th, a group that helps parents delay kids' access to social media and phones.

This fall, Norway announced plans to ban kids under 15 from using social media, while France is testing a smartphone ban for kids under 15 in a limited number of schools — a policy that could be rolled out nationwide if successful.

U.S. lawmakers have held multiple congressional hearings — most recently in January — on child online safety. Still, the last federal law aimed at protecting children online was enacted in 1998, six years before Facebook's founding. In July, the U.S. Senate overwhelmingly passed legislation designed to protect children from dangerous online content, pushing forward with what would be the first major effort by Congress in decades to hold tech companies more accountable. But the Kids Online Safety Act has since stalled in the House.

[Other studies? What have we missed?]

### 3) PARENTAL OVERPROTECTION?

The Question: Are Australian parents overprotecting their kids, keeping them supervised until age 10 or 12, and conveying a sense of paranoia to them?

### 3.1 JOURNALISM ABOUT SUCH A RISE, OR CHANGES IN AUSTRALIAN PARENTING IN LINE WITH COTAM

#### 3.1.1 [The link between 'helicopter parents' and student behaviour \(2018\)](#). *The Educator*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Researchers in USA found that the behaviour of 'helicopter parents' (a parent who takes an overprotective or excessive interest in the life of their child) can negatively impact on their child's emotional well-being. Australian researcher Michael Bernard is quoted as saying that **mental health and well-being of students is significantly worse than it was 15 years ago and is exacerbated by helicopter parents**. He recently "told The Australian that an increasing number of young people lack resilience to cope with the day-to-day pressures of life."

#### 3.1.2 [Arlington & Stevenson \(2012\)](#) Police threat to parents on children walking alone. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: **Parents have been "lectured" by police for letting their children walk to the shops or catch a bus on their own**, with senior police saying incidents will be reported to the Department of Community Services if a child is considered at risk.

NOTES: 1. Officers told a Hornsby mother it was "inappropriate" for her 10-year-old daughter to catch a bus unaccompanied, and warned a Manly father whose 7-year-old son walked alone to a local shop that while they would not alert DOCS, they would file a report.

2. A mother, who asked only to be known as Yvette, said her 10-year-old daughter was approached by police while waiting for a bus after a piano lesson last September. They followed the bus and when Yvette greeted her daughter at the other end, police told her: "If it was our daughter we wouldn't want her doing something like that." Yvette said she was grateful for the police concern, but was still "shocked" as she considered her daughter sufficiently mature. **"As a parent ... my role is to teach my children how to live in this society and get them ready for adulthood, and this was a step towards independence for that,"** she said. But after police spoke to her, Yvette escorted her daughter home. "I didn't want to be labelled an irresponsible parent." [Jon notes that this is exactly the dynamic that began in the USA in the 1990s]

**3.1.3 [Baker \(2019\)](#).** Profoundly dangerous': A generation at risk from 'concierge parents'. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

COMMENT: This article talks about the fostering of fragility in children as Australian parenting is changing, with some (not most) acting like the child's concierge: "Timothy Wright, headmaster of Shore School, has noticed more parents querying team selections, or essay marks, or invitations. 'I think some parents are more anxious about managing their children for ongoing success than they are about ongoing learning' he said. "The notion that 'my child must always succeed' is profoundly dangerous." It creates students that are too fragile to accept feedback. "They can't cope when a teacher says, 'you need more reasoning here', or 'this is unclear'," said Dr Wright."

**3.1.4 [Perkins \(2014\)](#).** Over-protected, over-organised ... why kids need time to play. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

COMMENT: This article describes the anxieties of modern Australian parents, the role of changing lifestyles, and how it manifests in overprotective or controlling parenting behaviour. "We are at risk of losing something precious: the unobserved child," says the University of NSW's Professor Paul Tranter, who has written about "child-friendly" cities for the past 20 years. The article also highlights some of the ways people are pushing back against these trends including 'bush kinder' programs where preschool children spend unstructured time nature (albeit intensely supervised and in hi-vis vests), and like minded families who allow their kids to walk or ride to school together. Tranter and his colleagues established the [Sydney Playground Project](#), which introduced loose parts into school playgrounds and included risk-reframing workshops that brought parents and teachers together to consider the benefits of risky play.

[NOTE: Added by Alethea Jerebine]

## 3.2 JOURNALISM QUESTIONING WHETHER THE RISE IS REAL, OR ASSERTING THAT AUSTRALIAN KIDS ARE DOING FINE

[None found yet]

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

### 3.3 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE SHOWING INCREASES IN OVERPROTECTION OR DECREASES IN FREE PLAY AND INDEPENDENCE

#### 3.3.1 [Frank C. \(2017\)](#) Why kids don't play outside anymore. *Style Magazine*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: **Australian children are outdoors on the weekend half as much as their parents were back in the day.** Where today's parents ran around, got dirty, explored neighbourhoods and made their own fun, their offspring are more likely to be found watching TV, playing video games and churning through homework.

FIGURES: (N/A)

NOTES: 1. Research shows that anyone who grew up in the 1970s, '80s or early '90s, would have spent, on average, more than **2 hours** playing outside every day and **9 hours** over a weekend. In contrast, today's youth have been found to spend less than **2 hours** a day outside, on average, and only **4 hours** over a weekend.

2. Further research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies found that **less than 8% of the nation's children play outside every day.** Along with this, Nature Play Queensland gives the statistic that **Australian kids now spend less time outdoors each day than the amount mandated for the well-being of maximum security prisoners!** [[same in USA](#)] [[Same in UK](#)]

#### 3.3.2 [Little \(2015\)](#). Mothers' beliefs about risk and risk-taking in children's outdoor play. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*.

ABSTRACT: Changes to social and environmental contexts impact on children's opportunities for and the nature of outdoor play in many ways. **A number of studies over the past decade have noted a trend towards over-protective parenting practices that restrict children's activities and limit children's independent mobility and engagement with their neighbourhoods.** Through semi-structured interviews with mothers of four-year-old to five-year-old children, this study examined beliefs about children's outdoor play opportunities and exposure to and management of potential risks in outdoor environments. **Whilst the mothers overwhelmingly acknowledged the benefits of risky outdoor play, tension existed between their desire to provide opportunities for their children to safely engage in such play and overcoming their own fears and concerns about their children's safety.** The study has implications for examining ways in which children gain access to outdoor play

and the role that early childhood settings may have in providing access to outdoor play environments that compensate for children's decreased opportunities in other areas of their lives.

**3.3.3** [Veitch, Salmon, & Ball \(2008\)](#). Children's active free play in local neighborhoods: a behavioral mapping study. *Health Education Research*.

ABSTRACT: Many Australian children are more sedentary than they should be, and almost one in five are currently overweight or obese. Some children may face difficulties finding opportunities to be active, having poor access to safe public open spaces or having low independent mobility limiting their access to places to play. This study aimed to examine children's access to places in their neighborhood for active free play and how these vary by age, sex and socioeconomic status (SES). Behavioral maps of the local neighborhood were completed by **children (8–12 years)** from five primary schools across different areas of Melbourne. Children living in low SES outer-urban neighborhoods had to travel greater distances to access local parks compared with those in inner-urban mid and high SES areas. **One-third (32%) of children reported an independent mobility range of <100 m from home.** In conclusion, for some children opportunities to engage in active free play in the local neighborhood may be limited due to lack of parks in close proximity to home and restricted independent mobility. It is important to collaborate with local governments, urban planners and community groups to improve access to neighborhood parks and to promote a sense of neighborhood safety.

**3.3.4** [Rhodes et al \(2023\)](#). Australian families: How we play. *RCH National*.

EXCERPT:

- Most parents (94%) recognise play is important for a child's health, including physical wellbeing and brain development.
- **Less than half (45%) of Australian children play outdoors most days**, and 80% of parents would like their children to spend more time outdoors.
- Time, safety concerns and weather stop Australian children playing outdoors.
- **A third of parents (32%) say it is not good for play to involve risk.**
- Almost two in three parents (61%) often find playing with their child hard or boring, and most parents (58%) are keen to learn more about how to play with their child.

**3.3.5** [Niehues et al \(2016\)](#). Reframing healthy risk taking: Parents' dilemmas and strategies to promote children's well-being. *Journal of Occupational Science*.

**ABSTRACT:** This paper reports findings of a qualitative study regarding dilemmas adults experience in balancing protecting children and offering age-appropriate risk taking opportunities. It outlines strategies adults used to manage their own uncertainties as they supported children to become autonomous. Twenty seven parents of typically developing children and 10 parents of children living with social or physical disabilities engaged in a card sort; they identified and prioritized attributes for their children as a prelude to semi-structured, in-depth interviews about how risk helps children reach these goals. Eight teachers of the typically-developing children also participated in interviews about risk in everyday life and their observations of parents' views about children's risk taking. We took a hermeneutic interpretive approach to analyzing interview transcripts to gain an understanding of these adults' dilemmas and strategies they used to offer children age-appropriate occupations with gradually increasing challenge and responsibility. This study provides unique insights into ways adults manage uncertainties and employ strategies to offer children practice in managing risks in everyday life. These practices supported children in developing qualities and characteristics that contributed both to children's own well-being and to collective well-being of families, schools and communities.

[NOTE from Emma Park: This study does not directly address a rise in overprotection.]

**3.3.6** [Jerebine et al \(2024\)](#). Playing it safe: The relationship between parent attitudes to risk and injury, and children's adventurous play and physical activity. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*.

**ABSTRACT:** Background: Children naturally seek risk in play and adventurous play outdoors confers many benefits, including the potential to increase moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA). This study aimed to investigate the relationship between parent attitudes to risk and injury, and their elementary school-aged child's daily adventurous play and MVPA. Methods: A panel sample of 645 Australian parents/guardians completed an online survey consisting of several validated measures of risk and injury attitudes, and physical activity and play behaviour. Data were analysed via descriptive statistics, univariate and multivariable regressions using Stata 17. A series of exploratory univariate logistic regressions were conducted, followed by a series of multivariable logistic regressions fitted to test the association between parent risk and injury attitudes and (i) children's MVPA, (ii) active play and (iii)



adventurous play, while adjusting for socio-demographic factors. Results: Most adult participants (81%) were female. The mean age of the child participants (53% male) was 8.6 years (SD = 2.4). On average, parents were positive about children's engagement with risk, however, **78% of parents had low tolerance of risk when presented with specific play scenarios**, and attitudes towards injuries varied, with mothers more concerned than fathers. After adjusting for confounders, **children with parents who were tolerant of risk in play were more likely to meet the MVPA guideline of  $\geq 60$  min daily** (OR 2.86, CI: 1.41, 5.82,  $p < 0.004$ ) and spend more time playing adventurously (OR 3.03, CI: 1.82, 5.06,  $p < 0.001$ ). Positive associations for MVPA and adventurous play were observed across all models examining parent attitudes to risk and injury. Younger children engaged in more play and physical activity, however, more positive parent attitudes appeared to moderate the age-related influences. Conclusions: **We found a divergence between the outcomes parents desire for their children through engagement with risk and the play activities they are comfortable with in practice.** Parent attitudes to risk and injury are potentially modifiable factors that may increase children's affordances for adventurous play and physical activity. Interventions that provide parents with practical approaches to address injury concerns and support children's risk-taking in play outdoors are recommended.

[Other studies? What have we missed?]

### 3.4 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE DISPUTING CLAIMS OF INCREASES IN OVERPROTECTION OR DECREASES IN FREE PLAY AND INDEPENDENCE

[None found yet]

[Other studies? What have we missed?]

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## 4) “SAFETYISM” IN K-12 (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY) EDUCATION?

The Question: Are Australian schools overprotecting kids, emphasizing “safety” including “emotional safety,” and otherwise denying kids the chance to develop their antifragility?

### 4.1 JOURNALISM ABOUT SAFETYISM AND OVERPROTECTION IN K-12

**4.1.1** [Ribeiro \(2019\)](#). John Marsden on the 'toxic' parenting pandemic: 'I've never seen this level of anxiety.' *The Guardian*.

SUMMARY: Interview with John Marsden (Tomorrow series author and alternative school Principal) about his new book “The Art of Growing Up” which critiques overprotection, in part based on his experience running an alternative “free range” style school.

**4.1.2** [Verberne \(2014\)](#). Schools cutting into children’s essential play. *The Age*.

EXCERPT: Staggered play times, banned games and smaller playgrounds – Australian schoolchildren are missing out an essential experience. **Play experiences many of us took for granted when we were young are now being radically diminished or at risk of disappearing entirely for children today, and Australia's experience is replicated in many OECD countries.** One reason is we now live in an increasingly risk-averse, litigiously fearful Australia. This, coupled with a lack of understanding of the role of play and “play literacies”, also means essential developmental life skills such as resilience, adaptability and creative thinking, all gained through play, are also being affected. With so much changing in childhood in Australia today, the school playground is one place where children are guaranteed a certain amount of time daily to play freely outdoors. Yet few, if any, Australian schools have a formal play policy or risk-management policy that supports a culture of play. Additionally, the space available for play in Australian schools was significantly impacted by a federal government policy in 2007 known as Building the Education Revolution (BER), a large-scale infrastructure

initiative whereby primary schools across the nation received a new hall, library or classrooms on their school grounds.

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

## 4.2 JOURNALISM QUESTIONING OR DISPUTING A RISE IN SAFETYISM IN K-12

**4.2.1** [Cook \(2019\)](#). Playing with fire: the childcare centres exposing children to risk. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

COMMENT: Article discusses the emergence of childcare centres which are introducing their students to risks (such as fire pits, handling knives to cut their own fruit etc). Anecdotal evidence of an early learning institution acknowledging the developmental need for children to be exposed to risk, and then facilitating the practical exposure. [thanks to Callum Newton]

**4.2.2** [Carmody \(2018\)](#). The anti-cottonwool schools where kids stare down risk in favour of nature play. *ABC*.

EXCERPT: Far from wrapping children in cotton wool, a growing number of WA public schools are doing the opposite, giving their students the opportunity to race around on rollerblades, fly off ramps in crates and slide down trees.

They are setting aside injury concerns to help children build resilience and squeeze in much-needed physical activity, in an age where screen time dominates and where one in four children is either overweight or obese.

**Schools that have adopted the so-called "anti-cotton wool" approach cite a long list of benefits to the approach, which result in happier and healthier students able to play more creatively and cooperatively.**

They say the children are more switched on in class after exhausting all of their energy in the playground.

[Note from Alethea Jerebine: space in schools is likely one influencing factor, with WA schools likely to be less densely populated than east coast schools in Sydney and Melbourne. Additionally, these schools are still in 2023 an exception not the rule].

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

## 4.3 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE SHOWING INCREASES IN OVERPROTECTION

**4.3.1** [Wyver, Tranter, Naughton, Little, Sandseter, & Bundy \(2010\)](#). Ten ways to restrict children's freedom to play: The problem of surplus safety. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*.

ABSTRACT: Play and playgrounds provide essential experiences for young children's growth, development and enjoyment of life. However, such play experiences are now limited for many children due to excessive fear of risk, or "surplus safety". In this article, the authors examine the pervasiveness of surplus safety in the lives of young children. **They argue that restrictions now imposed on children's play to promote safety may, paradoxically, expose children to more serious short and longer term threats of illness and limit children's life opportunities.** By comparing experiences from Australia and Norway, the authors demonstrate that surplus safety is not a necessary outcome of living in a modern Western society.

**4.3.2** [Hyndman & Telford \(2015\)](#). Should educators be 'wrapping school playgrounds in cotton wool' to encourage physical activity? Exploring primary and secondary students' voices from the school playground. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*.

ABSTRACT: Physical activity in school playgrounds has changed considerably over recent decades to reflect a climate of 'surplus safety'. A growing culture of surplus safety can be attributed to a desire of parents and teachers responsible for children to protect school students from danger. **The aim of this research was to examine students' perceptions of playground safety influences on physical activity during school breaks from the perspectives of the 'users' of school playgrounds.** Data

collection consisted of seven focus groups (4 primary school & 3 secondary school) conducted across four schools (2 primary & 2 secondary). During this study, the focus group discussions consisted of 54 children (32 primary & 22 secondary; 50% females; 50% males). Social-Ecological Model levels of school playground safety influence identified by both primary and secondary school students included intrapersonal safety influences (risk taking, preventing boredom, misbehaviour); interpersonal safety influences (teacher responsibilities, teacher support, peer support, teacher intimidation and bullying/territorial issues); physical environment safety influences (surfacing, protection from the weather, safe structures, protective equipment, playground space, hydration, school security and passive smoking protection) and policy/organisational safety influences (designated play areas, playground rules, further supervision, maintenance). This research addresses an important gap in the literature by providing useful information for teacher educators of the multiple safety influences on students' participation in playground physical activity.

#### **4.3.3 Jerebine et al (2024). How education policy actors interpret, portray and contest risk in children's active physical play in schools: a framing analysis. [in revision]**

**ABSTRACT:** Children's physical activity is low and play outdoors has been declining, coinciding with a greater preoccupation with risk in many countries. This study examines how policy actors frame the issue of risk in children's active physical play in schools. Using a theory-informed, multi-method, qualitative case-study design, 30 participants from a range of sectors involved in policy relevant to children's physical activity and play in schools participated in interviews and photo-elicitation. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Four frames of active physical play in schools were identified. Two 'risk averse' frames (protection and productivity) dominated and were primarily expressed by policy actors inside the school system. These frames were characterised by a negative construction of risk, and concerns for adverse outcomes for children and schools. In contrast, two frames were 'risk tolerant' (development and flourishing), within which risk was constructed as 'uncertainty', which could lead to positive or negative outcomes in play, and supported a child's holistic learning, development, and wellbeing. While there were some 'real world' examples of risk tolerant frames, more commonly they were expressed in the context of how things should/could be in schools. Findings indicate school policies that prioritise injury prevention and productivity goals, may involve a risk-benefit trade-off over other fundamental objectives, elevating some risks above less visible ones, such as the consequences of play and physical activity restriction. Implications for education policy are discussed. Future work should seek to improve understanding of the forces

contributing to risk averse frames of physically active play in schools and contribute evidence for the benefits of risk-taking for children.

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

## 4.4 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE DISPUTING AN INCREASE IN OVERPROTECTION

[None found yet]

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

\* \* \* \* \*

## 5) “SAFETYISM” AND SELF-CENSORSHIP IN UNIVERSITIES

The Question: Are Australian universities showing signs of “safetyism,” callout culture, and other trends that have interfered with open inquiry at American universities? Are some students calling for trigger warnings, safe spaces, microaggression training? Are they shouting down speakers and disinviting speakers? Do students and professors feel that they are “walking on eggshells” and therefore self-censoring? Are there distinctively Australian forms of these trends?

### 5.1 JOURNALISM ABOUT SAFETYISM IN UNIVERSITIES

**5.1.1** [Koziol \(2019\)](#) University bosses admit self-censorship and no-platforming a 'problem' on campus. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

NOTES/EXCERPTS: “University of Sydney vice-chancellor Michael Spence, whose institution was embroiled in a political controversy involving protests against author Bettina Arndt, acknowledged it was a “problem” that students were censoring their own views out of fear of repercussions. But this was not a problem peculiar to universities - rather, it resulted from a breakdown in civil discourse at all levels of Australian public life

and existed on both sides of the political spectrum, he said.... "This notion that the left has gone crazy and nobody can talk – I don't identify that. I think the left has gone crazy and the right has gone crazy. **"They're all trying to judge you in five minutes for you using three wrong words.** In that context, sure, there is a certain amount of self-censorship of students, of members of the community. That's a problem. "But that's not because people's right to speak freely is not being respected. That's because the culture – and I don't just mean university culture – **the whole culture has a problem with the way we're talking to each other."**

UNSW Vice Chancellor: "Part of the role of a university is to be a platform for people to express new, controversial ideas, and for other people to come and argue against them. That is part of a dynamic, innovative, democratic society. I don't think we can let our guard down."

**5.1.2** [Koziol \(2019\)](#) Is this man 'single-handedly trying to undermine western civilisation'? Some people think so. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

NOTES; 1. In a pitch echoing Prime Minister **Scott Morrison's call for Australians to "disagree better"**, Spence says there is an urgent need for everyone involved in public debates to learn how to "disagree well". "Unless we can do that, I think we're in the proverbial up the creek," he says.... student protests against author Bettina Arndt - who argues there is no such thing as a "rape crisis" at universities - caused consternation about free speech on campus, prompting federal Education Minister Dan Tehan to commission a review by former High Court chief justice Robert French.

**5.1.3** [Cook \(2019\)](#) The rise of the helicopter parent at Australian universities. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Academics say **helicopter parents** who were once overly involved in their child's primary and secondary schooling are now trying to **resolve their issues at university**.

NOTES: 1. Moms and dads are contacting lecturers to query their adult children's grades, sitting in on meetings with course coordinators and repeatedly phoning academics to inquire about students' progress. What follows are quotes from teachers about helicopter parents:

1a. "In the past the student would complain about the mark, now the **parents complain about the mark.**" -Monash University lecturer

1b. “Parents are coming in mobs and the **numbers have increased**,” -Monash University education lecturer Sarika Kewalramani

1c. “The influence of the parent is probably more now than it has ever been.” “When I ask them to work through an issue and resolve it themselves, many of them can never remember doing that.” -Queensland University of Technology parenting expert Professor Marilyn Campbell

**5.1.4** [McGinn \(2016\)](#). Monash University pilots trigger warnings to give students the heads up on potentially offensive material. *Herald Sun*.

COMMENT: This is the first reported instance of trigger warnings making their way into the curriculum on an Australian college campus. The idea was proposed by the student association, and met considerable push back from various members of the faculty.

**5.1.6** [Williamson \(2017\)](#). Call-out culture: Are social justice warriors stifling sensitive but important conversations? *ABC News*.

COMMENT: This article brings up an example of a professor lecturing on feminism and gender studies at Melbourne University being criticised by her students for incorrect use of terminology. It expresses concern that call-out culture, and oversensitivity to language is reducing leftwing politics to infighting over what words should and should not be used.

**5.1.7** Baker (2019). [How academics are taking steps to be open to uncomfortable ideas](#). *Sydney Morning Herald*.

QUOTE: “Dozens of Australian academics have joined [HxA]... .Babones, who describes himself as conservative, progressive and liberal in equal measure, is among them. He argues the erosion of viewpoint diversity has been a slow creep, the result of decades' worth of tiny biases in hiring, promotion and peer review processes. It's not because diverse viewpoints are not allowed; he does not fear being rapped on the knuckles by management for expressing an unpopular view, but the consequences would be subtle, such as resistance by colleagues to a promotion. He cites the example of a PhD student who struggled to find academic work because her research was critical of strategies used by Palestinians.”



COMMENT: This article is particularly important because it shifts attention away from the relatively rare protests of visiting speakers, onto the much larger problem of daily self-censorship among students and faculty.

**5.1.8** [Lane \(2019\)](#) Signs of resistance to the woke gang's war on reason. *The Australian*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Will we ever wake up from the “woke” activist nightmare? This week, Kmart insisted it was a software glitch in photo printing kiosks — not some PC edict — that erased the “offensive” word Jesus from captions. Maybe, but the suspicion of journalists is hardly surprising. The grim reality of offence-activism keeps racing ahead of parody.

NOTES: 1. One graduate affiliate is Monica Koehn, a mature-age student at Western Sydney University with a business background. She is doing her doctorate in evolutionary psychology and mating behaviour, a field where gender politics sometimes denies inconvenient science. Koehn says: **“If universities had more viewpoint diversity, I believe people would be more willing and able to listen to evidence from differing points of view.”** Like Haidt, her politics happen to be on the left but she opposes the shutting down of debate. **“If people don’t have the ability to hear a speaker or understand both sides of a controversial topic, how are they able to make up their own minds?”**

2. Another Heterodoxer is Kevin Carrico, now at Monash University in Melbourne but American-born and a seasoned visitor to China, the object of his scholarship. “A considerable amount of my thoughts about viewpoint diversity and orthodoxy very much grew out of my experiences in China, where I was not always particularly impressed by the vitality of political debates,” he says. “Coming back to the US after living in China — I don’t want to be too hyperbolic, but I suppose I did recognise the dangers of a situation in which everyone agrees on something and nobody raises any questions about it.” He, too, regards himself as progressive. **“But sometimes in academia, critical engagement is too often simply equated with a far left or Marxist viewpoint, which in my perspective ... don’t actually provide us with any real understanding of the sheer complexity of the world.”**

COMMENT: Most of the content of this article referred to examples outside of Australia

**5.1.9** [A choice between activism and true higher education \(2019\)](#). *The Australian*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Today we report that Peter Shergold, John Brumby, Angus Houston and other heavy-hitters who serve as university chancellors are taking seriously the activist challenge to open inquiry and free speech on campus. This is good news, because Universities Australia, the lobby for the vice-chancellors in charge of campus life, reckons there isn't a problem. This is an issue that goes to the heart of higher education and its interplay with values and institutions in the wider culture. **The task of universities is to pursue knowledge and truth, encouraging young minds to range widely, reason honestly and test their opinions against other views.** None of this amounts to "hate speech", the lazy smear now aimed at opinions that depart from progressive orthodoxy. **If society is to solve complex problems, we need graduate-citizens who won't tailor their thinking to audience sensitivities.**

NOTES: 1. **Politics and academic integrity do not go together, especially when emotionally brittle activists demand "safety" from competing viewpoints** — opinions, not hate speech. The future of universities in their present form is not assured. They undermine their true interests if they appease noisy minorities.  
 2. But all the Anglosphere countries have some level of this corruption and the US experience shows it can spread very quickly. **The task is to prevent a crisis and resist a dysfunctional culture already present in higher education**, as well as the corporate world.  
 3. Like the May 18 election result, **the good sense of the mainstream will impose a correction; there are already hopeful signs.** But why can't more vice-chancellors see the advantage of rising to the occasion and becoming authors of their own reform?

**5.1.10** [Baker & Hunter \(2019\)](#) 'Moral authority': The academics signing their own free speech pledge. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. (Thanks to Andrew Glover)

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: As universities debate adopting a free speech code, dozens of academics are signing up to a personal version that raises concern about a lack of viewpoint diversity on campuses and commits to "constructive disagreement".

NOTES: 1. Some conservatives claim narrow, left-wing views dominate on the nation's campuses, although others say **critics of universities have imported a United States debate to Australia, where there is little evidence of a similar problem.**  
 2. "I don't know if we are going to go the way of the **United States**, but **there are pressures as to what you can say and what you can't say.**" - Dr. Jamie Roberts from the University of NSW

3. Another signatory, Andrew Glover from the University of Wollongong, said academics needed to find faults in their theories or propositions, and **"that's much harder to do if you tend to agree with the findings someone already has."**

4. Professor Nick Enfield, professor of linguistics at the University of Sydney and the head of the Sydney Initiative for Truth, signed up because he believes healthy debate requires a wide range of views, but **did not think there was a particular issue in Australia.**

**5.1.11** [Baker \(2019\)](#) How academics are taking steps to be open to uncomfortable ideas. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: "My impression is that activist **University of Sydney students are very eager to import fashionable United States and United Kingdom culture war campaigns**, but have had little traction in doing so," says Salvatore Babones, one of the university's sociologists who is originally from the US.

NOTES: 1. He (Babones) has not observed a proliferation of "safe spaces" at Sydney and has never seen a trigger warning outside the student newspaper. He worries about something much more subtle, something difficult to quantify and something that poses a far more serious issue for universities – one that cannot be fixed by free speech codes, or ministerial edits, or even vice-chancellors' intervention. **His fear is that academics have become resistant to considering uncomfortable ideas.**

2. [Studies in the United States](#) – which are extrapolated to Australia, since none have been undertaken here – show academia is dominated by progressives; one study suggested conservatives were the most under-represented group after Hispanics.

3. As the left in the wider community shuts down controversial debates by **"no-platforming"** (refusing a platform for views deemed offensive), **"cancelling"** (rejecting someone because they have violated a social standard) and **social media "call-outs"** (publicly highlighting someone's social transgressions), even some left-leaning academics fear those practices are being adopted within academia, and worry about their long-term impact.

4. Babones, who describes himself as conservative, progressive and liberal in equal measure, is among them (those concerned about viewpoint diversity in universities). He argues the **erosion of viewpoint diversity has been a slow creep, the result of decades' worth of tiny biases in hiring, promotion and peer review processes**. It's not because diverse viewpoints are not allowed; he does not fear being rapped on the knuckles by management for expressing an unpopular view, but the consequences would be subtle, such as resistance by colleagues to a promotion.

5. Evans, a former foreign affairs minister and attorney-general, says the issue has been **"wildly overstated"**, a **controversy imported from the US that has left people "jumping at shadows" without local evidence.**

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

## 5.2 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ABOUT SAFETYISM IN UNIVERSITIES

[There does not seem to be any good data on changing attitudes among Australian students or faculty, or on the number of protests over visiting speakers]

COMMENT: [While not precisely on this point of "safetyism", there has been an important independent study by the former Chief Justice of the High Court, Robert French, on whether or not there is a "crisis" of free speech on campuses and whether steps need to be taken to provide further protection for academic freedom and free speech generally. See here for a link to the Report (May 2019):

<https://www.education.gov.au/review-university-freedom-speech> . There have been recent media reports that Chancellors (in effect chairmen of Uni boards of governance) agree with the report's recommendations for a new code of conduct, but Vice-Chancellors (in effect CEO's who run the institutions on a day by day basis) are not so keen. [See here](#). [Added by Neil Foster]

### [Valuing Viewpoint Diversity: Four Examples from Higher Education](#) (James Dalziel)

Paper from the 2018 TEQSA Conference - from the Diversity Stream. p195-215

NOTES: Includes a review of some recent examples of free speech/safetyism issues in Australian HE, plus a general review of many related issues.

ABSTRACT: There has been rising intolerance on some university campuses for non-progressive ideological viewpoints. In response, a growing number of academics and university leaders are acknowledging the value of viewpoint diversity – that is, the benefits for students of being exposed to a range of competing ideologies and viewpoints during university education, particularly in humanities, social sciences and professional faculties.

This paper considers four recent examples of valuing viewpoint diversity:

1. Heterodox Academy, “a politically diverse group of more than 1,800 professors and graduate students who have come together to improve the quality of research and education in universities by increasing viewpoint diversity, mutual understanding, and constructive disagreement.”
  2. The “Chicago Principles” for freedom of expression at universities – adopted by over 45 universities.
  3. How theological colleges can balance support for academic freedom with a statement of faith.
  4. The author’s use of Moral Foundations Theory to help people better understand others with differing moral priorities.
- The presentation will conclude with reflections on the importance of viewpoint diversity for Australian higher education, including implications for the recent Guidance Note from TEQSA on Diversity and Equity.

[Other studies? What have we missed?]

## 5.3 THE FRENCH REPORT: DISCUSSION OF ITS MERITS

Here is a link to the [full report](#)

[ I (Jon Haidt) am concerned that the report, and much of the discussion in Australia, is too focused on controversial speakers, which are relatively rare events. The far larger problem in the USA, UK and Canada is the pervasive low level self-censorship by students and faculty, who are afraid of getting “called out” or socially shamed by a small subset of students for expressing ideas that challenge or merely dissent from the politically favored view. Is that social dynamic happening in Australia? I am also very concerned about the large loopholes the model code provides as justifications for disinviting speakers; the exceptions for “the duty to foster well being” and “poor scholarship” would essentially write into policy the principle justifications that American students give -- and American administrators accept -- for shutting down talks. Australians may not appreciate the power of “[concept creep](#)”, even though it is an Australian discovery, by Nick Haslam at U. Melbourne. These two exceptions are likely to creep and expand in scope to cover a far larger set of ideas and speech acts than administrators realize. ]

### 5.3.1 ARGUMENTS AND ESSAYS MOSTLY IN FAVOR OF THE MODEL SPEECH CODE

#### 5.3.1.1 [Kelly \(2019\)](#) Freedom should be a no-brainer. *The Australian*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: The apathetic and grudging resistance from many of Australia's university vice-chancellors to the prudent recommendation from former High Court chief justice Robert French for a protection of freedom code **exposes a higher education sector that is short on common sense, enlightened self-interest and sound judgment.**

NOTES: 1. Australia's university sector is its own worst enemy. **Its leadership at the vice-chancellor level is sadly lacking.** The French report was a no-brainer. That it has been treated for many months as a piece of political radioactivity by many vice-chancellors only **betrays their weakness**, paranoia and the phony nature of assurances made about intellectual freedom on university campuses.

2. Federal Education Minister, Dan Tehan previously had written to all vice-chancellors asking them to implement the central recommendation from French — for a non-statutory code that protects freedom of speech and academic freedom, upholds institutional autonomy, avoids statutory overkill, defines core principles and signals the **commitment of universities to the freedom pivotal to their existence.**

3. No responsible university leader in Australia could be unaware of the turbulence within the American academy. **While the problem on the Australian campus is not of the same dimension, the evidence shows it does exist.** The issue is whether Australia will drift towards the US malaise or find the resilience and leadership to counter that trend.

4. There is no escaping what French said: **"The diversity and language of a range of policies and rules give rise to unnecessary risks to freedom of speech and academic freedom.** And even a small number of high-profile incidents can have adverse reputational effects on the sector as a whole."

#### 5.3.1.2 [Kastelein \(2019\)](#) Are university officials keener censors than leftie students. *The Spectator*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: A model code about academic freedom has been proposed by UWA chancellor and former Chief Justice Robert French, based on the Chicago

Statement from the University of Chicago. Tehan (federal Minister of Education) is urging universities to embrace it.

NOTES: 1. Several people have suggested that the problem in Australia is not as bad as in the USA. However, censorious protesting such as [Bettina Arndt](#) and several other speakers have experienced is only the tip of the iceberg. Less noticeable but more serious is an increasing sense of “**orthodoxy**” in the *teaching* of the university.

**Opinions that are never challenged, even if they are correct opinions, are weak opinions.**

2. The **response from universities so far has been underwhelming**. Gareth Evans, Chancellor of the ANU and former Labor luminary helpfully contributed this to the discussion: “these various developments, **rare and overblown** though they may be, do raise the issue of, variously, free speech, academic freedom and academic autonomy about which we do need to get our heads clear and perhaps think afresh.”

3. In another exceedingly helpful response, University of Sydney Vice-Chancellor Michael Spence [told the Sydney Morning Herald](#) that **any problem of self-censorship for fear of repercussions is not peculiar to universities, but is a broader cultural problem and that the right and the left are as bad as each other**. . . As the Prime Minister has said, “we need to disagree better.” Nevertheless, [Peter Ridd was fired](#) from a *university* after he did **not engage in self-censorship** and is a very good example of the real problem.

**5.3.1.3 [Hunter \(june 2019\)](#)**. High-level group of university chancellors tweaking French's free speech code. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

EXCERPT: With much of the university free speech debate focused on the treatment of controversial speakers, the three chancellors are working to sharpen the code's language about the need for different requirements for people invited onto campus by the university and those who are being hosted on campus by external organisations.

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

**5.3.2 ARGUMENTS THAT THE CODE CONTAINS SERIOUS FLAWS THAT NEED TO BE RECTIFIED**



**5.3.2.1 [Napier-Raman \(2019\)](#)** French report finds no campus free speech crisis, leaves conservatives dissatisfied. *MSN*.

EXCERPT: The report, which came after a four month review, concluded that there is **no systemic freedom of speech crisis on Australian university campuses**. But the reporting on French's conclusions has been wildly **divergent** — while the Nine papers reported that there was “**no freedom of speech crisis**”, The Australian focused on the fact that French **endorsed a national code to protect freedom of speech**. Despite French's comprehensive probe, the review has not helped cool the culture war around universities which led to its inception.

NOTES: 1. The idea that university campuses are becoming hostile to free speech and filled with censorious, overly-sensitive students is an **increasingly common right-wing trope** right across the western world. There is ample evidence that despite getting considerable media and political attention, the **free speech campus crisis is wildly overblown**

2. **The campus culture war is a pet project of Dan Tehan**, who became education minister following a reshuffle late last year.

3. On the very first page of his report, French writes that “**claims of a freedom of expression crisis on Australian campuses are not substantiated.**” The report goes on to state that the **relatively isolated incidents over a number of years do not add up to a systemic problem**. However French did **recommend the adoption of a national code to deal with freedom of expression issues on campus**, as was flagged in the review's terms of reference. French also recommended relatively small, non-essential statutory changes to highlight the importance of free speech in relevant legislation.

4. There seems to be something for everyone in French's 300-page report.

5. **The Australian's exclusive on the report** made no mention of this key conclusion, focusing entirely on the recommendation to implement a model code. **In a comment piece based on an incredibly strained and selective reading of the report**, *The Australian's* Janet Albrechtsen warned readers not to be fooled by universities' attempts to spin the report as a positive.

6. French's conclusion should have been enough to hose down many of the hysterical fears about free speech on campus. But **300 pages gives commentators plenty of opportunity to cherry pick a reading that affirms their worldview**.

**5.3.2.2 [Gelber & Bowman \(2019\)](#)** Dan Tehan wants a 'model code' on free speech at universities - what is it and do unis need it? *The Conversation*.



ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: The federal education minister, Dan Tehan, has called on universities to implement a model code to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom on campus.

NOTES: 1. French's report concluded there was **no systemic free speech crisis** in Australian universities. But he noted many universities' policies use broad terms that create the potential to limit free speech on campus. He therefore **suggested universities voluntarily strengthen their protections for free speech by adopting general principles**, which he set out in a model code.

2. The code also makes clear a university can **restrict free speech and academic freedom** if this is necessary to (1) achieve the university's core research and teaching mission, (2) to comply with legal duties and (3) to "foster the well-being of students and staff".

3. The model code recognises that universities' duties include preventing staff and students using lawful speech in a way that would be regarded as "likely to humiliate or intimidate" others. This provides quite a **generous scope for universities to prevent discriminatory and vilifying speech**, even if it would not meet the legal threshold for vilification under federal law or state law such as in NSW.

4. In response to the French report, Universities Australia's chief executive, Catriona Jackson, said universities would consider its recommendations. She also emphasised universities' independence, saying that: "...sector-wide legislative or regulatory requirements would be **aimed at solving a problem that has not been demonstrated to exist and any changes could conflict with fundamental principles of university autonomy.**"

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

\* \* \* \* \*

## 6) POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN AUSTRALIA?

The question: Is the political culture in Australia growing more nasty and bitter, more polarized (among elites and among the voters), as it is in the USA? Are the trends covered in Ch. 6 of The Coddling happening in Australia too?

## 6.1 JOURNALISM ON POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN AUSTRALIA

**6.1.1** [Molloy \(2018\)](#) Australia has never been more divided on social and political issues. Are we becoming the US? *News.co.au*

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Australia has never been more split.

NOTES: 1. Dr Charlton, an economist, author, and former senior adviser to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said, ““The warning lights on the dashboard of our democracy are blinking red. **It’s very hard to constructively govern in an electorate that is so divided. . .**”

1a. When asked if Australia was headed in the same direction as the U.S in terms of political polarization he said, “I fear we’re on the **same curve as the US** but a bit behind.”

1b. Dr. Charlton also talked about the increasingly negative perception of politics by Australians, “For a lot of Australians, and I can’t really disagree with them, the choices on offer are pretty unpalatable and it makes **the idea of participating in democracy pretty disappointing**.” “People have stopped caring and that’s turning into anger directed towards the system.”

2. Since 1996, the [Australian Electoral Study](#) has analysed voting trends and ideological positions among voters. Over two decades, it shows **political polarisation has increased significantly** and the moderate middle — people who consider themselves either left or right of centre — has evaporated.

3. Jill Sheppard from Australian National University’s School of Politics and International Relations said, “Fewer Australians think about and talk about politics, which is a bad sign. There’s a real **stalemate in terms of voters being angry, parties not caring and no one really knowing what to do**. It’s not sustainable indefinitely.”

3a. Dr. Sheppard also commented on how the rapid rise of **social media platforms has given people the ability to curate an information experience**, “We’re not quite sure what platforms like Facebook and Twitter are having on discourse and political engagement generally, but I think it **promotes a perception that things are getting worse**.” “Inside that social media bubble, there’s a sense that society is becoming crueller and less civil and we start looking for signs of that.”

**6.1.2** [Milo Yiannopoulos banned from entering Australia following Christchurch shooting comments \(2019\)](#). *ABC News*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Milo Yiannopoulos has been **banned from entering Australia** for a tour following his comments regarding the Christchurch terror attack.

NOTES: 1. Yiannopoulos was banned from entering Australia for his comments on social media regarding the Christchurch terror attack, a terrorist attack on Muslims practicing their religion that killed 50 people. In his comments, Yiannopoulos described Islam as a “barbaric alien.” Immigration Minister David Coleman said Yiannopoulos’s comments “are appalling and foment hatred and division.”

2. The controversial far-right activist has also been **banned from Twitter**, resigned from his role as a senior editor at Breitbart and lost his \$250,000 book deal.

**6.1.3** [Mansillo & Evershed \(2014\)](#). “Australian politics becoming more polarised.” *The Guardian*.

**6.1.4** School of Politics and International Relations Professor, personal communication, June 25, 2019

NOTES: 1a. Do you think that the political culture in Australia is becoming more polarized among elites and among voters? If so, what are the most important factors contributing to this?

1b. If anything, **Australia appears to be less polarised than other similar countries**. Voters are becoming **more distrustful** of political parties and politicians, and this seems to be - as much as anything - due to the fact that the major Australian parties are becoming less representative of the population generally. Where in the 1940s and in later decades the two major parties well represented unionised labour and non-unionised capital, those cleavages are less relevant in contemporary Australia. Both parties need to reconcile disagreements on both social and economic issues within their ranks.

2a. In what ways do you think Australia is similar to the political polarization happening in America? In what ways is Australia different?

2b. **Australia seems to be less polarised than most societies due to compulsory voting**. Australia has high rates of party loyalty (also known as party identification). We're required to vote (at either state or federal elections) every 18 months or so, and it leads to a comparatively stable party system. **Most importantly, parties do not need to appeal to extreme partisans in order to mobilise their voter turnout**. This important fact seems to have fostered a centrist and stable political system.

**6.1.5** [Federal election 2016: Paul Hanson's win prompts 'Quexit' call \(2016\).](#)  
*news.com.*

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Pauline Hanson is back and many Australians are far from happy with some even calling for the politician's home state of **Queensland** to be booted out of the Commonwealth. Almost 20 years after she left Parliament, and following no less than eight unsuccessful attempts to re-enter politics, Hanson has stormed into the Senate with her One Nation party predicted to take two of the seats allocated for Queenslanders. But the renaissance of the right wing politician has appalled some with comedian Tom Ballard just one of many to call for a '**Quexit**'.

**6.1.6** [Salisbury \(2019\)](#) Minor parties perform well, reconfirm the power of preference deals. *SBC News.*

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Non-major parties secured close to **25%** of the vote this election, showing more and more **Australians are growing increasingly tired of the political 'establishment'**

NOTES: 1. Significant backing for minor parties and independents at recent federal elections may **not have converted to many lower house seats**. But it at least ensures that preference dealing - and minor parties themselves - will continue to play a prominent role in our politics.

2. Significant backing for minor parties and independents at recent federal elections may not have converted to many lower house seats. But it at least ensures that **preference dealing** - and minor parties themselves - will continue to play a prominent role in our politics.

**6.1.7** [Watson \(2019\)](#) Minor parties are relatively new in Australian politics. This is how they become a big deal. *ABC News.*

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: From the Greens to One Nation, the United Australia Party and the Justice Party, minor parties have become a fixture of modern Australian politics.

NOTES: 1. And that's just the start; **every state has at least one federal representative from a political party outside the Labor or Liberal-National duopoly**. This would have been shocking — perhaps even unbelievable — to someone at the ballot box in the 1950s. But the minor party is now ubiquitous, after a **chaotic rise**

**driven by changes in electoral laws and demographics — and the clever use of preferences.**

2. The Family First Party — running on a platform opposing euthanasia, pornography and same-sex adoption — won Senate representation for the first time in 2004. It seized on a **"preference harvesting" strategy**, using Labor's premeditated preferences to get across the line in Victoria despite attracting **only 1.9% of the primary vote**.

3. Based on these results, whichever major party forms government, **they will most likely have to work hard to gain the support of crossbenchers made up of minor parties to pass legislation** through the Senate. 2019 is unlikely to be different.

**6.1.8** [Dalziel \(2015\)](#). Why Conservatives and Progressives Think Differently: Insights from Moral Psychology. *Samuel Griffiths Society Constitutional Law Conference*.

[Other articles? What have we missed?]

## 6.2 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN AUSTRALIA

**6.2.1** [Harris & Charlton \(2018\)](#) The fundamental operating model of Australian politics is breaking down. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

FIGURES:

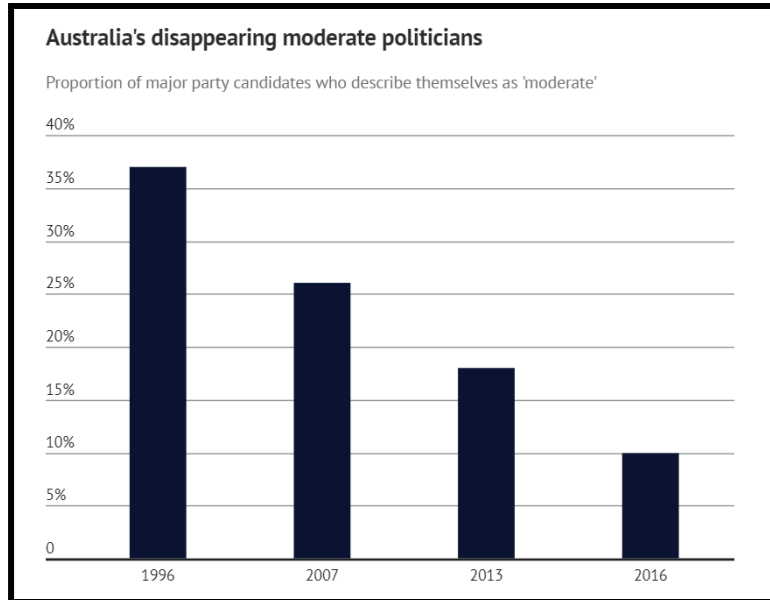


Figure 1: In 1996 **37%** of Australian politicians rated themselves as “moderate” – that is, centre-left Liberal and centre-right Labor politicians. At the 2016 federal election only **10%** of politicians described themselves as moderate.

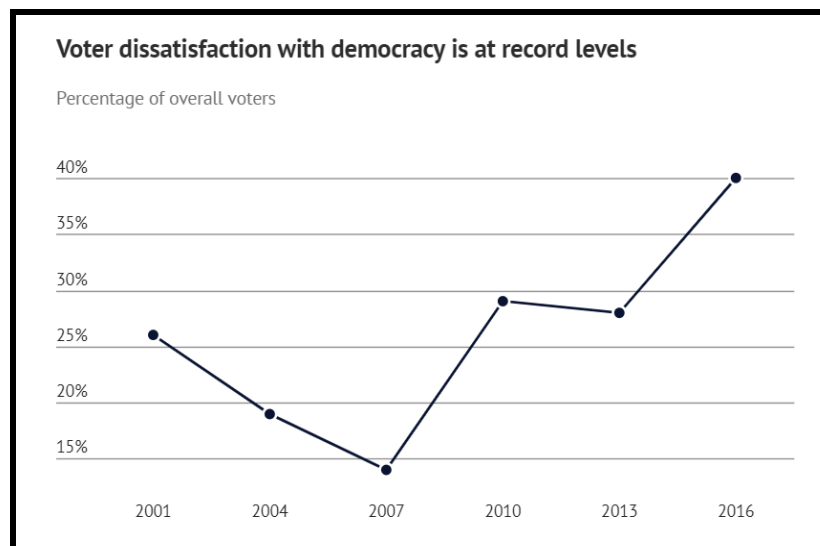


Figure 2: Dissatisfaction with democracy has gone from roughly **27%** in 2001 to **40%** in 2016.

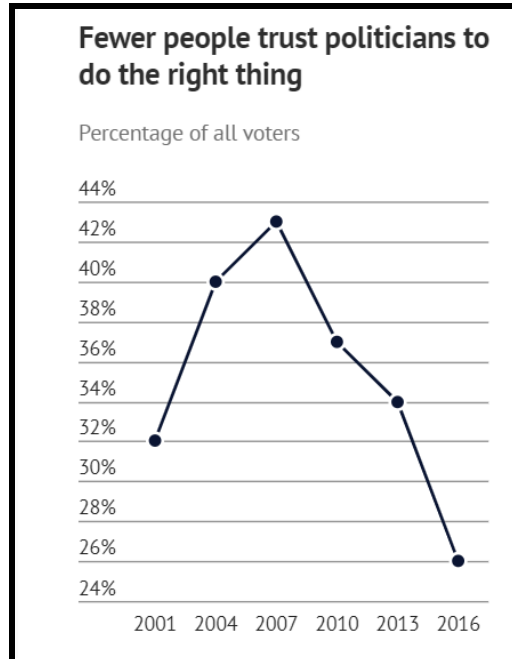


Figure 3: Trust in politicians doing the right thing peaked in 2007 at **43%**, in 2016 trust was at an all time low at **26%**.

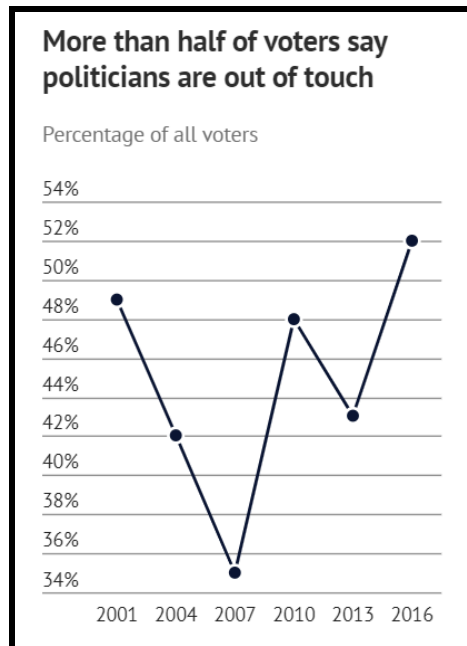


Figure 4: In 2016, **52%** of voters said that politicians were out of touch. This was a **17%** increase from 2007.

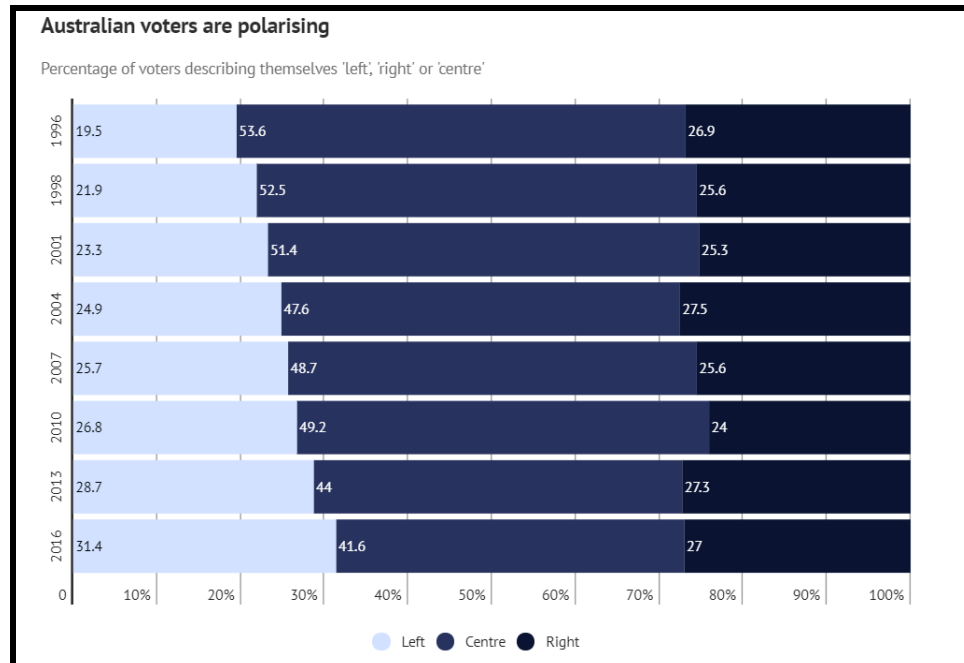


Figure 5: In 1993, **54%** of voters surveyed by the AES described themselves as centrist. By 2016 that number had fallen to just **42%**. This data conveys that Australian political polarisation is not just limited to the political class.

COMMENT: Most of this data is from the [Australian Electoral Study](#).

### 6.2.2 [Tranter \(2013\)](#). The great divide: Political candidate and voter polarisation over global warming in Australia. *Australian Journal of Politics & History*.

**ABSTRACT:** Attitude polarization between conservative and progressive politicians over global warming has an important influence upon public acceptance of action on climate change. Political party identification theorists claim that **political elites provide cues that guide party supporters on complex political issues**. In Australia, as in the USA, the UK and elsewhere, public attitudes on climate change are deeply divided on the basis of party identification and political ideology. Multivariate analyses of Australian candidate and voter survey data show that coalition candidates and their supporters are far less likely than their Labor or Greens counterparts to believe global warming will pose a serious threat to their way of life. Attitudes toward global warming are also more polarized according to party allegiance among candidates than among voters. Controlling for social background and political ideology, Coalition identifiers are less concerned about the dangers of climate change, far less supportive of the carbon tax



and less likely to support renewable energy options than Greens or Labor identifiers are, but much more supportive of nuclear power as an alternative energy source.

### 6.2.3 [Cameron & McAllister \(2016\)](#). Trends in Australian Political Opinion: Results from the Australian Election Study. ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences

**ABSTRACT/EXCERPT:** The Australian Election Study (AES) provides the most sophisticated and exhaustive set of data ever collected in Australia on the dynamics of political behavior. Each of the AES surveys contains questions relationship to the role of media and media exposure, general political interest and knowledge, perceptions of the election campaign, party identification and prior voting history, parents' and partner partisanship, vote in the election and the explanations given for it; party images; perceptions of the major party leaders and the content of their public images; election issues; social policy issues; and a range of socio-demographic measures including education, occupation, religious behaviour, family circumstances, and income.

FIGURES:

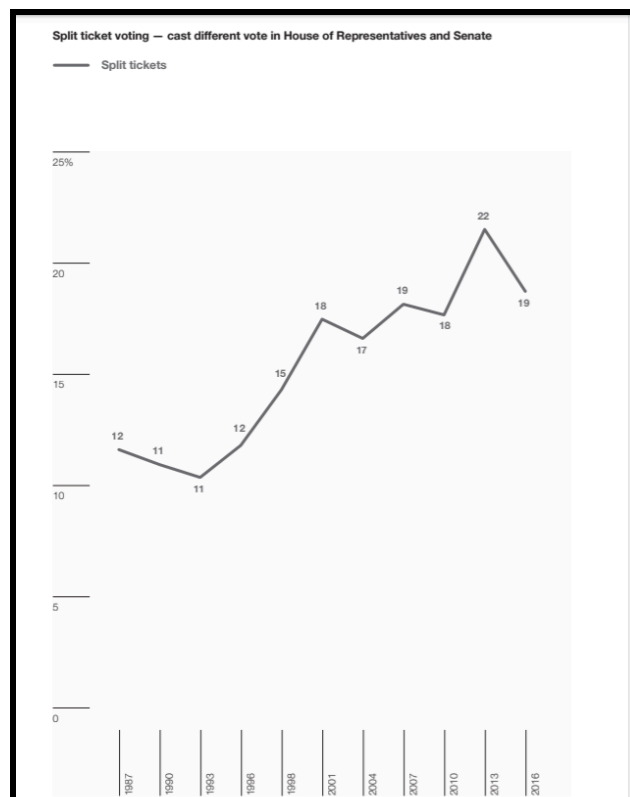


Figure 1: This figure captures split ticket voting, those who cast votes for different parties in the House of Representatives and the Senate from 1987 to 2016. In that time, split ticket voting increased from **12% to 19%**

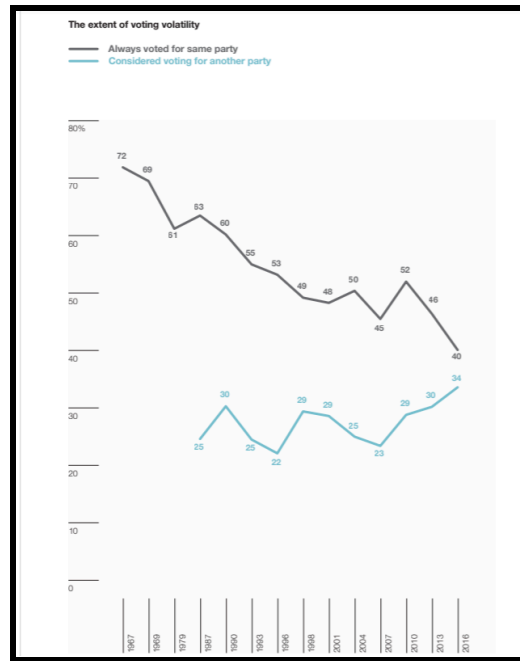


Figure 2: This figure captures the extent of voting volatility from 1987 to 2016. The percentage of people who always voted for the same party decreased from **72% to 40%** and the number of people who considered voting for the other party increased from **25% to 34%**.

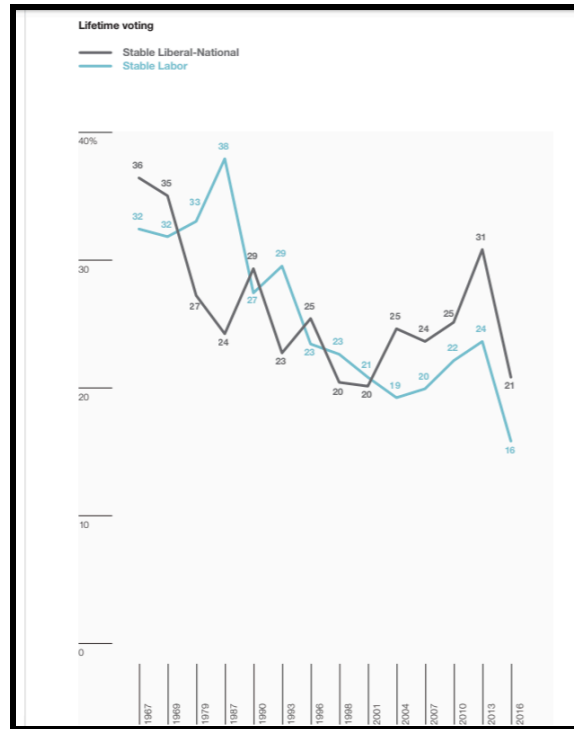


Figure 3: This figure captures lifetime voting from 1987 to 2016. In that time, the stable Liberal-National voting decreased from **36% to 21%** and the stable Labor voting decreased from **32% to 16%**

#### 6.2.4 [Wood & Daley \(2018\)](#) A crisis of trust: the rise of protest politics in Australia. *Grattan Institute.*

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: Australian voters are seeking change. The vote share of minor parties has been rising since 2007. At the 2016 election it reached its highest level since the Second World War. More than one-in-four Australians voted for someone other than the Liberals, Nationals, ALP or the Greens in the Senate, and more than one-in-eight in the House of Representatives.

FIGURES:

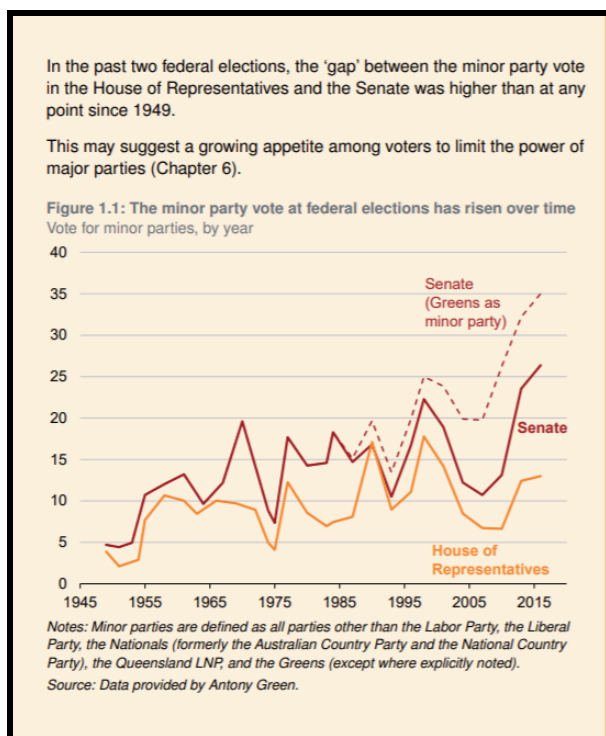


Figure 1: The minor party vote in both the Senate and the House of Representatives reached its highest point in recent history in the 2016 election. More than one-in-four Australians voted minor in the Senate, and more than one-in-eight in the House of Representatives. This may suggest a growing appetite among voters to limit the power of major parties

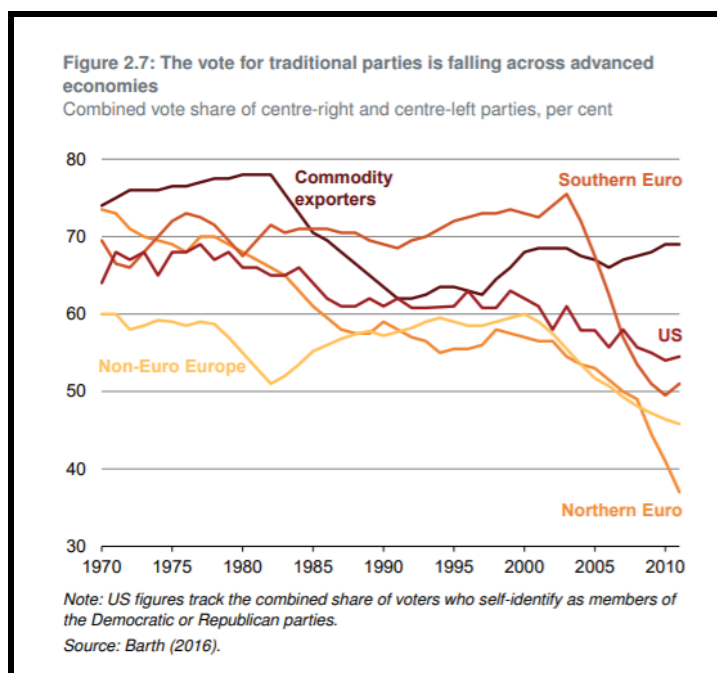


Figure 2: This graph shows that the trend established in figure 1 also applies to countries with advanced economies

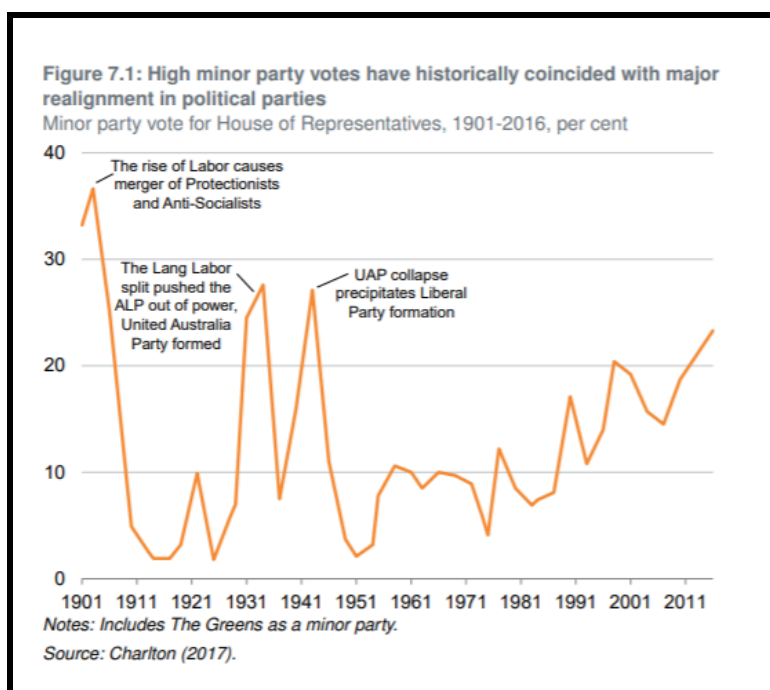


Figure 3: High minor party votes have historically coincided with major realignment in political parties

NOTES: 1. **The overall rise in the minor party vote primarily reflects growing voter distrust in politicians and political parties.** And many regional voters are also reacting to a growing cultural divide between cities and regions. Economics is less important, but voters concerned about keeping their job are more likely to be politically volatile.

2. Incumbents are more likely to reduce the minor party vote if, so far as possible, they address the increasing mistrust of government, which appears to be the dominant driver of the increasing minor party vote. As discussed in **Section 6.6**, factors that increase distrust and which politicians could alter include: **overpromising, unrepresentative democracy, favoring vested interests, and benefits to politicians.** Addressing these issues primarily requires institutional reforms to parties and to government.

**6.2.5 Leigh (2015).** *The Luck of Politics*. Black Inc, Melbourne.

SUMMARY: Ideological distance between partisan voters has grown. Ideological distance between candidates has grown. Dislike of the opposing side of politics has grown.

(Apologies for the screenshots - happy to email you the full book PDF if you like ~ Andrew).

Representatives is higher than at any time since the late 1800s. At the same time as the gap has grown, the share of moderates has fallen – from above half to just one in ten. Across US counties, the same pattern can be seen. From 1976 to 2008, the share of Americans living in a ‘landslide county’ – where the incumbent had more than a 20% margin – rose from 27% to 48%.<sup>24</sup>

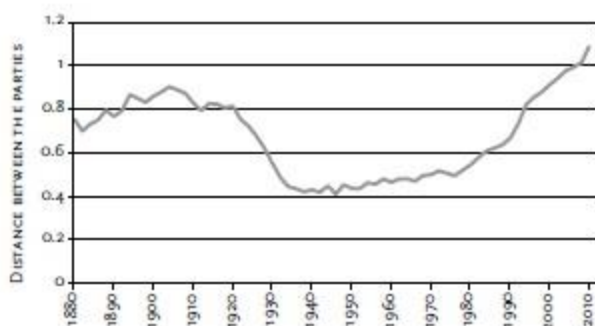


Figure 6: Partisan gap in the US House of Representatives  
Source: [voteview.com](http://voteview.com)

In Australia, strict party discipline prevents a similar analysis of our partisan gap. However, it is possible to look at the gap in another way. Since 1996, researchers at the Australian National University have surveyed voters and candidates, asking them to place themselves on a left–right scale running from 0 to 10.<sup>25</sup>

Figure 7 shows that the ideological gap between Labor and Coalition voters has grown over the past two decades. For voters, the partisan gap has increased from 1.5 to 2.1. For candidates, the partisan gap has increased from 2.4 to 3.3.

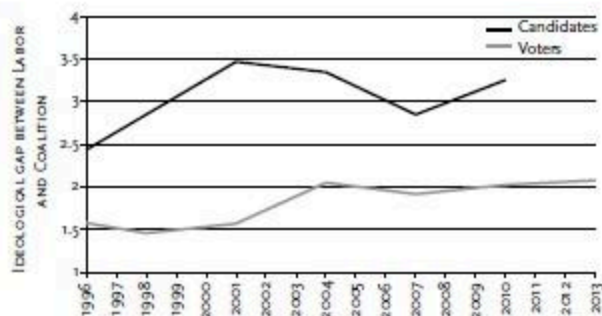


Figure 7: Partisan gap among Australian voters and candidates

Another measure of partisanship is the share of ‘crossover’ candidates – either Labor candidates who are to the right of the average Coalition candidate, or Coalition candidates who are to the left of the average Labor candidate. In 1996, one in ten candidates fitted this description. By 2010, it was down to almost one in twenty.

From the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, Liberal MP Bert Kelly wrote a ‘Modest Member’ column for the *Australian Financial Review*. In 2012, the newspaper revived the ‘Modest Member’ column, this time written in turn by a group of Liberal Party parliamentarians.<sup>26</sup> Analysing the columns from both eras, I estimate that 36% of the original ‘Modest Member’ columns criticised the Labor Party, while 29% criticised the Coalition. By contrast, the new ‘Modest Member’ columns criticise the Labor Party 70% of the time, but criticise the Coalition less than 2% of the time. Today’s ‘Modest Members’ are twice as likely to censure their political opponents, but fourteen times less likely to find fault with those on their own side.

Hyperpartisanship can be destructive. In Figure 8, I show the share of Labor and Coalition voters who say that they 'strongly dislike' the opposing party (meaning that on a 0 to 10 scale, they rate that party a 0).<sup>37</sup> Since the late 1990s, the share of people who hate their opponents has risen from under one in six voters to over one in four voters.

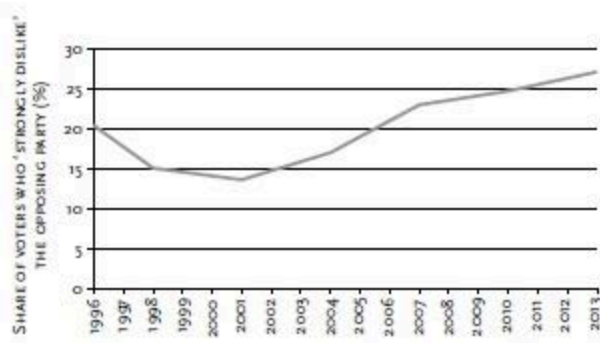


Figure 8: Share of voters who strongly dislike the opposing party

A similar pattern can be seen in the United States. Since the 1970s, surveys have asked people to assign a rating to the major parties. Over that time, people's average rating of their own party has stayed constant, but their rating of the opposite party has halved.<sup>38</sup> To give some sense of the distaste with which people view those on the other side, Republicans and Democrats are more hostile to one another than Catholics are towards Protestants, Democrats are towards big business, and Republicans are towards gay men and lesbians. Partisans regard those in the other party as less intelligent, more selfish and more closed-minded.

### 6.2.6 [Zheng & Bhatt \(2022\)](#). Political Polarization in Australia: A Case Study of Brushfires in Australia. *Causes and Symptoms of Socio-Cultural Polarization: Role of Information and Communication Technologies* (pp. 115–132). Springer.

**ABSTRACT:** The frequency and severity of bushfires have increased in the past decades across the globe. Despite the socio-economic and ecological devastation brought by the bushfires, there is a lack of serious actions preventing the risk of bushfire. We argue that this lack of action results from the political polarisation around the causes and mitigation strategies around the bushfire. Using the case study of 2019–2020 Australian bushfire, we specifically demonstrate the role of social media eco-chambers in reinforcing political affiliations and perpetuating extreme positions.



Based on our analysis, we provide practical and theoretical insights on social media-induced political polarisation around climate change.

[Other studies? What have we missed?]

\* \* \* \* \*

## 7) MISCELLANEOUS OTHER POINTS THAT MIGHT BE RELEVANT

7.1 [Kleefeld \(2019\)](#). 4 things to know about Australia's contentious election. *Vox.com*.

ABSTRACT/EXCERPT: There are 4 things to know about Australia's contentious election.

NOTES: 1. The major **conservative party is called the Liberal Party** (they're also part of a larger coalition). And the major **progressive force is the Labor Party**. Australia has a federal political system, with six states and two territories, which have smaller populations. (The Australian Capital Territory is host to the nation's capital city, Canberra.)

2. The country uses **ranked-choice voting** (or RCV, also known as instant-runoff voting) to elect members of their House of Representatives, the chamber that determines which party will govern the country. Instead of voting for one candidate, voters rank each person on the ballot with a "1" for their first choice, then "2" for the second choice, and so on to the last person.

3. Voting in Australia isn't just a civil right; it's a civic duty. Elections take place on Saturdays. **There's a token fine of \$20 AUD (around \$14 USD) for people who fail to show up and cast a ballot.** As a result, turnout levels can exceed 90 percent.

[Other articles/studies? What have we missed?]

\* \* \* \* \*

## 8) COMMENTS FROM AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

If you are a student at an Australian university, what do YOU think the situation is at your university, or in Australian society? Please add your own observations and analysis. Keep it brief and academic in tone. You may remain anonymous, but please identify your university.

**8.1** From a student at XX: [add your comments]

\* \* \* \* \*

## 9) COMMENTS FROM AUSTRALIAN PROFESSORS/ADMINS

If you are a professor or administrator at an Australian university, what do YOU think the situation is at your university, or in Australian society? Please add your own observations and analysis. Keep it brief and academic in tone. You may remain anonymous, but please identify your university.

**9.1** Andrew Glover, an academic researcher at University of Wollongong, writes: As you note, there haven't been as many incidents of de-platforming in Australian universities, but there have been several, and they're important to note:

- Lyle Shelton, the previous director of the Australian Christian Lobby, was invited to speak at University of Sydney in 2016 by a conservative student group but the university cancelled the venue booking at the last minute. Lyle was a prominent figure in the 'No' campaign to legalize same sex marriage. This seemed to be missed by the media at the time, so the only evidence of it I've found was Lyle's own Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/lyleshelton/status/765801820191064064>
- At the University of Wollongong (who has just approved the Ramsay Center's degree in Western Civilization, a whole controversy in itself) a local Muslim sheikh Jamil El-Biza was invited to speak at a workshop on 'Understanding others through narrative practice'. Jamil had made homophobic comments the previous year during the same sex marriage campaign, and so his participation in the event was opposed by academics and on social media. He withdrew from the event due to this opposition, whilst also apologizing for his previous comments. I

was particularly frustrated by the way academics reduced Jamil to his offending remarks alone, and couldn't see that he might have had other insights and contributions to offer the event.

- <https://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/6002074/controversial-sheikh-jamil-el-biza-pulls-out-of-uow-event/>

## 9.2 From Katy Barnett, Professor at University of Melbourne:

- There was a noticeable shift in 2015. There was a tremendous furore in June 2015 after the Women's Officers of the Law Students Society asked for a 'safe women's only space' to study in which men could not enter. There was a massive online debate between students. In the event, the Law School did not accede to the demands.
- Since 2015, there have been several debates regarding 'trigger warnings', particularly in sensitive subjects like Criminal Law and Evidence and Proof. (For examples of student newspaper articles discussing the issue, see eg <https://www.deminimis.com.au/home/is-considerate-informed-discussion-too-much-to-ask-for3491436> , <https://www.deminimis.com.au/home/do-trigger-warnings-stifle-freedom-of-speech-in-academia> , <https://www.deminimis.com.au/home/the-law-and-sexual-violence-a-troubled-relationship> , but cf <https://www.deminimis.com.au/home/a-warning-for-content-warnings> ). The Law School does issue warnings when sensitive material is discussed. I believe this is a common issue to any organisation or law school which teaches sensitive material. I suspect that other law schools have had similar issues.
- On the point of safetyism: we do not have a litigious culture. This is partly because our rules as to who pay legal costs are (and always have been) different to US laws, and tend to disincentivise people from bringing claims when their claim is weak. However, it is also relevant in relation to negligence law specifically that we introduced the Civil Liability Acts with the express intention to limit the circumstances in which people could sue in negligence all states in around 2002, 2003 after the Ipp Report argued that reform was necessary to arrest rising insurance premiums (Ipp report is here: [https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-03/R2002-001\\_Law\\_Neg\\_Final.pdf](https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-03/R2002-001_Law_Neg_Final.pdf) ; Relevant legislation is *Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002* (ACT); *Civil Liability Act 2002* (NSW); *Personal Injuries (Liabilities and Damages) Act 2003* (NT); *Civil Liability Act 2003* (Qld); *Civil Liability Act 1936* (SA); *Civil Liability Act 2002* (Tas); *Wrongs Act 1958* (Vic); *Civil Liability Act 2002* (WA)). In order to sue, a plaintiff

has to establish a certain threshold of permanent injury. There are also certain carve outs in different states which allow people to undertake dangerous activities with no liability upon the provider of the activity. Hence, I do not think that 'safetyism' is quite as intense in the US, simply because those avenues to sue are not present here.

- There is a recent incident in which recent law grads sued a large firm in relation to working conditions and sought to get a review by our workplace safety investigator:  
<https://www.afr.com/business/king--wood-mallesons-investigated-for-overworking-employees-20181011-h16hei>
- In terms of ideological diversity in my own law school, there is tolerance of ideological difference in my view. I would consider myself libertarian left, and thus I am a bit of an outlier in terms of my views on some issues. At one point (2010) I became a victim of a social media campaign for me to be sacked for something I said on a blog. I was assured that the Law School was behind me, even though I was a very junior scholar at that point (still on probation). Other lecturers have been supported when there have been calls for them to be sacked. On the other hand, I think more work could be done to support staff generally when students make allegations against a lecturer because it is extremely distressing and stressful.
- Since 2011 I have instituted a practice of starting my first class with a list of expectations and how I will discuss matters in class (including a strong defence of ideological diversity, and an invitation to challenge my views). I have also set out how I expect people to engage, and noted that the law requires us to look at different viewpoints and take them seriously, not just close our minds to a particular viewpoint. We are required as lawyers as part of our professional ethics to represent people even when we disagree with them personally, and to seek to understand their case. Students have been surprisingly receptive to this, and several students have said to me privately that they really appreciate it. I suspect that those who are participating in outrage culture are a small but vocal minority, mainly signalling to others.
- I have written in Quillette about why call out culture is a bad thing, particularly calls to sack people for being offensive:  
<https://quillette.com/2018/07/28/inducing-peoples-employers-to-fire-them-should-be-a-civil-wrong/> In that piece, I note that the law generally does not encourage people to use 'self-help' and that media mobs are a form of unreasonable 'self-help' which disincentive civil discussion. I suggest the use of economic torts may be helpful in this area.

- NB: I have amended this post because I did not realise that it was going to be public.

**9.3** From a professor at Swinburne U. of Technology: “Here are some quick insights on why the academic freedom concerns and polarization on USA campuses haven't found their way to Australia (and I doubt that they will). I've worked at US and Australian campuses in recent years.

1. We don't have much of a campus 'atmosphere' in Australia as students generally attend their local university. Moreover, they attend class and leave the campus, which precludes a vibrant intellectual atmosphere. In the US most students live on, or near campus. They spend a great deal of time there outside of class, involved in clubs/societies/supporting the sporting team etc. The campus is their 'home' and a significant part of their lives, in many ways a developmental milestone, signalling their independence intellectually and geographically (from their home town/parents). University for us is instrumental, rather than a unique experiential reality. This dulls the motivation for campus being a battleground of ideas.

2. Australian universities rely heavily on government funding, which has dried up in recent years. Funding for student clubs and organisations have been cut dramatically over the past 20 years. Rich Alum do not donate to their universities in Australia like they do in the USA (they actually donate to their private high schools instead - probably b/o point 1 above). Universities now rely on the exorbitant fees they charge international students (mainly from Asia and the middle east) and there is obviously a fierce competition to recruit domestic students. As such, economic concerns are a priority and so marketing overseas and maintaining a clean reputation (that is friendly to diverse over-seas and local students) engender a bureaucratic over-reach and desperate avoidance of any controversy. So there is an administrative containment of viewpoint diversity, but with nods to the SJW crowd to show that they are morally advanced and not turning away diverse students. They can afford to ignore conservatives because few students are conservative and ignoring them won't affect the university's fiscal situation.

3. We do not have a transgressive culture. Our society is relatively homogeneous and occupies the centre political ground. We are not overly beguiled by fringe parties. We have an historical internalized conformity. We are used to our free speech being encroached upon and we have a pretty effective nanny state which we acquiesce to. Look at our advertising for example - whether its smoking, alcohol, speeding or not wearing seatbelts - the messages are condescending and treat us like children. Some have described this as 'casual authoritarianism'. We are rule-followers and get incredibly frustrated when our fellow citizens breach these rules no matter how trivial. The consequence is a vanilla society with little imagination and risk taking, but it makes for a

peaceful existence. It's no surprise that we idolize the 'aussie battler' -the excessively cautious, ordinary underdog citizen who 'accepts their lot', deals with adversity, missed opportunities and disappointment. This message is in contrast to the american narrative which is one of perseverance leading to upward mobility. We instead romanticize stagnating in mediocrity and possess collective tall poppy syndrome. Perhaps this is a function of different histories. US history is one of conflict, unrest, competing group interests and rights, founding fathers, grandiose speeches, patriotism, struggles for freedom and the enshrining of pivotal principles. Our history is comparatively uneventful. Some Australians only feel a sense of what it means to be Australian when they move overseas. In other words, there was no defining imaginary until one was displaced from it. I think that says a lot about our reluctance to protest on campuses and challenge administrators.

4. We have compulsory voting in Australia. This means that mainstream political parties will pander to the centre in order to reach most of the electorate. We won't have situations like in the US where a leader can be outrageous and dog-whistle to the fringes and still get elected because more than half of the country don't turn up to vote.

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## 10) PRESS COVERAGE OF JON HAIDT'S VISIT TO AUSTRALIA

### 10.1 TV/Video Interviews

10.1.1 [Prof. Jonathan Haidt: Is Modern Parenting Fuelling Mental Illness?](#) Studio 10

10.1.2 [Jonathan Haidt thinks safe spaces are stifling vigorous intellectual debate.](#) ABC News

10.1.3 [Identity politics is stopping students from having 'a thick skin'](#) The Outsiders, Sky News

## 10.2 Podcasts/Radio

### 10.2.1 [Can we overcome terminal disagreement in our politics and morality?](#)

Conversation with Waleed Aly and Scott Stephens, on The Minefield, ABC Radio

### 10.2.2 [American psychologist explains why we're 'drowning in outrage' over social media use.](#)

3AW News Talk, with Neil Mitchell.

### 10.2.3 [Jonathan Haidt on good intentions and bad ideas.](#)

Interview with Sandra Peter, Director of Sydney Business Insights

### 10.2.4 Richard Glover, ABC Radio Sydney, Drive

### 10.2.5 [What's driving the age of outrage?](#)

3AW Breakfast, Breakfast with Ross and John

### 10.2.6 [Jonathan Haidt on Great Untruths.](#)

ABC Radio National, Drive, with Patricia Karvelas

### 10.2.7 ABC Radio Sydney, Mornings, with Cassie McCullagh

### 10.2.8 [On safetyism, coddling, and the perils of trigger warnings with Jonathan Haidt.](#)

Osher Gunsberg Podcast

### 10.2.9 [Why parenting mistakes are having a long-term impact.](#)

Babyology, Feed, Play, Love podcast [conversation focused on parenting]

## 10.3 Newspaper interviews and articles

### 10.3.1 [From protests to trigger warnings: the creeping threats to free speech at our universities.](#)

By Fergus Hunter. Sydney Morning Herald.

### 10.3.2 ['Really disastrous': the fragility epidemic that could change Australia.](#)

By Jordan Baker, Sydney Morning Herald

### 10.3.3 [America's uncivil war on democracy.](#)

by Paul Kelly, in The Australian

10.3.4 [How parents made Gen Z unemployable](#), by Jacob Greber, in the Australian Financial Review

10.3.5 [“Don’t become like us”: The rise of safetyism poses the question: Are we going soft. News.com.au](#), by Nick Wigham

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## 11) CONCLUSION

[Tentative, open to revision;] So far, it seems that most of the bad trends covered in *The Coddling of the American Mind* are indeed happening in Australia, though not always as strongly. There seems to be an increase in teen depression/anxiety in the years after 2012, parental overprotection of young children, wholesale movement of teen life to online/social-media, and occasional shutdowns and disinvitations of speakers who offend the dominant political sensibility on campus (though these are not common). Furthermore, many Australian professors told me stories about being shut down or censored for research findings that other professors or administrators found offensive. However, Australian university students generally live at home (rather than forming a tight residential community that can co-create new moral/political norms) and do not seem to be as politically active and as quick to take offense as American university students.

Additional points to add, perhaps in new sections:

--something about the case of Prof. Peter Ridd, at James Cook U; perhaps add a section listing specific cases of professors being punished for saying things that seem to be related to their area of expertise.