



Youth Survey

2023

Acknowledgement

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands. We pay our respects to all Elders past, present and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.



Overview

Youth-led consultation is a key activity that the Yarra Ranges Council Youth Development Team committed to achieving within their Victoria State Government's Engage! 2022-2024 funding agreement.

The 22/23 Youth Advisory Group (YAG) identified that this activity would best be delivered in the form of a Youth Survey to the young people of the region (12-25 years). During meetings, the YAG spent time developing this Youth Survey as a group.

The Youth Survey was then transferred to the Youth Ambassador's (YA's) for their consultation and input. The YA's worked to refine and complete the development stage and support the promotion of the Youth Survey to young people across the community.

Young people who completed the survey were able to remain anonymous. They were also given the option to provide their email address to:

- Go in the draw to win a \$250 voucher, of which 87% elected to do this.
- Receive information pertaining to the results of the survey, of which 71% elected to receive this.

Purpose

This data aims to inform both Council, and community stakeholders, of the young people's perspectives on priority areas of need. This will inform where planning, resource distribution, and interventions will be most effectively targeted. Key stakeholders can then engage in dialogue and initiate plans for improving overall circumstances, opportunities and outcomes for young people.



Method

The community Youth Survey consisted of the following:

- A basic demographic section.
- A question asking respondents to select the top three issues they've been most concerned about for young people in their local community.
- Ten Likert-scale questions (ranging from Extremely Agree to Extremely Disagree) about their satisfaction with various aspects of Yarra Ranges.
- Four open-ended questions asking respondents their opinion about:
 - what would make Yarra Ranges better for young people,
 - what Yarra Ranges is doing well for young people
 - what would improve the wellbeing of Yarra Ranges' young people, and
 - what they've seen in other communities that they would like to see in Yarra Ranges.

The survey invitation specifically requested participation from young people aged 12-25 who live, work or study in Yarra Ranges.

The survey was open for responses from May to June 2023.

The survey received responses from 237 young people.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to:

- Yarra Ranges Council's Youth Advisory Group and Youth Ambassadors, who contributed to the design and development of the Youth Survey
- The young people who participated in the community youth survey and took the time to share their experiences and perspectives.



Considerations

The Yarra Ranges region has a population of approximately 26,000 young people aged between 12 and 25 years, with many more residing in neighbouring Local Government Areas (LGAs) while pursuing educational or employment opportunities within our region. Our Youth Survey, which garnered 237 responses, offers invaluable insights and avenues for identifying key themes. However, it is important to acknowledge that this sample represents a mere 0.9% of the youth population, thereby limiting the extent to which we can generalise findings to encompass the entire youth demographic.

Within this respondent pool, only 19% fell within the 18-25 age bracket. A more equitable distribution between this group and their 12-17-year-old counterparts would have substantially enhanced the robustness and validity of our analysis, enabling more conclusive comparisons between these age cohorts.

The 12-17 age group proved more accessible through our region's secondary schools, while outreach efforts to engage the 18-25 cohort presented a greater challenge. We intend to implement a targeted strategy in future survey administrations to bolster participation among the older demographic.

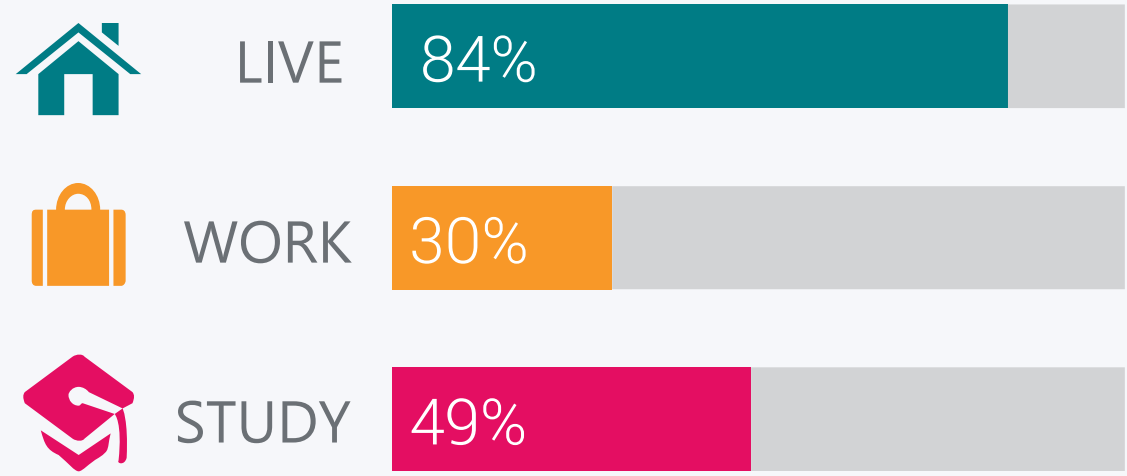
Furthermore, achieving a balanced response rate across the Yarra Ranges' distinct areas (Urban, Hills, Valley, and Upper Yarra) would have provided us with superior data for cross-area comparisons. Future survey initiatives will prioritise a concerted drive to secure an equitable number of responses from each area, potentially involving extensive outreach initiatives and community engagement team support.

While our primary objective was to elicit direct input from young people themselves, there exists an opportunity to concurrently administer a survey targeting parents and professionals working with youth in future iterations. This expansion of data sources would enrich our dataset and facilitate more comprehensive comparisons.

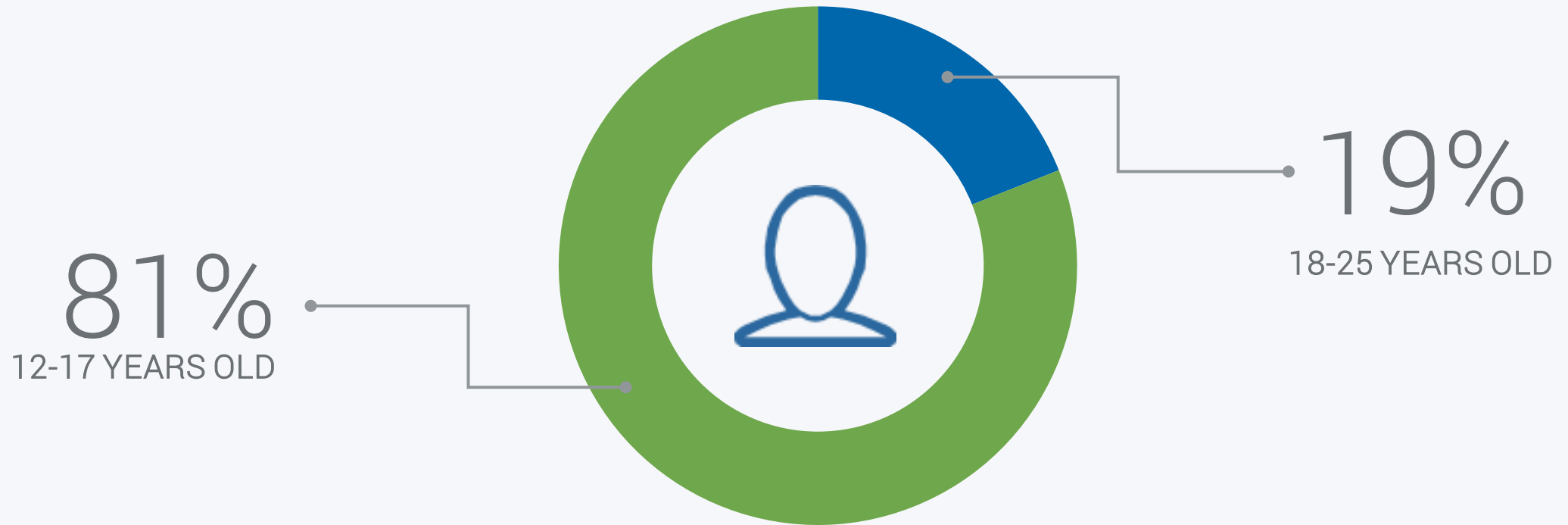
We recognize that certain questions, particularly those employing the Likert scales, may present challenges in deriving definitive conclusions due to their inherent ambiguity. While we championed a "youth-led" approach in this survey, we intend to allocate time and resources in the next iteration for collaboration with Council professionals, who can provide expertise in survey development. If feasible, we aim to engage a professional firm to augment our process, enhancing the needs assessment, survey construction, and data analysis phases. This multifaceted approach will bolster the rigor and credibility of our research endeavours.



WHAT IS YOUR CONNECTION TO YARRA RANGES?



HOW OLD ARE YOU?

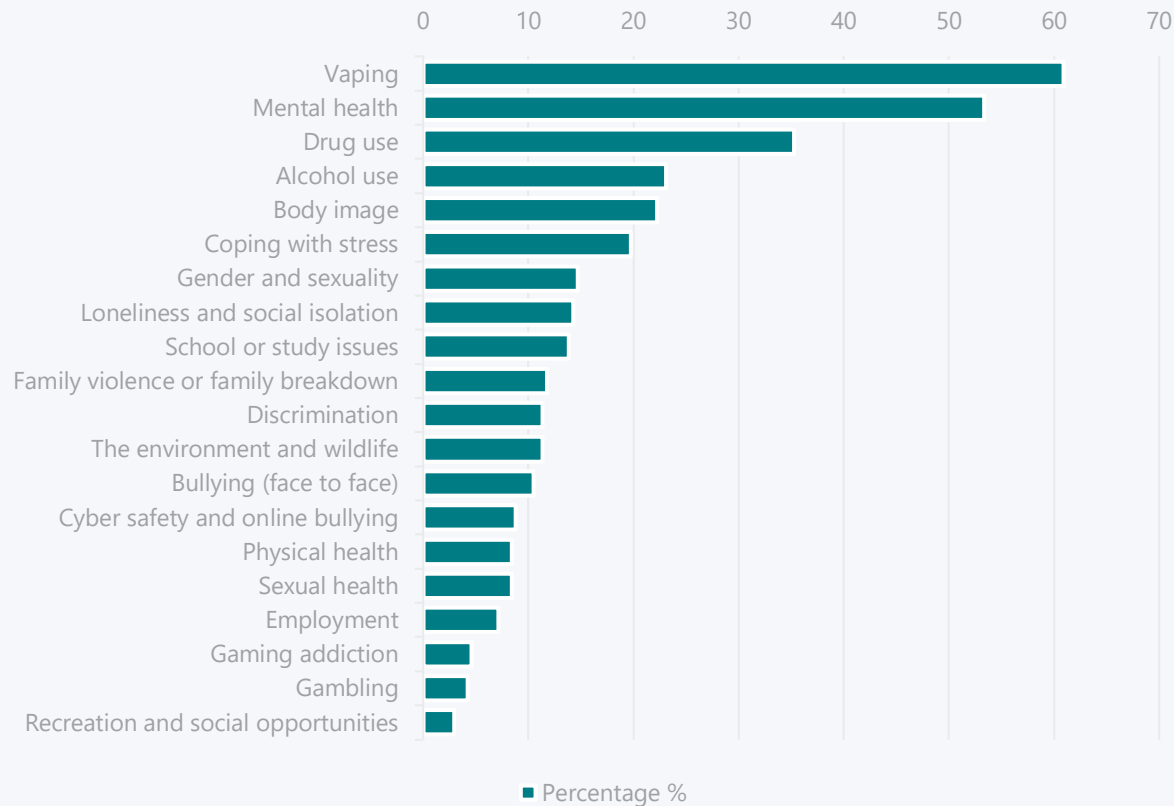


IN WHICH AREA OF YARRA RANGES DO YOU SPEND THE MOST TIME?



ISSUES OF CONCERN

The respondents were asked to select the top three issues they've been most concerned about for young people in their local community in the past year. The outcomes were consistent across the four areas (Hills, Upper Yarra, Valley, Urban). The percentages represent the number of respondents that chose the issues as one of their top three issues of concern.



61%

VAPING

53%

MENTAL HEALTH

35%

DRUG USE

23%

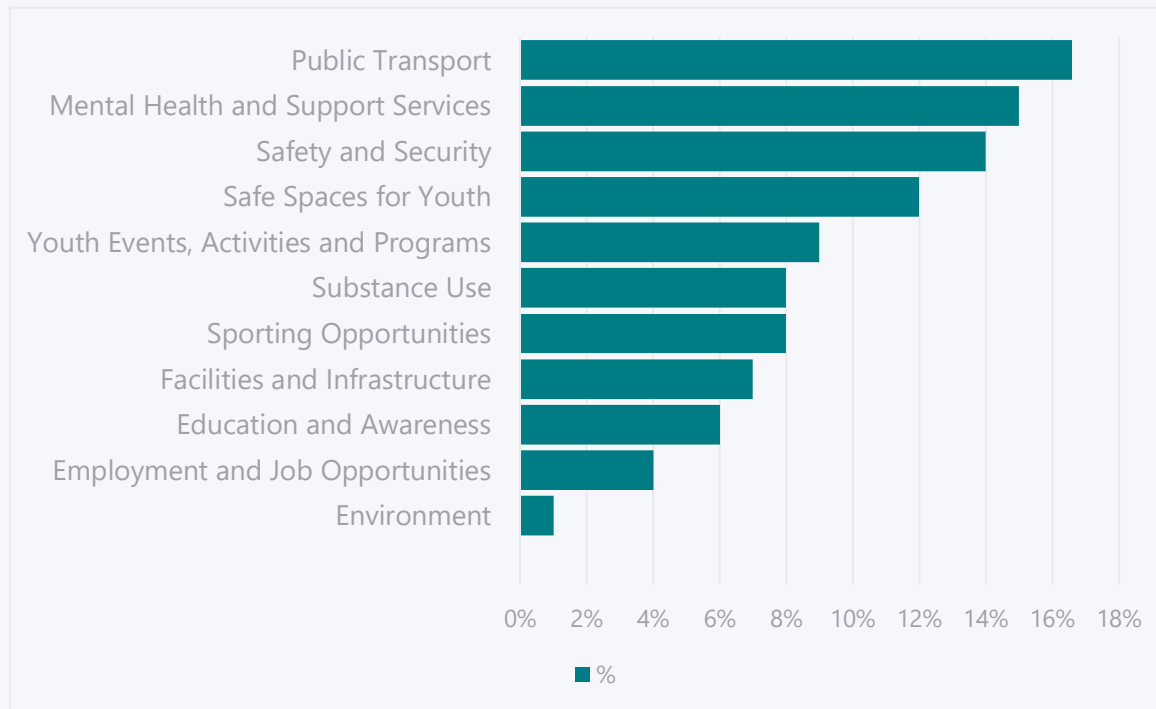
ALCOHOL USE

22%

BODY IMAGE

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING TO MAKE YARRA RANGES BETTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

This was an open question allowing for a free-form text response. The answers were then themed into categories. Of the 237 total respondents, 194 responded to this question.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT



MENTAL HEALTH & SUPPORT SERVICES



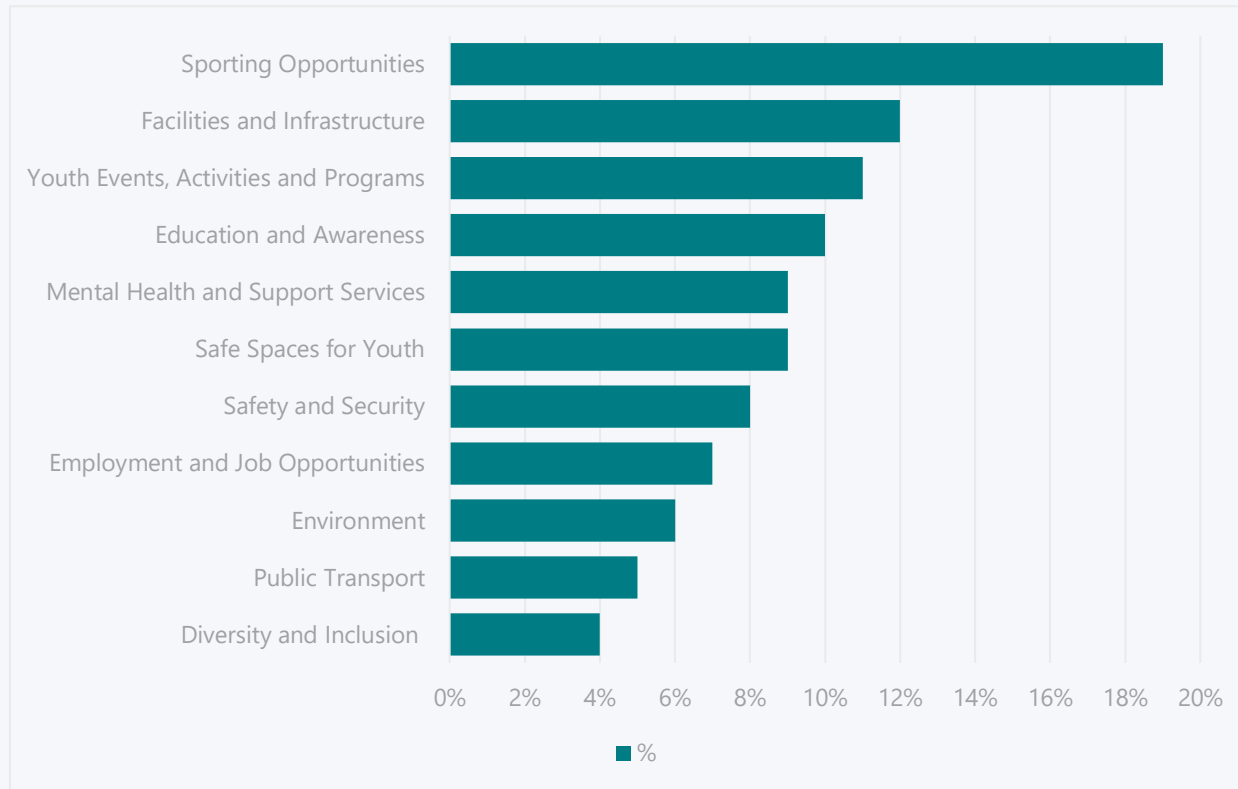
SAFETY & SECURITY



SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH

WHAT'S ONE THING THAT YARRA RANGES IS DOING WELL FOR ITS YOUNG PEOPLE?

This was an open question allowing for a free-form text response. The answers were then themed into categories. Of the 237 total respondents, 170 responded to this question.



SPORTING OPPORTUNITIES



FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE



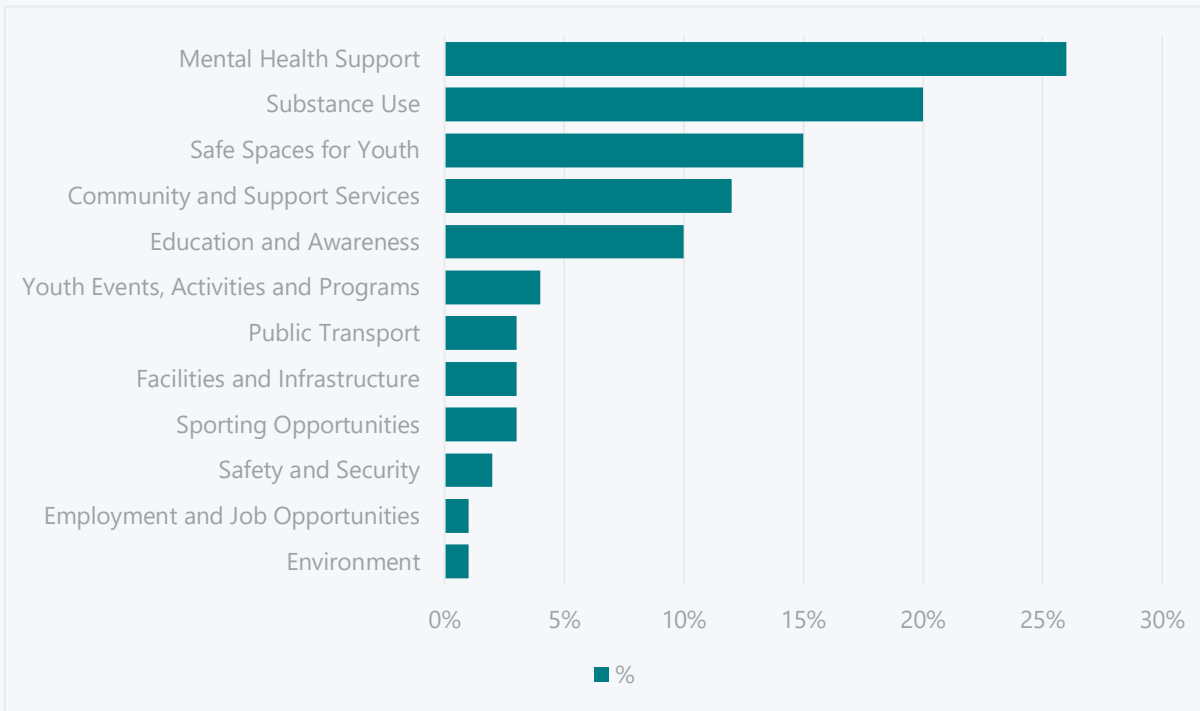
YOUTH EVENTS, ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS



EDUCATION & AWARENESS

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING TO IMPROVE THE WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN YARRA RANGES, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

This was an open question allowing for a free-form text response. The answers were then themed into categories. Of the 237 total respondents, 174 responded to this question.



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT



SUBSTANCE USE



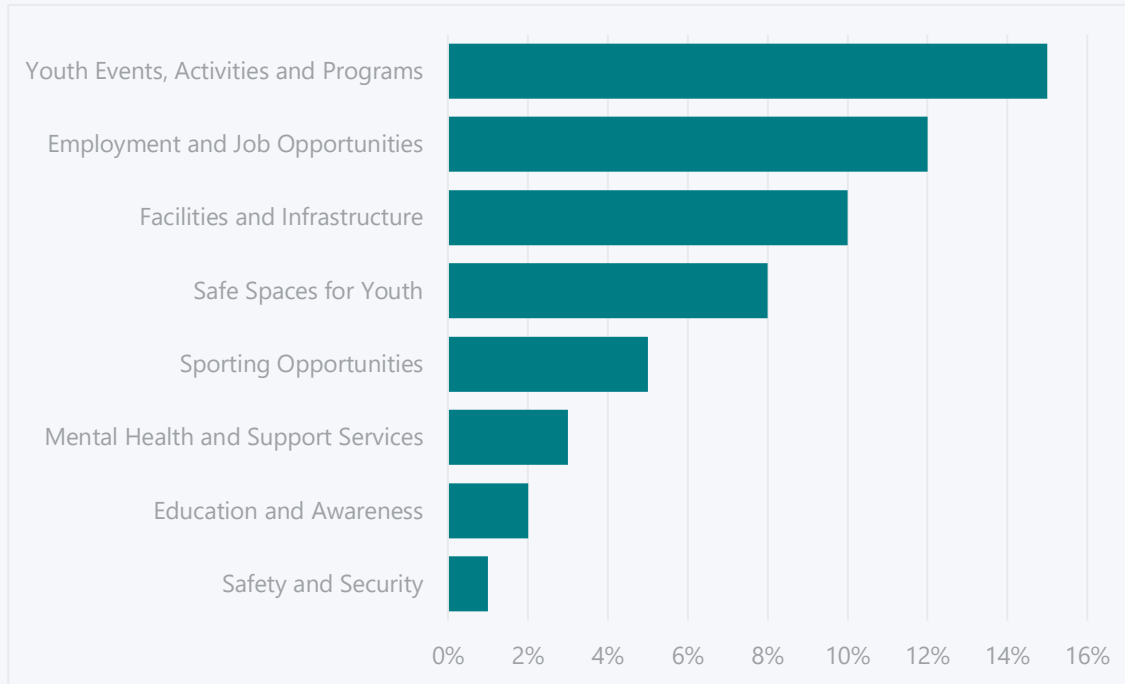
SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH



COMMUNITY & SUPPORT SERVICES

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE DO YOU SEE IN OTHER COMMUNITIES THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN YARRA RANGES?

This was an open question allowing for a free-form text response. The answers were then themed into categories. Of the 237 total respondents, 129 responded to this question.



YOUTH EVENTS, ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS



EMPLOYMENT & JOB OPPORTUNITIES

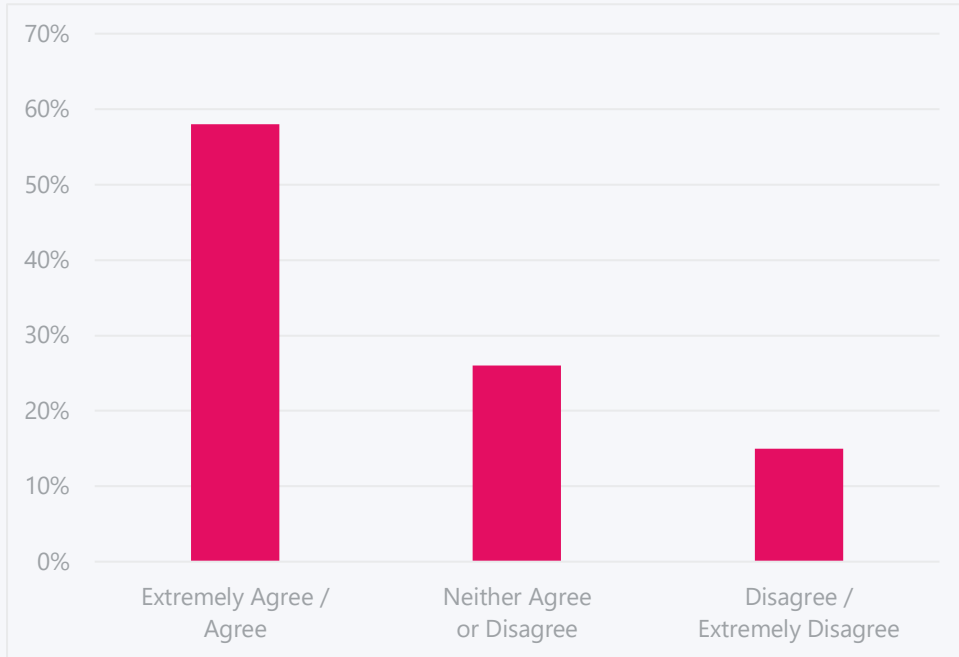


FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE



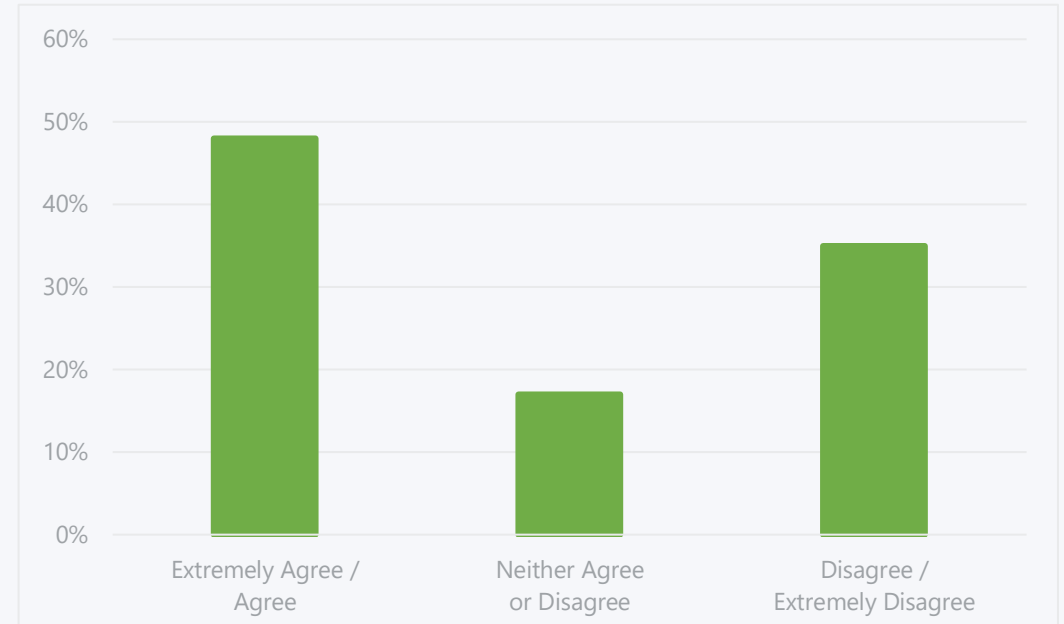
SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH

YARRA RANGES HAS GOOD JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE...



This data indicates that 58% of respondents agree that Yarra Ranges has good job opportunities. This potentially contradicts the qualitative responses which highlight the high employment opportunities perceived by young people in other communities that they would like to see in Yarra Ranges.

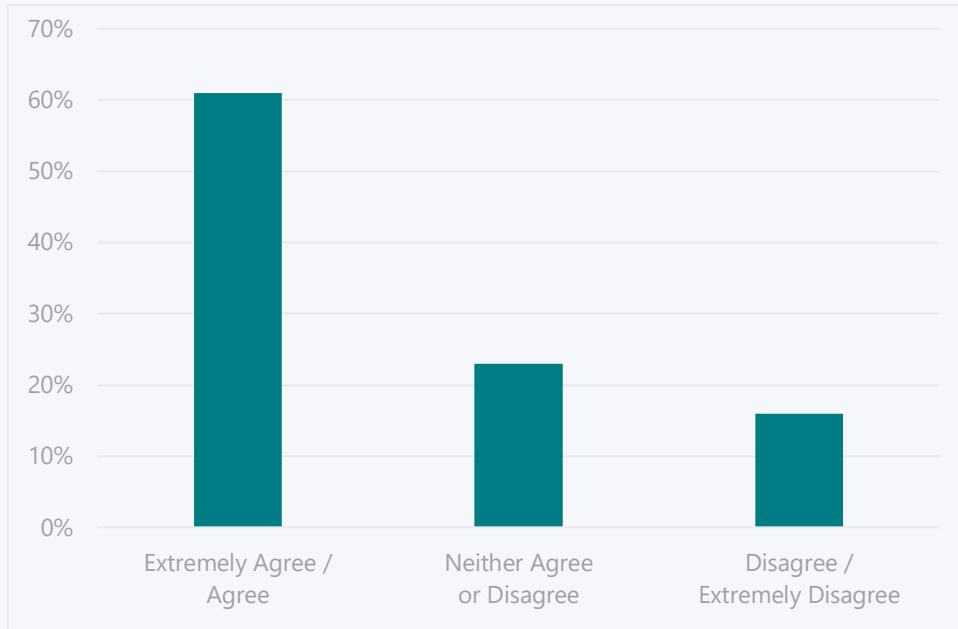
YARRA RANGES HAS SAFE, RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT...



This chart demonstrates the broad range of opinions on PTV in Yarra Ranges. The difference between these opinions appears to stem from the different levels of access to Public Transport services across the four areas of Yarra Ranges.

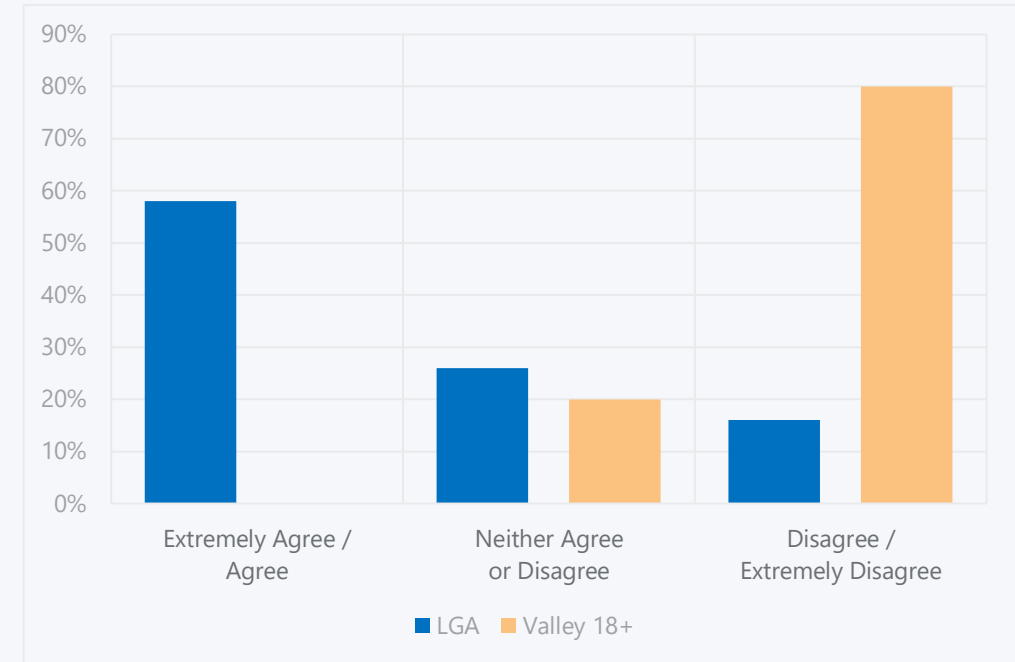
It is important to note that In the qualitative data, Public Transport was the highest response when asked what young people would like to see changed to improve Yarra Ranges.

YARRA RANGES HAS GREAT FACILITIES FOR RECREATION, AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE...



Across the LGA it is clear that most respondents are satisfied with Yarra Ranges' recreational, health and wellbeing facilities. This aligns with the qualitative data where "Sporting Opportunities" was the most popular category to the question 'What's one thing that Yarra Ranges is doing well for it's young people?'

YARRA RANGES IS AN INCLUSIVE AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY...



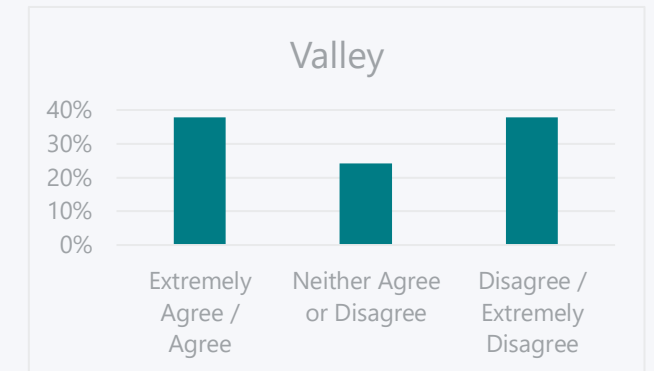
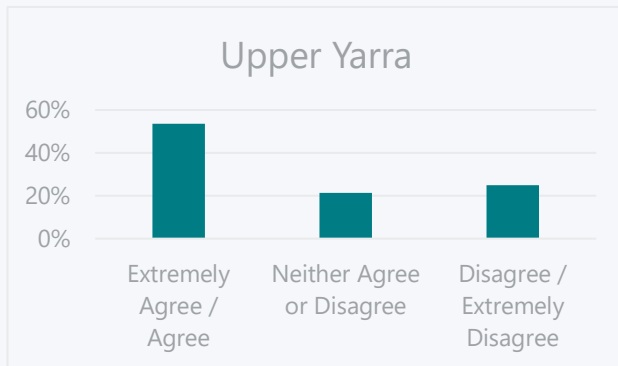
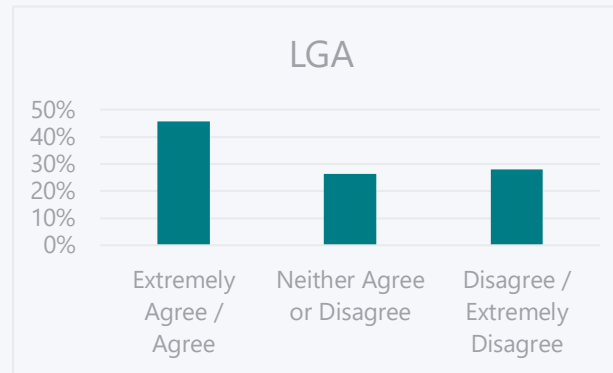
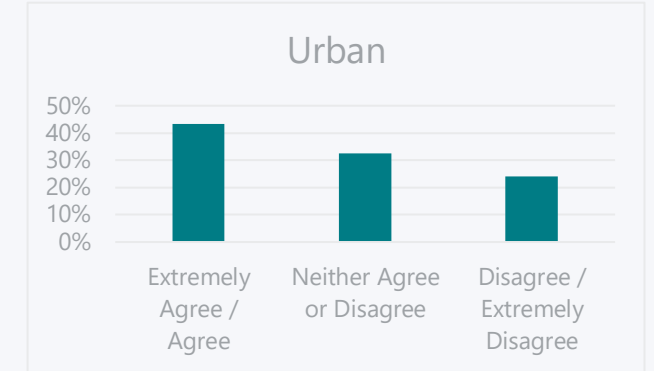
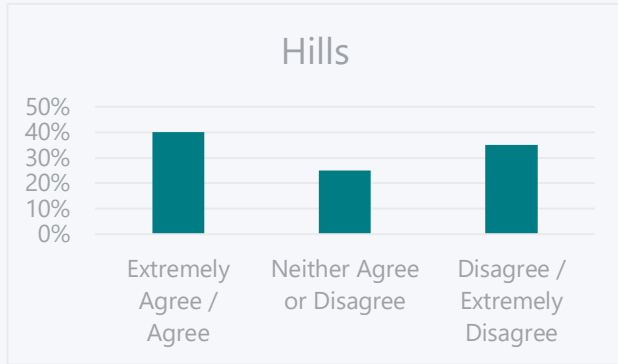
The LGA wide data shows a consensus with regards to Yarra Ranges being an inclusive and connected community. However, the group of 18–25-year-olds in the Valley area expressed a significantly contrary opinion, with none of the respondents agreeing with the statement.

YARRA RANGES HAS ENOUGH PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE...



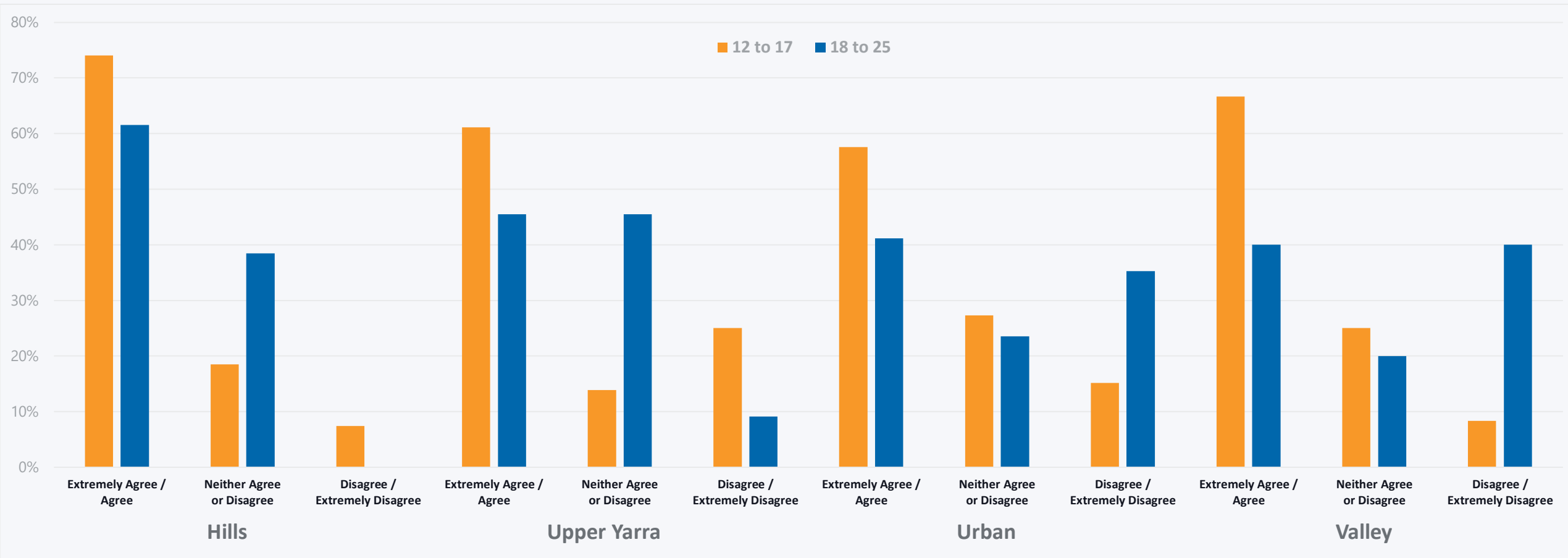
Whilst it's positive that most respondents tended to agree with this statement, it is worth noting the higher percentage of young people from the Hills and Valley areas who disagree. This is reflected in the qualitative data where "Youth Events, Activities, and Programs" was the most popular category to 'What opportunities for young people do you see in other communities that you would like to see in Yarra Ranges?'.

YARRA RANGES HAS ENOUGH PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE...



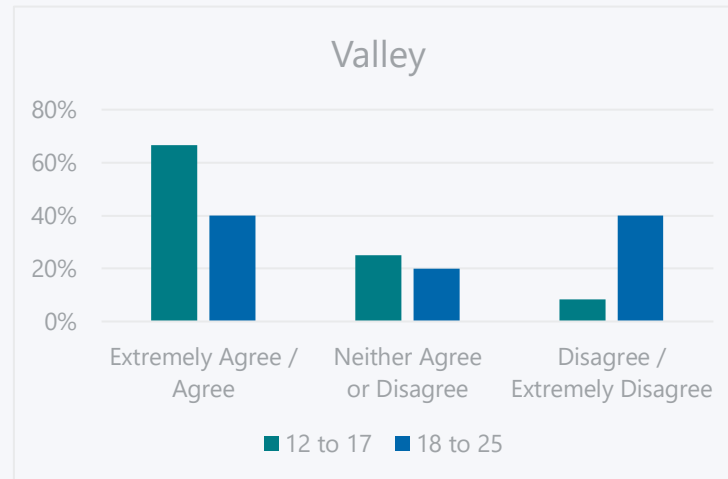
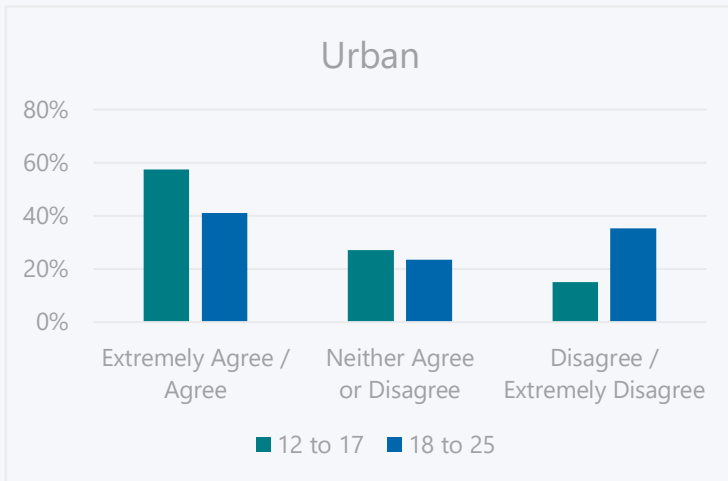
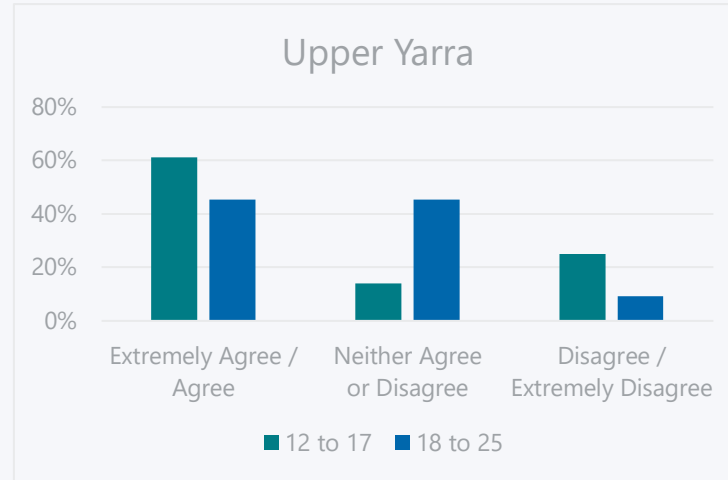
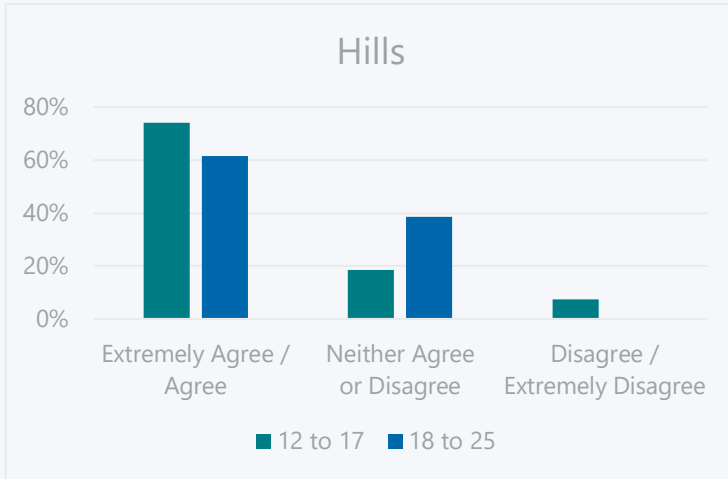
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I FEEL SAFE IN PUBLIC IN YARRA RANGES.



In a broad sense, respondents generally reported a sense of safety when in public spaces within the Yarra Ranges. However, it is noteworthy that respondents in the 18-25 age bracket, particularly those situated in the Valley and Urban areas, exhibited a relatively lower level of perceived safety. Importantly, our data does not differentiate between respondents' perceptions of safety during daytime versus nighttime hours. It is plausible that the younger cohort (aged 12-17) may express a greater overall sense of public safety, as their limited exposure to nighttime environments might mitigate some of the safety concerns prevalent during those hours.

I FEEL SAFE IN PUBLIC IN YARRA RANGES.



Overall, respondents tended to feel safe in public in Yarra Ranges, however it is interesting to note that the 18-25 year-old respondents tended to feel less safe, particularly in the Valley and Urban areas.

Furthermore, this data does not distinguish between feelings of safety during the day vs the night. The younger cohort (12-17) may feel safer in public overall, as they generally have less exposure to the safety concerns at night.

KEY FINDINGS

ISSUES OF CONCERN AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

A key finding from the data is how concerned young people are about vaping as an issue amongst their peers. Mental health was the second most significant response following vaping. The data shows that young people are grappling with mental health challenges, highlighting the importance of prioritising mental well-being and providing accessible resources for support.

Substance-related concerns, including alcohol use and drug use, are also frequently mentioned. This emphasises the need for addressing substance misuse and educating young people about the risks associated with such behaviours.

Other challenges such as body image, coping with stress, loneliness and social isolation, school/study issues are additional areas of concern for young people. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating safe and supportive environments, as well as fostering resilience among youth to navigate these challenges.



Key Findings

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

There is a strong desire for improved public transportation options, particularly in terms of reliability and accessibility for young individuals. This is particularly crucial given that young people often lack their own dependable means of transportation, thereby necessitating their reliance on public transport for access to education, employment, and other essential services.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The data indicates a strong emphasis on improving mental health services and support for young people in Yarra Ranges. Respondents consistently express a need for enhanced mental health resources, including more diverse, affordable and accessible long-term and youth-specific services, as well as outreach programs, counselling, and safe spaces for discussing mental health concerns.

SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH

The data indicates a compelling need for the establishment of safe spaces across the region that foster connection, by providing opportunities for young people to socialise, access support and feel a sense of belonging. The persistent emphasis on mental health echoes the necessity for environments where open dialogue and assistance is readily available. These safe spaces would not only provide solace from daily struggles, but also offer platforms for empowerment, community-building, and advocacy.



Key Findings

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Many respondents highlight the need for better and more diverse employment prospects for young people. They express concern about exploitative work conditions and a lack of fulfilling job opportunities within the region.

YOUTH DRIVEN INITIATIVES

There is a call for more youth-driven initiatives that promote cultural awareness, mental health support, and community engagement. Respondents mention examples from other communities where youth-driven groups, events, and programs play a significant role in addressing youth issues and providing safe spaces.

AREA SPECIFIC THEMES

The data highlights a sentiment among young people in the Valley area of Yarra Ranges, of limited inclusivity and community connection. This is further compounded by a perceived deficiency in quality recreational and health and wellbeing facilities within the region.

Young people in the Hills and Upper Yarra regions grapple with inadequate access to other areas due to limited public transport options. While young people in the Urban areas generally enjoy better access to public transport, they share a parallel concern with their Valley counterparts regarding safety in public spaces.

This shared sentiment reveals a common thread of unease among youth across Yarra Ranges. Young people identified a need for community-wide efforts to enhance inclusivity, connectivity, and safety, fostering an environment where all young residents can thrive.



Enquiries

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