

Thursday, 29 March 2018

## Tween mental health contacts to Kids Helpline more than double

The 2017 Kids Helpline Insights Report released today has revealed first time mental health contacts to the national counselling service was greatest in the 10-14 age group, increasing by 123% (1,250 contacts) from 2011-17 - twice that of the 19-25 age group.

According to yourtown/Kids Helpline CEO Tracy Adams, it's very encouraging to see this younger age group reaching out for help because early intervention is key.

"By addressing emotional wellbeing issues early, more serious mental health concerns can be averted before they escalate," Ms Adams said.

"Young people in the 10-14 age group tell us they experience issues ranging from anxiety, problems sleeping, online addiction, anger issues or mood swings through to self-harm, eating disorders, depression and thoughts of suicide.

"The reasons why they are experiencing these issues are varied and complex, but can include family breakdowns or illness, worries about bad news, school pressures or bullying.

"While some say they are receiving treatment through a GP, psychiatrist or counsellor, others say they use sleeping tablets, watching TV or YouTube, and turning to friends and family for help, and of course Kids Helpline."

In 2017, mental health was the number one reason children and young people contacted Kids Helpline with one in four (26%) or 17,115 of counselling contacts to Kids Helpline about this issue. Half (54%) of these were seeking support or strategies to manage an established disorder while close to two fifths (37%) were young people with symptoms of an undiagnosed mental health condition.

Ms Adams said the complexity of issues reported to Kids Helpline over the last 20 years had grown substantially with greater numbers of children and young people needing ongoing counselling.

"In 2017, 64% of all contacts were from children and young people who had contacted Kids Helpline before, and were receiving occasional or ongoing support," Ms Adams said.

"More complex issues have also meant the total counselling time with young people has risen significantly, increasing by 72% in just 10 years.

"Duty of Care sessions where emergency interventions are required also continues to rise, increasing by 40% from 2013-17."

Ms Adams said there was more the community could be doing to strengthen the mental health of young people in Australia.

"While not just one solution is needed to address this multi-faceted issue, a good start is ensuring that the community works together to create early prevention services that are accessible to those who are most at risk," she said.

"With many in the 10-14 age group too young to access community-based services such as headspace, we need to ensure we create access to early intervention services that directly target and support younger children who may be experiencing adverse emotional wellbeing at this critical age of development.<sup>1</sup>

"Kids Helpline is working hard to do just that by not only offering counselling 24/7 but by creating positive mental health in children at the grass roots.

“Primary schools across Australia can access the free **Kids Helpline @ School** program: **Optus Digital Thumbprint with Kids Helpline and Wellbeing program** supported by Bupa. Our counsellor-led sessions are designed to increase resilience and encourage help seeking by children, turning around emotional wellbeing concerns and creating positive futures for young people across Australia.”

For more information about the schools program see [www.kidshelpline.com.au/school](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au/school).

Other top reasons children and young people contacted Kids Helpline for counselling in 2017 were family relationships (18%), emotional wellbeing (17%), suicide-related (16%) and dating and partner relationships (10%).

The **2017 KHL Insights Report Key Insights** infographic is attached. To access the **2017 KHL Insights Reports**, including state and territory reports, go to [www.yourtown.com.au/insights/annual-overviews](http://www.yourtown.com.au/insights/annual-overviews)

Kids Helpline is Australia’s only free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. **FREE call 1800 55 1800** or [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

Kids Helpline would like to remind media to include [Kids Helpline](#) contact details at the end of broadcast coverage and articles where children and young people may need support.

'**yourtown** (2016) ‘Preventing Suicide: The voice of young people’ accessed at <https://www.yourtown.com.au/insights/advocacy>

-ENDS-

## INTERVIEW/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

Tracy Adams, CEO **yourtown**  
John Dalgleish, **yourtown** Head of Strategy and Research  
Tony Fitzgerald, Kids Helpline Virtual Services Manager  
Kids Helpline counsellors  
Kids Helpline VNR available on request

## MEDIA CONTACTS:

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# Key Insights 2017

We believe every young person has the right to a brighter future. Kids Helpline (KHL) gives children and young people choices, support and someone to listen any time and for any reason.

Counsellors responded to approximately 3,000 contacts each week from children and young people seeking information, support or counselling.

## 5 Most common reasons kids and young people seek help<sup>1</sup>

1. Mental health **26%**
2. Family relationships **18%**
3. Emotional wellbeing **17%**
4. Suicide-related **16%**
5. Dating and partner relationships **10%**

## Concerns of those who received counselling

- **1 in 4** contacts were about mental health issues
- **1 in 6** contacts were about suicide-related issues
- **1 in 12** contacts were about child abuse
- **1 in 14** contacts were about self-injury concerns



## Kids Helpline @School

24,221 primary school students participated in video link-up class sessions with a counsellor



## Direct counsellor time with kids and young people

72% increase from 2007 to 2017

## WebChat counselling

Young people are using WebChat in increasing numbers.

- **178%** growth in WebChat contacts over 6 years
- **12,643** in 2012 to **35,201** in 2017



## Number of contacts to KHL

- **339,724** attempts to contact the counselling service with **157,656** answered
- **607,634** unique visitors to the KHL website with **2,051,601** page views

Of the **154,868** contacts we answered from children and young people aged **5-25**:

- **88,482 (57%)** were seeking information, referral or other support
- **66,386 (43%)** were seeking counselling support



## Duty of Care interventions

- **2,150** were Duty of Care\* interventions
- **41** Duty of Care interventions a week

Of these:

- **36%** were related to child abuse
- **37%** were related to a suicide attempt

\*A Duty of Care intervention involves contacting emergency services or another agency to protect a young person who is experiencing or is at imminent risk of significant harm.

**40%** increase in the overall number of Duty of Care interventions initiated by counsellors from **2013 to 2017**.

Child abuse and suicide attempts are the top 2 reasons for Duty of Care interventions in 2017.



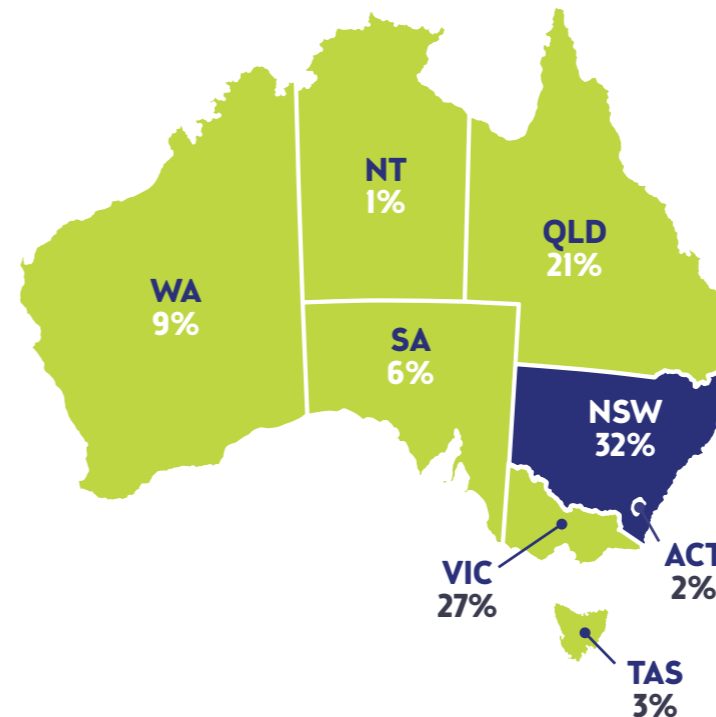
## Age (N = 99,460) Contacts where age is recorded



- 5-12 years **13%**
- 13-18 years **54%**
- 19-25 years **33%**

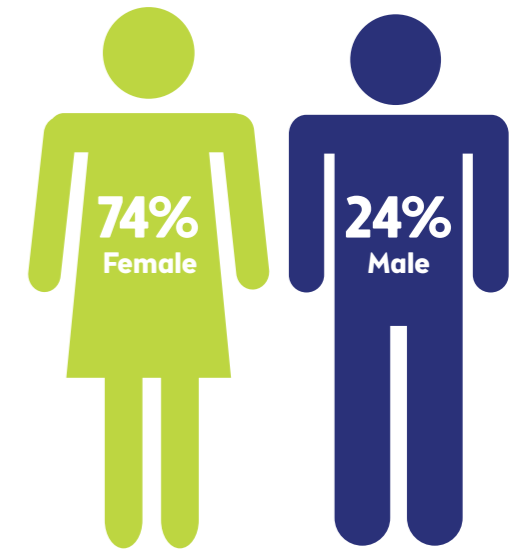
## Where did they come from?

(N = 154,868 total N = 140,007 where state is known)



## Who contacted us?<sup>2</sup>

**Gender** (N=110,134) Contacts where gender is recorded



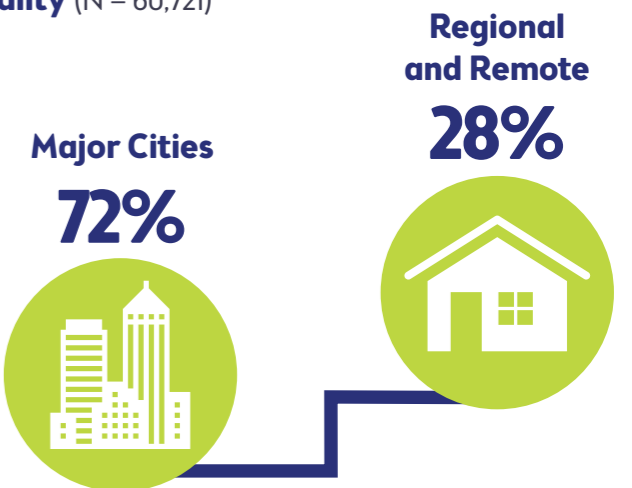
Intersex, trans & gender diverse 2%

## Culture<sup>3</sup> (N = 40,660)

- Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander **3%**
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) **36%**
- Neither Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander nor CALD **60%**



## Locality (N = 60,721)



1. Percentages are based on a total of 66,368 contacts seeking counselling support in 2017.

2. Proportions reported here are based on contacts for which the information is known (Ns reported above each table are the number of contacts for which this information is known, out of the total 154,868).

3. Total not 100% due to rounding issues.