

insights:

loneliness over time

headspace National Youth Mental
Health Survey 2020



Methodology

This paper presents insights from the 2020 headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey.

Who conducted the survey?

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation funded the survey and commissioned Colmar Brunton (now Kantar Public) to undertake the survey, the analysis and reporting.

Did the survey receive ethics approval?

This study was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and received ethics approval from Bellberry Limited Human Research Ethics Committee (ref: 2020-04-395).

How was the survey conducted?

The first survey was conducted between July and September 2018 and involved a national telephone survey of 4,065 Australian youth (aged 12–25 years). The telephone survey was conducted by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing or CATI.

A quota sampling strategy was used, with quotas set according to age, gender and state/territory that ensured representation as per general population demographic spread.

The current survey was conducted between 25 May and 21 June 2020 and involved a national telephone survey of 1,035 Australian youth (aged 12–25 years). The survey was conducted when much of the country was in a stage of government enforced lockdown, or just emerging from a period of lockdown due to COVID-19.

How is the data analysed and reported?

Throughout the report, we provide metrics for the total sample and consider differences by gender and by age group.

The data has been weighted to represent the population of young people in Australia in each of the four age groups (12–14 years, 15–17 years, 18–21 years and 22–25 years), by gender and by state/territory of residence. Tests of statistical significance have been conducted and only differences significant at 95% confidence are presented.

In some instances throughout the report percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Executive Summary: Loneliness over time

Telephone survey



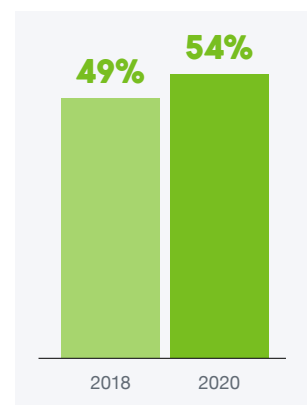
The number of young people reporting feelings of loneliness has increased between the 2018 and 2020 surveys.

More than half (54%) of young people now report experiencing a lack of companionship, up from 49% in the previous survey.

The rise in loneliness is especially significant in those aged 12–14. In 2018, 41% of 12–14 year-olds felt they lacked companionship. This figure has risen to 53% in 2020.

Young women continue to report higher rates of loneliness than young men. This gender disparity is observed across every age group, with the exception of 22–25 year-olds.

The impacts of COVID-19 social restrictions on young people and their sense of social connectedness are evident.



More than one in two Australian young people reported feelings of loneliness, an increase to the rate seen in 2018.

Insight 1:

The proportion of young people who feel they lack companionship is increasing

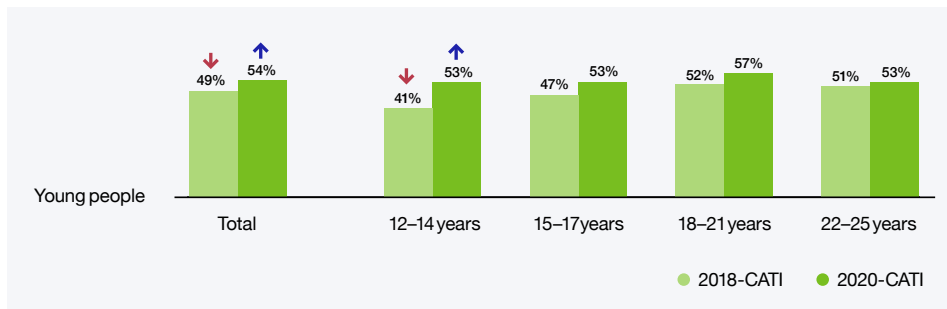


Figure 1.

Lacking companionship – % Some of the time/often
Young people

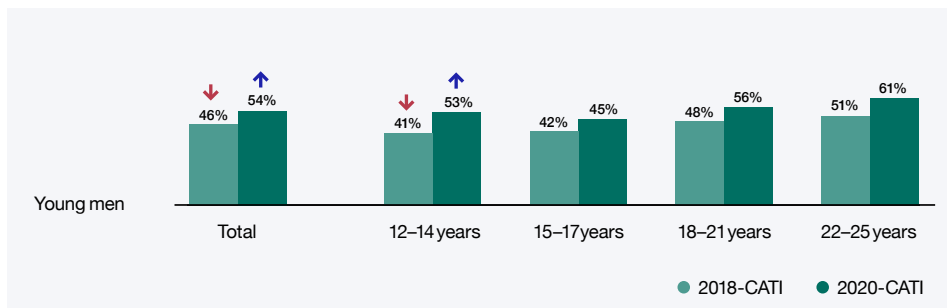


Figure 2.

Lacking companionship – % Some of the time/often
Young men

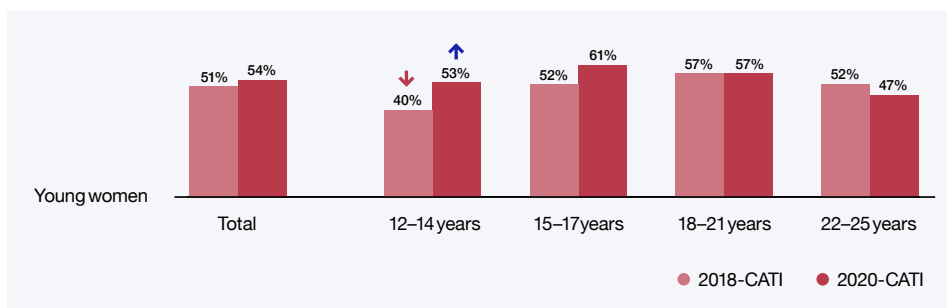


Figure 3.

Lacking companionship – % Some of the time/often
Young women

In 2020, 54% of Australian young people feel that they lack companionship often or some of the time, which is significantly greater than the proportion of young people who felt this way in 2018 (49%). A closer look at gender and age differences reveals that this trend is driven by young men and young women aged 12–14 years. In 2018, two in five young people felt they lacked companionship. This has increased to over one in two in 2020 (53%). This trend is seen among young men and young women aged 12–14 years.

54%
of young people feel that they lack companionship often or some of the time.

Q40 First, how often do you feel that you lack companionship?

↓ ↑ Indicates results are significantly different from other survey at 95% confidence.

Insight 2:

Feelings of being left out remain steady in 2020

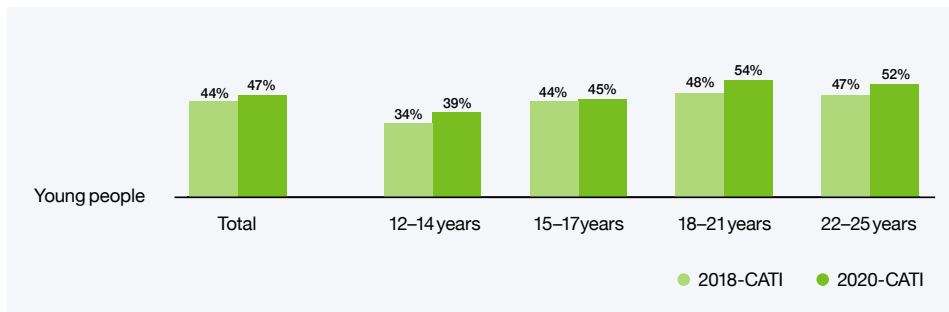


Figure 4.
Feeling left out –
% Some of the time/often
Young people

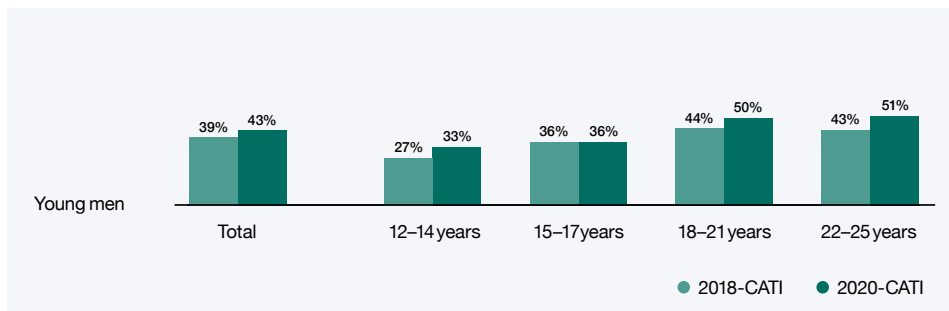


Figure 5.
Feeling left out –
% Some of the time/often
Young men

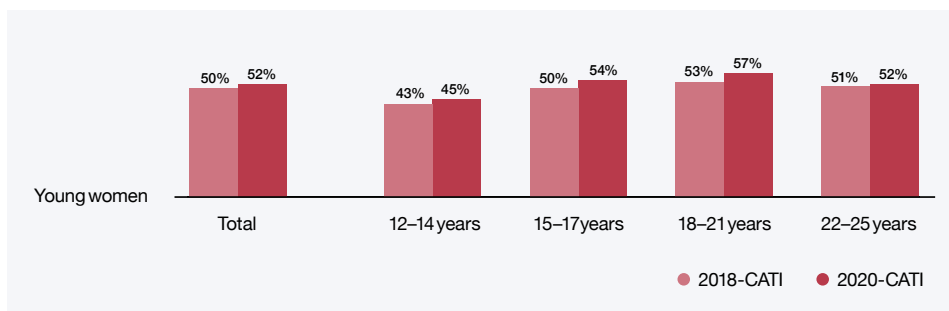


Figure 6.
Feeling left out –
% Some of the time/often
Young women

In 2020, just under one in two young people feel left out often or some of the time (47%). This is comparable to the rate seen in 2018 (44%). Rates remain stable across each of the age and gender groups.

As was also seen in 2018, young women consistently report higher rates of loneliness (feeling left out) than do young men. This gender disparity is observed across every age group, with the exception of 22-25 year-olds.

47%

of young people feel left out often or some of the time.

Q41 How often do you feel left out?

Insight 3:

Young women aged 12–14 and young men aged 18–21 felt increasingly isolated in 2020

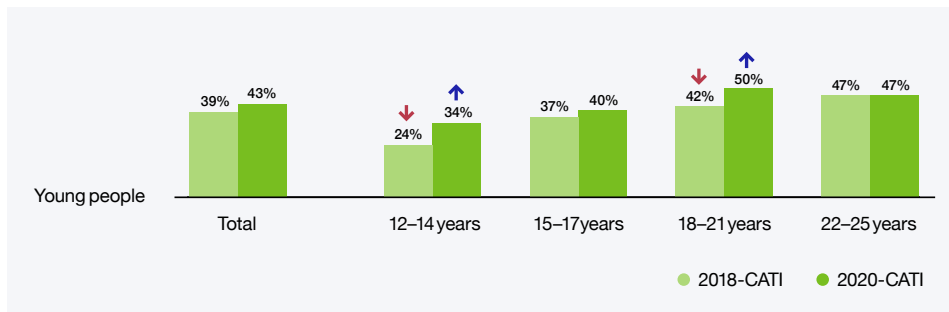


Figure 7.

Feeling isolated from others – % Some of the time/often
Young people

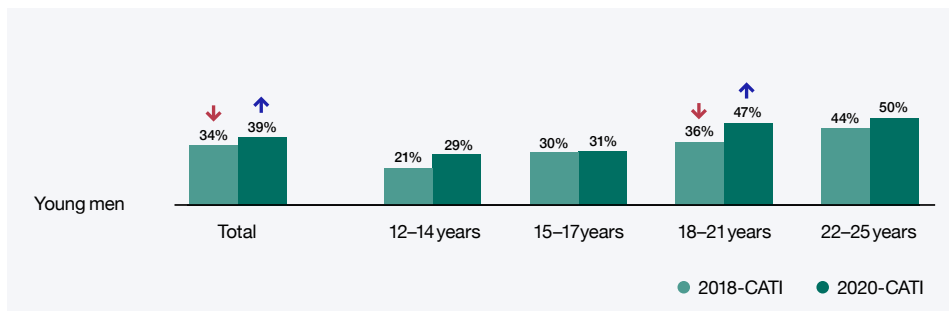


Figure 8.

Feeling isolated from others – % Some of the time/often
Young men

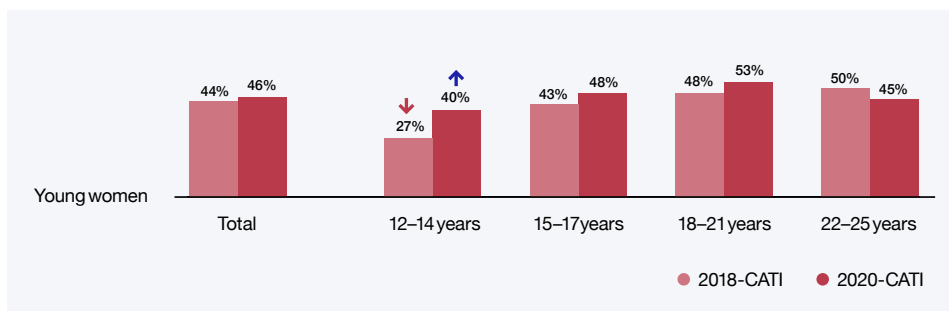


Figure 9.

Feeling isolated from others – % Some of the time/often
Young women

In 2020, just over two in five young people feel isolated from others often or some of the time (43%). This is comparable to the rate seen in 2018 (39%).

However, when looking closer at gender and age differences, there has been an increase in the sense of isolation among certain groups. In particular, among young women aged 12–14 years – in 2018 27% felt isolated from others and this increased to 40% in 2020. Among 18–21 year-old young men – in 2018 36% felt isolated and this increased to 47% in 2020.

40%

of young women aged 12–14 years felt isolated from others.

Q42 How often do you feel isolated from others?

↓ ↑ Indicates results are significantly different from other survey at 95% confidence.



headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.



headspace would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and emerging and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.



headspace is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. headspace welcomes all people irrespective of ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health