



RESILIENCE YOUTH SURVEY REPORT 2023

Secondary School Overview

ABSTRACT

In 2023, Hume City Council worked in partnership with Resilient Youth Australia and 25 local schools to survey 7,010 students in Grades 3 to 12. This is the largest youth data set we have ever had! We look forward to strengthening community resources, staff development areas and evidence-based student interventions with the outcomes of this survey.

Hume Youth, Engagement and Pathways Unit.

Hume Resilience Youth Survey 2023 Report

Secondary Schools

In 2023, we worked in partnership with [Resilient Youth Australia](#) and 25 local primary and secondary schools to survey 7,010 students in Years 3 to 12 to deliver the following results.

The following secondary schools participated in the survey:

- Hume Central Secondary College
- Gateway School
- Gladstone Park Secondary College
- Greenvale Secondary College
- Hume Anglican Grammar (Mt Ridley Campus)
- Hume Anglican Grammar (Donnybrook Campus)
- Hume Anglican Grammar (Kalkallo Campus)
- Hume Central Secondary College (Town Park)
- Hume Central Secondary College (Dimboola Road)
- Mickleham Secondary College
- Mount Ridley P-12 College
- Penola Catholic College
- Roxburgh College
- St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College

In total, there were 4,454 Year 7 – 12 students who completed the survey in 2023. Of these:

- 2064 identified as female.
- 2295 identified as male.
- 58 preferred not to say; and
- 37 identified as other.

The following table outlines the number of students surveyed in each secondary year level:

| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1251 | 718 | 665 | 750 | 627 | 443 |

What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to draw upon the strengths within yourself and from around you to flexibly respond to life while remaining true to yourself and creating positive relationships with others.

What are the Resilience Surveys?

The Resilience Survey is an online survey which collects, analyses and reports the resilience of young people at different age stages and captures their strengths, life satisfaction, hopefulness, anxiety and depression, coping style, risk and protective behaviours.

Specifically, the survey measures the resilience and wellbeing of young people across 9 key domains: Understanding Self, Social Skills, Positive Relationships, Safety, Healthy Body and Healthy Mind, Learning, Positive Attitude, Positive Values, Positive Identity.

Snapshot Findings by Year 7 to 12 Level

This data reports on 3 areas of wellbeing for young people known as the 'CPR of Wellbeing':

1. Connected – to be connected to self and others
2. Protected – to protect yourself and be protected by others
3. Respected – to respect yourself and be respected by others.

It provides at a glance an overview of the strengths and challenges of students at different year levels.

Secondary School Year 7 to 12 Summary

There were 4,454 students surveyed in Year 7 to 12. Data below outlines the key strengths and challenges for this cohort.

Key Strengths

- 95% do not use illegal drugs
- 93% are not bullied online
- 91% have at least one good friend at school
- 91% feel safe at home
- 89% do not gamble online
- 87% do not feel socially excluded
- 86% have love and support from family
- 85% think they are doing pretty well
- 80% trust their friends and they trust them
- 70% try hard at school

Key Challenges

- 73% do not read for fun
- 59% cannot talk about things that upset them
- 54% feel that school does not enforce rules fairly
- 49% are not getting at least 8 hours sleep most nights
- 47% do not have fun at school
- 47% feel they do not have a teacher at school who cares
- 39% reported that they do not have a teacher who encourages them
- 37% do not feel good about themselves
- 37% are playing excessive online games
- 35% do not feel safe at school
- 33% believe they do not have an adult in their lives that they can talk to
- 23% have threatened to physically hurt someone

Comparison to Australian Norm:

Areas that rated more than the norm

The following areas that rated higher (between 5%-15%+) than the Australian Norm (AN) included:

- Students feel good about themselves (Hume – 63%; AN – 57%)

Areas that rated less than the norm

There were a number of areas that rated less (5%-15%) than the Australian Norm (AN) these included:

- Teacher at school who cares (Hume -53%; AN-58%)
- Feel safe at school (Hume 65%; AN – 70%)
- School enforces rules fairly (Hume -46%; AN – 53%)
- Not using a device between 10pm/midnight and 6am (Hume -54%; AN-61%)
- Eat healthy food (Hume – 69%; AN – 75%)
- Given useful jobs t school (Hume 33%; N – 38%)
- Involved in at least one extracurricular (Hume -61%; AN – 69%)
- Have not threatened to physically hurt someone (Hume –77%; AN – 90%).

Summary

In summary, the data shows that for secondary school students in Hume the following areas are of concern, and may warrant further attention:

1. Safety– over a third of students (35%) indicated they did not feel safe at school and almost half (47%) indicated they did not have fun at school. Only 46% felt that school enforce rules correctly; and just under half (47%)

indicated they did not have a teacher at school who cares.. In addition, only 23% reported having threatened to physically hurt someone which was significantly higher than the Australian Norm (10%).

2. Health – just under a third (31% of students did not eat healthy food and only 51% of students get over 8 hours of sleep per night; and 42% reported being tired on low on energy. Over half of the students reported not using a device between 10pm/midnight and 6am. Over two thirds reported having no appetite, weight loss or over eating.
3. Connection – Majority of students indicated they had positive relationships with teachers and parents, however 20% of students indicated they did not have an adult in their life who set a good example; and a third (33%) did not have an adult in their life they could talk to; or listened to them (22%). In addition, only 41% of students said they could talk about things if they upset them.

Mental Health

Students were also surveyed in relation to their mental health. The six measures of mental health include:

- Overall Life Satisfaction
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Hope
- Coping
- Connection to Nature.

Secondary School – Year 7 to 12 Summary:

4454 students from Year 7 to 12 were surveyed in relation to their mental health. The following table provides an overview of the findings that were identified for each of the six areas by gender:

Overall Life Satisfaction

Students were asked to measure their overall life satisfaction using the Cantril Self Anchoring Scale. Scale 1= pertained to the worst possible life and scale 8= the best possible life.

| Scale | Female | Male | Other | Prefer not to say |
|-----------|--------|------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 (worst) | 1% | 2% | 19% | 12% |
| 2 | 1% | 1% | 8% | 3% |
| 3 | 6% | 4% | 14% | 7% |
| 4 | 17% | 11% | 19% | 17% |
| 5 | 30% | 24% | 19% | 22% |

| | | | | |
|------------|------|------|-----|-----|
| 6 | 24% | 28% | 11% | 19% |
| 7 | 12% | 15% | 5% | 7% |
| 8 (best) | 9% | 15% | 5% | 12% |
| Total (N=) | 2064 | 2295 | 37 | 58 |

In summary:

- Overall, male students indicated a higher life satisfaction (82% - levels 5-8) than female students (75% - levels 5-8).
- Students who identified as 'other' had a much lower life satisfaction (40%) and students who preferred not to identify (60%) than male and female identifying students.
- Analysis of the data based on year level also indicated that for both male and female students' life satisfaction decreased as they got older. For example – 77% of Year 7 students indicated they had a good/best life compared to 69% of Year 12 students. Similarly, 84% of Year 7 male students indicated a good/best life compared to 74% of Year 12 male students.

Hope

These findings show varying degrees of hope reported by secondary school students.

| Areas | Female | Male | Other | Prefer Not to Say |
|---------------|--------|------|-------|-------------------|
| <i>None</i> | 2% | 2% | 19% | 10% |
| <i>Little</i> | 13% | 7% | 27% | 21% |
| <i>Some</i> | 37% | 24% | 32% | 22% |
| <i>Lots</i> | 29% | 33% | 19% | 33% |
| <i>Most</i> | 15% | 23% | 3% | 9% |
| <i>All</i> | 5% | 10% | 0% | 5% |
| Total (N=) | 2064 | 2295 | 37 | 58 |

In summary:

- As the data indicates, only 20% of female students were hopeful most or all of the time, compared to a third of male students (33%).
- Just under half of the students who identified as 'other' (46%) indicated they had little or no hope; and 31% of students who preferred not to say. This was much higher than students who identified their gender.
- Overall, female students were less hopeful than their male counterparts.

Anxiety

These findings show percentage of secondary school students who reported symptoms of anxiety:

| Areas | Female | Male | Other | Prefer not to say |
|--------------------|--------|------|-------|-------------------|
| <i>Anxious</i> | 52% | 28% | 70% | 59% |
| <i>Not Anxious</i> | 48% | 72% | 30% | 41% |
| <i>Total (N=)</i> | 2064 | 2295 | 37 | 58 |

In summary:

- Overall, female students were more anxious than male students. Over half of the female students (52%) reported symptoms of anxiety compared to male students (28%).
- Alarming, 70% of students who identified as 'other' reported symptoms of anxiety and over half of students (59%) of students who did not identify their gender.
- Rates of anxiety for girls were shown to significantly increase over time. For example – 47% of girls in Year 7 experienced anxiety and this increased to 61% in Year 12.
- Similarly, a quarter of male students reported anxiety in Year 7 and this increased to 39% in Year 12.
- Overall rates of anxiety for students across levels 7-12 were less than the Australian Norm.

Depression

These findings show percentage of secondary school students who reported symptoms of depression.

| Areas | Female | Male | Other | Prefer Not to Say |
|----------------------|--------|------|-------|-------------------|
| <i>Depressed</i> | 39% | 25% | 65% | 40% |
| <i>Not Depressed</i> | 61% | 75% | 35% | 60% |
| <i>Total (N=)</i> | 2064 | 2295 | 37 | 58 |

In summary:

- Over a third (39%) of female students reported symptoms of depression as compared to male students (25%).
- Again, similar to the data regarding anxiety, 65% of students who identified as 'other' reported symptoms of depression and 40% of students who did not identify their gender.
- Students that identified as 'other' and 'prefer not to say' were higher than the Australian National norm.

Disengaged Coping Strategies

These findings show percentage of secondary school students who are disengaged from problem-solving.

| Areas | Female | Male | Other | Prefer Not to Say |
|-------------------|--------|------|-------|-------------------|
| <i>Disengaged</i> | 40% | 32% | 73% | 43% |
| <i>Engaged</i> | 60% | 68% | 27% | 57% |
| <i>Total (N=)</i> | 2064 | 2295 | 37 | 58 |

In summary:

- Over half of female students (60%) were engaged in problem solving, as compared to 68% of males.
- Students who did not identify their gender were more likely to be disengaged from problem solving – other 73%. This was lower than the Australian Norm.

Resilience Score

This data combines Hope and Life Satisfaction scores to identify the resilience of young people. For example: students with high life satisfaction and high level of hope are categorised as 'resilient'. In contrast those with low levels of hope and life satisfaction are categorised as 'low resilience'.

Overall, 52% of students were identified as resilient. However, students that 'preferred not to say' their gender or identified as 'other', less than a third (31%) were resilient.

Healthy Mind

This data combines anxiety and depression indicators, or the absence of these symptoms to suggest a healthy mind. In summary:

- 52% of female and male students have a healthy mind
- 23% of students are reported to be experiencing anxiety and depression.
- Only 29% of students that 'preferred not to say' and identified as 'other' have a healthy mind, and 42% of these students reported to be experiencing anxiety and depression.
- Overall, boys were faring better in terms of a healthy mind with 62% overall having a healthy mind compared to 40% of girls.

Ready to Learn

This data combines reported symptoms of either anxiety, disengagement from problem-solving, or both anxiety and disengagement for problem-solving, or absence of these symptoms to determine a readiness to learn.

Data highlighted that only 44% of male and female students were ready to learn; with 20% of students feeling anxious and disengaged. Alarming, only 19% of students who did not identify their gender were ready to learn, and over a third of this cohort (37%) identified as anxious and disengaged.

Connection to Nature

These findings show the percentage of secondary students who reported being connected to nature.

| Areas | Female | Male | Other | Prefer Not to Say |
|----------------------------|--------|------|-------|-------------------|
| <i>Little Connection</i> | 26% | 30% | 41% | 57% |
| <i>Moderate Connection</i> | 35% | 34% | 22% | 21% |
| <i>Strong Connection</i> | 29% | 36% | 38% | 22% |
| <i>Total (N=)</i> | 2064 | 2295 | 37 | 58 |

In summary:

- Male students had a stronger connection (70% to nature than Girls (64%).
- Similarly to other data sets, students who did not identify their gender had less of a connection to nature.

Mental Health Data Summary

The following are areas in which overall students in year 7 to 12 are not faring well in relation to their mental health and wellbeing:

- Anxiety and Depression
 - Generalised anxiety amongst secondary students that identified as females, other and prefer not to say is an area of concern as more than half in this group reported anxiety. This serves as an important intervention target area.
 - Rates of depression amongst Year 7 -12 students is high, with 46% of female students in Year 12 reporting symptoms of depression. In addition, data shows that rates of depression for female and male students increase over time.
 - Overall, 23% of students reported symptoms of anxiety and depression; and only just over half 52% had an absence of symptoms, suggesting a healthy mind.

- For students who did not identify their gender, this figure almost doubles with 42% of these students reporting being anxious and depressed; and only 29% being of healthy mind.
- This data shows that anxiety and depression are commonly experienced for Year 7-12 students in Hume.
- Resilience
 - Just over half of all Year 7 – 12 students (52%) identified as resilient.
 - Female students were less resilient (42.5%) than boys (59.7%).
 - Students who did not identify their gender were significantly less resilience than other students (41%). In addition, 34% of these students indicated they did not feel hopeful or satisfied with their life.
- Ready to Learn
 - Data shows that the impact of reported symptoms of either anxiety or disengagement has a significant impact on a student's ability to learn. Less than half of the students (44%) were identified as ready to learn; and this was worse for female students overall (34.5%) than their male counterparts (53%).
 - Of the students who did not identify their gender (other/prefer not to say) only 19% identified as ready to learn, with over a third (37%) reporting symptoms of both anxiety and disengagement.

Future Recommendations for Secondary School Students

Based on the data outlined above, the following recommendations for future interventions have been suggested. These suggestions are general in nature and may not apply to specific schools or geographical locations in the municipality.

1. Safety and risk behaviours:
 - Data indicates that a majority of students feel safe at home and feel safe in the area that they live, but do not feel safe at school (35%). The number of students who feel safe at school decreases from primary to secondary school particularly in Year 7-10. This increases again from Year 11 -12. Hume students scored lower than the Australian Norm in this category. Data on why students feel unsafe at school could be used to inform primary to secondary school transition resources. A whole-of-school approach to mental health for schools that had low rates of safety at school to create a positive and healthy school culture would be recommended.
 - Year 7,8 & 9 students reported higher rates of bullying than other year levels and this was similar for male and female students and

those who did not identify their gender. Further research into types of bullying specific to the school would inform the development of targeted prevention and early intervention programs. In addition, interventions that focus on respectful relationships would be beneficial.

- In relation to risky behaviours, data showed that 23 % of students reported threatening to physically hurt someone which is higher than the Australian Norm. Further research in this area would be useful to identify where and why threatening behaviours were used; and again, would inform prevention programs. In addition, interventions relating to respectful relationships, school-wide positive behaviour; communication and emotional regulation; and trauma informed programs would be beneficial.

2. Health and wellbeing:

- Data on healthy eating revealed that just under a third (31%) of young people were not eating healthy food. Initiatives in schools to provide healthy food and drink options for students to encourage healthy eating. Programs such as Vic Kids Eat Well (<https://www.vickidseatwell.health.vic.gov.au/>) provide resources and access to a health promotion professional to make healthy changes in schools.
- Sleep deprivation – data revealed that just under half of the students (49%) were not getting at least 8 hours of sleep most nights; and over a third of students (35%) were having trouble concentrating. In addition, data indicated that a high number of students were using a device between 10pm/midnight and 6pm. As research shows, sleep deprivation not only negatively impacts general and mental health but affects young people's ability to learn. Interventions to develop foundational skills for healthier and life-long sleep habits would be beneficial.

3. Mental health

- Data indicates that rates of anxiety and depression are relatively high for secondary students. Overall, female students were more anxious than male students; and 70% of students who identified as 'other' reported symptoms of anxiety and over half of students (59%) of students who did not identify their gender. In addition, over a third (39%) of female students reported symptoms of depression as

compared to male students (25%).

- Interventions that focus on mental health literacy, strategies to reduce anxiety; mental health wellness techniques; and regulating emotions; building resilience; and developing social, emotional and positive relationship skills for example would be beneficial.

4. Learning

- Disengaged from problem-solving – a number of students were disengaged from problem solving. Data showed that for female students this statistic is worse in Year 7 and 8 (45% and 44%) and gets better from Year 9 onwards. For male students, this is higher at Year 7 then declines across year levels. Interventions that focus on enhancing problem-solving for students at Year 7-9 would be beneficial.
- Data highlighted that just under half of students (44%) were ready to learn with many feeling anxious and disengaged. In addition, over a third of students (35%) felt unsafe at school and this would further compound difficulties with learning. Interventions focused on social and emotional learning; peer support; respectful relationships; mental health literacy; resilience would be useful.

5. Social connection and engagement:

- Data indicates that many students feel like that do not have a teacher at school who cares about them, that school does not enforce rules fairly and/or that they are not given useful jobs at school. Interventions to enhance a positive school culture would be beneficial. This could include, but is not limited to, teacher leadership programs; engagement programs that increase student voice; creation of opportunities for student leadership; parent seminars; career days; and building strategic partnerships with community and sector organisations for young people.
- Students who did not identify their gender were also faring poorly on a number of indicators including life satisfaction, hope, anxiety, depression and resilience. Although it is unclear why students did not identify their gender, interventions targeted at the health and wellbeing of gender diverse students would be beneficial.

- Positive relationships – students highlighted that they had love and support from family (86%) but just under half (47%) felt that did not have a teacher who cared. Interventions at school to create positive relationships with teachers and peers would be beneficial

Victorian Government Mental Health Menu

The Victorian government has invested \$217.8 million over four years to support student mental health and wellbeing, including \$200 million over four years and \$87 million ongoing to create a Schools Mental Health Fund. Underpinning the Fund is the evidence-based menu.

The Menu provides schools with opportunities to purchase evidence-based programs and initiatives across the three tiers of intervention. This includes initiatives that:

- Tier 1: Positive mental health promotion
- Tier 2: Early intervention and cohort specific support
- Tier 3: Targeted support and more individualised support for students who need it.

Information regarding the Mental Health Menu can be found at:

<https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/schools-mental-health-menu>

