

## Young people in SESLHD

Young people, aged between 12 and 25 years, represent 17% of SESLHD's population.<sup>1</sup>

Almost two percent (1.8%) of young people in SESLHD are Aboriginal.

The highest number of Aboriginal young people in SESLHD live in Sutherland (34% of all Aboriginal young people in SESLHD), followed by Randwick (21% of Aboriginal young people) and Bayside (19% of Aboriginal young people).<sup>1</sup>

Between 2016 and 2021, the Aboriginal youth population has increased (1.4% to 1.8%).<sup>2</sup>

The growing number and proportion of Aboriginal young people in SESLHD reflects national trends that indicate the Aboriginal population is younger than Australia's broader population.<sup>1</sup>

With 24% of young people in the district born overseas, SESLHD's youth population is culturally and linguistically diverse. 72.5% of this group arrived in Australia between 2011-2020<sup>1</sup>. Following this period, the COVID 19 pandemic and country border closures had a significant impact on young people arriving in Australia. Only 1% of overseas born young people in SESLHD arrived in 2021 and there was a significant decline in the overseas born youth population of SESLHD between the 2016 and 2021 census (31% to 24%).<sup>1</sup>

In 2021, 1.7% of 12-25 year olds in SESLHD required assistance with everyday activities. Nineteen percent (19%) of young people in the district report having a long term health condition. Of those with long term health conditions, 35% of young people have asthma and 26% are living with a mental health condition.<sup>1</sup>

4% of SESLHD's youth population are young carers who provide unpaid care to a person with a disability or health condition.<sup>1</sup>

SESLHD has a small population of young parents (0.6% of young people).<sup>1</sup>

Adolescence and young adulthood are critical and dynamic periods in a person's life, marked by major psychosocial and physical changes. Young people experience a range of unique health and wellbeing issues that differ from those of younger children and older adults.

Although most young people self-report being in excellent, very good or good health, some young people, particularly those from vulnerable and priority populations, experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes and increased barriers to accessing health services.<sup>3</sup> These include young people who are Aboriginal, those experiencing homelessness, LGBTIQ+ young people, those with an Out-of-Home Care experience, young people under justice supervision, young refugees or newly arrived migrants, young people with disabilities or chronic health conditions, young carers and young parents as well as young people who have experienced family, peer or intimate partner violence.<sup>4</sup>

This life stage offers an important opportunity for health services to intervene early with health issues and to be accessible and responsive to the needs of young people.

Nearly seven percent (6.8%) of all young people in SESLHD report having a long term mental health condition. Mental health challenges remain a key issue for young people nationally. They account for the predominant cause of the burden of disease for 15 to 24 year olds, with suicide the leading cause of death among young people.<sup>5,6</sup> Rates of psychological distress experienced by young people are also increasing, with over one quarter (26.6%) of young people reporting psychological distress in 2020 compared with one in five (18.6%) in 2012.<sup>7</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a particular impact on the health and wellbeing of young people. Compared with older age groups, young people have experienced high rates of psychological distress, social disconnection, educational disruption, unemployment, housing stress and family and domestic violence.<sup>8</sup>

Over recent years, vaping has emerged as a significant health issue for young people. One third of young people, 32% of all 14 to 17 year olds<sup>9</sup> and 32.7% of 16 to 24 year olds have ever used vaping products. Daily and regular use among the 16-24 year age group has doubled in recent years from 4.5% in 2019-2020 to 11% in 2020-2021.<sup>10</sup>

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2. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016, 'Census of Population and Housing, ABS 2016.'
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4. NSW Health 2017, 'NSW Youth Health Framework 2017-2024.'
5. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016, 'Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2011.'
6. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022, 'Deaths in Australia.'
7. Kos, R., Reily, N., Connell, C., Hall, S., Yip, D., Hudson, J., O'Dea, B., Di Nicola, K., Christie, R. 2021, 'Psychological Distress in Young People in Australia Fifth Biennial Youth Mental Health Report: 2012-2020.' Mission Australia: Sydney, NSW.
8. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021, 'COVID-19 and the impact on young people.'
9. Watts, C., Egger, S., Dessaix, A., Brooks, A., Jenkinson, E., Grogan, P., Freeman, B. 2022, 'Vaping product access and use among 14-17-year-olds in New South Wales: a cross-sectional study.' Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 46: 814-820.
10. NSW Health 2023, 'HealthStats NSW (2019-20 to 2020-21).'