



# Annual Membership Survey

## September 2022



## Introduction

The Annual Membership Survey is an important opportunity for Yfoundations to engage with our members and other stakeholders in the homelessness services sector. It gives sector workers the chance to evaluate and suggest improvements for our work advocating for children and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and the services that support them.

This year, our survey was distributed on 16 August through our newsletter and social media platforms. The survey closed on 31 August and yielded 67 responses.

To better understand the demographic reach of Yfoundations members and stakeholders, the first section of this report provides a profile of the survey respondents, including their district, age, role and the sector they work in. The second section explores sector concerns and priorities, where respondents report the issues they believe are most affecting children and young people experiencing homelessness in NSW. The third section explores how respondents perceive and value Yfoundations, providing valuable information on how we can improve our reach and impact.

## Profile of respondents

The sector is largely funded through various programs managed by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). When asked which of the 15 DCJ districts respondents worked in, we noted a shift in the source of responses (see Figure 1). Most respondents worked in the Sydney district (31.34%) followed by Mid North Coast (14.93%). While we received no responses from the Nepean Blue Mountains or Far West districts, we saw an increase in responses from the Mid North Coast district.

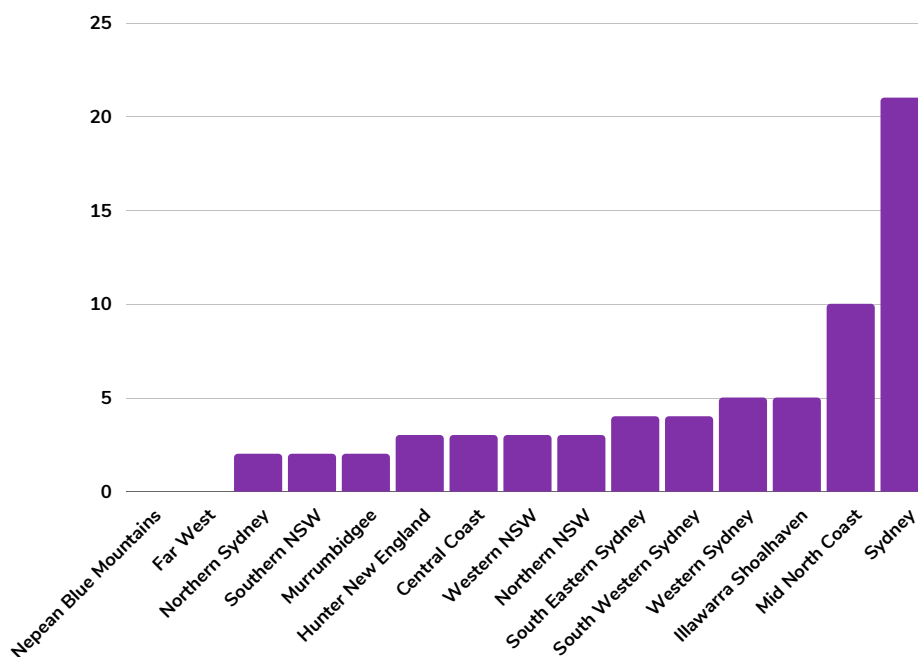


Figure 1: Total responses to the question: Which district do you work in?

The most common age bracket for respondents was 55–64 years (31.34%), followed by 45–54 (26.8%). We received only two responses from the 18–24 bracket, and two responses from the 65+ bracket. There were no under-18 survey respondents.

When asked for their role title, a large percentage of respondents were managers (29.85%), followed by youth/community workers (17.91%), Executive Managers (13.43%) and CEOs (11.94%). This year, we did not receive any responses from young people with lived experience of homelessness.

As shown in Figure 2, when asked ‘Which of the following best describes you or the sector you work in?’, 44 respondents (65.67%) worked in the youth homelessness sector. Five respondents (7.46%) worked for a youth service (that is not a homelessness service) and four respondents (5.97%) worked for a peak body organisation.

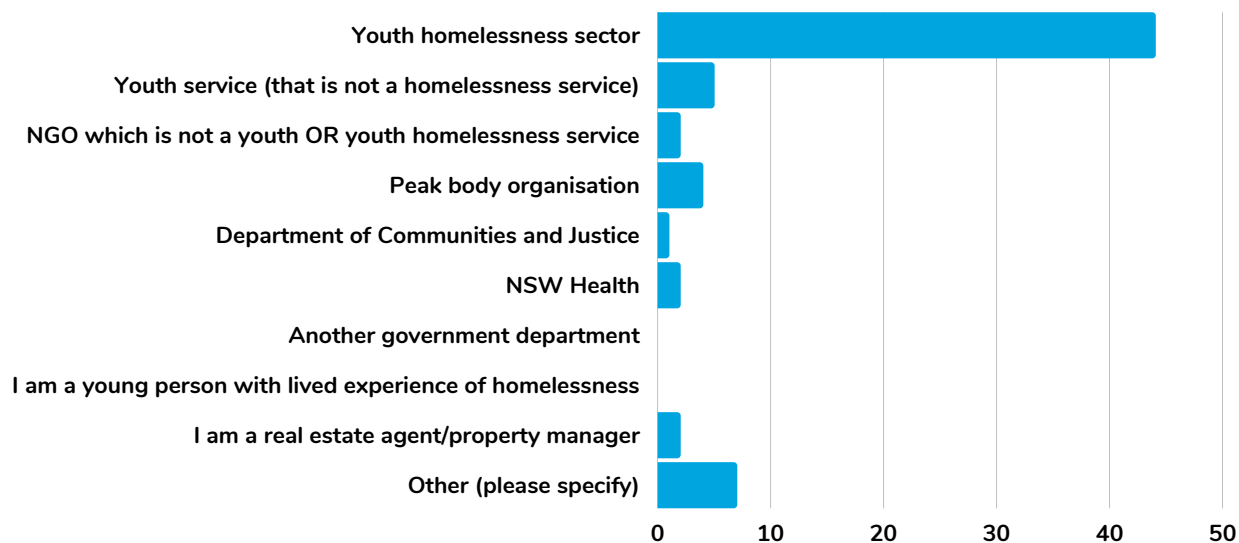


Figure 2: Total responses to the question: Which of the following best describes you or the sector you work in?

In terms of how long respondents have been working in the homelessness sector, responses were weighted on both ends of the spectrum. Almost half (47.76%) have been in the sector for 10 years or more, and almost a third (28.36%) have been in the sector for 0–3 years.

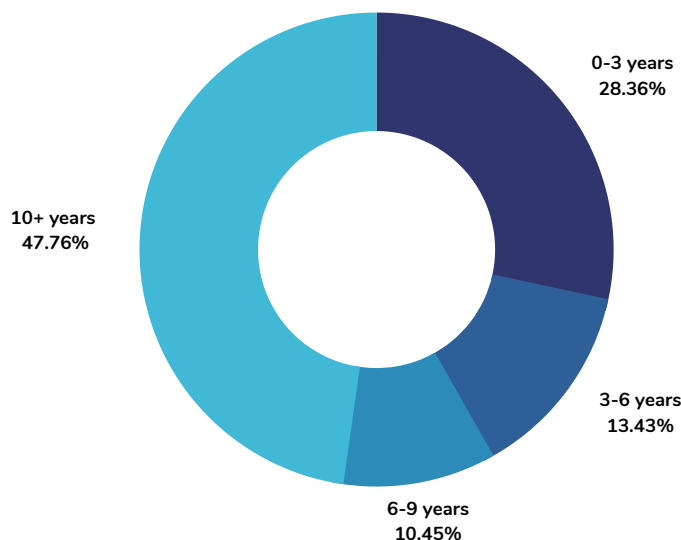


Figure 3: Total responses to the question: If you work in the homelessness sector, how many years have you worked in the sector?

## Sector concerns and priorities

As the NSW peak body advocating for young people experiencing homelessness and the services that support them, sector concerns and priorities play a key role in improving the work of Yfoundations. To ensure our work is aligned and up to date with the key issues faced by the sector, we asked a series of targeted questions about youth homelessness and the youth homelessness sector.

We first asked respondents to identify the biggest issues affecting the youth homelessness sector and what they would like to see Yfoundations campaign for in the future. As shown in Figure 4, the top five responses for this question were housing and accommodation related. 'Unaffordability in private rental market' received the highest responses (79.59%), followed by 'lack of medium-term accommodation' (69.39%), 'high demand for crisis accommodation' (67.35%), 'difficulty accessing social housing' (67.35%), and 'lack of transitional accommodation' (63.27%).

'Unaffordability in the private rental market' and 'lack of medium-term accommodation' were also the highest ranking concerns in the 2021 Annual Membership Survey, highlighting the ongoing need for a sharp and concerted focus on the impact of the housing affordability crisis in NSW and the lack of appropriate accommodation options for young people across NSW (medium-term, crisis, youth-specific social housing).

Non-accommodation related concerns included 'difficulty meeting high and/or complex needs of clients' (63.7%), 'inadequacy of income support' (48.98%), and 'lack of early intervention and prevention programs' (42.86%).

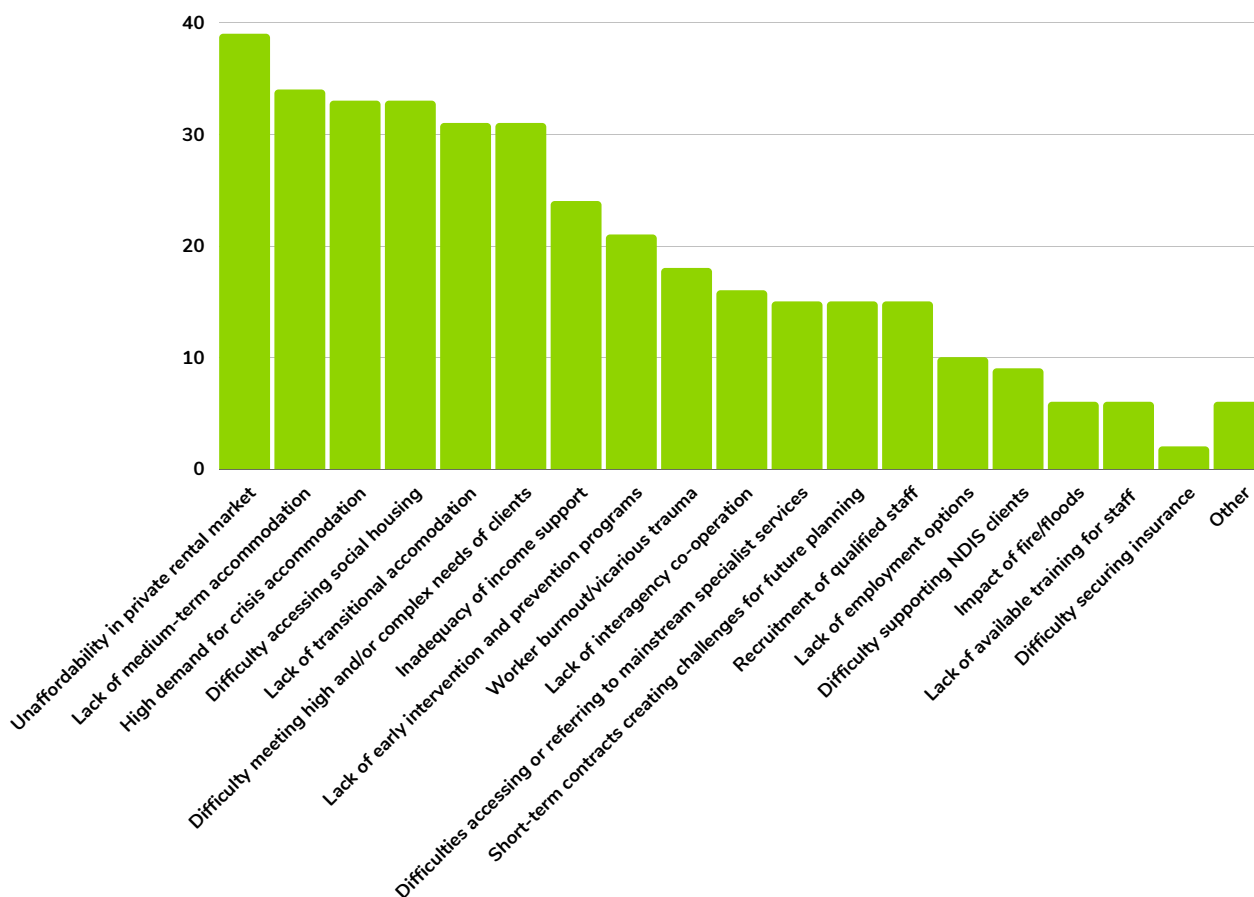


Figure 4: Total responses to the question: What do you think are the biggest issues affecting the youth homelessness sector that you would like to see Yfoundations campaign on in the future?

To further understand the most pressing issues for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, we asked respondents to identify the three most common types of issues their clients are encountering. As reflected in Figure 5, the highest rated most common issues were domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV – 77.55%), couch surfing (69.39%), and abuse and neglect (48.98%). This was followed by 'exiting youth justice' (26.53%), 'living in overcrowded dwellings' (22.45%), and 'exiting out-of-home care (OoHC)' (22.45%).



Figure 5: Total response to the question: What are the three most common types of issues your clients are encountering?

These findings reaffirm our commitment to bring focus to the insidious issue of domestic, family and sexual violence for unaccompanied children and young people, and ensure the sector is funded and resourced appropriately to provide age-appropriate, specialised responses. They also strengthen our call for any national or state homelessness strategy to commit to funding research into young people's pathways into and experiences of homelessness, particularly couch surfing and living in overcrowded dwellings, in the face of an urgent need for understanding in this space.

To gain a better understanding of our members and other stakeholders in the youth homelessness sector, we asked organisations where they obtained access to workforce and sector development. The Association of Children's Welfare agencies (ACWA)/Centre for Community Welfare Training (CCWT)' was selected by just over half of respondents (51.02%), followed by 'Industry Partnership' (22.45%) and 'Australia Housing Institute (AHI)' (20.41%). Six respondents chose 'Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV)' (12.24%) and five chose 'Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)' (10.20%). Of those who selected 'Other,' the MTS Training Calendar (an Industry Partnership initiative) was noted by three respondents.

When asked if the available workforce and sector development resources were relevant to their work, encouragingly the majority (89.79%) said they were relevant or very relevant. Only two respondents (4.08%) found the available workforce and sector development resources irrelevant.

To gain an understanding of what is needed in terms of sector resources, we asked survey respondents to identify what kind of workforce and sector resources they would like to see available in the future. In analysing the results, a large portion of responses highlighted the need for additional training, including:



Figure 6: Total responses to the question: What workforce and sector development resources would you like to see available in the future?

These results will inform Yfoundations’ advocacy and the design of workforce and sector development resources and initiatives, as well as targeted communications to our members in this space.

## Health and Wellness

Health and Wellness is one of the five foundations of Yfoundations, vital to the growth and development of children and young people. To improve our understanding and better inform our health programs, Sticky Stuff and Because You Care, we asked respondents to identify the key health issues affecting young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

**100%** of respondents identified mental health as the key health issue affecting homeless young people.

Consistent with last year’s results, mental health (100%) and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) use (83.67%) were the top two issues identified. This year, nutrition/diet was added as an option and was the third most chosen issue (42.86%). 34.69% of respondents identified ‘sexual health (including STI’s and contraception)’, and 32.65% chose dental care.

Following this question, we asked what kind of health resources would be useful for their organisation. Results were in line with the key health concerns expressed in the previous question. Figure 7 shows that 65.31% of respondents nominated mental health training, 57.14% chose AOD training, and 53.06% said they wanted specific guidance on the health needs of young people experiencing homelessness.

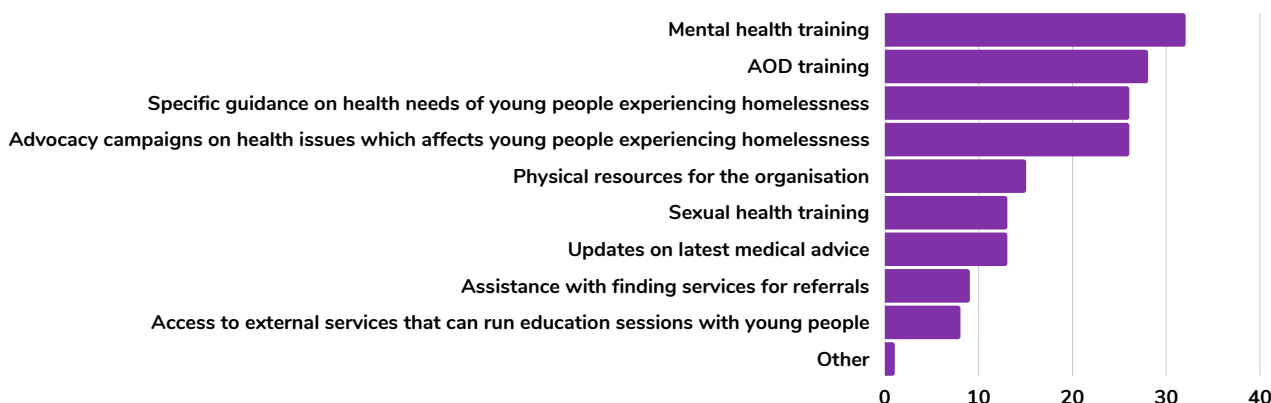


Figure 7: Total responses to the question: What kind of health resources would be useful for your organisation?

## Our Performance

The final section of this report focuses on our performance as a peak body, including levels of trust, satisfaction and engagement between us and relevant stakeholders. Responses to this part of the survey help us determine the effectiveness and reach of our sector consultations. While the majority of responses were positive or neutral, this series of questions provides us with critical insight into where we can improve.

When asked 'How satisfied are you with the amount that Yfoundations has engaged with your organisation in the past year', most respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (48.98%). 46.94% were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied', and only two respondents (4.08%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Yielding an overall neutral response highlights the need for increased engagement in the next financial year.

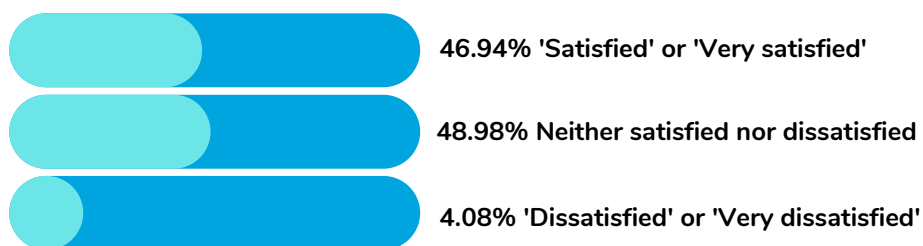
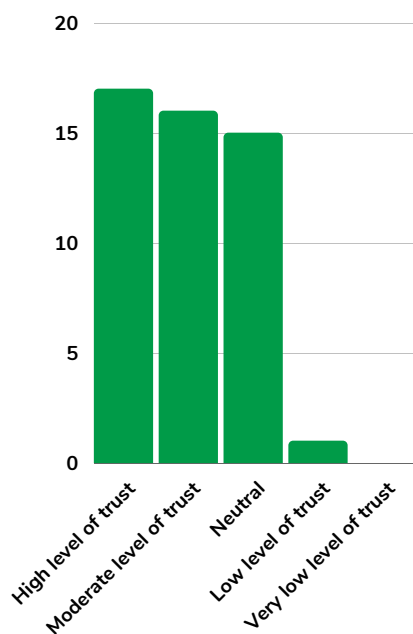


Figure 8: Total responses to the question: How satisfied are you with the amount that Yfoundations has engaged with your organisation in the past year?



Representing organisations in the sector is a key part of our work at Yfoundations, and making sure they trust us to do so is very important to us. Overall, as shown in [Figure 9](#), most people had a 'high level of trust' in Yfoundations' ability to represent their organisation and the sector (34.69%), 32.65% reported a 'moderate level of trust' and 30.61% were neutral. Only one respondent indicated a 'low level of trust'.

Figure 9: Total responses to the question: How much do you trust Yfoundations' ability to represent your organisation and the sector?

To understand the reach and effectiveness of our policy, advocacy and research initiatives, we asked survey participants to identify how often they felt consulted on relevant policy issues. Of those to whom this question was applicable (16.33% not applicable), 'always' and 'usually' were chosen by 35.73% of respondents. 'Sometimes' was chosen by 22.45%, and 24.49% chose 'Rarely' or 'Never'. This signifies the need for increased consultation with our stakeholders regarding relevant policy issues.

In terms of research, we asked respondents to identify how informed they felt about research developed by Yfoundations. [Figure 10](#) shows that over half of respondents felt 'Informed' (53.06%), with 10.20% feeling 'very informed', 22.45% neutral, 12.24% 'uninformed' and one respondent 'Very uninformed'. While this is an overall positive response, it highlights a need to better inform our members and stakeholders on future research developed by Yfoundations.

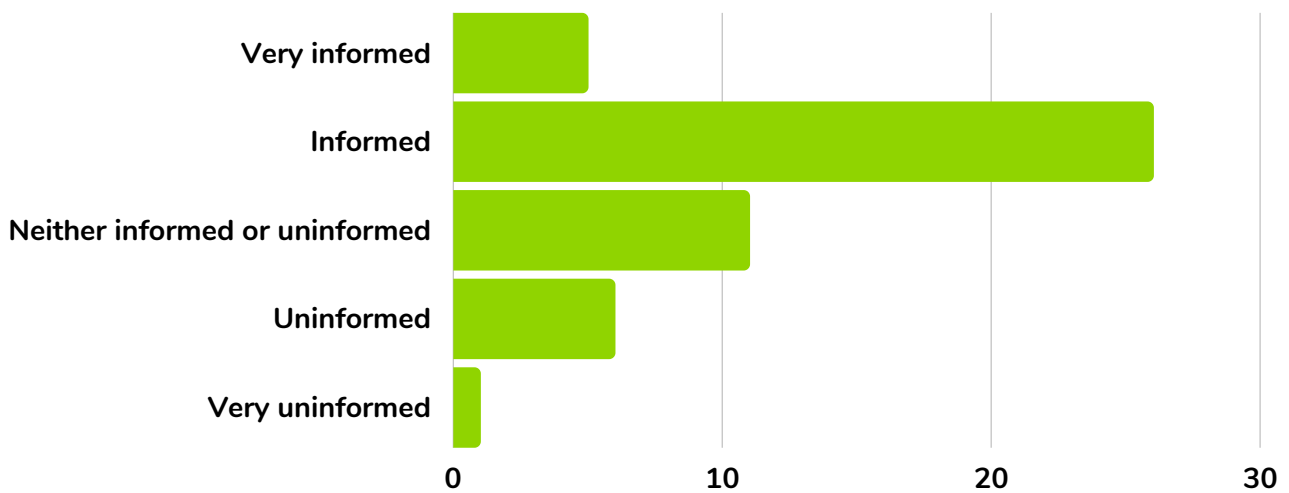


Figure 10: Total responses to the question: How informed do you feel about research developed by our organisation?

## Value of our work

In order to capture the value of our work, we posed multiple questions to gauge how members and other respondents perceived the usefulness of our work. Firstly, to gain a basic understanding of stakeholders' engagement with Yfoundations' work, we asked if they had utilised our resources and information in the past year. 77.5% of respondents answered yes to this question.

As shown in Figure 11, most respondents chose either 'yes, once or twice' (26.53%), 'yes, sometimes' (40.82%), or 'yes, regularly' (10.5%). 14.29% said they 'didn't at all', and 8.16% 'didn't know'. Encouragingly, this feedback indicates that our resources and information have been useful to our members and other stakeholders.

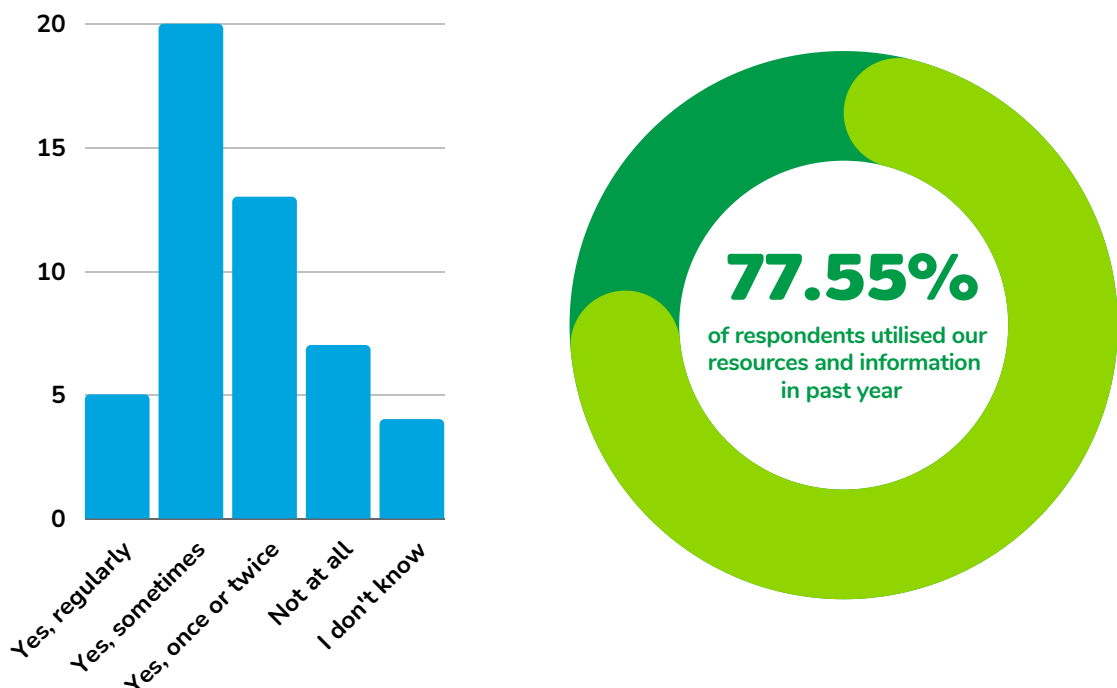


Figure 11: Total responses to the question: Have you utilised our organisation's resources and information in the past year?



To explore this further, we asked participants to disclose the most useful information, resource or service Yfoundations provided them in the past year. Common responses included general meetings, newsletters, statistics, DCJ updates, Core and Cluster information, and Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD) information. In terms of resources, respondents identified our policy papers and research as useful, including our [Youth Justice report](#), [pre-budget submission](#), [NHHA review](#) and [position papers](#). In terms of service delivery, [Sticky Stuff](#) health training and webinars were identified as a particularly useful resource.

To better understand the reach of our work, we asked respondents to identify which Yfoundations' activities they were aware of. Reassuringly, each of our activities were known to our respondents. Youth Homelessness Matters Day was our most known activity with 83.67% of respondents being aware of it. 79.59% knew about Sticky Stuff, and 67.35% were aware of our general meetings. Our least known activity was the Youth Community of Practice (YCoP), with only 36.73% respondents being aware of it.

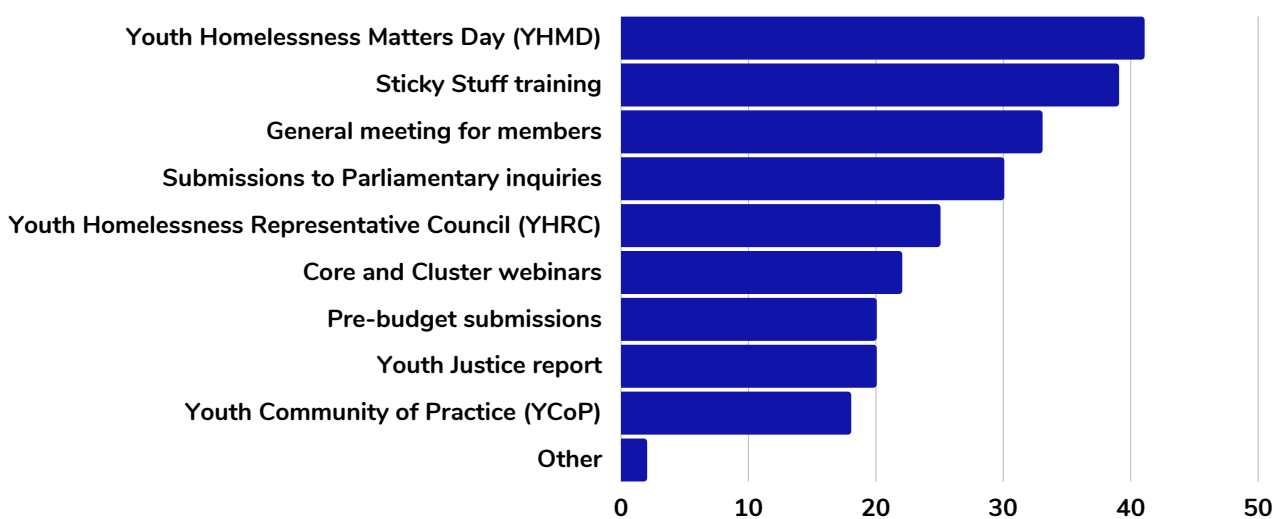


Figure 12: Total responses to the question: Which of the following Yfoundations activities are you aware of (click all that apply)?

As shown in Figure 13, when asked to what extent respondents felt that Yfoundations provides their organisation with useful information for their work, just over half of respondents were neutral (51.02%), 40.81% of respondents chose either 'large extent' or 'very large extent', and only 8.16% chose 'little extent' or 'very little extent'. Although there were only four respondents who responded negatively, a majority choosing 'neutral' signifies a need for us to enhance our engagement and relevant communications with our members to ensure the work we produce is useful and relevant.

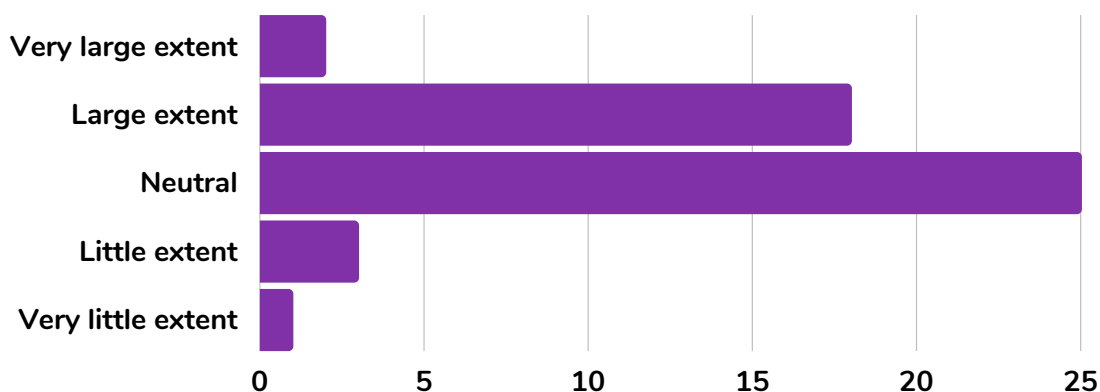


Figure 13: Total responses to the question: To what extent do you think that Yfoundations provides your organisation with useful information for your work?

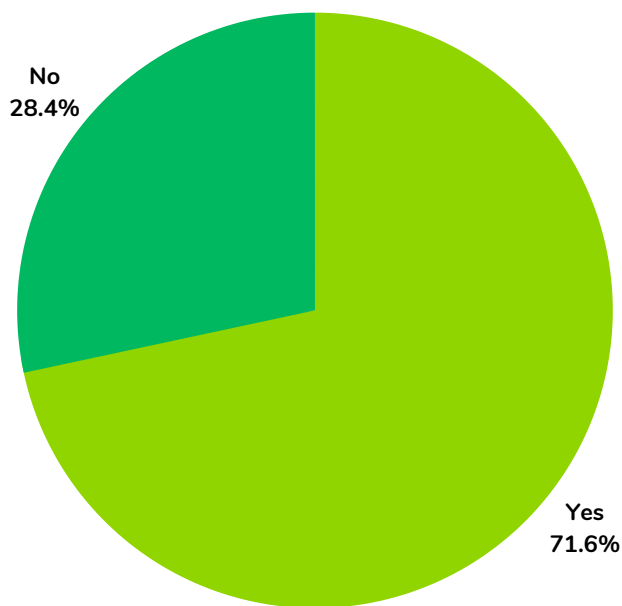
One new initiative that Yfoundations implemented to increase our engagement is the distribution of weekly media round-ups to inform our members of updates in politics, policy and research relevant to their work with children and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. We will build on this to further increase engagement levels over the coming financial year.

Lastly, to understand how we can improve our work to meet the needs of our members and other stakeholders, we asked survey respondents to identify how Yfoundations could support them better. The top two responses were 'update best-practice guidelines' (48.98%) and 'advocate more on behalf of the sector' (48.98%). Other popular responses included 'provide me with links to new research articles and reports' (44.90%), 'hold webinars on current sector issues' (44.90%) and 'cross sector collaboration' (40.82%).

These findings are critical in informing our strategic priorities, resourcing and workplan over the next 12 months.

## Member promotion

Membership of Yfoundations is available for specialist homelessness services (SHS), corporations, community organisations and individuals, including children and young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. As shown in [Figure 14](#), of the 67 responses, 48 respondents identified themselves as members of Yfoundations (71.64%) and 19 were not (28.36%).



For those who weren't a member (19), when asked 'why do you think your organisation is not a member?', four didn't know that Yfoundations had members, and four worked for an organisation that is not eligible for membership. Three respondents were 'already members of other peak bodies' and one felt 'they can access Yfoundations resources anyway without needing to sign up'. Of those who chose 'other', one respondent was based in Queensland and one believed the membership was not worthwhile for their organisation. These responses suggest we need to increase awareness of our membership, promote the benefits of being a Yfoundations member, and look at ways to ensure our membership offering is exclusive and engaging.

Figure 14: Total response to the question: [Is your organisation a member of Yfoundations?](#)

To better our communication with members and other relevant stakeholders, we asked about the best way for us to contact them to seek their views. 81.63% indicated email, 32.65% surveys, 18.37% direct phone call, and 14.29% preferred webinars. This information will be useful for future contact with our members, particularly with our new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system going live.

## Conclusion

The Annual Membership Survey is an invaluable opportunity to listen to the needs of the sector we represent. The feedback provides us with helpful information moving forward and allows us to track progress over time. The findings from this Annual Survey were generally optimistic but also provide a constructive feedback platform to inform our work over the next financial year.

We saw a similar profile of respondents to last year's survey, spread across a wide range of areas within NSW. It would be useful to further expand the geographical breadth of next year's survey to ensure results are representative of a broader range of sector workers. This year, we received no response from young people with lived experience of homelessness, which is disappointing given capturing the voices of young people is extremely important for our work. Next year, we will put additional effort into targeting this cohort.

The questions aimed at sector concerns and priorities demonstrated similar results to last year, with mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and lack of accommodation (rental, medium-term, crisis, transitional) drawing the most concern from our respondents across both years. This feedback is vital for our policy, research and health work moving forward.

Regarding performance, we saw high levels of trust from our members and other stakeholders. As representing organisations in the sector is a central component of our work, this result is encouraging. In saying that, it's clear there is a need for increased engagement between Yfoundations and relevant stakeholders to ensure the work we produce is relevant and reflective of their needs. That most of our respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' about the amount of engagement Yfoundations has had with them in the past year, and there was a predominantly neutral response regarding the usefulness of the information provided by us, highlights a need for increased consultation, communication and engagement with sector workers. That being said, it is encouraging to see that our members are aware of all our campaigns, events and/or services.

We would like to thank all of those who took part in the survey for their valuable feedback. The insights gained from this survey will guide our work for the coming year so we can best advocate for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in NSW, and the services that support them.