

Yfoundations Annual Survey
November 2023

Introduction

Each year, Yfoundations reaches out to our members and supporters to gather feedback on our work as the peak body for child and youth homelessness in NSW throughout the previous financial year. We use this feedback to gain insight into what's working and what needs improving so that we can constantly grow and refine our goals as a team and organisation.

This survey is open to anyone who works in the youth or homelessness sector, anyone with a lived experience of child and youth homelessness, and anyone who is passionate about ending child and youth homelessness. This year almost 70% of those who completed the survey were members of Yfoundations. The survey results have given us valuable insight into the profile/demographics of the respondents, sector concerns and priorities, health and wellness concerns, our performance as an organisation, and the value of our work to the sector and stakeholders.

The survey was distributed on 23 October 2023 and promoted through emails, our newsletter and across our social media platforms. The survey closed on 14 November and yielded 43 completed responses and 16 partially completed responses. This report will only cover the findings of those who completed the whole survey.

Profile of respondents

The first section of our survey aimed to build a profile of the survey respondents to better understand certain background characteristics of our members and supporters, including locations, ages, position titles and roles.

As the youth homelessness sector is largely funded through the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), we asked which of the 15 DCJ districts survey respondents worked in. As seen in [Figure 1](#), we received at least one response from every district, except for the Central Coast and the Far West. The Sydney District comprised 30.2% of respondents, 20.9% were from the South Eastern Sydney District, and 9.3% from the Hunter New England.

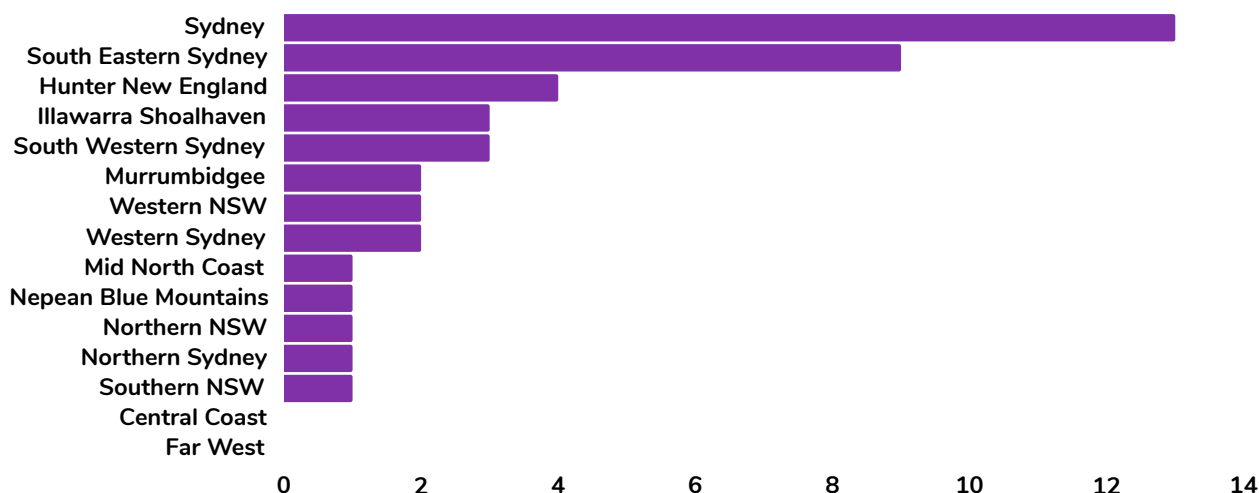


Figure 1: Total responses to the question: Which district do you work in?

A majority of respondents were aged between 55–64 years (23.3%), with an even spread of 22% of respondents each for the age groups 25–34 years, 34–44 years and 45–54 years. There were no under 18s.

As shown in [Figure 2](#), When asked 'Which of the following best describes you or the sector you work in?' a large majority of survey respondents worked in the youth homelessness sector (60.5%), followed by 11.6% who worked for a youth service, and 11.6% working in the homelessness sector.

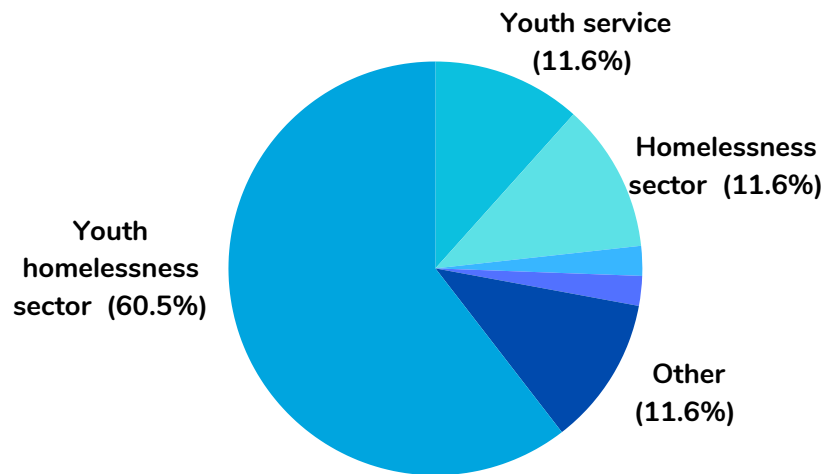


Figure 2: Total responses to the question: Which of the following best describes you or the sector you work in?

A majority of respondents were youth or community workers (25.6%), 18.6% were CEOs, and 16.2% managers. Unlike last year's survey, this year we received two responses from young people with lived experience. Those who identified as 'other' comprised 16.3% of respondents and included independent government agencies, the education sector, and one respondent who said they 'work anywhere people might change for the better!'

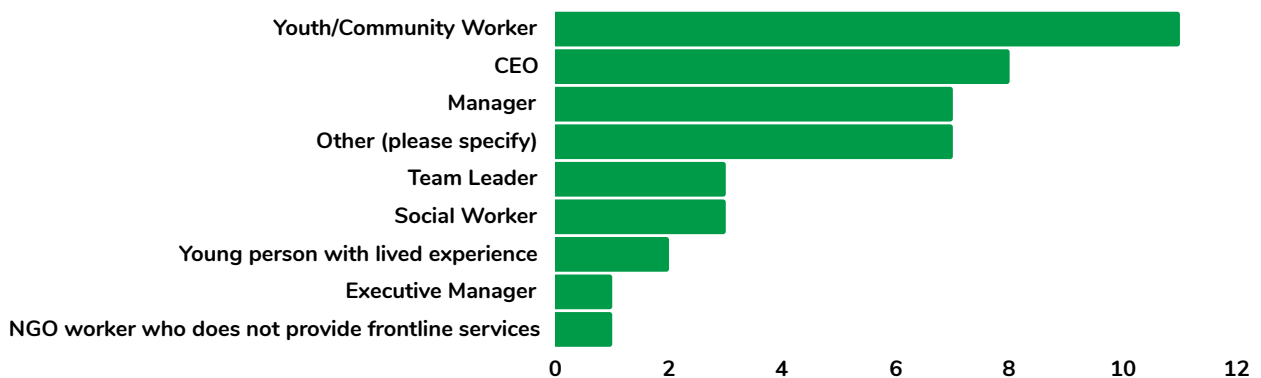


Figure 3: Total responses to the question: What is your position title?

Most of our responses were from people who had worked in the sector for 10 or more years (44.2%), a quarter of respondents had worked in the sector for 0–3 years, and 21% for 3–6 years.

Sector Concerns

Being the NSW peak body advocating for children and young people experiencing homelessness, and representing the services that support them, understanding the key concerns and priorities of the sector is a crucial part of our work. To ensure our efforts are aligned with the key issues faced by the sector, the next section of our survey asked a series of targeted questions on child and youth homelessness.

We asked our members and supporters what they think are the biggest issues affecting the youth homelessness sector and which of these they would like to see Yfoundations campaign on in the future. As shown in Figure 4, the top four concerns were all accommodation related, consistent with last year's results, with the number one issue for 65.1% of respondents being 'Unaffordability in the private rental market', followed by 'lack of medium-term accommodation' (58.1%) and the 'high demand for crisis accommodation' (44.25%).

The fact that these results are in line with previous annual surveys demonstrates significant ongoing concerns arising from the failure of government to respond to and invest in the range of specialised youth supported housing models needed to meet the needs of young people.

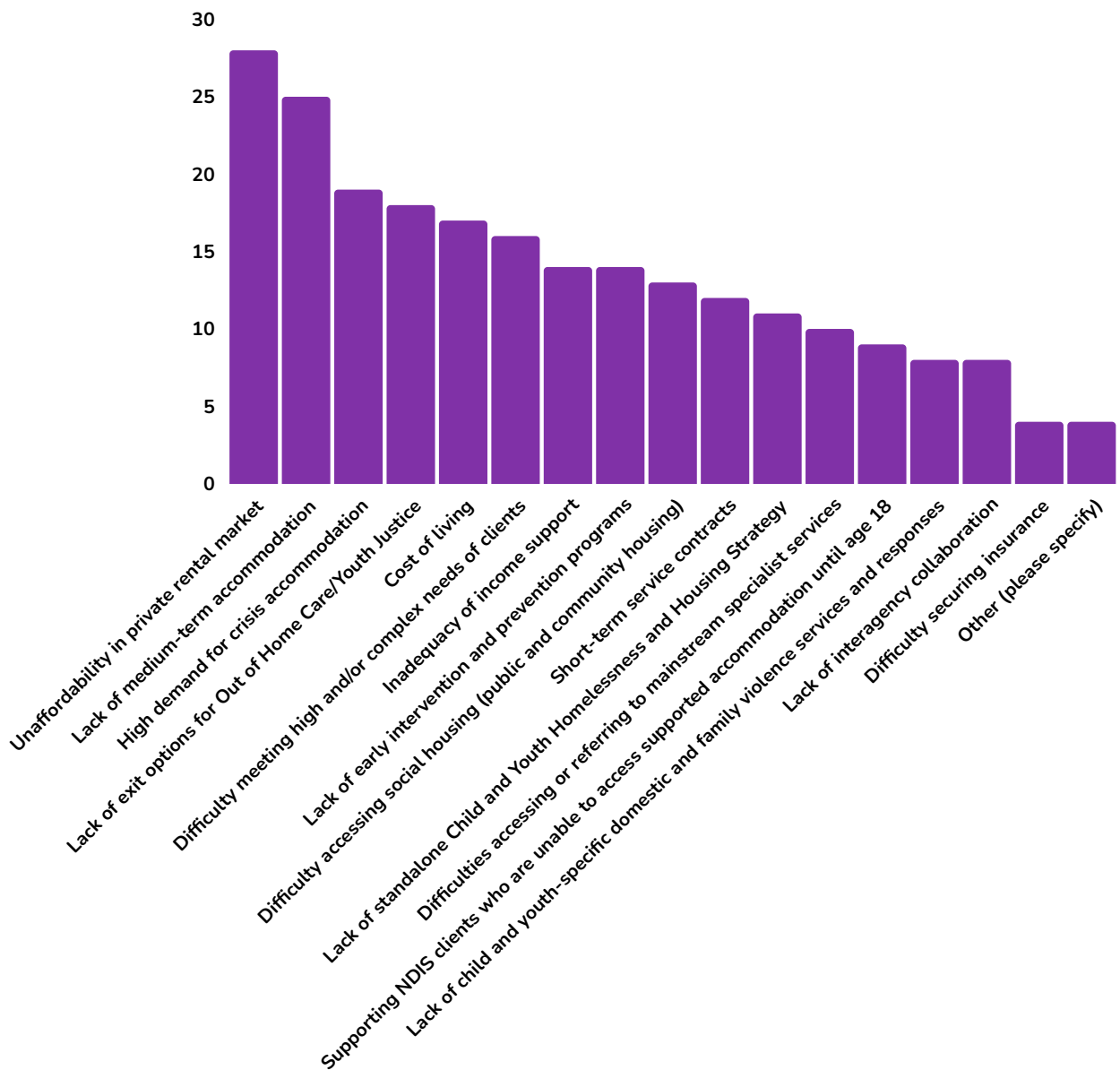


Figure 4: Total responses to the question: What do you think are the biggest issues affecting the youth homelessness sector that you would like to see Yfoundations campaign on in the future? (Pick up to three).

Other highly-scoring answers include ‘lack of exit options for Out-of-Home Care/Youth Justice’ (41.9%), ‘cost of living’ (39.5%), and ‘difficulty meeting high and/or complex needs of clients’ (37.2%). The range of these answers reaffirms our commitment to continue advocating for a standalone child and youth homelessness and housing plan that would address the many service system and policy gaps contributing to the increasing number of children and young people experiencing homelessness.

Further exploring the biggest issues children and young people are facing, we asked respondents to identify the three most common types of issues their clients are experiencing. As you can see in [Figure 5](#), the highest response was mental health (67.4%). This issue was not among the top three responses to last year’s survey, which is an incredibly insightful development. Similar to previous years though, other major issues identified included couch surfing (60.5%) and domestic, family and sexual violence (53.5%). These responses are not only in line with last year’s survey but have been reiterated in research, the media, and in our regular consultations with our members.

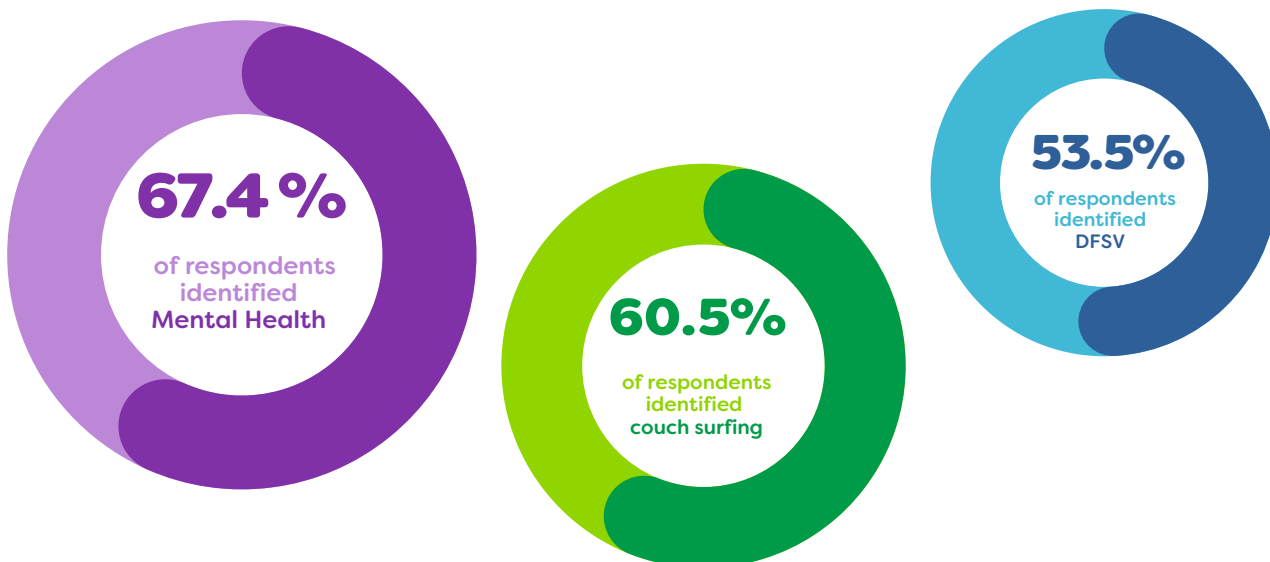


Figure 5: Total responses to the question: What are the most common types of issues your clients are experiencing?

Yfoundations not only advocates for children and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness but the services that support them as well. The development of an effective workforce with quality service provision relies on an array of factors, including workforce development. To get an idea of where survey respondents were accessing workforce and sector development we asked them where their organisation or workplace accessed workforce and sector development, if applicable (23.3% not applicable). As shown in [Figure 6](#), 44.2% selected the Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies (ACWA) / Centre for Community Welfare Training (CCWT), followed by the Homelessness NSW Sector Hub (41.9%), formerly known as the Industry Partnership. For those who chose ‘other’ (20.8%), DCJ SHS training was frequently cited.

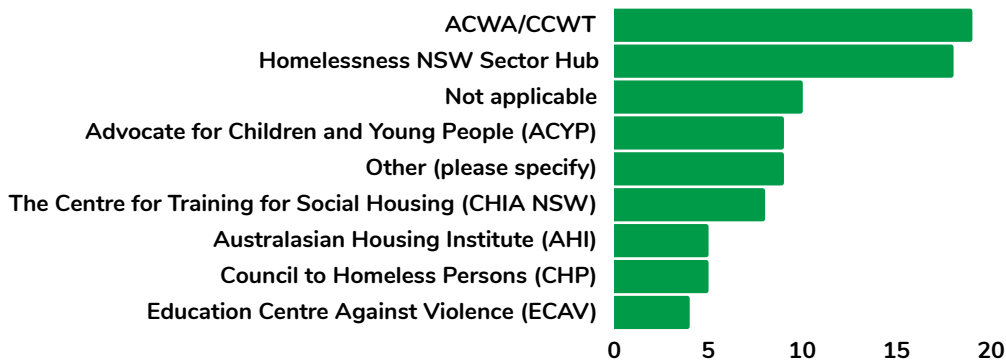


Figure 6: Total responses to the question: Where does your organisation access workforce and sector development?

When asked what workforce and sector development resources respondents would like to see available in the future, responses included:

- training on trauma-informed practice
- mental health and AOD-specific training
- policy influence and government advocacy for funding
- skills training
- service partnership
- early intervention training.

These responses are important insights for the direction of our work and advocacy to better support services.

Health and Wellness

Yfoundations' work is based on five foundations that support the growth and development of children and young people, and are essential to ending youth homelessness, one of them being health and wellness. We strongly believe it is vital that all young people are physically, socially and emotionally well. Yfoundations runs and promotes two health programs, Sticky Stuff and Because You Care.

To better inform these programs and guide any other work and advocacy related to health and wellness, we asked our respondents to identify their top three key health issues affecting children and young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

97.7% of respondents identified mental health as the key health issue affecting homeless young people.

72.1% of respondents identified Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) as the key health issue affecting homeless young people.

34.9% of respondents identified co-morbidity as the key health issue affecting homeless young people.

Following this question, we asked respondents to identify the kind of health resources that would be useful to them or their organisation. In line with last year's result, 'mental health training' was the most common response (65.12%), followed by 'advocacy campaigns on health issues that affect young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness' (55.8%), and AOD training (51.2%).

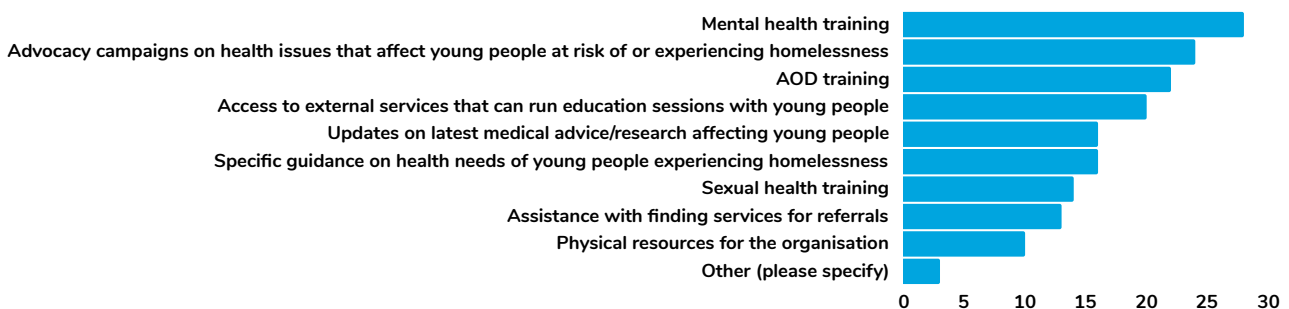


Figure 7: Total responses to the question: What kind of health resources would be useful for your organisation?

Our performance

To better understand the value and reach of our work, and the satisfaction with it, this section of the report details how members and other respondents felt about our work as a peak body. Responses to the following questions also help us determine our engagement with our members and supporters, including the effectiveness and reach of our communications.

To see what words come to mind when survey respondents think of 'Yfoundations', we asked them to identify three words each that they associate with us:



To understand the reach of our work, we asked respondents to identify the Yfoundations activities and/or services they were aware of.

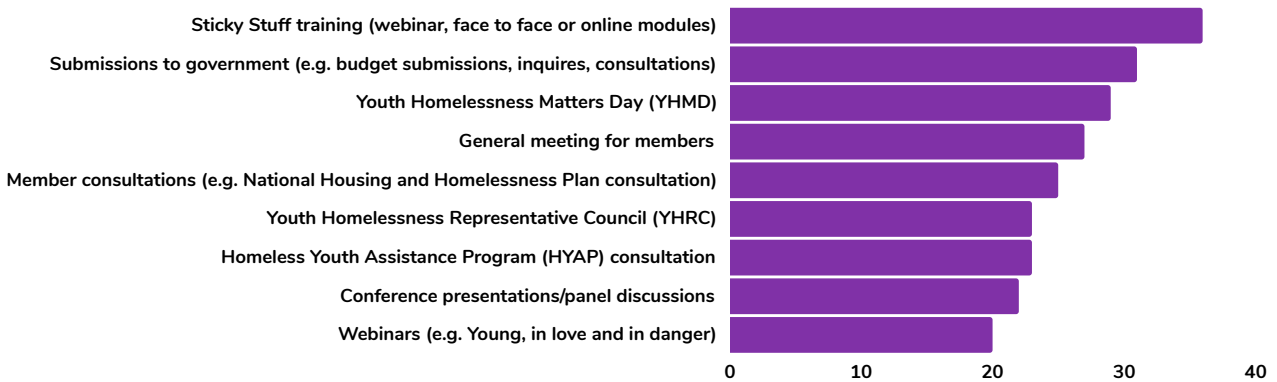


Figure 8: Total responses to the question: Which of the following Yfoundations activities/services are you aware of? Please check all that apply.

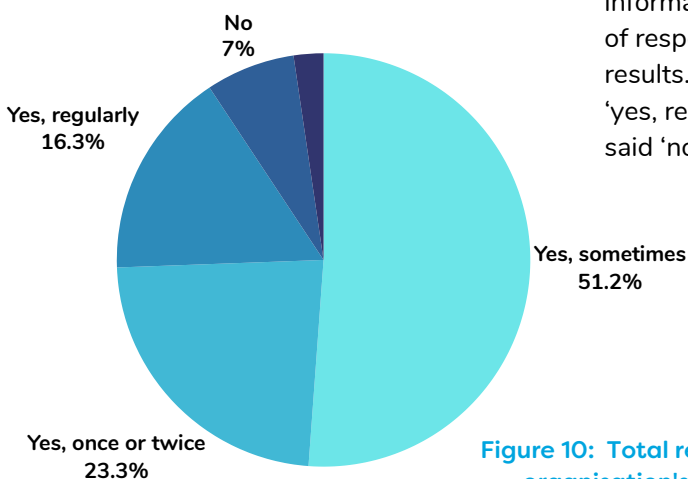
Encouragingly, as seen in Figure 8 every option was known by survey respondents, with Sticky Stuff training (82.7%), Yfoundations’ submissions to government (72.1%), and Youth Homelessness Matters Day (67.4%) being the most known among respondents. These responses are particularly gratifying given that Sticky Stuff, government submissions and YHMD were three of our main focuses as an organisation this year.

To gauge satisfaction with our engagement with members, supporters and stakeholders, we asked, ‘How satisfied are you with the engagement and consultation Yfoundations has conducted with your organisation in the last year?’ 67.4% of respondents were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ and 32.6% were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’. No respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.



Figure 9: Total responses to the question: : How satisfied are you with the engagement and consultation Yfoundations has conducted with your organisation in the last year?

We are very pleased with these responses as consulting with our members has been an important component of and process for our work this year. Compared to last year's results, satisfaction with our engagement has increased by 20.5%.



When asked if respondents utilised our resources and information in the past year, results signified that 90.7% of respondents had. This is up 13.1% from 2022 results. This year, 67.4% responded ‘yes, sometimes’ and ‘yes, regularly’, 23.26% said ‘yes, once or twice’, 6.9% said ‘no’ and 2.3% were ‘not sure’.

Figure 10: Total responses to the question: : Have you utilised our organisation's resources and information in the past year?

When respondents were asked to what extent Yfoundations provides their organisations with useful information for their work, 53.5% responded to a 'large extent', 9.3% said 'very large extent' and 34.9% were neutral,. Only one respondent chose 'little extent'. While a majority of respondents felt positive about our ability to provide their organisation with useful information for their work, the neutral response signifies this should be a focus area for the coming financial year.

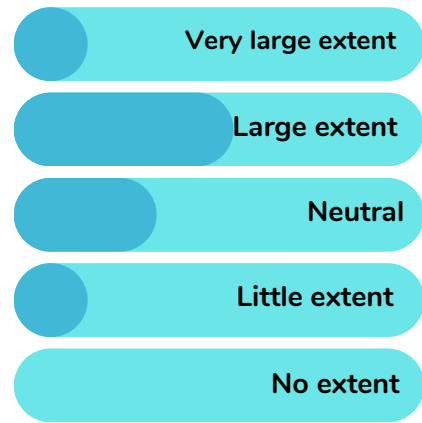


Figure 11: Total responses to the question: : To what extent do you think that Yfoundations provides your organisation with useful information for your work?

Concluding this section, to better understand how Yfoundations can align our focus and goals with the needs of the sector we asked survey respondents, 'How can Yfoundations support you better?' There was an array of responses to this question, the most common being:

- 1** To advocate more on behalf of the sector (53.5%)
- 2** Providing links to new research articles and reports (51.2%)
- 3** Cross-sector collaboration (51.2%)
- 4** Providing resources to advocate for funding their service (48.8%).

These responses, as always, provide valuable insight into where we can better our work, increase our reach and amplify our impact.

Membership

Almost 70% of those who completed the survey are members of Yfoundations, 16.3% were not and 13.9% didn't know if they were.

For those who are not members, when asked why, three respondents said their organisation was not eligible to be a member, one did not know Yfoundations had members, and one was not aware of the benefits of being a member. Another respondent said they were previously a member but can no longer afford to be, and one said they are a small organisation that cannot devote resources to being a member.

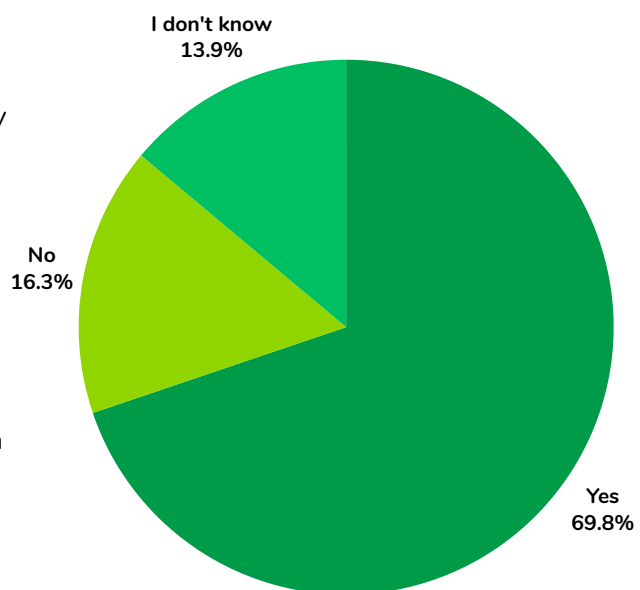


Figure 12: Total responses to the question: : Is your organisation a member of Yfoundations?

Conclusion

As with every annual survey, this year's survey results are extremely valuable and insightful. The learnings from these results regarding sector concerns and priorities, key health concerns for children and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, our performance as a peak body, and our value as an organisation, help Yfoundations reflect on our progress and refine our priorities for the coming year. We are incredibly encouraged to see such positive results this year regarding our work as an organisation and are highlighting the areas that need improvement going forward.

When comparing our survey responses to previous years, we see a similar profile of respondents. The fact that a majority of our respondents are in the Sydney District reflects the number of services in metropolitan areas but it also highlights the need to expand our reach beyond metropolitan NSW. We can do this through increased consultation and engagement with services, organisations and young people in regional and rural areas. While we received two responses from young people with lived experience of homelessness, we have decided it would be extremely beneficial for Yfoundations to undertake another survey specifically for this cohort.

Sector concerns remained consistent with previous years' surveys and what we hear from our member consultations, Youth Homelessness Representative Council, research, media and the advocacy work of other organisations. We will continue to incorporate these concerns into our policy, research, and health work.

We received very positive feedback regarding our work as the peak body for children and young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness, and the services that support them. Our activities and initiatives were well known, the levels of trust in us to represent the sector were high, and the degree of satisfaction regarding our work was overwhelmingly positive. From these results, Yfoundations can build on the positives and highlight key focus areas for the coming financial years, including increasing consultations with members and supporters.

Thank you so much to all of you who took the time to complete this survey. We cannot overemphasise how crucial your feedback is to our work moving forward. Yfoundations is always striving to do our best to support this country's children and young people, and all services that support them. We will continue to hold ourselves accountable as we do this.

The annual survey is always a great opportunity to get your feedback. If you didn't have a chance to complete the survey or would like to provide additional feedback on our work, voice your concerns for the sector, or find out more, we would love to hear from you. Please do not hesitate to contact the Yfoundations policy team at policy@yfoundations.org.au.