Close to home

Young people and the impact of alcohol and drug use by family and peers

This report looks at young people whose lives have been affected by alcohol and drugs. It focuses on young people who agreed that alcohol and/or drugs are a problem for my family/peers, compared with those who neither/disagree.

Personal concerns

Young people who agreed that alcohol and/or drugs are a problem for my family/peers were much more concerned about:

- **Mental health**: 43% compared with 27%
- **Family conflict**: 28% compared with 14%
- **Coping with stress**: 53% compared with 40%

Barriers to work

A higher proportion of young people who agreed that alcohol and/or drugs are a problem for my family/peers perceived barriers to finding work (45% compared with 36%). The biggest differences were for:

- **Lack of jobs**: 16% compared with 11%
- **Mental health**: 12% compared with 6%
- **Transport**: 15% compared with 10%

Sources of support

Lower proportions of young people who agreed that alcohol and/or drugs are a problem for my family/peers:

- **Had someone to turn to in a crisis**: 87% compared with 92%
- **Would go for help to parents or guardians**: 68% compared with 79%
- **Rated their family’s ability to get along as excellent**: 20% (compared with 32% neither/disagree) or very good (28% compared with 34%)
Almost double the proportion of young people who agreed that alcohol and/or drugs are a problem for my family/peers reported feeling very sad/sad with life as a whole

16%

8%

“Mental health related issues and alcoholic family members. I think more funding needs to go into these services. We need to become open about the issue.”
F, 15, NSW

“Feeling isolated because my friends are really into drugs.”
M, 18, SA

“People that are close to me have been dealing and doing drugs and smoking.”
F, 16, VIC

“Build more rehabilitation centres. Make info more available. Deal with conditions like depression and mental health to prevent drug use.”
M, 16, QLD

We recommend that government and organisations should:

• Provide mental health supports for young people who are experiencing heightened stresses or other challenges due to problematic alcohol and drug use within their close networks.

• Invest in alcohol and drug education, prevention and early intervention services in local communities.

• Provide access to alcohol and drug treatment services for young people, their families and peers that are age and culturally appropriate and available in local communities.

• Fund services that support all family members to maintain cohesion where alcohol and drugs are causing issues within families.

• Make available tailored supports to young people who face barriers to finding work or remaining engaged in education, including complex challenges such as problematic alcohol and drug use within their family or peer networks.

• Make efforts to shift community attitudes on alcohol and drug use.

• Design and implement services responses in collaboration with young people.

If you are a young person and need someone to talk with, you can contact Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 (24/7) kidshelpline.com.au
To download the report: missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey