

# COVID-19 Recovery

## Ideas and Solutions from Young People

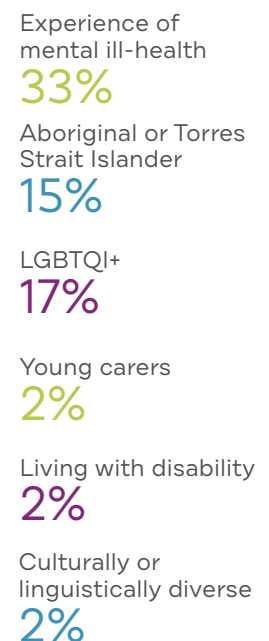
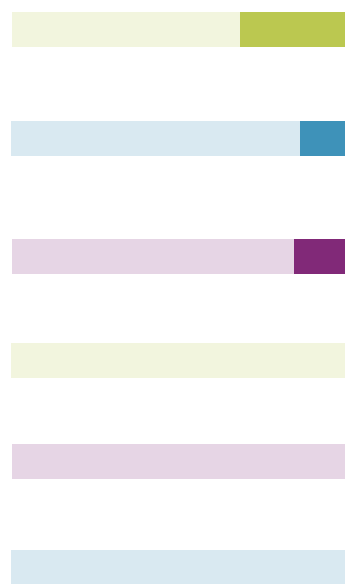
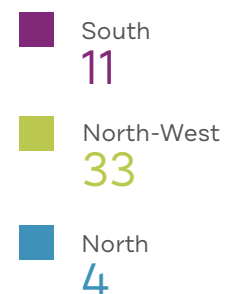
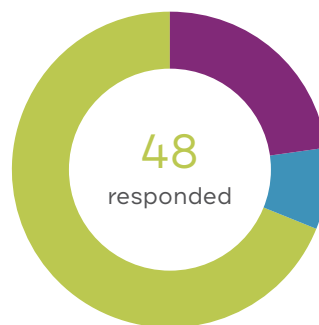
The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) invited young Tasmanians aged 12–25 years to share their experience of COVID-19 as well as their ideas and solutions for social and economic recovery in Tasmania. The survey was open from 18 June to 6 July 2020.

### Key findings

- Young people are aware that some young Tasmanians would need more support than others to recover from COVID-19. Local, holistic and tailored youth support services were identified as a key solution to address individual needs.
- Young people are concerned that many of their peers are experiencing financial hardship as a result of job losses and underemployment and want to see ongoing financial support for those impacted by the pandemic. Youth underemployment is of significant concern.
- Young people are worried about the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on their education and training and want to see additional support options available to help young people ‘catch up’ with their studies. Support from a counsellor or teacher, student-led mentoring and online support groups were identified as solutions.
- Young people want to see targeted youth support services to find employment post COVID-19 as there is limited awareness of employment pathways and job opportunities. Current employment programs are not meeting individual needs.
- Mental health is a significant concern. Young people recognised that COVID-19 has impacted all aspects of a young person’s life and that mental health should not be addressed in isolation. Young people want tailored youth support services that work with young people holistically to address their needs.
- Government messaging relating to COVID-19 education, training and employment initiatives is not reaching young people. Several employment and training initiatives identified by young people had already been announced by government prior to this survey.
- Young people are highly aware that their generation will be hardest hit by the economic response to COVID-19. This has resulted in exacerbated feelings of anxiety, worry and uncertainty. Young people want to see their needs considered and met during the pandemic response to provide hope for their future.

### Who responded?

We received 48 responses from young Tasmanians aged 12–25 years, statewide. We heard from young people with diverse backgrounds and experiences, including those directly impacted by the economic and social impacts of COVID-19. 68.8% of responses were from young people aged 18–25 years.



*“This whole experience is new. It has forced young people to put their lives on pause. They have had to isolate themselves from friends, family, education and employment. It will never be the same. Young people have been hit the hardest and it will continue.” Female, 24*

# Positive experience

Has any part of the COVID-19 experience had a positive impact on your training, employment, or mental health?



## What would you like to see continue?

### 1 Taking time to slow down

Many young people reported that COVID-19 restrictions have given them an opportunity to rest, relax and take time out for themselves, as well as focusing more on their studies or hobbies.

*"I've found myself looking at the small things and connecting with people I sometimes forget in the busy world. I think Covid-19 has helped me remember I have a life and I'm not just moving through the stages of growing up." Female, 15*

### 2 Strengthening social connections

Spending quality time with family, friends and people in their community has been a positive experience for many young people.

*"I have learnt SO much during this time. I am more creative in my approach, adaptable and understanding. I think lots of organisations are thinking outside of the box and it is fantastic!!"*  
Female, 22

### 3 Being adaptable

Young people have had to look for creative, alternative solutions to meet their needs, such as socialising, studying and working. Some young people have gained new skills and knowledge in areas that they did not previously hold.

### 4 Health awareness

Some young people reported that they now are more aware of their own and other people's responsibilities to maintain good hygiene practices to keep vulnerable community members safe.

# Employment

## Has COVID-19 had an impact on your employment?

### 53% No

Young people who were studying and not working, who remained employed or were already unemployed reported that COVID-19 had not impacted on employment.

### 47% Yes

Young people that had lost casual work, had their hours reduced or were reliant on JobKeeper to remain employed reported an impact on their employment. Youth underemployment was identified as a key concern.

## What supports, programs, services or initiatives do you think will help you or other young people to find and/or keep employment?

### 1 Youth employment support

Many young people identified the need for targeted youth support to find employment post COVID-19. Young people reported limited awareness of employment pathways or opportunities available to them and stated that employment programs are not meeting their individual needs. Young people want to see local, tailored employment and pathway planning support that will help them gain ongoing and meaningful employment. Reliable and appropriate transport options was also identified as important to reduce employment barriers.

*“There needs to be more employment opportunities for young people as our youth unemployment rate in Tasmania is far too high and we need to fix it.” Male, 14*

*“A service that exists solely for the purpose of giving advice to someone rather than just mates advice would be useful also. If something like that already exists, the fact that I haven’t heard of it means that it is not serving its purpose very well.” Male, 15*

### 2 Training support

Young people are concerned that they will need to retrain or upskill to gain employment in industries that are hiring. Young people reported that the cost of tertiary education would be a deterrent for many to upskill into a new industry temporarily, particularly with unknown job prospects. Affordable or free training and employment guarantees would positively motivate young people to reskill into industries that are hiring. Young people are also concerned that they are less likely to be employed in a competitive job market as they don’t have the skills and experience required. Young people believe that many would also benefit from employability and job skills training to gain and retain employment.

*“More training programs especially for people stuck in hospitality or similar industries. It’s hard to get away from and I think programs such as computer training could be beneficial to give people a better chance at a wider range of jobs.” Female, 20*

*“Workshops or programs around alternative career and study pathways.” Female, 19*

### 3 Government support

Several young people stated that JobKeeper was essential in keeping them employed and are worried about losing their job when this initiative ends. The increased rate of JobSeeker was mentioned as positive in adequately supporting young people experiencing unemployment and financial hardship. Some young people believe that youth employment outcomes could be improved by youth employment incentives including work experience and traineeship opportunities. Greater protection for young people in casual employment in the hardest hit industries was identified as important.

*“We need more full time and part time jobs. Casual jobs don’t offer the security and benefits young adults need to progress in life (buying a house, having children, etc).” Female, 20*

*“Incentives for businesses to hire young people, opportunities for young people to gain workplace certificates or skills before applying for jobs.” Female, 22*

# Education and training

## Has COVID-19 had an impact on your education or training?

34% No

Young people who were not currently engaged in education or training reported No.

66% Yes

Adjusting to online learning, studying at home, unreliable technology and limited internet data impacted young people's education and training. Many young people reported that they were less productive and motivated learning at home, and some did not have appropriate access to educators for their learning. Young people are very concerned about the long-term effects of disrupted schooling on their learning outcomes or final exams. Those undertaking tertiary education had practical placements cancelled and are unsure of how this will impact their studies or when their studies will resume. Several young people stated that their training had been postponed or cancelled until 2021.

## What will help young Tasmanians to continue and complete their education or training, or return to studies?

### 1 Holistic support

Young people want to see students provided with wraparound support to help them recover from the negative impacts of COVID-19 on their education and training. Many young people believe that students will need more leniency and support over the coming months to help them effectively recover. One-on-one support from a counsellor or teacher, student-led mentoring, and online support groups would support students to create routines, reach out for help and find normality in their education. Young people also stated the importance of supporting young people to 'catch up' with their studies, particularly for exams and practical-based training.

*"It would be awesome to see more teacher assistants in the classrooms supporting the teacher's trying their hardest to catch kids up on so much of their learning missed as a result of COVID-19. Getting young people back into routine and getting them back on track with their learning is critical."* Male, 14

*"Extra study support and exam times pushed back for more time to cover all work and learn it all."* Female, 17

### 2 Flexible training options

Some young people stressed the importance of returning to face-to-face learning as soon as possible, while others want to continue online learning. Young people want to be given an option to undertake flexible learning, where appropriate. It is important however, that flexible, blended learning opportunities do not compromise the social benefits of classroom learning.

*"A flexible approach from the education system, accepting that students have begun to adopt a very individualistic approach to learning and maybe integrating more of that personal responsibility back into regular school life and work."* Male, 15

*"Having the resources online or in a classroom I feel would be also very beneficial."* Female, 19

### 3 Financial support

Young people reported that financial security, particularly with significant job losses in the casual workforce, will help students to continue their education and training. Young people want to see ongoing income support to help those experiencing underemployment and unemployment to continue their studies.

*"Financial support and mentor style programs. Most online training providers do NOT offer concession which can be financially challenging for young people and offer deter them from enrolling."* Female 22

*"Gathering more awareness and understanding around the fact we are trying to manage online schooling/uni and need the money. We know you are financially tight but so are we."* Female, 19

### 4 Mental health support

Young people recognised that additional mental health support will be required to assist some young people to re-engage with education and training. Targeted mental health support from counsellors and educators and 'check-ins' was seen to be essential. This would help to reduce anxiety, stress and worry about returning to normal studies. Young people stressed the importance of young people having hope for the future and believe positive employment opportunities and outcomes would motivate them to continue their studies.

*"Mental health support, without this they may have no motivation to actually do so [return to study]."* Female, 20

*"Offer Mental Health check-ins to de-stress on any issues relating to COVID-19."* Female, 19

*"I think that in rural towns young people are scared of seeking help because of others knowing they are getting support. I also believe there's isn't as much support for young people, especially when it comes to employment and personal growth."* Female, 22

# Mental health

Do you think young people need greater mental health and wellbeing support because of COVID-19?

17% No

83% Yes

## What support is needed?

### 1 Youth Support Services

Young people want access to face to face and online youth specific services. They are mindful that COVID-19 has impacted all aspects of young people's lives including education, employment, social support, financial security and community engagement. If not appropriately addressed, this will have an ongoing negative impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing. Young people want tailored youth support services that work with young people holistically to address their needs and help them gain their best possible outcome to move forward.

*"Finding jobs, without jobs, financial support. Phone call conferencing to be able to talk to someone who understands what they are going through." Male, 18*

*Greater access to support persons [like] a buddy/mentor style approach to help young people. Also, less wait times and less daunting processes to access said support." Female, 22*

### 2 Service accessibility

Young people are generally aware of face to face and online mental health services available however, service accessibility is a significant barrier preventing young people from gaining help. Some young people would now consider accessing telehealth mental health support but stressed that this should not replace face to face services or be the only option available, particularly for rural areas. Barriers to accessing mental health services include limited transport, the cost of private psychology fees and service waiting times. Free government youth mental health services were well known, however young people stated that significant wait times and delays in receiving assistance prevented them from accessing services. Young people want to see reduced wait times, bulk-billed (or free) youth mental health services and greater outreach in rural areas.

*"Access to free support, many young people I know have used their free counselling sessions and are left with nothing so they suffer in silence instead." Female, 20*

*"More telephone appointments with mental health professionals need to be available, and without the months' wait time. I'm stuck on a medication that isn't working while being between psychiatrists and there's a two month wait for one but I'd have to pay \$300+ for a one hour slot." Non-Binary, 17*

### 3 Psychological distress

Young people are continuing to feel anxious, uncertain, scared, overwhelmed, lonely and stressed with how their lives and communities have changed.

Young people want to see greater youth support by raising awareness of mental health and youth issues in their communities, and by improving access to youth counselling and specialist psychological support.

*"COVID 19 is making a lot of people lonely and will cause stress and depression. Knowing your student or employee that is under performing due to stress should be given advice and mental help." Male, 19*

*"Maybe just a check-in from a therapist or family member or even close friend. Check-in with someone." Trans-female, 20*