



August 2021

**evaluation
snapshot
report**

accessibility of headspace centre services

headspace was initiated in 2006 to address the concerning mismatch between level of need and level of mental health service use among adolescents and young adults (McGorry et al., 2007). headspace centre services (including centres and satellites)¹ aim to create highly accessible, youth-friendly and integrated service hubs that provide evidence-based interventions and support to young people aged 12–25 years around their mental health, health and wellbeing needs (Rickwood et al., 2018). headspace centres now operate in 131 communities around Australia², across metropolitan, regional and rural locations.

headspace is committed to ensuring that our services and programs are underpinned by the best quality evidence and are effectively meeting the needs of young people.

This headspace evaluation snapshot summarises high level insights into the accessibility of headspace centres, drawing together data from a range of sources, including the headspace Minimum Dataset and surveys of young people and families. The data insights demonstrate the type of information used to evaluate our programs.

Why accessibility is important

The accessibility of headspace centre services is fundamental to ensuring that young people receive quality, evidence-based support early for their mental health and wellbeing needs.

The headspace Best Practice Framework (Rickwood et al., 2014) identifies a number of elements considered to indicate best practice for headspace centre services, including that services are accessible, acceptable, appropriate and sustainable. Figure 1 identifies the elements that make up the principle of accessibility.



Figure 1. Components of accessibility (Rickwood et al., 2014)

A 2019 survey that explored aspects of accessibility found that young people and their family members felt that timeliness, affordability and convenience were all important service features (Colmar Brunton unpublished, 2020). Ninety-two per cent of young people and 95 per cent of family members also indicated that it was important to know they wouldn't be turned away, reinforcing the importance of the headspace 'no wrong door' approach. The perspectives of young people and families on what service features they value provide important context on the accessibility of headspace centre services (from Rickwood et al., 2014):

- *"I really like how when you come in you get treated actually as an individual, you're not just treated as just some average guy off the street; there's a bit of like converse between yourself and the person at the desk, they treat you really nicely, you don't feel like you're being judged at all."*
headspace client, male, aged 18
- *"The space itself is nice, it's cosy, it's got a bit of a homely feel, nothing too serious but at the same time not too relaxed, so it's got a really good feel about it, you walk in the door and you feel comfortable, so it's always good."*
headspace client, male, aged 19
- *"You don't really have that worry of how they're going to see you when you come in ... because they just accept everyone equally and assist everyone."*
headspace client, male, aged 18
- *"I live in a very isolated area so having this place right next to the station is great. You're able to get off the train and walk across."*
headspace client, female, aged 15
- *"Yes, definitely a place where you can feel safe and perhaps air your views ... Just so that she can say what she needs to say without feeling judged."*
parent of headspace client

92%

of young people indicated that it was important to know they wouldn't be turned away

1 For the purposes of this report, headspace centres include all headspace centre services, including centres and satellites, but not other programs and services such as eheadspace.
2 As at May 2021 and inclusive of licensed headspace centre services.

What we know

headspace centre services have grown rapidly and increased their reach

Young people and families are accessing headspace centres at increasing levels across the country, as the growth of the network enables young people in more communities to seek support. By 30 June 2020, headspace centre services had supported over 440,000 young people with almost 3 million occasions of service. Figure 2 outlines the national reach and growth in service use from 2013 to 2020, with almost 100,000 young people accessing a headspace centre service during 2019/20. Based on the prevalence of mental health disorders for young people aged 12-25³, more than 10 per cent of the estimated 950,000 young people in Australia who would have experienced a mental health problem during this period may have accessed a headspace centre.

headspace centres are inclusive and non-stigmatising

"I think it's quite youth friendly, especially the one at shop front. I like going into there. They've got computers you can access if you need. There are also brochures on the wall, couches you can sit on. It's a quite friendly place to be."

headspace client, male, aged 16

headspace has identified a number of priority groups of young people who are less likely to seek help or who experience specific barriers to help seeking, putting them at greater risk of untreated mental health issues. These priority groups include young people who are male, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+, culturally and linguistically diverse, have co-occurring mental health and alcohol and other drug issues, and who are homeless (Rickwood et al., 2015).

"How friendly they are is definitely the first thing. And with the person I see, he really makes sure that I'm okay. He's always nice and caring."

headspace client,
male, aged 21

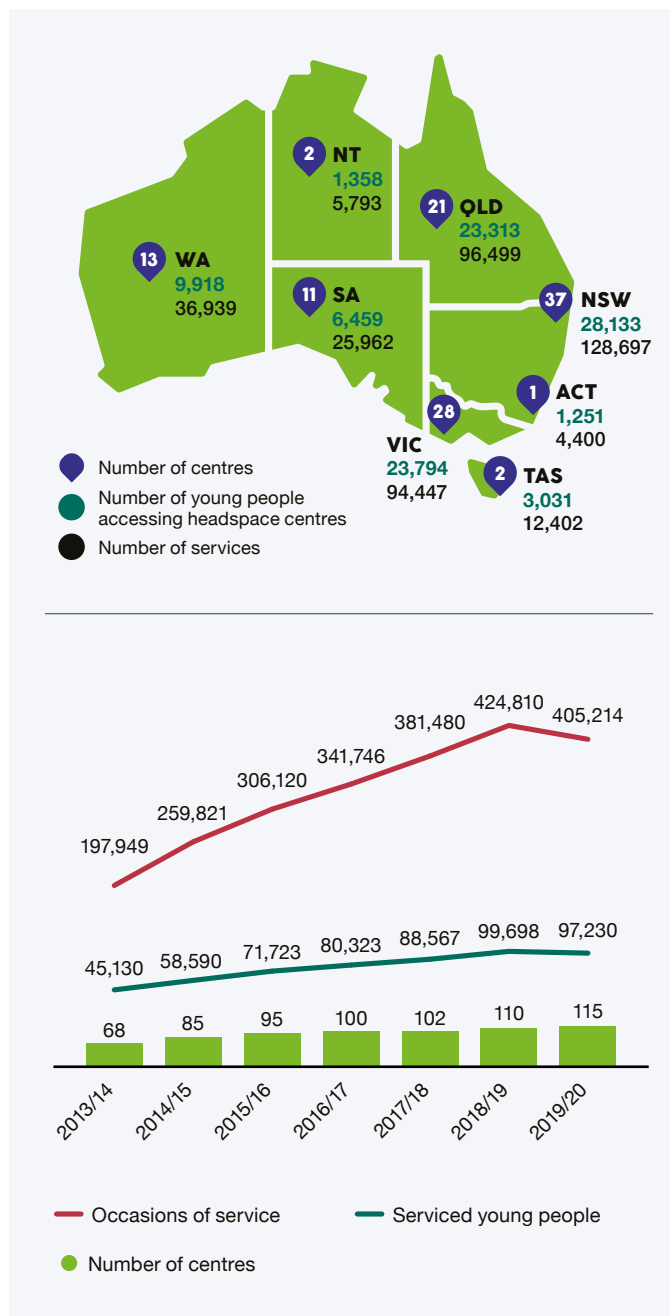


Figure 2.
Reach and growth of
headspace centre services⁴

³ Prevalence of mental health disorders among 12-17 year olds (14.4%); Lawrence et al. (2015). Prevalence of mental health disorders among 16-24 year olds (26.4%); Slade et al. (2009).
⁴ There were lower numbers of clients accessing headspace in mid-2020 compared to previous years as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions.

headspace centres are inclusive and non-stigmatising (cont.)

headspace is achieving higher engagement of a number of priority groups in headspace centres compared to the Australian population including (Figure 3):

- **Young people who are LGBTIQ+** accounted for a quarter of headspace clients, which compares to national estimate of 4% of males and 6% of females identifying as non-heterosexual (Wilson & Shalley, 2018).⁵
- Nine per cent of headspace centre clients identified as **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**, compared with 2016 census data which found that 4.5 per cent of Australians aged 12–25 years identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ABS, 2016).
- **Young males** made up 36 per cent of headspace clients in 2019/20, substantially more than the estimated prevalence of mental disorders among young males (Slade et al., 2009).

While 11 per cent of headspace clients are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds (compared to 21.7 per cent of the population who speak a language other than English at home [ABS, 2016]), headspace is continuing to strive to improve service accessibility and appropriateness for this priority group of young people.

headspace centres are affordable

An important feature of headspace services is that they are free or low cost for the young person:

- headspace service providers reported that during 2019/20, 97 per cent of services were free for the young person.
- The headspace grant was the source of funding for 46 per cent of occasions of service in 2019/20, with MBS mental health care treatment plans funding a further 38 per cent of services to young people.

97%

of services were free for the young person during 2019/20, according to headspace service providers

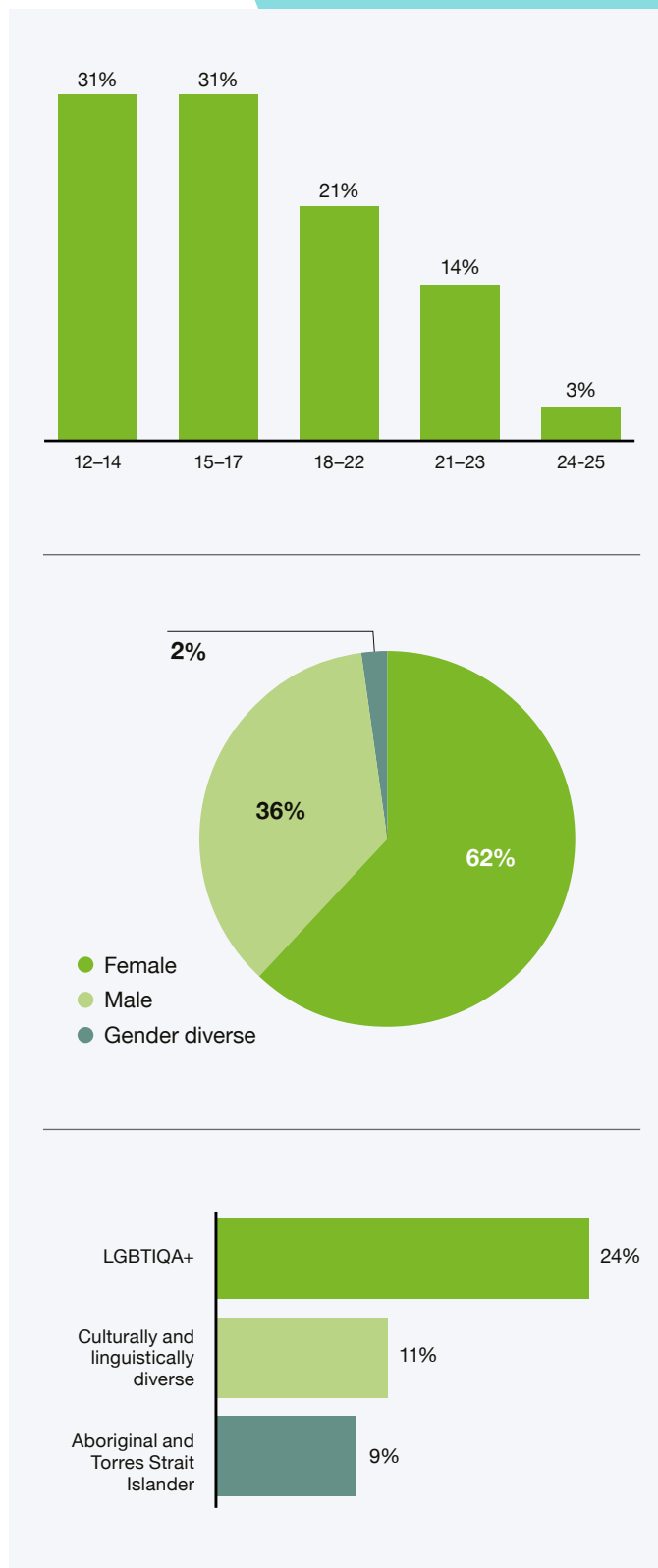


Figure 3. Key demographics of young people accessing headspace centres (2019-2020)

⁵ This figure only represents young people who identify as non-heterosexual, as opposed to gender diverse.

headspace centres are accessible for young people in rural and remote areas

Through placement of headspace centres across Australia, recently enhanced telehealth services and targeted campaigns and awareness raising activities, headspace centres have been effective in engaging young people from across metro, regional and rural areas:

- Thirty-nine per cent of headspace clients lived in regional and remote locations; well above the national population proportion of 27 per cent of all young people who live outside metropolitan areas (ABS, 2016).

Evolving service models and new modes of service delivery provide opportunities for further increasing the accessibility of headspace centre services. A survey of 1,205 young people who received a service from headspace via telehealth in April 2020 provided strong support for the ongoing availability of telephone and video supports for young people:

- Ninety-four per cent of telehealth clients indicated that they had a positive experience with headspace.
- Seventy-eight per cent agreed that the mode of service they received was suitable for their needs.

“The lack of travel is pretty great, plus it’s a lot more convenient. As a full time student it makes it a lot easier to fit into my schedule.”

headspace client, female, aged 23

headspace centres provide timely support

Timeliness of service provision is critical in the context of ensuring services are accessible for young people. headspace surveyed young people who accessed a headspace centre to understand their subjective experience of their wait time. These surveys indicate that satisfaction with wait times at headspace is generally high:

- Eighty-four per cent of young people who commenced a new episode of care in 2019/20 indicated that they didn’t have to wait too long for their first appointment and 88 per cent for their second.
- Self-reported wait times indicate that approximately two-thirds of young people waited 2 weeks or less for their service (65% for visit 1, 70% for visit 2).
- The Family and Friends Satisfaction survey also found that 90 per cent of family and friends who responded to the survey were satisfied with the waiting times at headspace.

Despite this encouraging data from young people and families who have accessed headspace, surveys with centre Managers and young people who have accessed headspace previously indicate that wait times can be a barrier for some centres and some young people. To address this, headspace National is working together with PHNs, headspace Lead Agencies and headspace centres to improve understanding of wait times and to co-design, trial and evaluate demand management strategies to reduce wait times for young people seeking to access headspace services.

headspace centres are convenient

“The train station is like a two minute walk from here and I think that’s really important especially considering not everyone has access to a car. I don’t, so I get the train here.”

headspace client, male, aged 24

The vast majority of young people who accessed headspace centres in 2019/20 indicated that it was easy for them to get an appointment and to get to a centre.

- Eighty-seven per cent of clients agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to get to their headspace centre.
- Eighty-four per cent could attend appointment times that suited them (Figure 4).

Rurality	headspace centre services 2019/20	National Population 12-25 yr olds (ABS, 2016)
Major Cities	60.6%	73.4%
Inner Regional	26.5%	16.9%
Outer Regional	11.3%	7.8%
Remote	1.5%	1.1%
Very Remote	0.2%	0.8%

Table 1. Rurality of Young people accessing headspace centres in 2020 FY and national population

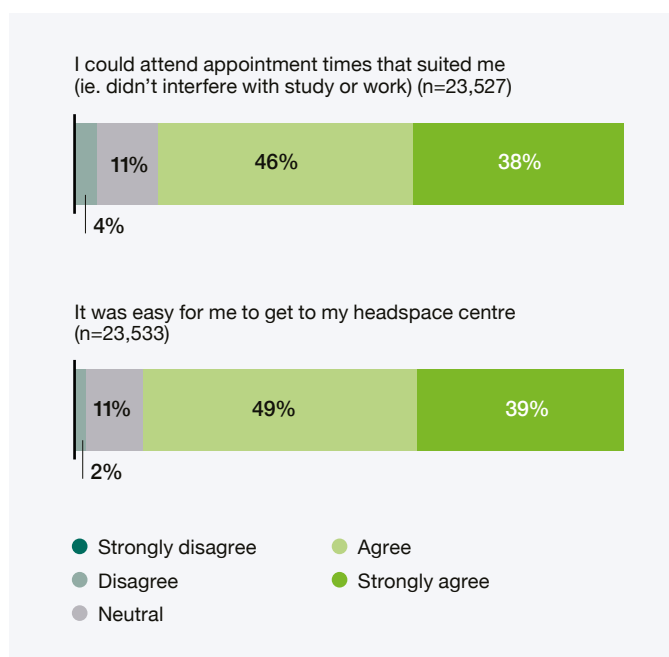


Figure 4. Client satisfaction responses – convenience (2019-20)

Methods used

Data for this snapshot were collated from a range of sources, including:

- headspace centre services minimum data set (MDS) (1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020) (unpublished headspace data)
- headspace centre services Family and Friends Satisfaction Survey (data aggregated from 2016 to 2019) (unpublished headspace data)
- A 2020 survey of 1,345 young people and 877 families who had previously accessed a headspace centre (Colmar Brunton unpublished, 2020)
- A 2020 client survey of 1,205 young people who had received support from headspace via telehealth (headspace, 2020)
- Direct quotes from young people and family members are from the headspace Service Innovation Project Component 1: Best Practice Framework (2014).

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headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.



headspace would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.



headspace is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. headspace welcomes all people irrespective of ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.