

Fact Sheet – Young people in Willoughby (12 to 24 years)^

Key insights

Between 2016 and 2021 the number of 12-17 year olds increased, while the population of 18-24 year olds declined.

Young people in Willoughby are more likely to attend an educational institution compared to Greater Sydney.

More specifically, 18-24 year olds in Willoughby are more likely to attend university and less likely to attend TAFE or vocational training compared to their peers in Greater Sydney.

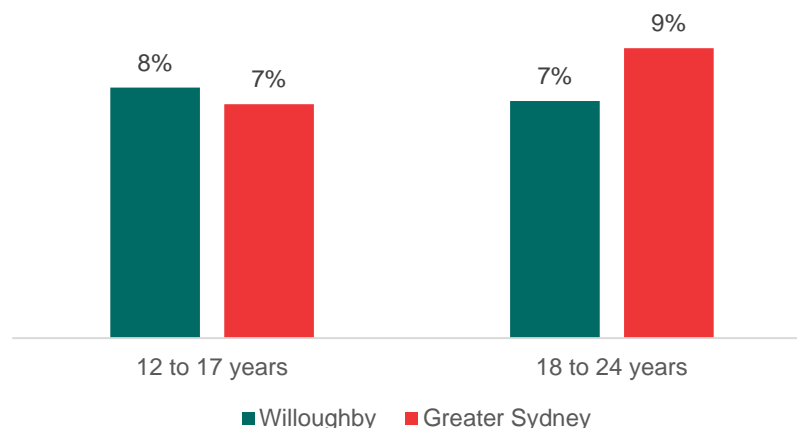
Many more young people are identifying as LGBTQIA+ compared to older age groups.

With substantial use of social media among young people, an upcoming ban on social media for those aged under 16 years may impact how they engage with their peers as well as services such as Council.

Between 2016 and 2021, the number of 12-17 year olds increased, while the population of 18-24 year olds declined.

In the 2021 Census, there were 5,735 young people aged 12 to 17 years and 5,424 people aged 18 to 24 years. As shown in Figure 1, Willoughby LGA had a slightly higher proportion of 12 to 17 year olds (8%) compared to Greater Sydney (7%), and a lower proportion of 18 to 24 year olds (7%) (compared to 9% for Greater Sydney).

Figure 1. Proportion of young people in Willoughby and Greater Sydney



^ All figures are sourced from the ABS Census via analysis from .id (profile.id.com.au/Willoughby) unless otherwise stated.

As shown in Figure 2, the number of 12-17 year olds increased by 969 people between 2016 to 2021, a jump of 20% over five years. The same age group only grew by 10% across Greater Sydney.

Meanwhile, the number of 18-24 year olds have declined by 624 people, a decrease of 10%. This is a significantly more prominent decline in this age group compared to Greater Sydney (-0.3%). The drop in this age group can be attributed both to the loss of international students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and as well as the lack of affordable housing options for this cohort.

Figure 2. Change in 12-24 year old population for Willoughby LGA, 2016 to 2021

	2016			2021			change 2016- 2021
	no.	%	Greater Sydney %	no.	%	Greater Sydney %	
12-17 year olds	4,766	6.4	6.9	5,735	7.6	7.1	↑ 969
18-24 year olds	6,048	8.1	9.6	5,424	7.2	8.8	↓ 624

Suburbs such as Castle Cove-Middle Cove (10%), Castlecrag (12%) and Northbridge (11%) had the highest proportion of 12-17 year olds, while Naremburn had the lowest proportion (6%). While Chatswood also had just over 6%, it remained the suburb with the highest number 12-17 year olds, with 1,658 in that age group. The areas with the highest proportion of 18 to 24 year olds were Castlecrag (9%), Roseville (9%) and Chatswood (8%).

According to population forecasts, the number of 18 to 24 year olds in Willoughby is expected to rebound slightly to 8% of the population by 2036, while the proportion of 12 to 17 year olds is expected to decline to 7% of the population.

Approximately 1 in 3 young people in Willoughby speak a language other than English at home.

30% of young people aged 12 to 17 years and 36% of those aged 18 to 24 years speak a language other than English at home. The cultural profile of young people in Willoughby largely reflects that of the broader Willoughby community (refer to Multicultural community factsheet).

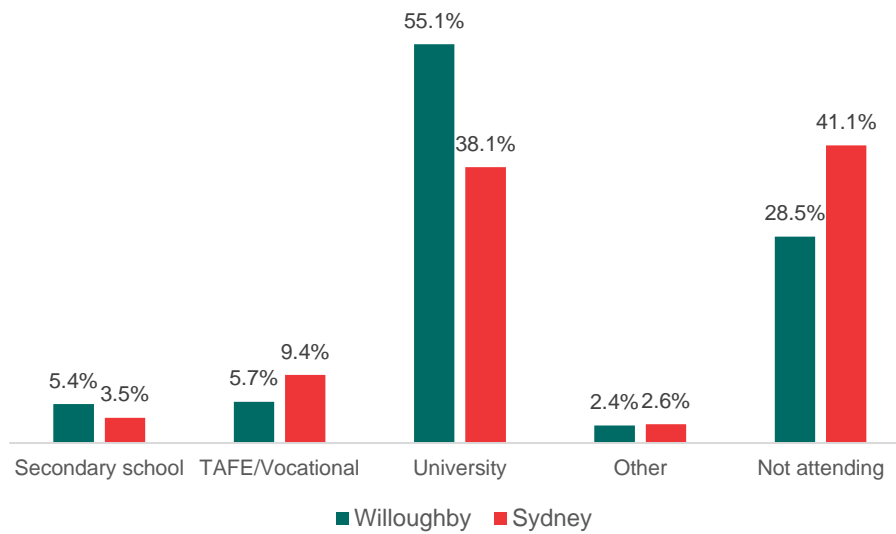
The proportion of non-English speaking 18-24 year olds dropped significantly between 2016 (46%) and 2021 (36%), likely reflecting a concentrated loss of international students in the local area. Across Greater Sydney, the same cohort only declined slightly (from 39% to 36%).

Young people in Willoughby are overall more likely to be attending an educational institution compared to those in Greater Sydney.

69% of 18-24 year olds were attending an educational institution in 2021, a significantly greater proportion compared to Greater Sydney at 54%.

As seen in Figure 3, 18 to 24 year olds in Willoughby were more likely to be attending university and less likely to attend TAFE or a vocational college compared to the same age group in Greater Sydney.

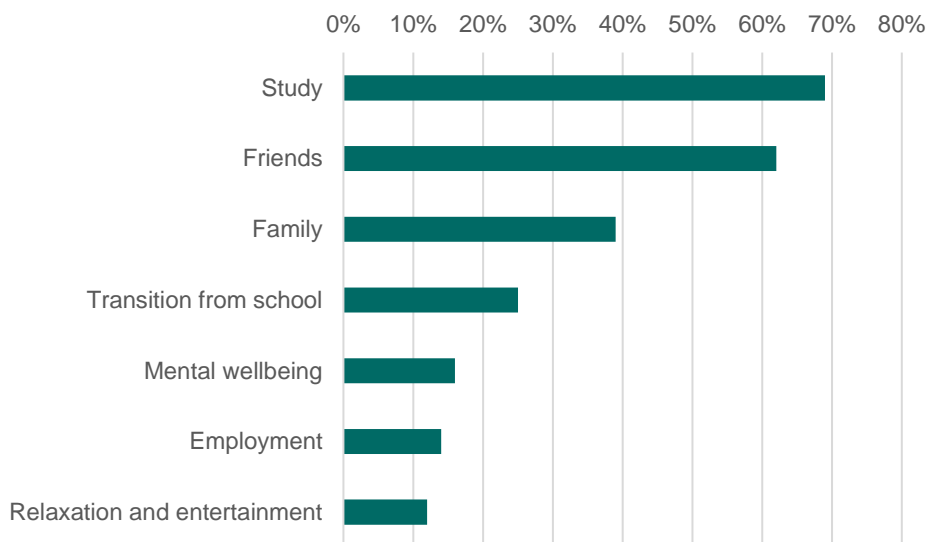
Figure 3. Young people 18 to 24 years in Willoughby and Greater Sydney, Educational institution attending



Many young people in Willoughby are engaged in part-time work.

In 2022, Council’s Youth Services team conducted intercept surveys with 350 young people aged 12-24 to help guide the development of the *Willoughby Youth Action Plan 2024-2027*. The surveys were conducted at Chatswood Westfield, Chatswood skate park, the Concourse, Chatswood Library and Chatswood Youth Centre. When asked about their personal priorities, studying, friends and family were the most important (see Figure 4). When asked about what makes them feel included and supported, friends, the library and community were among the most common responses.

Figure 4. What are young people’s priorities over the next four years?



Source: Willoughby Youth Action Plan Survey 2022

Up to 25% of young people in Willoughby identify as LGBTQIA+.

Of the young people who participated in the Youth Action Plan survey, 25% responded that they identified as LGBTQIA+. Young people are more likely to identify as LGBTQIA+ compared to older age groups. While data on the prevalence of gender and sexual diversity in the population are limited, a recent Australian survey found 18% of 16-24 year olds

identifying with a diverse sexuality and 2% identifying with a diverse gender.¹ This is almost twice the proportion for all age groups, with 9.5% of the general population identifying as sexually diverse and 0.9% identifying as gender diverse. Young people are increasingly identifying as LGBTQIA+ as awareness and education around diverse genders and sexualities grows, and as they feel more safe and comfortable to reveal their identities to others.

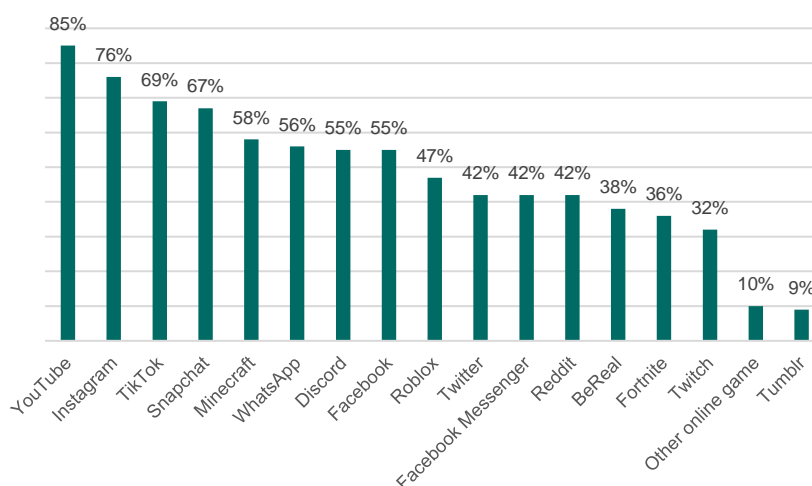
The most recent *Writing Themselves In* report, which is Australia’s largest study of LGBTQIA+ young people (14-21 years), highlights the unique and manifold challenges faced by this group. Two-fifths of survey participants experienced harassment based on their sexuality and gender identity within the past 12 months, and were three times more likely to experience high or very high levels of psychological distress compared to the general population.

In a 2022 report released by the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, ‘The voices of LGBTQIA+ young people in NSW’, its first recommendation highlighted the role of local councils in providing funding to support LGBTQIA+ young people through events and training².

Social media use remains a substantial part of young people’s lives.

A 2022 national survey of 600 young people aged 12-17 conducted by the University of Sydney found Youtube, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat were the most commonly used social media platforms used³ (see figure 5). The upcoming ban on social media for young people under 16 years will have significant impact on how young people engage with each other and receive information. The ban, due to be in place by November 2025, will necessitate a shift in how organisations such as Councils engage with young people under 16.

Figure 5. Social media usage among young people in 2022



Source: University of Sydney, 2023

¹ Higgins, D. J., Lawrence, D., Haslam, D. M., Mathews, B., Malacova, E., Erskine, H. E., Finkelhor, D., Pacella, R., Meinck, F., Thomas, H. J., & Scott, J. G. (2024). Prevalence of Diverse Genders and Sexualities in Australia and Associations With Five Forms of Child Maltreatment and Multi-type Maltreatment. *Child Maltreatment*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10775595231226331>

² Office of the Advocate for Children & Young People, 2022. ‘The voices of LGBTQIA+ young people in NSW’. <https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/lgbtqiareport>.

³ Humphry, J., Boichak, O. & Hutchison, J., 2023. ‘Emerging online safety issues – co-creating social media education with young people – research report’, University of Sydney. <https://hdl.handle.net/2123/31689>.