



KYDS YOUTH
COUNSELLING

IMPACT REPORT
2023



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INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a continuum and forms a key component of overall health and well-being. KYDS aims to be truly focused on the mental health of all young people, rather than working solely with diagnosable mental health conditions. To this end, we support young people across the mental health continuum, from those who are looking to build on their skills to maintain and improve their emotional well-being, to young people who are facing significant mental health challenges and are overwhelmed by hopelessness.

KYDS believes prevention is critical to ensuring that young people develop the skills to thrive and build resilience to cope in difficult moments. Simultaneously, we believe that young people who reach out early and as often as they need, will get back on track more quickly. Furthermore, when young people are overwhelmed by distress, we acknowledge the importance of working alongside them and with their networks of support to develop plans that aim to reduce symptoms of distress and improve functioning. We believe this integrative approach to prevention, early intervention and working with complexity is essential to ensuring all young people reach their full potential.

DEDICATION

The KYDS Impact Report 2023 is a demonstration of our commitment to transparency and to providing a snapshot of the presenting problems that young people accessing KYDS are facing, as well as highlighting the outcomes of KYDS' services and areas for further development. We dedicate this report to young people and their families in our community, including those who have overcome or continue to experience psychological distress, as well as our Clinicians and the professionals who are committed to improving mental health outcomes for all young people.



The KYDS Model

The KYDS model draws strongly from the eight core principles set out in the National Children's Mental Health and Well-being Strategy (2021).



YOUNG-PERSON CENTRED

We tailor our mental health care and support to each young person, empowering them to make decisions about the support they engage with based on what they know works for them.



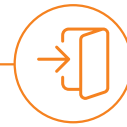
STRENGTHS-BASED

We acknowledge the skills and resources of young people and draw on these strengths to promote mental health and resilience.



PREVENTATIVE

We proactively address mental health challenges by educating young people, parents/carers, families and our wider community about mental health, promoting early intervention and normalising help-seeking.



ACCESSIBLE

We provide mental health support that is free, easy to reach and navigate. We encourage self-referrals or warm referrals from other professionals, and intake appointments can be scheduled online. There is no requirement for a GP referral or Mental Health Care Plan.



NEEDS-BASED

We support young people in a way that seeks to understand their unique experiences and challenges, including working alongside each young person for as long as they require support to achieve their goals.



FAMILY-INFORMED

We believe that having parents/carers and other family members involved in supporting the young person is critical to ensuring positive outcomes. KYDS works with the young person's family to increase understanding of the young person's needs and identify strategies that will help contribute to a young person's well-being.



HOLISTIC

We work collaboratively alongside members of a young person's network, including with school staff and other professionals, ensuring a planned and coordinated support response is developed to benefit the young person and help them realise their full potential.



FEEDBACK-INFORMED

We regularly collect and use feedback from young people and their families about their experiences with KYDS. This continuous feedback helps to tailor and improve our services to better meet the needs and preferences of young people, ensuring that the support provided is effective and responsive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

In 2023, KYDS successfully expanded its capacity to meet the growing demand for youth mental health support. Our team provided more sessions than ever before, while maintaining our high standards of care. The significant improvements in client outcomes reflect the efficacy of the KYDS model and our commitment to accessible, effective, and compassionate mental health support.

- **Females and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds report higher levels of psychological distress at the time they seek help from KYDS than other groups of young people. However, both during treatment and at the end of treatment we have seen the same improvements in symptoms across the board. This means that regardless of age, gender and cultural/linguistic background, the KYDS model proved to be effective for all who engaged in our counselling support.**
- **Over 50% of young people who accessed KYDS for counselling support were not in the clinical or sub-clinical range for depression or anxiety according to the Revised Child Anxiety & Depression Scale (RCADS), demonstrating that many young people are continuing to access KYDS in the early intervention phase of their difficulties, before problems become entrenched.**
- **Young people in the sub-clinical or clinical range for symptoms of anxiety or depression at the beginning of treatment (44% of clients), reported significant reductions in those symptoms of distress, typically within the first 4 months of counselling at KYDS.**
- **Those young people who completed their treatment in 2023 reported significant reductions in their symptoms of distress (RCADS) and significant improvements across all aspects of their lives, including within their peer and family relationships, according to the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS).**
- **KYDS continues to empower young people to make decisions about their treatment and what works for them with 100% (Always: 83%; Usually: 17%) reporting that KYDS' services met their needs (Your Experience of Service Survey).**
- **KYDS' schools and community-based work continues to expand and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to the prevention of mental health challenges and the promotion of mental health, with the aim of removing stigma and encouraging help-seeking behaviour. In 2023, our school-based presentations and workshops reached a record 4633 young people and received an overall rating of 88% and 83.4% respectively. Furthermore, we launched our program of free monthly webinars, which reached 1465 parents/carers and teachers and received an average feedback score of 4.6/5.**



For every \$1 contributed to KYDS, our counselling delivers more than 6 times greater economic benefit to society.

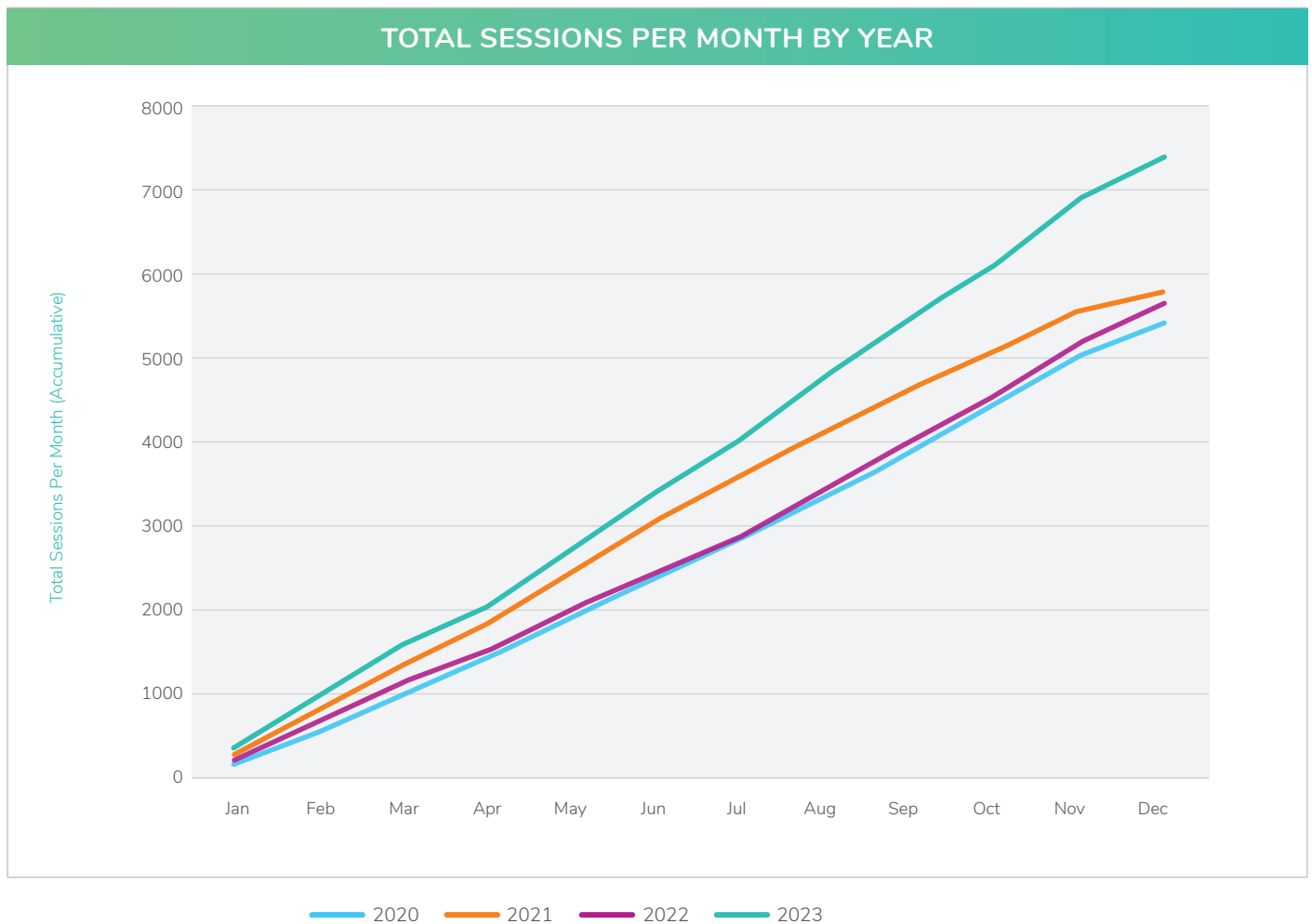
In a recent economic cost-benefit analysis conducted by an independent economist, it was shown that for every \$1 contributed to KYDS, our counselling delivers more than 6 times greater economic benefit to society.

In 2024, we will continue evolving and developing our services, including building our skills to work holistically and with our young people's families. In addition, we will use our data to better track and understand the reasons why young people might disengage from our service earlier than expected, and further explore methods of working to help keep those young people who are at risk of disengaging, connected to KYDS' support.

OUR SERVICE

TOTAL SESSIONS DELIVERED

KYDS delivered 7,437 sessions in 2023, marking a 31% increase from 2022.



This significant rise in sessions was achieved through growth in capacity due to increased funding of the service and an opportunity to build on the consistency of 2022 funding, specifically the support received from the Department of Social Services and the Sydney North Primary Health Network.

WAITLIST AND REFERRALS

KYDS received a record number of 315 referrals in 2023, demonstrating that increased funding of our service has allowed us to keep pace with community demand for youth mental health support. During the early stages of 2023, our waitlist for counselling support sat at over 3 months. However, with increased efficiency at the point of intake, improvements to the waitlist process and its management, and an increase in clinician capacity, we significantly reduced wait times. By the end of 2023 our wait times had dropped by over 50%, with young people typically waiting between 4-6 weeks to see a counsellor for face-to-face support.

LOCATIONS

Most of our clients (79%) visit our Lindfield service. To reach as many young people as possible, KYDS operates in 11 locations, 8 of which are co-located with partner organisations. In 2023, four of these co-location partnerships were established: St Ives Community Centre, Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, North Sydney Boys High School and our service in Gordon.

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We facilitate workshops, deliver programs and give keynote addresses in schools, with the aim of promoting psychological well-being and providing skills that will enhance young people's mental health. Furthermore, we hold free and easily accessible webinars and participate in community events providing information to parents/carers, school staff and other members of the community, to increase understanding of young people's mental health needs, while providing practical strategies to better meet those needs.

IN 2023, KYDS REACHED

TOTAL STUDENTS
(WORKSHOPS)

1792

ACROSS 17
WORKSHOPS

TOTAL PARENTS
& TEACHERS

1465

ACROSS 20
WEBINARS

TOTAL STUDENTS
(PRESENTATIONS)

2841

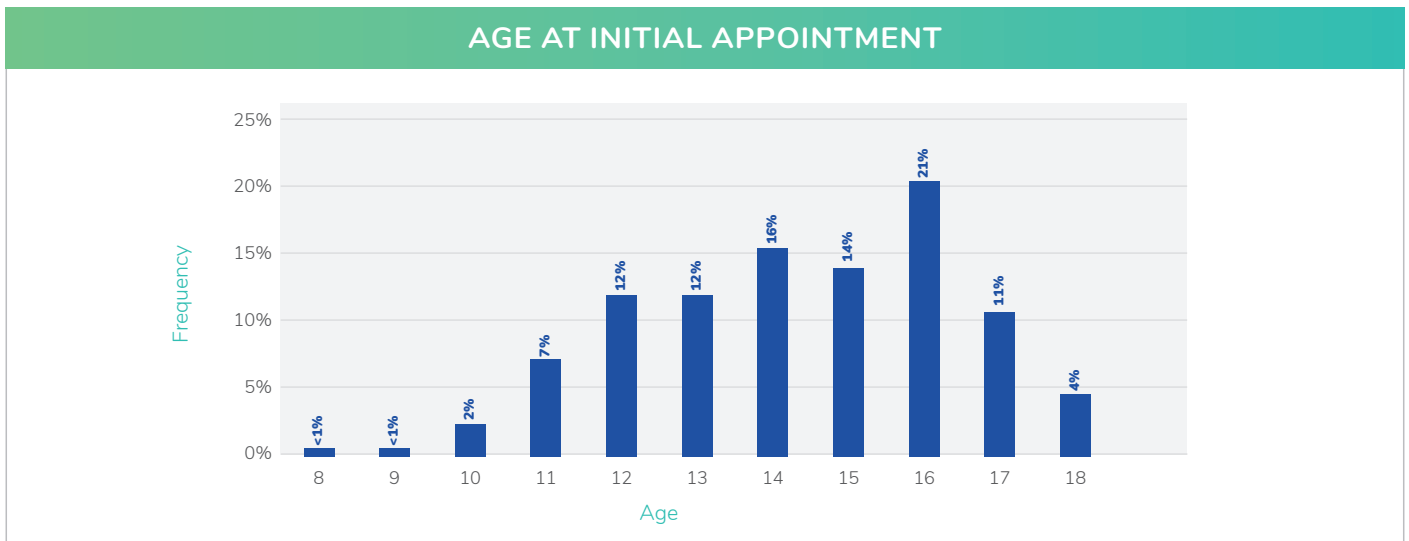
ACROSS 16
PRESENTATIONS

WHO WERE KYDS' NEW CLIENTS IN 2023?

KYDS supported a total of 308 new clients in 2023, representing a 21% increase on the previous year. Below we have outlined the demographic information for these new clients - please note that some clients will be missing information due to the time in which data was collected or because some young people were only engaged with the service briefly (with most of those young people being referred to services that would better meet their needs).

AGE RANGE

We mostly worked with clients in our target age group (10-18 years) but continued to support young people at earlier stages when appropriate. **Over 50% of the new clients we saw in 2023 were aged between 14-16 years.**

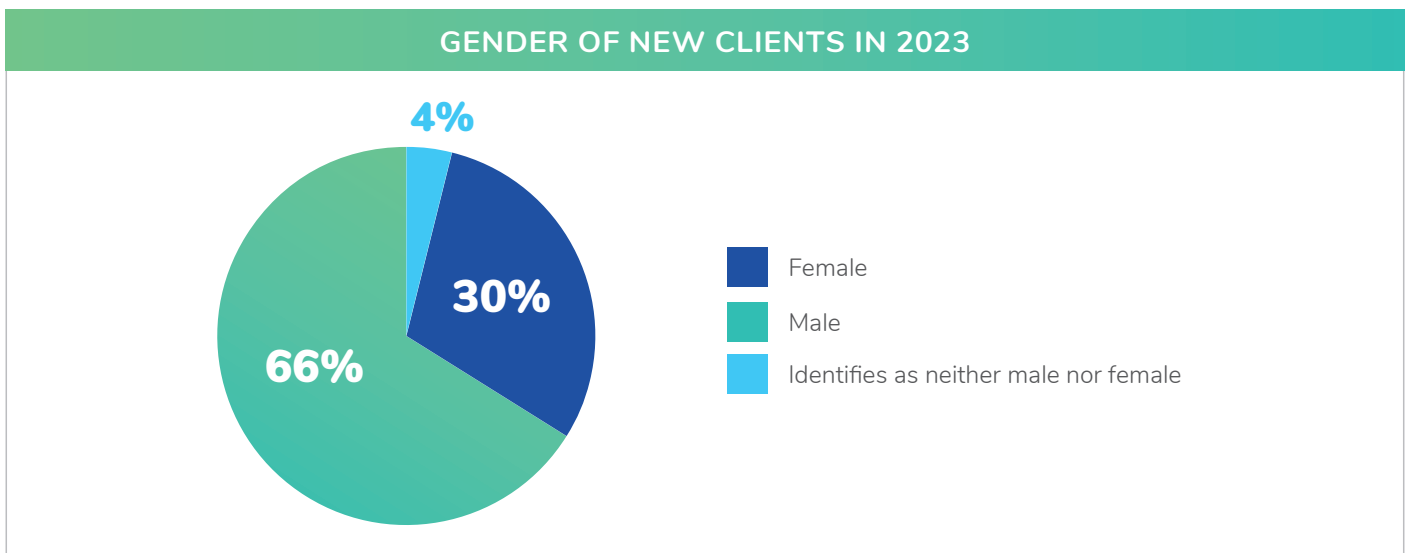


GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Most of the 308 new clients we saw in 2023 were female, which is consistent with previous years. 30.4% of new clients were male (down from 32.9% of total clients in 2022).

3.9% of new clients identified as neither male nor female (up from 3.2% in 2022).

While KYDS is striving to engage more young males in the service, it is noted that **more young females report experiencing anxiety symptoms than young males** (ABS, 2021). However, it is also known that young females are more likely to access support (ABS, 2021), so it is **critical to continue concerted efforts to engage young males who may not otherwise seek help**. KYDS continues to deliver presentations and workshops within all male schools and to recruit additional male clinicians to **encourage help-seeking behaviour among young males**.

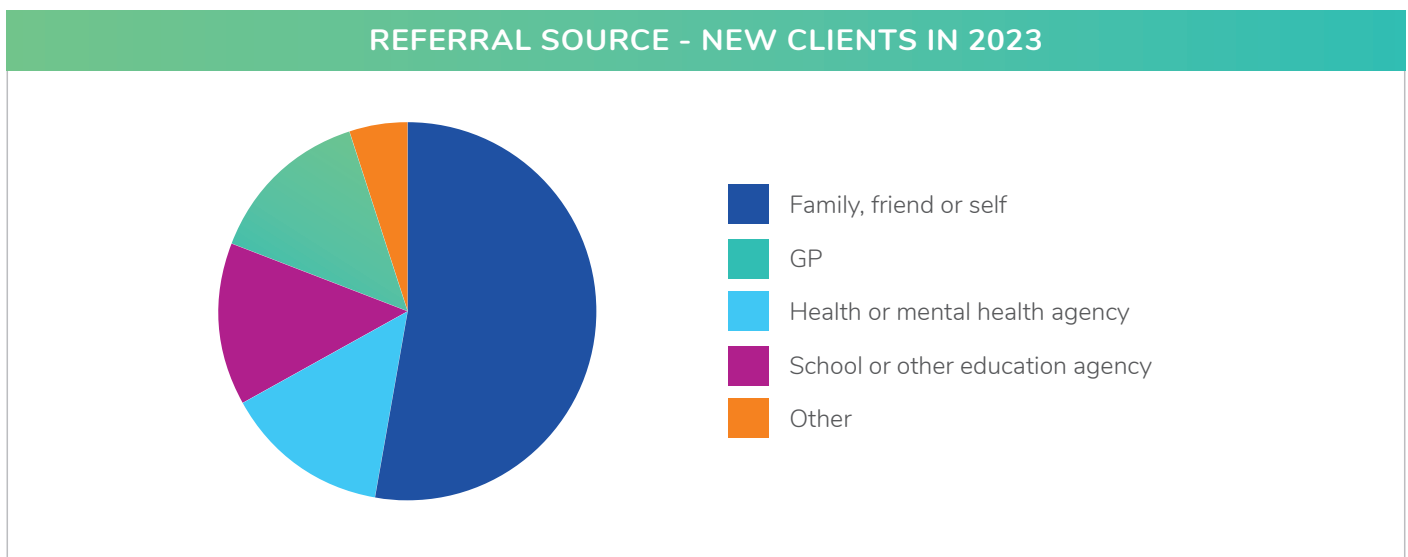


LANGUAGE

Clients who do not speak English at home increased to 13.3% from 11.6% in 2022. KYDS is continually seeking ways in which to engage a diverse range of clients, including those from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and has a culturally diverse team which allows us to support the needs of all clients.

REFERRAL SOURCES

Over half (53%) of new clients were referred by family, friends or self-referred to KYDS, which is consistent with previous years. Our other main sources of referrals are other health and community services agencies in the area, counsellors and support staff in schools, and GPs.



CASE STUDY

Fifteen-year-old Amelia first engaged in support at KYDS 12 months ago. She presented with anxiety, depression and some social phobias which left her feeling isolated, both in the context of her family and school environment. Amelia's anxiety was debilitating and took control of everything she did.

One of four children, Amelia described feeling like 'the odd one out', searching for love and validation from her parents. One of her main sources of anxiety was her relationship with her father, who had been absent for periods of her life. Equally, Amelia had encountered challenges in her friendships at school and as a result some of these relationships had broken down. These relational experiences impacted Amelia's ability to trust and regain confidence in building social relationships. She learnt to avoid getting close to her peers as she was worried about being hurt again.

Amelia's feelings of anxiety and low mood led her to feel overwhelmed and stressed. As a result, she gave up hobbies she loved such as playing sports, going to the gym, committing to her school studies and socialising with friends. Amelia's mother reported she would spend a lot of time inside the home on weekends, isolating herself in her room.

In the time Amelia has accessed support from KYDS, she has worked alongside her clinician to examine her past and unpack the deep wounds associated with her relationship with her father. This process involved understanding more about her upbringing, and unpacking and processing pivotal events that influenced her relationship with her dad. This new understanding allowed Amelia to gain acceptance of the relationship in the here and now. Amelia used this knowledge as a springboard to develop a new, different way of viewing her father and in turn has started to slowly rebuild this relationship.

By learning how to manage her anxiety, Amelia has not only been able to address some of the relationship challenges with her father, but also to engage more with her peers. KYDS has allowed Amelia to build confidence in overcoming her fear of getting close to people and being let down. She also used her sessions at KYDS to better understand her values and align more closely to what was important to her. Amelia has developed the interpersonal skills to be able to manage conflict and overcome situations that may provoke anxiety. She has been reflective and insightful during this process, which has been tremendously powerful.

When Amelia first engaged with KYDS, she felt disconnected from herself and the world around her. She now has renewed confidence in herself. She has started going to the gym with friends, is dedicating herself to her studies and is currently looking for work. While Amelia says that anxiety still shows up for her, she has learnt to trust herself more and manage her anxiety without getting swept away by it.

With the help of KYDS, Amelia has developed a sense of purpose and can now see the direction in which she is heading, supported by her family and friends.



CLIENT OUTCOMES IN 2023: ANXIETY & DEPRESSION MEASURES

WHAT IS ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AND WHY DO WE MEASURE IT?

KYDS measures anxiety and depression scores using the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS), a validated and widely used measure that screens for depressive symptoms and five different aspects of anxiety symptoms.

Within the first few sessions of a young person presenting to KYDS, we assess their anxiety and depression levels because severe symptoms of anxiety and depression are very common in young people who present for counselling. Anxiety and mood disorders are also among the most common disorders that young people experience.

When anxiety is high, it leads to feelings of dread, unease or panic. Young people may excessively worry about future events, have irrational fears and beliefs, and even a sense of impending doom. When depression is high, young people often experience high levels of worthlessness, helplessness, guilt and tend to withdraw from loved ones and social activities.


Symptoms of anxiety and depression and the psychological distress they cause can significantly impact a young person's quality of life, affecting their ability to function at school, maintain relationships, sleep and engage in everyday activities. They may also contribute to other issues such as substance abuse.

It is important to measure these symptoms at the start of and regularly during treatment, as well as at the end of treatment, to be able to understand how the young person's symptoms are changing over time and to be able to adapt the therapeutic response accordingly. The RCADS are completed by the client every 10-15 sessions or every six months, whichever the clinician deems most appropriate.

SEVERITY OF SYMPTOMS ON INITIAL PRESENTATION FOR 2023 CLIENTS COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEARS

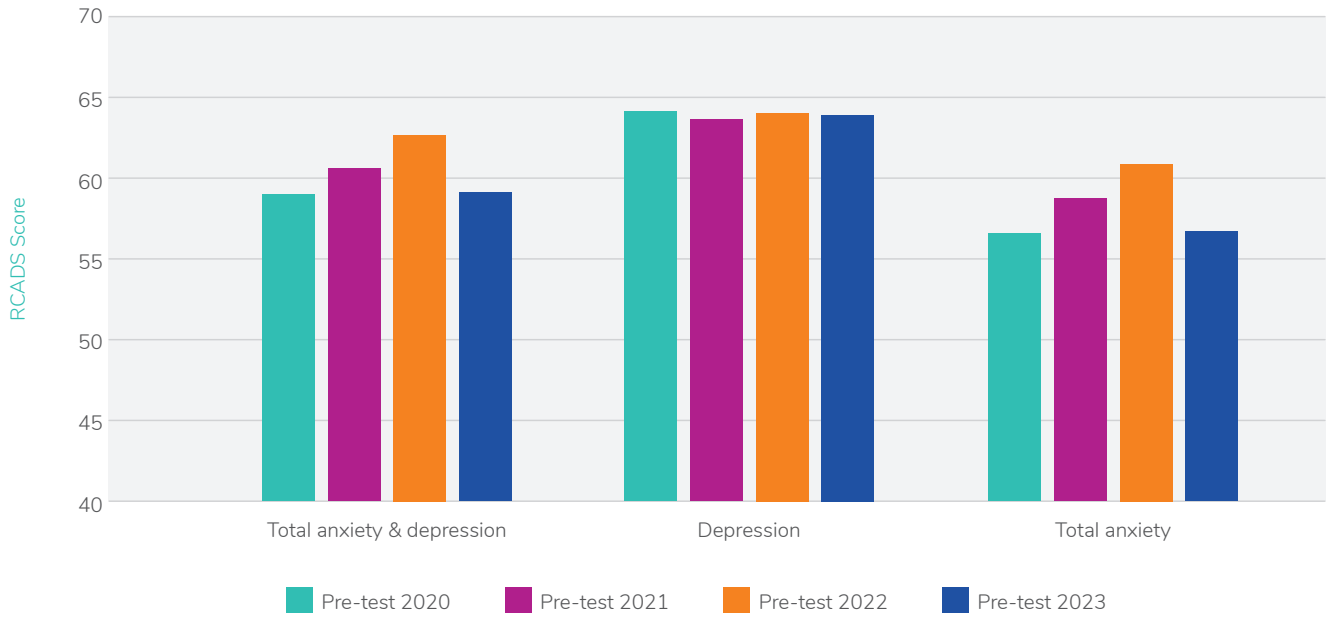
In the last four years the Depression score has been the highest overall score on the RCADS for young people entering the service. Simultaneously, the Total Anxiety and Depression scores and the Total Anxiety score have been increasing year on year. These patterns reflect our clinician-reported experience of increased symptoms of distress and young people presenting with higher levels of complexity.

For the first time since 2019, clients reported lower Total Anxiety and Depression and Total Anxiety scores than in the previous year, with both scores returning to levels similar to those recorded in 2020. Interestingly, only anxiety symptoms were lower for new 2023 clients, whereas Depression remained relatively constant compared to recent years. The reduction in symptoms of anxiety could reflect the sense of normality and routine that has returned to young people's lives post-Covid. Furthermore, the disruptions caused by Covid would likely have intensified symptoms of anxiety for those young people who were already experiencing higher levels of family conflict or interpersonal discord.



When depression is high, people tend to withdraw from loved ones and social activities.

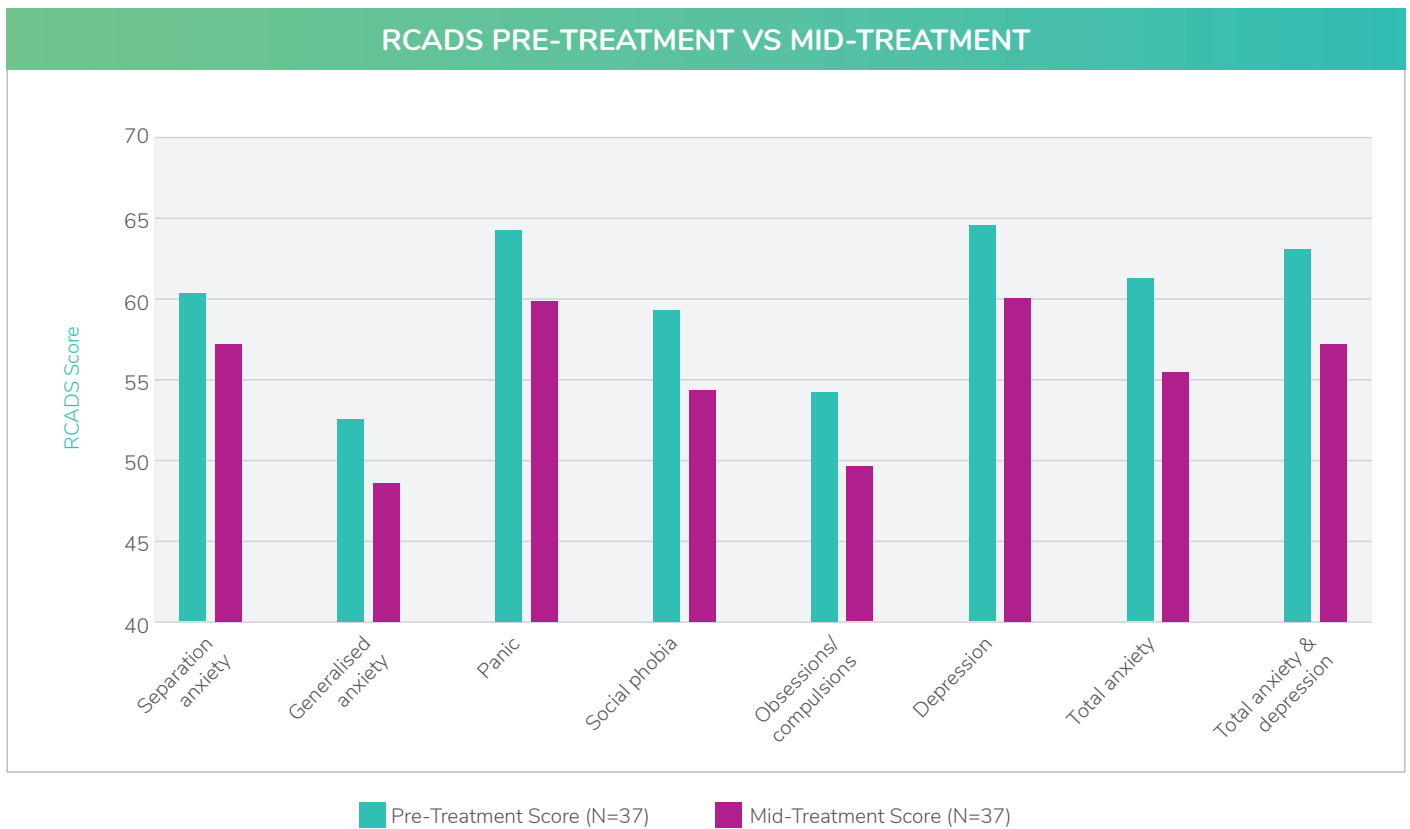
AVERAGE PRE-TREATMENT RCADS EACH YEAR 2020-2023



CHANGES IN ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION THROUGHOUT TREATMENT FOR NEW CLIENTS IN 2023

Our clients showed notable improvements in anxiety and depression symptoms between pre-treatment (session 1) and mid-treatment (sessions 10-15):

- At the start of treatment, 30% of clients were in the clinical or sub-clinical range of scores for anxiety and depression, but by mid-treatment this figure had reduced to 18%.
- Total anxiety and depression scores improved by almost 6 points on average, which is a statistically significant improvement in symptoms.
- Panic and depression symptoms, which were initially close to clinical concern levels, significantly improved to well below these thresholds during treatment.



CLIENT OUTCOMES IN 2023: WELL-BEING & THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

ORS AND SRS SCORES

KYDS uses Feedback Informed Treatment, which involves collecting two measures at each session:

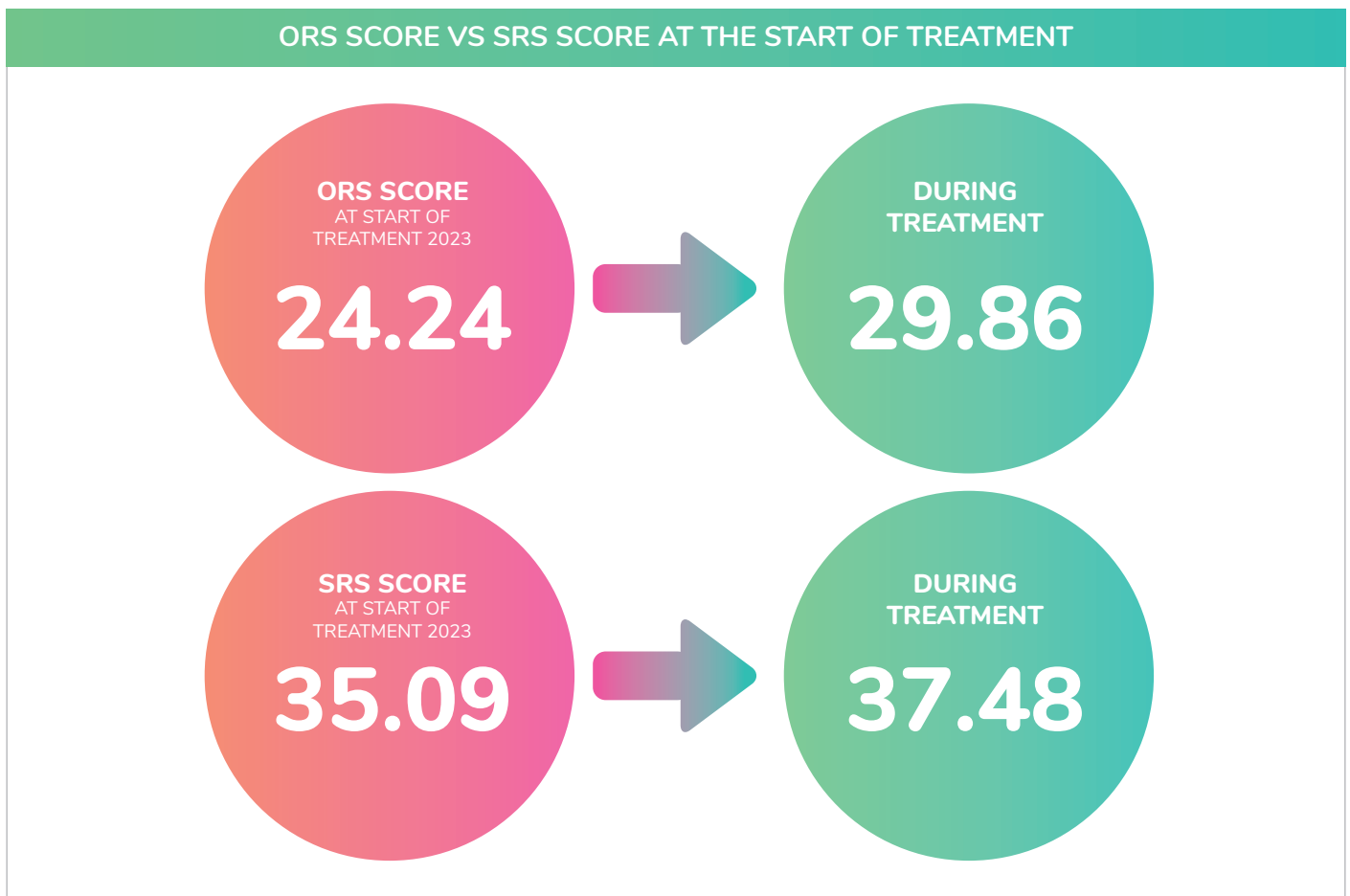
1) Clients complete the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) at the start of the session, which measures their feelings of individual, interpersonal and social well-being.

2) Clients complete the Session Rating Scale (SRS) at the end of the session, which measures the therapeutic relationship and their feelings about their practitioner's approach.

Scores range from 0-40 for both scales.

For the ORS, scores below 28 indicate clinical distress, while scores above 28 and up to 40 indicate increasing well-being. For the SRS, scores below 36 indicate challenges in the therapeutic relationship, while scores above 36 and up to 40 indicate increasingly healthy and trustworthy therapeutic alliances.

For KYDS' clients in 2023, ORS scores improved from an average of 24.24 at the start of treatment to 29.86 during treatment and SRS scores increased from 35.09 to 37.48.



This means that clients, on average, indicated clinical distress upon presentation, but after an average of 14 sessions, improved to no longer indicate clinical distress and had strong, comfortable relationships with their clinician.

CLIENT OUTCOMES IN 2023: CLIENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY

We also measure our clients' experience with KYDS, through the Your Experience of Service (YES) survey. In 2023, YES survey findings showed that:

- 85% of clients always felt comfortable using the service
- 92% of clients always felt safe using the service
- 100% of clients always (83%) or usually (17%) felt the service met their needs
- 90% of clients rated their last three months with the service as excellent (71%) or very good (19%).

When asked what the best things about the service were, young people reported:

“ That I feel supported and comfortable to share how I'm feeling 100% of the time. ”

“ Flexible, lots of offers of food and great communication. ”

“ Getting listened to and not judged. ”

“ The fact that we could joke and laugh about things and it felt like I was talking to my best friend. ”

“ My counsellor is amazing, and she helps me through everything, and she does everything in her power to be there for me. ”

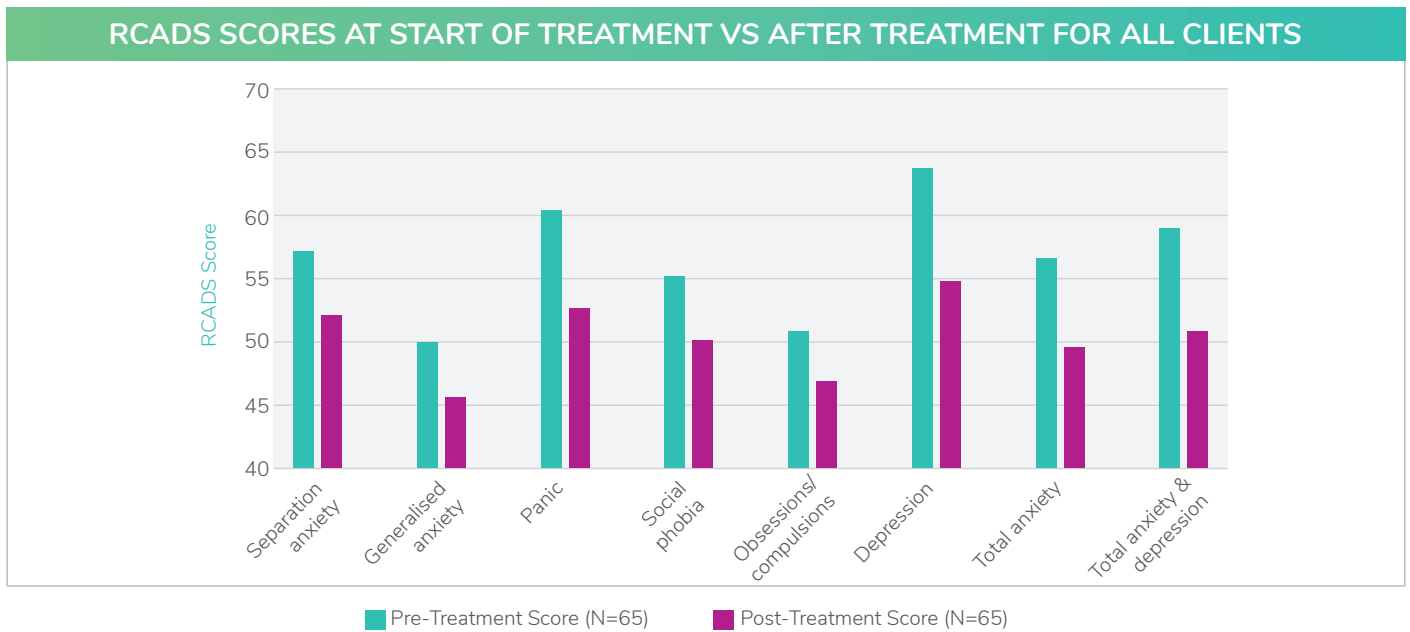
“ Being able to discuss whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted to. ”

“ I never felt alone dealing with all the challenges over the years. ”

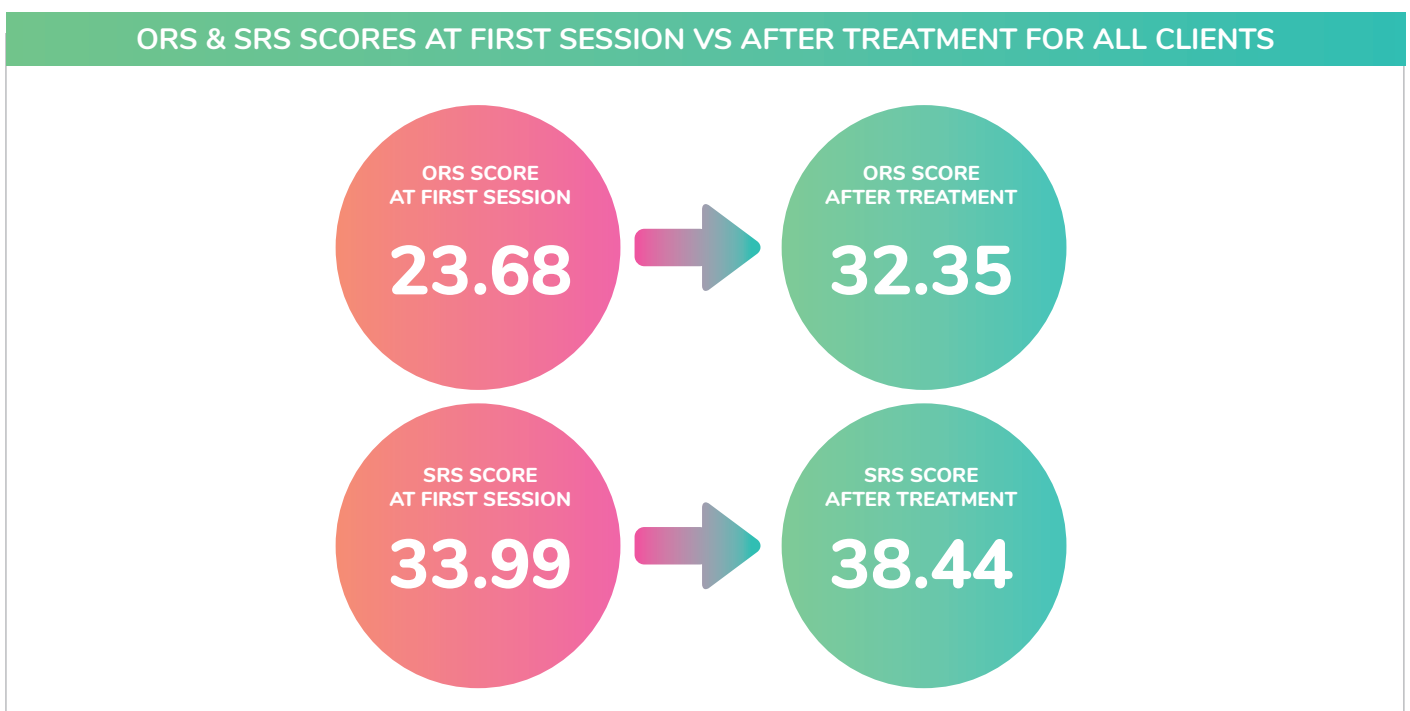
“ Knowing I'll have my feelings and opinions listened to every fortnight. ”

CLIENT OUTCOMES ACROSS THE KYDS JOURNEY

When considering data for all clients captured between 2019 and 2023, KYDS has seen some significant improvements in symptoms. For the 65 clients who completed RCADS before and after being a client at KYDS, symptoms of anxiety and depression reduced almost 10 points, which is a statistically significant improvement with a large effect size.



Almost half (44%) of these clients entered the service with clinically high levels of anxiety and depression. Of these clients, 55% reduced symptoms to below clinical levels before exit*, indicating recovery in their time with KYDS. Similar findings are evidenced for the ORS and SRS scores, with young people making significant improvements in functioning and completing treatment well below the clinical cutoffs for concern.



* Note that not all exits meant that the young person had completed their treatment journey. Some were referred to other services while others disengaged with treatment without consulting their Clinician.

ENHANCING OUR MODEL OF CARE

In the year ahead, we will further develop skills within our team to work with families. This particular aim will be achieved through whole service training in Parent Hope Project, which will enable us to provide mental health support for young people via their parents or carers.

We will deepen our commitment to working holistically by enhancing the team's ability to work with a young person's wider support network, including school staff, other health providers, social workers, mentors and others. We anticipate increased engagement with the wider system over the course of 2024, with specific training related to coordinating the network and supporting young person-informed plans which aim to increase stability and improve young person and family functioning.

KYDS will closely monitor and track clients who are disengaging early from treatment for further analysis of the reasons for disengagement and implement any learnings into the evolution of the service for the year ahead.



ABOUT KYDS

KYDS is a community-based non-profit that has provided free, accessible mental health support to countless young people and their families since 2005. We ensure young people aged 10 - 18 can reach out for support without the need for a Medicare card, GP referral or mental health plan, delivering about 7500 counselling sessions annually. As well as early intervention through counselling, KYDS is committed to promoting mental well-being and the prevention of mental health challenges in young people.

Our vital service is possible thanks to the support of our community. We are extremely grateful to the individuals, businesses, trusts, foundations and partnerships that allow KYDS to continue to support local young people.

We acknowledge the incredible work of the Clinicians, staff and volunteers who enable KYDS to achieve the positive outcomes for young people and families outlined in this Impact Report.



KYDS is supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

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YOUTH COUNSELLING

Before and After I came to counselling

8.5/10

BEFORE:

Ignored my anxiety (that didn't help)



Worried almost all the time

Let my anxiety take over and prevent me from having fun

Didn't know how to treat my anxiety

MY BRAIN BEFORE:



Pink = worried about bad things happening to me or my family

Blue = worried about school and exams and failing

orange = worried about the future

red = worried about doing something wrong

had negative thoughts

Can use my anxiety to help me

5.5/10

AFTER

Have more fun.



Have more positive thoughts
Have skills to treat my anxiety

Still worried/anxious but LESS

MY BRAIN AFTER:



Light blue = look forward to things more

Purple = think more Optimistically

SUPPORT KYDS

Please support KYDS by scanning the QR code. All donations, no matter the size, are gratefully received.

