

# Callers of Non-English Speaking Backgrounds



## Definition

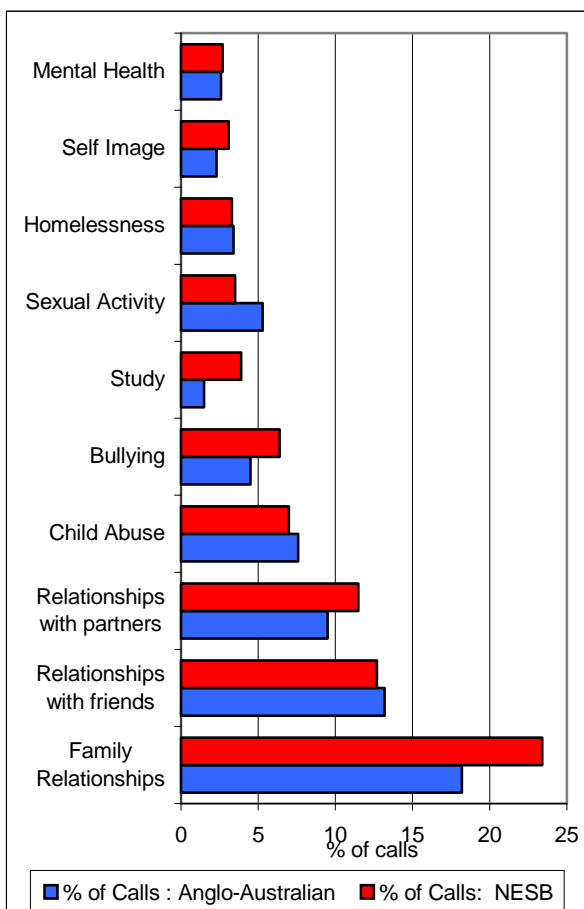
Kids Help Line defines NESB callers as any caller whose first language is not English or whose cultural background, of immediate family, is derived from a non-English-speaking tradition. This does not include callers from English speaking nations such as England, USA or Canada.

The proportion of calls Kids Help Line receives each year from children and young people of non-English speaking backgrounds has steadily increased from 4.1% in 1995 to 9.4% of all counselling calls made in 2000.

The information presented in this report is based on data collected between 1995 and 1999. Across this five year period, 6,614 calls were recorded from NESB children and young people. Given that only 27% of callers choose to reveal their ethnic background, this figure is a significant under-representation of actual calls from children and young people of non-English speaking backgrounds.

## Main Problems

Ten issues stand out as the major concerns for NESB callers. Together these ten problems (of a possible 35) account for over 75% of calls from young Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds.



The above graph compares the percentage of calls from NESB and Anglo-Australian groups for these ten problems (as represented by proportion of calls from each group).

As is the case for all callers, regardless of background, callers of non-English-speaking backgrounds most often contact the service to talk about problems related to their family and family relationships.

For issues such as bullying, study, self image and relationships with partners, callers of NESB backgrounds make higher proportions of calls than their Anglo counterparts. Problems concerning pregnancy, sexual-activity, drug use and developmental issues attract a significantly lower proportion of calls from this group.

## Age & Gender Differences

Of the NESB young people, females make the majority (73%) of calls with males making 27%. While family relationships represent the main concern for both genders, differences are apparent in the problems which concern males and females of non-English speaking backgrounds. The table below shows the top 7 problems, in rank order, for each gender.

FEMALE	MALE
Family Relationships	Family Relationships
Relationships with Friends	Bullying
Partner Relationships	Sexual Activity
Bullying	Relationships with Friends
Study	Partner Relationships
Self Image	Study
Physical Abuse	Loneliness

The majority of callers of non-English speaking backgrounds are aged between 15 and 18. This is a different pattern of service usage than is the case with callers from an Anglo background (see table below).

AGE	NESB	ANGLO
5-9 years	3.0%	3.7%
10-14 years	39.7%	53.3%
15-18 years	57.4%	43.1%

Family relationships and child abuse emerge as concerns for NESB children across all ages while bullying is more of an issue for callers younger than 15. As children grow older, problems involving relationships with partners, homelessness, self image, sexual activity and study become more of an issue.

## Family Relationships

Relationships with parents and family is the biggest concern, accounting for 1 in 4 calls from NESB young people. Almost 60% of these children and young people report experiencing frequent or major family conflict or disruption.

Compared with their Anglo-Australian peers, NESB callers are more likely to seek help about frequent or major family conflict and disruption and less likely to be phoning about family breakdown, separation or divorce.

In addition, qualitative analysis reveals conflict in NESB families is more likely to be intergenerational conflict as opposed to marital conflict/disruption caused by separation or divorce. The sources of intergenerational conflict include:

- The struggle for independence, with young people feeling their parents are overprotective and overly strict;
- Living between two cultures – parents of non-English speaking background and children growing up in “Australian” culture;
- Young people feeling restricted in their choice of and time with friends;
- Parental restrictions on dating and socializing; and
- Academic expectations and pressure from parents.

## Peer Relationships

Friendship and peer relationship concerns are the second most common reason NESB young people seek help. When compared to their Anglo-Australian counterparts, NESB callers are less likely to phone about occasional or one-off problems but more likely to phone about significant or ongoing problems with friends and peers. These young people are also more likely to report difficulties making or maintaining friendships.

The 30% of NESB callers who report significant or ongoing friendship problems reveal that these problems are often related to teasing and bullying or cultural and language differences. Similarly, language and cultural differences are the major themes in calls related to making and maintaining friendships for NESB children. Significant peer relationship issues may also be linked to parental restrictions on friendships, study commitments and being different in a new school.

## Intimate Relationships

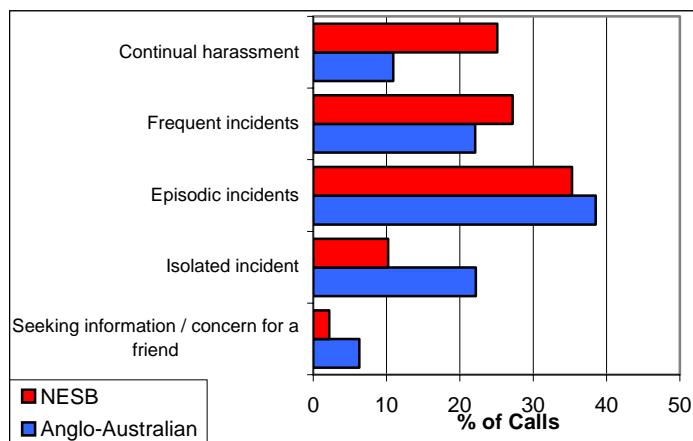
Relationships with partners is the third most common concern for young people of non-English speaking backgrounds, accounting for almost 12% of their calls.

When examining the nature of these calls, young people of non-English speaking backgrounds call less often about pressure to have sex or uncertainty about sex in their intimate relationships than their Anglo counterparts. The majority (57%) of their concerns relate to establishing or negotiating new relationships. A further 40% of calls relate to significant relationship difficulties or relationship breakdown.

## Bullying

Children and young people of non-English speaking backgrounds make 40% more calls concerning bullying than their Anglo-Australian counterparts.

Furthermore, the bullying NESB callers report is more severe and often based on racial or cultural differences. The graph below compares the severity of bullying calls.



Children and young people of non-English speaking backgrounds are more likely to be experiencing frequent bullying or continual harassment (52%) than their Anglo-Australian counterparts (33%). Qualitative data suggests much of the episodic, frequent and continual bullying is related to racial differences.

## Study Issues

Young people of non-English speaking backgrounds are more than twice as likely to be concerned about study issues, accounting for 3.9% of NESB calls as compared to 1.5% of Anglo-Australian calls.

In addition, NESB young people are more likely to be calling about study-related stress than Anglo callers. Almost half (43%) of these calls relate to workload, study pressure or exams, compared to 24% of Anglo callers. Other common issues (35%) include difficulties with study or need for assistance in managing schoolwork. Qualitative evidence of NESB calls shows that study stress is often related to parental expectations while difficulties with study often centre on difficulties coping with English as a second language.

## Self Image

Self-image issues are the ninth most frequent reason that children and young people of non-English speaking backgrounds contact the service, accounting for 3% of all counselling calls. This proportion is 30% higher than for Anglo-Australian callers.

The majority (59%) of NESB self-image concerns relate to persistent low self-value or severe feelings of worthlessness. A further 27% of callers report occasional dissatisfaction with self. The remaining self-image calls are from children and young people seeking information or concerned about a minor or transient issue.

For more detailed information about children and young people of non-English speaking backgrounds who contact Kids Help Line a comprehensive report is available for purchase:

“Issues and Concerns Facing Young People from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds” can be ordered from Kids Help Line by phone or email.

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## For more information

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### NATIONAL OFFICE:

PO Box 376, Red Hill, Qld, 4059  
Ph (07) 3369 1588 Fax (07) 3367 1266  
Email [admin@kidshelp.com.au](mailto:admin@kidshelp.com.au)  
24 hour telephone counselling line: 1800 55 1800