

#keready

Hold My Hand

Keready

to Ringa!



**A CALL TO BE HEARD, HELD AND UNDERSTOOD**

The Keready to Ringa competition was launched by Keready to open up real conversations between teenagers and adults about how they want to be treated, supported, and heard. In a world where young people are often spoken about but rarely listened to, this was a space where their voices came first.

Age	Count	Percentage
10 yrs		0.16%
11 yrs		0.33%
12 yrs		0.49%
13 yrs		8.69%
14 yrs		13.94%
15 yrs		14.10%
16 yrs		13.94%
17 yrs		18.14%
18 yrs		43.21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>100%</b>

Province	Count	Percentage
GP (Gauteng)	283	33.62%
KZN (KwaZulu-Natal)	97	11.52%
LP (Limpopo)	84	9.98%
EC (Eastern Cape)	71	8.44%
NW (North West)	68	8.08%
MP (Mpumalanga)	52	6.18%
FS (Free State)	37	4.40%
WC (Western Cape)	35	4.16%
NC (Northern Cape)	9	1.07%
<b>Total</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Submissions: 739**

## What Young People Want A Call to Be Heard, Held and Understood

### *Insights from Keready to Ringa*

The Keready to Ringa competition was launched by Keready to open up real conversations between teenagers and adults about how they want to be treated, supported, and heard. In a world where young people are often spoken about but rarely listened to, this was a space where their voices came first.

Their messages, shared through voice notes, videos, songs, letters, drawings, and poems, were raw and honest. They remind us that teenagers are asking for respect, for understanding, and for presence. We are taking these voices forward, not only into our campaigns, but also into our communities and into policy discussions and the systems that serve them.

Some of the main themes identified were:

- **Mental health**
- **Respect**
- **Real listening**
- **Safety to explore who they are**
- **Love without judgement**

**"DON'T JUST TELL US TO SPEAK. MAKE IT SAFE FOR US TO BE HEARD."** 14

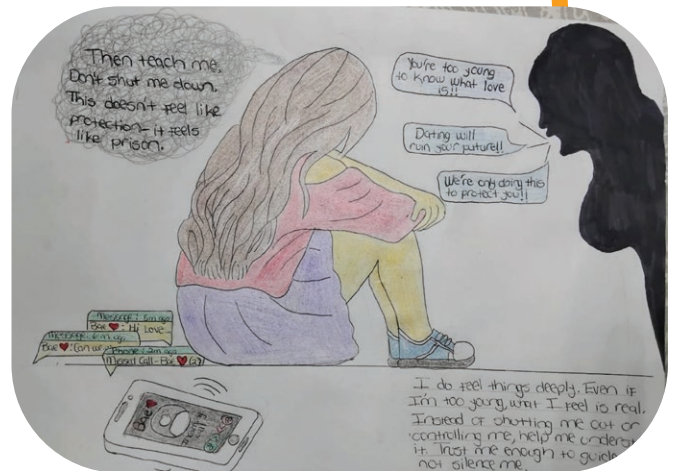
Too many young people say they've given up trying to talk to adults because they're met with judgement, shouting or silence.

- **"I feel heard when you get it, when you understand that being a teen is hard.... I just need you to listen, without interrupting, anew."** 14
- **"I wish you'd see me beyond the grades, beyond the expectations. See the real me, with all my imperfections and flaws."** 18

**"DEPRESSION IS REAL. IT'S NOT JUST A PHASE."** 18

Mental health came up in almost every submission, sometimes directly, sometimes hidden in metaphors. Teens are dealing with grief, anxiety, trauma, and identity challenges, often with no safe space to talk about it.

- **"Sometimes depression visits me and offers me a cup of suicidal thoughts. Anxiety and I...re metswalle."** 17
- **"It is a good feeling knowing there's someone you can talk to during hard times. Because depression is real."** 18

**"RESPECT ME, DON'T JUST CONTROL ME."** 17

A common thread was the desire for respect, not just rules. Teens are tired of being shouted at, compared to others, or dismissed when they share how they feel.

- **"Just because I'm a child doesn't mean I should be disrespected. Respect goes both ways."** 16
- **"Adults must stop comparing us to our cousins or siblings. We all walk different journeys."** 16
- **"You don't need to fix me. Just be there."** 15

***“WILL YOU STILL LOVE ME IF I’M NOT WHAT YOU EXPECTED?”*** 15

Young people are exploring their identities, asking questions, and hoping to be met with love, not rejection.

- **“What if my heart says something else? I feel like myself... but I’m scared. Will they still love me?”** 15
- **“To boys like me: it’s okay to cry. You’re not alone. You still can fly.”** 17

***“SCHOOL SHOULD NOT BE A SOURCE OF PAIN.”*** 14

Many entries described school as a place of stress, bullying, and anxiety, and made worse when teachers are harsh or unkind.

- **“Teachers must know we come from different homes. Some of us are dealing with a lot, and jokes in class can destroy us.”** 13
- **“I try hard and still don’t meet expectations. Then I’m told I’m lazy.”** 15

***“YOU DON’T SEE WHAT I’M CARRYING.”*** 17

Some youth shared stories of violence, death, poverty, broken families or rejection. And still, they show up. But their message is clear: adults don’t always see the weight they carry.

- **“I watched my father’s breathless body lying on the floor. Life hasn’t been easy ever since. My mother is my safest place.”** 13
- **“Sometimes I feel like I’m drowning... anxiety’s a constant hum in the background of my mind.”** 14

***"THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I COULD SAY THESE THINGS."*** 17

Many described how writing or drawing for this competition was the first time they had ever been asked what they want and the first time they felt truly seen.

Some submitted anonymously. Some apologised for "not writing well enough." But what they all did was trust us. With truth, rage, heartbreak, and courage.

## What This Means

Keready does not just see this as feedback and advocates to make this a call to action. Teenagers are telling us what they need. We just need to listen, support, fund and shift.

- **Normalise mental health support in schools, clinics and families.**
- **Train parents, caregivers, and teachers in trauma-informed care and emotional intelligence.**
- **Invest in safe creative platforms, poetry, audio, drawing, that allow expression outside formal spaces.**
- **Protect spaces for identity exploration, especially for LGBTQ+ and gender-questioning youth.**
- **Elevate teen leadership. Don't only consult children and teens, but co-create with them.**

***"ALL I SEEK FROM YOU IS TO HOLD MY HAND. KEREADY TO RINGA."***

Keready is part of the Hold My Hand national campaign of action for children and teens in support of the National Strategy to Accelerate Action for Children (NSAAC). The NSAAC calls on all of society to prioritise children. Over 160 organisations from across civil society have already partnered with Hold My Hand.

Keready is a fully digital platform, committed to supporting teenagers with the information and care they need. With a growing WhatsApp community, engaging social media content, and a dedicated support team, Keready is more present than ever.