

# LIFE AT 23 THEN+NOW

The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian youth (LSAY) is a study that follows young Australians over 10 years, from the age of 15 through to 25, as they move from school to further study, work and into adulthood.

*Life at 23: Then & Now* provides a snapshot of 23-year-old Australians' study, work, home life and attitudes. We compare the latest results from the cohort that commenced the program in 2009 (Y09) who were 23-years-old in 2017 with those that went before them 10 years earlier, the 1998 commencing cohort (Y98) who were 23-years-old in 2007. Using the data from their interviews, we can understand how things have changed over time for young Australians.

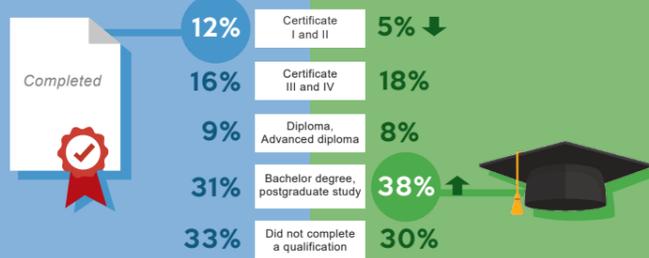


2007

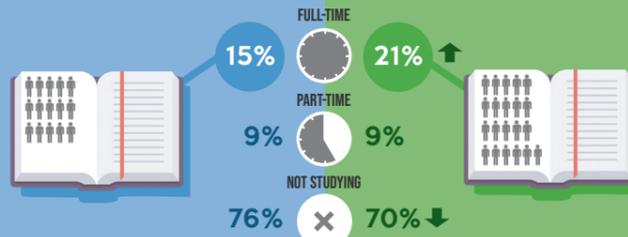
2017

## EDUCATION

### HIGHEST POST-SCHOOL QUALIFICATION COMPLETED

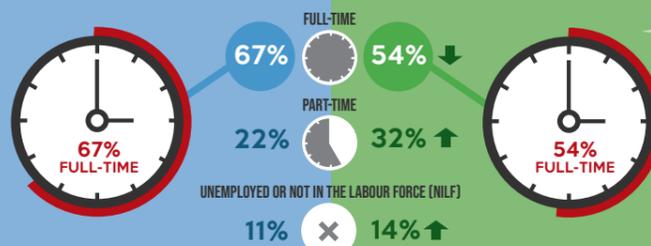


### EDUCATION STATUS



## EMPLOYMENT

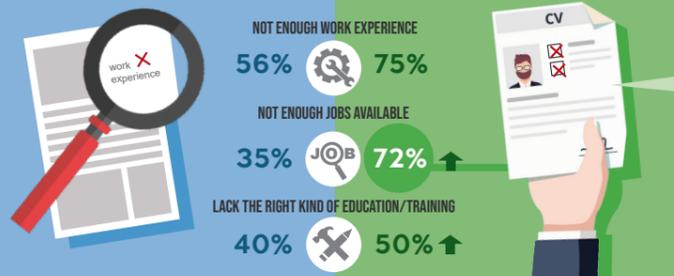
### EMPLOYMENT STATUS



### TOP 5 OCCUPATIONS

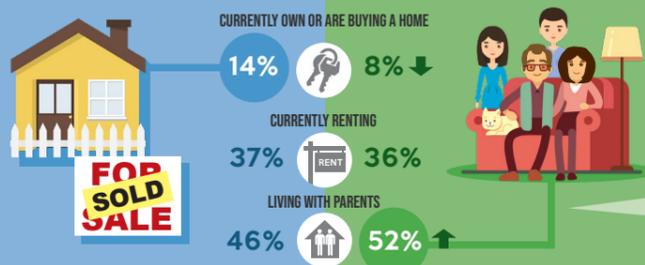


### PERCEIVED JOB BARRIERS

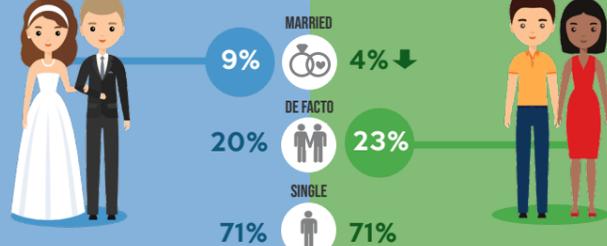


## LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

### RESIDENTIAL STATUS



### MARITAL STATUS



Comprising young people born in 1993–94, the LSAY Y09 cohort belongs to the generation known as Gen Y<sup>1</sup>. Gen Y is considered to be the first global generation and since early childhood, has been surrounded by information and communication technologies, a globalised world and the ability to travel. They have lived through the rise of the internet and endured uncertain economic times<sup>2</sup>.

With the rise of new technologies, Gen Y are experiencing changes in the way people look for work and attract and retain employees. So how do transitions into adulthood for this cohort compare with those of the past? Are young people entering the workforce at the same rates? What are the most common barriers to finding work?

The LSAY Y09 cohort commenced the LSAY program in 2009 when they were 15-years-old. Fast forward eight years to 2017 and our Gen Y school students are now 23-years-old, and many are completing or continuing their post-school studies, entering the workforce or establishing their careers. Using 2007 data from the 1998 commencing cohort (Y98), when these participants were the same age, we explore how transitions into adulthood have changed over the last decade.

Young people are remaining in education for longer. In 2017, about 30% of 23-year-olds were still studying compared with 24% in 2007. Coupled with longer periods of study, today's young people are also becoming more qualified with higher proportions having obtained a bachelor degree or higher level qualification.

Over the past decade, the proportion of 23-year-olds in full-time work has decreased significantly. Fewer young people are able to secure full-time work, and the proportion of those employed on a casual basis is increasing.

While some of the more common occupations among young people remain the same when compared with their peers from 10 years ago, such as sales assistants and retail managers, we also see a higher proportion of young people gaining jobs in the growing areas of health and personal care.

With fewer 23-year-olds securing full-time work and an increase in the proportion of unemployed youth, it's no surprise to see today's young people are struggling more than ever when it comes to finding a job.

More than one-third of those who were not working but looking for work also reported lacking confidence and their age as barriers they faced when looking for work.

The rising cost of housing over the past decade has seen a decrease in the proportion of 23-year-olds entering the housing market. As a result, more young people are remaining in their parental home for longer.

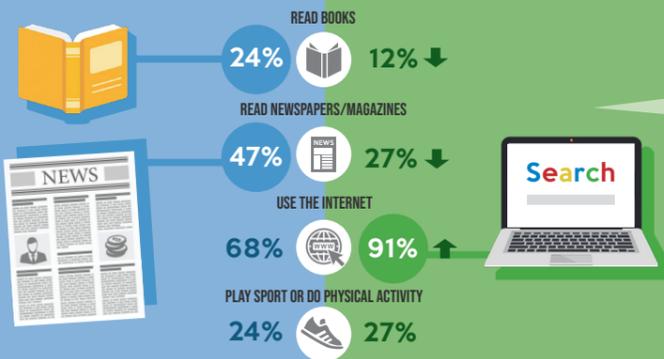
## FINANCES

### MANAGING FINANCIALLY



The proportion of 23-year-olds who own a credit card has almost halved over the last decade. This reflects a general shift from credit card to debit card ownership, particularly for young people who are increasingly concerned about personal debt. The LSAY Y09 cohort commenced the program just after the Global Financial Crisis of 2007–08, which saw a decline in the use of credit cards across all age groups, but noticeably among 18–29-year-olds.<sup>3</sup>

## DAILY LEISURE ACTIVITIES

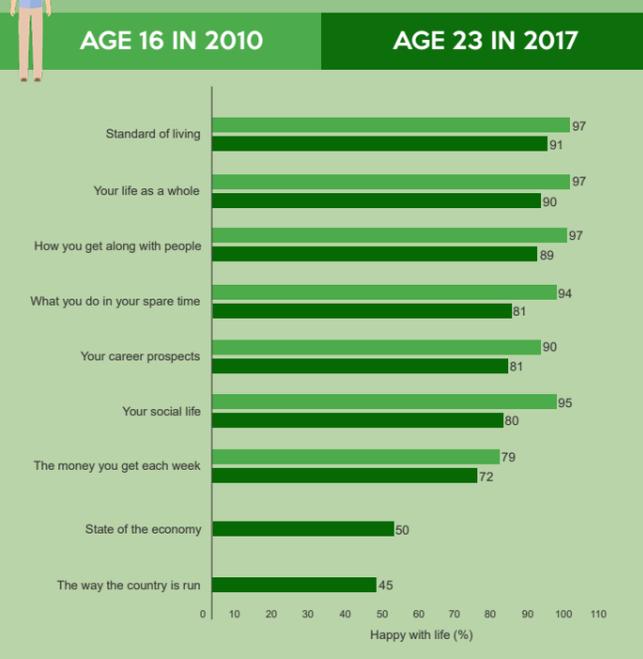


With the continuing growth of the internet and online digital platforms, it's no surprise the proportion of young people reading books, newspapers and magazines has decreased. Despite this, it's pleasing to see this hasn't impacted the proportion of young people engaging in physical activity on a daily basis.

There has also been a significant increase in the proportion of 23-year-olds who engage in community activities (for example, being involved in a political group, community radio or a performing arts group) from 26% in 2007 to 42% in 2017.

## LIFE SATISFACTION

For our respondents who were 23 in 2017, we look at their happiness across different aspects of their lives and compare this with their happiness when they were 16-years-old in 2010.



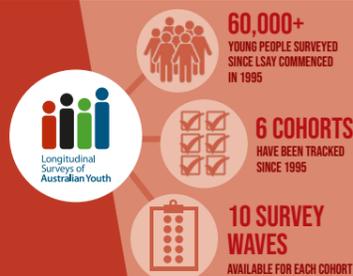
Note: respondents were not asked about the state of the economy or the way the country is run at age 16 in 2010.

These findings are consistent with other research which shows the relationship between age and life satisfaction is U-shaped. Satisfaction is high as a teenager and decreases as people move into their twenties due to increased stresses and responsibilities surrounding family and work.<sup>4</sup>

## PAVING FUTURE PATHWAYS

The wealth of information provided by LSAY helps us to understand the key events in the lives of young Australians and provides a valuable evidence-base towards informing future programs and policies. The data are freely available to researchers and policymakers.

Visit [www.lsay.edu.au](http://www.lsay.edu.au) to explore the results of past and present LSAY surveys and see how the lives of Australian youth have changed over time.



Note: The arrows in this infographic indicate a statistically significant difference when comparing 23-year-olds in 2007 with 2017.

- References:
1. McCrindle, M & Wolfinger, E 2009, *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the global generations*, UNSW Press, Sydney.
  2. Stejanova, H & Tesařová, E 2015, *Specification and characteristic of Generation Y in the sphere of work attitude*, conference paper, 2nd Dubrovnik International Economic Meeting, Croatia.
  3. Bagnall, J, Chong, S & Smith, K 2011, *Strategic Review of Innovation in the Payments System: Results of the Reserve Bank of Australia's 2010 Consumer Payments Use Study*, Reserve Bank of Australia.
  4. Cassells, R, Gong, H & Keegan, M 2010, *The pursuit of happiness - Life satisfaction in Australia*, AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth Report, Issue 26, July, Sydney, AMP.

Sources:  
National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2018, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, 2009 cohort (version 7.0).  
—2011, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, 1998 cohort (version 3.1).

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This work has been produced by NCVET through the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) program, on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments, with funding provided through the Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

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