

# GENERATION Z: LIFE AT 22

The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) follow young Australians from the age of 15 up until they are 25, exploring young people's experiences as they leave school, begin post-school study, and enter the workforce.

*Generation Z: life at 22* brings together information from LSAY participants who commenced the program when they were 15 years old in 2015. Using findings from their interviews in 2022, we look at their engagement with study and work and how this has changed over time. We also explore their levels of financial stress, mental health, and satisfaction with life and how this compares with 22-year-olds in 2016.

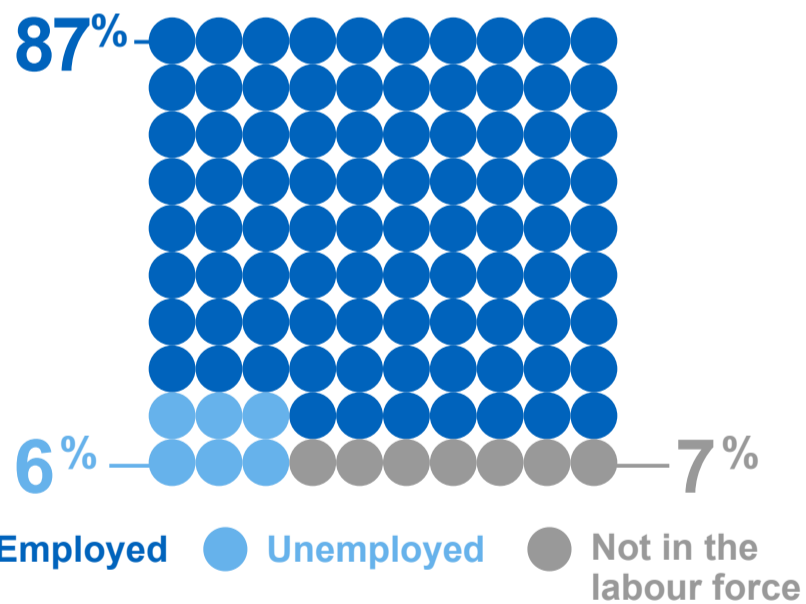
## AGE 22 IN 2022

### WORK AND STUDY

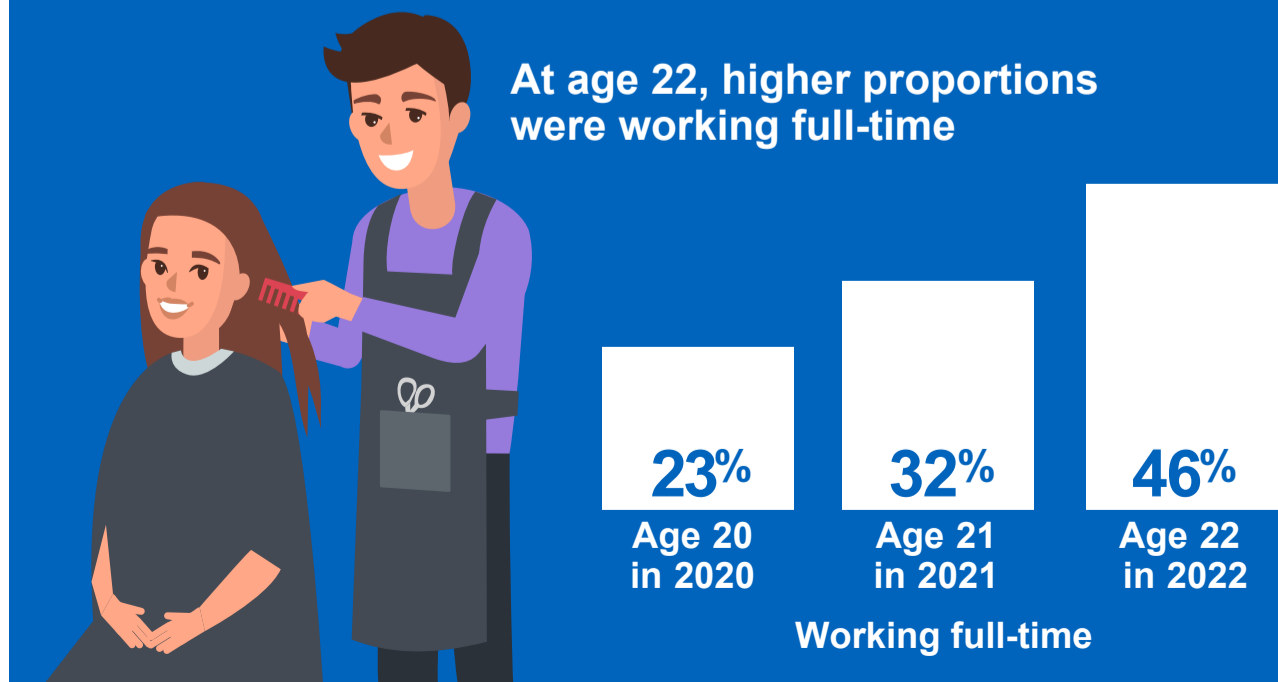
At age 22, most young people were engaged in study or work



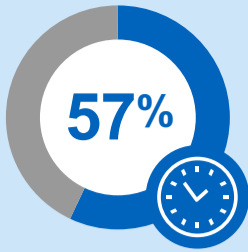
The vast majority of young people were working



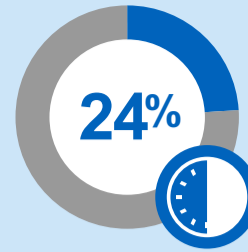
At age 22, higher proportions were working full-time



Is this the job you'd like to have as a career?



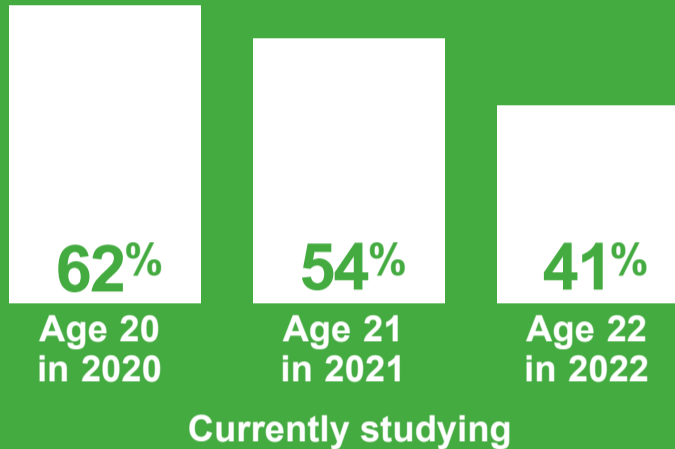
More than half of full-timers were in their "career job" at age 22



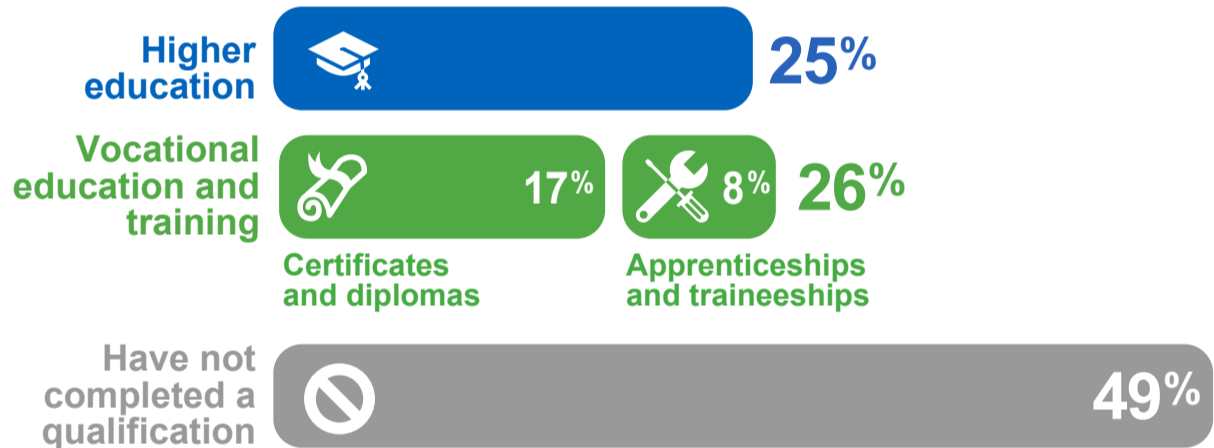
While only 1 in 4 part-timers saw their current job as their "career job"



At age 22, the proportion of young people in post-school education decreased



Just over half have completed a post-school qualification

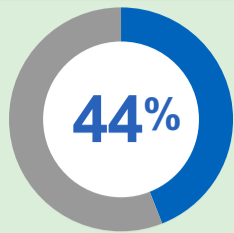


♂  
MALE

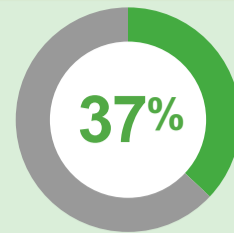
A higher proportion of males were working full-time compared with females

♀  
FEMALE





And a higher proportion of males were in their "career job" at age 22



TOP 5 FULL-TIME JOBS



- Electricians
- Carpenters and joiners
- Sales assistants
- Motor mechanics
- Truck drivers

- General clerks
- Sales assistants
- Registered nurses
- Child carers
- Primary school teachers

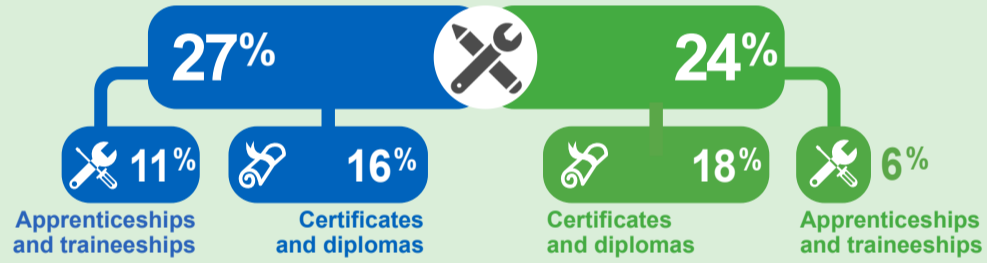


Females had higher rates of qualification completions than males

Higher education



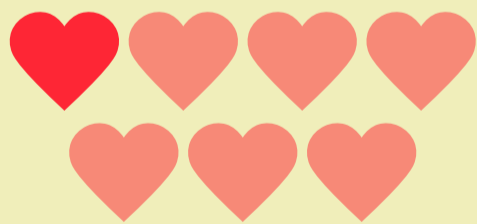
Vocational education and training



Have not completed a qualification



COMMUNITY



1 in 7 provided unpaid care for another person



2 in 3 young carers spent ten or more hours a week caring for others



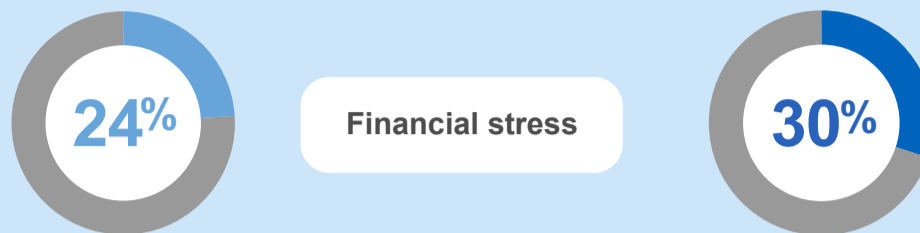
1 young person in every 25 experienced homelessness

# FINANCES AND HEALTH

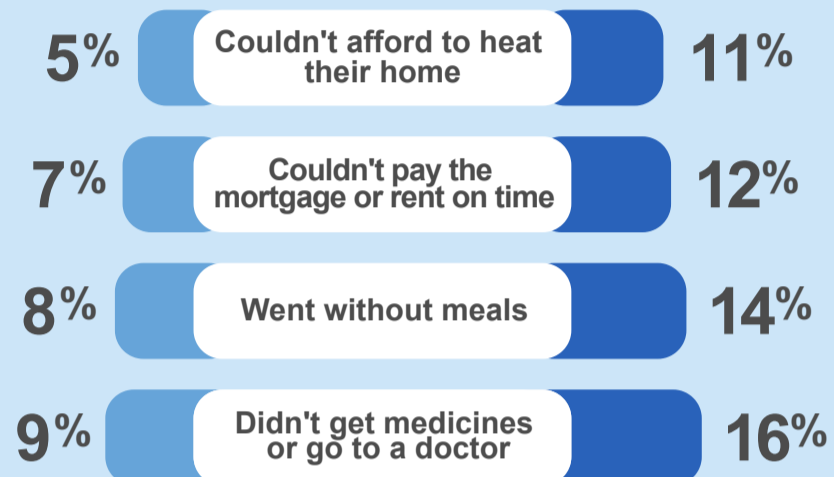
Age 22 in 2016

Age 22 in 2022

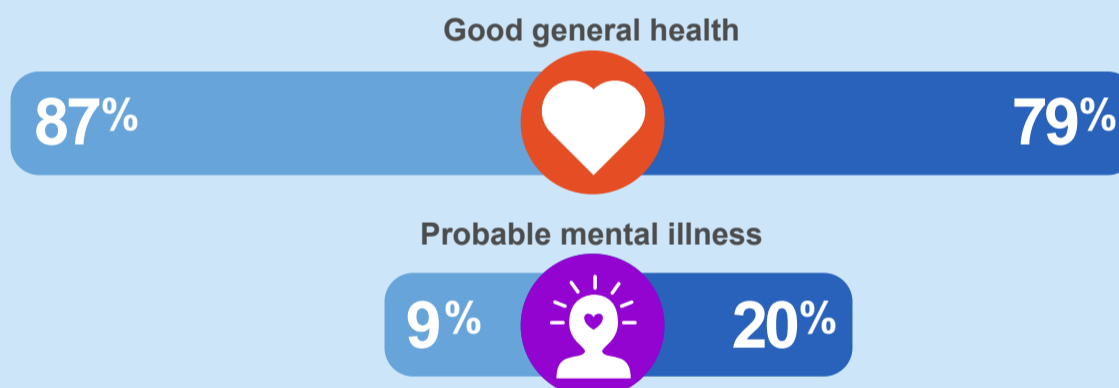
There was an increase in the proportion of 22-year-olds in financial stress



Increasing proportions of young people were unable to meet their basic needs



The proportion of young people reporting they were in good health declined, while those likely to have a mental illness more than doubled



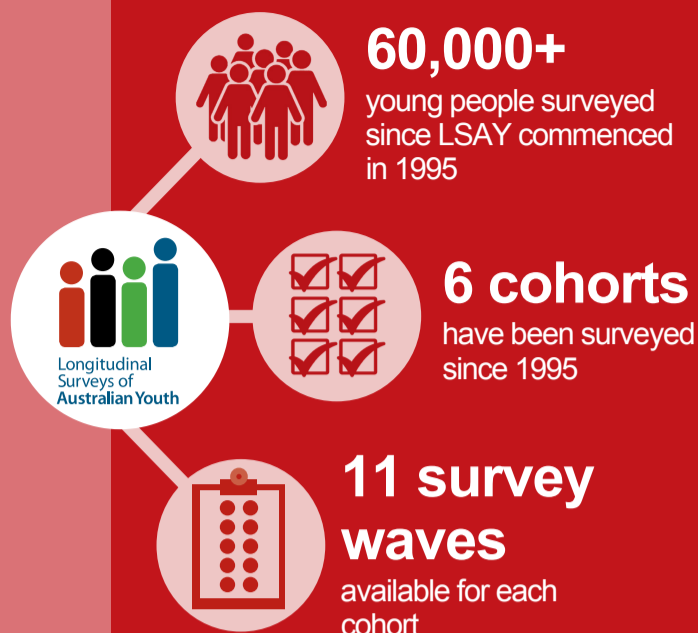
Overall, there was a decline in the proportion of young people who reported they were happy with life



# PAVING FUTURE PATHWAYS

For more than 25 years, LSAY participants have shared important information about their life experiences as they transition from school into adulthood, providing an enormous evidence base to explore in detail the key events in the lives of young Australians.

The data for all six LSAY cohorts, which now spans multiple generations, is freely available to researchers, policymakers and those with an interest in youth issues. Visit [www.lsay.edu.au](http://www.lsay.edu.au) to find out more.



## NOTES ON THE DATA

The LSAY 2015 sample is designed to be representative of 15-year-old Australian school students in 2015. Survey responses are weighted to the 15-year-old student population to account for the survey being undertaken as a sample rather than the entire target population. Due to population shifts over time and survey non-response, care must be taken when comparing LSAY results against other samples which have been drawn from different populations; and the results reported here may not represent national benchmarks. Further information is available from the [LSAY 2015 cohort user guide](#).

Percentages may not always add to 100 per cent because of rounding error.

### Engaged in study and work

- Fully engaged: Working or studying full-time or combining part-time work and part-time study.
- Partially engaged: Working or studying part-time.
- Not engaged: Unemployed or not in the labour force and not studying

### Working full-time

Those who are working but their working time is unknown have been excluded. This figure tends to be around 7.5 per cent on average but was particularly high in 2020 due to COVID at 17 per cent. This may distort the full-time/part-time working rates in that year.

### Currently studying

Currently studying includes those who are studying a post-school qualification. Students who are currently studying may have also completed a qualification.

### Completed a post-school qualification

For respondents who completed more than one post-school qualification, the highest qualification level is recorded. For example, for those that completed both a university and VET qualification, the university qualification takes precedence. In addition, apprenticeship and traineeship completions take precedence over certificates. "Certificates and diplomas" include certificates I-IV as well as those with an unknown certificate level.

When considering qualification completions more broadly, 26% had completed a VET qualification only, 24% had completed a university qualification only, and about 1% had completed both a VET and university qualification. Statistical testing shows no evidence to suggest that, by age 22, young people are more likely to have completed a VET qualification over a university degree, or vice versa.

### Working full-time and part-time by gender

Figures do not add to 100 per cent because those who are working but their working time is unknown are not shown.

### Financial stress

'In financial stress' includes those who responded 'Yes' to two or more of the following shortage of money events: You sold something because you needed money; You went without meals; You had to ask family or friends for money; You had to borrow money just to live on; Didn't get medicines or go to a doctor; You couldn't buy text books or other study materials; You couldn't buy other things you needed; You couldn't pay electricity, gas or telephone bills on time; You couldn't pay mortgage/rent on time; You couldn't afford to heat your home.

The following questions were only asked of those who were no longer living in their parental home: You couldn't pay electricity, gas or telephone bills on time; You couldn't pay mortgage/rent on time; You couldn't afford to heat your home.

### Shortage of money

Only a selection of shortage of money events has been presented. The full series includes 10 measures as listed under "Financial stress".

### Good general health

Includes those who responded "Good", "Very good" or "Excellent" when asked to rate their general health.

### Probable mental illness

'Probable mental illness' is derived using responses to the six Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6) question items. Figures exclude those who didn't answer one or more of the six psychological distress questions. For each question, a 5-point Likert scale is used with scores (which take the values 1 to 5) indicating the frequency of the symptom. The total possible values across the six items range from 6-30 and are categorised as:

- Likely to have a serious mental illness (total score = 6-17)
- Not likely to have a serious mental illness (total score = 18-30).

These categories have been adapted from Kessler et al (2010). See ABS 2012, 'Use of the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale in ABS Health Surveys, Australia, 2007-08', <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/4817.0.55.001chapter92007-08>

### Happy with their life as a whole

The measure presented here reports those who are happy with their life as a whole as a percentage of all respondents. Respondents were asked to rate their happiness with their life as a whole using an 11-point scale where zero means 'Very unhappy' and 10 means 'Very happy'. Those providing a response of:




- 0-4 are recorded as being unhappy
- 5 are recorded as being neither happy or unhappy
- 6-10 are recorded as being happy.

## SOURCES

National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) 2023, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, 2015 cohort (version 7.0).  
—2020, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, 2009 cohort (version 9.0).

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