

# LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

**SKILLSROAD**  
**2021/22**  
**EMPLOYMENT**  
**SURVEY REPORT**

How an ever-changing world continues to transform the way Australia's emerging and existing workforce plan and approach their professional futures, and what this means for employers and educators moving forward.

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# A SURVEY WITH A DIFFERENCE

The Skillsroad Employment Survey was designed to understand the unique challenges job-seekers in Australia face in their career journeys and what supporting audiences can do to help them feel successful and professionally fulfilled, now and well into the future.

The survey was undertaken between 26<sup>th</sup> November and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 and features an array of insightful responses by 5012 respondents – the vast majority being between 15-24 years of age. For the very first time in our survey's history, we also collected data from those under the age of 15, as well as mature-age job-seekers aged 25 years and over.

Responses were collected via our proprietary database of school students and young job-seekers, as well as direct marketing to parents, guardians and teachers.

All responses remained anonymous and were collected using an online survey tool.



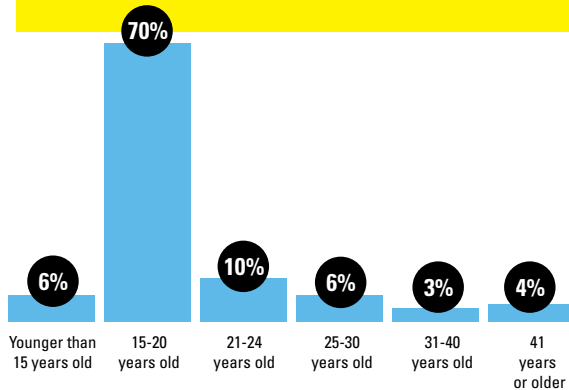
# OUR RESPONDENTS

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

In late 2021, we received 5012 responses from Australian students, job-seekers and employees in all situations and environments.

### AGE

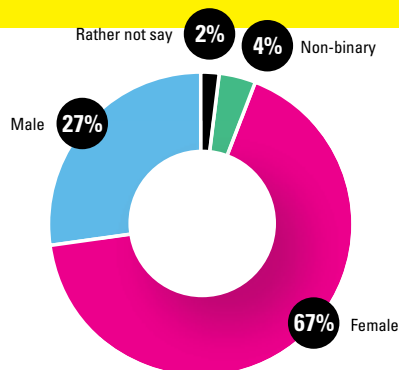
More than three quarters of the completed survey responses were from a person aged 20 years or below.



**Note:** As **86%** of respondents reported their age as under 25, and **92%** under 30, we refer to respondents as 'youth' throughout the report, unless otherwise stated.

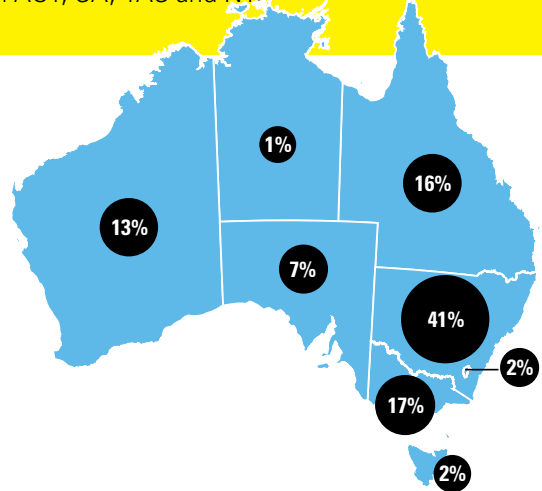
### GENDER

Two out of three respondents were females, three out of eleven respondents were males, and one out of 25 respondents identified as non-binary.



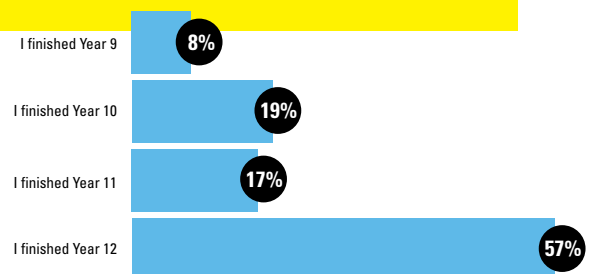
### LOCATION

41% of respondents lived in NSW, while 17% were from VIC, 16% from QLD and 13% from WA. The remainder of respondents were from ACT, SA, TAS and NT.



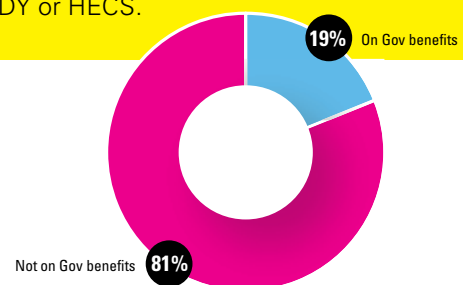
### EDUCATION

Nearly three out of five respondents had finished Year 12.



### INCOME SUPPORT

One in five respondents had received government support such as JobKeeper, JobSeeker, Newstart, Youth Allowance, Austudy, ABSTUDY or HECS.



# SETTING THE SCENE

## INTRODUCTION

While the last two years have shifted the way many Australians work, the outcomes of this ongoing change are still being explored as Australia navigates its way towards a new normal. From industry changes to role readiness, mental health aspects and beyond, there are numerous considerations to be made when contemplating the coming years for Australia's youth and their career trajectories.

The Skillsroad Employment Survey provides timely and significant insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by Australians in 2022 as they transition into the world of work. To aid this smooth transition, the following pages also highlight what employers can do to support and enhance this important stage – today and tomorrow.

This survey has been conducted by Skillsroad, which is an initiative of Apprenticeship Support Australia and part of Business Australia.

Working each day with Australia's youth, educators, mentors, mature-age job-seekers and current and future employers, we have unique insight into the challenges and opportunities each faces going forward. We're passionate about providing our community with the skills, tools and confidence they need to succeed in all their professional ventures.



# A NOTE FROM OUR TEAM



“As an organisation that works with school students, job-seekers and employers every day,

we are privileged to run these national annual surveys. They allow us to hear firsthand about the challenges, concerns, and hopes of our current and future workforce, as well as the barriers to growth facing employers. This year's report has taught us so much – from the importance of providing access to mental health programs for job-seekers and employees, to getting to the bottom of what's holding job-seekers back from applying for roles or even seeking employment. We've uncovered critical insights that will equip employers, parents/guardians and teachers to better support our job-seekers in a more holistic way. It's time to bridge the divide between employer and job-seeker's expectations for their mutual benefit. It is my hope our report will inspire and create positive change.”

**PETER GILCHRIST**

Executive Director, Apprenticeship  
Support Australia & Skillsroad



“This survey provides valuable insights into the experiences of young people as they move from school and into work.

While it has been a complex and uncertain time for many due to COVID-19, 30% of respondents report that they cannot work due to their mental health, and one in four report that they do not feel skilled enough to apply for entry-level jobs. If our end goal is to better support young people in finding and retaining meaningful career pathways, as well as support employers in attracting and engaging talent, then this report unequivocally shines a light on opportunities to do better and be better.”

**DANIELLE BUCKLEY**

Registered and Coaching Psychologist



“School might only be 10% of their life but it's the foundation that sets them up for their future.

Young people have so many career options and opportunities right now that it can feel incredibly overwhelming. It's clear from the data we found that young students are searching for more help earlier in their school life. Thankfully, Skillsroad is great at being able to guide them on the right path.”

**CHARLENE VAUGHAN**

Program Manager and  
Career Coach, Skillsroad

“ This report puts Business NSW in a unique position to understand the challenges faced by young people in sourcing and retaining employment,

whilst understanding the challenges facing businesses in finding and keeping those same young people employed. Given many businesses we hear from are voicing their frustrations about the inability to find staff yet 17% of report respondents believe there aren't enough vacancies - the findings of this report highlight the significant disconnect between businesses and young people understanding those needs. More must be done to bridge this gap and Business NSW is keen to work with governments and other stakeholders to identify and implement solutions.”



**TIMOTHY BURT**

Senior Policy Manager,  
Workforce Skills, Business NSW



“ The ever-changing nature of the recruitment market can lead to a knock in confidence for those who have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time, or those looking to pivot in their career. This can feel very overwhelming.

The assistance we provide is a one-stop-shop. Participants can review their resume, get advice on interview preparation and practice as well as guidance in where best to focus their energy. Mature-age job-seekers need the same amount of career support as younger job-seekers. The difference is in their individual responsibilities and needs that increase and change – owning a home, working around children and partners, taking time out of the workforce to parent or care for loved ones.”

**TELITA SHOAB**

Program Manager, Mid-Career  
Checkpoint Pilot

“ With the findings of the survey reinforcing the importance of culture in attracting candidates and becoming an employer of choice,

it's critical for businesses to invest time and resources into building a culture that makes theirs a desirable place to work. Culture is our unique identity and includes the shared values, norms, expectations and behaviours that underpin the way we approach our work/jobs and develop relationships with each other and all stakeholders. Organisations can start by defining their ideal culture and identifying their current culture. Using those insights, strategies and plans, they can start developing and shaping their ideal workplace values and environment.”



**ANTONIA PILIOS**

HR Business Partner,  
Business Australia



# KEY FINDINGS

To successfully enable young employees to thrive in an ever-evolving workplace, employers and other support networks will need to place a focus on the following:

- 1 Career confidence
- 2 Mental health
- 3 Gender imbalances
- 4 Post pandemic support
- 5 Early preparation
- 6 Future planning

**A brief summary of findings:**

While young Australians looking for work are excited about the future, they're also facing a crisis in confidence – requiring a stronger focus on mental wellbeing, earlier career discussions and a reminder that a lack of skills for entry-level positions is totally normal at this early career stage.





# 1 CAREER CONFIDENCE

## CHOOSING A CAREER, FINDING WORK AND TAKING THE NEXT STEP

Whether school leavers are jumping straight into the job search or taking time off before beginning a new form of study – there are a number of barriers keeping them from their professional goals.

### On the hunt

According to survey findings, the older the respondent, the longer they have been searching for a job. The stats:

- **29% of young people** have been looking for work for less than a month, compared to **15% of older job-seekers**.
- **16% of young people** have been looking for work for more than one year compared to **39% of older respondents**.
- Of the **354 respondents** who are no longer at school (Years 9-12), **10% have been looking for a role** for 6-12 months while **25% of respondents** have been looking for more than one year.

These findings are concerning, as nearly 40% of our older job-seekers have been searching for work for more than a year. Skillsroad has widened our focus to also include resources and support for mature-aged job-seekers.

So, how do we help those who have been searching for a while to no avail? We reduce their job-search time.

### How to reduce job-search time

For younger job-seekers:

- Once job-seekers submit their applications, they can always follow up with a call or connect with the recruiter, advertiser or organisation via LinkedIn. This allows them to introduce themselves and ask any questions they may have about the role.
- Being proactive and using various platforms to scour all opportunities rather than just one platform will ensure job-seekers have a wider pool of opportunities.
- Taking the leap by making the first move and approaching employers is a proactive way to connect with employers and remain front of mind.
- Networking and making connections. Encouraging job-seekers to grow their communities and network with those within the field they're trying to break into will give them insights into the industry they may not otherwise be exposed to.

For mature-age job-seekers:

- For those with an employment gap, ensure this is explained either on their CV or at interview stage. Include why they're looking for a role now and how the skills they acquired while not working can be utilised within a professional setting.
- Remember to highlight life experience, maturity, professionalism, conflict resolution, adaptability and leadership skills that have been acquired over the years. These are all great attributes that come with age.
- Encourage them to focus their efforts. It's not about looking for any old job. Rather, find one that speaks to their interests and skills. Consider whether they may need to take on some study or upskilling for the role they have in mind. Taking proactive steps to obtain the future roles they want will help get them there faster.



## First roles and next steps after school

While only **7%** of surveyed participants (165 respondents) went on to get an apprenticeship after leaving school, those who did scored higher for personal and emotional outcomes. Data shows that **70%** of those who embarked on an apprenticeship or traineeship felt they had a sense of direction in their life, while **69%** said they felt very optimistic about their future. Additionally, **58%** of these respondents felt they recovered quickly following stressful events while **54%** believed they were able to recover from significant life difficulties at pace.

**These results are all 10 percentage points higher on average than those who did not undertake an apprenticeship, further highlighting the benefits of an apprenticeship as a reliable career path for our workforce.**



## Mental health markers and after school pathways

% who strongly agree or agree				I cared for family (either older or younger)	I got a full-time job	I got a part-time job	I got an apprenticeship/ traineeship	I started another form of study (not university)	I started my own business	I started my own family	I went to university	Other (please specify)
LOWEST	%	HIGHEST	%									
I feel I have a sense of direction in my life				45%	58%	54%	70%	62%	65%	42%	64%	56%
I recover from stressful events quickly				42%	52%	53%	58%	39%	58%	54%	47%	46%
I feel very optimistic about my future				44%	61%	57%	69%	57%	65%	73%	59%	53%
I willingly give some of my time to others in need				88%	87%	87%	85%	88%	73%	88%	86%	88%
I get over and recover from significant life difficulties quickly				50%	52%	45%	54%	40%	50%	65%	45%	43%
I think COVID-19 has affected and delayed me reaching my career goals				41%	48%	48%	37%	51%	46%	38%	45%	36%

## Looking ahead

While **56%** of respondents believe they will get a job in the industry they're planning to work in, the other **44%** are not confident they will end up in a role within their desired industry.

Additionally, one in four respondents felt their biggest worry about starting their career was not knowing which career to choose.

Interestingly, **17%** of respondents stated there were no vacancies – which we know to be a misconception, as employers are struggling to fill vacancies.

In the Business NSW 2021 Workforce Skills Survey, **73% of businesses reported having a skills shortage** while the Australian Bureau of Statistics recently reported **more than 400,000 job vacancies** across the country – the highest on record.

So, how do we tackle this challenge and put an end to the disconnect between businesses needing workers and young people not connecting with these vacancies? We empower young Australians to make informed and assertive decisions – while learning how to search for the roles they want.

## Helping Australians make confident career decisions

- **Encourage a holistic approach** when it comes to the career search. From championing credible and trustworthy sources that can provide objective information and opportunities to teachers, career coaches, mentors and advisors – there are plenty of options for sound and reliable advice.
- **Enable research** of how different industries are tracking. Are industries more in need of workers than others? Are there significant pay disparities between industries?
- **Understand and celebrate natural skillsets** to ensure candidates engage with a career that suits them and their strengths. Beyond interest and passion – it's important to use natural talents and any acquired skills to help identify a career choice each candidate will enjoy and excel in.

## The big vs small business debate

While one in four respondents say they'd like to work for big business, only one in ten claimed they would like to work for a small business. Younger workers were more eager to work for a big business (**20%**) compared to mature workers (**14%**).

While big businesses may appear attractive to many young Australians preparing to enter the workforce, there are a number of benefits small businesses may want to point out to prospective job-seekers. These include:

- The opportunity to establish and enjoy stronger relationships with your employer or supervisors as they don't need to split their time between large groups of employees or apprentices.
- The opportunity to work with some of Australia's best businesses. Ruling them out of the job search only limits professional options and experiences.
- A large breadth of experience in the management and owners throughout a longer period of time, which can translate into more hands-on life experience for an entry-level role.
- The opportunity to build experience, grow a career and advance within the workplace.
- Increased options for flexible working arrangements.
- Increased visibility and personal ownership of celebrated outcomes from your own work.

It's important to remember however that there are benefits and drawbacks to both working environments. Job-seekers will need to be flexible and comfortable with either avenue as this will allow them to focus more on finding the right professional 'fit' rather than taking a black-and-white approach to the businesses they're prepared to work for. Given most job-seekers will eventually work for both big and small businesses during their professional lifetime, taking an open-minded approach will serve them well.





# KEY THOUGHTS

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We must continue to support businesses by ensuring employers have the skills and resources to create rich learning environments and the ability to bridge the gap when they don't. When done well, apprenticeship pathways for example provide a clear sense of direction, autonomy, coaching, social connection and opportunities to learn and play to one's strengths. Working in an environment that encompasses this type of psychological framework enables individuals to build resilience and have sense of direction in their life. Many businesses who hire apprentices also utilise mentoring and create shared experiences between older and younger staff, which can build hope, agency and purpose. This is essential to our wellbeing at work.”



**Danielle Buckley**

Registered and Coaching Psychologist





# 2 MENTAL HEALTH

## Improving mental wellbeing with passion and purpose

There are a number of reasons why many young Australians aren't working right now but none more pressing or urgent than their mental wellbeing.

### The Confidence Crisis

One in three respondents surveyed said they weren't working due to problems with their mental health. Furthermore, one in four respondents did not feel skilled enough to work. These skills concerns are strong enough that three in ten respondents looking at entry-level roles didn't feel they had enough skills or experience to even apply.

This finding is concerning given entry-level jobs shouldn't require skills or experience. It's important to consider respondents may be referencing social and coping skills, vs professional skills alone.

### Industries on the move

When respondents were asked if they are anxious about their employment prospects, **75%** of those wanting to work in the Healthcare, Aged Care or Disability sectors confirmed that they are, compared to **40%** of respondents wanting to work in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry or **50%** of respondents wanting to work in Retail. Respondents wanting to work in the Public sector are the most uncertain about their future with **82%** saying they are anxious about their employment prospects.

Of the 693 respondents planning to work in the Healthcare, Aged Care & Disability sectors, **34%** believe they don't have enough skills or experience to apply, even if it's an entry-level role. **17%** of respondents wanting to work in the Public sector or Finance and Insurance say the same, while only **21%** of respondents wanting to work in Accommodation, Food & Hospitality think they don't have enough skills or experience to apply for roles.

Respondents wanting to work in the Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services industries are the most pessimistic with **52%** believing that they don't have enough skills or experience to apply for roles or positions.

#### Of those planning to work:

- **21%** plan to work in the Healthcare, Aged Care and Disability sectors (a curious fact given currently only **8%** of respondents currently work in these sectors)
- **10%** plan to work in the Arts and Recreation industry
- **9%** plan to work in Education and Training
- **9%** plan to work in professional services such as Law, Accounting and Architecture
- **4%** plan to work in the Construction industry.

Of those currently working:

- **25%** work in the Accommodation, Food and Hospitality industry
- **24%** work in Retail
- **8%** work in the Healthcare, Aged Care and Disability sectors
- **7%** work in Education and Training
- **4%** work in the Construction industry.

Furthermore, those surveyed who were not working but receiving government support indicated they were more likely to experience mental health issues, reinforcing the importance of keeping young people in jobs via any means of employment – from traditional positions to traineeships and apprenticeships.

“Many of those in the VET sector were identified as ‘essential services’ throughout the pandemic and were celebrated for keeping many aspects of our economy ticking over. This has brought to the forefront the importance of the apprenticeship and traineeship framework:

There was a real sense of pride from both employers and apprentices identified through our ‘in-training support’ service during that time.”

**DAMIAN JACKSON**

Team Leader, Apprentice Advisors,  
Apprenticeship Support Australia

## Does mental health deteriorate the longer people are looking for a job?

While overall, respondents seem fairly optimistic about their career prospects and futures, those who are unemployed or have been stood down do seem to struggle and suffer impacts to their mental wellbeing, having the most negative views out of those surveyed below. Additionally, it appears the longer respondents are looking for a job, the less they feel they have a sense of direction in their lives or feel optimistic about their future.

At the time of the survey, respondents were experiencing varied impacts of COVID-19 depending on their location, meaning the COVID-19 related statistics would be a fair representation of that volatility.

“When people evaluate their lives, they often tend to focus on only a few aspects, and, with a negative bias.

However, as people age, they get better at focusing on emotional goals and their wellbeing, rather than resources and ‘things’. It is normal for younger people to feel anger, frustration, stress and levels of distress in their early 20s. When we consider work and careers, we want to encourage young people to move away from viewing a career as something that is binary and more towards something that is fluid, a collection of learnings, experiences and opportunities. Shifting our focus towards ‘learning’ and away from outcomes can help increase confidence. It can also shift the focus of our wellbeing away from what’s not working and towards action orientated behaviour.”

**DANIELLE BUCKLEY**

Registered and Coaching Psychologist

### Mental health markers and length of job-search

% who strongly agree or agree

LOWEST

%

HIGHEST

%

	Less than a month	1-3 months	3-6 months	6-12 months	More than 1 year
I feel I have a sense of direction in my life	19%	15%	20%	20%	24%
I recover from stressful events quickly	23%	30%	35%	29%	28%
I feel very optimistic about my future	13%	14%	18%	20%	27%
I willingly give some of my time to others in need	3%	3%	1%	0%	5%
I get over and recover from significant life difficulties quickly	20%	27%	27%	29%	25%
I think COVID-19 has affected and delayed me reaching my career goals	25%	27%	15%	18%	20%



## GRIT AND RESILIENCE

“Grit is the ability to see life as a marathon and not a sprint. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from setbacks. However, to be able to learn how to be gritty and resilient, young people need to begin by developing their emotional literacy, by recognising and labelling how they feel and what’s occurring for them. This is a skill. It is clear from this data that setbacks are having a significant impact on how respondents feel about life. Access to mental health programs that teach basic mental health skills will not only support people in the moment, but provide and equip them with necessary psychological skills throughout their life journey.”

**DANIELLE BUCKLEY**

Registered and Coaching Psychologist

“Employers and apprentices alike have been dealt a blow throughout the pandemic on both personal and professional levels.

Where employers once had confidence and certainty to support employees and apprentices, they now are dealing with their own personal and professional crisis, as small businesses in particular are often single entities with everything at stake.”

**DAMIAN JACKSON**

Team Leader, Apprentice Advisors,  
Apprenticeship Support Australia

### Mental health markers vs. current life situation

% who strongly disagree or disagree	LOWEST %		HIGHEST %		Gap year	Looking for a job	Other	Stood-down	Studying at TAFE/ College	Studying at university	Studying Year 12	Studying Years 9-11	Suspended or cancelled (apprenticeships/ traineeships)	Unemployed	Working casual hours	Working full-time	Working part-time
I feel I have a sense of direction in my life					24%	19%	20%	50%	13%	16%	13%	12%	15%	29%	16%	12%	16%
I recover from stressful events quickly					19%	29%	31%	38%	26%	31%	26%	23%	45%	40%	28%	21%	26%
I feel very optimistic about my future					21%	17%	19%	25%	12%	16%	13%	12%	20%	27%	14%	14%	14%
I willingly give some of my time to others in need					5%	3%	2%	13%	2%	4%	2%	3%	5%	5%	3%	3%	3%
I get over and recover from significant life difficulties quickly					24%	25%	29%	31%	26%	28%	24%	22%	35%	36%	28%	21%	27%
I think COVID-19 has affected and delayed me reaching my career goals					24%	22%	30%	13%	23%	31%	31%	37%	10%	26%	31%	33%	36%

## The culture solution

Respondents struggling with their mental health were strongly attracted to jobs that have a work/life balance and provide the option for flexible working hours. Our data shows that respondents who felt they had little direction in their life, felt pessimistic about their direction or otherwise scored low on markers for mental health stability, responded across the board that the top 2 things they looked for in a job were a good work/life balance and flexible working hours. Nearly 3/4 of people who felt they lacked resilience to recover from stressful events stated that work/life balance was the most important thing to attract them to a job.

Establishing a true cultural commitment to work/life balance and flexibility – and having actions to back up the words, like ensuring that there is no ‘invisible’ pushback against taking leave or working remotely – can give young respondents peace of mind that their employers care about their mental health and are not just making empty gestures.

For those looking to address youth mental health on a larger level, employers will need to think beyond the traditional working ways for their future roles and consider flexibility wherever possible to present to candidates.

## KEY THOUGHTS

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It is important to acknowledge that females in their 20s are more likely to experience depression than men. However, men are up to four times more likely to suicide than women. The stage of life when people leave school and move into employment is challenging. Providing mental health support for people contemplating different career pathways by coaching, mentoring and career counselling can help young people choose a meaningful pathway that is the best fit for them and their circumstances. This type of support and validation can also lessen the mental health burden they are experiencing.”



**Danielle Buckley**  
Registered and Coaching  
Psychologist

# 3 GENDER IMBALANCES

## The gender breakdown

From our survey:

- **9%** of females got a full-time job after leaving school, compared with **14%** of males.
- Only **4%** of females got an apprenticeship after leaving school, compared with **15%** of males.
- **28%** of females went to university after leaving school, compared to **17%** of males.

Furthermore, one in three females are currently not working due to struggles with their mental health compared to one in four males. While both genders are suffering, **37%** of females would like to access mental health programs compared to **19%** of males.

## The barriers you can't see

Beyond the hurdles preventing women from confidently choosing an apprenticeship or traineeship, there are also emotional concerns that come into play for many women:

- **17%** of females are worried about not liking the career they choose compared to **13%** of males.
- **11%** of females worry about coping with the stress of work compared to **8%** of males.
- **14%** more females started thinking about their career pathways whilst in primary school compared to males.
- **Two out of three** respondents receiving government benefits such as JobKeeper, JobSeeker, Newstart, Youth Allowance or HECS are female (**68%**).

## Supporting women in the workplace

While many women still experience a range of barriers to entering the workforce or engaging in a trade or apprenticeship (such as a lack of female role models, gendered societal expectations and male-dominated workplace cultures) there are plenty of ways employers can support women with a range of simple yet highly effective strategies:

- Ensure your workplace is a safe environment where all employees feel supported and not intimidated.
- Ensure the language within your business is gender-friendly and inclusive – never aggressive, sexist or male-centric. This includes the words and phrases you use personally, as well as the words on your website, your job adverts and your organisation's social media account.
- When engaging with women candidates, emphasise the real and tangible benefits of working within your business. This may include career progression, flexible working hours or conditions, family benefits, a focus on work/life balance and pay equity.
- Emphasise your workplace is a safe space where sexual harassment, bullying or discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Establish or highlight any internal business policies that support women applicants – such as combating sexual harassment, bullying, ensuring fair work, equal pay, workplace diversity and gender equity policies.
- Add testimonials to your website (written or visual) from other female employees.
- Consider whether there are any causes or charities your business can support to show you practice what you preach.
- Create dynamic teamwork structures based on a mix of skills and attributes.
- Provide supportive mentorship and training opportunities for women and provide clear career pathways.

“Culture is our unique identity and includes the shared values, norms, expectations and behaviours that underpin the way we approach our work and develop relationships with each other and all stakeholders. Organisations can start their culture journey by defining their ideal culture and identifying the current culture and any contributing factors. Using these insights, plans and strategies, they can start developing and shaping their ideal culture.”

**ANTONIA PILIOS**

HR Business Partner,  
Business Australia



# 4 POST PANDEMIC SUPPORT

## COVID-19

The ongoing effects of the pandemic have been felt across all sectors, industries and ages, however when it comes to Australia's youth and emerging workforce, the numbers are even more telling.

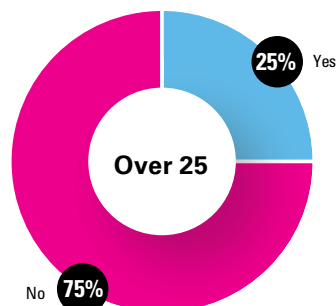
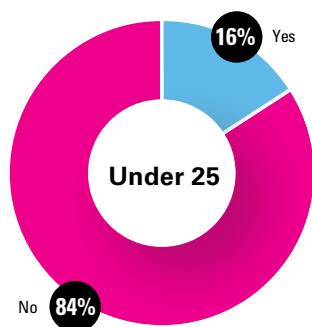
Only **36%** of respondents felt the COVID-19 pandemic hadn't influenced what they wanted to do with their careers in the future, whereas **64%** felt it had.

## Job loss due to COVID-19

Half of survey respondents were employed/ worked prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. One in six respondents became unemployed/ stood down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, predominantly affecting those aged over 25.

### Details in the data:

- **16%** of respondents under 25 became unemployed/ stood down due to the COVID-19 pandemic



- **25%** of respondents 25 years or older became unemployed/ stood down due to the COVID-19 pandemic

While there's no clear-cut reason for this, many young people may be working extra hours to make up for lost income during lockdowns or they have chosen to take on more shifts because of the critical skills shortages, which have been exacerbated by the loss of international students, backpackers and skilled migrants. Additionally, demand in many industries has also increased, leading to an influx of more work.

Our findings show the Accommodation, Food and Hospitality industry is the largest industry working both less and more – followed closely by Retail. There have been significant variations in hours worked across every industry, primarily due to the enforcement of public health restrictions. The Accommodation, Food and Hospitality industry has been the industry most affected by these restrictions. It appears there is a large proportion of people who have lost their jobs in this industry who haven't recovered those hours, while other workers have increased hours as lockdown restrictions eased.

## Working hours for respondents in Accommodation, Food and Hospitality

Industry	I'm working <u>less</u> hours since COVID-19	I'm working <u>more</u> hours since COVID-19	I'm working the same number of hours since COVID-19
Accommodation, Food and Hospitality	30%	25%	21%

At the same time – the net hours young Australians are working now is higher than it was pre-pandemic:

- **23%** of respondents are working less hours since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic
- **31%** are working more hours since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic
- **46%** are working the same number of hours.

## Future solutions

One of the many solutions to providing young professionals with a more stable work environment is the encouragement of apprenticeships and traineeships. They offer a range of benefits that support young workers emotionally and financially, in ways many other roles simply can't.

### The benefits:

- Employers can provide workers with a 'learn while you earn' experience as employees gain their qualifications.
- Employers can provide workers with the opportunity to learn practical and transferrable skills to use throughout their career.

- Employers can ensure workers gain first-hand experience, the kind of learning that can't be taught in a classroom or lecture theatre.
- Employers can provide workers with a consistent role and schedule they can rely on.
- Workers can choose how much time they want to spend studying and learning.

With a range of benefits to starting an apprenticeship or traineeship, it begs the question - why do so many young people choose university over apprenticeships? This is particularly intriguing given apprenticeships lead to increased positive outcomes.



# 5

# EARLY PREPARATION

## Study, career, and looking to the future

While planning for the years to come and making the move from study to work appears to be at the forefront of the minds of many young Australians, nearly one in five survey respondents feel they didn't start thinking about their career paths early enough.

“ Having early career conversations is so important to get young people thinking about their future, where they would like to be and how they can get there, not just from careers advisors and teachers but from everyone in their support networks. The earlier these conversations start, the better their outcomes will be.”

**CHARLENE VAUGHAN**

Program Manager and Career Coach,  
Skillsroad

## A great career starts here

- Those under 25 years of age started thinking about their career pathways earlier than those 25 years or older
- **42%** of those 25 years or older started thinking about their career pathway after high school, compared to **8%** for younger people – signifying a shift towards engaging in these considerations from a younger age.

Of 727 respondents who reported they didn't feel they started thinking about their career pathway early enough:

- **20%** started thinking about their career pathway after high school (Year 9/10)
- **28%** started thinking about their career pathway in high school (Year 11/12)
- **26%** started thinking about their career pathway after high school.

Although half of respondents were still at school when they started thinking about their future professional lives, they still didn't feel this was early enough.

Survey data shows two in five respondents would like more training and resources to help get work ready, while **35%** would like access to mental health programs, **28%** of respondents would like help with career planning from a career advisor and **14%** would like more career support from their school.

When considered alongside findings that show job-seekers are looking for more support to prepare for entry-level roles, the results are clear: many Australian job-seekers are feeling less than confident about finding or returning to work.

“ Career conversations should be about exploring passions, interests and strengths. We know that when employees are engaged at work, they are enthusiastic and committed to the work and the workplace. This impacts not only the employee, but the employer, their clients and the services they deliver. There is huge opportunity for employers to tap into future generations, to showcase their business and find young people passionate and excited about their industry and the work they do.”

**DANIELLE BUCKLEY**

Registered and Coaching Psychologist



## Becoming work ready

Nine out of ten respondents thought work experience would help them get into employment, but only **58%** of them managed to gain work experience before starting their current job. We know that work experience is one of the best ways to prepare job-seekers for the working world, and supporting them in this way is one of the best strategies for workplaces who want skilled, experienced workers.

However, work experience isn't the only way for new workers to prepare for their professional future. As registered psychologist Danielle Buckley mentions, often the key to helping new workers thrive in their new positions is giving them access to training – not just on the job or basic skills, but also training in soft skills and life skills, access to mental health programs, and team-building exercises which will all culminate in a more functional, well-rounded employee.

## University

To go or not to go, that is the question. Upon leaving school, one in four respondents went to university, while:

- **16%** got a part-time job
- **11%** started another form of studying (not university)
- **One in ten** respondents got a full-time job
- **7%** got an apprenticeship,
- **3%** cared for family (either younger or older), and
- **1%** started their own business, and another **1%** started their own family.

It's worth remembering, university isn't always an option for many school leavers and often presents challenges in terms of location, cost, academic success or qualifications for entry.

# KEY THOUGHTS



When young people begin work, the data is clear that they want more training and resources to develop the skills to not just survive but thrive. Providing access to develop key psychological skills like communication, resilience and relationship skills acts as a protective factor against developing significant mental health issues, and it also increases individual and team engagement as well as business outcomes. There are opportunities for employers to provide better access to psychological skills training for people at work which will support individuals and the broader business."



**Danielle Buckley**

Registered and Coaching Psychologist

# 6 FUTURE PLANNING

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Given the information and insights we've been able to explore throughout the survey, it's more important than ever before that we acknowledge these findings and take a proactive approach to creating positive change. Whether you're a parent, careers counsellor, employer or educator – the next steps will be the most powerful.



### Employers

With current and future employees seeking flexible working environments and a working culture that provides mental wellbeing support, it's vital that considerations are made to incorporate inclusive and supportive measures going forward. Ensuring that entry-level jobs have no entrance requirements and providing ample work experience opportunities can also help to allay many young job-seekers' concerns about their suitability for roles.

We know that great employers engage in transparent and equitable hiring and pay practices, ensuring their remuneration policies are in line with increases to cost of living and other financial factors. What's more, employers who make a real difference to the lives of their employees ensure their recruitment policies are as fair on paper as they are in practice. Not only does this support and increase job-seekers' mental health and stability, it leads to increased positive gains for all. Happy employees are hard-working employees, and stable pay and respect at work creates loyal, long-term employment.



### Teachers

There are opportunities to engage students at a younger age when it comes to their career ideas, professional hopes and future plans.

Building confidence and resilience has never been more vital in our ever-changing professional environment.

By providing students with the information and insights they need in order to make career decisions, teachers and educators alike can bolster their confidence, create an ongoing path forward and equip them with the basic skills and professional understanding they're seeking later in life. [Skillsroad.com.au](https://www.skillsroad.com.au) has a collection of teacher resources, including lesson plans and workbooks, which can boost career confidence and give students a head start into the workforce.



### Parents

It's important to be conscious of the gender imbalances that effect many young school leavers and those preparing to enter the workforce. Traditional career paths aren't always the answer, and encouraging careers based on outdated professional stereotypes only leads to more problems. Learn to read the signs – if your child seems overwhelmed, unhappy, or unsure of their future plans, act quickly. It's important to consider and discuss the myriad of options each student has when it comes to furthering their study, obtaining a full-time role or engaging in other options such as apprenticeships and traineeships. Luckily, [Skillsroad.com.au](https://www.skillsroad.com.au) has a wide range of parent-specific resources to assist you with starting these important career conversations early, as well as handy links to pathways which may better suit your young job-seeker. Support and an open mind will go a long way.

# SUPPORT SERVICES

## Mental Health

### Adults

**Lifeline** 13 11 14  
Lifeline.org.au

**Beyond Blue** 1300 224 636  
Beyondblue.org.au/forums

### Kids & Youth

**Kids Helpline** 1800 551 800  
kidshelpline.com.au

**headspace** 1800 650890  
Headspace.org.au

**ReachOut** ReachOut.com

## POST YOUR VACANCIES OR WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES FREE OF CHARGE

<https://skillsroad.com.au/jobs/post>

## WRITE EFFECTIVE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

<https://skillsroad.com.au/employers-and-recruiters/job-description>

## TIPS ON INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

<https://skillsroad.com.au/employers-and-recruiters/interviews>

## FOR SUPPORT AND MENTORING SERVICES OF YOUR TRAINEES & APPRENTICES

<https://apprenticeshipsupport.com.au>

## WORKPLACE ADVICE LINE

**All states** 1300 575 394

## POLICY & ADVOCACY RESEARCH

**NSW** <https://www.businessnsw.com/>  
**VIC** <https://www.victorianchamber.com.au/>  
**WA** <https://cciwa.com/>  
**National** <https://www.australianchamber.com.au/>

## FOR GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

**NSW** <https://www.nsw.gov.au/working-and-business>  
**ACT** <https://www.act.gov.au/business/business-support/covid-19-economic-support-for-business>  
**VIC** <https://www.vic.gov.au/business-and-workplace>  
**SA** <https://business.sa.gov.au/>  
**TAS** <https://www.skills.tas.gov.au/home>  
**WA** <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-coronavirus-support-business>  
**NT** <https://nt.gov.au/industry/business-support>

## HIRING, MENTORING AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR APPRENTICES & TRAINEES

<https://www.apprenticeshipsupport.com.au/>



# ABOUT US

## Skillsroad

Skillsroad is an initiative of Apprenticeship Support Australia and provides a one-stop, independent destination for students and job-seekers who are preparing to embark on their career journey – and the key supporters who help them along the way (parents, teachers and employers).

Not only do we utilise best-practice, evidence-based approaches to career advice, we provide the tools and insights needed to thrive in whatever professional endeavour future workers decide to explore.

SKILLSROAD.COM.AU®



## Apprenticeship Support Australia

At Apprenticeship Support Australia (ASA), we empower and upskill Australia businesses by developing talent to meet their workforce needs. ASA provides trusted apprenticeship and traineeship advice, expert solutions and apprenticeship support across all industries and at every stage of the employment cycle. Our mission is to lift apprenticeship commencement and completion rates for the benefit of employers and employees alike.

