



Melbourne Graduate  
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# Life Patterns Project Adult Life:

## Summary Report on the 2017 Survey

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*At the Youth Research Centre we acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our centre is located and where we conduct our research and teaching. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and future.*

# ADULT LIFE: SUMMARY REPORT ON THE 2017 SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS IN COHORT 1

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## INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to provide you with this latest update on the Life Patterns research project in which you are a highly valued participant. This report presents the results of the survey you completed in 2017. The survey is part of an ongoing research project by the Youth Research Centre, at The University

of Melbourne. It explores different areas of adult life, including your experiences in the workplace, your family and personal relationships, and health and wellbeing. With your contribution, we are able to provide valuable insights that can inform governments and social institutions about your generation.



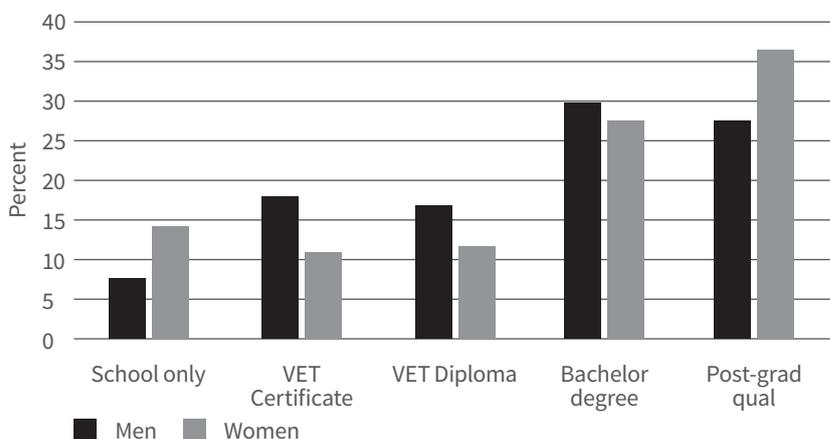
# SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

This report is based on the responses of 256 Cohort 1 participants aged 43-44 years. Just under half (45%) of the surveys were completed online. Two-thirds of the surveys were completed

by women. The majority of you were living in metropolitan centres (66%), with 17.6% living in regional cities and 15.3% living in rural areas.

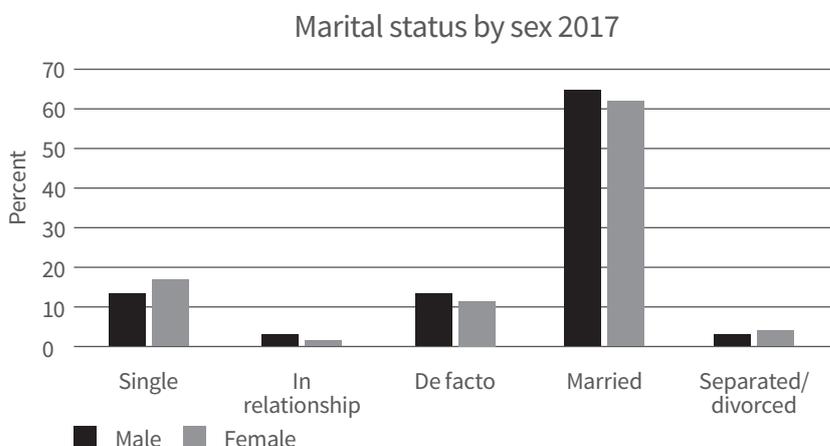
By 2017, 88% of you had completed at least one post-school qualification. Over half of men and almost two-thirds of women had completed at least one university qualification. Men were more likely than women to have completed a VET qualification.

**Figure 1 Education by gender: Cohort 1 aged 43-44**



In 2017, 75% of you were either married or living with your partner in a de facto relationship. Men were more likely to be married than women (64% compared to 61%). Women were more likely than men to be single (18% compared to 14.5%).

**Figure 2 Marital status by gender: Cohort 1 aged 43-44**



# FAMILY

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Seventy-one per cent of you reported being in a parenting role. Men were more likely than women to be in a parenting role: 78% compared to 69%. Of those with children, 7% had one child; 59% had two children; 31% had three children; and 3% had more than three children.

## Parenting responsibilities

When we asked you about your parenting responsibilities, 63% responded that you were able to balance your parenting duties with your work/ social life but 59% of you reported feeling tired/ exhausted from meeting the needs of your children. Less than one in five parents reported feeling trapped or that taking care of their children was more work than pleasure.

	%
I am able to balance my parental duties and my work/ social life	<b>63</b>
I often feel tired, worn out, or exhausted from meeting the needs of my children	<b>59</b>
I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent	<b>17</b>
I find that taking care of my child/ children is much more work than pleasure	<b>16</b>

“Having a child with additional needs has meant we have a huge additional burden mentally & financially”

“Becoming a parent is the best thing I have done”

“Who knew you would sacrifice everything so that your child comes first? As a result career - out, personal life- out, health- out. All the talk is about “the balance”, it really should be about “the juggle”.

“With the support of extended family, we have been able to return to our careers and achieve a great balance in our lives”

“Financially, child care payments were a nightmare”

# LEVEL OF CONCERN FOR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

When we asked you about your level of concern about your child/ children's future, 63% held a high level of concern about environmental issues and 61% held a high level of concern about health care

costs. More than half of you were concerned about their ability to develop positive friendships and about their physical safety.

	%
Environmental issues	63
Health care costs	61
Their ability to develop positive friendships	57
Physical safety	55
Availability of quality education	51
Children's health issues	41

When we asked you about parenting issues, we received many comments like these:

"Peer pressure. It seems young children are being exposed to adult concepts and behaviours at a very young age"

"My youngest son has developmental issues and I have concerns over how he will progress and what level of safe and independent living he will attain"

"I believe my children will live in an era of rapid world change, and I encourage them to be adaptable, resilient and intuitive"

"I am most concerned about their emotional development, confidence in themselves, ability to make strong meaningful relationships, the impact of Social media on them"

"I know that excessive use of technology is affecting my children in negative ways but I feel powerless to change it"

# EMPLOYMENT

In 2017, 12% of men and women were not employed; 86% of employed men and 72% of employed women were employed on permanent

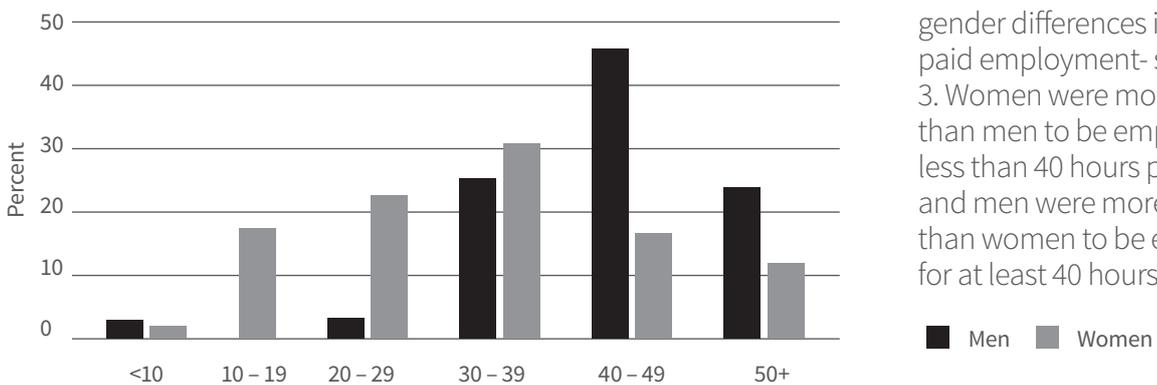
contracts. Overall 22% were self-employed and 16% were working more than one job.

Similar percentages of men and women were employed in managerial/ professional occupations. Men were far more likely than women to be employed as technicians or tradespersons. Women were far more likely than men to be employed in clerical occupations.

**Table 1 Occupation by gender: Cohort 1 aged 43-44**

	% All	% Men	% Woman
Manager/ Professional	72	71	73
Technicians/ Trades	4	9	2
Clerical	11	3	15
Sales/ Services	11	16	9
Machine operators/ labourers	1	1	1

**Figure 3 Paid work hours by gender: Cohort 1 aged 43-44**



There were also distinct gender differences in hours of paid employment- see Figure 3. Women were more likely than men to be employed for less than 40 hours per week and men were more likely than women to be employed for at least 40 hours per week.

Men were marginally more likely than women to be working night/evening shifts (12% compared to 10%); working public holidays (8% compared to 6%). Women were marginally more likely than men to be working on weekends (10% compared to 9%).

**Table 2 Working non-standard shifts by gender:**

	% All	% Men	% Women
Night/evening shifts	11	12	10
Weekends	10	9	10
Public holidays	7	8	6

# SATISFACTION WITH WORK

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When we asked you about your level of satisfaction with various aspects of your work, over 80% of you either agreed or strongly agreed that you used your skills and abilities at work. Almost three-quarters found your work fulfilling and two-thirds indicated

that you have a lot of freedom to decide how you work. Just over 60% of you were happy with your level of job security and 56% of you were happy with your level of pay.

	%
I use many of my skills and abilities	<b>82</b>
I find my work to be fulfilling	<b>74</b>
I have freedom to decide how I do my work	<b>68</b>
I have a secure future in my job	<b>61</b>
I get paid fairly for the things I do in my job	<b>56</b>
I have freedom to decide when I do my work	<b>46</b>

# SATISFACTION WITH LIFE

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We were also interested in your level of satisfaction with various aspects of your life. Almost 90% of you were very satisfied or satisfied with your life overall; 86% of you were very satisfied or satisfied with

your family life; and 68% of you were very satisfied or satisfied with your social life. As with previous surveys, your “health/fitness” appears to be the issue that people are least satisfied with.

	%
Your life, overall	<b>89</b>
Your family life	<b>86</b>
Your work/career	<b>76</b>
Your social life	<b>68</b>
Your health/ fitness	<b>50</b>

# MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

When we asked you to nominate the three most important issues in Australia today, 39% nominated the environment/ climate change; 30% nominated

equality/discrimination; 28% nominated security/ safety and 25% nominated cost of living.

**Table 4: The three issues considered the most important in Australia today**

	%
Environment/ climate change	39
Equality/discrimination	30
Security/safety	28
Cost of living	25
Health [physical/ mental]	23
Government/ politics	17
Education	16
Housing affordability	16
Economy	15
Employment	13
Marriage equality	9
Drug and alcohol misuse	9

“I am concerned about the affordability of higher education and the future job market for my children.”

“Housing affordability is a major issue for the kids...starting to think of ways to help them afford their first home as it is very unlikely they will be able to purchase their own home themselves”

“I am worried about drug and alcohol abuse and one hit punch when they are late teens/ early twenties.”

“Concerned about the impact of social media/networks and the lack of delayed gratification associated with ‘snapchat & instagram’”

# COMMENTS

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As in previous years, we also asked you if you had any further comments and many of you provided in-depth comments. These fragments represent the issues discussed.

“Looking after an elderly parent impacts all aspects of your life – you need to have flexible work arrangements to go to doctors/specialists and to go to shopping and other outings. It also affects social/leisure activities.”

“...the biggest hurdle - to be able to develop professionally in my career but to also be around as needed for my children and not be under the stress of always having too much to do.”

“I accept the stage my life is at – very busy household with teenage children. I realise this stage will not last forever and my circumstances will change again as my children grow up and leave home.”

“There is little recognition of single parent families ... I earn good money so receive no government support despite having to do everything on my own.”

“Between increasing work demands - which ramped up for everyone after the GFC - along with time needed to maintain family links, look in on aging parents... the constant need to multi-task, the continual distractions to one task at a time, the ever-increasing draw on time by Facebook, apps and other smart phone ‘conveniences’ that demand constant attention.”

# COMMENTS

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“The politics of the last 5 years seem to be about who can be the cruellest to the vulnerable - and those are not values to which I aspire or wish to be associated with.”

“We both travel an hour each way minimum so you have both adults commuting about 25+ hours per week. I worry about my child always been rushed everywhere, everyday and the impact this has on her anxiety...”

“What is happening in the wider world often worries me, and I feel time poor and powerless to make a difference - I do feel a sense of achievement though and that I do make a small difference in my community by working in health care.”

“Being unemployed after 22 years is pretty daunting and support from the government to walk through the Newstart allowance process and support in general for mental health is non-existent.”

“I am satisfied with work and see many opportunities in the future. I finally feel a sense of calm.”

“I feel fortunate to live in Melbourne which is politically progressive and I can teach my children tolerance and acceptance.”

“As I have gotten older I have realised that the goal is not happiness. The goal is good health, good relationships and good times.”

We appreciate and thank you for your contribution in this survey and over the last 25 years. We look forward to seeing how future years go for you and the group.

For more information on the Life Patterns Project visit our website:  
[web.education.unimelb.edu.au/ycr/life\\_patterns](http://web.education.unimelb.edu.au/ycr/life_patterns)

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