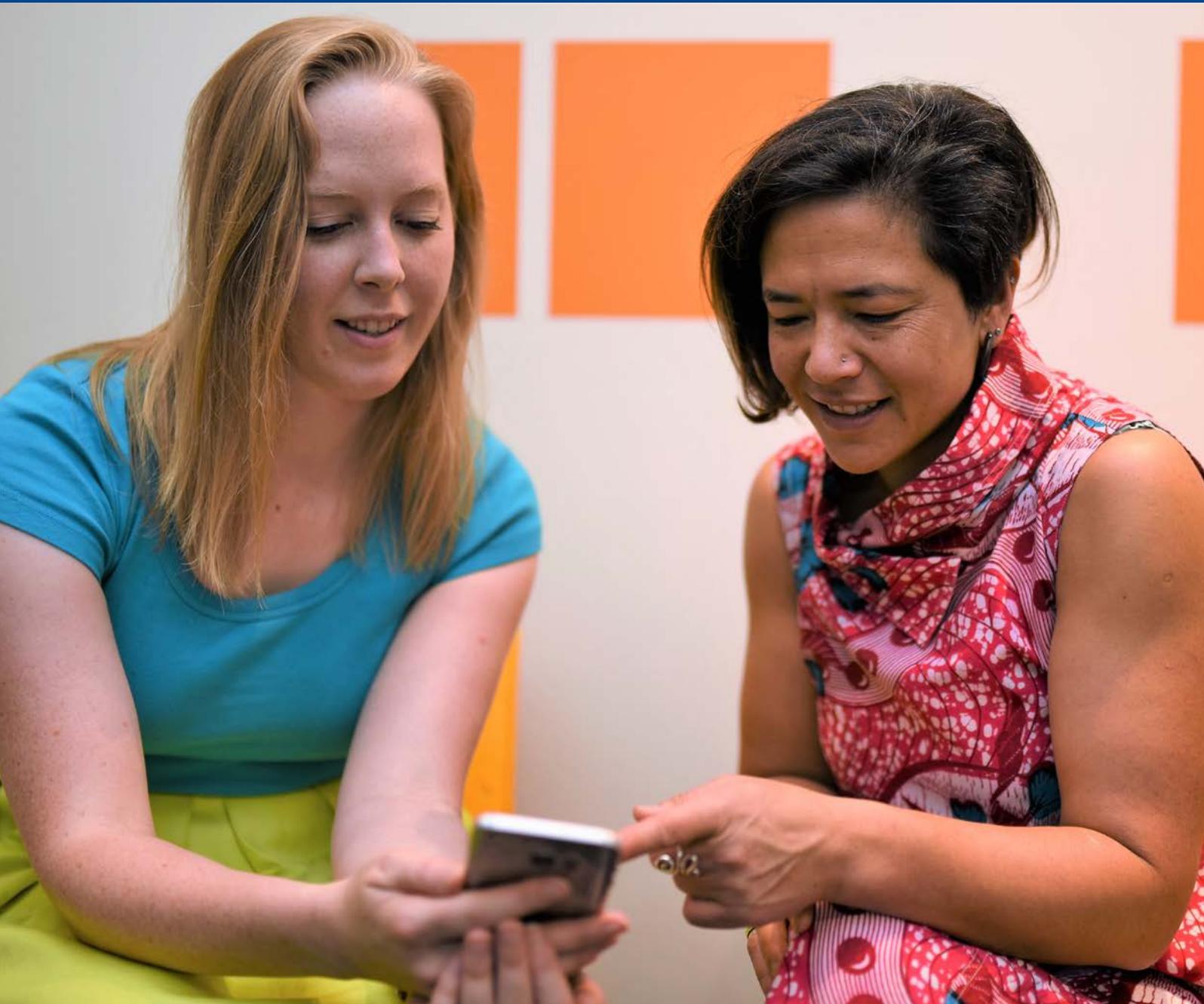


Examining the most important issues in Australia: similarities and differences across two generations

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This Life-Patterns program has maintained a tradition of a strong participatory approach to research, through regular written and verbal feedback by participants, which shaped the progress and outcomes of the research program. We deeply appreciate the generosity, willing engagement and honesty of our participants.

THE LIFE PATTERNS RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Life Patterns research program is designed to follow patterns in people's lives over time in order to gain a longitudinal and holistic understanding of the ways in which two generations of Australians are responding to our rapidly changing world (Tyler, Cuervo & Wyn, 2011). The program is based at the Youth Research Centre, in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne.

The generosity and ongoing support of the Life Patterns participants has meant that this study has built up a unique picture of the reality of the lives of two generations.

The Life Patterns program:

- follows two generations of Australians - one that left secondary school in 1991 (corresponding to the popular notion of 'Gen X') and another that left secondary school in 2006 (corresponding to the popular notion of 'Gen Y' or the 'Millennials'). Multiple comparisons can be made between the two cohorts across different points in their lives.
- explores the pathways through different areas of life taken by Australian young people including their experiences in education, the labour market, their family and personal relationships, attitudes to life, concerns, and health and wellbeing.
- provides a unique picture, very different from the stereotypes of smooth transitions from education to work, or of the narcissistic or complacent generation often described in public discourse. We have argued for the importance of paying attention to the diversity of experiences that characterise young people's lives.

- allows for insights to be drawn that feed into policy advice and also into public debate. Our work is often in the media disputing the simplistic claims about young people.
- was designed to follow patterns in young people's lives over time in order to gain more than a static glimpse. We are interested in developing a more dynamic picture of young people's lives rather than a single snapshot in time.

The Life Patterns project is ongoing, thanks to the continued engagement of the participants, and the support of the University of Melbourne and the Australian Research Council.

1. INTRODUCTION



In this report, we present findings from survey data collected in 2017 from participants of the two Life Patterns Project cohorts. In 2017, cohort 1 participants were aged 43 – 44 years (corresponding to generation X) and cohort 2 were aged 28 – 29 years (corresponding to generation Y).

In 2017, we included an open text question in the questionnaires for both cohorts asking our participants to nominate the three most important issues facing Australia. Almost all of cohort 1 participants and three-quarters of cohort 2 participants provided answers to this question.

Our analysis of their responses shows that one major issue unites both generations: concern about the environment/ climate change. Other areas of concern tended to reflect people's life stage. For cohort 1, who are the older cohort, the other most important issues were the cost of living, security and terrorism, education and the economy. For cohort 2, the other most important issues were the lack of jobs/ job security, drug abuse, housing affordability and health.

Members of cohort 1 and cohort 2 are in different stages of the life course with cohort 1 members being more likely than members of cohort 2 to be in long term relationships and parenting. This report shows that the distinctive experiences of each generation in time (such as their experiences of education, work and the nature of the housing market), have an effect on how they see the world.

We conclude that both generations present a challenge to policy-makers to take their concerns about the environment more seriously, and to ensure that young people's concerns about jobs and job security, housing and health (especially mental health) are a prompt to ensure that we do not create a 'precarious generation'.

2. A SNAPSHOT OF THE TWO COHORTS

In 2017, almost 70% of cohort 1 and cohort 2 participants were women (see Table A.1 in the Appendix). Three-quarters of cohort 1 and 61% of cohort 2 held a bachelor degree or higher qualification- see Figure 2.1. The majority of the participants lived in metropolitan areas, with two-thirds of cohort 1 and 60% of cohort 2 living in capital cities. Three-quarters of cohort 1 and 41% of cohort 2 were in a de facto relationship or were married – see Figure 2.2.

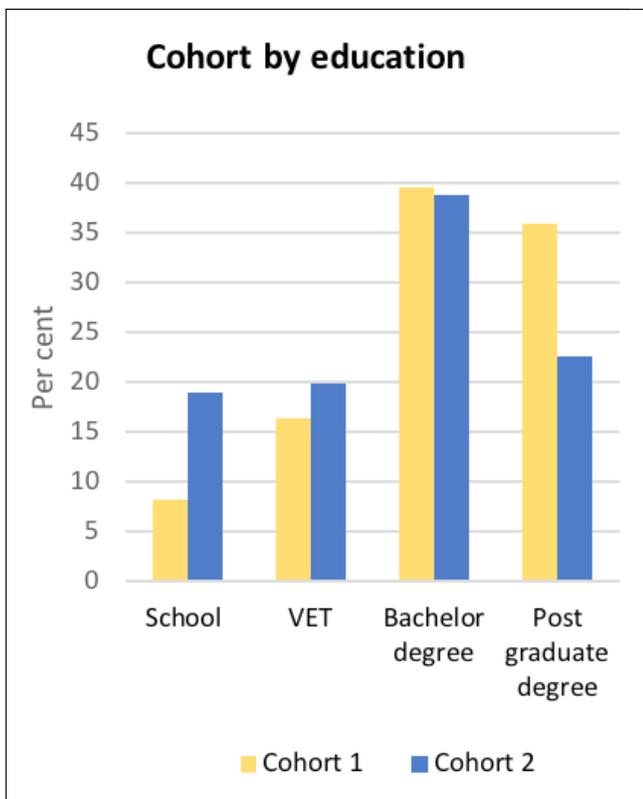


Figure 2.1

The majority of participants in both cohorts responded to the question asking them to nominate the most important issues in Australia in 2017: 250 from cohort 1 (n= 256) and 395 from cohort 2 (n=520). Originally, we coded the open text responses into 33 categories and included the remainder of responses into the ‘Other’ category- see Table A.2 in the Appendix.

Almost 40% of cohort 1 and cohort 2 participants nominated the environment, suggesting that there is a strong inter-generational concern for Australia’s environment. However, other concerns reflect participants’ different life stages. For cohort 2, the other most important

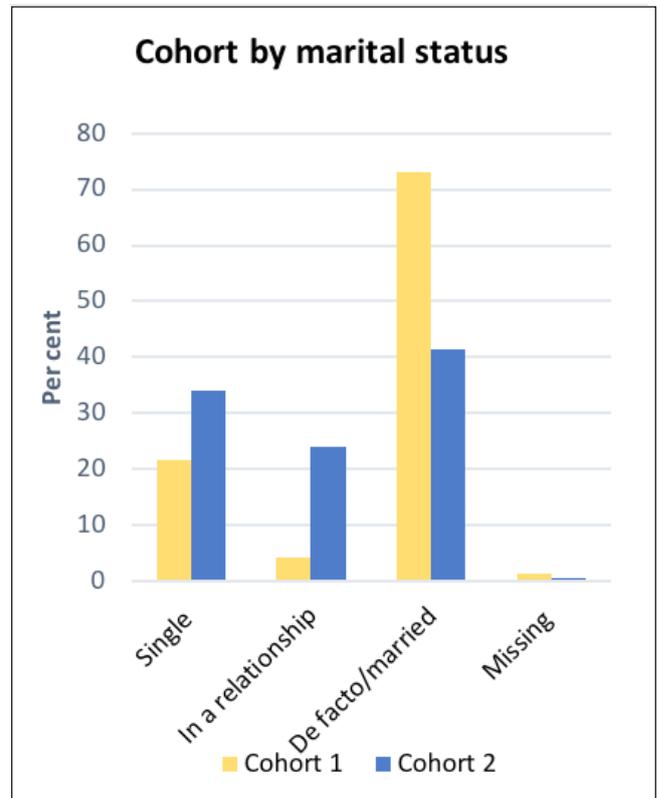


Figure 2.2

issues facing Australia were lack of jobs/ job security (33.9%), drug abuse (24.3%), housing affordability (24%) and health (19%).

Cohort 1 saw the other most important issues as being the cost of living (21.1%), security / terrorism (18.8%), and the economy and education (both 16.8%). The graph in Figure 2.3 illustrates the differences in the most nominated issues between the two cohorts.

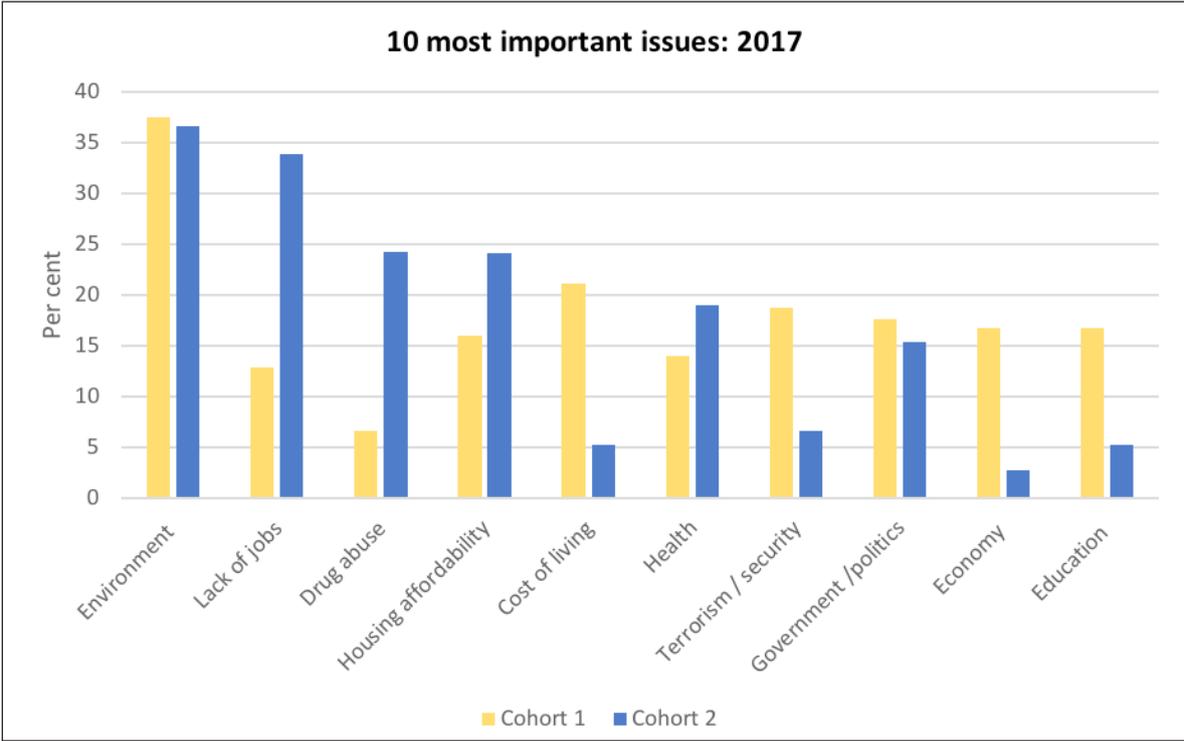


Figure 2.3



3. COMPARISON OF ISSUES ACCORDING TO SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS

In this section, we examine the associations between the most nominated issues and gender, education, marital status and parental status of the participants in cohort 1 and cohort 2.

Concern for the environment

Concern for the environment was the top issue for both cohorts. More detailed analysis shows that in cohort 1, women were nearly twice as likely as men to hold this concern, but in cohort 2, men were more likely than women to be concerned about the environment (40.8% compared to 34.7%) - see Table 3.1.

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
	%	%
Gender		
Males	23.1	40.8
Females	45.4	34.7
Education		
School	14.3	27.4
VET	30.8	33.3
Bachelor degree	39.6	36.4
Post grad degree	46.1	47.4
Marital Status		
Single	26.4	34.1
In a relationship	70	43.8
De facto/ married	40.2	34.3
Parent Status		
Not a parent	34.3	37.7
Parent	40.5	35.7

Table 3.1

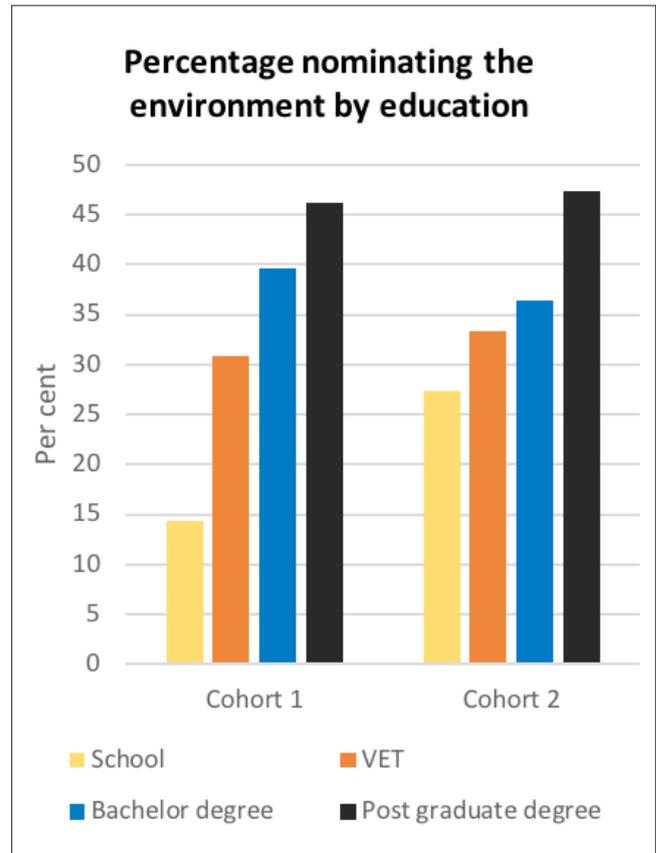


Figure 3.1

At the end of each questionnaire, our participants were asked if they had any final comments. Many of them referred back to the most important issues question and provided explanations for their choices. Participants from both cohorts used a range of terms to talk about the environment. The terms 'environment' and 'environmental concerns' were used interchangeably with 'climate change', often by the same participant, suggesting that they viewed these issues as equivalent.

While elaborating on the issues for Australia, many participants explored the specific aspects they found concerning. For example, participants in both cohorts associated environmental issues with a sense of urgency.

Environment – [we’re] not going to have air to breathe soon

[Female, full time mother, in a de facto relationship, living in a country town, cohort 2]

I worry for young people and this rapidly changing world. we’re destroying the planet.

[Female, working in sales, married, living in a regional centre, cohort 1]

As an extension of this idea, several participants in each cohort identified the lack of action or leadership on environmental issues or climate change as the root of their concern.

Government inaction on climate change in this country is a crying shame. Look at what they are doing in terms of addressing climate change in California, in Germany, in Scandinavia, even in China! But here it’s all too hard apparently.

[Male, librarian, married, parent, living in a capital city, cohort 1]

I’m concerned about the environment & the lack of action by government to fix problems.

[Female, hospitality worker, in a de facto relationship, living in a regional area, cohort 2]

However, while the concerns that members of each cohort expressed about the environment were marked by many similarities, they also presented some points of difference. Most notably, the concern for the environment reported by members of cohort 1 appeared to be motivated at least in part by concern for their children.

I am worried that our children will feel that all adults have let them down in terms of dealing with climate change in a proactive sense.

[Female, project worker, in a de facto relationship, parent, living in a capital city, cohort 1]

Climate change could ruin their lives and our governments are not acting.

[Male, editor, married, parent, living in rural area, cohort 1]

The uncertain climate-change reality is an enormous concern for me regarding my children’s future.

[Female, public health worker, married, parent, living in a rural area, cohort 1]

This impression was reinforced by data provided elsewhere in the survey. In 2017, 182 members of cohort 1 were parents. When cohort 1 parents were asked to rate their level of concern about their children’s future in regards to environmental issues, 63% rated it either very high or high- see Figure 3.2.

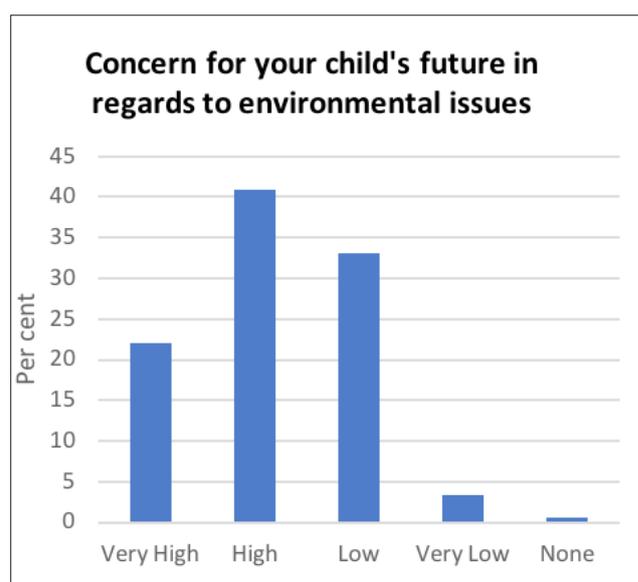


Figure 3.2



In 2017, only 14% of cohort 2 participants were parents, and as a result there was significantly less direct discussion of children as a point of concern for this group. Nevertheless, cohort 2 participants were also concerned about the impact that environmental issues and climate change would have on future generations.

Making sure as a generation we minimise our environmental footprint and contribute to leaving this planet in way that supports future generations.

[Female, construction administration and management, in a relationship, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Climate change and its impact on future generations.

[Male, dentist, in a relationship, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Overall, as these comments show, the participants from each cohort were concerned about the environment in similar ways. They viewed this issue as urgent, prompting reflections on the lack of action and leadership in this area with particular reference to the government. However, the nature of their

concerns reflected one significant difference. The participants in cohort 1 were concerned about the future implications of environmental issues in an intergenerational way due to their focus on their children, while the concerns of those in cohort 2 took on a more general character.

Job security

The second most nominated issue for cohort 2 was a lack of jobs/ job security with one-third of them regarding this as one of the most important issues in Australia in 2017. Only 13% of cohort 1 participants nominated lack of jobs/ job security as an issue, suggesting that cohort 2 participants were more likely than their older peers in cohort 1 to be affected by the precarious nature of employment. Although, for both cohorts, 68% of those employed were engaged on permanent contracts, members of cohort 2 appear to have a heightened perception of job insecurity (see the selected comments from participants provided later in this section).

Table 3.2 shows that 33.5% of cohort 2 participants who were employed on a permanent contract nominated lack of jobs/ job security as an important social issue whereas just 13.5% of their cohort 1 counterparts did. Of those who were self-employed, 7% of cohort 1 participants and 44% of cohort 2 participants nominated lack of jobs/ job security - see Figure 3.3.

Lack of jobs/ Job security	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
	%	%
Gender		
Males	16.7	40.0
Females	11.6	30.6
Education		
School	4.8	41.1
VET	15.4	33.3
Bachelor degree	18.8	35.8
Post grad degree	7.9	24.7
Contract Type		
Permanent	13.5	33.5
Renewable	14.3	33.3
Limited term	0	44.4
Casual	25.0	33.3
Self employed	6.7	43.9
Not employed	13.6	16.7

Table 3.2

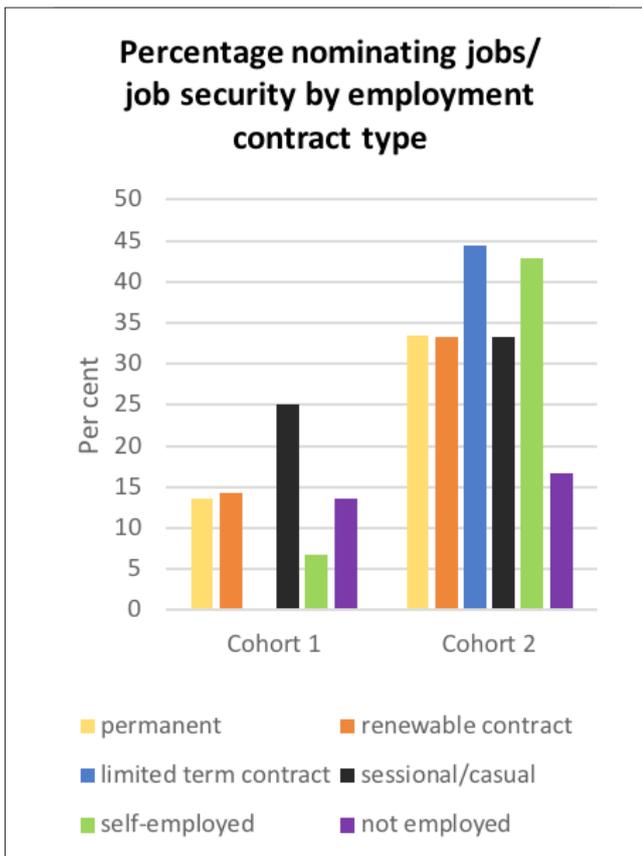


Figure 3.3

Our thematic analysis of the comments provided by our cohort 2 participants revealed that many believed that there was an oversupply of tertiary educated graduates and a corresponding lack of available jobs.

Lack of jobs. Going to uni to get a degree and a Masters' to discover there is a glut of every profession within the market.

[Male, electronic learning design, in a de facto relationship, living in a capital city, cohort 2]



Almost half of cohort 2 participants reported experiencing job insecurity at some point in time during the last 5 years. Additionally, the comments provided alongside the survey questions about employment indicated that those in permanent positions were also feeling the effects of job insecurity. Some were fearful of leaving their current job due to uncertainty that they would be able to find a suitable replacement.

Whilst I don't like the current job I have, I am fearful of leaving it unless I can find something else - which is not easy.

[Male, part time retail, single, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Job insecurity is also experienced through the situation of their partners. For example:

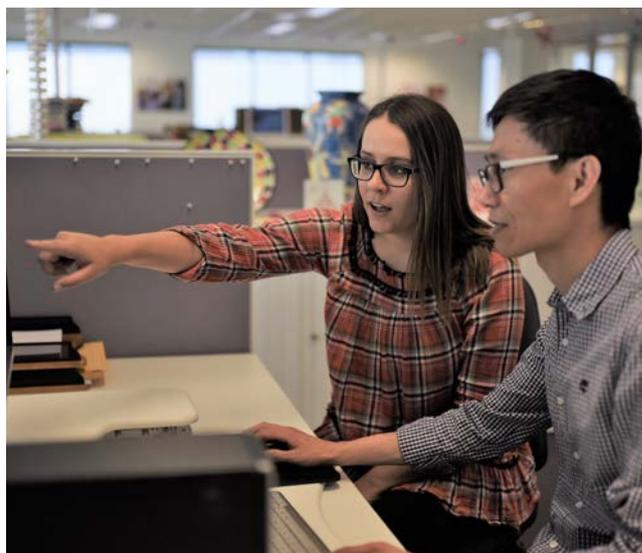
Job security is directly affecting my relationship at present. While I am securely and happily employed, my partner is struggling to maintain the career she has had for the past 8 years and needs a change. There are limited opportunities though and considerable competition for jobs that pay a reasonable wage. There is some stress that comes from this, as we both contribute to bills and are looking to build a house in the next year (a costly undertaking). Mostly I am concerned with the mental and physical strain that job dissatisfaction and job seeking cause and how this will impact her health.

[Male, business analyst, in a relationship, living in a regional centre, cohort 2]

Participants reported that their current or former partner's experiences of insecure work had shaped their own engagement with the labour market.

When I had a partner, he did not have a permanent job, which did impact me. Made me anxious of the future and whether I would need to climb the ladder quickly to be able to gain more money in case I would need to support him.

[Female, teacher, single, living in a capital city, cohort 2]



Drug Abuse

Table 3.3 shows that for cohort 2, one-third of those with a VET qualification and 18% of those with a post-graduate qualification nominated drug abuse; and that 43% of parents and 20% of non-parents nominated drug abuse as an important social issue.

Although almost one-quarter of cohort 2 respondents nominated drug abuse as an important social issue, very few elaborated on their concerns. Among the few who did, one participant noted that there was a lack of appropriate health facilities:

Drug abuse/lack of rehabilitation facilities: I see so many young people in the community who have huge issues with drugs. There's not enough assistance out there to rehabilitate & help these people, & the issues just continue & become more widespread.

[Female, teacher, single, parent, living in a regional centre, cohort 2]

Characteristic	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
	%	%
Gender		
Males	3.9	17.7
Females	8.1	25.7
Education		
School	9.5	24.7
VET	2.6	32.1
Bachelor degree	6.9	20.5
Post grad degree	7.9	18.3
Marital Status		
Single	9.4	21.1
In a relationship	0	21.4
De facto/ married	6.5	25.6
Parent Status		
Not a parent	6.2	20.4
Parent	8.6	42.9

Table 3.3

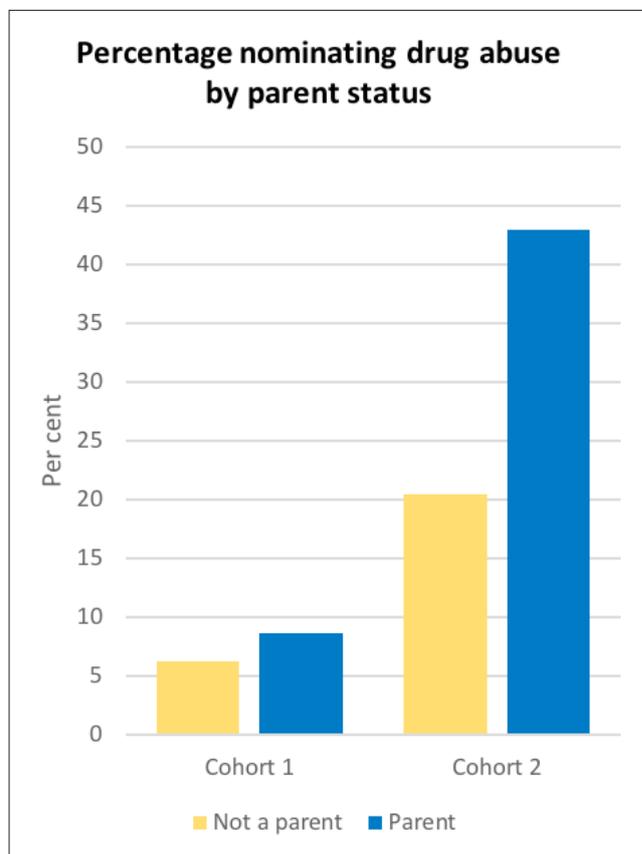


Figure 3.4

Housing Affordability

Cohort 2 participants were also more likely than cohort 1 participants to nominate housing affordability as an important issue: 24% compared to 16%. For many cohort 2 participants, the pathway to home ownership seems to be un navigable (see comments later in this section). Table 3.4 shows that for cohort 2, almost 30% of those who were married or in de facto relationships compared to 17% of those who were single nominated housing affordability.

Additionally, parents were more likely than non-parents to nominate housing affordability.

The topic of housing affordability also garnered a significant range of comments from our cohort 2 participants. Many of them linked their inability to enter into the housing market with delays in achieving other life goals such as parenthood.

I have a Masters' degree and my wife is well paid, we are not in a position to buy a home near Sydney in the next 5-8 years. No matter how hard we try and save, the goalposts keep shifting and so too the dream of raising a family in a home of our own.

[Male, teacher, married, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Housing costs have caused me to delay longer than I would otherwise have preferred in terms of starting a family. Providing shelter for my partner and I is important to me and I don't want to start a family until we are secure from that aspect.

[Male, HR manager, in a relationship, living in a regional centre, cohort 2]

Characteristic	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
	%	%
Gender		
Males	16.7	26.9
Females	16.3	22.6
Education		
School	23.8	19.2
VET	12.8	23.1
Bachelor degree	11.9	27.2
Post grad degree	21.4	23.7
Marital Status		
Single	17.0	16.7
In a relationship	20.0	25.8
De facto/ married	15.8	28.5
Parent Status		
Not a parent	12.9	25.4
Parent	18.0	12.2

Table 3.4

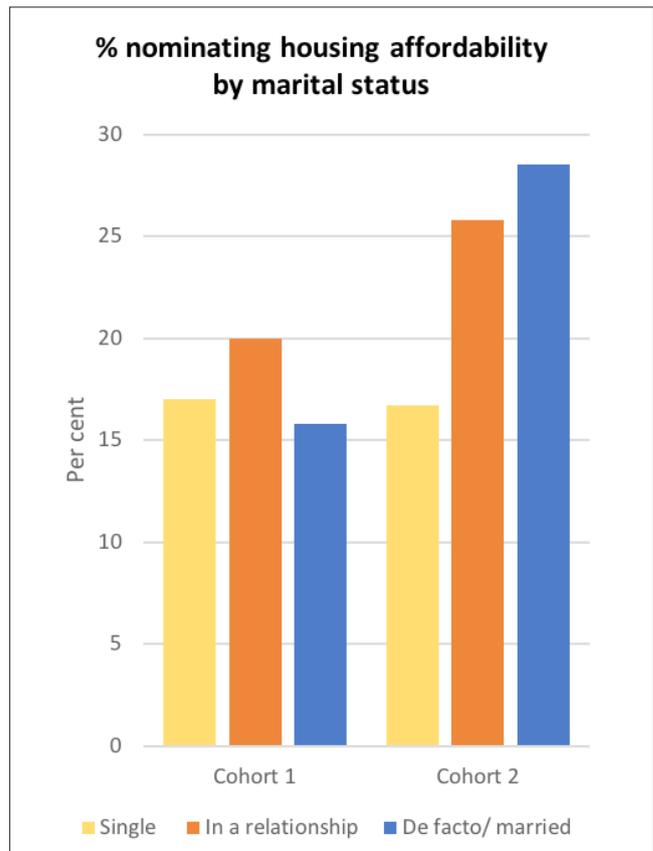


Figure 3.5

The goal of home ownership was identified as especially out of reach for those who were single, as outlined in this comment:

It's nearly impossible for a single person to buy a house. Myself and my wife have a combined income of nearly \$200K and still struggled to buy property. We ended up having to buy off the plan to save money on stamp duty.

[Male, nurse, married, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

On the whole, the comments about housing affordability conveyed a strong sense of frustration. This was especially evident in comments about the inability to afford entry into the property market despite working full time, or in some cases more than full time.

Currently saving for a home. I can't borrow enough because I don't earn enough. I work 2 jobs - 1 full-time, 1 part-time!

[Female, vet nurse, single, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

The frustrations of participants were exemplified in statements about how they felt that they were perceived in wider social discourses on housing affordability.

[Housing affordability] isn't about not going out for brunch every Saturday and avoiding avocado on toast, it's about a government that cares about the future of the younger generation not a government wanting to think about the now, who haven't had to pay for their own education, who own multiple properties who are disassociated with society.

[Female, research assistant, married, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Beyond simply being an issue in its own right, housing affordability also intersected with some of the other issues that cohort 2 participants nominated as



the most important. For instance, this participant identified concerns about housing affordability as part of the rising cost of living more broadly.

The rising cost of living - especially that its becoming an unobtainable dream to buy a house.

[Female, clinical research coordinator, in a de facto relationship, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Another participant identified the intersections of housing affordability and mental health.

Housing - renting or owning is too far out of reach in Sydney. If I move I have no work so I'm stuck still living with parents. It seems my generation is 10 years behind our parents and the cost of living greatly affects mental health issues.

[Female, youth worker, single, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Ultimately the participants' comments on housing affordability were striking because their concerns centred on their futures, and on their abilities to lead the lives that they desired.

Cost of Living

The second most nominated issue for cohort 1 was cost of living, nominated by 21%. Table 3.5 shows that, for cohort 1, 43% of those with no post-school qualification compared to 15% of those with a VET qualification nominated cost of living as an important issue. One-quarter of those who were married or in a de facto relationship compared to 11% of those who were single nominated cost of living as an important issue. Additionally, parents were more likely than non-parents to nominate cost of living.

Characteristic	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
	%	%
Gender		
Males	24.4	4.6
Females	20.4	5.7
Education		
School	42.9	6.9
VET	15.4	7.7
Bachelor degree	15.8	4.0
Post grad degree	25.8	4.3
Marital Status		
Single	11.3	5.3
In a relationship	0	4.5
De facto/ married	26.1	5.8
Parent Status		
Not a parent	18.6	4.1
Parent	23.0	5.6

Table 3.5

While some of the cohort 1 participants' comments about the cost of living were general, others focused on concerns about how it may impact upon their children.

I am very concerned about rising cost of living, and the likelihood my children may never afford to buy a house.

[Female, audiologist, married, parent, living in a capital city, cohort 1]

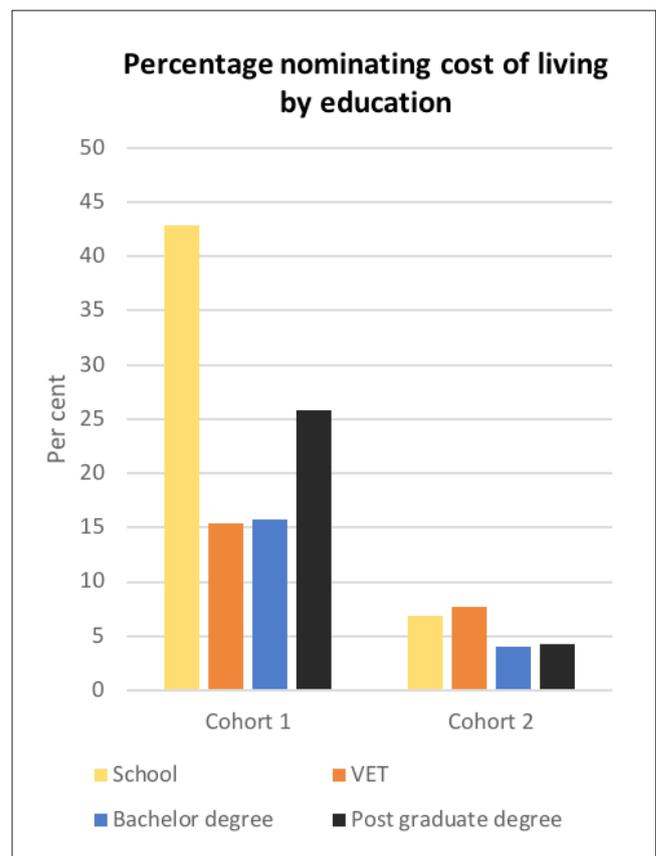


Figure 3.6

Interestingly, although only 5% of cohort 2 participants nominated cost of living, several included comments referring to cost of living.

Our generation faces so many challenges & we are so oppressed by house prices & the cost of living. We work hard for little reward.

[Female, self-employed, in a relationship, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Mostly the high cost of living. Property, utilities, insurances, petrol and rego to name a few.

[Male, electrician, single, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Health

One in five cohort 2 participants and 15% of cohort 1 participants nominated health, either physical or mental, as one of the most important issues in 2017. Table 3.6 shows that 8% of males and 17% of females in cohort 1 nominated health as one of the most important issues. For cohort 2, one quarter of those with a bachelor degree compared to 6.5% of those with a post-graduate degree nominated health. Figure 3.7 shows that those who were single were more likely to nominate health than those who were in a relationship, de facto partnership or married in both cohorts.

Characteristic	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
	%	%
Gender		
Males	7.7	17.7
Females	16.9	19.6
Education		
School	4.8	20.6
VET	23.1	23.1
Bachelor degree	13.9	23.8
Post grad degree	12.4	6.5
Marital Status		
Single	20.8	22.0
In a relationship	10.0	18.0
De facto/ married	12.5	17.4
Parent Status		
Not a parent	13.5	28.6
Parent	15.7	18.8

Table 3.6

Cohort 1's concerns about health centred on physical health and wellbeing.

Health - as in poor diets, processed foods, lack of exercise, chemicals etc.

[Female, osteopath, married, parent, living in a country town, cohort 1]

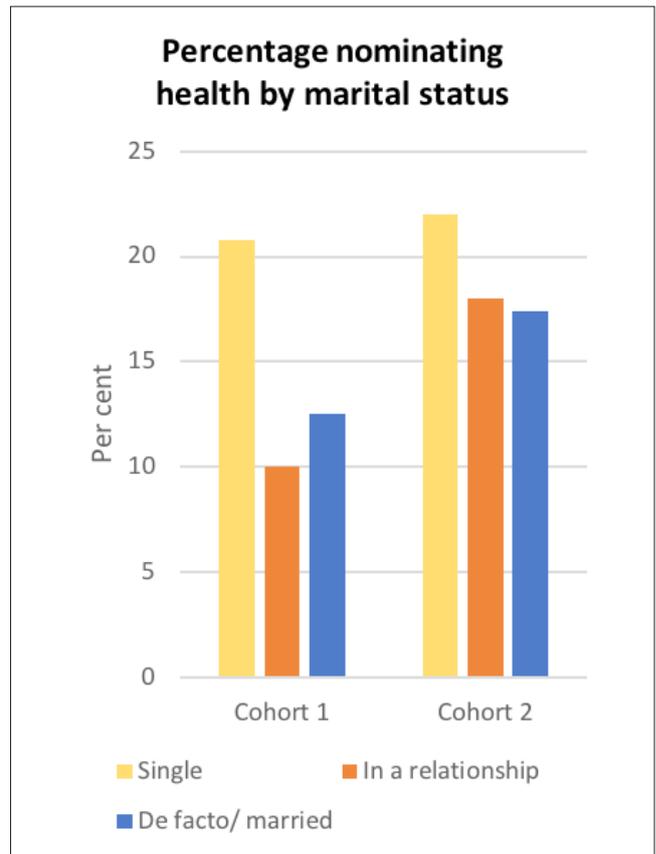


Figure 3.7

Some of the cohort 1 participants also raised concerns about mental health. However, when they did so it was often in relation to concerns about intersections between mental health distress and drug and alcohol abuse.

Crime/drugs (general) also their relation to mental health.

[Female, administrator, single, living in a capital city, cohort 1]

High drug usage in society and related mental health issues.

[Female, stay at home mother, married, living in a capital city, cohort 1]

Although cohort 2 participants commented predominantly on concerns about mental health, some participants also raised other health-related concerns.

It worries me that such a large percentage of people are not willing to have their children vaccinated, which not only affects the health of her child, but of the overall community as well

[Female, public service, married, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

In elaborating on their concerns about mental health, cohort 2 participants addressed several themes. For example: concerns about funding, support and facilities for mental health.

Mental health. I feel there are not enough facilities to assist people in the community who struggle with mental health issues. If more money was put into helping people with their mental health, so many more issues in society would decrease.

[Female, teacher, single, parent, living in a regional centre, cohort 2]

Some of the participants also raised concerns about the stigma around mental health.

I think there is still a poor stigma for people with mental health issues and it concerns me.

[Female, engineer, single, living in a capital city, cohort 2]

Treatment and stigmatism of mental health issues.

[Female, sustainability consultant, single, living in a capital city, cohort 2]



Several cohort 2 participants who nominated mental health as one of the most important issues facing their generation viewed mental health as connected to other issues that they nominated.

Mental Health – Housing, employment and education contribute to mental strain due to a lack of stability and safety net. It impacts on relationships, especially where both parties are experiencing similar stresses they tend to compound.

[Female, myotherapist, single, living in a country town, cohort 2]

I feel like there is SO MUCH pressure on my generation to have done and achieved everything. There are constant reminders (i.e. social media) everywhere that someone is more successful or working harder or achieving more (even if it's not true) and it's easy to feel like a failure which impacts your mental health.

[Female, event planner, single, living in a regional centre, cohort 2]

In both surveys, participants were asked about their own physical and mental health. Figure 3.8 illustrates the differences in the percentages of males and females in cohort 1 and cohort 2 who reported feeling physically or mentally unhealthy. In both cohorts, women were more likely than men to report being mentally unhealthy. Although cohort 1 females were more likely than their male counterparts to report being physically unhealthy, cohort 2 males were more likely than their female counterparts to report feeling physically unhealthy.

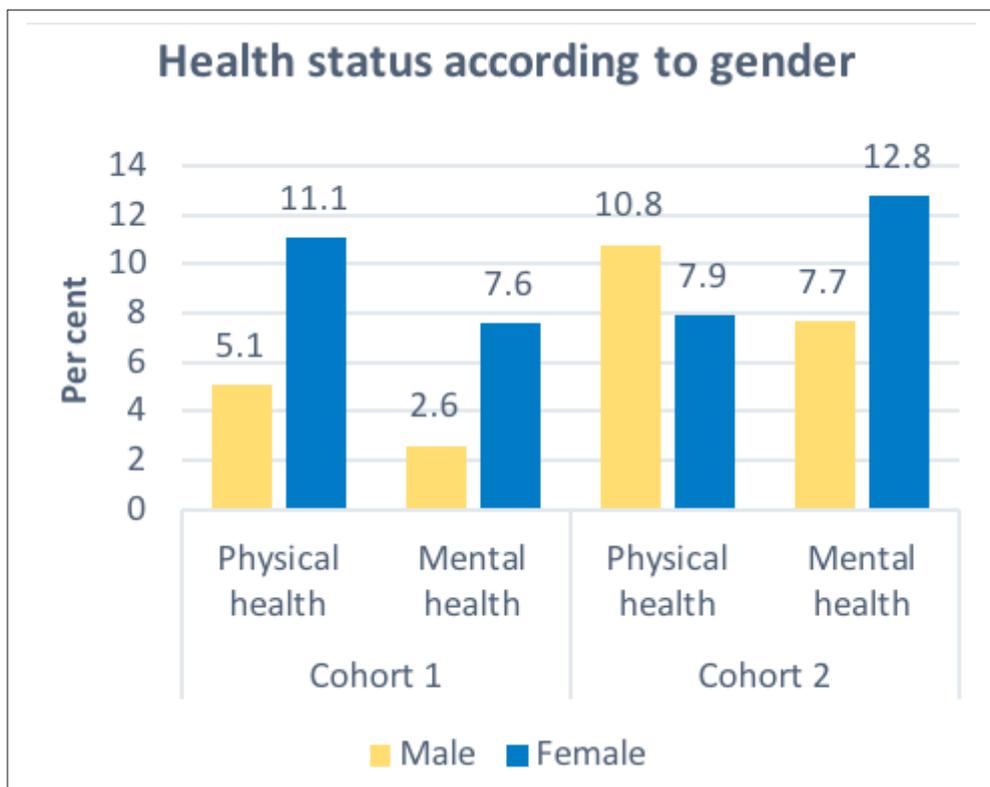


Figure 3.8

4. DISCUSSION

In this research report, we examined how members of two cohorts of Australians (broadly corresponding to the popular notions of Generation X and Generation Y) responded when asked to list the three most important issues facing Australia in 2017. Our findings reveal both similarities and differences according to generation and life course stage. Although both cohorts share a concern for the environment, between them there were notable differences underpinning their concerns. The older cohort reflected on the issues facing their children, whereas the younger cohort's concerns were intragenerational and anchored in their own futurity.

Although both cohorts have evidently been shaped by the specific socio-historical conditions in which they have achieved the milestones associated with adult life, the commonalities in their concerns about the environment stem from an apparent mistrust of governments to address climate change. This sentiment was echoed in comments on other issues from participants indicating that they believe governments are not adequately addressing everyday issues such as the cost of living, education, job security and housing affordability.

Our analysis also shows that there are notable differences within cohorts. For example, cohort 1 participants who were engaged in parenting were more likely than those who were not parenting to be concerned with the current cost of living and those who were married or in de facto relationships were more concerned than singles about the cost of living. The findings echo those of other researchers showing that Australians are experiencing the negative effects of rising living costs (see ABS, 2018; Haylen, 2014; Phillips, Li & Taylor, 2012).

In previous analyses of both cohorts (see Andres & Wyn, 2010; Crofts et al., 2016; Cuervo, Crofts & Wyn, 2013), we have illustrated different generational understandings of the 'rules of the game' and the social and economic conditions that these cohorts have had to face. For example, we found that at the age of 23 and 25, members of cohort 1 were more optimistic than those of cohort 2 about how long it would take them to secure a meaningful, well-paid

job in their area of study. Similarly, members of cohort 1 were more likely than their cohort 2 counterparts to believe they would be married and/or parenting within five years.

Social context appeared to significantly shape the issues that the cohort 2 participants nominated such as lack of jobs/ job security and housing affordability. With one-third of cohort 2 participants nominating lack of jobs/ job security and one-quarter nominating housing affordability, our results provide further evidence of deteriorating social and economic conditions for younger generations of Australians. These issues reflect the structural position that these young adults occupy in society: they are still trying to establish themselves in the labour market and are struggling to make their first foray into the housing market. As stated above, they were far more cautious about when they would secure these material achievements than cohort 1 participants. Furthermore, over the last decade, this cohort experienced irregular and precarious work as the new 'normal'. This resonates with other studies that argue that precarious and uncertain work is the norm for young workers (see Alberti et al., 2018; Mortimer et al., 2016). Some researchers have gone as far as stating that a new social class, the precariat, is rising (Standing, 2011), while others have labelled this generation as "The Precarious Generation" (Bessant, Farthing, Watts, 2017). Furthermore, other researchers have found an association between being in precarious employment and being unable to obtain stability in the housing market (see Beer et al. 2016).

Media concerns about young people 'delaying' their transition to adulthood by staying longer in their parental home tend to, firstly, homogenise the experiences of youth; and secondly, fail to take into account the precarious landscape of labour markets (White & Wyn, 2013). Moreover, in youth studies there is a tendency to neglect the role of families in transitions, and thus, to underplay the increasing intergenerational support many young people require to thrive in material and emotional spheres (Andres & Wyn, 2010; Wyn, Lantz & Harris, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Our aim in this research report has been to present the most important issues as considered by members of two generations of Australians. It has not been our intention to present these two cohorts as homogenous and undifferentiated groups. Nor have we sought to play along with crude representations of younger generations that stereotype youth as 'narcissistic', accusing them of delaying their transition to adulthood, and being devoid of any sense of social responsibility and mutuality. On the contrary, our own research is defined by attention to differences and inequalities according to social hierarchies (see

Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Cuervo, Wyn & Crofts, 2012; Wyn & Woodman 2006). As mentioned above, over the years of this longitudinal project, both cohorts have had similar goals dominated by the desire to establish a relationship with a significant other and secure stable employment. We believe the issues discussed in this research report reflect the concerns of members of these two generations, contributing to our understanding of the complex myriad of societal issues that Australians are grappling with due to rapid social and economic change.

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APPENDIX

Table A.1 Characteristics of the two cohorts

Characteristic	Cohort 1 n= 256	Cohort 2 n=520
	%	%
Males	30.9	32
Females	69.1	68
Education		
School	8.2	19
VET	16.4	19.8
Bachelor degree	39.5	38.7
Post graduate degree	35.9	22.5
Location		
Capital city	66.0	60
Regional city	17.6	25.8
Country town	10.6	9.2
Rural	4.7	3.3
Other	1.2	1.7
Marital status		
Single	21.5	34.1
In a relationship	4.3	24
De facto/married	73.1	41.3
Missing	1.2	0.6
Parent status		
Not a parent	28.0	86.3
Parent	72.0	13.7
Employment Contract		
Permanent	68.0	68.3
Renewable contract	3.1	9.4
Limited term contract	6.3	7.3
Casual	8.2	7.3
Self employed	5.9	1.5
Not employed	8.6	6.5

Table A.2 Most important Issues in Australia in 2017

Issue	Cohort 1 n=250	Cohort 2 n= 395
	%	%
Environment	37.5	36.7
Lack of jobs	12.9	33.9
Drug abuse	6.6	24.3
Housing affordability	16.0	24.1
Cost of living	21.1	5.3
Health	14.0	19.0
Government /politics	17.6	15.4
Terrorism / security	18.8	6.6
Economy	16.8	2.8
Education	16.8	5.3
Accept others	13.3	13.2
Lack of money	1.6	11.4
Violence	5.5	10.4
Healthcare	8.2	8.1
Refugees	10.9	7.1
Parenting	3.1	6.8
Marriage equality	8.2	6.6
Social inequality	9.4	6.3
Gender equality	7.0	4.6
Relationships	0.8	6.1
Homelessness	2.7	5.8
Global issues	3.1	5.1
Crime	5.1	0.3
Generations	3.9	..
Bullying	0.4	3.0
Religion	2.3	1.3
Indigenous	2.0	1.0
Social media	0.4	2.0
Technology	1.6	1.3
Community engagement	1.2	1.0
Other	10.6	12.9

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