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Life Patterns Project

Pathways in Adult Life: Summary Report on the 2019 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.

PATHWAYS IN ADULT LIFE: SUMMARY REPORT ON THE 2019 SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS IN COHORT 2

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 2019. The survey is part of an ongoing research project by the Youth Research Centre, at The University of Melbourne.

This report highlights your responses by gender. On most questions, the patterns overall are similar, however, there are some interesting differences. For example, men were more likely than women to be living with their parents and women were more likely than men to be living with a partner and children. In this report, we also examine gender differences in motivations to undertake further study and in the relationship between educational qualifications and employment. Men were more likely than women to say that it has been hard to achieve their current situation. Women were less satisfied with life than men and were more likely to say that they have difficulty meeting their living costs. For the first time, this year we included questions about levels of confidence in various institutions. Your responses point to uniformly low levels of confidence in banks and financial institutions, the Federal Government, the Australian political system and the media.

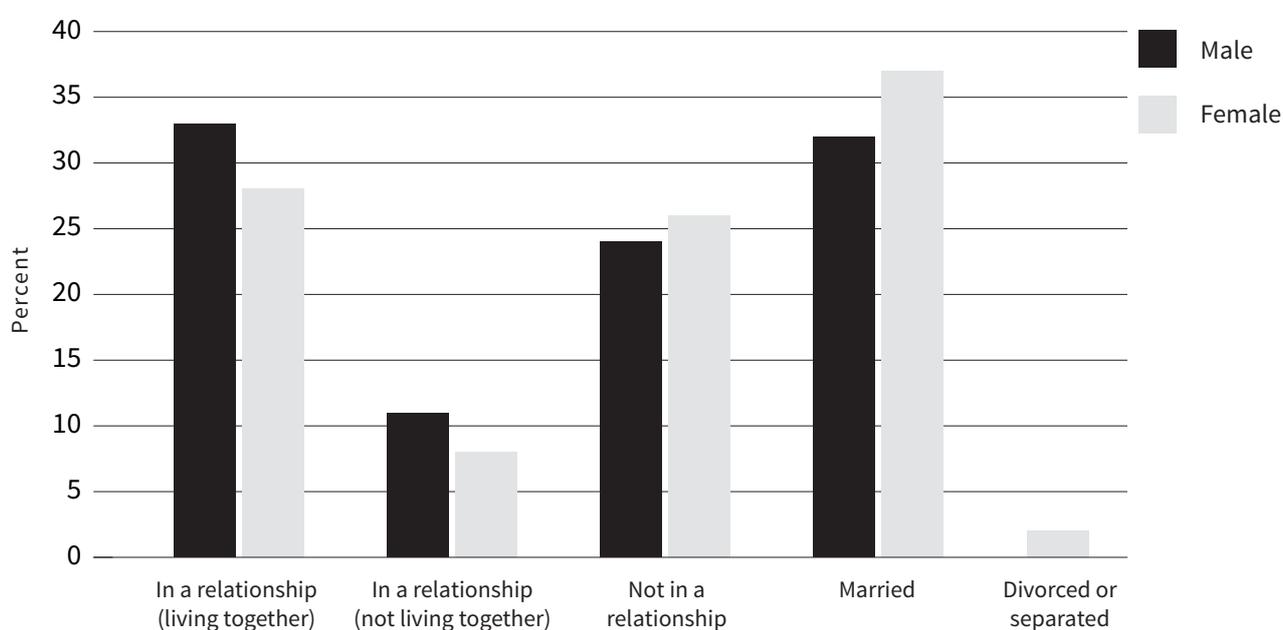
With your contribution, we continue to provide valuable insights that inform governments and social institutions about your generation.



SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

This report is based on the responses of 494 participants aged 30-31 years who completed secondary school in 2006 in Victoria, Tasmania, the ACT and New South Wales. In 2019, 154 (31%) participants were men and 340 (69%) were women. The majority of participants were living in metropolitan centres (57%), 25% were living in regional cities, 16% were living in rural areas, and the remaining 2% were living overseas. Although women were more likely than men to be married, men were more likely than women to be in a relationship and living together- see Figure 1.

Figure 1. Marital status by gender (%)



These trends were reflected in the participants' living arrangements. Men were more likely than women to be living at home with their parents: 15% compared to 11%; and more likely to be living with their partner: 41% compared to 35%. Women were more likely than men to be living with a partner and children (26% compared to 19%) and to be living on their own (13% compared to 8%)- see Table 1.

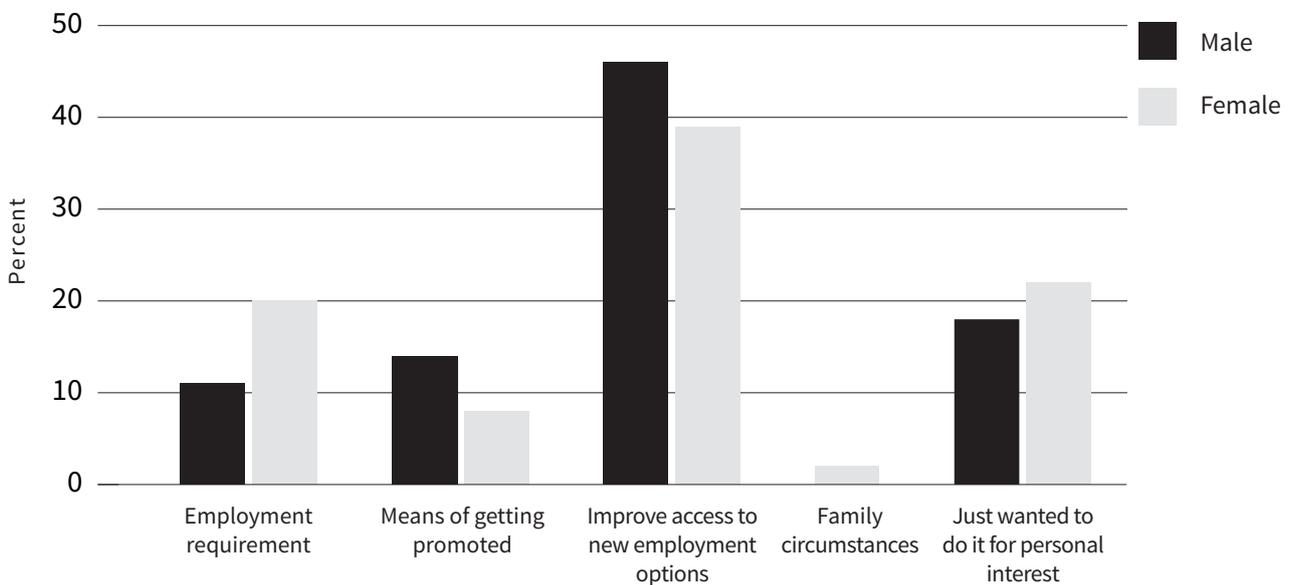
Table 1. Living arrangements by gender (%)

Living arrangements	Male	Female	All
Living with parents	15	11	12
Living in a shared household	16	15	15
Living on my own	8	13	11
Living with my partner	41	35	37
Living with my partner and child/children	19	26	24
Living with my child/children as a single parent	0	1	1

LIFE LONG LEARNING

In 2019, 15% of participants were undertaking study. The reasons for undertaking study differed according to gender- see Figure 2. Men were more likely than women to be studying as a means to getting promoted (14% compared to 8%) and to improve access to new employment options (46% compared to 39%). On the contrary, women were more likely than men to undertake further study due to employment requirements (20% compared to 11%) and for personal interest (22% compared to 18%).

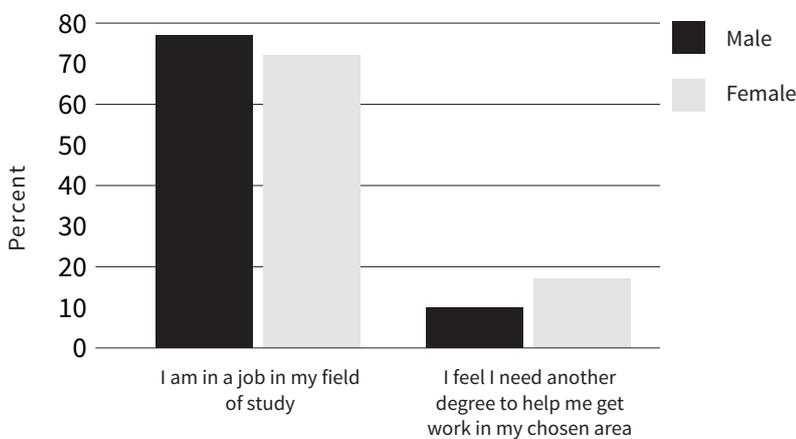
Figure 2. Motivation to study by gender



EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

When participants were asked if their current job was related to their field of study, men were slightly more likely than women to be employed in jobs related to their field of study (77% compared to 72%). Furthermore, men were less likely than women to feel that they needed another degree to help them get work in their chosen field (10% compared to 17%).

Figure 3. Education and employment



Throughout the survey, participants are invited to comment on various issues. The comments below illustrate some of the complexities that participants face when trying to make use of their educational skills and qualifications in the workplace.

"My university education was completed in 2010 and now I feel that it is not entirely relevant to what I do and would potentially need more education if I was to continue down the path I am going. I have the job experience required to do my current role but when looking at other employers they seem to want the qualifications over the on the job experience."

[female with a university degree living on her own in a capital city]

"I was looking to get more senior roles and the MBA is a good vehicle to do that and also allow me to change industries."

[male with a post-graduate degree living in a shared household in a capital city]

"From completing my degree to getting a job in that field took three years. I started two other degrees (but didn't finish) because I had almost given up on trying to find a job in the right field."

[female with a post-graduate degree living with her partner in a regional city]

"I believed getting a degree to become a qualified professional would mean I would easily be able to secure a job in my field of study. I did not anticipate the lack of positions in my area."

[female with a university degree living with her partner in a regional city]

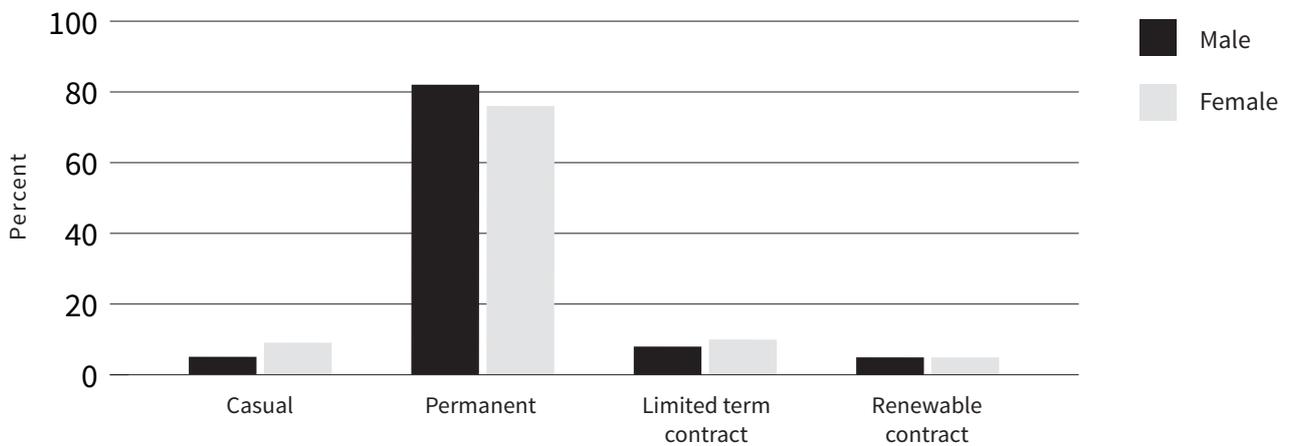
"I work as a service engineer for automated processing machinery and I'm going back to study programming and controls for automated machines to progress my career. "

[male with a university degree living with his parents in a country town]

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

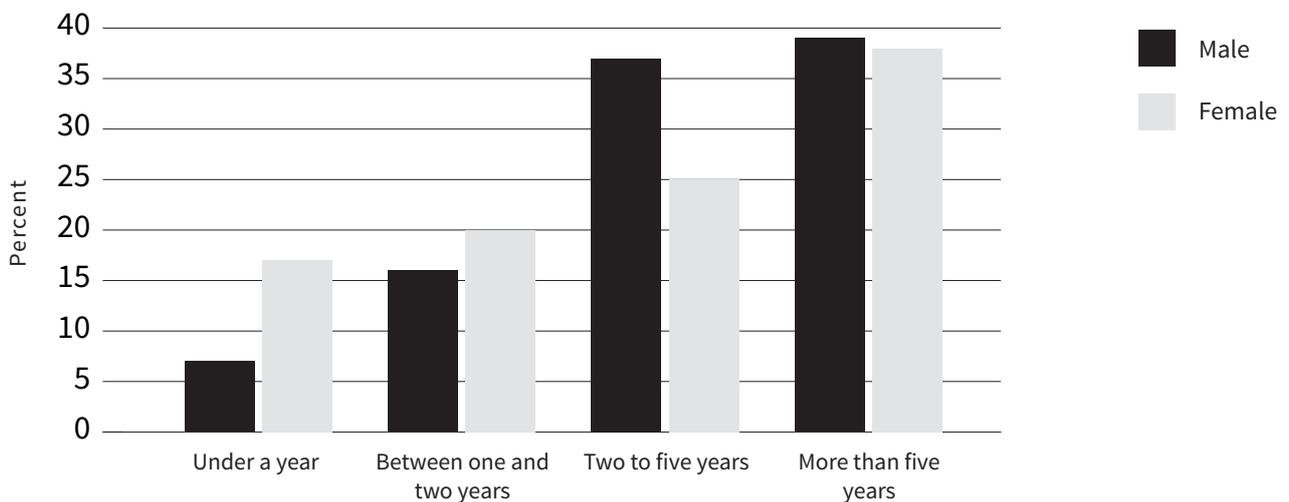
Although at age 30-31, the majority of participants were employed under a permanent contract (78%), men were more likely than women to have a permanent contract (82% compared to 76%), and less likely to work on a casual basis (5% compared to 9%) - see Figure 4.

Figure 4. Type of employment contract by gender



One third of participants expected to be employed in their current job for no more than two years (33%), 29% expected to be employed from two to five years, and 38% expected to be in their current job for more than five years. Figure 5 illustrates the differences in expected tenure according to gender. Women were more likely than men to be employed in jobs that they expected to leave within a year (17% compared to 7%) or between one and two years (20% compared to 16%). Although a similar proportion of men and women (39% and 38%) expected to be in their jobs for more than five years, a larger proportion of men expected to be in their current work between two and five years (37% of men compared to 25% of women).

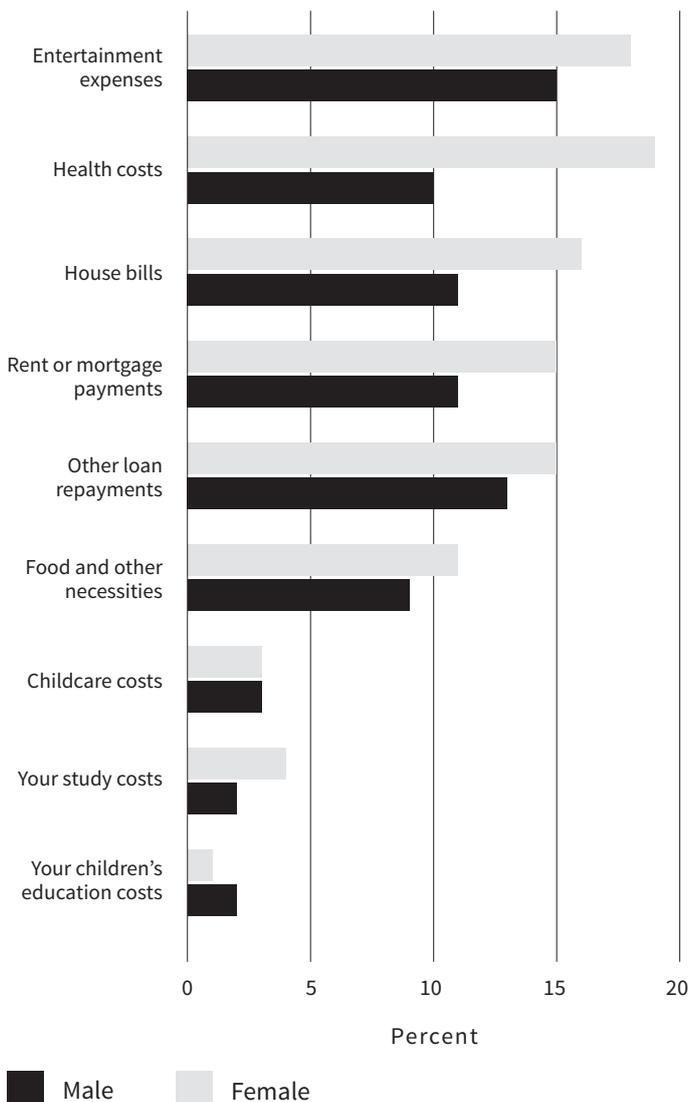
Figure 5. Expected duration of current job by gender



COSTS OF LIVING

In general, women had more difficulties than men meeting costs and living expenses over the past year. Figure 6 shows that for all cost items except children's study costs and childcare costs, a larger proportion of women than men reported having difficulty meeting their costs. The largest gender difference in meeting specific costs was in relation to health costs with 19% of women and 10% of men reporting that they had difficulties in meeting their health costs. Women were also more likely than men to report having difficulties meeting entertainment expenses (18% compared to 15%), house bills (16% compared to 11%) and rent or mortgage payments (15% compared to 11%).

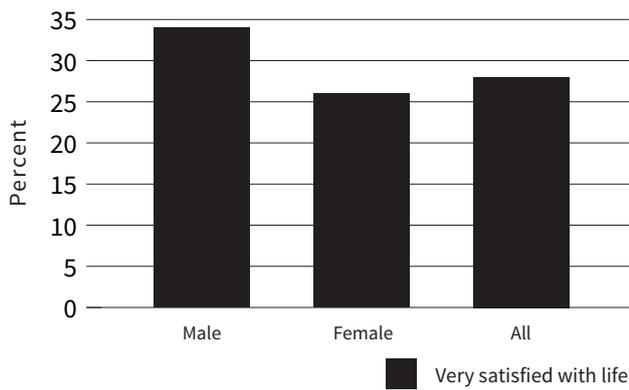
Figure 6. Difficulty meeting costs by gender



LIFE SATISFACTION

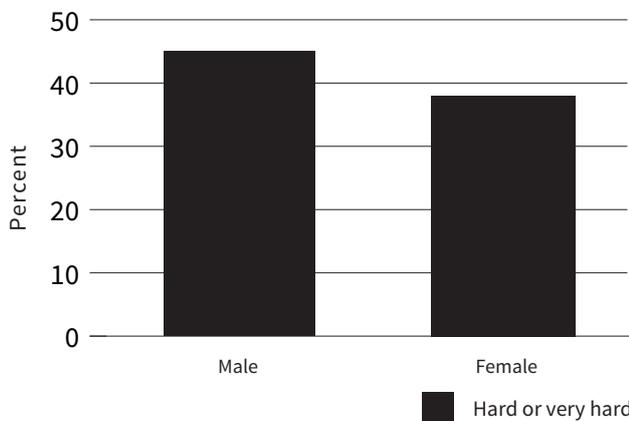
Although a large proportion of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with life (88% for both genders), a larger proportion of men than women reported being very satisfied with life (34% compared to 26%)- see Figure 7.

Figure 7. Life satisfaction by gender



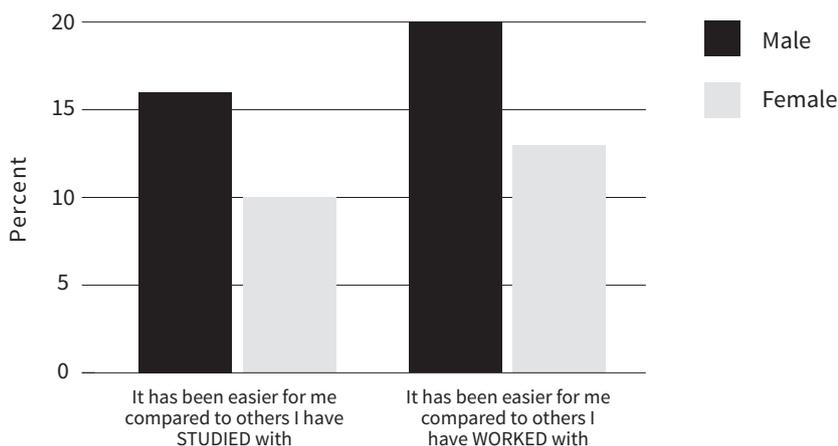
One factor driving levels of life satisfaction is the sense of how hard life is and/ or has been. When we asked participants about how easy or hard it has been given what they have achieved so far, men were more likely than women to report that it had been hard or very hard (45% compared to 38%).

Figure 8. How hard or easy has it been given what you have achieved so far by gender



Despite men being more likely than women to feel it had been hard or very hard for them to achieve what they have, they were also more likely than women to believe that it had been easier for them compared to others they studied with (16% compared to 10%), and compared to others they work with (20% compared to 13%)- see Figure 9.

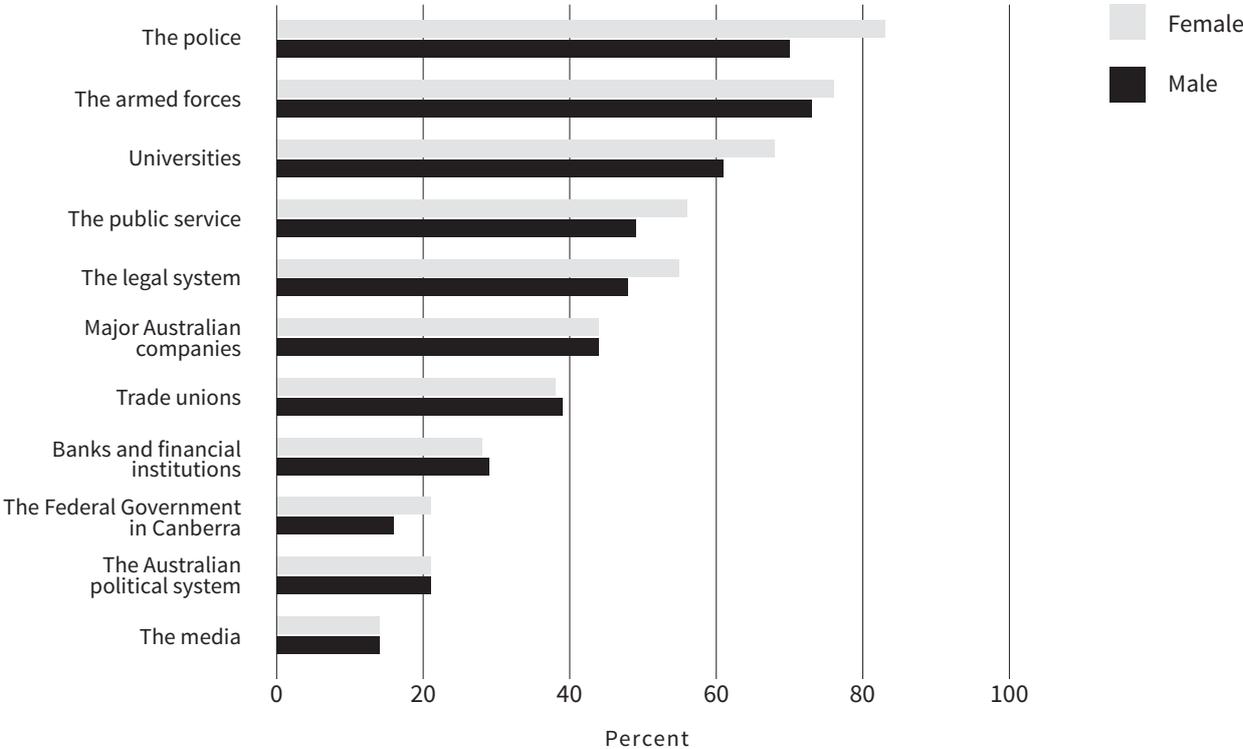
Figure 9. How hard has it been compared to others by gender



LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS

In 2019, participants were asked how much confidence they had in a number of Australian institutions. Figure 10 shows the percentage who answered ‘a great deal of confidence’ or ‘quite a lot of confidence’ by gender. The three institutions that participants had the highest levels of confidence were the police (79%), the armed forces (75%) and universities (66%). The three institutions that participants had the lowest levels of confidence were the media (14%), the Australian political system (21%) and the Federal Government in Canberra (20%). In general, women showed higher levels of confidence in institutions than men, especially in the police (83% compared to 70%), universities (68% compared to 61%), the public service (56% compared to 49%) and the legal system (55% compared to 48%).

Figure 10. Levels of institutional confidence by gender



At the end of the survey, we asked participants if they had any further comments. The majority of comments provided by participants referred to their levels of confidence in Australian institutions. A content analysis of the comments revealed two main themes: (1) low confidence in the Australian Government and political system; and (2) low confidence in the media. Participants did not provide many comments about institutions in which they had high levels of confidence. The sample of comments presented below reveals their disillusionment with the government, the political system and the media.

Government

"I am utterly disillusioned with the right of Australian politics and the Murdoch newspapers' erosion of our democracy, and it is shaping my future life goals. I now want to detach from active involvement in community and urban life because I feel like the cards are stacked against a fair, progressive and reasonable society."

[male with a post-graduate degree living with his partner in a capital city]

"We're living in such strange times thanks to social media. Confidence in the government & other institutions/companies (churches, big corporations) is at an all-time low. The government in particular is failing us when it comes to the issues that are important to us - affordability (housing, life needs, etc), social justice (asylum seekers, homelessness) and the environment."

[female with a university degree living with her partner in a capital city]

"Australian political system needs changing, we are not achieving or heading to the correct direction as a country."

[male with a trade certificate living with his partner and children in a country town]

"Australia needs a new political system. It's become about politicians keeping themselves employed rather than doing things to help the country long term. The latter should determine the former."

[female with a certificate III living with her partner in a capital city]

Media

"Media is very biased, and journalists don't deserve their title, as they don't do investigative work. Media is misleading."

[female with a university degree living with her partner in a capital city]

"Media is now only motivated by money. Genuine journalists are few & far between. It's hard to know who to trust anymore."

[female with a university degree living with her partner in a capital city]

"I believe that the rise of social media and the 24 hour news cycle have had a negative impact on society, particularly on politics. These platforms have resulted in a decreased standard of journalism, resulting in more widely distributed inaccurate information and an inability of government to effect change."

[female with a university degree living with her partner in a capital city]

"Traditional media and social media are not reliable organisations and fail to take responsibility for their social impact."

[female with a university degree living with her parents in a capital city]

"Media isn't helping as it sensationalises unimportant issues and buries that which really matters."

[female with a university degree living with her partner in a regional city]

We appreciate and thank you for your contribution and 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:
<https://education.unimelb.edu.au/ycr/research/life-patterns>

Or follow us on Twitter:
@YRCunimelb

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