



MONASH
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YOUTH POLICY
AND EDUCATION
PRACTICE

LIFE, DISRUPTED:

YOUNG PEOPLE, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19

24 August 2021

@MonashEducation @MonashCYPEP | #YouthDisadvantage #MonashCYPEP #ResearchInAction

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PROFESSOR VIV ELLIS
Dean, Monash Education

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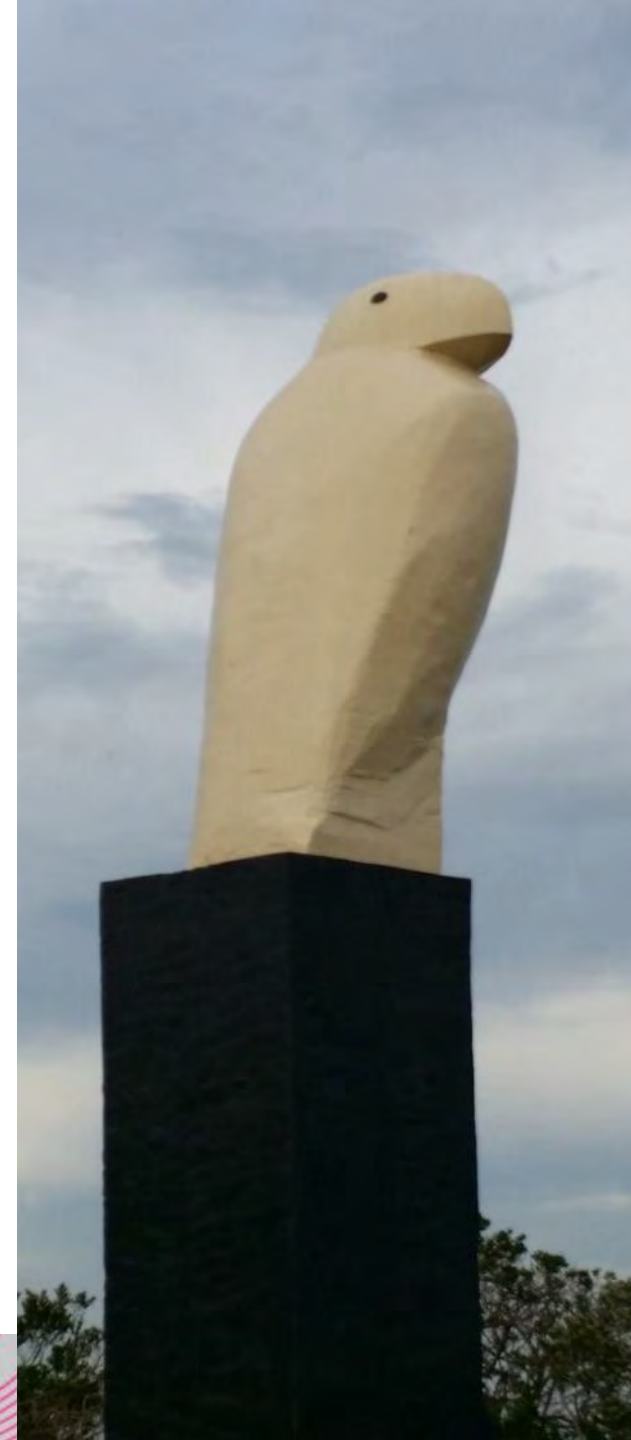
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

I would like to acknowledge the lands on which I speak on today and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

I would like to specifically acknowledge that the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people, communities of the Kulin Nation, are the ongoing custodians of the lands on which Monash University now stands.

We pay our respects through our research, teaching and learning to the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung Elders and their past, present and future communities.



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LIFE, DISRUPTED:

YOUNG PEOPLE, EDUCATION AND
EMPLOYMENT BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19

PROFESSOR LUCAS WALSH
Director, Centre for Youth Policy &
Education Practice

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AUTHORS

PROFESSOR LUCAS WALSH

Centre for Youth Policy & Education Practice

DR JOANNE GLEESON

Monash Q Project

DR BERTALAN MAGYAR

Centre for Youth Policy & Education Practice

DR BEATRIZ GALLO CORDOBA

Centre for Youth Policy & Education Practice

THANKS TO:

Masha Mikola, Blake Cutler & Lorene Wilks

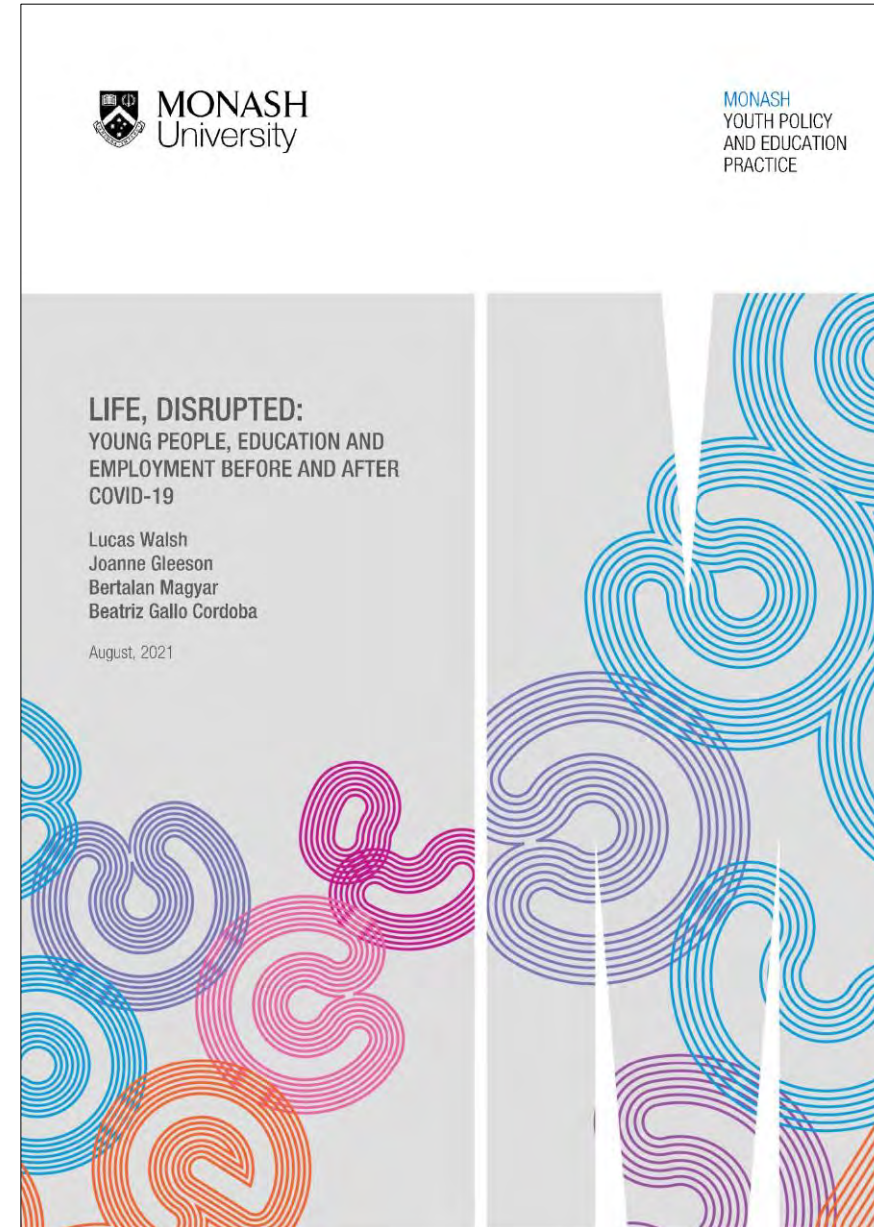
Assoc. Professor Steven Roberts

Professor Dan Woodman

Professor Viv Ellis

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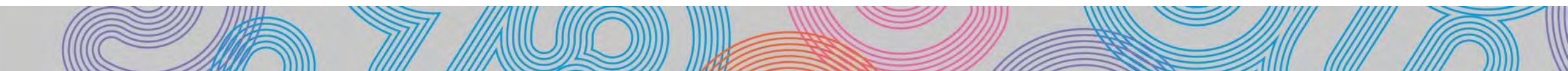
Rebecca Walters

Andrew Leap

UNCERTAINTY

The spectre of uncertainty looms even larger over the COVID-19 pandemic

- Ordinary uncertainty
 - Extra-ordinary uncertainty
 - Manufactured uncertainty (Beck)
-
- **COVID-19 has revealed deep fault lines in young people's relationship to work**



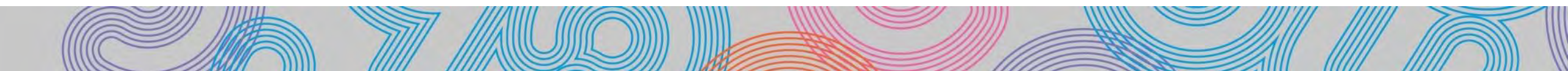
LOOKING TO THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Young Australians have been one of the groups to feel the full force of this pandemic, with thousands losing work and facing dwindling prospects in a battered economy and depleted labour market.

(Biddle 2020)

- The plight of young people in the past provides a window onto present and future challenges that relate to Australians in general.
- Earlier downturns such as the global financial crisis (GFC) help to understand key economic and social effects on young people as a result of the pandemic.
- Young people felt the impact of the GFC quickly and disproportionately compared to the overall working population.

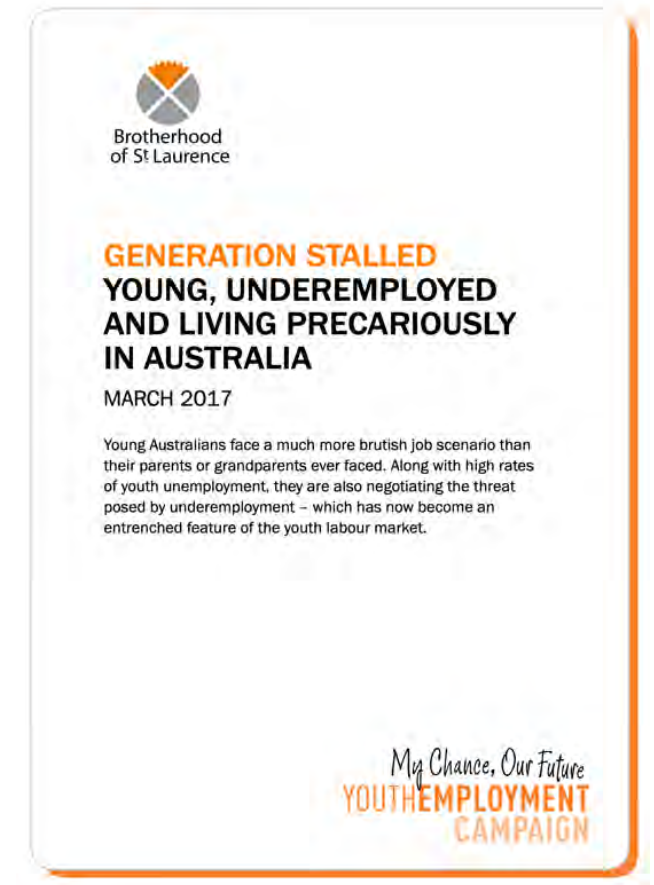
Walsh, L. (2016). Educating Generation Next. Palgrave Macmillan



LOOKING TO THE PAST

- While the percentage of prime-age workers has since increased, the level of youth employment has not kept the same pace.
- Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 3 young people were unemployed or underemployed (part-time workers who are available to do more work).
- Youth underemployment reached the highest level in the four decades since the count officially began.

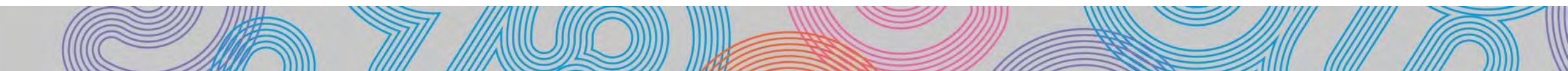
Brotherhood of St Laurence. (2017). Generation Stalled Young, Underemployed and Living Precariously In Australia
https://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/9409/1/BSL_Generation_stalled_young_underemployed_2017.pdf



LOOKING TO THE PAST

- Current trends are amplifications of trends that predate the GFC.
- Since 1992, the number of young people working full-time hours in casual employment has almost doubled.
- Australia has one of the highest shares of people employed in short-term, part-time work in the OECD.
- Concentrations of young people working in the gig economy, which has grown by over 300% since 2016.

OECD (2020). OECD Outlook 2020
Foundation for Young Australians + Tomorrow Movement. (2021). A livable income for all.



LOOKING AT THE PRESENT

- Job losses have been particularly severe in casual employment.
- Early in the pandemic, casual positions in small business fell by 25% vs 2% for full time and 5% decreases in part time jobs.
- Youth unemployment costs up to \$15.9 billion in lost GDP annually.
- The real costs are considerably greater.

Foundation for Young Australians + Tomorrow Movement. (2021). A livable income for all.



The Foundation for Young Australians + Tomorrow Movement

A livable income for all

March 2021

#QandA



THE DISCUSSION PAPER

Life, Disrupted: Young People, Education and Employment



It's pretty distressing – you're told in school to follow what you want to do. This is what I want to do. I don't want to be a nurse. I don't want to be an engineer. I [knew] going into my [media] degree, what career outcomes look[ed] like.

... there's obviously always going to be [a] need for healthcare workers, for all these emergency services people.

But that doesn't change the fact that I've just spent three years at university trying my best to do something that I want to do for the rest of my life.

...I don't feel like I should be told to do a different degree because of [the pandemic] there's no job opportunities for me. That's not fair.

Natasha Brock, 3rd year university student

THE DISCUSSION PAPER

Life, Disrupted: Young People, Education and Employment Before and After COVID-19

We trace the challenges magnified by COVID-19 back to the reassembly and sometimes eradication of conventional occupational structures around the world on the back of post-Cold War globalisation.

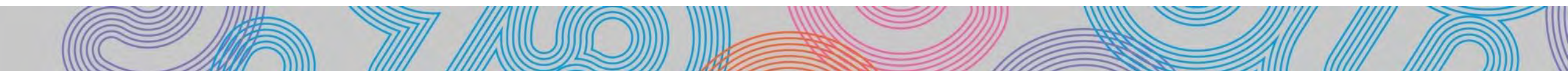
Automation and digitalisation of industrial production have accelerated this reformation.

Critically analyse to focus on 21st century skills.

Young people encounter multiple and intersecting challenges involving multiple areas of disruption that are largely constructed for them, rather than by them.

While we focus on young people, education and work, education does not exist exclusively to serve the economy, but a wider set of purposes across personal, political and social domains of life.

Gore, J. et al (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on student learning in New South Wales primary schools: an empirical study. The Australian Educational Researcher. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13384-021-00436-w>



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Beyond the discussion paper

- In 2019 Mission Australia youth survey about one in five young Australian were highly concerned about financial security.
- The 2020 survey indicated that COVID-19 was the second most frequently cited issue of national importance and concerns raised in relation to the impacts of COVID-19 and associated lockdowns included education, isolation and mental health.

[Equity and discrimination was the top national issue for young people, increasing by more than 60% since 2019.]

Mission Australia (2019 & 2020). Youth Survey Report

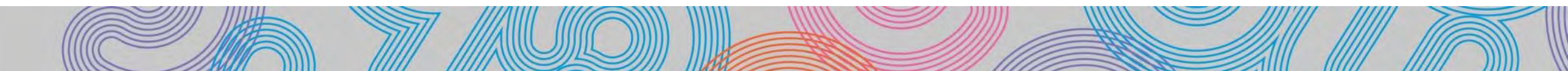


A WINDOW ONTO WIDER SOCIETY

Beyond the discussion paper

- One survey just prior to the pandemic found that 44% of 18 to 24 year-olds rated their mental health as average or poor.
- Other data suggests that young women aged 18 to 24 had the biggest proportion of high or very high levels of psychological distress of any age group.
- 70% of Australians aged 18 to 44 say climate change is a critical threat vs 49% of those over 45.
- The highest levels of prejudice continue to be directed against religious minorities, racial minorities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, LGBTI people, and young people.
- Anxiety about prejudice, climate change and financial insecurity – indeed insecurity in general – is not confined to young people.

Willis, O. (2019). What's driving poor mental health among young Australians? We asked them. ABC Health & Wellbeing
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021). Lowy Poll (2020), BWA (2020)



THE ANNUAL NATIONAL YOUTH BAROMETER

... will ask young people about:

- Health and wellbeing
- Education and the labour market
- Money
- Housing
- Politics and the environment
- Technology
- Relationships
- Safety and risk

Understanding how young people are affected by these provides a kind of barometer of wider society, measuring pressures faced by young people, as well as potentially forecasting the weather ahead.

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A PROVOCATION:

Education, youth voice and policy are enablers of change

- How can educators and policy makers better respond to these challenges?
- How we can form surprising collaborations?

***Is it possible to
consider being
young as a
disadvantage?***

EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES TO UNCERTAINTY

The spectre of uncertainty also looms large over the purposes of education

- Are we educating for survival in an eternal present?
- Are educating to shape futures?
- Are we learning from the past?

The Monash Centre for Youth Policy and Education Practice will explore these trends in relation to education policy and practice.

The job of educators is not just about developing in individuals the skills to navigate uncertainty, but to work with our students to imagine and create the conditions for a better, more secure life.

We want to start a conversation about young people based on a language of possibility.

Life need not be one of perpetual disruption.



THE DISCUSSION PAPER

A final word from Natasha



. . . there used to be this very stepping-stone way of getting to things.

You build experience, you do internships, it builds networks and opportunities. But that seems to be . . . almost obsolete now.

. . . right now, all we can think about is:

‘What are we going to do next? What’s literally next?’

Natasha Brock, 3rd year university student

A CAREERS ADVISOR PERSPECTIVE

DR JO GLEESON
Monash Q Project

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RESPONSE & KEY CHALLENGES

DR BRADY ROBARDS
School of Social Sciences

@MonashEducation @MonashCYPEP | #YouthDisadvantage #MonashCYPEP #ResearchInAction

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Responding and connecting to *Life, disrupted: Young people, education and employment before and after COVID-19*

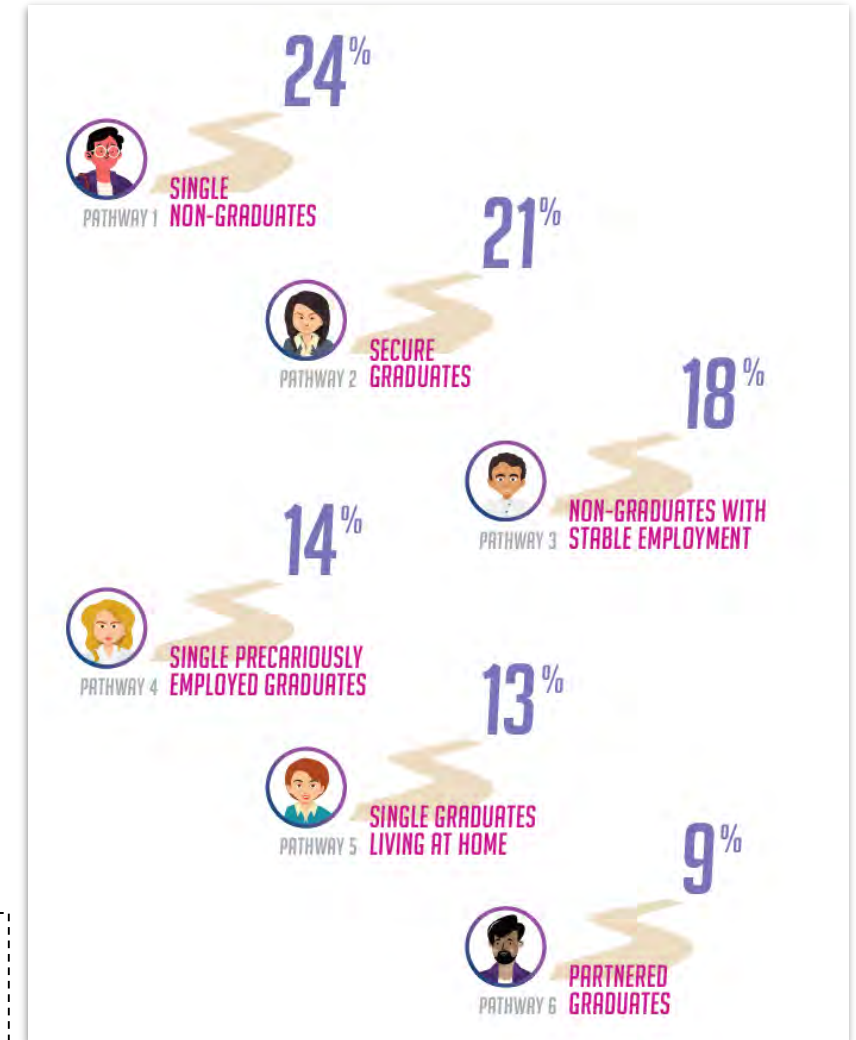
Brady Robards
School of Social Sciences, Monash Arts

@bradyjay
brady.robards@monash.edu

Already complex, non-**linear** pathways into ‘adulthood’

- Young people take complex, non-linear, and disrupted pathways, marked by transitions in:
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Relationships
 - Housing (+++)
- Pathway 1 (24%) - Single non-**graduates**, “unskilled” (disputed!)/vocationally educated, not cohabiting with partner, many at home with parents, mix of stable and non-permanent work by 25
- Pathway 2 (21%) - ‘**Secure graduates**’ in **permanent work by 25**, uni educated, mix of single and late partnered, out of home
- Pathway 3 (18%) - Non-grads, in stable employment, partnered, out of home
- Pathway 4 (14%) - Single precariously employed graduates
- Pathway 5 (13%) - Single graduates living at home
- Pathway 6 (9%) - Partnered graduates, 38% at home

Pathway analysis from LSAY data, by Jonathan Smith as part of our Young People & Australian Public Services Project (Robards, Roberts, Lyall, Neves, Ghazarian, Smith, Laughland-Booÿ, Trott & Lindsay, 2020); 2009 cohort data, Waves 1-10 (final analytic sample n=2,945)



COVID amplification

“The disruptions caused by the pandemic have highlighted the prolonged disruptions to the daily lives of many young people”

(Walsh, Gleeson et al. 2021)

It's a tough time! Based on our survey of 2261 young people in Australia, aged 18-30 in 2020 during the pandemic:

- Study:
 - 18% experienced a disruption to their studies
 - 57% said plans for future study changed
- Work:
 - 24% had their work hours reduced
 - 12% were laid off or their employer went out of business
 - 6% were stood down without pay
 - 14% had their pay reduced
- Loneliness since lockdowns/restrictions:
 - 53% were more lonely (17% much more)
- Mental health
 - 40% reported worse mental health
 - 39% about the same
- BUT 17% also **increased their social connections through digital media during this time.**
- Young LGBTIQ+ people tended to experience many of these negative effects more acutely, and also benefited more from digital media in terms of growing their connections.

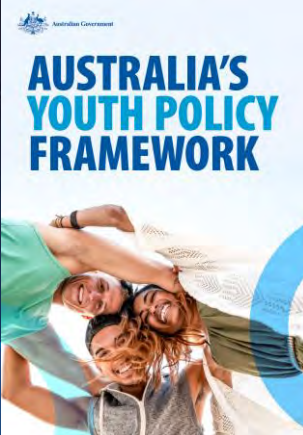
Key focus areas in our research

1. The importance of public services (Centrelink, Medicare, ATO, etc.) in the lives of young Australians, and how to improve them for young people
2. Uneven experiences and access to support - gender, cultural background, language
3. De-**stigmatising service access and eliminating the 'dole bludger' narrative**
4. Mental health as an embedded and enduring concern (which we can link to precarity, uncertainty, and responsibilisation/individualisation)

- Public release coming shortly, please be in touch for access.
- Join us at our *Youth Futures* panel for Social Sciences Week, September 6 - registration links forthcoming



- ❖ 47 focus groups with 155 young adults from around Australia, aged 18-30.
- ❖ 2,261 responses to a national survey of young adults, aged 18-30.
- ❖ 30,000 social media posts, collected from Twitter, Reddit and Whirlpool.
- ❖ Secondary analysis of longitudinal data from The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) and the Our Lives study.



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QUESTIONS?

PROFESSOR LUCAS WALSH

Director, Centre for Youth Policy & Education Practice

DR JO GLEESON

Research Fellow, Monash Q Project

DR BRADY ROBARDS

Senior Lecturer in Sociology, School of Social Sciences

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FULL DISCUSSION PAPER

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