

CLASS OF COVID

REPORT 2022



Prince's Trust

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on research undertaken by Censuswide on behalf of The Prince's Trust. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from Censuswide. The total sample size was 2,002 16 to 25-year-olds. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all young people aged 16 to 25 in the UK.

References to respondents from lower income backgrounds are those who said they had free school meals throughout their time at school. Of the 2,002 young people surveyed, 510 received free school meals throughout their time at school.

When referencing agreement, this combines 'strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree'. Fieldwork was undertaken between 16th August 2022 and 23rd August 2022.

CENSUSWIDE
+
THE SURVEY CONSULTANTS

THE TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE
OF 16 TO 25-YEAR-OLDS

2,002

OF THOSE SURVEYED,

510

RECEIVED FREE
SCHOOL MEALS

FOREWORD

Young people in the UK today are facing a unique set of challenges, threatening their futures and aspirations during crucial, formative years.

They are feeling the repercussions of the pandemic on their education, careers and social lives, and they now face a cost of living crisis too.

This report tells us that these profound challenges are leading many young people to feel like their lives are spiralling out of control. They are scared for their future, feeling destabilised and debilitated at a time when they should be full of ambition and hope.

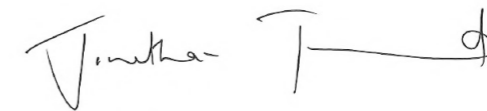
As the economic climate continues to change around us, this research indicates that 2.8 million young people don't think their job prospects will ever recover from the pandemic¹.

Over the last few years, we have been inspired at The Prince's Trust by the resilience, creativity and grit shown by young people. There are signs of hope in these report findings too, with young people claiming to feel more determined than ever to achieve their goals.

However, the research also shows that young people are feeling frightened for the future and

deeply anxious and uncertain about their careers and job security. It is our role to help young people develop the skills and confidence they need to move along the pathway to work, find stable employment and fulfil their potential.

At this moment of great uncertainty for us all, we must not turn our back on this generation. It is vital we act now. With businesses, government, charities and the public working together, we can ensure the 'Class of Covid' is given the opportunity to take control of their lives and build a positive future.



2.8M

YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T THINK
THEIR JOB PROSPECTS WILL
EVER RECOVER FROM
THE PANDEMIC



Jonathan Townsend,
UK Chief Executive
of The Prince's Trust

¹36 per cent agreed with the statement 'I don't think my job prospects will ever recover from the pandemic.' Using 2019 ONS mid-year population estimates to calculate what 36 per cent of 16 - 25 year olds would be in the UK, this figure is 2,862,936.

INTRODUCTION AND KEY FINDINGS

The findings of this research suggest that the global events since 2020, in particular, the pandemic and now the emerging cost of living crisis, are taking a significant toll on young people in the UK.

At such a formative time in their lives, it is vital that young people feel supported and guided in their transition into adulthood and entry to the workplace. However, what this report shows is a debilitating impact of the pandemic on this generation of young people.

The pandemic disrupted their options for work as well as many other areas of their lives, with those who were already facing disadvantage being left further behind. There is hope, however; this research also shows us the resilience of this generation, who want to build each other's confidence, grow their skills and take back control of their futures.



THE FUTURE OF THE CLASS OF COVID

49%

feel anxious about their future on a daily basis

51%

feel their aspirations for the future are lower now as a result of global events since 2020, such as the pandemic and now a cost of living crisis

35%

feel their life is spiralling out of control

40%

are feeling less in control than ever



THE JOURNEY TO WORK

36%

of young people think their job prospects will never recover from the pandemic

51%

of young people agree the expected recession makes them more concerned than ever for their job security

33%

no longer think they will achieve their career goals



COST OF LIVING FEARS

For **60%**

of young people surveyed, the cost of living crisis was most likely to make them feel uncertain about the future.

58%

worry the cost of living crisis will prevent them from reaching their goals

35%

agree their salary no longer covers their rent or mortgage



CONFIDENCE, RESILIENCE, DETERMINATION

51%

of young people feel less confident in their future now than before the pandemic began

49%

agree living through the pandemic has made them more resilient, and more determined to achieve their goals (52 per cent)

66%

of young people agree that having a clear career path and having the right skills for work (65 per cent) will make them feel more in control of their life



CHAPTER 1:

THE FUTURE OF THE CLASS OF COVID

This research suggests that young people are feeling destabilised, having bounced from crisis to crisis. They now report feeling out of control and fearful of what the future holds.

In particular, the findings show that **half (49 per cent) of young people feel anxious about their future on a daily basis, with 59 per cent agreeing it feels frightening for their generation.**

More than two fifths (45 per cent) of young people feel anxiety around recent political and economic events affect them daily. **More than half (51 per cent) feel their aspirations for the future are lower now as a result of global events since 2020, such as the pandemic and now a cost of living crisis.**

Concerningly, these daily worries among young people potentially translate into an overall loss of hope (35 per cent agreement) and confidence (37 per cent agreement) in their future. More than **a third (35 per cent) go as far to say that they feel their life is spiralling out of control, with 40 per cent feeling less in control than ever.**

49%

YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL ANXIOUS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE ON A DAILY BASIS

35%

FEEL THEIR LIFE IS SPIRALLING OUT OF CONTROL

36%

THINK THEIR JOB PROSPECTS WILL NEVER RECOVER FROM THE PANDEMIC

55%

ARE MORE CONCERNED THAN EVER FOR THEIR JOB SECURITY

CHAPTER 2:

THE JOURNEY TO WORK

Entering the labour market and starting their working life is crucial in setting young people up for the future. However, this research finds that **36 per cent of young people think their job prospects will never recover from the pandemic.**

A similar report earlier this year suggested that one in five (20 per cent) thought their employment prospects would never recover from the pandemic².

The findings show that 44 per cent of young people agree the uncertainty of their future career is a daily worry. **Half (51 per cent) of young people agree the expected recession makes them more concerned than ever for their job security, with one in three no longer thinking they will achieve their career goals (33 per cent).**

In addition, not being able to get a job (35 per cent) or not having the right skills for work (25 per cent) poll highly among young people as top reasons for uncertainty in the future.

² Conducted by YouGov in the United Kingdom for The Prince's Trust Youth Index 2022, 20 per cent agreed with the statement: 'I don't think my employment prospects will ever recover from the pandemic.' Fieldwork was undertaken between 22nd December 2021 and 12th January 2022 with 2,106 16-25-year-olds in the United Kingdom. The survey was carried out online. Figures are weighted and representative of 16- to 25-year-olds across the UK.

MEGAN SUCCESS STORY



Faced with mental and physical health conditions growing up which impacted her education and confidence, Megan left school without the required Maths and English qualifications to pursue her dream career working in healthcare. Finding herself unemployed at the start of the pandemic and on Universal Credit, she feared for her future and thought she was unemployable.

Today she is a Healthcare Assistant at The Whittington Hospital after support from The Prince's Trust Health and Social Care programme and looking forward to starting her nursing apprenticeship to achieve her dream of becoming a nurse.

"I was diagnosed with a severe form of Scoliosis at the age of 11 and was riddled with insecurities, anxiety and depression during my school years which impacted my education and carried on into my adulthood.

"After the support I received from my own nurses growing up, I knew I wanted to help others like they helped me. But I felt that I would never be able to achieve anything, let alone become a nurse. I didn't have the right qualifications or belief I could ever do this."

At the start of the pandemic, Megan was unemployed and feared she was unemployable. However, she reached out to The Prince's Trust and was put in touch with a mentor on its Health and Social Care programme who helped her to navigate the challenges she faced to secure her dream job.

With her mentor's help, Megan passed her Maths and English tests to secure the qualifications she needed to pursue a career working in the NHS, and eventually went on to secure a role working as a Healthcare Assistant at The Whittington Hospital in London.

"I finally have the career I always dreamed of but believed would only stay in my dreams. Now I'm living it. I smile at myself when I proudly tell people what

I do! Getting to help people every day is something I love, and I can't wait to start my nursing apprenticeship to finally become a nurse.

"I've gained the confidence to blossom and to not only get the job I wished for but also to believe in myself. A life skill that will allow me to progress and thrive in my now, not-so-scary future."

“ I've gained the confidence to blossom and to not only get the job I wished for but also to believe in myself. ”



CHAPTER 3:

COST OF LIVING FEARS

As young people begin to continue onwards post pandemic, the reality of an emerging cost of living crisis and impending recession looms heavily. **For nearly two thirds (60 per cent) of young people surveyed, the cost of living crisis was most likely to make them feel uncertain about the future. Similar numbers (58 per cent) worry the cost of living crisis will prevent them from reaching their goals.**

The research also suggests that many young people are looking to sacrifice their education, to a secure a job so that they can make ends meet. 40 per cent of students³ surveyed plan to finish their education early so they can start earning money, with 45 per cent of all respondents agreeing they have had to prioritise work over furthering their education because they need the money.

Troublingly, the research reveals forty-six per cent worry about not having enough money to buy basic essentials such as food, toiletries and clothing. **One in three (35 per cent) agree their salary no longer covers their rent or mortgage**, with similar numbers agreeing they can't afford to turn the heating on (33 per cent) or have to choose between heating and eating (29 per cent).

60%

AGREE THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS WAS MOST LIKELY TO MAKE THEM FEEL UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE FUTURE

35%

SAID THEIR SALARY NO LONGER COVERS THEIR RENT

51%

FEEL LESS CONFIDENT IN THEIR FUTURE THAN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN

49%

FEEL THE PANDEMIC HAS MADE THEM MORE RESILIENT

CHAPTER 4:

CONFIDENCE, RESILIENCE, DETERMINATION

This generation of young people have had a unique set of challenges to overcome. Although there has been much to erode their positive outlook, this research also reveals their resilience, determination and opinions on what support they need to succeed.

Despite more than half (51 per cent) feeling less confident in their future than before the pandemic began, almost the same number (49 per cent) agree living through it has made them more resilient, and more determined to achieve their goals (52 per cent).

The research also asked what would make young people feel more able to take control of their future and to feel positive about it. Sixty-eight per cent of young people agree feeling confident in themselves makes them feel in control of their future.

The majority also agree that **having a clear career path (66 per cent) and having the right skills for work (65 per cent) will make them feel more in control of their life.**

More specifically, 44 per cent say more life skills (money management, problem solving) and starting to earn their own money (52 per cent) would help.

³As part of the nationally representative survey of 2,002 16 – 25 year olds in the United Kingdom, 736 identified as being in education.

LA'JAY SUCCESS STORY



La'Jay found The Prince's Trust when seeking employment. He was trying to find a job and was on the verge of losing his house. Due to his resilience and passion for helping others, he now has a permanent role as a youth worker helping vulnerable children for a local authority.

"When I was out of work, I was doing everything I could to find a job. I looked online, went to the job centre and job fairs. I had had a run-in with the justice system which made applying for jobs very challenging. My life was extremely difficult at this point. I was on the verge of losing my home and I was stressed out trying to find a job. It was hard."

In May 2019, La'Jay signed up for the Future Leaders programme which focuses on personal development, building confidence and essential employability skills.

"I just wanted to do something constructive, and I found the programme very motivating and uplifting. It made me realise that I still had something to offer. Working with The Trust helped me to remember my self-worth which gave me back my self-confidence."

La'Jay then went to Get Hired, also run by The Prince's Trust, which brings together employers and young people without the need for a CV.

"I kept going to Get Hired events until I got a job at a café in Southwark. While working there, I also went into prisons to talk about my story, The Trust and how it helped me. I felt like I was making a difference and it cemented my goal of wanting to help others."

In February 2020, La'Jay interviewed for a youth work apprenticeship with a local authority and was offered the position in March, just before the pandemic hit.

"During the global pandemic, it was a very uncertain time for me. I was furloughed from my job at the café and wasn't sure whether my new job offer still stood. I'd always wanted a full-time position and

finally, that opportunity was within reach. I feel like I missed out on opportunities during the pandemic – career-building, networking, and gaining new skills all stalled. Luckily, my apprenticeship began in July 2020. Starting this new role was challenging as I had to adapt to working with young people and colleagues virtually. However, after the 18 months was up, I passed with distinction."

La'Jay then applied for a full-time permanent role as a Youth Worker and got the job. "I was so happy to be offered a permanent position – I work with looked-after children and care leavers, so I wanted to provide consistency and remain there for them. I was proud of myself and relieved I had achieved my goal.

"However, we are living through quite an uncertain time and people my age and younger are worried about the cost of living crisis. I think a lot of people are making small day-to-day changes to prepare for the winter months.

“ All in all, I think living through the pandemic has taught me so much and made me more resilient and confident. ”



CHAPTER 5:

IMPACT ON YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM LOWER INCOME BACKGROUNDS

The research shows how a young person's personal circumstances impact how confident and in control of their future they feel. The findings suggest that young women and those young people from lower income backgrounds are more likely to feel worried and uncertain about the future.

YOUNG WOMEN - ANXIOUS ABOUT THE FUTURE

More than half of young women (55 per cent) feel anxious about their future on a daily basis compared to 43 per cent of young men, with two thirds (66 per cent) of young women agreeing the future feels frightening for their generation compared to just over half (52 per cent for men).

Worries about employment could be a factor in this, with almost half (48 per cent) of young women agreeing the uncertainty of their future career is a daily worry compared to 41 per cent of men. Similarly, 56 per cent of young women agreed the expected recession in the UK makes them more concerned than ever for their job security compared to 47 per cent of men.

A LIFE SPIRALLING OUT OF CONTROL - LOWER INCOME BACKGROUNDS

Young people from lower income backgrounds were significantly more likely than their more affluent peers to feel like their life was spiralling out of control. 41 per cent of those receiving free school meals throughout their time at school felt this was the case compared to 30 per cent of those who never received free school meals.

Those from lower income backgrounds were also more likely to agree they had lost hope in the future (39 per cent agreeing compared to 31 per cent). Finally, when considering if their job prospects would ever recover from the pandemic, 42 per cent of those on free school meals did not think they would ever recover versus 29 per cent of those who never had free school meals.

55%

OF YOUNG WOMEN FEEL ANXIOUS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE ON A DAILY BASIS COMPARED TO 43 PER CENT OF YOUNG MEN

42%

OF THOSE FROM LOWER INCOME BACKGROUNDS DO NOT THINK THEIR JOB PROSPECTS WILL EVER RECOVER FROM THE PANDEMIC, COMPARED TO 29 PER CENT OF THOSE FROM MORE AFFLUENT BACKGROUNDS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABOUT THE PRINCE'S TRUST

The Prince's Trust believes that every young person should have the chance to succeed, no matter what their background or the challenges they are facing. We help those from disadvantaged communities and those facing the greatest adversity by supporting them to build the confidence and skills to live, learn and earn.

The courses offered by The Trust help young people aged 11-30 to develop essential life skills, get ready for work and access job opportunities. We support them to find work because having a job or running a business can lead to a more stable, fulfilling life.

Since The Trust was founded by HM The King in 1976 we have helped more than a million young people across the UK, and three in four of those we supported over the last five years have moved into work, education or training.

We are committed to enabling even more young people to create a better future for themselves. By helping young people today, the benefits for them, their communities and the wider economy will be felt for years to come.

Further information about The Prince's Trust is available at princes-trust.org.uk or on 0800 842 842.



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Find out more about The Prince's Trust

Visit: princes-trust.org.uk

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