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Young Australians are getting happier

Young adults in Australia are happier now than they were at the turn of the century, a new study reveals.

The analysis of 16 years of data from the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index survey finds the life satisfaction scores of the nation's 18-25 year olds has improved significantly since 2002, from 73.4 (out of 100) to 77.8.

This wellbeing improvement was evident whether the young person still lived at home with their parents or had moved out.

In contrast, overall life satisfaction for those aged 76+ has fallen since 2002, the study shows, though this group continues to enjoy the highest wellbeing level of any age cohort.

"Over the last 16 years we surveyed more than 60,000 adults of all ages and what really stood out in the data was the steadily improving trend in wellbeing for 18-25 year olds," the report's lead author, Deakin University Senior Research Fellow Dr Delyse Hutchinson said.

"While the survey doesn't ask why young people are feeling happier, the findings appear to run counter to the prevailing view that young Australians are increasingly burdened by issues such as being locked out of the housing market, education debt, and suggestions digital technology and social media is creating a generation of isolated young people," Dr Hutchinson said.

"Other national survey data may be relevant. For example, rates of alcohol use and smoking among young Australians have also been steadily declining in recent years," she said.

Dr Hutchinson said the study also examined the living arrangements of 18-25 year olds, finding that whether young adults were still at home with their parents or had moved out was unrelated to the rise in wellbeing seen among young people generally.

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Media Release

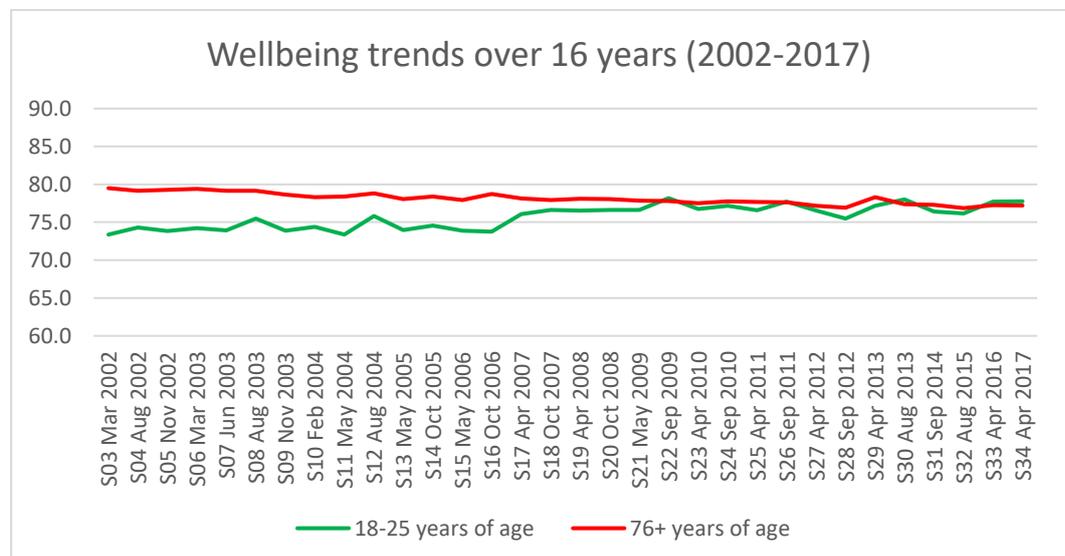
The survey revealed significant improvements since 2002 among young adults in a number of the wellbeing domains that form part of the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, including personal safety, community connectedness and standard of living

While Australians aged 76+ consistently had the highest wellbeing of any adult cohort, there was a significant decline in the last 16 years. In 2002, the average wellbeing score of people aged 76+ was 79.5 (out of 100), falling to 77.2 in 2017.

Older people reported declining scores in the wellbeing domains of future security, personal relationships, achievement in life and standard of living.

“It is interesting that while older people’s satisfaction with their health remained constant, these other areas of their life did not. This reinforces the notion that health is only one component of overall satisfaction with life,” Dr Hutchinson said.

Figure 1. Wellbeing trends in younger and older adults over time.



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Media Release

The full report can be viewed at: <http://www.acqol.com.au/projects#reports>

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Background

The index, a joint project of Australian Unity and the Australian Centre on Quality of Life (Deakin University), measures satisfaction with life across a range of areas – standard of living, health, achievement, personal relationships, safety, community connection and future security.

About Australian Unity

Australian Unity is a national health, wealth and living mutual company providing services to almost one million Australians, including about 280.000 members. Australian Unity’s history as a trusted mutual organisation dates back to 1840.

About Deakin University

Established in 1974, Deakin University was the first university in regional Victoria and the first to specialise in distance education. Deakin today has five campuses: one in Melbourne’s eastern suburbs, two in Geelong, one in Warrnambool with the fifth, and fastest growing campus, in the cloud (online). Deakin has more than 53,000 students, with almost a quarter choosing to study wholly in the cloud. Through its teaching and research Deakin aims to build the jobs of the future, using the opportunities of the digital age to widen access to education and make a difference to the communities it serves.

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