The future of education

Insights into today’s students and their future expectations
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There are 4,006,974 students enrolled in 9,452 schools across Australia.

Two thirds of students attend Government schools.

Proportions:
- Government: 66%
- Catholic: 19%
- Independent: 15%

There are 1,609,798 higher education students in Australia.

Proportions:
- Full-time: 72%
- Part-time: 28%
- International: 32%
- Domestic: 68%
Executive summary

In a time of rising complexity, it is more important than ever to understand our students’ educational experience and desires for the future. That is why we have turned the focus of this year’s Education Future Report to the student perspective, having surveyed Australian students aged 16 to 24 to inform these insights. To lead students well we first need to understand them and gain insight into education from their perspective. As we bring a holistic view to understanding today’s students and the external trends that are shaping their world, it equips leaders with greater clarity and confidence to make informed decisions for the future.

A values-driven generation

Today’s students are ambitious and values-driven. They want to own their own home (72%), have financial freedom and independence (67%) and excel in their career (67%), alongside living a sustainable lifestyle (51%) and working in an organisation that aligns with their values (45%). One of their greatest fears in fact, is being stuck in a job that they don’t enjoy or find fulfilment in (61%). This comes just after not having enough money to live comfortably (65%). More than half fear not reaching their full potential (54%) or not making a difference with their life (41%).

Students appreciate their education

Positively, students appreciate their education, with more than nine in ten (94%) agreeing they greatly value having access to an Australian education. The important role and influence of teachers does not go unnoticed with seven in ten students (70%) strongly/somewhat agreeing they can think of at least one teacher who has made a massive positive difference to their life.

Hybrid learning is the way of the future

The last 12 months have seen significant shifts in perspective on the delivery of education. Seven in ten students (70%) describe their ideal learning situation as a hybrid one, where there is a combination of time spent learning from home and in the classroom. With the digital increasingly replacing the physical, it is important to explore how this impacts student learning and experience. This study shows that different environments best develop different skills. When it comes to adaptability (53%), personal organisation (49%) and time management (46%) students are likely to say that the online learning environment has best helped them develop these competencies. Students reflect that competencies such as communication skills (56%) and collaboration (54%), however, are more likely to be best developed in the classroom. The future of learning is likely therefore a hybrid one.
Navigating student wellbeing

While students believe the high pressure to do well in exams and assessments (72%) is the top challenge for today’s students, navigating their own mental wellbeing (63%) and navigating loneliness and isolation (58%) are also key challenges. Positively, more than four in five students (83%) believe educational institutions are extremely, very or somewhat effective at creating an inclusive educational community.

A key challenge for educational institutions in the 21st Century, is navigating student wellbeing in relation to screens and digital technology. More than four in five students (82%) agree they struggle with spending too much time on screens and technology, and they are seeing the negative impacts in their daily life, with two in three (65%) agreeing social media is having a negative impact on their mental health. Part of the challenge is that social media and the digital realm is key in facilitating connection to others and awareness of events for today’s students. In fact, three in four students (74%) want to go off social media but haven’t because they would miss out on knowing what is happening in the world around them.

Students are equipped for the transition to tertiary education

The transition from school to tertiary education is often an exciting one, where students embark on a new season of life and acquire different skills and abilities. For this reason, it can also be a daunting one. Positively, students believe that educational institutions are preparing them well for their next step, with more than seven in ten students (72%) feeling at least somewhat equipped to transition from school to University or TAFE.

Future proofing careers

As the workplace shifts from more traditional jobs to those characterised by automation and digital integration, the focus on how to future proof careers continues to rise. When thinking about what is more important for success, students today are only slightly more likely to believe that skills (55%) are more important for success than character (45%). Students are similarly divided when they think about educational outcomes. More than half (56%) believe a secure pathway to employment matters more than the ability to adapt to the changing environment.

When it comes to preparing students for unknown careers, a combination of both skills and character qualities are essential. As the workplace and workforce becomes increasingly mobile and robotics and automation replace some jobs, the ability to adapt to change will become increasingly important for future proofing the careers of today’s school leavers. In fact, three quarters of today’s students (74%) believe that life-long learning will be essential for them to future-proof their career.

Living a life that aligns with their values

Education lays a foundation for students to build on for the rest of their life. Positively, as students look to the future, four in five (81%) feel at least somewhat equipped by their education to thrive in the workplace in the decade ahead.

Students today are a values-driven generation. As they think about their future career, the most important considerations for them are that they have purpose and meaning in their work (72%) and that their work aligns with their core values (68%).
Engaging today’s students in a changing world

The world is changing at a faster rate than ever before. We are living in a time of VUCA – volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. For older generations, this is another unique experience in the tapestry of their life, but for our emerging generations, this is the world they are being shaped in. It is no surprise then that the key traits of our emerging generation are digital, social, mobile, global and visual.

In a time of rising complexity, it is more important than ever to understand our student’s experience, their expectations and desires for the future. To lead students well we first need to understand their worldview, hopes, fears and values before overlaying the experience of education. As we bring a holistic view to understanding today’s students and the external trends that are shaping their world, it equips leaders with greater clarity and confidence for their future decisions.

Students want to live a life of independence and impact

The great Australian dream is still alive and well among Australia’s young people, with 72% of students hoping to own their own home one day. This is followed by having full financial freedom and independence (67%) and excelling in their career (67%). Travel is still an aspiration among young Australians, with two in three students (66%) hoping to travel and see the world.

Half of students (51%) have a desire to live a sustainable lifestyle and more than two in five (45%) aspire to work in an organisation that aligns with their values.

The desire to live a life of impact is important with three in ten wanting to have an impact on their local community (30%) or to have an impact globally (27%).

Students fear a lack of finances and fulfilment

The greatest fears for students today centre on not achieving their hopes and dreams for the future. In alignment with their hopes to own a home and have full financial freedom, the greatest fear for today’s students is not having enough money to live comfortably (65%). While more than two in five (45%) aspire to work in an organisation that aligns with their values, three in five (61%) fear being stuck in a job that they don’t enjoy or find fulfilment in. More than half (54%) fear not reaching their full potential while 41% fear not making a difference with their life.

TOP FIVE HOPES

1. Owning their own home 72%
2. Full financial freedom and independence 67%
3. Excel in their career 67%
4. Travel and see the world 66%
5. Pursue interests and hobbies 65%

TOP FIVE FEARS

1. Not having enough money to live comfortably 65%
2. Being stuck in a job they don’t enjoy or find fulfilment in 61%
3. Not reaching their full potential 54%
4. Not finding love 48%
5. Never being able to buy their own home 47%
Value of Australian education

The education sector has an important responsibility to help shape the future of our nation. The quality of education as well as the diverse range of opportunities provided in Australian schools are just some of the aspects showing the commitment of educational institutions to invest into the next generation.

Positively, students appreciate their education with more than nine in ten (94%) agreeing they greatly value having access to an Australian education. An even more encouraging insight is how strongly students hold this perspective with 84% strongly/somewhat agreeing they value their Australian education. The significant influence of teachers does not go unnoticed among students, with seven in ten (70%) strongly/somewhat agreeing they can think of at least one teacher who has made a massive positive difference to their life.

94% of students greatly value having access to an Australian education

The education sector has an important responsibility to help shape the future of our nation
The future of hybrid education

Having experienced the COVID-19 reality of work-and-study-from-home, seven in ten students (70%) describe their ideal learning situation as a hybrid one. Almost two in five (38%) would prefer the majority of time learning in the classroom and only learning from home a couple of days a week, while 32% would prefer the majority of time spent learning from home and only coming into the classroom a couple of days a week.

Unsurprisingly, school students (29%) are more likely than tertiary students (12%) to see their ideal learning situation as one where everyone is learning from the classroom all the time. The majority, however, of both school (63%) and tertiary students (77%) see their ideal learning situation as hybrid.

When you think about learning in the classroom or online from home, which of the following describes your ideal learning situation?

- Everyone learning from home all the time: 10%
- A hybrid where the majority of the time is spent learning from home and only coming into the classroom one or two days a week: 32%
- A hybrid where the majority of the time is spent learning in the classroom and only learning from home one or two days a week: 38%
- Everyone learning from the classroom all the time: 21%
Physical and digital learning environments develop different skills

With the digital increasingly replacing the physical, it is important to explore how this impacts student learning and experience. When asked which learning format – online or in the classroom, has best helped develop a number of different competencies, the environment differs based on the competencies.

For competencies such as adaptability (53%), personal organisation (49%) and time management (46%) students are more likely to say that the online learning environment has best helped them develop these competencies. Competencies such as communication skills (56%) and collaboration (54%), however, are more likely to be best developed in the classroom. Students are likely to strongly hold this perspective with one in four (25%) agreeing collaboration is developed much more in the classroom and almost three in ten (28%) agreeing communication skills are developed much more in the classroom.

High school students’ greater preference for in-class learning continues, with high school students more likely than tertiary students to say that time management (38% cf. 31%), collaboration (58% cf. 50%), communication skills (59% cf. 52%) and adaptability (27% cf. 22%) are best developed in the classroom.

With the learning environment impacting the development of different skills among students, it is important therefore that a hybrid learning environment is considered in the future of education. Employing this approach allows education facilities to intentionally use the learning environment to focus on developing different competencies within students.

Students believe communication skills and collaboration are best developed in the classroom

WHICH LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (ONLINE/CLASSROOM) HAS BEST HELPED YOU DEVELOP THE FOLLOWING COMPETENCIES?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>More online</th>
<th>About the same</th>
<th>More in the classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal organisation</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Innovative classrooms

The education sector has innovated and adapted in recent years with changing learning environments, collaborative classrooms and the rise of individualised learning. In our 2020 Future of Education report, we found that more than nine in ten educators (96%) and parents (94%), believe schools should, at least to some extent, provide individualised education. Students also value individualised learning with 72% wanting to see more of it in education in the future. Students would also like to see more open plan learning environments (73%), collaborative classrooms (71%) and inquiry-based learning (71%) in the future. To a lesser extent, students want to see more teacher directed learning in the future (64%).

Females are slightly more likely than males to want to see more individualised learning (77% cf. 68%) and open plan learning environments (78% cf. 69%) in the future.

Would you like to see more or less of the following in education in the future?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open plan learning environments</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualised learning</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborative classrooms</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry based learning (student initiated learning)</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher directed learning (teacher delivers instruction)</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student mental health and wellbeing

The world went through a significant period of isolation in COVID-19; however, we saw firsthand the power of community as a support structure emerge. Positively, more than four in five students (83%) believe educational institutions are at least somewhat effective at creating an inclusive educational community. There is room for improvement, however, with only two in five (38%) seeing educational institutions as extremely or very effective in this area.

Males are more likely than females to believe educational institutions are at least somewhat effective at creating an inclusive educational community (86% cf. 81%).

Navigating mental wellbeing is a key challenge for today’s students

While students believe the high pressure to do well in exams and assessments (72%) is the top challenge for today’s students, navigating their own mental wellbeing (63%) is also a key challenge.

Many other challenges that students are facing today concern their social interactions and mental wellbeing. Almost three in five students see navigating loneliness and isolation (58%), the pressure to grow up faster (57%), supporting friends with their mental wellbeing (48%) and online bullying through social networks (43%) as extremely or very challenging for today’s students. This is similar to our 2020 Future of Education report which explored the key challenges for today’s high school students from the perspective of parents and educators. Interestingly, students (43%) are less likely than parents (58%) and educators (77%) to see online bullying through social networks as extremely or very challenging for today’s students. Students are, however, more likely to see juggling work with study as extremely/very challenging (57% cf. 46% parents, 50% educators).

High school students are feeling the pressure to perform, being more likely than tertiary students to feel the pressure to do well in exams and assessments (75% cf. 69%), alongside supporting friends with their mental wellbeing (51% cf. 45%).

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AT CREATING AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely effective</th>
<th>Very effective</th>
<th>Somewhat effective</th>
<th>Slightly effective</th>
<th>Not at all effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOP FIVE CHALLENGES FOR TODAY’S STUDENTS

1. 72% High pressure to do well in exams and assessments
2. 63% Navigating their own mental wellbeing
3. 62% Preparing for unknown careers
4. 58% Navigating loneliness and social isolation
5. 57% Juggling work with study
Educational institutions most effective at providing support for learning habits

As the challenges students face become increasingly complex, the support required from educational institutions continues to grow. Currently two in five students believe Australian educational institutions are extremely or very effective at providing support for students’ learning habits (42%), leadership development (41%) and service to the community (37%). Three in ten students believe the support is extremely or very effective for helping students overcome personal challenges (30%) and mental wellbeing (30%).

Interestingly, tertiary students (34%) are more likely than high school students (26%) to see the support educational institutions provide for mental wellbeing as extremely or very effective. Similarly, males are more likely than females to see the support provided by educational institutions to help students overcome personal challenges (33% cf. 28%), and mental wellbeing (35% cf. 26%) as extremely or very effective.

If students had the opportunity to share with government and educational leaders, many would bring up issues relating to student support and wellbeing. There is a feeling that the pressure placed on students is too high, alongside a sense that students are not always seen as an individual with the ability to self-direct their own learning. This often plays out in the need to perform well in final examinations, when not all students bring their best to these types of assessments. There is also a desire for greater creativity and flexibility in course structure and curriculum, alongside a focus on developing life skills and creating opportunities for learning more careers specific subjects earlier in their education. It is believed practical placements and internships where education is more experiential than theory could help with this.

- Advocate more for mental health and lower the stress when it comes to homework.
- There is way too much pressure on kids to receive the perfect ATAR to study what they love.
- Maximise learning of skills that will be essential to workplaces in the future.

These student insights highlight that while educational institutions are delivering, there is room for improvement in the support provided to students.

***Based on your experience and that of others that you know, how effective are Australian educational institutions at providing support for students in the following areas?***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Extremely Effective</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Slightly Effective</th>
<th>Not at all Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership development</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning habits</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to the community</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming personal challenges</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental wellbeing</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The screen dilemma

A key challenge for educational institutions in supporting student wellbeing is managing technology and devices. With 74% of Gen Z’s time outside of school and work spent online, the challenge for educational institutions is significant.

While students are aware of this challenge, with more than four in five (82%) agreeing they spend too much time on screens and technology, social media continues to have a negative impact on the mental health of two in three students (65%).

Part of the challenge is the connection to others and awareness of events that is facilitated through social media and the digital realm. In fact, three in four students (74%) want to go off social media but haven’t because they would miss out on knowing what was happening in the world around them. While the digital world and social media, is one that older generations have come to know and integrate into their lives, this is the only world that many of today’s students have known. Their relational world and sense of connection has been built through the online medium more than any generation before.

Advice for the next generation of students

Students were asked to think about the generation coming after them (Generation Alpha – aged under 12 years) as they move into secondary education and further study, and what advice they would give them. Student responses included variations of: study hard, build a strong work ethic, be yourself, have fun and don’t stress. Many students believe that studying sets students up well and opens doors for the future, so it is important to learn to do it well without letting it become everything students worry about. They also want to encourage Generation Alpha to be present, enjoy the moment and don’t try to grow up too fast.

- Do your best but also enjoy every moment because that’s what you are going to remember when you get older, all the memories and fun.
- Stop worrying about the future and trying to grow up too fast.
- Do what you love. Pursue your passions and interests. Don’t do things for the sake of trying to impress others.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% that agree</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>MALES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Struggle with spending too much time on technology</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to go off social media but haven’t because they would miss out on knowing what is happening in the world around them</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media is having a negative impact on their mental health</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FEMALES ARE MORE LIKELY THAN MALES SEE THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT OF SCREENS ON THEIR LIVES
Transitioning to tertiary education

The transition from school to tertiary education is often an exciting one, where students embark on a new season of their life. It can also be a daunting one that requires them to draw on different skills and abilities. Educational institutions are often interested in understanding how to make this transition as smooth as possible for students. Positively, more than seven in ten students (72%) who are currently attending a tertiary educational institution felt at least somewhat equipped to transition from school to University/TAFE. There is room for improvement, however, with just 31% of students feeling extremely or very equipped. High school students are similar as they consider how equipped they feel to transition to University or TAFE should they choose to go. More than seven in ten (72%) feel at least somewhat equipped, with three in ten (30%) feeling extremely or very equipped.

Availability is the key driver for choosing an educational institution

Across both tertiary students and high school students considering their desired post-school education provider, the key influences on their decision are:

1. Availability (53%)
2. Location (48%)
3. Reputation (43%)
4. Family (35%)
5. Flexibility of course structure (33%)

These are higher than prestige of the course/institution (33%) and affordability (32%).

Key influences in the decision to attend a tertiary education provider can differ between high school students and tertiary students. High school students are more likely to be influenced by reputation of educational institution (48% cf. 39%), affordability (38% cf. 26%) and location (53% cf. 43%).
Preparing for unknown careers

In the last decade the workplace has undergone significant changes, maybe none more so than the last 12 months where we have seen the greatest transformation of the world of work in the shift to working from home. The workforce today is increasingly digital and mobile, requiring career pathways which are adaptable and fluid. With an average tenure of two years and nine months, it is projected that today’s students will have 18 jobs across six careers in their lifetime.

As the workplace shifts from more traditional jobs to those characterised by automation and digital integration, the challenge for educational institutions is evident. How do educational institutions prepare students for unknown careers?

Students are aware of this tension, with more than three in five (62%) seeing preparing for unknown careers as extremely or very challenging for today’s students. Similarly, more than half (56%) see navigating post-school pathways as extremely or very challenging.

What are the essentials for success?

In recent years educational institutions have focused on developing core competencies and character qualities to help future proof students. When thinking about what is more important for success, students today are only slightly more likely to say that skills such as scientific literacy, technology and job skills (55%) are more important for success than character traits such as initiative, adaptability and persistence (45%). Interestingly, male students are more likely to believe skills matter more for success than character (63% cf. 37%), whereas females are more likely to suggest character is more important for success (53% cf. 47%).

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR SUCCESS?

Skills e.g. Scientific literacy, technology & job skills Vs. Character e.g. Initiative, adaptability, persistence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>55%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skills Character
Students are similarly divided when they think about educational outcomes. More than half (56%) believe a secure pathway to employment matters more than the ability to adapt to the changing environment. This is consistent with the parent perspective from our 2020 study. Half of parents (51%) believe a secure pathway to employment matters more, whereas 72% of educators believe the ability to adapt to the changing environment matters more.3

Interestingly, males (63%) are much more likely than females (49%) to believe a secure pathway to employment matters more as an educational outcome than the ability to adapt to the changing environment.

When it comes to preparing students for unknown careers, it is a combination of both skills and character qualities that are essential. As the workplace and workforce becomes increasingly mobile and robotics and automation replace some jobs, it is the ability to adapt to the changes around them that will help future proof the careers of today’s students. In fact, three quarters of today’s students (74%) strongly/somewhat agree that life-long learning will be essential for them to future-proof their career.
Equipped to thrive

Education lays a foundation for students to build on for the rest of their life. Positively, as students look to the future, four in five (81%) feel at least somewhat equipped by their education to thrive in the workplace in the decade ahead. While there is still room for educational institutions to grow, as students stand on the brink of the unknown, two in five (41%) feel extremely or very equipped by their education to thrive in the workplace in the decade ahead.

Possibly due to being one step ahead of high school students in their journey, tertiary students have a greater confidence for the future with almost half (46%) feeling extremely or very equipped by their education for the future (cf. 37% high school students).

Living a life that aligns with their values

Students today are a values-driven generation. As they think about their future career the most important (extremely/very) considerations for them are that they have purpose and meaning in their work (72%) followed by their work aligning with their core values (68%).

In keeping with their social and mobile outlook on life, today’s students believe it is extremely important that their future career involves a workplace where there is a community of strong social connections (65%) alongside workplace flexibility (64%).

The desire to live a life of impact is strong with almost two in three students (64%) believing it is extremely/very important that the work they do has a positive impact on the world around them.

Personal growth through investment and development is also important to this generation. Three in five believe it is extremely/very important for there to be investment in their professional development (63%) and engaging and enlarging leadership that grows their strength and capacity (60%). While still important, lowest on the list is remuneration (52%), highlighting the values driven priorities of todays students.

Presumably because they are closer to entering the workforce, tertiary students are more likely than high school students to see workplace flexibility (67% cf. 60%) and remuneration (55% cf. 49%) as extremely or very important as they think about their future career.

KEY DESIRES FOR FUTURE CAREERS

Extremely/very important

1. Having purpose and meaning in their work (72%)
2. Work aligns with their core values (68%)
3. A workplace that is a community of strong social connections (65%)
4. Work they do has a positive impact on the world around them (64%)
5. Workplace flexibility (64%)
Preparing students for the future

To educate and set up students to thrive in their life beyond study, the first step is to truly understand them and their perspective. This generation have a desire to live out their values and have a positive impact on the world around them. As they wrestle with preparing themselves for an unknown future, there is an openness to change and innovation.

By supporting students in their mental health and creating an inclusive environment, educational institutions can continue to support today’s students as they navigate this changing and complex environment. It is important to remember that authenticity is crucial when engaging with the emerging generation that comprises today’s students. With their strong desire to live out their values, they appreciate authenticity in their own lives and the lives of those around them.

The future is bright, however. Australian students value the high-quality education that is offered in Australia and recognise the hard work of teachers who have had a significant impact on their lives. Students also feel largely equipped to transition from school to higher education and to embark on their careers.

There is only so much that the education sector can teach, but with the time available, there is an opportunity to equip students to thrive in the decade ahead as they continue to develop not just competencies but character and courage to press on and live a life of impact.

Shaping the future of our nation starts with investing into the lives of our students
Student demographics

Please select your gender

- Male: 49%
- Female: 51%
- Other: 1%

Where do you usually live?

- NSW: 13%
- VIC: 40%
- QLD: 25%
- WA: 1%
- SA: 13%
- TAS: 1%
- ACT: 1%
- NT: 2%

Educational institution

- Year 9: 2.0%
- Year 10: 17.3%
- Year 11: 29.4%
- Year 12: 39.5%
- University: 9.4%
- TAFE: 1.4%
- Private College: 1.0%

Study format

- Full-time: 81%
- Part-time: 19%

Type of school attending/did attend

- Government: 64%
- Independent: 21%
- Catholic: 15%
Research objectives

The *Future of Education 2021* report summarises the student experience of education in Australia, to equip education leaders and teachers for strategic decision making.

The purpose of this research is to:

- Provide a greater understanding of students learning experiences – both in the classroom and online
- Explore wellbeing and community within schools and tertiary institutions
- Give insight into sentiment towards post-school pathways and career expectations.

Research methodology

The *Future of Education 2021* report is the collation of quantitative data collected in an online survey. The survey was sent to Australians aged 16 to 24 with quotas set for an equal sample of high school students (Yr 9 - Yr 12) and tertiary students (University/TAFE/Private College). Respondents who indicated ‘no, I am not currently studying’ were screened out of the survey, leaving a sample of 1,201 Australians who are currently studying either part-time or full-time.

The survey of students was in field from the 1st to the 19th of April 2021. Throughout this report, these respondents are referred to as ‘Australian students’ or simply ‘students’.

Graphs and rounding

Data labels on the graphs in this report have been rounded and may, therefore, sum to 99% or 101%. Any calculations where two data points have been added are based on raw data (not the rounded data labels on the graph) which have then been rounded once combined.

References

1. ABS – Schools, Australia 2020
3. The Future of Education 2020 report, McCrindle
4. Understanding the future consumer, 2020, McCrindle
How can we help?

Book a presentation for your school now

You want to equip and advise your staff and parents with research on Generation Alpha to help them thrive.

Our McCrindle Speakers frequently present social trends and helpful insights in engaging advisory sessions to:

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- Boards
- Parents

We can provide in person and virtual:

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- Workshops
- Training and PD

You’ll receive:

- Research-based insights for parents, teachers and community leaders
- Detailed understanding of the demographic shifts about the generations
- Guidance in preparing this generation for the future of work

Why McCrindle?

For more than a decade, McCrindle has been trusted to provide a clearer picture for those in the education sector. We help school leaders think strategically. We love bringing data to life by collecting, analysing and visualising the latest trends so you can lead with confidence. Our team can provide:

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