



Prince's Trust



NatWest
Group

THE PRINCE'S TRUST NATWEST YOUTH INDEX 2024

FOREWORD



For 15 years, the Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index has provided an annual picture of how young people are feeling about their lives.

How do they feel about their work, their physical and emotional health, their education, their relationships? It enables us to understand how the external world impacts young people's overall wellbeing, so that we can continue to advocate for them, and particularly for those facing the greatest disadvantage, on their pathway to work.

This year, as we continue to live through challenging economic times, our research reveals that rising rates of poor mental health are significantly impacting young people's education and early careers. This is having drastic

consequences on their confidence, wellbeing and aspirations for the future, particularly among those from the poorest backgrounds.

Since the report began, unemployed 16 – 25-year-olds have consistently reported the worst overall wellbeing. This year's findings show us – and we see it every day at The Trust – that being in employment is good for young people's mental health, gives them stability and enables them to feel positive about their future.

However, one in five young people have missed school or work in the last year due to their mental health, and over a third of all young people worry that their mental health will stop them achieving their career goals.

This year's report shows that young people are finding themselves in a vicious cycle; poor mental health is having a negative impact on their work, and yet being unemployed has a negative impact on their mental health – this is a deeply concerning trap.

This trap, where poor mental health and employment struggles exacerbate each other,

threatens to close in on this generation unless we take immediate action.

Although these findings seem bleak, the research also presents a clear window of hope from an endlessly resilient and dedicated generation of young people. The overwhelming majority of young people tell us that they remain determined to achieve their goals but what they require is practical, pragmatic support to overcome their challenges, particularly as the world of work continues to rapidly change.

If we act now, with the support of partners like NatWest, employers, and government, we can help young people on their pathway to work and ultimately to more stable and fulfilling lives. This will benefit not only this generation, but wider society and the future economy for decades to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Townsend'.

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

INTRODUCTION

The findings of this year's Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index demonstrate how the relationship between financial confidence, work and education can have a detrimental impact on young people's wellbeing and aspirations for the future.

It also shows that we should not underestimate the devastating impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic on the daily lives and future aspirations of our young people.

Happiness and confidence with money has hit the lowest level on record since polling began during the Global Financial Crisis, and over half of the young people aged between 16 and 25 are worried that they'll never be financially secure. This is particularly acute among young women, with 60 per cent fearing the rising cost of living means they will never be financially secure, compared with 45 per cent of young men.

At NatWest we share the Prince's Trust's commitment to supporting all young people to achieve their career ambitions, no matter what their personal circumstances or background. No young person should be faced with these challenges, and as a business we are committed to meeting our young people's needs

and equipping them with the tools they need to meet their potential. Our partnership with the Prince's Trust provides valuable insight and expertise to help us better understand the needs of our young people and ensure that we take the right action to help them achieve their goals.

Financial security is the top priority for the majority of young people surveyed, and we know that having access to the right support is something many young people feel could help them succeed, with more than two thirds of young people determined to achieve their goals in life. Similarly, of those interested in entrepreneurship, three quarters said they would like support to build the skills they need to start their own business.

By working in collaboration with charities like The Trust, we can take the necessary action and initiative to give our young people the skills and tools to build their financial confidence and achieve

their goals. This report supports our view of the transformational impact that employment can have on the younger generation. We see this first hand through initiatives such as NatWest Thrive, which is committed to raising the confidence and capability of young people to better equip them to achieve their goals, and through our support of 57,000 young people in enterprise and entrepreneurship in 2023 alone.

As we look ahead, it is clear from the findings that there is resolve among young people to work towards a better future for themselves, providing they're given the right support. By working together, I am confident and committed that we can continue supporting our young people to build the skills, capability, and confidence to overcome these challenges and, ultimately, fulfil their potential.

Sandi Royden

Head of Youth and Families,
NatWest



“It has never been more important than now to capture the thoughts, feelings and experiences of young people and what life is like for them.

“Young people have been through a series of extraordinary challenges in the last few years, and this has had a significant and concerning impact on their mental and emotional health, and their vision for their lives.

“Education, employment, opportunity and training support young people to develop life skills and wellbeing strategies - a sense of purpose and hope, process and personal development, confidence, social connectedness and structure. These are all skills that allow young people to be a force in the world for good for others and are linked with good mental and emotional health.

“We need to listen, to understand and most importantly act to support young people to realise their potential and their vision for their futures.”

Dr Radha Modgil,
GP, TV and radio broadcaster and author

BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

The Youth Index is a national survey that gauges the happiness and confidence young people feel across a range of areas, from working life to mental and physical health. It measures how young people are feeling about their lives today as well as their aspirations for the future.

The findings are derived from the results of an online survey in which a sample of 2,239 adults participated between 23rd November and 14th December 2023. The survey was conducted online by YouGov on behalf of The Prince's Trust. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK young people aged 16 to 25.

Methodology

Survey participants are asked how happy and confident they are in different areas of their lives. The responses are then converted into a numerical scale, resulting in a number between zero and 100, where 100 denotes participants being entirely happy or confident and zero being not at all happy or confident.

The results for 2024 have been mapped against the data from the previous 14 reports to give a high-level view of how the wellbeing and aspirations of young people have changed over time.

11%

Of respondents are not currently in education, employment or training (NEET). 53 per cent of these have been unemployed for more than six months.

9%

Of respondents achieved fewer than five GCSEs graded A* to C, or the new grading of 4 to 9, or Scottish Standards, levels 1 or 2.

25%

Of respondents received free school meals either throughout their time at school or some of the time. Young people from low-income backgrounds are indicated in this study as those who received free school meals.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index shows that the happiness and confidence young people feel in their mental health has seen the biggest decline over the report's 15 years compared to other factors, while happiness with their work, education, qualifications and money are at an all-time low. Young people who are unemployed reported the lowest overall wellbeing this year.

The Index, which measures how young people feel across different aspects of their lives, finds the lowest scoring element when looking at young people's wellbeing this year is money, which has hit the lowest level recorded since the study began 15 years ago. Happiness in mental health remains the second lowest scoring aspect after money.

The report suggests that poor mental health is having a devastating impact on young people's education and early careers. One in five young people (21 per cent) said they have missed school or

work in the past year due to their mental health and more than a third (35 per cent) worry their mental health will stop them achieving their career goals.

Despite these challenges, one of the more encouraging findings is that more than two thirds of young people (68 per cent) feel determined to achieve their goals in life. The majority see having a job as beneficial to their life and future, not just to realise financial stability, but also to benefit other aspects of their lives, such as their mental health.



The mental health trap



Young people are missing school and work due to experiencing mental health problems in their lives. Others are worried that their mental health will stop them achieving their career goals and say their mental health has worsened during the past year.

- 40 per cent of young people have experienced a mental health problem and one in five (21 per cent) say their mental health got worse in the past year.
- One in five young people in the UK (21 per cent) have missed school or work in the past year because of a mental health issue.
- A mental health issue has stopped young people from applying for a job (18 per cent), attending an interview during the last 12 months (12 per cent) or asking for help with their CV or cover letter (ten per cent).
- One in ten¹ young people from poorer backgrounds (ten per cent) say they left work in the past 12 months due to a mental health issue, compared to four per cent of their more affluent peers.
- Almost two thirds of young people (62 per cent) think that having a job is good for their mental health.
- NEET young people report the lowest overall wellbeing scores.

Money on their minds



The cost of living continues to affect the day-to-day lives of young people. It is clear from the research findings that their confidence, career aspirations and mental health are all suffering as a result, with many left feeling anxious about their futures.

- Half of young people (49 per cent) state the cost of living has had a worse impact on their life than the pandemic.
- Over half of young people (53 per cent) worry that the cost of living means they'll never be financially secure.
- Due to the cost of living, a third of young people (34 per cent) say that worrying about money has made their mental health much worse. This rises to 44 per cent among young people who are NEET.
- Young people's overall happiness and confidence with money have hit their lowest levels ever recorded by this study, with a third (33 per cent) of young people saying thinking about money depresses or stresses them.
- A quarter of young people (25 per cent) have had to borrow money from family or friends in the past 12 months, rising to 30 per cent among young people from poorer backgrounds and 27 per cent among NEET young people.
- One in ten young people (ten per cent) have been bullied for not being able to afford everyday costs.
- Young people are increasingly turning to social media for advice on managing their finances, with the number of 16-25-year-olds utilising TikTok to secure this almost doubling since 2022 (7 per cent to 13 per cent).

¹ This figure relates to young people who received free school meals throughout their time at school.

An uphill struggle



The findings show that young people who are NEET are more likely to experience poor mental health and worry about the cost of living than those who are in work, training or education. This, in turn, can impact their ability to find work, with many finding it harder to get back into employment the longer they are out of it.

- One in four NEET young people (27 per cent) would like to work but are unable to due to their mental health.
- 41 per cent of NEET young people feel worthless because they don't have a job, and 32 per cent say they have experienced a mental health problem due to being unemployed.
- More than two fifths of NEET young people (44 per cent) say their mental health has got much worse due to worrying about money, compared with 32 per cent of those in work, education or training.
- Half of young people who are NEET (51 per cent) say that the uncertainty of the past few years has made them feel hopeless about their future, compared with 39 per cent of those in work, education, or training.
- More than half of young people (52 per cent) say the longer they are unemployed, the harder it is to find work, while 45 per cent feel being out of work means they have lost confidence in their skills.

Lonely and divided



Young people across the UK are experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation and are struggling to feel connected with friends, family and their communities.

- Many young people always or often feel lonely (36 per cent) or isolated (31 per cent).
- More than half of young people say they find it difficult to make new friends (56 per cent) or meet new people (54 per cent).
- Almost half of young people (45 per cent) feel their generation is more divided than this time last year.
- A quarter (26 per cent) worry about being picked on due to their faith, sexual identity or cultural background.
- More than a quarter of young people (28 per cent) say they have avoided seeing family and friends in the last 12 months due to their mental health, while a third (32 per cent) say they have stopped seeing family and friends to save money.
- A third of young people (32 per cent) say they have received negative or hurtful comments on social media, which can make them feel lonely (18 per cent).

The pressures on young women



Young women are more likely than young men to be struggling with low self-confidence, poor mental health and concern about the cost of living, with many young women worrying that financial stability will always be out of their reach.

- Young women are more likely than young men to feel as though they don't have control of their future, with 42 per cent feeling this way compared to 37 per cent of young men.
- 60 per cent of young women fear the rising cost of living means they will never be financially secure, compared to 45 per cent of young men.
- More young women than young men said a lack of confidence is one of the biggest barriers holding them back from achieving their career goals (40 per cent versus 32 per cent respectively).
- 28 per cent of young women said they have missed school or work in the last twelve months as a result of their mental health, compared to 14 per cent of young men.
- 70 per cent of young women always or often feel stressed compared to 54 per cent of young men.



THE WAY FORWARD

The findings of this research suggest that the pressures young people are under have not broken their resolve to overcome challenges and find a way forward. Having access to the right support is something that many young people feel could help them to succeed.



Feel determined to achieve their goals in life.



Said financial security is one of their biggest goals.



Said having good mental health is a key goal.



Said that having a job makes them feel as though they have stability in life.



Think that having a job will help them to get through the cost of living crisis.



Said help with securing work experience or training would help them to achieve their career ambitions.



**“Not only am I in a dream job,
but I also have financial stability,
which is important to me
particularly in a cost
of living crisis.”**

HATIM'S STORY

Hatim is now thriving in his role as a Display Assistant at the media agency Manning Gottlieb OMD. However, prior to coming to The Prince's Trust, he was struggling at college and unsure of what his next steps might be.

Hatim built his confidence and independence through taking part in The Trust's Team programme, which is a 12-week personal development course.

Then, when Hatim relocated to London, he completed a Get into Digital Marketing course with What You Know (WYK) Digital, which gave him the relevant skills and industry experience he needed.

"Failing my second year at college knocked my confidence, and I wasn't sure what direction to go in. But the Team programme took me out of my comfort zone, in a good way. It pushed me, built my confidence and taught me independence.

"The course and my tutor taught me the power of networking. I made connections through the programme with employers and did several short work placements at various theatre groups. I gained insight into marketing and writing copy, as I was tasked with drafting material for websites."

It was then Hatim's determination and drive which led him to discover his "dream" career.

"For me, perseverance is key; the challenges I faced made me who I am today."

"This three-month course helped me realise that digital marketing was my true calling. We were trained and given hands-on experience by getting to work on live digital marketing campaigns and liaised with real clients."

Upon completing the programme, Hatim successfully secured a role as a Display Assistant at MG OMD.

"The Prince's Trust and WYK were massive support systems during my time on the Digital Marketing course. I got so much invaluable experience and I feel that it really prepped me for what I'm doing now.

"I'm really excited about my new role. The work is great, and the team are really supportive.

"I'm in a job I've always wanted, my confidence has improved and I'm feeling positive about my future."

YOUTH INDEX SCORES

 Year	Money  		Work/ Employment  		Emotional Health  		Qualifications/ Training  		Home/ Accommodation  	
	2024	56	63	67	67	60	65	74	73	74
2023	56	64	67	67	58	64	75	73	73	71
2022	60	65	68	66	57	64	75	72	74	69
2021	60	65	67	66	56	64	77	74	76	72
2020	58	64	68	68	58	64	76	74	75	70
2019	56	65	68	68	58	64	76	73	76	71
2018	56	64	67	67	57	65	76	73	75	71
2017	58	65	69	68	61	67	76	74	75	71
2016	58	65	69	68	64	70	77	74	75	72
2015	58	65	70	67	67	72	76	74	76	73
2014	58	66	69	67	66	72	76	74	76	73
2013	58	67	70	70	67	70	77	76	78	75
2012	57	65	68	67	67	68	76	75	76	73
2011	56	66	70	70	70	71	77	76	76	75
2010	56	67	71	71	67	73	79	79	76	76

☹️ Happiness ⭐ Confidence

Community/ Local Area		Family Relationships		Relationships With Friends		Physical Health		Total Index Scores		Overall Index Scores
☹️	⭐	☹️	⭐	☹️	⭐	☹️	⭐	☹️	⭐	
68	67	76	76	72	72	66	70	68	69	69
66	66	76	76	70	70	64	68	67	68	68
67	66	74	75	71	71	63	68	67	68	68
69	68	77	78	74	73	65	69	69	70	69
67	66	75	76	72	71	63	68	68	69	68
68	68	77	79	72	72	63	68	68	70	69
69	68	77	78	72	72	63	68	68	69	69
68	68	77	78	73	73	65	70	69	70	70
69	68	79	80	73	73	67	70	70	71	72
70	70	79	79	75	75	69	72	71	72	72
68	69	79	79	74	74	69	73	70	72	71
69	71	80	81	77	78	71	74	72	74	73
68	68	78	78	75	75	68	72	70	71	71
69	69	81	82	78	78	71	74	72	74	73
69	70	79	81	77	79	69	74	71	74	73

WELLBEING ANALYSIS

Happiness



Some of the scores relating to the happiness young people feel across different aspects of their lives have either fallen to, or stayed at, an all-time low this year.

The lowest scoring aspect of young people's happiness this year is **money**, which has remained at 56; the lowest level recorded by the Index since the study began. This score is also four points off its highest peak of 60, which was recorded in 2021.

The score for the happiness young people feel about their **qualifications** has fallen to a new low of 74, down from 75. Happiness in their **employment** has stagnated at 67, which is also the lowest score ever recorded for this element of their lives.

There are some happiness scores that have increased, with the way young people feel about their **community**, **relationships with friends** and **physical health** all having increased by two points this year. The way they feel about their **home and accommodation** shows an increase of one point.

Although the score for **mental health** also increased this year, from 58 to 60, mental health remains the second lowest scoring aspect of young people's happiness by a margin of at least four points, when compared to all the other areas measured apart from money. Happiness with mental health has seen the biggest overall decline compared to other metrics since the study began in 2008, when it was 67.

Confidence



Changes in the scores measuring the confidence young people feel in their lives broadly reflect the changes we have seen in the happiness scores this year, with small increases in confidence recorded for aspects including **community**, **relationships with friends** and **physical health**.

The confidence young people feel in the amount of **money** they have has fallen to an all time low score of 63, down from 64 last year. Money is the lowest scoring aspect again this year and is four points lower than the score we published in 2009, when the UK was in the grips of a recession amidst a global financial crisis.

Young people's confidence in their **employment** remains four points lower than the peak score of 71, which was last recorded in 2009. Another area of concern is **mental health**, which is the second lowest scoring aspect after money. The confidence score for **mental health** has fallen from a peak of 73, which was recorded in 2009.



“After leaving education I felt very lost in life. I didn’t feel like I had anything going for me, which really took a toll on my mental health. The longer I was out of work, the harder it felt to go back into it, and I was unemployed for four years. After the Prince’s Trust course, I believed in myself and now feel positive about the future again.”

Daniel, Sales Assistant at Marks & Spencer.

PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCE COMPARISONS

The score for overall confidence and happiness young people feel in their lives varies according to their different personal circumstances and identities.

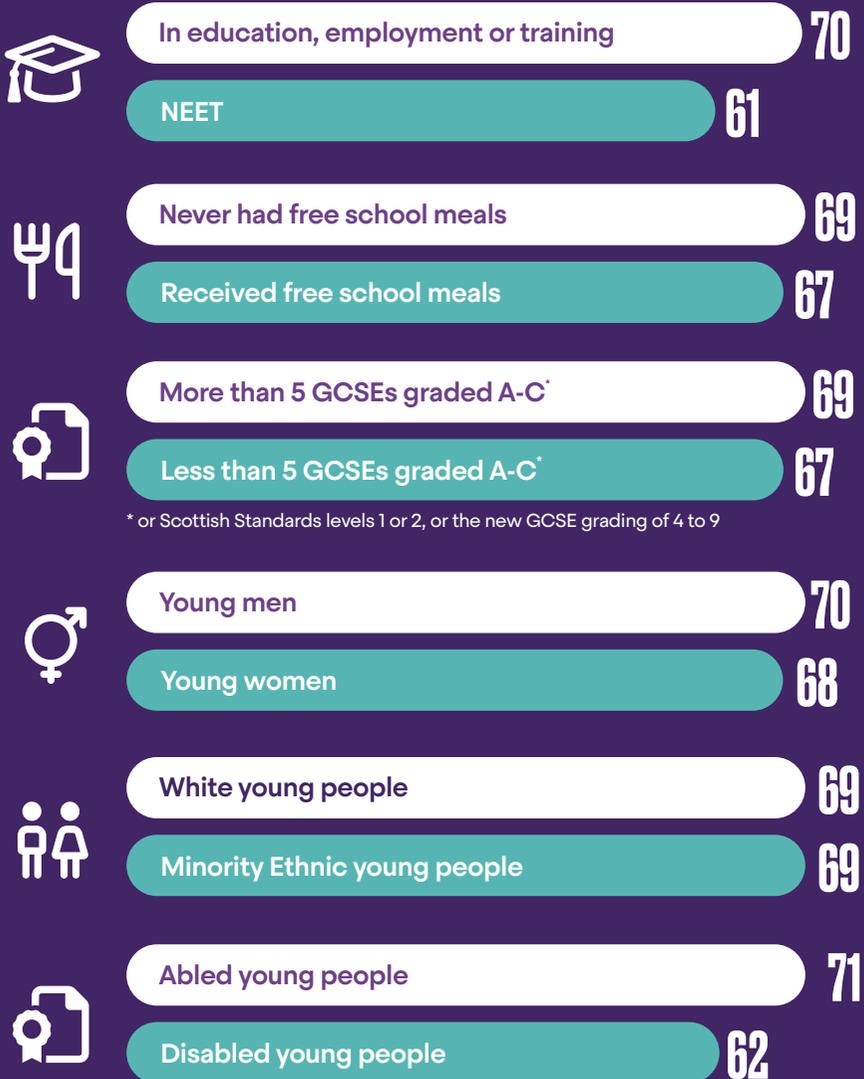
The findings show a correlation between circumstances such as being unemployed, being from a low income background, having a lack of qualifications and being disabled, and having lower Index scores. The data also shows that young women still have an overall Index score that is two points lower than the score for young men.

Of these factors, the lowest score of 61 was reported by young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). This is in stark contrast to the score for those who are in employment, education or training, which is nine points higher, and the overall 2024 Index score, which is eight points higher.

There is also a large gap between the scores for abled young people and disabled young people, which stand at 71 and 62 respectively.

Young people from poorer backgrounds, who are indicated in this study as those who received free school meals, have an overall happiness and confidence score that is two points lower than that of their more affluent peers. There is a similar gap between the scores for those who did not attain more than five GCSEs graded A-C (or equivalent) and those who did.

The graphic below shows Index scores for differing personal circumstances and lived experiences.



Overall 2023 Index score: 69

THE MENTAL HEALTH TRAP

The findings of this research show that poor mental health is preventing many young people from achieving their full potential, with negative repercussions affecting their progress in education and at work.

21%

Of young people say their mental health has worsened in the last year.

40%

Of young people report experiencing a mental health problem.

The challenges young people face with mental wellbeing can have significant knock-on effects to their journeys through education and into employment. One in five young people (21 per cent) have missed school or work in the past 12 months because of their mental health. A similar number (18 per cent) reported that their mental health has prevented them from applying for a job and 12 per cent said it held them back from attending an interview.

Many are now worried that their mental health will stop them from achieving their career ambitions altogether, with around a third (35 per cent) feeling this way.

Losing hope for the future

More than half of young people say they always or often feel stressed (62 per cent) or anxious (55 per cent). Many are also struggling to see a way forward, with two in five (40 per cent) saying they do not feel in control of their future. A quarter (26 per cent) even believe they will fail in life – a figure which rises to 38 per cent among NEET young people and 30 per cent for those from poorer backgrounds.

Worryingly, although **almost two thirds of young people (62 per cent) recognise that having a job is good for their mental health**, the findings of this report suggest that struggles with their mental wellbeing can all too often become a barrier to moving into positive work, training or education outcomes.

Of the young people who were supported by The Trust last year, 44 per cent of those who shared their mental health status told us they had experienced a mental health challenge.

All our programmes promote positive wellbeing and include activities such as personal development, sport and active citizenship, helping young people to build their resilience, confidence and wellness.





“I never thought I’d find a job in the NHS – it really is a dream come true! I keep telling friends and family to contact The Prince’s Trust too – as they don’t judge you and really want every young person to reach their full potential.

They removed all the barriers for me, so I started to believe I could get a job helping others.”

BETH'S STORY

Beth has fulfilled her long-term aspiration to work for the NHS, having overcome challenges with her mental health which led to her missing a year and half of school. She is currently working as a Healthcare Assistant.

Beth grew up around drugs and was introduced to cannabis aged 13. With support from The Prince's Trust and local mental health and substance abuse charity We are With You, Beth stopped using drugs and was able to transform her life.

Beth said: "My mental health really affected my outlook on life. My confidence was low, so when I was introduced to cannabis as a teenager I did it to fit in. I then started to use it daily, isolating myself from friends - my mental health was getting worse, I was self-harming – it was a very difficult time.

"I was referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and was supported to stop using cannabis by We are With You. I started to feel my aspiration to help others within the NHS was possible.

"With all the support that I received from the NHS - I stayed in hospital and missed school several times due to my mental health - I wanted to give back too. I didn't think it would ever be possible, I didn't think I had relevant work experience and had no idea how to get a job in the NHS.

"My key worker listened and encouraged me to speak with The Prince's Trust, who were running a programme at the time with a local hospital. I was a bit nervous at first but I'm really glad I got in touch with them.

"Alice at The Trust answered all the questions I had, helped me to update my CV and write a supporting statement, which is needed to apply for jobs in the NHS. Alice also helped me with mock interviews – so I knew what to expect."

Following on from this and after Alice completed The Prince's Trust's Get Into Health and Social care course, her confidence soared and she was ready to start applying for jobs. In January, she successfully secured a role working as a Healthcare Assistant at her local hospital.

"I was so happy! All the support I'd received from The Prince's Trust was so valuable. They taught me so much and the support didn't end when I got my job – I can still go to Alice if I need it, which is great!

"My mental health is much better now that I'm working and I can see a future career within the NHS. With the cost of living crisis, I feel that the NHS will give me some security in terms of a career. Whatever I decide I know I will continue to help others – it's so important to me."

MONEY ON THEIR MINDS

The cost of living is making young people feel hopeless and anxious about their future, taking a toll on their mental health and damping their career ambitions.

The overall happiness and confidence young people feel with the amount of money they have remains at the lowest level on record in the fifteen-year history of the study, with half of young people (49 per cent) saying the cost of living has had a worse impact on their life than the pandemic.

Worrying about money as a result of the cost of living has made a third (34 per cent) of young people's mental health much worse, with similar numbers (33 per cent) saying that thinking about money depresses or stresses them.

The findings suggest that the economic uncertainty is affecting young people's career ambitions, with almost a fifth (18 per cent) planning to finish their education early so that they can start earning money. A quarter (24 per cent) state they can't afford to get the qualification for what they want to do, rising to 34 per cent among those from poorer backgrounds and 33 per cent among NEET young people.

For those young people who are unemployed, five per cent report they have turned down a job because they can't afford the costs to start – be it rent, transport or uniform – with this rising to around one in ten for those who are NEET (ten per cent) or from a poorer background (nine per cent).

21%

Of young people have skipped meals to save money in the past year.

43%

Of young people feel anxious on a daily basis about the cost of living crisis.

5%

Of young people have missed school or work in the past 12 months because they couldn't afford transport, rising to almost one in ten (nine per cent) of those from poorer backgrounds.

The Trust's Development Awards can cover the cost of course fees, tools or equipment to help young people achieve their goals. In the last year, we gave out 3,529 Development Awards and helped remove financial barriers preventing young people from taking their next steps into work, education or training.



CHERELLE'S STORY

Cherelle is a single parent to four children and has recently been promoted to a Theatre Support Worker within the NHS. She attended the Prince's Trust's Get Into Health And Social Care programme and was given a Development Award to support her with some of the essential costs involved in the job application process.

"In order to apply for NHS roles I needed official ID, which I didn't have as my provisional license had expired. I was worried about the cost of purchasing this," Cherelle said.

"The Prince's Trust were great, as they suggested I apply for a Development Award that would cover the cost of a new license. It made a huge difference, as it would have been a struggle to find the extra money myself, before starting work. The Trust also paid for the comfortable work shoes I needed too.

"The cost-of-living crisis is real, especially if you have a young family. My electric and gas have gone up, plus food is more expensive too! I just have to keep budgeting for any change in prices."

Cherelle grew up in a deprived area of Birmingham and has faced multiple challenges in life. She was homeschooled, the youngest child of five and struggled to transition to life at secondary school. Growing up, Cherelle witnessed domestic abuse and this affected her mental health.

"I felt as though I didn't know how to be around other people in my age group. I didn't know how to socialise. Nobody understood that due to never going to school, I hadn't learned how to mix," Cherelle said.

When she was 14, she then attended college and completed several courses and by the age of 20, Cherelle had her first child. At 27 years-old, Cherelle had four children but was now a single parent.

It was at this point that Cherelle wanted to concentrate on starting her career, showing her daughters that with hard work anything is possible – even without qualifications.

Cherelle always had a desire to help people and dreamed of being a nurse. She'd known about The Prince's Trust when she was 22 and had two children, but at that point, she didn't have the confidence to apply for a Prince's Trust programme, let alone work in the NHS.

Cherelle had several false starts with The Prince's Trust – signing up for programmes, then panicking and talking herself out of attendance. In 2021 and now a mother of four, Cherelle had the courage to attend a Prince's Trust NHS programme and following completion, was offered a Health Care Assistant role (HCA), which she started in early 2022. Cherelle was overjoyed!

"I soaked up all the information while on the programme and my confidence slowly started to improve – I realised I could do this, I was good enough, I did have the social skills, I started to see myself as an HCA."

"Working has changed my life for the better, my mental health, my drive, my ambition and my hope. I am now stronger, I know that with effort things

can be overcome. I have a future and I am sure my children's lives will be more secure too."

Cherelle's career is going really well, she was recently promoted to a theatre support worker but even more important for Cherelle, is that her girls are really proud of her.



AN UPHILL STRUGGLE

The findings of this research show that young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are more likely to experience poor mental health than those who are in work, education or training, which can in turn affect their ability to find work. These challenges are compounded by the cost of living, which is causing NEET young people to feel worried about their futures and, in some cases, pricing them out of entering the job market.

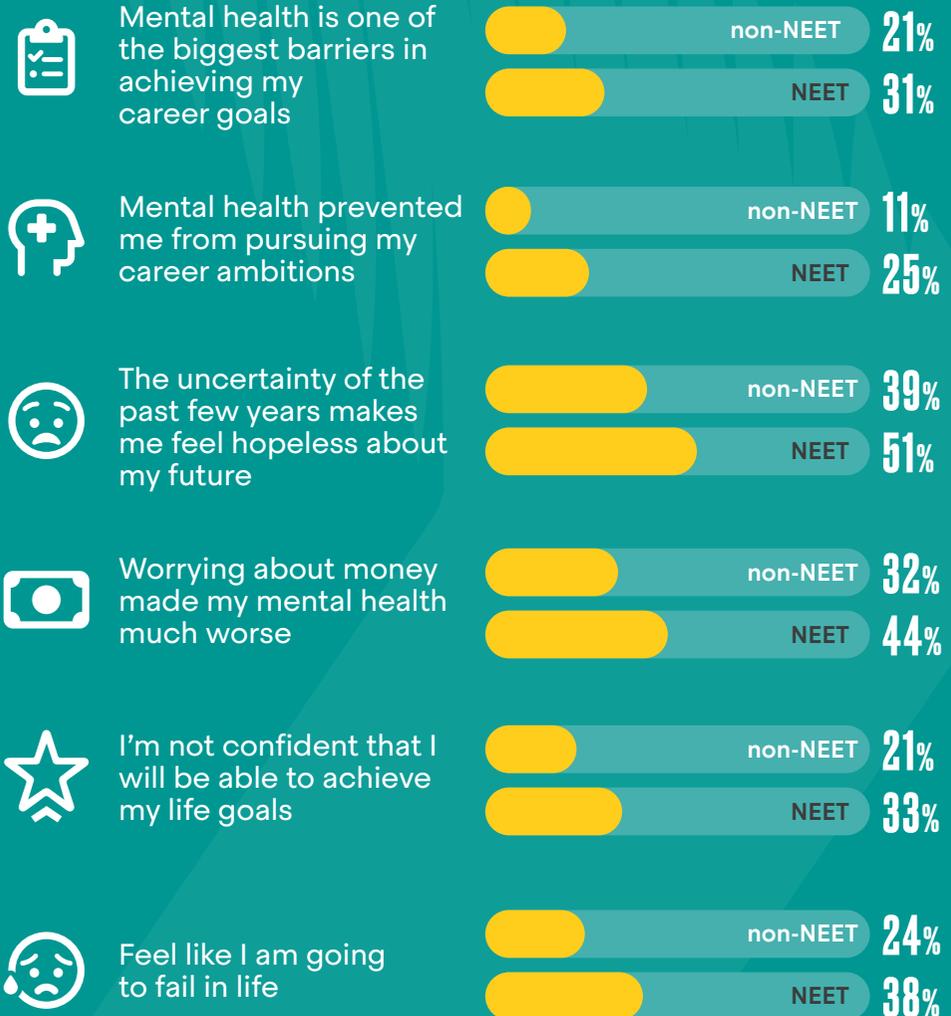
Half of NEET young people (50 per cent) have experienced a mental health problem compared to 40 per cent of those who are in work, training or education. Almost a third (32 per cent) say they have experienced a mental health problem due to being unemployed, and being out of work makes 43 per cent feel hopeless about their future.

The findings also show how poor mental health can affect the employment prospects of NEET young people, with more than a quarter (27 per cent) saying they would like to work but are unable to due to their mental health. For 52 per cent of NEET young people, the longer they are unemployed the harder it is to find work. More than a third (45 per cent) say being out of work means they have lost confidence in their skills.

Challenges resulting from the cost of living are also disproportionately affecting NEET young people. One in ten (9 per cent) NEET young people have turned down a job because they couldn't afford the costs associated with it and a third (33 per cent) of NEET young people reported not being able to afford to get the qualifications they need for the job they want.

Working with organisations across the country, The Trust's employability programmes help young people build their skills, confidence, and experience to secure a job. In the last year, more than eight and a half thousand young people were supported to overcome their challenges to secure employment.

Sentiments expressed by NEETs compared to non-NEETs



LONELY AND DIVIDED

Many young people regularly feel lonely (36 per cent) or isolated (31 per cent), with more than half stating they find it difficult to make new friends (56 per cent) or meet new people (54 per cent).

The findings suggest young people often feel disconnected from their peers and within their communities. More than two in five (45 per cent) feel their generation is more divided than this time last year, and a quarter (26 per cent) worry about being picked on due to their faith, sexual identity or cultural background. A fifth (21 per cent) said they feel as though they don't belong in their community.

Worryingly, the cost of living and mental health challenges are causing young people to limit how they engage with their friends and family. More than a quarter (28 per cent) say they have avoided seeing family and friends in the last 12 months due to their mental health, and a third (32 per cent) that they have stopped seeing family and friends to save money; a rise of nine per cent since last year.

Struggles with social media

The experiences young people have with social media can dramatically affect how they feel about themselves and their overall wellbeing. This report finds that 29 per cent of young people think social media makes their mental health worse, while one in ten (12 per cent) report feeling unsafe on social media.

A third of young people (32 per cent) say that they have received negative or hurtful comments on social media. Worryingly, one in seven young people (14 per cent) feel as though they have no friends or people to talk to about negative comments they receive. Receiving negative comments online also means some young people struggle to sleep (14 per cent), lose motivation to succeed (14 per cent) or do not want to go to school or work (10 per cent).

“Many of the young people I meet at the start of their journeys with The Trust have faced extremely challenging circumstances, and it can sometimes be hard to get them engaged initially.

It's amazing to see them grow in confidence and build new friendships while on our programmes – they're incredibly resilient and often just need a bit of support to get back on their feet.”

Jack Wellens,
Youth Development Lead,
The Prince's Trust



PRESSURES ON YOUNG WOMEN

This research finds that the rising cost of living, poor mental health and low self-confidence are factors which are more likely to take a greater toll on young women than young men.

Overall, young women are more likely than young men to feel as though they don't have control of their future, with 42 per cent of young women feeling this way compared to 37 per cent of young men. The uncertainty of the past few years is making 45 per cent of young women feel hopeless about their future, compared to 36 per cent of young men.

Money worries

For the majority of young women, the cost of living is weighing heavily on their minds, with 60 per cent of young women fearing that the rising cost of living means they will never be financially secure (versus 45 per cent of young men).

The cost of living is making almost half of young women (47 per cent) feel anxious on a daily basis, compared to 39 per cent of young men.

Young women are also much more likely than young men to be worried about earning enough to support a family (50 per cent vs 44 per cent respectively).

Mental health and confidence

Mental health challenges are disproportionately preventing many young women from reaching their full potential. More young women than young men said that their mental health has caused problems with their concentration at school or work^[1], and even that they have missed school or work in the last twelve months as a result of their mental health^[2]. Young women are also significantly more likely than young men to always or often feel stressed on a daily basis, with 70 percent of young women feeling this way compared to 54 per cent of young men.

Low confidence is also impacting young women more than young men. When asked what the biggest barriers are to achieving their career goals, more young women than young men said a lack of confidence is holding them back (40 per cent versus 32 per cent), while 25 per cent of young women said their mental health was holding them back (compared to 20 per cent of young men).

“The staff at The Trust were so supportive, it was a safe space, I could be myself. I could also feel my confidence increasing throughout the week.”

Jessica, Barry Island.

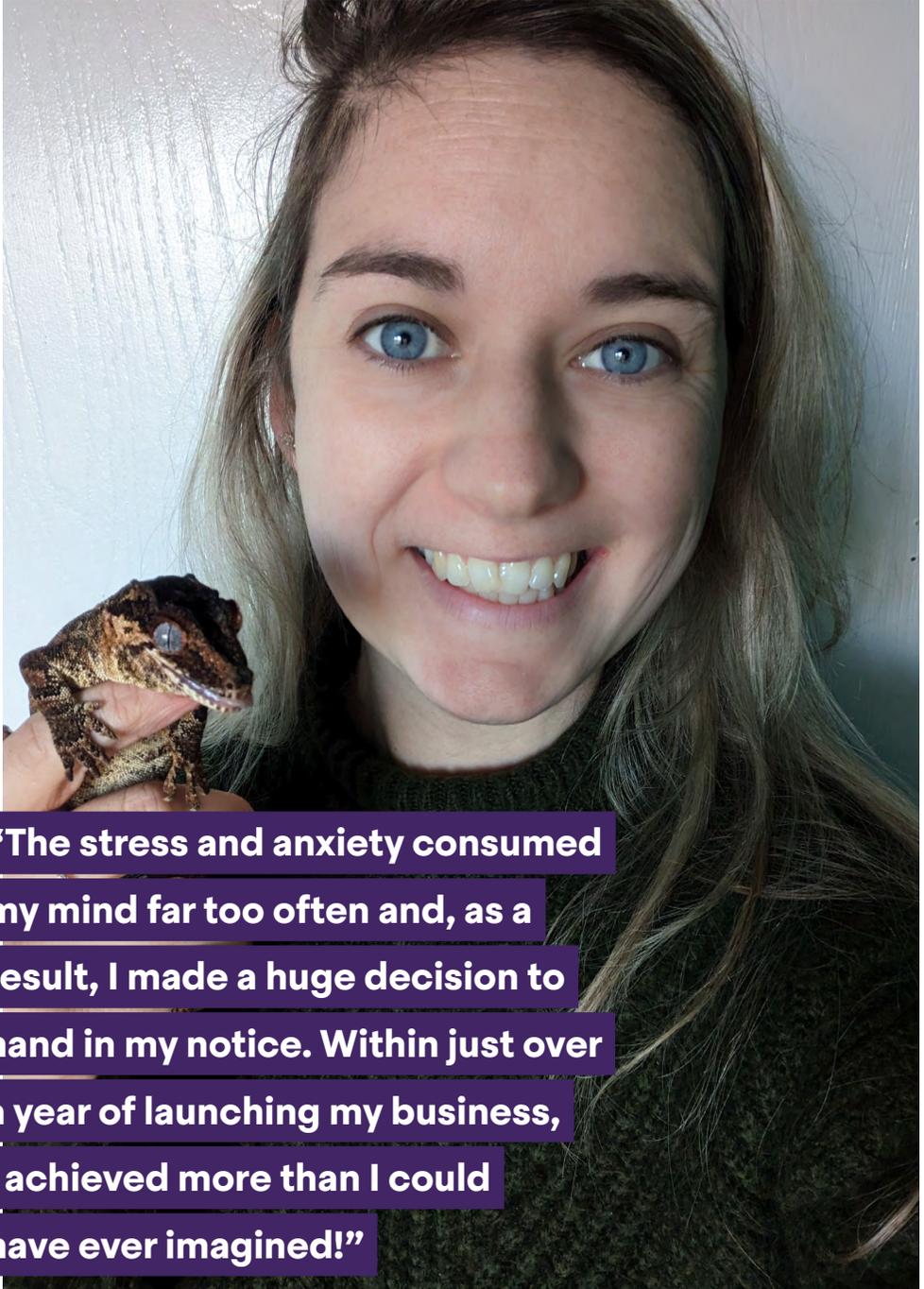


Things ever experienced by young women versus young men

Experience	Young Women	Young Men
Feeling inferior to others	44%	31%
A mental health problem	50%	31%
An eating disorder	20%	9%
Feelings of self-loathing	51%	32%
Panic attacks	39%	20%

[1] 32 per cent of young women said they had struggled to concentrate at school in the last twelve months as a result of their mental health compared to 18 per cent of young men, while 26 per cent of young women said they struggled to concentrate at work compared to 17 per cent of young men.

[2] 28 per cent of young women said they have missed school or work in the last twelve months as a result of their mental health, compared to 14 per cent of young men.



“The stress and anxiety consumed my mind far too often and, as a result, I made a huge decision to hand in my notice. Within just over a year of launching my business, I achieved more than I could have ever imagined!”

NAOMI'S STORY

Naomi is the founder and owner of Animal Teach, an exciting, educational workshop service which provides national curriculum linked lessons and lots of amazing animals! She is also a qualified Zoologist and used to be a teacher.

Naomi's hard work and ambition, together with the support of her Prince's Trust business mentor has seen Animal Teach go from strength to strength. She's gone from working with just seven animals, to now over 43 different species.

However, there was a time not so long ago when Naomi was really struggling to cope with her wellbeing at her previous workplaces. This led to her suffering panic attacks and, after experiencing a complete mental health breakdown, she was admitted to hospital and sought professional help.

"I struggled with my mental health when I did zookeeping, so much so that I missed a handful of days of work as a result.

"When I started teaching, my mental health was still not in a good place and, although my workplace at that time was extremely supportive and understanding, it was the job role and responsibilities that made the thought of returning unbearable for me."

Whilst on maternity leave with her second child, Naomi also became extremely stressed and anxious about returning to work with two young children of different ages. She worried about balancing her work life while raising them both.

"I felt that I needed a routine that gave me flexibility and would work around my life as a mum and my needs."

It was at this point that Naomi explored her options and she decided to set up a business that she could fit around her lifestyle and utilised her training, education and work experience. She contacted Citizens Advice and they put her into contact with The Prince's Trust.

"I started the Enterprise course and I really enjoyed learning business terminology and meeting other young people going through the process of just setting up and developing their businesses too. I soon began to create my business plan and applied for a grant for my Animal Activity License to make 'Animal Teach' a reality."

Within a month of receiving her license, Naomi was ready to launch.

"I now present workshops to a variety of audiences including younger children, the elderly, SEN groups, schools, home educators and more - it really feels like everyone!

"The flexibility that I have now since starting my own business has had a really positive impact on my mental health. I of course have busy days, but being my own boss, I feel in control of my schedule and I am able to fit my work around my needs."

THE WAY FORWARD

Although young people today still face many challenges, the findings of this research do offer some hope for the future, showing resolve among young people to work towards a better future for themselves.

Just over two thirds of young people (68 per cent) feel determined to achieve their goals in life. For two thirds of young people (66 per cent) financial security is one of their biggest goals, while having good mental health is a priority for 42 per cent of young people.

The findings also suggest that having a job is pivotal to achieving the things young people most want in life. Three quarters of young people (75 per cent) said that having a job makes them feel as though they have stability in life, while

69 per cent think it improves their self-confidence. An equally high proportion – 69 per cent – think that having a job will help them to get through the cost of living crisis.

Around a third of young people (35 per cent) would like to start their own business, with young men (41 per cent), young people who are NEET (41 per cent) and young people from poorer backgrounds (43 per cent) much more likely than average to feel this way. Of those interested in entrepreneurship, 79 per cent said their motivation is a desire to take control of their finances, and three quarters (74 per cent) say they would like support to build the skills they need to start their own business.



Young people's responses when asked what support would help with achieving their career ambitions

32% 

Help with securing work experience or training

28% 

Help with building confidence

28% 

Building their skills for work

28% 

Help with CV and interview skills

27% 

Improving their qualifications

23% 

Having a mentor

23% 

Help with applying for jobs

ABOUT THE 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, when he was HRH The Prince of Wales, we have helped more than a million young people across the UK. Three in four of those we supported over the last five years have moved into work, education or training.

As we look to the future, we are pleased to have announced our intention to change our name to The King's Trust, reflecting our founder's continued dedication to our work. We remain committed to enabling even more young people to create a better future for themselves and, by helping them today, know that the benefits will be felt for years to come – not just for those we support, but for their communities and the wider economy.

Acknowledgements

The Prince's Trust would like to thank the young people who are featured as case studies in this report. The Trust would also like to thank NatWest for supporting this research and YouGov for conducting the Youth Index.



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The Prince's Trust
South London Centre
8 Glade Path
London
SE1 8EG.