

One in three Aussies who lost their job at the start of the pandemic were under 25

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The initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic heightened some of the challenges faced by young Australians with early evidence suggesting that, compared with older age groups, young people experienced higher

rates of psychological distress, job loss, and educational disruption during the pandemic.

A new report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has shown that experiences of severe psychological distress among [young people](#) aged 18–24 increased from 14% in February 2017 to 22% in April 2020, and of the 592,000 Australians who lost employment in April 2020, more than 1 in 3 (38%) were aged 15–24.

The report, Australia's youth, brings together data about young people (aged 12–24) and their experiences of school and [higher education](#), mental health and wellbeing, employment, living circumstances, and personal relationships.

The effects of COVID-19 can be dynamic, with outcomes changing quickly when conditions change, such as the introducing or easing of restrictions.

"While data suggest some outcomes for young people have returned to pre-COVID-19 levels, this is not always the case. For example, in April 2021 the average level of psychological distress among young people was below what it was in April 2020, but still higher than in February 2017. Ongoing monitoring is needed to fully understand the longer-term impact of the pandemic," said AIHW spokesperson Ms. Sally Mills.

The proportion of young people aged 15–24 not in education, employment or training rose from 8.7% in May 2019 to 12% in May 2020 following the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions. Since then, the proportion has fallen to 11% in February 2021, a similar rate to February 2020 before the pandemic.

"Adolescence and young adulthood is a critical period in a person's life. Young people often experience rapid physical, social and emotional

changes in a time where they are transitioning from dependence to independence," Ms Mills said.

"This is a time when young people are finishing school, pursuing further training and education, entering the workforce, moving out of the family home, and forming relationships."

Despite the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people are faring well in a number of areas, with most 15–24 years-olds studying or working, and almost 3 in 5 (59%) young people aged 15–19 years feeling happy/very happy with their lives in 2020; similar to 2019 (61%).

In the past two decades rates of young people engaged in drinking at risky levels, daily smoking, and recent use of illicit drugs have fallen dramatically.

Overall, the proportion of young people aged 14–24 who smoke daily has more than halved, from 19.3% in 2001 to 6.8% in 2019.

Deaths among young people in Australia, have fallen markedly over the past two decades, with about 1,300 deaths in 2019. Injury, cancer, and diseases of the nervous system were the leading causes of death for young people aged 15–24.

"Injury remains the leading cause of [death](#) among young people, accounting for 73% of deaths in 2017–19. Just over half of all injury deaths (54%) were intentional, with the remainder classified as unintentional or undetermined intent," Ms Mills said.

This is the AIHW's first comprehensive report on young people since 2015. It brings together updated and new data about Australia's young people and provides suggestions for how to fill known information gaps.

Young people were involved in drafting information pieces on three topics of particular importance to them: discrimination, climate change, and the wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ young people.

More information: Australia's youth, *AIHW*:
[www.aihw.gov.au/reports/childr ... youth/contents/about](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/childr...youth/contents/about)

Provided by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)

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