



Prince's Trust

# THE PRINCE'S TRUST TESCO YOUTH INDEX 2021



YouGov®

# FOREWORD

**It has been a challenging year for all of us, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to turn lives and livelihoods upside down, causing untold economic and social disruption across the globe.**



**Here at The Prince's Trust, we have seen the devastating toll the pandemic is taking on young people's mental health and wellbeing, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.**

Young people are facing a disrupted education, isolation from their friends and loved ones and hundreds of thousands are now struggling to find a job. UK young people are almost four times as likely to be unemployed as the rest of the working age population and the jobs market has been shrinking – particularly in sectors that typically employ young people.

Sadly, this year's Youth Index shows that one in four young people (26 per cent) feel "unable to cope with life" since the start of the pandemic, increasing to 40 per cent among those not in work,

education or training (NEETs). The research also suggests that more young people are feeling anxious than ever in the 12-year history of the Index, with the unemployed worst affected.

Half of NEET young people (48 per cent) can't see an end to their unemployment. There is a real danger that young people who are already struggling to find a job – those with challenging homelives, few qualifications and little confidence – will be pushed furthest away from the jobs, as the labour market becomes even more competitive.

We cannot allow that to happen. The Prince's Trust will always be there for young people across the UK, giving them a lifeline to overcome the toughest of challenges. We know that our programmes work – giving young

people the confidence, skills and training to get into the jobs of the future. However, we can't do it alone.

At this critical time, we need businesses, government, and individuals to work with us to help as many vulnerable young people as possible. Our partnership with Tesco is boosting young people's mental health and giving them the confidence and training they need to get a job. We are also working with the Department of Health and Social Care, supporting young people into the vacancies that need filling in NHS Trusts, hospices, care homes and other employers across the sector. It is only by working together like this that we can stop this generation of young people giving up on their futures – and themselves.

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



# INTRODUCTION

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The findings of this year's Youth Index highlight how vital it is to support young people to develop skills and build their confidence, to support their future.

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**Emma Taylor, UK and ROI People Director at Tesco said:**

Through our existing partnerships with The Prince's Trust and other charities, we have already supported over 40,000 young people in secondary schools to develop essential employability and life skills, such as teamwork and communication.

The Trust and Tesco are working together to provide mental health resources and support in schools across the UK.

The partnership also helps young people into jobs through The Trust's employability courses, as well as Tesco self-funding six-month retail work placements for 1,000 unemployed young people through the Government's Kickstart programme.

In these extraordinarily difficult times, supporting young people's mental health is paramount and as a business, we are committed to helping many more young people in the coming years to build their skills and secure employment.



# BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

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**The Youth Index is a national survey that gauges young people's happiness and confidence across a range of areas, from working life to mental and physical health.**

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## BACKGROUND

**The findings are derived from the results of an online survey in which a sample of 2,180 16 to 25-year-olds participated between 25th November and 8th December 2020.**

The survey was conducted by YouGov on behalf of The Prince's Trust and the figures have been weighted and are representative of 16 to 25-year-olds in the UK. The results of the survey are displayed in a happiness and confidence Index.

## 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 2021 have been mapped against the data from the previous 11 reports to give a high-level view of how the wellbeing and outlooks of young people have changed over time.



**10%**

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



**6%**

**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.**



**18%**

**received free school meals either throughout their time at school or some of the time.**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## **The Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021 reveals the impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on young people's mental health in the UK.**

In an unstable jobs market, this report highlights the undeniable impact of joblessness on young people's mental wellbeing, with those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) significantly more likely to feel anxious, depressed and "unable to cope with life."

However, in a year like no other, the research indicates a motivation among young people to fight for a better future for their generation.

## **LIFE IN A PANDEMIC**

**The pandemic has taken a devastating toll on young people's mental health, with this year's report suggesting more young people are feeling anxious than ever in the 12-year history of the Index. This report indicates the experience of NEETs is more negative than those in work and training<sup>i</sup>.**

- One in four 16 to 25-year olds (26 per cent) admit they feel "unable to cope with life", increasing to 40 per cent among NEETs
- Half (50 per cent) say their mental health has worsened since the start of the pandemic
- More than half of young people (56 per cent) "always" or "often" feel anxious, rising to 64 per cent for NEETs
- A quarter of young people (23 per cent) do not feel confident about their future work
- 65 per cent of NEETs agree that the longer they are jobless, the worse they feel about themselves

## **MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS**

**For many 16 to 25-year-olds, these can be particularly turbulent years as they transition into adulthood. This report finds that living these years in a global crisis is having a detrimental effect on young people's mental health, with many showing symptoms of poor mental wellbeing. Indeed, more young people are feeling down or depressed than at any other time in the history of the Youth Index<sup>ii</sup>.**

Since the pandemic began:

- One in five young people (21 per cent) have experienced suicidal thoughts, rising to 28 per cent of NEETs
- Ten per cent have self-harmed, increasing to 14 per cent of NEETs
- One in five (22 per cent) have experienced panic attacks, compared to 28 per cent of NEETs

## **CHANGE FOR THE FUTURE**

**The research indicates that while the pandemic has taken its toll on young people's mental health and wellbeing, many are also more motivated than ever to make a positive change for their future.**

- Three-quarters of young people (74 per cent) agree that "my generation can change our future for the better"
- Two-thirds (66 per cent) say the political events of the year have made them want to fight for a better future, with more than half (58 per cent) agreeing that they are "more motivated than ever".
- Young people cite Black Lives Matter as the issue they have

been most motivated by in the past year, followed by movements to tackle climate change

- Despite this motivation, some feel that their voices aren't being heard. Over a third of young people (37 per cent) feel powerless to change their own future and nearly one in three (31 per cent) think that their opinions on issues don't matter

## **CAREER DREAMS VS REALITY**

**Young people are among the hardest hit by the economic impact of the pandemic. As competition for training and job opportunities increases, fears for future work are having a significant impact on their wellbeing.**

- A quarter of young people (24 per cent) say the pandemic has destroyed their career hopes
- While 78 per cent are hopeful for a better year ahead, 60 per cent say getting a new job feels impossible now because there is so much competition
- One in five (21 per cent) feel scared that their skills and training are no longer useful

# LUC'S STORY

**Luc's anxiety and depression had left him out of work for over a year, struggling with the lack of jobs available during the pandemic. However, The Prince's Trust helped Luc into work with Tesco and he says he's now "a totally different person."**



**Luc, 19 from Tandragee, was out of work for 13 months after a bad experience on a work placement left him feeling low with anxiety and depression. This, alongside the lack of jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, left Luc feeling worried about his future and how he was going to pay his bills.**

"I was studying a lorry mechanics course at college and got a work placement in a garage. But I faced bullying and things got so bad that I was actually sick with the anxiety and I had to leave.

"It was awful being out of work after that. My mum was so worried about me, she said she had never seen me at such a low point because I was depressed, and my anxiety was so bad I couldn't leave my room.

"It was a horrible time. I had bills to pay for my car but had no money coming in, it just kept getting me more and more down. Then the pandemic began and I didn't see how I was ever going to find work." A friend of Luc's told him about The Prince's Trust Get into Retail with Tesco programme.

"One of my friends did the programme previously. He had anxiety and no confidence at the start but at the end of the programme I was amazed at the change in him, that inspired me to give it a try.

"Part of the programme was online and it made me feel anxious just thinking about taking part, but when I was in the store on placement it gave me a new lease of life. Interacting with the customers has really boosted my confidence at the end of the programme I was delighted to be offered a contract in store. It feels great to be working again."

**“If you look at me two months ago and me now, I’m a totally different person. ”**



# REPORT FINDINGS



# YOUTH INDEX SCORES

The survey, conducted by YouGov, asks young people how happy and confident they feel about a number of aspects of their life, including their employment situation, education, mental wellbeing and physical health.

This year's Index shows that young people are feeling less happy and confident about their emotional health, their work and education and how much money they have than other areas of their lives. The scores for emotional health and work and education have reached their lowest point in Youth Index history.

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence
Work / education	71	71	70	70	68	67	70	70	69	67	70	67	69	68	69	68	67	67	68	68	68	68	67	66
Home / accommodation	76	76	76	75	76	73	78	75	76	73	76	73	75	72	75	71	75	71	76	71	75	70	76	72
Community / local area	69	70	69	69	68	68	69	71	68	69	70	70	69	68	68	68	68	68	68	68	67	66	69	68
Family relationships	79	81	81	82	78	78	80	81	79	79	79	79	79	80	77	78	77	78	77	79	75	76	77	78
Relationships with friends	77	79	78	78	75	75	77	78	74	74	75	75	73	73	73	73	72	72	72	72	72	71	74	73
Money	56	67	56	66	57	65	58	67	58	66	58	65	58	65	58	65	56	64	56	65	58	64	60	65
Qualifications	79	79	77	76	76	75	77	76	76	74	76	74	77	74	76	74	76	73	76	73	76	74	77	74
Physical health	69	74	71	74	68	72	71	74	69	73	69	72	67	70	65	70	63	68	63	68	63	68	65	69
Emotional health	67	73	70	71	67	68	67	70	66	72	67	72	64	70	61	67	57	65	58	64	58	64	56	64
Total Index scores	71	74	72	74	70	71	72	74	70	72	71	72	70	71	69	70	68	69	68	70	68	69	69	70
Overall Index scores	73		73		71		73		71		72		72		70		69		69		68		69	



# WELLBEING ANALYSIS

The findings show a correlation between young people’s personal circumstances and their overall Index score.

The experience of those who are NEET has historically been more negative across all nine areas than those currently in work, education or training. This year’s report is no different.

NEET young people feel significantly less happy and confident in all aspects of their lives, particularly their work and education and their emotional health.

The following table from this year’s Index shows the stark differences between the experiences of young people currently in work, education and training, and those who are not.

	Young people in employment, education or training (EET)		Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)	
	Happiness	Confidence	Happiness	Confidence
Work/Education	70	67	40	53
Home/Accomodation	77	73	68	64
Community/Local area	70	70	60	58
Family relationships	78	79	68	68
Relationships with friends	75	74	67	67
Money	62	66	46	55
Qualifications	78	75	68	63
Physical health	66	70	56	63
Emotional health	58	65	44	55
Total Index scores	70	71	57	60
Overall Index scores	70		59	

# YOUTH INDEX COMPARISONS

This study focuses particularly on the relationship between a young person's employment status and their wellbeing. In addition to this, the table below looks at the relationship between young people's Index scores and educational attainment.

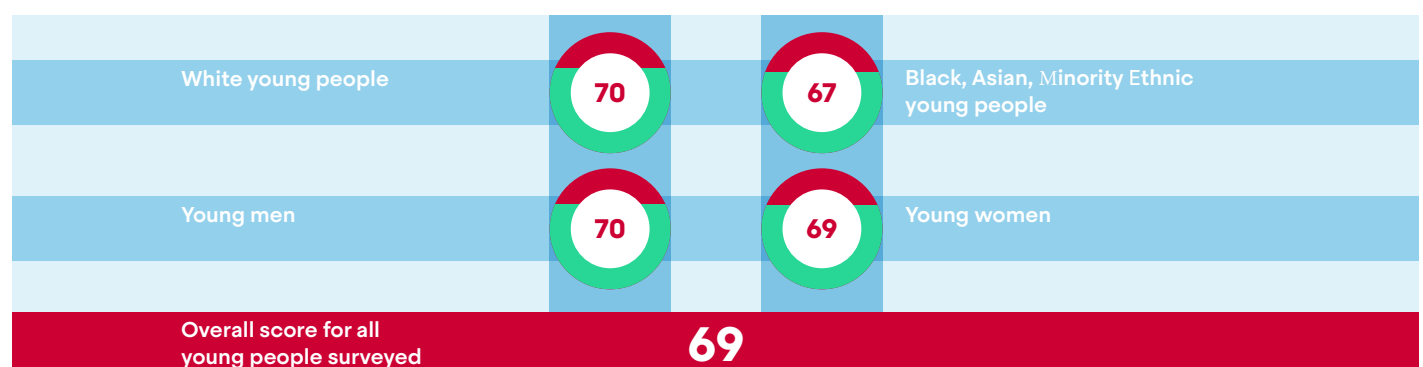
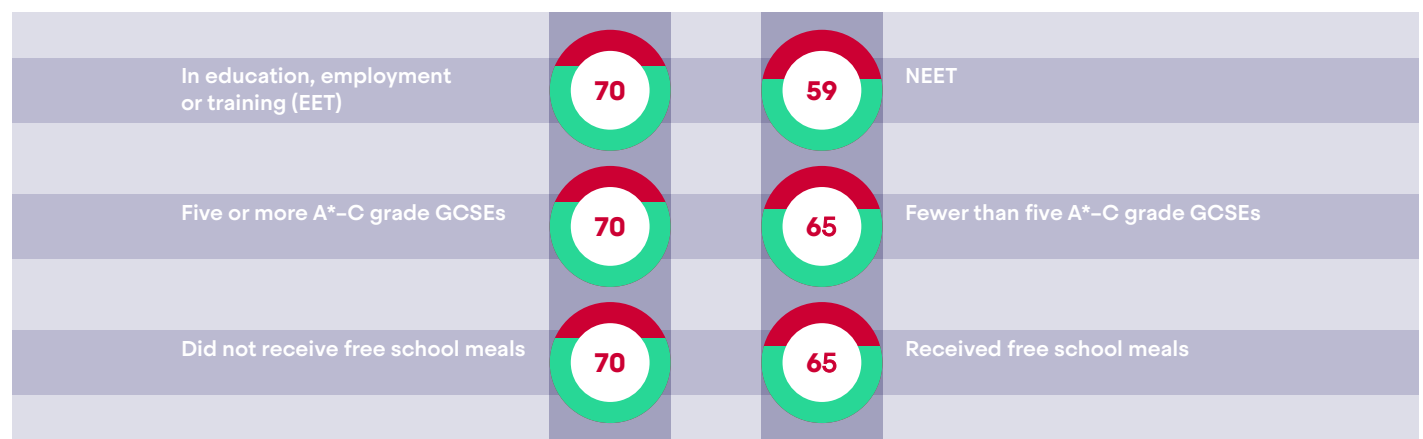
**Those young people with fewer than five A\*-C grade GCSEs have a lower score than those with more GCSEs.**

The data also suggests that young people from poorer backgrounds (i.e. received free school meals) have a significantly lower overall score than their peers<sup>iii</sup>.

This report also shows an Index score for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people.

While more detailed data is needed for a fuller analysis, including a breakdown of young people according to their specific ethnicity, the data available from this study suggests a lower Index score for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people compared with White young people.

The report also looks at the Index scores by gender and finds that the scores for young women and young men are similar, with a slightly lower Index score for women.



# CHARLOTTE'S STORY

**After the pandemic hit in March 2020, Charlotte was very anxious, and without a job she felt like things would not get better. After taking part in a course with The Prince's Trust, she was able to regain her confidence again and secure a job in retail.**



**Charlotte, 19, from Newcastle, was enjoying her Equine Management hit in March. With just three months left, her practical course was suddenly moved online to be completed at home.**

"It was strange not being able to do the practical things I excel at. I couldn't see a future at this point. I passed my course, but I was very down and I didn't think things would get better.

"During and after the first lockdown my anxiety was the worst. I didn't want to go outside by myself, because I was very anxious about people and the virus.

After Charlotte finished college she applied for Universal Credit. She was recommended a programme with The Prince's Trust, Get into Retail with Gap, which she took part in in October.

"I personally enjoyed the course being online because I was too anxious to get a bus, so being able to turn my camera and microphone on at my own pace was comforting. "We learnt about how to interview well and went over video interview basics. I gained some friends from the course and improved my public speaking skills."

Charlotte was interviewed for a retail job at the end of the course. "It the first interview I've ever done, and it was more relaxed than I was expecting. I was ecstatic to get the job and really proud of myself.

"It felt good to be working, like I was finally an adult with responsibility. I've still got quite a bit of anxiety, but that's levelling out through work because, although I have to get public transport, when I enjoy something and want to do it, I'll do anything to get there."

**“If you're being offered help, take it, whether that's mental health help, for a job or for your skills. And if you keep being turned down for jobs, know that this isn't forever.”**





# LIFE IN A PANDEMIC

The **COVID-19** pandemic has taken a devastating toll on young people's mental health, with data suggesting more young people are feeling anxious than ever in the 12-year history of the Youth Index<sup>i</sup>. Half of 16 to 25-year-olds (50 per cent) say their mental health has worsened since the start of the pandemic.

Young people in the UK are facing a disrupted education, a shrinking jobs market and isolation from their friends and loved ones. NEET young people are even more likely to feel anxious and "unable to cope with life" since the pandemic, according to the research. Sadly, NEETs are also more likely to feel anxious and less likely to feel happy, secure and loved.

It is clear that future employment prospects also continue to play on young people's minds. Almost a quarter of young people (23 per cent) say that they do not feel confident about their future work, rising to 40 per cent of NEETs.

More than half (54 per cent) of all young people say it is harder to ask for employment help as "everyone needs it at the moment."

For NEET young people, almost half (48 per cent) say they "can't see an end" to their unemployment and, worryingly, 65 per cent agree that the longer they are jobless, the worse they feel about themselves.



# MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

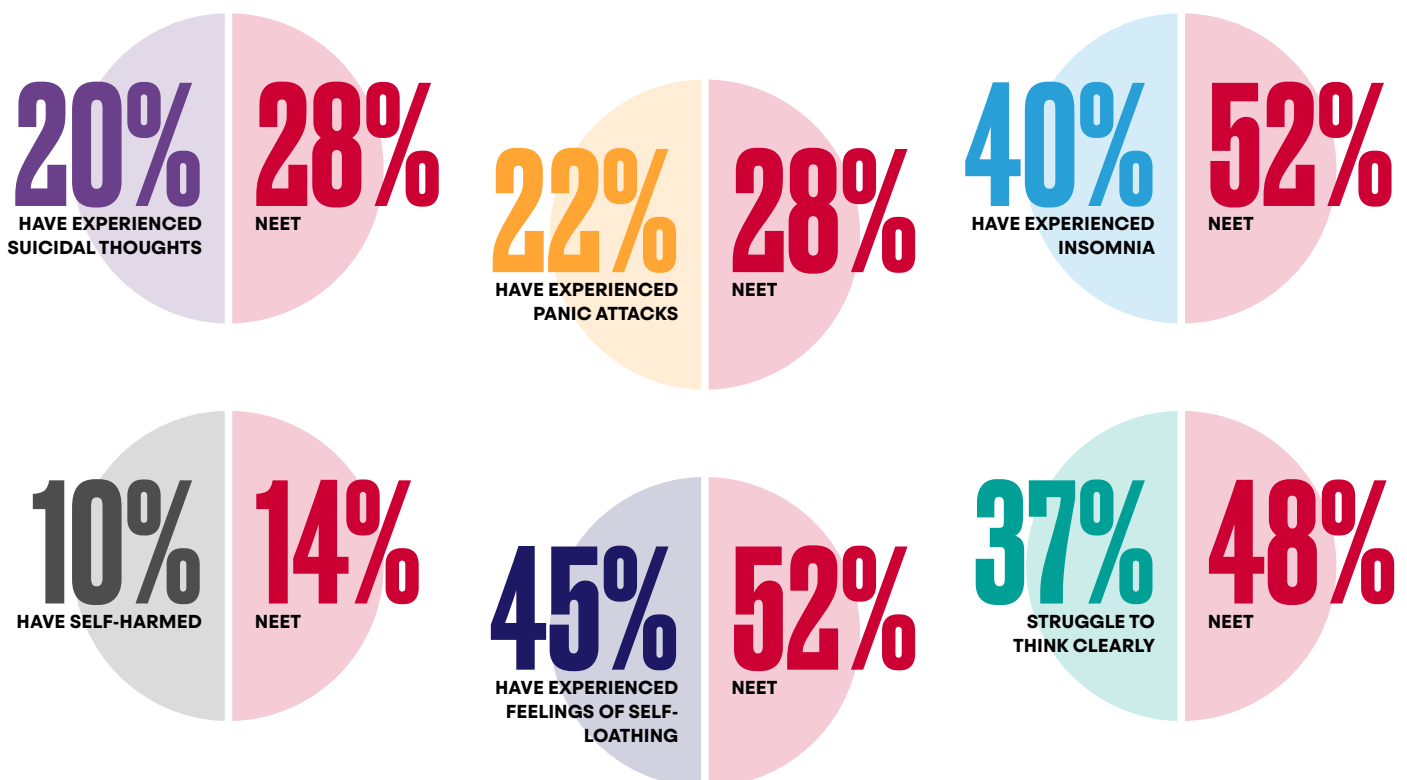
For many 16 to 25-year-olds, these can be particularly turbulent years as they transition into adulthood. It is clear that living these years in a global crisis is having a detrimental effect on young people's mental health, and the data suggests that more young people are feeling down or depressed than at any other time in the 12-year history of the Youth Index<sup>ii</sup>.

Over half (55 per cent) say that the political and economic events of 2020 made their mental health worse, with 58 per cent saying the constant news about the pandemic makes them feel anxious.

As the Index scores show, NEET young people are suffering more with their emotional health. The research also shows that 41 per cent of young people say they "always" or "often" feel down or depressed, rising to 59 per cent of NEETs.

More than one in three young people (39 per cent) need more support with their mental health since the pandemic, yet a similar proportion (34 per cent) do not where to turn if they need help. The research suggests that NEETs are even less likely to know where to get support with their mental health.

Which, if any, of the following have you personally experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic began:





# CHANGE FOR THE FUTURE

**While the pandemic has taken its toll on young people's mental health and wellbeing, the research shows that young people are feeling more motivated than ever to make a positive change for their future.**

**Three-quarters of young people (74 per cent) agree that "my generation can change our future for the better."**

Over half of young people (59 per cent) say that they pay attention to the news more than they did a year ago, with two-thirds (66 per cent) saying the political events of this year have made them want to fight for a better future.

Young people cite Black Lives Matter as the issue they have been most motivated by over the past year (25 per cent), followed by movements to tackle climate change (22 per cent).

More than half (58 per cent) say they are "more motivated than ever" to work for a positive future.

However, despite this motivation, many feel their voices are still not being heard. Over a third of young people (37 per cent) feel powerless to change their own future, while 31 per cent think that their opinions on issues don't matter.

**88%**

**I WANT A BETTER  
FUTURE FOR MY  
GENERATION**

**74%**

**I BELIEVE MY  
GENERATION CAN  
CHANGE OUR  
FUTURE FOR THE  
BETTER**

**58%**

**I AM MORE  
MOTIVATED THAN  
EVER TO WORK FOR  
A POSITIVE FUTURE**

**78%**

**I AM HOPEFUL  
FOR A BETTER  
YEAR AHEAD**



**“I believe that young people have the power to change our future for the better. More than ever, I want to encourage other young people like myself to make a positive change in the world.”**

**– Aisa Xena**







# CAREER DREAMS VS REALITY

**This year's Index shows that young people's confidence in their future work and education is the lowest it has ever been in Youth Index history.**

Young people are currently almost four times more likely to be out of work than the rest of the working age population<sup>(iv)</sup>. With an unstable jobs market and falling numbers of young people in employment, the research finds that **a quarter of young people (24 per cent) feel that the pandemic has destroyed their career hopes.**

While 78 per cent of those surveyed say that they are hopeful for a better year ahead, **60 per cent believe that getting a new job feels impossible now because there is so much competition.**

One in five (21 per cent) feel scared that their skills and training are no longer useful.

More than one in three young people (38 per cent) say that the pandemic has made them rethink their career goals, while one in 10 (11 per cent) believe that retraining for a new job is their only option right now.

Nearly a quarter (23 per cent) say that retraining is pointless because "there are no jobs anyway."

**24%**

**FEEL THAT THE  
PANDEMIC HAS  
DESTROYED THEIR  
CAREER HOPES**

**60%**

**BELIEVE THAT  
GETTING A NEW  
JOB FEELS  
IMPOSSIBLE**





# HALIMA'S STORY

**After suffering several setbacks due to health concerns, Halima struggled to see a positive way forward. However, following her participation in a Prince's Trust's course, she has rediscovered her sense of self-belief and looks to the future with optimism.**



**Halima, 19, from Scotland, struggled with her mental and physical health whilst at college, forcing her to withdraw from her course. As a student at Edinburgh College, studying HNC Childhood Practice, Halima noticed a decline in her mental and physical health.**

These concerns, coupled with the pressure of academic success, made the situation untenable for Halima and she was forced to leave her studies behind.

Feeling directionless, Halima scoured the internet for opportunities but had little success in finding something that she felt confident enough to take part in. She came across a Facebook post about Girls Week – a week-long course run by The Prince's Trust aimed at promoting self-care, body positivity and mental wellbeing

for young women – and was immediately interested enough to apply.

The course allowed her to make friends, learn about mindfulness and gain confidence. She felt that the support and encouragement of The Prince's Trust enabled her to overcome any anxiety she had about participating in the course or engaging in the new activities she was exposed to.

It helped to restore Halima's positive mindset and she felt more assured and comfortable with herself. She was optimistic about her future again and then lockdown was announced.

Halima said: "Coping with being on lockdown has not been easy, there have been days where I am positive and days where I have been

negative. However, I always try my best to keep myself occupied and keep calm, for example: I go outside every day for my daily walks which makes me feel better because I am able to get fresh air and have a more positive attitude!"

**“Despite the last few months, I still feel optimistic about the future. I feel ready to re-enter education and hope to continue to study childcare and secure a part-time position in a primary school as a pupil support assistant. ”**

# ABOUT THE PRINCE'S TRUST

**The Prince's Trust helps young people all over the UK to build their confidence and skills and supports them into jobs, education and training. Founded by The Prince of Wales in 1976, the charity supports 11 to 30 year-olds who are unemployed, struggling at school and at risk of exclusion.**

**Many of the young people helped by The Trust's youth support workers and mentors are in or leaving care, facing issues such as homelessness, mental health problems, or have been in trouble with the law.**

The courses offered by The Trust give young people the practical and financial support needed to stabilise their lives, helping develop self-esteem and skills for work. Three in four young people supported by The Prince's Trust move into work, education or training.

## 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 Tesco for supporting this research and YouGov for conducting the Youth Index.



The Trust has helped over 1,000,000 young people to date.

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

# REFERENCES

<sup>i</sup>In the 2021 Youth Index, 56 per cent of those surveyed report “always” or “often” feeling anxious on a four-point scale: Always/ often/ sometimes/ never. In 2016, the question was not asked. In 2011 and 2010, the question was asked on a 5-point scale: All of the time/ most of the time/ sometimes/ rarely/ never. All waves of the Youth Index were conducted online. Data was weighted and is representative of 16 to 25 year olds.

<sup>ii</sup>In the 2021 Youth Index, 41 per cent of those surveyed report feeling “always” or “often” feeling down or depressed on a four-point scale: Always/ often/ sometimes/ never. In 2016, the question was not asked. In 2011 and 2010, the question was asked on a five-point scale: All of the time/ most of the time/ sometimes/ rarely/ never. All waves of the Youth Index were conducted online. Data was weighted and is representative of 16 to 25 year olds.

Youth Index year	Sample details	Proportion feeling anxious
2021	2,180 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 25th November to 8th December 2020	56% always/often
2020	2,103 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 19th December 2019 to 7th January 2020	54% always/often
2019	1,162 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 13th November to 2nd December 2018	55% always/often
2018	2,194 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 9th to 26th November 2017	53% always/often
2017	2,115 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 3rd to 28th November 2016	49% always/often
2016	n/a	n/a
2015	2,265 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 26th November to 16th December 2014	43% always/often
2014	2,161 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 20th October to 18th November 2013	40% always/often
2013	2,136 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 29th October to 13th November 2012	41% always/often
2012	2,136 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 19th to 31st October 2011	41% always/often
2011	2,170 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 26th to 29th November 2010	21% all/ most of the time
2010	2,088 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 8th to 16th December 2009	19% all/ most of the time
2009	2,004 GB 16 to 25 year olds, 16th to 31st October 2008	37% always/often

Youth Index year	Sample details	Proportion feeling down/ depressed
2021	2,180 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 25th November to 8th December 2020	41% always/often
2020	2,103 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 19th December 2019 to 7th January 2020	39% always/often
2019	1,162 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 13th November to 2nd December 2018	38% always/often
2018	2,194 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 9th to 26th November 2017	38% always/often
2017	2,115 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 3rd to 28th November 2016	34% always/often
2016	n/a	n/a
2015	2,265 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 26th November to 16th December 2014	32% always/often
2014	2,161 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 20th October to 18th November 2013	32% always/often
2013	2,136 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 29th October to 13th November 2012	31% always/often
2012	2,136 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 19th to 31st October 2011	31% always/often
2011	2,170 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 26th to 29th November 2010	19% all/ most of the time
2010	2,088 UK 16 to 25 year olds, 8th to 16th December 2009	15% all/ most of the time
2009	2,004 GB 16 to 25 year olds, 16th to 31st October 2008	26% always/often

<sup>iii</sup>For the purposes of this report, YouGov used free school meals as a measure of those with poorer backgrounds. The number of young people in receipt of free school meals either throughout their time at school or some of the time with free school meals was 434.

<sup>(iv)</sup>Office of National Statistics, Labour market overview, UK : December 2020