

THE PRINCE'S TRUST EBAY

YOUTH INDEX 2019



Prince's Trust

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INTRODUCTION

This year marks the tenth edition of The Prince's Trust Youth Index – which measures the overall happiness and confidence of young people throughout the UK.

This latest research reveals that 16 to 25 year-olds are feeling overwhelmed by pressure, not helped by the presence of social media distorting the perception of their own success.

While social media can often be used as a positive tool, this report shows that nearly half of young people feel “inadequate” and more anxious about their future when comparing their lives to their friends on social media.

It may seem easy to point out that a photo or experience shared on social media is seldom a reflection of someone's day-to-day. However, these results point to a clear detriment to young people's emotional health as they compare their lives to those they see their peers enjoying on social media.

This year's findings also reveal that young people's overall wellbeing has flat-lined at the lowest level since the report began a decade ago. In these uncertain times, we must harness the unique potential and contribution of all young people as they move into work, education or training.

The 2019 report also marks the developing collaboration between The Trust and eBay, as we look to grow a partnership with the interests of young people at its core.

The Prince's Trust and eBay believe that, equipped with the necessary skills, resilience and self-belief, every young person can succeed. It is more important than ever that we rally together with employers, educators and government to help them.

That is why The Trust has recently launched the UK2030 taskforce, a collaborative initiative to support young people regardless of their background. The taskforce will visit communities across the UK to listen to people on the ground to understand how we should be investing in the next generation. We believe that when young people succeed our country succeeds and it is therefore a moral and economic imperative to put the needs of young people centre stage.



Nick

Nick Stace
UK Chief Executive
The Prince's Trust



Rob Hattrell

Rob Hattrell
Vice President
eBay UK

“Given the significant levels of uncertainty faced by young people today, for instance about the value of qualifications, and their future job and housing prospects, it’s no wonder that their wellbeing is taking a hit.

“Alongside this we know that social media offers many benefits but there are downsides too.

“The experiences of young people featured in this publication reflect this as they report encountering troubling online content, and often compare themselves unfavourably with what they see about the lives of others.

“Society needs to support young people so they are empowered to safely navigate life off and online – accentuating the positives and minimising potential pitfalls.”

Professor Yvonne Kelly
Institute of Epidemiology & Health, UCL



BACKGROUND

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.

It measures how young people are feeling about their lives today as well their aspirations and fears for the future.

The findings are derived from the results of an online survey in which a sample of 2,162 16 to 25 year-olds participated between 13th November and 2nd December 2018. 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.

- Nine per cent of respondents are not currently in education, employment or training (NEET). Sixty per cent of these have been unemployed for more than six months
- Seven per cent 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
- Twenty-two per cent received free school meals either throughout their time at school or some of the time

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 0 and 100, where 100 denotes participants being entirely happy or confident and zero being not at all happy or confident.

The results for 2019 have been mapped against the data from the previous nine reports to give a high-level view of how the wellbeing and outlooks of young people have changed over time.

This year’s study also takes a closer look at how life online affects young people’s wellbeing, the pressures young people feel to succeed and the impact of living in uniquely uncertain times.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Prince's Trust eBay Youth Index shows that young people's overall wellbeing has flat-lined at its lowest level since the research was first launched a decade ago.



The Index, which measures young people's happiness and confidence across various aspects of their lives, has stayed at a score of 69. Young people's confidence in their emotional health has dropped to its lowest ever level in Youth Index history; a score of 64.

In conjunction with the decline in young people's confidence in their emotional health, this year's report looks at how comparison to their peers on social media is having a negative effect on confidence and self-esteem.

Life online: compare and despair
The ease by which young people can compare themselves to their peers on social media cannot be overlooked. This year's report shows that comparison online can intensify the existing insecurities and instabilities that young people face.

- Over half (57 per cent) of 16 to 25 year-olds say that social media creates an overwhelming pressure to succeed
- Nearly half (46 per cent) think that comparing their lives to others on social media makes them feel "inadequate"
- Two in five (41 per cent) young people feel more confident online than they do in person

- A third (32 per cent) think that social media makes them feel like they can have a voice for their generation to influence positive change
- Sixty per cent of young people find it difficult not to compare their lives to others online
- Nearly half (48 per cent) say they feel more anxious about their future when seeing the lives of their friends online

Under pressure, over-stressed
Young people have great ambitions and plans for their life, but the considerable pressure they put on themselves can take its toll. This report shows a significant increase in stress and anxiety levels among young people.

- Over half (52 per cent) think they put too much pressure on themselves to succeed
- More than a quarter (28 per cent) feel like they are going to fail in life
- Nearly two thirds (65 per cent) of young people "always" or "often" feel stressed, the highest number in the history of the Youth Index. This is an increase from 47 per cent when the report first launched in 2009 and from 28 per cent in 2010, when young people said they feel stressed "all" or "most of the time"

- Over half (55 per cent) of young people say they "always" or "often" feel anxious
- When the Youth Index launched a decade ago, nearly one in ten (9 per cent) disagreed with the statement, they find life "really worth living." Ten years later in 2019, this figure has doubled with 18 per cent disagreeing

Instability in uncertain times
There is evidence to argue we are living in some of the most uncertain times for young people. An unstable political and economic landscape, financial worries and the ever-increasing presence of social media, makes a complicated backdrop for this generation.

- This year's Index shows money is the category in which young people feel the least happy and confident, an overall score of 60
- Over half (53 per cent) worry they will never be financially stable or be able to plan ahead financially
- Nearly three in four young people (73 per cent) said their generation is less certain about future employment than their parents
- Sixty-one per cent say the current and upcoming political events have made them feel anxious about their future

- Half of young people report being more anxious than they were a year ago

Gender divide
Young women's responses suggest they are more likely than young men to put too much pressure on themselves, and to be more negatively affected by life online. However their differing experiences means the reality is more complex.

- The overall happiness and confidence scores are higher in men than in women, in both cases men scoring two points higher
- Young women are more likely to "always" or "often" feel stressed (75 per cent, compared to 53 per cent of young men)
- More young women feel that social media creates "overwhelming pressure" (67 per cent, compared to 46 per cent of young men)
- More young men, however, say that no one has ever spoken to them about their mental wellbeing (36 per cent, compared to 32 per cent in women)

YOUTH INDEX SCORES

The survey conducted by YouGov asked young people how happy or unhappy they felt about a number of aspects of their life, including their employment situation, education, social standing, relationships and family life, mental wellbeing and physical health.

In addition to how happy young people felt, they were asked to consider how confident they felt about their current circumstances and how confident they felt about their future. The overall Index score has remained at its lowest level since the study was commissioned a decade ago.

Overall Youth Index scores for 2019 and previous years (both happiness and confidence Indexes combined)

2019	69
2018	69
2017	70
2015	71
2014	72
2013	71
2012	73
2011	71
2010	73
2009	73

Year-on-year breakdown of Youth Index score

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

WELLBEING ANALYSIS

Happiness

The overall level of happiness young people feel in their lives is unchanged this year from the previous, staying at a score of 68. This remains the lowest score since the Youth Index began in 2009.

Between 2017 and 2018, the Index saw a number of decreases in the happiness young people felt towards their work, money and most notably, their emotional health. The picture for 2019 remains very similar although there has been an increase from 57 to 58 in happiness in young people's emotional health.

The happiness young people feel with money, stays the lowest score across the nine themes at 56. This is the same score as when the Index began in 2009, and although it rose to its highest point of 58 between 2012 and 2017, it dropped back down in 2018 and has stayed at this level.

Confidence

Across the nine themes studied, confidence is higher than or level with happiness in all but two areas; home/accommodation and qualifications. In particular, confidence in home/accommodation is six points lower than its equivalent happiness score, this is the biggest differential between the two since 2009.

This latest report sees the confidence young people feel in their emotional health fall to its lowest in Youth Index history. This means for the first time emotional health has fallen below money as the area of least confidence.



PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCE COMPARISONS

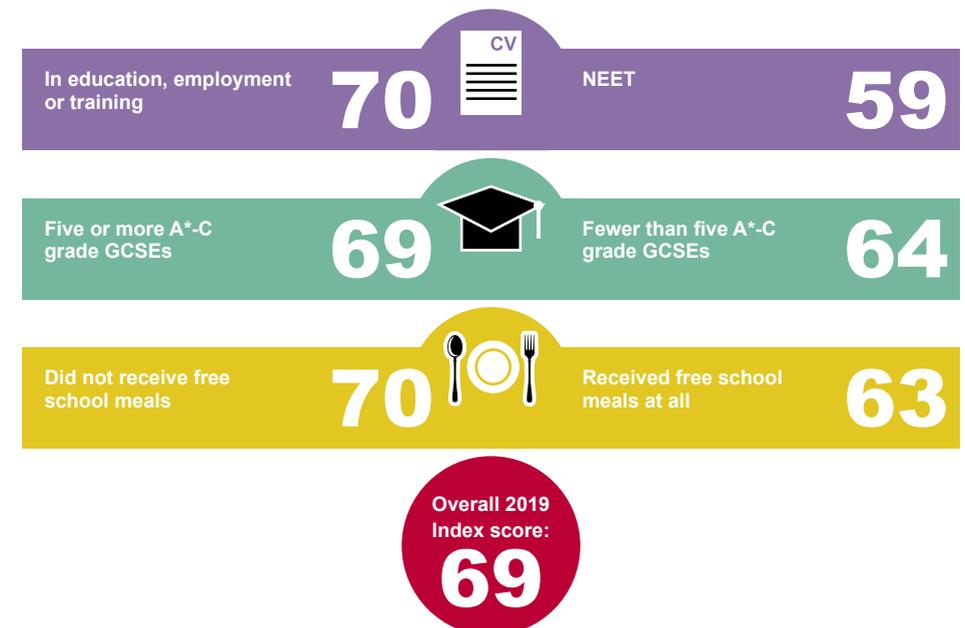
There is a correlation between young people's personal circumstances and their overall Index score.

Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) express the lowest overall score.

There is also a relationship between young people's academic attainment and their Index score, as those with fewer than five A*-C grade GCSEs have a score of 64, which is five points lower than the score for young people who have five or more A*-C grade GCSEs.

The graphic below demonstrates the difference in Index scores according to whether or not young people are in education, employment or training, their GCSE results, and whether or not they received free school meals (which is used as an indicator of low income background).

2019 Youth Index scores split by specific demographic factors





REECE HAYES



I WAS A CARER FOR MY MUM SINCE I WAS 11. IT COULD BE VERY MANIC AND DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH BECAUSE OF THE CHALLENGES AROUND POOR MENTAL HEALTH. EVENTUALLY THE CRACKS STARTED TO SHOW; I GOT INTO FIGHTS AT SCHOOL, I WAS DEPRESSED AND FILLED WITH PURE HATRED.

“When I moved out, I spent five months in a homeless unit before finding my own place, but still found it difficult to cope.

“I went clubbing all the time, I drank, got into fights and got arrested. I was suicidal and didn’t care what happened to me. Then one day, I’d had enough. I got a mental health assessment, was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, given medication and support from a counsellor, and referred to The Prince’s Trust.

“I got an interview for Get into Retail but my head was all over the place the day of my interview. What would they think when they heard about my past, my convictions, my mental health? I thought I’d be judged, but I was accepted and told it wasn’t about my past, it was about doing something to change my future.

“I was then invited to be a Prince’s Trust Young Ambassador. Talking at events about my life and about The Trust and the issues facing young people felt good. I even did a TEDx Talk to an audience of 2,000 people. It made me feel proud of how far I’ve come.

“I now see my career in mental health. I want to draw on my experiences to help others, and I’m currently studying Social Services at college to help me on my way.”

LIFE ONLINE: COMPARE AND DESPAIR

For better or for worse, since the Youth Index started to monitor the wellbeing of UK young people, social media has become omnipresent in their lives.

This research suggests that it is exacerbating what is already an uncertain and emotionally turbulent time in their lives.

Over half of young people (57 per cent) say that social media creates an overwhelming pressure to succeed, while 46 per cent think that comparing their lives to others on social media makes them feel “inadequate”.

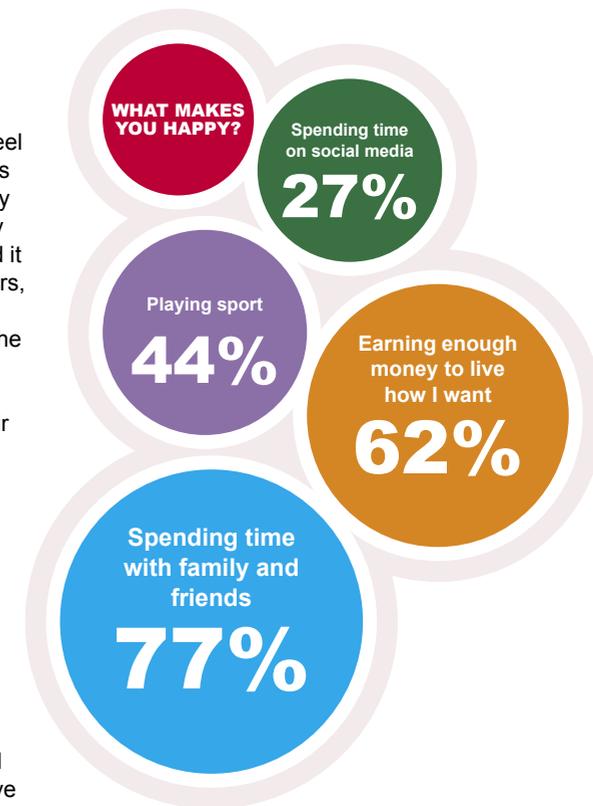
Responses suggest that young people feel increased levels of pressure on their lives in the wake of unprecedented opportunity for peer-to-peer comparison online. Sixty per cent of young people said they found it difficult not to compare their lives to others, with 48 per cent saying they felt more anxious about their future when seeing the lives of their friends online.

The confidence young people feel in their emotional health has fallen to its lowest level this year, and new data finds that 41 per cent of young people feel more confident online than they do in person. This sentiment is highest among 16-18 year olds where the figure is nearly half (47 per cent), significantly more than the 19-25 year olds.

The effects of social media on young people are still unclear, and a third (32 per cent) of respondents think that social media makes them feel like they can have a voice for their generation to influence positive change.

More than a quarter (27 per cent) of respondents believe spending time on social media makes them happy.

However, more popular responses included sport (44 per cent), earning enough money to live as they want (62 per cent) and spending time with family and friends (77 per cent).



TSKENYA FRAZER



I GOT INTO UNIVERSITY BUT MY MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES PERSISTED AS I HAD TO JUGGLE UNIVERSITY, CARING FOR MY MUM AND WORKING IN RETAIL.

“Growing up in a working class, single parent family, I was outwardly confident but it was a facade I’d built up through years putting on a brave face. I had kidney problems as a child and was bullied because of it for many years. My mother found it difficult to make ends meet. She became ill and I was her sole carer. The pressure to care for my mother and my own physical health, whilst battling to do well in school, developed into anxiety and depression.

“After graduating I was at my lowest. I would not leave the house, I felt hopeless and like I had nothing to live for. After getting another rejection email for a job, I broke down in tears on a bus and a stranger told me about The Prince’s Trust. This saved my life as I’d never really had anyone to turn to, but The Prince’s Trust Enterprise programme gave me the confidence I needed.

“My shoe business, TSKENYA, is flourishing and I am currently off mental health medication. I also work as a part-time Learning Mentor in a pupil referral unit, as I know what it feels like to be a troubled young person in need of support.

“In today’s world, where social media constantly shows you snippets of people living what they want you to believe is their ‘best life,’ you have to make a conscious effort to tell yourself you are good enough. With the help of The Prince’s Trust I was able to gain the confidence to move forward.”



UNDER PRESSURE, OVER-STRESSED

The life of a young person is undoubtedly complex, trying to carve out their place in the world, while juggling their work, health and home life.

This year’s research finds that the highest number of young people since the Youth Index was commissioned report regularly feeling stressed and anxious.

Nearly two thirds (65 per cent) of young people report that they “always” or “often” feel stressed. This is an increase from 47 per cent when the report began in 2009, and a rise from 28 per cent in 2010, when young people said they feel stressed “all” or “most of the time”. More concerning is that the report finds the youngest age group, 16 to 18 year-olds, are significantly

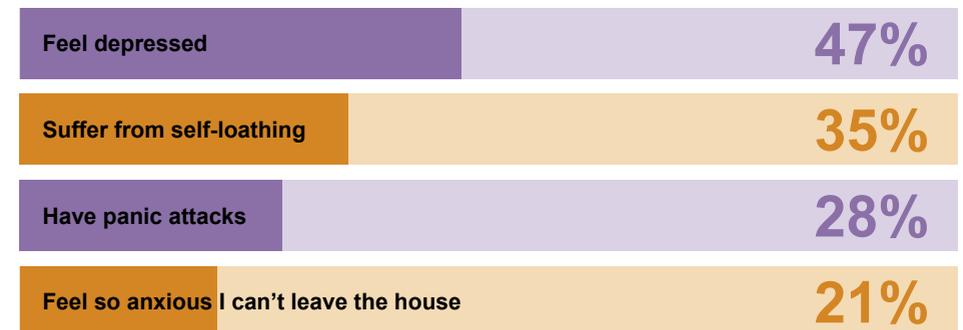
more stressed than the 19 to 25 year-olds, with 70 per cent saying they “always” or “often” feel stressed.

General levels of anxiety are also at an all-time high, with 55 per cent of young people saying they “always” or “often” feel anxious. This is an increase of 18 percentage points since this was first asked in 2009. For NEET young people, the figure is higher still with 62 per cent saying they “always” or “often” feel anxious.

High levels of stress and anxiety are reported in parallel with a considerable amount of pressure young people are putting on themselves. 52 per cent think they put too much pressure on themselves to succeed and more than a quarter (28 per cent) feel like they are going to fail in life.

Most worryingly, when the Youth Index first launched a decade ago, nearly one in ten disagreed with the statement that they find life “really worth living.” Ten years later in this year’s research, this figure has doubled with 18 per cent disagreeing with the statement, with the figure at nearly a third (30 per cent) for NEET young people.

Which of the following have you experienced as a result of feeling under pressure?



INSTABILITY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

There is evidence to argue that these are some of the most uncertain times for young people to grow up in.

An unstable political and economic landscape, financial worries and the ever-increasing presence of social media makes a complicated backdrop to this generation's life.

This year's Index shows money to once again be the area young people feel the least happy. Further data found that 53 per cent worry that they will never be financially stable or be able to plan ahead financially.

This too supports the feelings of the 63 per cent who worry that they won't be able to afford to buy their own home.

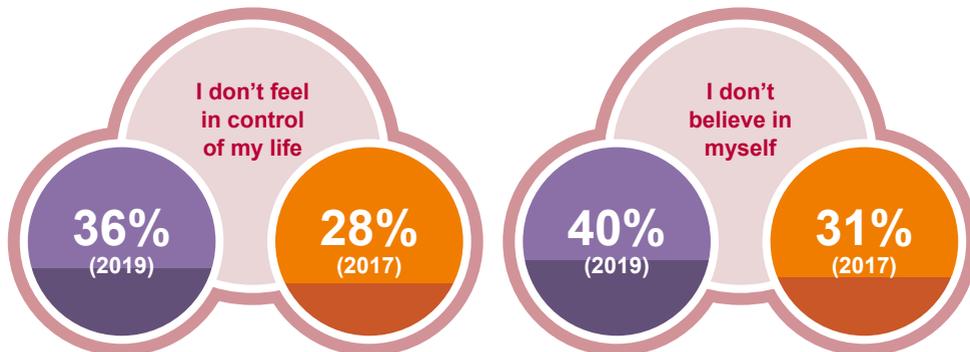


When asking the respondents to consider themselves alongside the previous generation, 73 per cent said their generation is less certain about future employment than their parents.

There is no doubt that these are volatile times politically and economically for the UK, and it seems this has taken its toll on the wellbeing of its young people.

Sixty-one per cent say the current and upcoming political events have made them feel anxious about their future and 63 per cent say the same about the economic climate. Overall, half of young people report being more anxious than they were a year ago.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



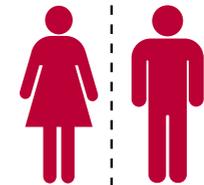
GENDER DIVIDE

Although young women's responses suggest they are more likely than young men to put too much pressure on themselves, their differing experiences means the reality is more complex.

This year's Youth Index paints a picture that pressures to succeed and the impact of life online are having a greater and more negative impact on the mental wellbeing of young women. When comparing themselves to others online, the report suggests women are more negatively affected than men.

More young women also admit high levels of stress and anxiety, as well as worries about their future finances and economic stability. The overall happiness and confidence scores are higher in men than in women, in both cases men scoring two points higher.

However this is certainly a nuanced issue, with more young men reporting that no one has ever spoken to them about their mental wellbeing. With overall emotional health staying at such a low score this year, it's clear that for all young people there is more to be done to improve how they feel about their futures.



Sentiments expressed by young women, compared to young men

Social media creates an overwhelming pressure to succeed	67%	46%
I always or often feel stressed	75%	53%
I put too much pressure on myself to achieve success	62%	40%
I worry I will never be financially stable	61%	43%
Current and upcoming political events have made me feel anxious about the future	66%	55%
No one has talked to me about my mental wellbeing	32%	36%

ABOUT THE PRINCE'S TRUST

Youth charity
The Prince's Trust helps young people to develop the confidence and skills they need to realise their ambitions, so that they can live, learn and earn.

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 are in or leaving care, facing issues such as homelessness, mental health problems, or have been in trouble with the law.

The programmes offered by the charity give vulnerable 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.

The Trust has helped over 950,000 young people to date and supports over 100 more each day.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PRINCE'S TRUST



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