

Mainstreet Insights

The Australian screen age

Exploring the relationship between Australians and
screen time

mainstreet

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About Mainstreet Insights

Mainstreet Insights, initiative of Reventure and McCrindle, exists to provide insights to build flourishing communities. It seeks to understand Australians as people not just consumers or employees. It explores the big issues of life that are impacting main street

Australia. From family and relationships to education, faith, wellbeing and work, it is a collection of timely insights that speaks into important community conversations to enable leaders to make informed decisions.

Research objectives

This research conducted for Mainstreet Insights endeavours to provide insights into the concerns, behaviours, beliefs and habits of Australians concerning their use of screens.

The key objectives of this research are to:

- Explore where Australians spend their time online
- Understand Australians' motivations for using online platforms
- Explore Australians' attitudes and beliefs about social media

Research methodology

The Australian screen age: exploring the relationship between Australians and screen time report is the collation of quantitative and qualitative data collected via an online panel. The nationally representative survey of Australians aged 18+ was in field from the 28th of August to the 1st of September 2020 and yielded 1,001 responses.

Graphs and rounding

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

Australians and online platforms

Australians show favouritism.

Google, Facebook and Instagram are Australians' favourite online platforms. Not only are Australians most likely to connect with friends on Facebook (42%), but Australians spend the most time on Google (24%), Facebook (22%) and YouTube (19%).

Another favourite online media platform is Instagram. One in ten Australians (10%) use Instagram to connect with friends, while 8% of Australians spend most of their time on Instagram.

Younger generations are more likely than their older counterparts to use Instagram (24% Gen Z, 15% Gen Y cf. 7% Gen X, 3% Baby Boomers, 0% Builders).

Older Australians, however, are more likely to use Facebook to connect with friends (45% Builders, 50% Baby Boomers, 51% Gen X cf. 35% Gen Y, 23% Gen Z).

Australians are loyal to their favourite platforms

The platforms Australians use to stay connected with friends are the same they use

to stay informed. Three in ten Australians (31%) access Google for news and current events, while one in four (19%) use news.com.au and 13% use abc.net.au.

Australians are choosing to keep up to date with news and current events from platforms they trust. Australians are most likely to trust information from abc.net.au (12%) followed by YouTube (7%) and Facebook (6%).

Google, a popular platform

Google is the search engine of choice for Australians, with more than four in five (85%) most likely to use Google in comparison to other search engines, including YouTube (3%) and Instagram (1%).

Younger generations are more likely than their older counterparts to trust information from YouTube (13% Gen Z, 10% Gen Y cf. 6% Gen X, 2% Baby Boomers, 6 % Builders).

Most used online platforms by proportion

	Online platform	% of respondents
Connect with friends	Facebook	45%
Trust for information	Abc.net.au	12%
Access for news and current events	Google	31%
Use as a search engine	Google	85%
Spend most time on	Google	24%

Top online platforms by proportion according to generation

	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
Connect with friends	Instagram (24%)	Facebook (35%)	Facebook (51%)	Facebook (50%)	Facebook (45%)
Trust for information	YouTube (13%)	YouTube (10%)	Abc.net.au (13%)	Abc.net.au (18%)	Abc.net.au (17%)
Access for news and current events	Google (37%)	Google (36%)	Google (31%)	Google (24%)	Google (26%)
Use as a search engine	Google (83%)	Google (83%)	Google (89%)	Google (87%)	Google (85%)
Spend most time on	YouTube (37%)	YouTube (26%)	Facebook (26%)	Google (35%)	Google (33%)

Screen usage and implications

Screens are incorporated in the every-day lives of Australians.

Phones are an integral part of Australians' daily routines. More than half (54%) of Australians access their phones during the last three minutes before they go to bed at night.

The same proportion begin their day with their phone, with 53% of Australians accessing their phones within the first three minutes of waking up in the morning.

“This data showing that most Australians connect with their screens within the last three minutes before going to bed and the first three minutes of waking up shows just how screen saturated Australians are. Despite the awareness of the negative impacts of screens in our lives, the dependency on them, indeed addiction to them for many is extreme” said Mainstreet partner Dr Lindsay McMillan.

Younger generations are more likely than older generations to access their phones during the first three minutes after waking up (75% Gen Z, 81% Gen Y cf. 54% Gen X, 22% Baby Boomers, 9% Builders) and the last three minutes before going to bed at night (82% Gen Z, 82% Gen Y cf. 55% Gen X, 21% Baby Boomers, 15% Builders).

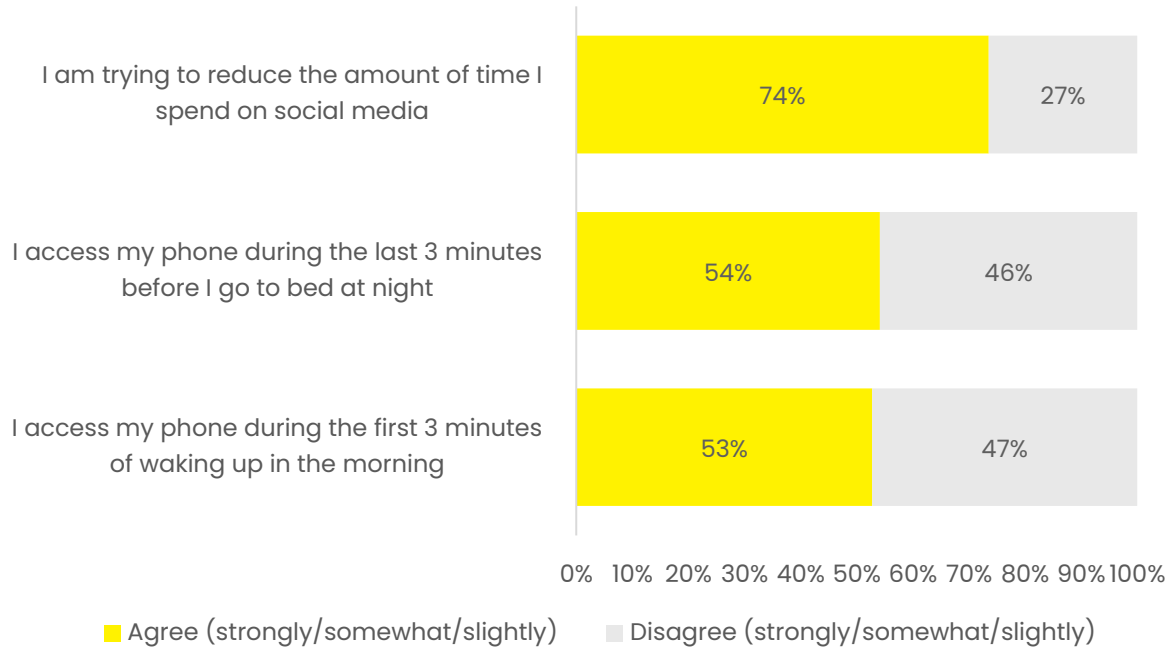
Specifically, Australians aged between 26 – 40, or generation Y, are accessing their phones the most compared to all other generations.

Australians attempt to regulate screen time

Australians are, however, attempting to decrease their screen time. Three in four Australians (74%) are trying to reduce the amount of time they spend on social media.

Younger generations are more likely than their older counterparts to try and reduce the amount of time they spend on social media (76% Gen Z, 81% Gen Y cf. 73% Gen X, 67% Baby Boomers, 63% Builders).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Australians are aware of the effects of screens.

Australians say the use of screens has led to a greater spread of misinformation in society and made their lives more sedentary.

More than four in five Australians (83%) agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) that the use of screens has led to a greater spread of misinformation in our society.

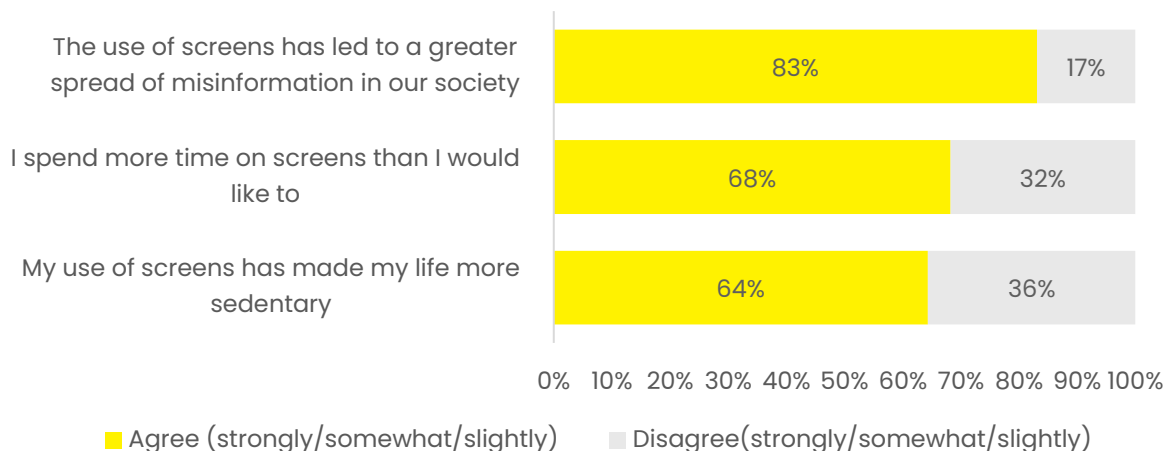
Two in three Australians (64%) agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) that the use of screens has made their life more sedentary.

Australians are aware, but choose to overlook, the negatives

Despite being aware of the negative implications of screen usage, Australians continue to spend more time than they would like to on social media, apps and websites outside of work/study (68%).

Younger generations are more likely than their older counterparts to agree they spend more time on screens than they would like to (82% Gen Z, 83% Gen Y cf. 70% Gen X, 54% Baby Boomers, 35% Builders) and that the use of screens has made their lives more sedentary (71% Gen Z, 74% Gen Y cf. 66% Gen X, 56% Baby Boomers, 44% Builders).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following when thinking about the use of screens e.g. social media, apps and websites outside of work/study?



Australians are concerned about the effects of screens on Generation Alpha.

The use of screens affects a multitude of spheres

The use of screens is impacting Australians' relationships, leading to an increase in the prevalence of bullying, hindering their relationships and impacting their mental health.

Three in four Australians (73%) agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) that the use of screens has made bullying more prevalent in our society.

Two in five Australians (42%) agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) that the use of screens negatively impacts their mental health.

"it creates angst and anonymous anger and self-righteousness that wouldn't normally be tolerated or expressed if people had to show up in person"

"In my view, mental health issues now a days is more to do with the use of social media and the way it operates."

"The suicide deaths of kids via bullying is heart wrenching and unacceptable"

One in two Australians (49%) have also observed, that overall, the use of screens hinders their relationships rather than helps them.

"[the use of screens] has made us unsociable, more interested in screen than people around you."

"People don't have time to meet and communicate it makes people more isolated and lonely"

"Social media was designed to connect but instead disconnects us"

"We have conducted much research into the epidemic of loneliness in Australia. But as this data shows, screens alone are not the solution. Indeed, as we have all experienced during COVID-19, connecting digitally does not fill the human need for connecting relationally" said Dr McMillan.

Younger generations are more likely than their older counterparts to agree the use of screens hinders their relationships rather than helps them (61% Gen Z, 65% Gen Y cf. 52% Gen X, 29% Baby Boomers, 24% Builders) and negatively impacts their mental health (63% Gen Z, 60% Gen Y cf. 45% Gen X, 17% Baby Boomers, 14% Builders).

Australians are concerned for future generations

Considering these negative impacts, Australians' concern for Generation Alpha (aged 11 and under) is understandable. More than four in five Australians (83%) agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) that for children aged 11 and under, the use of screens causes more harm than good.

The negative impacts are not just linked to the youngest generation, however, more than half of Australians also agree that overall, their use

of screens causes more harm than good (53%).

In this environment some Australians are calling for children’s screen time to be limited, while others refuse to use social media themselves and call for it to be banned.

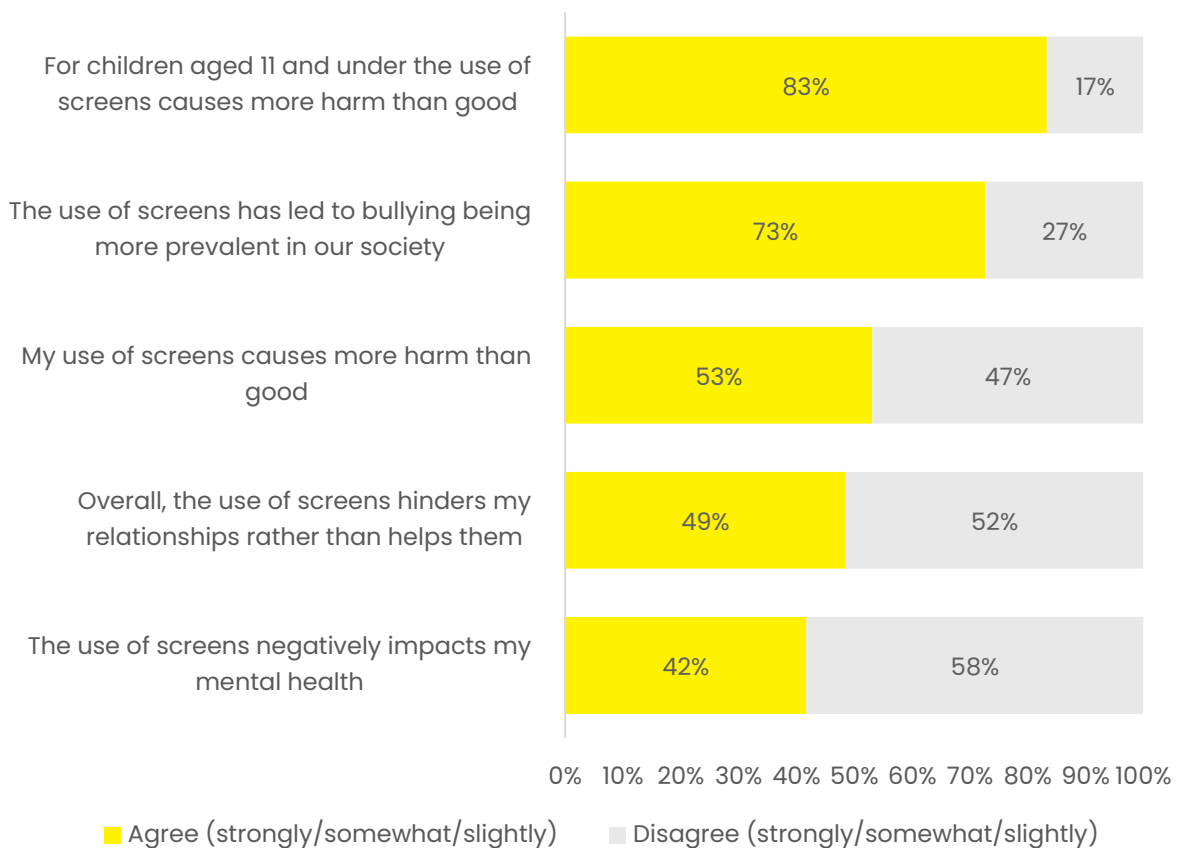
“Children under a certain age should not be using social media”

“I just think that parents need to be more strict towards their children for using social media”

“All social media should be banned. I refuse to have anything to do with any of it”

Females are more likely than males to agree the use of screens for children under 11 causes more harm than good (86% cf. 80% males)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following when thinking about the use of screens e.g. social media, apps and websites outside of work/study?



Learning to navigate information and opportunity.

Social media provides a platform for Australians to express themselves, resulting in positive and negative outcomes. Nine in ten Australians (90%) agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) that social media is the biggest spreader of fake news and mistrust in our society.

Cancel culture (boycotting a brand or person after they have done or said something considered objectionable) is rising in prevalence. Three in four Australians (74%) agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) that cancel culture has caused more harm than good.

"I have concerns that some people are unfairly and wrongly targeted, and the damage is very hard to reverse."

"I think that people need to be held accountable for past actions but that cancel culture is toxic and doesn't take into consideration that people grow and change and make mistakes."

Some Australians consider cancel culture positive because it forces people to experience consequences for their actions.

"Cancel culture means people have consequences for their actions."

"I think there is nothing wrong with cancel culture. A lot of people who have been cancelled have been because they have done things that have been cancel worthy."

Younger generations are more likely than older generations to strongly/somewhat/slightly agree that cancel culture causes more harm than good (81% Gen Z, 77% Gen Y cf. 75% Gen X, 69% Baby Boomers, 67% Builders).

Social media provides opportunities

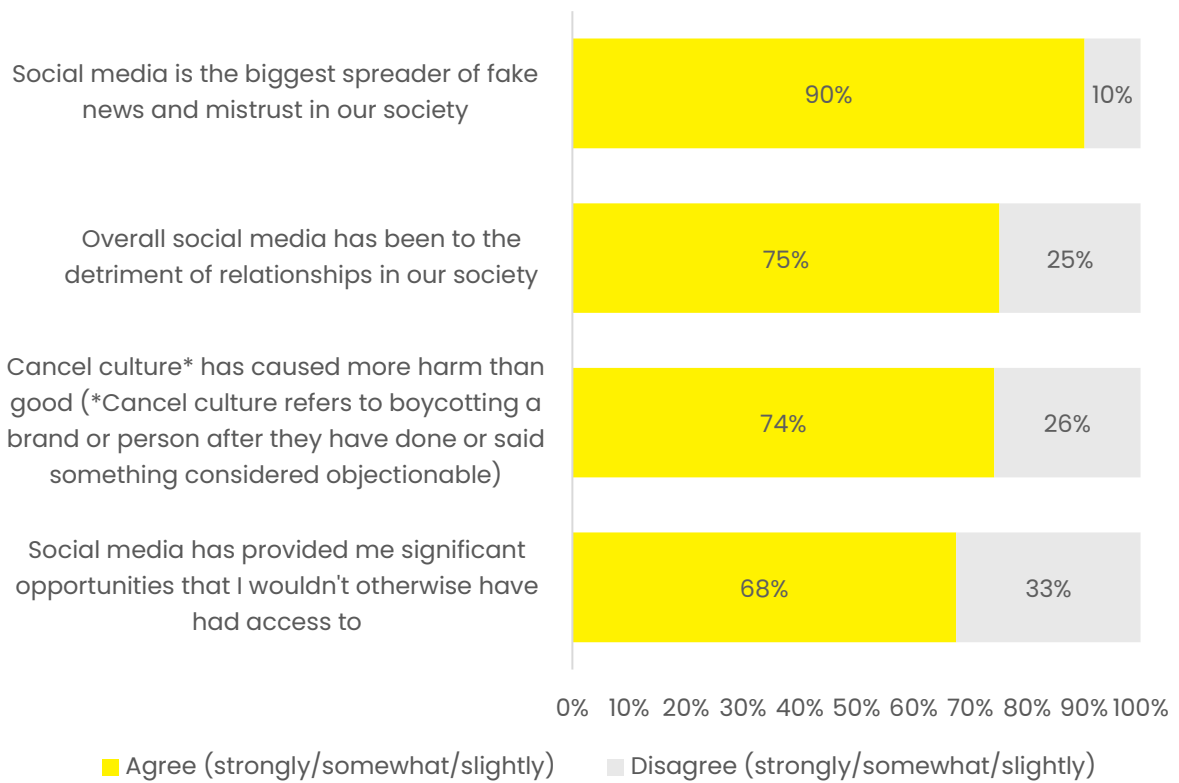
With social media giving rise to fake news, misinformation and cancel culture, it is not surprising Australians are taking a closer look at its effects. Overall, social media is considered to have negative effects, with three in four Australians (75%) strongly/somewhat/slightly agreeing that social media has been to the detriment of their relationships.

Despite the challenges with social media, some Australians have experienced positive outcomes. Two in three Australians (68%) agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) that social media has provided them with significant opportunities that they wouldn't have otherwise had access to.

"The good news from this study is that Australians are wanting to better manage their use of digital devices. From reducing their use for the sake of our relationships and physical activity, to concern about the harm they are causing young people, Australians are expressing a desire to improve the use their phones and social media" said Mark McCrindle

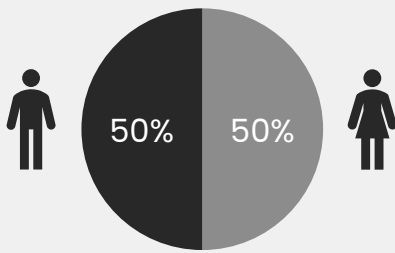
Females are more likely than males to agree (strongly/somewhat/slightly) that social media has provided them with significant opportunities that they wouldn't have otherwise had access to (73% cf. 62% males).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

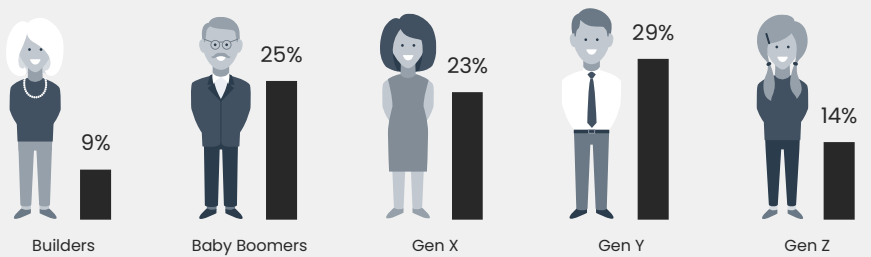


Demographic summary

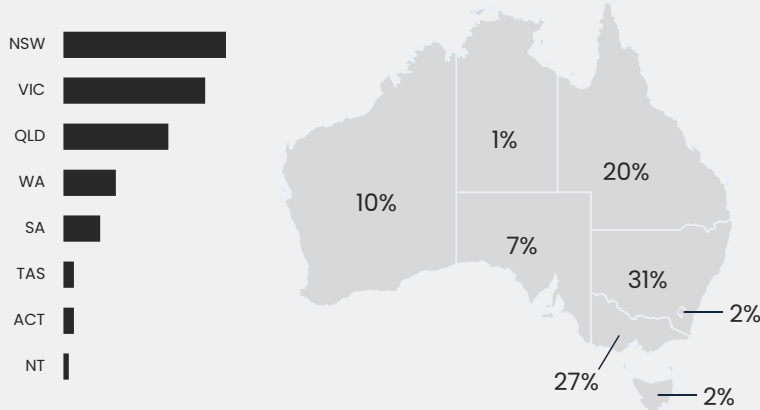
Are you male or female?



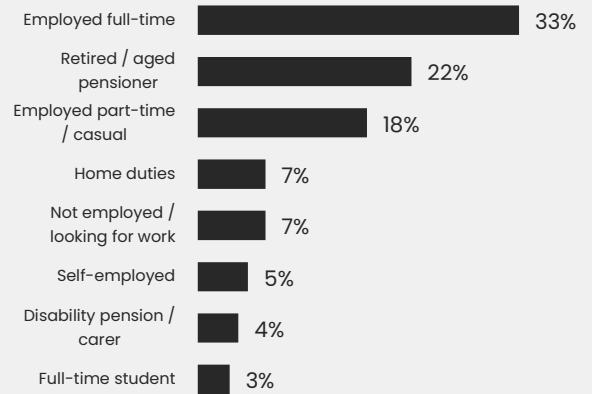
What age will you be in 2020?



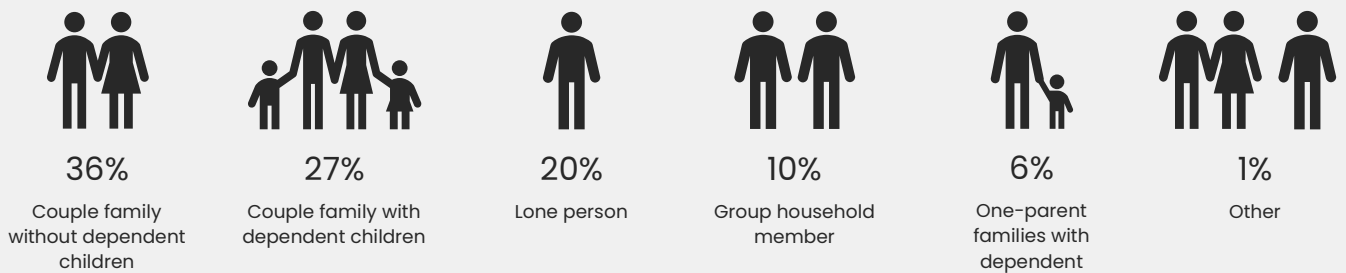
Where do you usually live?



Which of the following best describes your employment status?

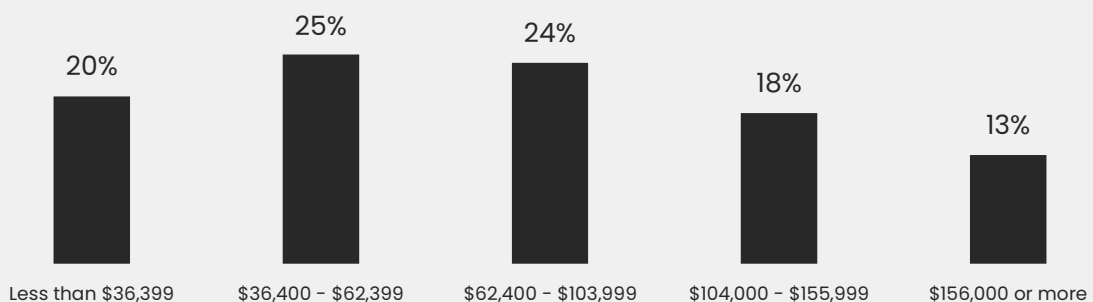


What type of household do you currently live in?



Which of the following best represents your household's combined gross annual income? (i.e. before taxes)

Note: Combined household income refers to the combined income of yourself and any other adults in the household - Include pensions, allowances, overt



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Get in touch.

Phone: 1800 873 637

Email info@mainstreetinsights.com.au

Website mainstreetinsights.com.au