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JOB SECURITY & THE FUTURE OF WORK: *Australian workers' views*

Report No. 25: July 2018
(ANUpoll data collected October 2017)

ANU College of
Arts & Social
Sciences

JOB SECURITY AND THE FUTURE OF WORK: **Australian workers' views**

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Report No. 25
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About the poll

ANUpoll is conducted for The Australian National University (ANU) by the Social Research Centre, an ANU Enterprise business. The poll surveys a national random sample of the adult population (the 'Life in Australia' panel), and is conducted via the Internet (76 per cent of respondents) and phone (24 per cent of respondents). The use of this mixed-mode frame is to ensure coverage of households without Internet access.

In this poll, 2,513 people were interviewed between 16 October and 5 November 2017. Among individuals who received the survey (i.e. members of the 'Life in Australia' panel), a completion rate of 67.7 per cent was achieved. Taking into account the recruitment rate to the panel, the cumulative response rate is calculated as 10.6 per cent. The results have been weighted to represent the national population. The poll's margin of error is ± 2.5 per cent.

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VICE-CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

The future of work is an issue of tremendous importance to Australian citizens and policy-makers. We face an era of uncertainty and rapid change. One thing that researchers and commentators seem to agree on is that we cannot predict the future of work with any real confidence. In public discussions on the changing nature of work, we too rarely ask how Australians feel about their current job security, the sources of insecurity, their expectations for their own and other industries, and their preferences for trade and wealth redistribution policy settings.

This ANUpoll, the 25th in the series, reports Australians' anxieties about the future of work. Positively, it finds that Australians are not particularly concerned about their current employment. However, we are concerned about our prospects of finding employment in the future. We are also more concerned about the threats posed by poor business management and international workers being prepared to work for lower wages, than about the prospect that our jobs will disappear through automation. In general, the representative sample of Australians surveyed in this poll is more worried about the globalisation of employment and trade, than about competition from robots.

The findings presented in this report contribute nuance and personal opinion to a public debate dominated by predictions of rapid technological change. I encourage our politicians and policy leaders to heed the concerns of Australians reported in this ANUpoll.

The ANUpoll series, conducted by the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods and the Social Research Centre, is designed to inform public and policy debate, as well as to assist scholarly research. It is an important contribution that ANU makes to public debate about the key social issues facing Australia and the type of country in which we want to live.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'B. P. Schmidt'.

Professor Brian P. Schmidt AC

Vice-Chancellor and President

JOB SECURITY AND THE FUTURE OF WORK IN AUSTRALIA

There is a considerable amount of academic, policy and media discussion about the future of work. There is no doubt that the labour market is changing with new occupations being created, as others become more precarious. Occupations that rely on creativity or human-to-human interaction are being developed or expanding their share of the labour market. Those that are based on routine tasks, even complicated ones, are employing fewer and fewer workers.

These changes are being driven by technological developments (like improvements in computing power and the increasing availability and access to large datasets) and geopolitical factors that originate outside of Australia's borders, including the rise of China and responses to anthropogenic climate change. There are also factors specific to or more common in Australia, like the end of the most recent mining boom and changes in the level and focus of industry support provided by the Commonwealth Government.

CSIRO, in the summary of its recent and highly influential report (Hajkowicz, Reeson et al. 2016) concluded that:

... workforce transitions – how individuals move from one job to another and how industries move from one labour market structure to another – are crucial. Although change is inevitable, future destinations are not. Based on this narrative of the future, individuals, communities, companies and governments can identify and implement transition pathways that achieve better outcomes.

Labour markets have always adjusted to new circumstances. It could reasonably be argued though that the current transformation of work will be more comprehensive and more rapid than transformations that have occurred in the past. Partly, this is because of a confluence of events – increased computing speed, decreased computing costs, greater network speed and capacity, increased availability of data, the lessening of some barriers to international trade and political and economic change in countries with large skilled and semi-skilled workforces.

While unique, there have been a number of episodes of labour market transition that have involved one or more of the above events. Labour market shocks aren't new, even if the specifics vary. The most obvious parallel is the first industrial revolution. In addition, in Australia labour market shocks that have occurred in the past include the various gold rushes of the 19th century, post World War II industrialisation, floating of the dollar and tariff reduction in the mid-80s, and the early 2000s mining boom. Other countries have experienced similar shocks at various points in time, sometimes concurrently.

Technological innovation over the past two centuries has not resulted in mass unemployment on the whole. Increased productivity means that workers have found jobs in new sectors and earned higher skill premiums due to the complementarity of capital and labour. However, this is a long-term perspective. In the short run, and within certain industries or regions, technological change can result in structural (or technical) unemployment. For the most part, this short-term unemployment has been addressed through the welfare system, as with any other kind of unemployment. What's more, the sudden and often localised nature of technical unemployment poses unique social and political challenges.

In all labour market transitions, there have been winners and losers. On balance, the former has tended to outnumber the latter, at least at a global scale. However, the benefits and costs haven't been distributed randomly or evenly, with certain groups doing better or worse than others. Current changes to the labour market and economic systems have tended to benefit the rich and highly skilled in developed and developing countries, the low-skilled in developed countries, and the semi-skilled in developing countries. The hardest hit have tended to be the semi-skilled in developed countries who haven't gained from the increasing returns to human capital, but have at the same time seen increased competition from low-wage competitor countries.

While this is true in broad terms, there is of course significant variation at the individual level. Increasingly, research has shown there is a cluster of skills and attitudes that are both highly predictive of success in times of transition, but also potentially amenable to interventions across the life course (Heckman, Stixrud et al. 2006). These are referred to in different contexts and different disciplines as executive function, non-cognitive ability, grit or perseverance.

Importantly, these measures of non-cognitive ability are correlated with, but independent of, the two other sets of skills that have been the dominant focus of government policy – cognitive ability (literacy and numeracy) and job-specific skills.

Increasingly, the research and media attention on job security and the future of work has shifted from describing the trends and patterns, to understanding the attitudes of the current and potential workforce to these changes. First and foremost, these attitudes will help determine the effect of labour market change (perceived and actual) on the subjective well-being of the population. Those who are optimistic about the future of the labour market will view new developments positively and may even be more likely to invest in the types of qualifications and skills that take advantage of new jobs and industries that are being created. Those who are more pessimistic may be more likely to experience anxiety and fear towards the future.

In addition, attitudes to job security and the future of work may impact on the receptiveness of the population to related policy proposals. Those who are relatively optimistic either about their own prospects or the prospects of others may be more open to policy proposals that accelerate the changes and less receptive to those that attempt to slow or mitigate the effects. Those who are anxious or pessimistic are likely to have a very different policy attitude.

The aim of this survey is to document the attitudes of a representative sample of the Australian population, and test how they vary by important demographic, geographic, and socioeconomic characteristics. We also asked about attitudes to related concepts like income inequality and key political issues of the day.

The data from this report are available for download at the Australian Data Archive.

PERCEPTIONS OF JOB SECURITY IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

Key points

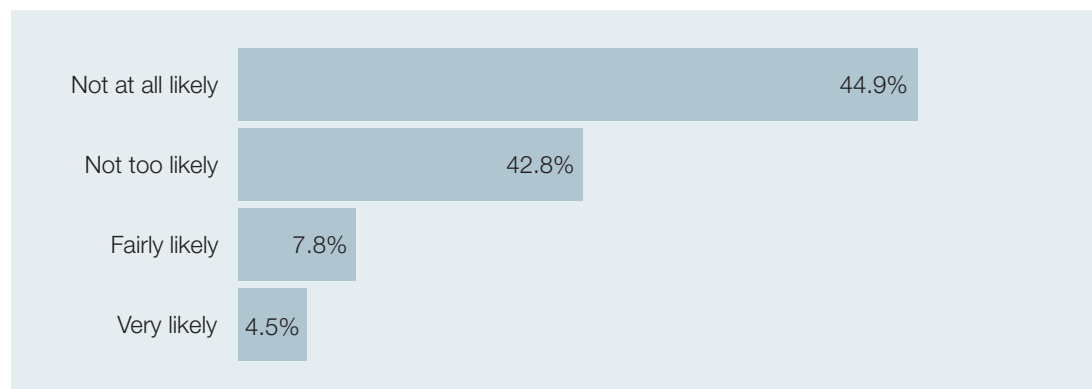
- > Across all workers, Australians are not too worried about their current job security.
- > Almost nine in ten workers believe it is not likely they will either be laid off or need to lay off workers (if self-employed) in the coming 12 months.
- > However, more than half of all workers believe finding employment that could match their current pay and benefits would not be easy at all.
- > Feelings of current job security and prospects of equivalent future employment vary widely by sector of employment.

In the short term, Australians are not overly concerned about their own job security. The overwhelming majority of Australian workers surveyed believe it is 'not at all likely' (44.9 per cent) or 'not too likely' (42.8 per cent) that they will either be laid off in the next 12 months, or – in the case of business owners – that they will have to lay off employees or close their businesses. Given the widespread media attention regarding possible effects of job automation and economic rationalisation, this result is perhaps surprising.

There is, however, a small minority of Australians who are concerned about their own jobs. Almost five per cent of Australians believe it 'very likely' that they will either be laid off or will lay off employees (or close their businesses) in the coming year, with an additional 7.8 per cent thinking it is fairly likely.

Thinking about the next 12 months, how likely do you think it is that you will lose your job or be laid off/have to lay off employees or close the business?

Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



When we analysed the factors associated with job security, we found some significant differences by demography and geography. Females feel slightly less secure than males, and older workers feel less secure than younger workers. However, the most consistent difference is by country of birth. Those who were born in a predominantly non-English speaking country were much more likely to report they were fairly likely or very likely to lose their job/lay off workers/close their business (15.8 per cent) compared to those born in Australia or in an English-speaking country.

There are also differences by the current sector of employment¹. While Australian workers are – on the whole – quite comfortable with their current job security, the level of comfort varies by sector of

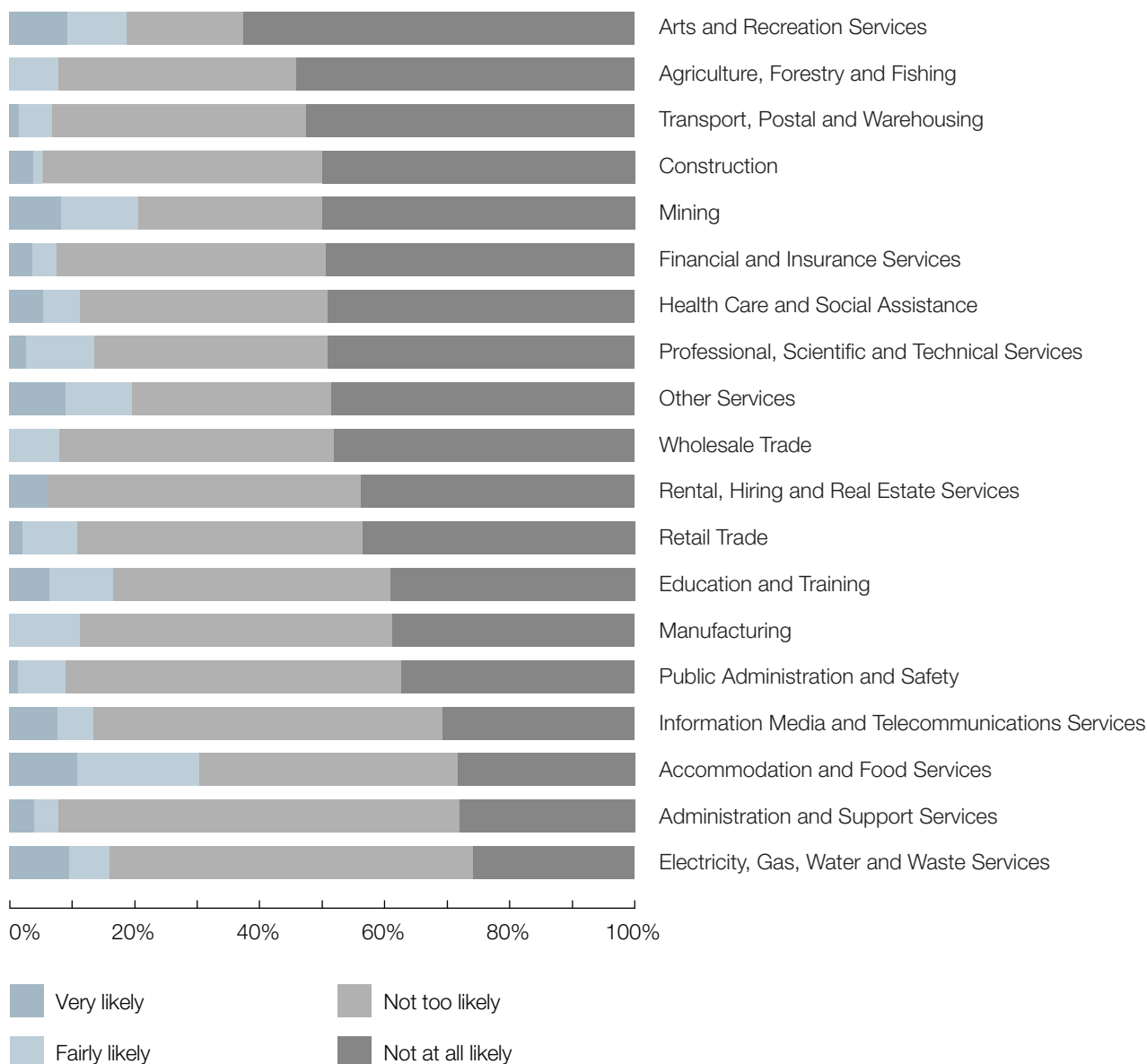
¹ In presenting differences in attitudes by employment sector, we face the challenge that some sectors are represented by very small numbers of respondents. For instance, a total of 174 respondents work in the health care and social assistance sector, but only 24 respondents work in the mining sector. We have removed sectors from the following analyses when fewer than 20 respondents from a sector provided responses. However, with such small numbers among some subgroups we urge caution when interpreting the results and advise the results should not be generalised to the population.

employment. Workers in the arts and recreation sector feel the most secure in their employment: 62.5 per cent believe it 'not at all likely' that they will be laid off (or need to lay off employees or close their businesses). At the other end of the spectrum, only one quarter (25.8 per cent) of workers in the electricity, gas, water and waste industries believe it not at all likely that they will be laid off or lay workers off.

Accommodation and food sector workers are the most concerned about their current job security, with almost one in three (30.5 per cent) believing it 'very likely' or 'fairly likely' they will be laid off or lay off workers in the coming year. Mining sector workers are the next most concerned, with one in five (20.8 per cent) believing it either 'very' or 'fairly likely' they will be laid off or lay off staff. Despite including the most job-secure workers, the arts and recreation sector also includes a substantial number of job-insecure workers, with 18.8 per cent feeling either 'very' or 'fairly likely' that they will lose their job or have to lay off staff. That is, it is a very polarised industry.

Thinking about the next 12 months, how likely do you think it is that you will lose your job or be laid off/have to lay off employees or close the business? (by employment sector)

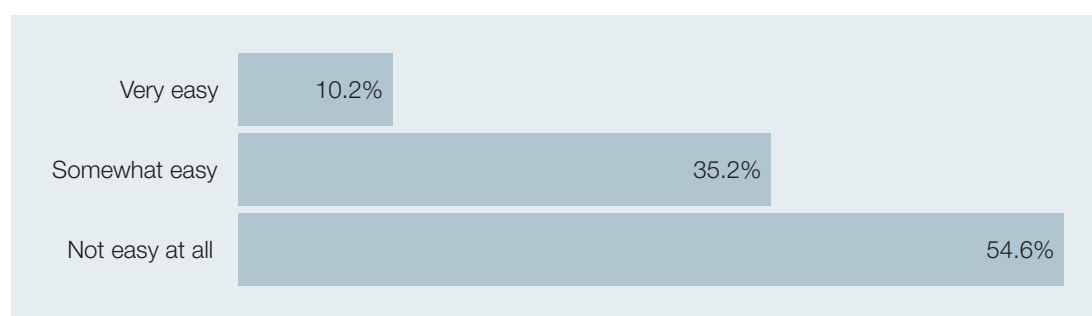
Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



While Australians feel reasonably secure in their current job, in the event that workers are laid off, they are far less optimistic about their future employment prospects. More than half – 54.6 per cent – of workers surveyed say that finding a new job with equivalent remuneration and benefits would be ‘not easy at all’. Only 10 per cent believe that attaining a new, equivalent job would be ‘very easy’. Taken together, these two results suggest that Australian workers feel largely comfortable about their current employment positions, but less optimistic about their future employment prospects in the event they do become unemployed.

If you were laid off/If you had to, how easy would it be for you to find a job with another employer with approximately the same income and fringe benefits you now have, would you say ...?

Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018

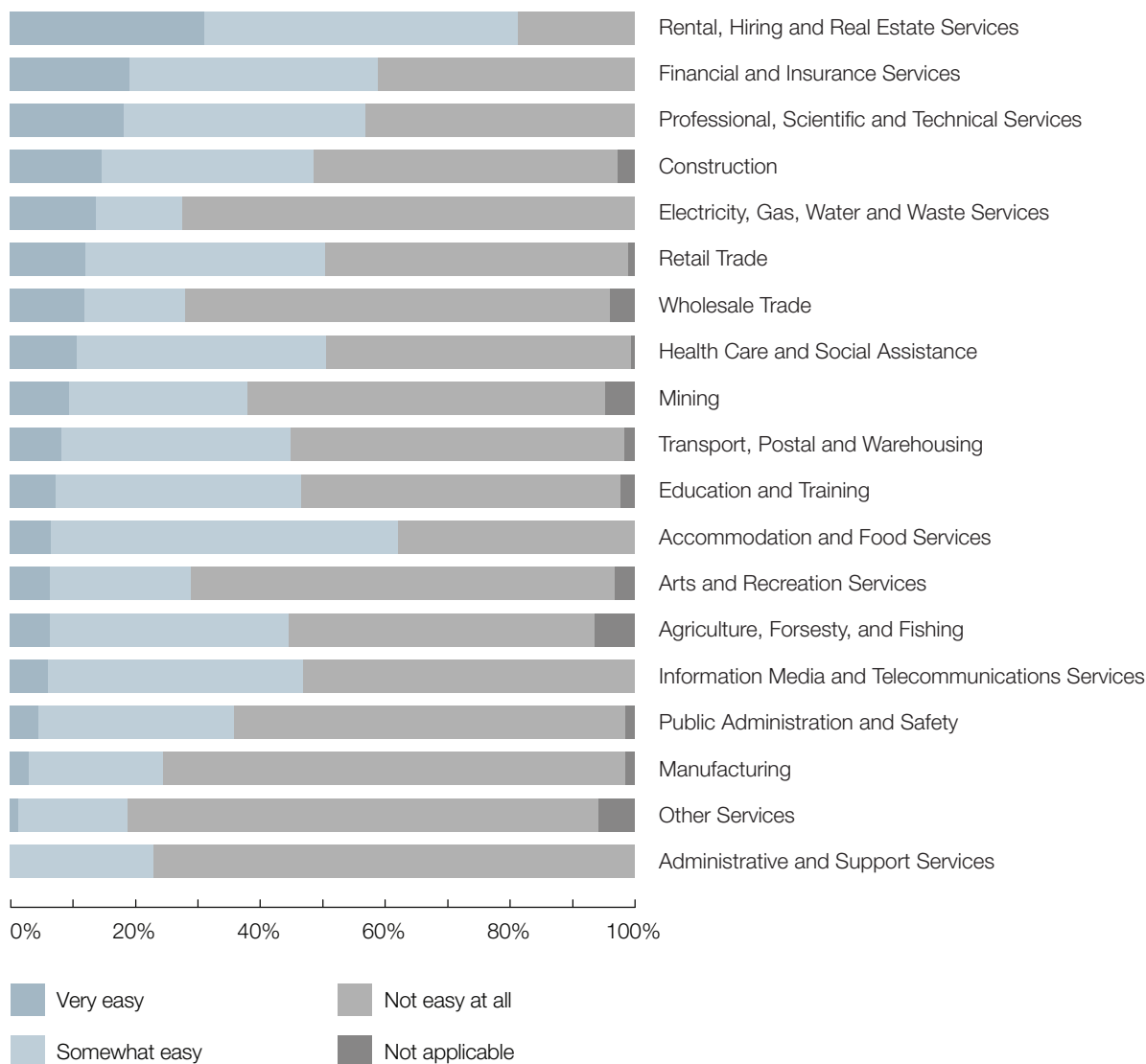


There were fewer differences by demographic characteristics in terms of confidence about future employment if required than with current job security. There were, however, larger differences by education. For those who had not completed Year 12, 67.4 per cent reported that it would be not easy at all to find a similar job, compared to 49.8 per cent for those who had completed Year 12. Geography was also important, with those in relatively disadvantaged areas less confident about finding another employer.

Again, confidence in future job prospects varies by employment sector. Real estate workers are the most confident that they can ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ easily find equivalent employment (81.3 per cent). On the other hand, no administrative or support service workers in this sample believe finding equivalent employment would be ‘very easy’, only 23.1 per cent believe it would be ‘somewhat easy’, and the remaining 76.9 per cent believe the prospect ‘not easy at all’. Accommodation and food service workers – among the least confident about retaining their employment in the coming year – are also pessimistic about their prospects of finding equivalent employment. Only 6.7 per cent believe it ‘very easy’, 55.6 per cent believe it ‘somewhat easy’ and 37.8 per cent think it would be ‘not easy at all’ to replace their current job.

If you were laid off/If you had to, how easy would it be for you to find a job with another employer with approximately the same income and fringe benefits you now have, would you say ...? (by employment sector)

Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT THREATS TO JOB SECURITY

Key points

- > The most acute concerns among Australian workers are that they will be laid off because their employer finds someone overseas to do their job for less pay, or because poor management will lead to their unemployment.
- > The least pressing concern among those listed is that workers will be replaced by robots or computer programs.
- > Retail workers feel the most exposed to threats to their employment.
- > Mining sector workers are the least concerned by the listed threats.

Workers may feel insecure about their current employment for any number of reasons. To further investigate the sources of feelings of job security (or insecurity), we asked Australian workers their level of concern regarding six different potential threats.

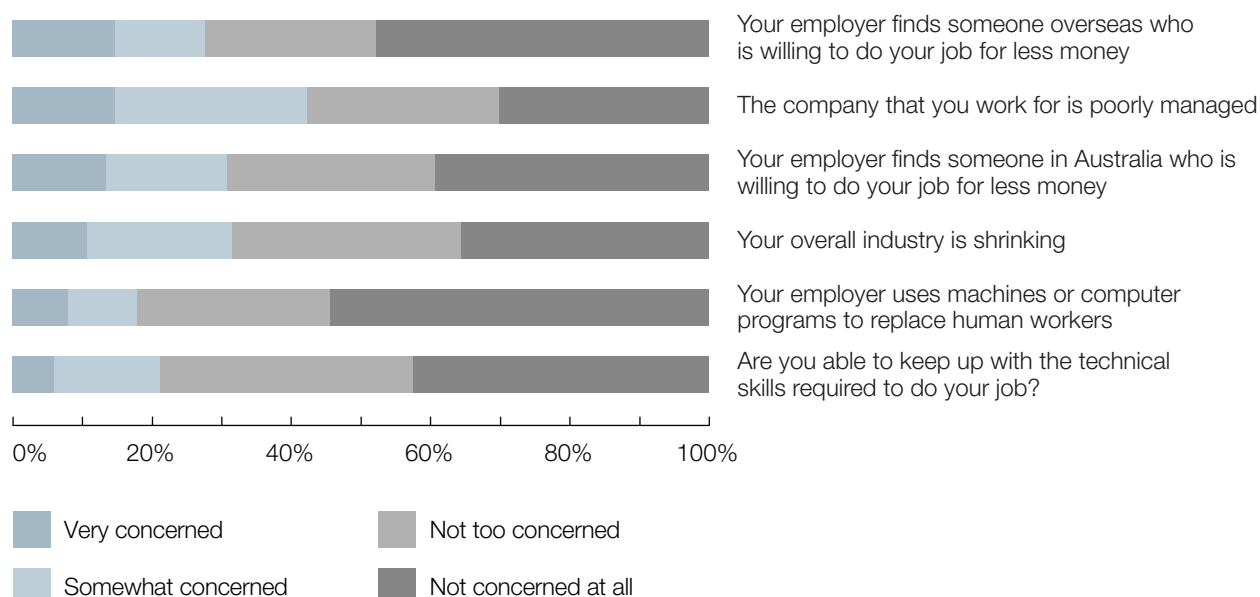
The prospect of their employer finding someone overseas who is willing to perform their job for less money presents the most acute concern among Australian workers, with 14.8 per cent 'very concerned'. However, the prospect that poor management of the company for which they work will lead them to lose their job presents the greatest overall threat for Australian workers: 14.7 per cent are 'very concerned' by this threat, and 27.6 per cent are 'somewhat concerned'.

The least concerning threats to Australians' job security are an inability to keep up with the technical skills required to do their job (six per cent are 'very concerned' and 15.2 per cent 'somewhat concerned'), and that employers may use machines or computers to replace human workers (eight per cent are 'very concerned' and 9.8 per cent 'somewhat concerned').

These results provide some nuance to the public debates on fears of the imminent automation of particularly low-skill jobs. There is a not insignificant minority of workers who worry about automation. However, this is less of a concern than other sources. The results also suggest that Australian workers feel similarly to American workers regarding potential job automation. In a May 2017 study, Pew Research Center found that 30 per cent of workers believe it 'not at all likely' that their job will be replaced by robots or computers in their lifetime, 40 per cent believe it 'not very likely', 23 per cent believe it 'somewhat likely' and only seven per cent believe it 'very likely'.

Following are some reasons why people might worry about losing a job. For each one, please answer how concerned, if at all, you are about potentially losing your job for this reason.

Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



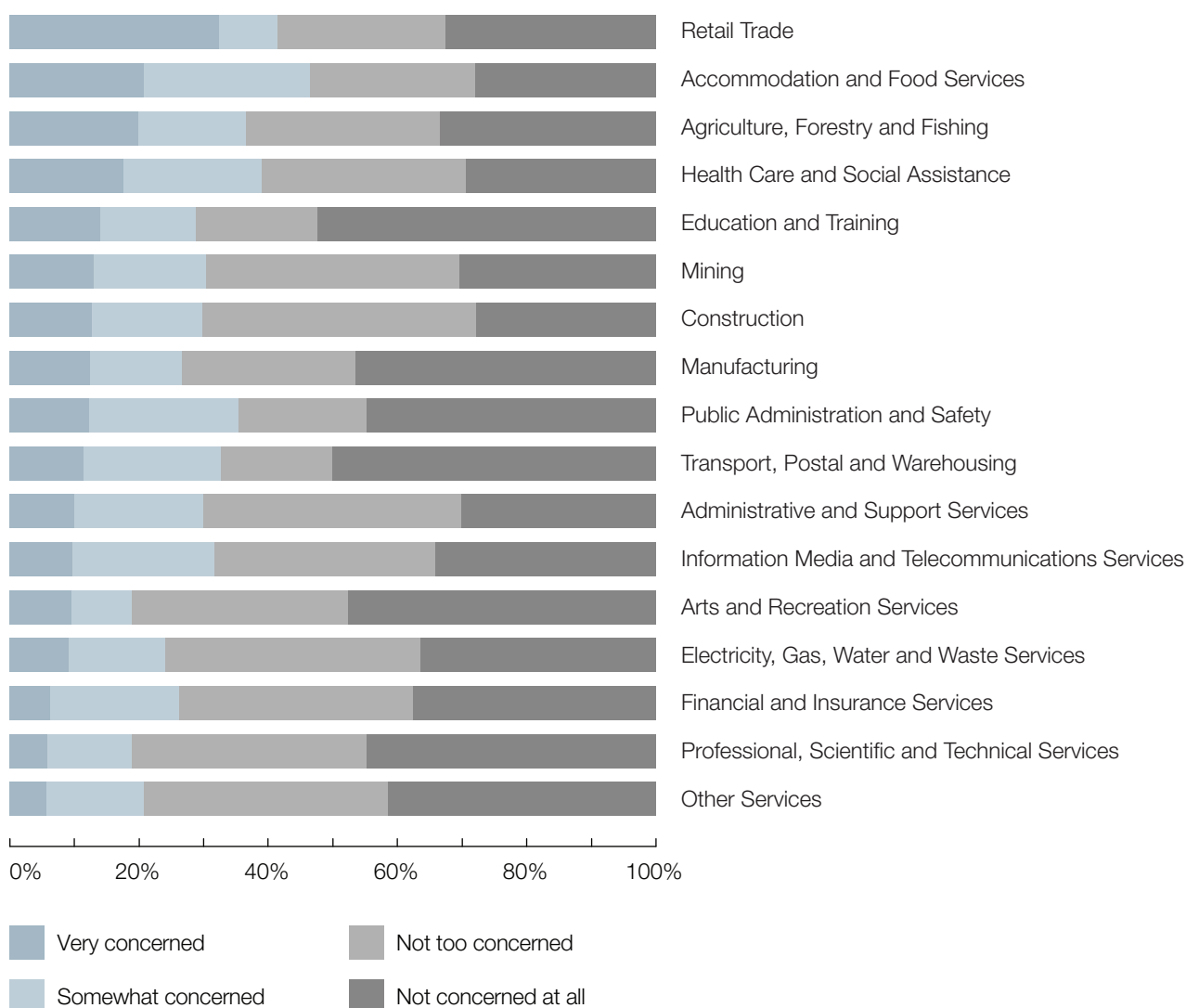
There are differences by demographic characteristics, education and geography in terms of the source of concern about losing a job. By gender, females were much more concerned about machines or computer programs than males, with no other major differences across the sources of concern. Interestingly, there were no major differences by age. Those respondents born in a non-English speaking country were more likely to be concerned about all sources apart from not being able to keep up with the technical skills of the job. Those who hadn't completed Year 12 were most concerned about people from overseas or from Australia doing their job for less money.

As with concerns about job security and future employability generally, concerns about specific threats to employment vary across sectors of employment. For instance, retail workers are the most acutely concerned that they will be replaced by workers from within Australia willing to work for lower pay, one in three (32.5 per cent) are 'very concerned' about such a scenario. Accommodation and food sector workers are the most generally worried, but the concern is less acute, with only 20.9 per cent 'very concerned', but a further 25.6 per cent 'somewhat concerned'.

Financial and scientific workers are among the least concerned about being replaced by lower-paid Australian workers, probably reflecting the highly skilled nature of their professions. However, among all sectors, education and training workers are the most likely (52.3 per cent) to be 'not concerned at all' about potential replacement by lower-paid Australian workers.

Concern that 'Your employer finds someone in Australia who is willing to do your job for less money', by employment sector.

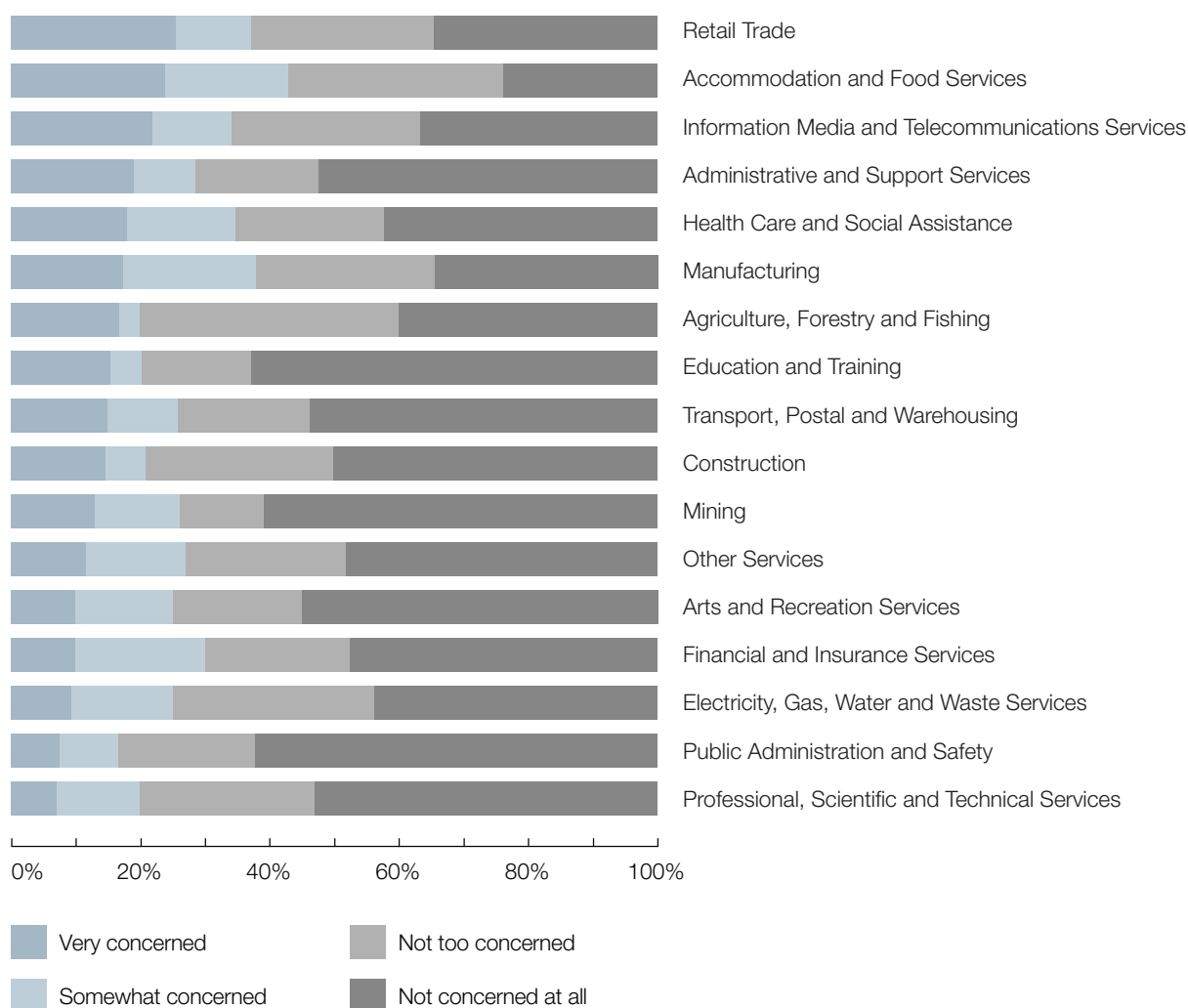
Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



Retail workers are also the most acutely concerned about the prospect of replacement by lower-paid workers from overseas, with 25.6 per cent 'very concerned'. Accommodation and food workers are again the most broadly concerned, with 23.8 per cent 'very concerned' and 19 per cent 'somewhat concerned'. At the other end of the chart, professional, scientific and public administration workers are the least concerned about replacement by overseas workers.

Concern that 'Your employer finds someone overseas who is willing to do your job for less money', by employment sector.

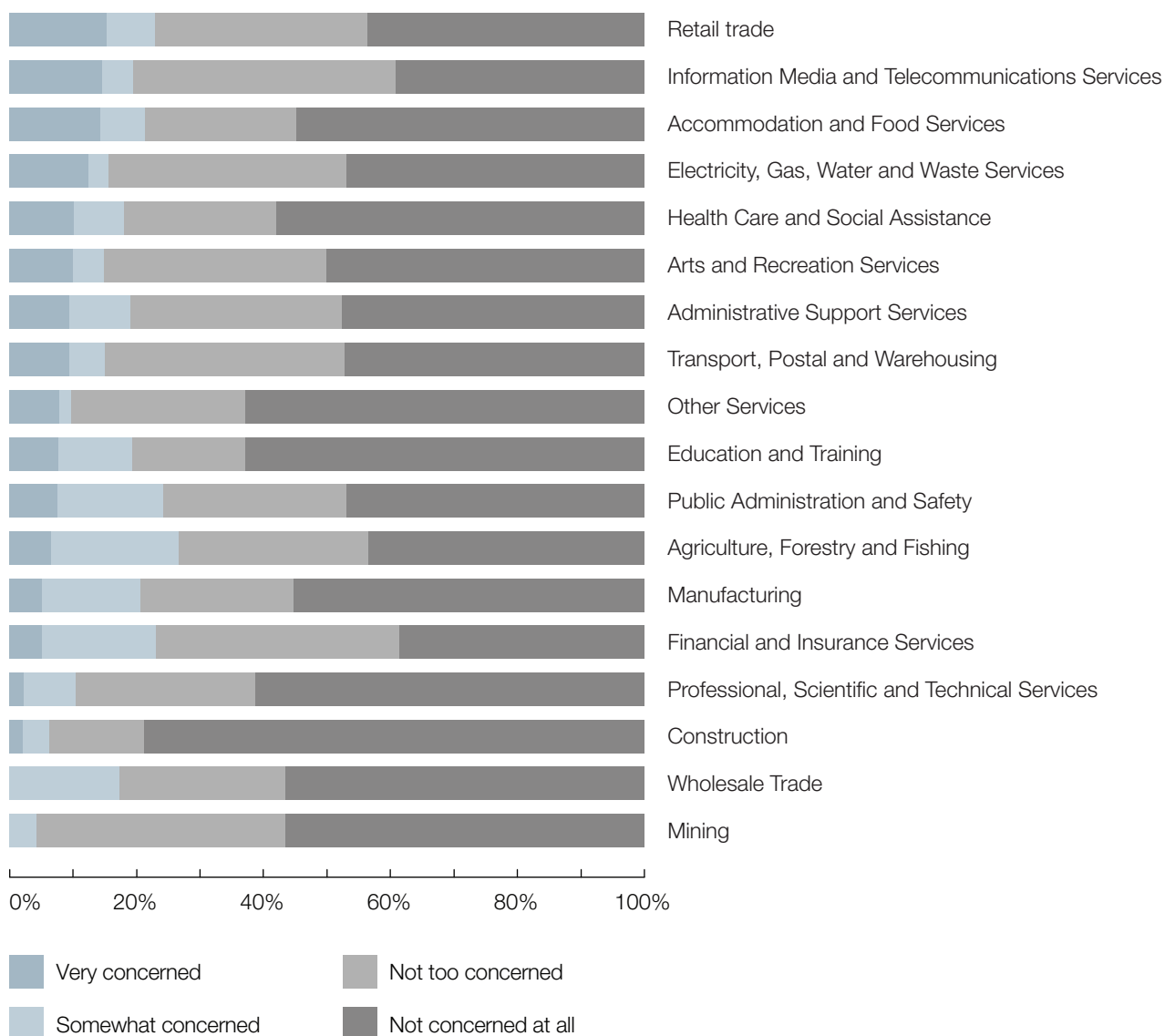
Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



Retail workers are the most likely to be acutely concerned their employer will replace them with a machine or computer program: 15.4 per cent are 'very concerned' about this prospect. Conversely, no workers in the mining sector surveyed on this question reported being 'very concerned'. In general, labouring and construction sector workers feel the least threatened by the prospect of job automation. Almost eight in ten (78.7 per cent) of construction sector workers feel 'not concerned at all' that they will be replaced by machines or computers.

Concern that 'Your employer uses machines or computer programs to replace human workers', by employment sector.

Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



LONGER TERM CHANGES IN WORK AND SOCIETY

Key points

- > Most Australians believe their job or occupation will exist in its current form in 50 years time.
- > One in four Australians think their job will 'definitely exist' in 2068.
- > Construction and accommodation and food service workers are the most confident that their jobs will still exist.
- > Australians are circumspect with regard to drastic technological changes, but one in five believe that doctors will commonly rely on computer programs to diagnose and prescribe treatments within the next 20 years.

Historically, occupations come and go very slowly, but in the long term dramatic change can be quite noticeable. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, since 1966²:

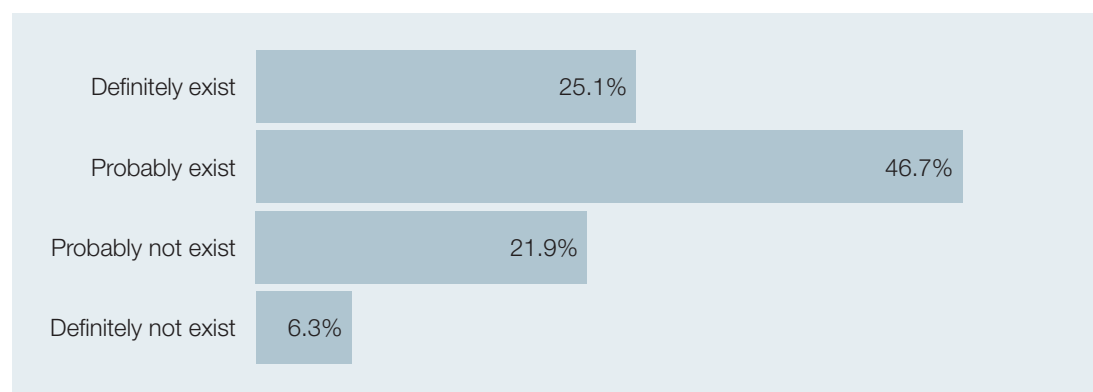
Employment has grown significantly in the service sector, particularly in the property and business division and the accommodation, cafes and restaurants division. On a smaller scale, changes in home life have led to an increased demand for services to replace in part those traditionally carried out within the home, such as child care and meal preparation. Along with this growth in the service sector there has been a decline in employment in production industries like manufacturing and mining ... All these broad patterns of industrial change have an effect on the jobs available today. This employment shift has, in general, reduced the opportunities for blue-collar workers and increased the opportunities for white-collar workers.

Looking forward though, Australians don't expect that much change over the same aggregate time period. One in four Australian workers (25.1 per cent) believe their current job or occupation will still exist in its current form in 50 years time. However, almost half of all workers (46.7 per cent) are more circumspect, believing their current job will 'probably exist' in 2068. Only 6.3 per cent believe their job will 'definitely not exist' at that time.

² <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/828adb6574d4875bca2570ec001b1f52!OpenDocument>

Thinking about the job or occupation that you work in now, how likely do you think it is that job will exist in its current form in 50 years?

Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018

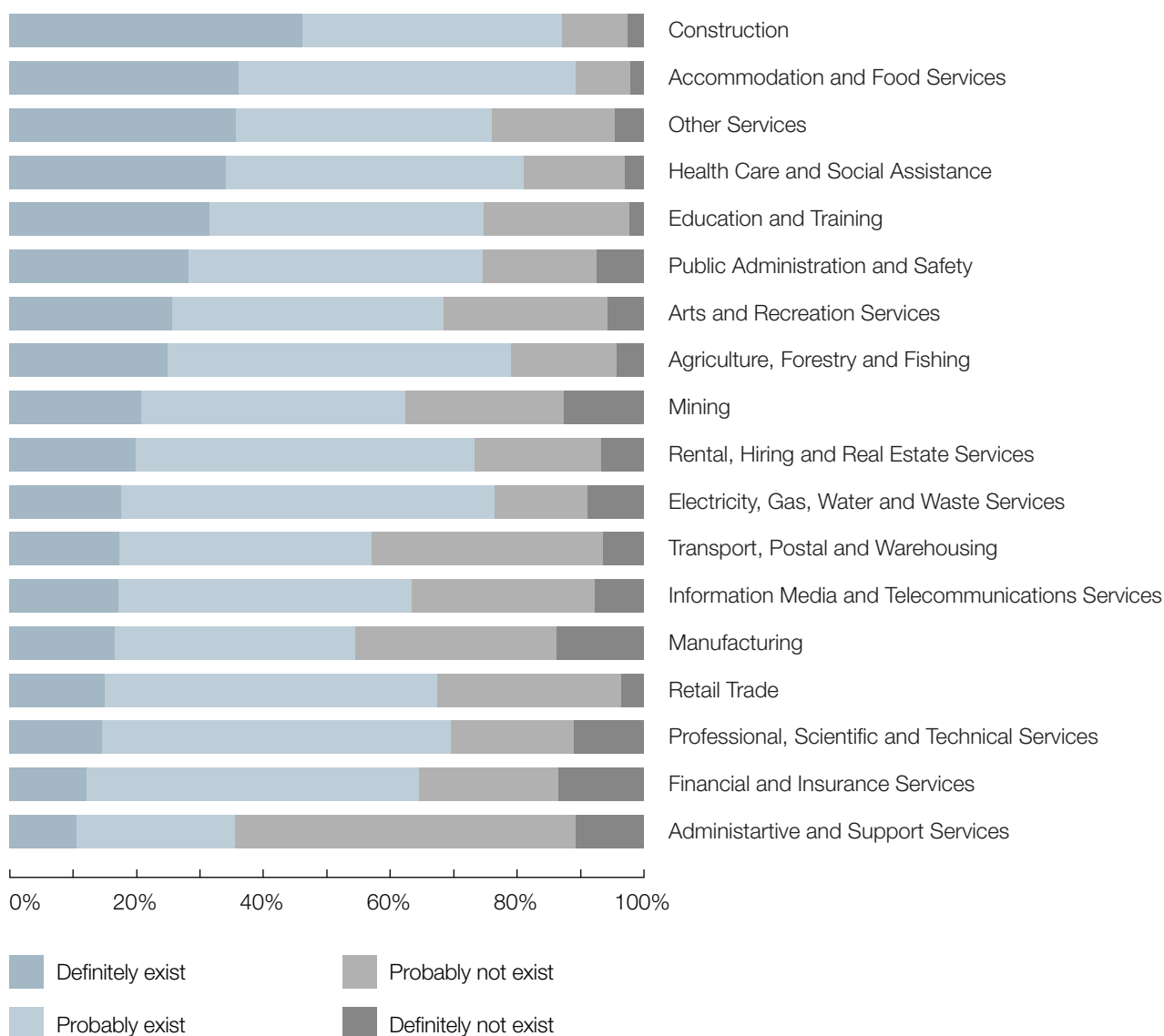


Construction industry workers are the most confident that their current occupation will still exist in 2068. Almost half (46.2 per cent) believe it will 'definitely exist' and a further 41 per cent that it will 'probably exist'. Despite feeling the most precarious with regard to their current job security, accommodation and food workers are also optimistic about the longevity of their line of work: 36.2 per cent believe their job will 'definitely exist' in 50 years and 53.2 per cent it will 'probably exist'.

At the other end of the spectrum, administrative and support service workers are decidedly pessimistic about the future of their occupations. More than half (53.26 per cent) believe their job will not exist in 2068 and a further 10.7 per cent believe it will 'definitely not exist'. However, manufacturing and financial and insurance sector workers report the highest rates of acute pessimism: 13.6 and 13.4 per cent of workers in these respective sectors feel their job will 'definitely not exist' in 50 years time.

Thinking about the job or occupation that you work in now, how likely do you think it is that job will exist in its current form in 50 years? (by employment sector)

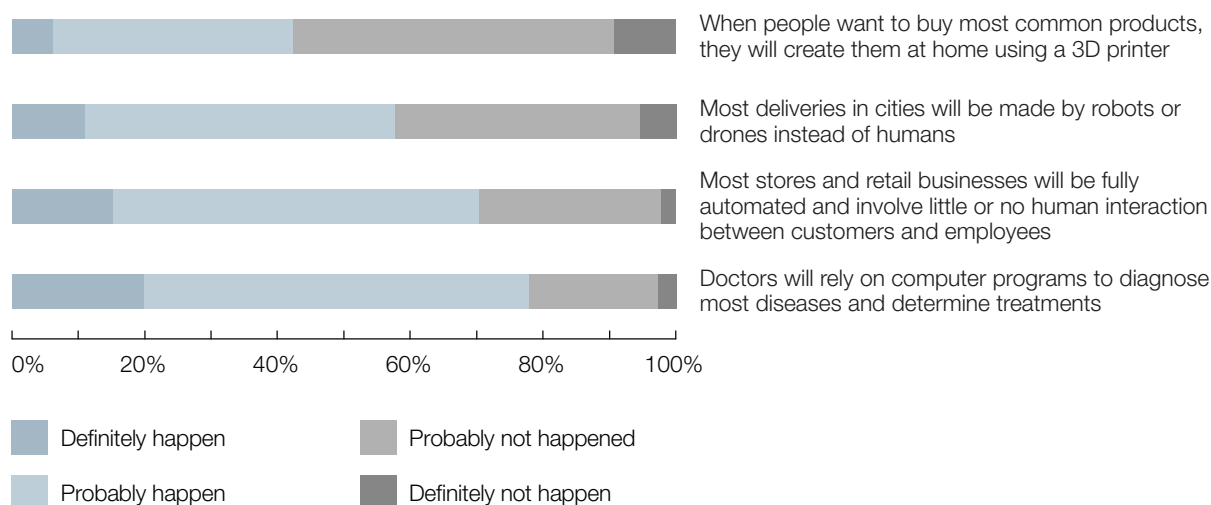
Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



Looking a shorter distance into the future, Australians expect to witness substantial technological change to workplaces and social life within 20 years. One in five – 20 per cent – believe doctors will ‘definitely’ rely on computer programs to diagnose most diseases and determine treatments within 20 years, while a further 58 per cent believe this will ‘probably happen’. Australians are more circumspect about the proliferation of 3D printing technology: 9.2 per cent believe people will ‘definitely not’ create common products at home using 3D printers, and almost half – 48.5 per cent – believe it will ‘probably not happen’. Australians are more evenly split with regard to whether deliveries in cities will be performed by robots or drones rather than humans, and whether most retail transactions will no longer involve human interaction.

Do you think each of the following things will or will not happen in the next 20 years?

Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



VIEWS ON INEQUALITY AND SOCIETY

Key points

- > Australians commonly perceive their society as ‘like a pyramid with a small elite at the top, more people in the middle and most at the bottom’.
- > But they would prefer that it was a ‘society with most people in the middle’.
- > Australians’ perceptions and preferences match closely with those of American survey respondents.

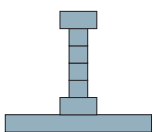
Concerns about job security and the future of work are likely to be mitigated by social and economic support structures. Indeed, one of the major pushes for a Universal Basic Income (UBI) is the perception that many workers will struggle to maintain secure employment in the future labour market, and that the link between employment and social/economic position within a society needs to be rethought (see, for example Bregman (2017)).

Given this potential link between job security and inequality, we asked Australians how they perceive the distribution of wealth in Australian society. Respondents were shown five different types of society, per the images below, with the accompanying descriptions.

When asked ‘what type of society is Australia today?’, the most common response is that Australian society resembles Type B. Almost one in three – 30.7 per cent – of Australians believe their society has a small elite, with more people in the middle and most at the bottom. The next most common response is Type D: a society in which most people are in the middle, with only tails of the population at the very upper and lower ends of the wealth distribution spectrum.

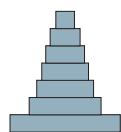
Interestingly, fears about job security are greatest for those who report the most and least unequal societies (Type A and Type E respectively). For those who identified these as the best description, between 15–16 per cent felt they were fairly or very likely to lose their jobs. For those who report a much greater concentration in the middle of the distribution (societies B, C, or D), only 10–13 per cent felt insecure in their current job.

Type D is also overwhelmingly the most popular response to the question of what Australian society *should* be like. More than half – 55.5 per cent – of Australians believe an ideal society would include most people in the middle, with few at the top and the bottom. The second most popular response – Type E – sees more people near the top of society, with few near the bottom. Only a very small number – 4.8 per cent of Australian adults – believe that Australian society should resemble Type B, suggesting a substantial discord between how Australians currently perceive their society and how they wish it.



Type A

A small elite at the top, very few people in the middle and the great mass of people at the bottom



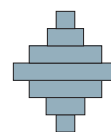
Type B

A society like a pyramid with a small elite at the top, more people in the middle and most at the bottom



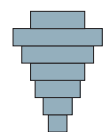
Type C

A pyramid except that just a few people are at the bottom



Type D

A society with most people in the middle

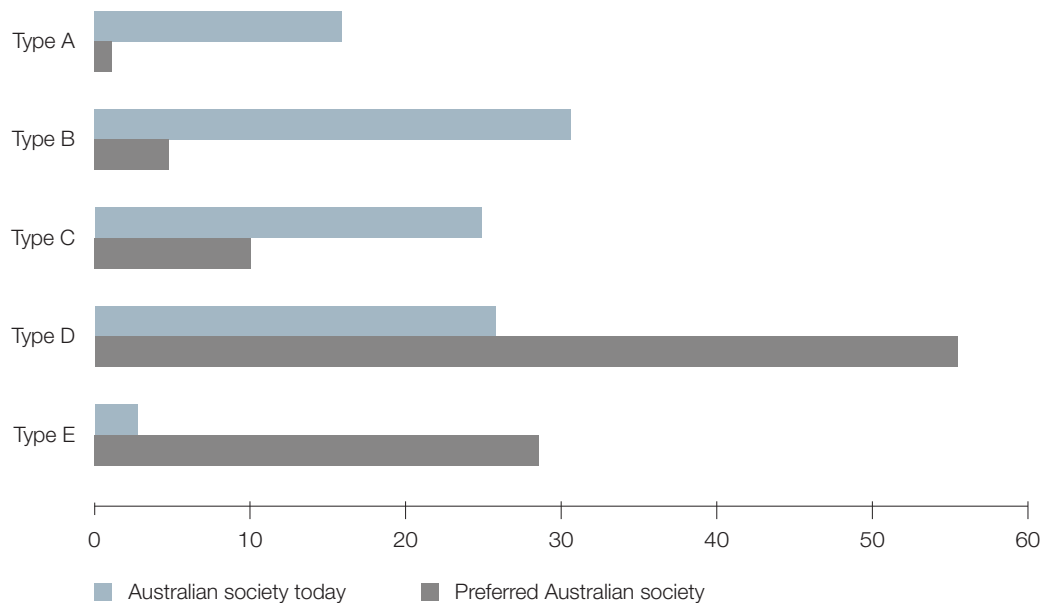


Type E

Many people near the top and only a few near the bottom

And finally, we are interested in your thoughts on the distribution of wealth in Australia. These five diagrams show different types of society. First, what type of society is Australia today – which diagram comes closest? What do you think Australia should be like – which would you prefer?

Source: ANUpoll on Job Security and Future of Work, July 2018



By way of comparison, when asked in the 2009 International Social Survey Program, respondents from the United States of America overwhelmingly described their society as resembling Type D (38.9 per cent of Americans). As in Australia, the next most common response was Type B (26 per cent). Almost one in five (17.1 per cent) described American society as Type A, and 15 per cent as Type C.

KEY TRENDS: THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS FACING THE COUNTRY

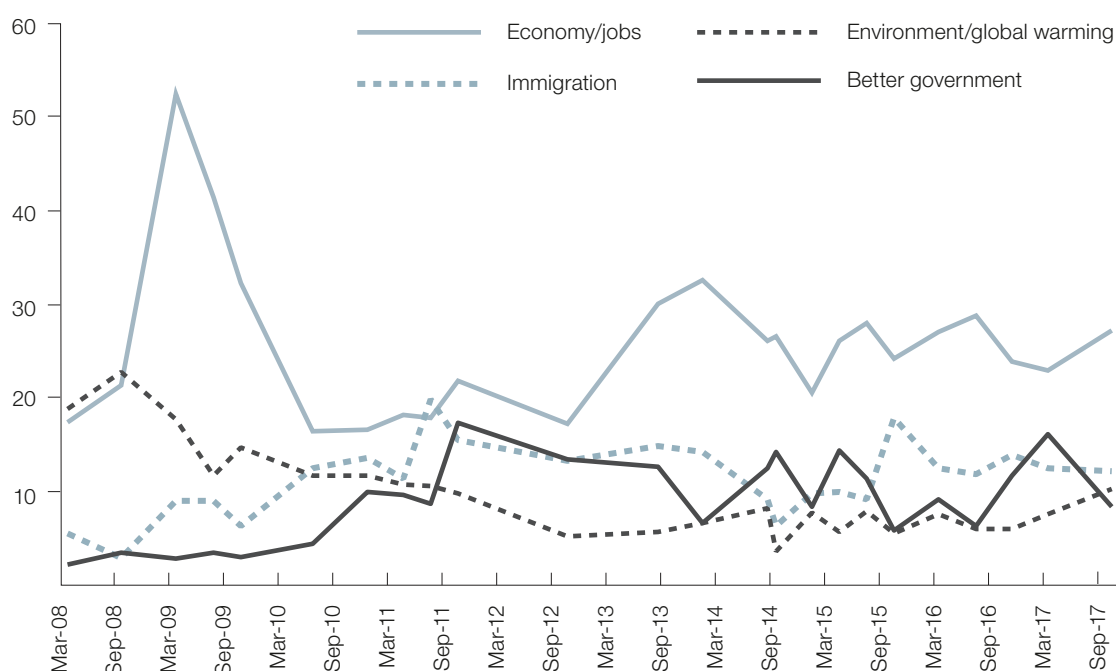
Key points

- > Continuing a six-year trend, Australians' three most important issues are the economy, immigration and better government.
- > The importance of the economy/jobs as an issue has returned to previously high levels, but the percentage of Australians naming better government as the most important issue facing the country has halved (from 16.4 to 8.7 per cent) from March 2017 to October 2017.
- > Immigration has once again overtaken 'better government' as the second most commonly named issue facing the country.
- > However, the importance of these three issues compared to others remains remarkably stable.

Continuing a six-year trend, Australians surveyed in the 25th ANUpoll name the economy and jobs, and better government as two of the three most important issues currently facing the country. However, for the first time since 2012 immigration is viewed as only the fourth most important issue facing Australia. The percentage of respondents nominating the economy and jobs as the number one issue has stabilised after a short-term decline during late 2016 and early 2017; 27.4 per cent of Australians believe it the most salient issue in October 2017.

What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?

Source: ANUpolls March 2008–October 2017



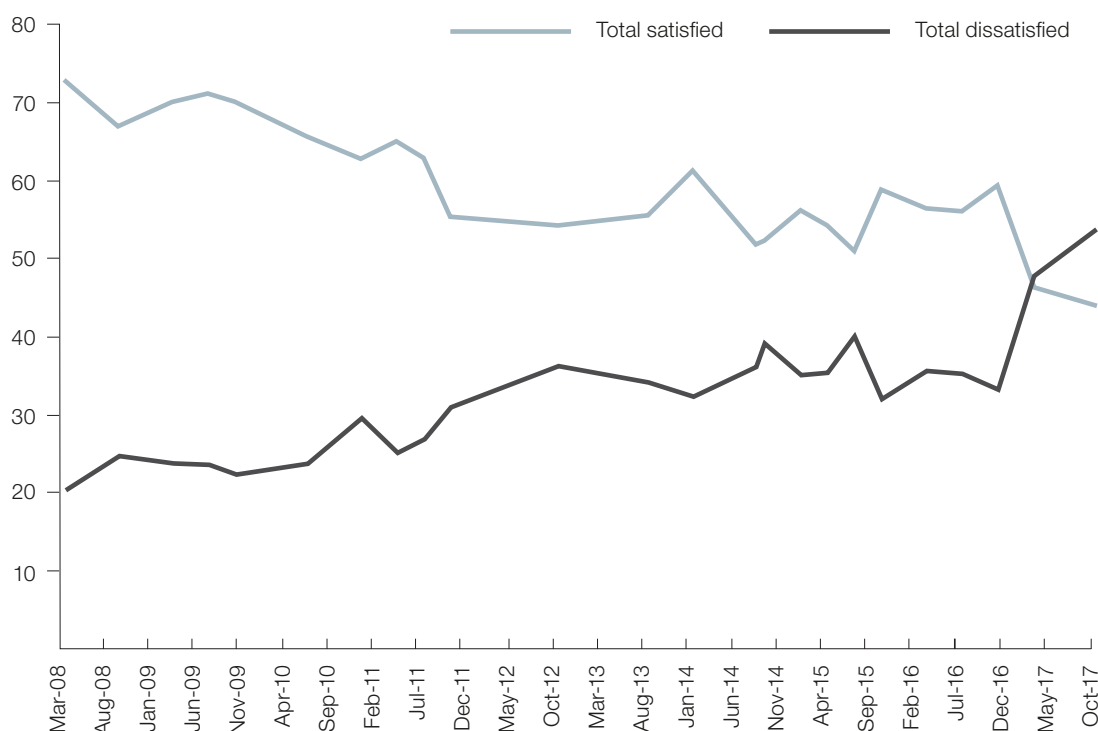
The methodology for the question, 'All things considered, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the country is heading?' was changed between the November 2016 and March 2017 ANUpolls. Accordingly, the question was not reported in the 25th ANUpoll, due to the possibility that any changes were due to methodology change rather than actual shifts in public opinion.

However, with two ANUpolls conducted with the new methodology, it seems that the apparent trend in Australians' dissatisfaction with the direction of the country is more than a methodological or statistical anomaly. Indeed, the finding that more than half (53.3 per cent) of Australians are dissatisfied with the country's direction accords with findings from the 2016 Australian Election Study and similar social surveys.

For the first time since the ANUpoll commenced in March 2008, more Australians are dissatisfied than satisfied with the direction in which the country is heading. Coupled with the 2016 Australian Election Study, which found that 40 per cent of Australians are not satisfied with Australia's system of democracy, this ANUpoll suggests that Australia is facing a crisis of public dissatisfaction.

All things considered, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the country is heading?

Source: ANUpolls March 2008–October 2017



ANUPOLL QUESTIONS

The following tables report the frequency of responses to questions in the October 2017 ANUpoll, weighted to reflect population age, gender, and education benchmarks. Estimates derived from surveys are subject to sampling variability. This variability can be expressed as a standard error (i.e. the extent to which the estimate of responses may vary from the estimate if the entire population answered the same questions). Cases where this error is large relative to the estimate are marked with a single asterisk (where the relative standard error is greater than 25 per cent of the estimate) and two asterisks (where the relative standard error is greater than 50 per cent of the estimate) respectively. Such estimates should be reported with caution.

All things considered, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the country is heading?

	Frequency	Per cent
Very satisfied	50	2.3
Satisfied	912	41.2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	71	3.2
Dissatisfied	945	42.7
Very dissatisfied	234	10.6
Total	2212	100.0
Refused	4	
Don't know	53	

What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?

	Frequency	Per cent
Economy/jobs	558	27.4
Better government	255	12.5
Environment / global warming	214	10.5
Immigration	177	8.7
Poverty / social exclusion / Inequality	171	8.4
Housing affordability	85	4.2
Values / morals / respect for others	67	3.3
Health care	61	3.0
Terrorism	57	2.8
Foreign influence / Australia's position in world	51	2.5
Infrastructure / planning / innovation	50	2.5
Ageing population	39	1.9
Defence / national security	37	1.8
Other	36	1.8
Alcohol and drug use	33	1.6
Law and order / crime / justice system	30	1.5
Education	29	1.4

	Frequency	Per cent
Industrial relations	22	1.1
Social services (including aged care, the disabled, etc)	15	0.7*
Young people's behaviour / attitudes	11	0.5*
Trade balance / loss of jobs to overseas	9	0.4*
Indigenous affairs	7	0.3*
Family / community / societal breakdown	6	0.3*
Water management	5	0.2*
Taxation	4	0.2*
Rural / farming issues	3	0.1*
The budget	2	0.1*
Interest rates	1	0.0*
Total	2035	100.0
Refused	42	
Don't know	195	

What do you think is the second most important problem facing Australia today?

	Frequency	Per cent
Economy / jobs	424	22.4
Immigration	188	9.9
Better government	166	8.8
Environment / global warming	149	7.9
Poverty / social exclusion / Inequality	128	6.7
Housing affordability	110	5.8
Law and order / crime / justice system	86	4.5
Values / morals / respect for others	78	4.1
Foreign influence / Australia's position in world	71	3.7
Infrastructure / planning / innovation	63	3.3
Health care	59	3.1
Other (specify)	57	3.0
Education	50	2.6
Alcohol and drug use	44	2.3
Social services (including aged care, the disabled, etc.)	43	2.3
Defence / national security	35	1.8
Terrorism	31	1.6
Industrial relations	30	1.6
Ageing population	24	1.3

	Frequency	Per cent
Taxation	18	0.9*
Young people's behaviour / attitudes	18	0.9*
Family / community / societal breakdown	8	0.4*
Indigenous affairs	5	0.3*
Rural / farming issues	4	0.2*
Trade balance / loss of jobs to overseas	3	0.2*
The budget	2	0.1*
None / no other	1	0.1*
Interest rates	1	0.1*
Water management	1	0.1*
Total	1897	100.0
Refused	237	

What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today? Time series data.

ANUpoll	Economy/jobs	Immigration	Better government
Mar-08	17.6	5.8	2.5
Sep-08	21.6	3.2	3.8
Mar-09	52.6	9.3	3.2
Jul-09	41.7	9.3	3.8
Oct-09	32.4	6.6	3.3
Jun-10	16.7	12.8	4.7
Dec-10	16.9	13.8	10.3
Apr-11	18.5	11.6	9.9
Jul-11	18.2	20.1	9.0
Oct-11	22.1	15.8	17.6
Oct-12	17.5	13.5	13.7
Aug-13	30.3	15.1	12.9
Jan-14	32.8	14.5	7.0
Aug-14	26.4	9.5	12.7
Sep-14	26.8	6.6	14.5
Jan-15	20.8	10	8.6
Apr-15	26.4	10.2	14.6
Jul-15	28.2	9.5	11.6
Oct-15	24.5	18.2	6.2
Mar-16	27.2	12.8	9.4
Jul-16	29.0	12.1	6.6
Nov-16	24.1	14.2	12.0
Mar-17	23.1	12.7	16.4
Oct-17	27.4	12.5	8.7

Thinking about the next 12 months, how likely do you think it is that you will lose your job or be laid off/have to lay off employees or close the business?

	Frequency	Per cent
Very likely	55	4.5
Fairly likely	96	7.8
Not too likely	525	42.8
Not at all likely	551	44.9
Total	1227	100.0
Not applicable	986	
Refused	7	
Don't know	50	

If you were laid off/If you had to, how easy would it be for you to find a job with another employer with approximately the same income and fringe benefits you now have, would you say ...?

	Frequency	Per cent
Very easy	122	10.2
Somewhat easy	420	35.2
Not easy at all	652	54.6
Total	1194	100.0
Not applicable	1007	
Refused	6	
Don't know	62	

Following are some reasons why people might worry about losing a job. For each one, please answer how concerned, if at all, you are about potentially losing your job for this reason ... Your employer finds someone in Australia who is willing to do your job for less money.

	Frequency	Per cent
Very concerned	141	13.5
Somewhat concerned	182	17.4
Not too concerned	314	30.0
Not concerned at all	411	39.2
Total	1048	100.0
Not applicable	1202	
Refused	4	
Don't know	15	

Following are some reasons why people might worry about losing a job. For each one, please answer how concerned, if at all, you are about potentially losing your job for this reason ... Your employer finds someone overseas who is willing to do your job for less money.

	Frequency	Per cent
Very concerned	155	14.8
Somewhat concerned	135	12.9
Not too concerned	258	24.6
Not concerned at all	501	47.8
Total	1049	100.0
Not applicable	1202	
Refused	2	
Don't know	18	

Following are some reasons why people might worry about losing a job. For each one, please answer how concerned, if at all, you are about potentially losing your job for this reason ... You aren't able to keep up with the technical skills required to do your job.

	Frequency	Per cent
Very concerned	63	6.0
Somewhat concerned	160	15.2
Not too concerned	382	36.3
Not concerned at all	447	42.5
Total	1052	100.0
Not applicable	1202	
Refused	2	
Don't know	13	

Following are some reasons why people might worry about losing a job. For each one, please answer how concerned, if at all, you are about potentially losing your job for this reason ... Your employer uses machines or computer programs to replace human workers.

	Frequency	Per cent
Very concerned	85	8.0
Somewhat concerned	104	9.8
Not too concerned	294	27.8
Not concerned at all	575	54.3
Total	1058	100.0
Not applicable	1202	
Refused	1	
Don't know	9	

Following are some reasons why people might worry about losing a job. For each one, please answer how concerned, if at all, you are about potentially losing your job for this reason ... Your overall industry is shrinking.

	Frequency	Per cent
Very concerned	112	10.6
Somewhat concerned	221	20.9
Not too concerned	347	32.9
Not concerned at all	375	35.5
Total	1055	100.0
Not applicable	1202	
Refused	2	
Don't know	11	

Following are some reasons why people might worry about losing a job. For each one, please answer how concerned, if at all, you are about potentially losing your job for this reason ... The company that you work for is poorly managed.

	Frequency	Per cent
Very concerned	155	14.7
Somewhat concerned	291	27.6
Not too concerned	292	27.7
Not concerned at all	316	30.0
Total	1054	100.0
Not applicable	1202	
Refused	2	
Don't know	12	

Thinking about the job or occupation that you work in now, how likely do you think it is that job will exist in its current form in 50 years?

	Frequency	Per cent
Definitely exist	312	25.1
Probably exist	581	46.7
Probably not exist	273	21.9
Definitely not exist	79	6.3
Total	1245	100.0
Not applicable	986	
Refused	3	
Don't know	36	

Do you think each of the following things will or will not happen in the next 20 years? ... Doctors will rely on computer programs to diagnose most diseases and determine treatments.

	Frequency	Per cent
Definitely happen	446	20.0
Probably happen	1291	58.0
Probably not happen	429	19.3
Definitely not happen	60	2.7
Total	2226	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know	42	

Do you think each of the following things will or will not happen in the next 20 years? ... Most stores and retail businesses will be fully automated and involve little or no human interaction between customers and employees.

	Frequency	Per cent
Definitely happen	341	15.3
Probably happen	1230	55.0
Probably not happen	614	27.5
Definitely not happen	50	2.2
Total	2235	100.0
Refused	0	
Don't know	34	

Do you think each of the following things will or will not happen in the next 20 years? ... Most deliveries in cities will be made by robots or drones instead of humans.

	Frequency	Per cent
Definitely happen	245	11.0
Probably happen	1037	46.7
Probably not happen	820	36.9
Definitely not happen	120	5.4
Total	2222	100.0
Refused	3	
Don't know	45	

Do you think each of the following things will or will not happen in the next 20 years? ... When people want to buy most common products, they will create them at home using a 3D printer.

	Frequency	Per cent
Definitely happen	132	6.1
Probably happen	780	36.2
Probably not happen	1045	48.5
Definitely not happen	199	9.2
Total	2156	100.0
Refused	3	
Don't know	112	

What do you think about the growing trade and business ties between Australia and other countries, do you think it is ...?

	Frequency	Per cent
Very good for Australian jobs	355	16.9
Somewhat good for Australian jobs	914	43.4
Somewhat bad for Australian jobs	641	30.4
Very bad for Australian jobs	196	9.3
Total	2106	100.0
Refused	4	
Don't know	161	

Do you think trade with other countries leads to an increase in the wages of Australian workers, a decrease in wages, or does it not make a difference?

	Frequency	Per cent
Increases wages	306	15.8
Decreases wages	939	48.5
Does not make a difference	693	35.8
Total	1938	100.0
Refused	10	
Don't know	322	

Do you think each of the following things will or will not happen in the next 20 years? ... Do you think trade with other countries leads to job creation in Australia, job losses, or does it not make a difference?

	Frequency	Per cent
Job creation	671	33.3
Job losses	1000	49.7
Does not make a difference	342	17.0
Total	2013	100.0
Refused	6	
Don't know	250	

Do you think each of the following things will or will not happen in the next 20 years? ... In your opinion, when foreign companies buy Australian companies, does this have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad or a very bad impact on our country?

	Frequency	Per cent
Very good	47	2.2
Somewhat good	346	16.4
Somewhat bad	1156	54.8
Very bad	560	26.6
Total	2109	100.0
Refused	8	
Don't know	154	

To the best of your knowledge, with which of these countries does Australia currently have a free trade agreement in place (not including those currently being negotiated)?

	'Yes' (Frequency)	'Yes' (Per cent)
China	1421	62.6
Japan	1128	49.7
Brazil	180	7.9
United Kingdom	1037	45.7
New Zealand	1451	63.9
India	592	26.1
South Africa	239	10.5
United States of America	1192	52.5
Canada	782	34.4
Russia	123	5.4
France	368	16.2
Thailand	618	27.2
Vietnam	446	19.6
United Arab Emirates	216	9.5
Chile	200	8.8
Argentina	142	6.3
Malaysia	654	28.8

If Australia stopped importing automobiles from another country, who would be most likely to benefit?

	Frequency	Per cent
Automobile manufacturers in that other country	318	15.6
Consumers in Australia	141	6.9
Automobile manufacturers in Australia	1579	77.5
Total	2038	100.0
Refused	20	
Don't know	212	

First, what type of society is Australia today – which diagram comes closest?

	Frequency	Per cent
Type A	275	15.9
Type B	530	30.7
Type C	430	24.9
Type D	446	25.8
Type E	48	2.8
Total	1729	100.0
Refused	2	
Don't know	39	
Not asked	501	

What do you think Australia should be like – which would you prefer?

	Frequency	Per cent
Type A	19	1.1
Type B	82	4.8
Type C	172	10.1
Type D	949	55.5
Type E	489	28.6
Total	1711	100.0
Refused	11	
Don't know	48	
Not asked	501	

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