

2021

LIVING

IN AUSTRALIA



HILDA

HEALTH, SLEEP
AND DIET
CORONAVIRUS



Message from Professor Peter Butterworth

Dear HILDA Survey participant,

For the past 20 years, the HILDA Survey has collected information about how Australians live and work, about their economic circumstances, their families and their relationships. This rich data has been used extensively by policymakers in government and by academic researchers. What is less recognised, however, is how important and influential the HILDA Survey has been in building our understanding of the health of Australians.

In my own research area of mental health there is no other Australian data comparable to HILDA. Each year the survey provides a snapshot of the mental health of the Australian population. This enables us to see, for example, how levels of distress have increased over time, particularly for younger Australians. The longitudinal data following the same people over time provides insights into how individuals' mental health changes. With 20 years of data we can better understand whether people's mental health varies significantly from year-to-year, the effect that different life transitions (e.g., leaving school, marriage, retirement) have on mental health, and how the social and economic context in which we are born, live and work influences our mental health.

HILDA continues to provide a unique resource to identify ways to enhance the mental health and wellbeing of Australians. This is only possible because of your willingness to participate in the HILDA interviews and to complete the surveys each year.

Thank you.



Professor Peter Butterworth

**Research School of Population Health,
ANU College of Health and Medicine**



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What's new this year?

In our twenty-first year, the Living in Australia (HILDA) study will focus on your health and health care visits, sleep, and diet along with a general update from you. Most of us have faced new challenges and demands, especially in the last year. With this in mind, it is critical that we capture this important information for policy makers and researchers who are passionate about improving Australian life.

Why are you so important to this study?

The Living in Australia (HILDA) study is truly one of a kind. It provides regular information on the household, economic and social experiences of the same people living in Australia over time and provides a true, detailed story of Australian life. Strict statistical guidelines that the Living in Australia (HILDA) study adheres to mean that you cannot be replaced or represented by any other person. The ongoing success of this study is dependent upon your participation.

Our thanks to you

We greatly appreciate the time you spend with our interviewers each year.

As a thank-you for your participation, you will receive a \$40 gift after your interview. You will receive an additional \$20 after you have completed and returned the Self-Completion Questionnaire, either as an online survey or hardcopy.

Also, when every eligible member in the household has taken part, all household members who have completed an interview will be entered into a prize draw to win 1 of 8 \$500 EFTPOS cards. Prize draws will be held monthly from August 2021 to March 2022.

Details of this prize draw are found at www.livinginaustralia.org/hildaprizedraw.

If you do not wish to be entered into the prize draw, simply inform your interviewer at the end of your interview. Once again, thank you for your ongoing participation.

Participating this year

Your interviewer will visit you to arrange a time for your face-to-face personal interview. If you prefer a phone call from your interviewer instead, please contact us via phone on 1800 656 670 or email HILDA@roymorgan.com. Our friendly support team will arrange this for you.

We encourage you to complete your Self-Completion Questionnaire online either now, or at the time of your interview. The instructions to complete the Self-Completion Questionnaire online are found in the letter addressed to your household. You will need your unique ID number to complete the survey online.

Just turned 15?

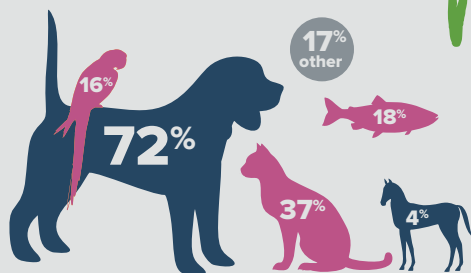
Young people, such as you, are critical to the future of Australia. By sharing your unique experience you are assisting all young Australians to influence their future.

If you have turned 15 (as at 30th June), we want to talk to you! Whether you are still at school, just started work, or trying to figure out your next steps, you can make sure that young people in Australia are represented in this important study.

For your time, you will receive a \$40 gift in thanks for your participation. In addition, you will receive an extra \$20 gift when you complete a Self-Completion Questionnaire.



In the Media



Pet ownership

For the first time in 2018, the HILDA Survey collected information about pet ownership, including whether Australians have pets or not and, if they do, what kind of pet they have.

Results show that pet ownership is quite high -- 61.2% of Australian people own at least one pet, with dogs being by far the most popular companion. Almost 72% of pet-owning people (or 48% of all people) have a dog. Cats are the next most popular pet, with approximately 37% of pet-owning people having a cat, followed by fish (18%), birds (16%) and horses (4%).

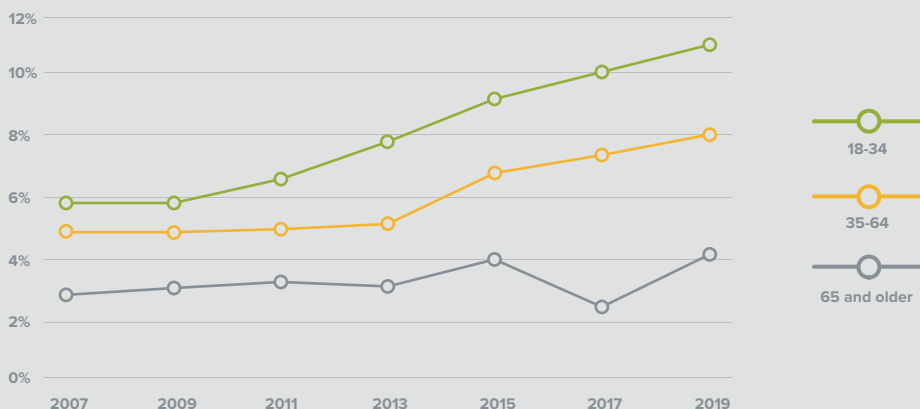
Mental health trends

The rates of mental health distress are on the rise. Using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, the percentage of Australian adults estimated to be at very high risk of psychological distress has grown substantially in the last 12 years -- from 4.8% in 2007 to 8.2% in 2019.

Young people are bearing much of the burden of this increase in psychological distress, with 10.9% percent of those aged 18 to 34 scoring 'very high' on the distress scale in 2019, rising from 5.8% in 2007. The elderly have experienced the least increase in psychological distress from 2007 to 2019.

Of course, these results do not reflect the impact of the coronavirus crisis on mental health which we will see in the years to come (through this measure in the study and others collected annually).

The risk of psychological distress for people aged 18 years and older, by year





What about privacy?

Your information is protected.

The people involved in the study are committed to ethical research and legally bound to ensure your information is secure. All people involved in the project must sign and comply with the Privacy Act 1988. Your rights are protected by Australian law. Your identifying information is collected for the purpose of the Living in Australia study only. Access to your identifying information is restricted to only those who require it for the purpose of administering or conducting the study.

Thinking of moving?

Your participation is critical to the success of the study, so please let us know if you are moving.

To update your contact details, either:

- Call **1800 656 670** and talk to our friendly support team;
- Email your new address to **HILDA@roymorgan.com**; or
- Update your address online: **<https://livinginaustralia.org/change-your-details>**

More information about Living in Australia

If you have any questions, would like more information, or would like to contact your interviewer please freecall **1800 656 670** or visit us online at **www.livinginaustralia.org**.



Offer to all Living in Australia participants

We are pleased to offer you a free Living in Australia report (Issue 3) – a short, stylish summary of key study findings.

Each year we also produce a very detailed Statistical Report which shows findings from topics like households, the labour market, economics, family formation, and health outcomes.

Both of these reports are available for free download from:

<https://livinginaustralia.org/#publications>

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: **+61 3 8344 2073** or Fax: **+61 3 9347 6739** or Email: **HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au** All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team (HILDA Survey) or the name or ethics ID number of the research project (ID no. 1955879).

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