

2020

# So Well

The Australian Wellbeing Check





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# Measure What Matters

Imagine a society where we all have the best chance to fulfil our potential and achieve wellbeing. The key to bringing this vision to life, starts with measuring what matters to create wellbeing.

Without measuring what matters, we continue to make decisions at the cost of our personal and collective wellbeing.

To understand, create and celebrate a future where we all have the best chance to fulfil our potential, Wellbeing Australia and Huber Social have joined forces to measure and track the wellbeing of Australians.

The aim is to provide data-driven evidence to help inform decision-making in our own lives and our communities.

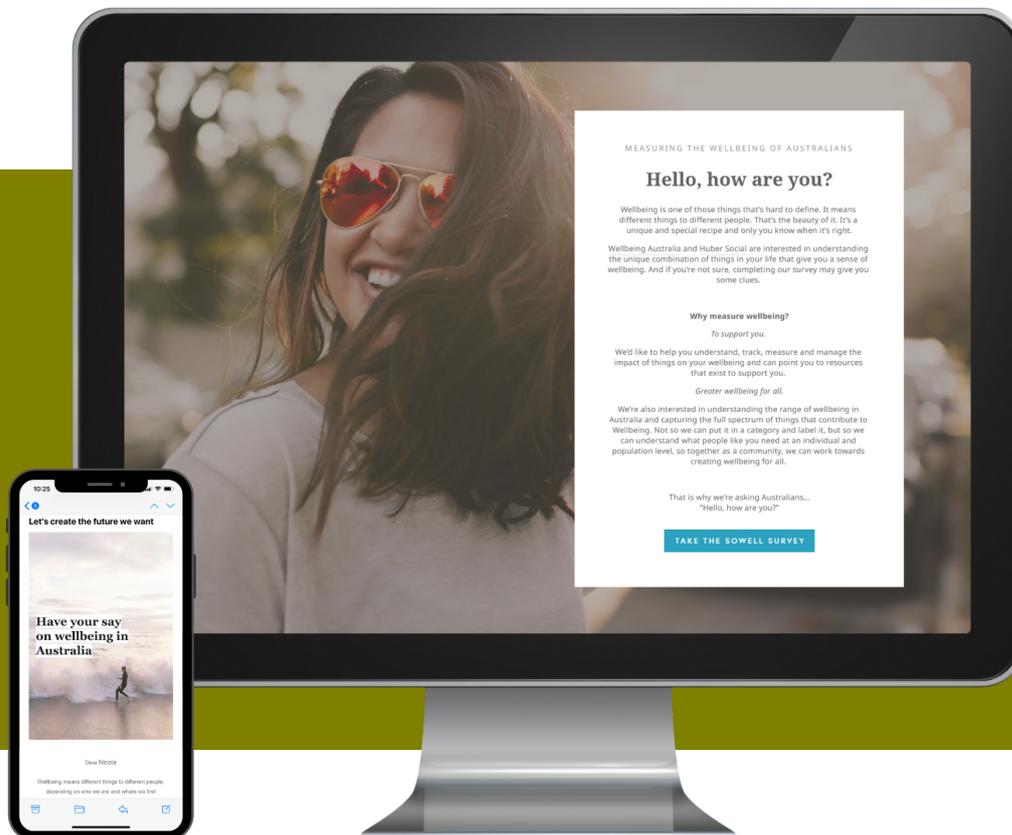
This insight will support employers and governments to make better decisions on our behalf, for the wellbeing of all.

To start to build out this understanding, we conducted the nation-wide SoWell survey in June 2020.

The survey asked questions to build an understanding of wellbeing in terms of a person's own satisfaction with life, and the capability and opportunity needs of people to support their wellbeing.

This report outlines what drives the wellbeing of participants in the SoWell survey. The objectives of this report are to:

- **SUPPORT**- offer solution focused strategies for individuals and their employers;
- **INFORM** - recommendations in relevant forums and policy opportunities; and
- **ADVOCATE** - for positive and proactive wellbeing management throughout Australia.





# Key Findings

## What matters most for our wellbeing

The following five factors emerged as the significant predictors of high levels of wellbeing:

- Enjoying life and having fun
- Being proud of one's life
- Having enough money to live comfortably
- Opportunity and ability to improve one's physical health
- Feeling comfortable asking for help when needed

## Demographics and wellbeing:

- **Age:** Respondents over the age of 55 were more likely to have higher levels of wellbeing.
- **Relationships:** Those who were in a relationship and living together had higher wellbeing than those who were not currently in a relationship.
- **Employment:** Retirees have the highest levels of wellbeing. Both employed and unemployed people have significantly lower levels of wellbeing than retirees.
- **Living arrangements:** Homeowners are more likely to have higher levels of wellbeing compared to people who are renting, staying in government housing, or staying with friends and family.
- **Location:** Those in regional and remote areas tend to have higher levels of wellbeing compared to those living in a major city.

*The findings will be strengthened over time as future surveys are conducted and analysed.*

# Why Measure Wellbeing?

Huber Social and Wellbeing Australia recognise wellbeing as the overall goal for all people, no matter where in the world they are or what circumstances in life they face. Wellbeing requires a person to have the capability and opportunity to be in the best position to fulfil their potential and live a life they value. It is more than an emotion; it is a state of being.



## To Support Individual Australians

The objective of the SoWell survey is to support Australians to understand, track, measure and be mindful of their wellbeing, with information and strategies to improve their satisfaction with life.

## Greater Wellbeing for All

We're also interested in understanding the range of wellbeing in Australia and capturing the full spectrum of things that contribute to wellbeing.

Not so we can put it in a category and label it, but so we can understand what Australians need at an individual and population level. Then together as a community, we can work towards creating wellbeing for all.

# How We Measured Wellbeing

For society to achieve collective wellbeing, we require a universal measure of wellbeing, that is holistic enough to account for each of our unique needs but that can also be applied in practical terms. To answer this call, Huber Social has developed the Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework. The framework addresses these challenges in two parts.

## 1. Subjective Wellbeing

As the inputs of wellbeing are unique to each and every one of us, it is not effective to select a set of objective targets and infer overall wellbeing. In doing so it is almost inevitable that an aspect of a person's life will be missed. Instead, leveraging the globally recognised Satisfaction with Life Scale[1], the framework measures subjective wellbeing at an individual level. This gives us a score for where someone finds themselves in life.

[1] Ed Diener, Robert A. Emmons, Randy J. Larsen and Sharon Griffin as noted in the 1985 article in the Journal of Personality Assessment.

## 2. Inputs to Wellbeing

To understand what a person needs to be in the best position of wellbeing, the second part of the framework measures a person's level of 'capability' and 'opportunity'.

At this level, the framework is a holistic and very comprehensive list of human needs. The level of each capability and opportunity factor is measured through self assessment using the SoWell survey. Scores against each factor are measured on a seven point scale.

Descriptive and statistical analysis helps us to identify any unique and significant relationships between the levels of capability and opportunity factors and overall wellbeing to identify what matters to a group or community at that point in time. Understanding what matters informs where to direct resources to have the greatest impact. Longitudinal measurement will allow us to understand any shifts in wellbeing overtime.

*The Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework*



# Who is Represented in the SoWell Survey?

The findings in this report are drawn from 116 completed surveys in the first, SoWell survey.

While SoWell aims to acquire a sample that is representative of Australia, the findings in this report should be considered in light of the following demographics of the survey respondents.

The average SoWell survey participant was:

- Female
- Between 25 and 64 years of age
- No children, but if they do then maximum of 2 children
- Self-identified as Australian, but not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- In a relationship and living with their partner
- University educated – most likely to have a post graduate qualification
- Living in a home they own
- Employed or self-employed, working 3-5 days a week

Description	%
Female	73%
Male	23%
18-34 years old	26%
35-54 years old	39%
55-74 years old	29%
75+ years old	3%
Identified as 'Australian' Ethnicity	60%
Identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	3% of the above 60%
In a relationship	74%
Not in a relationship	17%
No children	49%
Between 1 -3 children	40%
University educated	77%
Home owner	53%
Government housing	0.9%
Renting	26%
Employee	47%
Self-employed	25%
Retired	7%
Unemployed	3%
Unpaid work in the home	3%
Senior or top level management	27%
Entry level position	4%
Language other than English spoken at home	11%

*Note: any missing % in the table are due to respondents decision not to answer that question.*



# The Wellbeing of Participants

The wellbeing metric measures an individual's satisfaction with life.

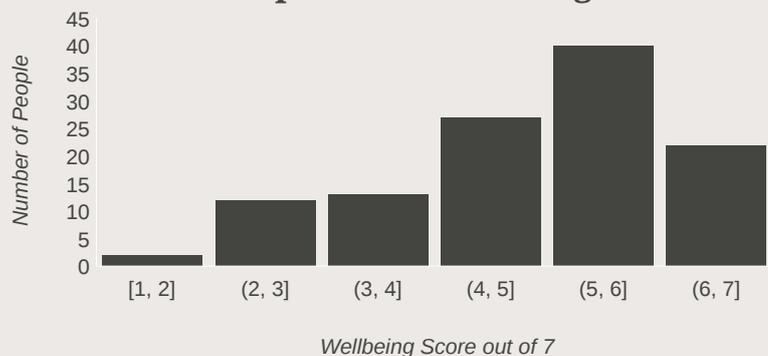
The average wellbeing score across all survey participants was

**5.02** out of 7



We will track and measure any changes in overall wellbeing over time. This longitudinal measurement will highlight trends as we see the effect of environmental, social or economic changes to our lives, such as COVID-19 or the Australian bushfires.

### Spread of Wellbeing



# Improving Wellbeing

To inform how to best support the wellbeing of our survey participants, statistical analysis was performed to understand what matters most to their overall wellbeing. This was achieved by determining the capability or opportunity factors that have a unique and significant relationship with wellbeing.

The following five factors emerged as the significant predictors of high levels of wellbeing:

Factor	P-Value	Change in Wellbeing
Enjoyment and fun	<0.001	0.249
Being proud of one's life	<0.001	0.370
Having enough money to live comfortably	<0.001	0.270
Opportunity to improve one's physical health	0.003	0.105
Being comfortable asking for help	0.002	0.131

These findings should be considered in the context of the entire scope of measurement on the following page. While all factors are valuable to the lives of Australian's, these five factors have the strongest relationship with overall wellbeing, above and beyond all other factors measured.

By focusing on and improving in these areas our survey participants, and those like them, will have the best chance of improving their overall satisfaction with life.

Pages 13-19 provide tips, suggestions and recommendations on how you can improve in each of these crucial areas.



# The Scope of Measurement for the SoWell Survey

The SoWell survey was designed to understand what is important to the wellbeing of Australians. As part of the measurement planning and survey design, consideration was given to which capability and opportunity factors are most likely to impact the wellbeing of the adult Australian population.

The following wellbeing, capability and opportunity factors were included in the scope of the SoWell survey. These factors may change overtime as analysis and feedback provide us with deeper insights into the factors driving the wellbeing of Australians.

Importantly, the five predictors of wellbeing identified on the previous page have the strongest relationship with overall satisfaction with life, above all other factors measured. This insight may surprise and hopefully enlighten some readers.



## Wellbeing:

- Satisfaction with Life

## Capability:

### Wellness

- Mental health
- Physical health
- Enjoyment
- Community connection
- Cultural connection
- Purpose and passion
- Self-acceptance

### Resilience

- Determination
- Discipline
- Coping
- Self-belief
- Problem solving
- Adaptability

### Life Skills

- Financial literacy
- Daily life skills
- Personal development
- Relationship skills
- Communication skills
- Health management

## Opportunity:

### Resources

- Internet
- Nutrition
- Income

### Societal Services and Structures

- Religion
- Employment
- Health services
- Home
- Culture
- Stability

### Relationships

- Community
- Land
- Personal

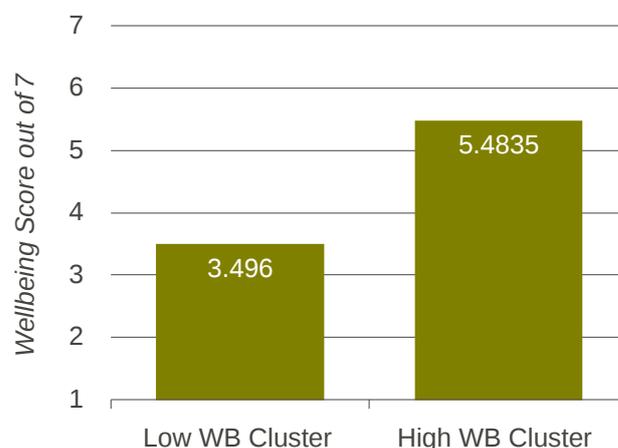
### Self-development

- Social
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Physical
- Self-respect
- Self-expression

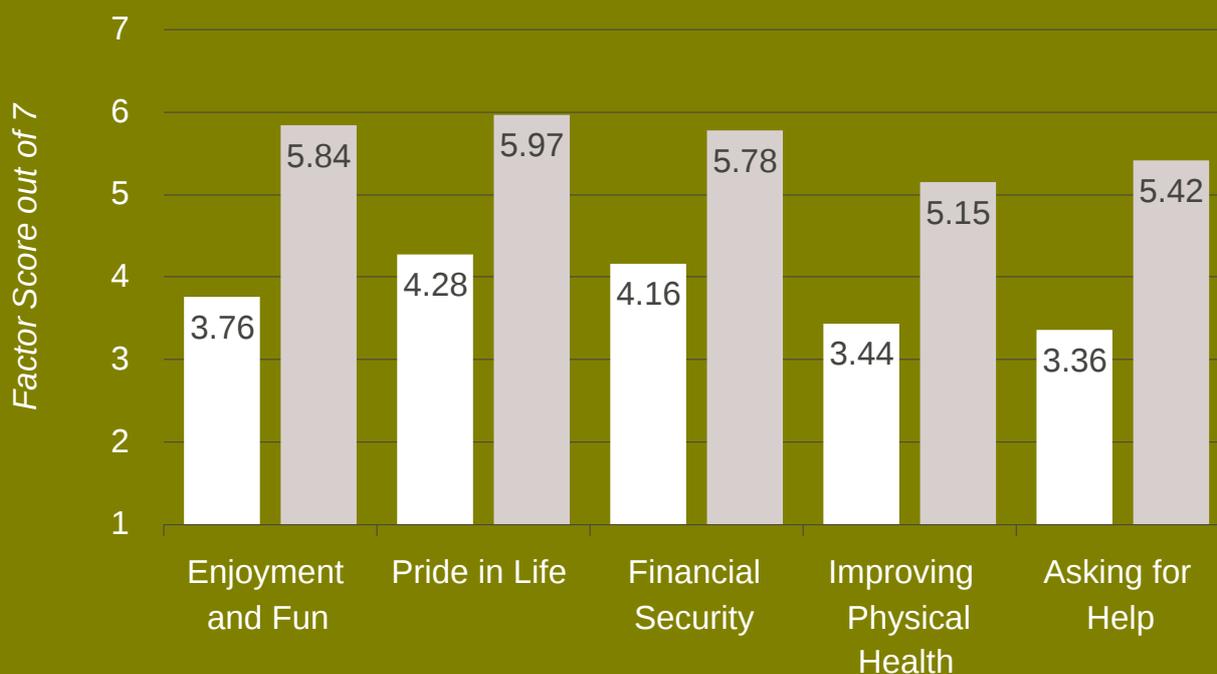
# The Highs and Lows of Wellbeing

Two clusters were identified from all survey participants – those with a particularly low level of wellbeing (Low WB Cluster) and those with high levels of wellbeing (High WB Cluster). All five predictors of high wellbeing were found to be significantly greater for the High WB Cluster.

Wellbeing Score by Cluster



Mean Ratings for the Predictors of High Wellbeing



# High Wellbeing

The cluster with high levels of wellbeing were more likely to be:

- People over 55 years old
- Living with their partner
- Retired
- Home owners (living in their home)
- Living in regional or remote locations



# Low Wellbeing

The cluster with lower levels of wellbeing were more likely to be:

- People between the ages of 18-45 years old
- Not in a relationship
- Employees (not-self employed), but also unemployed
- Renting, staying in government housing, or staying with friends and family
- Living in major cities

# #1 Enjoying life and having fun

Survey respondents with high levels of wellbeing take the time to enjoy their lives and have fun.

While theories of wellbeing have become more complex over the years, a lifestyle that involves enjoyable and positive experiences has remained consistent. Positive psychologists such as Seligman continue to place joy and fun as pivotal to our wellbeing [2].

What a life of enjoyment and fun looks like is different for each of us. Research shows there is no set path, but that we find moments of joy by seeking positive experiences, people and behaviours [3]. Individuals need to identify what they have fun doing and which aspects of life provides them with a sense of joy.

Once we individually understand what we enjoy, we can seek to share that joy with others, strengthening those positive experiences through connection and shared interests.

The SoWell survey shows that those in unpaid work at home or who are retired have the highest score for enjoyment when compared to those who are in paid work or unemployed. These groups also have higher levels of wellbeing. While this comes as no surprise, it sums up the all too familiar sentiment that work comes first, leisure comes second [4]. "It's not that Australian's don't know how to have fun, it's that we don't prioritise it enough." In fact, the 2019 Fun Report reveals 75% of Australians feel guilty when they have fun, with this figure increasing to 84% for parents [5].

[1] Kringelbach, M.L. & Berridge, K.C. (2010). *Pleasures of the Brain*, New York: Oxford University Press.; Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). *On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being*, Annual Review of Psychology, 52, 141-166.

[2] Seligman, M. (2013). *Flourish*, New York: Atria.; Rath, Tom, & Clifton, O. (2009) *How Full Is Your Bucket?*, New york: Gallup Press.

[3] Ibid.

[4] O'Brien, E. (2017). *Stop Putting Off Fun for After You Finish All Your Work*, Harvard Business Review.

[5]The Happiness Institute and Carnival Cruise Line (2019). *2019 Fun Report*.



## Some strategies to enjoy life and have fun:

- Reflect on joyful moments daily – at the dinner table, before bed or even journal.
- Don't confuse seriousness with boring. It is possible to take something seriously and still inject some fun and humour. See if you can bring laughter to your next work meeting.
- Find fun in the little moments. You don't need to set aside a whole day to have fun. Take a half hour here and there to do something you enjoy. Stop for a moment to take in your favourite song or grab a 15 minute neck massage.
- Take advantage of free or inexpensive fun. You don't need to go on a pricey vacation or buy concert tickets to enjoy life. Grab a book from the library, look for a trivia night or head to the park for a scavenger hunt.
- Don't wait to have fun. Sometimes we let perfection get in the way of fun. Telling yourself, "I'll have fun when..." is never going to end in peals of laughter. Have fun now.
- Take the time to connect with nature, even a short walk in the sunshine at lunchtime can turn your mood around.
- Celebrate and relive happy memories with friends and family. Leave your phone at the door and be in the moment with the people you care about.
- Try new things. Take risks to explore what fun looks like for you. You never know what you might enjoy.
- Plan something to look forward to. There is a certain joy in anticipation.
- Daydream. Whether you have a spare two minutes between meetings or an hour to lay in the park, positive daydreams are extremely enjoyable.

For more information on how to build your wellbeing with supporting research, please visit:  
[www.wellbeingaustralia.com.au](http://www.wellbeingaustralia.com.au)



## #2 Being proud of one's life

The SoWell respondents with high levels of wellbeing are more likely to be proud of what they have accomplished in life.

It seems intuitive that through a deeper sense of meaning and purpose we can be fulfilled and proud of our achievements, which in turn gives us a sense of wellbeing. But it also cuts the other way. Having healthy self-confidence and wellbeing enables us to recognise our strengths and achievements, and feel pride.

The connection between a sense of accomplishment, purpose and pride have been emphasised in the research of Seligman[1], Rath[2] and Sale[3], to name a few. Consistent in their work is the recognition that individuals need to feel they're making a difference, and are living their lives to a higher purpose. Accomplishments that support our sense of purpose provide a strong sense of pride.



Having 'purpose' is also related to the value we put on how we spend the majority of our days[4]. This varies throughout life's stages, especially in transitions, for example becoming parents or retiring. For parents who believe the value of full-time parenting a young child outweighs work, this experience is deeply fulfilling. Later they may elect to work, become involved in community and school volunteering, or to remain as primary caregiver. Again, the value of their role in the family and society remains essential to the pride they take in their daily life.

The SoWell findings supports this subjective evaluation of pride, with equal levels of pride for those with and without children, and those who are employed vs. in an unpaid role at home. The group who score lowest in being proud of their accomplishments are those in casual work or unemployed.

[1] Seligman, M. (2013). *Flourish*. New York: Atria.

[2] Rath, T, & Clifton, O. (2009). *How Full Is Your Bucket?*. New York: Gallup Press.

[3] Sale, J. (2017). *Mapping Motivation*. Milton: Taylor & Francis.

[4] In his PERMA model Seligman refers to this purpose as 'meaning', see note 1

Developing a greater understanding of your purpose, and therefore the having pride in your accomplishments can be assisted by the following strategies:

- Clarify what is of most importance and value to you.
- Continue to assess your purpose as you go through life. Does it still provide a sense of meaning and pride in the way you live?
- Set realistic goals or break a big dream into small goalposts. An unrealistic goal, or one so far in the future, often leaves us feeling deflated.
- Celebrate the small wins regularly. Include your loved ones in these celebrations or take a moment to write it down.
- Stop to take in the moment, ensuring you see and value how far you have come. Keep a record of all the moments you are proud of.
- Embrace a growth mindset. Accept that practise, failure and learning are endless. You can be proud of the way you handle a failed endeavour or the skills you learned along the way.
- Become part of something bigger than yourself. Join a community group, help out a friend. See how your small actions have a greater ripple effect.

The SoWell respondents with high levels of wellbeing tend to have enough money to live a comfortable life, by their own definition of comfortable.

Research shows that money causes short-term happiness by giving us more control over how we spend our time and who we spend it with [1]. Having money can make life easier, but it raises our expectations of what “living comfortably” means. By Rath’s logic those with more money would chose to spend more time with loved ones or in more enjoyable pursuits. Instead, many encounter new stresses, have higher expectations, feel lower self-esteem and feel more isolated.

Ed Dienier found that higher income was associated with more work, less leisure time and fewer stronger connections, offsetting the benefits of more money.

## #3 Having enough money to live comfortably

[1] Rath, T., & Harter, J. (2010). *Wellbeing: The five essential elements*. Gallup Press

**“In reality, most of the important pleasures in life cannot be bought. What really brings us satisfaction in life are relationships, purpose, meaning and a connection to nature.”**

- The Joyless Economy (1976)

According to research done by Australian Unity into subjective wellbeing, there is a point at which more money no longer improves our wellbeing. They found that wellbeing only rises with income up to \$100,000, and even those with a low income achieve wellbeing if they feel in control of how to spend it.

Aligned with these findings, the SoWell respondents who were in a relationship felt more secure with their finances, than singles. Understandably shared expenses and responsibility over the finances may leave them feeling like they can live a more comfortable life.

Some ways to improve your sense of having enough money to live comfortably include:

- Educate yourself. Being financially literate is the start to taking control of your finances but also to building your wealth.
- Make a financial plan and stick to it. Simple.
- Get help – use experts and free resources. Start by ensuring their credibility.
- Understand it is a learning process. Just like exercise and eating healthy, if you fall off the wagon, get back on.
- Try and minimise interest charges and bank fees. Get clever about paying off debt.
- Take stock of your belongings. Keep what is essential and sell those no longer of use.



**"Something fulfilling to do for employment, which earns me enough money to live without worrying about where my next meal will come from"**

- SoWell Survey Respondent.

# #4 Improving your physical health

When it comes to wellbeing, exercise is often the first thing to pop into our minds. However, when we consider physical health, we are discussing so much more than exercise. One's physical health encompasses a range of facets to be fulfilled. These include:

1. Basic necessities, such as clean, accessible water to drink and fresh unpolluted air to breathe
2. Physical safety in the area we live, work or are educated in
3. Freedom from physical pain or debilitating disability
4. A feeling of fitness and the ability to move freely
5. Healthy food choices and access
6. Regular physical activity to suit your interests, lifestyle and life phase
7. Sound and effective sleep patterns

The research around mental and physical health notes the correlation between positive mental health and healthy physical wellbeing and routines.

Recent studies around poor sleep quality highlight the physical and mental damage caused through persistent lack of good quality rest. Dr Libby Weaver refers to a relationship we need to have with our sleep, recognising our own triggers and challenges around going to and staying asleep. She notes the need for sleep to balance physical and mental health with special reference to age, gender and life habits.

To improve your physical health, consider the following strategies:

- Set realistic goals around healthy habits such as meal choices, exercise and sleep patterns.
- Improve your sleep quality by having clear times, a darkened room and comfortable climate.
- Plan meals and have some healthy snacks ready for on the go.
- Find ways to de-stress and laugh more often.
- Make time to address physical issues - book those appointments in advance so you don't keep making excuses.
- Every little bit counts. Just start with what you can do today and go from there.



**"My health is another part of my Wellbeing, and one that should take up more space in my Wellbeing pie chart but often gets shadowed by work and financial strains."**

*- SoWell Survey Respondent*

# #5 Asking others for help

**"The discomfort I feel about asking for help, pales in comparison to that of never finding the answer."**

*Andrea Ayres-Deets [1]*

Constantly learning and adapting to new situations is fundamental to our survival. Asking for help is just another way of learning and opening yourself up to new skills and ideas.

Being comfortable asking for help is strongly associated with healthy self-esteem and confidence. People with a healthy self-esteem are realistic about their strengths and the things they need help with. They are comfortable being vulnerable and don't fear being rejected or losing control. They trust that others like to help as it makes them feel appreciated for their skill and expertise. Furthermore, evidence shows that people actually like us more when we ask for help.

The SoWell respondents who find it easiest to ask others for help are females, and those in a relationship.

In order to become more comfortable asking for help try these strategies:

- See it as learning rather than being needy. Embrace your ability to learn new things from others. Great leaders are very comfortable in acknowledging where they can learn from others.
- Know yourself. Identify and understand your strengths and areas where you need help.
- Be direct and specific. People like to have something concrete on which to base their advice.
- Learn to actually ask, rather than hint. While you may think you are being as clear as day, hinting often just leads to miscommunication.
- Practise by putting yourself in uncomfortable or vulnerable positions that you're forced to ask for help.
- If fear is stopping you asking for help, stop and explore why those feelings exist.
- Once you ask for help, step back and let someone help you. Even if it feels uncomfortable.

Ayres-Deets, A. (2020). "How To Ask For Help (And Not Feel Bad About It)". The Next Web.

# What's Next for SoWell?

The SoWell survey is designed to be an ongoing check of wellbeing in Australia. Its purpose is to establish the key factors that influence wellbeing and assess trends and how these change over time and contexts.

For continuity, we will track the longitudinal wellbeing of participants where possible to further inform how wellbeing changes through life stages.

The intention is that the insights gained through this survey will inform government policy and the priorities of local governments, communities, employers and others. Measuring and understanding the key factors that contribute to individual and societal wellbeing is expected to be of significant value to these many stakeholders as they allocate resources to support the wellbeing of Australians.

## Plans for future surveys

While this SoWell survey aimed to acquire a sample that is representative of Australia, the slightly skewed demographics of respondents in this first survey limits the interpretation of the findings.

It is therefore our intention to work hard to ensure a more representative demographic for future surveys.

## Thank you

We would like to thank all the responders who made this first report possible. We truly hope the insights provided contribute to their insight and management of their own wellbeing.

If you would like to participate in future surveys, please register your interest at [www.sowell.com.au](http://www.sowell.com.au)

For more information on how to measure wellbeing and the survey results, please contact Huber Social at [info@hubersocial.com.au](mailto:info@hubersocial.com.au).

For more information on the implications of the findings and recommendations on how to address these please contact Wellbeing Australia at [hello@wellbeingaustralia.com.au](mailto:hello@wellbeingaustralia.com.au)



# About the Collaborators



Wellbeing Australia is a membership-based not-for-profit that started in 2012 with a vision that all Australians are engaged, motivated to learn and develop, and are proactive in managing their own wellbeing. Our purpose is to inspire people to value and proactively manage their wellbeing through sharing insights, information, resources, skills and hope.

We believe in finding and sharing practical solutions that people can use to improve their wellbeing and we embrace a wide range of solution-based theories. Wellbeing Australia is committed to identify the common elements and experiences that impact wellbeing at many stages of life and attempt to better understand and manage them.

We represent our members, who are around Australia across a broad range of life stages and industries. We see our role as a community hub to deliver solutions by way of practical tools, resources and connections to support our members and the Australia community through wellbeing challenges as much as when they are thriving.

For more information please visit [www.wellbeingaustralia.com.au](http://www.wellbeingaustralia.com.au).



Until we measure beyond financial value, we will continue to make decisions at the cost of our personal, social and environmental wellbeing. To truly measure progress, we must measure social value as well as financial value. Without both, we may unwittingly increase one to the detriment of the other. Just as longitude is to latitude, we need social value and financial value to know that we are on track.

Working across the private and social sector globally, Huber Social holds 'Wellbeing' as the measure of success for humanity and works with organisations to measure and create social value.

As an independent third party, Huber Social applies a universally applicable Wellbeing standard to determine the social value that an organisation has created and to identify how to maximise it. Through its growing network of Accredited Impact Consultants, Huber Social is developing a global Wellbeing database to inform decision making at every level – from service delivery, to investment, to policy.

Huber Social is dedicated to measuring what matters, so that resources can be directed to where they create the most social value.

For more information please visit [www.hubersocial.com.au](http://www.hubersocial.com.au)

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# SoWell

The Australian Wellbeing Check

HUBER SOCIAL & WELLBEING AUSTRALIA

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