



PRESS RELEASE

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Bastion's research reveals Aussies optimism has surged

The latest *Australia Now and Next* report by Bastion Agency has revealed Australians are at their most optimistic since the start of the study, and not just about their own future, but the country as a whole. Life satisfaction has also taken a significant leap forward since earlier this year, while most Australians also feel positive about the performance of the new Federal government to date.

However, we are not all 'happy little vegemites'. Cost of living pressures are starting to bite. 5% simply cannot afford the basics, and a further 20% are just hanging in there. It's no surprise to learn that groceries, fuel, and energy are the main contributors here and that has come at the cost of going out, ordering takeaway food and interestingly, how much alcohol we drink (normally in tough times Aussies hit the bottle).

The survey measuring consumer sentiment revealed the new Australian dream for one in two Aussies is simply to be 'comfortable'. While for some that still meant home ownership, for others it meant job security or having a family. Others dream of being carefree (23%), entrepreneurial (13%) or a changemaker (12%).

While personal optimism is high (73%), economic headwinds are impacting household consumption behaviour - especially for the hard-hit under 30s who wonder when they will catch a break.

"We would expect optimism to rise as we moved away from covid's darkest period, but with cost of living surging many Australians may in fact be experiencing 'optimism bias', believing the negative impacts that could affect them are in the past now. With the report finding household budget pressures beginning to bite, our optimism bias may prove to be a short-lived honeymoon period," **Bastion Insights' Head of Social & Government research James Wunsch** said.

Household Budget Pressures Bite

The latest survey showed the devastating impact of the cost of living pressures, with one in 20 unable to afford essentials and one in five (20%) barely able to afford essentials on a weekly basis.

One in two Australians report being somewhat, fairly, or extremely worried about their financial situation. Six in 10 are spending more on groceries (66%), fuel (63%) and energy bills (59%) than six months ago. That has led to one in three spending less on entertainment and going out (36%), alcohol (33%) and takeaway food (32%).

In a worrying finding for charities whose services come under pressure from increased demand in times of economic hardship, 54% of people plan to reduce charitable gifts and donations in the next six months, up from 42% in the last three months.

The survey showed young Australian adults are experiencing the highest levels of financial concern, with six in 10 of those aged under 30 worried about their current financial situation.

Aussies are adopting the 'working to live' mindset

When it comes to the new world of work, the survey revealed a 'work to live' mindset becoming entrenched.

The number of Australians who believe we will never see a return to a dominant office or location-based work culture has doubled since February, skyrocketing from 21% to 40% in the latest survey.

Half of those surveyed (48%) said they have 'quiet quit', while three in five (57%) believed their colleagues have done so.

"The survey found three in four (75%) Australians are confident in the security of their employment. While pandemic-induced skills and labour shortages have made jobs relatively easy to come by, the longer-term viability of the new 'work to live' mindset may come under pressure if the cost of living pressures and inflationary impacts on businesses begin to threaten that job security," **Wunsch** said.

Travel embraced as Aussies jet set

Despite widespread media reports of challenges including the soaring cost of airfares, travel delays, lost luggage, and mooted industrial action by airline staff, three in four travelers (76%) were satisfied with their recent interstate travel experience.

Reflecting Aussies love of travel, two in five have travelled intra (39%) or interstate (40%) in the past three months, and 13% overseas. Almost six in 10 expect to travel interstate (58%) and one in five (18%) internationally in the next three months.

“The report shows the new normal has indeed begun - and has flipped conventional thinking on its head on multiple fronts. Both Government agencies and our major corporates need to ensure they are proactively engaging with citizens, customers, and stakeholders to avoid strategic missteps based on outdated assumptions rather than accurate and timely data” **Wunsch** noted.

About the survey

Bastion has been conducting the *Australia Now & Next* (previously *Adapting to the New Normal*) survey tracking consumer sentiment for over two years. Each wave is an online survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,000 Australians. The latest survey, Wave 28, was conducted 14 - 20 October 2022.

If you would like to access further insights from the report, please go to <https://bastionagency.com/think-wide-narratives-australia-now-next/> or contact Bastion Insights' Head of Social & Government Research James Wunsch via jamesw@bastioninsights.com or 0422 433 231.

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About Bastion

Bastion is Australasia's largest independent marketing and communications agency, offering a breadth of specialist capabilities in an integrated model. It has 300+ staff across Melbourne, Sydney, Gold Coast, Los Angeles, New York City, Wellington and Auckland, plus agency partnerships in 10 Asian markets. Its client list includes Air New Zealand, Microsoft, Tower Insurance, Alinta Energy, ABC, Unilever, Cancer Institute NSW, L'Oréal, and KIA.

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