

Press release

For immediate release

Research shows university is falling out of favour with next generation of teenagers

Secondary school children age 11-16 are now far less likely to consider going to university than in previous years, according to the latest 2019 CHILDWISE Monitor Report.

The next generation of would-be students are also much less likely to see university as a route to getting a better paid job than they were five years ago.

“It appears children now have a less positive view about going to university,” says Simon Leggett, research director at CHILDWISE. “Children are less likely to see university as the golden ticket to a great future and the worthy investment it was once considered to be.”

“When we surveyed children in 2013, four in five agreed that going to university was a worthwhile investment for the future. This has now decreased considerably, with three in five now agreeing with this,” says Simon.

Girls are more likely to think it’s a worthwhile investment than boys. As children get closer to leaving school, their view becomes less optimistic about whether having a university degree means you will get a better paid job.

“At age 11-12, three in five think a degree will lead to a better paid job, but by age 15-16, this drops to two in five agreeing.”

The 2019 CHILDWISE Monitor is a comprehensive annual report looking at 5 to 16-year-olds’ media consumption, purchasing and social habits as well as key behaviour and reading habits. More than 2000 children in schools across the United Kingdom completed in-depth online surveys for the report, which is now in its 25th year.

Children were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the benefits of higher education and its impact on their career prospects. These questions were last asked in 2013, allowing some comparison over time.

The data also shows more children think it is a good idea to make all young people stay on in education or training until 18 than they did five years ago when last surveyed.

Children are also more likely to see the benefits of speaking foreign languages now than in 2013, with girls far more likely than boys to hold this opinion.

Two in five children think the current school external exam system is unfair and confusing, with girls more likely than boys to think this. Before the new GCSE grading system was introduced, fewer young people agreed with this statement.

Optimism about career prospects has also fallen since children were last asked about this in five years ago. Two in five are now confident they will find a job they enjoy, compared to three in five previously.

“Children are now more inclined to think they are likely to find a job but it might not be one that they really want,” says Simon Leggett. “One in five think it will be hard to find a job that pays enough to live on and one in seven think it will be hard to find a job of any kind.”

When asked about future career choices, girls want to be teachers and vets, while the number one choice for boys is footballer, although a career in engineering is growing in popularity with boys, and becoming a doctor or surgeon is increasingly popular with girls.

CHILDWISE is an independent market research agency specialising in children and young people. CHILDWISE has a programme of published independent research and also conducts research for government agencies, charities, broadcasters, publishers and brands www.childwise.co.uk

The Monitor Report 2019 covers... children and their media; TV viewing; music; reading ; children’s equipment; money; purchasing; sports & activities; health & wellbeing and education and employment.

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