

Media Release

September 2016

HARD-WORKING WESTERN AUSTRALIANS EVOLVE THE AUSSIE CLASS SYSTEM

- Four new classes emerge: Sloggers, Startup Stars, Gen 2.0s and Gestaters
- Western Australians emerge as more resistant to the way technology is evolving the class system
- Large portion of Western Australians have updated their occupational skills in the last five years but remain in more traditional roles

The social class system in Australia is evolving with four new groups emerging, as found in the “*Real Insurance Class System Survey*” released today.

The *Real Insurance Class System Survey* is the fourth instalment in a series of national studies, with this instalment investigating the shift in modern day classes.

The Survey found four new classes in Australia:

- **Sloggers:** Senior Australians who have to keep working to support themselves when they would prefer to work less. They are modest with less emphasis on material possessions.
- **Gen 2.0s:** Children of immigrants who have managed to improve their social and economic standing. They seem to be the most generous with their time and money.
- **Startup Stars:** In-demand professionals and entrepreneurs associated with emerging digital industries and work opportunities. They place emphasis on material possessions and tend to be more self-focused.
- **Gestaters:** They are the ‘celeb-generation’. They are living at home comfortably with their parents into their adult years despite having little assets or progression in their careers.

Mr Phillip Anderson, Real Insurance spokesperson, said that while it appears there are clear winners and losers in the changing class system, Western Australians are debunking perceptions around a fragile ageing workforce, with many seniors making huge contributions to the thriving local economy.

“Of the four emerging class systems, Western Australia has the highest proportion of Sloggers, with almost half identifying with this group. The proportion of Sloggers is followed by Gen 2.0s, with one in four Western Australian respondents fitting into this upwardly mobile group.”

While new trends and technologies are rapidly revolutionising the modern day class system, only 20 percent of Western Australians saying they work in an occupation that was very rare or didn’t exist 10 years ago.

“It appears Western Australians are taking advantage of our changing economy in a different way. Instead of jumping on the technological or startup bandwagon, a large portion of Western Australian respondents are honing their professional skills, with three in five stating they have developed or updated their occupational skills in the last five years.”

The research challenges traditional assumptions of the fixed Australian class system, with the social ladder becoming more permeable than ever before. This is evident in that over half of respondents in Western Australia feel they have ‘upgraded’ their social class compared to their parents.

However, the evolving class system may still indicate a source of contention, with 74 per cent of Western Australian respondents feeling there was a widening gap between classes compared to the past.

“An interesting finding was that more people today appear to be evolving into ‘social snobs’. Nationally, most Startup Stars say they think about social class when they meet new people and when they choose their friends. On the other hand, some of the groups such as Gen 2.0s and Sloggers would actually prefer to spend time with people significantly poorer than richer. This leads us to believe there could be a case made for ‘reverse snobbery’ within some groups in Australia,” Mr Anderson added.

For Western Australia’s Sloggers, over half believe they’ve already exceeded the expectations of their family and friends in relation to career and financial position – a figure higher than any other state.

However, a sizeable three in five Sloggers in Western Australia also said they wish they could work less, but couldn’t afford to.

While the research reveals a vastly different story of the Western Australian class system compared to other states, Mr Anderson said that there is little evidence to suggest certain groups are missing out.

“Indeed, the vast majority of Western Australians identified themselves as Sloggers, but this group also demonstrates innovation in its own right, upskilling past the age of 50 and taking advantage of their state’s decade-long mining boom, in addition to other traditional sectors such as tourism and agriculture.”

Additionally, Western Australians respondents demonstrated the successful and abounding diversity at play in the state, with more than half of Gen 2.0s believing they are upwardly socially mobile and on track for great progression in their careers.

Mr Anderson said that there is also a move towards increasing multiculturalism, which is contributing to new ideas for established industries, evident in Western Australia’s growing Gen 2.0 cohort.

“Multiculturalism and diversity is more prevalent than ever in today’s society, with almost half of Startup Stars and just under a third of Gen 2.0s speaking a language other than English at home.”

“Clearly, multiculturalism has not only resulted in a rich diversity of backgrounds and cultures, but a true diversity of thought, experience and innovation as well,” Mr Anderson said.

Dr Anna Hickey-Moody, lecturer in Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, said that the research adds weight to the cultural and societal trends she has been watching evolve for some time.

“The importance of technology and social media in the digital age is being realised through a number of emerging yet noticeable professional groups. These groups have potential to open opportunities for class fluidity, although the social and financial capital to engage with technology and the personal flexibility to meet the changing demands of the new labour market remain. It is significant that we are starting to see signs of upward intergenerational mobility being created through technology use.”

While the majority of Gen 2.0s and Sloggers believe social class is still about money and occupation, other groups disagree. Gestaters believe the ‘upper class’ is better defined by one’s occupation and how important their friends and connections are, while Startup Stars feel that education and how much money they have are the most important factors.

“Big picture statistics show the gap may be widening between social classes, and this is a great concern. It is important to note that groups that have harnessed modern technological advancements are finding it easier to increase their class standing than ever before, and we need to find more ways of facilitating this mobility” Dr Hickey-Moody said.

The research showed that more than three in four Startup Stars in Western Australia said they were career focused, with almost nine in ten feeling 'upwardly socially mobile.' The state's Sloggers, however, are struggling to make social class transitions, with just under one in ten saying they think moving up a class is possible. They also indicated that they are less career focused (42%).

"The ways people move up in social class has not changed substantially over the years. Those without an inheritance or parents with occupational repute still have a significantly more difficult economic life. While the rapidly evolving employment and economic landscape in Australia has the possibility to drive the flexibility of social groups, technological training and resources need to be made available to low socio-economic students who all too often leave formal education early," Dr Hickey-Moody commented.

The research shows the career-focused groups such as Startup Stars find 'upgrading' easier. Additionally, Western Australia's Gen 2.0s place the most value on education than any other state, with those managing to 'upgrade' their class attributing their success to better education opportunities (88%).

Mr Anderson said that the new class system is affecting people's perception of themselves and of those around them.

"What's particularly interesting is the way social class systems were more apparent to those in the city versus the country. City folk are viewed as more materialistic whereas country dwellers appear to most as more community-minded. City dwellers have also gained a reputation for being more judgmental, with almost a third of Western Australian respondents saying this group is more judgmental than those living in the country," commented Mr Anderson.

The evolution of social classes in this new research clearly demonstrates that class boundaries aren't becoming more blurred, but instead more well-defined. While there may be more room for mobility in the new class system to both challenge traditional hierarchies and leave some groups behind, it is important to note that success also looks different to each class.

Supporting data is available on the Real Insurance website:

www.realinsurance.com.au/news-views/real-insurance-class-system-survey

ENDS

Media Enquiries

Lucinda Bell
Senior Account Executive

Hill + Knowlton Strategies

p: 02 9286 1215
m: 0439 020 024

e: lucinda.bell@hkstrategies.com

Abby Hempfling
Account Director

Hill + Knowlton Strategies

p: 02 9286 1221
m: 0450 769 337

e: abigail.hempfling@hkstrategies.com

About Real Insurance

Real Insurance is an award-winning Australian insurer, with a goal to protect the quality of people's lives. Real Insurance has been named as the top Risk and Life Insurer in Roy Morgan's 2015 annual Customer Satisfaction Awards and was also awarded the 2014 Highly Commended Trusted Brand Award in the Life and Funeral Insurance categories, as voted for by Australian consumers. The company has been in the Australian market since 2005 with product offerings in car, home, life, income, pet, funeral, travel and bike insurance. Real Insurance is a trading name of Greenstone Financial Services Pty Ltd and The Hollard Insurance Company Pty Ltd.

About the 'Real Insurance Class System Survey'

In order to explore the new class system in Australia, CoreData surveyed over 1000 Australian across the nation in mid-August 2016.

Hard quotas by state were also engaged to ensure all the main states were represented with sufficiently robust samples (NSW = 212, VIC = 212, QLD = 208, WA = 201, Remaining states/territories = 204.)