

We're more selfish - Busy, stressful lives leave little time for others

Anooska Tucker-Evans, Sunday Mail, 4 May 2008

AUSTRALIANS are becoming more selfish -- and work and technology are to blame, a new survey reveals.

The Bushells Barometer, a poll of 1200 Australians aged 18 to 64, found most Aussies believed we were becoming more self-centred, with three in four respondents saying we were more selfish than 10 years ago. Social researcher Mark **McCrindle** said life stresses meant we were focusing only on ourselves.

``We are busier than ever and it probably flows on from that, that people are a bit more self-obsessed," he said.

``People are in the complexity of 21st-century living, just having to bunker down and look after themselves and their family because we're struggling with mortgage stress and time stress and trying to get work-life balance."

Mr **McCrindle** said increasing use of technology such as mobile phones and MP3 players was also leading to people having less time for others.

``I think technology, while it's a help, is part of the problem," he said. ``People aren't connecting with strangers or on the lookout to say 'Hi' because, whether walking or on public transport, they are in their own zone with earphones in their ear."

Mr **McCrindle** said working longer hours was also keeping many from volunteering.

``It's a hard label to say we're selfish, but people are focused more on their own lives than reaching out and it's reflected in volunteering rates," he said.

``Eighty-two per cent say that people should be more willing to participate and help their local community."

Mr **McCrindle** said the selfishness wasn't liked though, and there were hopes that the next generation would reverse the trend.

``People are lamenting the old days when people had a bit more time and weren't in financial survival mode and weren't on that wealth accumulation pathway," he said.

``Luckily, we've got a generation coming through who are more open to the world."

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WHY IT'S ALL ABOUT ME

- * WORK stress and technology are the prime reasons people say they have less time for others.
- * TALKING on mobile phones and listening to iPods put some people in their own 'zone'.
- * SOME say financial pressures force them to work longer and spend more time on their own projects.