

Unmet Demand?
Characteristics and Activities of University Applicants not offered a Place
LSAY Research Report 46

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on Year 12 students who apply to go to university but are not offered a place. This group is commonly referred to as indicating a level of ‘unmet demand’ for university. The size and nature of the group are potentially important considerations in planning higher education.

The report compares the ‘Applied, no offer’ group with other groups of young people. The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) program provides a rich source of data on young people – their social and educational backgrounds, intentions, Year 12 performance, enrolments in post-school education and training, and labour market activities. The report analyses the LSAY cohort that was first sampled in Year 9 in 1998. Most were in Year 12 in 2001, and their post-school activities were analysed for 2002 and 2003.

The report analyses the characteristics and activities of six groups of young people who comprise the LSAY cohort. The groups and their relative sizes are:

- Group 1:* In Year 12 in 2001 and applied to enter university, but not offered a place (5 per cent of the LSAY cohort)
- Group 2:* In Year 12 in 2001, received an offer of a university place, but did not enrol in university in either 2002 or 2003 (5 per cent)
- Group 3:* In Year 12 in 2001, received an offer of a university place, and enrolled in 2003 after a ‘gap’ year in 2002 (3 per cent)
- Group 4:* In Year 12 in 2001, and entered university in 2002 (38 per cent)
- Group 5:* In Year 12 in 2001, but did not apply for a university course (22 per cent)
- Group 6:* Other. This group comprises those who left school before Year 12 and those with no post-school information (28 per cent)

The main findings are as follows.

- The 5 per cent of the sample who were in the ‘Applied, no offer’ group (Group 1) amounted to about 10 per cent of the 2001 Year 12 students who applied for a university place.
- The ‘Applied, no offer’ group expressed clear intentions to go to university. In Years 9 to 11, about 70 per cent of the group indicated that they wished to attend university. In Year 12 in 2001, 75 per cent said that they intended to go to university. These percentages are higher than for the group who received an offer of a university place but who did not enrol in either 2002 or 2003 (Group 2), and for the group that did not apply (Group 5).
- Overall, the demographic and social characteristics of the ‘Applied, no offer’ group were similar to those of other students enrolled in Year 12 in 2001. Young persons from middle occupational and educational backgrounds were only marginally more likely to be in the ‘Applied, no offer’ group.
- Similarly, school sector was not associated with belonging to the ‘Applied, no offer’ group.
- In contrast, membership of the ‘Applied, no offer’ group was strongly associated with achievement in literacy and numeracy in Year 9: the lower the achievement score, the more likely students were to be in the group. Very few students in the top achievement quartile belonged to this group, unlike those who were offered a university place.

- Membership of the ‘Applied, no offer’ group was even more strongly associated with tertiary entrance performance. The ‘Applied, no offer’ group (Group 1) had much lower Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER) scores than the other university applicant groups. Their average ENTER score was about 54 compared to 80 for those who enrolled in university (Groups 3 and 4). Only 14 per cent of Group 1 had ENTER scores above 70.
- Multivariate analyses revealed that, of demographic and social background factors, only parental occupational background had a significant impact on belonging to the ‘Applied, no offer’ group. A professional background, and to a lesser extent, a managerial background, significantly reduced the odds of being in Group 1. However, these effects were not strong and disappeared when controlling for Year 12 ENTER score.
- In 2003, two years after doing Year 12, about 65 per cent of the ‘Applied, no offer’ group were ‘fully engaged’ in either working full-time (37 per cent) or studying full-time (27 per cent). This compares to 72 per cent of the ‘Did not apply’ group who were fully engaged in 2003 and 71 per cent of the ‘Not in year 12 in 2001’ group. The latter two groups were more likely to be working full-time (57 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively) than the ‘Applied, no offer’ group.
- In contrast, the ‘Applied, no offer’ group showed low levels of unemployment in 2003 (4 per cent) compared to 7 and 8 per cent respectively among the ‘Did not apply’ and ‘Other’ groups.
- Although the ‘Applied, no offer’ group missed out on going to university after Year 12, by 2003 around 45 per cent were doing some form of post-school education and training. About 24 per cent were enrolled in a TAFE Diploma course, 11 per cent in a traineeship, 6 per cent in a TAFE Certificate course, and 5 per cent in an apprenticeship.

In summary, the report indicates that a relatively small proportion of the Year 12 students who applied for university did not receive an offer of a place. The principal reason why these students did not receive an offer was that they achieved a low ENTER score. Around 45 per cent of the ‘Applied, no offer’ group were engaged in some form of education or training, all of it in the vocational education and training sector, indicating their continuing interest in learning.