

***What do we know
about the experiences
of Australian youth?***

***An easy reference guide to
Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth
research reports, 1996–2003***

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September 2004*

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What is this reference guide about?

Have the literacy levels of 14 year-old Australians changed over the last two decades? Do girls perform better than boys? What factors influence literacy and numeracy skills?

What subjects do secondary school students in Australia choose? Does this make a difference after school?

Who leaves school early? Are early leavers 'at risk' compared to those who complete Year 12?

Combining part-time work with schooling – what impact does this have on school results and post-school pathways?

What factors appear to influence post-school choices?

What pathways are followed by young Australians after leaving school? Which pathways appear to be successful? Who goes on to post-school education and training?

How do young people fare in the labour market? What helps them to do well?

These are some of the questions that the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) research program has been examining over the last two decades.

This reference guide is not simply a summary of each report – rather the findings from 36 reports have been summarised thematically to show what we know about the experiences of Australian youth as they move through education and training into the labour market and adult life. The bracketed notations in the right hand margin indicate the report number and the relevant page(s) on which each piece of information is based and where further information can be found.

About LSAY

LSAY is a research program that follows young Australians as they move through secondary school, into further education or training, and into the labour market and adult life. The LSAY program is funded by the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) and is jointly managed by DEST and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Longitudinal studies such as LSAY give a clear picture of what young people are up to at any point in time and of the pathways they took to get there. The capacity to follow the same young people over time means that factors influencing their pathways and outcomes can be identified, and changes in the educational and employment experiences of successive groups can be tracked.

The current LSAY program began in 1995 with the selection of a national sample, or cohort, of 13 000 Year 9 students (Y95 cohort). Further national samples were selected in 1998 (Y98 cohort) and 2003 (Y03 cohort). LSAY participants are interviewed annually from around age 15 to around age 25. Participants provide information, mostly via telephone surveys, about their involvement in education, training and jobs, and other facets of their lives. Overall, some 35 000 young people have taken part in the current LSAY program.

LSAY research is generally published by ACER in the form of research reports and briefing papers. Thirty six LSAY research reports were produced between 1996 and 2003. The purpose of this reference guide is to make the research in these 36 reports more accessible and widely available.

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Part 1. Educational experiences

Part 1 of this reference guide looks at what we know about the educational experiences of Australian youth. The research summarised contributes to a number of educational debates. Some of the highlights are:

- *Literacy and numeracy are important. By the time students are 14, the levels of literacy and numeracy they have achieved are critical determinants of what they go on to do. If they have achieved high levels of literacy and numeracy, they are more likely to continue at school, enter university, and go on to high-status, well-paid jobs. The research also shows that over a twenty-year period there has been no decline, or 'dumbing down', in literacy and numeracy levels.*
- *Vocational Educational and Training (VET) options for students are playing a useful role. VET programs offer a successful transition from school to full-time work, especially for those more at risk.*
- *Part-time work while at high school plays the same useful transition role, provided it does not take up too many hours. Working part-time for extremely long hours usually means that the students will leave school early but, if they do not work too much, they are generally more satisfied with their lives and more likely to get an apprenticeship or full-time job after leaving.*
- *Gender does make a difference. Boys continue to score higher in numeracy and girls in literacy, and boys are more likely to leave school before completing Year 12.*

During the high school years

Literacy & numeracy of 14 year-olds

What are the levels and have they got better or worse?

The most striking aspect of the research on literacy and numeracy is that there has been no overall change in the scores on achievement tests over more than two decades, although the number of 14 year-olds who have a level of mastery in numeracy has increased.

The scores of 14 year-olds, as a group, in reading comprehension and mathematics have remained constant over the period from 1975 to 1998. It is significant to note that the measurement scale used to record the scores has also remained constant over the same time frame.

(29,ix)

The percentage of students who have achieved mastery in literacy—that which would enable them to function in adult society—has also remained constant. On average, 70% of students achieved mastery of reading comprehension over the period 1975 to 1995. Interestingly, the levels of mastery in numeracy have increased: from 74% achieving mastery in 1975 to 85% in 1995.

(3,5 & 12)

What factors are related to literacy achievement?

A number of sociodemographic and school variables are related to literacy achievement. The most important individual factors are gender, SES and the intention to go to university. The most important school factors are the mean school SES and the proportion of students from a non-English speaking background.

(36,24)

When comparing performance over the 1975-to-1988 period, the two most notable findings are that Indigenous students perform much lower and students from a non-English speaking background have improved over the period.

GENDER

Over the period 1975 to 1998, the most noticeable change was that 14 year-old males' performance on the literacy test decreased while females' increased.

(29,9-12)

So, while the overall performance had not changed for the full group of 14 year-olds, within the group males' reading comprehension level had gone down and females' reading comprehension had gone up—and the difference was statistically significant.

A later study, using data from Year 9 students in the Y95 and Y98 cohorts, also found a small but significant gender difference. Females performed significantly higher than males, even when the potential effect of other variables was taken into account.

(36,18-21)

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Students from English speaking families performed better over the 1975 to 1998 period than those whose main language was not English. Nevertheless, those from non-English speaking backgrounds still showed significant improvement in reading comprehension over the period.

(29,11-13)

Another study based on the period 1975 to 1995 showed the narrowing of the gap between students from different backgrounds was mainly due to improvements from 1975 to 1995 in socio-economic status and to changes in the country of parental birth of students with non-English speaking backgrounds.

(3,7)

Data from Year 9 students in the Y95 and Y98 cohorts also showed that students born in a non-English speaking country or with a mother born in a non-English speaking country performed lower.

(36,22)

PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS/SES

There were interesting and different patterns in literacy scores between students with parents in different occupational groups.

The literacy levels for students:

- with parents in the professional/managerial group decreased from 1975 to 1995 and then increased slightly in 1998
- with parents in the clerical/sales/service group also decreased from 1975 to 1995 and then stabilised
- with parents in trade occupations remained stable from 1975 to 1989, then decreased in 1995 and increased in 1998
- with parents as production workers/labourers remained relatively stable until 1995, then decreased in 1998.

(29,13-16)

Students with parents in the different groups performed significantly differently, with those in the professional/management group scoring the highest and those in the production workers/labourer group the lowest.

(29,13-16)

However, there was some suggestion that the performance gap between students with parents from the highest and lowest occupational groups could in part be attributed to school factors. There was also an indication that, up to 1995, the gap was narrowing.

(3,8)

Data from the Y95 and Y98 cohorts also showed that SES, as measured by parents' occupations, had an influence on literacy performance. However, in this study, school factors did not account for differences.

(36,21)

PARENTS' EDUCATION

Data from the Y95 and Y98 cohorts showed that students whose fathers had a post-secondary qualification had higher scores than those whose fathers had not obtained one, but the influence of this factor diminished as other factors were taken into account (eg SES)

(36,21-22)

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

In the study comparing performances between 1975 and 1998, a simple distinction was made between metropolitan and non-metropolitan students. No significant differences in literacy performance between students in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas were found over that period.

(29,16-18)

There are, however, a number of related variables that could confound the measure of geographic location. Another study (26) looked at the role of geographic location in more detail, breaking up location into five categories and analysing the relative strength of influence of related variables—especially those of Indigenusness and remoteness.

Using the literacy data from the Y95 and Y98 cohorts, it was found that home location had a small, albeit statistically significant, effect on reading comprehension scores of Year 9 students (mostly 14 year-olds). But, this effect was weaker than those associated with other background characteristics and there was no substantive support for the belief that non-Indigenous students from remote areas are disadvantaged.

(26,13-15)

On the other hand, another analysis of the Y95 and Y98 cohorts, using the five-category distinction for location, found no significant difference in performance levels. (36,23)

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Data for Indigenous students are only available from the 1995 and 1998 samples. When compared with non-Indigenous students for the same years, the Indigenous students performed significantly lower on reading comprehension. (29,18-19)

When data from both samples were compared, Indigenous students in the Y98 cohort performed lower than those in the Y95 cohort. (36,21)

Geographic location had a bearing on the performance levels of Indigenous students. The average level of literacy attainment for Indigenous students in remote areas was substantially below that of Indigenous students in other areas. (26,16)

STUDENTS' ASPIRATIONS AND ATTITUDES TO SCHOOL

Data from the Y95 and Y98 cohorts showed that students who performed higher on the literacy test also:

- scored higher on the achievement subscale of the *Quality of School Life* measure
- planned to complete Year 12
- planned to attend university. (36,22-23)

SCHOOL FACTORS

Data from Y95 and Y98 cohorts showed that about one-sixth of the variation in the literacy scores could be attributed to differences between schools. Students with higher literacy scores came from schools with:

- higher socio-economic status
- fewer students from a non-English speaking background
- a positive school climate. (36,23-24)

® for data on the relative influences of all these literacy related variables see (36,19,20,24)

What factors are related to numeracy achievement?

Many of the same sociodemographic and school variables are related to numeracy achievement, although with some different effects and with fewer factors accounting for differences in performance.

GENDER

Both male and female 14 year-olds' numeracy levels had increased over the period 1975 to 1998, although only the increase for males was statistically significant. More importantly, male levels of numeracy were significantly higher than females' over the whole period.

(29,21-23)

Data from the Y95 and Y98 cohorts also showed that males scored significantly higher than females on the numeracy test.

(36,24-27)

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Fourteen year-old students with an English speaking background performed consistently and significantly higher on the mathematics test than students from a non-English speaking background over the period 1975 to 1998. However, those students from a non-English speaking background also showed a significant increase in their mathematics score over the same period.

(29,22-24)

Another study, based on the period 1975 to 1995, showed the narrowing of the gap between students from different language backgrounds was mainly due to improvements from 1975 to 1995 in socio-economic status of students with non-English speaking backgrounds.

(3,14)

A further study using the Y95 and Y98 cohort data showed no significant influence of language background on numeracy performance.

(36,27)

PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS/SES

There were interesting and different patterns in mathematics scores between 14 year-old students with parents in different occupational groups over the period 1975 to 1998. The numeracy levels for students:

- with parents in the professional/managerial group decreased from 1975 to 1989 but have remained stable since

- with parents in the clerical/sales/service group also decreased from 1975 to 1989, then increased to 1995 and stabilised in 1998
- with parents in trade occupations decreased from 1975 to 1989, then remained stable to 1998
- with parents as production workers/labourers fluctuated over 1975 to 1998 but with no significant difference between the mean scores for 1975 and 1998.

Students with parents in the different groups performed significantly differently, with those in the professional/management group scoring the highest and those in the production workers/labourer group the lowest. (29,25-27)

However, the gap between students with parents in different occupational groups narrowed from 1975 to 1995. (3,15)

Nevertheless, the combined Y95 and Y98 cohort data showed that SES, as measured by parent occupation, still does influence numeracy performance. On the other hand, after adjusting for other factors, parents' education does not influence performance. (36,27)

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Mean mathematics scores for 14 year-olds from both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas fluctuated over the period from 1975 to 1998. But there were no significant differences between students from the two different locations or within each group over the period. (29,27-29)

When geographic location was broken into five categories to further explore the effect, it was found that (using the numeracy data from the Y95 and Y98 cohorts) home location had a small, albeit statistically significant, effect on mathematics scores of Year 9 students (mostly 14 year-olds). But this effect was weaker than those associated with other background characteristics and there was no substantive support for the belief that non-Indigenous students from remote areas are disadvantaged. (26,13-15)

Data from the Y95 and Y98 cohorts based on the five-category distinction for location showed no significant effect of location. (36,28)

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Data for Indigenous students were only available for the Y95 and Y98 cohorts. When compared with non-Indigenous students for the same years, the Indigenous students performed significantly lower in mathematics.

(29,29-30)

(36,27)

However, other data show a dramatic diminishing of the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This is most notable in the changes in the number of students achieving mastery. The percentage of Indigenous students attaining mastery increased from 22% in 1975 to 65% in 1995.

(3,16)

Geographic location had a bearing on the performance levels of Indigenous students. The average level of numeracy attainment for Indigenous students in remote areas was substantially below that of Indigenous students in other areas.

(26,16)

STUDENTS' ASPIRATIONS AND ATTITUDES TO SCHOOL

Data from the Y95 and Y98 cohorts showed that students who performed higher on the numeracy test also:

- scored higher on the achievement subscale of the *Quality of School Life* measure
- planned to complete Year 12
- planned to attend university.

(36,27-28)

SCHOOL FACTORS

Data from the Y95 and Y98 cohorts showed that about one-sixth of the variation in the numeracy scores could be attributed to differences between schools. Students with higher numeracy scores came from schools with:

- higher socio-economic status
- a positive school climate.

(36,28-29)

® for data on the relative influences of all these numeracy related variables see

(36,25,26,29)

How do literacy and numeracy levels relate to later experiences?

The level of literacy and numeracy achieved by 14 year-olds is a major factor contributing to later patterns of education and work.

LEVEL OF SCHOOLING

Achievement levels in literacy and numeracy among the 1995 Year 9 cohort showed a strong relationship with early school leaving. Those performing at low levels were substantially more likely to have left school before Year 11. This was more pronounced for boys than girls. (11,9-10)

The same pattern was shown in another study looking at those who completed high school in Year 12 and those who didn't. There was a steep achievement gradient in school completion. As the achievement level decreased, the rate of school completion fell away dramatically. (4,3)

A further study, comparing the cohorts born in 1961 and 1970, found that general achievement, as measured by the combined numeracy and literacy scores, was a major factor influencing schooling decisions. Those with higher achievement scores were more likely to continue with their schooling. (25,v)

Not only were low achievers more likely not to complete Year 12, they were also more likely to leave school earlier—in Year 10 or Year 11. (31,30-32)

UNEMPLOYMENT

Achievement levels in literacy and numeracy have a strong relationship with unemployment incidence. Following through the experiences of four cohort groups born in 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1975, it was found that those with low achievement levels had a much higher unemployment rate. (7,8-9,15)
(18,12-13)

The same pattern between low achievement and unemployment was identified in the Y95 cohort data. (31,60-66)

Not only were those with low levels of literacy and numeracy more likely to be unemployed, they were also more likely to have longer periods of unemployment and to experience long-term unemployment. (4,19-27)
(7,22,26-27)

ENTRY TO TAFE, APPRENTICESHIPS & TRAINEESHIPS

In the mid 90s, young people with low levels of literacy and numeracy were less likely to enrol in TAFE courses than those with stronger skills. Females entering TAFE had high to above-average literacy skills, although weaker numeracy skills. Males were more likely to be average achievers. (4,14-15)

However, it should be noted that in an analysis of data gathered between 1980 and 1994, the school achievement profiles of entrants to non-apprenticeship TAFE courses had moved down, once other factors were taken into account. (13,116)

In the mid 90s, those taking up apprenticeships were more likely to have low to very low literacy and numeracy skills. But when the effects of a number of other factors were removed, and data compared from 1980 to 1994, school achievement had very little effect on participation in apprenticeships. (4,16-18) (13,117)

ENTERING HIGHER EDUCATION

The strongest influence on tertiary entry performance is literacy and numeracy achievement in Year 9, although performance in numeracy has a consistently stronger relationship with tertiary entry performance than literacy. (22,13-15) (9,23)

Over the period from 1980 to 1994, it was found that even when controlling for other factors, the impact of achievement on rates of entering higher education (university and CAEs) had increased substantially. (13,115)

The importance of literacy and numeracy achievement on tertiary entry performance is not simply a reflection of socioeconomic background. (22,57)

It should also be noted that schools do very little to improve or modify differences in learning that appear by Year 9. Poor achievers do not make up ground. Low achievement in literacy and numeracy by Year 9 has a profound effect on the likelihood of not entering university, regardless of schooling between Years 9 and 12. (4,9-13)

SUBJECT CHOICES IN YEAR 12

Those with high levels of numeracy and literacy are more likely to be enrolled in advanced mathematics, physical sciences and other related subjects. (33,41-50)

Those with low levels are more likely to enrol in vocational education and training (VET) programs. (21,10-11)

OCCUPATIONS AND EARNINGS

Those with higher levels of literacy and numeracy are more likely to go into higher occupation status jobs and have higher earnings (31,74)
(8,11)

Subject choices in Years 11 & 12

What are students choosing?

Between 1993 and 2001, there were some changes in the proportion of students choosing different subjects and participation in vocational education and training (VET) increased.

SUBJECT AREAS

Comparative data from students in Year 12 in 1993, 1998 and 2001 showed:

- almost all students studied an English subject
- almost 85% were studying mathematics in 2001, with 36% of students studying advanced mathematics
- 70% were enrolled in a studies of society and environment subject in 2001, with enrolments in the business studies area being the most notable growth from 1993 to 2001
- 55% were enrolled in a science subject, with enrolments in the biological sciences remaining a great deal higher than in other science subjects
- enrolments in the arts continued to grow, with almost one-third taking an arts subject in 2001
- enrolments in languages remained low, the only increase being a slight one in Japanese enrolments
- 27% of students were enrolled in computer studies in 2001

- enrolments in physical education subjects declined slightly, but there was growth in the health area. (33,24-29)

® *for a more complex analysis of the changing patterns in subject choices see* (33,51-56)

PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

Approximately 16% of students in Year 12 were taking at least one VET subject in 1998. This was a substantial increase from 1993. (15,36-37)

® *for more information related to VET, go to the 'Other forms of post-school education and training' section starting on p. 32 of this reference guide and see report no 10* (10,10-18)

What factors are related to their choices?

A number of sociodemographic variables as well as personal ability and aspirations are related to subject choice.

GENDER

Gender accounts substantially for subject choice. Males predominate in the areas of mathematics, physical sciences, technical studies, computer studies and physical education. Females predominate in English, humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, the arts, languages, home sciences and health studies. (15,12-14)
(33,29-30)

Gender, however, makes little difference in choosing to participate in a VET program at school. (21,10-11)

SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Enrolments in mathematics and the physical sciences in Year 12 in 1998 and 2001 were consistently higher for students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Enrolments in technology, economics and business areas were consistently higher for students from a lower socioeconomic background. (15,14-17)
(33,30-31)

In 1998, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to participate in VET. (15,36-37)
(21,13)

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

There were some specific striking differences in 2001 enrolments for students from different language backgrounds. For example, students with an Asian background were more likely to be studying advanced mathematics, while Australian students and those from a Southern European background were more likely to be enrolled in arts and technology areas. (33,33-34)

Twenty-four percent of students with Australian-born parents participated in VET in 1998, compared with 18% from non-English speaking backgrounds. (21,11-12)

LITERACY & NUMERACY

When the scores from literacy and numeracy were combined to make a single measure of achievement in Year 9, and compared with subject choices in Year 12, it was found that the highest achieving students overwhelmingly chose advanced mathematics, chemistry and physics. (33,34-35)

Twenty-four percent of those at the lowest level of achievement participated in VET. (21,10-11)

ASPIRATIONS

Those with aspirations to higher education in Year 12 in 2001 were more likely to be enrolled in advanced mathematics, chemistry and physics. Those with aspirations to work were more likely to be enrolled in technical studies. (33,35-36)

Participation in VET was higher for those with lower aspirations and for those with lower levels of engagement or satisfaction with school. (21,14-17)

SCHOOL SECTOR

Students in independent schools in 2001 were more likely than those in government or Catholic schools to be enrolled in physics and chemistry, while those in government schools were more likely to be enrolled in technical studies and home sciences. (33,36-37)

Participation in VET was substantially higher in the government sector. (21,11-12)

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

More students in regional and rural areas (1:4) participated in VET than students in urban areas (1:5), although this did not contribute substantially to choice when all factors were considered in a multivariate analysis.

(21,13,18)

® for an analysis of the relative influence of the above factors on subject choice (excluding VET) see

(33,40-50)

® for an earlier study on factors affecting subject choice see

(12,7-22)

What are the outcomes?

Subject choice, including VET choice, in Year 12 impacts directly on post-school outcomes. And, most notably, it seems that the VET program can offer a successful transition from school to full-time employment, especially for those more at risk.

NO FURTHER EDUCATION OR TRAINING

Over 50% of Year 12 students enrolled in the group of subjects with physical education, home economics, health, biology, and general maths did not take part in any further education or training by age 19.

(12,23-26)

FULL-TIME WORK

About 25% of students who had taken VET courses were in full-time employment, with no further study a year after leaving. In contrast, only 14% of students who had not taken VET were in the same position. These figures had increased to 35% and 20% for VET and non-VET students, respectively, by the end of the second year.

(21,29-31)

HIGHER EDUCATION

Over 75% of Year 12 completers who studied maths, advanced maths, physics and chemistry entered higher education by the age of 19 and over 60% taking maths, chemistry, biology, other science and computing entered higher education (universities and CAEs) by the age of 19.

Roughly 50% of those enrolled in a combination of maths, chemistry, literature, music, French, history and art (the

combination more popular with females) entered higher education by the age of 19.

Over 33% of those doing foreign languages with literature, history and geography also entered higher education by the age of 19. (12,26-27)

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Over 33% doing a VET course in Year 12 had obtained an apprenticeship, traineeship or studied at TAFE by the age of 19. (12,27-28)

UNEMPLOYMENT

Young people who spent the greatest percentage of their time unemployed (>50%) from leaving Year 12 to age 19, more often than not had studied arts and humanities courses and the VET subject combinations. And a quarter of the students who studied a combination of technical drawing, technology, general maths and computing had three or more spells of unemployment by age 19. (12,38-39)

However, there were no real differences between VET and non-VET students in the number unemployed one year (4% cf 4%) and two years (10% cf 9%) after leaving school. (21,30-31)

PART-TIME WORK AND NO FURTHER EDUCATION

Over 25% of Year 12 students who took business studies, legal studies, textiles, general maths and biology were only working part-time and doing no further study by the age of 19; similarly for 20% who took an arts and humanities combination. (12,38-40)

® *for a more complex analysis of outcomes, especially as they relate to VET studies and the influence of socio-demographic and achievement variables see (21,31-52)*

Work experience during school years

Who is doing part-time work?

Part-time work is commonplace for more than a quarter of Year 9 and a third of Year 11 and 12 students, especially those with higher numeracy and literacy skills, from an English speaking background, and with higher aspirations—and most don't need to do it for the money.

PARTICIPATION

The percentage of 17 year-old students (in Years 11 and 12) who held part-time jobs had increased from 26.5% in 1978 to 35.4% in 1992, and more 17 year-old females than males held part-time employment in 1992. (2,6)

Further data from 1992 and 1995 showed that about 25% of students in Year 9 (mainly 14 year-olds) were also in part-time work. (2,7-8)
(30,6-7)

The average time spent in part-time employment between 1982 and 1992 increased with age and school year level. The mean hours worked rose from 8.0 at age 14 (in 1989) to 9.1 at age 17 (in 1992). (2,12)

Females mainly did part-time sales and professional services work, while males were roughly split between white-collar work and part-time labouring. (9,2)

FACTORS RELATED TO DOING PART-TIME WORK

Over the period 1978 to 1995, Year 9 (mainly 14 year-olds) and 17 year-old students (in Years 11 and 12) from non-English speaking backgrounds had consistently lower levels of part-time employment than students from English speaking backgrounds. (2,17-19)
(30,7-8)

Part-time workers are more likely to come from middle to higher socioeconomic backgrounds than lower. (2,17-24)

By 1992, there was a tendency for part-time work to be higher in Year 11 than 12, especially amongst males. (2,24-27)

Over the period 1978 to 1992, students who went to government schools were more likely to be part-time workers. (2,24-27)

Students who had low numeracy and literacy levels at ages 10 and 14 were less likely to have part-time jobs when they were 17. (2,26-27)

Students' future aspirations played a role in choosing to do part-time work. Students with lower aspirations, in terms of future education and/or occupation, were a little less inclined to do part-time work (2,29-31)

® for a multivariate analysis of the above factors see (2,31-38)

REASONS FOR WORKING PART-TIME

Most students worked because of the independence and enjoyment it gave them. (21,4-6)

A majority believed that doing part-time work at school would help them get a job later: females believed this more than males. (21,4-7)

For an important minority (eg those on Austudy), the money was needed to support themselves. (21,7-8)

Who is doing work experience and placement programs?

Work experience was commonplace but workplace learning programs far less so in the mid to late 90s.

PARTICIPATION

Sixty-two percent of Year 10 students in 1996 and 44% of Year 11 students in 1997 participated in work experience programs, with most programs being from one to two weeks. (10,4,8)

In 1997 around 67% of secondary schools provided workplace learning programs—up from 62% in 1996 and 46% in 1995. However, only 8% of Year 11 students in 1997 participated in such programs. (10,10-11)

® *for more information on types of workplace learning programs see (10,15-19)*

FACTORS RELATED TO PARTICIPATION

For Year 10 students in 1996 and Year 11 students in 1997:

- females were slightly more likely to participate in work experience than males in Years 10 and 11 (10,5-6)
- students in independent, non-Catholic schools were slightly less likely to participate in work experience programs than those from Catholic or government schools (10,5-6)
- non-English speaking background students were much less likely to participate in workplace learning programs than students from an English speaking background (10,11-14)

- the Year 11 students most likely to participate in workplace learning programs were those with lower levels of literacy and numeracy, who lived in rural or remote areas, and whose parents did not complete secondary school and were employed in skilled trades or unskilled occupations

(10,11-14)

What are the consequences of part-time work?

It is not the fact of working that is critical but rather its intensity. Those who work extremely long hours are more likely not to complete school. But this could well be a deliberate strategy for leaving early—especially for males. For those who work and complete school, the odds are in their favour of having an apprenticeship or full-time job after leaving.

STUDENTS' VIEWS

Some 41% of 17 year-olds in 1992 felt that they would have spent more time studying if they had not been working part-time and 31% believed their results would have been better. In all instances, females were more likely than males to say their schooling suffered.

(9,10-11)

Students who were working had higher levels of satisfaction with all aspects of their life than those who were not working; in particular, working students were happier with their social life, their independence and the money they got each week (although there were some gender differences).

(9,14-15)

Many students in Year 10 in 1996 saw part-time work as more useful than work experience in developing general employment skills.

(10,9-10)

SCHOOL COMPLETION

Part-time employment in Year 11 did not have a significant influence on school completion in Year 12, nor was there any negative cumulative effect of employment over successive years.

(9,20-21)

Intensity of work, as measured by number of hours worked, affected school completion: those who worked longer hours were slightly less likely to complete Year 12.

(9,20-22)

Year 12 results were not significantly related to part-time working per se, although those working very long part-time hours had lower Year 12 results than non-workers.

(9,23-24)

EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT 19

In 1994, more than two-fifths of the 1992 sample of 17 year-olds were studying full-time, with the same percentage (43%) of students coming from those who had and had not worked during school. (9, 26)

Those who had participated in part-time work in Year 9 in 1995 were more likely to have an apprenticeship or a full-time job in 1999. (30,15-17)

For those who entered the labour market after Year 12, there was a higher percentage (42%) of Year 11 and 12 part-time student workers than non-school workers (36%) employed full-time at the age of 19. (9,26-27)

Those who worked at school were also less likely than non-workers to be unemployed at the age of 19. (9,26-27)

JOB TYPE & EARNINGS AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL

Three-fourths of employed females at age 19 were in sales and personal services jobs, with slightly more than half of these having been in part-time work at school. (9,31)

Most employed males at 19 were in trade and labour jobs; for those who were not, there were slightly more males who had worked in sales part-time at school also employed in sales at the age of 19. (9,31)

In general, there was no significant relationship between wages at the age of 19 and part-time employment at school. (9,31-34)

® *an overview of the reports summarised in this section can be found in [LSAY Briefing No. 3, Oct. 2001](#)*

Other aspects of school & community life

How satisfied are students?

They are not as generally satisfied with school as they have been. Those with lower levels of personal satisfaction are more likely to leave school earlier.

PATTERNS

There was a decline between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s in Year 9 students' general satisfaction with school and a smaller decline in their attitude to teachers. However, there was no decline in satisfaction with opportunity and achievements, with over 82% satisfied with both.

(5,3-5)

RELATED FACTORS

There were small but consistent gender differences: Year 9 females reported greater levels of satisfaction than males.

(5,5-7)

Students from non-English speaking backgrounds were more satisfied on all four fronts, generally and with their teachers, opportunity and achievement.

(5,5-7)

Students from Catholic and independent schools had higher levels of general satisfaction and were substantially more satisfied with their teachers.

(5,5-7)

CONSEQUENCES

Feeling generally satisfied and with a sense of achievement positively influenced self-perceived achievement in Year 10.

(5,7-10)

Students with a low sense of achievement were more likely to leave school in Year 10.

(5,10-11)

Levels of engagement

Engagement in school life can be enhanced by increasing the level of involvement in extracurricular activities.

BACKGROUND FACTORS INFLUENCING ENGAGEMENT

Overall, engagement levels were higher for students who were

- female
- from higher SES backgrounds
- from independent schools
- aspiring to higher education
- at single-sex schools
- generally happy with school and learning
- intrinsically motivated.

(27,12-19)

However, in multivariate modelling, it was found that not only did the school a student attend matter but that the school environment can moderate the negative effects of SES and Indigenous status. (27,20-30)

Who participates in the community?

Gender, SES, home language and size of town predict who will begin volunteering activity.

PATTERNS OF VOLUNTEERING

The highest level of student volunteer activities in the community was in the 16-to-17 years age group. (32,8)

Four variables were positively related to volunteering. In general, students were more likely to volunteer if they were:

- female
- from English speaking backgrounds
- from higher SES groups
- from non-metropolitan communities. (32,8-10)

Attendance at school and type of school also made a difference:

- those who remained at school did more volunteering
- students at government schools did less. (32,11)

The school leaving decision

Continuing after compulsory schooling

What factors influence going on at school?

The major factors influencing decisions to continue beyond the level of compulsory schooling (usually 15 years of age) are ability, school type and, to a lesser extent, family background.

FOR THE 1961 AND 1970 COHORTS

The 1961 cohort was followed through to the mid-to-late 1970s and the 1970 cohort to the mid 80s. Data analyses found the most significant determinants for continuing at school were:

- being female
- having high levels of literacy and numeracy in Year 9

- having at least one parent born in a non-English speaking country
- having a father in a high status job and with post-secondary qualifications
- having no siblings
- going to a Catholic or independent school
- living in the ACT and then Victoria, Queensland and SA. (25,14-22)

While there were many similarities between the two cohorts, there were some changes. (25,22-25)

How have things changed?

There have been a number of changes over the decade from the mid 70s to the mid 80s, most notably the growth in female educational attainment. Interestingly, the significant changes in the labour market in the 70s and 80s do not seem to have played a role. (25,43)

LITERACY AND NUMERACY

The magnitude of the impact of literacy and numeracy decreased over the decade from the mid 70s to 80s. There is a possibility that this could be due to the measures being taken at different ages—10 and 14, respectively. Nevertheless, this achievement variable was still the strongest determinant for both cohorts. (25,25-26)

PARENTAL BACKGROUND

The impact of the father's occupational status was smaller for the 1970 cohort than for the 1961 cohort and, although not statistically significant, there was a suggestion that the mother's post-secondary education was becoming a more important determinant of schooling attainment. (25,25-26)

A larger number of siblings decreased the probability of finishing Year 12 and increased the probability of leaving early. (25,36-37)

SCHOOL TYPE

The impact of attending an independent school had increased over the decade from the mid 70s to 80s. (25,26-7)

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Male and female schooling had increased at similar rates across the decade from the mid 70s to 80s, with the mean female schooling level increasing only slightly faster. (25,38)

Individual achievement (as measured by literacy and numeracy) became less important for females' level of schooling over the decade.

The mother's qualifications had become relatively more important as a determinant of schooling for daughters, but not sons.

The influence of enrolment in a Catholic school had declined slightly for males, but strengthened for females. (25,34)

The effect of a larger number of siblings decreasing the probability of finishing Year 12 was more pronounced for males. (25,36-37)

Leaving before Year 12

What are the profiles of those who do not complete Year 12?

Non-completers are more likely to be males with lower levels of literacy and numeracy, Indigenous Australians, from lower SES and English speaking backgrounds, non-metropolitan areas and government schools. (31,ix)

CHANGES OVER THE 80S AND 90S

The rate of leaving before the end of Year 12 declined substantially over the 1980s and 1990s. About 60% of students left before the end of Year 12 in 1980/81, 41% by 1988/89 and 24% in 1992/3. (16,vii)

Of the young people in the Y95 cohort, only 9% of students sampled had left school on or before the completion of Year 10, and a further 13% left before the completion of Year 12. (31,15)

Overall, the changes during the 1980s and 1990s suggest that in some respects schooling had become more equitable, while in other respects less so. In particular:

- the relative gender gap favouring girls increased during the period but stabilised by the mid to late 90s (31,15-18)

- the influences of SES and school sector declined, although having parents in unskilled manual jobs and lower education levels still increased the chances of leaving early (31,19-23)
- Indigenous Australian youth continued to be the most disadvantaged in relation to school completion (31,23-24)
- the numbers of early school leavers with Australian born parents and from non-metropolitan areas increased (31,24-28)
- the school non-completion rates for students from Catholic schools were between those of government and independent schools in the early 80s, but by the mid to late 90s, there was little difference between Catholic and independent schools—and government schools still had the highest rate of early leavers (31,28-30)
- the gap between school non-completion rates of young people with high and low levels of numeracy and literacy narrowed but by the mid to late 90s the influence was still strong—not only are low achievers more likely to be non-completers they are also likely to leave school earlier (31,30-32)

® *for earlier reports on non-completers that are in accord with the above findings see*

11 & 16

What are the reasons for not completing Year 12?

Most early school leavers leave for work-related reasons.

WORK-RELATED

In the early 80s, 75% of male early leavers and 60% of female early leavers gave work-related reasons as their main reason for leaving. These percentages had not changed by the mid 90s. (16,30-31)

The most frequently mentioned reason by early and later school leavers in the Y95 cohort was to secure a job or an apprenticeship. Over 80% of early leavers (by Year 10) and 76% of later leavers (before end of Year 12) said this was an important consideration in their decision to leave. In addition, just over half of the early school leavers and 44% of the later leavers said this was the most important reason. (31,34-37)

OTHER REASONS

There was the little change over the 1980s to mid 90s in the percentage of males and females who gave other reasons for early leaving. In particular, less than one-fourth gave school-related factors. (16,30-31)

Less than one-third of the 1995 cohort non-completers (or 6% of the total Year 9 1995 cohort) said that school-related factors, such as not doing well at school or not liking it, were their main reasons for leaving.

Advice from teachers or financial difficulties played a very minor role in school leaving. (31,34-37)

® for an earlier report on reasons for leaving see (11,12)

What happens to non-completers of Year 12 after leaving?

They follow a number of different pathways between leaving school and entering the labour market.

STUDYING FULL-TIME

In 1998, only 7% of the Y95 cohort of early school leavers (by Year 10) and 15% of the later school leavers (before end of Year 12) were in full-time study. (31,43-46)

FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT

Participation in full-time employment increased as the length of time since leaving school increased. For early school leavers the percentage engaged in full-time employment rose from 60% in 1997 to 71% in 2000. For the later school leavers, the percentage rose from 49% in 1998 to 65% in 2000. (31,43-46)

FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT WITH EDUCATION/TRAINING

In 1998, over half of the early and later school leavers in full-time work were also engaged in post-school education or training. (31,43-47)

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

Seven to 10% of early and later leavers were in part-time employment that was not coupled with full-time study. (31,43-47)

NOT WORKING

Of those not working, about 1% were studying part-time time and the majority were looking for work. The proportion of early and later leavers who were looking for work was similar: around 13% to 14% in 1998, falling slightly to 10% to 11% in 2000.

(31,43-47)

® *for more detail on the different pathways see Part 2 on 'Transitions: from school and into the labour market', starting on p. 37 of this reference guide*

How does the Australian experience compare with the United States?

While similar proportions of young people leave school before completing Year 12, the educational and economic consequences are quite different between Australia and the US. However, it should be noted that the data reported below are a decade old and labour market conditions may have changed.

THE PATTERNS

In 1994, there were almost identical rates of early school leaving in Australia (22%) and the United States (21%).

(14,3-4)

However, there were some significant differences in the time of leaving and patterns of later school completion:

- more Australians tend to leave earlier—nearly half of all Australian non-completers left at Year 10 while about one-third of US non-completers had not left until some time during Year 12
- only 8% of non-completers in Australia return to complete school, compared to nearly 50% of all non-completers in the US.

(14,8-10)

FACTORS AFFECTING NON-COMPLETION OF HIGH SCHOOL

The factors affecting early school leaving in both countries were:

- low levels of numeracy and literacy were the most influential factors in both Australia and the US
- family socioeconomic status was important in both countries but the disparity between the highest and lowest groups in the US was greater

- Australian non-completers were much more likely to be male while the gender composition was more balanced in the US
- geographic location, school type, parental education and ethnicity were also important.

(14,3-7)

POST-SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

The post school transitions of non-completers varied between the US and Australia. Australian non-completers took up post-secondary education and training more than those in the US:

- just under one-half of all Australian non-completers participated in some form of post-secondary education and training
- the large majority of US non-completers did not go on to post-secondary education and training.

While non-completers in both countries were significantly disadvantaged in the labour market compared with completers, non-completers in the US were less likely than those in Australia to find employment:

- only 43% of those in the US who had not completed and did not return to school, and 45% of those that did return, were working full-time
- in Australia, two-thirds of non-completers found employment.

(14,15-23)

Of those that were employed, the quality of the jobs held by US and Australian non-completers did not vary greatly, although female non-completers in Australia were in lower paid jobs than their male counterparts.

(14,25-29)

Doing Year 12

Who continues on to Year 12?

As could be expected, the characteristics of those who continue on to Year 12 are the converse of those who leave early. However, the more striking aspect of the changes over the past two decades is the decline in influence of some of the variables traditionally associated with continuing at school.

CHANGES OVER TWO DECADES

There has been a steady rise in the number of students going on to Year 12, from 35% of the LSAY cohort in 1980 to 79% in 2001. This figure of 79% is slightly higher than the national figure. (33,16-18)

Over the period from 1980 to 2001:

- females continued to be more likely to participate in Year 12 than males—by 2001, 83% of females and 75% of males from the 1998 Y9 cohort were in Year 12 (33,16-18)
 - but when the data were adjusted statistically to account for other factors, the gender effect was reduced a little (33,21)
- students with parents in professional occupations showed higher rates of participation across the two decades; however, by 2001, the relative percentage difference between students from professional and unskilled manual backgrounds declined—88% and 73%, respectively (33,16-18)
 - the decline in professional family influence was statistically significant (33,21)
- students from non-English speaking backgrounds displayed higher levels of Year 12 participation than other students across the two decades (33,17-18)
 - NESB was a significant influence on Year 12 participation (33,20-21)
- students from metropolitan areas continued to show higher participation rates than those from non-metropolitan areas—by 2001, 82% of students were from metropolitan areas and 74% from non-metropolitan areas (33,18)
 - the difference was statistically significant but not as strong as the percentages indicated, when other factors were taken into account (26,20-22)
- while students from independent schools had consistently higher participation rates over the two decades, there was also a steady decrease in the difference—by 2001, there were 89% of students from independent schools and 75% from government schools (33,18-19)
 - school sector had a significant influence (33,20,22)

- students who achieved higher in literacy and numeracy had a consistently higher participation rate, however the difference between the highest and lowest achievers had narrowed noticeably by 2001 (33,18-19)
 - while influence of achievement was still significant and strong, it had also noticeably decreased over time. (33,20,23)
- ® *the changes reported above draw on earlier studies that have not been directly reported on here— see* 1, 13,17

What happens to Year 12 participants after leaving?

Approximately three-fourths of students who complete Year 12 continue on to further education of some form or other.

STUDYING FULL TIME

By 2000, 47% of those who had completed Year 12 in 1998 had continued on to university and 87% of those studied full-time. An additional 22% of Year 12 went on to study at TAFE, 80% of them doing so on a full-time basis. (31,43-46)

FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT

In 1999, 48% of the Year 12 completers who did not go onto higher education were in full-time employment. By 2000, this figure had risen to 61%. (31,43-46)

FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT WITH EDUCATION/TRAINING

In 1999, only 20% of completers who did not go onto higher education were combining full-time work with study. (31,43-47)

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

In 1999, 9% of completers were in part-time employment that was not coupled with full-time study. (31,43-47)

NOT WORKING

In 1999, 6% of completers were not working but looking for work. (31,43-47)

® *for more detail on the different pathways see Part 2 on 'Transitions: from school into the labour market', starting on p. 37 of this reference guide*

From school to higher education and training

Going on to higher education

Who goes on to higher education?

The characteristics of those who go on to higher education (universities, earlier colleges of advanced education, and other tertiary institutions), show the same pattern as those who complete Year 12, as does the decline in influence of some of the traditional variables associated with entering higher education.

PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

The percentage of students entering higher education had increased over the two decades from 1980 to 1999: from 20% in 1980 to 31% in 1999. (17,15)

Over that time, the following patterns emerged:

- gender differences grew—in 1980 the likelihood of participation was higher for males but by 1994 it was lower and, by 1999, 9% more females than males entered higher education (13,46-47) (17,15)
- students with parents from higher occupational status and education levels were still more likely to enter higher education, but the differences between higher and lower had declined (17,15)
 - nevertheless, another study has shown that in 1994, even when other factors were taken in account, those with higher parental occupation and wealth were more likely to enter higher education (13,70-74))
- students with non-English speaking backgrounds were consistently more likely to participate in higher education, even when other factors were taken into account, with 41% entering university in 1999 (13,81) (17,16)
- fewer students from non-metropolitan areas entered university than those from metropolitan areas—25% in 1980 and 35% in 1999 (17,16)
 - however, other studies have shown that, when other background factors are taken into account, home location has either no significant effect or its effect is substantially reduced (26,22-25) (13,91-92)

- students from independent schools were still more likely to enter higher education and, even though the difference between them and those from government schools has declined, statistically significant differences between school type still remains when other factors are taken into account (17,16) (13,106-107)
 - students with higher literacy and numeracy skills were still more likely to enter university but the difference between them and those with lower levels had declined (17,16)
 - and, when other factors are taken into account, the effects of school achievement on participation in higher education are often halved. (13,115-116)
- ® *for a more detailed analysis of the potential policy issues arising from the above trends see (17,22-41)*

What affects tertiary entrance performance?

Literacy and numeracy achievement in Year 9 is the single most important variable impacting on tertiary entrance performance.

INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCES

The major findings of a study of the relationship between the tertiary entrance performance of the Y95 cohort, measured by their Equivalent National Tertiary Rank (or ENTER scores), and a variety of individual level variables were:

- the strongest influence on tertiary entry performance was literacy and numeracy achievement in Year 9, with numeracy having the consistently stronger relationship (22,13-15)
- students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, especially those with parents of professional occupational status, had higher ENTER scores and this effect was not removed altogether after controlling for literacy (22,15-19)
- on average, females had higher ENTER scores than males but these differences varied between states (22,20-24)
- school type had a substantial effect on ENTER scores, students from independent schools having higher scores than those from Catholic schools and those in turn having higher scores than those from government schools—but the difference was reduced substantially when the influence of literacy and numeracy achievement was taken into account (22,24-30)

- there was a small difference between the scores of students from metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas (22,31-34)
- students from Asian backgrounds performed better than students with fathers born in Australia (22,34-37)
- Indigenous students had significantly lower scores than non-Indigenous students that could not be attributed to socioeconomic differences and could only partially be explained by Year 9 achievement—however the Indigenous sample was small and thus the results only suggestive (22,37-39)
- students' self-concept of ability, their aspirations and their parents' aspirations had an impact on tertiary entrance performance, in the order given. (22,39-43)

SCHOOL INFLUENCES

The relationships between tertiary entry performance of the Y95 cohort and various school level variables were:

- when the influences of significant individual variables were removed, only 9% of the schools attended by these students impacted on their tertiary entrance performance (22,46-53)
- the school's achievement environment affected tertiary entry performance, in addition to individual effects, but the school's socioeconomic environment did not (22,53-54)
- tertiary entry performance was enhanced by a higher average level of confidence among students in their ability, a school environment more conducive to learning and higher parental aspirations. (22,54-56)

® *an overview of this and other forms of higher education participation can be found in LSAY Briefing No. 6, Jan. 2003*

Other forms of post school education and training

What has changed?

There have been noticeable changes in the rate of participation in post-school education and training and in the characteristics of the people participating between 1980 and 1994.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Comparing the educational participation rates over four cohorts born in 1961, 1965, 1979 and 1975, apprenticeships declined substantially in the 1990s—from 18% in 1980 to 12% in 1994. This decline was offset a little by the increase in traineeships—from 2% in 1989 to 3% in 1994. (13,8-9)

People in apprenticeships were more likely to be male, from the middle of the socioeconomic distribution, a rural background, a government school, and from the lowest group of literacy and numeracy achievers. (13,x)

People in apprenticeships were also more likely to have left school before Year 12. (16,33)

NON-APPRENTICE TAFE COURSES

There was a substantial increase in TAFE course participation—from 13% in 1980 to 20% in 1994. (13,8-9)

During the 14 years, the pattern of participation changed. The difference that had favoured girls in 1980 had almost disappeared by 1994, the advantage of young people from a higher socioeconomic background in 1980 had been reversed by 1994, and there was a shift towards greater participation by rural youth and by young people from the lower end of the achiever profile. (13,x)

® *for detailed analyses of the individual effects of different variables on participation see each of the relevant chapters in* (13)

Who participates in VET after leaving school early?

Over one-third of those who do not complete Year 12 participate in vocational education and training programs, usually at TAFE, and this serves the needs of many but not all. (20,30)

PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION

Of the Y95 cohort who did not finish Year 12, 37% had completed some form of VET by the end of 1998. Of those who participated in VET, there were:

- more males (42%) than females (30%) (but note that more females go on to complete Year 12)

- more students from Catholic schools (44%), than government (36%) or independent (31%) schools
- slightly more students with fathers born in Australia (39%), than those with a non-English speaking background (35%) or of parents born in other English speaking countries (30%)
- proportionately fewer non-completers from Indigenous backgrounds (28%) than other Australians (38%)
- more rural and remote students (44%) than those from urban or regional centres (35%)
- more students from the highest SES quartile (43%) than the lowest (37%)
- less from areas of high unemployment (33%) than low (42%).

® *for a more detailed analysis of this 'neighbourhood effect' see report 24 and p. 56 here*

- just as many were likely to be living close to or distant from a TAFE.

(20,8-11)

COURSES TAKEN AND COMPLETED

Non-completers of Year 12 who go on to VET take a wide variety of courses but there were some distinct patterns in the Y95 cohort:

- over 40% entered trade-related courses and one-fourth in non-trade skills courses
- males (57%) were more likely to enrol in trade-related courses and females (82%) in courses that teach other skills
- males who leave school after starting Year 11 (51%) were less likely to enrol in trade-related courses than earlier school leavers (64%).

(20,12-13)

® *for further details of enrolment patterns see*

(20,13-16)

There were differences in the VET courses studied by non-completers between 1996 and 1998 according to several background factors:

- there was considerable divergence in the courses taken by high school achievers who left in Year 11 compared with lower achieving non-completers but there was little

difference between high and low achievers who left in Year 10

- students with highly educated parents were more often enrolled in paraprofessional, education preparation and preparatory trade courses
- proportionately more students from disadvantaged backgrounds were studying basic education and employment skills
- fewer students living in rural and remote areas were enrolled in complete trade courses.

(20,17-20)

Non-completers had a successful outcome in 59% of the modules they studied and were not successful in 29% of modules. The remaining 12% either had results withheld or had not finished.

Success rates were highest for:

- modules more frequently taken by students who achieved well at school
- modules more frequently taken by high SES students
- modules more frequently taken by those from English speaking backgrounds.

(20,21-28)

® *an overview of this and other aspects of VET participation can be found in LSAY Briefing No. 7, Sept. 2002*

Who participates in firm-based training and education?

Almost one-half of young employed people in the mid 1990s participated in formal firm-based training, with a substantially greater number of females participating when compared with 1985 data.

PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION

Of those who were between 16 and 24 in 1994 and employed, 82% reported they had received some sort of training on the job, while 46% reported they had received formal training. This formal training was characterised by:

- being, on average, 55.5 hours over the past 12 months but with a median time of only 17.2 hours
- being provided mainly by the employer (76%)
- females having a higher incidence (49%) than males (44%), but receiving fewer hours.

(23,4-7)

CHANGES OVER TIME

Data from two different surveys showed important comparisons in training for young employed persons between 1985 and 1997. The main changes were:

- participation of females aged 19 to 26 in external training had more than doubled—from 15% in 1985 to 32% in 1997—while the corresponding values for males increased only marginally (23,10-13)
- training tended to be higher for workers with full-time jobs that require more education—ie in Public Administration and Community Service compared with Agriculture and Primary Industry (23,14-21)
- although the results were not clear cut in all analyses, there was the suggestion that training was associated with higher earnings by young workers. (23,22-38)

Part 2.

Transitions: between school and the labour market

Part 2 of this reference guide looks at what we know about the transitions from school to higher education and the labour market. This part demonstrates the particular value of longitudinal research in identifying the steps Australian youth take along different pathways over time. Some of the highlights are:

- *Australian youth follow a number of different pathways after leaving school or completing higher education. The most common pathway is to leave school or higher education and go on to continued full-time work, but this was done only by 30% of the youth studied. Many students (21%) took time out—either by choice or default—before starting full-time work.*
- *Most (79%) make a successful transition from school to employment, with those following the pathway through higher education being more likely to be successful.*
- *The least successful pathways with a number of years unemployed, in part-time work or out of the labour force were experienced by females who left school early and were from a lower SES background.*
- *Once full-time work is secured it is highly likely to continue.*
- *Those who leave school early are most at risk when they first leave. After a few years there is little difference between early school leavers and those who complete Year 12.*

A multitude of pathways

The range of possibilities

How many different pathways?

Young people's post-school pathways in Australia are highly individualised.

Two samples of young people leaving school in the late 80s and early 90s were followed over a seven-year period. Just under half of the sample followed the path to further education and just over half went into the labour market directly. But from there on in, a quite extraordinary array of patterns of activity emerged.

For those following the path into further education, out of six possible main activities in any one year there were around 300 different patterns. One-fourth of the sample experienced their own uniquely individual pattern accounting for around two-thirds of the total patterns.

(19,6)

For those following the path straight from school into the labour market, there were around 500 different patterns. Forty-two percent of the sample experienced their own uniquely individual patterns accounting for around four-fifths of the total patterns. Nevertheless, it was still possible to identify common patterns.

(18,23)

What are the main pathways?

Data from two related studies are summarised below to show the main patterns of activity over seven years and the percentage of young people who undertake them. The percentages are of the sample as a whole and have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

(18,25)

(19,8)

PATHWAYS OF GRADUATES (43% OF ORIGINAL SAMPLE)

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • study and then full-time work | 19% |
| • study, brief interruption (<1 year) and then work | 7% |
| • still studying in seventh post-school year | 7% |
| • work, study, and then full-time work | 4% |
| • work combined with part-time study | 3% |
| • study, extended period of interruption (>1 year) and then work | 3% |

PATHWAYS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS NOT GOING ON TO GRADUATE (57% OF SAMPLE)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • brief interruption (<2 years) and then full-time work | 14% |
| • continual full-time employment over 7 years | 11% |
| • apprenticeship/traineeship then full-time work | 7% |
| • further full-time study and then full-time work | 7% |
| • extended interruption (3-4 years) then full-time work | 7% |
| • mainly part-time work (4 years+) | 3% |
| • mainly unemployed (4 years+) | 4% |
| • mainly not in the labour force | 4% |

Successful and less successful pathways

Who takes the successful pathways?

Seventy-nine percent of the sample studied made a successful transition from school to employment, with those following the pathway through higher education being more likely to be successful than those who did not.

GRADUATING AND INTO WORK

Those 19% who went into full-time study, graduated and then entered the work force were more likely to be:

- female (a statistically significant factor)
- university graduates
- with an education degree or, to a lesser extent, an accounting/economics, health sciences or engineering degree.

(19,9-18)

FULL-TIME WORK AFTER A BRIEF INTERRUPTION

Those 14% who went into full-time work after a brief period (<2 years) of unemployment, part-time work or out of the labour force, were not statistically more likely to be from any particular group of people. However, there was a suggestion that those with non-English speaking backgrounds experienced more difficulties in making the transition from school into work.

(18,33-36)

FROM SCHOOL INTO FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT

Those 11% who went straight from school into continuous full-time work were significantly more likely to be:

- female
- from an English speaking background.

(18,27-36)

APPRENTICESHIP INTO FULL-TIME WORK

Those 7% who undertook apprenticeships or traineeships and then went into full-time work were more likely to be:

- male (statistically significant)
- early school leaver (statistically significant)
- from a rural background.

(18,27-36)

STUDYING IN THE SEVENTH YEAR

Those 7% who were still in full-time tertiary study in the seventh year of the survey were significantly more likely to be:

- male
- from a non-English speaking background
- doing law, medicine or social sciences.

(19,9-18)

FURTHER FULL-TIME STUDY BEFORE ENTERING INTO FULL-TIME WORK

Those 7% who went from school into full-time study (not resulting in a university qualification or associate diploma) and then into full-time work were significantly more likely to be:

- from a high SES background
- a school completer
- from a private school.

(18,27-36)

GRADUATING WITH A SHORT INTERRUPTION BEFORE FULL-TIME WORK

Those 7% who graduated and waited up to a year before entering full-time work were significantly more likely to be:

- from a non-English speaking background
- attended a government school.

(19,9-18)

WORKING, GRADUATING AND THEN INTO FULL-TIME WORK

Those 4% who entered the work force straight after school and then went into full-time study before entering the work force again were more likely to be:

- female
- TAFE graduate. (19,9-18)

WORKING WITH PART-TIME STUDY

Those 3% who entered the work force straight after school and combined it with part-time study were significantly more likely to be:

- studying at TAFE
- from a lower SES background. (18,27-36)

Who takes the less successful pathways?

Less successful pathways were more likely to be experienced by those who did not go onto higher education after school, although 3% of the sample who had graduated had extended periods before working.

EXTENDED INTERRUPTION BEFORE WORK

Those 7% who experienced up to 3 to 4 years (out of the 7 studied) unemployed, in part-time work or not in the labour force were significantly more likely to be:

- female
- from an upper-middle SES background. (18,27-36)

GRADUATING, THEN EXTENDED INTERRUPTION BEFORE WORK

Those 3% who experienced more than a year (out of the 7 studied) unemployed, in part-time work or not in the labour force after they had graduated were significantly more likely to:

- have a disability
- be a TAFE graduate. (19,9-18)

MAINLY PART-TIME WORK

Those 3% who worked part-time for four or more years of the seven studied were significantly more likely to be:

- female
- and, to a lesser extent, have a disability. (18,27-36)

MAINLY UNEMPLOYED

Those 4% who unemployed for four or more years of the seven studied were significantly more likely to be:

- female
- from a lower SES background.

and, although not significant, there was a trend for them to also be:

- an early school leaver
- from a Catholic school
- with a disability
- from a non-English speaking background.

(18,27-36)

MAINLY NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE

Those 4% who were out of the labour market for four or more years of the seven studied were significantly more likely to be:

- female
- an early school leaver
- with a disability
- from a low SES background.

(18,27-36)

® *for a more detailed description of the experiences of those following these different pathways see*

(18,37-51)

(19,19-27)

® *for more on the pathways see LSAY Briefing No.4, Nov. 2001*

Dynamics of education and work activities in early adulthood

What are the patterns of activities from 21 to 25 years?

Between 1996 and 2000, the majority of the cohort born in 1975 was engaged in full-time education and work and over half had obtained a post school qualification by age 25.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Data from the cohort born in 1975 were gathered annually over the period 1996, when they were aged 21, to 2000, when they were aged 25. The pattern of main activities over this period was:

- the proportion working full-time increased from 44% at age 21 to 71% at age 25 and, in each year, approximately 10% more males than females were working full-time
- the proportion in full-time study declined substantially from 28% at age 21 to 5% at age 25
- the proportion unemployed (ie not working but looking for work) decreased from 6% at age 21 to 3% at age 25, with the proportion being slightly higher for males than females
- the proportion in part-time work also declined from 14% at age 21 to 11% at age 25, with more females than males in part-time work.

(34,6-8)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The pattern of education and training activities of the 1975 cohort during the period 1996 to 2000 was:

- the most common form of post-secondary study was a degree course with over one-third of the cohort having a degree qualification and 4% a postgraduate qualification by age 25
- approximately 7% had completed an apprenticeship or traineeship and 13% held a TAFE certificate by age 25
- less than 40% had no post-secondary qualification by age 25
- approximately 13% of males and 11% of females had not completed Year 12 or gained a post-secondary qualification by age 25.

(34,8-10)

OCCUPATIONAL PATTERNS

The pattern of occupation groups of the 1975 cohort who were employed during the period 1996 to 2000 was:

- at age 25, 46% held professional, paraprofessional or managerial jobs, 17% were in clerical work, 16% in sales and personal work, 9% in trades and a 9% in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs

- at age 21, the profile was quite different, with a much higher proportion in semi-skilled and unskilled work and sales and personal services
- gender differences reflected that of the entire adult workforce, with higher proportions of females in clerical, sales and personal service work
- a high proportion of part-time work was in sales and personal service work, although this decreased from 52% at age 21 to 32% at age 25.

(34,11-13)

What are the different pathways of moving between activities?

Once full-time employment is secured, it is highly likely to continue and if there is movement out of part-time work or unemployment it is most likely into full-time work.

MAJOR ACTIVITY

Following the movement of activities from one year to the next of the cohort born in 1975, it was found that:

- the proportion of people remaining in full-time work from one year to the next was around 80% to 85%
- much of the movement from part-time work, unemployment and other activities was into full-time work
- there was little movement from part-time work into unemployment.

(34,14-17)

OCCUPATIONAL PATHWAYS

The occupational pathways from one year to the next of the cohort born in 1975 were:

- between 80% and 90% of those in a managerial or professional occupation in one year were in the same group in the next
- the trades group also showed stability from one year to the next
- the manual work group had the least stability, with much of the movement out into professional or managerial occupations.

(34,18-19)

Points of divergence

Comparing school completers and non-completers

What are the post-school pathways of non-completers and completers?

Within a few years of leaving school, most people move into full-time work or study. But just under 10% of non-completers and school completers who do not enter higher education remain in marginal activities for a number of years.

FULL-TIME EDUCATIONAL AND LABOUR MARKET ACTIVITIES

Using data from the Y95 cohort gathered from 1997 to 2000 (when they were roughly 16 to 19), it was found that a large proportion of young people moved into, and remained in, full-time work or education and training in the first few post-school years.

In particular, the majority of non-completers who engaged in full-time study or work in any given year remained in full-time activities in the subsequent year. The same held true for completers who did not go on to higher education.

(31,50-52)

MARGINAL ACTIVITIES

While the majority of school leavers experienced a smooth transition, some young people still spent time in marginal activities—being unemployed, out of the labour force and not studying, or in part-time or casual work not coupled with studying.

For non-completers from the Y95 cohort:

- between 27% and 30% (of the non-completers group) leaving full-time study in any given year were engaged in marginal activities the following year and a similar pattern was found for leaving full-time work
- but for those who coupled full-time work with further education/training, far fewer (4%) moved into marginal activities
- a large proportion of non-completers in marginal activities in any one year moved into the same marginal activities in the next year
- between 40 and 61% of non-completers in part-time activities in one year moved on to full-time activities in the next.

In contrast, for those who completed Year 12 (from the Y95 cohort) but did not go on to higher education, movement out of marginal activities was more common.

(31,51-53)

AT-RISK GROUPS

Non-completers were most at risk when they first left school but, after completers had been out for two years, the differences between non-completers and completers in marginal activities had dissipated. Nine percent of completers and 9% of non-completers were engaged in marginal activities at the time of each annual measurement.

(31,54)

The background and educational characteristics related to remaining in marginal activities were tested but only two factors were significant:

- gender had the strongest association with post-school pathways, with females being far more likely to have spent some or all of their time in marginal activities (usually out of the labour force altogether) and to be still engaged in them in 2000—this was especially so for non-completers
- early school leavers had the lowest risk of remaining in marginal activities but this may, at least partially, reflect the amount of time spent in the labour market—as a group they had been out of school for the longest and thus had had more time to find employment.

(31,54-57)

DIFFERENCES OVER A LONGER TIME FRAME OF SEVEN YEARS

In an earlier study based on a sample of Year 10 students from the late 1980s, those who left before the end of Year 12 and those who completed school were followed up over a seven-year period.

The pattern for males was:

- in the first year after leaving, 28% of Year 12 leavers were in full-time study (not at a university or doing a TAFE diploma) compared with 6% of earlier leavers
- earlier school leavers were far more likely to be in apprenticeships in their first year (29%)
- by the seventh year, 75% of earlier school leavers and 79% of Year 12 leavers were in full-time employment
- in the first year of leaving school the incidence of unemployment was roughly the same—11% for earlier leavers and 12% for Year 12 leavers—but by the

seventh year 13% of earlier leavers and only 7% of Year 12 leavers were unemployed. (18,9-12)

The pattern for females was:

- in each post-school year many more early school leavers than Year 12 leavers were not looking for work and were not in work, study or training
- by the seventh post-school year, 69% of Year 12 leavers were in full-time jobs compared to 49% for earlier school leavers. (18,9-12)

What is the impact of extra schooling?

The process of schooling itself has a considerable effect on labour market outcomes. (35,v)

A policy change in South Australia meant that a subset of students had an additional year of junior primary school. This subset was compared with those who were not affected by the policy change. The impact of this policy change on labour market outcomes for those who left school and did not go on to higher education was:

- an additional year of primary school increased the probability of being employed full-time by about 11% in school leavers' first year out of school
- but there was an offsetting effect of about 8% on that probability because individuals were older when they left school (35,v)

Going into the labour market or continuing with further education after school

What are the gender patterns over a seven-year period?

Females who do not graduate are the most likely to be out of the labour force or unemployed by the seventh post-school year.

FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT GO ON TO GAIN A UNIVERSITY DEGREE OR TAFE DIPLOMA

The participation pattern for males was:

- 79% were in full-time activities in the first year after leaving school—41% employed, 20% in apprenticeships and 18% studying full-time

- by the seventh post-school year in the mid 90s, 78% were in full-time work, 9% were unemployed and 3% out of the labour force. (18,8-9)

The participation pattern for females was:

- 68% of females were in full-time activities in the first year—47% employed, 4% in apprenticeships or traineeships and 17% studying full-time
- by the seventh post-school year, 61% were in full-time work, 6% unemployed and 17% out of the labour force (mainly caring for children). (18,8-9)

FOR THOSE WHO GRADUATE WITH A DEGREE OR DIPLOMA

The participation pattern for males was:

- 76% of male graduates started studying in their first post-school year
- by the seventh year 68% were employed, 23% were still studying and 3% were unemployed. (19,4-5)

The participation pattern for females was:

- 79% of female graduates started studying in their first post-school year
- in the seventh year, 73% were in full-time work, 2% were unemployed and 4% were not in the labour force and not studying. (19,4-5)

® *for more details on gender and patterns of participation for non-graduates over 7 years see (18,12-20)*

What are the benefits of graduating?

The investment in study is repaid for graduates in terms of securing full-time work and, in the main, higher incomes—especially for males.

INCOME

From a study following young people in Year 10 in the 1980s over a seven-year period, it was found that:

- the highest average weekly earnings after seven years were achieved by male graduates who had worked and studied part-time

- the next highest were achieved by males who went directly from school into full-time study and then full-time work
- in general, male graduates earned more than their non-graduate counterparts
- female graduates also earned higher average weekly earnings than female non-graduates who had worked continuously since leaving school
- in all instances, female average weekly earnings were less than their male equivalent.

(19,30)

OCCUPATION

From the same study following young people in Year 10 in the 1980s over a seven-year period, it was found that:

- 75% of male graduates who graduated from their degree or diploma course gained work in professional and managerial occupations, compared with 28% of males who did not graduate with a degree or diploma but did some form of study
- 61% of female graduates gained work in professional and managerial occupations, compared with 16% who did not graduate with a degree or diploma but did some form of study.

(19,31-32)

Part 3. Beyond education: experiences in the labour market and other aspects of life

Part 3 of this reference guide looks in more detail at the labour market and other life experiences of the LSAY cohorts as they move from teenage years into early adulthood. Here we see where they end up and look backward to find what may have led to it. Some of the highlights are:

- *Female early school leavers are especially vulnerable. They are employed in low status white-collar work with lower incomes and less job stability.*
- *The effects of literacy and numeracy achievement in Year 9 carry through into later life. Those with higher levels were more likely to be employed and earning more (regardless of qualifications). Leaving before Year 12 and having lower levels of literacy and numeracy are associated with higher unemployment rates in the early years after leaving school. Lower literacy and numeracy levels continue to be associated with lengthy periods of unemployment up to 33 years of age (the latest age studied).*
- *Once people experience unemployment, it becomes the factor most likely to lead to further unemployment in early adulthood.*
- *Young people are leaving home later, delaying marriage and delaying home ownership.*

Labour market outcomes: a more detailed focus

Being employed

What are the initial jobs and earnings for those who do not go on to higher education?

While the majority of non-completers and Year 12 school leavers settle into the labour market reasonably well, there are noticeable gender differences. Female early school leavers appear especially vulnerable.

TYPES OF JOBS

There were marked differences in the first job held by school leavers from the Y95 cohort, in terms of gender and year of leaving:

- trades and semi-/unskilled manual work remained male dominated, especially among early leavers
- females were clustered in white-collar work, especially early leavers.

(31,67-68)

By age 19 (in 2000), a similar pattern was still evident:

- relatively few early school leavers were in the upper white-collar occupational category
- early school leaver males remained clustered in trades and semi-/unskilled manual work and early school leaver females in white-collar work.

(31,67-68)

When occupational status levels were analysed a similar picture emerged.

(31,69-70)

LEVEL OF EARNINGS

For non-completers in 1997:

- males who left before Year 11 had the highest median income
- females from both early leaver groups had a lower median income than the male early leavers.

(31,70-71)

Three years later in 2000:

- all categories of people had increased median incomes
- males who had left before Year 11 had the highest median income (\$480 per week)
- females who had completed school in Year 12 and did not go on to higher education had the lowest median income. (31,70-71)

® for data on earnings from earlier time periods see (12,41-42)

INFLUENCES ON OCCUPATION AND EARNINGS

The most significant social background factor was:

- gender—females obtained higher status jobs than males but males received higher hourly earnings. (31,73,75)

Significant human capital factors were:

- literacy and numeracy—higher levels were associated with higher occupational status and higher earnings (31,74)
- new apprenticeships—persons doing new apprenticeships had higher occupational status but lower earnings than other recent school leavers (31,74)
- other (non-trade) post-school qualifications—these people had jobs with higher occupational status than those who had not undertaken a qualification (31,75)
- labour market experience—the longer the time in employment, the higher the occupational status and the higher the earnings. (31,75)

JOB STABILITY

Job stability increased the longer the school leavers were in the labour market. However, there were gender differences. In each year assessed and for each type of school leaver, males exhibited similar or higher levels of job stability, depending on age, than their female counterparts. (31,82-83)

CAREERS AND WORK SATISFACTION

- over one-half of the non-completers viewed their present job as a career job and this percentage was rising over time
- males were more likely than females to perceive themselves in a career job, regardless of level of school leaving

- overall, school leavers in paid employment reported being satisfied with their jobs—there were no differences between level of school leaving or gender. (31,82-85)

® for an earlier report on labour market outcomes at the age of 19 see (4)

What influences earnings over time?

People are more likely to be earning higher incomes if they are older, are male, have high literacy and numeracy levels and a degree.

SOCIAL BACKGROUND, DEMOGRAPHY AND CONTEXT

Data on earnings from three youth cohorts—1961, 1965 and 1970—were gathered between 1980 and 1994. From the pooled data, across cohorts and with ages from 17 to 33, the following significant effects were identified:

- the effect of age was considerable—hourly earnings increased between 8% and 14% annually (8,9)
- the hourly earnings of males were considerably higher than females, although the gap appeared to be narrowing (8,9,15-16)
- the effects of socioeconomic and non-English speaking background were small (8,10)
- although having lived in a metropolitan area at school had some beneficial effect on earnings, the difference due to region declined (8,10)
- the unemployment rate had a substantial effect—as it went up, earnings came down. (8,11)

SCHOOL & EDUCATIONAL VARIABLES

Data from 1980 to 1994 also showed significant effects from school-related variables:

- attendance at an independent school may have affected earnings indirectly through qualifications
- school achievement in literacy and numeracy increased hourly earning, net of qualifications and labour market experience, and this effect of achievement increased with increasing age. (8,11,16-17)

QUALIFICATIONS

- the strongest influence on hourly earnings was a degree and this increased as the degree holder aged (8,12,18-19)
- apprenticeships also increased hourly earnings, but more so for the young (8,19-20)
- Year 12 completion appeared to have a positive impact on earnings for women, but less so for men; however, this positive impact was greatest at younger ages and declined thereafter (8,17-19)
- TAFE certificates and diplomas did not have an appreciable effect on earnings (8,12)

What are the patterns of full-time work in early adulthood?

Overall, prior work experience has the strongest influence on being in full-time work.

PROPORTION OF TIME IN FULL-TIME WORK

Data from the cohort born in 1975 and gathered over the period 1996, when they were age 21, to 2000, when they were age 25, showed:

- about 40% of the cohort had no full-time work in 1996, when they were 21 years of age but this decreased to 18% by age 25
- more males than females spent all or most of the year in full-time work—by age 25, 75% of males were in full-time work more than 70% of the year compared with 63% of females. (34,21-22)

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FULL-TIME WORK

Data from the 1975 birth cohort who were in full-time work all year (100%) over the period from 1996 to 2000 were broken down in terms of a number of factors.

The most striking finding in terms of the standard demographic variables was the changing relationship between years 21 and 25:

- in the early years those with parents in trades and semi-skilled work and those with less education had the highest incidence of employment but by age 25 it was those with better-educated parents in managerial jobs (34,22-23)

RELATIONSHIP OF QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK EXPERIENCE WITH FULL-TIME WORK

Data from the 1975 birth cohort who were in full-time work all year showed that:

- those who had completed an apprenticeship or traineeship showed consistently higher levels of full-time work
- by age 23 those with degrees showed higher levels of full-time work for all groups except those who had done an apprenticeship
- TAFE certificates or other diplomas did not seem to have a noticeable effect
- prior experience of full-time work had a strong relationship with subsequent full-time work.

(34,23-25)

INFLUENCES ON TIME SPENT IN FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT

A number of the above factors were subject to statistical analysis to investigate the influences on the time spent in full-time employment. The significant findings were:

- prior experience of full-time work had a large positive impact on subsequent work and this impact was greater than qualifications
- completion of Year 12 increased time spent in full-time work, after taking account of prior work experience
- of all qualifications, a degree had the strongest impact on subsequent time spent in full-time employment.

(34,25-28)

Being unemployed or marginalised

What are recent school-leavers' experiences of unemployment?

Leaving before Year 12 and having lower levels of literacy and numeracy are associated with higher unemployment rates in the early post-school years. Living in a socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhood also impacts on unemployment.

PATTERN OF UNEMPLOYMENT TO AGE 19, 1997–2000

Data from the Y95 cohort showed that, in any given year between 1997 and 2000 (when they were roughly 16 to 19), the majority of school non-completers were employed and this proportion increased each year. By 2000, the employment rates for early

leavers (at or before Year 10), later leavers (before end of Year 12) and school completers who did not go on to higher education were 80%, 77% and 79%, respectively.

However, when expressed as a proportion of those from the cohort in the labour force, school non-completers had a higher rate of unemployment than school completers.

(31,58-60)

INFLUENCES ON UNEMPLOYMENT AT AGE 19, IN 2000

Data from the Y95 cohort who left school at or before Year 12 and did not go onto higher education showed that the following characteristics were associated with unemployment:

- young people whose parents were employed in skilled occupations had significantly lower unemployment rates than those with parents in semi-/unskilled manual occupations
- young people from non-English speaking backgrounds who did not go on to higher education had the highest unemployment rates
- people with high literacy and numeracy had significantly lower unemployment rates
- later school leavers (before the end of Year 12) were more likely to be unemployed than either earlier school leavers (by Year 10) and school completers
- recent school leavers who had completed an apprenticeship had a significantly lower unemployment rate
- recent school leavers who had achieved a non-trade qualification had higher unemployment rates.

(31,60-66)

NEIGHBOURHOOD EFFECTS ON UNEMPLOYMENT BETWEEN 18 AND 21

A sample of 18 year-olds and one of 21 year-olds were drawn from a number of cohorts to investigate neighbourhood effects—ie where residential location impacts on the social outcomes of individuals above and beyond what could be expected from their personal and family characteristics—on unemployment propensity.

A robust statistical test using a panel data model found:

- the concentration of vocational qualifications was not statistically significant in terms of unemployment
- youth from the lowest 20% of neighbourhoods experienced a higher probability of unemployment.

(24,19-23)

What are the unemployment experiences of early adulthood?

Prior experience with unemployment is the factor most likely to lead to further unemployment for 21-to-25 year-olds.

PATTERNS OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR 21-TO-25 YEAR-OLDS

Data from the cohort born in 1975 were gathered from 1996, when they were age 21, to 2000, when they were age 25. The key patterns for those in that group who were employed for between 30% and 100% of any one year were:

- the percentage unemployed between 30% and 100% of the year declined from 5% at age 21 to 2% at age 25
- those at the lowest end of literacy and numeracy achievement had the highest levels of unemployment over all five years
- those with parents with managerial/professional jobs and with university degrees had lower levels of unemployment
- by age 25 there was no difference in the unemployment rate between those from metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas and between those from different ethnic backgrounds
- by age 25 unemployment among those who had attended independent schools was close to zero.

(34,29-31)

INFLUENCES ON TIME UNEMPLOYED

Data from the cohort born in 1975 were analysed for the relative contributions of the different variables affecting the percentage of time spent unemployed between 1996 and 2000. The key findings were:

- there was no significant effect of gender
- prior experience of full-time work and, to a lesser extent, part-time work, decreased the percentage of time spent unemployed
- prior experience of unemployment had the strongest relationship—the more prior experience the more time spent unemployed
- degrees offered little protection against unemployment.

(34,31-35)

What are the experiences of 21-to-25 year-olds in marginal activities?

The amount of time in full-time work prior to age 21 substantially reduces the time spent in marginal activities between 21 and 25.

PATTERNS OF MARGINAL ACTIVITIES FOR 21-TO-25 YEAR-OLDS

Data from the cohort born in 1975 were used to identify those who spent time in marginal activities that included working or studying part-time, looking for work, not working, or doing other things (not domestic duties). The key patterns for those in marginal activities between 1996 and 2000 were:

- the proportion that spent all year in marginal activities was 8% at age 21 and 6% at age 25
- in most years a higher proportion of females than males were in marginal activities 31% to 100% of the time
- those who achieved the lowest levels in literacy and numeracy spent more time in marginal activities.

(34,36-38)

INFLUENCES ON TIME SPENT IN MARGINAL ACTIVITIES

Data from the cohort born in 1975 showed that the significant influences on time spent in marginal activities between 1996 and 2000 were:

- the percentage of time spent in full-time work up to age 20 decreased the percentage of time in marginal activities between age 21 and 25
- Year 12 completers spent less time in marginal activities than non-completers
- having a degree substantially reduced the time spent in marginal activities.

(34,38-41)

What factors influence unemployment to 33 years of age, 1980–1994?

School achievement in literacy and numeracy is the single, main consistent factor related to being unemployed for 3 months or more during the period 1980 to 1994. Prior labour market experience is also significant.

SOCIAL BACKGROUND, DEMOGRAPHY AND CONTEXT

Data on unemployment (3 or more months) from three youth cohorts—1961, 1965 and 1970—were gathered between 1980 and 1994. From the pooled data, across cohorts and with ages from 17 to 33, the following significant effects were identified:

- age had a significant and negative effect on unemployment incidence—this was independent of the overall unemployment, qualifications and work experience
- males were more likely to be unemployed than females
- parental occupation had some effect on unemployment, although over the time period it became less for males and more for females
- males from non-English speaking backgrounds were significantly more likely to experience unemployment
- the national unemployment rate was significantly related to the sample's unemployment rate.

(7,12-14)

SCHOOL & EDUCATIONAL VARIABLES

Data from the youth cohorts—1961, 1965 and 1970—gathered between 1980 and 1994 also showed that:

- attendance at a non-government school was increasingly beneficial in terms of employment
- school achievement in literacy and numeracy had a direct and substantial effect on unemployment.

(7,14-16)

QUALIFICATIONS

The cohort data gathered from 1980 to 1994 showed that:

- completing Year 12 reduced the odds of unemployment, regardless of any other qualifications
- having a degree did not provide additional protection against unemployment
- having an apprenticeship did not reduce the chances of unemployment and, in the youngest cohort, the chances actually increased.

(7,17-18)

LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCE

Prior full-time employment had the largest effect of all variables on unemployment. The higher the percentage of prior full-time work the lower the unemployment incidence, and more so for men than women.

(7,18-19)

What influences the duration of unemployment, 1980–1994?

Males tend to be unemployed for longer durations, as are younger people, those not married and those with low school achievement.

UNEMPLOYMENT DOES NOT ENGENDER MORE

Data on unemployment duration from three youth cohorts—1961, 1965 and 1970—were gathered between 1980 and 1994. Data from each of the cohorts at age 18, 22, 26 and 30 showed there was no evidence that the longer the time spent in unemployment, the less likely people were to leave unemployment (state dependency hypothesis).

(7,20-21)

DURATION AT AGE 18

The cohort data from 1980 to 1994 were used to identify factors affecting the duration of unemployment when the respective cohorts were aged 18. It was found that:

- Year 12 completion reduced unemployment duration, especially amongst females
- high achievement in literacy and numeracy substantially decreased unemployment duration.

(7,22-23)

DURATION AT AGE 22

- the effect of Year 12 completion and achievement decreased, although the latter was still significant
- gender differences were stronger—being female decreased the length of time unemployed
- marriage had a strong effect on reducing unemployment duration
- the strongest effect was the percentage of time respondents spent unemployed until the previous year

(7,23-25)

DURATION AT AGE 26

- school achievement again had a substantial effect
- unemployment was shorter for females than males
- marriage had a strong effect on reducing unemployment duration
- the percentage of time respondents spent unemployed until the previous year also affected duration.

(7,25-26)

DURATION AT AGE 30

At this stage the previous pattern of effects had been consolidated:

- school achievement continued to have a substantial effect, although more so for males than females
- unemployment was shorter for females than males
- marriage had a strong effect on reducing unemployment duration, with males experiencing the stronger effect
- the percentage of time respondents spent unemployed until the previous year also affected duration but only significantly for males.

(7,26-27)

Other life experiences

Making the transition to adulthood

Leaving home

Young people, especially young women, are leaving home later.

TRENDS OVER TIME

Data from four youth cohorts—born in 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1975—were used to identify trends. For the early cohorts, data are available until they were 33 and 28 years of age and for the latter two until they were 24 and 25 years of age respectively. It was found that:

- young people under 25 had been leaving home at decreasing rates
- young women especially were making the transition to independent living at much older ages.

(28,13-15)

INFLUENCES

Using data from the four cohorts, social background, education and employment/study activity were investigated for their effect on leaving home. Only two variables were significant:

- young people from non-metropolitan areas were more likely to leave home earlier than those from metropolitan areas and this trend had increased over the decades
- young people from a non-English speaking background were less likely to leave home early and this trend had remained steady over time.

(28,16-18)

Getting married

A number of young Australians are delaying marriage.

TRENDS OVER TIME

Data from the four youth cohorts—born in 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1975—showed that:

- fewer people in the younger cohorts (1970 & 1975) are married by the age of 25
- the number of young people in de facto relationships had increased substantially to age 25

(28,19-21)

INFLUENCES

Data from the four youth cohorts showed that the significant influences on getting legally married before the age of 25 were:

- coming from a non-metropolitan area was one of the most consistent influences on marriage, especially for males
- the positive influence of employment on marriage for males decreased across the cohorts
- the negative impact of study on the likelihood of marriage for females increased over the cohorts.

(28,22-25)

Buying the first home

The transition to home ownership is being delayed for successive cohorts and the pattern of influences changing.

TRENDS OVER TIME

Data From the four youth cohorts—born in 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1975—showed that:

- the proportion of young people renting had increased over the last three cohorts

- by age 25 around one-fourth of the two younger cohorts owned their own home compared to more than one-third of the older cohorts at the same age. (28,26-27)

INFLUENCES

Data From the four youth cohorts—born in 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1975—showed that:

- marriage was one of the strongest and consistent influences on home ownership by 25, but this effect decreased for females in the two younger cohorts
- being employed also increased the likelihood of home ownership, although the influence decreased over the cohorts and especially for males
- being female and studying decreased the likelihood of home ownership. (28,28-29)

Effects on well-being

What factors influence well-being?

Marriage and unemployment have the strongest, albeit opposite, effects on well-being.

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

The impact of demographic factors on the well-being of young adults was investigated using data from four cohorts born in 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1975. It was found that:

- women reported being happier than men, especially in their interpersonal relationships
- higher levels of satisfaction were experienced by those who were married than by those in a de facto relationship
- having children had no impact on well-being
- for the two oldest cohorts living with parents at 20 years of age had a negative relationship, for the third cohort (1970) there was no difference, and for the youngest there was a positive relationship. (6,3-7)

ECONOMIC FACTORS

The impact of economic factors on the well-being of young adults was investigated using data from four cohorts born in 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1975. It was found that:

- income influenced all cohorts at all ages, although the relationship between income and life satisfaction weakened with age
- occupational status also showed a relatively strong relationship with life satisfaction, although with a decreasing effect with age
- there was a strong negative relationship between unemployment and well-being.

(6,8-10)

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