

# How Young People are Faring '10

THE NATIONAL REPORT ON THE LEARNING AND  
WORK SITUATION OF YOUNG AUSTRALIANS



First published 2010 by  
The Foundation for Young Australians  
21–27 Somerset Place, Melbourne  
Victoria, 3000, Australia  
[www.fya.org.au](http://www.fya.org.au)

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### **Acknowledgments**

This report has been prepared by Lyn Robinson, Stephen Lamb and Anne Walstab, researchers in the Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning (CPELL) at the University of Melbourne.

The assistance of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) with the provision of data is gratefully acknowledged.

Supplementary case study material has been prepared by Barbara Lemon from The Foundation for Young Australians. Sincere thanks are extended to the young people who contributed their stories.

### **Cover photo**

Drew Echberg

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**The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians presents an ambitious vision for young people in the 21st century. Signed by all Australian Education Ministers, the Declaration includes as its second goal that ‘All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens’. Consider this goal while reading the following report, which begins with some unsettling and challenging statistics.**

By some economic measures, Australia has fared comparatively well during a period of global economic instability. But as this report shows, the same cannot be said for many young people. The level of teenage disengagement from work and study, for example, remains as high as in 2009. Teenage males continue to be particularly affected by the economic downturn. They have greater difficulty finding full-time work. Unemployment rates are much higher for teenagers than for adults. As the adult labour force has grown, the teenage labour force has steadily declined over the last 25 years. Despite modest improvements, the percentage of school leavers not fully engaged in education or work remains at its highest level in two decades. In 2010, the unemployment rate of teenagers not in full-time education is approaching 18 per cent. Fewer teenagers began an apprenticeship in 2009, the level of commencements having stalled following the global financial crisis. For those not in some form of education, labour market conditions have barely changed since last year. Full-time job opportunities for teenagers are decreasing, offset by a small increase in participation in full-time education.

Longer term trends indicate that the labour market for young Australians is changing. More young people are undertaking further education after leaving school and staying in education longer. Levels of participation by 20 to 24 year-olds in earning and learning have improved; however, nearly a quarter of this age group are still not engaged in full-time education or full-time work—an unacceptable level by any measure. While participation in education has increased significantly over the last two decades, we need to be doing more to provide a greater variety of options for young people who find that conventional pathways to higher education and training may not be suitable.

Completing Year 12 or equivalent continues to be a critical factor in successful transitions. By international comparisons, Australia’s rate of secondary school completion still lags behind several Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Many parts of Australia are tracking well to meet targets to raise the completion of Year 12 or equivalent, as well as university level qualifications, but there is still some way to go—particularly for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those in rural and remote areas. Achievement levels of Indigenous students in areas such as literacy and Year 12 completion remain unacceptably low compared to non-Indigenous students.

In summary, the data on transitions suggest that while conditions for young people have improved slightly, they remain far from ideal. A key question is: ‘what do young people think?’

## **Preface**



A new feature of this year's report is the use of case studies. These snapshots of young people offer some insight into the faces behind the data. Their stories point to nuances in experience that reveal a more complex picture of transition, deepening our understanding beyond statistics. More snapshots of young people can be found alongside this report at [www.fya.org.au](http://www.fya.org.au). Despite the often unsettling portrayal of young people in transition that emerges from the data, young people are resilient and optimistic about their futures, as these snapshots reveal. The case studies also remind us that young people comprise a richly diverse range of individuals, defying easy categorisation. Young people are not a homogenous group. Making up nearly a quarter of Australia's population, they reflect a broad range of heritage cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, political perspectives and other dispositions.

Another new feature of this year's report draws on data from the World Values Survey to contextualise our understanding of youth transitions within a global frame, and in relation to broader goals such as the Melbourne Declaration. Views of young Australians about aspects of citizenship are compared with those of young people in other countries, and suggest many similarities in world views. While half of young adults in Australia see economic growth as important, the majority indicate that protecting the environment should have even greater priority, echoing other research and evidence to emerge during the last few years.

Young people who have a sense of where they want to go after leaving school tend to fare better in the transition to work and further study. Moreover, as the following report shows, those who complete school have a greater sense of control over their lives in comparison to those who drop out early. International data affirms the importance of finishing school to the confidence of young people and their experience of citizenship. They are more likely to be engaged in voluntary community work. Their wellbeing across a range of indicators improves. They are more likely to fulfil the goal of the Melbourne Declaration as active citizens, not just locally, but with a global perspective in mind.

Persistent challenges remain for certain groups of young people. Those in need of particular attention live in regional and remote areas, come from low socioeconomic status backgrounds and leave school before Year 12. This report—the third to arise out of a three year collaboration between The Foundation for Young Australians and the Centre for Post-Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Melbourne—urges us to develop new thinking about how we can better open up new pathways to earning and learning both in response to recent economic conditions and longer-term shifts in the worlds of work. We need to pay greater attention to those struggling to achieve at an earlier stage in their development; in particular, we need to address the trend towards fewer opportunities for teenagers to get full-time work in a changing labour market. We also need to understand better how this data about transitions fits within the bigger picture of what it means for young people to be active citizens within their communities, their country, their region and their world.



**Dr Lucas Walsh**

Senior Executive, Research & Evaluation  
The Foundation for Young Australians

# Key findings

## Engaging in education, training and work: teenagers

**About 70 per cent of 15 to 19 year-olds are in full-time education, and 13 per cent are working full-time.**

- > More females (74 per cent) than males (67 per cent) are in full-time study.
- > Males are more often in full-time work (17 per cent compared with 9 per cent of females).

**There has been little improvement since 2009 in the labour market situation of teenagers not in education.**

- > Full-time employment slipped by one percentage point and withdrawal from the labour force increased by the same amount (a change that occurred only for males).

**Differences between states in teenagers' levels of engagement in education and training are partly due to differences in school structure and provision.**

- > School participation rates at age 18 vary greatly, for instance, from 5 per cent in Queensland to 26 per cent in Victoria.

**Despite the easing of the financial crisis, the percentage of teenagers not fully engaged in work or study remains at the same high level of 16 per cent that was seen in 2009.**

- > In the past, such marginalisation has been higher among females, but this gender gap narrowed in 2010 to less than one percentage point.
- > Marginalisation decreased for females but increased for males, suggesting that the negative impact of the economic downturn has been felt more severely among teenage males than females.
- > Changes since 2009 in the percentages of teenagers not fully engaged have not been consistent across states.

**The long-term decline in full-time employment among teenagers continues in 2010, while participation in full-time education has risen slightly.**

- > Non-school education accounts for the increase in educational participation among teenagers.

**Teenagers not in education and in the labour force face an unemployment rate of nearly 18 per cent in 2010.**

- > Since 2007, unemployment among those not in education has been higher for females than males; but in 2010 the female rate (16.7 per cent) dipped below that for males (18.9 per cent).

**Fewer teenagers were seeking higher-level VET qualifications in 2009 than in the previous year, although the percentage studying for a degree rose slightly.**

**Apprenticeships are an important training pathway for teenagers, but have been hit by the economic downturn.**

- > Estimates indicate a decrease in the percentage of teenagers undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships, from 9.1 per cent in 2008 to 8.3 per cent in 2009.
- > This decline in participation in training was greater for males than for females.
- > Fewer teenagers began an apprenticeship in 2009.
- > Trade apprenticeship commencements have been more adversely affected than non-trade traineeships.

## Explanatory Notes

**Apprentices and trainees:** unless separately identified, apprentices and trainees may be in one of several categories depending on how they have reported their activity at the time of ABS survey.

**Full-time work:** work involving 35 hours or more per week.

**Part-time work:** work involving less than 35 hours per week.

**Not in the labour force:** refers to those not in work and not seeking work.

**Unemployed:** refers to those not employed in the week of the survey, and who had actively looked for and were available for work in the previous four weeks.

**School completers:** young people who have attended school and completed Year 12.

**Early school leavers:** young people who have left school without completing Year 12.

**Rounding:** rows/columns in tables and figures may not sum to 100.0 due to rounding.

## Engaging in education, training and work: school leavers

### **More school leavers are going on to further education in 2010.**

- > 46 per cent of school leavers continued in full-time education, which is 3 percentage points higher than in the previous year.
- > More female school leavers (54.5 per cent) than males (37.5 per cent) are studying.

### **The job prospects of teenage school leavers have not improved, with a lower percentage entering full-time work in 2010 than in 2009.**

### **In 2010 the percentage of school leavers not fully engaged in education or work remains at a higher level than at any time during the last 20 years, having dropped only slightly since 2009.**

- > In the past, females have been more likely than males to be not fully engaged. But in 2010 this situation has been reversed, because of a 6 percentage point fall in females who are not in full-time study or full-time work, and a two percentage point rise in males in marginalised activities.
- > Males, more dependent on the labour market, are experiencing greater difficulty than females in their transition from school.

### **Year 12 completion provides substantial benefits for school leavers.**

- > More than 60 per cent of Year 12 completers continued in study in 2009 compared with less than 40 per cent of school leavers who completed Year 11.
- > Of those who entered the labour market directly from school, Year 12 completers had higher rates of full-time and part-time employment, and lower unemployment.
- > School completers were less likely to be at risk of marginalisation.

## Engaging in education, training and work: young adults

### **Three quarters of 20 to 24 year-olds are fully engaged in earning or learning: 46 per cent are working full-time and 30 per cent are in full-time education.**

- > There are strong gender differences in rates of participation in work and study.
- > One third of females compared with just over one quarter of males are in full-time study.
- > Five in ten males are in full-time jobs, compared with four in ten females.
- > For those not in study, the unemployment rate is higher among males than females, but twice as many females as males have withdrawn from the labour force.

### **Apprenticeships provide access to qualifications for young adults, although participation in such training fell slightly in 2009.**

- > About 7 per cent of 20 to 24 year-olds (10 per cent of males, and almost 4 per cent of females) were doing an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2009.

### **Almost one quarter of 20 to 24 year-olds are not engaged in full-time work or full-time education in 2010, a slight improvement over the situation in the previous year.**

- > A rise in full-time employment by nearly one percentage point, combined with a smaller increase in participation in full-time education accounted for the fall in the percentage of young adults not fully engaged recorded between 2009 and 2010.

### **Over the last two decades, the rate of participation in full-time work has declined while participation in full-time education has more than doubled.**

- > Full-time employment dropped |from 63.4 per cent to 46.4 per cent.
- > Full-time education rose from 12.8 per cent to 29.5 per cent.

### **Young men are more likely to be unemployed, while young women are more likely to be in part-time work or not in the labour force.**

- > Young women tend to be more at risk of marginalisation than young men, with the size of the gender gap varying over time.
- > This gap narrowed in 2009 (due to sharper rises for males than for females in the percentages that were in part-time work and unemployed), but increased again in 2010 as a result of a better rate of recovery in employment among young men compared with young women.
- > Females aged 20 to 24 are more likely than males to be not studying and not in the labour force, mainly due to family formation and child care responsibilities.

## The youth labour market

### **The teenage labour force has shrunk in size (from almost 600,000 to about 370,000 over the last 25 years) while the adult labour force has grown (from 7.5 to 11.6 million).**

### **During the last three decades unemployment rates have been much higher among teenagers than adults.**

- > The gap in 2010 is nearly 12 points, with adult unemployment at 5 per cent and the rate for teenagers at 17 per cent (close to 18 per cent for males, and 16 per cent for females).

### **The number of full-time jobs for teenagers dropped sharply following economic downturns in the early 80s and 90s, and then levelled out.**

- > The same trend appears to be occurring following the recent downturn, so teenagers continue to miss out on full-time jobs.

# Key findings

### **Teenagers have difficulty finding full-time work.**

- > In 2010 almost one quarter of those not in education are looking for a full-time job.

### **Fewer young Australians who are not in full-time education are in the labour force compared with 20 years ago.**

#### **Among young people not in education:**

- > The decline in full-time employment has been much greater for teenagers than for young adults. Between 1990 and 2010 it fell by 20 per cent for teenagers, compared with 7 per cent for young adults. In 2010, about three quarters of young adults are in full-time work, compared with just over half of teenagers.
- > Unemployment is higher among teenagers (17.9 per cent) than young adults (7.6 per cent).
- > Part-time employment accounts for an increasing percentage of young Australians who are not in education: 3 in 10 teenagers had part-time jobs in 2010, which is 3 times as many as in 1990, while among young adults the proportion almost doubled, to 17 per cent.

### **Educational attainment**

#### **More than 84 per cent of 20 to 24 year-olds had attained Year 12 or equivalent in 2009, with a target of 90 per cent in 2015.**

#### **Upper secondary completion rates in Australia have increased, but international comparisons show there is still scope for improvement.**

- > In Australia, 81 per cent of adults aged 25 to 34 had completed upper secondary school, compared with more than 90 per cent in several OECD countries, including Canada.
- > Australia's early school leaving rate of 16 per cent is higher than in many European countries.
- > Social background continues to have a strong influence on early school leaving, with much higher rates of early leaving among young people whose parents themselves have not completed school.

#### **Raising attainment among Indigenous young people involves challenges.**

- > Apparent retention rates of Indigenous students are well below those of other students, although this gap has decreased over the last 15 years.
- > Year 9 achievement levels of Indigenous students are markedly below those of non-Indigenous students, especially in literacy.
- > Achievement gaps are much greater for remote and rural Indigenous students.
- > In 2008 less than one third of Indigenous young adults had completed Year 12 compared with three quarters of non-Indigenous young people.

#### **In most European countries and in Australia, among adults aged 30 to 34 years, more females than males obtain a tertiary qualification.**

- > In Australia, 52 per cent of females compared with 38 per cent of males have a university or higher level VET qualification.

#### **In Australia, 31 per cent of young adults aged 25 to 34 had attained university-level qualifications in 2007, against a target of 40 per cent by 2020.**

- > To meet this target, participation by under-represented groups, especially those from low SES backgrounds and from rural areas, must be raised.

#### **Educational attainment confers substantial economic benefits.**

#### **For all labour force participants in 2009, regardless of age, higher levels of educational qualifications are associated with higher weekly earnings and lower unemployment rates, as well as higher rates of full-time employment.**

- > Early school leavers were 3 times more likely to be unemployed than degree holders.
- > Of those in the labour force in 2009, about three quarters of those with a degree were in full-time work, compared with just over half of those without a post-school qualification.

## **Key findings**

***Educational attainment has benefits for young people in their mid-20s.***

***School completers are more likely to be working; very early leavers are more likely to be unemployed or not in the workforce.***

- > Among 25 year-olds in 2008, 92 per cent of Year 12 completers were working, whereas just 43 per cent of those who had left school at Year 10 or below were employed.

***Higher educational attainment increases opportunities for work-related learning.***

- > Six in ten degree holders participated in such training in 2008, compared with four in ten of those with lower qualifications.

***Educational attainment is also linked to non-economic benefits that include better health, such as reduced levels of obesity and higher life expectancy.***

***The attitudes and values of young Australians***

***Completing secondary school has a positive impact in developing the capacities for citizenship.***

One of the national goals of schooling is that 'All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens' (MCEECDYA, 2008a). The views of young Australians about various aspects of citizenship can be compared with those of young people in other countries, using data from the World Values Survey.

***Relating to the world as local and global citizens***

- > Almost all (95 per cent) young Australians regarded themselves as members of the nation, four in five (83 per cent) identified with their local community, and three quarters (76 per cent) saw themselves as a world citizen. This was a pattern common across most countries.
- > In many countries, school completers tend to be more likely to see themselves as global citizens.

***Views about national priorities***

- > School completers are more likely to say that living in a democratic country is very important.
- > Half of young adults in Australia think that economic growth should be one of the main aims over the next ten years.
- > Nevertheless, there is strong support for the environment, with three quarters of young adults in Australia saying that protecting the environment should have priority over economic growth.

***Participating in the community***

- > About two thirds of young Australians are active participants in voluntary community organisations.
- > School completers are more likely to be actively engaged in community organisations: across a majority of countries the active participation rate was at least 10 percentage points higher for school completers than non-completers.
- > In Australia, almost two thirds of school completers were active members of voluntary organisations compared with half of non-completers, and the proportion that were not members of any organisation was twice as high among school non-completers.

***Being confident individuals***

- > School completion increases an individual's sense of self-efficacy: across almost all countries it was school completers who were more likely to feel that they had a great deal of control over their lives compared with young adults who had not finished school.

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This 2010 edition of *How Young People are Faring* is number twelve in an annual series which seeks to bring together the most current information available on the education, training and work activities of young Australians. The series provides the opportunity, each year, to step back and consider how well our education and training system and our economy are meeting the needs of young people as they make the transition from school to further study and work.

How successful are young people in moving into the labour market? The economic outlook appears to be more positive than previously. Signs of recovery (growth, or at least stabilisation) in economies around the world over the past 12 months suggest that the worst of the global financial crisis may be over. Australia has weathered this period remarkably well, never technically entering recession and seeing recent improvement in the unemployment situation and strong gains in the numbers of full-time jobs. Yet the data indicate that not all Australians have fared equally as well. While rates of unemployment in the adult population have now returned to pre-downturn levels, for our youngest labour force participants, teenagers, the jobless rate has not fallen. This is consistent with patterns in other countries. A recent report from the International Labour Organisation showed that young people in developed economies were hit hard by job losses during the global economic crisis. Young people were disproportionately affected by the situation, the report argued, because they are far more vulnerable in a tight labour market than their adult counterparts (International Labour Organisation, 2010). The report contends that innovative policy responses are needed from governments and communities to build stronger pathways to work for young people.

The data assembled for this 2010 edition of *How Young People are Faring* can also be used to assess patterns of engagement in education and training in the context of the Government's education and training agenda.

Education has remained an important focus of effort in Australia and there has been renewed commitment to lifting participation and achievement standards. The task of the education and training system is to produce the skilled workers demanded by industry, so that Australia becomes more competitive globally. The recent Bradley Review of higher education concluded that Australia must aim to increase the proportion of the population which has attained a higher education qualification, and recommended a target of 40 per cent for 25 to 34 year-olds to be achieved by 2020 (Bradley, 2008). This is on top of the goal set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to raise rates of completion of Year 12 or its equivalent to over 90 per cent of school leavers.

## Introduction

When first established, the latter target was to be achieved by 2020, but this date was recently brought forward to 2015 (COAG, 2009). At the same time there is also the aim of reducing achievement gaps for Indigenous Australians by half, as well as reducing gaps in attainment for young people in rural and remote locations. In light of these targets, therefore, it is pertinent to ask: What do the data reveal about current levels of educational attainment? How much change is needed to achieve the goals of the government's agenda?

In all of these areas of target-setting, inequality across groups of young people remains a key issue to be addressed. Overall, the educational attainment levels of young Australians are similar to those of many other industrialised countries, with the majority of young people completing secondary school and a growing number graduating from university. As a whole, young people in Australia are spending more years in formal educational programs, and post-secondary education is generally valued very highly. But large gaps across social groups and regions persist.

Year 12 completion is still lowest among young people from poor families, for Indigenous Australians and for those living in rural and remote areas. Nationally, young people from low SES families are still two and half times less likely to undertake university study than those from high SES backgrounds. If Australia is to achieve the targets that have been set, then higher levels of participation and completion will be required of these groups that, in the past, have not completed school and entered university.

Unequal access continues to be one of the major challenges for government. The patterns revealed in this report indicate that more still needs to be done.

Another perspective on the performance of the education system is that which takes account of the broader goals of schooling. These go beyond the needs of the economy, and extend to the development of a wide range of personal and social competencies, and the capacities for active citizenship. The national goals of schooling contained in the Melbourne Declaration emphasise the importance of such outcomes. It is therefore timely to canvass what is known about some of the attitudes and values that young people hold in relation to their role as citizens of Australia.

The data assembled in *How Young People are Faring 2010* come from a range of sources. From the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), these include the monthly *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) and the annual *Education and Work* survey, as well as the 2009 *Survey of Education and Training* and the 2008 *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSIS)*. The *Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth* (LSAY) also yields national data about the transition experiences of different groups of young people according to social and other aspects of their background. In addition, data from international sources are drawn on to make cross-country comparisons of educational participation and attainment for specific age groups. Together, these provide a picture of key aspects of the transition from school to post-school study and the workforce.

One caveat concerning the data is that some reported in annual series, particularly related to education and training, rely on surveys from the previous year. Hence data on participation in education and training presented in certain parts of this report refers to circumstances in 2009. Data on employment and work activities, however, are from the current year (using the most recent labour force survey data available) and so provide an opportunity to review the impact of the recent economic downturn on employment, unemployment and the youth labour market.

The information on how well the education and training system is working for young Australians is organised into four main sections in this report. The first section profiles the levels of participation in education, training, and work of teenagers (15 to 19 year-olds), school leavers and young adults (20 to 24 year-olds).

Those young Australians who are not undertaking any education and training, and who rely on finding a place in the labour market to provide the foundation for their future wellbeing, are of particular interest. It is important to know who makes up this group, and whether it is growing or shrinking in size.

One of the important goals of education and training is to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to make a smooth transition from school to further study or work. But how difficult is the transition into employment? The second section of the report analyses various aspects of the youth labour market, with a focus on teenagers, and examines long-term changes in the size of the labour force and rates of unemployment for young people relative to the adult population, as well as the demand for full-time jobs.

Section three looks at educational attainment among young people, the efforts to raise attainment levels, and the evidence about the rewards that education confers on individuals. It considers the current rates of secondary school completion and attainment of tertiary-level qualifications in the context of government targets in these areas. In doing so it compares the performance of the education and training systems in Australia and a range of OECD and European countries. The challenges facing policies aimed at reducing Indigenous disadvantage and boosting educational attainment among Indigenous young people are also outlined.

A final section of the report explores some of the attitudes and values held by young Australians in light of the national goals for schooling contained in the Melbourne Declaration (MCEECDYA, 2008a). It considers the experiences of young people from a more subjective perspective, including their perceptions of their role in the world, their views about national goals, the economy and the environment, their level of engagement in the community, and their perceptions of self-efficacy. These findings about the attitudes and values of young Australians can be seen in an international context, because they are based on analyses of survey results from a large range of countries around the world. Furthermore, in showing the connections between these attitudes and values and school completion, the findings strengthen the case for the wider benefits of education.

## Introduction

Patterns of participation in education, training and employment among three groups of young Australians are described in this section. It presents the most currently available data about the learning and earning activities of teenagers (15 to 19 year-olds), school leavers (the large majority of whom are in the same age category), and young adults (20 to 24 year-olds).

Consistent with the way that data are collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, throughout this report apprentices and trainees are classified according to their self-reported education and work statuses. This means that, except in tables where they are specifically enumerated, apprentices and trainees may be spread across one of several categories in the other relevant tables, depending on whether they identified themselves as being in education, or in full-time or part-time work. Young people who have deferred study are counted as being in the education and/or work activities they reported at the time of survey, even if they have an education and training place which they have not yet taken up.

# O1

## **Engaging in education, training and work**

# Teenagers

**A little over 70 per cent of 15 to 19 year-olds are engaged in full-time education, and a further 13 per cent are working full-time**

In May 2010, close to 84 per cent of teenagers aged 15 to 19 were either studying full-time or working full-time (Table 1). Seventy per cent were in full-time education, either at school or in tertiary study, while a further 13 per cent of teenagers were in full-time employment. More than 16 per cent of 15 to 19 year-olds were neither engaged in full-time work nor full-time education, and instead were working part-time (7.3 per cent), were unemployed and seeking work (4.5 per cent), or had withdrawn from the labour force (4.6 per cent).

Rates of participation in full-time work and full-time study differ according to gender. Higher percentages of females (73.8 per cent) than males (66.9 per cent) were doing full-time study. Teenage males, however, more often had full-time jobs (17.1 per cent compared to 9.4 per cent of females). Hence there was little difference in the proportions of males and females who were fully engaged (either in full-time education or full-time work): this was the case for 84 per cent of males and 83.2 per cent of females.

More females than males were in part-time work (8.7 per cent compared with 6 per cent), but the percentage who were unemployed was higher among teenage males (5.3 per cent) than females (3.6 per cent).

It is important to consider the circumstances of teenagers who are no longer at school, especially in light of the recent economic downturn. The labour force status of 15 to 19 year-olds who were not in full-time education in May 2010 compared with the situation for those in the same category in May 2009 is recorded in Table 2.

**Table 1**  
Education and labour market status of teenagers aged 15 to 19 years, Australia, May 2010 (%)

	IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION					NOT IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION					TOTAL
	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	SUB TOTAL	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	SUB TOTAL	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Males	0.4	20.2	4.3	42.1	66.9	17.1	6.0	5.3	4.6	33.1	100.0
Females	0.7	30.0	5.6	37.5	73.8	9.4	8.7	3.6	4.5	26.2	100.0
PERSONS	0.6	25.0	4.9	39.8	70.3	13.4	7.3	4.5	4.6	29.7	100.0

Source: ABS *Labour Force Australia* (2010) (data cube LM3)  
Note: All students enrolled at school are treated as full-time. Apprentices and trainees may be included in education or in work, depending on how they reported their activity at the time of ABS survey.

**Table 2**  
Labour market status of teenagers aged 15 to 19 years not engaged in full-time education, by gender, Australia, May 2010 and May 2009 (%)

	2010			2009		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Full-time work	51.7	36.0	44.9	53.5	36.3	45.9
Part-time work	18.3	33.0	24.6	20.6	28.3	24.0
Seeking work	16.2	13.9	15.2	16.5	15.1	15.8
Not in labour force	13.9	17.1	15.3	9.4	20.3	14.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS *Labour Force Australia* (2010) (data cube LM3)  
Note: It is possible that some apprentices and trainees may be included in this category of ‘not engaged in full-time education’, depending on how they reported their activity at the time of ABS survey.

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A consistent feature of these data is that they highlight the difference between teenage males and females in their access to full-time jobs. Girls tend to stay on in education longer than boys because there are fewer opportunities for them in the labour force. In both 2009 and 2010 Table 2 shows that more than five in ten males who were no longer in study were in full-time work, whereas for females the figure was less than four in ten; this is a difference that largely reflects the different uptake of apprenticeships among young males and females.

*“Most of the boys didn’t seem to want to go on and do further study, and if they did they went and did sports studies at TAFE, whereas most of the girls I hung out with went to uni.”* Louise, 20 years

**There has been little improvement since 2009 in the labour market situation of teenagers who are not engaged in education**

The data do not indicate any substantial improvement since 2009 in the situation for teenagers in the labour force. Comparing the figures for 2010 with the previous year, the percentage in full-time work slipped by one percentage point, to 44.9 per cent; nor was this matched by an equivalent rise in part-time work. And while the percentage of teenagers not in education who were seeking work fell slightly, from 15.8 per cent in 2009 to 15.2 per cent in 2010, this small gain was offset by an increase in those who were not participating in the labour force.

Teenage males appear to have experienced greater difficulties in the labour market. In 2010, compared with 2009, fewer males were in both full-time and part-time work, and substantially more had withdrawn from the labour force. Although the percentage of males who were seeking work has fallen slightly since 2009, from 16.5 to 16.2 per cent, the gender difference in unemployment rates among those teenagers who had left school, which favoured females in each year, increased between 2009 and 2010.

**Engagement in education and training varies by age, with older teenagers less likely to be participating**

Table 1 provides an overview of the education and labour market status in 2010 of all those aged from 15 to 19 years. However, when these data are disaggregated by single year of age, as shown in Table 3, very large differences across the age group can be observed. Almost all 15 and 16 year-olds are in full-time education, mostly at school. A substantial proportion of these school students also have part-time jobs, although the majority are still not in the labour force. For instance, over half (54 per cent) of 16 year-olds are in full-time education, are not employed, and are not seeking work, while nearly one third (29.9 per cent) are combining full-time education with part-time work. Because most 15 and 16 year-olds are in full-time education, small proportions are not fully engaged, just 1.6 per cent of 15 year-olds, and 6.1 per cent of 16 year-olds.

**Table 3**  
Education and labour market status of 15 to 19 year-olds, and proportion not in full-time education or full-time work, by year of age, Australia, May, 2010 (%)

	IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION				NOT IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION				TOTAL	Not fully engaged
	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force		
AGE	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
15	0.2	22.9	6.1	68.5	0.8	0.1	0.7	0.8	100.0	1.6
16	0.1	29.9	5.9	54.0	3.9	1.9	2.0	2.2	100.0	6.1
17	0.5	27.3	5.8	40.6	10.0	6.4	4.7	4.8	100.0	15.9
18	1.0	20.4	4.1	22.0	23.3	13.7	8.0	7.4	100.0	29.1
19	1.1	24.4	2.8	16.6	27.2	13.7	6.8	7.2	100.0	27.8
15-19	0.6	25.0	4.9	39.8	13.4	7.3	4.5	4.6	100.0	16.4

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (Table o3b)

As teenagers leave school in greater numbers by age 17, participation in full-time education declines. One in ten 17 year-olds was in full-time work in May 2010. But not all young people who leave full-time education at this age find a secure place in the labour market. In 2010, a total of 15.9 per cent of 17 year-olds were marginalised to part-time work (6.4 per cent), unemployment (4.7 per cent), or withdrawal from the labour market (4.8 per cent).

This marginalisation is even more pronounced among older teenagers; more than one quarter of those aged 18 and 19 are not fully engaged. For 18 year-olds, the figure was 29.1 per cent, and for 19 year-olds it was almost as high at 27.8 per cent. The main differences between 18 and 19 year-olds are in the proportions in full-time education (a little higher among 18 year-olds), and full-time work (a little lower). By age 19, full-time education (mainly study at university or TAFE, as almost all have left school at this age) accounts for 45 per cent of the age group, whereas for 18 year-olds it is 47.6 per cent. While 27.2 per cent of 19 year-olds have left education and have full-time jobs, a slightly smaller 23.3 per cent of 18 year-olds have done so.

**There are differences between States in teenagers’ levels of engagement in education and training, partly due to differences in school structure and provision**

Table 3 reveals that, nationally, in May 2010, a total of 16.4 per cent of teenagers were not fully engaged in earning or learning. Further information presented in Table 4 indicates that this percentage varied by gender and across the states and territories, although it should be noted that for smaller states and territories these figures need to be treated with caution due to the sample sizes on which estimates are based. In the larger states, however, where estimates are more robust, there are quite marked differences in the percentages of 15 to 19 year-olds who are not engaged in full-time education or full-time work.

Higher percentages of males than females were not fully engaged in Victoria and South Australia, and by a smaller margin in New South Wales. In Queensland and Western Australia, where the opportunities in the labour market may be greater for males, it was females who were more at risk of marginalisation.

*“I was never a good student, I don’t study well, I never did homework, never did my assignments... the thought of uni scared the hell out of me. The extra time at school [required for that] was very daunting.”* Cara, 22 years

Apart from differences in economic conditions and labour markets, another major factor in explaining these differences between states is the variation in the age at which students leave school. This is a result of both the age of starting school, and therefore the typical age of school completion within a state, as well as variation across states in rates of school retention. Figure 1 displays the most recent apparent retention rates, for 2009, indicating the states which have levels above and below the national average of 76 per cent. Victoria and Queensland, and the ACT are in the former category, with New South Wales and Tasmania in the latter.

**Table 4**  
Not fully engaged in education or employment, 15 to 19 year-olds in each State/Territory, by gender, May 2010 (%)

STATE OR TERRITORY	MALES	FEMALES	PERSONS
NSW	15.7	15.5	15.6
Victoria	13.1	12.3	12.7
Queensland	19.8	21.8	20.8
South Australia	19.6	18.8	19.3
Western Australia	15.5	20.3	17.8
Tasmania	15.2	18.3	16.3
Northern Territory	14.5	17.3	15.9
ACT	6.8	14.7	10.7
Australia	16.0	16.8	16.4

Source: ABS *Labour Force Australia* (2010) (data cube LM3)  
Note: All students enrolled at school are treated as full-time.

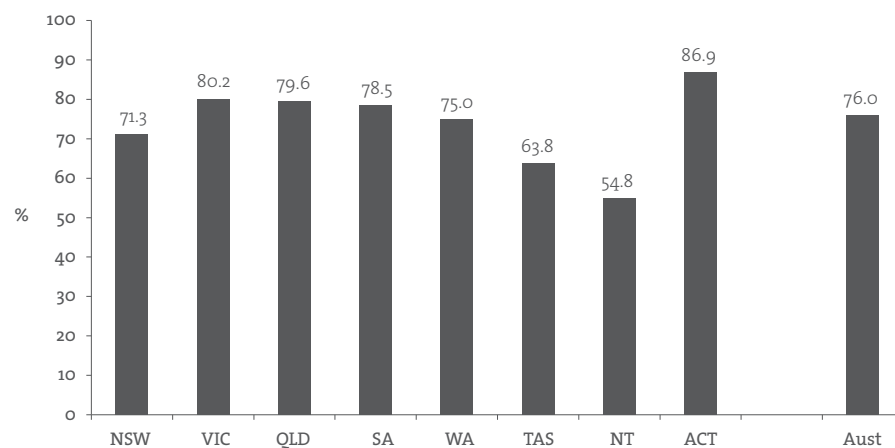
# 01

## Engaging in education, training and work



**Figure 1**

Apparent retention of full-time students from Year 7/8 to Year 12, by State/Territory, 2009 (%)



Source: ABS Schools, Australia (2009)

The combined impact of inter-state differences in school retention rates, and in age and grade structures, can be seen in Table 5. For instance, while the school participation rate among 17 year-olds in 2009 was 65.1 per cent nationally, the figure ranged from 43.6 per cent of 17 year-olds in Western Australia to 78.4 per cent in Victoria (and as high as 92.7 per cent in the ACT). The majority of Year 12 students in Western Australia are aged 16 or 17, and there are very few 18 year-olds still at school (just 4.6 per cent in 2009, as revealed in Table 5), whereas in Victoria almost all Year 12 students are 17 or 18 years of age, including more than one quarter (26 per cent in 2009) of 18 year-olds. A consequence is that Victoria has a lower rate of teenagers not fully engaged in education or work—this rate in 2010 is 12.7 per cent compared with 17.8 per cent in Western Australia.

**Table 5**

School participation rates, by age and State/Territory, 15 to 19 year-olds, 2009 (%)

	AGE				
	15	16	17	18	19
NSW	93.7	81.3	68.6	15.7	1.7
Victoria	97.7	90.9	78.4	26.0	2.7
Queensland	93.9	84.5	49.9	5.1	0.9
South Australia	99.9	95.5	74.8	16.3	4.4
Western Australia	94.1	80.9	43.6	4.6	1.3
Tasmania	99.6	89.1	70.6	28.9	4.0
Northern Territory	81.1	65.5	48.5	10.5	2.2
ACT	111.3	106.8	92.7	24.5	2.2
Australia	95.4	85.6	65.1	15.4	2.0

Sources: ABS Schools, Australia (2009) Table 61b

Note: Participation rate is number of school students of a particular age at the NSSC census date (Aug) expressed as a proportion of the ERP of the same age at 30 June of that year.

Students undertaking school level studies in non-school settings, such as TAFE, are excluded from these data.

The rate for ACT is inflated due to enrolment of students from outside of ACT, so that it exceeds 100 per cent for some ages.

Between-state comparisons of the proportions of teenagers not fully engaged in education or work therefore need to take account of the difference in the typical age of school completion. It is more meaningful to compare Queensland with Western Australia (where in each of these states the average age of Year 12 students in 2009 was 16.7 years), and to compare Victoria (where 17.4 years was the average age of Year 12 students) with New South Wales and South Australia (in which the average age in Year 12 was 17.2 years). Therefore, referring to Table 4, it would seem that circumstances for teenagers are more favourable in Victoria (with 12.7 per cent not fully engaged in work or education) than in New South Wales and South Australia (with higher rates of 15.6 per cent and 19.3 per cent respectively not fully engaged). Similarly, this rate is lower, and thus more favourable, in Western Australia (17.8 per cent) than in Queensland (20.8 per cent).

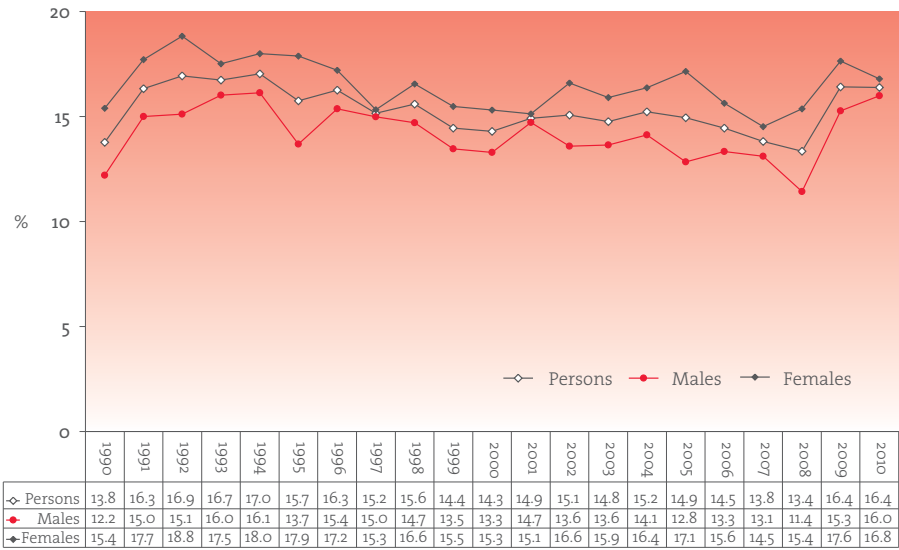
**In 2010, in Australia the percentage of teenagers not fully engaged has remained at the same high level that was seen in 2009, when it spiked as a result of the global economic downturn**

Increases in both school retention and participation in post-school education have previously accounted for a long-term decrease in the proportion of teenagers not learning or earning. However the recent economic downturn saw a jump in the proportion of teenagers not fully engaged. Figure 2 charts data for the period 1990–2010, and shows that in 2009 the percentage of 15 to 19 year-olds who were neither in full-time work nor in full-time education was the highest that it had been since the recession of the early 1990s, and that despite the easing of the financial crisis, this high level of marginalisation has been maintained in 2010.

*“The people that I know that dropped out, they had their mind set—my brother was one of them—that they didn’t want to go to school and nobody could change their mind. And it wasn’t really encouraged [for them to stay], because I guess they were the kind of people who maybe disrupted the class and that’s because they didn’t want to be there, and there wasn’t really anyone to say ‘hey look, there’s other options’.”*

Jessica, 24 years

**Figure 2**  
Not in full-time education or full-time work, 15 to 19 year-olds, by gender, 1990–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)  
Note: All students enrolled at school are treated as full-time

Between 2009 and 2010, marginalisation decreased for females but increased for males

When disaggregated by gender, as in Figure 2, it can be seen that rates of marginal attachment to education and the labour market for females have generally been above those for males throughout the last two decades, with a difference of about two percentage points being common. The size of this gender gap has narrowed in recent years, from four points in 2008, to two in 2009, and less than one percentage point in 2010. In fact, between 2009 and 2010 the percentage of females not fully engaged fell (from 17.6 per cent to 16.8 per cent), while for males it rose (from 15.3 per cent to 16 per cent). This suggests that the negative impact of the downturn in the economy has been felt more severely among teenage males than females.

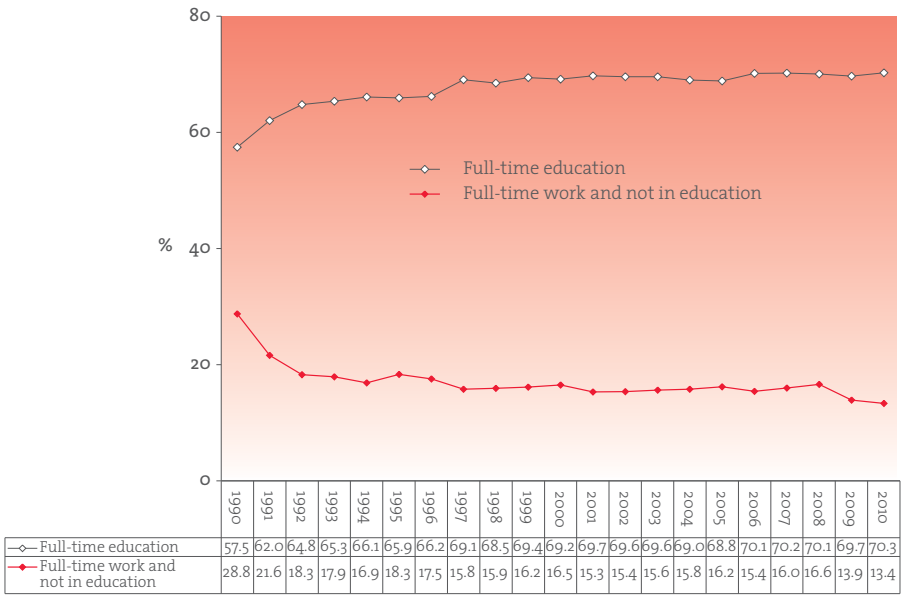
The long-term decline in full-time employment among teenagers continues, while participation in full-time education has risen slightly

Figure 3 provides evidence of continued deterioration in the full-time youth labour market. Of all teenagers, the percentage in full-time work but not in full-time education, which had fallen from 16.6 per cent to 13.9 per cent between 2008 and 2009, dipped even further, to 13.4 per cent in 2010. Counteracting this decline somewhat, teenage participation in full-time education grew slightly to 70.3 per cent in 2010, the highest that it has been.

*“The expectation now is that you can’t get a decent job without a tertiary education.”*

Josh, 23 years

**Figure 3**  
Participation in full-time education and full-time work, 15 to 19 year-olds, 1990–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)  
Note: All students enrolled at school are treated as full-time.

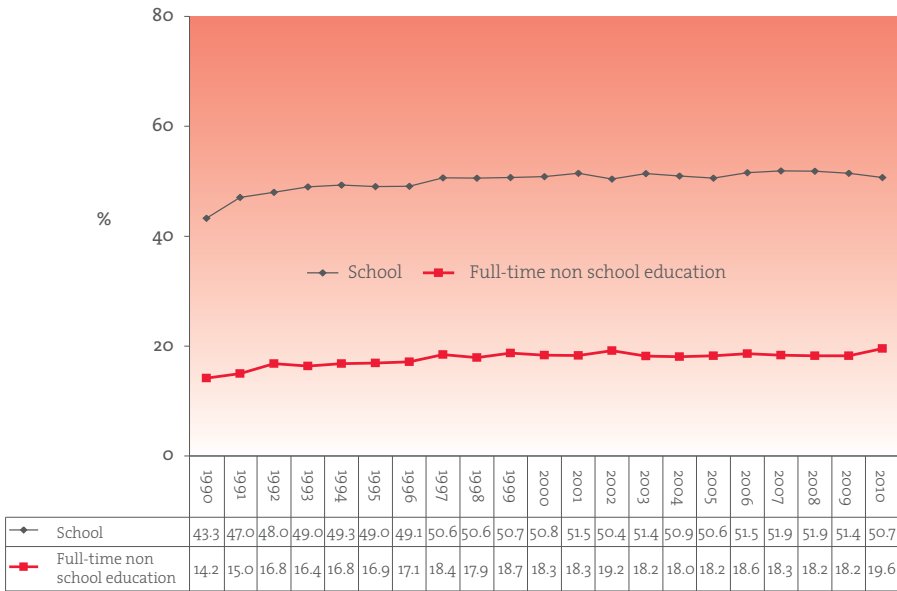
Non-school education accounts for the increase in educational participation among teenagers

Full-time educational participation among teenagers is broken down by school and other non-school attendance in Figure 4. This chart illustrates the trend, over more than twenty years, for increasing proportions of young people to stay on at school, and to continue in tertiary education. As was shown in Figure 3, this overall growth in educational participation, after peaking in 2007, flattened slightly in 2008–2009 but has resumed in 2010. Figure 4 reveals that the most recent rise, from 2009 to 2010, is due to greater participation by teenagers in non-school education; the latter accounted for 19.6 per cent of 15 to 19 year-olds in 2010, up from 18.2 per cent in 2009.

Teenagers in the labour force face high unemployment rates

Among teenagers who were not in full-time education, and who were seeking to enter the labour market, the unemployment rate jumped steeply between 2008 and 2009. As charted in Figure 5, the rate of unemployment rose from 12.2 per cent in 2008 to 18.5 per cent in 2009, following several years in which teenage unemployment had been falling (Note that those who indicate that they are not looking for a job are not counted as labour force participants, and hence are excluded in calculations of the unemployment rate.) The most recent figure, for 2010, shows 17.9 per cent of teenagers not in education but in the labour force were not working and were looking for a job, indicating a halt to the spike in unemployment that had occurred as a result of the economic downturn. But while these figures for 2009 and 2010 suggest that the labour market prospects for teenagers have not actually worsened during the last year, nor has there been any substantial improvement. The rate of teenage unemployment remains at the highest levels that have been experienced over the previous decade

Figure 4  
Participation in school and other type of full-time education, 15 to 19 year-olds, 1990–2010 (%)

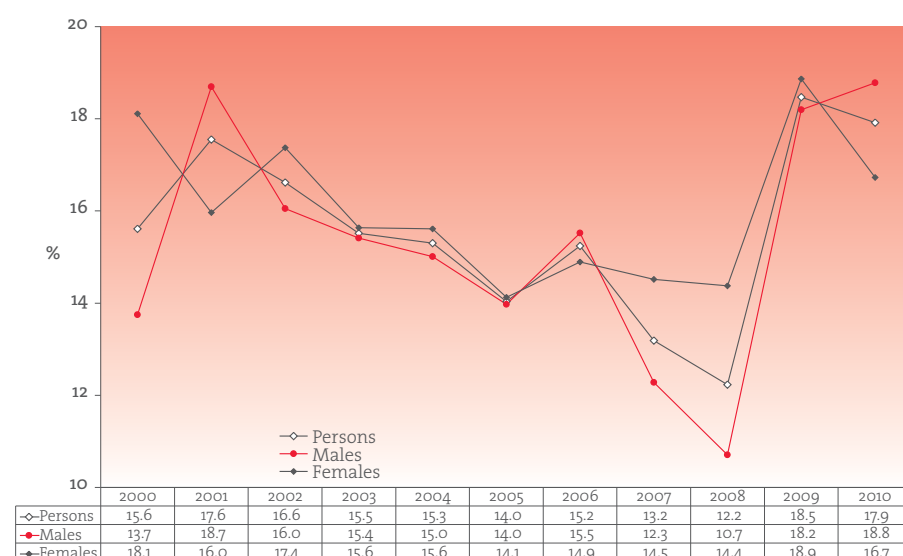


Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

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**Figure 5**

Unemployment rates for those not in full-time education, by gender, 15 to 19 year-olds, 2000–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

Note: Unemployment rates are for teenagers who are not in full-time education and are labour force participants: those who are not seeking employment are excluded. Hence these figures do not match others shown in Table 1 and Table 2 which are based on all 15–19 year olds not in full-time education, including those who were not in the labour force.

For the last few years, since 2007, unemployment rates have been higher among females than males. The gender gap closed in 2009, widening again in 2010, but this time favouring females; the rate of unemployment for males rose sharply from 2008 to 2009, with another small increase to 2010, whereas the female rate dipped between 2009 and 2010, so that it is now two percentage points below that for males (16.7 per cent compared with 18.8 per cent).

#### Changes since 2009 in the percentage of teenagers not fully engaged in work or study have not been consistent across states

The percentages of young people aged 15 to 19 who were not fully engaged in education or work in each of the states and territories during the years between 2000 and 2010 are presented in Table 6. (However note that the estimates for smaller states may not be reliable, due to large standard errors.) A general pattern of improvement in the education and employment circumstances of teenagers was evident in many states prior to 2008, indicated by several years in which there were decreasing percentages who were not fully engaged in work or study. This was reversed in 2009, with sharp rises in these percentages, especially in Queensland and Victoria. The most recent figures, for 2010, do not indicate a consistent trend across states. Based on these estimates, and compared with 2009, there has been no change in NSW, improvement in Victoria and Tasmania, and some deterioration in South Australia and Western Australia in the earning and learning situation of teenagers.

**Table 6**

Not in full-time education and not in full-time employment, 15 to 19 year-olds, by State/Territory, Australia, May, 2000–2010 (%)

MAY	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUSTRALIA
2000	14.7	11.1	16.8	14.0	14.3	16.8	31.3	11.3	14.3
2001	13.4	9.8	19.2	19.2	18.6	16.5	26.4	16.9	14.9
2002	14.9	10.6	17.9	17.2	17.8	15.3	31.7	11.2	15.1
2003	14.7	10.2	18.2	17.0	16.5	15.7	20.4	16.5	14.8
2004	14.2	12.3	17.4	19.6	15.0	15.4	49.0	12.4	15.2
2005	14.5	11.7	16.8	18.3	15.8	16.0	33.1	15.1	14.9
2006	13.8	11.5	17.5	18.0	14.9	13.0	25.2	10.9	14.5
2007	15.0	10.7	14.0	15.1	14.0	15.9	34.2	10.4	13.8
2008	14.0	9.9	15.3	14.0	13.7	16.0	24.8	8.8	13.3
2009	15.6	13.6	20.5	18.2	17.0	16.8	22.2	7.6	16.4
2010	15.6	12.7	20.8	19.3	17.8	16.3	15.9	10.7	16.4
MEAN	14.6	11.3	17.7	17.3	16.0	15.8	28.6	12.0	14.9

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

Note: Values for smaller states are unreliable due to large standard errors.

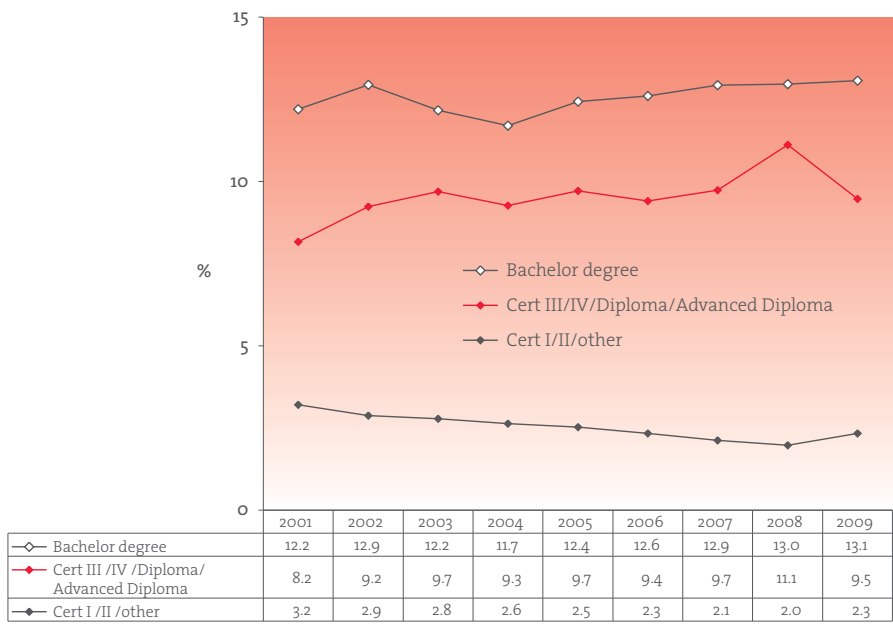
Some values differ from earlier editions of HYPAP due to use of revised estimates.

**Fewer teenagers were seeking higher-level VET qualifications in 2009 than in the previous year, while the percentage studying for a degree rose very slightly**

Participation in education and training is the means by which individuals can develop skills and obtain qualifications that will help to improve their job prospects, and this is seen as even more important at a time when the economy is in downturn. It is therefore pertinent to consider the level and type of study or training undertaken by teenagers who have left school. Figure 6 charts the percentages of 15 to 19 year-olds who were engaged in three different levels of non-school study in each year between 2001 and 2009 (noting that estimates for 2010 derived from the most recent ABS *Education and Work* survey are not yet available).

For much of the decade until 2008, along with a buoyant economy, there was a steady rise in the percentage of teenagers undertaking vocational education and training (VET) at Certificate III level and above, from 8.2 per cent in 2001 to 11.1 per cent in 2008. Apprentices and trainees account for a large proportion of these VET participants. However this figure dropped to 9.5 per cent of teenagers in 2009, back to the level it had been in 2006. Enrolments in basic VET certificates rose by a very small margin (from 2 per cent to 2.3 per cent of the teenage population) between 2008 and 2009. As shown in Figure 7, the percentage of 15 to 19 year-olds doing a bachelor degree grew slightly over the decade, and has hovered around 13 per cent since 2007.

**Figure 6**  
Participation in non-school education, by level of course, 15 to 19 year-olds, 2001–2009 (%)



Source: ABS Education and Work, Australia (2001 to 2009)

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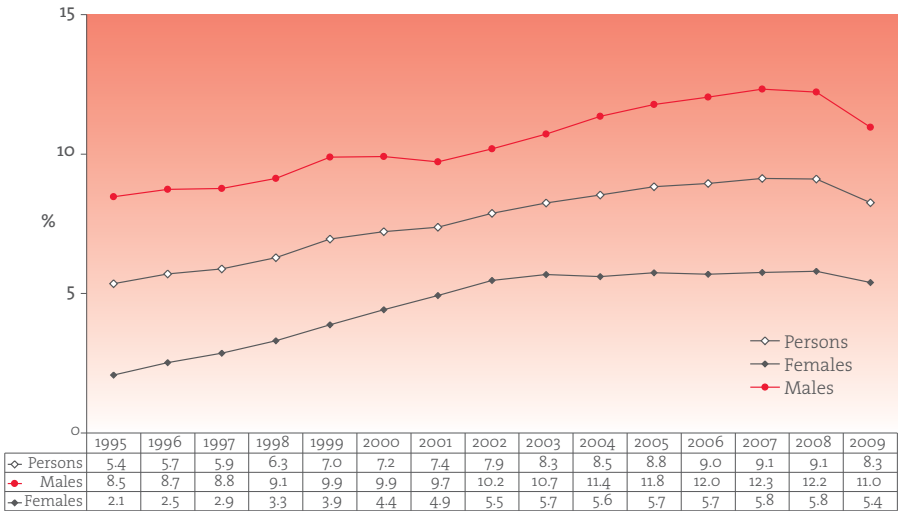
Apprenticeships are an important training pathway for teenagers, but have been hit by the economic downturn

From the 1990s through to 2008 there was a steady rise in the proportion of young people doing apprenticeships and traineeships. As charted in Figure 7, the percentage of 15 to 19 year-olds who were undertaking such training increased from 5.4 per cent in 1995 to 9 per cent in 2006, and peaked at 9.1 per cent in 2007 and 2008. However the estimate for 2009 indicates a reversal of this trend, with a considerable drop to 8.3 per cent of teenagers participating, back to the level that was seen in 2003.

The decline in participation in training has been greater for males than females

Figure 7 also shows this participation rate separately for males and females, and the wide gender gap that has been a consistent pattern. Nationally, in 2009 the proportion of teenage males doing an apprenticeship or traineeship was double that of females (11 per cent compared with 5.4 per cent). Access to this training pathway has recently become more difficult for teenage males: the decline between 2008 and 2009 for males (from 12.2 to 11 per cent of those aged 15 to 19) was much larger than for females (5.8 to 5.4 per cent). At the same time it can be noted that, because males account for a greater proportion of apprentices and trainees than do females, the participation rate for males has a larger effect on the overall rate than does that for females.

Figure 7 Participation in apprenticeships and traineeships, 15 to 19 year-olds, by gender, Australia 1995–2009 (%)



Sources: NCVER National Apprentices and Trainees Collection (2010), ABS Australian Historical Population Statistics (2008), and ABS Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories (2009)  
Note: Some values differ from the previous edition of HYPAP due to the use of revised estimates.

Case study

Hamish: 20 years, apprentice

Hamish attended an inner city public school. Though he enjoyed his classes in PE, Health, History and Maths, he ‘didn’t really work that hard’ and was more interested in spending time with his friends. After school he worked part-time at Coles and coached kids in basketball. He played a lot of football, and is still an active member of his local football club.

After completing Year 12, Hamish admits that ‘it took me a while to look’ for work, partly because he was living at home with parental support and always had part-time employment. He knew he didn’t want to go to university: ‘I always thought I’d do a trade, I just didn’t know what trade I wanted to do. I was working random jobs to get money for the time being. Just factory jobs.’

A year and a half went by before Hamish heard from one of the guys in the football team about a plumbing apprenticeship. He successfully applied and is enjoying his work. The apprentice wage, he says, is ‘just enough to have some fun on the weekends and still save a little bit’.

While underscoring the greater significance of this form of vocational training for males than for females, Table 7 also shows the way in which participation in these forms of vocational training varies across states. Apprenticeships and traineeships have a more important role, when measured by the proportions of teenagers participating in 2009, in Queensland and Tasmania (where more than 9 per cent of 15 to 19 year olds in those states were doing an apprenticeship or traineeship), compared with New South Wales (7.2 per cent) and Western Australia (8.1 per cent). This relatively low overall figure for Western Australia is mainly attributable to the low percentage of females (4.4 per cent) undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships, in comparison with the national average of 5.4 per cent, whereas an above average percentage of the state's teenage males (11.6 per cent) were participating in such training. A comparison across the states shows that this gender imbalance was most pronounced in Western Australia, as well as in the smaller jurisdictions of the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

**Males in trade occupations make up more than half of all those doing apprenticeships and traineeships in 2009**

Table 8 presents further information about teenagers participating in this form of employment-based training in 2009, broken down according to their age and gender, and whether they were undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship. It indicates that more than half (54.1 per cent) of all these young people aged 15 to 19 were males doing an apprenticeship in a trade occupation, and nearly one quarter (23.2 per cent) were females in non-trade traineeships. Males undertaking a traineeship comprised 14.1 per cent of the total, while females in trade apprenticeships made up just 8.6 per cent.

**Table 7**  
Apprentices and trainees in-training, 15 to 19 year-olds, by gender and State/Territory, 2009 (%)

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUS
In-training in 2009 as percentage of population aged 15–19									
Males	9.5	11.1	12.9	10.4	11.6	12.3	9.1	10.4	11.0
Females	4.7	5.8	6.2	6.1	4.4	5.9	3.3	6.4	5.4
Persons	7.2	8.5	9.7	8.3	8.1	9.2	6.3	8.4	8.3

Sources: NCVER National Apprentices and Trainees Collection (2010), ABS Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories (2009)

**Table 8**  
Participation in apprenticeships and traineeships, age 15 to 19, by trade status and gender, Australia 2009 (%)

AGE	TRADES			NON-TRADES			ALL		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
15	0.8	0.3	1.2	1.3	1.9	3.2	2.1	2.2	4.4
16	4.4	1.0	5.4	3.0	4.3	7.3	7.4	5.3	12.7
17	10.8	2.0	12.8	3.1	4.5	7.6	13.9	6.5	20.4
18	16.9	2.6	19.5	3.1	5.7	8.8	20.0	8.3	28.3
19	21.2	2.7	23.9	3.6	6.8	10.4	24.8	9.5	34.2
TOTAL 15–19 YEARS	54.1	8.6	62.7	14.1	23.2	37.3	68.2	31.8	100.0

Source: NCVER National Apprentices and Trainees Collection (2010)

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## Fewer teenagers began apprenticeships in 2009

Nationally, the number of commencements of apprenticeships and traineeships by teenagers is estimated to have fallen by more than 15,000 between 2008 and 2009, with two thirds of these in trade occupations. In 2008 teenage commencements comprised 39.9 per cent of total apprenticeship and traineeship commencements; this had dropped to 36.6 per cent in 2009.

The percentages of 15 to 19 year-olds across Australia commencing apprenticeships and traineeships in 2009 compared with the preceding year are recorded in Table 9. It reveals that the percentage of this age group embarking on employment-based training contracts dropped from 7.8 per cent to 6.7 per cent in 2009. The largest decreases, when measured as a percentage of the teenage population of the state, occurred in Queensland and Western Australia. States in which the proportion of commencements was higher than the national average, in each of the years, were Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania, while NSW was substantially below the average.

Focusing on teenagers who commenced an apprenticeship or traineeship in each year, Table 10 reveals a change in the composition of this training over the period since 2004. In the years when the economy was buoyant, males who were starting trade apprenticeships made up an increasing share of all training commencements, reaching 41.6 per cent of the total in 2007; this figure began to fall in 2008, and slipped to 37.6 per cent in 2009. It is apparent that, in a time of economic downturn, trade apprenticeships are more adversely affected than are non-trade traineeships.

**Table 9**  
Apprenticeship and traineeship commencements, 15 to 19 year-olds, by State/Territory, 2008 and 2009 (%)

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUS
Commencements as percentage of population aged 15–19									
2008	6.6	9.0	8.5	8.0	7.3	9.1	6.5	8.0	7.8
2009	5.4	8.1	7.0	6.9	5.6	8.0	5.3	8.9	6.7

Source: NCVER National Apprentices and Trainees Collection (2010), ABS Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories (2009).

Note: Some values differ from the previous edition of HYPAF due to the use of revised estimates.

**Table 10**  
Apprenticeship and traineeship commencements, 15 to 19 year-olds, by gender, 2004–2009 (%)

	TRADES			NON-TRADES			ALL		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
2004	39.4	6.1	45.5	22.2	32.3	54.5	61.6	38.4	100
2005	39.8	6.1	45.9	21.4	32.7	54.1	61.2	38.8	100
2006	41.0	6.3	47.3	20.7	32.1	52.7	61.6	38.4	100
2007	41.6	6.6	48.2	19.8	32.0	51.8	61.3	38.7	100
2008	40.6	6.3	46.9	19.8	33.2	53.1	60.5	39.5	100
2009	37.6	6.7	44.3	20.9	34.7	55.7	58.5	41.5	100

Source: NCVER National Apprentices and Trainees Collection (2010)

One of the other changes that have occurred over recent years has been a shift towards part-time training. The numbers of 15 to 19 year-olds commencing apprenticeships and traineeships increased each year between 2004 and 2008 (by about 10,000 overall, from almost 105,000 to more than 115,000) but declined in 2009 by an even larger number, to a little over 99,000. However a consistent trend, regardless of absolute numbers, has been an increase in part-time training. Table 11 shows this rose from 28.3 per cent of total commencements in 2004, to 34.2 per cent in 2008. In 2009, at the same time as there was a steep drop in numbers of commencements, the proportion of part-time commencements continued to grow to 39.1 per cent. While twice as many females as males are engaged in part-time training (reflecting the gender difference in take up of apprenticeships compared with traineeships), the pattern of increased part-time training occurred for both males and females, and in each case was of the same order of magnitude of ten percentage points over the period from 2004 to 2009.

Table 11  
Apprenticeship and traineeship commencements among 15 to 19 year-olds, part-time as per cent of total, by gender, Australia, 2004–2009 (%)

	PART-TIME AS PER CENT OF TOTAL COMMENCEMENTS		
	Males	Females	Persons
2004	18.9	43.3	28.3
2005	19.6	44.2	29.2
2006	20.0	44.9	29.6
2007	21.8	45.4	30.9
2008	24.4	49.2	34.2
2009	28.8	53.5	39.1

Source: NCVER National Apprentices and Trainees Collection (2010)

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# School leavers

## More school leavers are going on to further education

There are various sources of data about the destinations of school leavers. National longitudinal research studies, particularly the *Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth*, as well as annual school leaver surveys conducted within states such as Queensland and Victoria, provide valuable insights into the post-school education, training and employment pathways taken by students.

However there is a time lag inherent in the longer term perspective offered by longitudinal data, while cross-sectional state level surveys, although more current, do not give a national picture. Instead, the ABS *Labour Force Survey* can be drawn on to obtain the most up-to-date national overview of the destinations of school leavers. One of the sub-groups which can be identified from the LFS data is those who were not at school at the time of survey but had been attending school in the previous year. Hence the activities of 15–19 year olds who were no longer at school in May 2010 but had been there in 2009 give us some evidence about the circumstances of the most recent crop of school leavers.

According to estimates derived from this source and presented in Table 12, 46.2 per cent of the young people aged 15 to 19 who had left school in 2009 were engaged in full-time education in May 2010. More school leavers are continuing in education in 2010 than did so in 2009: this figure of 46.2 per cent is three percentage points higher than among 2008 school leavers in May 2009. The gender difference in the rate of entry to full-time post-school study has, consistently over time, favoured females. But in 2010 this gap was exacerbated markedly, with 54.5 per cent of female school leavers continuing in education, compared with 37.5 per cent of males. About half of those in full-time education were also working part-time.

**Table 12**

Education and labour market status of persons aged 15 to 19 who left school in 2009, by gender, Australia, May 2010 (%)

	IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION					NOT IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION					TOTAL
	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	SUB TOTAL	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	SUB TOTAL	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Males	0.3	13.0	4.5	19.8	37.5	26.9	15.0	12.5	8.1	62.5	100.0
Females	0.6	26.3	5.2	22.5	54.5	13.1	17.9	8.3	6.2	45.5	100.0
Persons	0.5	19.7	4.8	21.2	46.2	19.9	16.4	10.4	7.1	53.8	100.0

Previous year results (2009 destinations of 2008 school leavers)											
Males	0.5	17.0	3.5	19.2	40.2	26.5	14.4	11.8	7.1	59.8	100.0
Female	0.8	23.8	2.9	19.0	46.4	14.9	20.0	9.7	9.0	53.6	100.0
Persons	0.6	20.4	3.2	19.1	43.3	20.7	17.2	10.7	8.0	56.7	100.0

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

**The percentage of school leavers in full-time work in 2010 is lower than in 2009**

One in five or 19.9 per cent of school leavers entered full-time work rather than continuing with study in 2010. Males were much more likely to do so than females (26.9 per cent compared with 13.1 per cent), this gender gap being partly due to males having a much higher rate of entry to apprenticeships, which can be recorded as full-time work. The sharp decline that had occurred between 2008 and 2009 in the percentage of school leavers moving into a full-time job, coinciding with the economic downturn, has been arrested. But while the figures for 2009 and 2010 suggest that the full-time job market for school leavers has not worsened substantially in the last year, nor have the job prospects of these teenagers improved. This is evidenced by the small drop in the percentage who were in full-time work, from 20.7 per cent in 2009 to 19.9 per cent in 2010.

In May 2010, apart from those who were engaged in full-time education or full-time work, 16.4 per cent of school leavers were in part-time jobs, 10.4 per cent were unemployed, and 7.1 per cent had withdrawn from the labour force. Thus a total of one third (33.9 per cent) of school leavers were not fully engaged in education or work the year following their exit from school, with the gender differential on this overall measure favouring females (32.4 per cent) over males (35.6 per cent) (see also Figure 8 below).

These national figures mask variation across states in the activities of school leavers, as can be seen in Table 13. While more than five in ten school leavers were in full-time education in 2010 in Victoria and NSW, the proportion was just under four in ten in Queensland, SA and WA. Higher proportions—more than one in four—were working full-time in WA and Tasmania, compared with NSW (14.9 per cent) and SA (18.8 per cent).

**In 2010 the percentage of school leavers not fully engaged in education or work remains at a higher level than at any time during the last twenty years, having dropped only slightly since 2009**

Changes over two decades in the circumstances of school leavers, in their initial post-school year, are charted in Figure 8. Following a sharp increase from a little more than 20 per cent at the beginning of the 1990s, the percentage of school leavers not fully engaged in further education or full-time employment hovered around 30 per cent for much of that decade. From 2001, the period of sustained economic growth up until 2008 saw a downward trend in this figure, before the spike to 36 per cent (and even higher, to nearly 39 per cent for females) that resulted from the global financial crisis. There was some improvement by 2010, with a two percentage point drop to 33.9 per cent not fully engaged—but this is still a higher level than recorded at any other time over the last twenty years.

**Males, more dependent on the labour market, are having greater difficulty than females in their transition from school**

Throughout the period since 1990, female school leavers were more likely than males to be less than fully engaged. Between 2009 and 2010, however, this situation was reversed. As was noted from Table 12, more females continued into post-school education in 2010, and Figure 8 shows that the percentage of females not engaged in education or full-time work fell by 6 percentage points, from 38.7 to 32.4 per cent. By contrast, there was a rise in the percentage of male school leavers in marginalised activities—from 33.4 to 35.6 per cent. In 2010, male school leavers who are more dependent than females on accessing the labour market are experiencing greater difficulties in making that transition from school.

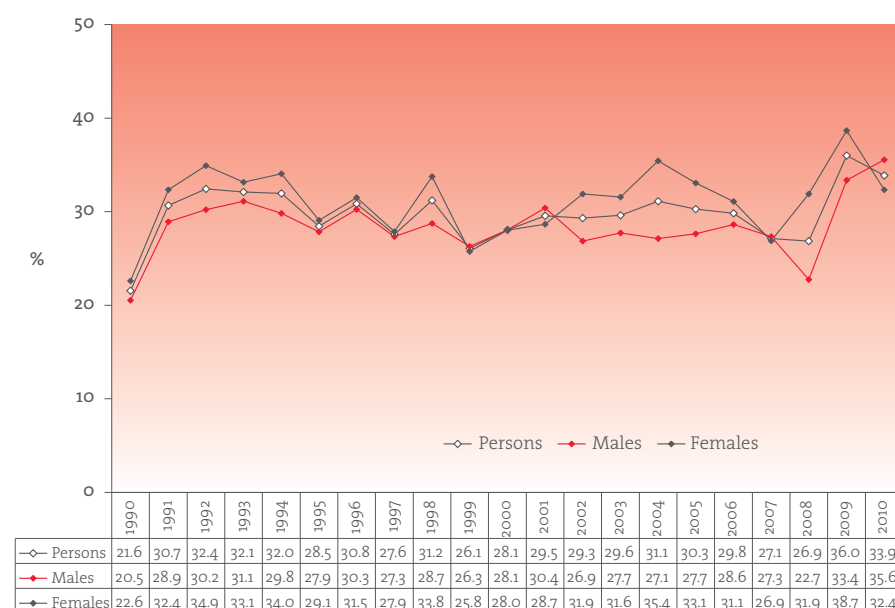
**Table 13**  
Education and labour market status of school leavers aged 15 to 19 years, by State/Territory, Australia, May 2010 (%)

	IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION					NOT IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION					TOTAL
	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	SUB TOTAL	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	SUB TOTAL	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
NSW	—	17.2	6.8	28.1	52.1	14.9	16.6	9.9	6.5	47.9	100.0
Victoria	—	26.6	5.0	21.0	52.6	21.5	13.7	8.3	3.9	47.4	100.0
Queensland	0.6	17.8	3.4	17.9	39.7	21.7	14.3	15.5	8.8	60.3	100.0
South Australia	1.2	18.8	4.1	13.9	38.0	18.8	21.6	10.2	11.4	62.0	100.0
Western Australia	1.8	19.3	2.1	14.1	37.4	26.1	19.6	7.4	9.5	62.6	100.0
Tasmania	—	12.3		17.8	30.1	27.4	21.9	6.8	13.7	69.9	100.0
Northern Territory	—	7.5	5.0	5.0	17.5	42.5	32.5	5.0	2.5	82.5	100.0
ACT	3.8	21.2	3.8	17.3	46.2	19.2	19.2	11.5	3.8	53.8	100.0
TOTAL	0.5	19.7	4.8	21.2	46.2	19.9	16.4	10.4	7.1	53.8	100.0

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)  
Note: Estimates for small states and territories are unreliable.

**Figure 8**

School leavers aged 15 to 19 not engaged in full-time education or full-time work in May of year after leaving school, by gender, 1990–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

## The outcomes of school completion

While data from the *Labour Force Survey* provides information about the education and labour force destinations of school leavers as a group, other data must be used to explore differences amongst those school leavers. The most recently available data about the association between Year 12 completion and post-school destinations comes from the 2009 *ABS Education and Work* survey. Table 14 shows the education and labour market statuses of school leavers in their first year after exiting school, according to the highest year level they had completed. About half (53.3 per cent) of all those who had been attending school in 2008 but were not there in 2009 went on to other full-time or part-time education. (It can be noted that prior to 2009, the proportion of school leavers who continued with further education or training had been rising; although not recorded in Table 14, between 2007 and 2008 this figure had increased from around 54 per cent to almost 57 per cent, but it fell back to 53.3 per cent in 2009.)



Year 12 completers were more likely to continue in study in 2009

Participation in further study varied among school leavers. More than six in ten of Year 12 completers were doing so in 2009, compared with much lower proportions of early leavers—nearly four in ten of those who left at Year 11, and just three in ten of those who left from Year 10 or below were engaged in some education or training. That is, the group of school leavers who are most at risk because they lack an end-of-school qualification, and therefore have the greatest need to acquire further skills and training, are those who are least likely to gain them through continued participation in education.

The highest year of school completed influenced not only the likelihood of continued study but also the type of further study that school leavers pursued. Four in ten of all Year 12 completers went on to university in 2009, whereas TAFE was a more important study destination among early leavers, accounting for three in ten of those who left at Year 11, and two in ten of students who left at Year 10 or below.

Other evidence of the benefits of school completion can be observed in the different proportions of school leavers who were not in any form of education, nor in full-time work. Table 14 indicates that the combined percentage who were in part-time work only, seeking work, or not in the labour force was more than twice as high among early leavers (57 per cent for those who left at Year 10 or below, and 47 per cent for Year 11 leavers) compared with Year 12 completers (25 per cent). (Also see Table 15 for trend over time in the percentage of school leavers not fully engaged).

Completing Year 12 helped those who entered the job market in 2009 directly from school

Early school leavers who do not continue in education face ongoing disadvantage in their entry to the labour market. In 2009 Year 12 completers had substantially higher rates of both full-time and part-time employment, compared with early leavers. Figure 9 shows that, among Year 12 completers, three in ten had full-time work and four in ten were part-time workers. By contrast, of those who had left school at Year 10 or below, the comparable figures were closer to two in ten—17.8 per cent were employed full-time, and 23.4 per cent part-time. Unemployment was higher among early leavers, and furthermore, very large proportions had withdrawn from the labour force—three in ten (31.3 per cent) of those who had left at Year 10 or below, and two in ten Year 11 leavers (21.7 per cent) were not in any job nor seeking one.

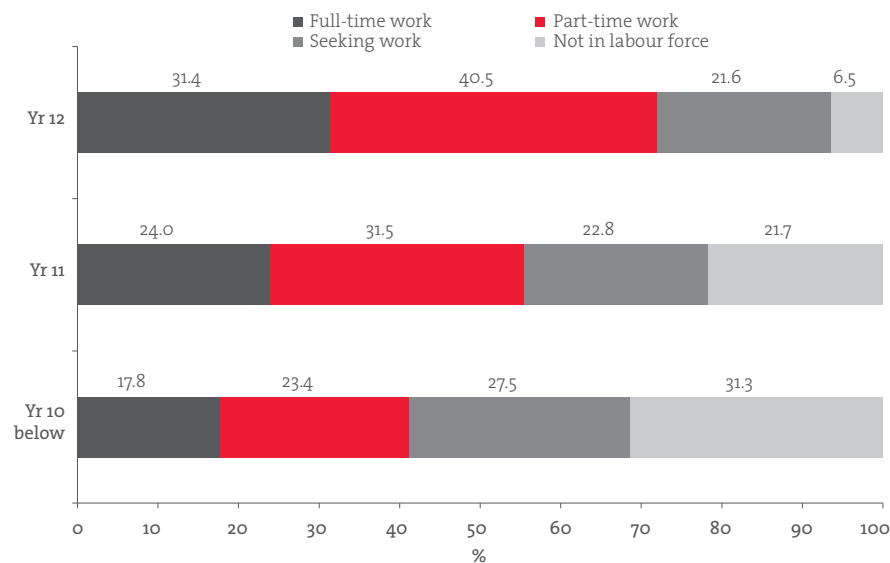
**Table 14**  
Education and labour market destinations of persons aged 15 to 24 who left school in 2008, by school leavers' highest year of school completed, Australia, May 2009 (%)

Highest year of school completed	IN EDUCATION (FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME)				NOT IN EDUCATION					
	Higher ed	TAFE	Other	SUB TOTAL	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Year 12	41.2	17.7	3.8	62.8	11.7	15.1	8.0	2.4	37.2	100
Year 11	np	30.1	8.0	38.5	14.7	19.3	14.0	13.4	61.5	100
Year 10 or below	np	20.5	9.4	30.9	12.3	16.2	19.0	21.7	69.1	100
TOTAL	28.2	19.6	5.5	53.3	12.2	15.8	11.1	7.8	46.8	100

Source: ABS Education and Work, Australia (2009) (customised tables)  
Note: 'np' is not published, but included in sub-total 'in full-time or part-time education'.

**Figure 9**

Labour market destinations of school leavers (persons aged 15 to 24 at school in 2008 but not in 2009) who are not in education, by highest year of school completed, Australia, May 2009 (%)



Source: ABS Education and Work, Australia (2009) (customised and published tables)

### School completers were less likely to be at risk of marginalisation in 2009

The effect of school completion in reducing the likelihood of not being engaged in education or full-time work in the initial post-school year can be seen in Table 15. A consistent pattern of disadvantage among early school leavers, compared to those who left from Year 12, is evident. The most recent data are for May 2009, with the economic downturn reflected in a sharp 8 percentage point rise overall among all school leavers in these marginalised activities: but the largest increase, of more than 13 percentage points, was for those who left school from Year 10 or below.

**Table 15**

School leavers aged 15 to 24 in part-time work, unemployed or not in the labour force, and not studying, in May of the year after leaving school, by highest year of school completed, selected years 1999–2009 (%)

	YEAR 10 OR BELOW	YEAR 11	YEAR 12	ALL SCHOOL LEAVERS
MAY	%	%	%	%
1999	39.2	29.9	16.5	28.9
2001	45.5	41.7	17.7	27.6
2003	46.7	36.0	19.3	30.6
2005	48.9	40.4	19.8	30.7
2007	47.1	45.7	21.1	28.6
2008	43.5	41.2	19.2	26.4
2009	56.8	46.7	25.5	34.6

Source: ABS Education and Work, Australia (selected years, customised tables)

Note:

Excludes all students, whether full-time or part-time.

1999 and 2001 report Year 10 completion only, not Year 10 and below.

# Young adults

Three quarters of 20 to 24 year-olds are fully engaged in earning or learning: 46 per cent are working full-time and 30 per cent are in full-time education

Full-time education occupies a majority of teenagers, but movement into the labour force increases among young adults aged 20 to 24. Table 16 shows that in May 2010 just under 30 per cent of young adults remained in full-time study, while 46 per cent were no longer studying and had transitioned to full-time work.

Gender differences in the rates of participation in work and study that occur among teenagers are just as evident for young adults. More females than males aged 20 to 24 were studying full-time (32.3 per cent, compared with 26.9 per cent). By contrast, more than half (52.5 per cent) of all males were not in education and in full-time jobs, while this proportion was much lower (40 per cent) for females.

For those not engaged in education, the proportion who were seeking work was higher among males (5.9 per cent) than females (3.5 per cent), but almost twice as many females as males had withdrawn from the labour force (11.3 per cent compared with 5.6 per cent).

Apprenticeships provide access to qualifications for young adults, although participation in such training has fallen slightly

Apprentices and trainees may be spread across a number of categories in the Labour Force survey data, so other data are used to calculate the level of participation in this form of vocational training. Using data on apprenticeship numbers from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and ABS population figures as a base, it is estimated that 7 per cent of young adults aged 20 to 24 were undertaking training as either apprentices or trainees in 2009. (Although not shown by Table 17, this 7 per cent for 2009 was a small decline from the estimate of 7.4 per cent for 2008—a decline in participation that occurred only among males) As evident from Table 17, the gender gap observed among teenagers in apprenticeships and traineeships (see Table 7) was even wider for young adults, with participation rates of males two and a half times that of females (10 per cent compared with just below 4 per cent).

When looking at state differences in the proportions of the young adult population who were engaged in employment-based training, the percentages were above the national average in Tasmania (for both males and females), Victoria and South Australia, and lower in Western Australia.

**Table 16**  
Education and labour market status of young adults aged 20 to 24 years, Australia, May 2010 (%)

	IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION					NOT IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION					TOTAL
	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	SUB TOTAL	Full-time work	Part-time work	Seeking work	Not in labour force	SUB TOTAL	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Males	1.4	12.9	1.1	11.6	26.9	52.5	9.0	5.9	5.6	73.1	100.0
Females	2.0	15.4	1.3	13.5	32.2	40.0	12.9	3.5	11.3	67.8	100.0
Persons	1.7	14.1	1.2	12.5	29.5	46.4	10.9	4.7	8.4	70.5	100.0

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

01  
Engaging in education,  
training and work

**Table 17**

Apprentices and trainees in-training, ages 20 to 24, by gender and State/Territory, 2009 (%)

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUS
<b>In-training in 2009 as percentage of population aged 20–24</b>									
Males	9.9	11.2	9.4	10.0	8.8	13.1	6.9	9.7	10.0
Females	4.4	3.9	3.2	4.0	2.8	5.3	3.1	4.6	3.9
Persons	7.2	7.7	6.4	7.1	5.9	9.3	5.1	7.3	7.0

Sources: NCVET National Apprentices and Trainees Collection (2010)  
ABS Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, 2009

**Almost one quarter of 20 to 24 year-olds were not engaged in full-time work or full-time education in 2010, a slight improvement over the situation in the previous year**

Table 18 reveals the changes over the last two decades in the percentages of 20 to 24 year-olds not fully engaged, as well as those who were in full-time work and in full-time education. (These trends are also displayed in Figure 10.) Rates of participation in full-time employment hovered around 50 per cent for most of the past decade, but dropped to 45 per cent in 2009 before recovering slightly to 46.4 percent in 2010. However the long-term deterioration in the full-time labour market for young adults is evident: twenty years ago, more than six in ten of those aged 20 to 24 were employed full-time.

Over the same lengthy period there has been a steady growth in full-time educational participation among this age group, which has continued in 2010. According to the most recent figure, almost three in every ten young adults aged 20 to 24 were attending full-time education. This can be seen both as a response to the rising demand for skills, as well as a result of a greater propensity to shelter from an unfavourable labour market at a time of economic slowdown.

Overall, the proportion of 20 to 24 year-olds not fully engaged in education or employment was just below one quarter (24.1 per cent) in 2010. This comprised 10.9 per cent who were in part-time work only, 4.7 per cent who were unemployed and seeking work, and a further 8.4 per cent who had withdrawn from the labour force. As both Table 18 and Figure 10 show, this combined figure is a slight improvement over the level of less than full engagement among young adults that occurred in 2009, when it was 25.3 per cent, but nevertheless is higher than that prevailing in the three preceding years.

**Table 18**

Not fully engaged (not in full-time education and in part-time work, unemployed, and not in the labour force) compared with in full-time work and in full-time education, 20 to 24 year-olds, May, 1990–2010 (%)

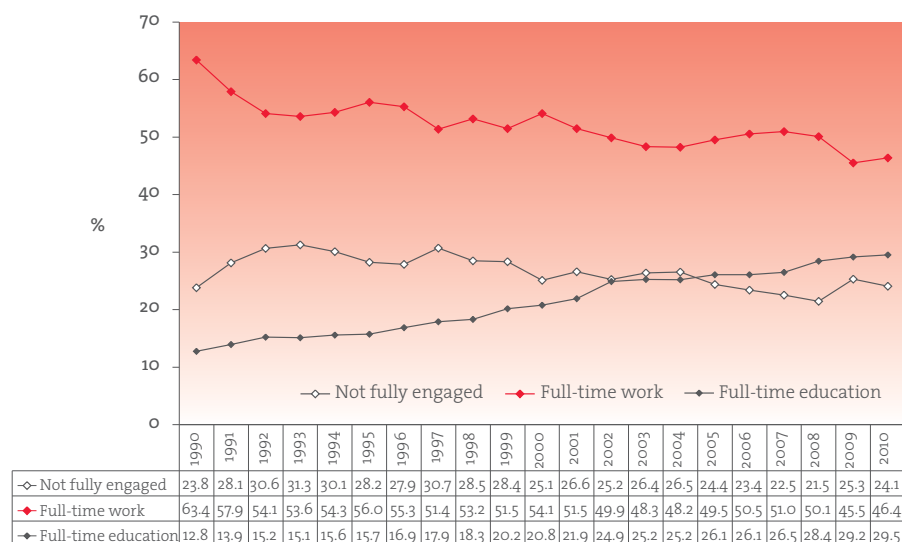
May	NOT FULLY ENGAGED				FULLY ENGAGED	
	Total not fully engaged	Part-time work, not in full-time education	Unemployed, not in full-time education	Not in labour force, not in full-time education	Full-time work	Full-time education
May	%	%	%	%	%	%
1990	23.8	6.9	7.2	9.6	63.4	12.8
1991	28.1	7.2	11.0	9.9	57.9	13.9
1992	30.6	9.1	12.0	9.6	54.1	15.2
1993	31.3	9.5	11.3	10.5	53.6	15.1
1994	30.1	9.7	10.3	10.2	54.3	15.6
1995	28.2	9.7	8.7	9.8	56.0	15.7
1996	27.9	9.8	8.4	9.6	55.3	16.9
1997	30.7	10.8	10.4	9.6	51.4	17.9
1998	28.5	10.4	8.5	9.6	53.2	18.3
1999	28.4	11.3	7.3	9.8	51.5	20.2
2000	25.1	10.0	6.7	8.5	54.1	20.8
2001	26.6	10.7	7.4	8.5	51.5	21.9
2002	25.2	10.2	6.0	9.0	49.9	24.9
2003	26.4	11.0	6.3	9.1	48.3	25.2
2004	26.5	11.9	4.9	9.8	48.2	25.2
2005	24.4	11.3	4.8	8.3	49.5	26.1
2006	23.4	10.5	4.3	8.5	50.5	26.1
2007	22.5	10.4	3.5	8.5	51.0	26.5
2008	21.5	9.9	3.9	7.7	50.1	28.4
2009	25.3	11.7	5.1	8.5	45.5	29.2
2010	24.1	10.9	4.7	8.4	46.4	29.5

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

See Appendix Table A1 for gender differences in the labour force status of persons not fully engaged.

**Figure 10**

Not fully engaged (not in full-time education or full-time work), in full-time work, and in full-time education, 20 to 24 year-olds, 1990–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

**Over the last two decades, the rate of participation in full-time work has declined while participation in full-time education has more than doubled**

As discussed above, consistent patterns of change in the education and labour market activities of young adults are charted in Figure 10. Throughout the previous two decades, among 20 to 24 year-olds, the rate of participation in full-time work has declined, falling from 63.4 per cent in 1990 to 46.4 per cent in 2010, while participation in full-time education has more than doubled over that time, from 12.8 per cent to 29.5 per cent. The spike in less than full engagement which occurred in 2009 has since abated. Nevertheless, in May of 2010, almost one quarter of young adults were not engaged in full-time education or in full-time employment.

**Young men are more likely to be unemployed, while young women are more likely to be in part-time work or not in the labour force**

Table 19 records the fluctuation in the percentages of young adults not fully engaged in education or work over this twenty year period, disaggregated by gender. In the past, young women have been more at risk of marginalisation than young men, with a gender gap of about 10 percentage points in each year of the most recent decade. However this gap narrowed to just 6 percentage points in 2009, suggesting that, due to their greater exposure to the labour market, young adult males were more severely affected by the global economic downturn than were females. Between 2009 and 2010 the size of the gender gap increased by one percentage point, as a result of a slightly greater rate of recovery in employment among young men compared with young women (see Figure 11).

Figure 11 charts, for the same period, the labour market status of young adults who were not in full-time education or work. It clearly demonstrates strong and persistent gender differences in patterns of activity.

Rates of participation in part-time work have been consistently higher among young women. In 2009 this gender gap narrowed somewhat, because the percentage of males in only part-time work rose more sharply compared with the increase for females. However in 2010 the gap widened again; although the percentages of both males and females in this category decreased slightly, the drop was larger among males (Table A1 in appendix contains the figures for these trends).

Males are more vulnerable to unemployment. This was especially the case in 2009, when the economy was slowing, and (compared with females) there was a larger rise in the proportion of males who were unemployed and looking for work. The rate of unemployment eased between 2009 and 2010, but remained higher for males (5.9 per cent) than females (3.5 per cent).

Withdrawal from both education and from the labour market is a more common occurrence among young adult women than young men. In 2010, twice as many females (11.3 per cent) as males (5.6 per cent) were not engaged in education nor seeking employment.

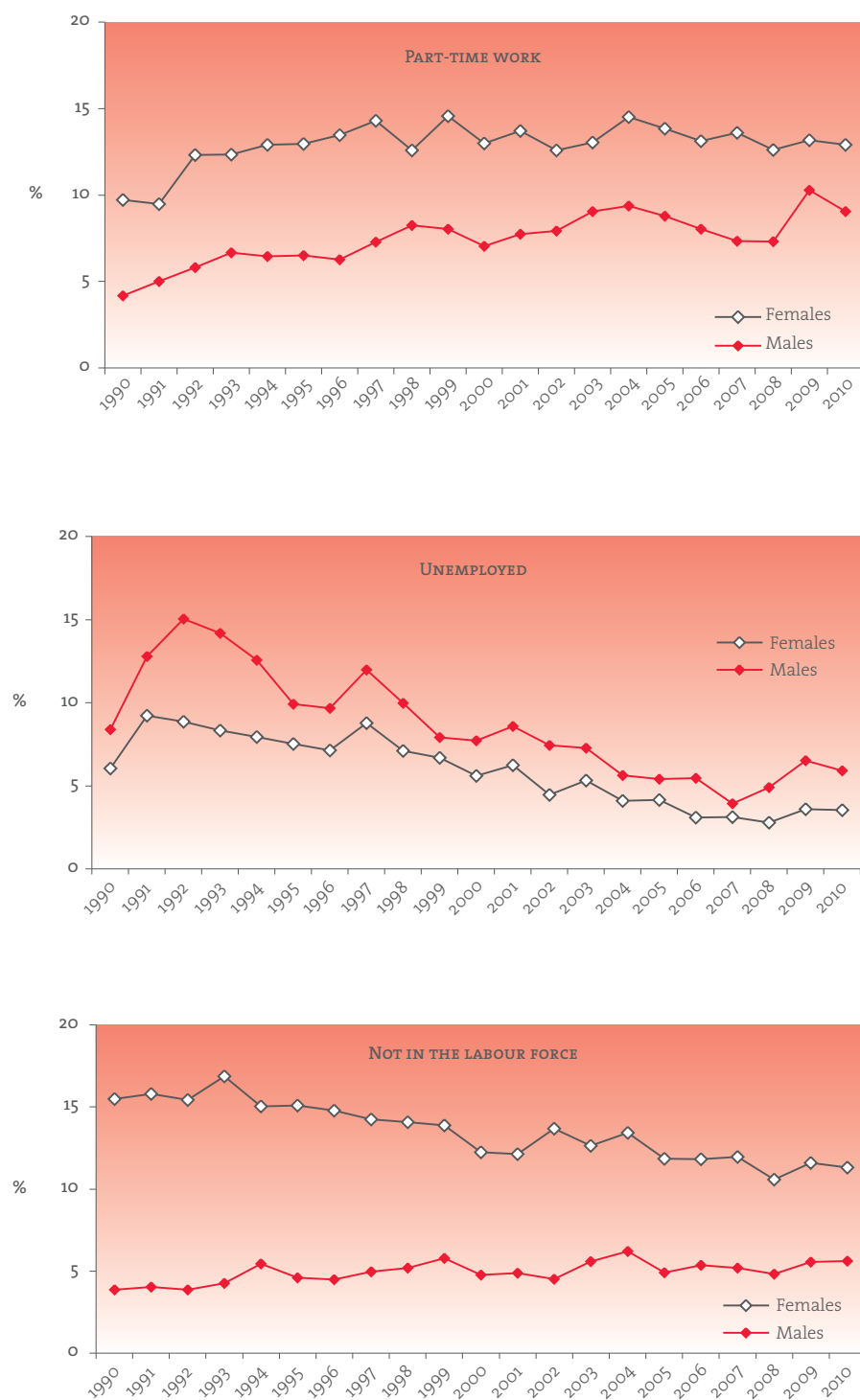
**Table 19**  
Not fully engaged, 20 to 24 year-olds, by gender, May, 1990–2010 (%)

	NOT FULLY ENGAGED			
	Males	Females	Persons	Size of gender gap
MAY	%	%	%	%
1990	16.4	31.3	23.8	14.8
1991	21.8	34.5	28.1	12.7
1992	24.7	36.6	30.6	11.9
1993	25.1	37.5	31.3	12.5
1994	24.5	35.9	30.1	11.4
1995	21.0	35.6	28.2	14.5
1996	20.4	35.4	27.9	14.9
1997	24.2	37.3	30.7	13.1
1998	23.4	33.7	28.5	10.3
1999	21.7	35.1	28.4	13.4
2000	19.5	30.8	25.1	11.3
2001	21.2	32.1	26.6	10.9
2002	19.9	30.7	25.3	10.9
2003	21.9	31.0	26.4	9.1
2004	21.2	32.0	26.6	10.8
2005	19.1	29.9	24.4	10.8
2006	18.8	28.0	23.3	9.2
2007	16.5	28.7	22.4	12.2
2008	17.0	26.0	21.4	9.0
2009	22.3	28.3	25.3	6.0
2010	20.6	27.8	24.1	7.2

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

**Figure 11**

Young adults not studying full-time and in part-time work, unemployed, or not in the labour force, by gender, 1990–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)  
See Appendix Table A1 for percentage values.



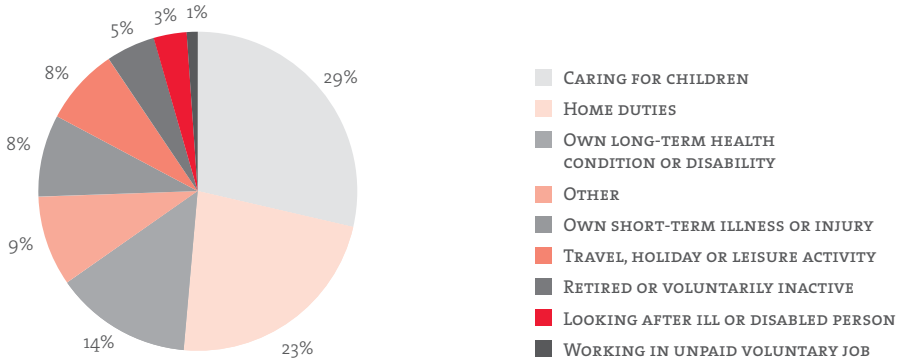
**Females aged 20 to 24 are more likely than males to be not studying and not in the labour force**

Table 16 indicated that 11.3 per cent of young women aged 20 to 24 were not in full-time education and not in the labour force in May 2010, compared to 5.6 per cent of males. (Such a difference has occurred over the previous two decades, as the lower chart in Figure 11 shows.) This marked gender disparity was not the case for teenagers in 2010; among 15 to 19 year-olds, almost the same percentage of males (4.6 per cent) and females (4.5 per cent) were not seeking work nor engaged in full-time education or training (see Table 1).

Figure 12 presents the main activities of young people aged 15 to 24 years who were not working or looking for work and not engaged in education or training in 2009. This information has been obtained from the ABS *Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey*, conducted as a supplement to the monthly *Labour Force Survey* in September of each year. As displayed in Figure 12, the dominant activities reported by just over half (52 per cent) of those not in the labour force were home duties and caring for children. A further 22 per cent cited long or short-term health issues, while 8 per cent of those not in the labour force were travelling or undertaking other leisure activities.

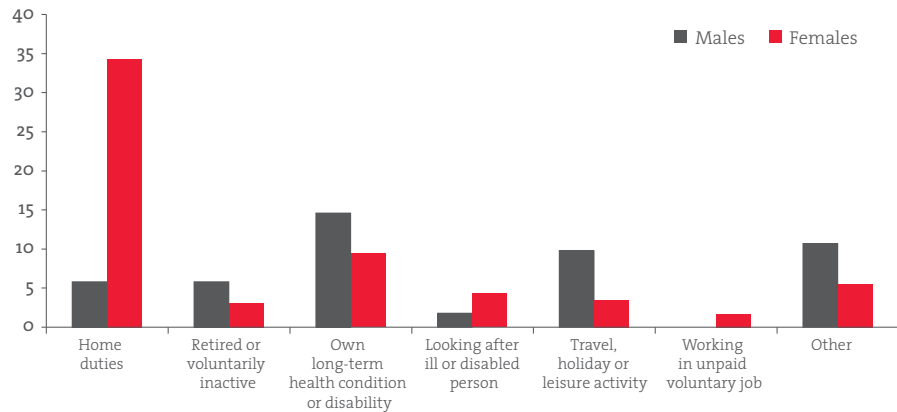
While the published data do not allow a gender breakdown for all activities, the available data reveal differences between the main activities of young men and women who are not in the labour force and not in study. Figure 13 highlights the far greater number of females than males engaged in home duties.

**Figure 12**  
Activities of 15 to 24 year-olds not in the labour force, Australia, 2009 (%)



Source: ABS Persons Not in the Labour Force (2009).

**Figure 13**  
Numbers of 15 to 24 year-olds not in the labour force, in selected main activities, by gender, 2009 (000s)



Source: ABS Persons Not in the Labour Force (2009)

This section explores various aspects of the youth labour market over the previous two to three decades. It includes an analysis of changes in the size of the labour force and levels of labour market participation. Rates of employment and unemployment, which vary according to whether or not young people are engaged in education, are also examined, as is the demand for full-time jobs. These analyses of long-term trends show that teenagers are particularly vulnerable in the labour market. While the situation for young adults may be less dire, with some signs of a slight recovery in the last year, for both age groups access to full-time employment is an ongoing challenge.

## O2

### **The youth labour market**

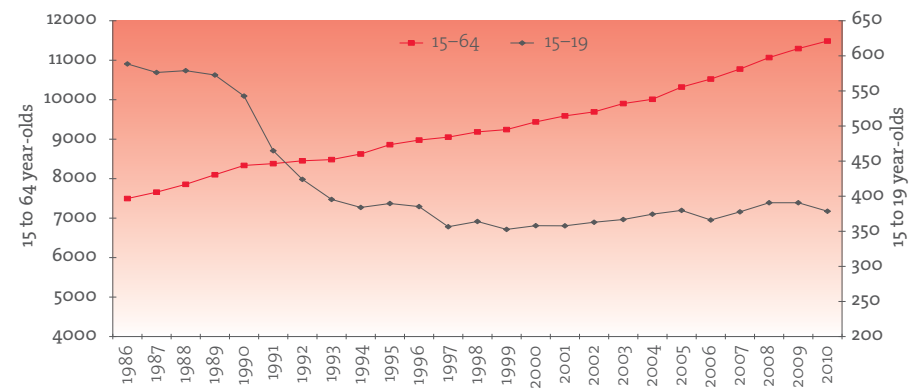
# The teenage labour market

**The teenage labour force has shrunk in size compared with the adult workforce**

Figure 14 provides an indication of the size of the teenage labour market in relation to the overall adult population. The number of teenagers who were not in any education but in the labour force (right-hand scale) can be compared with the number of 15 to 64 year-old labour force participants (left-hand scale). In the general population, the numbers in the labour force grew from 7.5 million to 11.6 million between 1986 and 2010. Over the same time, teenage participants fell from almost 600,000 to about 370,000.

**Figure 14**

Size of the labour force, teenagers not in education and all adults compared, 1986–2010 ('000)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010a) (Table 03b); ABS Labour Force Australia (2010b) (Table 01)

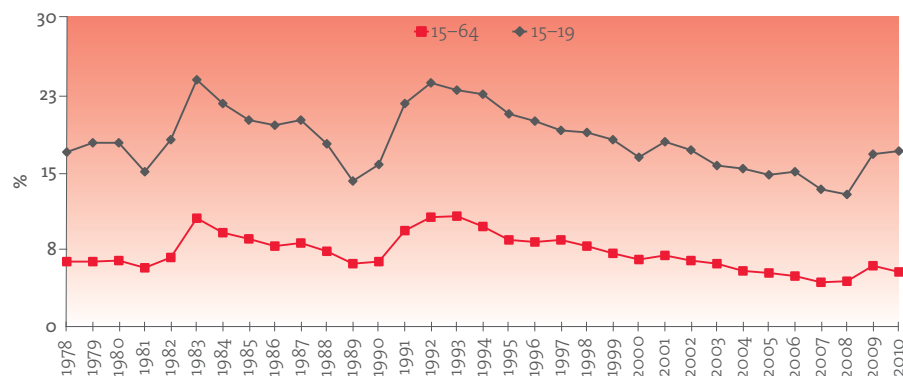
**Unemployment rates are much higher among teenagers than adults**

Despite the fact that teenagers have required fewer jobs, they have been less able to find work. During the past three decades the rates of unemployment (when defined as all those who, regardless of whether or not they are engaged in education, are labour force participants and looking for either full-time or part-time work) among teenagers have followed overall national trends. Figure 15 charts the rises in unemployment during periods of major downturn (in the early 1980s, the early 1990s, and in 2008), followed by declining unemployment rates coinciding with economic recovery. Throughout that time, however, the unemployment rate for teenagers has been at levels markedly higher than for the general population. In 1983, this gap was as much as 15 percentage points, when the teenage rate reached almost 1 in 4 compared to 1 in 10 for all adults in the labour force. More commonly, the difference has been about 10 percentage points. The most recent figures, 17 per cent for teenagers and just over 5 per cent for all adults in 2010, put this gap at 12 percentage points.

*“I’ve worked since I was old enough—Year 9—and I’ve been working part-time jobs ever since... I found it easy to balance but that particular job hindered me towards the end of Year 12 just because academically I was aiming for certain marks and pressuring myself to be studying at certain times. A lot of students doing Year 12 at the time, we were taken off rosters, or if we said ‘we’ve got practice exams here, can we have hours off?’, that particular workplace wasn’t overly supportive, but I think if they had have given a little bit of leeway it wouldn’t have been a hindrance at all. It’s almost like a break from the whole school thing.” Kaitlyn, 20 years*

**Figure 15**

Unemployment rates, teenagers and all adults compared, labour force participants, 1978–2010 (May)(%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010b) (Table 13; Table 18)

The number of full-time jobs for teenagers dropped sharply following economic downturns in the early 80s and 90s, then levelled out. The same trend since the recent downturn means that teenagers continue to miss out on full-time jobs

What is remarkable about the gap between rates of unemployment for teenagers compared with all adults is that it has remained fairly constant, despite the reduction in the size of the teenage labour force graphed in Figure 14. This point is more apparent when looking at the changes in the numbers in full-time work. From Figure 16 it can be seen that full-time jobs for teenagers decreased from a high of almost 550,000 in 1981 to just over 200,000 in 2010. Teenagers have been losing access to full-time jobs. There were very sharp falls after the major economic downturns of the early 1980s and early 1990s. Recovery periods have not seen rises in full-time job numbers, just some levelling out. This has meant that teenagers have become more reliant on education and training, with these trends helping to explain why school and tertiary education participation have increased over the period. The recent decline in full-time jobs associated with the global financial crisis may lead to another permanent loss of employment opportunities for teenagers.

## Case study

### Danae: 19 years, employed in contract work

Danae attended a regional public school until she was in Year 11. By then she was no longer living with her family, staying instead with a friend, and had been working part-time at Woolworths from the age of 13.

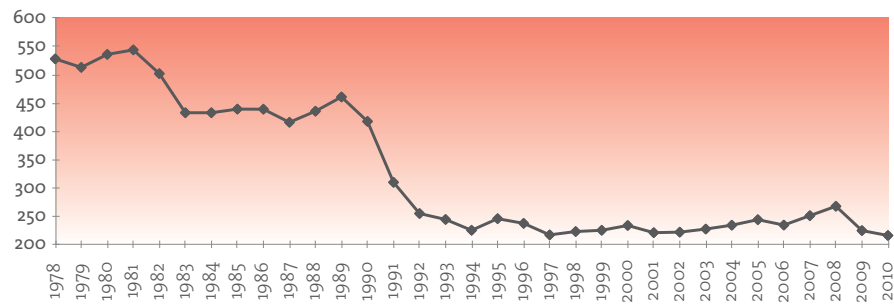
At the age of 15, Danae lost three of her best friends in a major car accident. She remembers that 'there were posters all over the school' and with these constant reminders she found it difficult to cope, eventually choosing to leave. She supported herself by taking on extra shifts at the supermarket before obtaining a full-time job at a fast food chain: 'I used to do 40 hours a week, and still didn't get paid that much'.

Danae moved interstate where she took part in a six month government-subsidised conservation and land management course. Her dream was to work as a ranger in a wildlife park, but to earn a living she took up a job at Night Patrol, 'which is basically helping people who are alcoholics and drug users, get them off the street, take them to the sobering up shelter, make sure they don't hurt themselves'. From Night Patrol, where she became a Team Leader, she moved to work in Transit Safety to 'police the bus interchanges and buses' and deal with patrons who were 'starting fights, drinking and all of that'.

Danae lives with her partner and is the primary breadwinner. Job security is one of her greatest challenges: 'I signed on as a contract first and then I was supposed to go full-time but my contract ends in [two months] and now they're changing everything and it's not looking like I'm going to get my full-time employment... I might be at that stage where I have to go and find another job'. Though she has undertaken short courses as part of her role, she has been unimpressed with the monotonous teaching style and would consider further education only if it would assist her in getting a better job.

**Figure 16**

Changes in number of full-time jobs for teenagers, 1978–2010 ('000)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010b) (Table 13)

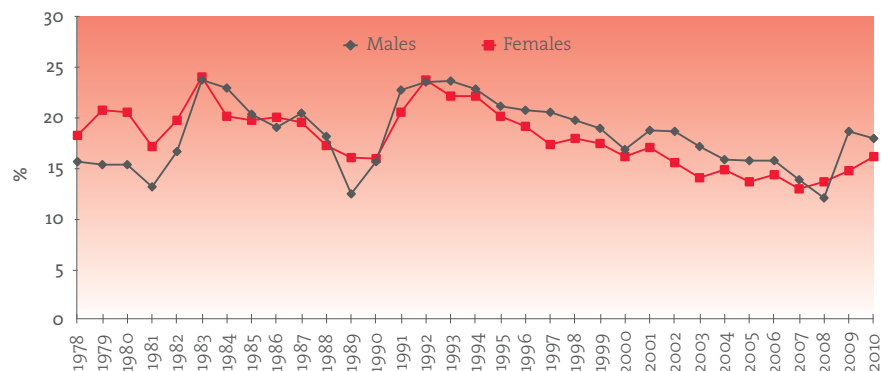
**Teenage males tend to have higher rates of unemployment than females**

Gender differences in the unemployment rates of all teenagers in the labour force are displayed in Figure 17. Rates for males were consistently above those for females from the early 1990s until 2007, when the gender gap closed. This changed in 2008, with an increase in female unemployment, but was followed by an even sharper rise in male unemployment between 2008 and 2009. Teenage males appear to have been more exposed to the effects of the downturn in the labour market that occurred with the financial crisis. In 2010 the unemployment rate for males (17.9 per cent) remained above that for females (16.1 per cent).

*“I work at the drive-in cinema on weekend nights, taking on a minimum of four, maximum of nine or ten hours a week... The fact that I have that extra distraction means that I prioritise my time a bit better because I’m more pressured I suppose, some of my time is taken away”. Haneke, 18 years*

**Figure 17**

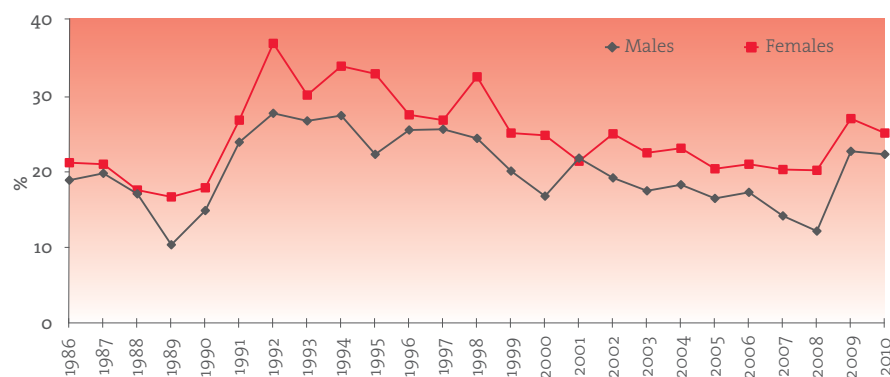
Unemployment rates for teenagers, all labour force participants, by gender, 1978–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010b) (Table 13)

**Figure 18**

Teenagers not in education, looking for full-time work, by gender, 1986–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (Table o3b)

**Teenagers have difficulty finding full-time work: almost one quarter of those who are not in education are looking for a full-time job**

Teenagers in the labour market not only face high unemployment rates, but increasing difficulty in finding full-time jobs. The percentages of 15 to 19 year-olds who have left school or other full-time education and who are seeking a full-time job are recorded in Figure 18, separately for males and females.

It is evident from this chart that there is considerable unmet demand for full-time work, with nearly one quarter of teenagers (males and females) who are not engaged in education indicating they were looking for a full-time job in 2010.

Figure 18 also suggests that females have quite a different experience to males. Proportionately more females than males are seeking full-time work. There was only one year, 2001, in which this was not the case. The gaps over time have varied but have been as high as almost 10 percentage points in the mid 1990s and 8 percentage points in 2008. Since then however, the gender gap has narrowed somewhat, and in 2010 was less than three percentage points (25 per cent of females and 22 per cent of males were looking for full-time jobs).

What needs to be kept in mind when considering the figures is that at this age many more males than females are in the labour force. Yet, even so, females are more often looking for full-time work (possibly reflecting the larger proportions of females than males who are part-time workers). This gender difference in successful access to the full-time labour market may help to explain why females remain in education and training in much greater numbers than do males.

## O2

# The youth labour market

# Teenagers and young adults in the labour market

To this point, the analyses have focused on teenagers. Figures 19 and 20 provide a broader perspective on the youth labour market in Australia by showing trends over a lengthy time among teenagers and also young adults. It is apparent from these next charts that, during the last two decades, young people in both age groups have faced increasing difficulties in accessing full-time employment.

*"I got a job three months after I finished high school. I worked in hospitality for about five years straight after school [while studying part-time]. I ended up qualifying for Youth Allowance... I've done everything except for one subject, which I'm doing online. I'm going through the process of applying for [teaching] jobs in the next couple of months. I do personal training pretty much full-time now."* Tim, 23 years

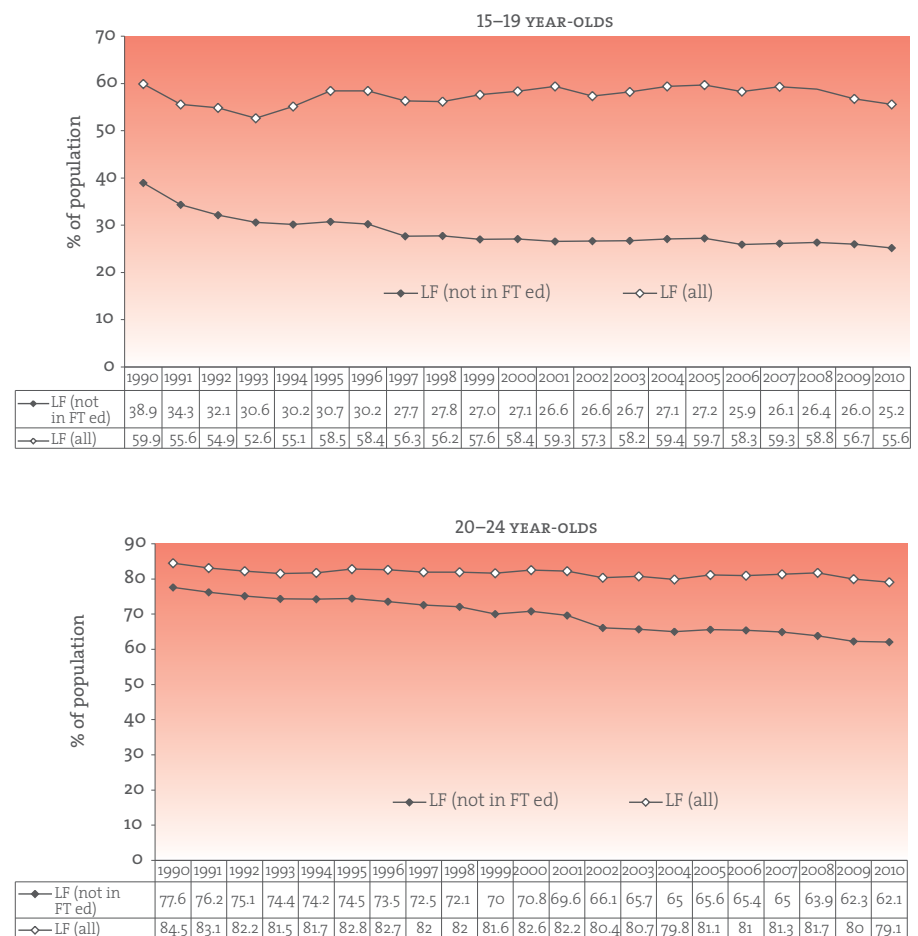
## Fewer young Australians who are not in full-time education are in the labour force compared with 20 years ago

Figure 19 charts the labour force participation of young people (teenagers and young adults) showing both the percentages who were labour force participants while not in education, and also the overall percentages who were labour force participants (that is, regardless of their educational status). On this second measure, Figure 19 reveals that, among all teenagers, labour force participation fell below 55 per cent in the early 1990s, then rose and was relatively stable for a lengthy time at just under 60 per cent. This has dropped sharply since 2008, and currently is back to the level of 1991. Among 20 to 24 year-olds, the labour force participation rate hovered around 80 per cent across most of the twenty years, before also declining from 2008 to the lowest level it has been over that time.

Throughout the two decades, and for both age groups, participation in full-time education has grown. At the same time the proportions of young people who are not in full-time education and in the labour force have dropped, by similar amounts in each age group. For teenagers, the fall was from 38.9 per cent in 1990 to 25.2 per cent in 2010, and for young adults in this category, their labour force participation rate fell from 77.6 per cent to 62.1 per cent.

**Figure 19**

Labour force participation among 15 to 19 year-olds and 20 to 24 year-olds: all labour force participants, and labour force participants not in full-time education, 1990–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (Data cube LM3)



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*“I didn’t want to leave [my home town] without some experience [but tourism and] human resource jobs are few and far between in this area, so after about two or three months I accepted that if I wanted to pursue those fields I needed to move away. That’s something that I wasn’t prepared to do... I was volunteering with City Council for about three years before I secured a paid role with them.”* Josh, 23 years

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Looking more closely at young people in the labour force who are not in full-time education, Figure 20 displays changes over the last twenty years in their labour force status. The percentages of the total in full-time work, in part-time work, and unemployed are shown for each year, for teenagers and for young adults.

**For those not in education, the decline in full-time employment has been much greater for teenagers than for young adults**

After a sharp drop in the early 1990s (from 73.8 per cent in 1990 to 56.9 per cent in 1992) the percentage of teenagers in full-time jobs was relatively stable during the remainder of the decade. In both age groups the small increases in full-time employment associated with more buoyant economic times from 2005–2007 were followed by declines between 2008 and 2009, but the drop was steeper for teenagers than young adults.

For teenagers, the percentage in full-time employment in 2010 remains below the level it had fallen to in the previous year, whereas for young adults there was a small recovery between 2009 and 2010 in full-time employment, from 73.1 per cent to 74.7 per cent.

Over the 20 year period, the decline in full-time employment has been much more severe among teenagers (dropping by 20 per cent) than among young adults (for whom there was a fall of 7 per cent).

## O2

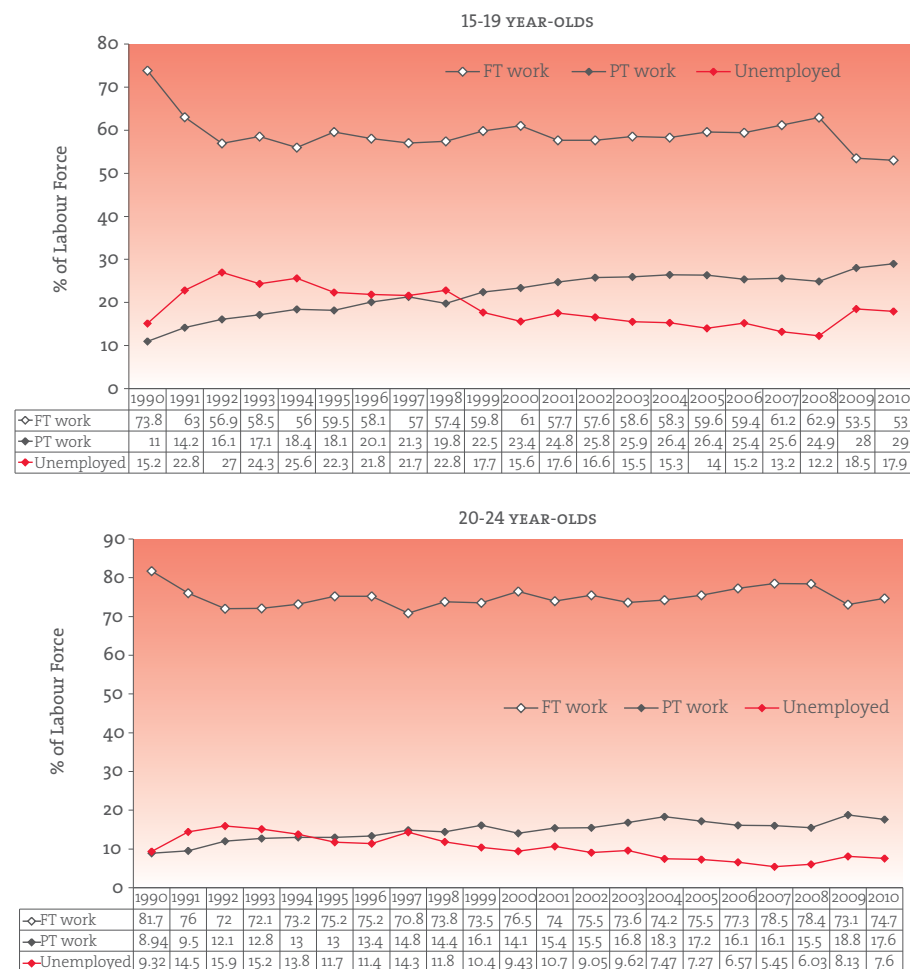
### The youth labour market

## Unemployment is higher among teenagers than young adults

Unemployment levels are substantially higher among teenagers who are not in full-time education than they are among young adults; in 2010 these were 17.9 per cent and 7.6 per cent respectively. Furthermore the increase that occurred between 2008 and 2009 was more acute for teenagers than for young adults (a 6 percentage point rise, compared with 2 percentage points). In each case, the figures for 2010 suggest that the surge in unemployment may have eased.

**Figure 20**

Employment and unemployment status of those in the labour force and not in full-time education: 15 to 19 year-olds and 20 to 24 year-olds, 1990–2010 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (Data cube LM3)

## Part-time employment accounts for an increasing percentage of young Australians who are not in education

Part-time employment has accounted for a steadily increasing percentage of these labour force participants. Of the teenagers who were not in education, nearly three times as many held part-time jobs in 2010 as in 1990, and the change between 2009 and 2010, which saw teenage unemployment fall slightly, was due to a shift toward part-time, not full-time, employment. Among young adults, too, part-time work has assumed greater significance, with the percentage of 20 to 24 year-olds employed part-time almost doubling, from 8.9 per cent in 1990 to 17.6 per cent in 2010. Unlike the pattern for teenagers, however, the decrease in young adult unemployment in 2010 was linked to a growth (by 1.6 percentage points) in full-time work rather than increased part-time employment.

Long-term decline in opportunities for full-time work and rising levels of part-time employment are major features of the youth labour market. Hence it is likely that the transition experience, for very many school leavers, will encompass periods of part-time work during their early years in the workforce.

## Case study

### Danny: 24 years, part-time employed and seeking work

Danny grew up in an outer metropolitan area and attended a public school. He liked school, but 'went there on a social basis... education-wise it probably wasn't my priority at the time'. Though Danny finished his VCE, he didn't want to pursue further education and gave little thought to what he would do after school:

'When you're at the age of, I was 17 when I was doing my VCE, the last thing you're thinking about is where you're going to go in the future. You just think it'll fall into place for you. You know, you don't think it's something that you actually have to plan out. At the age of 17 what more do you expect? I'm thinking about drinking with my mates and seeing girls. I think most people work like that'.

Danny finished Year 12 and took up a series of jobs in factory work and hospitality before joining the concreting industry. The factory work was 'physically demanding', but paid a 'very good wage considering it's unskilled labour'. Danny's brother and sister owned a cafe and finding work wasn't a big problem: 'If you want to work and you've prepared yourself well', he says, 'it's easy to find work. It might not be the work that you want, if you wanted to work with a specific company, but there's always work... I was even doing factory work as a second job after hours, it was great money'.

Though Danny is currently seeking permanent employment as a sub-contractor in concreting, he is confident that opportunities will open up: 'It's difficult because generally they don't employ concreters full-time. About 80% of them are sub-contractors, but if you go with one of the big mobs that can afford to keep people on all the time then it is possible. It's only a matter of time. I went for an interview last week and I think it went well'.

As for further education or training, Danny concedes that 'you kind of get used to the money that you're making and you can't go back' but is considering opening his own café: 'If everything goes well in the next three months and the business is up and running then yeah, I'd be happy'.

A major goal of education policy is to increase attainment at both secondary and tertiary levels. The Australian government has a target of 90 per cent of students completing Year 12 or its equivalent. There is also a target to increase the proportion of the population with a university degree to 40 per cent. Such targets raise several questions. What is the present level of attainment? How much improvement is necessary to reach the targets? Which groups in the population require most assistance if the targets are to be met? What policies are needed in order to achieve this?

## 03 Educational attainment

This section of the report assembles information about the current levels of educational attainment among young Australians, including secondary school completion and the acquisition of tertiary qualifications. It also uses data from other countries to put those attainment levels into an international perspective. Furthermore, looking more closely within Australia, it shows how attainment levels vary across sub-groups, and therefore where effort must be directed if targets are to be reached, notably, by addressing social disadvantage.

Various national data sources can be drawn on to estimate levels of educational attainment in the population as a whole or in sub-groups of particular interest, with each source having both advantages and limitations.

The ABS survey *Education and Work*, conducted annually in May as a supplement to the *Labour Force Survey* in that month, is a major data source, providing a number of the indicators used by COAG. This national survey has the advantage of yielding reliable estimates and enabling comparisons across jurisdictions (subject to adequate sample sizes, which in some small jurisdictions, particularly for specific age groups, has been an important caveat in recent years). A limitation of this survey data is that, aside from gender and age, there is little information available on the personal and social backgrounds of individuals, and therefore the data cannot be used to shed light on the attainment levels of sub-groups who are more or less likely to be at risk.

On the other hand, data collected through the *Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth* (LSAY) research program contain a considerable amount of background information about individuals, hence are valuable in exploring and explaining patterns of association. The drawback of such surveys is that they suffer from high sample attrition, especially of particular groups of respondents (such as low achievers and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds); therefore samples tend to be biased and can produce inflated estimates of attainment.

Bearing in mind their strengths and shortcomings, both of these data sources are needed to gain a more comprehensive picture of educational attainment among young people in Australia, and both are used in this section. The *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey* (NATSISS), a sample survey conducted in 2008–09, also provides specific information on the attainment of Indigenous young people.

In addition to these national data sources, international data collections by the OECD and by Eurostat for the European Union enable comparisons of the levels of attainment achieved across different countries, and therefore the means of assessing the relative performance of education and training systems in those countries, including Australia.

After reviewing the available data on educational attainment at both secondary and tertiary levels, the final part of this section discusses some of the evidence concerning the rewards that education confers. It is recognition of these benefits that underpins the policy drive to raise educational attainment.

## 03 Educational attainment

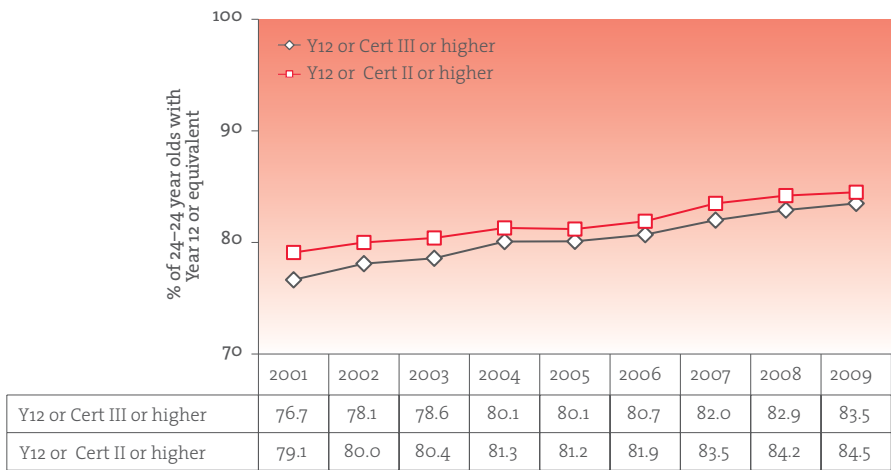
# Secondary school attainment in Australia

The indicator that has been agreed upon to measure progress toward the target of 90 per cent Year 12 or equivalent completion is drawn from the ABS *Education and Work* survey, and is the proportion of the population aged 20 to 24 years which has attained either Year 12 or an equivalent VET qualification. When it was first announced, the target was set as one to be achieved by 2020, and the equivalent VET qualification was deemed to be Certificate III or higher. In 2009 COAG decided to bring forward the target date to 2015, and to use, as an interim progress measure, the percentage of the age cohort that attained Year 12 or a qualification at the level of Certificate II or higher.

**Estimates from sample surveys indicate that more than 84 per cent of young adults have attained Year 12 or its equivalent in 2009**

Figure 21 records the steady increase since 2001 in Year 12 or equivalent attainment, according to each of these two definitions. In 2009 it is estimated that 83.5 per cent of 20 to 24 year-olds had either completed Year 12 at school or attained a VET qualification at Certificate III or higher. The percentage that had attained Year 12 or Certificate II or higher was slightly greater, at 84.5 per cent, thus leaving a gap of 5.5 per cent to be closed in order to reach the 90 per cent target by 2015.

**Figure 21**  
Completion of Year 12 or Certificate III or higher, and of Year 12 or Certificate II or higher, 20 to 24 year-olds, Australia, 2001–2009



Source: ABS Education and Work, Australia (2001–2009)

*“I always wanted to complete Year 12 and I didn’t really want to leave school when I found out I was pregnant, but I thought ‘I don’t have a lot of options, I’m going to have a baby and I’m not going to be able to take it to school’. I went and got a traineeship and worked for six months and then had maternity leave, so I went back to work and did [Year 12] at the same time.”*

Rebecca, 19 years

# Secondary attainment: an international comparison

## School completion

The completion of upper secondary education has become an important benchmark of performance internationally. This is partly because it is increasingly recognised as the minimum level of education needed for participation in further study and in the labour force. It is the requirement for entry to many post-secondary education and training courses, and important also as a minimum credential for successful entry to the labour market. In addition, over time secondary school completion has also become more and more influential in determining how economic and other life benefits, such as good health and wellbeing, are distributed. As a consequence, many countries, including Australia, have established targets for attainment. The goal in Switzerland, for example, is for 95 per cent completion of upper secondary qualifications. In European countries, most systems agreed to work towards the benchmarks established as part of the Lisbon strategy for education, which set the upper secondary attainment target of 85 per cent of young people aged 20 to 24 by 2010.

A majority (68 per cent) of Australians aged 25 to 64 had attained at least upper secondary education in 2007, according to the most currently available OECD figures (OECD, 2009a). However, for this broad age-group, this rate is slightly below the OECD average (70 per cent) and well below the leading countries. Top ranking countries include Canada (87 per cent), the United States (88 per cent), Switzerland (86 per cent), Sweden (85 per cent) and Germany (84 per cent).

To see the impact of more recent policy it is necessary to look at the change over time, and consider the proportions of different age cohorts that have completed at least upper secondary education. Figure 22 displays these attainment rates in OECD countries for two groups, 25 to 34 year-olds and 45 to 54 year-olds. (Appendix Table A2 provides additional detail, with rates disaggregated for males and females, for 25 to 34 year-olds, and also for the wider population aged 25 to 64 years.)

Figure 22 reveals a higher proportion of secondary school graduates in the younger generation of adults. France, Australia, Ireland, Belgium, Italy and Spain all posted intergenerational differences in excess of 15 percentage points. This indicates the rapid changes in attainment that have occurred in Australia, a trend similar to that experienced in several other countries.

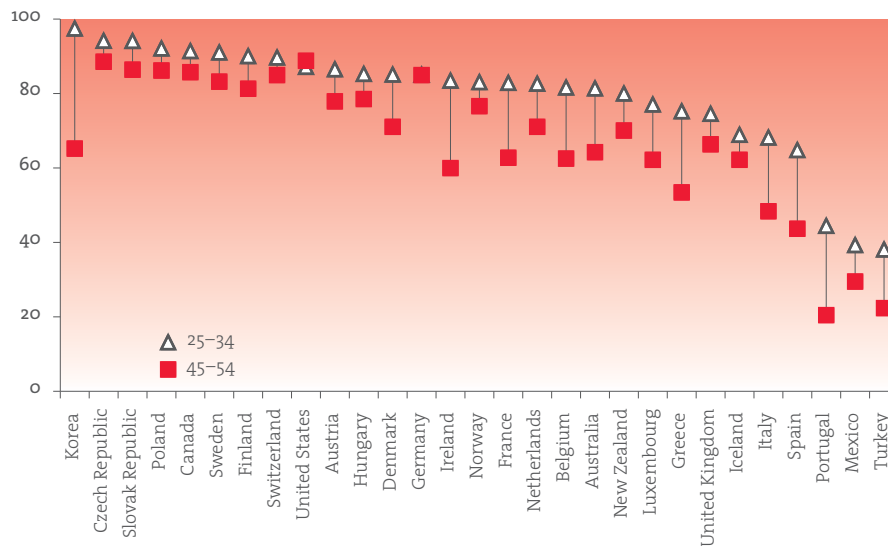
**Upper secondary completion rates in Australia have increased, but international comparisons show there is still scope for improvement**

When compared with other countries, the level of upper secondary attainment among young adults in Australia of 81 per cent was slightly above the OECD average of 79 per cent. As Figure 22 shows, there are eight countries which in 2007 had achieved Australia's goal of 90 per cent attaining upper secondary education. These were Korea, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Poland, Canada, Sweden, Finland and Switzerland.



**Figure 22**

Attainment of at least upper secondary education<sup>1</sup> in OECD countries, population aged 25 to 34 years and 45 to 54 years, 2007 (%)



1. Excluding ISCED 3C short programmes.

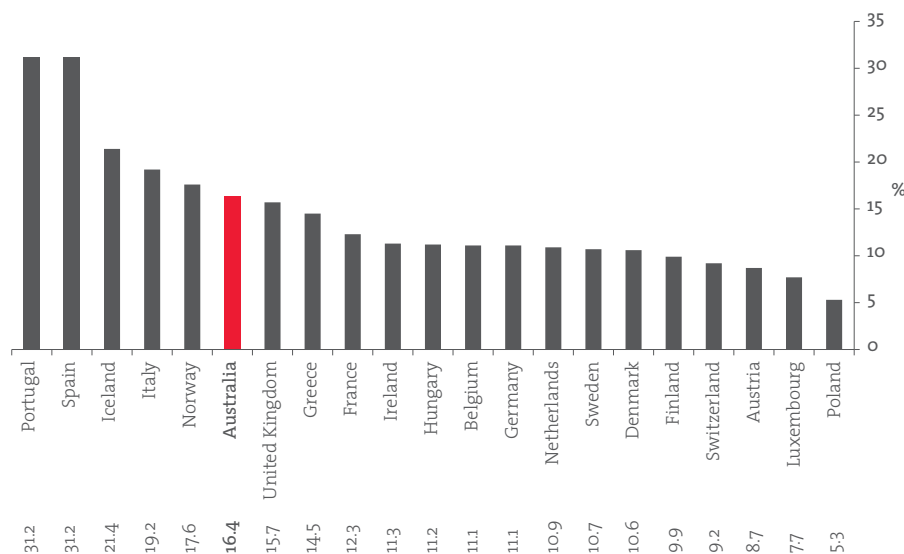
Source: OECD (2009a)

Note: Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of 25 to 34 year-olds who have attained at least upper secondary

See also Appendix Table A2

**Figure 23**

Rates of early school leaving in European Union countries and Australia, population aged 18 to 24 years, 2009 (%)



Sources: Eurostat (2010a); ABS Education and Work, Australia (2009)

## Early school leaving

Rates of early school leaving also vary across countries. Early leaving is not the direct opposite of upper secondary attainment because the definition of early leavers that has been adopted in other countries excludes those who are still in some form of study or training, even though they are no longer in school and have not completed an upper secondary certificate. For the purpose of data collection within the European Union (EU), the early school leaving rate is defined as the percentage of the population aged 18–24 who have attained, at most, lower secondary education and are not involved in any further education or training. A comparison based on this measure, and including the figure for Australia, is presented in Figure 23.

*“My parents had a very strong opinion of not being able to leave school unless there was something else there waiting for you.”* Cara, 22 years

**Australia’s early leaving rate of 16 per cent is higher than in many European countries**

The percentage of early school leavers is one of five benchmarks adopted as part of the EU’s Lisbon strategy in the field of education. The target was for this rate to be reduced to 10 per cent by 2010. Figure 23 shows that a few countries have achieved this target, including Poland, Luxembourg, Austria, Switzerland, and Finland. However, a few are well short of it, including Portugal and Spain (with early leaving rates above 30 per cent), and Iceland, Italy and Norway. Australia’s rate of 16 per cent places it with countries that still have some way to go to reach the EU target of 10 per cent.

# Approaches to meeting Australia's secondary attainment target

## Addressing social disadvantage

Early school leaving within Australia varies by social background, as demonstrated in previous research. Current figures highlight the persistence of this pattern.

## Social background continues to have a strong impact on early school leaving

Table 20 records the rates of non completion of Year 12 among 15 to 24 year-olds in 2009 by two aspects of family background—these being level of parents' school education and their employment status. It shows that early school leaving occurs at a much higher rate among those whose parents themselves have not completed school. Of the young people from families in which both parents had completed Year 12 or higher, the early leaving rate was just 15 per cent, whereas it was 45.1 per cent for those from families in which neither parent had attained Year 12.

Early leaving rates also vary by gender. At each level of parental education, males have the most ground to make up. However the table also suggests that the group lagging behind the most (males from families where neither parent has attained Year 12) have large scope for improvement, based on the experiences of females from similar backgrounds. The gaps across the three categories of parental education are weaker for females than for males.

Employment status of parents is also influential. Where both parents are unemployed, the rate of early school leaving is substantially higher (35.4 per cent) than in families in which both parents were working (24.7 per cent).

**Table 20**  
Early school leaving, by parental education and employment status, 15 to 24 year-olds, 2009 (%)

	MALES	FEMALES	PERSONS
<b>Parents' education</b>			
Both parents completed Year 12 or higher	15.9	14.2	15.0
One parent completed Year 12 or higher	39.2	28.1	33.8
Neither parent completed Year 12 or higher	52.1	37.0	45.1
<b>Parents' employment status</b>			
Both parents employed	29.6	19.5	24.7
One parent employed	31.6	21.3	26.6
Neither parent employed	39.5	31.4	35.4

Source: ABS Education and Training Experience, 2009 (2010)

*“My parents both left school before they completed their schooling, but that was almost the expected thing in their generation. Dad worked in a factory, Mum was a stay-at-home mum. Dad had a disc explode in his back about 18 years ago now, so went back to uni and got a degree and is utilising that. Out of my siblings, there’s five of us altogether of which I’m the second-youngest, and I’m the only one who went on to complete tertiary education. So there wasn’t really an expectation from family about having to go to uni. It was ‘do with your life what you would be happy to do with it’.” Josh, 23 years*

Reasons for early school leaving may be influenced by parents’ education

There can be many causes of early school leaving. Some insights can be gained by asking young people themselves, although this may not reveal the impact of long-term factors that can shape outlooks and behaviour. Table 21 reports the findings from the ABS *Survey of Education and Training* conducted in 2009, in which those who did not complete Year 12 were asked their main reason for not completing.

*“My mum didn’t finish high school, she dropped out in about Year 10. Dad finished high school and that was all. My dad always said he wished he’d studied further and he never did, so he wanted us to have the opportunities that he didn’t, I suppose.”*

Jessica, 24 years

When indicating their main reasons for dropping out of school, some nominated work-related factors (what might be described as ‘pull factors’) such as the desire to get a job, or having already found a job or wanting to find an apprenticeship. While this was the case for about one third of all early leavers (as shown in the lower panel of the table), these work-related reasons were more frequently cited by males than females, and especially by males from families whose parents had not completed school (almost 44 per cent).

School-related factors such as not liking school, not doing well or not having suitable courses available (which could also be termed ‘push factors’) were the main reason for dropping out given by about 40 per cent of all early leavers. Personal factors, including ill health, needing to care for family members, disability or financial reasons, accounted for the remaining category of reasons for early leaving. Females were more likely to report such personal factors as their main reason for leaving school, at almost twice the frequency as that for males.

**Table 21**  
Self-reported main reason for early school leaving, by parents’ education, and by gender, 15 to 24 year-olds, 2009 (row %)

	WORK-RELATED	SCHOOL-RELATED	PERSONAL & OTHER
<b>Males</b>			
Both parents completed Year 12 or higher	36.5	44.0	18.9
One parent completed Year 12 or higher	43.9	41.8	14.3
Neither parent completed Year 12 or higher	43.8	37.2	19.0
<b>Females</b>			
Both parents completed Year 12 or higher	26.1	36.6	37.3
One parent completed Year 12 or higher	31.7	42.7	25.6
Neither parent completed Year 12 or higher	24.3	37.0	38.4
<b>Persons</b>			
Both parents completed Year 12 or higher	32.0	40.7	27.3
One parent completed Year 12 or higher	39.1	42.3	18.9
Neither parent completed Year 12 or higher	36.6	37.3	26.4

Source: ABS Education and Training Experience, 2009 (2010)

Challenges in raising attainment among Indigenous young people

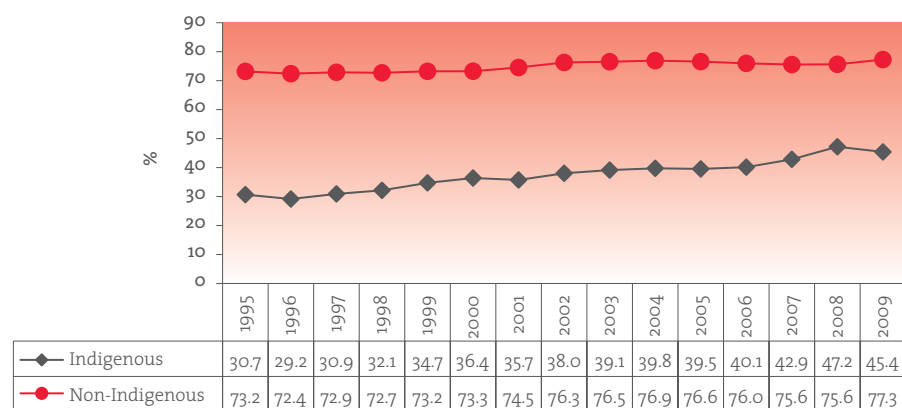
The National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap) aims to reduce the level of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. One of the targets agreed by COAG is to halve the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment by 2020 (COAG, 2008).

Retention to Year 12

Improving the attainment level of Indigenous students means ensuring that more stay on at school. Currently, as measured by apparent retention rates, there is much ground to make up. Figure 24 plots the apparent retention rates to Year 12 for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students from 1995 to 2009, showing the magnitude of the gap between the two.

**Figure 24**

Apparent retention of full-time students from Year 7/8 to Year 12, by Indigenous status, 1995–2009 (%)



Source: ABS, Schools, Australia (2009) Table 64a

### Apparent retention rates of Indigenous students are well below those of other students, although this gap has decreased over the last 15 years

During the fifteen year period depicted in the chart there has been a steady increase in apparent retention among Indigenous students, with the rate rising by 15 percentage points from 30.7 per cent in 1995 to 45.4 per cent in 2009. Over the same time span, retention among non-Indigenous students increased by just 4 percentage points, but from a much higher base, reaching 77.3 per cent in 2009.

The size of the gap between apparent retention rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (more than 40 percentage points in 1995) has narrowed somewhat—in 2008 it was about 28 percentage points. However this gap remains substantial and actually increased by more than more 3 percentage points in 2009.

### Achievement in literacy and numeracy

Improvements in Year 12 attainment can only come about by increasing the levels of student achievement throughout school. Indeed, one of the *Closing the Gap* targets is to halve the achievement gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018. This will be measured by the proportions of Indigenous students at or above the national minimum standard in National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests. NAPLAN tests are conducted each year across Australia for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

### Year 9 achievement levels of Indigenous students are markedly below those of non-Indigenous students, especially in literacy

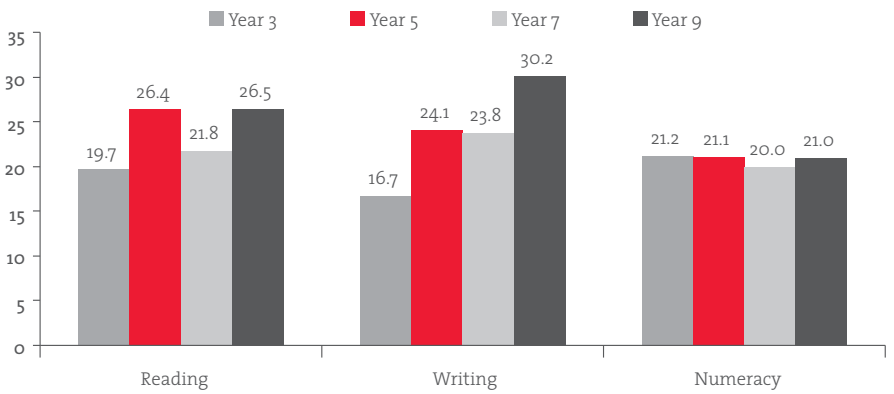
Table 22 gives the percentages of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Year 9 students meeting or exceeding the national minimum standard in NAPLAN tests. Students in the lowest of 10 bands on the achievement scale are categorised as not having met the national minimum standard. In 2009, nearly all non-Indigenous Year 9 students met the minimum standard, whereas considerably lower percentages of Indigenous students achieved this minimum level, particularly in writing.

**Table 22**  
Achievement in Reading, Writing and Numeracy at or above national minimum standard, Year 9, by Indigenous Status, Australia, 2009 (%)

	READING	WRITING	NUMERACY
Indigenous	67.0	59.0	75.0
Non-Indigenous	93.5	89.2	96.0

Source: MCEECDYA (2009)

**Figure 25**  
Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students achieving at or above the national minimum standard, by year level, Australia, 2009 (%)



Source: MCEECDYA (2009)

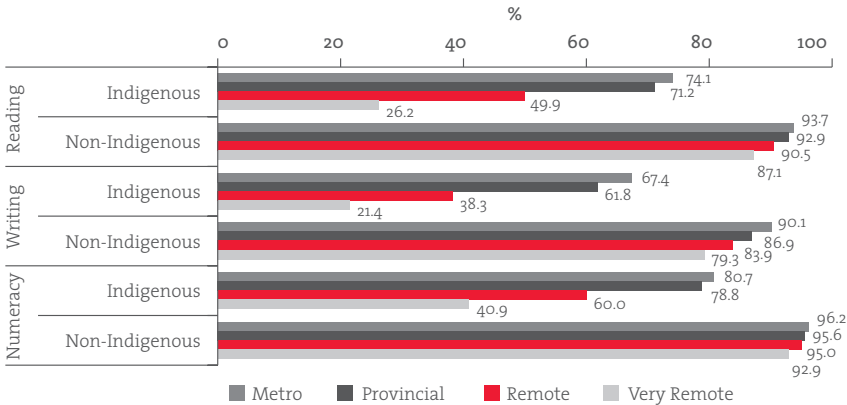
It is important to investigate whether this gap in levels of achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students has manifested at Year 9, or differs across school year levels. Identifying where the achievement gaps are greatest allows for more targeted effort to improve numeracy and literacy standards. Figure 25 charts the gap between the percentages of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for each year level that is tested. The chart shows that for the literacy measures of reading and writing, in general the gap increases through the years at school. For numeracy, however, the gap in achievement levels of about 20 percentage points starts at Year 3 and remains uniform through to Year 9.

Achievement gaps are much greater for remote and rural Indigenous students

These gaps in achievement in numeracy, while constant across year levels, vary significantly when the location of students is taken into consideration. This is clear from Figure 26, which displays the percentages of Year 9 Indigenous and non-Indigenous students meeting the minimum standards in each test, according to the location of their school.

There are not only the gaps in levels of achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, but between Indigenous students attending school in cities and towns compared to those in remote and very remote parts of Australia. Indigenous students living in metropolitan and provincial areas have rates of achievement that, while below those of non-Indigenous students, offer the prospect of improvement. Indigenous students in remote and very remote locations, however, are falling substantially behind, especially in literacy achievement. These sharp differences by location are not found in the results for non-Indigenous students.

Figure 26  
Year 9 Indigenous and non-Indigenous students achieving at or above the national minimum standard, by location (%)



Source: MCEECDYA (2009)

School attendance

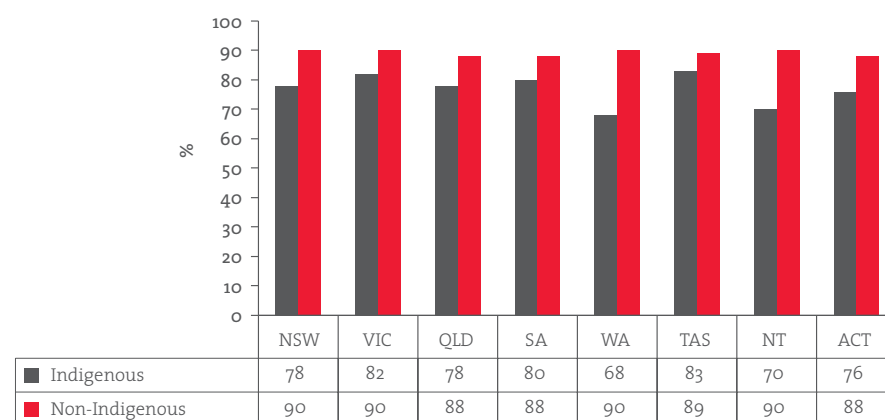
Just as improving achievement is a critical factor in raising levels of educational attainment amongst Indigenous young people, so too is increasing levels of student engagement. Policies to address retention must also address the difference in school attendance rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. According to the annual update of the *Closing the Gap* reform, Indigenous students miss 26 days of school per year on average, compared to 8 days for all students (*Commonwealth of Australia, 2010*).

Indigenous students are absent from school more often than non-Indigenous students

Rates of student attendance for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students vary across states and territories. Figure 27 shows the proportion of days attended in 2008 by Year 9 Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in government schools, as published by MCEECDYA. While in all states and territories Indigenous students have lower attendance rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts, the gap between attendance rates in Western Australia and the Northern Territory is particularly high, at 22 and 20 per cent respectively.

**Figure 27**

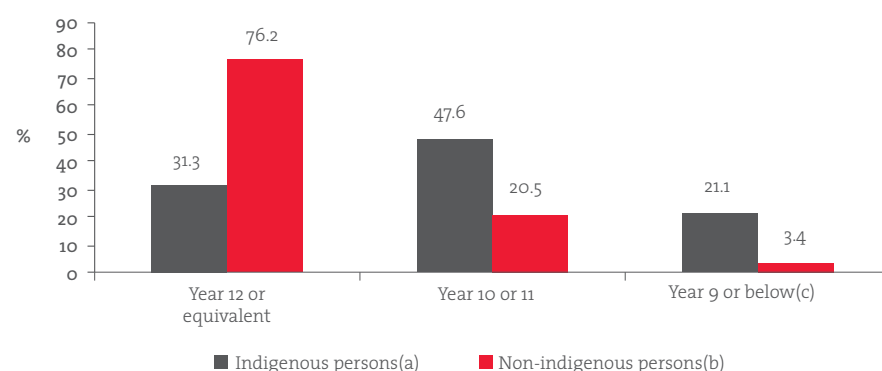
Year 9 student attendance rates in government schools, by Indigenous status and State/Territory, 2008 (%)



Source: (MCEECDYA 2008b)

**Figure 28**

Highest year of school completed, Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons, 20 to 24 year-olds, 2008 (%)



Sources:

(a) ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (2009)

(b) ABS Education and Work, Australia (2008).

Note:

Includes people currently studying at secondary school or non-school institutions.

(c) Includes people who never attended school.

### Secondary school attainment of Indigenous young people

An apparent retention rate to Year 12 of 45 per cent suggests that less than half of the Indigenous students entering secondary school stay on to Year 12. Apparent retention, however, is not a direct measure of attainment of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications. Other data sources must be used to provide an indication of the level of secondary school attainment amongst young Indigenous Australians. The ABS *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey* (NATSISS) is one such source. The most recent survey was conducted throughout Australia from August 2008 to April 2009.

### Less than one third of Indigenous young adults had completed Year 12 compared with three quarters of non-Indigenous young people

Figure 28 shows the highest year of school completed for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people aged 20 to 24 years. Over three-quarters (76.2 per cent) of non-Indigenous young people had completed Year 12, compared to less than one third (31.3 per cent) of Indigenous young adults. More than one in five (21.2 per cent) of Indigenous young people had left school with Year 9 or less, whereas the comparable figure for the non-Indigenous population was 3.4 per cent.



# Tertiary attainment in Australia and internationally

Tertiary education is important for economic and social development, in part because it contributes to the enrichment of scientific and cultural knowledge. It also gives individuals the tools they need to participate in social and economic life. The educational attainment of people in the labour force also influences the competitiveness and prosperity of economies. Variation in attainment over time can reflect differences in access to education and training, as well as changes in provision.

## Tertiary attainment (university and higher level VET qualifications)

Tertiary education levels are rising in OECD countries. Figure 29 indicates that more people are completing tertiary-level courses than ever before. These data include university degrees as well as higher-level VET courses such as diplomas and advanced diplomas. A comparison of tertiary education levels of the younger age group (25 to 34 year-olds) with the older (55 to 64 year-olds) reveals a much higher proportion of tertiary graduates among the younger generation. There were intergenerational differences in excess of 20 percentage points in Korea, Japan, Ireland, France, and Spain. By contrast, increases were negligible or non-existent in the United States and Germany (although it can be noted that attainment rates in the United States are relatively high for both age groups).

## 03 Educational attainment

**Figure 29**  
Attainment of at least tertiary education, population aged 25 to 34 years and 55 to 64 years, 2007 (%)



Source: OECD (2009a)

Australia registered a modest increase in the proportion of such graduates. In 2007 there was a difference of 14 percentage points between the two age groups. Of young adults aged 25 to 34 years, 41 per cent had attained tertiary qualifications in Australia, compared with 27 per cent for the older cohort aged 55 to 64. The rate for younger adults places Australia alongside France and Belgium (both with 41 per cent), and the United States and Denmark (both with 40 per cent). Australia lags behind Canada (56 per cent), Korea (56 per cent), Japan (54 per cent) and New Zealand (47 per cent).

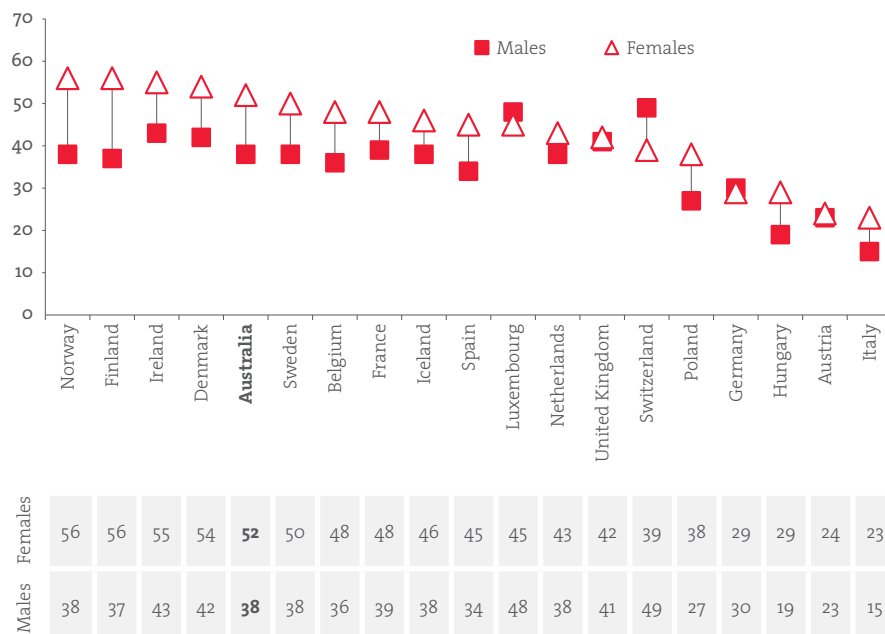
## In most European countries, and in Australia, more females than males obtain a tertiary qualification

One of the striking features of tertiary education attainment across countries is the gender difference. Data which provide evidence of this are presented in Figure 30, for European Union countries as well as Australia. In most countries young women are more likely to obtain a tertiary qualification than young men, although there is some variation in the size of this gender gap according to country. Australia, with a 14 percentage point gap between females and males, has similar tertiary attainment levels by gender as countries such as Norway, Finland, Ireland, Denmark and Sweden.

*“In Year 12 we were at school all day and I studied for an extra three or four hours a night, studied all the weekends, I was absolutely cactus [by the end]. I thought I’d be able to transfer that work ethic straight into university and then the different structures of university—there’s no pressure from peers, from teachers... I just lost all motivation, like, ‘I don’t know what I’m doing here.’” Tim, 23 years*

**Figure 30**

Attainment of longer-cycle tertiary qualification, population aged 30 to 34 years, by gender, 2009 (%)



Source: Eurostat (2010b); ABS, Education and Work, Australia (2009)

This pattern reflects the stronger employment alternatives (such as traditional apprenticeships) that exist for men, and highlights the greater reliance women need to place on gaining credentials. In this sense, tertiary education functions as a refuge for women, continuing the role that education plays at secondary school level. On the other hand marked gender differences in tertiary education attainment do not occur in some systems, such as in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and the United Kingdom, where older more traditional patterns of training provision remain.

## Case study

### Georgie: 19 years, full-time tertiary student after a gap year

Georgie grew up in a rural area where she attended a small public primary school before moving to an all girls private high school in the nearest town. She notes that 'especially being private, there was quite a big push for university' but there was also a high take-up of VET programs among students there: 'You get to learn by actually doing rather than studying books and finding your way'.

Georgie undertook a variety of business-oriented subjects and enjoyed mathematics. She was attracted to Business and Accounting because 'I could see the point of them in the end', and Hospitality because a Certificate II was embedded in the course. During school holidays she worked part-time at a deli, and on her parents' farm.

For Georgie, 'the option of gap year was quite a good opportunity' and she applied privately to work at a school in the United Kingdom after her application through the formal system was turned down: 'Apparently I wasn't suitable enough. I think their selection criteria is very much based on leadership roles. I had a lot of involvement in the Rotary Club rather than head girl, that sort of stuff', she says, 'so I got quite stubborn and decided that I wanted to go anyway.'

The motivation to take a gap year was less about earning enough to gain Youth Allowance, and more about feeling that 'I've worked really hard for the last four years and I just want a break, I want to go and enjoy a bit of my life'. Working during the day at the school, she was able to access London's theatre scene and cultural life in the evenings.

The experience gave her a sense of worldliness, independence and maturity: 'You come back and you realise how much more capable you are'.

After her year away, Georgie began a double degree in Business and Media Communications. This choice was based upon the advice of a careers adviser who had encouraged her to combine her aptitude in economics with her interest in music and events. She finds the business aspect 'very boring but very necessary' for a competitive industry, and is looking toward a career in events and marketing.

University attainment

The recent review of higher education argued that Australia will need more university-qualified people if it is to anticipate and meet the future demands of our economy (Bradley, 2008). It claimed that from 2010 the supply of people with undergraduate qualifications will not keep up with demand, and that to increase student numbers it will be necessary to look to members of groups currently under-represented in university study.

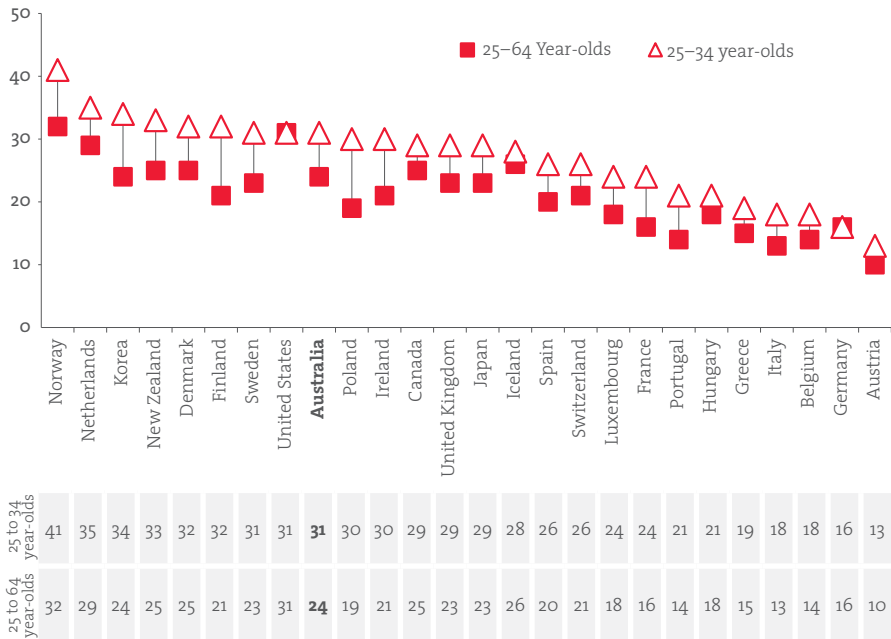
To address this situation the review proposed a target for higher education that 40 per cent of 25 to 34 year-olds will have attained at least a bachelor-level qualification by 2020. This is a huge challenge, but one that is possible to meet, based on international experience. Figure 31 displays comparisons of the levels of attainment of university qualifications for 25 to 34 year-olds and for the whole adult population of 25 to 64 year-olds in OECD countries. Norway already has an attainment rate of 41 per cent among the younger age group. This is the result of relatively recent major improvement, because the rate for the broader adult population is 32 per cent.

In Australia 31 per cent of young adults aged 25 to 34 had attained university-level qualifications in 2007

An indication of the gains made in Australia can be seen by comparing the attainment levels of the two age cohorts. Almost one-quarter (24 per cent) of adults aged 25 to 64 had completed university-level qualifications in 2007 (ranking Australia below 8 other OECD countries, led by Norway). For the younger age group, the figure was 31 per cent. This latter figure was equal with the United States and Sweden, but below Norway (41 per cent), the Netherlands (35 per cent), Korea (34 per cent), New Zealand (33 per cent), and Denmark and Finland (both at 32 per cent).

03 Educational attainment

Figure 31 Attainment of university qualifications, population aged 25 to 34 years and 25 to 64 years, 2007 (%)



Source: OECD (2009a)

# Approaches to meeting Australia's university attainment target

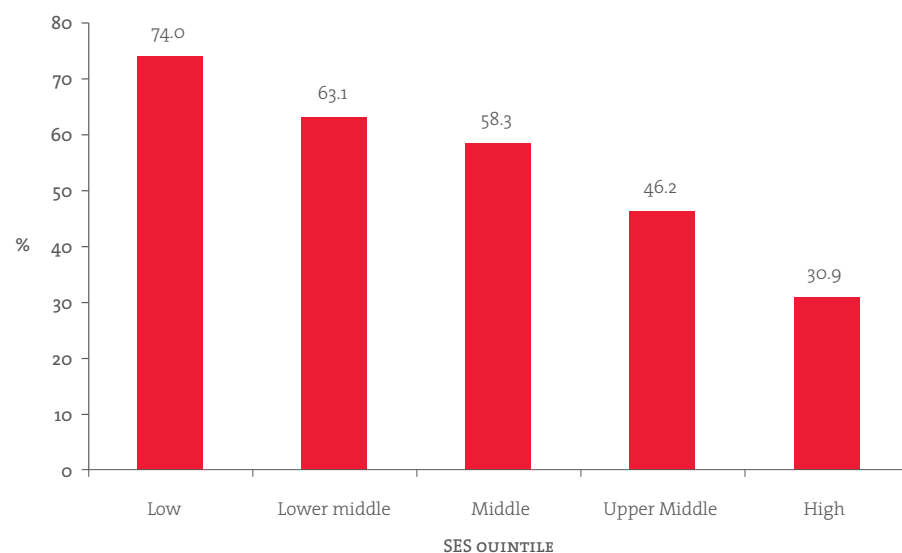
If Australia is to achieve the target of 40 per cent set by the Bradley Review, then higher levels of participation and completion will be required of groups that traditionally have not attended university, at least in proportionate numbers. Among the key groups that will need to lift are those young people from low SES backgrounds and from rural and remote locations. Some idea of the size of the shift that will be needed is provided by looking at current patterns of participation and non-participation in university study.

## Participation by under-represented groups, especially those from low SES backgrounds and from rural areas, must be increased

Figure 32 presents the percentages of 20 year-olds who were not engaged in university study in 2008, nor had they ever commenced such study, according to their social background. The latter is measured by quintiles of SES, based on the 2003 cohort of 15 year-olds who were surveyed as part of the *Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth* (LSAY). Non-participation in university study refers to activity in 2008, when most sample members were 20 years of age.

**Figure 32**

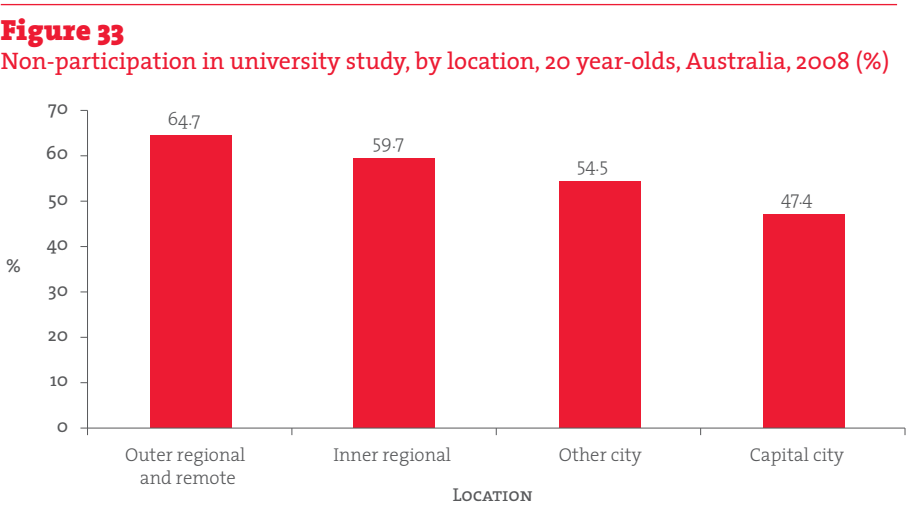
Non-participation in university study, by SES, 20 year-olds, Australia, 2008 (%)



Source: Derived from the 2003 cohort of LSAY

Figure 32 shows that 74 per cent of 20 year-olds who were from the lowest SES backgrounds were not undertaking university study in 2008. The non-participation rate for those from the highest SES backgrounds was very much lower, at 31 per cent. These figures point to the need for substantial change in access and participation from the least represented social groups if the new target for university attainment is to be achieved. An even greater challenge, in terms of a target, would be to set the benchmark of the current rate of participation of young people from high SES origins as the global participation target. This would require major transformation in the provision of university places and in secondary school preparation.

Figure 33 displays the percentages of university non-participation according to regional location, and emphasises the disadvantage experienced by young people outside of the main cities. The lowest rate of participation in university, where the greatest effort would be needed to lift engagement and attainment, is in outer regional and remote areas of Australia.



Source: Derived from the 2003 cohort of LSAY

## Case study

### Louise: 20 years, completed TAFE course and part-time employed

Louise grew up in a small coastal town and attended a Catholic Regional College. In Year 9, she was influenced by her best friend’s decision to apply for the air force: ‘It got me thinking about what I wanted to do with my life and I decided I wanted to be a helicopter pilot. But our air force only has fixed-wing aircraft, so one option was to go to the army, or the navy. I thought the navy would be awesome.’ After sitting the aptitude test successfully, Louise was encouraged to go on but the psychology test was a different matter: ‘They said “you’re not mature enough, you’re only 17”. They said I needed more life experience, and I just looked at them and went “I’m 17, what do you expect me to have?”’

Louise abandoned her ambition to join the navy, and in Year 12 confounded her year level coordinators by choosing to study Physics, Chemistry, Maths Methods and Dance: ‘They were really quite confused about me doing Physics and Dance, because they started to conflict. I was the only person in the whole of Victoria to do Physics and Dance. It was more of an issue when it came to exams because the exams were scheduled for the exact same day at the exact same time.’

On completing school, Louise still had no clear idea about what she wanted to do. She applied for a whole range of TAFE courses, from Tourism Management to Beauty Therapy, but Outdoor Education was ‘the first one I got back and I just went yep, I’ll do that’.

While studying she worked part-time as a waitress, and on completing her course found part-time employment with an outdoor recreation recruitment company.

Louise currently works running outdoor education camps for a city-based private school, and notes its ‘very, very academic’ focus: ‘It’s still amazing to know that some of these kids haven’t slept in tents before... I like working with kids and making them realise that just because they don’t want to [try something new] doesn’t mean it’s not a good thing. I like having that challenge there.’

# The rewards of education

There has been a very strong emphasis placed on educational attainment in Australia and in many other countries. School completion targets, goals for the reduction of academic achievement gaps, and target increases for attainment of university and other tertiary qualifications all highlight a policy commitment to education as a valued good. There is sound reason for this. As well as social and community benefits, there are major benefits of education which accrue to individuals, and which reinforce the rationale for target setting to raise levels of educational attainment in the population.

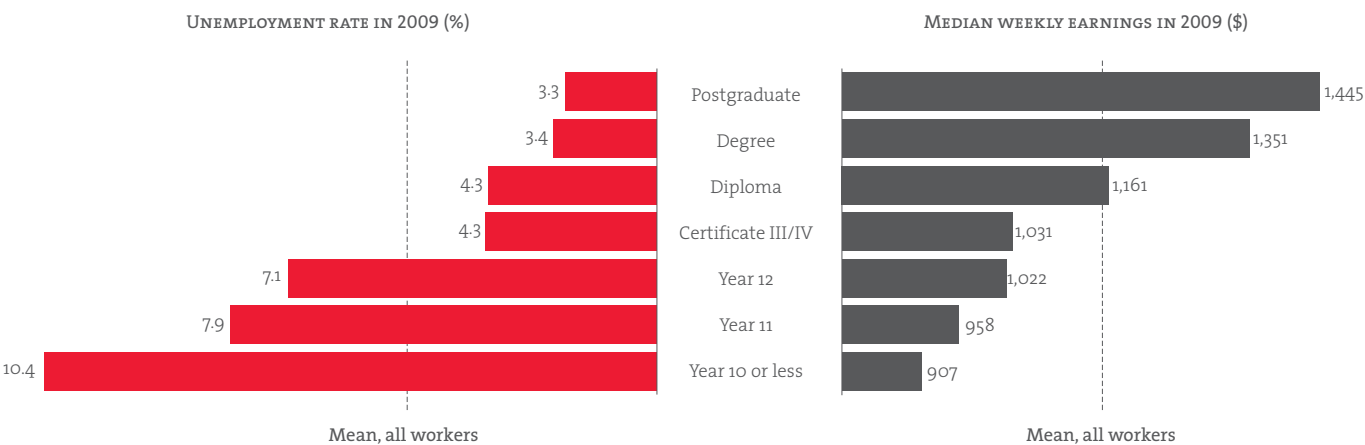
## Economic benefits of education

Increasing educational attainment is a key contributor to the economic success of individuals; the acquisition of skills and qualifications has a significant effect on their employability and earnings. The following analyses demonstrate some of the beneficial economic outcomes of greater educational attainment for all labour force participants regardless of age, as well as for young people in their mid-20s.

## Higher levels of educational qualifications are associated with higher weekly earnings and lower unemployment rates

Figure 34 displays both median weekly earnings and unemployment rates for the population of 15–64 year-olds in Australia in 2009, according to their level of educational qualification. Earnings range from \$907 per week for an early school leaver with Year 10 or less, up to \$1445 for someone with a postgraduate degree. Median weekly earnings increase with every increase in education level. Equally as striking are the differences in the rates of unemployment. Those who left school at Year 10 or earlier were three times more likely to be unemployed in 2009, compared to those with a university degree.

**Figure 34**  
Unemployment rates and median weekly earnings, by educational attainment, 15 to 64 year-olds, Australia, 2009



Sources: ABS Education and Work (2009); ABS Education and Training Experience (2009)

Educational attainment is associated with lower unemployment and a greater likelihood of full-time work, across all labour force participants regardless of age

Employment prospects are influenced by a person’s level of educational attainment, and unemployment rates tend to fall as the levels of qualifications increase. The data for 2009 presented in Table 23 shows that, among all labour force participants, those with higher levels of attainment have lower levels of unemployment. They also have the highest rates of employment in full-time work. Hence gaining full-time rather than part-time jobs is another benefit associated with higher educational attainment.

When in their mid 20s, school completers are more likely to be working; very early leavers are more likely to be unemployed or not in the workforce

Year 12 qualifications play an important role for young people, as Figure 35 demonstrates. In 2008, among young people aged in their mid twenties who had previously dropped out of school from Year 10 or below, more were likely to be not working (57 per cent were either unemployed or not in the labour force) than were working (only 43 per cent were employed). By contrast, 92 per cent of those who had completed Year 12 were employed.

Table 23

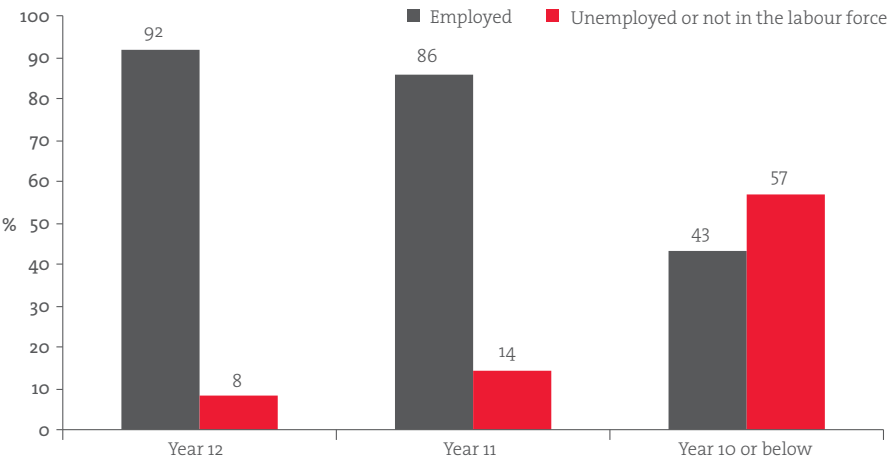
Employment status of labour force participants, by non-school educational attainment, 15 to 64 year-olds, Australia, 2009 (%)

	EMPLOYED FULL-TIME	EMPLOYED PART-TIME	UNEMPLOYED
Postgraduate Degree	78.8	17.3	3.9
Graduate Diploma/Graduate Certificate	72.4	25.4	2.2
Bachelor Degree	73.8	22.7	3.4
Advanced Diploma/Diploma	69.8	25.8	4.3
Certificate III/IV	77.2	18.4	4.3
Certificate I/II	61.6	30.4	7.9
All without a non-school qualification	57.0	34.3	8.6

Source: ABS Education and Work (2009)

Figure 35

Working and not working, by level of school attainment, 25 year-olds, Australia, 2008 (%)



Source: Derived from the 1998 cohort of LSAY

“Early on in my degree I discovered what I wanted to do and made positive steps to try and get to that. I’ve always tried to do work experience, most of that is on a volunteer basis because realistically you can’t [expect to be paid] for a week or two when you’re not really providing them any benefits, so I think that as a whole has put me in good stead for future prospects”. Eliza, 22 years



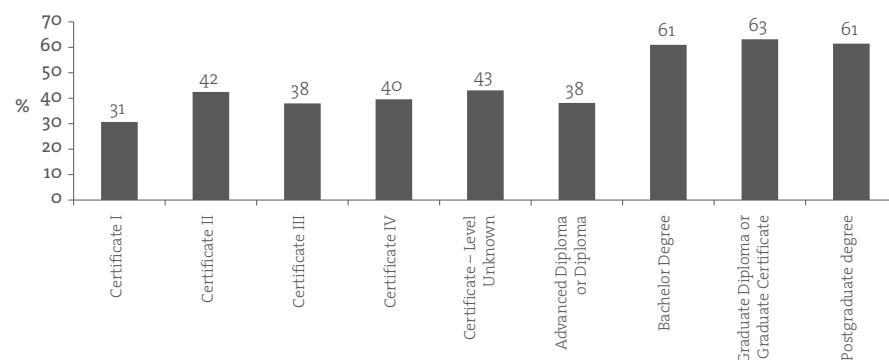
### For those in their mid-20s, higher educational attainment increases opportunities for work-related learning

Workplace or work-related learning comprises courses or training at a workplace that does not necessarily result in a qualification. However such learning can contribute in important ways to skill formation, and also providing a foundation or platform for promotion, greater productivity, and wage increases. Work-related training courses are structured learning activities undertaken primarily to obtain, maintain or improve employment-related skills or competencies. The courses can be taken in and outside the workplace and include training seminars, workshops and conferences, audio visual presentations, lectures, self-paced tutorials of a structured nature, as well as less formal activities involving being instructed or shown by other workers.

Participation in this non-formal work-related learning is associated with educational attainment. Figure 36 shows that, among 25 year-olds who were employed in 2008, more than six in ten of those with a university degree or higher had participated in work-based training during the previous 12 months. The comparable participation rates for those with lower levels of qualifications were generally around four in ten. This pattern indicates that those who already have advantages in terms of their educational attainment continue to build on this capital through workplace training.

**Figure 36**

Participation in work-based training by level of educational attainment, 25 year-olds, Australia, 2008 (%)



Source: Derived from the 1998 cohort of LSAY

### Other benefits of education

#### Educational attainment is also linked to non-economic benefits that include better health, such as reduced levels of obesity, and higher life expectancy

Economic and workforce gains are not the only benefits of education. There is a well established, large, and consistent association between education and health and wellbeing. This has been observed in many countries and time periods, and for a wide variety of health measures. As one example, obesity has been found to be associated with educational attainment. Analyses of data collected over several waves of National Health Surveys in 11 OECD countries show that levels of obesity decrease with increasing education, with these disparities by education more pronounced among women than men (OECD, 2009b). In Australia, those with more than 16 years of education have a 15 per cent chance of being obese compared to 22 per cent for those with less than 10 years of education, although the gaps vary by gender.

Differences in life expectancy associated with differences in educational attainment become another important indicator of socioeconomic inequalities in health. Relevant data are currently not available for Australia, but evidence from similar OECD nations is revealing. An analysis of data for a selection of European Union Member States, as well as Norway, shows a systematic relationship between educational attainment and mortality (see Corsini, 2010). At age 30, life expectancy is less among persons with the lowest educational attainment and increases with educational level. For example, in Norway, for those with the lowest levels of educational attainment, life expectancy is reduced by an average of three years compared to those with the highest attainment levels. Across these European countries the life expectancy gaps linked to differences in educational attainment range from 10 years to 2 years, with these differences generally more pronounced for men than for women.

It is important to consider how young people are faring not only from the point of view of their participation in education and training and in the labour market.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, formulated by Commonwealth and State Education Ministers and the Catholic and independent school sectors and released in December 2008, sets the direction for schooling in Australia over the next ten years. The declaration contains two goals:

- > Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence; and
- > All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens (MCEECDYA, 2008a).

These goals represent a broad view of the role of education, as they acknowledge and espouse the social, cultural and political purposes of schooling. The nature of the outcomes of education encapsulated in the goals can be seen as something of an antidote to the dominance of the human capital focus in education policy, wherein the main aim of the education and training system is to deliver more productive workers to serve the needs of the economy.

## 04 Attitudes and values of young Australians

Various outcomes for individuals that are encompassed by the two goals of schooling are detailed in the Melbourne Declaration. In reference to the second goal, it describes 'active and informed citizens' as those who:

- > are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life;
- > are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia;
- > work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments; and
- > are responsible global and local citizens.

In addition, according to the Melbourne Declaration, the 'confident and creative citizens' who are to be the products of schooling are to have among their attributes 'a sense of optimism about their lives and the future'.

Recognition of these more expansive goals for schooling prompts several questions. How will policy makers know whether such goals are being met? How can the goals be measured, in order to judge whether there is progress toward their achievement? What do we currently know about the prevalence of these attitudes and values among young people in Australia?

One data source that can be drawn on, which provides information about the activities and opinions of young Australians, and in a context that enables international comparisons, is the *World Values Survey* (WVS). This is a comprehensive survey administered in a large number of countries: the most recent data, from national samples of people aged 18 and over in 57 countries, was gathered in the period 2005–2007 (World Values Survey Association, 2009). Data can be disaggregated by age, so that results for young adults (those under 30 years of age) can be analysed. The many countries involved means that the WVS data allows comparisons not only with other OECD nations, but with a much wider array of countries, including our Asian neighbours.

A number of issues pertinent to the national goals for schooling can be explored using this survey. The WVS provides data on the perceptions of individuals about how they relate to the world, and their role in it, including how strongly they see themselves as a part of their local community, as a member of their nation, and as a citizen of the world.

At a national level, opinions about the importance of living in a country that is governed democratically can serve as a measure of the degree of personal commitment to the idea of democracy among young adults. Another matter that can be examined is the views of young people concerning national priorities, based on responses to survey questions about what they think should be the aims of the country in which they live over the next ten years, and more specifically the relative importance of the economy and the environment.

Considering the ways in which individuals function at a more local level, information on the extent of participation in community organisations can be analysed, as one indicator of the level of social and civic engagement among young adults. These analyses based on data from the WVS can be supplemented by findings from LSAY.

Furthermore, in relation to the Melbourne Declaration goal of developing confident citizens who have a sense of optimism about their lives, there are WVS data available to look at individuals' perceptions of the level of choice and control they have over their lives, as well as the influence of school completion on these perceptions.

# Relating to the world as local and global citizens

There are differences in the ways in which people relate to the world. Survey respondents were asked how much they saw themselves as part of their local community, as a member of their nation, and as a world citizen. The percentages that either agreed or strongly agreed with each of these three perspectives on their place in the world are presented in Table 24.

## Most young people identify with their nation, while fewer see themselves as part of their local community or as global citizens

Four in five young Australians (83 per cent) identified with their local community, almost all (95 per cent) regarded themselves as members of the nation, and three quarters (76 per cent) saw themselves as a world citizen. The last figure was lower than in many other OECD countries—for instance, 85 per cent of young Canadians and 89 per cent of Japanese said they viewed themselves as world citizens—but it was a little above the United States (70 per cent), and considerably above Italy (64 per cent).

**Table 24**  
Individuals’ perceptions of their place in their local community, their nation, and the world, various countries, 18 to 29 year-olds, 2005–2007 (%)

	AGREED THAT THEY SAW THEMSELVES AS...			WORLD CITIZEN	
	Part of my local community	Member of the nation	World citizen	Completed school	Didn't complete school
OECD countries					
Australia	83	95	76	77	62
Canada	84	95	85	86	85
Chile	87	92	80	80	80
Finland	88	98	81	80	83
Germany	67	83	72	84	66
Italy	77	92	64	64	65
Japan	93	96	89	89	90
Mexico	92	97	91	91	93
Norway	94	97	80	84	73
Poland	89	98	80	86	77
Slovenia	88	94	80	83	77
Spain	94	94	85	88	83
Sweden	90	99	83	87	67
Switzerland	55	80	77	78	75
United States	71	92	70	70	71
Other countries					
Argentina	94	96	67	57	72
Brazil	90	90	83	86	82
Bulgaria	85	92	58	57	59
China	93	96	86	84	88
Colombia	88	91	95	95	94
Cyprus	83	96	72	74	57
Egypt	93	98	60	62	57
Ethiopia	92	93	92	92	92
Georgia	93	99	48	48	49
Ghana	98	100	85	90	85
India	85	97	76	78	72
Indonesia	85	99	92	93	91
Iran	89	97	82	85	77
Jordan	98	98	71	69	74
Malaysia	92	94	90	92	87
Mali	97	98	95	91	95
Morocco	79	98	51	62	47
Romania	84	89	57	62	47
Rwanda	99	100	98	96	98
South Africa	95	95	86	89	85
Serbia	86	89	79	88	72
Thailand	96	96	98	98	98
Trinidad & Tobago	89	99	71	68	72
Turkey	94	93	86	85	86
Ukraine	60	92	67	69	65
Uruguay	88	94	78	84	77
Vietnam	99	99	94	99	93
Zambia	90	96	72	78	70

Source: World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File v.20090901, 2009

This curvilinear pattern of responses, with most people identifying themselves with their nation, and fewer seeing themselves as part of their local community or as global citizens, occurred across all OECD countries for which data were available (with the exception of Spain). In making comparisons between Australia and other countries beyond the OECD, the percentages endorsing a view of themselves as world citizens were similar in India (76 per cent), but higher in China (86 per cent), Malaysia (90 per cent) and Vietnam (94 per cent).

### **School completers tend to be more likely to see themselves as global citizens**

While it was not a consistent pattern across all nations, in many countries school completion tends to be associated with higher percentages that see themselves as global citizens. As can be seen from the final two columns of Table 24, this was the case in Australia, and in Germany and Sweden there was an even larger percentage point difference between school completers and non-completers, although more commonly the margin was smaller, as in Poland where it was about ten percentage points. However, in a number of other OECD countries (including Chile, Finland, Italy and Japan), school completion appears to have had very little or no impact on the percentages of young adults who think of themselves as citizens of the world.

## **Case study**

### **Jolie: 20 years, full-time tertiary student**

Jolie attended primary school in a rural area before moving to a regional public high school interstate. A highly capable student, she completed Year 12 and gained entry to a Bachelor of Medicine at a major university. An Access Scholarship paid some of her tuition fees and Jolie has since received a more substantial annual scholarship for rural and regional students.

Jolie received strong moral support from her parents in pursuing her education. Though her father did not complete school initially, he returned to study at night school later in life and finished his Year 12 equivalent. At school, Jolie worked part-time as a waitress.

From the age of 17, she was supporting herself financially, working 45 hours per week for her first two years at university. In part this was to fund travel.

Jolie moved to northern Australia for the third year of her medicine degree, dedicated to research, where she began work on a thesis in young Indigenous women's sexual health. She is a member of a multicultural youth group and Studio 34, a collaborative program using media and music to promote health messages, particularly among Indigenous children in rural areas:

'I see myself as part of the Australian community in the sense that I'm a student, I'm learning and I'm going to contribute back to society one day. I do my best to participate in things like climate change youth organisations and different parts of the community where I can. [As for] the international community, I'm getting a growing sense that the world is becoming more globalised and I will contribute to the international community eventually. I would like to be an administrator for *Medicins Sans Frontières*'.

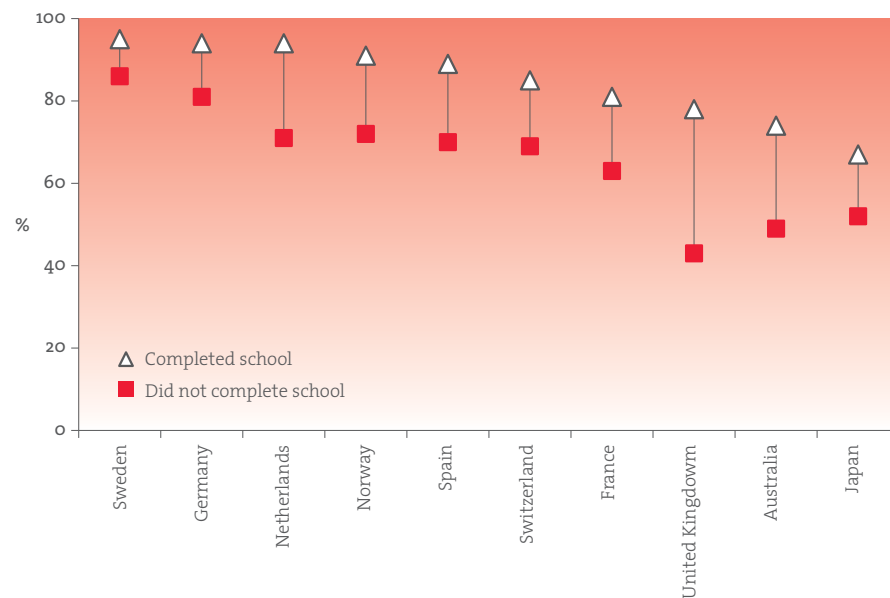
# Views about national priorities

**School completers are more likely to say that living in a democratic country is very important**

As noted with reference to Table 24, in each country the majority of young adults recognised themselves as a part of their nation state. Figure 37 is based on responses to another question (which was not asked in all countries): 'How important is it to you to live in a country that is governed democratically?' Figure 37 reveals that in each OECD country for which data are available school completers were more likely than non-completers to say that living in a democracy was very important to them. This was the response of more than nine in ten of those young adults who had finished secondary school in Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway. In Australia, three quarters of school completers held that view, compared to about half of those who had not completed their schooling.

**Figure 37**

Per cent of 18 to 29 year-olds who say that living in a democratic country is very important, by school completion, selected OECD countries, 2005–2007 (%)



Source: World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File v.20090901, 2009

*“[In terms of national priorities, I would nominate] the high level of economic growth to some extent, but probably the community having a bit more say. Especially with the [recent] election, I’m a bit sick of everyone throwing promises around and nothing happening. So having my own say I guess.”*

Georgie, 19 years

04

**Attitudes and values of young Australians**

### **Half of young adults in Australia think that economic growth should be one of the main aims over the next ten years**

The results presented in Table 25 are derived from two questions on the survey. The first set of four columns shows the percentage breakdown of responses to a question in which respondents were asked to nominate, from a list of four, what they considered to be the most important aim for their country for the next 10 years.

In Australia, a high level of economic growth was regarded as the most important priority, cited by 50 per cent of respondents, while 37 per cent believed that the main aim should be seeing that people have more say about how things are done at their jobs and in their communities. This ordering of priorities was similar in many other OECD countries such as Chile, Mexico, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, and the United States (although the difference found in the United States was the relatively high 20 per cent who believed that a strong defence force should be the main aim). Conversely, in several other OECD countries economic growth was not regarded as the highest priority; two thirds of respondents in Finland, half in France and in the United Kingdom, and slightly fewer in Spain and Switzerland indicated that they thought the main national goal should be to give people more say in their jobs and communities.

Japan and Switzerland were among the few countries in which a substantial percentage of respondents (16 per cent) ranked trying to beautify their country as being the most important national goal that ought to be pursued. China and India were two non-OECD countries in which this view was held by similar percentages of respondents (21 per cent and 17 per cent respectively).

In many of the less wealthy countries that are not OECD members, the goal of achieving a high level of economic growth was very clearly seen as the most important aim, for example, by over 70 per cent in Egypt and Ethiopia, and by over 80 per cent in Indonesia.

### **There is strong support for the environment, with three quarters of young adults in Australia saying that protecting the environment should have priority over economic growth**

Respondents also had the opportunity to select one of two statements about the environment and economic growth as being closer to their own point of view:

- > Protecting the environment should be given priority, even if it causes slower economic growth and some loss of jobs; or
- > Economic growth and creating jobs should be the top priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent.

The second set of columns in Table 25 records the relative weight accorded to each (as well as an additional category of 'other answer', which diluted responses in a few countries). Three quarters of young Australians were of the opinion that protecting the environment should have priority over economic growth. A similarly high proportion of respondents endorsed this view in Canada, New Zealand, Norway and Spain, with the highest (83 per cent) being in Switzerland. In most of the remaining OECD countries, this difference was not as sharp, with the percentage supporting the environment slightly greater than that favouring economic growth. The exceptions, where a small majority supported economic growth as a priority even at the expense of the environment, were Germany, the Netherlands and Poland, while opinion was almost equally divided in the United States.



**Table 25**

Opinions about national goals, the economy and the environment, various countries, 18 to 29 year-olds, 2005–2007 (%)

	MOST IMPORTANT AIM FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS SHOULD BE...				PRIORITY SHOULD BE...		
	A high level of economic growth	Strong defence forces	People have more say about things at their jobs and in their communities	Trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful	Protecting environment	Economic growth and creating jobs	Other answer
<b>OECD countries</b>							
Australia	50	7	37	6	74	27	0
Canada	43	4	42	11	74	19	7
Chile	56	8	31	5	71	28	2
Finland	19	7	67	6	70	29	1
France	34	6	49	11	54	43	4
Germany	62	3	30	5	39	51	10
Italy	60	4	31	5	61	31	7
Japan	41	9	34	16	55	29	16
Mexico	55	6	32	8	60	37	3
Netherlands	49	4	40	7	45	50	5
New Zealand	48	5	35	11	72	28	0
Norway	38	6	51	5	75	24	1
Poland	64	4	31	0	45	52	4
Slovenia	51	4	39	6	54	38	8
Spain	41	9	40	9	73	24	4
Sweden	59	1	35	5	62	36	2
Switzerland	34	8	42	16	83	13	4
Turkey	65	13	13	10	57	43	0
United Kingdom	30	12	52	5	57	42	2
United States	53	20	23	5	53	48	0
<b>Other countries</b>							
Argentina	64	8	23	5	73	24	3
Brazil	55	11	27	7	63	31	6
Bulgaria	74	3	18	6	47	48	5
China	47	23	9	21	67	28	5
Cyprus	57	20	17	6	63	34	3
Egypt	72	13	11	4	45	47	8
Ethiopia	73	12	11	5	22	79	0
Georgia	66	22	10	3	60	38	3
Ghana	69	14	12	5	47	53	1
India	62	12	10	17	52	38	10
Indonesia	83	6	8	3	36	25	40
Iran	59	12	22	7	46	52	1
Jordan	68	21	6	6	53	47	0
Malaysia	67	17	11	6	48	39	13
Mali	67	18	9	7	50	46	4
Morocco	66	12	14	9	54	28	18
Peru	62	5	29	5	68	30	2
Romania	76	5	11	8	53	45	2
Russia	74	10	14	2	47	49	5
Rwanda	27	43	18	13	58	41	0
South Africa	58	11	23	8	26	73	2
Serbia	77	7	12	5	51	39	10
Taiwan	65	9	9	17	55	43	3
Thailand	65	23	9	2	54	41	5
Trinidad & Tobago	50	8	33	9	58	41	1
Ukraine	79	6	14	2	48	51	1
Uruguay	70	3	22	5	50	49	1
Vietnam	72	10	9	8	59	25	16
Zambia	69	12	16	4	36	63	1

Source: World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File v.20090901, 2009

# Participating in the community

About two thirds of young Australians are active participants in voluntary community organisations

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*“I guess I had been brought up in a family where it was always just wanting to give back to the community. [At my school] there were a lot of other people there working hard, there were people who had started up their own charities and people travelling to Africa, so you were always around inspiring people who were working in that area... I was interested in staying in those community-based projects.”* Eliza, 22 years

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Survey respondents were presented with an extensive list of types of voluntary organisations (including sport or recreational; humanitarian or charitable; political; environmental; art, music or educational; church or religious), and asked to indicate whether they were an active member, an inactive member, or did not belong to each of these types of organisations. Summing responses across these categories of organisations, Table 26 records, for each country, the breakdown of the percentage of respondents aged 18 to 29 years who reported that they were an active member of at least one such organisation; the percentage who, although they were not active members of any, were an inactive member of at least one organisation; and the remaining percentage who were not members of any such organisations.

In Australia, nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of young people said they were active members of at least one voluntary organisation, and another 17 per cent were inactive members of an organisation, leaving 20 per cent (one in five) who indicated that they did not participate at all. This pattern of participation among young people in Australia matches that found in several other OECD nations, including the Netherlands, the United States, and Mexico. The United Kingdom and Sweden also have similar levels of active membership, around 60 per cent, although non-membership was much lower in Sweden (6 per cent) and higher in the UK (29 per cent).

By comparison with other OECD countries, the level of participation in voluntary organisations in Australia ranks a little below Canada and Switzerland. However it is higher than in countries such as Germany and Italy, where about half of those under 30 years of age reported that they were active members of organisations, and substantially higher than in France (with active membership of 37 per cent), Poland (31 per cent) and Spain (21 per cent).

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*“I was volunteering with City Council... I’m still involved with the church and I’ve been involved with some social justice programs with them around child trafficking... I’ve been teaming up not only with the church but also with a charity called Adra. It’s something that I’ve taken probably right from the first moment I set foot in primary school. Every week I go to church and coordinate a young kids group which I find really rewarding... The [personal cost of all the voluntary work] is kind of outweighed by the fact that what may cost me \$5 or ten minutes of my time can mean the world to somebody else.”* Josh, 23 years

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It is also of interest to consider these data about Australian young people not only in comparison with OECD nations, but in the wider international context, perhaps especially in relation to other countries within our region. For instance, the pattern of responses for Australia is similar to that found in Indonesia (with active membership of 59 per cent, non-active membership of 24 per cent, and non-membership of 16 per cent), and not greatly different to that for India (with figures of 49 per cent, 29 per cent and 22 per cent respectively). Participation levels were lower in China (and also in Japan), where about half the population of young adults were not members of any voluntary organisations. Amongst the countries in which the lowest levels of participation were recorded were Turkey within the OECD, and, elsewhere, Egypt, Bulgaria and Jordan.

Another survey question asked respondents to say whether they had taken part in various kinds of political activity (namely signing a petition, joining a boycott, attending a peaceful demonstration, or some other activity); the final column of Table 26 shows the percentages who indicated that they had done so. There are two caveats to note concerning these data. One is that reliability of responses may vary due to differences in political regimes. The second is that these responses may be subject to greater volatility than responses to participation in community organisations, due to changes over time in political regimes. Nevertheless, as might be expected, there is a generally strong positive association between levels of participation in voluntary organisations and taking part in some kind of political action. For example, about eight in ten young Australians said that they were members of voluntary organisations and the same proportion had engaged in political action. This latter figure is higher than in the United Kingdom (where the proportion was five in ten), and the United States (where it was six in ten).

The OECD countries in which the percentages of young people reporting that they had participated in a political activity were highest include, apart from Australia, Canada (70 per cent), France (72 per cent) and Norway (73 per cent), while it was the highest of all in Sweden (92 per cent). Within the OECD, low levels of political activity were recorded in Turkey (15 per cent) and in Mexico and Japan (34 per cent in each case), while outside of the OECD there were low percentages who said they had taken political action in Asian countries such as Malaysia (14 per cent), Taiwan (13 per cent) and Vietnam (10 per cent).

**Table 26**  
Participation in community organisations and in political activity, various countries, 18 to 29 year-olds, 2005–2007 (%)

	PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS				Taken political action %
	Active member	Inactive member	Not a member	TOTAL %	
OECD countries					
Australia	63	17	20	100	83
Canada	75	9	16	100	70
Chile	49	12	39	100	48
Finland	48	45	7	100	53
France	37	15	48	100	72
Germany	48	17	35	100	53
Italy	49	16	35	100	65
Japan	28	18	55	100	34
Mexico	62	18	19	100	34
Netherlands	66	14	20	100	44
Norway	56	29	15	100	73
Poland	31	14	55	100	30
Slovenia	56	22	22	100	50
Spain	21	14	65	100	47
Sweden	61	33	6	100	92
Switzerland	71	22	7	100	71
Turkey	6	6	88	100	15
United Kingdom	62	8	29	100	54
United States	58	24	18	100	60
Other countries					
Argentina	30	19	51	100	33
Brazil	63	21	16	100	57
Bulgaria	8	9	83	100	14
China	31	21	48	100	18
Colombia	34	23	43	100	20
Cyprus	41	25	35	100	55
Egypt	4	8	89	100	9
Ethiopia	46	43	11	100	50
Georgia	6	7	87	100	21
Ghana	80	16	4	100	15
India	49	29	22	100	39
Indonesia	59	24	16	100	33
Iran	46	19	35	100	na
Jordan	15	0	85	100	9
Malaysia	31	30	39	100	14
Mali	63	21	17	100	39
Morocco	19	13	68	100	26
Peru	47	12	42	100	39
Romania	11	9	81	100	10
Russia	22	17	61	100	16
Rwanda	68	22	10	100	23
South Africa	61	30	9	100	17
Serbia	20	30	51	100	41
Taiwan	18	24	59	100	13
Thailand	38	12	49	100	21
Trinidad & Tobago	61	21	17	100	30
Ukraine	22	27	51	100	28
Uruguay	31	10	59	100	26
Vietnam	52	13	35	100	10
Zambia	77	21	2	100	34

Source: World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File v.20090901, 2009

### School completers are more likely to be actively engaged in community organisations

There is very clear and consistent evidence in Table 27 (and in Figure 38) that school completion increases the likelihood of community engagement, when participation in voluntary organisations is used as an indicator of the latter. Participation rates in community organisations are higher among young people who complete secondary school than among those who do not complete their schooling. In Australia, almost two thirds (65 per cent) of school completers who were aged less than 30 said they were active members of a voluntary organisation, compared with half (50 per cent) of the non-completers, and the proportion who were not members of any organisation was twice as high among school non-completers (38 per cent) as completers (18 per cent).

Across a majority of countries listed in the table the active participation rate was at least 10 percentage points higher for school completers than non-completers. This was the case in OECD countries as varied as France (where the figures were 44 per cent and 31 per cent respectively), and Mexico (68 per cent compared with 58 per cent). In some OECD member countries the gap was even wider, as much as 20 percentage points in Germany (64 per cent compared to 41 per cent), and 30 percentage points in the United Kingdom (78 per cent compared with 44 per cent).

The same pattern occurred in non-OECD countries, with differences between school completers and non-completers in the rate of participation as active members of organisations generally at least 10 percentage points (Argentina and China, for instance), ranging up to 20 percentage points in others (such as Brazil and Vietnam), and as high as 30 percentage points in a few (for example, India and Morocco).

Young adults who had not finished their schooling were not only less likely to be active members of community organisations; they were less likely to belong to such organisations at all, even as inactive members. The percentages that did not belong to any organisation were higher among school non-completers, and lower among school completers, across almost all countries.

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*“I wasn’t involved at the beginning but now I’m the treasurer of [Raising Dust]. The model was originally based on young farmers, because there’s nothing like that here. It’s a group for 18–40 we say. Pretty much what we do is organise events and things, we have a major event every year and a few smaller ones as well as catch ups every two months to try and create networks for people who have moved back to the area or moved to the area and provide them with social opportunities that they mightn’t otherwise get. I’ve been the treasurer for two years now.”* Jessica, 24 years

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**Table 27**

Participation in community organisations in various countries, by school completion, 18 to 29 year-olds, 2005–2007 (%)

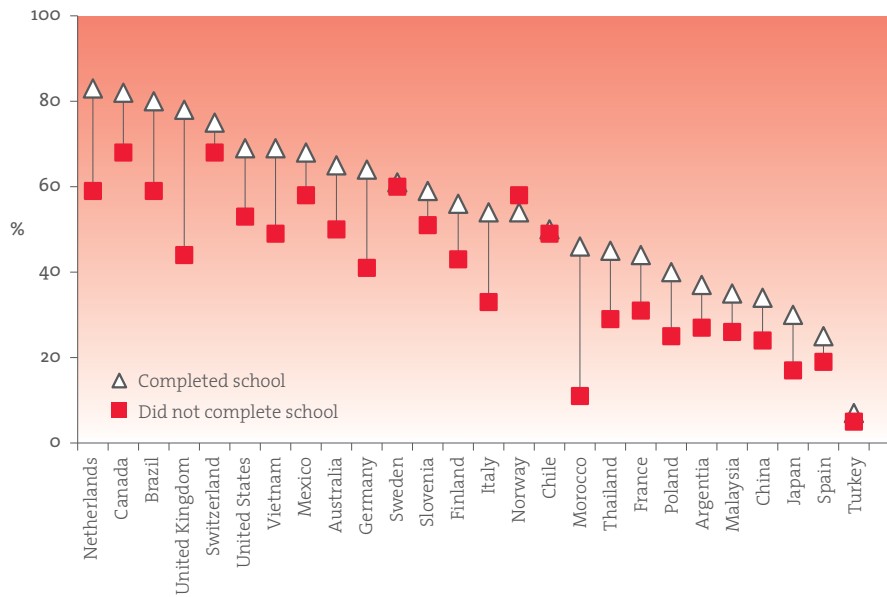
	COMPLETED SCHOOL			DID NOT COMPLETE SCHOOL		
	Participation in community organisations			Participation in community organisations		
	Active member	Inactive member	Not a member	Active member	Inactive member	Not a member
<b>OECD countries</b>						
Australia	65	18	18	50	11	38
Canada	82	10	9	68	8	24
Chile	50	10	40	49	14	38
Finland	56	39	5	43	49	8
France	44	17	39	31	13	56
Germany	64	16	20	41	18	41
Italy	54	17	29	33	13	53
Japan	30	16	54	17	27	57
Mexico	68	15	17	58	21	22
Netherlands	83	7	9	59	17	24
Norway	54	28	18	58	31	10
Poland	40	12	48	25	15	60
Slovenia	59	23	18	51	22	27
Spain	25	14	61	19	13	68
Sweden	61	33	6	60	32	8
Switzerland	75	20	5	68	24	9
Turkey	7	8	85	5	3	92
United Kingdom	78	6	16	44	11	45
United States	59	24	18	48	28	24
<b>Other countries</b>						
Argentina	37	23	40	27	18	55
Brazil	80	14	6	59	22	19
Bulgaria	10	9	80	6	8	86
China	34	23	43	24	19	57
Colombia	37	22	41	22	27	52
Cyprus	41	25	33	36	19	45
Egypt	6	11	83	1	2	98
Ethiopia	60	38	2	43	44	13
Georgia	6	8	85	7	1	92
Ghana	91	8	1	79	17	4
India	62	20	18	32	41	28
Indonesia	60	25	15	57	22	21
Iran	49	19	32	42	18	40
Japan	30	16	54	17	27	57
Jordan	17	0	83	12	0	88
Malaysia	35	30	35	26	30	44
Mali	72	20	7	61	21	19
Morocco	46	20	35	11	11	78
Peru	50	12	37	45	11	44
Romania	13	12	75	7	4	89
Russia	25	17	58	19	17	64
Rwanda	70	26	4	68	22	10
South Africa	68	27	5	57	32	11
Serbia	25	31	44	14	28	58
Taiwan	21	24	55	12	23	65
Thailand	45	12	43	29	12	58
Trinidad & Tobago	71	15	14	57	24	19
Ukraine	26	27	47	15	26	59
Uruguay	47	6	47	27	11	62
Vietnam	69	4	27	49	15	36
Zambia	82	18	0	75	22	3

Source: World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File v.20090901, 2009

Row percentages within categories of school completion may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

**Figure 38**

Active participation in community organisations among 18 to 29 year-olds in various countries, school completers and non-completers, 2005–2007 (%)



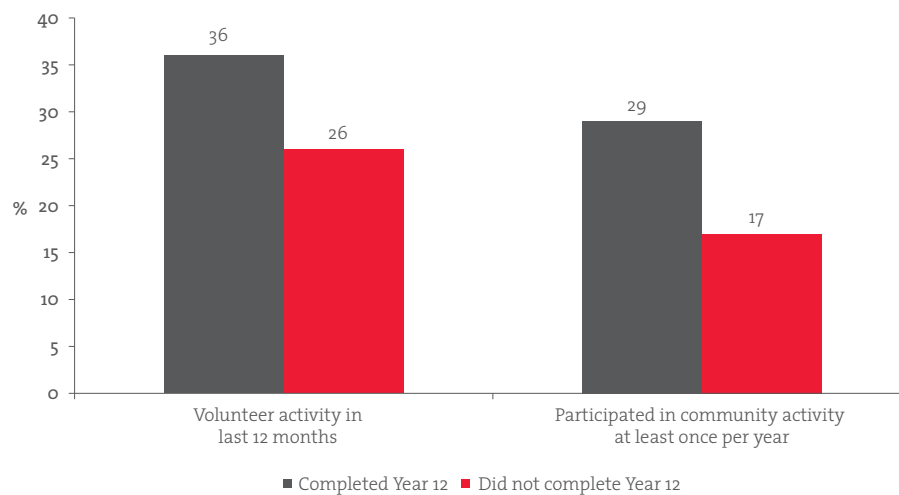
Source: World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File v.20090901, 2009

### Other evidence shows that volunteering and community engagement among young Australians is linked to school completion

Further evidence confirming the strong association between educational attainment, measured by school completion, and community engagement that is revealed by these analyses of the WVS can be found in the LSAY data. Figure 39 refers to the levels of participation in volunteer and community activities reported by 19 year-olds in Australia, according to whether or not respondents had completed Year 12. Higher percentages of school completers than non-completers—again by a margin of at least 10 percentage points—indicated that they had taken part in volunteering and community activities during the previous 12 months.

**Figure 39**

Participation in volunteer and community activities, by school completion, 19 year-olds in 2007, Australia (%)



Source: Derived from 2003 cohort of LSAY

# Being confident individuals

Among the goals of schooling, as they are detailed in the Melbourne Declaration, is that it should promote, in all students, a sense of optimism about their lives and the future. Self-efficacy is a concept that, in the psychology literature, refers to an individual's overall belief that they can take actions to produce desired and intended outcomes; in other words, that they have the capacity to influence events that affect their lives. It is believed that ideas of self-efficacy affect social interactions in many ways, and that fostering the development of self-efficacy is important because it can lead to a more productive and happy life.

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*“At my school there are a lot of options open to me which is I think is a good thing, it makes me very ambitious... They help us access whatever we want to do, they really do their best to get us to where we want to be.”* Haneke, 18 years

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One question in the WVS that explores this sense of self-efficacy required survey respondents to say how much freedom of choice and control they felt over the way their life turns out. Responses on a scale of 1 (no choice) to 10 (a great deal of choice) can be categorised into ‘little or none’, ‘some’ and ‘a lot’, and these results are presented in Table 28, for all persons and separately for males and females.

Table 28 shows considerable variation between nations when looking at the overall percentages of young adults who expressed a high level of confidence that they have choices in how their lives turn out. Such opinions, it can be assumed, are the product of a complex mix of cultural, social, economic and political influences, both historical and contemporary. For instance, perhaps as a reflection of high youth unemployment rates, fewer young people held that view in France (37 per cent), the Netherlands (32 per cent), and Japan (28 per cent) whereas these figures were much higher in Mexico (79 per cent) and Finland (69 per cent).

Beyond the OECD, other countries in which there were high percentages (around 60 per cent) of young people who saw themselves as having a great deal of control and choice in their lives included Argentina, Brazil and Columbia, whereas Bulgaria, Egypt and India were at the opposite end of the spectrum.

Gender differences within some countries are also evident in Table 28, although the pattern across countries was mixed. Within the OECD, reported levels of self-efficacy were higher among males than females in a few countries, including Australia, Canada, Chile and France; the reverse was the case most markedly in the United States, and also in Sweden and Switzerland. However for the remaining OECD countries these differences according to gender were often very small. In the majority of non-OECD countries, it was males who were more likely than females to believe that they had a great deal of choice and control over their lives, by a margin of at least ten percentage points in China, Egypt, and Morocco, and more than 20 points in Jordan.

## 04 Attitudes and values of young Australians



**Table 28**

Individuals' perceptions of their level of choice and control over their lives, by gender, various countries, 15 to 29 year-olds, 2005–2007 (row % within categories)

	MALES			FEMALES			PERSONS		
	Choice and control over life			Choice and control over life			Choice and control over life		
	Little or none	Some	A lot	Little or none	Some	A lot	Little or none	Some	A lot
<b>OECD countries</b>									
Australia	4	33	63	2	46	53	2	41	56
Canada	1	34	65	2	39	59	2	37	62
Chile	2	32	66	2	42	57	2	37	61
Finland	2	28	70	2	31	68	2	30	69
France	4	54	41	8	60	33	6	57	37
Germany	4	48	48	4	50	46	4	49	47
Italy	3	52	45	2	53	45	3	52	45
Japan	8	70	22	6	69	25	7	69	24
Mexico	2	18	80	4	18	78	3	18	79
Netherlands	4	62	34	8	60	32	6	61	33
Norway	1	32	67	1	31	68	1	32	67
Poland	7	47	46	3	47	50	5	47	48
Slovenia	1	27	72	4	24	71	3	26	72
Spain	1	58	42	2	57	41	2	57	41
Sweden	0	38	62	0	32	68	0	35	65
Switzerland	2	38	60	1	34	65	1	36	63
Turkey	7	38	54	10	34	56	9	36	55
United Kingdom	3	49	48	3	46	51	3	47	49
United States	1	52	47	0	35	65	0	44	56
<b>Other countries</b>									
Argentina	2	42	56	1	39	60	2	41	58
Brazil	5	36	59	3	38	59	4	37	59
Bulgaria	9	59	32	13	66	21	11	63	26
China	4	35	61	8	41	51	6	39	55
Colombia	6	24	69	7	30	64	7	27	67
Cyprus	5	46	49	5	35	60	5	40	55
Egypt	11	54	35	15	62	23	13	59	28
Ethiopia	11	65	24	15	61	24	13	63	24
Georgia	6	46	47	7	58	36	7	52	41
Ghana	11	33	56	11	41	48	11	37	52
Hong Kong	10	64	26	4	75	21	7	69	24
India	34	38	29	31	46	23	33	41	26
Indonesia	4	40	56	6	41	54	5	41	55
Iran	7	47	46	7	49	44	7	48	45
Iraq	24	50	26	29	51	21	26	50	23
Jordan	7	26	67	9	47	44	8	36	56
Malaysia	3	51	46	3	48	49	3	49	48
Mali	14	53	33	11	53	35	12	53	34
Morocco	19	56	24	23	63	14	21	60	19
Peru	4	48	48	9	51	40	6	50	44
Romania	6	32	62	3	31	65	5	32	64
Russia	4	31	65	7	33	60	5	32	62
Rwanda	4	65	31	5	64	31	5	64	31
South Africa	7	38	55	6	31	63	7	35	59
Serbia	3	50	47	5	51	45	4	50	46
Taiwan	5	45	50	4	34	62	4	40	56
Thailand	1	43	56	7	46	48	4	44	52
Trinidad & Tobago	3	39	59	1	37	62	2	38	60
Ukraine	5	57	38	8	60	32	7	59	35
Uruguay	1	34	65	3	43	54	2	39	59
Vietnam	3	46	50	8	49	43	5	48	47
Zambia	8	43	49	9	44	47	8	44	48

Source: World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File v.20090901, 2009

School completion increases an individual's sense of self-efficacy

There was a contrast in perceptions of self-efficacy depending on whether or not respondents had completed secondary school. Almost invariably, across most countries, it was school completers who were more likely to feel that they had a great deal of control over their lives compared with young adults who had not finished school. To illustrate and highlight the different pattern of responses for the two groups, the percentages of school completers and non-completers reporting that they thought they had a lot of choice and control over their lives, for a number of countries listed in the table, are charted in Figure 40 (see Appendix Table A3 for figures).

*“Although [my parents] were influences, I always felt that I could choose. I chose not to go to [residential] college and I chose to travel, I chose to go to university but my parents really had no say in what I was studying, nor did anyone else. There’s restrictions with money, that’s probably the only thing where freedom is stunted, but I think that’s student life.”*

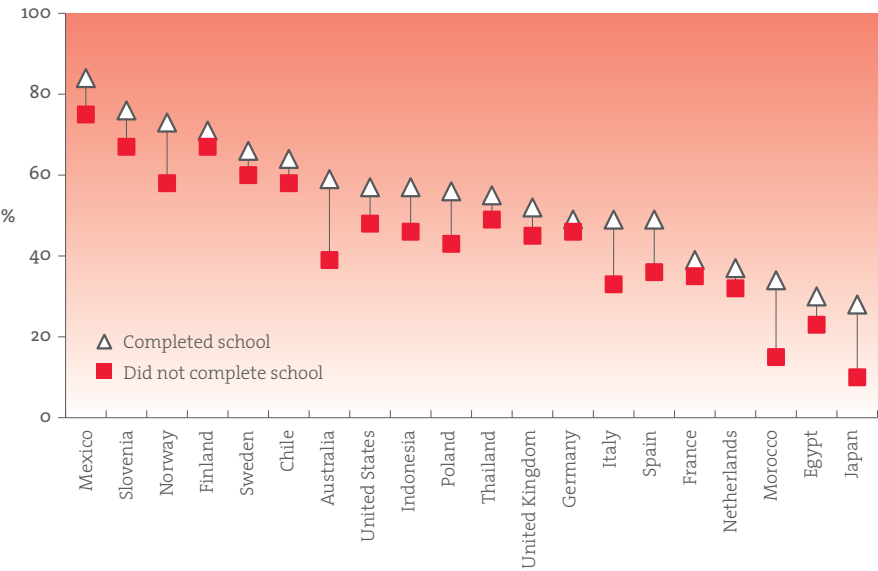
Georgie, 19 years

The countries in which the gaps in responses were largest were Japan and Morocco, with levels of perceived self-efficacy twice as high among school completers than non-completers (28 per cent compared with 10 per cent in Japan, and 34 per cent compared with 15 per cent in Morocco). There was also a considerable gap of 20 percentage points in Australia, which was more than in comparable OECD countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, where the margin was less than 10 percentage points.

Completing secondary schooling has a positive impact in developing the capacities for citizenship

A consistent message to emerge from these various analyses, exploring some of the broader outcomes of education, is the positive impact of completing secondary schooling. Recognition is growing, in Australia and elsewhere, that the purpose of education is not confined to meeting the needs of the economy. Attention is equally focussed on the role of education in building the common good, with the latter being measured in terms of developing the capacities for citizenship, for community engagement, and for intercultural understanding

**Figure 40**  
Individuals’ perceptions of having a high level of choice and control over their lives, 18 to 29 year-olds in various countries, school completers and non-completers, 2005–2007 (%)



Source: World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File v.20090901, 2009  
See also Appendix Table A3.

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**Table A1**  
 Proportion of young adult males and females aged 20 to 24 years not in full-time education who are in part-time work, unemployed, or not in the labour force, May, 1990–2010 (%)

	IN PART-TIME WORK			UNEMPLOYED			NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
May	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1990	4.2	9.7	6.9	8.4	6.0	7.2	3.9	15.5	9.6
1991	5.0	9.5	7.2	12.8	9.2	11.0	4.0	15.8	9.9
1992	5.8	12.3	9.1	15.0	8.9	12.0	3.9	15.4	9.6
1993	6.7	12.4	9.5	14.2	8.3	11.3	4.3	16.9	10.5
1994	6.5	12.9	9.7	12.6	7.9	10.3	5.4	15.0	10.2
1995	6.5	13.0	9.7	9.9	7.5	8.7	4.6	15.1	9.8
1996	6.3	13.5	9.8	9.7	7.1	8.4	4.5	14.8	9.6
1997	7.3	14.3	10.8	12.0	8.8	10.4	5.0	14.2	9.6
1998	8.3	12.6	10.4	10.0	7.1	8.5	5.2	14.1	9.6
1999	8.0	14.6	11.3	7.9	6.7	7.3	5.8	13.9	9.8
2000	7.0	13.0	10.0	7.7	5.6	6.7	4.8	12.2	8.5
2001	7.7	13.7	10.7	8.6	6.2	7.4	4.9	12.1	8.5
2002	7.9	12.6	10.2	7.4	4.5	6.0	4.5	13.6	9.0
2003	9.1	13.0	11.0	7.3	5.3	6.3	5.6	12.6	9.1
2004	9.4	14.5	11.9	5.6	4.1	4.9	6.2	13.5	9.8
2005	8.8	13.8	11.3	5.4	4.1	4.8	4.9	11.9	8.3
2006	8.0	13.1	10.5	5.5	3.1	4.3	5.4	11.8	8.5
2007	7.3	13.6	10.4	3.9	3.1	3.5	5.2	12.0	8.5
2008	7.3	12.6	9.9	4.9	2.8	3.9	4.8	10.6	7.7
2009	10.3	13.2	11.7	6.5	3.6	5.1	5.5	11.6	8.5
2010	9.0	12.9	10.9	5.9	3.5	4.7	5.6	11.3	8.4

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia (2010) (data cube LM3)

# Appendix Tables

**Table A2**Attainment of at least upper secondary education<sup>1</sup> in OECD countries by gender, population aged 25–34 and 25–64, 2007 (%)

	25 to 64		25 to 34	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Australia	72	64	80	83
Austria	86	74	89	84
Belgium	68	68	80	83
Canada	86	88	90	93
Czech Republic	94	87	95	94
Denmark	77	74	84	86
Finland	78	83	88	92
France	70	67	82	84
Germany	87	81	86	84
Greece	59	61	70	80
Hungary	83	76	85	85
Iceland	66	62	66	72
Ireland	64	71	80	87
Italy	52	53	64	72
Korea	83	73	97	98
Luxembourg	69	62	76	78
Mexico	36	31	40	38
Netherlands	76	71	81	84
New Zealand	73	70	78	82
Norway	79	79	81	86
Poland	87	86	91	93
Portugal	25	30	37	52
Slovak Republic	91	83	94	94
Spain	50	51	60	70
Sweden	83	86	90	92
Switzerland	90	82	91	88
Turkey	33	23	44	31
United Kingdom	71	66	74	75
United States	87	89	85	89
<b>OECD AVERAGE</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>80</b>

Source: OECD 2009a

Stats Extracts: Education at a Glance 2009 OECD Indicators: Indicator A1

1. Excluding ISCED 3C short programmes



**Table A3**

Individuals' perceptions of their level of choice and control over their lives, by school completion, various countries, 18 to 29 year-olds, 2005–2007 (row % within categories of school completion)

	COMPLETED SCHOOL			DID NOT COMPLETE SCHOOL		
	Choice and control over life			Choice and control over life		
	Little or none	Some	A lot	Little or none	Some	A lot
<b>OECD countries</b>						
Australia	2	39	59	6	55	39
Canada	1	38	61	2	35	62
Chile	2	34	64	2	40	58
Finland	1	28	71	3	31	67
France	8	54	39	5	60	35
Germany	2	48	49	5	49	46
Italy	1	50	49	7	60	33
Japan	7	65	28	0	90	10
Mexico	1	15	84	5	20	75
Netherlands	11	52	37	4	64	32
Norway	0	27	73	3	39	58
Poland	3	41	56	6	51	43
Slovenia	3	22	76	3	30	67
Spain	1	50	49	2	62	36
Sweden	0	34	66	0	40	60
Switzerland	3	43	54	0	30	70
Turkey	8	40	52	10	30	59
United Kingdom	2	46	52	5	60	45
United States	0	43	57	0	52	48
<b>Other countries</b>						
Argentina	2	46	52	1	38	60
Brazil	4	35	61	4	38	59
Bulgaria	9	63	28	13	63	25
China	5	40	55	9	37	54
Colombia	6	27	67	9	24	67
Cyprus	5	40	56	10	40	49
Egypt	11	59	30	18	59	23
Ethiopia	7	54	39	14	64	21
Georgia	6	50	44	9	60	31
Ghana	6	45	49	11	36	53
India	29	44	27	39	37	25
Indonesia	4	39	57	7	47	46
Iran	5	49	45	8	47	45
Jordan	5	37	57	12	34	54
Malaysia	4	49	47	2	50	48
Mali	9	54	37	13	53	33
Moldova	2	32	66	4	51	45
Morocco	13	54	34	23	62	15
Peru	5	51	44	7	49	44
Romania	2	29	69	10	36	54
Russia	4	36	61	7	29	64
Rwanda	0	49	51	5	66	29
South Africa	3	33	63	8	35	56
Serbia	4	48	48	4	52	44
Taiwan	2	36	61	9	47	45
Thailand	3	42	55	5	46	49
Trinidad & Tobago	1	37	62	2	38	59
Ukraine	4	62	33	11	52	37
Uruguay	0	40	60	3	38	59
Vietnam	4	49	46	6	48	47
Zambia	7	38	55	8	46	46

Source: World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File v.20090901, 2009



**The Foundation for Young Australians**  
21–27 Somerset Place  
Melbourne Victoria 3000

GPO Box 239  
Melbourne Victoria 3001

**P** 03 9670 5436  
**F** 03 9670 2272

[www.fya.org.au](http://www.fya.org.au)