

Education outcomes of youth respondents



About Youth in Focus

Youth in Focus (YIF) is a study about young Australians – their experiences while growing up and aspirations for the future, their education and work choices, and their diverse transitions to adulthood.

YIF is a project combining administrative data with a longitudinal survey. The first wave of interviews took place in 2006, involving more than 4,000 18-year olds and their parents. The project will follow the young adults as they finish school, leave home, enter employment and form their own families.

The YIF Factsheets are a series of brief reports on the major outcomes and characteristics of Australian youth using the data collected in the course of the YIF survey.

Income-support history stratification

One of the important questions which YIF is designed to address is the relationship between outcomes of young people and the socio-economic experiences of their families while they were growing up. Nearly all YIF participants agreed to having their survey responses matched to government administrative records of family benefits and income support. For the young adults in the study, these records provide information about the timing, intensity, and duration of their families' use of government assistance.

We can categorize families' experiences in three broad groupings which turn out to be very informative about the young adult's current circumstances.

- A** The family of the young adult never received income support while the young adult was growing up (they may have received tax benefits/credits or child care subsidies for families with children).
- B** The family of the young adult received income support for more than 6 years while the young adult was growing up.
- C** The family of the young adult received some income support while the young adult was growing up, but for less than a total of 6 years.

The YIF factsheets report results separately for categories A, B and C.

While these factsheets provide descriptive analysis that can be used as a first step towards understanding the complex relationship between young people's outcomes and their exposure to the income-support system, at this stage it is not possible to draw conclusions about the causal nature of these relationships.



The educational choices of individuals are closely linked to a wide range of outcomes including employment and income, family formation, health status, and economic and social wellbeing generally. Since

education can play a role in economic and social mobility, it is important to assess whether the education system in Australia is effective in providing equal opportunities and experiences to young people from all economic backgrounds.

This factsheet provides a summary of the extensive range of data on the educational experience of young people in the Youth in Focus (YIF) survey focusing on youth's reports of their own educational outcomes. Factsheet No.2 presents information provided by parents about their children's educational experiences.

Exposure to income support is related to the amount of schooling completed by young people (Table 1). Wave 1 interviews were conducted in the late spring/early summer of 2006, by which time all of the interviewed young people had turned 18. More than 90 per cent of them had left school by the time of the interview. Among those, fully 85 per cent of young people in families with no history of income-support receipt had completed Year 12 before leaving school, while less than 60 per cent completed Year 12 from those families with the greatest reliance on the income-support system (category B).

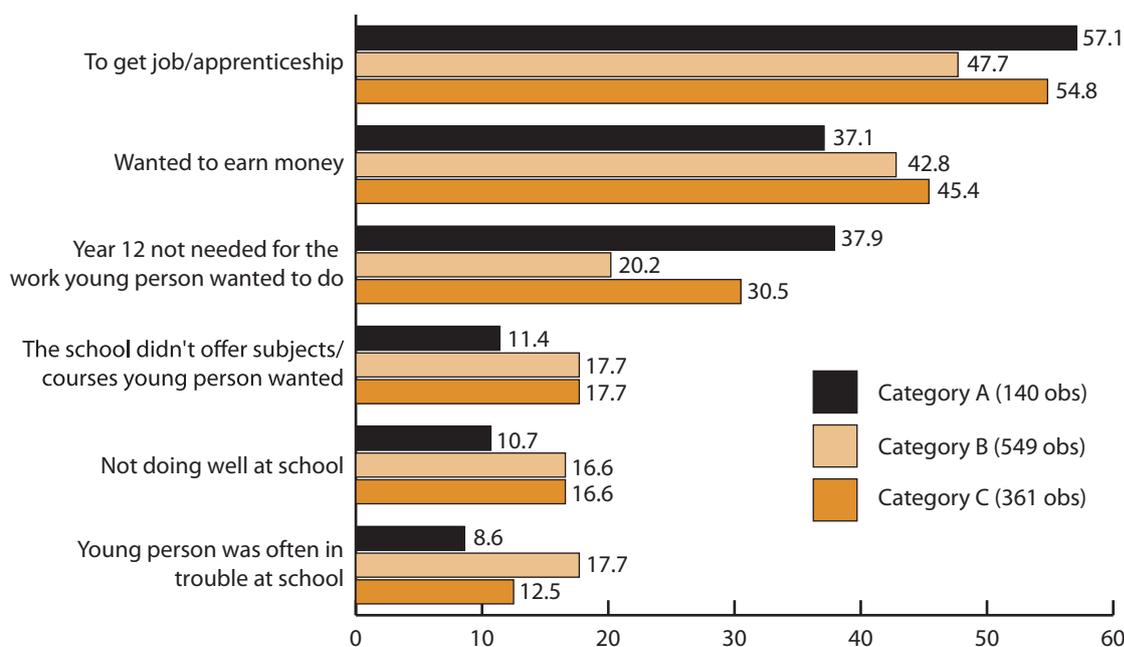
Table 1 Year of youth leaving school

	A	B	C
Total school leavers	938	1,359	1,426
Percentage of youth:			
Year 10 or lower	4.4	19.6	10.5
Year 11	6.9	14.1	11.1
Year 12 (did not complete the year)	3.5	6.8	3.6
Year 12 (completed the year)	85.0	59.5	74.6
Other	0.2	0.2	0.2

Early school leavers tend to leave school for work-related reasons, particularly those growing up in families which did not use the income-support system. Respondents who left school before completing Year 12 were asked about their reasons for making this decision. Figure 1 summarises the relative importance of "push" factors (i.e., poor academic performance, financial constraints, health reasons, dislike of school) versus "pull" factors (getting a job, the desire to earn money) in the decision to leave school before completing Year 12.

Getting a job or apprenticeship is the most important factor in young people's decisions to leave school early. Consistent with this, the second most important factor for early school leavers was their desire to earn money. Poor academic performance, schools not offering subjects youth wanted and being in trouble at school are much less prevalent in comparison.

Figure 1 Top reasons for leaving school before completing Year 12



The probability of receiving a formal school credential for the early school leavers does not vary across income-support categories. About a third of those who left school early received some certificate upon the completion of their studies (mostly TAFE certificate or certificate of completion awarded by the school).

Among those leaving school after Years 12 or 13, the probability of receiving a formal credential of completion is also very similar for young people in a range of economic circumstances (Table 2). However, the nature of that credential differs in important ways.

The disparity of school credentials across income-support history categories is especially evident in university entrance scores. While 81 per cent of youth in families which did not receive income support obtained a university entrance score, this was true of only 62 per cent of young people in families with a history of intensive income-support receipt. Moreover, among those who receive them, entry scores (Figure 2) are higher on average for young people in families with no history of income-support use. Just under two thirds (62 per cent) of youth in category A reported entry scores of 70 or higher. Amongst youth in category B less than half (47 per cent) reported having an entry score of 70 or above.

Thus, although all young people are equally likely to receive a credential upon completing school, the quality of this credential is linked to their families' past economic circumstances.

Intensive exposure to income support while growing up is associated with lower rates of participation in further education and, among those who pursue additional education, lower rates of university enrolment. The key post-school educational

Figure 2 University entrance scores

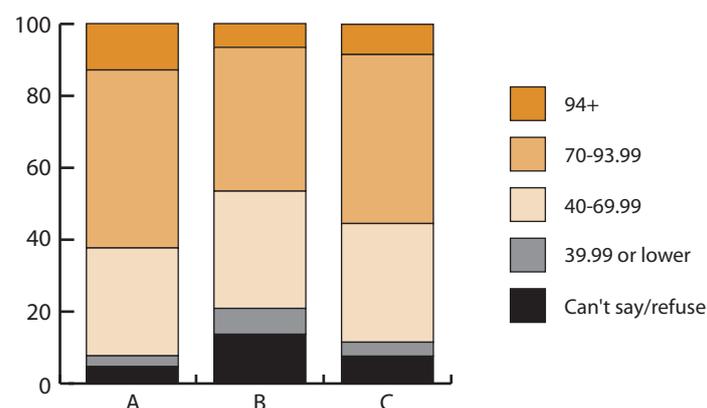


Table 2 Academic credentials received upon leaving school

	A	B	C
Total leaving school after Year 12 or 13:	798	810	1,065
Percentage studied for International Baccalaureate in the last year of school	1.63	0.49	0.85
Of those who did not study for IB:			
Percentage obtained Year 12 certificate	94.18	91.82	93.38
Of those who received Year 12 or IB:			
Percentage obtained a university entrance score	85.51	67.61	76.48

Table 3 Summary of educational outcomes of YIF youth respondents

	A	B	C
Total respondents	1,027	1,472	1,580
Percentage of youth who have:			
Left school	91.3	92.3	90.3
Of those left school: percentage in post-school education/training	70.2	48.1	61.2
Of those studying:			
Studying at TAFE	22.2	35.4	26.8
Studying at university	58.3	37.3	46.1

attainment outcomes among YIF youth respondents are summarised in Table 3. Averages for all respondents are consistent with Australia-wide indicators.

Post-school educational and training activities vary significantly for young people from families with different historical economic circumstances (see Table 4). The majority (70 per cent) of school leavers in families with no history of income-support use reported in wave 1 that they were currently undertaking a traineeship or an apprenticeship or studying for an educational qualification. Fully 53 per cent of these young people expect to receive a university degree upon the completion of their studies. Young people in families with a history of intensive reliance on income support are much less likely (48 per cent) to say that they are currently studying and – among those who are – much less likely to be studying for a university degree. Rather, they are relatively more likely to report that they are studying for a vocational qualification.

The current school enrolment rate in the YIF sample is largely independent of family income-support history. Of the less than one in ten youth still in school at the time of wave 1, around 90 per cent were enrolled in Year 12. Young people still in school at the time of the first YIF interview were much more likely to have repeated a year at school or been suspended than young people who had left school. Specifically, more than one quarter (26 per cent) of youth in category A and more than one half (51 per cent) of youth in category B who have not yet left school report that they have repeated a year. This is much higher than the proportion of school leavers who report ever having repeated a year at school (Table 5).

Table 5 also shows that **young people growing up in families heavily dependent on income support are more likely to have a host of bad school experiences** (suspensions, expulsions, etc.) This is confirmed by the parents’ reports presented in Factsheet No.2.

Youth who grow up in families that received income support attend more schools over the course of their schooling than do young people in families that did not receive income support (Figure 3). More than half (55 per cent) of young people from families with no interaction with the income-support system (category A) report attending two or fewer schools by age 18, while this is true of only slightly more than one third (35 per cent) of youth in families with histories of intensive income-support receipt (category B).

The performance of school leavers in their last year of school is correlated with the family income-support history. Table 6 shows that young people in families with a history of income-support receipt rate their own school performance lower than their colleagues from families with no history of income-support receipt. All respondents rate their performance in English higher than they do in mathematics.

Parental involvement in children’s education differs with economic circumstances (Figures 4a and 4b). Youth are much less likely to report that their parents read to them at night or were involved in helping them with their school work, choosing options, and preparing for exams if they grew up in families heavily reliant on income support.

Table 4 Post-school studies of all school leavers

	A	B	C
Total school leavers:	938	1,359	1,426
Percentage currently undertaking a traineeship/apprenticeship or studying for educational qualification	70.2	48.1	61.2
Of those studying percentages studying for:			
School certificate	0.3	1.5	0.6
Trade certificate, traineeship	15.0	19.9	20.9
TAFE certificate	13.7	25.9	18.3
TAFE certificate or diploma	8.5	9.5	8.5
University degree or diploma	58.3	37.3	46.1
Other qualification	3.9	5.0	5.5

Table 5 Youth’s schooling experience

	A	B	C
Total respondents still going to school:	89	113	154
Percentage ever repeated a year at school	25.84	51.33	42.86
Percentage ever suspended from school	8.99	23.89	17.53
Percentage ever expelled from school	1.12	0.88	1.95
Total school leavers:	938	1,359	1,426
Percentage ever repeated a year at school	4.05	13.02	8.84
Percentage ever suspended from school	12.47	31.05	18.80
Percentage ever expelled from school	0.75	5.37	2.45

Figure 3 Number of schools attended by youth

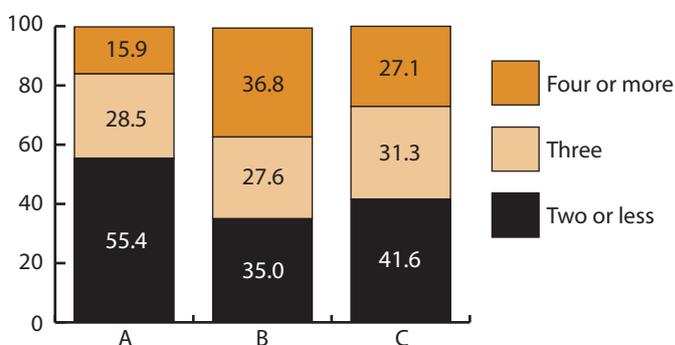


Figure 4a Frequency of parents reading to youth at night

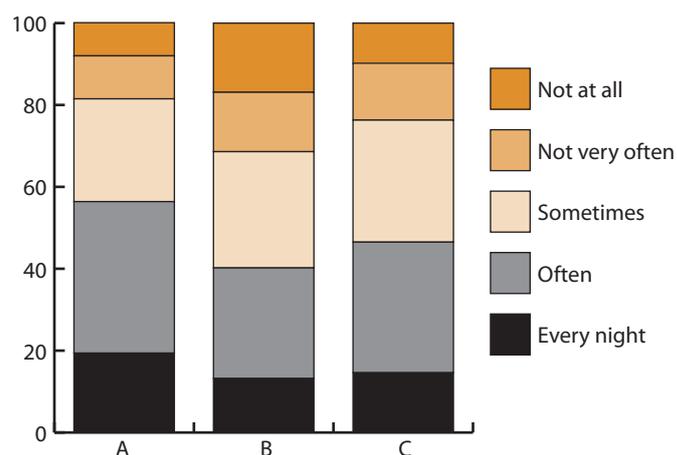
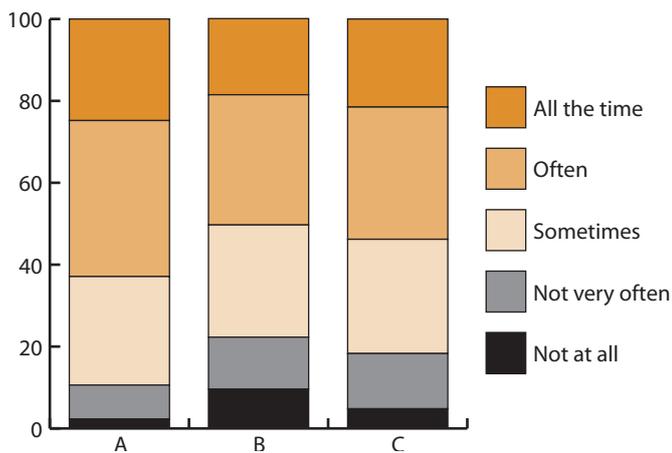


Figure 4b Frequency of parents helping youth with school work or preparing for exams



These young people are approximately twice as likely to report that their parents never read to them at night and four times as likely to report that their parents did not help them with school work compared to young people from families that never received income support.

Future plans of young people still in school differ depending upon the income-support history of their families. Specifically, while 63 per cent of category A youth still in school intend to go to university, this is true of only 40 per cent of youth in category B. This latter group are more likely to say that they intend to look for work or get a job after leaving school (18

Table 6 Youth's school performance in the last year of school

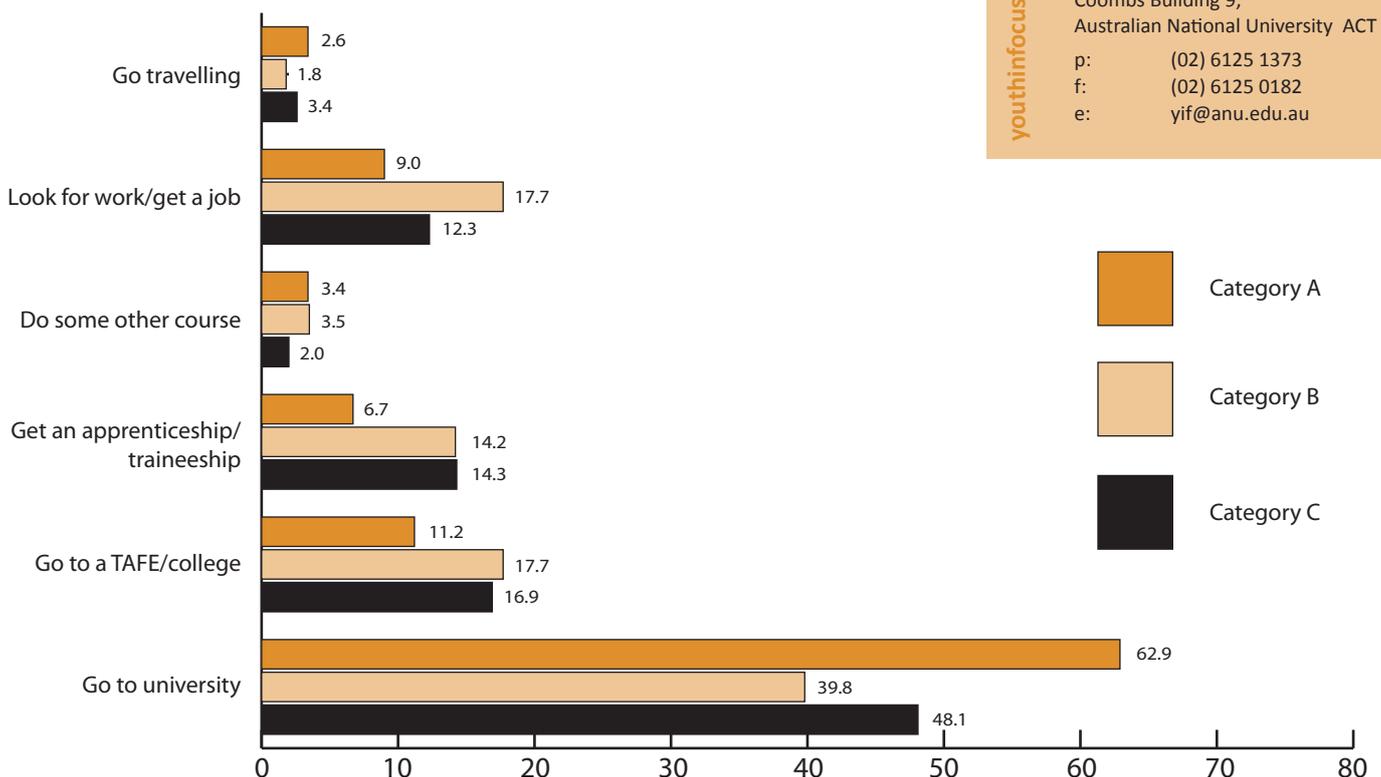
	A	B	C
Total school leavers	938	1,359	1,426
English:			
above average	54.3	40.1	44.6
average	40.1	50.6	48.0
below average	5.2	8.6	6.5
Mathematics (for those studied maths in the last year of school):			
above average	45.5	30.6	37.8
average	40.7	45.9	44.0
below average	13.7	23.0	17.6

versus 9 per cent) than their counterparts from families that have never received income support.

Future research questions

Taken together, the results suggest that it is important to investigate the ways in which economic disadvantage might flow from one generation to the next by limiting the educational attainment of youth who grow up in disadvantaged families. We intend to address how differences in resources, attitudes and schooling interact to produce such different educational outcomes for young people from different economic backgrounds.

Figure 5 Future plans of youth still in school



youthinfocus.anu.edu.au

Contact Information

Survey Manager, Youth in Focus
Economics Program,
Research School of Social Sciences (RSSS),
Coombs Building 9,
Australian National University ACT 0200
p: (02) 6125 1373
f: (02) 6125 0182
e: yif@anu.edu.au