

# Education outcomes of youth: parents' reports



## 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.

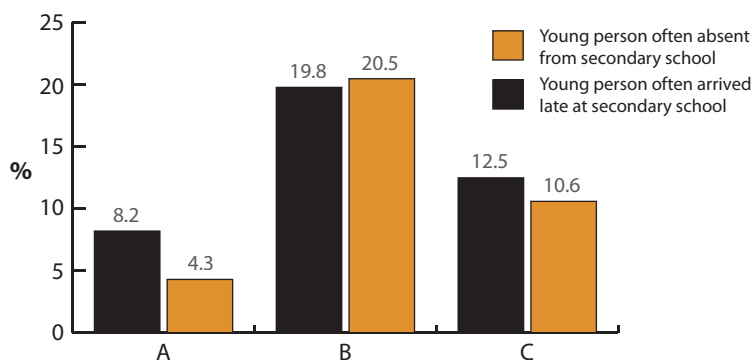


*The nature of a young person's educational experience can play a vital role in determining whether and how educational outcomes are achieved. Future life chances are greatly affected by educational outcomes and both are related to the economic circumstances in which a young person is raised. Understanding the role of these factors in social mobility is important.*

*The Youth in Focus (YIF) survey collected information on youth's attendance and performance at school, youth's participation in various educational programs and extra-curricular activities, and parents' involvement in youth's education. These outcomes – as reported by parents – are discussed in this Factsheet.*

**Young people who grow up in families heavily dependent on income support tend to have a worse overall school experience.** Regular attendance and being late for school are closely related to the family's experience with the income-support system (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1 Youth's school attendance**

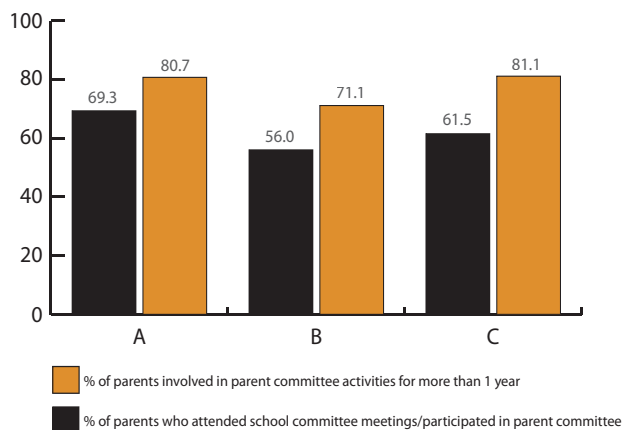


**The nature of the school experience also varies depending on a family's income-support history.** Specifically, young people growing up in families with intensive income-support histories are two and a half times as likely to have repeated a year in school or to have been suspended from school (see Table 1). Moreover, young people in income-support families (categories B and C) are much more likely to have been placed in remedial English or mathematics classes or programs for those

**Table 1 Youth's secondary school educational experience**

	A	B	C
Number of respondents	1,045	1,413	1,506
<b>Percentage of youth:</b>			
ever repeated a year at school	6.3	15.2	12.0
ever suspended from school	9.8	25.3	15.4
ever expelled from school	0.7	3.5	1.5
placed in a remedial English course	10.0	13.3	13.3
placed in a remedial mathematics course	4.8	8.1	7.0
placed in programs for students w. learning difficulties	7.6	14.0	9.9
placed in programs for gifted and talented	19.6	12.1	16.3

**Figure 2 Parental involvement in youth education**



with learning difficulties, and much less likely to have participated in gifted and talented classes.

**Participation in extra-curricular activities varies substantially across income-support history categories.**

Fully 85 per cent of category A parents report that their child participated in after-school or weekend activities during secondary school, in comparison with only 66 per cent of parents in category B. Table 2 provides information about the breadth of the activities undertaken by participants. While in many cases the proportions of youth participating in a particular activity are similar, in others – for example, music, tennis, and netball – children from families with a history of income-support receipt are much less likely to participate. As well as the type of activity, the number of activities differ. Youth from families with an income-support history participate in fewer activities than those from families with no history of income-support receipt.

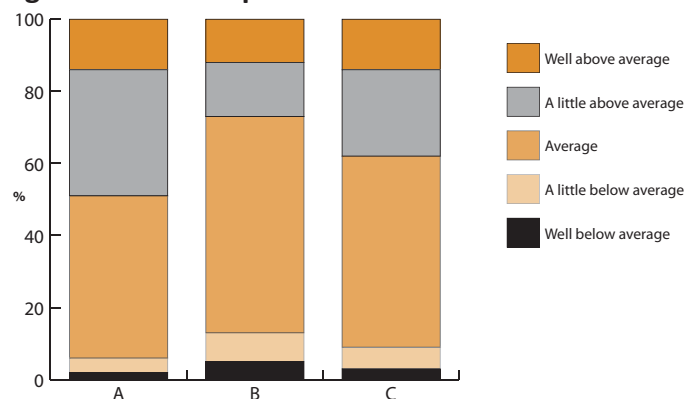
Parents with income-support histories report being *less involved in the parent committees* in their children’s schools (see Figure 2).

**Youth’s school performance is related to their families’ income-support receipt** (Figure 3). Parents with no history of income support (category A) report that their children performed somewhat better in school than do parents with an intensive history of income-support receipt (category B). These results are consistent with parents’ reports of how often youth received good marks at

**Table 2 Youth’s extra-curricular activities**

	A	B	C
Number of respondents	1,045	1,413	1,506
Youth participation in after-school/week-end activities during secondary school	84.7	65.8	75.9
<b>Types of activities:</b>			
Basketball	14.9	12.6	15.5
Football/Rugby/Soccer	37.9	38.3	41.5
Netball	23.6	13.9	18.1
Cricket	14.4	9.7	12.1
Swimming	11.5	8.4	11.0
Music	16.4	12.0	13.2
Dance	14.4	11.1	10.1
Tennis	10.7	5.4	8.8
Boxing/martial arts	1.7	4.2	3.0

**Figure 3 Youth’s performance at school**



secondary school.

**Risky behaviour appears to be much more prevalent among young people growing up on income support**

(see Table 3). More than one in five of category B parents report that their 18-year old has been in trouble with the police or attended juvenile court. This is a much higher incidence than among families that have never used income support, or even families which have a shorter history of income support. According to their parents, youth growing up in families which received income

**Table 3 Parental reports of risky behaviours**

	A	B	C
Number of respondents	1,045	1,413	1,506
<b>Percentage of youth who ever:</b>			
Got in trouble with police or attended juvenile court	8.7	21.0	11.7
Drunk alcohol excessively	22.4	27.5	26.2
Used illegal drugs	7.5	16.8	11.4
Hung out with a bad crowd	11.3	26.0	18.2

support are also much more likely to have at some point drunk alcohol excessively, to have used illegal drugs, or to have hung out with a bad crowd.

**Future research questions**

Given these patterns, it is perhaps not surprising that at age 18 there are substantial differences in the educational attainments of young people from different income-support history categories (see Factsheet No.1).

Clearly, there remains much that we do not know about the potential causes and future consequences of these educational disparities. Future research will focus on the way this different experience of early schooling affects educational attainment and participation in risky behaviour.

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