

# Social inclusion



## 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 current Australian Government has adopted a social inclusion agenda as a means of providing a framework within which to refashion its policies and programs to combat economic and social disadvantage in Australia.

The elements of social inclusion that have been identified encompass providing individuals with the opportunity to:

- ♦ secure a job;
- ♦ access services;
- ♦ connect with family, friends, work, personal interests and local community;
- ♦ deal with personal crisis; and
- ♦ have their voices heard.

In what follows, we pick out a series of indicators from the responses by young people to the first wave Youth in Focus (YIF) interview. These indicators are not exhaustive, but they are indicative of the relative experiences of young people whose backgrounds differ in their families' experiences of receipt of income support.

We present a small number of educational participation and employment indicators that show familiar patterns – young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds have poorer outcomes. We also present a series of indicators of phenomena that are less commonly collected and reported – on the living arrangements of young people, on their relationships with their families, their participation in local clubs and on their perception of their ability to deal with crises. These outcomes tend to also be worse for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Table 1 Educational characteristics**

	A	B	C
<b>Total young adult respondents</b>	1,027	1,472	1,580
Percentage studying	72.7	52.1	65.0
Percentage left school in Year 10 or earlier and not currently studying	2.0	12.1	5.3

### There are sharp differences in current educational participation among 18-year-olds depending on the income-support history of their parents.

The two indicators chosen to summarise educational participation are presented in Table 1. The differences between the least and the most disadvantaged categories (A and B) are 20 percentage points for the share of young people currently continuing their education and 10 percentage points for young people who left school in Year 10 or earlier and are not currently studying.

The proportion of young people employed full-time does not differ greatly across economic categories. However, if we take into account current study, the resulting picture is quite different. Among part-time and non-students, almost half of young people with no or limited exposure to the income-support system are employed full-time, compared to only 36 per cent

**Table 2 Employment characteristics**

	A	B	C
<b>Total young adult respondents</b>	1,027	1,472	1,580
Percentage employed full-time	29.2	29.0	32.7
<b>If not full-time student:</b>	366	840	694
Percentage employed full-time	48.9	36.2	47.4
Percentage looking for work	7.7	23.6	13.4

of young people whose families were heavily dependent on income-support receipt in the past (see Table 2). At the same time, almost a quarter of these young people (category B) are currently looking for work, compared to much smaller proportions in the other categories.

**Young people who grow up in families heavily dependent on income support tend to move out of their parents' houses earlier and are more likely to have moved out because of "negative" factors.** Figures 1a and 1b summarise living arrangements of young people according to their own and their parents' reports. We have grouped the reasons for moving out into "negative" and "positive". While "positive" reasons represent such "pull" factors as moving for education or employment, or wanting to be independent or to live with a partner, "negative" reasons comprise lack of space, bad relationships at home, or the youth's inability to accept the rules there.

**The quality of family relationships seems to be negatively related to the incidence and length of income-support exposure.** As shown in Table 3, young people who have grown up in families with a history of intensive

**Table 3 Quality of youth's relationship with parents**

	A	B	C
<b>Total youth respondents</b>	1,026	1,472	1,580
<b>Relationship with mother</b>			
No relationship with mother	0.7	2.7	1.2
Hardly or never good	3.6	6.1	4.6
Usually good	23.2	25.1	23.4
Always or often good	72.5	66.2	70.8
<b>Relationship with father</b>			
No relationship with father	2.2	23.9	7.6
Hardly or never good	3.1	10.7	7.8
Usually good	25.1	21.6	26.5
Always or often good	69.6	43.8	58.2

**Table 4 Social participation of young adults**

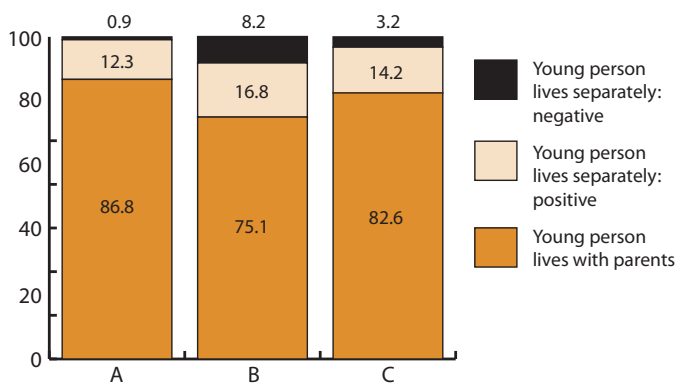
	A	B	C
<b>Total</b>	836	1,008	1,134
Percentage exercising 3 or more times a week	57.4	54.6	55.9
Percentage belonging to clubs/societies	49.9	31.1	43.0
Percentage often feels helpless in dealing with the problems of life	29.1	34.6	30.1

income-support dependence are less likely to have a good relationship with either of their parents. The proportion of youth in category B who do not have a relationship with their fathers is substantial (23.9 percent).

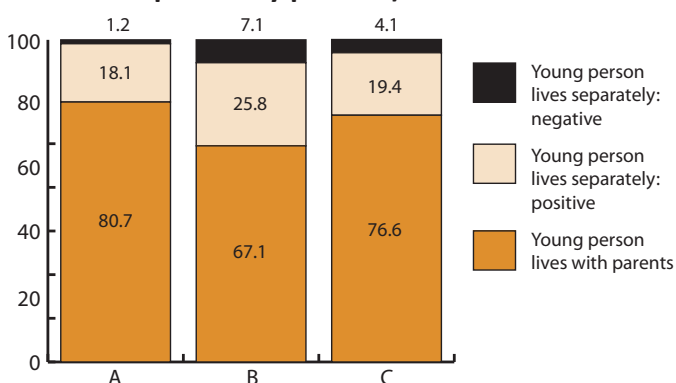
**Exercise behaviour among young adults does not seem to vary greatly by income-support category, but participation in clubs or societies does** (see Table 4). The indicators of youth's exercise and recreational activities are important for understanding their lifestyle, social involvement and the extent to which they are engaged in (rather than isolated from) their local communities.

**The ability to deal with problems in life is correlated with the family income-support history** although the differences across the income-support categories are not very big (last row of Table 4). This last indicator is part of the locus of control battery which is used to assess the extent to which people believe they control their own life.

**Figure 1a Living arrangements of young adults (as reported by young people)**



**Figure 1b Living arrangements of young adults (as reported by parents)**



**Future research questions**

The set of indicators presented in this Factsheet is a first attempt at developing a system of indicators of social inclusion for policy evaluation from the YIF data. YIF is an important resource for understanding social inclusion among the young. Following them forward in time and observing their experiences in the context of their family situation make the study unique. Further analysis will look into causal links between family background and attitudes and youth's outcomes, as well as refining the list of indicators from the available data.

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