

A research project about the experiences of young people in Australia

Jointly funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Australian Research Council and carried out by the Australian National University

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About us

Youth in Focus is a study about young Australians - their experiences while growing up and aspirations for the future, the education and work choices they make, and their transition to becoming independent adults.

Youth in Focus is a longitudinal study, which means that the same respondents are followed for several years. This way, we can find out what is happening to our respondents over time and use this information for informing government policies to improve the lives of young people.

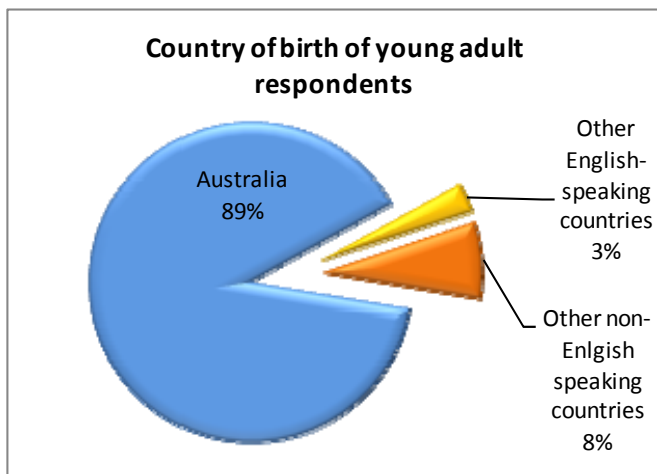
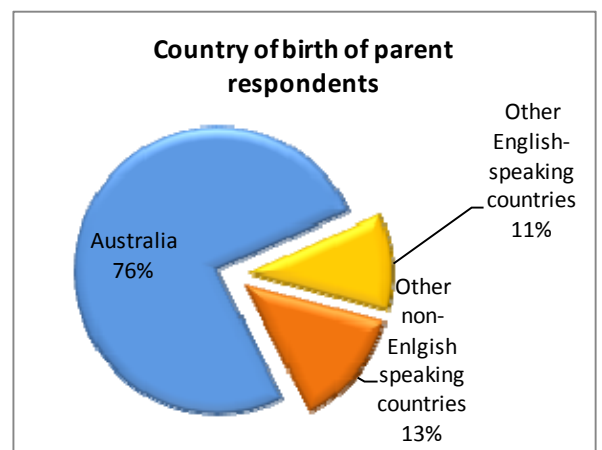
The Youth in Focus study is conducted by the Australian National University (ANU). Roy Morgan Research is conducting the survey on behalf of the ANU.

Wave 1 results

The first wave of interviews took place in 2006, from March to December. More than 8,000 young Australians and their parents have participated in the survey. The second wave is due to be conducted in 2008 and this time we will be approaching young people only.

Among wave 1 young adult respondents, 52.8% were female and 47.2%, male. About 3.9% identified themselves as Indigenous Australians.

All our respondents were asked about their family background. The two figures on this page show the breakdown of both parents and young people by their country of birth.



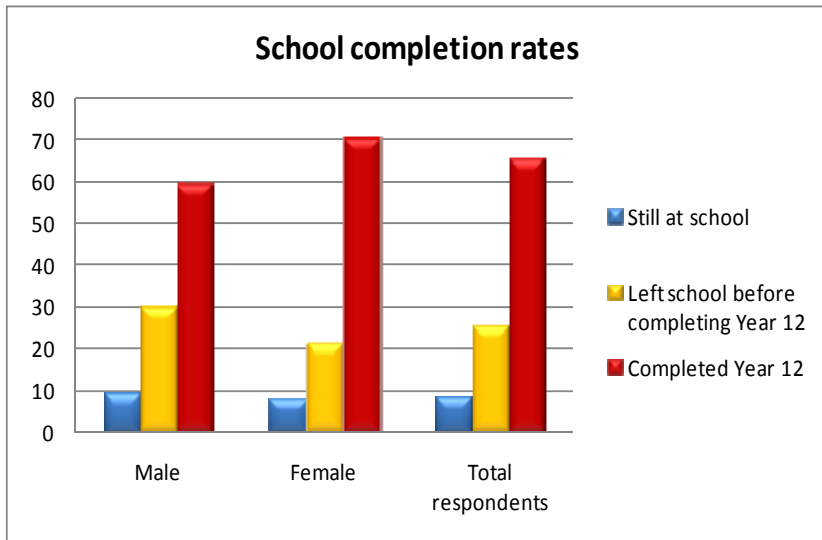
Among the young adult respondents, a bit more than one in five young women and 15% of young men live independently, without parents or parental figures in their households. 2.8% of male and 7.1% of female respondents were either married or living in de-facto relationships.

Education and year 12 completion

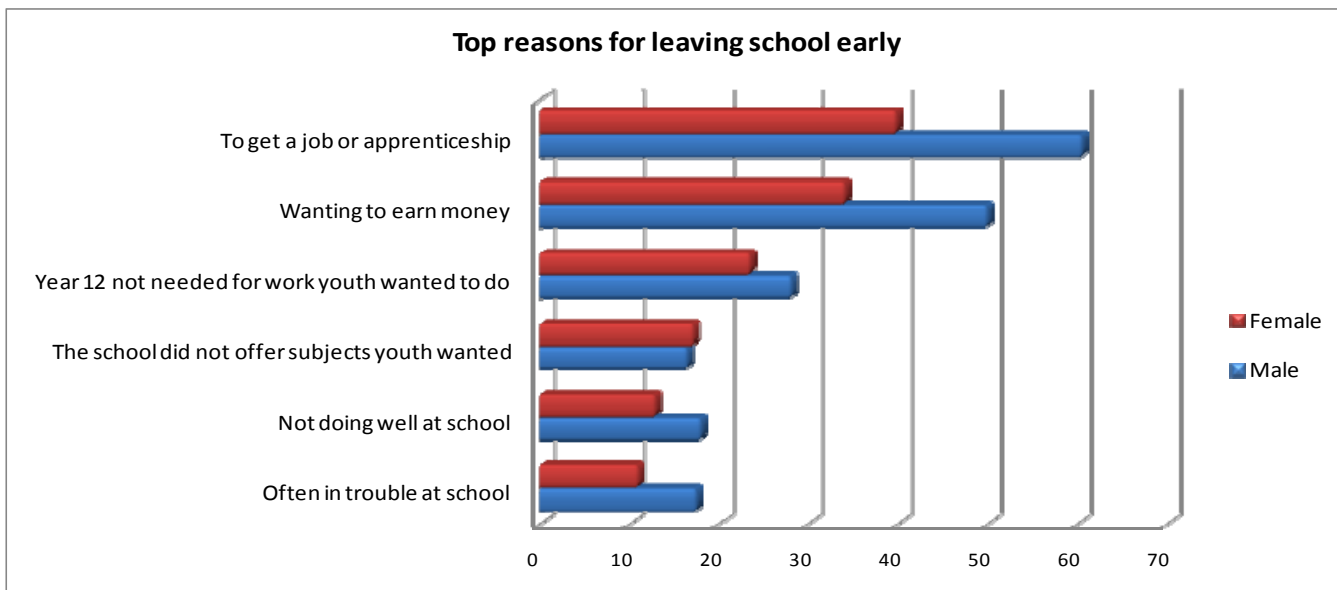
At the time of wave 1, the majority of interviewed young people were 18 years old. 8.7% were still at school, almost all of them in Year 12. Of those who left school, 58.7% were studying for a post-grad qualification or doing a traineeship or apprenticeship.

The graph on the right shows the rates of Year 12 completion separated by male and female.

About 30% of male and 21.5% of female survey participants have left school before completing Year 12. They were asked about reasons that they left school early. The chart below shows the reasons that respondents felt were very important for their not completing secondary school.



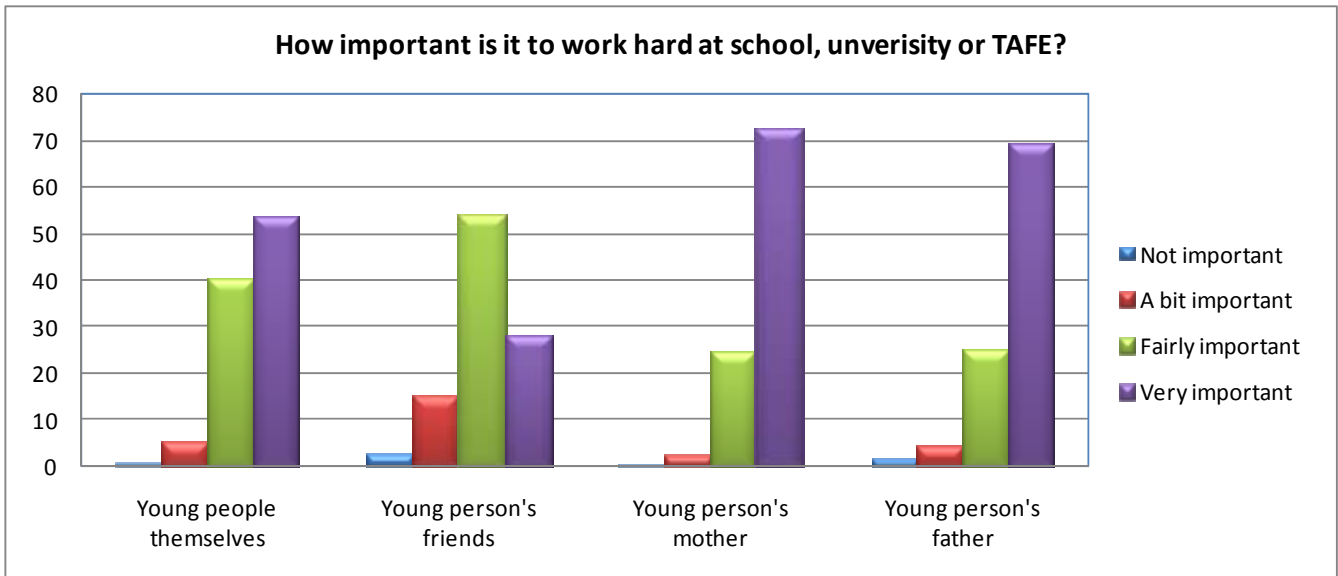
The top three reasons - getting a job, starting to earn money, and not needing Year 12 for work the respondents wanted to do - were the same for young men and women, but there are some differences among the top 5 reasons: "often being in trouble at school" is a top-5 reason for male but not for female respondents.



Among other reasons that make young people leave school without completing Year 12 were teachers suggesting that the young person should leave (9.4%), health reasons (9%), and financial difficulties (8.9%).

Attitudes to education

In a self-completion questionnaire we asked young people their opinions on the importance of working hard at school, university or TAFE. We also asked whether their friends and parents think hard work is important. The chart on the next page shows young people's own views and what they think are the attitudes of their friends and parents.



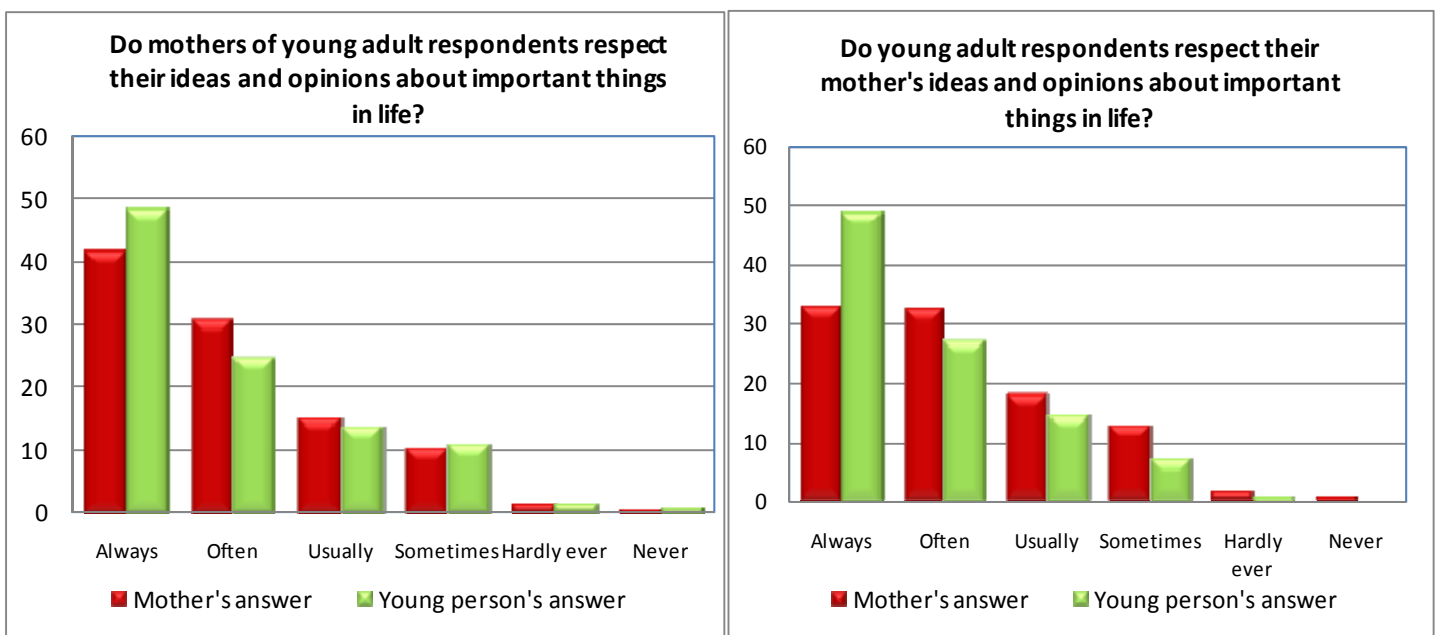
While more than half of young respondents thought that working hard at school or uni was very important, less than 30% of them believed their friends felt the same. On the other hand, more than 70% of the 18-year olds reported that their mother or father think that hard work is extremely important. You could say that a lot of young people view their peers as being "cooler" than themselves but they think they are "cooler" than their parents!

Relationship with parents

In wave 1, we interviewed young people and also one of their parents. Interviewing parents helped us gather background information about things that happened during the young people's childhood.

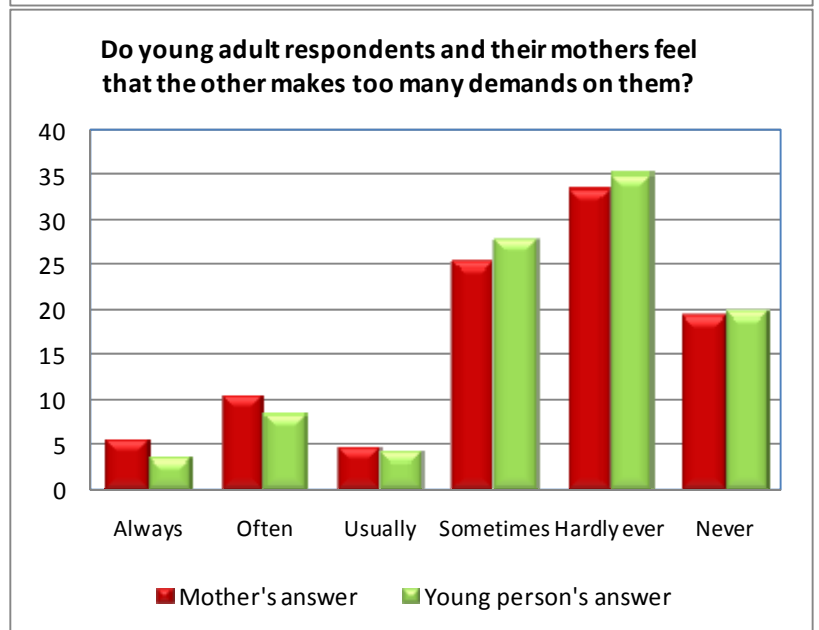
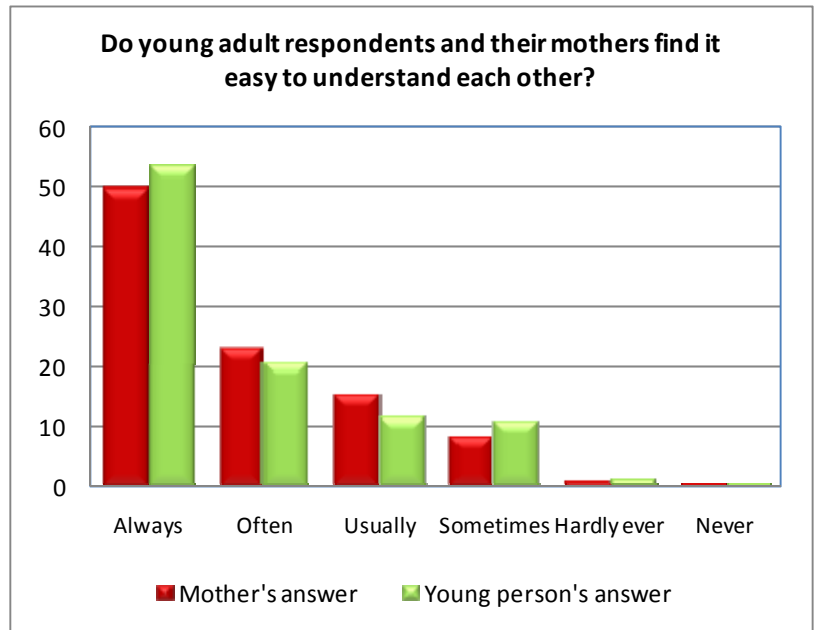
In addition, we asked identical questions of parents and young people, mostly on their opinions and attitudes. We were interested to see whether young people and their parents or guardians share similar ideas about life.

For instance, young people were asked about the quality of their relationship with their mother. The parent respondents (who, in most cases, were mothers) were asked the same questions about relationships with their 18-year olds. Four graphs on this and the next page show how these answers match up.



Overall, we can say that the quality of relationship between young adult respondents and their mothers is generally quite high: about two thirds of both mothers and 18-year olds said that they can always or often respect each other's opinions. Only about 10% of young people and their parents have said that this rarely happens, or that they can rarely understand each other. On the other hand, neither the 18-year olds nor their mothers seem to make too many demands on each other often.

We can also see that the answers that young people and their parents gave are pretty close to each other, perhaps with one exception: while almost 50% of the young people said that they always respect their mother's opinion, only one third of the mothers felt that their opinions are being respected. Maybe parents should lighten up and have some faith that their kids are listening to them!



Wave 2 is approaching – and we want your contact details!

We are currently getting ready to start the first series of wave 2 interviews. As was the case in 2006, most of the survey fieldwork will be done between August and December this year. We will be sending out a reminder to our participants about one month in advance of the interview.

For all our respondents - thank you! For all young people who took part in wave 1 - we look forward to your future participation. If your contact details have changed, or you expect them to change before the end of the year, please get in touch with Roy Morgan Research so that they can update your details. You can contact Roy Morgan toll-free on 1800 647 466 or send an email to yif@roymorgan.com.

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