Australia's Youth: Reality and Risk

School Participation, Retention and Outcomes

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Summary

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- The percentage of young people remaining to the final year of secondary school has fallen somewhat from the high point of 1992, but remains higher than in 1990 or any year prior to that.
- The decline in school completion has been uneven and has impacted most on Government schools and least on Catholic schools. It has also impacted more on males from low socioeconomic backgrounds than other groups.
- Secondary school completion rates continue to be higher among those with higher levels of earlier school achievement, females, those from enriched social backgrounds and those of non-English speaking background. There are also differences between states that appear to reflect curriculum provision.
- During the 1990s participation in senior school programs that link schools with vocational education and the world of work has grown as those programs have become more firmly established in school systems.
- The destinations of school leavers continue to emphasise further education rather than work and there appears to be both a decline in full-time work, and a growth in part-time work (without a link to education) as destinations for school leavers.

Just over seven out of ten of the young Australians who commenced secondary school in 1991 or 1992 (depending on the State of Territory) remained at school to the final year of secondary school in 1996. More than eight out of ten of this group remained at school to the Year 11 in 1995 and almost all (97 per cent) had remained at school to Year 10 in 1994. Despite a fall in school retention rates since 1992 these figures still represent high levels of participation in the senior years of secondary school in relation to those that prevailed until the mid 1980s. High rates of school completion impel some rethinking of the purposes of those senior secondary years. Whereas two decades ago the senior secondary years of school had been oriented to university entrance other destinations for high school graduates have become important.

There are other issues that arise from high rates of school completion such as what becomes of those who do not complete secondary school, which students do not complete secondary school and what are appropriate rates of school retention. Targets for participation in post compulsory education and training were adopted following a report from The Australian Education Council Review Committee; *Young People's Participation in Postcompulsory Education and Training* (AEC, 1991). The first of these targets specified that by 2001, 95 per cent of 19 year-olds should be participating in Year 12, have completed Year 12, have completed Years 10 or 11 and be participating in some formally recognised education and training, or have completed Years 10 or 11 and some formally recognised education and training. The second set of targets specified that by 2001, 60 per cent of 22 year olds should be participating in education and training programs which lead to level 3 awards (eg a trade certificate), have attained level 3 (or above) qualifications, or be participating in (or have completed) higher education studies such as degrees and diplomas.

Changes in School Retention Rates

The 1990s saw school retention rates to Year 12 rise to an historically high level of 77.1 per cent in 1992 and then fall to 71.3 per cent in 1996. Details of this change have been shown in the apparent retention rates recorded in Table 1. An apparent retention rate indicates the percentage of a given entering cohort who continue to a particular Year level and is thus a measure of the holding power of the school system[1]. Apparent retention rates can be calculated for Australia as a whole or for components such as States or sectors.

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[1] Apparent retention rates are calculated as a percentage of the total number of full-time students in the target year to the number from that cohort in their first year of secondary school. At a national level the figures can be affected by repeating students and migration. At lower levels of disaggregation additional factors such as transfers between sectors and interstate migration can influence the rates.

Table 1 Apparent Retention Rates to Years 10, 11 and 12

	1981	1986	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Persons									
Year 12	34.8	48.7	64.0	71.3	77.1	76.6	74.6	72.2	71.3
Year 11	55.2	68.3	80.5	86.0	87.8	87.4	85.3	83.3	83.4
Year 10	91.4	94.1	98.2	98.8	99.1	98.3	97.0	96.4	96.7
Females									
Year 12	37.8	52.1	69.9	76.7	82.0	81.4	79.9	77.9	77.0
Year 11	59.0	70.9	84.8	89.2	90.7	90.5	88.9	87.2	87.6
Year 10	92.6	95.1	99.3	99.4	99.6	99.1	97.9	97.4	97.8
Males									
Year 12	32.0	45.6	58.3	66.1	72.5	71.9	69.6	66.7	65.9
Year 11	51.6	65.7	76.4	82.9	85.1	84.5	82.0	79.5	79.5
Year 10	90.3	93.2	97.1	98.2	98.5	97.5	96.0	95.5	95.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Schools Australia* (Catalogue Number 4221.0) Various years.

Department of Employment Education and Training (1991) *Retention and Participation in Australian Schools, 1967 to 1990*. AGPS: Canberra

Table 1 contains information for the period from 1990 to 1996 as well as data from 1981 and 1986 as a reference point. This earlier data provides a sense of the magnitude of the decline in retention rates. In the period from 1992 to 1996 Year 12 retention rates have only declined to 1991 levels and remain above 1990 levels and well above rates from the early 1980s.

Retention Rates to Years 10, 11 and 12

The data in Table 1 show that the rise and fall in Year 12 retention rates was also observed at Year 11 but to a smaller extent. The fall in Year 11 retention rates from 1992 to 1996 was 4.4 percentage points (from 87.8 to 83.4 per cent) compared to the fall of 5.8 percentage points for Year 12. At Year 10 the fall was smaller again: just 2.4 percentage points from 99.1 to 96.7 per cent. These relativities mirror the rises from 1981 to 1992 during which period Year 12 retention grew more rapidly (by 42.3 percentage points) than Year 11 (by 32.6 percentage points). In other words the decline in apparent retention rates has been more marked at Year 12 than at Year 11 and this mirrors the previous differences in growth.

Gender Differences in Retention Rates

The decline in retention rates since 1992 has been greater for males than for females. Between 1992 and 1996 Year 12 retention rates for males fell by 6.6 percentage points (from 72.5 to 65.9 per cent) compared to 5.0 percentage points (from 82.0 to 77.0 percent) for females. The same pattern was observed in Year 11 (a fall of 5.6 percentage points for males compared to 3.1 for females). Even in the Year 10 rates the fall was greater for males (2.8 percentage points) than females (1.8 percentage points).

Over the preceding period of growth, retention rates rose more for females than males. From 1981 to 1992, Year 12 retention rates for females increased by 44.2 percentage points compared to a gain of 40.5 percentage points for males. Hence the gap between males and females in participation in post compulsory schooling widened during a period of overall expansion and continued to widen during the following period of contraction.

Differences Between School Sectors

Comparing changes in apparent retention rates for school sectors can be misleading because observed changes in retention can result either from changes in school holding power within sectors or changes in the extent to which students transfer between sectors for the senior years of school. Recognising that caveat, the data in Table 2 indicate the apparent retention rates for different school sectors over the period from 1990 to 1995, with some additional data for 1981 and 1986. The problem arising from system transfers is evident in the apparent retention rates in excess of 100 for non-Catholic non-Government schools in 1991 and 1992.

The data in Table 2 indicate that the decline in the Year 12 apparent retention rate between 1992 and 1996 was greatest for Government schools (7.0 percentage points) and least for Catholic schools (where the decline was just 0.6 percentage points- or 1.2 points if taken from the highest point for those schools in 1993). Analyses of longitudinal individual-record data from the Australian Youth Survey support the interpretation that declines in school holding power over the 1990s were smallest for Catholic schools (Lamb, 1996). Over the 1980s the growth in retention to Year 12 was greatest for Government schools (45.3 percentage points between 1981 and 1992), followed by Catholic schools (31.0 percentage points between 1981 and 1993) and least for other non-Government schools (11.6 percentage points between 1981 and 1992). The interesting issue arising from these data is why there has been so little loss of holding power from Catholic schools in the middle 1990s.

Table 2 Apparent Retention Rates to Year 12 by School Sector

	1981	1986	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Government	28.5	42.3	58.3	66.9	73.8	73.1	70.6	67.2	65.8
Catholic	45.6	57.4	68.1	71.9	76.0	76.6	75.5	75.3	75.4
Other non-Govt.	89.2	91.2	99.8	100.8	101.5	98.1	97.3	95.6	97.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Schools Australia* (Catalogue Number 4221.0) Various years.

Department of Employment Education and Training (1991) *Retention and Participation in Australian Schools, 1967 to 1990*. AGPS: Canberra

Differences Among States and Territories

Whereas differences in apparent retention rates between sectors can be confounded by the effects of inter-sectoral transfers, state differences can be influenced by inter-state migration and by changing policies on the way students who repeat a year are recorded. Over the 1990s South Australia and the Northern Territory changed the way in which repeating Year 12 students were recorded so the large apparent decline in the Year 12 retention rate for those States is partly a consequence of that change. Across the remaining States and Territories there were differences in the extent to which retention rates declined. In addition there are differences between States in the time at which retention rates peaked. If the difference between the peak retention rate and that for 1996 is considered it would appear that the largest decline was in Queensland (8.5 percentage points) and the smallest was in New South Wales (2.9 percentage points).

Even if the two territories are excluded from consideration (on the basis of each having populations somewhat different from the States) there remain substantial differences among States in apparent retention rates to Year 12: a gap of approximately 23 percentage points between Queensland and Tasmania. Although differences in social and economic conditions contribute to differences among States there is evidence that differences in senior school curriculum and assessment structures are also involved (Vickers, 1995). Vickers argues that school completion rates among States diverged during the 1980s in ways that were not explicable in terms of differences in youth labour markets. Three important factors associated with these state differences were the extent to which the senior school curriculum incorporated studies that were not oriented to university entrance, the extent to which certification involved school assessment of student work and the absence of a formal certificated examination at the end of Year 10 (Vickers, 1995).

Differences Associated with Social Background

Information about the association of school retention with various aspects of social background ideally requires longitudinal unit-record data incorporating social indicators. Williams et al (1993) analysed such data from nationally

representative samples of young people to establish the extent to which differences in school completion rates were associated with such factors as :

- earlier school achievement (in 1989 the graduation rate for the top quarter of achievement was 83 per cent compared to 22 per cent for the bottom quarter);
- parental occupation (76 per cent for those of professional background compared with 44 per cent for those of an unskilled background);
- parental education (75 per cent for those with a post secondary education compared 52 per cent for those with only a primary or secondary education).
- non-English speaking background (76 per cent for first generation NESB compared to 55 per cent for Australian-born students); and
- home location (61 per cent for urban areas compared 51 per cent for the most rural areas).

These analyses have also used multivariate techniques that allow conclusions of an "other things equal" type to be drawn (Williams et al, 1993). One of the important conclusions to emerge from those analyses is that disadvantage between groups tends "to operate in the longer term through its effect on the achievements of students in their primary and secondary school years" (Williams et al, 1993: 66). This is not to dismiss other influences such as the support given to students through teachers, parents and peers over the senior secondary years but to point to the importance of the development of a sense of competence in those earlier years. Another important conclusion to emerge from these analyses was that as school completion rates rose during the 1980s, schools recruited more widely to the senior secondary years so that the social composition of the senior secondary years moved a little closer to that of the wider population (Williams et al, 1993).

Lamb (1996) has analysed longitudinal unit-record data from the *Australian Youth Survey* to investigate social differences associated with declining school retention. In addition to confirming the continued existence of differences associated with the factors noted above, those analyses explored social influences on the decline in school retention rates. One result of consequence involves an interaction between gender and socioeconomic background. Relevant data are recorded in Table 3.

Table 3 Differences in School Completion Rates by Social Group

	1990/91		1994	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Professional	90.5	95.4	88.6	94.9
Intermediate Non-manual	85.0	91.2	81.0	86.5
Skilled manual	75.5	85.0	71.0	79.7

Unskilled	72.4	73.7	59.2	68.7

Source: Lamb (1996)

The decline in retention to Year 12 has been greater for young males from "unskilled" family backgrounds. Lamb concludes that the rate of school completion for this group fell by over 13 percentage points since the early 1990s. By comparison the falls in school completion for males from professional and managerial backgrounds was three percentage points. Among females the decline in school retention rates was both smaller and less strongly associated with socioeconomic background (Lamb, 1996). Differences in the decline in retention rates related to living in rural or urban areas and to language background were found to be negligible (Lamb, 1996).

Participation Rates

An alternative measure of the extent to which young people engage in school is provided by age participation rates: the percentage of an age group engaged in full-time schooling. Whereas retention rates are based on estimated progression through school participation rates refer to the population as a whole. Thus they avoid the complications caused by grade repetition in estimating retention rates. Age participation rates for school students are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Age Participation Rates in Full-time Schooling for Young People Aged 16 to 19 Years: 1990 to 1996

	Males Age in Years				Females Age in Years				Persons Age in Years			
	16	17	18	19	16	17	18	19	16	17	18	19
1996	77.0	55.3	12.4	2.2	83.0	63.1	10.9	1.8	79.9	59.1	11.7	2.0
1995	75.7	55.2	13.0	2.3	82.1	62.0	11.6	1.9	78.8	58.5	12.3	2.1
1994	77.4	56.5	13.8	2.7	82.6	63.0	11.9	2.1	80.0	59.7	12.9	2.4
1993	78.8	58.2	15.0	2.9	83.8	63.1	12.9	2.5	81.3	60.6	14.0	2.7
1992	79.0	58.2	15.5	3.1	82.9	62.4	13.5	2.7	80.9	60.3	14.5	2.9
1991	78.1	54.2	13.2	2.7	82.6	56.9	11.7	2.2	80.3	56.9	12.5	2.5
1990	72.8	46.7	11.2	2.1	78.8	53.8	9.9	1.8	75.7	50.2	10.6	2.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Schools Australia* (Catalogue Number 4221.0). Various years.

In examining Table 4 it is worth focussing on the participation rates for 17 and 18 year-olds since those the ages most commonly associated with Year 12. The data in Table 4 indicate that the decline in participation in full-time schooling between 1992 and 1996 was greater among 18-year-olds than 17-year-olds (although 17 years is the modal age for students in Year 12). It also shows that the decline in

participation among 17 and 18 year-olds was greater for males than females (in fact there was no decline for 17 year-old females).

There is also evidence from the Australian Bureau of Statistics collection *Participation in Education* that from 1991 to 1995 there were increases in full-time TAFE participation for 17 (from 2.5 to 4.3 percent) and 18 year-olds (from 5.9 to 8.1 percent) but declines in part-time TAFE participation (from 5.2 to 4.2 percent among 17 year olds and 10.1 to 7.4 percent among 18 year-olds). Declining part-time TAFE participation may reflect reduced apprenticeship intakes over the period.

The Senior Secondary Years

Over the 1980s, as school retention rates increased, the curriculum range in senior secondary schools broadened in terms of the range of subjects provided in schools, the curriculum frameworks within which those subjects were provided, and the organisational structures of senior secondary years. In the 1990s a range of different developments are being implemented to provide learning environments and curricula that are more appropriate to the post-school destinations of a more diverse study body. Changes to the Higher School Certificate in New South Wales are a recent and particular example of this phenomenon. The arrangements made for senior secondary reflect values and assumptions made about its purpose (Collins, 1995) and have considerable potential to influence what is studied.

Patterns of Subject Choice

The subjects studied in the senior secondary years can be a major influence upon the educational and career options available to young people. For this reason it is important to monitor patterns of participation in different subject areas so that all students can access studies that provide a sound basis for further education, work and an enriched personal life. The distribution of Year 12 enrolments across the full range of subject areas in 1990 and 1993 is shown in Table 5.

Those data indicate that the pattern of subject enrolments by students in the post compulsory years have changed in small but perceptible ways over a short space of time in the early 1990s. For the period from 1990 to 1993 the following trends were evident in official enrolment statistics in the five largest states and in national survey data from two years (Ainley et al, 1994).

- There was a decrease in the proportion of enrolments in the Studies of Society and Environment Learning Area associated with a decline in enrolments in humanities such as geography, history and economics.
- There was an increase in the proportion of enrolments the Technology Learning Area evident especially in computing studies and technical studies.

- There were small increases in the Arts Learning Area.
- Even though there was no growth in overall levels of enrolments in Languages Other Than English, there was a shift from European languages to Asian languages.
- There was a small decline in physical science enrolments and a small increase in enrolments in biological sciences.
- There was a small decrease in the proportion of all enrolments in subjects that were clearly designated for tertiary entrance.

Table 5 Percentage Distribution of Year 12 Enrolments Across Key Learning Areas and Subject Areas

Learning Area	Subject Area	1990 Survey	1993 Survey		
			All	Male	Female
English	English	18.1	18.2	17.5	18.8
Mathematics	Mathematics	17.5	17.9	19.7	16.4
Society & Env.	Humanities & social sciences	11.9	9.6	8.9	10.1
	Economics & business	11.6	11.3	10.7	11.9
	Religious studies	na	2.0	2.0	2.0
		na	*22.9*	*21.6*	*24.0*
Science	Biological & other sciences	8.9	9.5	7.6	11.2
	Physical sciences	8.1	7.7	10.2	5.6
		17.0	*17.2*	*17.8*	*16.8*
Arts	Arts	6.6	6.9	5.9	7.8
LOTE	Languages	2.0	1.8	1.3	2.4
Technology	Technical Studies	2.5	3.6	6.0	1.6
	Computing studies	2.0	3.7	4.1	3.3
	Home science	2.4	2.8	0.7	4.6
	Agriculture	0.6	0.5	0.9	0.3
		7.5	*10.6*	*11.7*	*9.8*
Health & Phys Ed.	Physical education	2.2	3.2	3.8	2.6
	Health	na	0.7	0.2	1.1
		na	3.9	4.0	3.7
	Other	5.8	0.3	0.2	0.3

Source: Ainley, Robinson, Harvey-Beavis, Elsworth & Fleming (1994)

Table 5 also displays information about differences between males and females in subject-area participation. Males predominated in physical sciences, mathematics and technical studies while languages, biological sciences and home

science were areas in which females were strongly represented. Subject enrolment patterns are also associated with earlier school achievement, especially in mathematics and physical sciences (Ainley et al, 1994), aspects of social background, school and cultural influences (Teese et al, 1993) and vocational interests (Kidd & Naylor, 1991).

Vocational Education in Schools

Vocational education and training in the senior secondary years has developed in a number of diverse ways, often through local initiatives that were subsequently incorporate in wider systems (Golding, 1995; Keating, 1995). The *New Apprenticeship* initiative could expand and broaden that provision even further. The growth of vocational education and training in schools has been so diverse that it is hard to establish national statistics to indicate its extent. The review of the Higher School Certificate in New South Wales indicates that in 1996 almost one quarter of the students in that State included vocational studies at some point in Years 11 or 12 (McGaw, 1997: 56). For Year 12 students alone the figure was 18 per cent and even among students who were eligible to apply for Tertiary Entrance Rank the figure was 11 per cent. Although many of these programs began in 1980s, growth has been most rapid in 1990s; from 2,958 Year 12 students in 1991 to 12,403 in 1996 (McGaw, 1996: 57).

Of the various vocational education and training courses provided in New South Wales in 1996, the largest number of enrolments (7,795 students) was in the Joint Secondary Schools TAFE program. This program incorporates a large number of courses (214 were proposed for 1997) and involves students taking instruction in TAFE institutes through arrangement between the school and an institute. Results are recorded on the Higher School Certificate and provide varying degrees of credit towards a vocational qualification. McGaw (1997: 52) observes that these courses do not usually incorporate workplace learning. Vocational Content-Endorsed Courses are the next largest set of courses (3,149 students) and are based on training modules developed for entry level in specific industries (equivalent to levels 1 and 2 of the Australian Qualifications Framework). This is intended to maximise recognition in subsequent TAFE courses. McGaw (1997) outlines a number of principles for inclusion of vocational education and training in schools including: integration with other studies to the greatest extent possible, accreditation towards a recognised vocational qualification, industry links (incorporating workplace learning and assessment) and being broadly educative rather than enterprise specific.

School-Industry Programs

School-industry programs are courses for Year 11 and/or Year 12 students that require students to spend time in the workplace as part of a structured experience that is recognised as part of their formal studies. They have emerged

as an important innovation in a context of historically high levels of participation in the upper secondary years; a decline in the opportunities for full-time work by young people; and a realisation that deferred entry to work may have deleterious consequences for individual development. The programs aim to provide for "learning about the world of work" as well as "learning employment-related skills". Structured learning in the workplace, that is assessed and accredited as part of school work, is the central means by which these goals are pursued.

As shown in Table 6, in 1995 some 46 per cent of schools provided some form of school-industry program. By 1996 that figure had grown to 62 per cent and there are indications are that this growth has continued into 1997. However, only one quarter of schools provided programs with an extended duration work placement of more than 20 days and there were differences in the extent of provision between sectors (with provision being greatest in Government schools but growth being most rapid in Catholic schools). There are also variations by location and other characteristics such as the size of the school and the social characteristics of the area in which it was located. Variations between regions suggest that it is important to have local support for the implementation of these programs. It remains an important challenge to ensure that substantial high quality work placements are provided.

Table 6 Percentage of schools providing school-industry programs with various levels of workplace time: 1995 and 1996

Sector	Workplace Time (days)									
	None		Not Spec		1-10		11-20		> 20	
	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996
All Schools	54	38	3	3	15	24	8	11	20	24
Government Schools	42	26	4	4	19	26	10	13	25	30
Catholic Schools	62	36	2	3	10	28	7	10	20	23
Independent Schools	84	75	1	1	6	12	5	7	4	5

Source: Ainley and Fleming (1997)

Even though a substantial number of schools provide school-industry programs, it remains the activity of a minority of students. Table 7 shows the percentage of students engaged in school-industry programs in 1996. Most of those in these course participate in a program with just a short period of time in the workplace. Even though 12.1 per cent of Year 11 and 12 students were involved in some school-industry program, only 2.3 per cent of those students participated in an extended school-industry program (ie more than 20 days in the workplace). Students in these programs tended to be from Year 11 rather than Year 12 (70 per cent were from Year 11) and were evenly divided between males and females.

Table 7 Percentage of Year 11 and 12 Students Participating in School-Industry Programs in 1996

	All	Duration			
		Short	Mid	Extended	Unspecified
All Schools	12.1	7.5	1.5	2.3	0.8
Government Schools	14.5	8.7	1.8	2.9	1.1
Catholic Schools	10.0	6.5	1.1	1.9	0.5
Independent Schools	4.8	3.7	0.6	0.4	0.1

Source: Ainley and Fleming (1997)

Between 1995 and 1996 overall participation in school-industry programs grew from 7.0 to 12.1 per cent of the Year 11 and 12 population but all of the growth was in programs with short duration work placements. Even though there were more schools providing extended duration programs, each program appeared to have fewer students in it.

Post-school Destinations

Table 8 records data on the transition from school for 1995-96 and for 1990-91. It is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics *Transition from Education to Work* survey and for people aged 15 to 19 years: a survey that records destinations of school leavers in May of the year after leaving school.

Changes in the Destinations of School Leavers: 1991 to 1996

The data in Table 8 indicate that between 1990-91 and 1995-96 further education increased as a destination for school leavers by 2.7 percentage points. Overall the growth was greater for TAFE than for university but the trends were different for those who had completed Year 12 than for those who left school before completing Year 12. The early 1990s was a period of consolidation for university participation rates following a time of increased participation in university driven by rising school retention rates. The 1983-84 data for the *Transition from Education to Work* indicate that 15 per cent of school leavers entered university at that time compared to 29 per cent in 1995-96 (Ainley et al, 1997).

Table 8 May Destinations of School Leavers Aged 15 to 19 Years by School Attainment: 1991 and 1996

Attainment	Destination									
	% in Further Education				% Not in Further Education					Popn.
	Univ	TAFE	Other	All	FTW	PTW	Unempl	NLF	All	'000
1996										

Year 12	44.2	21.0	2.7	67.9	13.0	10.6	7.2	1.2	32.0	168.9
Not Year 12	1.2	29.4	4.7	35.2	22.0	14.2	21.1	6.6	63.9	92.4
All	29.1	24.0	3.4	56.5	16.3	11.9	12.2	3.2	43.6	261.3
1991										
Year 12	41.7	19.1	3.8	64.6	14.3	8.3	9.8	3.0	35.4	164.7
Not Year 12	1.5	25.9	4.0	31.4	27.8	10.7	22.1	8.0	68.6	79.5
All	28.6	21.3	3.9	53.8	18.7	9.1	13.8	4.6	46.2	244.2

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Based on specially requested tables from Transition from Education to Work May 1996 (Catalogue No. 6227.0)

Among school leavers who did not enter any form of further education the percentage obtaining full-time work fell from 18.7 to 16.3 per cent between 1990-91 and 1995-96. This decline appears to indicate a continuation of the very large drop from 35 per cent of school leavers entering full-time work in 1987-88 (Ainley et al, 1997). Concomitantly, part-time work without an associated educational program, increased as a destination of school leavers from 9.1 to 11.9 per cent. That increase follows a steady increase from 6.0 per cent in 1984. Unemployment in May of the year after leaving school actually fell by a small amount between 1991 and 1996: from 13.8 per cent to 12.2 per cent of school leavers.

Part-time work is not necessarily an indication of marginal employment status in all cases but there is other evidence that part-time work not linked to further study can signal a marginal hold on the labour market for people moving regularly between various part-time jobs and unemployment. Sweet (1996) notes that since the beginning of the 1990s there has been an increase in the percentage of young people who are occupied in neither full-time study nor full-time employment. He characterises these young people as on the "margins" of study and work and estimates that the percentage of 15 to 19 year-olds in this category grew from 10 per cent in May 1990 to 18 per cent in May 1996. Using data from the ACER longitudinal surveys Sweet showed that during 1993 and 1994 significant proportions of 18 and 19 year-olds were on the margins for a significant period of time. In most months (other than the summer period when school leavers are seeking work and full-time students work in summer jobs) the figure was constant at around 19 to 20 per cent. During 1993 and 1994 more than one quarter of 18 and 19 year-olds spent nine or more months of the two year period "on the margins" of work or study. These figures were even higher for those with low levels of earlier school achievement (among the bottom achievement quartile 40 per cent were on the margins for nine months or more) and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (among those from semiskilled and unskilled family backgrounds extended periods on the margins were twice as common as for those from professional and managerial

backgrounds). Sweet also reports high rates of job mobility within marginal activities (ie. from one part-time job to another).

Differences in Destinations by School Attainment

As shown by the data in Table 8, the immediate destinations of school leavers are closely associated with the level of schooling they have attained. Table 8 shows the different destinations for those who have completed Year 12 and early school leavers (the pattern is similar for those who completed either Year 10 or Year 11). In broad terms approximately two-thirds of Year 12 leavers progress to further education compared to approximately one third of early school leavers. In addition school attainment is also related to patterns of employment and unemployment.

Further Education

It has been noted above that between 1991 and 1996 further education grew as a destination for school leavers. Although there was growth in participation in further education for both Year 12 leavers and early school leavers, the pattern of growth was different for each group.

Approximately two-thirds of the 1995 school leavers who had completed Year 12 were engaged in further education in May of 1996. Some 44 per cent of these school leavers were in university, 21 per cent were in a TAFE institute and three per cent were in another form of provision (eg. skill centre, business college). Among Year 12 leavers there was a small increase between 1990-91 and 1995-96 in entry to both university and TAFE. The percentage of Year 12 leavers entering university rose by 3.3 percentage points between 1991 and 1996. The percentage of Year 12 leavers entering TAFE rose by a smaller amount (1.9 percentage points).

Among 1995 early school leavers a little more than one third were engaged in further education in May of 1996. This participation was predominantly in TAFE (29.4 per cent) with a small number in other institutions. For this group of school leavers participation in TAFE grew between 1991 and 1996 by 3.5 percentage points from 25.9 to 29.4 per cent.

No Further Education

The data in Table 8 refer to the destinations of school leavers in two groups: those who continue with education and those who do not. In using these data to examine participation in full-time or part-time work it is important to recognise that those who combine work with further study have been included with the group for whom further education is a destination.

The one-third of Year 12 leavers from 1995 who did not pursue further education was made up 13 per cent in full-time work, 11 per cent in part-time work and

eight per cent who were unemployed or not in the labour force. The two thirds of school leavers from 1995 who did not complete Year 12 was made up of 22 per cent in full-time work, 14 per cent in part-time work and 28 per cent who were unemployed or not in the labour force.

The general decline in full-time work, without any associated education, as a destination for school leavers between 1991 and 1996 has been noted above. Closer inspection of Table 8 shows that this decline was a little smaller for Year 12 leavers (from 14.3 to 13.0 per cent) and a little larger for those who left school before Year 12 (from 27.8 to 22.0 per cent).

Data in Table 8 indicate that school leavers from Year 12 in 1995 were less likely to be in part-time work without associated education (10.6 per cent) than those who attained Year 10 or 11 before leaving school (14.2 per cent). Moreover, the growth between 1991 and 1996 in the percentage of school leavers for whom part-time work was a destination was smaller for Year 12 completers (2.3 percentage points) than for early school leavers (3.5 percentage points)

Table 8 indicates that in May 1996 some 7.2 per cent of Year 12 leavers from 1995 were unemployed. This compares with a figure of 9.8 per cent in 1991. In contrast 21.1 per cent of those who left before Year 12 were unemployed compared to 22.1 per cent in 1991. It is evident that Year 12 leavers are less likely to be unemployed than those who leave school prior to Year 12. Lamb (1997), using data from the Australian Youth Survey, concludes that completing Year 12 is associated with lower duration of unemployment to the age of 19 years, even after allowing for the effects of differences in earlier school achievement and social background.

Work Combined with Education

A significant number of school leavers engaged in education combined study with work. Relevant data for those who left school in 1995 are recorded in Table 9.

Table 9 Percentages of School Leavers Aged 15 to 19 Years Engaged in Further Education By Employment Status and Attainment: 1996

Further Education	Years of School Attained	Working			Not Working
		Full-time	Part-time	Total	
University		2.4	46.8	49.2	50.8
TAFE:	Year 12	23.4	34.1	57.7	42.2
TAFE	Year 11	42.7	14.6	58.5	41.4
TAFE	Year 10	56.5	14.5	70.2	29.8

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Based on specially requested tables from Transition from Education to Work (Catalogue No. 6227.0)

Just under half (48.9 per cent) of those attending university were employed: mostly on a part -time basis (46.5 per cent) but a few (2.4 per cent) were employed on a full-time basis.

Among those attending a TAFE institute over half (57.7 per cent) were employed with one third (33.2 per cent) being employed full-time and one quarter (24.4 per cent) being employed part-time. For students in TAFE the extent to which education was combined with work was related to school attainment. Whereas 58 per cent of Year 11 and 12 leavers who were enrolled in TAFE combined work and study, among Year 10 leavers in TAFE the figure was 70 per cent. For a majority of Year 12 leavers in TAFE work was part-time but for a large majority of Year 11 and 10 leavers in TAFE their work was described as full-time.

Table 10 Destinations of 1995 School Leavers Aged 15 to 19 Years in May 1996 by School Attainment and Gender

Attainment	Destination									
	Further Education				Not Further Education					Popn.
	Univ	TAFE	Other	All	FTW	PTW	Unempl	NLF	All	'000
Females										
Year 12	46.9	18.1	4.1	69.1	12.6	11.7	5.5	1.1	30.9	88.5
Year 11	0.0	31.5	3.1	34.6	31.5	20.0	13.8	0.0	65.3	13.6
Year 10	0.0	20.6	5.9	26.5	17.6	27.6	22.4	5.9	73.5	17.0
All [a]	33.1	20.3	4.5	57.9	15.2	14.9	9.3	2.6	42.0	126.3
Males										
Year 12	41.3	24.3	1.1	66.7	13.7	9.2	9.1	1.4	33.4	80.4
Year 11	0.0	29.5	1.4	30.9	27.3	10.8	29.5	1.4	69.0	13.8
Year 10	2.7	32.4	5.1	40.2	24.0	9.5	18.6	7.8	59.9	29.8
All [a]	25.4	27.6	2.3	55.3	17.3	9.0	14.9	3.6	44.8	135.1

[a] All includes a number of school leavers for whom years completed was not known.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Based on specially requested tables from Transition from Education to Work May 1996 (Catalogue No. 6227.0)

Differences in the Destinations of Males and Females

There were differences in the educational and employment destinations of male and female school leavers. Relevant data for the cohort of leavers from 1995 are shown in Table 10.

Participation in Further Education

Table 10 indicates that females from the graduating class of 1995 were a little more likely than males from the same year to participate in some form of education on leaving school. This difference was especially evident in terms of university entrance by those who had completed Year 12. Some 46.9 per cent of female Year 12 leavers from 1995 entered university in 1996 compared to 41.3 per cent of males. This pattern represents a change from that observed for Year 12 leavers from 1990. Among the graduating class of 1990 some 43.0 per cent of male Year 12 leavers from 1990 entered university compared to 40.6 per cent of female Year 12 leavers. In other words, over the five year period, university grew as a destination for females with Year 12 but declined as a destination for males with Year 12.

Among those leaving school in 1995 participation in TAFE was stronger among males (27.6 per cent) than females (20.3 per cent): a gap that widened over the

period from 1990-91 to 1995-96. However, females were more likely to participate in another (non-TAFE) form of further education than males so that the difference in total vocational education and training is not as great as might appear at first.

For early school leavers the differences between males and females depended on whether they had completed Year 10 or Year 11. Among those who had completed Year 11 there was only a small difference (slightly in favour of females) in the percentage who were engaged in education. Among those who had completed Year 10 only rather more males than females were engaged in education (32 per cent compared to 21 per cent): presumably a reflection of the apprenticeship system.

No Further Education

Table 10 indicates that male school leavers from 1995 who did not pursue further education were both more likely to have a full-time job, and also more likely to be unemployed, than females. In contrast females were more likely than males to have a part-time job without that job being linked to further study. However there were some differences associated with school attainment indicated in Table 10.

Among Year 12 leavers not engaged in further education males were a little more likely to have a full-time job than females (13.7 compared to 12.6 per cent) but less likely to have a part-time job (9.2 compared to 11.7 per cent). A somewhat larger percentage of males than females were unemployed (9.1 compared to 5.5 per cent).

For Year 11 leavers not engaged in education a greater percentage of females had a full-time or part-time job and a greater percentage of males were unemployed (30 per cent compared to 14 per cent).

For Year 10 leavers not engaged in education the differences were smaller but a greater percentage of males had a full-time job and a greater percentage of females had a part-time job or were unemployed.

Combining Work and Study

Table 9 indicates that combining work with study in higher education was a little more common for females (51.3 per cent) than males (45.9 per cent). For all attainment levels, but especially among Year 10 and 11 leavers, a greater percentage of males than females worked while studying at TAFE and this difference was greater for Year 10 leavers than for Year 12 leavers. Overall 67 per cent of male school leavers entering TAFE were also working, compared to 44 per cent of females. This arises mainly because of differences in the extent to which full-time work, rather than part-time work, is combined with study in TAFE.

Summary

The percentage of young people remaining to the final year of secondary school has fallen somewhat from the high point of 1992, but remains higher than in 1990 or any year prior to that. The decline in school completion has been uneven across school systems and social groups. It has impacted more on males from low socioeconomic backgrounds than other groups. Secondary school completion rates continue to be higher among those with higher levels of earlier school achievement, females, those from enriched social backgrounds and those of non-English speaking background. There are also differences between states that appear to reflect curriculum provision.

During the 1990s participation in senior school programs that link schools with vocational education and the world of work has grown as those programs have become more firmly established in school systems. Despite this the destinations of school leavers continue to emphasise further education rather than work and there appears to be both a decline in full time work, and a growth in marginal part-time work (without a link to education) as destinations for school leavers.

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