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## LSAY Cohort Report The Year 9 Class of 1998 in 2000: School and Non-school Experiences

Sheldon Rothman

ACER, sheldon.rothman@acer.edu.au

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# Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth

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## COHORT REPORT

### **THE YEAR 9 CLASS OF 1998 IN 2000: SCHOOL AND NON-SCHOOL EXPERIENCES**

Sheldon Rothman

This report forms part of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth,  
a research program that is jointly managed by ACER and the  
Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and not necessarily of the  
Department of Education, Science and Training.

November 2001



**Australian Council for Educational Research**

Produced 2001 by  
The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides details of the experiences of the 1998 cohort of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth in 2000. Information on this cohort was first collected in 1998, when these young people were Year 9 students in Australian schools.

### Highlights

#### *Education and Training*

- 86 per cent of the cohort were still at school, with differences by gender (89% of females and 83% of males); nearly all were enrolled in Year 11. 8 per cent of the cohort were engaged in other study, including study at TAFE (2%), in an apprenticeship or traineeship (5%), or in some other form of study (less than 1%).
- One out of six cohort members changed schools between Year 9 and Year 11, and nearly one-half were because the schools they attended in Year 9 did not offer senior secondary studies.
- More than one-quarter of school students in the cohort were studying a TAFE or non-TAFE VET subject.
- Of those cohort members who were no longer at school, 59 per cent of males and 46 per cent of females were engaged in other study. Males were predominantly in apprenticeships.

#### *Employment*

- More than one-half of the cohort were employed in 2000, with 43 per cent working part-time and 8 per cent working full-time.
- Of those cohort members still at secondary school, nearly one-half (48%) were employed, mostly in part-time jobs.
- The majority of females who were employed (72% of those still at school and 69% of those who were no longer at school) had clerical, sales or services positions.
- Nearly one-half (48%) of males who were working while still at school had production, transport or labourer positions. Nearly one-half (49%) of males who were working and were no longer at school were working as tradespersons.

#### *General Attitudes and Other Activities*

- Most members of the cohort were happy with their lives, with little difference between those who were still at school and those who were no longer at school.
- About seven out of eight cohort members participated in sport or exercise activities on a weekly basis.
- Female cohort members read books more frequently than male cohort members did, and females read more books in the previous year than males did.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides details of the experiences of the 1998 cohort of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (abbreviated to LSAY Y98) at a single point in time. Information on this cohort was first collected in 1998, when these young people were Year 9 students in Australian schools. The reference period for this report is October 2000. Most members of the cohort were still at school, but some had already left school and entered the labour force. Information about the LSAY Y98 cohort's activities in 1999 is available in Fullarton (2001b).

## **Purposes of the cohort reports**

ACER provides a variety of reports as part of the LSAY program. *Research Reports* concentrate on particular groups of young people, such as early school leavers and university students, or on particular topics, such as part-time work by secondary students. *Technical Reports* provide technical detail on issues such as sampling, the construction of weights, question wording and frequencies for various parts of the LSAY project. These reports contain necessary background material for researchers using LSAY data, including codebooks and questionnaires. *Briefing Papers* summarise findings in an easy-to-read format.

During 2000, ACER introduced *Cohort Reports* as part of a strategy to disseminate information from this important project. These reports provide an overview of the education, training and labour market experiences of the whole cohort on a regular basis, contributing to discussions of issues that affect young people. For example, discussions of school participation rates are more informative when viewed in the context of the other forms of education and training that young people participate in, and of their experiences with school and the wider society.

By providing details about what members of the cohort are doing, cohort reports supplement data already available from government statistics on enrolments and apparent retention rates. Research Reports provide a deeper understanding of the cohorts' activities, aspirations and experiences. The Cohort Reports are also intended to help researchers and other users of LSAY to see the potential of the database. By detailing the experiences and activities of a cohort at a single point of time, each report will use a wider range of the variables than may be done in the focused research reports.

## **Structure of the report**

Section 2 of this report outlines who was in the Year 9 class of 1998 in 2000. It provides an overview of what education and training activities and what type of employment they were doing. Section 3 looks at those who were still at school in 2000—their characteristics, their schools, their studies, their plans, and their employment. Section 4 deals with those students who are no longer at school. It looks at the characteristics of this group, their reasons for leaving, and their activities since leaving school. Section 5 examines general attitudes of the whole cohort, providing information on their happiness with aspects of their lives and on the activities in which they were engaged in their spare time.



## 2. WHO IS IN THE YEAR 9 CLASS OF 1998 IN 2000?

A nationally representative sample of 14,118 Year 9 students was selected in 1998 to form the second cohort of LSAY. The sample was constructed by randomly selecting two-to-three classes of Year 9 students from a sample of schools designed to represent each Australian State and school sector. Smaller States and Territories were over-sampled to provide sufficient numbers to give reliable estimates on many key variables.

In 1999, a questionnaire was mailed to each member of the sample, with 9,289 useable responses returned. The sample was rebuilt after that survey, and members were contacted by telephone in 2000. There were 9,548 sets of useable responses to the 2000 telephone questionnaire.

When the sample was first established, smaller States and Territories were oversampled and larger States were undersampled. For this report, sample weights are used to account for attrition caused by non-response and refusal, and the distribution of respondents across the States and Territories of Australia. Details of the sampling and weighting procedures used in LSAY and on attrition from the sample are contained in Marks and Long (2000).

### What were members of the Year 9 class of 1998 doing in 2000?

Most members—86 per cent—of the Year 9 class of 1998 were still at school in 2000. A further two per cent of the cohort were attending TAFE, and five per cent were undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship. Six per cent of the Y98 cohort were not enrolled in education or training in 2000. Participation in education and training is shown in the rows of Table 1.

**Table 1 Labour force and education/training participation of the Year 9 class of 1998 in 2000**

	Not in the labour force (%)	Employed full-time (%)	Employed part-time (%)	Unemployed (%)	Total (%)
Still at secondary school	45	1	41	- -	86
Attending a TAFE institution	1	<1	1	<1	2
Apprenticeship or traineeship	<1	4	<1	<1	5
Doing some other study	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Not enrolled in education or training	<1	3	1	2	6
Total	46	8	43	2	100

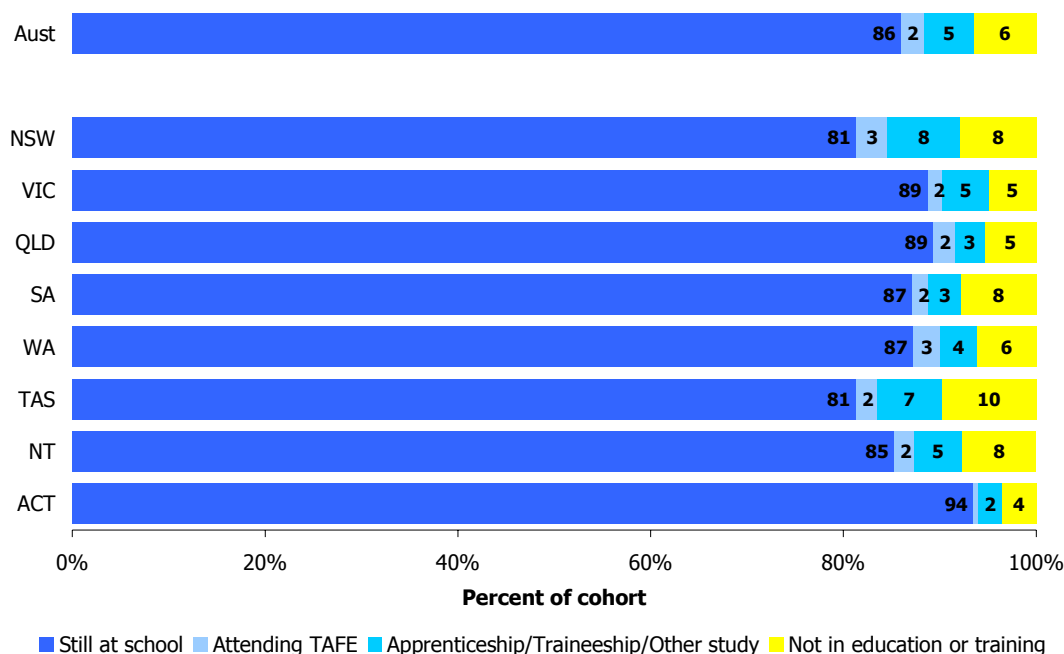
Note: Cells may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Forty-six per cent of the LSAY Y98 cohort were not in the labour force in 2000. Nearly all were still at school, with some attending TAFE, undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship, or pursuing further study elsewhere. Approximately one per cent of those not in the labour force were not engaged in any form of study.

Eight per cent of the LSAY Y98 cohort were employed in full-time jobs, including some who were still at school. Forty-three per cent of the cohort were employed part-time. Approximately two percent of the cohort (equivalent to one in seven of those no longer at school) were unemployed. Participation in the labour market is shown in the columns of Table 1.

Of the LSAY Y98 cohort across Australia, 86 per cent were still at school, but this figure varied by location (see Figure 1). New South Wales and Tasmania, for example, had the lowest school retention rate of all States, with 81 per cent of the cohort still at school. These two States also had the highest rates of participation in apprenticeships, traineeships and other study, at eight per cent in New South Wales and seven per cent in Tasmania. With three per cent of the cohort participating, New South Wales also had the highest rate of TAFE enrolment.

These data demonstrate that States and Territories vary in the combination of school and post-school study options taken up their young people, and that standard school-based retention rates are affected by these options, as well as opportunities in the labour market. School retention rates for the LSAY Y98 cohort range from 81 per cent in Tasmania and New South Wales to 94 per cent in the Australian Capital Territory, but education and training participation rates for this cohort range from 90 per cent in Tasmania to 96 per cent in the Australian Capital Territory. It would be more beneficial to State and Territory government agencies to consider this participation rate when monitoring and evaluating their policies and programs for young people, and to consider how and where programs for young people are delivered.



**Figure 1** Education and training activity by the cohort in 2000, by State and Territory

### 3. COHORT MEMBERS STILL AT SCHOOL

In 2000, 86 per cent of the LSAY Y98 cohort were still at school, which is a decrease from the 99 per cent who were still at school in 1999 (Fullarton, 2001b). Nearly all of those who were still at school (98%) were enrolled in Year 11. One per cent of those still at school were in Year 12, and one per cent were in Year 10.

#### Background characteristics

The distribution of the sample by State and by school sector, for members of the Y98 cohort who were still at school, was similar to the distribution of full-time Year 11 students in 2000 (see Table 2).

**Table 2** Distribution of LSAY Y98 cohort still at school, by state and school sector

	School students in the LSAY Y98 cohort in 2000 (%)	Year 11 students in Australian schools in 2000 (%)
<b>State of school attendance</b>		
New South Wales	31	30
Victoria	24	25
Queensland	21	20
South Australia	8	8
Western Australia	11	11
Tasmania	3	3
Northern Territory	1	1
Australian Capital Territory	2	2
<b>Sector of school attendance</b>		
Government	64	64
Catholic	21	21
Independent	15	16

Notes: 'Independent' schools are non-government, non-Catholic schools. Cells may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Schools, Australia 2000* (catalogue no. 4221.0), Tables 6-14.

To say that 86 per cent of the cohort were still at school is the same as saying that the cohort had a Year 9-to-11 retention rate of 86 per cent. This retention rate is equivalent to the apparent retention rate calculated for Australia based on full-time enrolments only, while the LSAY retention rate includes secondary students enrolled part-time.<sup>1</sup> The LSAY retention rate varied by State, with New South Wales and Tasmania having the lowest rate (81%), and the Australian Capital Territory the highest (94%).

<sup>1</sup> The Australian Bureau of Statistics calculates the apparent retention rate as the number of full-time enrolments at one grade level divided by the number of full-time enrolments at a lower grade level and when the cohort would have started secondary school. For example, the Year 7-to-12 rate for New South Wales is the number of Year 12 full-time enrolments as a proportion of the number of Year 7 full-time enrolments five years earlier. The Year 9-to-11 apparent retention rate reported here is based on the number of full-time enrolments in Year 11 in all Australian schools in 2000 divided by the number of full-time enrolments in Year 9 in all Australian schools in 1998. Full details are contained in the ABS series *Schools, Australia* (catalogue no. 4221.0).

**Table 3 Background characteristics of members of the LSAY Y98 cohort still at school in 2000**

	<b>Number still at school, 2000</b>	<b>% of those still at school, 2000</b>	<b>% of those still at school, 1999</b>	<b>% of LSAY Y98 cohort, 1998</b>	<b>% of cohort still at school (retention)</b>
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	3,897	48	49	49	83
Female	4,292	52	51	51	89
<b>Indigenous status</b>					
Indigenous	137	2	2	3	62
Non-Indigenous	7,784	98	98	97	87
<b>Student's country of birth</b>					
Australia	7,109	89	90	90	86
Other	858	11	10	10	94
<b>Main language spoken at home</b>					
English	7,078	89	89	90	86
Other	761	11	11	10	91
<b>Father's country of birth</b>					
Australia	5,374	68	68	67	85
Other	2,556	32	32	33	89
<b>Mother's country of birth</b>					
Australia	5,610	70	72	69	85
Other	2,349	30	28	31	90
<b>Father's level of education</b>					
Did not complete secondary	3,299	44	47	42	82
Completed secondary	4,203	56	53	58	91
<b>Mother's level of education</b>					
Did not complete secondary	3,292	43	46	42	83
Completed secondary	4,292	57	54	58	90
<b>Father's occupational group</b>					
Professionals and associate professionals	2,395	35	33	36	93
Managers and administrators	1,129	16	17	15	88
Clerical, sales and service	672	10	9	10	88
Trades	1,506	22	22	22	83
Production and transport	807	12	13	12	81
Labourers and related	413	6	6	6	83
<b>Mother's occupational group</b>					
Professionals and associate professionals	2,176	38	37	40	92
Managers and administrators	243	4	4	4	88
Clerical, sales and service	2,428	42	42	42	88
Trades	239	4	4	4	81
Production and transport	147	3	3	2	85
Labourers and related	533	9	10	9	81
<b>Achievement in literacy and numeracy (Year 9)</b>					
Lowest quartile	1,727	21	24	25	74
Second quartile	2,003	24	25	25	84
Third quartile	2,127	26	25	25	90
Highest quartile	2,325	28	26	25	96

Notes: Based on weighted data. Occupational groups based on the *Australian Standard Classification of Occupations*, second edition (ABS 1997, catalogue no. 1220.0).

The sociodemographic characteristics of those members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who were still at school are similar to the characteristics of the full sample in 1998, and similar to those still at school in 1999 (see Table 3). Overall, 86 per cent of the cohort were still at school in 2000, but the retention rate was not the same across all groups. Retention for females was 89 per cent, compared to 83 per cent for males. Of students in the top achievement quartile, 96 per cent were still at school, compared to 74 per cent in the lowest quartile. Students who were born in Australia had lower retention rates than students born overseas. Only 62 per cent of Indigenous students in the sample were still at school in 2000. The relationship between these characteristics and continued participation in secondary school continues the trends in retention among previous Australian cohorts reported by Marks, Fleming, Long and McMillan (2000).

### Students who changed schools

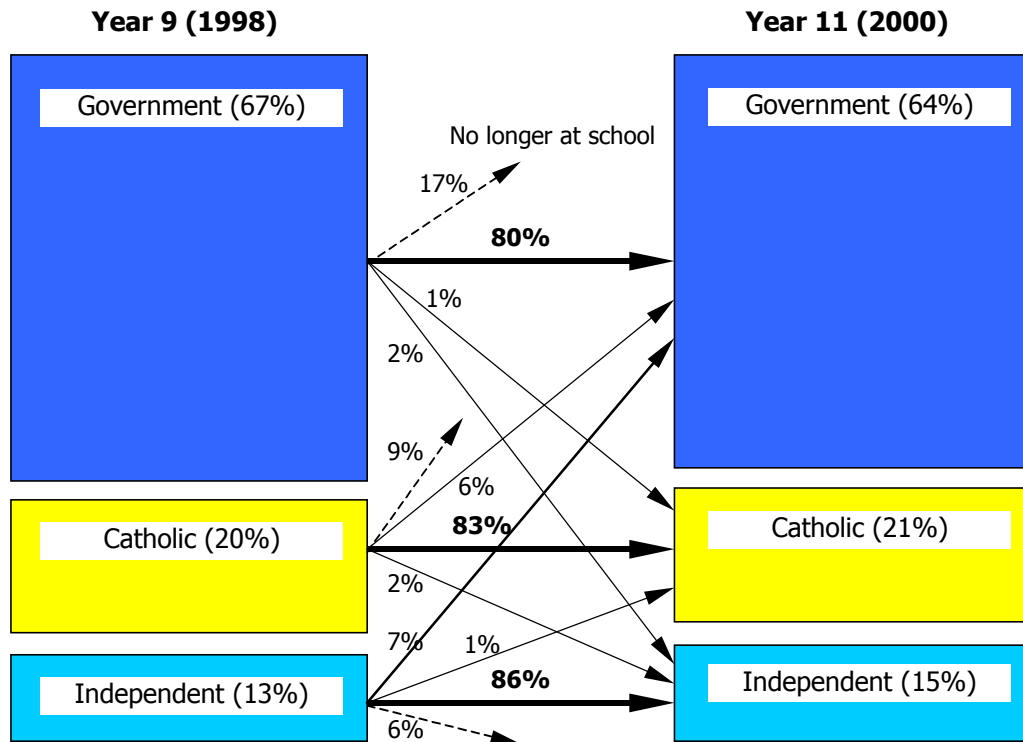
About one of every six members of the Y98 cohort who were still at school in 2000 had changed schools since they were first surveyed in 1998. Of those who did change schools, 66 per cent had attended a government school in 1998, 23 per cent a Catholic school, and 11 per cent an independent (non-government, non-Catholic) school. The sector of school attended after the change varied by the initial school sector (see Table 4). More than three-quarters of students who had attended a government school in 1998 attended a different government school in 2000, and more than half of students transferring from a Catholic school attended another Catholic school. Nearly two-thirds of students who moved from an independent school transferred into a government school; another one quarter transferred into a different independent school.

While Table 4 contains data for only those who changed schools between 1998 and 2000, Figure 2 shows the percentage share of enrolments by school sector for all members of the LSAY Y98 cohort in 1998, and for those who were still at school in 2000. Figure 2 shows whether cohort members had left school (for example, 17% of those who were in a government school in 1998 were not enrolled at school in 2000), and for those still at school, in which school sector they were enrolled. When all members of the LSAY Y98 cohort are considered, more than 80 per cent of those in each sector in 1998 attended a school in the same sector in 2000.

**Table 4** Students in the LSAY Y98 cohort who changed schools between Year 9 and Year 11: School sector 1998 (Year 9) and school sector 2000 (Year 11)

Sector of school attended, 1998	Sector of school attended, 2000			
	Number of students	Government (%)	Catholic (%)	Independent (%)
Government	878	77	9	13
Catholic	311	37	52	12
Independent	140	64	11	25

Note: 'Independent' schools are non-government, non-Catholic schools.



**Figure 2** Sector of school attendance in 1998 for all members of the LSAY Y98 cohort in 2000, and sector of school attendance in 2000 for those still at school

**Table 5** Main reason for school transfer between 1998 (Year 9) and 2000 (Year 11), by type of transfer

Reason	All types of school transfer (%)	Government to non-government (%)	Non-government to government (%)	Catholic to Independent/Independent to Catholic (%)	Same sector (%)
Previous school did not offer year 11-12	48	21	27	20	62
We moved house	9	9	1	5	10
Previous school was too expensive	2	4	2	3	1
Was not doing well/ was asked to leave	1	<1	3	3	<1
To go to a better school	10	27	8	11	7
Range of subjects offered	11	11	26	21	8
Did not like the previous school	10	13	22	21	6
Problems with travel	3	2	6	6	3
School merged with another school	<1	--	--	--	<1
Other	6	14	5	10	4
All reasons	100	100	100	100	100

Students who transferred to another school indicated the main reason for the change. Nearly one-half of this group (48%) changed schools because the school they attended in Year 9 did not offer Years 11 and 12, and they tended to stay within the same sector of schooling—government, Catholic or independent. Among students who transferred from a government school to a non-government school (Catholic or independent), the most common reason cited was ‘to go to a better school’. For students who transferred from a non-government school to a government school, the most common reasons given—after the lack of Year 11 and 12—were the ‘range of subjects offered’ and ‘did not like the previous school’ (see Table 5).

### What were members of the LSAY Y98 cohort studying at school in 2000?

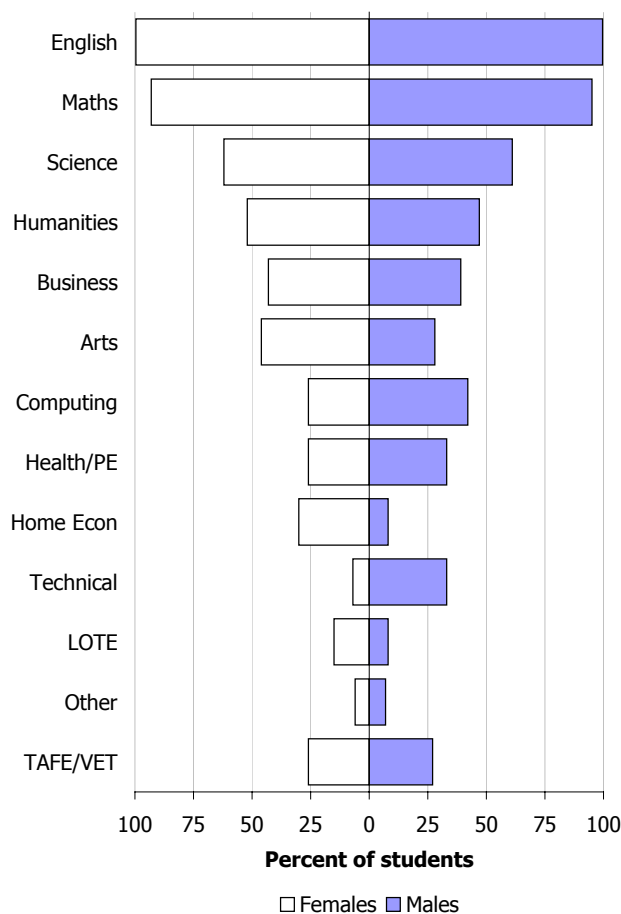
Most of the LSAY Y98 cohort were still at school in 2000, and nearly all were enrolled in Year 11. Nearly all of the Y98 cohort were studying English in 2000 (see Table 6). Mathematics was the next most commonly studied subject, with 94 per cent of those still at school enrolled. Fullarton and Ainley (2000), reporting on the Year 12 subjects studied by the LSAY Y95 cohort, found a similar level of participation in English but lower levels of participation in mathematics and science. The subject choices of the LSAY Y98 cohort will be reviewed with 2001 data to determine what changes occur between Years 11 and 12 in enrolments in these subjects and to investigate associated factors.

In some subjects there was a great disparity between the percentage of female and male students enrolled. Nearly one in three male school students (33%) were enrolled in technical subjects, compared to 7 per cent of female students, and nearly three in ten female students (30%) were enrolled in home economics subjects, compared to eight per cent of male students. Showing less marked differences, computing subjects enrolled more male students, and arts subjects enrolled more female students (see Figure 3).

**Table 6** Subjects studied in Year 11 by the LSAY Y98 cohort still at school

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Students (%)</b>
English	>99
Mathematics	94
Science	61
Humanities	50
Business Studies	41
Arts	38
Computing	34
Health/Physical Education	29
Home Economics	20
Technical	19
Languages other than English	12
Other subjects	7
TAFE or non-TAFE VET	27

More than one-quarter (27%) of the LSAY Y98 cohort who were still at school were undertaking TAFE subjects (offered through TAFE institutions) or non-TAFE vocational education and training (VET) subjects (offered at schools). Of those in the cohort still at school, two per cent were studying TAFE subjects as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship and two per cent were studying non-TAFE VET subjects as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship. Further, eight per cent of the cohort were enrolled in TAFE subjects that involved workplace learning, and eleven per cent were in non-TAFE VET subjects that involved workplace learning (see Table 7). Fullarton (2001a) reported similar participation rates in VET in schools for Year 11 students among the LSAY Y95 cohort.



**Figure 3** Percentage of female and male Year 11 school students in LSAY Y98 cohort enrolled in subject areas, 2000

**Table 7** TAFE and non-TAFE VET subjects studied during 2000 by the LSAY Y98 cohort still at school, as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship and inclusion of workplace learning

	TAFE subjects (%)	Non-TAFE VET subjects (%)
No TAFE or non-TAFE VET subjects	86	84
Subject is part of apprenticeship/traineeship	2	2
Subject is not part of apprenticeship/traineeship	12	14
Subject involves workplace learning	8	11
Subject does not involve workplace learning	7	5

Note: Includes students whose study included both TAFE subjects and non-TAFE VET subjects.



In all States and Territories, Year 11 offers students the opportunity to study domain-specific science subjects. While it is still possible to enrol in an integrated science subject, students can enrol in biology, chemistry or physics, and concentrate on a specific science domain or on a number of different domains. As Table 6 showed, 61 per cent of the LSAY Y98 cohort who were still at school were enrolled in at least one science course.

Because of the specialisation available in science study in Year 11, students may have opted to enrol in more than one science subject. Those in the LSAY Y98 cohort enrolled in government schools for Year 11 were least likely to be enrolled in a science subject; students in independent schools were most likely. In addition, three out of ten students attending independent schools were enrolled in more than one science subject (see Table 8).

**Table 8** Number of science subjects studied by the LSAY Y98 cohort still at school, by school sector

	<b>Government (%)</b>	<b>Catholic (%)</b>	<b>Independent (%)</b>
No science subjects	43	34	25
1 subject	36	42	42
2 subjects	17	21	30
3 or more subjects	3	3	4

Note: 'Independent' schools are non-government, non-Catholic schools.

### School advice on post-school options

According to members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who were still at school, all schools provided students with some sort of advice on post-school options. Less than one per cent of students thought that their school did not offer any such advice or they were not aware of this opportunity. Students knew most commonly (95%) that their school offered advice on career opportunities. Ninety-two per cent of students said that their school provided information on TAFE courses, and close to 90 per cent provided information on apprenticeships, traineeships and university courses (see Table 9). Fewer than half of the students said their schools provided information on financial support for further study. Although this information was available, not all students took advantage of it. School students in the cohort most commonly accessed information on careers (63%) and university courses (57%), when they knew it was available.

**Table 9** Students' use of information provided by schools on post-school options

	<b>School provides information on... (%)</b>	<b>Student has accessed information on... (%)</b>
Apprenticeships and traineeships	88	30
Careers which students might be interested in	95	63
TAFE courses	92	38
University courses	87	57
Financial support for study at TAFE or university	44	18

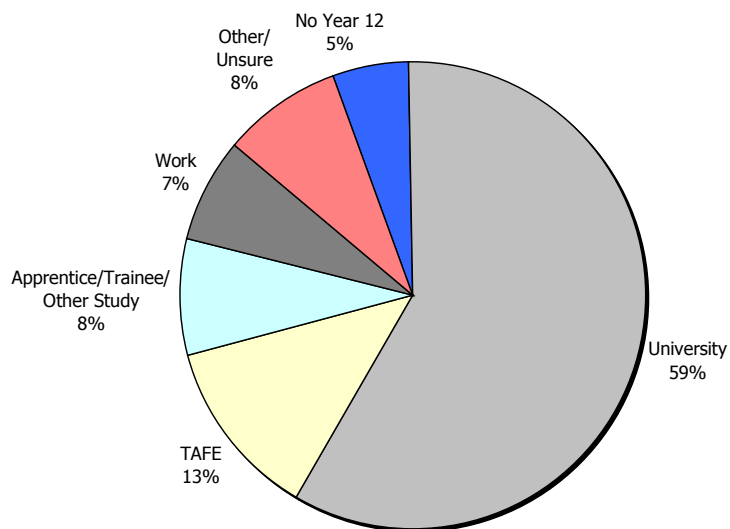
Note: The second column shows the percentage of students who stated that their school provides the information listed in the first column. The third column shows the percentage of students who accessed the information if they said it was available at their school.

### Year 12 and beyond

Of the LSAY Y98 cohort who were still at school in 2000, nearly all (95 per cent) planned to remain at school for Year 12 (see Table 10). Seventy-two per cent of school students planned to do further study at either a university or a TAFE college after completing Year 12. Another nine per cent planned to do further training or other study as an apprentice or trainee, or in some other form of study. About one in twenty of those still at school in 2000 did not plan on or were not sure about completing Year 12 (see Figure 4).

**Table 10 LSAY Y98 school students' plans for Year 12 and afterwards**

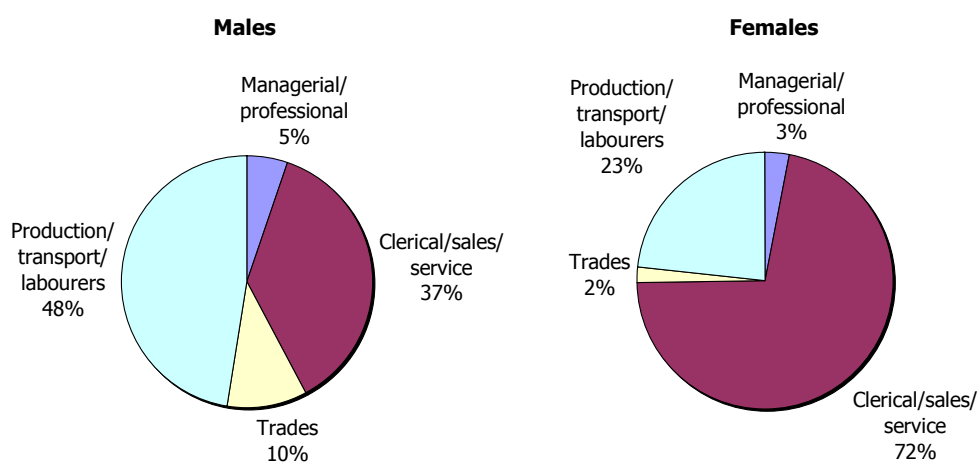
	<b>% of those still at school, 2000</b>
Yes, I plan to go on to Year 12	95
<b>.... after Year 12</b>	
Go to university	59
Go to a TAFE college	13
Other course/training elsewhere	3
Get an apprenticeship	4
Get a traineeship	1
Look for work/get a job	7
Other	<1
Don't know	8
No, I do not plan to go on to Year 12	3
I don't know what my plans are right now	2



**Figure 4 Plans of the LSAY Y98 cohort still at school for completion of Year 12 and afterwards**

## School students and employment

Forty-eight per cent of the cohort who were still at school in 2000 were participating in the labour force, with about one per cent in full-time jobs. Of those still at school, 41 per cent of males and 53 per cent of females were working part-time. The clerical, sales and service area, which includes the retail and hospitality industries, employed more than one-half of student workers: 72 per cent of females who worked and 37 per cent of males who worked were in this group (see Figure 5). Another 33 per cent of working students (23 per cent of females and 48 per cent of males) had jobs as production or transport workers or as labourers. On average, those still at school—both males and females—worked 11 hours per week, but males had gross earnings of \$90 per week compared to \$79 per week for females.



**Figure 5** Occupation groups for members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who were working while still at school, by gender

## School students and job satisfaction

Members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who worked while at school during 2000 saw their jobs as a temporary means for learning about work and earning some money. Even though they were satisfied with many aspects of their jobs, only seven per cent of this group believed they would like to continue in their jobs as a career. School students who were working said they were satisfied with the people they worked with more frequently than with any other aspect of their jobs, and they were more frequently *very* satisfied with this aspect (see Figure 6). School students were least satisfied with opportunities for promotion, but 20 per cent did not believe it was appropriate to respond to that item. The most negative aspect of their work was the recognition received for tasks well done, with 13 per cent stating they were dissatisfied.

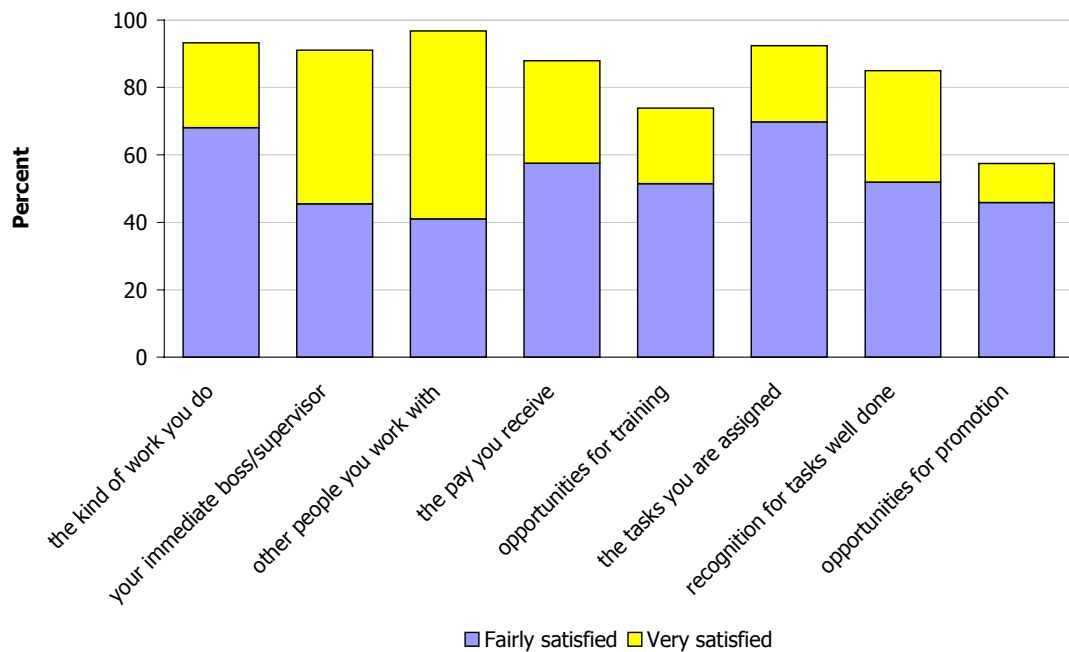
## Summary

This section provided information on those members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who were still at school in 2000, approximately six out of seven of those in the original cohort. Within this group, there were differential patterns of school retention, with the following groups showing higher retention rates than their counterparts: females,

non-Indigenous, those in the highest achievement quartile, those born outside Australia, those whose main language was a language other than English, and those whose parents were born overseas and had completed secondary education. Among those still at school, approximately one in six changed schools between Year 9 and Year 11, most frequently because their previous school did not offer senior secondary study. While there were some transfers between school sectors at this time, more than 80 percent of students stayed within their school sector.

Close to one-half of school students in the LSAY Y98 cohort were also working during 2000, with females most commonly in clerical and personal service positions and males working as skilled and unskilled labourers. Males earned about ten dollars per week more than females did, even though both groups worked the same number of hours. School students who were working did not see themselves as working towards careers in their jobs, but were generally satisfied with the work they did.

Satisfaction with...



**Figure 6** Satisfaction with various aspects of work among members of the LSAY Y98 cohort in full-time and part-time employment while still at school

#### 4. COHORT MEMBERS NO LONGER AT SCHOOL

By the end of 2000, 14 per cent of the LSAY Y98 cohort had already made the transition from secondary schooling. Of those members of the cohort who had left school, 60 per cent were male, 7 per cent were Indigenous, 96 per cent were born in Australia, 93 per cent used English as their main language at home, and 46 per cent had scored in the lowest achievement quartile in Year 9. Males were more likely than females to have left school, Indigenous students were more likely than non-Indigenous students to have left school, and Australian-born students were more likely than those born overseas to have left school. Background characteristics of those who were no longer at school in 2000 are presented in Table 11.

##### Why did they leave school?

Members of the cohort who had left school before the end of 2000 were asked two sets of questions regarding their leaving school. First, they were read eleven statements as reasons commonly given by people who leave school before Year 12, and stated which were *important* in their decisions. Second, they were asked which one of those reasons was the *main* reason for leaving school.

According to those in the LSAY Y98 cohort who had left school, the most important reasons for leaving school were 'to earn [their] own money' and 'to get a job or apprenticeship'. More than one-half (51%) stated that their dislike of school was also an important factor. This pattern reflects the pattern of reasons given by members of the LSAY Y95 cohort who had left school before Year 11 (Marks & Fleming, 1999). One-quarter of those who had left school stated that the main reason for leaving was that they already had a job or apprenticeship to go to.

About one in five said that the main reason for leaving was their dislike of school. When these students were asked about the importance of all factors that influenced their decision to leave, they responded in a similar manner to all school leavers on some factors, but cited their own progress in school and attitude factors (they were not doing well at school, teachers thought they should leave, they did not like school) more frequently; they also cited the desire to earn their own money and the desire to get a job or apprenticeship as important more frequently than other school leavers did.

There were differences between male and female members of the LSAY Y98 cohort in reasons for leaving school (see Table 12). Males in the group cited as important ten of the eleven reasons more frequently than females did. Females cited school subject offerings more frequently than males did. The greatest differences between male and female school leavers were in work-related reasons (wanted to earn own money, had or wanted a job or apprenticeship to go to) and school-related reasons (not doing well at school, teachers thought they should leave). While there were gender differences in these reasons, there was no gender difference in the per cent of respondents who said they left school because they did not like school.

**Table 11 Background characteristics of members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who had left school by 2000**

	<b>Number no longer at school, 2000</b>	<b>% of those who have left school, 2000</b>	<b>% of LSAY Y98 cohort, 1998</b>	<b>% of cohort no longer at school, 2000</b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	798	60	49	17
Female	534	40	51	11
<b>Indigenous status</b>				
Indigenous	84	7	3	38
Non-Indigenous	1,153	93	97	13
<b>Student's country of birth</b>				
Australia	1,197	96	90	14
Other	55	4	10	6
<b>Main language spoken at home</b>				
English	1,164	93	90	14
Other	74	7	10	9
<b>Father's country of birth</b>				
Australia	929	75	67	15
Other	310	25	33	11
<b>Mother's country of birth</b>				
Australia	978	78	69	15
Other	274	22	31	10
<b>Father's level of education</b>				
Did not complete secondary	744	65	42	18
Completed secondary	404	35	58	9
<b>Mother's level of education</b>				
Did not complete secondary	694	59	42	17
Completed secondary	481	41	58	10
<b>Father's occupational group</b>				
Professionals and associate professionals	168	17	36	7
Managers and administrators	151	15	15	12
Clerical, sales and service	93	9	10	12
Trades	309	31	22	17
Production and transport	191	19	12	19
Labourers and related	87	9	6	17
<b>Mother's occupational group</b>				
Professionals and associate professionals	187	25	40	8
Managers and administrators	32	4	4	12
Clerical, sales and service	335	44	42	12
Trades	55	7	4	19
Production and transport	26	3	2	15
Labourers and related	127	17	9	19
<b>Achievement in literacy and numeracy (Year 9)</b>				
Lowest quartile	614	46	25	26
Second quartile	376	28	25	16
Third quartile	245	19	25	10
Highest quartile	87	7	25	4

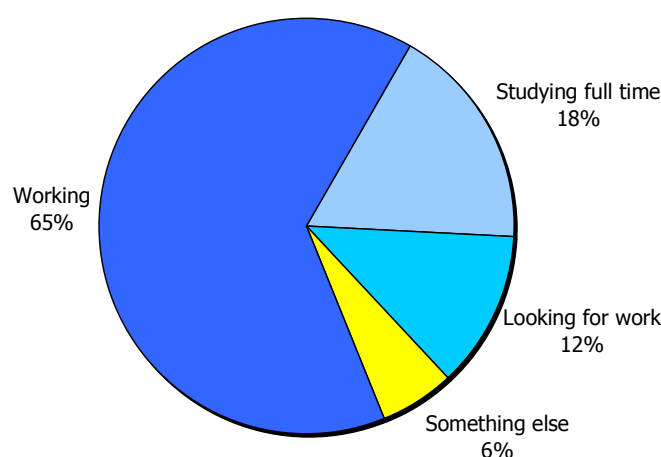
Notes: Based on weighted data. Occupational groups based on the *Australian Standard Classification of Occupations*, second edition (ABS 1997, catalogue no. 1220.0).

**Table 12 Importance of reasons for leaving school among members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who left school before completing Year 11, by gender**

	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Had job/apprenticeship to go to	53	61	58
Wanted job/apprenticeship	70	83	78
Not doing well at school	34	40	38
Wanted job training not available	42	51	48
Didn't like school	55	56	55
Financially hard to stay at school	17	19	18
Teachers thought should leave	13	22	18
Wanted to earn own money	72	83	79
School didn't offer subjects wanted	42	39	40
Year 12 no help to get job	28	30	29
Don't need Year 12 for further study	37	39	39

### What have school leavers been doing since leaving school?

Since leaving school, nearly two-thirds (65%) of those members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who left school before completing Year 11 have been working. More than one in six (18%) have been studying full-time (see Figure 7). Since leaving school, 59 per cent have had a full-time job, and more than three-quarters (77%) of those who secured full-time jobs still have them. Of those respondents who have had a full-time job, more than three-quarters (77%) began their jobs within the first month after stopping full-time study (see Table 13).

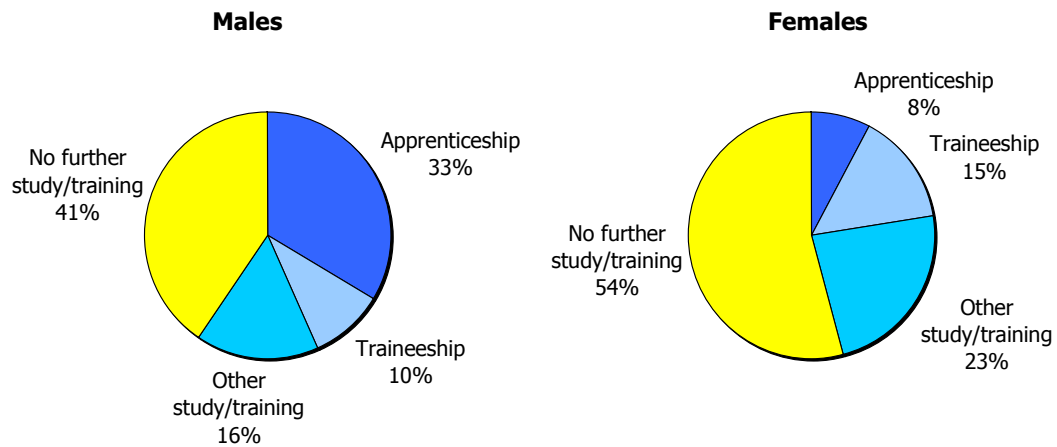
**Figure 7 Main activity of members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who left school before completing Year 11**

### Further study and training by cohort members no longer at school

Among those in the cohort who were no longer at school in 2000, 35 per cent were undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship, and 19 per cent were undertaking some other form of study or training in 2000. The remaining 46 per cent said they were doing no further study or training at the time. These rates varied by gender, with a majority of apprenticeships held by males (see Figure 8).

**Table 13 Length of time to find a full-time job after stopping full-time study**

	<b>Number with full-time jobs, 2000</b>	<b>% of those with full-time jobs</b>
Straight away (less than 1 month)	609	77
1-2 months	103	13
3-5 months	50	6
6 months or more	29	4



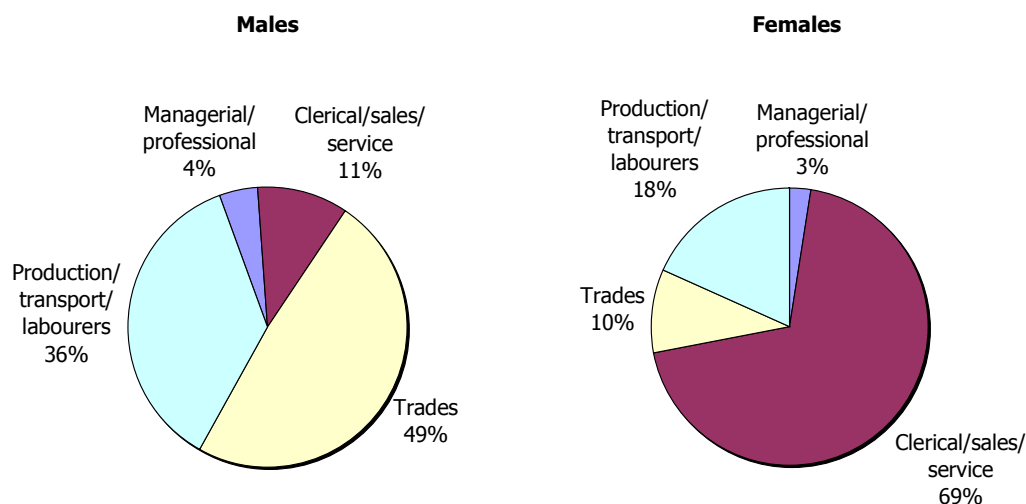
**Figure 8 Post-school further study and training undertaken by those who left school before completing Year 11, by gender**

**The labour market and those who left school before completing Year 11**

The distribution of jobs held by males who left school before completing Year 11 was different from the distribution of jobs held by females (see Figure 9). Close to one-half (49%) of males were employed in the trades, and a further 36 per cent were working in production and transport areas or as labourers. More than two-thirds of females were employed in clerical, sales and service positions. This distribution of occupations is similar to that found by Marks and Fleming (1999) in their analysis of members of the Year 9 class of 1995 who left school before starting Year 11.

Among those no longer at school, males worked on average 37 hours per week and females worked 30 hours per week. The number of hours worked is reflected in the weekly income, with males earning a gross salary of \$265 per week and females earning \$199 per week.





**Figure 9 Occupation groups for members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who were working and had left school before completing Year 11, by gender**

### Those who left school and job satisfaction

Unlike the student workers in the LSAY Y98 cohort, who overwhelmingly said that they would not like to continue in their jobs as a career, more than one-half (54%) of those who had left school before completing Year 11 did see a future in their present jobs. Nevertheless, 41 per cent did not see these jobs as part of their careers, and a further 6 per cent were unsure. Those who had left school were generally satisfied with all aspects of their work, with more than 90 per cent reporting satisfaction with the kind of work they did, with their supervisors, with the other people they worked with, and with the tasks they were assigned (see Figure 10). On these aspects, they were similar to the members of the cohort who were still at school, but they said more frequently that they were *very* satisfied. Although they were least satisfied with their opportunities for promotion, they were still more satisfied on this aspect than those still at school were.

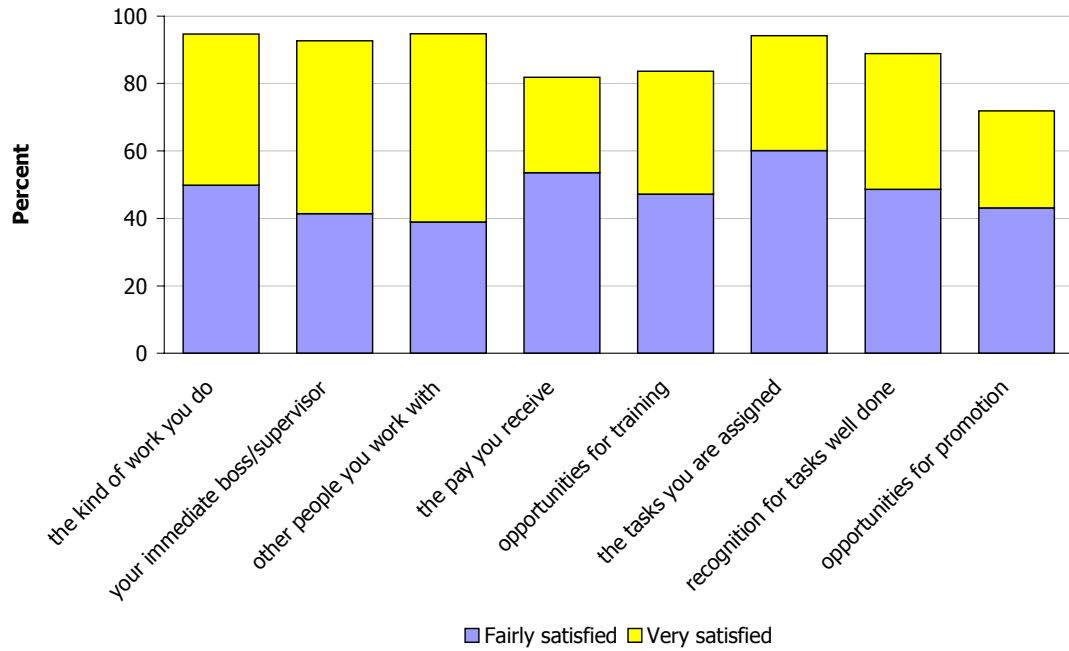
### Summary

This section provided information on those members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who had left school by the end of 2000, before completing Year 11. This group had more males than females, and more of those in the lowest two quartiles of literacy and numeracy achievement. The group had over-representation of those born in Australia, whose main language is English, and whose parents were born in Australia and who did not complete secondary education. This group had left school to get jobs and earn their own money, and their dislike of school played an important role in the decision to leave.

Nearly two-thirds of those who left school have been working, with most having found full-time jobs within one month of stopping full-time study. Another 18 per cent have been involved in some other form of full-time study, including apprenticeships and traineeships. Nearly one-half of working males who left school before completing Year 11 were employed in trades, and more than two-thirds of

females in clerical, sales and service positions. Males worked more hours than females, with higher gross weekly earnings.

Satisfaction with...



**Figure 10** Satisfaction with various aspects of work among members of the LSAY Y98 cohort who left school before completing Year 11

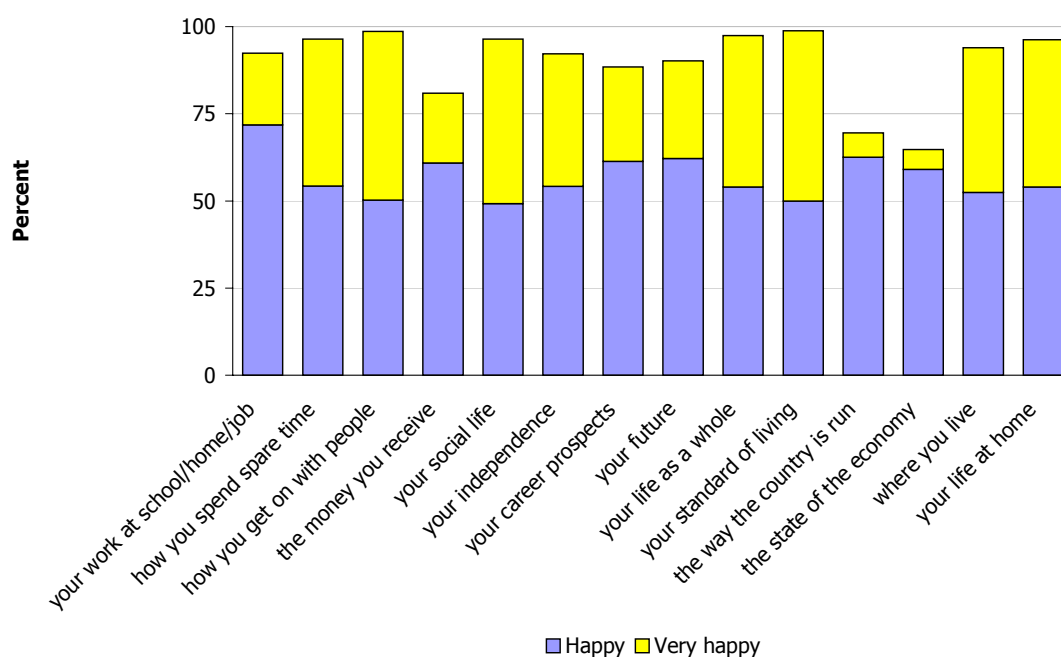
## 5. GENERAL ATTITUDES AND ACTIVITIES

### Happiness with aspects of their lives

All members of the LSAY Y98 cohort—those still at school and those no longer at school—were asked about their happiness with various aspects of their lives. They were asked to tell the interviewer if they were very happy, happy, unhappy or very unhappy with these aspects. Most of the cohort responded to all questions, and most responded positively. There was little difference in the responses between those who were still at school and those who were no longer at school, although those no longer at school tended to say they were ‘very unhappy’ more frequently.

There were two items on which less than 75 per cent of respondents said they were pleased with a given aspect of their lives, and both were items beyond the respondents’ direct control (see Figure 11). Of those still at school, 71 per cent were pleased with the way the country was being run and 65 per cent were pleased with the state of the economy. Of those who had left school, only 58 per cent were pleased with the way the country is run and 64 per cent were pleased with the state of the economy.

Happiness with...



**Figure 11** Per cent of the LSAY Y98 cohort who were happy or very happy with various aspects of their lives in 2000

### How did they spend their spare time?

During their spare time, members of the LSAY Y98 cohort were heavily involved in many leisure activities in 2000 (see Table 14). Approximately seven of every eight members said that they played sport or did regular exercise at least once a week, and

only six per cent said they never participated. More than two-thirds used the Internet each week, and 85 per cent said they read newspapers or magazines in their spare time once a week. More than two-thirds said they did not take part in any community-based activity.

**Table 14 Cohort participation in spare time leisure activities in 2000, by gender**

	Once a week (%)	At least once a month (%)	Every 3 months or less often (%)	Never (%)
<b>Go to the library</b>				
Male	14	21	27	38
Female	17	27	27	29
<b>Read books</b>				
Male	35	20	21	24
Female	45	23	18	14
<b>Read newspapers or magazines</b>				
Male	87	8	2	3
Female	84	13	2	2
<b>Use the Internet</b>				
Male	71	11	4	14
Female	66	14	6	15
<b>Play sport or do regular exercise</b>				
Male	90	4	2	5
Female	84	7	2	7
<b>Take part in any community based activity</b>				
Male	15	7	9	70
Female	16	8	10	66

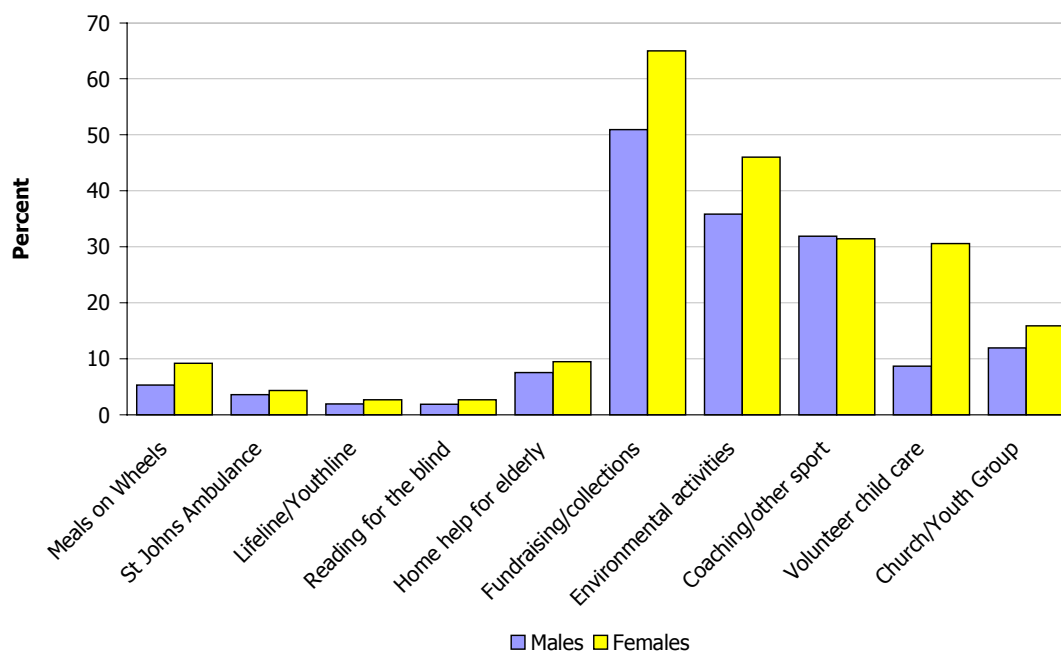
While there were only minor differences between males and females in most spare-time activities, there were greater differences in the literacy-based activities of reading and library use. Nearly one in four (24%) males said they never read a book, compared to 14 per cent of females. When asked about reading for enjoyment, 16 per cent of males said they had not read any books in the previous 12 months, compared to 7 per cent of females. On average, females had read 24 books for pleasure in the previous year, and males had read 15 books (see Table 15). Similar findings regarding gender differences in Australian 15-year-olds' attitudes towards reading were found in the Programme for International Student Assessment (Lokan, Greenwood & Cresswell, 2001), which also showed a moderate correlation between reading achievement and reading engagement.

**Table 15 Number of books read for pleasure in previous 12 months, by gender**

	None (%)	1-10 books (%)	11-50 books (%)	More than 50 books (%)	Mean number of books read
Male	16	56	22	5	15
Female	7	51	33	9	24

Even though more than two-thirds of the LSAY Y98 cohort said they never participated in community volunteer activities during their spare time, nearly six out

of ten (58%) did take part in fundraising activities, and more than four out of ten (41%) took part in environmental activities. Females participated in some activities more frequently than males did, most notably in volunteer childcare (see Figure 12).



**Figure 12** Percent of LSAY Y98 cohort who participate in selected community volunteer activities, by gender

## Summary

This section provided information on the general attitudes of all members of the LSAY Y98 cohort. Members of the cohort were happy with the social aspects of their lives, and were most unhappy aspects outside their direct control—the running of the country and the state of the economy. On most aspects of their lives, there were only minor differences between those still at school and those who had left school before completing Year 11. Eighty-five per cent of cohort members read newspapers or magazines at least once a week in their spare time during 2000, and eighty-seven per cent played sport or did regular exercise.

## 6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This Cohort Report has presented an overview of what the Year 9 class of 1998—the LSAY Y98 cohort—were doing during 2000. Of the cohort, 86 per cent were still at school. Most of those who had left school before completing Year 11 had been working, and most of those working had been employed full-time. More than one in six of those no longer at school had been participating in some other form of study. Nearly one-half of the school students were working while at school. Regardless of whether they are at school or not, members of the Y98 cohort were satisfied with how they were spending their time and happy with their lives in general.

These Cohort Reports are intended to provide information on what each LSAY cohort has been doing during a year. In 2001, the majority of the LSAY Y98 cohort will be in Year 12 at school, at which time they will face important decisions about their futures. Data collected at that time will provide opportunities to examine changes in plans about further study and attitudes to life in general.

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