



MEDIA RELEASE

TWEENS AND TEENS WORRY MOST ABOUT THEIR FAMILY

Embargoed to: 17 December 2019

When Australian young people were asked what they worry about, the majority cited issues concerning their families, according to new research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The *Growing Up In Australia* Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found the issues of greatest concern among 10-11 year-olds and 12-13 year-olds were their families, followed by terrorism, the use of drugs and alcohol and school related matters.

Australian Institute of Family Studies Director, Anne Hollonds said it was important to understand what children and young people worry about in order to support and deal with their concerns effectively.

“As young people move through childhood and adolescence they experience many changes and it can be a worrying time as they learn to deal with changes in their bodies, relationships and moving from primary to secondary school,” she said.

“As young people get older, friends become more important but in their ‘twens’ and early teenage years, most still rely greatly on their families for financial, practical and emotional support and guidance.

“Our study found two-thirds of 10-11 year-olds were worried about a family member becoming seriously ill or injured, more than half were concerned about fighting in their family and nearly half were worried about their parents losing their job.

“By the age of 12-13, the level of worry about family issues had declined but still remained a prominent concern for this age group with more than a half worrying about the health of family members and close to 4 out of 10 concerned about family fighting and parental job loss.”

Ms Hollonds said global issues were another major concern among children at both age groups.

“In both age groups, about 4 in 10 children said they were worried about terrorism and war,” she said.

“The use of drugs and alcohol was also a concern for many children (44 per cent at 10-11 years) although this appeared to become less of an issue once they reached their teens (37 per cent at 12-13 years).

“Concern about the environment remained fairly stable over time with one third of children in these age groups worrying about this issue.”

Ms Hollonds said school was also a source of anxiety for some children although the nature of the issue differed for the age groups.

“The study found changing schools was an issue of greater concern for students aged 10-11 years who were approaching the transition from primary to secondary school, requiring them to make new friends and adapt to new school settings. In contrast, 12-13 year-olds were more worried about not performing well at school.”

Ms Hollonds said that relatively fewer teens and tweens were concerned about how they looked and whether they fitted in with their friends.

“While concerns about personal appearance and fitting in with friends ranked the lowest among the issues children were asked about, a sizeable proportion of children – 20 per cent of 10-11 year-olds and 25 per cent of 12-13 year-olds - were still worried about these issues,” she said.

“It is possible that concerns about these issues may increase as children move through adolescence and peer relationships become more important.”

Ms Hollonds said the study also found specific gender, economic and cultural differences in children who worried more about these issues.

“Our study found that a higher percentage of girls worried about how they looked and fitting in with friends than boys. The only issue that concerned boys more than girls was the possibility that one of their parents may lose their job,” she said.

“Children from disadvantaged families worried more about a range of issues than children from more advantaged families. In addition, children aged 10-11 of parents with no post-secondary school qualifications reported higher levels of concern about most issues. However, by the age of 12-13 years, most of these differences had disappeared.

“Children from culturally and linguistically diverse families in Australia also generally worried more than children from English-speaking backgrounds, with these worries became more wide-ranging as the children got older.”

Access a copy of the AIFS' *Growing Up in Australia* Longitudinal Study of Australian Children 2018 Annual Statistical Report [Tweens and teens: What do they worry about?](#)

Media contact: Luisa Saccotelli 0400 149 901 or Aileen Muldoon 0419 112 503.

AIFS conducts original research to increase understanding of Australian families and the issues that affect them. Go to: aifs.gov.au