



MEDIA RELEASE

TEEN CAREER DREAMS FIT GENDER STEREOTYPES

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Six in ten Australian 14-15 year-olds know what career they would like to have in the future but the jobs that boys aspire to are quite different to those that girls aspire to, according to new research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The Institute's Director, Anne Hollonds said 60 per cent of 14-15 year-olds – who know what job they would like – aspire to a professional or a managerial job. This figure is high when compared to the 35 per cent of workers currently in professional or managerial jobs.

"Boys most wanted to work as engineering or transport professionals; in information and communications technology; or in construction – which girls rarely stated as their desired jobs," Ms Hollonds said.

"Girls rank being an educator; a legal or social professional as their top career choices. None of these occupations were in the boys' top ten selections.

"Some jobs were ranked highly by boys well as girls, including doctors and other medical professionals, and design, planning and architecture.

"The highly gendered career aspirations may have been shaped at a much younger age by parents' occupations, the local area labour market, or their own interests and perceptions of available jobs."

Ms Hollonds said very few teenagers aspired to work in what may be regarded as less prestigious jobs, such as in retail, hospitality or manufacturing.

Around 11 per cent of teens desired to get into less realistic jobs, such as for boys, being a professional footballer, a you-tuber or a technology expert 'apple-genius' and for girls, an actor or ballet dancer.

AIFS Senior Research Fellow, Dr Jennifer Baxter said four in ten 14-15 year-olds in the study did not know what career or occupation they would like to have.

"Career uncertainty at this age may not be a problem and in fact, it can actually be beneficial if it means teens get to explore a range of options," Dr Baxter said.

"Where it is less of a positive is for teens who are less motivated to explore the various options, who are less certain about their own abilities or whose school outcomes are poorer.

"For example, around half of those expecting to complete no education after secondary school were uncertain about their career future.

"This group of teens were also the least likely to be talking to parents, teachers or school counsellors about their future and may need extra guidance to avoid leaving school early.

"Even those doing well in school were not always clear about future plans. A high proportion of girls with high Year 9 NAPLAN numeracy scores did not know what career they might pursue.

"By contrast, both boys and girls in the lowest quartile of Year 9 NAPLAN numeracy results were the most likely to know what they want to do. These teens could often visualise specific jobs, such as working as plumbers or hairdressers."

"All teens need good information to help them identify the range of jobs that may be suitable to them and the pathway to achieve their aspiration. Some may also need help to modify their plans to suit their skills and the nature of the labour market."





Australian Government

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