



MEDIA RELEASE

MONEY THE MAIN MOTIVATOR FOR WORKING TEENS

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Australian teens choose to work for the money – citing financial reasons as the main motivation to get a job – according to new research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The Institute's Director, Anne Hollonds said 16 per cent of Australian 12-13 year olds were working, rising to 39 per cent of 14-15 year olds.

"Financial factors were the main reason teens gave for their employment. This was less about saving up for something or helping with family expenses and more about earning every-day spending money," Ms Hollonds said.

"Data from the ABS shows that girls' jobs were likely to include work as baby-sitters, sales assistants, checkout operators and waiters while boys tended to work as labourers, sales assistants, kitchen hands and fast food cooks."

Younger teens at 12-13 earned an average of \$31 a week for around 3 hours work per week, while older teens at 14-15 earned \$77 a week for about 6 hours work per week.

The study – involving about 3,500 teens from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children – examined which teens are working, when and how often they worked.

At 12-13 years, similar proportions of boys and girls were working, but at 14-15 years, girls were more likely to be working than boys.

By 14-15, girls were more likely to be working for an employer (31 per cent) than boys (24 per cent), with another 11-12 per cent of boys and girls at this age working informally, including helping out in a family business, coaching a sports team or babysitting.

At 12-13 years, boys and girls were a little more likely to be working in informal jobs (9-10 per cent) rather than working for an employer (7-8 per cent).

AIFS' Senior Research Fellow, Dr Jennifer Baxter said teens in outer regional or remote parts of Australia were more likely to be employed than those in city areas.

"Overall, girls were more likely to be employed than boys at age 14-15, but in outer regional areas it was the boys who were more likely to be employed, particularly in informal work. This may be explained by these areas having increased opportunities for boys to work in areas like farming, labouring or contributing to a family business," she said.

"Teens were not necessarily working to help with their family's cost of living expenses. We found lower rates of teen employment among families in lower socio economic families. However when teens in lower income families were in employment, they were more likely to be working longer hours."

Dr Baxter said the research also looked at teen employment and any links to their socio-emotional development and academic performance.

"Overall, teens who were not employed at 14-15 years had relatively weak social and emotional skills and also in the years before," she said.

"This suggests that teens who are less confident socially may be less motivated to take up employment at this stage and simply decide to put it off for a while.

"For girls, those doing informal work had the most positive social emotional skills, while for boys it was those working for an employer who had the most positive social emotional skills.





Australian Government

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“Looking at academic outcomes using NAPLAN, we did not find any evidence that employment was related to academic scores – either positively or negatively – suggesting that most teens can balance work and school.”

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