



You're gold...if you're 15 years old

The perceived impact of WorkChoices on
Youth Employment and Education in NSW

Produced for



July 2007

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About this Study

“You’re gold...if you’re 15 years old” is a study of the perceived impact of the federal WorkChoices legislation on youth employment and education in New South Wales in 2007.

Two research methodologies were used to generate the findings contained in this report: the qualitative group discussion and the quantitative survey questionnaire. The qualitative research was undertaken first in order to discover and explore the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of Year 10, 11 and 12 students in NSW with respect to the interplay between their education and employment. The quantitative survey was then designed to measure the extent to which those perceptions are held across a representative sample of NSW students enrolled full-time in the final three years of high school.

In order to ensure that participants in both the qualitative and quantitative research had sufficient direct experience of education and employment to provide meaningful views, participants were required to:

- Be enrolled full-time in High School in New South Wales
- Be employed a minimum of three hours per week throughout the school year
- Be employed or supervised by someone who is not a family member

Qualitative Group Discussions

This study is based on a series of six group discussions with students enrolled full-time in Years 10, 11 and 12 in New South Wales. The sample was evenly divided between girls and boys and between each of the three year-cohorts under investigation. No mixed gender groups were held; groups were made up of either girls or boys in order to encourage honesty and lively debate and discussion. The fieldwork for this study was conducted in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong in April and May 2007.

The groups used for the research were **AFFINITY GROUPS** – naturally occurring groups of friends, classmates and co-workers. The use of existing social groups allowed the project to harness the dynamics of spontaneous peer-group interaction (including the important phenomenon of opinion leadership) and to ‘borrow’ the trust, honesty and frankness of established relationships. This is particularly important as it is known to encourage spontaneous discussion among younger participants.

All discussions were held **IN HOME**, at the residence of one of the participants. The locations were chosen to maximise the comfort of the group and to minimise the artificiality of the research process.

A **NON-DIRECTIVE** technique was used to moderate the discussions. However, a general discussion guide was developed in consultation with the New South Wales Teachers’ Federation as a general framework. Where possible, the asking of direct questions was avoided and participants were encouraged to engage in spontaneous discussion of the topic with one another.

Data generated by non-directive group discussion is essentially qualitative and anecdotal. Accordingly, no attempt has been made to quantify the findings of the qualitative research or

to draw distinctions between majority and minority opinions, other than general observations based on the year of enrolment of the students. The report offers a summary of views expressed, though some emphasis is given to those opinions and attitudes which appeared to be consistent across the whole sample.

Where relevant, quantitative survey results have been interspersed with qualitative results in order to give a reliable guide to the direction of majority opinion.

Quantitative Survey Research

Following the qualitative research, a quantitative questionnaire was developed in consultation with the New South Wales Teachers' Federation.

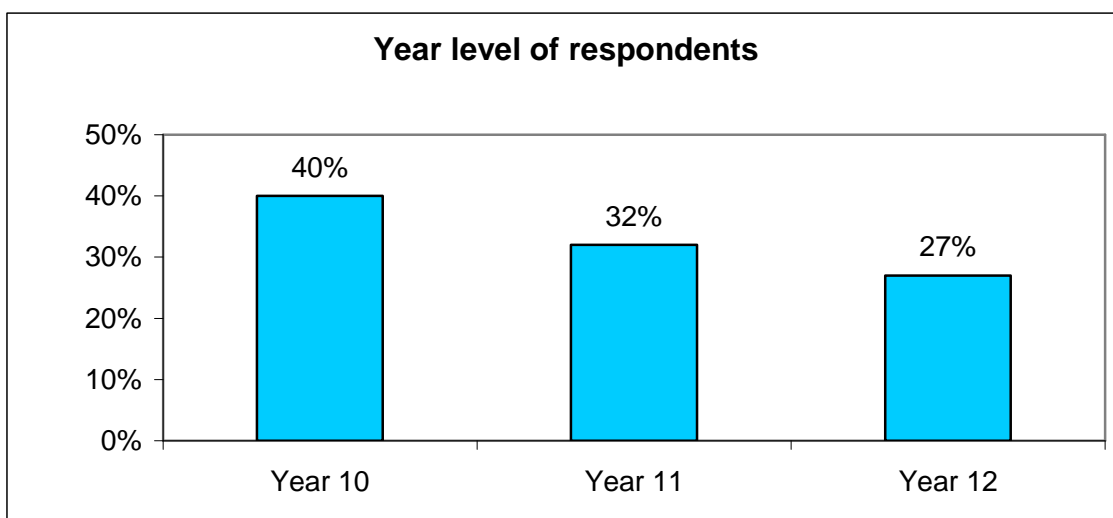
The survey was administered over the Internet, drawing on a random sub-sample of a research panel of Australian Youth. Panel members were screened to ensure they met the specifications before they were permitted to participate. Quotas based on year of enrolment were set to ensure the total sample would be proportionally representative of the three year-cohorts under investigation. Demographic characteristics of respondents such as gender and location were supplied at the time they joined the panel and were subsequently correlated with the survey data generated by the survey.

The survey took each respondent between 6 and 10 minutes to complete. All fieldwork was conducted 2 – 6 May 2007.

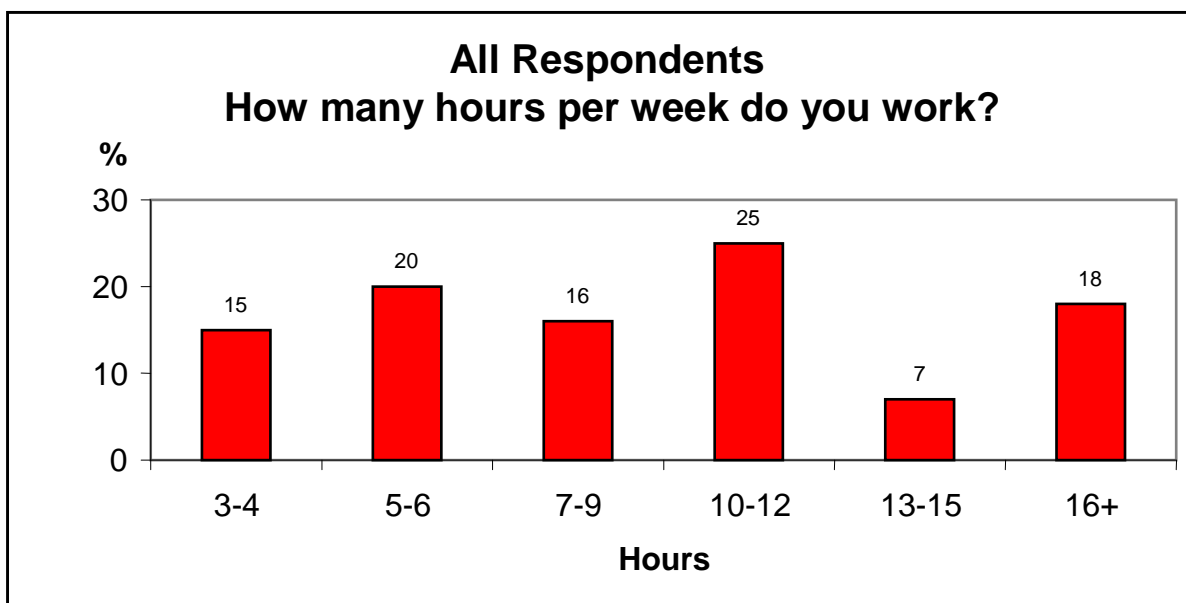
300 students completed this survey from a combined Year 10 – 12 enrolments of 129,406. As a result, the margin of error on a sample of this size is +/- 5.6 % 19 times out of 20.

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About the Students



- Actual enrolments are:
 - Year 10 – 52,340 or 40.0%
 - Year 11 – 41,499 or 32.0%
 - Year 12 – 35,567 or 27.0%

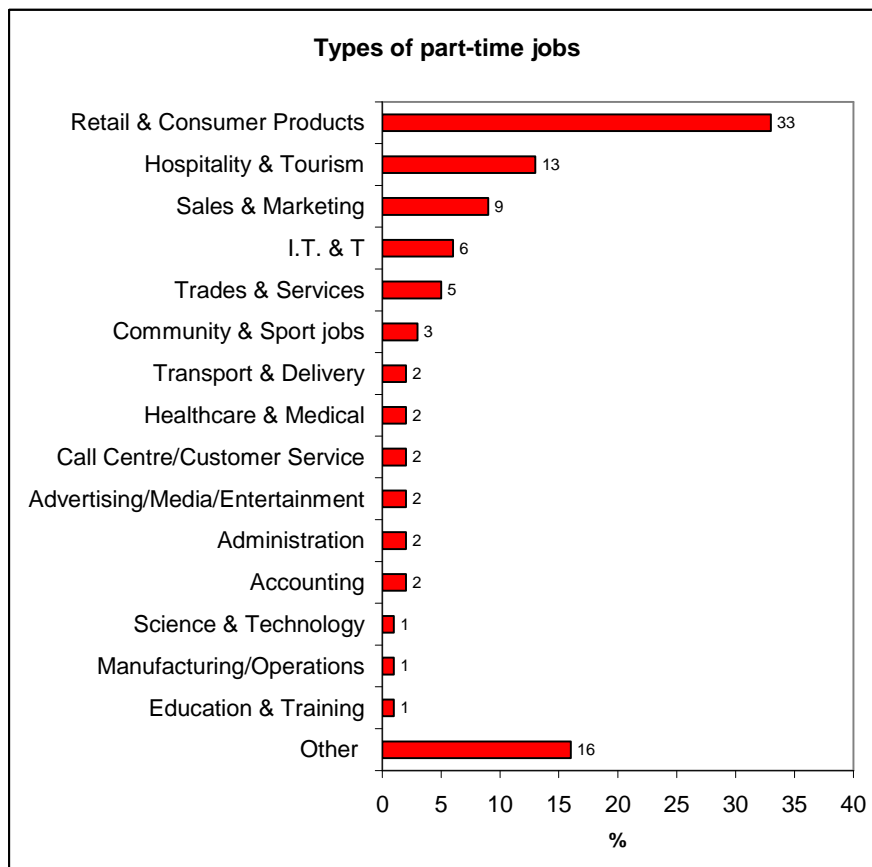


- Half of all students surveyed in Years 10, 11 & 12 work ten or more hours per week. ABS statistics indicate that 53.17% of all 15 – 19 year old Australian students work part-time.
- While a slightly higher percentage of males work more hours (51%) per week than females (48%) in the sample overall, there are more females (30% v. 21%) who work 13 hours or more each week (please refer to Appendix A for more detailed information about the work habits of the students in the sample)
- There is little difference between students surveyed who live in metro areas (49%) and students who live in non-metro areas in terms of the percentage who work more than ten hours per week

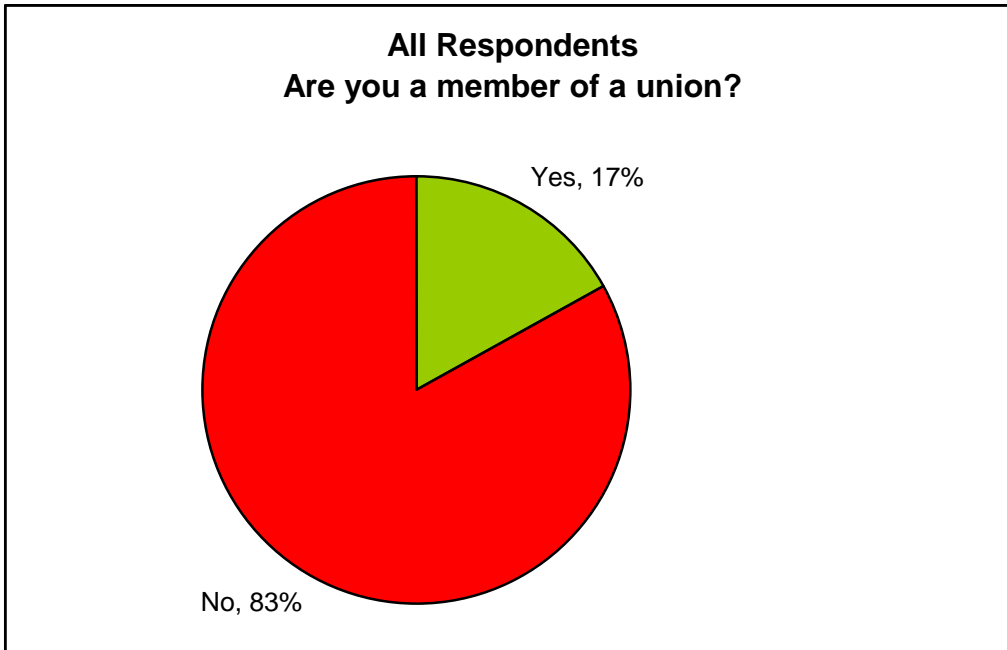
When Respondents Work

Overall Respondents							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 9 am	5%	1%	2%	2%	2%	5%	5%
9 am - Noon	4%	4%	3%	2%	3%	22%	17%
Noon - 3 pm	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	22%	21%
3 - 5 pm	17%	15%	17%	16%	15%	25%	24%
5 - 7 pm	23%	20%	19%	28%	26%	27%	21%
7 - 9 pm	18%	17%	19%	23%	21%	21%	15%
9 - 11 pm	7%	7%	7%	11%	10%	13%	7%
11 pm - 1 am	2%	4%	3%	3%	5%	5%	3%
1 - 3 am	1%	2%	2%	1%	3%	4%	3%
3 - 6 am	4%	2%	5%	3%	4%	5%	5%

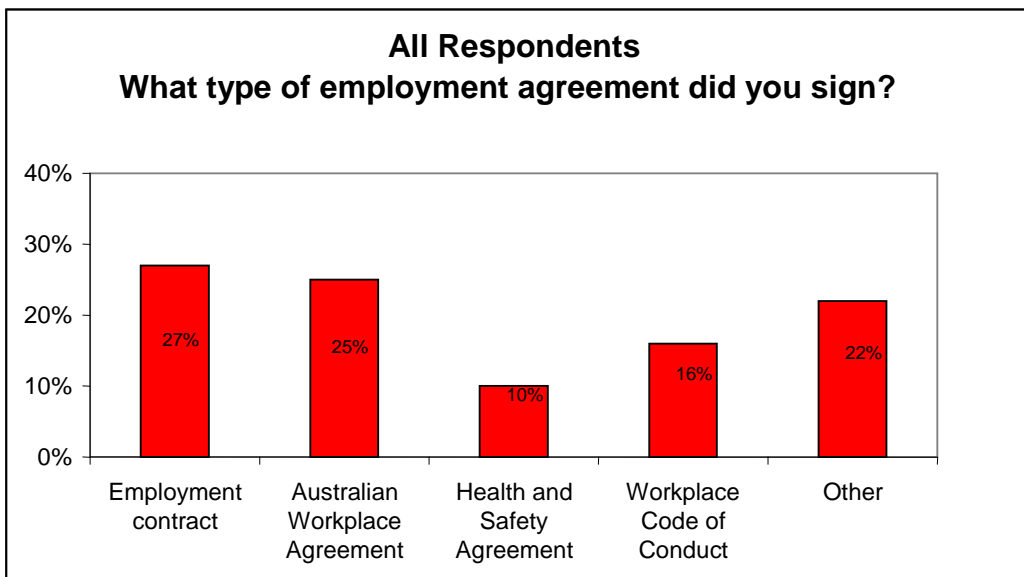
- Weekends are the most likely times for students to work; consequently, they are significantly affected by changes to rates of pay for working on Sundays
- On any given school night, approximately one fifth of working students are rostered to work after 7 p.m., cutting into time for homework and assignments



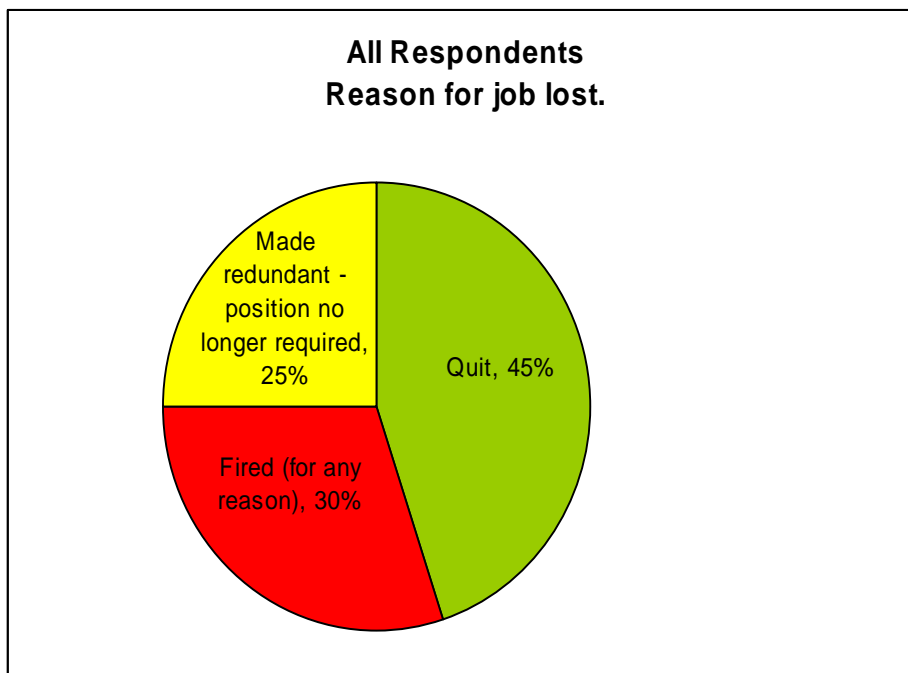
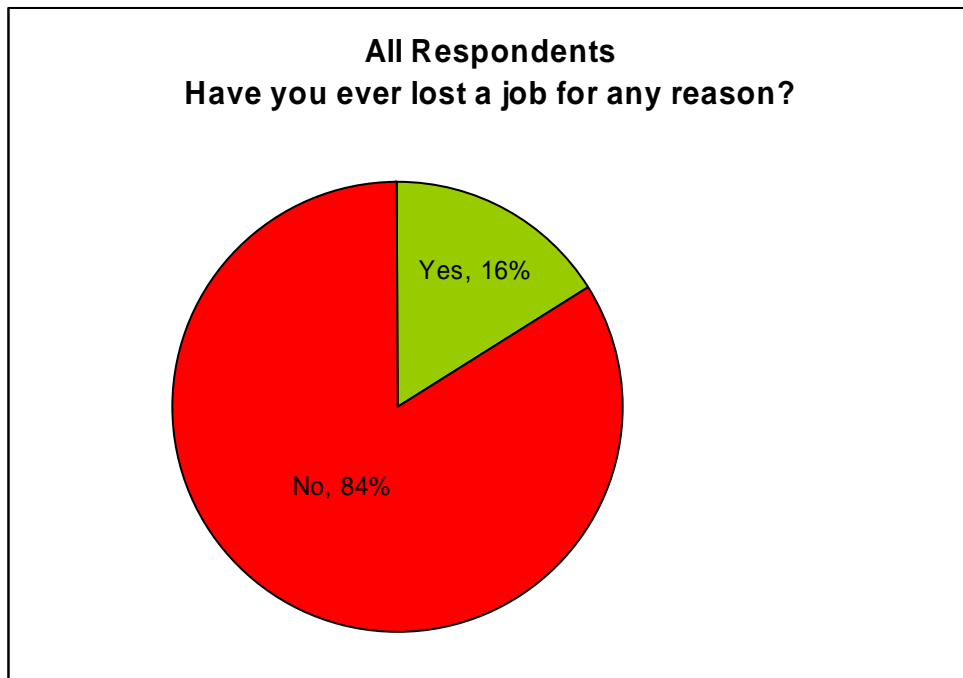
- Nearly half (46%) of all working students are employed in the retail and hospitality sectors; the same sectors which have been most widely impacted by Australian Workplace Agreements



- Fewer than one-in-five NSW Year 10, 11 & 12 students are members of a union
- Students living in non-metro areas were almost twice as likely to be union members than students living in metro areas (24% v. 13%)
- Males are slightly more likely than females to belong to a union (19% v. 16%)



- One quarter of all students surveyed recall having signed an Australian workplace agreement. The percentage increases with age with 18% of Year 10, 25% of Year 11 and 34% of Year 12 students reporting having signed an AWA.
- Nearly half of all students report having signed either an “employment contract” of some sort or another kind of unspecified agreement.



- 16% of all students surveyed reported having lost a job for some reason. Predictably, the percentage increases with age given the increased years spent in paid work:
 - Year 10 – 11% lost a job
 - Year 11 – 20 % lost a job
 - Year 12 – 18% lost a job
- A large percentage (45%) of students report having quit a job, reflecting the fact that young workers will experiment with different sorts of work during high school
- Year 10 students were most likely cite “quit” as their reason for leaving a job (54%) in comparison with Year 11 (48%) and Year 12 (34%)
- Year 12 students were the most likely to report being made redundant (33%) in comparison with Year 11 (26%) and Year 10 (15%)

Executive Summary

Teachers care about their students. This study was commissioned by the New South Wales Teachers' Federation because of a concern that students' performance at school is suffering as a result of too much part-time and casual work. The objectives of this study were to investigate the reasons students work, including the extent to which 'consumerism' may tip the balance between school and work, the length and lateness of student work schedules and any perceived changes in the working conditions of students in the past year that may have had a negative impact on school performance.

As this study demonstrates, the Teachers' concerns were well-placed. It would seem that students do report a strong correlation between longer and later hours at work and poor performance at school. Students who work the most hours are most likely to go to school feeling tired, fail to hand in homework and assignments and to say that part-time work negatively impacts their overall school performance.

There is awareness that the federal government's WorkChoices legislation is creating an environment where employers are incentivised to hire young workers on Australian Workplace Agreements because they are not required to pay Sunday and holiday rates, pay trainees, offer free meals or regular breaks. While teenagers report that the cost of living is high, students on AWAs may face pressure to work longer hours than their counterparts on industrial awards because they are paid a flat rate for all hours worked, regardless of when those hours are scheduled. Young workers also believe that some employers have restructured or suppressed workforce growth temporarily in order to remain below the WorkChoices threshold of 100 employees.

Young workers are particularly susceptible to exploitation by unscrupulous employers for a myriad of reasons. First of all, the enthusiasm of first-time workers blinds them to the possibility of exploitation. Even those who are aware of unfair treatment in the workplace are willing to turn a blind eye to abusive practices for the opportunity to make money and gain employment experience. Secondly, young workers report scant knowledge of rules governing pay rates and working conditions. The fact that there is little formal information provided to part-time and casual workers, combined with the introduction of new workplace rules for those employees covered by WorkChoices, heightens the confusion of student workers. Thirdly, young workers who do sign employment agreements report that they don't always understand what they have signed. Lastly, the relative short tenure and high turnover of young workers means that few in the part-time workforce today are aware of recent changes that may have disadvantaged student workers since the introduction of the new industrial relations laws.

Although AWAs have been promoted as a two-way agreement between employers and employees, negotiation isn't really an option for young workers. More experienced workers may feel that they are being underpaid or that some conditions are being withheld but they don't feel that they are in a strong bargaining position, particularly for unskilled jobs. Asking for a raise is unthinkable for some because they believe they can be easily replaced in a market rich with willing student workers.

Students have not always been vocal in the face of unfair working conditions because money is not their prime motivation for working. The social aspects of work, including the development of enhanced communication and life skills, along with career experience are all cited as better reasons to work than money. It is only once students enter the workforce that they develop an awareness of the need for fairness in the work place and rules to govern fair treatment. Among working students there is a strong appetite for a trusted source of

information about pay rates and conditions. While parents are the most likely purveyors of workplace information, teachers are seen to be unbiased and professional in the advice that they offer. While awareness of unions is not always high, when their role is well-understood they are perceived to exercise a positive influence in the workplace.

As students take up work in their inexorable march to adulthood, they report that one of the most valuable aspects of working life is learning to manage increasing responsibility – at home, at school and at work. While teachers and parents are trustworthy sources of advice about how to manage the dual challenges of school and work, advice from peers is perhaps the most valuable of all. In the words of some students who participated in this study, the best advice is: *Ask questions, don't be shy; give it your all.*

Key Findings

1.0 Students believe that WorkChoices has given employers more opportunity to exploit the inexperience of young workers

1.1 You're gold...if you're fifteen years old

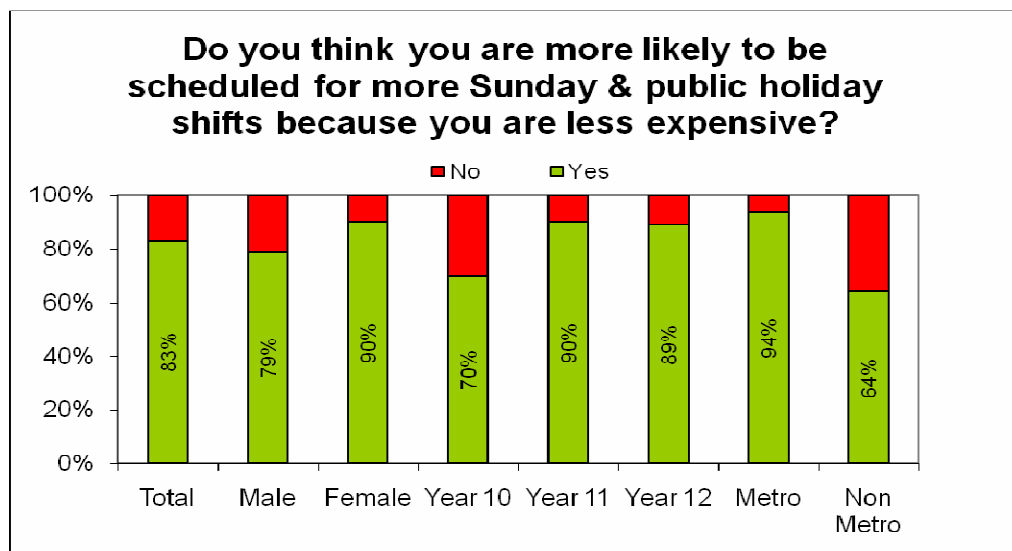
The Australian Industrial Relations system has historically given employers an economic incentive to favour younger workers over older workers. By requiring employers to pay young workers more on each successive birthday after the age of fourteen, the government has created a situation where it is in the best interests of the employer to hire the youngest workers possible in order to keep labour costs down. According to the students who participated in this study, while employers continue to favour younger workers over older ones, they can hardly be expected to act otherwise.

The younger you are, the less they have to pay you. That's why there are a lot of kids who have jobs now. It's cheaper for them.

I've been told that I am cheap; that's why I get so many hours. So, they use the youngest ones possible.

It saves them money in the long run.

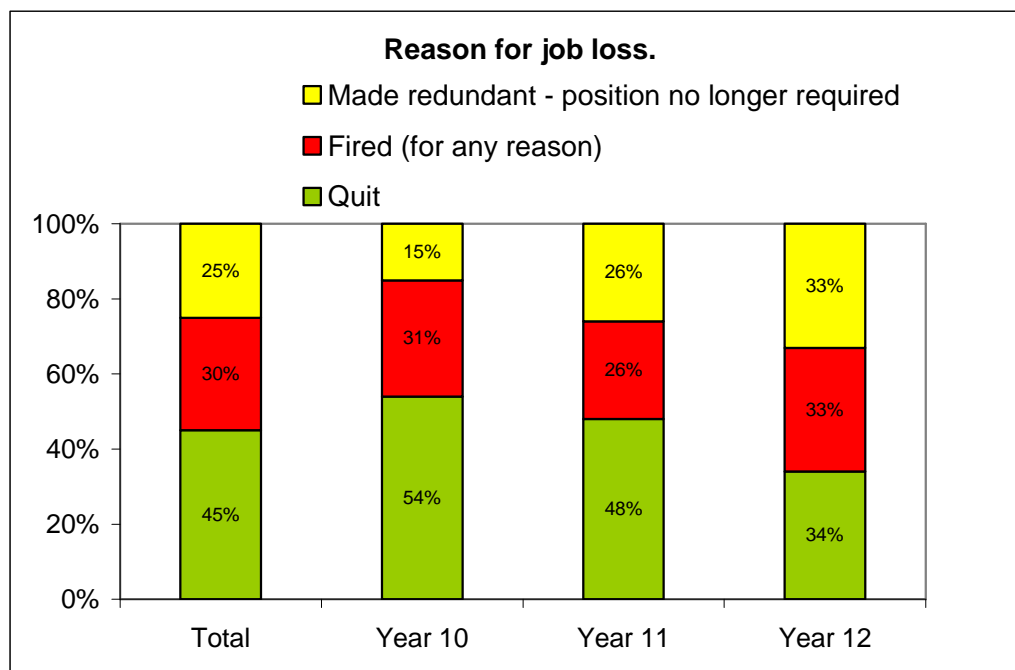
Students are generally aware that employers favour younger workers. 83% believe they are scheduled for more shifts on Sundays and public holidays because they are less expensive.



Research conducted in South Australia in 2004¹ indicated that 17% of workers aged 15 to 19 reported that they been fired or lost shifts after a birthday. Among the

¹ Schuller, Jodie and Houghton, Christine, "Dirt Cheap and Disposable: A report about the exploitation of young workers in South Australia." SA Unions (2004) page 8.

students surveyed for this study, a similar trend was reported both qualitatively and quantitatively. However, in the case of this study, students said that not only were employers incentivised to employ younger workers because of their comparatively cheaper wage rates but also because new workers, of any age, would not be covered by existing industrial awards and would instead be placed on Australian Workplace Agreements.



While the chart above shows a clear trend toward greater redundancies with age, it is important to note that this may also be attributable to other factors rather than age discrimination and a move toward more AWA workers. The cumulative experience of Year 12 students means that they are more likely to have been made redundant at some point in their comparatively longer working lives. Year 10 students may also be more likely to be fired rather than be made redundant because they may be in jobs that are not well suited to their particular skills and aptitudes.

In this case, the qualitative evidence is clearer with respect to the pressure that is placed on older workers to make room for younger ones.

They can't really fire us so they just make life hard for you. So, they say, "Work these hours." But if you can't, anytime you miss three shifts, they can get rid of you. So, they will give you the three worst shifts and make sure that you can't swap'em. So when you don't show, they can fire you. So, that way they can get some new people. They make you fire yourself.

1.2 The relatively short tenure and high turnover of young workers means that few have a point of comparison from which to judge the impact of WorkChoices

One of the realities of young workers is that they pass through the part-time and casual workplace relatively quickly. Since WorkChoices was introduced in 2005, two year-cohorts have already graduated from high school and have pursued further

study or joined the full-time workforce. Into year 3 of WorkChoices, Year 12 students are the only ones with the perspective to be able to compare the current system of rules with the one that preceded it.

Some Perspective on WorkChoices – Part One

Two Year 12 boys talk about the plight of Year Ten students at a local MacDonald's and Pizza Shop

Boy 1: If someone told me that I was not going to get \$20 an hour on Sundays, then I would say that I would want to spend that time with my family.

Moderator: So what about the younger workers.

Boy 1: They don't get paid any extra on Sundays. I offer to work Sundays but they don't always want me [at MacDonald's]. But the young ones get rostered on every Sunday. They are paid \$7 an hour while I get \$20.

Boy 2: The companies are money hungry; that's all it is.

Boy 1: The younger guys are inexperienced. They only put one guy on there who is experienced. So, I am going to sit there and tell them what to do.

Boy 2: It's going to cut [MacDonald's] labour costs. It just like at my work. If someone calls in sick[to the pizza shop], they could call my friend who knows what he is doing, but they don't. The supervisor calls one of the 15 year old girls because they are cheaper.

Boy 1: And that's what screws you on a busy Sunday when you have a big church group or something.

Boy 2: On a Friday or Saturday night, if I have inexperienced staff on, I just yell at them. I don't care. My manager lets me.

Boy 1: Those new rules are bullshit. It's so not fair. Number one, because I am doing the same work he is doing but he is getting paid less than me. Number two, because when I was his age, I was making more money than him on a Sunday. But, they get a better flat rate but it's the same every day. Like Australia Day; it was the busiest day I ever worked at Maccas and all the people working with me were younger than me. So, I ask, "Why all the young people?" And they say, "Because we don't get paid as much as youse." And then I asked myself, "Why do they work here?" And then I thought, if they don't work at Maccas and they go to Woollies, they are still going to have to sign those contracts; anywhere where it is easy to get a job, they are still going to make them sign those contracts.

1.3 In some cases, employers are perceived to restructure their businesses solely to take advantage of WorkChoices

Again, according to older and more experienced Year 12 student workers, some employers are believed to be actively managing their businesses so that they can take advantage of WorkChoices provisions. For example, students spoke about efforts to restructure or reduce the workforce to fewer than 100 employees, so that all employees would be required to sign Australian Workplace Agreements.

What MacDonald's has done is they have made every store an individual store so that they only have 80 people; that is how they cut us back. Sometimes, they don't hire as many people as they should.

Faced with the prospect of signing or not signing an AWA, some students confront a Hobson's choice.

I have a friend who was asked to sign a contract and she didn't know what to do. If she didn't sign it she could lose her job but if she didn't, it would lower the amount that she got paid.

2.0 WorkChoices has compounded the confusion of younger workers; few have the knowledge or confidence to negotiate rates and conditions

2.1 Some students wonder if there are any rules anymore

Because of their inexperience, younger workers are always at a disadvantage in the workplace. For many young people participating in this study, 'the rules' were just one of many new things to be learned. The introduction of WorkChoices has simply heightened their level of uncertainty.

No one knows. No one knew we needed a TFN to get paid more.

They don't have to follow those laws anymore [regarding holiday rates].

With the new laws, it's harder to know your rights.

Not only are the rules new for all of their co-workers but there are also workplaces in various stages of adopting WorkChoices provision. Complicating this further, not all workplaces are treated the same under the federal government's new laws; companies on either side of the 100 employee dividing line are treated differently.

Girl 1: I get an extra dollar an hour on Sundays.

Girl 2: We get double time-and-a-half on Sundays.

Girl 3: We don't.

Girl 4: We don't either.

Girl 1: The old ladies get a tea break after 3 hours or something like that.

Girl 2: My sister works from 8:30 a. to 3:00 p.m. and she only gets a twenty-minute break.

Girl 3: I think you are supposed to get a half hour break after five hours.

Whether or not new workers should be paid while on trial or on traineeships was an area of confusion and contention for students participating in this study. The only students with any certainty on this subject had taken an effective careers course at school.

They're supposed to pay you on trial.

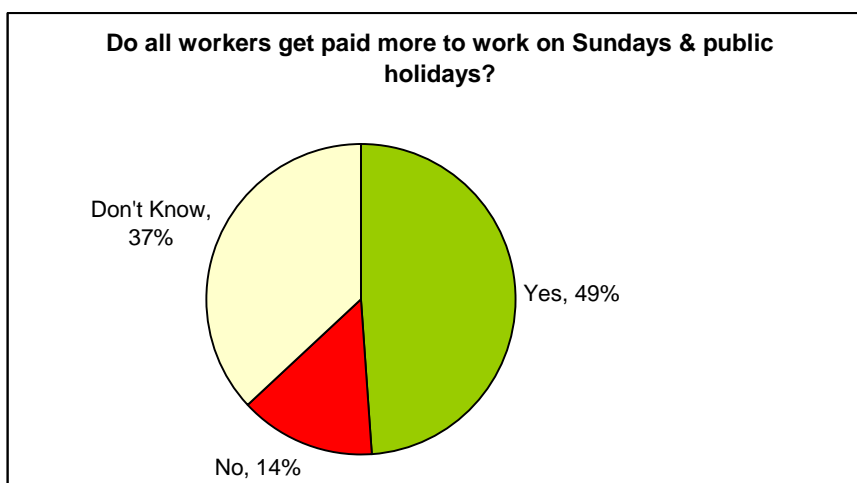
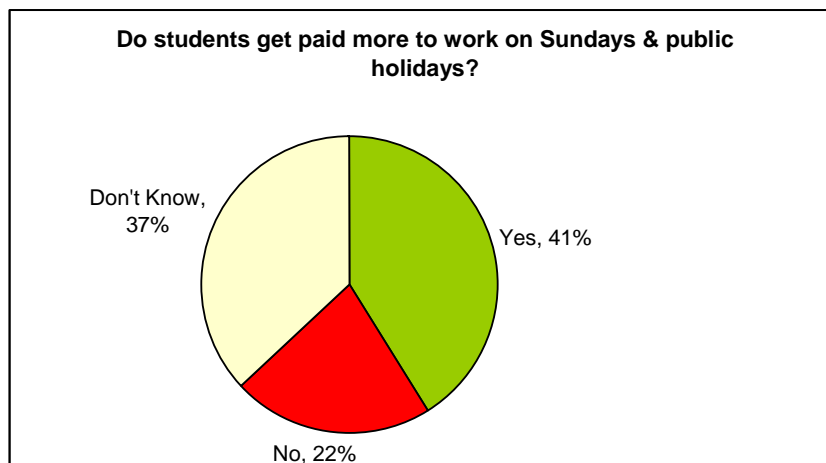
No one knew we had to be paid on trial.

Sunday and holiday rates were the subject of much more widespread confusion. This issue is clouded not only by the different regimes above and below the 100 employee marker but also the different treatment of older workers on awards versus new workers on AWAs. Some students weren't entirely sure if the movement to flat rates on Sunday was not simply part of the community's changing attitudes toward a day of rest.

I know this girl who has been working at Maccas for like four years and she is on the old laws, so she will get time-and-a-half. Whereas, people who come in on the new laws get like a flat rate, even on Sundays.

Now that it has become the norm for things to be open on Sunday, they don't have to pay higher rates. It's just like any other day.

The following two charts indicate just how much confusion reigns among younger workers on the subject of Sunday and holiday pay. Roughly one-in-four student workers are unsure if higher rates are offered for Sunday and holiday shifts. Those who are aware, believe students are less likely than older workers to be paid more to work on Sundays and public holidays.



2.2 Young workers are often at a disadvantage at work because they have little formal information about their rights and responsibilities

Many first-time workers are either too excited at the prospect of working, or too nervous, to ask about rates of pay before commencing work. Several respondents reported that they only learned their rate of pay after receiving their first paycheque.

When I was younger, I didn't care. I would've worked if they had paid me \$5 an hour but then I got there and it was \$6 and I thought, "This is the best job in the world."

I was too scared to ask them how much because I was concerned that they would think that I was just there for the money.

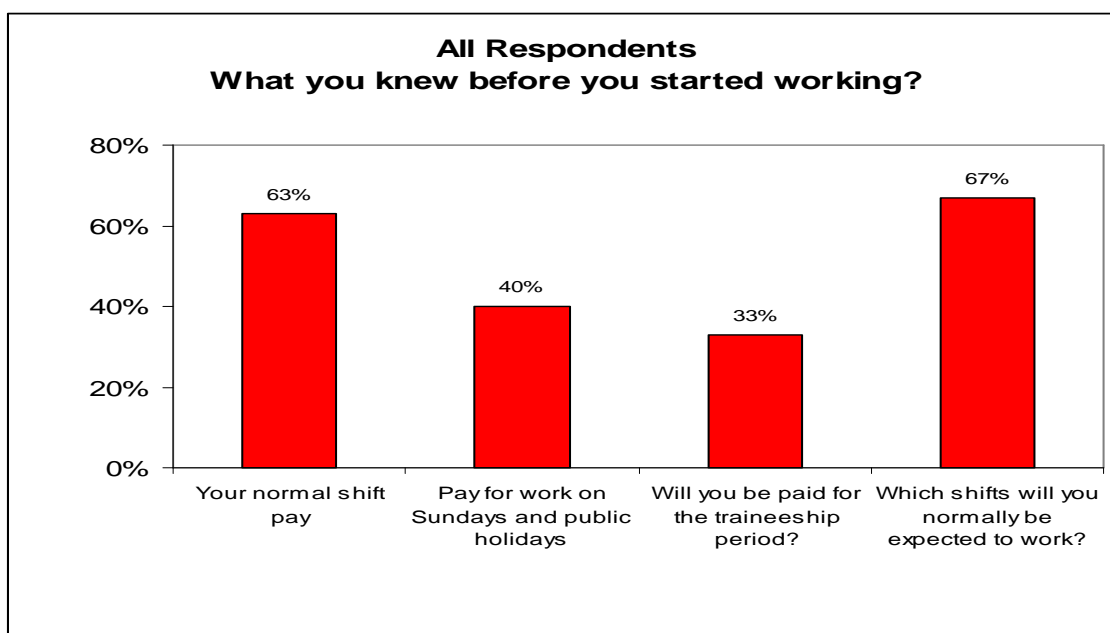
The rate of pay is often a secondary consideration for many young workers. Several respondents said that they valued the convenience or the camaraderie over the

compensation offered. Young workers may be aware that they are being exploited but turn a blind eye nonetheless.

It's so fun and we get food there. It's just a nice place. I'm not bothered that I don't get paid that much.

The deli was close and convenient, so I just decided to work there. I didn't know how much I would be paid.

They're taking advantage but the kids know it.



It would seem that many employers ensure that young workers are aware of their responsibilities to show up for a particular shift but are less concerned about providing other information. Most employment related information is relayed by friends and siblings.

My friend works there so I sort of got the gist of what was involved with it from her.

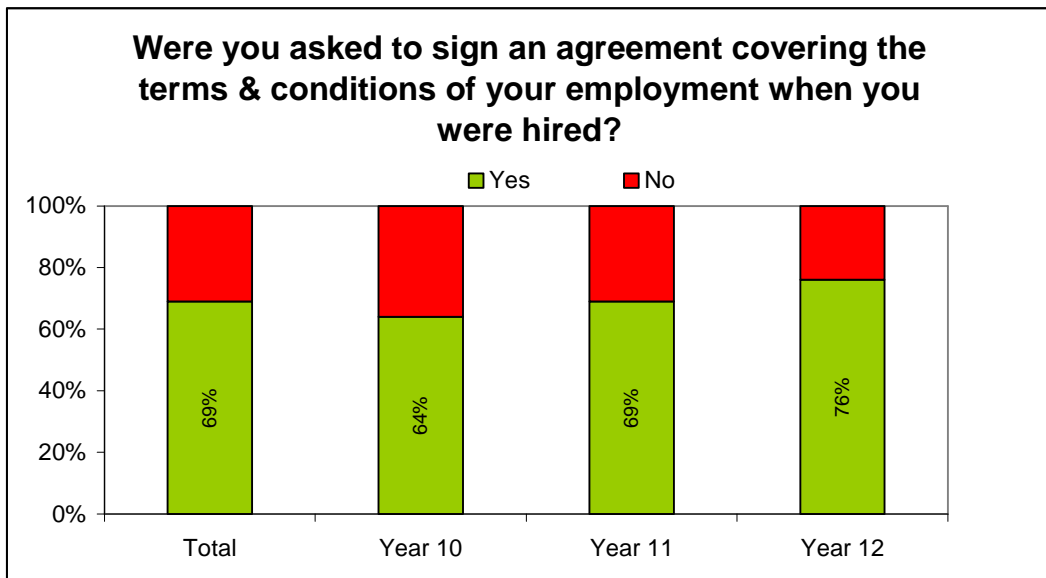
Heaps of my friends already work at Maccas, so I can find out stuff.

Larger employers (e.g. fast food restaurants, large grocery stores) were most likely to have formal communication/induction programmes for young workers (i.e. detailed verbal explanation/referral to website). Information is a sign of respect that is likely to be repaid by young workers.

She showed me this sheet and it showed different ages and the different rates of pay. She said, "We want to tell people what to expect before they start. That's what we're about."

Maccas is good because they give you all the details. I get \$9.60 now because I am 16 and I just got a pay rise.

Given that many casual and part-time jobs are taken up informally, large percentages of workers do not recall having signed an agreement covering their terms and conditions of employment. 36% of Year 10, 31% of Year 11 and 24% of Year 12 students reported that they had no agreement covering their employment.



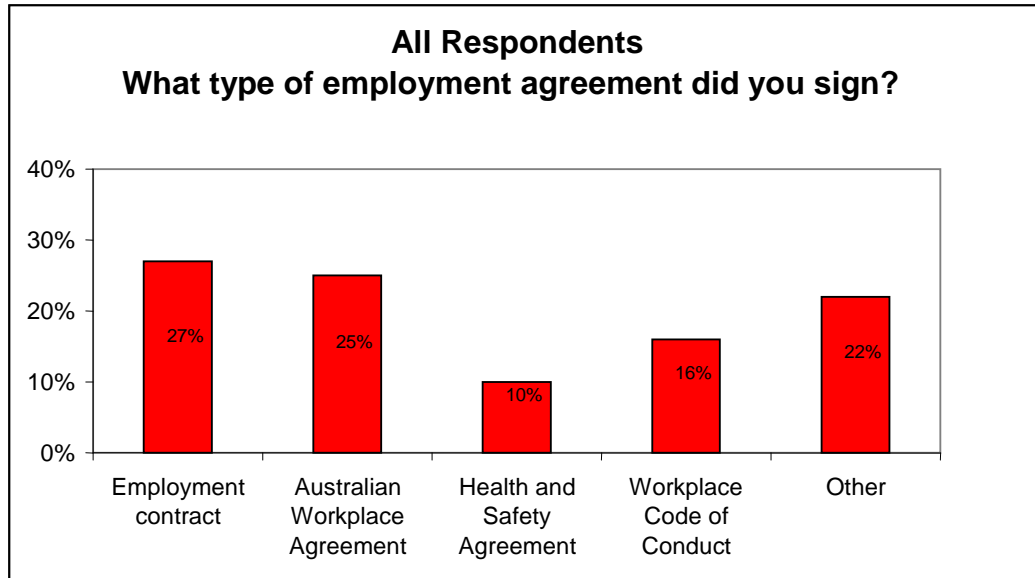
2.3 Young workers report a low level of comprehension but a high level of compliance with agreements in the workplace

Student employees of larger organisations were the most likely to have signed a formal agreement which their parents may have helped them to read and understand. Some operate on blind trust.

No, I really don't know what the agreement was all about. My Dad read it. He didn't sign it, I did, but he explained it to me.

I'm not sure what I signed but I knew them so I trusted them. I know that's bad but my parents know them too.

It was not uncommon for participants to report that they had signed agreements covering other aspects of workplace practice and behaviour (e.g. OH&S agreements and codes of conduct for child carers).



2.4 Negotiation isn't really an option...even for older student workers

Although AWAs have been promoted as a two-way agreement between employers and employees, negotiation isn't really an option for young workers. More experienced workers may feel that they are being underpaid or that some conditions are being withheld but they don't feel that they are in a strong bargaining position, particularly for unskilled jobs. Asking for a raise is almost unthinkable for some because they believe they can be easily replaced.

At this stage, it is not really negotiable to ask for a raise. With the new work place laws, they can just find another teenager who will want to work. It's not like we are doing anything that requires a skill or anything.

Others wonder what the long-term implications of WorkChoices will be on the work ethic of young people.

Some Perspective on WorkChoices – Part Two

Two Year 12 boys talk about the plight of Year Ten students at a local MacDonald's and Pizza Shop

Boy 2: If ever we have to leave our jobs, we're all going to have to sign those contracts.

Moderator: So, with these new contracts, you are supposed to be able to negotiate.

Boy 2: No, not really.

Boy 1: So, you go in and argue with them and they are older and they ask themselves, "Do we really need them here?"

Boy 3: Hundreds of kids will apply at Maccas.

Boy 4: So, if you go in there and start arguing with them, they will say, "Get lost, there are plenty of 15 year olds who will work for less."

Boy 5: And, they don't have to be rostered on for at least 3 hours a week. Some haven't worked in weeks. I asked them and they said, "Oh, it's those contracts we had to sign."

Boy 1: It's crap. I asked [MacDonald's] head office. They said they don't have to give them so many hours per week. And, they don't have to give them a meal after five hours. It's just making life harder for everyone and sooner or later, we're gonna say it's not worth having a job and we'll just sit at home on the dole and make more money.

3.0 For young workers, work is about more than money

3.1 Money (for spending or saving) is just one of many motivations to work for young people

While young workers frequently lack a point of reference with respect to employment, some recall childhood employment experiences that make teenage work seem luxurious in comparison. For these students, some jobs just aren't worth the money. However, as young workers mature, they discover there are more reasons than money to work.

My Dad drives taxi. So, my first job was washing cars on the front lawn--\$3 each. All the taxis would drive up and I'd make \$9 a weekend. I worked so hard for that money.

I had this job delivering prescriptions for the chemist. I was getting \$4 an hour. It was 38°C. And once we were done, we had to go back to the pharmacy and sweep up the dust. Sometimes, we only got \$8 for two hours. It just wasn't worth it.

The social aspect of work can be one of its biggest attractions, particularly for younger students whose only alternative may be to stay at home. Work also opens up new social networks outside of family and school.

I think [work] is good for making friends.

I just like getting out of the house, away from Mum.

If you go there and you like the people you work with, it is okay. You go out and do stuff. Not just as work colleagues but as friends.

Young workers were quick to point out the benefits of work experience, especially in terms of developing social & communication skills. Several respondents felt that work prepared them for a variety of interactions in the adult world, including the ability to deal with difficult people and colleagues

It is really good to interact with different sorts of people than if you were just at school. At work, there is that one girl who no one likes at school but at work you have got to interact with her. It is good life skills to learn to work with people you wouldn't talk to otherwise.

There was this old man who kept coming round. I was so scared. He kept stroking my hand and saying "Nice girl." You need to learn how to handle things like that.

I get scared when all the boys come in from surfing. Sometimes, they are nice; but sometimes they are boneheads. It's good to have the self-confidence to deal with them.

Work can provide an opportunity for young people to develop independently of parents and siblings; work adds another layer to their maturing identities. Some students reported a high level of satisfaction with 'accomplishments' outside of home and school; some attach a sense of pride to new skills acquired on the job

Personal satisfaction. You get a buzz out of doing something; you can make a good coffee!

Still others report that work experience can help build a strong CV for pursuing bigger opportunities in future.

I love my job because I want to work with kids. So, this gives me the chance to do it without having a degree. So, it's really not like work.

I am doing a traineeship in hospitality which will help me get a job in future.

If you work, it looks good later on. You've got something to put on your CV. It shows you understand teamwork, it builds character, you get a bigger idea of who you are and what you are.

Others say supervisory experience at work helps develop leadership skills.

I like my job because everybody listens to me at work. You can earn respect. You feel like you are part of something.

It makes you look responsible to your manager. If staff listen to you, then you are using your leadership skills. Your manager might think that you can do more.

Of course, money, for spending or saving does have its attractions. Some say that 'getting stuff' reinforces a sense of achievement. Others value the sense of security and contentment that 'money in the bank' offers.

You start working and you save up. I saved and bought my first Gameboy and I thought I was the coolest kid in the world. My parents never bought me anything extra.

It's just the feeling of having it there. Knowing that you have that money in your bank account and you know if you want to buy something or go somewhere, you can.

3.2 Teenagers perceive that life for them is more expensive than ever

While successive generations of teenagers would no doubt report that life is more expensive for them than for their forebears, it cannot be denied that today's teenagers are facing some kinds of expenses not incurred previously. Technology, in particular, represents a new and growing expense for teenagers.

The other day, I dropped my I-Pod and that was \$400.

We buy technology.

You have to buy the I-Pods and then you have to buy the upgrades and the music and the speakers.

But technology is not just another luxury; it is more than entertainment. For many young people technology is the way they communicate and connect with their social network. The mobile phone can consume a large part of the teen budget unless it is charged to a pre-paid account.

I spend most of my money on credit for my phone.

Everyone's on pre-paid now.

When not connecting with their friends via technology, teens 'go out' to socialise. However, as many respondents pointed out, it is not really possible to go out and not spend money. Perhaps because fast food is so ubiquitous, perhaps because it is the centre of so many teenagers social life, food consumes a large portion of teenage budgets. While few if any teenagers reported any peer pressure to purchase more 'stuff', several mentioned a feeling of obligation to go out with their friends.

If you don't have a job, you can't go out.

I live at MacDonald's.

Every weekend we say, "Let's go to Subway."

Then, it comes to friends and you don't want to let them down, so you go.

While work provides the money needed to go out, it also puts limits on the time available for doing so. According to the participants in this study, one key difference between teenagers who work and those who don't is the time available to socialise. Ironically, workers have the money but not the time, while non-workers have the time but not the money.

When you've got a job, you've got the money to go out but you can't go out because you've got to work. It's kinda funny.

Having money becomes more important as teens get older. Not only do they face more expenses but they also relish the freedom and independence having one's own money can bring.

Having your own money, you can go out and do what you like. Whereas, if you are sponging off your parents, you get all the questions: "Where are you going? What are you doing?"

Some of us have girlfriends too. They take money.

Movies and dinner; there's \$50 gone.

For several of the participants in this study, a car was the ultimate sign of independence. Younger students reported that they were saving up for one; older students reported that they never stopped paying for one.

With a car, the cost never ends. I spend at least a hundred dollars a week on my car.

Cars are killing my money these days: insurance, petrol, the regos.

It's hard to try to save while going out and paying for petrol.

3.3 Some young workers report that work has taught them to be more value-conscious

Some young workers report a changed attitude to consuming as a result of work; some said that their parents have been encouraging them to pay for more of their own purchases, resulting in a different attitude toward extraneous purchases

When it's my own money, I tend not to spend it so freely. Now that it's my money, I value it a lot more.

You have a different attitude to what you buy. I have a wealthy friend and she doesn't work. Sometimes she asks us for money but she doesn't realise what it means.

When you have a job, it changes everything because you have a bigger responsibility.

Parents give me the money for the things that I need; not the things I want.

Some teens say that the pressure to become more financially independent comes from within. Some teens just feel like they "should" pay for more,

I don't think our parents make us; we just kind of feel like we should.

I feel bad these days, taking money off my parents. I mean, you have a job so you feel responsible.

3.4 Young workers can make good savers

Several participants in this study talked about strict savings plans; several said that they set aside fifty percent of their earnings, or were required to by parents

I save half of it and put it in a separate bank account. The other half is for me.

I've got two accounts; one I can't touch and one I can touch. \$100 goes into the one I can't touch.

But, payment cash-in-hand makes it difficult to save

Cash in hand is good because you feel so happy when you get paid. But then it's bad because you have all this money and you spend it.

4.0 Working students believe they can balance competing demands better than non-workers but schoolwork can suffer if they don't plan well or speak up in the workplace

4.1 Student workers report that they become very adept at balancing the competing demands of home, school and work as they get older

Some participants in this study said that they took the commitment to work more seriously than school because they are being paid to be there. It could be that since work draws heavily on a teen's sense of responsibility, it exercises a greater pull. However, an almost equal number of respondents held the contrary view and said that school is the most important priority for young people.

I reckon you're getting paid to be there, so you should take it kinda seriously.

Work? You work your whole life. School is more important for us.

A frequent piece of advice to would-be student workers is, "Don't work until you are ready;" meaning, teenagers need maturity to juggle competing demands in order to be a successful student and work at the same time. Younger workers acknowledge that they are not always good at planning.

Last week was bad; I had 4 – 5 assignments. I stayed up till 3 a.m. most nights.

If you leave the last part [of an assignment] till the end and then you realise that it is a really big part then you're up a 11 o'clock at night, scratching your head.

4.2 Good employers generally accommodate student requests, given adequate notice but student workers find it hard to say no to bosses, even when they should

I don't want to cause conflict. Sometimes my boss will ask me to work and I will, even when I should be doing schoolwork.

It's a hard thing because you need the money but you have to study.

Many employers will accommodate the needs of students to complete assignments or to study for exams but they require notice to plan rosters adequately. Without notice, many employers allow student workers to arrange for their own replacement.

We have a pretty understanding boss. So, if you tell him you can't work a certain day before he puts out the schedule, then you won't have to work.

If you tell them in advance, they generally won't roster you on that day. Otherwise, you have to find someone else on your own.

Some employers take an active interest in their employee's education and will place their own restrictions on the number of hours or shifts worked.

She won't give me any more shifts; she wants me to do well in school.

He understands that we've got the HSC.

Some work places have sufficient staff to allow for a substantial amount of flexibility. However, this underscores the fact in some young worker's minds that they are expendable which acts as a deterrent against students asking for time off to complete assignments.

They just hire more people so they don't have a problem.

4.3 Many student workers cope by planning their work and studies; disorganised bosses or teachers can wreak havoc on tight schedules

When employers require their workforce to be 'on call', plans can be jettisoned to fit in another shift and stress can mount for student workers. Similarly, if teachers schedule homework or assignments with little advance notice, they can be difficult to accommodate in a timetable that is planned down to the minute.

It's really kind of disorganised about when I will work. He only messages me a few hours in advance. It stresses me out because I like to plan when I do my assignments.

If I have an assignment that is given to me on a Tuesday that is due Thursday, I might not be able to do it because I have to work on Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

Homework is the worst. They say, "Do this tonight." But I can't because I have to work. So, you leave it to the next day. But then, you end up not doing it and it all just builds up and you fall behind.

4.4 Fatigue is the first sign that school and work are out of balance; schoolwork is the first to suffer.

The only way work would interfere with school would be if you don't get the right amount of sleep and you go to school tired.

Work is tiring and sometimes does not leave the mental and physical energy for homework, even though it may be technically possible to fit into a busy schedule.

If you have to work and then come home and do homework, it can be really hard.

I can't really do homework when I first get home from school. You've just had six hours! Then you go to work and you do six hours of work. And, then you get home at midnight. Ugggh!

The charts below demonstrate a clear relationship between the amount of hours worked and fatigue. Year 12 students are most likely to work more than 10 hours per week (53%) and are also the ones most likely to work more than 16 hours per week (23%). They are also the ones who report that they go to school feeling tired as a result of working part time.

How often do you go to school feeling tired as a result of working part-time?



How often do you go to school feeling tired as a result of working part-time?



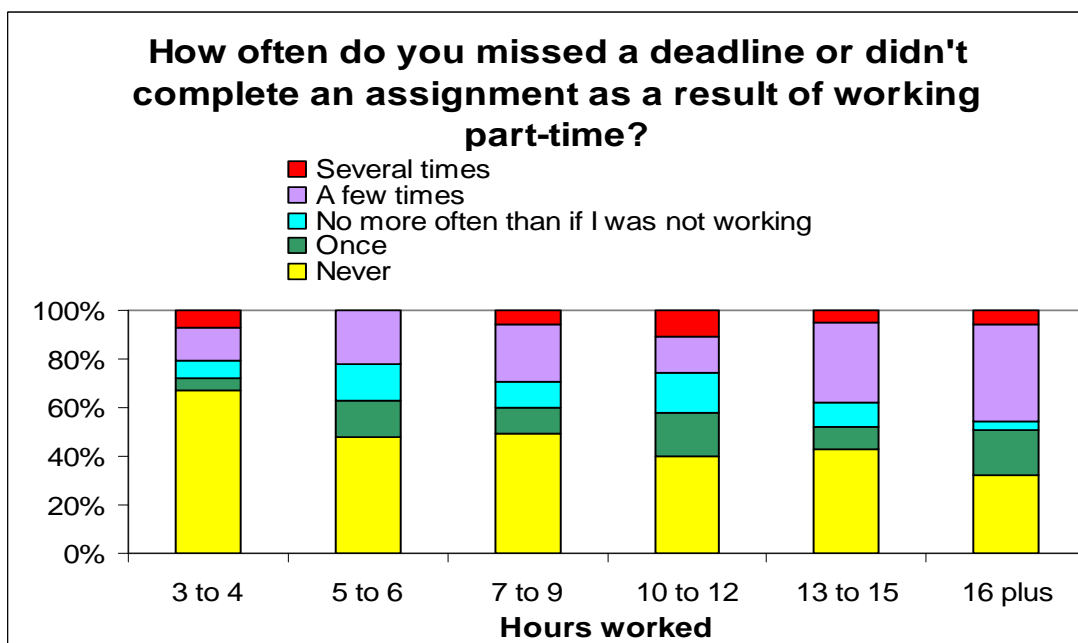
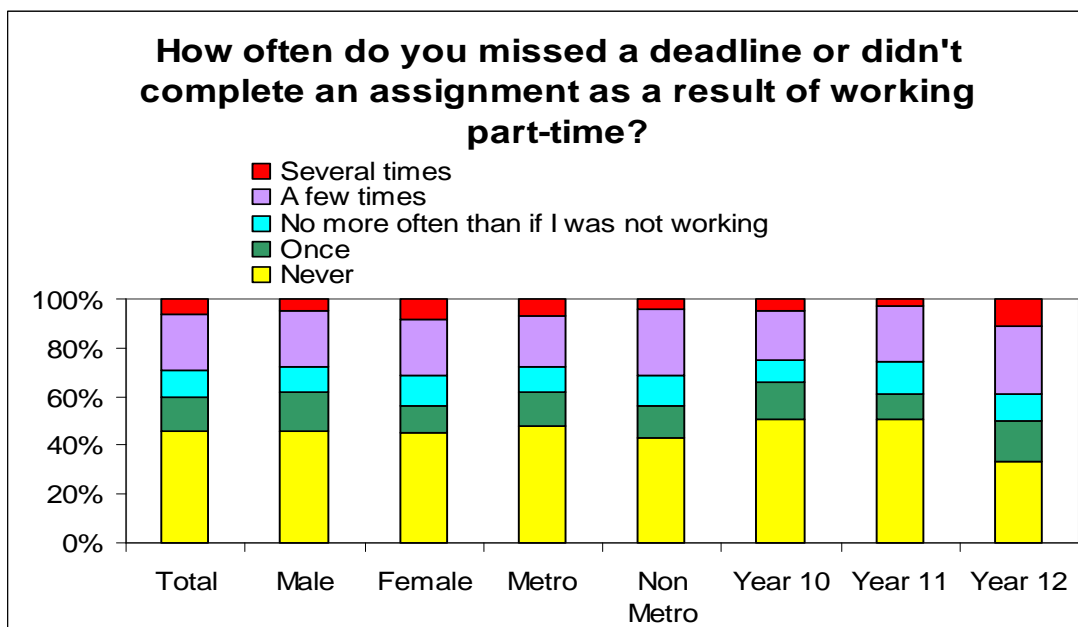
Given that education is an additive process, falling behind can be detrimental to overall performance. Some participants in this study described life on a razor's edge, where one more shift or one more assignment might tip the balance to academic Armageddon.

The kids at Maccas do so much more than us and they get paid so little, particularly for the hours they put in. I have a friend who works there and she is constantly behind in school just because she works there.

Unfairness is getting an excessive number of hours per week to the point where you can't cope with the amount of schoolwork.

If I had to work any more hours a week, I wouldn't be able to keep up.

The charts below show a similar pattern. Older students who work more hours are the most likely to fail to complete an assignment or to miss a deadline at school. It would seem that after one deadline is missed, several others also pass without an assignment being completed.

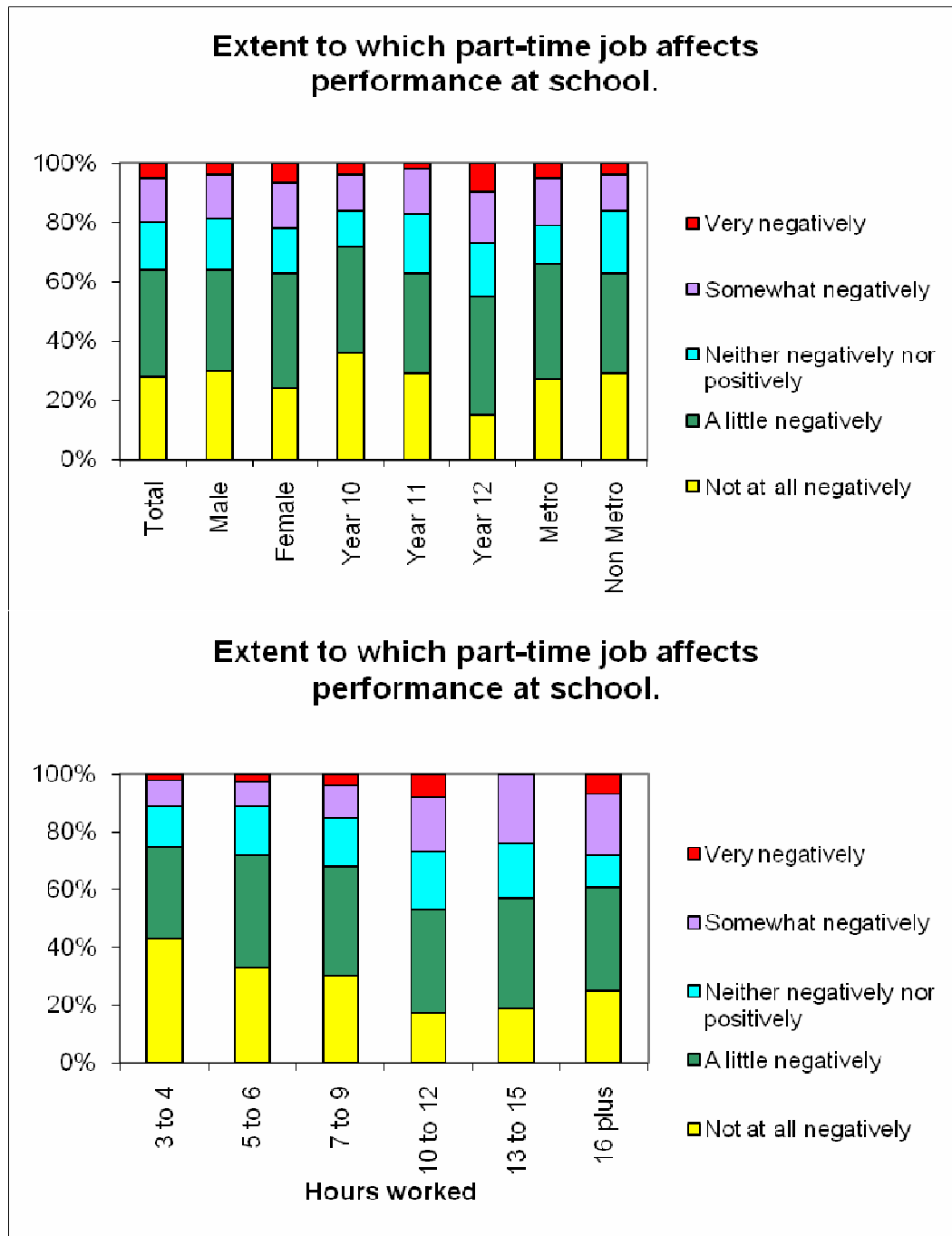


Not surprisingly, if students attend classes while feeling tired and if they fail to complete assignments on time, overall academic performance suffers. Normally strong academic performers blame work for mediocre results; they say they could be much better students if they only had the time to plan and to complete assignments to the best of their ability rather than according to the time available.

If I didn't work maybe my schoolwork would be up to standard...especially now in year 10. You do it but you think if you just had those two extra days you could do so much better.

If you didn't work you'd really know what you are doing rather than rushing everything.

A similar relationship between amount of hours worked and the perceived impact on school performance is evident in the two charts listed below. 27% of Year 12 students report that part-time work has a negative impact on their performance at school. 28% of all students who work more than 16 hours per week report that work has the same negative effect on their performance.



However, it would appear that late night shifts, combined with long hours spent at work are the most corrosive to school performance. The most at-risk students according to the table below are the 23% of Year 12, 14% of Year 11 and 17% of Year Ten students who work more than 16 hours per week because they are also the ones most likely to work late night shifts.

Respondents who worked 16+ hours							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 9 am	8%	2%	6%	6%	8%	9%	8%
9 am - Noon	13%	8%	8%	8%	6%	25%	23%
Noon - 3 pm	6%	9%	8%	8%	6%	23%	28%
3 - 5 pm	30%	28%	28%	26%	26%	40%	32%
5 - 7 pm	43%	38%	38%	42%	43%	40%	36%
7 - 9 pm	36%	42%	40%	43%	43%	32%	28%
9 - 11 pm	21%	23%	23%	32%	28%	25%	21%
11 pm - 1 am	8%	8%	9%	6%	19%	13%	9%
1 - 3 am	2%	4%	4%	2%	6%	6%	6%
3 - 6 am	6%	2%	6%	4%	4%	8%	6%

5.0 With age and experience young workers experience a creeping interest in workplace rules and issues of fairness

5.1 First-time workers report an interest in workplace issues once they start working

Students, like anyone else, need to feel that an issue is relevant to them before they will take an active interest in it. Several participants in this study noted that before they started working, they had little-to-no knowledge of or interest in workplace issues.

Before I started working, I had no idea about this kind of stuff.

People are actually interested in stuff like that, now that they have jobs.

You really only learn about work when you get a job.

The Workchoices television campaigns (from both sides) may have gone ‘over the heads’ of younger workers; but older workers soon caught on to what was happening in the workplace.

I heard about them first on TV and I just thought it's not gonna affect me. I thought, "I'm not signing no contract." Then, at work, people were bitching about it, saying you guys don't get paid as much. And then, when you are working with 'em some of them are working just as hard as me and I'm thinking, "That's not fair; you're not getting paid as much as me."

Some were left with a general impression as a result of the public debate.

It's really about how we don't have much of a say anymore.

5.2 Student workers want to know ‘the rules’ for their workplace and to know that other workers of the same age are being treated equally

Given the sense that young workers are easily exploited, some students believe that the government should be involved more actively in informing students about the rules of the working game.

I think the government should be involved because of the treatment. Sometimes people our age are not treated that well but they don't really know it.

It's very important that the Government intervene because some employers just don't respect kids, like MacDonald's. If there were no laws, it would be a little slave factory.

Others believe that workplace rules and practices should be taught in schools and that the current information is insufficient and ill-timed.

You know how we get sex education and stuff? We should get educated about our rights so that we don't get exploited.

I reckon they should make it clearer; they should teach it in schools.

They taught us how to do an interview but it was too late; we already had jobs. It should be done at the end of year 8.

Others are more self-motivated and will seek out the information. Still others would like employers to provide it in more prominent places.

I look up award rates and look up my rights. My Mum looks it up for me.

There should be an award on the back of your payslip which tells you how much you should be getting paid for your age.

5.4 'The truth' about workplace rules might be elusive but teachers and unions are seen as trustworthy

I don't think that anybody can tell the truth. Your parents might not know what the truth is. Your employer certainly won't tell you the truth.

While parents are the most frequent source of information and interpretation of the workplace for young workers, teachers are seen to act impartially and professionally.

At school, our teachers want to make sure everything is alright. They're not going to be swayed like our parents are. Teachers look over us but they still keep that professionalism.

The school careers advisor gives advice and is very helpful. When you see him, he is good but the problem is getting to see him.

I got my job through school originally. My careers advisor got this fax about a job and she took it around. No one else even applied, so I got my job through her.

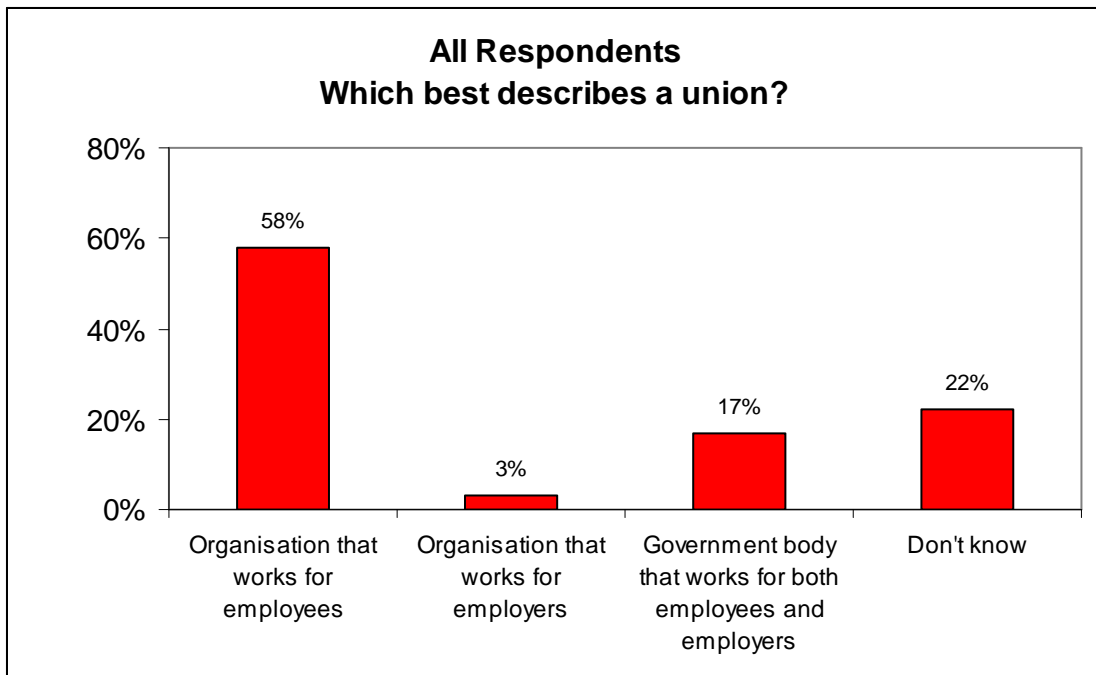
Few of the participants in this study were able to say with certainty just what a union does but those who did expressed a generalised sense that unions work positively on behalf of workers.

They're good. They're enforcing the rights of us as employees.

Unions do try; they work against the work place laws.

If you have a problem at work, they will sort it out and make sure that it is fair and proper.

As the chart below illustrates, 42% of students surveyed were unable to accurately describe a union. While there was little variation in knowledge levels between the sexes or between metro and non-metro areas, there was some difference by year of enrolment. As might be expected, Year 10 students were the most uncertain, with 51% unable to choose an accurate description from the four options provided.



5.5 Older students may use their new awareness to guide first vote decisions in the upcoming federal election

Students who were going to vote for the first time in the 2007 federal election were asked what issues might influence how they cast their vote. Some were clearly motivated to take action on an issue which impacts them directly and which they perceive to be unfair.

I'm gonna think about these IR laws for sure.

I will look at what party's gonna help me with better rights and regulations at work.

6.0 Advice from student workers to students considering work

At the conclusion of each discussion group, participants were asked to give advice to younger students contemplating undertaking casual or part-time work along with their studies for the first time. Here is their advice:

Make sure there is an agreement somewhere with the rules and what you have to do and what you don't. Know what your rights are.

Find out what actually happens; find out what you don't have to do. Find out how much you should get paid so that you don't get ripped off.

Be aware that some employers will go back on the contract.

Don't work until you have to; in grades 7 and 8, you are not ready to juggle school and work.

I would watch the hours the employer is offering.

Don't take the first job you are offered.

Make a point to ask about your pay so you don't take on something that isn't worth it. Employers won't think worse of you for asking.

Research what you are doing.

Make sure you got good pay. Find out what other people got at your age.

Make sure the time is right for you.

Make sure that you are ready to have a job; that you don't have too many commitments.

Know your rights.

Choose something that is convenient and seems like a nice environment.

Only go for a job if you are willing to commit to it. If you know you are out most nights or are out socialising, work is not for you.

Don't work at MacDonald's. Work somewhere small and fun.

Find something that interests you. If you like food, work in a restaurant.

Find something that helps you gain experience.

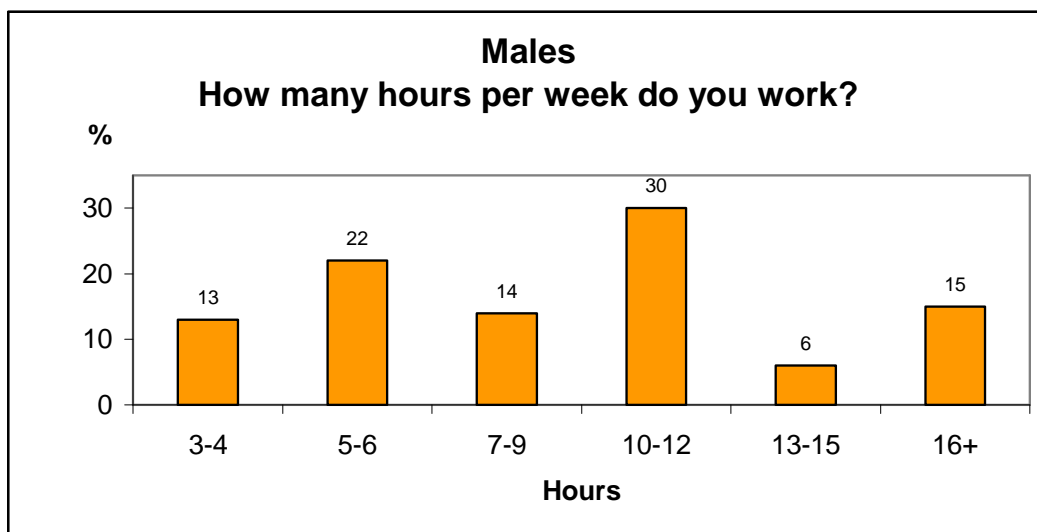
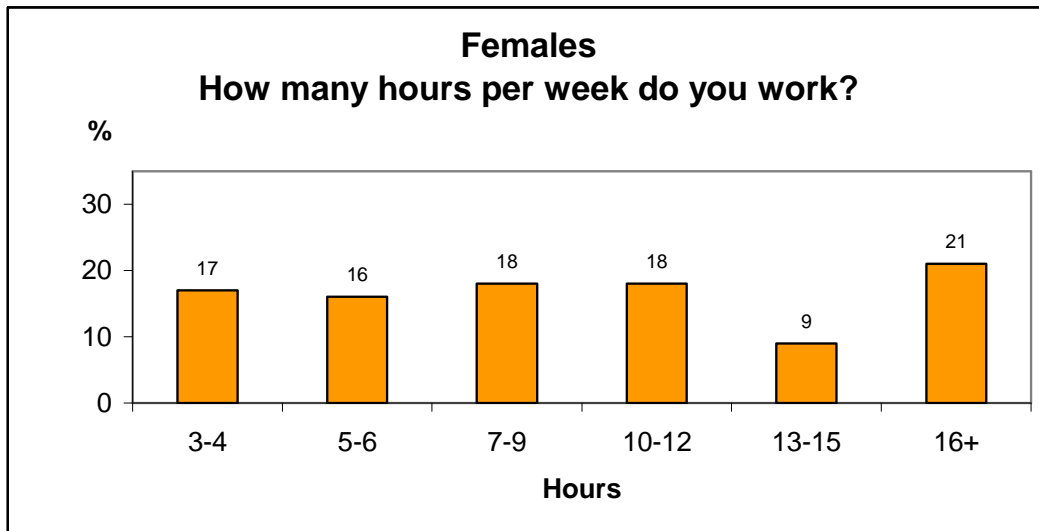
Ask questions.

Don't be shy.

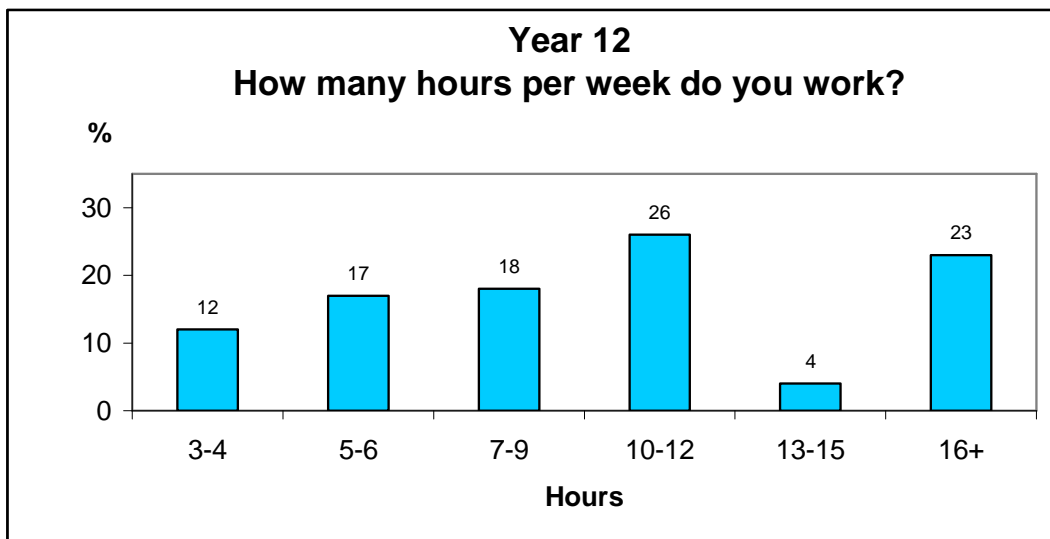
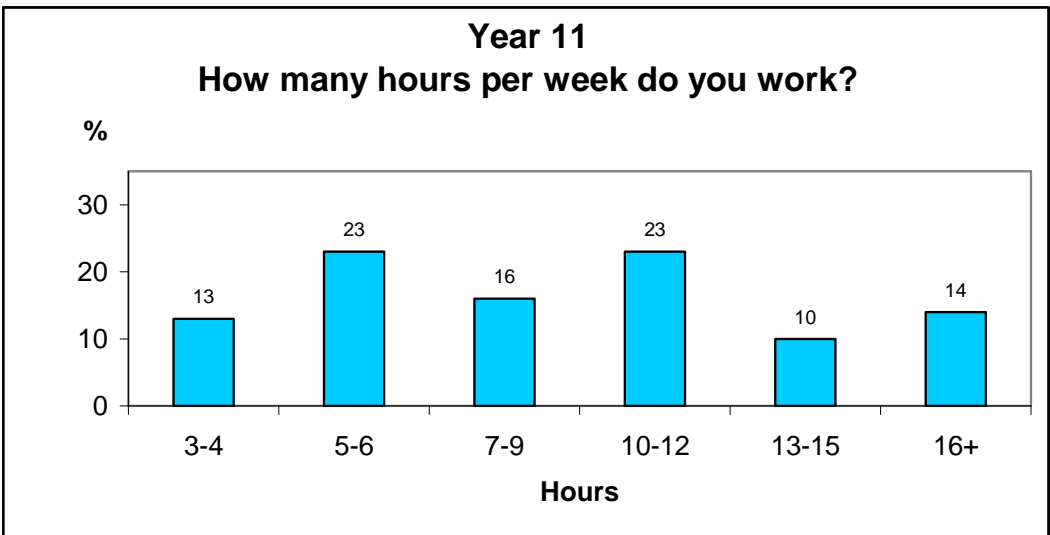
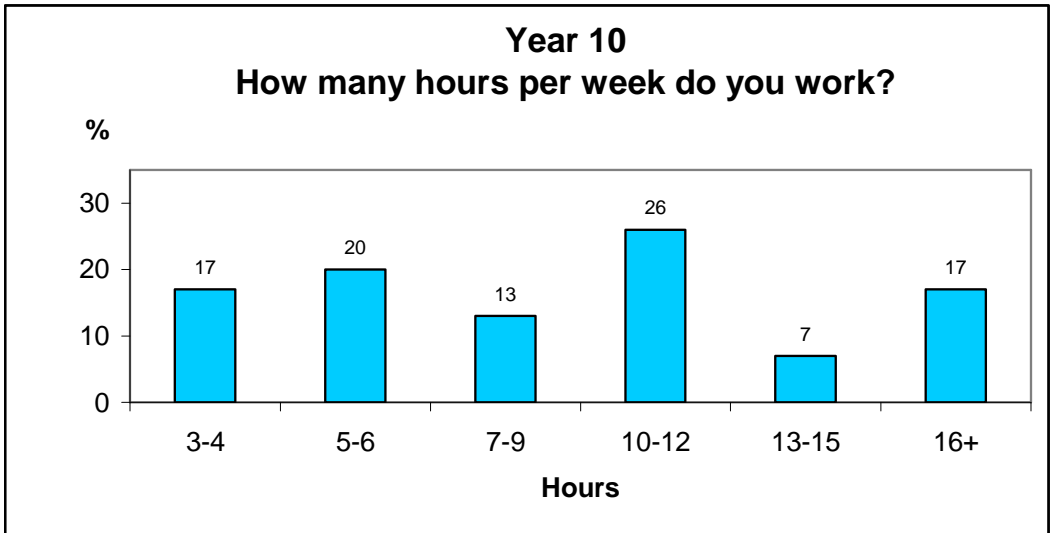
Give it your all.

Appendix A – Detailed Quantitative Results

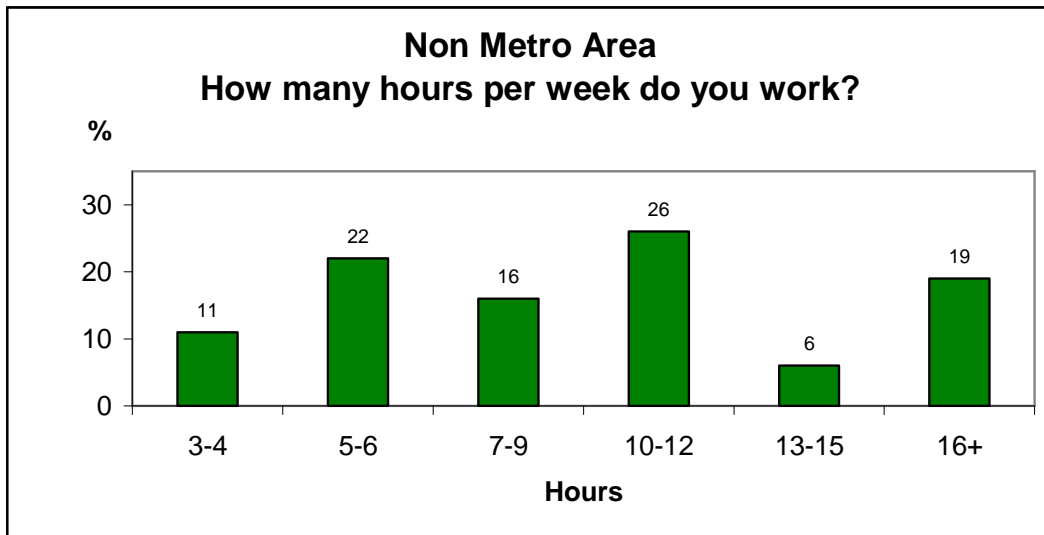
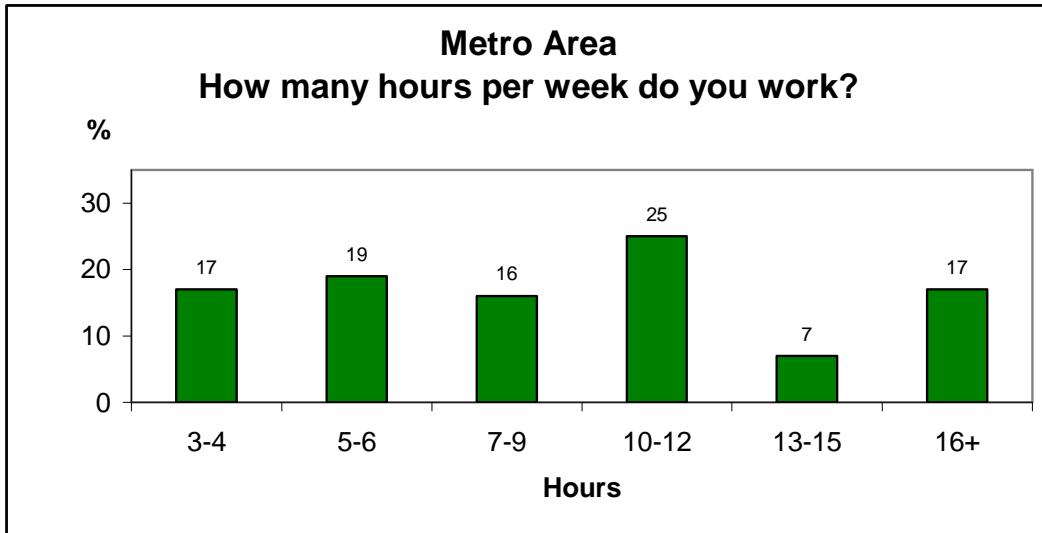
How Many Hours Respondents work



- A slightly higher percentage of males work more than ten hours (51%) per week than females (48%) overall
- However, there are more females (30% v. 21%) who work 13 hours or more each week. As a result, girls who work the longest hours might be under the greatest time constraints to complete homework and assignments.



- 53% of Year 12 students work more than 10 hours per week, compared with 47% of Year 11 students and 50% of Year 10 students



- There is little difference in percentage terms between students living in metro areas versus non-metro areas in terms of the number who work more than 10 hours each week (49% v. 51%)

When Respondents Work

Female Respondents							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 9 am	2%	2%	0%	1%	0%	4%	3%
9 am - Noon	7%	3%	5%	2%	4%	32%	24%
Noon - 3 pm	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	25%	25%
3 - 5 pm	16%	15%	19%	16%	16%	27%	28%
5 - 7 pm	25%	22%	22%	37%	29%	30%	24%
7 - 9 pm	19%	12%	19%	29%	20%	22%	14%
9 - 11 pm	9%	5%	8%	15%	11%	13%	6%
11 pm - 1 am	2%	2%	2%	2%	7%	3%	2%
1 - 3 am	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%
3 - 6 am	1%	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%

Male Respondents							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 9 am	7%	1%	3%	2%	3%	6%	7%
9 am - Noon	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%	15%	13%
Noon - 3 pm	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	20%	18%
3 - 5 pm	17%	16%	16%	16%	15%	24%	21%
5 - 7 pm	21%	19%	17%	22%	24%	25%	19%
7 - 9 pm	18%	20%	19%	20%	22%	20%	15%
9 - 11 pm	6%	9%	6%	8%	10%	12%	8%
11 pm - 1 am	2%	4%	4%	3%	4%	6%	4%
1 - 3 am	2%	3%	4%	2%	4%	6%	5%
3 - 6 am	6%	3%	6%	4%	4%	7%	7%

- Females are more likely than males to be rostered to work Sundays, exposing them to changes in pay rates as a result of WorkChoices
- Females are slightly more likely to work later hours during the week, placing greater constraints on time available for homework and assignments

Year 10 Respondents							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 9 am	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	6%	7%
9 am - Noon	6%	5%	3%	2%	2%	18%	15%
Noon - 3 pm	3%	3%	4%	4%	2%	18%	15%
3 - 5 pm	21%	19%	16%	20%	18%	21%	21%
5 - 7 pm	21%	18%	24%	29%	22%	29%	23%
7 - 9 pm	17%	13%	21%	21%	21%	22%	17%
9 - 11 pm	3%	4%	11%	9%	7%	16%	9%
11 pm - 1 am	1%	2%	4%	1%	4%	5%	2%
1 - 3 am	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%	6%	4%
3 - 6 am	2%	1%	4%	2%	2%	7%	5%

Year 11 Respondents							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 9 am	7%	2%	1%	4%	2%	5%	5%
9 am - Noon	2%	2%	3%	0%	2%	24%	19%
Noon - 3 pm	2%	2%	4%	2%	0%	24%	24%
3 - 5 pm	11%	16%	16%	9%	11%	27%	22%
5 - 7 pm	26%	24%	24%	29%	34%	29%	22%
7 - 9 pm	23%	19%	21%	25%	23%	28%	18%
9 - 11 pm	11%	9%	11%	12%	12%	11%	5%
11 pm - 1 am	3%	3%	4%	6%	2%	3%	4%
1 - 3 am	2%	2%	3%	2%	5%	3%	3%
3 - 6 am	6%	5%	4%	4%	8%	5%	6%

Year 12 Respondents							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 9 am	5%	1%	2%	1%	2%	5%	4%
9 am - Noon	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	26%	20%
Noon - 3 pm	4%	4%	4%	2%	4%	26%	26%
3 - 5 pm	17%	9%	15%	17%	15%	29%	29%
5 - 7 pm	22%	20%	12%	27%	22%	22%	16%
7 - 9 pm	15%	20%	16%	26%	20%	11%	7%
9 - 11 pm	7%	10%	5%	11%	13%	10%	6%
11 pm - 1 am	4%	7%	6%	2%	11%	6%	2%
1 - 3 am	0%	2%	4%	1%	1%	2%	1%
3 - 6 am	4%	1%	6%	5%	1%	4%	4%

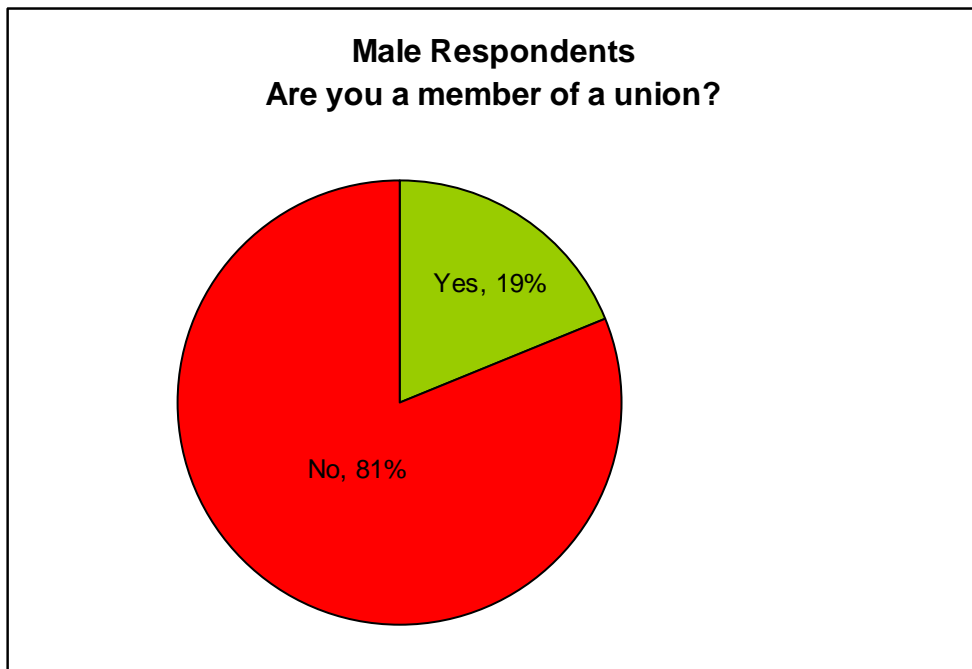
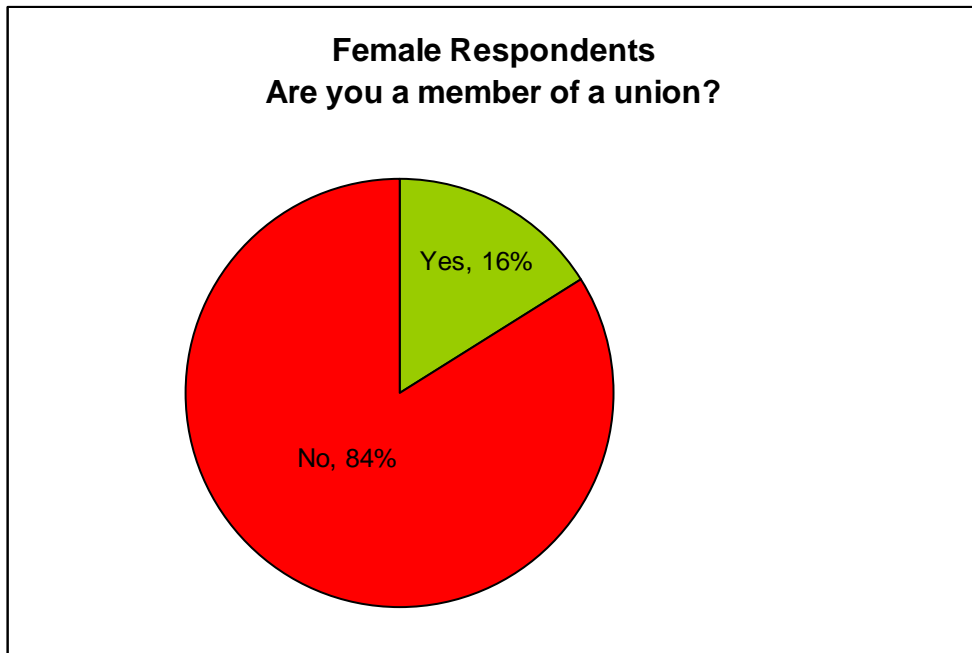
- Year 11 & 12 students are more likely to work later on weeknights and earlier on weekends than Year 10 students

Metro Respondents							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 9 am	6%	2%	2%	2%	2%	5%	4%
9 am - Noon	4%	6%	5%	3%	4%	22%	17%
Noon - 3 pm	4%	3%	4%	3%	2%	23%	22%
3 - 5 pm	12%	13%	13%	14%	12%	27%	24%
5 - 7 pm	19%	19%	15%	27%	20%	26%	18%
7 - 9 pm	18%	16%	18%	25%	20%	19%	11%
9 - 11 pm	7%	7%	5%	11%	10%	11%	7%
11 pm - 1 am	2%	4%	3%	3%	6%	5%	3%
1 - 3 am	1%	3%	3%	2%	4%	4%	3%
3 - 6 am	4%	2%	5%	4%	4%	5%	6%

Non Metro Respondents							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 - 9 am	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	6%	8%
9 am - Noon	4%	1%	1%	1%	1%	22%	19%
Noon - 3 pm	2%	3%	3%	3%	1%	20%	19%
3 - 5 pm	25%	19%	25%	18%	19%	21%	24%
5 - 7 pm	30%	23%	27%	31%	35%	29%	26%
7 - 9 pm	19%	19%	20%	21%	22%	25%	20%
9 - 11 pm	7%	7%	10%	11%	11%	15%	6%
11 pm - 1 am	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
1 - 3 am	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	4%	3%
3 - 6 am	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%	6%	3%

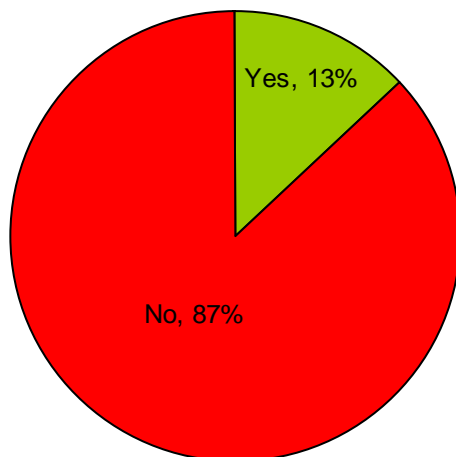
- Non-metro students are more likely to work between 5 and 7 p.m. on weeknights than are metro students
- Weekend work patterns are roughly the same for students who live in metro areas and those who live in non-metro areas

Union Membership & Awareness

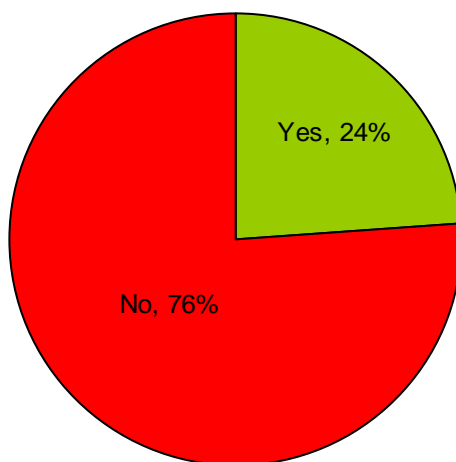


- More males are likely to be union members than females (19% v. 16%)

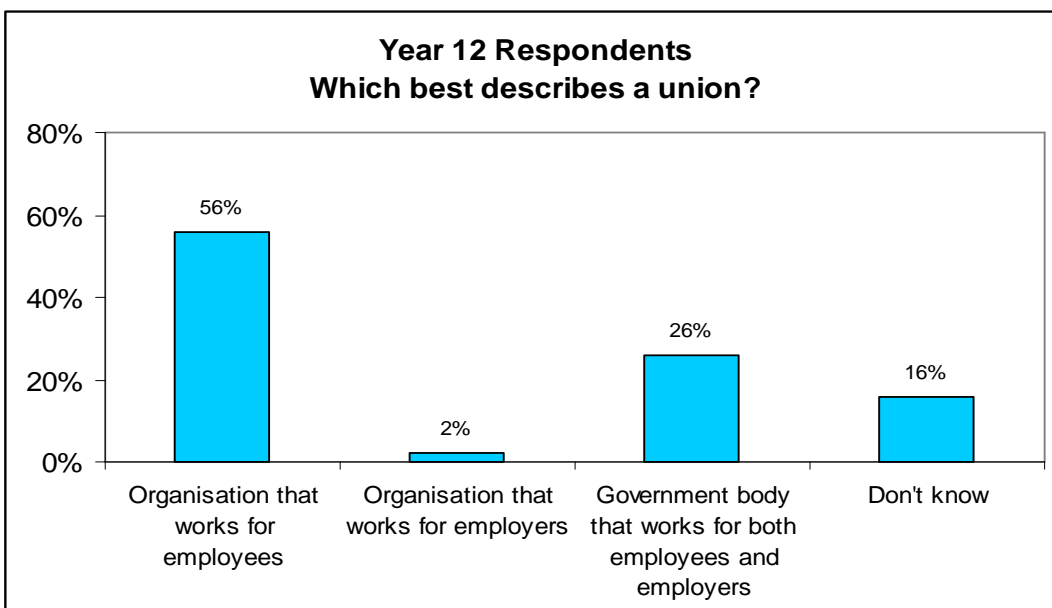
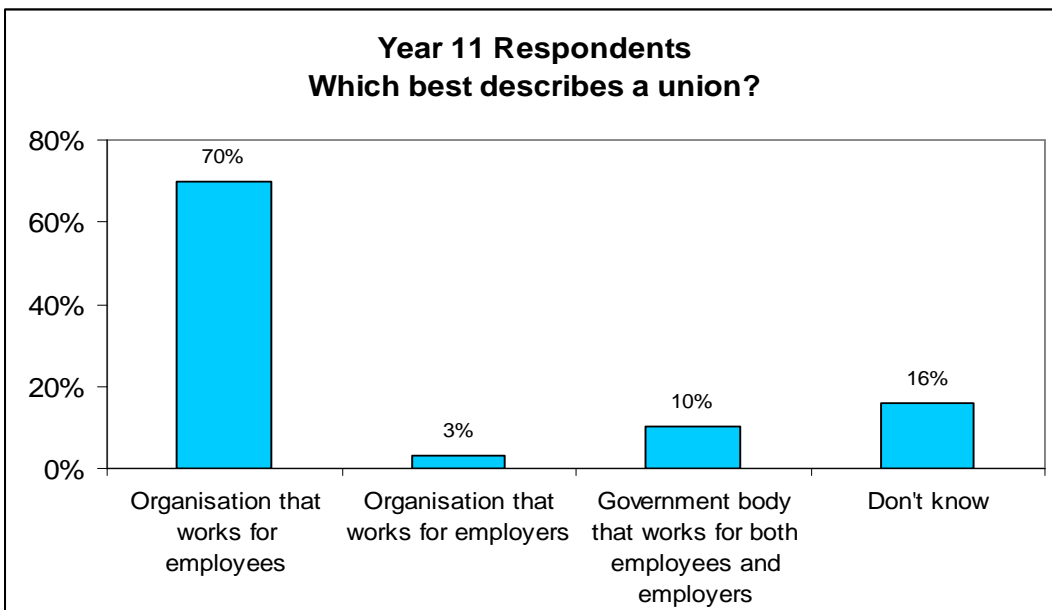
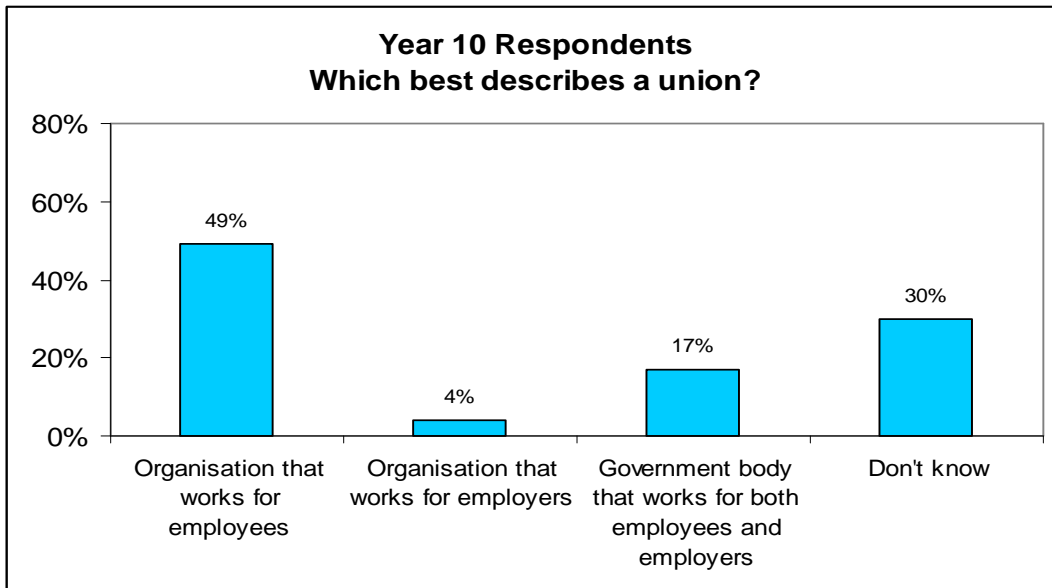
Metro Respondents
Are you a member of a union?



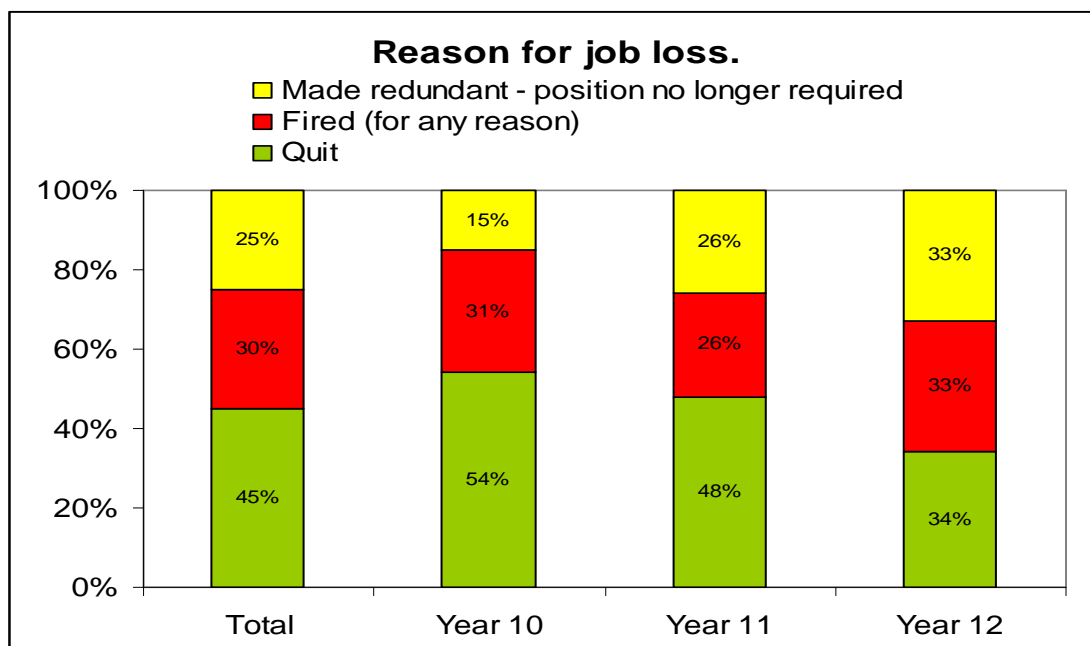
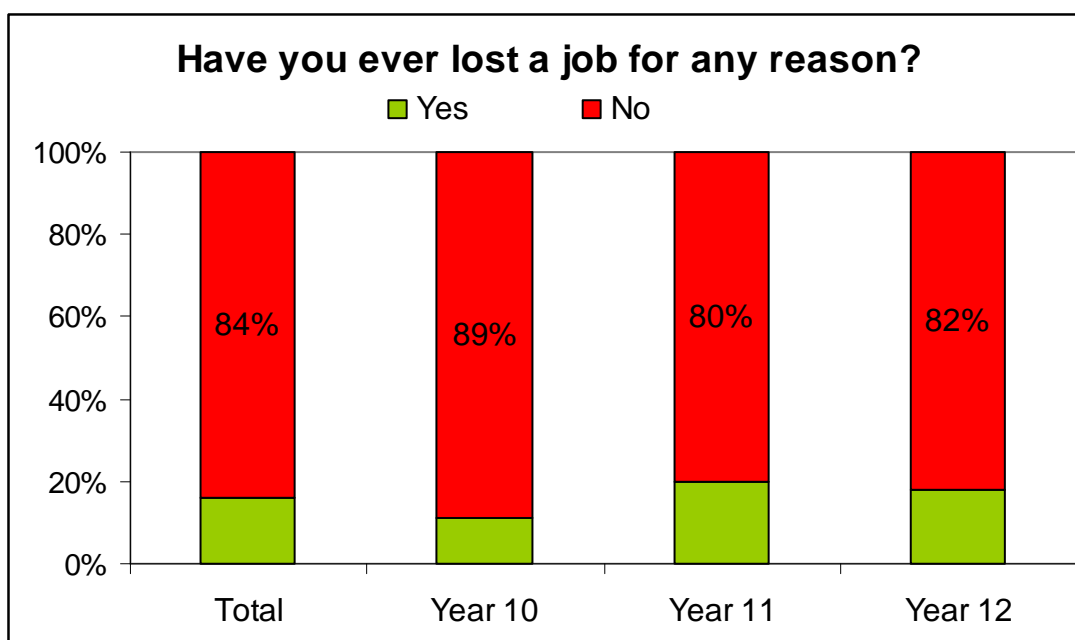
Non Metro Respondents
Are you a member of a union?



- Almost twice as many non-metro students are likely (24% v. 13%) to be union members compared with metro students.

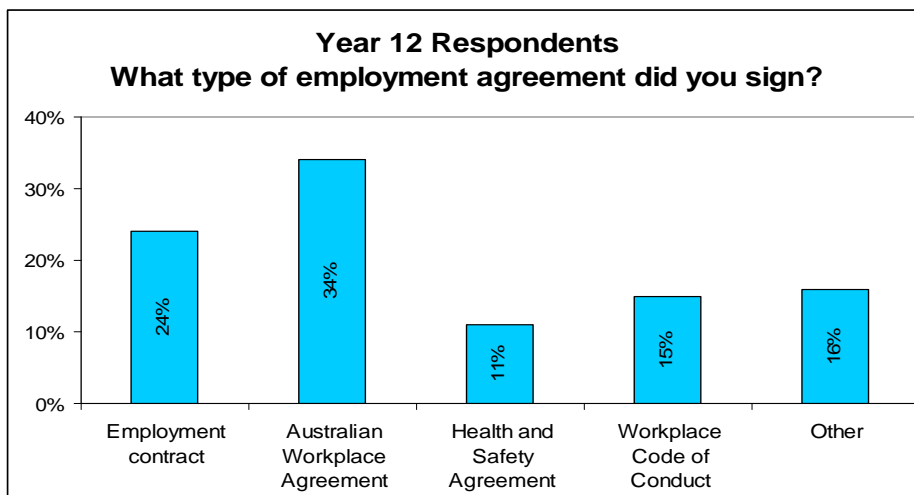
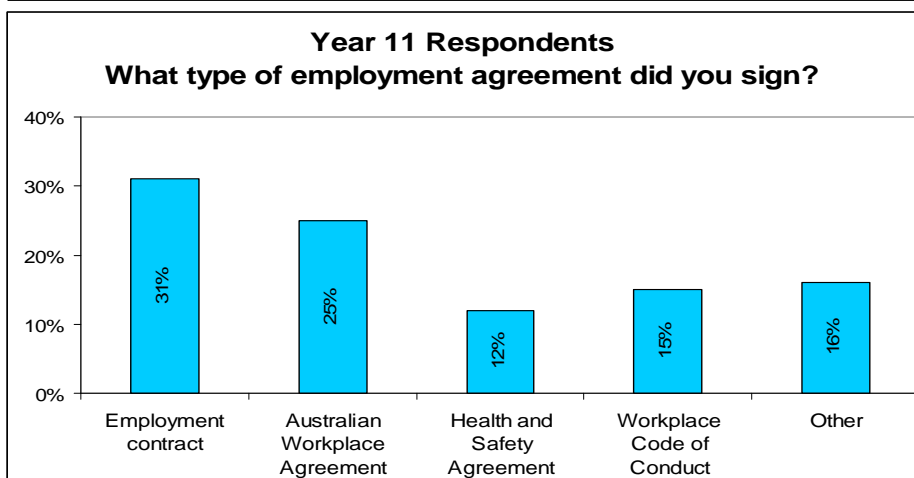
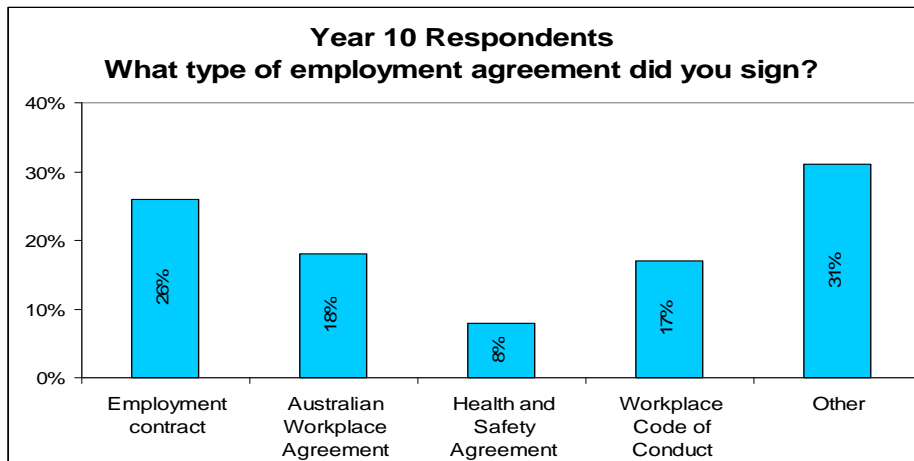


Job Loss



- Year 10 students were most likely to have quit a position, presumably because they are experimenting with various forms of part-time and casual work.
- Year 12 students are most likely to have been made redundant perhaps because of age-based discrimination or to make way for new workers on AWAs. However, it could also be due to the fact older students with a comparatively longer work history may have had more occasion to be made redundant than younger students.

Types of Employment Agreements



- Year 10 students were least likely to be aware of what sort of agreement, if any, covered the terms and conditions of their employment.
- Year 12 students were most likely to be on Australian Workplace Agreements (34%), followed by Year 11 students (25%) and Year 10 students (16%). This may be because Year 12 students were more likely to be covered by a formal agreement of some kind (76% Year 12 v. 64% for Year 10) and because older students were likely to be engaged in more formal employment relationships than younger students.