

1.5 million Australians (7.3% of the adult population) were aged 15-19 years old in August 2018. Of these, 1.15 million (77.5%) were full-time students and 336,130 were not (12 month averages).

Labour force participation rates are much lower for 15-19 year olds than for older adults, with 54% of all 15-19 years olds in work or looking for work (and 46% of 15-19 year olds in full-time education), compared to 79% for 20-24 year olds and 66% for all people 15 years or older (12 month averages to August 2018).

For the 800,000 teens who are participating in the labour market, unemployment rates remain significantly higher than for older adults, with 16% of 15-19 year olds who are participating in the labour force seeking work, compared to 5.2% of all adults in August 2018 (chart 3). Although fewer teens actively participate in the labour force and seek work (as a proportion of their age cohort), it remains harder for them to get a job – and for many teens to break into the workforce with their first job – than it is for older jobseekers.

77.5% of 15-19 year olds were full time students in 2018, up from 68% in 2008 and 54% in 1988. This solid increase in full-time education has been the defining trend for this age group over the past three decades and longer. Among this growing full-time student group, 46% were participating in the labour force in 2018 (on average, year to Aug), down from a peak of 48% in 2008 but up from 33% in 1988 (annual averages). Teenage student labour force participation has a seasonal peak of around 48% in summer (for school holiday work) and a seasonal low of around 42% in winter and spring (chart 2). In raw number terms, over 600,000 full-time teen students were not in the labour force in 2018 (down from a record high of 650,000 in 2017), 430,000 were working (a record high) and just under 100,000 were seeking work (down from a record high in 2015, chart 1). The majority of teenage working students are working part-time (94% or 410,000 on average, year to Aug 2018). The RBA recently noted that:

“the majority of young part-time workers indicate that their main motivation is that part-time work allows them to combine paid work with study. The increase in young people working part-time has occurred at the same time as a significant increase in the participation of young people in full-time education. Just over three-quarters of 15-19 year olds and around one third of 20-24 year olds are enrolled in full-time study. This is up from one half and 10 per cent, respectively, in the 1980s. The high incidence of full-time students working part-time means that Australia has the fourth highest labour force participation rate for younger workers in the OECD.” (RBA, Oct 2018)

Chart 1: 15-19 years: labour force and education status, 1988 - 2018

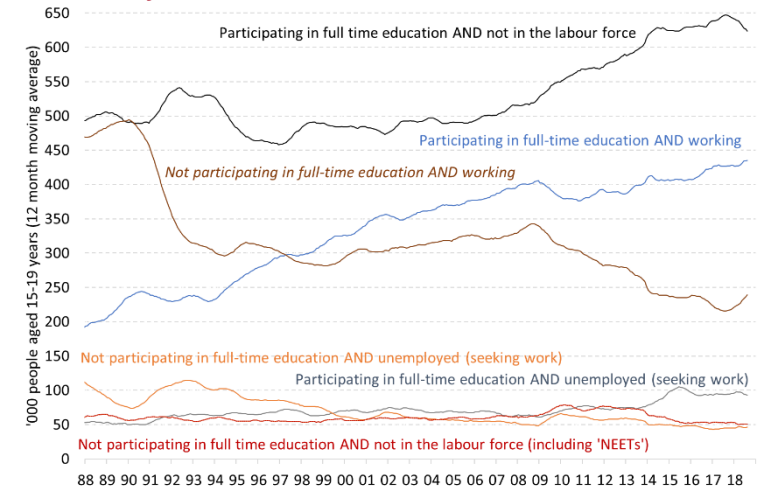
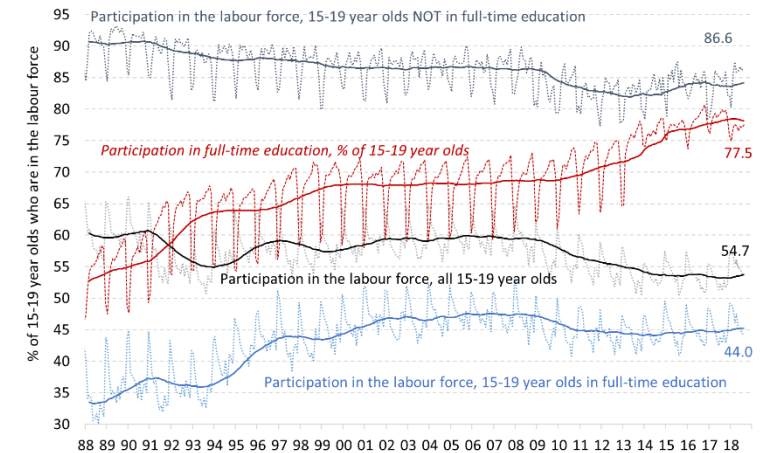


Chart 2: 15-19 years, labour force and education participation rates, 1988 - 2018



336,130 people aged 15-19 years (22% of this age group) were not full-time students in 2018 (12 month average to Aug 2018), but they might be participating in part-time or short courses through the year. For this group, 85% were participating in the labour force (12 month average to Aug 2018), up from a recent low of 83% in 2011 but down from around 91% in 1988 (see chart 2). Labour force participation is seasonally lower for this group every summer, which probably coincides with the end of school for many 18 and 19 year olds and an understandable desire to take a short break before actively seeking work.

For the 285,000 15-19 year olds who were not full-time students and were participating in the labour force in 2018, 16% - or 46,000 people - were unemployed (12 month average to August 2018), down from a seasonal peak of 60,000 in each of the last three summers. The majority of these jobseekers (40,000 or 87%) were seeking full-time work, with around 6,000 (13%) seeking only part-time work.

Around 250,000 15-19 year olds were working but not studying full-time in August 2018, with 200,000 of them (60%) working full-time. The number of 15-19 year old full-time non-student workers has fallen significantly over the past two decades, with especially large falls following the recession in the early 1990s and then the post-GFC downturn from 2008. The number working part-time but not studying full-time has remained relatively steady, at just over 100,000, since 2002 (chart 4).

Within this group of 15-19 year olds who are not full-time students, around 50,000 are not in full-time education and are not participating in the labour force (that is, they are not working or seeking work). This small group (3% of all 15-19 year olds) includes young parents, people with (temporary or permanent) disabilities and those doing short courses or part-time study. It also includes the 'NEETs' (Not in Employment, Education or Training) who are not engaged in any work, study or jobseeking and are especially disadvantaged. This group grew to over 70,000 after 2008 but has been shrinking since 2012.

Table 1. 15-19 year olds: participation in full-time education and labour force, August 2018

12 month average to August 2018*	'000	%
Attending full-time education	1,152,240	77.5 of ALL 15-19 year olds
not in labour force	623,760	Participation rate: 45.9%
working	435,200	Employment to population ratio: 37.8%
unemployed	93,280	Unemployment rate: 17.6%
Not attending full-time education	336,130	22.5 of ALL 15-19 year olds
not in labour force	50,690	Participation rate: 84.9%
working	239,330	Employment to population ratio: 71.25%
unemployed	46,110	Unemployment rate: 16.1%
ALL 15-19 year olds	1,488,360	7.3% of ALL adults (aged 15 years and over)

* 12 month average of original unadjusted data. Part-time employment = 35 hours or less per week.

Chart 3: Unemployment rates by age group, 1998 to 2018

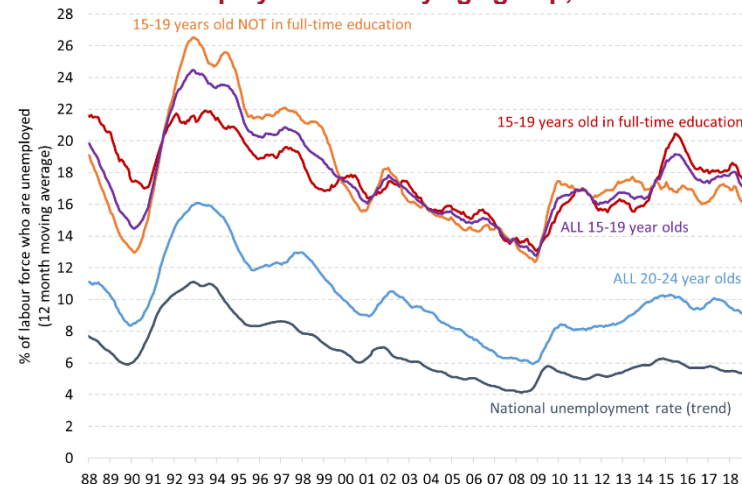
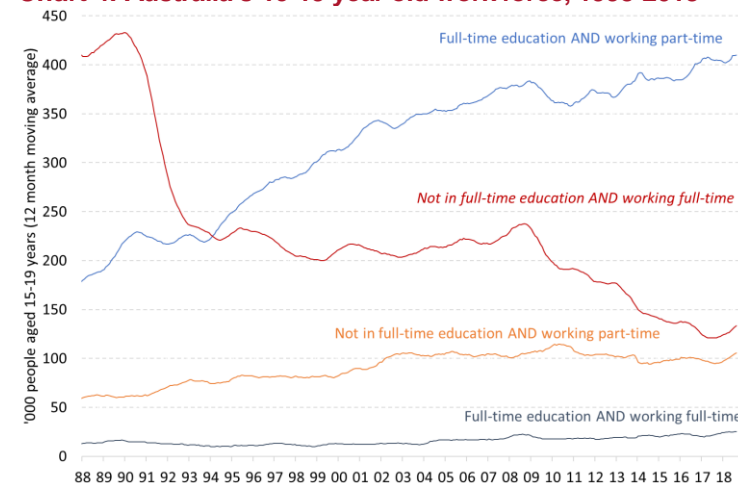


Chart 4: Australia's 15-19 year old work force, 1998-2018



Data sources

ABS 6291.003, *Labour Force Australia, electronic detailed*, August 2018
Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, *Youth unemployment statistics: a quick guide*, May 2018
RBA, *The Evolving Australian Labour Market*, Speech by Dr Alexandra Heath, 5 October 2018

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