

Community and Family Studies

Groups in Context: Youth

Youth

- In Australia, *youth* are defined as people between the ages of 12 and 24.
- Some international organisations stretch this to 25 years of age.

Prevalence of each group within the community

- Today, youth account for almost 20 per cent of Australia's total population. This equates to over 4.2 million persons.
- Males comprise 51.3 per cent and females comprise 48.7 per cent of the total group.
- With trends in fertility and lowered birth rates, it is anticipated that youth will account for less than 18 per cent of the population in 2020.

Individual diversity within each group

- Youth belong to many different groups in the community and have diverse identities and experiences.
- Youth may differ from one another in terms of gender, religion, race, ability or disability, and socioeconomic status.
- Also, there is a significant difference in how people live between ages 12 and 24, as people grow in independence and move from schooling to employment.

Terminology used by the community to describe the group

Positive	Negative
Fresh	Hoons
Youthful	Hooligans
Young	Thugs
	Youngin's
	Babies
	Ankle Biters

Discuss the impact this might have on individuals within the group

- Negative terminology has a significant impact on self-esteem and sense of self.
- While positive language and terminology can be empowering, negative language can be disempowering.
- The use of certain terminology can exacerbate generational differences and create rifts in the community.

Issues of concern for the four specific groups within the community

- Satisfaction of needs
- Access to services
- Factors affecting access to services

Satisfaction of needs

- Adequate standard of living (food, clothing, shelter)
- Health
- Education
- Employment
- Safety and security
- Sense of identity

Adequate standard of living

- Youth have little financial independence and a much lower employment rate than the general population.
- According to a 2016 report by the ABS, on any given night in Australia 116,427 Australians are homeless. 27,680 of these are young people aged 12-24 years.
- Due to lower wages, lower employment and the need to balance schooling with employment, youth often struggle to attain an adequate standard of living - particularly youth who receive no assistance from their parents.

Health

- 7.6% of 15-24 year olds have a reported disability and 9.8% have a long-term condition without a reported disability (e.g. asthma).
- 16% males and 13% females aged 12-17 experienced a mental health disorder in 2017.
- In 2015, 2,377 women aged 19 or younger and 11,358 women aged 20-24 gave birth.
- Risk factors for future health and the development of chronic disease in later life, such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers, also emerge in adolescence.
- Smoking, alcohol and drug misuse are often initiated during adolescence and pose risks to young people's long-term health and wellbeing.

Education

- In 2018, there were 3,893,834 students enrolled in 9,477 schools.
- 65.7% of students were enrolled in government schools, 19.7% in catholic schools and 14.6% in independent schools.
- The grade 7 to 12 Apparent Retention Rate for Australia was 84.5%.
- Approximately 925,000 people study undergraduate degrees in Australia and the majority of these students begin their courses directly or relatively soon after finishing high school.

Employment

- Generally, people will begin working at about 15 or 16. People can only begin full-time work, after they turn 17 or after completing Year 10 with special exemption.
- Unemployment among younger people tends to be much higher than the general population.
- For some young people, a job is a chance to gain some independence and money while they're at school or uni. For others, a job is a necessity.
- There is a similar percentage of both genders unemployed – 12% male and 11% female.
- Youth have high workforce participation rates, with part-time being the predominant work pattern.

Safety and security

- Young people can experience domestic and family violence in two ways:
 - In their own interpersonal relationships, and/or
 - In their home.
- Young people who experience or are affected by domestic and family violence are at high risk of suffering psychological and emotional trauma that can lead to ill health later in life.
- Young women aged 15 to 19 years are seven times more likely to be sexually assaulted compared to the general population.
- Young men experience the highest rates of hospitalisation due to interpersonal violence of any group, especially in regional and rural areas.

Sense of identity

- The development of a strong and stable sense of self is widely considered to be one of the central tasks of adolescence.
- Despite the fact that identity development occurs throughout one's lifetime, adolescence is the first time that individuals begin to think about how their identity may affect their lives.
- During adolescence, people are much more self-conscious about their changing identities than at any other stage in their lives.

Access to services

- Types of services:
 - Financial support
 - Transport
 - Accommodation and housing
 - Health care
 - Counselling
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Legal aid

Financial support

- As young people are unable to work full time until they reach 17, they are unable to support themselves financially and generally rely on parental support.
- Due to the rising cost of living, youth tend to rely on parental financial support for a longer period than they used to, especially youth that pursue university qualifications who are unable to work full-time.
- The government also provides financial support to youth, including Youth Allowance.

Transport

- In New South Wales, people are unable to drive until they are 16, and they cannot drive alone until they are 17, when they gain a provisional license.
- Youth must largely rely on parents or public transport.
- The cost of public transport is moderated for younger people.

Accommodation and housing

- Almost one in every hundred youths is homeless.
- Many youths live in unsafe housing situations.
- As of 30 June 2017, there were 47,915 Australian children living in out of home care (usually in foster care, group homes or with extended family). After a person turns 18, they are considered adults and are no longer entitled to this support.
- Most youths live at home with parents, often until much later in life.
- In 2016, 43% of 20–24 year-olds were living in the family home.

Health care

- A range of barriers exist which mean some young people are reluctant to seek help or do not recognise the need to seek help. Many young people need support to access and navigate health services.
- This is due to:
 - The complexity of the health system and lack of knowledge about services,
 - The availability and cost of healthcare services,
 - Difficulty making appointments and getting to services,
 - The capacity of the services to deal effectively with young people,
 - Embarrassment, stigma and cultural expectations, and
 - Not feeling welcomed and fear of being judged when using services.

Counselling

- Counselling is a particularly important service for youth due to the prevalence of mental health issues among younger people.
- 16% males and 13% females aged 12-17 experienced a mental health disorder in 2017.
- Suicide is the greatest cause of death for all Australians between 15 and 34 years of age.
- However, counselling can be difficult for younger people to access, often due to concerns about the cost and stigma associated with mental health.

Education

- The majority of Australian youth are involved in the education system and education is mandatory until the end of Year 10.
- However, access to education differs depending on location and financial status.
- Just over half of all Indigenous 15-19 year olds are enrolled in education, compared to 76% of non-Indigenous 15-19 year olds.
- University education in particular is directly affected by a person's socioeconomic status and their location – wealthier people living in urban areas are more likely to receive a university education.

Employment

- Youths have a lower rate of employment than the general population and access to employment may be affected by the need to balance multiple commitments (particularly schooling and university).
- Also, access to some types of work is restricted due to age or qualifications.

Legal aid

- Young often find it difficult to obtain legal advice, particularly due to the expense of legal services.
- *The Youth Hotline* provides legal advice and information to young people under 18, and operates 9am to midnight weekdays, with a 24-hour service from Friday 9am to Sunday midnight and also on public holidays.

Factors affecting access to services

- Characteristics of individuals within the group:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Level of education
 - Culture
 - Type of disability
 - First language spoken
 - Socioeconomic status
- Resources:
 - Time
 - Money
 - Energy
 - Knowledge
- Aspects of the service:
 - Opening hours
 - Confidentiality
 - Location
 - Staffing

Age

- For many youth, age may prevent them from having knowledge of the services available to them.
- While discrimination legislation clearly states that individuals shall not be discriminated against on the basis of age (along with other factors), many youth may find that their age affects their access to employment, accommodation and education.
- Their age may mean that they do not possess the skills required for a job, but, at the same time, they are not given the opportunities to acquire the skills because of their age.

Gender

- Males are less likely to seek help when confronted with physical or mental health issues. While this situation is changing slightly, it is still one of the greatest reasons for youth not accessing services.
- The inclusion of male staff in service agencies works to create an environment where males feel more comfortable seeking assistance. Nevertheless, stereotypical beliefs about males being 'stronger' heighten males' sense of inadequacy and uselessness when asking for help.
- More general gender disparity in the wider community may impact upon females accessing services.

Level of education

- In many cases, level of education is directly linked to a youth's ability to obtain employment. If a job provides only a low level of pay, this again limits the youth's opportunity to better their situation through further education due to the cost associated with education.
- A low level of education may also present in lowered self-esteem and lack of self worth.

Culture

- One in five Australian young people were born overseas, primarily in Asia (6.6%) or Europe (2.6%) and many speak a language other than English.
- Cultural background may also be an issue in relation to accessing services, especially if language is a barrier to effective communication.
- Different cultural beliefs may impact on access to certain services, particularly counselling.
- An absence of culturally appropriate assistance may also be a factor in youth not accessing services.

First language spoken

- One in five youths speak a language other than English at home – mostly an Asian language (10%) or another European language (4%).
- Language proficiency may prevent youth from accessing services where communication may be difficult.
- Also, difficulty speaking English proficiently may limit a youth's ability to engage in education or employment.

Type of disability

- 7.6% of 15-24 year olds have a reported disability and 9.8% have a long-term condition without a reported disability (such as asthma).
- Disabilities manifest in many different ways and they may be physical, intellectual, psychological or sensory.
- Discrimination in particular may impact on a disabled youth's ability to access services.
- Furthermore, difficulty with transportation or communication issues, may impact on a youth's ability to access services.

Socioeconomic status

- Some services may be unaffordable for some youth, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or those who do not receive any financial support from their families.
- While there are a significant number of 'free' services available to youth, many youth struggle economically and are unable to leave their employment to access these services.
- Lower socioeconomic status may also lower a youth's self-esteem and make it difficult for them to ask for help.
- For other youth, their ability to obtain a service is limited due to their lack of access to, and lack of ability to afford, transport.

Time

- Many young people have to balance multiple commitments, including school, family, sport, work etc.
- Many services are only open on school days, during school hours, limiting the ability of youths to access these services.
- A service that manages to overcome this is the Kids Helpline, which is a 24/7 online or phone service that allows youth to access counselling services outside of typical 9-5 office hours.

Money

- Young people often balance multiple commitments, including study, and there is not an excess of time in which to earn money and, therefore, most youth have limited funds with which to access services.
- Not all youth are employed or able to seek employment, leaving their access to money largely in the hands of their parents.

Energy

- Young people tend to have a greater level of energy than older people.
- However, the large number of commitments that young people have to balance can be draining and may make it difficult to find the energy to seek access to services.

Knowledge

- Due to their age, youth may lack knowledge and may not know how a particular service works or how to seek help.
- Young people often lack the experience to know where to turn and how to engage a particular service.
- However, access to the internet assists in allowing young people to discover how certain services work independently.

Opening hours

- Youth are generally involved in full-time study and some pattern of work.
- As a result, their access to services open during business hours (Monday to Friday, 9-5) may be limited.

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality and security of information are also important factors in access to services.
- Despite the fact that many youth are underage, they are still protected by confidentiality legislation and should be able to expect that their information will remain private when shared with medical professionals or counsellors.
- It is critical that youth feel safe and secure when they access services.

Location

- The location of youth relative to a service they wish to access may limit their ability to access that service.
- For youths living in rural areas, physical distance may be a factor in accessing services.
- For others, services may be closer, but they may lack the means of reaching the service due to lack of access to or cost of transportation.
- Therefore, the steady increase of online service facilities, which are readily accessible by a greater portion of youth, is beneficial.

Staffing

- The staff at services that young people access need to be supportive of youth. They should be attentive without being patronising.
- Given that males are less likely to access services, many services are seeking to employ younger males in the hope of providing a safe environment conducive to males who need assistance.
- Equally, the employment of staff from culturally diverse backgrounds provides another dimension of accessibility, as staff are able to address the needs of youth from different cultural backgrounds.