

Young people leaving home

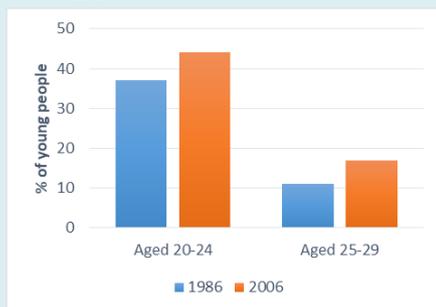
Changes in the age at which Australian young people leave home: contributory factors and policy implications for care-leavers

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FAST FACTS

- Rates of young people delaying leaving home or leaving and then returning are steadily increasing.

Fig 1. Changes in the percentage of young people remaining at home between 1986 and 2006.



- In 2012, almost **2/3 of 21 year olds** were still living in their family home.

Fig 2. Factors influencing young people to remain at home



Leaving home is a key part of the transition to adulthood. There is evidence in many countries, including Australia, that young people are remaining at home for longer. This paper explores this issue using Australian data, considers factors driving the trend, and implications for young people leaving out-of-home care.

Significant shift in age of leaving home

There is a growing trend, evident both in Australia and internationally, of young adults delaying leaving home.^{1 2} Fifty years ago, most young adults in their early twenties had completed schooling, left home and entered the workforce.³ By contrast, according to the most recently available data from the Australian Census, rates of young adults (20 to 24 years) living with one or both of their parents rose from 37% in 1986 to 44% in 2006. This increase was also apparent among those aged 25 to 29 years with rates increasing from 11% in 1986 to 17% in 2006.⁴ Again based on the most recent data available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2012-2013, 58% of males and 47% of females aged 18-24 years had never left home.⁵ The proportion of Australian 21-year-olds still living in their family home has increased from 58.6% in 2005 to 65.4% in 2012.⁶

A second trend is that of young adults returning to the parental home after a period of living independently.⁷ According to the Family Characteristics and Transitions Survey, in 2006–2007, 26 per cent of young people aged 20 to 24 years and 53 per cent aged 25 to 29 years left home but then later returned to live with their families.⁸



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IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

- Over the past 40 years, young people in Australia have faced significant social and economic change including an expansion of educational opportunities and a weakening youth labour market. These changes have significantly impacted on their ability to support themselves independently during the early years of adulthood.
- Given the extent of these societal changes, older legislation and policies which support young people in the child protection system to transition to independence, may need to be reconsidered.
- Young people leaving the child protection system are some of the most vulnerable in society and often lack the family support and resources needed to successfully respond to these societal changes and challenges.
- The development of new policy solutions needs to be informed by an understanding of the significant social and economic changes which have occurred.

What factors influence leaving home?

A range of social, cultural and economic factors affect the age at which young people leave home.⁷ An increase in youth participation in post-school education has been found to be associated with young people staying at home for longer.⁷ Between 2004 and 2016, rates of young Queenslanders aged 20-24 years studying towards a non-school qualification increased from 30.9 to 42.6 per cent.⁹

As educational opportunities have increased, full time employment opportunities for young people have decreased.¹⁰ The Longitudinal Study of Australian Youth¹¹ reported that in 2006, only 55.2 per cent of its 21-year-old cohort had gained their first full-time job, compared to 63.1 per cent in 1995. Increased educational participation and fewer employment opportunities can limit young people's capacity to become economically independent from their family.^{12 13} Studies have found that around half of young people who have never left their parental home cite financial reasons as the main reason for this decision.^{14 15}

In addition to the economic benefits gained by staying at home, by comparison to young adults who leave home at an earlier age, those who remain at home are also more likely to be recipients of their parents' time, advice and emotional support.¹³ There is substantial evidence that many young adults strongly value the social and emotional support provided by their parents¹² and that it is associated with higher levels of psychological adjustment and life satisfaction for them.¹⁶

Over the past 30 years, leaving the family home and commencing independent living at age 18 has become an increasingly uncommon outcome for most young Australians. Young people leaving out-of-home care, however, are still expected to transition to independence at this age. Like all other young Australians this group faces fewer employment opportunities and lower incomes than were available 30 years ago however they often lack the resources and support needed to successfully negotiate these contemporary challenges.¹⁷

Consideration needs to be given to whether this group of young people needs to be provided with additional support to promote their successful transition to independent living.



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