

### 3.4.2 Socioeconomic factors

*“Social and economic status is a significant determinant of health and well-being at the population level. There are striking health and developmental disparities associated with socioeconomic disadvantage, and the lower placed individuals are on the socioeconomic gradient, the more likely they are to suffer from physical and mental ill-health.”*

*Strategic Policy Framework for Children’s and Young People’s Health 2002-2007<sup>4</sup>*

Evidence shows that health is linked to socioeconomic position, with the socioeconomically disadvantaged having higher mortality rates for most major causes of death. Their morbidity pattern indicates they experience more ill health<sup>28</sup> and their use of healthcare services suggests they are less likely to act to prevent disease or to detect it at an asymptomatic stage.<sup>71</sup> Socioeconomic indicators for young people are reported in this section and build on those reported in section 1.4.2 in *Whole of population* chapter.

#### Income

In 2001, more Queensland males (52.3%) than females (27.0%) were in the higher income categories (greater than \$500 per week: Table 3.7).<sup>72</sup> The income of the majority of young people aged 15-24 years (males 81.3% and females 86.8%) had an income of less than \$500 per week. Considering the lowest income bracket, young females (66.5%) were more likely than young males (61.9%) to earn less than \$300 per week (Table 3.7).

In Queensland in 2001, young males aged 18-24 years were most likely to report running out of food and being unable to buy more (Table 3.8).

**Table 3.7: Percentage individual income (\$ weekly) received by age group and sex, Queensland 2001**

Weekly income (\$)	15-24 years		15+ years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
< 300	61.9	66.5	35.5	66.5
300-499	19.4	20.3	17.3	20.3
500-999	17.1	12.8	32.8	12.8
1000-1499	1.1	0.4	14.5	4.7
1500+	0.4	0.1	5.0	1.1

Source: ABS Census of population and housing 2001

**Table 3.8: Percentage of people who reported running out of food and being unable to afford to buy more, in past 12 months, by age and sex, Queensland 2001**

Age group	Male	Female
18+ years	5.5	6.6
18-24 years	13.9	8.1*

Source: ABS Census of population and housing 2001

\*Relative SE of the estimate = 25-50% of the estimate

## Education

*“They will be able to participate in and shape community, economic and political life in Queensland and the nation. They will be able to engage confidently with other cultures at home and abroad.”*

*2010 A Future Strategy: Education Queensland*

In Queensland in 2002, the Year 8 to Year 12 apparent retention rate for young females was 85.5%, which is 4.8% higher than the national average.<sup>73</sup> The rate for young males was 77.4%, which is 7.6% higher than the national average. The Year 8 to Year 12 apparent retention rate for Indigenous students increased from 52.1% in 2001 to 55.9% in 2002. Although these rates are low compared with non-Indigenous students, the apparent retention rate for Queensland Indigenous students continues to exceed the Australian Indigenous retention rate by about 20%.<sup>73</sup>

Education is an important indicator for young people aged 15-24 years because they are at an age when compulsory education finishes and further education and training for the workforce commences. Completion of secondary education is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for full participation in many aspects of adult life, including the workforce. Young people without appropriate education are considerably disadvantaged.<sup>74</sup>

Generally people with low education levels have poorer health status, and are more vulnerable in terms of employment and managing change. Young people who experience a safe and supportive school environment have an increased sense of connectedness to their school and community. This sense of belonging is protective against a range of health issues including depression, violence, unsafe sexual activity, and alcohol, tobacco and substance misuse.<sup>23</sup>

## Employment

In Queensland in 2001, 47.6% of young males aged 15-24 years and 35.5% of young females were employed full-time. Conversely, 47.4% of young females and 31.9% of young males were employed part-time (Table 3.9).<sup>75</sup> Similar proportions of males and females were unemployed and seeking work.

**Table 3.9: Labour force status by age and sex, Queensland 2001**

	15-24 years		15+ years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total labour force (% of total population, aged 15+ years)	69.7	66.4	70.9	55.6
Not in labour force (% of total population, aged 15+ years)	30.3	33.6	29.1	44.4
Employed: working full-time (% of labour force)	47.6	35.5	69.4	45.5
Employed: working part-time (% of labour force)	31.9	47.4	18.9	44.3
Total employed (% of labour force)	83.3	86.1	91.2	92.5
Total unemployed (% of labour force)	16.7	13.9	8.8	7.5

Source: ABS Census of population and housing 2001

Over recent years, substantial changes have occurred in the youth labour market, in particular an increased participation in education and hence a later entry into the full-time labour market.<sup>43</sup> Participation in part-time work has been increasing. In Australia in 2002, the proportion of young people aged 15-19 years who were unemployed and not in full-time education was 4.4%, and the proportion of young people aged 20-24 years who were unemployed and not in full-time education was 6.0%. In 2002, about 60% of employed young people aged 15-19 years were employed in elementary clerical, sales, service provision and labouring jobs. About 66% of young people aged 20-24 years were employed as intermediate and elementary clerical, sales and service workers, tradespersons and labourers.<sup>43</sup>

Employment is an important socioeconomic indicator of health and wellbeing. Youth suicide and mental health have been associated with unemployment. Unemployed young people have higher behavioural risk factors (such as tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption and cannabis use) than employed young people.<sup>74,76</sup>