



Does combining school and work affect school and post-school outcomes?

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One of the distinctive characteristics of Australia's secondary schooling system is the sizable proportion of students working part-time. This phenomenon raises important policy issues: does working part-time assist or hinder academic performance? Does it assist the transition to the labour market? This report uses data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) of students who were aged 15 in 2003 to look at these questions.

Key messages:

- ✧ Students who are combining work and school, on average, work 11–12 hours a week, with more females working than males; however, on average, males who are combining work and school work longer hours.
- ✧ Combining school and work has a modest negative impact on school and post-school study outcomes when hours are long (in excess of 15–20 hours a week). Females are better able to balance school and work, with the magnitude of these negative effects generally being less than for males.
- ✧ Working for relatively few hours a week (around five hours per week) has a positive impact on post-school full-time employment, compared with not working at all. Females have to work slightly longer hours to realise maximum benefits from working (15–20 hours per week) than males (10–15 hours per week), but the magnitude of the effect is comparable with males.
- ✧ While one has to be cautious in attributing causation, it does appear that students who are working lengthy hours in part-time employment are signalling an orientation towards employment and away from formal education.

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