



# Work and learning in Fitzroy, Richmond and Collingwood

Survey of public housing residents

Lauren Siegmann  
2010

Evaluation of the Centre for Work and Learning >> Yarra



Brotherhood of St Laurence  
Working for an Australia free of poverty

Work and Learning  Yarra

Published by

Brotherhood of St Laurence  
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Fitzroy, Vic. 3065  
ABN 24 603 467 024

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## Acknowledgements

This report is the first in a series that will communicate the findings of the evaluation of the Centre for Work and Learning, Yarra. The evaluation is a partnership between the Brotherhood of St Laurence Research and Policy Centre and the Centre for Work and Learning, Yarra. Both of these are part of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. The evaluation is jointly funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Innovation Fund and the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Dr May Lam, who developed the survey. We would also like to thank the residents of the housing estates who conducted the surveys and the staff at the Centre for Work and Learning, Yarra, who supported the residents in the collection of the surveys.

## Acronyms

BSL	Brotherhood of St Laurence
CWLY	Centre for Work and Learning, Yarra
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DSP	Disability Support Pension
NR	Neighbourhood Renewal
OoH	Office of Housing
RPC	Research and Policy Centre

# 1 Background to evaluation

The Centre for Work and Learning, Yarra (CWLY) is an innovative demonstration project funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL). The project will promote work and learning opportunities in public housing neighbourhoods with high concentrations of unemployment. It will coordinate the efforts of Job Services Australia providers, employers, enterprises and industry groups, training organisations and community and government support services. The CWLY will achieve this by matching employer demand for skills and labour and job seeker supply, working closely with public housing residents' groups, offering access to accredited and non-accredited pre-vocational training, developing community projects that create supported paid and unpaid work-experience opportunities, and increasing access to life skills education such as English and financial literacy training.

An evaluation is a key part of the project. The evaluation will be directed towards supporting and improving the potential for replication in other neighbourhoods, and may include evaluation of the service strategy and staffing, the financial model and cost benefit analysis. The evaluation is a partnership between the BSL Research and Policy Centre (RPC) and the CWLY.

## 2 Background to survey

This report describes some of the key findings of the survey, which was conducted under the auspices of Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) from November 2009 to January 2010. The NR program is a Victorian State Government program that aims to 'narrow the gap between disadvantaged communities and the rest of the State' (<http://www.neighbourhoodrenewal.vic.gov.au>).

Neighbourhood Renewal undertakes a regular sample survey of public housing tenants to assist in the review of local activities. As part of the initial development of the CWLY, the project team decided to 'piggy-back' on the 2009 Neighbourhood Renewal survey process of public housing tenants and undertake an additional optional survey. We did this because we recognised that public housing tenants will probably comprise a large part of the CWLY client base, given its location opposite the Atherton Gardens estate. The survey was developed by Dr May Lam, Project Leader, Applied Social Inclusion, with input from the BSL RPC.

The first purpose of the CWLY survey was to obtain a research profile of the public housing residents' current employment status, aspirations for work, and financial incentives and disincentives to work. The second purpose of the survey was to obtain information about people's needs, activities and obstacles to work and learning, which could be used to guide service development at the CWLY. In addition, where individuals chose to be identified, it served as an initial client file for registration with the CWLY.

The NR and CWLY surveys were administered by residents who had been trained by the University of Melbourne in social survey collection techniques. The NR sample comprised 500 residents in Fitzroy, Richmond and Collingwood. The total response to the CWLY survey was 301, which represents 60% of the NR survey sample. It should be noted that this represents just 6% of the household population in the survey area (OoH 2009). The extent to which we can generalise the results of this survey to the populations of the public housing estates is limited, and this should be kept in mind when considering the survey results.

This initial report does not describe the outcomes of each variable in the survey. Rather, it is intended as a 'taster', to highlight some of the key themes emerging from the survey data. The report provides a housing profile of the survey respondents, and describes some key issues that pertain to obstacles to work and learning.

## 3 Summary of key findings

### The sample

- A total of 301 residents completed the survey, representing 60% of the participants in the NR survey. The sample thus represents about 6% of the household population across the three high-rise estates (Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond).
- Forty-one per cent of respondents (125) gave their consent and contact details to be provided to the CWLY.
- The survey was skewed towards women, older people, people born in Australia, and people living in the Atherton Gardens estate in Fitzroy.
- Almost half (145 or 48%) are 15–40 years old, but 23% are over 60 years old.
- Two-thirds of respondents (201 or 67%) have been living at their current address for over five years.
- Respondents ( $n = 298$ ) are most likely to be living alone (83 or 28%) or in sole-parent households (69 or 23%).

### Engagement with labour market

- Ninety-five (or one-third) of the 283 respondents who provided information about their source of income are receiving the Disability Support Pension (DSP).
- Seventy-two (or around one-quarter) respondents stated that they were currently unemployed.
- Seventy-three per cent of people aged 18–60 years ( $n = 151$ ) indicated that they would like paid work in some capacity.
- Thirty-nine or about 14% were currently employed in part-time or full-time work.
- Parents and people on DSP are more likely to want part-time paid work.
- People over the age of 60 are less likely to want to do any paid work.
- People who are currently employed part-time appear to desire an increase in working hours.
- Respondents are most likely to have qualifications or experience, or to be seeking work, in hospitality, retail, cleaning and community services.
- The main categories of income support for people who 'want to work' are Newstart/Youth Allowance (30%), Parenting Payment (25%) and DSP (15%).
- The impact on current payments and benefits is an important consideration for people when contemplating paid employment. They know that earning an income will impact on current payments, but very few understand to what extent income affects payments.
- The great majority (75%) indicated that losing entitlements, such as their Health Care Card and paying extra rent, are important factors in their decisions about employment.
- Respondents indicated the following 'barriers' to employment: concerns about a lack of job search or interview skills (185), lack of qualifications or experience (183), uncertainty about the type of available work (158), concern about the effect of income on benefits or concessions (157), as well as caring responsibilities (119).
- The level of engagement and perceived benefit of job services is low: 57 or about one-third of the 170 who were currently not employed but 'wanted to work' indicated that they had had previous contact with an employment services provider in the past 12 months. Fourteen (24%) of those who had used job services reported that the assistance they received was 'no help at all'.



## 4 Profile of respondents

This section explores some of the characteristics of the entire sample (a total of 301 respondents)<sup>1</sup>.

Based on a summary snapshot of survey data, we can make the following observations about the survey population:

- They are more likely to be female (61%). Female respondents are overrepresented in the sample when compared to the population of the public housing estates in Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy (57%).
- Respondents tend to be older. Half (50%) were 15–40 years old; but 23% were over 60 years old.
- Female respondents are more likely to be older (28% over the age of 60, compared to 17% of men).
- Respondents are most likely to have been born in Vietnam (40%) or Australia (22%). Australian-born respondents are overrepresented in the sample when compared to the population of the public housing estates in Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy (13% Australian born according to Office of Housing tenant data).
- Respondents who were born overseas are more likely to have lived in Australia for over 10 years (53%).
- Respondents' preferred language is English (52%) or Vietnamese (39%), although the English reading skills of people who preferred written material in English varied. Of the respondents who do not speak English, a third (33%) stated that it would be impossible to get English material translated within two to three days.
- Respondents are more likely to live in the Atherton Gardens estate in Fitzroy (53%). People in Fitzroy were overrepresented in the sample when compared to the Office of Housing data of populations of the Fitzroy, Richmond and Collingwood estates.
- Two-thirds of respondents have been living at their address for over five years and nearly half (44%) for over 10 years.
- Respondents are more likely to be living alone (28%) or as a single parent with one or more children (23%).

### Gender

A comparison of gender between the CWLY survey and data collected by the Office of Housing (OoH 2009) is given in Table 4.1. Here we can see that women are slightly overrepresented in the CWL sample.

**Table 4.1 Gender**

Gender	CWLY survey		Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy estates	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Male	111	37	2111	44
Female	184	61	2679	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>4790</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: missing data = 6

<sup>1</sup> In tables and figures, percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

# Age

Survey respondents tended to be older. Half the respondents are 41 years old or more, and 38% of respondents are over 50 years old (see Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2 Age**

Age (years)	n	%
15–20	20	7
21–30	55	19
31–40	70	24
41–50	37	12
51–60	45	15
60+	69	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: missing data = 5

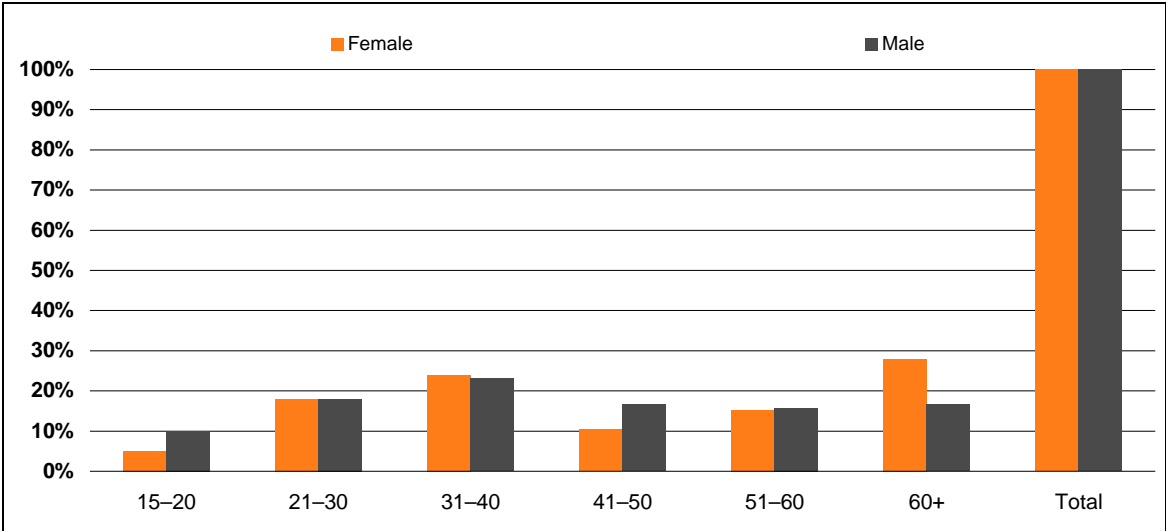
# Age and gender

At first glance, there do not appear to be significant differences in the age spread of respondents. In general, however, respondents over the age of 60 are more likely to be female and respondents under the age of 20 are more likely to be male (see Table 4.3 and Figure 4.1).

**Table 4.3 Age and gender**

Age (years)	15–20	21–30	31–40	41–50	51–60	60+	Total
Female	5%	17%	24%	10%	15%	28%	100%
Male	10%	18%	23%	17%	16%	17%	100%

**Figure 4.1 Age by gender**



## Country of birth

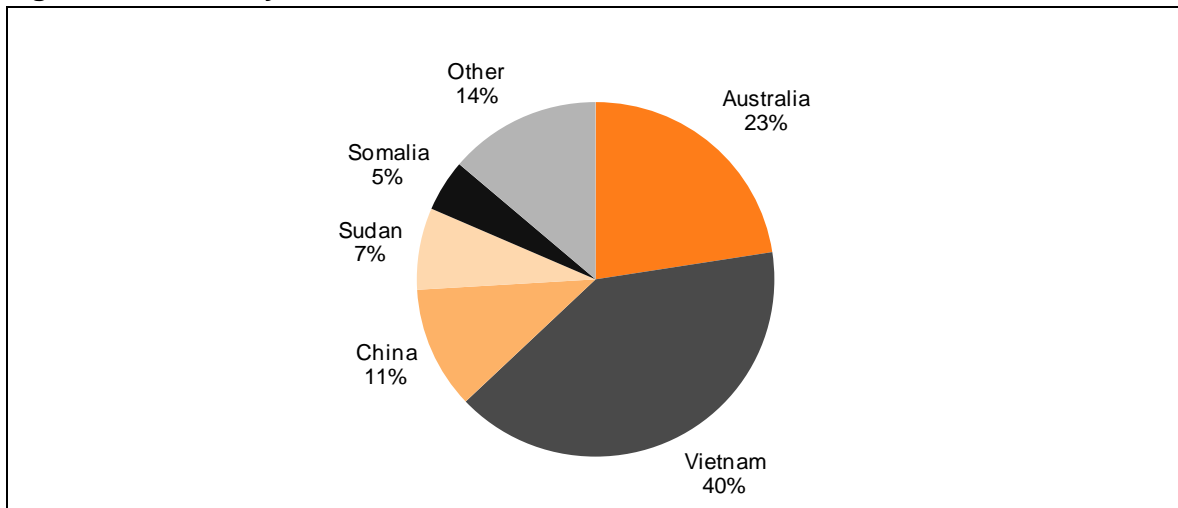
A comparison of country of origin of the CWLY survey and data collected by the Office of Housing is given in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.2. Here we can see that people born in Australia are overrepresented in the CWLY sample.

**Table 4.4 Country of birth**

Country	CWLY survey		Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy estates	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Australia	67	22	579	12
Vietnam	120	40	1675	35
China	33	11	500	10
Sudan	22	7	258	5
Somalia	14	5	207	4
Other	41	13	1571	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4790</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: missing data = 4

**Figure 4.2 Country of birth**



The category 'other' represents 21 countries: New Zealand, East Timor, Greece, Turkey, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Chile, Hungary, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Macedonia, Malaysia, Morocco, Mozambique, Pakistan, Serbia, Thailand and Zimbabwe.

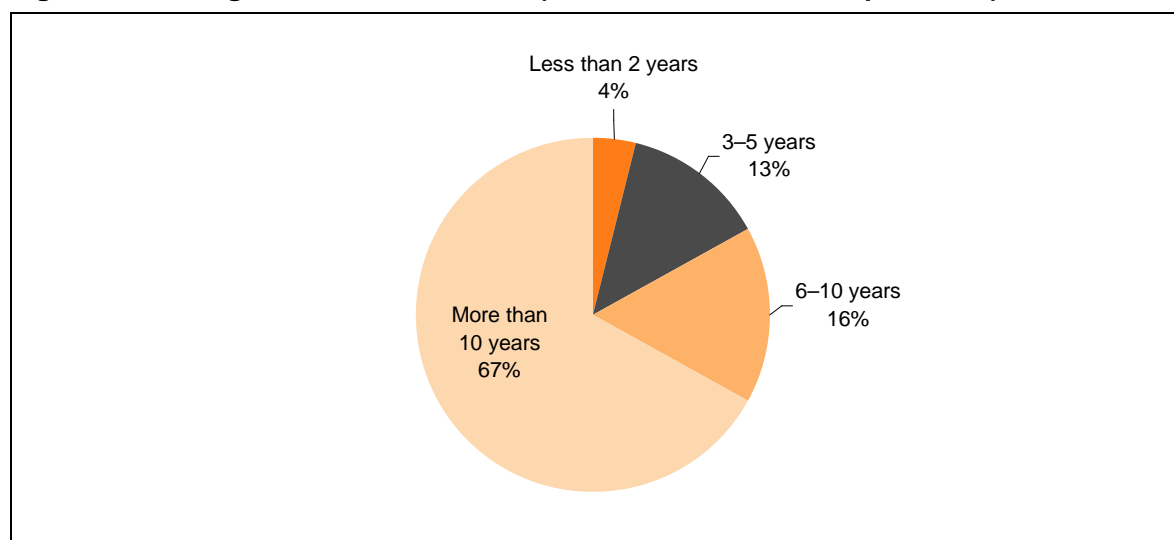
The majority of respondents born overseas have been living in Australia for more than 10 years (67%). Only 4% of respondents born overseas have been in Australia less than two years (see Table 4.5 and Figure 4.3).

**Table 4.5 Length of time in Australia (non-Australian born respondents)**

Less than 2 years		3–5 years		6–10 years		More than 10 years	
<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
10	4	30	13	36	16	154	67

Note: *n* = 230

**Figure 4.3 Length of time in Australia (non-Australian born respondents)**



## Preferred language

Participants were asked to name all of their preferred languages. English is the most commonly indicated preferred language (46%), followed by Vietnamese (35%), and then Chinese (15%) (see Table 4.6).

**Table 4.6 Preferred language**

Language	Number of respondents	
	<i>n</i>	%
English	158	46
Vietnamese	119	35
Chinese	50	15
Somali	6	2
Sudanese languages	8	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: 63 respondents nominated more than one preferred language.

## Where respondents live

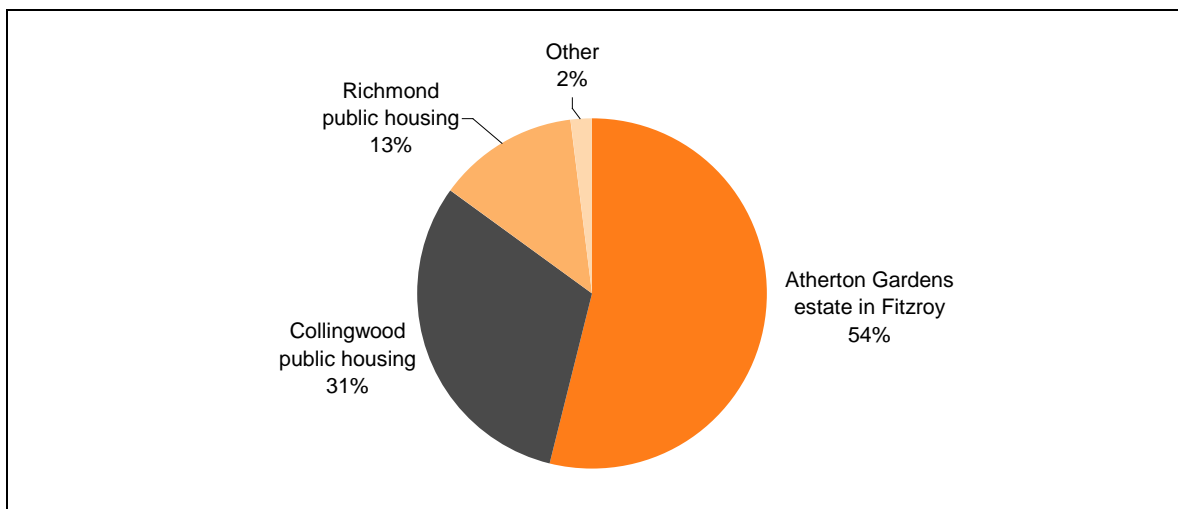
Just over half of the surveyed respondents live in the Atherton Gardens estate in Fitzroy (54%), with almost a third from Collingwood public housing (31%) and just 13% from the Richmond public housing estate (see Table 4.7 and Figure 4.4). The survey population does not reflect the actual population sizes of the three housing estates (1177 people live in Fitzroy, 1426 people live in Collingwood public housing, and 2187 people live in Richmond public housing).

**Table 4.7 Respondents' place of residence**

Place of residence	Number of respondents	
	<i>n</i>	%
Fitzroy Atherton Gardens public housing	161	54
Collingwood public housing	91	31
Richmond public housing	38	13
Other	6	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: missing data = 5

**Figure 4.4 Where respondents live**



## Length of time at current address

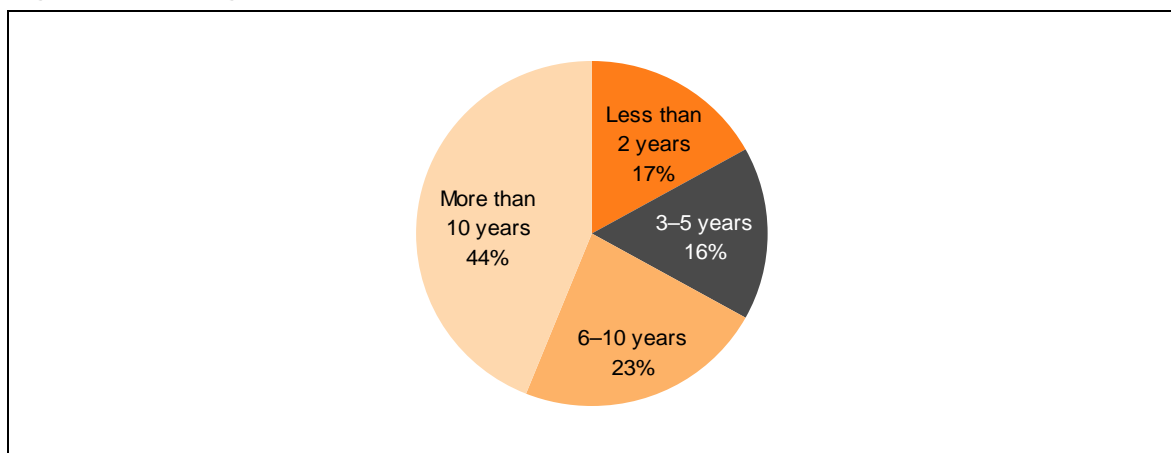
Two-thirds of respondents have lived at their current address for over five years; 44% for more than 10 years. Only a small proportion of this sample could be considered to be new residents (see Table 4.8 and Figure 4.5).

**Table 4.8 Length of time at current address**

	Number of respondents	
	<i>n</i>	%
Less than 2 years	51	17
3–5 years	47	16
6–10 years	69	23
More than 10 years	132	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: missing = 2

Figure 4.5 Length of time at current address



## Household types

Respondents to the question ‘Which of the following describes your household?’ ( $n = 294$ ) are most likely to be living alone (28%), or in a single-parent household with children (23%). Of the 83 respondents who reported that they lived alone, 38 are over 60 years old (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9 Household composition by age

Age group (years)	Couple with child or children		Sole parent with one or more children		Shared household with children		Couple without children		Single person living alone		Shared household no children	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Under 20	2	1	8	3	3	1	0	0	1	0	5	2
21-30	16	5	17	6	3	1	5	2	6	2	8	3
31-40	27	9	22	8	3	1	5	2	7	2	5	2
41-50	11	4	9	3	1	0	1	3	12	4	3	1
51-60	3	1	10	3	0	0	8	3	19	7	5	2
Over 60	2	1	3	1	2	1	24	8	38	13	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>10</b>

Respondents living alone are more likely to be over the age of 60 ( $n = 38$ , 13%). Women ( $n = 57$  as a sole parent and  $n = 37$  as a couple) are more likely to be living in a household with children than men ( $n = 12$  as a sole parent and  $n = 21$  as a couple) (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Household composition by gender of respondent

Gender ( $n = 283$ )	Couple with child or children		Sole parent with one or more children		Shared household with children		Couple without children		Single person living alone		Shared household no children		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	%
Female	37	13	57	20	4	1	23	8	50	17	12	4	<b>63</b>
Male	21	7	12	4	8	3	20	7	34	12	15	5	<b>37</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: discrepancies between Table 4.9 and Table 4.10 are due to missing data

## Employment status

Fourteen per cent ( $n = 39$ ) of respondents are engaged in paid work and 73% indicated that they were not in paid work.

Of the 39 people engaged in paid work, only 11 were employed 35 hours or more per week (4% of the total sample).

Seventy-two respondents (26% of the total sample) stated that they were currently unemployed. Of these respondents, 42 indicated that they were currently looking for work (15% of total sample).

Eight per cent ( $n = 24$ ) of respondents were not engaged in paid work because of parenting duties. A further 34% ( $n = 95$ ) of respondents are currently on the DSP. Of the 95 on DSP, 83 indicated that they did not wish to engage in paid work (30% of the total sample) (See Table 4.11).

**Table 4.11 Employment status**

Employment status ( $n = 283$ )	Female		Male		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	%
Employed full-time: 35 hours or more per week	3	1	8	3	4
Employed part-time: 25–34 hours per week	5	2	2	1	3
Employed part-time: 10–24 hours per week	7	2	7	2	4
Employed part-time: less than 10 hours per week	2	1	5	2	3
Unemployed and looking for work	22	8	20	7	15
Unemployed and not looking for work	20	7	10	4	11
Full-time parent, not in paid work	24	8	0	0	8
DSP and looking for work	6	2	6	2	4
DSP and not looking for work	53	19	30	11	30
Studying	8	3	9	3	6
Other	28	10	8	3	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>

## How respondents manage on their income

Respondents were asked how their household had been managing on their income over the prior 12 months. Just over half of respondents indicated that they were 'coping' (52%,  $n = 155$ ), about one-quarter (24%) reported that they were 'finding it difficult' to manage financially and 22% said that they were 'living comfortably'.

## 5 Labour market engagement

The previous sections of this document described the composition of the entire survey sample. This section describes the characteristics of respondents who do and who do not want to engage in paid work. Responses to the question 'What are your desired hours of paid work?' were divided into two categories: those who indicated that they desired some hours of paid work ( $n = 170$ ) and a smaller group who indicated that they did not desire paid work ( $n = 106$ ). Missing data for this question were excluded. The total sample size for the two groups is 276.

The following key themes can be identified:

- Most people want to work in some capacity, but not necessarily full-time.
- People who are currently working part-time appear to desire more hours of paid work than they currently work.
- Parents are more likely to be seeking part-time work.
- People most likely to want to work are 31–40 years old. Older people are less likely to want to work.
- People who want to work are more likely to indicate that their health is 'very good' or 'excellent'.

### Desired hours of paid work

In the survey, respondents were asked to categorise themselves as being employed, unemployed, parenting, on DSP or studying. They were then asked to nominate their desired hours or work per week. Some respondents who indicated they were not looking for work were interested in some part-time work (see Table 5.1).

Most respondents indicated that they desired paid employment ( $n = 170$  or 62%). Most respondents who desired paid employment wanted to work part-time; that is, 20 hours a week or less per week ( $n = 93$ , or 55% of 170 respondents). People on DSP were the largest group who indicated that they did not wish to work; however, it should be noted that a small number of people on DSP indicated a desire to work part-time. Parents looking for work are more likely to want part-time work; no parent wants more than 31 hours of work per week. People working 15–24 hours per week generally want to work more hours than they currently work.



**Table 5.1** Desired hours of work

Respondents' employment status ( <i>n</i> = 269)	'I don't want to work'		1–20 hours		21–30 hours		31–40 hours		41+ hours	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Employed full-time: 35 hours or more per week	0	0	0	0	1	3	5	28	4	17
Employed part-time: 25–34 hours per week	0	0	3	3	0	0	1	6	3	13
Employed part-time: 15–24 hours per week	0	0	3	3	4	13	2	11	2	8
Employed part-time: 10–14 hours per week	0	0	1	1	2	7	0	0	1	4
Employed part-time: less than 10 hours per week	0	0	4	4	2	7	0	0	1	4
Unemployed and looking for work	2	2	15	16	9	30	6	33	9	38
Unemployed and not looking for work	13	13	15	16	1	3	1	6	0	0
Full-time parent, not in paid work	7	7	11	12	4	13	0	0	0	0
DSP and looking for work	2	2	6	6	2	7	1	6	1	4
DSP and not looking for work	64	62	15	16	0	0	0	0	0	0
Studying	3	3	8	9	3	10	2	11	1	4
Other	13	13	12	13	2	7	0	0	2	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

## Age and desire for paid work

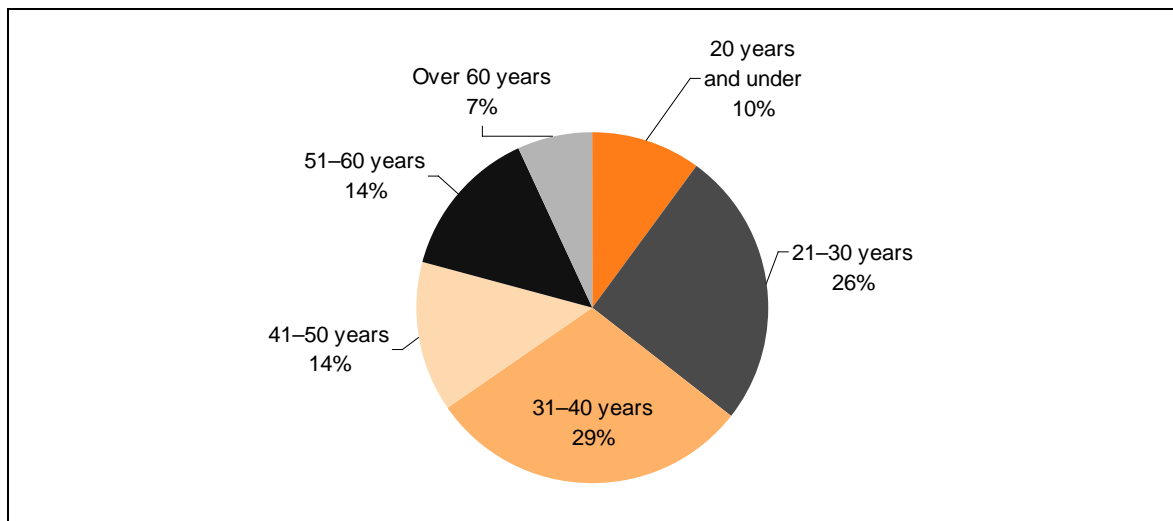
Most people who desire paid employment are aged 21–30 (26%) or 31–40 (30%) years. Over 60% of people who said they did not desire paid work were aged 41 years or more. Most people who did not desire paid employment (*n* = 106) are those over the age of 60 (*n* = 47 or 44%) (see Table 5.2 and Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

**Table 5.2** Age and desire for paid work

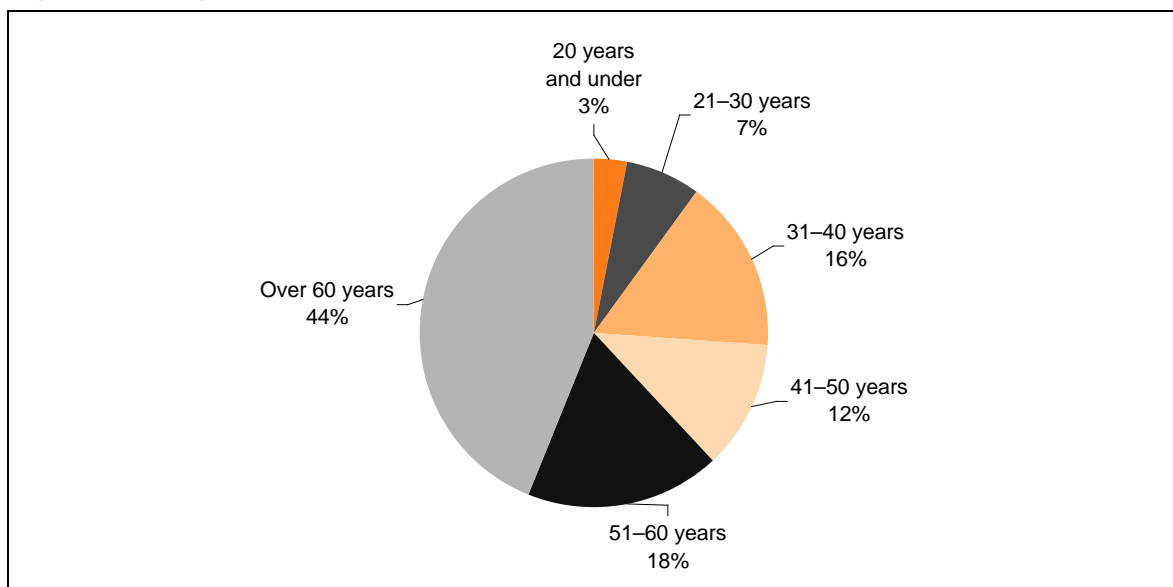
Age group (years) ( <i>n</i> = 274)	Want to work		Don't want to work	
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	%
20 and under	17	3	3	10
21–30	44	7	7	26
31–40	50	17	16	30
41–50	23	13	12	14
51–60	23	19	18	14
Over 60	11	47	44	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: missing data = 2

**Figure 5.1** Age of people who 'want' to do paid work



**Figure 5.2** Age of people who 'don't want' to do paid work



## Gender and desire for paid employment

Women comprised just over half of those who wanted some paid work. However, of those who said they didn't want to do paid work, three-quarters were women. This pattern reflects gendered patterns of engagement in paid employment and responsibility for unpaid caring work.

**Table 5.3** Gender and desire to do paid work

Gender (n = 272)	Desired some hours of paid work		Desired no hours of paid work	
	n	n	%	%
Female	88	78	74	53
Male	79	27	26	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: missing data for 'Desired some hours of paid work' = 3;  
missing data for 'Desired no hours of paid work' = 1

## Health and desire to do paid work

Men and women who stated that they want paid work were more likely to describe their health as 'excellent' or 'very good'. Understandably, respondents who stated that their health was 'not good' or 'bad' are less likely to want paid work (see Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4 Health and desire for paid work**

Desire for work ( <i>n</i> = 275)	Excellent		Very good		Good		Not good		Bad	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Want to work ( <i>n</i> = 169)	26	15	46	27	75	44	22	13	0	0
Don't want to work ( <i>n</i> = 106)	4	4	17	16	47	44	29	27	9	9

Note: missing data = 1

## Type of payment and desire for paid work

The main source of income for 78% (*n* = 132) of respondents who desired some paid work (*n* = 170) is some form of income support.

The largest cohort of people who did want to do paid work are people receiving the Parenting Payment (25%, *n* = 42). Twenty-seven (65%) people receiving the Parenting Payment indicated that they wanted to work 20 hours or less per week. The largest group seeking full-time employment were those receiving the Newstart Allowance, and, of those, 15 (31%) wanted more than 30 hours of work per week. Of the 106 respondents who did not want to do paid work, half are on DSP (50%, *n* = 53) (see Table 5.5 and Figures 5.3 and 5.4).

**Table 5.5 Type of income support payment and desire to do paid work**

	Parenting Payment		Newstart Allowance		Youth Allowance		Austudy		DSP		Carer Payment		Other	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Want to work ( <i>n</i> = 104)	42	25	29	18	21	13	4	2	26	19	3	2	13	9
Don't want to work ( <i>n</i> = 104)	16	15	3	3	3	3	2	2	53	50	6	6	21	20

Note: missing data for 'Want to work' = 2; missing data for 'Don't want to work' = 2

Figure 5.3 Types of income support payment and desire to do paid work

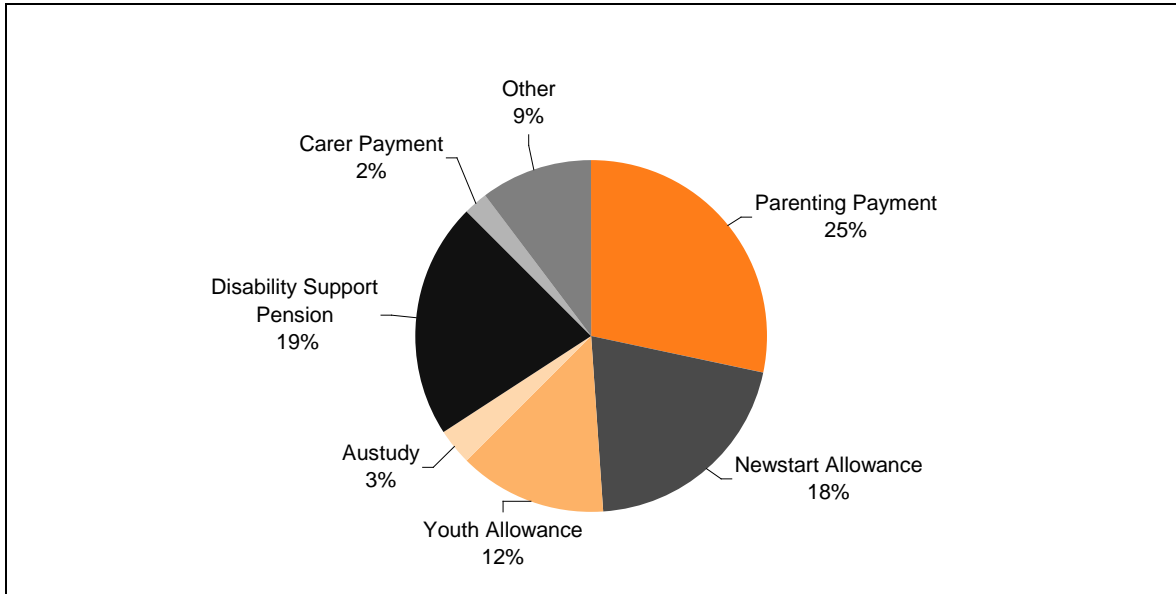
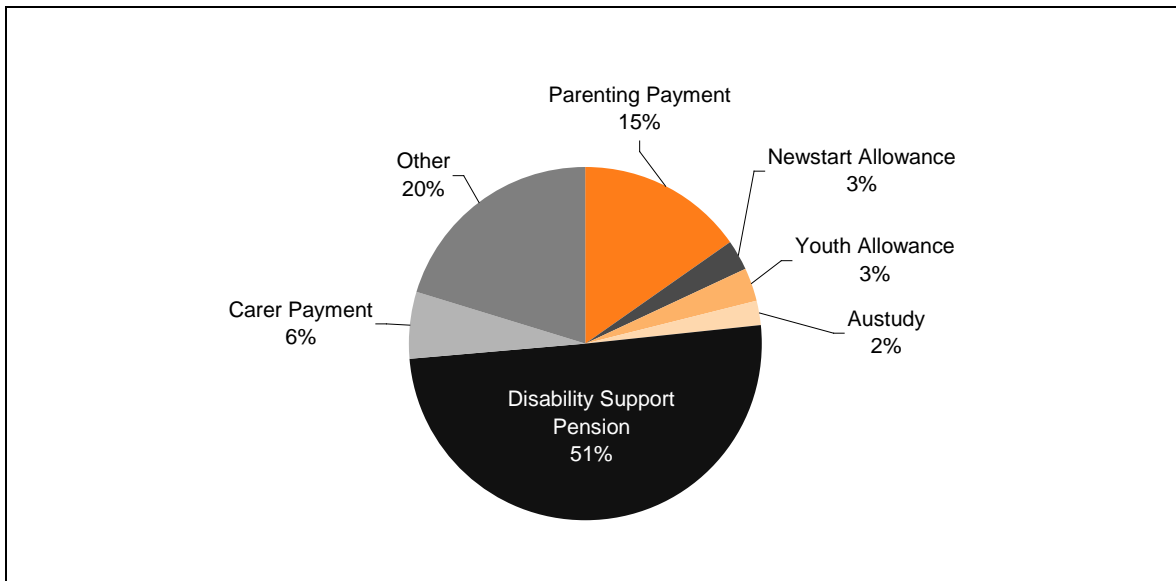


Figure 5.4 Types of income support payment of people who do not want to work



## 6 Profile of people interested in paid work

This section deals with the sample of the survey ( $n = 170$ ) who were not currently employed and who indicated that they wished to engage in some kind of paid work. It highlights key issues for people who stated that they desired some hours of paid work.

Based on a summary snapshot of survey data, we can make the following generalisations regarding these respondents:

- The majority of respondents who want some hours of paid work are reliant on income support payments through Centrelink ( $n = 138$  of 170), although most respondents indicated that they would be better off if they worked full-time.
- Respondents who want to do paid work are aware that working will impact on the current rate of payments they receive and the amount of rent they pay to the Office of Housing, but they do not know to what extent earning income will impact on their payments. Reduction of payments and other benefits appears to be one important factor in people's decision to work.
- Respondents looking for paid work indicated the following 'barriers' to employment: concerns about a lack of job search or interview skills (185), lack of qualifications or experience (183), uncertainty about the type of available work (158), concern about effect on benefits or concessions (157), as well as caring responsibilities (119).
- Only one-third of respondents have had contact with local job services providers.
- About 70% of respondents who want to do paid work have a computer, and 60% have internet access. Younger people (<40 years of age) tended to be more likely to have a computer. Computer skills of respondents appear to be evenly divided between people who state that they have good skills and people whose skills need improvement.
- All respondents who want to do paid work have some level of English, with 85% of respondents indicating that their skills are 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'.
- Most respondents who want to do paid work appear to have qualifications or experience and are seeking work in hospitality, retail and community services.

### Work experience

Responses indicated that respondents who want to do paid work ( $n = 170$ ) are most likely to have qualifications in:

- hospitality (9%,  $n = 15$ )
- community services (9%,  $n = 14$ )
- retail (8%,  $n = 12$ )
- cleaning (7%,  $n = 11$ ).

Responses indicated that respondents who want to do paid work ( $n = 170$ ) are most likely to have work experience in:

- retail (23%,  $n = 38$ )
- hospitality (21%,  $n = 34$ )
- community services (17%,  $n = 27$ )
- administration (15%,  $n = 24$ )
- building (unskilled) (12%,  $n = 20$ ).

Responses indicated that respondents who want to do paid work ( $n = 170$ ) would like to work in the following fields:

- hospitality (25%,  $n = 40$ )
- cleaning (22%,  $n = 35$ )
- community services (22%,  $n = 35$ )
- retail (20%,  $n = 32$ )
- administration (14%,  $n = 23$ ).

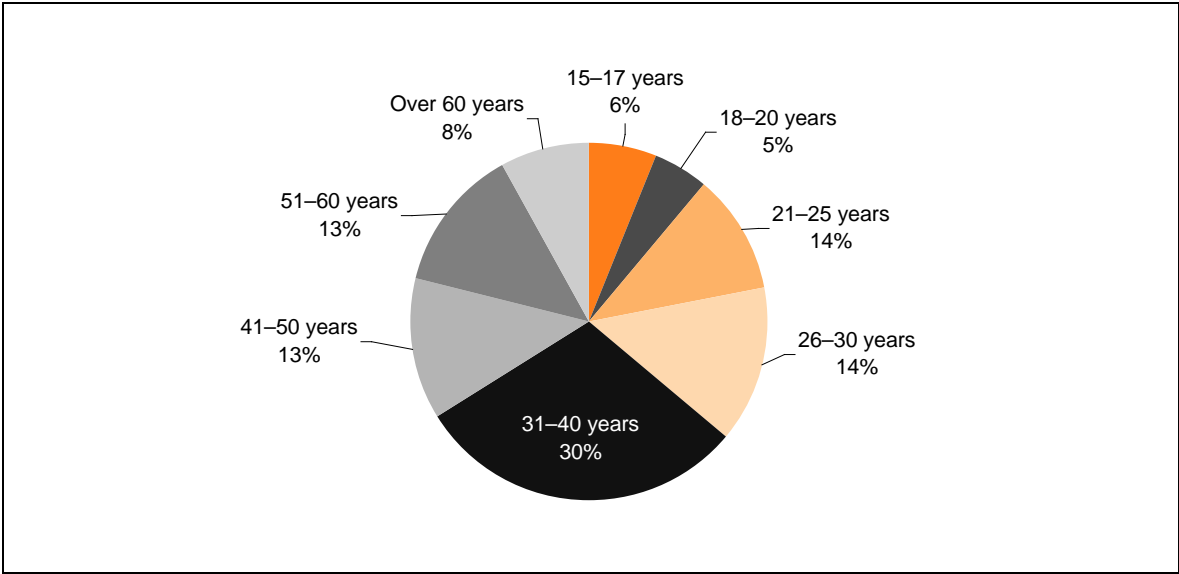
## Knowledge and attitudes regarding the effect of earnings on Centrelink benefits and rent

Income support payments are the main source of income for 78% ( $n = 132$ ) of respondents who desired some paid work ( $n = 170$ ). The age breakdown of people in receipt of Centrelink benefits is provided in Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1.

**Table 6.1 Age of income support recipients**

Age (years)	In receipt of Centrelink payments	
	<i>n</i>	%
15–17	8	6
18–20	7	5
21–25	14	11
26–30	18	14
31–40	40	30
41–50	17	13
51–60	17	13
Over 60	11	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 6.1 Age of respondents in receipt of income support payments**



Respondents ( $n = 170$ ) who want to do paid work were asked whether they would be better off financially if they worked, or relied on Centrelink benefits. Fewer than half believed that they would be better off if they worked full-time ( $n = 62, 41\%$ ).

Respondents ( $n = 170$ ) who want to do paid work were asked whether they knew about the effect of earning income on payments from Centrelink and to the Office of Housing. They were then asked by how much their Centrelink payments would be reduced and how much extra rent they have to pay. Tables 6.2 and 6.3 suggest that although respondents are aware that earning additional income would affect their benefits and rental payments, they are less likely to know the extent of such an effect.

Of the 170 respondents looking for paid work, when asked 'Would you like financial advice about paid work?' over half (89, 54%) said 'Yes' and 29 (18%) stated 'Maybe'.

**Table 6.2 Effect of income on Centrelink benefits for people wanting to work**

	Number of respondents who answered 'Yes'	
	<i>n</i>	%
Do you know about the effect of extra income on getting reduced payments from Centrelink? ( $n = 170$ )	141	83
Do you know how much your Centrelink payments would be reduced for the extra income you earn? ( $n = 167$ )	28	17

**Table 6.3 Effect of income on rental payments for people wanting to work**

	Number of respondents who answered 'Yes'	
	<i>n</i>	%
Do you know about the effect of extra income on paying 25% of income to the Office of Housing for rent? ( $n = 170$ )	136	80
Do you know about rent freeze – that is, no requirement to pay extra rent for a limited period even if you are earning an extra income? ( $n = 165$ )	31	19
Do you know how much extra rent you would need to pay to the Office of Housing? ( $n = 167$ )	34	20

Concern about losing Centrelink payments or having to pay increased rent appears to be important to respondents who want to do paid work. The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that losing a Health Care Card, receiving reduced benefits, or paying increased rent are significant factors in their decisions about taking on paid work (see Table 6.4).

**Table 6.4 Assessment of effect of extra income on benefits**

	Paying 25% of my income to OoH ( $n = 167$ )		Losing my Health Care Card ( $n = 167$ )		Getting reduced payments from Centrelink ( $n = 167$ )	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Very important	84	50	78	47	62	37
Important	42	25	50	30	54	32
Total	126	75	128	77	116	69

Note: only the 'very important' and 'important' variables are included in this table.

## Perceived ability to get paid work

Respondents ( $n = 170$ ) who want to do paid work were asked to rank a series of factors according to how important they were in stopping them getting paid work. Overall, respondents appear to be concerned about lack of experience required to obtain paid work, and lack of skills needed to go through the recruitment process for paid work (see Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5 Perceived ability to gain employment (of people looking for paid work)**

Factors affecting getting paid work	Very important		Important		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
I am not good at job interviews ( $n = 154$ )	43	26	46	28	89	54
I don't have the right qualifications ( $n = 157$ )	43	26	45	27	88	53
I don't have the required work experience ( $n = 156$ )	42	25	53	32	95	57
I don't know how to prepare a job application ( $n = 157$ )	41	25	55	33	96	58
I am not sure what kind of work to look for ( $n = 158$ )	40	24	47	28	87	52
I have to look after someone ( $n = 158$ )	37	22	27	16	64	38
Working hours don't fit with caring for children ( $n = 156$ )	34	21	28	17	62	37
I would lose benefits and concessions ( $n = 157$ )	32	19	57	34	89	53

Note: only the 'very important' and 'important' variables are included in this table.

## Previous contact with job services in the past year

Respondents who want to do paid work were asked about their experience with services to help them find work or develop skills in the previous 12 months. When responding to the question 'Have you had any contact with these services in the past year?', just over a third of respondents who wanted to work (57 of 170) indicated that they had had contact with a job services provider; however, two-thirds (111 of 170) reported that they had had no contact with a job services provider in the previous year. An additional 11 people had only visited a job services provider once. Further, a small number of respondents ( $n = 11$ ) reported some contact with disability employment services.

Respondents who desired some hours of paid work were asked how helpful the job services provider had been. Most said that they had been helpful: 27 (40%) said they had been 'a bit helpful', 25 (37%) stated that they had been 'helpful' or 'very helpful' and 16 (24%) of those reporting contact in the past year said they had been 'no help at all'.

## How respondents manage on their income

Respondents ( $n = 170$ ) who want to do paid work were asked how their household has been managing on their income over the prior 12 months. Only 14% ( $n = 23$ ) of respondents wanting to work indicated that they are 'living comfortably' on their income. The majority of respondents indicate that they are 'coping' (56%,  $n = 94$ ) or 'finding it difficult' (29%,  $n = 46$ ).



## Computer and internet access

Most respondents who want to do paid work had access to or owned a computer: 70% ( $n = 117$ ) of respondents ( $n = 170$ ) indicated that they had a computer, and 60% ( $n = 102$ ) indicated that they had internet access. Those under the age of 40 are more likely to have a computer (48%) than people over the age of 41 (22%) (see Table 6.6).

**Table 6.6 Age and computer access (of people looking for paid work)**

Computer access ( $n = 166$ )	Under 20		21–30 years		31–40 years		41–50 years		51–60 years		Over 60	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	13	8	33	20	34	20	17	10	16	10	4	2
No	4	2	11	7	14	8	6	4	7	4	7	4

## Computer skills

People who did not have access to a computer were more likely to indicate that they are 'not good' with computers, although the difference was not significant. People who did have access to a computer were more likely to state that their skills are 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'. Responses appear to be evenly divided between respondents who indicated that they had computer skills that are 'not good' or are 'still learning' and respondents who indicated that they had 'good', 'very good', or 'excellent' computer skills. However, respondents appear to be less confident in using the internet to look for jobs, with just over half (53%) indicating that they are 'not good' or 'still learning' (see Table 6.7).

**Table 6.7 Computer skills of people looking for paid work**

	Computer skills		Skills in using the internet to get information		Skills in using the internet to look for jobs	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
'Not good' or 'still learning'	69	44	64	41	82	53
'Good', 'very good' or 'excellent'	88	56	93	59	74	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100</b>
Missing data	13		13		14	

Note: 47% ( $n = 80$ ) of respondents indicated that they would like to learn how to use a computer and 48% ( $n = 92$ ) of respondents indicated that they would like to keep job search needs online.

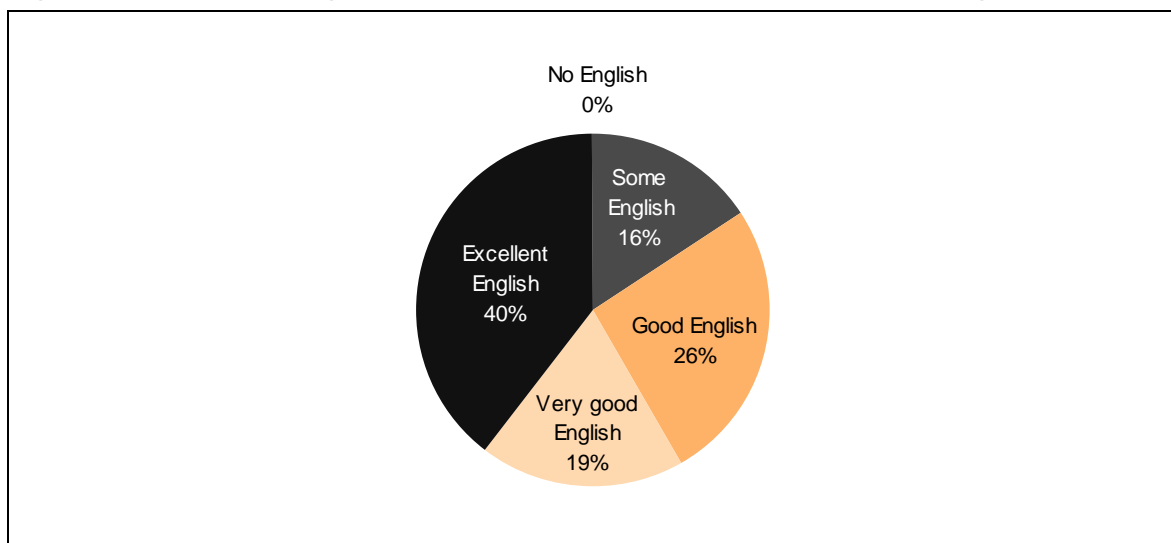
## Language

Of the respondents who desired paid work ( $n = 170$ ) and who indicated that English was their preferred language ( $n = 121$ ), most said they had 'excellent', 'very good' or 'good' English reading skills (85%). However, 16% of respondents stated that they had 'some' English reading skills (see Table 6.8 and Figure 6.2).

**Table 6.8 English language skill level (of those looking for work, with English as preferred language) ( $n = 121$ )**

No English		Some English		Good English		Very good English		Excellent English	
<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
0	0	19	16	31	26	23	19	48	40

Figure 6.2 Level of English for people who prefer written material in English



## Using the Centre for Work and Learning

At the end of the survey, respondents who stated that they wish to engage in paid work were asked for their permission to be contacted by the CWLY if they were interested in some involvement or information about its activities. Nearly half of all respondents (41%,  $n = 125$ ) gave their consent and contact details to be provided to the CWLY.

## Getting to the Centre for Work and Learning

The majority of respondents indicated that they would walk (75%,  $n = 127$  of 170) or take public transport (40%,  $n = 68$ ) to the centre. Only 8 (5%) respondents explicitly stated that they would not attend the CWLY.

## How respondents prefer to access information

The majority of respondents who want to do paid work indicated that they would prefer to get information from neighbours or friends (75%,  $n = 126$  of 170), via email or the internet (51%,  $n = 86$ ) or via the noticeboards at the entrance of the building that they lived in (51%,  $n = 85$ ).

Table 6.9 Preferred access to information by country of birth

	Born in Vietnam (31%)		Born in China (7%)		Born in Australia (29%)		Born in Sudan (11%)		Born in Somalia (6%)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Prefer to get information from family and friends ( $n = 233$ )	41	25	11	5	36	22	15	8	8	5

## 7 Discussion and next steps

Although we must acknowledge the limitations of this survey—the sample is small and it cannot be generalised to the population of the housing estates across Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond—the survey does provide some useful insights. The findings provide a basis for further research and will inform the development of the CWLY.

### Desire for paid work

One of the most interesting findings from the survey relates to the stated working intentions of respondents. In Table 5.1, we see that 32 people (unemployed or on DSP) who identified as not looking for work and 15 parents not in paid work later indicated that they were interested in work, when asked to state the number of hours they would like to work each week. These numbers are small (16% of the sample), but they do suggest that there is an identifiable group of people living in the housing estates who, while not actively seeking work, could become engaged with the labour market given the right conditions. Accordingly, the survey respondents who are not engaged in paid work or self-employment can be categorised into three groups:

- those who identify as unemployed
- older people, sole-parents and people in receipt of DSP who do not identify and are not identified as unemployed, but may desire paid work
- those who are not engaged with the labour market and do not desire paid work.

The recently released report *Making work pay and making income support work* (Bodsworth 2010) identifies the complex interaction of taxation, housing and income support policies that can act as a disincentive to employment for particular groups, especially single mothers. In this survey, although some respondents expressed concern about the impact of paid work on receipt of benefits, concern about lack of experience and skills was a more frequently cited barrier. The data suggest that for some cohorts the reason for not actively seeking work may be linked to barriers involved in seeking work rather than no desire to work. Respondents identified particular barriers, which included lack of confidence about the recruitment process, concerns about availability of work, and caring responsibilities. Further research is required to examine the factors that may enable or discourage engagement in paid work for those who desire employment but are currently not seeking work.

### Engagement with job services providers

Older people, sole parents and people in receipt of DSP are unlikely to engage with job services providers. Yet even those who identify as unemployed and seeking work appear to have little engagement with job services. This apparent lack of engagement with jobs services providers requires further investigation.

## What are the implications of this survey for the CWLY?

The first implication relates to the reach of services and ensuring that the CWLY does not just work with the unemployed, but also engages with those who are not identified as unemployed but who may desire paid employment. It is also important to engage with those who are underemployed—those working part-time who are seeking increased hours or further qualifications.

The second implication is that getting a job should not be seen 'as an end in itself'. Work and learning provide a range of benefits including improved skill development and social engagement. It is important that the CWLY recognises these 'soft outcomes'.

The third implication is that the CWLY needs to develop an understanding as to why people are not engaging with job services and use this information to better engage with the populations of the public housing estates.

## 8 References

Bodsworth, E 2010, *Making work pay, and making income support work*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy.

Office of Housing (OoH) 2009 (unpublished), Tenant data from the Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond housing estates.