

Section 2: The Sydney Sample:

Demographic Characteristics

Our survey in Sydney was designed to draw in a large range of immigrant communities—adults as well as youth—and to include roughly equal numbers of males and females across these age ranges. Overall, we surveyed 825 youth and adults in nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Sydney. Of this sample, 380 were adults and 445 were youth. The pilot survey in Canterbury was conducted in late 2000, with the other fieldwork being carried out in 2001.

Table 2.1: Birthplace of Adults Surveyed in Sydney

Country of Birth	Frequency
Australia	63
China	20
Egypt	21
Greece	25
Hong Kong	3
India	6
Italy	9
Korea	8
Lebanon	45
Macedonia	23
New Zealand	3
Philippines	14
Samoa	11
Sri Lanka	7
Tonga	9
United Kingdom	5
Vietnam	41
Croatia	3
Fiji	8
Poland	8
Iraq	6
Cambodia	3

Laos	8
Uruguay	7
Other	22
Not Stated	2
Total	380

Table 2.1 shows the birthplace and number of adults surveyed. The survey was stratified to include twenty-one NESB birthplace groups of adults. The largest of these were adults born in Lebanon (45) and Vietnam (41), with the justification that these two birthplace groups have been most associated with crime in recent public discourses in Sydney (Collins *et al.*, 2000). Other birthplace groups of adults with large numbers are: Greece (25), Macedonia (23), Egypt (21) and China (20). In addition, there were five adults born in the UK and three born in New Zealand who were also surveyed. We also included a “control” sample of 63 adults who were third or later generation Australian born. The importance of this “control” sample is that it can help us work out if and how cultural or ethnicity factors shape attitudes and impressions of youth crime. Such a control sample is also important because while Sydney’s LGAs in the south-west of the city, where most of our survey took place, are Sydney’s most multicultural suburban precincts (Collins and Poynting, 2000), they are also home to many Australian-born people of second, third or later generation immigrants.

Countries of birth for the youth surveyed can be seen in Table 2.2. Of the 445 youth surveyed, the largest group (241) were born in Australia. We also included some 200 first generation immigrant youth with the biggest samples of first generation youth being those born in Vietnam (29) New Zealand (28) Lebanon (19) and Macedonia (13).

Table 2.2: Birthplace of Youth Surveyed in Sydney

Country of Birth	Frequency
Australia	241
China	9
Egypt	2
Greece	3
Hong Kong	6
India	3
Korea	7
Lebanon	19
Macedonia	13
New Zealand	28
Philippines	5
Samoa	6

Sri Lanka	8
Tonga	2
United Kingdom	3
Vietnam	29
Croatia	2
South Africa	3
Fiji	8
Poland	2
Turkey	2
Iraq	3
Cambodia	6
Chile	2
Thailand	8
Other	25
Total	445

Most of the youth born in Australia were, in fact, second-generation NESB immigrants. We asked the youth surveyed to nominate the birthplace of their mothers and fathers—only 72 youth has an Australian-born mother, while 70 youth had an Australian-born father.

Gender is an important dimension of society and one that must be taken into account as part of any inquiry into youth crime in Sydney. One of the problems with Australian research is that the gender dimensions of crime are not fully appreciated. This becomes understandable given the fact that 95 per cent of those in juvenile detention in NSW in 1995 were males (Lawlink NSW, 1995c: 1–2). As a consequence, crime in general, and youth crime in particular, seem mainly to be a problem of masculinity. Nor is this just the case in Australia, for a recent survey of juvenile crime issues in the United States also concluded that, ‘research on delinquency has traditionally focused on boys’ (McCord, Widom and Crowell, 2001: 10).

Wanting to redress this imbalance in this research project, our sample was stratified to include approximately equal numbers of men and women. As Figure 2.1 (see next page) shows, males comprised 55 per cent of the youth sample, while they comprised only 40 per cent of the adult sample, giving a roughly equal gender balance overall.

Youth, as a definition, can be a slippery concept so we had to determine at the outset where we would draw the line. For some researchers, the popular meaning of the term youth would apply only to those 21 years or less. Others think that youth crime has to deal mainly with early teens—hence in the United States the term *juvenile*, used synonymously with *young person* and *youth*, refers to those aged between 10 and 17 years (McCord, Widom and Crowell, 2001: 23). In Australia, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 10—although in Tasmania it is 7—whilst the age of adult criminal responsibility is 16 or 17 years of age,

depending on the state (McCord, Widom and Crowell eds. 2001: 18). Still others see those under 25 as youth. The age boundaries of “youth” are thus fairly arbitrary. Our approach was to use the age range from 14 to 25 year olds, but to concentrate on the age ranges that tend to fall within most definitions of youth—that is, between 14 to 19 years of age. As Figure 2.2 shows, three quarters of the youth surveyed were aged 14 to 19 years: about half of all youth surveyed were aged 14 to 16 years, while another third were aged between 17 and 19 years. Only 13 per cent were aged 20–22 and only 7 per cent aged 23–24 years.

Figure 2.1: Gender Dimensions of the Sydney Survey

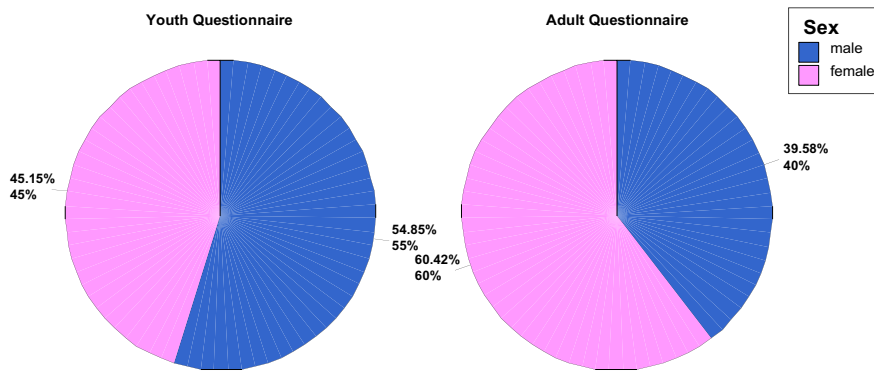
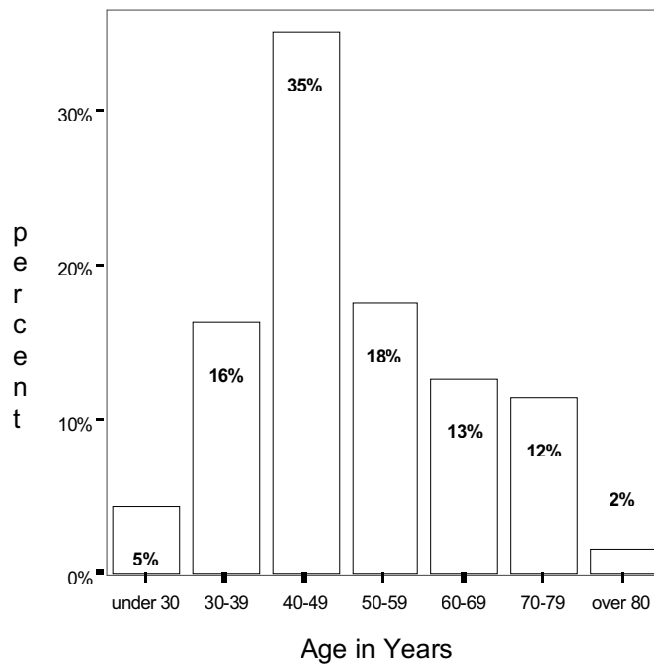
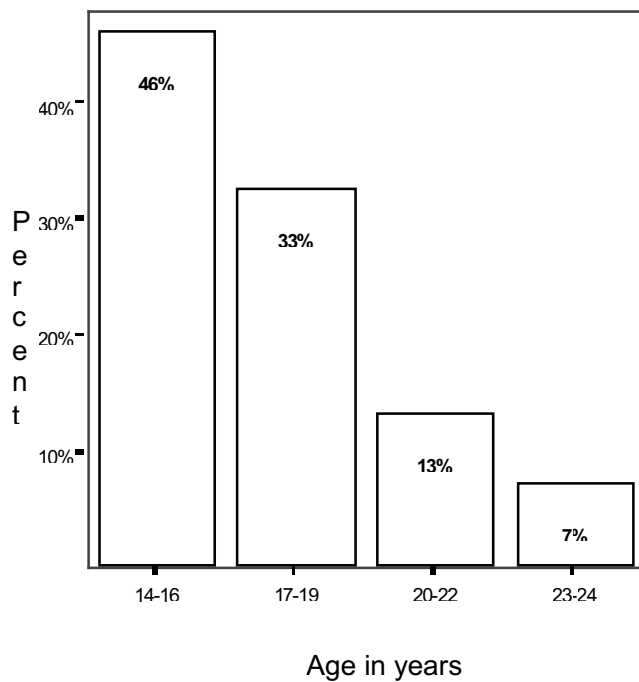


Figure 2.2: Age Dimensions of Adults in the Sydney Survey



Adults most often appear in the youth crime story as either the victims of youth crime or as those who demonstrate a fear of youth crime. Often older people are more afraid of crime in their local area than younger people so we included a broad age spread of adults in the survey in order to get a broad range of responses. As Figure 2.3 shows, while few adults surveyed (5%) were under 30 years of age, about half of the adults surveyed were between 30 and 49 years of age. Because those aged 60years and over have a different ‘take’ on the crime issue than younger adults or youth, 17 per cent of those surveyed were over 60years of age.

Figure 2.3: Age Dimensions of Youth in the Sydney Survey



We drew our total Sydney sample from the many suburbs within the municipalities where the council were research partners. .As Table 2.3 shows, the largest samples of adults were taken from the Hurstville, Canterbury, Bankstown, Fairfield and Rockdale LGAs. The largest samples of adults were taken from the Liverpool, Auburn, Hurstville, Bankstown, and Rockdale LGAs. Most of these areas are located in South Western Sydney, the heart of cosmopolitan Sydney (Collins and Castillo, 1998; Burnley, 2000; Spearritt, 2000).

Table 2.3: Survey characteristics by Local Government Areas

Youth	
Local Government Area	Frequency
Auburn	62
Bankstown	71

Adults	
Local Government Area	Frequency
Auburn	13
Bankstown	60

North Shore	24
Canterbury	39
Fairfield	42
Hurstville	58
Liverpool	68
Rockdale	54
Miscellaneous	27
Total	445

North Shore	10
Canterbury	66
Fairfield	56
Hurstville	77
Liverpool	37
Rockdale	52
Miscellaneous	9
Total	380

One important variable in the research into the relationship between ethnicity and crime relates to the period of residence that first generation immigrants have been in the country. Some literature, such as that on race relations developed by Park (1922) and the Chicago school, has argued that immigrant crime was only a problem with recent migrants (Dunn *et al.*, 2001). Over time, the argument goes, immigrants become ‘absorbed’ or integrated and stop being over-represented in criminal behaviour. We thus concentrated our survey on immigrant arrivals over the past two decades. Table 2.4 shows that nearly two thirds of the first generation adult immigrants surveyed arrived in Australia since 1980 and are relative newcomers to Sydney. On the other hand, it also shows that the bulk of our first generation youth sample arrived in Australia in the last decade. The rest, the second generation or control samples of third or later generation youth, were born in Australia.

Table 2.4: Period of Arrival—Adults and Youth

Period of Arrival	Adults	Youth
Before 1950	4	n/a
1950-1959	19	n/a
1960-1969	27	n/a
1970-1979	68	1
1980-1989	102	74
1990-1999	74	103
After 1999	5	13
Not Stated	17	15
Not Applicable	64	239
TOTAL	380	445

Birthplace is a most inaccurate guide to ethnicity (Collins *et al.*, 1995). Ethnic Chinese from Malaysia, for example, are recorded as Malaysian-born. We need information of language spoken at home to separate the ethnic Chinese and ethnic Malaysians among the Malaysian-born community in Sydney. This is the same for many other immigrant groups. It is thus important to have a sharp eye on the language spoken at home. Figure 2.4 provides

information on the language spoken at home by the adults and Figure 2.5 provides information on the language spoken at home by the youth that we surveyed. Figure 2.4 shows that, other than English, the most frequent languages spoken at home by the adult sample in Sydney are Arabic, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Greek and Macedonian. The other adults spoke a wide range of other languages.

Figure 2.4: Main Language Spoken at Home by Adults

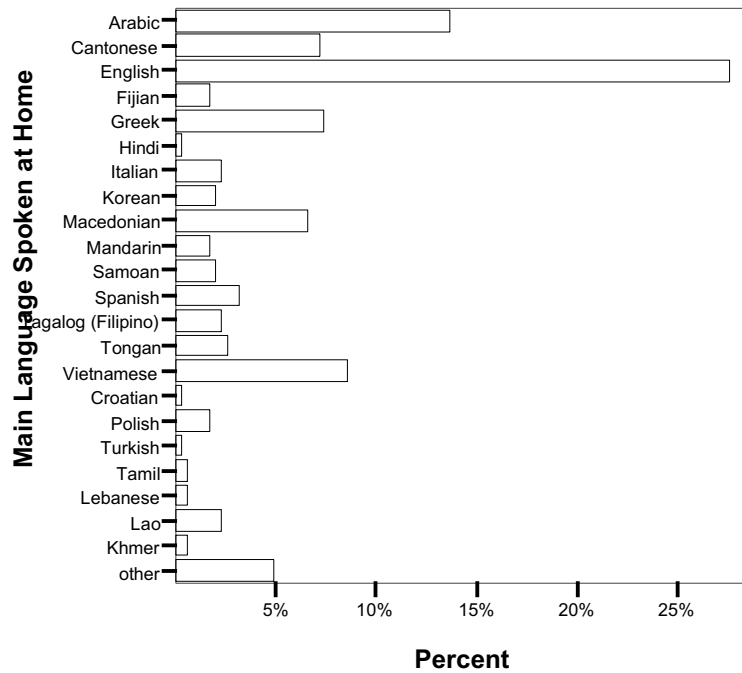
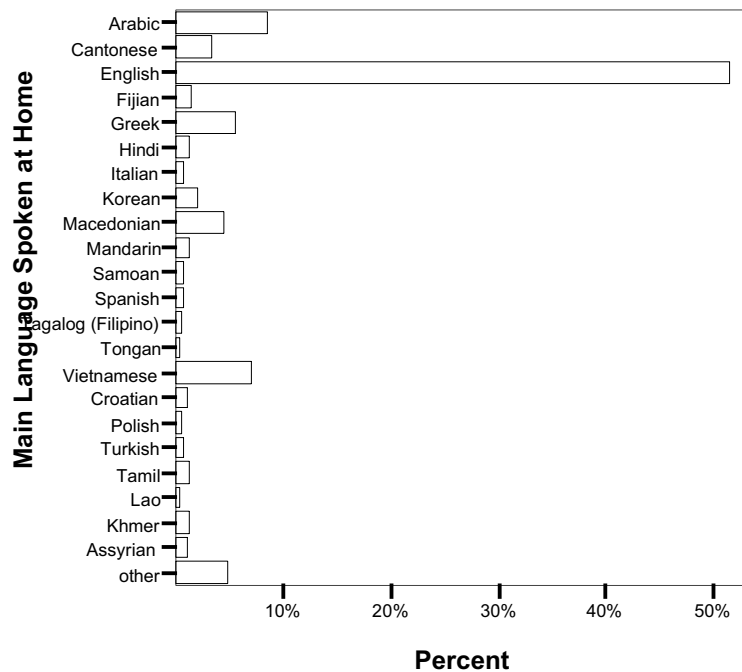


Figure 2.5 shows that English is spoken at home by half of our youth sample in Sydney, while the others speak Arabic, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Greek and Macedonian at home. The languages spoken at home by the immigrant adults and youth included in our survey roughly corresponds to those languages other than English most commonly found in Sydney households (Ethnic Affairs Commission, 1998). The major exception is that we have included few Italian speakers in our survey, despite the fact that Italian language proved to be a prominent language spoken at home in Sydney at the 1996 Census (Collins 2000b: 43). This is mainly because Italian settlement patterns in Sydney generally fall outside those LGAs in which the surveys were conducted (Burnley 2001: 179).

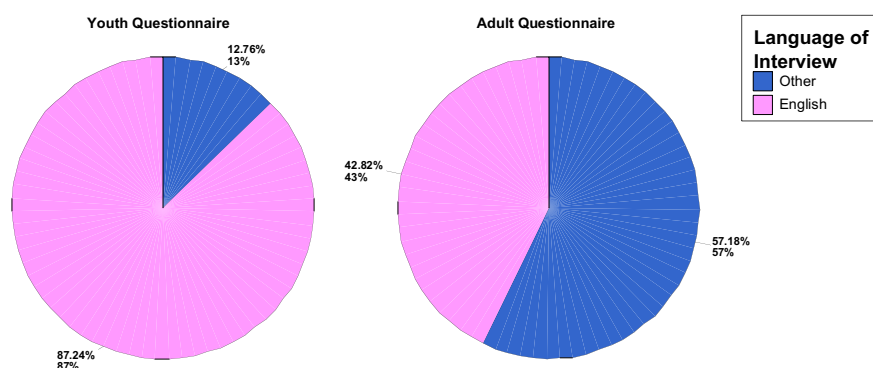
Figure 2.5: Main Language Spoken at Home by Youth



Most of the research into the ethnic crime issue in Sydney has been conducted in English by English speakers. The opinion of people who speak languages other than English are usually totally ignored by the normal methods of gauging public opinions and attitudes—such as telephone surveys—because these are almost exclusively taken in English. However, in this research project we wanted to give a voice to Sydney’s NESB immigrant community, since they are the ones increasingly associated with criminal behaviour in the public perception. As a consequence, the majority of interviews with adults were conducted in languages other than English using bilingual interviewers.

As Figure 2.6 shows, only 42 per cent of interviews involving adults were conducted in English. The rest were conducted across the range of languages spoken at home by these adults, as indicated already in Figure 2.4. We would argue that this highlights a very important aspect of the contribution of our fieldwork. We have tapped into adults living in immigrant communities in South Western Sydney whose views and experiences would generally go unnoticed by the majority of English language pollsters and social researchers. We maintain that our method of selecting people through community networks—the so-called networking or snowballing methodology of choosing subjects to be interviewed (Collins *et al*, 1995: 142-4)—has resulted in a higher level of participation of immigrant minority voices, and a greater reliability of responses, than would have been achieved through traditional random sampling methodologies.

Figure 2.6: Language of Interview



Socio-economic profile of those in the Sydney survey

In this section we outline some of the socio-economic characteristics of our sample. This is important, since international research emphasises the socio-economic roots of crime. For example, a recent survey of juvenile crime research in the United States, coordinated by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, concluded that ‘the relationship between poverty and crime is robust over time and space’ and that ‘[f]actors such as multifamily and public housing, unemployed and underemployed men, younger people and single person households tends to be linked to higher crime rates’ (McCord, Widom and Crowel, 2001: 92). As Findlay (1999: 18) recently put it:

Social context, and its relevance for analysis, lies behind the discussion of particular connections between crime and development, crime and marginalisation, economic dimensions of crime, crime and social organisation and dysfunction.

Education is another important indicator of relative socio-economic position and opportunities. Figure 2.7 shows the highest educational attainment of the adults surveyed. It demonstrates that there is a widespread educational achievement amongst the adults in our sample, just as there is among Sydney’s population in general. Twenty three per cent only completed primary school, while another 36% had completed high school. But South Western Sydney is an area of great ethnic linguistic and class diversity (Collins and Poynting, 2000). The same is true for education, with about one in five adults (22%) surveyed having achieved a university degree.

Figure 2.7: Highest Education Attained—Adults

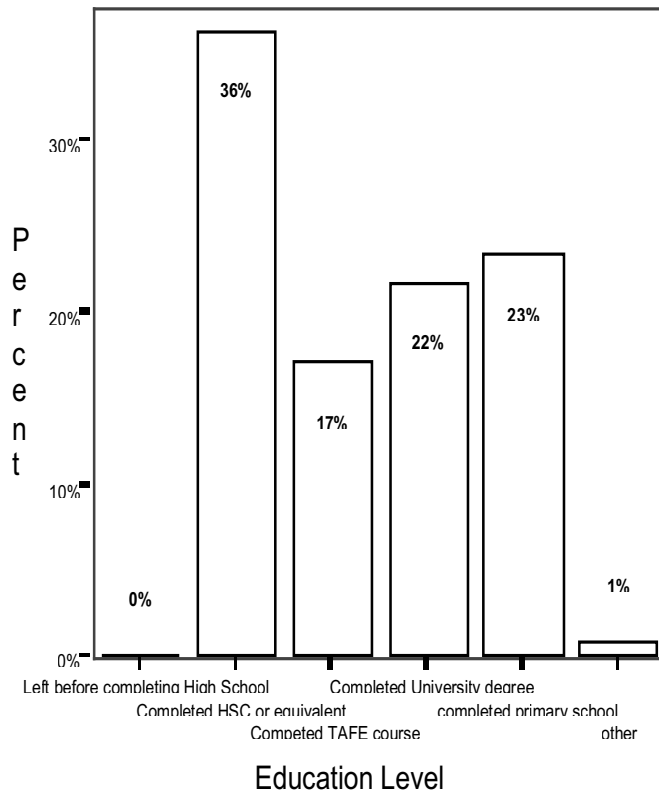
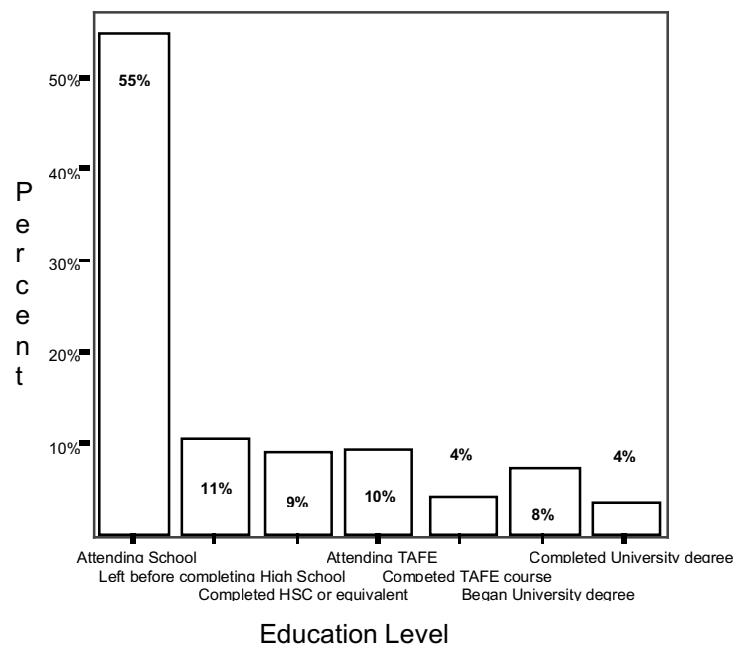


Figure 2.8: Education Levels of Youth



The youth surveyed in Sydney had a wide range of educational experience. Some were still at school, some had left school, and others had HSC, TAFE or tertiary education experience. As Figure 2.8 shows, the majority (55%) were still at school, while another 11% had left school before completing their high school education. Another 9% had completed their HSC, 4% had completed TAFE courses while 10% were still engaged in TAFE courses. Eight per cent had completed a university degree while a further 4% were currently engaged in university education. In other words, there is a wide range of educational achievement amongst the youth surveyed, reflecting in part age distribution and in part the general diversity of educational experience that Sydney youth exhibit at any one time.

Employment, or lack of it, is also an important, perhaps the most important, socioeconomic indicator. As Findlay (1999: 97–8) put it:

There is nothing new in the suggestion that crime is the province of the unemployed, or that criminalisation is necessary for the jobless... Unemployment as a global concern, ravaging both developed and developing countries, has magnified the need to consider its relationship with crime.

We asked the adults we surveyed if they had jobs and, if so, what was their occupation? As Figure 2.9 shows, there was a very high rate of unemployment amongst the adults surveyed. Of the 378 adults who responded to this question, 41 people, or 11.3% were unemployed, while 191 or 50.3% were employed. This is a very high unemployment rate when compared to Sydney or Australia as a whole—the national rate of unemployment has been around 7% to 7.5% in the first years of the first decade of the new Millennium. However, disproportionately high unemployment rates are not uncommon among the immigrant minorities that we have surveyed in western Sydney (Collins, Morrissey and Grogan, 1995; Collins, 2000b: 45–48). Another 116 adults, or 32% of the sample who responded to this question, were not in the workforce. This reflects the number of those adults aged 65 and over who we included in our sample to give the “elderly” a voice on crime issues. Of those adults in employment, two were employers, 24 were self employed and the majority, 150 or about 80% of those in employment, were employees, 14% self-employed and 1% were employers. This corresponds fairly well to the labour market profile of the total population in employment (Collins, 2001). In other words, the socio-economic spread of our adult sample is very similar to that of the population as a whole.

Those adults who are in employment have jobs spread across the occupational spectrum, as Figure 2.10 shows. The most common occupation of the adults surveyed was clerical/sales/services but there is great diversity evident here. We surveyed more professionals than tradesmen, and included a number of those who were managers or administrators. Overall, nearly half (44%) of the sample were either managers or professionals. This exceeds the average representation in these positions (Collins, 2001). However, one impact of globalisation is that there is a decline in manual, unskilled jobs at the same time as there is a growth of jobs at the ‘top end’ of the Australian labour market. Indeed, for the past two decades Australian immigration policy has been geared to select mainly those with professional, technical and managerial qualifications and experience (Collins, 2001).

There were also a large number of home-workers and retirees. In this way our sample succeeded in our aim to get a diversity of social class as well as a diversity of cultures in our interview sample.

Figure 2.9: Employment Status of Adults

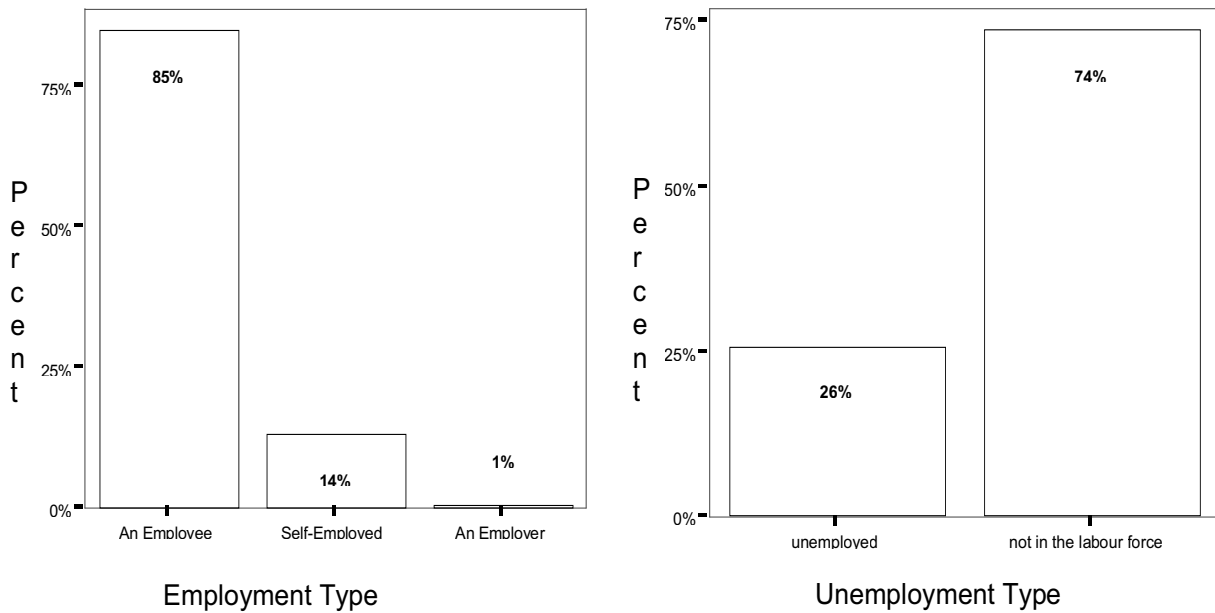
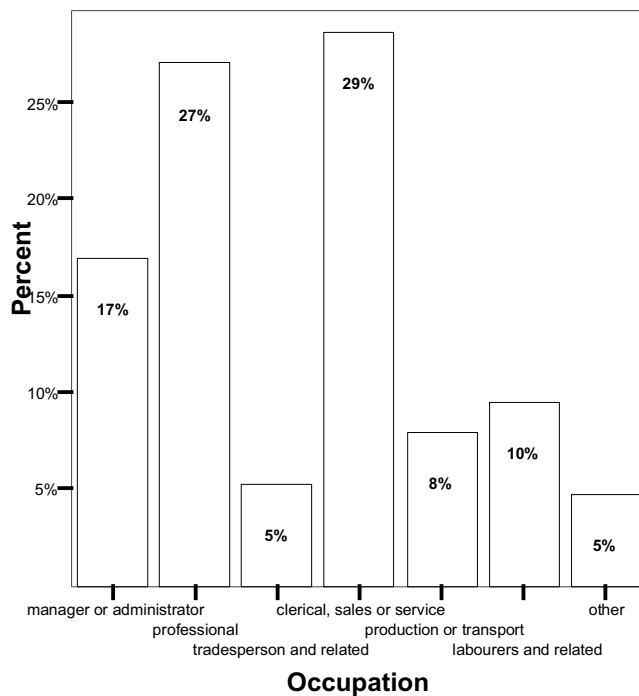


Figure 2.10: Occupations of Adults



The employment status of the youth surveyed is shown in Table 2.5. 173 out of the 440 of the youth sample who responded to this question, or 40% of the sample, were employed. Another

243 were attending school. Since youth self-reported their occupations, some of their answers included the industries in which they worked rather than their occupations in these industries. Nevertheless, it can be seen that the largest number worked in the retail and hospitality industries. Most other youth were white-collar workers in clerical, community work, finance or services jobs, while there were only 6 youth who reported blue-collar jobs as apprentices. Many youth were unspecific about occupation, so that the information about the socio-economic position of the youth surveyed is, unfortunately, fairly unreliable.

Table 2.5: Occupations of Employed Youth Surveyed

Occupation	Number	Per cent
retail	49	28.3
hospitality	28	16.2
clerical	16	9.3
community worker	6	3.5
apprentice	6	3.5
finance	7	4
services	3	1.7
other	32	18.5
not specificd	26	15
total	173	

Table 2.6: Employment Status of Youth and Adults Across LGAs

Employment Status	Local Government Area							
	Auburn	Banks-town	Canter-bury	Fair-field	Hurst-ville	Liver-pool	Rock-dale	Total
Employed	45.3	48.4	54.0	38.2	48.4	49.5	35.8	45.9
Unemployed	54.7	51.6	46.0	61.8	51.6	50.5	64.2	54.1
Not in labour force								
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Figures expressed as percentages