

Youth Scan

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From the National Youth Council
"Developing a Vibrant, Highly-Connected,
and Self-Sustaining Youth Sector, and Nurturing World-Ready Youth"

Bringing you snippets of youth trends and issues compiled from diverse sources such as news reports, journals and press releases, Youth Scan aims to help you stay in touch with the constantly evolving youth scene.

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1. France: French President Calls for a National Service Programme

Innovations in Civic Participation, December 2005

On November 14, in response to civil unrest in cities and towns across France where young people torched cars and inflicted heavy damage on community property, French President Jacques Chirac announced the creation of a voluntary civil service programme. The programme, which will engage 50,000 young people in 2007, was established to better assist young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to gain job skills. This proposal has grouped some previously announced initiatives along with some programmes that will be established in the near future.

20,000 placements will be with the "Défense deuxième chance" (Second chance defense), established by the Ministry of Defense but located outside the military service; this initiative is intended to give a second chance to young people between the ages of 18 and 21 who are in trouble academically. 5,000 places will be created for young people interested in careers in law enforcement -- the "cadets de la République." A programme designed to engage unemployed young people who are having difficulty finding work will involve 15,000 young people in the areas of environment, health, and culture. Finally, 10,000 young people will be engaged with local community

organisations, following a model that can be found in France in an organisation called Unis-Cité, which for the past 10 years has engaged youth between the ages of 18 and 25 in projects designed to increase a sense of community solidarity. Terms of service in the community organisations, many of which will be organised through Unis-Cité, will range from six to 12 months and include a training component. The establishment of this programme will be overseen by the newly created Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Chances.

This last component is also supported by a law on youth service adopted earlier this year by the Senate, which will be confirmed by the National Assembly early next year. The law is designed to support young people who choose to serve their communities for up to two years, and provides a stipend to offset necessary costs. One million euros had already been set aside in the 2006 budget to improve opportunities for youth service in France, an initiative of Jean-François Lamour, Minister of Youth, Sports, and Community Life.

2. USA: New Survey Suggests Teacher Supervision and Internet Use Rules are Keeping Kids' Online Behaviour at School in Check

Harris Interactive Inc, December 2005.

The results of a recent nationwide survey Harris Interactive conducted for the Business Software Alliance (BSA) suggest that as a result of teacher supervision and computer restrictions, such as blocking software and usage policies, young people are demonstrating more responsible behaviour online in school than they do on their home computers.

Of the findings, 51 percent of all U.S. youth surveyed (aged 8-18) report the rules at school are more restrictive than the rules at home. This may be why kids are most likely to say they have used school computers in the past year to complete activities or conduct research assigned by their teachers (60%), followed by doing school work on their own (51%) and surfing the web (32%), while they are most likely to say they used their home computer in the past year to play games (77%), followed by checking e-mail (66%) and doing school work on their own (66%).

One reason that school computer use is safer than at home is that at school, children are much more likely to be online with other people. While it is rare that they are online alone at school, it is common that they are online alone at home. In addition, both teacher and parental involvement in children's Internet use wanes as the child gets older. This is unfortunate, as inappropriate behaviors are more common in the upper grade levels -- at exactly the time when adult supervision is at its lowest.

Even though inappropriate online behavior is more common at home, parents are more likely to have discussed inappropriate behaviors with their children than teachers. This implies that the discussion is not enough -- the adult needs to remain vigilant and involved.

"This study shows that unfortunately students are more likely to engage in risky computer use at home than at school," said Diane Smiroldo, Vice President of Public Affairs for BSA. "Parents and teachers need to take every opportunity to get involved and be observant when it comes to kids spending time on the Internet."

3. USA: Youth Helping America: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering

Corporation for National and Community Service, November 2005

In early 2005, the Corporation for National and Community Service, in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and the non-profit coalition Independent Sector conducted the first major federal survey of volunteering by teenagers in more than a decade. The survey collected information on the volunteering habits of youth between the ages of 12 and 18. A new Corporation study based on the survey, titled "Youth Helping America", looks at the state of youth volunteering and the connections between youth volunteering and the primary social institutions to which teenagers are exposed -- family, religious congregations, and schools. Among other findings, the analysis shows that:

-- 55 percent of youths aged 12 to 18, or an estimated 15.5 million youths, participate in volunteer activities; the teen volunteering rate is nearly twice the adult volunteering rate of 29 percent.

-- The typical youth volunteer contributes 29 hours per year, while adult volunteers typically serve 52 hours per year.

-- 39 percent of teen volunteers are "regular" volunteers, defined as those who volunteer at least 12 weeks per year, compared to 55 percent of adult volunteers who can be classified as "regular".

-- 64 percent of teenagers who volunteer do so primarily through a religious organisation, a school-based group, or a youth leadership organisation such as 4H or Scouts, while 74 percent volunteer to at least some extent through these institutions.

-- 34 percent of teens reported that a religious organisation was the main organisation with which they volunteer, compared to 18 percent for school-based groups and 12 percent for youth leadership organisations.

-- 38 percent of the youth population, or about 10.6 million youths, have engaged in community service as part of a school activity. Of these 10.6 million youths, 65 percent are also engaged in the service-learning related activities of planning and/or writing about the service project in class.

-- 55 percent of those enrolled in school participate in volunteer activities, compared to 26 percent of those not enrolled in school.

-- Students who report doing better in school are more likely to be volunteers than students who report doing less well, and are also more likely to have been involved in community service as part of a school activity.

-- Only 5 percent of youth attribute their volunteer activities to a school requirement.

-- A youth from a family where at least one parent volunteers is almost twice as likely to volunteer as a youth with no family members who volunteer, and nearly three times as likely to volunteer on a regular basis. 64 percent of non-volunteers reported that no one in their family volunteers.

-- Among youth who are in families where both parents and siblings volunteer, 86 percent volunteer themselves, and 47 percent are regular volunteers. Only 14 percent do not volunteer themselves.

-- Among youth who attend religious services regularly, defined, generally, as once a week, 64 percent also volunteer, while only 41 percent of those who do not attend religious services volunteer.

-- Among teens who regularly attend religious services, 47 percent volunteer primarily with a religious congregation, 8 percent with a faith-based group that is not a religious congregation, and 45 percent with a secular organisation.

4. Australia: The Democratic Audit of Australia - Young People Assess Democracy in Australia

Youth Electoral Study, December 2005.

This report for the Democratic Audit of Australia uses findings gleaned so far from the Youth Electoral Study's (YES) continuing investigations into young people, voting and politics. It focuses on two questions: (1) What prevents or inhibits young people from democratic participation in Australia; and (2) In what ways do young people participate democratically in Australia? The study combines quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) methodologies.

Many young participants in YES claimed to be bored by politics and alienated from democratic participation. YES' quantitative study found that almost two out of three students considered voting boring and slightly more than one half considered it to be a hassle. While 87 percent of survey participants indicated they would vote after they turned 18, this was largely due to voting's compulsory nature. When asked if they would vote if voting were not compulsory, only 50 percent indicated they would. In the focus group interviews, many who reported they would not vote or regularly vote said they did not see the efficacy of voting. Some went so far as to describe voting as a waste of time, of a Saturday, and of paper.

When asked in the survey if they considered they had sufficient knowledge to understand political issues, parties and voting, only around half of the respondents indicated they had. Some interviewees in the focus groups drew attention to their lack of knowledge about politics and voting, identifying this lack of knowledge as a factor contributing to their personal lack of interest and participation.

Young people were asked in both the survey and the focus groups why they had such negative views of politics, and such a lack of trust and investment in Australia's democratic processes and institutions. One half of the survey respondents considered that 'people in government' could be trusted to act in Australia's best interests. Only one quarter thought that people in government were honest. Broken promises, endless and hollow speeches and the adversarial nature of the chambers and of party politics were major issues cited by the focus group participants.

Many interviewees also reported feeling marginalised, trivialised and stereotyped by politicians. Many considered that issues of importance to them were not on any government agenda. In short, young people in Australia feel excluded from the democratic process. They consider that their voices are not heard and that few are willing to listen.

Despite these negative perceptions, YES discovered that a significant number of young people maintained that democracy was a valuable asset. YES found that many participated in active ways.

Although they considered politics, defined as parliamentary politics, a "turn-off", it would seem that many young people are interested in political issues. When asked, most of the interviewees were able to name a political issue of interest to them, with the war in Iraq, education funding, refugees and the environment being highlighted. Further in their discussion of these issues, many displayed factual accuracy and used language that showed some grasp of political language and terminology.

YES also discovered that many of the survey and focus group participants had participated in some form of protest with regard to the issues they found important. The survey revealed that signing petitions was the most popular form of protest activity, followed by gathering signatures and attending rallies.

Despite professing apathy about politics, many focus group participants reported discussing political issues in class, with their families and with friends. Democracy was important to many interviewees, with some calling for 'more democracy' in the form of referenda. They indicated that democracy did not go far enough and that they wanted more say regarding the issues they found important.

A pattern that emerges is the alienation of young people from formal political interest and participation. This is not the same as, and should not be confused with, political apathy more generally. YES has also found that many young Australians are active and engaged politically. Nevertheless, their lack of faith and trust in the ballot box is an issue of concern.

One message emerging so far from YES' study of young people's views is that it is necessary to examine the system we are asking young people to trust and participate in, as well as merely encourage them to participate.

5. Australia: Leading the Way: The Victorian Government's Strategic Framework on Mentoring Young People 2005-08

Youth Field Express, December 2005.

The Victorian Government is paving the way for its approach to mentoring, becoming the first Australian State to adopt a strategic, coordinated framework for mentoring young people. Led by the Department for Victorian Communities through the Office for Youth, all Victorian government departments now share a strategic approach to mentoring that will support the delivery of high quality, cost-effective programmes that meet safety and community standards. In April 2005, the Victorian government announced a new social policy action plan called 'A Fairer Victoria', which addresses disadvantage in the community. As part of 'A Fairer Victoria', the government has injected \$2.9 million over three years to boost mentoring programs for young people. This will be used to provide funding and tools, like a good practice guide, to organisations running programmes for young people who are isolated and disadvantaged -- either socially, economically or geographically. Importantly, the strategic framework also recognises the unique perspectives and needs of young people. The views of young people currently participating in mentoring projects throughout Victoria have significantly contributed to the development of the strategic framework.

Principles Guiding the Strategic Framework

- Taking a holistic approach. Ensure young people are viewed in the context of their family, peers and community. The specific experiences and characteristics of young people must be understood so that mentoring responses are tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Knowing what works. Improve understanding of effective mentoring by supporting agencies to identify and replicate cost-effective and safe mentoring programmes that provide positive outcomes for young people.

- Linking up and partnering. Improve young people's access to mentoring programmes and promote the benefits of mentoring for those young people seeking assistance to achieve their aspirations and break the cycle of disadvantage.
- Being accountable and flexible. Provide direction to key sectors and networks so that they can develop high-quality, well-planned and sustainable mentoring activities and programmes. Underpinning this principle is the need for mentoring programmes to undergo frequent review to ensure they are of the highest quality, and that issues such as diversity, cultural relevance and access are addressed.
- Providing good governance. Ensure all participants feel confident and safe by putting in place the right checks and balances to protect the safety of young people and volunteers. Address welfare, safety and security issues and take into account any legislative changes that may impact on the delivery of mentoring programmes for young people in Victoria.

Some Priority Initiatives for 2005-2008

- Mechanism within the government to provide ongoing coordination for current and future mentoring programmes
- Targeted funding to boost youth mentoring in rural, regional and other areas where young people may be isolated by social and economic status
- A "Mentoring Good Practice Guide" detailing evidence-based guidelines for programme design and risk management, evaluation and other areas critical to best practice mentoring for young people.
- Consultations and forums with young people, volunteer mentors and other key stakeholders
- Training for mentors and coordinators of mentoring programmes
- Networks that are linked to volunteer resource centres
- Opportunities for government employees to volunteer as mentors

6. Australia: How Young People are Faring 2005

Dusseldorp Skills Forum, November 2005.

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum's 'How Young People are Faring' annual series of reports is now a much anticipated document for those interested in tracking the important life stages of Australian youth. Their 2005 report -- the seventh in this series -- paints a picture of 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. While many young people today are better educated and better skilled than previous generations, an estimated 560,000 15-24-year-olds are not in full-time learning or work. Those growing up in stressed socio-economic circumstances, rural Australia, Indigenous communities and young women not in education are particularly susceptible.

Releasing How Young People are Faring 2005, Dr John Spierings of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF) said, "More than 330,000 of the young Australians not engaged full-time in learning or work are female. The difference between the sexes is the largest since 1989 and is markedly higher than in previous years... Younger women who are not in education are considerably more disadvantaged in the job market than young men, a trend that has been increasing since 2000."

Highlights in the 2005 report include:

-- In May 2005, 85.1 percent of Australian teenagers were in full-time study or full-time work, while 14.9 percent or 208,400 teenagers were not.

-- At a time when Australia faces a national skills shortage, with migration seen as a favoured policy option, 30 percent of Australia's school leavers were unemployed, in part-time work or not in the labour force six months after leaving school. 43 percent of early school leavers and 23 percent of school completers experienced a troubled transition from school in 2004.

-- Females are more likely to experience a troubled transition from school than male school leavers despite a higher rate of completing Year 12 and higher participation rates in post-school education

-- 33 percent of female school leavers experienced a troubled transition six months after leaving school compared to 27 percent of male school leavers

-- 17 percent of female teenagers were unemployed, working part-time or not in the labour force compared to 12 percent of male teenagers.

-- In May 2005, unemployment rates for teenagers were three and a half times higher than for adults aged 25 to 64 years; and unemployment rates for 20 to 24 year olds were twice those of older adults

-- The proportion of school leavers entering an apprenticeship or traineeship has risen from 16 percent in 1999 to 18 percent in 2004, while the proportion of school leavers entering higher education has declined from 40 percent in 1999 to 34.5 percent in 2004.

-- Australia is becoming a nation of the overworked or the underemployed. It has one of the highest rates of part-time employment for non-students in the OECD, and for young people, the growth of part-time employment is outstripping full-time employment. 55 to 60 percent of young people working part-time (excluding full-time students) want to work more hours.

"Skills shortages and an ageing workforce make improving the education and training of young Australians an economic and social imperative," Dr Spierings said.

"Governments - Commonwealth and State - are moving to improve the prospects of school leavers, especially early school leavers. It's an area of vital micro-economic reform that can benefit not just young Australians and their parents, but Australian industry as well."

"The challenge this report presents is to match the high expectations of government initiatives with adequate resources, co-ordination and planning. Personal support and career guidance, robust learning choices, labour market programs and structural incentives are needed if our young people really are going to make a successful transition from school to an enduring career."

7. Australia: Time Out of the Labour Market a Common Experience for Australian Youth *Australian Council for Educational Research, November 2005.*

The majority of young Australians experience at least a short period of time outside of full-time education and the labour force in the early years after leaving secondary school, new research has found. A report released by the Australian Council for

Educational Research (ACER) identified the characteristics, activities and later destinations of young people who had spent time outside of the labour force.

The study was based on annual interviews with a group of 10,700 young Australians who were tracked from 1997 (average age 16) until the end of 2003 (average age 22). It focused on those who spent at least one month during that time not studying full-time and working or looking for work.

Overall, close to two-thirds, or 64 percent of participants spent some time outside the labour force and full-time education over the time they were surveyed. For the majority of these young people, their time spent outside the labour force was relatively short, between one and three months, after which they moved back into the labour market or full-time education with little apparent difficulty. Most saw their state as temporary and planned to enter full-time education or look for employment in the near future.

Young people who had not achieved highly at school, did not have a Year 12 certificate, were female, or who had a health problem or disability were more likely to have reported extended periods of time outside the labour force and full-time education.

"It would appear that for young people today, spending some time outside the labour force and full-time education is a common experience and can be seen as part of the transition process from school to work or further education," chief executive Professor Geoff Masters said. "There are some groups of young people, however, for whom the experience of time outside the labour force and full-time education may be more disruptive."

Professor Masters warned that young people who spend extended periods outside the labour force and full-time education may be missing out on employment experience, the development of work skills and familiarity with new technologies, all of which appear to decrease their chances of finding employment in the future.

8. Russia: Service Learning Project for Secondary School Pupils

Sozidanie Foundation, November 2005.

September 2005 saw the start of a Service Learning project for secondary school pupils in Russia. The project aims to develop an academic course on Service Learning, including theory and practice, that will prepare school pupils aged 14 and above for involvement in activities that will benefit their community. The course emphasises active learning with lessons drawn from experience.

This project is an experiment, in which staff of the Sozidanie Foundation and other experts are taking a foreign programme, adapting and translating it to make it relevant to Russia, and producing a course of nine lessons in Service Learning. It is intended to disseminate effective teaching methods of civic education, linking schools directly to young people's service in the community.

Sozidanie Foundation, together with the Centre for the Development of Volunteering in Russia, are piloting this project, which is supported by a grant from the US Embassy's Committee for Democracy, in ten schools in five Russian regions. Altogether, about 400 school pupils will be involved.

A project launch seminar was held at the end of October, attended by school administrators, teachers, school students from all the regions covered by the project, and NGO representatives. The seminar explained how to incorporate course materials

into students' academic programmes, including practical work during lesson times. The seminar participants will then seek to implement the course's methods and lessons in the curricula of their own schools and colleges, in consultation with school authorities, teachers and colleagues. It was hoped that the first adapted courses will run for students from January or February 2006, once a week, taking them through the period of Global Youth Service Day and the Spring Week of Action (21-29 April 2006).

For the future, there are plans to publish 1,000 course textbooks of the adapted "Nine Lessons of Service Learning", including examples of Russian students' own social projects, for distribution to different regions of Russia, so that people as yet unconnected with the project can use the lessons for themselves, in their own educational and social contexts.

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