



A/Prof Helen Watt
Faculty of Education
Monash University
Melbourne, Vic. 3800
E: steps@monash.edu
T: (03) 9905 3818
www.stepsstudy.org



Greetings from the STEPS Study!

Hello and best wishes for the remainder of Year 12! Thank you again for participating in STEPS over the past three years. It was great to see you last March in your final year of school. There is one last survey next year that we will e-mail, to find out about what you are doing then.

Thinking about next year... One of the major decisions we make in our lives is what career or work to pursue, and there are many factors that influence this decision including goals and beliefs at school and beyond. The STEPS Study has been asking what you think about your school, studies, and current and future goals.

You are important! Along with 1,172 students from nine schools in Sydney and Melbourne, you are providing this important information. With ongoing contact, we will understand why you make your decisions about secondary school and transition to work, further studies, or other post-school plans. As you know, this is a Government Priority research study, funded by the Australian Research Council. You are involved in the 1st large-scale Australian study to track students over the whole 4 years.



Why is this important? Because you are helping us understand how and why young people are making their future education and career plans, especially to plan for fields where Australia faces increasing shortages of suitably qualified people. Why young people today are, and are not, pursuing these fields is important to discover. It is also important to identify what affects people's work satisfaction for quality of life reasons.

Thank you for your willingness to share your thoughts and for your time in doing so – the information you provided has been already very valuable. This Newsletter summarises some of the findings in progress, and explains how you can help us stay in contact with you!

Did You Know... ?

STEPS started in 1996, when 1,323 participants were followed from when they were in Year 7 up until now when they are in their mid-30s. It's like the famous documentary "[7-Up!](#)", where we are following their high school journey and beyond. By including your current cohort of 1,172 students, we can compare what has changed since they attended high school in the 1990s. This is why it is so important that we keep in touch to hear about your "next steps" after finishing school. We are really interested in what happens to you. Staying in touch also means that you will receive a summary of STEPS findings, which is all only possible thanks to you and your schoolmates.

How Can You Help?

The success of STEPS depends on being able to stay in contact with you. Please take a moment to:

1. Sign up to our STEPS Facebook Group



2. Update your contact details here

<http://tinyurl.com/stepscontactB>

or, by email or telephone:

E: steps@monash.edu T: (03) 9905-3818

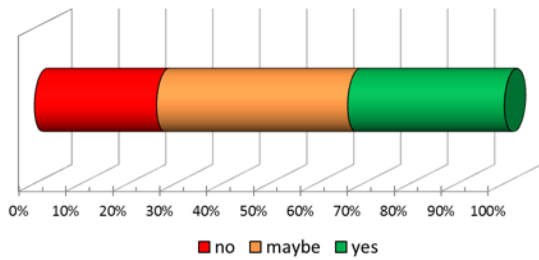
3. Complete the latest survey.

Coming next year!

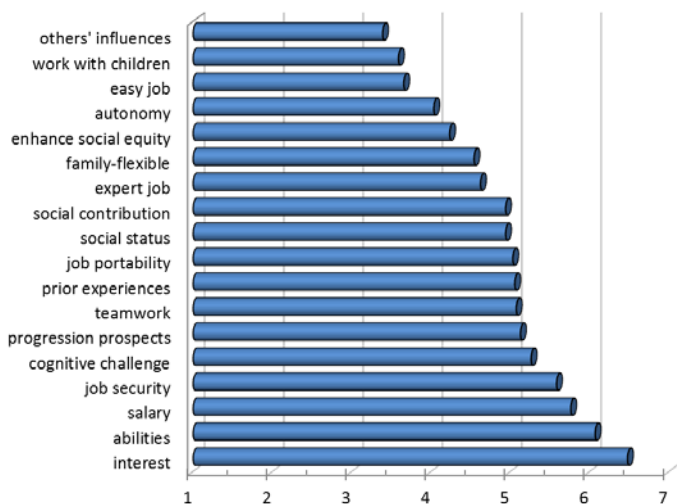
DO IT NOW! Facebook is a great way for us to keep in contact, and for you to be the first to hear our findings. Also, next year you won't be in high school, so let's make sure we have your best contact details now, to keep in contact.

Findings About Work and Career

Exactly one-third of you had decided on your future work or career when you completed the Year 12 survey last March. Twenty-six percent had not yet decided, and 41% had “maybe” decided.



What kinds of things are important for Year 12 students planning their future job? On average, by far the most important thing you were seeking in deciding about future work and career, was something you would find interesting and enjoyable. The next most important consideration was something that you would be good at, that suited your abilities. Average ratings are shown in order of importance below.



Across the sample as a whole, other important considerations were, in order:

- salary, job security, cognitive challenge;
- career progression prospects, teamwork, something that fitted with your prior experiences, a “portable” job that would let you choose where to live, something that was respected by society in terms of its status, and the opportunity to make a social contribution.

Somewhat important considerations included:

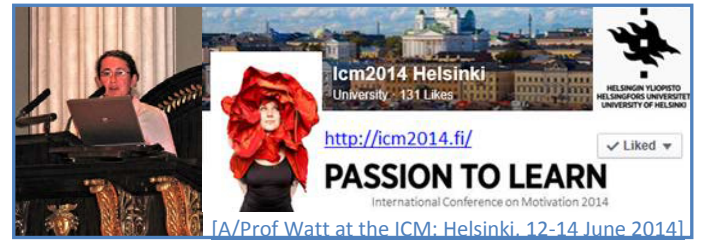
- something involving expertise, that was family-flexible;
- opportunities to enhance social equity, and to work autonomously.

Least important influences on career plans were:

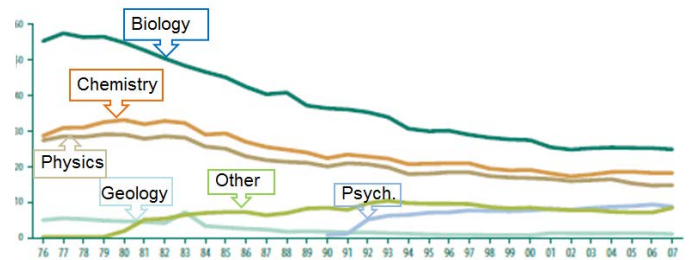
- choosing a career other people thought you should do;
- working with children; and
- finding an easy job.

Recent News: STEPS and STEM

A/Prof Helen Watt was the Keynote Speaker at the 2014 *International Conference on Motivation*. Because of your participation she delivered inspiring findings from STEPS titled “Passion and Persistence in STEM Pathways”.

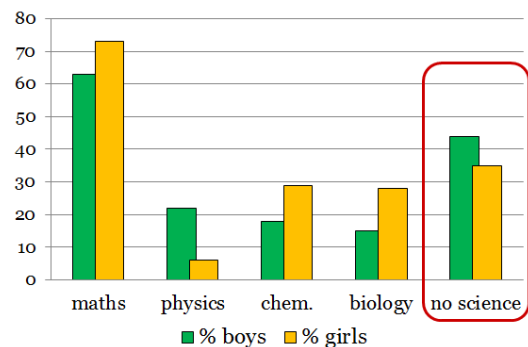


There is growing concern in Australia, the United States and Europe about declining participation in “STEM”: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Between 1992—2009 in Australia the proportion of Year 12 students studying sciences fell by 32% in biology, 23% in chemistry, 31% in physics. The graph below shows the total percentage of Australian Year 12 students undertaking each science 1976—2007.



This trend was echoed in Year 12 STEPS data (below):

- 44% of males and 35% of females studied no science;
- 37% of males and 27% of females studied no maths.



Students who perceived their maths/science teachers to emphasise understanding and interest, rather than marks and competition, valued the subject more, expected to do better, perceived themselves to be more talented, and were more likely to plan to pursue related careers in future. These students experienced less stress, anxiety and depression.

There is much more work to do to analyse trends from the valuable information you have provided so far, and especially from your information next year. Such work would be impossible without your support.

Thank you!