

# 19

## Working



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A key part of family wellbeing is the capacity to provide for the family's financial needs and workforce participation is a major way of achieving this. However, working has other functions within families. Workforce participation can provide a sense of meaning and status for family members and can play an important part in the way family labour is shared and in the development of power relationships within families. The loss of work can have important consequences for the identity of family members and the ensuing poverty can affect family stability and functioning.

The place of work within family systems is forever changing – both historically and over the family life course. Historically, families were once the site of production, but economic changes that were part of industrialisation moved much of the economic activity out of the home and into the public domain. The separation of work from home had important implications for roles of men and women, as women focused on domestic work in the home while men had primary responsibility for economic roles in the public world of work.

In more recent times, however, women have been able to move more into the public arena of paid work. Increasingly, this has highlighted the tensions between the domestic work in the home and the economic activities in the paid workforce. The balancing of these two domains has increasingly become an area in which public policy has become involved. Thus the provision of publicly subsidised, work-related child care, industrial changes to ensure maternity leave, and various family friendly work practices have been introduced to better balance work and family responsibilities.

This chapter covers three main issues regarding the links between families and employment. First, it examines the extent to which men and women in different family types have paid employment and the extent to which this has changed in recent decades. Second, much of the discussion regarding work and family has been framed around how families balance work and family commitments. Accordingly, this chapter explores how men and women seem to combine these two domains of their life. Finally, there has been increasing concern about the way paid employment is distributed unequally between families. Some families have multiple jobs and little time for anything else, while other families are jobless and have little money. This chapter will explore the extent of the polarisation of work between families.

### **Which parents are employed?**

In 2002, 92.4 per cent of partnered fathers with dependent children were participating in the labour force – 82.7 per cent were employed full time, 6.5 per cent were employed part time and 3.3 per cent were unemployed but seeking work. Far fewer partnered mothers with dependent children were in the labour force. Two thirds (65.5 per cent) of those with dependent children were in the labour force – 25.5 per cent of partnered women with dependent children were employed full time, 37.4 per cent part time and 2.6 per cent were unemployed. The lower participation rate of mothers and the lower full time employment of couple mothers in particular reflects the greater responsibilities of mothers for the care of dependent children. Despite the considerable increase in the availability of child care, many mothers continue to withdraw from the labour force to care for dependent children.

### **Are lone parents employed as often as couple parents?**

The workforce participation of lone parents with dependent children is lower than that of couple parents – especially so for lone fathers where about 20 per cent fewer lone fathers than couple fathers are in the labour force. However, the participation rate of lone fathers is considerably higher than that of lone mothers. Lone mothers with dependent children have a participation rate of 54 per cent – about 10 per cent lower than their partnered counterparts (Table 19.1).

While the fact that lone mothers are more likely than couple mothers to have exclusive responsibility for child care might be expected to be responsible for the lower workforce participation of lone mothers, it seems that this is not the reason. Research using the 1996 census data, shows that the presence of children has a similar impact on the probability of employment of lone and couple mothers (Gray, Qu, de Vaus and Millward, 2002). The lower participation of lone mothers is partly because lone mothers have different characteristics (for example, education) to couple mothers and that these make it more difficult for lone mothers to gain employment.

### **Does the age of children affect the workforce participation of lone and couple parents?**

#### **How many parents of pre-schoolers are employed?**

When the youngest child in the family is still a pre-schooler, very few mothers work full time. In 2002, just 15 per cent of couple mothers with pre-schoolers worked full time. However, a third (34 per cent)

of couple mothers with pre-schoolers worked part time at this stage, which means that, overall, half of couple mothers had at least some employment when their youngest child was aged 0-4 years old (Figure 19.1). Among mothers with pre-schoolers, workforce participation varies depending on the age of the pre-schooler. Patterns of child care use indicate that far fewer mothers are employed when their child is younger than one or even two years old, while more of those with a four year old will be employed (Figure 16.2 and Table 16.11).

Lone mothers were less likely to be employed either full time or part time at this stage. Just 9 per cent of lone mothers were employed full time and 21 per cent part time – a total of 30 per cent in some form of employment (Figure 19.1).

Couple fathers were very likely to be employed when they had such young children with 84 per cent being employed full time and a further 6 per cent part time. When children were this age, the traditional male breadwinner model of employment was the most common – fathers were at their highest employment levels and mothers were at their lowest employment levels than at any other stage after they had children (Figure 19.1).

Not surprisingly, lone fathers with pre-schoolers had a much lower employment rate than couple fathers, with 51 per cent employed full time and a further 4 per cent employed part time – just a little over half the employment rate of couple fathers. Perhaps a little more surprising is the much higher rate of employment of lone fathers with pre-schoolers compared with that of lone mothers. While 55 per cent of such lone fathers are employed, just 30 per cent of lone mothers are employed. Furthermore, lone fathers were mainly employed full time (51 per cent) while lone mothers were mainly employed part time.

The reason for the different rates of employment of lone fathers and lone mothers with pre-schoolers is not clear from these data.

Employment rates of mothers with pre-schoolers have changed in recent years. The 34 per cent of couple mothers with pre-schoolers who worked part time in 2002 was a substantial increase on the 24.5 per cent employed part time in 1986. In 1986, 62.8 per cent of couple mothers with pre-schoolers were not employed – a considerably higher figure than the 2002 figure of 51.3 per cent.

Similarly, more lone mothers were employed in 2002 than in 1986. In 1986, 21.8 per cent of those with pre-schoolers were working (11.8 per cent full time and 10 per cent part time) (ABS 1986b). By 2002, the employment rate of lone mothers with a pre-schooler had increased to 30 per cent (9.2 per cent were employed full time and 28.8 per cent were employed part time) (ABS 2003d).

	Males %	Females %
<b>Couple</b>		
With children under 15	93.1	64.5
With dependants	92.5	66.4
<b>Lone</b>		
With children under 15	72.6	53.8
With dependants	73.9	57.1

*Source:* Labour Force Survey February 2003 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003m).

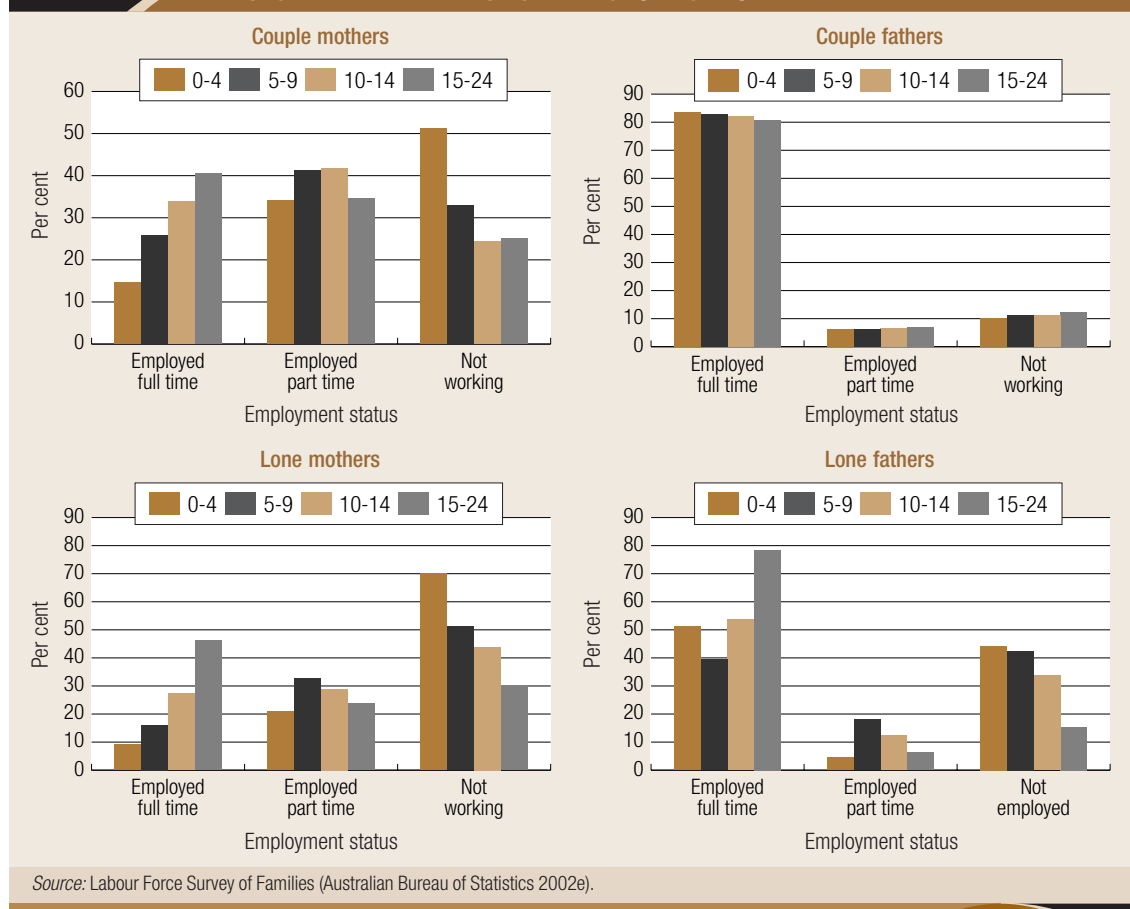
### Do mothers return to work when children go to school?

Employment of couple mothers increases as their pre-school children grow older. As indicated in Table 16.11 and Figure 16.2, usage of child care indicates that mothers increase their workforce participation steadily once their youngest child turns one year old. The sharpest increases in workforce participation occur when the youngest child turns one or two years old. Taken overall, mothers with pre-school children have lower employment rates than those whose youngest child is at primary school. In 2002, of mothers whose youngest child was at primary school, 26 per cent worked full time and 41 per cent worked part time. This means that of these mothers, 67 per cent were employed compared with 48.7 per cent of those with pre-schoolers (Figure 19.1).

Employment rates for lone mothers also increased when their youngest was at primary school but not at the same rate as for couple mothers. Full time employment increased to 16 per cent and part time employment to 32 per cent – giving a 50 per cent employment rate. While the employment gap among couple and lone mothers with pre-schoolers was 10 percentage points the employment gap when their youngest was at primary school stretched to 17 per cent.

Most couple fathers whose youngest child was at primary school were employed – 83 per cent full time and 6 per cent part time. However, this stage saw some changes among lone fathers. Their full time employment rate declined to 40 per cent and part time employment increased to 18 per cent, giving a total employment rate of 58 per cent which was very similar to that for lone fathers with pre-schoolers. In other words, for lone fathers, children moving to primary school is not associated with an increase in employment levels. However, compared with lone fathers of pre-schoolers, lone fathers whose youngest child is at primary school are more likely to work part time and less likely to work full time (Figure 19.1).

Employment rates of lone and couple mothers whose youngest child was aged 5-9 changed between 1986 and 2002. In 1986, 58.5 per cent of

**Figure 19.1** Employment of lone and couple parents by age of youngest child, June 2002

couple mothers were employed (23.5 per cent full time and 35 per cent part time). By 2002, the percentage of employed couple mothers with a child aged 5-9 had increased to 67.1 per cent (25.8 per cent were employed full time and 41.3 per cent were employed part time).

Among lone mothers similar changes occurred. In 1986, 41.5 per cent of lone mothers whose youngest child was aged between 5 and 9 were employed (23.1 per cent were employed full time and 18.4 per cent were employed part time). By 2002, this employment rate had increased to 48.8 per cent with 16.1 per cent being employed full time and 32.7 per cent being employed part time (ABS 1986b, 2003d).

#### Do mothers return to work as their children grow older (ages 10-14)?

When the youngest child is aged 10-14 (and therefore many will be at secondary school) the full time employment rate of couple mothers lifts further to 34 per cent with part time employment remaining stable. This means that at this life stage three quarters (76 per cent) of couple mothers were employed (Figure 19.1).

The full time employment rates of lone mothers also increased to 27 per cent but partly at the expense of part time employment which fell to 29

per cent giving a total employment rate for lone mothers at this stage of the family life cycle of 56 per cent – well below that of couple mothers.

Employment of couple fathers remained consistently high but that of lone fathers changed somewhat. Full time employment of lone fathers increased to 54 per cent but part time employment fell to 12 per cent giving an overall employment rate for these lone fathers of 67 per cent (Figure 19.1).

These 2002 levels of employment of mothers whose youngest child was aged 10-14 are somewhat different from those in earlier years. In 1986, 52.9 per cent of lone mothers whose youngest child was aged 10-14 were employed – 36.9 per cent were employed full time and 16 per cent were employed part time. By 2002, 56.1 per cent of these lone mothers were employed - 27.2 per cent were employed full time and 28.9 per cent were employed part time.

Over the same period, the employment of couple mothers whose youngest child was aged 10-14 increased from 62.7 per cent in 1986 to 75.6 per cent in 2002. Full time employment increased from 30.7 per cent in 1986 to 33.8 per cent in 2002; part time employment increased from 32 per cent in 1986 to 41.8 per cent (ABS 1986b, 2003d)

### Dependent students aged 15-24

Once the youngest dependent child in the family reaches the 15-24 year old age band, employment changes continue – most sharply among lone parents.

The employment rate of couple mothers remained at 75 per cent but consisted of more fully employed and fewer part time employed women. In 2002, full time employment jumped from 34 per cent among those whose children are aged 10-14 to 41 per cent among those whose dependent children are aged 15-24. Conversely, part time employment fell from 42 per cent to 34 per cent.

Employment jumped sharply for lone mothers with these older children. Full time employment jumps from 27 per cent where the youngest child was aged 10-14 to 46 per cent when the youngest dependent child is aged 15-25. As children move into the 15-24 year old age group, part time employment of lone mothers declined from 29 per cent to 24 per cent. Overall, the employment rate of these lone mothers with these older children increased to 70 per cent and included a much greater proportion of full time employed lone mothers. Comparable changes occurred among lone fathers at this life stage giving them an employment rate of 84 per cent – somewhat higher than comparable lone mothers.

Apart from noting the increasing employment rate of lone parents and couple mothers as the youngest child grows older, there are three points to highlight from the above discussion. First, as the youngest child grows older the employed parents seem to move from part time to full time employment. Second, regardless of the age of the youngest child, lone fathers have a substantially higher rate of employment than lone mothers.

Third, there is a substantial employment rate gap (of approximately 20 percentage points) between couple mothers and lone mothers when the youngest child is aged under 15. This gap narrows sharply to just 5 per cent among lone and couple mothers when the youngest dependent child is a dependent student aged 15-24. One of the reasons for this will be that any disincentive effects of the income support system should disappear when a lone mother's youngest child reaches the age of 16, since the lone mother is no longer eligible for the Parenting Payment (single). One would also expect that once children reach this age, lone mothers will be more easily able to combine work with their child rearing responsibilities.

### Is employment of lone and couple mothers increasing?

The employment patterns of parents with dependent children have changed in a number of ways over the last two decades.

The first change is that since 1983 the rate of employment of both lone and couple mothers has increased while the rate of employment among fathers has declined marginally. In particular:

- Among partnered mothers of dependent children the percentage without employment has fallen from 57.9 per cent in 1983 to 37.1 per cent in 2002 – a 36 per cent decline.
- Among lone mothers the percentage without employment has fallen from 67.9 per cent in 1983 to 52.2 per cent in 2002 – a 23 per cent decline.
- For couple fathers the percentage without employment has fluctuated but was 10.5 per cent in both 1983 and 10.8 per cent in 2002.
- Among lone fathers the percentage not working has increased marginally from 28.7 per cent in 1983 to 32 per cent in 2002.

One factor behind the decline in the proportion of mothers who were not employed has been changes in the economic cycle. The early 1980s was a time of high unemployment. Until the early 1990s there was a period of sustained growth followed by a recession in the early 1990s, after which there has been a further period of sustained growth.

An additional factor that has enabled the employment growth for mothers has been the growth in part time work which enables mothers more easily to balance work and family commitments.

The second major change has been the growth in part time employment. The story of employment over the last two decades of the 20th century has partly been the story of the growth in part time work. In understanding the way in which families manage employment it is important to include the role of part time work (Renda, 2003).

Among parents with dependent children, part time employment is very much a female pattern. Both couple and lone mothers had much higher rates of part time employment than lone or couple fathers. The highest rates were among couple mothers. In 2002:

- Over a third of couple mothers (37.4 per cent) had part time employment.
- Over a quarter (26.7 per cent) of lone mothers were employed part time.
- 11.4 per cent of lone fathers were employed part time.
- 6.5 per cent of couple fathers were employed part time.

The growth in part time employment has been especially evident among mothers with dependent children (Figures 19.2 and 19.3). Between 1983 and 2002, part time employment increased from:

- 22.3 per cent of all couple mothers with dependent children to 37.4 per cent – a 63 per cent increase.
- 11.8 per cent of all lone mothers to 26.7 per cent – a growth of 126 per cent.
- 4.7 per cent of all lone fathers to 11.4 per cent – a growth of 142 per cent.
- 2.4 per cent of all couple fathers to 6.5 per cent – a growth of 70 per cent.

While the proportional growth in part time employment is greatest among fathers, this is a growth from a very low base of part time employment. Nevertheless, it does represent an important change in the nature of work of some fathers. The main growth in part time employment is among mothers with dependent children. Although the percentage growth in part time employment has been lower among couple mothers than for the other groups it is still large in proportionate terms (63 per cent growth) and in absolute terms – 14.1 percentage points. However, the growth in part

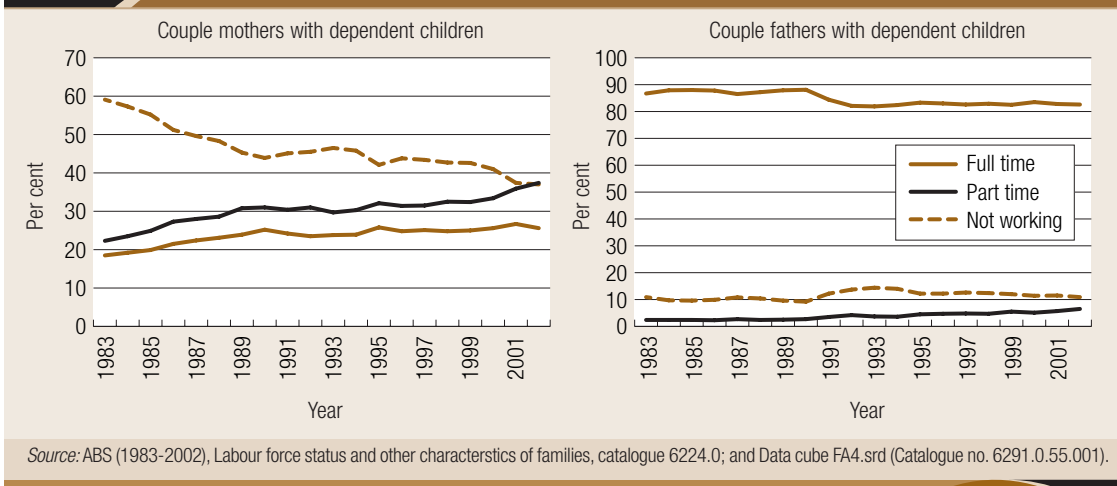
time employment of lone mothers is even more marked – 142 per cent in proportional terms and 14.9 per cent in absolute terms.

There are a number of possible reasons for this growth in part time employment. These are discussed at length in Gray, Qu, Renda and de Vaus (2003) and include:

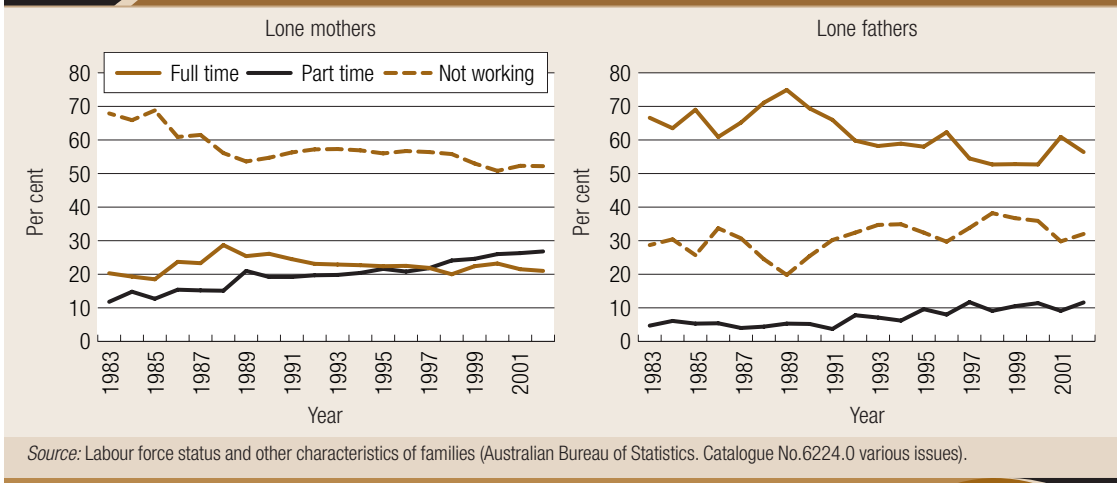
- Changes to the income support system which have reduced some of the disincentives for part time employment by lone parents.
- Labour market changes. Economic restructuring over this period has meant that the main growth in jobs in the new economy has been in the area of part time employment.
- Preferences of parents for part time work. The changes in income support and the changing labour market may have enabled some parents to more easily put their preferences into practice.

The third major change in employment patterns for parents, especially mothers, has been in the area of full time employment (Figures 19.2 and

**Figure 19.2** Employment status of couple parents with dependent children, 1983-2002



**Figure 19.3** Employment status of lone parents with dependent children, 1983-2002



19.3). Changes in levels of full time employment have been very different among different groups of parents.

- Among couple mothers full time employment has risen substantially from 18.3 per cent in 1983 to 25.6 per cent in 2002 – a 39 per cent rise.
- Among lone mothers the rate of full time employment has been basically stable. In 1983, 20.3 per cent of lone mothers with dependent children were employed full time. After an increase to 28.7 per cent in 1988, full time employment of lone mothers has stabilised at 21 per cent in 2002.
- Full time employment among couple fathers has declined a little from 86.7 per cent in 1983 to 82.6 per cent in 2002.
- Full time employment has declined among lone fathers from 66.6 per cent in 1983 to 56.4 per cent in 2002 – an 18 per cent decline.

The reasons for these different patterns in full time employment are not certain. Some of the change may be due to the lack of full time job growth but other factors are needed to explain the different patterns among the different groups of parents. These factors are considered more fully in Gray, Qu, Renda and de Vaus (2003).

### How much employment do mothers want?

Many factors affect the work status of parents. The nature of the labour market, income support systems, family characteristics and a person's employability all play a part. Overlaying all these factors are the work preferences of mothers and fathers (Hakim, 2000; Glezer and Wolcott, 1999). The type of work arrangements that parents want will play a part in their workforce participation and the hours they work. While it will not always be possible for parents to realise their preferences, these preferences will nevertheless be part of the mix of factors that determine employment outcomes. This section provides some insight into the preferred work arrangements of mothers with children aged under 18. The information is drawn from the 2001 HILDA survey (FaCS 2002a).

#### Are employed mothers happy with their hours of work?

Of employed women with children under the age of 18:

- Over half (56 per cent) were happy with their weekly number of work hours.
- A quarter wanted to work fewer hours.
- 18 per cent wanted to work more hours.

Satisfaction with the current hours of work depended very much on current hours of work.

Many of those working full time wanted to work fewer hours while many of those working just a few hours wanted more work. Of mothers with under 18 year old children still at home:

- Half (49 per cent) of those who worked full time wanted to work fewer hours while half were happy with their current full time work commitments.
- Just 3 per cent of those who worked between one to 15 hours wanted to work fewer hours while 42 per cent wanted to work more hours. Over half were happy working between one to 15 hours a week.

The preference of mothers to reduce their hours of employment was relatively consistent regardless of the age of the mother's youngest child. Of employed mothers whose youngest child was a pre-schooler, 21 per cent wanted to work fewer hours; of those whose youngest was at primary school a quarter wanted fewer hours of employment; while 29 per cent of those whose youngest was of secondary school age wanted fewer hours of work.

The main reason why women with older children were a little more inclined to want to work fewer hours is that they worked more hours than those with younger children. Of employed women, those whose youngest child was a pre-schooler, worked, on average, 24.4 hours a week; those whose youngest child was at primary school worked, on average, 28.2 hours a week; and those whose youngest child was of secondary school age worked, on average, 32.3 hours a week.

Table 19.2 shows that the key factor driving the desire of employed mothers to have fewer or more hours of work was not the age of her children but her current hours of work. Regardless of the age of her children, many of the mothers with relatively few hours of work wanted to work more hours. Regardless of the age of the children, about half of the mothers working full time wanted to work fewer hours.

### What is happening to employment among older men and women?

Labour force participation rates of older men in Australia are, by OECD standards, average. For men aged 55-64, the rates in 2001 were 60.6 per cent which meant that Australia was ranked 16 out of 30 OECD countries. Among Australian women aged 55-64 the participation rate in 2001 was 36.9 per cent, which gave an Australian ranking of 13 out of 30 OECD countries (OECD 2003).

However, Australian men and women withdraw from the labour force at a relatively early age. In 1999, the mean retirement age for men was 59.7 years and for women in the labour force it was 61.3 years. By OECD standards this represents early

labour force withdrawal. Only two OECD countries (France and Italy) for which data were available, had earlier (only marginally) average retirement ages for men (OECD 2001). The average age at which men retire is a little lower than their intended retirement age – at least as indicated by the 2001 HILDA survey. In this survey the average employed male intended to retire at the age of 62.3 years. The average intended retirement age for employed women was 60 years (FaCS 2002a).

**Is employment declining for older men but increasing for older women?**

The labour force participation of older Australian men has been declining steadily for many years. In 1911, 93 per cent of men aged 55-59, 86 per cent of those aged 60-64 and 55 per cent of men aged 64 or over were still in the workforce (Hugo 2001). The decline in workforce participation of older workers

has continued in more recent decades – certainly since at least the late 1970s. The 1980s and 1990s saw substantial economic restructuring meant that the disappearance of certain occupations and the need for particular skills particularly affected the employment of older men. Furthermore, this restructuring led to substantial downsizing which, in many workplaces, was disproportionately directed at older workers.

- For men in their late fifties (aged 55-59) this has meant a decline in labour force participation from 82 per cent in 1979 to 69 per cent in 2002 – a decline of 12 percentage points.
- Among men aged 60-64 the decline in participation between 1979-2002 has been from 54.4 per cent to 47.9 per cent.
- However, among those aged 65 and over the participation rate has remained steady at about 10 per cent (Table 19.3).

The participation rate of older women has shown an opposite trend to that of men and has increased in each age group.

- Of women aged 55-59 the participation rate has increased from 27.8 per cent in 1979 to 49.3 per cent in 2002 – a 77 per cent increase.
- Among women aged 60-64 the participation rate has almost doubled from 12.8 per cent in 1979 to 23.2 per cent in 2002 (Table 19.3).

Although the labour force participation of older men has declined, this has been more than compensated for by the increased labour force participation of older women (Table 19.3). The net effect of this is that, in 1980, 55.6 per cent of all people aged 55-59 participated in the labour force and 31.6 per cent of those aged 60-64 participated in the labour force. By 2002, these participation rates had increased to 62.2 per cent among the 55-59 year olds and 36.7 per cent among the 60-64 year olds (ABS Labour Force Australia, various years).

**Are older workers part time workers?**

An increasing proportion of older workers are working part time. This is partly because older workers are choosing this as a method of gradually withdrawing from the workforce. The higher rate of part time work of older workers is also because of the increasing feminisation of the older workforce. Because women across all age groups have higher rates of part time employment, the feminisation of the older workforce has produced an older workforce with a greater proportion of part time workers.

One way in which older workers make the transition to retirement is to gradually withdraw from the workforce. This movement to part time work appears to begin well before the normal retirement age. Figure 19.4 shows the rising proportion of part

**Table 19.2 Work preference of employed mothers with a child under 18 by current hours of work, 2001**

Current hours of work	Prefer to work	Age of youngest child			Total %
		0-4 %	5-11 %	12-17 %	
1-15	Fewer hours	4.9	3.1	1.6	3.6
	Same hours	56.3	53.5	50.0	54.1
	More hours	38.7	43.4	48.4	42.3
N		142	129	62	
16-34	Fewer hours	13.5	12.2	15.4	13.3
	Same hours	69.1	66.3	65.7	67.1
	More hours	17.4	21.5	18.9	19.6
N		207	288	143	
35+	Fewer hours	51.6	51.0	45.3	49.0
	Same hours	46.9	46.5	49.3	47.6
	More hours	1.6	2.5	5.4	3.4
N		128	241	223	

Source: HILDA, 2001 (FaCS 2002a).

**Table 19.3 Labour force participation rates of men and women aged 55+, 1979-2002**

Year	Male			Female		
	Age group					
	55-59 %	60-64 %	>64 %	55-59 %	60-64 %	>64 %
1979	82.1	54.4	11.6	27.8	12.8	2.4
1985	77.1	43.8	9.1	28.2	11.9	2.1
1990	75.0	50.6	9.2	33.9	16.0	2.4
1995	74.1	46.8	9.6	39.8	16.4	2.6
2000	72.2	46.3	9.6	48.2	21.5	2.9
2002	69.1	47.9	10.4	49.3	23.2	3.5

Source: 1979-1995 from Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999j; 2000 and 2002 rates from ABS Labour Force Australia June (various years).  
Note: Figures 1979-98 are averages across the year; 1999-2002 are June rates

time work as workers get nearer retirement age. Among both male and female workers, the proportion of workers who work part time begins to increase from the mid fifties and steadily rises in each age group thereafter.

Of employed men aged 45-54, 9 per cent worked part time in 2002. This increases to 14 per cent among those in their late fifties and then increases sharply to 24 per cent of workers in their early sixties. Of those who continued to work after the age of 65, 45 per cent were employed part time. The patterns are similar for female workers except that the absolute levels of part time work are higher in each age group.

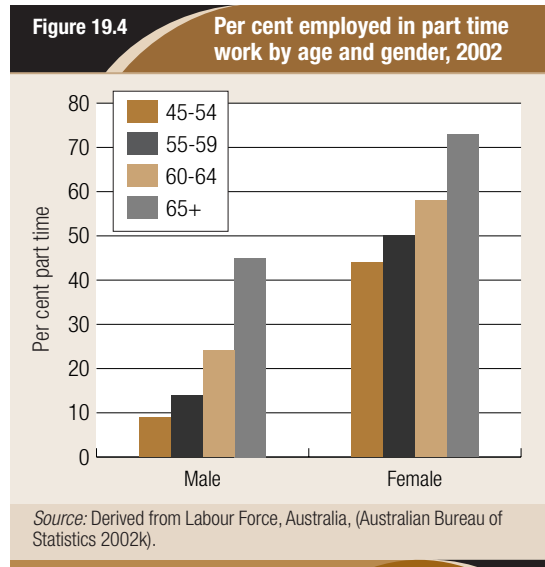
There is also evidence that moving to part time work is becoming a more common arrangement among older workers. In October 1991, 26 per cent of workers aged 55 and over worked part time. By October 2001 this had increased to 34 per cent – a 30 per cent increase in just ten years (ABS 2002k).

**How evenly are jobs shared between families?**

*Are jobless families growing?*

Gregory (1999) reported substantial increases between 1979 and 1998 in the number of dependent children living in families in which no parent had a job. The percentage of jobless families with dependent children depends considerably on the business cycle. The sharpest increases in jobless families with dependent children were between 1979 and 1983. Family joblessness declined again during the 1980s only to rise again in the recession of the early 1990s (Figure 19.5).

Since 1983, the growth in the proportion of jobless families with dependent children appears to be largely confined to lone parent families (except for the fluctuation in the early 1990s). Indeed, the overall growth in the proportion of children in families without any job is substantially due to the growth in lone parent families overall during the period.



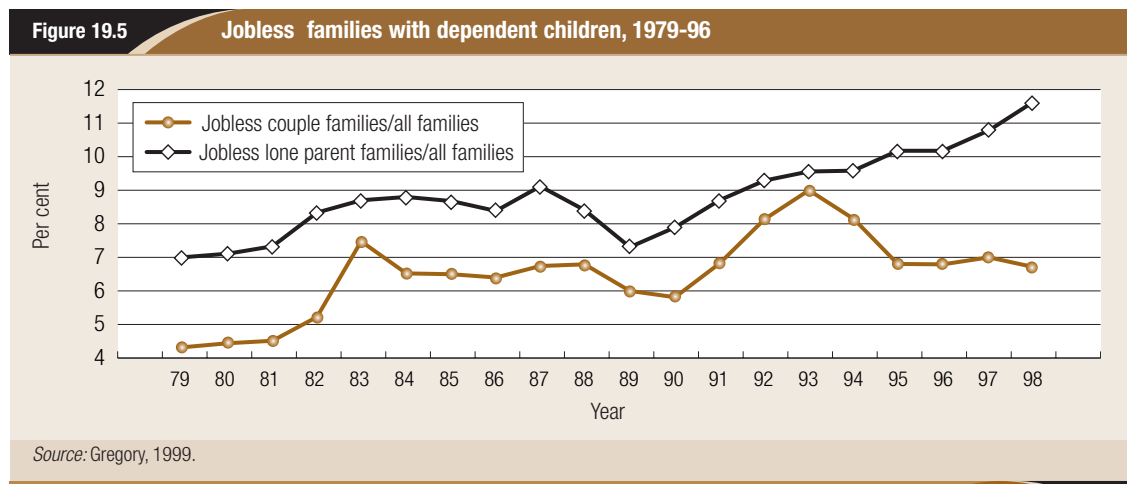
**Have job poor couples increased?**

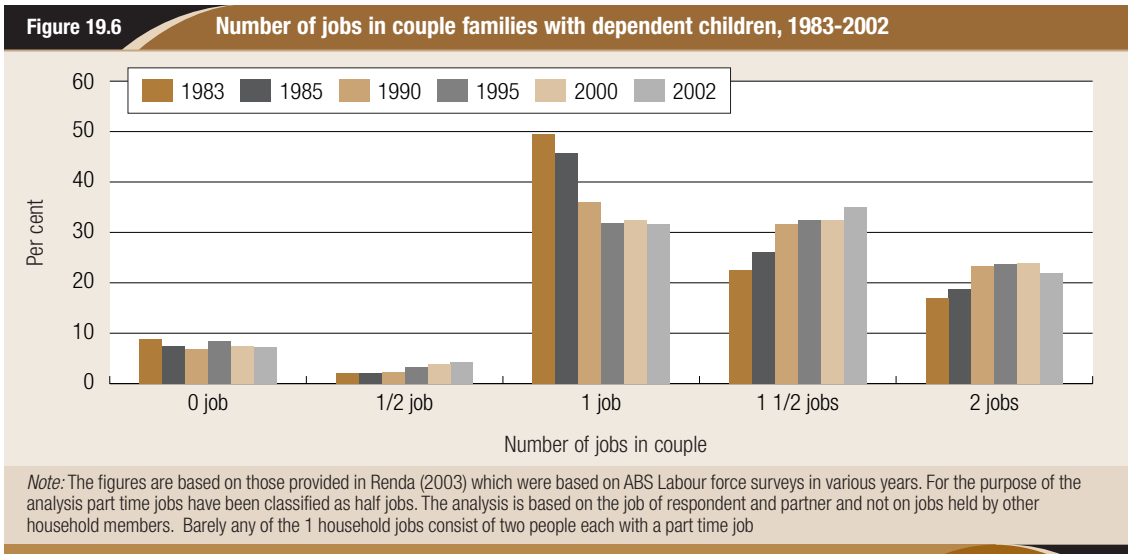
Couples with dependent children but which have either no job or one part time job between them, can be thought of as job poor couples (Renda, 2003; Burbidge and Sheehan 2001; Dawkins, Gregg and Scutella 2001).

Among couples with dependants there has been little change in the percentage of job poor families since 1983 (Figure 19.6).

In 2002, 7.2 per cent of all couples with dependents were those in which neither partner was employed. A further 4.2 per cent had just one part time job between the couple. This means that in 2002, 11.4 per cent of couple families with dependent children were job poor.

These 2002 figures are very similar to those that have persisted from the early 1980s. In 1983, 10.9 per cent of these couples had either no job or one part time job – a level that has remained stable thereafter.





**Has the percentage of job poor lone parents increased?**

After high levels of joblessness in the early to mid 1980s when around 63 per cent of lone parents had no job, the level of joblessness among lone parent families with dependent children declined to around 50 per cent from 1990 to 2002 (Figure 19.7).

The decline in lone parent joblessness has been partly mirrored by an increase in part time employment among lone parents. In 1983, 11 per cent of lone parents had part time employment – by 2002 this had more than doubled to 25 per cent.

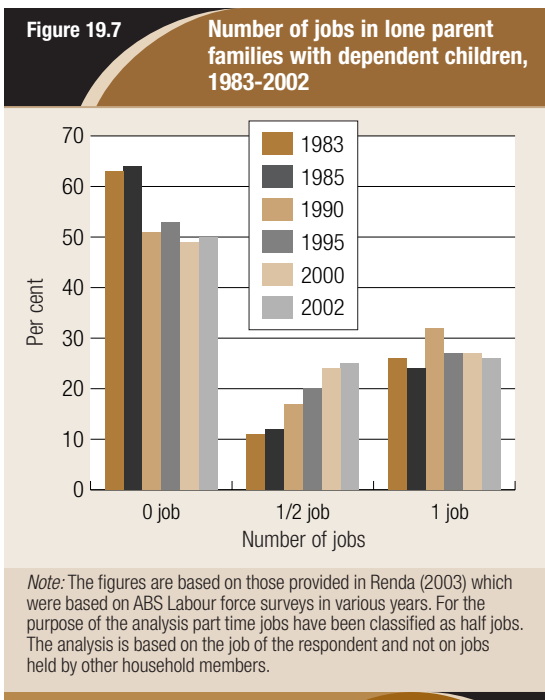
**Have overall levels of jobless families with dependents increased?**

While joblessness and job poverty have not increased in either couple families or lone parent

families since 1983, joblessness and job poverty have nevertheless increased since 1983.

- In 1983, 19.5 per cent of all families with dependent children had either no employed parent or one part time employed parent. By 2002, this had increased to 25.8 per cent – a 32 per cent increase in work poor families.
- Most of this increase in job poverty is driven by an increase in families with one part time employed person rather than in families with no jobs.

This growth in job poor families is because there are more lone parent families and these families have always had much higher levels of joblessness than couple parent families. While only about 11 per cent of couples with dependents are job poor families, approximately 75 per cent of lone parent families have either no job or a part time job. The growth in lone parent families, therefore, has brought with it an overall increase in job poor families.



**Are dual job couples becoming more common?**

In 2002, 22 per cent of all couples with dependent children had two full time jobs between them. This is a slight decline since the mid to late 1990s when 24 per cent of couples with dependent children had two full time jobs. However, the 22 per cent figure in 2002 is an increase from the 17 per cent of two full time job couples back in 1983.

In addition to couples with dependent children who had two full time jobs, there was an additional 35 per cent of families in 2002 that had a full time job plus a part time job. Much of this increase has been driven by the growth in part time jobs that mothers took up over this period. The growth in couples with one and a half jobs from 1983 to 2002 is substantial – from 23 per cent to 35 per cent of couples. This increase in couples with 1.5 jobs means that in 2002, 57 per cent of all couples with dependent children were two income families.

### Are one job couple families disappearing?

Since 1983 there has been a sharp decline in the number of single job couples (or couples with two part time jobs) from 49 per cent of all couples with dependent children in 1983 to 32 per cent in 2002 (Figure 19.6). Most of this decline occurred in the 1980s. From the early 1990s onwards the decline in single job couples stabilised. Most of the decline in one job couples appears to have been compensated for by the growth of dual earner couples that share either 1.5 or two full time jobs between them. In other words, the decline in one job families is substantially due to the increase in multiple job couples rather than any increase in jobless couples.

### Are men still the breadwinners?

Part of the answer to this question is simple. In an increasing number of couple families both partners are contributing to the family income. In these families men are certainly not the sole breadwinners – even if they are predominantly the main income earner. Even in those families in which a man might be the main breadwinner at a particular point, his relative contribution will vary at different points of the family life course. There is also an increasing number of mother-headed lone parent families and this means that these lone parent families are headed by a female breadwinner.

But what is the picture among couple families in which there is just one income earner? How many of these families are male breadwinner families and how many are female breadwinner families?

Among couples in which one partner is not employed there are two possibilities regarding the employment of the other partner. They can be employed or not employed.

When female partners are not employed, the traditional male breadwinner pattern is for the male partner to be working. Is this still the case?

To what extent has the traditional pattern been reversed? When men are not employed is their female partner employed? Is there any evidence of an increase in the single income couple in which the female is the breadwinner?

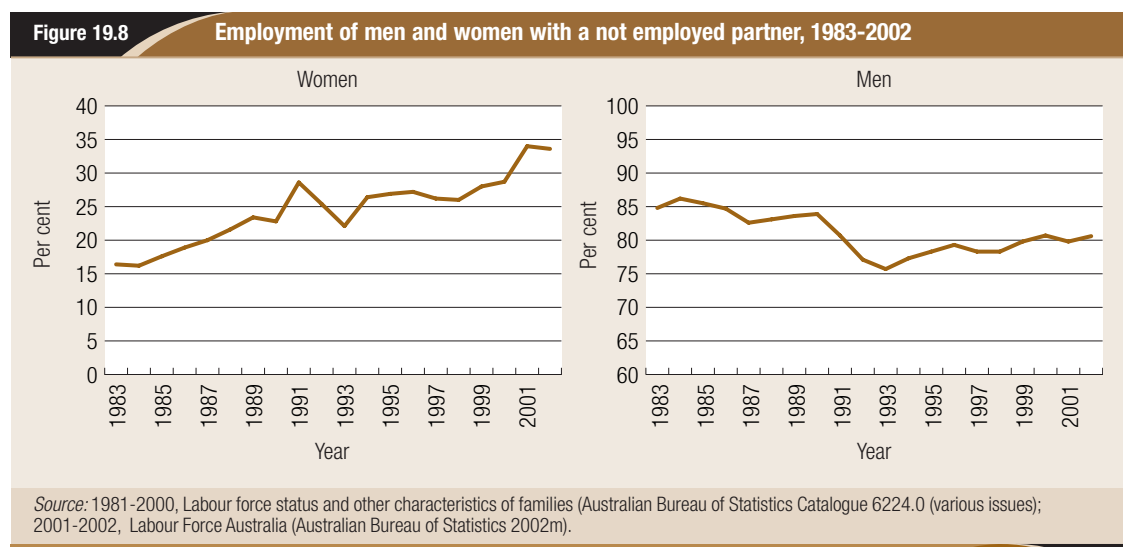
**Male breadwinner couples:** Figure 19.8 shows that in 1981, of partnered men whose partner was not employed, 91 per cent were themselves employed, that is, they were the traditional male breadwinner. By 2002, just 81 per cent of partnered males with a not employed partner were themselves employed – 19 per cent were also not employed.

**Female breadwinner couples:** At the same time there has been a rise in partnered women who are the sole breadwinner, that is, their partner is not employed. In 1981, 19.6 per cent of women with a non employed partner were themselves employed. By 2002 this percentage had increased to 34 per cent. That is, of partnered women with a not employed partner a third were the breadwinner in the couple (Figure 19.8).

While the percentage of breadwinner partnered women has increased, it has been more common for employed partnered women also to have an employed partner. Indeed, it is the growth in two income couples that has been one of the most notable changes in employment patterns among couples since 1983. In 1983, 45 per cent of couple mothers with employed partners were themselves employed. Since then this percentage has increased steadily so that by 2002, 66 per cent of women with an employed partner were employed themselves (see Renda, 2003).

### How many young children live in jobless families?

So far the statistics have examined how many families with dependent children have no jobs, half a job, one job or two jobs. However, this does not indicate how many children live in such families.



Nor does it give any indication of whether children living in jobless families are very young or older.

The 2001 Census (Table 19.4) indicated that in 2001, of all dependent children:

- 17.9 per cent (799,069) lived in a family with no employed parent. 7.3 per cent (332,371) lived in a couple family and 10.6 per cent (466,798) lived in a lone parent family.
- 45.3 per cent (1,990,731) lived in a couple family in which both parents were employed.
- 36.8 per cent (1,619,210) lived in a family with one employed parent. Almost 28 per cent (1,222,114) were living in a couple family with only one employed parent and 9 per cent (397,096) lived in a one parent family in which that parent was employed.

While the proportion of children in jobless couple families was similar across all age groups of children (mainly around 7 per cent of all children in each age group), the proportion of children in jobless lone parent families was higher among younger than older children (Table 19.4).

A much smaller proportion of young children than older children lived in dual worker couple families. Of all children aged 0-4, 37 per cent lived in couple families in which both parents were employed. This percentage increases to 45 per cent among those of primary school age (5-12) and increases again to over 50 per cent among teenagers.

Only a small proportion of children aged 0-4 live in a one parent family in which the parent was employed (4.5 per cent or 50,310 children). However, of teenagers, close to 13 per cent (152,289) lived in a one parent family in which the parent was employed.

If we focus just on children living in lone parent families, half lived in a jobless family (Table 19.4). The chances of such a child living in a jobless family depends very much on the age of the child.

In 2001, of children in lone parent families aged 0-4, 71.7 per cent lived with their parent who was not employed. This figure fell to 55.9 per cent among children aged 5-12 and dropped to about a third among dependent children aged 15-24 who lived in lone parent households.

The situation is very different for children in couple families where 9.1 per cent of children in couple families lived in a jobless household in 2001. More than half (56 per cent) the children in couple families had two employed parents. The chances of a child in a couple family having two employed parents increases as they grow older. Of pre-schoolers, 43.8 per cent had two employed parents in 2001; 57.3 per cent of those aged 5-12 had two employed parents while almost two thirds of teenagers in couple families had two employed parents.

### Do people still disapprove of working mothers?

In general, attitudes still tend towards the traditional views that the primary role of a mother is to look after her children rather than to pursue her employment or career. According to the 2001 HILDA survey:

- Over three quarters (78.1 per cent) of respondents agreed that being a mother was more important than a career for a woman.
- Less than a half (44.9 per cent) agreed that a working mother can have just as good relationship with her children as a mother who does not work (Table 19.5).

However, there appears to be less agreement with the traditional division of responsibilities and aptitudes of mothers and fathers. The HILDA survey found that:

- Almost two-thirds (65.4 per cent) agreed that children do just as well if their mother works and their father looks after the children (only 9 per cent disagreed).

**Table 19.4** Employment status of parents of children by age group of child and family type, 2001

	Age of child					All dependent children %
	0-4 %	5-12 %	13-14 %	15-19 %	20-24 %	
<b>Couple parents</b>						
Neither parent employed	7.9	7.2	7.0	6.6	9.0	7.3
Both parents employed	36.9	45.3	49.8	54.0	53.3	45.3
Only one parent employed	39.5	26.6	20.4	18.9	19.1	27.8
<b>Lone parent</b>						
Employed	4.5	9.2	12.2	13.1	12.3	9.0
Not employed	11.3	11.7	10.6	7.5	6.3	10.6
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Derived from 2001 Census expanded community profiles (Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003a).

- Only a little over a third (38.5 per cent) agreed that it is better if the mother looks after the children and the father works.
- Only a little over a third (38.1 per cent) agreed that a mother should not work if she does not need the money (Table 19.5).

### *Are men more disapproving than women?*

Men and women hold different views on some of these matters. On some matters women hold less traditional views to those of men. For example, women were more likely than men to say that a working mother can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work (51.5 per cent of women agree compared with 37.5 per cent of men). Women were also more likely than men to say that children do just as well if mother works and the father looks after the children.

However, on other matters men and women appear to be largely in agreement. Similar percentages of men and women agree that being a mother is more important than a career for women, and that a mother should not work if the money is not needed. Men and women also held reasonably similar views about whether it was better for mothers to provide the child care while fathers worked (Table 19.5).

### *Is the older generation the most disapproving?*

Even where men and women held different views about working mothers the differences between men and women were relatively small. Age group differences in attitudes about the role of working mothers were much more substantial. Older people aged 60 and over were much more likely than those in their twenties, to say that being a mother is much more important than a career for a woman (around 90 per cent compared with 70 per cent). Similarly, over 70 per cent those aged 60 or more said that it was better if the mother cares for the children and fathers work. In contrast, just 22.7 per cent of those in their twenties and 26.4 per cent of those in their

thirties subscribed to this traditional view about the best role for mothers and fathers (Table 19.5).

Reinforcing this difference between age groups is the observation that just over a half of older people agreed that children do just as well if the mother works and the father looks after the children, while almost 70 per cent of those in their twenties and thirties felt this way. Of the oldest group, 62.9 per cent believed that a mother should not work if she does not need the money while less than 30 per cent of those aged under 40 saw financial reasons as the only justification for working. The younger age groups were more willing to accept that there are good non financial reasons that justify a mother working.

The more traditional values of older people towards working women could be due to people becoming more conservative as they grow older. However, it is much more likely that it reflects the different eras in which the older and younger people have developed their views. It is likely that over time we will see a greater consensus among the generations regarding the role of working mothers as today's younger people become the older generation of the future.

### *Is approval of working mothers increasing?*

Evans and Kelley have been tracking changes in attitudes to working mothers since 1984 using regular national surveys (Evans and Kelley, 2002b). They present evidence of an increasing level of approval of married women and mothers working.

Table 19.6 reports some of their findings. This table shows that:

- Approval of married women working even if their husband can support them (that is, where there is not an economic necessity) has increased from 62 per cent approval in the mid 1980s to 82 per cent in 2001<sup>1</sup>.
- There is an increasing rejection of the view that a married woman should not attach much importance to her career (51 per cent in 1984 to 65 per cent in 2001).

**Table 19.5 Attitudes about working mothers by gender and age, 2001**

	All %	Gender		Age					
		Men %	Women %	20-29 %	30-39 %	40-49 %	50-59 %	60-69 %	70+ %
Being a mother is more important than a career for a woman (AGREE)	78.1	75.7	80.2	69.8	75.7	76.8	82.3	87.6	92.3
A mother shouldn't work if the money is not needed (AGREE)	38.1	39.5	36.9	25.7	31.9	35.7	44.5	56.0	62.9
It's better if mother cares and father works (AGREE)	38.5	41.6	35.6	22.7	26.4	32.6	46.7	64.5	78.0
Children do just as well if mother works & father cares (AGREE)	65.4	60.1	70.2	69.2	71.1	68.8	63.2	57.0	51.2
Working mother can have just as good relationship as a mother who does not work (AGREE)	44.9	37.5	51.5	46.4	45.0	45.0	45.5	40.2	39.1

Source: HILDA, 2001 (FaCS 2002a).

Note: Agreement was measured on a 7 point scale with 7 indicating strongest agreement. Respondents giving a score of 5, 6 or 7 were regarded as agreeing with the statement

- There is an increasing rejection of the view that family life suffers if the woman has a full time job (28 per cent rejected this view in 1984 compared with 41 per cent in 2001).
- There is increasing agreement that a working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a non working mother (50 per cent in 1984 and 60 per cent in 2001)<sup>2</sup>.

However, there has been very little recent change in what people consider to be the appropriate activity for mothers when their children are pre-schoolers, at school and grown up. In each of the relevant International Social Science Surveys in Australia from 1989 to 2001, close to 70 per cent of respondents said that the ideal activity for the mother of a pre-schooler is to be a housewife. Around 30 per cent thought that the mother ideally should work part time and barely anyone (around 3-4 per cent) thought that full time work was the ideal for the mother of a pre-schooler.

Once children are at school the view of over 70 per cent is that the ideal is for the mother of school aged children to work part time. Of the remainder, about half (15 per cent) said the mother should ideally be a housewife and the other 15 per cent said she ideally should work full time. These views have remained unchanged since 1989.

Once children have grown up the majority view is that mothers should ideally work full time. Around 60 per cent think she should work full time and a third think she should work part time. Once her

husband retires, however, the common view was that she should revert to being a full time housewife. In 2001, 79 per cent of survey respondents believed that the ideal for a woman whose husband had retired was to be a full time housewife (Evans, and Kelley 2002b).

### How do families balance work and family?

#### Does working help parenting?

The debate about achieving a balance between work and family life mainly emphasises the difficulty that parents have balancing the competing demands of work and home. While these difficulties are very real and will be explored shortly, it is worth first noting that work can have benefits for family life and parenting.

Responses in the HILDA survey provide a mixed picture (Table 19.7). Around 70 per cent of employed fathers and mothers felt that combining work and family benefited them as a person by making them feel more rounded, more competent and giving them more variety in life. Presumably, where work benefits the parent this can have indirect benefits for aspects of their parenting.

However, there was less agreement about the direct positive effects of working on parenting (Table 19.7). While close to two thirds of employed mothers and fathers felt that work makes them better appreciate the time they spend with their children:

- Less than half (47.6 per cent) felt that their working had a positive effect on their children (52 per cent of mothers felt this way).

	1984	1986	1990	1993	1996	2001
	%	%	%	%	%	%
APPROVE of married women earning money, even if husband can support her	62	65	68	65	73	82
Do NOT believe that a woman should devote nearly all her time to her family	48	49	48	--	51	48
REJECT the view that a married woman should not attach much importance to a career	51	56	54	60	60	65
REJECT view that family life suffers if the women has a full time job	28	26	35	33	31	41
AGREE that a working mother can establish just as warm a relationship with her children as a mother that does not work	50	52	58	50	53	60

Source: Evans and Kelley, 2002b.

	Male	Female	Total
Per cent agreeing	%	%	%
Having both work and family responsibilities makes me more rounded person	72.8	68.0**	70.6
Having both work and family responsibilities gives life more variety	78.9	79.7	79.3
Managing both work and family makes me feel competent	68.2	72.9**	70.3
Work has positive effect on my children	44.4	51.5***	47.6
Work helps me better appreciate my time with children	64.3	64.0	64.2
Working makes me a better parent	47.4	37.5***	42.8

Source: HILDA, 2001 (FaCS 2002a).  
 Note: Respondents were defined as agreeing with the statement if they scored their agreement as 5,6,7 on a 7 point scale  
 \*\* Difference between males and females is statistically significant at the .01 level  
 \*\*\* Difference between males and females is statistically significant at the .001 level

- 43 per cent felt that working made them a better parent. Even fewer mothers than fathers (37.5 per cent compared with 47 per cent) felt that working made them a better parent.
- A third of fathers compared to a quarter of mothers felt that their job requirements made their family time less enjoyable and more pressured (Table 19.8).

### *Do work and family commitments conflict?*

Another way of thinking about the effects of work on parenting is to explore the extent to which employed parents feel that working interferes with good parenting. On most measures “only” a minority felt that work interfered with effective parenting. According to the 2001 HILDA survey (Table 19.8):

- 28 per cent of parents (32 per cent of fathers and 24 per cent of mothers) felt that their employment made their time with their family less enjoyable and more pressured.
- 43 per cent worried about what their children were up to while they were at work.
- Work requirements made 44 per cent of parents feel that they missed out on family activities in which they would like to participate.
- 40 per cent of parents (45 per cent of fathers and 36 per cent of mothers) said that work left them with insufficient energy to parent as they would like.
- 52 per cent felt that work meant that they missed out on some of the rewarding aspects of being a parent.

An important point to note is that employed fathers were more likely than employed mothers to comment on these negative aspects of working. For example:

- 52 per cent of fathers compared with 35 per cent of mothers felt that job requirements made them miss out on family activities in which they would like to participate.
- 59 per cent of fathers compared with 42 per cent of employed mothers felt that work made them miss some of the most rewarding aspects of being a parent.

The pattern of men being more likely than women to report that work interferes with their home life is consistent with earlier studies such as the Australian Family Life Course Survey in 1996 (Glezer and Wolcott, 1999).

### *Does part time employment reduce work-family conflict for mothers?*

One of the reasons why work interferes more with the father’s ability to parent is that he mainly works full time whereas many mothers work part time. In general, mothers who worked part time reported much less conflict between their work and family commitments.

Information from the HILDA survey shows that on most measures of work and family conflict, full time employed women were much more likely than part time employed women to experience work-family conflict. Furthermore, full time employed women experienced very similar degrees of work-family conflict as experienced by full time employed men.

For many women, the way to contain the conflict between work and family roles was to reduce the level of workforce participation. Compared to full time employed women, those employed part time were less likely to say that:

- Work made them miss on family activities in which they would prefer to participate (27 per cent of part timers compared with 47 per cent of full timers).
- Job requirements made their family time less enjoyable and more pressured (18 per cent compared with 33 per cent).
- They worried about what the children were doing while they (that is, the mother) were at work (39 per cent compared with 48 per cent).

**Table 19.8** Perceived conflict between work and family commitments

Per cent agreeing	Fathers %	Mothers %	Total %
Family responsibilities make me turn down work activities and opportunities I'd like to take on	25.9	31.6***	28.5
Family responsibilities make work time less enjoyable and more pressured	19.1	22.8**	20.8
Job requirements make me miss family activities I'd prefer to participate in	52.2	34.9***	44.2
Job requirements make my family time less enjoyable and more pressured	31.6	24.1***	28.1
I worry about what goes on with children while I'm at work	43.5	43.2	43.4
Working leaves me with little energy to be parent I'd like to be	43.8	36.0***	40.2
Working makes me miss on some of rewarding aspects of being a parent	59.3	41.7***	51.2

Source: HILDA, 2001 (FaCS 2002a).

Note: Respondents were defined as agreeing with the statement if they scored the the statement as 5,6,7 on a 7 point scale

\*\* Difference between mothers and fathers is statistically significant at the .01 level

\*\*\* Difference between mothers and fathers is statistically significant at the .001 level

- Work left them with little energy to be the type of parent they wanted to be (29 per cent compared with 47 per cent).
- Working made them miss out on some of the rewarding aspects of being a parent (34 per cent compared with 54 per cent).

**Do people work from home?**

Working from home, for at least some of the time, is an option that is open to people in certain types of employment. Home based work is much more common among people in management and professional jobs as well as those in advanced clerical and services occupations (ABS 2002k).

In 2002, about one in five employed people worked some hours at home and 11 per cent (980,300) worked mainly from home (ABS 2001i). The reasons given for working at home do not, in the main, mention family reasons. Only 4 per cent of all home workers gave child care or family reasons as the reason for working from home.

However, there is some evidence that working from home is a strategy that some women adopt for combining work and family commitments (ABS 2001i). For example, of home based workers:

- 49 per cent were women (compared to 44 per cent in the workforce at large).
- Of women who worked mainly from home, 45 per cent had children under the age of 15 – substantially higher than the 30 per cent of employed women who had children under the age of 15.
- Women with children under the age of 15 were twice as likely than those with no such children to work from home. Of women with children under 15, 12.8 per cent worked mainly from home compared with 6.6 per cent of those without children of this age.

**How time stressed are parents?**

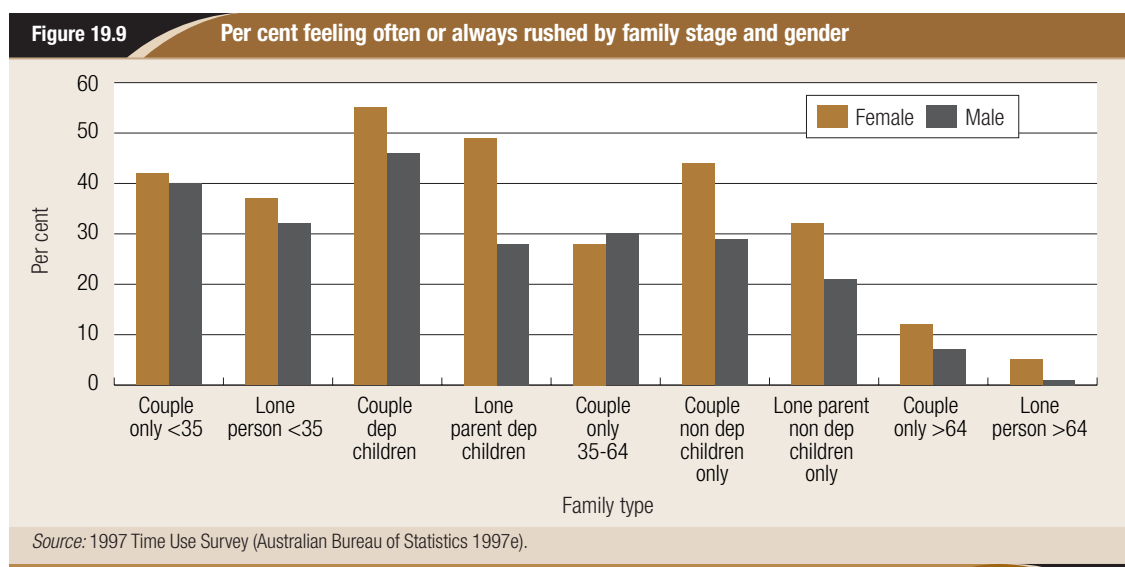
Women report more time stress than do men. Of women, 39 per cent report being often or always rushed compared with 32 per cent of men. However, the level of time stress among both women and men depends very much on their stage in the family-life cycle (Figure 19.9).

Gender differences in time stress are particularly pronounced among families with children (Figure 19.9). In the 1997 Time Use Survey, mothers with dependent children reported very high degrees of time stress. Of partnered women with dependent children, 55 per cent said they were often or always rushed. This percentage was higher than for men or women at any other life stage (Figure 19.9).

**Are lone parents more time stressed than couple parents?**

Lone mothers of dependent children report slightly lower levels of time stress than partnered mothers – 49 per cent were often or always rushed. Partnered mothers with non dependent children displayed the next highest levels of stress.

The fact that partnered parents reported higher levels of time stress than lone parents is noteworthy. It might be expected that lone parents would be more stretched for time since one parent is required to take on the tasks that are shared by two parents in couple families. The higher level of time stress among partnered parents probably stems from a number of sources. One source of the greater time stress among parents in couple families is the higher level of workforce participation by those in couple families. Of parents in couple families with dependent children, 38 per cent cited balancing work and family commitments as a key source of their time stress. This compares with 30 per cent of those in lone parent families who identified work-family balance as the source of their stress.



Other reasons for the different degrees of time stress of lone parent and partnered parents may reflect the additional time demands that flow from having a partner. These include finding time to spend with one's partner, the additional work generated by a partner, maintaining larger family networks and the fact that couple families have more children on average than lone parent families.

### *Is time stress due to employment?*

The main reasons given for time stress relate to work and family demands. More than half (52 per cent) of those who reported high levels of time stress identified work-family balance as a key source of time stress. Thirty per cent cited work demands as the source of time stress while a quarter pointed to family demands as a key factor.

As indicated earlier, mothers with dependent children are especially likely to report being highly time stressed. Part of the reason for this is the pressure of combining work with family commitments. Figure 19.10 shows that two thirds of partnered women who worked full time and had dependent children were highly time stressed. Working part time did not seem to reduce substantially the levels of time stress since 61 per cent of partnered women who worked part time and had dependent children were time stressed. Those not in the labour force reported much lower levels of time stress than those in paid work, but nevertheless, 43 per cent of these mothers still reported high levels of time stress. It is notable in Figure 19.10 that partnered fathers of dependent children reported substantially less time stress than the mothers – even when labour force participation was similar. Of the full time employed parents, 14 per cent more mothers than fathers were highly time stressed; among the part time employed, 33 per cent more mothers were time stressed, and among the not employed 16 per cent more mothers were time stressed.

Time stressed women were considerably more likely to attribute being rushed to the demands of their family (31 per cent) than to the demands of work (14 per cent). Time stressed men, on the other hand, were much more likely to cite the demands of work (31 per cent) than their family demands as the source of time stress (14 per cent) (Table 19.9).

### **How friendly are workplaces to family needs?**

#### *What access do working parents have to family friendly work practices?*

In an attempt to enable both men and women to achieve a better balance between work and family roles, there have been attempts to encourage family friendly workplaces. The annual Work and Family Awards are one example of this but other examples include some industrial reforms that enable family

friendly work practices. At the same time, other industrial changes have the potential to make it more difficult for families to combine work and family commitments. In some cases, workplace deregulation may lead to requirements for people to work hours that are incompatible with family needs.

Gray and Tudball (2002) use information from the 1995 AWIRS survey of 1896 workplaces to explore how many employees (19,155 employees participated in the survey) have access to four family friendly work arrangements. These arrangements were:

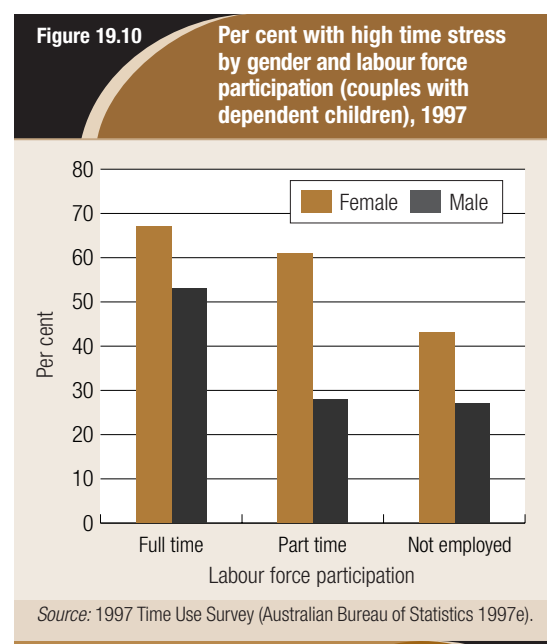
- Control over start and finish times (hours flexibility).
- Access to a telephone for family reasons.
- Availability of permanent part time employment; and
- Type of leave used for the care of a sick family member.

The availability of these arrangements are reported in Table 19.10.

**Table 19.9** Reasons for time stress by gender

	Female %	Male %
Trying to balance work and family	53	52
Pressure from work/study	23	39
Demands of family	31	14
Take on too much/not good at time management	10	12
Too much to do/too many demands	29	25
<i>N</i>	1398	1041

*Source:* 1997 Time Use Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997e).  
*Note:* Since people could cite more than one reason, per cent can total more than 100 per cent



The Work Arrangements Survey in 2001 (ABS 2001j) explored the working arrangements of employed men and women and compared the arrangements of parents with children under the age of 12 with those of other workers. As far as fathers were concerned, work arrangements were very similar regardless of whether they had younger children. However, mothers with younger children had quite different work arrangements than fathers with young children, and to many women who did not have young children. In particular, the survey found that compared to fathers of young children, mothers with young children:

- Had less access to rostered days off (90 per cent compared with 75 per cent had no access).
- Were more likely to have fixed start and finish times<sup>3</sup> (68 per cent compared with 59 per cent).
- Could not choose when leave was taken (21 per cent compared with 13 per cent had no choice).
- Did not have leave entitlements associated with the job (39 per cent compared with 19 per cent had no leave entitlements).

The main reason why employed mothers with younger children lack access to certain work arrangements that could make it easier to balance work and family responsibilities, is the much higher rate of casual work among mothers of young children. While casual and part time work may relieve mothers of some time pressures, these jobs also are more likely to lack a number of family friendly work arrangements.

**Is access to family friendly arrangements a matter of where you work?**

In considering access to family friendly work arrangements, an important issue is whether access to these arrangements depends mainly on *where* a person works, or whether it depends on the *type* of work the employee performs. Gray and Tudball

(2002) argue, on the basis of economic theory, that employers will offer family friendly arrangements depending on the value of the employee to the workplace. They argue that family friendly arrangements will be available to those employees that employers most want to keep or attract.

There is evidence that many workplaces are more family friendly for some employees than for others. That is, certain types of employees are given access to family friendly arrangements while others are denied these options.

Figure 19.11 demonstrates very considerable variation *within* workplaces in the access to certain family friendly work practices. For example, Figure 19.11 (a) shows that, in only about 6 per cent of workplaces, did 100 per cent of employees have access to flexible start and finish times at work (value of 1 on bottom axis). In 6 per cent of workplaces only 20 per cent of employees had access to flexible start and beginning times (bottom axis value of 0.2).

There was much more general access to a telephone for family purposes. Sixteen per cent of workplaces made a telephone available to all workers and a further 26 per cent made a phone available to 90 per cent of employees.

There was very considerable variation within workplaces in access to particular types of leave to help look after a sick family member (Figure 19.11 (d)).

**Who can access family friendly work arrangements?**

The analysis of Gray and Tudball highlights that the following characteristics of employees are important in determining access to family friendly work practices.

The most important factor affecting whether or not an employee had flexible start and finish times for work was their occupation. Managers and administrators, followed by professionals, had much more control than others over start and finish times. Blue collar workers, especially plant and machinery operators, drivers, tradespeople and labourers had the least flexibility in when they started and finished work. Women did not have better access than men and those with younger children had no greater access to flexible times than those with older children or no children at all. Part time employees had less access to flexible times. As the proportion of female workers in a workplace increased, flexible starting and finish times became less common.

Similar factors affected whether or not employees had access to a telephone for family matters. White collar workers, especially managers and professionals had better access in their workplace to phones than did blue collar employees. Similarly, those with higher education and those with older

	% of employees	N
Control over start and finish times	52.0	13,315
Access to a telephone for family reasons	74.8	9,134
Availability of permanent part time work	42.5	8,697
Type of leave usually used to care for sick family member		
Paid family leave	17.7	13,384
Holiday leave	44.4	13,384
Own sick leave	43.7	13,384
Make up time later	15.9	13,384
Leave without pay	33.2	13,384
Other	7.2	13,384
Not able to take any time off	3.8	13,384

*Source:* Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (Gray and Tudball, 2002).

dependent children had better access to telephones for family purposes. Women had similar access to men but part time employees had less access than full time workers.

On the other hand, professionals, paraprofessionals, clerical and tradespersons had relatively poor access to part time work – especially compared to salespeople, plant and machinery operators, drivers, labourers and managers. Women had greater access than men to part time work but the age of children made no difference to whether an employee had access to part time work

Taken overall, the evidence from the Gray and Tudball analysis of the AWIRS95 survey shows that the type of job that a person holds is much more important than where a person works in determining their access to family friendly work arrangements. With the exception of part time work, gender made no difference to this access and the age of children made virtually no difference. It appears that the *need* for family friendly workplace arrangements is less important in determining access to family friendly work practices than is the *level and type of work* a person performs. This pattern is consistent with the argument that these practices will be offered by employers to attract and

**Table 19.11 Family friendliness of workplaces**

	Male %	Female %	All %
Males taking family leave NOT seen as less committed	62.9	77.2	69.3
Employees taking family leave NOT seen as less committed	62.9	77.2	69.3
Part time employees NOT seen as less committed	58.0	67.6	62.8
<b>In current job can use:</b>			
Paid maternity leave	-	49.5	-
Unpaid maternity	-	76.3	-
Parental leave	61.8	69.0	65.2
Special leave for caring for family members in current job	73.2	77.2	75.1
Permanent part time work	57.0	80.1	68.4
Home based work	29.1	26.4	27.8
Flexible start and finish times	19.5	26.1	22.5

*Source: HILDA, 2001 (FaCS 2002a).*

keep what they see to be the more difficult or expensive to attract and replace employees.

Even where workplaces have arrangements that could help workers manage their family commitments, informal pressures can discourage workers from taking advantage of these arrangements. In

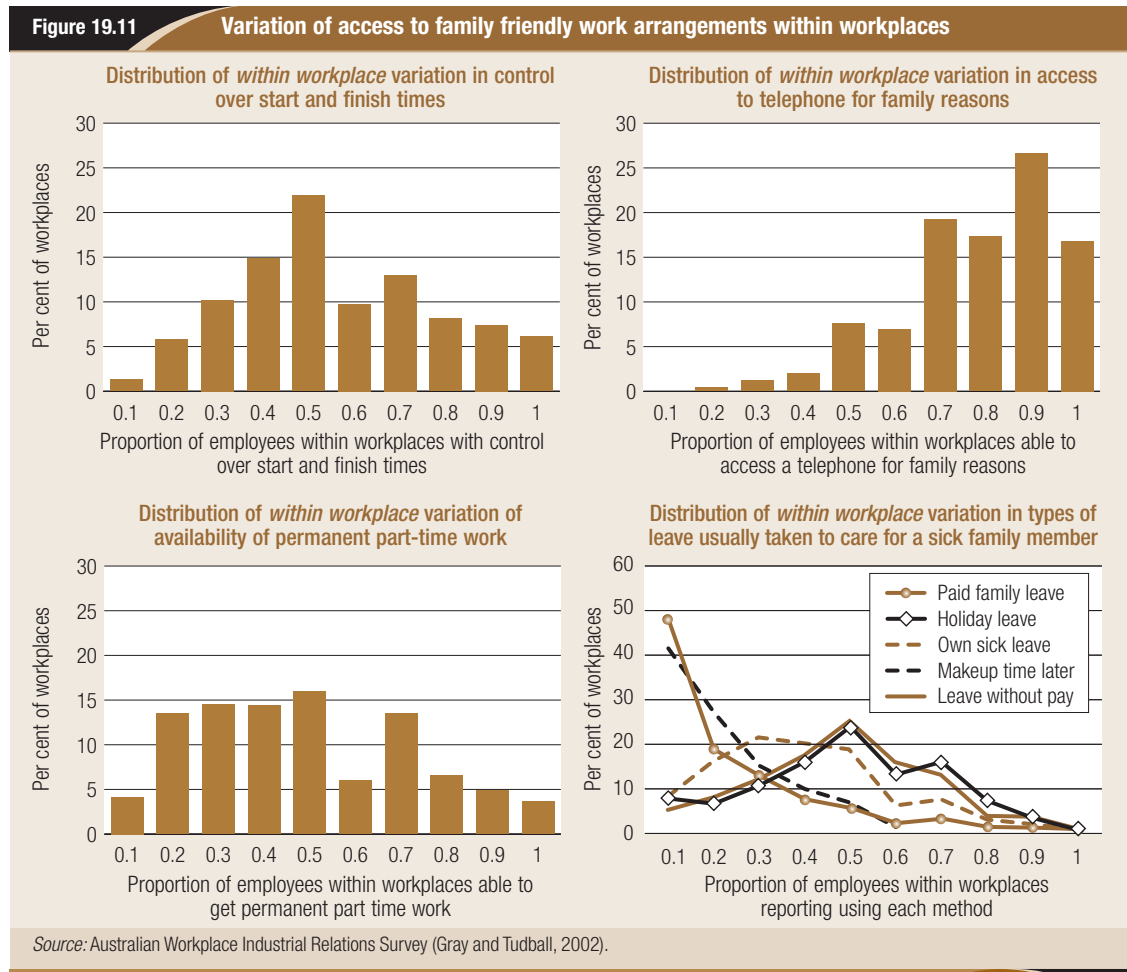


Table 19.12 Family friendly workplace arrangements by occupational group of employed people, 2001

	Managers %	Professional %	Ass professionals %	Trades %	Adv clerical and sales %	Intermediate clerical/sales %	Prodn & transport %	Elem clerical & sales %	Labouring %
Males taking family leave NOT seen as less committed	67.7	73.9	67.7	66.1	72.3	72.3	64.1	74.1	68.2
Employees taking family leave NOT seen as less committed	64.1	67.3	65.1	64.6	69.0	68.5	65.2	66.5	65.4
Part time employees NOT seen as less committed	62.7	62.5	64.7	58.7	63.4	65.4	61.4	67.9	63.1
<b>In current job can use:</b>									
Paid maternity leave (women only)	60.2	64.0	52.0	30.2	41.1	45.8	37.5	30.4	29.4***
Unpaid maternity (women only)	86.4	86.8	79.2	69.8	71.4	74.2	51.3	70.7	54.3***
Parental leave	69.1	75.9	69.6	56.5	71.2	70.0	56.3	52.6	45.7***
Special leave for caring for family members in current job	77.9	83.5	78.7	67.3	80.6	77.8	69.3	68.7	62.4***
Permanent part time work	58.1	78.9	66.9	47.3	76.2	76.6	56.1	76.1	64.3***
Home based work	52.4	33.7	35.6	17.0	42.7	22.6	12.0	9.3	16.9***
Any usual working hours at home	63.5	45.5	32.5	21.5	35.3	16.0	10.2	7.0	10.5**
Flexible start and finish times	76.3	58.5	67.5	54.9	75.9	60.3	49.7	51.8	52.7**

Source: HILDA, 2001 (FaCS 2002a).  
 Note: Differences between occupational groups are statistically significant at .01 level (\*\*\*) or .001 level(\*\*\*).

some workplaces, the use of family leave or accepting part time work can be seen as signs of insufficient commitment to the workplace. However, the HILDA survey showed that in 2001 this was not the typical situation. Almost 70 per cent of employed respondents felt that taking family leave was *not* regarded in their workplace as a sign of lower work commitment. This, of course, means that there are up to 30 per cent that felt there may be some ambivalence about people who take family leave. Even with part time work, the majority (63 per cent) did not feel that this was interpreted in the workplace as indicating a lower level of work commitment.

Perhaps surprisingly, female employees were more likely than men to feel that family leave and part time work was not viewed in their workplace as a sign of lower work commitment (Table 19.11).

The research by Gray and Tudball reported above, indicated that family friendly work arrangements were unevenly available within workplaces. This research showed that the type of work people did was more important in terms of accessing these arrangements than the particular workplace in which they lived. The HILDA survey reinforces this picture by showing that access to family friendly work arrangements varies considerably according to the type of occupation in which a person works (Table 19.12).

While those in different occupations held similar perceptions of the way in which the taking of family leave and part time work was regarded in their workplace, there were substantial occupational differences in the access to family friendly work arrangements. In general, those from white collar occupations – especially the higher status jobs, had better access to family friendly work arrangements than those in blue collar jobs. For example:

- Over 60 per cent of women in management and professional occupations had access to paid maternity leave compared to around a third of those in the lower occupations (production and transport, elementary clerical and sales, labouring).
- Women in managerial, professional and associate professional occupational categories had a relatively high access to unpaid maternity leave (80 per cent or higher) while only about half of those in the lower level blue collar jobs could get unpaid maternity leave.
- Parental leave was more available to those in white collar occupations (around 70 per cent or higher) than in blue collar jobs (around 50 per cent).
- Home based work was more available to workers in managerial, professional, associate professional and advanced clerical and sales occupations.

- In general, workers in white collar occupations had greater flexibility than blue collar workers regarding the times when they commenced work or when they went home (Table 19.12).
- 60 per cent of full time employed women had access to paid maternity leave compared to just 36 per cent of part time employed women.
- 84 per cent of full time employed women could access unpaid maternity leave compared to 69 per cent of part time employed women.
- Parental leave was available to 70 per cent of full time workers but only 56 per cent of part time workers.
- Special family leave was available to 79 per cent of full timers and 68 per cent of part timers.
- Full time workers were more likely than part time workers to routinely spend some of their working week working from home (Table 19.13).

Some family friendly work arrangements were more available to full time workers than part time workers. While part time work is frequently used by mothers as a means of balancing work and family responsibilities, part time work is also less family friendly in some respects. The advantages afforded to full time workers were evident in a variety of work conditions including:

**Table 19.13** Access to family friendly work arrangements of full time and part time workers, 2001

In current job can use	Full time %	Part time %
Paid maternity leave (women only)	59.9	36.4***
Unpaid maternity (women only)	83.7	69.0***
Parental leave	70.2	55.9***
Special leave for caring for family members in current job	78.8	68.4***
Permanent part time work	63.5	79.8***
Home based work	28.5	24.3***
Any usual working hours at home	31.0	22.6***
Flexible start and finish times	59.4	61.4

Source: HILDA, 2001 (FaCS 2002a).

\*\*\* Difference between full time and part time workers is significant at .001 level

### Endnotes

- 1 This figure from the ISSSA survey is considerably higher than the comparable percentage from the HILDA survey in 2001 (62 per cent). This discrepancy is disturbing. ISSAA used a 5 point scale for responses while HILDA used a 7 point scale and this may account for some difference. I am inclined to rely more on the HILDA figure for the simple reason that it is likely to have a better sample than the ISSSA survey due to higher response rates, and much larger sample size.
- 2 The discrepancy between the figure of 60 per cent in the ISSSA survey in 2001 and the 45 per cent figure HILDA survey in 2001 to a very similar question is disturbing. Possible reasons for this discrepancy have been canvassed in a previous endnote. While the level of agreement recorded in the ISSSA survey may need to be treated cautiously, there is no reason to question the trend observed in Table 19.6 since it is based on the same question and comparable sample over time.
- 3 It is debatable whether fixed start and finish times are an advantage or a disadvantage to parents. While fixed times may provide less flexibility they also provide more predictability and assist with organising aspects of families including child care. However, inflexible times may make things very difficult when family matters make it difficult to get to work on time or require a parent to leave work at an irregular time.

### Highlights

- Most fathers (92.4 per cent) who have dependent children in the home are employed as are two thirds of couple mothers with dependent children.
- Couple mothers with dependent children have a higher employment rate than lone mothers with dependent children.
- Lone fathers have a considerably higher employment rate than lone mothers.
- When children are pre-schoolers, employment rates of fathers are at their highest level and those of mothers are at their lowest level.
- Full time employment of mothers with pre-school children is relatively unusual – just 15 per cent of mothers with a pre-school child are employed full time.
- Employment levels, especially part time employment, of couple mothers with pre-schoolers have increased from 37.2 per cent in 1986 to 48.7 per cent in 2002.
- Employment rates of lone mothers have also increased over this period from 20.8 per cent in 1986 to 30 per cent in 2002.

- When a couple or lone mother's youngest child begins school, employment rates increase substantially. For couple mothers they increase from 49 per cent to 67 per cent and for lone mothers from 30 per cent to 49 per cent.
- Since the mid 1980s the employment rate of mothers whose youngest child is aged 5-9 has increased from 58.5 per cent in 1986 to 67.1 per cent in 2002.
- Among lone mothers whose youngest child is aged 5-9, the employment rate over the same period has increased from 41.5 per cent to 49 per cent.
- Most of the increase in employment among lone mothers since the early 1980s has been in part time work with little change in the percentage employed full time.
- In contrast, both part time and full time employment of couple mothers has increased steadily over this same period.
- Among couple mothers and lone mothers and lone fathers there is a consistent and steady increase in workforce participation as children grow older.
- Of employed mothers with children under the age of 18, just over half are happy with their hours of work; a quarter want to work fewer hours and 18 per cent want to work more hours.
- Half the mothers with full time work wanted to reduce their hours to part time work and 42 per cent of employed mothers with less than 15 hours work wanted more work.
- These preferences of mothers to change their work hours in these ways held, regardless of the age of their youngest child.
- Among older men and women (aged 55 and over) the employment levels of men have been steadily declining while those of older women have been steadily increasing since at least 1979.
- In 2002 just 69 per cent of men aged 55-59 were employed (down from 82 per cent in 1979) and 49 per cent of similarly aged women were employed (up from 27.8 per cent in 1979).
- The percentage of older men and women who are employed part time increases steadily as they grow older. Part time employment seems to be a common part of the transition from work to retirement.
- Since 1982 there has been very little change in the percentage of jobless couple families with dependent children. Rather than joblessness growing in couple families, there has been a steady decline in single earner couple families with dependent children and a steady growth in the percentage with two jobs.
- Over the same period there has been a decline in the percentage of lone parent jobless families and an increase in the percentage with a part time job.
- Lone parent families with dependent children have a much higher rate of joblessness than do couple families. The main factor driving any growth in jobless families with dependents has been the growth in the proportion of lone parent families.
- Since 1981 there has been a decline in the percentage of traditional male breadwinner couple families (employed male and not employed female) and a rise in female breadwinner families (employed female and not employed male).
- There is still evidence of the view in much of the community that for women, children should be a more important priority than employment. These views were especially evident among older age groups.
- There was evidence of many parents, especially mothers, finding it difficult to combine their work and family commitments.
- For mothers, part time employment went some way towards reducing the conflicts and producing a better work-family balance. However, many fathers and mothers who worked full time found it difficult to achieve a workable balance.
- About 11 per cent of employed people do some work from home but family reasons are not often the main reason for working from home. Nevertheless, women with children were considerably more likely than those without children to work mainly from home.
- Both mothers and fathers report quite high levels of time stress. At all life stages women reported greater time stress than men and these gender differences were particularly pronounced among parents with children.
- Couple mothers with dependent children reported the highest level of time stress followed by lone mothers with dependent children, followed by couple mothers with non dependent children.
- Many workplaces have practices that can assist parents with their family responsibilities. However, there was evidence that access to these practices depends substantially on the level that parents occupy in a workplace and the type of job they have rather than simply whether or not they have family responsibilities.
- While many mothers choose part time or casual employment as a way of combining their work and family responsibilities, these part time and casual jobs often provide poorer access to family friendly work practices. This means that the benefit of part time work can be at least partly eroded by the poorer conditions in these jobs.