



5 Differences within and between workplaces

This section presents a statistical analysis of the extent to which variation exists in access to family-friendly work practices *within* and *between* workplaces.

Within versus between workplace variation

Differences in access to, and usage of, family-friendly work practices between employees can be separated into the component due to variation between workplaces (termed *between workplace* variation) and the component due to differences between employees working in the same workplace (termed *within workplace* variation).¹⁰ At one extreme, if all employees in the same workplace have equal access to family-friendly work practices, the *within workplace* variation will be zero and all differences between employees will be due to differences between workplaces. At the other extreme, if there is no correlation among employees working in the same workplace, the degree of variation in the *within workplace* and *between workplace* measures will be the same. The degree of variation in access to family-friendly work practices can be summarised using the standard deviation. The larger the standard deviation, the greater the degree of variation.

Table 1 presents an analysis of the variances in access to each of the family-friendly work practices broken down into the *overall*, *between* and *within* workplace components. As an example to the interpretation of Table 1, consider control over start and finish times. The proportion of employees who report having control over start and finish times is 52.0 per cent. The overall standard deviation is 0.500. The breakdown of the variation into the *between* and *within* workplace components reveals that the standard deviation of the variation *between workplace* is 0.230 as compared to 0.445 for *within workplace*. This can be interpreted to mean that the variation in employees having control over their start and finish times is greater within workplaces than between workplaces. In other words, if you were to randomly select two employees working in different workplaces, the chance that they both have control over their start and finish times will be greater than the equivalent chance for two employees working in the same workplace.

Evident also from Table 1 is the finding that a high proportion of employees report being able to access a telephone for family reasons (74.8 per cent). The further breakdown of this finding into *within* and *between* workplace components reveals that the *between* variation is again substantially less than the *within workplace* variation. A much smaller percentage of employees report having access to permanent part-time employment in their current workplace if needed (42.5 per cent). The breakdown into the *within* and *between* workplace variation indicates that the *within workplace* variation is larger than the *between workplace* variation.

Table 1		Variance in family-friendly work practices, overall, within and between workplaces		
		Per cent of employees	Standard Deviation	Number of observations
Control over start and finish times				
Overall		52.0	0.500	13,315
Between workplaces			0.230	
Within workplaces			0.445	
Access to a telephone for family reasons				
Overall		74.8	0.434	9,134
Between workplaces			0.224	
Within workplaces			0.391	
Availability of permanent part-time work				
Overall		42.5	0.494	8,697
Between workplaces			0.300	
Within workplaces			0.412	
Type of leave usually used				
<i>Paid family leave</i>				
Overall		17.7	0.382	13,384
Between workplaces			0.191	
Within workplaces			0.330	
<i>Holiday leave</i>				
Overall		44.4	0.497	13,384
Between workplaces			0.207	
Within workplaces			0.456	
<i>Own sick leave</i>				
Overall		43.7	0.496	13,384
Between workplaces			0.188	
Within workplaces			0.461	
<i>Make-up time later</i>				
Overall		15.9	0.366	13,384
Between workplaces			0.133	
Within workplaces			0.341	
<i>Leave without pay</i>				
Overall		33.2	0.471	13,384
Between workplaces			0.186	
Within workplaces			0.436	
<i>Other</i>				
Overall		7.2	0.258	13,384
Between workplaces			0.104	
Within workplaces			0.252	
<i>Not able to take any time off</i>				
Overall		3.8	0.192	13,384
Between workplaces			0.077	
Within workplaces			0.181	
Notes: Figures exclude workplaces with less than 10 employee interviews. The estimates of the within and between workplace variation is likely to be unreliable for workplaces with less than 10 interviews. Source: AWIRS95.				

Turning to the ways in which employees usually take time off to care for a sick family member, it is apparent that holiday leave and sick leave are the most commonly used form of leave, with 44.4 and 43.7 per cent of employees respectively reporting usually doing this. The next most common means of taking time off is leave without pay (33.2 per cent), with smaller numbers of employees reporting taking paid family leave (17.7 per cent) and taking time off and making it up later (15.9 per cent). A very small proportion of employees reported not being able to take any time off at all. For all types of leave, the variation within workplaces is much larger than the variation between workplaces. This finding is not altogether surprising given that employees will usually have some choice as to how leave for family reasons is taken. Further evidence of this is the finding that employers reported offering an average of 3.8 ways from a list of six possible ways for employees to take leave to care for a sick family member.

Variation within workplaces

This section presents a more detailed analysis of the distribution of the variation in access to family-friendly work practices between employees at the same workplace.

For each workplace a variable is constructed which measures the proportion of employees reporting have access to (or using) each work practice. This provides a summary measure of the uniformity of access within each workplace. For example, if a workplace has 10 employees of whom one employee reports having control over start and finish times, then the proportion of employees in that workplace who report having control over their start and finish times is 0.1 (1 divided by 10). If all 10 employees report having control over their start and finish times the proportion reporting this would be 1. The closer the proportion is to 1, the more universal is the reported availability of the work practice within the workplace.

The estimates of the proportion of employees within each workplace reporting having access to a work practice is likely to be unreliable for workplaces in which only a small number of employees were interviewed. In order to avoid potential biases, workplaces in which fewer than 10 employees were interviewed have been excluded from the analysis. Because the number of employees interviewed in each workplace increased relative to the size of the workplace, the exclusion of workplaces with less than 10 employee interviews resulted in the exclusion of smaller workplaces.¹¹ These estimates are presented in Appendix C.

Graphing provides an overall picture of the distribution within workplaces of access to each of the family-friendly work practices. Figure 1 presents the distribution of the proportion of employees within each workplace reporting having control over start and finish times. The horizontal axis indicates the proportion of employees within each workplace who report having control over start and finish times. Workplaces in which no employee reported having control over start and finish times are excluded so that the proportion ranges from just above zero to one. The vertical axis presents the percentage of workplaces which have that proportion of employees reporting having control over their start and finish times.

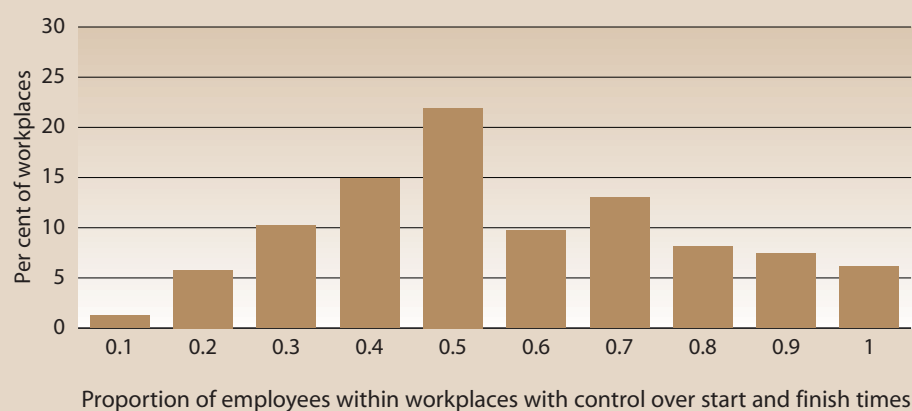
The most striking feature of Figure 1 is the *within workplace* variation in control over start and finish times. In only 35 per cent of workplaces do 70 per cent

(a proportion of 0.7) or more of employees report having control over start and finish times, and in only 6 per cent of workplaces do 90 per cent or more of employees report this.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of *within workplace* variation in access to a telephone for family reasons. This distribution is skewed much more to the right indicating that a higher proportion of employees are able to access a telephone for family reasons than that for control over start and finish times. However, there are a substantial numbers of workplaces in which less than 70 per cent of employees report having access to a telephone for family reasons.

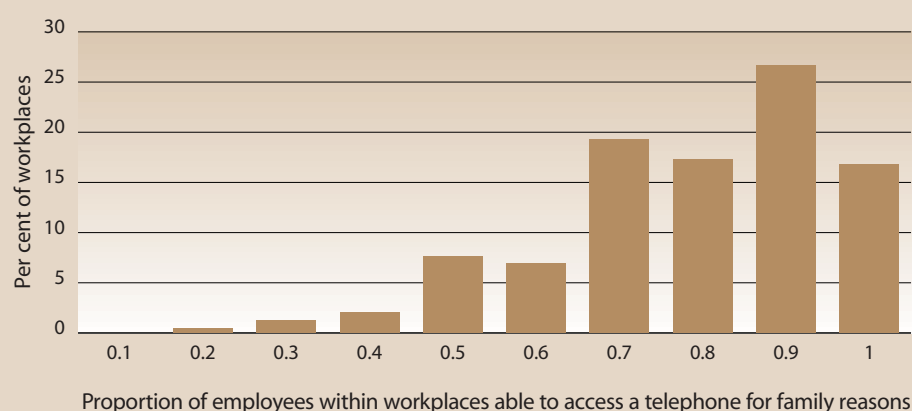
The distribution of *within workplace* variation in the availability of permanent part-time work is skewed to the left, with the bulk of the distribution being in the range 0.2 to 0.5 (Figure 3). In only a few workplaces did a high proportion of employees report being able to access permanent part-time employment if needed.

Figure 1 Distribution of *within workplace* variation in control over start and finish times



Source: AWIRS95.

Figure 2 Distribution of *within workplace* variation in access to telephone for family reasons



Source: AWIRS95.

The distribution within workplaces of the proportion of employees reporting using each type of leave for the care of a sick family member is presented in Figure 4. When interpreting this figure it is important to remember that more than one type of leave could be nominated as usually being used.¹² The distribution of *within workplace* variation in use of paid family leave is heavily skewed to the left (that is, the majority of workplaces had a low proportion of employees usually using paid family leave).

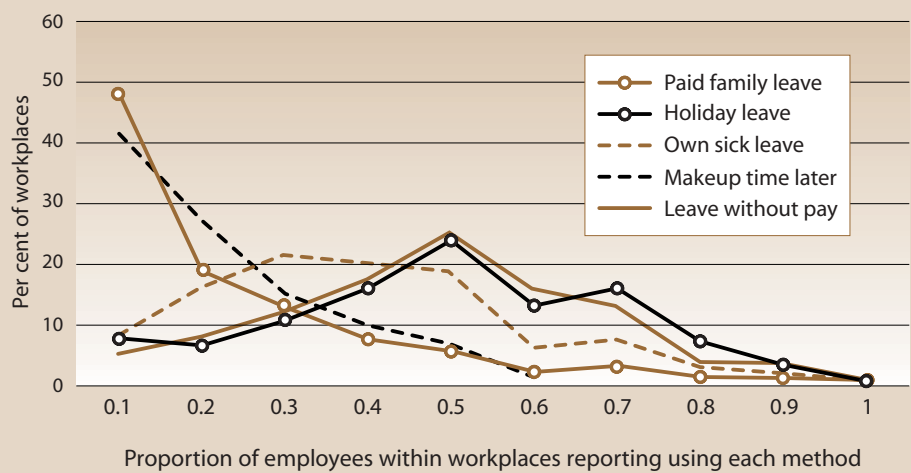
Among workplaces in which at least some employees reported usually using paid family leave to care for a sick family member, just under 50 per cent of those workplaces had less than 10 per cent of employees who usually used this form of leave. In only a very small proportion of workplaces did all employees report using paid family leave.

Figure 3 Distribution of *within workplace* variation of availability of permanent part-time work



Source: AWIRS95.

Figure 4 Distribution of *within workplace* variation in types of leave usually taken to care for a sick family member



Source: AWIRS95.

The distribution of being able to take time off and make it up later is most similar to paid family leave, with less than 70 per cent of employees in any workforce reporting usually using this form of leave. A much higher percentage of employees reported using their own sick leave or holiday leave to care for an ill family member.

In summary, the analysis of *within* and *between* workplace variations in access to a range of work practices has clearly demonstrated that there is a great deal of variation both between workplaces and among employees working for the same workplace. However, the real surprise is that, for every work practice analysed, the *within workplace* variation is greater than the variation between workplaces.