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# Introduction

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*Australian Social Trends* draws on a wide range of data, sourced both from ABS and other agencies, to present a picture of Australian society. This publication aims to inform decision-making, research and discussion on social conditions in Australia. It covers social issues of current and ongoing concern, population groups of interest, and changes in these over time.

The selection of articles aims to address current and perennial social concerns and to provide answers to key social questions. Some topics are revisited as new data become available. The aim of this approach is for each report to remain responsive to contemporary concerns, while accumulating a more comprehensive picture of Australian social conditions over time. For this reason, articles often include cross references to other relevant articles in the current issue, and in previous issues. All articles published since 1994 are available on the ABS web site: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au).

*Australian Social Trends* is structured according to the ABS Wellbeing Framework which identifies areas of social concern, population groups and transactions among people and entities within their social environments (see *Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics, 2001* – ABS cat. no. 4160.0). The broad areas of social concern are:

- population
- family and community
- health
- education and training
- work
- economic resources
- housing
- crime and justice
- culture and leisure
- other areas - including environment, religion, and transport and communication.

From March 2009, *Australian Social Trends* will be issued on a quarterly basis after being issued annually from 1994 to 2008. In the course of a year, articles will cover a wide range of the areas of social concern.

The articles focus strongly on people and social concerns. Each article aims to tell a story, providing a sense of the social and historical context in which a particular topic is embedded, moving from the general to the specific, and using statistics to bring light to the issue. Articles aim to balance 'what' analysis (relating the relevant statistical facts surrounding the issue, e.g. number, characteristics, change over time, sex, age and other differences), with 'why' analysis (providing context and explanation by highlighting relevant social changes and events and the chronologies of these). For example, an article on work may examine current labour force participation, how the labour market has changed over time, how different groups of people are affected by social and economic conditions, and how these factors may be linked to observed employment trends.





# Expanding links with China and India

Australia has substantially increased its involvement with the Asian region over the last quarter of a century. During this time the number of Australians born in Asian countries has increased, contributing to the expansion of economic and cultural links with the region.

Of all Asian countries, China and India stand out as the world's fastest growing major economies over the last decade. In contrast to the economic contractions in the United States, Euro area and Japan, the International Monetary Fund forecasts China and India to continue with positive growth in 2009 and 2010.<sup>1</sup>

**Over the last two decades, the number of Chinese born and Indian born Australians has increased six-fold and four-fold respectively.**

With each having more than one billion people, China and India together make up 62% of the Asian population and 38% of the world's population.<sup>2</sup> The emergence of these two large rapidly developing countries not only provides Australia with significant export markets, but also a source of investment, human capital and cultural wealth. This article charts the increase in Australia's Chinese and Indian populations, as well as the growing links from travel and trade.

## Australia's Chinese and Indian born populations

Over the past two decades, skilled migration from China and India has increased markedly, driving rapid growth of these populations (see *Australian Social Trends 2007*, 'Migration'). In 2008, there were over half a million

### Data sources and definitions

*Estimated Resident Population (ERP)* is the official measure of the population. It's based on the concept of residence and includes all people, regardless of nationality or citizenship, who usually live in Australia. For the purposes of this article, *Chinese born Australians* and *Indian born Australians* include people who were resident in Australia and counted in the ERP, regardless of their citizenship or visa type. ERP by country of birth is sourced from *Migration, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 3412.0).

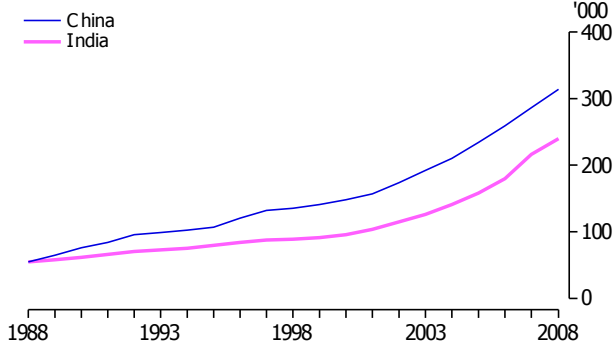
*Permanent additions* to the population are people arriving from overseas who intend (and are eligible) to settle permanently in Australia plus people who gain permanent residency while here on temporary visas. Data on permanent additions comes from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

*China*, as defined in this article, excludes the Special Administrative Regions (SARs) of Hong Kong and Macau, as well as Taiwan province. For more information see the *Standard Australian Classification of Countries* (ABS cat. no. 1269.0).

Australian residents who were born in China or India. The number of Chinese born Australians increased nearly six-fold in two decades to be over 310,000 in 2008, while those from India increased four-fold to almost 240,000. Together, these populations accounted for 10% of all overseas born people in 2008, up from 3% in 1988. The rapid increase from migration also implies that a relatively high proportion of these two populations arrived recently, with around two-fifths of all Chinese and Indian born Australians arriving in the five years before the 2006 Census.

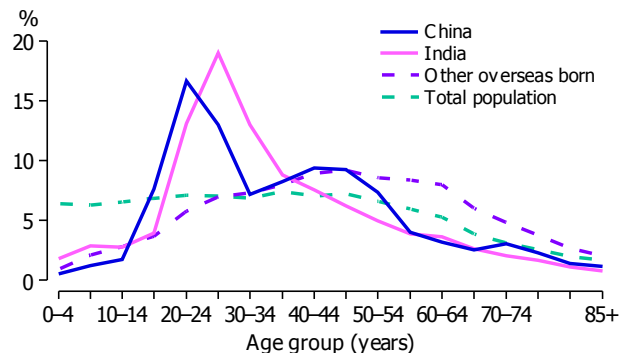
### Chinese and Indian born Australians, estimated resident populations

NUMBER



Source: *Migration, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 3412.0)

### AGE DISTRIBUTION, 2008



## ...age and sex

Chinese and Indian born Australians were relatively young, reflecting the large number of overseas students and the recent arrivals through the Skilled Migration Program (applicants to this program must be over 18 and under 45 years old). In 2008, 45% of Chinese and 54% of Indian born Australians were aged 20–39 years. In contrast, only 28% of other Australians were in this age group.

The sex ratios of the Chinese and Indian born populations differed markedly, with more women among Chinese Australians (85 men per 100 women), and more men from India (137 men per 100 women). The Indian sex ratio was highest in the 20–24 years group where there were 246 men for every 100 women in 2008. This is likely to reflect a cultural norm within Indian society which tends to place greater value on the education of males.<sup>3</sup>

## ...most live in Sydney and Melbourne

According to the 2006 Census, over 90% of both Chinese and Indian born residents lived in capital cities, compared with 64% of the total

### Highest non-school qualification, people aged 25-64 by country of birth – 2006(a)

|   | China<br>% | India<br>% | Other<br>% | All<br>Australians<br>% |
|---|------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Level(b)</b>                           |            |            |            |                         |
| Postgraduate Degree                       | 15.7       | 25.7       | 3.6        | 3.9                     |
| Graduate Diploma/<br>Graduate Certificate | 1.6        | 2.5        | 2.2        | 2.2                     |
| Bachelor Degree                           | 24.6       | 33.7       | 15.9       | 16.2                    |
| Advanced<br>Diploma/Diploma               | 12.4       | 8.5        | 9.5        | 9.5                     |
| Certificate                               | 6.2        | 8.4        | 21.6       | 21.3                    |
| No qualification                          | 37.0       | 17.7       | 45.6       | 45.2                    |
| <b>Field</b>                              |            |            |            |                         |
| Information Technology                    | 10.7       | 14.1       | 3.2        | 3.5                     |
| Engineering and<br>Related Technologies   | 17.7       | 20.3       | 20.3       | 20.3                    |
| Management and<br>Commerce                | 32.1       | 25.9       | 20.6       | 20.8                    |
| Other(c)                                  | 39.5       | 39.6       | 55.9       | 55.4                    |
| Total(d)                                  | 100.0      | 100.0      | 100.0      | 100.0                   |

(a) Percentages exclude records where level/field were not stated.

(b) Components do not add to 100%, as some qualifications were not adequately defined.

(c) Includes: Natural and Physical Sciences; Architecture and Building; Agriculture; Environmental and Related Studies; Health; Education; Society and Culture; Creative Arts; and Food, Hospitality and Personal Services.

(d) Of all those people with a non-school qualification.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

population. Sydney was home to over half (53%) of the Chinese population and over one-third (36%) of the Indian population. Melbourne had another third of the Indian population (34%), and just over one-quarter of the Chinese born population (26%). Together, the other Australian capitals had 21% of the Indian and 15% of the Chinese populations.

## ...tend to be highly educated

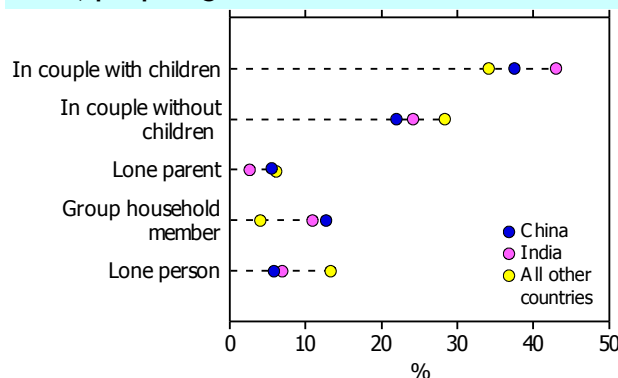
Indian born Australians were almost three times as likely as other Australians to have a Bachelor degree or above, while the Chinese born were almost twice as likely. Among Indian born Australians aged 25–64 years, 34% had a Bachelor degree, and a further 26% had a postgraduate qualification as their highest qualification. Of the Chinese born, 25% had a Bachelor degree as their highest qualification and 16% had a postgraduate level qualification. In contrast, for all other Australians aged 25–64 years, 16% had a Bachelor degree, while less than 4% had postgraduate qualifications.

Both Chinese and Indian born graduates were more likely to be qualified in the field of management and commerce than other disciplines (32% and 26% respectively). This was a significantly higher proportion than other Australians (21%). The second most popular field of qualification for both Chinese and Indian Australians was engineering and related technologies (18% and 20% respectively) which was similar to that of other Australians (20%). The third most popular field was information technology (11% of Chinese and 14% of Indian graduates), much higher than the 3% for other Australians.

## ...mostly in couple families

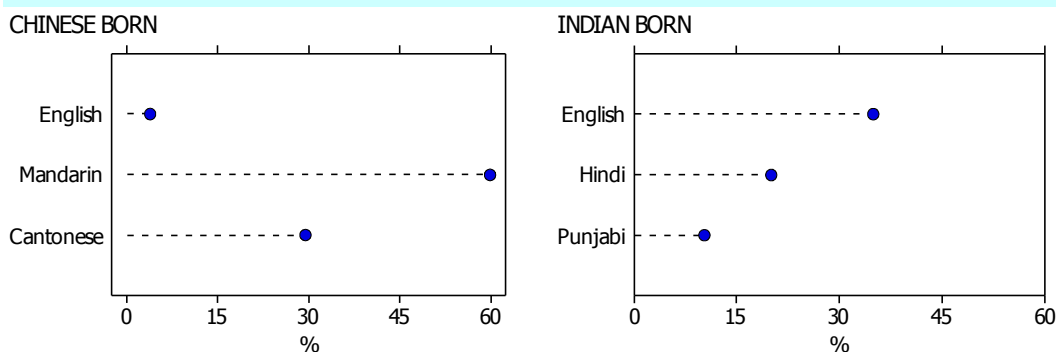
Indian born adults were more likely to be part of a couple family with children (43%) than both Chinese born adults (38%) and other Australians (34%). This is consistent with the age profile of the Chinese and Indian born populations, being significantly concentrated in

### Selected living arrangements by country of birth, people aged 18 or over – 2006



Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

## Selected main language spoken at home, Chinese and Indian born Australians – 2006



Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

the 20–39 years age group. Similarly, being in a couple without children was slightly less common among Chinese (22%) and Indian born Australians (24%) than other Australians (28%).

In eight out of ten couple relationships where at least one partner was Chinese born, the other partner was also someone who was Chinese born or had Chinese ancestry. Similarly, of all Indian born people in couple relationships, in seven out of ten cases the other partner was either Indian born or had Indian ancestry.

Group house living was higher among the Chinese (13%) and Indian born populations (11%) than other Australians (4%). Among Chinese and Indian students (who make up 28% and 18% of the respective populations), group house living was a very common living arrangement with 34% of Chinese students and 35% of Indian students living in a group house.

### ...languages spoken

People's proficiency in English can affect their ability to access services and education, find employment and participate in Australian society. However, continuing to use one's home language can also be important for cultural connections and identity.

In 2006, 60% of the Chinese born population spoke Mandarin at home while 29% spoke Cantonese and 4% spoke English. Nine out of ten Australian born children of Chinese born parent(s) also spoke a Chinese language at home. Of the Chinese born who usually spoke a language other than English, around two-thirds (65%) considered themselves able to speak English well or very well.

Among the Indian born, more spoke English at home (35%) than any other language, with the next most common languages being Hindi (20%), Punjabi (10%) and Tamil (7%). Among the Indian born who usually spoke a language other than English at home, 95% thought they spoke English well or very well.

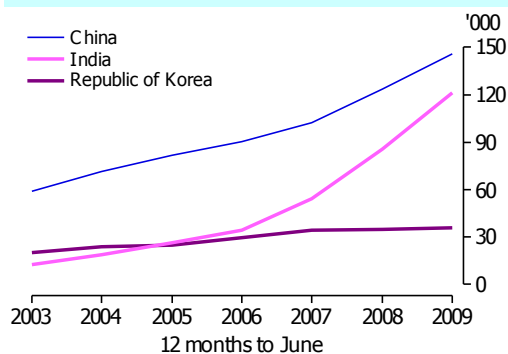
### Overseas students

The growth of transnational education over recent decades has provided Australia with the opportunity to develop a market for international students, offering courses and qualifications that are accredited globally. The provision of education services is a major export sector for Australia, worth an estimated \$13.7 billion in 2007–08. As the number one and two source countries for overseas students, China and India together accounted for \$5.1 billion of these exports.

Although overseas students are temporary migrants (they do not hold a permanent residency visa), while in Australia, they are generally counted as part of the estimated resident population. At June 2008, there were 66,000 Chinese and 63,000 Indian students temporarily in Australia.<sup>4</sup>

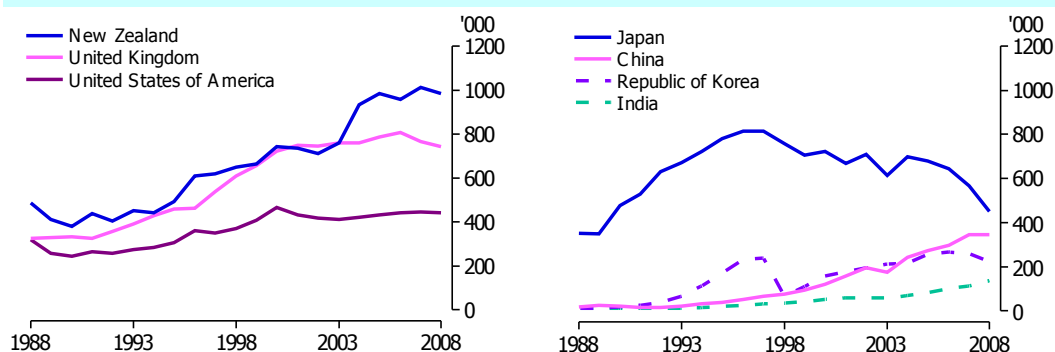
As students may be enrolled in more than one course, and many study English language courses concurrently, the number of enrolments is well in excess of the number of students. Together, students from China and India accounted for 267,000 enrolments (or two-fifths of international student enrolments) in the year to June 2009.

### Enrolments of international students, top three contributor countries, 2003-2009



Source: [Australian Education International](#), International student data

## Short-term visitor arrivals, leading six countries and India – 1988 to 2008



Source: *Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 3401.0)

In addition to being Australia's largest markets for international students, they have also grown very fast and account for most of the growth in overall student numbers.

In the six years to June 2009, the annual number of enrolments by Chinese students in Australian institutions increased by an average of 16% per year to be 146,000 in the year to June 2009. Over the same time, the number of enrolments by Indian students increased by 46% per year, on average, to 121,000 in 2009.

Higher education was the sector with the largest share of student enrolments from China (42% in the year to June 2009) with the number of higher education enrolments almost trebling in the six years to 2009. While making up a smaller share (22% in 2009), Vocational Education and Training (VET) enrolments among Chinese students grew even more rapidly (showing a four-fold increase in the six years to 2009), with 'Management and commerce' and 'Food, hospitality and personal services' popular fields of education. English language courses are often studied concurrently with other qualifications and nearly one quarter of enrolments by Chinese students were in English language courses.

Among Indian students, VET made up the greatest share of enrolments (62% in the 12 months to June 2009). The number of VET enrolments by Indian students has grown very rapidly from 1,600 in 2003 to 75,000 in 2009. Higher education made up 24% of the enrolments by Indian students, growing three-fold between 2003 and 2009.

### ...as a pathway to residency

Studying in Australia can be a step on the pathway to permanent residency. Of the 44,000 Chinese and Indian born people who committed to permanent settlement in 2007–08, more than a third (36%) had applied from within Australia and most were students.

### International visitors

Over the last decade international travel has boomed as airline travel has become more affordable for many people around the world. The desire to travel may have also been fuelled by development of tourist markets and larger expatriate populations wanting to visit their homelands.

### ...short term visits to Australia

In 2008, there were 343,000 short term visitor arrivals (i.e. people planning to stay less than 12 months) by people from China, making it the fifth largest market for overseas visitors (after New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Japan and the United States). India was the eleventh largest source country with 138,000 arrivals in 2008. Short-term arrivals from both China and India have grown exceptionally quickly since 1988 (15% and 13% per year respectively), with only South Korea having similarly rapid growth over the period (16%).

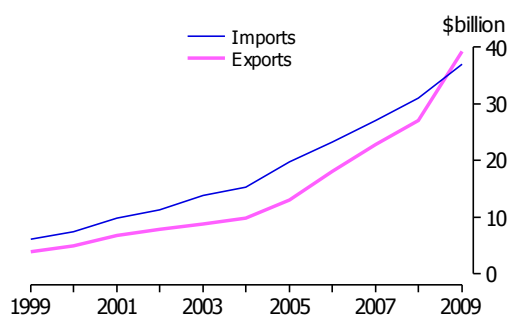
Reflecting the large number of overseas students from China and India, short-term visitors from these countries were more likely to say their reason for travel was for education in 2008 (17% for China and 14% for India) when compared with people from all other countries (5%). However, the most popular reason for visiting was for a holiday (50% for China and 26% for India) with business being relatively more important among Indian (30%) than Chinese (17%) visitors.

### ...short term visits to China and India

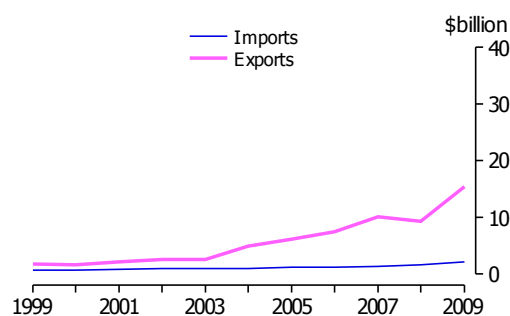
China and India (along with Vietnam) have been the fastest growing destinations for Australians heading overseas in recent decades. In 2008, over a quarter of a million Australian residents visited China. This number has grown by an average of 14% per year since 1988. India had around half the number of Australian visitors that China had in 2008, with 127,000 Australian visitors, up by an average of 10% per

## Australian merchandise trade with China and India, 1998-99 to 2008-09(a)

### CHINA



### INDIA



(a) 12 months to June.

Source: *International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 5368.0)

year from 1988. Many of the Australian residents visiting China and India were expatriates of these countries, with over one-third (37%) of those travelling to China being Chinese born, and nearly half (47%) of those travelling to India born there. A higher proportion of visitors to China were travelling for business (30%) compared with India (16%). Having a holiday or visiting friends/relatives was the main reason for visiting both countries (64% China, 82% India).

## International trade

### ...in merchandise

Strong demand in China (and to a lesser extent India) for raw materials throughout the 2000s has driven Australia's resources boom and the sharp increase in the terms of trade (see *Australian System of National Accounts 2007-08*, (cat. no. 5204.0, p15). The value of goods traded between Australia and China and India grew more strongly over the last decade than for any of Australia's other major trading partners. In the 12 months to June 2009, the total value of merchandise traded between Australia and China (imports + exports) was \$76 billion. This level has grown by an average of 22% per year in the ten years to 2009, making China Australia's largest trading partner (ahead of Japan and the United States). India was Australia's seventh largest trading partner with \$18 billion of merchandise traded in 2008-09, up by an average of 21% per year on 1998-99.

Iron ore was the most important commodity that Australia supplied to China, making up 56% of the value of exports in 2008-09. Coal and gold were the main exports to India, comprising 43% and 37% respectively of the value of exports to India in 2008-09.

The major imports from China comprised appliances and other electrical/electronic equipment (39%), clothing and footwear (14%), toys, games and sporting equipment (6%), and furniture (5%).

### ...in services

Australia's success in exporting education services has been largely responsible for a six-fold increase in the value of services exported to both China and India in the eight years to 2007-08. In 2007-08, educational services made up 70% of the total \$4.4 billion in services exported to China and 79% of the \$2.5 billion worth of services exported to India.

Of services imported to Australia from China and India, travel was the most significant. In 2007-08, travel by Australians made up 58% of the \$1.3 billion in services imported from China and 73% of the \$0.5 billion in services imported from India. Most of the balance of services imported from India were for computer services (\$73 million) and communication services (\$13 million).

### Looking ahead

Australia's economic and cultural links with China and India have grown steadily in recent years, benefiting from the rapid development in these countries. These ties should continue, with China and India forecast to continue with relatively strong economic growth and to have an ongoing demand for Australian mineral resources. In addition, the number of visits between the countries is set to increase, with the Tourism Forecasting Committee expecting that China and India could contribute almost one-third of the growth in international visitor arrivals to Australia between 2008 and 2018.<sup>5</sup>

### Endnotes

- 1 International Monetary Fund, April 2009, *World Economic Outlook Crisis and Recovery*.
- 2 United Nations World Population Prospects: *The 2008 Revision Population Database*.
- 3 Tilak, Jandhyala, B.G 2003, *Education, society and development: national and international perspectives*, New Delhi.
- 4 Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009, *2007-08 Immigration update*.
- 5 Tourism Forecasting Committee, *Forecast, 2009 Issue 1*.

# Children who are overweight or obese

Obesity is a major contributor to the global burden of chronic disease and disability. Around the world, levels of childhood obesity have been rising for a number of reasons including the fact that children are eating more foods that are high in fat and sugars and spending less time on physical activity.<sup>1</sup>

Overweight and obesity in children is a major health concern. Studies have shown that once children become obese they are more likely to stay obese into adulthood and have an increased risk of developing both short and long-term health conditions, such as Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.<sup>2</sup>

Obesity not only has significant health and social impacts, but also considerable economic impacts. In 2008, the total annual cost of obesity for both children and adults in Australia, including health system costs, productivity and carers costs, was estimated to be around \$58 billion.<sup>3</sup>

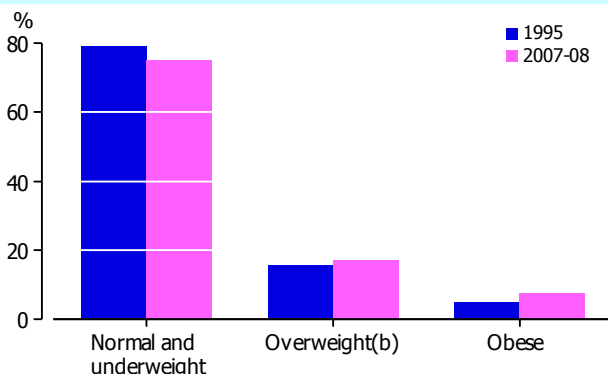
## Changes over time

In 2007–08, one-quarter of all Australian children, or around 600,000 children aged 5–17 years, were overweight or obese, up four percentage points from 1995 (21%).

The obesity rate for children increased from 5% in 1995 to 8% in 2007–08 with the proportion overweight remaining around 17% over this time period. This shows a shift towards the higher and heavier end of the body mass index.

The rates were much higher for adults, with 61% of Australian adults overweight or obese in 2007–08.

Children's Body Mass Index – 1995, 2007-08(a)



(a) Based on measured height and weight of children aged 5-17 years.  
 (b) Differences between the numbers in 1995 and 2007-08 are not statistically significant.

Source: [National Health Survey: Summary of Results, 2007-2008](#) (ABS cat. no. 4364.0)

## Data sources and definitions

The information in this article comes from the 2007–08 National Health Survey (NHS) and 2006 Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities Survey.

This article looks at children aged 5–17 years unless stated otherwise.

*Body Mass Index (BMI)* was calculated from measured height and weight information (using the formula weight (kg) divided by the square of height (m)). Height and weight were measured for children aged 5–17 years in the 2007–08 NHS.

*Overweight and obesity* are defined according to the BMI scores. There are BMI cutoffs for children which are based on the definitions of adult overweight and obesity adjusted to specific age and sex categories for children. For a detailed list of these cutoffs, please see the [National Health Survey Users' Guide](#) (ABS cat. no. 4363.0.55.001).

Physical activity results from the 2006 Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities Survey may not represent total physical activity, since the survey only covers sport organised by a school, club or association which has been played outside school hours.

The 2007–08 National Health Survey collected information on the physical activity of children aged 15–17 only.

## ...age and sex

Between 1995 and 2007–08 there was no change in the proportion of boys who were overweight (16%). However, there was a significant increase in the proportion of boys who were obese. Over this time, the rate of obesity for boys aged 5–17 years doubled from 5% in 1995 to 10% in 2007–08. Increases in obesity occurred for both younger and older boys. For boys aged 5–12 years, 8% were obese (up from 4% in 1995) while 13% of older boys (aged 13–17 years) were obese, up from 6% in 1995.

The story for girls was different to that of boys. While for boys there were significant increases in obesity, there were no such increases for girls. The obesity rate for girls aged 5–17 remained unchanged at 6%.

While the obesity rate for girls did not change from 1995 to 2007–08, the proportion of girls who were overweight increased. The increase, however, occurred for older girls only (aged 13–17 years), up from 12% in 1995 to 20% in 2007–08. In contrast, there was no change for younger girls (aged 5–12 years) with the overweight rate remaining constant at 17% in both time periods.

In 2007–08, a higher proportion of older children were overweight or obese (19% and 9% respectively) than younger children (16% and 7%).

### ...socioeconomic factors

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Disadvantage summarises various attributes (such as income, unemployment and educational attainment) of an area in which people live. Aside from socioeconomic differences between areas in terms of education, income and employment, some areas may also offer greater opportunities for physical activity and greater access to healthy food options.<sup>4</sup>

Children living in the areas of greatest relative disadvantage had higher rates of being overweight (20%) compared with children living in lower relative disadvantage areas (14%) and had more than double the rate of obesity (12%) compared with children living in areas with the lowest disadvantage (5%).

### Overweight and obesity into early adulthood

Children who are overweight or obese are at increased risk of developing certain health conditions, such as cardiovascular conditions and Type 2 diabetes, compared with children of normal weight. They also have a higher risk of psychological and social problems, such as discrimination, victimisation and bullying. Obesity, in particular, may continue into adulthood and affect long-term health.<sup>5</sup>

Although the National Health Surveys collect data at one point in time, it is possible to observe changes over time in the overweight and obesity rates for a cohort of people born in the same period.

In this approach, survey respondents aged 5–17 years in 1995 and those aged 18–30 years in 2007–08, while not the same respondents, are used to represent the same group of people as they age 13 years.

About 16% of children (aged 5–17) were overweight in 1995 compared with 28% of 18–30 year olds in 2007–08. The rate of obesity also increased. About 5% of the children's cohort were obese in 1995, compared with 15% of 18–30 year olds in 2007–08.

The greatest increase in overweight and obesity occurred for older children (aged 13–17 years). In 1995, 16% were overweight and 5% were obese, whereas the figures for 26–30 year olds in 2007–08 were 35% and 17% respectively.

### Physical activity

Physical activity can include any activity which requires a child to expend energy, including

sports or simply playing. Regular physical activity helps children to expend the calories they consume in their diet, while building and maintaining healthy bodies, and so reduces the risk of becoming obese.<sup>6</sup>

The [2004 Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations for Children](#) suggest that children aged 5–18 years need a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.<sup>7</sup>

The following section looks at physical activity using results from two ABS surveys.

### ...children aged 5-14 years

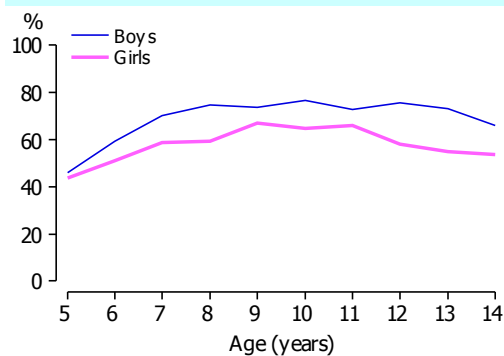
The 2006 Children's Participation in Culture and Leisure Activities Survey collected information on the participation of children aged 5–14 years in organised sports and informal sports during the 12 months prior to interview. It provides insight into some of the physical activities children aged 5–14 are participating in.

In 2006, 63% of children had played sport which had been organised by a school, club or association (outside of school hours), an increase from 59% in 2000. Over the six year period, girls' participation in organised sport rose by six percentage points from 52% to 58% compared with three percentage points for boys (from 66% to 69%).

While the participation rates were similar for children aged five years (boys 46% and girls 44%), by 13 years of age the participation rate for boys was 73%, while for girls it was 55%. The rate of participation for boys peaked around 8-13 years, while for girls it was around 9-11 years.

Children who did participate were spending, on average, six hours per fortnight on organised sport participation. Swimming and outdoor soccer were the most popular sports (17% and 13% respectively).

#### Children's participation in organised sport(a) – 2006



(a) In the 12 months prior to interview.

Source: [Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australia, April 2006](#) (ABS cat. no. 4901.0)

The survey also collected information on informal sports, such as bike riding, rollerblading and skateboarding, to get some indication of children's involvement in informal physical activity.

The survey found that 68% of children had been bike riding and 24% had been skateboarding or rollerblading in the previous two weeks. The amount of time spent on these informal activities was the same as organised sport participation, with an average of six hours per fortnight.

### ...non-participation in organised sport

An estimated 37%, or almost 974,000 children, did not take part in an organised sport in 2006. The rate of non-participation was greater for girls (42%) than boys (31%). Children aged 5–8 years were least likely (42%) to take part in organised sport, while 30% of children aged 9–11 and 36% of 12–14 year olds did not participate in organised sport.

### ...children aged 15-17 years

In 2007–08 over three-quarters (77%) of children aged 15–17 took part in sport or recreational exercise in the two-weeks prior to the National Health Survey. Almost 13% of children took part in high level exercise over a two-week period, while around 65% took part in moderate to low level exercise. However, just under one-quarter (23%) said that they either did no exercise, or very low amounts, during the two-week period.

## Sedentary lifestyles

Children who spend significant amounts of time in sedentary states, such as watching TV or playing computer games, increase their likelihood of poor fitness, raised cholesterol and being overweight in adulthood.<sup>7</sup> Related research has also shown that the incidence of obesity is highest among children who watch TV for long periods each day, compared with children who watch TV for a smaller amount of time each day.<sup>8</sup>

Australian recommendations say that children should not spend more than two hours a day watching TV, playing computer games or using other electronic media for entertainment.<sup>7</sup>

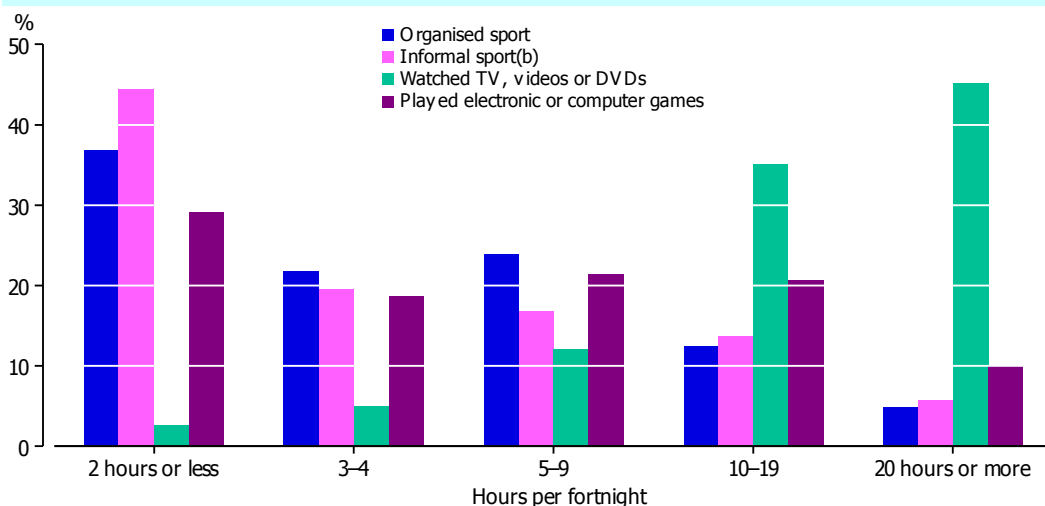
In 2006, most children (97%) aged 5–14 had watched television, videos or DVDs during the two-week period of the survey, and almost two-thirds had played electronic or computer games (64%). Around 45% of children who watched television, videos or DVDs, and 10% of children who played electronic or computer games, did so for 20 hours or more over the two-week period.

Overall, the average amount of time spent on these two activities by children (averaged across a two-week period) was two hours per day, the maximum amount of time recommended under Australian guidelines. The time spent on these activities was similar to that spent in 2000 and 2003.

## Looking ahead

Overweight and obesity, in both children and adults, is a major health concern. In 2007, the Australian Government announced the

Proportion of children's time spent on selected activities(a) – 2006



(a) Children aged 5-14 years who were involved in these activities outside of school hours, during the two school weeks prior to interview.

(b) Average time spent on informal activities including bike riding and skateboarding/rollerblading.

Source: [Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australia, April 2006](#) (ABS cat. no. 4901.0)



development and promotion of healthy eating and physical activity guidelines for children. These measures will form part of the Government's *Plan for Early Childhood* and *Plan for Tackling Obesity*.<sup>6</sup> One of the main aims of the National Preventative Health Taskforce is to develop a National Obesity Strategy.<sup>9</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 World Health Organisation, *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, Overweight and Obesity*, viewed 6 July 2009, <<http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/childhood/en/>>.
- 2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Risk Factor Monitoring, A Rising Epidemic: Obesity in Australian Children and Adolescents*, Canberra, 2004.
- 3 Access Economics, *The Cost of Obesity*, Canberra, 2008.
- 4 King T, Kavanagh A M, Jolley D, Turrell D and Crawford D, 2005, 'Weight and Place; a Multilevel Cross Sectional Survey of Area-Level Disadvantage and Overweight and Obesity in Australia', *International Journal of Obesity*, pp 1-7.
- 5 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Making Progress*, Canberra, 2008.
- 6 Department of Health and Ageing, *Early Childhood Nutrition*, viewed 15 June 2009, <[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)>.
- 7 Department of Health and Ageing, *Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations for Children*, viewed 21 May 2009, <[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)>.
- 8 National Health and Medical Research Council, *Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Children and Adolescents* 2003, viewed 6 May 2009, <[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)>.
- 9 Australian Health Ministers Communique, *Delivering Results*, 18 April 2008.

# Carers and employment

People who provide care outside of institutions perform an important service, allowing people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, and those who are frail or aged, to live in the community rather than in institutions. While all carers make a valuable contribution to society, this article focuses on unpaid, informal carers. These carers provide services that might otherwise cost over \$30 billion annually.<sup>1</sup>

Caring can have beneficial effects for the carers, such as emotional satisfaction and strengthened relationships with those cared for. As well as the positive effects, a caring role may also have negatives. A person's ability to study, work or be involved in community activities may be limited by the time spent caring. The extent to which carers may miss out on various opportunities depends on the intensity, duration and timing of the care they provide.

Tension between caring and employment may mean that some carers change their working patterns, reduce their hours or leave the workforce altogether. For people who were out of the workforce before they started caring, the time pressures of caring may prevent them rejoining the workforce. In each of these cases, carers have a reduced capacity to earn income and build wealth and superannuation. For these reasons, some carers may be less able to provide for themselves and their families not only now, but also as they move into retirement. Carers may also miss out on the benefits of social interaction at work, such as boosted self-esteem and friendships. This article focuses on how carers balance employment with their caring role and how this may affect their financial future.

## Who cares and who do they care for?

The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) is the most comprehensive source of data on carers in Australia. In the 2003 SDAC there were 2.5 million carers aged 15 years and over (16% of the population). The rate of caring was higher for women (17%) than for men (14%) with women more likely than men to take on the caring role at an earlier age.

The 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS) provides an insight into how carers balance caring with paid work and the subsequent implications for their retirement and superannuation. In the 2007 SEARS, around three-quarters (77% or 1.0 million) of the 1.3 million carers aged 15 years or over provided

## Data sources and definitions

This article draws mostly on data from the 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS). Questions regarding retirement were only asked of those aged 45 years or over.

*Carers* in this article include those 1.3 million people aged 15 years or over who, in the week prior to interview, cared for someone who needed assistance because they had a disability, a long-term health condition, or who was frail or aged, where this care was not done as a part of paid work or voluntary work. People who provided general child care (for a child without a disability or long term health condition), or cared for someone who had a short-term illness, are excluded.

*Non-carers* in this article are those who did not provide care as defined above in the week prior to interview. Although not identified as carers, non-carers may have provided care prior to the one-week reference period and may well provide care in the future. Some people who usually provide care may not have done so in the reference week, perhaps due to respite care.

*Employed* people include employees and owner managers of incorporated or unincorporated enterprises. They exclude contributing family workers.

A person was *retired* if they had previously worked for two weeks or more, were not in the labour force and did not intend to look for, or take up, paid work in the future.

The population of carers in the 2007 SEARS is not identical to that in the 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC). SDAC counted all 2.5 million people in 2003 who provided any care, however small or infrequent, to people with a disability or long-term health condition or to the frail aged, of which 475,000 were identified as primary carers. SEARS, on the other hand, limited its scope to those who provided care in the week prior to the survey in order to link this care provision to working arrangements. This should be kept in mind when comparing the analysis in this article with analyses from SDAC.

Other useful sources of information about carers include [A Profile of Carers in Australia, 2008 \(ABS cat. no. 4448.0\)](#), the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, the 2006 General Social Survey and the 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.

care to an adult who needed assistance because they had a disability, a long-term health condition or because they were frail or aged. One-quarter (25%) provided care to a child under 15 years with a disability or long-term health condition. It was possible to provide care for more than one person. Younger carers (aged 15–44 years) were more likely than older carers (aged 45 years or over) to be providing care for a child (51% compared with 9%).

## Employment

Employment can lead to better health, wealth and self-esteem, in addition to building wider networks for social interaction. Having the opportunity to participate in employment is therefore seen as a key element of social inclusion.<sup>2</sup> However, carers may find it difficult to combine their caring role with paid employment. While this may cause some carers to reduce their hours or leave employment altogether, drawing a causal link between the caring role and labour force status is not straightforward. In some households, it may have been most convenient for a person already outside the labour force to take up a caring role when needed, rather than carers leaving the workforce due to their caring role.

In 2007, of people aged 15–64 years, carers were less likely than non-carers to be employed (61% compared with 74%). Carers were also less likely than non-carers to be working full-time (62% of those employed compared with 72%).

The unemployment rate was higher for carers aged 15–64 years (7.2%) than it was for non-carers (4.8%). Carers of this age were also more likely to be outside the labour force (35% compared with 22%). The differences in full-time employment between carers and non-carers were evident for both males and females and for those aged 15–44 and 45–64 years.

The most common reason carers gave for being outside the labour force was that they were caring for at least one person who was ill, disabled or elderly (39%). This was more common for older carers aged 45–64 years (46%) than for carers aged 15–44 years (29%). The older carers were more likely to be caring for a parent (45% compared with 33%) or a partner (28% compared with around 6%) than were younger carers. Around half (48%) of carers aged 15–44 years said that they were outside the labour force because they were caring for children (this child care may or may not have been for someone with a disability or long-term health condition). Another 30% of carers this age said that they weren't working because of home duties.

## ...balanced with caring

While carers who are employed benefit from the income and social interaction that their jobs provide, employed carers may feel pressures on their time which can have adverse effects on their capacity to engage with other community life and on their mental and physical health. In 2007, three-fifths (60%) of employed carers, aged 15–64 years, always or often felt rushed or pressed for time compared with 47% of employed non-carers. Always or often feeling rushed or pressed for time was more common for carers who were employed full-time compared with those employed part-time (63% compared with 56%), this being true for both female carers (69% compared with 59%) and male carers (58% compared with 43%).

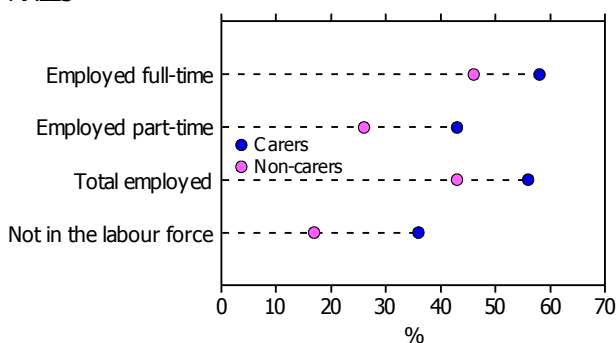
**In 2007, around two-thirds of female carers who were working full-time always or often felt rushed or pressed for time.**

Among employed people aged 15–64 years, carers were slightly more likely to prefer to work a different number of hours (39% compared with 35% of employed non-carers), with 24% wanting fewer hours and 16% wanting more hours. Employed male carers were more likely than female carers to want to work fewer hours (27% compared with 21%), consistent with men being more likely to work more hours than women. Older employed carers aged 45–64 years were also more likely to want to work fewer hours than younger carers aged 15–44 years (28% compared with 19%).

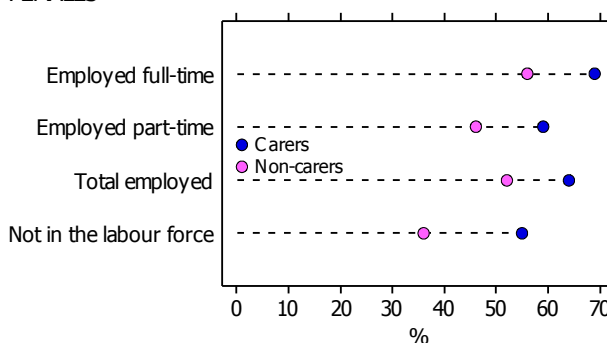
The most common reason carers gave for preferring to work fewer hours was to spend more time on social and recreational activities and have more free time (31%). A further 15% said the main reason they wanted to work fewer hours was because their current job regularly involved long hours, and 14% said it was because they were caring for children (not necessarily with a disability or long-term health condition). Of those carers who would prefer to work more hours, the vast majority said that they wanted more income (89%).

### Always or often feels rushed or pressed for time, people aged 15-64 years – 2007

MALES



FEMALES



Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

## Sharing care

Balancing work and care is not something that carers always have to do by themselves. Over two-thirds of carers aged 15–64 years (70%) were living with a partner and may have shared the caring and earning roles. While 45% of carers of this age had at least one other carer in their household, this was more common for carers who were employed full-time (56%) than those employed part-time (43%) or those who were not employed (36%). Care may also be shared by those outside the household.

Access to leave entitlements provides carers with increased options to balance their caring role with paid employment. Paid leave may also help manage family cash flow and caring responsibilities. Carers who were part-time employees<sup>3</sup> were more likely than non-carers who were part-time employees<sup>3</sup> to have access to paid leave entitlements (50% compared with 41%).

Access to flexible working arrangements can also help carers to manage their care and employment commitments more easily. Of male employees<sup>3</sup>, carers were slightly more likely than non-carers to have some say in their start and finish times (45% compared to 41%), while for female employees there was no significant difference. Carers and non-carers both had similar access to a formal system of flexible working hours (around 10%). Similarly, carers were no more likely than non-carers to have some say in the days they worked (around 28% for all male employees regardless of caring roles, and 40% for all women employees).

One option that could make it easier to balance work and caring is working from home, since this reduces travel time and may allow a carer to spend more time with the person they care for (especially if they live in the same household as the care recipient, or close by). Younger carers, aged 15–44 years, who were employed were more likely than young employed non-carers to usually work at least some hours from home (35% compared with 25%) but there was no significant difference in working from home between carers and non-carers aged 45–64 years.

## Retirement

Retirement from the work force is often seen as an opportunity for people to get involved in activities for which they had no time while working. However, caring responsibilities may well change the experience of retirement for many people. A carer may enter retirement primarily to continue to provide care on a more intensive basis or to take up new caring roles, or a person may become a carer after retirement due to the deteriorating health of their partner, elderly parents, or other relatives or friends. In such cases, retirement for carers may not involve as much free time or leisure as it does for others.

In 2007, 41% of both carers and non-carers aged 45 years and over were retired. For non-carer retirees who had worked at some time in the last 20 years, by far the most common main reason for retirement was the retiree's own health (33%). For retired carers the most common main reasons for retirement were their own health, as well as caring responsibilities (around one-quarter each).

## ...intentions

Of employed people aged 45 years or over, around 85% of both carers and non-carers intended to retire at some point (the remainder did not state an intention to retire). Of those who intended to retire, most were planning to do so in their 60s, with around two-fifths of both carers and non-carers planning to retire in their late 60s. Among carers intending to retire, the most common main factor influencing the decision about when to retire was financial security (35%), followed by personal health or physical abilities (16%). These were also the most common factors for non-carers. A small group of carers (7%) cited the need to care for their partner or a family member as the main factor influencing their decision about when to retire.

## ...returning to work

People may come out of retirement for a number of reasons, perhaps for financial necessity, to top-up finances, because new employment opportunities arise or family circumstances change, or because they have had difficulty adjusting to a retired lifestyle. Of all employed carers aged 45 years or over, 11% had previously retired, that is, stopped working with no intention at the time of ever working again. This rate was a little higher than for non-carers (8%).

Perhaps demonstrating the financial costs of providing care, around half (54%) of carers who had returned from retirement to work cited financial need as their main reason for returning to work after retiring, compared with about two-fifths (38%) of non-carers.

## Funding retirement

Over the next half century, Australia's population structure is projected to continue to age. In 2007 there were five people aged 15–64 years for each person aged 65 years or over, but this ratio may drop to less than three by 2056 (see *Australian Social Trends, March 2009*, '[Future population growth and ageing](#)'). Superannuation is important in boosting retirement savings and relieving some of the need to provide financially for a growing number of retirees. For carers who are retired, superannuation may be particularly important, as financial commitments relating to care may eat into savings.

## ...source of income

In 2007, around half (51%) of carers aged 45 years or over who had retired in the previous 20 years had a government pension or allowance as their main source of income at retirement. About one in ten (11%) relied on superannuation or an annuity as their main source of income at the time of retirement. These rates were similar to those for non-carers.

Of employed carers aged 45 years or over intending to retire, around half (47%) expected superannuation or an annuity to be their main source of income at retirement, while only 26% were expecting their main income to be a government pension or allowance. These rates were again similar to non-carers.

## ...superannuation coverage

While the majority of both carers and non-carers aged 15 years or over had superannuation coverage, the rate was slightly lower for carers (68% compared with 71%). However, there were differences in the rates of coverage for different age groups. The largest gap in superannuation coverage was between carers and non-carers aged 35–44 years (79% compared with 88%). The gap in superannuation coverage was not apparent for those aged 65 years or over, where coverage was relatively low for both carers and non-carers (around 30%). While carers had a lower level of superannuation coverage, they were more likely than non-carers to be in a couple relationship in their household and may therefore have access to their partner's superannuation.

## ...superannuation balances

It is important to look not just at the rates of superannuation coverage, but also at superannuation balances. People with higher balances when approaching retirement are more able to self-fund a comfortable retirement lifestyle without relying on the aged pension.

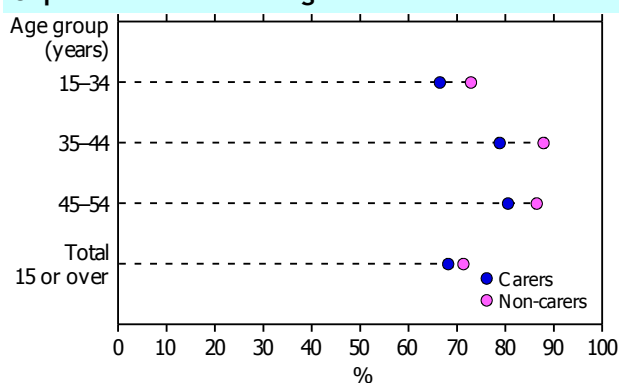
For both those aged 35–44 years and those aged 45–54 years, the median superannuation balance

### Superannuation definitions

In SEARS, a person has *superannuation coverage* if they are currently receiving a superannuation pension or annuity, or had received a superannuation lump sum within the previous four years, or have a superannuation account in the accumulation phase.

Accounts *accumulate* from a mix of personal and employer contributions, and investment earnings. Accounts are considered to accumulate even if contributions are not currently being made to them, or if there are negative investment returns. For some people, it is possible to accumulate benefits, as well as draw on superannuation, at the same point in time.

## Superannuation coverage – 2007



Source: 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

for carers was around \$9,000 lower than for non-carers. There were no significant differences between carers and non-carers aged 15–34 years, who had a lower rate of caring and had not had long to accumulate superannuation, or those aged 55 years or over, who may not have benefited from compulsory superannuation or who may have only taken up their caring role after retirement.

## Looking ahead

Recognising the difficulties that carers may face in balancing their caring role with employment, the House of Representatives report on the inquiry into better support for carers *Who Cares...?*, provided several recommendations specifically aimed at improving support for carers who work or hope to (re)enter the workforce. Recommendations 39–44 promote improved respite care, more flexible working arrangements, and broader Carer Payment eligibility for working carers, increased employment opportunities and training for carers hoping to (re)enter the workforce and more flexible policies allowing students to better combine care, work and study.<sup>4</sup>

## Median superannuation balances(a) – 2007

| Age                 | Carers  | Non-carers |
|---------------------|---------|------------|
|                     | \$ '000 | \$ '000    |
| 15–34 years(b)      | 8.1     | 6.7        |
| 35–44 years         | 24.5    | 33.2       |
| 45–54 years         | 37.0    | 46.4       |
| 55 years or over(b) | 74.8    | 72.1       |

(a) Of people with one or more superannuation accounts in the accumulation phase. Balances are limited to three accounts per person, and calculated on known values only.

(b) Differences between carers and non-carers were not statistically significant.

Source: 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

## Endnotes

- 1 Access Economics (2005), *The Economic Value of Informal Care*, Canberra, p. 15.
- 2 Australian Government, 2008, [Social Inclusion Principles for Australia](#).
- 3 *Employees* include all employed people except: owner managers of incorporated enterprises (a group of people usually classed as employees, but excluded for the purposes of this article); owner managers of unincorporated enterprises; and contributing family workers.
- 4 House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, 2009, *Who cares?... Report on the Inquiry into Better Support for Carers*, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

# People with more than one job

Over half a million Australians have more than one job. These 'multiple job holders' are of particular interest because of concerns about whether they need to work two or more jobs just to 'make ends meet' and whether the long hours sometimes involved are adversely affecting their family and social lives. On the other hand, having more than one job may offer workers more variety and the chance to gain additional skills.

## How common is multiple job holding?

In 2007, 657,000 workers had more than one job (6% of employed people). According to data collected in the Labour Force Survey, the incidence of multiple job holding has not changed much since the 1990s, hovering around 5% to 6%.

## Who are multiple job holders?

While the characteristics of multiple job holders were broadly similar to those of single job holders, there were some differences. In 2007, single job holders were more likely to be men (56%) than women (44%), whereas multiple job holders were more likely to be women (54%) than men (46%).

In 2007, 29% of all multiple job holders (compared with 20% of all single job holders) were women aged 35–54 years; an age when they are more likely to have mortgages and dependent children. A lower proportion of multiple job holders (38% compared with 47% of single job holders) were men under 55

## Data sources and definitions

Most of the information in this article comes from the 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS). The information relates to workers aged 15 years and over, excluding those who were contributing family workers in their main job (these workers were not asked about their working patterns and preferences). More information about SEARS can be found in:

- [Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, Australia, April to July 2007](#) (ABS cat. no. 6361.0); and
- [User Guide: Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, Australia, April to July 2007](#) (ABS cat. no. 6361.0.55.002).

*Multiple job holders* are people who worked in more than one job during the survey reference week, or who held a second job from which they were absent.

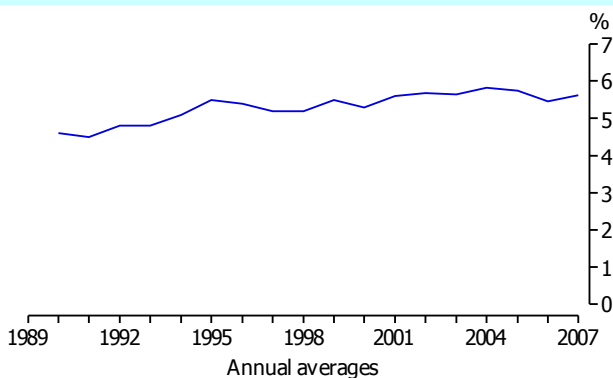
*Casuals* are employees (excluding owner managers of incorporated enterprises) who are not entitled to paid sick or holiday leave (the ABS proxy measure for casuals).<sup>1</sup> *Other employees* are those who are entitled to paid sick and/or holiday leave.

In this article, *part-time* workers are those who usually worked 1–34 hours each week. *Full-time* workers are those who usually worked 35 or more hours.

*Employees*, for the purposes of this article, exclude owner managers of incorporated enterprises. These are people who work in their own incorporated enterprise (a limited liability company). While the ABS generally classes these owner managers as employees, they have more say in their working arrangements than other employees, so are not counted as employees in this analysis.

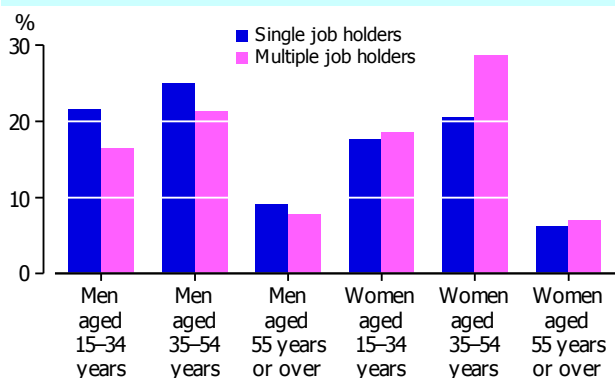
years of age. Multiple job holders often worked part-time hours in their main job but usually worked full-time hours overall.

Proportion of workers with more than one job – 1990–2007



Source: ABS Labour Force Survey

Single and multiple job holders by age and sex – 2007



Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

## Employment type in main and second jobs, multiple job holders – 2007

|                                    | <i>Employment type in second job</i> |              |                                |                                  |                 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
|                                    | <i>Employee</i>                      |              | <i>Owner manager</i>           |                                  | <i>Total(a)</i> |
|                                    | <i>Casual</i>                        | <i>Other</i> | <i>Incorporated enterprise</i> | <i>Unincorporated enterprise</i> |                 |
| <i>Employment type in main job</i> | '000                                 | '000         | '000                           | '000                             | '000            |
| Employee                           |                                      |              |                                |                                  |                 |
| Casual                             | 126.3                                | *11.9        | *7.2                           | 41.8                             | 188.7           |
| Other                              | 142.7                                | 35.7         | 30.1                           | 118.9                            | 334.5           |
| Owner manager                      |                                      |              |                                |                                  |                 |
| Incorporated enterprise            | 13.2                                 | *5.1         | 19.3                           | *8.8                             | 46.5            |
| Unincorporated enterprise          | 23.1                                 | 14.2         | *7.0                           | 42.5                             | 86.9            |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>305.4</b>                         | <b>66.8</b>  | <b>63.6</b>                    | <b>212.0</b>                     | <b>656.5</b>    |

\* estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution

(a) Includes around 9,000 people who were contributing family workers in their second job.

Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

### What sort of work are they doing?

In 2007, most multiple job holders (nearly 93%) had two jobs. Just under 7% had three jobs and very few had four jobs. Since by far the most common multiple job holding arrangement is to have two jobs, this article focuses on the characteristics of the first and second jobs held by multiple job holders.

#### ...employment type

In 2007, just over half of all multiple job holders (51%) worked as employees with paid leave entitlements in their main job (compared with 61% of single job holders). However, only 10% of multiple job holders worked under such arrangements in their second job, and few (5%) did so in both their main and second jobs.

Casual work, which is often part-time work, was fairly common for multiple job holders: 29% of multiple job holders were casual employees in their main job compared with 20% of single job holders. Almost half (47%) of all multiple job holders were casual employees in their second job and nearly one in five multiple job holders (19%) were casual employees in both their main and second jobs.

Women were more likely to be working as casuals than were men. About 62% of female multiple job holders were working as casuals in either their main or second job (more commonly their second job), compared with 49% of men. Similarly, 22% of women were working as casuals in both their jobs, compared with 16% of men.

Owning a business was also common, particularly as a second job. About 20% of multiple job holders were owner managers of a business in their main job and 42% were owner managers in their second job. Almost 12% of

multiple job holders were owner managers of businesses in both jobs.

Men were much more likely to be working as owner managers than were women. About 60% of male multiple job holders were working as owner managers in either their main or second job, compared with 42% of women.

#### ...industry

People whose main job was in the arts and recreation services industry were most likely to have a second job (12%), while those whose main job was in the mining industry were least likely to be working a second job (1%). Both of these industries employ relatively small numbers of people.

The industries in which the majority of multiple job holders held their second job were retail trade (14% of all second jobs), health care and social assistance (12%), education and training (10%), accommodation and food services (9%) and agriculture, forestry and fishing (9%).

#### ...occupation

Multiple job holding is more common for people working in certain occupations. In 2007, people who worked as community or personal service workers in their main job were the most likely to have a second job (9%). People employed as technicians and trades workers (4%) and machinery operators and drivers (4%) were least likely to have a second job.

In their second job, people were most likely to be working as professionals (24% of all second jobs), community and personal service workers (17%) and managers (15%), and least likely to be employed as machinery operators or drivers (3% of all second jobs).



Around 34% of male multiple job holders and 41% of female multiple job holders worked in the same major occupation group in their main and second jobs. However people who worked in the same occupations tended to be employed on a different basis in the two jobs (e.g. as an employee in one job and as a business owner in the other). The proportions of male and female multiple job holders working in both the same major occupation group and same employment type in their main and second jobs were considerably lower (11% for men and 14% for women).

### How much do they earn?

Income is often the biggest motivator for people to take on paid employment, and taking on an extra job (or two) offers people the opportunity to earn more, particularly when their main job is part-time.

Around three-quarters (76%) of all single job holders were employees who had stated their income.<sup>2</sup> On average, these single job holders usually earned \$912 per week in wages and salaries (\$24.20 per hour), with men averaging \$1,076 per week (\$25.70 per hour) and women averaging \$728 per week (\$22.50 per hour).

In contrast, less than half (43%) of all multiple job holders were employees in both their main and second jobs who had stated their income.<sup>3</sup> These multiple job holders received \$843 per week from all of their jobs combined (i.e. including wage/salary income from third and fourth jobs). On average, they usually earned \$627 per week from their main job, at \$23.60 per hour (the men \$784 at \$25.60, and the women \$535 at \$22.40).

Equivalised household income is household income adjusted to take account of differing household size and composition. This measure is used to compare living standards. There was no statistically significant difference between the average equivalised gross household income of single job holders (\$1,045 per week) and multiple job holders (\$1,061 per week).

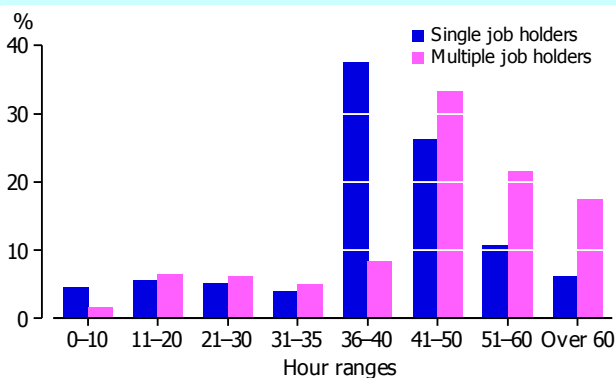
### Are they working long hours?

In 2007, multiple job holders were more likely to work long hours than other workers. For example, 18% said they usually worked more than 55 hours a week compared with 8% of single job holders. On the other hand, there was also a slightly higher proportion of multiple job holders than single job holders working less than 35 hours per week (34% compared with 30%). As a consequence, the overall median weekly hours worked by multiple job holders was only 3 hours more than single job holders (41 and 38 hours respectively).

Differences in hours usually worked by multiple job holders and single job holders were wider among men than women. For example, the median weekly hours usually worked by male multiple job holders (50) were clearly more than those worked by male single job holders (40). However there was no difference in median weekly hours usually worked by women who had more than one job and women who had just the one job (35 in both cases). Just over half of female multiple job holders usually worked full-time (i.e. at least 35 hours per week in all of their jobs combined). The same proportion of female single job holders usually worked full-time (52%).

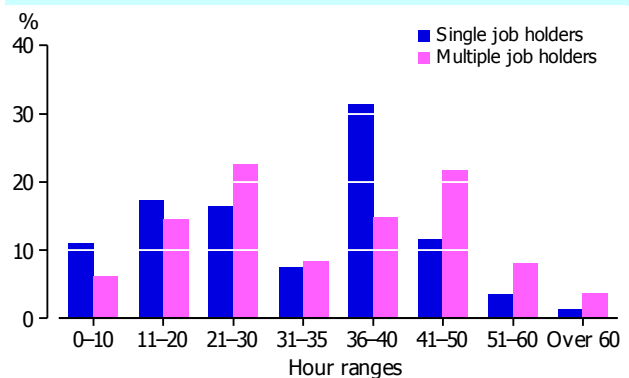
Multiple job holders often worked part-time hours in their main job but usually worked full-time hours overall due to the hours they worked in their second job. The median number of hours usually worked in their main job was 30, and 55% of all multiple job holders usually worked part-time hours in their main job. The median weekly hours usually worked in their second job was 10, with virtually all (99%) usually working part-time hours in that job. Almost two-thirds (65%) of all male multiple job holders worked full-time in their main job and part-time in their second job, whereas only 27% of all female multiple job holders did so.

Usual weekly hours in all jobs, men – 2007



Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

Usual weekly hours in all jobs, women – 2007



Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

## Travel time

There was little difference between single and multiple job holders when it came to time spent travelling to and from work. Around 59% of single job holders and a similar proportion of multiple job holders usually spent less than half an hour per day travelling to or from work (i.e. less than half an hour each way), or worked from home.

## How many days a week do they work?

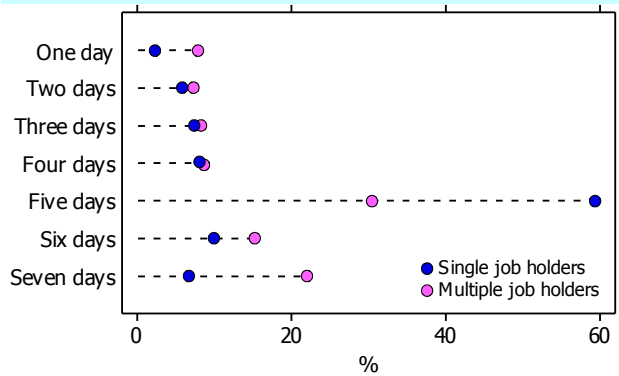
For both single and multiple job holders, working five days a week was the most common working pattern. However, people with only one job were almost twice as likely as multiple job holders to usually work five days a week (59% compared with 30%). People with more than one job were much more likely to work every day of the week than single job holders (22% and 7%, respectively).

## How stressed are they?

Multiple job holders were more likely to feel more time stressed than single job holders, which is not surprising since multiple job holders – especially men – are also more likely to work longer hours. In 2007, 56% of all multiple job holders (53% of the men and 58% of the women) often or always felt rushed or pressed for time compared with 47% of all single job holders (43% of the men and 52% of the women).

The causes of time stress were similar for multiple job holders and single job holders. Just over one-third of multiple job holders who always, often or sometimes felt rushed or pressed for time said trying to balance work and family responsibilities was the main reason for feeling time stress. A further 5% nominated the demands of family as their main reason.

## Number of days usually worked per week – 2007



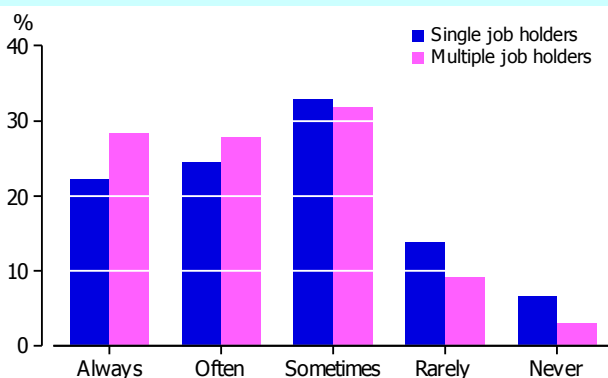
Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

Consistent with feeling more time stressed, multiple job holders were slightly more likely than single job holders to feel that their work and family responsibilities were out of balance. Around 47% of multiple job holders and 42% of single job holders always, often or sometimes felt that their work and family responsibilities were out of balance.

## How long have they had their second job?

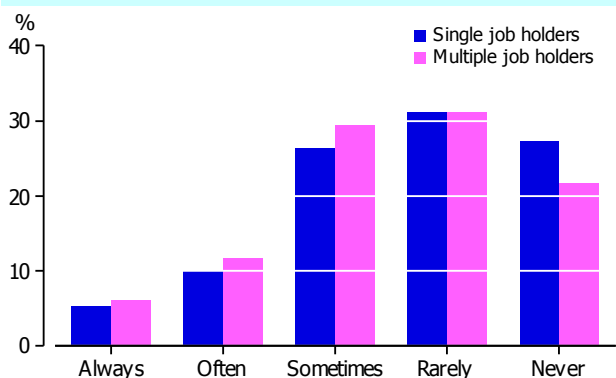
In some cases, people may be working in more than one job as a temporary measure, so that any associated time pressures may be of relatively short duration. However in most cases it seems that multiple job holding continues for years, rather than months. In 2007, most multiple job holders had been working in their second job for at least a year (73% had worked in their second job for at least one year, with 37% of multiple job holders having held their second job for at least five years), and most also expected to be working in that second job in another year's time (83%).

## How often feels rushed or pressed for time – 2007



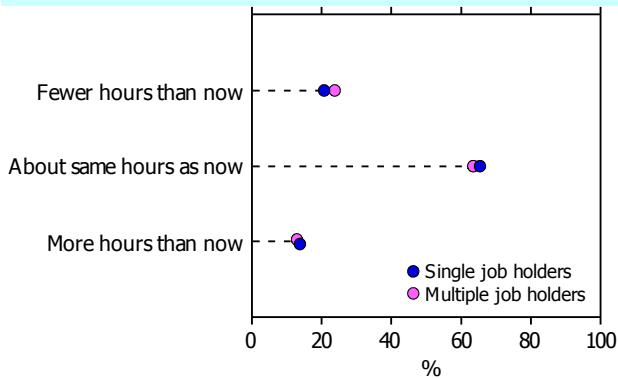
Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

## How often feels work and family responsibilities are out of balance – 2007



Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

## Preferences for weekly hours worked – 2007



Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

### Are they happy with their work pattern?

It appears that the working arrangements for many, but not all, multiple job holders match up with their preferences. For example, almost two in every three multiple job holders were happy with the number of hours they were working, and a similar proportion were happy to be working more than one job.

### ...in terms of number of hours

About 63% of multiple job holders were happy with the total number of hours they worked. Almost one-quarter (24%), though, would have preferred to work fewer hours, while 13% wanted to work more hours. There was little difference between multiple job holders and single job holders in this respect.

By far the most common reason for wanting to work fewer hours was for social reasons or to have more free time. Just over 40% of the 156,000 multiple job holders who wanted to work less said this was their main reason. The next most common reason was to care for children (12%).

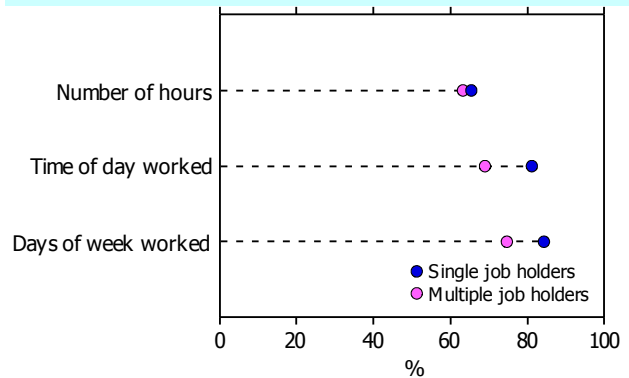
For most of the 85,000 multiple job holders who would have liked to work more hours, the main reason was to earn more income (84%). The most common reasons people didn't work more

### Measuring work preferences

As part of the Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, people were asked about the kind of work pattern they would prefer. For example, if people could choose the number of hours they could work each week, would they rather work fewer hours, about the same hours, or more hours than they do now? People were asked to take account of how this would affect their income when answering these questions.

In this article, *working at night* refers to working between 7 in the evening and 7 in the morning. Conversely, *working during the day* refers to working between 7am and 7pm.

## Proportion who were happy with their working patterns – 2007



Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

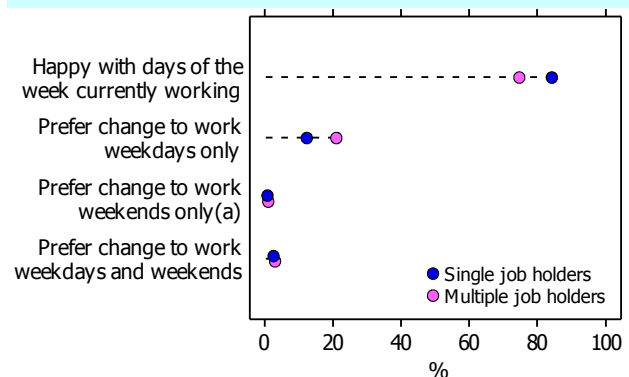
hours were related to employment (such as the availability of suitable jobs) rather than personal reasons (such as family or study commitments). About 32% of those who wanted to work more said they didn't work more hours mainly because the hours they worked were related to their current job or profession, and another 21% said it was mainly because there were no jobs in their line of work or locality.

**Multiple job holders are much more likely to work at night and on weekends than single job holders.**

### ...the time of day they work

Almost 69% of multiple job holders were happy with the time of the day they worked, compared with 81% of single job holders. The lower rate for multiple job holders largely reflects the fact that they're much more likely to usually work at night than people with only one job (58% of multiple job holders compared with 35% of single job holders), and that people usually working at night are much more likely to want to change the time of day they work.

## Preferences for working weekdays or weekends – 2007



(a) Estimate for multiple job holders has a relative standard error greater than 25% and should be used with caution.

Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

About 20% of multiple job holders would have preferred to work during the day only, and 10% wanted to shift to a mix of hours during the day and night.

Almost all the multiple job holders who usually worked during the day only were happy with this arrangement (92%). In contrast, 34% of multiple job holders who usually worked at night would have preferred to work during the day only.

### ...which days were worked

In 2007, 75% of multiple job holders were happy with the days of the week on which they worked (either weekdays, weekends, or both), a slightly lower proportion than for single job holders (84% of whom were happy with which days they worked). This difference largely reflects the fact that multiple job holders are much more likely to work on weekends only, or both weekdays and weekends, than people with only one job (63% compared with 35%). Almost half of multiple job holders who worked on weekends only would have preferred a different arrangement (44%, compared with 26% of single job holders), and 35% of multiple job holders who worked on both weekdays and weekends would have liked to change this (a similar proportion to that for single job holders).

### ...and number of jobs?

Just over 61% of multiple job holders were happy with the number of jobs they worked. About 36% of multiple job holders would have preferred to work only one job without changing the number of hours they worked. In addition, some multiple job holders preferred to cut back to just two jobs and some wanted to work more jobs.

### Conclusion

In 2007, 6% of employed Australians worked more than one job. On average, the hours worked by multiple job holders per week were not much longer than those worked by single job holders, although 18% of multiple job holders worked more than 55 hours a week (a much higher rate than for single job holders). Multiple job holders were a bit more likely to feel rushed or pressed for time than single job holders, and to feel that their work and family responsibilities were out of balance.

### Endnotes

- 1 For more information on how casual employment may be defined, see '[Measures of Casual Employment](#)' in *Australian Labour Market Statistics, October 2008*, cat. no. 6105.0, ABS, Canberra.
- 2 All data presented in this paragraph describe single job holding employees usually working at least one hour per week with stated usual wage/salary income of at least \$1 per week.
- 3 All data presented in this paragraph describe multiple job holders who were employees in both their main and second jobs, and usually worked at least one hour per week in both their main and second jobs, had stated usual wage/salary income of at least \$1 per week in both their main and second jobs, and had stated wage/salary income of at least \$1 per week from all of their jobs combined.

# Work, life and family balance

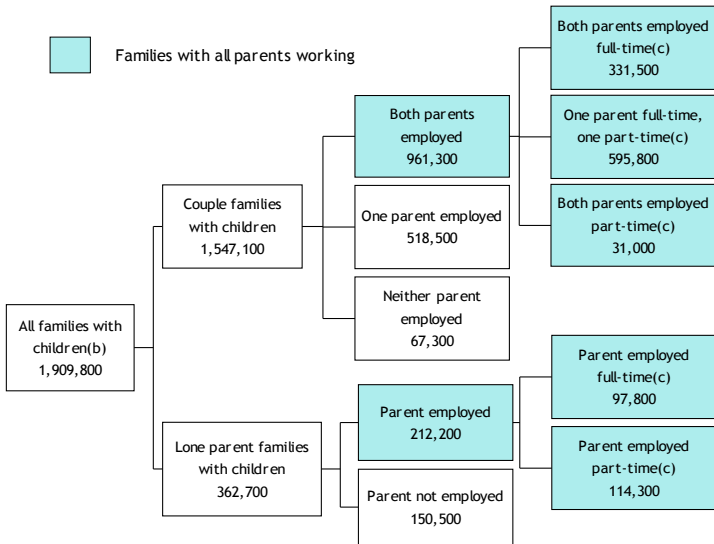
Parents who are working can face challenges in balancing their work and child-rearing responsibilities, particularly while their children are young. Achieving this balance is important for the wellbeing of parents and their children.<sup>1</sup>

The participation of parents in paid work is important for both the Australian economy (in terms of having enough workers into the future given Australia's ageing population) and a parent's individual wellbeing. Parents' participation in employment can also affect their feelings of social inclusion, provide opportunities for social interaction outside the family and help them to maintain attachment to the workforce. Parents' participation in paid work may depend upon their access to certain working conditions such as part-time work, as well as access to formal and informal child care.

## Working parents

According to the Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, in 2007 there were 1.5 million couple families with children and about 360,000 lone parent families with children (see the *data sources and definitions box* for details on these families).

### Labour force status of parents with children aged under 15 years(a) – 2007



- (a) In households containing one family only (see *data sources and definitions box* for details).
- (b) Around 80% of these families contain children aged under 15 only and no older children.
- (c) Excludes people whose part-time/full-time status could not be determined.

Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

### Data sources and definitions

The information in this article comes from the 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation.

For the purposes of this article *children* refers to all people who are younger than 15 years and are living in a family.

Families include:

- *Couple families with children*, comprising two people living together as a couple, with at least one child aged under 15 years usually living in the same household.
- *Lone parent families*, in which one parent usually lives with at least one child (aged under 15 years).

In examining working arrangements of families, this article focuses on households which contain one family only. Households which contain multiple families (such as grandparents, parents and children) or other unrelated people have been excluded from the analysis so that the working arrangements used to balance work and family life, particularly child rearing, can be understood in the context of this particular set of family circumstances. Other analyses may focus on the use of extended or multiple families living in the same household, or raising children with care provided by more than one household.

Contributing family workers and owner-managers are excluded when examining parents' working arrangements, paid leave and access to flexible working conditions, and time pressures on parents, but included elsewhere in the analysis.

*Employed full-time* refers to people who usually work 35 hours or more a week (in all jobs) and others who, although usually working less than 35 hours a week, worked 35 hours or more during the week of the survey.

*Employed part-time* refers to people who usually work less than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and who either did so during the week of the survey, or were not at work during that week.

The most common arrangement for couple families with children was for both parents to work (62% of couple families). Often, where both parents were working, one worked full-time and the other part-time. This was the case in around three-fifths of couple families where both parents worked, and in almost all these cases, it was the mother who was working part-time (95%). For those couple families with young children (i.e. the youngest child was aged under five years) it was more common for only one parent to work full-time, with mothers less likely to be in paid work.

In 2007, lone parent families were most likely to be lone mother families (93%). Around 60% of all lone parents were working. Similar proportions were working full-time and part-time. Lone parents were more likely to be working full-time if their youngest child was of school age (5–14 years) than if their child was younger (47% compared with 40%). For many lone parent families there is also a non-resident parent, who could be working and contributing financially to the family, and who may also provide help in caring for the child.

## Parents' working arrangements

In 2007, in about half of all couple families with both parents working, one or both parents worked variable hours or were on call. Working at night was also a feature of working life for many parents. In nearly 60% of couple families, one or both parents usually worked some hours between 7pm and 7am.

Putting in extra hours at work (paid or unpaid) was the usual practice for one parent in 41% of cases, and both parents in 17% of cases, among couples with children. Working extra hours was especially common in families where both parents were employed full-time. One or both parents usually worked extra hours in 70% of these families, however relatively few were doing this to increase their income (12% of those who were paid for their extra hours). People were mainly working extra hours to get the work done and meet deadlines.

At least one parent usually worked some hours from home in 63% of couple families where both parents were working. Some parents worked from home to balance work and caring responsibilities, while for others it was a way to catch up on work or meet deadlines.

Working arrangements such as shift work and weekend work are often a condition of work in specific occupations such as nursing and retail. Working a combination of weekdays and weekends (although not necessarily every day of the week) was a common working arrangement for many families. In 2007, just over half of all couple families where both parents were working had this arrangement for one (41%) or both (15%) parents. One-third of working lone parents usually worked a combination of weekdays and weekends.

## Paid leave and access to flexible working conditions

Working arrangements such as part-time work, flexible hours and paid carers leave may help parents juggle paid work and family responsibilities.

## Types of paid leave and job flexibility

In the 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, questions about paid leave entitlements were only asked of employees (excluding owner managers of incorporated enterprises). These questions were not asked of owner managers because people who work in their own business are generally thought to have more control over their working arrangements, so questions about access to paid leave may be less relevant for this group of people.

The term *access to leave* refers to whether or not the parent is entitled to the specified leave. A parent may or may not be able to make use of these entitlements.

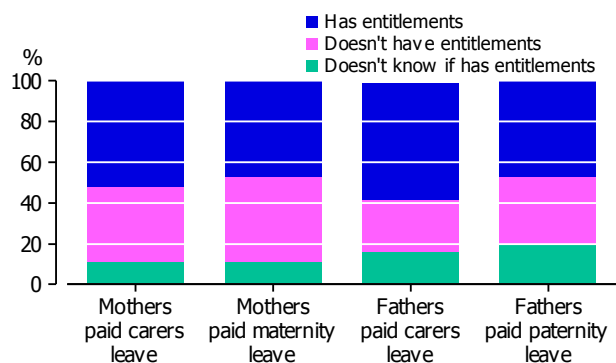
For the purposes of this article, information on paid leave relates to the parent's main job and the analysis about leave entitlements is restricted to:

- working couple families, that is where both parents were working as employees in their main job (571,900 or 60% of all couple families with children and both parents working); and
- lone parent families where the parent was an employee in their main job (184,700 or 87% of working lone parent families).

In 2007, both parents were entitled to paid holiday and sick leave in two-thirds of working couple families, with very few families in a situation where neither parent was entitled to such leave. Compared with couple families, lone parent families were slightly less likely to have access to paid holiday (62%) and sick leave (61%). However, some parents who do not have paid holiday or sick leave entitlements may be compensated for this in the form of higher pay rates.

While most people are entitled to paid holiday and sick leave, fewer people have access to leave which is specifically aimed at helping parents balance work and family life, such as carers leave. While most people knew whether they were entitled to paid holiday and sick leave, in quite a few cases, people did not know

## Parents in couple families(a), access to paid carers and maternity/paternity leave – 2007



(a) Where both parents were working as employees (excluding owner-managers and contributing family workers).

Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

whether or not they had access to paid carers leave or maternity/paternity leave. For example, 9% of mothers in working couple families didn't know whether they had access to paid carers leave.

In 2007, both parents in just over one-third of working couple families had access to paid carers leave, while in 12% of cases neither parent had access. Where only one parent had access to paid carers leave, fathers were more likely to have access than mothers, reflecting the fact that fathers were more likely than mothers to be working full-time and less likely to be casuals.

Both parents had access to paid maternity/paternity leave in just over one-quarter of working couple families (26%). In cases where just one parent in the couple had access to paid maternity/paternity leave, mothers and fathers were almost equally entitled (just over one-fifth of mothers and fathers).

In lone parent families, 42% of working parents had access to paid carers leave while 44% did not. The remaining 14% didn't know whether they had access. Similarly, 37% of lone parents had paid maternity/paternity leave entitlements, while almost half (48%) did not.

### Working arrangements used by parents to provide care(a) – 2007

|  | Mothers<br>% | Fathers<br>% |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| <i>Had time off work to provide care(b)</i>          |              |              |
| Unpaid leave   | 35.6         | 23.1         |
| Paid holiday leave                                   | 22.7         | 25.8         |
| Paid carer's leave                                   | 18.2         | 24.2         |
| Flexible working hours                               | 14.8         | 17.7         |
| Informal arrangements                                | 13.9         | *9.9         |
| Other paid leave                                     | *11.5        | *11.7        |
| <b>Total ('000)</b>                                  | <b>107.6</b> | <b>67.8</b>  |
| <i>Did not have time off work to provide care(c)</i> |              |              |
| Flexible working hours                               | 53.9         | 54.2         |
| Took children into work                              | 23.4         | 14.1         |
| Working from home                                    | 22.3         | *14.0        |
| <b>Total ('000)</b>                                  | <b>76.7</b>  | <b>81.4</b>  |

\* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

- (a) Parents of a child/children under 15 years, who provided care to someone in the household in the week prior to the survey.  
 (b) Estimates do not add to 100% as people could have used one or more arrangements.  
 (c) Estimates do not add to 100% as only selected arrangements are shown.

Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

### Working arrangements and care

The 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS) asked people whether they had taken time off work to provide care to someone in their household in the week before the survey. They were asked about the working arrangements used to provide care, but the module did not clarify who they provided this care to. For example, if a parent who provided care to both their own child(ren), and to someone else in their household, said that they used working arrangements to care, it is not clear for which caring role the working arrangements were used.

For more information see [Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, April to July 2007](#) (ABS cat. no. 6361.0) and [User Guide: Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, Australia, April to July 2007](#) (ABS cat. no. 6361.0.55.002).

In addition to paid leave entitlements, flexible working arrangements can also be important for parents. In 2007, either one or both parents in almost all working couple families were able to choose when they took holiday leave (96%). In many couple families, one or both parents were able to work extra time in exchange for time off (71%), or had a say in their start and finish times at work (72%).

When compared with couple families, lone parent families were slightly less likely to have a say in when they could take holidays (82%). They were much less likely to have a say in their start and finish times (45%) or to be able to work extra hours in exchange for time off (48%).

### ...use of work arrangements to provide care

In 2007, 14% of the 2.4 million parents who worked as employees had used some form of working arrangement to provide care to someone in their household in the week prior to the survey (16% of mothers and 12% of fathers). Parents did not necessarily have to take time off work to care. Around 55% of fathers who provided care did not take time off work, compared with 42% of mothers. Parents who did not take time off work to provide care used working arrangements such as flexible working hours and working from home to meet their caring and work responsibilities. For those parents who did take time off work to provide care, unpaid leave (31%) was the most common working arrangement used.

### Child care arrangements

Many families with young children use some type of child care arrangement to make it easier for parents to work or do other things. Parents may also use child care to give children the chance to interact with other children and adults. Whether parents choose to use child

### Impact on work: caring for children

Caring for children is reported as a barrier to looking for work by some women. The 2008 Survey of Persons not in the Labour Force estimated that there were 479,100 women who wanted to work but were not actively looking for work, and were available to start work within four weeks if suitable child care arrangements were available. Of these, 134,600 women said caring for children was the main reason they were not actively looking for work. Typically these women:

- were aged 25–44 years (82%)
- had a husband or partner (78%)
- had a youngest child aged 0–2 years (58%).

Some of these women prefer to look after their own children while others are unable to find suitable child care. For over half (55%) of these women the main 'caring for children' reasons for not looking for work were related to barriers associated with finding suitable child care (for example, there was no child care nearby, no child care available at all, it was too expensive, or the quality of the child care was unsuitable). For the remainder, the reasons were either related to 'personal choice' (e.g. they prefer to look after their children) – 40% – or were unknown (other child care reasons) – 5%.

care may depend to some extent on their perception of the quality, affordability and accessibility of formal child care services, availability of informal sources of care such as grandparents, and their personal preferences.

In 2007, most couple families who had young children (aged four years and under) used some form of child care where both parents were working (83%). Almost all employed lone parents with a young child used some form of child care.

The most commonly used sources of child care for working couple families with young children were a child's grandparent(s) (43% of families used grandparents for at least some of the care) and long day-care centres (38%), followed by family day-care centres (12%). Employed lone parents with young children who used child care commonly used long day-care centres (57%). About 40% used the child's grandparent(s) to provide at least some of the care.

### Use of child care by working families, in the week prior to the survey – 2007

| Used child care in the week prior to the survey | Couple families: both parents employed |                                |              | Lone parent families: parent employed |                                |              |
|---|--|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
|   | Youngest child aged under 5 years      | Youngest child aged 5-14 years | Total        | Youngest child aged under 5 years     | Youngest child aged 5-14 years | Total        |
|   | %                                      | %                              | %            | %                                     | %                              | %            |
| <b>Used child care</b>                          |  |                                |              |                                       |                                |              |
| Used formal child care only                     | 26.7                                   | 7.7                            | 15.6         | 22.6                                  | *6.8                           | 9.9          |
| Used informal child care only                   | 28.4                                   | 28.3                           | 28.3         | 21.8                                  | 41.1                           | 37.4         |
| Used formal and informal child care             | 27.7                                   | 5.9                            | 15.0         | 51.6                                  | 10.8                           | 18.7         |
| <b>Total used child care</b>                    | <b>82.8</b>                            | <b>41.9</b>                    | <b>59.0</b>  | <b>96.1</b>                           | <b>58.8</b>                    | <b>66.0</b>  |
| Did not use child care                          | 17.2                                   | 58.1                           | 41.0         | 4.0                                   | 41.2                           | 34.0         |
| <b>Total families</b>                           | <b>100.0</b>                           | <b>100.0</b>                   | <b>100.0</b> | <b>100.0</b>                          | <b>100.0</b>                   | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Type of child care used(a)</b>               |  |                                |              |                                       |                                |              |
| Long day-care centre                            | 38.3                                   | n.p.                           | n.p.         | 57.4                                  | n.p.                           | n.p.         |
| Family day-care                                 | 12.0                                   | *0.8                           | 5.5          | 14.8                                  | *2.1                           | 4.6          |
| Before and/or after school care                 | 9.6                                    | 10.9                           | 10.4         | 11.4                                  | 13.2                           | 12.8         |
| Child's grandparent(s)                          | 42.7                                   | 17.8                           | 28.2         | 39.7                                  | 22.6                           | 25.9         |
| Child's other parent not living in household    | *1.4                                   | *1.5                           | 1.5          | 21.5                                  | 15.3                           | 16.5         |
| Child's brother/sister                          | *1.3                                   | 5.7                            | 3.9          | 4.4                                   | 8.9                            | 8.1          |
| Other(b)  | 22.3                                   | 14.7                           | 17.9         | 33.1                                  | 19.1                           | 21.8         |
|   | '000                                   | '000                           | '000         | '000                                  | '000                           | '000         |
| <b>Total families(c)</b>                        | <b>391.0</b>                           | <b>544.1</b>                   | <b>935.1</b> | <b>38.9</b>                           | <b>161.8</b>                   | <b>200.7</b> |

\* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

\*\* estimate has a relative standard error of greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use

n.p. not published

(a) Proportions do not add to 100% as people can use more than one sort of child care.

(b) Includes school holiday care program, occasional care centre, other relatives, friends/neighbours and paid carer.

(c) Excludes a small number of families for whom information on child care arrangements was not collected.

Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation



The use of child care was less common in families with school-aged children (aged 5–14 years). About 42% of working couple families with school aged children used child care, with most of these using informal care. The main sources of child care for couple families with school-aged children were grandparents (18%), and before/after school care (11%).

Lone parents with school-aged children were more likely than couple families (with children the same age) to use child care, with 59% of employed lone parents using some form of care – most commonly informal child care only. Close to one-quarter (23%) of employed lone parents with school-aged children used a grandparent of the child to provide some of the care. Others used a child's non-resident parent (15%), before/after school care (13%) or a sibling of the child (9%) for child care purposes.

## How do parents spend their time?

The way that parents spend their time depends largely on their personal and family circumstances and preferences. It's affected by whether they're a lone parent or partnered, working, and the age of their youngest child, as well as by whether they are a mother or father.

The following analysis is based on the 2006 Time Use Survey and compares a broader range of families than the previous analysis.

## ...spending time with children

Parents who weren't in paid work spent more time on child care activities than parents who were employed. Parents also spent more time caring for their children, and less time in paid work, in the years before their children started school.

Lone parents who weren't employed spent around 25 hours a week on child care activities in 2006. When the youngest child was aged under five, lone parents who were not in paid work spent around 34 hours a week on child care, compared with around 19 hours a week when the child was aged 5–14. Lone parents working part-time spent 16 hours a week on child care – this was substantially more when the youngest child was aged under five (30 hours a week), than if the youngest child was aged 5–14 (around 12 hours a week). The average time spent on child care fell to 10 hours a week for those lone parents who were working full-time.

In couple families, on average, mothers spent more time on child care activities than fathers. In couple families where both parents worked, mothers spent on average, around 19 hours a week caring for their children, while fathers spent around half that time (8 hours). When both parents were employed full-time, mothers spent 17 hours and fathers spent 8 hours caring

## Measuring time spent on activities

The ABS 2006 Time Use Survey collected information on the time people spent on a range of activities. People who participated were asked to keep a diary record of their activities (including the nature, duration and timing) over two days.

Data from the Time Use Survey can be based on either the *participant average* or the *all person average*. The analysis in this article is based on the *all person average*. This is the total time for an activity divided by the total relevant population such as parents (or a sub-group of that population). It can be used to compare groups and assess time use patterns over a longer period, such as a week.

Any activity that respondents described as their 'main activity' at a given time was recorded as a *primary activity*. If it was 'something else they were doing at the same time', it was recorded as a *secondary activity*. All data in this article refers to a person's *primary activity*.

A substantial amount of time spent on child care activities is recorded as a secondary activity. That is, parents may be looking after their children (secondary activity), while preparing the family meal or cleaning the house (primary activity). When taking secondary activities into account, the time a parent spends on child care increases, but the overall trends do not change. For example, in couple families in which both parents were employed, fathers spent an average of 28 hours a week on child care (compared with 8 hours as a primary activity), while mothers spent over 57 hours a week (compared with 19 hours).

For more information, see [How Australians Use Their Time](#) (ABS cat. no. 4153.0).

for their children. In families where one parent – usually the mother – was working part-time and the other full-time, mothers spent 19 hours caring for their children and fathers spent 8 hours.

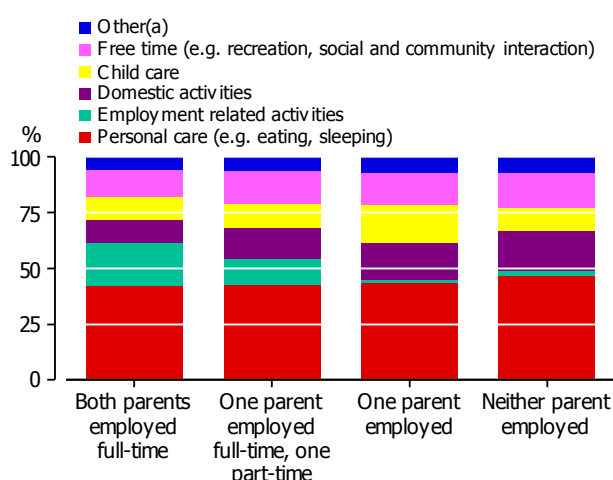
Where both parents were working, mothers spent much more time on child care when their youngest child was under five (27 hours a week), than if they were aged 5–14 (11 hours).

Although on average mothers are likely to spend more time on child care activities, they spend much less time in paid work than fathers. In couple families where both parents were employed, fathers spent around twice as many hours per week (50 hours) as mothers (24) on employment related activities. For fathers, time spent in paid work was not affected by the age of youngest child in the family, whereas mothers spent more hours in paid work when their youngest child was aged over five (28 hours) than if their youngest child was under five (19).

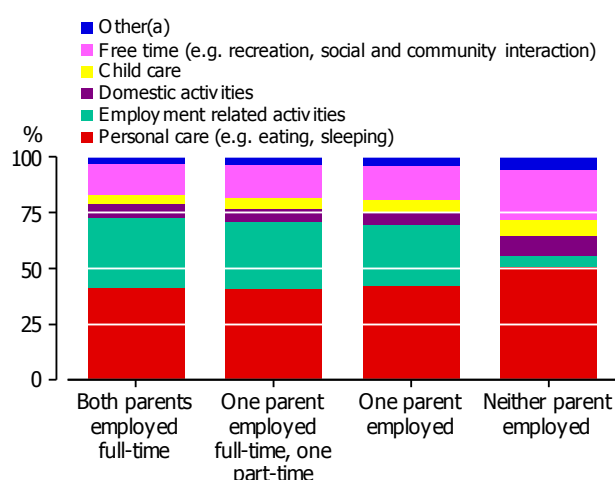
In those couple families where only one parent (usually the father) was in paid work, mothers spent on average 28 hours a week on child care, while fathers spent around 9 hours a week.

## Time spent on primary activities, parents in couple families – 2006

### MOTHERS



### FATHERS



(a) Includes activities such as purchasing goods and services, education and voluntary work and care.

Source: ABS 2006 Time Use Survey

### ...free time

There was no significant difference between the hours that mothers spent on free time overall, compared with fathers. In couple families where at least one parent was employed, mothers and fathers spent around 24 hours a week on their free time. In those couple families where no parent was employed, parents spent about 32 hours a week on free time. Lone parents spent around 27 hours a week on free time.

### Time pressures on parents

The need to balance work, family and other activities and commitments can result in increased time pressure and stress for parents. This may have negative consequences for their mental and physical health, which can then affect their relationships with others.

In 2007, in 82% of couple families with children under 15 where both parents were employed, one or both parents always or often felt rushed or pressed for time. Partners in couple families where there were no children under 15 and both people were working were less likely to feel rushed or pressed for time (one or both partners always or often felt rushed or pressed for time in 67% of cases). In employed lone parent families with a child aged under 15, around two-thirds of parents always or often felt rushed or pressed for time, while just over half (53%) of all lone parents without dependent children (aged under 15) felt rushed.

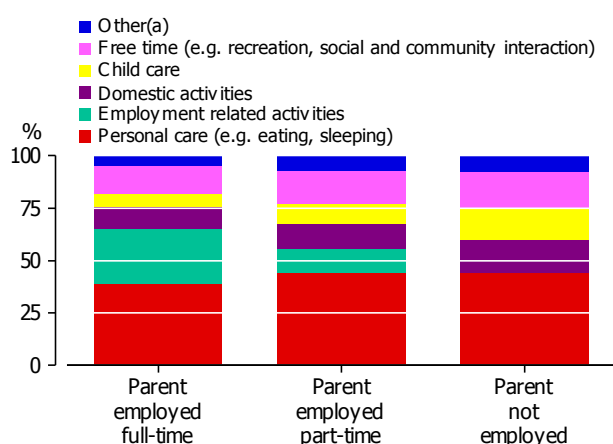
Mothers in couple families tended to feel rushed or pressed for time more often than fathers, regardless of their, or their partners, employment status.

### ...why parents feel pressed for time

Trying to achieve a balance between work and family is one of the main reasons parents who are working feel rushed or pressed for time. In 2007, in couple families where both parents were working, around half (49%) of fathers and two-thirds of mothers (67%) who felt rushed said this was a result of trying to balance work and family responsibilities. In couple families where one parent, often the father, was employed, 44% of fathers and 12% of mothers gave this reason for always/often feeling rushed or pressed for time.

The need to balance work and family is not the only reason parents feel rushed or pressed for time. In those couple families where neither parent worked, one or both parents felt rushed in 66% of cases, with the demands of family being cited by 65% of mothers and 34% of

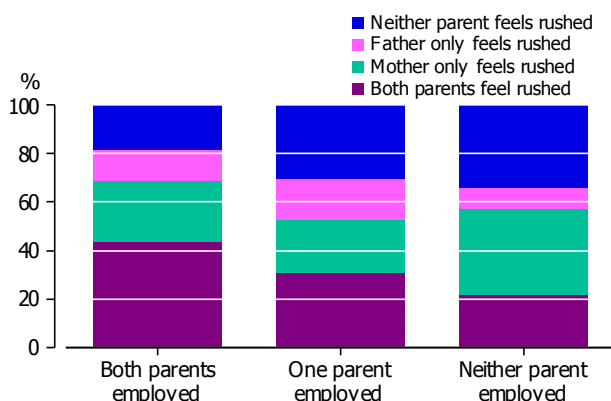
## Time spent on primary activities, lone parents – 2006



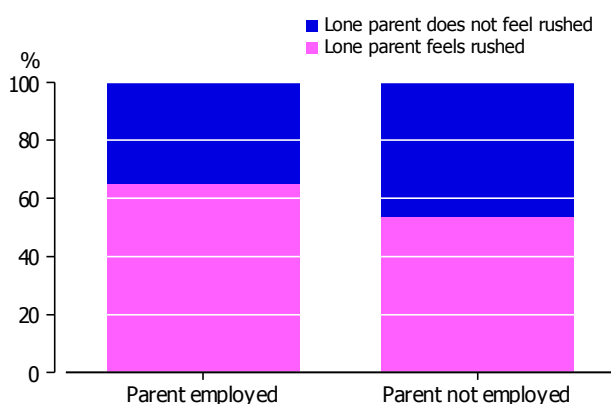
(a) Includes activities such as purchasing goods and services, education and voluntary work and care.

Source: ABS 2006 Time Use Survey

### Whether parents always or often feel rushed or pressed for time, couple families – 2007



### Whether lone parents always or often feel rushed or pressed for time – 2007



Source: ABS 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation

fathers in these families as the main reason. For mothers in these families, another commonly cited reason for feeling rushed was too much to do/too many demands on them (14%).

As with couple families, the reasons lone parents always or often felt rushed or pressed for time varied according to whether or not they were working. Most lone parents who were working and felt rushed, were rushed as a result of trying to balance work and family responsibilities (73%). For those lone parents who were not in paid work, 55% cited the demands of family as the main reason they felt rushed or pressed for time, while around 22% said that having too much to do/too many demands placed on them was the reason.

Having children is not the only reason people may feel rushed or pressed for time. Many people who did not have children under 15 felt rushed or pressed for time as a result of the pressures of work and study, or having too much to do/too many demands.

Whether or not people feel rushed or pressed for time not only relates to the activities they, or their family, partake in, but also the services that are available to people to help them

manage their time (such as appropriate public transport services or facilities available in their locality).

### Looking ahead

Finding ways to balance work and family life is often challenging. In 2007, many women did not have access to paid maternity leave. This will change in 2011, with the introduction of a means-tested parental leave system. Other recent changes may also have an impact on how many parents have access to flexible work arrangements in future. For example, the *Fair Work Act*, which took effect in July 2009, gives parents and other people caring for young children the right to make formal requests for flexible work arrangements. The Act allows employers to refuse such requests only on reasonable business grounds.

### Endnotes

- 1 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Striking the Balance: Women, men, work and family*, Discussion paper 2005, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney, NSW.

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