

# Race against time

How Australians spend their time





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# Foreword

Australians are known as hard workers and our reputation for being willing to roll our sleeves up and get the job done has seen many welcomed into workplaces all over the world. But we are also laid back, enjoying our downtime and there is no shortage of things to do when we get the chance.

But the balance has been thrown out in recent times with Australians under pressure to fit more and more into their busy lives. Many are left lamenting that there “aren’t enough hours in the day” to get everything done. And even worse, there isn’t much time to really relax.

So where does all our time go? And are we really working more and playing less?

The latest AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth report *Race against time* throws some light on the subject of time use in Australia, exploring how competing commitments impact on time spent on work, family, social, recreational and community activities, and the shift in this balance over the years.

The report shows that full-time hours in paid employment for Australians have varied substantially with the economic cycle, rising in good times and falling in bad.

Taking a long time horizon, women now work an extra two hours per week and men work almost three hours extra per week compared to what they did in 1985. This equates to an average of 38.6 hours per week for women and 42.3 hours per week for men.

But full-time hours are still below their 2000 peak when men worked an average of 43.4 hours and women an average of 39.3 hours per week. By 2009, these weekly hours had dropped two hours on average for men and 1.5 hours for women.

On the other hand, average weekly part-time hours in paid employment have increased over the last decade for both men and women – possibly a consequence of employers seeking greater workforce flexibility in changing economic times, and mothers seeking a flexible return to the labour market.

Noticeably, however, both part-time and full-time hours in paid employment have shown a rapid increase in the past two years as Australia recovers from the global financial crisis.

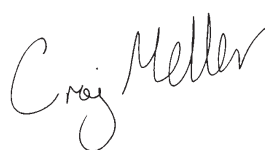
So there’s no doubt Australians work hard, but for the average Australian, free time is still quite generous. When measured over the whole Australian population, leisure and recreational activities are found to take up 20 per cent of our day. This is more time than the average Australian spends on employment and education activities, or childcare and housework. That said, free time varies considerably depending on a person’s employment status, whether they have children and their responsibilities in other areas.

All this may leave us wondering why Australians are feeling so strapped for time when we apparently have so much free time. Whatever happened to the relaxed Australian lifestyle?

Juggling competing work, family and individual commitments requires us to be careful time managers. But there are only 24 hours in a day, leaving some people feeling at the end of the day like they’ve let someone, or even themselves, down. This is especially the case for young working mothers, who seem to be the most time poor according to the report’s findings.

It could be that many people are trying to fit too much into their day and be all things to all people. As we adapt our busy lifestyles to our ever changing demands, we must learn to spend our time wisely – ensuring we are doing the things we want to do, as well as all the things we need to do.

After all, The Rolling Stones had it right in 1974 when they sang, “Time waits for no one, and it won’t wait for me.”



**Craig Meller**  
Managing Director  
AMP Financial Services

# Introduction

Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.

Benjamin Franklin

There are 24 hours in each day. Yet more now than ever, there just doesn't seem to be enough time to fit everything in.

For many of us, the balance between work, family and social life is an increasingly complicated exercise in time management. There's so much we like to do with our time beyond the regular commitments of work and family, whether it's to meet with friends, make the odd gym class, help at the community centre or simply take time to relax with a good book. However, the constant battle to juggle busy jobs, family needs and home lives can leave little time for more than a rushed coffee with a friend before running to the next meeting or picking up the kids from school.

So where does the time go? Are we satisfied with the time we're able to spend with our families, our children, our friends? How much of our time can we volunteer for others? And do we leave enough time for ourselves?

For those who work, it has become increasingly hard to keep to a regular nine-to-five working week, and many are forced through job, time and financial pressures to work earlier in the morning, later at night, or even at weekends.

More parents now work longer hours and are often working when their children are at home. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data show that around 30 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women are working at 7am in the morning, with one in six men and one in seven women working at 7pm in the evening. The same appears true at weekends, for both men and women. Indeed, a greater proportion of women work between 6pm and 9pm on weekends than on weekdays.

There are risks associated with such extended working patterns. Research has found that children whose parents work at weekends spend less time reading, less time on homework, and significantly more time alone. Couples may look to divide between them the task of looking after their children, but this also can lead to dissatisfaction with the loss of time spent together as a family.

The feeling of being rushed or pressed for time is often tiring and can be a source of stress. We expect our partners to contribute to the care of the children and helping with the housework. But are we happy with the help we get? And is there any difference between the sexes in what constitutes a fair share of household tasks?

In this AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth Report, we throw light on what Australians do with their time, and explore how competing time commitments impact on the balance of work and family life. We analyse data from the ABS Time Use Survey and the Household Income and Labour Dynamics of Australia (HILDA) survey, which asks participants to record the time they spend on work, family, social, recreational and community activities. To see how the time use of Australian families has evolved, we have sought whenever possible to compare patterns now with those that existed a decade ago.

# How Australians spend their time

How does a typical Australian portion out their day? With almost half the day spent sleeping and eating (necessary time) we don't have a lot of time left to fit everything else in.

The ABS Time Use Survey divides the activities on which people spend their time into four broad categories - necessary time, contracted time, committed time, and free time (ABS 2010).

**Necessary time** includes activities which are performed for personal survival, such as sleeping, eating and personal hygiene.

**Contracted time** includes activities such as paid work and regular education where there are explicit contracts which control the periods of time in which the activities are performed.

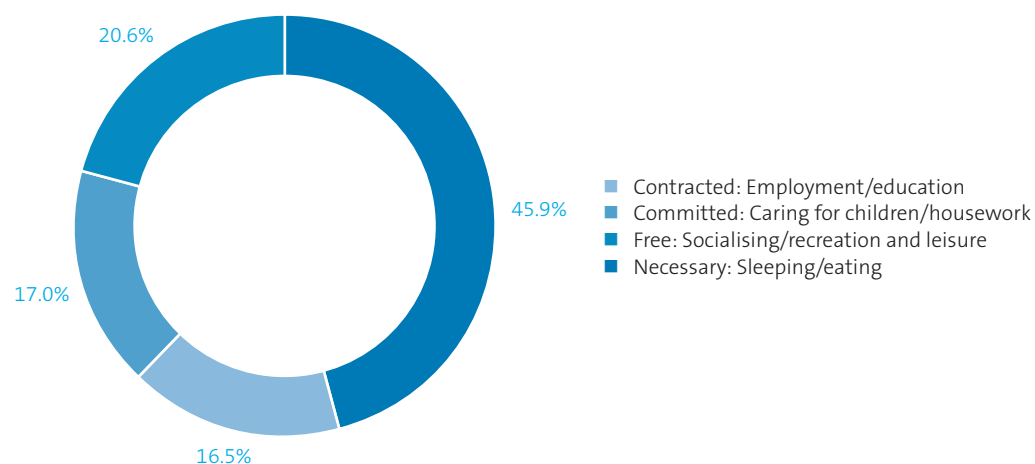
**Committed time** includes activities to which a person has committed themselves because of previous social or community interactions, such as establishing a household or volunteering.

The consequent housework, other household management activities, child care, shopping or provision of help to others are all examples of committed time activities.

**Free time** is the amount of time left when the previous three types of time have been taken out of a person's day. Free time includes activities associated with social and community interaction and recreation and leisure.

Just under a fifth of our day (17 per cent) is spent on committed activities such as caring for children, and 16.5 per cent of our day is spent on contracted activities - employment and education (Figure 1). Our free time (socialising, recreation and leisure), appears quite generous on average - taking up just over a fifth of our day. However, this varies considerably depending on what type of household we live in and what responsibilities we may have.

Figure 1 - How Australians spend their day



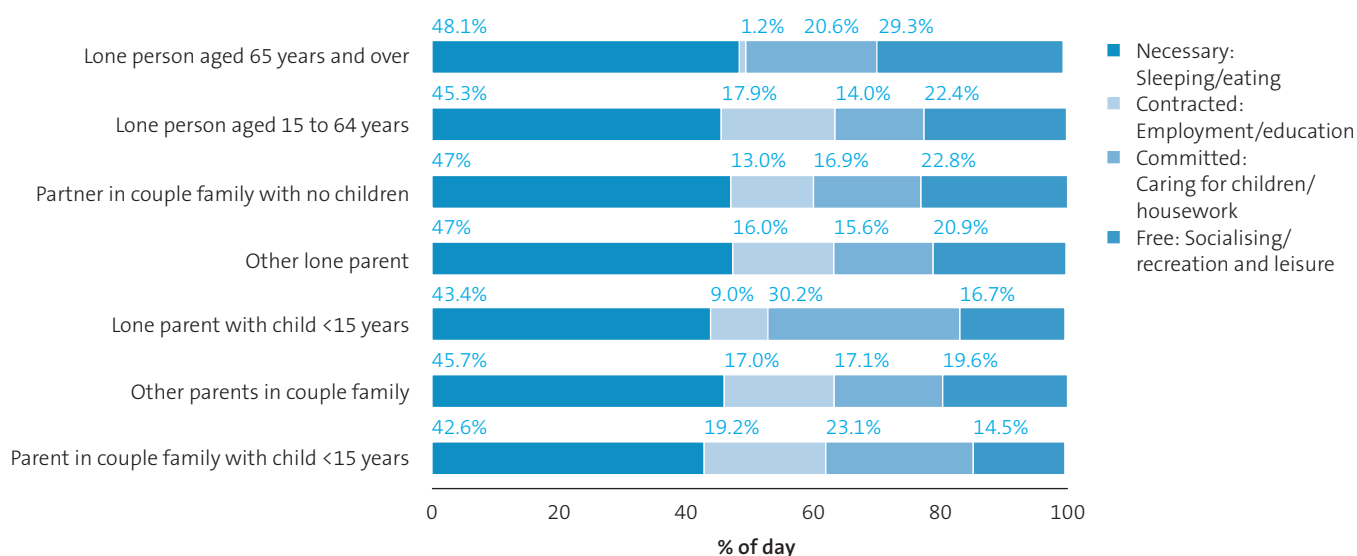
**Note:** See technical notes for detailed definitions of the sub-categories within free, necessary, committed and contracted time.

**Source:** ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

“At all ages, women spend more time each day doing housework and other domestic activities, while men spend more time on recreation and leisure.”

An increasing amount of free time is available for older Australians and those without children (Figure 2). Parents with dependent children have the least amount of free time in a day, and parents in couple families also spend the largest proportion of their day working or engaged in educational activities - 19.2 per cent.

**Figure 2 - Time use and household type**



**Note:** The estimate for contracted time for lone persons aged 65 years and over has a high relative standard error and should be used with caution. Other lone parents and other parents in a couple family are those parents with dependent children aged more than 15 years. Values may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

**Source:** ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

## Men, women and time

Traditional gender roles are still evident when examining time use among men and women. Women are more likely to spend a greater amount of time each day on shopping, housework and child care; while men are more likely to be engaged in paid work for longer (Table 1). That is, women spend on average over two hours extra a day than men on domestic activities, child care and purchasing goods and services. Men spend almost the equivalent time on employment-related activities. Women spend slightly more time eating and sleeping, whereas men commit more time to recreational and leisure pursuits - an extra 30 minutes on average per day.

**Table 1 - Time use and gender - specific activities**

Activity	Men	Women	Difference (Men-Women)
Hours and minutes per day			
Personal care	10:48	11:06	-0:18
Employment related	4:33	2:21	2:12
Education	0:30	0:30	0:00
Domestic activities	1:37	2:52	-1:15
Child care	0:22	0:59	-0:37
Purchasing goods and services	0:38	0:58	-0:20
Voluntary work and care	0:15	0:24	-0:09
Social and community interaction	0:40	0:47	-0:07
Recreation and leisure	4:29	3:57	0:32

**Note:** See technical notes for detailed definitions of the above activities.

**Source:** ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

Regardless of age, women spend more time each day doing housework and other domestic activities (Table 2). Time spent on domestic activities increases substantially for both men and women as they age, with men spending more time on household chores in their sixties and seventies than they did in their youth.

As they age, men double the time they spend purchasing goods and services, especially once retired. However, time spent shopping remains relatively stable for women at all ages.

At all ages, men enjoy larger amounts of time for recreation and leisure (including playing sport, watching TV, surfing the web and talking on the phone), compared with women. Time spent on personal care (primarily sleeping and eating) increases with age for both men and women.

**Table 2 - Time use, age and gender - specific activities**

	Personal care	Employment related	Education	Domestic activities	Child care	Purchasing goods and services	Voluntary work and care	Social and community interaction	Recreation and leisure
Population characteristics	Hours and minutes per day								
Age groups (years)	Men								
15 to 24	11:04	3:33	2:23	0:35	0:04	0:25	0:12	0:45	4:51
25 to 34	10:24	6:18	0:12	1:11	0:35	0:35	0:12	0:38	3:44
35 to 44	10:15	6:11	0:07	1:30	0:52	0:32	0:14	0:37	3:36
45 to 54	10:29	5:47	0:06	1:43	0:19	0:36	0:20	0:33	3:57
55 to 64	11:02	3:53	0:02	1:58	0:06	0:46	0:33	0:44	4:49
65 to 74	11:35	1:06	0:00	2:47	0:04	0:57	0:32	0:40	6:13
75 and over	12:10	0:21	0:01	2:47	0:03	0:57	0:25	0:45	6:26
Age groups (years)	Women								
15 to 24	11:38	2:16	2:22	0:58	0:22	0:50	0:21	0:53	4:09
25 to 34	10:35	3:10	0:15	2:32	2:22	0:55	0:20	0:42	3:03
35 to 44	10:32	3:05	0:09	3:05	2:05	0:55	0:22	0:41	2:59
45 to 54	11:04	3:18	0:07	3:13	0:26	1:03	0:31	0:45	3:31
55 to 64	11:09	1:59	0:04	3:25	0:12	0:59	0:53	0:47	4:27
65 to 74	11:30	0:12	0:02	3:39	0:08	1:01	0:53	0:49	5:35
75 and over	11:57	0:02	0:01	3:33	0:01	0:55	0:23	0:49	6:05

**Note:** See technical notes for detailed definitions of the above activities.

**Source:** ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

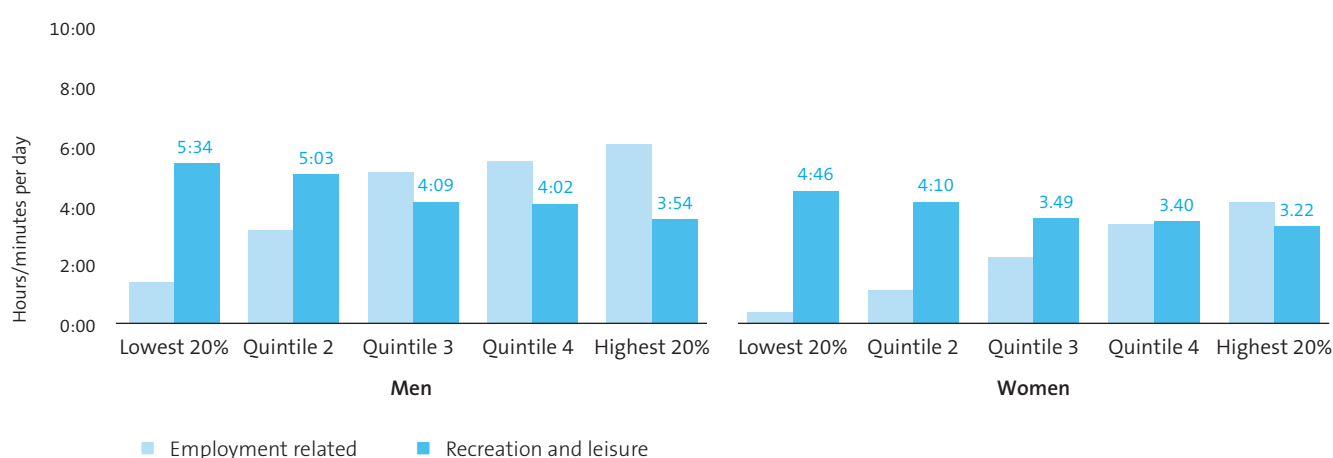


## Who plays the most?

Time spent at work inevitably comes at a price - less time for recreation and leisure activities. However, time in employment also means greater income and the ability to afford those things which are necessary or which we may deem important, such as purchasing a family home or sending the kids to a private school.

The trade-off between work and leisure and the income this affords us is apparent in Figure 3. Both men and women with a higher household income spend longer hours in employment-related activities and much less on recreation and leisure. However, those in the lowest household income quintile spend a much larger proportion of their day on recreation and leisure.

**Figure 3 - Income, recreation and leisure**



**Note:** (1) Household income quintiles are the quintiles of equivalised gross weekly household income. For more details on how these quintiles were derived, see the technical notes. (2) The average time use here is based on all people aged 15 and over.

**Source:** ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

Is there an ideal situation that affords a person more recreation and leisure time as well as a relatively comfortable income? Being a man, born in a main English speaking country (MESC)<sup>1</sup> other than Australia, aged over 65 years and living in regional Australia will stand you in good stead to achieve this.

Table A1 shown in Appendix A indicates that those who were born in a MESC other than Australia averaged around four hours and 41 minutes each day of leisure, compared with four hours and 29 minutes for those born in Australia and four hours and 12 minutes for those born elsewhere in the world (Table A1). Men born in MESCs other than Australia also averaged more time on domestic activities, child care and voluntary work, as well as high average time spent in employment related activities.

“Both men and women with higher incomes spend longer hours at work and less time on recreation and leisure.”

1. Main English speaking countries include the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, USA, Ireland and South Africa.

**Table 3 - Average time on daily activities by remoteness**

	Personal care	Employment related	Education	Domestic activities	Child care	Purchasing goods and services	Voluntary work and care	Social and community interaction	Recreation and leisure
Population characteristics	Hours and minutes per day								
Men									
Remoteness areas									
Major cities	10:46	4:37	0:36	1:26	0:22	0:40	0:18	0:40	4:27
Inner regional	10:48	4:13	0:19	1:51	0:20	0:35	0:25	0:39	4:45
Other areas	10:58	4:47	0:15	1:55	0:21	0:31	0:18	0:35	4:10
Women									
Remoteness areas									
Major cities	11:03	2:30	0:31	2:38	0:59	1:00	0:28	0:47	3:57
Inner regional	11:17	1:57	0:33	2:57	0:50	0:53	0:35	0:45	4:09
Other areas	11:04	2:10	0:21	3:28	1:04	0:45	0:34	0:44	3:43

**Note:** Remoteness is measured using the ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Structure. More details, including a map of the remoteness structure, can be found in the technical notes.

**Source:** ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

Examining time use by remoteness structure allows comparisons to be made between ‘country’ and ‘city’ areas. The ABS remoteness structure, determines how ‘remote’ an area is by measuring its physical distance by road to the nearest urban centre. Urban centres are classified into five groups based on population size and consequently services and opportunities that these urban centres are likely to afford individuals.

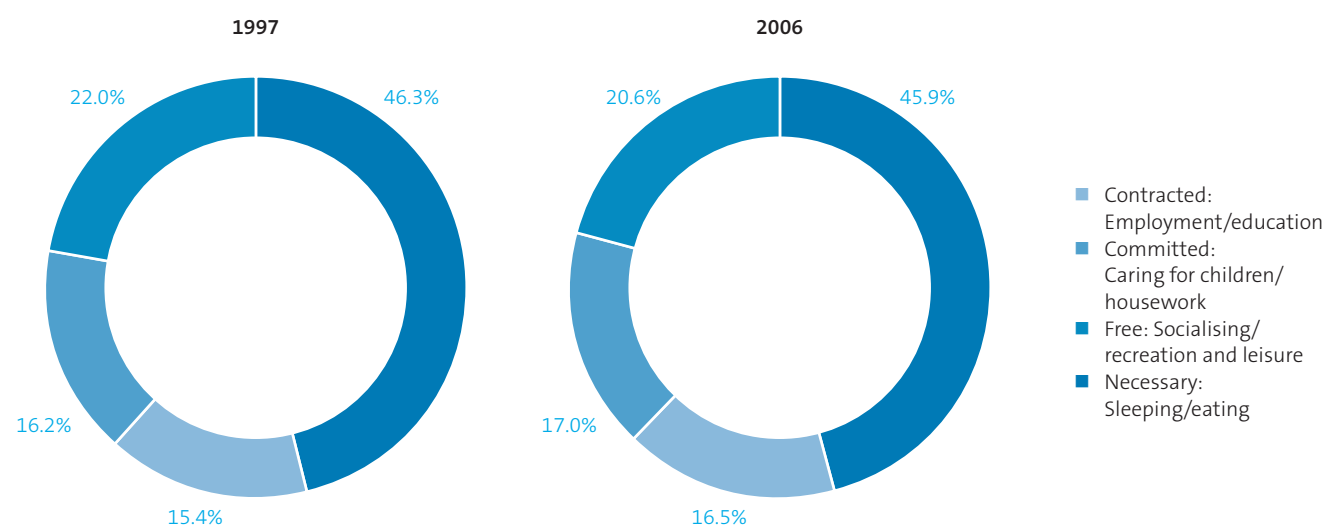
Living in inner regional parts of Australia, in locations such as Bendigo, Ballarat, Shepparton (Vic); Goulburn, Orange, Wagga Wagga, Albury and Nowra (NSW); Toowoomba and Rockhampton (Qld); Bunbury (WA); Murray Bridge (SA); and Launceston (Tas), will almost certainly guarantee you more time for recreation and leisure, which may be a result of the shorter travel time to work and slower paced lifestyle that often exists in these areas. For men and women living in other areas of Australia, such as Griffith, Dubbo, Forbes and Temora (NSW); Emerald, Townsville, Bowen and Innisfail (Qld); Horsham, Bairnsdale and Mt Gambier (Vic); Port Augusta and Whyalla (SA); Albany, Geraldton and Broome (WA); Darwin (NT) and Burnie (Tas), a longer part of the day is spent on domestic chores - an extra 30 minutes per day for women compared with those living in inner regional Australia and an extra hour when compared with those living in capital cities (Table 3). This is likely to be linked with a number of factors, including shorter time spent on employment and education, larger gardens to take care of and less opportunity to outsource these services.

# How have things changed?

More and more, there is a feeling of increased pressure on our precious time - is this truly the case or are we just trying to fit too much in?

A comparison of broad time use categories between 1997 and 2006 is shown in Figure 4. Overall, there have been some minor changes in these broad categories. Our time spent working and educating ourselves (contracted time) has increased marginally, rising from 15.4 per cent of our day in 1997 to 16.5 per cent in 2006. Time spent sleeping and eating (necessary time) and our free time has suffered over the same period, both decreasing slightly, whereas time spent in committed activities such as child care has increased.

**Figure 4 - Changes spent on selected activities over time**

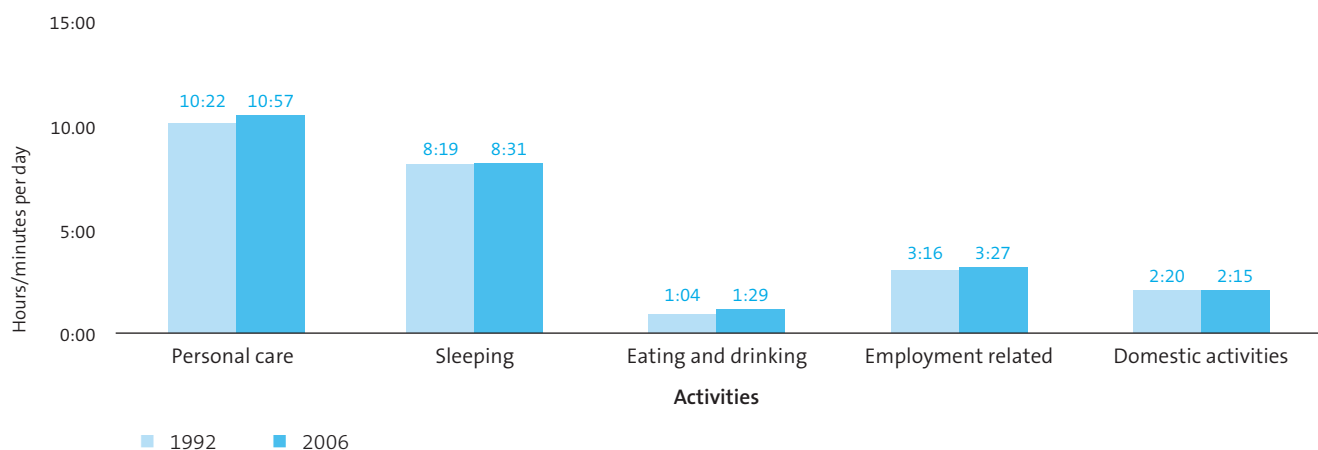


**Note:** See technical notes for detailed definitions of the sub-categories within free, necessary, committed and contracted time. Values may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

**Source:** ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

When examining changes over a longer period, we see some more dramatic patterns. Over the last 14 years, the average time spent on personal care has increased by around 35 minutes each day, with people spending more time sleeping, eating and drinking (Figure 5). Our increased time spent sleeping is likely to be attributed to our changing population structure, with a higher proportion of Australians aged above 65 - a population that is also more likely to spend a higher proportion of their day on personal care (see Table 2). Time spent in employment-related activities has increased each day by around 11 minutes, whereas time on domestic activities has decreased slightly by five minutes each day - equating to over 30 hours each year. This decrease could be due to a higher rate of outsourcing our domestic chores.

**Figure 5 - Changes spent on selected activities over time**



**Note:** See technical notes for detailed definitions of the above activities.

**Source:** ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

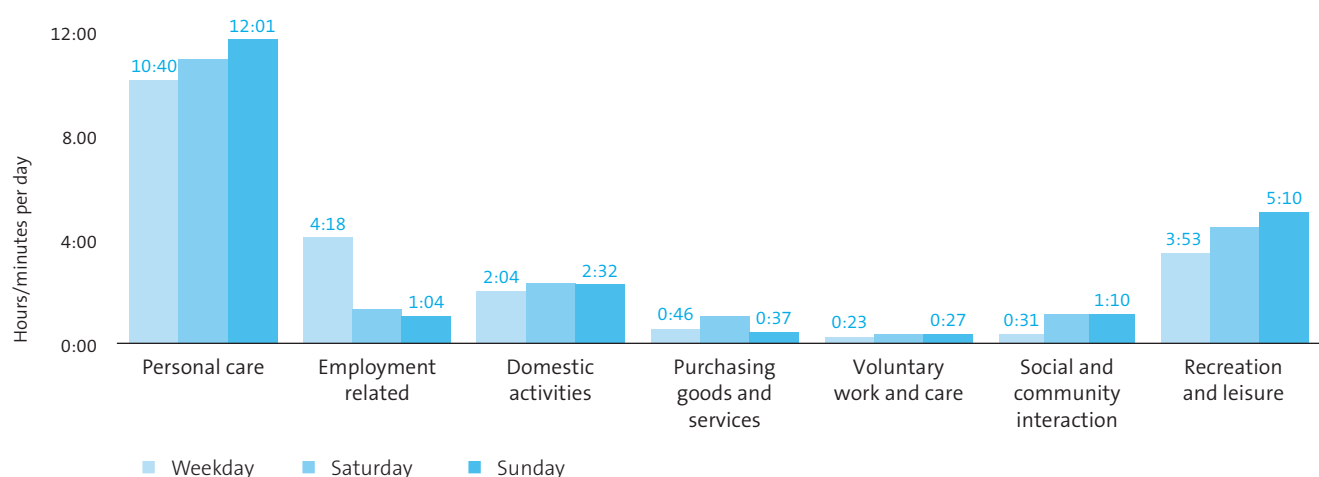
# What happens on the weekend?

Australians work and play hard. Weekends are the treasured time we spend recuperating from our hard week's work – time with friends and family, catching up on housework and indulging in a bit of rest and relaxation.

According to Figure 6, many Australians spend their Saturdays at the shops engaging in retail therapy or stocking up on necessities for the week ahead. On average, an hour is spent purchasing goods and services on a Saturday, compared with 46 minutes on a weekday and 37 minutes on Sundays.

Sundays are all about recreation and leisure – seriously putting our feet up, watching television or our favourite sport, finishing that book or jumping on Facebook to catch up with friends. Australians spend an average of around five hours on recreation and leisure each Sunday, compared with just over four hours on a Saturday and 3.5 hours each weekday (Figure 6).

**Figure 6 - Weekend and weekday time use**



**Note:** See technical notes for detailed definitions of the above activities.

**Source:** ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

We also volunteer our time more on the weekends - helping out with the kids' soccer or a local charity. Data from the ABS Voluntary Work Survey show that overall volunteer rates have increased over time, from 34.4 per cent in 2002 to 35.4 per cent in 2006. However, time spent volunteering differs according to gender and age.

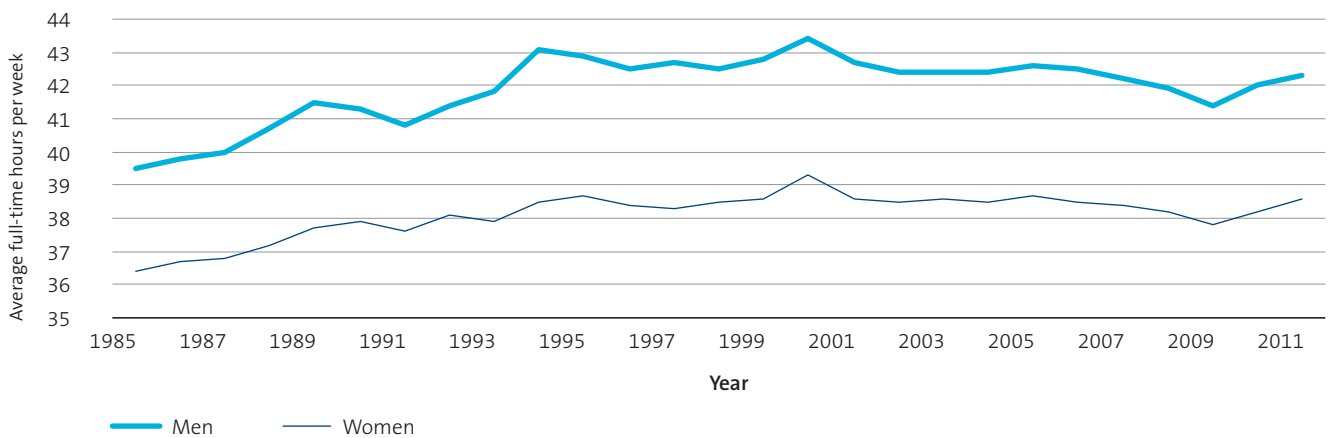
From 2002 to 2006, volunteer rates increased by 4.1 per cent among those aged between 18 and 24 and 3.2 per cent for those aged 25 to 34, but fell or remained stable for Australians aged over 40. The gender difference is also quite marked, with 38 per cent of women volunteering their time in 2006 - up nearly 3 percentage points on 2002 figures. This compares with a reduction in volunteer rates amongst men of around 0.9 percentage points, from 33.7 per cent in 2002 to 32.8 per cent in 2006.

# Time on the job

In 2010, 11 million Australians worked a total of 19.2 billion hours in paid employment. In this section, the time Australians spend at work each week is analysed, including changes over time and the amount of time spent travelling to and from work.

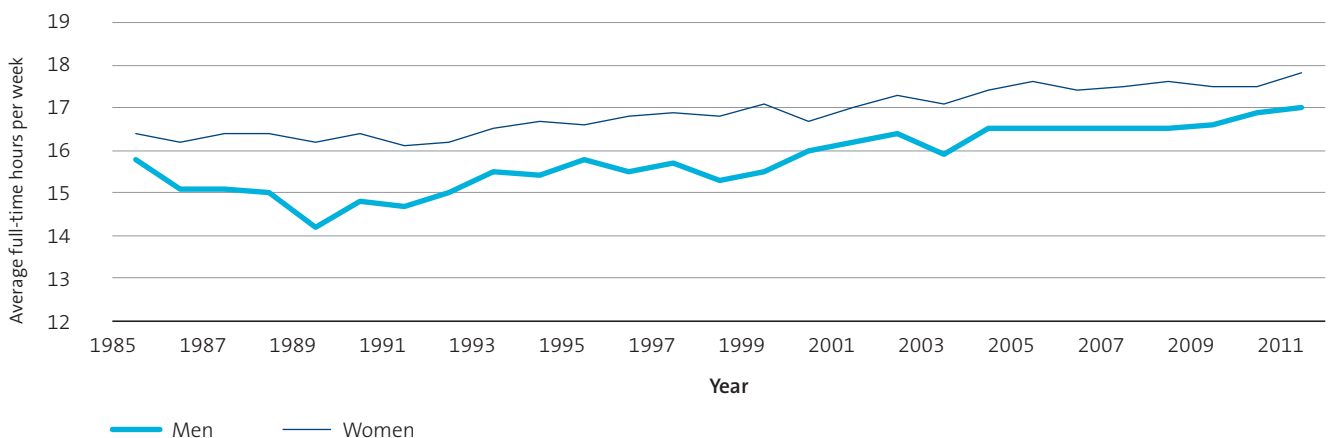
Overall, between 1985 and 2011, the average hour amount that constitutes 'full-time' work has increased for both men and women. Peaks and dips in hours tend to follow the economic cycle, decreasing in hard economic times and increasing in good ones. In 1985, men working full-time averaged around 39.5 hours - today it's 42.3 hours (Figure 7). The average weekly full-time hours for women have also increased, from 36.4 in 1985 to 38.6 in 2011. Part-time hours have also risen steadily over this period for both men and women, from 16.4 to 17.8 hours for women and 15.8 to 17 hours for men (Figure 8).

**Figure 7 - Average weekly hours at work for full-time employees**



Source: NATSEM calculations from ABS Labour Force Australia cat. 6291.0.55.03, August data.

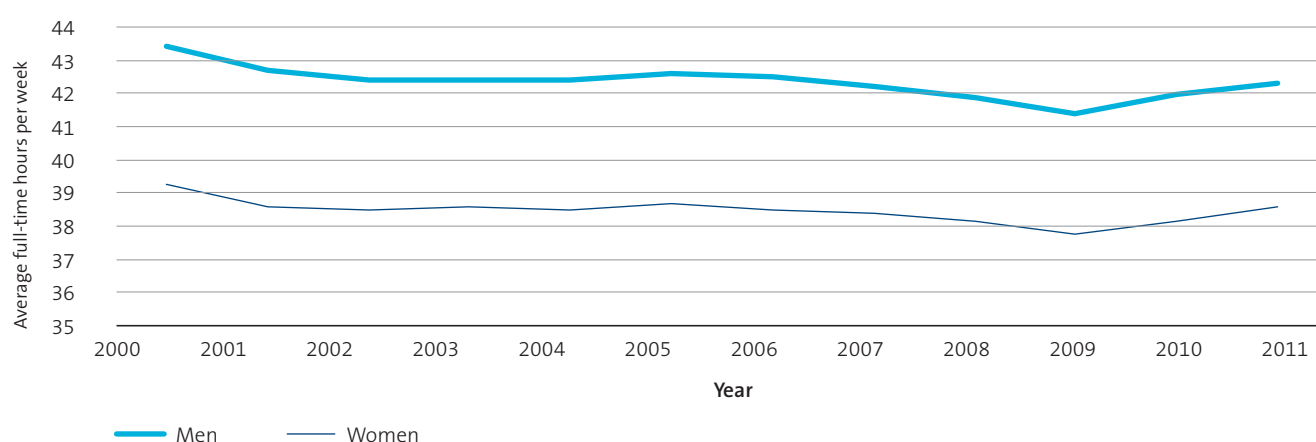
**Figure 8 - Average weekly hours at work for part-time employees**



Source: NATSEM calculations from ABS Labour Force Australia cat. 6291.0.55.03, August data.

However, when examining trends in full-time hours over the last 10 years, a pattern of decline is evident (Figure 9). Men working full-time in 2000 averaged just over 43 hours per week and women just over 39 hours. A steady decline has seen men's full-time hours decrease by two hours each week, to just over 41 hours in 2009. Women working full-time have also decreased their average full time hours to just under 38 hours in the same period. The sharper decreasing trend in full-time hours, from 2007 and bottoming out at 2009 is likely to be an impact of the global financial crisis, with employers often reducing employee hours in times of economic decline. Since 2009, we can see average full-time hours for both men and women increasing steadily, yet still below the year 2000 peak.

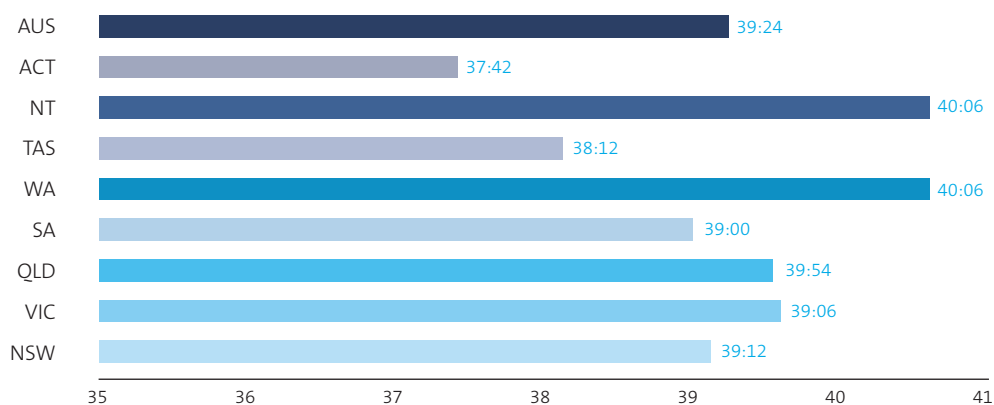
**Figure 9 - Average weekly hours for full-time employees**



**Source:** NATSEM calculations from ABS Labour Force Australia cat. 6291.0.55.03.

Canberrans enjoy some of the highest salaries in Australia, and they also enjoy the lowest average full-time hours at 37 hours and 42 minutes per week (Figure 10). High rates of public service employment, which typically go hand in hand with better working conditions, are likely to be influencing these results. Those in the Northern Territory and Western Australia work the longest full-time hours each week at just over 40. This is likely to be due to the mining sector and its impact on the states economies, increasing demand and hours worked. Queensland is a close second, with full-time workers here averaging 39 hours and 54 minutes each week. Those working full-time in New South Wales average 39 hours and 12 minutes per week, Victorians 39 hours and 6 minutes and South Australians 39 hours per week.

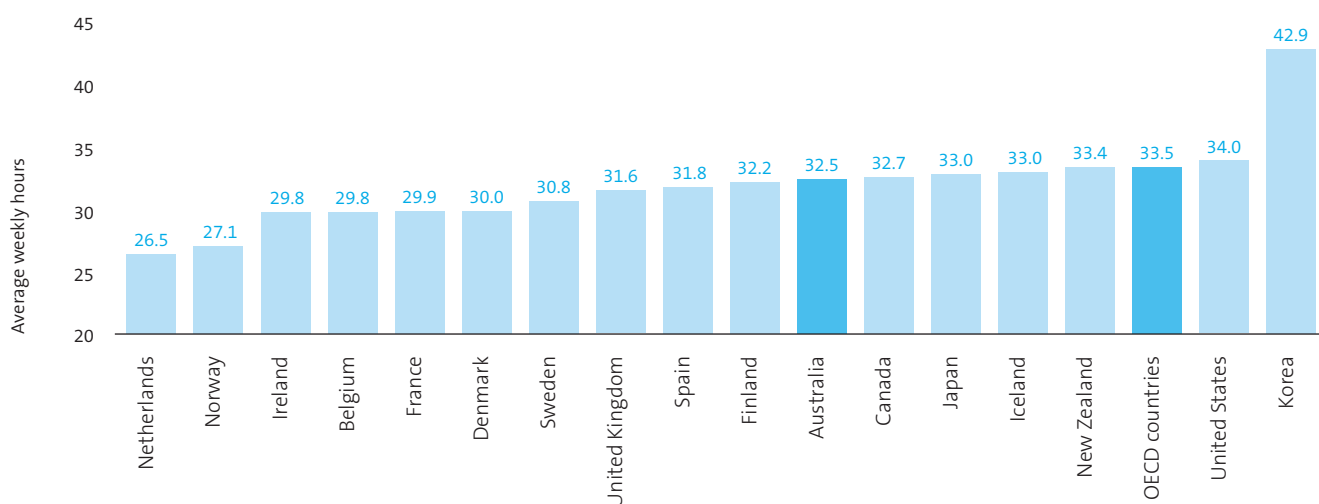
**Figure 10 - Average full-time hours by state (Full time - Hours:Minutes/week)**



**Source:** Australia social trend 2008, Cat. 4102.0.

A comparison of average weekly hours among OECD countries for all workers regardless of full or part-time status (Figure 11) shows that in 2009, Australian workers averaged 32.5 hours per week, which compares closely with the average for all OECD countries. Average hours worked each week are highest for Korea at 42.9 hours per week and lowest in the Netherlands, with an average of 26.5 hours.

**Figure 11 - Average weekly hours worked per week – selected OECD countries**



**Note:** Average weekly hours actually worked per week has been calculated by dividing average annual hours actually worked per worker by 52.

**Source:** OECD statistics for selected OECD countries 2009.



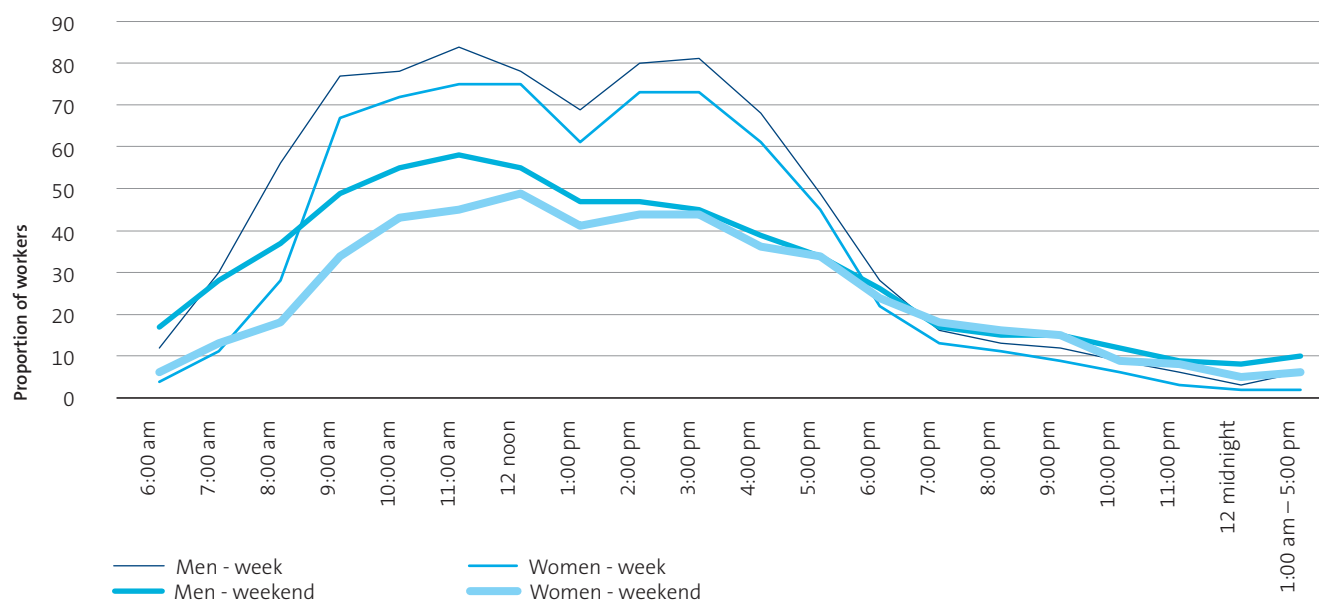
## Working nine to five?

Pop star Sheena Easton's take on working 'nine to five' is less relevant now than it was when the song was released in the early 1980s. For those who work, it has become increasingly hard to keep to a predictable five day working week and, consequently, protected time for family and social activities. Instead, more Australians have fallen into a pattern of work that requires an early start or a late finish (or indeed both).

Working weekends are also more commonplace, meaning at least one parent may be at work at times during the day or week that clash with when their children are at home. This also gives rise to 'tag-team' parenting, with children being 'handed over' as parents share the task of looking after them.

Data from the 2006 ABS Time Use Survey show that around 30 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women are working at 7am in the morning, with one in six men and one in seven women working at 7pm in the evening (Figure 12). The same is true at weekends, for both men and women. Extended working patterns are known to have consequences both for family life, stability of relationships and child development. For example, research from the UK has found that children whose parents work at weekends spend less time reading, less time on homework, and significantly more time alone, and a recent AMP.NATSEM report *Little Australians* found that children being read to more frequently are more likely to have higher development scores (Gong et al. 2011).

**Figure 12 - Proportion of population working by time of day**



Source: ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

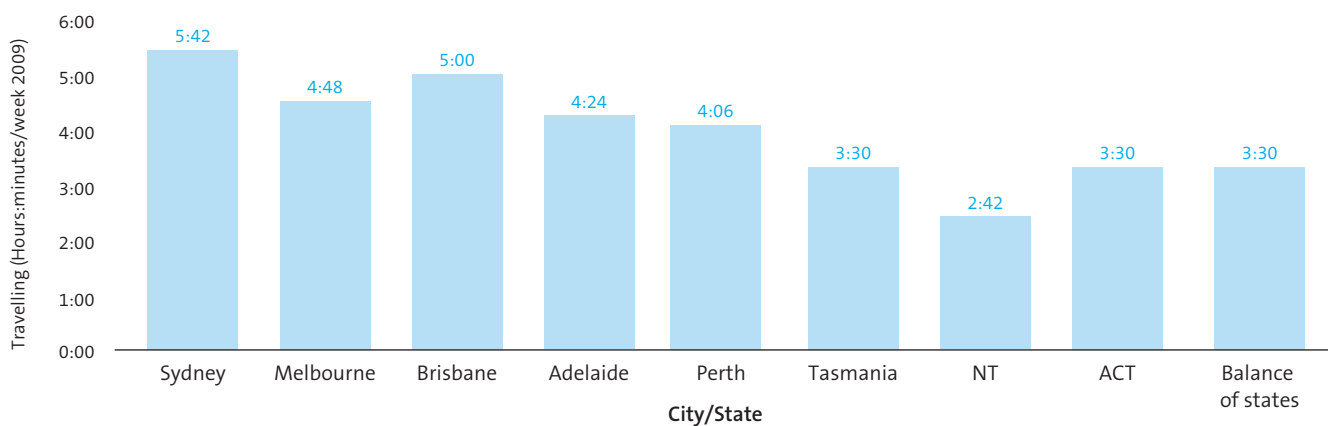


## Going the extra mile - travelling time in Australia

Not only are we working on average more hours each week, we are also spending a large amount of our time getting to work. Data from the HILDA survey show that the average hours Australians spent each week travelling to and from work have increased from 3.9 hours in 2002 to 4.4 hours in 2009 (data not shown).

When comparing capital cities, Sydneysiders fare the worst in this area, spending on average almost six hours per week in a car, bus or train (Figure 13). Those living in Brisbane spend on average five hours a week travelling to and from work, Melburnians are a little lower at 4.8 hours. For those who are looking to reduce travel time to and from work, getting a job in Canberra, Hobart or Darwin may be a good option.

**Figure 13 - Time spent travelling to/from paid work - capital city**



**Note:** Balance of states refers to those areas outside capital cities.

**Source:** NATSEM calculations from HILDA, Wave 9.

“Sydneysiders spend almost six hours per week getting to and from work. Canberra, Hobart and Darwin spend the least time commuting.”

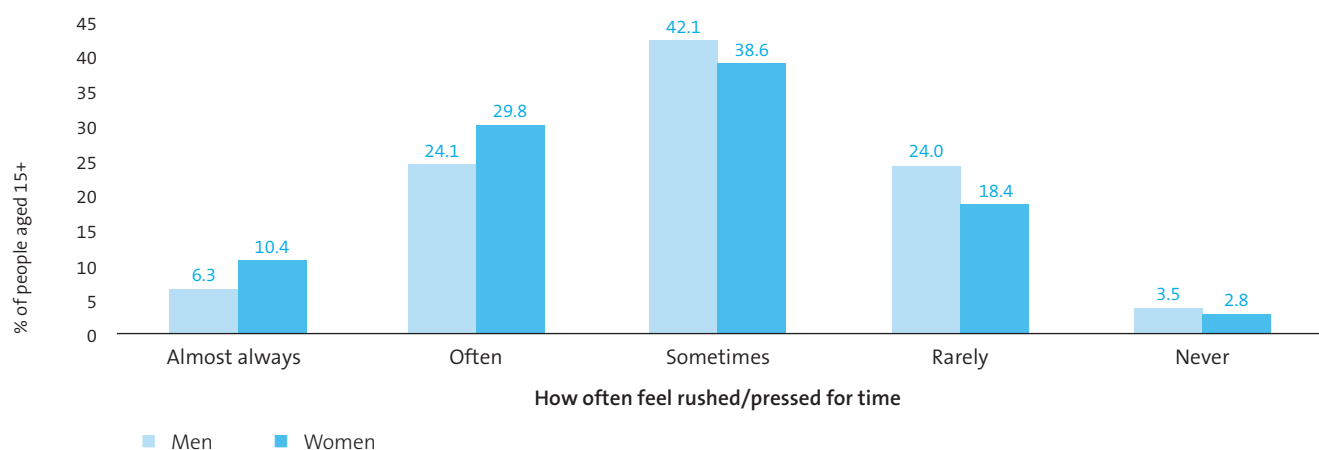
# Families under pressure

## I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date...

Our quality of life is enhanced by a feeling of ownership and control over the use of time, and our ability to protect enough time for family, social and recreational activities. Unfortunately, this tends to be difficult to achieve for many Australians. When asked about their ability to manage their commitments, around 40 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men report being often or always rushed or pressed for time (Figure 14).

Not surprisingly, the pressures of managing time are far greater for those who seek to balance work and family commitments while holding down full-time jobs. Nearly eight out of 10 women who work more than 40 hours per week feel pressured in their management of time (Table 4), as do around half of all men.

**Figure 14 - Proportion of people feeling rushed or pressed for time**



Source: NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

**Table 4 - Proportion of people feeling rushed or pressed for time, by broad labour force status**

How often do you feel rushed or pressed for time?		Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
		%				
Employed full-time >40 hours	Men	10.0	37.7	37.6	13.6	1.2
	Women	18.1	47.1	28.8	5.9	0.0
Employed full-time 35-40 hours	Men	5.2	22.9	49.9	19.2	2.8
	Women	14.8	31.9	39.5	12.5	1.2
Employed part-time <35 hours	Men	4.3	21.6	45.4	26.0	2.7
	Women	11.1	35.5	40.3	12.2	1.0
Unemployed	Men	2.9	20.4	48.0	22.1	6.6
	Women	3.7	19.6	47.4	23.6	5.7
Not in the labour force	Men	4.6	11.3	38.0	39.4	6.7
	Women	6.0	20.5	39.0	29.0	5.5

Source: NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

So what are the main reasons that people give for being rushed or pressed for time? Baxter (2009) examined this question using the 2006 Australian Time Use Survey (Table 5), and found that the reason most often cited for feeling time pressure was the task of balancing work and family. This is equally felt by men and women. The demands of family also featured highly in the list of factors, with 38 per cent of women reporting this as a reason for being rushed or pressed for time. Many fewer men say they are pressed for time because of family demands. The third factor that resonates strongly with many people (and features prominently in time management textbooks) is the problem of taking too much on - the inability to say “no”. This factor ranks for men almost as highly as family demands ranks for women.

**Table 5 - Reasons for feeling rushed or pressed for time (for those pressured at least sometimes)**

Reasons for feeling rushed or pressed for time	Women	Men
Balancing work and family	46%	45%
Demands of family	38%	22%
Pressure of work/study	31%	39%
Taking too much on	32%	27%
Too much to do/too many demands	25%	22%
Not good at managing time	14%	16%
Unpredictable working hours	10%	18%
Transport difficulties	9%	9%
Other reasons	2%	2%

**Note:** Respondents can state more than one reason for feeling rushed or pressed for time.

**Source:** Baxter (2009), with data drawn from the Australian Time Use Survey, 2006.

“The most common reason cited for feeling time pressure is the task of balancing work and family.”

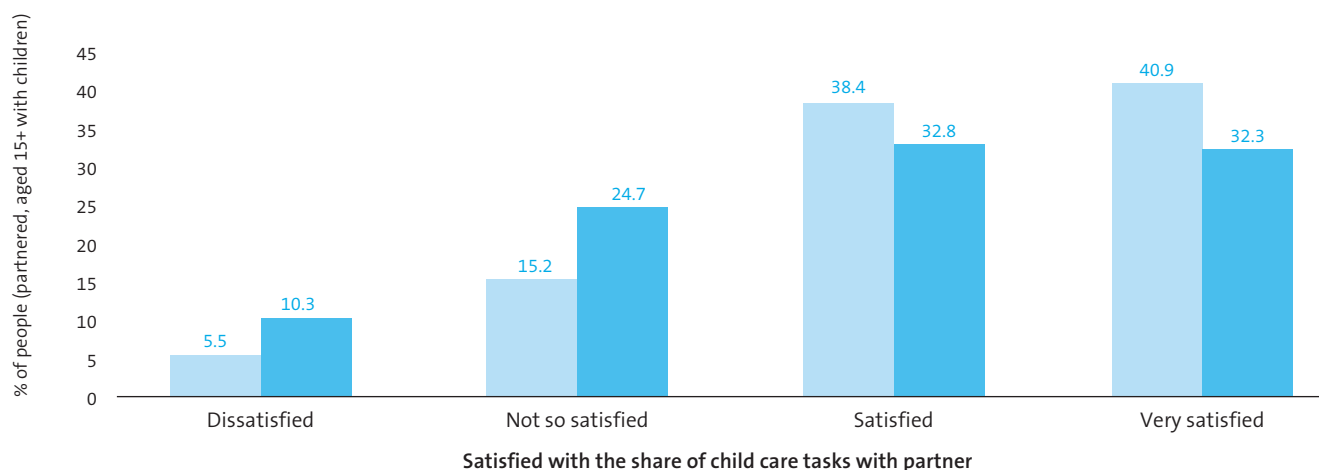
## Sharing the load

Running a busy family is a constant challenge for parents, especially when they are juggling work and home responsibilities. Whether it's getting the kids ready for school, helping them with homework or picking them up from the sports club - this 'running around' never seems to stop. And then there's the house to keep in order, overdue household repairs to attend to and relatives to visit or take care of. For people in couples, the support of their partner in sharing the burden of child care and housework can make a real difference.

But what does the data tell us about how couples share household tasks, and how effectively parents work together to look after their children? We expect our partners to lend a 'hand to the wheel' in caring for the children and helping with the housework. But are we happy with the help we get? And what are our perceptions of the contributions our partners make to their family and home responsibilities?

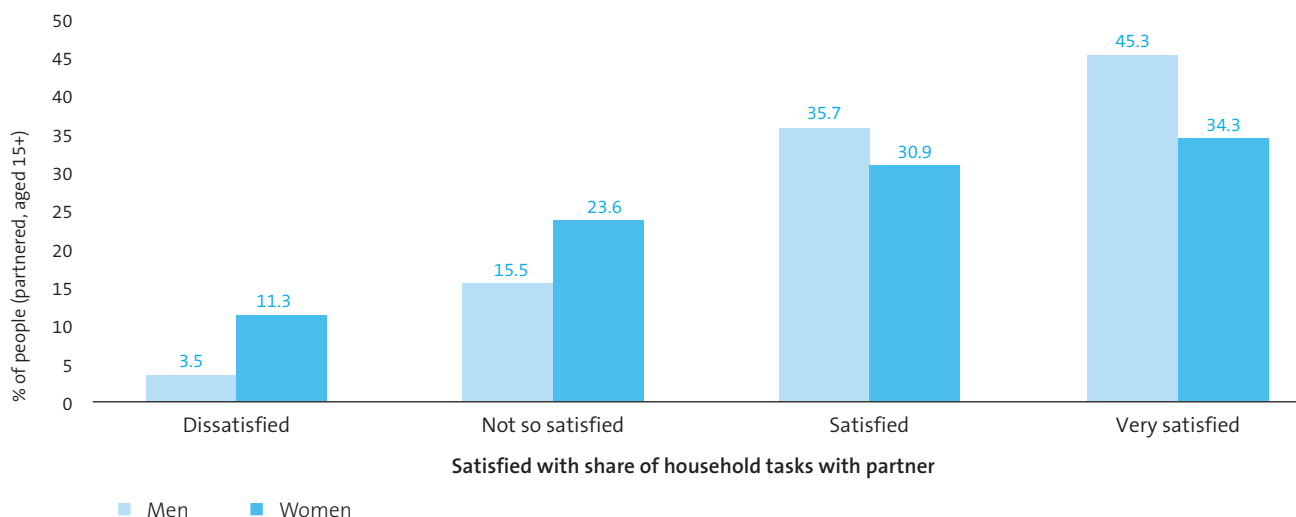
Differences are certainly apparent between men and women in the level of satisfaction with their partner's contribution to looking after the children (Figure 15). About 25 per cent of women are not so satisfied with their partner's commitment of time towards child care. This compares to a figure of around 15 per cent for men. Women are even less happy with the help they get with household tasks - with almost a quarter of women not so satisfied with their partner's efforts in housework, and 11 per cent actively dissatisfied (Figure 16).

**Figure 15 - Satisfaction with partner's share in child care, by gender**



Source: NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

**Figure 16 - Satisfaction with partner's share of household tasks, by gender**

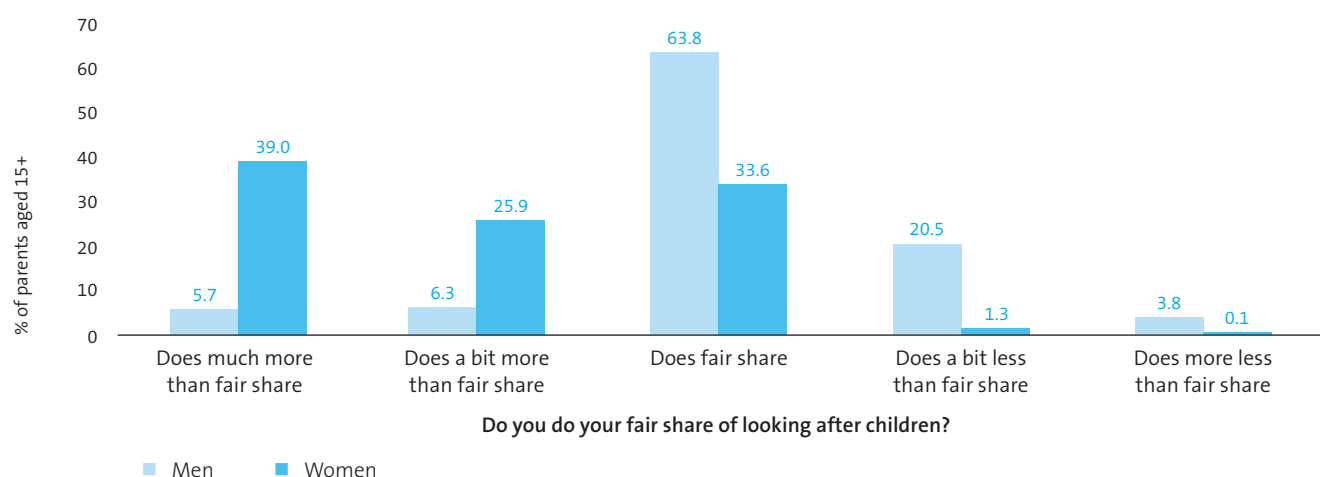


Source: NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

Participants in the 2009 HILDA survey were also asked to rate their own contributions to household tasks and to looking after the children. Responses are shown in Figures 17 and 18, and highlight a sharp divide in perceptions of effort between men and women. Around 65 per cent of women say that they commit more than a fair share of time to looking after children, and around 49 per cent of women reporting more than a fair share of household tasks.

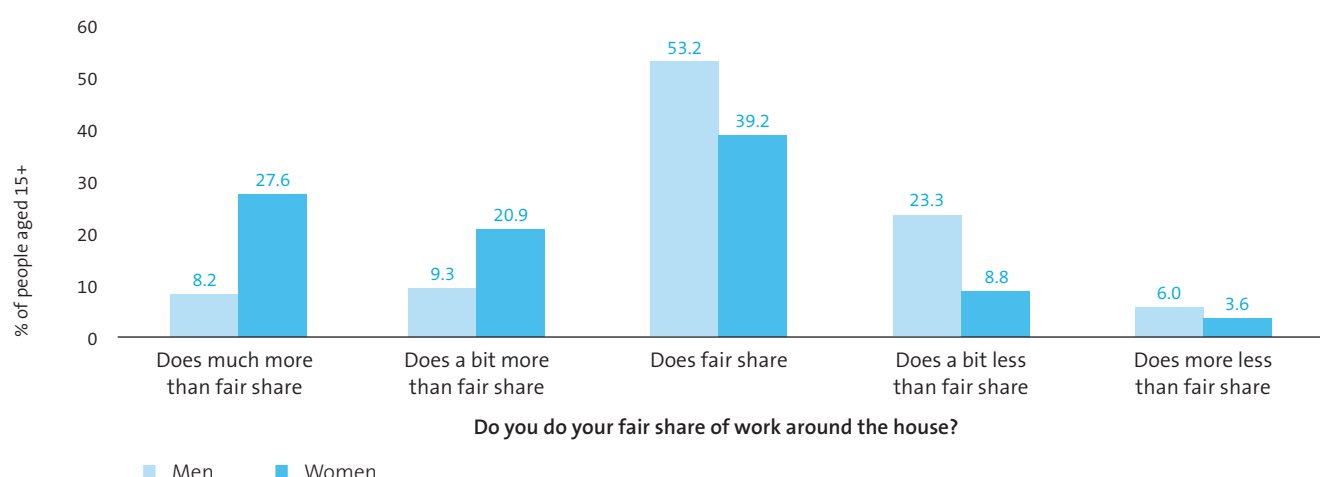
This is in marked contrast to men's responses, a quarter of whom admit to doing less than their fair share in looking after children, and almost 30 per cent confessing less than a fair effort in housework. Of course, men may well commit more than their fair share of effort to activities other than child care or household chores. Unfortunately, we're not able to assess this from the data in our sample. Neither can we test whether men's relatively poor appetite for housework is because their comparative advantage lies elsewhere.

**Figure 17 - Self-perception of share of looking after the children, by gender**



Source: NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

**Figure 18 - Self-perception of share of work around the house, by gender**



Source: NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

## Who does the most - or who thinks they do?

But are these responses consistent within families? Are there any differences between the sexes in the perceived commitment of time towards child care or household tasks? Research conducted for this report matches the self-assessed child care and housework contributions of each person in a couple directly to those of their partner, using data drawn from the 2009 HILDA survey. The results reveal some fascinating intra-household perceptions.

The majority of double income couple households with dependent children have women assessing their contribution to child care as either doing their 'fair share' or 'more than their fair share', and men's assessment as either doing their 'fair share' or 'less than their fair share' (Table 6). This could all be working well in 33 per cent of these households, with men and women both claiming to be doing their 'fair share'. However almost a third of households (32%) may be a little tense at times, with women in these households stating they are more than pulling their weight, where as men are claiming to still be doing their fair share.

A further one in five (22%) households have women in these households claiming to be doing more than their fair share of child care and men recognising this condition by claiming that they are indeed contributing less than their fair share. The relationship dynamics between the four per cent of households where we have both mum and dad claiming to be doing more than their fair share would be most interesting.

**Table 6 - Self-assessed contribution to looking after children – double income couples**

	Men feel that their contribution is...			
	Less than fair	Fair share	More than fair	Total
Women feel that their contribution is...	% of matched couples			
Less than fair	0.1	0.6	0.3	0.9
Fair share	4.1	33.1	4.3	41.6
More than fair	21.9	32.1	3.5	57.5
Total	26.1	65.8	8.1	100.0

**Note:** Data are presented for couples who are responsible for at least one child aged 17 or under, and for whom both men and women respond to the HILDA question on perceptions of share of child care. Both members of the couple are in employment, and both are aged between 15 and 65.

**Source:** NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

To see whether the perceived shares in looking after children between men and women vary according to employment status, we can compare double income families (in Table 6) with families comprising a working man and a woman not in paid employment (Table 7).

Our results suggest even greater discrepancies in perception between the sexes, with 38.7 per cent of male breadwinner families, with women assessing their contribution to child care as doing 'more than their fair share' and men in these households assessing their contribution as 'fair'.

**Table 7 - Self-assessed contribution to looking after children – male breadwinner couples**

	Men feel that their contribution is...			
	Less than fair	Fair share	More than fair	Total
Women feel that their contribution is...	% of matched couples			
Less than fair	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.2
Fair share	3.1	24.4	4.1	31.6
More than fair	25.2	38.7	4.3	68.2
Total	28.3	63.3	8.3	100.0

**Note:** Data are presented for couples who are responsible for at least one child aged 17 or under, and for whom both men and women respond to the HILDA question on perceptions of share of child care. Only the man is in paid employment. Both members of the couple are aged between 15 and 65.

**Source:** NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

One result to emerge quite clearly from the research is the high pressure that young working mothers feel in managing work and family. We compare (in Tables 8 and 9) the perceived share of time spent on household tasks by young families (with each parent aged below 40) with and without dependent children, and find some striking differences.

Simultaneously, we find almost 30 per cent of young double income families with children consist of a woman that assesses her contribution to the share of household tasks as being 'more than fair', and a man's assessment as 'fair'. This result is similar to young couples without children, with 28.8 per cent of couples having a 'more than fair' (women) and 'fair' (men) share mix of assessments. A small proportion of couples exist in both instances, where both the man and woman are assessing their contribution to household tasks as being above and beyond the call of duty.

**Table 8 - Self-assessed contribution to household tasks – young double income couples with children**

	Men feel that their contribution is...			
	Less than fair	Fair share	More than fair	Total
Women feel that their contribution is...	% of matched couples			
Less than fair	0.5	0.8	2.6	3.9
Fair share	3.1	24.9	6.3	34.3
More than fair	27.4	29.4	5.0	61.7
Total	31.0	55.0	13.9	100.0

**Note:** Data are presented for couples who are responsible for at least one child aged 17 or under, and for whom both men and women respond to the HILDA question on perceptions of share of child care. Both members of the couple are in employment, and both are aged less than 40.

**Source:** NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

**Table 9 - Self-assessed contribution to household tasks – young double income couples without children**

	Men feel that their contribution is...			
	Less than fair	Fair share	More than fair	Total
Women feel that their contribution is...	% of matched couples			
Less than fair	0.4	3.7	4.1	8.1
Fair share	3.2	29.6	8.0	40.8
More than fair	17.4	28.8	4.9	51.1
Total	21.0	62.0	17.0	100.0

**Note:** Data are presented for couples who are responsible for at least one child aged 17 or under, and for whom both men and women respond to the HILDA question on perceptions of share of child care. Both members of the couple are in employment, and both are aged less than 40.

**Source:** NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

# Conclusion

While Benjamin Franklin encouraged us to use our time wisely and well, to 'seize the day', what evidence is there to suggest that Australians are able to devote their time to the sorts of activities that add to their quality of life?

Do we have ownership of our own time? Do we contribute time to the benefit of others? Or are we prey to the time pressures that draw us away from doing the things we'd ideally like to do?

The 'average' Australian sleeps and eats for two fifths of their day, and divides the remaining time (more or less) equally on committed time (housework and caring for children), contracted time (employment and education) and free time (socialising, recreation and leisure). Of course, time use varies considerably depending on the circumstances we're in and the responsibilities we may have – more free time for older Australians and those without children; less free time for parents; and more time in employment or education for couples with children.

Differences between men and women are evident throughout the report, with women spending more time on shopping, housework and child care; and men more time in employment, recreational and leisure pursuits.

Has our time use changed over time? From 1997 to 2006, we can see an impact on our free time and the time we spend sleeping and eating, with these activities being crowded out by time spent on committed activities such as child care and household management. Time spent in employment has increased and so has the time spent getting there. However, Australians have also managed to volunteer more of their time now to community and charitable causes than in the past.

While overall our time spent in employment has increased as more of the Australian population participates in the paid workforce (particularly women) – full-time hours have gradually declined in the last 10 years, dropping by over two hours per week for men in full-time employment and an hour per week for women in full-time employment. However, a subtle rise in part-time hours is evident, gaining an extra hour over the last quarter of a century.

The regular 'nine-to-five' working week now appears less the norm than a work pattern involving long hours, early starts, late finishes and weekends at the office – with potential adverse effects on family life and a greater requirement for 'tag team' parenting, but also potentially allowing us to fit a whole lot more in.

One thing is clear however – we are feeling it! The pressure of 'balancing' work, life, family, community, and everything else, is one that is felt by many Australians, with clear differences in the time pressures felt by women and men. Women feel more pressed for time, more of the time. This is particularly evident among women in families with children, and women in employment. And the reasons most often cited? For women, the feeling comes from family demands and the difficulties of balancing responsibilities at work and at home. For men, it's about the same work-life balance, and the problem of taking too much on.

There are gender differences also in the perception of who takes responsibility within couples for child care and household chores. With more women engaged in paid work now than ever before, and part-time hours on the rise, the bulk of the share of household and child care tasks still lie with women, often leaving them less satisfied with the contribution of their partner – particularly young working mothers.

At the end of the day, we may ask ourselves – are all these pressures and competing demands really worth it, or should one take more time to simply stop and smell the roses?





# Appendix A

Table A1 - Average time on daily activities by country of birth

	Personal care	Employment related	Education	Domestic activities	Child care	Purchasing goods and services	Voluntary work and care	Social and community interaction	Recreation and leisure
Country of birth	Hours and minutes per day								
Males									
Australia	10:43	4:40	0:30	1:34	0:21	0:35	0:19	0:40	4:29
MESC*	10:41	4:37	0:12	1:43	0:23	0:42	0:24	0:33	4:41
Other	11:14	4:00	0:40	1:31	0:22	0:45	0:17	0:42	4:20
Females									
Australia	11:05	2:21	0:30	2:44	1:00	0:56	0:31	0:46	4:00
MESC*	10:58	2:20	0:18	2:53	0:47	1:02	0:33	0:45	4:16
Other	11:14	2:23	0:36	2:58	0:57	0:57	0:23	0:48	3:37

Source: ABS Time Use Survey 2006 data cube.

\* MESC - Main English-speaking countries.

# Technical notes

## Data

The majority of the data used in this report comes from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics of Australia (HILDA) Survey 2002 and 2009.

The HILDA Project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (Melbourne Institute). The findings and views reported in this paper, however, are those of the authors and should not be attributed to either FaHCSIA or the Melbourne Institute.

The time use component of HILDA is taken from the self-completion questionnaire which asks people who are aged 15 and over to record the length of time spent on various activities in a 'typical' day or week. The sample size of time use is about 4,000 persons in HILDA 2002 and 3,000 persons in HILDA 2009. The time use variables in HILDA are consistent over time. However, several studies have found that, in the survey, women report their housework time more accurately than men. On the other hand, men tend to overestimate their time spent on housework (Baxter and Bittman, 1995).

Wooden and Watson (2007) provides details of the design of HILDA and Watson (2011) is the latest version of the HILDA User Guide.

Time use data from the ABS time use surveys 1992, 1997 and 2006 and time series data of Australian labour force participation from ABS labour force surveys have also been used in this report (ABS 1998, 2008, 2011).

The time use data of ABS is collected by time diary method which requires respondents who are aged 15 and over to record every episode of time use in a given series of days. The sample size is about 3,000 to 3,900 households in each year (ABS, 1998 and 2008). There are some changes in the allocation of activities over time. For more details, see below "Cautions when comparing ABS time use data over time" and ABS (1998, 2008).

Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003) includes data only collected in February, May, August and November (including industry and occupation). The August data has been used in this report, from 1985 to 2011.

## ABS time use terms

The ABS Time Use Survey was conducted across states and territories in 1992, 1997 and 2006. It collected information from people aged 15 years and over (ABS 1998, 2008). The average hours/minutes reported from ABS time use data cubes are the average of all respondents no matter whether they have reported zero or non-zero value of time use on each activity.

When measuring averages for time spent on an activity, all minutes stated are averaged over the seven days of the week and the whole specified population group.

The ABS Time Use Survey divides the activities on which people spend their time into four broad categories: necessary time, contracted time, committed time, and free time (ABS 2010).

**Necessary time** includes activities which are performed for personal survival, such as sleeping, eating and personal hygiene.

**Contracted time** includes activities such as paid work and regular education where there are explicit contracts which control the periods of time in which the activities are performed.

**Committed time** includes activities to which a person has committed themselves because of previous social or community interactions, such as establishing a household or volunteering. The consequent housework, other household management activities, child care, shopping or provision of help to others are all examples of committed time activities.

**Free time** is the amount of time left when the previous three types of time have been taken out of a person's day. Free time includes activities associated with social and community interaction and recreation and leisure.

**The ABS Time Use Survey** also divides the activities on which people spend their time into more detailed categories (ABS 2008).

**Personal care** is the time spent on personal care activities, including sleeping, sleeplessness, personal hygiene, health care, eating and drinking, and associated travel.

**Employment related** is the time spent on employment related activities, including main job, other job, unpaid work in family business or farm, work breaks, job search, and associated travel etc.

**Education** is the time spent on education, including attendance at educational courses, job related training, homework/study/research, breaks at place of education and associated travel etc.

**Domestic activities** is the time spent on domestic activities, including total housework (food and drink preparation, clean up, laundry and clothes care, and other housework) and other household work (grounds and animal care, home maintenance, household management, associated travel, etc.).

**Child care** is the time spent on child care, including care of children, teaching, helping and reprimanding children, playing, reading, talking with child, minding child, visiting child care establishment/school and associated travel, etc.

**Purchasing goods and services** is the time spent on purchasing goods and services, including purchasing goods, purchasing services and associated travel, etc.

**Voluntary work and care** is the time spent on voluntary work and care, including support for adults, unpaid voluntary work and associated travel, etc.

**Social and community interaction** is the time spent on social and community interaction, including socialising, visiting

entertainment and cultural venues, attendance at sports events, religious activities/ritual ceremonies, community participation, negative social activities and associated travel, etc.

**Recreation and leisure** is the time spent on recreation and leisure, including sport and outdoor activity, games, hobbies, arts, crafts, reading, audio/visual media, attendance at recreational courses, talking (including phone) or writing/reading own correspondence and associated travel, etc.

**Undescribed** is the time spent which cannot be classified into any of the categories mentioned above.

### **Cautions when comparing ABS time use data over time (ABS 1998, 2008)**

1. The 1992 and 1997 time use surveys approached the measurement of 'socialising' in different ways. In 1992 survey, the time spent on meeting or visiting someone for a social purpose, was coded to the category 'socialising', regardless of the activity undertaken. While in 1997 survey, the time on talking with someone was included into 'recreation and leisure' and time on eating with someone was included into 'personal care'. The changes decrease the time on 'socialising', while increase the time on 'recreation and leisure' and 'personal care'.
2. Only slight changes occurred between 1997 and 2006 time use surveys, for more details, see ABS (2008).
3. Because time use activity on weekend days is quite different to time use on weekdays, for 2006, the proportion of total diary days allocated to weekend days was increased compared with earlier time use surveys to reduce sample error in many total time use estimates by activity, and to enable better time use estimates to compare time use for both Saturday and Sunday individually and with the weekdays.

### **ABS terms for labour participation**

Hours worked used in ABS are derived from the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) (ABS 2007, 2011).

**Average weekly hours worked** is the total actual hours worked by a group, divided by the total number of people in that group (ABS 2007).

**Actual hours of work** refer to hours actually worked during normal periods of work. Including (1) time spent in addition to hours worked during normal periods of work (overtime); (2) time spent at the place of work on activities such as the preparation of the workplace, repairs and maintenance, preparation and cleaning of tools, and the preparation of receipts, time sheets and reports; (3) time spent at the place of work waiting or standing by; and (4) time corresponding to short rest periods. Excluded are: (1) hours paid for but not worked such as paid annual leave, public holidays or paid sick leave; (2) meal breaks; and (3) time spent on travel to and from work (ABS 2007).

**Full-time workers** are those who usually work 35 hours or more per week (in all jobs) and those who, although usually work less than 35 hours a week, worked 35 hours or more in the reference week (ABS 2007).

**Part-time workers** are those who usually work less than 35 hours per week (in all jobs) and did so in the reference week (ABS 2007).

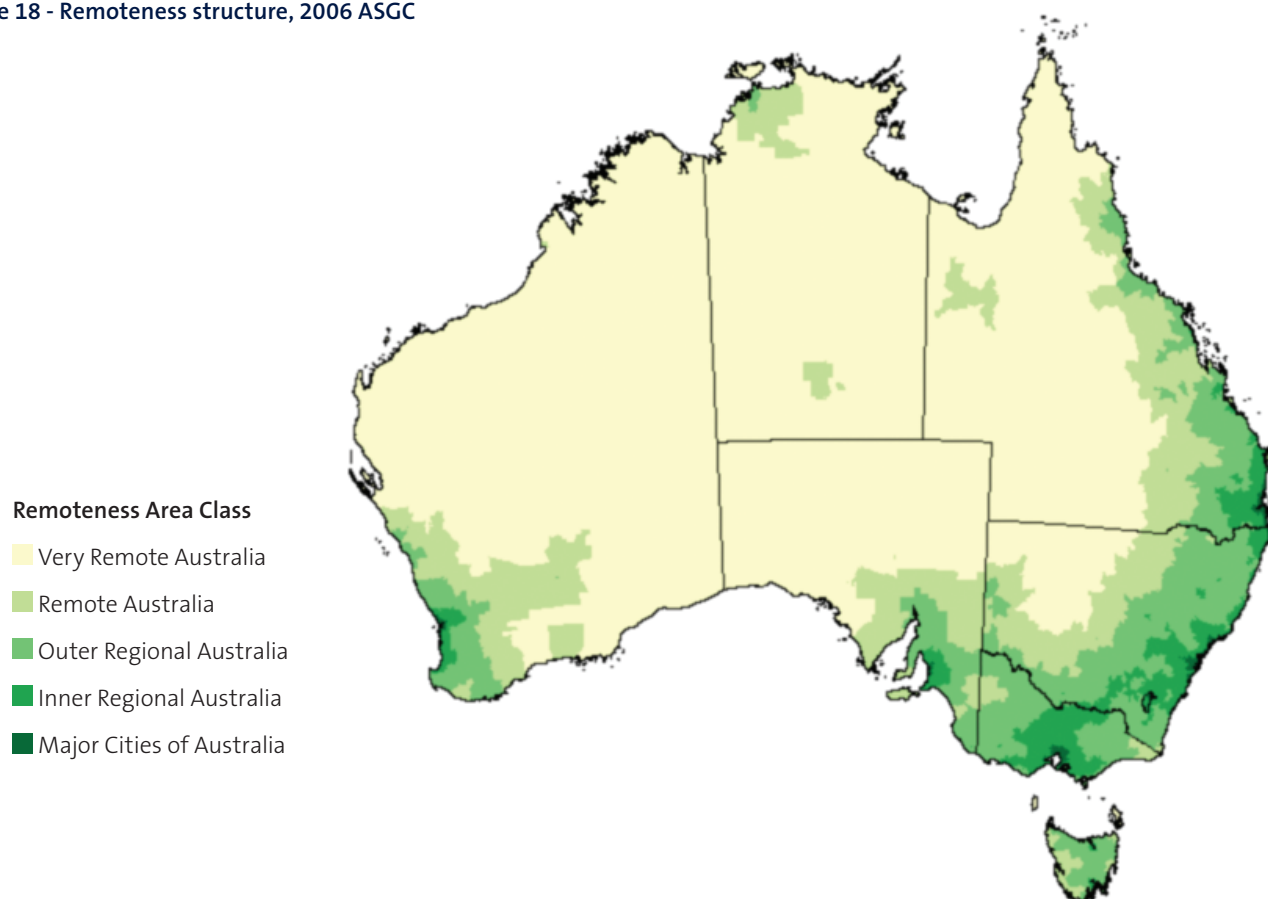
**Standard working hours** is calculated as working 35-40 hours per week (ABS 2007).

**Employee** is a person who works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wages, salary, a retainer fee from their employer while working on a commission basis, tips, piece-rates, or payment in kind; or a person who operates his or her own incorporated enterprise with or without hiring employees (ABS 2007).

**Remoteness Area** (see Figure 18) is a structure of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC). It classifies areas sharing common characteristics of remoteness into six broad geographical regions (Remoteness Areas). The remoteness of a point is measured by its physical distance by road to the nearest urban centre. As remoteness is measured nationally, not all Remoteness Areas are represented in each state or territory. The six Remoteness Areas are: Major Cities of Australia; Inner Regional Australia; Outer Regional Australia; Remote Australia; Very Remote Australia; and Migratory. In this report Remoteness Areas are collapsed to three levels:

- Major Cities
- Regional Areas (Inner Regional)
- Other Areas (Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote).

Figure 18 - Remoteness structure, 2006 ASGC



**Note:** The Remoteness Structure is composed of six classes. The migratory class is not mapped.

**Source:** Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006), Australian Standard Geographical Classification, <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/remoteness+structure>, viewed 18 October 2011.

## HILDA satisfaction and work-life balance

For comparison purpose, we have restricted all HILDA variables used in this report to persons aged 15 and plus. For the variables about 'parenting' and 'time playing with your children', we restricted them further to parents who have parenting responsibilities for any children aged 17 years or less.

Parents indicate people who have parenting responsibilities for any children aged 17 or less. There are about 3,400 parents in HILDA 2009.

Working parents indicate the employed persons who have parenting responsibilities for any children aged 17 or less. There are about 2,600 working parents in HILDA 2009.

Life satisfaction in HILDA is a subjective measure, with respondents ranking their satisfaction level of life, job or relationship on a scale of 0 to 10 (from totally dissatisfied to totally satisfied). We defined very satisfied with a scale of (9, 10), satisfied (7, 8), not so satisfied (4, 5, 6) and dissatisfied (0, 1, 2, 3).

Opinions about parenting and work-family balance in HILDA are also subjective measures, with working parents who have any children aged 17 years or less ranking their level of disagreement/agreement to a statement on a scale of 1 to 7 (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). We defined disagree with a scale of (1, 2, 3), neither disagree/agree (4), and agree (5, 6, 7).

Household income quintiles are quintiles of equivalised gross weekly household income. Equivalised income is obtained by adjusting gross weekly household income using the modified OECD scale.

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Dost thou love life?  
then do not squander time  
for that is life is made of.

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