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Australian families feeling time pressured
Traditional gender roles still evident

Balancing work and family remains a big issue for Australian men and women, with around 40% of women and 30% of men feeling often or always rushed or pressed for time, according to a new report.

But when it comes to how men and women spend their day, the report finds that there are some big differences, with traditional gender roles still evident.

Australian women are spending on average two hours more each day than men on housework, child care and purchasing goods and services. Men spend almost the equivalent extra time on employment-related activities as well as an extra half hour per day on recreational and leisure pursuits.

These are some of the key findings of the AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth Report: *Race against time – How Australians spend their time*, which examines time use in Australia, including time spent on employment and education; housework and child care; leisure; and sleeping and eating; and how this has evolved.

With many already time squeezed, women are less satisfied than men with their partners' contribution towards child care and housework, with 25% not so satisfied with their partners' commitment of time towards child care compared to 15% for men.

And women are even less happy with the help they get with household tasks – with 11% actively dissatisfied. In contrast, only 4% of men are dissatisfied with their partners' efforts around the home.

Contributing to time pressures, Australian full-time weekly work hours have increased by almost three hours for men and two hours for women since 1985. That is, average weekly full-time hours have risen from 39.5 hours to 42.3 hours for men and 36.4 hours to 38.6 hours for women.

AMP Financial Services Managing Director Craig Meller said the report shows that juggling work and family is the main reason both men and women in Australia feel pressed for time.

“Juggling competing work, family and individual commitments means we have to be careful time managers. But there are only 24 hours in a day, leaving many of us feeling like we’ve let someone, or even ourselves, down. This is especially the case for young working mothers, who seem to be the most time poor according to the report’s findings,” Mr Meller said.

A third (33%) of men and women in double income households with children feel that child care is shared fairly between them. However, an additional 33% of women believe they do more than their fair share of looking after the children, despite their partners claiming to contribute fairly.

Time pressure is felt especially by young mothers with children, more than 60% feeling they contribute more than their fair share to household tasks. This compares with 50% of working women without children.

NATSEM Director and co-author of the report Professor Alan Duncan said the regular nine to five working week now appears less the norm with people now working longer hours, often with early starts and late finishes, and weekends at the office.

“These types of work patterns have potentially adverse effects on family life, a greater requirement for tag team parenting and add to the time pressures that working couples particularly are feeling,” Professor Duncan said.

Other key report findings

Women spend more time buying goods and services, while men have more free time

Each day, on average:

- Women spend 59 minutes on child care, compared to 22 minutes for men;
- Women spend 2 hours, 52 minutes on domestic activities and men spend one 1 hour, 37 minutes;
- Women spend 58 minutes purchasing goods and services while men spend 38 minutes;
- Men spend 4 hours, 33 minutes on employment-related activities, while women spend 2 hours, 21 minutes.

Note: 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, which includes men and women at all ages, job statuses and those with and without children.

Women are not so satisfied with the help they get at home

Around 65% of women say they commit more than their fair share of time towards child care and 49% report to doing more than their fair share of household tasks. On the other hand, a quarter of men (25%) admit to doing less than their fair share in looking after children with almost 30% confessing less than a fair effort in housework.

Sydneysiders spend the most time travelling to and from work

When comparing capital cities, people in Sydney spend the most time commuting – an average of 5 hours, 42 minutes per week. This is followed by those living in Brisbane (5 hours); Melbourne (4 hours, 48 minutes); Adelaide (4 hours, 24 minutes); Perth (4 hours, 6 minutes); Tasmania and Canberra (both 3 hours, 30 minutes); and the Northern Territory (2 hours, 24 minutes).

Canberrans earn the most but work the least average full-time hours. NT works longest full-time hours

Canberrans enjoy some of the highest salaries in Australia, and they also enjoy the lowest average full-time hours of work each week – 37 hours, 42 minutes. Northern Territorians and Western Australians work the longest full-time hours each week at 40 hours and six minutes. Queensland is a close second (39 hours, 54 mins), followed by New South Wales (39 hours, 12 minutes); Victoria (39 hours, 6 minutes); South Australia (39 hours), and Tasmania (38 hours, 12 minutes).

Many Australians are now working on the fringes of the day

Many Australians are now working on the fringes of the day and at weekends. Around 30% of men and 11% of women are working at 7am in the morning, with 1 in 6 men (17%) and 1 in 7 women (14%) working at 7pm in the evening. A greater proportion of men and women work between 6pm and 9pm on weekends than on weekdays.

How the average Australians spends their time

The average Australian sleeps and eats for two fifths of their day (46%) and shares broadly the remaining time between recreation and leisure (20%); housework and child care (17%); and employment and education (16.5%).

Volunteer rates have increased over time, especially for the younger generation

Volunteer rates have increased from 34% of Australians in 2002 to 35% in 2006. Volunteer rates for those aged 18 to 24 increased by 4% (to 32.2%) and those aged 25 to 34 increasing 3% (to 32%) between 2002 and 2006.

The more you earn, the more you work and the less you play

Men and women in the highest income quintile have the least free time each day (just under 4 hours for men and 3 hours, 22 minutes for women). Men in the lowest household income quintile spend an extra 2 hours on recreation and leisure (5 hours, 34 mins) and women spend an extra 1.5 hours (4 hours, 46 minutes) than those in the highest income quintile.

Australia's average weekly work hours are comparable with OECD countries

In 2009, Australians worked an average of 32.5 hours per week (which includes full and part-time work), which compares closely with many OECD countries. Average weekly hours are highest for Korea at 42.9 hours and lowest in the Netherlands at 26.5 hours. In 2010, 11 million Australians worked a total of 19,210 million hours in paid employment.

Part-time hours have increased over time

Average weekly part-time hours have also increased since 1985, with men now working an extra hour (17 hours) and women now working an extra 1.5 hours (17.8 hours).

Those in inner regional areas have more free time

Men in inner regional areas (where people live in or reasonably close to a major town centre), have an extra 18 minutes a day for recreation and leisure and women have an extra 12 minutes a day, compared with people in major cities and women.

People living in other areas of Australia (not inner regional or major cities) such as Dubbo (NSW), Townsville (QLD), Mount Gambier (VIC), Port Augusta (SA), Broome (WA), Darwin (NT) and Burnie (TAS) spend longer on domestic activities – 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.

Men born in a Main English Speaking Country other than Australia have more leisure time

Those who were born in a Main English Speaking Country (MESC) other than Australia averaged around 4 hours, 41 minutes of free time each day; compared with 4 hours, 29 minutes for those born in Australia and 4 hours, 12 minutes for those born elsewhere in the world.

Since 2002, AMP and NATSEM have produced a series of reports that open windows on Australian society, the way we live and work – and our financial and personal aspirations. AMP publishes these reports to help the community make informed financial and lifestyle decisions and to contribute to important social and economic policy debate. 

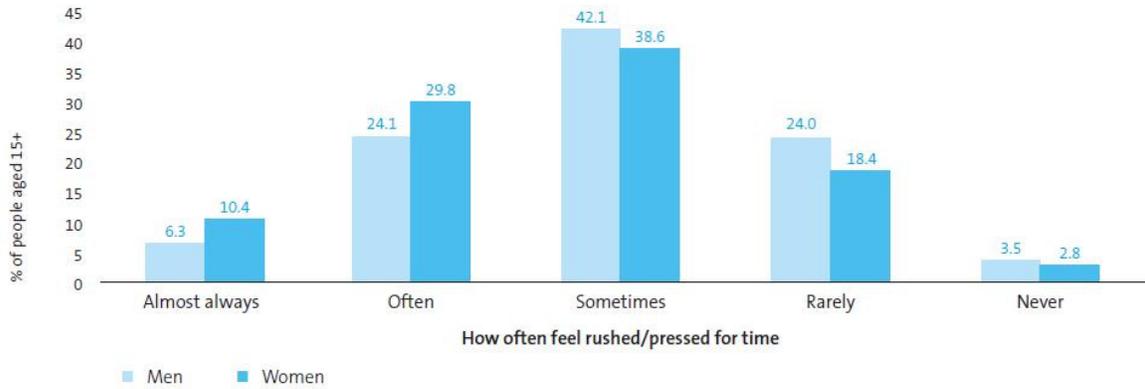
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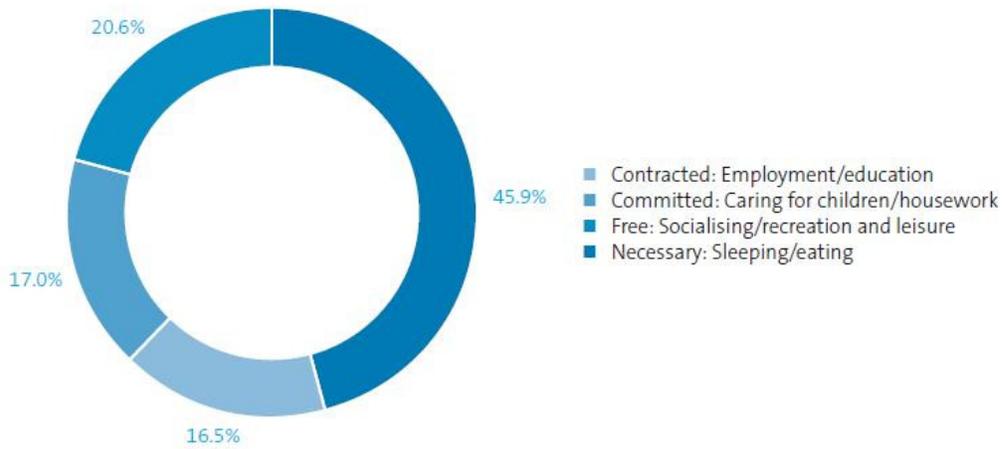
Appendix

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



Source: NATSEM calculations from HILDA 2009.

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.

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.

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.