Submission

No 3

INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 9-14 YEARS IN NSW

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Summary:

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Dear Sir/ Madam,

In response to your invitation we enclose our submission to the inquiry into children and young people 9-14 years in NSW. Please find enclosed our submission and three relevant attachments.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Prof Barbara Pocock, Mr Ken Bridge or me, at the Centre for Work + Life.

Yours sincerely,

PWilliams

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Inquiry into children and young people 9-14 years in NSW

Submission

Introduction

Our submission is based on research with men, women and children conducted over the past ten years. Qualitative data has been collected from children aged 10 to 18 years living in suburban and rural communities, and in high and low income areas, in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. In addition, qualitative and quantitative data concerned with work and life issues have been collected from adults across all states and territories.

This submission addresses the terms of reference directly and is accompanied by a list of associated resources and three relevant attachments.

Terms of Reference

1. **The needs of children and young people in the middle years i.e. between about nine and fourteen years of age**

- Access to opportunity for social interaction, work experience, education, physical activity and independent agency depends on good amenity and mobility options in the area where they live (e.g. libraries with resources attractive to young people, public transport that adequately services young people in terms of place and time).
- Our analysis of suburban developments, particularly master planned communities, suggests that the needs of children aged 9-14yrs are neglected relative to younger children aged 2-8yrs.

2. **The extent to which the needs of children and young people in the middle years vary according to age, gender and level of disadvantage**

- The resource requirements of children vary depending on age, socio-economic status and location. Due to their relative dependent status and safety issues within many communities (people and traffic), younger children may need greater access to resources with in the home than older children (particularly access to mobility). Due to less resources within the home (computers, adult time, private transport) children from poorer families need greater resources within their community (Particularly good amenities and mobility options). Due to their relative isolation children residing in newly built communities need increased access to good public transport and amenity.
- Existing after school programs are negatively perceived by many children in the middle years. Young people often say they are boring, inappropriately resourced for middle years teenagers and lacking desirable social activity (especially for those 13 years and older who want to 'hang' with their friends not with younger children). The role of after school programs, their funding and implementation need to be examined and input sought from young people of varying ages.

- Young people across ages and socioeconomic levels do better if resources are available to them within their residential communities. Valuable resources include safe, reliable and appropriately time-tabled public transport; accessible public/social space such as libraries and recreation centres with diverse and age appropriate resources including 'free' spaces that are uncommitted and can be used in various ways by young people.
- Shopping malls play a big role in the social and recreational lives of young people but they also pose risks in terms of the consumerisation of children. In an effort to distil the fundamental value of malls in children's lives we are currently exploring what characteristics of malls appeal to young people. The following characteristics seem important and should be considered in the design of alternative meeting places for young people: easily accessed by public transport, safe (though often issues associated with stereotype of groups of children as 'gangs'), indoor climate controlled space, free space to hang out with friends, meeting place and things to do (occasionally entertainment, but usually just shop browsing and eating).

3. The activities, services and support which provided opportunities for children and young people in the middle years to develop resilience

- Children and young people need to be able to act independently in a safe and supported environment. Access to good amenity (accessible public space such as parks and natural spaces, libraries, leisure and recreation facilities, food and other retail outlets) and public mobility options (public transport, safe walking and cycle routes) fosters independence. Frequent and sustained interaction with other people (adults and children) within their local area of residence fosters a caring community and helps develop social capital for children and their families.
- Young people often negotiate with their parents the space and time within which they live, however they are rarely consulted in the design of space and time at the level of development. Young people need to be active participants in the design of the spaces and time schedules within which they live. This gives them agency and a degree of inclusion and ownership which fosters positive interaction with the people and spaces around them.

4. The extent to which changing workplace practices have impacted on children and young people in the middle years, including possible changes to workplace practices which have the potential to benefit children and young people in the middle years

- Changing labour market participation rates (including increases in participation rates of women, decreases in job security and increases in working hours, especially among men) means that parents have less time and energy resources available for children than in the past.
- Many work practices are not compatible with children's 'time'. Long hours work culture, lack of employee initiated flexibility, shift work, long commutes, and

increased work stress reduce the amount of time and energy adults can spend with their children and in the community (thus reducing social connection with other children and their families).

- A lot of households struggle to coordinate paid working patterns with children's activities. Co-location of work, home and community activities, as well as good transport options between these spheres of life can facilitate coordination.
- Growth in sole parent households and their associated time and income poverty exacerbates difficulties associated with coordinating paid work and children's activities, further highlighting the need for considered and holistic approached to urban planning and labour policy.
- Our national survey of work and life - the Australian Work and Life Index 2007 (AWALI) showed that parents who worked long hours or felt overloaded at work or had a poor fit between their actual working hours and their preferred working hours were more likely to have poor work-life outcomes. These findings have implications for public policy interventions designed to help parents get a better fit between work and life.

5. Any other matter considered relevant to the inquiry by the committee

- Urban planning often designs children out of their environment. Planning should pay much greater attention to the amenity and mobility needs of children in order for them to access opportunities regardless of the resources available to them through their family.

Associated Resources

Pocock B (2006). *The Labour Market Ate My Babies: Work, Children and a Sustainable Future*. Federation Press, Sydney.

Pocock B (2003). *The Work/Life Collision: What Work is Doing to Australians and What to do About it.* Federation Press, Sydney.

Attachments

Pocock B, Skinner N, Williams P (2007). *Work Life in Australia: Outcomes from the Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI).* Centre for Work + Life, Hawke Research institute for Sustainable Societies, University of South Australia.

Williams P. (2007). Building 'community' for different stages of life: Physical and social infrastructure in Master Planned Communities. Proceedings of the *State of Australian Cities Conference*, Adelaide, Australia.

Williams P, Pocock B, Skinner N. (2007) "Clawing back time": Expansive work time and implications for work life outcomes in Australian workers. Proceedings of the *International Industrial Relations Association Conference*, Manchester, UK.

"Clawing back time"
Expansive working hours and implications for work-life outcomes in Australian workers

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Abstract

This paper explores the changing ways in which workers are 'putting together' their work, home and community relationships in the Australian context. It presents complimentary findings from a set of focus groups in two master planned communities and a national survey of workers. Both these studies have been conducted as part of the Work, Housing, Services and Community Project[1]. 'Time' is seen as a commodity by participants in this study. Time spent with family and in the community is traded or sacrificed for money, job security or career for participants engaged in the labour force. The findings suggest that the expansive nature of working time is the result of a shift from time oriented to task oriented working regimes; long hours working cultures; access to technologies that create porous boundaries between work and home; and issues with commuting. This study suggests that understanding the contemporary labour market in industrialised countries like Australia, requires a more integrated analysis of how work intersects with other aspects of workers lives, including home and community.

Introduction

The regulation of work is undergoing radical change in Australia under a conservative national government. These regulatory changes occur against the background of increasing rates of labour market participation (especially amongst women), high rates of precarious employment, increasing hours of work amongst full-time workers, and declining rates of unionisation and collective bargaining (Pocock, 2003).

The ability to access working conditions that help reconcile working time with time needed for other activities has been shown to have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of workers and their families (Glass & Estes 1997; Presser 2000; Strazdins et al. 2004a; Strazdins et al. 2004b). 'Good jobs' with inherent security, standard working hours and family friendly policies have the potential to enrich the lives of workers and those who depend on them (Strazdins et al. 2004b). Jobs that lack stability, perpetuate unsociable working hours and fail to implement policies that make it easier for workers to combine work and other aspects of life are likely to contribute to work related stress and negatively affect the physical, social and mental health of the worker, their partner and their children in a myriad of ways (Presser 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Strazdins et al. 2004a; Strazdins et al. 2004b). This has been borne out in a recent analysis of data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) which found that children whose mothers had low quality jobs, jobs that lack flexibility, control and security, were significantly more likely to have emotional and behavioural problems than children whose mothers worked in high quality jobs (Strazdins et al. 2006).

An increasing proportion of Australians, compared to 20 years ago, are working under conditions that may be compromising their capacity to reconcile working time with time spent in other activities. For example, sixty-four percent of Australian employees work non-standard time sometimes or regularly (ABS 2002) thirty-seven percent work overtime on a regular basis (ABS 2003) and twenty-seven percent have no leave entitlements (ABS 2006). Twenty-seven percent of employed mothers and sixty-six percent of employed fathers do not make use of working conditions that help them to reconcile work and family, such as flexible working hours and working from home (ABS 2003). Similar trends are being recorded in other industrialised countries, with long full-time hours increasing in the US, UK, Germany, Japan as well as Australia (Boulin et al, 2006).

The availability of working conditions that allow people to combine their roles as worker, parent, friend and community member, are clearly important, but the degree to which workers feel able to use these conditions is largely determined by the culture of the workplace and perceived consequences associated with their use (Wajcman 1999; Gambles, Lewis & Rapoport 2006). Eaton (2003) found that when workers perceived a threat to their career they did not use conditions that were theoretically available to them. If, however, workers perceived family friendly conditions to be useable then perceived productivity for all employees was higher.

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[1] *The Work, Housing, Services and Community* Project is jointly funded by The University of South Australia, Lend Lease Communities, the Australian Research Council and the University of Adelaide. The project is an ARC Linkage project. Barbara Pocock (University of South Australia) and Susan Oakley (University of Adelaide) and Kelvin Trimper (Lend Lease Communities) are Chief Investigators, and Philippa Williams is a Research Fellow on the project. More details about the project can be found at *http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/cwl.*

Paralleling work, the nature of housing and community configurations is also undergoing significant change. Major new master planned communities (MPCs) are being undertaken to meet demand as cities struggle to cope with increasing and ageing populations. Such urban developments are influencing workforce, household and community relations, which in turn drive health and well-being outcomes, and affect social capital and labour market participation.

MPCs are usually defined as geographically (and sometimes socially) bounded large scale, private housing developments that incorporate varying levels of social and physical infrastructure (Gwyther 2005a). These communities create new spatial alignments of work and home which affect people's capacity to engage in private and public life. often seen as elitist or 'instruments of governmentality' (Dowling and McGuirk 2005, p 3), for many they appear to satisfy a yearning for community and safety (Mullins and Western 2001; Mackay 2004; Gleeson 2004). Urban and suburban developments – in all their forms - are influencing workforce, household and community relations. A work 'career', a housing 'career' and a relationship 'career' are not what they used to be. They are now very dynamic over the life cycle creating changing needs, and different needs from previous generations. These have important implications for policy areas like housing, labour market policy, and community service provision. Forms of social support to assist people to live through these changes – and to dynamically 'put together' work, households and communities – affects how well things turn out both for individuals and societies.

Contemporary analysis of linkages between work, home and community, from the standpoint of workers and residents are rare in Australia. O'Connor and Healy argue this is a 'serious inadequacy in urban policy' (2002, vii). Their own spatial analysis of employment and housing linkages concluded: 'housing policy cannot be expressed independently of an adequate understanding of the spatiality of jobs and the nature of job-housing links' (2002, vii).

The study reported here attempts to address this gap in understanding by drawing on analysis of focus groups in two newly developed master planned communities with diverse housing forms, worker populations, household configurations and service provisions. These findings will be considered alongside quantitative data about work and life collected from a random sample of working Australians (Pocock, Skinner & Williams P, 2007). While not directly addressing issues of labour market or housing policy, this exploration of expansive working time will nonetheless make an important contribution to wider policy discussions

Methods

The Work, Housing, Services and Community Project takes work to the forefront, examining how urban Australians, are 'putting together' their work, home and community.

The study focuses upon ten communities in high and low socio-economic sites across Australia, studying the experiences of men, women and children. These sites include two recently developed urban MPCs as well as four sub-urban MPCs, each of which is paired with an adjacent, older, lower socio-economic community. The MPCs are Lend Lease developments and they are designed to create 'balanced communities' with a mix of housing types and employment and education opportunities.

The Work, Housing, Services and Community Project consists of a number of interrelated studies. Two of which are the subject of this paper. Study 1 was a focus group study of residents and workers at two MPCs; study 2 was a national survey of working Australians using the newly developed Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) (Pocock, Williams P & Skinner, 2007; Pocock, Skinner & Williams P, 2007).

Study 1: Focus groups

The aim of the focus groups was to gain a preliminary understanding of the issues faced by women and men in relation to fitting their work, home and community lives together in order to inform the development of the Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) and a larger household survey to be used in later phases of the project.

Fourteen focus groups were conducted with men and women who reside and/or work in two of the study sites, Mawson lakes in South Australia and Caroline Springs in Victoria. Both sites are newly developed residential communities with diverse housing forms, worker populations, household configurations and service provisions. Mawson Lakes differs from Caroline springs in that it is built around an existing technology park and University campus and is within 12 Kilometres of Adelaide CBD. Caroline Springs, on the other hand, is a classic 'green fields' development 25 kilometres from the Melbourne CBD with no existing employment or educational facilities.

The 68 participants included 33 women and 35 men aged between 19 and 70 years. Just over half the participants had dependent children; less than half the women and two thirds of the men were tertiary educated and the majority were in paid employment. There was a disproportionately high number of upper and middle-income earners with an over-representation of professional and tertiary educated workers/residents. A number of participants ran their own businesses from home (sometimes in addition to waged work) and several were self-employed tradesmen or contractors. Participants were living in a mix of household types (sole, dual earner/couple, sole earner/couple, retired, with and without dependents).

Focus group questions were used as a guide to facilitate a semi-structured discussion. They focused on participants' perceptions and experiences of where they worked, where they lived, their communities and the fit between these three things.

Qualitative analysis was carried out using verbatim transcripts of focus groups, notes taken during focus groups and notes made immediately following focus groups. Most groups were attended by two researchers, one facilitating and one note taking.

Transcripts were divided between two investigators and subjected to thematic coding. Investigators then met to discuss thematic coding and collective decisions were made about salient themes and possible relationships between them. Investigators then individually and collectively subjected the data to analytical coding; interpreting the data in relation to the focus group aims and developing an understanding of the meanings and processes surrounding the issues discussed.

Study 2: Survey of Working Australians using AWALI

The Australian Work and Life index (AWALI) was designed primarily as a national work/life index for Australia. The conceptual and methodological rationale for the development of AWALI as well as its psychometric properties are reported elsewhere (Pocock, Williams P & Skinner, 2007).

The aim of study two was to gain a cross sectional picture of work/life fit for a representative sample of working Australian adults. The quantitative data collected during this phase of the project will be used as a backdrop to the qualitative and quantitative data collected from the ten study areas during other phases of the project.

Data was collected from a national stratified random sample of 1435 Australian workers aged 18years or older (57% male, 43% female). The AWALI was conducted over two weekends in March 2007 as part of a larger computer assisted telephone (CATI) survey run by Newspoll, a respected Australian polling agency.

Quantitative data analysis was carried out using SPSS. Descriptive statistics indicated that in general the AWALI sample was an accurate reflection of the Australian labour market at the time according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS Cat. No. 6310.0 November, 2006 and Cat. No. 6202.0 May, 2007) (Pocock, Skinner & Williams P, 2007).

A work–life index score will be referred to at different times throughout this paper. This index score was calculated for different groups of people. The work-life index is a standardised scale with the mean set at 100 and a standard deviation of 15. The Index is interpreted in a similar way to a standard IQ score, but unlike IQ scores, higher scores on the Index indicate a poorer outcome. For example, a higher work–life index score (e.g., 115) implies worse work–life outcomes than the average of the survey population, while a lower score (e.g., 83) implies better than average outcomes.

Findings and discussion

Work and Time

Work was a central issue for most of the participants in this study. Employees were very explicit about the things they valued in their workplaces. When asked what kept him in his workplace, one young man replied: *'Good conditions, good pay, and they just look after you'*. Although some participants said *'I wouldn't work if I didn't need the money'*, many acknowledged that it provided opportunities for *'learning and mental stimulation and satisfaction'* and also personal and social benefits, as one mother of four said '*It makes you a* *better person, yeah. You're not relying on the government'*. Participants were also explicit about the impact of work on the rest of their lives. Work both enabled and constrained participants. Through wages and salaries, work enabled participants to attain a preferred lifestyle. Too much work, however, constrained life style and a number of participants spoke about their efforts to curtail work in order to regain the life style they wanted. The views of many participants were articulated by this married man with no children:

> *At the end of the day what you really want is ongoing enjoyment. Ongoing time to spend on bushwalks, ongoing time to spend with your family and if you have a barbeque on the weekend I don't have to think about I've got this project and it's due on Monday so I've got to login and spend 3 hours doing reading on this. I'll have a few mates over and have a beer, just enjoying time and not have to think about that. You want to be focused on sitting there, laughing and having a good time. It seems that for me [time like this has been] diminishing dramatically over the first couple of years of working and I'm trying to claw some of that back by setting up boundaries. But, like I said, the expectations of work for the project to progress and stuff like that sort of pulling your time and grabbing that focus of energy from you and it seems to be invading the home more because you're both working and have got very little time.(ML14, p.227)*

Expansive Hours of Work

Working time affected participants in a myriad of ways. For many full-time workers, 'standard' hours (or working the contracted number of hours and not more) were a *'luxury'* and in reality they also worked *'overtime'* and *'extra time'* at home. 'Informal' working time included time spent working beyond the 'standard' contracted hours. It was clear that 'informal' working time expanded through the use (and abuse) of technology outside the work environment. Mobile phones, laptops and the internet meant that many workers accessed work, and were accessed by work, at all hours of the night and day and all days of the week. Some welcomed the mobility and flexibility this gave them, but a larger proportion were worried about the blurring of the boundary around work and home and the incursion of work into home. As one woman commented with heavy irony:

> *I'm on salary, so it's another one of those 'lovely' package deals...I'm on call 24/7, which is becoming a struggle.* **How do people contact you outside your normal working hours?** *Directly on my mobile or like I have, obviously, a lap top, like everything is set up at home. I have a Blackberry with me 24/7 on which you can page me, email me, beep me or call me. And so, it's yeah, it's probably not very well balanced at the moment and I'm learning... I'm still figuring out how to balance things (ML11, p.111).*

For this mother of two toddlers, technology turned her part-time job into a full-time concern:

> *Even though I work two days a week if there's a problem at work ... they ring me and I'm expected to stick the kids in front of the telly or something, I might need to log on for an hour and a half and help them out with a problem. So even though I work two days a week you get to the stage that sometimes you're thinking about it five days a week so that puts a bit of pressure on as well.(CS5, p.197)*

Many participants had 'normalised' the expectation and practice of long hours and of extended 'informal' working time. They took personal responsibility, by and large, for the expansion of working time and recognised its pervasiveness. As one male worker said, *'I suppose it affects all of us doesn't it?'* Many expected and accepted long working hours and the need to *'take work home'*. When asked about what his partner thought of his long hours, one young man said, *'She understands it because she's in the same position'*. Another man described how the workers method of 'managing' work by taking it home fed a work culture of long hours:

> *You keep taking it home, and what ends up happening is, the expectation on you for getting 12 hours work done a day becomes the norm, which means you need to do 12 hours of work. (ML14, p.155)*

While some found the technology enabling because it allowed them to work and care for children simultaneously, for others there were signs of significant *'technological kickback'* against the great flexibilities and expansions of working time and space implicit in the technologies of phone, laptop, and online access at home. Several men (including relatively young men without dependents) had made firm decisions about not taking a computer home. As one sole father put it:

> *I've made a rule...I won't take the laptop home...the more you bring home the more they expect of you and then they'll expect you to be working 65-70 hours a week. So I think 55 hours is enough. (CS7, p 102)*

However, while some people are in a position to curtail spillover from work to other aspects of life, others are not. Recent changes to Australia's industrial relations laws are perceived as having an impact on working time that is out of the control of the worker. In a discussion about the new IR laws one male electrician reported:

> *We had 30 guys retrenched only a month ago. We went from 80 staff to probably 30 staff... And now they're realising they haven't got the guys to cover it, "we need you guys to do the overtime". So our 8 hours will be going to 10 to 12 hours and instead of working every 6 weekends we'll be working every third weekend. (CS6, p.251)*

Findings from the AWALI survey mirror concerns about the amount of time spent on work and the amount of time available for home and community. Figure 1 demonstrates a clear relationship between hours spent in work and work-life outcomes. Contrary to popular belief, long part-time hours do not protect women from poor work-life outcomes. Women working long part-time hours had significantly worse work-life outcomes than women working short part-time hours, and there was no difference compared to women working full-time. These results are probably explained by the fact that women working part-time continue to shoulder the majority of care, household and community tasks, compared to women working full-time who are more likely to buy in assistance for care and housework, and opt out of community activity.

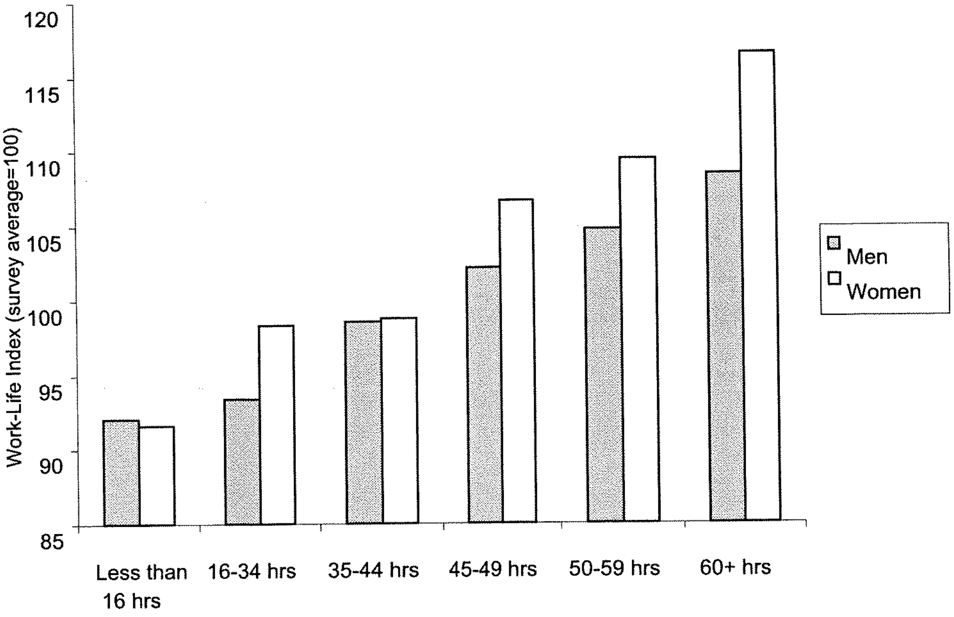

Figure 1 Work–life index by hours of work, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Estimate for women working 60 or more hours is not reliable. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

In this context, organising a short commute to work, if at all possible, assumed great significance. As one woman said: '*15 minutes doesn't seem very long, but when you're time poor, 15 minutes is important.*' Even at a moment when rising petrol prices have been increasing rapidly, *time* was more important than *cost* in the minds of a number of participants:

> *It's the time. The money, well we can all survive one way or the other. But the time is being wasted, sitting there ... So if I get to spend half an hour playing in the park with my son, [it] would be better spent than sitting there in traffic. (CS 6, p.402)*

In addition, having easy access to retail services, banking, medical, schooling, childcare, restaurants, community activities, volunteer sites, and the whole gamut of activities was very important for many in the study. The 'closer you can be to home and school the better', was a common sentiment. It drove housing location decisions for a number, and job decisions were also affected, but not necessarily decided, on this criterion alone. Of course getting all aspects of life in close spatial alignment is difficult. However, getting some in close proximity (like home, school and shops) compensated in some ways for a longer commute to work.

The affects of commuting are clearly demonstrated in the survey findings which indicate that longer commute times are correlated with poorer work–life outcomes ($P < 0.001$). When hours of work are combined with commuting time there is a clear negative decline in work-life outcomes as hours increase (Figure 2).

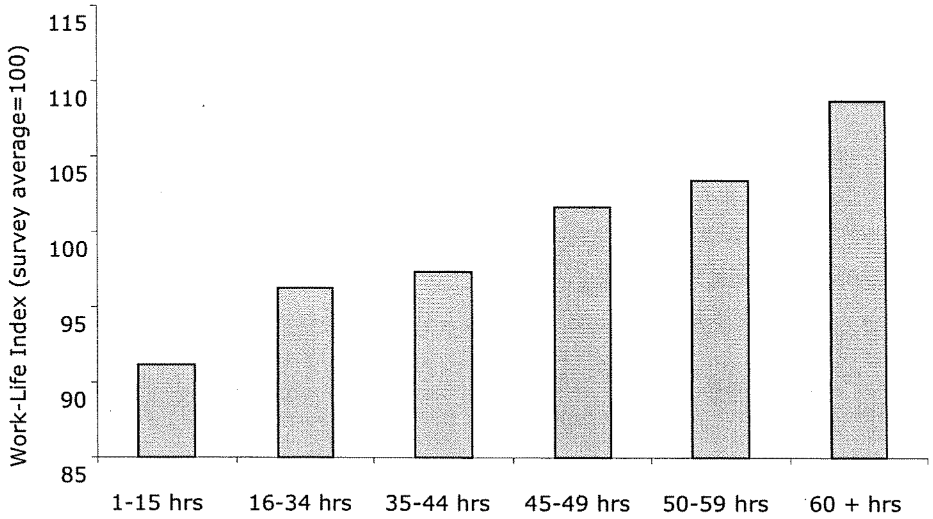

Figure 2 Work–life index by total hours spent working and commuting, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

Household Management of Work and Time

For parents of young children and teenage children, paid work was an issue to be negotiated within the household and 'managed' by the individual often in consultation with a partner, as indicated by this father of a teenage boy:

> *Basically my son sometimes says, "hey Dad can you come home early?" We don't spend as much time as we used to because in the past we used to do it different. We both work full-time. Like Rose, she used to have the morning shift and I used to go the afternoon. So what I used to do is work nights for many years, and I accepted this new position over the last 3 years. The new position [has] come with new commitments and new responsibilities so we have to manage it. And she wanted to reduce her hours of work and spend more time with him, so that's how we decided to balance the hours back again. (CS6, p.659)*

Parents ability to 'manage' work, so that it 'fits' well with home and community life, can be facilitated or impeded by formal and informal working conditions. Many participants spoke of working environments that provided flexible working arrangements, but which expected employee flexibility in return. In these workplaces, the onus is on the employee to 'manage' their work. One common way of managing work is to do some of it during 'home' time:

> *I'm trying to limit the amount of work that I take home. This time of the year, it's pretty busy ... but, the more you actually do the more they expect, so, I'm trying to find that work-life balance. I have got two kids and they are very demanding. So for my wife, on the three days she's there and the other days when she works I need to come home at a reasonable time to try and give her some sanity and try to spend some time with her as well. So I try to do some work on the weekends but it's normally late at night when the kids have gone to bed. (ML14 p. 167)*

A fluid, intensive set of ongoing negotiations are underway which recognise the time needs of different aspects of life. For workers with families, the time needs of work, children and partners often compete and time for self (for sleep or relaxation) is often sacrificed as work is extended into the night. Parents on the whole are more likely to experience this conflict and this is supported by our survey data. Figure 3 shows that workers with care responsibilities, particularly those with very young children (WL Index score = 105.9) or 2 or more children (WL Index score = 104.9), are likely to have poorer work-life outcomes than workers with no care responsibilities (WL Index score = 97.3) (P<0.001).

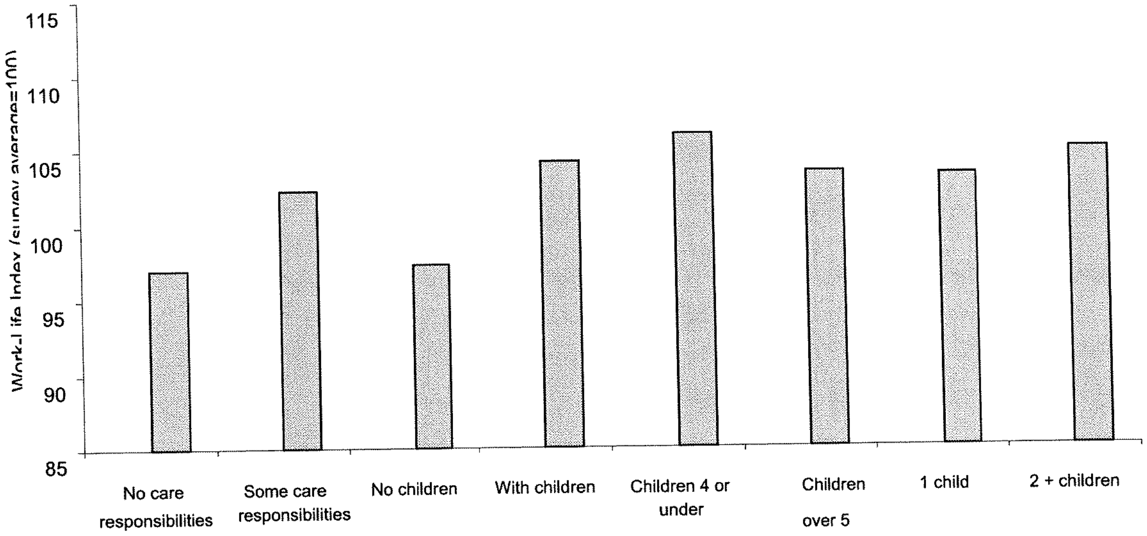

Figure 3 Work–life index by care responsibilities, and the presence, age and number of children, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

Working conditions: Flexibility in theory and practice

Employee-influenced flexibility and autonomy were valued characteristics of working life for most participants. Employee-influenced flexibility allowed workers to attend to personal or family matters when they arose, and autonomy gave employees a sense of control over the work they did and when they did it: *'They treat you like an adult, which is really nice'*. However, flexibility and autonomy were also sometimes problematic in that they often worked to expand total working hours squeezing time for relationships.

For professionals in particular, work was often project based and work time expanded to meet the needs of the project, making the promise of flexibility unrealisable. For some this also meant that *'home becomes your workplace as well'*. This situation was particularly common for participants in managerial positions and the following comment was typical in assessments of working as a supervisor or manager:

> *The flexibility is there, it's just for my position, it never seems reachable. But then as you go down the line it is more reachable for others. (ML3, p.171)*

Workplace policies and culture were also acknowledged as significant contributors to workers' ability to 'manage' working time and obtain a good fit between work and other aspects of their lives. For these participants, flexibility and understanding from employers affected decisions about where to work.

Participants were clear about the kinds of workplaces that facilitated or inhibited a good fit between work, home and community. For most it was a combination of flexibility and job satisfaction that attracted them to a job, as was the case for this mother:

> *For me it was convenience and my boss being flexible because I had young children when I first started working, so that was vital to me. I had to be able to leave, if the school called, I had to be able to go. (ML12, p.101)*

'Fit' is facilitated by workplaces that respect the lives of workers through workplace policy and practice. These workplaces acknowledge the changing needs of workers at different life stages; they provide and promote flexible working arrangements that allow workers to coordinate all the domains of their life; they discourage unreasonable and unsociable working hours and they promote team work in order to ameliorate individual work pressures associated with tasks and time. Many participants spoke about the *'good boss'* who understood the needs of workers and treated them as *'individuals'* and *'adults'*. Often these bosses were parents themselves. It seems that a shared life experience facilitated understanding between the worker and their supervisor. Unfortunately, many participants thought workplaces were moving away from practices that facilitate 'fit':

> *I actually think the labour market's changing and I think they're making it a lot more difficult for care givers.* ***In what way?*** *I think the expectation is very different, it's almost that you're expected to do X amount of work and they don't calculate the hours that go with that X amount of work. So you tend to either take it home or be readily available for them when they ring you at home whether you're being paid for it or you're not being paid for it. And it's almost like you've got to, not a threat but ... if I don't do it, there's a million others out there that will do it. (CS5, p.217)*

'Flexibility', *'good hours'* and a *'good boss'* were key factors in finding fit between work and other aspects of life but, as this mother of two teenagers describes, flexibility can be a double edged sword and needs to be *'managed'* in order to be of greatest value:

> ***What makes a good boss for you?*** *The flexibility. Yeah, family friendly. I get to be able to go to the sports day ... I'm picking one up from camp tonight at 3.00. So I'm just able to leave and do that, because it's important for all the family ... if one of them is sick, I can go duck home and look after them. I don't necessarily have to be in my office to do my work. So I'm able to work from home.* ***Is that good working from home?*** *Yeah. It is. I think since I've been able to work from home, I've probably been doing a bit more work from home than what's required ... now that I can access everything, I'll access it more and more ... I tend to do the extra hours at home, if I've got some free time, I'll just log on and do my work.* ***And the family love that do they?*** *Although they like the idea that I work, and I certainly like the money that I bring in, they do tend to think I haven't quite got that much time. (ML12, p.116)*

Some participants spoke of flexibility as a rarity in the context of jobs that required long working hours from their employees. Others described a working culture that has shifted its focus from time (the 9 to 5 culture) to task completion. One mother of two teenagers explains her 60 hour working week in the following way: *'I'll take work home and do it on weekends or stay longer at work to get tasks done.'* And despite some employees placing strict limitations on themselves, some workplaces still intrude on 'home time':

> *When I have my daughter that's my main focus and she gets my attention for 100% of the time. I still get the occasional phone calls, like I worked 12 hours Monday and I still had phone calls coming through at 8:15 at night and one went for 45 minutes. So it can be testing. (ML9, p.102)*

Co-location of work and home was enormously beneficial for those participants who had managed to achieve it, and most participants agreed that working near home would help them fit it all together, as one woman who worked at ML said, *'I'd love to be based out here, so I can walk to work, that would be the best thing'*. Where co-location was not possible (and this was especially the case in CS where employment and career opportunities were limited) participants wanted to be able to do tasks, such as banking and post, in the vicinity of their workplace.

As figure 4 indicates, participants in the AWALI survey who indicated they had little or no flexibility in their job or whose working conditions were poor by other measures such as work load, job security and task autonomy, were more likely to experience poor work- life outcomes compared to participants in good quality jobs.

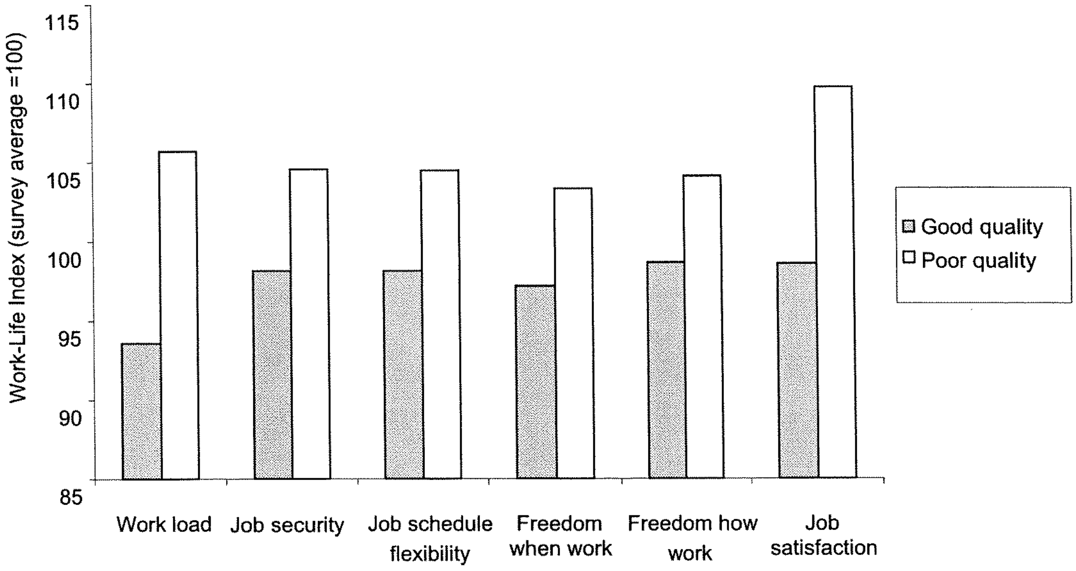

Figure 4 Work–life index by job quality, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area.

Conclusion: Implications for time poor communities

The implications of expansive working time are considerable. The physical and social well being of individuals, families and communities are put at risk as time stress and role overload erode the capacity of individuals to participate in life outside work, including family life and the life of the local community. More than half of all participants in the AWALI survey (52.5%) indicated they were often or always pressed for time. For working parents this figure was 63.3% and for working mothers it was 72.5%. Work is clearly implicated in time poverty, but the degree to which it is implicated is largely dependent on the conditions and culture of the workplace. The experience of one woman is indicative of the time pressures experienced by many working mothers:

> *...because of a bit of pressure at work and pressure at home, I went three days a week and that lasted probably about six months and I finished up in April and returned to my two days simply because the juggle, you just can't squeeze everything in, I thought I was going to go round the twist.* ***What was it that was making you go round the twist?*** *Just the pressure, not being able to keep up with the housework and constantly being ratty with the kids, I mean the kids are at an age that you do need to spend quality time with them, they're learning all the time, if you don't put the time, they get ratty as well and just, your work suffers, your home life suffers ... because you'd always be spending time rushing here and rushing there and interrupt sleeps and they just get out of a routine, they don't get as many play dates with friends and things like that or you know, outings to the zoo or you know, just nice things, visiting grandparents, there just wasn't time for any of that sort of thing anymore.(CS 5 p.83)*

These time pressures affect not only the working parent, but their children, their partner and the wider community. Time 'spent' on work, particularly time that is not renumerated such as overtime and commuting time, is time that cannot be 'spent' with family, friends or in local community activities. This was clearly indicated in our survey findings where just under half (47.3%) of the participants felt that work interfered with their capacity to build and maintain community connections and friendships.

Expansive working hours are increasing (Boulin et al, 2006) but the findings from these studies indicate that they are increasingly seen as unsustainable in the context of individual, family and community well-being.

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Building 'community' for different stages of life: physical and social infrastructure in master planned communities

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Abstract: Australia's labour market and its cities are changing, along with the nature of housing and community configurations. Major new master planned housing developments are being undertaken to meet demand as cities struggle to cope with increasing populations. Such urban developments are influencing workforce, household and community relations, which in turn drive health and well-being outcomes, and affect social capital and labour market participation. The Work, Home and Community Study aims to explore these outcomes through analysis of qualitative and quantitative data gathered in ten communities across four Australian states. This paper reports findings from the first phase of qualitative data collection. Fourteen focus groups were conducted with men and women who live and/or work at newly developed Master Planned Communities in South Australia and Victoria. Findings indicate that familiarity, availability, and the enabling of social bridges contribute to the development of community and social capital in these MPCs. For individuals at different stages of life these factors were facilitated or inhibited by specific physical and social infrastructures in the MPC and the workplace. At a time when concerns are being raised about the ability of people to combine work, home and community these findings shed some light on the physical and social infrastructures that can enable or constrain the building of healthy communities.

Introduction

The nature of housing and community configurations is undergoing significant change in Australia. As the populations of our cities grow, major developments are being undertaken to meet the demand for housing. The Master Planned Community (MPC) is one response to this need for housing. MPCs are housing developments with a particular focus on shared spaces and 'community'. It is the experience of 'community' for people at different stages of life living in a MPC that is the focus of this paper.

MPCs are usually defined as geographically (and sometimes socially) bounded large scale, private housing developments that incorporate varying levels of social and physical infrastructure. They often have a distinctive look and a formal physical entry (Gwyther 2005a). These communities create new spatial alignments of work and home which affect people's capacity to engage in private and public life. On the one hand they are seen as elitist and 'potential instruments of governmentality' (Dowling and McGuirk 2005, p 3). On the other, they appear to satisfy a yearning for community and safety (Mullins and Western 2001; Mackay 2004; Gleeson 2004b). The implications for policy areas like housing, labour market policy, and community service provision are significant.

Our understanding of the lived experience of community in MPCs in Australia comes from only a handful of studies (e.g. Bosman, 2003, Peel, 1995; Powell, 1993; Richards, 1990). In her qualitative study of two MPCs in Sydney, Gabrielle Gwyther talks about the 'community compact' that exists between residents and the developer in MPCs. it consists of both formal and informal components, including legally binding covenants that ensure certain standards of home maintenance, and social norms that encourage high degrees of civility, friendliness and neighbourhood concern (Gwyther, 2005). The community compact in conjunction with physical and social infrastructure provided or accommodated by the developer, encourages the development of broad social networks. These social networks underpin the development of relational community (Voydanoff, 2001) which builds bridging, bonding and linking social capital (Putnam, 2000; Stone, 2001) for individuals and groups within the development. According to Gwyther, these social networks are stronger and more sustained in MPCs than in other less intensive forms of planned residential estates. Having said this, Gwyther recognises that these communities exhibit levels of bridging and bonding social capital, in terms of social control, trust and reciprocity, that benefit some residents of the MPC, but which have limited benefit for other residents and those living adjacent to the MPC (Gwyther, 2005).

There are two limitations to existing research in this area that we will try to address in our current research. First, discussion of community and social capital in MPCs is very generalised. The level of analysis is usually the whole community and this has resulted in the perception that the residents of MPCs are a fairly homogenous group. It is not at all clear how the MPC is experienced by different groups of people. In particular, how does community and social capital develop for people at different stages of life in the MPC? Second, discussion is often focused on the MPC to the exclusion of other relevant factors such as work. A variety of qualitative research has demonstrated a close reciprocal relationship between working and household life, with the notion of 'spillover' from home to work and from work to home now extensively researched (Hoshschild 1997; Williams 2000; Pocock 2003; Pocock, Skinner & Williams, 2007). Despite the appearance of separation, the MPC is necessarily connected to the experience of work but analysis of this connection is rare in Australia. O'Connor and

Healy argue this is a 'serious inadequacy in urban policy' (2002, vii). Their own spatial analysis of employment and housing linkages (in Melbourne) concluded: 'housing policy cannot be expressed independently of an adequate understanding of the spatiality of jobs and the nature of job-housing links' (2002, vii).

In our research we bring work to the forefront and examine how it interacts with life in the MPC to facilitate or impede the development of community and social capital for people at different stages of life.

Community and social capital: what do we mean?

Community and social capital are two concepts that are somewhat intertwined and equally dogged by definitional variability and ambiguity.

In academic and lay definitions, the primary concern surrounding notions of community is the importance of place. To what extent does place, or geographic location, characterise community? While some academics insist community maintain a locational component (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Philips, 1993), others do not consider shared geographic location a necessary characteristic and define it only as a group of people who are relationally associated, with shared values or common goals and feelings of group identification and belonging (Small & Supple, 2001). Still others suggest that community can be defined in either locational and/or relational terms (Voydanoff, 2001). When we refer to our neighbourhood as a 'close knit community' we are invoking both these notions.

Even more so than community, social capital is a term that defies a commonly understood definition. Most academics agree that social capital refers to the resources that are afforded individuals and groups through social networks and relationships. According to Lin (1999) three elements must be in place for social capital to develop: resources must be imbedded in a social structure, individuals must have access to social resources, and individuals must use these resources. The three main types of social capital that are commonly referred to in the literature and which resonate with the findings presented in this paper include bridging social capital – broad, superficial social connections which are inclusive of diversity, for example, membership of varied social or interest groups (Putnam, 2000; Stone 2001); bonding social capital – restricted, exclusive social connections which may be exemplified by family groups, exclusive social groups built on a specific ideology and, at a negative extreme, gangs (Putnam, 2000; Stone 2001); and linking social capital – social connections that link ordinary people to various levels of administrative or political power (Stone 2001). Membership of a grass roots community group that has access to representatives on the local council is an example of linking social capital.

When thinking about the concepts of community and social capital together community can be considered the social milieu from which social capital develops. If the community provides individuals with the opportunity and capacity to participate in social activities and form social networks, then social capital in the form of trust, reciprocity, support, social control, civic engagement and political empowerment, is likely to develop. If the community does not provide individuals with the opportunity and capacity to participate in social activities and form social networks, then social capital will struggle to develop.

When I talk about community in this paper I will be referring to community that is both locational and relational. In the Work, Home and Community Study we are deliberately focusing on 10 distinct geographical residential areas. We are interested in how community is built (physically and socially) and how social capital is developed for the men, women and children who live in these areas.

When I talk about social capital in this paper I will consider what I think of as the antecedents of social capital, such as opportunity and capacity to develop social ties and networks, as well as indicators of social capital, such as network density, trust, reciprocity, social support, social control and civic engagement.

The Work, Home and Community Project: Phase one

The Work, Home and Community Project is a national study analysing how changes at work, in households and in residential areas are reconfiguring relationships between work, home, services and community for men, women and children. The project is jointly funded by the Australian Research Council, Lend Lease Communities and the Innovation and Economic Opportunities Group at Mawson Lakes. Ethics approval has been obtained from the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee.

Phase one of this project was designed to gain a preliminary understanding of the issues faced by women and men in relation to fitting their work, home and community lives together. In particular, it focussed on how the physical and social infrastructures of the MPC and, to a lesser extent, the workplace, facilitate the development of community and social capital for people at different stages of life.

Methods

Fourteen focus groups were conducted with men and women who reside and/or work in two Master Planned Communities; Mawson lakes in South Australia and Caroline Springs in Victoria. Both sites are newly developed residential communities with diverse housing forms, worker populations, household configurations and service provisions. Mawson Lakes differs from Caroline springs in that it is built around an existing technology park and University campus and is within 12 Kilometres of Adelaide CBD. Caroline Springs, on the other hand, is a classic 'green fields' development 25 kilometres from the Melbourne CBD with no existing employment or tertiary education facilities.

Focus group participants were recruited from existing resident and business lists, via a general email sent to local businesses and institutions and through notices placed on public notice boards. Lend Lease community development managers conducted recruitment activities at each study site.

The 68 participants included 33 women and 35 men aged between 19 and 70 years. Eighteen (55 per cent) women and 19 (54 per cent) men had dependent children, 14 (42 per cent) women and 23 (66 per cent) men were tertiary educated, 31 (94 per cent) women and 32 (91 per cent) men were in paid employment, and 12 (36 per cent) women and 25 (71 per cent) men stated their occupation was managerial or professional.

Participants were living in a mix of household types (sole, dual earner/couple, sole earner/couple, retired, with and without dependents). In income terms they included a disproportionately high number of upper and middle-income earners with an over-representation of professional and tertiary educated workers/residents. A number of participants ran their own businesses from home (sometimes in addition to waged work) and several were self-employed tradesmen or contractors.

Focus group questions were used as a guide to facilitate a semi-structured discussion. They focused on participants' perceptions and experiences of where they worked, where they lived, their communities and the fit between these three things.

Qualitative analysis was carried out using verbatim transcripts of focus groups, notes taken during focus groups and notes made immediately following focus groups. Most groups were attended by two researchers, one facilitating and one note taking.

Transcripts were divided between two investigators and subjected to thematic coding. Investigators then met to discuss thematic coding and collective decisions were made about salient themes and possible relationships between them. Investigators then individually and collectively subjected the data to analytical coding; interpreting the data in relation to the focus group aims and developing an understanding of the meanings and processes surrounding the issues discussed.

Findings and discussion

In presenting these findings I am going to concentrate on the physical and social infrastructures that facilitate social connection and enable social capital for different groups of people living within the MPC.

Physical and social infrastructure

Physical infrastructure refers to the built environment. It includes the buildings and facilities that exist in a geographic area and the physical links between places and people. Social infrastructure refers to the social environment. It includes formal groups and networks that cater to all sorts of social, professional and life stage interests or needs. Physical and social infrastructure can facilitate or impede the development of community and social capital by the way it enables people to come together. Many participants, from both MPCs, indicated that superficial familiarity engendered feelings of trust and safety and a sense of belonging to their community. This familiarity was facilitated by centralised facilities and recreation areas as well as community groups and events that brought people together.

> *[In my old neighbourhood I] didn't really see a lot of the neighbours, there was no central focus, places you could go and know that you would meet people you knew. Whereas here we've got the restaurants, the hotel and the nursing home where we meet people. Walking our dog, we meet people walking the dog. (ML9,p.48-retired male, MPC 1)*

However, if social infrastructure was lacking and movement outside the MPC was restricted then some groups were particularly isolated and unable to develop social networks. One thing that was clear in our analysis of these focus groups was the importance of life stage in the conceptualisation of both community and social capital. The remainder of this paper will highlight the importance of physical and social infrastructure for the development of community and social capital at four distinct stages of life.

New mothers

New mothers need access to services, information and companionship. In particular they need access to the places and people who can provide them with the information, support and care required after a baby is born. Importantly, this includes formal services such as early childhood centres and informal networks of other mothers. Access to services, information and companionship is facilitated by physical infrastructure, including walking paths suitable for prams, meeting places such as parks, play grounds and cafes, adequate local early childhood services, choice of child care options and adequate transport (public or private); and social infrastructure, including mothers group, new mothers network and play group.

Diagram 1 illustrates the multiple routes via which a new mother can develop social ties with other mothers. Formal services and social groups often act as conduits for social connection, but so too do public spaces designed to accommodate new mothers with pram access, breast feeding areas and nappy change facilities. The arrows in this diagram represent access and connection in a physical and social sense. These social connections are broad and dense and illustrated in the following statement from a new mother:

> *I'm into the community five days a week. I have something planned every day. It's the walking group, it's the mother's group, its mother's network, its playgroup. (CS5, p.369)*

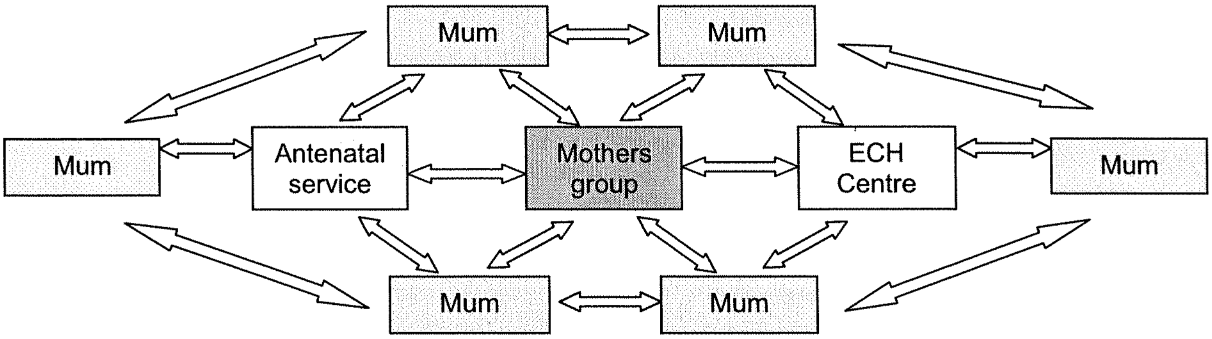

Diagram 1: Avenues to social networks for new mothers

Adequate physical and social infrastructure enhances capability and provides opportunity to develop social ties and become a part of multiple social networks. This is a good example of bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000). Its benefits for the individual mothers are access to information, companionship, support and informal care. Children and partners are indirect beneficiaries of this social capital, and the larger MPC will benefit because the new mothers become social bridges, connecting their families and friends to the families and friends of other new mothers. As a loosely connected group with a common interest, they also have the opportunity to act together toward mutual goals. For example they may lobby the developer or council for upgraded amenities or services (an example of linking social capital), the benefit of which will reach beyond the individuals in the social network to the wider community.

If the physical and social infrastructure of the MPC is inadequate, for example, if there is a lack of services or existing services cannot cater to the needs of the population, new mothers would find it harder to access care, information and each other, they would be more likely to be lonely and poorly supported and their capacity for social agency would be limited. They would lack social capital and the consequences would be felt by their children, their partners and the wider community. Diagram 2 illustrates how lack of formal physical and social infrastructure reduces avenues to social networks for new mothers and increases reliance on existing services. The consequences of poor access to social networks and adequate care and information are illustrated in the following quote:

> *I had a woman stop me out in the street one day. She was in such a state; she's got a baby in the pram and had walked the streets until she bumped into somebody else with a pram because she needed advice from another mother. She was having trouble breastfeeding and her baby was constipated and she had such a bad experience with the health nurse…I mean that's when people do stupid things when they get desperate…That's exactly why the mother's network was set up, someone had actually done something stupid. They drowned their baby. (FG 5. p409)*

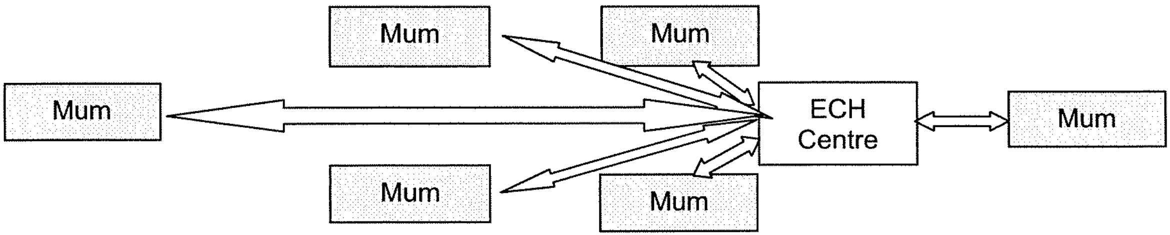

Diagram 2: Inadequate physical and social infrastructure for new mother

There are two significant lessons to be learned from this tragedy. First, Physical infrastructure such as parks and footpaths cannot compensate for a lack of social infrastructure; both are needed to build a healthy community. Second, In the face of tragedy, or even just a perceived lack of social infrastructure, it is a combination of bridging social capital with its horizontal social ties between concerned residents and linking social capital with its vertical social ties between residents and the hierarchy of Lend Lease in this case, that empowers and enables a community to acknowledge a problem and identify a way to avoid a similar tragedy in the future. In the case of Caroline Springs they immediately started up a new mother's network which identified all new mothers in the area on an ongoing basis, and invited them to participate in the network which offered friendship, information, support and referral.

The physical and social infrastructure of the MPC combined with physical and social infrastructures of work to either enhance or undermine the capacity of new mothers to make social connections. For some, the convenient location of their workplace and the flexible working arrangements meant that returning to work after maternity leave was an easy transition that accommodated the social needs of the mother and her baby. For others, the location of work or the unaccommodating working arrangements undermined their capacity to develop social relationships within the community, as was the case for this mother:

> *...because of a bit of pressure at work and pressure at home, I went three days a week and that lasted probably about six months and I finished up in April and returned to my two days simply because the juggle, you just can't squeeze everything in, I thought I was going to go round the twist ... not being able to keep up with the housework and constantly being ratty with the kids, I mean the kids are at an age that you do need to spend quality time with them, they're learning all the time, if you don't put the time, they get ratty as well and just, your work suffers, your home life suffers ... you'd always be spending time rushing here and rushing there and interrupt sleeps and they just get out of a routine, they don't get as many play dates with friends and things like that or you know, outings to the zoo or you know, just nice things, visiting grandparents, there just wasn't time for any of that sort of thing anymore.(CS 5 p.83)*

The MPC's we studied are particularly attractive to young families or people considering a family. It is not unreasonable then for developers and the local labour market to consider the needs of young families when planning their physical and social infrastructure. Those businesses that deliberately position themselves near new housing developments should acknowledge the life stage of their employee base by accommodating their needs. Family friendly work place policies such as flexible working time and parental leave make it easier for new parents to combine work with the demands of a new baby (Pocock, 2006). Efficient public and private transport routes between work and home and accessible parking near work at all times of the day should also be considered by businesses who are concerned about the life stage needs of their employees (Dobbs, 2007).

Dual income family

Families with two parents working full time or at least long part-time hours need access to other children and parents. The children of working parents need opportunities to develop social ties with other children and adults in their local area, and parents need opportunities to develop social ties with other individuals and families in the area. Children can act as social bridges (Roos, Trigg & Hartman, 2006) but their capacity to bring adults together can be enhanced or constrained by the physical and social environment within which they live. Focus group participants identified many examples of physical infrastructure that can facilitate access to children and other parents, including, choice of local preschools and primary schools, easy parking around schools, comfortable waiting areas in schools where parents can talk, local after school care, safe walking and bike paths between homes and schools, local parks and playing fields and efficient transport options (public and private) to areas of work. Participants also identified social infrastructures that can facilitate access to others, such as consideration of working parents in the timing of parent association meetings and other events that might bring parents together, breakfast events for school students and parents, local sporting clubs, anything that necessitates parents hanging around with nothing better to do than talk while their children are engaged in some activity.

Diagram 3 illustrates how children, if given the opportunity, can facilitate the development of numerous social ties between adults in a locational community.

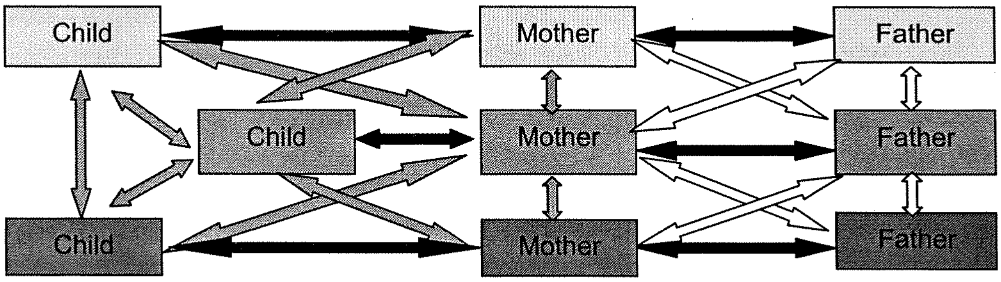

Diagram 3: Developing social ties through children (darker lines indicate closer social tie)

Co-location of school and home is key to the process depicted in diagram 3, as illustrated by the following statement from a working mother whose son remained at school in his old suburb after moving to Caroline Springs:

> *When I moved here I knew nobody... my son was still at [his old school] so I didn't get to meet anybody for three years, then when he finally did move here, he made friends with the older boys, not the younger boys ... So it took ages and ages sort of for us to assimilate in. (CS5, p.154)*

This woman's degree of social connection in the first few years she lived in the MPC is depicted in diagram 4:

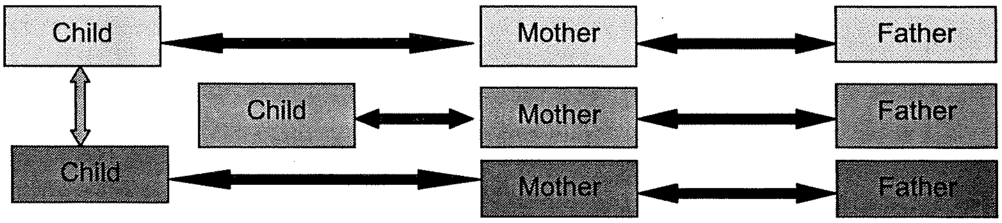

Diagram 4: Impoverished social ties due to lack of connection with other children in local area

While there may have been community around her she had no way of accessing it. For some, lack of access arises out of the way home and work is configured. The following quote from a woman who had recently changed from full time to part time work illustrates the potential social impact of two parents working full time. Having two parents working full time in a family often had social consequences for the children, the parents and the family as a unit.

> *[My job] was starting to impact on the kids.* ***Can I ask how you noticed the effect on the kids? What did you see?*** *Stress in the kids like sleeping problems and homework. Not coping with school, not being able to be involved with sports activities, like not having a lot of friends in the community. (CS7, p.88)*

Many of our participants reported changing their working arrangements in response to perceived negative effects on their family. In most cases it was a lack of social embeddedness in their local community, either of their children or themselves, that prompted the change. It was clear though, that when decisions were made to limit participation in the labour market in order to meet the social needs of children or the family, it was usually mothers who stepped back. Once they did, their options were limited, particularly in CS where there are limited work opportunities in the local area and very poor prospects for a career. As one woman said:

> *Career advancement and things are important to me you can't really find that on this side of the city to be honest, (CS7, p.152)*

Even in ML where the labour market has breadth and depth, the bulk of career jobs are in IT and Defence which favour men and, in the case of defence, fail to provide flexible working arrangements that would accommodate family and community. For many women living in these MPC's the need for both time and money means employment options are limited. Home based businesses were a common solution for many women who recognised the incompatibility of living in their MPC and having a job in the city:

> *The whole reason behind starting this business [was] for a bit of a life plan being able to work from home and have children and be able to pay off the mortgage and do all those other wonderful things you need to do (CS7, p.78)*

In CS in particular, women are removed from career and so a 1950's stereotype of the family is being perpetuated. By separating children's activities from good employment opportunities for women, mothers (and it usually is mothers) are forced to choose between a career in the city and a job close to home.

There is evidence from recent research in the UK that suggests that women are disadvantaged when it comes to transport, both public and private, and that this disadvantage affects their ability to engage in work (Dobbs, 2007). This this disadvantage alsoaffects their ability to engage in social and civic activities thus reducing their connection to others and limiting their social capital. Issues about transport are the responsibility of the developer, local council and state government who together determine transport needs in terms of roads, parking and public transport. It is also the responsibility of the employer, who decides where to locate their business and whether or not to accommodate the transport deficit that many women face (Dobbs, 2007).

It should be noted that it was not full time work per se that proved the enemy of community and social capital for these participants. Rather it was a combination of working time that did not fit with children's social time (children often cement their social relationships with play dates after school, between 3-5pm), long commutes and jobs that required excessive overtime or weekend work. It was also the physical location of work, its proximity to home and school that facilitated or inhibited the ability of children to act as social bridges for their parents. This is indicated in the following quote from a father at Caroline Springs:

> *A lot of the guys that work where I work, they live around this area too. We can see each other and things like that. Sometimes give lift to each other...It's overlapping for me. We [also] have a great relationship because of the school. We get friendships through it. [We've met] six or seven families and we every so often, every six months we have lunches together, dinners together.* ***So the school has been very important for that?*** *I think the school relationships, friendships that you made out of your kids are lasting relationships (CS6, p.982).*

When two parents work full time or long part time hours, particularly in jobs that are not located near their home, opportunities for making social connections in the neighbourhood are reduced for the parents as individuals, and often for their children. However, if the physical and social infrastructure of the MPC and the workplace enable working parents to minimise travel time and maximise flexibility through flexible working arrangements as well as flexible community arrangements, then access to child and adult social networks will be easier for these families.

One of the key benefits of dense social networks between generations within a geographical location is what Sampson (1999) has called intergenerational closure. Intergenerational closure encourages a degree of social support and social control within the community. In other words, when lots of adults know your children either socially or even just by sight, then you have lots of adults available to both support and sanction your children when you are not around. Though they did not use such academic language, our participants acknowledge the benefits of intergenerational closure as indicated by the following statement from a working father of one young teenage boy:

> *We look after each other's kids. So if we see one of the kids doing something wrong [we do something about it]. (CS6, p.313)*

Of course one significant barrier to intergenerational closure is the absence of adults or children in the community setting. The following discussion of teenagers will highlight the consequences to individuals and communities when certain groups are not visible or available in the local area.

Teenagers[1]

Teenagers need access to each other and to recreation and entertainment in their local community. They also need access to adults in their local community. Like many women, teenagers are disadvantaged when it comes to transport. Physical infrastructure that was considered necessary for teenagers included amenities such as skate parks, sporting grounds and entertainment hubs. A mixture of targeted and shared spaces that are integrated within the physical spaces of the MPC were considered ideal. Targeted transport provision that links teenagers with the things they do within and outside the MPC were also considered essential, particularly by residents of Caroline Springs who are more isolated from surrounding areas than residents at Mawson Lakes. Necessary social infrastructure included organised social events that focus on bringing teenagers together (such as skate competitions, dance events, music events) as well as social events that appeal equally to teens and other sections of the community (such as markets and music festivals).

The key to social connection and therefore the development of community and social capital for teenagers is the sharing of space and time. Local amenities that cater to the needs of teenagers provide opportunities for social connection among teens and if these amenities are integrated into the physical and social infrastructure of the area as a whole, they provide opportunities for intergenerational closure. The local adults and the local teenagers become familiar with each other at the very least, and this increases feelings of trust and responsibility which result in support and sanction when necessary. Diagram 5 illustrates the social opportunities available to teenagers who live in an area with adequate physical and social infrastructure.

---

[1] Teenagers were not included in this phase of data collection so the findings presented here reflect the views of adult men and women. These findings will guide subsequent phases of data collection with teenagers aged 11 – 17yrs.

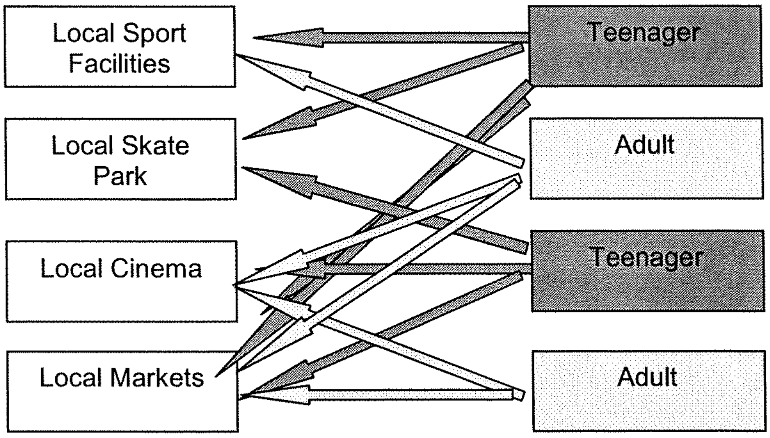

Diagram 5: Opportunities for intergenerational social interaction through shared use of infrastructure

Although we did not conduct focus groups with teenagers for this phase of the study, adult residents were quite clear about their concerns for teenagers, and for the community as a whole, when teenagers had nothing to do. The following quotes are indicative:

> *One thing I hear other people talking about with kids older than mine, that there's nothing to do because they have no good public transport. They can't just tootle off somewhere else very easily. (CS3, p.265)*
>
> *That's the end result I think, if you don't give them something to do they'll just get into trouble. (CS 5 p.282)*

It was clear that adults living in these MPC's were very concerned about the impact of unoccupied teens on the community in general. A key issue was security, with hoons and drug dealing behaviour threatening personal safety as well as financial and status security (these behaviours were likened to the behaviour to be found in poorer nearby suburbs from which some of our participants had moved).

What was not clear was the extent to which they wanted teens to be integrated into the community fabric. The research on intergenerational closure would suggest that integration would result in the broad and superficial social connections that best foster positive social capital (Sampson, 1999).

Lack of provision in terms of social and physical infrastructure fosters negative forms of bonding social capital as the teen group become isolated from the main community because they must travel out of area to find recreation – in these out of area places they are not recognised as part of a wider social network. Care and control forces cannot be exerted. They are physically and symbolically out of sight and out of mind. When they are visible, they are often seen as loitering because the physical and social infrastructure of their local community does not accommodate them well. With nothing to do and nowhere to go teenagers congregate together. If they gather in groups within the MPC other residents feel threatened and feelings of safety and trust are eroded. If they gather outside the MPC they are beyond the support and control mechanisms that may exist in their residential area and this can have the effect of decreasing their identification with the broader residential community and increasing their bonding social capital. This is all well and good as long as the supports and controls they offer each other conform to the accepted norms of the society they exist in. If not, the teens become an 'issue' for the MPC and surrounding areas. Diagram 6 illustrates what the social fabric might look like in this instance:

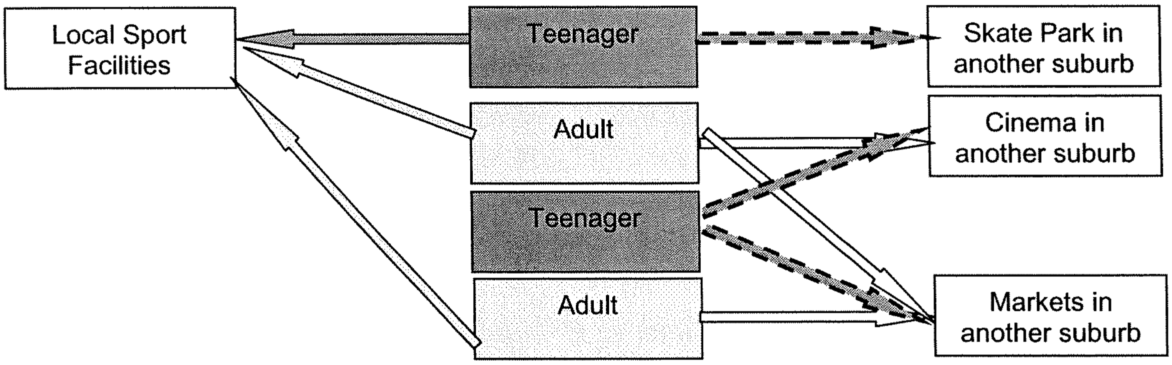

Diagram 6: Lack of opportunities for intergenerational social interaction resulting from few shared facilities and events in local area (broken arrows indicate poor access due to lack of transport options)

In this diagram there is a lack of overlap between the adults and teenagers. Except for sporting facilities, there are few shared spaces and therefore few opportunities to socially connect. Even sporting activities are restricted if they require expensive equipment or attendance fees. If the transport options between the MPC and surrounding areas are limited, then opportunities to be occupied outside the community are also restricted and teens become a local 'problem' for other residents.

Interaction between adults and teenagers, and the ability to develop intergenerational closure, is also affected by work. Shared time is the critical issue when it comes to work. If adults are not available to share communal space (such as sporting fields or internet cafes or town centres where multiple amenities are co-located) then a well appointed MPC will only satisfy the entertainment needs of teenagers. Flexibility in the community and the workplace can ensure that teens and working adults cross paths on a regular basis. Workplaces that are co-located with residential developments can also consider the teenagers in particular when planning community involvement.

Older people

Similar to teenagers, older people want access to each other and to various forms of activity in their local community. Unlike teenagers they will not congregate on street corners and look threatening if these needs are poorly met. What they may do however is become isolated in their homes, so the out of sight out of mind analogy fits here as well as in the discussion of teenagers. Like many women and teenagers, Frail older people are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to transport.

Physical infrastructure that was considered necessary for older residents of these MPCs included site planning designed to attract residents from across the life span (homes built for retirees and frail elderly as well as families), good intra site transport such as a community bus (for shopping days etc) as well as good public transport in and out of the area, good quality walking paths that consider the safety needs of older residents, amenities that accommodate the frail elderly (ramps, room for walkers etc), adequate health care services and associated retail outlets, physical spaces for older people to come together (halls, clubs etc). Social infrastructure considered necessary included social groups that cater to the time available to older people and the interests of older people, sport and recreation facilities that cater to the needs of older people, active encouragement by the developer for community makers (recognition, amenity availability) and community news letters to keep people informed of local activities and services.

Older people can often be the glue that binds local communities. Because they do not work, they are rich in time. Time that can be spent chatting to neighbours, keeping an eye on things during the day when many of their neighbours are at work and pursuing social activities in their local area. For some this time affluence is well supported by financial security and good health, which allows them to choose how they spend their time. When they choose to spend their time in what we have called 'community making' or 'community taking' activities they develop broad social networks that result in the development of social capital at an individual and local area level. This is illustrated in the following quote from an older woman who moved from the country to Mawson Lakes following a divorce:

> *I've made a huge effort because I felt really dislocated…to combat that I made the effort to go on the Progress Association Committee and to join things and started going to church… I really worked at it … [then] last year just after I set up my own business I tripped over my cat, shot through the door and broke my ankle which is just like the worst time you can probably have. But, it was a fantastic story… some of my lovely neighbours brought my bed downstairs next to my office and the church organised food for three weeks and so there I was in my office and I*

> *could hobble out with my crutches and open the gate and then neighbours could come and check on me and bring food and all that. Just startling. I invite neighbours to dinner and they invite me to dinner and so we have that lovely networking thing happening (FG1, p221)*

For some older people, frail health or financial insecurity restricts how time is spent and if the physical and social infrastructure of their local area is inadequate, these people will have few opportunities to get out and make social connections. The following quote demonstrates this point well:

> *I knew of one woman that lived here and her and her husband, they weren't very mobile but had nothing to do during the day and they've moved into a neighbouring suburb and into a retirement village to have daily activity and stuff going on. (CS3, p.326)*

Diagram 7 illustrates the importance of physical and social infrastructures in the development of social ties for older people. If access to services or other people is unavailable (through poor transport, lack of services or social opportunities) then older people may become isolated.

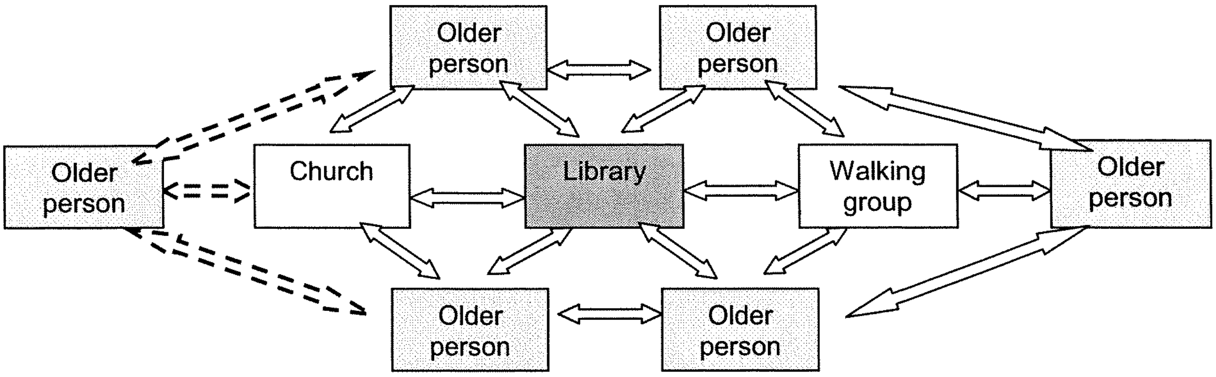

Diagram 7: Avenues to social networks for older people (broken arrows indicate poor access)

Many of the physical and social infrastructure needs of older people mirror those of teenagers; however it is important to acknowledge that the space and time issues are different.

Conclusions

'Community' and 'social capital' are not generic notions. They have physical and social components which occupy time and space in different ways for different groups of people. The people living within the MPCs studied here did not represent a homogenous group. While they all identified clear needs for social connection within the MPC, the physical and social infrastructure needed to support this social connection was idiosyncratic.

We need to acknowledge that residential developments such as Mawson Lakes and Caroline Springs are going to be made up of residents at various stages of life and that community and social capital for the whole will only develop if the various groups are given access to opportunities to make social connection within their life stage group and outside their life stage group. Although social capital as a notion may be difficult to pin down, the physical and social infrastructures that facilitate access to social opportunities within MPCs and other residential areas are knowable – we only need to ask.

This first phase of data collection for the Work, home and Community Study highlighted the role of work in the development of community and social capital, however, more efforts need to be made to understand how workplaces and employers can facilitate social connection within residential areas and therefore have a positive impact on the development of community and social capital for their employees.

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Work, Life and Time

The Australian Work and Life Index 2007

AWALI

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and **Philippa Williams**

CENTRE FOR WORK + LIFE

Hawke Research Institute for Sustainable Societies
University of South Australia
http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/cwl/default.asp

The authors would like to thank Michael Alexander (Principal Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Family Studies) and Carole Pearce for their comments on an earlier draft.

Published by the Centre for Work + Life
Hawke Research Institute
University of South Australia

Street address:
St Bernards Road
Magill SA 5072
Adelaide

Postal address
GPO Box 2471
Adelaide SA 5001 Australia

Barbara Pocock, Natalie Skinner and Philippa Williams
Work–life in Australia: Outcomes from the Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) 2007

ISBN 978–0–9803798–4–6

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Executive summary

The Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) is a national survey of work–life outcomes amongst working Australians. It will be repeated annually from 2007 in partnership with the SA and WA Governments. AWALI 2007 establishes baseline data for work–life outcomes using a range of measures. AWALI 2007 surveyed 1435 randomly selected working Australians in March 2007 by computer-assisted telephone interviews. The survey provides a fair representation of the Australian labour market at the time of the survey. Data are weighted by age, highest level of schooling, sex and geographic area throughout this report in order to reflect the Australian population distribution.

AWALI measures perceptions of work–life interaction, including both work-to-life and life-to-work interactions. Two dimensions of negative interaction are considered: general interference (work interference with responsibilities or activities outside work and vice versa) and time strain (restrictions on time spent with family or friends and vice versa). AWALI also contains measures of work-to-community interaction (interference with capacity to develop or maintain community connections and friendships), feeling rushed for time and satisfaction with overall work–life balance.

Work affects most working Australians beyond the workplace. Over half employees surveyed find that work sometimes, often or almost always affects their activities beyond the workplace (52.6% of the total) and even more find it regularly keeps them from spending the amount of time they would like with family or friends (60.7%). Men report more spillover from work-to-life, and less satisfaction with their work–life balance overall, than women. This reflects their longer hours at work. When hours are controlled for, women have worse work–life outcomes than men. Women are much more pressed for time, reflecting their greater unpaid work hours.

Spillover from work to activities and time outside work is much greater than the reverse. Most people do not think that their personal life affects their working lives or the time they have to give to work. It seems that work time is better protected from personal life and its competing demands for time than personal life is protected from work time and its demands. Only 5.5 per cent of workers feel that that their personal life takes time from their work often or almost always, compared to a quarter who feel the reverse (i.e. that work takes away from personal time). The temporal boundary around work and life thus appears rather more porous in one direction than in the other. Work pulls more from life outside work than life pulls from work.

Work is also having a significant impact on workers' community connections. Just under half the respondents feel that work interferes with their capacity to build and maintain community connections and friendships sometimes, often or almost always. Twenty per cent of men said work did so often or almost always and 17.0 per cent of women agreed.

Australian workers often feel rushed for time. Australian women are especially affected, with 55.6 per cent feeling often or almost always rushed or pressed for time compared to 49.9 per cent of men. When it comes to feeling rushed or pressed for time, women with children are distinctive: 72.5 per cent of them often or almost always feel rushed for time compared to 44.2 per cent of women without children (45.7% and 56.0% for men).

However, despite high levels of spillover from work to life, three-quarters of Australians (77.2% of women and 74.0% of men) are satisfied with their work–life balance.

Some suggest that the self-employed can gain control of their working time and better reconcile work and family. Our results give little support to this proposition. The self-employed report more frequent negative work–life spillover than employees in our study, although the difference is small. Specifically, self-employment does not appear to offer better work-life outcomes for women with children. In our study, self-employed women with children are more likely to report frequent time strain and more frequent interference of work with non-work activities than women employees with children. Overall, seventy-five per cent of employees and the self-employed are satisfied with their work–life balance.

Controlling for hours, male employees in permanent employment have the best work–life outcomes. There is no statistically significant difference between the work–life outcomes of men in fixed term or casual employment arrangements and women in permanent, fixed term contract or casual employment: all of these have very similar work-life outcomes.

Longer hours of work are consistently associated with worse work–life outcomes on all our work–life measures. Outcomes are worse for both women and men who work long hours (45–59 hours), and especially for those who work very long hours (60+ hours). For example, more than twice as many employees who work very long hours frequently perceive that work interferes with their activities outside work, compared to those working around a standard full-time week (35–44 hours).

While part-timers generally experience less work–life interference than full-timers, for women part-time work may not provide very much protection from negative work-to-life spillover. Work-to-life interference is worse for women who work long part-time hours (16–34 hours), than for full-time women. For example, 16.8 per cent of women who work long part-time hours perceive that work frequently interferes with activities outside work, compared to 13.5 per cent of full-time women. This raises the possibility that longer part-time working does not shield women well from time pressures or work–life spillover.

Less than half the survey respondents had a good fit between their actual and preferred hours. Just over 40 per cent of those workers surveyed work more hours than they want to, while a smaller proportion (16%) work less. This result is perhaps surprising, given that the survey was conducted at a time of very low official unemployment, when conditions might be expected to favour a good fit as workers change jobs or negotiate to achieve their preferences. Our data provide evidence for the proposition that a good fit between hours of work and preferences improves work–life outcomes. For example, work frequently interferes with time for family or friends for a third of those who would like to work less, compared to 15 per cent of those with a good hours fit. In terms of the overall work–life index (a standardised scale averaging five key work–life measures into a single Index), there are significant differences between those who have a good fit and those who seek different hours. Those with a good match between actual and preferred hours have the best work–life outcomes and those who want to work less have the worst.

Work–life spillover is greater for those in poorer quality jobs, and this holds consistently for a range of job quality measures (job security, work overload, time and task autonomy, flexibility of working time and overall job satisfaction). This effect is consistent for all work–life measures. For example, workers who are worried about the future of their jobs are more likely to experience a negative spillover from work to activities outside work. Lower work overload, more schedule flexibility, more autonomy at work and higher job satisfaction are all associated with better work–life outcomes in terms of less work–life spillover, having enough time with family and friends, less interference with community connections, less chance of feeling rushed or pressed for time and higher satisfaction with one's work–life balance overall.

The survey shows that many Australian workers feel stressed at work, especially women, and this is associated with poor work-life outcomes.

Particular occupations are associated with lower levels of work–life interference and others with much higher rates. Managers, professionals, community and personal service, and technical and trades workers are most likely to experience work–life interference, while sales and clerical and administrative workers are least affected. Almost a third of managers are not satisfied with their work–life balance (32.1% of men and 30.1% of women, compared to the overall average of 25 per cent). Similar proportions of community and personal services workers (36.7% of men and 28.9% of women), professionals (27.1% of men and 23.6% of women) and technical and trades workers (38.5%) are also more likely to be dissatisfied.

While conclusions about states should be viewed with some caution due to small sample sizes in particular states (ACT, TAS), findings suggest that Tasmanians are least likely to experience general interference from work to non-work activities. Queenslanders are most likely to report time strain (i.e., restrictions on time with family and friends due to their work commitments). Western Australians and South Australians are least likely to find that work interferes with their community connections. When it comes to feeling rushed for time, Tasmanians are the least affected. Compared to all other locations combined, there was some indication that work–life outcomes are better in South Australia in terms of a less negative spillover from work-to-life. However there is little difference for overall satisfaction with work–life balance and feeling rushed for time.

The average commute of respondents was 4.7 hours a week. Those who do the longest commutes have the worst work–life outcomes. A quarter of those who commute for more than 10 hours a week find that work frequently interferes with activities outside work compared to a fifth of those who commute for 2–5 hours. The effect of long commuting times is especially negative in relation to time strain. When commuting and working hours combine to create long days, the effects on work–life spillover are especially negative.

Older workers (over 55 years) and workers under 34 years have better work–life outcomes than those in their middle years. In terms of education, there are significant differences in work–life outcomes between workers with different educational levels, ranging from the best for those without post-school vocational or university qualifications to the worst for those with university qualifications. This reflects the tendency for those with a university education to enter occupations that are more likely to be associated with negative work–life spillover, such as management and the professions.

More caring responsibilities are associated with worse work–life outcomes. More specifically, parenting is associated with worse work–life outcomes, especially amongst those with younger children (four years old or less) and more children (two or more children). Parenting and caring responsibilities have a stronger negative effect on work–life outcomes for women than for men. Compared to men with or without caring responsibilities/children and women without caring responsibilities/children, the worst work–life outcomes are reported by women with caring responsibilities for family and friends, women with two or more children, and women with children regardless of whether they are of preschool (four years old or under) or school age. When it comes to feeling rushed or pressed for time, women with children are distinctive: 72.5 per cent of them often or almost always feel rushed for time, compared to 44.2 per cent of women without children (45.7% and 56.0% for men, respectively).

It is widely accepted that working conditions and experiences can affect workers' physical and mental health and well-being. Similarly, our study shows that negative work–life spillover is also associated with worse health. Poor work–life outcomes also show a clear relationship to (self-reported) physical, mental and social well-being. Men and women with the worst work–life outcomes report poorer health, more use of prescription medications, more stress, and more dissatisfaction with their close personal relationships. Work–life outcomes are imposing high costs – on individuals, families and the broader community. This study confirms the importance of work–life issues in Australia and creates a firm basis for greater policy and research attention to these questions and their effects.

Introduction

More and more Australians are participating in paid work for longer over their life-cycles. Women are increasingly contributing to paid work and, in a tight labour market, Australia's economy relies on them. Putting more time and effort into paid work, however, has important implications beyond the workplace: it affects personal, household and community well-being and health. It affects the nature and quality of care for those who rely on workers or live in their households, and it affects fertility (McDonald 2000).

These issues have considerable international purchase. Governments are increasingly aware and attentive, at least rhetorically, to work–life issues as a result of their strong purchase in community conversation as well as their demographic, health and labour market implications. Much of this interest focuses upon the question of reconciling work with family responsibilities (OECD 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005), but there is increasing interest in issues beyond work–family effects to work–life effects. This larger set of effects (which include work–family interaction) is our focus.

This report on the Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) is the first of an annual survey of work–life interaction in Australia. Collection of the Index data will be funded in 2008–2010 through a collaboration of the University of South Australia and the South Australian and Western Australian governments with the support of the Australian Research Council (ARC), through the ARC linkage project, 'Work/life balance, well-being and health: theory, practice and policy' (ARC LP 0776732).

Here we describe key results arising from the initial 2007 survey and analyse them by gender and other factors. Subsequent publications will go beyond this descriptive account to undertake multivariate analysis. Our database is a survey of over 1400 working Australians undertaken in March 2007. The concepts and methodology underpinning AWALI have been set out elsewhere (URL: http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/cwl/publications.asp).

Throughout this report we refer to work–life 'spillover' or 'interaction' rather than 'balance'. In our view, work and life interact in complex ways that are better conceived of as interactions rather than degrees of balance. The boundaries around them are porous. Further, they are shaped by many things: labour market regulation, social supports and the cultures prevailing in workplaces and around gender, as well as more local workplace and household factors and the personal capacities of individuals. The metaphor of balance has at its fulcrum a clever or lucky individual who keeps everything in careful equilibrium. In our view this places too much weight on the individual, and too little upon their legal, economic, social and cultural surrounding. What is more, the two spheres of work and life interact in complex ways: they don't sit alongside each other, but overlap with porous boundaries between the spheres. The effects of each sphere spill onto the other, though as this report shows this happens rather more in one direction (from work to life) than in the other (from life to work). For these reasons, this report assesses work–life interaction or spillover and locates outcomes for individuals in the context of their workplace and household situations.

AWALI contains a number of questions which directly assess respondents' perception of work-to-life interaction and vice versa. AWALI measures two dimensions of influence: firstly, the impact of each sphere (work, non-work life) on respondents' capacity to satisfactorily engage in the activities and responsibilities of the other sphere (which we term a general strain or interference effect) and secondly, the time available to spend in the other sphere (which we view as a time strain effect).

AWALI measures work-to-life interactions that include, but are not confined to, work–family issues. Those without children also experience spillover from their working lives onto their relationships, recreation, households and health and well-being. AWALI also measures the effects of work on community connections. Putting more hours into paid work affects our relationships beyond home, including our capacity to build friendships and support networks in the broader community, but these are generally not investigated in assessments of work–life interactions.

AWALI also employs a commonly used single measure of time pressure in daily life (feeling rushed or pressed for time), which is an indirect measure of negative work–life spillover. Finally, AWALI includes a general assessment of satisfaction with work–life balance. 'Balance' rather than 'interaction' was the terminology used in this question, as it is the most common terminology used in the media and other public discussions and hence most likely to be familiar to respondents. In sum, AWALI measures perceptions of work–life interaction focusing on work-to-life interaction and life-to-work interaction. The first two items study the dimensions of negative interaction:

- Firstly 'general interference' (i.e., the frequency with which work interferes with responsibilities or activities outside work and vice versa) and
- Secondly 'time strain' (i.e., the frequency with which work keeps workers from spending the amount of time they would like with family or friends and vice versa).
- Work-to-community interaction, measuring the frequency with which work affects workers' ability to develop or maintain connections and friendships in their community.
- Satisfaction with overall work–life 'balance'.
- Frequency of feeling rushed or pressed for time.

Finally, we bring together the above five measures of work-to-life interaction (excluding the distinctive life-to-work interactions) to arrive at an overall work–life index, providing an easily understood, overall comparative measure of work–life outcomes.

While we recognise that work-to-life and life-to-work interactions have both positive and negative effects, AWALI 2007 concentrates upon negative interactions, given that these are of most immediate policy interest. We hope that AWALI makes a new and useful contribution to existing knowledge and policy in five ways:

1. It includes a random sample drawn from all working Australians, permitting analysis of work and family issues but extending more broadly to work–life issues as they affect all Australian workers across the life-cycle.
2. It is annual in nature, allowing for the analysis of change over time, based on a cross-section of surveyed working Australians.
3. It includes both work-to-life and life-to-work interactions.
4. It includes work-to-community interactions.
5. It analyses a wide range of life issues (including care responsibilities, relationships and health outcomes) with a wide range of work effects (including hours of work, job quality, forms of employment, industry, occupation and unionisation). This analysis is set in the context of geographic, personal and household factors (including gender, age, education, location and commuting time).

Structure of this report

This report begins in Section 1 with a description of the AWALI 2007 sample and analysis of its representativeness relative to the Australian labour force.

Section 2 then gives a descriptive account of the main outcomes of the survey which begins with a discussion of overall work–life outcomes for the whole sample before moving to analysis of work–life issues by a range of factors. This analysis integrates discussion of gender throughout (where sample size permits reliable statements).

Section 3 includes detailed discussion of eight work or job-related factors, as follows:

1. Employee/self-employed
2. Form of employment: casual, contract, permanent
3. Working hours
4. Fit between actual and preferred hours
5. Job quality
6. Occupation
7. Industry
8. Unionisation.

Section 4 includes detailed discussion of ten geographic, personal and household characteristics as follows:

1. State and city/regional location
2. South Australian outcomes
3. Length of commute
4. Gender, age and education
5. Care responsibilities and children
6. Income
7. Health
8. Close relationships
9. Utilisation of medical services
10. Stress.

Unless otherwise indicated, the findings reported in Sections 2, 3 and 4 refer to employees, not self-employed persons. It is likely that the experience of work is qualitatively different for employees of an organisation than for self-employed persons. We investigate these differences in regard to work–life outcomes in Section 3.

Statistical conventions in this report

Any differences that are commented upon throughout the report are significant at the $P < 0.05$ level unless otherwise indicated. The Dunn–Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons is used where appropriate to set a more conservative level for statistical significance. We sometimes refer to the size of the relationships observed between work–life outcomes and a particular factor (e.g., work overload). Within a range of 0 (no relationship) and 1.0 (a perfect relationship), the magnitude (i.e., the strength) of the association is defined as small (0.10–0.29), moderate (0.30–0.49) and large (0.50 and above).

We also make use of a combination measure of work–life interaction, the work–life index. This standardised scale is calculated by taking the average of responses across five key work–life questions (work interference with activities outside work, work interference with time with family and friends, work interference with community connections, satisfaction with overall work–life balance and being rushed for time). Principal components factor analysis shows that the five items load onto a single factor, indicating it is appropriate to combine the items into a single scale. The scale has a satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.81).

The work–life index is a standardised scale with the mean set at 100 and a standard deviation of 15. The Index is interpreted in a similar way as a standard IQ score, but unlike IQ scores, higher scores on the Index indicate a poorer outcome. For the purposes of this report the Index offers a quick indication of how much particular groups vary from the survey average. A higher work–life index score (e.g., 115) implies worse work–life outcomes than the average of the survey population, while a lower score (e.g., 83) implies better than average outcomes. With this type of standardised scale, about 68 per cent of the scores will fall within one standard deviation of the mean (i.e. between 85 and 115) and about 95 per cent of the scores will fall within two standard deviations of the mean (i.e. between 70 and 130). This type of standardised scale assists us to interpret the magnitude of the difference between a score and the survey average. For example, since 95 per cent of the sample will have a score between 70 and 130, a score of 71 indicates a large difference relative to the average survey score of 100.

Section 1: The AWALI 2007 sample, its representativeness and general characteristics

This section provides an overview of the sample and its general characteristics.

The AWALI 2007 sample is a national stratified random sample of 1435 Australian workers conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviews over the two weekends of 23–25 March and 31 March to 1 April 2007. Newspoll conducted the survey. In accordance with usual Newspoll practice, the respondents were selected by means of a stratified random sample process, which included a quota set for each capital city and non-capital city area. In each of these categories, a quota is set for each telephone area code, with a random selection of household telephone numbers drawn from current telephone listings in each area code, and a random selection of an individual in each household by means of a 'last birthday' screening question.

Telephone surveys have strengths and weaknesses. They allow fast data collection and increased quality controls through interview controls and clarifications, and they permit data collection from individuals regardless of their reading and writing ability. A system of callbacks and appointments to facilitate a higher response rate and the inclusion of responses from people who do not spend a great deal of time at home means that this possible distortion is minimised in AWALI. However, the survey is likely to be biased against those who do not use a telephone at home. The concepts, methods, literature, measures and pre-tests underpinning AWALI are set out in Pocock, Williams & Skinner 2007, 'The Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI): Concepts, Methodology & Rationale' (http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/cwl/publications.asp).

As a sample drawn from a much larger population, the estimates presented in this report may be subject to sampling bias; that is, the estimates may be different from the figures that would have been reported had all Australian workers been interviewed. Two strategies have been used to address this issue. The total number of completed interviews was post-weighted to reflect the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates of the Australian population distribution according to age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. This was done to adjust for differences between the AWALI sample and Australian population on these key demographics.

The reliability of these weighted population estimates can be evaluated by calculating the relative standard error for each estimate. This indicates the accuracy of a population estimate. Resource and space limitations preclude the calculation of relative standard errors for each estimate in this report. Instead, we follow the threshold rule used in the HILDA study (Heady, Warren & Harding 2006) set at a minimum of 20 units (i.e., participants) that must contribute to the value of a cell for that figure to be considered reliable throughout this report. Estimates that do not meet this threshold requirement are preceded by an asterisk, indicating that this figure should be interpreted with caution. Excluding self-employed participants, the unweighted sample size was 1230 and the weighted sample size was 8609. There were 205 self-employed respondents (1226 weighted).

Sample characteristics

The AWALI 2007 sample was, on the whole, a good reflection of the Australian labour market at the time of the survey, as Table 1 shows. It provides a good representation by state, age and occupation. However, it over-represents full-time workers and professionals, and under-represents the self-employed .

Table 1 Overview of AWALI 2007 sample characteristics (%)

	Men	Women	All	ABS labour force survey[1]
All	57.3	42.7	100	54.9 (male)
State				
SA	6.7	7.0	6.8	7.4
WA	11.4	10.8	11.1	10.3
QLD	20.4	19.7	20.1	20.2
NSW	33.6	33.8	33.7	32.4
VIC	24.2	23.5	23.9	24.8
TAS	2.1	2.4	2.2	2.2
ACT	1.7	2.7	2.1	1.8
Total	100	100	100	100
Geographic location				
City	64.2	67.1	65.4	-
Regional/rural	35.8	32.9	34.6	-
Total	100	100	100	-
Age group				
18–24	14.2	15.9	15.0	17.6
25–34	24.4	21.5	23.2	21.9
35–44	22.4	26.6	24.2	23.7
45–54	23.7	21.9	23.0	22.3
55–64	11.5	11.8	11.7	12.5
65+	3.6	2.2	3.0	2.2
Total	100	100	100	100
Higher education				
TAFE/college	40.8	33.2	37.5	NA
University degree	33.3	37.6	35.2	NA
None	25.9	29.2	27.3	NA
Total	100	100	100	NA
Occupation				
Manager	15.2	10.1	13.1	13.0
Professional	28.5	33.7	30.7	20.1
Technician/trade	19.5	2.1	12.1	15.3
Community/personal service	4.8	9.4	6.7	8.7
Clerical	6.9	23.4	14.0	15.3
Sales	5.9	11.7	8.3	9.8
Machinery operator	8.2	0.9	5.1	6.8
Labourer	10.9	8.8	10.0	10.9
Total	100	100	100	100
Type of employment				
Employee	84.3	91.1	87.5	81.2
Self-employed	15.7	8.1	12.5	18.8
Total	100	100	100	100
Work status				
Full-time (35+ hours per week)	84.2	54.7	71.6	71.9
Part-time (< 35 hours per week)	15.8	45.3	28.4	28.1
Total	100		100	100
Trade union membership	24.1	26.3	25.0	20.3
Income				
< $30,000	6.3	11.4	8.4	-
$30,000–$59,999	28.9	25.1	27.3	-
$60,000–$89,999	23.5	24.1	23.8	-
$90,000 or more	41.3	39.3	40.5	-
Total	100	100	100	-

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. [1]ABS Cat. No. 6310.0 November 2006 and Cat. No. 6202.0 May 2007. ABS data for states includes 2.2% from the Northern Territory, and includes 15–24 year olds in first age group.

With regard to household and family structure, Table 2 shows that most respondents were living in a household with two or more adults, and 40.6 per cent of households contained one or more children. In most households with children, most of these children were of school age. A third of the sample (31.2%) included a child aged four years or under in the household.

Table 2 Household and family structure, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Persons
Adults in household	
1 adult	18.3
2 or more adults	81.7
Marital status	
Married/de facto	61.1
Divorced, separated, never married or widowed	38.9
Children in household	
No children	59.3
1 child	16.9
2–3 children	22.0
4 or more children	1.7
Ages of children[1,2]	
≤ 4	31.2
5–12	67.9
13–17	52.9

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. [1]Percentage as proportion of respondents with children in the household (weighted n = 4002). [2]Total is greater than 100 as 23.7% of respondents with children had more than one child.

Section 2: Overall work–life interaction

This section describes overall work–life outcomes for men and women who are employees. The effects of self-employment are considered in Section 3. Most employees who participated in this survey are working full-time (85.6% of men, 54.8% of women; 71.8% overall), with part-time work more common for women (45.2%) than men (14.4%).

Table 3 sets out respondents' perception of work-to-life and life-to-work interactions by gender. Table 6 sets out their overall satisfaction with their work–life balance.

Table 3 Work–life outcomes by gender, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Work interferes with activities outside work				
Men	45.1	32.2	22.7	100
Women	50.2	33.6	16.2	100
All	47.4	32.8	19.8	100
Work interferes with enough time with family or friends				
Men	37.4	35.3	27.3	100
Women	41.7	37.7	20.7	100
All	39.3	36.4	24.3	100
Work interferes with community connections				
Men	51.2	28.1	20.7	100
Women	54.6	28.4	17.0	100
All	52.7	28.3	19.0	100
Personal life interferes with work activities				
Men	70.5	21.9	7.7	100
Women	70.8	22.9	6.3	100
All	70.6	22.3	7.1	100
Personal life restricts time spent at work				
Men	75.6	18.6	5.8	100
Women	77.8	17.0	5.1	100
All	76.6	17.9	5.5	100
Feel rushed or pressed for time				
Men	19.4	30.6	49.9	100
Women	11.6	32.7	55.6	100
All	15.9	31.6	52.5	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Table excludes self-employed persons.

Work-to-life interaction

Work affects the lives of most Australian workers beyond the workplace. Over half of those surveyed find that work sometimes, often or almost always affects their activities outside work (52.6%) or keeps them from spending the amount of time they would like with family or friends (60.7%). More men perceive work-to-life strain than women, a result which is replicated across all work-to-life and life-to-work interactions, except when it comes to feeling rushed or pressed for time.

The general interference of work with non-work activities is more frequently reported by men, of whom 22.7 per cent said it affects them often or almost always, compared to 16.2 per cent of women. This reflects the over-representation of men amongst those working long hours and women's greater concentration in part-time work. Only 13.2 per cent of all part-timers (men and women combined) said they often or almost always feel that work interferes with life outside work, compared to 22.4 per cent of full-time employees.

A similar pattern is evident for the impact of work on time available to spend with family and friends (or what we call time strain as a result of work). Most respondents report some time restriction, with 60.7 per cent saying that work keeps them from spending enough time with family or friends sometimes, often or almost always. Significant differences exist in relation to gender and full-time/part-time work status. The greatest burden of time restriction is reported by men: 27.3 per cent of men feel that work often or almost always interferes with having enough time with friends or family compared to 20.7 per cent of women. Over a quarter of full-time workers (27.9%) feel that work often or almost always interferes with having enough time with friends or family, compared to 15.1% of part-time employees. Overall, men working full-time report the most frequent interference of work with other life activities, and the most frequent restrictions on time with family and friends.

Life-to-work interaction

Clearly, spillover from work to life is a widespread experience for Australian workers. However, spillover that runs the other way – from personal life to work – is much less frequent, as Table 3 shows. Most participants (70.6%) do not think that their personal life affects their work activities to any great extent (i.e., never or rarely). Gender has a small but statistically significant effect, with men reporting more frequent interference: 7.7 per cent of men perceive spillover from personal life onto work often or almost always, compared to 6.3 per cent of women who do so.

A similar pattern is evident around how respondents' personal lives restrict work time. Three quarters (76.6%) do not feel that their personal lives restrict work time to any great extent. There is a small but statistically significant association by gender, but not by full-time/part-time work status. Women are marginally more likely to report that their personal lives exert few restrictions on their work time (77.8%) than men (75.6%). Further analysis reveals that this pattern is sustained only for men and women with children. For people without children, there were no differences in time strain from life-to-work, and women (4.5%) were more likely to report frequent interference (often/almost always) from life to work activities compared to men (2.9%).

Work-to-community interaction is widespread

Public policy and academic debate about the relationship between work and life outside work tend to focus on the reconciliation of work and family, occasionally focusing on workers' capacity to pursue personal and social interests. However, the impact of work on workers' capacity to develop and maintain connections in their community is generally overlooked. These effects include the impact of work on social networks, social cohesion and social capital. Robert Putnam has drawn attention to these complex and multi-faceted concepts and the links between them (Putnam 2000). AWALI includes a single measure of the extent to which work is perceived to interfere with respondents' capacity to develop or maintain connections and friendships in their community as a broad indicator of the spillover of work onto the broader community fabric. Our findings on this issue indicate that work's interference with community connections is surprisingly widespread.

As shown in Table 3, just under half the respondents (47.3%) feel that work interferes with their capacity to build and maintain community connections and friendships to some extent (sometimes, often or almost always). Full-time/part-time work status and gender had small but statistically significant associations with the perceived interference of work on community connections. The most frequent interference is reported by men (20.7% said it often or almost always occurred) compared to women (17.0%), and full-time employees (23.5%) compared to part timers (7.7%; Table 4).

Table 4 Work interferes with community connections by gender and work status, employees, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Men				
Full time	47.3	30.0	22.7	100
Part time	74.7	17.1*	8.2*	100
Total	51.2	28.1	20.7	100
Women				
Full time	48.9	26.2	24.9	100
Part time	61.5	30.9	7.5	100
Total	54.6	28.4	17.0	100
All				
Full time	47.8	28.7	23.5	100
Part time	65.2	27.0	7.7	100
Total	52.7	28.3	19.0	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. *Estimate not reliable. Hours usually worked per week used to categorise full-time (35 or more hours) and part-time (34 or less) work status. Table excludes self-employed persons.

Feeling rushed or pressed for time: women feel it most

Overall, just over half of all respondents report that work interferes with their activities outside work to some extent. This spillover is especially evident from respondents' feelings about being rushed or pressed for time. As Table 5 shows, over half the respondents report frequently (often or almost always) feeling rushed or pressed for time (52.5%). Women report more frequent feelings of time pressure (55.6%) than men (49.9%). Given that women are more likely to work part-time and that part-timers overall are less often rushed or pressed for time, this effect for women is pronounced. Working part-time offers men more relief from time pressure than it does women. Overall, women working full-time are most likely to experience high levels of time pressure in their daily lives.

Table 5 Rushed or pressed for time by gender and work status, employees, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
		Men		
Full-time	17.0	29.8	53.2	100
Part-time	34.0	35.4	30.6	100
Total	19.4	30.6	49.9	100
		Women		
Full-time	8.2	32.4	59.4	100
Part-time	15.8	33.1	51.0	100
Total	11.6	32.7	55.6	100
		All		
Full-time	14.0	30.7	55.3	100
Part-time	21.0	33.8	45.3	100
Total	15.9	31.6	52.5	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Hours usually worked per week used to categorise full-time (35 or more hours) and part-time (34 or less) work status. Table excludes self-employed persons.

Work–life satisfaction: most employees are satisfied with their overall work–life balance

AWALI also asks respondents about their overall satisfaction with the balance between their work and the rest of their life. As shown in Table 6, most respondents (75.4%) are satisfied with their work–life balance. There are small statistically significant associations with gender and part-time/full-time work status. Women (77.2%) were more likely to report feeling satisfied than men (74%), and part-time employees (84.6%) more frequently report satisfaction than full-timers (71.8%). Overall, women working part-time are most likely to be satisfied with their work–life balance.

Table 6 Satisfaction with work–life balance by gender and work status, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Not satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Men			
Full-time employees	27.4	72.6	100
Part-time employees	17.7*	82.3	100
Total	26.0	74.0	100
Women			
Full-time employees	29.7	70.3	100
Part-time employees	14.4	85.6	100
Total	22.8	77.2	100
All			
Full-time employees	28.2	71.8	100
Part-time employees	15.4	84.6	100
Total	24.6	75.4	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. *Estimate not reliable. Hours usually worked per week used to categorise full-time (35 or more hours) and part-time (34 or less) work status. Table excludes self-employed persons. Response range on satisfied with work–life balance: 1 'not at all satisfied' 2 'not very satisfied', 3 'somewhat satisfied', 4 'very satisfied'. Responses 1 and 2 categorised as 'not satisfied', responses 3 and 4 categorised as 'satisfied'.

Work–life index by gender and full-time/part-time work status

Significant differences exist between men and women on their overall work–life index scores, moderated to some extent by their part-time/full-time work status, as set out in Figure 1. Our overall work–life index is a standardised scale with the average score (mean) set at 100 and a standard deviation of 15. It is based on the average of five measures of work–life interaction (listed in Table 7). A score higher than 100 indicates a worse than average work–life outcome and a score lower than 100 indicates a better than average work–life outcome.

Full-time employees (Index score = 102.2) have much worse overall work–life outcomes than part-timers (95.0) ($P < 0.001$). Women are more likely to be working part-time, and also report working fewer hours (average of 32.5 hours) than men (average of 42.2 hours). When we statistically control for the effects of hours (i.e., by holding work hours constant), women (101.4) have worse work–life outcomes than men (98.9) ($P < 0.001$).

There were small, but not statistically significant, differences between men and women working full and part-time hours. Men who work less than 35 hours a week have better overall work–life outcomes than women who do so. Women who work full-time have the worst outcomes. Full-time women have a work–life index score of 103.0 (the worst work–life outcomes), full-time men 101.7, part-time women 95.8 and part-time men 93.0.

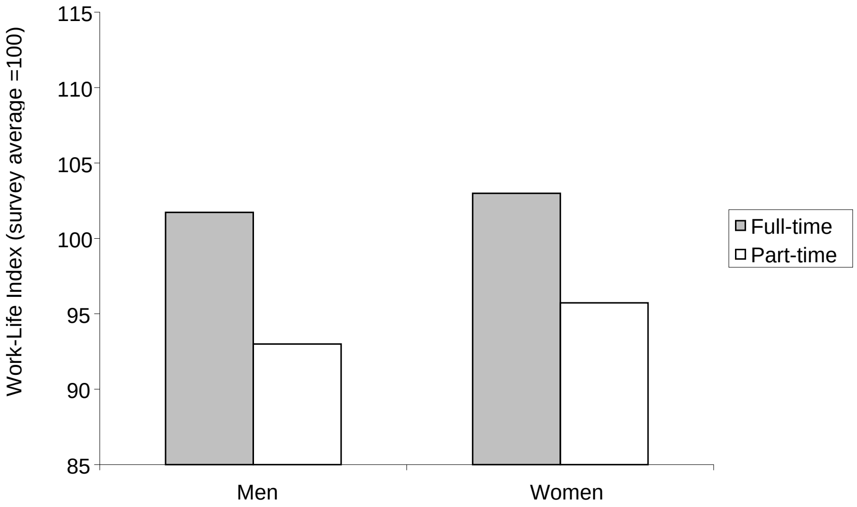

Figure 1 Work–life index by gender and full-time/part-time work status, AWALI 2007 (%)
Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Hours usually worked per week used to categorise full-time (35 or more hours) and part-time (34 or less) work status. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

Overall work–life interaction: summary

In sum, it emerges that work-to-life spillover is much more common than the reverse: work interferes with life much more frequently than personal life affects employees at work. Work affects time available for family and friends, in particular. It is more prevalent than the general interference from work to non-work activities. Sixty per cent of Australians feel that work sometimes, often or almost always keeps them from spending the amount of time they would like with family or friends. For a quarter of men and a fifth of women, work does this often or almost always.

In terms of general work-to-life interference, over half of all workers feel that work interferes with their activities outside work, and for a fifth it does this often or almost always.

Interference the other way, from life to work, occurs much less frequently, with only 7.0 per cent of workers reporting that their personal life interferes with work and 5.5 per cent reporting that their personal life keeps them from spending time they would like on work activities. There is only a small gender difference on this, which is interesting in view of women's much greater care responsibilities (see Section 4). Women's greater care responsibilities do not appear to be taking time from work or interfering with work generally. However, these responsibilities beyond the workplace go a long way to explain women's more frequent feelings of being rushed or pressed for time.

An interesting finding is that women are more likely to perceive few work-time restrictions resulting from their personal lives (77.8%) than men (75.6%). Men are also more likely to perceive frequent interference (often/almost always) from their personal lives to their work responsibilities and activities (7.7% of men compared to 6.3% of women). These results suggest that the expectation that women are more likely to be distracted at work by life outside work than men is misplaced. Instead, we find that men are slightly more affected. Women appear to act as personal shock-absorbers of work–life interference, working fewer hours to reduce the negative spillover between the two domains and enduring higher levels of time poverty as a personal cost of their workforce participation and domestic load.

AWALI distinguishes the general interference of work on non-work activities from time strain (restrictions on time with family and friends due to work commitments). It seems that time strain is the more frequent work-to-life effect, than general interference. However, the reverse is true when it comes to life-to-work strain, with life-to-work spillover more commonly of general strain in nature, than related to time.

It seems that work time is better protected from personal life and its competing demands than personal life is protected from work time. Only 5.5 per cent of workers feel that their personal life takes time from their work often or almost always, compared to a quarter who feel the reverse is true. The temporal boundary around work and life thus appears rather more porous in favour of work. Work pulls more from life outside work than life pulls from work.

Our findings give some substance to concern about how work affects community connections, with almost half of all employees indicating that work sometimes, often or almost always interferes with their ability to develop or maintain their connections and friendships in their communities. For a fifth of all employees it does this often or almost always, and men (20.7%) more frequently report this type of interference than women (17.0%). Given the importance of community and social relations to general human happiness (Layard 2005), this is an important finding.

The incidence of feeling rushed for time is much higher than general work-to-life interference. Over half of the survey population often or always feel rushed for time. Unlike work-to-life interference, feeling rushed is more common for women than men, with 55.6 per cent often or almost always feeling rushed for time, compared to 49.9 per cent of men.

The incidence of feeling rushed for time amongst all respondents is double the proportion of those who agree that their work often or almost always restricts the time they would like to spend with family or friends. Factors beyond employment help give rise to feelings of being rushed. As we see in Section 4, these include care responsibilities for family and friends and parenting responsibilities, which are particularly significant for women.

Given the association between feeling rushed, gender and caring responsibilities that we explore below, it seems that the combination of care with paid work goes a long way to explaining the higher incidence of feeling rushed, especially amongst women. While respondents report considerable work-to-life interference, and a very sizeable majority at least sometimes feels rushed for time, most are satisfied with their work–life balance overall.

Section 3: Work–life outcomes by job characteristics

3.1 What difference does it make to be self-employed ?

While some suggest that self-employment can result in an increased risk of poverty and insecurity, it is also argued that being self-employed allows workers to better reconcile work and life (Hughes 2006). Specifically, some suggest that women turn to self-employment as a way of getting control of their working time and better meeting family responsibilities while earning. Our results give little support to this proposition (see Table 7). For each work–life question, the self-employed report more frequent spillover than do employees. However, these differences are small and are statistically significant only for work interference with community connections and feeling rushed for time. Twenty-two per cent of the self-employed often or almost always find that work interferes with their community connections, compared with 19.0 per cent of employees. The self-employed are also more rushed for time (57.5% say they are often or almost always rushed, compared to 52.3% of employees).

Table 7 Work–life outcomes of the self-employed compared to employees, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Work interferes with activities outside work				
Employees	47.0	33.1	19.9	100
Self-employed	47.9	30.0	22.1	100
Work interferes with enough time with family or friends				
Employees	39.1	36.6	24.3	100
Self-employed	36.9	35.9	27.3	100
Work interferes with community connections				
Employees	52.9	28.2	19.0	100
Self-employed	52.5	24.8	22.8	100
Feel rushed or pressed for time				
Employees	16.0	31.7	52.3	100
Self-employed	13.4	29.2	57.5	100
Satisfied with work–life balance		Not satisfied	Satisfied	
Employees		24.2	75.8	100
Self-employed		24.6	75.4	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Response range on satisfied with work–life balance 1 'not at all satisfied' 2 'not very satisfied', 3 'somewhat satisfied', 4 'very satisfied'. Responses 1 and 2 categorised as 'not satisfied', responses 3 and 4 categorised as 'satisfied'.

Looking at each gender separately, there was no significant difference in the pattern of these results except for feeling rushed for time. As shown in Table 8, the experience of being rushed or pressed for time is distinctive for women. Frequent time pressure is more common for self-employed women (74.2%) than female employees (55.7%), whereas male employees are more likely to report an absence of time pressure (19.4%) than self-employed men (15.9%).

When we look at the experience of women with children specifically, these differences persist. Self-employed women with children are more likely to report frequent time strain and more frequent interference of work with non-work activities than women employees with children.

Work–life index: comparison of the self-employed with employees

A comparison of self-employed workers and employees shows that on the overall work–life index there is a small but significant difference between these groups. The self-employed have a work–life index score of 101.3 and employees a score of 100 ($P < 0.01$). This difference is slight (and much less than the variance in the other factors discussed).

However, it suggests that the self-employed are not securing much more positive work–life outcomes than employees. This effect is consistent for men and women.

Table 8 Rushed or pressed for time by gender and employment arrangement, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Men				
Self-employed	15.9	33.1	51.0	100
Total employees	19.4	30.6	49.9	100
Total employed	18.9	31.0	50.1	100
Women				
Self-employed	6.5*	19.4*	74.2	100
Total employees	11.6	32.7	55.6	100
Total employed	11.2	31.7	57.1	100
All				
Self-employed	13.4	29.2	57.5	100
Total employees	15.9	31.6	52.5	100
Total employed	15.7	31.3	53.0	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. *Estimate not reliable.

The self-employed work longer hours than employees (41 compared to 38 hours per week, respectively). When we control for hours, the overall work–life index score for the self-employed is still higher than for employees. In other words, regardless of differences in hours worked, the self-employed have slightly worse work–life outcomes than employees.

About the same proportion of self-employed persons and employees work full-time (70.2 versus 71.8%, respectively). Consistent with the findings for employees, self-employed persons working full-time have worse work–life outcomes than part-time self-employed persons (Index scores of 104.6 and 94.8, respectively) ($P < 0.001$).

As for employees, self-employed men are more likely to be working full-time than women (76.8% compared to 52.8%, respectively), whereas part-time work is more common for self-employed women (47.2% are part-time). Self-employed men report longer working hours (43.6 hours per week) than self-employed women (32.9 hours per week). Consistent with the findings for employees, when we control for the effects of hours, self-employed women have poorer work–life outcomes (a work–life index score of 105.4) compared to self-employed men (100.4) ($P < 0.001$).

As for employees, self-employed women who work full-time have the worst work–life outcomes (106.5), compared to part-time self-employed women (98.1) and self-employed men (104.1 for full-time workers and 92.4 for part-time workers). Further, self-employed men working part-time have better work–life outcomes than part-time women.

The small cell sizes for self-employed women as a group, and self-employed men working part-time, are a significant limitation to this analysis. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that self-employment may not provide protection from negative work–life spillover. More research with a larger sample size is needed for more confident conclusions.

3.2 Form of employment: permanent, fixed term contract and casual employees

What differences in work–life outcomes exist between employees in different forms of employment? Permanent employees report longer working hours per week (an average of 41.4 hours) compared to contracted employees (an average of 36.9 hours) and casual employees (an average of 20.2 hours). When we control for differences in hours, permanent employees have the best work–life outcomes (Index score = 99.7) ($P < 0.001$), with no statistically significant difference between the work–life outcomes of fixed term contract (101.4) and casual (102.5) employees (Figure 2).

However, when we disaggregate by gender, the benefits of permanent employment are evident only for men: they have the best work–life outcomes. Data shown in Figure 2 are adjusted for work hours.

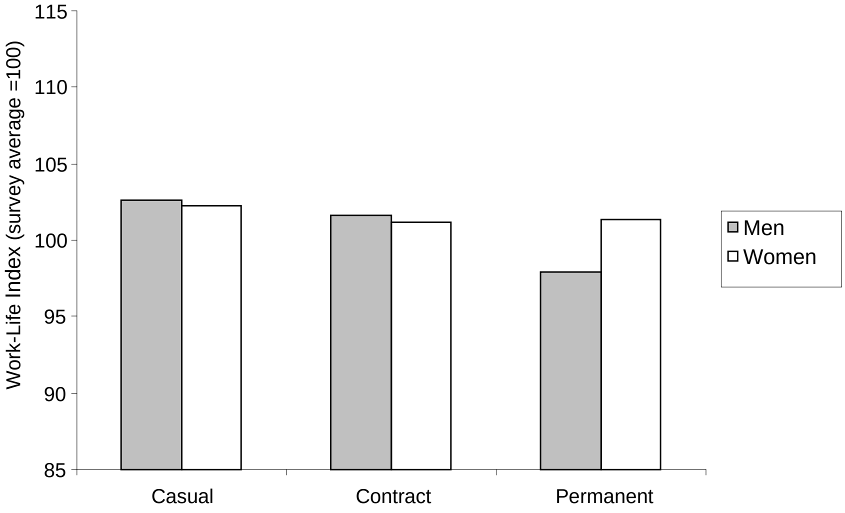

Figure 2 Work–life index by gender and casual, permanent and contract employment status, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Hours usually worked per week used to categorise full-time (35 or more hours) and part-time (34 or less) work status. Figure excludes employees who nominated 'other' as their type of employment contract (unweighted n = 16). Data shown is adjusted (i.e., controlled) for work hours. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

3.3 Work–life interaction and working hours

In the past 20 years the pattern of working hours in Australia has changed significantly, with growth in both part-time and extended full-time working hours. In November 2006, 36.8 per cent of Australian employees worked overtime (40.8% of men and 32.5% of women), and almost half of these (48.0%) were not paid for these hours (ABS Cat. No. 6342.0, November 2006). In our survey, 33.4 per cent worked more than 45 hours a week (20.3 per cent worked more than 45 hours a week, of which 7.7 worked 60+ hours). Different working hours are associated with sizeable and significant differences in work–life outcomes. We have seen these in relation to full-time/part-time status by gender in Figure 1.

A detailed analysis of working hours reveals a more complex picture. The most striking finding is the consistent association between long (45–59 hours) and very long hours (60+) and poorer work–life outcomes. This association is very pronounced for men and women. More than twice as many men working very long hours often or almost always perceive that work interferes with non–work activities, compared with men working around a full-time week (35–44 hours). The effect is three times greater among women, although the number of women working long hours is small and the result should be treated with caution (Table 9).

Part-timers working short hours (<16 hours a week) have much less frequent work–life interference but small cell sizes mean the results, should be treated with caution. Longer hours of work are consistently associated with worse work–life outcomes on all our work–life measures. For example, Table 9 shows frequent work interference is associated with longer hours. The strength of this association is small but statistically significant. Work–life interference is most common for those working more than 60 hours a week (40% of men, 43.3% of women and 40.5% of all respondents in this category say they often or almost always find that work interferes with activities outside work), and lowest for those working less than 16 hours a week (Table 9). An even more marked pattern is evident around the interference of work with time for family or friends (Table 10). Once again, the effects are consistent for men and women.

Table 9 Work interferes with activities outside work by gender and hours of work, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Men				
Short part-time (< 16 hrs)	55.1*	32.6*	12.3*	100
Part-time (16–34 hrs)	51.5	35.8*	12.8*	100
Full time (35–44 hrs)	51.4	31.1	17.5	100
Long hours (45–59 hrs)	38.3	33.2	28.5	100
Very long hours (60+)	29.9	30.1	40.0	100
Total	45.1	32.1	22.8	100
Women				
Short part-time (< 16 hrs)	62.8	29.3	8.0*	100
Part-time (16–34 hrs)	50.1	33.1	16.8	100
Full time (35–44 hrs)	58.5	27.9	13.5	100
Long hours (45–59 hrs)	28.0	49.1	22.9	100
Very long hours (60+)	15.7*	40.9*	43.3*	100
Total	49.6	34.0	16.4	100
All				
Short part-time (< 16 hrs)	60.2	30.4	9.4*	100
Part-time (16–34 hrs)	50.5	33.8	15.8	100
Full time (35–44 hrs)	54.2	29.9	16.0	100
Long hours (45–59 hrs)	35.0	38.3	26.7	100
Very long hours (60+)	27.3	32.2	40.5	100
Total	47.1	33.0	19.9	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. *Estimate not reliable. Table excludes self-employed persons.

Working long part-time hours compared to working full-time hours may not protect women

We have observed that men working part-time have better work–life outcomes than women working part-time. Although this effect is not statistically significant, it raises important questions regarding the potential for part-time work to effectively protect women against negative work–life interference. There is some indication that work–to–life interference may be worse for women who work long part-time hours (16–34 hours), than for women working around full-time hours (35–44 hours; Table 9). For example, 16.8 per cent of women who work long part-time hours perceive that work often or almost always interferes with non–work activities, compared to 13.5 per cent of full-time women. Women who work long part-time hours are also more frequently rushed or pressed for time (57.0%), than women who work full-time (49.0%).

Table 10 Work interferes with enough time with family and friends by gender and hours of work, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Men				
Short part-time (< 16 hrs)	60.9	27.5*	11.6*	100
Part-time (16–34 hrs)	51.5	29.7*	18.8*	100
Full time (35–44 hrs)	43.9	35.9	20.2	100
Long hours (45–59 hrs)	28.9	38.2	32.9	100
Very long hours (60+)	13.4*	32.8	53.8	100
Total	37.4	35.3	27.3	100
Women				
Short part-time (< 16 hrs)	67.2	26.4*	6.4*	100
Part-time (16–34 hrs)	42.9	37.9	19.2	100
Full time (35–44 hrs)	46.1	35.9	18.0	100
Long hours (45–59 hrs)	14.9*	51.1	34.0	100
Very long hours (60+)	11.7*	35.2*	53.1*	100
Total	41.3	37.9	20.8	100
All				
Short part-time (< 16 hrs)	65.1	26.8	8.1*	100
Part-time (16–34 hrs)	45.1	35.8	19.1	100
Full time (35–44 hrs)	44.7	35.9	19.4	100
Long hours (45–59 hrs)	24.4	42.4	33.2	100
Very long hours (60+)	13.0*	33.3	53.7	100
Total	39.2	36.4	24.4	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. *Estimate not reliable. Table excludes self-employed persons.

This pattern does not occur for work–to–community interaction (see Table 11), where fewer women working longer part-time hours (10.2%) compared to full-time women working 35–44 hours (18.1%) report frequent interference. Women working long part-time hours are also more satisfied overall with their work–life balance (81.2% are satisfied) relative to full-time women (77.6%).

Table 11 Work interferes with community connections by gender and hours of work, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Men				
Short part-time (< 16 hrs)	77.3	14.4*	8.3*	100
Part-time (16–34 hrs)	73.4	19.3*	7.4*	100
Full time (35–44 hrs)	54.3	29.4	16.2	100
Long hours (45–59 hrs)	45.2	31.4	23.3	100
Very long hours (60+)	24.6	27.7*	47.7	100
Total	51.2	28.2	20.6	100
Women				
Short part-time (< 16 hrs)	77.4	19.7*	2.8*	100
Part-time (16–34 hrs)	52.1	37.7	10.2	100
Full time (35–44 hrs)	58.0	23.9	18.1	100
Long hours (45–59 hrs)	38.8	29.7	31.5	100
Very long hours (60+)	13.4*	31.5*	55.1*	100
Total	54.0	28.7	17.2	100
All				
Short part-time (< 16 hrs)	77.4	18.0	4.6*	100
Part-time (16–34 hrs)	57.6	33.0	9.5	100
Full time (35–44 hrs)	55.7	27.3	17.0	100
Long hours (45–59 hrs)	43.2	30.9	26.0	100
Very long hours (60+)	22.3	28.5	49.2	100
Total	52.5	28.4	19.1	100

Note Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. *Estimate not reliable. Table excludes self-employed persons.

Many Australian women attempt to reconcile work and family through part-time work. Most of them work long part-time hours (two–thirds of all female part-timers in our sample). This raises the possibility that extended part-time work does not shield well from time pressures or negative work–life spillover relative to full-time work. This might be explained by a range of factors: it may reflect the lower reliance of part-time workers relative to full timers upon external supports (e.g., cleaners and pre–prepared food), a lower level of support from their partners, increased participation in non–work activities or other characteristics of their jobs or households.

Turning to the overall work–life index, there is a clear relationship between hours of work and work–life outcomes ($P < 0.001$) (see Figure 3). Among all employees, part-time hours (< 35 hours per week) are associated with better work–life outcomes. Long hours are consistently associated with worse outcomes relative to the average score of 100, and this effect persists as hours increase from standard full-time to moderate long hours, to extended long hours. Work hours account for 10 per cent of the variation in work–life outcomes as measured by the work–life index.

Work hours have different effects for men and women ($P < 0.001$), confirming the picture that part-time work is not an effective protector against negative work–life spillover for women. Long part-time hours are associated with significantly worse work–life outcomes for women compared to short part-time hours. Further, there is no difference in work–life outcomes for women working long part-time or standard full-time (35–44) hours. In contrast, work–life outcomes for men do not differ between short and long part-time hours, and men working long part-time hours have better work–life outcomes than men working standard full-time hours (35–44 hours).

There is a consistent association between longer work hours and poorer work–life outcomes ($P < 0.001$) for both men and women. There is a consistent gender difference in favour of men across most categories of work hours ($P < 0.001$). As Figure 3 shows, with the exception of employees working short part-time hours (<16 hours) or standard full-time hours (35–44 hours), women consistently have worse work–life outcomes than men. Overall, women working very long hours (60 or more) have the worst work–life outcomes. However, the findings for this group should be interpreted with caution as the cell size is small.

3.4 The fit between actual and preferred hours and work–life outcomes

Many Australian workers work more hours than they want to, while others work less. The latest Australian data on working time preference refers to Queensland (ABS Cat. No. 6365.3). In that state in November 2006 just over half of all wage and salary earners worked their preferred hours, while one–third wanted to work less and 14.1 per cent wanted to work more. In our study, less than of employees (40 per cent) had a good fit between their actual and preferred hours, which we defined as one hour or less difference between their actual and preferred hours per week (changing this definition to two hours or less made little difference to our analysis). Sixty per cent did not have a good fit, and most of these wanted to work less. Overall, 43.5 per cent of employees wanted to work less. Another group of about 16 per cent wanted to work more. This result is perhaps surprising, given that the survey was conducted at a time of low official unemployment and high labour demand, when conditions might be expected to favour a good fit between workers' preferences and outcomes through worker mobility or negotiating strength.

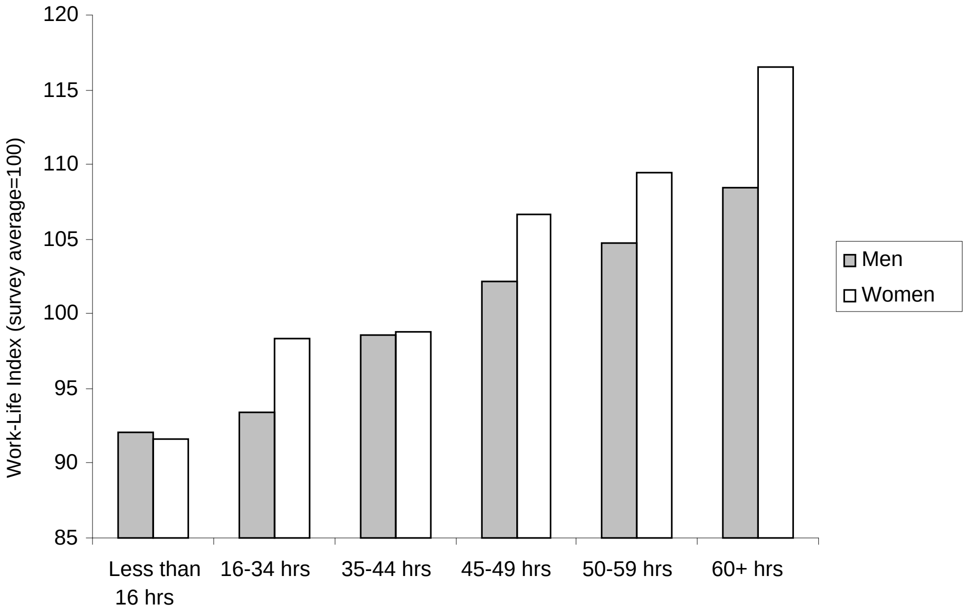

Figure 3 Work–life index by hours of work, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Estimate for women working 60 or more hours is not reliable. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

International studies suggest that workers who have a good fit between their working time regime and their preferences are likely to have better work–life outcomes (Fagan & Burchell 2002; Messenger 2004). From the perspective of the ILO, Messenger has included the notion of 'employee say over working time' as a key element of 'decent work' (Messenger 2004). Indeed some countries have taken steps to attempt to make this better fit possible for workers through facilitative labour laws that confer a right to request a change in hours of work. The Australian Industrial Relations Commission took a step in this direction in its 2005 family leave test case decision. This has since been removed as a general right through Workchoices changes to federal labour law. Our data provide good evidence in support of the proposition that a good fit between hours of work and preferences improves work–life outcomes, reinforcing studies in other countries.

Table 12 sets out work–life outcomes for employees with different degrees of fit between their actual and preferred hours. It shows how significantly better work–life outcomes occur for those workers who can get a better fit between the hours they work and their preferences. Most employees who prefer more hours are working part-time (65.7% compared to 34.3% working full time), and most employees who prefer fewer hours are working full-time (89.4% , compared to 10.6% working part-time)

Satisfaction with overall work–life balance is very high among those who have a good fit: around 85 per cent are satisfied, compared with around 75 per cent of those who would like to work more hours and only two–thirds of those who would like to work less. Gender differences within these groupings are small. For those with a good fit between their hours and preferences, only 12.8 per cent often or almost always feel that work interferes with their activities outside work, compared to 27.5 per cent of those working more hours than they prefer. Those who would like to work more hours are not much different from those with a good fit to preferences.

Similarly, work interferes with time for family or friends often or almost always for a third of those who would like to work less, compared to 14.9 per cent of those with a good hours fit. Only a fifth of those who would like to work more say that work often or almost always interferes with their time for family or friends.

Table 12 Working hours preferences and work–life outcomes, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Work interferes with activities outside work				
Actual and preferred hours match	55.7	31.5	12.8	100
Prefer more hours	54.5	30.0	15.5	100
Prefer fewer hours	36.9	35.7	27.5	100
All	47.3	33.1	19.6	100
Work interferes with enough time with family or friends				
Actual and preferred hours match	49.1	36.0	14.9	100
Prefer more hours	44.2	34.6	21.1	100
Prefer fewer hours	27.8	38.3	33.9	100
All	39.1	36.8	24.1	100
Work interferes with community connections				
Actual and preferred hours match	64.1	24.2	11.7	100
Prefer more hours	56.2	32.3	11.5	100
Prefer fewer hours	40.8	30.6	28.6	100
All	52.7	28.3	19.0	100
Feel rushed or pressed for time				
Actual and preferred hours match	20.8	33.9	45.4	100
Prefer more hours	17.6	38.4	43.9	100
Prefer fewer hours	10.9	26.4	62.8	100
All	16.0	31.3	52.7	100
Satisfaction with work–life balance		Not satisfied	Satisfied	
Actual and preferred hours match		15.1	84.9	100
Prefer more hours		25.1	74.9	100
Prefer fewer hours		33.1	66.9	100
All		24.5	75.5	100

Note . Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Hours match defined as 1 hour or less difference between actual and preferred hours per week. Table excludes self-employed persons.

Not surprisingly, those with a good fit of hours to preferences (as well as those who would like to work more) have much less work–to–community spillover than those who would like to work less. The latter group are more likely to be working longer hours. Over a quarter of those who would like to work less find that work frequently interferes with community connections.

In sum, the proportion of those with a good hours fit who experience frequent work to life interference is small, especially among women. For example, only 9.6 per cent of women whose working hours match their preferences often or almost always experience interference from work to activities outside of work or to their community connections, compared to 15.4 per cent and 13.5 per cent of men, respectively. On all measures of work-life interference, men are more likely to perceive frequent interference than women, whether their hours match their preferences or exceed or fall short of them.

However, the reverse occurs around feeling rushed: women are more likely to experience frequent feelings of being rushed than men, regardless of the fit of their actual and preferred hours. For example, 67.3 per cent of women who preferred fewer hours felt often or almost always rushed compared to 59.3 per cent of such men; 47.6 per cent of women who sought more hours felt often or almost always rushed for time (40.8% men), not much different from the proportion of 'rushed' women (46.9%) whose hours matched their preferences.

In terms of the overall work–life index, there are significant differences between those with a good fit and those who seek more and seek less hours (*P* < 0.001; see Figure 4). Those with a good match of actual and preferred hours have the best work–life outcomes. Those who are working less than they want also have better than average outcomes. Those who are working more than they want, however, have the worst outcomes. This effect is partly explained by the fact that many who want to work less are working long hours. When we control for differences in hours, however, this pattern, while moderated, is sustained. Controlling for hours, the adjusted work–life index scores are 95.9 for those with a good fit, 100.8 for those who prefer to work more hours and 103.6 for those who would like to work less. This pattern is observed for men and women. Figure 4 shows the original (unadjusted for hours) Index scores.

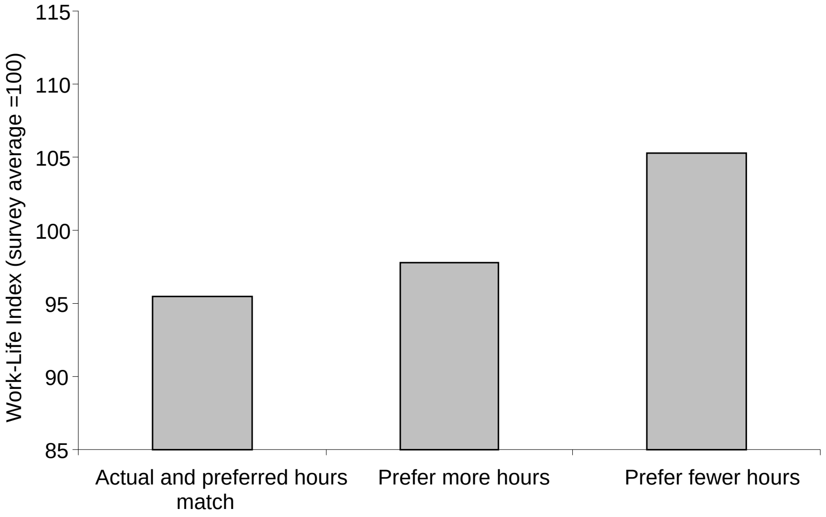

Figure 4 Work–life index by fit between actual and preferred hours, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Hours match defined as one hour or less difference between actual and preferred hours per week. Original data shown (not adjusted for work hours). Figure excludes self-employed persons.

3.5 Job quality and work–life outcomes

We now turn to the association between job quality and work–life outcomes. Many aspects of a job can affect work–life outcomes, including the demands that a job makes (for example, the workload) and the resources it supplies (for example flexibility and satisfaction). AWALI assesses six job characteristics: work overload, job insecurity, time and task autonomy, work schedule flexibility and overall job satisfaction. Recent reviews of the work–life balance literature have highlighted work overload and work schedule flexibility as important job characteristics likely to affect work–life interaction (Byron 2005; Eby et al. 2005). AWALI also contains two items assessing employees' autonomy at work. Lack of autonomy in the workplace combined with high work pressure are well established as a key psychosocial risk factors for negative health outcomes such as anxiety and depression (Michie & Williams 2003) and increased risk of coronary disease (Jones & Fletcher 2004). AWALI measures two aspects of autonomy: control over how and control over when work is performed. It also measures job satisfaction. Low levels of job satisfaction have been linked to a range of undesirable outcomes for individual employees and their employers, including mental and (self-reported) physical health (Faragher, Cass & Cooper 2007), work performance (Judge et al. 2001) and turnover (Tett & Meyer 1993). The high proportion of Australian employees employed casually makes the issue of job insecurity of considerable policy interest.

Table 13 Job quality outcomes by gender, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Strongly or somewhat disagree	Strongly or somewhat agree
Men		
Work load (often seem to have too much work to do)	43.9	56.1
Job security (worry about the future of the job)	65.9	34.1
Flexible working time (working times can be flexible to meet own needs)	34.6	65.4
Freedom when to do work (a lot of freedom to decide when to do work)	48.8	51.2
Freedom how to do work (a lot of freedom to decide how to do work)	27.0	73.0
Job satisfaction (satisfied with present job)	15.7	84.3
Women		
Work load (often seem to have too much work to do)	47.6	52.4
Job security (worry about the future of the job)	72.4	27.6
Flexible working time (working times can be flexible to meet own needs)	27.7	72.3
Freedom when to do work (a lot of freedom to decide when to do work)	50.8	49.2
Freedom how to do work (a lot of freedom to decide how to do work)	28.0	72.0
Job satisfaction (satisfied with present job)	11.9	88.1
All		
Work load (often seem to have too much work to do)	45.5	54.5
Job security (worry about the future of the job)	68.8	31.2
Flexible working time (working times can be flexible to meet own needs)	31.6	68.4
Freedom when to do work (a lot of freedom to decide when to do work)	49.7	50.3
Freedom how to do work (a lot of freedom to decide how to do work)	27.5	72.5
Job satisfaction (satisfied with present job)	14.0	86.0

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Table excludes self-employed persons.

On each of the job quality measures, substantial proportions of employees report low quality working conditions and experiences (Table 13). Specifically, 54.5 per cent of employees agreed somewhat or strongly that they are overloaded at work, 31.2 per cent are worried about the future of their jobs (job insecurity), 31.6 per cent have low flexibility around their schedules (job schedule flexibility), 27.5 per cent have little freedom to decide how to do their jobs (work task autonomy), 49.7 per cent have little freedom about when to do their jobs (work time autonomy) and 14.0 per cent are strongly or somewhat unsatisfied with their jobs (job satisfaction). Each of these indicators of poorer quality jobs is associated with worse assessments of work–life interference.

As Table 14 shows, spillover from work onto activities outside work is greater for those in poorer quality jobs, and this holds consistently for all six job quality measures and across the five work–life measures. For example, 27.7 per cent of those who experience work overload often or almost always feel that work interferes with activities outside work, compared to only 10.5 per cent of those with no overload. Workers who are worried about the future of their jobs are more likely to experience frequent spillover (26.7%) from work to activities outside work, compared to 16.6 per cent who have secure jobs.

Similarly, those with less flexible work schedules are more likely to experience spillover from work to activities outside work (27.4%) than those who have flexibility (16.5%). Freedom about when work is done and how it is done has a similar set of associations. Those with lower job satisfaction are more likely to report negative work–life spillover. Similarly, there are clear associations between poor job quality and time pressure (frequently feeling rushed for time) as indicated, for example, by work overload. Sixty-eight per cent of overloaded workers are frequently rushed, compared to 33.8% of those who are not. Sixty-three per cent of those who lack flexibility feel rushed, compared to 47.8% who have flexibility.

Table 14 Job quality and work–life outcomes by gender, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Work interferes with activities outside work				
Work overload	35.7	36.6	27.7	100
No work overload	61.5	28.0	10.5	100
Job security concerns	39.0	34.3	26.7	100
No job security concerns	51.0	32.4	16.6	100
Job schedule flexibility	50.4	33.1	16.5	100
No job schedule flexibility	41.0	31.7	27.4	100
Freedom when to work	52.3	32.8	14.9	100
No freedom when to work	42.4	32.5	25.1	100
Freedom how to work	50.2	32.0	17.8	100
No freedom how to work	39.8	34.8	25.3	100
Job satisfaction	49.3	33.2	17.5	100
No job satisfaction	36.1	30.6	33.3	100
Total	47.4	32.8	19.8	100
Work interferes with enough time with family or friends				
Work overload	27.2	37.8	35.0	100
No work overload	53.8	34.3	11.9	100
Job security concerns	31.7	35.1	33.3	100
No job security concerns	42.7	37.0	20.3	100
Job schedule flexibility	43.4	36.5	20.1	100
No job schedule flexibility	31.0	35.2	33.9	100
Freedom when to work	45.2	34.5	20.2	100
No freedom when to work	33.3	38.0	28.7	100
Freedom how to work	42.0	35.0	23.0	100
No freedom how to work	31.8	39.8	28.3	100
Job satisfaction	41.6	37.2	21.2	100
No job satisfaction	26.1	30.6	43.3	100
Total	39.3	36.4	24.3	100
Work interferes with community connections				
Work overload	42.4	30.9	26.7	100
No work overload	64.7	25.2	10.1	100
Job security concerns	41.9	33.6	24.5	100
No job security concerns	57.2	26.0	16.7	100
Job schedule flexibility	56.6	28.3	15.0	100
No job schedule flexibility	43.4	28.6	28.0	100
Freedom when to work	59.3	28.0	12.6	100
No freedom when do work	45.1	28.9	26.0	100
Freedom how to work	55.9	27.0	17.1	100
No freedom how to work	44.2	31.6	24.2	100
Job satisfaction	55.3	28.7	16.0	100
No job satisfaction	37.2	26.0	36.8	100
Total	52.7	28.3	19.0	100
Feel rushed or pressed for time				
Work overload	6.6	25.3	68.1	100
No work overload	27.0	39.2	33.8	100
Job security concerns	12.0	27.8	60.2	100
No job security concerns	17.5	33.6	48.9	100
Job schedule flexibility	17.5	34.7	47.8	100
No job schedule flexibility	12.2	24.5	63.3	100
Freedom when to work	18.8	34.1	47.1	100
No freedom when to work	12.9	29.0	58.1	100
Freedom how to work	18.3	32.3	49.4	100
No freedom how to work	9.8	29.6	60.6	100
Job satisfaction	17.5	32.8	49.7	100
No job satisfaction	*5.8	23.4	70.9	100
Total	15.9	31.6	52.5	100
Satisfaction with work–life balance		Not satisfied	Satisfied	
Work overload		32.9	67.1	100
No work overload		14.6	85.4	100
Job security concerns		38.8	61.2	100
No job security concerns		18.3	81.7	100
Job schedule flexibility		19.9	80.1	100
No job schedule flexibility		34.9	65.1	100
Freedom when to work		17.4	82.6	100

Table 14 *continued*

Satisfaction with work–life balance	Not satisfied	Satisfied	Total
No freedom when to work	32.5	67.5	100
Freedom how to work	20.2	79.8	100
No freedom how to work	36.1	63.9	100
Job satisfaction	18.8	81.2	100
No job satisfaction	58.7	41.3	100
Total	24.6	75.4	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Response range on all job characteristics measures 1, 'strongly disagree'; 2, 'somewhat disagree'; 3, 'somewhat agree'; 4, 'strongly agree'. Responses 1 and 2 categorised as absence of job characteristic (e.g., no work overload), responses 3 and 4 categorised as presence of job characteristic (e.g., work overload). Table excludes self-employed persons.

Similar findings of negative work–life spillover are evident for low levels of job security and autonomy. With the exception of job satisfaction, over 60 per cent of employees with poor job quality are also dissatisfied with their overall work–life balance. The relationship between job satisfaction and work–life balance satisfaction appears to be slightly weaker, with 58.7 per cent of dissatisfied workers also reporting dissatisfaction with their work–life balance.

Good quality jobs across a range of job characteristics are thus associated with better work–life outcomes. Lower work overload, more secure employment, more schedule flexibility, more autonomy at work and higher job satisfaction are all associated with less negative work–life spillover, having enough time with family and friends, less interference with community connections, less chance of feeling rushed or pressed for time and better self–assessments of work–life balance.

The overall work–life index scores in relation to job quality are set out in Figure 5. There is a consistent and significant difference between employees with a good quality jobs compared to poor quality jobs ($P < 0.001$). Those with poor job quality on each of the five measures had the worst work–life outcomes. This effect is particular strong for work overload, which accounted for 16 per cent of the variation in work–life outcomes. These effects are consistent for men and women. It is interesting to note that on each of the job characteristics those in poor quality jobs reported longer working hours. However, statistically controlling for work hours does not result in any meaningful changes to the figures reported or the interpretation of the data. Figure 5 presents the original data not adjusted for work hours.

3.6 Occupation and work–life outcomes

Particular occupations are associated with lower levels of work–life interference and others with much higher rates. Managers, professionals and community and personal service workers have the poorest work–life outcomes, while sales, clerical and labouring workers have the best work–life outcomes. When we statistically control for the length of work hours, however, it is clear that occupational differences in work hours partly explains these outcomes. After adjusting for work hours, this pattern of the best and worst outcomes persists, although the magnitude of the differences between the various occupations is reduced.

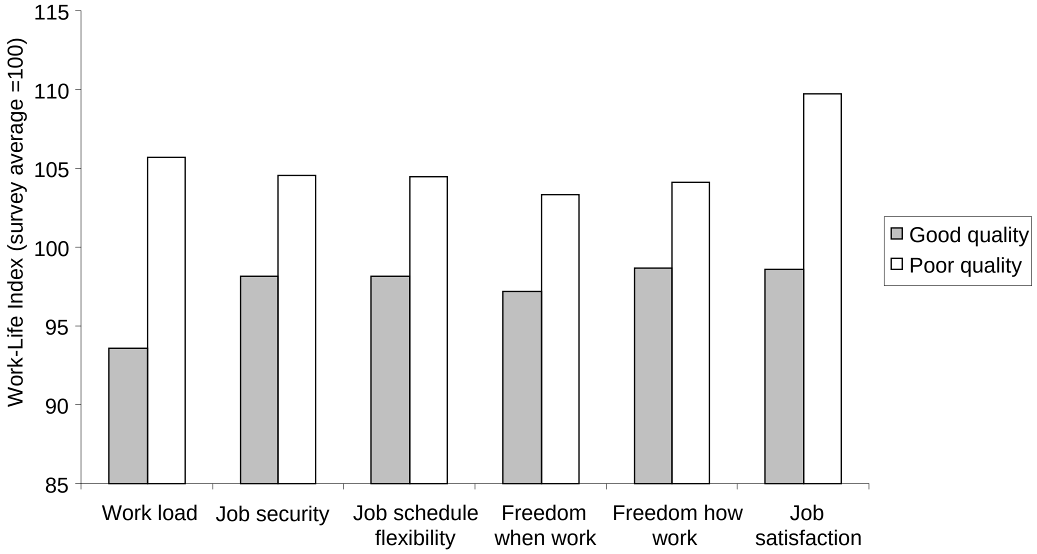

Figure 5 Work–life index by job quality, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Good quality defined as 'agree' or 'strongly agree' on positively worded items (e.g., 'have a lot of freedom to decide when do work') and 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' on negatively worded items (e.g., 'often seems like have too much work to do'). Poor quality defined as 'agree' or 'strongly agree' on negatively worded items, and 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' on positively worded items. Original data shown (i.e., not adjusted for work hours). Figure excludes self-employed persons.

Figure 6 below illustrates these differences. It shows that employees in management, professional and community and personal services occupations have higher average work–life index scores and thus worse work–life outcomes than other occupations. This pattern is consistent for both full-time and part-time workers. Within each occupation, part-time workers have significantly better work–life outcomes compared to their full-time counterparts. Overall, full-time community and personal service workers have the worst work–life outcomes. However, due to small cell sizes for part-time workers in some occupations (managers, technical and trades workers, machinery operators and drivers) these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Almost a third of managers are not satisfied with their work–life balance (32.1% of men and 30.1% of women) and similar proportions of community and personal services workers (36.7% of men and 28.9% of women) and professionals (27.1% of men and 23.6% of women). Dissatisfaction with work–life balance is also high for machinery operators and drivers (38.5%).

Managers, professionals and community and personal services workers tend to indicate the most frequent negative spillover from work to activities outside work and from work to having enough time with family or friends. Technical and trades workers also report frequent spillover. Managers report the most frequent spillover from work to community connections: a quarter of both female and male managers felt that work often or almost always interferes with community connections, with technical and trades workers also reporting frequent interference with community connections (22.0%). Managers are also the most rushed for time (65.3% of male and 66.0% of female managers report being often or almost always rushed for time). Professionals (57.2%) and technical and trades workers (60.1%) also report relatively high frequencies of time pressure in daily life.

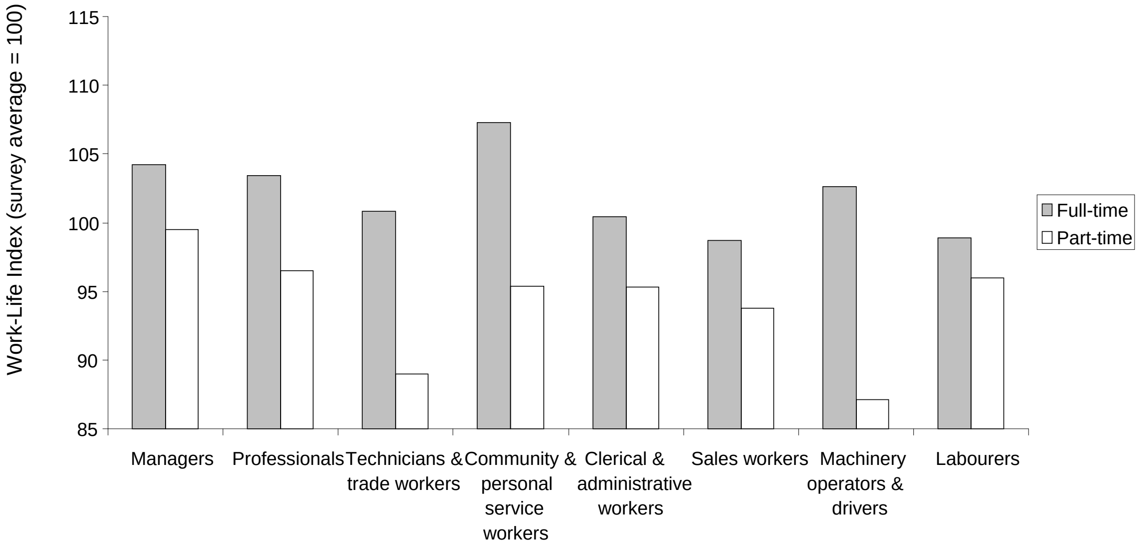

Figure 6 Work–life index by occupation and full-time/part-time work status, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Hours usually worked per week used to categorise full-time (35 or more hours) and part-time (34 or less) work status. Estimates for part-time workers, management, technical and trades, machinery operation and driving occupations are not reliable. Original data shown (i.e., not adjusted for work hours). Figure excludes self-employed persons.

3.7 Industry and work–life outcomes

There were few respondents in some industries (wholesale trade, rental/hiring and real estate, in particular). The following comments regarding industry differences, therefore, should be treated with caution. Public administration and safety stands out as an industry with comparatively poor work–life outcomes (Figure 7), followed by construction; manufacturing; and rental, hiring, and real estate services, although in each case the differences from the survey average are small. In terms of overall work–life satisfaction, over a third of those working in public administration and safety services are not satisfied with their work–life balance and just under this proportion in information, media and telecommunications; electricity, gas, water and waste services; manufacturing and the retail trade.

3.8 Does union membership deliver better work–life outcomes?

Twenty-seven per cent of the employees surveyed belong to unions. We found very little difference in work–life outcomes between union and non–union members. For example, about three-quarters of both union members and non-union members are satisfied with their work–life balance. Just over half of both groups feel they are often or almost always rushed for time. Among both groups, similar proportions feel that work often or almost always interferes with activities outside work.

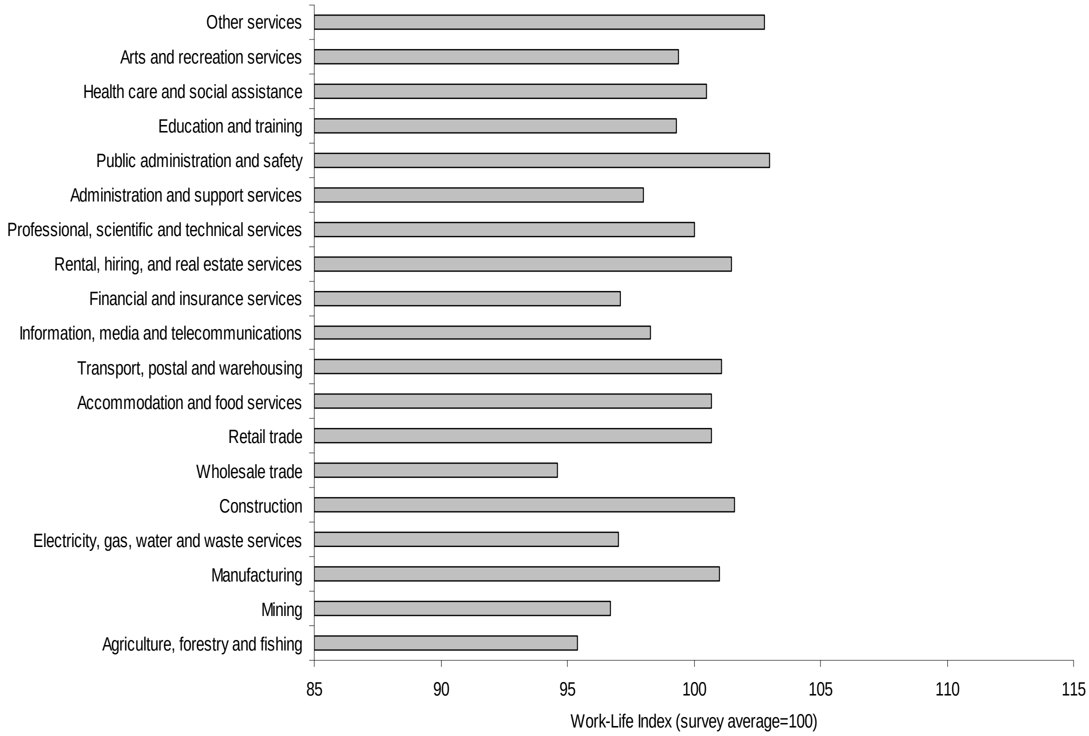

Figure 7 Work–life index by industry, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Estimates for wholesale trade, rental/hiring and real estate not reliable. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

There is a significant difference around time: union members are more likely to perceive that work interferes with enough time for family or friends (28.9% compared to 22.6% of non–union members). Considering all measures together, union membership is associated with a slight but significant difference in work–life outcomes and this effect persists when we control for hours worked. The overall work–life index score for union members across the five measures of work–life was 102.6 compared to 99.2 for non–unionists, suggesting that union members have slightly worse work–life outcomes than non–unionists, although this small difference may reflect occupational or public/private sectoral differences associated with union membership.

Section 4: Work–life outcomes and geographic, personal and household characteristics

Work–life outcomes might be expected to vary by a number of geographic variables: by state, or whether one lives in a city, regional or rural setting. We might also expect work–life outcomes to vary depending upon the length of workers' commute. This section begins with these geographic aspects, then moves on to household (children and caring responsibilities) then personal characteristics (education, age, health, stress and nature of close relationships).

4.1 Geographic location: work–life outcomes by state

Our data do not suggest that work–life outcomes differ a great deal for city versus rural/regional employees. Rural/regional workers experience more frequent work restrictions on time with family and friends (26.7% compared to 23.1% of city workers) and are more likely to be dissatisfied with their overall work–life balance (26.5% compared to 23.7% of city workers). However, rural/regional workers are less likely to be rushed for time (50.5% compared to 53.5% of city workers). Rural/regional and city workers do not differ significantly on the overall work–life index (99.7 and 100.2, respectively). This result persists when differences in work and travel hours are controlled for, and is consistent for men and women.

The data suggest some differences between states. Tasmanians are least likely to experience general interference from work to personal life. Queenslanders are most likely to report time strain arising from work. Western Australians and South Australians are least likely to find that work interferes with their community connections. Almost 80 per cent of workers in Victoria and Western Australia and just over 75 per cent of workers in New South Wales and South Australia are satisfied with their work–life balance overall, and around 70 per cent of employees in Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland are satisfied. When it comes to feeling rushed for time, Tasmanians are the least affected.

Figure 8 shows the overall work–life index outcomes by state. Tasmanians, Western Australians and South Australians have slightly better work–life outcomes although the differences are not large and not all are significant (small numbers of employees makes comparisons with the ACT unreliable).

4.2 Work–life outcomes in South Australia

The South Australian Government has included an objective to 'improve the quality of life for all South Australians through maintenance of a healthy work–life balance' in its strategic plan (South Australian Government 2007, p 2). Table 15 sets out South Australian work–life outcomes relative to other states and national averages.

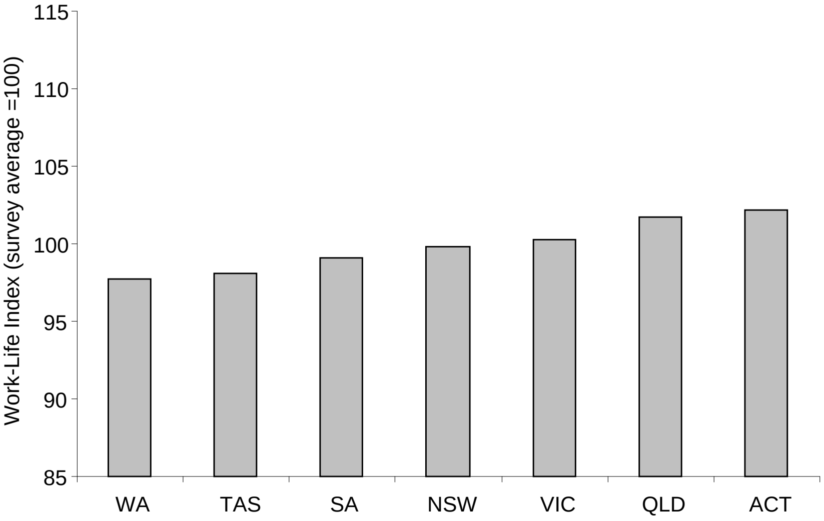

Figure 8 Work–life index by state, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Small numbers of respondents from the ACT make comparisons with this state unreliable. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

Table 15 Work–life index by state, AWALI 2007 %

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Work interferes with activities outside work				
South Australia	52.6	29.7	17.7	100
All states excluding South Australia	47.0	33.1	19.9	100
All states	47.4	32.8	19.8	100
Work interferes with enough time with family or friends				
South Australia	45.1	29.3	25.6	100
All states excluding South Australia	38.9	36.9	24.2	100
All states	39.3	36.4	24.3	100
Work interferes with community connections				
South Australia	60.8	20.5	18.7	100
All states excluding South Australia	52.1	28.8	19.0	100
All states	52.7	28.2	19.0	100
Feel rushed or pressed for time				
South Australia	15.9	35.0	49.1	100
All states excluding South Australia	15.9	31.3	52.8	100
All states	15.9	31.6	52.5	100
Satisfaction with work–life balance		Not satisfied	Satisfied	
South Australia		22.1	77.9	100
All states excluding South Australia		24.8	75.2	100
All states		24.6	75.4	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Table excludes self-employed persons.

Table 15 shows that relative to other states, South Australians have lower levels of work–to–life interference in the form of less frequent time strain, general interference and interference with community connections. Although these differences are small, they are statistically significant. However, South Australians' satisfaction with their overall work–life balance and their feelings of being rushed or pressed for time do not differ from respondents in other states. The difference between South Australia and all other states on the overall work–life index is not significant, but in the direction of South Australians having slightly better than average work–life outcomes (SA 99.2, all other states 100.2).

4.3 Commuting and work–life outcomes

The average commute in the survey group is 4.7 hours (slightly more for men than women). This compares to an average commute time of 3 hours 37 minutes (4 hours for men, 3 hours for women) reported by Flood and Barbato (Flood & Barbato 2005) in their analysis of commuting times in Australia. In our study, 73.5 per cent of employees commute for five hours or less a week.

Those who do the longest commutes have the worst work–life outcomes. For example, a quarter of those who commute for more than 10 hours a week find that work interferes with activities outside work often or almost always, compared to a fifth of those who commute for 2–5 hours. With the exception of overall satisfaction with work–life balance, similar gaps exist for time strain, interference with community connections and feeling rushed for time. The gap between these two groups was widest for time strain (restriction of time with family and friends).

The overall work–life index outcomes by length of commute are set out in Figure 9. There is a clear relationship between longer commute times and poorer work–life outcomes ($P < 0.001$). With the exception of the difference between long (6–9 hours) and very long (10 or more hours) commute times, there is a statistically significant difference between each group, as shown in Figure 9. Workers with long and very long commute times have the worst work–life outcomes.

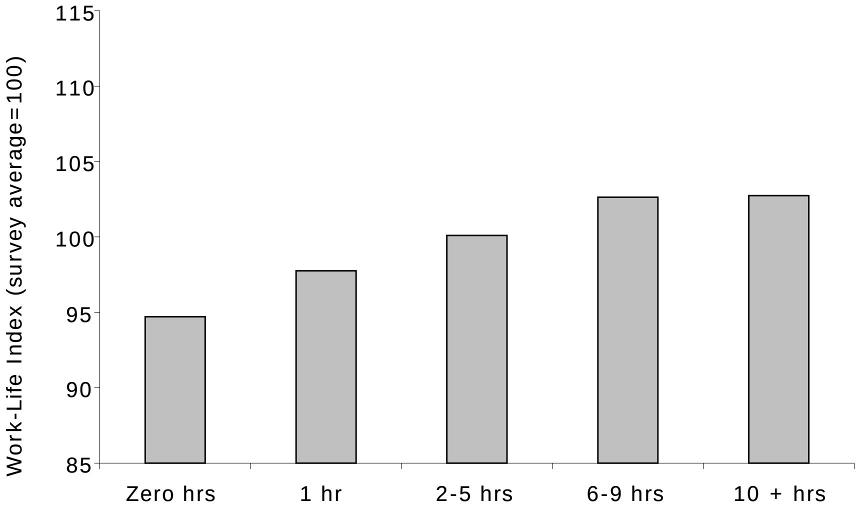

Figure 9 Work–life index by work commute time, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

When commuting and working hours combine to create long days, the effects on work–life outcomes are especially negative. A third of survey participants spend more than 50 hours a week working and commuting to and from work, and within that group 12.9 per cent spend more than 60 hours doing so. Forty-five per cent of this latter group are not satisfied with their work–life balance, compared to twenty percent or less of those whose combined work and commute time is less than 44 hours a week.

The overall work–life index scores by combined work and commuting hours are shown in Figure 10. Once again, the negative impact of long hours on work–life outcomes is clear ($P < 0.001$). Workers with a work and commute time commitment of more than 50 hours have the worst work–life outcomes. With the exception of the difference between workers with time commitments of 16–35 and 35–44 hours, all differences between the groups shown in Figure 10 are statistically significant ($P < 0.05$). The combination of work and commute hours account for 10 per cent of the variation in work–life index scores.

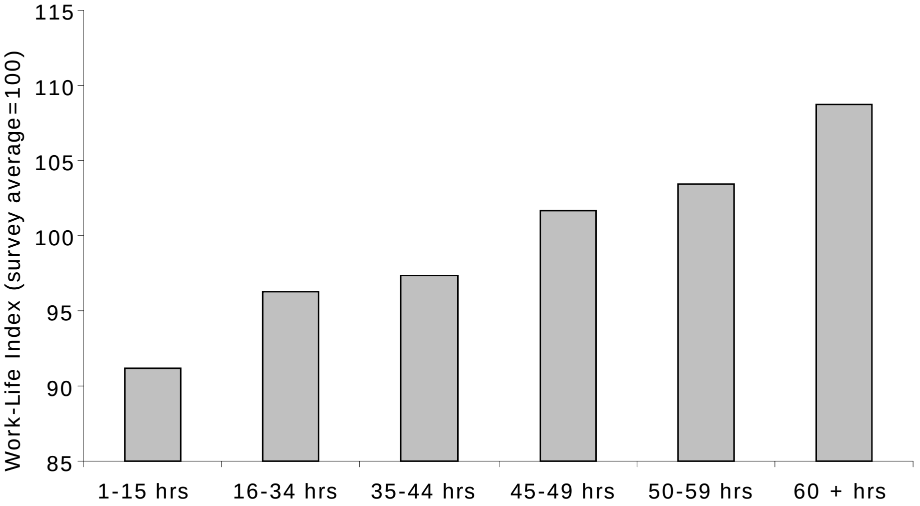

Figure 10 Work–life index by total hours spent working and commuting, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

4.4 Work–life outcomes by age and education

Age

Older workers have better work–life outcomes than those in their middle years when caring responsibilities are more intense (Figure 11). The lower overall work–life index scores (indicating better work–life outcomes) among 18–34 year olds and 55–64 year olds are significantly different from others ($P < 0.05$). Within the mid–range of ages (25–34, 35–44, 45–54) the differences are small and mostly non-significant. Index scores range from 84.3 for those 65 years old or more, 94.0 for 55–64 years, 99.2 for 18–24 year olds and worse than average outcomes in the 35–44 (101.7) and 45–54 (101.1) age groups. The highest Index score and hence the worst work–life outcomes are reported by those aged 25–34 years (102.6).

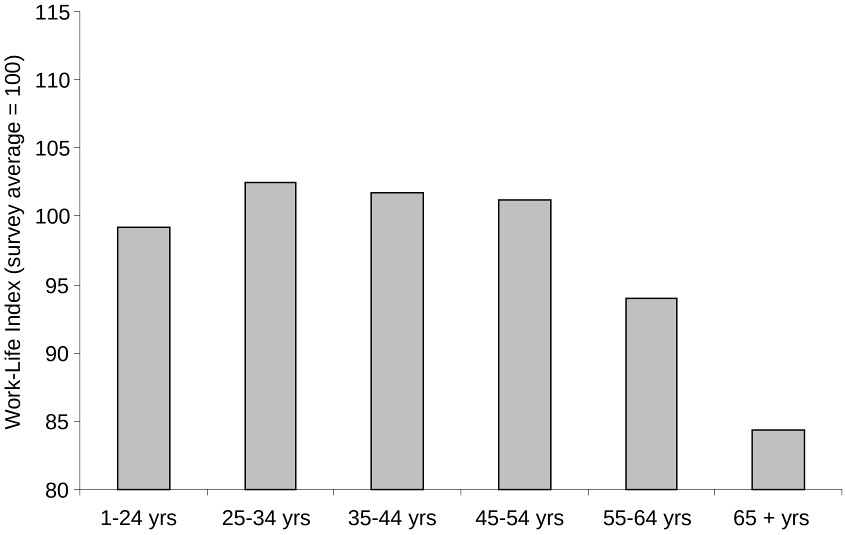

Figure 11 Work–life index by age (years), AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

Education

In terms of education, there are significant differences in work–life outcomes between workers with different educational levels, ranging from the best for those without post-school vocational or university qualifications to the worst for those with university qualifications ($P < 0.001$) (Figure 12). Those without any education past high school have an overall work–life index score of 95.8, compared to 102.5 for those with a degree or diploma from a university. This difference is most likely due to differences in occupation. University educated respondents tend to be in professional and managerial occupations and hours, and respondents with vocational qualifications have the highest representations in the community and personal service and technical and trade professions. As previously discussed, these occupations are associated with the worst work–life outcomes.

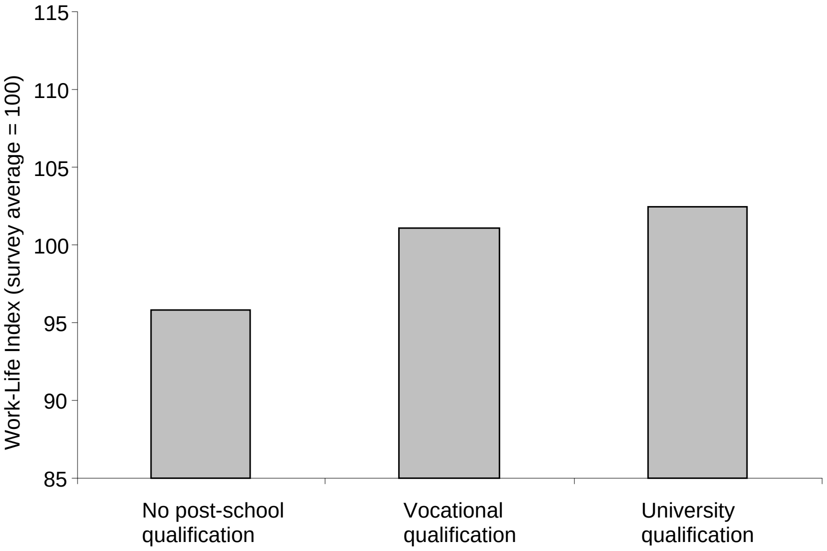

Figure 12 Work–life index by education, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

4.5 Work–life outcomes, caring responsibilities and children

The quality of work–life interaction is likely to be influenced by a workers' caring responsibilities. AWALI assesses care responsibilities in relation to care of family and friends and care of children. As expected, women report more care responsibilities than men (19.7 hours per week compared to 10.8 hours for men; $P < 0.001$). This gap persists, but is slightly smaller, when differences between men and women's work hours are held constant.

There are small but statistically significant differences in work–life outcomes depending upon workers' responsibilities for care and children ($P < 0.001$). More care is associated with worse work–life outcomes. The overall work–life index score for those without care responsibilities for family and friends was 97.0 compared to 102.3 for those with these care responsibilities (see Figure 13).

Caring responsibilities had slightly stronger effects on work–life outcomes for women than men. When we control for work hours, women with caring responsibilities have the worst work–life outcomes (103.2), followed by men with caring responsibilities (101.4) and women with no caring responsibilities (98.6). Men with no caring responsibilities have the best work–life outcomes (95.5). Each difference between these groups is statistically significant ($P < 0.01$).

Parenting is also associated with significant differences in work–life outcomes. The ages and number of children have significant effects ($P < 0.001$). Parents of young children (four years old or under) or multiple children have worse work–life outcomes. The work–life index for those without children was 97.3, compared to 103.4 for those with children over five years old and 105.9 for those with children four years old or under (see Figure 13). The Index score for parents with one child is 103.2, compared to 104.9 for parents with two or more children.

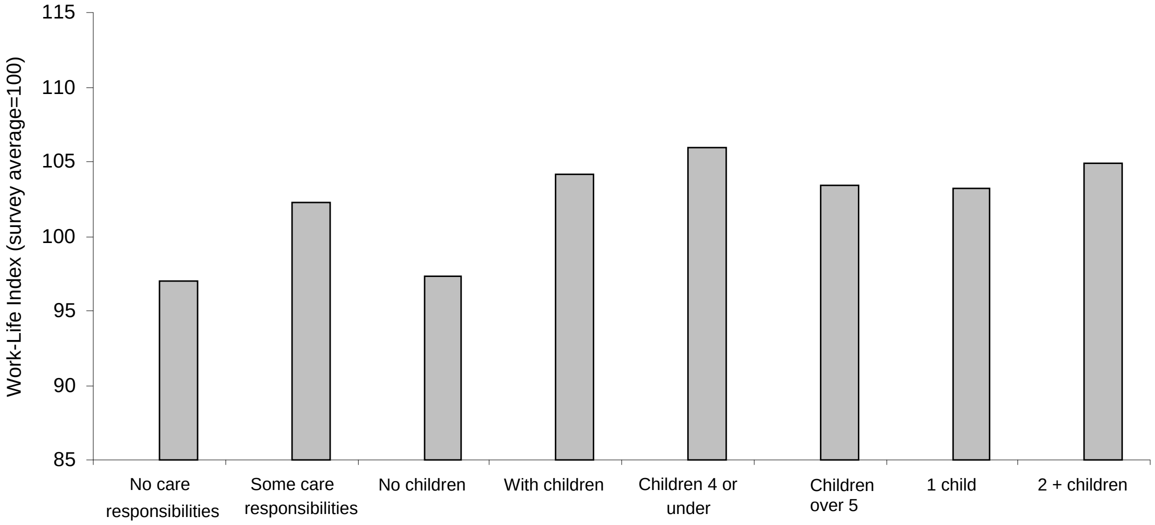

Figure 13 Work–life index by care responsibilities, and the presence, age and number of children, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

Similar to caring responsibilities for family and friends, parenting responsibilities also have a slightly stronger effect on women's work–life outcomes than men's, after controlling for differences in work hours ($P < 0.001$). Index scores for men and women without children are better than average (95.8 and 98.9, respectively). In comparison, women with two or more children have the worst work–life outcomes (106.1), followed by women with one child (103.5) and men with two or more children (103.6), and then men with one child (102.7). With the exception of parents with one child, fathers have better work–life outcomes compared to mothers regardless of the number of children. Further, for both men and women, there is no difference between parents with one child compared to two children.

In regard to the age of children, we again see different patterns of association with work–life outcomes for mothers and fathers ($P < 0.001$). Of particular interest is the observation that having children at school age compared to preschool children provides some improvement to men's work–life outcomes but not to women's. For women, having children, regardless of their age, is associated with poorer work–life outcomes. Specifically, the worst work–life outcomes are reported by parents with preschool–aged children (four years or under) (men 105.1 and women 105.0) and women with school–aged children (5 years and over) (105.1). There are no significant differences in Index scores between these three groups. Men with school–aged children (102.3) have slightly better work–life outcomes compared to fathers with preschool–aged children and mothers with school–aged children (the difference with mothers of preschool children is not significant).

There do not appear to be significant differences between those who live in couple households and single parents. On average, single parents work fewer hours than those in couple households, which may go some way towards alleviating the extra demands of parenting in single–adult households.[1]

Examining responses to the individual questions that comprise the overall work–life index also reveals some interesting differences in the relationship between parenting and work–to–life interference. Men with children perceive much more frequent interference than for men without children, while the gaps between women with and without children are narrower. For example, 29.6 per cent of men with children feel that work interferes with activities outside work often or almost always compared to 17.9 per cent of childless men (19% and 14.3% for women, respectively; Table 16).

Similar differences exist around satisfaction with work–life balance: 30.1 per cent of men with children are not satisfied compared to 23.2 per cent of childless men, while there is no statistically significant difference between women with and without children (22.6% and 23.1%, respectively). When it comes to feeling rushed or pressed for time, however, women with children are distinctive: 72.5 per cent of them often or almost always feel rushed for time compared to 44.2 per cent of women without children (45.7% and 56.0% for men).

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[1] ANCOVA analysis on Index scores by parental status (single vs dual parent household) indicated that work hours are a significant covariate. Although parental status is not a significant predictor of Index scores, the trend is for the adjusted mean score for single parents to be higher (indicating poorer work–life outcomes) compared to parents in couple households. The number of single parent respondents was relatively small in this survey, and hence power for this analysis is weak and these findings should be treated with caution.

Table 16 Work–life outcomes by gender and presence of children, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Work interferes with activities outside work				
Men				
No children	51.1	31.0	17.9	100
Children	36.6	33.8	29.6	100
Total	45.1	32.2	22.7	100
Women				
No children	54.5	31.2	14.3	100
Children	43.7	37.3	19.0	100
Total	50.1	33.6	16.2	100
All				
No children	52.7	31.1	16.3	100
Children	39.8	35.3	24.9	100
Total	47.4	32.8	19.8	100
Often feel rushed or pressed for time				
Men				
No children	23.9	30.3	45.7	100
Children	13.0	31.0	56.0	100
Total	19	30.6	49.9	100
Women				
No children	16	39.7	44.2	100
Children	*5.1	22.4	72.5	100
Total	11.6	32.7	55.6	100
All				
No children	20.4	34.6	45.0	100
Children	9.5	27.2	63.3	100
Total	15.9	31.6	52.5	100
Satisfaction with work–life balance				
		Not satisfied	Satisfied	
Men				
No children		23.2	76.8	100
Children		30.1	69.9	100
Total		26.0	74.0	100
Women				
No children		22.6	77.4	100
Children		23.1	76.9	100
Total		22.8	77.2	100
All				
No children		22.9	77.1	100
Children		27.0	73.0	100
Total		24.6	75.4	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. *Estimate not reliable. Table excludes self-employed persons.

4.6 Income and work–life outcomes

Significant differences in work–life outcomes exist by income level. Overall, work–life interference is lower, and work–life satisfaction is higher among workers living in households with incomes lower than $30,000 (see Table 17). However, these findings should be interpreted with caution due to small cell sizes for low income households (< $30 000) who experience frequent interference.

Almost a quarter of those earning more than $90,000 often or almost always perceive this interference. Sixty per cent of these high income earners were often or almost always rushed for time, compared to about half of those earning $30,000 to $89,999. Once households have an income higher than $30,000 – a level that is quite modest by today's standards – there are relatively small differences in work–life interference.

This income effect reflects occupational differences between high and low income earners. In our study most managers (66%) and professionals (56.7%) were earning $90,000 or more and, as previously discussed, these professions have the poorest work–

life outcomes. Labourers and sales workers were the most common occupations in the < $30,000 income bracket, and these occupations also have the best work–life outcomes.

Table 17 Work–life outcomes by income, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Work interferes with activities outside work				
< $30,000	71.8	16.8*	11.5*	100
$30,000–$59,999	55.2	28.1	16.7	100
$60,000–$89,999	43.0	36.9	20.1	100
$90,000+	39.7	37.0	23.3	100
All respondents	47.2	33.0	19.8	100
Work interferes with enough time with family or friends				
< $30,000	68.8	21.4*	9.8*	100
$30,000–$59,999	42.2	34.5	23.2	100
$60,000–$89,999	35.6	40.3	24.1	100
$90,000+	32.3	39.3	28.4	100
All respondents	38.6	36.9	24.5	100
Work interferes with community connections				
< $30,000	69.3	23.2*	7.5*	100
$30,000–$59,999	54.7	27.7	17.6	100
$60,000–$89,999	46.9	30.5	22.6	100
$90,000+	48.0	30.0	21.9	100
All respondents	51.2	29.0	19.8	100
Feel rushed or pressed for time				
< $30,000	32.3	30.0	37.7	100
$30,000–$59,999	19.8	32.4	47.8	100
$60,000–$89,999	17.2	32.3	50.4	100
$90,000+	9.8	30.7	59.5	100
All respondents	16.1	31.5	52.4	100
Satisfaction with work–life balance		Not satisfied	Satisfied	
< $30,000		16.2*	83.8	100
$30,000–$59,999		24.4	75.6	100
$60,000–$89,999		29.5	70.5	100
$90,000+		24.7	75.3	100
All respondents		25.1	74.9	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. *Estimate not reliable. Table excludes self-employed persons.

Analysing all the measures of work–life together, significant differences exist in the overall work–life index by income (*P* < 0.001; see Figure 14). However, these differences are modest in size for incomes over $30,000.

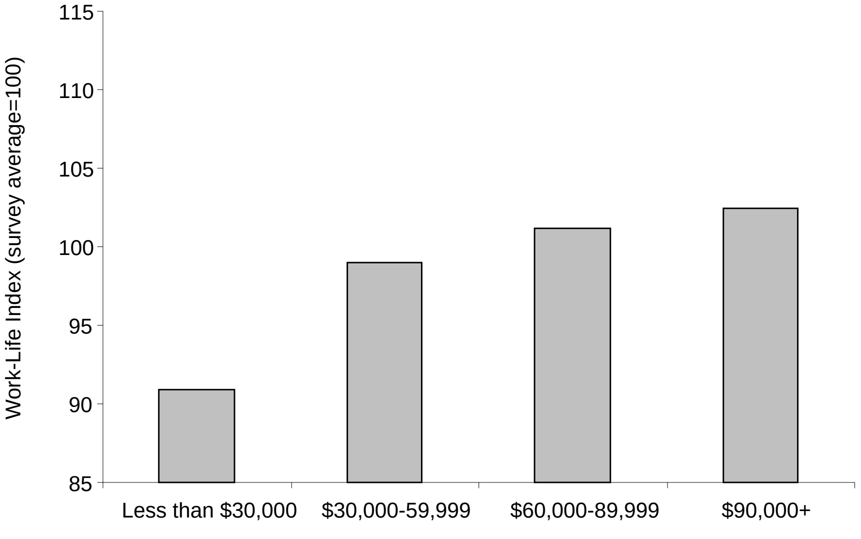

Figure 14 Work–life index by income, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

4.7 Health and work–life outcomes

Work plays an important role in most people's lives beyond providing the means to obtain the basic necessities of life. It is widely accepted that work can have significant positive and negative impacts on psychological and social well–being (Layard 2005). Working conditions and experiences can also benefit or impair workers' physical health. It is thus not surprising that there is evidence that the negative work-life spillover is also associated with impaired physical and mental health (Allen et al. 2000).

Our survey confirms this relationship between work–life outcomes and workers' health. While effects vary by gender and in strength, the overall relationship is consistent across a range of work–life measures. We used a single–item self-report measure of general health sourced from the SF–12 survey: 'In general would you say your health is …', with a five–point response scale ranging from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) (Ware, Kosinski & Keller 1996). Overall, 14.3 per cent of workers surveyed felt in poor health (15.6% of women; 13.3% of men). As Figure 15 shows, there is a clear relationship between work–life outcomes and health. Men and women with the worst work–life outcomes also have the poorest health ($P < 0.001$). This effect is stronger for women than men.

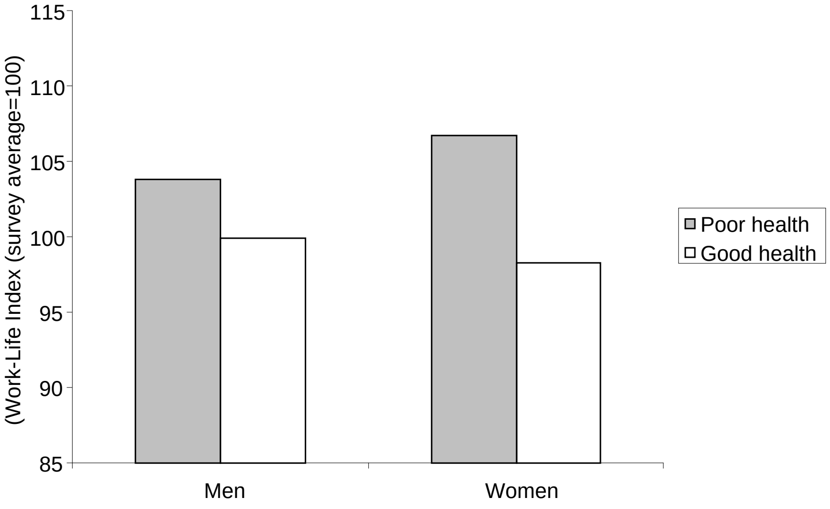

Figure 15 Work–life index by gender and self-reported health, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Response range 1, 'poor'; 2, 'fair'; 3, 'good'; 4, 'very good'; 5, 'excellent'. Responses 1 to 2 categorised as 'poor health', responses 3 to 5 categorised as 'good health'. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

As we have discussed in previous sections, it is clear that both the length of work hours and the degree to which preferred and actual hours match have a significant impact on work–life outcomes. It is also likely that work hours have an impact on health. As Table 18 shows, those with a better fit between actual and preferred work hours, and those with shorter working hours, have better self-reported health outcomes. These relationships, however, were statistically significant only for women. Women with poor health are more likely to have a mismatch between their actual and preferred hours (70.0%) than women with good health (56.7%). For most workers the mismatch occurs as a function of working more hours than preferred. Consistent with this pattern, women with poor health are more likely to report working long hours (26.9%) than women with good health (21.0%). However, this finding should be treated with caution due to the small cell size for women with poor health who are working long hours.

Table 18 Working hours (fit and length) and self-reported health outcomes by gender, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Actual and preferred hours match	Prefer more hours	Prefer less hours	Total
Men				
Good health	40.5	15.5	44.0	100
Poor health	35.7	16.9*	47.5	100
Total	39.9	15.7	44.4	100
Women				
Good health	43.3	15.5	41.2	100
Poor health	29.9	21.7*	48.3	100
Total	41.2	16.5	42.3	100
All				
Good health	41.7	15.5	42.8	100
Poor health	32.9	19.2	47.9	100
Total	40.5	16.0	43.5	100
	Shorter hours (1–34)	Full-time hours (34–44)	Long hours (45+)	Total
Men				
Good health	14.0	43.3	42.7	100
Poor health	16.3*	42.4	41.3	100
Total	14.3	43.2	42.5	100
Women				
Good health	46.1	32.9	21.0	100
Poor health	36.4	36.7	26.9*	100
Total	44.6	33.5	21.9	100
All				
Good health	28.1	38.8	33.1	100
Poor health	26.0	39.7	34.3	100
Total	27.8	38.9	33.3	100

Note . Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. *Estimate not reliable. Hours match defined as 1 hour or less difference between actual and preferred hours per week. Response range on self-report health question: 1 'poor', 2 'fair' 3 'good', 4 'very good' 5 'excellent'. Responses 1 to 2 categorised as 'poor health', responses 3 to 5 categorised as 'good health'. Table excludes self-employed persons.

4.8 Use of medical services and work–life outcomes

AWALI also contains two behaviour-based self-report measures of health: the number of visits to a health professional in the past four months and number of prescription medications purchased over the same time period.

Consistent with the self-reported health ratings, self-reported health–related behaviours indicate a relationship between poorer work–life outcomes and poorer health. As shown in Table 19, with the exception of feeling rushed for time, respondents who have the most negative spillover from work–to–life or are dissatisfied with their work–life balance are also most likely to make frequent visits to a health professional (four or more times in the past four months). Similar patterns are also evident in regard to frequent purchases of prescription medication. With the exception of feeling rushed for time, those who report the most frequent work–life interference and least satisfaction with their work–life balance are most likely to purchase prescription medication frequently (four or more purchases in the past four months).

Table 19 Work life outcomes by visits to health professional in past four months, AWALI 2007 (%)

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Often/almost always	Total
Work interferes with activities outside work				
No visits	48.1	33.4	18.5	100
1 visit	48.5	33.2	18.2	100
2–3 visits	47.6	33.8	18.6	100
4 + visits	42.7	29.0	28.4	100
Total	47.4	32.8	19.8	100
Work interferes with enough time with family or friends				
No visits	40.8	36.2	23.0	100
1 visit	39.0	39.0	22.0	100
2–3 visits	39.0	37.5	23.6	100
4 + visits	35.7	30.3	34.0	100
Total	39.3	36.4	24.3	100
Work interferes with community connections				
No visits	52.7	28.2	19.1	100
1 visit	53.0	31.0	16.0	100
2–3 visits	53.5	27.3	19.2	100
4 + visits	50.8	24.0	25.1	100
Total	52.7	28.3	19.0	100
Feel rushed or pressed for time				
No visits	18.2	31.0	50.8	100
1 visit	17.1	31.7	51.2	100
2–3 visits	10.8	30.5	58.6	100
4 + visits	13.4	35.1	51.5	100
Total	15.9	31.6	52.5	100
Satisfied with work–life balance		Not satisfied	Satisfied	
No visits		22.5	77.5	100
1 visit		23.4	76.6	100
2–3 visits		25.8	74.2	100
4 + visits		31.4	68.6	100
Total		24.6	75.4	100

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Table excludes self-employed persons. Response range on work–life balance satisfaction 1, 'not at all satisfied'; 2, 'not very satisfied'; 3, 'somewhat satisfied'; 4, 'very satisfied'. Responses 1 and 2 categorised as 'not satisfied', responses 3 and 4 categorised as 'satisfied'.

4.9 Stress in daily life and work–life outcomes

AWALI contains a single–item measure of respondents' stress in their life in general, including home and work. We measure stress on a five–point scale ranging from 1 (not at all stressed) to 5 (very stressed). Overall, 46.5 per cent of workers surveyed felt somewhat or very stressed (52.6% of women and 41.5 % of men). Similar to the health findings, poorer work–life outcomes are associated with higher levels of stress.

In short, the survey confirms high levels of stress amongst Australian workers, especially women, and this is associated with poor work-life outcomes. As shown in Figure 16, men and women with the worst work–life outcomes also report feeling stressed in regard to their life in general ($P < 0.001$). Indeed, feelings of stress account for about 20 per cent of the variation in the Index scores. This relationship was slightly stronger for men than women.

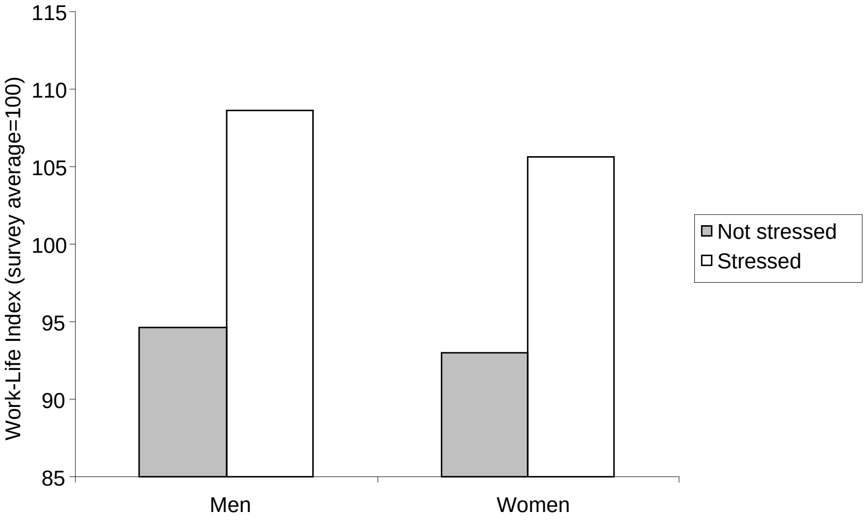

Figure 16 Work–life index by gender and self-reported stress in daily life, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Response range 1, 'not all stressed'; 2, 'not very stressed'; 3, 'somewhat stressed'; 4, 'very stressed'. Responses 1 & 2 categorised as 'not stressed', responses 3 & 4 categorised as 'stressed'. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

4.10 Satisfaction with close relationships and work–life outcomes

AWALI also contains a measure of social well–being, assessed in terms of the quality of close relationships. Similar to the findings on health and stress, men and women who report the worst work–life outcomes are less satisfied with their close relationships ($P < 0.001$) (Figure 17).

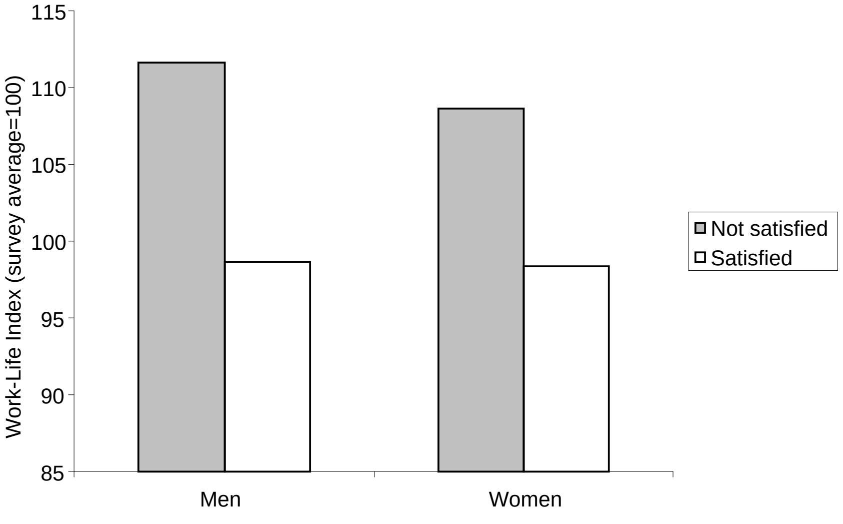

Figure 17 Work–life index by gender and satisfaction with close relationships, AWALI 2007

Note. Data weighted by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on age, highest level of schooling completed, sex and area. Response range 1, 'not all satisfied'; 2, 'not very satisfied'; 3, 'somewhat satisfied'; 4, 'very satisfied'. Responses 1 & 2 categorised as 'not satisfied', responses 3 & 4 categorised as 'satisfied'. Figure excludes self-employed persons.

Conclusion

This study confirms a basis for the lively and widespread community conversation underway in many Australian homes and workplaces. Spillover from work to home and community life affects many Australians. With rising workforce participation rates, these effects reach into a growing proportion of homes. People are giving a lot to work – and taking a lot home from it as well. There are high levels of interaction between work, households and communities.

Spillover the other way – from home to work – is much less frequent. Surprisingly, it is less frequent for women than men, contradicting the common belief that working women, with their greater responsibility for domestic work and care, are likely to be more affected at work by their family lives than men.

Many workers find that work interferes with their friendships, social relations and community interactions. We know all too little about the long term effects of this interference on our social capital and the resilience of our social fabric.

Long hours now affect many Australians and the effects extend well beyond the individual to wider social life. Working hours matter a great deal to the nature and level of work–life interaction. Long hours are especially associated with more frequent negative spillover into workers' personal lives and higher levels of time pressure and time strain. They affect the time that workers have for their friendships, social and community connections. Existing literature suggests that these issues are very important to personal happiness and to wider social trust (Layard 2005).

At the other end of the spectrum, part-time hours are associated with better work–life outcomes. However, long part-time hours (16-34) are not associated with less negative work–life spillover for women, than full-time work. This perhaps explains the ongoing pressure that so many women report (Pocock 2003) despite the fact that a high proportion of Australian women try to deal with their work–life spillover by working part-time (most of them for 16-34 hours).

The findings suggest that a good fit between preferred and actual working hours is very important to work–life outcomes. Many Australian workers are not working their preferred hours, and the work–life consequences of this are significant. Better public policy and labour law to support requests to change hours are essential.

The quality of jobs is important. Poor quality, insecure, high pressure jobs with low levels of worker say are associated with worse work–life outcomes. Once, again this has implications for workplace and public policies.

Some of the most influential workplace players are most affected by long hours and by work–life pressures: managers and professionals. They are in charge in many locations. What does their lived experience of poor work–life outcomes mean for those they supervise and manage? What cultures are being re-created through their expectations and the transmission of their own stresses? These questions deserve closer study in Australia.

It seems that women are acting as shock absorbers for the increasing reach of work into our lives and communities. Many work part-time to manage their paid and unpaid responsibilities, but this does not save them from high levels of pressure and stress.

The current work–life situation in Australia is imposing health and medical costs on our communities and the individuals who have poor work–life outcomes. At present these are privately experienced and uncounted. They are likely to be substantial. They deserve more public attention.

This study provides some important indicators about who is most affected by the complex and changing interactions between work and life outside work, what kinds of jobs they hold and what kinds of households they live in. But many questions remain. We hope to explore these in further iterations of AWALI in coming years as well as through qualitative studies that allow us to investigate beneath the surface of survey data.

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