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**Department of Families, Community Services  
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# **Mothers and fathers with young children: paid employment, caring and wellbeing**

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# Executive summary

In recent decades, the increasing employment rates of mothers combined with other changes in Australian society have had a major impact upon many aspects of family life. Despite widespread policy interest and community debate about the impact of this trend, a lack of nationally representative surveys that have a large sample of families with young children means that relatively little is known about how families with young children combine caring for children with participation in paid employment.

*Growing up in Australia:* the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) is a new study that provides information on over 10,000 children. In the first wave, there are approximately 5,000 infants and 5,000 4 to 5 year-old children and their families. With its detailed information on labour force status, job characteristics and measures of wellbeing of the children and parents, LSAC provides an opportunity to examine the different patterns of parental employment and the characteristics of jobs in which parents with young children are employed.

Four themes are addressed in the report.

- The labour force status and job characteristics of parents with young children.
- Patterns of use of child care and how they vary according to family labour supply.
- The impact of parental employment on co-parenting and time spent with children.
- The relationship between family labour supply and the wellbeing of parents.

## Parental labour force status

Analysis of LSAC reveals that having young children has a much greater effect on the employment patterns of mothers than fathers. This is consistent with the findings of other studies. Mothers with young children are less likely to be employed, more likely to work shorter hours and are employed in quite different types of jobs compared to fathers. There are substantial differences in patterns of employment between single and couple mothers and according to the age of the youngest child.

- The overall employment rate for mothers with an infant was 38.1 per cent. Among mothers with an infant, the employment rate increased from 24.7 per cent for those with a 3 to 5 month old, to 33.2 per cent for those with a 6 to 8 month old, 41.2 per cent for those with a 9 to 11 month old and 49.6 per cent for those with a child aged 12 to 19 months.
- The employment rate for mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years was 60.3 per cent.
- The employment rate for fathers was 92 per cent.
- Single mothers had a much lower employment rate than couple mothers.
- Employment rates for both single and couple mothers increased rapidly with the age of the youngest child, whereas the employment rates of fathers were unaffected by the age of the youngest child.
- Mothers who were in employment while they were pregnant had a much higher rate of return to work than those who were not employed while they were pregnant.
- The average working hours of employed mothers was 20 hours per week for those with an infant and 25 hours for those with a 4–5 year-old child, much lower than the average of 46 hours for fathers. A substantial number of the fathers worked 55 or more hours per week: 21.9 per cent of those with an infant and 24.9 per cent of those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years.

- Nearly two-thirds of employed mothers did not want to change the number of hours they were working. However, among full-time employed mothers, more than half preferred to work fewer hours, while those working less than 16 hours were the most likely to prefer more hours (21.7 per cent of those with an infant and 28.3 per cent of those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years).
- There was little difference between mothers and fathers in the extent to which they reported having access to family-friendly work arrangements, although there were differences between mothers and fathers in the types of work arrangements available. Fathers were more likely to have access to paid leave than mothers while mothers were more likely to have access to flexible hours.
- Couple mothers were more likely than single mothers to have access to paid maternity/parental leave (41.0 and 25.9 per cent respectively) and more likely to have access to paid personal/family leave (51.8 and 35.4 per cent respectively). Couple mothers were also more likely to report being able to change start and finish times without seeking approval (56.9 per cent) than single mothers (47.1 per cent).

## Patterns of child care use

LSAC provides detailed information on the use of child care (and early education). This information, combined with the comprehensive employment data, allows for a detailed analysis of the relationship between the use of child care and parental employment.

- Families with an infant in which the parents were both in paid employment (or for single-parent families, the resident parent was employed) had higher rates of use of non-parental care than in families with at least one parent not in paid employment.
- In couple-parent families in which both parents were employed, 65.4 per cent used some form of non-parental care. For couple-parent families in which neither parent was employed or in which only one parent was employed, 13.3 and 16.7 per cent respectively used some form of non-parental care.
- Around 80.9 per cent of employed single parents with an infant used some form of non-parental care compared to 24.7 per cent of not-employed single parents using non-parental care.
- Rates of use of non-parental care were higher for single parents than couple-parent families with an infant irrespective of parents' employment.
- A substantial number of single-parent and couple-parent families were able to combine paid employment without the use of non-parental care. For example, 19.1 per cent of employed single mothers did not use any form of non-parental care and 34.6 per cent of couple-parent families in which both parents were employed did not use any form of regular non-parental care. An important factor in allowing families to balance work and family while using parental care only was one parent (usually the mother) working short part-time hours.
- For the 4–5 year-old cohort, almost all of the children were in some non-parental care or early education arrangement. At this age, many children have such arrangements for reasons other than parental employment.
- Considerable differences were observed in the care arrangements of employed couple-parent families compared to employed single families. Single parents were less likely to rely only on parental care, and more likely to make use of formal care for infants. For both cohorts, single parents were more likely to have multiple care arrangements.

## Parents' time with children

A valuable feature of LSAC is that detailed information is collected on how and with whom children spend their time. Analysis of this information clearly demonstrates the demands that combining paid work and the care of young children places on parents, particularly mothers.

- The time demands are greatest when children are in their first year of life, and fall disproportionately upon mothers.

- Mothers' hours of employment reduced their time with children but not in proportion to the extra time demands of their jobs.
- In contrast, fathers' time with their children was only increased under the unusual circumstance of less than full-time employment and not much affected by the difference between standard full-time hours and very long hours of work.
- Fathers' time with children did increase in response to their partners' hours of employment, partially offsetting reductions in mothers' time for infants and more adequately offsetting losses of maternal availability for 4–5 year olds.
- While there seems to be some recognition of how partners try to compensate for each other's work demands, mothers were still more likely to indicate they did 'more than their fair share', although fathers felt they were doing their 'fair share' of the work involving children.

As successive waves of this longitudinal study accumulate, there will be opportunities to study the effects of how parents spend time with children during their early years and how this affects children's outcomes and their resilience in the face of adverse circumstances.

## Employment and financial wellbeing

Very few of the families assessed themselves as getting along 'poorly' or 'very poorly' financially. At the other extreme, few families said that they were prosperous. Single-mother families were more likely than couple-parent families to say that they were 'just getting along' financially and couple-parent families were more likely to say that they were 'very comfortable' or 'reasonably comfortable' financially.

- As expected, having a parent or parents in paid employment was associated with an increased equivalised family income.
- Single-mother families had much higher rates of having experienced financial hardship and having experienced multiple hardships than couple-parent families.
- For both single-mother and couple-parent families, jobless families reported having experienced a higher number of hardships than families in which there was parental employment.
- Much of the difference in equivalised family income between single-mother and couple-parent families was explained by the higher rates of joblessness among single-mother than couple-parent families.
- For couple-parent families, although having both parents employed resulted in a lower number of hardships being reported, the difference compared to couple-parent families in which only one parent was employed was relatively small.

## Employment and parental wellbeing

LSAC contains a number of questions about the positive and negative effects of work on family life (termed work–family 'gains' and 'strains'). These questions provide the most direct measure of the effect of employment on parental wellbeing available in the LSAC survey. As well as the effects of paid employment on family life, this report also examines parental wellbeing in terms of parents' health, psychological wellbeing, marital relationship (for couples), and how time pressured parents felt.

- Employed mothers and fathers varied very little on the work–family gains measure, although there were more differences between mothers and fathers on the work–family strains measure, with fathers reporting greater levels of work–family strain.
- For employed mothers, the positive effects of work on family life were greatest for those working 16 to 24 hours per week, and the negative effects of work on family life were lowest for those working less than 16 hours per week.

- For employed fathers, work–family gains declined as hours worked increased, and work–family strains increased the more hours fathers worked.
- Full-time employed mothers reported having poorer health, higher levels of psychological distress, and a poorer quality relationship with their partner (if a couple) and more time pressure. In contrast, part-time hours were associated with greater wellbeing.
- With the exception of time pressure and work–family strains, full-time employed fathers generally reported higher levels of wellbeing than part-time employed fathers, although fathers working very long hours (55 or more hours per week) did report lower levels of wellbeing.
- Overemployment (working more hours than preferred), and underemployment (not being able to work as much as preferred) were also associated with poorer wellbeing for both mothers and fathers.
- There is some evidence that the working hours of one parent were associated with the wellbeing of the other. Mothers’ wellbeing was generally lower when fathers worked long hours. However, associations between mothers’ work hours and fathers’ wellbeing were more mixed.
- Wellbeing varied with the type of job, and the work conditions that parents encountered.
- Mothers and fathers who were permanently employed showed better wellbeing on most indicators compared to casual and self-employed parents.
- The self-employed reported having lower levels of work–family strain than those working for an employer (casual or permanent employees). However, self-employment was also associated with lower levels of physical and psychological health, poorer-quality relationships, more time pressure and fewer positive effects of work on family. While this could be interpreted as meaning that self-employment places pressures on mothers’ health and wellbeing, it could also indicate that mothers with poorer health or wellbeing were more likely to take up self-employment than to work for an employer.
- Job security, job autonomy (freedom to decide how work is done) and flexible work hours (ability to change work starting and finishing times without difficulty) showed independent and consistent associations with improved wellbeing on most indicators.
- Working evenings/nights or weekends showed less consistent associations with employed mothers’ or fathers’ wellbeing, although where associations were observed, they were in the direction of poorer wellbeing.

Given the dramatic increase in maternal employment over the last three or more decades and the inevitable impacts of this on family life, it is surprising how little is known about the patterns of participation in paid employment of families with young children. Even less is known about the effects of different patterns of parental employment, particularly maternal employment, on family life and wellbeing.

The findings in this report provide new insights into the relationship between employment and wellbeing for families with young children, with a particular focus on those with an infant. Parental wellbeing and close family relationships are central for children’s wellbeing, and because most children live in families where one or both parents are employed, optimising parents’ wellbeing with respect to their work arrangements may also benefit children now and into the future. The findings in relation to employment patterns are generally consistent with previous research on the working arrangements of families with children.

The findings in this report are relevant to the development of a wide range of policies including the areas of workplace relations, income support, labour market policies, welfare reform and child care. The findings are also relevant to employers who need to be able to retain and attract employees, many of whom have young children.

By providing detailed information on these issues, this report begins to fill important gaps in our knowledge base. The evidence provided in this report is relevant to crucial questions such as what is the impact of changing employment patterns on family wellbeing and ultimately the wellbeing of children? Providing answers to these questions will be critical to improving policies that impact on families.

# 1 Introduction

In recent decades, the increasing employment rates of mothers combined with other changes in Australian society have had a major impact upon many aspects of family life. There have been changes in the use of non-parental care to allow participation in the labour market and related changes in the time parents spend with their children. There have also been effects on material living standards and potentially family and child wellbeing. There have also been other changes in Australian society including increases in the educational attainment of women; increases in the average age of first birth; increased societal acceptance of working mothers; and a greater availability and acceptance of non-parental child care.

Despite the significance of these changes, relatively little is known about how families with young children combine caring for children with participation in paid employment. Also surprisingly, little is known about how these changes have affected the wellbeing of families with young children. The absence of information on this crucial period in the life course of families is largely a result of a lack of nationally representative surveys that provide detailed labour market information for a large sample of families with young children.

*Growing up in Australia:* the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) is a new study that provides information on a large number of infants and 4 to 5 year-old children and their families (over 10,000 children). With its detailed information on labour force status, job characteristics and measures of wellbeing of the children and other family members, LSAC provides a valuable source of information for understanding the labour market participation of families with young children. The study provides an opportunity to examine the different patterns of parental employment and the characteristics of jobs in which parents with young children are employed. LSAC was initiated and funded as part of the Australian Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy by the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA).

The other main Australian dataset with information on a large number of families with preschool-aged children and family labour force status is the five-yearly Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing. However, the Census has more limited information on labour force status and has no information on the use of non-parental care and very limited information on wellbeing.

The labour force status of families with children has changed significantly over recent decades, and the changes for families with a child under 5 years of age have been the most dramatic. A few statistics are given here to illustrate these changes. In 1984, 62.8 per cent of couple-parent families with a youngest child under 5 years of age had one parent employed and the other not in paid employment. By 2004, this proportion had fallen to 47.6 per cent. Over this period, there has been a corresponding increase in the proportion of dual-earner families with young children (from 29.2 per cent in 1984 to 46.5 per cent in 2004). In these families, the most common arrangement is for the father to work full-time and the mother part-time (about one-third of couple-parent families).<sup>1</sup>

Along with the changes in the labour market over the past two decades, there have also been changes in families. One of the major changes has been the growth of single-parent families. Since 1984, single-parent families have risen from 10.5 per cent of families with children aged under 5 years to 18.1 per cent in 2004. Over this period the employment rate in single-parent families with children aged under 5 years has increased from 20.6 per cent to 29.8 per cent, with much of this increase due to growth in part-time employment.<sup>2</sup>

Joblessness in families with young children is an important social and economic issue, and is an important determinant of family wellbeing. The proportion of jobless couple-parent families with a child aged under 5 years actually decreased from 8.0 per cent in 1984 to 6.0 per cent in 2004. Furthermore, of single-parent families, the proportion in which the parent was not employed fell from 79.4 per cent to 70.2 per cent. Overall, however, joblessness in families with a child aged under 5 years increased during that time. This was because of an increase in the proportion of families that were single-parent families, combined with the lower employment rates of single parents (compared to parents in couple-parent families).

These changing patterns of employment have had a major impact on the ways in which young children are cared for and, in particular, the extent to which they experience various forms of non-parental care before they start school.

There is extensive Australian and international literature on the determinants of labour market outcomes for parents, particularly mothers.<sup>3</sup> This literature has consistently found that having children has a much bigger impact upon the employment rates of women and hours of work than it does for men. A detailed review of Australian studies of female labour supply is provided by Birch (2005).

A number of studies on the impact of the taxation and income support system on labour supply decisions have been conducted using microsimulation models (for example, Creedy & Kalb 2005; Kalb 2003; Kalb, Kew & Scutella 2005). Other studies have focused on the effects of the costs of child care on labour supply decisions (for example, Cobb-Clark, Liu & Mitchell 2000; Doiron & Kalb 2002; Doiron & Kalb 2005; Rammohan & Whelan 2005; Rammohan & Whelan 2006).

A key finding of the labour supply literature is that women with children (both couple and single mothers) are more sensitive to the financial incentives in paid employment than are other groups (for example, Apps 1991; Doiron & Kalb 2005; Creedy, Kalb & Kew 2003).

While there have been a number of studies of the determinants of labour supply, these studies have tended to estimate the impact of children of different ages on labour supply decisions, often using age groups such as 0–4 year olds. Studies that have focused on labour market outcomes for parents with an infant include Baxter (2005a) and Glezer (1988).

These studies have not, in general, provided a detailed description of the labour market participation and characteristics of families with children in their first year of life; a time when maternal employment patterns are often changing. Furthermore, few studies have examined questions such as access to family-friendly work arrangements for parents with young children, which is a crucial issue for these families given the time pressures associated with having young children.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the data on labour force participation from LSAC and how use of child care, time spent with children, and parental wellbeing are related to labour force participation. It is hoped that this information will improve the evidence base for those interested in the labour market participation of mothers and fathers with young children, and the implications of this for families. It is also hoped that the report will be of value to others interested in using the LSAC data to analyse labour market participation of families with young children. A number of methodological issues and considerations in using the data for this purpose are discussed in the report (particularly in Section 2).

This report does not analyse how child development and wellbeing is affected by parental employment status, although this will be possible once additional waves of LSAC data have been collected. Throughout this report, the concern is mainly about associations between parental employment and other characteristics and generally causal links are not drawn. This is an important point to keep in mind, particularly in later sections, where multivariate modelling is used to allow a number of characteristics to be taken into account (controlled for) when considering the association between labour force status and child care use or parental wellbeing.

This report covers four main themes. First, the labour force status and job characteristics of parents are described (Section 3). Second, the patterns of use of child care and how they vary according to parental employment are analysed (Section 4). Third, the links between parental employment, the time that parents spend with their children and co-parenting are analysed (Section 5). Fourth, the relationship between parental employment and the wellbeing of parents and their families is explored. The relationship between paid employment and income and financial hardship is analysed in Section 6. The effects of paid employment on family life and the effects of family life on paid employment are examined in Section 7. In Section 8 the relationships between parental employment and wellbeing are explored. The final section draws together the key findings.

## 2 Methodological and data issues

In this section an overview of LSAC is provided and a number of methodological and definitional issues are addressed. LSAC provides Australia's first comprehensive national data on children as they grow up. The study was initiated to examine the effect of Australia's current social, economic and cultural environment on the next generation. More specifically, it seeks to improve understanding of the factors that facilitate or impede healthy early childhood development, to identify opportunities for early intervention, and to inform policy debate more generally.

The data used in this report are from Wave 1 of LSAC, which was conducted in 2004.<sup>4</sup> The focus of LSAC is on the early years of children's lives and as such 'the child' is the sampling unit. Two cohorts of children were selected: infants and 4 to 5 year olds. The final Wave 1 sample comprised 5,107 infants and 4,983 4 to 5 year-old children, giving a total sample of 10,090 children.

### 2.1 Study design, sample selection and representativeness

Although the data used in this report are from only a single wave, and therefore cross-sectional in nature, the study design is longitudinal. The study has adopted a cross-sequential design that follows two cohorts of children whose ages will overlap as the study progresses. These children and their families will be followed at two-yearly intervals until 2010, and possibly beyond.

Children in the infant cohort were born between March 2003 and February 2004, and were aged 3 to 19 months at the interview date. Almost all were aged 4 to 13 months (96.1 per cent, see Table 2.1). Children in the 4–5 year-old cohort were born between March 1999 and February 2000 and were aged 4 years 3 months to 5 years 7 months at the interview date. At the time of interview, the majority were aged 4 years 4 months to 5 years 2 months (97.5 per cent). The sample was selected to be broadly representative of all Australian children in the two age cohorts. The main exception is that children in some remote parts of Australia were excluded because of the high data collection costs in these areas.

The sampling frame for the study was Medicare Australia's database (formerly the Health Insurance Commission). A sample of more than 18,500 children within the LSAC birth dates was selected from Medicare Australia's administrative database.<sup>5</sup>

Information was collected from the child's parent(s) and from the child (for the 4–5 year-old cohort). Face-to-face interviews were held with the parent who knew the child best (known as the 'primary carer'). Parents were asked to nominate who was the primary carer for this purpose. In 97 per cent of families this was the child's biological mother. In couple-parent families, just 2 per cent of families nominated the father as the primary carer (across both cohorts).<sup>6</sup>

The primary carer and, where applicable, the primary carer's resident partner (most often the child's other parent) were also asked to fill in separate questionnaires. In addition, the interviewer collected information about the child, their parents, other family members and the neighbourhood. Two diaries ('time-use diaries') were left behind for the parent to record how the child spent his or her time during two 24-hour periods (one weekday and one day on the weekend). Finally, if the parent agreed, a questionnaire was sent to a carer/teacher where the study child spent time in a child care or educational setting.

Calculating response rates is complicated for studies where the sample is drawn from an administrative database. The final Wave 1 sample represents 53 per cent of all families who were sent a letter by Medicare Australia. Refusals were the largest source of sample loss (31 and 35 per cent of infants and 4–5 year olds respectively) followed by 'non-contact'. Non-contact occurred when the address details supplied by Medicare Australia was out of date due to the family moving or when only a post office box address was available and interviewers were unable to locate the respondent. The rates of non-contact were 10 per cent for infants and 14 per cent for 4–5 year olds. The most appropriate response rate is thus constructed by excluding the 'non-contacts'. This results in a response rate of 64 per cent for infants and 57 per cent for 4–5 year olds.<sup>7</sup> These response rates refer to interviews with the primary carer.

**Table 2.1: Age distribution of the LSAC sample**

Infant cohort		4–5 year-old cohort	
Age in months at Wave 1 interview	Number of observations	Age in months at Wave 1 interview	Number of observations
3	55	51	57
4	193	52	176
5	322	53	293
6	416	54	414
7	604	55	566
8	798	56	726
9	781	57	733
10	634	58	630
11	504	59	522
12	413	60	421
13	244	61	276
14	94	62	103
15	18	63	21
16	17	64	27
17	9	65	6
18	4	66	7
19	1	67	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,107</b>		<b>4,983</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Age as at the LSAC Wave 1 interview.

As noted above, parents and carers/teachers were also asked to complete questionnaires. Response rates for these were lower than for the primary carer interviews. The response by the parent(s) to the self-complete questionnaire was highest (85 per cent of primary carers and 79 per cent of the primary carers' partners) and for the time-use diaries (78 per cent), followed by the teacher questionnaire (69 per cent).<sup>8</sup>

LSAC is broadly representative of the population, with no large differences from ABS Census data on most characteristics. Variables with a close match to Census figures include mother's and father's country of birth and the study child's sex. The main bias in the sample is that the parents of the study child are more highly educated than the general population. The LSAC sample underrepresents children from single-parent families, larger families, those with a non-English-speaking mother, lower income families and those from New South Wales. A detailed discussion of sampling issues and the representativeness of the LSAC data is provided in Soloff, Lawrence and Johnstone (2005). The representativeness of the LSAC data in terms of parental employment rates is analysed in more detail later in this section.

Throughout this report, sample weights have been used to adjust for sampling design and for survey non-response.<sup>9</sup> The estimates reported throughout this report take account of the stratification and clustering generated by the survey design.

## 2.2 Analytical approach and definitions

The LSAC sample was selected to be representative of families and households of infants and 4–5 year olds<sup>10</sup> and so it is possible to use LSAC to analyse parental and family characteristics.<sup>11</sup> Labour market data are presented separately for mothers and fathers. In addition, for partnered parents, several approaches are used to combine



information from each parent (termed ‘parental labour supply’ or ‘family labour supply’ in this report). Parental labour supply is also classified according to the primary carer’s labour force status.

Throughout this report a number of key variables are used. In this section, the key variables are discussed.

### Age of children

Given that employment rates of mothers increase with the age of their youngest child (Gray et al. 2003) it is essential to take into account the age of the youngest child when analysing labour market outcomes. An important issue (related to the design of LSAC) that needs to be addressed when using LSAC to analyse parental labour force status is that nearly half (47 per cent) of the 4–5 year-old cohort live in a family with a younger child. The difference between the age of the study child and the age of the youngest child in the family is shown in Table 2.2. Some 8.8 per cent of 4–5 year olds have a youngest sibling who is aged less than 1 year, 12.8 per cent have a youngest sibling aged 1 year and a further 17.1 per cent have a youngest sibling aged 2 years. While 82.6 per cent of the 4–5 year-old study children were 4 year olds, in only 43.9 per cent of families were they the youngest child. Similarly, 17.4 per cent of the study children in this cohort were aged 5 years, of whom 9.5 per cent were the youngest child. In contrast, virtually the entire infant cohort was the youngest child in the family.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 2.2: Age of study child and age of youngest child (column per cent)**

	Infant cohort		4–5 year-old cohort	
	Age of study child	Age of youngest child	Age of study child	Age of youngest child
< 1 year	84.3	84.6		8.8
1 year	15.7	15.4		12.8
2 years				17.1
3 years				7.8
4 years			82.6	43.9
5 years			17.4	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Although the infant sample is restricted to those aged 3 to 19 months, only 20 per cent of the infant cohort was aged 3 to 6 months. The infant cohort also includes some children aged over 1 year of age (7.6 per cent). As such the infant cohort, while representative of all families with an infant within the scope of LSAC, is not representative of families with a 1 year old or under 1 year-old child. Similarly, LSAC is not representative of all families with a child aged 4–5 years, due to the exclusion of children aged less than 4 years and 3 months and children older than 5 years.

Further, combining the cohorts does not result in a sample that is representative of families with a child aged 0–5 years. Families from the 4–5 year-old cohort where the study child was also the youngest child (53.4 per cent of families in this cohort) are representative of families with a youngest child aged 4–5 years (noting the biases mentioned above). Families from the 4–5 year-old cohort where the study child has a younger sibling are representative only of families with a child aged 4–5 years and a younger sibling (and not representative of all families where the youngest child is less than 4 years old).

The approach adopted in this report is to exclude from the analysis children from the 4–5 year-old cohort who have a younger sibling when conducting analysis by the age of the youngest child. This should result in a representative sample of families with a youngest child who is an infant and families with a youngest child aged 4–5 years. In several places, however, the analysis is presented according to the age of the youngest child including families from the 4–5 year-old cohort with a younger sibling. This is particularly the case in the multivariate analyses where age of youngest child can be used as a control variable.

## Family characteristics

Throughout the report, the terms ‘mother’ and ‘father’ are used to describe the female and male carers of the study child. In the vast majority of cases this was the biological mother (99.5 per cent of female carers) and father (97.9 per cent of male carers) of the study child.<sup>13</sup>

The face-to-face survey component was conducted with the ‘primary carer’ of the study child. Single-parent families are defined as those families in which the primary carer of the study child was not living with a partner.<sup>14</sup> Couple families are defined to include those who are legally married and those in a de facto or ‘marriage like’ relationship. The very small number of single-parent fathers in LSAC precludes a separate analysis of this group.

## Labour force status

In this report, labour force status is categorised as employed, unemployed and not in the labour force. Much of the analysis combines the unemployed and not in the labour force into the category of not employed. The definition of employed includes those who did any work at all in a job, business or farm, or did any work without pay in a family business in the week prior to the interview. It excludes those who had a job but were on maternity/parental leave or on leave without pay, but it includes those who were absent from their job because of holidays, sickness or any other reason.

Although this definition is similar to the standard ABS definition, there are several differences.<sup>15</sup> The differences largely relate to the treatment of those who were absent from their job in the week prior to the interview. The standard ABS definition is that those who had a job but were not at work during the survey week are classified as employed if they meet one of the following conditions: they had been away from work for less than four weeks; or away from work for more than four weeks and had received pay for some or all of the four-week period; or away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement or on strike; or locked out or on workers’ compensation and expected to return to their job; or were employers or own-account workers who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.

For those who had a job but were not at work during the interview week, Wave 1 of LSAC did not collect information on the length of absence from work. Also, except in the case of maternity leave, information was not collected on whether the absence was with or without pay. Finally, for those parents with a job but not at work in the week prior to the interview, there was no attempt to find out about their circumstances in the four weeks prior to the interview in the way the ABS *Labour Force Survey* does. Consequently, there are a number of ways in which LSAC cannot be used to exactly match the ABS definition of employment and so a number of alternative assumptions were required.

Given the prevalence of women with infants being on leave from work at the time of the interview (see Table 3.1), the decision as to the classification of those on leave has a substantial impact on the employment rates of mothers with an infant. As this report is, in part, about the employment decisions of mothers following the birth of a child, the most useful distinction is whether or not the mother has been in paid employment following the birth of the study child. Consequently, those on paid or unpaid maternity or other types of parental leave, and also those on leave without pay have been classified as being not employed.<sup>16</sup> A high proportion of these parents had been absent from work for some time with most not having returned to work since the birth of the study child. In the analysis of leave-taking in Section 3.2, these parents are described as being on a maternity/parental-related leave. Parents who were absent from work for other reasons, or on other types of leave, are classified as being employed on the assumption that these absences (even if unpaid) were only for a relatively short period. Details of the standard ABS questions and the LSAC questions used to measure labour force status are provided in Appendix A.

Given the central importance of labour force status to this report, the employment rates derived from Wave 1 of LSAC are compared to estimates from the 2001 Census and 2004 Labour Force Survey. In making this comparison, it is important to take into account the differences in the definition of employment used in this report and the standard ABS definition. The fact that LSAC is not representative of the youngest infants (those less than 6 months old) should also be noted. Overall, the employment rates of the LSAC parents are comparable to estimates from the 2001 Census and the 2001 and 2004 Labour Force Surveys.<sup>17</sup> The conclusion is that the data can be used with confidence to analyse the labour force status of the parents of the study child.

## 3 Employment patterns and job characteristics

This section describes the employment patterns and job characteristics of LSAC parents. As outlined in Section 1, there is relatively little Australian research on labour market outcomes for parents with an infant. There is also relatively little research that provides a detailed description of the characteristics of jobs in which parents of young children are employed. This section aims to start to fill this gap.

The section is structured as follows. Section 3.1 provides an overview of how labour force status varies according to the age of the youngest child, mothers and fathers, and between single and couple mothers. This is followed by an analysis of mothers who were on maternity leave at the time of the interview and those that had returned to work following childbirth. Section 3.3 describes how labour force status varies with educational attainment, the number of children and parental health status. In Section 3.4, employed parents' hours of work are described, followed by a section examining whether these hours are actually preferred by parents. One of the strengths of the LSAC design is the collection of data from both parents in couple households. This is exploited in Section 3.6, where the employment patterns found in couple-parent families are detailed. Section 3.7 describes the characteristics of the jobs in which parents with young children are employed. Section 3.8 summarises the findings in this section.

### 3.1 Labour force status

In this section, a three-category measure of labour force status is used: employed, unemployed and not in the labour force.<sup>18</sup> The 'not in the labour force' category includes those on maternity/parental-related leave. The labour force status of couple and single mothers is also analysed. The differences between single-parent and couple-parent fathers are not considered because there are too few single-parent fathers (see Section 2.2) to provide reliable estimates for this group separately. How labour force status varies with the age of the youngest child is also examined.<sup>19</sup>

The majority of fathers were employed (92 per cent) and there was no difference according to the age of the youngest child (see Table 3.1). The proportion of fathers who were unemployed was low, ranging from 2.2 per cent for those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years to 3.2 per cent for those with an infant. The proportion of fathers not in the labour force ranges from 4.6 per cent for those with an infant to 5.4 per cent for those with a 4–5 year old. Very few fathers were on parental-related leave from work (0.3 per cent for those with an infant).

Labour force participation of mothers was very different to that of fathers. For mothers with an infant, 38.1 per cent were employed, 3.4 per cent were unemployed and 58.6 per cent were not in the labour force. The employment rate of mothers increased as the age of the youngest child increased. Correspondingly, the proportion not in the labour force decreased. For mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, 60.3 per cent were employed, 4.6 per cent were unemployed and 35.1 per cent were not in the labour force.

According to LSAC, 9.7 per cent of mothers with an infant were on maternity leave at the time of the Wave 1 interview. This comprised 8.4 per cent on unpaid maternity/parental leave, 1.0 per cent on paid maternity/parental leave and 0.3 per cent on leave without pay. The patterns of use of maternity leave are examined in detail in Section 3.2.

**Table 3.1: Labour force status by family type and age of youngest child, mothers and fathers (column per cent)**

Labour force status	Mothers			Fathers
	Couple	Single	Total	Total
			<b>Infant</b>	
Employed	40.5	17.5	38.1	92.3
Unemployed	2.9	7.6	3.4	3.2
Not in the labour force	56.6	75.0	58.6	4.6
<i>On maternity/parental related leave</i>	10.3	4.5	9.7	0.3
	<b>(n=4,620)</b>	<b>(n=473)</b>	<b>(n=5,093)</b>	<b>(n=4,622)</b>
			<b>4–5 year old with younger sibling</b>	
Employed	48.4	27.1	46.2	92.4
Unemployed	2.9	10.2	3.6	2.3
Not in the labour force	48.8	62.8	50.1	5.4
	<b>(n=2,118)</b>	<b>(n=210)</b>	<b>(n=2,328)</b>	<b>(n=2,118)</b>
			<b>4–5 year old with no younger sibling</b>	
Employed	63.5	45.8	60.3	92.3
Unemployed	3.5	9.8	4.6	2.2
Not in the labour force	33.1	44.4	35.1	5.4
	<b>(n=2,161)</b>	<b>(n=446)</b>	<b>(n=2,607)</b>	<b>(n=2,192)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

There were large differences in the labour force status of single and couple mothers. For single mothers with an infant, the employment rate was just 17.5 per cent, much lower than the employment rate of 40.5 per cent among couple mothers. Single mothers were also more likely to be unemployed (7.6 per cent) than couple mothers (2.9 per cent). Three-quarters of single mothers with an infant were not in the labour force compared to 56.6 per cent of couple mothers.

The employment rate of both single and couple mothers was higher for those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years than those with an infant. For single mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, the employment rate was 45.8 per cent. This compares to an employment rate of 63.5 per cent among couple mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years. The absolute and proportionate gap in employment rates between single and couple mothers narrowed as the age of the youngest child increased from being an infant to 4–5 years, although it still remained substantial. The difference in labour force status of single and couple mothers is consistent with the findings of other research (Gray et al. 2003; Whiteford 2001).

Those with a 4–5 year old and a younger sibling had employment rates that were between those of the mothers with an infant and mothers with a 4–5 year old and no younger sibling (see Table 3.1). Within this group, the employment rates differed considerably according to the age of the youngest sibling (Table B2). The percentage of mothers employed increased from 27.0 per cent for those whose youngest child was less than 1 year, to 44.7 per cent for those with a 1 year old, 52.8 per cent for those with a 2 year old and 56.1 per cent for those with a 3 or 4 year old.

In much of the following analysis of parental employment patterns, parents from the 4–5 year-old cohort but with younger children are excluded. This enables comparisons to focus on those families with a youngest infant child and a youngest 4–5 year-old child.

There is little large-scale nationally representative data that includes information on both the age of infants in months and mothers' labour force status. Therefore, little is known about how the employment rate of mothers varies in the first year of a child's life. LSAC provides this information.<sup>20</sup> Table 3.2 shows the employment rates of mothers and fathers with infants by the age of the infant in months. For mothers, employment rates increased with the age of the infant from 24.7 per cent when the child was 3 to 5 months to 49.6 per cent when the child was more than 1 year old. Employment increased with the age of the infant for couple and single mothers, but the rates of employment were higher for couple mothers at all ages. For fathers, no relationships with age of the infant were apparent.

**Table 3.2: Employment rate by age of child, mothers and fathers, infant cohort (per cent)**

Age of child	Mothers			Fathers
	Couple	Single	Total	Total
3–5 months	26.4	10.4	24.7	92.4
6–8 months	35.4	12.8	33.2	92.0
9–11 months	44.1	17.9	41.2	92.2
12 months or more	52.2	29.0	49.6	92.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.5</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>92.3</b>
	<b>(n=4,620)</b>	<b>(n=473)</b>	<b>(n=5,093)</b>	<b>(n=4,622)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

An interesting question is the impact that having children has on employment rates. However, given that LSAC is restricted to families with children, these data cannot be used to compare families with children to those without. There is extensive literature that has explored the effects of children on employment (for example, de Vaus 2004). This literature consistently finds that men with children have higher employment rates than childless men. The reverse pattern is found for women; mothers with dependent children had much lower employment rates than childless women.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2 Leave from work

LSAC provides information on the types of leave used by parents who had a job but were on leave at the time of the interview. Among mothers of infants who were absent from work, 69.7 per cent were on unpaid maternity leave (see Table 3.3). This was the most commonly reported reason for absence by mothers of infants aged less than 1 year, but for mothers of infants aged 1 year or more, the reasons for absence were more diverse. Some mothers of the infant cohort were on paid maternity leave, especially among those with younger children.

**Table 3.3: Mothers' reasons for absence from work, infant cohort (column per cent)**

Reason for absence	Age of study child				Total
	3–5 months	6–8 months	9–11 months	1 year or more	
Paid maternity/parental leave	15.7	6.2	8.5	1.6	8.3
Unpaid maternity/parental leave	72.8	75.7	69.5	35.7	69.7
Annual/recreation leave	2.7	6.2	7.4	20.2	7.1
Own illness/sick leave	0.0	0.5	3.3	9.9	2.1
Leave without pay	1.3	2.2	3.9	6.4	2.9
Standard work arrangement	2.3	1.7	1.9	0.0	1.7
No work available	3.3	2.6	2.1	14.2	3.7
Other (including workers' compensation)	2.0	4.9	3.4	12.1	4.6
	<b>(n=127)</b>	<b>(n=280)</b>	<b>(n=182)</b>	<b>(n=56)</b>	<b>(n=645)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

The leave patterns for the mothers of the 4–5 year-old cohort were quite varied, although in families where there was also a sibling under 1 year of age, mothers were often on unpaid maternity leave (62.7 per cent of those on leave) or paid maternity leave (18.1 per cent of those on leave). In other families without a sibling under 1 year of age, annual/recreation leave, own illness/sick leave, leave without pay and 'other' were the most common reasons for absence (see Table 3.4).

**Table 3.4: Mothers' reasons for absence from work, 4–5 year-old cohort (column per cent)**

Reason for absence	Has younger sibling		No younger sibling	Total
	Sibling under 1 year	Sibling 1 year and over		
Paid maternity/parental leave	18.1	0.0	0.0	4.4
Unpaid maternity/parental leave	62.7	10.0	7.3	21.6
Annual/recreation leave	11.9	25.3	35.2	26.3
Own illness/sick leave	3.2	18.3	13.2	12.5
Leave without pay	0.9	14.5	16.7	12.2
Standard work arrangement	0.0	6.2	6.2	4.7
No work available	0.0	9.6	8.3	6.7
Other (including workers' compensation)	3.1	16.1	13.1	11.7
	<b>(n=56)</b>	<b>(n=70)</b>	<b>(n=89)</b>	<b>(n=215)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Fathers' reasons for absence from work are shown in Table 3.5. Very few reported being on paid or unpaid parental leave. Around half of the fathers who were absent from work, from both cohorts, were on annual/recreation leave (49.2 per cent in the infant cohort and 53.7 per cent in the 4–5 year-old cohort). The next largest reported reasons were own illness/sick leave (15.7 per cent in the infant cohort and 14.0 per cent in the 4–5 year-old cohort) and standard work arrangement (12.1 per cent in the infant cohort and 14.3 per cent in the 4–5 year-old cohort).

**Table 3.5: Fathers' reasons for absence from work, infant and 4–5 year-old cohort (column per cent)**

Reason for absence	Infant	4–5 year old
Paid parental leave	1.2	0.4
Unpaid parental leave	2.8	0.0
Workers' compensation	4.7	6.9
Annual/recreation leave	49.2	53.7
Own illness/sick leave	15.7	14.0
Leave without pay	4.4	3.4
Stood down, bad weather, plant breakdown	0.7	2.1
Standard work arrangement	12.1	14.3
Other	9.2	5.1
	<b>(n=180)</b>	<b>(n=157)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

### 3.3 Maternity/parental leave

Most women make significant changes to their involvement in the labour market when they have children. This section describes the use of maternity/parental leave and rates of return to paid employment of mothers following childbirth. There is limited Australian data about the use of maternity, parental or other types of leave after a child is born, and for mothers, about the rates of return to work following childbirth, although recent data provide some information on this topic (ABS 2006b; Australian Institute of Family Studies 2006). Other Australian analyses of mothers' employment transitions (Baxter 2005a) are useful in relation to the question of return-to-work timing, but do not provide information on the ways in which leave are used following the birth of a child. Research by Glezer (1988) was particularly valuable in understanding the use of leave and returning to work, but is now quite dated.<sup>22</sup>

The measure of maternity/parental leave used in this report includes those on paid or unpaid maternity/parental leave as well as those on leave without pay. This will tend to result in an underestimate of maternity-related breaks from a job because it excludes those on paid recreational or long service leave, which are sometimes taken in conjunction with maternity leave. Conversely, some of those on leave without pay may have been using this leave for reasons other than a maternity break, tending to result in an overstating of the rates of maternity leave.

While only 24.7 per cent of mothers with an infant aged 3 to 5 months were employed, 19.5 per cent had a job from which they were on maternity/parental leave (see Table 3.6). The proportion on paid or unpaid maternity leave decreases with the age of the child. Among mothers with a child aged 6 to 8 months, 12.4 per cent were on maternity/parental leave and among those with a 1 year old, just 2.9 per cent were on maternity/parental leave.

**Table 3.6: Labour force status by age of study child, mothers of infant cohort (per cent)**

Age of study child	Employed	On maternity/ parental leave	Not employed and not on maternity/ parental leave
3–5 months	24.7	19.5	55.8
6–8 months	33.2	12.4	54.4
9–11 months	41.2	7.5	51.3
12 months or more	49.6	2.9	47.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>52.2</b>
	<b>(n=2,014)</b>	<b>(n=527)</b>	<b>(n=2,552)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Very few women are entitled to maternity/parental leave for more than one year.

The return to work of mothers following childbirth is further investigated by comparing employment rates and rates of maternity leave use for mothers who were employed while pregnant and mothers who were not employed while pregnant (see Table 3.7). Overall, 61.5 per cent of mothers of the infant cohort were employed during pregnancy.<sup>23</sup>

Mothers who were employed during their pregnancy had a much higher rate of return to work during the first year of their child's life than mothers who were not employed during pregnancy (see Table 3.7). At the time of the Wave 1 interview, 53.3 per cent of women who had been employed during pregnancy had returned to employment. This compared to just 13.8 per cent for those who were not employed during pregnancy.

Of mothers who had been employed during pregnancy, 15.3 per cent had not yet returned to work and were on maternity/parental leave. Unsurprisingly, very few of those who were not employed during pregnancy indicated they were on maternity/parental leave (0.8 per cent). They were much more likely to be without a job, although almost a quarter (22.8 per cent) had taken up employment once their child had reached its first birthday.

**Table 3.7: Mothers' labour force status by age of child and employment status while pregnant with study child (per cent)**

Age of study child	Employed	On maternity/ parental leave	Not employed and not on maternity/ parental leave	Number of observations
<b>Employed during pregnancy</b>				
3–5 months	35.2	30.0	34.8	368
6–8 months	46.5	20.1	33.4	1,151
9–11 months	58.7	11.5	29.8	1,212
12 months or more	67.0	4.1	28.9	496
<b>Total</b>	<b>53.3</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>3,227</b>
<b>Not employed during pregnancy</b>				
3–5 months	7.0	1.7	91.3	201
6–8 months	12.0	0.3	87.7	654
9–11 months	13.1	1.0	85.9	683
12 months or more	22.8	1.0	76.2	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>85.4</b>	<b>1,838</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes those without a stated employment status at Wave 1 or during pregnancy.

The classification of those on maternity/parental leave as being not employed is an important point that should be kept in mind when interpreting the analyses throughout this report. The importance of classifying maternity/parental leave as not employed is illustrated by comparing the percentage of single mothers and couple mothers (from the infant cohort) on maternity/parental leave. Table 3.1 showed that single mothers were more likely than couple mothers to be not working, whereas couple mothers were more likely to be on maternity-related leave (10.3 and 4.5 per cent respectively).

The reasons for the higher use of maternity-related leave by couple mothers are complex. In part, the difference is due to the fact that couple mothers were more likely to have been working in pregnancy (and therefore potentially entitled to maternity leave): 64 per cent of couple mothers (in the infant cohort) were in paid employment in pregnancy, compared to 40 per cent of single mothers. It is also related to the different types of jobs couple and single mothers worked in. Couple mothers' higher education levels are reflected in them being more likely to be in higher-status occupations than single mothers (see Section 3.7).<sup>24</sup> These higher status occupations were more likely to provide some level of paid maternity leave, thus helping to offset the economic cost of being out of employment (Goward 2002).

The information on employment and use of maternity/parental leave presented above shows the relationship between age of youngest child and employment at a single point in time. While this provides some insights into the extent to which mothers enter paid employment following childbirth, and the timing of this, other questions in LSAC allow a more sophisticated analysis of this issue to be conducted (see, for example, Table B3).

An analysis of these data is outside the scope of this report.

### 3.4 Factors associated with employment

Research on the determinants of employment (for example, Gray et al. 2003; Baxter 2005c; Birch 2005; Breusch & Gray 2004) has shown there to be a number of factors associated with participation in the labour force. These include educational attainment, number and age of children, and health status. Table 3.8 shows how employment rates vary by these characteristics. The analysis is presented separately by the age of the youngest child and for couple and single mothers.

There is a strong relationship between the number of children and the employment rates of mothers with an infant. For mothers with an infant and no other children the employment rate was 42.5 per cent. The employment rate fell to 38.4 per cent for those with an infant and one other child and 30.6 per cent if there were



two or more other children. For fathers of infants, the employment rate was the same if they had one or two children (93.5 and 93.6 per cent respectively), but was a little lower if they had an infant and two or more other children (88.4 per cent).

There was a strong relationship between educational attainment and the probability of employment for mothers and fathers. For mothers with an infant, the employment rate of those with a highest level of educational attainment of incomplete secondary schooling was 20.3 per cent. This increased to 49.1 per cent for those with a bachelor degree or higher. A similar pattern was apparent for mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years. The effects of educational attainment on the probability of employment were greater for single mothers than couple mothers. For example, the difference in employment rates between the highest education level and lowest education level was 37.0 percentage points for single mothers of infants (43.3 per cent compared to 6.3 per cent) and for couple mothers it was 25.3 percentage points (49.3 per cent compared to 24.0 per cent). The differential effect of education on single and couple mothers is consistent with the findings of Gray et al. (2003). For fathers, the employment rate also increased with educational attainment. For fathers with an infant, the employment rate of those with incomplete secondary education was 85.8 per cent and for those with a bachelor degree or higher the employment rate was 96.2 per cent.

**Table 3.8: Percentage employed by number of children, educational attainment, health status and age of youngest child**

	Mothers			Fathers
	Couple	Single	Total	Total
<b>Number of children</b>			<b>Infant</b>	
1	45.2	22.1	42.5	93.5
2	40.4	16.1	38.4	93.6
3 or more	33.1	11.6	30.6	88.4
<b>Highest education level</b>				
Incomplete secondary	24.0	6.3	20.3	85.8
Complete secondary only	35.0	15.6	33.3	91.9
Certificate/diploma	43.3	24.9	41.2	92.2
Bachelor degree or higher	49.3	43.3	49.1	96.2
<b>Has long-term medical condition</b>				
Yes	37.3	15.0	33.8	85.7
No	41.4	18.9	39.5	93.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.5</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>92.3</b>
			<b>4–5 year old</b>	
<b>Number of children</b>				
1	69.8	46.8	62.2	88.8
2	67.8	53.6	65.6	94.2
3 or more	55.1	31.7	52.2	91.6
<b>Highest education level</b>				
Incomplete secondary	48.9	32.0	45.0	88.1
Complete secondary only	60.2	44.3	57.5	96.2
Certificate/diploma	66.9	52.4	64.0	91.3
Bachelor degree or higher	75.1	62.0	73.6	95.6
<b>Has long-term medical condition</b>				
Yes	60.4	31.5	53.5	85.2
No	64.6	54.5	63.0	94.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>60.3</b>	<b>92.3</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings.

While the patterns were similar for those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years and for those with an infant, some differences are worth noting. First, the effects of the number of children differed between those with a youngest child who is an infant and those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years. For couple mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, there was little difference in the employment rate between those with one child and two children. For single mothers, the employment rate was actually higher in two-child families than one-child families. Overall, the employment rate for mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years was higher in two-child families (65.6 per cent) than for those with one child (62.2 per cent). This was also the case for fathers. Second, the effect of education differed for fathers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years compared to fathers with an infant. In the older cohort, the highest employment rate was among fathers with a secondary school education only (96.2 per cent), although this was not significantly higher than the employment rate of fathers with a bachelor degree or higher (95.6 per cent).

As expected, parents with a long-term medical condition had lower employment rates than those who did not. For mothers with an infant, the effect on the employment rate of couple and single mothers was similar (those with a long-term medical condition having employment rates around 4 percentage points lower than those without). The impact on mothers overall though was larger (around 6 percentage points). This was because more single mothers than couple mothers had such a condition.

For single mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, the effect was substantially larger, with 31.5 per cent of those with a long-term medical condition employed compared to 54.5 per cent of those without. The effect on couple mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years was similar to those with an infant, which suggests that such a condition is a substantially greater barrier to employment for single mothers than couple mothers.

The effect of a long-term medical condition on the employment rate of fathers was similar, irrespective of the age of the youngest child, with a difference in the employment rate of 8–9 percentage points.

### 3.5 Hours worked

This section provides information on the hours usually worked by employed parents. Overall, the average usual working hours of mothers with an infant was 20.4 hours per week. The average hours worked by fathers was much higher at 46.1 hours per week (see Table 3.9). Over half the fathers worked 45 hours or longer per week (53.3 per cent) including 21.9 per cent who worked 55 hours or longer. The average usual working hours for fathers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years was 47.0 hours per week. The proportion of fathers who worked part-time hours (less than 35 hours) was small, at just 7.6 per cent for those with an infant and 6.8 per cent of those whose youngest child was 4–5 years.

For mothers, the average usual hours worked increased from 20.4 hours per week for those with an infant as their youngest child to 25.8 hours per week for those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years. There was little difference in the average working hours of single and couple mothers, although the relatively small number of employed single mothers with an infant means that caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the results for this group. Part-time hours were clearly the predominant form of employment for mothers of infants, with 43.0 per cent of mothers working for less than 16 hours per week and 20.6 per cent working 35 or more hours per week. Only 5.6 per cent of mothers with an infant worked 45 or more hours per week. For mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, the majority also worked part-time. The major difference compared to mothers with an infant is that the proportion working 1 to 15 hours per week was 28.0 per cent (compared to 43.0 per cent of mothers with an infant working these hours). A higher proportion of those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years were working 35 or more hours per week (31.3 per cent).

**Table 3.9: Usual working hours by age of youngest child and family type, employed parents (column per cent)**

Usual hours	Mothers			Fathers
	Couple	Single	Total	Total
			<b>Infant</b>	
1–15	42.8	48.6	43.0	2.1
16–24	24.7	24.7	24.7	1.6
25–34	11.8	10.4	11.7	3.9
35–44	15.2	10.7	15.0	39.1
45–54	4.2	4.9	4.2	31.4
55 or more	1.4	0.8	1.4	21.9
<i>Mean hours per week</i>	20.5	18.4	20.4	46.1
	<b>(n=1,915)</b>	<b>(n=90)</b>	<b>(n=2,005)</b>	<b>(n=4,238)</b>
			<b>4–5 year old</b>	
1–15	27.6	30.0	28.0	1.6
16–24	24.0	24.9	24.2	2.1
25–34	16.4	17.4	16.5	3.2
35–44	21.1	20.5	21.0	38.8
45–54	7.4	5.4	7.1	29.5
55 or more	3.4	1.7	3.2	24.9
<i>Mean hours per week</i>	26.0	24.3	25.8	47.0
	<b>(n=1,406)</b>	<b>(n=213)</b>	<b>(n=1,619)</b>	<b>(n=2,024)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings. Also excludes those with missing information on hours worked.

To give some idea of the effect of children on the likelihood of being employed part-time compared to full-time, ABS estimates for women aged 20 to 44 years without children aged less than 15 years provide a useful benchmark. Among employed women without a child aged less than 15 years, 77.2 per cent were employed full-time and 22.8 per cent were employed part-time.<sup>25</sup>

For women, a much higher proportion of those with a young child are employed part-time than for women without a child less than 15 years of age. Clearly, working part-time is a strategy used by women to enable them to combine work and family responsibilities.

### 3.6 Preferred hours worked

In addition to examining actual hours worked, it is of interest to examine preferred working hours. A significant proportion of the employed would prefer to work less or more hours than they currently work, and mothers, in particular, often express a strong preference for part-time hours (Gray et al. 2004; Qu & Weston 2005).

LSAC provides information on whether employed respondents would prefer to work a different number of hours than they currently do. Employed parents were asked, ‘if you could choose the number of hours you work each week (and taking into account how that would affect your income), would you prefer to work:

- (i) fewer hours than you do now?;
- (ii) about the same hours as you do now?; or
- (iii) more hours than you do now?’

About two-thirds of mothers (irrespective of the age of the youngest child) preferred to work the same hours they currently worked (see Table 3.10). Mothers working part-time hours were more likely than those working full-time to be satisfied with the hours they worked. Mothers working 16 to 24 hours per week were the least likely to want to change their working hours. However, a significant number of those working less than 16 hours per week preferred to work more hours (21.7 per cent with youngest child an infant and 28.3 per cent of those with youngest child aged 4–5 years). More than half of the full-time employed mothers preferred to work fewer hours (62.7 per cent of those with infant and 54.4 per cent of those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years).

**Table 3.10: Mothers' preferred working hours, by hours worked and age of youngest child, employed mothers (row per cent)**

Usual hours	Prefer fewer	Prefer same	Prefer more	Number of observations
<b>Infant</b>				
1–15	12.3	66.0	21.7	708
16–24	15.6	76.7	7.7	425
25–34	26.6	63.4	10.1	188
35 or more	62.7	34.1	3.2	308
<b>Total</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>62.3</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>1,629</b>
<b>4–5 year old</b>				
1–15	6.1	65.5	28.3	352
16–24	11.9	77.9	10.2	354
25–34	27.1	65.0	7.9	218
35 or more	54.4	44.3	1.3	370
<b>Total</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>1,294</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings. Information on preferred hours was collected using the self-complete (mail-back) questionnaire, hence sample counts are lower due both to non-response to this questionnaire or non-response to this item.

The small number of employed single mothers in the infant cohort meant that in order to compare the extent to which single and couple mothers would prefer to work different hours to those they currently work, it was necessary to combine the infant and 4–5 year-old cohorts and combine some of the hours categories. Couple mothers working less than 16 hours per week were substantially more likely to prefer to work the same hours than single mothers working these hours (see Table 3.11). Single mothers usually working these short part-time hours were more likely to prefer more hours than couple mothers (40.3 per cent and 22.5 per cent respectively). Similarly, single mothers working 16 to 34 hours were more likely to prefer more hours than couple mothers working these hours. In fact, couple mothers working 16 to 34 hours per week were more likely to prefer to work fewer hours than prefer to work more hours. Couple mothers working full-time were more likely to prefer to work fewer hours than single mothers working full-time, although for both groups the proportion preferring less hours was substantial.

**Table 3.11: Mothers' preferred working hours, by hours worked and family type, employed mothers (row per cent)**

Usual hours	Prefer fewer	Prefer same	Prefer more	Number of observations
<b>Couple</b>				
1–15	9.7	67.8	22.5	1,339
16–34	18.7	73.4	7.9	1,437
35 or more	58.5	39.2	2.4	779
<b>Total</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>63.6</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>3,555</b>
<b>Single</b>				
1–15	10.4	49.3	40.3	96
16–34	13.0	68.8	18.2	120
35 or more	47.5	50.7	1.8	72
<b>Total</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>57.8</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>288</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: The infant and 4–5 year-old cohorts are combined and the 4–5 year-old cohort includes those with and without younger siblings.

Among employed fathers, just over half preferred to work their current hours (see Table 3.12). Fathers who worked 35 to 44 hours were most likely to prefer the hours they worked compared to those working 45 hours or more per week. The proportion of fathers who preferred to work fewer hours increased as hours worked increased. A very high proportion of fathers working 55 hours or more per week preferred to work fewer hours (61.4 per cent). Among fathers usually working part-time hours, more than one-quarter preferred to work longer hours.

**Table 3.12: Fathers' preferred working hours by hours worked, employed fathers (row per cent)**

Usual hours	Prefer fewer	Prefer same	Prefer more	Number of observations
1–34	14.5	59.0	26.5	386
35–44	29.1	64.1	6.8	2,349
45–54	41.5	54.3	4.2	1,916
55 or more	61.4	35.9	2.7	1,446
<b>Total</b>	<b>39.6</b>	<b>54.1</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6,097</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

### 3.7 Within-couple employment patterns

One of the strengths of LSAC is that it provides information on the employment status of both parents in the household. This section focuses on describing the patterns of working hours for mothers and fathers in couple-parent families.

Table 3.13 shows the within-couple distribution of mothers' working hours and fathers' working hours. An example may assist with the interpretation of this table. Looking at the first row total, 59.5 per cent of couple mothers with an infant were not employed, which (looking at each cell in this row) comprised 5.9 per cent of families in which the father was not employed, 4.2 per cent of families in which the father worked 1 to 34 hours, 22.3 per cent where the father worked 35 to 44 hours, 16.3 per cent where the father worked 45 to 54 hours and 10.8 per cent where the father worked 55 hours or more.

The column totals in Table 3.13 show the percentage of fathers working in each hours category. For example, for those with infants, 7.8 per cent of all fathers were not employed, 7.0 per cent worked 1 to 34 hours per week, 36.2 per cent worked 35 to 44 hours, 28.9 per cent worked 45 to 54 hours and 20.2 per cent worked 55 hours per week or more.

The patterns of parental employment within families are varied and change substantially as the age of the youngest child increases. For couple-parent families with an infant, in 49.4 per cent of families the father worked full-time and the mother was not in paid employment. The second most common arrangement was for the father to work full-time and the mother part-time (29.0 per cent). In relatively few families with an infant were both parents working full-time (7.0 per cent).

In couple-parent families with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, a much higher proportion of both parents were employed than in families with a younger child. In 39.7 per cent of families the father worked full-time and the mother part-time and in 17.8 per cent both parents worked full-time. The more traditional model in which the father works full-time and the mother is not in paid employment was still quite common, applying to 29.4 per cent of families with a 4–5 year old.

**Table 3.13: Within-couple working hours, by age of youngest child (per cent)**

Mother's work hours	Father's work hours					Total
	Not employed	1–34	35–44	45–54	55 or more	
<b>Infant</b>						
Not employed	5.9	4.2	22.3	16.3	10.8	<b>59.5</b>
1–15	0.4	1.3	4.9	6.0	4.8	<b>17.3</b>
16–24	0.3	0.6	4.0	2.8	2.3	<b>10.0</b>
25–34	0.3	0.3	1.9	1.5	0.8	<b>4.8</b>
35–44	0.5	0.5	2.8	1.5	0.8	<b>6.2</b>
45 or more	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.8	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>28.9</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>4–5 year old</b>						
Not employed	4.5	2.6	11.9	10.0	7.5	<b>36.5</b>
1–15	0.6	0.9	5.6	4.4	6.1	<b>17.5</b>
16–24	0.3	0.8	6.2	4.5	3.6	<b>15.3</b>
25–34	0.6	0.5	4.2	3.2	1.9	<b>10.4</b>
35–44	0.7	0.9	6.3	3.5	2.1	<b>13.5</b>
45 or more	0.4	0.7	2.1	1.9	1.9	<b>6.9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings. Also excludes couples if employment data was missing for either parent.

The proportion of young children in couple-parent families whose parents were both jobless<sup>26</sup> was relatively low (5.9 per cent of those with an infant and 4.5 per cent of those whose youngest child is aged 4–5 years). By way of contrast, when single-mother families were included, 13.6 per cent of children (13.9 per cent of infants, 12.6 per cent of 4–5 year olds with a younger sibling and 14.1 per cent of 4–5 year olds with no younger siblings) were in families in which there was no employed parent.

The relationship between mothers' and fathers' working hours is difficult to discern from Table 3.13 and so Table 3.14 shows how mothers' average hours were related to fathers' hours and how fathers' average hours were related to mothers' hours. This enables an examination of whether mothers work shorter hours when fathers work longer hours, and whether fathers work shorter hours when mothers work longer hours. The top panel of Table 3.14 shows that employed mothers of infants worked similar hours, on average, irrespective of the hours worked by their partners. Where the father was not working, however, mothers of infants worked substantially longer (29.6 hours per week, on average). Employed mothers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years worked the longest hours when the fathers were not employed (28.6 hours per week) or worked part-time hours (30.3 hours per week). As fathers' hours of work increased, mothers worked less hours, particularly where fathers worked very long hours (55 hours or more per week).

There was less variation in mean hours of fathers according to the mothers' hours at work, but fathers worked marginally longer hours, on average, in families where the mother worked less than 16 hours per week (bottom panel).

**Table 3.14: Relationship between partnered mothers' and fathers' working hours by age of youngest child**

	Infant	4–5 year old
<b>Fathers' work hours</b>	<b>Mean hours of employed mothers</b>	
Not employed	29.6	28.6
1–34	20.5	30.3
35–44	21.7	26.6
45–54	19.7	26.0
55 or more	18.3	23.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>26.0</b>
<b>Mothers' work hours</b>	<b>Mean hours of employed fathers</b>	
Not employed	45.4	46.5
1–15	48.5	49.5
16–24	46.9	47.3
25–34	44.8	46.3
35 or more	46.1	45.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>46.1</b>	<b>47.0</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings.

As discussed earlier, educational attainment is an important determinant of labour market outcomes. Table 3.15 shows the relationship between the highest level of educational attainment within the couple and the likelihood of the parents being jobless. The most striking point is that for couples in which education levels were lowest (both parents with incomplete secondary education), the likelihood of both parents not working was much higher than for couples in which either parent had a higher level of educational attainment. Among the infant cohort, 18.7 per cent of the couples in which both parents had incomplete secondary education were jobless. This compared to the overall jobless proportion of 5.9 per cent for this cohort. A similar pattern is apparent for those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, with a jobless rate of 9.5 per cent for the low-education couples compared to 4.5 per cent for all couples.

**Table 3.15: Joblessness in couple-parent families by highest parental education level and age of youngest child**

Highest education of either parent	Per cent jobless		Number of observations (total couple-parent families)	
	Infant	4–5 year old	Infant	4–5 year old
Incomplete secondary	18.7	9.5	199	122
Complete secondary only	10.3	5.9	297	137
Certificate/diploma	7.0	5.2	2,041	1,006
Bachelor degree or higher	2.2	2.3	2,040	882
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4,577</b>	<b>2,147</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings.

Jobless families are those in which no parent is employed, including those in which the parent/s were classified as being not employed because they were on maternity/parental leave.

In classifying the highest education of either parent, for example, if both parents had incomplete secondary education they were coded in the incomplete secondary category, but if one had completed secondary, they would be coded to complete secondary only.

### 3.8 Job characteristics of employed parents

The remainder of this section provides detailed information on the job characteristics of employed parents. Characteristics examined include occupation, type of employment (self-employed, permanent/ongoing or casual employee) and access to a range of family-friendly work arrangements. LSAC does not provide measures of earnings from paid employment and so this job characteristic cannot be examined.

#### Occupation

Occupation is of interest because it is correlated with earnings (although there are large differences in earnings within occupations) and is also a measure of social status. Overall, fathers were more likely than mothers to be employed in managerial occupations, as tradespersons and related workers, and intermediate production and transport workers (see Table 3.16). Fathers were also slightly more likely than mothers to be employed as associate professionals, or labourers and related workers. Mothers were more likely than fathers to be employed as professionals, advanced clerical and service workers, intermediate clerical sales and service workers, or elementary clerical sales and service workers. Occupational differences by sex exist not only for parents of young children, but across the broader population of employed men and women (Office of the Status of Women 2004).

There is evidence that women employed in managerial and administrative or professional jobs were likely to return to work more quickly following childbirth than women in clerical and service occupations. This can be seen from the fact that the proportion of women employed in managerial and administrative or professional jobs was lower for the women with older children than the women with younger children (see Table 3.16). There are likely to be many reasons for the faster return to work of mothers in the higher status occupations, but a more detailed analysis of these data would be required to determine to what extent different factors are important. Possibilities include the desire by these women to minimise loss of income and the availability of part-time work or other family-friendly employment conditions that make a faster return to work possible. For fathers, the occupational distribution did not vary systematically by the age of the youngest child.



**Table 3.16: Occupation of mothers and fathers by age of youngest child, employed parents (column per cent)**

Occupation	Mothers		Fathers	
	Infant	4–5 year old	Infant	4–5 year old
Managers and administrators	5.7	4.5	12.1	12.2
Professionals	29.8	25.2	19.9	19.7
Associate professionals	10.8	12.0	15.8	15.4
Tradespersons and related workers	4.8	4.2	22.6	22.0
Advanced clerical and service workers	11.2	8.4	0.7	0.7
Intermediate clerical sales and service workers	21.9	26.9	6.0	7.2
Intermediate production and transport workers	1.5	2.3	11.9	13.1
Elementary clerical sales and service workers	10.3	10.3	3.7	3.2
Labourers and related workers	4.0	6.3	7.4	6.5
	<b>(n=2,014)</b>	<b>(n=1,625)</b>	<b>(n=4,295)</b>	<b>(n=2,036)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings and those with missing occupation data. Occupation refers to one-digit Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO), second edition (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997).

**Table 3.17: Occupation of mothers by family type, employed mothers of both cohorts (column per cent)**

Occupation	Couple mother	Single mother
Managers and administrators	5.5	3.3
Professionals	28.8	16.2
Associate professionals	11.4	9.6
Tradespersons and related workers	4.3	6.3
Advanced clerical and service workers	10.7	3.8
Intermediate clerical sales and service workers	23.4	34.2
Intermediate production and transport workers	1.7	2.3
Elementary clerical sales and service workers	9.5	17.4
Labourers and related workers	4.7	7.0
	<b>(n=4,392)</b>	<b>(n=365)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: The infant and 4–5 year-old cohorts are combined and the 4–5 year-old cohort includes those with and without younger siblings. Occupation refers to one-digit Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO), second edition (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997).

Table 3.17 shows occupational status for mothers by family type.<sup>27</sup> Single mothers were less likely than couple mothers to be employed in professional, associate professional and advanced clerical jobs and more likely to be employed as an intermediate clerical sales and service worker, elementary clerical sales and service worker or labourers and related workers.

### Type of employment

The distribution by type of employment was quite different for mothers and fathers, although for both, being a permanent or ongoing employee was the most common work arrangement. Mothers were much more likely to be casually employed than fathers. Further, single mothers were more likely to have casual jobs than couple mothers (see Table 3.18).

**Table 3.18: Type of employment of mothers and fathers, by family type and age of youngest child, employed parents (column per cent)**

Employment type	Mothers			Fathers
	Couple	Single	Total	Total
			<b>Infant</b>	
Self-employed	28.3	9.0	27.4	22.7
Permanent/ongoing employee	47.3	47.8	47.4	67.1
Fixed-term contract employee	2.8	5.6	2.9	3.4
Casual employee	19.5	30.1	20.0	5.8
Employee, some other basis	2.1	7.6	2.3	1.0
	<b>(n=1,920)</b>	<b>(n=91)</b>	<b>(n=2,011)</b>	<b>(n=4,286)</b>
			<b>4–5 year old</b>	
Self-employed	24.5	9.8	22.5	28.0
Permanent/ongoing employee	49.6	47.8	49.4	64.2
Fixed-term contract employee	5.6	4.5	5.4	2.9
Casual employee	18.6	33.5	20.7	4.2
Employee, some other basis	1.7	4.5	2.1	0.7
	<b>(n=1,409)</b>	<b>(n=214)</b>	<b>(n=1,623)</b>	<b>(n=2,031)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings.

Australian and international research has shown that, for women, having young children is associated with a greater likelihood of being self-employed compared to being an employee (Boden Jr 1999; Baxter 2005c; Chapman, Gregory & Klugman 1998; Preston 2001; Bell & la Valle 2003; Lombard 2001). International research has shown while the self-employed give a wide range of reasons for self-employment, self-employed mothers often give reasons related to job flexibility, minimising non-parental care and balancing paid employment with family responsibilities (Boden Jr 1999; Bell & la Valle 2003). Hughes and Gray (2005), using Australian data, found that a significant proportion of self-employed parents, particularly mothers, took up self-employment to better manage their caring responsibilities.

Self-employment is quite common among parents with young children (see Table 3.18). Around one-quarter of employed mothers and fathers were self-employed. The rate of self-employment was slightly higher among mothers with an infant (27.4 per cent) than among those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years (22.5 per cent). For fathers the pattern is the reversed, with a higher rate of self-employment among those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years (28.0 per cent) than those with an infant (22.7 per cent).

There are differences between single and couple mothers in the rates of self-employment, with a much lower proportion of single mothers being self-employed. The higher rate of self-employment among couple mothers is probably explained in part by employment in family businesses with two-thirds of the partners of self-employed couple mothers being also self-employed.

### Access to family-friendly work arrangements

Access to family-friendly work arrangements has been shown to assist families to negotiate family and work responsibilities (see Gray & Tudball 2003 for a discussion of this literature). LSAC contains information on a range of family-friendly work arrangements including access to paid maternity/parental leave, paid personal/family leave and flexible start and finish times.

The extent to which non-standard hours assist families in balancing work and family responsibilities will depend upon the particular circumstances of the employee. Working in the evening or on weekends may make a parent less available to provide or assist with child care and do household tasks (especially around the peak periods of children's needs in the early evening) and in this sense is often thought to make it more difficult to balance work and family responsibilities. However, there is evidence that some parents are able to dovetail working hours to

reduce or remove the need for non-parental care (see Section 4), although recent research by Alexander and Baxter (2005) also using LSAC data suggests that non-standard work arrangements increase the level of work-family strain experienced.

Employed fathers were more likely to have had access to paid leave than employed mothers (see Table 3.19). This is true both for parents with an infant and parents with a youngest child aged 4–5 years. For example, 48.0 per cent of employed fathers with an infant had access to paid parental leave and 63.6 per cent had access to paid personal/family leave. This compares to 37.2 per cent of employed mothers with an infant having access to paid maternity/parental leave and 47.4 per cent having access to paid personal/family leave.

The main difference between employed fathers with an infant and those with a 4–5 year-old child in access to paid leave is that those with older children are more likely to have access to paid parental leave and paid personal/family leave. For example, 54.2 per cent of fathers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years had access to paid parental leave and 68.2 per cent had access to paid personal/family leave. Employed mothers with an infant are also more likely to have access to paid leave than those with an infant, but the difference is much smaller than for fathers.

**Table 3.19: Access to family-friendly work arrangements by age of youngest child, employed mothers and fathers**

Work arrangements	Mother		Father	
	Infant	4–5 year old	Infant	4–5 year old
<i>Per cent of employees with access</i>				
<b>Paid leave<sup>(a)</sup></b>				
Paid maternity/parental leave	37.2	39.7	48.0	54.2
Paid personal/family leave	47.4	50.3	63.6	68.2
	<b>(n=1,414)</b>	<b>(n=1,201)</b>	<b>(n=2,882)</b>	<b>(n=1,231)</b>
<i>Per cent of employed with arrangements</i>				
<b>Non-standard hours</b>				
Sometimes works after 6 p.m. or overnight <sup>(b)</sup>	51.7	48.7	68.6	69.4
<i>Works permanent night shift</i>	2.6	4.1	4.9	3.7
Sometimes works weekends <sup>(c)</sup>	54.8	52.2	73.6	72.8
	<b>(n=2,014)</b>	<b>(n=1,625)</b>	<b>(n=4,295)</b>	<b>(n=2,036)</b>
<b>Start/finish times flexibility<sup>(d)</sup></b>				
Can change start/finish times, works flexible hours	56.3	53.7	47.1	48.2
Can change start/finish times with approval in special circumstances	27.0	28.9	34.4	31.6
Unlikely or not able to change start/finish times	16.7	17.5	18.5	20.2
	<b>(n=1,611)</b>	<b>(n=1,288)</b>	<b>(n=3,164)</b>	<b>(n=1,454)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings.

(a) Asked only of employees (excludes the self-employed). A significant proportion of the employed did not know whether they had access to paid leave and are therefore excluded from these calculations.

(b) Employed parents were asked if they ever worked after 6 p.m. or overnight and if so how frequently. The information on frequency of working after 6 p.m. or overnight is used to identify permanent night shift workers.

(c) Employed parents were asked if they ever work on Saturdays or Sundays. Those parents that answered 'yes' were coded as sometimes working weekends.

(d) Sourced from self-complete questionnaire. Non-respondents on the self-complete questionnaire were excluded, as were those who answered 'don't know'.

Around half of employed mothers and more than two-thirds of employed fathers sometimes work beyond 6 p.m. or overnight<sup>28</sup> at least sometimes each week (see Table 3.19). Similarly, just over half of employed mothers and nearly three-quarters of employed fathers sometimes worked on weekends.<sup>29</sup>

Over half of employed mothers were able to change their start and finish times, having flexible work hours (56.3 per cent of those with an infant and 53.7 per cent of those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years). This was higher than the proportion of fathers with flexible start and finish times (47.1 and 48.2 per cent of those with infants and those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, respectively).

Only a minority (although still a significant proportion) of employed parents said that it was unlikely or they definitely could not change their start or finish times (ranging from 16.7 per cent of mothers with an infant to 20.2 per cent of fathers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years).

Table 3.20 shows how access to family-friendly work arrangements differs by family type. Again, the relatively small number of employed single mothers in the LSAC sample means that the age of youngest child is not taken into account when comparing single and couple mothers. Couple mothers were substantially more likely to have access to paid maternity and personal/family leave than single mothers. For example, 41.0 per cent of couple mothers had access to paid maternity leave and 51.8 per cent had access to paid personal/family leave. This compared to 25.9 per cent of single mothers with access to paid maternity leave and 35.4 per cent with access to paid personal/family leave.

**Table 3.20: Access to family-friendly work arrangements by family type, employed mothers**

Work arrangements	Couple mother	Single mother
	<i>Per cent of employees with access</i>	
<b>Paid leave<sup>(a)</sup></b>		
Paid maternity/parental leave	41.0	25.9
Paid personal/family leave	51.8	35.4
	<b>(n=3,086)</b>	<b>(n=312)</b>
	<i>Per cent of employed with arrangements</i>	
<b>Non-standard hours</b>		
Sometimes works after 6 p.m. or overnight <sup>(b)</sup>	51.6	43.9
<i>Works permanent night shift</i>	3.0	5.5
Sometimes works weekends <sup>(c)</sup>	53.9	52.2
	<b>(n=4,401)</b>	<b>(n=366)</b>
<b>Start/finish times flexibility<sup>(d)</sup></b>		
Can change start/finish times, works flexible hours	56.9	47.1
Can change start/finish times with approval in special circumstances	26.1	35.6
Unlikely or not able to change start/finish times	17.1	17.2
	<b>(n=3,015)</b>	<b>(n=224)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings.

- (a) Asked only of employees (excludes the self-employed). A significant proportion of the employed did not know whether they had access to paid leave and are therefore excluded from these calculations.
- (b) Employed parents were asked if they ever worked after 6 p.m. or overnight and if so how frequently. The information on frequency of working after 6 p.m. or overnight is used to identify permanent night shift workers.
- (c) Employed parents were asked if they ever work on Saturdays or Sundays. Those parents that answered 'yes' were coded as sometimes working weekends.
- (d) Sourced from self-complete questionnaire. Non-respondents on the self-complete questionnaire were excluded, as were those who answered 'don't know'.

Couple mothers were more likely than single mothers to at least sometimes work evenings/nights (51.6 per cent compared to 43.9 per cent). Couple and single mothers had a similar likelihood of sometimes working weekends.

Couple mothers were more likely to be able to change their start and finish times without seeking approval (56.9 per cent) than single mothers (47.1 per cent).

Differences were apparent in access to family-friendly work arrangements according to the type of job, in particular between the self-employed workers and employees (see Table 3.21). Of all employed mothers and all employed fathers, the self-employed were much more likely to have flexible start and finish times than permanent/ongoing or casual employees. They were also more likely to sometimes work evenings/nights or weekends. Self-employed mothers worked shorter hours, on average (19.2 hours per week), than permanent/ongoing employee mothers (27.1 hours per week), although casual employees worked the shortest average hours (15.1 hours per week). For fathers, self-employment was associated with longer work hours, compared to permanent/ongoing employment, and casual employment was associated with the shortest work hours.

For mothers, the differences between permanent/ongoing and casual employees were not great, although casual employees were more likely to say they worked flexible hours (and could therefore vary their start and finish times), and the permanent/ongoing employees to say they could vary their hours with approval in special circumstances. Permanent/ongoing employed mothers were a little more likely to report sometimes working evenings/nights, while casually employed mothers were more likely to report sometimes working on the weekends.

For fathers, casual employees were more likely to say they could not vary their start and finish times than permanent/ongoing employees. The proportions of permanent/ongoing and casual fathers working flexible hours were similar. Casually employed fathers were less likely to be sometimes working evenings/nights or weekends than permanent/ongoing employed fathers.

**Table 3.21: Job type and work arrangements, employed parents both cohorts (per cent)**

Work arrangements	Self-employed	Permanent/ongoing employee	Casual employee	Total
<b>Mothers</b>				
Can change start/finish times, works flexible hours	87.8	43.6	51.6	56.1
Can change start/finish times with approval in special circumstances	4.6	37.1	26.0	26.8
Unlikely or not able to change start/finish times	7.6	19.4	22.4	17.1
Sometimes works evenings/nights	61.4	48.6	44.8	51.1
Sometimes works weekends	64.3	48.4	54.8	53.8
<i>Mean hours worked</i>	<i>19.2</i>	<i>27.1</i>	<i>15.1</i>	<i>22.6</i>
<b>Fathers</b>				
Can change start/finish times, works flexible hours	74.9	39.8	37.2	48.1
Can change start/finish times with approval in special circumstances	11.8	40.2	31.7	33.0
Unlikely or not able to change start/finish times	13.3	20.1	31.1	18.9
Sometimes works evenings/nights	75.5	67.5	54.1	68.8
Sometimes works weekends	85.3	69.8	62.9	73.2
<i>Mean hours worked</i>	<i>50.9</i>	<i>46.0</i>	<i>34.1</i>	<i>46.6</i>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

### 3.9 Summary

Consistent with the findings from other data sources, analysis of LSAC reveals that having young children has a much greater affect on the employment patterns of mothers than fathers. Mothers with young children are less likely to be employed, work shorter hours and are employed in quite different types of jobs compared to fathers. There are substantial differences between single and couple mothers and according to the age of the youngest child.

Key findings of this section are outlined below.

- For mothers with infants, 38.1 per cent were employed. For those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, 60.3 per cent were employed. This compares to an employment rate of 92 per cent for fathers.
- LSAC provides new data on how the employment rate of mothers varies with the age of children under 1 year. The employment rate of mothers with a 3 to 5 month-old baby was 24.7 per cent, increasing to 33.2 per cent for those with a 6 to 8 month-old baby, 41.2 per cent for those with a 9 to 11 month-old baby and 49.6 per cent for those with a child aged 12 to 19 months.
- Mothers' employment rates were higher among those with higher levels of education. For fathers of infants the proportion employed also increased with higher levels of education. For fathers with a youngest child aged 4–5 years, those with complete secondary education only and those with bachelor degree or higher had the highest rates of employment.
- Single mothers had a much lower employment rate than couple mothers (17.5 per cent compared to 40.5 per cent for mothers with an infant youngest child, and 45.8 per cent compared to 63.5 per cent for mothers with a 4–5 year-old youngest child). Factors that might be considered to be a barrier to employment (for example, low levels of education and having multiple young children) had a greater impact upon the likelihood of being employed for single mothers than couple mothers.
- Employment rates for both single and couple mothers increased with the age of the youngest child, whereas the employment rates of fathers were unaffected by the age of the youngest child.
- LSAC provides information on the employment status of mothers while pregnant with the study child. Mothers who were in employment while pregnant had a much higher rate of return to work than those who were not employed while pregnant.
- The average working hours of employed mothers with a young child were 20 to 25 hours per week, much lower than the average of 46 hours for fathers. A substantial number of the fathers worked 55 or more hours per week: 21.9 per cent of those with an infant and 24.9 per cent of those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years.
- Nearly two-thirds of employed mothers did not want to change the number of hours they were working. However, among full-time employed mothers, more than half preferred to work fewer hours, while those working less than 16 hours were the most likely to prefer more hours (21.7 per cent of those with an infant and 28.3 per cent of those with a youngest child aged 4–5 years).
- There was little difference between mothers and fathers in access to family-friendly work arrangements, although there were differences between mothers and fathers in the types of work arrangements available. Fathers were more likely to have access to paid leave than mothers but mothers were more likely to have access to flexible hours.
- Couple mothers were more likely than single mothers to have access to paid maternity/parental leave (41.0 and 25.9 per cent respectively) and more likely to have access to paid personal/family leave (51.8 and 35.4 per cent respectively). Couple mothers were also more likely to report being able to change start and finish times without seeking approval (56.9 per cent) than single mothers (47.1 per cent).

The analysis in this section reveals that a significant number of working parents do not have access to family-friendly work arrangements such as paid personal/family leave and flexibility around start and finish times, or have work arrangements that are usually considered less family-friendly, such as regularly working into

the evenings or on weekends. Fathers working very long hours were the most likely to prefer a reduction in hours even after taking account the effect on their income. Similarly, over half of the mothers working full-time preferred to work fewer hours.

Everything else being equal, having a greater access to family-friendly work arrangements does help parents balance work and family commitments. It is important to consider the consequences of these work arrangements on the overall wellbeing of parents with young children. LSAC provides this opportunity, and so following the next two sections that consider the relationships between employment and child care (Section 4) and the time spent with children (Section 5), the final three sections address the issue of work arrangements and parental wellbeing.





## 4 Child care and employment

The decisions of families with young children about participation in paid employment are strongly tied to decisions about who will care for the children. This section exploits the detailed data in LSAC about the use of child care by the study child to provide an overview of patterns of use of child care.

Parents' decisions about the use of non-parental care are influenced by a range of factors, including attitudes about the appropriateness of different types of care, the perceived needs of the child, and the availability and cost of care. Some parents have a preference for centre-based care arrangements as a way of socialising the child, while others prefer home-based care that more closely resembles the care they themselves would provide (Hand 2005). Parents may also have a choice between informal arrangements such as direct family members (grandparents, older siblings or a non-resident parent) and formal arrangements such as a day care centre or family day care (Greenblat & Ochiltree 1993).

There is considerable variation in the types of child care used by Australian families. Furthermore, the options and decisions around combining paid employment and how children are looked after are quite different for infants and 4–5 year olds. The separate early childhood education system (preschool) for children just under school age provides different options (and complexities) for families to manage. Regardless of the age of the child, employed parents may need to make use of multiple forms of care to facilitate their participation in the labour market. This is especially likely for employed parents when children attend preschool for part of the week (Baxter 2004).

Child care for young children ranges from formal, government-regulated centre and home-based child care settings to various informal, unregulated arrangements that include, for example, care by grandparents, friends or nannies. During the preschool years, prior-to-school programs that can have a strong focus on early education augment child care settings.<sup>30</sup> The analysis in this section is presented separately for the infant and 4–5 year-old cohorts.

LSAC data on the use of child care was analysed by Harrison and Ungerer (2005) and this section extends this work by examining how the use of non-parental care varies according to patterns of parental employment.

The remainder of this section is structured as follows. Section 4.1 focuses on patterns of use of child care by the infant cohort and Section 4.2 focuses on the 4–5 year-old cohort. For each cohort, child care use is described according to patterns of parental employment. Satisfaction with child care use is also analysed. A more detailed description of the patterns of child care use for families in which at least one parent is employed is also provided.

Single parents in paid employment generally face greater constraints in their options as to whether or not to use non-parental care and the types of arrangements they need to provide care for their children (see Hughes & Gray 2005 for a discussion of this issue). The use of child care of single and couple-parent families is compared.

For children in couple-parent families, parental employment patterns are classified according to whether neither parent is employed, one parent is employed or both parents are employed. Where one parent was not employed, this classification does not specify whether it was the mother or the father who was not employed, although the not-employed parent is usually the mother. Further, where job characteristics are related to child care use, the characteristics of the job held by the primary carer are used. In most cases, the primary carer was the mother (see Section 2.2).

### 4.1 Child care in the infant cohort

#### Data and definitions

Information on the use of child care for the infant cohort were collected from the primary carer.<sup>31</sup> Parents were asked 'over the past one month, has [the study child] been looked after at regular times during the week by anyone other than you (or partner)? (include care by non-resident parents but not casual or occasional babysitting)'. Subsequent questions then probed for details of any regular child care arrangements.

All types of care were captured by the questionnaire, but for much of the following analysis, these detailed care types were collapsed into four broad groups as shown in Box 4.1.

**Box 4.1: Child care classification, infants**

Parental care only	No regular child care arrangement.
Formal care only	Day care centre, family day care, occasional care.
Informal care only	Grandparent, other relative, nanny, child's parent living elsewhere, other person (includes friend or neighbour), gym leisure or community centre, mobile care unit.
Both formal and informal care	A combination of formal and informal care.

**Child care in all infant families**

Just over one-third of infants had at least one regular child care arrangement. There were substantial differences in the use of child care according to family type and employment status (see Table 4.1). A higher proportion of employed single parents used some form of child care (80.9 per cent) than not-employed single parents (24.7 per cent). A high proportion of couple-parent families in which both parents were employed used some form of child care (65.4 per cent), although interestingly, around one-third of these dual-employed families used parental care only. In couple-parent families where only one parent was employed (usually the father), only 16.7 per cent had regular care arrangements for the infant. This is similar to the rate for couple-parent families in which neither parent was employed (13.3 per cent).

Employed single-parent families had higher rates of use of child care than couple-parent families in which both parents were employed (see Table 4.1). This is not surprising, given that couple parents may be more easily able to coordinate their use of time and work arrangements so that non-parental care is not required.

Families with infants were more likely to use informal care only for the infant (20.5 per cent) than formal care only (10.8 per cent) (see Table 4.1). Employed single parents were more likely than dual-employed parents to use a mix of formal and informal care.

**Table 4.1: Child care use by family type and parental work status, infant cohort (column per cent)**

Child care	Single		Couple			Total
	Not employed	Employed	Neither employed	One employed	Both employed	
Parental care only	75.3	19.1	86.7	83.3	34.6	64.8
Formal care only	6.2	22.7	4.6	4.4	21.5	10.8
Informal care only	16.5	37.7	8.7	11.4	35.6	20.5
Both formal and informal	2.0	20.5	0.0	0.9	8.4	3.9
	<b>(n=385)</b>	<b>(n=91)</b>	<b>(n=238)</b>	<b>(n=2,555)</b>	<b>(n=1,834)</b>	<b>(n=5,103)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

The reason for use of child care was clearly related to parental employment (see Table 4.2), with the majority of employed single parents and dual-employed couples citing parental work or study commitments as the main reason for using child care (92.9 per cent and 91.2 per cent, respectively).<sup>32</sup> This is true regardless of whether formal or informal care was the main type of care used.<sup>33</sup>

**Table 4.2: Main reasons for using child care by family type and parental employment status, infant cohort families using child care (column per cent)**

Reason for care	Single		Couple			Total
	Not employed	Employed	Neither employed	One employed	Both employed	
Parent's work or study commitments	34.7	92.9	27.7	28.9	91.2	72.0
Parent's sport, shopping or social commitments	20.7	2.4	31.1	24.6	2.7	9.5
To give parent a break or time alone	21.8	1.8	28.7	25.4	2.5	9.5
Child-related reasons <sup>(a)</sup>	14.4	1.3	12.5	11.2	2.8	5.6
Other reasons <sup>(b)</sup>	8.5	1.6	0.0	9.9	0.9	3.5
	<b>(n=96)</b>	<b>(n=75)</b>	<b>(n=29)</b>	<b>(n=428)</b>	<b>(n=1,191)</b>	<b>(n=1,819)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: (a) Includes: 'it is good for child's social, intellectual/language development', 'respite care for the child', 'mix with other children of the same age', 'establish relationships with relatives' and 'other for child's benefit'.

(b) Includes: 'so parent can attend own/others' health needs', 'other for parent's benefit' and 'other unspecified'.

### Satisfaction with child care in the infant cohort

The vast majority (82.2 per cent) of parents of the infant cohort were very satisfied with their main child care arrangement (see Table 4.3). Families who used grandparents to care for their children were the most satisfied with this care arrangement (also see Gray, Misson & Hayes 2005). While remaining high, satisfaction with child care was lowest for those using child care centres.

**Table 4.3: Satisfaction with main child care used by type of care, infant cohort, families using child care (row per cent)**

Child care	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied	Number of observations
<b>Formal care</b>					
Child care centre	67.7	25.2	3.2	3.9	514
Family day care	79.5	15.7	3.0	1.8	182
<b>Informal care</b>					
Gym, leisure or community centre, mobile care unit	78.2	16.7	5.2	0.0	51
Grandparent	92.4	7.1	0.6	0.0	792
Other relative	84.0	13.0	1.7	1.3	82
Nanny	84.2	14.4	1.4	0.0	75
Other person (includes friend or neighbour)	83.8	13.0	3.2	0.0	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>82.2</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1,832</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes main child care types of occasional care and child's parent living elsewhere due to small sample sizes.

### **Child care in working families, infant cohort**

This section examines the use of child care by employed single-parent families, and couple-parent families where both parents were employed (described as 'working families' in this section).

A significant proportion of working families were able to manage paid work responsibilities without using non-parental care (19.1 per cent of employed single parents and 34.6 per cent of employed couple-parent families, Table 4.1). An important question is what factors are related to the probability of using non-parental care for their infant. For working families that do use care, the question is what factors are associated with using formal care compared to informal care.

In considering these associations, it should be kept in mind that other factors, not considered here because of a lack of information in LSAC, are likely to be important. These include affordability or availability of different care options, and views on what is appropriate care for children at different ages.

The following tables show the child care use of working families according to family characteristics (Table 4.4) and the primary carer's job characteristics (Table 4.5). To help in the analysis of these relationships, the data was further explored using multivariate techniques, which drew out the associations between these characteristics and the care arrangements. The results of the multivariate analyses formed the basis of the following discussion, with only those relationships found to be statistically significant discussed.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Factors associated with using parental care only*

Turning first to the use of parental care only, there were a number of relationships evident in the data (see Table 4.4). First, younger children were most likely to be in parental care only (54.3 per cent of those aged 3 to 5 months, compared to 21.8 per cent of those aged 12 months or more). Children from larger families were also more likely to be in parental care only (28.9 per cent of one-child families compared to 47.2 per cent of infants in families of three or more children). Children in employed single-parent families were significantly less likely to be in parental care only (19.1 per cent) compared to children from couple working families (34.6 per cent). A higher total parental income was positively related to the use of non-parental child care (the percentage using parental care only was 43.7 per cent for families with gross income of less than \$1,000 per week, 32.4 per cent where the income was between \$1,000 and \$1,499 and 26.5 per cent where the income was \$1,500 or more), reflecting the fact that higher-income parents were more likely to be working longer hours and/or in higher paying jobs. When the primary carer was more highly educated, there was also a greater use of non-parental child care (for example, 42.9 per cent of those with incomplete secondary compared to 28.7 per cent of those with bachelor degree or higher used parental care only).

**Table 4.4: Child care use by family characteristics, working families, infant cohort (row per cent)**

Characteristic	Parental care only	Formal care only	Informal care only	Formal and informal	Number of observations
<b>Age of study child</b>					
3–5 months	54.3	12.0	29.2	4.5	140
6–8 months	40.8	17.1	36.8	5.3	611
9–11 months	31.2	23.5	35.3	10.0	790
12 months or more	21.8	27.4	37.0	13.7	384
<b>Number of children</b>					
1	28.9	21.4	39.7	10.0	858
2	32.5	24.3	33.8	9.4	699
3 or more	47.2	16.6	30.4	5.8	368
<b>Family type</b>					
Couple	34.6	21.5	35.6	8.4	1,834
Single parent	19.1	22.7	37.7	20.5	91
<b>Country of birth<sup>(a)</sup></b>					
Australia	33.8	21.8	34.7	9.7	1,580
Not Australia	33.7	20.4	40.0	5.9	345
<b>Highest education<sup>(a)</sup></b>					
Incomplete secondary	42.9	18.1	33.0	6.0	167
Complete secondary only	41.3	15.4	32.2	11.1	253
Certificate/diploma	33.8	21.2	36.5	8.5	725
Bachelor degree or higher	28.7	24.8	36.7	9.8	780
<b>Total parental gross weekly income</b>					
< \$1,000	43.7	13.2	34.9	8.1	547
\$1,000–1,499	32.4	23.9	34.8	8.9	581
\$1,500 or more	26.5	26.1	37.4	10.0	710
<b>Total</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>1,925</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1

Note: Table includes families of employed single parents and dual-employed couples.

(a) Characteristic relates to the primary carer.

Specific job characteristics of the primary carer also had an association with using parental care only (see Table 4.5). Parents working less than 16 hours per week were more likely to use parental care only for the study child (49.9 per cent), as were self-employed parents (56.4 per cent). Casual employees were also more likely to use parental care only than permanent/ongoing employees (37.5 per cent compared to 19.8 per cent). Parents who worked evenings/nights and parents who worked weekends were more likely to use parental care only (40.8 per cent and 41.2 per cent, respectively) compared to those who did not. It could be that these parents worked some or all of their time in these non-standard times to facilitate the caring of children around work. Unfortunately, LSAC does not contain information on whether parents always worked from home, and so this relationship could not be explored further using these data.

**Table 4.5: Child care use by job characteristics, working families, infant cohort (row per cent)**

Characteristic <sup>(a)</sup>	Parental care only	Formal care only	Informal care only	Formal and informal	Number of observations
<b>Hours worked</b>					
1–15	49.9	11.7	34.1	4.4	860
16–34	20.2	28.8	36.7	14.3	702
35 or more	22.0	30.5	38.1	9.4	356
<b>Job type</b>					
Self-employed	56.4	8.8	29.7	5.1	515
Permanent/ongoing employee	19.8	31.0	37.4	11.7	991
Casual employee	37.5	15.6	39.5	7.5	381
<b>Evening/night work</b>					
Does not work evenings/nights	26.2	26.0	37.7	10.2	914
Works evenings/nights	40.8	17.5	33.9	7.9	1,011
<b>Weekend work</b>					
Does not work weekends	24.7	26.7	38.9	9.7	867
Works weekends	41.2	17.4	33.1	8.3	1,058
<b>Flexible start/finish times</b>					
Flexible working hours	39.1	19.1	33.7	8.2	855
Can change hours with approval	22.2	31.0	35.3	11.5	407
Cannot change start/finish	28.7	24.9	38.2	8.3	253
<b>Non-primary carer hours (couples only)</b>					
1–34	44.5	13.5	36.6	5.4	128
35–44	28.6	24.7	38.5	8.1	656
45–54	31.3	22.6	37.0	9.1	600
55 or more	44.5	17.7	29.4	8.5	438
<b>Total</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>1,925</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1

Note: Table includes families of employed single parents and dual-employed couples.

(a) Unless specified otherwise, characteristics refer to those of primary carer.

Restricting the analysis to couple-parent families in which both parents are employed allows an analysis of the effect of hours worked by the non-primary carer (usually the father) on the rates of use of child care and to the types of care used. While Table 4.5 shows parental care only was higher when the non-primary carer in dual-employed families worked part-time hours or very long full-time hours (55 hours or more), these results were not significant once other characteristics were taken into account.

### *Formal versus informal care*

For those working families that used child care, it was also possible to identify differences in the use of formal care versus informal care. Again, this analysis refers to the previous two tables, but draws on the results of the multivariate analysis to identify the key findings, with the relationships noted here being the only ones found to be significant.<sup>35</sup> As noted earlier, this analysis was not able to consider those factors that could not be identified through these data, such as affordability, availability or family preferences for different types of care.

First, from Table 4.4, the age of the study child had the greatest effect, with older infants more likely to be in formal care (12.0 per cent of those aged 3 to 5 months were in formal care only and 29.2 per cent informal care only, compared to 27.4 per cent of those aged 12 months or more in formal care only and 37.0 per cent in informal care only). Two-child families were somewhat more likely to be in formal care than informal care than one-child families (21.4 per cent of infants in one-child families were in formal care only and 39.7 per cent in informal care only, while 24.3 per cent of infants in two-child families were in formal care only and 33.8 per cent in informal care only). From Table 4.5, when the primary carer was self-employed the child was more likely to be in informal care only (29.7 per cent) than in formal care only (8.8 per cent), relative to those with a primary carer who was a

permanent/ongoing employee (31.0 per cent formal care only, 37.4 per cent informal care only). This was also the case if the primary carer worked less than 16 hours per week (34.1 per cent were in informal care only and 11.7 per cent in formal care only), relative to working 35 hours or more (38.1 per cent informal care only, 30.5 per cent formal care only). The hours the non-primary carer worked did not significantly differentiate between those who used formal care and those who used informal care, and neither did parental income.

### *The use of parental care only in more detail*

A possible explanation as to how couple working families are able to use parental care only is that the parents share the care of children. In other words, parents schedule their hours so that one parent is available to care for the child while the other is working. Although LSAC does not provide detailed information on work schedules, it can provide some insight into this through a question which asks the primary carer whether there are any regular times during the week when their partner takes care of the child while they are not there (for example, to go to work or do the shopping). The primary carer is then asked for how many hours the child is looked after by the partner only.

Table 4.6 shows that the partner spent some time caring for the child in 52.4 per cent of couple working families who used no formal or informal care. Looking from the other perspective, the primary carer was the sole carer of the child in 47.6 per cent of these dual-employed, parental-care-only families (see Table 4.6). In these families, it seems that the primary carer was working while also being responsible for children.

Partners of self-employed primary carers were the least likely to provide care, and when they did, they provided care for fewer hours than the mean working hours of self-employed primary carers. That is, it appears that self-employed primary carers were the most likely to be working while also caring for children. For permanent/ongoing and casual employees, when their partners did provide care, they did so for an amount of hours that was similar to the mean hours worked by permanent/ongoing or casual employees, suggesting a dovetailing of hours in these families.

**Table 4.6: Partner involvement in care by job type of primary carer, dual-employed couples who use no child care, infant cohort**

	Self-employed	Permanent/ ongoing employee	Casual employee	Total
Partner cares for the child (%)	42.1	62.0	61.8	52.4
Weekly number of hours of care by partner (hrs)	6.9	18.1	10.5	11.8
	<i>Mean weekly hours worked by primary carer</i>			
Partner does not care for child	12.7	19.6	8.7	13.6
Partner does care for child	13.3	21.5	11.0	15.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>14.7</b>
	<b>(n=304)</b>	<b>(n=191)</b>	<b>(n=143)</b>	<b>(n=638)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

### *Child care use in more detail*

Continuing to focus on working families, Table 4.7 shows a more detailed breakdown of the types of care used, by family type and the hours worked by the primary carer. The predominant non-parental care providers for infants were grandparents (33.7 per cent), child care centres (21.9 per cent) and family day care arrangements (8.2 per cent).

Table 4.7 shows all types of care used, not just the main type of care, so the percentages may add to more than 100. This was particularly true for single employed parents, who were more likely to have multiple care arrangements. Single working parents had a higher rate of usage of almost all care types compared to couple working families.

In working families with an infant using non-parental child care, grandparents were the single most common type of non-parental care used. This was true for both single-parent and couple-parent families and for all hours categories worked by the primary carer (see Table 4.7). Grandparent care was most common in families where the primary carer worked 16 to 34 hours (40.1 per cent). As working hours increased, use of formal child care arrangements increased substantially, with child care centres the most common providers of formal child care.

**Table 4.7: Child care types by family type and hours worked by primary carer, working families, infant cohort (column per cent)**

Child care	Family type		Hours worked by primary carer			Total
	Couple	Single	1–15	16–34	35 or more	
<b>Parental care only</b>	34.6	19.1	49.9	20.2	22.0	33.6
<b>Formal care</b>						
Child care centre	21.3	32.6	10.3	31.4	30.6	21.9
Family day care	8.0	12.3	4.0	12.1	10.0	8.2
Occasional care	1.1	0.0	2.0	0.3	0.3	1.1
<b>Informal care</b>						
Gym, leisure or community centre	1.4	0.0	2.0	1.3	0.0	1.4
Grandparent	33.4	40.0	29.1	40.1	32.5	33.7
Other relative	4.9	7.2	3.9	6.7	4.5	5.1
Nanny	3.8	1.8	1.9	3.9	7.4	3.7
Child's parent living elsewhere	0.0	13.7	1.0	0.3	0.8	0.7
Other person (includes friend or neighbour)	5.0	11.3	5.3	4.9	6.3	5.3
	<b>(n=1,834)</b>	<b>(n=91)</b>	<b>(n=860)</b>	<b>(n=702)</b>	<b>(n=356)</b>	<b>(n=1,925)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Totals add to more than 100 per cent, as multiple care types possible.

### Reasons for not using child care, infant cohort

This section focuses on the reasons for not using child care (64.8 per cent of families). Table 4.8 examines the reasons families gave for not using child care, by family type. The categories used were 'no need', 'child-related' and 'affordability, availability or quality barriers'. The large majority of families said they were not using child care because they had no need for it (87.3 per cent). This was true regardless of family type and parental employment.

Only a small proportion of families said that they were not using child care because they had problems with affordability, availability or quality (5.5 per cent). Single parents were more likely than couple parents to say that they were not using child care because of problems with affordability, availability or quality of child care. However, it should be recognised that only a minority of single parents gave this reason (8.8 per cent).

Some caution needs to be exercised in drawing conclusions from these results about relationships between child care 'barriers' and parental employment, as the Wave 1 child care questions were not designed in a way to obtain good measures of unmet demand for child care, or to obtain information on the extent to which employment is constrained by child care options.<sup>36</sup>



**Table 4.8: Main reason for not using child care, infant cohort (column per cent)**

Reasons <sup>(a)</sup>	Single <sup>(b)</sup>	Couple, neither employed	Couple, one employed	Couple, both employed	Total
No need	81.7	83.9	89.5	84.1	87.3
Child-related	9.6	11.9	5.9	8.9	7.3
Affordability, availability or quality barriers	8.8	4.3	4.7	7.0	5.5
	<b>(n=302)</b>	<b>(n=209)</b>	<b>(n=2,120)</b>	<b>(n=639)</b>	<b>(n=3,272)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: (a) **No need** comprises: 'child does not need it' and 'parent is available, other care not needed'.

**Child-related** comprises: 'child has disability or special needs', 'child would be unsettled in care', 'does not suit our culture/ethnic beliefs', 'do not want child cared for by strangers', 'child is too young' and 'other: not good for child'.

**Affordability, availability or quality barriers** includes: 'problems with getting child care places', 'not available locally', 'transport problems', 'can't afford it: cost too high', 'concerned with quality of care', 'other: accessibility or affordability' and 'other: quality/program issues'.

(b) Employed and not-employed single parents have been combined as only 16 employed single parents were not using child care.

## 4.2 Child care, preschool and school in the 4–5 year-old cohort

### Data and definitions

Parents of children in the 4–5 year-old cohort were asked about child care and preschool/school attendance for the study child. This information was collected from the primary carer in a two-stage process. Parents were first asked whether the child attends school, kindergarten, preschool or a day care centre, and if so, more detail was obtained about the main one of these that the child attends. Parents were then asked for details of other forms of care, including informal care.

For much of the following analysis of child care for the 4–5 year-old cohort, the detailed care types have been collapsed into six broad groups, shown in Box 4.2.

The need to include preschool/school attendance means that the number of possible care/early education categories is larger than for infants. In much of the analysis preschool and school were combined to simplify the analysis, although some tables distinguish between school and preschool and between individual types of care. No children were identified as being in Year 1 at school but some were identified as being in pre-Year 1.<sup>37</sup>

### Box 4.2: Child care classification, 4–5 year olds

Parental care only	No regular child care arrangement.
School/preschool only	Attends pre-Year 1 in school or preschool, but no regular child care arrangements outside school or preschool.
School/preschool and other care	Attends pre-Year 1 school or preschool, and also has regular child care arrangements outside school or preschool.
Formal care only	No school/preschool. Day care centre, family day care, occasional care.
Informal care only	No school/preschool. Grandparent, other relative, nanny, child's parent living elsewhere, other person (includes friend or neighbour), gym leisure or community centre, mobile care unit.
Both formal and informal care	No school/preschool. A combination of formal and informal care.

An important point to note is that child care use and early education involvement was only collected for the study child, not for any younger siblings. Given the strong relationship between the age of the youngest child in the family and maternal employment, it is likely that the child care arrangements for the youngest child will be important when attempting to understand employment decisions. Overall there were some differences in child

care and early education use according to whether or not the study child had younger siblings (see Table 4.9). However, when the analysis focuses on working families (defined as single employed parents or dual-employed couple parents) there is little difference in child care and early education arrangements according to whether or not there were younger siblings. Therefore, 4–5 year-old cohort children with and without younger siblings were combined in the analyses presented in the remainder of this section.

**Table 4.9: Child care use by parental employment and presence of younger siblings, 4–5 year-old cohort (column per cent)**

Child care	All families		Working families	
	Has younger siblings	No younger siblings	Has younger siblings	No younger siblings
Parental care only	3.7	3.5	1.5	0.7
School or preschool only	39.6	47.2	27.5	30.1
School/preschool and other	33.3	27.9	44.8	42.1
Formal care only	16.2	15.5	16.5	17.6
Informal care only	1.2	0.8	1.1	0.7
Both formal and informal	5.9	5.2	8.7	8.8
	<b>(n=2,647)</b>	<b>(n=2,336)</b>	<b>(n=1,581)</b>	<b>(n=1,092)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Working families are employed single parents and dual-employed couples.

### Child care and early education in the families of 4–5 year-old cohort

This section focuses on the child care and early educational arrangements of all children in the 4–5 year-old cohort. At 4 years and older, many children were eligible to participate in government-provided preschool or early education at school, although given differences across Australia in the age of school commencement, and in the availability of preschool places, considerable diversity was still expected in the types of care or early education these children were receiving.

Almost all children in the 4–5 year-old cohort had some form of care or early educational involvement (96.4 per cent, Table 4.10). Only in families where no parent was employed was the proportion of children in parental care only of any significance. In not-employed single-parent families it was 8.5 per cent and in couple-parent families in which neither parent was employed it was 16.0 per cent. In contrast to the infant care arrangements, children aged 4–5 years were more likely to be in formal care or educational arrangements rather than informal care.

More than half the 4–5 year olds were in preschool: 32.2 per cent in only preschool, and 25.2 per cent in preschool and some other care. A further 10.9 per cent were in school only and 5.6 per cent were in school as well as some other care (see Table 4.10). In families where the single parent was employed, or both couple parents were employed, the children were less likely than in other families to be in school or preschool with no other care arrangements. This was especially true for preschool only. Eleven per cent of employed single parents and 22.4 per cent of dual-employed couple-parent families had children in preschool only (compared to the average for all 4–5 year olds of 32.2 per cent). The percentages using school only were 6.3 per cent for single employed parents and 7.6 per cent for dual-employed couples.

The use of formal care only was very similar across all family types, although children from working families were significantly more likely to be in a mix of formal and informal care (not including school or preschool) than families without an employed parent.

**Table 4.10: Child care use by family type and parental employment status, 4–5 year-old cohort (column per cent)**

Child care	Single parent		Neither employed	Couple		Total
	Not employed	Employed		One employed	Both employed	
Parental care only	8.5	0.7	16.0	4.5	1.2	3.6
School only	12.8	6.3	20.2	14.3	7.6	10.9
Preschool only	32.0	11.0	37.1	48.2	22.4	32.2
School and other	4.6	13.7	1.9	2.4	7.6	5.6
Preschool and other	19.4	39.8	7.3	13.8	34.8	25.2
Formal care only	15.3	14.0	15.0	14.5	17.3	15.9
Informal care only	3.2	0.8	0.0	0.6	1.0	1.0
Both formal and informal	4.3	13.8	2.5	1.7	8.1	5.6
	<b>(n=403)</b>	<b>(n=289)</b>	<b>(n=185)</b>	<b>(n=1,712)</b>	<b>(n=2,384)</b>	<b>(n=4,973)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Due to the two-stage process of asking questions about child care for this cohort, information was only collected on the reasons for the use of care where it was in addition to the main care provided by a school, kindergarten, preschool or day care centre. The main reasons for using care in addition to this main care differed markedly according to the employment status of parents (see Table 4.11). Single-parent employed families and dual-employed families were most likely to cite work as the main reason (79.7 per cent and 84.7 per cent respectively), while other families were more likely to cite child-related reasons, which included ‘to establish relationships with grandparents or non-resident parents’, ‘to mix with other children of the same age’, and ‘it is good for child’s social (or intellectual/language) development’.

**Table 4.11: Reasons for using more than one type of child care, 4–5 year-old cohort (column per cent)**

Reason	Single parent		Neither employed	Couple		Total
	Not employed	Employed		One employed	Both employed	
Because of parents’ work or study commitments	23.1	79.7	22.5	24.3	84.7	68.5
Because of parents’ sport, shopping, social or community activities	9.7	0.5	12.2	15.4	2.0	4.8
To give parent a break or time alone	13.4	0.5	14.1	16.5	1.8	5.2
Child-related reasons <sup>(a)</sup>	46.8	16.7	44.8	37.1	9.9	18.5
Other reasons	7.0	2.7	6.4	6.8	1.6	3.0
	<b>(n=118)</b>	<b>(n=195)</b>	<b>(n=21)</b>	<b>(n=313)</b>	<b>(n=1,202)</b>	<b>(n=1,849)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: (a) Includes ‘to establish relationships with grandparents or non-resident parents’, ‘to mix with other children of the same age’, and ‘it is good for child’s social (or intellectual/language) development’.

### Satisfaction with child care, 4–5 year-old cohort

Primary carers in the 4–5 year-old cohort were asked about their satisfaction with the main type of care arrangement they used (school, kindergarten, preschool or day care centre). As for the infant cohort, most parents (65.8 per cent) were highly satisfied with their care arrangement (see Table 4.12). The differences across different care types were very slight.

**Table 4.12: Satisfaction with main child care used, families with children in school, preschool or day care (row per cent)**

Child care	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied	Number of observations
Pre-Year 1 in a school	64.7	28.3	5.8	1.1	743
Preschool program in a school	66.2	26.9	5.0	2.0	1,464
Preschool at non-school centre	68.2	25.3	5.4	1.2	1,358
Day care centre where child has a preschool program	64.4	27.8	5.9	2.0	971
Day care centre where child does not have a preschool program	62.6	28.3	5.4	3.7	157
<b>Total</b>	<b>65.8</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>4,761</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

### Child care in working families, 4–5 year-old cohort

As with the infant cohort, the analysis now turns to families in the 4–5 year-old cohort in which all parents in the home are in paid employment. Unlike the infant cohort, the vast majority of children in non-working families spent time in some non-parental setting (often it was a preschool-only setting).

Table 4.13 and Table 4.14 show the relationships between care type and family and job characteristics. More detailed tables, separating school and preschool, are provided in Tables C4 and C5.

When considering the infant cohort, it was useful to analyse which children were in parental care only. For the 4–5 year-old cohort, this was not the case, since the vast majority of children (96.4 per cent) were in some form of care, including preschool and school. What is informative for this cohort is to analyse which children were only in school or preschool, as opposed to being in families where other or additional care was required. Multivariate analyses were used to identify key relationships between family or job characteristics, and use of school/preschool only versus other care arrangements. The discussion that follows highlights the relationships that were significant in this multivariate analysis.<sup>38</sup>

For the 4–5 year-old cohort, the combination of care possibilities was more complex than the infant cohort, and more closely linked to the age of the child due to institutional arrangements as well as parental preferences. Older children were, of course, more likely to be in school or preschool (see Table 4.13). Younger children were more likely to be in formal care, on its own or combined with informal care. This is probably, to some extent, related to the availability of school or preschool places for the younger of these children. Even among the younger of these children though, very few were not in some form of formal care or school or preschool.

As shown in Section 2, the 4–5 year-old cohort comprised children who were the youngest child in the family, and others who had younger siblings (about half of each). This difference was found to be important in explaining the work arrangements of parents of this cohort, but in this context it revealed no significant differences. There was a difference, however, according to the total number of children in the family, with children in larger families less likely to be in any care other than school or preschool on its own.

There was a significant difference between couple-parent and single-parent working families, with the latter more likely to be using care other than school or preschool (42.5 per cent of couple-parent families versus 53.5 per cent of single-parent families). Higher levels of education and the country of birth of the primary carer made little difference to the care arrangements.

**Table 4.13: Child care use by family characteristics, working families, 4–5 year-old cohort (row per cent)**

Characteristic	Parental care or informal only	School/preschool only	School/preschool and other care	Formal care only	Formal and informal	Number of observations
<b>Age of study child</b>						
4 years and:						
3–5 months	3.8	20.7	32.4	29.3	13.8	256
6–8 months	2.5	27.7	41.0	19.2	9.6	902
9–11 months	2.0	29.5	45.1	15.5	7.9	1,027
5 years and older	0.8	31.8	51.1	10.0	6.3	488
<b>Has younger siblings</b>						
No	2.6	27.5	44.8	16.5	8.7	1,581
Yes	1.4	30.1	42.1	17.6	8.8	1,092
<b>Number of children</b>						
1	1.5	16.9	46.9	19.8	14.9	343
2	1.3	27.8	45.5	17.2	8.1	1,440
3 or more	3.6	34.1	39.6	15.4	7.3	890
<b>Family type</b>						
Couple	2.2	30.0	42.5	17.3	8.1	2,384
Single parent	1.5	17.3	53.5	14.0	13.8	289
<b>Country of birth<sup>(a)</sup></b>						
Australia	1.8	28.1	44.6	16.5	9.1	2,111
Not Australia	3.4	30.1	40.5	18.6	7.4	561
<b>Highest education<sup>(a)</sup></b>						
Incomplete secondary	3.8	29.4	44.5	14.0	8.4	390
Complete secondary only	2.5	30.3	43.8	15.8	7.6	366
Certificate/diploma	2.5	28.8	41.5	18.8	8.4	977
Bachelor degree or higher	0.5	27.0	46.0	16.8	9.7	940
<b>Parental income (gross per week)</b>						
< \$1,000	3.2	30.6	43.7	15.3	7.2	700
\$1,000–1,499	1.8	27.5	43.9	18.0	8.8	708
\$1,500 or more	1.6	27.3	43.5	17.7	10.0	1,121
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>2,673</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Table includes families of employed single parents and dual-employed couples.

(a) Characteristic relates to the primary carer.

**Table 4.14: Child care use by job characteristics, working families, 4–5 year-old cohort (row per cent)**

Characteristic <sup>(a)</sup>	Parental or informal care only	School/preschool only	School/preschool and other	Formal care only	Formal and informal	Number of observations
<b>Hours worked</b>						
1–15	1.3	44.2	35.4	13.9	5.2	885
16–34	2.3	22.2	49.0	17.2	9.3	1,070
35 or more	2.9	18.2	46.4	20.3	12.3	710
<b>Job type</b>						
Self-employed	2.6	47.6	29.6	15.0	5.2	673
Permanent/ongoing employee	1.4	18.0	50.7	18.8	11.1	1,477
Casual employee	3.4	33.1	42.4	14.5	6.7	518
<b>Evening/night work</b>						
Does not work evenings/nights	1.3	28.0	43.3	17.9	9.4	1,289
Works evenings/nights	2.9	29.0	44.1	16.0	8.1	1,384
<b>Weekend work</b>						
Does not work weekends	1.9	27.0	42.5	18.5	10.2	1,225
Works weekends	2.3	29.9	44.8	15.6	7.4	1,448
<b>Flexibility of start/finish times</b>						
Flexible working hours	2.2	33.6	40.4	16.3	7.5	1,211
Can change hours with approval	1.0	18.6	51.4	18.4	10.7	559
Cannot change start/finish	2.0	23.7	49.2	15.2	9.9	377
<b>Non-primary carer hours (couples only)</b>						
1–34	2.4	36.2	37.7	18.9	4.9	155
35–44	2.2	24.5	46.5	17.8	9.0	915
45–54	2.4	29.0	41.5	18.4	8.7	673
55 or more	2.1	37.0	38.7	15.5	6.8	628
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>2,673</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Table includes families of employed single parents and dual-employed couples.

(a) Unless specified otherwise, characteristics refer to those of primary carer.

Not surprisingly, primary carers working shorter hours were more likely to have the study child in school or preschool only (44.2 per cent of families where the primary carer worked 1 to 15 hours, versus 18.2 per cent of families where the primary carer worked 35 or more hours per week, Table 4.14). Similarly, primary carers who were self-employed were much more likely to have their child in school or preschool only (47.6 per cent), with permanent/ongoing employees considerably less likely (18.0 per cent) and casual employees somewhere in between (33.1 per cent). Parents who worked weekends were more likely to be using school/preschool only for the study child. Whether or not parents chose these care arrangements to suit their work, or whether they chose their work to suit these care arrangements cannot be discerned from these data.

Working flexible hours or working evenings/nights did not have strong associations with using care other than school/preschool and neither did parental income. The relationship with hours worked by the non-primary carer was only significant in that families in which the partner worked part-time hours were more likely to use only school/preschool.

### *Specific care or early education types*

Table 4.15 shows how the more detailed classification of type of care varied by family type and working hours of the primary carer for working families. The percentages in each column add up to considerably more than 100 per cent because of the significantly higher incidence of multiple care in the 4–5 year-old cohort (compared to the infant cohort, where multiple care arrangements was the exception rather than the norm). The table reveals that besides preschool or school care types, single employed parents had a similar or higher prevalence of using each type of care than couple employed families, except for the use of nannies. In particular, single employed parents were more likely than couple employed parents to be using informal care arrangements (50.0 per cent in comparison to 36.6 per cent), and in 16.7 per cent of single-parent employed families, the non-resident parent cared for the child for some time during the week.

There was considerable variation in the use of different care or educational arrangements as the number of hours worked by the primary carer in working families increased. For the broad categories of day care, other types of formal care and informal care, the proportion of working families accessing care was higher when the primary carer worked longer hours. For the broad category of preschool or school, the proportion of study children attending these educational arrangements decreased as the primary carer's hours increased (see Table 4.15). These trends, however, hide some interesting variation within these broad categories. Primary carers with the study child in pre-Year 1 were more likely to be working full-time hours. In contrast, the use of a preschool program in a school or a separate centre decreased in working families as the hours of the primary carer increased; although where the preschool program was part of a day care centre, the lower usage only occurred with primary carers working full-time hours.

These results perhaps indicate that the limited hours of a preschool program may present logistical problems for some families where the primary carer works longer (full-time) hours. This is supported by the fact that day care centres without a preschool program were the most popular among full-time working primary carers. Of course, decisions about attendance at school and at preschool are quite different ones, with decisions about a child's school attendance much more likely to be made on the basis of a child's age and readiness for school than on the basis of parental employment. On the other hand, decisions about preschool attendance are more likely to be made in consideration of hours of work and other care options.

As the primary carer works longer hours, the longer non-parental care needs of children are also reflected in the increased use of other forms of formal care and most forms of informal care.

**Table 4.15: Child care types by family type and hours worked by primary carer, working families, 4–5 year-old cohort (column per cent)**

Child care	Family type		Hours worked by primary carer			Total
	Single	Couple	1–15	16–34	35 or more	
<b>Preschool/school</b>	<b>70.8</b>	<b>72.4</b>	<b>79.6</b>	<b>71.2</b>	<b>64.6</b>	<b>72.2</b>
Pre-Year 1 in a school	20.3	15.5	13.1	15.1	21.1	16.1
Preschool program in a school	25.7	27.3	32.2	26.0	22.3	27.1
Preschool at non-school centre	26.6	30.9	34.8	31.4	23.7	30.4
<b>Day care</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>38.3</b>
Day care centre where child has a preschool program	32.6	29.5	22.4	31.7	16.1	29.9
Day care centre where child does not have a preschool program	6.5	6.4	3.5	8.7	27.1	6.4
<b>Other formal care</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>12.2</b>
Family day care	9.9	5.5	4.0	7.1	6.8	6.0
Before/after school care	7.0	4.6	1.6	4.6	9.5	4.9
<b>Informal care</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>38.2</b>
Grandparent	30.9	26.3	20.7	28.7	32.0	26.9
Other relative	8.6	3.1	3.0	4.1	4.3	3.8
Child's parents living elsewhere	16.7	0.3	2.3	1.5	3.0	2.2
Nanny	1.4	3.2	1.9	3.1	4.3	3.0
Other person (includes friend or neighbour)	6.5	6.9	5.2	8.5	6.4	6.9
Parental care only	0.7	1.2	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.2
	<b>(n=289)</b>	<b>(n=2,384)</b>	<b>(n=885)</b>	<b>(n=1,070)</b>	<b>(n=710)</b>	<b>(n=2,673)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Table includes families of employed single parents and dual-employed couples. The totals (in bold) represent percentage using any of the component types of care. Totals add to more than 100 per cent, as multiple care types are included.

### 4.3 Summary

LSAC provides detailed information on the use of child care (and early education). This information, combined with the comprehensive employment data, allows a detailed analysis of how the patterns of child care use are related to parental employment.

Key findings include:

- Families with an infant in which the parents were both in paid employment (or for single-parent families, the resident parent was employed) had higher rates of use of non-parental care than in families with a parent not in paid employment.
- In couple-parent families in which both parents were employed, the use of some form of non-parental care was much higher (65.4 per cent). For couple-parent families in which neither parent was employed or in which only one parent is employed, 13.3 and 16.7 per cent respectively used some form of non-parental care.
- Of those employed single parents with an infant, 80.9 per cent used some form of non-parental care compared to 24.7 per cent of not-employed single parents using non-parental care.
- For the infant cohort, rates of use of non-parental care were higher for single parents than couple-parent families irrespective of parents' employment.



- ▶ A substantial number of single-parent and couple-parent families were able to combine paid employment without the use of any form of non-parental care. For example, 19.1 per cent of employed single mothers did not use any form of non-parental care and 34.6 per cent of couple-parent families in which both parents were employed did not use any form of regular non-parental care. An important factor in allowing families to balance work and family commitments while using parental care only was one parent (usually the mother) working short part-time hours.
- ▶ For the 4–5 year-old cohort, almost all of the children in this cohort were in some non-parental care or early education arrangement. At this age, many children have such arrangements for reasons other than parental employment.
- ▶ Considerable differences were observed in the care arrangements of employed couple-parent families compared to employed single families. Single parents were less likely to rely only on parental care, and more likely to make use of formal care for infants. For both cohorts, single parents were more likely to have multiple care arrangements.

This last point highlights a key issue emerging from this section, which is the greater use of child care arrangements by single parents compared to couple parents. This was found to be the case for employed single parents (compared to dual-employed couple parents), as well as for single parents who were not working (compared to couple parents where one or both parents were not working). These findings highlight the additional support that single parents need in the absence of a partner, as well as the importance of integrated child care arrangements in facilitating single parents to more readily access paid employment.



## 5 Time use and activities with children

Raising children takes both time and money (Folbre 2001; Apps & Rees 2000). With one more mouth to feed, parents need more money to just maintain their new family's standard of living. Earning income requires parents to devote time to labour market activities; however, raising children also makes large demands on parents' time. While it is often possible to earn more money, there can never be more than 24 hours a day. Finding the right balance between work and family responsibilities has become one of the most prominent issues in the last few decades because it seems as if employment and children compete for parents' time (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2002–2005). This section uses LSAC data to explore this work–family balance by first analysing the time diary component of LSAC, and then analysing measures of co-parenting.

Studies of adults' time-use diaries show that the initial time costs of being a parent are very high, with the time costs falling as the child matures (Craig & Bittman 2005). Compared to an equivalent couple with no children, a couple with two children under 3 years of age devote an extra 35 hours per week to non-market work of child care and associated extra housework and shopping. If child care is counted as a simultaneous activity that accompanies nominal 'leisure' or personal activities, this increase is closer to 80 hours per week. Once the youngest child has reached school age, the time costs of these same children (based on primary activity only) fall to 12.5 hours per week and once the youngest child is beyond the age of 12 the time costs associated with parenting are markedly lower.

As shown in earlier sections, it is mostly mothers and not fathers who withdraw from the labour market or reduce their hours at work when they have young children. This has the potential to create the time to care for children. It is therefore not surprising that, in aggregate, mothers are responsible for most of the unpaid work associated with child-rearing (Craig & Bittman 2005; Bianchi 2000; Goward 2005). However, Australian and international time-use studies have been used to show that mothers' employment has far less impact on the time mothers spend with children than might be expected (Bittman, Craig & Folbre 2004; Nock & Kingston 1988; Bianchi 2000, Craig forthcoming). One hour of employment does not equate to one less hour with children; it appears that mothers reschedule the time they spend with children to minimise the time lost (Craig 2005). In particular, employed mothers preserve the amount of time they spend in interactive activities, spending less time on less interactive activities with their children than do non-employed mothers (Bittman, Craig & Folbre 2004; Craig 2006).

Not only do fathers spend less time with their children than do mothers, they tend to spend time undertaking a different range of activities, and are less likely to spend time alone (without the mother) with their children (Craig 2006). There is inconclusive evidence of how mothers' employment is associated with fathers' time with children, with some studies finding fathers spend more time with children when the mother is employed, but other studies finding no such association (see studies reviewed in Craig forthcoming). Similarly, there are mixed findings on the extent to which fathers' own employment hours are associated with their time with children, although more hours of employment generally reduces their time spent with children (see studies cited in Sayer, Bianchi & Robinson 2004).

As with child-rearing tasks, mothers tend to undertake the majority of other household tasks, regardless of employment status. In general, women's time on housework declines and men's time on housework slightly increases with increases in women's time in paid employment (Bianchi 2000; Nock & Kingston 1988; Bittman, Craig & Folbre 2004). The division of labour within the household, both in child-rearing and other domestic tasks, is likely to have some relationship with parental working hours. An interesting aspect of this is how this corresponds to perceived fairness in the division of these tasks (Baxter & Western 1998).

The relationship between parental employment and time with children is directly relevant to questions of work–family balance. To some extent this is evident in Section 8, in which it is shown that more hours in paid employment is associated with a higher level of being rushed or experiencing time pressure. There are other reasons for studying time with children related to the link between parental employment (especially maternal employment) and child development. Although the effects on child development of parental employment are not addressed in this report, perhaps this issue more than any other has fuelled a powerful interest in the time parents spend with children.<sup>39</sup>

This section focuses on the association between parental employment and children's times and activities spent with parents, and on how parents perceive they support their partner, are supported and understood by their partner (with regard to needs as a parent) and share the child-rearing and other domestic tasks. This is done in a simple manner, by comparing these data according to mothers' and fathers' hours of paid employment. Section 5.1 examines these associations (after an overview of the data) for time-use data, and Section 5.2 examines the co-parenting measures.

## 5.1 Time use

### Data

Among the suite of instruments used in LSAC was a 'light' time-use diary (TUD), which measures the time that infants and children aged 4–5 years spent in specific activities, and who they were with at the time of the activity. Parents were asked to complete two diaries about their child's day, one on a weekday and one on the weekend. The diaries divided the 24-hour day into 96 15-minute time intervals. Parents were asked to mark down the time their child spent in a number of pre-coded activities. The diaries included 22 pre-coded activities for the infant cohort, such as sleeping, being breastfed, crawling and listening to a story. For the 4–5 year-old cohort there were 26 activities, including sleeping, watching television, walking and eating. For analysis in this section, the activities of the child were classified into eight broad categories (see Box 5.1).

#### Box 5.1: Classification of children's activities

Activity category	Infant	4–5 year old
Sleeping/resting	Sleeping/napping, awake in bed.	Sleeping/napping, awake in bed.
Personal care	Bathe/nappy change/dress/hair care, breastfeeding, other eating/drinking/being fed.	Bathe/dress/hair care/health care, eating/drinking/being fed.
Interactive care	Held/cuddled, crying/upset, read a story, talked to/sung to.	Held/cuddled, crying/upset, being reprimanded/corrected, read a story, talked to/sung to.
Education	Colour/draw/look at book, participate organised activities/playgroup.	Colour/look at book/educational game, use computer, taught to do chores or read.
Passive play	Looking around/doing nothing, watching television, listening to tapes.	Watching television, movie, listening to tapes, radio, music, do nothing/bored/restless.
Active play	Destroy things/create mess, crawl or climb.	Destroy things/create mess, walk/ride bike/other exercise/participate organised lessons/activities.
Other play	Other play, visiting people/special event/party.	Other play/other activities, visiting people/special event/party.
Travel	Taken places with adult, taken out in a pram or bicycle seat, travel in a car or on public transport.	Taken places with adult, taken out in a pusher or bicycle seat, travel in a car or on public transport.

Time-use diaries often classify activities into the primary activity (the main activity being done at the time) and secondary activities (other activities being done concurrently). In these data, children could be coded to a number of activities concurrently, but no distinction was made between primary and secondary activities. The coding of concurrent activities meant that the sum of time spent in different activity groups could be greater than 24 hours.

The diaries also included pre-coded context information about who the child was with, that is, who was in the same room, or if outside, who was nearby. Parents could mark whether their child was alone, with siblings or other children, with their mother (including stepmother), father (including stepfather)<sup>40</sup> or other adults or relatives. This analysis focuses only on those times when the mother or father was present.<sup>41</sup> Note that these data

do not comprehensively measure the time that parents spend undertaking child care tasks, as parents can be responsible for children or undertaking tasks relating to child care while not in the same room as them. On the other hand, the co-presence of a parent does not necessarily indicate that the parent's primary activity was child care: the parent may be undertaking another primary activity (for example, meal preparation) while in the same room as the child; or they may be completely involved in the child's activity, for example, breastfeeding or reading to the child. In some cases, such as if both parent and child are asleep in the same room, there may actually be no active care being done by the parent.<sup>42</sup>

These data, therefore, are a very broad indication of parents' involvement in children's lives. A useful indicator of the likely degree of parental involvement is the activity of the child. Parental involvement is likely to be lower when the child is asleep, for example, compared to when the child is involved in personal or interactive care activities (as listed in Box 5.1). This analysis, therefore, includes measures of total time with children, as well as total time in different activities.<sup>43</sup>

Only diaries completed for a weekday and nominated to be a 'usual' day were analysed. This was to ensure the diary day could more accurately be related to parental employment. As the actual hours parents worked on the diary day was not known, or indeed if they did work that day, this analysis could not be done more accurately. Weekdays were chosen because the overwhelming majority of parents' work hours are on weekdays (Millward 2002). However, for parents who worked part-time or regularly worked weekends, the diary day may not have been a workday. It is also possible that parental employment during the week is associated with different patterns of time use on the weekend (Nock & Kingston 1988), but this association was not considered in this report.

This analysis was undertaken using the first release of the Time Use Diary.<sup>44</sup> As is the accepted practice with time-use diary data, to improve data quality, diaries were excluded from the analysis if they contained more than 90 minutes of missing activity or context data or if there was a large amount of simultaneous activities. A weekday diary was completed for 3,937 infants, but there were the following exclusions: 1,489 due to poor quality, 534 because it was not a 'usual' day, and 23 due to missing employment data. This left 1,914 diaries, of which 1,785 were couples and 129 single mothers. For the 4–5 year-old cohort, there were 3,799 weekday diaries. Of these, there were the following exclusions: 2,197 for poor quality, 420 for not being a 'usual' day and 11 for missing employment data. This left 1,171 diaries, of which 1,062 were couples and 109 single mothers.

The parental employment distribution of the sub-sample used in this analysis was broadly comparable to that of the overall sample used throughout the report. The final sample contained couples and single-mother families, but in this section, comparisons were not made between these family types, due to the small number of single-mother families. The analysis is limited to an overview of time and activities with children, and on bivariate relationships between these data and the employment hours of parents.<sup>45</sup> It is important to note that other relationships between child, family or other parental employment characteristics and the time-use data were not explored. Some of these relationships are likely to be quite significant, in particular for infants, considering variations in time spent with children and activities undertaken by children, according to the age of the child in months. A more complex multivariate analysis would be able to control for such variables, but was beyond the scope of this report.

### **Overview of parents' time with children**

On average, mothers spent over 15 hours per day with their infant children and over 12 hours per day with their 4–5 year olds. This was roughly double the amount of time that fathers spent in the company of their infant (just over 7 hours) or 4–5 year-old child (just over 6 hours) (see Table 5.1). The time that parents were not present includes when someone else was caring for the child, but perhaps more importantly, it includes times when the child was in a room alone, but in proximity to parents or other carers.

The majority of mothers' time with the infant was spent with the infant sleeping (approximately 6 hours and 20 minutes per day) or in interactive care activities, which includes holding or cuddling the child, the child crying, or the child being read, talked or sung to (just over 5 hours and 30 minutes per day). For almost 4 hours per day, mothers engaged in personal care activities such as bathing, changing nappies, feeding and breastfeeding. Clearly, interactive care and personal care are likely to be high-contact activities, and involve a considerable

amount of interaction with the mother. This demonstrates a heavy investment of parental time in the potential for symbolic communication in the early phases of the child's life. This was reinforced by a total of approximately 5 hours of mothers' presence during children's play activities (passive, active and other play). Infants' educational activities occupied less than 20 minutes of their mother's time on an average weekday.

**Table 5.1: Mean time spent with mothers and fathers, by children's activities and cohort (hours per day)**

Children's activities	Time with mother		Time with father	
	Infant	4–5 year old	Infant	4–5 year old
Sleep	6.3	4.4	3.8	3.0
Personal care	3.7	2.4	1.5	1.1
Interactive care	5.6	1.5	1.2	0.7
Education	0.2	1.1	0.1	0.4
Passive play	0.9	2.2	0.3	0.9
Active play	1.9	0.8	0.7	0.3
Other play	2.1	1.3	0.8	0.5
Travel	1.7	1.5	0.4	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>6.1</b>
	<b>(n=1,914)</b>	<b>(n=1,171)</b>	<b>(n=1,785)</b>	<b>(n=1,062)</b>

Source: Time-use diary (Release 1), LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Times are for a 'usual' weekday. More than one activity can be recorded at a time, so the times in each activity cannot be summed. The total is time in any activity.

On average, fathers' time with infants was less than mothers' time with infants in all activity groups, although, as for mothers, fathers were most often present when the infant was sleeping, in personal care or interactive care. Fathers were more likely to be present during personal care than they were during interactive care, unlike mothers (see Table 5.1).

Children's activities change as they mature (see also Australian Institute of Family Studies 2005), which is not surprising given the developmental changes that occur between the infant and 4–5 year age groups. The activities undertaken while mothers and fathers are present are therefore also likely to be quite different. But developmental differences do not explain all of these differences. Some can be explained by the differences in what a typical day entails for the 4–5 year-old cohort. Many will be in non-parental care or early education (Section 4), although not necessarily on the diary day.

Mothers' time of being present during 4–5 year olds' personal care (eating, bathing and grooming) was roughly 65 per cent of the time they devoted to being present during infants' personal care activities (see Table 5.1). Mothers' presence during interactive care was considerably lower in the older cohort, which was consistent with 4–5 year olds spending less time being 'held/cuddled' (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2005, p.23). Mothers of 4–5 year-old children spent less time with the child engaging in active and other play, compared to mothers of infants, which is likely to be in part due to the types of play children engage in at different ages, but also may be due to more play occurring in the absence of parents for older children. Mothers' time during the child's passive play (chiefly media consumption) and educational activities was higher in the older cohort. Again, this is likely to be related to children engaging in different types of activities as they get older and not necessarily due to a reallocation of mothers' time.

In analysing the time with father by activity, the same patterns emerged for the 4–5 year-old cohort as were evident for the infants, and differences between the cohorts can be explained by those same factors mentioned for mothers above (see Table 5.1). As with infants, mothers spent more time than fathers with the 4–5 year olds in each of the activity groups.

The following sections expand on these findings by considering how time with mothers and time with fathers is related to parental employment patterns, first examining the associations with mothers' hours of work and then considering fathers' hours of work.

### Time spent with children by mothers' hours of work

In both cohorts, maternal employment was associated with mothers spending less time with their children, although the difference between employed and not-employed mothers was not large, at 2.0 hours difference (12.6 per cent) for infants and 1.8 hours difference (13.7 per cent) for 4–5 year olds (see Table 5.2). This finding is consistent with previous research, in Australia and the United States, showing that maternal employment has surprisingly small effects on time spent with children (Bianchi 2000; Nock & Kingston, 1988; Bittman, Craig & Folbre 2004).

The differences were greater when hours of work were taken into account. For mothers of infants the difference between no employment and full-time employment was 3.7 hours, and for mothers of 4–5 year-old children, the difference was 3.9 hours a day. If full-time employment, including travel time and breaks from work involves an absence from home of about 8 hours, this means that for every hour of work, time with children is reduced by about half an hour or less.

This is consistent with research by Craig (forthcoming), who concluded that mothers were reluctant to reduce the amount of time that they spent with their children. Employed mothers preserved time with children, to some extent, by spending more time with children at the beginning and the end of the day and by spending less time on activities such as leisure and sleep. It is not surprising, in the analyses of wellbeing in Section 8, that full-time employed mothers experienced more time pressure than other mothers.

**Table 5.2: Mean time spent with mother and father by mother's hours of work (hours per day)**

Mother's employment status and hours of work	Time with mother		Time with father	
	Infant	4–5 year old	Infant	4–5 year old
Not employed	15.9	13.1	7.0	5.9
Total employed	13.9	11.3	7.3	6.3
1–15 hours	14.7	12.2	6.6	5.3
16–24 hours	13.8	11.9	7.3	6.7
25–34 hours	13.7	10.3	7.5	6.2
35 hours or more	12.2	9.2	9.2	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>6.1</b>
	<b>(n=1,914)</b>	<b>(n=1,171)</b>	<b>(n=1,785)</b>	<b>(n=1,062)</b>

Source: Time-use diary (Release 1), LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Times are for a 'usual' weekday. Single-mother families are excluded from analyses of time with father.

Fathers spent more time with children, either infants or 4–5 year olds, when the mother was employed (see Table 5.2). However, these differences were modest and only partially compensated for the difference between employed and not-employed mothers' time with children: employed mothers spent 2.0 hours per day less with infants while their partners spent 20 minutes more; and employed mothers spent 1.8 hours less with 4–5 year olds while fathers spent around 24 minutes more.<sup>46</sup>

The same partial compensation can be seen when comparing not-employed and full-time employed mothers. The difference in mothers' time spent with the child was 3.7 hours for infants and 3.9 hours for 4–5 year olds, but the corresponding average differences in time for fathers was only 2.2 and 1.8 hours, respectively (see Table 5.2).

While the time spent with children overall is not strongly affected by parental employment, it is possible that maternal employment may be associated with less time spent with children on specific activities. For the infant cohort, the major relationships seem to be with personal care, interactive care and play time. Mothers working full-time hours spent approximately one-third less time with their infants in these activities compared to not-employed mothers (see Table 5.3). However, it is important to note that even within the infant cohort, not-employed mothers are more likely to have younger infants than mothers working full-time hours, and younger infants are more likely to spend time in personal or interactive care or certain types of play. This apparent relationship with maternal employment may therefore be a factor of the age of the child.

The relationship between mothers' hours of work and fathers' time with children by child's activity is not clear-cut (see Table 5.3). Fathers spent longer with the child when the child was sleeping, the longer the hours worked by the mother. The explanation for this is not obvious. There were other differences between fathers with full-time employed partners and fathers whose partners worked shorter hours or were not employed: the fathers with full-time employed partners spent longer with the child during personal care, interactive care and play activities. However, except for when the child was sleeping, fathers who had partners working shorter than full-time hours did not appear to have very different patterns of time spent in particular activities, compared to fathers with not-employed partners.

**Table 5.3: Mean time spent with mothers and fathers by child's activities and mother's work hours, infant cohort (hours per day)**

Child's activities	Not employed	Mother's work hours			
		1-15	16-24	25-34	35 or more
		<b>Time with mother</b>			
Sleep	6.6	5.7	5.6	6.5	5.9
Personal care	3.9	3.7	3.3	2.9	2.7
Interactive care	6.0	5.5	4.4	4.5	3.9
Education	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.3
Passive play	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.7
Active play	2.0	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.3
Other play	2.1	2.2	2.0	1.3	1.3
Travel	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.5	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>15.9</b> (n=1,171)	<b>14.7</b> (n=369)	<b>13.8</b> (n=185)	<b>13.7</b> (n=77)	<b>12.2</b> (n=112)
		<b>Time with father</b>			
Sleep	3.7	3.5	3.9	4.4	4.5
Personal care	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.3	2.0
Interactive care	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.4
Education	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Passive play	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.6
Active play	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.1
Other play	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.1
Travel	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.0</b> (n=1,063)	<b>6.6</b> (n=357)	<b>7.3</b> (n=181)	<b>7.5</b> (n=74)	<b>9.2</b> (n=110)

Source: Time-use diary (Release 1), LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Times are for a 'usual' weekday. More than one activity can be recorded at a time, so the times in each activity cannot be summed. The total is time in any activity. Single-mother families are excluded from analyses of time with father.

In the case of 4-5 year-old children, mothers' time with children in all activities generally reduced the longer hours they worked. However, personal care and passive play, after sleep, were the activities that mothers were most likely to be present for, regardless of employment status or hours worked.

As mothers increased their hours of employment, fathers appeared to compensate 4-5 year olds for some loss of maternal availability during their personal and interactive care activities. Where mothers worked full-time hours, compared to mothers who were not employed, there was also a pattern of fathers compensating in all types of play activities. For fathers' presence during the play activities of 4-5 year olds, the differences between those with not-employed and part-time employed partners were less evident.



**Table 5.4: Mean time spent with mothers and fathers, by child's activities and mother's work hours, 4–5 year-old cohort (hours per day)**

Child's activities	Not employed	Mother's work hours			
		1–15	16–24	25–34	35 or more
<b>Time with mother</b>					
Sleep	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.0
Personal care	2.6	2.5	2.3	2.0	1.7
Interactive care	1.7	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.0
Education	1.2	1.1	1.1	0.9	0.8
Passive play	2.5	2.0	2.0	1.5	1.3
Active play	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.5
Other play	1.4	1.3	1.2	0.8	0.8
Travel	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.1</b> <b>(n=517)</b>	<b>12.2</b> <b>(n=258)</b>	<b>11.9</b> <b>(n=183)</b>	<b>10.3</b> <b>(n=87)</b>	<b>9.2</b> <b>(n=126)</b>
<b>Time with father</b>					
Sleep	2.5	2.4	2.9	3.4	3.0
Personal care	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.1	1.3
Interactive care	0.6	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.8
Education	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.6
Passive play	0.8	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.2
Active play	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4
Other play	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.7
Travel	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.9</b> <b>(n=455)</b>	<b>5.3</b> <b>(n=238)</b>	<b>6.7</b> <b>(n=170)</b>	<b>6.2</b> <b>(n=85)</b>	<b>7.7</b> <b>(n=114)</b>

Source: Time-use diary (Release 1), LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Times are for a 'usual' weekday. More than one activity can be recorded at a time, so the times in each activity cannot be summed. The total is time in any activity. Single-mother families are excluded from analyses of time with father.

### Time spent with children by fathers' hours of work

With a considerable proportion of fathers working long hours (see Section 3), it is relevant to consider whether paternal working hours are associated with time spent with children.

The time that fathers spent with their children, whether infants or 4–5 year olds, was affected by the hours they devoted to paid employment, but the largest differences related to comparisons of not-employed fathers with part-time employed fathers and full-time employed fathers. For the fathers who worked 35 hours or more per week (the overwhelming majority of fathers), time spent with children was relatively invariant (see Table 5.5). In the 4–5 year-old cohort, time fathers spent with children declined with longer hours work, but in the infant cohort, time fathers spent with children was lowest when they worked 45 to 54 hours, rather than 55 hours or more.

Although not-employed fathers spend the most time with children (see Table 5.5), the 12.3 hours spent with infants and 9.0 hours spent with 4–5 year olds was still only approximately the same amount of time that mothers working full-time hours spent with children (see Table 5.2).

**Table 5.5: Mean time spent with mother and father, by father's hours of work (hours per day)**

Father's employment status and work hours	Time with mother		Time with father	
	Infant	4-5 year old	Infant	4-5 year old
Not employed	16.5	11.3	12.3	9.0
Employed	14.8	11.8	6.8	6.0
1-34 hours	14.8	12.3	9.1	8.3
35-44 hours	14.9	12.0	7.1	6.4
45-54 hours	14.2	11.1	6.2	5.7
55 hours or more	15.4	12.4	6.7	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>6.1</b>
	<b>(n=1,785)</b>	<b>(n=1,062)</b>	<b>(n=1,785)</b>	<b>(n=1,062)</b>

Source: Time-use diary (Release 1), LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Times are for a 'usual' weekday. Excludes single-mother families.

**Table 5.6: Mean time spent with father by child's activities, father's work hours and cohort (hours per day)**

Child's activities	Not employed	Father's work hours			
		1-34	35-44	45-54	55 or more
		<b>Infant's time with father</b>			
Sleep	5.9	4.4	3.7	3.3	4.1
Personal care	2.6	2.0	1.6	1.3	1.3
Interactive care	2.1	1.9	1.2	1.0	0.9
Education	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Passive play	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.3
Active play	1.4	1.4	0.7	0.6	0.6
Other play	1.3	1.1	0.8	0.9	0.6
Travel	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.7</b>
	<b>(n=95)</b>	<b>(n=97)</b>	<b>(n=647)</b>	<b>(n=564)</b>	<b>(n=382)</b>
		<b>4-5 year old's time with father</b>			
Sleep	3.2	3.5	3.1	2.6	2.8
Personal care	1.8	1.5	1.2	1.1	0.9
Interactive care	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.6	0.6
Education	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.3
Passive play	2.1	1.2	1.0	0.7	0.7
Active play	0.6	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.2
Other play	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.4
Travel	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.5</b>
	<b>(n=51)</b>	<b>(n=61)</b>	<b>(n=362)</b>	<b>(n=314)</b>	<b>(n=274)</b>

Source: Time-use diary (Release 1), LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Times are for a 'usual' weekday. More than one activity can be recorded at a time, so the times in each activity cannot be summed. The total is time in any activity. Excludes single-mother families.

Mothers' time spent with children was barely affected by their partner's work hours. Mothers of infants spent the most time with their children when fathers were not employed.<sup>47</sup> When fathers of infants were in paid employment, however, there was a relatively small variation in number of hours that mothers spent with their child. This pattern of relative stability of mothers' time spent with children was also found in the 4–5 year-old cohort, irrespective of whether the father was employed or not (see Table 5.5).

Fathers' time with children by activity declines in proportion to the hours they commit to paid work (see Table 5.6), as was the case for the total time spent with children. This was true of fathers of infants and fathers of 4–5 year olds. Fathers did not seem to protect time in any particular activity with the child from the incursion made by allocating more time to earning an income. For example, there does not seem to be any emphasis on maintaining the same time allocation to 'quality time' with children in play or interactive care.

In the same way that total hours mothers spent in the care of the study child (both the infant and 4–5 year-old cohorts) did not vary with respect to fathers' hours (see Table 5.5), when broken down by broad categories of activities, the time mothers spent on particular activities was similarly invariant. Although not shown here, for either cohort, the time mothers spent with the study child did not vary for specific activities across fathers' hours. This invariance of mothers' time with the study child with respect to the employment hours of the father is in contrast to her own hours of paid work (shown earlier in Table 5.3 and Table 5.4).

## 5.2 Perceived co-parenting

### Data

For couple parents, LSAC contains a range of items that measure the extent to which parents feel that they have the support of their partner, and share in child-rearing and other household tasks. These data were collected individually from both parents, allowing for a consideration of how the characteristics of one parent were associated with the responses of the other. The measures used are listed in Box 5.2.

#### Box 5.2: Co-parenting measures

Partner is a support	How often is your partner a resource or support to you in raising your children? (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=always)
You are a support	How often are you a resource or support to your partner in raising your children? (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=always)
Partner understands	How often do you feel your partner understands and is supportive of your needs as a parent? (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=always)
Fair share child-rearing tasks	Do you think that you do your fair share of the child-rearing tasks? (1 = 'I do much less than my fair share', 2 = 'I do less than my fair share', 3 = 'I do my fair share', 4 = 'I do more than my fair share', 5 = 'I do much more than my fair share')
Fair share domestic tasks	Do you think that you do your fair share of the domestic tasks? (coded as above)

### Co-parenting and parental employment

Table 5.7 shows perceived co-parenting measures analysed by own hours worked. The mean score for 'partner is a support' was high for mothers and fathers, with, on average, most parents saying their partner was often or always supportive. Fathers were somewhat more likely than mothers to say their partner was supportive, and this was consistent with the scores on the 'you are a support' measure, where mothers rated themselves higher than fathers.

These measures did not differ greatly by hours worked. Mothers who worked longer hours were more likely to say they had a supportive partner, and as the time-use diaries showed, fathers spent more time with their children when maternal hours of employment were higher. However, the extent to which mothers said they were supportive of their partner did not vary according to their own hours. Fathers who worked longer hours had slightly higher ‘partner is a support’ scores, but the degree to which they perceived themselves to be a support to their partner declined the longer hours they worked. This reflected less time spent with children under these circumstances.

Looking at the ‘partner understands’ score, most parents felt their partner ‘often’ understood them. Fathers were more likely than mothers to feel their partner ‘always’ understood them. Interestingly, the relationship with hours worked differed for mothers and fathers. For mothers, the longer hours they worked, the more likely they were to say their partner understood and was supportive of their needs as a parent. For fathers, the opposite was true—the longer they worked the less likely they were to think their partner understood and was supportive of them in this respect. Interestingly, this went against the pattern evident for fathers and hours worked for the ‘partner is a support’ measure.

**Table 5.7: Perceived co-parenting, by own hours worked**

Hours worked	Partner is a support	You are a support	Partner understands	Fair share child-rearing	Fair share domestic
<b>Mothers</b>					
Not employed	4.40	4.74	4.09	3.88	3.90
1–15	4.40	4.74	4.06	3.83	3.92
16–24	4.46	4.73	4.12	3.77	3.88
25–34	4.45	4.75	4.12	3.74	3.95
35 or more	4.55	4.74	4.20	3.66	3.73
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>4.74</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>3.89</b>
<b>Fathers</b>					
Not employed	4.68	4.36	4.34	3.16	3.11
1–34	4.75	4.32	4.31	3.10	3.03
35–44	4.76	4.16	4.29	2.97	2.93
45–54	4.79	4.06	4.22	2.91	2.82
55 or more	4.78	3.91	4.21	2.77	2.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>2.86</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Co-parenting measures are listed in Box 5.2.

The perceived fairness of sharing of child-rearing and domestic tasks is also shown in Table 5.7. For mothers, the mean score was on the threshold of feeling ‘I do more than my fair share’, while for fathers the mean score was generally closer to the perception that ‘I do my fair share’. This may reflect the clear differences in the average time mothers and fathers allocated to being in the company of their children. Not surprisingly, these measures were related to hours worked, but much more so for the fathers. The ‘fair share child-rearing’ score declined for mothers and fathers as hours worked increased—that is, as one parent worked longer hours, the sharing of child-rearing shifted towards the other parent (or at least, there is a perception that it did). For ‘fair share domestic’, the score remained high for mothers at all hours worked, and was only lower for those working full-time hours (but still remained closer to an average of ‘I do more than my fair share’). For fathers, there was a stronger relationship with hours worked, with fathers working longer hours more likely to say they did less than their fair share.

Did perceptions of co-parenting vary according to partner’s hours worked? Table 5.8 shows these relationships. For mothers, the longer their partner worked, the lower their rating of the partner as a support, and also the lower the rating of the extent to which their partner understood their needs, a pattern consistent with the time-use diary data. The extent to which fathers perceived their partner was a support to them or understood their needs did not appear to vary by partner’s hours worked.

Mothers' perceptions of the degree to which they were a support to their partner did not vary according to the hours their partner worked, matching the fact that mothers' time spent with children hardly varied with respect to their partner's hours of work. Fathers' perceptions did vary according to the hours their partner worked, with fathers more likely to say they were a support in families where the mother worked longer hours, a response related to the pattern of compensating children for the time their mothers spent in employment.

Looking at the 'fairness of sharing of household tasks', mothers were perceived to be taking on more than their fair share of both child-rearing and domestic tasks in families where the husband worked longer. Fathers were most likely to do what they perceived as their fair share (or more) of child-rearing or other domestic tasks when their partner worked full-time. They were least likely to when their partner worked less than 16 hours (but not when the partner was not employed). Once again, these perceptions were grounded in the actual pattern of time allocation revealed in the time-use diary.

**Table 5.8: Co-parenting by partner's hours worked**

Partner's hours worked	Partner is a support	You are a support	Partner understands	Fair share child-rearing	Fair share domestic
<b>Mothers' responses by partner's hours worked</b>					
Not employed	4.48	4.70	4.24	3.68	3.73
1-34	4.46	4.72	4.13	3.70	3.78
35-44	4.50	4.75	4.15	3.78	3.83
45-54	4.41	4.74	4.08	3.83	3.89
55 or more	4.29	4.74	3.99	3.96	4.06
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>4.74</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>3.89</b>
<b>Fathers' responses by partner's hours worked</b>					
Not employed	4.77	4.06	4.26	2.92	2.87
1-15	4.79	4.06	4.24	2.88	2.76
16-24	4.75	4.11	4.24	2.93	2.87
25-34	4.71	4.18	4.23	2.95	2.82
35 or more	4.74	4.32	4.27	3.04	3.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.76</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>2.86</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Co-parenting measures are listed in Box 5.2.

The literature on perceptions of equity, satisfaction and fairness in the domestic division of labour suggests that neither dissatisfaction nor perceived unfairness are automatic consequences of a very unequal domestic division of labour (Baxter 2000; Baxter & Western 1998; Bittman & Pixley 1997). However, the results of this analysis show a plausible consistency between perceptions and time spent with children.

### 5.3 Summary

Combining paid work and the care of young children is time-intensive. The children's time-use diaries showed high hours of parental availability throughout a range of children's activities.

- The time demands are greatest when children are in their first year of life and fall disproportionately upon mothers.
- Mothers' hours of employment reduced their time with children but not in proportion to the extra time demands of their jobs.
- In contrast, fathers' time with their children was only increased under the unusual circumstance of less than full-time employment, and not much affected by the difference between standard full-time hours and very long hours of work.

- ▶ Fathers' time with children increased in response to their partners' hours of employment, partially offsetting reductions in mothers' time for infants and more adequately offsetting losses of maternal availability for 4–5 year olds.
- ▶ Australian parents' expectations about 'sharing' and 'fairness' are broadly formed against a background of specialisation by sex. However, mothers were more likely to indicate they did more than their 'fair share', while fathers feel they were doing their 'fair share'. There is some recognition of how partners try to compensate for each other's work demands and it is likely that social attitudes and, therefore, the expectations that mothers and fathers have of each other are still in flux.

As the successive waves of the longitudinal study accumulate, there will be opportunities to study the effects of how parents spend time with children during their early years on the developmental outcomes of their children, including their resilience to adverse circumstances. Even with this first wave of time-use data, there is considerable scope to expand the analysis of the relationship between time spent with children and parental employment by incorporating parents' work arrangements other than hours worked, such as evening/night or weekend work, self-employment compared to casual or permanent work, the flexibility of hours, or the use of non-parental care arrangements. As well, examination of the times of the day that children undertake different activities with their parents is likely to reveal differences according to parental work arrangements, which in turn may be related to different parental and child wellbeing outcomes.

## 6 Income, financial hardship and perceived prosperity

A number of approaches have been used to measure wellbeing.<sup>48</sup> Traditionally, assessment of personal wellbeing focused on the absence of signs of ill being, but over the last few decades indicators of positive wellbeing have also been emphasised. Personal wellbeing has sometimes been measured in terms of the extent to which individuals have access to a set of resources prejudged as necessary for meeting basic needs for healthy functioning, for handling life's problems, or for achieving 'a good life'. It has also been measured in terms of people's subjective experiences or inner sense of wellness or happiness (Allardt 1993; Campbell 1981; Deci & Ryan 2000). Thus, wellbeing may include objective circumstances such as access to financial and community resources, subjective phenomena such as happiness or life satisfaction, and circumstances that involve gradations of objective and subjective phenomena, such as physical health.

This section focuses on income, financial hardship and perceived prosperity. The following two sections focus on other aspects of wellbeing. Section 7 focuses on work-to-family spillover as an aspect of family wellbeing, and Section 8 addresses the links between employment and family wellbeing, by focusing in depth on parents' health, psychological wellbeing, marital relationship, work–family strains and gains, and time pressures.

Conventionally, measures of hardship and poverty are based on income. However, often the underlying concept of interest is material hardship resulting from a lack of consumption for which low income is used as a proxy. The many facets of poverty mean that it is not appropriate to rely solely on income-based measures to indicate disadvantage (Travers & Richardson 1993).<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, there is often a weak relationship between low income and material hardship because the needs of families are as important as income in determining whether a family experiences material hardship (see Mayer & Jencks 1989 for a discussion of this issue).

This section provides descriptive information on the gross income of families with young children, on the extent to which they report having experienced hardship and their self-reported subjective prosperity. Differences across family types (single-parent and couple-parent) and age of the study child are also examined. The relationships between the measures of income, financial hardship and perceived prosperity and family labour supply are also analysed.

### 6.1 The measures

The measures of income and financial wellbeing used in this section are described below, and summarised in Box 6.1.

**Box 6.1: Financial wellbeing measures**

Unequalised gross weekly income	Based on the question 'Before income tax is taken out, what is your present yearly income (for you and partner combined)? <i>Include pensions and allowances, before tax, superannuation or health insurance</i> '. Yearly income is converted to a weekly income by dividing by 52. Responses were collected in 15 income ranges, and this analysis uses the midpoint of each range. For the top range (\$2,400 or more per week), a value of \$2,900 was used. <sup>50</sup>
Equalised gross weekly income	Household income was adjusted for household size and composition using the modified OECD equivalence scale (refer to text for more information about this scale).
Number of hardships reported	Derived from a six-item question relating to having had financial difficulties in the previous 12 months. The primary carer was asked whether any of the following things had occurred due to shortage of money:  (1) not been able to pay gas, electricity or telephone bills on time (2) could not pay the mortgage or rent on time (3) adults or children have gone without meals (4) been unable to heat or cool your home (5) have pawned or sold something (6) have sought assistance from a welfare or community organisation.  The measure is a count of how many of these 'hardships' the households experienced and ranged from zero to six. See also endnote 55.
Perceived prosperity	This measure is derived by converting the responses to the question 'Given your current needs and financial responsibilities, how would you say you and your family are getting on?' to a six-point numeric scale. Response categories ranged from 'very poor' through to 'prosperous', with 'very poor' assigned a value of one and 'prosperous' a value of six.

**Income**

Wave 1 of LSAC has limited income data. LSAC collects information on the gross annual income of the parent(s).<sup>51</sup> LSAC does not collect information about the income of other members of the household. The incomplete nature of the household income data means that household income can only be measured for households in which the parents are the only adults. In these households parental income and total household income will be the same. Therefore, when analysing household income, households with other adults present (including children aged over 15) are excluded.<sup>52</sup>

When comparing incomes across different population groups for the purpose of assessing living standards, it is necessary to adjust household income for household size and composition in order to take into account differences in the costs of living. For example, a household with two adults will require a household income greater than that of a single adult household to attain the same standard of living. Similarly, a household with one adult and one child will require more income than a single adult household, but perhaps not as much as a two-adult household to achieve this standard of living.

The adjustment to household family income for household size and composition is done using equivalence scales. There are a number of equivalence scales that can be used. A widely used scale is the modified OECD equivalence scale.<sup>53</sup> This equivalence scale gives a weight of 1.0 to the first adult, 0.5 to the second and subsequent adults, and 0.3 to all dependent children. Each household's income is converted to an equalised income by dividing total household income by the value of the scale for that household, resulting in a measure that can be compared across households of different size and composition.<sup>54</sup>



To show how equivalence scales work, the following example considers a household with total income of \$900 per week. If this family comprised two adults and two children, to obtain the equivalised household income, the \$900 would be divided by 2.1, resulting in an equivalised income of \$428. If the household comprised one adult and two children, applying the equivalence scale of 1.6 gives an equivalised income of \$562. A higher value of equivalised household income for the single-parent family would indicate this family could afford a higher material standard of living than a couple-parent family on the same unequivalised household income.

### **Hardship**

In LSAC, experience of financial and material hardship is measured by asking the primary carer a series of questions about the degree to which they have been affected by a shortage of money, looking at specific indicators that are outlined in Box 6.1.<sup>55</sup> These indicators of financial stress may be considered a form of deprivation measure because they largely reflect that the household went without certain items or services.

### **Prosperity**

LSAC also contains a question of the primary carer about how they and their family are getting on financially (perceived prosperity). Response categories range from very poor to prosperous.<sup>56</sup>

### **Income support**

This section also includes an examination of the extent to which different families receive an income support payment from the government. This information is based on whether either parent received a payment, and is based on reported receipt of government support, which as discussed later, may underreport the actual receipt of government support. This section focuses only on receipt of income support payments, which includes the following payments: Parenting Payment (Single), Parenting Payment (Partnered), Carer Allowance, Disability Support Pension, Newstart Allowance or another income support payment. Receipt of Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A or B was not analysed, as an initial examination of the data indicated probable significant underreporting of receipt of these payments.

## **6.2 Household income**

This section provides an overview of the household income data. Both the unequivalised and equivalised household income for couple-parent families and single mothers were analysed. Single fathers were excluded, as were households with adults other than the parents present, as discussed earlier in the section.

The average unequivalised gross household income for the infant cohort was \$1,201 per week and for the 4–5 year-old cohort it was only slightly higher at \$1,268 per week (see Table 6.1). Differences were apparent between single mothers from the infant cohort and those from the 4–5 year-old cohort. Single mothers from the infant cohort had an income of \$456 compared to \$543 from the 4–5 year-old cohort. A similar pattern was evident for couple-parent families. Couple families from the infant cohort had, on average, unequivalised income of \$1,290 per week compared to \$1,391 for those from the 4–5 year-old cohort. A possible reason for the differences in the income of single-parent and couple-parent families across cohorts are the number of adults (parents) employed, and if employed, the hours worked. This is explored in Section 6.3.

As discussed, in order to compare financial living standards it is necessary to adjust for differences in household composition using an equivalence scale. Overall, single-mother families had a much lower equivalised income than couple-parent families. For the infant cohort, the equivalised weekly gross income for single-mother families was \$290 per week, while couple-parent families had an equivalised income of \$641 (see Table 6.1). The pattern for families from the 4–5 year-old cohort was similar. Single-mother families had an equivalised income of \$336 compared to \$639 for couple-parent families.

**Table 6.1: Unequivalised and equivalised weekly household income, by cohort and family type**

Family type	Unequivalised income (\$)	Equivalised income (\$)	Number of observations
<b>Infant</b>			
Single-mother family	456	290	284
Couple-parent family	1,290	641	4,019
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,201</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>4,303</b>
<b>4–5 year old</b>			
Single-mother family	543	336	483
Couple-parent family	1,391	639	3,648
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,268</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>4,131</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes families with missing income data and households with adults other than parents present.

### 6.3 Parental labour supply and household income

There was a clear relationship between parental labour supply and household income. This is not surprising given the importance of wage and salary (and business) income to Australian households. Households with no parent employed, whether single-mother or couple-parent, had the lowest income (see Table 6.2). In couple-parent families, those with two parents employed had higher incomes than those with one parent employed. For example, in the infant cohort, the average unequivalised income of single-mother families in which the mother was not employed was \$425 and if employed was \$603. For couples, if neither parent was employed the average unequivalised income was \$561, if one was employed it was \$1,222 and if both were employed \$1,490. The effect of parental employment on income was also evident from the comparison of couple-parent families where the primary carer worked full-time (\$1,768) to those where the primary carer worked part-time (\$1,428). The same relationships were observed for the 4–5 year-old cohort. Single mothers working full-time also had higher income than those working part-time, although the sample size was too small to make this distinction in the infant cohort.

As noted earlier, within family types the 4–5 year-old cohort had somewhat higher average unequivalised income than the infant cohort. An important factor is the difference in parental employment. Parents were more likely to be employed, and more likely to be employed full-time in the 4–5 year-old cohort than the infant cohort. For example, in the infant cohort, 36.9 per cent of families were couple-parent families in which both parents worked (30.0 per cent where the primary carer worked part-time and 6.8 per cent where the primary carer worked full-time). In the 4–5 year-old cohort, 47.8 per cent of families were couples in which both parents worked, including 35.3 per cent in which the primary carer worked part-time and 12.3 per cent in which the primary carer worked full-time.

Within each combination of family type and parental employment status there are still differences between the cohorts in unequivalised household income. For families who received income support or family payments, a contributing factor was that families of the 4–5 year-old cohort had, on average, more children than those in the infant cohort, thereby making these families eligible for more assistance. There are, however, other factors that were not examined here, including the exact hours worked (as demonstrated elsewhere in this report, the categories of full-time and part-time work do not capture the full extent of diversity in hours worked), other job characteristics, or measures of human capital such as educational levels of parents. Any differences in these factors are associated with different average incomes across the cohorts.

Some of the compositional differences between cohorts are taken into account when equivalised income is considered. For example, while single not-employed mothers in the 4–5 year-old cohort had higher unequivalised income than those in the infant cohort (\$447 compared to \$425), the equivalised income was virtually the same (\$262 in the infant cohort and \$264 in the 4–5 year-old cohort). While the unequivalised income of couple-parent families, by parental employment, was higher in the 4–5 year-old cohort, the equivalised income was actually lower in the 4–5 year-old cohort. That is, while couple-parent families had more income in the 4–5 year-old cohort, they had more family members to sustain with that income. This was not true of employed single-mother families, whose equivalised income was higher in the 4–5 year-old cohort. The higher income in this cohort translated into a better standard of living, as measured by the amount of income adjusted for family composition.

Overall, as with unequivalised income, greater parental employment was associated with higher levels of equivalised income. These data, interpreted as financial wellbeing, showed that financial wellbeing was higher in families with at least one parent employed, and higher still in couple-parent families where two parents were employed; and full-time as opposed to part-time employment further improved financial wellbeing.

**Table 6.2: Unequivalised and equivalised weekly household income, by cohort, family type and family labour supply**

Family type	Unequivalised income (\$)	Equivalised income (\$)	Number of observations
<b>Infant</b>			
<b>Single-mother family</b>			
Not employed	425	262	227
Employed	603	420	56
<b>Single-mother total</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>Couple-parent family</b>			
Neither parent employed	561	261	170
One parent employed	1,222	601	2,207
Both parents employed	1,490	744	1,642
<i>Primary carer works part-time</i>	1,424	707	1,341
<i>Primary carer works full-time</i>	1,768	906	295
<b>Couple-parent family total</b>	<b>1,290</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>4,019</b>
<b>Total infant cohort</b>	<b>1,201</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>4,303</b>
<b>4–5 year old</b>			
<b>Single-mother family</b>			
Not employed	447	264	274
Employed	686	445	209
<i>Works part-time</i>	599	389	152
<i>Works full-time</i>	922	594	57
<b>Single-mother total</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>483</b>
<b>Couple-parent family</b>			
Neither parent employed	587	248	133
One parent employed	1,247	560	1,450
Both parents employed	1,575	731	2,062
<i>Primary carer works part-time</i>	1,523	699	1,539
<i>Primary carer works full-time</i>	1,721	825	518
<b>Couple-parent family total</b>	<b>1,391</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>3,648</b>
<b>Total 4–5 year-old cohort</b>	<b>1,268</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>4,131</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes families with missing income data and households with adults other than parents present.  
Part-time employment is defined as less than 35 hours per week.

## 6.4 Financial hardship and perceived prosperity

The measures of hardship and prosperity do not need to be equivalised for differences in family size and consumption since they implicitly take account of differences in the consumption needs of families.

Single mothers were much more likely to report having experienced at least one of the types of financial or material hardship than parents in couple-parent families (see Table 6.3). Over 70 per cent of couple-parent families had not experienced any of the hardships, whereas only about 40 per cent of single mothers reported having experienced no hardships in the previous 12 months.<sup>57</sup> The most common hardship was not being able to pay gas, electricity or telephone bills on time.

Single mothers were also much more likely to have reported experiencing a number of financial hardships in the previous 12 months than couple-parent families. For example, 7.1 per cent of single-mother families in the infant cohort reported having experienced four or more of the hardships. Among couple-parent families in the infant cohort, just 2.0 per cent had experienced four or more hardships. There was little difference in the patterns of financial hardship reported between the infant and 4–5 year-old cohort for both couple-parent and single-mother families.

**Table 6.3: Number of hardships experienced, couple-parent and single-mother families, by cohort (column per cent)**

Hardships	Infant		4–5 year old	
	Couple-parent family	Single-mother family	Couple-parent family	Single-mother family
0	70.4	40.7	72.7	39.1
1	17.4	23.8	16.2	23.1
2	7.0	17.8	7.2	15.8
3	3.2	10.6	2.6	11.9
4 to 6	2.0	7.1	1.4	10.1
<i>Average number of hardships reported</i>	<i>0.50</i>	<i>1.22</i>	<i>0.44</i>	<i>1.33</i>
	<b>(n=4,608)</b>	<b>(n=464)</b>	<b>(n=4,260)</b>	<b>(n=651)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Single father families are excluded.

Single-mother families also reported lower levels of family prosperity than couple-parent families (see Table 6.4). This was the case for both the infant and 4–5 year-old cohort families. For both couple-parent and single-mother families, only a very small proportion reported being prosperous (the maximum was 2.2 per cent for couple-parent families from the 4–5 year-old cohort). Similarly, a small proportion of families reported being very poor (the maximum was 2.1 per cent for single-mother families from the 4–5 year-old cohort).

The biggest difference between single-mother and couple-parent families was that single-mother families were more likely to say that they were ‘just getting along’ (47.8 and 51.5 per cent among the infant and 4–5 year-old cohorts respectively) than couple-parent families (33.4 and 31.2 per cent among the infant and 4–5 year-old cohorts respectively). Couple families were more likely to report being ‘very comfortable’ or ‘reasonably comfortable’ than single-mother families.

**Table 6.4: Perceived family prosperity, couple-parent and single-mother families, by cohort (column per cent)**

Perceived prosperity	Infant		4–5 year old	
	Couple-parent family	Single-mother family	Couple-parent family	Single-mother family
Prosperous	1.6	1.2	2.2	0.8
Very comfortable	15.1	11.5	16.8	6.6
Reasonably comfortable	46.6	32.9	47.1	32.4
Just getting along	33.4	47.8	31.2	51.5
Poor	2.7	6.0	2.1	6.6
Very poor	0.6	0.7	0.6	2.1
	<b>(n=4,625)</b>	<b>(n=471)</b>	<b>(n=4,280)</b>	<b>(n=657)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Single-father families were excluded. Some observations were missing due to non-responses to the prosperity question. Details of the perceived prosperity measure are provided in Box 6.1.

## 6.5 Parental labour supply and financial hardship and perceived prosperity

In this section, the relationship between parental labour supply and financial hardship and perceived prosperity is presented (see Table 6.5). The analysis was conducted separately for single-mother and couple-parent families. Families with adults other than parents were included in this analysis.<sup>58</sup>

For both single-mother and couple-parent families, jobless families reported having experienced a higher number of hardships than families in which there was parental employment. Interestingly, although single-mother families reported having experienced a greater number of hardships than couple-parent families (irrespective of whether there was parental employment in the household), the difference in the number of hardships between jobless families and families in which at least one parent was employed was greater for couple-parent families than single-mother families. This pattern holds for families from both cohorts.

**Table 6.5: Perceived prosperity, by age cohort, family type and family labour supply**

Family type	Number of hardships	Perceived prosperity	Number of observations
<b>Infant</b>			
<b>Single-mother family</b>			
Not employed	1.23	3.53	379
Employed	1.14	3.50	91
<b>Single-mother total</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>471</b>
<b>Couple-parent family</b>			
Neither parent employed	1.30	3.27	238
One parent employed	0.48	3.76	2,553
Both parents employed	0.41	3.88	1,833
<i>Primary carer works part-time</i>	0.41	3.87	1,488
<i>Primary carer works full-time</i>	0.36	3.93	339
<b>Couple-parent family total</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>4,625</b>
<b>4–5 year old</b>			
<b>Single-mother family</b>			
Not employed	1.52	3.32	381
Employed	1.05	3.46	275
<i>Works part-time</i>	1.11	3.41	197
<i>Works full-time</i>	0.87	3.59	76
<b>Single-mother total</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>657</b>
<b>Couple-parent family</b>			
Neither parent employed	1.15	3.33	185
One parent employed	0.53	3.76	1,709
Both parents employed	0.31	3.95	2,383
<i>Primary carer works part-time</i>	0.32	3.95	1,753
<i>Primary carer works full-time</i>	0.30	3.94	624
<b>Couple-parent family total</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>4,280</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Part-time employment is defined as less than 35 hours per week. Details on the construction of the hardship and perceived prosperity measures are provided in Box 6.1. Some observations are missing due to non-responses for the prosperity or hardship questions. The number of observations relates to the number contributing to the hardship measure, and it is slightly higher than indicated in some cells for the prosperity measure.

For couple-parent families, although having both parents employed resulted in a lower number of hardships being reported, the difference compared to couple-parent families in which only one parent was employed was relatively small. For example, for couple-parent families from the 4–5 year-old cohort in which only one parent was employed, the average number of hardships experienced was 0.53 compared to 0.31 for couple-parent families in which both parents were employed (see Table 6.5).

The prosperity measure did not vary to the same extent as the number of hardships measure across family type and employment status, although the patterns were largely similar to those identified in the analysis of hardship. Single mothers' prosperity did not vary significantly according to employment status, but was overall lower than that of couples. Not-employed couple-parent families had the lowest levels of self-reported prosperity; even lower than single mothers. Prosperity was higher in couples with at least one parent employed, with significantly higher prosperity reported in families where two parents were employed.

In dual-working couple-parent families, financial wellbeing, as measured by reported hardships and perceived prosperity, did not vary significantly according to whether the primary carer worked full-time or part-time hours (see Table 6.5) This is despite considerable differences in income according to the hours worked by primary carers (see Table 6.2). A possible reason for the weak relationship between primary carers' hours and reported hardship or prosperity is that some primary carers may work full-time to boost the finances of the household where there are more financial pressures. While the income may be higher in these families, so may be the financial commitments, for example, the mortgage repayments.

## 6.6 Receipt of government support

The analysis in this section is based on parents' reports of financial support they received from the government. Some caution needs to be exercised when interpreting this information on self-reported receipt of income support payments as there is evidence from other surveys that parents do not always accurately state which government payments they are in receipt of. For example, a significant proportion of mothers in receipt of a FTB Part A or B, when asked whether they received an income support payment, gave an incorrect response (Gray & Renda forthcoming). According to Gray and Renda's research, the lack of knowledge was in both directions with mothers who received an income support payment reporting that they did not, and others who did not receive an income support payment incorrectly reporting that they did receive a payment.

Initial examination of the self-reported government payments indicated that the data on receipt of FTB was problematic. For example, 93 per cent of single-mother families reported receiving an income support payment, but only 73 per cent reported receiving FTB Part B. However, all single-parent families are eligible for FTB Part B. There was also an apparent underreporting of FTB Part A. This section therefore focuses only on receipt of income support payments.

The vast majority of single mothers who were not employed reported receiving an income support payment (95.0 per cent for the infant cohort and 97.6 per cent for the 4–5 year-old cohort in Table 6.6). A large proportion of employed single mothers also reported receiving an income support payment (84.0 per cent among the infant cohort and 76.3 per cent among the 4–5 year-old cohort). This high proportion of employed single mothers receiving an income support payment was a consequence of the income support system rules that allowed single mothers to continue to receive some income support payments while earning quite substantial amounts of income (Centrelink 2005).<sup>59</sup>

Among couple-parent families, the proportion in receipt of an income support payment was much lower than for single-mother families. For jobless couples, 80.8 per cent from the infant cohort and 85.7 per cent from the 4–5 year-old cohort reported having at least one parent in receipt of an income support payment. Of the jobless couple-parent families that did not report receiving an income support payment, some had one or both of the parents on paid parental leave. Other jobless couple-parent families had a significant source of income other than from paid employment.<sup>60</sup> There were also likely to have been respondents receiving an income support payment who incorrectly reported that they did not.

Compared to jobless couples, couples in which one parent was employed had much lower rates of receipt of income support payments (22.3 per cent for the infant cohort and 28.9 per cent for the 4–5 year-old cohort). When both parents were employed, the percentage receiving income support was lower again (10.5 per cent for the infant cohort and 14.2 per cent for the 4–5 year-old cohort).

The lower rates of receipt of income support payments among employed couples compared to employed single mothers was explained by differences in the eligibility conditions and income test for income support payments for single-parent and couple-parent families, as well as the lower incomes of single mothers.

**Table 6.6: Receipt of income support payments, by family type, cohort and family labour supply**

Family type	Per cent reporting receipt of income support		Number of observations	
	Infant	4–5 year old	Infant	4–5 year old
<b>Single-mother family</b>	<b>93.1</b>	<b>88.9</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>693</b>
Not employed	95.0	97.6	385	404
Employed	84.0	76.3	91	289
<b>Couple-parent family</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>4,627</b>	<b>4,281</b>
Neither parent employed	80.8	85.7	238	185
One parent employed	22.3	28.9	2,555	1,712
Both parents employed	10.5	14.2	1,834	2,384
<b>Total</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>33.6</b>	<b>5,103</b>	<b>4,974</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: For couples, the figures refer to income support payment received by either parent. Income support is Parenting Payment (Single) or Parenting Payment (Partnered), Carer Allowance, Disability Support Pension, Newstart Allowance or other income support.

## 6.7 Summary

Very few of the families assessed themselves as getting along ‘poorly’ or ‘very poorly’ financially. At the other extreme, few families said that they were prosperous. Single-mother families were more likely than couple-parent families to say that they were ‘just getting along’ financially, and couple-parent families were more likely so say that they were ‘very comfortable’ or ‘reasonably comfortable’ financially.

- As expected, having a parent or parents in paid employment was associated with an increased equivalised family income.
- Single-mother families had much higher rates of having experienced financial hardship and having experienced multiple hardships than couple-parent families.
- For both single-mother and couple-parent families, jobless families reported having experienced a higher number of hardships than families in which there was parental employment.
- Much of the difference in equivalised family income between single-mother and couple-parent families was explained by the higher rates of joblessness among single-mother than among couple-parent families.
- For couple-parent families, although having both parents employed resulted in a lower number of hardships being reported, the difference compared to couple-parent families in which only one parent was employed was relatively small.

The analyses in this section revealed a strong connection between parental employment and financial wellbeing. The equivalised income measures, as well as the hardships and perceived prosperity measures, highlight the financial wellbeing benefits that follow from parental employment.





## 7 Work–family spillover

The literature surrounding work and family balance recognises that the interplay between the work and home environments is crucial to the understanding of individual and family wellbeing. It has long been recognised that events that affect the feelings, attitudes and experiences of a parent in either the family or work environment can ‘spill over’ into other spheres of a parent’s life and that of their family. This spillover can be positive or negative and can impact in either direction.

For example, stress at work can result in tensions within the family because parents are unable to devote the necessary time or energy to maintain family relationships. Equally, difficulties with relationships within the family have the potential to affect an individual’s capacity to perform within the workplace environment. In addition, past research has also emphasised that work often has positive relationships with parenting (Barnett & Hyde 2001) and self-perception (Barnett, Marshall & Pleck 1992; Marks & MacDermid 1996).

This section focuses on the direct effects of paid employment on family life (work-to-family spillover and the effects of work on parenting and work on self) and the effects of family life on paid employment (family-to-work spillover). Collectively, these four concepts can be summarised as work–family spillover. The next section addresses the effects of paid employment on a wider range of measures of personal and family wellbeing. This section on work–family spillover has been included because it is the measure of wellbeing that most directly draws a link between paid employment and family wellbeing.

Research into the determinants of work–family spillover can be broadly categorised into three areas. The first has focused on whether men and women experience work–family spillover to the same extent or in the same way. Early research focused on perceived innate sex differences to explain apparent differences between women and men, although this approach is less prevalent these days, partly because not all studies find these effects, and partly because more compelling reasons have emerged (Marshall & Barnett 1993; Milkie & Peltola 1999).

More recent studies have considered the extent to which parents identify with each of the family and work roles. Where identification is poor, conflict can arise leading to negative spillover effects (Cinamon and Rich 2002a; Cinamon & Rich 2002b; Westman & Etzion 1995).

The second broad area for the determinants of work–family spillover has been the differing workplace environments that confront parents and are particularly pertinent to the issues within this report. The available research has found that while long working hours may have a negative impact upon wellbeing, this is not necessarily the case (Barnett 1998; Gray et al. 2004). More important to work–family spillover than actual hours worked appears to be the nature of the work itself—in particular, the perceived ‘quality’, complexity and skill level of the job, as well as the degree of flexibility, job security and schedule control a worker has over their tasks. Work hours that encompass less family-friendly work schedules (evening/night work, weekend work, shift work, or excessive overtime) have been found to be associated with greater negative work–family spillover (Barnett 1998; Alexander & Baxter 2005).

The third broad area concerns the home environment and is not something dealt with in detail in this report. In summary though, work–family spillover has been found to be associated with the care needs of young children or ill or elderly relatives, the time required to perform household work, or its distribution within families (Barnett 1994; Barnett & Marshall 1992a; Barnett & Marshall 1992b; Coltrane 2001). The quality of a parent’s roles within the home (as spouse or parent) has also been shown to be an influential factor (Greenstein 1996; Marshall & Barnett 1993; Milkie & Peltola 1999).

A number of these relationships with work–family spillover are explored in Section 8, where the family and work variables associated with wellbeing measures are considered. The remainder of this section provides a more detailed introduction to the work–family spillover measures because of their capacity to draw a more direct link between aspects of employment and individual and family wellbeing.

## 7.1 Data and measures

LSAC contains a number of measures of the effect of paid employment on family life (work-to-family spillover) and the effects of family life on paid employment (family-to-work spillover). Employed parents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with ten statements describing the relationship between work and family. The ten statements in LSAC focused on negative work-to-family and family-to-work spillovers, as well as the positive effects of work on parenting and on self. The statements that the parents were asked to respond to are listed in Table 7.1. These measures are a subset of Marshall and Barnett's (1993) measures.<sup>61</sup>

While the individual measures are of interest in their own right, they can be combined to form a number of scales that are measures of the different aspects of the interplay between paid employment and family life. The advantage of the scales is that since they are based on responses to more than one question, they may provide more reliable measures than those based on answers to a single question. The scales used in this section are:

- Positive aspects of work on family life: work–family gains
  - Positive effect of work on parenting
  - Positive effect of work on self
- Negative aspects of the interplay between paid employment and family life: work–family strains
  - Negative work-to-family spillover
  - Negative family-to-work spillover

Although there are some differences between cohorts in the measures of work–family spillover, they are generally small. Therefore, the analysis in this section combines both cohorts.<sup>62</sup>

## 7.2 Elements of work–family gains

For both mothers and fathers, most (73.2 and 71.8 per cent, respectively) agreed or strongly agreed that working helps them to better appreciate the time that they spend with their children (see Table 7.1). About half the mothers and fathers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their working had a positive effect on their children, while just over one-third neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Both mothers and fathers were less likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement that working makes them a better parent. Just over a third of working mothers (36.5 per cent) responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 41.0 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement and 22.5 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Again, fathers gave very similar responses to this statement (see Table 7.1). As a result, the mean positive effect of work on parenting score for mothers and fathers was almost identical (see Table 7.2).

This similarity of responses between mothers and fathers on these three statements was interesting, given that fathers on average were working longer hours than mothers (see Section 3).

**Table 7.1: Work-family spillover measures, employed parents, both cohorts (row per cent)**

Work-family spillover measures	Strongly agree/ agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree/ disagree
<b>Employed mothers</b>			
<b>Effect of work on parenting scale</b>			
My working has a positive effect on my children	51.2	36.5	12.2
Working helps me to better appreciate the time that I spend with my children	73.2	17.7	9.2
The fact that I work makes me a better parent	36.5	41.0	22.5
<b>Effect of work on self scale</b>			
Having work and family responsibilities:			
Makes me a more well-rounded person	65.1	26.3	8.6
Gives my life more variety	82.1	12.5	5.4
Makes me feel competent	72.5	20.6	6.8
<b>Effect of work on family scale</b>			
Because of work responsibilities:			
I have missed out on home or family activities that I would like to have taken part in	39.8	12.7	47.5
My family time is less enjoyable and more pressured	22.6	17.9	59.5
<b>Effect of family responsibilities on work scale</b>			
Because of my family responsibilities:			
I have to turn down work activities that I would prefer to take on	25.6	17.2	57.2
The time I spend working is less enjoyable and more pressured	19.9	21.7	58.4
<b>Employed fathers</b>			
<b>Effect of work on parenting scale</b>			
My working has a positive effect on my children	49.7	35.5	14.8
Working helps me to better appreciate the time that I spend with my children	71.8	17.0	11.2
The fact that I work makes me a better parent	41.7	37.3	21.0
<b>Effect of work on self scale</b>			
Having work and family responsibilities:			
Makes me a more well-rounded person	72.3	21.6	6.2
Gives my life more variety	74.3	19.0	6.7
Makes me feel competent	70.2	23.5	6.2
<b>Effect of work on family scale</b>			
Because of work responsibilities:			
I have missed out on home or family activities that I would like to have taken part in	65.8	12.9	21.3
My family time is less enjoyable and more pressured	24.5	20.1	55.4
<b>Effect of family responsibilities on work scale</b>			
Because of my family responsibilities:			
I have to turn down work activities that I would prefer to take on	16.8	18.3	64.9
The time I spend working is less enjoyable and more pressured	18.8	27.8	53.4

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: The number of observations differs slightly between measures due to variations in the rate of non-responses to individual questions. The sample size for mothers is between 3,828 and 3,856 compared to between 6,100 and 6,133 for fathers.

For the effect of work on self, most parents agreed or strongly agreed that having work and family responsibilities made them a more well-rounded person (65.1 per cent of mothers, 72.3 per cent of fathers), gave their life more variety (82.1 per cent of mothers, 74.3 per cent of fathers) and made them feel competent (72.5 per cent of mothers, 70.2 per cent of fathers). The mean score for this scale was the same for mothers and fathers (see Table 7.2).

As a result of the similarity of mothers' and fathers' scores on the effect of work on parenting and on self, the overall work–family gains score was the same for mothers and fathers (see Table 7.2).

**Table 7.2: Work–family gains, mean work–family spillover measures, employed mothers and fathers**

<b>Work–family spillover measures</b>	<b>Mothers</b>	<b>Fathers</b>
<b>Effect of work on parenting scale</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>3.52</b>
My working has a positive effect on my children	3.48	3.45
Working helps me to better appreciate the time that I spend with my children	3.88	3.84
The fact that I work makes me a better parent	3.17	3.28
<b>Effect of work on self scale</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>3.82</b>
Having work and family responsibilities:		
Makes me a more well-rounded person	3.70	3.83
Gives my life more variety	3.94	3.83
Makes me feel competent	3.83	3.79
<b>Work–family gains</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>3.67</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: The average score is calculated by assigning each response a numeric value in the range of one for strongly disagree to five for strongly agree. A higher score indicates a greater level of agreement with the scale. A score of three represents neither agree nor disagree.

### 7.3 Elements of work–family strains

There were more differences between mothers and fathers on the work–family strains scores, with fathers having a higher score (indicating greater work–family strain, refer to Table 7.3).

The negative effect of work on family life (work-to-family spillover) was perceived to be greater by fathers, who were more likely than mothers to agree or strongly agree that they had missed out on home or family activities that they would have liked to have taken part in (65.8 per cent of fathers compared to 39.8 per cent of mothers). Mothers and fathers were more similar with regard to the degree to which work responsibilities meant their family time was less enjoyable and more pressured (59.5 per cent of mothers and 55.4 per cent of fathers disagreed or strongly disagreed, refer to Table 7.1).

Combining these two measures reveals fathers had a higher level of work-to-family spillover (see Table 7.3).

Mothers were slightly more likely than fathers to agree or strongly agree with the statements relating to the negative effects that family responsibilities can have on work (family-to-work spillover). For example, 25.6 per cent of mothers agreed or strongly agreed that because of family responsibilities they had to turn down work activities that they would have preferred to take on (see Table 7.1). Among employed fathers, 16.8 per cent agreed with this statement. There was little difference between mothers and fathers in the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement that because of their family responsibilities the time they spend working was less enjoyable and more pressured. Only a minority of mothers and fathers (19.9 and 18.8 per cent respectively) agreed with this statement, although mothers were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree than fathers (58.4 per cent compared to 53.4 per cent, respectively). These two statements together reveal that mothers were more likely to experience family-to-work spillover (see Table 7.3), which contrasts with the greater work-to-family spillover experienced by fathers discussed earlier.

Together, the work-to-family and family-to-work spillover scales produce the work–family strains measure that is analysed in Section 8. Overall, the strains were higher for fathers than mothers (see Table 7.3).

**Table 7.3: Work–family strains, mean work–family spillover measures, employed mothers and fathers**

<b>Work–family spillover measures</b>	<b>Mothers</b>	<b>Fathers</b>
<b>Effect of work on family scale</b>	<b>2.66</b>	<b>3.10</b>
Because of work responsibilities:		
I have missed out on home or family activities that I would like to have taken part in	2.86	3.62
My family time is less enjoyable and more pressured	2.46	2.58
<b>Effect of family on work scale</b>	<b>2.51</b>	<b>2.46</b>
Because of my family responsibilities:		
I have to turn down work activities that I would prefer to take on	2.54	2.36
The time I spend working is less enjoyable and more pressured	2.48	2.55
<b>Work–family strains</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>2.78</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: The average score is calculated by assigning each response a numeric value in the range of one for strongly disagree to five for strongly agree. A higher score indicates a greater level of agreement with the scale. A score of three represents neither agree nor disagree.

## 7.4 Working hours and the impact of work on family life and family life on work

This section presents information on how the effects of work on family life and the effects of family responsibilities on work vary according to working hours. The scales described above are used: effect of work on parenting; effect of work on self; effect of work on family life; and effect of family responsibilities on work. The analysis is based on both cohorts combined. Due to the relatively small number of mothers working long hours and fathers working part-time hours, different categorisations of hours for mothers and fathers were used (see Table 7.4).

For mothers, the work–family gains were greatest for those working 16 to 24 hours per week, both in respect of effects of work on parenting and work on self. The work–family gains decreased with a decrease or increase in hours worked in this category, with the lowest gains being for those mothers working 35 hours or more. The work–family strains were greatest for those working 35 hours or more, with the stronger relationship being the effect of work on family life. The work–family strains declined where mothers were working shorter hours. Thus for employed mothers, work–family gains were maximised for those working medium part-time hours (16 to 24 hours per week), while work–family strains were minimised for those working short part-time hours (less than 16 hours per week).

For fathers, work–family gains declined as hours worked increased, and work–family strains increased the more hours fathers worked. These relationships were also evident in the underlying scales, although the effect of family on work did not vary among those working less than very long (55 or more) full-time hours. Thus for working fathers, the maximum work–family gains and minimum work–family strains were found for those working part-time hours (less than 35 hours per week).

**Table 7.4: Work–family spillover scores, employed mothers and fathers, by hours worked**

Usual hours	Effect of work on parenting	Effect of work on self	Work–family gains	Effect of work on family	Effect of family on work	Work–family strains
<b>Mothers</b>						
1–15	3.50	3.82	<b>3.66</b>	2.26	2.41	<b>2.33</b>
16–24	3.56	3.87	<b>3.71</b>	2.66	2.50	<b>2.58</b>
25–34	3.50	3.83	<b>3.66</b>	2.86	2.58	<b>2.72</b>
35 or more	3.48	3.76	<b>3.62</b>	3.19	2.65	<b>2.92</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>2.66</b>	<b>2.51</b>	<b>2.59</b>
<b>Fathers</b>						
1–34	3.56	3.88	<b>3.72</b>	2.69	2.44	<b>2.56</b>
35–44	3.55	3.83	<b>3.69</b>	2.99	2.44	<b>2.71</b>
45–54	3.52	3.81	<b>3.66</b>	3.12	2.44	<b>2.78</b>
55 or more	3.47	3.80	<b>3.64</b>	3.38	2.50	<b>2.94</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>2.78</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

## 7.5 Summary

This section has introduced the concepts of work–family gains and strains. While a more comprehensive set of family wellbeing measures are considered in Section 8, it is important to introduce these work–family spillover measures first as they draw the link more directly between paid employment and family wellbeing. A more comprehensive analysis of the work–family gains and work–family strains scores is undertaken in Section 8, where multivariate analyses are used to relate these scores to family and job characteristics.

- Employed mothers and fathers varied very little on the individual items that comprised the effects of work-on-parenting and work-on-self scores, and also on the composite measure of work–family gains.
- There were more differences between mothers and fathers on the work–family strains scores, with fathers having a higher score (indicating greater work–family strain). Fathers were more likely to indicate they missed out on family activities because of work commitments. They were also more likely to say their family time was less enjoyable because of work responsibilities and that their work time was less enjoyable because of family responsibilities. Mothers, however, were more likely to say they had to turn down work opportunities because of family responsibilities, although this was not sufficient to outweigh the more negative responses of fathers on the other three work–family strains items.
- For employed mothers, work–family gains were maximised for those working medium part-time hours (16 to 24 hours per week), while work–family strains were minimised for those working short part-time hours (less than 16 hours per week). For employed fathers, work–family gains declined as hours worked increased, and work–family strains increased the more hours fathers worked.

## 8 Employment and wellbeing

Paid employment delivers a range of benefits for families. As well as income, it can provide the opportunity for social interaction and support, and can be associated with increased self-esteem (London et al. 2004). On the other hand, unsatisfactory employment can be damaging to an individual and their family. For parents, paid employment generally needs to be combined with caring for their children. Thus, the extent to which work provides benefits for families is likely to also depend on working hours, whether the other parent is working (if a couple-parent family), and work conditions.

This section looks at the associations between work arrangements and individual and family wellbeing. Wellbeing has been defined broadly, in terms of parents' health, relationship quality and conflicts, work–family strains and gains, and time pressure. Work–family strains and gains are discussed and analysed in Section 7, and in this section a more detailed analysis is presented. Wellbeing also includes economic prosperity (or financial wellbeing), so references to those findings reported in Section 6 on income, financial hardship and perceived prosperity are made where relevant. This section focuses on the following questions:

- What aspects of paid employment, including parents' work arrangements, affect wellbeing?
- Are there trade-offs between different aspects of wellbeing for employed mothers and fathers?
- Are the same patterns observed for mothers and fathers?

As in previous sections, the results are based on cross-sectional analyses of LSAC. The analyses therefore, identify co-relationships in the data, that is they show where indicators of wellbeing vary or are constant across different combinations of work arrangements or conditions. The findings should not be interpreted as causal relationships. Further waves of LSAC will provide opportunities to examine the nature of these relationships more fully.

Understanding the connections between employment and wellbeing is timely. Since the early 1970s, there has been a steady increase in Australian mothers' labour force participation, especially into part-time jobs (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2002–2005; Gray et al. 2003). Dual-earner families have now become the most common family form (Renda 2003). Debate on parents' employment and wellbeing is shifting, with a focus on the sorts of jobs parents have, as well as the hours they work and their conditions of work. Further, there is evidence that parents' work hours and conditions are also changing. These changes include increases in part-time work (for women), jobs with very long hours, unpaid overtime, and casual employment. There has also been a debate about whether employment has become less secure (Campbell 2004; Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training 1999; Gray et al. 2003; Wooden 2002; Hancock 2002). The extent to which there is a relationship between characteristics of jobs and family wellbeing has important policy implications.

In this section several sets of analyses are conducted. A broad overview of the relations between mothers' and fathers' wellbeing and their employment status (not employed, part-time employed, and full-time employed) is presented. A comparison between single and couple mothers is also made.

This section also includes an examination of the way parental wellbeing varies with different work conditions, including flexible work hours, work on weekends or evenings/nights, job security and job autonomy or control. Alexander and Baxter (2005) estimated the associations between these variables and work-to-family spillover, also using LSAC. Both longitudinal and cross-sectional research has found that job insecurity and low autonomy are associated with a range of negative health outcomes, especially depression and anxiety (D'Souza et al. 2003; Ferrie 2001; Marmot et al. 1999; Stansfeld et al. 1995). Job insecurity has also been associated with more work-to-family conflict, impaired marital and family functioning including poorer communication and problem solving, and poorer mental health in spouses (Jansen et al. 2003; Larson, Wilson & Beley 1994; Westman, Etzion & Danon 2001).

In contrast, other features of work, including its complexity and the degree of challenge and employee skills involved, have been associated with more responsive and developmentally sound parenting, better language and educational stimulation in the home, and improved emotional wellbeing in children (Cooksey, Menaghan & Jekielek 1997; Greenberger, O'Neil & Nagel 1994; Menaghan 1991). Factors such as length of work hours, flexibility of work, autonomy and job security may be related to parents' wellbeing and how they manage family routines and care. For single parents, there may be no other person to help shoulder care and domestic work and often only one income to support the family and so the impact of work arrangements could play a crucial role in parental wellbeing. For dual-earner families, the employment status of both parents is relevant to family life and the changes outlined above could be compounded in families where both parents are employed (Jacobs & Gerson 2001), affecting their wellbeing. To examine this possibility, couple data were used to analyse variations in wellbeing across partners' working hours.

## 8.1 Data, measures and methods

### Data and measures

Initial analyses of the data found that there were no substantive differences between the cohorts in associations between work arrangements and wellbeing. Thus both LSAC cohorts were combined for the analyses reported in this section. Later in this section, multivariate techniques are used to simultaneously control for possible differences between the cohorts by including the variables age of youngest child and number of children.

The wellbeing indicators are summarised in Box 8.1.

For health, **fair or poor health** was assessed with a single question shown to be predictive of later morbidity and mortality (Gandek et al. 1998; Idler & Benyamini 1997; McCallum, Shadbolt & Wang et al. 1994), and dichotomised to reflect good versus poor health (good = excellent, very good or good; poor = fair or poor).

Three measures of psychological wellbeing were used. Single items measured parents' rating of how difficult their life was currently (**some to very many difficulties**) and how well they were coping (**problems coping**).<sup>63</sup> **Psychological distress** was assessed with the six-item Kessler distress scale (K6). This scale has been used in the Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing and assesses the presence and extent of anxious or depressive symptoms. The K6 shows strong discriminatory power for mood and anxiety disorders but is not a diagnostic instrument (Furukawa et al. 2003; Kessler et al. 2002). High scores represent symptoms of non-specific psychological distress.

For partnered parents, relationship wellbeing was assessed using two measures. A subscale of the Quality of Co-parental Interaction Scale was used to assess the frequency of arguments and conflict in the relationships (**arguments with partner**). This scale has been validated against clinician ratings of relationship quality, and assesses conflict between spouses. **Relationship quality** is assessed using six items from the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) developed by Hendrick (1988). Scale scores correlate with measures of love, sexual attitudes, self-disclosure, commitment, and investment in a relationship. The scale is also strongly correlated with a much longer, well-validated measure, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier 1976).

Work and family spillover measures were based on the **work–family gains** and **work–family strains** scores discussed in Section 7. As discussed in that section, these measures are based on work of Marshall and Barnett (1993). Another dimension of work–family spillover is measured using a rating of **time pressure**. This one item measure is widely used in social science surveys and was also used in the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey and the ABS Living Standard Survey. Time pressure is often highest when there are young children in the family; employed mothers tend to report more time pressure compared to employed fathers; and time pressure is a risk factor for depression (Roxburgh 2004).



**Box 8.1: Wellbeing measures**

Name	Description
<b>Health:</b>	
Fair or poor health	Derived from perceived health ('In general, would you say your own health is ...?'. This indicator is set to one for those who rate their health as fair or poor. Aggregate statistics show the percentage with fair or poor health, and analysis of individual-level data is done using logistic regression.
<b>Psychological wellbeing:</b>	
Some to very many difficulties	Derived from the question, 'How difficult do you feel your life is at present?'. This indicator is set to one for those who report they have some, many or very many problems or stresses, and to zero for those who report they have no or few problems or stresses. Aggregate statistics show the percentage with some, many or very many problems or stresses, and analysis of individual-level data is done using logistic regression.
Problems coping	Derived from the question, 'How well do you think you are coping?' This indicator is set to one for those who report they are not coping at all, or coping a little or fairly well, and to zero for those who report they are coping very or extremely well. Aggregate statistics show the percentage who are not coping very well, and analysis of individual-level data is done using logistic regression.
Psychological distress	Derived from six items, which include the degree to which respondents felt nervous, hopeless or restless. Scored from one to five, a higher score equates to more distress. Aggregate statistics represent the mean of this score, and analysis of individual-level data is done using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression.
<b>Relationship with partner:</b> (only applicable for partnered parents):	
Arguments with partner	Derived from four items, which measure how often there are arguments, hostility or violence in the relationship. Scored from one to five, with a higher score meaning more arguing. Aggregate statistics represent the mean of this score, and analysis of individual-level data is done using OLS regression.
Relationship quality	Derived from six items, which measure the respondent's contentment with the relationship with their partner. Scores range from one to five, a higher score indicating more positive view of the relationship. Aggregate statistics represent the mean of this score, and analysis of individual-level data is done using OLS regression.
<b>Work-family spillover:</b> (only applicable for employed parents)	
Work-family gains	Derived from six items, relating to the positive effects of work on parenting and on self. The scale ranges from one to five, where the higher score equates to more 'gains'. Aggregate statistics represent a mean of this score, and analysis of individual-level data is done using OLS regression.
Work-family strains	Derived from four items, relating to the negative effects of work on family and the negative effects of family on work. The scale ranges from one to five, where a higher score equates to more 'strains'. Aggregate statistics represent the mean of this score, and analysis of individual-level data is done using OLS regression.
Time pressure	Derived from the question, 'How often do you feel rushed or pressed for time?' This indicator is set to one for those 'often' or 'always' rushed. Aggregate statistics show the percentage often or always rushed, and analysis of individual-level data is done using logistic regression.

**Methods**

Relationships between wellbeing and family and job characteristics were investigated using multivariate techniques. These analyses are reported later in this section. This involved estimating a statistical model for each of the wellbeing measures. Separate models were estimated for mothers and fathers. The models included a wide range of explanatory variables. Where the dependent variable (the wellbeing measure) was a scale, it was treated as continuous, and estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS). Where the dependent variable was binary it was estimated using logistic regression.

The following control variables were included in all models:

#### Parent characteristics

- highest level of education
- whether has a long-term medical condition
- age (and age-squared)
- whether Australian-born and English language proficiency

#### Family characteristics

- total gross weekly parental income
- region (remoteness indicator)
- number of children in the family
- age of youngest child

Other variables related to employment were also included. Four sets of models were estimated, to show the different effect of employment variables. These models are outlined in Box 8.2.

### Box 8.2: Wellbeing model sets

Model Set 1	These models include all parents, with a single measure of parental employment status indicating not employed, employed part-time or employed full-time. This model set is used to discuss the effect of employment status on wellbeing and also to discuss associations between wellbeing and other family characteristics (the control variables).
Model Set 2	These models are restricted to employed parents and additional variables are added to show the associations with job characteristics, including a more detailed breakdown of hours worked, job type (permanent/casual/self-employed), whether works weekends or evenings/nights, the flexibility of start and finish times, job security and job autonomy. <sup>64</sup>
Model Set 3	These models are estimated only for couples and are used to test for the effect of partner's working hours on an individual's wellbeing. As in the first set of models, they include everyone, employed or not, and include the full set of family controls. Unlike the models estimated as part of Model Set 1, they include a more detailed classification of hours (as in Model Set 2), and also include hours worked by the partner.
Model Set 4	These models are restricted to employed parents. They contain the same variables as Model Set 2 but include one additional variable, preferred hours worked.

All estimation results (coefficients and significance levels) are provided in Appendix D, with only a selection of results presented in this section. Given the technical nature of many of the results, to make them more accessible, predicted values were calculated, allowing only the variable of interest (usually hours worked) to vary and holding the values of the other variables at the mean values for mothers and fathers. This shows the effect of one variable for the 'average mother' and the 'average father'. This is the approach used in Gray et al. (2004). Although all multivariate analyses are adjusted for variables that could affect associations between employment and wellbeing, results should be interpreted cautiously. There are likely to be variables not measured in LSAC that could influence the associations observed, or our interpretation of them.

## 8.2 Wellbeing of all parents

This section considers the wellbeing of all parents (that is, includes parents who are employed and those who are not). The focus is on differences between mothers and fathers, and also between couple and single mothers, on the measures of individual wellbeing. The measures of wellbeing are then considered in the context of their association with employment status (broadly defined) and other family characteristics.

The initial analysis is restricted to bivariate relationships to provide an overview of the wellbeing measures and differences across sex, family type and employment status. The results from the multivariate analysis are introduced throughout the section, to examine whether the bivariate relationships remain significant once other personal and family characteristics are controlled. These results are based on Model Set 1. The full regression results are provided in Tables D1 to D4.

### Wellbeing by family type

Table 8.1 shows the mean wellbeing scores (or the percentage reporting the outcome for binary measures) for all mothers and fathers. Mothers have also been classified by family type, whether partnered or single. The binary wellbeing measures are reported in the top half of the table and the wellbeing measures (scales) are reported in the bottom half. By way of example, 9.1 per cent of mothers reported having fair or poor health compared to 11.4 per cent of fathers. Also, both mothers and fathers had high levels of relationship quality (on a scale from one to five), although for mothers the average score was slightly lower (4.33) than for fathers (4.41).

Overall, mothers reported higher distress, more difficulties, poorer relationship quality and were more often rushed for time compared to fathers. On the other hand, fathers were more likely to report poorer health and had more work–family strains. There was not a statistically significant difference between mothers’ and fathers’ reports of arguments with their partner, how well they were coping, or in their assessment of the positive effects of work on the family (work–family gains).

Mothers’ wellbeing varied by their relationship status. Significantly worse outcomes<sup>65</sup> on all wellbeing indicators were observed for single mothers compared to couple mothers, with two exceptions: the work–family gains did not vary significantly by relationship status; and partnered mothers were more likely to report being rushed. Single mothers reported poorer self-rated health, the highest levels of distress, more problems coping and more difficulties, as well as more strains from combining work with parenting.

**Table 8.1: Wellbeing of mothers and fathers, mean scores**

Wellbeing measures <sup>(a)</sup>	Mothers			Fathers
	Couple	Single	Total	
	<i>Per cent</i>			
Fair or poor health (–)	8.2	16.1	9.1	11.4
Some to very many difficulties (–)	41.9	60.6	44.0	45.3
Problems coping (–)	45.5	53.6	46.4	46.0
Time pressure (–)	44.9	40.4	44.4	43.1
	<i>Scale (1–5)</i>			
Psychological distress (–)	1.62	1.91	1.65	1.57
Arguments with partner (–)	2.20	n/a	2.20	2.17
Relationship quality (+)	4.33	n/a	4.33	4.41
Work–family gains (+)	3.66	3.71	3.67	3.67
Work–family strains (–)	2.57	2.75	2.59	2.78

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: For dichotomous variables, the mean is given as a percentage.

(a) Wellbeing measures as detailed in Box 8.1. Measures marked (+) indicate that a higher score means ‘better’ wellbeing. For those measures marked (–), a higher score means ‘worse’ wellbeing.

Differences between the sexes in the wellbeing measures were not tested through multivariate analysis, as separate regression models were run for mothers and fathers. For mothers and fathers, the effect of family type was analysed in each model through an indicator variable that identified single-parent families. Given there were very few single fathers in LSAC, the effect of this variable was only considered for mothers. Based on Model Set 1 (see Box 8.2), the multivariate analysis confirmed several of the findings reported above. Even after controlling for other family and personal characteristics, single mothers had significantly higher levels of distress,

more difficulties and more strains from combining work with parenting compared to couple mothers. The other differences noted above (that single mothers had worse self-rated health and more problems coping) were also evident, but not significant at the 0.05 level (Tables D1 and D3).

### **Wellbeing by employment status**

Table 8.2 considers the association between wellbeing and being employed part-time, full-time and not being employed. As these are bivariate results, the mean wellbeing scores and percentages shown in Table 8.2 are not adjusted for other factors, such as income or education. Family type, however, is taken into account by reporting separate results for single and couple mothers.

Better wellbeing was often associated with being employed, but there were important exceptions, especially for mothers. First, for couple mothers, those who were not currently employed reported fewer difficulties and less time pressure compared to mothers who worked full-time. Mothers who were not employed also showed similar relationship wellbeing (fewer arguments and better relationship quality) to part-time employed mothers, and both fared better than full-time employed mothers on these indicators. Across the other indicators, part-time work was associated with higher wellbeing in couple mothers compared to not being employed or to working full-time hours. On the other hand, couple mothers who were employed full-time fared worse on all indicators of wellbeing. This was in contrast to financial wellbeing, which was found to be highest (in couple-parent families with both parents working) when primary carers worked full-time, as measured by parental income, and found not to differ by primary carer's hours when measured by hardship or perceived prosperity (see Section 6).

For single mothers, part-time employment was consistently associated with better wellbeing, compared to either full-time employment, or no employment (except for being time pressured; mothers who were not employed reported the lowest time pressure). Note though, financial wellbeing was higher among families in which the mother was working full-time (Section 6). Part-time employed mothers were less likely to report poor mental or physical health, report fewer difficulties, were less likely to report problems coping, and report fewer work–family strains.

For fathers, the associations between wellbeing and employment were relatively clear-cut and consistent. On most indicators, full-time employed fathers were better off in terms of health, psychological wellbeing and relationships. Financial wellbeing was also highest for families with full-time employed fathers (Section 6). Full-time employed fathers did, however, report being more rushed for time, and experienced less work–family gains and more work–family strains, compared to fathers who were employed part-time or not at all.

Table 8.2 reveals that there are different relationships between employment and wellbeing for mothers and fathers. For fathers, full-time employment was fairly consistently associated with better wellbeing. Fathers did, however, report that full-time work created strains for themselves and their parenting. For mothers, both single and couple, full-time employment was not associated with better wellbeing, except financially (see Section 6). Mothers fared better on most indicators when they worked part-time.

The simple bivariate analysis suggests that full-time employment is associated with significant differences in wellbeing for mothers and fathers. However, these associations could be due to other personal or family variables.<sup>66</sup> Multivariate analyses were conducted to address these possible influences (see Box 8.2 and results in Tables D1 to D4). The patterns of association between wellbeing and employment status remained virtually unchanged in the multivariate analyses. Adjusting for family and personal characteristics, the pattern of associations between the sexes remained. Mothers employed part-time showed significantly better wellbeing on all indicators compared to being employed full-time. Similarly, mothers who were not employed showed better wellbeing on most measures (not poor health or distress), compared to mothers who were employed full-time.

Optimal wellbeing was significantly associated with full-time employment for fathers. The only exceptions were in relation to work–family strains and being rushed, for which full-time employed fathers reported poorer wellbeing compared to part-time employed fathers.

**Table 8.2: Wellbeing by work status: mean scores for mothers, by family type, and fathers**

Wellbeing measures <sup>(a)</sup>	Not employed	Part-time work	Full-time work	Total
<b>Couple mothers</b>				
<i>Per cent</i>				
Fair or poor health (-)	9.6	5.9	8.9	8.2
More than a few difficulties (-)	40.2	42.1	49.7	41.9
Problems coping (-)	45.8	43.4	51.2	45.5
Time pressure (-)	37.8	50.0	61.7	44.9
<i>Scale (1-5)</i>				
Psychological distress (-)	1.65	1.57	1.65	1.62
Arguments with partner (-)	2.20	2.19	2.28	2.20
Relationship quality (+)	4.33	4.34	4.26	4.33
Work-family gains (+)	n/a	3.68	3.61	3.66
Work-family strains (-)	n/a	2.48	2.91	2.57
<b>Single mothers</b>				
<i>Per cent</i>				
Fair or poor health (-)	18.9	9.5	12.8	16.1
More than a few difficulties (-)	61.3	57.5	65.8	60.6
Problems coping (-)	55.8	48.5	51.5	53.6
Time pressure (-)	33.9	47.0	78.3	40.4
<i>Scale (1-5)</i>				
Psychological distress (-)	1.98	1.76	1.80	1.91
Work-family gains (+)	n/a	3.71	3.72	3.71
Work-family strains (-)	n/a	2.65	3.08	2.75
<b>All fathers</b>				
<i>Per cent</i>				
Fair or poor health (-)	24.2	14.5	10.1	11.4
More than a few difficulties (-)	48.8	46.5	44.8	45.3
Problems coping (-)	54.8	48.5	45.1	46.0
Time pressure (-)	23.1	34.5	45.3	43.1
<i>Scale (1-5)</i>				
Psychological distress (-)	1.71	1.66	1.55	1.57
Arguments with partner (-)	2.16	2.23	2.17	2.17
Relationship quality (+)	4.31	4.34	4.42	4.41
Work-family gains (+)	n/a	3.72	3.67	3.67
Work-family strains (-)	n/a	2.57	2.79	2.78

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: For dichotomous variables, the mean is given as a percentage.

(a) Wellbeing measures as detailed in Box 8.1. Measures marked (+) indicate that a higher score means 'better' wellbeing. For those measures marked (-), a higher score means 'worse' wellbeing.

### Wellbeing and other family characteristics

This section presents associations between wellbeing and some key personal and family characteristics that were used in the multivariate analyses. While these variables were primarily included as control variables, and therefore not central to the analysis, they provide important contextual information for the findings on wellbeing. As with the results presented in the previous sections, these results are based on Model Set 1, and the full regression results are provided in Tables D1 to D4.

For both mothers and fathers, having a long-term **medical condition** was significantly associated with poorer wellbeing (with the exception of mothers' work-family strains and fathers feeling time pressured).

Parents who were **not born in Australia** showed some differences in wellbeing compared to Australian-born parents, and among the non-Australian-born parents, some differences emerged according to the proficiency of spoken English. Being non-Australian-born and having poor language proficiency was associated with worse wellbeing on some indicators. In some cases, however, it was the Australian-born parents who fared worse. For example, Australian-born mothers and fathers had more difficulties and were more often rushed than other mothers and fathers.

Higher **educational attainment** was not necessarily associated with improved wellbeing for mothers and fathers. Indeed, for mothers, higher educational attainment was associated with having more difficulties, more distress, more work–family strains (but also more work–family gains) and more time pressure. For fathers, those who were more highly educated reported more difficulties and time pressure, although interestingly, those with certificate or diploma qualifications had better health outcomes than those with both lower and higher qualifications. Couple fathers with bachelor degrees or above had higher quality relationships than fathers with low educational attainment.

There were some clear associations between parents' wellbeing and the **number of children**, often with worse outcomes being associated with more children in the family. Compared to parents with more than one child, parents with one child were less likely to report difficulties or problems coping, and they reported less psychological distress and were less rushed for time (time pressure). These effects were stronger for mothers than for fathers.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, **parental income**<sup>68</sup> was associated with several dimensions of wellbeing. Both mothers and fathers with higher incomes reported fewer difficulties, less problems coping and lower psychological distress. Mothers also reported better health at higher levels of income. Parental income was unrelated to relationship quality or work–family gains or strains for mothers, but for fathers, higher income was associated with more conflict and less work–family gains. Mothers (but not fathers) were more likely to report being rushed in families with higher parental income.

### 8.3 Wellbeing of employed parents

This section is based on the results of Model Set 2 (see Box 8.2), which focus on employed parents only, to assess the associations between wellbeing, work hours and other job characteristics. The analyses include work hours (coded into categories, see below), job type (permanent/ongoing, self-employed and casual) and work conditions (flexible hours, working evenings/nights or weekends, job security, and job autonomy). In addition to these job characteristics, the models include the control variables in Model Set 1. As in Model Set 1, couple and single parents were included in each model, with a control variable to identify single-parent families.

As analyses are multivariate, the associations described are independent of other relationships, and not due to co-relationships among work-related factors. Further, the analysis adjusts for having a medical condition, if born in Australia or not (and English proficiency), level of education, parental income, parent age, family type, number of children, and age of youngest child. These analyses are presented in Tables D5 to D8.

#### Hours worked

The categories part-time and full-time work analysed in Section 8.2 mask a wide diversity in actual hours worked. Consequently, a more detailed breakdown of work hours and their association with wellbeing has been used in this second set of models (focusing on employed mothers and fathers). For mothers, this meant breaking part-time work hours into a number of categories: short part-time hours (less than 16 hours per week), medium part-time hours (16 to 24 hours) and long part-time hours (25 to 34 hours). Relatively few mothers worked very long hours, so full-time hours were kept as one category (35 or more hours). Fathers who worked full-time were classified as short full-time hours (35 to 44 hours), medium full-time hours (45 to 54 hours) and long full-time hours (55 hours or more), with all part-time hours grouped together (less than 35 hours).

For both mothers and fathers, those working the longest hours were the reference group, contrasting their wellbeing with those working shorter hours. This meant that for mothers the reference group was full-time employed mothers. For fathers the reference group was those working long full-time hours (55 or more hours

per week). A significant association, as indicated in Table 8.3 or Table 8.4, means that the wellbeing measure for that category was significantly different from the reference group (the longest hours category). While these significance levels cannot be used alone to assess differences between non-comparison groups (for example, to compare less than 16 hours with 16 to 24 hours in Table 8.3), such differences were formally tested, and where appropriate the results are discussed.

Looking first at mothers, Table 8.3 presents predicted wellbeing scores across the work hour categories. Full-time employed mothers showed poorer wellbeing across all indicators, although the differences between full-time employed mothers and mothers working longer part-time hours (25 to 34 hours per week) were not always significant. This was the case for measures of health, work–family gains, and relationship quality (including arguments with partner). For these measures, mothers working less than 25 hours showed better wellbeing (although they did not differ significantly between those working short or medium part-time hours).

Mothers were least likely to report poor health if they worked 16 to 24 hours compared to all other categories of mothers. The likelihood of mothers having more difficulties or of not coping increased as their work hours increased, although within the different categories of mothers working part-time hours, these differences were often not statistically significant. Similarly, distress scores also varied across categories of part-time hours, but these differences were not significant, although all were significantly lower than those of full-time working mothers.

Work–family strains varied significantly across categories of part-time hours, with those working fewer hours reporting less work–family strain, and mothers working full-time reporting the most. Similarly, working longer hours was associated with a greater likelihood of reporting time pressure, and for mothers who were employed, the least rushed worked short part-time hours.

**Table 8.3: Predicted wellbeing: employed mothers by hours worked**

Wellbeing measures <sup>(a)</sup>	Mothers' work hours			
	1–15	16–24	25–34	35 or more
	<i>Per cent</i>			
Fair or poor health (–)	5.5**	4.1***	7.2	8.3
Some to very many difficulties (–)	42.0***	43.0***	47.1**	54.6
Problems coping (–)	42.3***	43.4***	46.3*	52.9
Time pressure (–)	44.8***	50.3***	58.6*	64.6
	<i>Scale (1–5)</i>			
Psychological distress (–)	1.60*	1.56***	1.59**	1.69
Arguments with partner (–)	2.17***	2.20***	2.23	2.29
Relationship quality (+)	4.35*	4.32**	4.26	4.23
Work–family gains (+)	3.68**	3.70***	3.65	3.59
Work–family strains (–)	2.41***	2.59***	2.71***	2.91

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Figures refer to the predicted percentage or the predicted score, holding all control variables at their mean value (for employed mothers only) and varying only hours worked.

(a) Wellbeing measures as detailed in Box 8.1. Measures marked (+) indicate that a higher score means 'better' wellbeing. For those measures marked (–), a higher score means 'worse' wellbeing.

Significance refers to difference from the reference category, 35 hours or more.

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05.

Table 8.4 presents fathers' wellbeing across work hour categories. The most striking result from this table is that among those working full-time hours,<sup>69</sup> almost all of the predicted wellbeing measures were at their most favourable for short full-time hours (35 to 44) and at their least favourable for long full-time hours (55 or more). For example, fathers' self-reported health was at its most favourable (that is, least poor) among those working 35 to 44 hours, somewhat poorer for those working 45 to 54 hours, and at its poorest for those working 55 hours or more. The only exceptions were with respect to the amount of arguing with a partner and the quality of the relationship, both of which did not vary significantly across the range of full-time hours.

**Table 8.4: Predicted wellbeing: employed fathers by hours worked**

Wellbeing measures <sup>(a)</sup>	Fathers' work hours			
	1-34	35-44	45-54	55 or more
	<i>Per cent</i>			
Fair or poor health (-)	10.5	8.3**	9.6*	12.0
Some to very many difficulties (-)	47.2	41.6*	46.0	48.3
Problems coping (-)	48.4	44.3*	45.8	48.0
Time pressure (-)	39.7***	37.4***	46.4***	56.9
	<i>Scale (1-5)</i>			
Psychological distress (-)	1.61	1.55*	1.57	1.60
Arguments with partner (-)	2.25**	2.17	2.20	2.17
Relationship quality (+)	4.35*	4.41	4.39	4.43
Work-family gains (+)	3.69	3.71**	3.65	3.60
Work-family strains (-)	2.60***	2.75***	2.82***	2.97

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Figures refer to the predicted percentage or the predicted score, holding all control variables at their mean value (for employed fathers only) and varying only hours worked.

(a) Wellbeing measures as detailed in Box 8.1. Measures marked (+) indicate that a higher score means 'better' wellbeing. For those measures marked (-), a higher score means 'worse' wellbeing.

Significance refers to difference from the reference category, 55 hours or more.

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05.

Unlike for mothers, Table 8.4 shows that part-time work was not associated with better wellbeing for fathers, but was either similar to or worse than the wellbeing of fathers working very long full-time hours (55 hours or more). This was the case for self-reported health, having difficulties, problems coping and psychological distress (all of which were not significantly different from fathers working 55 hours or more); and for more arguments and relationship quality (where part-time hours were associated with the least favourable outcomes and were significantly worse than for fathers working 55 hours or more).

The only exceptions to this for fathers were time pressure and their work-family strains. For these two wellbeing measures, fathers who worked less hours (including part-time) had more favourable outcomes.<sup>70</sup>

### Job type

Job type describes the distinction between the self-employed, permanent/ongoing employees (including fixed-term contract, and a small number employed on 'some other basis') and casual employees.

For mothers, self-employment had strong, and where significant, consistently negative association with wellbeing, relative to permanent/ongoing employment. These differences in association were observed for psychological wellbeing (difficulties, coping and distress), relationship quality, and work-family balance (less work-family gains and more rushed). Self-employed mothers did not, however, have significantly worse work-family strains compared to permanent/ongoing employees.

For fathers, self-employment was associated with more difficulties, more distress and being more rushed. However, it was also associated with more work-family gains.

Comparing casual to permanent/ongoing employees, there were fewer differences in wellbeing. Among mothers, casual employees had lower work-family strains. Among fathers, casual employees reported better coping.

### Flexible hours

Working more flexible hours (that is, being readily able to change start and finish times) was associated with positive wellbeing on almost all measures for both mothers and fathers. For mothers, having flexible start and finish times (relative to those with no flexibility) was associated with better health, less difficulties, better coping, less distress, and less work-family strain. Mothers who were only able to change their hours with approval did not have such positive wellbeing, and were not significantly different to those mothers who could not change their hours.



Similarly, fathers who worked flexible hours had less problems coping, less distress, less arguments, less work–family strains and were less rushed.

### **Working evenings/nights or weekends**

For mothers, working either evenings/nights or weekends was associated with more work–family strain and more time pressure, while working evenings/nights was associated with mothers reporting more difficulties. Unexpectedly, working evenings/nights was also associated with better health outcomes for mothers.

For fathers, working weekends had no clear associations with wellbeing, with the one exception being couple fathers regularly working weekends who reported slightly more conflict with their partners. Working evenings/nights was associated with poorer wellbeing including having more difficulties, having less work–family gains and more work–family strains, and time pressure (being more rushed).

### **Job security and autonomy**

The extent to which parents felt secure about their job was significantly associated with some measures of wellbeing. For mothers, greater job security was related to better coping, less distress and less work–family strain.

Greater job security showed strong and consistently favourable associations with all measures of fathers' wellbeing. For fathers, greater job security was associated with better health, less difficulties, better coping, less distress, being less rushed, more work–family gains and less work–family strains. For the relationship wellbeing measures, fathers reporting more security had significantly better scores; that is, less conflict and better relationship quality.

Job autonomy assesses how much freedom parents perceived they had to decide how they do their work. In line with previous research on job control or autonomy, consistently favourable associations were observed with wellbeing, for both mothers and fathers. Higher autonomy was associated with better health, psychological wellbeing (fewer difficulties, better coping and less distress), less arguments and better work–family spillover (fewer strains and more gains). Job autonomy was also associated with being less rushed and having a better quality relationship for employed fathers.

Based on this analysis, job security and job autonomy appear to have important favourable associations with wellbeing, particularly for fathers. Not only were the size of the effects for fathers some of the largest in the multivariate analyses, they were easily the strongest effects in terms of significance. For mothers, job autonomy appeared the more important of the two variables, with a more universal impact across all the measures of wellbeing compared to job security. Compared to fathers, though, the impacts of these variables were rarely as large or significant.

### **Summary**

The analyses in this section compared variations in employed mothers' and fathers' wellbeing by work hours, job type and work conditions. All analyses were adjusted for a range of family, socio-demographic and work-related variables in order for independent associations with wellbeing to be explored. In reporting these associations, however, it needs to be kept in mind that the analyses are cross-sectional in nature and causality cannot be inferred. Indeed for some aspects of wellbeing, especially parents' health, it is likely that reciprocal relationships exist.

The key findings are outlined below.

- Work hours were consistently associated with both mothers' and fathers' wellbeing, although the effects were different for mothers and fathers. Part-time hours were associated with higher wellbeing for mothers (particularly less than 25 hours per week), while full-time hours were associated with poorer wellbeing. Higher wellbeing for fathers was associated with working shorter full-time (35 to 54 hours per week), but not long hours (working 55 hours or more per week). Part-time hours for fathers were often similar to long full-time hours.
- Mothers and fathers who were permanent/ongoing employees (this includes fixed-term contracts) showed better wellbeing on most indicators compared to self-employed parents. Self-employment for mothers was consistently associated with poorer psychological and relationship wellbeing, more time pressure and fewer gains from combining work with family roles.

- Both mothers' and fathers' wellbeing were associated with their conditions at work. Job security, job autonomy (freedom to decide how work is done) and flexible work hours (able to change work start and finish times without difficulty) showed independent and consistent associations with improved wellbeing on most indicators. Working evenings/nights or weekends showed less consistent associations with employed parents' wellbeing, although where associations were observed, they were generally in the direction of poorer wellbeing for mothers or fathers.

## 8.4 Couple labour supply and wellbeing

This analysis extends the work in the previous section, and for couples only, assesses if mothers' or fathers' wellbeing is related to their partner's work hours. The approach is well founded in the literature, which shows that within families, the work patterns of one parent may affect the wellbeing of the other (termed cross-over effects) (Almeida 2004; Wethington 1999). For example, there is evidence that wives' mortality risk is linked to their husband's occupational risks (Fletcher 1991). Further, spouses' work stress can predict increased distress and negative mood in partners, pointing to the transmission of distress to other family members from work-related stresses (Bolger et al. 1990).

This section is based on multivariate analyses, in which associations with wellbeing were estimated, controlling for individual and family characteristics (as in previously presented models). Analyses also use the detailed work hours classification for each parent, and introduces their partner's work hours (detailed classification). Any partner effects, therefore, are adjusted for possible associations with own hours worked.<sup>71</sup> This refers to Model Set 3 (See Box 8.2) and the detailed results are provided in Tables D9 to D12.

Table 8.5 presents the associations between mothers' wellbeing and partners' work hours, using predicted values, as before. Partner's hours were associated with some, although not all, measures of mother's wellbeing. Significant effects were evident for relationship quality, increased time pressure, having difficulties and higher distress. For all these indicators of wellbeing, mothers whose partner worked short full-time hours (35 to 44 hours) had better wellbeing than those whose partner worked other hours. Mothers whose partner was not employed were also less likely to report being time pressured, although they were also more likely to report poorer health.

**Table 8.5: Predicted wellbeing: couple mothers, by partner's hours worked**

Mothers' wellbeing measures <sup>(a)</sup>	Not employed	Father's hours worked			
		1-34	35-44	45-54	55 or more
			<i>Per cent</i>		
Fair to poor health (-)	9.9*	9.3*	8.4	6.9	6.7
Some to very many difficulties (-)	42.7	47.2	38.7***	41.3*	45.7
Problems coping (-)	44.1	47.9	44.5	45.8	47.3
Time pressure (-)	41.1*	47.9	41.5**	44.9	47.7
			<i>Scale (1-5)</i>		
Psychological distress (-)	1.61	1.64	1.59**	1.64	1.65
Arguments with partner (-)	2.26	2.24	2.19	2.21	2.19
Relationship quality (+)	4.29	4.29	4.36*	4.32	4.30
Work-family gains (+)	3.48	3.60	3.63	3.62	3.58
Work-family strains (-)	2.74	2.76	2.71	2.74	2.73

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Figures refer to the predicted percentage or the predicted score, holding all control variables at their mean value (for all fathers) and varying only hours worked.

(a) Wellbeing measures as detailed in Box 8.1. Measures marked (+) indicate that a higher score means 'better' wellbeing. For those measures marked (-), a higher score means 'worse' wellbeing.

Significance refers to difference from the reference category, 55 hours or more.

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05.

For self-rated health, poorer maternal health was likely in couples if the partner worked part-time hours or if they were not working, compared to mothers with a partner who worked longer hours. While this does not mean that partner's working part-time hours or not working at all caused poorer health of mothers, Baxter (2005b) found that women with partners who are not working because of poor health often have an ongoing medical condition themselves.

A similar analysis was undertaken for fathers, looking at whether partner's work hours were associated with their wellbeing (see Table 8.6). Compared to the findings for mothers, fathers' wellbeing was less consistently associated with their partner's work hours. All findings are in comparison with households where mothers worked full-time. Fathers reported less problems coping when mothers worked shorter part-time hours (either 1 to 15, or 16 to 24) or where mothers were not employed. In households where mothers worked between 16 and 24 hours each week, fathers reported fewer arguments and better relationship quality, more work–family gains and less work–family strains. However, fathers' time pressure was significantly worse when mothers worked either short part-time hours (1 to 15) or long part-time hours (25 to 34).

Fathers reported significantly less psychological distress when mothers worked short part-time hours, but their distress was unrelated to any other category. As well as the better relationship outcomes for fathers in households where mothers worked between 16 and 24 hours per week, compared to fathers whose partners worked full-time, better relationship quality was also reported when partners worked 1 to 15 hours per week or if partners were not employed. Similarly, fathers reported fewer arguments when partners were not employed.

**Table 8.6: Predicted wellbeing: couple fathers, by mother's hours worked**

Fathers' wellbeing measures <sup>(a)</sup>	Mother's hours worked				
	Not employed	1–15	16–24	25–34	35 or more
			<i>Per cent</i>		
Fair to poor health (–)	11.1	10.6	9.4	12.8	11.9
Some to very many difficulties (–)	45.3	45.0	44.1	39.8	45.8
Problems coping (–)	45.3**	43.4***	46.2*	49.5	52.8
Time pressure (–)	41.6	45.4*	39.4	45.3*	39.8
			<i>Scale (1–5)</i>		
Psychological distress scale (–)	1.58	1.55*	1.54	1.56	1.60
Arguments with partner (–)	2.17*	2.16	2.15**	2.21	2.22
Relationship quality (+)	4.41*	4.43*	4.45***	4.32	4.34
Work–family gains (+)	3.65	3.69	3.72*	3.71*	3.64
Work–family strains (–)	2.83	2.76	2.73*	2.76	2.81

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Figures refer to the predicted percentage or the predicted score, holding all control variables at their mean value (for all mothers) and varying only hours worked.

(a) Wellbeing measures as detailed in Box 8.1. Measures marked (+) indicate that a higher score means 'better' wellbeing. For those measures marked (–), a higher score means 'worse' wellbeing.

Significance refers to difference from the reference category, 35 hours or more.

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05.

## 8.5 Preferred hours and wellbeing

Following the approach developed by Gray et al. (2004), this section analyses employed parents' wellbeing according to their work hour preferences. The analyses include all employed parents (single and couple) based on Model Set 4 (Box 8.2). These models contain the same variables as Model Set 2, but also include one additional variable to test whether the wellbeing measures of employed mothers and fathers are associated with a parent's preference for more or less hours than they were working. The model details are provided in Tables D13 to D16.

As shown in Section 3.5, many parents preferred to be working different hours to those that they were working. This might have been because their current work hours were having a detrimental effect on some aspect of wellbeing. In the case of parents who wanted to work longer hours (underemployed parents), this preference may have been related to the financial situation of these families, specifically that they preferred more hours to increase their income. In fact, of primary carers (mostly mothers) who preferred to work more hours, 46.9 per cent rated their prosperity as ‘just getting along’, ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’, compared to 31.6 per cent of all primary carers. On the other hand, wanting to work fewer hours (overemployed parents), is unlikely to be driven by financial difficulties, but a consequence of other strains, such as those associated with time pressure.

Table 8.7 shows that preferred working hours were strongly related to wellbeing, even after controlling for these other variables. For mothers and fathers, preferring to work fewer hours was strongly associated with poorer wellbeing, compared to those who preferred the hours they worked. Mothers who preferred fewer hours had lower wellbeing on all measures, compared to those who preferred the hours they worked, although the association was not significant for self-reported health. Fathers had lower wellbeing on all measures also, but the effects on the relationship measures (arguments and relationship quality) were not significant.

**Table 8.7: Predicted wellbeing: employed parents, by preferred working hours**

Wellbeing measures <sup>(a)</sup>	Prefer fewer	Prefer same	Prefer more
<b>Mothers</b>			
<i>Per cent</i>			
Fair to poor health (-)	6.4	5.2	8.4*
Some to very many difficulties (-)	53.5***	41.3	53.7***
Problems coping (-)	53.0***	41.2	52.4***
Time pressure (-)	64.4***	49.0	50.5
<i>Scale (1-5)</i>			
Psychological distress (-)	1.68***	1.56	1.71***
Arguments with partner (-)	2.24*	2.19	2.31***
Relationship quality (+)	4.26**	4.35	4.10***
Work-family gains (+)	3.42***	3.73	3.78
Work-family strains (-)	2.92***	2.48	2.72***
<b>Fathers</b>			
<i>Per cent</i>			
Fair to poor health (-)	11.3**	8.1	12.1*
Some to very many difficulties (-)	49.5***	40.3	53.5***
Problems coping (-)	49.7***	42.4	51.7**
Time pressure (-)	54.3***	38.3	40.9
<i>Scale (1-5)</i>			
Psychological distress (-)	1.63***	1.52	1.68**
Arguments with partner (-)	2.18	2.17	2.33***
Relationship quality (+)	4.40	4.42	4.30*
Work-family gains (+)	3.53***	3.75	3.79
Work-family strains (-)	3.01***	2.66	2.81**

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Figures refer to the predicted percentage or the predicted score, holding all control variables at their mean value and varying only the hours preference.

(a) Wellbeing measures as detailed in Box 8.1. Measures marked (+) indicate that a higher score means ‘better’ wellbeing. For those measures marked (-), a higher score means ‘worse’ wellbeing.

Significance refers to difference from the reference category, 55 hours or more.

\*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05.

Preferring to work more hours was also associated with lower wellbeing, relative to a preference for current hours. The only measures in which the association was not significant (for both mothers and fathers) were work–family gains and being rushed. On these measures, those who preferred more hours were not significantly different to those who preferred the same hours. Preferring to work more hours also significantly increased work–family strains. This is possibly explained by there being some parents whose working hours are constrained by their family responsibilities. Such parents might have indicated they preferred more hours, and also have agreed more strongly with the statement ‘I have to turn down work activities that I would prefer to take on’, which is one of the elements of the work–family strain measure.

## 8.6 Child care use and wellbeing

In Section 4, the patterns of child care use for each cohort were described in some detail. Using LSAC, it is possible to look for associations between child care use and wellbeing, to investigate whether parents report having more difficulties, or other reduced (or increased) wellbeing, when they have a particular care arrangement. A preliminary analysis of these relationships showed that no such relationships existed for either cohort. This may be related to the vast majority of parents being satisfied with the child care they used, if they used any, and also, that the majority of those not using child care had no need for such care. Although such information indicates a high degree of satisfaction with child care use, LSAC was not designed to measure any discordance between preferred and actual use of child care (for example, using informal care but preferring formal care), which may have a stronger association with wellbeing.

This analysis was not progressed, given the lack of associations found in these data and lack of suitable data on child care preferences.

## 8.7 Summary

Maximising parent participation in the workforce will be increasingly important as the population ages. Given recent policy initiatives, the question of whether some work conditions or arrangements can further benefit families is timely. On the one hand, aspects of work that conflict with and strain family life or affect parent health could have adverse consequences for parents’ wellbeing and family relationships. Poorer mental and physical health, or strains on family relationships could in turn serve as disincentives for sustained participation, as well as increasing health care costs, reducing productivity, and potentially affecting children. On the other hand, there is evidence that work can have positive effects on family life (Section 6).

Sections 6, 7 and 8 address these links between employment and family wellbeing, focusing in depth on family financial wellbeing (Section 6), the spillover (positive and negative) from work to family life (Section 7), and parents’ health, psychological wellbeing, marital relationship, work–family strains and gains, and time pressures (Section 8). Section 6 shows the financial benefits that employment delivers to families. Jobless families with neither parent working reported the most financial hardship compared to families with one or both parents employed full-time.

For wellbeing, the key findings are:

- Although full-time employment benefits parents financially, there may be some costs for mothers with young children. Mothers who worked full-time showed poorer wellbeing in terms of their health, psychological distress, relationships with their partners (if in couples), time pressure and work–family strains and gains. On the other hand, part-time hours were associated with optimal wellbeing.
- With the exception of time pressure and work–family strains, full-time employed fathers generally reported higher levels of wellbeing than part-time employed fathers, although fathers working very long hours (55 or more hours per week) did report lower levels of wellbeing.
- Overemployment (working more hours than preferred), and underemployment (not being able to work as much as preferred) were also associated with poorer wellbeing for both mothers and fathers.

- Mothers' wellbeing was generally higher when fathers worked short full-time hours. However, associations between mothers' work hours and fathers' wellbeing were mixed.
- Wellbeing varied with the type of job and work arrangements. Mothers and fathers who were permanently employed (including fixed-term contracts) showed better wellbeing on most indicators compared to casual and self-employed parents.
- The self-employed report having lower levels of work–family strain than those working for an employer (casual or permanent employees). However, self-employment was also associated with lower levels of physical and psychological health, poorer quality relationships, more time pressure and fewer positive effects of work on family. While this could be interpreted as meaning self-employment places pressures on mothers' health and wellbeing, it could also indicate that mothers with poorer health or wellbeing are more likely to take up self-employment than to work for an employer. This is an issue worthy of further research.
- Job security, job autonomy (freedom to decide how work is done) and flexible work hours (able to change work start and finish times without difficulty) showed consistent associations with improved wellbeing on most indicators. These work conditions were important for both mothers' and fathers' wellbeing. Job security and autonomy were amongst the strongest predictors of fathers' wellbeing in the models.
- Working evenings/nights or weekends showed less consistent associations with employed mothers' or fathers' wellbeing, although where associations were observed, they were in the direction of poorer wellbeing.

These findings illustrate two key points. First, work, either in terms of the hours, conditions or arrangements between mothers and fathers, shows pervasive associations with wellbeing. In some instances the work patterns of one partner is also associated with the wellbeing of their partner. Second, the relationship between full-time employment and wellbeing differs for mothers and fathers, being largely positive for fathers but not for mothers. This suggests that mothers and fathers face different pressures at work and at home, but these data could not be used to assess why this was so. The types of jobs available to mothers compared to fathers and the sharing of the housework and care may all contribute; the findings underline the need for further research.

In Section 6 and in numerous other research, it has been shown that adequate family income is important to wellbeing. Findings from this section indicate that jobs offering parents flexible work hours, security, and autonomy are also likely to yield further payoffs to parent mental health and family relationships.

Parents' work hours were also associated with wellbeing, but in more complex ways. A key element is parents' preferences and control over when they work. Allowing parents to tailor their work hours to their circumstances, rather than mandating more or less hours, may be a preferable policy option. In this section and throughout the report, the mothers of young children show stronger preferences for, and better wellbeing outcomes from, working short to medium part-time hours (less than 25 hours per week). For fathers, the best and preferred outcomes are from jobs with short full-time hours (35–44 hours per week).

The association between mothers' poorer wellbeing and full-time employment suggests ongoing differences between men and women. This is possibly related to mothers' greater share of caring and domestic work, and supporting fathers to be more active carers could be a focus of policy initiatives. On a cautionary note however, although part-time work appears to be one way to support family wellbeing and help share the caring, it could also impose significant financial costs to mothers or fathers in the longer term in the form of lower superannuation benefits, which may work against other policy objectives of more self-funded retirement as the population ages.

Work–family strain is another measure of how difficult it is to combine work with caring responsibilities, and the analysis in this report suggests several ways strain could be reduced. For mothers and fathers with young children, working fewer hours, having flexible work hours, job security and autonomy appear to reduce strain. Findings suggest that evening/night work, and for mothers (but not fathers) weekend work, might also make it harder to combine work with caring. An analysis of labour market regulation may need to conduct cost–benefit analyses that include family outcomes along with business outcomes.

It is important to keep in mind that the analyses show correlations, not causality, and so interpretations should be made with caution. Reverse and reciprocal relationships between employment and wellbeing are possible. Furthermore, many of the work characteristics are measured with single items, reducing their reliability and potentially underestimating the strength of the association. Finally, although our findings are consistent with previous research on employment, job characteristics and mental and physical health, unobserved characteristics of the parents or the families may underlie the relationships identified here.





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## 9 Conclusion

Given the dramatic increase in maternal employment over the last 30 years and the inevitable impacts of this on family life, it is surprising how little is known about the patterns of participation in paid employment of families with young children. Even less is known about the effects of different patterns of parental employment, particularly maternal employment, on family life and wellbeing.

This report has taken advantage of the opportunity presented by the collection of an exciting new dataset, *Growing up in Australia*: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, which provides information on these issues for young families. LSAC collects information from about 5,000 families with an infant and about 5,000 families with a 4–5 year-old child.

In this report, LSAC has been used to explore employment patterns, child care use, time with children, co-parenting and wellbeing for families with different employment patterns. These are all areas experiencing substantial change. The analysis illustrates the interconnections between these aspects of family life. Participation in paid employment can have a positive or negative effect on family life, and understanding the conditions under which negative effects are minimised and positive effects are maximised is an important challenge facing individual families as well as those responsible for design of policies that impact upon young families.

By providing detailed information on these issues, this report begins to fill important gaps in our knowledge base. The evidence provided is relevant to crucial questions such as: what is the impact of changing employment patterns on family wellbeing and ultimately the wellbeing of children? Providing answers to these questions will be critical to improving policies that affect families with young children.

The analysis illustrates the varied ways families combine raising young children with paid employment. In about half of couple-parent families with an infant, the father is employed full-time and the mother is not in paid employment. In about one-third the mother is employed part-time and the father full-time. It remains relatively uncommon in families with an infant for both parents to be employed full-time. However, by the time the youngest child in the family is 4 to 5 years of age, in over 60 per cent of couple-parent families both parents are in paid employment. Within this group the most common arrangement is for the father to work full-time and the mother part-time.

Only a relatively small proportion of couple-parent families have both parents not working (the so-called jobless family). Joblessness is a much greater issue in single-mother families with over 80 per cent of single mothers with an infant not employed and almost three-quarters of those with a 4–5 year old not employed.

The findings in this report provide new insights into the relationship between employment and wellbeing for families with young children. The findings in relation to employment patterns are generally consistent with previous research on the working arrangements of families with children.

Parental wellbeing and close family relationships are central for children's wellbeing and because most children live in families where one or both parents are employed, optimising parents' wellbeing with respect to their work arrangements may also benefit children now and into the future.

The findings in this report are relevant to the development of a wide range of policies including in the areas of workplace relations, income support, labour market policies, welfare reform and child care. The findings are also relevant to employers who need to be able to retain and attract employees, many of whom have young children.

The ageing population further increases the urgency to help adults combine working and caring. For some parents, paid work will need to be combined with caring for both children and ageing parents. An important implication of the findings of this report is that when thinking about policy in this area, it is important to consider the implications of employment within families on the wellbeing of the whole family.

A wide range of economic and social policies impact upon the capacity of parents to care for both themselves and their families. It is thus important that interactions between policies are taken into account and that the combined impact on families with children are considered.

Arguably families have more choice than in the past. This raises important questions about the impact of different working arrangements and decisions about the use of non-parental care on the wellbeing of parents and their children.

# Appendix A: Comparison of LSAC and ABS employment estimates

In this appendix, the employment rates estimated from LSAC are benchmarked against estimates from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing and the monthly Labour Force Survey collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).<sup>72</sup> A summary of how employment is defined in LSAC, the Labour Force Surveys and the Census is provided in Table A1.

**Table A1: ABS and LSAC definitions of employment**

ABS Labour Force Surveys	ABS 2001 Census	LSAC Wave 1
<p>Employed comprises those who, in the previous week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind, in a job or business or on a farm; or</li> <li>worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm; or</li> <li>were employees who had a job but were not at work and were away from work for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; or away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four week period to the end of the reference week; or away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement; or on strike or locked out; or on workers' compensation and expected to be returning to their job; or were employers or own-account workers, who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.</li> </ul>	<p>The Census question asks, last week, did the person have a full-time or part-time job of any kind?</p> <p>Employed are those who select any one of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, worked for payment or profit;</li> <li>Yes, but absent on holidays, on paid leave, on strike or temporarily stood down; or</li> <li>Yes, unpaid work in a family business.</li> </ul>	<p>Employed comprises those who, in the previous week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>worked for one hour or more in a job, business or farm; or</li> <li>worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business; or</li> <li>had a job, business or farm that was away from because of holidays, sickness or any other non-maternity/parental reason.</li> </ul> <p>A maternity/parental reason was said to be those absent from work but on paid or unpaid maternity or parental leave, or on leave without pay.</p>

In the Labour Force Survey, those with a job from which they were absent are classified as being employed if they meet conditions relating to extent of attachment to their job. Given that the Census is self-enumerated, it is not possible to know to what extent people who are on an extended absence from work record themselves as having a job they were away from.<sup>73</sup> However, it is likely that those on an extended **unpaid** absence from work would not select the 'on leave' option, given that this option specifically refers to 'paid leave'.

The LSAC definition of employment varies with that of the precise ABS Labour Force Survey definition, due to the lack of information on the length of absence from work, and whether or not it was paid (except for maternity leave). The definition used excluded those parents who were on a maternity or parental-related leave (paid or

unpaid maternity or parental leave, or leave without pay) from the employed. Those who reported being on any of these types of leave were classified as not in the labour force. This was to clearly differentiate between those parents (in particular, mothers with infant cohort children) who had (re)commenced employment following child-bearing and those that had not. Most of the mothers on these types of leave were on unpaid leave and would ordinarily have been defined by the ABS as not in the labour force anyway.<sup>74</sup> Only those on paid maternity leave (only 1.0 per cent of mothers in the infant cohort and negligible for the 4–5 year olds) would have been classified as employed by the ABS but not by the definition used in this report.

In contrast, other types of leave were assumed to be unrelated to a maternity or parental leave period, and so were assumed to be of short duration and of the type that the ABS would normally classify as being employed. Consequently, the employed include those who had a job but were absent from work for any of the following reasons:

- ▶ workers' compensation
- ▶ annual or recreation leave
- ▶ own illness or sick leave
- ▶ on strike, locked out or industrial dispute
- ▶ stood down
- ▶ bad weather or plant breakdown
- ▶ standard work arrangement
- ▶ no work available
- ▶ any other reason.

Being mindful of these definitional differences, Table A2 compares estimates of employment rates from the 2001 Census, the Labour Force Survey and LSAC. Labour Force Survey data are only available by age of the youngest child in five-year groupings, so the percentages employed among parents with a child under 5 years of age were calculated from the 2001 Census and also for LSAC<sup>75</sup> to compare with the percentage employed for this population from the Labour Force Survey. Two years of Labour Force Survey data have been given: 2001 to compare with Census data and 2004 to compare with LSAC data. Also in Table A2, 2001 Census data and LSAC data are used to calculate the percentages employed for mothers and fathers with a child aged under 1 year. For LSAC this was done using the infant cohort, excluding those families where the youngest child was aged 1 year or more. Also, 2001 Census and LSAC data were used to compare the figures for families with a youngest child aged 4—for LSAC this was based on those 4 year olds who had no younger siblings from the 4–5 year-old cohort.

Comparing the 2001 Census data with the Labour Force Survey data for 2001, the estimates are very similar (46.2 per cent from the Labour Force Survey for all mothers compared to 45.0 per cent from the 2001 Census, and for fathers, 88.9 and 88.6 per cent from these sources, respectively). This is despite the more stringent measurement of employment in the Labour Force Survey.

The 2004 LSAC estimate compares very well to the 2004 Labour Force Survey estimate, for mothers and fathers.

The analysis of parents of a child aged under 1 year also shows that the 2001 Census estimate is very similar to the LSAC estimate for all mothers, and for single and couple mothers. While it is somewhat lower than the LSAC estimate for fathers, this is consistent with changes between 2001 and 2004 (see 2001 and 2004 Labour Force Survey estimates for fathers).

**Table A2: Employment rate of mothers and fathers by family type, families with children under 5 years, 2001 and 2004**

Source	Mothers			Fathers
	Couple	Single	Total	Total
<b>Youngest aged under 5 years</b>				
Labour Force Survey 2001	49.4	29.5	46.2	88.9
Census 2001	48.2	28.3	45.0	88.6 <sup>(a)</sup>
Labour Force Survey 2004	48.2	27.7	44.8	91.4
LSAC 2004	47.1	28.4	44.9	92.3
<b>Youngest aged under 1 year</b>				
Census 2001	37.1	14.8	34.6	89.6 <sup>(a)</sup>
LSAC 2004	38.1	14.9	35.7	92.2
<b>Youngest aged 4 years</b>				
Census 2001	57.3	35.1	52.6	88.8 <sup>(a)</sup>
LSAC 2004	63.1	44.4	59.7	92.6

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1; unpublished cross-tabulations from ABS (2001) and ABS (2005b).

Note: (a) Census data are based on partnered fathers only as comparable data were not readily available for all fathers.

There are larger differences between the Census and LSAC estimates for parents with a youngest child aged four, with LSAC producing higher estimates. While the exact reasons for these differences are unknown, it may be that employment has increased between 2001 and 2004 for mothers with this aged child. Further, the LSAC estimate is likely to be affected by having somewhat higher representation of older children in this age group, and also having a more highly educated sample than the population in general.

Overall, it appears that the LSAC employment measures gives results that are quite consistent with ABS labour force data.



# Appendix B: Employment tables

**Table B1: Family labour supply, families with children under 5 years old, 1984 and 2004**

	1984	2004
	<b>Couple parents (%)</b>	
Both employed	29.2	46.5
<i>Mother employed full-time</i>	10.6	13.8
<i>Mother employed part-time</i>	18.7	32.6
One employed	62.8	47.6
Neither employed	8.0	6.0
	<b>Single parents (%)</b>	
Parent employed	20.6	29.8
<i>Full-time</i>	10.7	12.7
<i>Part-time</i>	9.9	17.1
Parent not employed	79.4	70.2
	<b>Estimated totals ('000)</b>	
Couple families	798.0	818.0
Single-parent families	93.7	181.0
	<b>Single parents (%)</b>	
Families with dependants aged <5 years	10.5	18.1

Source: ABS (1984) and ABS (2006a).

**Table B2: Percentage employed, mothers and fathers by age of youngest child, 4–5 year-old cohort**

	Mothers	Fathers
Has no younger siblings	60.3	92.3
Has younger sibling(s), youngest aged		
< One	27.0	90.6
One	44.7	90.3
Two	52.8	94.3
Three or four	56.1	93.7
<i>Total with younger siblings</i>	46.2	92.4

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

**Table B3: Mothers' return to work timing and whether study child has younger siblings, 4–5 year-old cohort (per cent)**

Age of child at mother's first return to work	Has no younger siblings	Has younger siblings	Total
< 3 months	9.9	9.4	9.6
3–6 months	10.9	12.5	11.6
6–12 months	17.5	20.3	18.8
1–2 years	12.9	11.5	12.2
2 years or more	19.3	11.8	15.8
Did not return to work	24.7	28.8	26.6
Never worked	4.9	5.8	5.3
	<b>(n=2,647)</b>	<b>(n=2,336)</b>	<b>(n=4,983)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Categories for age of the child at mother's return to work are taken directly from the questionnaire.

**Table B4: Job autonomy by age of youngest child, employed parents (per cent)**

Response	All mothers	All fathers
		<b>Infant</b>
Strongly disagree/disagree	17.2	15.6
Neutral	17.5	15.7
Agree/strongly agree	65.3	68.7
	<b>(n=925)</b>	<b>(n=1,463)</b>
		<b>4–5 year old</b>
Strongly disagree/disagree	17.4	14.9
Neutral	16.8	15.0
Agree/strongly agree	65.8	70.1
	<b>(n=1,297)</b>	<b>(n=1,471)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Job autonomy comes from responses to the statement 'I have a lot of freedom to decide how I do my own work'. Excludes those from the 4–5 year-old cohort with younger siblings, and those who were non-respondents to this question.



**Table B5: Job security by age of youngest child, employed parents (per cent)**

Job security	Mothers			Total fathers
	Couple	Single	Total mothers	
			<b>Infant</b>	
Very secure	33.1	28.0	32.9	36.9
Secure	41.1	41.1	41.1	43.9
Not very secure	11.1	10.9	11.1	10.3
Very insecure	14.6	20.0	14.9	9.0
	<b>(n=1,567)</b>	<b>(n=66)</b>	<b>(n=1,633)</b>	<b>(n=3,201)</b>
			<b>4-5 year old</b>	
Very secure	30.9	22.7	29.8	35.3
Secure	44.1	43.8	44.1	42.6
Not very secure	11.1	15.0	11.6	11.5
Very insecure	14.0	18.4	14.6	10.6
	<b>(n=1,118)</b>	<b>(n=174)</b>	<b>(n=1,292)</b>	<b>(n=1,464)</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Excludes those from the 4-5 year-old cohort with younger siblings, and those who were non-respondents to this question.



## Appendix C: Child care tables

The following tables are discussed in Section 4. Tables C1 to C3 reflect the results of multivariate analysis of use of child care among working families.

**Table C1: Likelihood of parental care only, logistic regression results, working families, infant cohort**

	Coefficient	z-statistic
1–15 hours	1.053	5.77
16–34 hours	–0.069	–0.24
35 hours or more (ref)		
Self-employed	0.908	7.04
Casual employee	0.258	2.75
Permanent employee (ref)		
Sometimes works weekends	0.484	3.69
Sometimes works evenings/nights	0.515	3.51
Cannot change start/finish times (ref)		
Can change hours with approval	–0.067	–0.45
Flexible hours	0.122	1.23
(Non-response to self-complete/flexible hours question)	0.077	0.54
Incomplete secondary (ref)		
Complete secondary only	–0.118	–0.86
Certificate/diploma	–0.397	–2.65
Bachelor degree or higher	–0.465	–3.10
Australian-born (ref)		
Not Australian-born	0.196	1.16
1 child (ref)		
2 children	0.052	0.36
3 children or more	0.523	2.14
Study child aged 3–6 months (ref)		
Study child aged 7–9 months	–0.624	–4.57
Study child aged 10–11 months	–0.876	–5.44
Study child aged 12 months or more	–1.290	–7.56
Parent weekly income < \$1,000		
Parent weekly income \$1,000–1,499	–0.307	–1.77
Parent weekly income \$1,500 or more	–0.548	–3.55
Partner works 1–34 hours	0.340	1.52
Partner works 35–44 hours (ref)		
Partner works 45–54 hours	–0.140	–0.99
Partner works 55 hours or more	0.244	1.87
Single parent	–1.042	–4.13
Constant	–0.966	–3.52
	<b>(n=1,817)</b>	
<b>Log pseudo-likelihood</b>	<b>–931.047</b>	
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.1932</b>	

Note: Unless otherwise noted the characteristics are for the primary carer.

'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels:  $z=1.960$  for  $p=0.05$ ,  $z=2.576$  for  $p=0.01$  and  $z=3.291$  for  $p=0.001$ .

**Table C2: Child care type, multinomial logistic regression results, working families, infant cohort**

	No care		Formal care only		Formal and informal care	
	Co-efficient	z-statistic	Co-efficient	z-statistic	Co-efficient	z-statistic
1–15 hours	0.748	4.04	-0.881	-3.52	-0.758	-2.22
16–34 hours	-0.078	-0.30	-0.195	-0.78	0.331	0.98
35 hours or more (ref)						
Self-employed	0.695	4.35	-0.708	-3.57	-0.326	-1.19
Casual employee	0.116	1.22	-0.406	-1.93	-0.216	-0.91
Permanent employee (ref)						
Sometimes works weekends	0.470	3.50	-0.074	-0.61	0.168	0.91
Sometimes works evenings/nights	0.403	2.54	-0.332	-2.01	-0.326	-1.80
Cannot change start/finish times (ref)						
Can change hours with approval	0.137	1.16	0.041	0.18	0.127	0.55
Flexible hours	0.029	0.18	0.221	0.86	0.297	1.28
(Non-response to self-complete/flexible hours question)	-0.002	-0.01	-0.407	-2.12	0.164	0.69
Incomplete secondary (ref)						
Complete secondary only	-0.026	-0.13	-0.073	-0.21	0.863	2.21
Certificate/diploma	-0.349	-2.40	0.052	0.19	0.286	0.80
Bachelor degree or higher	-0.368	-2.01	0.168	0.47	0.516	1.09
Australian-born (ref)						
Not Australian-born	0.048	0.23	-0.313	-1.53	-0.768	-2.07
1 child (ref)						
2 children	0.173	1.24	0.368	2.12	0.261	1.11
3 children or more	0.543	2.22	0.160	0.98	-0.111	-0.34
Study child aged 3–6 months (ref)						
Study child aged 7–9 months	-0.468	-2.75	0.569	1.56	0.381	1.25
Study child aged 10–11 months	-0.620	-2.88	0.846	2.11	0.617	1.65
Study child aged 12 months or more	-0.977	-5.08	0.895	2.50	0.940	2.72
Parent weekly income < \$1,000						
Parent weekly income \$1,000–1,499	-0.199	-1.35	0.355	1.94	0.258	1.23
Parent weekly income \$1,500 or more	-0.462	-3.04	0.259	1.25	0.221	1.09
Partner works 1–34 hours	0.255	0.99	-0.356	-0.93	-0.194	-0.37
Partner works 35–44 hours (ref)						
Partner works 45–54 hours	-0.095	-0.67	0.089	0.62	0.221	1.05
Partner works 55 hours or more	0.343	3.04	0.163	1.06	0.526	3.13
Single parent	-0.799	-2.91	0.246	0.93	1.364	5.42
Constant	-0.517	-1.62	-0.910	-1.36	-2.671	-7.31
	<b>(n=1,817)</b>					
<b>Log pseudo-likelihood</b>	<b>-20,656</b>					
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.12</b>					

Note: The omitted category of the dependent variable is informal care only. The coefficients estimated are related to this omitted category. Unless otherwise noted the characteristics are for the primary carer.  
‘Ref’ denotes ‘reference category’. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table C3: Likelihood of using school/preschool only, logistic regression results, working families, 4–5 year-old cohort**

	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>z-statistic</b>
1–15 hours	1.175	8.55
16–34 hours	0.380	3.41
35 hours or more (ref)		
Self-employed	0.994	6.63
Casual employee	0.445	3.11
Permanent employee (ref)		
Sometimes works weekends	0.181	2.06
Sometimes works evenings/nights	0.084	0.73
Cannot change start/finish times (ref)		
Can change hours with approval	–0.044	–0.24
Flexible hours	0.250	1.64
(Non-response to self-complete/flexible hours question)	0.112	0.82
Incomplete secondary (ref)		
Complete secondary only	–0.139	–0.86
Certificate/diploma	–0.222	–1.82
Bachelor degree or higher	–0.134	–1.15
Australian-born (ref)		
Not Australian-born	0.265	1.52
Study child has younger siblings	–0.191	–1.54
1 child (ref)		
2 children	0.379	1.87
3 children or more	0.474	2.91
Study child aged < 4 years, 4 months (ref)		
Study child aged 4 years, 5–8 months	0.494	2.25
Study child aged 4 years, 9–11 months	0.659	4.44
Study child aged 5 years and over	0.843	5.06
Parent weekly income < \$1,000		
Parent weekly income \$1,000–1,499	–0.059	–0.40
Parent weekly income \$1,500 or more	0.004	0.03
Partner works 1–34 hours	0.641	2.86
Partner works 35–44 hours (ref)		
Partner works 45–54 hours	0.018	0.11
Partner works 55 hours or more	0.153	1.30
Single parent	–0.517	–1.85
Constant	–2.973	–6.38
	<b>(n=2,482)</b>	
<b>Log pseudo-likelihood</b>	<b>–1,308</b>	
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.12</b>	

Note: Unless otherwise noted the characteristics are for the primary carer.  
 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table C4: Detailed child care use by family characteristics, families with working parent(s), 4–5 year-old cohort (row per cent)**

	Parental or informal care only	School only	School and other care	Preschool only	Preschool and other care	Formal care only	Both formal and informal
<b>Age of study child</b>							
4 years and:							
3–5 months	3.8	1.1	0.5	19.6	31.9	29.3	13.8
6–8 months	2.5	1.6	2.8	26.1	38.1	19.2	9.6
9–11 months	2.0	8.2	7.6	21.3	37.5	15.5	7.9
5 years and over	0.8	18.7	22.8	13.2	28.3	10.0	6.3
<b>Has younger siblings</b>							
No	2.6	7.6	9.5	19.9	35.2	16.5	8.7
Yes	1.4	7.2	6.5	22.9	35.7	17.6	8.8
<b>Number of children</b>							
1	1.5	6.0	10.2	10.9	36.7	19.8	14.9
2	1.3	7.1	8.7	20.7	36.8	17.2	8.1
3 or more	3.6	8.4	6.9	25.7	32.7	15.4	7.3
<b>Family type</b>							
Couple	2.2	7.6	7.6	22.4	34.8	17.3	8.1
Single parent	1.5	6.3	13.7	11.0	39.8	14.0	13.8
<b>Country of birth of primary carer</b>							
Australia	1.8	6.8	7.9	21.3	36.7	16.5	9.1
Not Australia	3.4	9.7	9.7	20.5	30.8	18.6	7.4
<b>Highest education of primary carer</b>							
Incomplete secondary	3.8	6.2	9.3	23.2	35.2	14.0	8.4
Complete secondary only	2.5	7.8	5.9	22.5	37.9	15.8	7.6
Certificate/diploma	2.5	7.2	8.4	21.6	33.1	18.8	8.4
Bachelor degree or higher	0.5	8.3	8.5	18.7	37.5	16.8	9.7
<b>Parental income (gross per week)</b>							
< \$1,000	3.2	7.4	9.7	23.2	34.0	15.3	7.2
\$1,000–1,499	1.8	7.4	6.0	20.1	37.9	18.0	8.8
\$1,500 or more	1.6	7.0	9.1	20.3	34.3	17.7	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>8.7</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Includes families of employed single parents and dual-working couples.

**Table C5: Detailed child care use by job characteristics, families with working parent(s), 4–5 year-old cohort (per cent)**

<b>Job characteristics</b>	<b>Parental or informal care only</b>	<b>School only</b>	<b>School and other care</b>	<b>Preschool only</b>	<b>Preschool and other care</b>	<b>Formal care only</b>	<b>Formal and informal</b>
<b>Hours worked</b>							
1–15	1.3	8.9	4.0	35.3	31.3	13.9	5.2
16–34	2.3	6.4	8.4	15.8	40.7	17.2	9.3
35 or more	2.9	7.0	13.6	11.3	32.8	20.3	12.3
<b>Job type</b>							
Self-employed	2.6	11.4	3.9	36.3	25.7	15.0	5.2
Permanent employee	1.4	5.7	11.5	12.3	39.3	18.8	11.1
Casual employee	3.4	7.0	5.3	26.1	37.1	14.5	6.7
<b>Evening/night work</b>							
Does not work evenings/ nights	1.3	8.0	8.3	20.0	35.1	17.9	9.4
Works evenings/nights	2.9	6.8	8.4	22.2	35.7	16.0	8.1
<b>Weekend work</b>							
Does not work weekends	1.9	7.3	7.9	19.7	34.6	18.5	10.2
Works weekends	2.3	7.5	8.7	22.4	36.1	15.6	7.4
<b>Flexibility of start/finish times</b>							
Flexible working hours	2.2	8.8	6.3	24.8	34.1	16.3	7.5
Can change hours with approval	1.0	3.9	11.4	14.7	39.9	18.4	10.7
Cannot change start/finish	2.0	6.7	9.4	17.0	39.8	15.2	9.9
<b>Non-primary carer hours (couples only)</b>							
1–34	2.4	11.7	5.8	24.5	31.9	18.9	4.9
35–44	2.2	5.5	9.7	19.0	36.8	17.8	9.0
45–54	2.4	7.7	6.7	21.3	34.8	18.4	8.7
55 or more	2.1	9.4	6.2	27.7	32.5	15.5	6.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>8.7</b>

Source: LSAC 2004, Wave 1.

Note: Table includes families of employed single parents and dual-working couples. Unless stated, categories refer to the primary carer.





# Appendix D: Wellbeing multivariate results

The following tables are discussed in Section 8, and the methods section of that section describes the models used. Models were estimated for each of the wellbeing measures listed in Box 8.1. Those estimated using logistic regression are grouped together, and those estimated using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) are grouped together.

**Table D1: Wellbeing Model Set 1, logistic regression, all mothers**

	Fair or poor health		Some to very many difficulties		Problems coping		Time pressure	
	Coefficient	z-score	Coefficient	z-score	Coefficient	z-score	Coefficient	z-score
Not employed	-0.074	-0.46	-0.454	-5.60	-0.240	-3.06	-1.044	-11.61
Part-time	-0.450	-3.29	-0.392	-6.63	-0.323	-4.06	-0.629	-7.06
Full-time (ref)								
Age	-0.052	-0.70	-0.006	-0.15	0.039	1.14	0.007	0.20
Age squared	0.001	0.72	0.000	0.45	0.000	-0.68	0.000	0.16
Incomplete secondary (ref)								
Complete secondary only	-0.179	-1.53	0.131	1.63	0.050	0.55	0.236	2.85
Certificate/diploma	-0.117	-1.09	0.253	4.08	0.070	0.82	0.204	2.76
Bachelor degree or higher	-0.092	-1.00	0.422	4.50	0.105	1.02	0.416	5.88
Australian-born (ref)								
Not Australian-born, good English	0.355	3.03	-0.061	-0.78	0.098	1.46	-0.407	-5.29
Not Australian-born, not good English	0.761	5.50	-0.586	-4.14	0.642	4.59	-0.562	-3.93
Couple parent (ref)								
Single parent	0.217	1.86	0.588	5.83	0.153	1.89	0.176	1.68
Remoteness area classification	-0.067	-1.10	-0.066	-2.34	0.004	0.14	-0.076	-3.62
Youngest aged < 1 (ref)								
Youngest aged 1	0.012	0.10	0.179	3.00	0.188	2.54	-0.020	-0.30
Youngest aged 2-3	0.087	0.61	0.186	2.18	0.262	4.95	0.124	1.72
Youngest aged 4-5	0.147	1.43	0.071	1.15	0.074	1.53	0.033	0.53
1 child (ref)								
2 children	0.164	1.53	0.122	1.62	0.145	2.62	0.490	10.38
3 children or more	-0.134	-1.17	0.291	3.88	0.103	1.85	0.416	8.15
Has a medical condition	1.254	15.55	0.495	9.50	0.370	6.98	0.328	6.02
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.811	-2.03	-0.474	-2.80	-0.308	-2.11	0.384	3.38
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.165	1.36	0.075	1.81	0.031	0.82	-0.063	-1.85
Constant	-1.228	-0.94	-0.120	-0.19	-0.916	-1.59	-0.851	-1.56
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.078</b>		<b>(n=7,943)</b>	<b>0.033</b>	<b>(n=7,937)</b>	<b>0.018</b>	<b>(n=7,941)</b>	<b>0.060</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.

Table D2: Wellbeing Model Set 1, logistic regression, all fathers

	Fair or poor health		Some to very many difficulties		Problems coping		Time pressure	
	Coefficient	z-score	Coefficient	z-score	Coefficient	z-score	Coefficient	z-score
Not employed	0.654	4.06	0.028	0.19	0.122	1.01	-0.869	-6.34
Part-time	0.222	1.57	0.028	0.18	0.035	0.52	-0.289	-2.24
Full-time (ref)								
Age	0.040	0.89	0.117	3.77	0.068	2.27	0.084	2.85
Age squared	0.000	-0.65	-0.001	-3.60	-0.001	-2.01	-0.001	-3.05
Incomplete secondary (ref)								
Complete secondary only	-0.132	-0.60	0.113	1.12	0.002	0.03	0.109	0.80
Certificate/diploma	-0.261	-2.18	0.057	0.74	0.013	0.25	0.206	2.11
Bachelor degree or higher	-0.155	-0.89	0.264	3.29	-0.027	-0.29	0.326	2.74
Australian-born (ref)								
Not Australian-born, good English	-0.139	-1.91	-0.296	-5.07	-0.048	-0.83	-0.357	-3.88
Not Australian-born, not good English	0.568	3.08	-0.614	-2.06	0.551	3.20	-0.693	-1.50
Couple parent (ref)								
Single parent	0.109	0.18	0.423	1.57	0.447	1.84	0.609	1.43
Remoteness area classification	-0.052	-1.06	-0.079	-2.80	-0.057	-2.30	-0.095	-2.61
Youngest aged < 1 (ref)								
Youngest aged 1	0.037	0.34	-0.016	-0.15	-0.058	-0.75	-0.023	-0.25
Youngest aged 2-3	0.025	0.23	-0.081	-1.22	0.088	1.14	-0.023	-0.22
Youngest aged 4-5	-0.015	-0.16	-0.023	-0.36	0.084	1.06	-0.011	-0.13
1 child (ref)								
2 children	0.006	0.06	0.026	0.30	0.049	1.44	0.110	1.08
3 children or more	0.103	0.95	0.119	2.24	0.111	2.06	0.124	2.75
Has a medical condition	1.075	13.43	0.418	5.07	0.373	5.70	0.125	1.90
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.178	-0.80	-0.337	-2.49	-0.269	-1.54	-0.035	-0.18
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.011	0.17	0.088	2.26	0.016	0.35	0.077	1.72
Constant	-2.978	-3.52	-2.472	-4.37	-1.340	-2.63	-1.975	-3.21
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.055</b>	<b>(n=6,592)</b>	<b>0.015</b>	<b>(n=6,389)</b>	<b>0.013</b>	<b>(n=6,385)</b>	<b>0.027</b>	<b>(n=6,385)</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table D3: Wellbeing Model Set 1, OLS, all mothers**

	Psychological distress		Arguments with partner		Relationship quality		Work-family gains		Work-family strains	
	Coefficient	t-score	Coefficient	t-score	Coefficient	t-score	Coefficient	t-score	Coefficient	t-score
Not employed	-0.012	-0.48	-0.075	-3.76	0.080	2.54	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Part-time	-0.092	-3.20	-0.084	-3.27	0.077	1.97	0.086	2.91	-0.417	-11.15
Full-time (ref)										
Age	-0.007	-0.63	-0.043	-2.71	0.036	1.82	-0.002	-0.10	0.030	1.40
Age squared	0.000	0.26	0.001	2.99	-0.001	-2.15	0.000	-0.04	0.000	-0.73
Incomplete secondary (ref)										
Complete secondary only	0.011	0.52	-0.008	-0.31	0.000	-0.01	0.032	0.90	0.078	1.40
Certificate/diploma	0.052	3.26	0.003	0.15	0.005	0.20	0.070	3.04	0.090	1.61
Bachelor degree or higher	0.077	4.03	0.018	1.04	0.033	1.17	0.122	4.46	0.339	8.57
Australian-born (ref)										
Not Australian-born, good English	0.090	2.34	0.023	1.16	-0.019	-0.69	-0.059	-1.82	-0.028	-0.81
Not Australian-born, not good English	0.048	0.86	-0.050	-1.18	0.021	0.49	0.223	1.67	0.114	0.94
Couple parent (ref)										
Single parent	0.162	6.17	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.102	1.36	0.212	3.07
Remoteness area classification	-0.021	-1.93	-0.010	-0.89	-0.001	-0.07	0.015	0.87	-0.013	-0.68
Youngest aged < 1 (ref)										
Youngest aged 1	0.061	4.31	0.019	0.72	-0.018	-0.68	0.010	0.33	0.056	1.51
Youngest aged 2-3	0.106	5.16	0.045	1.32	-0.023	-1.04	0.054	1.39	0.079	1.22
Youngest aged 4-5	0.118	5.46	0.039	1.64	-0.036	-1.53	0.017	0.45	0.131	3.64
1 child (ref)										
2 children	0.044	2.92	0.126	4.55	-0.062	-2.33	-0.026	-0.95	0.046	1.22
3 children or more	0.046	2.26	0.010	0.70	0.018	1.03	-0.058	-2.02	0.008	0.19
Has a medical condition	0.212	10.46	0.107	6.77	-0.106	-4.77	-0.057	-2.02	0.035	0.90
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.193	-3.85	0.046	0.88	0.082	1.41	-0.033	-0.29	0.056	0.53
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.034	2.35	-0.025	-1.73	-0.007	-0.38	0.035	1.11	-0.026	-0.93
Constant	1.836	10.90	2.765	10.56	3.765	10.88	3.590	10.64	1.892	5.40
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.071</b>	<b>(n=7,945)</b>	<b>0.023</b>	<b>(n=7,072)</b>	<b>0.017</b>	<b>(n=7,070)</b>	<b>0.021</b>	<b>(n=3,659)</b>	<b>0.089</b>	<b>(n=3,658)</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: t=1.960 for p=0.05, t=2.576 for p=0.01 and t=3.291 for p=0.001.

Table D4: Wellbeing Model Set 1, OLS, all fathers

	Psychological distress		Arguments with partner		Relationship quality		Work-family gains		Work-family strains	
	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score
Not employed	0.069	1.73	-0.013	-0.43	-0.081	-2.47	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Part-time	0.054	1.92	0.064	2.67	-0.070	-1.85	0.038	0.71	-0.228	-5.21
Full-time (ref)										
Age	0.012	1.24	0.006	0.63	0.002	0.18	-0.027	-1.38	0.020	2.11
Age squared	0.000	-1.31	0.000	-0.24	0.000	-0.48	0.000	1.28	0.000	-1.88
Incomplete secondary (ref)										
Complete secondary only	0.022	0.79	-0.019	-0.69	0.030	0.88	0.048	1.28	-0.036	-0.87
Certificate/diploma	-0.004	-0.16	-0.019	-0.92	0.021	0.89	0.030	1.45	0.007	0.27
Bachelor degree or higher	0.048	1.47	-0.046	-1.71	0.059	2.02	0.015	0.49	0.024	1.00
Australian-born (ref)										
Not Australian-born, good English	0.025	1.41	0.009	0.56	-0.007	-0.35	0.005	0.22	0.001	0.02
Not Australian-born, not good English	0.067	1.29	-0.050	-0.56	-0.074	-1.87	-0.053	-0.47	0.210	1.92
Couple parent (ref)										
Single parent	0.117	0.75	n/a		n/a		0.005	0.06	0.123	0.52
Remoteness area classification	-0.025	-3.26	-0.011	-1.27	0.003	0.38	0.024	2.18	-0.020	-1.96
Youngest aged < 1 (ref)										
Youngest aged 1	-0.021	-1.01	0.020	0.98	-0.018	-0.88	0.027	0.98	-0.043	-1.88
Youngest aged 2-3	-0.007	-0.42	0.051	1.63	-0.035	-0.78	-0.003	-0.10	-0.034	-0.92
Youngest aged 4-5	0.015	1.06	0.077	4.63	-0.072	-3.37	0.034	1.43	0.008	0.26
1 child (ref)										
2 children	0.001	0.03	0.102	3.89	-0.057	-2.23	-0.006	-0.21	0.104	2.70
3 children or more	0.014	0.96	-0.001	-0.03	0.036	1.91	0.005	0.31	0.029	1.32
Has a medical condition	0.141	7.82	0.045	2.57	-0.071	-5.07	-0.048	-2.28	0.077	2.49
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.128	-2.14	0.086	1.90	0.031	0.75	-0.149	-2.37	0.014	0.19
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.021	1.42	-0.027	-2.02	-0.009	-0.67	0.045	2.42	0.001	0.05
Constant	1.427	8.51	1.863	10.70	4.459	21.34	4.265	10.91	2.293	13.18
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.024</b>	<b>(n=6,371)</b>	<b>0.017</b>	<b>(n=6,535)</b>	<b>0.014</b>	<b>(n=6,533)</b>	<b>0.007</b>	<b>(n=5,776)</b>	<b>0.018</b>	<b>(n=5,776)</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: t=1.960 for p=0.05, t=2.576 for p=0.01 and t=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table D5: Wellbeing Model Set 2, logistic regression, employed mothers**

	Fair or poor health		Some to very many difficulties		Problems coping		Time pressure	
	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score
1-15 hours	-0.437	-3.10	-0.508	-4.20	-0.426	-3.91	-0.810	-7.11
16-24 hours	-0.760	-4.86	-0.465	-6.14	-0.380	-3.53	-0.589	-7.20
25-34 hours	-0.148	-0.60	-0.300	-3.13	-0.262	-2.00	-0.257	-2.15
35 hours or more (ref)								
Self-employed	0.328	1.81	0.443	4.55	0.246	2.23	0.275	3.34
Casual employee	-0.091	-0.39	0.127	1.10	0.112	1.19	-0.030	-0.25
Permanent employee (ref)								
Sometimes works weekends	-0.112	-1.07	-0.024	-0.38	0.066	1.14	0.200	2.27
Sometimes works evenings/nights	-0.294	-2.76	0.240	3.56	0.067	0.84	0.134	1.96
Flexible hours	-0.368	-2.04	-0.175	-2.00	-0.199	-2.62	-0.050	-0.55
Can change hours with approval	-0.397	-1.74	-0.007	-0.07	-0.065	-0.72	0.108	0.98
Cannot change start/finish times (ref)								
Perceived level of job security	-0.012	-0.17	-0.054	-1.26	-0.082	-2.90	-0.027	-0.90
Level of job autonomy	-0.200	-3.94	-0.109	-4.78	-0.134	-3.48	-0.056	-1.59
Age	0.023	0.23	0.027	0.34	0.093	1.34	0.029	0.39
Age squared	0.000	-0.23	0.000	-0.17	-0.001	-1.09	0.000	-0.13
Incomplete secondary (ref)								
Complete secondary only	-0.250	-0.89	0.203	1.66	0.152	1.15	0.288	2.68
Certificate/diploma	0.011	0.04	0.312	2.78	0.045	0.37	0.202	2.36
Bachelor degree or higher	0.129	0.63	0.543	3.40	0.061	0.43	0.492	4.29
Australian-born (ref)								
Not Australian-born, good English	0.394	2.82	-0.172	-1.87	0.011	0.11	-0.404	-4.32
Not Australian-born, not good English	1.283	3.00	-0.854	-1.99	0.208	0.62	-0.485	-1.03
Couple parent (ref)								
Single parent	0.331	1.31	0.541	2.88	0.024	0.19	0.444	2.18
Remoteness area classification	-0.068	-1.11	-0.087	-2.22	0.008	0.22	-0.101	-2.73
Youngest aged < 1 (ref)								
Youngest aged 1	0.175	0.96	0.202	1.91	0.297	3.22	0.122	0.92
Youngest aged 2-3	0.099	0.41	0.029	0.23	0.217	2.41	0.132	1.09
Youngest aged 4-5	0.027	0.11	0.035	0.39	0.026	0.32	0.046	0.39
1 child (ref)								
2 children	-0.029	-0.17	0.147	1.64	0.191	2.20	0.483	5.19
3 children or more	-0.222	-1.30	0.277	4.82	0.048	0.82	0.308	3.51
Has a medical condition	1.230	8.92	0.474	5.48	0.337	4.76	0.243	2.91
Parent weekly income (\$000)	0.063	0.42	0.127	2.00	0.060	1.05	-0.080	-1.41
Parent income (\$000) squared	-0.224	-0.42	-0.638	-2.40	-0.374	-1.71	0.402	1.86
Constant	-1.795	-1.22	-0.129	-0.10	-1.080	-0.94	-1.254	-0.99
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(n=3,629)</b>	<b>0.078</b>	<b>(n=3,628)</b>	<b>0.043</b>	<b>(n=3,627)</b>	<b>0.026</b>	<b>(n=3,629)</b>	<b>0.056</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table D6: Wellbeing Model Set 2, logistic regression, employed fathers**

	Fair or poor health		Some to very many difficulties		Problems coping		Time pressure	
	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score
1-34 hours	-0.152	-0.87	-0.042	-0.29	0.016	0.14	-0.696	-5.46
35-44 hours	-0.401	-2.59	-0.271	-2.51	-0.147	-2.38	-0.793	-9.06
45-54 hours	-0.243	-1.97	-0.093	-1.09	-0.089	-1.16	-0.423	-4.67
55 hours or more (ref)								
Self-employed	0.133	0.89	0.176	2.27	-0.002	-0.02	0.335	3.24
Casual employee	0.163	0.77	-0.180	-1.51	-0.304	-2.11	-0.296	-1.49
Permanent employee (ref)								
Sometimes works weekends	0.030	0.24	0.094	1.39	-0.003	-0.05	-0.110	-1.33
Sometimes works evenings/nights	0.075	0.62	0.255	3.92	0.124	1.83	0.385	8.19
Flexible hours	-0.117	-0.95	-0.091	-0.97	-0.184	-2.32	-0.230	-2.33
Can change hours with approval	-0.204	-1.85	-0.017	-0.21	-0.127	-1.42	-0.067	-0.82
Cannot change start/finish times (ref)								
Perceived level of job security	-0.186	-3.02	-0.223	-7.29	-0.293	-7.62	-0.075	-2.20
Level of job autonomy	-0.194	-6.18	-0.176	-8.47	-0.256	-7.83	-0.061	-2.22
Age	-0.014	-0.27	0.124	3.68	0.072	1.92	0.088	2.64
Age squared	0.000	0.47	-0.001	-3.45	-0.001	-1.68	-0.001	-2.72
Incomplete secondary (ref)								
Complete secondary only	-0.198	-0.86	0.254	2.41	0.095	1.08	0.192	1.35
Certificate/diploma	-0.298	-2.18	0.110	1.43	0.018	0.26	0.209	1.90
Bachelor degree or higher	-0.081	-0.42	0.361	4.28	0.046	0.40	0.399	3.80
Australian-born (ref)								
Not Australian-born, good English	-0.079	-0.77	-0.254	-3.76	-0.038	-0.61	-0.295	-3.36
Not Australian-born, not good English	-0.878	-1.46	-0.849	-1.80	0.313	1.49	-0.966	-2.74
Couple parent (ref)								
Single parent	(a)		1.597	2.90	0.734	1.18	0.413	0.46
Remoteness area classification	-0.098	-1.98	-0.067	-2.10	-0.046	-1.33	-0.104	-2.64
Youngest aged < 1 (ref)								
Youngest aged 1	0.023	0.18	-0.020	-0.18	-0.034	-0.41	-0.073	-0.81
Youngest aged 2-3	-0.063	-0.48	-0.106	-1.40	0.089	1.16	-0.092	-0.84
Youngest aged 4-5	-0.106	-0.90	-0.061	-0.84	0.043	0.53	-0.088	-1.00
1 child (ref)								
2 children	0.032	0.32	0.062	0.79	0.116	2.19	0.108	1.10
3 children or more	0.961	9.96	0.398	4.79	0.371	4.49	0.129	1.82
Has a medical condition	0.038	0.33	0.075	0.94	0.086	1.29	0.053	0.96
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.086	-1.10	0.069	1.11	0.016	0.30	0.056	0.97
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.165	0.61	-0.282	-1.32	-0.230	-1.16	-0.069	-0.28
Constant	-0.557	-0.57	-1.440	-2.14	0.424	0.56	-1.134	-1.68
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.078</b>		<b>(n=3,629)</b>		<b>(n=3,627)</b>		<b>(n=3,629)</b>	
			<b>0.043</b>		<b>0.026</b>		<b>0.056</b>	

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.  
 (a) Single fathers were excluded from this model, as all not-employed single fathers were identified as having poor health.

**Table D7: Wellbeing Model Set 2, OLS, employed mothers**

	Psychological distress		Arguments with partner		Relationship quality		Work-family gains		Work-family strains	
	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score
1-15 hours	-0.093	-2.38	-0.112	-3.34	0.120	2.43	0.084	2.86	-0.500	-11.77
16-24 hours	-0.129	-5.24	-0.088	-3.73	0.089	2.80	0.108	3.57	-0.315	-8.38
25-34 hours	-0.106	-3.10	-0.057	-1.37	0.033	0.53	0.061	1.24	-0.201	-4.24
35 hours or more (ref)										
Self-employed	0.125	2.92	0.042	1.49	-0.090	-3.73	-0.084	-2.17	-0.042	-0.98
Casual employee	0.000	0.00	0.057	1.81	-0.046	-1.12	0.026	0.99	-0.094	-2.34
Permanent employee (ref)										
Sometimes works weekends	0.028	1.06	-0.004	-0.20	-0.008	-0.36	0.009	0.40	0.093	3.24
Sometimes works evenings/nights	-0.019	-0.75	-0.009	-0.28	0.041	1.27	-0.010	-0.44	0.072	2.73
Flexible hours	-0.073	-3.43	-0.027	-0.90	0.066	1.76	-0.003	-0.12	-0.226	-7.29
Can change hours with approval	-0.013	-0.62	0.010	0.44	0.031	0.85	0.019	0.44	-0.069	-1.51
Cannot change start/finish times (ref)										
Perceived level of job security	-0.029	-3.87	-0.023	-1.51	0.022	1.48	0.008	0.59	-0.035	-3.61
Level of job autonomy	-0.056	-7.48	-0.024	-2.46	0.029	1.88	0.147	12.27	-0.081	-6.33
Age	0.021	1.23	-0.027	-0.83	0.053	2.02	-0.003	-0.13	0.037	1.74
Age squared	0.000	-1.34	0.000	1.05	-0.001	-2.44	0.000	-0.02	0.000	-1.04
Complete secondary only	0.012	0.33	-0.013	-0.29	0.049	1.02	0.024	0.63	0.111	2.00
Certificate/diploma	0.052	1.52	0.004	0.14	0.049	1.15	0.068	3.23	0.082	1.41
Bachelor degree or higher	0.078	2.33	-0.009	-0.31	0.097	2.84	0.119	4.79	0.299	7.20
Not Australian-born, good English	0.052	1.76	0.054	1.99	-0.048	-1.49	-0.059	-2.17	-0.041	-1.13
Not Australian-born, not good English	0.219	1.66	0.335	3.43	-0.094	-0.90	0.251	2.09	0.083	0.65
Single parent	0.130	3.38	n/a		n/a		0.095	1.57	0.164	2.30
Remoteness area classification	-0.026	-2.69	-0.004	-0.34	-0.001	-0.07	0.012	0.71	-0.012	-0.58
Youngest aged 1	0.033	1.51	0.025	0.59	0.004	0.09	0.015	0.51	0.039	1.12
Youngest aged 2-3	0.065	1.98	0.039	0.83	0.004	0.10	0.065	1.65	0.052	0.83
Youngest aged 4-5	0.063	3.06	0.052	1.74	-0.039	-1.12	0.025	0.76	0.081	2.48
2 children	0.053	2.36	0.110	2.37	-0.037	-0.78	-0.023	-0.92	0.054	1.43
3 children or more	-0.008	-0.41	0.017	0.66	0.003	0.09	-0.041	-1.50	0.038	0.95
Has a medical condition	0.158	8.17	0.101	3.16	-0.110	-3.57	-0.055	-1.92	0.034	0.86
Parent weekly income (\$000)	0.023	1.39	-0.031	-1.55	0.013	0.69	0.026	1.01	0.011	0.40
Parent income (\$000) squared	-0.141	-2.13	0.085	1.14	-0.011	-0.17	-0.032	-0.32	-0.074	-0.72
Constant	1.646	6.32	2.585	4.57	3.330	7.49	3.053	8.36	2.347	5.85
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.078</b>	<b>(n=3,631)</b>	<b>0.037</b>	<b>(n=3,344)</b>	<b>0.033</b>	<b>(n=3,346)</b>	<b>0.081</b>	<b>(n=3,631)</b>	<b>0.153</b>	<b>(n=3,624)</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: t=1.960 for p=0.05, t=2.576 for p=0.01 and t=3.291 for p=0.001.



**Table D8: Wellbeing Model Set 2, OLS, employed fathers**

	Psychological distress		Arguments with partner		Relationship quality		Work-family gains		Work-family strains	
	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score
1-34 hours	0.014	0.34	0.080	3.28	-0.078	-2.24	0.089	1.79	-0.371	-7.24
35-44 hours	-0.045	-2.58	0.006	0.36	-0.021	-1.01	0.111	3.28	-0.212	-5.31
45-54 hours	-0.024	-1.44	0.035	1.88	-0.039	-1.76	0.048	1.42	-0.150	-5.15
55 hours or more (ref)										
Self-employed	0.054	2.95	0.022	1.10	-0.011	-0.39	0.077	3.27	-0.043	-1.79
Casual employee	-0.039	-1.26	-0.060	-1.58	-0.047	-0.89	0.032	0.72	0.027	0.50
Permanent employee (ref)										
Sometimes works weekends	-0.016	-0.89	0.039	2.69	-0.015	-0.63	0.004	0.24	0.029	1.56
Sometimes works evenings/nights	0.026	1.53	-0.010	-0.45	0.001	0.04	-0.049	-1.97	0.125	4.18
Flexible hours	-0.079	-3.04	-0.061	-2.21	0.019	0.76	0.041	1.52	-0.194	-6.62
Can change hours with approval	-0.062	-2.24	-0.022	-0.64	0.027	1.11	0.049	2.07	-0.100	-3.23
Cannot change start/finish times (ref)										
Perceived level of job security	-0.075	-9.58	-0.045	-4.49	0.046	4.12	0.058	6.26	-0.069	-6.57
Level of job autonomy	-0.056	-5.94	-0.030	-4.41	0.037	5.79	0.130	11.98	-0.072	-6.64
Age	0.007	0.83	0.001	0.11	0.005	0.32	-0.028	-1.52	0.021	2.10
Age squared	0.000	-0.95	0.000	0.15	0.000	-0.58	0.000	1.38	0.000	-1.77
Complete secondary only	0.043	1.36	-0.021	-0.58	0.020	0.49	0.028	0.79	-0.004	-0.08
Certificate/diploma	0.020	0.84	-0.024	-0.94	0.020	0.83	0.011	0.61	0.023	0.75
Bachelor degree or higher	0.085	2.95	-0.050	-1.77	0.055	1.86	-0.048	-0.59	0.066	2.47
Not Australian-born, good English	0.013	0.78	0.035	2.11	-0.037	-1.80	0.006	0.35	-0.003	-0.12
Not Australian-born, not good English	-0.099	-1.33	0.006	0.07	-0.064	-0.96	0.023	0.20	0.119	1.02
Single parent	0.233	1.34	n/a		n/a		-0.008	-0.06	0.152	0.55
Remoteness area classification	-0.023	-2.84	-0.019	-1.83	0.005	0.70	0.027	2.22	-0.028	-2.63
Youngest aged 1	-0.008	-0.39	0.023	1.06	-0.009	-0.42	0.030	1.29	-0.046	-2.31
Youngest aged 2-3	-0.022	-1.24	0.057	1.70	-0.030	-0.65	0.003	0.13	-0.045	-1.24
Youngest aged 4-5	0.001	0.06	0.067	3.94	-0.058	-2.58	0.038	1.82	-0.001	-0.04
2 children	0.019	0.85	0.118	4.66	-0.065	-2.32	-0.023	-0.90	0.113	2.95
3 children or more	0.122	7.55	0.047	2.49	-0.077	-4.76	-0.041	-1.89	0.069	2.27
Has a medical condition	-0.003	-0.11	-0.004	-0.24	0.029	1.23	0.014	0.79	0.012	0.60
Parent weekly income (\$000)	0.010	0.57	-0.028	-2.13	0.002	0.18	0.031	1.49	0.005	0.23
Parent income (\$000) squared	-0.074	-1.08	0.111	2.22	-0.021	-0.50	-0.108	-1.55	-0.005	-0.07
Constant	1.964	12.90	2.166	9.78	4.210	14.00	3.527	10.41	2.914	14.79
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.057</b>	<b>(n=5,576)</b>	<b>0.033</b>	<b>(n=5,714)</b>	<b>0.027</b>	<b>(n=5,709)</b>	<b>0.083</b>	<b>(n=5,745)</b>	<b>0.080</b>	<b>(n=5,744)</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: t=1.960 for p=0.05, t=2.576 for p=0.01 and t=3.291 for p=0.001.

Table D9: Wellbeing Model Set 3, logistic regression, couple mothers

	Fair or poor health		Some to very many difficulties		Problems coping		Time pressure	
	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score
<b>Own hours worked</b>								
Not employed	-0.063	-0.40	-0.463	-4.78	-0.276	-3.65	-0.987	-9.05
1-15	-0.364	-2.12	-0.430	-4.23	-0.340	-3.86	-0.759	-7.09
16-24	-0.629	-3.39	-0.413	-5.02	-0.398	-3.56	-0.610	-6.40
25-34	-0.068	-0.26	-0.228	-2.41	-0.224	-1.94	-0.105	-0.93
35 or more (ref)								
<b>Partner's hours worked</b>								
Not employed	0.348	2.26	-0.154	-1.07	-0.152	-1.17	-0.287	-2.26
1-34	0.365	2.09	0.051	0.49	0.018	0.18	0.004	0.02
35-44	0.270	1.79	-0.289	-3.51	-0.109	-1.64	-0.247	-3.08
45-54	0.036	0.31	-0.183	-2.36	-0.060	-0.88	-0.110	-1.46
55 or more (ref)								
Age	-0.131	-1.74	-0.045	-1.17	0.065	1.47	0.033	0.71
Age squared	0.002	1.72	0.001	1.54	-0.001	-1.04	0.000	-0.34
Complete secondary only	-0.013	-0.08	0.159	1.67	0.048	0.46	0.253	2.73
Certificate/diploma	-0.054	-0.34	0.266	3.79	0.068	0.75	0.225	3.07
Bachelor degree or higher	-0.048	-0.40	0.456	4.68	0.110	1.10	0.422	5.89
Not Australian-born, good English	0.338	2.75	-0.081	-1.00	0.096	1.34	-0.428	-5.15
Not Australian-born, not good English	0.294	1.37	-0.560	-3.14	0.576	3.98	-0.089	-0.43
Remoteness area classification	-0.093	-1.45	-0.066	-2.14	-0.016	-0.57	-0.061	-2.56
Youngest aged 1	0.010	0.07	0.202	3.00	0.194	2.36	-0.026	-0.28
Youngest aged 2-3	0.106	0.67	0.158	1.93	0.275	4.85	0.092	1.07
Youngest aged 4-5	0.141	1.10	0.062	0.85	0.051	0.88	0.007	0.08
2 children	0.185	1.23	0.150	1.71	0.163	3.13	0.517	11.29
3 children or more	-0.124	-1.22	0.269	4.22	0.072	1.18	0.410	8.11
Has a medical condition	1.261	15.24	0.511	8.34	0.413	6.87	0.363	6.33
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.606	-1.80	-0.393	-1.74	-0.301	-1.85	0.168	1.21
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.122	1.20	0.044	0.81	0.019	0.47	-0.014	-0.37
Constant	-0.330	-0.24	0.620	1.08	-1.267	-1.74	-1.097	-1.42
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.072</b>		<b>(n=7,071)</b>		<b>(n=7,064)</b>		<b>(n=7,069)</b>	
			<b>0.027</b>		<b>0.019</b>		<b>0.063</b>	

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.

Table D40: Wellbeing Model Set 3, logistic regression, couple fathers

	Fair or poor health		Some to very many difficulties		Problems coping		Time pressure	
	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score
<b>Own hours worked</b>								
Not employed	0.365	1.74	-0.141	-0.90	-0.039	-0.31	-1.394	-9.45
1-34 hours	-0.075	-0.48	-0.176	-1.12	-0.090	-1.05	-0.818	-5.77
35-44 hours	-0.414	-2.93	-0.342	-3.80	-0.143	-2.35	-0.867	-10.45
45-54 hours	-0.239	-1.75	-0.126	-1.37	-0.109	-1.19	-0.450	-5.05
55 or more (ref)	0.365	1.74	-0.141	-0.90	-0.039	-0.31	-1.394	-9.45
<b>Partner's hours worked</b>								
Not employed	-0.047	-0.35	-0.013	-0.17	-0.296	-3.19	0.077	0.94
1-15 hours	-0.081	-0.55	-0.020	-0.22	-0.364	-3.89	0.233	2.43
16-24 hours	-0.253	-1.65	-0.068	-0.66	-0.263	-2.41	-0.015	-0.16
25-34 hours	0.130	0.52	-0.236	-1.64	-0.123	-0.96	0.228	2.03
35 or more (ref)								
Age	0.039	0.86	0.111	3.85	0.074	2.42	0.080	2.68
Age squared	0.000	-0.66	-0.001	-3.49	-0.001	-2.15	-0.001	-2.92
Complete secondary only	-0.102	-0.46	0.131	1.30	0.012	0.12	0.159	1.11
Certificate/diploma	-0.257	-2.21	0.057	0.77	0.009	0.16	0.222	2.14
Bachelor degree or higher	-0.127	-0.79	0.271	3.31	-0.004	-0.04	0.365	3.12
Not Australian-born, good English	-0.128	-1.78	-0.297	-4.79	-0.054	-0.93	-0.340	-3.57
Not Australian-born, not good English	0.659	3.41	-0.379	-1.12	0.518	2.43	-0.394	-0.75
Remoteness area classification	-0.054	-1.06	-0.089	-2.89	-0.065	-2.42	-0.116	-3.21
Youngest aged 1	0.032	0.28	-0.023	-0.22	-0.074	-0.98	-0.037	-0.40
Youngest aged 2-3	0.007	0.06	-0.080	-1.30	0.058	0.70	-0.033	-0.32
Youngest aged 4-5	-0.020	-0.21	-0.003	-0.05	0.035	0.43	-0.005	-0.06
2 children	0.008	0.09	0.022	0.26	0.061	1.73	0.094	1.00
3 children or more	0.086	0.75	0.095	1.60	0.128	2.35	0.103	2.26
Has a medical condition	1.083	13.70	0.423	5.04	0.374	5.75	0.130	2.03
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.190	-0.84	-0.323	-2.45	-0.385	-2.26	0.003	0.02
Parent income (\$000) squared	-0.001	-0.01	0.075	2.00	0.034	0.76	0.039	0.83
Constant	-2.588	-3.20	-2.125	-4.19	-0.969	-1.78	-1.435	-2.21
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(n=6,530)</b>		<b>(n=6,329)</b>		<b>(n=6,325)</b>		<b>(n=6,325)</b>	
	<b>0.058</b>		<b>0.019</b>		<b>0.015</b>		<b>0.046</b>	

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table D11: Wellbeing Model Set 3, OLS, couple mothers**

	Psychological distress		Arguments with partner		Relationship quality		Work-family gains		Work-family strains	
	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score
<b>Own hours worked</b>										
Not employed	-0.032	-1.21	-0.070	-3.09	0.081	2.40	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1-15 hours	-0.088	-2.31	-0.094	-2.60	0.101	2.07	0.081	2.70	-0.599	-12.93
16-24 hours	-0.123	-4.02	-0.077	-3.32	0.079	2.62	0.106	3.04	-0.338	-7.00
25-34 hours	-0.073	-1.86	-0.039	-0.91	0.013	0.23	0.066	1.31	-0.202	-3.49
35 or more (ref)										
<b>Partner's hours worked</b>										
Not employed	-0.042	-0.89	0.065	1.32	0.000	0.01	-0.094	-1.02	0.006	0.06
1-34 hours	-0.005	-0.20	0.051	1.58	-0.006	-0.11	0.018	0.35	0.024	0.33
35-44 hours	-0.053	-2.88	-0.002	-0.07	0.057	2.35	0.049	1.01	-0.022	-0.44
45-54 hours	-0.005	-0.38	0.024	1.37	0.018	0.97	0.041	0.97	0.013	0.36
55 or more (ref)										
Age	-0.013	-1.21	-0.041	-2.49	0.035	1.77	-0.011	-0.48	0.035	1.36
Age squared	0.000	0.62	0.001	2.78	-0.001	-2.09	0.000	0.31	0.000	-0.80
Complete secondary only	0.011	0.43	-0.005	-0.22	-0.003	-0.08	0.043	1.22	0.079	1.32
Certificate/diploma	0.041	2.47	0.005	0.24	0.004	0.15	0.088	2.96	0.071	1.30
Bachelor degree or higher	0.079	3.76	0.017	0.96	0.031	1.12	0.140	4.63	0.327	7.78
Not Australian-born, good English	0.086	2.37	0.019	0.97	-0.018	-0.64	-0.046	-1.64	-0.036	-1.15
Not Australian-born, not good English	-0.054	-0.80	-0.074	-1.49	0.046	0.85	0.267	2.03	0.144	1.17
Remoteness area classification	-0.023	-2.03	-0.010	-0.90	0.001	0.12	0.011	0.73	-0.011	-0.55
Youngest aged 1	0.056	4.18	0.017	0.61	-0.018	-0.68	0.017	0.56	0.017	0.44
Youngest aged 2-3	0.109	5.24	0.045	1.29	-0.023	-0.99	0.045	1.32	0.028	0.38
Youngest aged 4-5	0.112	5.63	0.035	1.42	-0.032	-1.23	0.009	0.26	0.064	1.65
2 children	0.040	2.66	0.125	4.27	-0.063	-2.20	-0.021	-0.83	0.083	1.97
3 children or more	0.046	2.74	0.009	0.60	0.021	1.20	-0.043	-1.69	0.034	0.80
Has a medical condition	0.200	10.05	0.109	6.80	-0.107	-4.71	-0.051	-1.95	0.035	0.79
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.205	-3.81	0.080	1.20	0.062	0.91	-0.067	-0.54	-0.031	-0.35
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.034	2.34	-0.034	-1.95	0.001	0.04	0.043	1.28	-0.010	-0.41
Constant	2.023	13.07	2.685	9.81	3.765	10.83	3.735	10.03	1.927	4.59
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.052</b>		<b>0.024</b>		<b>0.018</b>		<b>0.025</b>		<b>(n=3,361)</b>	<b>0.111</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: t=1.960 for p=0.05, t=2.576 for p=0.01 and t=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table D12: Wellbeing Model Set 3, OLS, couple fathers**

	Psychological distress		Arguments with partner		Relationship quality		Work-family gains		Work-family strains	
	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score
<b>Own hours worked</b>										
Not employed	0.034	0.85	-0.014	-0.39	-0.083	-1.96	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1-34 hours	0.019	0.58	0.059	2.36	-0.066	-1.57	0.082	1.45	-0.380	-7.67
35-44 hours	-0.049	-2.58	-0.004	-0.26	-0.012	-0.59	0.066	1.88	-0.224	-6.24
45-54 hours	-0.028	-1.53	0.027	1.82	-0.034	-1.50	0.032	0.83	-0.157	-5.34
55 or more (ref)										
<b>Partner's hours worked</b>										
Not employed	-0.013	-0.69	-0.048	-2.03	0.071	2.29	0.005	0.15	0.017	0.55
1-15 hours	-0.043	-2.08	-0.057	-1.72	0.081	2.29	0.051	1.50	-0.052	-1.80
16-24 hours	-0.059	-1.94	-0.069	-3.13	0.107	4.25	0.076	2.24	-0.075	-2.07
25-34 hours	-0.039	-1.23	-0.002	-0.04	-0.027	-0.58	0.073	2.18	-0.044	-1.00
35 or more (ref)										
Age	0.010	1.09	0.008	0.84	-0.001	-0.09	-0.030	-1.52	0.016	1.73
Age squared	0.000	-1.13	0.000	-0.49	0.000	-0.16	0.000	1.44	0.000	-1.53
Complete secondary only	0.026	0.90	-0.013	-0.44	0.028	0.77	0.046	1.19	-0.020	-0.50
Certificate/diploma	-0.004	-0.18	-0.014	-0.65	0.019	0.78	0.033	1.61	0.011	0.43
Bachelor degree or higher	0.049	1.50	-0.039	-1.45	0.055	1.81	0.015	0.52	0.031	1.32
Not Australian-born, good English	0.026	1.50	0.004	0.28	-0.002	-0.09	0.007	0.33	0.003	0.12
Not Australian-born, not good English	0.019	0.34	-0.060	-0.69	-0.056	-1.33	-0.035	-0.33	0.161	1.21
Remoteness area classification	-0.024	-3.25	-0.013	-1.34	0.004	0.57	0.025	2.23	-0.024	-2.32
Youngest aged 1	-0.021	-1.07	0.017	0.84	-0.016	-0.72	0.018	0.74	-0.039	-1.79
Youngest aged 2-3	-0.004	-0.25	0.046	1.36	-0.023	-0.54	-0.011	-0.48	-0.020	-0.55
Youngest aged 4-5	0.018	1.24	0.073	3.90	-0.062	-2.48	0.024	0.86	0.019	0.62
2 children	0.004	0.18	0.105	4.03	-0.064	-2.51	-0.005	-0.17	0.099	2.68
3 children or more	0.010	0.63	-0.001	-0.04	0.032	1.63	0.012	0.66	0.015	0.67
Has a medical condition	0.142	7.88	0.045	2.61	-0.068	-4.76	-0.047	-2.28	0.073	2.31
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.122	-1.91	0.069	1.50	0.051	1.17	-0.163	-2.48	0.043	0.54
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.017	1.13	-0.024	-1.80	-0.012	-0.93	0.050	2.55	-0.013	-0.63
Constant	1.503	8.98	1.878	11.37	4.443	22.76	4.239	11.42	2.520	13.91
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.026</b>	<b>(n=6,311)</b>	<b>0.018</b>	<b>(n=6,504)</b>	<b>0.017</b>	<b>(n=6,502)</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>(n=5,739)</b>	<b>0.033</b>	<b>(n=5,739)</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: t=1.960 for p=0.05, t=2.576 for p=0.01 and t=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table D13: Wellbeing Model Set 4, logistic regression, employed mothers**

	Fair or poor health		Some to very many difficulties		Problems coping		Time pressure	
	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score
1-15 hours	-0.454	-2.79	-0.375	-3.13	-0.295	-2.42	-0.538	-4.73
16-24 hours	-0.701	-4.55	-0.284	-3.57	-0.203	-1.75	-0.334	-4.01
25-34 hours	-0.107	-0.46	-0.165	-1.52	-0.137	-1.00	-0.067	-0.55
35 or more (ref)								
Prefer fewer hours	0.229	1.76	0.493	6.82	0.478	6.89	0.633	9.69
Prefer same hours (ref)								
Prefer more hours	0.519	2.35	0.498	5.90	0.454	4.02	0.060	0.47
Self-employed	0.299	1.73	0.418	4.18	0.212	1.92	0.257	2.82
Casual employee	-0.127	-0.57	0.112	0.96	0.109	1.16	-0.006	-0.05
Sometimes works weekends	-0.127	-1.18	-0.034	-0.53	0.051	0.88	0.191	2.27
Sometimes works evenings/nights	-0.301	-2.80	0.232	3.21	0.064	0.75	0.135	1.96
Flexible hours	-0.346	-1.94	-0.143	-1.64	-0.176	-2.28	-0.032	-0.36
Can change hours with approval	-0.379	-1.62	0.019	0.20	-0.051	-0.56	0.119	1.06
Perceived level of job security	-0.005	-0.06	-0.044	-1.09	-0.074	-2.62	-0.025	-0.83
Level of job autonomy	-0.190	-3.56	-0.092	-3.94	-0.118	-2.94	-0.036	-1.03
Age	0.021	0.22	0.028	0.32	0.091	1.24	0.021	0.27
Age squared	0.000	-0.23	0.000	-0.19	-0.001	-1.04	0.000	-0.06
Complete secondary only	-0.210	-0.74	0.226	1.82	0.162	1.17	0.272	2.54
Certificate/diploma	0.019	0.07	0.320	2.84	0.061	0.49	0.205	2.48
Bachelor degree or higher	0.135	0.64	0.540	3.42	0.058	0.39	0.483	4.27
Not Australian-born, good English	0.395	2.86	-0.180	-1.93	0.009	0.09	-0.404	-4.19
Not Australian-born, not good English	1.288	2.84	-0.795	-1.76	0.271	0.67	-0.392	-0.90
Single parent	0.282	1.06	0.522	2.69	0.013	0.11	0.477	2.38
Remoteness area classification	-0.060	-0.97	-0.074	-1.88	0.020	0.57	-0.091	-2.44
Youngest aged 1	0.171	0.94	0.206	1.98	0.302	3.11	0.133	0.98
Youngest aged 2-3	0.112	0.47	0.036	0.30	0.225	2.51	0.138	1.16
Youngest aged 4-5	0.031	0.12	0.063	0.68	0.043	0.54	0.082	0.68
2 children	-0.035	-0.21	0.149	1.69	0.198	2.38	0.498	5.23
3 children or more	-0.212	-1.25	0.280	4.68	0.051	0.84	0.303	3.32
Has a medical condition	1.232	8.60	0.484	5.57	0.349	5.00	0.260	3.09
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.218	-0.40	-0.599	-2.25	-0.299	-1.34	0.494	2.27
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.063	0.41	0.118	1.82	0.042	0.73	-0.105	-1.81
Constant	-1.966	-1.34	-0.562	-0.39	-1.479	-1.21	-1.630	-1.24
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(n=3,619)</b>		<b>(n=3,618)</b>		<b>(n=3,617)</b>		<b>(n=3,619)</b>	
	<b>0.082</b>		<b>0.051</b>		<b>0.034</b>		<b>0.065</b>	

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table D14: Wellbeing Model Set 4, logistic regression, employed fathers**

	Fair or poor health		Some to very many difficulties		Problems coping		Time pressure	
	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score	coefficient	z-score
1-34 hours	-0.073	-0.36	0.014	0.09	0.064	0.57	-0.445	-3.76
35-44 hours	-0.309	-1.94	-0.171	-1.56	-0.066	-1.03	-0.604	-6.18
45-54 hours	-0.174	-1.37	-0.028	-0.34	-0.039	-0.52	-0.306	-3.67
55 hours or more (ref)								
Prefer fewer hours	0.373	3.27	0.375	7.96	0.295	5.16	0.647	10.44
Prefer same hours (ref)								
Prefer more hours	0.448	1.97	0.532	5.70	0.376	2.86	0.109	0.63
Self-employed	0.113	0.74	0.164	2.19	-0.014	-0.22	0.326	3.13
Casual employee	0.111	0.50	-0.191	-1.55	-0.305	-1.99	-0.256	-1.24
Sometimes works weekends	0.025	0.20	0.080	1.16	-0.013	-0.22	-0.117	-1.40
Sometimes works evenings/nights	0.080	0.67	0.247	3.82	0.115	1.71	0.383	8.19
Flexible hours	-0.077	-0.61	-0.053	-0.56	-0.160	-2.05	-0.193	-1.90
Can change hours with approval	-0.167	-1.53	0.006	0.08	-0.115	-1.32	-0.054	-0.64
Perceived level of job security	-0.179	-2.84	-0.218	-6.88	-0.289	-7.38	-0.069	-1.93
Level of job autonomy	-0.183	-5.75	-0.166	-7.74	-0.248	-7.62	-0.048	-1.87
Age	-0.017	-0.31	0.117	3.60	0.066	1.76	0.073	2.28
Age squared	0.000	0.47	-0.001	-3.39	-0.001	-1.55	-0.001	-2.47
Complete secondary only	-0.176	-0.77	0.263	2.43	0.089	0.98	0.187	1.32
Certificate/diploma	-0.281	-1.98	0.115	1.45	0.012	0.15	0.201	1.79
Bachelor degree or higher	-0.077	-0.39	0.360	4.29	0.033	0.28	0.376	3.41
Not Australian-born, good English	-0.064	-0.61	-0.247	-3.81	-0.031	-0.49	-0.273	-3.31
Not Australian-born, not good English	-0.833	-1.49	-0.829	-1.52	0.408	1.56	-0.855	-2.12
Single parent			1.583	2.97	0.717	1.20	0.462	0.54
Remoteness area classification	-0.089	-1.70	-0.056	-1.80	-0.036	-1.03	-0.091	-2.25
Youngest aged 1	0.028	0.22	-0.012	-0.10	-0.029	-0.35	-0.068	-0.71
Youngest aged 2-3	-0.073	-0.55	-0.099	-1.33	0.099	1.25	-0.094	-0.85
Youngest aged 4-5	-0.097	-0.82	-0.052	-0.71	0.048	0.61	-0.076	-0.86
2 children	0.032	0.33	0.067	0.83	0.122	2.20	0.120	1.22
3 children or more	0.041	0.36	0.070	0.88	0.079	1.18	0.060	1.07
Has a medical condition	0.965	10.01	0.403	4.65	0.373	4.47	0.132	1.71
Parent weekly income (\$000)	0.192	0.70	-0.239	-1.11	-0.204	-0.99	-0.070	-0.30
Parent income (\$000) squared	-0.094	-1.19	0.058	0.92	0.008	0.15	0.053	0.94
Constant	-0.872	-0.87	-1.651	-2.52	0.291	0.39	-1.291	-2.05
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.055</b>		<b>0.043</b>		<b>0.047</b>		<b>0.062</b>	
	<b>(n=5,721)</b>		<b>(n=5,577)</b>		<b>(n=5,576)</b>		<b>(n=5,574)</b>	

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: z=1.960 for p=0.05, z=2.576 for p=0.01 and z=3.291 for p=0.001.

**Table D15: Wellbeing Model Set 4, OLS, employed mothers**

	Psychological distress		Arguments with partner		Relationship quality		Work-family gains		Work-family strains	
	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score
1-15 hours	-0.066	-1.58	-0.108	-2.65	0.120	2.06	-0.075	-2.16	-0.337	-6.13
16-24 hours	-0.085	-2.72	-0.070	-2.93	0.062	1.71	-0.031	-0.86	-0.140	-3.40
25-34 hours	-0.074	-2.13	-0.045	-1.03	0.013	0.20	-0.044	-0.90	-0.074	-1.39
35 or more (ref)										
Prefer fewer hours	0.120	5.03	0.051	1.98	-0.090	-3.35	-0.314	-16.92	0.439	12.56
Prefer same hours (ref)										
Prefer more hours	0.154	7.84	0.129	3.83	-0.248	-6.22	0.049	1.33	0.240	5.06
Self-employed	0.115	2.68	0.033	1.13	-0.075	-3.05	-0.079	-1.96	-0.063	-1.40
Casual employee	-0.007	-0.31	0.050	1.53	-0.032	-0.78	0.009	0.34	-0.092	-2.34
Sometimes works weekends	0.024	0.91	-0.007	-0.36	-0.003	-0.15	0.014	0.62	0.081	3.20
Sometimes works evenings/nights	-0.024	-0.88	-0.010	-0.30	0.045	1.40	-0.014	-0.58	0.072	2.44
Flexible hours	-0.063	-2.92	-0.020	-0.68	0.053	1.48	-0.010	-0.36	-0.206	-6.60
Can change hours with approval	-0.006	-0.27	0.017	0.72	0.020	0.55	0.016	0.40	-0.054	-1.24
Perceived level of job security	-0.026	-3.54	-0.021	-1.37	0.017	1.27	0.009	0.68	-0.031	-3.10
Level of job autonomy	-0.051	-6.66	-0.022	-2.25	0.025	1.62	0.138	11.77	-0.067	-5.30
Age	0.022	1.19	-0.025	-0.78	0.050	1.96	0.002	0.10	0.034	1.48
Age squared	0.000	-1.34	0.000	0.99	-0.001	-2.36	0.000	-0.18	0.000	-0.90
Complete secondary only	0.019	0.53	-0.006	-0.12	0.034	0.64	0.038	1.03	0.113	2.16
Certificate/diploma	0.053	1.58	0.009	0.29	0.041	0.94	0.070	2.91	0.090	1.63
Bachelor degree or higher	0.077	2.42	-0.007	-0.23	0.094	2.61	0.129	4.86	0.292	7.52
Not Australian-born, good English	0.049	1.76	0.050	1.80	-0.044	-1.25	-0.059	-2.13	-0.044	-1.27
Not Australian-born, not good English	0.232	1.75	0.340	3.33	-0.098	-0.95	0.196	1.59	0.147	1.65
Single parent	0.121	3.23	n/a		n/a		0.075	1.19	0.164	2.25
Remoteness area classification	-0.022	-2.36	-0.001	-0.11	-0.006	-0.47	0.007	0.40	-0.002	-0.08
Youngest aged 1	0.032	1.44	0.026	0.62	0.005	0.11	0.009	0.28	0.045	1.32
Youngest aged 2-3	0.063	2.09	0.040	0.87	0.003	0.07	0.062	1.60	0.060	1.01
Youngest aged 4-5	0.069	3.53	0.053	1.78	-0.045	-1.30	0.011	0.32	0.100	3.02
2 children	0.054	2.43	0.110	2.34	-0.037	-0.76	-0.030	-1.21	0.057	1.64
3 children or more	-0.008	-0.36	0.016	0.60	0.004	0.10	-0.038	-1.43	0.036	0.91
Has a medical condition	0.160	8.08	0.100	3.14	-0.111	-3.58	-0.062	-2.29	0.041	1.10
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.128	-1.93	0.084	1.15	-0.004	-0.06	-0.063	-0.67	-0.020	-0.20
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.021	1.22	-0.030	-1.54	0.009	0.52	0.036	1.43	-0.002	-0.09
Constant	1.528	5.36	2.499	4.31	3.467	7.87	3.206	8.48	2.021	4.72
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(n=3,621)</b>	<b>0.090</b>	<b>(n=3,334)</b>	<b>0.041</b>	<b>(n=3,337)</b>	<b>0.046</b>	<b>(n=3,621)</b>	<b>0.114</b>	<b>(n=3,615)</b>	<b>0.193</b>

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: t=1.960 for p=0.05, t=2.576 for p=0.01 and t=3.291 for p=0.001.



Table D16: Wellbeing Model Set 4, OLS, employed fathers

	Psychological distress		Arguments with partner		Relationship quality		Work-family gains		Work-family strains	
	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score	coefficient	t-score
1-15 hours	0.028	0.73	0.057	2.57	-0.062	-1.60	-0.017	-0.38	-0.247	-4.63
16-24 hours	-0.016	-0.93	0.005	0.26	-0.023	-1.08	0.041	1.26	-0.104	-2.79
25-34 hours	-0.005	-0.27	0.033	1.91	-0.040	-1.88	0.002	0.07	-0.080	-2.66
35 or more (ref)										
Prefer fewer hours	0.109	7.22	0.011	0.61	-0.018	-1.34	-0.220	-12.86	0.355	19.33
Prefer same hours (ref)										
Prefer more hours	0.167	3.26	0.159	3.53	-0.118	-2.41	0.047	1.13	0.154	2.74
Self-employed	0.050	2.94	0.019	0.96	-0.007	-0.27	0.081	3.43	-0.053	-2.05
Casual employee	-0.046	-1.48	-0.079	-2.07	-0.043	-0.82	0.020	0.45	0.037	0.68
Sometimes works weekends	-0.019	-1.01	0.039	2.51	-0.012	-0.52	0.005	0.30	0.024	1.16
Sometimes works evenings/nights	0.023	1.37	-0.013	-0.58	0.003	0.15	-0.050	-2.07	0.120	4.32
Flexible hours	-0.066	-2.66	-0.054	-1.99	0.014	0.56	0.029	1.09	-0.169	-5.59
Can change hours with approval	-0.055	-2.05	-0.018	-0.53	0.025	1.02	0.042	1.82	-0.088	-2.72
Perceived level of job security	-0.072	-8.69	-0.043	-4.33	0.045	3.94	0.056	6.12	-0.064	-6.22
Level of job autonomy	-0.053	-5.72	-0.029	-4.25	0.035	5.70	0.126	11.13	-0.063	-5.34
Age	0.005	0.59	0.002	0.13	0.005	0.32	-0.023	-1.19	0.014	1.43
Age squared	0.000	-0.75	0.000	0.12	0.000	-0.58	0.000	1.09	0.000	-1.29
Complete secondary only	0.044	1.40	-0.015	-0.41	0.015	0.37	0.028	0.82	-0.003	-0.08
Certificate/diploma	0.021	0.88	-0.018	-0.72	0.014	0.60	0.011	0.66	0.023	0.78
Bachelor degree or higher	0.083	2.84	-0.044	-1.54	0.050	1.70	-0.009	-0.32	0.055	2.11
Not Australian-born, good English	0.015	0.89	0.034	2.02	-0.036	-1.79	-0.004	-0.18	0.009	0.46
Not Australian-born, not good English	-0.089	-1.48	0.010	0.10	-0.053	-0.69	-0.017	-0.14	0.199	1.22
Single parent	0.222	1.36	n/a		n/a		-0.035	-0.30	0.166	0.67
Remoteness area classification	-0.020	-2.56	-0.017	-1.74	0.004	0.52	0.023	1.93	-0.020	-1.83
Youngest aged 1	-0.006	-0.28	0.025	1.15	-0.010	-0.46	0.029	1.19	-0.041	-2.03
Youngest aged 2-3	-0.019	-1.11	0.059	1.80	-0.030	-0.65	0.007	0.27	-0.041	-1.23
Youngest aged 4-5	0.004	0.27	0.069	4.24	-0.058	-2.66	0.036	1.77	0.004	0.16
2 children	0.019	0.89	0.116	4.58	-0.064	-2.27	-0.024	-0.96	0.113	3.06
3 children or more	-0.004	-0.15	-0.006	-0.33	0.031	1.35	0.010	0.53	0.015	0.78
Has a medical condition	0.123	7.61	0.048	2.54	-0.076	-4.59	-0.040	-1.76	0.067	2.23
Parent weekly income (\$000)	-0.060	-0.91	0.132	2.70	-0.036	-0.82	-0.091	-1.40	0.002	0.02
Parent income (\$000) squared	0.006	0.36	-0.033	-2.54	0.006	0.42	0.029	1.49	0.000	0.01
Constant	1.901	12.30	2.117	9.87	4.249	14.39	3.565	10.30	2.780	14.37
	<b>(n=5,569)</b>		<b>(n=5,706)</b>		<b>(n=5,704)</b>		<b>(n=5,737)</b>		<b>(n=5,736)</b>	
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.069</b>		<b>0.036</b>		<b>0.029</b>		<b>0.111</b>		<b>0.129</b>	

Note: 'Ref' denotes 'reference category'. Significance levels: t=1.960 for p=0.05, t=2.576 for p=0.01 and t=3.29 for p=0.001.



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# Endnotes

- 1 See Table B1 for a summary of changes in employment patterns between 1984 and 2004.
- 2 A more detailed analysis of changes in family labour supply is provided by Renda (2003) and analysis of the changes in partnered mothers' employment by Baxter (2005c).
- 3 Examples include Breusch and Gray (2004); Brusentsev (2002); Gray et al. (2003); Kalb (2004); and Scutella (2001).
- 4 Almost all interviews were conducted between March and November 2004.
- 5 Children were selected from a random selection of 293 postcodes. The selection of children within postcodes was also random. A process of stratification was used to ensure that the numbers of children in each State and Territory and within and outside each capital city were roughly proportionate to the total numbers of children in these areas. The sampling strategy was deliberately designed to reduce the age differences of the child at the interview date and so families with children born between September and February of the relevant years were selected for interview slightly later than those born between March and August. Refer to Soloff, Lawrence and Johnstone (2005) for details of the sample selection process.
- 6 In order to investigate the process that may have led to the male parent being nominated as the primary carer in couple-parent families, the labour force status of these men was examined. Interestingly, 76.3 per cent of male primary carers were employed (23.2 per cent part-time, 53.1 per cent full-time). Of those who were not employed, 78.9 per cent had an employed partner. There is likely to be a range of reasons for nominating the father as the primary carer, including health or language barriers of the mother. Alternatively, it may simply be that it was more convenient for the father to respond to the survey and be nominated as the primary carer.
- 7 This response rate calculation assumes that the non-contacts would respond at the same rate as those who could be contacted by an interviewer and is probably the most reasonable assumption. Nonetheless, the fact that more geographically mobile families were more likely to be a non-contact may introduce some biases into the sample.
- 8 Only 53 per cent of carers based at long day care centres and 43 per cent of home-based carers (family day carers or informal carers such as grandparents) completed and returned their questionnaires. Information from teachers, long day care centres and home-based carers are not used in this report.
- 9 No adjustments, such as imputations, were made to account for non-response to particular items or particular components of the survey. For example, if the self-completion questionnaire was not returned, these non-responding parents were excluded from analyses that rely on items that are contained in this instrument, without any attempt to re-weight the remaining observations back to population benchmarks. For more details see LSAC User Guide (LSAC Project Operations Team 2006).
- 10 As the sampling frame was child based, all children from multiple births can be included. This means that for families with multiple-birth children, one child does not represent one family. Treating these child records as representative of families will therefore slightly overestimate the number of families (LSAC Project Operations Team 2006).
- 11 In Wave 1, detailed information is only collected about parents who live in the same household as the study child. Wave 2 will collect information from non-resident parents.
- 12 Only 11 of the 5,107 study children that make up the infant cohort had a younger sibling, although 165 study children were one of a multiple birth.

- 13 For the 48 children where the female carer was not the biological mother, they were an adoptive or foster mother, a grandmother or aunt or stepmother or had another relationship to the study child. Of the 181 cases in which the male carer was not the biological father, in 60 per cent of the cases the relationship to the study child was stepfather.
- 14 A small number of single parents were in a relationship with the study child's other parent, or with another partner, even though they did not live together. These families are classified as being single-parent families. Of 1,174 single-parent families in LSAC, 75.6 per cent did not have a partner, 11.5 per cent did not reside with study child's other parent but had an ongoing relationship with them and the remainder (12.9 per cent) had a partner who was not the study child's father with whom they did not reside. Of the 8,916 couple-parent families, there were 147 families in which the partner was temporarily living away from home for work reasons, and 47 families in which the partner was temporarily living away from home for other reasons.
- 15 This refers to the definition used in the monthly Labour Force Survey collected by the ABS. For more detail refer to Appendix A.
- 16 Mothers on paid maternity leave at the time of the interview represented 1.0 per cent of the infant cohort, while those on unpaid maternity/parental-leave represented 8.4 per cent of this cohort.
- 17 The comparison of LSAC, Census and Labour Force Survey estimates is provided in Appendix A.
- 18 See Section 2.2 for details of the labour force status variable.
- 19 See Section 2.2 for a discussion of the issues involved in analysing LSAC by age of the youngest child.
- 20 The ABS *Pregnancy and Work Transitions* survey, November 2005 (cat. no. 4913.0) (ABS 2006b) provides information on maternal employment following pregnancy. The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (LSAC Wave 1.5), conducted on the infant cohort in June to September 2005, also provides extensive information on mothers' employment before and after the birth of the study child (see Whitehouse & Soloff 2005 for information) and also <<http://www.uq.edu.au/polsis/parental-leave>>.
- 21 According to the June 2004 Labour Force Survey, the rates of employment for men and women aged 20 to 44 years without dependant children were 80.3 and 81.9 per cent respectively. Men aged 20 to 44 years with a dependent child had an employment rate of 91.4 per cent, over 10 percentage points higher than for childless men. The employment rate of women with dependent children was considerably lower at 55.9 per cent.
- 22 Parents in permanent jobs or in long-term casual jobs are entitled to one year's unpaid leave, such that they can return to their same job when the child is 1 year old. Some women, as a condition of their employment, are also able to take some of this one year off work on paid maternity leave. Further, women can take other types of leave such as recreation leave, long service leave or leave without pay, to extend the period of paid leave. Not all women take official leave from work, with some having less formal arrangements with an employer about if and when they will return to work. The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (LSAC Wave 1.5), collected in 2005 and released in late 2006, was designed to update and extend Glezer's study and will greatly enhance our understanding in this area (see <<http://www.uq.edu.au/polsis/parental-leave>>)
- 23 The question about work during their pregnancy did not distinguish between those who worked for some of or all of their pregnancy.
- 24 For example, 29 per cent of couple mothers and 9 per cent of single mothers had bachelor degrees or higher, while 21 per cent of couple mothers and 40 per cent of single mothers had incomplete secondary education.
- 25 Estimates from ABS (2006a).
- 26 Jobless families are those in which no parent is employed, including those in which the parent/s were classified as being not employed because they were on maternity/parental leave.
- 27 Given the relatively low number of employed single mothers with infants, the age of the youngest child is not taken into account in this analysis.

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- 28 Employed parents were asked if they ever worked after 6 p.m. or overnight and if so, how frequently. The information on frequency of working after 6 p.m. or overnight is used to identify permanent night shift workers (see Table 3.20).
- 29 Employed parents were asked if they ever work on Saturdays or Sundays. Those parents that answered 'yes' were defined as sometimes working weekends.
- 30 The description of the Australian child care system draws heavily on Harrison and Ungerer (2005, p. 26).
- 31 This information was collected in the face-to-face interview.
- 32 In some non-employed families, child care was said to be used for work or study reasons and in two-thirds of these families, the primary carer was studying. In a small number of families the primary carer was not employed but seeking work.
- 33 In these families, 92.4 per cent of those whose main type of care was formal care and 90.4 per cent of those whose main type of care was informal care did so for parent's work or study reasons.
- 34 These analyses were restricted to working families: employed single-parent families and dual-employed couple-parent families. First, a logistic regression was estimated on the likelihood of using parental care only (compared to using some form of child care). Second, a multinomial logistic regression was estimated that fitted the different child care types, and the results of this model were used to assess whether there were characteristics associated with the use of formal care only versus informal care only. For both methods, the models estimated contained the family and job characteristics shown in Table 4.4 and Table 4.5, with the full model results presented in Table C1 and Table C2.
- 35 From Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 the differences were not so easy to identify, but by using the multinomial logistic regression to test for the effect of variables on the odds of using informal care only versus formal care only, a few effects were revealed (see Table C2 for details).
- 36 To answer questions about the association between employment and child care, there would need to be more information on the employment preferences of parents (that is, to ask those who were not employed whether they would prefer to be, and why they were not), and on parents' child care preferences beyond those already collected in LSAC. Specifically, parents would need to be asked whether they preferred more care or a different type of care, and whether there were barriers to being able to access these arrangements.
- 37 There were some difficulties in accurately making the distinction between preschool and pre-Year 1 of school, especially taking into account State and Territory differences in the naming of different levels of early education or school. However, detailed analyses of these data suggest that most children have been classified correctly (LSAC Project Operations Team 2006).
- 38 A logistic regression was estimated on the likelihood of being in school or preschool only, as opposed to being in some other type of care (including those in school or preschool plus some other care). Those in parental care only were excluded from the multivariate analysis. The multivariate results are presented in Table C3.
- 39 The evidence suggests that maternal employment 'protects' children against the damaging effects of maternal depression and poverty. Research suggests that parental employment improves children's cognitive and social developmental, educational achievement and their likely earnings as adults (Brooks-Gunn, Leventhal & Duncan 2000; Han, Waldfogel & Brooks-Gunn 2001; Brooks-Gunn, Han & Waldfogel 2002). However, some researchers have also been concerned about the possible negative effects of maternal employment during the child's infancy on cognitive development and attachment (Belsky 2001; Brooks-Gunn, Han & Waldfogel 2002). There has been far less exploration of the mechanisms which connect child development and maternal employment. The existing literature on successful child development concentrates on characteristics of the parent-child relationship (Solchany & Barnard 2001; Shonkoff & Phillips 2000).

- 40 Single mothers sometimes recorded that the child was with the father, but this information was not used, since it could not be related to the father's characteristics.
- 41 For fathers, there is considerable overlap between their time and the mother's time with children, such that fathers are less likely to be present with the child with the mother not also there (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2005; Craig 2006).
- 42 The measures of time spent with children using time-use data are described in Budig and Folbre (2004) and Craig (2006). Estimates of time spent with children based on primary child care, primary plus secondary child care and time with children are given in Craig (2006).
- 43 A similar, but more sophisticated approach, further classifying activities according to the likely degree of parental involvement, was used on a different data source, by Bittman, Craig and Folbre (2004).
- 44 For a discussion of the problems related to this release of the Time Use Data, refer to the LSAC User Guide (LSAC Project Operations Team 2006). A second release of these data was issued in October 2006, which addressed some of the data quality issues. A more detailed analysis of the missing data is being undertaken by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the findings of which will be released as an upcoming LSAC Discussion Paper.
- 45 The analyses were based on unweighted data, and statistical tests were not used to test for significant associations or differences between groups.
- 46 To be more definitive, a more detailed analysis of the contextual information is required, to determine whether fathers with employed partners spend more time with the child without their partners also present than fathers with not-employed partners.
- 47 Most of this increased time, however, can be accounted for by additional hours of sleep where the mother was present (see Table 5.6).
- 48 This discussion of wellbeing draws heavily upon Gray et al. (2004).
- 49 An overview of the history of the literature on material welfare and perceived poverty is provided by Saunders (2003). Bradshaw (2003) provides an excellent overview of the related concept of social exclusion.
- 50 Throughout this report the measure of parental income used is that collected in ranges. Wave 1 of LSAC also collected income as a continuous measure from each parent. These continuous measures were used to derive an approximation for the top range in the grouped parental income data item. This approximation was set to the median of the continuous measure parental income, from those whose combined parental income was reported to be in this top range.
- 51 That is, income before tax, superannuation or health insurance is deducted.
- 52 Of the 5,107 families in the infant cohort, 556 were excluded because of the presence of adults other than the parents, and for the 4–5 year-old cohort, 551 of the 4,983 families were excluded for the same reason. There were further exclusions because income was missing for some households (245 of the infant cohort and 274 of the 4–5 year-old cohort) or was negative (eight families).
- 53 See Citro and Michael (1995) for a discussion of different equivalence scales and their use, and ABS (2005a) for a discussion of the modified OECD equivalence scale and application to Australian data.
- 54 For the infant cohort, most families had equivalence scales of 1.8 (representing two adults and one child, 35 per cent) or 2.1 (representing two adults and two children, 34 per cent). For the 4–5 year-old cohort, the most common values of the equivalence scale were 2.1 (two adults and two children, 44 per cent) and 2.4 (two adults and three children, 24 per cent).
- 55 Respondents were also asked about having financial limitations on the type of food they could buy. However, the extent to which this question provides an indicator of hardship is unclear and it is therefore excluded from the analysis in this section.

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- 56 A useful validation check of the hardship and prosperity measures is the extent to which they are correlated. The hardship score is highly correlated (correlation coefficient= $-0.48$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) with perceived prosperity, with higher levels of hardship found among those who see themselves as poorer, providing some confidence in these measures for this survey.
- 57 This finding is consistent with those of Bray (2001) who analysed the incidence of hardship of different family types using the ABS 1998–99 Household Expenditure Survey. Bray found that the incidence of hardship and the experience of multiple hardships was higher among single-parent families than couple-parent families.
- 58 The analysis presented in this section was repeated excluding households with other adults, and it was found that comparisons by family type and employment status gave the same findings in terms of relative differences between the groups.
- 59 Recent changes to the conditions of receipt of Parenting Payment (Single) and the income testing of this benefit is likely to have had an effect on the proportion of employed single mothers in receipt of an income support payment. These families would, however, continue to be eligible for FTB Part B.
- 60 There were 77 couple-parent families where neither parent was employed and neither received an income support payment (as reported). In 15 of these families, a parent was on leave from work and in another 11 cases the reported gross weekly income of the couple was \$1,000 or more. Of the rest, while not reporting to receive an income support payment, 34 reported receiving FTB Part A or B.
- 61 The measures in LSAC are a subset of those used in the HILDA survey.
- 62 This result is consistent with the findings of Alexander and Baxter (2005) who used LSAC data to examine the work-to-family measure and found that most differences between cohorts were accounted for by differences in family and job characteristics.
- 63 Both items were drawn from the Australian Temperament Study— see <http://www.aifs.gov.au/atp> and Prior et al. (2000).
- 64 The majority of these variables were explored in Section 3. Further tables for the latter two variables are in Appendix B.
- 65 Where a result is noted to be ‘significant’, it is at least statistically significant at the 5 per cent level.
- 66 For example, parents were less likely to be employed if they had a long-term medical condition (Table 3.8), which means the not employed are more likely to have a long-term medical condition than are other parents. This in part, then, could explain the poorer health outcomes of not-employed parents.
- 67 Wellbeing was also associated with the age of the youngest child in the family. As both cohorts were combined for this analysis, the age of the youngest child ranged from less than 1 to 5 years old. In the multivariate models, the 2 and 3 year olds were combined into a single category, as were the 4 and 5 year olds.
- 68 This measure is the combined parental income, collected in ranges. Refer also to endnote 50.
- 69 Which was more than nine out of 10 of the employed fathers in LSAC.
- 70 For feeling time pressured, results for fathers working part-time hours were not significantly different from those working short full-time hours; for work–family strains, fathers working part-time hours had the most favourable outcome.
- 71 Other models were explored, interacting hours of parent with hours of partner, but very few significant effects were found, and interpretation was complicated unjustifiably.
- 72 Data are extracted from the ‘Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families’, which is based on the Labour Force Surveys as at June of each year. This is the only month in which sufficient family data are collected to enable a comparison with LSAC.
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- 73 There are a number of other differences between Labour Force Survey and the 2001 Census, which are outlined in ABS (2002).
- 74 The ABS would define a person on unpaid leave as not in the labour force if they had not received any paid leave in the previous four weeks, something which is highly likely with the LSAC respondents but which is not able to be accurately confirmed.
- 75 For LSAC, this does not produce a representative sample (see discussion in Section 2.2) but it is useful as it enables a comparison of employment estimates between sources.



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