

Negotiating the Life Course



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT IN A PIONEERING STUDY OF AUSTRALIAN'S LIVES



You are receiving this newsletter because you are a participant in one of Australia's most exciting social survey projects. The project surveys people over time to see how life in Australia is changing.

We contacted you in 1997, 2000, and you may have participated in the third wave of the survey in 2003/2004. We hope to begin collecting data for the 4th wave of this project in late 2006.

This year we will also be replenishing the sample of participants. We will be collecting information from 2,000 new respondents, as well as those of you who wish to participate again.

This newsletter provides participants with some information on how the project is progressing. Further information is available at the Negotiating the Life Course website: <http://lifecourse.anu.edu.au>

WHO IS CONDUCTING THE PROJECT?

This project is conducted by a group of Australian researchers from The Australian National University, the University of Queensland and the Australian Institute of Family Studies. See the back of this newsletter for the project leaders contact information. The project has been funded by the Australian Research Council since 2000 (project numbers A7990570, DP0208305 and DP0663459).



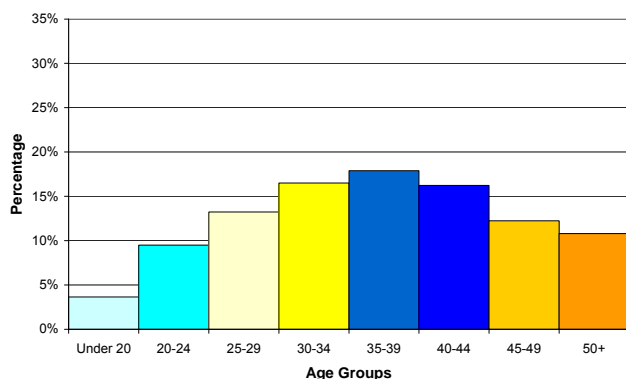
Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Users of the survey information are from a range of universities and government research units. Results from this survey are never used for market research.

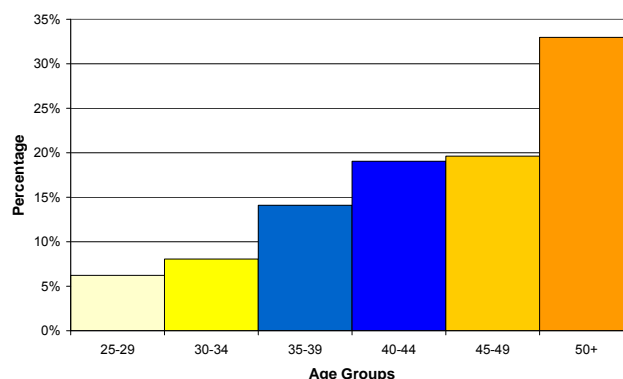
WHO HAS PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECT?

In the first wave of the Negotiating the Life Course project 2,231 people took part. At that time participants ranged in age from 18-54 years. It has been 9 years since we first interviewed you and in that time your lives have changed remarkably. In 2003 we interviewed 1 192 people, your ages ranged from 27-63 years.

Age of Participants in 1997



Age of Participants in 2003/2004



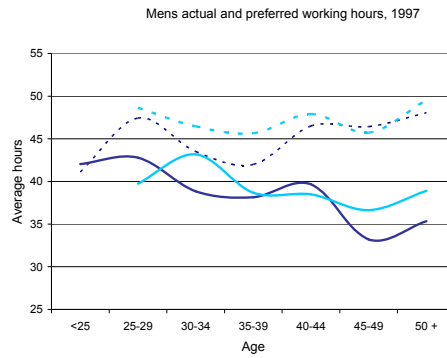
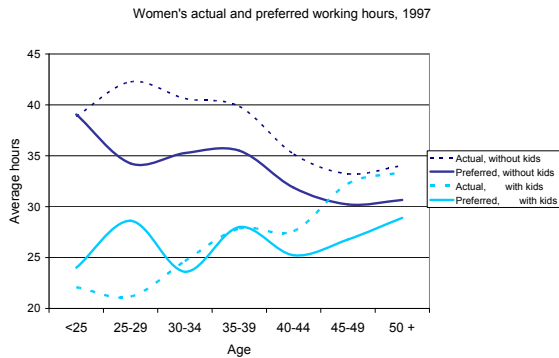
During this time your interests and focus in life have changed, and in 2006 we will be asking new questions of you. In particular we will be asking additional questions on retirement and grandparenting.

To make sure that the project represents all people from Australia we will recruit new participants to boost the numbers across all age groups, and in particular collect information from young Australians.

SOME PROJECT FINDINGS

AUSTRALIANS' WORKING HOURS REFLECT THE DEMANDS OF FAMILY LIFE

Research shows that people's working hours change throughout their life course according to their family commitments.

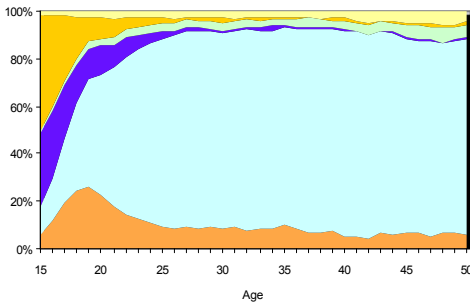


The data collected from the NLC project confirms this, suggesting that women with children have varying hours of work throughout their lives. Most tend to work part-time hours to fit in with the needs of their families. The research also shows that men tend to change the hours that they work once they start a family, with men increasing their hours of work. This increase in work could reflect the added financial responsibility that comes with having a family.

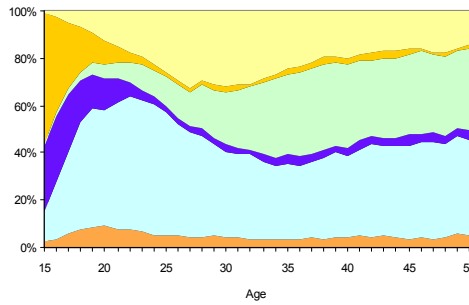
HOW DO WE BALANCE WORK AND STUDY?

Men and women negotiate work and study differently. For men, significant employment and study transitions occur at younger ages. At age 15, most males are involved in education only. In the late teens a considerable proportion combine study with full-time or part-time work. After age 20, men's employment patterns are quite stable with the vast majority working full-time.

Males, lifetime employment



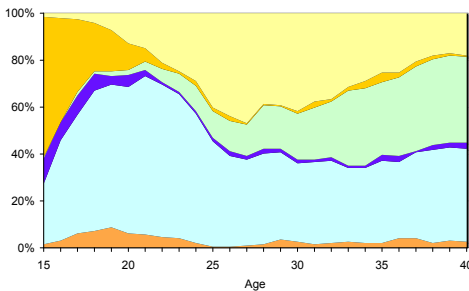
Females, Lifetime employment



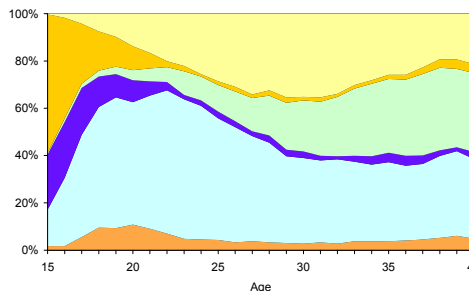
In comparison, women have a quite different pattern of work and study transitions. As women enter childbearing years there is a large group who are neither working nor studying. Full-time employment is most likely for women in their early 20s, with part-time work being important for women aged 25-34. At age 35, women's involvement in full-time work increases again.

- Not working, not studying
- Not working, studying
- Part-time work, not studying
- Part-time work, studying
- Full-time work, not studying
- Full-time work, studying

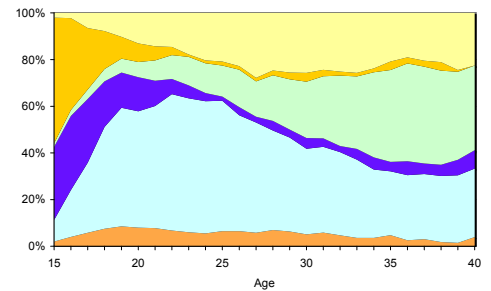
Females born in the 1940s, Lifetime employment



Females born in the 1950s, Lifetime employment



Females born in the 1960s, Lifetime employment



The patterns for women change depending on their generation. For women born in the 1940s there was a dramatic fall in employment at age 25. In comparison, women born in the 1960s remain associated with the labour force through part-time work.

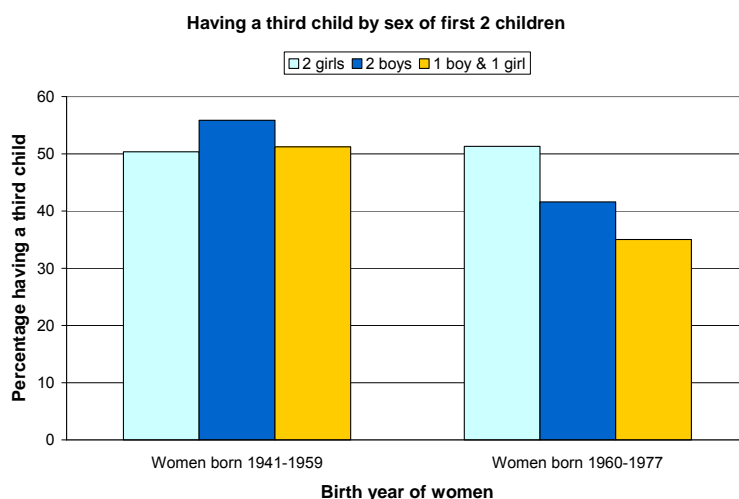
DO WE WANT TO “HAVE ONE FOR OUR COUNTRY”?

In the 2006 Budget, the Treasurer Peter Costello announced extra benefits for “large” families. The definition of a large family that was given was having three or more children.

Recent research using NLC data examined the factors that influence having a third child.

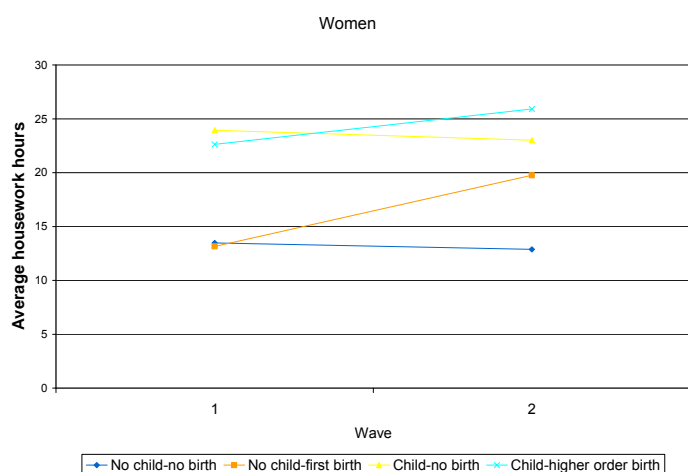
One factor that is related to having a third child is the sex of the first two children. For the current generation of women having children, those who already have a son and a daughter are least likely to have a third child. The ones most likely to have a third child are women with two daughters.

Sex of children was not found to be an important factor for women born from 1941-1959.



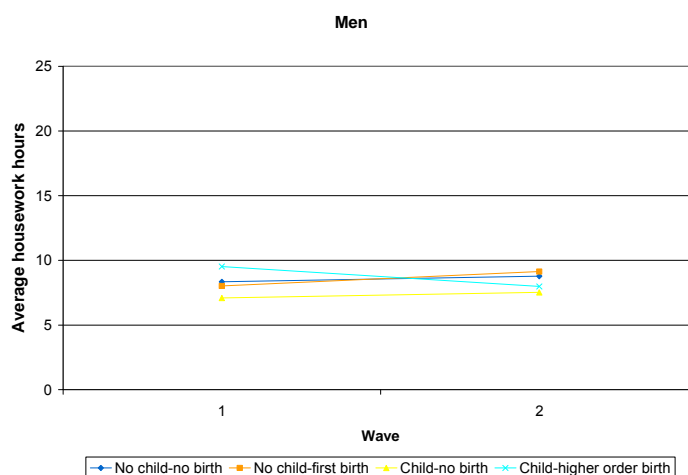
WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF HAVING CHILDREN ON HOUSEWORK?

How does bringing a baby into the household affect the amount of time spent on housework?



For men the impact of bringing a baby into the home made little or no difference to the amount of time spent doing housework. In fact, men who already had at least one child tended to do less housework (on average) when a new baby joined the family.

The NLC data shows that for women the transition between having no child, and the birth of a child brings about the greatest change in hours spent on housework. In all households where there are children there is a need for more hours spent on housework than in households without children.



Negotiating the Life Course researching changes in Australian society

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED IN THE NEXT INTERVIEW?

At the next survey, scheduled for October 2006 we will be adding some new questions to the interview. One of the most important aspects of this research is to see how people change over time, what factors become more important to you in different stages of your lives.

A new “Grandparenting” section will be asked of those of you with grandchildren. In the nine years of data collection for the NLC a lot has changed in your lives. Many of you are now grandparents (some of you were when we started). We want to know how important your grandchildren are to you and how much time you spend with them. We also want to know how many of you help out with child care arrangements for your grandchildren while your own children are working.

There will be additional questions on retirement. Many of you will either be retired, or thinking of retiring in the future. For those of you who are not at this stage of your lives we still want to know what you think you will do when you do retire. This is important information for us to collect, with an ever changing superannuation system and changes to industrial relations, it is more important than ever for us to understand how Australians plan for their future.

We will also be asking many of the questions you have been asked previously. Questions will be asked again about any continuing education you have undertaken, if you have changed jobs and/or careers, whether you have had more children and who maintains the household and cares for others.

PROJECT INFORMATION

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT?

The Negotiating the Life Course project has been running for nine years. Over this time, the project has collected valuable data about how Australians balance their work, family, health and education. The project explores the changes that take place in each of these areas over the life span.

In the coming year the researchers aim to publish a book about the changing lives of Australians, based on the information you have provided. They will be looking at many different aspects of your lives and reporting on how they have changed. This will become a valuable source of information for social researchers in Australia.

The information you have provided is a precious resource for both researchers and government policy makers. Without surveys such as this one, it is difficult to observe how life in Australia is changing and where resources should be allocated to improve quality of life. That is why your continued involvement in the survey is so important.

IS THE INFORMATION I PROVIDE CONFIDENTIAL AND PROTECTED?

Any identifying information you provide is kept totally confidential from both academic and government users of the data. It is not possible for data users to identify you from the Negotiating the Life Course project data.

Any academic or government department that wishes to use the project data in their research needs to go through an application process. Applications for the data are reviewed by the Australian Social Science Data Archive and final approval is needed from the project leaders before the data can be provided. Market researchers do not have access to the project data.

Your involvement in the Negotiating the Life Course project is also protected by The Australian National University Ethics Committee. The project is routinely reviewed by the Ethics committee to ensure that your privacy and the information you provide is protected.

HOW LONG WILL THE PROJECT RUN FOR?

The longer the Negotiating the Life Course project runs for the more information there will be on the varying and changing nature of Australian society. The project team will be collecting information from you in 2006/2007. They are aiming to collect a further round three years after that in 2009. We hope you will continue to participate in this valuable project.

WE WILL BE CONTACTING YOU AGAIN SOON FOR THE 4TH WAVE OF THE SURVEY

If you have any questions, or need to update your contact details,
please contact the Data Manager:
Sue Trevenar (02) 6125 1549
or email nlc@anu.edu.au

PROJECT LEADER CONTACT INFORMATION

Information on project leaders is available at their websites.

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