

# Using the NLC Working Time Data

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This paper examines and describes the working time data that is available in waves 1 and 2 of the Negotiating the Lifecourse (NLC) dataset, which I will be using in my research. It will discuss some of the difficulties of the data and the possible ways of overcoming these, as well as the comparability between ABS data, which is considered representative of the Australian population.

### **My Working Hours Research Project**

I will be using the NLC dataset to examine why people work the hours that they do. The advantage of this dataset is that it is the only one in Australia, thus far, that examines individual working time preferences over time. Examining working time preferences and how they have or have not changed over time will go some way towards examining workers' various reasons for working their current hours of work. Another advantage of this dataset is that it will enable me to look at the issue of working time from several aspects such as the workplace, household and reasons pertaining to the individual. The next step after a thorough examination of the data will be to interview individuals at depth to uncover and understand more deeply the issues that are identified from the data.

### **The Differences between Wave 1 and Wave 2**

The wording and the order of the questions have differed in waves 1 and 2, see Attachment A. A question on paid hours was added to wave 2.

The most outstanding difference between the wave 1 and wave 2 working hours data is the added option of the 'irregular hours' response in the wave 2 data. The 'irregular hours' option is understandable in terms of hours usually worked, in which 40 respondents opted for this answer. However, 6 respondents gave this answer for hours worked last week. The problem is that the 'irregular hours' option was not available in the wave 1 data and it is not an option that is used in the ABS data, so it makes both comparisons difficult.

An added complication is that the 'irregular hours' response was coded as '99'. This is problematic because it is possible that someone could have worked 99 hours in a week. 40 respondents had '99' recorded as their response to how many hours they usually worked. It is assumed the majority of these respondents had intended an answer of 'irregular hours', however, there is some doubt as one respondent said they usually work 98 hours a week

and another answered 97 to the same question. In 1997, in terms of hours worked last week responses included 96, 98, 100, 110 and 120 hours.

Knowing whether the respondent is working full-time or part-time will give a better indication of what these ‘irregular hours’ look like. Unfortunately there is no question that asks about the respondents’ full-time and part-time status in relation to their current job (job held last week). There is information on their employment status of their current job. Table 1 below shows the employment status of those respondents recorded as usually working ‘irregular hours’. As would be expected, irregular hours workers are dominated by casuals and the self-employed.

Table 1. Hours worked last week and employment status of irregular hours workers.

<b>Total hours worked last week</b>	<b>Employment Status</b>				
	Self-employed	Permanent	Contract	Casual	Total
0	-	1	-	1	2
1-15 hours	5	-	-	7	12
16-34 hours	3	1	1	4	9
35-44 hours	-	-	-	2	2
45-59 hours	4	3	-	1	8
60 plus (60-98)	1	1	-	-	2
Irregular	3	1	-	-	4
Don't know	1	-	-	-	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>39</i>

Population: All those respondents who are recorded as usually working irregular hours

Source: NLC, Wave 2.

Note: the missing respondent recorded a ‘don’t know’ to hours worked last week.

#### Usual and Actual Hours of Work: What’s the difference?

A rather large omission in the wave 1 data is that respondents were not asked about their usual hours of work. This is quite problematic when looking at working hours preferences, as a respondent is most likely to consider their usual hours when responding to a question on what hours they would prefer to work. It also greatly limits options for comparing both waves of data. One of the greatest appeals of the data is that it is longitudinal, however, this has been negated by the fact that data on usual hours in the first wave is missing. Despite this, I will still be focusing on working time preferences for my analysis.

From the 1386 respondents for whom there is information on actual and usual hours, 623 (45 percent) respondents have the same actual and usual hours data. On the other hand, the

difference between usual hours and actual hours for the remaining respondents is up to as much as 98 hours, in this case the respondent is likely to normally work 98 hours each week but was on leave during the reference week. Thus, it seems hours worked last week is a fairly unreliable indicator for the number of hours usually worked. Table 2 shows that even if the broad working hours groupings are used we still don't escape the large differentiation between usual and actual hours. Hours worked last week, in broad working time groups seems to be a fairly good predictor of hours usually worked. But there are several reasons why it may not be a good predictor on an individual basis. Firstly, as would be expected there is a group of people who worked zero hours in the reference week, which doesn't occur in measuring usual hours. The group working standard hours is substantially underestimated amongst actual hours. This table only looks at broad working time groups and does not examine the differences on an individual level, which is what the following discussion will touch on.

Table 2. Usual and actual hours compared, Australia, 2000

<b>Hours Worked</b>	Hours Usually worked (%)	Hours worked last week (%)
0	0.1	6.5
1-15 hours	7.1	9.0
16-34 hours	19.0	20.9
35-44 hours	35.0	27.8
45-59 hours	23.9	22.9
60 plus (60-98)	12.2	12.4
Irregular	2.8	0.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Population: All those respondents who are recorded as usually working irregular hours

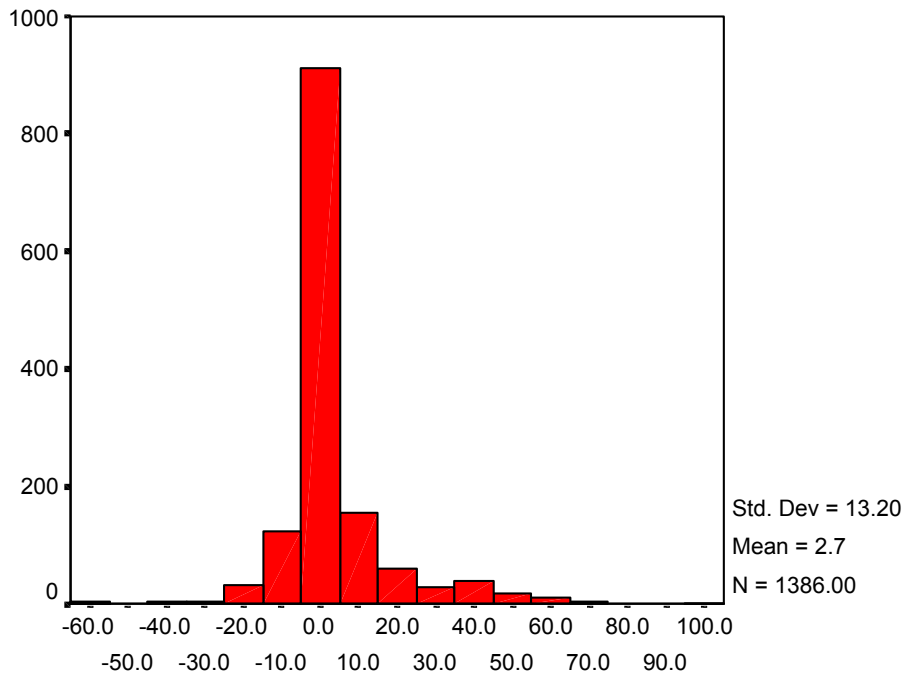
Source: NLC, Wave 2.

Note: the missing respondent recorded a 'don't know' to hours worked last week.

To discover how much of a problem the omission of usual hours is, I have examined how much actual hours differ from usual hours in the wave 2 data. I created a variable "hours difference" to get an indication of how different usual hours are from the reported hours worked last week. A negative value indicates that the respondent worked more hours in the last week than they usually work and a positive value means that the respondent worked less hours last week than they normally work. A value of zero will indicate that for those respondents actual and usual hours don't vary for this data set. Overall, there were 1433 people who responded to the working hours questions, of these there were 1386 valid outcomes (that is, excluding irregular hours workers). There were 623 respondents for whom actual and usual hours did not differ. Thus, there is quite some variation between the

two work hours data items and they cannot be interchanged. However, the hours difference is mainly in the area of -10 to 10 hours. The results are displayed in Graph 1.

Graph 1: Difference between usual and actual hours, 2000.



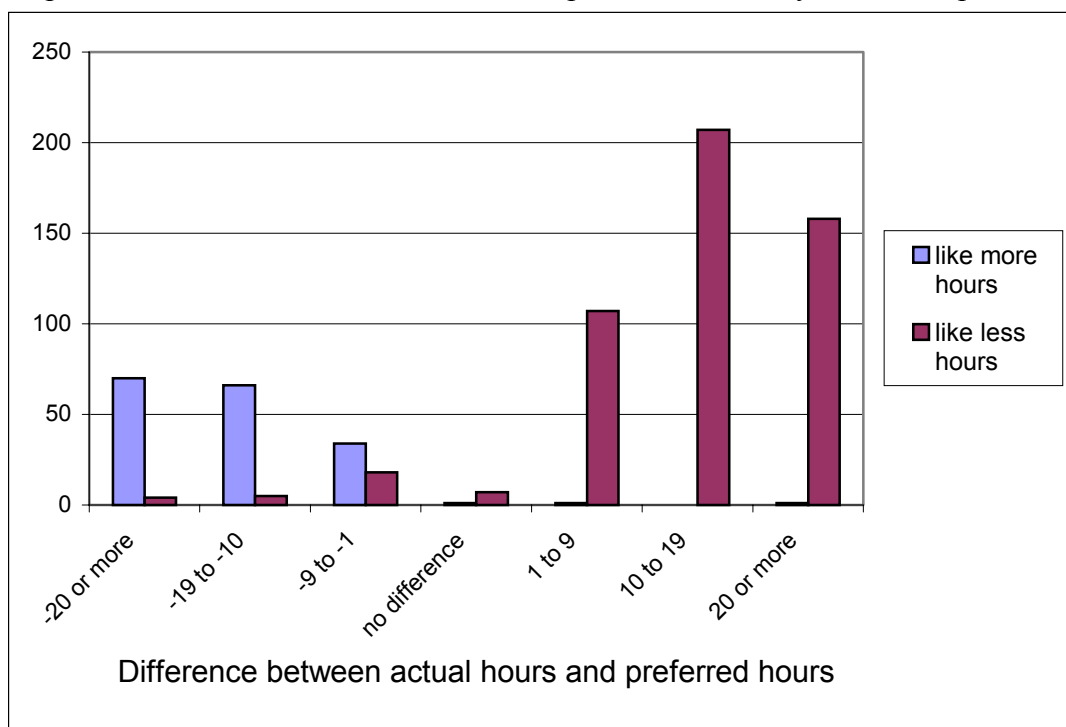
Total Usual Hours minus Total Hours Worked last week

For the wave 1 data, an indication of how useful the actual hours data is as a general gauge can be obtained by looking at hours worked last week and preferred hours, as well as whether they said they would like more or less. I created a variable that took the respondent's preferred hours away from their actual hours. If actual hours are reflective of usual hours then this new variable should be a positive value for those who want less hours and negative for those who want more hours. Unfortunately those who were happy with their hours were not asked what their preferred hours are, so I am limited in being able to determine whether actual hours data is a useful tool in examining preferences. We cannot assume, for these people, that the hours they worked last week are their usual and in fact their preferred hours. Graph 2 shows the results of comparing the difference between actual and preferred hours of just the 679 respondents who had a preference for different working hours.

The graph shows that actual hours could provide a pretty good rough indicator of usual hours of work when looking at those people who would like more hours because there were

only three respondents with this preference where their actual hours were greater than their preferred hours. Actual hours are a more dubious indicator for those who want less hours. Amongst those who wanted less hours, there were 34 respondents whose actual hours were less or equal to their preferred hours. Workers are more likely to have worked less hours than they usually do in the previous week due to leave being taken. To reinforce the point, this newly created variable only serves as rough indicator and could not be taken as a measure of magnitude of the difference between hours currently worked and preferred hours. However, this is something that can be examined in the 2000 data.

Graph 2: The difference between actual and preferred hours, by work time preference, 2000



Population: All employed persons who want more or less hours and did not work “irregular” hours.  
 Source: NLC 2.

To conclude, actual hours can not be considered a substitute measurement for hours usually worked, however, where there is no other measure available it can give a general indication of hours worked, except in those cases where the worker has been on leave in the reference week.

## How Does the Hours Data Compare to ABS Data?

The NLC working hours questions are not directly comparable to the ABS data on hours worked because it asks about total hours in **all jobs**, whereas ABS figures usually refer to hours worked in main job. The issue is complicated further by the fact that the multiple job question refers to the last week, rather than the usual week. So it is hard to know whether the respondent usually has more than one job and whether the figure on hours usually worked encompasses multiple jobs. I have a preference for using the hours usually worked data rather than the hours worked last week. This is because when examining people's working practices, their household and societal position, the hours usually worked holds more relevance than the hours they worked last week (due to taking leave, etc). Refer to discussion above comparing actual and usual work hours.

If for a moment we ignore the multiple jobs inconsistency, the data on hours usually worked is fairly similar to that of the 2000 *Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation* (SEAS) data, see Table 3. The NLC2 appears to have over-sampled those people usually working 16 to 34 hours per week and under-sampled those working 1 to 15 hours per week. However, overall proportions of part-time workers in both surveys is quite similar, 26.1 percent for the NLC2 and 28.4 percent for SEAS. It is likely that part-time workers are more likely to be multiple jobholders (compared to those people who have full-time jobs) and this could explain the low proportion of part-time workers with very low hours. Compared to the SEAS data, the NLC2 has a higher proportion of extended hours workers, that is, those working more than 50 hours per week. This could also possibly be explained by multiple jobholders, although only 10 percent of employed respondents worked more than 1 job in the last week.

Table 3. NLC2 and SEAS hours usually worked, Australia 2000.

Hours Usually Worked	SEAS		NLC2	
	%	'000s	%	No.
1-15	12.0		7.1	102
16-34	16.4		19.0	272
35-40	33.4		30.8	442
41-50	22.0		22.1	316
51-60	10.0		12.3	176
61 plus	6.3		8.7	124
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>1432</i>

Population: All employed persons, excluding irregular hours workers.

Source: ABS *Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation, 2000* and NLC Wave 2.

Table 4 shows that multiple jobholders are fairly evenly distributed across all hours groups with 10 per cent of all workers who are working more than one job. Those who worked ‘standard hours’ (35-44 hours) had the least proportion of multiple jobholders. This supports the analysis and comparison of the SEAS and NLC2 data above.

Table 4. Multiple job holding and total hours actually worked, 2000.

Hours usually worked	Worked in more than one paid job last week		Worked in one paid last week	
	%	No.	%	No.
1-15	9	9	91	93
16-34	13	34	88	238
35-40	6	27	94	415
41-50	10	30	91	286
51-60	15	27	85	149
61 plus	12	10	88	74
Irregular	13	5	88	35
<i>Total</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>1290</i>

Population: All employed persons

Source: NLC Wave 2.

Five respondents who said that they worked more than one paid job last week also said they worked zero hours in the same week. This highlights a problem with the question in that it technically does not enable a person, who may have been on some type of leave, to say that they hold multiple jobs.

During my position at ACIRRT (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training) I developed a diagram with a senior researcher, Dr. John Buchanan, using the SEAS data to show the distribution of hours in Australia, see Diagram 1. I have developed a similar diagram using the NLC2 data with the major difference being the definition and categorization of the self-employed, refer to Diagram 2. Taking this approach, the NLC survey appears to be a fairly good representation of the distribution of hours in Australia.

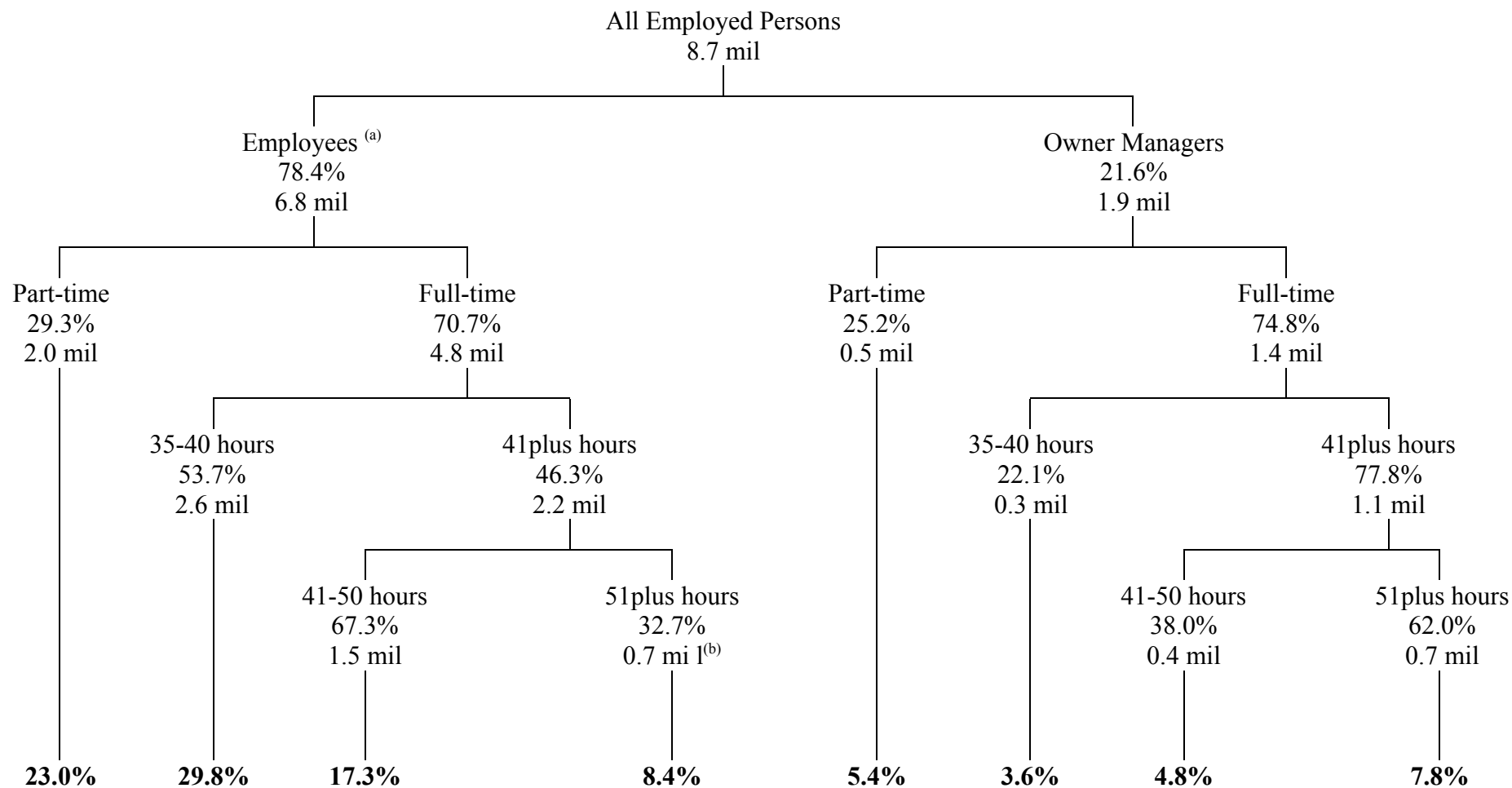
#### Hours Preferences: Comparisons with ABS data

Overall, 35 percent of respondents said they would like to work fewer hours. This figure is high compared to the ABS data collected on preferences, most likely due to the different way the question is asked. There is contention over what is the most accurate working time preference question. The simple answer is that it is almost impossible to get a true reflection of working time preferences just by asking one question.



The ABS phrases the working time preference question in terms of desired hours and the relative size of pay, see Table 5. The reason for asking whether the respondent would like fewer hours as well as less pay is that it is feared that every respondent would express a desire for fewer hours if there was no consequence for pay. This fear is disproved by the NLC data (which is discussed in the following section). The complicating factor for the ABS preference question is the issue of unpaid overtime. Those who are technically paid to work, for example, a 38 hour week but in fact are working longer than this without any extra compensation may not consider working less hours for less pay as a fair or even viable option. In the ABS survey, respondents were only given the first three options as displayed in Table 5. As explained in the Glossary of the SEAS (p.61: 2000), “The option ‘fewer hours for the same pay’ was not offered, but there was provision for interviewers to record this response if a respondent insisted”. Thus, the 6 percent of respondents who insisted on their response being ‘fewer hours for the same pay’ is not indicative of all employees who have this preference.

Diagram 1: The Current Distribution of Working Time in Australia, April – June 2000: Hours usually worked in main job (ABS).



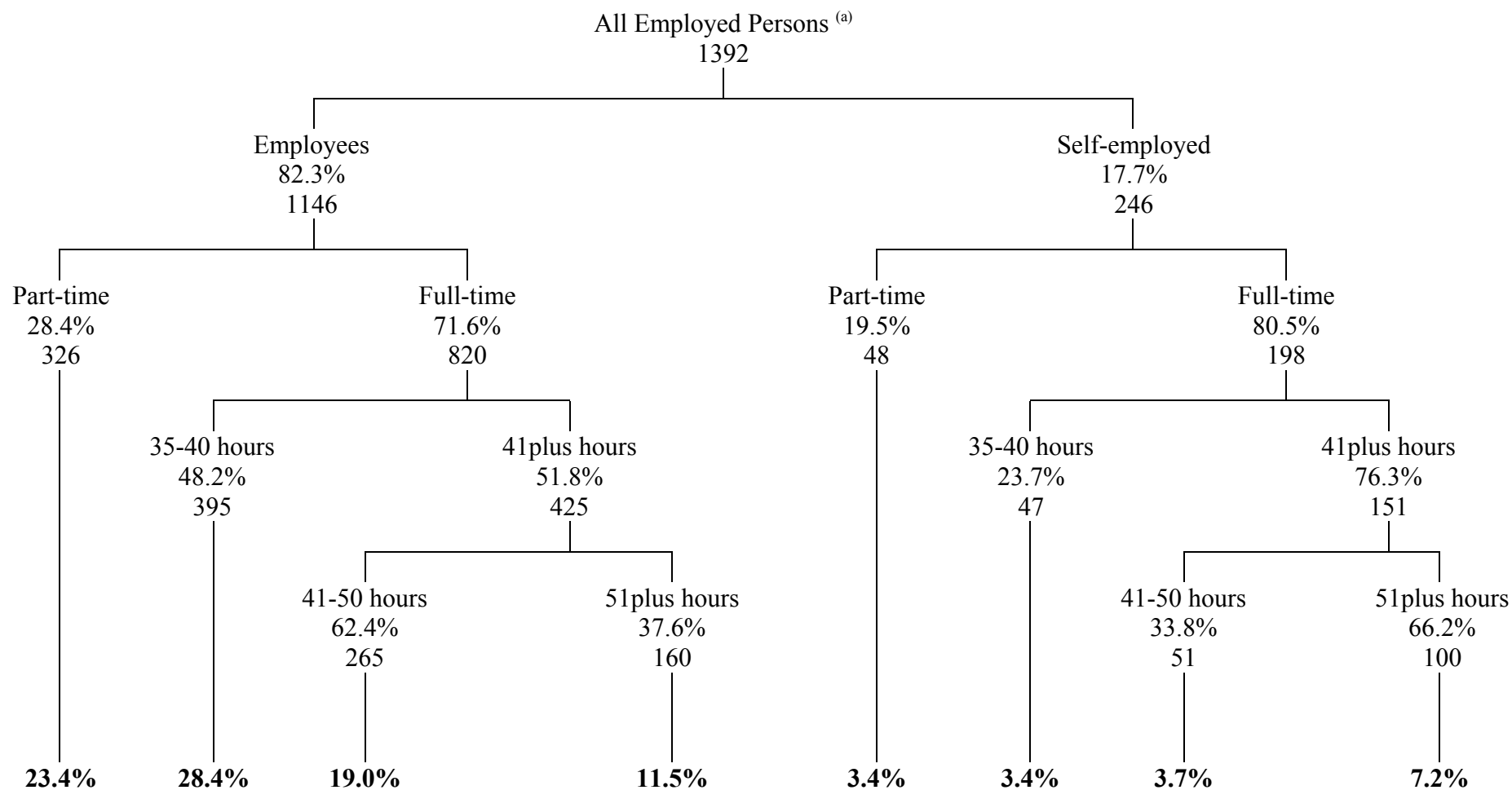
(a) Excludes owner managers of incorporated enterprises.

(b) This figure has been rounded down from 732 276 people.

(c) This figure has been rounded up from 680 088 people.

Source: *Working Time Arrangements in Australia*, A submission to the AIRC written by ACIRRT commissioned by the ACTU

Diagram 2: The Current Distribution of Working Time in Australia, NLC, 2000: Hours usually worked. (ABS comparison diagram)



<sup>(a)</sup> 1 refused and 40 responded 'irregular hours'.

Table 5. Employees in Main Job <sup>(a)</sup>, Usual hours by preferred hours <sup>(b)</sup>, 2000.

Usual hours worked in each week in main job	More hours for more pay	Same hours for same pay	Fewer hours for less pay	Fewer hours for same pay	Total
	----- (%) -----				('000)
Part-time	35.1	59.4	3.6	1.5	2005.6
1-15	41.0	56.2	1.8	0.9*	845.8
16-34	30.9	61.7	4.8	1.9	1159.9
Full-time	16.4	66.8	8.3	7.4	4838.1
35-40	19.1	68.8	6.7	4.2	2602.0
41-50	15.6	65.5	9.6	8.4	1504.1
51-60	9.6	62.8	11.5	15.3	517.3
More than 60	5.1	61.6	11.4	20.7	214.7
All persons	21.9	64.6	6.9	5.7	6843.7

Population: All employees

Source: ABS *Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation, 2000*

\* Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

(a) Excluding owner managers

(b) Persons who had now worked in previous 4 weeks are included in the total but some information was not collected for this group. As a result percentages may not add to 100% for this item.

Table 6 shows that ABS data indicates that the preference for lower hours is relatively low, with a total of 16 percent of full-time workers preferring fewer hours. However, amongst the long hours workers the preference for less hours is much stronger, with one-fifth (21 percent) of workers working more than 60 hours wanting fewer hours for the same pay and a further 11 percent happy to take a drop in pay for less hours. This may indicate that amongst these workers there is a higher incidence of unpaid overtime. More than one-third (35.1 percent) of part-time workers would like to work more hours for more pay.

The NLC data illustrates how asking about working time preferences in a different way can invoke quite different responses. The data in Table 6 has been displayed to enable comparison with the SEAS data. However, there are two main differences with the data, other than the way the question was phrased. Firstly, the usual hours figure is total hours for all jobs, not main job as in the SEAS. Secondly, the way employees have been identified is very different. In the NLC survey, respondents were asked if in their main job they were employed by a private company, a government body or if they were self-employed. The SEAS goes to more detail to determine whether a worker is an employee or owner manager.

Table 6. Employees' <sup>(a)</sup> preferred hours by total usual hours, 2000.

Total usual hours worked per week	Would like more hours	Would like fewer hours	Happy with present hours	Total (n)
	----- (%) -----			
Part-time hours*	22	9	69	326
1-15	29	4	67	91
16-34	19	11	70	235
Full-time hours*	3	41	55	819
35-40	6	28	66	394
41-50	1	46	53	265
51-60	2	63	35	112
More than 60	-	69	31	48
Irregular hours	36	18	45	22
All persons	9	32	59	1145

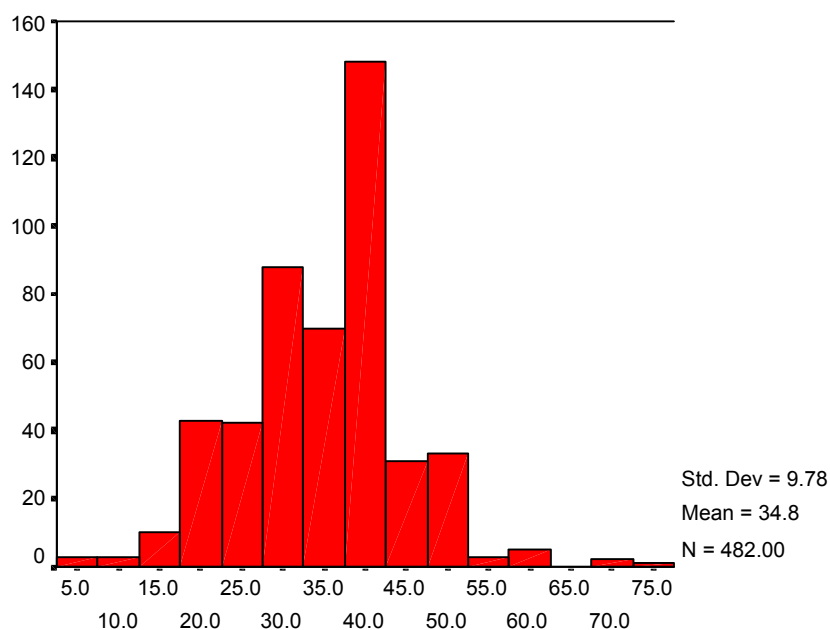
Population: <sup>(a)</sup> All workers who are do not describe themselves self-employed

Source: NLC2

\* Does not include irregular hours workers.

When employees were asked about their hours preferences without having to consider consequences for pay, 41 per cent of full-time employees said they would like fewer hours (Table 6). Thus, even though the number of people wanting fewer hours is much larger, not every respondent prefers fewer hours. In fact, more than half (55 percent) of full-time employees are happy with their current hours. To examine further whether some workers' preferences for fewer hours could be considered 'unreasonable', we can look at their number of preferred hours. Graph 3 illustrates that for most people who want less hours their preference is for what is normally considered a 'standard' working week, that is around 35 to 40 hours. Around 30 hours per week is also a popular preference.

Graph 3: Preferred hours of those workers who want less hours, 2000



Q91 R. how many hours like to work

Population: Workers who would prefer to work less hours.

Source: NLC wave 2

Almost one-tenth of employees wanting more hours is particularly low compared to the ABS figures. Just over one-fifth of (22 percent) employed Australians want more hours for more pay. Such a large discrepancy may be due, in part, to the way the question was framed. In the ABS survey respondents were asked if they would like more hours for more pay. The suggestion of more pay could have led more respondents to opt for this response.

### Suggested Improvements for Third Wave

When considering the improvements that could be made to the questions related to working time I have been fully aware of the restrictions that exist on the number of questions that can be added, so this list is not a 'wish-list' of all the questions that I would like to add. Rather it includes the ways existing question could be altered as well as added questions that I consider necessary to make the most of the existing questions.

- A question on whether the respondent is currently employed on a full-time or part-time basis needs to be added because it provides clarification, particularly in the case of 'irregular hours' respondents and for those working multiple jobs and have given a total hours figure.

- There should be some consideration of asking about hours for main job and total hours for all jobs. Some benefits of this would be to know the exact hours worked in each occupation as well as comparability with ABS data.
- Remove irregular hours option, preferring respondent to give an average or estimation of hours worked; or for the respondent to give an ‘irregular hours’ answer but then to provide an estimation as well.
- Unemployed people, that is people who would like to work, to give an hours preference.
- Currently those on leave are not asked whether they have multiple jobs, this should be reversed to provide consistency to the data.

### **Analysing the Working Hours Data**

To attempt to answer the question of why people work the hours that they do, I will initially be examining how preferences have changed over time and whether different household, work or individual characteristics can account for some of these changes. For a more basic analysis of the working hours data for 2000, using some of the initial variables available, please refer to Attachment B.

Examining people’s working time preferences could say a lot about why they are working their current hours. If people aren’t working their desired hours, there may be factors that are contributing to their undesired working pattern. This could possibly be made even clearer by looking at how preferences haven’t change over time as well. Exploring those people who are happy with their hours and have remained so over the last 3 years could also say a lot about the situations in which people are happy working the hours that they are. Table 5 shows how individual working time preferences have changed over the 3 years.

Table 5: Working time preferences in 1997 and 2000.

<b>Working time preferences in 1997</b>	<b>Working time preferences in 2000 (%)</b>				
	Skipped <i>N</i> = 127	More hours <i>N</i> = 124	Same <i>N</i> = 808	Less hours <i>N</i> = 502	Total <i>N</i> = 1561
Skipped	~	2.2*	8.9	3.5	14.6
More hours	1.4*	2.0*	4.3	1.3*	9.0
Same	4.8	2.4*	30.1	12.7	50.1
Less hours	1.9*	1.3*	8.5	14.5	26.3
Total	8.1	7.9	51.8	32.2	100.0

\* Indicates *N* < 50

Population: All employed persons in waves 1 and 2

Source: NLC waves 1 and 2

The majority of workers interviewed (30%) have remained content with their hours in 1997 and 2000. The proportion of people who wanted to decrease their hours rose from 26% to 32% in 2000. There is some representation in every group, although in some groups there are very small sample sizes, particularly amongst those who want more hours. In 1997 the total of this group was 124 and in 2000 it was 141. These low numbers aren't helped by the fact that people who were not employed in the reference week were not asked about their working time preferences. The smaller groups maybe limited to a more qualitative-type analysis.

My first step in the data analysis will be to individually examine each working time preference group displayed in Table 5. This will be a tedious process but essential in getting a comprehensive grasp of the data. The proceeding stages will involve some more sophisticated data analysis.

To provide an indication of the direction of my analysis I have taken one group to explain some of its characteristics. Without knowing anything about the data, the group I find the most intriguing is the people who said they wanted less hours in 1997, but in 2000 reported being content with their hours. They make up 8.5 per cent of the employed population in both waves, refer to Table 5. Some questions that arise immediately are: have these people taken some action that has lead them to working the hours they desired in 1997 or have their hours stayed the same and they have just adjusted to their hours? In terms of the question of why people work the hours they do, this group may tell a story of an assertive group of workers who work the hours that they want because they have activated change in their working conditions or they may possibly paint a picture of a group of workers who

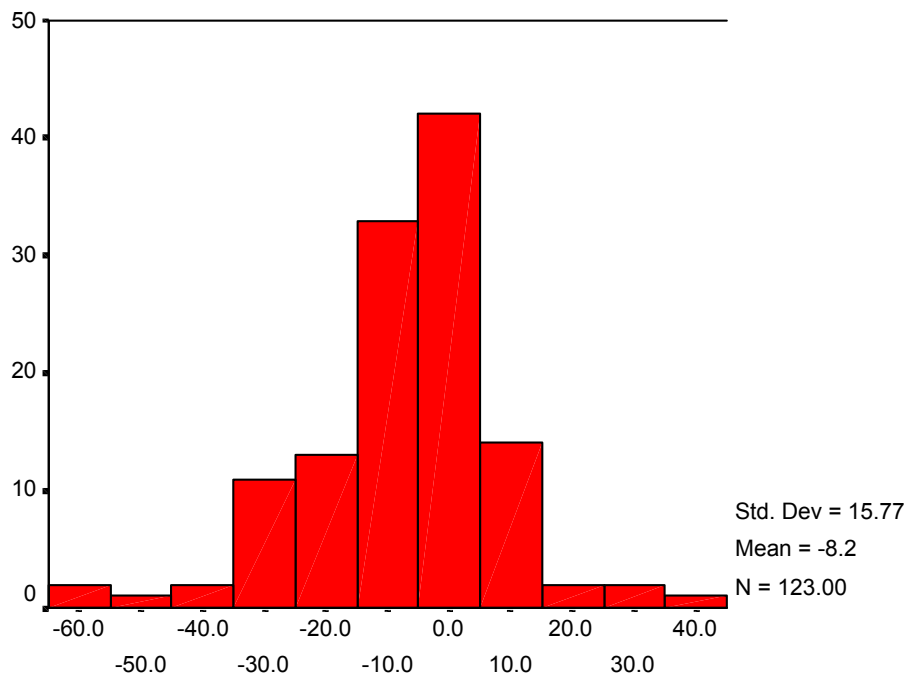


work the hours they do because they have succumb to the pressure of their job.

There were 132 people who reported wanting less hours in 1997 and happy with their hours in 2000. The proportion of males and females was about half-half. (52.3% males) And most of these people are middle-aged (30-44 years old). I examined various aspects of this group. In terms of their workplace, about a third (34.5%) had changed employer in the last 4 years and almost the same (34.8%) had changed to a very broad positional level (ie, managerial, supervising, other). I only have occupation for 1997 at the moment, and 64% of these workers were managers, professionals or associate professionals.

One of the obstacles in this dataset is highlighted when trying to determine whether working hours have changed in the 3 years. Ideally, to answer this question it would be a simple comparison between their usual hours in 1997 and 2000 but only actual hours data exists for 1997. The previous section provides some discussion on how usual and actual hours vary. Despite this, actual hours may give some indication of whether hours have substantially changed over time. I created a variable that subtracts 97 actual hours from 2000 actual hours. So if there is a positive value it means that they were working more hours in the reference week in 2000. For this group of workers we would expect that their hours would have decreased and thus have negative values for this variable, see Graph 4.

Graph 4: Difference in 1997 and 2000 Actual Hours.



Difference in Hours work Last week: W2 minus W1

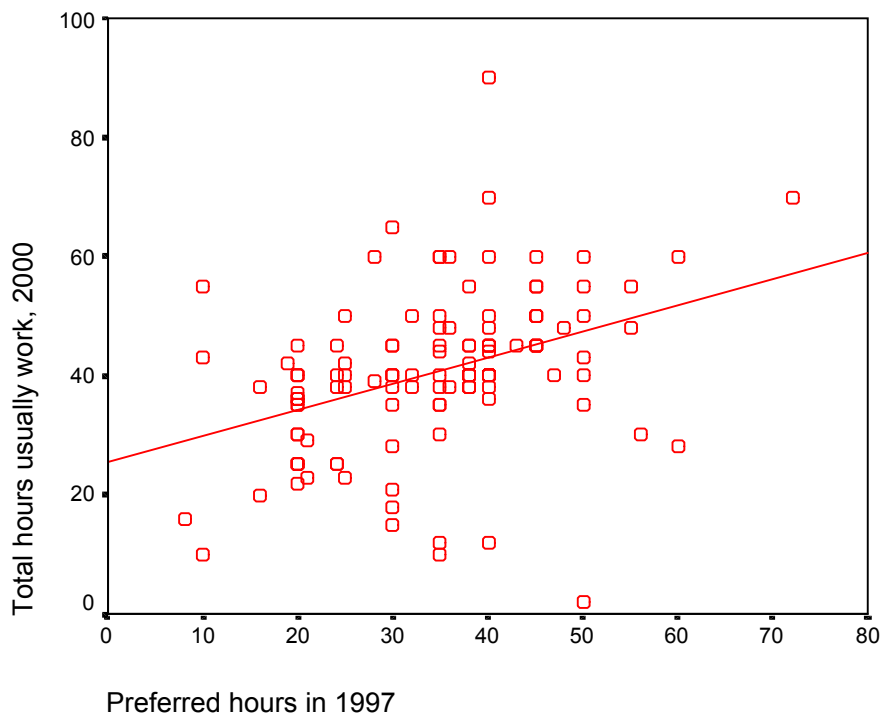
Population: Workers who want less hours in 1997 and happy with hours in 2000.

Source: NLC Wave 1 and 2.

Graph 4 shows that for most of these respondents, their hours in the reference week of 2000 have not changed what they were working in the reference week in 1997. However, the histogram is skewed to the left, which means that for some actual hours have decreased.

Instead of relying on actual hours data, it may be more telling to determine whether work hours in 2000 are the same as what these workers stated they would actually prefer in 1997. Graph 5 shows that this is not necessarily the case. The graph includes a line of best fit. If it was the case that the respondents had now achieved their preferred hours in 2000 the line of best fit would be situated where the values on the x-axis equal y-axis values but this is not the case. If a line like this was drawn, it would show that only a handful of respondents have achieved what they said were their desired hours in 1997. It would also show that most respondents are located above this line, which means that they have settled for more than their desired hours. There are many reasons why this has occurred. It must be remembered that respondents were asked for their ideal preference so it is possible that they may just be as happy not with their ideal but something close to it.

Graph 5: Preferred hours 1997 by Hours usually worked 2000.



Population: Workers who want less hours in 1997 and happy with hours in 2000.  
Source: NLC Wave 1 and 2.

In terms of the household situation of these respondents, I briefly examined data on relationships, children and age of children, however there were no outstanding patterns.

One of the more popular reasons for long working hours in recent literature has been conspicuous consumption and consequently debt. I had a look at the data on whether the respondent was renting, buying or owned their own house, although nothing stood out. I also examined information on achieving financial objectives. I found that a slightly proportion of these respondents had felt that by 2000 they had achieved a secure financial position, compared to the rest of the labour force in the 1997 and 2000 waves.

Obviously these are all issues that have to be investigated at more depth.

**Working Hours Questions in Wave 1 of NLC**

Q109

Did you work in more than one paid job last week?

Q110

Including all paid employment, how many hours did you work last week?

Q111

Why didn't you work full-time, that is 35 hours a week or more?

Q112

Would you like to change the number of hours you currently work?

Q113

About how many hours a week would you prefer to be working?

Q114

What prevents you working these extra hours?

Q115

What prevents you working less hours?

Q118/119

Does your job require you to:

Work broken shifts or irregular hours

Work overtime or very long hours

Work weekends

Work nights

Take work home

Travel away from home overnight

Q120

Can you have flexible working hours if you need them?

**Working Hours Questions in Wave 2 of NLC**

Q85

Did you work in more than one paid job last week?

Q86

Including all paid work that you do, how many hours do you usually work, that is how many hours in a normal week?

Q87

Leaving aside how many hours you normally work in a week, how many hours are you paid to work?

Q88

And how many hours did you actually work last week?

Q89

Why don't you usually work full-time, that is 35 hours a week or more?

Q90

Would you like to change the number of hours you currently work?

Q91

About how many hours a week would you prefer to be working?

Q92

What prevents you working these extra hours?

Q93

What prevents you working fewer hours?

Q95

Does your job require you to:

Work broken shifts or irregular hours

Work overtime or very long hours

Work weekends

Work nights

Take work home

Travel away from home overnight

Q96

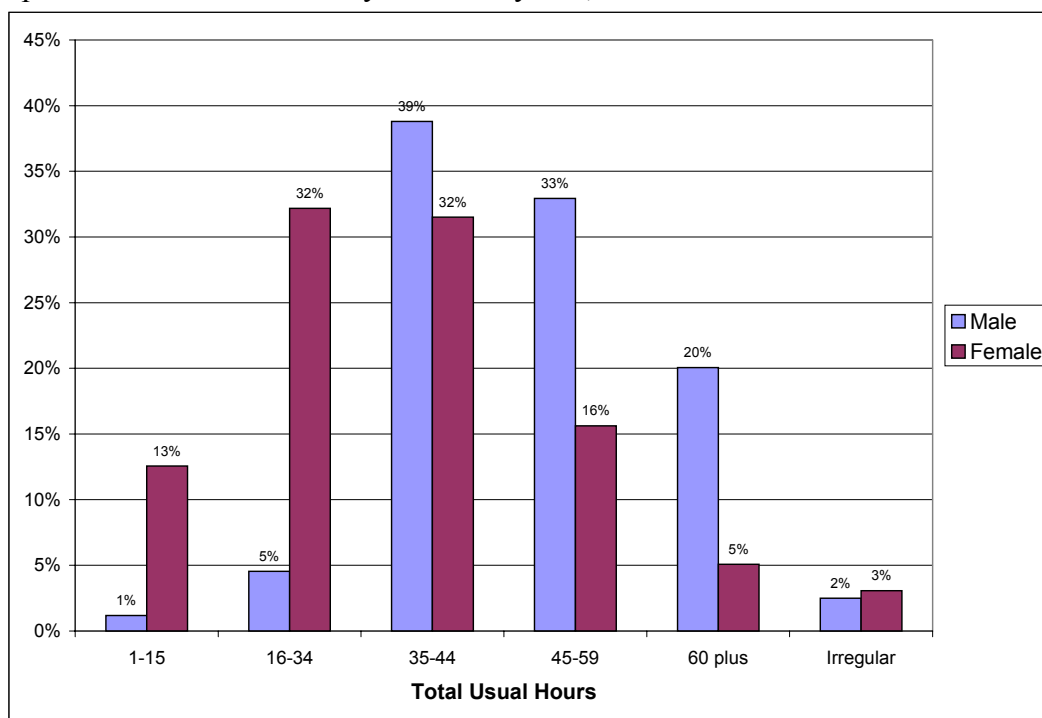
Can you have flexible working hours if you need them?

## Working Hours Profiles

This section gives an overview of the working hours data in wave 2 of the NLC dataset.

Graph 1b shows that men dominate the higher working hours groups, including what could be considered ‘standard hours’ (35-44). It is interesting to note that equal proportions of women were working higher part-time hours (16-34) and ‘standard hours’ (35-44).

Graph 1b. Total Hours Usually Worked by Sex, Australia 2000.



Population: All employed persons  
Source: NLC 2

Table 1b shows that average age does not appear to be a variable factor when it comes to broad working time patterns. The average age of males and females in all working time groups is around 40 years. The only point worth noting is that females usually working 60 hours a week or more have a slightly older average age of 45, this could possibly be due to a lower level of family responsibilities at this age and thus more available time to spend at work.

Table 1b. Working hours and average age, 2000

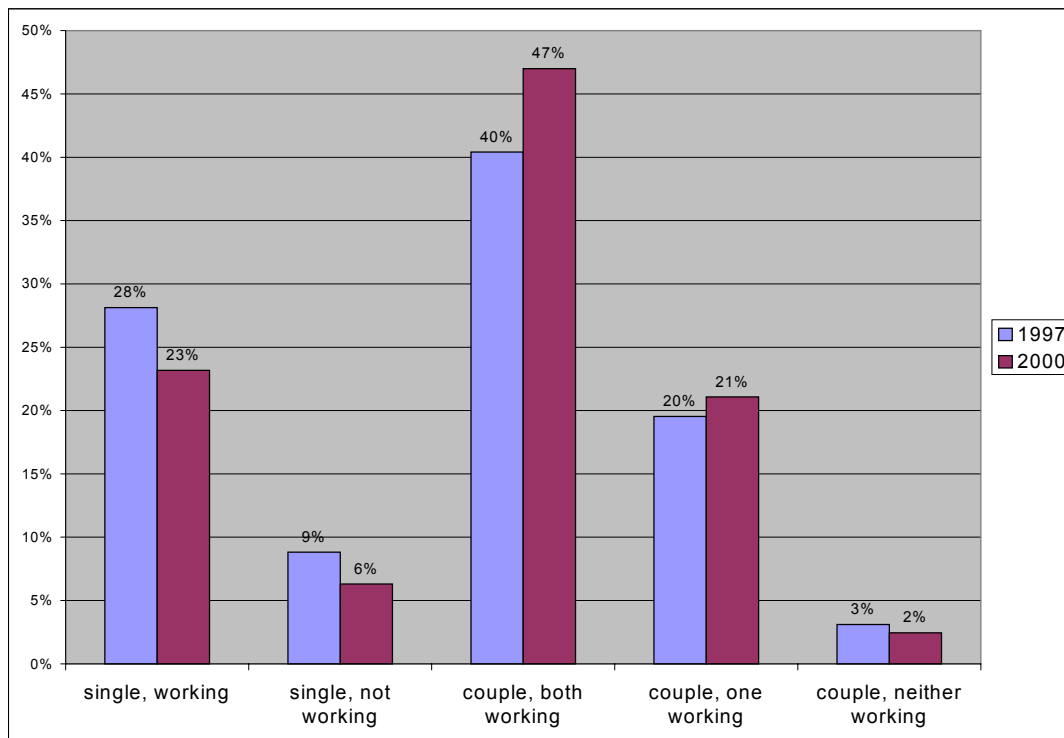
Hours Usually Worked	Age of Respondent	
	Females (N)	Males (N)
1-15	41.6	40.6 (8)
16-34	41.0	39.8 (31)
35-44	39.1	39.9 (265)
45-59	39.2	39.9 (225)
60 plus	44.9	41.0 (137)
Irregular	40.6	40.7 (17)

Population: All employed persons  
Source: NLC 2

### Working Hours and Relationships

The number of hours worked can often depend on the person's position in the household. A very basic indicator of position in the household is relationship status. Out of the 1433 respondents in Wave 2 who were employed, 1120 were in a relationship of some kind. Graph 2b shows how the NLC database has changed over the two waves in terms of the respondents and their partners' working status. The proportion of respondents who are single has decreased slightly, which means that the respondents are moving through the lifecycle by establishing co-habitation relationships. The proportion of couples who are both working has increased by 7 percent.

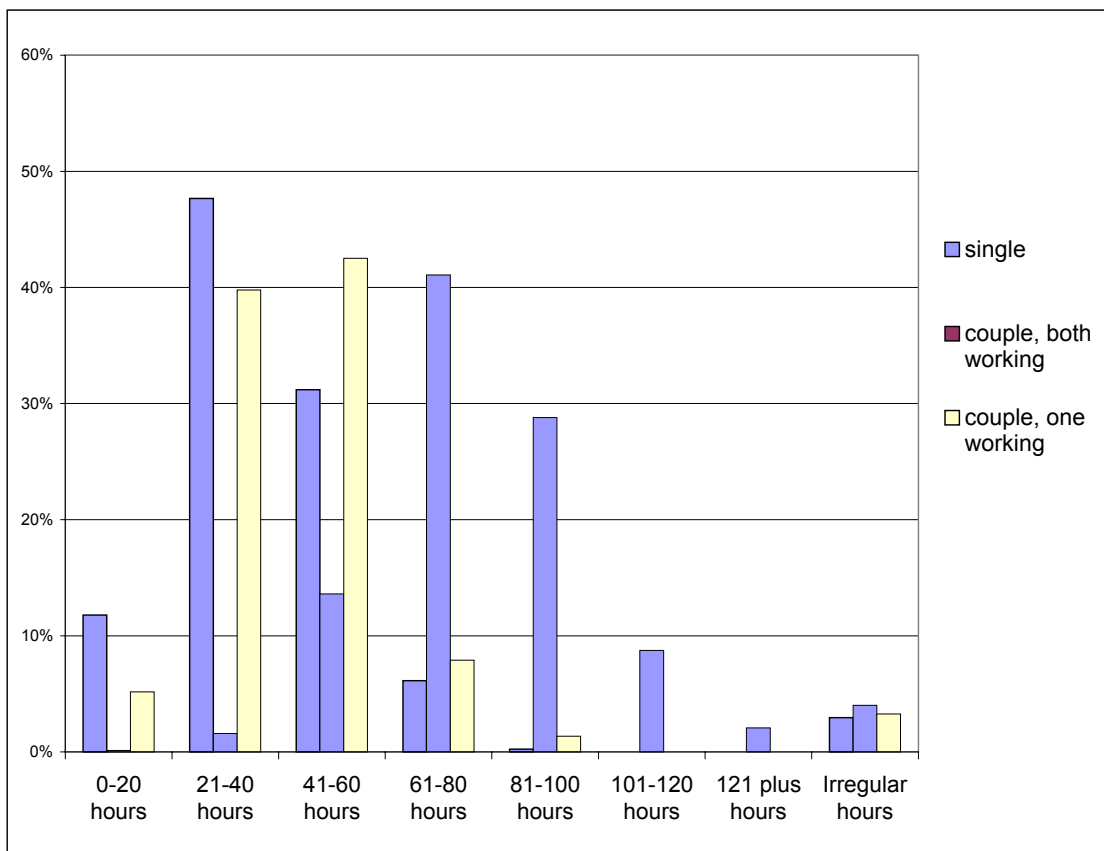
Graph 2b: Household work status, NLC database, 1997 and 2000.



Population: All respondents employed in waves 1 and 2  
Source: NLC waves 1 and 2

Graph 3b shows the hours that are usually worked by respondents and their partners in 2000. As would be expected the households with only one worker dominate the lower rungs of total hours. However, amongst these groups there are proportionately more single people working between zero and 40 hours per week, while the workers living with a partner who doesn't work dominate the 41 to 100 hours per week. It seems that if a worker has a dependent partner at home they are more likely to be putting in more hours at work.

Graph 3b: Total Usual Hours Worked, by Household, 2000



Population: All employed persons who are single and all couples where one person is employed.  
 Source: NLC 2

Amongst working couples, most have total work hours between 61 and 80 per week, however, more than a quarter (29 percent) are have a total of work hours between 81 and 100 per week.

There is only hours preference information for the respondent, thus we are limited to looking at only those respondents who are employed when determining whether there is a relationship between household work status and preferences. Table 1 displays the



results, which show a clear relationship and is supported by the chi-square test of significance. Single working people are more likely to want more hours, compared to their counterparts in relationships. Those workers who have a partner who is not working are by far the most satisfied group and those in couple who are both working are most likely to be unsatisfied with their hours. This indicates that those people in a couple where both people are working find it more difficult to find a work hours balance that satisfies them.

Table 2b: Respondent's preferred hours by household work status.

<b>Respondent's hours Preferences</b>	<b>Household work status</b>			<b>Total</b>
	Single	Couple, both working	Couple, respondent working only	
Want more hours	14%	6%	7%	9%
Happy with hours	30%	35%	43%	35%
Want less hours	55%	58%	50%	56%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>

#### Work Characteristics

Working hours are not only a function of a person's household situation but also the working conditions and characteristics of their job. This section examines the relationship between hours usually worked and various job characteristics that were asked about in the Lifecourse Survey. [At the time of the writing of this paper occupation and industry variables were missing].

Table 3b shows that public sector workers are most likely to be working 'standard hours', especially compared to self-employed workers who are more likely to be working 60 or more hours per week.

Table 3b. Hours usually worked by employment sector, Australia 2000 (%).

<b>Total hours usually worked</b>	<b>Private Sector</b> (N = 802)	<b>Public Sector</b> (N = 366)	<b>Self-employed</b> (N = 263)	<b>Total</b> (N = 1431)
1-15	8	7	4	7
16-34	20	20	14	19
35-44	36	43	20	35
45-59	25	20	27	24
60 plus	9	7	29	12
Irregular	2	2	6	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Population: All employed persons

Source: NLC2

Table 4b looks at the types of hours people are working and whether they are in managerial and supervisory positions. Those people working part-time hours are less likely to be in a managerial or supervisory position. Those working ‘standard hours’ are more likely to be in a non-managerial position (but could be supervising), while the largest proportion (61 percent) of those in managerial positions are working more than 44 hours per week. Respondents in managerial positions were also asked what level manager they are. Of the 100 managers who usually work 45-59 hours per week, 43 per cent are a middle level manager. Of the 57 managers who work 60 or more hours per week, 56 per cent are upper level managers.

Table 4b. Hours usually worked by employment sector, Australia 2000.

Total hours usually worked	Managerial position	Supervising Others	Other	Total
	----- (%) -----			
1-15	4	4	11	8
16-34	7	17	26	20
35-44	28	43	41	38
45-59	39	28	16	23
60 plus	22	7	4	9
Irregular	-	1	3	2
Total	100	100	100	100

Population: All employed persons

Source: NLC2

Note: 265 respondents skipped this question, 263 of who are self-employed.

Respondents were asked if they had an immediate supervisor at work or someone who supervises what they do. If respondents were in such a case they were asked if they expected to be one day promoted to that level. Table 5b displays the outcomes of that question, in relation to hours usually worked. There doesn't appear to be any obvious relationship in terms of promotional opportunities as hours increase, however, if the proportions in the total column are compared to those in various promotional categories a few comments can be made. Overall 26 percent of people work part-time hours, however, 32 percent of those who did not expect to be promoted worked part-time hours and 39 percent did not want a promotion. In the second case it seems that there would be some workers who have actively chosen to work part-time hours due to other commitments and are probably not seeking further commitment at work. In the former case though, there could be various reasons why a worker could not expect a promotion. In the case of part-time hours, it may be that at the workplace, the nature of the work in the higher position is not considered to be suitable to part-time hours.

Table 5b. Hours usually worked by expectation of promotion

<b>Total hours usually worked</b>	<b>Do not expect to be promoted</b> N = 408	<b>Yes, in current workplace</b> N = 180	<b>Yes, in other workplace</b> N = 87	<b>Yes, in either current or other</b> N = 67	<b>Don't want to be promoted</b> N = 85	<b>Total</b> N = 827
1-15	9	2	1	3	13	6
16-34	23	16	16	9	26	20
35-44	40	46	43	42	35	41
45-59	21	27	29	37	19	24
60 plus	5	9	10	9	6	7
Irregular	2	1	1	-	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Population: All employed persons

Source: NLC2

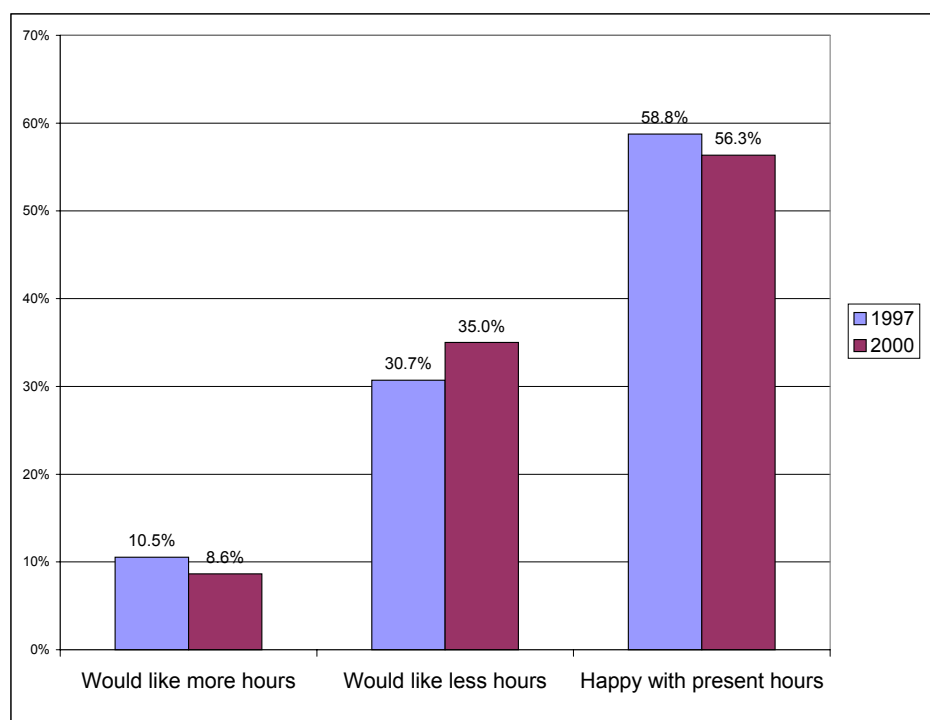
Note: 602 respondents reported not having an immediate supervisor.

Amongst those workers who thought that there were promotional opportunities, there were greater proportions that were working full-time hours. For example, overall 24 percent of employed persons were working 45-59 hours per week, and amongst those who thought they could get a promotion either in their current workplace or elsewhere, 37 percent were working those hours.

#### Hours Preferences

There were 1434 employed respondents who answered the question on working hours preferences. Graph 4b shows that the overall proportions of working hours preferences in 1997 and 2000 have not changed substantially. There has been a slight change in that there are less people who are happy with their hours or that want more and the proportion of those who want less hours has grown by about 4 percent. Thus, if there has been any change it has been a growing preference for less hours. This begs the question as to whether working hours have altered substantially in the three years, which is partly answered by Table 6b.

Graph 4b: Working hours preferences, 1997 and 2000.



Population: All employed persons.

Source: NLC waves 1 and 2.

This analysis depends on hours worked last week, as usual hours is not available for 1997. Table 6b seems to show a longer working group of respondents in 1997 compared to 2000, with total average hours being slightly higher in 1997. While those who want more hours in 2000 would be happy with a little less, that is 35 hours, compared to 38 hours in 1997. However, the average preferred hours amongst those who prefer less hours has not changed from 33 hours per week.

Table 7b takes a closer look at hours usually worked and preferences of all employed persons in 2000. Overall the preference for more hours is low, with just 9 percent of all employed persons wanting to work more hours. As would be expected most of these people are working part-time or irregular hours. Table 8b looks at some of the reasons why these people are not working more hours. Nearly half (48 percent) of those who want to work more hours are not doing so because they aren't available in their current job.

Table 6b: Working time preferences and average hours worked, 1997 and 2000.

Working hours preference	Average number of hours worked last week		Average number of preferred hours	
	1997	2000	1997	2000
Would like more hours	26	24	38	35
Would like less hours	48	46	33	33
Happy with present hours	37	34	-	-
Total	39	37	-	-

Population: All employed persons who do not work irregular hours.

Source: NLC2

Table 7b. Hours usually worked by hours preferences, 2000.

Total hours usually worked	Would like more hours	Would like fewer hours	Happy with current hours	Total
Part-time hours*	22	9	69	100
1-15	27	4	69	100
16-34	19	11	69	100
Full-time hours*	3	45	52	100
35-44	5	31	65	100
45-59	1	55	44	100
60 plus	2	69	29	100
Irregular	22	14	64	100
Total	9	35	56	100

Population: All employed persons

Source: NLC2

\* Does not include irregular hours workers.

Table 8b: Reasons for not working extra hours, 2000

Reason for not working extra hours	Proportion of all responses (%)	N
Can't get extra hours in my present job	44.4	60
Can't find another job with the hours I want	16.3	22
Problems with child care	5.2	7
My partner doesn't want me to work more hours	1.5	2
I couldn't manage extra hours of work and other responsibilities	8.9	12
Health problems	3.7	5
Other	20.0	27
<i>Total responses</i>	100.0	135

Population: All employed persons who want more hours

Source: NLC2

Multiple response: 135 answers but 124 people with this preference.

The issue of why people haven't reduced their hours of work to a more preferable level appears to be quite complex with nearly half (48 percent) of respondents attempting to explain the reasons in their own words, see Table 9b. For more discussion on this issue please refer to Attachment C.

Table 9b: Reasons for not working less hours, 2000

Reason for not working less hours	Proportion of all responses (%)	N
I/we need the money	27.0	140
It would reduce my chances of promotion	3.1	16
My employer won't agree to me reducing my hours in my present job	21.6	112
Can't find another job with suitable hours	1.5	8
My partner does not want me to work fewer hours	0.6	3
Other	46.2	240
<i>Total respondents</i>	100.0	519

Population: All employed persons who want less hours

Source: NLC2

Multiple response: 519 answers but 502 with this pref.

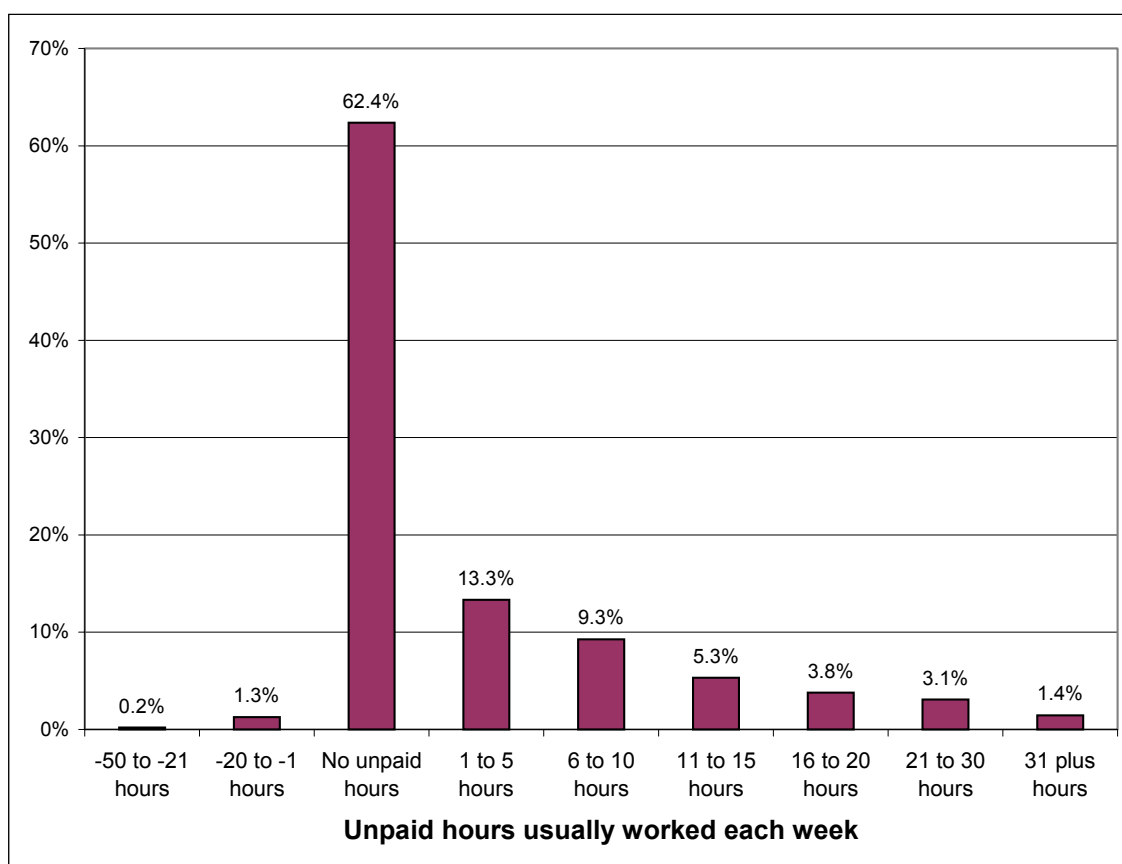
### Unpaid Hours

In Wave 2, respondents were asked how many hours they usually work in a week and if they were not self-employed they were then asked how many hours they are paid to work. From this data an unpaid hours variable was created to determine approximately how many unpaid hours are usually worked each week. There are a few imperfections with this variable. Firstly, those working irregular hours are unable to be included in the calculation of this variable. The other factor to keep in mind is that because the variables deal with usual hours it does not include all unpaid hours, only those done on a regular basis. Graph 5b displays the basic frequencies of this new variable. The majority of employed persons (64 per cent) are not working anymore hours than that they are paid for on a regular basis. However, 23 percent of employed persons are usually working between 1 and 10 hours of unpaid overtime each week.

Sixteen respondents reported being paid for more hours than they usually work each week. The most outstanding case is the respondent who is recorded as being paid for 85 hours of work each week but usually working 35 hours. Most of these respondents (11) work for a private company, with the remainder working in the public sector.

What is most surprising is the type of occupations that these workers are employed in, as some are occupations which would be assumed to pay by the hour, see Attachment D.

Graph 5b. Number of unpaid hours usually worked.



Population: All employed persons.  
Source: NLC2

There were 50 respondents who are recorded as usually working more than 20 unpaid hours per week. The majority of these respondents usually work 60 to 70 hours per week but are paid for 35 to 40 hours. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of these respondents were in managerial positions and 58 percent were employed in the private sector. For a list of the occupations and number of unpaid hours see Attachment D.

Unpaid overtime is contentious issue in terms of whether it exists and how to measure it. Such things as salary packaging and method of payment for labour complicate the issue. The ABS tackles the issue by having several categories for method of payment for labour. In the *Working Arrangements Survey, 2000* respondents are asked whether the most recent period of overtime was:

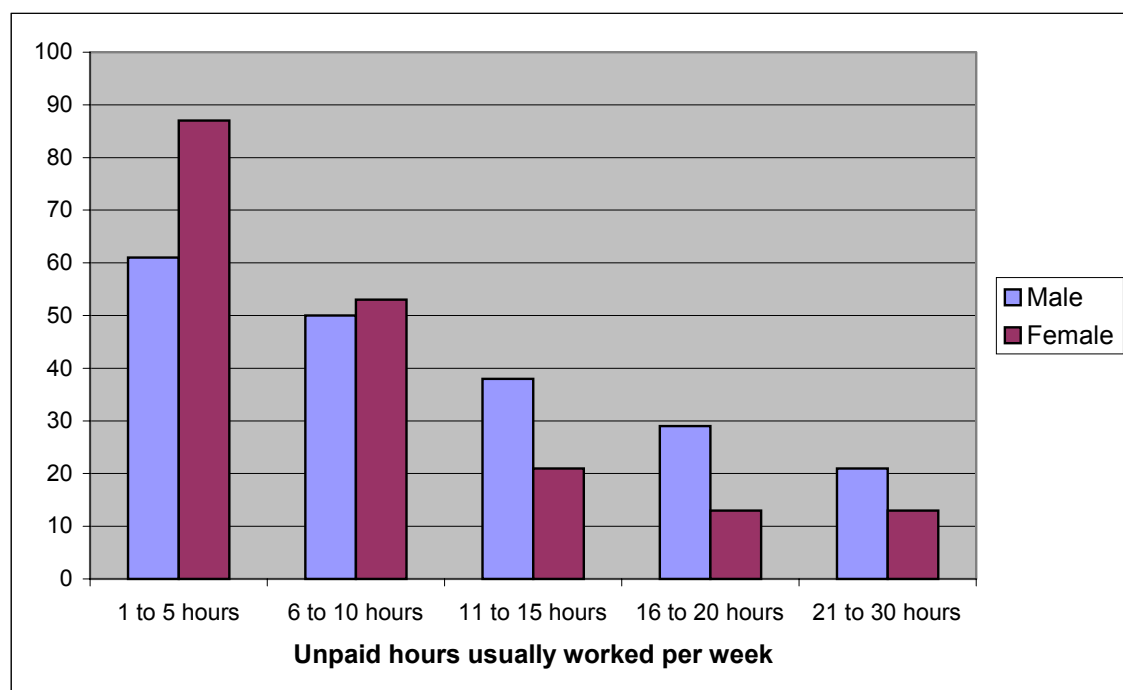
- paid overtime,
- unpaid overtime,
- overtime included in the salary package,
- overtime taken as time off in lieu, or

- other arrangements.

This method is attempting to account for all the possible ways that extra hours can be compensated for. The NLC questions on paid and unpaid hours is more simplified and does not get the respondent to consider whether their extra hours may be compensated in other ways in their salary package, rather than outright payment. However, not all people working extended hours are recorded as working unpaid overtime, which indicates that salary packaging was probably a consideration for some, if not most respondents.

The following analysis looks at the 402 people who are recorded as working unpaid overtime on a regular basis and who do not work irregular hours. Overall, unpaid overtime is fairly evenly distributed amongst females (47.5 percent) and males (52.5 percent). Although, males are dominate those groups working more than 10 hours a week of unpaid overtime, see Graph 6b.

Graph 6b. Number of people who usually work unpaid overtime by sex.



Population: All employed persons who work unpaid overtime and 'regular' hours.

Source: NLC2

Table 10b indicates a relationship, spurious if not direct, between the number of unpaid hours usually worked and working time preferences. To begin with, it is evident that those who are happy with their hours are working around what is



considered to be ‘standard’ hours (36 hours per week on average) and those that would like different hours are working, on average, more or less than the standard hours. Amongst those who want less hours, the average number of unpaid hours being working each week is 8. Those who are content with their hours are happy working on average about 2 hours per week and those who want more hours are unlikely to be working any unpaid hours at all, or just a very small amount. So it appears that at the greatest level of contentment, people are willing to put up with a few unpaid hours of work each week.

Table 10b: Working time preferences and average paid and unpaid hours, 2000.

<b>Working hours preference</b>	<b>Average number of hours usually worked</b>	<b>Average number of hours paid for</b>	<b>Average number of unpaid hours usually worked</b>	<i>N</i>
Would like more hours	26	21	0.5	113
Would like less hours	49	26	8	491
Happy with present hours	36	28	2	780
Total	40	27	4	1385

Population: All employed persons who do not work irregular hours.

Source: NLC2

## ATTACHMENT C

### Taking a Closer Look at Reasons for not Working Fewer Hours.

The issue of why people haven't reduced their hours of work to a more preferable level appears to be quite complex with nearly half (48 percent) of respondents attempting to explain the reasons in their own words, refer to Table 1c and the previous discussion in Attachment B.

Table 1c: Reasons for not working less hours, 2000

Reason for not working less hours	Proportion of all responses (%)	N
I/we need the money	27.0	140
It would reduce my chances of promotion	3.1	16
My employer won't agree to me reducing my hours in my present job	21.6	112
Can't find another job with suitable hours	1.5	8
My partner does not want me to work fewer hours	0.6	3
Other	46.2	240
<i>Total respondents</i>	100.0	519

Population: All employed persons who want less hours

Source: NLC2

Multiple response: 519 answers but 502 with this pref.

By examining the 'other' responses, it is evident that part of the reason for some many of these responses is a coding issue. As almost all of the majority of the answers could be summed up by a few words such as workload, responsibility/commitment to the job, and nature of the job. Some of the type of comments that come under this grouping are:

*Workload doesn't permit me to work less, and I'm committed to the work.*

*Workload. Just can't complete the requirements within 37 hours.*

*I have to do my job it doesn't matter how long it takes.*

*My job demands it*

*The work is there and I have to do it.*

*Basically I have to do the work that is given to me.*

*The workload is not doable in a 38 hours week.*

The way a lot of these comments are phrased indicates a feeling of helplessness or hopelessness when it comes to the workload and the control they have over the hours that they are working.

The other most obvious group of responses amongst the 'other' comments were those that related to self-employed people or people who owned their own business.

*The nature of the business, have to work those hours to maintain it.*

*I run the company, I do everything.*

Another group of responses, although much smaller, referred to the lack of staffing and resources at their workplace, which meant they had to put in longer than preferred hours.

*There is a lot of work and downsizing in the company.*

Then there were some more personal comments that reflected the workers' own desires, motivations or ----- . The following comments indicate that workers sometimes have a sense of guilt or obligation that is much more powerful than what is written in the work contract or what the employer will allow.

*Being on call, and my own perfectionism – not feeling like [I'm] producing anything.*

*Employer would agree to reducing [my] hours but [I] feel obligated to do the hours as the work requires.*

*My employer would go broke. [I have a] sense of loyalty to my employer.*

*Because I'm good at my job and I can't say no.*

Other comments indicated that workers have accepted the long hours as just a part of their job or the wider economy and to participate in it long hours is what it takes.

*GST creating more work. The nature of the world.*

*Nature of the employment: only know the time you start, not the time you finish.*

The following comment supports the basic notion that consumerism has led to long hours of work:

*We need the money to pay off our mortgage and do renovations to our house.*

## ATTACHMENT D

### Unpaid Hours and Occupations

Those who work less hours than they are paid for	Those who work more than 20 unpaid overtime each week
Administrative officer Attendant care officer - nursing Bank teller Butcher Child care assistant Diesel mechanic Flight attendant Legal secretary Mechanical engineer Postal delivery officer/postman Postal service Process worker Sales assistant Shift supervisor Special education teacher Teacher aide	Academic Academic/associate Dean Account executive Area manager/Government department Army major Assistant station master Auditor Bank manager Brand manager Building supervisor Business for a division of a bank Coal miner Computer consultant Consultant in emergency medicine Divisional chief/ Government agency Farm labourer Full time primary teacher Lecturer at a university Lecturer/uni Live stock manager Manager hospitality Manager of area in council Manager/CEO of an organisation Manager/nursing/ patient services Managing director Marketing manager// Mechanical engineer Missing Personal secretary Physicist Primary school teacher Production controller Project manager Regional business manager Research scientist Sales manager (x2) Sales representative Secondary teacher Service station proprietor Software engineer Software programmer (company director) State retail manager Teacher (x2) Teacher/high school University lecturer (x3) Warehouse manager