

# Living in Australia

A snapshot of Australian society  
and how it is changing over time





The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services with scientific leadership by the Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, the University of Melbourne. Since 2009, Roy Morgan has been responsible for conducting the fieldwork. The findings and views reported here, however, are those of the authors' and should not be attributed to the Australian Government Department of Social Services, the Melbourne Institute or Roy Morgan.

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# FOREWORD

## Professor A. Abigail Payne

*Director and Ronald Henderson Professor  
Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research*

Living in Australia is fundamentally different today than it was 20, 10 or even five years ago. We are a nation that has been defined by social transformation, driven in part by shifting employment conditions, diverse family structures and changes in our health and wellbeing that affect the opportunities with which we are provided and the decisions we make.

As society evolves, it is important that we have a clear understanding of our living, employment and educational opportunities, so that decision makers at the highest levels are informed and can plan effectively for the future prosperity of our nation and its people.

That is why almost 20 years ago the Australian Government partnered with the Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research to design and manage the pioneering Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. This long-running survey collects and analyses information from thousands of different families and individuals across the country to provide insights into how living in Australia has changed over time.

Today, the HILDA Survey remains the first and only study of its kind that involves telling the story of the same group of people and families over their lifetime. The ongoing cooperation of the survey participants, who represent the voices of all Australians, is vital to the study's success and the ability to make a real and long-lasting difference.

It is with heartfelt thanks to the HILDA Survey participants, who generously give their time each year, that we have been able to keep the study running for as long as it has, and in doing so, provide a vital source of information to those making economic and social welfare decisions for all Australians.

The study stands as a guide to better inform our understanding of what's shaping modern Australia, and whilst the Melbourne Institute has been a driver in its creation, we are just one of many organisations and people around the world that can make important use of the strong body of knowledge it has created.

To the survey participants, all of Australia owes you its eternal thanks.



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# WELCOME

## Professor Mark Wooden

*Director, HILDA Survey Project  
Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic  
& Social Research*

Every year some 20,000 Australians are invited to participate in the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The information that is collected is then fed into an ever-growing database describing how Australian lives have been changing (and not changing). With these data, researchers have access to a powerful tool that is informing policy settings in a wide range of areas. Included here are: income inequality; poverty; minimum wages; housing affordability; child care; public health; employment conditions and job quality; the setting of official interest rates—I could go on.

This report, the first in what we expect to be an annual production, seeks to provide you with more insight about a small selection of some of the trends and findings that emerge from the data you provide each year.

The material covered is drawn from a larger report—the annual HILDA Survey Statistical Report—which we have been producing every year since 2006. This new report, however, is very different in that it has been designed specifically with you—the HILDA Survey participant—in mind.

Finally, I would like to express my own deepfelt thanks to you (and your family) for inviting our interviewers into your home and/or answering their phone calls every year. Without your cooperation there would be no HILDA Survey.

# HOUSEHOLDS

*and family life*

- THE EVOLVING HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE
- LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS IN AN EVER MORE DIVERSE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY
- PATHWAYS TO ADULTHOOD

# THE EVOLVING

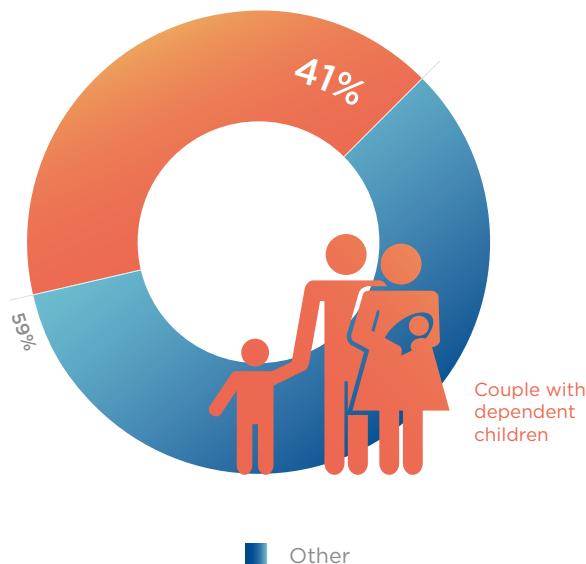
## *household structure*

The structure of Australian households has changed over the last two to three generations. People living under the same roof still tend to see themselves as part of family units, but families have become increasingly diverse.

Households are constantly changing, with new members entering and others leaving. From one year to the next, approximately 23.5 per cent of individuals, on average, experience some sort of change to their household structure according to the HILDA Survey. Over a five-year period, slightly more than half of the population experiences at least one change in household structure, and over a 16-year period more than two-thirds (76.6%) experience at least one change.

The most common sources of change are children leaving the parental home and then also returning after a period of time. The birth of a child, new romantic partnerships and separation of spouses are other causes of the ever-changing household structure in Australia.

*Figure 1: The most common household structure in Australia, 2017*



Even though more diverse household types are emerging, the most common structure over the last 17 years is a household containing a couple with dependent children (41.3% in 2017), followed by households containing a couple and no children (19.7%) who may or may not live with others, such as siblings, parents or other unrelated persons.

*Table 1: Proportion of respondents who experienced a change to their household structure, 2001–2017 (%)*

	Changes since 2001		
	1 year later	5 years later	16 years later
Household structure changed (someone left and/or someone entered)	23.5	52.4	76.6
<b>Type of change:</b>			
Partnering	3.2	13.1	32.9
Separation	2.2	10.2	23.7
Birth of a child	4.9	13.2	26.5
Child moving into parental home	3.9	14.5	31.1
Child moving out of parental home	11.5	34.7	61.5
Death of a household member	0.4	2.4	7.1
Other source of increase in household size (entry)	1.6	5.9	15.5
Other source of decrease in household size (exit)	3.5	8.8	18.6

# LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

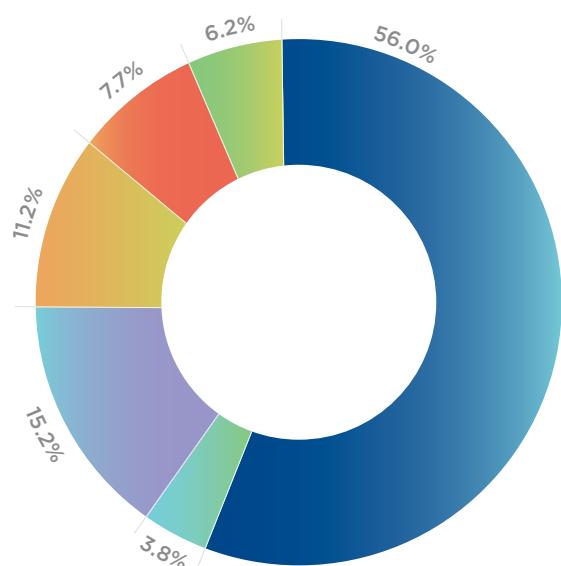
*in an ever more diverse Australian society*

With more than one in four Australian residents born overseas according to 2016 Census data (26.3%), there is a growing number of people from different cultural backgrounds making romantic connections. The increase in interethnic romantic partnerships could be a sign of successful integration to Australia and a more vibrant Australian society.

The HILDA Survey reveals that one in four couples in 2017 were interethnic—by which we mean that spouses are born in different countries. Results also show that partnering with someone from a different country is more likely if you have a bachelor degree or a higher educational attainment compared to lower educational attainment. Similarly, people who are relatively open to new experiences are significantly more likely to partner with someone from a different country; while more traditional attitudes towards marriage and children reduce the likelihood of living in an interethnic relationship.



Figure 2: Types of couple relationships by country of birth, 2017



- Both partners born in Australia
- Both partners born overseas (in the same main English-speaking country)
- Both partners born overseas (in the same other country)
- One partner born in Australia and the other partner born overseas (main English-speaking country)
- One partner born in Australia and the other partner born overseas (other country)
- Both partners born in different overseas countries to one another

Note: Main English-speaking countries: United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, United States of America and South Africa.

# PATHWAYS

## *to adulthood*

The period between the end of adolescence and the late 20s—young adulthood—is a time of significant change during which individuals graduate or leave school, settle into a career, start a life on their own or choose to build a family. How a young adult navigates this stage of the life-course is very important as it can affect their future pathways.

### A LATER DEPARTURE FROM THE FAMILY HOME

Compared with their parents and grandparents, young adults in Australia today are taking more time before entering family roles that have long defined adulthood. The number of young adults living with their parents has significantly increased since the HILDA Survey began 17 years ago. This increase has been led by young female adults who are now leaving the parental home at the age of 24 years, on average. The average age for women leaving home has increased by two years since 2001 when the average for going out on their own was 22. The average age for young men leaving home is 23 years and has remained the same between 2001 and 2017.

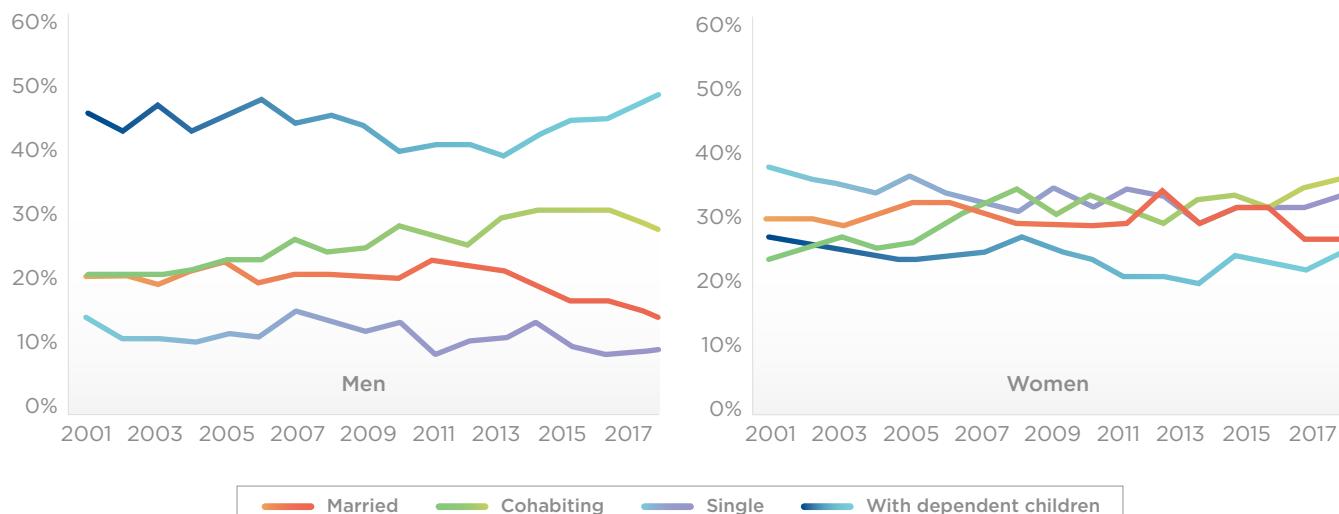
### YOUNG ADULTS IN NO HURRY TO GET MARRIED

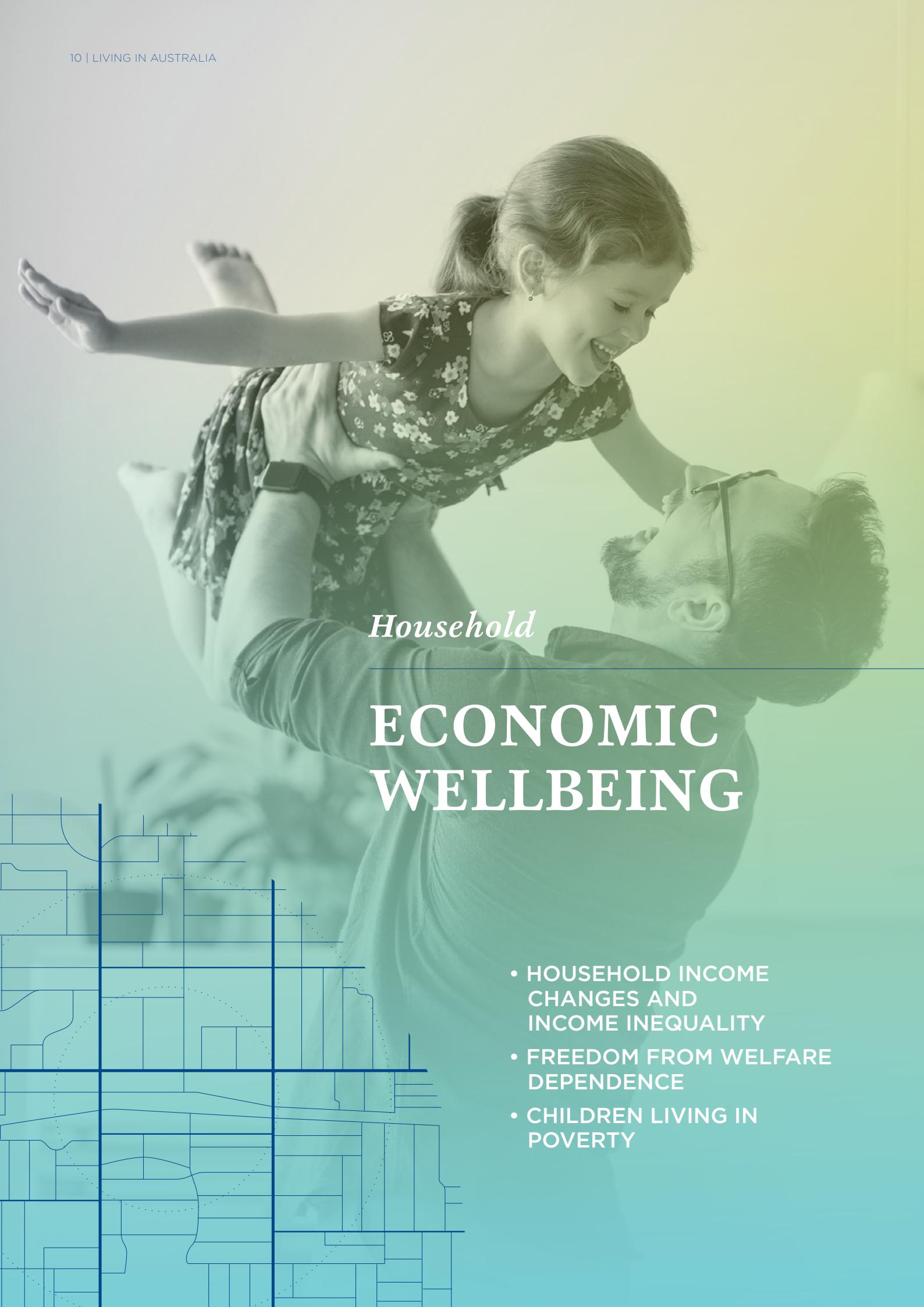
A longstanding coming-of-age tradition has been the notion of leaving the family home to get married. However, the HILDA Survey indicates that this is changing, with a decrease in the number of young adults who are married and living outside their parents' home.

Young men are less likely than their female peers to be leaving the family home to get married. The proportion of young male adults who get married following departure from the family home has fallen from 21.7 per cent in 2001 to 16.5 per cent in 2017. The decrease in young women is not as sharp, but is decreasing nonetheless, falling from 29.5 per cent in 2001 to 26.6 per cent in 2017.

In contrast, there has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of both male and female young adults who have left the family home and live (or 'cohabit') with a partner without being married. Between 2001 and 2017 the proportion who were cohabiting rose by 8 percentage points among men and 12 percentage points among women. Today the proportion of young adults living outside the parental home and cohabiting outnumbers those who are married.

*Figure 3: Change in young adults (18–29 years) living outside the parental home, 2001–2017, by relationship status and gender*



A woman with blonde hair tied back in a ponytail is smiling and laughing while carrying a young child on her shoulders. The child has their arms raised in the air. They are both wearing casual clothing. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting.

*Household*

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## ECONOMIC WELLBEING

- 
- An abstract graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of several overlapping blue-outlined shapes, including rectangles, triangles, and irregular polygons, creating a layered effect.
- HOUSEHOLD INCOME CHANGES AND INCOME INEQUALITY
  - FREEDOM FROM WELFARE DEPENDENCE
  - CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY

# HOUSEHOLD INCOME CHANGES

## *and income inequality*

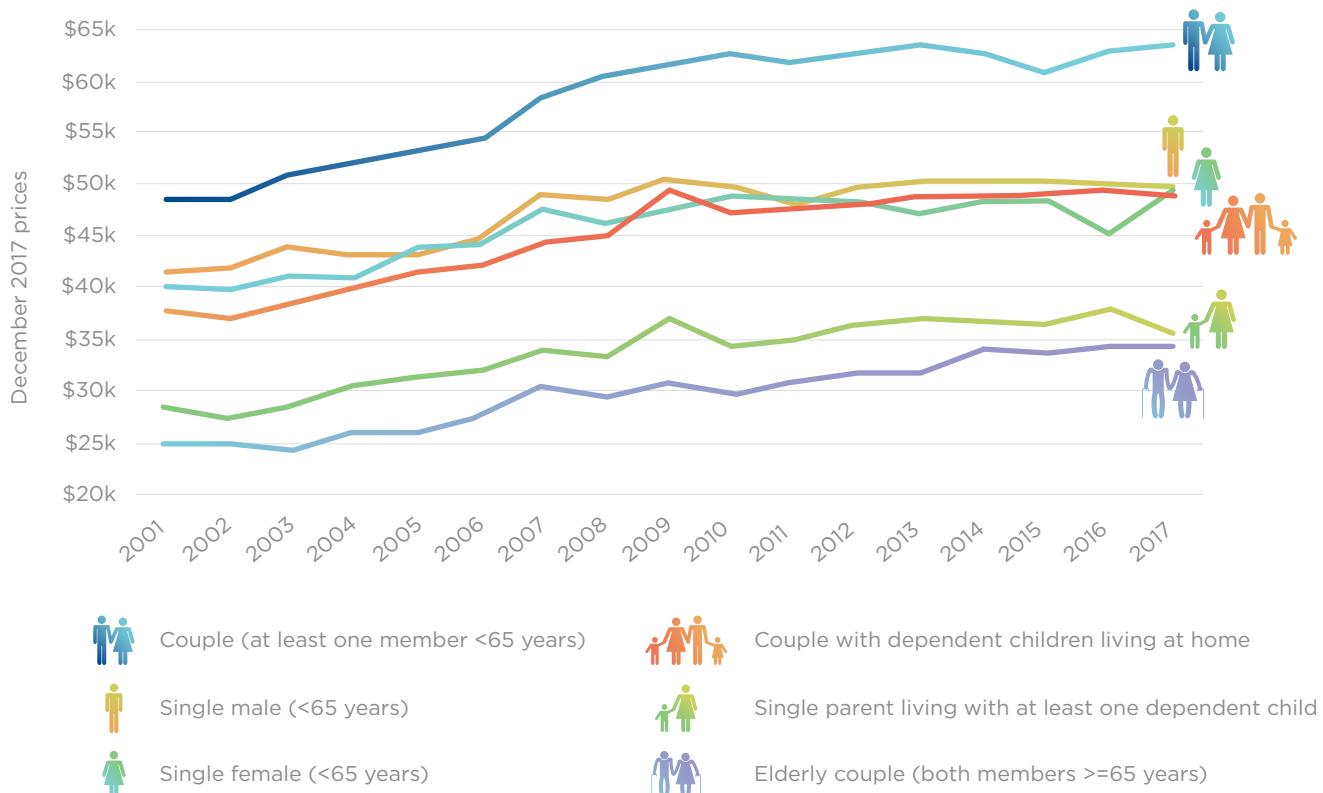


Examining the pattern of changes to households' income over time is vital to understanding the economic potential of the Australian population. Australian household incomes have, on average, remained at the same level since 2009 (\$90,578 in 2009 compared to \$93,734 in 2017). However, there have been noticeable changes in households' income from year to year.

### HOW STABLE IS AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME?

The HILDA Survey indicates that households tend to remain within the same income group from one year to the next (that is, reporting roughly the same income in real terms each year). This has especially been the case in recent years (since 2012). This income stability from year to year may be understood as a positive development, since average household incomes do not appear to be decreasing. However, those in the lowest income groups are more likely to be persistently struggling to make ends meet and afford a decent living standard, and require assistance to try and break their cycle of disadvantage.

Figure 4: Income by family type (mean equivalised)



Note: A household of four people requires a higher household income than a single-person household to achieve the same living standard. Thus income needs to be adjusted for different family sizes. Household equivalised income is a measure of material living standards, obtained by adjusting household net income for the household's needs. This adjustment is based on the number of adult and child household members, recognising that there are economies of scale in consumption (for example, the rent on a two-bedroom flat is typically less than twice the rent on an otherwise comparable one-bedroom flat) and that children require less than adults.



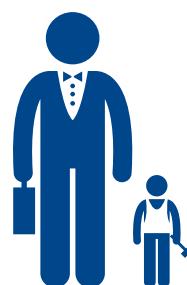
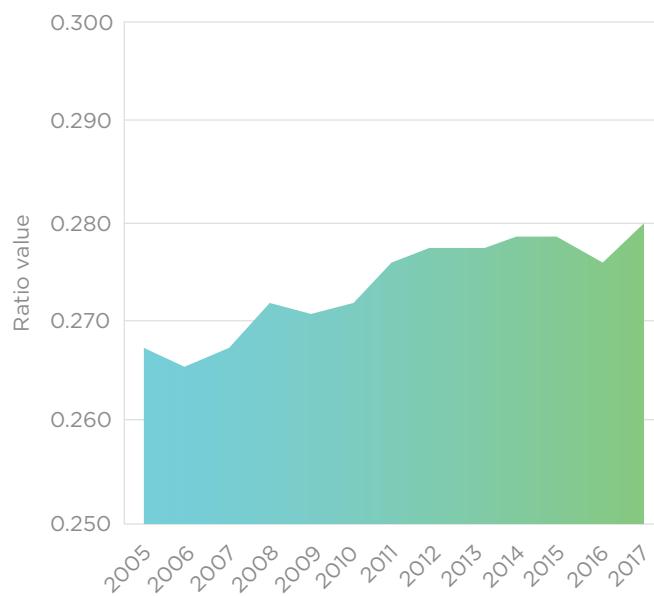
## INEQUALITY OVER A PERIOD OF TIME

The gap between people with high incomes and those with low incomes provides us with a measure of income inequality. There are some people with temporarily low incomes and some people with temporarily high incomes. When we examine incomes over five years, these temporary fluctuations are less important and so incomes look more equal. Looking at household incomes reported in the HILDA Survey reveals that the gap between people at the high and low end of the income spectrum is somewhat smaller over a five-year period than the gap in incomes when measured over only one year. However, even though inequality measured over five years is not very high (ranging from 0.266 to 0.277), the gap has been expanding since the early 2000s.

## HOW CAN INEQUALITY BE MEASURED?

Inequality is measured based on an index known as the Gini coefficient, whereby 0 signifies an equal society and 1 signifies an unequal society.

*Figure 5: Long-term inequality (Gini coefficient)*



**Long-term inequality is widening the gap between the highest income group whose economic prosperity is increasing and the lowest income group whose economic prosperity is declining.**

# FREEDOM

## *from welfare dependence*

Broadly speaking, welfare refers to the wellbeing of people: their security, health and happiness. The Australian welfare system supports the elderly and those who may be unable to participate fully in the labour market or otherwise achieve a satisfactory income, for reasons such as disability, illness, caring responsibilities or unemployment. Overall, welfare dependency in Australia remains well below what it was 17 years ago. There are, however, groups within the population who require support to help break the cycle of disadvantage to obtain economic independence.

The HILDA Survey shows a declining trend in welfare reliance over the 2001 to 2017 period. While 30.6 per cent of individuals aged 18 to 64 were living in a household that received income support at some stage during the financial year ending 30 June 2017, this is substantially lower than in 2001, when the corresponding figure was 38.5 per cent.

Nevertheless, many Australians, especially elderly Australians (aged 65 and over), are still heavily reliant on welfare benefits (that is, the Age Pension). Despite the introduction of compulsory superannuation in 1992, most persons aged 65 and over are reliant on the Age Pension, yet this trend is declining over time.

In 2017, welfare provided more than half of household income for almost 10 per cent of Australians aged 18 to 64, and just over half of all Australians aged 65 years or more.

Further, for a substantial minority this dependency is long-lasting. One in 10 (10.7%) working-age females (aged 18–64) and 8.6 per cent of their male counterparts have relied on income support for 10 consecutive years, between 2008 and 2017. Despite the decline in overall welfare dependency, the level of long-term reliance has barely changed.

### WELFARE BENEFITS

Welfare benefits comprise income support payments such as the Age Pension, Disability Support Pension, Parenting Payment and Newstart Allowance, and non-income support payments, such as Family Tax Benefit Parts A and B.

Figure 6: Income support recipients by age (%)

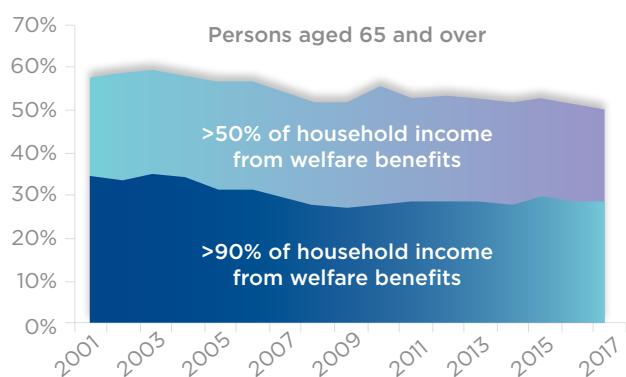
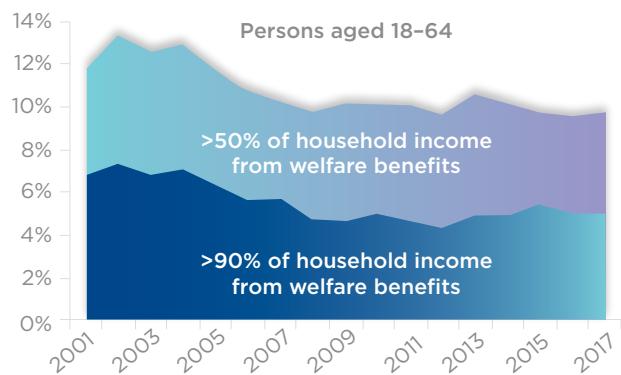
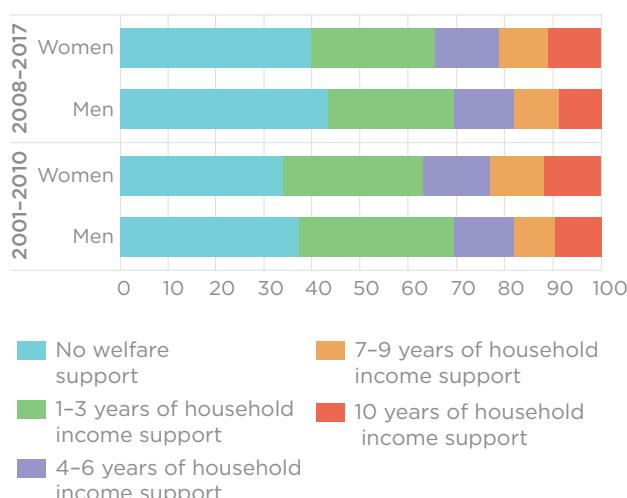


Figure 7: Number of years in which more than 50 per cent of household income comes from welfare benefits: Working-age people observed over a 10-year period (%)



*There has been a decrease in the proportion of the population who require income support, but the proportion of the population who rely on income support remains unchanged.*

# CHILDREN

## *living in poverty*

**Living in poverty during childhood can have negative long-term effects. It is therefore important that policy both responds to these long-term effects and focuses on breaking the cycle of deprivation.**

More than 28 per cent of children born between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2008 lived in relative poverty for at least one year. More specifically, 18.2 per cent were living in relative poverty for one to two years, while 4.7 per cent were in poverty for at least half of their first 10 years of life.

Children who grow up outside the major urban areas (towns and cities with a population of at least 100,000 people) are more likely to experience relative poverty within the first 10 years of life—with 34.2 per cent experiencing relative poverty at some stage in their lives, compared with 25.8 per cent of children growing up in major urban areas.

Children growing up outside major urban areas are also more likely to experience long-term relative poverty, with 3.4 per cent experiencing disadvantage for seven or more of the first 10 years of life, compared with 1.4 per cent of their peers.

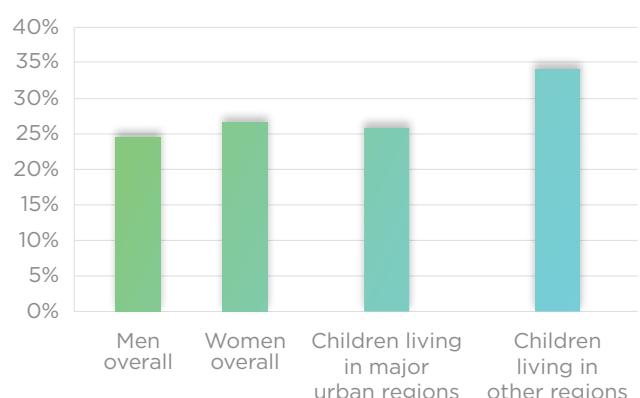
### CHILD RELATIVE POVERTY

According to the OECD, children are in relative income poverty if their households are unable to afford the goods and services needed to provide them with a mainstream lifestyle in the country in which they live.

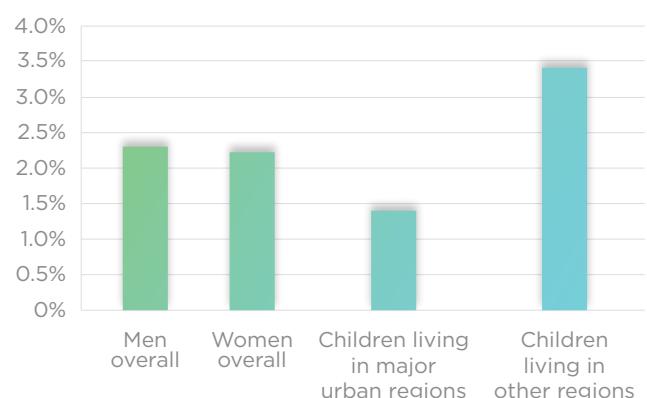


*Figure 8: Experience of relative poverty over a 10-year period by type of individual and place of residence (%)*

People living in poverty at some stage over a 10-year period



People living in poverty for at least 7 years over a 10-year period

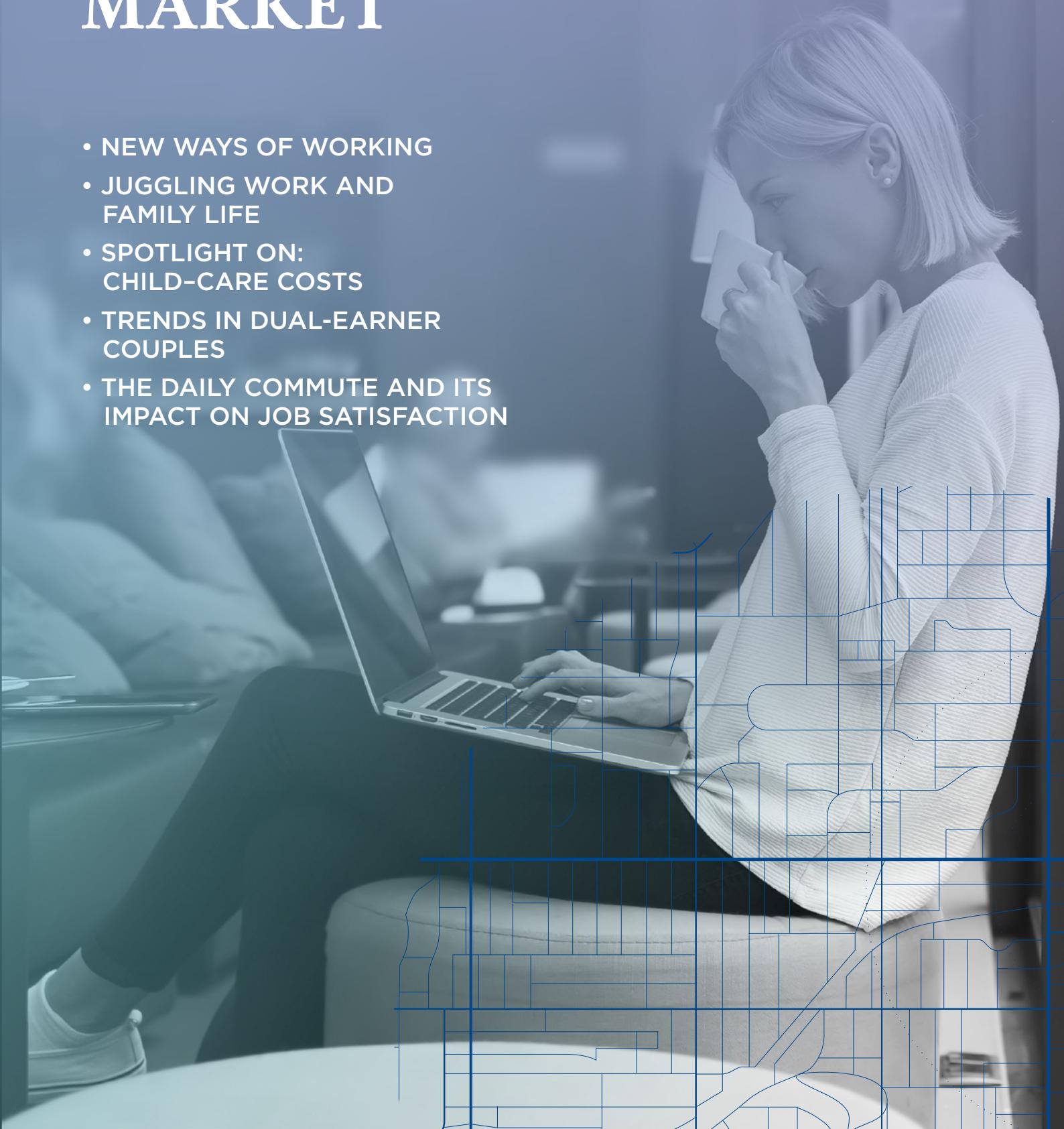


Note: Major urban regions refers to cities with populations of 100,000 or more. Other regions include towns and cities with populations of 1,000 to 99,999, towns with populations of less than 1,000, and rural and remote areas.

*The*

# LABOUR MARKET

- NEW WAYS OF WORKING
- JUGGLING WORK AND FAMILY LIFE
- SPOTLIGHT ON: CHILD-CARE COSTS
- TRENDS IN DUAL-EARNER COUPLES
- THE DAILY COMMUTE AND ITS IMPACT ON JOB SATISFACTION



# NEW WAYS

## *of working*

Over the last two decades there has, at least among employees, been a shift away from ‘traditional’ full-time permanent employment towards different forms of work—also known as non-standard forms of work. They include: temporary jobs, permanent part-time work, and casual or seasonal work. These new forms of work can create pathways into employment and new career opportunities, as well as offer greater flexibility to individuals. However, non-standard forms of work also typically lack the stability and employment benefits that are offered by traditional forms of employment.

### WOMEN AND NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT

Non-standard employment is a common way of working for many women in Australia. The HILDA Survey shows that there are more women working in non-standard forms of employment than men, with the average share of female non-standard employees being almost double that of their male peers. In 2017, 61 per cent of employed women were in non-standard jobs compared to 37 per cent of men.

In addition, women are overrepresented in three out of the four most common types of non-standard employment: fixed-term contracts, casual employment and permanent part-time work.

Figure 9: Average share of non-standard employment by gender, 2017

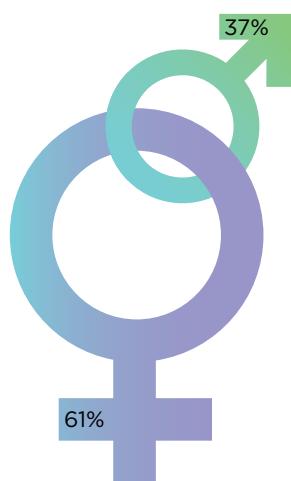
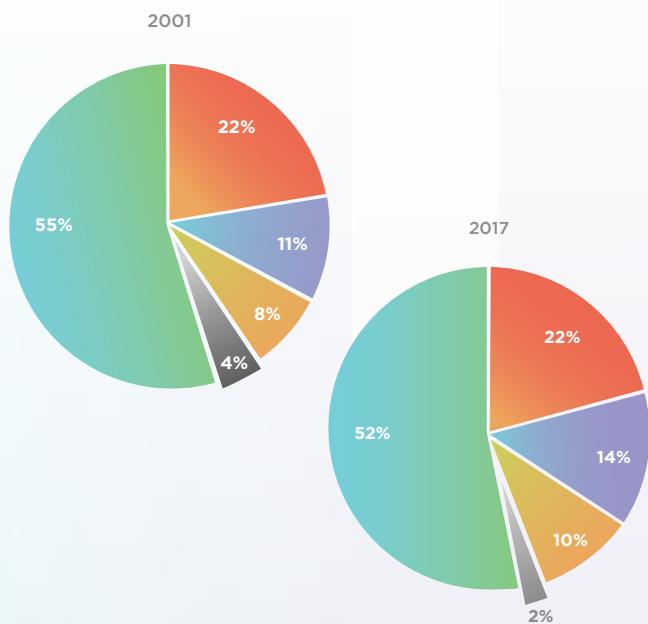


Figure 10: Share and definitions of different employment types, 2001 and 2017



#### ■ STANDARD EMPLOYMENT

Full-time dependent employment on a permanent contract.

#### ■ CASUAL EMPLOYMENT

The most common form of non-standard employment in Australia. Its main feature is the absence of any advance commitment by the employer regarding both the duration of employment and the number of days or hours to be worked. Additionally, casual employees are usually not entitled to paid annual or sick leave.

#### ■ PERMANENT PART-TIME WORK

Usually working, on a permanent basis, less than 35 hours per week in the main job.

#### ■ FIXED-TERM CONTRACTS

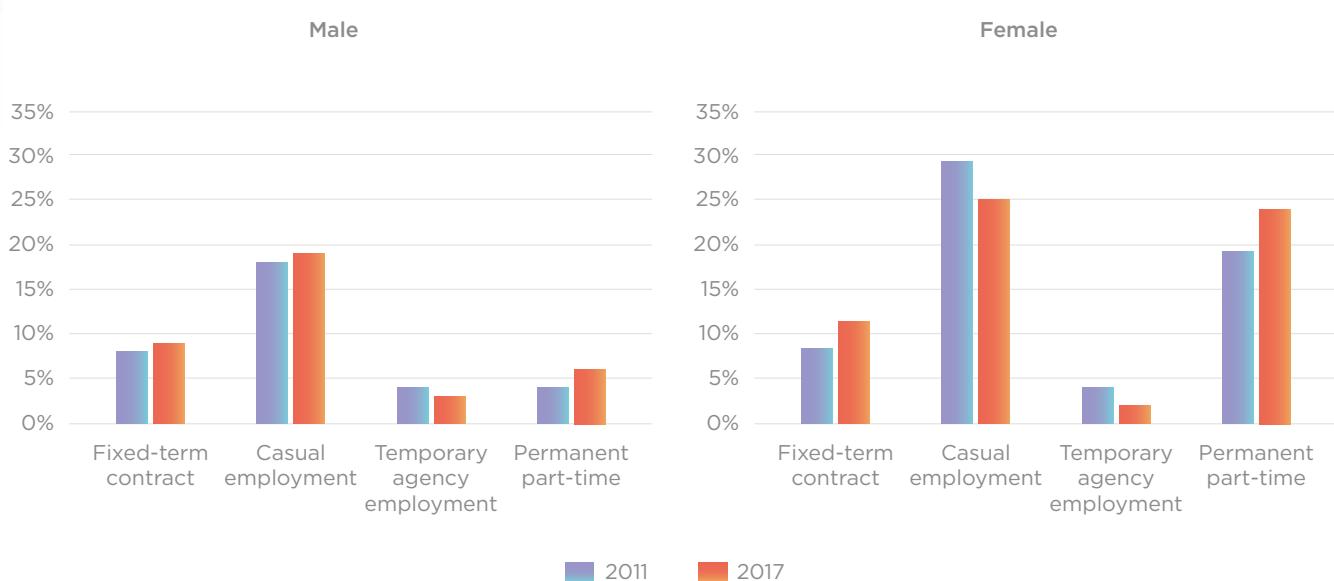
Employment contracts that specify a specific date when employment will be terminated.

#### ■ TEMPORARY AGENCY EMPLOYMENT

Where a worker is employed by a temporary agency, and then hired out to perform her/his job at a company. No employment relationship exists between employer and company and wages are paid by the temporary agency.



*Figure 11: Share of fixed-term contracts, casual employment, temporary agency employment and permanent part-time work by gender: Employees aged 15 and over (%), 2001 and 2017*

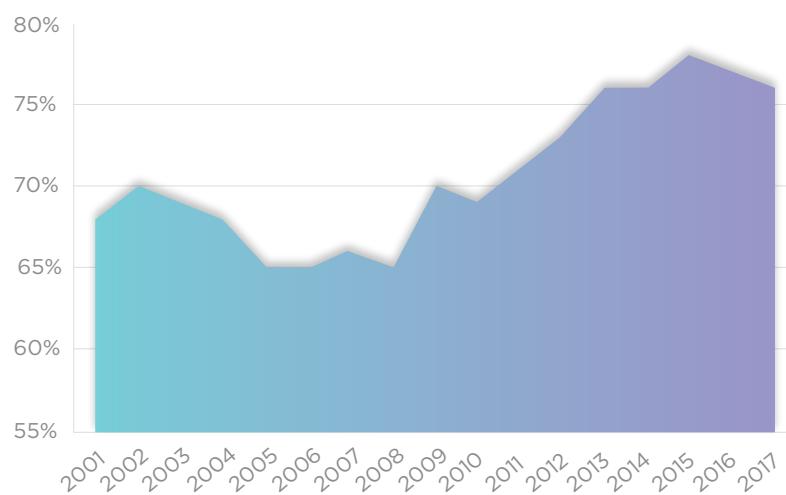


#### YOUNG PEOPLE MORE LIKELY TO BE IN NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT

Young people (15–24 years old) are also more likely to have non-standard employment arrangements, primarily as casual or permanent part-time employees.

Non-standard employment offers young people an opportunity to get work experience and earn an income while balancing their studies and transitioning into young adulthood. However, it is not yet understood whether non-standard employment is a short-term experience for young people, or whether it may become a longer-term alternative in place of full-time or permanent positions.

*Figure 12: Share of young people aged 15–24 in non-standard employment (%)*



# JUGGLING WORK

## *and family life*

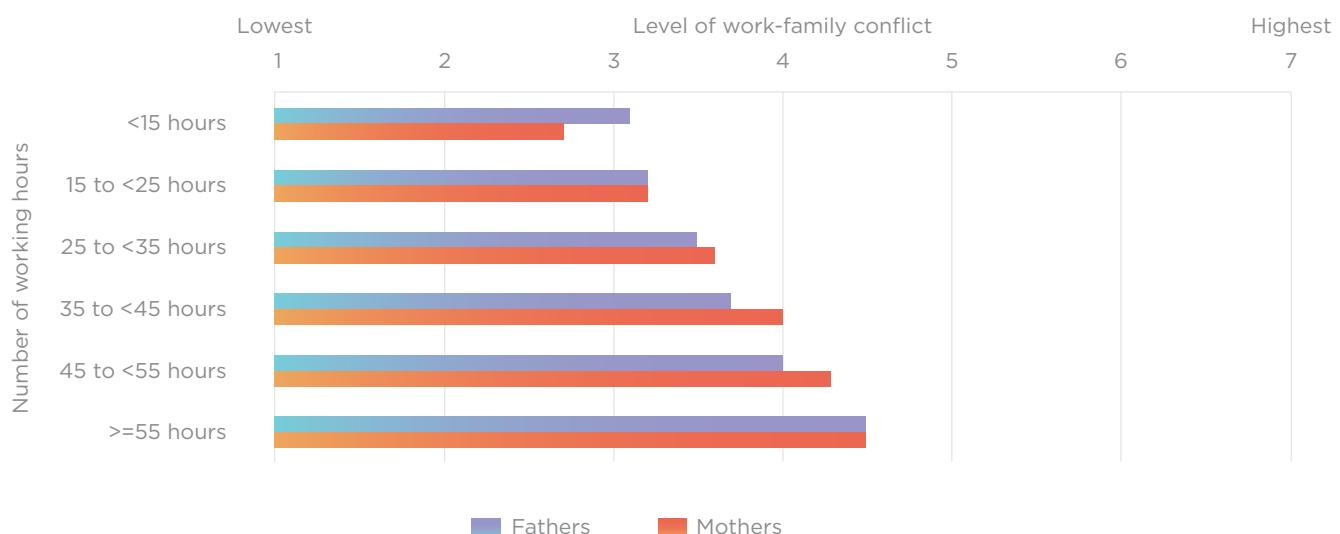
**Finding a balance between raising children and paid work is something most parents strive for. However, in Australia this is challenging as many parents have a full-time paid job and work long hours. Understanding the differences in how paid work and family commitments are perceived and experienced by men and women provides important insights into how to design policies that support work-life balance.**

The HILDA Survey reveals a clear connection between longer working hours and greater work-family conflict. Mothers seem to feel the effects the most. Not only

have mothers' working hours increased since 2001, full-time working mothers, on average, also express a significantly higher degree of difficulty in balancing work and family life than is the case for all parents.

Being able to achieve a work-family life balance also depends on the person's family situation, including the age of their youngest child, number of children and marital status. Mothers with young children (aged 0 to 3 years) report relatively low levels of work-family conflict, which is partly explained by their concentration in part-time jobs.

*Figure 13: Level of work-family conflict by number of working hours: Working parents with children aged 17 or younger, 2001–2017 (pooled)*



### MEASURING WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

Using the HILDA Survey, we are able to measure work-family conflict based on questions related to work-family gains and strains including: 'Working causes me to miss out on some of the rewarding aspects of being a parent'; 'Working leaves me with too little time or energy to be the kind of parent I want to be'; or 'Because of the requirements of my job, my family time is less enjoyable and more pressured'.



Factors such as working schedule and whether the person is self-employed or an employee also influence how mothers and fathers perceive the impact of work on their family lives. The long-term nature of the HILDA Survey enables us to examine how a range of employment-related changes impacts work-family balance. We compare the share of workers experiencing these changes from one year to the next among those who experience high work-family conflict

in both years (persistent) and those who experience high work-family conflict in one year but then have a low level of conflict by the following year (exiting). Workers who have low conflict in the first year and remain employed in the following year are also studied. A reduction in the number of hours worked from one year to the next, a change in working schedule, or giving up a supervisory role seem to decrease the level of work-family conflict for those who are employed.

*Table 2: Proportion of workers experiencing employment-related changes by level of work-family conflict:  
Working parents with children aged 17 or younger, 2001–2017 (pooled) (%)*

Level of conflict	Reduce hours	Change working schedule	Give up supervision	Change employer	Change occupation
Low conflict	30.1	16.1	17.6	10.6	30.9
High conflict—persistent	33.8	17.0	13.7	11.1	29.0
High conflict—exiting	40.4	17.4	19.7	15.6	33.1

## Spotlight on: CHILD-CARE COSTS

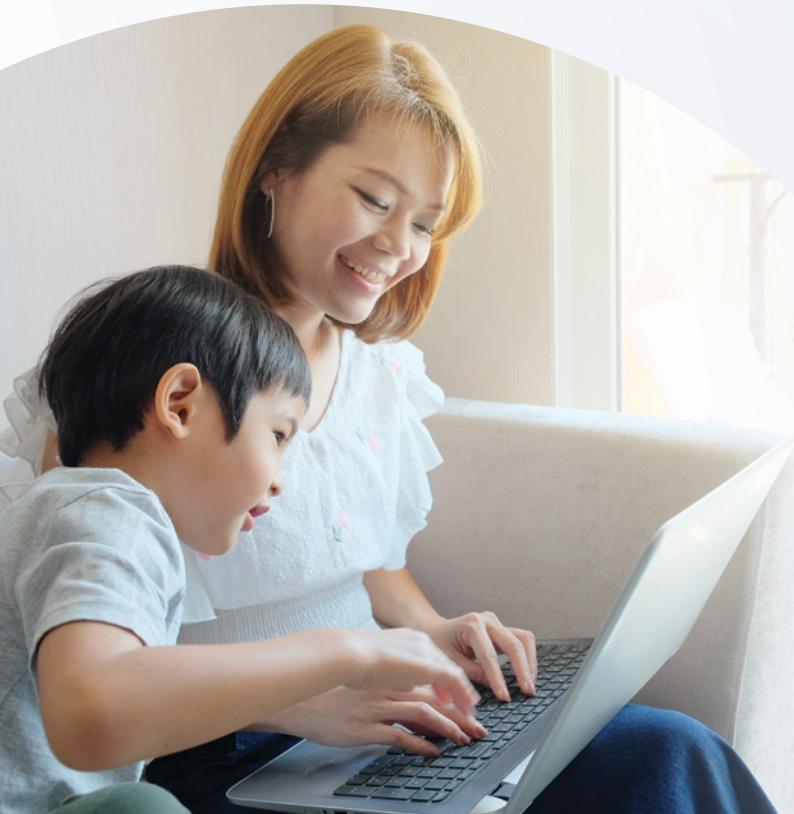
Over the past few decades, child care for children not yet in school has become a major concern among Australian families who struggle to balance their child care responsibilities with paid work outside their home.

The HILDA Survey data show sustained and substantial rises in median weekly expenditure on child care for children not yet in school over the 2002 to 2017 period—by around 145 per cent (\$62 per week in 2002/2003 rising to \$153 per week in 2016/2017).

In part, this is the result of increased uptake of child-care services. However, hourly costs of formal care for young children have also been rising. After adjusting for price inflation, these have risen by 51 per cent—from \$4.10 in 2002/2003 to \$6.20 in 2016/2017.

*Table 3: Expenditure on formal child care for children not yet at school, 2002/03 and 2016/17*

December 2017 prices	2002/03	2016/17	% change
Median weekly expenditure	\$62	\$153	145
Median expenditure per hour of child care	\$4.10	\$6.20	51



**The HILDA Survey has found a drastic increase in the share of household income spent on child care since 2002.**

*Figure 14: Top child care challenges parents face.*



*The financial cost of child care is the main difficulty experienced by parents (whose youngest child is below five years).*

# TRENDS

## *in dual-earner couples*

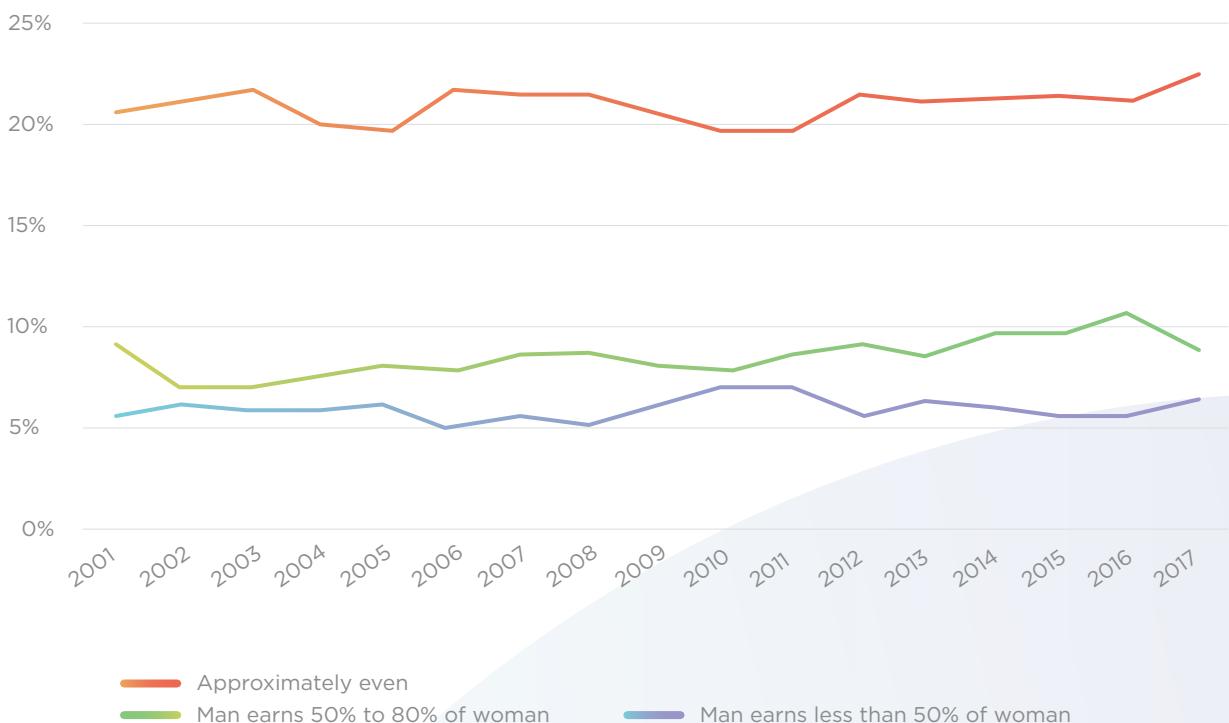
There has been a significant increase in female workforce participation over the last 50 years, which has given rise to growth in ‘dual-earner’ couples—that is, couples in which both members are employed and contributing to the household finances.

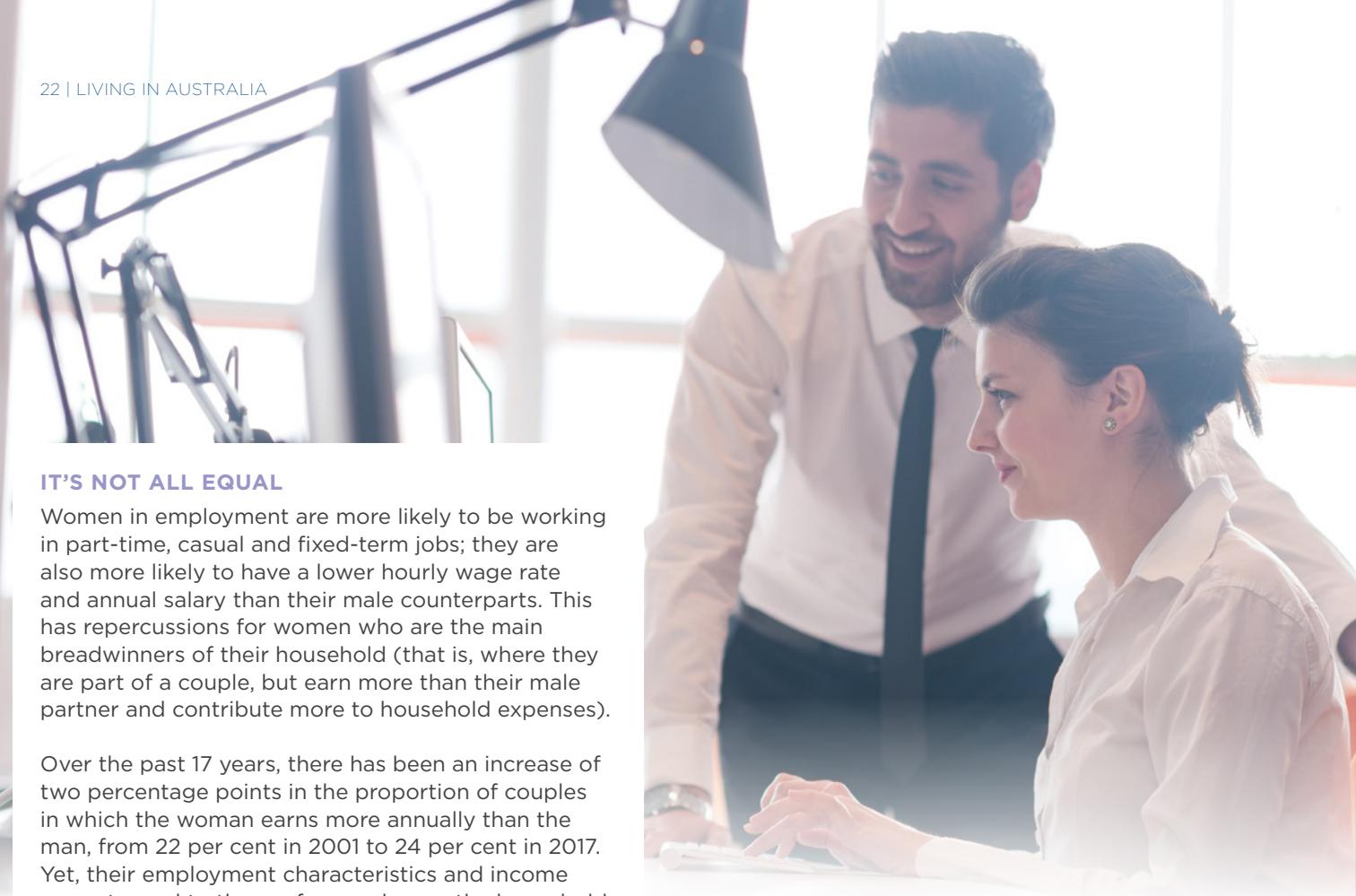


Results from the HILDA Survey reveal that there was a substantial rise in the number of dual-earner couples between 2008 and 2011, which was mainly driven by an increase in female breadwinners (that is, female spouses who earn more than their male partners). This may reflect the slowing in wages growth and a decline in job security experienced by households in the aftermath of the global financial crisis.

Since 2011, however, the growth of dual-earner families has been led by an increase in couples in which both the man and the woman evenly contribute to household income.

Figure 15: Share of dual-earner couples by relative earnings, 2001–2017 (%)



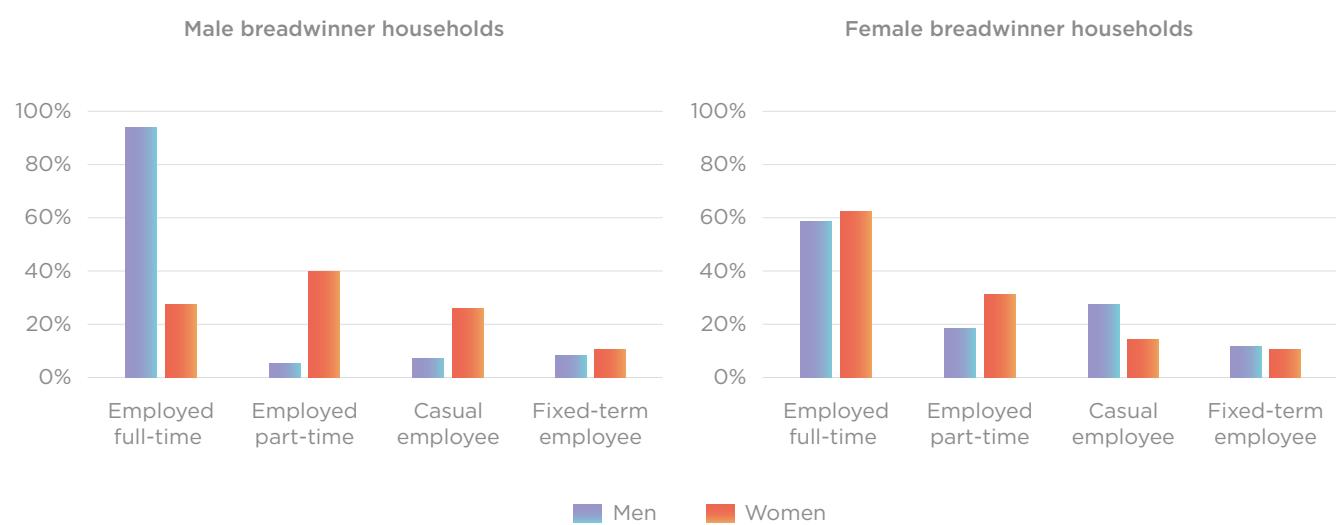


### IT'S NOT ALL EQUAL

Women in employment are more likely to be working in part-time, casual and fixed-term jobs; they are also more likely to have a lower hourly wage rate and annual salary than their male counterparts. This has repercussions for women who are the main breadwinners of their household (that is, where they are part of a couple, but earn more than their male partner and contribute more to household expenses).

Over the past 17 years, there has been an increase of two percentage points in the proportion of couples in which the woman earns more annually than the man, from 22 per cent in 2001 to 24 per cent in 2017. Yet, their employment characteristics and income are not equal to those of men who are the household breadwinners. As a result, female breadwinners tend to support households on lower levels of income. Also, their employment is less secure and their disposable income is lower than their equivalent male breadwinners, despite the fact that they are the main source of income in the household.

*Figure 16: Employment characteristics of men and women in dual-earner couples by major contributor to household income, 2015–2017 (%)*



Men are more likely to be employed full-time in households where they are the primary source of income.

Women are more likely to be working in a mix of full-time and non-standard employment in households where they are the primary source of income.

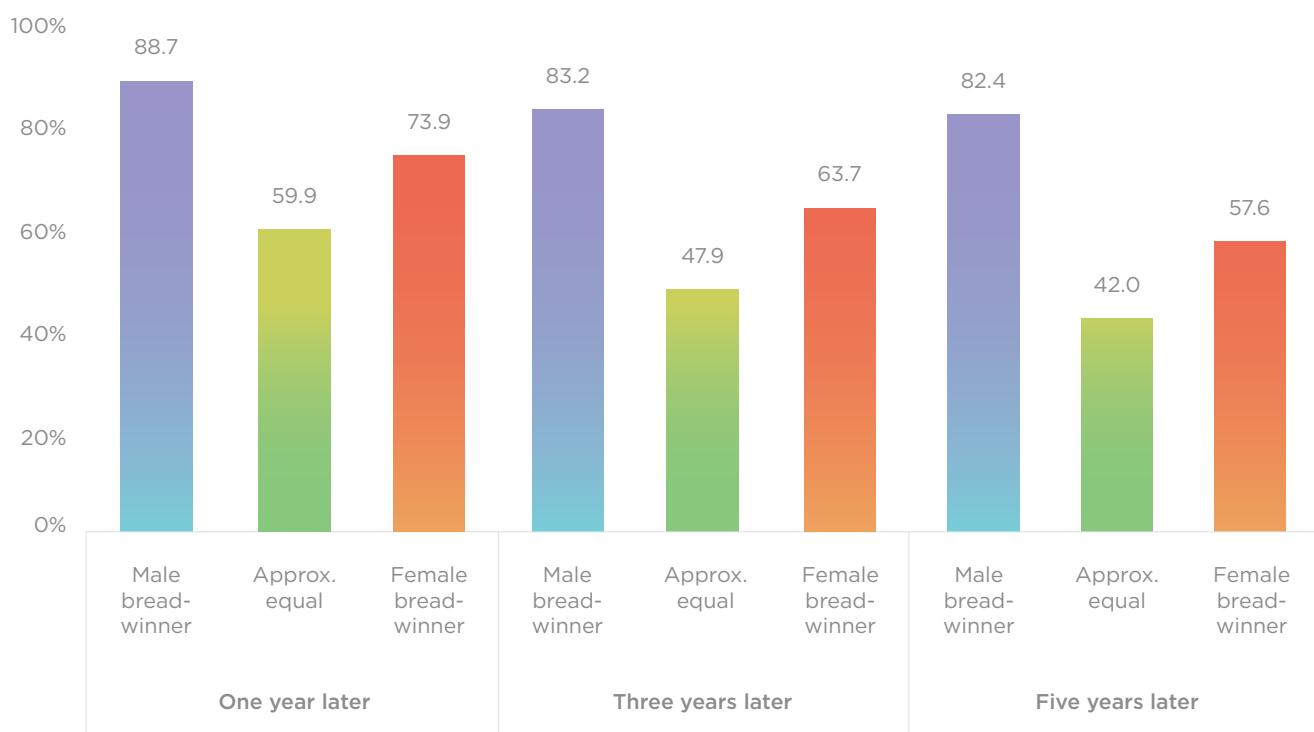
Within couples where the man is the primary source of household income, 89.6 per cent of men work in full-time employment and earn \$107,366 on average per year compared to \$73,988 per year for female breadwinners—a difference of 45 per cent.

The situation where the woman is the primary source of household income tends to be more temporary than the male breadwinner arrangement. Among couples, less than 60 per cent of women who are the breadwinners in their household still have that arrangement five years later, whereas more than 80 per cent of men who are the primary income earners are still breadwinners five years later.

*Table 4: Earnings and job experience of men and women in dual-earner couples by major contributor to household income*

	Male breadwinner		Female breadwinner	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Mean hourly wage (\$, December 2017 prices)	45.47	31.8	31.05	38.31
Mean annual wage (\$, December 2017 prices)	107,366	27,611	25,114	73,988
Mean tenure in job (years)	8.6	6.3	8	8.5

*Figure 17: Share of households by relative earning arrangements: Change after one, three and five years (%)*

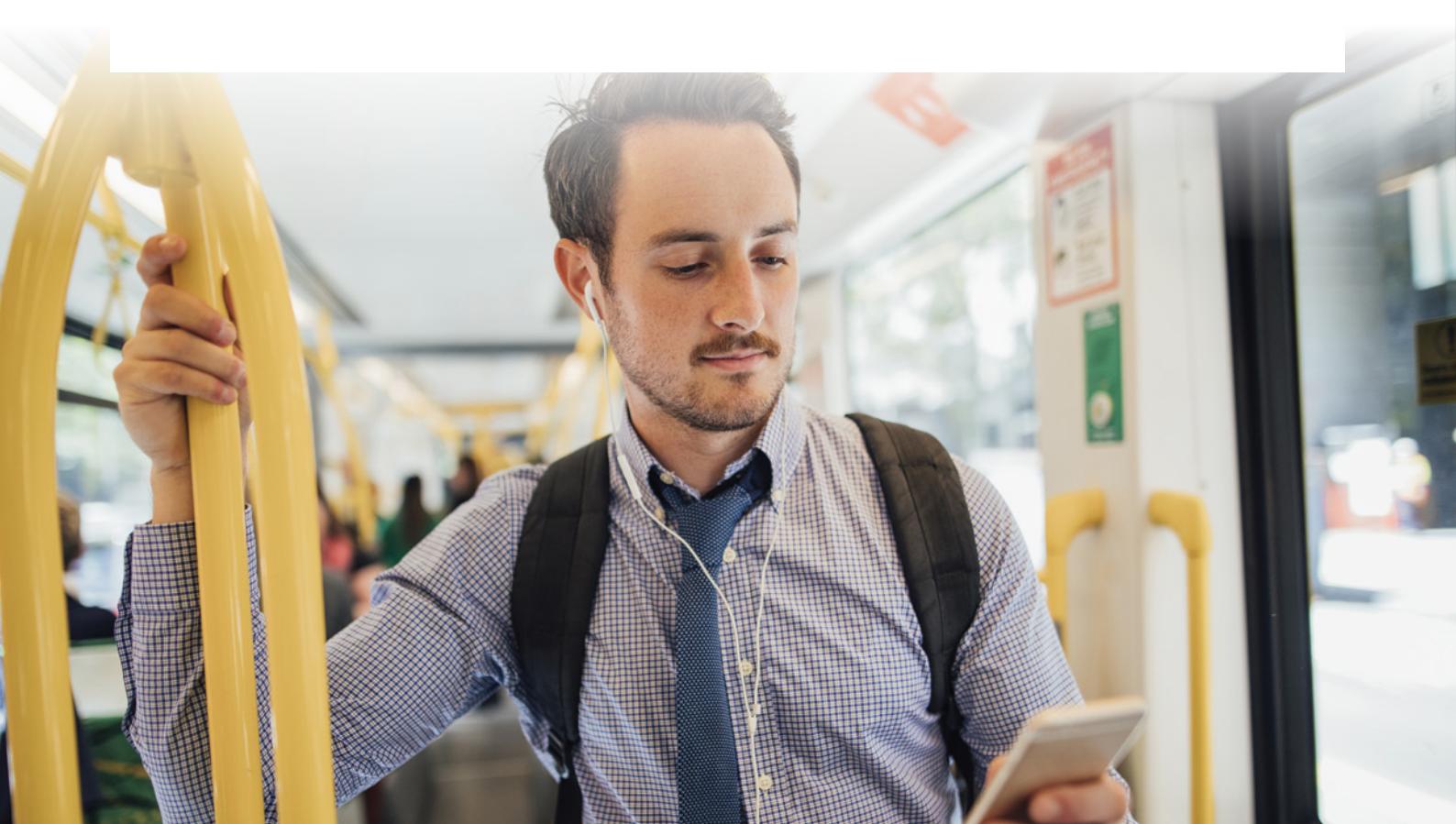
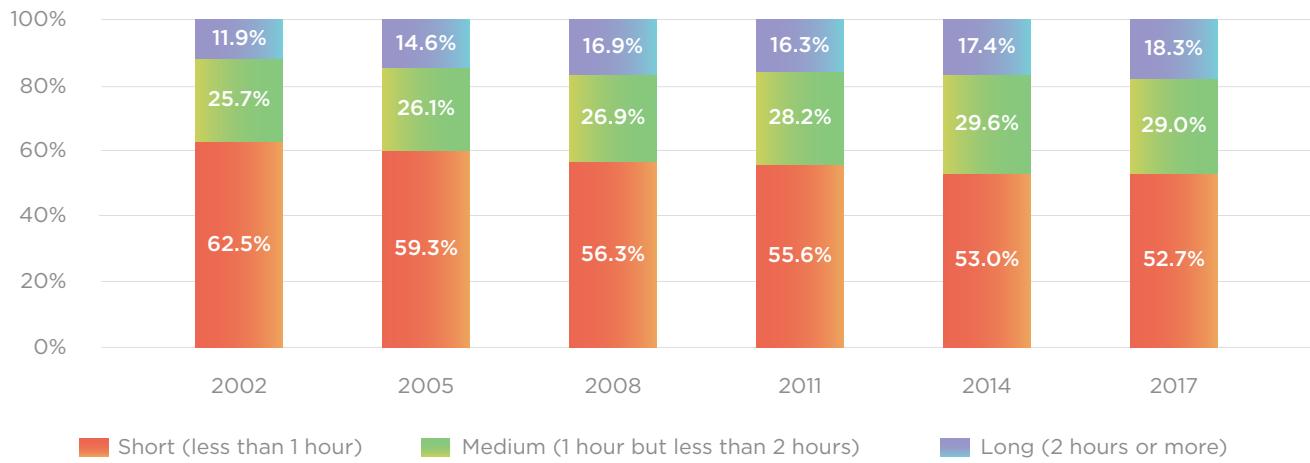


# THE DAILY COMMUTE

## *and its impact on job satisfaction*

For most of us, the time spent waiting for public transport or stuck in traffic is an unavoidable part of our working day. The HILDA Survey shows that Australians spend, on average, 4.5 hours a week or just below one hour per work day, travelling to and from work. This is 23 per cent higher than in 2002. More importantly, these trends are impacting the wellbeing and job satisfaction of Australian workers.

Figure 18: Trends in the share of workers with short, medium and long commutes per day



The HILDA Survey reveals that a long commute to work impacts people's satisfaction with their jobs. Those who spend a long time getting to and from work each day are more likely to be dissatisfied with their job overall, as well as with their working hours, flexibility to balance work and non-work commitments, and salaries. In addition, people who have a longer daily commute are more likely to expect to leave their jobs in the next 12 months than those who spend less time getting to and from work.

People who work in highly-skilled occupations are more likely to have lengthy commutes compared to people in lower-skilled occupations. Even though people in highly-skilled occupations spend more time getting to and from work, they have higher levels of life satisfaction, possibly due to their greater earning potential and other favourable working conditions and benefits associated with more highly-skilled occupations.

*Figure 19: Job satisfaction and job stability by length of commute*





# HEALTH *and* WELLBEING

- TAKING CARE OF AUSTRALIANS' MENTAL HEALTH
- ILLICIT DRUG USE:  
A GROWING CONCERN FOR AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY?

# TAKING CARE

## *of Australians' mental health*

Since the early 2000s, there has been a substantial increase in reported rates of depression and anxiety among people living in Australia. Depression and anxiety are serious illnesses that make it hard to cope with daily life. When these conditions are intense and experienced over a long period of time, they can have devastating implications for the individual with a mental illness and their family, as well as impacting society at large. Understanding the pattern of these conditions and who is most adversely affected within the community helps provide an understanding of how to improve the quality of and access to care.

### WHO IS MOST AFFECTED?

The HILDA Survey collects information about selected serious medical conditions every four years, including most recently in 2017. These data reveal that depression and anxiety are some of the most common illnesses reported by respondents; only asthma is more prevalent. In addition, there has been a substantial and ongoing increase in the incidence of depression and anxiety across genders and different age groups.

Most notable is the rise in the incidence of depression and anxiety among those aged 15 to 34. In 2017, 20.1 per cent of females and 11.2 per cent of males in this age group reported being affected by these conditions compared to 12.8 per cent of females and 6.1 per cent of males in 2009.

Figure 20: Prevalence of depression or anxiety, by gender and age group in 2017 (%)



Table 5: Prevalence of selected serious illness conditions, by gender and age group in 2017 (%)

	Males			Females		
	15-34	35-54	> 55	15-34	35-54	> 55
Arthritis or osteoporosis	1.1	9.2	27.6	1.6	11.2	45.9
Asthma	10	8	9	11.5	11.7	12.9
Any type of cancer	0.2	2	9.1	0.4	2.5	5.6
Chronic bronchitis or emphysema	0.4	0.7	4.4	0.2	1.5	4.6
Type 1 diabetes	0.5	0.8	2	0.4	0.9	1.2
Type 2 diabetes	0.5	3.3	15.2	0.5	3.1	10.3
Depression or anxiety	11.2	13.5	11.5	20.1	19.4	16.5
Other mental illness	2.3	2.6	1.5	3.1	3.2	1.2
Heart disease	0.4	1.9	16.1	0.2	1.3	10
High blood pressure	1.3	10.9	39.9	1.7	9.6	42.7
Any other serious circulatory condition (e.g., stroke, hardening of the arteries)	0.3	1.8	9.2	0.5	1.7	7.4

Note: In interpreting these results, it is important to recognise that reported prevalence could diverge from actual prevalence because of the potential for undiagnosed conditions.

## SEEKING SUPPORT

People living with anxiety or depression are more likely to see a doctor if they are already under the supervision of a medical practitioner, and the change in self-assessed health over a four-year period is more positive. In addition, the mental health of individuals improves when admitted to inpatient services, reflecting the importance of providing everyone in Australia with access to mental health services and treatment.

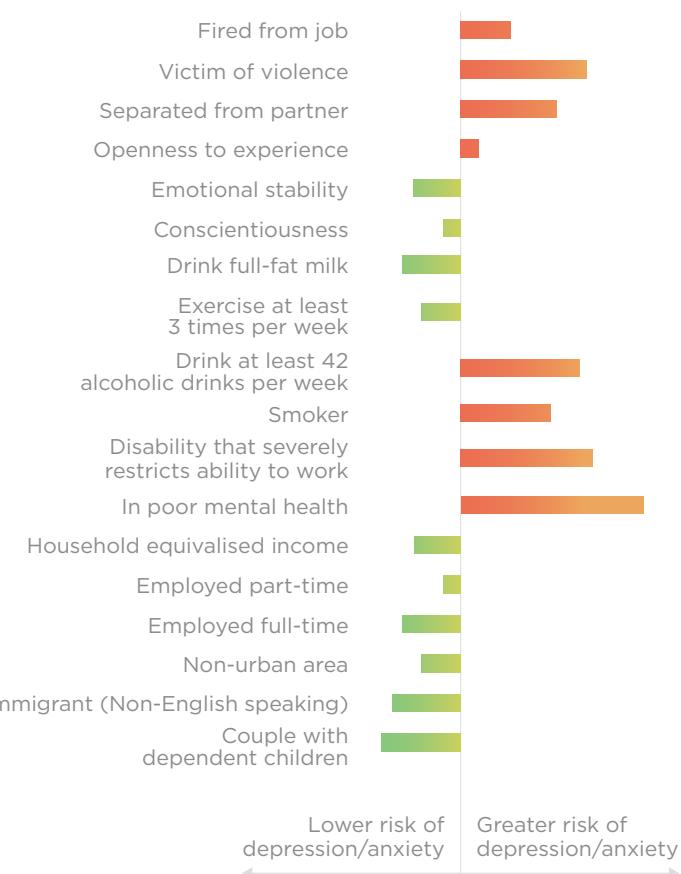
Figure 21: Do people with depression or anxiety regularly see a doctor?



Do they see improvements in their health condition (%):

- Health improved
- Health decreased

Figure 22: Factors associated with onset of depression and anxiety



Greater emotional stability is associated with lower probabilities of depression or anxiety while poor mental health is, unsurprisingly, connected with an increased risk of onset.



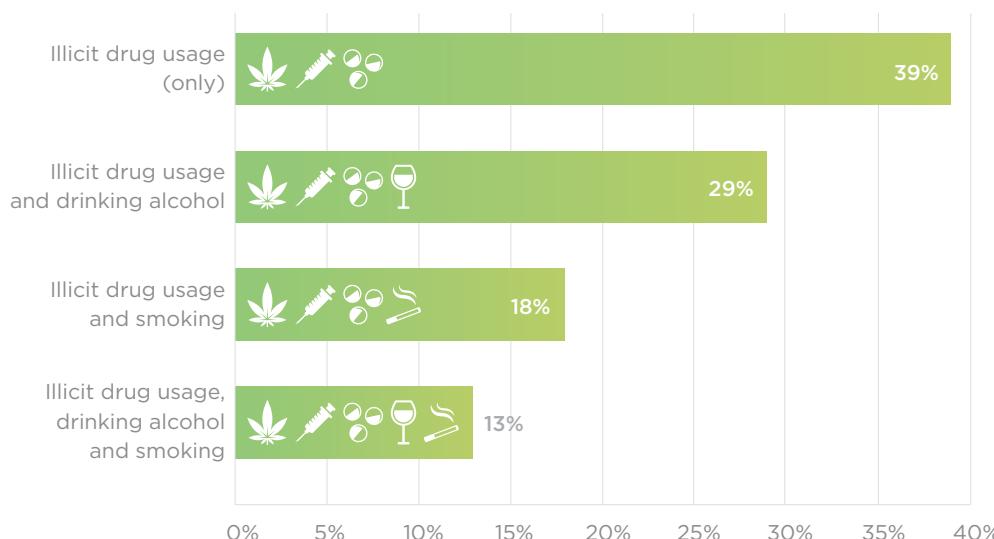
## ILLICIT DRUG USE:

*A growing concern for Australian society?*

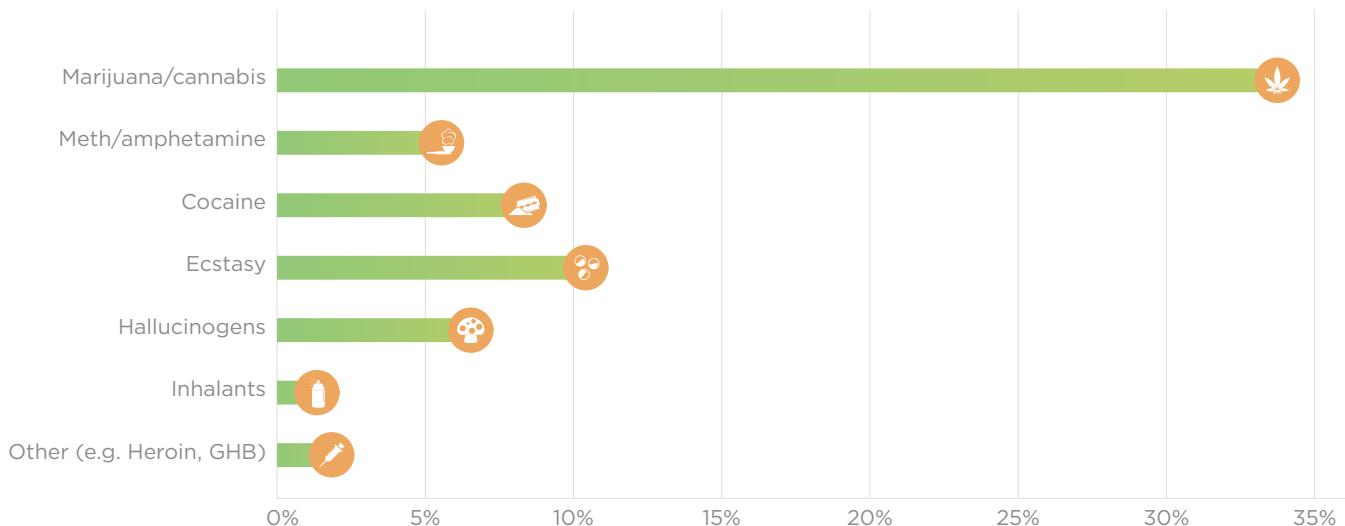
The HILDA Survey shows that 12 per cent of Australians aged 15 years or older had used at least one illicit drug in the past 12 months. Illicit drug use can cause premature death, disability and functional impairment, as well as negative effects on physical, mental and cognitive wellbeing. In addition, the individual health and behavioural issues associated with some forms of illicit drug use (such as crime, violence and social dysfunction) are a social concern that requires a community response to protect those most at risk.

The HILDA Survey shows that the beginning of illicit drug use usually occurs between the ages of 15 and 21 years. Illicit drug use is most common among those aged in their 20s, with almost a quarter of those in this age range reporting current use (within the past 12 months). The rates of current illicit drug use tend to decline with increasing age.

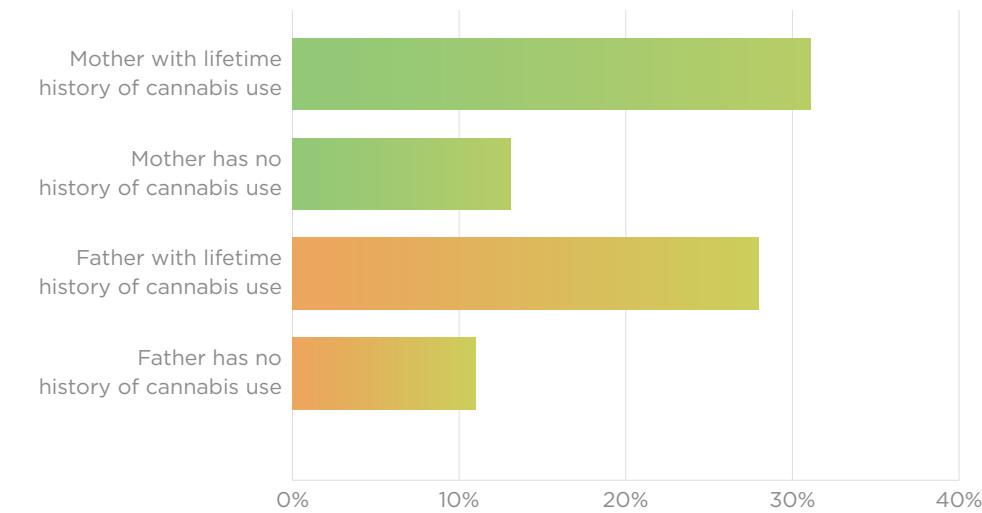
Figure 23: Use of multiple types of illicit and legal drugs (%)



Just over 60 per cent of those using illicit drugs also smoke tobacco and/or drink alcohol at risky levels (measured according to the quantity and frequency that is consumed). The combination of risky levels of illicit drug use and alcohol consumption (42%) is more common than the combination with smoking (31%).

*Figure 24: Lifetime illicit drug use by type of drug (%)*

While marijuana/cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug, the majority of those using this drug are not using any other type of illicit drug. Conversely, consumers of meth/amphetamines, cocaine or ecstasy combine them with other illicit drugs.

*Figure 25: Cannabis use and family background among respondents aged under 35 years*

This graph shows the percentage of respondents aged under 35 years who are still living at home with their father and/or mother and had used cannabis in the past 12 months. It shows that parents' use of cannabis can affect their children's probability of using cannabis.

Note: Mother and/or father must also have completed the survey.

# MEET TWO OF THE HILDA SURVEY TEAM



## MICHELLE SUMMERFIELD

*HILDA Deputy Director, Survey Management*

*Each year we collect information from thousands of different families and individuals across Australia which enables us to get a true picture of how Australian households change over time. The security of your information is one of the most important parts of the HILDA Survey.*

*While your personal details (your name, address and phone numbers) are used to contact you each year, your details are restricted to those who require it for the purposes of conducting the study and are never made available to researchers or other companies who might use them for marketing purposes. This information is held by our fieldwork company (Roy Morgan) in an encrypted database.*

*All your survey answers are combined with the answers from all the other respondents and then securely transferred to the Melbourne Institute using an encrypted portal. All your personal information is removed so you cannot be identified.*

*Here at the Melbourne Institute we analyse and prepare the data for researchers. The HILDA Survey data are only available to those authorised to access them and any analysis done on the data is reported in terms of percentages of people and not on any individual's answers.*

*We are thankful that you have entrusted us, year after year with your data. We hope that you will continue to let us into your household for many years to come.*



## PROFESSOR ROGER WILKINS

*Professorial Research Fellow, Melbourne Institute*

Roger has, with the help of others, been producing the annual Statistical Report since 2008.

*As an economics researcher focused on informing and helping to improve economic and social policy in Australia, I see the HILDA Survey as one of the most important innovations in my field in the last 50 years. The HILDA Survey has generated a much richer understanding of the lives of Australians and how they change from year to year. There is no substitute for the HILDA Survey, and there never will be, because the longer the study runs, the richer a source of information it becomes. It is therefore critical that the HILDA Survey continues to flourish.*



Commenced in 2001, the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey is a nationally representative household-based panel study, providing longitudinal data on the economic wellbeing, employment, health and family life of Australians. The study is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and is managed by the Melbourne Institute at the University of Melbourne. Roy Morgan Research has conducted the fieldwork since 2009, prior to which The Nielsen Company was the fieldwork provider.

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