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**Fertility Pathways in Australia:
Relationships, opportunities,
work and parenting**

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1. Overview

- 1 This preliminary study of declining fertility rates, based on the first wave of data from HILDA, highlights important links between fertility, relationships and work opportunities for both men and women.
- 2 This paper indicates that, overall, expectations of having children appear to be in decline for both men and women. However, individual fertility expectations and outcomes vary and the data indicate that the pathways to low fertility are different for men and women. Among women, higher education, income and occupation status is associated with lower fertility, while among men the reverse seems to be true. Although the associations are not as clear or strong as they are among women, among younger men, lower education and employment opportunities are more likely to be linked to lower fertility expectations. In addition, younger men overall tend to expect to have fewer children than younger women and are more likely to expect to remain childless. These findings highlight the neglected role of men in understanding fertility decline. They also raise questions about the impact of individual and household income, as well as labour market changes on fertility expectations.
- 3 The data show that the impacts of education and employment opportunities on fertility are complex and, for both men and women, appear to be linked to problems with partnering. For instance, among those who do not expect to have children, particularly men, there are considerably lower proportions in stable married or de facto relationships. This analysis confirms the critical role of relationship formation and stability in fertility expectations and outcomes and the need to understand contemporary pressures on relationships.
- 4 This study further confirms that working parents are under pressure. It points to tensions within families about the share of family workload and the balance of work and family responsibilities. While women, particularly those working full-time, seem to experience more pressure and dissatisfaction with their share of family responsibilities than men, there are indications that working fathers also experience tensions. In particular, men seem to experience somewhat more workplace inflexibility in meeting their family responsibilities than women.

2. Introduction

- 5 The aim of this paper is twofold. The first is to demonstrate the potential opportunities provided by the HILDA¹ dataset for immediate cross-sectional and future longitudinal research and analysis.² The second is to conduct a preliminary and descriptive exploration of a range of issues related to declining fertility rates as a prelude to more focused statistical analysis with the release of the final dataset. Only through longitudinal analysis of future waves of the HILDA Survey will the richness and complexity of fertility dynamics emerge. This paper points the way forward and provides a platform for further evidence-based policy.

¹ Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia.

² All HILDA data used in this paper is from the preliminary Wave 1 dataset and is weighted, but may change with the public release.

- 6 Although previous research into fertility is used to guide this study, the paper does not attempt a complete review of the fertility literature. Furthermore, the statistics reported in this paper should be treated with caution, given that all data in this paper is from the preliminary Wave 1 dataset and is weighted, but may change with public release. The conclusions drawn are clearly tentative.
- 7 This paper is divided into three sections. The first section provides a broad overview of key fertility trends and statistics in the HILDA data. This includes an overall profile of those who do and do not expect to remain childless. The second section focuses on key gender differences in the pathways to childlessness and low fertility. The third section investigates the broader social and relational context of fertility. This includes the issue of relationships, parenting, work and family balance and changing gender roles and relations. In the concluding remarks a number of suggestions for further research are outlined.

3. Setting the scene

- 8 Over a number of decades, an increasing number of young men and women in Australia are remaining childless or having smaller families than their parents' generation (ABS, 1997; ABS, 2001a). When Australia's fertility rate was at its peak in 1961, the average number of children was 3.6 babies per woman. In 2000 the rate has more than halved to become the lowest on record at 1.75 babies per woman; well below the replacement rate of 2.1 births per woman (ABS, 2001a). This stark decline in the natural fertility rate has been the result of a number of important social changes over time, not least of which has been the introduction of the contraceptive pill in the early 1960s, allowing women to control their fertility more effectively, and women's rising levels of education coinciding with their increasing participation in the workforce (ABS, 2002, Barnes, 2001; Bryson, Strazzari and Brown, 1999; Chesnais, 1998).
- 9 Recently, there has been considerable media attention on Australia's low fertility rate. In Australia, like many other wealthy countries, there is concern that the economy, and ultimately the nation's existence, is threatened by a declining population and particularly the declining proportion of children (McDonald; 2002). As people live longer and more people retire early, the key concern revolves around the structural ageing of the population. Structural ageing occurs when there is a decrease in the proportion of the population that are in the labour force compared with those that are not; referred to as the labour force dependency ratio (McDonald and Kippen, 1999). This has prompted concerns about the negative impact on economic growth as well as the nation's capacity to meet the rapidly rising pension, medical and other costs associated with ageing (Barnes, 2001; McDonald and Kippen, 1999). While immigration can only delay the effects of structural ageing and not reverse them, it has been argued that the most effective way to address these issues is to raise fertility rates (Barnes, 2001).
- 10 While a few commentators have questioned the logic of maintaining economic growth and population size given concerns about the environment (Curnow, 2002; Stilwell, 2002), most contemporary debate has speculated on the causes and possible solutions for declining fertility in Australia. Research has shown that marriage rates have been declining and age of first childbirth has been increasing over the last few decades and these trends have contributed to lower

fertility (ABS, 2002b; ABS, 2001a). In the relative absence of research on people's decision-making about having children (McDonald, 2002; Weston and Qu, 2001a), a number of explanations, not necessarily mutually exclusive, have been put forward to explain these trends (McDonald, 2000a). One perspective is that the rise of postmaterialist values, emphasising freedom, autonomy and individual self-interest, has contributed to the decline in stable relationships and family formation (McDonald, 2000a; Coleman cited in Weston and Qu, 2001a). Another explanation is that delays in raising a family are in part due to social aspirations for material comfort and security, such as larger and more comfortable houses, rising faster than the standard of living. In the context of economic uncertainty, job insecurity and high levels of relationship instability, people tend to be more risk averse to bearing the direct and indirect costs associated with having children (McDonald, 2000a; Coleman, 2000). In the public debate, however, considerably more attention has been focused on the impact of women's rising education and career aspirations. The delayed age of marriage and first childbirth have been linked to extended years of education and the need to establish careers before women are prepared to consider having children (McDonald, 2001a). There is also concern that further barriers to fertility have been created by the difficulties of balancing work and family responsibilities (McDonald, 2001a). A considerable part of the debate in Australia has thus revolved around finding ways to minimise the opportunity costs for women in trying to balance work and family (Barnes, 2001; McDonald, 2001b; Manne, 2001). This has included the 'baby bonus' incentive for new mothers and, more recently, calls for paid maternity leave to be mandatory in all workplaces.

- 11 Australia currently ranks around the middle of wealthy industrialised countries in terms of fertility rates but is higher than all European countries (Barnes, 2001). The notable variation and variability in fertility rates across these countries has fuelled contemporary Australian debate on the causes and the effectiveness of policies aimed at addressing low fertility (Castles, 2002; Lesthaeghe & Moors, 2000; McDonald, 2000b; Manne, 2001). McDonald (1997) argues that variation can largely be explained in terms of the mismatch in the levels of gender equity experienced by women between the values and imperatives of individual-oriented institutions, such as work and career, compared with the expectations and broader policy context of family-oriented institutions. For instance, he argues that lower fertility rates are experienced in those countries where the expectations and opportunities for women to pursue a career conflict with the level of responsibility and involvement that women are expected to take in raising children. This explains the very low levels of fertility now being experienced in countries such as Spain, Italy and Japan where traditional gender divisions in family responsibilities remain strong (McDonald, 2001b). McDonald claims the relative opportunity costs for women in having children are thus a key component in understanding declining fertility rates. From this perspective, policies that address the difficulties that women face in balancing work and career play a key role in ameliorating low fertility rates, and, explain the relative success of Norway and France in managing fertility rates (McDonald, 2001b).
- 12 Many countries have introduced a variety of family friendly policy packages, ranging from workplace flexibility, maternity leave to various income transfers

designed to facilitate the balance of work and family for parents and women in particular (Castles, 2002; McDonald, 2001a; McDonald, 2000b). While some research suggests that a range of family friendly policies has had important impacts on raising the fertility rate (Castles, 2002; McDonald, 2000b; Chesnais, 1998), others have argued that the impact is questionable or minimal in comparison with cross-national variation in fertility rates, suggesting that other factors are more important (Manne, 2001). Manne (2001), for instance, has argued that McDonald's view tends to overstate the proportion of women who prefer to prioritise career over family. It is more appropriate, she argues, to understand the diversity of women's preferences and points to research suggesting that by far the largest proportion of women prefer to balance family responsibilities with part-time work. Policy should thus aim to enable women to balance work and family according to their preference, rather than focusing on encouraging a return to work. However, as with most fertility research, this debate neglects the role of men's fertility preferences and circumstances in affecting outcomes. While research has pointed out the importance of relationships and marriage in determining fertility rates, there appears to have been very little research on decision-making in couples and what role men play in influencing the rate of fertility (Weston and Qu, 2001a).

- 13 What has also become increasingly clear is the importance of context in understanding fertility trends. Research has found that over time the factors strongly associated with fertility can change or even reverse their relationship with fertility (Castles, 2002). For instance, the longstanding link recognised between women's level of education and their fertility rate appears to be loosening in some countries and no longer appears to have a systematic connection in Sweden (McDonald, 2002). This suggests that policies aimed at increasing fertility need to be based on a good understanding of the contemporary context and tailored to address these specific barriers. These issues point to the need to gain a broader understanding of the context of changing fertility preferences and outcomes in Australia. The release of the first wave of the longitudinal HILDA Survey provides a valuable opportunity to address a complex issue like fertility. Future waves will enable both individual and generational changes to be tracked over time.

4. The Social Context of Fertility

4.1. Introduction

- 14 The HILDA Survey asked respondents aged 18 to 55 the following questions regarding their fertility:
- how many children they have;³
 - the extent to which they desired to have children in the future;
 - the extent to which they thought it was likely that they would have (more) children in the future; and
 - how many (more) children they intended to have in their lifetime.

³ This question was asked of all respondents.

- 15 In order to compare fertility across age groups, the total number of children that each person is likely to have in their lifetime was calculated.⁴ Among people aged 18 to 55, this was calculated by combining the number of children they have with the number they intend to have. For people aged over 55, this figure therefore includes only the number of children they actually have. The inclusion of actual children and expected children allows fertility rates to be compared across age groups, including those respondents aged over 55.
- 16 It needs to be borne in mind that individuals' desire and expectations of having children are not necessarily stable over time, nor are they necessarily congruent with actual fertility outcomes (Weston and Qu, 2001a; DHFS, DSS & OSW, 1998). Since people may adjust their expressed desires as well as their expectations to the reality of their circumstances, it is difficult to make a distinction between voluntary and involuntary preferences for children (Weston and Qu, 2001a; DHFS, DSS & OSW, 1998). Comparisons across age groups depend not only on assumptions about the stability of individuals' expressed desires and expectations over time, but also their relation to actual fertility outcomes.
- 17 This paper assumes that the total number of children that people expect to have in their lifetime will reflect both voluntary choices and adjustments to involuntary circumstances.⁵ Likewise, the desires and expectations of young people involve greater uncertainties than their older cohorts as they are based more on their expectations than the number of children they actually have. The stability of individual desires, expectations, and changes in individuals' circumstances can be further explored in future waves of the HILDA Survey.⁶ In the context of this cross-sectional analysis, the interpretation of changes in fertility preferences over time must be seen as tentative.

4.2. Fertility decline

- 18 Despite low fertility rates, the vast majority of people would like to have children and most expect that they will do so in their lifetime. The strong overall association (0.88 correlation) between people's desire and their self-assessed likelihood of having children in their lifetime indicates that people tend to have a reasonably strong sense of control over their fertility. However, the data show that low fertility rates are not entirely based on voluntary preferences and that the overall desire for children tends to exceed people's expectations of having children in their lifetime. Among the 52 percent of men and 46 percent of women aged 25 to 39 who desire (more) children in the future, 11 percent do not think it is likely that they will have any in the future. Among those aged 40 to 55, (where only 5 percent of women and 10 percent of men still desire (more) children), this rises to 80 percent of women and 48 percent of men do not think if

⁴ This concurs with the framework used by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research to calculate fertility expectations and actual experience (HILDA Survey Annual Report 2002, see page 14 for graph).

⁵ For example, women who wish to work full-time may choose not to have children because they are unable to afford the supports that enable them to balance work and family (refer to section 5).

⁶ Gaps between expected and actual fertility outcomes may also be explored.

is likely they will have any children in the future; reflecting to a large extent the age limits on childbearing.

- 19 Consistent with ABS trends (2002c), the data show that the number of children that individuals are having, or are planning to have, is declining over time. This decline is a result of a number of changes in fertility preferences. Table 1 shows that the proportion of people who are, and are likely to remain, childless has increased from 8 percent of people aged 56 and over to 24 percent of people aged 18 to 24. Similarly, the proportion of people who have, and are likely to have, families of four or more children has declined from 32 percent of people aged 70 and over to 9 percent of people aged 18 to 39. The table also shows the increasing popularity of two child families and, among those aged 18 to 24, a decline in popularity of one-child families.

TABLE 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXPECTED IN LIFETIME BY AGE GROUP

Total number of children	Percentage				
	18–24	25–39	40–55	56–69	70+
None	24	17	13	8	8
One	5	11	12	7	9
Two	41	42	37	31	28
Three	22	20	24	27	23
Four or more	9	9	15	27	32
Mean number of children	1.90	1.98	2.24	2.81	2.97
Sample size N =	1366	3805	3867	2032	1322

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

- 20 The fertility expectations of men and women appear to be diverging among the younger age groups. Table 2 shows that the mean total number of children that men expect to have is somewhat lower in the 18 to 24 year age group and the 25 to 39 year age group compared with women. This difference is also reflected in the proportion of men compared with women who expect to remain childless. Among those aged 18 to 24, 27 percent of men compared with 21 percent of women expect to remain childless. A similar pattern is found for the expectation of having four or more children.

TABLE 2: MEAN NUMBER OF TOTAL CHILDREN EXPECTED BY AGE GROUP AND SEX

	Mean number of children by age group				
	18–24	25–39	40–55	56–69	70+
Men	1.76	1.89	2.23	2.67	3.00
Women	2.03	2.08	2.26	2.95	2.94
Sample size N =	1366	3805	3867	2032	1322

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

- 21 It is unclear from this cross-sectional analysis whether the differences are related to emerging generational changes or reflect a tendency among men to delay expressing a desire and intention to have children. The latter would be consistent with the tendency for men to marry and have children at older ages than women (ABS, 2002b). Alternatively, the emerging differences may be indicative of changes in the labour force and relationship ‘market’ that are impacting on men’s optimism about having children in their lifetime. For instance, 28 percent of men

aged 18 to 24 who expect to remain childless have less than Year 12 education, compared with 19 percent of men who expect to have two children.

- 22 These findings indicate the importance of taking account of the changing fertility desire and expectations of men in relation to current and future fertility rates. While declining fertility expectations of women have received considerable attention, the role and circumstances of men in decision-making about fertility has been largely overlooked. Subsequent waves of the HILDA Survey will enable investigation of these questions, including the extent to which men's and women's desires and intentions to have children change over time.

4.3. Profile of childlessness

- 23 While fertility rates are declining overall, the levels are not even across the community. Understanding these patterns of low and high fertility can highlight the factors and contexts that may be influencing fertility. While more is known about fertility patterns among women, in particular that low fertility tends to be associated with higher levels of education and involvement in the workforce (ABS, 2001a; McDonald, 1998), less is known about patterns of fertility among men. Tables 3 and 4 provide a profile of differences between men and women aged 25 to 39 who expect to remain childless and those who do not. Table 3 includes all those aged 25 to 39 while table 4 only includes those who have not yet had a child.

TABLE 3: PROFILE BY EXPECTATION OF HAVING (MORE) CHILDREN IN LIFETIME: 25 TO 39 YEAR OLDS, INCLUDING THOSE THAT ALREADY HAVE CHILDREN

Percentage within each child expectancy group	Age 25–39			
	Men		Women	
	Expect to have children in lifetime			
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Never married and no live-in partner	62	19	48	15
Live in a state capital city	69	64	71	63
Bachelor degree or postgraduate qualifications	30	35	48	40
Year 11 education or below	21	17	16	22
High or very high occupation status	29	30	37	34
Employed full-time	74	82	65	35
Individual income \$0 to \$30,000	41	31	41	65
Agree that have a secure future in my job	60	63	57	65
Own or buying own home	50	61	54	62
High or very high importance of employment and work situation	79	85	82	69
Satisfied or very satisfied with employment opportunities	67	79	77	71
Very satisfied with hours worked in job	21	22	26	36
Overall, very satisfied with job	22	27	29	38
High and very high importance of financial situation	78	84	79	84
Satisfied or very satisfied with financial situation	54	62	61	58
Very high importance of family	63	88	81	95
Very high importance of leisure activities, hobbies, sports and contact with friends	42	35	38	34

Percentage within each child expectancy group	Age 25–39			
	Men		Women	
	Expect to have children in lifetime			
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Satisfied or very satisfied with partner	82	92	87	90
Emotional health high	70	79	68	73
Mental health medium high or high	66	76	63	70
Sample size N =	331	1410	274	1790

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

- 24 Table 3 appears to confirm the view women who are less inclined to have children tend to be more career-oriented. For instance, they are more likely to highly educated, employed full-time, less likely to be in lower income brackets, be somewhat more satisfied with employment opportunities and place greater importance on employment and work. Interestingly, these women are also somewhat less likely to believe they have a secure future in their jobs, a finding which is more marked in Table 4 that excludes those who already have children. This issue requires further investigation, but it is consistent with the view that, for some, perceptions of risk may be a barrier to fertility.
- 25 This profile contrasts with that of men who are inclined to remain childless. Table 3 shows they are somewhat less likely to be highly educated, employed full-time, place slightly less priority on employment and work and are more likely to be in the lower income brackets. These men are also less likely to be satisfied with their employment opportunities and financial situation. Clearly, the context and many of the factors affecting men’s fertility are different from those of women. It is also important to note that, among those aged 25 to 39 years, overall more women are likely to have higher occupation status and to have higher levels of education than men.
- 26 There are also common patterns found for both men and women who intend to remain childless. For instance, they are both, but particularly men, far more likely to have never married and currently have no live-in partner, than those who intend to, or actually have, children. For those who have a partner, they are also less likely to be satisfied with them. They are also less likely to be buying or own their home and somewhat more likely to be living in a state capital city. These findings are consistent with previous research, notably that childlessness is often associated with problems with partnering and that fertility expectations are somewhat contingent on current circumstances (Weston and Qu, 2001b). What the Survey is also able to show, however, is that those who expect to remain childless, and particularly men, are less likely to value family and somewhat more likely to value friends and leisure activities than those who expect or have children. Table 4 shows that the relatively lower value placed on family remains when excluding from the comparison those who have already had children. One interpretation of this finding is that, at least for some, childlessness is a voluntary choice and based on different value priorities. In contrast, the relative value of leisure activities and friends reverses or disappears in Table 4, indicating that those with children tend to place less importance on this aspect of life than those without children. The somewhat lower importance placed on leisure activities and contact with friends in Table 4 needs further investigation to understand if

this is indicative of different priorities or if it is linked to other factors, such as the somewhat lower rating for those who expect to remain childless on emotional and mental health scales⁷.

TABLE 4: PROFILE BY EXPECTATION OF HAVING CHILDREN IN LIFETIME: 25 TO 39 YEAR OLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN

Percentage within each child expectancy group	Age 25–39			
	Men		Women	
	Expect to have children in lifetime			
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Never married and no live-in partner	62	41	48	34
Live in a state capital city	69	74	71	77
Bachelor degree or postgraduate qualifications	30	48	48	61
Year 11 education or below	21	7	16	9
High or very high occupation status	29	37	37	47
Employed full-time	74	81	65	76
Individual income \$0 to \$30,000	41	31	41	33
Agree that have a secure future in my job	60	62	57	69
Own or buying own home	50	51	54	53
High or very high importance of employment and work situation	79	85	82	88
Satisfied or very satisfied with employment opportunities	67	82	77	85
Very satisfied with hours worked in job	21	19	26	31
Overall, very satisfied with job	22	20	29	31
High and very high importance of financial situation	78	85	79	89
Satisfied or very satisfied with financial situation	54	71	61	69
Very high importance of family	63	81	81	90
Very high importance of leisure activities, hobbies, sports and contact with friends	42	45	38	48
Satisfied or very satisfied with partner	82	94	87	95
Emotional health high	70	79	68	71
Mental health medium high or high	66	77	63	73
Sample size N =	331	452	274	391

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

27 In Table 4, which excludes all those who have already had a child, the comparative profile for those women expecting to remain childless changes in important ways to that in Table 3. Whereas in Table 3 women who did not want children were relatively more career-oriented, in Table 4 they are relatively less career-oriented compared with those women who do intend to have children in their lifetime. For instance, they are relatively less likely to be highly educated, have very high occupation status, place importance on their employment or

⁷ Created from items in section A of the self-completion questionnaire. The scales were created according to Ware JE, Snow, K, Kosinski, M. (2000), 'SF-36 Health Survey: Manual and Interpretation Guide', Lincoln, RI, QualityMetric Incorporated. 10 items were recoded as required, raw scale scores were calculated by summing across the items in the same scale; and these raw scores were transformed to a standardized scale (0-100). The scales were then grouped into categories.

financial situation, to be satisfied with employment opportunities and finances and not live in a capital city. In contrast, the comparative profile of men does not alter substantially and as a result the profile of men and women who expect to remain childless appear more alike among this group. This points to an opportunity for further analysis. For instance, the findings may be indicating that, for women, while education and career may be delaying childbirth (so that this group is disproportionately represented in Table 4), financial and employment success and security are somewhat positively associated with expectations (if not outcomes) of having children; a finding which is more consistent with the factors associated with fertility among men.

- 28 The tendency for those who expect to remain childless to place less importance on their financial situation or to be less likely to be buying their own home also does not support the view that material wealth is a greater priority for this group compared with those who expect to have children. Consistent with Table 3, they are also less likely to place importance on family and religion, particularly men. In addition, the profile of women who expect to have children in Table 4 challenges the view that highly educated women who are successful at work are choosing career over family. The figures show that the vast majority clearly value family as much as their work. While these findings provide some indication of value differences, further in-depth longitudinal analysis is required to understand to what extent, and for whom, childlessness likely reflects a different set of values and priorities.
- 29 These profiles of childlessness highlight some further opportunities for research in subsequent waves of the data particularly since changes in individual expectations and outcomes can be tracked over time. For instance, it would be valuable to know what proportion of those highly educated and successful women who intend to have children do fulfil their expectations over time, and likewise with men. These findings also suggest that the relationships between fertility and education and career are complex and that the low fertility pathways are different for men and women. These gender differences appear to have received less attention in the fertility literature, yet arguably, the role of men is of equal importance in determining fertility outcomes over time.

5. Partnering and fertility pathways

5.1. Introduction

- 30 The family and social institutional context has an important bearing on individual fertility decisions (McDonald, 2002). Macdonald (2000c) argues that low fertility rates tend to occur where the expectations of individual-oriented institutions, such as those relating to work and career, do not match the social role expectations and the institutional context associated with family and parenting. Social changes over the last few decades have clearly had an impact on relations between men and women and on families and how they function. As employment opportunities for women have increased, it has been argued that work and career have become more important to women's identities (DHFS, DSS & OSW, 1998). As a consequence, Macdonald (2000c) claims that the higher the career opportunity costs for women in having a child, the more likely they are to delay childbirth and have fewer or no children.

- 31 The profile of women who are less likely to have children shown in Table 3 is largely consistent with this explanation of low fertility. However, it is not the whole story. The profile of men in relation to expected fertility in Table 3 also shows patterns in fertility rates associated with education and work and there appears to be far less research and analysis explaining these relationships. Weston and Qu (2001a; 2001b) have shown that declining relationship stability is an important factor influencing fertility outcomes for both men and women. They argue that despite the increasing prevalence of cohabitation and extramarital births, marital status still plays a critical role in determining fertility outcomes for individuals (Weston and Qu, 2001b). Hence, one possible explanation for low fertility expectations among men with low education and occupation status is that it reflects the difficulties they perceive in finding a partner. Likewise, the lower marriage rates among women who do not expect to have children, suggests that many may be experiencing problems with partnering⁸. Barnes (2001) argues that this is in part due to an emerging mismatch in terms of education and values, between men and women looking for partners.
- 32 Birrell and Rapson (in Barnes, 2001) suggest that there are two different ‘marriage markets’ the ‘breadwinner’ and the ‘collaborative’ market that operate on a continuum. Women with higher education and economic resources are more likely to be in the collaborative end where both partners contribute economically to the household. On the other hand, men with lower education levels are more likely to be on the ‘breadwinner’ end, where men have primary responsibility for providing income for the family. Barnes (2001) argues that with the rapid change in the structure of employment in recent times, fewer men are in stable full-time work and they are experiencing greater problems in attracting a partner since they are less able to contribute a secure income. In contrast, women with higher education and occupation status may be experiencing problems with partnering due to the limited pool of men with equivalent education status in the collaborative marriage market (Barnes, 2001). So while men with higher education and occupation status have relatively little difficulty in finding a partner, women are experiencing greater difficulties. As a prelude to more in-depth analysis, the associations between education, work and partnering will be explored in some detail in this section.

5.2. Relationship formation and stability

- 33 The important connection between relationship stability and fertility is clearly shown in the HILDA data. Table 5 shows that for both men and women aged 25 to 39 there is a strong association between marital status and fertility for both the mean number of children they have had already and the total number they expect to have in their lifetime. Those who are married are much more likely to both expect to have children and to have had children already than those who are not. Those that have never been married and are not currently in a live-in relationship are the least likely to expect to have children. For instance, among those aged 25 to 39, only 6 percent of married men and women expect to remain childless. This compares with 45 percent of men and 35 percent of women who have never married, and 19 percent of men and 18 percent of women in de facto

⁸ Though it may also reflect an increase in same sex partnering.

relationships. The higher proportion of men who do not expect to have children may suggest that the role of partnerships may have more bearing on their fertility expectations than for women.

- 34 Not surprisingly, those who do not have children are also more likely to have had more live-in relationships than those who do have children; reiterating the importance of marriage and relationship stability to fertility. In the context of declining marriage rates, increasing divorce rates as well as the increasing prevalence of de facto relationships (ABS, 2002b) there appears to be an important link between the increasing transience of relationships and fertility (Weston and Qu, 2001b).
- 35 The HILDA Survey provides considerable scope for further examining these links. While cross-sectional analysis, such as this paper and those conducted by the ABS, can provide snapshots that suggest associations between partnering and fertility expectations, longitudinal analysis can help to disentangle the links by monitoring individual changes over time. The HILDA Survey includes a range of detailed questions such as relationship history and family history, and parents' relationship stability and employment status. These would be particularly useful for life course research since the interactions between relationship status, life circumstances and fertility outcomes can be tracked over time.

TABLE 5: MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN BY MARITAL STATUS BY SEX: AGED 25 TO 39 YEARS

Marital Status	AGED 25 TO 39			
	Men		Women	
	Total* expected	Had* already	Total expected	Had already
Married	2.23	1.48	2.33	1.76
De facto	1.82	0.62	1.92	0.88
Separated, divorced or widowed	1.39	0.86	2.12	1.85
Never married and not living with partner	1.22	0.05	1.48	0.48
Sample size N =	2031		1596	

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

* Total expected= mean total number of children expected in lifetime; Had already= mean number of children had

5.3. Education, work and partnering

- 36 As the comparisons of those aged 25 to 39 in Table 3 and 4 have shown, there are patterns in education and work that tend to coincide with different fertility outcomes for men and women. The following data show that education, labour force status, occupation status and income are associated in somewhat similar ways to each other and to fertility rates but in different ways for women and men and that these patterns are more clear for women than men. In this section these connections will be examined in more detail and their association with partnering will be considered.
- 37 Table 6 confirms that women reaching higher levels of education, particularly post-graduate level tend to have fewer children. Between the ages 18 to 55, 23 percent of women who have postgraduate qualifications expect to remain childless compared with 9.5 percent of women with Year 11 education or less.

Similar patterns are found for family size. The relationship between level of education and fertility does not appear to be as strong among men, however, there is some tendency toward the reverse association, where men with postgraduate qualifications have the highest fertility rate and are the least likely to be, or remain, childless (15 percent).

TABLE 6: MEAN NUMBER OF TOTAL CHILDREN EXPECTED IN LIFETIME BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND SEX: AGED 18 TO 55 YEARS

Highest level of education	Aged 18 to 55 years					
	Men			Women		
	Total expected	Had already	Median age	Total expected	Had already	Median age
Postgraduate, grad cert / diploma	2.12	1.55	42	1.79	1.25	39
Bachelor, advanced dip, diploma	2.04	1.24	37	1.98	1.24	35
Certificate (all levels)	2.05	1.47	38	2.15	1.64	37
Year 12*	1.83	0.63	25	2.13	0.95	27
Year 11 or less	1.99	1.51	38	2.43	2.12	41
Sample size N =	4175			4662		

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

* The considerably lower median age of those with Year 12 education in part explains the low fertility expectations of this group.

- 38 Table 7 shows that the relationship between workforce participation⁹ and fertility is similar to that for education. For instance, women who work full-time are more likely overall to have fewer children than those who work part-time or are not in the labour force. In contrast, working part-time or being unemployed appears to be connected to lower fertility rates for men when compared with those working full-time.
- 39 HILDA data confirm ABS figures of the large gender differences in workforce participation (ABS, 2001b). Among men aged 18 to 55, 74 percent are working full-time compared with 39 percent of women. Likewise, 30 percent of women between these ages are working part-time compared with only 10 percent of men; also 26 percent of women are not in the labour force compared with 9 percent of men.
- 40 Analysis suggests that to a large extent the stronger associations between workforce participation and fertility for women reflect the tendency for women to take primary responsibility for house management and childcare.
- For instance, among women between 18 and 55 years who do not have children, participation in full-time work ranges from 73 percent of those with postgraduate qualifications to 37 percent of those with year 12 education and 41 percent of those with Year 11 education or below. Among men with no children the proportion in full-time work is very similar for those with tertiary qualifications and certificate level at around 76 percent but considerably lower for those men with Year 11 education or below at 54 percent.

⁹ Labour force status categories are consistent with ABS definitions.

- The proportions in full-time work drop dramatically for women with children, yet for men with children the proportions are consistently higher. Women with tertiary education are also more likely to work full-time when they have children. For instance, 48 percent of those with postgraduate qualifications and 40 percent of those with Bachelor degrees are employed full-time compared with 26 percent of those with Certificate level education and 22 percent of those with Year 11 education or below.
- In contrast, the higher proportion of men who have children in full-time work suggests that work and their role as the 'breadwinner' in relationships remains central. The proportions in full-time work range between 88 percent of those with postgraduate qualifications and 82 percent of those with Certificate level of education to 68 percent of those with Year 11 education and below.¹⁰

TABLE 7: MEAN NUMBER OF TOTAL CHILDREN EXPECTED IN LIFETIME BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS, SEX AND AGE GROUP

Labour force status	Mean number of children by age group					
	Men			Women		
	18–55	Median age	25–39	18–55	Median age	25–39
Employed full-time	2.03	38	1.94	1.88	36	1.70
Employed part-time	1.88	27	1.60	2.22	37	2.15
Unemployed and looking for work	1.92	30	1.75	2.20	32	2.03
Not in the labour force	2.00	39	1.80	2.44	36	2.55
Sample size N =	4233		1741	4805		2064

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

- 41 Similar patterns can be shown between occupation status and fertility rates. Table 8 shows clear relationships between fertility and occupation status for both women and men, where women with higher occupation status are likely to have fewer children compared with lower occupation status, while the reverse is true for men. However, for men, this association can be largely explained by their level of workforce participation. When the analysis is confined to those in full-time work between the age of 25 and 55 years the association between occupation status and fertility rates is no longer evident for men. The relationship between occupation status and fertility rates remains the same for women, which reflects the tendency for those who work full-time to have higher education and occupation status.
- 42 This data shows that while full-time work is strongly associated for men with the role of being a father, for all women and for mothers the importance of work varies considerably by the level of education. However this analysis also confirms that at each education level women are still far more likely to take greater responsibility for childcare than men.

¹⁰ Only 49 percent of those men with year 12 education work full-time however this group disproportionately represents younger people and is likely to include many who are still completing their education. This would explain the relatively high proportion of this group, 32 percent, with part-time work and somewhat high proportion not in the labour force, 13 percent.

TABLE 8: MEAN NUMBER OF TOTAL CHILDREN EXPECTED IN LIFETIME BY OCCUPATION STATUS¹¹ AND SEX: 18 TO 55 YEAR OLDS

Occupation status	Mean number of total children expected			
	Age 18–55			
	Men	Median age	Women	Median age
Very low occupation status	1.90	34	2.22	40
Low occupation status	1.96	34	2.08	35
Middle occupation status	2.08	39	2.00	37
High occupation status	2.04	38	1.95	37
Very high occupation status	2.14	41	1.88	39
Sample size N =	3564		3307	

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

TABLE 9: MEAN NUMBER OF ACTUAL CHILDREN BY OCCUPATION STATUS, SEX AND AGE GROUP

Occupation status	Mean number of children already had			
	Men		Women	
	25–39	40–55	25–39	40–55
Very low occupation status	1.14	2.02	1.48	2.52
Low occupation status	1.01	2.15	1.27	2.25
Middle occupation status	1.06	2.24	1.00	2.16
High occupation status	0.85	2.08	0.87	1.88
Very high occupation status	0.76	2.30	0.73	1.97
Sample size N = 131 to 549	1540	1549	1103	1446

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

- 43 While further longitudinal analysis is required, Table 9 suggests that the level of occupation status is associated with the timing of having children. For both women and men there is a tendency for those with higher occupation status to have had fewer children between 25 and 39 years, which is consistent with the view that higher career aspirations are often associated with delays in starting a family (McDonald, 2000c). However, what is remarkable in Table 9 is that this relationship disappears for men, but not for women, when looking at those aged 40 to 55. This is consistent with the natural age limits on childbearing for women, the higher age of marriage among men and the substantial increase over time in the proportion of fathers aged 40 years and over (ABS, 2001a). These figures seem to show that while for both men and women higher occupation status is linked to the delay of fertility, for men, but not for women, this difference is considerably redressed after the age of 40. Future waves of the HILDA Survey will be able to show the extent to which this pattern persists over time.
- 44 Analysis of relationship status among 18 to 55 year olds provides further support for the idea that the extent and way in which factors are affecting fertility rates are different for education and occupation groups as well as for gender. For

¹¹ A person's occupation has been recoded into the ANU4 status score status. See F.L. Jones and Julie McMillan (2000), 'Scoring Occupational Categories for Social Research: a Review of Current Practice, with Australian Examples', *Work, Employment & Society*, Vol. 15, No. 3: pp. 539-563.

instance, those with higher levels of education, particularly tertiary education, both with and without children, tend to be somewhat more likely than other education groups to be in a relationship (married or de facto).

- Among those with tertiary education and without children, higher proportions compared with other education groups are in a relationship and fewer have never been married and have no live-in partner. For example, 49 percent of men and women with postgraduate qualifications are in a relationship compared with 39 percent of women and 14 percent of men with Year 11 education or less.
 - Likewise, for both men and women without children, those in full-time work are much more likely than other groups to be in a stable relationship. Among full-time workers, 42 percent of men and 48 percent of women are in a stable relationship compared with 28 percent of women and 16 percent of men who work part-time.
- 45 Among men and women with children the proportions in a stable relationship are far higher and far more similar across education and gender. For example, of those with children 82 percent of men with Year 11 education and below are in a relationship compared with 95 percent of men with postgraduate qualifications; though only 69 percent are married compared with 87 percent of those with postgraduate qualifications. This suggests a link, particularly for men, between relationship stability and work status and stability. However, this association between workforce participation and relationships is likely to reflect, to some extent, correlations with life stages. Further longitudinal and in-depth analysis will enable these links to be clarified and highlighted.
- 46 These findings point not only to the links between relationship formation and fertility, but also the importance of taking account of the broader economic context and changes in the labour market in understanding changing fertility rates (ABS, 2002c; Coleman, 2000;). In the past, fertility rates have shown clear links to the economic situation, including the sharp drop in fertility rates during the 1930s depression and, more recently, in fluctuations in the fertility rate in Sweden (ABS, 2002c; McDonald, 2001a). McDonald (2002) has pointed to the need to understand the diversity of patterns and factors affecting fertility among different groups in Australia. To what extent changes in the labour market are affecting fertility rates in Australia, and which groups in particular are being affected, needs further research. Future waves of the HILDA Survey will be particularly valuable in tracking employment and income changes for individuals in relation to relationship formation and fertility rates in considerable detail over time.
- 47 The relationships found between education and relationship formation are also consistent with the tendency for higher levels of education to be associated with the delay of childrearing and remaining childless. However, it may also indicate that relationship formation is a less important factor affecting fertility among the tertiary educated than other education groups. On the other hand, the remarkably low rate of marriage among men without children with Year 11 education or below, suggests that problems finding a partner may play a more critical role in their overall rate of fertility. While the direction of the association with relationship status is similar for women they are not as strong. In fact, overall,

women in between 18 and 55 years are slightly more likely to be in a stable relationship than men, 40 percent compared with 33 percent of men - perhaps in part reflecting the tendency for men to marry at an older age.

- 48 The extent to which women with tertiary qualifications are experiencing greater difficulties in finding suitable partners needs further investigation. While the relationship formation rates appear the same for men and women who are tertiary educated without children, they are somewhat higher for tertiary educated men with children compared with women. This may be reflecting what appears to be a somewhat higher rate of separated, divorced or widowed among tertiary educated women with children compared with men (13 percent of women compared with 7 percent of men) and perhaps a tendency for men to re-partner more quickly.
- 49 In addition, the data confirm ABS (1998) figures that among the younger age groups more women are tending to attain higher levels of education than men. For example, among those aged 25 to 39, 34 percent of men have Bachelor or postgraduate qualifications compared with 41 percent of women. The impact of this widening education gap needs to be tracked over time to understand whether, as Barnes suggests, that relationship formation for women in the 'collaborative' marriage market is becoming increasingly problematic.
- 50 Table 10 shows more complex relationships between education level and fertility when examined across age groups. While among women the pattern of high and low fertility is relatively stable over time, among men there appear to be changes in the relationship between education level and fertility over time. For instance, the pattern of fertility rates for men with Year 11 education or below appears to have declined relative to those with higher levels of education. To what extent these changes in fertility rates among younger age groups will be borne out is uncertain and this cross-sectional analysis is unable to answer these questions. However, future waves of the HILDA Survey provide the opportunity for these issues to be clarified.

TABLE 10: MEAN NUMBER OF TOTAL CHILDREN EXPECTED IN LIFETIME BY EDUCATION LEVEL, AGE GROUP AND SEX

Highest level of education	Mean number of children expected by age group									
	18–24		25–39		40–55		56–69		70+	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Postgraduate	#	#	1.99	1.84	2.20	1.68	2.55	2.33	#	#
Bachelor	1.77	2.01	1.96	1.93	2.21	2.04	2.76	2.81	2.94	2.87
Certificate	1.68	1.76	1.89	2.14	2.32	2.32	2.59	2.73	2.81	2.58
Year 12	1.89	2.18	1.70	2.06	1.89	2.12	2.93	2.98	3.02	2.48
Year 11 or less	1.61	2.02	1.87	2.35	2.24	2.57	2.66	3.18	3.08	3.09
Sample size N =	639	683	1718	2007	1815	1961	967	992	554	698

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

Too few observations (N<30)

5.4. Income and housing

- 51 A prominent argument in the debate about declining fertility is that men and women are increasingly delaying or foregoing childbirth in order for rising

expectations of material wealth and self-fulfilment to be met (DHFS, DSS & OSW, 1998). These aspirations have coincided with the rise of individualistic 'Me generation' values that prioritise freedom, material prosperity and self-fulfilment (Weston and Qu, 2001a). Some commentators are concerned that minimum expectations of home ownership and house size have risen, which is effectively delaying the raising of families. While subsequent waves of the HILDA Survey will incorporate data on household wealth, in this paper, patterns of home ownership, individual and household income data are examined in relation to fertility. This paper takes some initial steps towards exploring these issues.

- 52 It is not surprising to find that the HILDA Survey data confirm that owning or buying a house tends to be associated with higher fertility rates compared with renting. For couples aged 18 to 39, those who own or are buying a house are more likely to have had children than those who are renting; 1.48 compared with 0.96. Not surprisingly, buying or owning a house is also linked with relationship security (the latter will be discussed further below). For example, 73 percent of men and 75 percent of women aged 25 to 39 who are married are buying a house compared with 40 percent of women and 48 percent of men who have never been married and are not currently living with someone. Those in de facto relationships or who have been separated, divorced or widowed have similar home ownership rates to those that have never married. The HILDA Survey includes a range of questions tapping people's perceptions of the adequacy of various aspects of their homes, including living space, number of bedrooms and the surrounding neighbourhood. There is an opportunity for further exploration of these issues in relation to fertility through future waves of data that can link issues of adequacy more effectively with the timing of children than this cross-sectional analysis.
- 53 Table 11 suggests that individual income follows a similar pattern to education and work for men and women. For instance, women with lower individual incomes tend to have more children. However, this is likely to be largely related to the effect of the association between workforce participation and child rearing as previously discussed. In order to control for participation, only those working full-time between 25 to 55 years were included and the results still showed broadly the same relationship for women. For example, the total mean number of children for those earning more than \$70,000 at 1.59 compared with 2.15 for those earning between \$10,000 and \$20,000. This seems to confirm that for women with higher income, education and occupation status, different priorities are influencing their fertility.
- 54 The relationship between individual income and fertility is more complex for men. The higher rates of fertility at the lower and the higher end of income scales may indicate a somewhat curvilinear relationship to fertility. This fertility pattern appears more strongly, particularly for men, when analysing household income (see Table 12). Both the mean total number of children and number of actual children is higher for those on lower incomes than for those on higher incomes. The lowest fertility rates seem to be in households with incomes between \$60,001 and \$100,000. This is likely to be related in some way to the sharp rise, from around 36 percent to 62 percent, in the proportion that are

currently in a stable relationship compared with the household income bracket below. Women in the higher household income brackets appear to have a lower actual as well as intended fertility rate compared with men in these income groups. This is difficult to explain but may be related to age differences in relationship formation between men and women and possibly the distribution of paid work in the households. These may be pointing to different stressors on different household types that are affecting fertility.

- 55 The data show that for men, the higher their individual income and the higher their household income, the more likely they are to be in a stable relationship and to be in full-time work. The relationship is particularly strong among men without children. For men aged 25 to 55 years without children, 31 percent of those with an individual income between \$1 and \$10,000 and 25 percent of those with an income between \$10,001 and \$20,000 are in a relationship compared with 69 percent of those with an income of \$70,001 or more. For those men with children the likelihood of being in a relationship is far higher, though the relationship between income and relationships still remains, including slightly higher rates of marriage. Not surprisingly, particularly among the lower income brackets, men's workforce status is less likely to be full-time and far more likely to be unemployed or not in the labour force.
- 56 The relationship between individual income and being in a stable relationship is not evident among women with or without children. However, this does not necessarily mean there is no relationship since it is possible that becoming part of a stable relationship may be linked to a higher likelihood that women will reduce their workforce participation to part-time or not at all. The higher proportion of women, compared with men, with children who are separated, divorced or widowed in the income brackets \$30,001 and above confirms the gender differences in the links between relationships and work. These issues, including differences in the likelihood of remarriage among groups following separation and the consequent impact on fertility rates requires further analysis.
- 57 The data show that for both men and women, the group least likely to be in a stable relationship, with and without children, are those earning between \$10,001 and \$20,000. For those with children, this in part reflects the higher proportion of lone parents in this income range especially among women; 29 percent of women compared with 14 percent of men. Lone parents also disproportionately represent those that are in financial debt; women comprise 33 percent compared with 25 percent of men. However, the figures reach 39 percent of men and 28 percent of women who are divorced, separated or widowed and have children but are not necessarily living with them. The disproportionate number not in a relationship in this income group among those without children, requires further investigation.
- 58 As the extent of the missing data for both individual income and household income suggest, there is often some sensitivity and uncertainty associated with the collection of income data. Further analysis of missing data is needed to identify any patterns in these incomplete responses. Cross-checks of income data with indicators of poverty and hardship, self-assessments of financial prosperity as well as household work and income structure would also be valuable in understanding the role of economic resources in relation to fertility choices and

outcomes. The next HILDA Survey includes a wealth component which will enable more in-depth analysis of these relationships.

TABLE 11: MEAN NUMBER OF TOTAL CHILDREN EXPECTED BY INDIVIDUAL INCOME AND SEX: AGED 18 TO 55 YEARS AND 25 TO 39 YEARS

Individual income	Mean number of children by age group					
	Men			Women		
	18–55	Median age	25–39	18–55	Median age	25–39
Missing data	567		229	725		254
-\$70,000 - \$0	2.02	33	#	2.35	36	2.56
\$0–\$10,000	2.02	27	1.86	2.38	35	2.48
\$10,001–\$20,000	1.86	28	1.85	2.21	34	2.19
\$20,001–\$30,000	1.96	33	1.83	2.16	37	1.94
\$30,001–\$50,000	2.00	36	1.92	1.95	37	1.78
\$50,001–\$70,000	2.02	40	1.77	1.68	42	1.49
\$70,001 +	2.21	42	2.12	1.68	41	1.67
Sample size N =	3666		1512	4080		1810

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

N<30

TABLE 12: MEAN NUMBER OF TOTAL CHILDREN EXPECTED BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND SEX: AGED 18 TO 55 YEARS

Household income	Aged 18 to 55 years: Mean number of children					
	Men			Women		
	Total expected	Median age	Had already	Total expected	Median age	Had already
Incomplete or missing*	2.37	42	1.92	2.39	40	2.02
-\$70,000 - \$0	#	#	#	#	#	#
\$1–\$20,000	2.70	39	2.14	2.63	35	2.05
\$20,001–\$40,000	2.42	36	1.81	2.42	34	1.84
\$40,001–\$60,000	2.19	36	1.70	2.16	35	1.69
\$60,001–\$80,000	2.18	38	1.54	2.20	36	1.55
\$80,001–\$100,000	2.07	38	1.52	2.16	37	1.54
\$100,001–\$200,000	2.20	41	1.70	2.19	39	1.73
\$200,001–\$880,000	2.40	42	2.19	2.14	42	1.88
Sample size N =	2422			2864		

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

*Missing data: Men N=661, Women N=910.

N<30

59 There is considerable scope for further analysis of income and fertility. Some examples include the relationship between fertility patterns and income support, job security, sources and stability of income, poverty and changes in partnering over time. For instance, the structure of the distribution of paid work between couples is likely to have an important influence on fertility, just as changes in the availability of full or part-time work and income support may be affecting relationship formation, job security and people's perceptions of the risks and affordability of having children. Further analysis of the HILDA data can explore

these issues in more detail, including an analysis of the different financial stressors on different family types.

- 60 This analysis indicates that education, work and income play an important part in influencing fertility timing and likely outcomes, though in different ways for men and women and across different groups. The HILDA data are consistent with previous research that women with higher education, occupation status, labour force participation and income tend to delay starting a family and expect to have fewer children. This is consistent with the notion that these women have higher opportunity costs in having a child and tend to prioritise their careers over having children. While for men the links between work and education status and fertility are less clear, there is evidence that fewer employment opportunities and lower work status is more likely to lead to childlessness and lower expected fertility. The data also suggest that the picture is more complex when examined more closely and there are complex associations between relationship formation, income, employment and education across all groups, but in what appear to be somewhat different ways. Disentangling these issues will require future waves of data but also statistical analysis, such as regression techniques, that can better identify and separate out the relationships between key factors affecting fertility.

6. Parenting and work

6.1. Introduction

- 61 McDonald (1997) argues that reducing the opportunity costs for women having children by introducing measures to improve their capacity to balance work and family commitments will improve fertility rates. These measures include a range of work-based entitlements as well as childcare and a variety of income measures. Castles (2002) and Macdonald (2001a) find that where these policy measures are in place in OECD countries there appears to be some marginal improvement in fertility rates. Manne (2001) disputes these findings, arguing that the relatively high fertility rates of the United States, New Zealand and Ireland suggest other factors are more important in influencing fertility rates.
- 62 Manne (2001) challenges the view (referred to above) that the answer to low fertility rates lies with enabling mothers to better maintain or increase their participation in the workforce. Characterising all women who work as career-oriented, argues Manne, misrepresents the diversity of women's priorities and preferences. Manne concurs with Hakim's view that three broad groups of women can be identified across all industrialised countries (cf. Hakim 2000). The first group are women who are family centred and prefer to stay out of the labour force in order to look after their children; the second are work-centred women who prefer to balance working full-time with raising children in a collaborative partnership; and the third represent the vast majority of women who prefer to balance part-time work with family responsibilities. They argue that policies aimed at raising fertility rates should be directed towards facilitating the diversity of women's preferences for balancing work and family and increasing their choices (Manne, 2001).

- 63 The difficulty of balancing family and work commitments is regarded as an important contributing factor towards low fertility rates (McDonald, 1997; Cooke, 2001a; Cooke, 2001b). The rationale is that while there is a more direct trade-off between women's employment opportunities and having children (given social expectations that women will take the primary role in caring for children), women are likely to delay having children and/or opt for fewer children (McDonald, 1997). This profile seems to broadly resemble the group identified in the HILDA Survey as tending to have lower fertility rates. This section gauges the social climate around relationships and balancing work and family and how these may affect fertility. There is a particular interest in the roles, views and preferences of fathers and, to some extent, the social context of relationships between men and women in determining fertility rates.
- 64 Questions about access to several key work entitlements that facilitate balancing work and family responsibilities are included in the HILDA Survey. These entitlements include access to paid maternity leave, unpaid maternity leave, special leave for caring for family members, permanent part-time work, home-based work and flexible start and finish times. Analysis of access to these entitlements does not show a relationship to fertility expectations. Overall, 50 percent of women aged 18 to 39 who are in relationships had access to paid maternity leave, with 55 percent of those with no children and 48 percent of those with one child having access. (see Table A in the appendix for access to work entitlements by sex).
- 65 This analysis did not show a relationship between different perceptions of flexibility in balancing work and non-work commitments and fertility. Moreover, the vast majority of couples aged 18 to 39 who work report being satisfied or very satisfied with the flexibility of work (74 percent of men and 79 percent of women). For this group, only a relatively small proportion of workers (between 10 percent of women and 22 percent of men) thought that employees taking family leave were seen as less committed to their job or less committed to getting ahead in their careers than other workers. Slightly more (25 percent of men and 21 percent of women) believed that those who worked part-time were seen as less committed than other workers. (see Table B1 and Table B2 in the appendix for various perceptions of work by sex).
- 66 Although no association was found between work entitlements or perceptions of work flexibility and fertility rates, this does not necessarily mean that there are no relationships. Identifying an association is difficult with cross-sectional data since the timing of decision-making about childbearing and current work is crucial in determining their impact. In addition, other factors that are associated with access to entitlements and have an important influence on fertility may be masking the effect of entitlements. For instance, access to work entitlements tends to be higher among those with higher occupation status, yet among women, this group tends to have lower fertility rates overall. The same cautions in drawing conclusions from the work entitlements analysis applies to perceptions about work place accommodation of family responsibilities. Future waves of the HILDA Survey will enable these relationships to be examined more closely, particularly with the addition of questions related to the preferred timing of having children.

6.2. *Childcare*

- 67 In his cross-national study of fertility rates in OECD countries, Castles (2002) claims that participation rates of children up to the age of 4 years in formal childcare are significantly and positively associated with fertility rates (that is, greater use of childcare is correlated with higher fertility rates). It is possible that in Australia the utilisation of pre-school childcare is also linked to fertility. Utilisation of pre-school childcare will be influenced both by attitudes, and hence demand, for pre-school care as well as the accessibility of childcare enabling parents to balance work and family responsibilities. The HILDA Survey provides researchers the opportunity to investigate these issues in some depth through the extensive collection of information on children and the patterns and type of childcare used, both formal and informal. In addition, parents are asked about problems they have experienced in the last 12 months in accessing or attempting to access childcare so that they can (both) undertake paid work.
- 68 While there is scope for considerably more analysis, in this study the problems that parents experienced in accessing paid childcare in order to work was compared with their workforce participation. All parents who had children 14 years or younger, and had at any time in the last 12 months used, or thought about using, paid childcare in order to undertake paid work, were asked to rate on a scale from 0 to 10 the level of difficulty they had experienced with 11 different aspects of accessing childcare. Their responses have been grouped into 5 categories of difficulty ranging from 'None to not much difficulty' to 'Much to very much difficulty'. The questions included: finding good quality childcare; finding the right person to take care of their child; getting care for the hours needed; finding care for a sick child; finding care during school holidays; the cost of childcare; juggling multiple childcare arrangements; finding care for a difficult or special needs child; finding a place at the childcare centre of your choice; finding a childcare centre in the right location; and finding care their children are happy with.
- 69 The data show that, overall, around half or more parents have experienced 'None to not much difficulty' with the various aspects of accessing childcare. The most commonly experienced problems across all labour force groups appear to be with finding care for a sick child, where 38 percent of all parents experienced difficulties. The data also suggests a tendency for those not in the labour force and those unemployed to experience somewhat more difficulties with some aspects of accessing childcare. These include finding quality care, the right person, cost (particularly for those unemployed), juggling multiple childcare arrangements, finding care for a difficult or special needs child, finding a place at the centre of their choice, finding a centre in the right location, and finding care that their children are happy with. For many of these questions the differences are not large, but the consistency, including the tendency for those working part-time to experience the least difficulties, suggests there may be systematic differences in problems experienced that are related to labour force participation.
- 70 Further analysis is required to identify and clarify which parents are experiencing greater difficulties with childcare. It is potentially an important issue as it suggests some parents are unable to work due to the barriers they experience in accessing appropriate childcare. This could include the location of the parents as

well as the age and the number of children in the family, since larger families are disproportionately represented among mothers who are not in the labour force.

- 71 Manne (2001) refers to recent research by Evans and Kelley (2001) that suggests that a very small minority of Australians support full-time formal childcare for pre-school age children. The HILDA data suggest a different picture. While most people do not support full-time childcare for children under three years, Table 13 shows that one third of full-time working couples between 18 and 55 years with children agree that, given that the care is good, it is fine for children under three to be placed in childcare all day for 5 days per week. Women, full-time workers and lone parents tend to be more positive about full-time childcare, suggesting a link between circumstance and attitudes. Among women, but not men, there appears to be a relationship between family type and attitudes to childcare, while lone parents who work full-time are more likely to agree with full-time childcare for those under three years compared with women in a relationship with no children. The HILDA Survey provides the opportunity for changes in attitudes and patterns of use to be tracked over time.

TABLE 13: ATTITUDES TO CHILDCARE FOR UNDER THREES: FULL-TIME WORKERS, 18 TO 55 YEARS

Percentage agree	Full-time workers 18–55 years	
	As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under three years of age to be placed in child care all day for 5 days a week	
	Men	Women
Single, no children	17	24
Lone parent	23	41
Couple, no children	19	22
Couple with children	19	33
All full-time workers	19	28
All respondents	18	23
Sample size N =	2694	1512

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

6.3. *Division of labour in the home*

- 72 Effective balancing of work and family life is not just dependent on access to flexible work entitlements and formal childcare, but also on the division of labour in the home, including the care of children. This is particularly the case for those parents who work full-time. Analysis of the HILDA data shows that when women work full-time and are part of a couple with children, the demands on their time are much more likely to be greater than for men who work full-time. The HILDA Survey collected people's estimates about how many hours per week they spent on seven different types of family and community responsibilities. This included household errands, housework, outdoor tasks, interacting with children, volunteer or charity work, caring for relatives with a disability and travelling to work. The total number of hours per week spent on these responsibilities was calculated by adding the number of hours spent on all these activities.

TABLE 14: DIVISION OF WORK IN HOUSEHOLDS: COUPLES AGED 18 YEARS AND OVER

Percentage	Couples 18 years and over	
	Men	Women
Total hours per week 41 hours or more	22	49
Eleven or more hours on housework per week	14	66
Much more or a bit more than my fair share of housework per week	18	63
Twenty one or more hours on playing with children per week	10	23
Much more or a bit more than my fair share of looking after the children	12	67
Almost always feel rushed or pressed for time	11	14
Never have spare time that do not know what to do with	24	30
Sample size N =	4023	4299

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

73 The traditional gendered division of labour predominates. For instance, 66 percent of women spend 11 hours on housework per week, compared with 14 percent of men. Similarly, 32 percent of men spend 6 or more hours on outdoor tasks compared with 16 percent of women. Table 14 shows that among couples aged 18 and over, more than double the proportion of women than men spend 41 hours or more on all family related work. This difference in hours in part reflects the fact that many more women are not in the labour force or work part-time in order to care for children and the home. Nevertheless, the division of labour in housework and looking after children is not considered fair by more than three times the proportion of women than men.

TABLE 15: DIVISION OF WORK IN HOUSEHOLDS: COUPLES AGED 18 YEARS AND OVER WORKING FULL-TIME

Percentage	Full-time workers in a couple aged 18 years and over			
	Couple no children		Couple with children	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total hours per week 41 hours or more	7	10	25	44
Eleven or more hours on housework per week	11	34	12	60
Much more or a bit more than fair share of work around the house	15	48	18	64
Twenty one or more hours on playing with children per week	na	na	13	16
Much more or a bit more than fair share of looking after children	na	na	11	58
Never have spare time that do not know what to do with	20	25	27	41
Almost always feeling rushed or pressed for time	8	15	13	22
Sample size N =	477	412	2155	782

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

74 The pattern is similar when comparing only men and women who work full-time. Table 15 shows that the impact of having children is far greater on women than men in this situation. For instance, while for both men and women the proportion of people who spend 41 or more hours on family work quadruples (compared with childless couples), the proportion of men balancing these hours with full-

time work is far less than for women (44 percent of whom are likely to spend 41 or more hours per week on family work). This appears to be reflected in men and women’s experiences of time pressure and the sense of fairness in sharing housework and caring for children.

TABLE 16: REACTIONS TO PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES: FULL-TIME WORKERS IN A COUPLE AGED 18 TO 55 YEARS

Percentage agree	Full-time workers in a couple age 18 to 55 years	
	Couple with children	
	Men	Women
Being a parent harder than I thought it would be	53	62
I often feel tired, worn out or exhausted from meeting the needs of my children	41	53
I feel trapped by my responsibilities of being a parent	16	17
I find that taking care of my children is more work than pleasure	15	20
Sample size N =	1375	429

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

- 75 This is further supported by Table 16, which shows that for parents who work full-time, mothers are somewhat more likely to have found the overall pressures of parenting to be greater. For instance, 20 percent of mothers who work full-time claim that parenting is more work than pleasure compared with 15 percent of fathers. In part, these differences reflect the fact that these women are more likely to be in a collaborative household where both partners work full-time, whereas as men working full-time have a greater probability of being the main breadwinner in the family. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that the lifestyle implications are likely to be far greater for women than men in terms of the decision to work full-time, particularly when having children. This points to difficulties balancing work and family in the home for full-time workers, most likely those in collaborative partnerships. Further research that takes into account the labour force status of both couples in a partnership would be useful in understanding the patterns and changes in work distribution in the home. This could include analysis of time pressure and experiences of the division of labour for those parents who work part-time or not at all.
- 76 The HILDA Survey includes a range of questions concerning attitudes to gender roles in balancing parenting and work, as well as questions on experiences of work and family balance. Table C in the appendix shows attitudes to gender roles regarding balancing parenting and work. Overall, although the differences are not large, there is also a general tendency for men to have more conservative views than women. For instance, men are less likely to agree that children do just as well with a working mother and caring father. This may suggest that despite overwhelming support for the equal division of labour in the home when both partners work and for men to be as heavily involved in the care of his children as the mother, these are not occurring in practice.

TABLE 17: WORK AND FAMILY BALANCE: FULL-TIME WORKERS IN A COUPLE AGED 18 TO 55 YEARS WITH CHILDREN

Percentage agree	Age 18 to 55 years			
	Couple with children			
	Men		Women	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Because of the requirements of my job, I miss out on home or family activities that I would prefer to participate in	55	42	48	25
Because of the requirements of my job, family time is less enjoyable and more pressured	33	22	34	17
Working leaves me too little time or energy to be the kind of parent I want to be	45	39	46	27
Working causes me to miss out on some of the rewarding aspects of being a parent	60	50	54	32
Because of my family responsibilities I have to turn down work activities or opportunities	24	32	31	30
I worry about what goes on with my children while I am at work	41	49	47	38
Sample size N =	1325	83	414	727

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

77 Table 17 confirms that parents who work full-time are more likely than those who work part-time to feel that they are missing out on some of the positive aspects of being a parent. However, the table also shows that fathers who work full-time experience missing out on family activities they would like to be involved in as much, if not more, than mothers who work full-time. This points to the need for further investigation into men's experiences of balancing work and family, including working hours and job flexibility. The HILDA Survey also provides further opportunities for looking at the patterns experienced over time for those with pre-school aged children compared with hours of paid work. (See Table D in the appendix for perceptions of work-family strains and gains by sex).

7. Concluding remarks

78 This analysis of the HILDA data has shown that fertility is a complex issue that needs to be understood within the social context of relationships and the broader socio-economic conditions. While there are clearly many factors affecting fertility rates overall, this paper points to some of the ways in which these are likely to be affecting groups in different ways.

79 There is much more research to be done to fully understand the relationships. However, this paper highlights different pathways for men and women toward lower fertility and childlessness. It confirms that highly educated women are more likely to work full-time and to have lower fertility rates than women with less education. In contrast, the men tend to have lower fertility rates and are more likely to have the reverse characteristics, with low education, occupation and labour force participation. In addition, while much of the focus of fertility research has focused on women, the data show that men, particularly younger men, are more likely to have fewer children than women.

- 80 The findings reflect not only gender differences in the circumstances and decisions affecting fertility but also suggest different socio-economic impacts and expectations of partnerships. The findings are consistent with the view that problems with partnering, and possibly mismatches in marriage markets may play a key role in fertility outcomes (Barnes, 2001). The strong links found between relationship formation, particularly marriage, to fertility rates reinforces the critical role of relationship instability in declining fertility (Weston and Qu, 2001b; Barnes, 2001).
- 81 The patterns of labour force status of men and women found in the HILDA Survey are consistent with changes in the structure of the Australian labour market (Dunlop, 2000; Healy, 2000) and point to important linkages between the broader economic context and fertility trends as a whole, as well as for particular groups. The complex relationship between household income and fertility compared with individual income suggests scope for further research on understanding fertility decisions in relation to economic resources and in the context of family type. It is likely that different family types, such as single versus double income, face different pressures that impact on fertility choices. To identify and understand the complex relationships requires further investigation and statistical analysis.
- 82 The compromises and tensions experienced by parents in balancing work and family are highlighted. Many parents report working under time pressure and are finding parenting harder than they thought it would be. These pressures seem particularly marked for women, especially those who work full-time. There are also indications of common tensions within households about the distribution of the family workload. The data show that women tend to take greater responsibility for family related responsibilities and are far more inclined than men to perceive that they shoulder an unfair burden of housework and caring for children.
- 83 However, there is evidence that men also experience difficulties in balancing work and family. Many feel that they are missing out on family events that are important to them. There is considerable scope for further analysis of these issues in relation to the particular pressures on different family types but also of the particular problems that men experience in relation to work and family balance and how these may affect fertility decisions.
- 84 There is some evidence that barriers to accessing work may be experienced by those not in the labour force due to problems with accessing formal childcare. This analysis was unable to confirm a linkage between work entitlements, such as paid maternity leave, aimed at facilitating balancing work and family and fertility. However, further statistical analysis and future waves of the HILDA Survey may reveal associations that are difficult to identify and disentangle in this cross-sectional study.
- 85 While the findings in this paper are necessarily tentative, particularly since statistical techniques for analysis were not used, this study clearly shows there is considerable scope for further investigation of fertility expectations and outcomes through the HILDA Survey. In particular, there is an opportunity to address the gap in research about men's role in fertility decisions and balancing work and

family. Further research using statistical analysis to separate the complex and often overlapping factors associated with fertility would be valuable for both verifying these findings and for examining the issues in more depth and detail. Subsequent waves of the HILDA Survey will provide further opportunities to clarify questions relating to low fertility rates.

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9. Appendix

TABLE A: ACCESS TO CONDITIONS AND ENTITLEMENTS IN CURRENT JOB BY SEX AND EXPECTATION OF HAVING CHILDREN IN LIFETIME: AGED 25 TO 39 YEARS, IN A COUPLE AND EMPLOYED

Percentage that have access to conditions and work entitlements in current job	In a couple and employed aged 25 to 39 years			
	Men		Women	
	No children	Yes children	No children	Yes children
Paid maternity leave	#	40	56	50
Unpaid maternity leave	65	62	82	81
Parental leave	75	74	75	76
Special leave for caring for family members	77	78	74	79
Permanent part-time work	67	56	81	81
Home-based work	29	30	33	30
Flexible start and finish times	61	60	60	59
Sample size N =	93	887	92	827

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

N<30

TABLE B1: PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR FAMILY ROLE BY SEX AND EXPECTATION OF HAVING CHILDREN IN LIFETIME: AGED 18 TO 55 YEARS, IN A COUPLE AND EMPLOYED

Percentage agree in relation to own workplace	In a couple and employed aged 18 to 55 years			
	Men		Women	
	No children	Yes children	No children	Yes children
Male employees who take leave for family reasons are seen as less committed to their jobs than other male workers	16	22	12	11
Employees who take leave for family reasons are less likely to get ahead in their jobs and careers	15	21	18	16
Employees who work part-time are seen as less committed to their jobs than other workers	18	27	21	20
Sample size N =	162	1866	163	1649

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

TABLE B2: PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR FAMILY ROLE BY SEX AND EXPECTATION OF HAVING CHILDREN IN LIFETIME: AGED 18 TO 55 YEARS, IN A COUPLE AND EMPLOYED

Percentage 'Very satisfied'* with following aspects of their job	Aged 18 to 55 years, in a couple and employed			
	Men		Women	
	No children	Yes children	No children	Yes children
The flexibility available to balance work and non-work commitments	36	36	41	46
Job security	48	43	50	54
Hours worked	23	24	25	39
The work itself	34	39	32	43
Total pay	21	20	21	26
Overall job	30	31	33	42
Sample size N =	200	2293	202	2040

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

* Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on a scale from 0 to 10. The answers were then grouped into five levels with 'Very satisfied' as the highest.

TABLE C: ATTITUDES ABOUT WORK AND GENDER ROLES BY SEX AND EXPECTATION OF HAVING CHILDREN IN LIFETIME: AGED 18 YEARS AND OVER

Percentage agree*	Aged 18 and over			
	Men		Women	
	No children	Yes children	No children	Yes children
It is important to have a paying job in order to be happy	70	77	62	64
I would enjoy having a job even if I didn't need the money	53	59	57	58
Many working mothers seem to care more about being successful at work than meeting the needs of their children	30	34	22	31
Many working fathers seem to care more about being successful at work than meeting the needs of their children	40	47	38	43
If both partners work, they should share equally in the housework and care of the children	84	86	90	91
Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role is still that of being a mother	63	78	58	83
Whatever career a man may have, his most important role is still that of being a father	63	80	59	81
Mothers who don't really need the money shouldn't work	36	40	27	39
Children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and children	58	60	70	70
It is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children	31	44	24	38

As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under 3 years of age to be placed in child care all day for 5 days per week	20	19	27	23
A working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay	39	37	53	51
A working father can establish just as good a relationship with his children as a father who does not work for pay	45	48	54	58
A father should be as heavily involved in the care of his children as the mother	82	82	87	85
Sample size N =	897	4800	752	5629

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

* Respondents were asked to rate their disagreement-agreement from 1 to 7 with the above statements. The answers were then grouped into 3 categories; agree, neither disagree nor agree, and disagree.

TABLE D: WORK-FAMILY STRAINS AND GAINS BY SEX AND EXPECTATION OF HAVING CHILDREN IN LIFETIME: WORKING PARENTS, AGED 18 TO 55 YEARS

Percentage agree*	Working parents aged 18 to 55 years	
	Men	Women
Having both work and family responsibilities makes me a more well-rounded person	73	68
Having both work and family responsibilities gives my life more variety	79	80
Managing work and family responsibilities well makes me feel competent	68	73
Managing work and family responsibilities, I have to turn down work activities or opportunities	25	32
Because of my family responsibilities, the time I spend working is less enjoyable	18	23
Because of the requirements of my job, I miss out on home or family activities that they would prefer to participate in	53	35
Because of the requirements of my job, family time is less enjoyable and more pressured	31	24
Work has a positive effect on my children	44	50
Working helps me to better appreciate the time I spend with my children	64	63
The fact that I am working makes me a better parent	48	37
I worry about what goes on with my children while I am at work	43	43
Working leaves me with too little time or energy to be the kind of parent that I want to be	43	37
Working causes me to miss out on some of the rewarding aspects of being a parent	59	41
Sample size N =	1695	1465

Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 1 beta data, June 2002

* Respondents were asked to rate their disagreement-agreement from 1 to 7 with the above statements. The answers were then grouped into 3 categories; agree, neither disagree nor agree, and disagree.