



Living in Australia

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

ISSUE 2





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

For more information about the survey, its design, the data that are available and research that is making use of it, visit us online at www.livinginaustralia.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge the contributions of Esperanza Vera-Toscano, Roger Wilkins and Ferdi Botha. Thanks to Qualia Creative for the design of the report.





Foreword

Professor Mark Wooden

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

Welcome to this, our second Living in Australia report, which showcases a small selection of findings drawn from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey data collected in 2018 and earlier.

Now many of you might be thinking, “isn’t the world today vastly different than it was even at the start of this year, let alone back in 2018?” And, of course, you are right. The year 2020 began with many parts of the country in the middle of one of the worst bushfire seasons on record. Then the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic arrived, with the government efforts to contain the outbreak turning our world upside down. I am sure all of us have been affected in some way. For many of us it has affected the way we work, the way we interact with others, and how we spend our leisure time. For others, the effects are much more severe, including job loss, business closure, sickness, and the loss of loved ones.

But it is these changes that we expect to have captured in our latest round of interviews. Of course, the HILDA Survey too has had to adjust. Social distancing meant that in 2020 we were no longer knocking on your doors. Instead, interviews were mostly conducted over the telephone. And many of you will have completed our self-completion questionnaire online.

Nevertheless, we do not expect these changes in the way we collect data to in any way undermine the value of the information you provide us. Indeed, the HILDA Survey data will surely be more valuable than ever, providing researchers and policy-makers with an incredibly valuable resource for understanding and evaluating the impact of the pandemic on the lives of all Australians.

Let me also apologise for not getting this report to you sooner. Unfortunately the challenge of working during the pandemic has meant that not everything has gone as smoothly as hoped.

Finally, can I once again thank you all for your continued participation in the HILDA Survey. Without your cooperation the study would not be able to continue.

Very best wishes.



AUSTRALIAN HOUSEHOLDS IN 2018

at a glance

The HILDA Survey is a broad social and economic longitudinal study, with a focus on family and household formation and continuation, income and work. Most of the questions we ask are repeated each year to help us understand how lives are changing over time. Each wave of the survey also includes a rotating series of special interest questions that appear every four years.

The special interest questions in 2018 investigated wealth and household's ability to afford basic resources and services, religiosity and gambling activities.

In addition, pet ownership was explored for the first time. The special interest questions provide unique insights into Australian households in 2018.

Persistence of poverty

Following the lives of 1,158 children aged nine to 15 in 2001 up until 2018, results reveal that children who were living in a household that cannot afford the essential comforts of life in 2001 (i.e. living below the poverty line) are more likely to be poor in early adulthood (when they are 26 to 32 years old), than they are to exit out of poverty.



41%

Experience 1 year living in poverty as an adult

21%

No experience of poverty in adulthood

12%

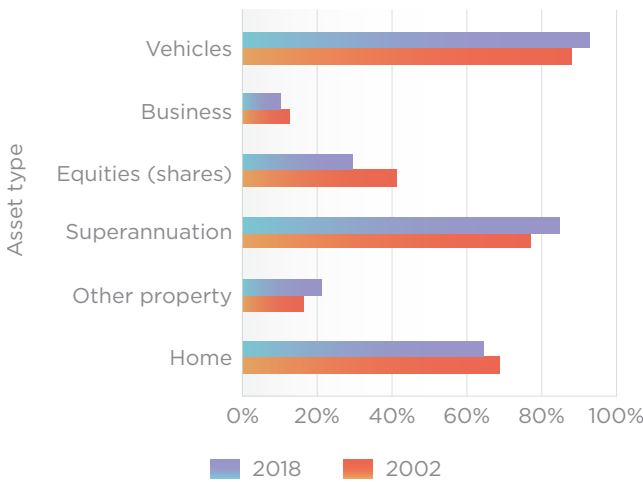
Experience 3 years+ living in poverty as an adult

26%

Experience 2 years living in poverty as an adult



Changes in household wealth, 2002-18



Between 2002 and 2018 Australian households have experienced some changes in their possession of assets, with a decline in home ownership by 6 per cent and an increase in their superannuation by 10 per cent.

61%

of Australian households own at least one pet, with dogs being by far the most popular animal companion.



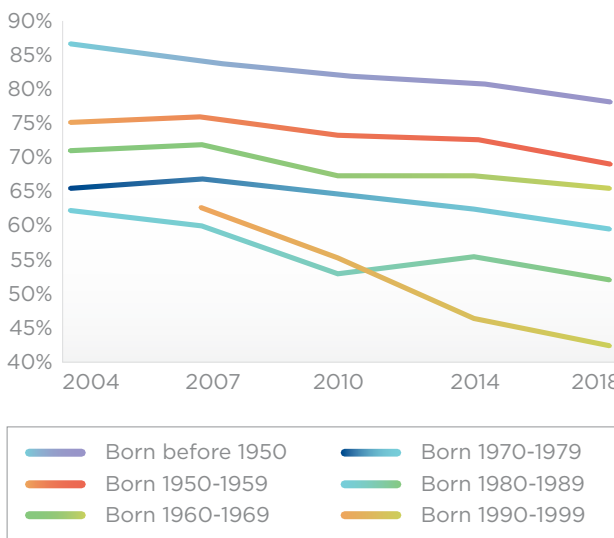
Health and safety are the two most important dimensions in explaining satisfaction with life as a whole for both men and women. This is followed by housing for women and job satisfaction for men.



What explains life satisfaction

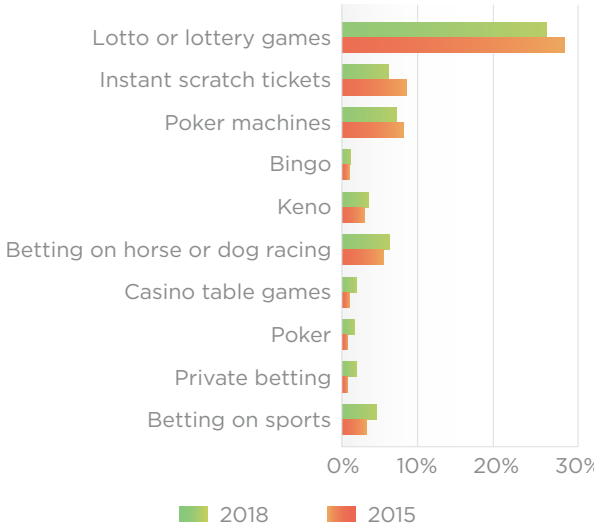


Religious affiliation higher among older generations



The proportion of people with religious beliefs has declined since 2004, particularly among younger Australians (by 24%).

Changes in gambling activities



Compared to 2015, Australians are gambling less on Lotto or Lottery games, Instant scratch tickets and poker machines, but are gambling more on poker, casino table games and sports betting, which happen to be the activities with the highest expenditure per month (ranging between \$80 and \$150).

HOUSEHOLDS

and family life

- GROWING UP IN AUSTRALIA: FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES AND CARE ARRANGEMENTS
- BREAKING UP IS NEVER EASY

GROWING UP IN AUSTRALIA

Family circumstances and care arrangements

Every year, the HILDA Survey collects information on a variety of aspects of family life. Insights provided here reveal how parents manage child care responsibilities, including the formal care arrangements families have in place. Most notably, between 2001 and 2018, there has been a 17 per cent increase in demand for paid child care among working mothers.

The majority of children in Australia live with both parents (Figure 1). However, in both 2001 and 2018, around a quarter of children lived with only one parent.

Interestingly, of those who lived with only one parent in 2018, approximately 27 per cent never had contact with the non-resident parent – a proportion that has decreased by more than four percentage points since 2003 (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Children's living arrangements, 2001 and 2018 (%)

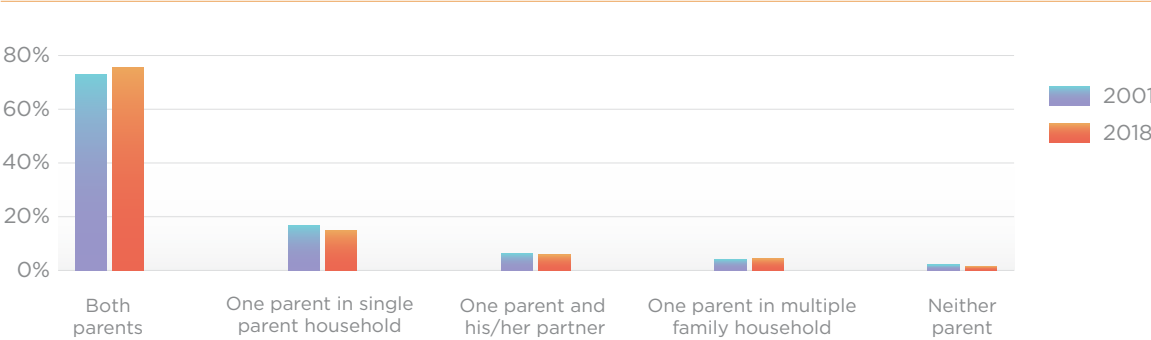
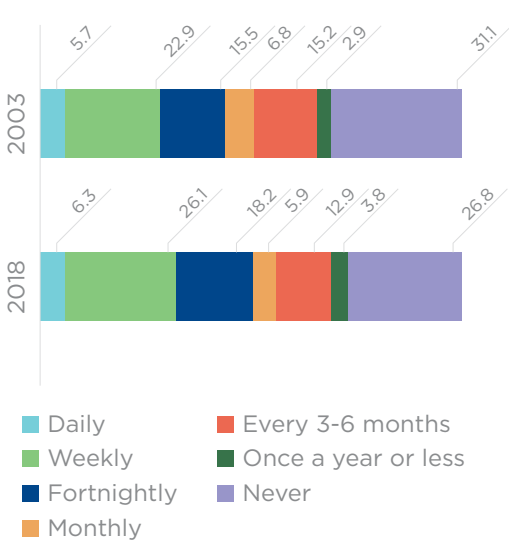


Figure 2: Frequency of contact with non-resident parents, 2003 and 2018 (%)

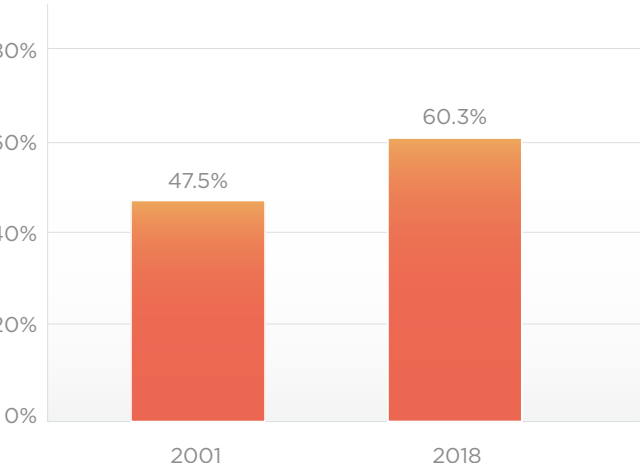




Between 2001 and 2018, the amount of time spent with the non-resident parent has increased substantially among children in shared-care arrangements (Figure 3).

This increase has been driven by the number of children who spend between 20 and 50 per cent of the week with the non-resident parent (which covers most of the weekends and summer holidays).

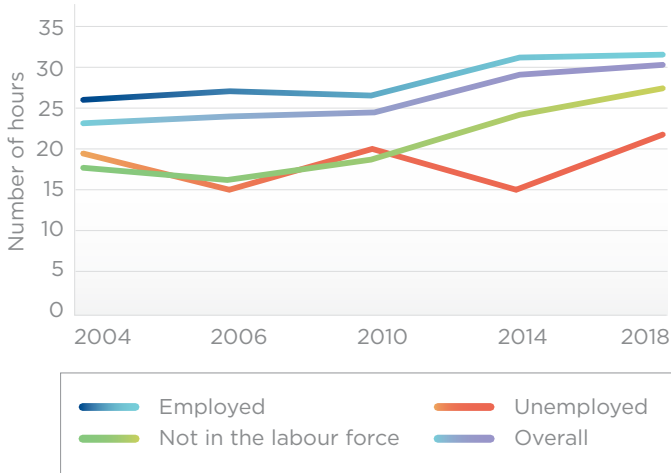
Figure 3: Children who spend at least one night with non-resident parents, 2001 and 2018 (%)



WHO'S LOOKING AFTER THE CHILDREN?

The average number of hours of formal care for children not yet at school (from 0 to 4 years of age) has increased by almost 32 per cent between 2001 and 2018 (Figure 4). This growth in demand has mainly been driven by working mothers who have increased their participation in part-time (65%) and full-time (24%) employment during this period.

Figure 4: Number of hours of formal paid child care required for children not yet at school, by labour market status of mothers



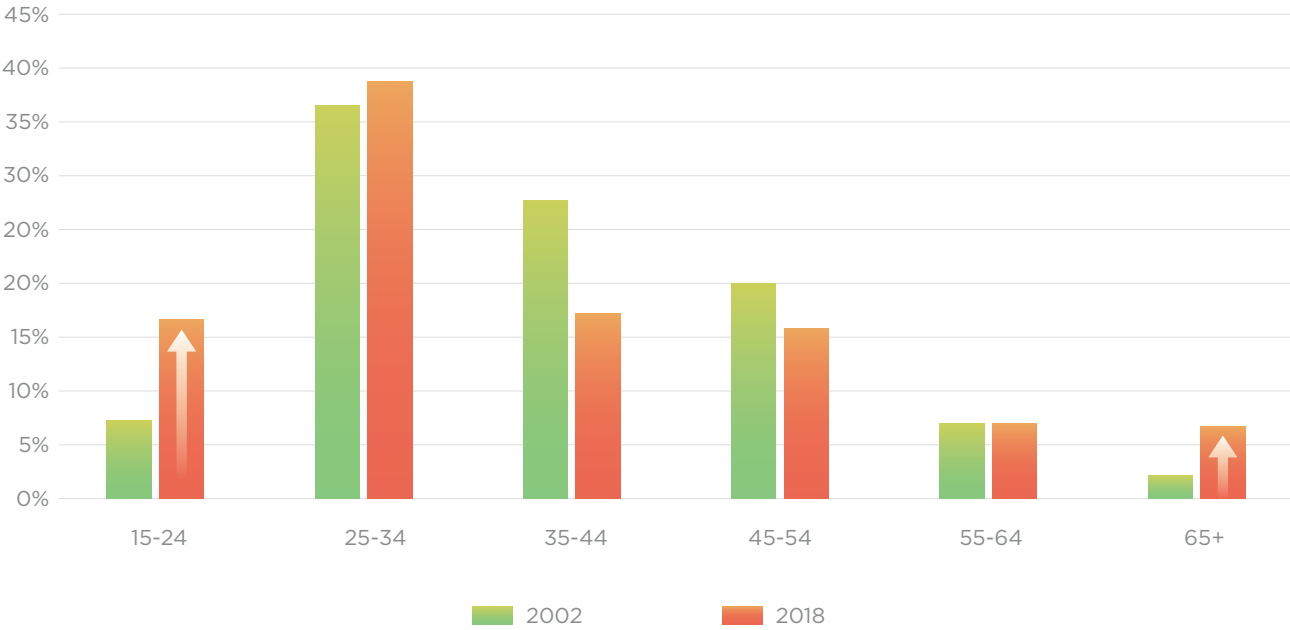
BREAKING UP

is never easy

In 2002, approximately five family breakup events occurred per 1000 people. Considering the increase in the Australian population, this ratio remained stable in 2018. The most common age when breakups occur is between 25 and 34 – both in 2002 and 2018.

However, an increase in the number of breakups among the youngest (15–24) and oldest (65+) age groups appeared in 2018 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Proportion of breakups by age group, 2002 and 2018 (%)



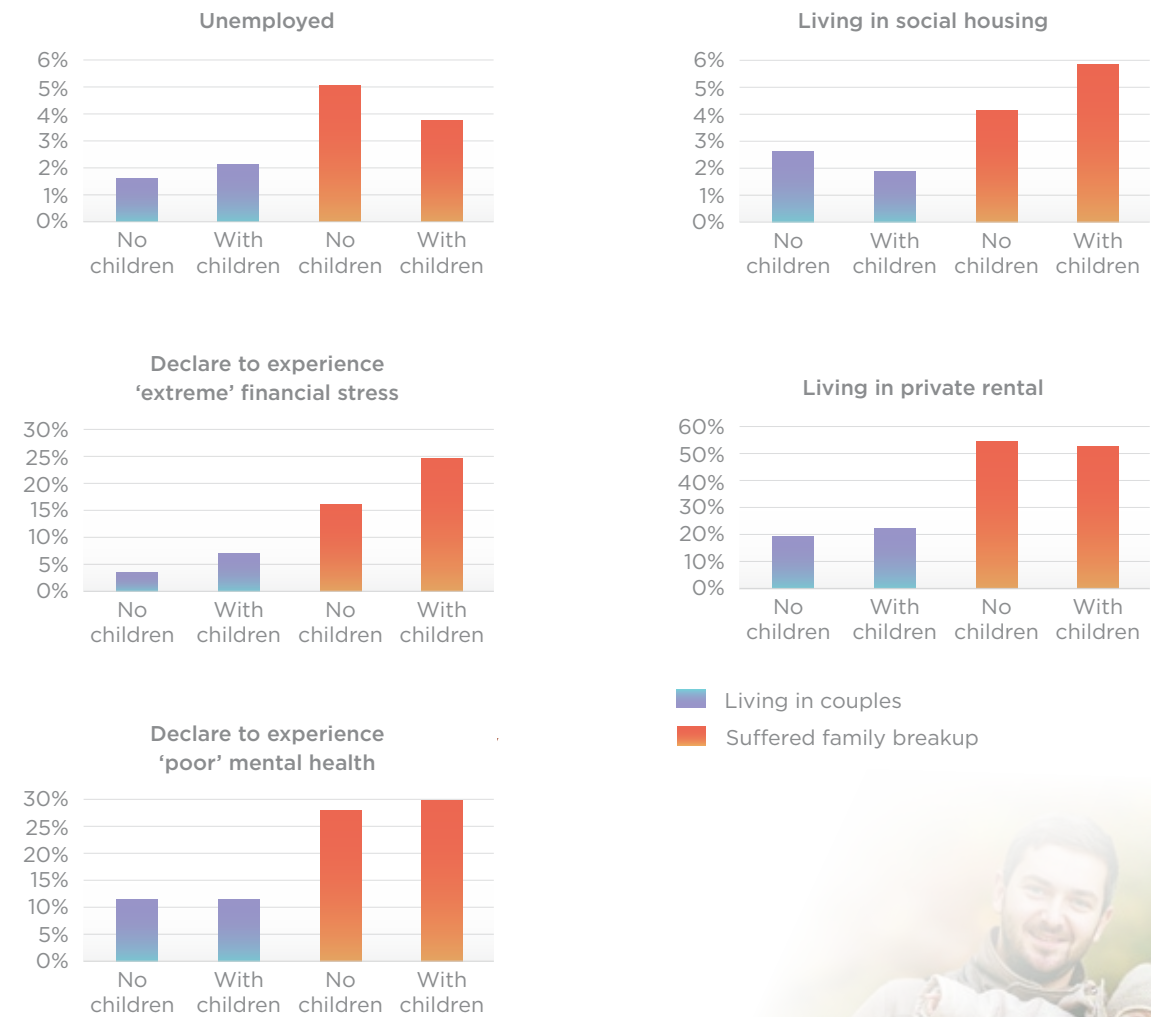
Family breakups – defined as the end of an intimate relationship by any means other than death – can be an unpleasant life event.



The HILDA Survey shows that a relationship breakdown is closely linked to a number of adverse effects on individuals including psychological distress, grief and an overall decline of subjective wellbeing, in addition to lower performance at work and an increased risk of unemployment. Compared to individuals who remain in intimate relationships, those who

experience a family breakup are slightly more likely to be unemployed, have lower hourly wages, and consequently lower household income, as well as more likely to rent a house or live in social housing compared to people who remain in a relationship (Figure 6). They are also more exposed to financial stress and poor mental health.

Figure 6: The relationship between family breakups and individual socio-economic characteristics (%)



Household ECONOMIC WELLBEING

- HOME OWNERSHIP AMONG YOUNGER GENERATIONS
- GENDER GAP IN RETIREMENT SAVINGS IS CLOSING
- HOUSEHOLD HARDSHIP



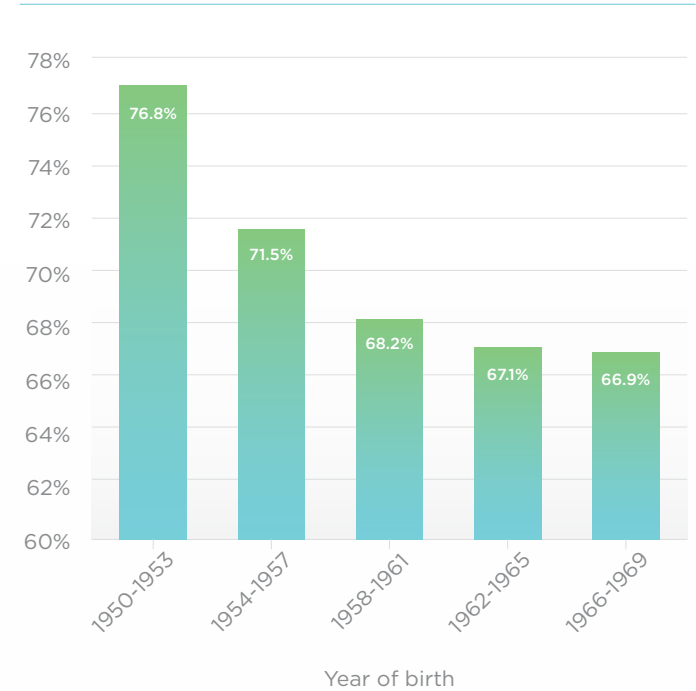
HOME OWNERSHIP

among younger generations

The HILDA Survey indicates a significant decline in home ownership among younger generations. Results reveal that 77 per cent of Australians born between 1950 and 1953 were homeowners when they reached 49–52 years of age (Figure 7). In contrast, only 67 per cent of those who were born between 1966 and 1969 became homeowners by the same age.

The trend in lower rates of homeownership among younger generations indicates that those born in the early 1980s onwards are less likely to become homeowners at the same age as the generations before them.

Figure 7: Home ownership by 49-52 years old, according to year of birth (%)



GENDER GAP

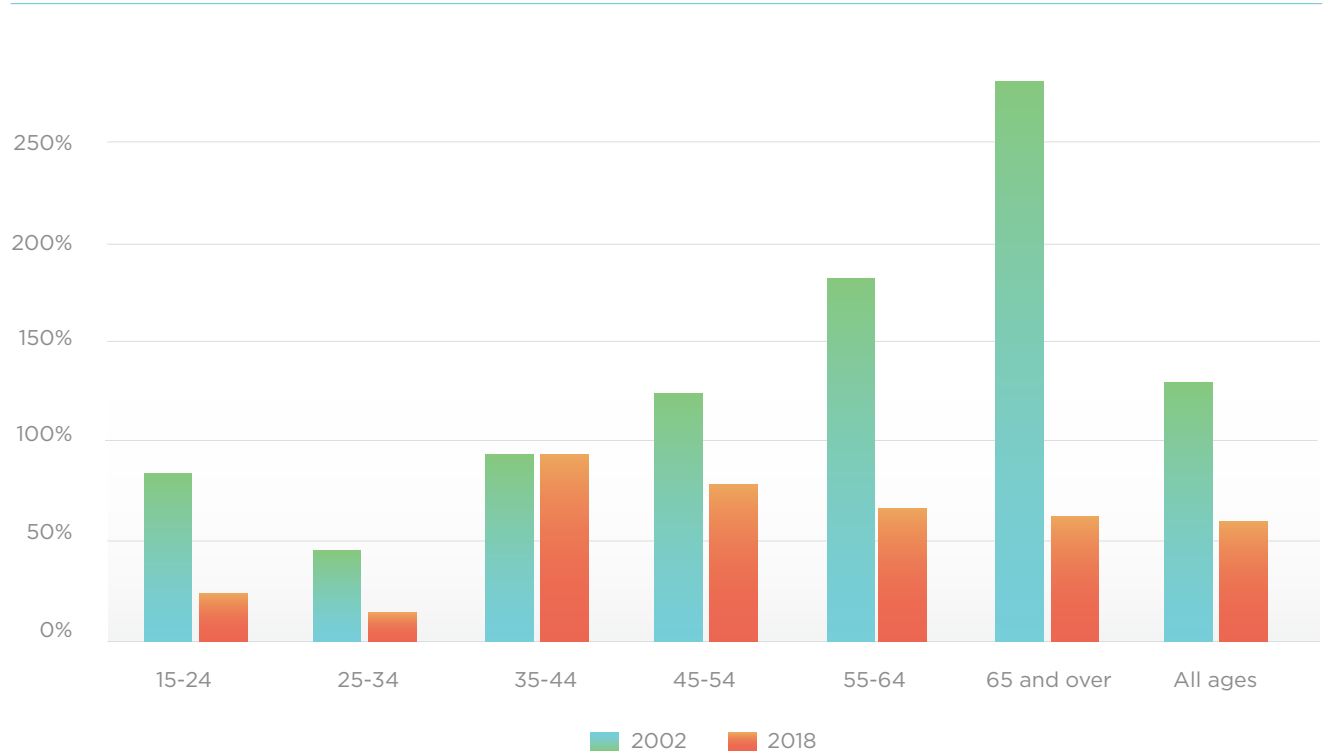
in retirement savings is closing

The increase in female labour market participation between 2002 and 2018 has affected the gender gap in average superannuation balances (Figure 8).

In 2002, women had significantly lower balances than men – particularly among older age groups where men had typically acquired greater lifetime earnings. By 2018, this picture changed, with the superannuation balance gender gap closing among all age groups except those aged 35–44. A possible explanation for this group is that many women are raising children during this stage of their life, which may be affecting their labour market participation and earning potential at the time of data collection.



Figure 8: Gender gap in average superannuation balance by age group, 2002 and 2018 (%)



HOUSEHOLD

hardship

Material deprivation is a form of financial hardship that exists when people cannot afford to buy items or undertake activities that are widely regarded in society as essential things that everyone should or do have. Individuals who experience material deprivation tend to report lower levels of satisfaction with different aspects of life (Figure 9).

The HILDA Survey reveals that in 2018 there was no significant change in the proportion of households which have experienced a reduction in their ability to afford essential items or services compared to 2014 (Figure 10). Around nine per cent of Australian households are still deprived of three or more basic items.



Some examples of items or services individuals may be deprived of include:

- Eating a substantial meal at least once a day
- A telephone
- At least \$500 in savings for an emergency
- Ability to keep at least one room of the house adequately warm
- Roof and gutters that do not leak
- Furniture in reasonable condition
- Home insurance
- Access to the internet at home
- Warm clothes and bedding
- Able to afford medical treatment or medicines
- Able to afford to buy presents for immediate family or close friends at least once a year



Figure 9: Average level of satisfaction with different aspects of life by household hardship, 2018

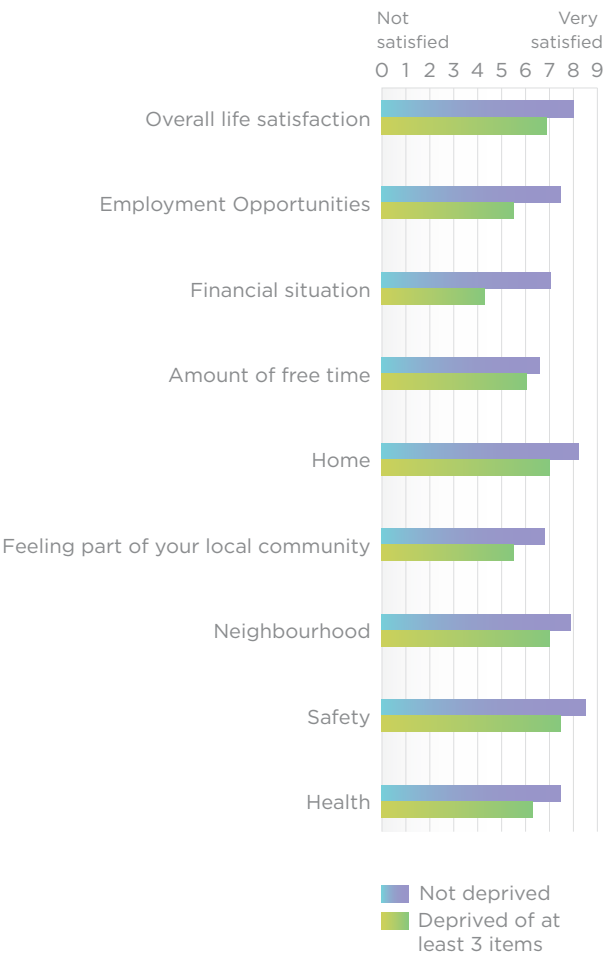
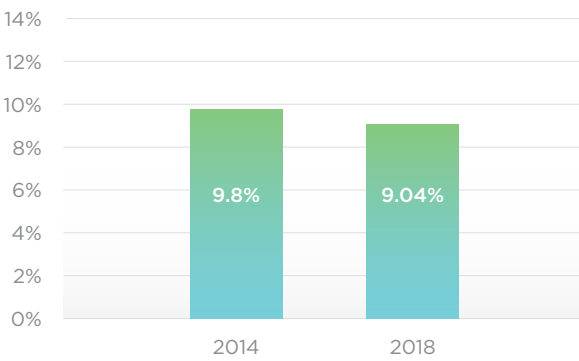


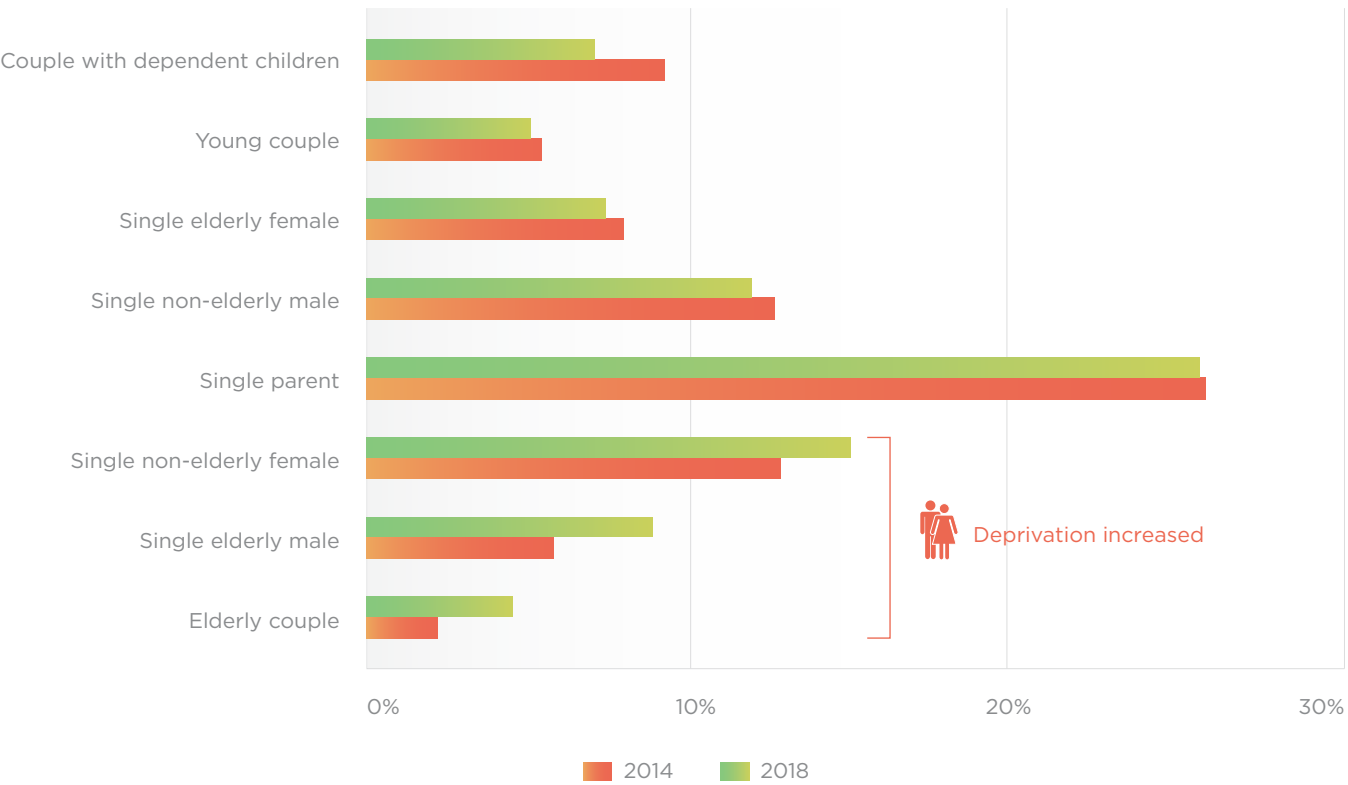
Figure 10: Individuals deprived of three or more items (%), 2014 and 2018



By looking at the living standards actually achieved rather than the income available within a household, the material deprivation approach identifies poverty and disadvantage more directly.

Comparisons across family types reveal that single parent families had the highest rate of material deprivation in 2014, with 26 per cent of people in these families living without three or more basic items or essential services (Figure 11). There has been a significant increase in the proportion of elderly couples deprived of at least three basic items or essential services between 2014 and 2018 (from 1.5% to 4%), followed by single elderly males and single non-elderly females (below 65 years old) whose level of household hardship has increased.

Figure 11: Family types deprived of three or more items, 2014 and 2018 (%)



The

LABOUR MARKET

• WORKING ON THE WEEKEND

WORKING on the weekend

To meet demand for 24/7 access to services, employers use a wide range of work schedules such as regular daytime hours, nine-day fortnight schedules, evening, night or rotating shifts, and on-call rosters, among other options. A substantial proportion of the workforce (around 32 per cent of workers) is engaged in employment on weekends (Saturday and Sunday), however, less than 10 per cent of their overall work hours are completed on weekends.

The HILDA Survey shows a substantial increase in women working on weekends over the past decade. On the contrary, male participation in weekend work dropped sharply at first but has remained at around 32 per cent since 2007 (Figure 12).

Weekend work is considerably more common among part-time workers. Part-timers work more often on the weekend than full-time employees working standard weekday hours (Figure 13).

Figure 12: Proportion of people working on the weekend, by gender (%)

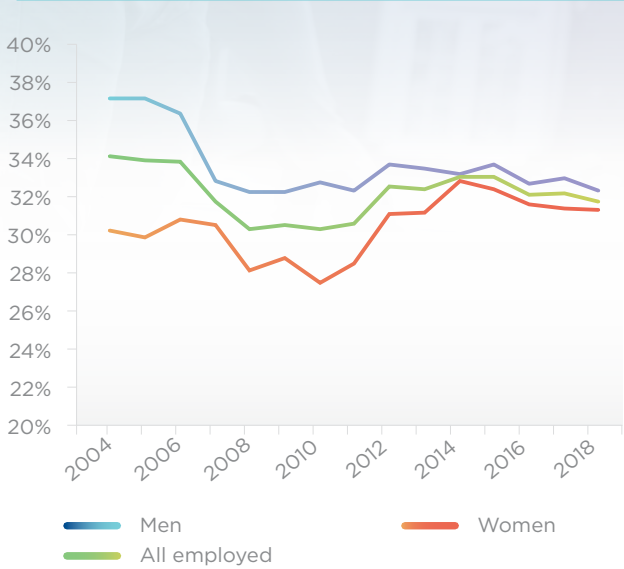


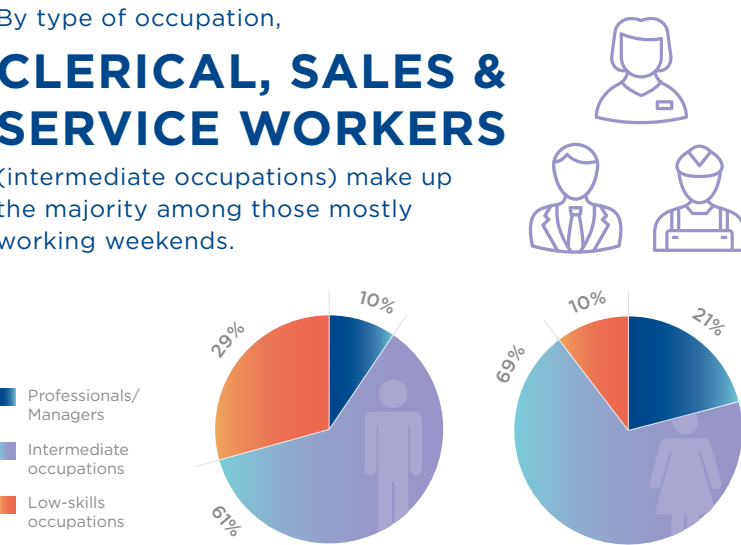
Figure 13: Proportion of employees by share of hours worked on the weekend and whether they are full-time or part-time in main job, 2018 (%)



WHO WORKS WEEKENDS? (50% OR MORE HOURS OF THEIR MAIN JOB)



By type of occupation, **CLERICAL, SALES & SERVICE WORKERS** (intermediate occupations) make up the majority among those mostly working weekends.



OVER 50% are casual workers

Average age of people working on the weekend: **32**

The average age of weekend workers is lower compared to other working arrangements.

OVER 30% are in the lowest income groups

WORKING MOST HOURS ON THE WEEKEND IS ASSOCIATED WITH SLIGHTLY WORSE MENTAL HEALTH, PARTICULARLY AMONG WOMEN

Food and beverage services, food retailing, other store-based retailing, and hospitals are the four most common industries for weekend workers.

MORE THAN 54% OF THOSE WORKING MAINLY ON THE WEEKENDS ARE IN THESE FOUR INDUSTRIES

ABOUT 10% OF MEN & 16% OF WOMEN are multiple job holders.

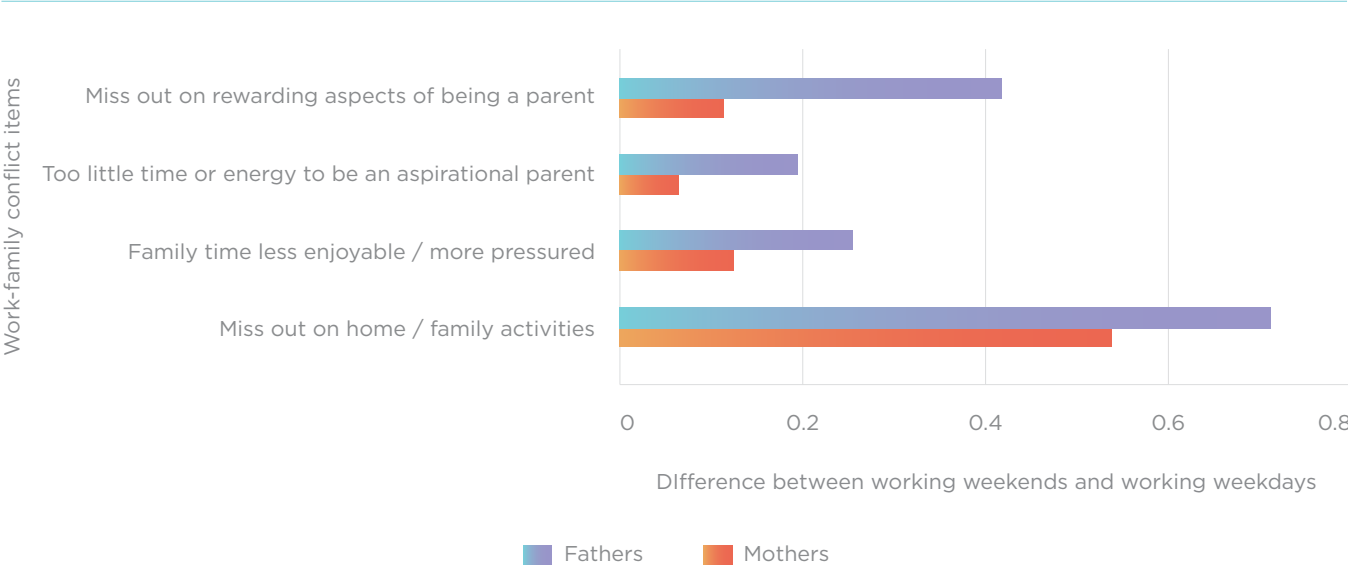
DOES WEEKEND WORK GET IN THE WAY OF FAMILY LIFE?

One of the critical characteristics of weekend work is that it has a tendency to be out of sync with the working schedules of other individuals in the household (including partners and relatives), as well as with the operating hours of school and child care facilities. Weekend workers are often unable to spend

as much time with their family as someone who works in a standard Monday to Friday job.

Both mothers and fathers report higher levels of work-family conflict if they work weekends. Fathers report a higher degree of strain for all aspects of life considered to conflict with weekend work (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Aspects of life where work-family conflict is present



WEEKEND WORK IS HERE TO STAY

Short, medium and long-term persistence of weekend work has increased in successive periods studied, suggesting it is becoming a more common way of working. Around 65 per cent of people who work on the weekend are still doing so three years later, and around 60 per cent of workers continue to work on weekends five years later (Table 1).

Table 1: Persistence of weekend work: Proportion who still work weekends one, three and five years later, by time period (%)

First time observed in	One year later	Three years later	Five years later
2004-2007	73.5	61.7	56.8
2008-2011	75.5	65.7	59.9
2012-2015*	75.6	64.8	—
2016-2017**	75.5	—	—

*Data for five years later is not available for individuals first observed from 2014 onwards
**Data for three and five years later not available for individuals first observed from 2016 onwards.

SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

and life satisfaction

Australians continue to report feeling satisfied with their life overall. In addition to studying the economic wellbeing of individuals, it is also important to understand other aspects of non-economic wellbeing. More generally speaking, wellbeing implies feeling well – it is the experience of prosperity but also of good health, sense of purpose and overall happiness and life satisfaction.

The HILDA Survey has asked Australians to report on overall life satisfaction in every wave since 2001. Life satisfaction is measured by asking respondents ‘All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life overall?’ with responses ranging from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied).

The trend is essentially flat, especially since 2004 (Figure 15).

Individuals who are active in their community, have frequent contact with family and friends, and are in good health are more likely to report higher levels of life satisfaction. Older males report twice as much life satisfaction than their female counterparts (Figure 16).

Figure 15: Average life satisfaction for all Australians and by gender, 2001 to 2018

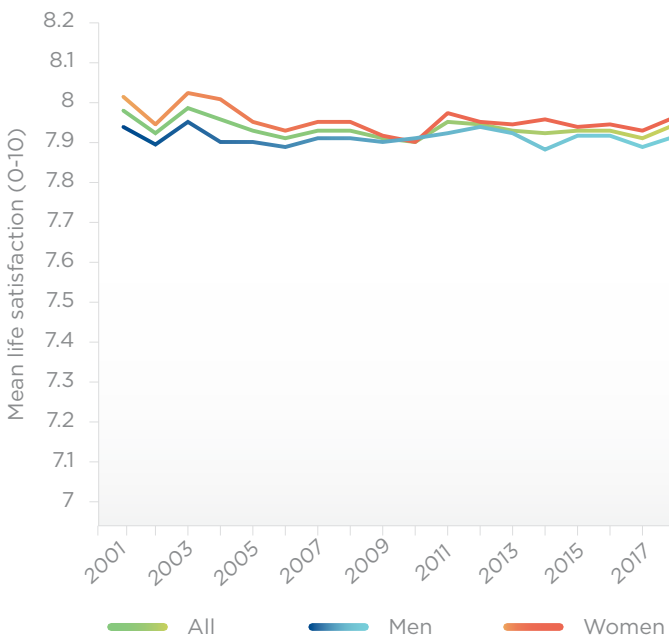
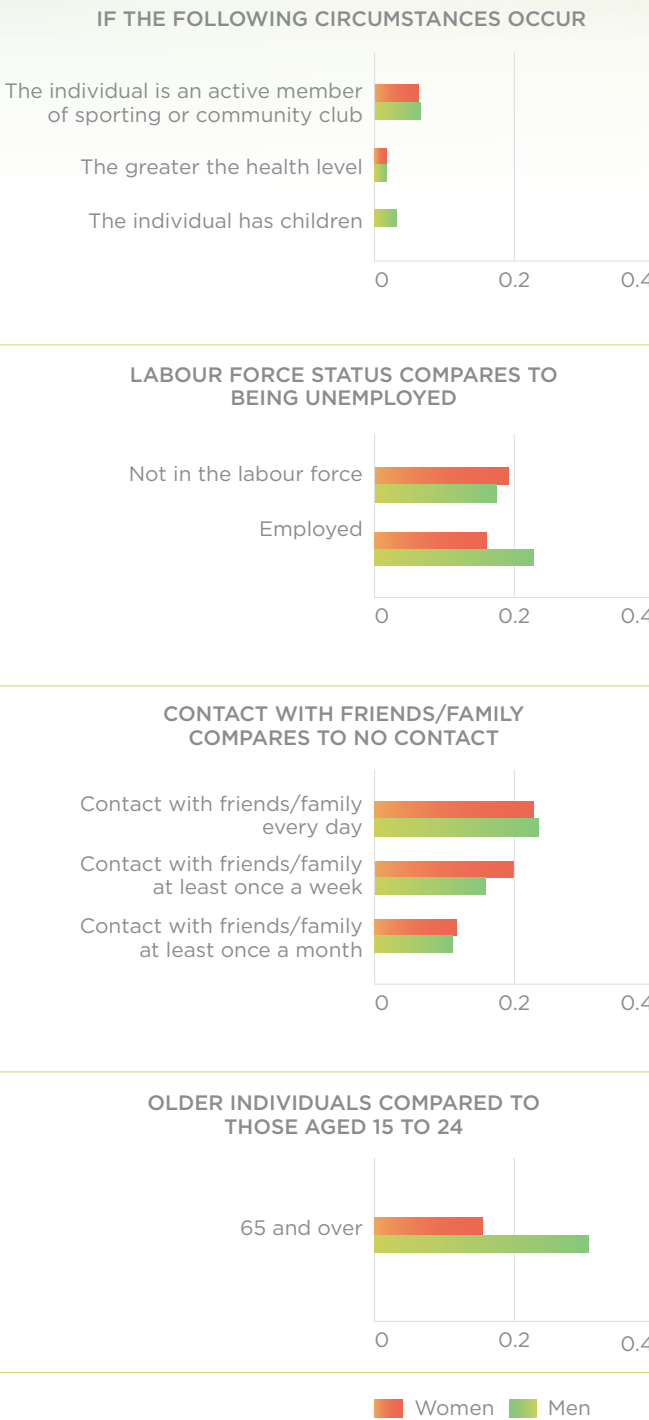


Figure 16: What gives Australians greater life satisfaction?



WELLBEING

- SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING AND LIFE SATISFACTION

MEET TWO OF THE HILDA SURVEY TEAM



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR NICOLE WATSON
HILDA Deputy Director, Survey Methodology & Principal Research Fellow

I have worked on the HILDA Survey project since it started in 2000 and look after the statistical issues of running a longitudinal study. I am delighted to see how the study has grown and changed over time and how the data is highly regarded by researchers and decision makers.

Good quality data and research provide the foundation for good quality decisions.

One of the strengths of the HILDA Survey data is that it includes questions across a wide range of topics so we can see how one aspect of life – such as work, study, health, children, finances – influence other areas. The data provides insights into the rich tapestry of life over time in a way that data collected at only one point in time cannot.

I am very grateful to all of the respondents who contribute a portion of their time each year to help us build such a unique dataset. At this time, we need to understand how your life has been affected by the coronavirus and associated restrictions. I look forward to seeing how the years to come look for all of you as we move forward from this challenging time



MS. MARY-ANN PATTERSON
HILDA Project Manager Respondent and Interviewers, Roy Morgan

I remember, back in 2005, when I conducted my first HILDA Survey Living in Australia interview. I remember being so excited to be involved in such a great study ensuring real Australian voices are heard by the decision makers. Over the years my role has changed but that same enthusiasm remains. The only way to improve it would be if I could also be a participant, but you are so important simply because no one can replace you – including me.

I now work at Roy Morgan where my role is to ensure everything runs smoothly when we are collecting your answers each year – both for our respondents, and the interviewers. The data users, whether in government or academia, rely on us administering the study professionally and ensuring every household who is part of the study is represented each year.

I take pride in the quality of data collected and the fact the HILDA Survey is a one of a kind study. Rather than giving a quick snapshot, it provides a story of the life of real Australians and how policy changes affect their household over the years.

I feel so privileged to be a part of the HILDA Survey because people like you understand why it is so important.

Part of my role is to support you. Please remember if something is affecting your ability to participate, have a chat to your interviewer or to me directly. Our aim is to try and find a solution because without you the HILDA Survey stops. Also, if you have any recommendations on how we can improve your experience, please feel free to let us know as your feedback is essential for the ongoing continuity of the study.



NOTES

THE HILDA SURVEY DATA WILL SURELY BE MORE VALUABLE THAN EVER, PROVIDING RESEARCHERS AND POLICY-MAKERS WITH AN INCREDIBLY VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR UNDERSTANDING AND EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE LIVES OF ALL AUSTRALIANS.

— *Prof. Mark Wooden*
Director, HILDA Survey Project





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

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