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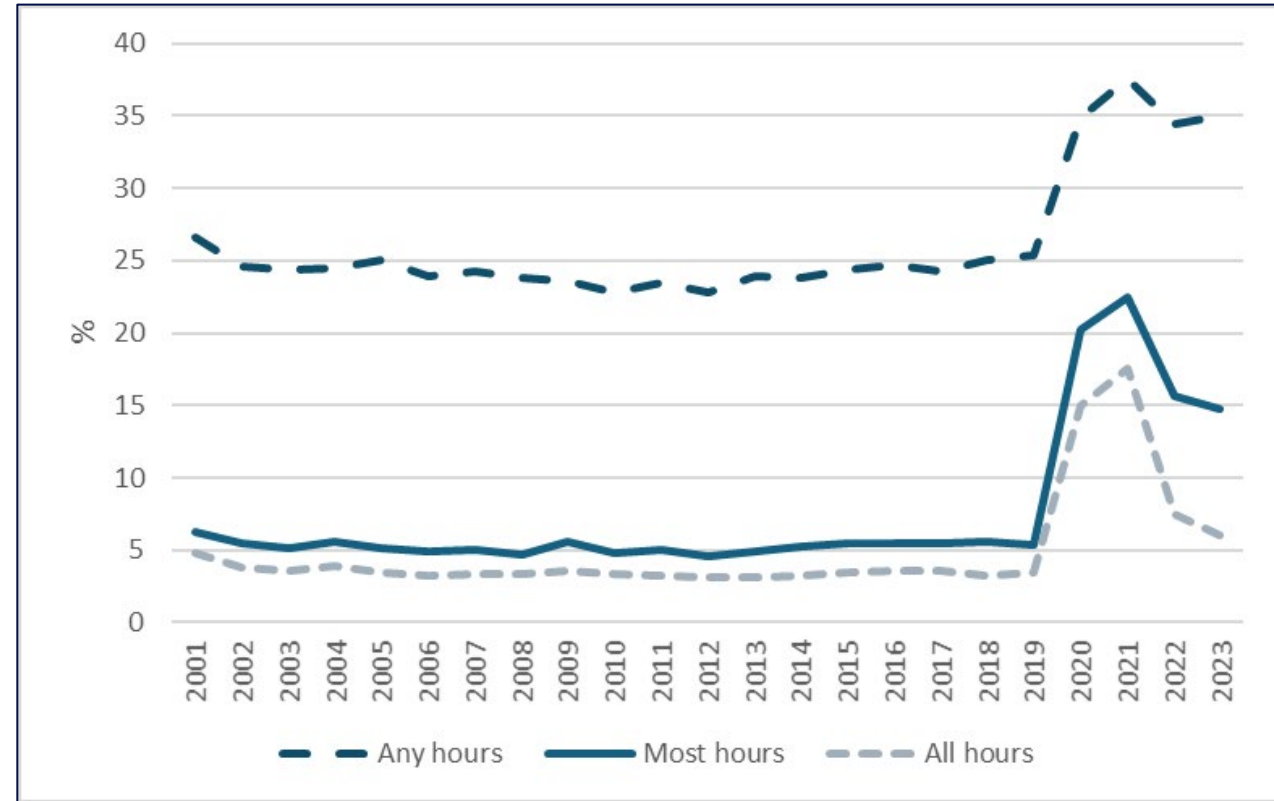
2 Oct 2026, HILDA Survey Research Conference, Melbourne



Background

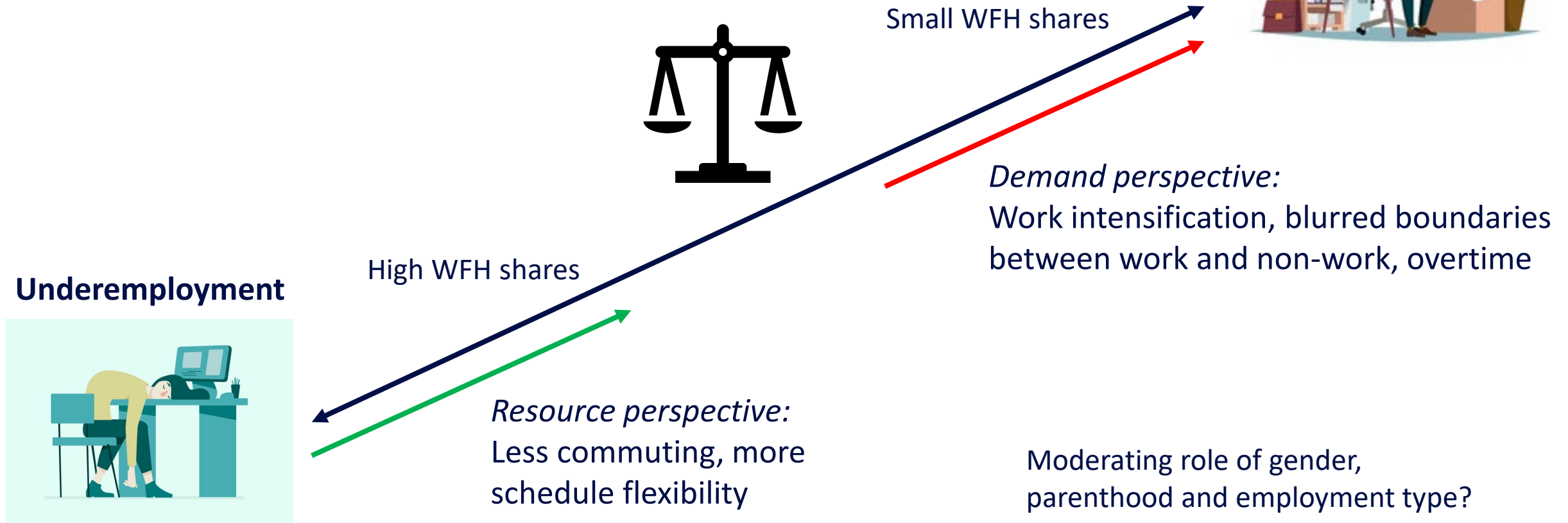
- Many workers do not work the desired hours
 - 24% overemployed
 - 14% underemployed (in 2023)
 - Massive increase in working from home during COVID-19
 - Working from home changes the way people work and use their time
- Does working from home improve the match between actual and desired working time?

Extent of Working from Home (% of employed persons), Australia, 2001 to 2023



Source: HILDA Survey, unit-record data release 23

Theoretical considerations: WFH and working time match



Data and Methods (I)

- **Data:** Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey (2001-2023)
- **Sample:** Workers aged 18-64 years (179,718 observations from 16,656 individuals)
- **Dependent variables:**

“If you could choose the number of hours you work each week, and taking into account how that would affect your income, would you prefer to work ...

- fewer hours than you do now? (**overemployed**)
- about the same hours as you do now? (**matched**)
- or more hours than you do now?” (**underemployed**)

Data and Methods (II)

- **Key independent variable:**
 - Share of total working hours worked from home (in main job)
- **Control variables:**
 - **Socio-demographics:** age (quadratic), highest level of education, full-time student, long-term health condition, partnered, age of youngest child, number of children aged 17 and younger, remoteness, survey year
 - **Job characteristics:** employment type, public sector, supervisor, occupation, firm size, industry
- **Method:**
 - Binary fixed-effects logistic regressions of the three outcomes
 - Multinomial FE regressions and linear probability models as robustness checks

Results: Working from home and overemployment (Odds Ratios)

	All men	Childless men	Fathers	All women	Childless women	Mothers
Share WFH (ref.=0%)						
Less than 20%	1.333***	1.345***	1.343***	1.479***	1.533***	1.404***
20-39%	1.276***	1.222***	1.305***	1.215***	1.215***	1.151**
40-59%	0.976	0.916	1.006	0.960	0.895	0.991
60-79%	0.872	0.991	0.793	0.847*	0.896	0.844
80% and more	0.794***	0.710***	0.891	0.740***	0.725***	0.738***
N	75217	38996	28831	70631	37337	25689

Notes: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01; Models control for socio-demographic and job-related characteristics.

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Results: Working from home and underemployment (Odds Ratios)

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Less than 20%	0.684***	0.705***	0.682***	0.573***	0.603***	0.564***
20-39%	0.958	0.875	1.095	0.909	0.867	0.934
40-59%	1.248**	1.187	1.527**	1.061	1.347**	0.904
60-79%	1.530***	1.825***	1.162	1.344***	1.204	1.395**
80% and more	1.652***	1.580***	1.841***	1.202***	1.378***	1.007
N	53633	31647	14327	58300	29613	20723

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Results: Working from home and being matched (Odds Ratios)

	All men	Childless men	Fathers	All women	Childless women	Mothers
Share WFH (ref.=0%)						
Less than 20%	0.838***	0.845***	0.824***	0.814***	0.763***	0.868***
20-39%	0.790***	0.840***	0.762***	0.844***	0.832***	0.885**
40-59%	0.907*	0.936	0.868	0.950	0.893	1.012
60-79%	0.934	0.742**	1.150	0.977	0.966	0.935
80% and more	0.980	1.046	0.905	1.088**	1.041	1.181**
N	91175	51157	33343	87237	48533	32502

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Results: WFH and being matched – employees vs. self-emp. (Odds Ratios)

	Men	Childless men	Fathers	Women	Childless women	Mothers
Share WFH (ref. = 0%)						
Less than 20%	0.786***	0.792***	0.786***	0.821***	0.766***	0.878**
20-39%	0.765***	0.827***	0.725***	0.824***	0.786***	0.897*
40%-59%	0.885*	0.919	0.875	0.948	0.932	0.968
60%-79%	0.883	0.675**	1.074	0.930	0.831	0.982
80% and more	0.933	0.958	0.882	0.968	0.931	1.033
Self-employed (ref. = employee)	0.835***	0.866**	0.843**	0.804***	0.806**	0.744***
Share WFH x Self-employed						
Less than 20% x Self-employed	1.277***	1.301***	1.192**	1.135	1.249*	1.053
20-39% x Self-employed	1.174*	1.140	1.194	1.321***	1.610***	1.039
40-79% x Self-employed	1.144	1.133	1.034	1.160	1.041	1.248
60%-79% x Self-employed	1.212	1.323	1.209	1.318*	1.795**	1.002
80% and more x Self-employed	1.196*	1.297**	1.107	1.483***	1.571***	1.432***
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Robustness checks

- **Linear probability FE models**
 - Findings are substantially the same
- **Multinomial FE models**
 - Findings are substantially the same
- **Differences between pre-COVID (2001-2019), COVID (2020-2021) and post-COVID (2022-2023) period**
 - Most associations are similar
 - But odds ratios of WFH for being matched worsened for:
 - Men and women WFH less than 20% (in 2022/23)
 - women WFH extensively (in both 2020/21 and 2022/23)

Discussion (I)

- Complex link between WFH and working time (mis)match
- Overall, WFH mostly does not lead to better working time matching
- **Extent matters:**
 - Small shares: lower likelihood of achieving a working time match due to overemployment
 - often the result of overtime done at home
 - Large shares: increased likelihood of underemployment
 - Fixed hours, wage/career disadvantages, labour market constraints?
- **Gender and parenthood status matter:**
 - (Only) mothers more likely to obtain a working time match, and only when they work from home extensively
 - Allows greater labour supply despite extensive family commitments
- **Employment type matters:**
 - Better working time matches when WFH entirely restricted to the self-employed (esp. women)
 - Benefits only materialize when accompanied with high levels of schedule flexibility and work autonomy

Discussion (II)

- **Limitations:**
 - Broad measures for over- and underemployment
 - Associations rather than causality
 - No separate investigation of actual and desired hours
 - No dyadic/couple perspective
- **Conclusion:**
 - Extensive WFH mostly neither improves nor deteriorates working time matches
 - less overemployment is offset by more underemployment
 - more research needed to uncover reasons for increase in underemployment
 - Specific groups benefit from extensive WFH (mothers, self-employed women)
 - Greater schedule flexibility and autonomy needed for employees WFH to prevent (disadvantageous) switches to self-employment

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