

Transitions between full-time and part-time employment across the life-cycle

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1. Introduction

Around 28 per cent of employed Australians work part-time, one of the highest rates of part-time employment in the OECD. Part-time employment is particularly common among parents, students and older workers. Around 31 per cent of people employed part-time are parents with children under 15 years, the vast majority of whom are women. A further 16 per cent of part-timers are dependent students, while 15 per cent are aged 55 years or older (ABS 2005a). These people presumably work fewer than full-time hours to help them balance paid work with unpaid activities such as child care, study, elder care, volunteer work and leisure.

The demographic characteristics of the part-time workforce are reasonably well established in the Australian literature (see for example Smith and Wilson 2002; de Ruyter and Burgess 2000; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 2000). There is also a developing literature on working conditions associated with part-time employment including factors such as casual status, rates of pay and hours preferences (see for example, Harley and Whitehouse 2001; Drago, Tseng and Wooden 2004; Booth and Wood 2004; Rodgers 2004).

Cohort analysis undertaken by the ABS suggests that women move into and out of part-time employment throughout their lives. Part-time employment participation is highest in the late 30s, perhaps when women are combining paid work with parenting. Full-time employment participation peaks for women in their early 20s and again in their late 40s. In contrast, men generally work full-time, with part-time work only prominent at the start and end of their working lives (ABS 2005b).

While we know about the life-cycle characteristics of the part-time employed population at any point in time, we know less about the exact life cycle events that trigger a movement between full-time and part-time employment. Data from the first three waves of the HILDA survey show that there is considerable movement between full-time and part-time employment over time. Around 17 per cent of people employed part-time in any year move into full-time employment in the following year. Around 7 per cent of people employed full-time in any year move into part-time employment in the following year. This paper will examine these transitions between full-time and part-time employment, particularly focusing on the impact of life cycle events such as finishing full-time study, having young children and the transition into retirement.

The paper will also examine the process of moving between full-time and part-time employment. For example, do people who make transitions between full-time and part-time employment change employers or move into lower or higher skill level jobs? And are they more or less satisfied with their hours of work after making the transition?

While the paper focuses on the role of life cycle events in motivating movements between full-time and part-time employment, other factors, such as external labour market conditions and structural change are also likely to be important. In addition, by examining only movements between full-time and part-time employment, the paper only paints a partial picture of the role of part-time employment over the life cycle. Movements between part-time employment and non-employment (either unemployment or being out of the labour force) are also likely to play a major part in the dynamics of labour force participation over the life cycle. However, such transitions are beyond the scope of this paper.

2. How many people move into and out of part-time employment?

The analyses in this paper use data from the first three waves of the HILDA survey. Person-level data from the combined file were used to generate two sets of pairs of observations for each person – one pair for wave 1 and wave 2, and one pair for wave 2 and wave 3. The pairs of observations were compiled to form a data set comprising 23 475 observations where labour force status was known in both years. Changes in labour force status between the two years are shown in Table 1.

This paper will focus on transitions between full-time and part-time employment. These transition groups are shown in bold in Table 1. Of people who were employed part-time in Year 1, 17 per cent move into full-time employment in Year 2. Of people who were employed full-time in Year 1, 7 per cent move into part-time employment in Year 2.

Table 1 Labour force status, year 1 and year 2

		Year 2			Total
		Full-time	Part-time	Not employed	
Year 1	Full-time	8663	660	460	9783
	Part-time	808	3215	692	4715
	Not employed	461	834	7682	8977
	Total	9932	4709	8834	23475

Note: "Not employed" includes not in the labour force and unemployed.

Note that there are also substantial movements between part-time employment and not employed. Around 9 per cent of people who were not employed in Year 1 are employed part-time in Year 2. Almost 15 per cent of people who were employed part-time in Year 1 are not employed in Year 2.

3. Who moves between full-time and part-time employment?

Gender

Overall, women are more likely than men to make the transition between full-time and part-time employment, accounting for around 60 per cent of those moving between full-time and part-time employment.

Table 2 shows the proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment by gender. Women who are employed full-time in Year 1 are around four times more likely than men to move to part-time employment in Year 2. In contrast, men who are employed part-time are more likely than women to move into full-time employment.

The results show that women are significantly more likely to move into part-time employment and less likely to move to full-time employment if they are already employed part-time than men. This is consistent with the fact that women are more likely than men to be employed part-time in general.

Table 2 Proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment by gender

	FT Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2
Men	3.9	25.8
Women	12.1 (0.000)	13.8 (0.000)

Note: Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values.

Age

Young people dominate movement from part-time to full-time employment. Around one third of women and almost half of men who move from part-time to full-time employment are aged under 30 years. Table 3 shows the proportion of men and women who move between full-time and part-time employment by age group.

Table 3 Proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment by gender

	Women		Men	
	FT in Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2	FT in Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2
15-19 years	22.4 (0.001)	12.8 (0.528)	8.6 (0.000)	23.6 (0.001)
20-29 years	11.2 (0.763)	20.5 (0.002)	3.8 (0.400)	32.9 (0.356)
30-39 years	11.7 (--)	14.1 (--)	3.2 (--)	37.2 (--)
40-49 years	12.2 (0.758)	14.1 (0.968)	2.7 (0.402)	35.9 (0.797)
50-54 years	10.2 (0.779)	11.2 (0.198)	2.9 (0.687)	22.9 (0.029)
55-59 years	11.2 (0.835)	10.3 (0.154)	7.3 (0.000)	19.1 (0.002)
60-64 years	14.3 (0.539)	3.9 (0.004)	11.0 (0.000)	12.6 (0.000)
65+ years	40.0 (0.000)	5.1 (0.025)	11.3 (0.000)	5.6 (0.000)

Note: Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values. The comparison category is 30-39 years.

Women who are employed full-time have similar likelihood of moving into part-time employment at all ages between 20 and 64 years. Younger women and women aged 65 years and over have a significantly higher likelihood of moving into part-time employment, perhaps associated with study for younger women and the transition to retirement for older women. Women in their 20s who work part-time are the most likely to move into full-time employment. Older women are far less likely to move from part-time to full-time employment than younger and middle-aged women.

For men who work full-time, the propensity to move into part-time employment is highest among those aged 60 years and older: older men are almost three times more likely to move into part-time employment as men in general. In contrast, movements from part-time to full-time employment are most likely for men aged between 20 and 49 years. Men aged 55 years and older are significantly less likely to move from part-time to full-time employment than men aged in their 30s.

Presence of children

Given the high rates of part-time work by mothers with young children, it is likely that moving between full-time and part-time employment is closely associated with caring responsibilities, particularly for women.

Table 4 shows that women who work full-time in Year 1 and give birth to a child between Years 1 and 2 are significantly more likely to move into part-time employment in Year 2 than women who do not give birth to a child. In contrast, very few women who have given birth to a child move from part-time to full-time employment. (Note that the majority of women who give birth to a child are unlikely to be employed in both years and therefore are excluded from our sample.)

For men, becoming a father increases the probability of moving from part-time to full-time employment, but has no significant effect on the likelihood of moving from full-time to part-time employment. This is consistent with other evidence that shows that fathers generally have higher rates of full-time employment than non-fathers.

Table 4 Proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment by gender and whether had a child between Years 1 and 2

	Women		Men	
	FT in Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2	FT in Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2
Had a child	20.0	1.9	2.2	43.5
Did not have a child	11.7	14.2	4.0	25.5
	(0.007)	(0.000)	(0.138)	(0.051)

Note: Respondents are assumed to have had a child between Years 1 and 2 if the variable *tchad (total children ever had) is higher in Year 2 than Year 1. Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values.

Table 5 shows that, for both men and women, transitions between full-time and part-time employment are also associated with the age of the youngest child. Women who work full-time are most likely to move to part-time employment when their children are aged under five years. The likelihood of moving into part-time employment falls as children reach primary school age, but is still significantly higher than that for women without resident children. The chances of women moving from part-time to full-time employment are lowest among women with young children and with resident children aged over 18 years. Women with children of upper-primary and secondary school age are no more likely to move from part-time to full-time employment than women without resident children. In total, 30 per cent of women who move from full-time to part-time employment and 34 per cent of women who move from part-time to full-time employment have children under the age of 13 years.

While men with younger children are significantly less likely to move from full-time to part-time employment than men without children, the differences are relatively small. Men with children under 13 years of age are significantly more likely to move from part-time to full-time employment than men without resident children. Men are most likely to move from part-time to full-time employment when their youngest child is in primary school.

Table 5 Proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment by gender and age of youngest resident own child

	Women		Men	
	FT in Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2	FT in Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2
0-4 years	20.5 (0.000)	9.5 (0.000)	2.6 (0.001)	37.9 (0.001)
5-9 years	16.9 (0.007)	12.9 (0.055)	2.2 (0.001)	50.0 (0.000)
10-12 years	11.9 (0.688)	13.0 (0.135)	1.8 (0.004)	40.0 (0.029)
13-17 years	11.0 (0.987)	15.0 (0.557)	3.0 (0.062)	30.4 (0.229)
18+ years	9.2 (0.355)	9.6 (0.006)	5.8 (0.474)	28.6 (0.291)
No resident children	11.0 (--)	16.4 (--)	4.9 (--)	22.8 (--)

Note: Age of youngest resident own child in Year 2. Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values. Comparison category is no resident children.

Couple mothers and single mothers

We might expect that couple and single mothers exhibit different patterns of moving between full-time and part-time employment because couple mothers are more likely to have other earnings to supplement their income if they move into part-time employment. Table 6 shows that, while single

mothers are slightly less likely to move from full-time to part-time employment and slightly more likely to move from part-time to full-time employment than couple mothers, the differences are not statistically significant.

Table 6 Proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment for couple and single mothers with children under 15 years

	FT Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2
Couple mothers	16.3	12.1
Single mothers	13.6 (0.443)	15.3 (0.183)

Note: Mothers with children under 15 years. Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values.

Changes in full-time student status

Another key factor influencing movement from part-time to full-time employment is whether people complete full-time studies. Many students work in part-time jobs to support themselves while studying. Table 7 shows that 36 per cent of people who were studying in both years and who also worked full-time in Year 1 moved to part-time employment in Year 2. In contrast, students in Year 1 who stopped studying in Year 2 were more than twice as likely as average to move from part-time to full-time employment. This was particularly common for men: 20 per cent of all men who moved from part-time to full-time employment were study leavers. The process of moving into full-time employment for students will be examined in greater detail in the next section.

Table 7 Proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment by study status

	FT Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2
Stopped studying in year 2	11.5 (0.024)	37.8 (0.000)
Still studying in year 2	35.7 (0.000)	5.2 (0.000)
Not studying in year 1	6.3 (--)	17.6 (--)

Note: Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values. Comparison category is 'Not studying in year 1'.

Educational attainment

Educational attainment could have a number of effects on the likelihood of moving between full-time and part-time employment. People with high levels of education could be more able to negotiate changes between full-time and part-time employment to suit their needs at different stages of the life cycle. Alternatively, people with higher levels of education could be less inclined to move into part-time employment in general as working full-time allows them to capitalise on their investment in education.

Table 8 shows that there are only slight differences in the likelihood of moving between full-time and part-time employment between groups with different educational attainment. Among full-time workers, there is a slight decrease in the probability of moving into part-time employment as educational attainment rises above Year 12 level. The results for people who work part-time show no clear trend.

Table 8 Proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment by highest level of education

	FT Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2
Bachelor degree or higher	6.7 (0.006)	17.0 (0.356)
Trade qualification or diploma	5.4 (0.000)	17.4 (0.187)
Year 12	8.0 (0.442)	20.0 (0.008)
Year 11 and below	8.8 (--)	15.6 (--)

Note: Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values. Comparison category is 'Year 11'.

Employment status

It is possible that the flexibility to move between full-time and part-time employment depends in part on employment status and contract type. Table 9 shows that self-employed people are slightly more likely than employees to move from full-time to part-time employment. There is no significant difference between the likelihood of moving from part-time to full-time employment by employment status. The self-employed may have more control over their working time and are more likely to be able to move between full-time and part-time employment by choice, but are also probably more likely to respond to fluctuating demand for their labour than employees.

Table 9 Proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment by Year 1 employment status

	FT Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2
Employer/self-employed	8.6	19.0
Employee	6.2 (0.002)	16.9 (0.225)

Note: Excludes employees of own business and unpaid family workers. Note: Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values.

Table 10 shows the proportion of permanent, fixed term and casual employees who move between full-time and part-time employment. Casual employees who work full-time in Year 1 are far more likely to move to part-time employment in Year 2 than either permanent or fixed-term employees. There are no significant differences in the likelihood of moving from part-time to full-time employment between different contract types.

Table 10 Proportion of people moving between full-time and part-time employment by contract of employment in Year 1

	FT Year 1: % who move to PT in Year 2	PT in Year 1: % who move to FT in Year 2
Permanent or ongoing	4.8 (--)	17.6 (--)
Fixed term	7.9 (0.000)	20.2 (0.348)
Casual	17.1 (0.000)	16.1 (0.179)

Note: Data are for employees in Year 1 only (excluding employees in own business). Note: Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values. Comparison category is 'Permanent or ongoing'.

While most casual employees work regular patterns of hours, the nature of casual employment means that it is much easier to change hours of work than for permanent employees. It is possible that some people, such as students or women with young children, choose to work on a casual basis to give themselves the flexibility to alter their hours in response to fluctuating study or caring responsibilities.

4. How do people move between full-time and part-time employment?

The HILDA survey contains a wealth of information about job characteristics and employment preferences. This information can be used to examine the process of moving between full-time and part-time employment in more detail, including whether people change employers, move to a lower skill level job or are more satisfied with their working hours as a result of moving between full-time and part-time employment.

These issues will be examined in general, and for three particular life cycle groups: women with children aged under 13 years; people who finish full-time study; and people aged 55 years and older. Together, these groups make up 37 per cent of people moving from full-time to part-time employment and 43 per cent of people moving from part-time to full-time employment. The comparison group used in this section comprises all people who were employed in both years. The transition groups are subsets of the comparison group, which also includes people who worked full-time in both years and people who worked part-time in both years.

Do people change employers?

While respondents to the HILDA survey are not asked whether they have changed employers since their previous interview, they are asked about their tenure with their current employer. We assume that people whose tenure with their current employer in Year 2 is one year or less have changed employers since Year 1.

Table 11 shows the proportion of people in each transition group who have changed employers. Overall, around one quarter of people who are employed in both years changed employers between Years 1 and 2.

People who moved between full-time and part-time employment are more likely than average to have changed employers. Men are slightly more likely than women to have changed employers when moving from full-time to part-time employment, and far more likely to have changed employers when moving from part-time to full-time employment. Overall, people who move from part-time to full-time employment are twice as likely as all people who are employed in both years to have changed employers.

Table 11 Proportion in each transition group who changed employers between Years 1 and 2, persons employed in both years

	FT to PT	PT to FT	All
Women	38.3 (0.000)	44.3 (0.000)	26.4
Men	42.5 (0.000)	62.2 (0.000)	24.1

Note: Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values between those in the transition groups and all people who are employed in both years.

Table 12 shows the proportion in each transition group who changed employers for the three life cycle groups of interest. In general, those in the transition groups were more likely than average to have changed employers.

Compared with women in general (see Table 11), mothers with children aged under 13 years are less likely to change employers when they move between full-time and part-time employment. The contrast is particularly stark for movements from part-time to full-time employment: around 37 per cent of mothers in this group changed employers, compared with 44 per cent of all women.

The vast majority of study leavers who move from part-time to full-time employment do so by changing employers. While only 23 per cent of older workers who move from full-time to part-time employment change employers, this is more than twice the incidence than for all older workers who are employed in both years.

Table 12 Proportion in each transition group who changed employers between Years 1 and 2, by life cycle group, persons employed in both years

	FT to PT	PT to FT	All
Mothers	31.7 (0.088)	36.9 (0.001)	24.7
Study-leavers		84.1 (0.000)	58.4
Older workers	23.3 (0.000)		9.7

Note: Data are only presented for study leavers and older workers for the transition groups where they have sizeable numbers. Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in mean values between those in the transition groups and all people in the life cycle group who are employed in both years.

Do people move to lower-skill jobs?

The Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO second edition) links one-digit occupation groups with one of five skill levels, as shown in Table 13. The skill levels associated with occupation in Years 1 and 2 were compared to determine whether people who move between full-time and part-time employment move into jobs that have higher or lower skill levels than their previous job.

Table 13 Skill level by ASCO major occupation group

	Skill level
Managers and administrators	1
Professionals	1
Association professionals	2
Tradesperson and related workers	3
Advanced clerical and service workers	3
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	4
Intermediate production and transport workers	4
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	5
Labourers and related workers	5

Source: ABS, Australian Standard Classification of Occupations, second edition

Table 14 shows that over 80 per cent of people who moved from full-time employment to part-time employment and 88 per cent of people who moved from part-time to full-time employment moved to a job with the same or higher skill level. People who moved between full-time and part-time employment were more likely than all people employed in both years to move to a job with a lower skill level, but no less likely than to move to a job with a higher skill level.

Almost 30 per cent of people who moved from part-time to full-time employment moved to a job with a higher skill level than their previous job, which is significantly higher than for all people employed in both years.

Table 14 Proportion in each transition group who moved to an occupation with higher, lower or the same skill level between Years 1 and 2, persons employed in both years

	FT to PT	PT to FT	All
Higher skill level	13.4 (0.551)	29.2 (0.000)	14.1
Same skill level	67.4 (0.001)	59.1 (0.000)	73.3
Lower skill level	19.3 (0.000)	11.7 (0.446)	12.6

Note: 'All' is all people employed in both years.

Table 15 shows that very few mothers who moved between full-time and part-time employment moved to a job with a lower skill level. Only 13 per cent of mothers who moved from full-time to part-time employment moved to a job with a lower skill level. Three quarters moved to a job with the same skill level and 12 per cent to a higher skill level job. These differences were not significantly different from the likelihoods of moving into different skill level jobs for all mothers

employed in both years. Likewise, very few mothers who moved from part-time to full-time employment moved to a job with a lower skill level. Around 26 per cent of mothers in this transition group moved to a job with a higher skill level, which is significantly higher than for all mothers employed in both years.

Almost half of all study leavers who moved from part-time to full-time employment were able to get a job with a higher skill level than their previous job. Only 7 per cent moved to a job with a lower skill level, which is not significantly different to the likelihood of moving to a lower skill level job for all study leavers employed in both years.

Among our life cycle groups, older workers who moved from full-time to part-time employment were the most likely to move to a job with a lower skill level. Even so, over 80 per cent of these people moved to a job with the same or higher skill level.

Table 15 Proportion in each transition group who moved to an occupation with higher, lower or the same skill level between Years 1 and 2, by life cycle group, persons employed in both years

	FT to PT	PT to FT	All
Mothers:			
Higher skill level	11.7 (0.530)	25.6 (0.000)	13.7
Same skill level	75.8 (0.694)	61.3 (0.000)	74.2
Lower skill level	12.5 (0.895)	13.1 (0.702)	12.1
Study leavers:			
Higher skill level		46.0 (0.000)	28.8
Same skill level		46.9 (0.007)	60.3
Lower skill level		7.1 (0.241)	10.9
Older workers:			
Higher skill level	13.6 (0.306)		10.4
Same skill level	67.0 (0.011)		77.9
Lower skill level	19.4 (0.021)		11.7

Note: 'All' is all people in the life cycle group who are employed in both years. Data are only presented for study leavers and older workers for the transition groups where they have sizeable numbers.

Are people more satisfied with their hours of work?

There is a large literature about the extent of underemployment and long hours of work in Australia. Respondents to the HILDA survey were asked “Taking into account the effect it would have on your income, would you prefer to work fewer, the same or more hours?” We might expect that people moving between full-time and part-time employment do so, in part, in response to their preference for more or fewer hours.

Table 16 shows that, among men, moving from full-time to part-time employment satisfies demands for fewer hours in Year 1, but increases the proportion who would prefer to work longer hours. In total, men who move from full-time to part-time employment tend to be less satisfied with their hours on average. In contrast, men who move from part-time to full-time employment are, on average, more satisfied with their hours in Year 2 than in Year 1. This indicates that

movements between full-time and part-time employment for some men could be involuntary and accords with previous research that shows that men tend to be less satisfied when working part-time (see for example, ABS 2004).

Women who move from full-time to part-time employment are significantly more satisfied with their hours in Year 2 than Year 1: around 60 per cent would prefer not to change their hours further. Likewise, 58 per cent of women who move from part-time to full-time employment are satisfied with their hours in Year 2, while 37 per cent would prefer to work fewer hours in Year 2.

Table 16 Proportion in each transition group by hours preference in Years 1 and 2, persons employed in both years

	FT to PT		PT to FT		All	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
Men						
Fewer hours	35.7 (0.000)	7.5	4.8 (0.000)	25.1	31.5 (0.000)	33.6
Same hours	51.6 (0.056)	43.7	41.1 (0.000)	59.5	54.7 (0.528)	54.2
More hours	12.3 (0.000)	48.4	54.1 (0.000)	15.4	13.7 (0.000)	11.9
Women						
Fewer hours	53.1 (0.000)	12.3	9.7 (0.000)	36.5	26.3 (0.619)	26.6
Same hours	41.3 (0.000)	59.0	51.7 (0.063)	57.6	57.3 (0.277)	58.1
More hours	5.7 (0.000)	28.8	38.4 (0.000)	5.5	16.2 (0.043)	15.2

Note: 'All' is all people employed in both years. Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in means from Year 1 to Year 2.

Table 17 shows that, on average, people in our life cycle groups are more satisfied with their hours after moving between full-time and part-time employment. Almost twice as many mothers who move from full-time to part-time employment are satisfied with their hours in Year 2 compared with Year 1. Likewise, older workers who move from full-time to part-time employment and study leavers who move from part-time to full-time employment are more satisfied with their hours on average after making the transition. The exception to this trend is mothers who move from part-time to full-time employment. Over half of all mothers in this group would prefer to work fewer hours in Year 2.

Table 17 Proportion in each transition group by hours preference in Years 1 and 2, by life cycle group, persons employed in both years

	FT to PT		PT to FT		All	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
Mothers						
Fewer hours	65.8 (0.000)	17.5	12.5 (0.000)	51.3	24.0 (0.290)	25.2
Same hours	32.5 (0.000)	60.0	55.0 (0.186)	47.5	57.5 (0.726)	58.0
More hours	1.7 (0.000)	22.5	31.9 (0.000)	1.3	18.1 (0.143)	16.5
Study leavers						
Fewer hours			6.2 (0.007)	12.0	28.4 (0.406)	30.0
Same hours			46.9 (0.002)	55.8	63.2 (0.801)	60.8
More hours			46.9 (0.000)	31.3	7.9 (0.730)	8.4
Older workers						
Fewer hours	40.8 (0.000)	9.7			28.4 (0.212)	30.0
Same hours	50.5 (0.005)	68.0			63.2 (0.101)	60.8
More hours	8.7 (0.001)	22.3			7.9 (0.462)	8.4

Note: 'All' is all people employed in both years. Figures in parentheses are p-values from a t-test of the difference in means from Year 1 to Year 2.

5. Conclusion

Movement between full-time and part-time employment is relatively common in Australia. Around 17 per cent of people employed part-time in any year move into full-time employment in the following year. Around 7 per cent of people employed full-time in any year move into part-time employment in the following year. Movement between full-time and part-time employment is closely associated with certain life cycle events, indicating that part-time employment plays an important role in helping people to balance paid work with other responsibilities and interests at different times in their lives.

Women are more likely than men to move between full-time and part-time employment, reflecting their higher representation in part-time employment in general. Young people are particularly likely to move between full-time and part-time employment, particularly those finishing full-time study and moving from part-time to full-time employment. Women with young children make up around one third of all women who move between full-time and part-time employment. Older workers, particularly men, appear to move from full-time to part-time employment as part of a transition to retirement.

People who move between full-time and part-time employment are more likely than all people who are employed in both years to change employers. In total, 40 per cent of people who move from full-time to part-time employment and 52 per cent of people who move from part-time to full-time employment change employers.

Men are more likely than women to change employers as part of a transition between full-time and part-time employment, and mothers with young children are less likely than women in general to change employers when moving from full-time to part-time employment. Around 84 per cent of study leavers who move from part-time to full-time employment change employers. Older workers are less likely to change employers when moving from full-time to part-time employment than people making this transition in general, however older workers in this transition group are more likely to change employers than older workers in general.

Despite the commonness of changing employers when moving between full-time and part-time employment, very few people move to a lower skill level occupation when making these transitions. More than 85 per cent of mothers who move between full-time and part-time employment move to a job with the same or higher skill level. Similarly, around 80 per cent of older workers who move from full-time to part-time employment move to a job with the same or higher skill level. Very few study leavers who move from part-time to full-time employment move to a lower skill level job, and almost half move to a job with a higher skill level than their previous job.

In general, moving between full-time and part-time employment improves people's satisfaction with their hours of work. The exceptions to this trend are for men who move from full-time to part-time employment and mothers who move from part-time to full-time employment. This accords to some extent with previous research that shows that men are generally less satisfied when working part-time, and mothers with young children generally prefer to work part-time.

The results show that transitions to part-time employment are particularly prominent during stages in the life cycle where people have commitments other than paid work. When such commitments end, such as when people finish full-time study or when children are school age, many people move from part-time employment back into full-time employment.

Almost half of all people who make transitions between full-time and part-time employment change employers. It is not clear from the results whether this is voluntary or because there are not opportunities to increase or decrease hours of work with their current employer. It is possible that the relationship runs in the opposite direction: people change employers and as a result need to change their hours of work. However, the finding that people who move between full-time and part-time employment are on average more satisfied with their hours suggests that, for most people, such changes in employment status are voluntary.

Some anecdotal evidence suggests that people who move from full-time to part-time employment, particularly mothers with young children, sacrifice job seniority or skill level in order to work hours

that allow them to better balance work and family. However, our results suggest that, at least at the broad skill level examined here, very few people who make this transition move to a lower skill level job.

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