
WOMEN & EMPLOYMENT SURVEY 2009

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Security4Women Alliance

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ABOUT THE WOMEN & EMPLOYMENT SURVEY

The Women & Employment Survey was developed to look at some of the specific issues women face in seeking and/or engaging in paid work in order to better understand what information or support is needed to assist women.

This report on the main findings from the Women & Employment Survey provides useful data about the real life experiences of a large and diverse group of Australian women, including a group of Indigenous women, as well as their views as to what services and supports might better assist them in seeking work, in negotiating working conditions and remaining in work.

KEY MESSAGES

- There are ongoing barriers to women's workforce participation. *Within the workplace* the organisation of work around full-time hours and/or rigid working time arrangements; *outside the workplace* the lack of supportive infrastructure, such as childcare services and inclusive labour market programs. These barriers make it difficult for many women to enter paid employment despite active job searching.
- Practical access to flexible work practices and working time arrangements remains limited for many women in paid employment, particularly those women who work on a part-time or casual basis and/or in the private sector. At the same time, heavy workloads and managerial discretion in public sector employment may make it difficult for those who may be entitled to various flexible working arrangements to access them.
- There is a lack of awareness among many women about their workplace entitlements, such as carers leave. Moreover, a significant minority of women do not know where to access information on their workplace entitlements, on appropriate wage levels or on bullying and harassment in the workplace.

The Women & Employment Survey respondents had a higher than average level of education than most Australian women and were more likely to be working in professional and managerial occupations and in permanent full-time employment. This suggests that less advantaged women may well face more difficulties in seeking work and in negotiating their working conditions. As well as more responsive workplaces, childcare and out-of-school-hours care services, more targeted and personalised support and information are needed to better meet the needs of women seeking employment and to raise women's awareness of their workplace rights.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Women & Employment Survey was developed to look at some of the specific issues women face in seeking paid work and/or engaging in paid work in order to better understand what information or support is needed to assist women.

This report encompasses a two-stage project and methodology. The first stage, which saw the development and dissemination and initial analysis of the Women & Employment Survey, was undertaken in 2009 by WIRE Women's Information Victoria on behalf of the women's information services located in all states and territories except for New South Wales and Queensland. In the second stage, Security4Women Inc. (S4W) contracted further research to refine the original analysis, locate the data within the context of other relevant Australian data and literature, and draw out the main implications of the survey findings as a basis for S4W recommendations and policy advocacy.

THE WOMEN & EMPLOYMENT SURVEY

Of those 1159 women who completed the survey, 63 respondents (5%) were not in the paid workforce and 1096 respondents (95%) were in the paid workforce. Of the respondents in the paid workforce, 71 (7%) identified as Indigenous.

As with most online surveys, those who responded to the Women & Employment Survey do not constitute a representative sample of Australian women. The survey sample was skewed towards women who lived in Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory, women with a higher than average level of education and women in paid employment. Of those in employment, the survey sample overrepresents those working in the Health and Community Services industry, in professional and managerial occupations and in permanent full-time employment.

Notwithstanding these limitations, however, the survey provides important and useful data about the real life experiences of a large and diverse group of women from every Australian state and territory, as well as their views as to what services and supports might better assist them in seeking work, negotiating working conditions and remaining in work.

MAIN FINDINGS

Women outside the paid workforce

More than a third of this group were not looking for paid work. The main reasons they were not looking for work included study and care responsibilities for children.

Of those looking for work, more than half had been looking for more than six months. The majority were looking for part-time hours. Those looking for work had accessed a wide range of employment services, but reported that the services they required included not only job search assistance but importantly face-to-face services such as career counselling, job application assistance and resume workshops.

Not surprisingly for a group of women completing an online survey, websites were seen as the most useful way to access information to assist people in finding work. However, once again, respondents also nominated more personalised and responsive services such as walk-in/appointment and email services as helpful in successful job seeking.

The barriers to participating in the paid workforce identified by survey respondents are broadly consistent with the findings of a recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey (ABS 2010a). The ABS survey highlights *workplace barriers* for women in the way work is organised — such as on a full-time basis or with no access to flexible start and finish times — and *barriers outside the workplace* — such as the lack of assistance with and access to childcare services and the withdrawal of government benefits.

Women in paid employment

The survey respondents who indicated they were in paid employment are a more homogenous group than is the case for women in employment generally, with the overwhelming majority of all respondents working in the government or non-profit/community sectors. Almost half the respondents worked in the Health and Community Services industry.

The main occupational categories of respondents were Professionals (39%), Clerical and Administrative Workers (24%) and Managers (20%). Over half of the respondents worked on a permanent full-time basis and around a quarter worked on a permanent part-time basis. Less than one in 10 indicated they were employed on a casual basis.

While a large proportion of respondents indicated that they had access to flexible hours and working time arrangements that suited them, a significant minority reported that they did not. In general, those who reported they were unable to access flexible hours or negotiate hours that suited them were much more likely than other respondents to be working on a casual or permanent part-time basis and/or in the private sector.

While the global financial downturn in Australia has seen a rise in female underemployment (TAI 2009), only 13% of respondents reported that their hours had decreased over the last 12 months. The reasons offered for the decrease in hours reflect not only workplace changes, such as a decrease in shifts and hours available, being relocated or taking on a new job, but also increased constraints due to caring responsibilities, study commitments, health issues and the need for a better work/life balance.

Over a third of respondents indicated they had dependent children. Those who worked in the government and non-profit/community sectors were the most likely to have some access to flexible work arrangements, with those who worked in the private sector and/or on a casual basis the most likely to report they had no such access. Likewise those who worked in the government sector were the most likely to have access to carers leave and those working in the private sector the least likely. However, while access to an annual allocation of paid carers leave is an industrial right for the vast majority of permanent and fixed-term contract employees, well over a third of these respondents stated they had no access to carers leave or did not know if they had such a right.

While the rate of unionisation among survey respondents was relatively high, a significant minority of respondents had poor knowledge of or access to information about their entitlements. Those who worked on a casual basis were the most likely to rate their knowledge as poor, while union members were more likely to rate their knowledge as good than non-union members. A fifth of respondents reported that they did not know where to access information on workplace entitlements, while a fifth also stated they did not know where to access information on appropriate wage levels.

In terms of assistance and information required, respondents emphasised personal support such as that from an independent person, information about workplace entitlements and increased confidence. Websites were overwhelmingly seen as the most useful source of information no doubt reflecting the survey sample who responded to the survey online. Personalised services such as email and telephone services were also seen as very important by around a third of respondents in both instances.

Finally, supportive infrastructure in terms of childcare, out-of-school hours and vacation care services are vital for women with dependent children, both within and outside the workforce, in seeking and maintaining labour force attachment. While most respondents with preschool children and with school-aged children were able to secure the childcare services they needed, a minority were not able to secure the hours of care needed and/or their employer did not provide access to flexible arrangements during school holidays or on curriculum days.

Indigenous women in paid employment

The relatively large response from Indigenous women to the Women & Employment Survey (71 respondents) provided a welcome opportunity to shed some light on the characteristics and experiences of Indigenous women in paid work.

This particular sample is not representative of the employment experiences of most Indigenous women. The survey respondents were more likely to work in higher status occupations and in the government sector than is the case for Indigenous women generally. However, the survey data shows that they experience a number of specific constraints in employment. This may reflect different workplace conditions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents, as well as the higher proportion of Indigenous respondents who had dependent children and the slightly higher proportion who were sole parents than is the case with the non-Indigenous respondents.

Despite the large proportion in public sector employment, the Indigenous respondents appeared to have somewhat less access to employee-orientated flexibility than non-Indigenous respondents. While almost two-thirds of respondents indicated they were able to negotiate hours that suited them, more than a third indicated that they were not able to do so. Further, while most indicated they were happy with their hours, almost a third would like more flexible hours.

Similarly to other respondents in the paid workforce, the responses of the Indigenous women raise some issues around knowledge of and information on workplace entitlements. Well over half of the respondents, almost all of whom would have a right to carers leave because they worked on permanent or fixed-term contracts, stated they did not have carers leave or did not know if they had such a right. Further, while there was generally a good level of knowledge about some specific workplace entitlements and issues, almost a fifth did not know where to where to access information about appropriate wage levels.

In terms of assistance and information required Indigenous respondents emphasised personal support such as that from an independent person, increased confidence and information about workplace entitlements. The most useful sources nominated by respondents in seeking information about workplace conditions were websites, email services and printed material.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the data from the Women & Employment Survey as well as other relevant data and research, the following recommendations are made to better support women seeking paid work and/or engaging in paid work and to improve the provision of providing accessible and focused information, support and referral.

More responsive information and support for women seeking employment

Recommendation 1 (see p. 46):

That in partnership with the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations and the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, women's information services and working women's centres nationally develop and promote gender-specific support and information services to better respond to the needs of women outside the paid workforce. These

services need to be resourced to provide personalised support, such as specialised job search assistance and careers counselling for those not linked into current mainstream government-funded services.

Recommendation 2 (see p. 46):

Further, that the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations ensure that the delivery of mainstream government-funded employment services is gender-sensitive and meets the needs of women who have dependent children or significant others, are studying or have a disability.

Recommendation 3 (see p. 46):

That in the federal government in its response to the Henry Taxation Review take into account that the current mechanism for the phasing out of government benefits for women entering the workforce erects a substantial barrier to increasing female labour force participation and that a more gender-equitable integration of income support and taxation provisions is needed to ensure that women are not financially worse off when they gain employment.

Infrastructure support for women with caring responsibilities

Recommendation 4 (see p. 47):

That the federal government in conjunction with state and territory governments develop a program of evaluation and research to more adequately identify the needs of women both within and outside the workforce, for various types of out-of-school-hours care, including before- and after-school care and vacation care, and to enhance the quality and provision of out-of-school-hours care including for older primary school and younger secondary school age children.

Recommendation 5 (see p. 47):

That to better meet the needs of women providing care to family and significant others who have a disability and/or are aging, communication mechanisms be developed by federal and state women's policy offices in conjunction with the women's information services and working women's centres nationally to provide information on available respite and care options as well as other sources of support.

Access to flexible working time arrangements

Recommendation 6 (see p. 48):

To encourage more flexible workplaces that support both women outside the paid workforce to find employment and women in paid work to maintain employment, the federal government consider expanding its Fresh Ideas for Work and Family Grants Program to private and public sector larger workplaces and to encourage employers and unions to jointly work on innovative flexible working time and leave arrangements that meet the needs of both employees and of their workplaces.

Recommendation 7 (see p. 49):

That the Minister for Employment Education and Workplace Relations and the Minister for the Status of Women address the gendered effects of the poorer job quality and job design that characterise much part-time employment in female-dominated industries, including through regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of part-time work in those industries.

Enhancing legislative awareness and implementation of workplace rights

Recommendation 8 (see p. 51):

That, in partnership with the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, women's information services and working women's centres develop information workshops to ensure women are fully informed about their workplace rights and entitlements and to assist women in negotiating conditions of work. In addition, that the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman provide simple details of rights and entitlements under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, including of the 10 National Employment Standards, and appropriate training and support to women's information services and working women's centres nationally as well other women-specific support services.

Recommendation 9 (see p. 51):

That the Fair Work Ombudsman consult with women's information services and working women's centres nationally about the most effective ways to reach and provide support to women, including Indigenous women, women with disabilities and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Further, that in partnership with federal and state women's policy offices, the Fair Work Ombudsman develop, disseminate and promote gender-specific information for women accessible through a range of different media including web-based services, email, print and face-to-face services to reach women who are non-unionised and/or work in female dominated-industries.

Recommendation 10 (see p. 51):

That the Manager of Fair Work Australia specifically invite women's information services and working women's centres nationally to contribute to the legislated evaluation of the new 'right to request' flexible work arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009*

1 INTRODUCTION

ABOUT WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICES

Each state and territory has a Women's Policy Office, except New South Wales and Queensland. Each of these offices has a women's information service. These services are located within government and within the Women's Policy Office, except for Victoria. WIRE Women's Information Service in Victoria receives funding through the Office of Women's Policy for the Women's Information Centre — the face-to-face service of WIRE — but is an independent non-government organisation.

BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

The Women & Employment Survey is the second national survey undertaken by the national women's information services. The first survey undertaken in 2006 sought information on women's financial information needs and has led to the development and dissemination of a range of positive information products and programs for women around improving their financial security.

The 2009 Women & Employment Survey was developed in order to look at some of the specific issues women face in seeking paid work and/or engaging in paid work in order to better understand what information or support is needed to assist women. A copy of the survey is at Appendix A.

SURVEY AIMS

The survey was developed in order to investigate the experiences of:

- Women outside the paid workforce particularly in regard to:
 - Seeking paid employment
 - Barriers to seeking or maintaining paid employment
- Women currently in paid employment particularly in regard to:
 - Working conditions
 - Access to and uptake of flexible working arrangements
 - Knowledge of workplace entitlements, and level of confidence in negotiating these rights
 - Access to childcare and out-of-school-hours care

In doing so the survey also identifies the type of information and support women say they want in seeking and maintaining employment.

METHODOLOGY

Two-stage process

As detailed above, this project includes a two-stage investigation. The methodological approach for both stages was as follows:

(1) Development, dissemination and initial analysis of the Women & Employment Survey

Survey questions were developed by a small working group of the Women's Information Services Network. While most questions provided for a single response, a number allowed multiple responses with additional opportunities for written comments on barriers to job seeking and on employment conditions.

After an initial set of questions that asked for details of key socio-demographic characteristics of all the respondents, those who indicated they were not in paid employment at the time of the survey were instructed to complete Part A of the survey. Those who indicated they were in paid employment were instructed to complete Part B of the survey.

The survey was hosted on the online 'Survey Monkey' website. Information about the survey was distributed through the women's information services, the Working Women's Centres (SA, NT and QLD) and the Australian Services Union.

The survey was open for completion from the beginning of August until the end of September 2009. The survey data was then downloaded and an initial analysis undertaken as part of a student placement.

(2) Further analysis of the Women & Employment Survey and development of recommendations

Following the initial analysis of the Women & Employment Survey data, Security4Women Inc. (S4W) contracted further research to refine the original analysis, locate the data within the context of other relevant Australian data and literature, and draw out the main implications of the survey findings as a basis for S4W recommendations and policy advocacy.

The survey data was downloaded to and analysed through SPSS Statistics 17. As a number of respondents who were not in the paid workforce at the time of the survey had gone on to respond to questions asked of those who were in the paid workforce, the data was cleaned to enable separate analyses of those two groups.

A large number of the respondents took the opportunity to provide written comments about the barriers to staying in employment and on their current workplace conditions. The verbatim comments made were coded and some have been used in this report to illustrate the findings of the quantitative survey data. Where appropriate, comparisons of the survey results are made with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and other data and the findings located within the context of other relevant research.

A small S4W working group worked with the research consultant to provide feedback on a draft report and to refine policy implications and a small set of recommendations.

Limitations and strengths of the Women & Employment Survey

As with most online surveys, those who responded to the Women & Employment Survey do not constitute a representative sample of Australian women. In particular, women not in paid employment were significantly underrepresented. The low response rate from this group of

women is a reflection of the survey dissemination method with the survey mainly distributed through paid work networks.

Key differences between the profile of survey respondents and the relevant population of Australian women are highlighted in the separate sections of this report. In summary the survey sample was skewed towards women who lived in Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory, women with a higher than average level of education and women in paid employment. Of those in employment, the survey sample over represents those working in the Health and Community Services industry, in professional and managerial occupations and in permanent full-time employment.

Notwithstanding these limitations, however, the survey provides important and useful data about the real life experiences of a large and diverse group of women from every Australian state and territory, as well as their views as to what services and supports might better assist them in seeking work, negotiating working conditions and remaining in work.

OVERVIEW OF REPORT

While it is recognised that women transition in and out of paid employment over the life course, the analysis in this report has focused on two distinct but related cohorts: those not in the paid workforce at the time of the survey and those in the paid workforce. The following section of this report, Section 2, provides an overview of the key demographic characteristics of all respondents and highlights where relevant key differences from Australian women more generally. Section 3 then highlights findings from the data provided by respondents not in the workforce.

Section 4 focuses on the findings from data provided by respondents in paid employment at the time of the survey, while Section 5 turns to a separate analysis of data provided by respondents who identified as Indigenous. This group of respondents were all in the paid workforce at the time of the survey. Finally, Section 6 draws on survey data, the written views of respondents and other relevant research to inform the recommendations developed by the Security4Women Alliance working group that are set out at the end of Section 6.

2 DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS

INTRODUCTION

Some 1171 women responded to the survey, although 10 women did not go on to complete it.

Of those 1169 women who completed the survey:

- 1096 women who reported that they were in the paid workforce (93.7%)
 - 71 of these women (6.5%) identified themselves as Indigenous; 65 identified as Aboriginal and six identified as Torres Strait Islander
- 63 women were not currently in paid employment (5.4%)

All questions were optional and as a result not every question was answered by all survey respondents. The totals in each of the tables in the report reflect those who responded to that specific question.

The survey data presented below provides an overview of key demographic characteristics of all respondents and highlights difference between those who were in the paid workforce and those who were not.

ABS data is also used to highlight the extent to which the distribution of respondents reflects that in the relevant female Australian population.

LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS

The vast majority of respondents provided their postcodes. These postcodes were then sorted into the relevant states and territories to provide the locations in Table 1.

Table 2.1: Location of respondents

Location	In paid workforce		Not in paid		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Western Australia	43	3.9	4	6.7	47	4.1
Victoria	329	30.2	38	63.3	367	31.9
Tasmania	66	6.1	3	5.0	69	6.0
South Australia	58	5.3	2	3.3	60	5.2
Queensland	306	28.1	8	13.3	314	27.3
Northern Territory	138	12.7	0	.0	138	12.0
Australian Capital	54	5.0	3	5.0	57	5.0
New South Wales	96	8.8	2	3.3	98	8.5
Total	1090	100.0	60	100.0	1150	100.0

- Almost a third of survey respondents come from Victoria (32%), while more than a quarter came from Queensland (27%). Surprisingly, fewer than one in 10 came from New South Wales, which is Australia's most populous state.

- There was a similar distribution for survey respondents in the paid workforce.
- However almost two-thirds of the respondents who were not in the paid workforce came from Victoria.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY AGE

Table 2.2: Age of respondents

Age cohort	In paid workforce		Not in paid		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
15–19 years	3	.3	1	1.6	4	.3
20–24 years	69	6.3	3	4.8	72	6.2
25–34 years	313	28.6	30	47.6	343	29.7
35–44 years	299	27.4	11	17.5	310	26.8
45–54 years	286	26.2	9	14.3	295	25.5
55–64 years	114	10.4	8	12.7	122	10.6
65 or over	9	.8	1	1.6	10	.9
Total	1093	100.0	63	100.0	1156	100.0

- More than one-third of all survey respondents were aged less than 34 years (36%), with a similar proportion aged 45 years and over.
- More than half of those not in the paid workforce were aged less than 34 years (54%).
- 65% of those not in the paid workforce were aged between 25-44 years compared with 56% of those in the paid workforce. This difference illustrates the participation gap in this age cohort in Australian female participation rates compared with those in most other OECD countries (Whitehouse and Hosking 2005).
- Two-thirds of those in the paid workforce (66%) were aged 35 years and over, with more than a third 37% aged 45 years and over.
- The age profile of survey respondents in the paid workforce is broadly similar to that for Australian female employed persons (2009c).

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION OF RESPONDENTS

Table 2.3 below sets out the distribution of respondents by household composition:

- The majority of respondents (59%) respondents live in either partnered (without children) or partnered with children households.
- One in 10 of the respondents lived in sole parent households, while 13% of the sample lived in a lone-person household.
- While women who were not in the paid workforce were just as likely to live in partnered with children households, they were less likely to report that they lived in partnered (without children) households than women who were in the paid workforce.

Table 2.3: Household composition

Household type	In paid workforce		Not in paid workforce		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lone person	148	13.5	6	9.7	154	13.3
Single with children	111	10.1	8	12.9	119	10.3
Partnered	328	30.0	13	21.0	341	29.5
Partnered with children	326	29.8	18	29.0	344	29.7
Group/share household	132	12.1	11	17.7	143	12.4
Other	50	4.6	6	9.7	56	4.8
Total	1095	100.0	62	100.0	1157	100.0

RESPONDENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF SCHOOLING

Table 2.4: Highest level of schooling

Schooling	In paid workforce		Not in paid		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Primary School	3	.3	0	.0	3	.3
Year 10	59	5.4	4	6.3	63	5.4
Year 12	83	7.6	6	9.5	89	7.7
Certificate/Diploma	254	23.2	8	12.7	262	22.6
Degree	331	30.2	21	33.3	352	30.4
Graduate Diploma	120	11.0	8	12.7	128	11.1
Postgraduate	245	22.4	16	25.4	261	22.5
Total	1095	100.0	63	100.0	1158	100.0

- The overwhelming majority of survey respondents had completed some form of post-school qualification (87%). Almost a third of all respondents have a degree (30%).
- Comparison with ABS data suggests that survey respondents had on average a higher level of education attainment than is the case for women aged 15-74 years in the Australian population, where 39% had no post-school qualifications and 21% held a bachelor degree (ABS 2009a).
- There is little difference between those in the paid workforces and those not in the paid workforce in this respect, except that those in the paid workforce were more likely to have a certificate or a diploma.

RESPONDENTS FROM A NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING BACKGROUND

As in Table 2.5 below, the majority of participants (88%) reported they came from an English-speaking background. There is little difference in this respect between those respondents in the paid workforce and those who were not.

- The majority of those who came from a non-English speaking background (61%) spoke a language other than English at home.
- 39 different languages were nominated by respondents as the language they spoke at home.

Table 2.5: Respondents from a non-English-speaking background

NES background	In paid workforce		Not in paid workforce		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	132	12.2	8	12.7	140	12.2
No	954	87.8	55	87.3	1009	87.8
Total	1086	100.0	63	100.0	1149	100.0

RESPONDENTS' WEEKLY GROSS INCOME

Table 2.6: Average gross weekly income

Gross weekly income	In paid workforce		Not in paid workforce		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than \$400	66	6.0	39	65.0	105	9.1
\$400–599	156	14.3	8	13.3	164	14.2
\$600–799	228	20.9	3	5.0	231	20.1
\$800–999	191	17.5	3	5.0	194	16.8
\$1000–1199	181	16.6	2	3.3	183	15.9
\$1200–1399	107	9.8	2	3.3	109	9.5
\$1400–1999	121	11.1	0	.0	121	10.5
\$2000 or more	42	3.8	3	5.0	45	3.9
Total	1092	100.0	60	100.0	1152	100.0

- Almost one in 10 respondents have an average weekly gross income of less than \$400 gross per week.
- Not surprisingly, two-thirds of respondents who were not in the workforce had a gross weekly income of less than \$400.
- More than half of those who were in the paid workforce (55%) had a weekly gross income of between \$600 and \$1199.
- Only 42 women of those who were in the paid workforce (4%) reported an average weekly income of more than \$2000.

3 WOMEN OUTSIDE THE PAID WORKFORCE

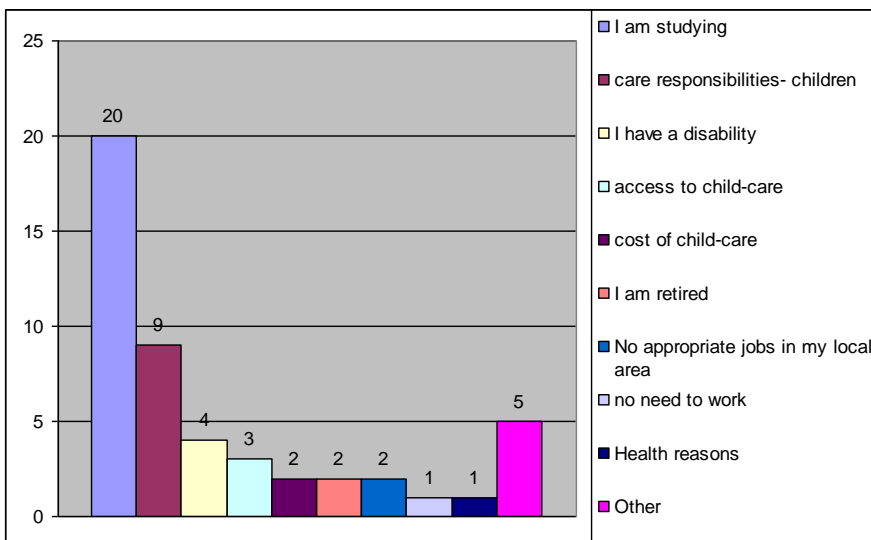
In this section, we focus on those survey respondents who were outside the paid workforce at the time they complete the Women & Employment Survey. Sixty-three of the women who responded to the survey reported they were not currently in the paid workforce. Of these:

- 32 respondents (51%) were looking for work
- 25 respondents (40%) were not looking for work
- Six did not say if they were looking for paid work or not

NOT LOOKING FOR PAID WORK

Reasons not looking for paid work

Figure 3.1: Reasons for not seeking paid work



Of those women who reported they were not looking for work the main reasons nominated were:

- Study (by 20 or 41% of respondents)
- Care responsibilities for children (by nine or 18% respondents)
- Access to and cost of childcare (by five or 10% of respondents)
- Disability and health reasons (by five or 10% respondents)

These reasons differ from findings of a recent ABS survey (ABS 2010a) where the main reasons nominated by women for not wanting a job or more hours were:

- Permanently retired from full-time work (28%)
- No need / satisfied with current arrangements / retired from full time work (23%)

- Long-term illness or disability (19%)
- Caring for children (11%)
- Studying / returning to study (7%)

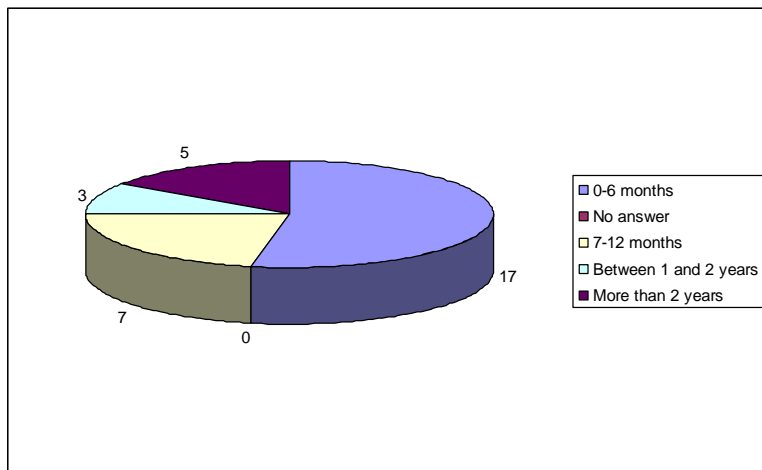
However consistent with the findings of the ABS survey, the two women in the current survey who reported they were retired were over 55 years of age

LOOKING FOR PAID WORK

Length of time spent looking for work

As set out in Figure 3.2, of the 32 respondents who were looking for work, more than half (17 respondents) had been looking for six months or less. However, five respondents had been looking for more than two years.

Figure 3.2: Length of time looking for work



Reasons for unsuccessful job seeking

Respondents who had applied for jobs and been unsuccessful were asked to identify the main reasons they thought this was the case. The main reasons given by 32 women who responded to this question were:

- Not having the right connections (five respondents)
- Not being able to work the hours required (four respondents)
- Being too qualified for the job (four respondents)

The basis on which work is sought

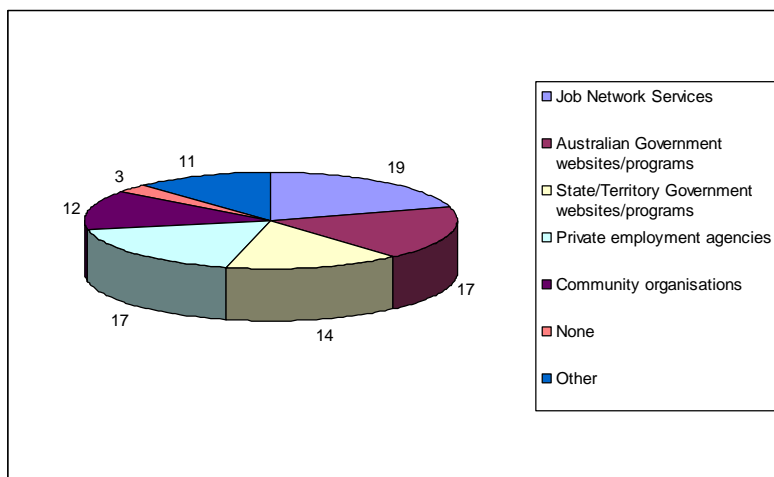
Of the 32 respondents looking for work

- 17 respondents were looking for part-time work
- Five respondents were looking for full-time work

- Five respondents were looking for casual work
- Five respondents were looking for any kind of work

Use of employment services

Figure 3.3: Employment services accessed



Respondents accessed multiple services in looking for work. The most frequently accessed employment services by those looking for work were:

- Job network services (nominated by 19 respondents)
- Australian government websites/programs (nominated by 17 respondents)
- Private employment agencies (nominated by 15 respondents)
- State/territory government websites/programs (nominated by 13 respondents)
- Community organisations (nominated by 12 respondents)

Ten women reported that they had accessed alternative services including:

- Newspapers (four respondents)
- Online advertisements (six respondents)

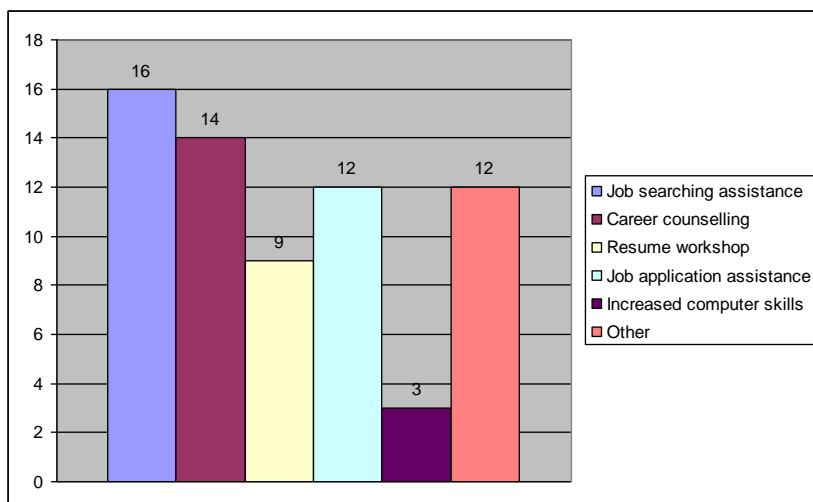
Job services required

Respondents who were not in the paid workforce were asked to indicate services that they believed would help them in seeking and gaining employment. As set out below in Figure 3.4 (and including four women who were not currently looking for work but who responded to this question), the services nominated most frequently were:

- Job search assistance (16 respondents)
- Career counselling (14 respondents)
- Job application assistance (12 respondents)

- Resume workshop (nine respondents)

Figure 3.4: Job services required



Twelve women indicated that they required ‘other’ services and assistance with the following most frequently nominated:

- Interview training (two respondents)
- Networking skills and help to access the ‘hidden job market’ (two respondents)
‘It’s all about who you know or who you are associated with...’
- Incentives for employers to provide flexible workplace conditions (two respondents)
‘Government incentives for employers to provide part-time work...’

ACCESSING INFORMATION

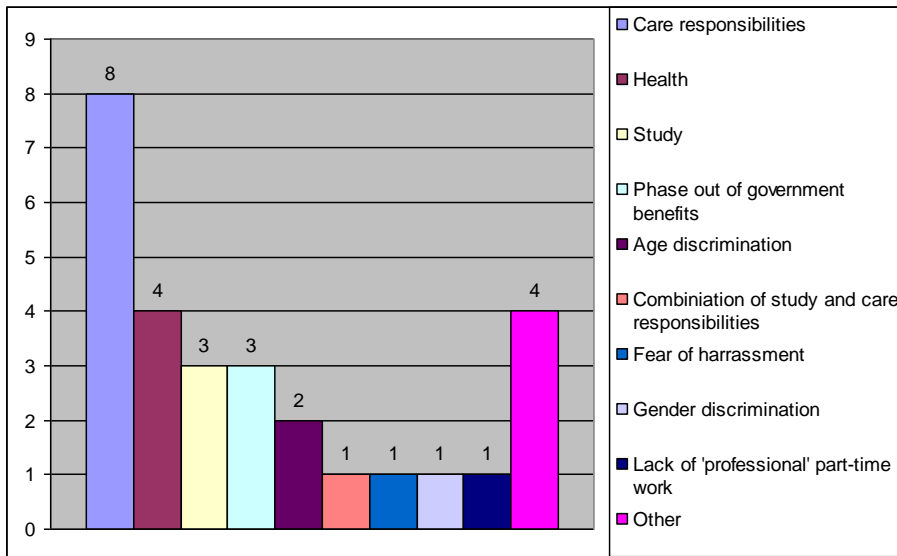
Survey respondents were asked to nominate the most useful ways to access information to assist in finding work. Of the 34 women who responded to this question:

- 16 respondents nominated websites
- 14 respondents nominated walk-in/appointment services
- 12 respondents nominated email services
- Eight respondents nominated printed material
- Eight respondents nominated seminars
- Two respondents nominated telephone services
- Two respondents nominated DVD/CDs

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Survey respondents who were not in the paid workforce were asked: ‘In your opinion, what barriers might prevent you from staying in full or part time employment?’ A total of 30 women responded to this question. While two women responded that there were no barriers, the barriers nominated by the other 28 respondents have been coded as in Figure 3.5 below.

Figure 3.5: Barriers to staying in full- or part-time employment



- Eight women nominated the difficulty of balancing work and caring responsibilities:

Flexible child care, family responsibility - leaving early for children's activities or appointments... Weariness- doing it all on my own trying to give the best to my children and the work environment.

I can't take night work or shift as I am a single parent.

Child care is the biggest issue and the hours that i can work. My husband works permanent afternoons and we only have one car and we have three children

- Four women nominated health:

The impact of full-time work on my physical and mental well-being prevents me from trying to find full-time employment. This especially relates to long hours in front of a computer screen.

My biggest personal problem is: Its not about barriers once I find a job - it's about finding a job that doesn't require a drivers license as I cannot drive due to pain mostly in my neck (although now managed through medication, and knowing my limitations, ie: taking off the invisible roller-blades).

- Three women nominated managing work and study or work, study and care responsibilities:

I left fulltime employment [to] gain qualifications for future job 'security' and work in an area that I feel passionate about. Upon returning to study I lost my part-time job and I find that the biggest barrier to finding work now is finding work that has the flexibility to fit around my studies.

Wanting to study on part time basis and also need work that suits my role as a parent.

- Four women nominated gender or age discrimination and/or fear of harassment

Old boy network - breaking into current strongholds re it's not what you know, but who you know. Preferences given to WA males. Minority of women in senior management and board positions.

I have already experienced age discrimination during an interview for a social work fieldwork placement this year. Staying in full or part time employment probably isn't the issue. The real issue appears to be gaining the job in the first place.

I have left three jobs in the past five years because of sexual harassment and bullying from managers and supervisors. I am now fearful of work in general. I am not confident that I can defend myself or react in a way that will work for me instead of against me next time I am harassed or bullied in the workplace...Sometimes a safe workplace seems like a hopeless fantasy.

- Three women nominated the phase out of government benefits as a barrier to remaining in employment:

The social security network where you lose benefits so quickly before you are established financially.

the cut out of benefits when it is hard to live on the amounts given out.

As highlighted in Section 6, the barriers to participation in the paid workforce identified by survey respondents are broadly consistent with the findings of a recent ABS survey (ABS 2010a). The ABS survey highlights *workplace barriers* for women in the way work is organised, such as on a full-time basis or with no access to flexible start and finish times, and *barriers outside the workplace* such as the lack of assistance with and access to childcare services and the withdrawal of government benefits.

4 WOMEN IN THE PAID WORKFORCE

In this section we look first at the workplace demographics of the respondents who stated they were in the paid workforce at the time of completing the survey before turning our attention to the working time arrangements and the employee-orientated flexibility of these arrangements. The next section then considers the critical issues of workplace rights and legislative awareness while the final section looks at the assistance respondents require to be better able to negotiate their workplace conditions.

INDUSTRY, SECTOR, OCCUPATION & BASIS OF EMPLOYMENT

To situate the analysis in this section we also consider the extent to which the survey respondents are similar to employed Australian women.

Industry

Table 4.1: Industries in which respondents work

Industry	N	%
Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	14	1.3
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	8	.8
Communication Services	22	2.1
Construction	16	1.5
Cultural and Recreational Services	21	2.0
Education	148	14.0
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	4	.4
Finance and Insurance	8	.8
Government – Federal/State/Local	208	19.7
Health and Community Services	521	49.4
Manufacturing	6	.6
Mining	12	1.1
Personal and Other Services	41	3.9
Property and Business Services	9	.9
Retail Trade	10	.9
Transport and Storage	2	.2
Wholesale Trade	5	.5
Total	1055	100.0

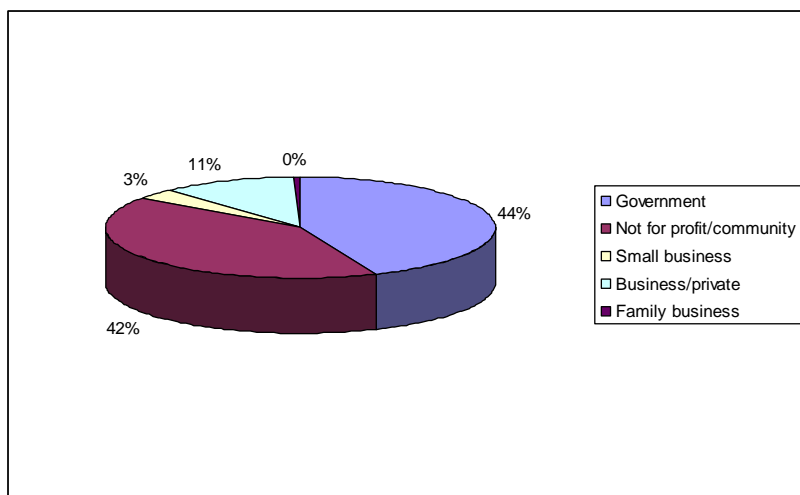
Out of the 1055 respondents who nominated the industry in which they worked:

- Almost half worked in the Health and Community Services industry (49%), while another fifth worked in Government (federal/state/local) (20%). These two industries which accounted for more than two-thirds of all respondents.

- In comparison with comparable 2009 ABS data (2009a) where Health and Community Services makes up just 19% of female employment, the Health and Community Services industry was very much overrepresented among the women who responded to the survey. On the other hand the Retail industry – the second most important industry of employment for Australian women (14% of all female employment) was considerably underrepresented with just 10, less than one percent of all respondents, working in this industry.
- While the proportion of those working in Education was more similar to like that for Australian female persons (14% compared with 11%), the survey overrepresented those working in Government or Public Administration (20% compared with 6%)

Sector of employment

Figure 4.1: Sector in which respondents work



- The majority of respondents worked in the government sector (44%) and the non-profit/community sector (42%) with just 15% of respondents working in the private sector (small business / private business and family business).
- Thus in this survey, those working in the private sector are significantly underrepresented in comparison with relevant ABS data. In 2009, 75% of female employed persons worked in the private sector in their main job (ABS 2009d).

When we look at the industry location of the survey respondents we found that:

- Of all government sector workers, just under half of respondents (44%) worked in federal/state or local government, with a third (33%) working in Health and Community Services and a fifth working in Education (20%).
- Of those who worked in the non-profit/community sector, the majority (80%) worked in Health and Community Services.
- Private sector (small business / private business and family business), respondents were distributed through a number of industries with the most common industries in which respondents worked Education (17%) and Health and Community Services (13%).

Occupation

Respondents were also asked to indicate the occupation in which they currently worked. While respondents provided job titles, this data was retro-coded according to the ABS 1 digit ANZSCO codes to provide data for analysis as below.

Table 4.2: Occupations in which respondents work

Occupation	N	%
Managers	195	19.8
Professionals	379	38.5
Technicians & trades Workers	13	1.3
Community & personal service workers	140	14.2
Clerical & admin Workers	235	23.9
Sales workers	14	1.4
Labourers	9	.9
Total	985	100.0

Ten percent of the respondents did not answer this question. Of the 985 women who did:

- The main occupations reported were Professionals (39%), Clerical and administrative workers (24%), and Managers (20%). Community and personal service workers accounted for 14% of respondents.
- This distribution differs from that for employed Australia women more generally. 2009 ABS Data indicates that the largest female occupational group is Clerical and administrative workers (26%), followed by Professionals (23%) Community and personal service workers (14%) and Sales workers (13%) (ABS 2009d).
- In the survey while sales workers are significantly underrepresented just making up 1.4% of all respondents compared with 13% for employed women, the proportion of community and personal service workers in the survey is similar to the Australian workforce (14%).
- While managers make up just 10% of all female occupations, this occupational category accounted for a fifth (20%) of survey respondents.

Looking at the Health and Community Services industry, the main industry represented in the survey, it is interesting to note that the main occupations reported by those who worked in this industry were:

- Professionals (41%)
- Managers (20%)
- Community and personal service workers (20%)
- Clerical and administrative workers (19%)

This occupational profile underrepresents Community and personal service workers who in 2009 made up 33% of those working in Health and Community Services (ABS 2009d).

Workplace size

Table 4.3: Sector by size of workplace

Size of workplace	More than 15		Less than 15		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	397	85.9%	65	14.1%	462	43.5%
Non-profit/ community	244	55.2%	198	44.8%	442	41.6%
Small business	6	17.1%	29	82.9%	35	3.4%
Business/private	88	73.3%	32	26.7%	120	11.3%
Family business	3	75.0%	1	25.0%	4	0.4%
Total	738	69.4%	325	30.6%	1063	100.0%

- While over two-thirds of respondents worked for large employers or workplaces (69%), the size of business or departments varied across the sector in which respondents worked.
- Not surprisingly those working for government worked in large workplaces while the reverse was true for those working in small business. Those working in the not-for-profit community sector worked across both smaller and larger workplaces.

Basis for employment

Respondents were asked the basis on which they were employed as below in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Sector by basis of employment

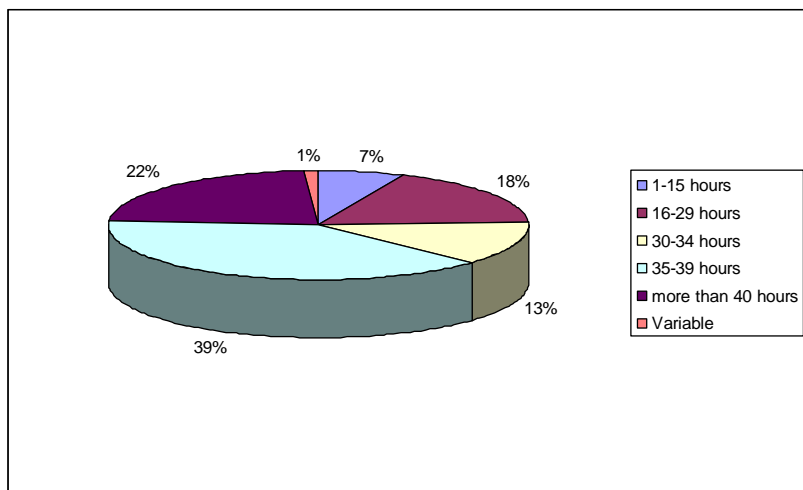
Basis of employment	Government		Non-profit/community		Small business		Business/private		Family business		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Casual basis	17	3.7	27	6.1	15	42.9	22	18.3	1	20.0	82	7.7
Permanent part-time basis	96	20.8	137	31.0	6	17.1	20	16.7	1	20.0	260	24.4
Permanent full-time basis	258	55.8	215	48.6	11	31.4	66	55.0	3	60.0	553	52.0
Fixed-term contract	86	18.6	50	11.3	1	2.9	9	7.5	0	.0	146	13.7
In more than one job	5	1.1	11	2.5	2	5.7	3	2.5	0	.0	21	2.0
Don't know	0	.0	2	.5	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	2	.2
Total	462	100.0	442	100.0	35	100.0	120	100.0	5	100.0	1064	100.0

- The majority of respondents worked on a permanent full-time basis (52%) with another 24% working on a permanent part-time basis.
- Only 8% of respondents stated they worked on a casual basis which is well under the proportion of casual employees among female employed persons in Australia (28%) (ABS 2009e).¹
- Those working outside the government and non-profit community sectors were the most likely to be casual with 43% of those who work for small business being employed on a casual basis.
- The majority of those who work on fixed-term contracts work in the government sector where they make up almost one-fifth of respondents in that sector.

WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS & FLEXIBILITY

Hours worked

Figure 4.2: Weekly hours worked



- The majority of respondents worked more than 35 hours a week (62%), with almost a quarter (22%) working more than 40 hours a week.
- Only 7% worked less than 16 hours a week while 13 (1.2%) of respondents indicated that their hours were variable.
- Casual respondents were the most likely to work hours of less than 30 per week (82%) compared with those in permanent part-time work (59%) or on fixed-term contracts (19%).
- Of those working on a permanent full-time basis, 40% worked more than 40 hours per week.

While the quantum of working hours is important for women workers, particularly those who have caring responsibilities, the scheduling of those hours and the predictability of that scheduling is crucial (Chalmers et al. 2005). The Women & Employment Survey data allows us to look at a number of dimensions of employee-orientated flexibility as highlighted below.

¹ Defined by the ABS as 'without paid leave entitlements'. Paid leave entitlements refers to the entitlement of employees to either paid holiday leave, paid sick leave, paid long service leave and/or paid maternity/paternity leave in their main job.

Able to negotiate hours

Respondents were asked if they were able to negotiate hours that suited them. As set out in Table 4.5:

- 71% indicated they were able to do so, while 29% said they were not.
- The ability to negotiate hours differed across sector of employment.
 - Perhaps surprisingly only two-thirds (67%) of government sector respondents were able to negotiate hours that suited them.
 - This was the case for more than 80% of small business and family business residents which suggests some better employee flexibility in these sectors.
 - However 40% of respondents working in business / private sector indicated that they were not.

Table 4.5: Sector by negotiation of hours

Sector	Able to negotiate hours		Not able to negotiate hours		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	306	66.7	153	33.3	459	100.0
Non-profit/ community	339	77.8	97	22.2	436	100.0
Small business	29	82.9	6	17.1	35	100.0
Business/private	72	60.5	47	39.5	119	100.0
Family business	4	80.0	1	20.0	5	100.0
Total	750	71.2	304	28.8	1054	100.0

Weekly set hours

Table 4.6: Sector by weekly set regular hours

Weekly set regular hours	Yes		No		Sometimes		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	376	81.4	41	8.9	45	9.7	462	100.0
Non-profit/ community	349	79.1	38	8.6	54	12.2	441	100.0
Small business	17	48.6	9	25.7	9	25.7	35	100.0
Business/private	90	75.0	15	12.5	15	12.5	120	100.0
Family business	4	80.0	1	20.0	0	.0	5	100.0
Total	836	78.6	104	9.8	123	11.6	1063	100.0

Respondents were asked if they had set weekly hours:

- The majority of respondents (79%) indicated they did.
- 12% of respondents indicated they sometimes had set weekly hours while a further 10% indicated they did not.
- While those who worked in the government sector were the most likely to have set weekly hours (81%), of the 35 respondents who worked for small business only 17 (49%) indicated their weekly hours were set.
- Not surprisingly casual employees were much less likely to have set weekly hours (42%) and more likely to have weekly hours that varied (27%) than other respondents.

Reduction in hours

The survey was run in late 2009 towards the tail end of Australia's economic downturn. For women, this downturn (unlike earlier economic downturns in the early 1980s and early 1990s which saw an increase in female unemployment) has been characterised by the fall in full-time employment being offset by the rise in part-time employment (ABS 2010b). There also appears to have been rising *underemployment* (ABS 2009f) which is attributable to the loss of hours in many industries in which women work part-time (see also TAI 2009).

Given the economic downturn at the time of the survey respondents were asked if their work hours had decreased in the last 12 months.

Table 4.7: Sector by reduction in hours over the last 12 months

Hours decreased	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	43	9.3	419	90.7	462	100.0
Non-profit/community	58	13.2	381	86.8	439	100.0
Small business	14	40.0	21	60.0	35	100.0
Business/private	21	17.5	99	82.5	120	100.0
Family business	0	.0	5	100.0	5	100.0
Total	136	12.8	925	87.2	1061	100.0

- Only 13% of respondents indicated that their work hours had decreased over the last 12 months.
- Those working in government were least likely to report any reduction in hours (9%) and those working in small business the most likely (40%).
- Those working on casual contracts were the most likely to report a reduction in hours (45%) and those working on a permanent full-time basis the least (6%). However 21% of those working on a permanent part-time basis reported a reduction in hours.

The survey respondents who reported their hours had decreased in the last 12 months offer a range of reasons why this has occurred.

Written responses from 129 respondents (95% of those who reported that their hours had decreased) as to the reasons for the decrease in hours have been coded as below:

- Due to the economic downturn, budgetary constraints / decrease in shifts or hours available (27 or 21%)

[The] economic downturn has caused a number of women to take their children out of child care due to cut in hours or losing their job. Consequently my hours have gone down.

Reduction in department funding available to pay casual tutors. The magnitude of the teaching job hasn't changed, but the paid hours were reduced to accommodate the staff required.

{My} project ended, found new project with new employer but grant funds had been reduced in response to economic crisis so fewer hours.

- Due to care responsibilities, maternity leave (19 or 15%)

To accommodate dropping off and picking up children from school.

Can't find child care and some places wont let a 3 yr old come to work.

I left to have a baby and now have returned to work on a casual, 2 day a week basis.

- Due to study (18 or 14%)

Apart from working I am completing an honours year and needed to take some hours off work a week to complete my thesis.

Due to doing a full time placement for uni I can only work weekends now, I used to work about 25-30 hours a week...

- Due to relocation or new job (18 or 14%)

Changing jobs, having to start as the "newest person" in a casual job (in a casual industry) so only get the bare min. hours, takes awhile to build up to getting decent hours.

I changed job! my last job was more stressful with a bigger workload that required out of hours work/travel and unpaid overtime.

- 'Personal choice' (18 or 14%)

My choice for lifestyle reasons.

Elected to work less hours.

- Due to health reasons (10 or 8 %)

I used to work 60+ hours per week but I couldn't handle being so exhausted so I stopped.

Injury through cycling accident.

- Work/life balance (4 or 3%)

I cut back on my hours for my third job as it was affecting my work/life balance.

- Other (15 or 12%)

While more than a fifth of respondents reported that the economic downturn had been the key reason for their reduction in hours, a range of other reasons were also offered. What is of

particular interest here is that the impact that care responsibilities and indeed women's more precarious labour market attachment can also lead to the reduction of hours in paid work; for example, because of relocation or a new job.

A reduction of hours can be positive for women's health and indeed can help them manage less stressful lives, particularly those who have to manage care and other responsibilities. Nevertheless, the findings of the recent AWALI survey suggest that the economic downturn and consequent anxiety about job security might encourage the pursuit of more work to both insure against the risk of redundancy and save money, increasing work-life stress (Pocock et al. 2009: 19). In the current survey, however, it is unclear the extent to which any increased workload and hours impacted on the preference for fewer hours by those working full-time as highlighted in the next section.

Preference for hours

Respondents were also asked how they felt about the hours they worked. As shown in Table 4.8 below:

- The majority indicated they were happy with their hours (60%).
- A fifth of respondents indicated they would like to work fewer hours.
 - Those who in non-profit/community sector (23%) and family business (two or 40% of respondents) were the most likely to indicate they would like fewer hours of work.
- Almost a fifth (19%) indicated they would like more flexibility in their hours.
 - Those who worked in the government sector were the most likely to report they would like more flexible hours (23%).
- Only 7% indicated they would like more hours and only 3% reported they would like more stability in their hours.
 - Those in small business were more likely to report they wanted more hours (seven respondents or 21%) and more stability in their hours (three respondents or 9%).

Table 4.8: Sector by how respondent feels about hours worked

Preference for hours	I'm happy with the hours that I work		I'd like more hours		I'd like fewer hours		I'd like to have more flexible hours		I need more stability in my work hours		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	273	60.4	22	4.9	82	18.1	103	22.8	12	2.7	452	100.0
Non-profit/ community	267	61.1	31	7.1	100	22.9	67	15.3	9	2.1	437	100.0
Small business	20	58.8	7	20.6	5	14.7	6	17.6	3	8.8	34	100.0
Business/private	69	58.0	13	10.9	24	20.2	17	14.3	6	5.0	119	100.0
Family business	3	60.0	0	.0	2	40.0	1	20.0	0	.0	5	100.0
Total	632	60.4	73	7.0	213	20.3	194	18.5	30	2.9	1047	100.0

- In terms of employment status:
 - Those who worked on a casual basis were the most likely to state they would like more hours (32%) and the least likely to say they would like more flexible hours (three respondents or 4%).
 - Those who worked on a permanent full-time basis were the most likely to state they would like fewer hours (26%) and the most likely to state they would like more flexibility in their hours of work (25%).

These latter finding highlights the tension between permanency, which provides some job security and formal access to paid leave arrangements yet limited flexibility in hours of work, and casual employment, which may provide some flexibility of hours but which comes at the price of more secure employment and income.

Being available on short notice

There are a number of employer-orientated flexibilities that can make things very difficult for employees in terms of predictability in hours. One of these is having to be available on short notice.

Respondents were asked if their employer expected them to be available on short notice:

- A fifth of respondents (21%) responded 'yes'
- Another 29% indicated that their employer 'sometimes' expected them to be available on short notice.
- However more than half (51%) responded 'no'.
- In terms of employment basis:
 - As might be expected casual employees were more likely to respond 'yes' (28%) and 'sometimes' (32%).
 - 24% of permanent full-time employees also indicated that their employer expected them to be available on short notice with another 27% indicating their employer sometimes had this expectation.
 - This employer-orientated flexibility of permanent full-time employees highlights the time-unbounded nature — heavier workloads and the overtime expectation of many full-time employees — of much full-time employment (Rubery et al. 2005).
 - Permanent part-time employees were expected to be available on short notice with 11% responding 'yes' and a further 34% expected to be 'sometimes' available, which highlights the casual-like flexibility expected of many permanent part-time workers (Campbell and Charlesworth 2004).

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

In Australia as in other countries the main responsibility for providing care for dependent children, family members and other significant others falls on women, whether or not they are in the paid workforce (Chesters et al. 2009). Many women in the paid workforce have such caring responsibilities. A representative survey of Victorian employees undertaken in 2009 (Haynes et al. 2010) found:

- 62% of employed women have dependent children.
- 17% of employed women regularly provide unpaid care to other family members and others.

Thus access to employee-orientated flexible working time and leave arrangements is crucial to support women and support their labour force attachment. Part-time work is one way of managing the work/care juggle but reduced hours do not necessarily deliver the required flexibility, particularly if employed on a casual basis or even on a permanent basis where hours can be flexed up and down at ordinary time rates. In addition, casual employees do not have access to any paid or leave entitlements.

Access to flexible work arrangements

Respondents were asked if they used flexible workplace arrangements to assist in care for family or significant others.

Table 4.9: Sector by access to flexible workplace arrangements

Access to flexible workplace arrangements	Yes		No		Sometimes		I don't have access		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	173	37.6	125	27.2	115	25.0	47	10.2	460	100.0
Non-profit/community	161	37.3	126	29.2	108	25.0	37	8.6	432	100.0
Small business	8	22.9	12	34.3	5	14.3	10	28.6	35	100.0
Business/private	35	29.2	41	34.2	26	21.7	18	15.0	120	100.0
Family business	1	20.0	3	60.0	0	.0	1	20.0	5	100.0
Total	378	35.9	307	29.2	254	24.1	113	10.7	1052	100.0

- More than a third of respondents (36%) indicated that they were able to use flexible work arrangements to care for family or significant others, with another quarter (24%) stating that they *sometimes* could.
- However almost a third (29%) stated they did not use flexible work arrangements, with another 11% indicating they did not have access to such arrangements.
- In terms of sector, those working in the non-profit/community sector (63%) and the government sector (63%) were most likely to always or sometimes have such access.
- Those who worked in the small business, private and family business sectors were the most likely to report they had no access at all to flexible work arrangements to care for family or significant others (18%).
- In terms of employment basis:
 - Those who worked on casual contracts (25%) were the most likely *not to have any access* at all to flexible work arrangements.
 - Those who worked on permanent part-time contracts (45%) were the most likely to report they were able to take flexible work arrangements.

35% of respondents reported they had dependent children. Of these respondents:

- More than half (53%) reported they used flexible work arrangements while another 25% reported they sometimes were able to use such arrangements.
- Almost half (49%) worked 34 hours or less compared with 30% of those who don't have dependent children suggesting that reduced hours is used by women as a way of accommodating parental responsibilities

Carers leave

An annual allocation of carers leave is now one of the 10 National Employment Standards (NES) under the *Fair Work Act 2009* for those who are employed other than on a casual basis. The NES on carers leave now provides for 10 days paid personal/carers leave per annum (which includes both sick and carers leave); two days unpaid carers leave for casuals per occasion and other employees who have used up their paid entitlements. The Standard also provides an additional two days compassionate leave per occasion unpaid in the case of casual employees and paid for other eligible employees.²

However until January 2010, when the NES came into effect, casuals have not been able to access even unpaid carers leave as a workplace right. So at the time of the Women & Employment Survey casual respondents would not have had formal access to carers leave. Those on other contracts, however, would typically have access to 10 days carers leave per annum.

Table 4.10: Sector by annual allocation of carers leave

Carers leave	Yes		No		Don't know		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	292	64.2	77	16.9	86	18.9	455	100.0
Non-profit/ community	233	53.0	89	20.2	118	26.8	440	100.0
Small business	6	17.6	20	58.8	8	23.5	34	100.0
Business/private	48	40.0	48	40.0	24	20.0	120	100.0
Family business	2	50.0	1	25.0	1	25.0	4	100.0
Total	581	55.2	235	22.3	237	22.5	1053	100.0

- While more than half (55%) of all respondents reported they had an annual allocation of carers leave, while more than a fifth (22%) reported they did not.
- Those who worked in the government sector were the most likely to have carers leave (64%) while those who worked for small business were the least likely (59%).
- When we examine this question by basis of employment:
 - Only one respondent employed on casual basis stated she had an allocation of such leave.

² See: <<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/Pay-leave-and-conditions/Leave-and-public-holidays/Pages/Personal-carers-compassionate-leave.aspx?role=employees>>.

- On the other hand, 16% of those employed on permanent or fixed-term contracts — those employees most likely to have a right to paid carers leave — stated they *did not have* an allocation of carers leave.
- Almost a quarter (23%) reported that they *did not know* if they had an allocation of carers leave:
 - This was the case for 27% of non-profit/community sector respondents and 21% of small business, private and family business respondents.
 - 16% those employed on a casual basis did not know if they had such access.
 - However, those employees most likely to have a right to paid carers leave did not know if they did or not. Twenty-three percent of those employed on permanent or fixed term contracts did not know if they had such access. This lack of knowledge was somewhat higher among those employed on a permanent part-time contract (28%) and among those employed on a fixed-term contract (23%) than those employed on a permanent full-time basis (21%).

This lack of knowledge about rights to carers leave goes to the general awareness of legislative rights discussed further below.

UNION MEMBERSHIP, WORKPLACE RIGHTS AND LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS

Union membership

Thirty-four percent of respondents stated that they were union members, which is a higher rate of unionisation than for employed women generally. In 2008, 19% of female employees were union members (ABS 2009e).

The higher rate of unionisation reported in the Women & Employment survey is consistent with a number of other recent surveys such as the AWALI survey and the Vic WAL survey (Pocock et al. 2007; Haynes et al. 2010). It is likely that the relatively high rates of union membership in the current survey reflect the predominance of public and community sector employment and low rates of casual employment. It is also possible that the relatively high rates of union membership are related to response bias in online surveys.

An analysis of union members in the Women & Employment survey shows that:

- In terms of employment basis those employed on permanent full-time contracts were much more likely to be union members (59%) than those employed on a casual basis (5%).
- Those in the government (58%) and the non-profit/community sectors (33%) were much more likely to be union members than those employed in private business (8%).

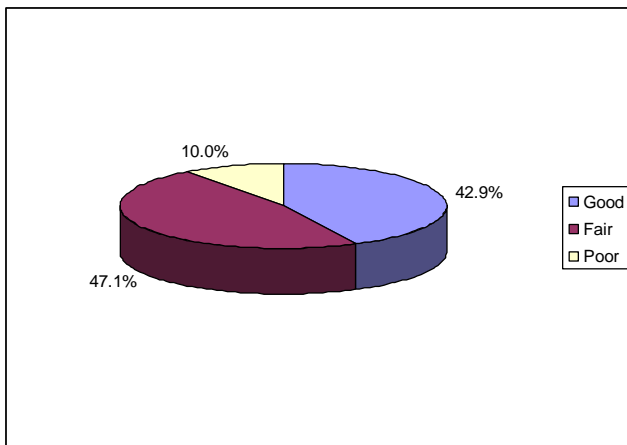
Awareness of workplace rights

Respondents were asked to rate their overall knowledge of their workplace rights. As shown in Figure 4.3:

- The majority of respondents (47%) rated their overall knowledge as fair.
- However this rating depended both on sector of employment and basis of employment:

- Those employed in small business were the mostly likely to rate their knowledge as poor (21%), while those who worked in the government sector were the most like to rate their knowledge as good (46%).
- Respondents who were employed on a casual basis were the most more likely to describe their knowledge as poor (22%), while those who worked on a permanent full-time basis were the most like to rate their knowledge as good (49%).

Figure 4.3: Overall knowledge of workplace rights



Survey respondents were also asked if they knew where to access information on four specific workplace rights and conditions. While the majority of respondents indicated they knew where to access such information, a significant minority did not and these responses are highlighted below:

- 20% did not know where to access information on their workplace entitlements.
- 21% did not know where to access information on appropriate wage levels.
- 14% did not know where to access information on bullying and harassment in the workplace.
- 11% did not know where to access information on workplace health and safety.

ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

Sort of assistance

Respondents were asked what sort of assistance they required to assist them negotiate their workplace conditions. The nominated assistance included:

- Support and assistance from an independent person (79%).
- Increased confidence (78%).
- Information about what workplace entitlements are available (78%).

- In terms of sector of employment :
 - Those in the government sector were most likely to nominate support and assistance from an independent person (82%) while those in the non-profit/community sector were most likely to nominate information about what workplace entitlement are available (82%).

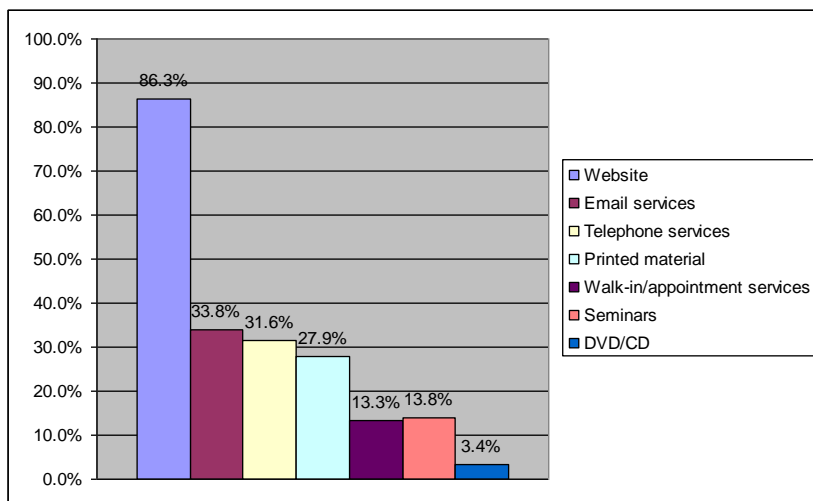
Sort of information

Respondents were also asked to indicate the most useful sources in seeking information about workplace conditions. As can be seen in Figure 4.4:

- Websites were overwhelmingly seen as the most useful source of information (86% of respondents).
- This was followed by email services (34%), telephone services (32%) and printed material (28%).

The choice of websites no doubt reflects the survey sample who responded to the survey online.

Figure 4.4: Useful sources of information



Childcare

The provision of childcare is critical for women in paid employment with dependent children and the lack of or limited access to childcare and out-of-school-hours care is a significant barrier both to obtaining employment and also to remaining in employment.

Those who had reported they had dependent children and that they had preschool-aged children (a total of 211 respondents) were asked if they had been able to secure the childcare they needed in order to work the hours they wanted to.

- Less than half (46%) indicated they were able to, although 40% indicated that such care was not required (for example as a family member was able to care for the children).
- 14% indicated that they were not able to secure the childcare needed.

Those who had reported they had dependent children and that they had school-aged children (a total of 272 respondents) were asked if they had been able to secure the out-of-school-hours care they needed in order to work they hours they wanted to.

- Well over half (59%) indicated they were able to, although 21% indicated that such care was not required (for example as a family member was able to care for the children).
- More than a fifth (21%) indicated that they were not able to secure the out-of-school care needed.

A larger group of those who had dependent children and had school-aged children (310 respondents) responded to the question as to whether their employer provided the flexible work arrangements required to accommodate school hours, holidays, sickness and curriculum events. Of these:

- Just over half (51%) stated that their employers did so, with another third (34%) stating their employers sometimes did so.
- 16% or 40 respondents stated their employer did not provide the necessary flexible work arrangements.

Workforce conditions

Respondents who were in the paid workforce at the time that they completed the Women & Employment Survey were asked if they would like to provide any further comments on their workforce conditions. Some 241 women, 21% of this group of respondents, did so. These written comments were both positive and negative and touched on a number of common themes which have been categorised as below. Indicative comments have been reproduced to highlight the main themes raised.

General working conditions:

- Generally positive comments (84 respondents)

Feeling that you are valued, respected and even cared for is invaluable in a work place. My father recently got sick, and being supported by my line manager and fellow colleagues regarding flexible time and work load was really important to me. Also i am completing my undergrad, being supported with flexible hours around assessment time is also incredibly encouraging. It makes me love my job and my work place!

- Generally negative comments (44 respondents)

I feel that some employers feel they can employ students casually and pay them below minimum wage. This applies also to graduates employed on a part time basis. It is worse if you were not born in Australia as they know you don't know your rights.

Work environment and managerial discretion

- Generally positive comments (10 respondents)

I'm very lucky to work for a community organisation with a manager who is very conscious of ensuring staff are well treated and that work demands do not impact negatively on family/personal commitments, health etc. This has not always been the case in previous jobs however.

- Generally negative comments (31 respondents)

Needs to be more information on who can assist with bullying and harassment in the workplace. When this is coming from management level there does not seem

to be clear information on what are your rights and who you can go to. Our manager has just asked that all staff must bring in medical certificate after 1 day of being sick. I am sure this breaches federal legislative rights for the worker. What if someone has morning sickness or it is their child it is not fair to ask staff to pay \$60 for a medical appointment for 1 day sick leave.

Implementation of working time arrangements:

- Generally positive comments (10 respondents)

They are good - flexible - and this works both ways - I am also flexible when operational requirements need more input on occasion. I think this is fair.

- Generally negative comments (19 respondents)

In theory I work in a place with flexible arrangements. The reality is that the flexibility ends up being one sided - I am paid to work part time but the work needs to be done and that requires significant extra hours on 'non-work' days.

Work organisation and restructuring

- There was only one positive comment; however there were 17 negative comments:

Undergoing a long process of change/restructuring (over two years now) in which there is a huge level of uncertainty about continued employment despite being a full-time continuing position has created incredible stress, unhappiness and low morale in my current workplace. No end appears in sight.

Support for balancing work and family

- Generally positive comments (11 respondents)

I feel that i am lucky as I have been able to secure flexible and interesting part time work to allow me to be a single parent with older children that i still need to be around for. However, I know that many women are not so lucky.

- Generally negative comments (seven respondents)

My children are older now, so childcare is not such an issue, but when I first started back at work it was extremely difficult to negotiate any flexible work practice. My children had to cope with a succession of babysitters, when it would have been relatively easy, while I was part time, to organize flexible work practice that would not impact on my work practice but most of the time when I approached my managers re this, it was knocked back. Very disappointing as I work in a service (child and family health) that is supposed to be supporting families.

5 INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN PAID WORK

The relatively large response from Indigenous women to the Women & Employment Survey provides a welcome opportunity to shed some light on the characteristics and experiences of Indigenous women in paid work. While in 2006 Indigenous women in paid employment represented 1.4% of the Australia female workforce (ABS 2008a), they make up 6.5% of the survey respondents who were in paid work at the time of the survey.

However it should be noted that the characteristics of this particular sample are not representative of the employment experiences of most Indigenous women. The latest available ABS data indicates that in 2007 only 47.9% of Indigenous women were in the labour force (ABS 2008b), compared with 58.8% of all Australian women (Plibersek 2009). Further, as noted below, the sample of Indigenous women who responded to the survey were more likely to work in higher status occupations and in the government sector than is the case for Indigenous women overall. In this respect their experiences were similar to other women who responded to the Women & Employment Survey.

LOCATION

Table 5.1: Location of Indigenous respondents

Location	N	%
Queensland	53	74.6%
Northern Territory	10	14.1%
Victoria	3	4.2%
Western Australia	2	2.8%
Australian Capital Territory	2	2.8%
Tasmania	1	1.4%
South Australia	0	.0%
New South Wales	0	.0%
Total	71	100.0%

The overwhelming majority of Indigenous respondents came from Queensland (75%), with the next largest grouping coming from the Northern Territory. This makes up the majority of respondents from the sample.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITON, CARING RESPONSIBILITES AND INCOME

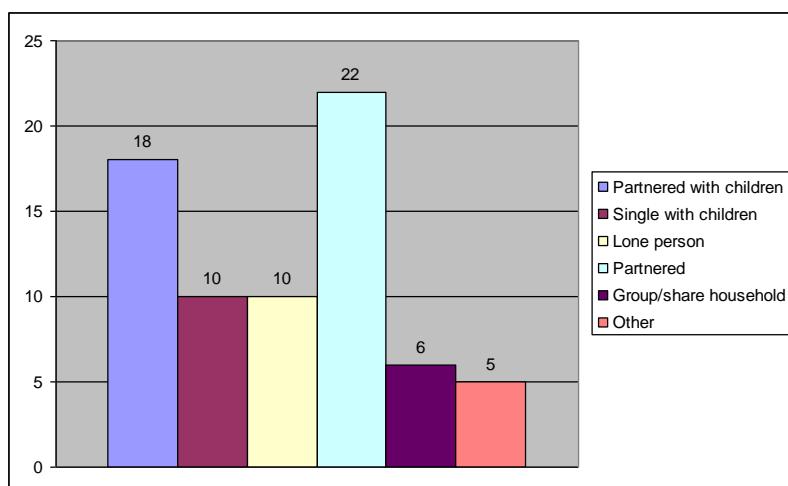
Household composition

As shown below in Figure 5.1:

- Most respondents (40 respondents or 56%) lived in partnered or couple households, with almost half of those in these households having dependent children.
- 10 respondents lived in single-parent households with children while another 10 lived in lone-person households.

- The household composition of the Indigenous respondents was broadly similar to that of respondents who were in the paid workforce although a slightly greater proportion was single with children (14% compared with 10%).
- Respondents were less likely to be in single-parent families and in group/share households than is the case for Indigenous persons generally. In 2006, 28% of Indigenous persons were in one parent households, while 10% lived in multiple family or group households (ABS 2008a).

Figure 5.1: Indigenous respondents: household composition



Dependent children

Respondents were asked if they had dependent children.

- 29 (41%) of all Indigenous respondents indicated they did, which higher than the average for all respondents in paid work (35%).

Weekly gross income

Compared with all women respondents in paid work:

- A larger proportion of the Indigenous respondents had mid-range weekly gross incomes of \$600 to \$1199 (67.5% compared with 55% for all respondents in paid work).
- However a smaller proportion of the Indigenous group had an income of \$1200 or more a week (17%) compared with all survey respondents in the paid workforce (25%).

INDUSTRY, SECTOR & BASIS OF EMPLOYMENT

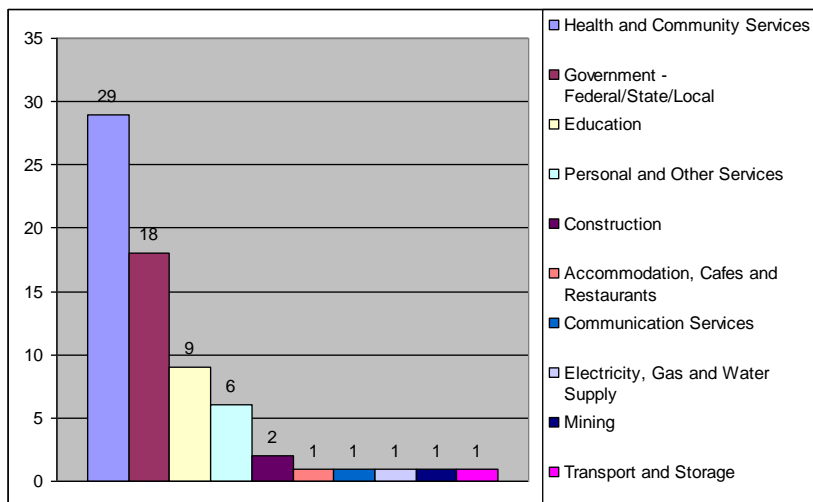
Industry

As shown in Figure 5.2, the main industries in which Indigenous respondents worked were:

- Health and Community Services (29 respondents or 42%) and government (federal/state/local) (18 respondents or 26%), which together accounted for more than two-thirds of all the Indigenous respondents.

- This distribution broadly reflects the importance of these two industries for employed Indigenous women more generally. 2006 Census data indicates that 21% of employed Indigenous women worked in Health and Social Assistance with another 16% working in Public Administration (ABS 2008a).

Figure 5.2: Indigenous respondents: industry



Sector of employment

Respondents were asked to indicate the sector in which they worked:

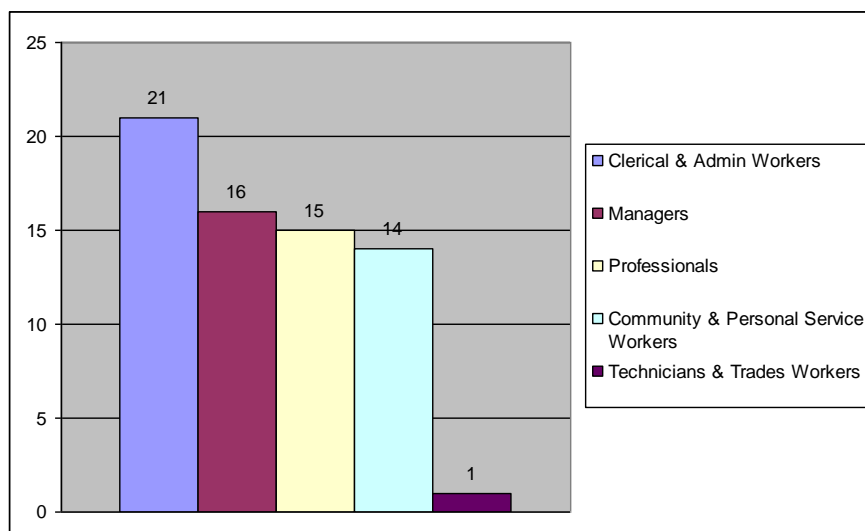
- The majority worked in the government sector (39 respondents or 56%) and the non-profit/community sector (24 respondents or 34%) with only five respondents working in the private sector. In 2006, 27.8 % of employed Indigenous women worked in the government sector while 68.5% worked in the private sector (ABS 2008a). Thus the sample of Indigenous women who responded to the survey significantly underrepresents Indigenous women who are employed in the private sector.
- Of all government sector workers, just under half (18 respondents or 46%) worked in federal, state or local government with more than a quarter (11 respondents or 28%) working in Health and Community Services.
- Of those who worked in the non-profit /community sector, the majority (17 respondents or 74%) worked in Health and Community Services.

Occupation

As in Figure 5.3 below, the main occupations in which Indigenous respondents worked were:

- Clerical and administrative worker (21 respondents or 31%), Manager (16 respondents or 24%) and Professional (115 respondents or 22%). Community and personal service workers accounted for 21% of respondents (14 respondents).
- This distribution differs from that for employed Indigenous women more generally. 2006 Census data indicates that Community and personal service workers (23%) was the largest occupational grouping followed by Clerical and administrative workers (21%), Labourers (16%) and Professionals (15%). Managers comprised just 5% of all employed Indigenous women (2008a).

Figure 5.3: Indigenous respondents: occupation



Workplace size

Table 5.2: Indigenous respondents: sector by size of workplace

Sector	More than 15 employees		Less than 15 employees		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	31	81.6%	7	18.4%	38	100.0%
Non-profit/community	14	58.3%	10	41.7%	24	100.0%
Small business	0	.0%	1	100.0%	1	100.0%
Business/private	3	60.0%	2	40.0%	5	100.0%
Total	48	70.6%	20	29.4%	68	100.0%

- The majority of all respondents (48 respondents or 71%) worked in workplaces with more than 15 employees. Of these the majority worked in the government sector.
- Less than a third of respondents worked in smaller workplaces with less than 15 employees. Of these, half were in the non-profit/community sector.

Basis of employment

As can be seen in Table 5.3 below, the majority of respondents worked on a permanent full-time basis (51 respondents or 73%), with another 11 respondents (16%) working on a fixed-term contract. Only three of the respondents reported working on a casual basis.

- Those working in the government sector were most likely to work on a permanent full-time basis (31 respondents or 80%). This was also the case for those working in the non-profit/community sector (17 respondents or 71%) although four of those working in the non-profit/community sector working on a permanent part-time or casual basis.

Table 5.3: Indigenous respondents: sector by basis of employment

Basis of employment	Casual basis		Permanent part-time basis		Permanent full-time basis		Fixed term contract		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	1	2.6%	1	2.6%	31	79.5%	6	15.4%	39	100.0%
Non-profit/community	1	4.2%	3	12.5%	17	70.8%	3	12.5%	24	100.0%
Small business	0	.0%	1	100.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	1	100.0%
Business/private	0	.0%	0	.0%	3	60.0%	2	40.0%	5	100.0%
Family business	1	100.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	1	100.0%
Total	3	4.3%	5	7.1%	51	72.9%	11	15.7%	70	100.0%

WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS

In this section we look at the working time arrangements reported by respondents:

- The overwhelming majority of respondents (60 respondents or 86%) indicated that they had set regular work hours each week. Seven (10%) indicated they 'sometimes' had set regular hours.
- While almost two-thirds of respondents (44 respondents or 64%) indicated they were able to negotiate hours that suited them, more than a third (25 respondents or 36%) indicated that they *were not* able to do so.

Respondents were also asked how they felt about the hours they worked:

- The majority indicated they were happy with their hours (43 respondents or 63%).
- Only eight respondents (12%) indicated they would like to work fewer hours, five respondents (7%) indicated they would like more hours and only two reported they would like more stability in their hours.
- However, almost a third (22 respondents or 32%) would like more flexible hours.
- Those who worked for government were less likely to indicate they were happy with their hours (22 respondents or 54%) than those who worked in not-for-profit community services (17 respondents or 82%).

Less than one in 10 respondents indicated that their hours had decreased in the last 12 months, which is not surprising given the permanent full-time and/or government sector employment in which the majority of respondents were engaged. Two of the six women working in small or private business had had their hours reduced.

Flexible work arrangements

In Table 5.4 below we see that while almost half of all respondents (32 respondents or 47%) indicated that they used were able to take flexible work arrangements to care for family or significant others, more than a fifth (14 respondents or 21%) indicating that they did not, with another eight (12%) indicating they did not have access to such arrangements.

- Respondents who had dependent children were more likely to report they had access or sometimes had access to flexible work arrangements (72% or 21 out of 29 respondents) than those who did not (64% or 25 out of 39 respondents).
- In terms of sector, those working in the government sector were most likely to always or sometimes have such access.

Table 5.4: Indigenous respondents: sector by flexible workplace arrangements

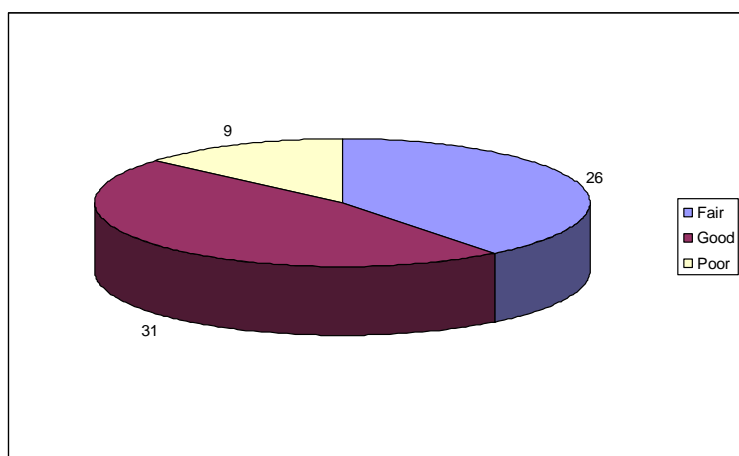
Use of flexible work arrangements	Yes		No		Sometimes		I don't have access		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	19	50.0	5	13.2	9	23.7	5	13.2	38	100.0
Non-profit/community	10	43.5	5	21.7	5	21.7	3	13.0	23	100.0
Small business	0	.0	1	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	1	100.0
Business/private	3	60.0	2	40.0	0	.0	0	.0	5	100.0
Family business	0	.0	1	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	1	100.0
Total	32	47.1	14	20.6	14	20.6	8	11.8	68	100.0

UNION MEMBERSHIP, WORKPLACE RIGHTS AND LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS

Of the Indigenous respondents, 28 or 40% of respondents reported that they were a member of a union. This is a higher union membership rate than for all respondents in the paid workforce (36%) and is most probably linked to the higher rate of employment in the government and non-profit/community sectors.

Knowledge of workplace entitlements

Figure 5.4: Indigenous respondents: knowledge of workplace entitlements



- Of the 66 respondents who rated their overall knowledge of their workplace entitlements, almost half (31 or 47%) indicated that their knowledge of their workplace entitlements was good, while more than a quarter indicated their knowledge was fair. Nine or 14% reported that their knowledge was poor.

- Interestingly there was little difference in this respect between those who were union members and those who were not.
- 15 or 21% reported they had had to personally negotiate their own workplace conditions. Of those who had done so, more than two-thirds (12 respondents) had been able to obtain what they needed.

Respondents were asked whether they knew where to access information about some specific workplace conditions and issues.

- 56 (85%) stated they knew where to access information about their workplace entitlements.
- 52 (79%) stated they knew where to access information about appropriate wage levels.
- 63 (96%) stated they knew where to access information about bullying and harassment in the workplace.
- 61 (92%) stated they knew where to access information workplace health and safety.

However there seemed to be somewhat less awareness in respect of entitlement to carers leave:

- While 39% of all Indigenous respondents reported they had an annual allocation of carers leave, 13 or 18% reported that they did not know if they had such an allocation.
- This is which is somewhat surprising given that almost all of these 13 respondents worked on a permanent basis (11 respondents) and that the majority (eight respondents) were union members.
- However it should be noted that a somewhat larger proportion of all respondents in the paid workforce (23% see above) did not know if they had an annual allocation of carers leave.

ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

Negotiating workplace conditions

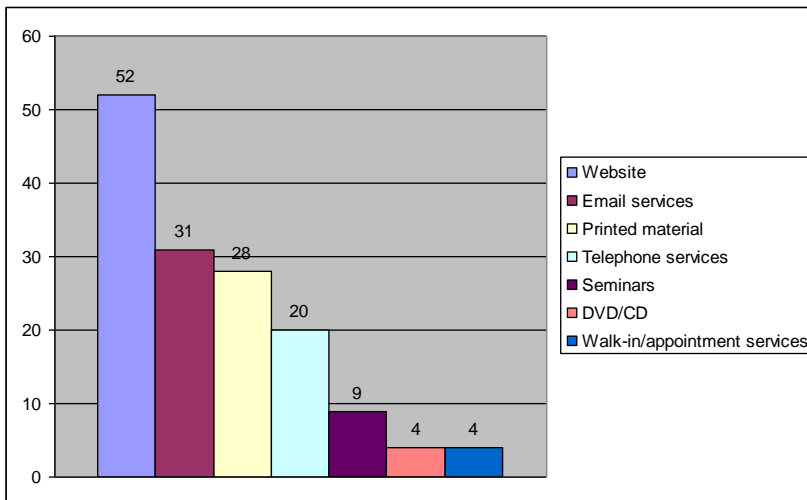
Respondents were asked what would assist them negotiating workplace conditions. The nominated assistance by the 57 respondents who responded to this question included was:

- Support and assistance from an independent person (49 respondents or 86%).
- Increased confidence (44 respondents or 77%).
- Information about what workplace entitlements are available (39 respondents or 68%).

Respondents were also asked to indicate most useful sources in seeking information about workplace conditions. 67 respondents provided a response to this question.

- Websites were seen as the most useful source of information (52 or 78% of respondents), which no doubt reflects the survey sample who responded to the survey online
- This was followed by email services (31 or 46% of respondents) and printed material (28 or 42% of respondents).

Figure 5.5: Indigenous respondents: useful sources of information



Written comments on workforce conditions

Respondents were asked if they had any further comments about their workplace conditions. Only eight respondents made any comment.

- Of these four comments were critical of the management of their working environment

Although I have access to information I have little ability to influence it - for instance, with the recent restructures occurring in [org], the A&TSI workforce are being alienated and divided from the general workforce, however we have little recourse for this & have a very small workforce which means we have little influence /power to 'fight-back'... this creates dissatisfaction and division in the workforce.

It [working conditions] needs to be scrutinized in a high degree

Management needs to practice what they preach

The Qld government appears to foster ancient mindsets from the 70s and unfortunately those that worked in that environment are now the Men that occupy the senior Management roles.

- However, four respondents were more positive

Conditions are good and [employer] look after their staff and help in every way they can

Great

I am happy with my current arrangements, I am paid well for the work that I do, and have a range of other employment related benefits.

My workplace is rather flexible and enjoyable to work in. We are treated well and can usually get time off for anything!!

6 DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

As set out in the Introduction, the Women & Employment Survey was developed to collect data about some of the specific issues women face in seeking paid work and/or engaging in paid work. One of the key aims was to better understand what information or support is needed to assist women.

The findings of the survey together with other relevant research are used below to provide a basis for recommendations and policy advocacy by Security4Women.

MORE RESPONSIVE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR WOMEN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

Two main issues emerge from the survey data:

- There are ongoing barriers to women's workforce participation (both within and outside the workforce) despite active job searching by many women.
- There is a need for supportive infrastructure and targeted assistance for women seeking to re-enter the paid workforce.

While Australia's female labour force participation is around the OECD average, the participation rates for women of child-bearing age (25-44 years) is well below the OECD average (Abhayaratna and Lattimore 2006). This is mainly because Australia has a 'motherhood gap' in labour force participation (Whitehouse and Hosking 2005). For example in 2002, 49.6% of Australian women with a youngest child under six years were employed compared with 57.0% of women in the UK, 62.7% of women in Canada and 77.5% of women in Sweden (ABS 2007). Within the group of mothers with preschool children the participation rate of lone mothers is below that of partnered mothers. For example, 51% of partnered mothers with children aged under five years were employed compared with 43% of lone mothers with children aged under five years (AIFS 2008).

While female labour force participation including in the older age cohorts has grown over time, there is also a relatively low participation rate for women in the 55-65 year age group compared with other countries such as New Zealand, Canada and the United States (Abhayaratna and Lattimore 2006: 29). One of the reasons for this lower rate of participation is the caring responsibilities many older female carers take on. Despite these responsibilities a large proportion of carers want to be in paid employment (Gray and Edwards 2009).

Within paid employment there are many barriers highlighted in the Women & Employment Survey data that make it difficult for women outside the workforce to enter. These include:

- The organisation of work, particularly good quality jobs, around full-time hours jobs.
- Both rigid working time arrangements and 'too flexible' work with no predictability of hours.

These barriers are related to those found in the ABS survey on barriers to labour force participation (ABS 2010a). In that survey, the important work-related incentives to join or increase participation in the labour force for women were:

- The ability to work part-time hours (51%)
- Set hours on set days (41%)
- Variable start and finish times (37%)

Outside the workplace the most significant barriers relate to the greater care burden shouldered by women (Cassells et al. 2009: 14). The barriers highlighted by women in response to the Women & Employment Survey included care responsibilities, study, health and discrimination. Some of these are reflected in the ABS survey barriers to labour force participation (ABS 2010a) which found that the most important incentives to assist women increase their labour force participation were:

- Assistance with childcare (55%)
- Access to childcare places (53%)
- Being able to maintain welfare benefits (34%)

The Women & Employment Survey also highlighted the importance for targeted support and assistance for women seeking employment, as found in a recent study undertaken for S4W and other women's groups. In that study the Australia Institute found there was a need for more and better developed labour market programs as well as a need for better communication mechanisms with women who were not currently in paid work (TAI 2009). Responses to the Women & Employment survey from those not in paid employment suggest that there is a need for more personalised responses including walk-in services, seminars and telephone services. Currently it is unclear what supports are available to women if they do not register with Centrelink and we know that women who are not in the paid workforce tend not to register with Centrelink (TAI 2009). In particular there is a lack of training and workforce preparation programs available to older women (AHRC 2009: 9) as well as to those who have dependent children or significant others, are studying or have a disability.

Recommendation 1:

That in partnership with the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations and the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, women's information services and working women's centres develop and promote gender-specific support and information services to better respond to the needs of women outside the paid workforce. These services need to be resourced to provide personalised support, such as specialised job search assistance and careers counselling for those not linked into current mainstream government-funded services.

Recommendation 2:

Further, that the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations ensure that the delivery of mainstream government-funded employment services is gender-sensitive and meets the needs of women who have dependent children or significant others, are studying or have a disability.

The Henry Taxation Review (Australia's Future Tax System Review Panel) has also raised the deficiencies of the current taxation system where government payments fall as a family's income rises, which puts pressure on second income earners to cut working hours (NFAW 2009). There is a clear need then for an income support system that supports rather than frustrates women's access to paid employment.

Recommendation 3:

That in the federal government in its response to the Henry Taxation Review take into account that the current mechanism for the phasing out of government benefits for women entering the workforce erects a substantial barrier to increasing female labour force participation and that a more gender-equitable integration of income support and taxation provisions is needed to ensure that women are not financially worse off when they gain employment.

INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT FOR WOMEN WITH CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

As highlighted above, the provision of childcare is seen as a critical element in supporting women's greater workforce participation (TAI 2009: 13). It also affects women's participation in labour-market programs (TAI 2009: 36). While HILDA survey data suggest that difficulties with locating childcare may have eased over the last six years, the cost of childcare remains a persistent barrier for many families. Over 20% of couple households report this problem every year, and the proportion of lone parents who report problems with the cost of childcare has increased from 15% in 2002 to 26% in 2005 (Melbourne Institute 2010: 19). As one respondent to the Women & Employment Survey put it:

Childcare is the biggest issue and the hours that i can work. My husband works permanent afternoons and we only have one car and we have three children.

Adequate childcare including out-of-school-hours is also crucial for women who are in paid employment, as highlighted in the Women & Employment Survey. The lack of affordable good quality care may restrict the capacity of women to work in jobs that are commensurate with their skills and qualifications and for the hours that they wish to. The National Foundation of Australian Women has pointed to evidence that affordable, accessible, acceptable quality care for school-aged children (6-15 years) out of school hours, including during vacations, is in short supply (NFAW 2008). In 2005, formal before- and/or after-school formal care was required for some 64,400 children across Australia. However, even given the shortage of places in out-of-school-hours and vacation programs, most programs appear to focus on children of the lower primary school age with little provision of any appropriate services for older primary school and younger secondary school age children (NFAW 2008).

Recommendation 4:

That the federal government in conjunction with state and territory governments develop a program of evaluation and research to more adequately identify the needs of women both within and outside the workforce, for various types of out-of-school-hours care, including before- and after-school care and vacation care, and to enhance the quality and provision of out-of-school-hours care including for older primary school and younger secondary school age children.

While not canvassed in the Women & Employment Survey, the lack of respite care and information and support for older women caring for family and significant others restricts their employment participation (Gray and Edwards 2009). So access to such care and support is also likely to assist this group of women increase their participation in paid work and to be able to balance working and caring obligations once in employment.

Recommendation 5:

That to better meet the needs of women providing care to family and significant others who have a disability and/or are aging, communication mechanisms be developed by federal and state women's policy offices in conjunction with the women's information services and working women's centres nationally to provide information on available respite and care options as well as other sources of support.

ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS

As noted above, limited access to employee-orientated working time and leave arrangements is not only an issue for women in the paid workforce, but prevents women outside the paid workforce from being able to find paid work that will allow them to combine work and other obligations including care and study.

Further, as highlighted in the findings of the Women & Employment survey and in other studies (Haynes et al. 2010; Campbell and Charlesworth 2004), practical access to flexible work practices remains limited for many workers. This is particularly the case for many women who opt to work on a part-time or casual basis to help them better manage their work and caring responsibilities (Campbell and Charlesworth 2004). At the same time increasing workloads and the exercise of managerial discretion in public sector employment makes it difficult for those who may be entitled to various flexible working arrangements to access them. As one government employee noted:

Although we as government employees have access to a range of family friendly practices they are not applied equally across the Department. The practices are totally dependent on manager approval and although I am currently with a manager that is family friendly this has not always been the case. Often I was denied leave in school holidays. Had problems with starting earlier to leave earlier to pick up children. Not able to take time off for carers leave and no capacity for working from home. All this changed when I had a change of manager! and this is the public service!

The federal government is currently running the Fresh Ideas for Work and Family Grants Program aimed at providing small grants of up to \$15,000 to put into place or improve existing family friendly work arrangements. These grants are restricted to small businesses with fewer than 15 employees. Given that the majority of respondents to the Women & Employment Survey worked for larger workplaces, including most of those reporting no or limited access to flexible work arrangements there is a need for a grants program that covers larger workplaces and also actively encourages employee and union participation. In Victoria, the state government ran a successful Partners at Work Program which provided small grants to employers and unions across a range of large and small public and private sector workplaces to jointly work on innovative flexible working time and leave arrangements that met the needs of both employees and of their workplaces.³ This program was followed by the Better Work and Family Balance grants program. Both programs provided grants of up to \$50,000.

Recommendation 6:

To encourage more flexible workplaces that support both women outside the paid workforce to find employment and women in paid work to maintain employment, the federal government consider expanding its Fresh Ideas for Work and Family Grants Program to private and public sector larger workplaces and to encourage employers and unions to jointly work on innovative flexible working time and leave arrangements that meet the needs of both employees and of their workplaces.

Written comments made by a number of respondents to the Women & Employment Survey highlight the job quality price paid by women who work reduced hours of work, either on a casual or permanent part-time basis, particularly in low paid female dominated industries. For a number of women having access to working time arrangements that suited their care responsibilities was also connected with their work being undervalued with one stating:

I feel supported and valued, the hours being kindergarten hours are perfect because I am home for my children which is the most important thing in my life... but I do wish the rate of pay could be 'real' and the work I and the women I work with could be commensurate with the amount of energy and effort we put in! If a man did our type of work; requiring the dedication to well being, education, safety and education, and teaching of life skills for the children they would demand three times what we are paid! I wouldn't change the work or the hours or the rewards

³ For details of the resulting initiatives and the Partners at Work and Better Work and Family Balance grants program evaluation report see: http://www.business.vic.gov.au/BUSVIC/STANDARD/1001/PC_60915.html.

inherent in the occupation... just if the pay packet were a little more things would be just a little easier. :-)

For many women working in the Health and Community Services industry the lack of decent wages and workload that reflected the part-time contract was a big concern work conditions was particularly acute. One woman employed on a permanent part-time basis stated:

In theory I work in a place with flexible arrangements. The reality is that the flexibility ends up being one sided - I am paid to work part time but the work needs to be done and that requires significant extra hours on 'non-work' days.

Another respondent also working on a part-time basis highlighted the poor job design and appropriate workload that is characteristic of much part-time work in the non-profit/community sector:

*the organisation that I work for is very flexible and I have comparatively quite good employment conditions for a community based not-for-profit. However I feel that the role I am in is ultimately unsustainable in the wider context of my life because * wages are still very low and make it difficult to pay mortgage, let alone school fees etc * there are so many more tasks and responsibilities than time - so don't have a high degree of self-efficacy * very little validation/ low valuing of the work undertaken - by funding bodies or the community in general * I am a single parent so the long hours required to get the job done sufficiently (even though there is flexibility in principle) are too difficult to manage*

Recommendation 7:

That the Minister for Employment Education and Workplace Relations and the Minister for the Status of Women address the gendered effects of the poorer job quality and job design that characterise much part-time employment in female-dominated industries, including through regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of part-time work in those industries.

ENHANCING LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF WORKPLACE RIGHTS

While a third of respondents who were in the paid workforce at the time of completing the Women & Employment Survey were union members, a significant minority did not know where to access information on their workplace entitlements, on appropriate wage levels or on bullying and harassment in the workplace. Further, while almost a quarter of respondents did not know if they were entitled to an annual allocation of carers leave, more than a quarter of those most likely to have a right to paid carers leave because of their employment status did not know if they did or not.

The lack of knowledge about entitlements to carers leave is of concern as it has been a workplace entitlement for over 15 years. The right to carers leave was first introduced through the Family Leave Test Case 1994/96, which was adopted across the federal award and state award jurisdictions. What became known as personal/carers leave allowed employees to use their accumulated entitlement to sick leave and bereavement leave (up to a maximum of five days a year) to provide care or support to a member of their family or household. This provision was extended in the 2005 Family Provisions test case decision which permitted the use of up to 10 days paid personal leave each year for caring purposes. Today, as noted in Section 4, it is one of the National Employment Standards in force since January 2010.

The potential breach of other National Employment Standards (NES) is also highlighted by the survey data and respondent comments. The right to (unpaid) parental leave, also one of the NES, has been a workplace right for most employees since the ACTU text case in 1979 (see Charlesworth and Macdonald 2006). This entitlement both provides for a period of unpaid leave

for up to 12 months and a right to return to the same or similar position on return to work after that leave. However one of the survey respondents points to the systemic exclusion of those on parental leave in her workplace:

There is still an old culture of those on parental leave are overlooked for new opportunities in changing structures. To the point of being excluded before the taking of parental leave.

Another related NES is the 'right to request a change in working arrangements'. Only those who are parents of (or care for) children under school age, or a child under 18 who has a disability, are eligible to exercise this right. While this 'right to request' applies to both permanent and casual employees, an employee must have completed 12 months continuous service before making a request and, if casual, have an expectation of continued employment. While this is a new right, and has inadequate grievance mechanisms (see Charlesworth and Campbell 2008), the findings from the Women & Employment Survey suggest that there may be a low awareness of this right to request. At the time of the survey, almost a fifth of women in the private sector did not have any access at all to such arrangements while this was the case for a quarter of respondents on casual contracts.

The 2009 AWALI survey found that prior to the implementation of the new right to request, one in five Australian employees had made a request for a change in work arrangements and that while casuals and permanent employees have similar rates of request, feminised industries and occupations have much higher rates of request than male-dominated industries and occupations (Pocock et al. 2009: 68). The AWALI study found that just over two-thirds of requests were fully granted, which is lower than in the UK where around three-quarters were fully granted (Pocock et al. 2009: 55).

The survey findings and comments of respondents suggest one of the challenges in the implementation of the right to request a change in working arrangements will be to ensure that flexible working arrangements are practically accessible. Further, the limiting of the right to request means those who have caring responsibilities for older children, aged relatives and other significant others are not formally able to use it. As one respondent put it:

I would like to see more flexible arrangements - we have provision for working from home conditions but that is only for parents of children mainly. This can be dependent on your manager's attitude as well whether or not it is actually granted.

Data from the Women & Employment Survey and written responses from individual women also highlighted the need for targeted information to women who are in the paid workforce to both raise awareness of their entitlements and to support them in better negotiating their conditions. One respondent pointed to the needs for support for employees who are not union members:

Need more information about who can assist outside the organisation when issue is with your direct supervisor and you don't belong to a union.

Another respondent indicated she would appreciate information and support in understanding what was available more generally in her sector to inform the negotiation of a collective agreement in her workplace

We are moving to a Collective Agreement, and while I can read and understand the material, I am not aware of where to go to find out if the CA has all the employee benefits that are possible to get in this sector. I do not assume my employer is deceiving the workplace, rather that there may be entitlements that we are able to bargain for that I/we don't know about.

Recommendation 8:

That, in partnership with the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, women's information services and working women's centres develop information workshops to ensure women are fully informed about their workplace rights and entitlements and to assist women in negotiating conditions of work. In addition, that the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman provide simple details of rights and entitlements under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, including of the 10 National Employment Standards, and appropriate training and support to women's information services and working women's centres nationally as well other women-specific support services.

Recommendation 9:

That the Fair Work Ombudsman consult with women's information services and working women's centres nationally about the most effective ways to reach and provide support to women, including Indigenous women, women with disabilities, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Further, that in partnership with federal and state women's policy offices, the Fair Work Ombudsman develop, disseminate and promote gender-specific information for women accessible through a range of different media including web-based services, email, print and face-to-face services to reach women who are non-unionised and/or work in female dominated-industries.

The *Fair Work Act 2009* provides that right to request provisions in the NES are to be reviewed by the General Manager of Fair Work Australia. Specifically Fair Work Australia is to conduct research every three years into the circumstances in which employees make requests, the outcome of such requests; and the circumstances in which such requests are refused. The women's information services and the working women's centres are in a unique position to contribute to that review. One area they could raise is the extension of the right request flexible working arrangements to all carers.

Recommendation 10:

That the Manager of Fair Work Australia specifically invite women's information services and working women's centres nationally to contribute to the legislated evaluation of the new 'right to request' flexible work arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

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APPENDIX A: WOMEN & EMPLOYMENT SURVEY

Introduction

Women's Information Services and Women's Policy offices around Australia have developed this survey to find out about (a) what barriers women are facing in entering the workforce and what assists women to enter the workforce, and (b) what women know about their workplace entitlements and what assists them to improve their workplace conditions.

This survey should take about 7 minutes of your time.

Part A is designed for women NOT CURRENTLY in the paid workforce, if you are not in paid work or you are self-employed and looking for paid work, please complete this section. Part A aims to find out about the barriers that women face in terms of workforce participation so that information and other services can be developed to provide greater assistance.

Part B and Part C are designed for women CURRENTLY in the paid workforce, if you are in the paid work force please complete these sections. Part B aims to find out about women's workplace conditions. Part C aims to find out the information needs of women in relation to their workplace entitlements and conditions.

The survey is confidential. We do not require your name. To protect the confidentiality of each survey participant, no identifying data will be provided in the final report. Postcode information will be used to break down the information by state or region if necessary.

On completion would you please return to: (PLEASE INSERT HERE THE NAME OF YOUR WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE HERE PRIOR TO PRINTING)

General Information (all respondents please fill in this section)

1. Post code (please insert):

2. How old are you? (Please tick)

- 15-19 years 20-24 years 25-34 years 35-44 years 45-54 years 55-64 years 65 or over years

3. What is your household composition? (Please tick)

- Lone person
 Single with children
 Partnered
 Partnered with children
 Group/share household

Other (please describe)

4. Are you from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background?

- Yes, Aboriginal
 Yes, Torres Strait Islander
 No

If yes, what is your first language?

5. Are you from a non-English speaking background?

- Yes
 No

If yes, what is your first language?

6. What is your highest level of schooling?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Primary School | <input type="radio"/> Degree |
| <input type="radio"/> Year 10 | <input type="radio"/> Graduate Diploma |
| <input type="radio"/> Year 12 | <input type="radio"/> Postgraduate Degree |
| <input type="radio"/> Certificate/Diploma | |

7. What is your average gross weekly income (Please tick one)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than \$400 | <input type="radio"/> \$1000-1199 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$400-599 | <input type="radio"/> \$1200-1399 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$600-799 | <input type="radio"/> \$1400-1999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$800-999 | <input type="radio"/> \$2000 or more |

8. Are you CURRENTLY in the paid workforce?

- Yes
 No

Thank you.

If you answered 'no' at Question 8 please click 'next' and you will be directed to Part A.

If you answered 'yes' at Question 8 please click 'next' and you will be directed to Part B.

If you are self-employed the survey will not apply to you - unless you are seeking work with an employer, in which case please answer 'no' at Question 8 and click 'next' to be directed to Part A.

Part A: Women not in the paid workforce

Please complete if you are NOT in the paid workforce.

1. Are you looking for paid work?

- Yes
 No

If 'no', please complete Question 2 below and thank you for your contribution.

If 'yes', please go to Question 3 and continue the survey.

2. If you are not seeking work, why is that? From the following list please tick up to 2 reasons why you are choosing not to seek paid employment:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No need to work | <input type="checkbox"/> I am studying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to transport | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Costs of transport | <input type="checkbox"/> I have given up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to child-care | <input type="checkbox"/> No appropriate jobs in my local area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost of child-care | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel confident to seek work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Care responsibilities- children | <input type="checkbox"/> Health reasons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Care responsibilities- others | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am retired | |

Other (please specify)

3. On what basis are you seeking work?

- Full time Part time Casual Any

4. How long have you been looking for work?

- 0-6 months 7-12 months Between 1 and 2 years More than 2 years

5. If you have applied for jobs and not been successful, please identify the main reasons why you think that is so (You may tick up to 3 boxes)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My qualifications aren't good enough | <input type="checkbox"/> My reading and writing skills are not good |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I need better resume writing skills | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not interview well | <input type="checkbox"/> I have children or am pregnant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't have enough experience | <input type="checkbox"/> My sexual preference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am too old or too young | <input type="checkbox"/> I have an interrupted work history |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a migrant | <input type="checkbox"/> I cannot work the hours required |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't have the right computer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't have the right referees | <input type="checkbox"/> My gender |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't have the right connections | <input type="checkbox"/> I am over-qualified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My spoken language skills are not good | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

Other (please specify)

6. How often do you receive acknowledgment of your letters of application?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Always or mostly | <input type="radio"/> Less than half the time |
| <input type="radio"/> More than half the time | <input type="radio"/> Rarely or never |

7. If you have been interviewed for a position, how often have you been offered post-interview contact as to the reasons why you were not successful?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Always or mostly | <input type="radio"/> Less than half the time |
| <input type="radio"/> More than half the time | <input type="radio"/> Rarely or never |

8. What services have you accessed to assist you in looking for work? (You may tick any number of boxes)

- Job Network Services
- Australian Government websites/programs
- State/Territory Government websites/programs
- Private employment agencies
- Community organisations
- None

Other employment services (please specify)

9. What services or assistance do you consider would assist you in seeking and gaining work?

- Job searching assistance
- Career counselling
- Resume workshop
- Job application assistance
- Increased computer skills

Other (please specify)

10. If you were seeking information about how to be successful in seeking work, what would you find most useful? (You may tick up to 2 boxes)

- Website
- Printed Material
- Seminars
- DVD/CD
- Walk-in/appointment services
- Telephone services
- Email services

11. In your opinion, what barriers might prevent you from staying in full or part time employment?

Part B: Women in the paid workforce

Please complete if you ARE in the paid workforce.

1. What is your occupation?

2. In which sector are you employed?

- Government
- Business/private
- Small business
- Family business
- Not for profit/community

3. Approximate number of employees in business or department:

- Under 10
- 10-20
- 20-50
- Over 50

4. In what primary industry are you employed?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing? | <input type="radio"/> Retail Trade | <input type="radio"/> Government Administration and Defence |
| <input type="radio"/> Mining | <input type="radio"/> Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants | <input type="radio"/> Education |
| <input type="radio"/> Manufacturing | <input type="radio"/> Transport and Storage | <input type="radio"/> Health and Community Services |
| <input type="radio"/> Electricity, Gas and Water supply | <input type="radio"/> Communication Services | <input type="radio"/> Cultural and Recreational Services |
| <input type="radio"/> Construction | <input type="radio"/> Finance and Insurance | <input type="radio"/> Personal and Other Services |
| <input type="radio"/> Wholesale Trade | <input type="radio"/> Property and Business Services | |

5. Are you employed on a:

- Casual basis
- Permanent part-time basis
- Permanent full-time basis
- Fixed term contract
- Don't know

6. How many hours a week do you usually work? (Please tick one)

- 1-15 hours
- 16-29 hours
- 30-34 hours
- 35-39 hours
- More than 40 hours
- Variable

7. Are you able to negotiate hours that suit you?

- Yes
- No

8. Do you have set, regular work hours each week?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

9. Have your hours decreased in the past 12 months?

- Yes
- No

If yes: Why?

10. How do you feel about the hours you work? (You may tick more than one box)

- I'm happy with the hours that I work
- I'd like more hours
- I'd like fewer hours
- I'd like to have more flexible hours
- I need more stability in my work hours

11. Does your employer expect you to be available on short notice?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

12. If you work public holidays or weekends, are you paid overtime or loadings?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

13. Do you have an annual allocation of carer's leave?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

14. Do you take up workplace flexibility conditions to assist you to care for family or significant others?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- I don't have access to flexible work arrangements

If 'no': Why not?

15. Do you have children?

- Yes (Please go to next question)
- No (Please go to Part C by clicking 'next' at the bottom of this page)

16. If you have PRE-SCHOOL aged children, have you been able to secure the child-care that you need to work the hours that you want?

- Yes
- No
- Not required (eg family member is able to care for the children)

17. If you have SCHOOL aged children, have you been able to secure the out of hours care that you need to work the hours that you want?

- Yes
- No
- Not required (eg family member is able to care for the children)

18. If you have SCHOOL aged children, does work allow the flexibility to accommodate school hours, holidays, sickness and curriculum events?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Part C: Workplace Conditions

Please complete if you ARE in the paid workforce.

1. Are you a member of a union?

- Yes
 No

2. Have you had to personally negotiate your own workplace conditions?

- Yes
 No

3. Would any of the following assist you in negotiating workplace conditions? (You may tick more than one box)

	Yes	No
Increased confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information about what workplace entitlements are available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support and assistance from an independent person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)		

4. In overall terms how would you rate your knowledge of your workplace entitlements?

- Good
 Fair
 Poor

5. Do you know where to access further information on the following topics?

	Yes (Please comment)	No
Your workplace entitlements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriate wage levels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bullying and harassment in the workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workplace health and safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please describe where you would access information for each 'yes' answer:

6. When seeking information about workplace conditions what would you find most useful: (please tick up to 2 boxes)

- Website
- Printed material
- Seminars
- DVD/CD
- Telephone services
- Walk-in/appointment services
- Email services

7. Have you any further comments about your current workplace conditions?

Thank you. Please click 'next'.