



Work



Main findings

- 54.2% of Queensland women are in paid employment – nearly half working part-time.
- Mothers are much more likely than fathers to structure their work arrangements to enable them to care for family members.
- Women are a small proportion of employees in the lucrative industries of information technology, engineering, environmental science, accounting and finance.
- 66.3% of under 4-year-olds attend child care – and demand is growing.
- 35.6% of small business operators are women.



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Child care, transport, work clothes . . . all add up and, with the loss of various concessions as income increases, can be disincentives to working part-time if not earning above average income

Introduction

Employment is the key to women's economic independence, directly impacting on their position in every sphere of society.

Over the past 30 years, women's workforce participation in Queensland has dramatically increased to the current level of 57.7% (compared with 72.6% male participation); much of this part-time or casual work.

Sole mothers, who head 22.6% of Queensland families with children under 15 years, generally have no secondary source of household income. They, and their children, are the group in our society most likely to live in poverty. Sole mothers have a lower rate of workforce participation than partnered mothers.

There are considerable disincentives to working part-time at present. Government benefits diminish rapidly as income increases. On top of this, the expense and availability of child care, transport, work clothing and other costs associated with employment may mean only a small net benefit unless a woman earns an above average income; it may even cost her to work.

Child care is essential to enable parents to work. Data indicates that the main reason children are placed in formal child care is to enable their parents to work. Demand is high for more before- and after-school care, vacation care, and formal care for children aged under three years.

Women and men are over- and under-represented in many industries and occupations. Women are over-represented in low-paid occupations, and this, combined with their propensity for part-time and casual work, makes them financially vulnerable.

The evidence suggests the reasons women consistently earn less than men is due to women being over-represented as carers for children and, increasingly, ageing parents.

Diversity in different fields of employment is important for individual, social and economic reasons. While a lack of diversity restricts the opportunities available to men and women, it also prevents employers from employing the best person for the job. It can also result in a shortage of skills and labour in particular fields.¹

Workforce participation

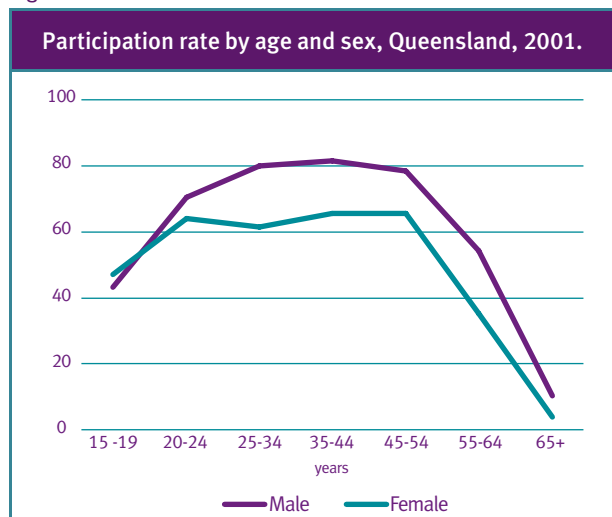
In 1971, 37.1% of Australian women were participating in the workforce.² This rate has steadily increased to 55.5% as at June 2004. In Queensland, the highest rate of 58.6% in January 2003 has decreased to 57.7% in June 2004. Of all women employed in Queensland, 46.2% were employed part-time.³ 22.2% of female part-time workers in Queensland were underemployed in September 2003, meaning they would have preferred to work more hours.⁴

Queensland's workforce participation rate in June 2004 was 65.1% (compared with 63.5% nationally), and the unemployment rate was 5.9% (5.6% nationally). The unemployment rate for Queensland women was 6.1%, and 54.2% of Queensland women were in paid employment.⁵

Workforce participation refers to those people available and looking for work, as well as those who are actually employed. Workforce participation rates vary significantly for both men and women depending upon age, but the greatest disparity between men and women is in the 25-44 age group, the prime child-rearing – and career-building – years.

The unemployment rate for Indigenous women in Queensland at the time of the 2001 Census was 18.1%, which was lower than that for Indigenous men (21.5%) but much higher than the total Queensland population (rate of 8.2%). The unemployment rate for Indigenous women has reduced steadily from 36% in 1986 to the current 18.1%.⁶

Figure 9



Source: ABS, 2001. *Census of Population and Housing, Queensland, Table B25.*

The unemployment rate for Queensland women with a disability was 11.2% in 1998. This compared to the unemployment rate of 8.2% for all women at this time. There was a much greater gap between women with a disability and men with a disability, who had an unemployment rate of 18.6%.⁷

Working hours

It is important to note that workforce participation by women is strongly associated with part-time and casual work. Of all women employed in Queensland in June 2004, 46.2% worked part-time.⁸ Women's over-representation as primary carers for children appears to be the major reason for women working in part-time and casual positions. For women with children, part-time employment rates are highest when children are pre-school-aged (0 to 4 years), at over 60%.⁹

Figure 10 shows the proportion of employed people in each age group who work part-time, by age and sex. Across every age group, significantly more women are employed part-time than men. The difference between men and women is most pronounced between the ages of 25 to 54.

Figure 10



Source: ABS, 2001. *Census of Population and Housing, Queensland, Table B25.*



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Occupations and industries

The highest-paying industries in Australia are mining, electricity, gas and water supply, finance and insurance, communication services, and property and business services. These industries are traditionally male-dominated, at least in the professional areas.

The highest-paying occupational groups in Australia are information technology (IT), engineering, science and the environment, and accounting, finance and management.¹⁰

In 2002, women represented 19.7% of IT professionals and 28.2% of support staff. Women made up 5.8% of engineers, 39.8% of workers in science and the environment, 40.7% of accountants and 26.3% of accounting and finance managers.¹¹ Generally, 28.1% of managers and administrators were women.¹²

The lowest-paying occupational groups are cleaning, hospitality and tourism, gardening and farming, and sales assistants and storepersons. Women are over-represented as sales assistants, and in the hospitality and tourism occupations.¹³

Women are predominantly employed in the clerical, sales and service roles (31.7% of all employed women), followed by employment as health and education professionals. These industries also have high levels of part-time and casual employment.¹⁴ Teaching and nursing are mostly female-dominated professions. A significant number of female employees work in finance and insurance. The mining and construction industries have the lowest proportions of female employees.

Table 13

Occupation by sex, Queensland, 2001.				
Occupation	Males	Females	% Female	Persons
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	73,714	192,037	72.3	265,751
Professionals	116,618	134,655	53.6	251,273
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	52,533	105,689	66.8	158,222
Associate professionals	102,660	85,250	45.4	187,910
Labourers and related workers	97,497	55,276	36.2	152,773
Advanced clerical and service workers	5,952	48,725	89.1	54,677
Managers and administrators	95,852	37,443	28.1	133,295
Tradespersons and related workers	178,691	21,974	11.0	200,665
Intermediate production and transport workers	116,727	16,975	12.7	133,702
Inadequately described	7,557	3,828	33.6	11,385
Not stated	10,113	9,098	47.4	19,211
Total	857,914	710,950	45.3	1,568,864

Source: ABS, 2002. Cat. No. 2046.0. Queensland, 2001 Census secondary release, summary publication. Canberra, 2002.

Table 14

Industry of employment by sex, Queensland, 2001.				
Industry	Males	Females	% Female	Persons
Retail trade	111,909	127,706	53.3	239,615
Health and community services	32,712	118,317	78.3	151,029
Education	35,656	83,240	70.0	118,896
Property and business services	81,568	72,296	47.0	153,864
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	37,644	50,737	57.4	88,381
Manufacturing	126,659	40,721	24.3	167,380
Government administration and defence	43,459	31,589	42.1	75,048
Personal and other services	29,506	28,156	48.8	57,662
Finance and insurance	17,784	26,778	60.1	44,562
Wholesale trade	55,270	24,448	30.7	79,718
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	52,646	23,886	31.2	76,532
Transport and storage	57,660	19,927	25.7	77,587
Cultural and recreational services	19,560	17,781	47.6	37,341
Construction	95,238	15,971	14.4	111,209
Communication services	14,720	8,296	36.0	23,016
Electricity, gas and water supply	10,118	2,241	18.1	12,359
Mining	17,085	2,201	11.4	19,286
Non-classifiable economic units	4,173	3,279	44.0	7,452
Not stated	14,547	13,380	47.9	27,927
Total	857,914	710,950	45.3	1,568,864

Source: ABS, 2002. Cat. No. 2046.0. Queensland. 2001 Census secondary release, summary publication. Canberra, 2002.



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The industries with the best job growth forecasts to 2010 are property and business services (22.3% of all employment growth), retail trade (20.5%), and health and community services (19.9%). Women are currently well represented in these areas.¹⁵

In 2001, the industries employing the largest number of Indigenous people in Queensland were government administration and defence, health and community services, and education.

Rural industries

Women represented 33% of farmers and farm managers in Queensland in 2003.¹⁶

There are around 320,000 women over the age of 15 living on farms in Australia. In August 2001, 12% of Australia's women lived in rural areas. Around 80% participated in farm work. Women made up 32% of the total farm work force and signed around 80% of farm cheques.¹⁷

Despite this, in 1998 only 120,000 women reported themselves as employed in agricultural occupations. Many rural women still write "housewife" as their occupation on a survey form, despite their contribution to farm labour and management.¹⁸

A 1998 study found that in economic terms, women's contribution to Australian agriculture amounted to at least 28% of the market value of farm output or a gross figure of \$4 billion. When the value of household work, volunteer and community work and off-farm wage income are included, women in agriculture contributed about \$13.5 billion, or 48%, of real farm income in Australia.¹⁹

In 2001, nine of the Queensland Farmers Association's 32 board and committee members were women (21.9%).²⁰ This is the greatest proportion of women on farming organisation boards of any Australian state. Women hold 11 of the 121 National Farmers Federation board or committee seats (8.3%). They hold the chair position on seven such boards or committees nationally (6.1% of all chairs).

Table 15

Workforce participation and employment rates, Australia, 2001.				
Youngest child	Sole mothers		Partnered mothers	
	Participation rate (%)	Employment rate (%)	Participation rate (%)	Employment rate (%)
0-4	40.1	29.7	51.4	48.1
5-9	58.9	47.9	69.7	66.0
10-14	65.4	56.1	76.0	72.9
15-19	75.9	68.0	77.8	75.2
0-19	57.2	47.2	64.8	61.6

Source: Unpublished data ABS Census 2001.

Work and family

“Dual wage earner” has become the dominant model for Australian families. In 2001, both parents working was the most common scenario for families with children aged under 15 years (43%).²¹

As children grow up, workforce participation rates for Australian mothers rise. The average participation rate, for a woman in a partnered relationship and with a youngest child under 20, was 64.8% in 2001. Actual participation varied significantly, according to the child's age. If the youngest child was aged under 5, workforce participation was significantly lower, at 51.4%. This rate rose to 69.7% when the youngest child was between five and nine years. Once the youngest child was 10 years or more, the participation rate plateaued, reaching 76% for women with a youngest child aged 10 to 14, and 77.8% for women with 15 to 19-year olds.²²

Being a sole or partnered parent also has a bearing on women's workforce participation rates. Nationally, 29.7% of sole mothers and 48.1% of partnered mothers with children under four years were in paid work in 2001.

It is important to note that this is not necessarily full-time work: in 2002, 60.9% of employed Australian mothers with children under 15 worked part-time (with employed sole mothers being slightly more likely to work full-time).²³

Table 16

Employed mothers with children under 15, Australia, 2002 (%).		
	Part-time	Full-time
Sole mothers	59.1	40.9
Couple mothers	61.2	38.8

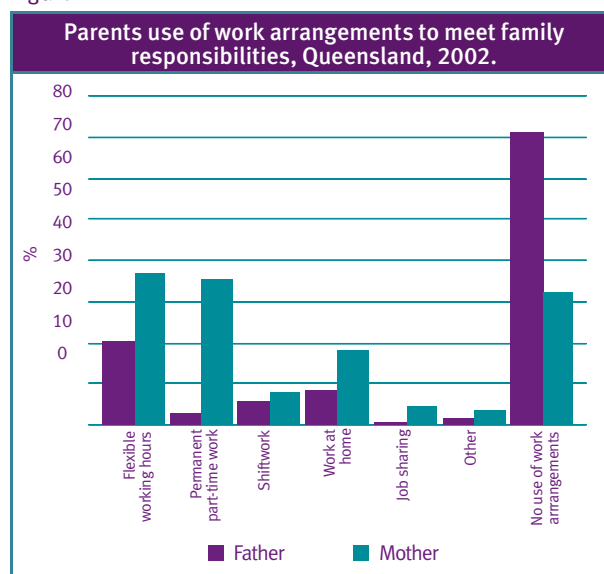
Source: ABS, 2002. Cat. No. 6203.0. *Labour Force Australia*, November 2002. Table 30.

Sole mothers (who in 2002 headed 22.6% of Queensland families with children under 15 years of age)²⁴ have lower levels of workforce participation overall (full-time and part-time) than partnered mothers. The chapter “Financial security” discusses sole parents' vulnerability to poverty.

A recent survey found 19.7% of sole mothers employed part-time would prefer to be working full-time, compared to 7.6% of partnered mothers.²⁵

Mothers still take primary responsibility for meeting family needs, and are much more likely than men to structure their work arrangements in order to do so. Figure 11 (below) illustrates the relative use of work arrangements for this purpose by Queensland mothers and fathers in 2002. Flexible working hours and permanent part-time work were the most commonly used arrangements for working mothers. 71.2% of working fathers did not use any work arrangements to help them meet family responsibilities.

Figure 11



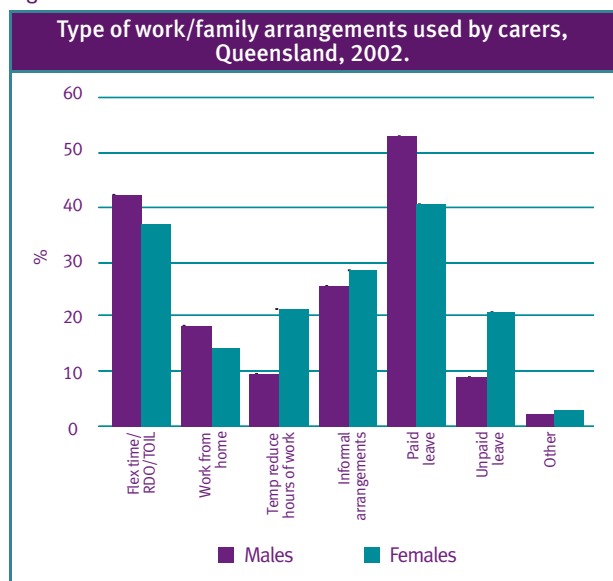
Source: ABS, 2002. *Child Care 2002 - State tables*. Table 25.

Queensland workplaces are increasingly recognising the benefits of implementing flexible working arrangements to assist employees balance their work and family responsibilities. In 2002, women (42%) were more likely than men (31.2%) to use such arrangements. Figure 12 illustrates the types of arrangements used by people with caring responsibilities (not just parents). Women more often use arrangements which involve loss of pay.



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Figure 12



Source: ABS, 2002. Cat. No. 4903.3. *Managing paid employment and caring responsibilities.*

Unpaid maternity leave is available in Australia to all female employees (other than seasonal workers and piece workers) who have more than 12 months' service with their employer, on the birth or adoption of a child. In 2002, 48,700 women in Queensland with a child six years or under had taken maternity leave in the past five years. Of these, 50.3% had taken a mix of paid and unpaid leave, and 36.3% had taken unpaid leave only. 66% of them had taken more than 26 weeks' leave.²⁶

Of women who had taken maternity leave between 1997 and October 2002, 67.6% had returned to work, 17.2% did not return to work and 15.2% were still on maternity leave. Of those who were back at work, 43.2% were in exactly the same job with the same employer, 43.6% were in the same job but with reduced hours, 2.5% with the same employer but a different job, and 6.9% with a new employer.²⁷

Child care

In 2002, 66.3% of under four-year-olds and 40.6% of five to 11-year-olds attended child care in Queensland. The extent of use varies with age of the child, particularly for formal care. Only 9.6% of under one-year-olds used formal day care, increasing progressively to 84.9% of four-year-olds. Before- and after-school programs (61.4%) were the most common child care for five to 11-year-olds followed by pre-school (31.2%).²⁸ Overall, 19.2% of Queensland children aged 0–11 years attended some form of formal care, a slight decrease from 20.7% in 1996.²⁹

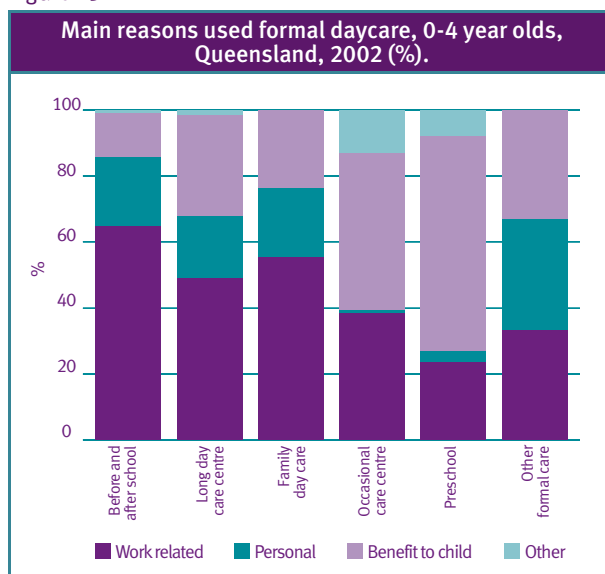
Only 7.1% of children used any type of care (including informal care by relatives or friends) for more than 45 hours per week. The majority of children (67.8%) used less than 20 hours per week.³⁰

The main reasons for using the various types of formal child care in the under-four age group are outlined in Figure 13 below.

Work was the main reason for using before- and after-school care, long day care, and family day care.

As household income increases, so does the likelihood of a child using some form of day care. This is likely to be due, in large part, to two-income households necessitating some form of care.³¹

Figure 13



Source: ABS, 2002. Cat. No. 4402.0. *Child Care 2002 - State tables. Table 08.*

There is a heavy reliance upon informal care, and in particular grandparents, to provide care for children. With an increasing workforce participation rate by older women, the latter may become less viable (see also chapter “Carers”).

In 2002, children of sole parents were more likely to use both formal and/or informal care than children with partnered parents. 59.8% of children with partnered parents used care when both parents worked, while 80.8% of children with a sole parent who worked, used care.³²

Demand for more formal child care in Queensland is strong, with 38,700 children requiring additional formal care in 2002. The greatest demand is for long day care (36.1%), followed by occasional care (19.6%), family day care (19.3%) and before-and-after school care (18.6%). The parents of 48.5% of these children need extra formal care for work-related reasons while 36.1% need it for personal reasons. The greatest demand, for both reasons, is for care for children aged under three.³³

Commonwealth Child Care Benefit is paid towards the fees of 86.5% of children attending formal day care.³⁴

Women in business

Queensland women are increasingly becoming their own boss. Since November 1999, the number of women in small business has risen by an average 12.9% per year, to 35.6% of small business operators in June 2001. It has been higher in the past however, with women representing 38.6% of small business operators in 1997. It should be noted that the term “operator” can be misleading as it includes women who are partners in a business, and does not necessarily reflect the actual level of involvement in the business.

Women in the 30–50 age group are particularly turning to small business (19.8% annual increase), second only to men under 30 (23.4%).³⁵

Workplace health and safety

Men are generally more likely to sustain an injury while working, reflecting their higher workforce participation and their representation in particular industries and occupations. Overall, women accounted for 27.8% of the 20,635 new workplace injuries reported in Queensland in 2000–2001, mostly in the health and community services industry (77.7% or 2,125 claims). In all industries, sprains and strains of muscles were the most common injury for women (71.6% of the total 5,581 reports of injury by women in 2000–2001). Women working as labourers and related workers had the highest number of injuries (1,571 reports), followed by intermediate clerical, sales and service workers (1,438 reports).³⁶

Relying on grandparents
to mind children may be less
viable as more and more women
keep working, longer.





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