

New Zealand fathers: Overworked, undervalued, and overseas?

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Introduction

Are New Zealand fathers (and New Zealand men in general), overworked, undervalued and, increasingly, overseas? To help answer this question, some background demographic data are firstly presented. These data cover some important changes in the structure of the New Zealand population; long-term changes in employment for men and women; more recent changes in tertiary education participation and the gaining of tertiary qualifications by men and women; and also includes a very brief examination of family change.

Next there is a focus on the working hours of fathers, in particular partnered fathers with young children. While the main attention is given to paid work, some comments about unpaid work are included.

Setting the scene: Demographic, employment, educational and family change

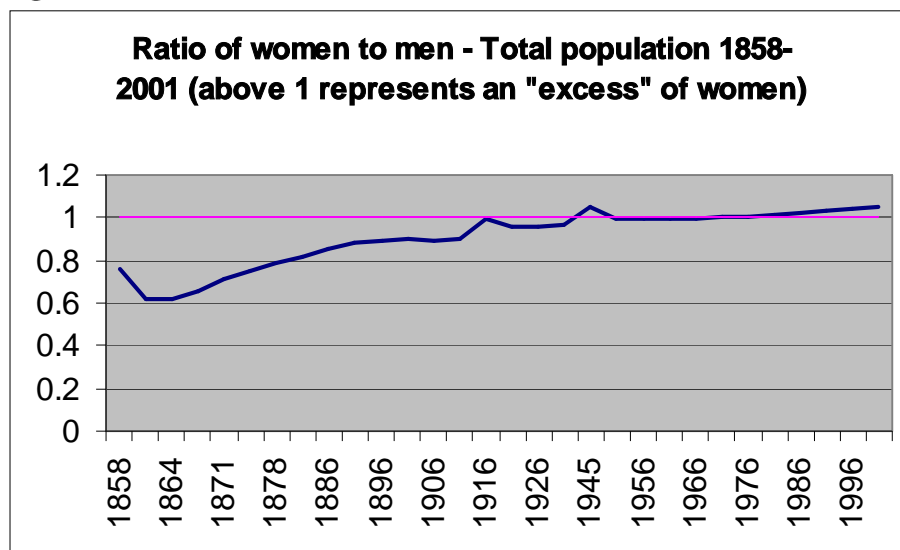
Demographic change

Changing demographics provide a first insight as to whether men are undervalued in New Zealand. A change in the composition of the New Zealand population partly reflects that, for a variety of reasons, many New Zealand men prefer to live and work, either short term or long term, in countries other than New Zealand.

Reflecting a naturally occurring ratio in the number of boys born relative to girls, in all age groups under 20 there are more men than women in New Zealand. Historically, apart from brief periods in WW1 and WWII, from the time of European colonisation through to 1968 there have also been more men than women in the total population (see Figure 1). However, at each census since 1968 more women than men have been recorded living in New Zealand. In 2001, according to the census, there were 5% more women than men.¹

¹ Population estimates produced by Statistics New Zealand for 2004 put this slightly lower at 3% more women than men.

Figure 1



While the birth ratio in New Zealand continues to favour boys, census data show that since the early 1980s among prime working and childbearing age groups the ratio of men to women in New Zealand has also reversed. In 1986 there were just over 700 more men than women in the 20-49 age group with this reversing in the 1991 census, with 13,000 more women than men. According to census data, this excess of women rose to over 35,000 in 1996 and to just over 53,000 in 2001. Some of the “missing men” are simply undercounts by Statistics New Zealand, and some temporarily overseas at the time of the census. Table 1 shows estimates of sex ratios taking into account these factors. It still indicates a major imbalance in the 25-49 age groups.²

Table 1: Estimated Population Sex Ratio - Total New Zealand Population - As at 31 December 1991-2004 and June 2005

| | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2004 | 2005* |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 20-24 | 1.02 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.00 | 0.99 | 0.99 | 0.98 | 0.96 | 0.95 | 0.96 | 0.96 |
| 25-29 | 1.04 | 1.04 | 1.04 | 1.05 | 1.05 | 1.06 | 1.06 | 1.06 | 1.06 | 1.06 | 1.04 | 1.04 | 1.03 |
| 30-34 | 1.04 | 1.04 | 1.05 | 1.05 | 1.05 | 1.05 | 1.06 | 1.07 | 1.08 | 1.09 | 1.09 | 1.09 | 1.09 |
| 35-39 | 1.03 | 1.03 | 1.03 | 1.03 | 1.03 | 1.04 | 1.05 | 1.05 | 1.06 | 1.06 | 1.06 | 1.07 | 1.08 |
| 40-44 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.02 | 1.02 | 1.02 | 1.03 | 1.03 | 1.03 | 1.04 | 1.05 | 1.06 | 1.06 |
| 45-49 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.01 | 1.02 | 1.02 | 1.02 | 1.03 | 1.03 |

Source: Estimated Resident Population data, Statistics New Zealand

* provisional

To place these figures into a long-term perspective, the following table shows census data for 1921 and 1926 alongside population estimates for 2004 in some key age groups. In 1921 and 1926, we were busily building war memorials in all small towns to “missing men” killed in WW1. The overall picture of sex ratios in 2004 is even more dramatic than the on-going effects of male loss due to WW1.³

² International comparative data suggest New Zealand stands out with respect to this “excess” of women.

³ One major difference of course is that the current group of “missing men” may one day return to New Zealand.

Table 2: Ratio of women to men aged 25-39, 1921 and 2004

| | 1921 | 1926 | 2004 |
|-------|------|------|------|
| 25-29 | 1.10 | 1.00 | 1.03 |
| 30-34 | 1.01 | 1.09 | 1.09 |
| 35-39 | 0.94 | 1.01 | 1.08 |

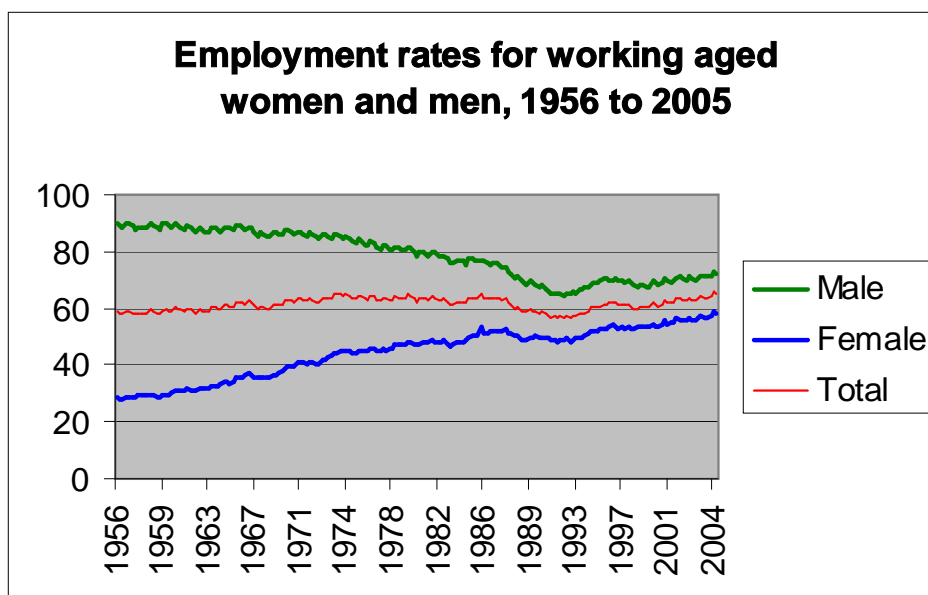
This imbalance between women and men has been picked up by the media in recent months, with headlines such as “Dirty thirties myth” and “Young women flock to New Zealand” (Collins 2005, Davis 2005). Research undertaken by Professor Richard Bedford and myself suggests a number of reasons for this imbalance, including more women than men migrating to New Zealand in recent years. But the main reason is the loss to other countries of New Zealand born men.⁴ It is likely there are many reasons for New Zealand men leaving this country (just as Australian men are leaving Australia) But one reason is that they (like young women) often have much better earning potential overseas. This measure of sex ratios alone suggests that many New Zealand men feel undervalued in New Zealand.

Long-term employment change

In the immediate post WW2 period, most working-aged men were in paid work, and men and women in this broad age group lived as married couples and raised children. In these couples, the main pattern of employment was the male working full time and the female at home looking after children. This was an extreme of specialisation of roles within a family.

⁴ This issue is the subject of further investigation – see <http://www.callister.co.nz/research.htm>.

Figure 2



Source: Derived from Chapple (1994, 1999) and Household Labour Force Survey

Figure 2 shows women's employment rates at the highest point since the 1950s. In contrast, while men's employment rates have increased in the early years of the new century, they are still well below that of the 1950s. The decline in men's employment from the 1950s through to the early 1980s primarily related to men retiring earlier. But younger men also started working later in their lifecycle due to participation in tertiary education. This could be seen as a positive trend. However, the latter decline was primarily through job loss, particularly for men with little or no formal education. Some of the recent gain in male employment is due to growth in the employment of older men (Retirement Commission 2005).

Restricting the analysis to men born in New Zealand and using data from the five yearly census, Table 3 shows trends in full-time paid work for various birth cohorts of men (full time work is 30 or more hours of paid work per week). Table 3 covers the time period 1976 through to 2001. In the time period shown, in each successive cohort, and across each age group, there was a decline in full-time employment. For example, of those men born in 1947-51 and who were aged 25-29 in 1976, 91 percent worked full time. By 2001, of those born in 1972-76 only 77 percent worked full time when they were 25-29.

Table 3: % of total New Zealand born men who worked full time, A cohort analysis

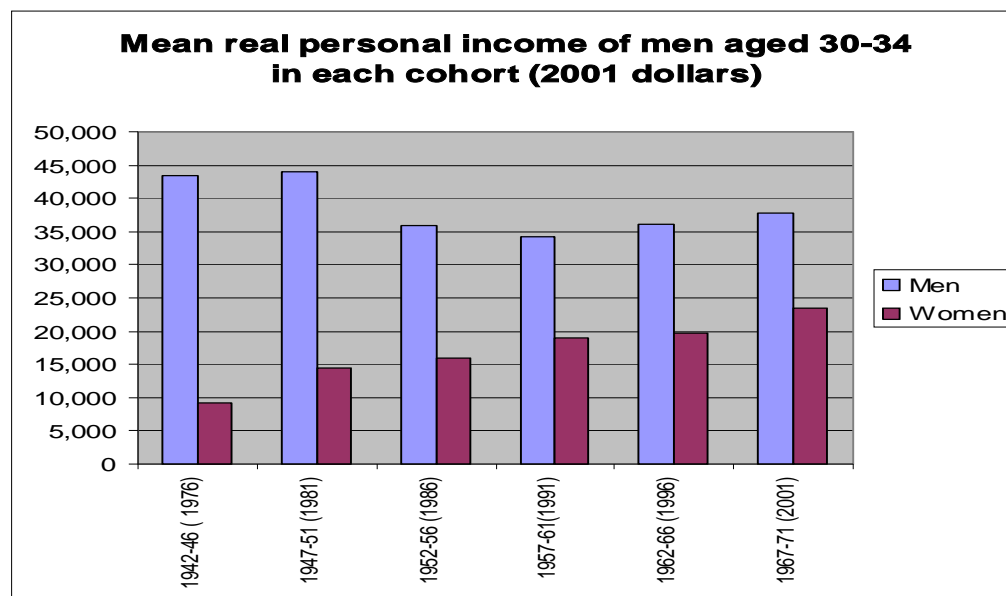
| | Born in | | | | | | | |
|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 1937-41 | 1942-46 | 1947-51 | 1952-56 | 1957-61 | 1962-66 | 1967-71 | 1972-76 |
| 15-19 | | | | | 50 | 50 | 47 | 27 |
| 20-24 | | | | 83 | 85 | 81 | 64 | 66 |
| 25-29 | | | 91 | 92 | 88 | 75 | 78 | 77 |
| 30-34 | | 92 | 95 | 90 | 80 | 81 | 81 | |
| 35-39 | 92 | 95 | 92 | 82 | 82 | 82 | | |
| 40-44 | 95 | 92 | 84 | 83 | 83 | | | |
| 45-49 | 91 | 84 | 83 | 83 | | | | |
| 50-54 | 79 | 79 | 81 | | | | | |
| 55-59 | 69 | 74 | | | | | | |
| 60-64 | 54 | | | | | | | |

Source: Census, Statistics New Zealand

A small part of this shift is positive as it represents some men having the freedom to take on roles as primary caregivers, to undertake further study, or to work part time. But, for most men, the loss of full time jobs has not been an active choice.

The loss of full-time paid work translates through to income earning potential. Figure 3 shows inflation adjusted average yearly income (from all sources and before tax) for men aged 30-34 in 1976 through to 2001. This is an age group when many men will be setting up homes and raising children. Figure 3 shows that while inflation adjusted incomes have risen from a low point in 1991, they are still below levels of 1976 and 1981. These are average data, and therefore do not take into account the distribution of income. Some men, for example, have dramatically increased their earnings in recent decades. But equally, some men are earning far less. Overall, the employment data and the income data together suggest that there is a group of men in New Zealand society who face major employment and financial challenges and are worse off than in previous decades.

Figure 3



Source: Census, Statistics New Zealand

I have written much about the loss of jobs through to early 1990s for men and its effect on families (Callister 1999a, b & c, 2000). The outlook for young, low-skilled men in terms of employment, forming stable long term relationships, and providing a significant level of financial support to a family seemed particularly gloomy in the early 1990s. The Australian *Marginal Men* study found that many men who had poor labour market prospects were also far less likely to live in stable couple households (Sydney Morning Herald 1998).⁵ Instead, they tended to live either alone, or in non-private dwellings such as boarding houses or had returned to live with their own parents. Also in Australia, Gregory (1999) argued that changes in the labour market had already resulted in a large accumulated income loss for young males over their initial years of adulthood, which had significantly reduced their ability to finance household formation and to support children.⁶

Despite its impressive performance since the mid 1990s, the New Zealand economy remains a tough environment for men, and women, with little or no formal qualifications. Table 4 shows the proportion of men in the labour force (which includes both those employed and those seeking work) from 1987 through to 2003. Men with no formal educational qualifications face major problems entering paid work and, if they do, finding a job that can support a family.⁷

Table 4: Participation rates for men with no/school only qualifications

| | No qualifications | School qualifications | Total |
|------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| 1987 | 72.4 | 76.1 | 78.6 |
| 1991 | 65.1 | 70.2 | 74.1 |
| 1996 | 61.2 | 71.5 | 74.4 |
| 2001 | 59.6 | 70.0 | 73.7 |
| 2003 | 59.2 | 70.6 | 74.3 |

Source: Household Labour Force Survey

Educational change

Boys and education is another theme of this summit. While what happens at primary and secondary school is extremely important as it shapes subsequent education choices and outcomes, I briefly focus on outcomes from tertiary education.

In a recent edition of *Asymmetric Information* (2004) it was noted:

In a Human Rights Commission report by Judy McGregor (Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner at the Human Rights Commission) and Lance Gray, *Modern Apprenticeships: Training for the Boys* it was announced, “equity issues must be addressed. Two years since the introduction of the Modern Apprenticeships Scheme females represent 6.6 percent (381) of

⁵ The Sydney Morning Herald article was primarily based on a report by Birrell and Rapson (1998).

⁶ A paper presented at the Workshop on Labour Force Participation and Economic Growth Wellington, 14-15 April, 2005 by Gregory suggests that although Australia has experienced strong overall employment growth in recent years, this has not translated into full-time jobs for low-skilled men.

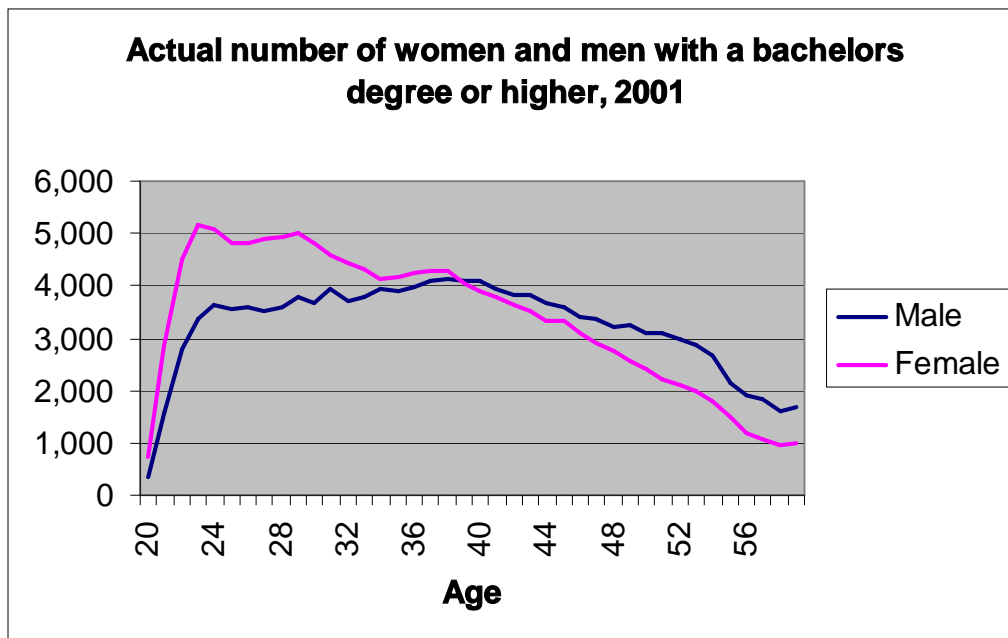
⁷ The proportion of men with no formal qualifications has been declining over time. For example, in 2001 around 35% of men in their 50s had no formal qualification while for men in their 20s it is around 17%. It is likely, therefore, that disadvantage is becoming more concentrated in this group. For women in their 20s, around 13% have no formal qualifications.

total participants (5739)". In other words, in these apprenticeships, males outnumber females by about 5000. To put this in context, in July 2002 there were 133,979 male and 185,907 female tertiary students, or about 52,000 more women than men.

It is not only in 2002 the number of women in tertiary education greatly outnumbered men. This has been occurring for a number of years. It appears to be more of a participation issue than simply that men are "missing" overseas. Tertiary institutions are now more attractive to women than they are to men. There are many possible reasons for this, for example just look at the *Welcome to Massey University* home page for future students— there are six women and two men on that page.⁸

Figure 4 shows the number of women relative to the number of men with a bachelors degree or higher qualification in 2001. It shows in the younger age groups that women greatly outnumber men. There are a number of labour market and family implications that may be flowing out of this imbalance and this is the subject of ongoing research.

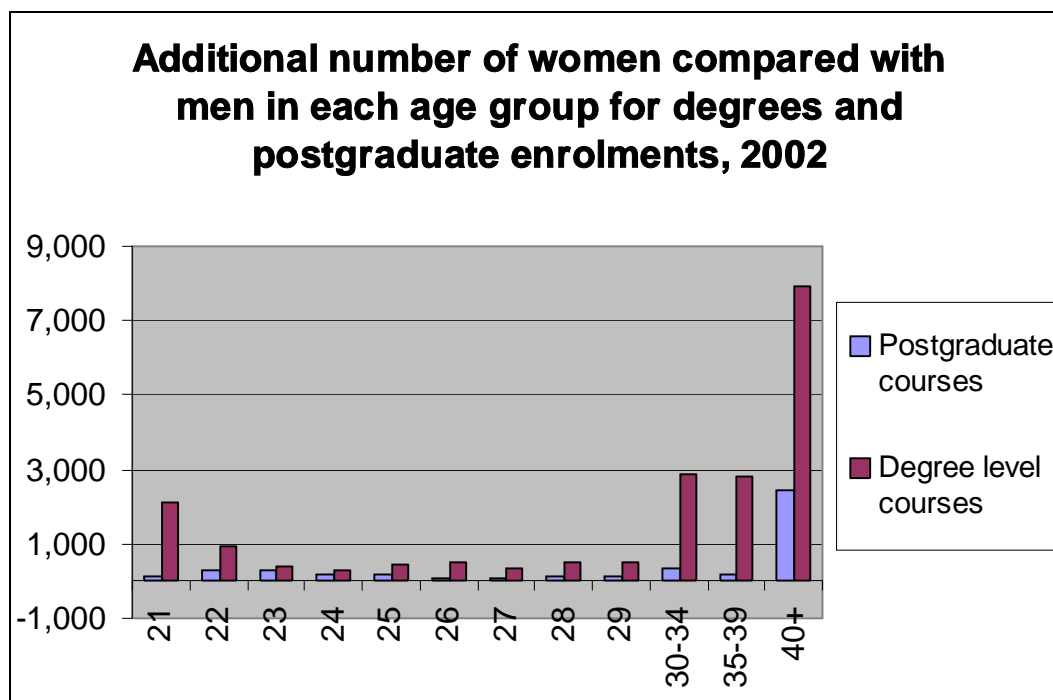
Figure 4



Given that a significant number of older women return to tertiary education, over time the gap between the number of men and women over age 40 with tertiary qualifications is also narrowing (Figure 5).

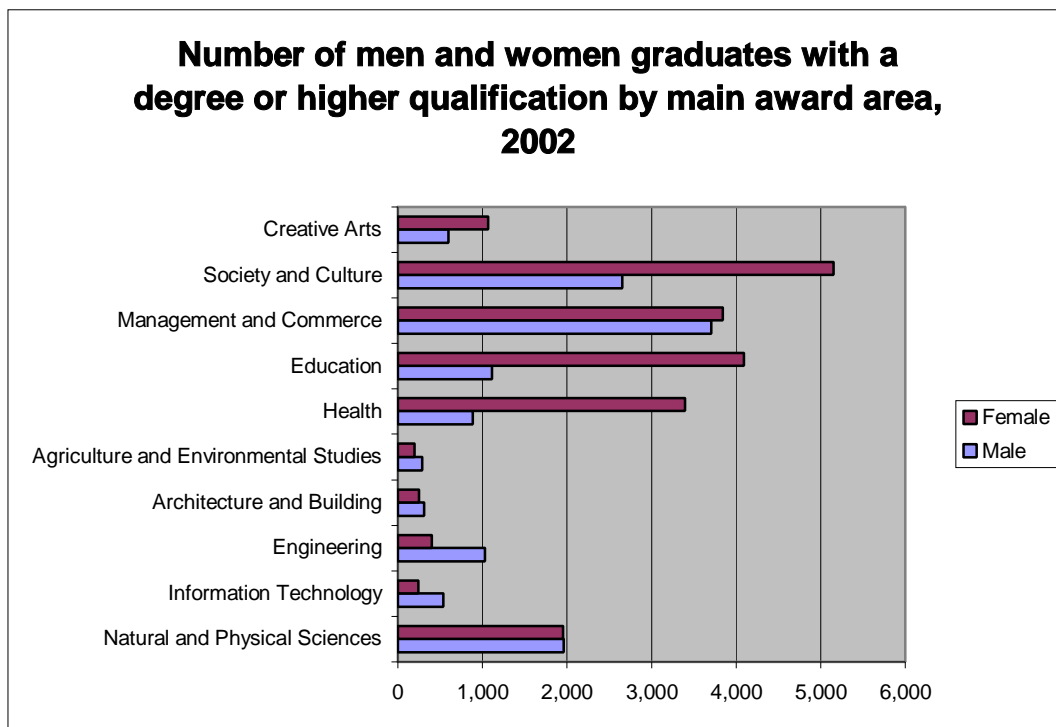
Figure 5

⁸ <http://futurestudents.massey.ac.nz/>. Auckland University has 3 woman and one man on a similar webpage <http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/for/prospective/home.cfm>, Waikato University three women and one man <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/student/future.shtml>, Victoria has one woman and one man and a mixed crowd scene http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/prospective_students/index.html, Canterbury University has four women and one man <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/prospectivestudents.shtml>, the Auckland ? of Technology www.aut.ac.nz/students/ has four women and 1 man and Otago has a man and a woman <http://www.otago.ac.nz/prospectivestudents/index.php> (Accessed 2 August 2005).



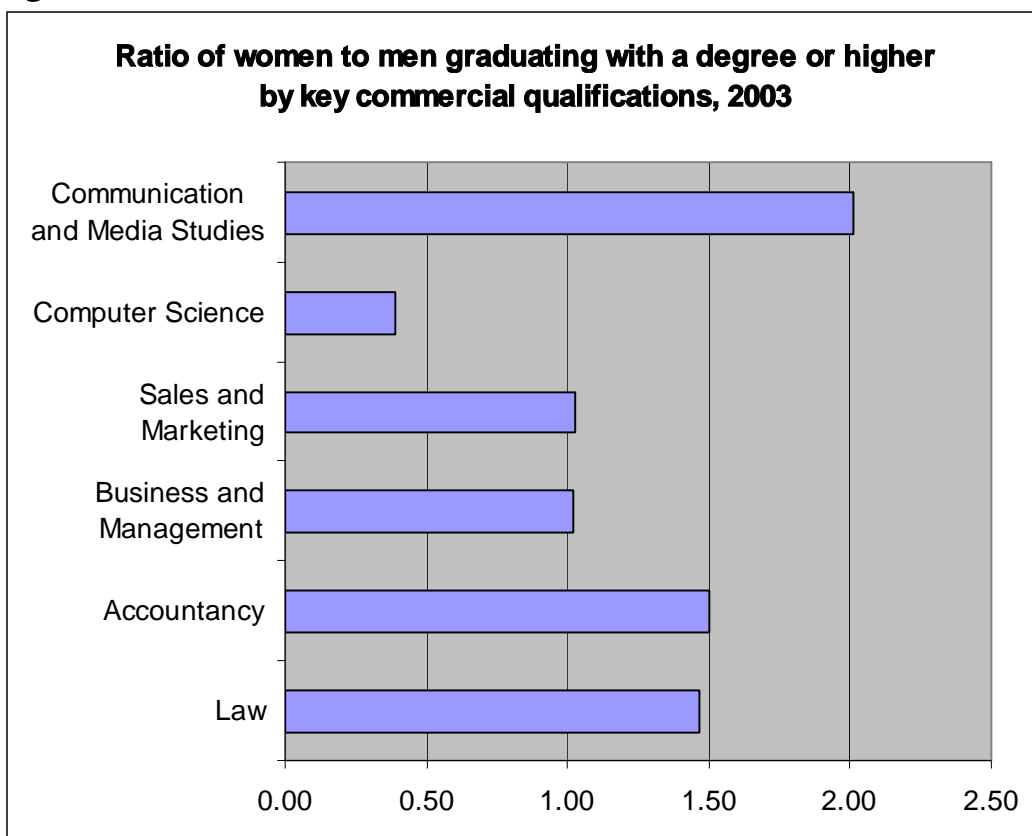
The identification of the male-female imbalance in tertiary as a possible gender equity problem is met by one response is that we should not be concerned about this as men still fill the majority of the highest managerial and professional jobs in New Zealand (apart from a number of senior public sector jobs, including the Prime Minister, and some private sector companies, including Telecom and IBM New Zealand). Another response is that women tend not to gain qualifications in science and business areas so will remain lower paid than men. However, these patterns are also changing too. Figure 6 shows the number of women relative to men gaining degrees in a range of subject areas in 2002. It is noteworthy that there are now more female than male graduates in management and commerce type qualifications; there are roughly equal numbers of men and women in natural and physical sciences, and in areas such as information technology women are rapidly catching up. In the health arena, it is primarily nursing that leads to women dominating the field but women also outnumber men in areas such as graduate doctors.

Figure 6



Increasingly businesses will be recruiting women in key business specialities. For example, in 2003 women outnumbered men by 2 to 1 in communication and media studies and 1.5 to 1 in accountancy (Figure 7).

Figure 7



I welcome the increase in the number of women in tertiary education. There are many positive outcomes from having a well-qualified population. But, if gender equity concerns apply only to situations where women appear to be disadvantaged, this then shows a double standard in research and public policy. We should be equally concerned when men seem to be “falling behind” in education, particularly if we want New Zealand to be a high-skill, high productivity economy.

We also need to keep an open mind as to what might be causing the on-going “pay gap” between men and women, despite the impressive gains in education by women. Research shows the “gap” is the strongest for women who have dependent children (e.g. Waldfogel 1998). The solutions which tend to be put forward for eliminating or reducing the pay gap include greater support for working women in areas such as childcare and paid parental leave as well as making sure there is equal pay or equal work (for instance, comparing work and pay for police and nurses). However, virtually no support is given in New Zealand to policies to help men increase time spent with children. In fact, in New Zealand in areas such as paid parental leave, the law discriminates against fathers (Father and Child Society 2003).⁹ Shared custody arrangements would also increase the time fathers spend with their children.

As in New Zealand, there is concern in Australia about women’s relatively low labour force participation rate. However, unlike in New Zealand there also appears to be concern expressed about men who are not in the labour force (Karvelas 2005). For example, in an article about encouraging fathers to become “stay at home Dads” Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward is cited as saying:

In the same way that special measures were made available to women seeking to enter certain sectors of the paid workforce, perhaps governments have to consider special measures to men to enable them to enter the unpaid workforce.

However, there are researchers who suggest that the “pay/work gap” will never disappear because a significant number of women, including well educated women, simply do not want to make the sacrifices needed (for example, in terms of time away from the family) to compete with men in the upper end of the labour market (Hakim 2003). For women, the choice to work part time or to exit the paid workforce this generally requires them to be financially supported by either a partner (generally male) or the state. In turn, this often means men have little choice over their paid work options.

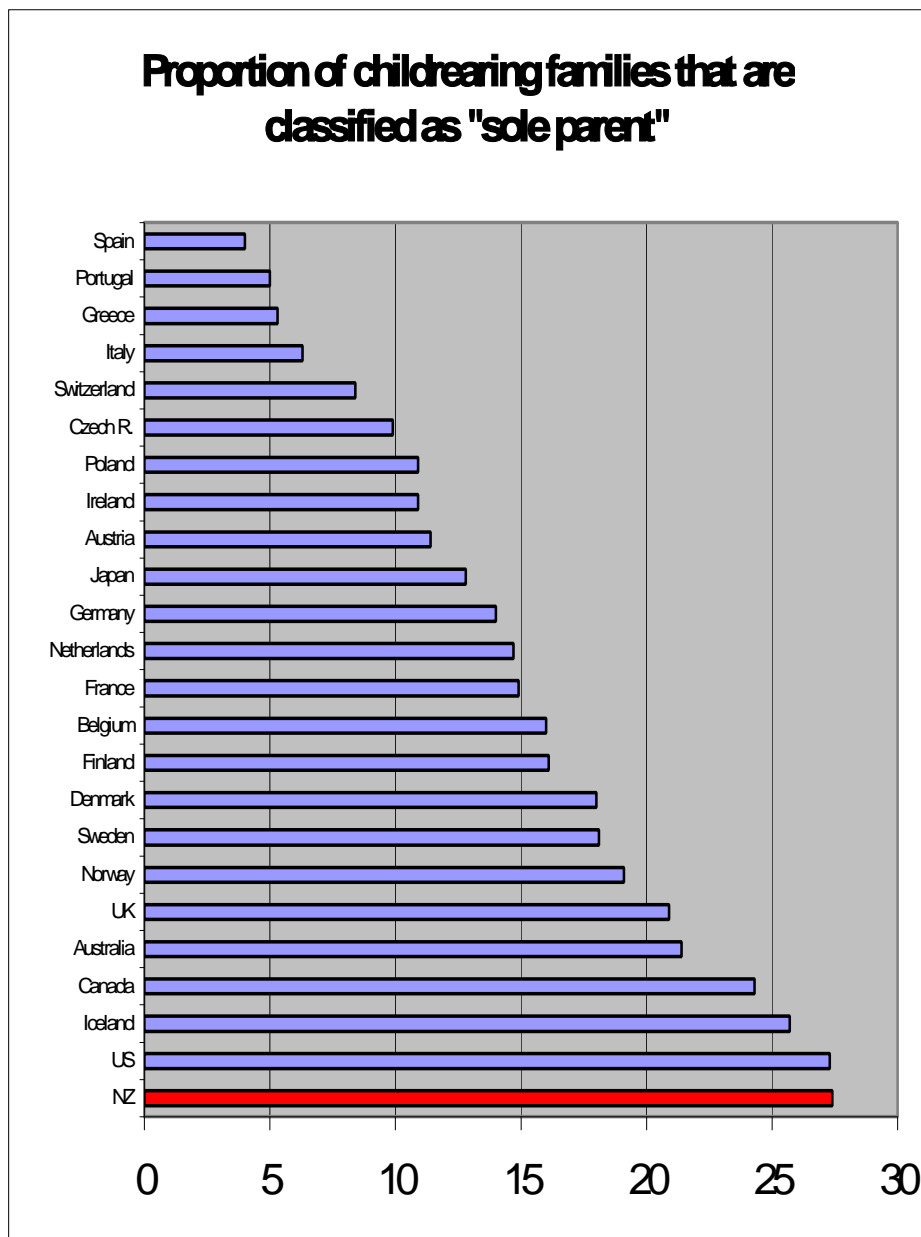
Family change

Many factors influence family change. However, there is some evidence that labour market change, including the loss of jobs among men or the inability of low skilled men to earn reasonable incomes, can influence family form (Callister 2000). One area that New Zealand stands out internationally is in the number of “sole parent households” (Figure 8). The term, ‘sole parent’, is, nevertheless problematic as Birks

⁹ In contrast, in Sweden (and Norway) there is “positive discrimination” to encourage fathers to take a period of parental leave (Galtry and Callister 2005).

(2001) has pointed out. In many of these “sole parent” households the children will, in fact, have two living biological parents.

Figure 8



Source: Johnston (2005)

A significant number of New Zealand fathers do not live full time with their children, and, while we do not have New Zealand data, a small but not insignificant number appear to have little contact with their children.¹⁰ A significant number of New Zealand sole mothers are not in paid work when compared to sole mothers in other industrialised countries (see Table 7). This means that directly, or more generally indirectly through the tax system, these sole parents have to be supported by other New Zealanders, including former partners. The working hours of employed fathers

¹⁰ While the popular media and politicians often focus on cases of “abandonment” of children by fathers, the men’s and father’s movement tends to focus on situations where access to children is blocked by mothers and the court system.

(and mothers) therefore needs to be considered in the context of family change and the income transfers required to support both sole mothers not in paid work and partnered women not in paid work.

Overworked fathers?

Paid work

International research indicates that, over the past couple of centuries, the average hours spent by individuals in paid work have reduced (Bosch and Lehdorff 2001).¹¹ Yet, in the last decade, concerns about overwork in New Zealand have re-emerged (e.g. Department of Labour 2004, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions 2002). A comparison of the proportion of employees working 50 or more hours per week among a selection of OECD countries shows that New Zealand has one of the highest proportions of workers putting in long hours of paid work (Messenger 2004). Some of the concerns about long hours of paid work relate to workplace health and safety issues. Other concerns focus on the possible negative effect on families and children. Table 5 shows changes in working hours between 1986 and 2001 for women and men age 25-54.

Table 5: Long hours worked per week (% working 50 or more hours per week), by sex and age, 1986 and 2001

| | Men | | | Women | | |
|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 25--34 | 35--44 | 45--54 | 25--34 | 35--44 | 45--54 |
| 1986 | 30.9 | 36.5 | 32.3 | 9.3 | 10.3 | 10.1 |
| 2001 | 33.8 | 40.6 | 43.0 | 13.5 | 13.5 | 17.0 |
| Δ 86--01 | 2.9 | 4.1 | 10.7 | 4.2 | 3.2 | 6.9 |

Source: Census data, in Callister (2005a)

In New Zealand, fathers of young children make up a significant proportion of those working long hours. As an example, in 1986, 34 percent of employed, partnered fathers aged 25-34 with a preschool child worked 50 or more hours per week.¹² By 2001, this had risen to 39 percent. Older fathers tend to work even longer hours. Yet, at the same time there was also a small rise in the proportion of fathers working very short hours, under 20 per week. Overall, the main shift for fathers was away from the traditional 40-hour week, with some working shorter hours but most working longer ones. In contrast, less than 10 percent of employed partnered mothers with a preschool child worked 50 or more hours per week.

¹¹ This section draws heavily on Callister (2005a)

¹² In terms of sole parents, there are far fewer sole fathers than sole mothers. However, sole fathers are far more likely to be employed than sole mothers and, if so, are much more likely to work long hours (Callister 2005a).

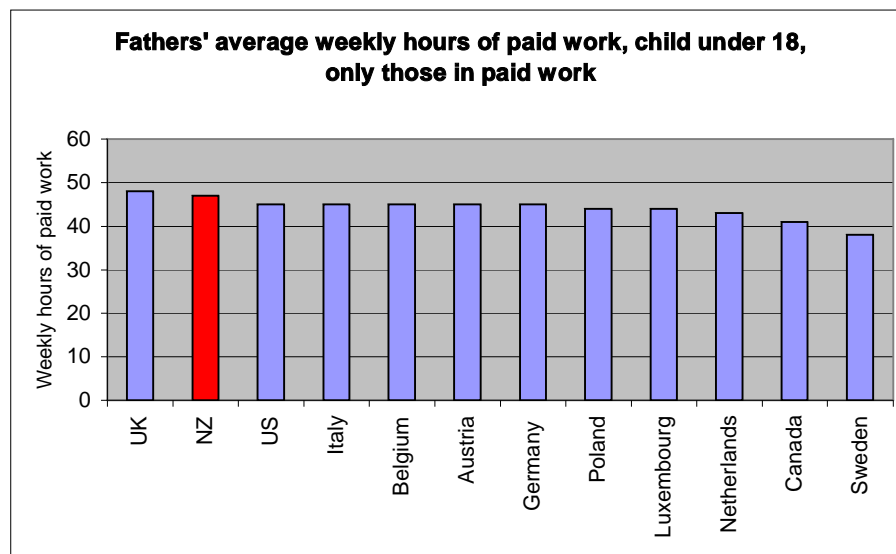
Table 6: % of employed partnered mothers and fathers working 50 or more hours per week, by age of parent with a child under 5 years, 1986 and 2001

| | Mothers | | Fathers | |
|-----------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | 25--34 | 35--44 | 25--34 | 35--44 |
| 1986 | 9.0 | 10.2 | 34.3 | 37.0 |
| 2001 | 7.9 | 9.8 | 38.6 | 43.0 |
| Δ 86--01 | -1.1 | -0.4 | 4.3 | 6.0 |

Source: Census data, in Callister (2005a)

International comparative data, based on average hours worked per week, indicates that New Zealand fathers' working hours are at the upper end of the scale (Figure 9).

Figure 9



Source: OECD data Gornick (2005), New Zealand data from the Census, Statistics New Zealand.

Why do many New Zealand fathers work long hours? There is likely to be a variety of reasons, but one is that men are still expected to be the main financial providers in many families. This provision of income for family wellbeing is generally unrecognized, even in much of the recent literature on 'fatherhood'. Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001) argue that 'providing' is often overlooked because it is taken for granted, is invisible to the family, holds negative connotations, and is inadequately conceptualised.

Patterns of paid work among New Zealand mothers of young children can put pressure on fathers to fulfill the provider role. Partnered mothers of preschool children have been increasing their employment rates in New Zealand, with just over half of these mothers were employed in 2001. However, this rate is well below that of some other industrialised countries. At the top of employment rates for mothers is to be found Sweden at 81%, while Canada has a rate of 70% and the United States 61% (Table 7). This provides one possible reason why a group of New Zealand men work long hours, that is to make up for the lost income when their partner is no longer in paid work (or perhaps only working part time).

Yet, when total hours of paid work (averaged across those in paid work and those not) for partnered mothers and fathers with a dependent child are calculated, New Zealand

has higher total average working hours than Sweden despite the high employment rates of Swedish mothers (Callister 2005b). So New Zealand couples with young children work longer hours than their Swedish counterparts, but also earn less income (when measured on per capita GDP).

Table 7: Employment Rates for Mothers with a Child under 6 Years of Age

| | Total Mothers (ranked) | Partnered Mothers | Sole Mothers |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Sweden | 75 | 81 | 65 |
| Portugal | 72 | 70 | 83 |
| Finland | 67 | 58 | 65 |
| Austria | 67 | 66 | 76 |
| Netherlands | 66 | 62 | 39 |
| Canada | 63 | 70 | 68 |
| Belgium | 62 | 72 | 49 |
| United States | 59 | 61 | 68 |
| France | 56 | 57 | 52 |
| United Kingdom | 55 | 61 | 37 |
| Ireland | 53 | 46 | 35 |
| Germany | 52 | 51 | 50 |
| New Zealand | 47 | 53 | 32 |
| Greece | 47 | 48 | 63 |
| Italy | 47 | 45 | 72 |
| Poland | 46 | 50 | 33 |
| Australia | 45 | 48 | 30 |
| Spain | 45 | 42 | 65 |

Source: Johnston (2005)

The effect of long hours of paid work by fathers on children

There has been much debate about possible “maternal deprivation” when mothers enter paid work. However, while focusing primarily on the effects of maternal employment, a recent study undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2004: 43) noted that one of the important influences on child outcomes is paternal care. There are still few studies of the effects of paternal employment - particularly long hours of work - on child outcomes. However, interviews with young Australians about work-life balance issues suggest that many young people wanted to spend more time with their fathers (Pocock 2004, Pocock and Clarke 2005).

There is a further potential problem with partnered fathers working long hours, especially if the mother works part time or is not in paid work. That is if they separate. There is then the potential for the fathers to be seen as “not there” for their children, with a possibility they may get limited access to see them if custody is disputed. Even if they had been working 60 hour weeks, fathers would have likely to have been able, in many cases, to tuck the children into bed every night rather than meeting them for an hour or two at McDonalds once a fortnight. Specialisation in work and family roles can therefore be risky for men as well as women.

Unpaid work – Fathers suffer from a “double burden” too

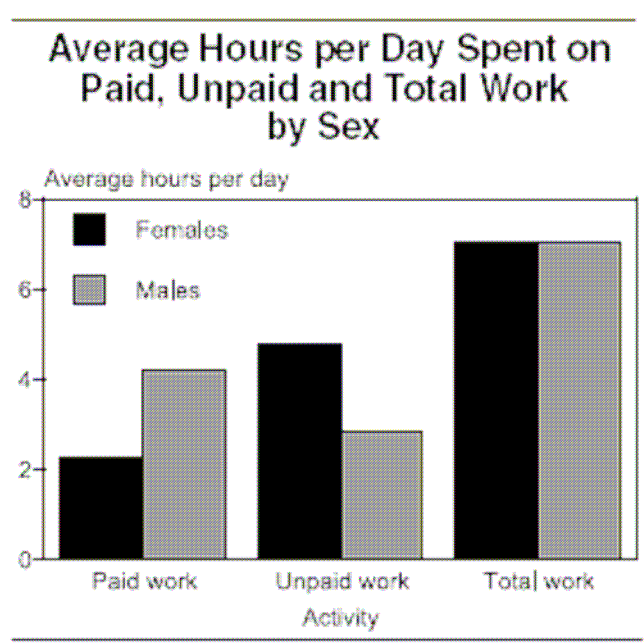
Looking at paid work only tells half the story. Total workload, both paid and unpaid, is important.¹³ As Stuart Birks pointed out in his paper given to the Auckland summit, with statements like “Why are women still doing almost all the work - in the fields, offices and home?”, rhetoric about unpaid work (and total working hours), often comes to the fore rather than facts. When talking in the media, promoting the importance of time use surveys, well known time-use advocate Marilyn Waring constantly refers to the ‘double burden’ facing women, but does not acknowledge that men can also face this so called ‘double burden’ of paid and unpaid work.

Fathers are now under a double pressure to be both good providers and good fathers. So how do fathers balance their paid work and childcare? In New Zealand there has only been one time-use survey carried out, so changes in total working hours over time cannot be determined. But the time use data that Waring considers so vital, does not support her assertion that the ‘double burden’ is a problem solely for women. Statistics New Zealand report the following on their website:

Men and women spend about the same amount of time working, on average seven hours a day, or 49 hours a week. Females spent two hours a day more than males on unpaid work, while males spent two hours a day more than females on paid work. While approximately 60 percent of males’ work is paid, almost 70 percent of females’ work is unpaid.

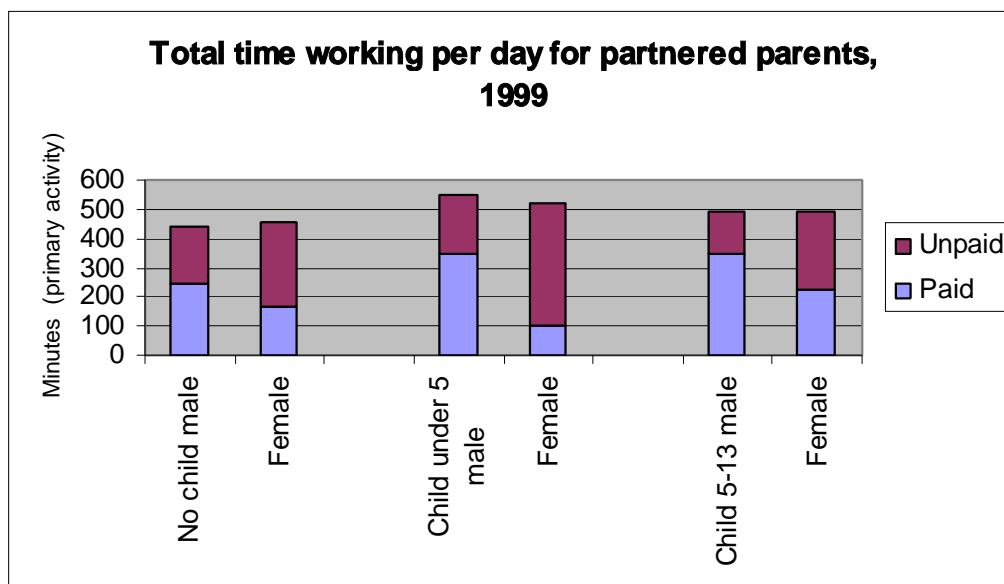
<http://www.stats.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/FF42228D-F958-4598-8AD7-36D5A2CEED7B/0/GenUnpdWk.pdf>

And here is the graph from that website, which does not support the idea that women are doing almost all the work in society.



¹³ While paid and unpaid work are usually seen as separate activities, New Zealand time use data show that there is a small, but nevertheless significant, amount of simultaneous paid and unpaid work undertaken in New Zealand (Callister and Singley 2004).

So what about families with young children? When the New Zealand time use sample is restricted to partnered men and woman with a child under five, Stevens (2002) demonstrates that total hours of work are higher for parents of young children than for men and women without children. Steven’s data also show that the ratio of total hours of women to men’s work was 0.96; that is, on average partnered men with a child under five work longer total hours than partnered women.



Source: Stevens (2002)

Again contrary to popular discourse, the total hours data, drawn from an official survey undertaken with the support of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs suggest that, in New Zealand when children are young it is, on average, fathers who suffer more from the “double burden” than mothers. This double burden fathers is not unique to New Zealand. In Norway, fathers with a child under six on average work longer total hours (paid and unpaid combined) than mothers (Statistics Norway 2005).

This “double burden” for partnered fathers is also confirmed by research carried out in countries where fathers work long hours. This research shows that they are spending more time with their children than in the past. For example, for dual-earner couples in the United States, since 1977 fathers have increased the time they spend on workdays doing household chores, including childcare, by approximately 42 minutes, while mothers have reduced their time by the same amount, although still doing more than fathers (Bond et al 2002). This long-term pattern of change is likely to have also taken place in New Zealand.

So how have fathers managed to increase their time with children while, at the same time, generally continue to be employed rather than becoming full-time parents at home? A small group is now working part time but most, if employed, still work full time. US research also shows that fathers (and mothers) are now also spending less time on themselves. In the United States, in 2002 fathers spent 1.3 hours on themselves on workdays, down from 2.1 hours in 1977 (Bond et al 2002). This is effectively the “domestication” of men’s leisure time.

In addition, New Zealand time-use data also show that some fathers with long working hours are undertaking paid work at home in the evenings and weekends, time that children will also be generally home (Callister 2004). A further investigation of these data indicates that nearly 24% of working parents recorded undertaking simultaneous paid work and childcare. Not surprisingly, almost all of the simultaneous childcare being passive rather than active (Callister and Singley 2004). However, given the popular idea that it is mainly women who multi-task, an unexpected result was that, when both passive and active childcare are considered, there was little difference between women and men. The data showed that just over a third of employed New Zealand mothers and fathers undertook a spell of simultaneous childcare and paid work in weekends, while during the week the figures were a fifth for fathers and a quarter for mothers.¹⁴

Are fathers happy with their long paid working hours?

Research carried out in Australia on the working preferences of partnered fathers suggests that, overall, fathers' satisfaction with their work hours decreased as the number of hours worked increased (Weston et al. 2004). In addition, the proportion of fathers who would prefer to work fewer hours (taking into account the impact this would have on their income) increases with the number of hours worked. Yet, the research also found that a quarter of fathers working very long hours (60 or more) were satisfied with their working hours. In New Zealand, a non-random on-line survey of fathers indicated that 80% of them wished they could spend more time with their children (EEO Trust 2003).

More research is needed in New Zealand as to why so many fathers work long hours and how hours of paid work can be reduced for those wishing to do so. But one thing we do know already, in part because of the accepted discourse on the 'double burden', is that policy makers still tend to see work-life balance as a women's issue alone. For example, in the preamble to a Green's sponsored bill currently being considered by parliamentary select committee, a bill designed to reduce hours of paid work, it is stated that "women in particular who are often the main care givers of children are frequently burdened with the extra stress from having to do both paid work and domestic labour" (p. 1). The preamble also notes that "greater opportunities for flexible working will enable some parents who would otherwise leave the labour market to remain in employment at the end of *maternity leave*" (emphasis added p. 2). Such statements, particularly considering that in New Zealand it is actually technically parental leave not maternity leave, indicate that, like much family related policy in New Zealand, concerns about fathers are very much a secondary issue (Father and Child Society 2005).

Conclusion

Is fathers' work undervalued in New Zealand? The answer has to be the affirmative with regard to the lack of public recognition in New Zealand of their "double burden". In addition, not enough credit is given to fathers in their provider role. Fathers are now generally expected to be dedicated full-time workers as well as "good fathers". To fulfil both roles often requires long hours of work.

¹⁴ For a further discussion of paid and unpaid work see Callister (2005b).

Are fathers (and men in general) undervalued in the labour market? The answer is also potentially yes – for some men at least. The reason for this is the fact that so many men find they are more valued in overseas labour markets than in New Zealand. Given globalising labour markets, unless New Zealand incomes can be significantly elevated it is difficult to see how this trend will be reversed.

Are fathers overworked? At one end of the spectrum, poorly educated men find it difficult to participate in the labour market and, if they do, are often poorly paid. This has an impact on their ability to form stable relationships in which they can raise children. There is a group of men who are falling behind in the educational arena and this issue needs to be given more prominence. In the global economy, unskilled or low skilled workers (both men and women) in industrialised countries face a difficult future.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is a group working very long hours. New Zealand stands out internationally in the proportion of men, including fathers who work long hours. It is not known if the increasing employment of mothers will eventually lead to a reduction in men's hours of work. In recent times, increasing women's employment has simply led to longer total hours for couples.

One of the ways that men's long hours might start to reduce is if there was greater recognition of the fact that work-life balance issues also affect men. There has been some limited progress in this area, but more attention is needed.

Overall, the data show that men, like women, are an increasingly heterogeneous group. Simply suggesting that men are from "Mars" and women from "Venus" disguises increasing within-group complexity. Many men have good jobs; the hours of work that suit them; and satisfying family lives. But a significant number do not. Policies designed to assist men, and fathers in particular, to have a high level of wellbeing in New Zealand need to recognise this diversity.

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