

Overwork, work schedules, working at home and time spent with family members: How time use data can inform work/life policy

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Introduction

Policy makers have long been concerned about a lack of paid work, particularly in the form of unemployment. However, in recent times the re-emergence of long working hours for some groups has brought work/life balance discussions to the fore in most industrialised countries. In New Zealand, work/life balance is a key aspect of research in the *Future of Work* program run by the Department of Labour. The Ministry of Social Development is undertaking a *Work, Family and Parenting Study*, while the Ministry of Women's Affairs has had a long interest in the broad topic of work/life balance.

New Zealand, like the United States and Britain, stands out internationally in terms of having a significant group of workers who put in long weekly hours of work (Callister, 1998; Jacobs and Gornick, 2001). However, census data also shows that, for prime working aged individuals, and for couples, there has been a polarisation of hours worked between 1986 and 1996 (Callister, 1998). Some workers are working shorter hours, while another group have extended their hours of paid work. Included amongst those working long hours on New Zealand are parents of young children.

Working hours have long been a concern for policy makers. A key part of the concern about the overwork revolves around the possible negative effect of long hours of work on the quality of family life. Yet, at the same time it is well established that having an adequate household income is important for personal and family well-being. This particularly holds for families with dependent children (Carlson and Corcoran, 2001). For many people long hours of work are a requisite to earning an adequate income (Rones, Gardner and Ilg, 2001). In addition, as Bell and Freeman (2001) demonstrate, in countries with a high level of wage inequality, such as the United States, Britain and New Zealand, working hard is potentially rewarded through career advancement, while a lack of perceived effort can attract a major earnings penalty. Finding ways to balance paid work effort and time spent with family members or friends therefore present a challenge for many individuals and for policy makers.

In France, concerns about long hours of work for some groups alongside an anxiety about high levels of unemployment, has led to the introduction of legislation that limit weekly working hours (Golden and Figart, 2000). In New Zealand, there is on-going discussion about reducing yearly hours of work through extending provisions for holidays.¹ Yet, simply looking at hours of paid work, either on a weekly or yearly basis, can be misleading when considering time spent with family members or friends.

This paper suggests that those individuals in the higher skilled occupations generally have more control over when and where they work than those in lower skilled jobs. Through this higher level of control, they may be working longer hours, and earning higher incomes, but still be achieving a better work/life balance than those in lower

¹ For example see <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2270517a6160,00.html>

skilled, lower status and lower paid occupations. Policy makers need to take into account not only hours of paid work, but work schedules and where work is carried out, when considering strategies for improving the work/life balance of New Zealand workers.

Finally, there is a secondary aim of this paper. Undertaking a time use survey in New Zealand was a costly exercise. While information from this survey has been used to report hours of paid and unpaid work, overall researchers and policy makers have made relatively little use of this data source. This paper endeavours to demonstrate that some important work / life issues can be explored using these data.

International literature

Influences on work schedules

In much of the labour market literature, non-standard working times have been seen as allowing employers to better manage their workflows (Working Party on Industrial Relations, 1989). Working time patterns can also be influenced by the constraints that are imposed by non-work responsibilities and tasks such as education, training and childcare. However, some people actively choose non-standard work schedules in order to find a better work/life balance.

There are many influences on when people undertake their work. These include environmental factors, such as the seasons and the patterns of night and day, and changing technology. For example, new information and communication technology, such as laptop computers and cellular phones, now allow working time to expand beyond the standard office working hours. Government regulations have also been seen as historically having influence on working hours. As an example, in the past women have been restricted from working at night, and in Europe shop trading hour legislation has been seen as influential in determining when work is carried out (Beckers and Breedveld 2000). Official school hours, and the times childcare centres are open, can also potentially influence work schedules for parents.

While evidence from labour force surveys in the United States and Britain suggest that there are differences in total hours worked for men and women, overall, there is little difference in the work schedules across the day (e.g. in the UK Harkness, 1999, in the US Presser, 1995). However, the presence of young children has been found to have some influence on the work schedules of women (Presser, 1995). In the United States, Hamermesh (1995) shows that women are more likely to work evening and night shifts if they have young children. Also in the U.S., Presser (1994) found that a significant proportion of two parent families have non-overlapping shifts. One third of dual-earner married couples with pre-school children managed their childcare in this way. This strategy may maximise the time the individual parents spend with their children, but minimise the time they spend with each other.

Also in the US, Heymann and Earle (2001) found that low-income parents were more likely to be required to work non-standard schedules. The authors demonstrate some negative effects on the home environments of children when either the fathers or mothers work in the evenings. Cox and Presser (2000) point to the difficulties of sole

parents working non-standard hours as they do not have a partner to look after the children and formal childcare is often not available in non-standard working times.²

Some studies have also tried to assess the reasons why individuals work particular schedules. Presser (1998) reports that, in 1994, 30 percent of men working non-standard days did so for voluntary reasons while the figure was 45 percent for women. For women with a child under five, 31 percent noted it was a requirement of the job when working non-standard hours, with 33 percent stating that it gave them better child care arrangements. While family caregiving obligations were an important factor in the reasons listed by women for choosing to work non-standard schedules, overall the figures suggest that job demands are very important as to when people work. However, these studies do not provide information on where the work was carried out and often do not consider total hours of work.

While 'supply-side' factors are important in shaping work schedules at an individual level, overall at the group or aggregate level the research literature demonstrates they are not as influential as one might expect.

In contrast, industry and occupation appear to be very important in relation to who works at non-standard times (e.g., in the United Kingdom, Harkness, 1999 and in the United States, Cox and Presser, 2000). Presser (1998) suggests that non-standard work schedules can be particularly found in service industries, and that with these predicted to continue growing there will be a shift to a 7 day a week, 24 hour economy. Presser also makes the point that while family considerations appear not to be the main reason behind working non-standard work schedules, such schedules may still have significant effects on family life.

Why people work from home

There have been many small-scale studies of homeworking (e.g. Shamir, 1992). Working from home does appear to offer a chance to combine paid work and family life. But the literature paints a complex picture of working from home (e.g. Kiran, 2000). While home has traditionally been seen as a refuge from the workplace, in the United States, in the late 1990s Hochschild (1997) suggested that long hours spent in workplaces reflected that home could be a place of conflict and stress. Hochschild argued some workplaces have "become home". Subsequent United States research challenges this view. Kiecolt (2003) uses national survey data to show that there has been no long-term shift to finding the workplace a more satisfying place to be.

The emerging research from both time use and labour force surveys suggests that relatively few people work primarily from home. Instead, it seems that there are three main patterns of work at home. These are:

- Undertaking most of one's work in an external workplace but supplementing it with shorter periods of work at home in the evenings and/or weekends.

² However, it may be that a non-custodial parent undertakes childcare during non-standard hours. For example, it is quite common for children to stay with non-custodial fathers in weekends.

- Undertaking most of one's work in an external workplace but staying home and working from there, possibly for an extended period of time, on particular weekdays.
- Undertaking most or all of one's work at home.

Farmers are a key group who undertake most of their work at home. But when they are excluded, time use and labour force data would suggest that the first pattern is numerically the most important with a large group of people undertaking some work from home (BLS, 2002; Callister and Dixon, 2001; Harvey, 1996; Harvey *et al*, 1997; Horvath, 1986). Presser and Bamberger (1993), using US labour force data, show that there are some significant differences between women who work "all", "some" or "none" at home. The women who worked "some" at home were particularly likely to be in higher status occupations. An important group within those who undertook all their work at home were women who looked after other people's children at home.

While there is information on the demographic characteristics of home workers, there is less research available as to why people bring work home with them. However two studies do provide some guide. A British study on balancing work and life asked employees why they took work home (Hogarth *et al*, 2001). The most frequently cited reasons were "the demands of the job" (35 percent) and "to get more work done/it is more efficient" (38 percent). Few employees cited factors related to caring for family members as reasons for working from home. A "work at home" supplement to the United States CPS undertaken in May 2001 also provides a list of reasons for home work for people who worked at home at least once a week (BLS, 2002). For both men and women the single largest response was "finish or catch up on work" (38.2% and 36.3% respectively). The option "co-ordinate work schedule with personal or family needs" was only chosen by 3.3 percent of men and 7.8 percent of women.

While offering some potential for work and family integration, there is also evidence that combining work at home with actively caring for young children can be stressful and problematic (Kiran, 2000). However, in relation to families with older children, working at home in the evening or weekend may provide an opportunity for parents to have a "presence" even if not actively looking after a child. In testing time use questions, Schwartz (2001) notes that parents can consider that children are in their care and that they are "generally aware" of what the child is doing even if they are not in the same room as the child. In a study of welfare reform in the U.S., Morris *et al* (2002) provide evidence of negative effects on adolescents as a result of the "child care problem" associated with employment of parents, particularly sole mothers. Many adolescents were left unsupervised in non-school periods as their parents increased their employment. Given that children are generally home in the evenings and weekends, for parents who work evenings and/or weekends outside of the home, the ability to monitor, mentor, help with homework and have spontaneous interactions with a child is substantially reduced. In couple families, working outside the home in the evenings or weekends may also limit the time spent with spouses unless the spouses work similar shifts.

Why might occupation be of particular importance for when and where people work

Occupation might be important for two reasons. First, the occupational grouping reflects the type of work being carried out. But occupational groups also reflect underlying skills, income potential and the negotiating power of group members.

Groups such as factory workers and fast-food workers are generally tightly constrained by the production process and cannot carry out their work at home. Similarly, occupations such as waiters, bank tellers, hairdressers, teachers, nurses and other people provide a direct service to clients. The timing of their work is heavily constrained by consumer demand. In addition, most have little opportunity to carry their work out at home unless the client comes to their home.

Professionals, and to a lesser degree managers, would appear to potentially have the most control over when and where they work. While for many there is often a need to undertake “group work”, such as attending meetings, much of their work would appear able to be carried out alone, at home and often not with strict control on when it is undertaken.

Data source and measures

Time use data is used for this study. The New Zealand Time Use Survey was conducted by Statistics New Zealand, the government agency for collecting official statistics. The data was collected over a twelve-month period from July 1998 to June 1999. The sample was allocated evenly across the 12 months of the survey period to minimise the seasonal effects, and was also balanced across days in the week. The survey had a response rate of 72 percent and an achieved sample size of 8,522 respondents. The analysis in this paper is confined to people aged 15 to 64.

Because only two days of diary information were collected from each person, the weekly work schedules of individuals are not observed and cannot be analysed. People who worked at non-standard times on their diary days may have worked at standard times on other days of the week, and vice versa.

Except where specifically noted, the tables and graphs presented in this paper are calculated for a set of people who were at work on any given day and exclude those people who were employed but, for whatever reason, were not working on the day/s in question. For further detailed information on the time use survey, the sample used in this study, and coding decisions see Callister and Dixon (2001).

Results

Working time patterns - Weekdays

Figure 1 uses five-minute blocks of time to show the percentage of women and men at work across the day during the week.

Figure 1: Percentage of weekday workers at work, by gender

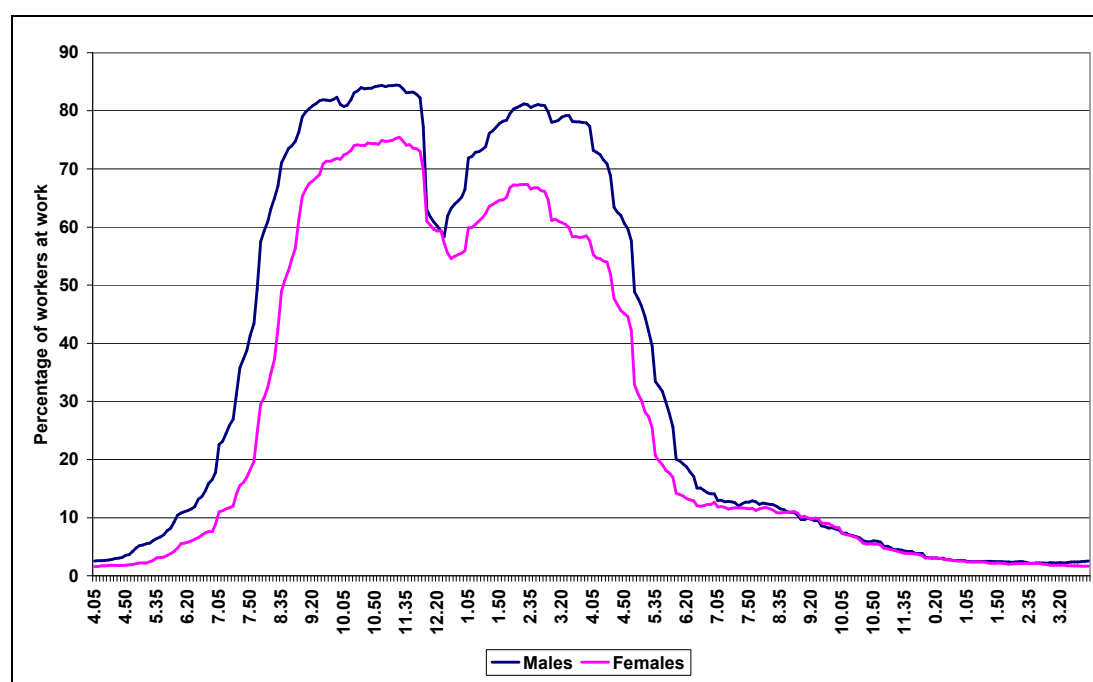


Figure 1 shows a number of important patterns. These include:

- Paid work is heavily concentrated between the hours of 7 am and 6 pm. Relatively few people are working in the evenings, and the rate of night work is very low.
- More men than women are working at any given time, reflecting both differences in activity rates and differences in daily hours of work.

In interpreting this overall pattern of work care is needed particularly when considering those who work in the mornings or evenings. Some of these people may be working relatively short daily hours but with all the time worked carried out within these non-core periods.

Not surprisingly, there is a strong relationship between daily hours of work and whether a person spends at least some of their working time outside of core hours (Table 1). For example, just under 90 percent of people working 12 or more hours per day undertook some work in the 6-8 pm time period as against just 18 percent working up to 7 hours on their diary day. Certain occupational groups and parental statuses are over-represented amongst those recording long working days. Partnered fathers tend to work longer hours than men without children and people in managerial and professional occupations also tend to work longer than average hours. For example,

1996 census data shows that nearly 60 percent of male managers worked more than 50 hours per week as compared with 30 percent of men in trades occupations.

Table 1: Percentage of weekday workers who undertook some work within each time-of-day band, by the hours recorded in the diary

	4-6 am	6-8 am	8-12 noon	12-4pm	4-6 pm	6-8 pm	8-12 pm	12-4am	Mean hours worked
Up to 4 hours in diary	4.3	14.2	54.9	50.2	26.6	15.2	13.8	0.5	2.2
Up to 7 hours in diary	5.0	18.8	71.5	71.2	36.4	17.5	15.6	2.0	4.1
10 or more hrs in diary	20.6	72.6	95.3	97.6	94.7	67.2	44.5	10.1	11.4
12 or more hrs in diary	34.1	76.4	92.4	96.1	94.3	87.1	68.8	21.1	13.2

Table 2 shows the individual relationships of parental status and occupation to when work is carried out. It also shows the overall patterns for women and men.

Table 2: Percentage of weekday workers who undertook some work within each time-of-day band³

	4-6 am	6-8 am	8-12 noon	12-4pm	4-6 pm	6-8 pm	8-12 pm	12-4am
Male	10.1	52.8	90.3	91.9	78.1	28.7	19.5	4.3
Female	4.6	28.7	85.7	86.9	61.9	21.9	18.4	3.4
Male, joint parent	11.6	52.4	92.3	94.5	80.1	30.5	22.2	5.8
Male, not a parent	9.0	53.4	88.8	89.9	76.8	27.5	17.5	3.0
Female, joint parent	5.7	27.4	84.8	85.0	52.8	21.7	22.2	4.0
Female, not a parent	4.3	30.6	87.0	88.6	69.2	22.7	16.5	3.1
Managerial	3.4	39.1	96.2	95.5	81.6	30.0	24.0	2.3
Professional	4.0	30.8	89.8	93.4	75.6	26.6	24.6	4.0
Technical	1.7	28.2	91.5	91.2	72.5	25.9	18.9	3.5
Clerical	2.3	30.1	90.0	90.2	68.3	16.3	10.6	1.2
Service & sales	7.6	28.4	78.2	79.5	61.1	29.6	23.7	5.9
Agricultural	20.0	64.0	87.3	91.3	76.7	32.5	13.3	0.2
Trades	7.7	71.5	96.5	95.7	76.1	16.2	11.5	2.3
Operatives	18.3	67.4	86.5	90.2	65.5	28.9	19.4	9.4
Elementary	16.5	48.6	70.1	74.0	53.5	25.9	24.7	12.3

While most people work in the 8 am to 6 pm period, a number of other patterns emerge from Table 2. Considering parental status first these include:

- Partnered fathers and men without dependent children are more likely than other groups to be working before 8am.
- Partnered fathers are the most likely to be working both early in the morning and early in the evening.

³ While a very important group, we do not include sole parent households in the parental analysis due to small numbers in the sample which make estimates unreliable

- Men without dependent children tend to work longer hours than women without children, leading to higher activity rates both in the early hours of the morning and in the evening.
- In the early evening there were few differences between the proportion of partnered mothers with children and women without children working. However, late evening work was more common amongst partnered mothers.

Some of these patterns reflect underlying hours of work. As already discussed, partnered fathers work, on average, longer hours than other men. The later start for partnered mothers will, in part, reflect higher rates of part-time work amongst this group. But the later start for mothers might reflect that there are childcare constraints in the early morning. While day care and after school care are considered important by policy makers with regards to supporting working parents, less attention has been given to early morning care. Even if such care is available, getting young children ready and then transporting them to a centre at perhaps 5.30 or 6 in the morning can be stressful for both children and parents. If particular occupations tend to start work early this may operate against those with care obligations working in such occupations.⁴ It could even deter some people from entering these occupations if they think they may in the future have early morning care obligations. In couples, one way around this is for one person to start later. However, this person has to be in an occupation that can start at a later time.

Overall, however, the differences between the parental states shown at this level are not great. During the week most employed parents are not in their workplaces either early in the morning or in the evening. We then examined differences in evening work patterns between partnered mothers with a child under five years of age, those with children over five, and all women without children. While the results support the findings of British and American researchers in that mothers with young children are more likely to work in the evening the differences were not that great. For example, only 14.8 percent of working mothers with a child under five were working at 9 pm, as against 12 percent for those with a child over five and 10.1 percent with no child. Finally, we also examined the proportion of weekday work time that was undertaken between 9 am and 3 pm (standard school hours) by partnered women with children and all women without children. Again, there was virtually no difference with the figures being 60.2 and 59.5 respectively.

In contrast, occupation is associated with greater differences in work schedules. Some of the differences include:

- People in jobs that require manual skills, including farmers, trades people, plant and machinery operators and elementary workers tend to start early with many working before 8 am. When total work hours are considered a significant proportion of their working time was also undertaken early in the morning. Part of this will reflect a need to maximise work time in daylight hours.
- In general, the pattern for professional and managerial workers is to start later than manual workers, but to continue working later in the evening. Yet, even for these groups few people are working late on their diary day. A finer analysis shows that for both male and female managers only 15 percent were

⁴ Or working at all if these are the only jobs available.

still working at 7 pm, while for professionals the figures are 12 percent and 9 percent.

- Occupations that are over-represented in night work were sales and service workers, plant and machinery operators, elementary workers and professionals.

However, further complicating this picture is that within these broad occupational patterns there are some differences by gender. For example, at 7 am on a weekday, on average, 20 percent of male tradespeople were at work and by 7.40 am this had risen to half. In comparison, at 7am only 11 percent female tradespeople were at work and by 7.40 am this had still only risen to 27 percent.

The data show that while there is a group of potentially overworked New Zealanders, the majority of workers do not work long hours and will not be at work either early in the morning or in the evenings on weekdays. The initial evidence does not support the idea that, on an average diary day, for many New Zealanders work is spilling over into the evenings. Yet, not surprisingly, amongst those people who do work very long daily hours a significant proportion work on into the evenings. Occupation has a stronger influence on work schedules during the week than parental status. This would support the idea that the nature of the work being carried out is more important than supply side factors (such as family responsibilities) in determining when people work. Yet, parental status and occupation may not be independent. It is likely that some parents will try and avoid occupations that create work/life balance problems.

Working time patterns – Weekends

Working on the weekends has the potential to reduce the amount of time spent with family members, particularly children. Weekend work can involve either a spillover from weekday work, or specific shifts that are scheduled in the weekend. Through both types of work a surprisingly high proportion of workers who filled in their diaries on either Saturday or Sunday undertook some work on these days. On Saturday 45.3 percent of workers undertook some work, while on Sunday it was 42.2 percent.

Table 3: Proportion of workers who completed their diary in the weekend and reported some period of paid work

	Saturday	Sunday
Male, joint parent	46.9	42.0
Male, not a parent	53.8	45.8
Female, joint parent	33.8	41.2
Female, not a parent	41.9	38.6
Managerial	49.2	45.5
Professional	36.5	44.9
Technical	31.7	26.3
Clerical	33.1	26.4
Service & sales	53.1	49.8
Agricultural	78.1	69.5
Trades	45.5	32.5
Operatives	47.1	38.1
Elementary	33.2	43.1

Note: This table is based on all respondents who stated they were employed and who also completed a diary in the weekend.

No clear pattern emerges from Table 3 when activity rates by parental status and either of weekend days are considered. When occupation is considered the seven day a week nature of much of agricultural work shows up and there are lower rates of weekend work by people in technical and clerical occupations. However, while some people do work complete shifts in the weekend, much of the weekend work involves short periods of work. Table 4 captures this time component and shows the allocation of working hours between the standard Monday to Friday hours and those outside this time period by occupational group and parental status.

Table 4: Proportion of total working hours undertaken during weekdays, the weekend and at night

	Percentage of working hours undertaken		
	Monday-Friday 8am-6pm	Saturday-Sunday 8am-6pm	All days 6pm- 8am
Male, joint parent	75.3	7.6	17.1
Male, not a parent	73.3	11.0	15.7
Female, joint parent	73.7	9.0	17.3
Female, not a parent	74.0	11.9	14.1
Managerial	76.2	10.7	13.1
Professional	78.9	7.2	13.9
Technical	83.1	5.5	11.4
Clerical	82.8	7.8	9.4
Service & sales	61.3	17.1	21.6
Agricultural	67.2	15.0	17.8
Trades	81.1	7.3	11.6
Operatives	66.4	9.8	23.8
Elementary	64.7	6.4	28.9

If work was evenly spread across the day and the week then 30 percent would be carried out Monday to Friday 8 am to 6 pm, 11 percent in the weekend during the day, and the remaining 58 percent in the evenings and at night. In a challenge to the idea that industrialised economies have rapidly moved to a seven day a week, 24 hour working pattern Table 4 shows that the working time for all groups is still concentrated in the core daylight hours of Monday to Friday. When parental status is considered there is almost no variation in the proportion of work carried out in core Monday to Friday hours. There is, however, slightly more variation in the amount of work carried out in the evenings and weekends, with parents undertaking less work in the daylight hours in weekends but more in the evenings.

The variation is greater when occupation is considered. Sales and service workers undertake the lowest amount of work in core Monday to Friday hours while technical workers have the highest concentration. The seven-day a week nature of work is most evident amongst agricultural workers and sales and service workers. These two groups illustrate how trends in work patterns over time can be complex. The long term decline in agricultural employment moves society away from a seven day a week pattern of work but the growth of service and sales occupations pushes it back in this direction.

Work at home

Around 60 percent of all homework carried out in New Zealand is undertaken in the agricultural sector. Excluding the agricultural industry from the analysis reduces the percentage of working time that was undertaken at home to 9.7 percent.⁵ Given the dominance of agriculture in the home work data, but also given that agricultural workers represent a small and unusual occupational group, they are excluded for the rest of this analysis.

Table 5 shows that participation in home work is particularly high on weekends although the proportion of hours worked in weekends is much lower than weekdays. Work carried out at home accounted for around 20 percent of all paid working hours recorded on weekends, and the fraction of working days involving some home-based work was as high as 42 percent on Sundays.

Table 5: Home working time and participation in home work

	Home work as % of all paid work time on the day	% of workers who did <u>some</u> of their paid work at home
Sunday	22.7	42.2
Monday	8.3	24.7
Tuesday	7.6	24.9
Wednesday	7.8	22.5
Thursday	9.9	27.0
Friday	7.4	19.9
Saturday	17.5	36.0
All days	9.7	26.4

Table 6 shows that when parental status is considered there are some slight variations in the percentage of working time in each period that was carried out at home. Female joint parents undertook a slightly higher proportion of their work at home during weekdays. In the evenings male joint parents had the highest rate of working at home as a proportion of total working time in this period. Overall, however, if still working in the evenings most parents and non-parents are not working at home. Table 6 again shows that occupation is more important in relation to the pattern of home work. In evenings, for example, over half of work carried out by professionals is carried out at home. This compares with a low of 8.6 percent for elementary workers.

⁵ One issue not considered in this paper is that of health and safety considerations related to working at home. Clearly, there are some boundary problems in terms of how guidelines on health and safety can be applied to home work.

Table 6: Percentage of working time in each time period that was worked from home

	Weekdays %	Weekends %	Evenings (7-12pm) %
Male, joint parent	7.5	21.5	36.5
Male, not a parent	7.6	19.1	24.0
Female, joint parent	10.9	19.4	32.5
Female, not a parent	8.3	19.4	30.7
Managerial	10.4	26.3	42.4
Professional	10.4	36.1	54.1
Technical	11.2	32.2	45.8
Clerical	4.9	17.3	23.7
Service & sales	7.3	4.9	12.1
Trades	6.3	22.7	31.0
Operatives	5.6	13.7	17.5
Elementary	4.0	18.5	8.6

Times of the day when home work is undertaken – Weekdays only

Finally, while the proportion of hours worked at home in any large block of time is important, the time use data can provide evidence of more subtle differences in home work patterns. Table 7 shows work home work patterns across weekdays. When parental status is considered there are some small but important difference between groups. As an example, in the 4-6 pm time slot a much higher proportion of partnered mothers are undertaking their paid work at home than other groups. This is likely to reflect some mothers combining work with managing children in the period immediately after school. For some mothers this may reflect a lack of quality after school care, while for others it will be a choice to balance work and family obligations. As a further example, in the late evening slot partnered fathers and mothers, if working, were more likely than non-parents to work at home. However, even at this level of detail the effect of parental status is not that strong.

Again there is more variation by occupation. In both very early mornings and late evenings, people in managerial, professional and technical occupations did a much higher proportion of their working time from home than was the case for other occupations. In the early morning it is quite different getting up in winter in a warm house and doing a little pre-work reading over breakfast from going out in the cold and the dark and catching an early morning bus to a work. At night, technical workers and sales and service workers undertook a significant proportion of their total working at home. At the other extreme, people in elementary occupations undertake little of their work at home in the evening.

Table 7: Home-based working time as a percentage of all paid working time reported in each time-of-day band, by selected variables (weekdays only)

	4-6 am	6-8 am	8-12 noon	12-4pm	4-6 pm	6-8 pm	8-12 pm	12-4am
Male, joint parent	11.8	6.5	4.8	5.4	7.6	20.8	36.7	4.9
Male, not a parent	6.1	7.0	6.5	6.3	7.7	13.5	26.4	12.9
Female, joint parent	4.8	10.6	6.8	9.0	14.4	18.9	37.8	17.5
Female, not a parent	5.4	6.8	5.7	7.1	9.1	19.5	30.2	18.6
Managerial	22.1	7.8	7.9	8.1	8.9	21.6	49.9	15.1
Professional	16.6	14.5	5.6	7.2	10.4	27.1	61.0	10.6
Technical	11.2	17.4	7.4	8.8	13.1	27.8	43.0	28.4
Clerical	1.6	3.2	3.4	4.5	6.6	11.0	26.0	7.0
Service & sales	9.8	6.4	5.5	5.9	6.9	12.1	14.6	19.7
Trades	1.2	6.4	4.6	5.6	8.4	18.9	32.5	1.9
Operatives	0.0	2.8	5.3	4.9	4.4	11.8	12.3	12.5
Elementary occupations	8.8	2.1	2.6	3.6	1.9	4.2	5.7	3.5

A finer time and gender analysis shows that in the later evening an even higher proportion of professional and managerial work is carried out at home. For men after 8 pm, when measured in five minute slots the proportion hovers around the 70 percent mark for professionals and just over 50 percent for managers. For women the patterns are more complex, but managers have a peak around 60 percent while the high point for professionals is 70 percent.⁶

This high rate of home work in the evenings by managers and professionals is likely to reflect a number of factors. First, many aspects of managerial and professional work are suited to being undertaken at home. This includes “catch-up” reading or writing reports. Most elementary jobs simply cannot be carried out at home. Second, as already shown managers and professionals tend to work long hours, so working at home could be a way of coping with spillover. Third, the homes of managers and professionals are more likely to be suited to working, with more space and sometimes separate rooms for offices. Forth, managers and professionals are more likely to have contracted out work such as house cleaning that other groups might have to undertake themselves in the evening. This gives managers and professionals more opportunity to choose to work in the evening although, of course, this work could also be carried out in the workplace. Being able to contract out some parts of unpaid work, such as housecleaning, also potentially means that the total work hours (paid and unpaid) of the “over-worked” managers and professionals might actually be less than for other seemingly less “over-worked” occupations. This has yet to be tested.

Another explanation for the relatively high rate of working at home in the evenings and weekends amongst managers and professionals may be a blurring between work and leisure. As Reich (2000) points out, many of these jobs are enjoyable. Just as shopping in time use surveys can be either seen as unpaid work or leisure once the attitude of the person undertaking the task is known, part of the home work by these groups may be also a mixture of work and leisure.

⁶ Low numbers mean these estimates should be treated with caution.

However, a final possible explanation for the high rates of evening work amongst managers and professionals is they want or need to keep working but also wish to have a “presence” in their family’s lives.

In relation to this last theory, we tested whether having dependent children was a significant factor in managers and professionals working at home in the evenings rather than continuing to work at an external workplace. The data revealed no obvious positive association for women, while for men in the highest three occupational groups there was a pattern whereby joint fathers had slightly higher homework estimates than men without dependent children. This, and the previous evidence of the lack of influence of parental status on home work, suggests that, in line with the findings of both the British and United States research, workers are bringing their work home for reasons other than being with their families. Yet, spending additional time with family members may still be one positive outcome of such behaviour even if this outcome is not the primary reason for bringing work home.

Conclusion

While in the popular press ideas that industrialised economies are rapidly moving to a 24 pattern of work are often put forward, the New Zealand time use data shows that the “core” Monday to Friday hours are still very important. While some New Zealanders are working long hours, based simply on the patterns of work across the day there is little evidence that during the week most people are working long into the evenings or that daily weekend work has reached the levels of weekday work. For both men and women actual hours worked are influenced by the presence of dependent children. Related to this, men tend to work longer hours, while women tend to work shorter hours. The longer hours worked by men not surprisingly pushes them beyond the core hours with earlier starts and later finishes. Yet despite this, there are not major differences between the amount of time men and women work in what could be considered standard working hours, that is Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm. Around three quarters of the time that men and women, either with or without children, spend in paid work is undertaken within this period.

Of more importance in relation to work schedules is occupation. This primarily reflects the underlying nature of the work carried out. The 24-hour economy is of more relevance to those people in sales and service jobs, plant and machinery operatives and elementary workers than to clerical workers, professionals and managers. For sales and service workers, this reflects the times that people demand their services, while for plant and machinery operatives it reflects some of them working in 24 hour production processes. While many people from a range of occupational groups undertake some work on the weekends, the 7 day-a-week (in daylight hours) pattern of work is particularly common amongst agricultural workers. Again this reflects production processes.

Where work is carried out also matters. Particularly for people in managerial, professional and technical occupations, work at home in the evenings and, to a lesser degree weekends, is important. The occupational data suggest that for many people who would appear to have some choice in work location the workplace “has not become home” in the evenings. For whatever reason, in these occupational groups

most people still retreat to their homes in the evening or weekend even if still undertaking some paid work.

Using these time use data it is not possible to directly assess why people are choosing to work at home rather than in an external workplace in the evenings or weekends. Certainly, the time use data does not show that it is particularly parents with dependent children who exhibit this behaviour. Yet, while this might be an incidental benefit rather than a conscious strategy, nevertheless, for managers and professions working at home in the evenings and weekends does raise the potential for some level of contact with spouses and children as these are times that family members are likely to be at home. In contrast, workers in many other occupational groups tend to work more in non-standard hours and if working evenings or weekends are less likely to undertake this work at home.

Finally, the time use data provide a warning for work and family researchers and policy makers that it should not be just hours of work that are focussed on in work/life policy discussions. Individuals may work long hours, but because of schedules and work locations may be seeing more of family members than one might assume. Other individuals may be working relatively short hours, but because they work in evenings or weekends, and solely in external workplaces, they may actually have less of an opportunity to spend time with family and friends. Debates about working hours, including whether policies should be developed to shorten them, therefore also need to consider work schedules and the location that the work is carried out in.

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