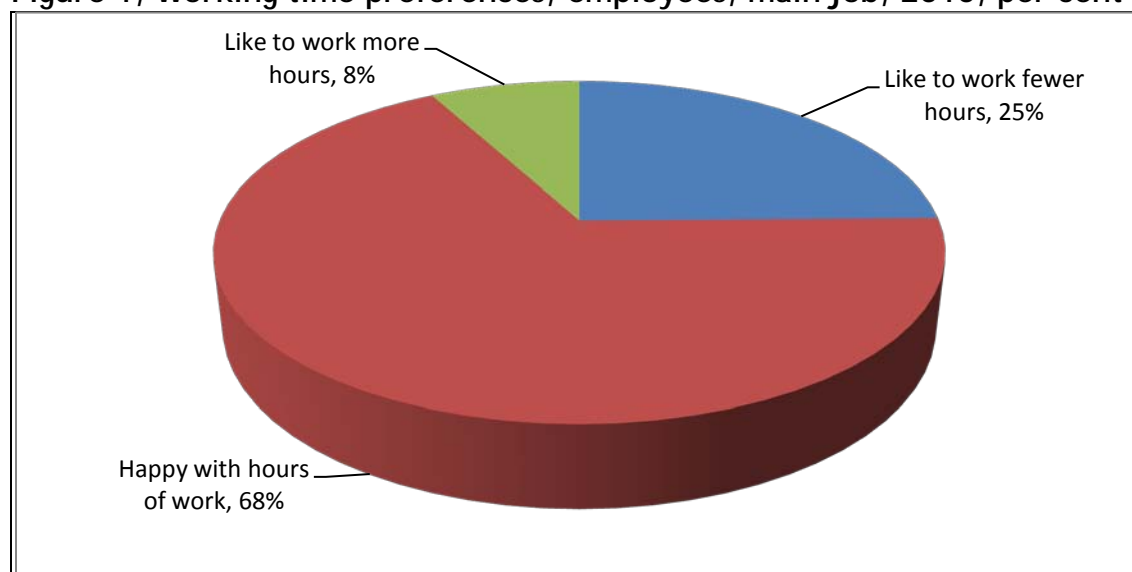




Working time preferences

Employees in the *Australia at Work* study¹ are asked a series of questions about their current working arrangements. Findings around working time preferences from 2010 are set out below, Figure 1.² Employees in the study are asked whether they are satisfied with their current hours of work. Just over two-thirds (68%) of employees reported being happy with their current hours of work while the remaining 32% of employees who prefer to change the number of hours they currently work.

Figure 1, Working time preferences, employees, main job, 2010, per cent



Population: Employees in 2010

Weights: Weights10

Source: Australia at Work W4

¹ The *Australia at Work* study is being conducted by the Workplace Research Centre at the University of Sydney Business School. The project is funded by the Australian Research Council's Linkage Grant scheme and the industry partner is Unions NSW. Further financial support is provided by CFMEU Energy & Mining Division, CFMEU ACT Branch, NSW Nurses' Association, the Police Federation of Australia, the SDA, the CEPU, the QLD Nurses Federation and the Nurses Federation (Victorian Branch). *The study* is a five-year longitudinal telephone survey of people who were aged 16 to 58 years and in the Australian labour force in March 2006 (i.e. prior to the implementation of the *Work Choices* legislation on 27 March 2006). New entrants and re-entrants to the labour force after March 2006 were not 'in-scope' for the study.

² Care should be exercised when comparing or combining the data from this study with that from other sources, especially the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The differences primarily arise because the *Australia at Work* study has gone back to survey the same people each year whereas the ABS generally gets a new cross-sectional sample each time a survey is conducted. Further technical details as well as substantive findings arising from the *Australia at Work* study can be found at: <http://www.australiaatwork.org.au/index.php>.

One quarter (24.5%) of employees would prefer to work **fewer hours**. Among this group:

- **Men** were slightly more likely (26.5%) than women (22.4%) to want to work fewer hours.
- Those in **managerial roles** (43.2%) were much more likely than those working in non-managerial roles (21.6%) to want to work fewer hours.
- Not surprisingly, those working **long unpaid hours** were more likely than those not working unpaid hours. For example, more than half (54.0%) of those who work between 11 and 20 unpaid hours a week and more than two-thirds (70.8%) of those who work more than 20 unpaid hours a week would like to work fewer hours.
- **Permanent employees** are over-represented amongst those wanting to work fewer hours (27.7%). In contrast, only 7.6% of casual employees want to work fewer hours.

Around one-in-12 (7.6%) would prefer to work **more hours**³. Among this group:

- **Women** were more likely (9.1%) than men (6.2%) to prefer to work more hours.
- **Casuals** (26.1%) are over-represented amongst those wanting to work more hours, compared to only 3.9% of permanent employees.
- Employees working **part-time hours** (20.6%) are more likely to want to work more hours than those employees working full-time hours (2.3%).
- Employees in the **private sector** were slightly more likely (8.1%) than those in the public sector (6.2%) to want to work more hours.
- Those employees **earning less than \$75,000 p.a.** were more likely (9.9%) than those earning more than \$100,000 p.a. (1.7%) to want to work more hours.
- Employees with **dependent children** were less likely (5.8%) than those without dependent children (8.7%) to want to work more hours.

What do our findings suggest?

A significant proportion of employees (i.e. 1 in 3) want to change the number of hours they currently work.

After two decades policy of 'labour market flexibility' many employees remain discontent with one of life's basic features: what to do with their time. Dissatisfaction is most pronounced amongst part-timers (wanting to work more hours) and extended hour workers (wanting to work fewer hours).

The challenge is not the restoration of the old working time order. There is a need for new arrangements where working time choices are real and not simply formally available.

³ When considered as a proportion of part-time employees only, the proportion of those working shorter hours wanting more hours of work is 23.9 percent.