

THE PARENTAL LEAVE IN AUSTRALIA SURVEY: NOVEMBER 2006 REPORT

This report should be read in conjunction with the information on *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey* provided on the Parental Leave in Australia website <http://www.uq.edu.au/polsis/parental-leave>¹, where links are available for access to the data and the questionnaire, and acknowledgement requirements for use of the survey data are outlined. Here we explain the survey in more detail and present some initial findings. Our goals are to explain the rationale for and design of the survey, provide a basic statistical overview for readers interested in the topic, and inform potential users about the dataset. The report has three main sections: the first provides background information on the survey design and rationale; the second covers sample selection and response rates; and the third provides a preliminary overview of statistics drawn from the survey.

Readers citing statistics or other material from this report should cite: Whitehouse, G., M. Baird, C. Diamond and A. Hosking (2006) *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey: November 2006 Report* <http://www.uq.edu.au/polsis/parental-leave/level1-report.pdf>.

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The need for comprehensive survey data on the use of parental leave in Australia has long been an issue of concern. Although a survey on the use of maternity leave was conducted in 1986 in Australia (Glezer 1988), by the early 2000s there was a significant statistical gap on the issue, and no information was available on the use of paternity leave. The statistical gap on maternity leave was noted in particular by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) in its 2002 report on options for a paid maternity leave scheme (HREOC 2002: 238-9). At that time, the main sources of regular information on parental leave were estimates of the proportion of large organisations with parental leave policies (collected in Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency [EOWA] surveys – see EOWA 2006), the incidence of provisions in awards and agreements (based on federal government and Workplace Research Centre databases – see Baird 2005; Whitehouse 2001), and data from employee or household surveys on perceptions of access (for example, Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] Cat No 6310.0 and aspects of longitudinal surveys such as the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia [HILDA] survey). The project team has noted elsewhere the limitations of these kinds of data in providing a comprehensive picture of parental leave in Australia, in particular their inability to address issues of usage (see Whitehouse, Baird, Diamond and Soloff 2007).

The Parental Leave in Australia Survey, distributed in May 2005, was explicitly designed to address this statistical gap and provide opportunities for analysis of the influences on, and impact of, parental leave usage. Since the survey was distributed the ABS has also sought to address the statistical gap with a supplementary labour force survey, the Pregnancy and Employment Transitions survey, conducted in November 2005 (ABS 4913.0). While some of the basic statistics collected in these surveys overlap, there are also differences and complementarities. *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey* offers researchers the capacity to analyse the use and impact of leave-taking through the accessibility of unit record files at a nominal cost. In addition, its

¹ Follow the links to 'Research design and data' and 'Level 1'

location within the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children [LSAC] will allow ongoing investigation of links between leave usage and issues such as child and family well-being.

Five main themes are covered in *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey*:

- mothers' employment status prior to the birth of a child;
- mothers' use and experiences of maternity leave and related policies, including reasons for using/not using leave provisions;
- mothers' employment status and experiences on return to work after the birth of a child;
- fathers'/partners' employment status before and after the birth of a child, use of paternity leave and related policies, and reasons for using/not using leave provisions;
- parents' policy needs and preferences.

Further detail on the rationale for each of these sections is provided below. As in the questionnaire (Section A of which formed part of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children), they are labelled Sections B-F. In reading this information, note that references to 'the birth' or 'the child' refer to a specific child born between March 2003 and February 2004 (information on the sample is provided on pp4-5).

Section B – Mothers' employment prior to the birth

This section of the questionnaire seeks information on the employment status of mothers in the period leading up to a birth (or adoption), primarily to establish respondents' eligibility for maternity/parental leave and to allow comparison of the employment situation of mothers before and after the birth of a child.

Employment status (employee, self-employed, not in paid work) and continuity of employment in the 12 months prior to the birth or adoption are identified at Q19. This provides basic information on the issue of eligibility for statutory unpaid parental leave provisions under federal legislation, and allows broad comparison with information collected in the only previous national survey on the use of maternity leave in Australia which was conducted by Glezer in 1986 (see Glezer 1988).

Employment details, largely based on conventional categories and definitions consistent with ABS surveys, are collected in Qs22-29. Employment contract (permanent, casual, fixed-term), sector (public/private), size of employing organisation, hours per week, occupation, earnings and trade union membership are all variables that have been linked with access to 'family friendly' policies in the workplace (for Australian studies, see Gray and Tudball 2002; Whitehouse and Zetlin 1999), and that may affect the use of parental leave and return to work experiences (see, for example, Glezer 1988; Hudson, Lissenberg and Sahin-Dikmen 2004).

The experiences of women employed during their pregnancy and the supports and constraints they face in accessing suitable leave and working-time arrangements are addressed in Qs20 and 21. While 'family-friendly' policies have gained a high profile and are increasingly widespread in workplaces, information on women's experiences provides an additional dimension beyond simply the presence of formal policies. In Australia, there has been a heightened awareness of pregnancy discrimination in employment following an inquiry conducted by HREOC in the late 1990s (see HREOC 1999), and studies of complaints under the legal system have highlighted the difficulties some women encounter in negotiating suitable working hours on return to work (see for example Gaze 2005).

Section C – Mothers’ use and experiences of maternity leave and related provisions

This section of the questionnaire collects specific detail about types and length of leave used around the birth or adoption of a child. The questions are designed to provide a statistical benchmark to redress the current lack of information on the use of maternity leave in Australia, to inform analyses of optimal leave times and types (a widely debated issue in the international literature – see, for example, Kamerman 2000), and to enable assessments of the impact of leave arrangements. In conjunction with other waves of LSAC, information about leave taken may extend analyses of family and child well-being. The length of different types of leave accessed around the time of the child’s birth is identified at Q31, with more detail on periods of paid maternity leave collected at Qs35-37.

Information on women’s experiences of leave and their policy preferences are important for analyses of debates over policy and theories about women’s preferences in relation to work/family balance (for example, as proposed by Hakim 2000). Reasons for, respectively, not taking any maternity leave and not taking any forms of leave are examined in Qs33, 39 and 40, while Q38 collects information on women’s experiences of leave and their policy preferences.

Section D – Mothers’ employment status and experiences on return to work after the birth

In this section of the questionnaire, information is collected on women’s employment experiences after the birth of a child. Central themes in the analysis of parental leave and related employment entitlements are their effects on women’s pay and career trajectories (for example, Boushey 2005; Waldfogel 1998), and the broader concern that careers still tend to be constructed around the notion of an ‘ideal’ worker without family responsibilities (see Williams 2000). Qs41, 43 and 45-49 examine the employment situation of mothers in the first job they worked in after the birth of their child, enabling comparison with employment status prior to the birth and the use of any ‘family-friendly’ provisions in the post-birth job. Work history is extended in Q50, which seeks information on changes in employment status between the job returned to after the birth and the situation at the time of the survey; while Q54 provides a broad indication of earlier work transitions where the ‘survey birth’ was not the mother’s first child.

Reasons for decisions about returning to work may enable assessment of theories about work/family preferences (for example, Hakim 2000) and assist policy makers in evaluating existing measures and identifying areas of need. Qs 42, 44 and 51 explore mothers’ reasons for decisions about changing jobs, returning to work or remaining out of the paid labour market.

Section E – Fathers’/ partners’ employment status and use of leave

This section of the questionnaire covers pre-birth employment status, use of parental leave and changes in employment arrangements following the birth for the mother’s partner, tracking relationship status at Qs55, 70. In conjunction with the preceding sections it enables separate examination of couple and sole-parent families, with Qs 56-62 providing detailed employment information on partners in couple families.

The uptake of paternity leave has been analysed in several countries (see, for example, Bygren and Duvander 2006; Thompson, Vinter and Young 2005), but thus far comprehensive statistical information on the use of paternity/parental leave has not been available in Australia (see Bittman, Hoffman and Thompson 2004 for an elaboration of data limitations and an assessment

of the Australian situation). Qs 63-69 provide detail on the length and type of leave taken by partners, as well as reasons for not taking paternity or other forms of leave.

Men's uptake of family-friendly workplace provisions and other employment changes around the birth of their child are also covered in Qs71-72. For couple families, these questions allow an examination of whether men's use of workplace family arrangements is linked to their partner's employment situation, and elaboration of different ways in which families share paid and unpaid work.

Section F – Policy needs and preferences

The final section of the questionnaire examines policy preferences, covering a range of work/family support options from paid and unpaid leave arrangements and flexible working-time provisions to child care, and allowing open-ended responses. It provides additional material for policy analysis and the examination of preferences.

2. SAMPLE AND RESPONSE RATES

Here we present a brief description of the sample used for *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey* and some basic details on the survey implementation. As noted on the Parental Leave in Australia web site, the survey was conducted in conjunction with Wave 1.5 of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). Further information on the LSAC sample design can be found in technical papers on the LSAC web site (<http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup>); in particular, see Soloff, Lawrence and Johnston (2005).

The sample used for *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey* was LSAC's Infant Cohort. This cohort is comprised of a random sample of infants born between March 2003 and February 2004. The sampling frame was provided for LSAC by Medicare Australia and the recruitment process achieved a response rate of 64 per cent, producing a cohort of 5107 infants (Soloff, Lawrence and Johnson 2005: 27).

The unit of selection for this sample was the child, and thus families in which there had been a multiple birth had a greater chance of selection, even though only one child of a multiple birth was ever selected for inclusion. The impact of this aspect of the sampling process is minimal, and in effect the outcome is a random sample of Australian families with a child of the specified age. The representativeness of the sample has been enhanced with the construction of sample weights to account for non-response bias, which was evident in the somewhat higher response rates among families in which the mother had completed year 12 and where English was the main language spoken at home. While some non-random attrition occurred between Waves 1 and 1.5, the construction of separate weights for Wave 1.5 was not considered necessary. More detailed comparison of the two Waves can be found in Table 1 in the LSAC 2005-6 Annual Report, accessible on the LSAC web site.

The utility of the LSAC sample for a survey on parental leave lies in its focus on the target population (parents of young children), representativeness and sample size. The main barrier to collection of information on the use of parental leave has been the expense of this type of sample, due primarily to the difficulty of locating 'in-scope' families through random household surveys.

A further important advantage of linking with LSAC was the timing of the survey (a minimum of 15 months after the birth), which was ideal for investigating leave and return to work experiences.

The Parental Leave in Australia Survey was distributed to the infant cohort families in conjunction with the ‘between-wave’ mailout (Wave 1.5) in May 2005. Responses were possible by mail or online, and after implementation of a range of follow-up procedures, 3573 responses were received from the 5061 questionnaires distributed (a response rate of 70.6 per cent). The sample reported on here has been further reduced by removing five cases where uncommon family types, such as grandparents taking primary guardianship of the child, meant that questions about parental leave were not relevant. The final sample size is therefore 3568 cases (families).

Table 1 provides an overview of these families, drawing on data from Waves 1 and 1.5. Most families in the survey population had two biological parents in the home, both at birth and at the time Wave 1.5 was administered (none of the four same sex couples from Wave 1 responded to the Wave 1.5 survey). However, the composition of some families did change over time, as Table 1 documents. Given the complexity of processes of family formation and breakdown, the classification of a small number of families was not definitive.

Table 1: Overview of families responding to *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey* (LSAC Wave 1.5)

Relationship history between birth of LSAC child and Wave 1.5 survey	Parents in household at Wave 1.5				
	Biological parent(s) only			Adoptive parent(s) only	Combination of biological & non-biological parents
	Male & female	Female only	Male only		
Remained in couple relationship	3192	-	-	3	6
Remained single ^a	-	168	-	1	-
Partnered at time of child's birth, single @ Wave1.5	-	117	2	-	-
Partnered at time of child's birth, re-partnered @ Wave1.5	-	-	-	-	6
Single at time of child's birth, partnered @ Wave1.5	-	-	-	-	16
Partnered at birth, separated, back with previous partner @ Wave1.5	8 ^b	-	-	-	-
Single at birth, unclear @ Wave1.5	-	17	3	-	14 ^c
Partnered at birth, unclear @ Wave1.5	4	-	-	-	-
Unclear at time of birth, partnered @ Wave1.5	-	-	-	-	11 ^d

Notes

- a. Includes divorced, widowed, separated and never-married persons not currently living with a partner.
- b. Unclear whether male parent was the biological father of the LSAC child.
- c. For these fourteen cases it is not possible to know whether the mother now lives with the child's biological father or with someone else.
- d. Eight cases involve biological mothers who give an inconsistent pattern of responses between W1 and W1.5 concerning their relationship status at the time of the birth.

Sources: LSAC Wave 1; *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey* (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005) conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

3. STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In this section of the report we present preliminary statistics on the following issues:

- employment and eligibility for parental leave among mothers and fathers/partners²;
- patterns of leave-taking among mothers and fathers/partners;
- return to work experiences of mothers;
- parents' policy needs and preferences.

As well as highlighting initial findings on these topics for all with an interest in the area, we aim to introduce the dataset to potential users, explaining the 'populations' within the sample on which we base our estimates and providing some guidelines for interpreting the survey data.

All tables present weighted data in order to maximise the accuracy with which estimates can be inferred to the population of Australian families with children in the specified age group (although Ns for base populations are unweighted to indicate exact sample size). Differences between the tables presented here and those reported elsewhere³ are evident mainly where different base populations have been used, although some minor variations may reflect the process of refining the dataset and categories within it. Subsequent reports may produce amended estimates as further refinements are made, although we anticipate that changes will be minimal.

3.1 EMPLOYMENT AND ELIGIBILITY FOR PARENTAL LEAVE

The first issue addressed in the questionnaire is the employment situation of parents in the lead up to the birth of their child. Table 2 summarises this basic information for the 12 months period prior to the birth. It shows that 69 per cent of mothers and 96 per cent of fathers were employed (either as employees or self-employed) for at least some of this 12 month period (row 1, columns 1 and 3). Among the 31 per cent of mothers who reported that they were not in paid employment at this time, the majority stated that this was because they were at home looking after their family (rows 6 and 7, column 1). These figures from columns 1 and 3 are based on the total population of mothers and fathers for whom there is valid data in relevant sections of the questionnaire.

The more specific employment categories in rows 2-5 of Table 2 allow preliminary assessment of eligibility for the statutory 52 weeks unpaid parental leave (UPPL) provided under federal legislation, the primary criterion for which is 12 months continuous employment with the same employer. Percentages are based not only on the 'total' population (in columns 1 and 3), but also on all 'employed' mothers and fathers (columns 2 and 4). The latter is a key population used throughout the report: when we refer to employment status in the 12 months prior to the birth, 'employed' mothers and fathers are those who were in paid employment for at least some of this period. The figures in row 2 of Table 2 shows that 72 per cent of employed mothers worked for the same employer for 12 months prior to the birth; while among fathers the corresponding figure was 65 per cent. The figures in rows 3 and 4 show that 17 per cent of employed mothers (and 14 per cent of employed fathers) were employees who would not have met this basic eligibility criterion, either because they changed employers during this time period or were not employed

² While the questionnaire refers to the mother's partner, we use the term 'father' for simplicity of presentation in the tables. In the majority of cases, the mother's partner is the biological father of the child (see Table 1).

³ For example, Whitehouse, Baird, Diamond and Soloff (2007), various conference presentations in 2006, and tables in the LSAC 2006 Annual Report posted on the LSAC webpage. (Some of the latter report unweighted data, however differences between weighted and unweighted estimates are minimal in most cases.)

for the full 12 months. A further 11 per cent of employed mothers (and 20 per cent of employed fathers) would not have met the basic criterion because they were self-employed (row 5).

Table 2: Employment status in the 12 months prior to the birth of a child, parents of children born March 2003-February 2004, Australia^a

	Mothers		Fathers	
	% of total	% of employed	% of total	% of employed
<i>Employed</i>	69		96	
Employee, with same employer for 12 months	49	72	62	65
Employee for 12 months, but not with same employer	3	4	9	9
Employee, but not for the full 12 months	9	13	5	5
Self employed	7	11	19	20
<i>Not in paid employment</i>	31		4	
At home looking after family	27		1	
Not in paid work for other reasons	4		3	
Total %	100	100	100	100
<i>N^b</i>	3525	2462	3335	3210

Notes:

- a. Estimates have been weighted to account for non-response bias. Due to rounding, figures may not add to 100%.
- b. Base populations 'total' (all with valid data on relevant questions) and 'employed' (subset of 'total' who were employed for at least part of the time in the 12 months prior to the birth), unweighted.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

On the basis of these statistics, a minimum of 28 per cent of mothers and 34 per cent of fathers employed prior to the birth of their child would not have had access to the basic Australian provision for UPPL. We cannot assume, however, that all the remainder would have been eligible. First, a closer examination of the data shows that, among the 72 per cent of employed mothers and 65 per cent of employed fathers who responded that they worked for one employer for 12 months prior to the birth, a small number indicated in later questions that they had been dismissed from their job, made redundant or been on a fixed-term contract that finished prior to the birth. Excluding these cases to produce a more accurate group of '12 months continuous employees' (a refinement of the group in row 2 of Table 2⁴) was thus a first step in estimating the scope of eligibility.

A second complication in estimating eligibility is the situation of casual employees. The revised '12 months continuous employees' population discussed above includes casuals who had been with one employer for 12 months or more, and while many such 'long-term' casuals would have been eligible for UPPL under state provisions or federal awards at the time our respondent parents were having their children, not all would have been covered.⁵ This complexity (which cannot be fully controlled for as our data lack explicit information on industrial coverage), and associated debates over how meaningful access to UPPL is for casual employees, will be addressed in a forthcoming paper by project team members.

⁴ Figures for 'Population 2' in Whitehouse, Baird, Diamond and Soloff (2007: Tables 2 and 3) were based on the earlier, unrevised, group.

⁵ Thanks to Jenni Whelan for a comprehensive overview of eligibility conditions in different jurisdictions over the relevant time period.

In this report, we simply illustrate the variability in estimates of eligibility for UPPL by examining the prevalence of ‘12 months continuous employees’ within three different population groups. These figures are presented in Table 3. Row 1 shows that, within the population of all employed mothers and fathers, 70 and 64 per cent respectively met our revised ‘12 months continuous employees’ criteria.⁶ If the self-employed are removed to produce a base population of ‘employees’ (row 2), these percentages rise to 78 per cent and 81 per cent respectively. Finally, eliminating the uncertainty associated with casuals, row 3 indicates that among permanent employees, 89 per cent of mothers and 86 per cent of fathers were ‘12 months continuous employees’.

Table 3: Percentages of ‘12 months continuous employees’ within selected employment populations, parents of children born March 2003-February 2004, Australia^a

Base populations	% of ‘12 mths continuous employees’ ^b in base population			
	Mothers	<i>N</i> ^c	Fathers	<i>N</i> ^c
All employed	70	2462	64	3210
All employees	78	2201	81	2564
All permanent employees	89	1570	86	2261

Notes

- Estimates have been weighted to account for non-response bias.
- Employees working for the same employer for 12 months prior to the birth, excluding those who also indicated that they had been dismissed from their job, made redundant or been on a fixed-term contract that finished prior to the birth. Includes casuals meeting these criteria, unless casuals are excluded from the base population as in row 3.
- Base populations for each row, unweighted.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

While Table 3 does not present an unambiguous measure of eligibility for UPPL in the Australian labour market, it highlights some important considerations in addressing this question. In particular, it provides a reminder of groups for whom eligibility is non-existent or limited (self-employed and casuals). It is also important to note that estimates in rows 1 and 2 indicate the upper limits of eligibility among these base populations. This is because the ‘12 months continuous employees’ group within these populations includes long-term casuals, not all of whom would have been formally eligible at the time. In spite of these complications, we utilise the ‘12 months continuous employees’ group as a population of interest in subsequent tables. It provides a proxy for UPPL eligibility, albeit a somewhat generous one⁷, and a useful comparison with other ‘employment’ populations.

Another elaboration of mothers’ employment situation in the lead up to the birth of their child involves identifying those who opted to leave employment around the time of the birth. The survey data show that approximately 14 per cent of employed mothers quit work around this time, including a proportion (eight per cent) of the ‘12 months continuous employees’ group whose members were likely to be formally eligible for UPPL. These ‘leavers’ are of considerable interest and Table 4 presents an overview of their reasons for choosing to exit the labour market.

The most frequently cited reason, identified by close to two-thirds of employed mothers who left work at this time, was to look after family full-time (Table 4, row 1). However 20 per cent also

⁶ The difference between these figures and those in row 2 of Table 2 is due to the exclusions discussed in the text under Table 2. The lower percentage among employed fathers reflects their greater incidence of self-employment.

⁷ Although one broadly consistent with post WorkChoices eligibility rules.

indicated that their job was too demanding or inflexible to combine with parenthood, while 17 per cent cited lack of paid maternity leave as an important factor influencing their choice to leave (rows 2 and 3). Among those who had been with their employer for 12 months, 23 per cent identified lack of paid maternity leave as one of the reasons they chose to quit work, and only 10 per cent identified health reasons (not shown in table).

Table 4: Reasons for quitting work, mothers of children born March 2003-February 2004 who quit their job around the time of the birth of their child, Australia^a

Reason for quitting work	Percentages
Wanted to look after family full-time	64
Job too demanding or unable to get enough flexibility in hours	20
Lack of paid maternity leave	17
Lack of a supportive work environment	10
Health reasons	21
<i>N^b</i>	284

Notes:

- Estimates have been weighted to account for non-response bias. Columns do not add to 100% as respondents could mark more than one item. All other reasons cited by respondents and not included in this table were relevant to fewer than 10% of those who quit.
- Base population, mothers who quit work around the time of the birth, unweighted; excludes those missing or not directed to the question on reasons for leaving, and is thus lower than the total who quit work.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Table 5: Full-time and permanent status and sector of employment, mothers of children born March 2003-February 2004, Australia^a

	% Full-Time ^b	% Permanent ^c	%Public Sector ^d
Employed in 12 months prior to birth			
All mothers	52	71	34
<i>First-time mothers</i>	73	76	31
<i>Mothers with other child/ren</i>	28	66	37
12 months continuous employees			
All mothers	57	81	37
<i>First-time mothers</i>	80	87	34
<i>Mothers with other child/ren</i>	31	75	39
Left work around the time of the birth			
All mothers	38	36	18
<i>First-time mothers</i>	52	40	19
<i>Mothers with other child/ren</i>	17	30	17

Notes:

- Estimates have been weighted to account for non-response bias.
- Break-down of full-time/part-time includes self-employed.
- As opposed to casual or fixed-term contract; breakdown is limited to employees.
- Public/private breakdown is limited to employees

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Table 5 compares the pre-birth employment characteristics of this ‘leavers’ group with those of all mothers who were employed prior to the birth and the ‘12 months continuous employees’ group. It shows that those who left work prior to the birth (third panel in the table) were overall least likely to be in full-time jobs (38 per cent compared with 52 per cent of all employed mothers), in permanent jobs (36 per cent compared with 71 per cent of all employed mothers) or in the public sector (18 per cent compared with 34 per cent of all employed mothers); while the

12 months continuous employees (middle panel in the table) were most likely to have these employment characteristics.

In addition, Table 5 underlines considerable differences between first-time mothers and those with other children. Within all three population groups, first-time mothers were much more likely to be working full-time. The contrast is most marked among the '12 months continuous employees' population, within which 80 per cent of first-time mothers but only 31 per cent of mothers with more than one child were working full-time prior to the birth. First-time mothers were also more likely to be in permanent positions, and (except among the 'leavers') somewhat less likely to work in the public sector. These figures hint at the kinds of transitions associated with motherhood in the Australian labour market.

3.2 PATTERNS OF LEAVE-TAKING

Patterns of leave taking were central issues in the survey, and the questionnaire was designed to identify the variety and duration of different types of leave used by mothers and fathers. Respondents were first asked to indicate the different types of leave they utilised, then to elaborate on periods specifically designated as maternity or paternity leave. Presenting the questions in this order was a strategy to address a tendency among some respondents (noted in the pilot study) to report any leave taken at the time of the birth of child as 'maternity' or 'paternity' leave. There may still be some over-reporting of use of maternity/paternity leave in the survey: in particular we note that around 20 per cent of self-employed mothers and 10 per cent of self-employed fathers claimed to have taken maternity/paternity leave, in spite of the fact that this is not something to which they would be formally 'entitled' under legislation. In view of these complexities in relation to the self-employed, the tables presented below use 'employees' and '12 months continuous employees' as base populations.⁸

Within these populations, the survey data show complex patterns of leave-taking that differ markedly between mothers and fathers. For mothers, it appears that in spite of the absence of legislated provisions for paid maternity leave extending to the private sector, over one-third of mothers working as employees prior to the birth and close to half the '12 months continuous employees' group took some paid maternity leave (Table 6, columns 1 and 3). On average, however, this was for less than 12 weeks. Moreover, 18 per cent of mothers taking paid maternity leave took their pay at less than the full-time rate; commonly at half-pay to double their length of 'paid' leave (not shown in the table).⁹

Table 6 (column 1) also shows that a substantial proportion (57 per cent) of employees took some unpaid maternity leave, while 68 per cent took maternity leave of some kind for an average duration of 35 weeks. Thirty-eight per cent used 'other' (that is, 'non-maternity') forms of paid leave, but only 11 per cent used 'other unpaid' leave. Amongst '12 months continuous employees' (column 3), the proportions taking leave were higher for almost all leave types; a

⁸ Note that elsewhere (for example, Whitehouse, Baird, Diamond and Soloff 2007) we have reported figures for different populations such as 'all employed'. Percentages based on 'employee' populations are higher than those based on 'all employed' due to lower leave usage rates among the self-employed. As noted earlier, we also use a revised version of '12 months continuous employees' in this report.

⁹ The average durations reported for paid maternity leave are calculated on the basis of total leave time, even if some or all of this leave was taken at less than full pay.

finding to be expected given the exclusion of respondents with more intermittent or mobile employment histories from this population. The average duration overall was 40 weeks (row 6). Amongst the groups taking no leave – 24 per cent of all employees and 12 per cent of 12 months continuous employees (the balance of the ‘Any leave’ figures in row 6) – the majority had opted to leave work around this time.

Table 6: Use and average duration of forms of leave taken at the time of the birth of a child, mothers of children born March 2003-February 2004, Australia^a

Type of leave	All employees		12 months continuous employees	
	% taking leave	Ave duration (weeks)	% taking leave	Ave duration (weeks)
Maternity leave - paid	37	11	46	11
Maternity leave - unpaid	57	35	68	35
Any maternity leave	68	35	81	36
Other ^b leave - paid	38	7	46	7
Other leave - unpaid	11	31	12	29
Any leave	76	40	88	40
<i>N^c</i>	2144		1705	

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias; percentages represent the proportion of the base population taking any of the specified leave type, with average duration based on those who took at least some of that kind of leave.
- ‘Other’ refers to leave not designated as ‘maternity’ leave. Other forms of paid leave include annual leave, long service leave and sick leave.
- Base populations ‘all employees’ and ‘12 months continuous employees’, unweighted.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Table 7: Use and average duration of forms of leave taken at the time of the birth of a child, fathers of children born March 2003-February 2004, Australia^a

Type of leave	All employees		12 months continuous employees	
	% taking leave	Ave duration (days)	% taking leave	Ave duration (days)
Paternity leave - paid	24	7	27	7
Paternity leave - unpaid	7	14	6	14
Any paternity leave	30	9	33	9
Other ^b leave - paid	62	13	68	14
Other leave - unpaid	6	18	4	21
Any leave	83	14	88	15
<i>N^c</i>	2521		2042	

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias; percentages represent the proportion of the base population taking any of the specified leave type, with average duration based on those who took at least some of that kind of leave.
- ‘Other’ refers to leave not designated as ‘paternity’ leave. Other forms of paid leave include annual leave, long service leave and sick leave.
- Base populations ‘all employees’ and ‘12 months continuous employees’, unweighted.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Table 7 presents the comparable figures for fathers, who were much more likely to use forms of ‘other’ paid leave than paternity leave, and who took much shorter leave periods than mothers. While 24 per cent of fathers working as employees took some paid paternity leave for an average

duration of seven days (row 1), only seven per cent took some unpaid paternity leave (row 2), and overall only 30 per cent used any paternity leave (row 3). However 62 per cent of fathers working as employees (and 68 per cent of the 12 months continuous employees group) used other forms of paid leave (row 4).¹⁰ The overall average duration of leave taken by fathers was only 14 days (row 6), indicating a low take-up of leave for ‘primary carer’ purposes. Among fathers taking no leave – 17 per cent of all employees and 11 per cent of 12 months continuous employees (the balance of ‘Any leave’ figures in row 6) – the majority stated that they did not take leave because the child’s mother was at home full-time.

While Tables 6 and 7 illustrate the different forms of leave in use, an accurate picture of leave-taking requires an understanding of the combinations of leave types that parents use. Tables 8-11 present this information for mothers and fathers, organising the data in two different ways: first drawing a primary distinction between maternity/paternity and ‘other’ forms of leave (Tables 8 and 9); and then using paid and unpaid leave as the primary distinction (Tables 10 and 11). In both cases the list of leave combinations is exhaustive and mutually exclusive (although for simplicity some categories have been collapsed), and the population base is ‘employees who took leave’ (contrasting ‘all employees who took leave’ with ‘12 months continuous employees who took leave’). The use of leave-takers as the population base precludes comparisons with the figures in Tables 6 and 7, which include those who did not take leave.

As Table 8 shows, among mothers who took leave the most common arrangements were combinations of maternity and other forms of leave. Although a substantial proportion of both population groups (40 per cent) used maternity leave only (panel 1, row 1), only four per cent used paid maternity leave only (panel 1, row 2). Proportions using ‘other’ types of leave only ranged from 7-11 per cent (panel 2, row 1), while around half used combinations of maternity and other leave (panel 3, row 1). The overall average duration of leave was 40 weeks (‘Total’ row), ranging from less than 10 weeks among those taking ‘paid other only’ to around 50 weeks for those taking combinations of paid and unpaid maternity leave, with or without other forms of leave. The table also shows that once the focus is narrowed to leave-takers the marked differences between ‘all employees’ and ‘12 months continuous employees’ evident in Table 6 disappear, with the main contrast being that leave-takers within the narrower population were somewhat less likely to use ‘other’ leave only and a little more likely to combine maternity and other leave.

In comparison with mothers, fathers were less likely to use combinations of parental and ‘other’ leave, and relied much more on ‘other’ leave. As Table 9 (panel 2, row 1) shows, over 60 per cent of both population groups in the table were taking ‘other’ leave only, and the vast majority of these were taking ‘paid other’ only (panel 2, row 2). Overall leave durations were short compared with mothers’: around 14 days (‘Total’ row), increasing to around 28 days among the small number of fathers combining some unpaid paternity leave with other forms of leave. These may be cases where some use of unpaid paternity leave as ‘primary carer’ is taking place.

¹⁰ The majority of these leave-takers (over 80 per cent) used annual leave only.

Table 8: Maternity only, Other only, and Maternity + Other leave combinations, mothers of children born March 2003-February 2004 who took leave, Australia^a

Type of leave	All employees who took leave		12 months continuous employees who took leave	
	% taking leave comb	Ave duration (weeks)	% taking leave comb	Ave duration (weeks)
Maternity leave only	40	40	40	41
Paid mat only	4	18	4	18
Unpaid mat only	24	38	23	39
Paid+unpaid mat	12	51	13	50
'Other' ^b leave only	11	29	7	26
Paid other only	3	8	1	9
Paid+unpaid other ^c	8	35	5	30
Maternity + Other combinations	49	42	53	42
Paid mat + any 'other' ^d	10	32	11	31
Unpaid mat + any 'other' ^{d,e}	17	38	17	38
Paid + unpaid mat+ any 'other' ^d	22	50	25	50
Total	100	40	100	40
<i>N^g</i>		1647		1415

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias; percentages have been rounded and may not add to 100%.
- As defined in note (b) Table 6.
- Includes the small number of cases who took other unpaid leave only.
- 'Any other' includes either paid or unpaid other, or a combination of both.
- Cases combining unpaid maternity with other paid leave comprise the majority of this group.
- Base populations 'all employees who took leave' and '12 months continuous employees who took leave', unweighted.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Table 9: Paternity only, Other only, and Paternity + Other leave combinations, fathers of children born March 2003-February 2004 who took some leave, Australia^a

Types of leave	All employees who took leave		12 months continuous employees who took leave	
	% taking leave comb	Ave duration (days)	% taking leave comb	Ave duration (days)
Paternity leave only	20	10	19	10
Paid paternity only	14	8	14	8
Unpaid paternity w/wo paid pat	6	16	5	16
'Other' ^b leave only	63	14	62	14
Paid other only	57	13	59	14
Unpaid other w/wo paid other	6	19	4	24
Paternity + Other combinations	17	22	18	22
Paid paternity + any other ^c	15	21	16	21
Unpaid pat w/wo paid pat +any other ^c	2	28	2	29
Total	100	14	100	15
<i>N^d</i>		2090		1787

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias; percentages have been rounded and may not add to 100%.
- As defined in note (b) Table 7.
- 'Any other' includes either paid or unpaid other, or a combination of both
- Base populations 'all employees who took leave' and '12 months continuous employees who took leave', unweighted.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Tables 10 and 11 illustrate another way combinations of leave can be presented from the survey data, distinguishing primarily between paid and unpaid leave. As Table 10 shows, only 14 per cent of the populations of mothers represented in the table took paid leave only, with around half of these combining paid maternity with other forms of paid leave (panel 1). The average duration of leave among those taking paid leave only was around 20 weeks; up to 26 weeks among those taking combinations of paid maternity and paid other. Approximately 30 per cent took unpaid leave only with an average duration of 38 weeks (panel 2), and over half took combinations of paid and unpaid leave with an average duration of 46 weeks (panel 3).

Table 10: Paid leave only, Unpaid leave only, and Paid + Unpaid leave combinations, mothers of children born March 2003-February 2004 who took leave, Australia^a

Type of leave	All employees who took leave		12 months continuous employees who took leave	
	% taking leave comb	Ave duration (weeks)	% taking leave comb	Ave duration (weeks)
Paid leave only	14	20	14	22
Paid maternity only	4	18	4	18
Paid other ^b only	3	8	1	9
Paid maternity & paid other	7	26	8	26
Unpaid leave only	32	38	28	38
Unpaid maternity only	24	38	23	39
Unpaid other, w/wo unpaid maternity	8	39	5	35
Paid + unpaid ^c	54	46	58	46
Total	100	40	100	40
<i>N</i> ^d		1647		1415

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias; percentages have been rounded and may not add to 100%.
- 'Other' as defined in note (b) Table 6.
- Combinations have been collapsed for simplicity of presentation. The most frequent combinations of paid and unpaid leave are: paid maternity and paid other with some unpaid leave (23% of all employees who took leave); paid other with unpaid maternity leave (16% of all employees who took leave); paid and unpaid maternity leave, no other leave (12% of all employees who took leave).
- Base populations 'all employees who took leave' & '12 months continuous employees who took leave', unweighted.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

In contrast, the overwhelming majority of fathers in the corresponding population groups used paid leave only. As Table 11 shows, 85 per cent of employees who took leave (and 88 per cent of '12 months continuous employees' who took leave) used paid leave only; with around two-thirds of these accessing 'paid other' leave only (panel 1). Only a small percentage of fathers in both population groups were using unpaid leave only (7-11 per cent), and only around five per cent used unpaid paternity leave only (panel 2). A similarly small percentage (four per cent) used combinations of paid and unpaid leave (panel 3). It was among this group that relatively long average leave durations for fathers were evident (up to 29 days).

Table 11: Paid leave only, Unpaid leave only, and Paid + Unpaid leave combinations, fathers of children born March 2003-February 2004 who took leave, Australia^a

Type of leave	All employees who took leave		12 months continuous employees who took leave	
	% taking leave comb	Ave duration (days)	% taking leave comb	Ave duration (days)
Paid leave only	85	13	88	14
Paid paternity only	14	8	14	8
Paid other ^b only	57	13	59	14
Paid paternity & paid other	14	20	16	21
Unpaid leave only	11	16	7	18
Unpaid paternity only	5	13	4	12
Unpaid other, w/wo unpaid paternity	5	20	3	25
Paid + unpaid ^c	4	27	4	29
Total	100	14	100	15
<i>N</i> ^d		2090		1787

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias; percentages have been rounded and may not add to 100%.
- 'Other' as defined in note (b) Table 7.
- Combinations have been collapsed for simplicity of presentation and because numbers are low in this category. The majority of fathers in this category took 'paid other' leave with some unpaid leave.
- Base populations 'all employees who took leave' & '12 months continuous employees who took leave', unweighted.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

3.3 MOTHERS' RETURN TO PAID EMPLOYMENT

The timing of mothers' return to paid employment after the birth of a child and the changes women make or experience at this time are important themes in the growing international literature on parenthood and employment. This section of the report presents selected statistics from the survey on these issues, drawing attention to some of the analytical questions they raise.

At the time the survey was conducted the youngest of the children born between March 2003 and February 2004 were 15 months old. Table 12 thus presents estimates of the percentage of mothers who returned to paid employment in periods up to 15 months after the birth of their child. It shows that, among mothers employed prior to the birth who reported taking leave, nine per cent returned to work within three months of the birth (row 1), 25 per cent returned within six months (row 2), and close to 60 per cent had returned by 12 months (row 4). Within 15 months, 70 per cent were back in paid employment (row 5).¹¹

In addition to the figures presented in Table 12, it is possible to estimate proportions returning over longer time periods, but only for smaller populations within the sample. For example, narrowing the base population of 'mothers employed prior to the birth who took leave' to those whose children born between March 2003 and February 2004 were aged 18 months or more at the time of the survey, 75 per cent had returned within 18 months; while among those with children aged 24 months or more at the time of the survey, 80 per cent had returned within 24 months.

¹¹ Percentages are dependent on the population base. For example, return rates are lower if the base population is the more inclusive group of all employed prior to the birth (among this group only 62 per cent were back in paid employment within 15 months of the birth).

Table 12: Timing of return to employment, mothers of children born March 2003-February 2004 who were employed in the 12 months prior to the birth and took leave, Australia^a

	Percent	Cumulative percent
Up to 3months	9	9
3 up to 6 months	16	25
6 up to 9 months	15	40
9 up to 12 months	19	59
12 up to 15 months	11	70
Did not return within 15 months ^a	30	100
<i>N^b</i>		1694

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias.
- Base population of mothers employed prior to the birth who took leave, unweighted; excludes cases with missing data on questions relating to leave or date of return to work.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Table 13: Influences on timing of return to work, mothers of children born March 2003-Feb 2004 who were employed in the 12 months prior to the birth, took leave and returned to work within 15 months, Australia^a

Influences on timing of return to work	Timing of return to work (percentages)					
	Up to 3mths	3 up to 6mths	6 up to 9mths	9 up to 12mths	12 up to 15mths	Total returning in 15mths
A Would have taken longer if access to some, or more, paid mat leave	44	57	54	37	38	46
B Would have taken longer if access to some or more unpaid mat leave	4	2	2	14	12	7
C Returned earlier than liked because worried about job	15	12	8	5	8	9
D Returned earlier than liked because needed the money	45	57	57	35	29	45
Any of A, B, C or D	65	73	72	58	54	65
<i>N^b</i>	150	272	255	332	182	1191

Notes:

- Percentages have been weighted to account for non-response bias
- Base population 'mothers employed prior to the birth who took leave and returned to work within 15 months', unweighted; excludes cases with missing data on relevant questions.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Elaborating the issue of timing of return to work, Table 13 presents information on mothers' experiences of leave and the factors influencing when they returned to paid employment, taking as a base population those mothers who had been employed in the 12 months prior to the birth, taken leave and returned to work within 15 months.¹² The 'total' figures in the final column show that among this group, close to half (46 per cent) thought they would have taken longer if they'd had some (or better) access to paid maternity leave (row 1). In comparison, very few (7 per cent) indicated that they would have taken longer if they had better access to unpaid maternity leave (row 2). Only 9 per cent reported that they had returned earlier than they would have liked

¹² This narrower population was selected as a base because it focuses on the respondents for whom these questions are most meaningful and for whom we have the most consistent data: that is, those who had returned to work within a specified period at the time of the survey. Estimates of problems and changes are likely to be lower on the basis of this population than on the basis of more inclusive populations.

because they were worried about their job (row 3), but close to half (45 per cent) indicated that they had returned earlier than they would have liked because they (or their family) needed the money (row 4). Overall 65 per cent of respondents indicated that at least one of these four situations applied to them.

Table 13 also illustrates variation in mothers' responses depending on the actual length of leave taken. As might be anticipated, those with the longest leave durations tended to be least likely to report that they would have taken longer if they had access to more or better paid maternity leave (row 1) or that they returned earlier than they would have liked because they needed the money (row 4). However the respondents most likely to report that these situations applied to them were not those with the very shortest leave durations (up to three months) but those who had taken between three and nine months. These figures underline the complexity of leave and return to work decisions and raise questions about the most important influences on choices (questions currently being addressed in research by project team members).

The next three tables present statistics on employment changes experienced by women on returning to work. As with Table 13, the base population is mothers who were employed prior to the birth, took leave and returned to work within 15 months.¹³ The data in Table 14 show that amongst this population 66 per cent returned to the same employer and same job (row 1), while another 17 per cent also returned to the same employer but in a different job (row 2). Nine per cent returned to a different employer, with around half of these also changing occupation (rows 3 and 4). Another seven per cent remained in self-employment while two per cent changed to self-employment.

Table 14: Changes in employer or occupation after the birth of a child, mothers of children born March 2003-February 2004 who were employed in the 12 months prior to the birth, took leave and returned to work within 15 months, Australia^a

	Percent
With the same employer and in the same job as before birth of child	66
With the same employer but in a different job	17
With a different employer but in same occupation	4
With a different employer in a different occupation	5
Continued in self-employment	7
Changed to self-employment	2
Total %	100
<i>N</i> ^b	1198

Notes:

- a. Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias.
- b. Base population 'mothers employed prior to the birth who took leave and returned within 15 months', unweighted; excludes cases with missing data on relevant questions.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

While the figures in Table 14 suggest a high level of continuity in employment for mothers returning to work within a 15 month period, one area in which considerable change was apparent

¹³ We reiterate that estimates based on this population will differ from those based on broader populations. Among the population of all mothers employed prior to the birth, for example, only 55 per cent had returned to the same employer and same job at the time of the survey.

was the transition from full-time to part-time employment. As Table 15 shows, amongst this same population of mothers who were employed prior to the birth, took leave and returned within 15 months, almost 70 per cent of those who were employed full-time prior to the birth returned to work part-time (row 1). Amongst those who worked part-time prior to the birth, 98 per cent returned part-time (row 2). Overall, 83 per cent of these women were in part-time jobs on their return to work after the birth (row 3).

Table 15: Changes in working hours after the birth of a child, mothers of children born March 2003-February 2004 who were employed in the 12 months prior to the birth, took leave and returned to work within 15 months, Australia^a

Working hours during pregnancy	Working hours on return		N ^b
	% Full-time	% Part-time	
Full-time	32	68	688
Part-time	3	98	509
All	17	83	1197

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias; due to rounding rows may not add to 100%.
- Row totals for base population 'mothers employed prior to the birth who took leave and returned within 15 months', unweighted; excludes cases with missing data on relevant questions.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Table 16: Changes in permanency of contract after the birth of a child, mothers of children born March 2003-February 2004 who were employed in the 12 months prior to the birth, took leave and returned to work within 15 months, Australia^a

Permanency of contract during pregnancy	Permanency of contract on return			N ^b
	% Permanent	% Casual	% Fixed-term	
Permanent	87	11	2	915
Casual	7	92	1	127
Fixed-term	16	20	65	37
All	75	21	4	1079

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias; due to rounding rows may not add to 100%.
- Row totals for base population 'mothers employed prior to the birth who took leave and returned within 15 months', unweighted; excludes cases with missing data on relevant questions and mothers who were self-employed either before the birth or on return to work.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

In comparison with working hours, considerably less change was evident in permanency of contract before and after the birth among mothers who returned to work within 15 months. As Table 16 shows, 87 per cent of those in permanent contracts prior to the birth returned to permanent positions (row 1), while those in casual positions prior to the birth were similarly likely to return as casuals (92 per cent, row 2). Those who had been on fixed-term contracts prior to the birth were most likely to experience change on return although even amongst this group the majority (65 per cent) remained under fixed-term arrangements.¹⁴

¹⁴ Among the broader population of all who had returned to work at the time of the survey, slightly more full-timers returned part-time, and a higher proportion of permanents and fixed-term employees changed to casual status.

A key analytical issue relating to these data is the impact of leave-taking and changes made on return to work. Early analysis indicates that those experiencing change (particularly those moving from full-time to part-time employment), and those taking longer leave breaks, were more likely to believe their career opportunities declined since their return to work. Extension of this work is currently in progress.

3.4 POLICY PREFERENCES

The final section of the report focuses on the policy preferences of parents, drawing on responses to a question asking them to identify provisions that would have been most helpful in the period following their child's birth. The results presented in Table 17 show that, across all families responding to this question (column 4), the most frequently cited groups of provisions were better parental leave and better child care provisions. Close to 50 per cent of all families indicated that these would have improved things for them, while over one-third indicated a preference for maternity payments from government. Within the 'better parental leave provisions' group of provisions, it was paid maternity leave (36 per cent), and to a lesser extent paid paternity leave (24 per cent), that were the cited most often; in contrast, very few thought that longer unpaid maternity or paternity/parental leave would have been useful (six and three per cent respectively).

Table 17: Policy preferences by employment status of mother prior to the birth, families with children born March 2003-February 2004, Australia^a

Which of the following would have improved things most for you in the period since your child was born?	% families where mother not employed prior to birth	% families where mother employed prior to birth	% families where mother employed prior & took leave	% all families
Better parental leave provisions	20	59	69	48
More, or some, paid maternity leave	5	50	61	36
More, or some, paid paternity/parental leave	16	28	31	24
Longer unpaid maternity leave	1	8	10	6
Longer unpaid paternity/parental leave	3	3	4	3
Better workplace provisions on return to work	14	29	33	25
Better access to part-time hours on return to work	9	18	19	15
More family leave options on return to work	7	13	17	12
Better, or some, breastfeeding facilities at work	2	8	9	6
Higher, or some, maternity payment from govt	20	43	47	36
Better child care provisions	36	53	55	47
More accessible child care	15	25	27	22
More affordable child care	31	43	44	39
Better quality child care	13	16	16	15
None of the above	44	17	12	26
<i>N^b</i>	<i>1039</i>	<i>2443</i>	<i>1749</i>	<i>3514</i>

Notes:

- Figures have been weighted to account for non-response bias. Percentages do not sum to group totals or to 100% overall as respondents could mark more than one item.
- Base populations for each column, unweighted; excludes cases missing on the relevant question.

Source: The Parental Leave in Australia Survey (Whitehouse, Baird and Diamond 2005), conducted in conjunction with LSAC Wave 1.5.

Table 17 also illustrates how these policy preferences vary across different population groups within the sample, in particular between families where mothers were not in employment prior to the birth of the child (column 1), where they were in employment at that time (column 2), and where they had been in employment and taken leave (column 3). Unsurprisingly, it was the latter group within which parental leave, workplace provisions and child care were cited most frequently (69, 33 and 55 per cent respectively); but this group was also most likely to indicate that maternity payments from the government would be helpful (47 per cent). In contrast, only 20 per cent of families where the mother was not in paid employment prior to the birth indicated a preference for maternity payments; and this group was most likely to think that ‘none of the above’ provisions would have been of value.

We hope this preliminary overview of *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey* is useful both for those seeking basic statistics on issues relating to parental leave and for researchers planning to use the dataset for analytical purposes. Further information to be posted on the Parental Leave website in 2007 will include an overview of the main ‘populations’ within the dataset, updates on basic statistics, and links to analytical papers based on the data as these become available.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is based on *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey* which was funded by ARC Linkage Project (LP0453613) and implemented in 2005 as a nested study within Wave 1.5 of *Growing Up in Australia*, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) <<http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/>>. LSAC was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) and is being conducted in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and a consortium of research agencies and universities. We are grateful to FaCSIA, AIFS and the LSAC consortium for access to the LSAC infant cohort sample to conduct the survey, and particularly thank Sebastian Misson from AIFS for his work on the database. None of these individuals or organisations has any responsibility for the information we present here.

REFERENCES

- Baird, M. (2005) 'Parental Leave in Australia: The Role of the Industrial Relations System', *Law in Context*, 23 (1): 45- 64.
- Bittman, M., S. Hoffman and D. Thompson (2004) Men's Uptake of Family-Friendly Employment Provisions, Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) Policy Research Paper, Canberra: FaCS.
- Boushey, H. (2005) *Family-Friendly Policies: Boosting Mothers' Wages* Briefing Paper, Center for Economic and Policy Research, Washington.
- Bygren, M. and A.-Z. Duvander (2006). 'Parents' Workplace Situation and Fathers' Parental Leave Use' *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68(2): 363-372.
- Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) (2006) *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Survey 2005: Paid Parental Leave*. Australian Government, Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency.
- Gaze, B. (2005) 'Quality part-time work: can law provide a framework?' *Labour & Industry*, 15 (3): 89-111.
- Gray, M. and J. Tudball (2002) *Family-friendly work practices: differences within and between workplaces*. Research Report No.7. Melbourne: AIFS.
- Glezer, H. (1988) *Maternity Leave in Australia: Employee and Employer Experiences*. Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) Monograph #7. Melbourne: AIFS.
- Hakim, C. (2000) *Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century – Preference Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hudson, M., S. Lissenberg and M. Sahin-Dikmen (2004) *Maternity and Paternity Rights in Britain 2002: Survey of Parents*. Policy Studies Institute, Social Research Division In-House Report 131, London: Department for Work and Pension and Department of Trade and Industry.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) (1999) *Pregnant and Productive. It's a Right not a Privilege to Work While Pregnant*. Sydney: HREOC.

_____ (2002) *A Time to Value: Proposal for a National Paid Maternity Scheme*, Sydney: HREOC.

Kamerman, S (2000) 'Parental Leave Policies: An Essential Ingredient in Early Childhood Education and Care Policies' *Social Policy Report* 14 (2): 3-15.

Soloff C, Lawrence D, Johnstone R (2005) *LSAC Technical Paper No. 1. Sample Design*. Australian Government/ Australian Institute of Family Studies.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/pubs/techpapers/tp1.pdf>, accessed September 2006.

Thompson, M., L. Vinter and V. Young (2005) *Dads and their Babies: Leave Arrangements in the First Year*. EOC Working Paper Series. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Waldfogel, J. (1998) 'The family gap for young women in the United States and Britain: can maternity leave make a difference?' *Journal of Labor Economics* 16(3): 505-45.

Whitehouse, G. (2001) 'Industrial agreements and work/family provisions: trends and prospects under "enterprise bargaining"', *Labour & Industry*, 12(1): 109-129.

Whitehouse, G., M. Baird and C. Diamond (2005) *The Parental Leave in Australia Survey*, conducted through Wave 1.5 of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, and funded through Australian Research Council Linkage Project LP0453613.

Whitehouse, G., M. Baird, C. Diamond and C. Soloff (2007) 'Parental leave in Australia: beyond the statistical gap' *Journal of Industrial Relations* 49(1): 103-112.

Whitehouse, G. and D. Zetlin (1999) "'Family Friendly" Policies: Distribution and Implementation in Australian Workplaces'. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 10(2): 221-239.

Williams, J. (2000) *Unbending Gender: Why Family and work Conflict and What to do About It*. Oxford: Oxford University