



GENDER EQUITY

INSIGHTS 2024

THE CHANGING

NATURE OF PART-TIME

WORK IN AUSTRALIA

About the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre is an independent economic and social research organisation located within the Curtin Business School at Curtin University.

The Centre was established in 2012 through the generous support of Bankwest, a division of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. The Centre's core mission is to deliver high quality, accessible research that enhances our understanding of key economic and social issues that contribute to the wellbeing of Western Australian families, businesses and communities.

The Centre's research and engagement activities are designed to influence economic and social policy debates in state and Federal Parliament, regional and national media, and the wider Australian community.

The Centre capitalises on Curtin University's reputation for excellence in economic modelling, forecasting, public policy research, trade and industrial economics and spatial sciences. Centre researchers have specific expertise in economic forecasting, quantitative modelling and economic and social policy evaluation.

About the Workplace Gender Equality Agency

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) is responsible for promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces.

WGEA is an Australian Government statutory agency created by the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (WGE Act). The WGE Act requires private sector and Commonwealth public sector employers with 100 or more employees (relevant employers) to report annually to the Agency against 6 gender equality indicators (GEIs). It also requires larger employers (with 500 or more employees) to meet gender equality standards.

WGEA provides advice and assistance to employers and collects and analyses information provided by employers. We also assess and measure workplace gender equality performance and undertake research, education and other programs to promote and improve gender equality in the workplace. We are both a regulator and a driver of change. We provide Australia with a world-leading dataset that delivers comprehensive insights on the landscape of gender equality within Australian workplaces.

About the dataset in this edition of the *Gender Equity Insights* series

The data included in this report is based on employer reports to WGEA for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. It includes information from 5,377 reporting organisations covering 4,974,978 employees. Of these, 51.1 per cent were women and 48.7 per cent were men. The percentage does not add to 100 per cent due to people who did not identify as either a woman or a man in the WGEA dataset. The results in this report cover women and men.

While WGEA's legislation and data collection powers do not extend to additional diversity characteristics or non-binary gender, Recommendation 6 of the 2021 Review of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act* recommended that WGEA consider the best way to collect diversity data, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, cultural and linguistic diversity, and disability, and Recommendation 7.2 recommended legislative changes to enable WGEA to mandatorily collect data on non-binary employees. WGEA has commenced research alongside key stakeholders on the best approach to collecting this data.

FOREWORD WGEA



This ninth report in the BCEC-WGEA Gender Equity Insights Series comes at a time when Australian workplaces are experiencing a period of dynamic evolution in their workplace environments. Employees and employers are considering the opportunities and challenges flowing from our changing attitudes and expectations of how, when and where we work.

Over the past several years, Australian workplaces have navigated new ways of working – including through forced adaptation during COVID-19. Some employers have scaled up their support for flexible working arrangements in response.

This Gender Equity Insights report profiles the current state of part-time employment and flexible working arrangements in Australia. It highlights the ways employers can embed part-time and flexible ways of working into their own workplace to the benefit of all employees and be at the forefront of progressing gender equality in their organisations. This report includes recommendations on ways employers can mitigate against career limiting ‘flexibility stigma’ and career penalties historically associated with part-time and flexible working arrangements, which are often particularly detrimental to women, who have taken up these work arrangements in greater numbers than men.

Employers have the opportunity to continue to adapt ways of working to the benefit of employees and their own businesses. They can challenge certain patterns of work and re-design and re-imagine work as part-time and flexible in a way that delivers maximum benefit to their employees and the productivity and profitability of their organisation. Employers can deepen their understanding of the preferences and needs of their own workplace setting by consulting with their employees and co-designing work arrangements that meet business and employee requirements. They can upskill their managers to become confident and competent to better manage a flexible workforce and ensure flexible working arrangements do not have unintended consequences for employees. At its core, these actions seek to create inclusive workplaces in which all people can thrive and contribute to their full potential and which will improve gender equality.

Ultimately, this report is a call to action for employers to embrace the evolution of part-time and flexible work, so businesses can create more equitable and supportive work environments for all employees.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Wooldridge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a distinct underline for the name.

Mary Wooldridge

Director, Workplace Gender Equality Agency

FOREWORD BCEC



Part-time employment has long been a feature of Australia's labour market, providing employees with scope to balance paid employment with other commitments, such as caregiving, education, second jobs, or other pursuits.

This has opened up labour force participation to a broader group of workers, especially for women who make up three quarters of the part time workforce.

Part-time work has also enabled employers to balance fluctuations in demand and manage labour costs.

But the nature of part-time work has been evolving significantly in recent years.

We are seeing a growing demand for flexible work arrangements, with employees seeking more input into the structure of how, when and where they work including hybrid or remote work options.

Working part-time can limit pay and career progression resulting in long-term economic disadvantages for women, including lower lifetime earnings and reduced retirement savings.

And there has long been a concern among those who take up part-time employment that they will suffer a career penalty through lower rates of progression and promotion.

The COVID pandemic enforced a global working from home experiment that may also have changed the attitudes of some employers towards non-traditional models of working.

Emerging work practices and employee preferences attach increased value to flexibility, autonomy and the ability to work in a way that aligns to responsibilities at home.

This comes alongside increased expectation of access to, and normalisation of, flexible work since the pandemic.

This is especially true in the ongoing debate on broadening women's economic participation through more flexible work alternatives.

This latest Gender Equity Insights report, the ninth in the series from the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), explores the changing nature of part-time work in Australia.

The report highlights how part-time employment can adapt to Australia's changing labour market landscape through flexible work arrangements that benefit both businesses and employees.

We hope the findings in this report provide new insights and practical solutions to support inclusivity and improve gender equality throughout Australia's workplaces.

John Curtin Distinguished Professor Alan Duncan
Director, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workplace environments are shaped by a dynamic and rapidly evolving job market. This is informed by the growing demand from employees to work flexibly and with more input into the structure of how, when and where they work, and by changing attitudes of employers to new models of working.

Part-time work has long been a cornerstone of global labour markets, offering opportunities for employees to reduce paid work hours to balance other commitments, such as caregiving, education, or other pursuits. Traditionally, this enabled a broader constituency of people to participate in the workforce. Part-time work has also enabled employers to balance fluctuations in demand and manage labour costs.

But despite its historical significance, the traditional concept of part-time work is being re-evaluated. Emerging flexible work practices and employee preferences have attached increased value to flexibility, autonomy, and the ability to work in a way that aligns to other responsibilities. Technological advancements and changing workforce demographics are driving demand for greater employment flexibility. This comes alongside increased expectation of access to, and normalisation of, other forms of flexible work, primarily remote work, since the COVID-19 pandemic.

In contrast, other flexible work practices focus on the adaptability of work arrangements, allowing employees to tailor their work schedules in light of other responsibilities and personal needs.

Flexible work practices increasingly encompass a broader set of arrangements, including remote and hybrid working, flexible hours, job sharing, and compressed work weeks. These practices allow employees to adjust their work schedules and locations to better fit their personal needs, offering a level of autonomy that has not been available historically either for part-time or full-time work.

Flexible work practices can be transformative. The ability to work remotely or adjust hours can make it easier to balance work and other responsibilities, reducing the stress and logistical challenges of juggling multiple roles. Increased flexibility can also enable employees to maintain their employment without penalty, while still managing caring responsibilities and other commitments.

For this ninth report in the Gender Equity Insights report series from the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), we take a detailed look at the incidence and evolution of part-time work in Australia, examine its relevance to the future of work, and explore the potential for part-time work options to include more fluid and adaptable work arrangements better aligned with employee preferences and the evolving nature of work.



KEY INSIGHTS

The changing world of work

- Australia has one of the highest shares of part-time employment across OECD countries.
- But the share of women engaging in part-time has been falling over the past decade, gradually up to the COVID-19 pandemic but more rapidly since then.
- Flexibility in hours and location is becoming more mainstream, driven by technological advancements and changes in employee expectations.
- Part-time employment is higher in female-dominated sectors, and in larger organisations.
- Full-time employment with flexible and hybrid work options that combine remote and in-office work are becoming more common in Australian workplaces.

What drives the choice of part-time work? And is it a choice?

- A rising share of women (29 per cent) and men (31 per cent) are choosing part-time work out of preference, with fewer citing care of children as the main reason for doing so.
- The majority of those who move from part-time to full-time work are driven by preference, rather than forced by financial need.
- The most rapid increases in full-time work over the past three years have taken place among women aged between 35 and 55.
- Flexible work entitlements have risen most rapidly for full-time workers and for managers, with over 65 per cent of full-time managers now able to access flexible start and end times.
- A part-time promotion cliff is apparent for non-managers, where promotion rates for women and men in part-time employment are half of their full-time counterparts.

Labour market outcomes for part-time workers

- The part-time total remuneration gender pay gap sits at 2.7 per cent in favour of women.
- This compares to a total remuneration gender pay gap for full-time workers that has declined systematically - but slowly - from 24.8 per cent to 18.3 per cent over the past decade.
- There has been some narrowing of the part-time gender pay gap, but this trend has been reversing in the last two years.
- Businesses need to ensure an equal commitment to part-time employment options and improved gender equity outcomes for managers and non-managers.

Company policies and part-time employment outcomes

- Flexible work arrangements, support for caregiving responsibilities, pay audits, and gender equality initiatives in retention and promotion lead to higher shares of part-time employment.
- The share of women working part-time is nearly 5 percentage points lower for businesses with 5,000 or more employees compared to businesses with fewer than 250 employees.
- Flexible work policies matter – the share of women working part-time is up to 3.6 percentage points higher in companies with flexible work strategies
- A higher representation of women on boards is positively related to the share of women in part-time employment.
- Implementing a flexible work strategy increases the share of female managers working part-time by up to 1.8 percentage points, and reduces the part-time managerial gender pay gap.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mitigating downside effects of part-time employment – the evidence in this report provides a compelling justification for employers ensuring that part-time employment and other forms of flexible work arrangements are normalised within the organisational workplace culture. And as part of this normalisation, employers should also ensure that such arrangements do not carry career penalties in terms of perception of performance, pay and progression. The report recommends that organisations should:

- keep workplace policies under regular review and, if necessary, take action to guard against unconscious biases and systemic penalties against part-time employees.
- record and monitor the career progression pathways for part-time employees to identify promotion cliffs, and where necessary implement mitigating actions to remove progression penalties for part-time workers.

Normalisation of flexible work arrangements – while rates of part-time work are declining, a rising share of both women and men are choosing part-time work because it is their preference. This comes alongside an increased use of other types of flexible working arrangements since the COVID-19 pandemic. This presents an opportunity for Australian employers to normalise part-time employment and other flexible work options without negatively impacting an employee's experience or outcomes at work. In support of this recommendation, employers should:

- create a positive, supportive workplace culture in which flexible and part-time work are normalised, and historic career penalties associated with these forms of work are reduced.
- reinforce the normalisation of part-time employment and flexible work through the role modelling of flexible work by executive leadership and senior management.
- invest in developing the skills and capabilities of managers and human resource professionals to manage a flexible workforce.



- ensure that public sector organisations are strong role models as employers in their support for part-time employment, flexible work arrangements, remote and hybrid work options.

Work (re)design – flexible work practices increasingly encompass a broader set of arrangements, including remote and hybrid working, flexible hours, job sharing, and compressed work weeks. These practices allow employees to adjust their work schedules and locations to better fit their personal needs, offering a level of autonomy that has not been available historically either for part-time or full-time work. To broaden access to non-traditional forms of employment, businesses should:

- rethink job specifications and the task content of roles to identify opportunities for part-time roles or job share arrangements.
- ensure access to staff development and training opportunities for part-time employees and those with flexible work arrangements.
- explore hybrid and remote work options to attract part-time employees who want or need flexibility in their work location.



Consultation and communication – in working towards the removal of the ‘flexibility stigma’ and career penalties associated with flexible work arrangements, businesses should establish and maintain a clear communication strategy that balances the needs of employers and employees. As part of this strategy, organisations should:

- consult with employees to better understand their needs and preferences in order to shape forms of work that can best meet employee and employer needs.
- ensure an inclusive culture that respects part-time status and normalises the organisational commitment to part-time employees that they are not expected to work on their days off.
- recognise and acknowledge the contributions of part-time employees equally with full-time employees.

Measuring impact – to ensure that the evolution of flexible working arrangements will deliver better outcomes for both businesses and employees, and to protect against any unintended consequences for either employers or workers, we recommend:

- an expansion in the measurement and collection of labour force statistics to cover flexible working arrangements, to enable an effective assessment of their impact.
- * the evaluation of company policies and actions that successfully implement flexible work arrangements.



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"WORKPLACE
ENVIRONMENTS ARE
SHAPED BY A DYNAMIC
AND RAPIDLY EVOLVING
JOB MARKET."

A photograph of two women in a server room. The woman on the left is wearing a brown cardigan over a white collared shirt and blue jeans. She is holding a tablet and looking at it. The woman on the right is wearing a light blue blouse and a black skirt. She is holding a pen and looking at the tablet. Both women are wearing lanyards with "ACCESS CARD" badges. The background shows server racks with green lights.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Workplace environments are shaped by a dynamic and rapidly evolving job market. This is informed by the growing demand from employees to work flexibly and with more input into the structure of how, when and where they work, and by changing attitudes of employers to new models of working.

Part-time work has long been a cornerstone of global labour markets, offering opportunities for employees to reduce paid work hours to balance other commitments, such as caregiving, education, or other pursuits. Traditionally, this enabled a broader constituency of people to participate in the workforce. Part-time work has also enabled employers to balance fluctuations in demand and manage labour costs.

But despite its historical significance, the traditional concept of part-time work is being re-evaluated. Emerging flexible work practices and employee

preferences have attached increased value to flexibility, autonomy, and the ability to work in a way that aligns to other responsibilities.

Technological advancements and changing workforce demographics are driving demand for greater employment flexibility. This comes alongside the normalisation of other forms of flexible work, primarily remote work, since the COVID-19 pandemic. This is especially true in the ongoing debate on broadening women's economic participation through more flexible work alternatives.

Defining part-time employment

Part-time work is defined primarily according to the number of hours worked; that is, less than full-time hours. Part-time work typically entails a regular schedule of hours with limited flexibility.

Part-time work

According to the Fair Work Commission, part-time work is defined primarily according to the number of hours of work per period. Part-time employees work **less than 38 hours per week**, with **hours usually being regular each week** and agreed between employer and employee. Part-time workers are usually employed on a **permanent basis** or on a **fixed term contract**. Part-time employees are provided the same minimum leave entitlements as full-time employees. This includes paid leave, such as:

- annual leave (on a pro-rata basis);
- sick and carer's leave (on a pro-rata basis); and
- up to 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave (not pro-rated).

The contractual status of part-time employment defines a **set number of hours** per week for a defined base salary, plus any other bonuses or discretionary pay items. Overtime beyond the set number of hours agreed by contract is compensated at a rate prescribed by the employing organisation or the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) covering the industry.

Part-time work has traditionally featured as a labour market solution that is taken up more frequently by women as a means to balance employment with gendered family responsibilities, such as childcare and elder care. Some part-time roles offer predictable schedules with fewer hours than full-time positions, while other part-time arrangements allow employees to work flexibly and vary their start or end times. Both can support those seeking to balance work with other responsibilities.

Part-time work has historically been more prevalent in certain industry sectors, especially in retail, hospitality, healthcare and social assistance, and education. But the occupational segregation by gender in these sectors coupled with lower rates of pay have acted to limit economic opportunities. Part-time work choices can also be perceived – falsely - as a lack of commitment, potentially hindering career progression (Chung 2020; Sturrock, 2018; Russo and Hassink, 2008).

Together, each of these factors contribute to a widening of the gender pay gap. Working part-time can result in long-term economic disadvantages for women, including lower lifetime earnings and reduced retirement savings.

This is why there is a compelling need for strong empirical evidence on the effects of working part-time compared to full-time in terms of pay, workplace benefits, and longer-term career advancement opportunities. This is especially important for supporting women's engagement and progression in the labour force, given their greater representation in part-time work.

The rise of flexible work arrangements

In contrast, other flexible work practices focus on the adaptability of work arrangements, allowing employees to tailor their work schedules in light of other responsibilities and personal needs.

Flexible work practices increasingly encompass a broader set of arrangements, including remote and hybrid working, flexible hours, job sharing, and compressed work weeks. These practices allow employees to adjust their work schedules and locations to better fit their personal needs, offering a level of autonomy that has not been available historically either for part-time or full-time work.

From an employee perspective, flexible work practices offer numerous advantages over rigid and defined part-time roles with regular hours. The ability to work remotely or adjust hours can make it easier to balance work and other responsibilities, reducing the stress and logistical challenges of juggling multiple roles. Increased flexibility can also enable employees to maintain their employment without penalty, while still managing caring responsibilities and other commitments.

Flexible work practices can also cater to a broader range of workers – whether full-time, part-time or casual – including those who may not fit into the conventional part-time mould, such as those with disability, freelancers, gig workers, and those seeking temporary or project-based employment.

Effective flexible work practices are enabled by an inclusive and supportive workplace culture. By normalising flexible arrangements, organisations can work towards removing the historical ‘flexibility stigma’ associated with career penalties in terms of pay and progression (Chung 2020; Rudman and Mescher 2013; Williams *et al.* 2013). This can encourage more equitable sharing of domestic duties between men and women, further supporting women’s career ambitions.

Employers and employees stand to benefit from embracing a broader range of well-supported flexible work practices and considering how they can also support part-time employees. By offering greater flexibility, companies can attract a more diverse talent pool, enhance employee engagement and

cultivate a culture of trust, improve retention and increase productivity. Additionally, flexible work arrangements can lead to cost savings through reduced office space requirements and lower absenteeism rates.

For this ninth report in the *Gender Equity Insights* report series from the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), we take a detailed look at the incidence and evolution of part-time work in Australia, examine its relevance to the future of work, and explore the potential for traditional part-time work options to include more fluid and adaptable work arrangements better aligned with employee preferences and the evolving nature of work.





THE EVOLUTION OF PART-TIME WORK IN AUSTRALIA

THE EVOLUTION OF PART-TIME WORK IN AUSTRALIA



Australia has one of the highest shares of part-time employment across OECD countries.

Flexible positions with hybrid work options are becoming more common in Australian workplaces.

Key Insights

- Australia has one of the highest shares of part-time employment across OECD countries.
- But the share of women engaging in part-time has been falling over the past decade, gradually up to the COVID-19 pandemic but more rapidly since then.
- Part-time employment is higher in female-dominated sectors, and in organisations with larger numbers of employees.
- The part-time total remuneration gender pay gap sits at 2.7 per cent in favour of women.
- Full-time employment and flexible positions with hybrid work options that combine remote and in-office work are becoming more common in Australian workplaces.
- Businesses need to ensure an equal commitment to part-time employment options and improved gender equity outcomes across all managerial and non-managerial occupations.

The concept of part-time work may not be entirely anachronistic, but it is evolving and becoming less dominant in the landscape of work options beyond the industrial full-time worker archetype.

From an administrative or human resources perspective, the contractual settings related to part-time work are definitionally clear. Two examples from the Fair Work Ombudsman's part-time work agreements, for the retail industry and for health professionals, serve to make this point.



Fair Work Commission Industry Awards – Examples of part-time work agreements

General Retail Industry Award [MA000004]

A part-time employee is engaged to work less than 38 ordinary hours per week, with hours of work that are reasonably predictable. An employer and employee have to agree on a **'regular pattern of work'** when the employee starts, to include:

- the hours worked on each particular day of the week (the **'guaranteed hours'**);
- the start and finish times each day; and
- the times and length of meal breaks.

The hours in the agreement have to be within the ordinary hours in the award. This includes the times of day ordinary hours can be worked and the maximum and minimum ordinary hours of work. Overtime must be paid for any time worked over a part-time employee's 'guaranteed hours' at the contractually agreed rate.

Health Professionals and Support Services Award [MA000027]

A part-time employee is employed to work less than 38 hours per week. An employer and employee **have to agree on a regular pattern of work** before the employee starts.

The agreement has to be in writing and include:

- the number of hours worked each week;
- the days of the week the employee will work; and
- the start and finish times each day.

The regular pattern of work can only be changed if the employer and employee agree to it in writing. The roster for the days and times of work (not the amount of hours) may be changed in other ways than by agreement.

However, experientially from employees' perspectives, the strict delineation between full-time, part-time and alternative work models is becoming increasingly blurred as more companies adopt and normalise flexible work models (Stovell and Besamusca, 2022). Flexibility can result in employees working varied hours that don't adhere to a strict account of hours under either full-time or part-time hours schedules.

Flexibility in hours and location is becoming more mainstream, driven by technological advancements and changes in employee expectations. And the gig economy has introduced new forms of flexible employment that overlap with part-time work.

Employment settings have evolved in the post-COVID-19 pandemic world to accommodate hybrid models that combine remote and in-office work, expanding the options beyond regular full-time and part-time work arrangements, towards more flexible work alternatives.

With a decade of data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's annual Employer Census, we are in an exceptional position to explore the evolving patterns of part-time work over time, including the changing composition of the part-time workforce.



The share of women in part-time roles has dropped 3.2 ppts to 29.7% between 2016-17 and 2022-23

PATTERNS OF PART-TIME WORK OVER TIME

An immediate and striking observation from our analysis of the WGEA data collection is the degree to which the labour market status of women and men has evolved over time.

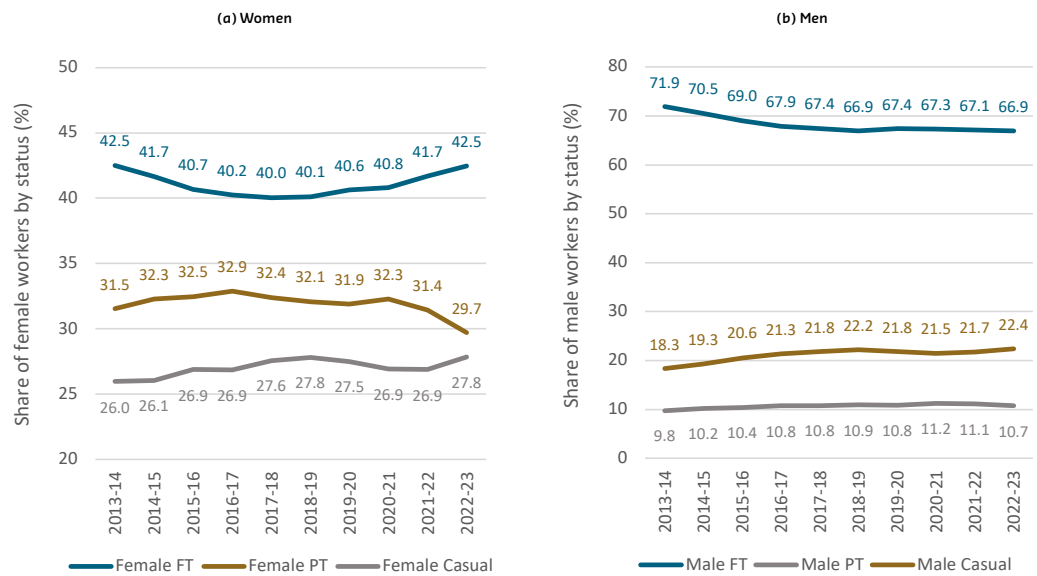
The overall share of women working part-time grew over the second half of the last decade, rising to 32.9 per cent of the overall female workforce by 2016-17 (Figure 1 Panel a).

However, the proportion of women working part-time has since dropped markedly, especially in the past three years, with a significant transition towards roles formally categorised as full-time. The share of women in part-time roles has dropped 3.2 percentage points to 29.7 per cent between 2016-17 and 2022-23, with the share of women in full-time jobs increasing from 40.2 per cent to 42.5 per cent over the same period.

The share of men working in full-time roles has gradually declined in Australia over the past decade, from 71.9 per cent in 2013-14 to 66.9 per cent in 2022-23 (Figure 1 Panel b). And the predominant transition for men is towards casual roles, with more than one fifth (22.4 per cent) of men employed on casual contracts in 2022-23.

After years of relative stability in the share of women working part-time, the combined shifts in labour force status over the “COVID-19 years” may lead us to speculate that the dramatic changes to work associated with the pandemic-enforced global working from home experiment has contributed to women making different choices about how they work.

FIGURE 1
Shares of employees by labour force status and gender: 2014 to 2023



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2013-14 to 2022-23.

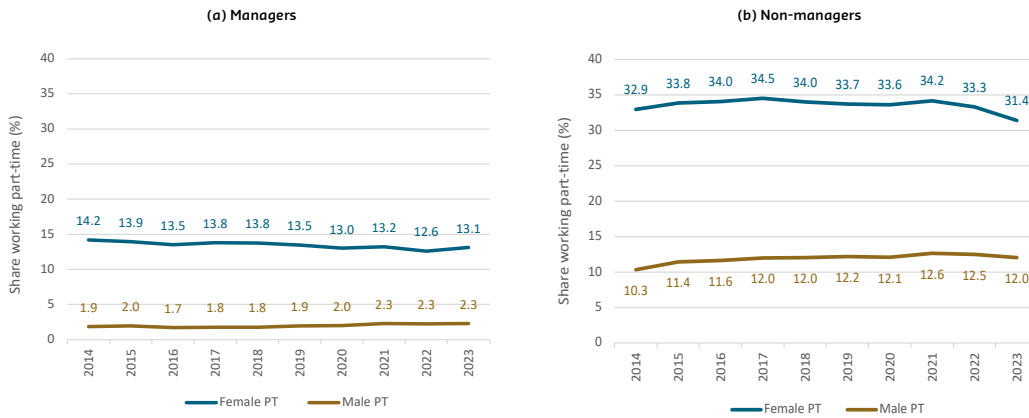


The prevalence of part-time work in Australian workplaces differs substantially by managerial status and gender. Around 13 per cent of female managers work part-time, with the part-time share having fallen by about 1 percentage point over the past decade (Figure 2 Panel a). This contrasts with the labour force status of male managers, almost all of whom work full-time.

The data suggest some change in the labour market status of women in non-managerial roles over the post-pandemic period. The share of female non-managers who work part-time has declined by 2.8 percentage points from 34.2 per cent in 2020-21 to 31.4 per cent in 2022-23 (Figure 2 Panel b).



FIGURE 2
Share of female and male part-time employees, by managerial status: 2014 to 2023



Around 13% of female managers work part-time, while almost all male managers work full-time.

Notes: Charts show the shares of part-time and full-time managers/non-managers positions from 2013-14 to 2022-23.
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2013-14 to 2022-23.





Women dominate the managerial workforce in health care and social assistance (71% of all managers) and in education and training (55%).

As an indication of the different gender concentrations across industry sectors, Figure 3 breaks down the managerial and non-managerial workforces in each industry by gender and employment status (whether employed full-time, part-time or casually).

Just over 40 per cent of Australia's total managerial workforce are women (Figure 3 Panel a), but women dominate the managerial workforce in health care and social assistance (71 per cent of all managers) and in education and training (55 per cent).

At the other end of the spectrum, female managers make up no more than a quarter of the total managerial workforce in construction (17 per cent), mining (19 per cent), agriculture, forestry and fishing (19 per cent of all managers), and electricity, gas, water and waste services (25 per cent).

The majority of managers across all industry sectors are employed full-time (92 per cent of all managers), although around one in five female managers in the health care and social assistance sector work part-time (14 per cent of the sector's overall managerial workforce). Part-time female managers account

for 8 per cent of the total managerial workforce in professional, scientific and technical services, arts and recreation services, and in education and training.

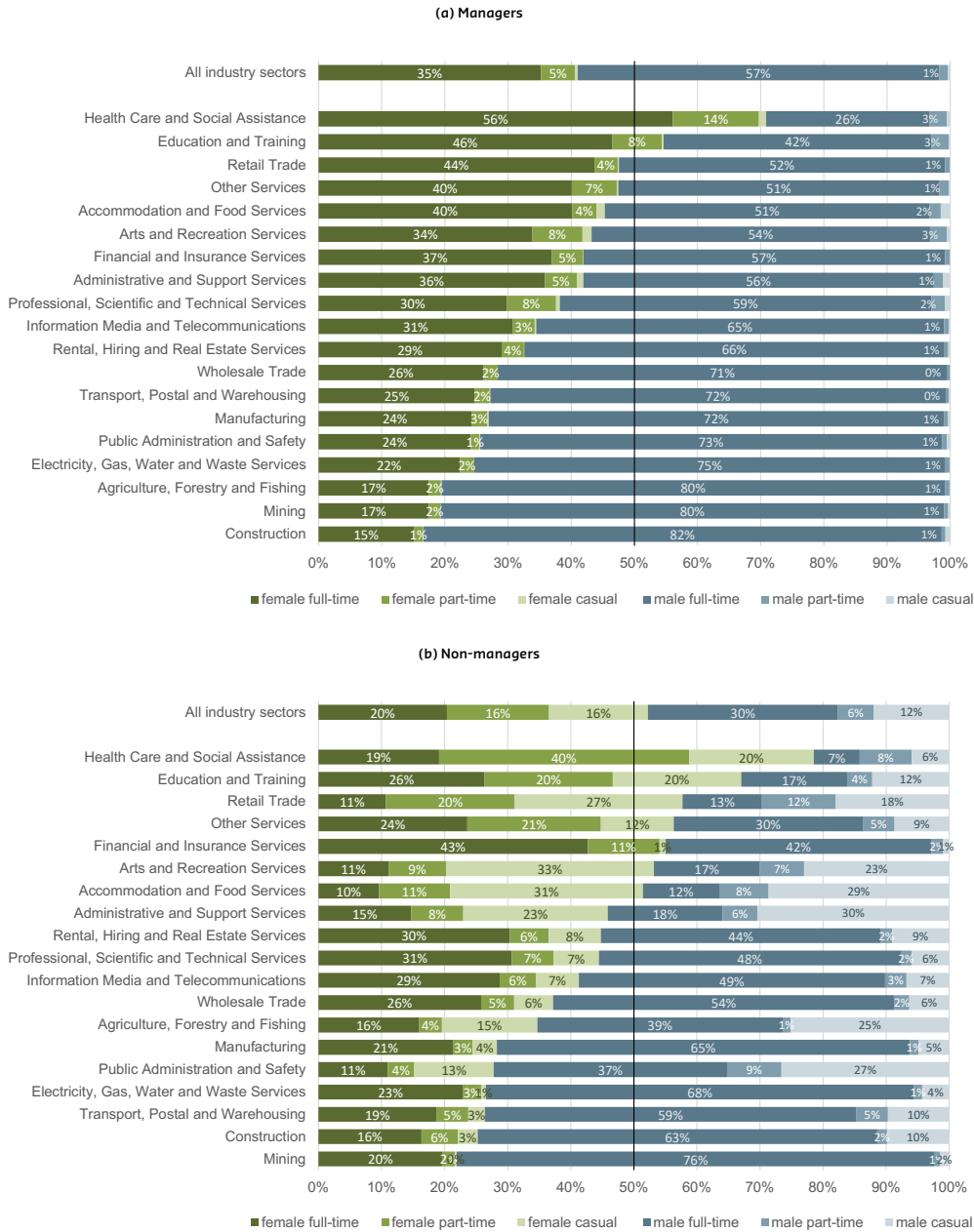
Part-time managers are rare in most male-dominated industry sectors. Full-time work dominates the mining sector at manager level, making up 97 per cent of the overall managerial workforce. The same is true for the construction, manufacturing and agriculture sectors, and in the male-dominated electricity, gas, water and waste and public administration and safety sectors.

Part-time and casual work is far more prevalent for non-managers in most industry sectors, with 22 per cent working part-time and 28 per cent working on casual contracts (Figure 3 Panel b).

Health care and social assistance sector has by far the greatest share of part-time employment (48 per cent of all workers) and part-time female employees (40 per cent of the sector's total non-managerial workforce) with women employed casually making up a further 20 per cent of all non-managerial positions.



FIGURE 3
Workforce distribution by labour force status, industry and gender: 2022-23



Notes: Industries are ordered according to the level of female workforce dominance, as measured by the size of the female workforce as a share of the overall workforce.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2022-2023.





The share of female part-time managers has declined over the past two years for the majority of industry sectors.

But how have the shares of workers in full-time, part-time and casual positions been changing over time in different industry sectors?

We examine recent trends over the past two years by evaluating the difference in workforce shares for companies by broad industry division between 2020-21 and 2022-23, for both the managerial and non-managerial workforce.

The share of female part-time managers has declined over the past two years for the majority of industry sectors (Table 1), particularly in the professional, scientific and technical services sector (down 3.6 percentage points) and in arts and recreation (down 2.5 percentage points). Most of the larger employing industries have seen part-time employment shares declining by between 1 and 2 percentage points over the past two years.

As exceptions to this rule, the shares of part-time female managers have risen over the past two years in some male-dominated sectors, most notably by 2.1 percentage points in construction and by 0.6 percentage points in mining. Part-time shares for female employees have also risen in more female-dominated sectors in retail trade (by 2.4 percentage points) and in health care and social assistance (by 1.3 percentage points). The mix of male employees has remained far more stable in the majority of industry sectors, other than in administrative and

support services where there has been a shift away from full-time employment towards casual contracts, potentially as a result of the casualisation of the contracting and labour hire workforce.

The shift away from part-time employment is even more evident when we look at the change in workforce composition by labour force status among the non-managerial workforce.

All but three industry sectors are showing a reduction in the shares of female non-managers working part-time (Table 2), with some significant falls in part-time female employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing (down 6.2 percentage points), professional, scientific and technical services (down 8.8 percentage points) and finance and insurance services (down 4.2 percentage points).

There has been a strong shift from part-time employment towards casual contracts in the public administration and safety sector, especially among women. The share of female non-managers in this sector has fallen by nearly 21 percentage points over the past two years, with the share of women employed casually rising by 26.8 percentage points over the same period. The same is true for male non-managers to a slightly lower degree, with part-time employment falling by 10.5 percentage points and casual employment increasing by 15.5 percentage points.



TABLE 1

Change in shares of full-time, part-time and casual workers: managers, 2020-21 to 2022-23

	Change in share of workers by labour market status: 2020-21 to 2022-23								
	Women			Men					
	full-time	part-time	casual	full-time	part-time	casual	full-time	part-time	casual
	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt
Public Administration and Safety	-0.6	-0.1	+0.7	+0.0	-0.0	+0.0	-0.6	-0.1	+0.7
Wholesale Trade	+1.1	-1.3	+0.2	-0.2	+0.0	+0.0	+1.1	-1.3	+0.2
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	+1.8	-1.7	-0.0	-1.1	+0.2	+0.9	+1.8	-1.7	-0.0
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	+1.7	-1.8	+0.1	-0.7	+0.5	+0.3	+1.7	-1.8	+0.1
Manufacturing	+1.7	-1.1	-0.6	+0.3	-0.0	-0.2	+1.7	-1.1	-0.6
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	+0.5	-1.7	+1.2	-0.1	-0.3	+0.5	+0.5	-1.7	+1.2
Information Media and Telecommunications	+2.1	-1.6	-0.5	+0.2	-0.1	-0.1	+2.1	-1.6	-0.5
Accommodation and Food Services	-1.4	+0.9	+0.5	-0.2	+0.4	-0.2	-1.4	+0.9	+0.5
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	+1.3	-1.4	+0.2	+0.2	-0.0	-0.1	+1.3	-1.4	+0.2
Mining	-0.4	+0.6	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1	+0.4	-0.4	+0.6	-0.1
Retail Trade	-2.5	+2.4	+0.1	-0.6	+0.5	+0.0	-2.5	+2.4	+0.1
Financial and Insurance Services	+1.4	-1.4	-0.0	+0.0	-0.0	-0.0	+1.4	-1.4	-0.0
Construction	-2.1	+2.1	+0.0	-0.1	+0.1	+0.0	-2.1	+2.1	+0.0
Administrative and Support Services	-4.0	+0.0	+3.9	-5.5	-0.3	+5.7	-4.0	+0.0	+3.9
Education and Training	+0.2	-0.3	+0.1	-0.6	+0.6	+0.0	+0.2	-0.3	+0.1
Other Services	+0.3	-0.2	-0.1	-0.7	+0.7	+0.0	+0.3	-0.2	-0.1
Arts and Recreation Services	+2.1	-2.5	+0.4	-1.4	-0.0	+1.4	+2.1	-2.5	+0.4
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	+3.6	-3.6	-0.0	+0.7	-0.9	+0.2	+3.6	-3.6	-0.0
Health Care and Social Assistance	-2.0	+1.3	+0.6	+0.1	-0.6	+0.5	-2.0	+1.3	+0.6
Total	-0.2	-0.1	+0.3	-0.3	+0.0	+0.3	-0.2	-0.1	+0.3

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2020-21 and 2022-23.

TABLE 2

Change in shares of full-time, part-time and casual workers: non-managers, 2020-21 to 2022-23

	Change in share of workers by labour market status: 2020-21 to 2022-23								
	Women			Men					
	full-time	part-time	casual	full-time	part-time	casual	full-time	part-time	casual
	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt
Mining	+0.9	-0.9	+0.0	-0.8	-0.0	+0.9	+0.9	-0.9	+0.0
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	-6.6	-6.2	+12.8	-8.0	-1.1	+9.1	-6.6	-6.2	+12.8
Manufacturing	+3.9	-3.1	-0.8	+1.1	-0.1	-1.0	+3.9	-3.1	-0.8
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	+3.3	-3.7	+0.4	+0.0	+0.5	-0.6	+3.3	-3.7	+0.4
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	-4.7	+0.4	+4.3	-0.3	+0.9	-0.6	-4.7	+0.4	+4.3
Wholesale Trade	+4.3	-4.1	-0.2	+0.1	-1.2	+1.1	+4.3	-4.1	-0.2
Information Media and Telecommunications	+1.4	-0.0	-1.4	-0.5	+1.4	-0.9	+1.4	-0.0	-1.4
Public Administration and Safety	-5.9	-20.9	+26.8	-5.0	-10.5	+15.5	-5.9	-20.9	+26.8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	+10.4	-8.8	-1.6	+2.5	-1.3	-1.2	+10.4	-8.8	-1.6
Arts and Recreation Services	-1.6	-3.3	+4.8	-4.2	-2.5	+6.7	-1.6	-3.3	+4.8
Administrative and Support Services	+1.8	+0.1	-1.9	-1.1	+0.9	+0.2	+1.8	+0.1	-1.9
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	-0.2	-1.7	+1.9	-1.5	-0.5	+2.1	-0.2	-1.7	+1.9
Financial and Insurance Services	+4.4	-4.2	-0.3	-0.1	-0.6	+0.7	+4.4	-4.2	-0.3
Accommodation and Food Services	+1.7	-2.8	+1.1	+1.7	-1.1	-0.6	+1.7	-2.8	+1.1
Construction	+6.4	-3.7	-2.7	+0.6	+0.1	-0.6	+6.4	-3.7	-2.7
Education and Training	-0.5	+1.0	-0.5	-1.2	+0.6	+2.1	-0.5	+1.0	-0.5
Retail Trade	+0.6	-3.4	+2.9	+0.2	-2.8	+2.6	+0.6	-3.4	+2.9
Other Services	+0.8	-4.0	+3.2	-4.7	-0.1	+4.8	+0.8	-4.0	+3.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	+1.5	-3.3	+1.8	-0.8	-1.4	+2.1	+1.5	-3.3	+1.8
Total	+1.7	-2.8	+1.1	-0.3	-0.6	+0.9	+1.7	-2.8	+1.1

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2020-21 and 2022-23.



HOW DOES THE INCIDENCE OF PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA COMPARE TO OTHER COUNTRIES?

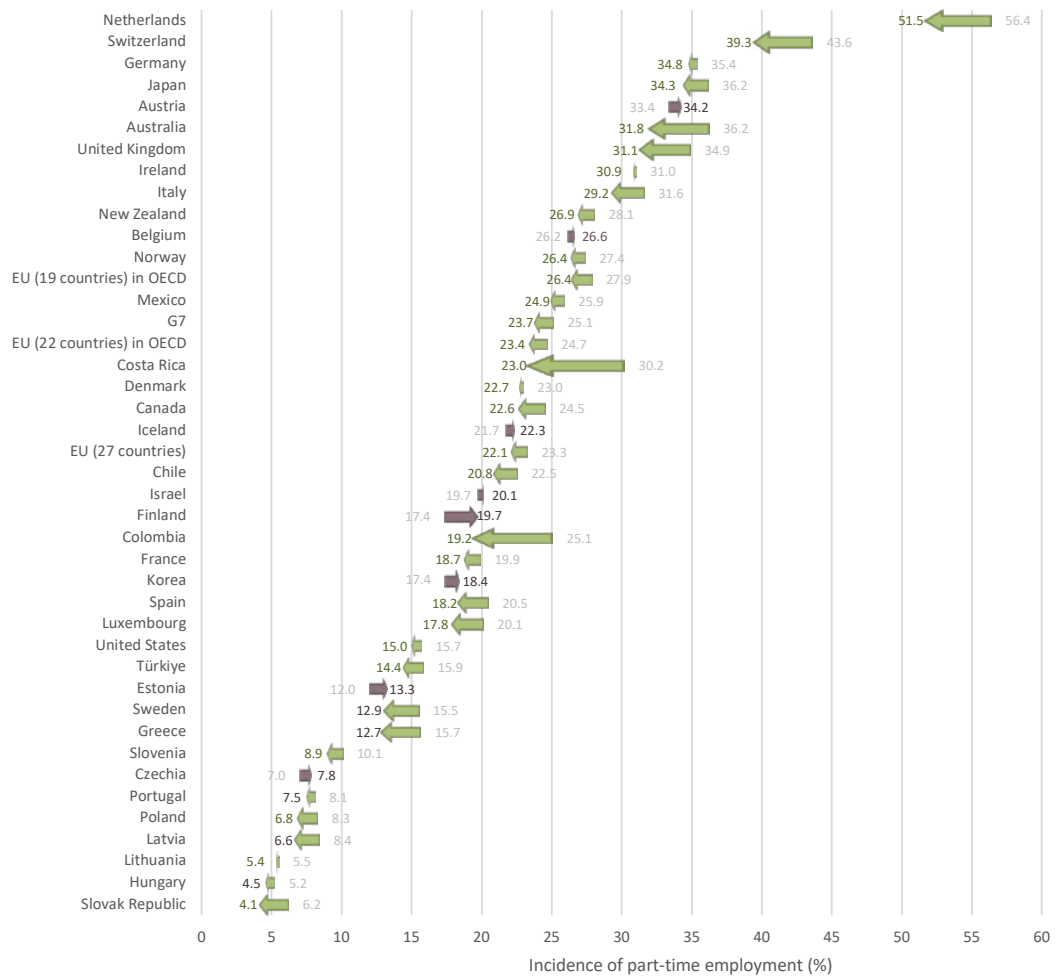


Australia has one of the highest shares of part-time employment across OECD countries, with part-time workers accounting for around 22 per cent of total employment (including casuals) in 2023.¹ According

to OECD data, the incidence of part-time work among women is higher, at 31.8 per cent in 2023 (Figure 4), with women making up more than three quarters of all part-time employees.

FIGURE 4
Changes in part-time employment shares by OECD country: women, 2019 to 2023

Australia has one of the highest shares of part-time employment across OECD countries.



Notes: Countries are arranged in descending order of the 2023 part-time employment shares for female workers. Comparisons are based on the harmonised OECD definition of less than 30 hours per week for part-time employment.

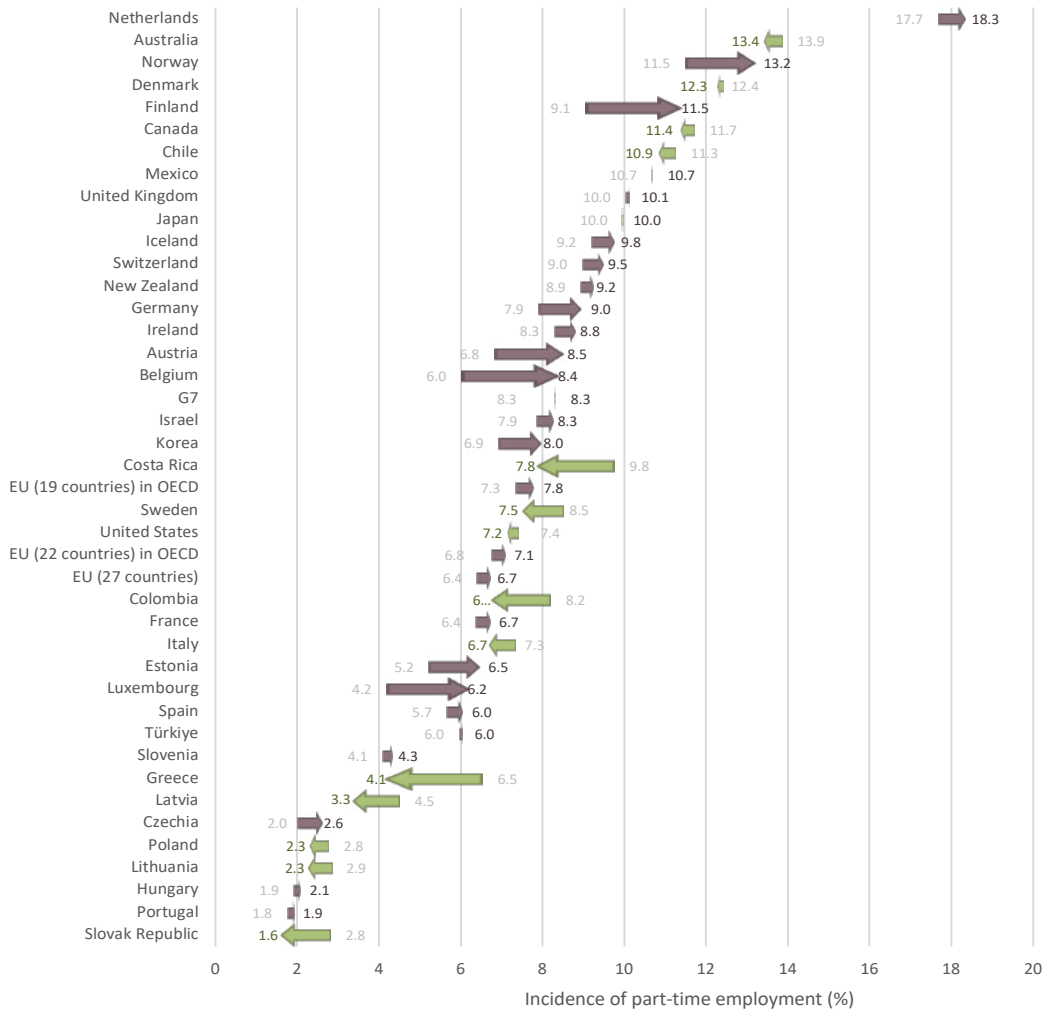
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from OECD Data Explorer (Full-time and part-time employment) 2019 and 2023.

¹ Compared to Australia's definition, the harmonised OECD benchmark uses a lower cut-off of 30 hours or more per week for full-time employment (based on usual/normal hours) and less than 30 hours per week for part-time employment.

But the same data show that the share of Australian women who work part-time has declined by 4.5 percentage points between 2019 and 2023 – a pattern mirrored in the majority of OECD countries. More than half of female employees in the Netherlands (51.5 per cent) are engaged in part-time roles, followed by Switzerland where four in ten women (39.3 per cent) work part-time. But for both countries, and many more across the OECD, the incidence of part-time employment has been falling.

The proportion of Australian men in part-time employment is also higher than most other OECD countries at 13.4 per cent in 2023 (Figure 5), with the share having declined by 0.5 percentage points since 2019. This goes against the trend for most other OECD countries, where we have seen rising shares of part-time employment for men between 2019 and 2023. The Netherlands again lead the way in rates of part-time employment, with 18.3 per cent of male workers occupying part-time roles.

FIGURE 5
Changes in part-time employment shares by OECD country: men, 2019 to 2023



Notes: Countries are arranged in descending order of the 2023 part-time employment shares for male workers. Comparisons are based on the harmonised OECD definition of less than 30 hours per week for part-time employment.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from OECD Data Explorer (Full-time and part-time employment) 2019 and 2023.

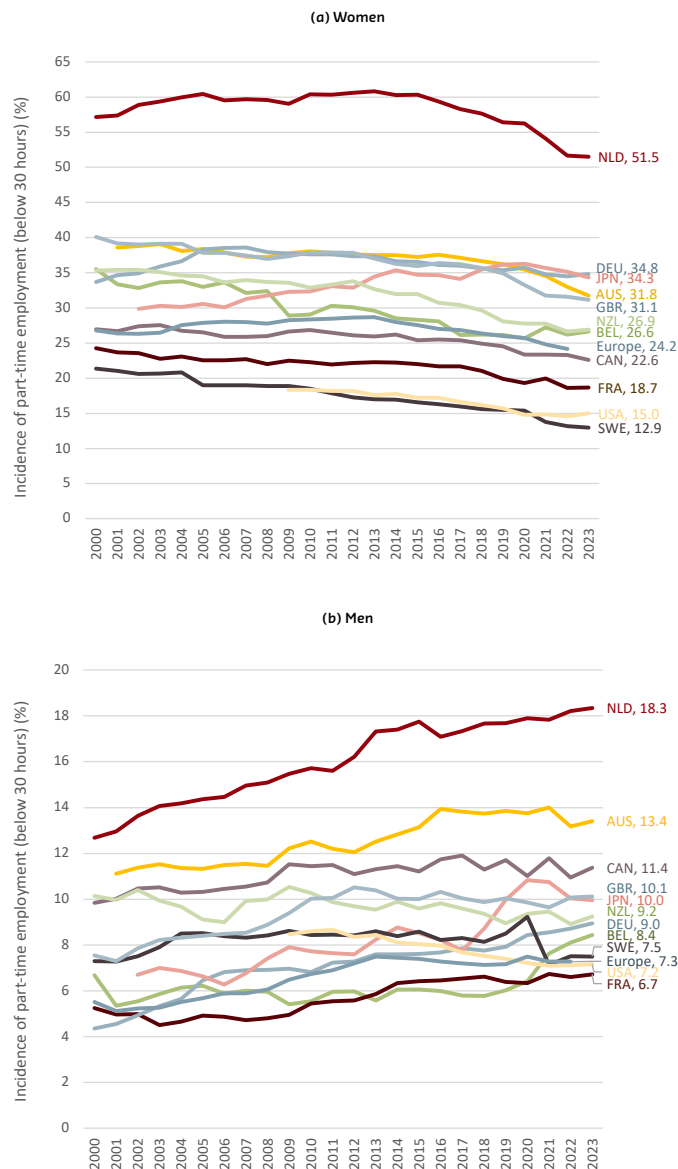


There has been a general pattern of decline in part-time employment for women in most OECD countries, contrasting with an increase in male part-time employment.

Looking over a longer time period from 2000 to 2023, we find there to be a general pattern of decline in part-time employment shares for women in most OECD countries (Figure 6 Panel a) contrasting with an increase in male part-time employment (Figure

6 Panel b). The notable exception to this rule is Japan, where the incidence of female part-time employment has risen from 29.9 per cent in 2000 to 34.3 per cent in 2023.

FIGURE 6
Incidence of part-time employment for selected OECD countries: by gender, 2000 to 2023



Notes: All measures of part-time work incidence over time are based on the harmonised OECD definition of less than 30 hours per week for part-time employment.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from OECD Data Explorer (Full-time and part-time employment) 2000 to 2023.

THE COMPOSITION OF AUSTRALIA'S PART-TIME WORKFORCE

Women make up just over half of the workforce among private sector organisations that report to WGEA, with the share gradually rising over the past decade.

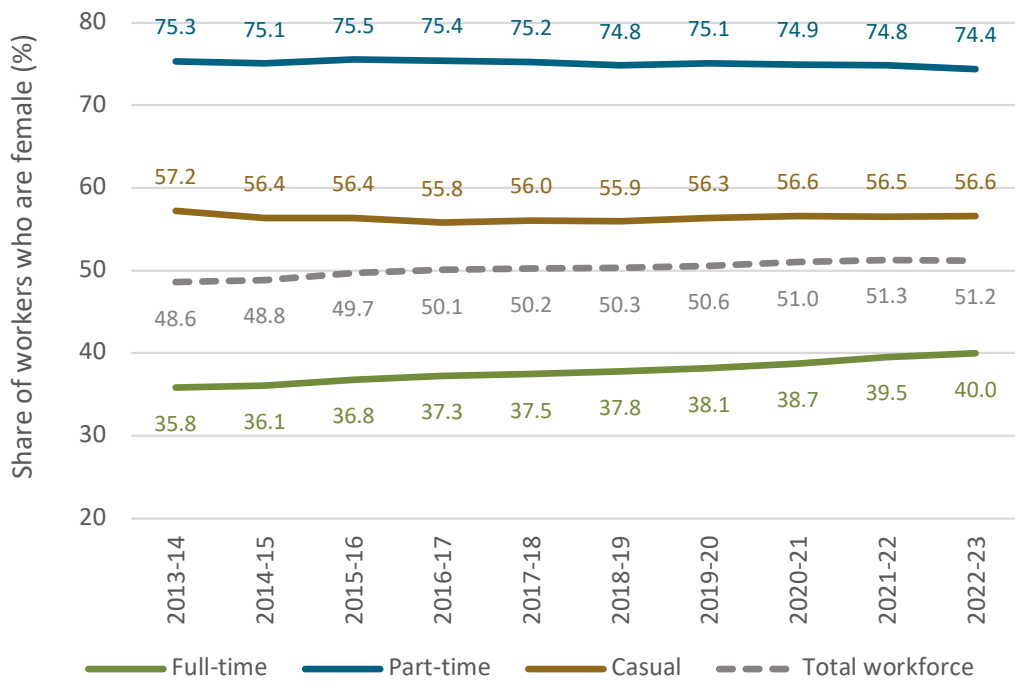
In 2022-23, 51.2 per cent of employees among reporting organisations were women – up from 48.6 per cent in 2013-14 (Figure 7).

The highest representation of women is among the part-time workforce. Just under three quarters of

part-time workers (74.4 per cent) are women, with the share remaining more or less at the same level over the past ten years.

There has been an uplift in the proportion of full-time workers who are women. Four in ten full-time employees were women in 2022-23, up from 35.8 per cent since 2013-14. The gender balance of casual workers has remained more or less the same over the past decade, and the casual workforce was 56.6 per cent women in 2022-23.

FIGURE 7
Representation of women in workforce: by labour force status, 2013-14 to 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2013-14 to 2022-23.



Female-dominated companies are far more likely to employ people part-time, with the share rising for larger companies.

And how does the share of part-time employees vary according to the gender composition of the overall workforce, and by the size of the company?

We categorise organisations as female-dominated if the overall workforce comprises at least 60 per cent female employees, and male-dominated if at least 60 per cent of the workforce is made up of male workers.

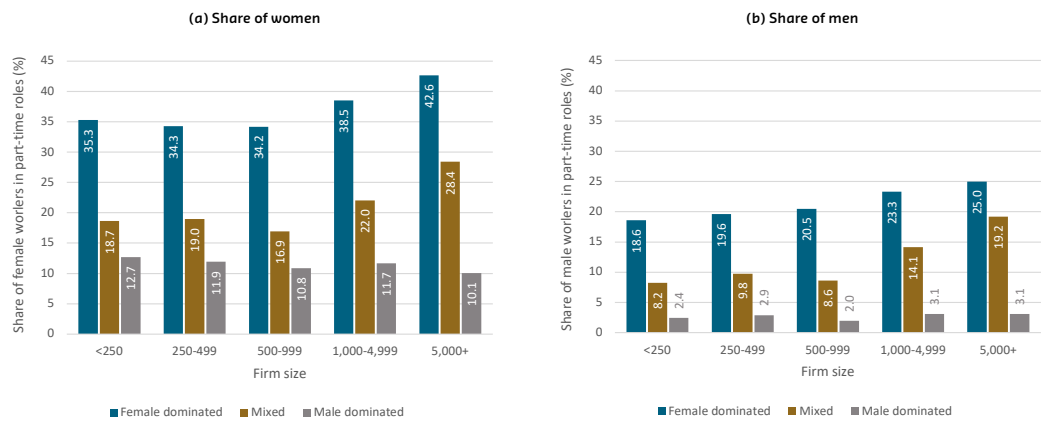
Female-dominated companies are far more likely to employ people part-time, with this share higher for larger companies. Just over 35 per cent of women in companies with fewer than 250 employees work

part-time, with the proportion rising to 42.6 per cent among companies with 5,000 or more employees (Figure 8 Panel a).

For male-dominated companies, fewer women are employed part-time. One in eight women are employed part-time in organisations with fewer than 250 workers, down to 10 per cent for the largest organisations.

Up to one quarter of men are in part-time jobs in the largest female-dominated companies, compared to only 3 per cent of men working part-time where the organisation is male-dominated (Figure 8 Panel b).

FIGURE 8
Shares of employees in part-time roles by firm size and gender dominance: 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2013-14 to 2022-23.

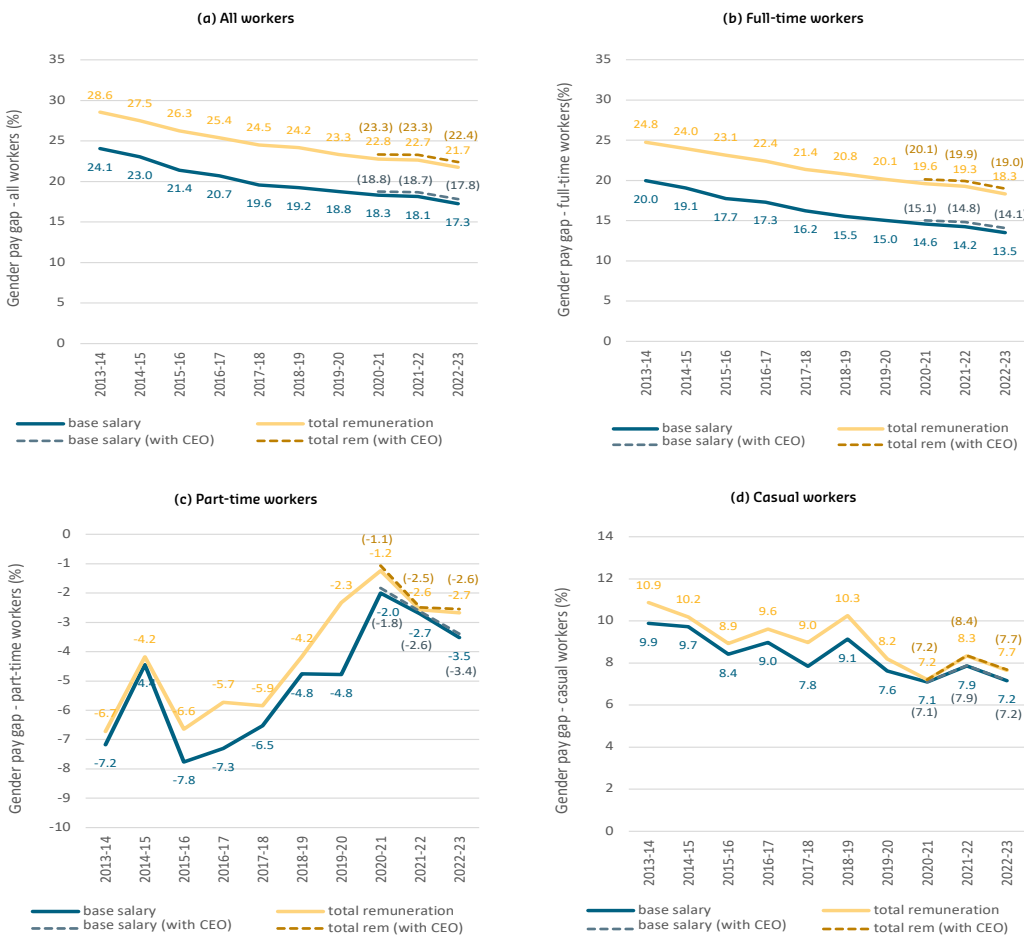
THE RELATIVE PAY OF PART-TIME WORKERS

Because part-time employment entails fewer working hours each week, it necessarily reduces the average salaries paid to part-time employees compared to their full-time counterparts. But to what degree do gender pay gaps – the percentage difference in average salaries between women and men – endure for people working part-time.

The overall gender pay gap has declined systematically - albeit slowly - over the past decade. Looking across the full-time workforce, the gender pay gap in average total remuneration has declined from 24.8 per cent in 2013-14 to 18.3 per cent by 2022-23 (Figure 9 Panel b).²



FIGURE 9
Gender pay gaps by labour force status: 2013-14 to 2022-23



The part-time gender pay gap in total remuneration sits at 2.7% in favour of women.

Notes: The main series of gender pay gaps exclude voluntarily reported pay data for CEOs and Head of Businesses. Labels in parentheses from 2020-21 report gender pay gap calculations that include voluntary data on CEO/Head of Business remuneration.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2013-14 to 2022-23.

² WGEA's published gender pay gap calculations data exclude voluntarily reported remuneration data, including for CEOs, Heads of Business, and Casual Managers, and employees who were furloughed, without pay. Following legislative changes in 2023, employers are required to report remuneration for these employees from 2023-24 and, from this point, WGEA will include it in the gender pay gap calculation. The dataset used for this report also includes a small number of employers that reported after WGEA's official data cut-off deadline.





The part-time total remuneration gender pay gap in the health care and social assistance sector rose to 11.5% in 2020-21 and remains at just under 9% in 2022-23.

For base salaries, the gender pay gap is a little smaller at 14.1 per cent in 2022-23 but has followed more or less the same trajectory over the past decade.

Remuneration for full-time employment (Figure 9 Panel b) is primarily responsible for the overall gender pay gap in Australia, whereas the part-time gender pay gap (Figure 9 Panel c) has historically been in favour of women, whether or not one looks at base salary or total remuneration.

There has been some narrowing of the part-time gender pay gap between 2015-16 and 2020-21, but this trend has been reversing in the last two years of data from 2021-22 and 2022-23. According to the latest data reported to WGEA, the part-time gender pay gap in total remuneration sits at 2.7 per cent in favour of women.

The gender pay gap for casual employees (Figure 9 Panel d) has also been declining gradually, from 10.9 per cent in terms of total remuneration in 2013-14 down to 7.7 per cent in 2022-23.

Part-time gender pay gaps for selected industries

The gender pay gaps for part-time women and men across industries (Figure 10) reveal some significant differences in relative patterns of remuneration.

In the construction industry (Figure 10 Panel a), the gender pay gap for part time employees reversed from 30 per cent in favour of men in 2014-15 to 15 per cent in favour of women in 2019-20.³ The pattern

has reversed over the last three years, however, to a part-time gender pay gap in favour of men of just under 10 per cent in total remuneration by 2022-23.

The mining sector has a part-time gender pay gap in 2022-23 in favour of men of just over 13 per cent in total remuneration and 6.5 per cent in base salary (Figure 10 Panel b).

In public administration and safety, the part-time gender pay gap is neutral, having risen from a pay gap of up to 16 per cent in favour of women in the middle of the last decade to 4.7 per cent in 2022-23 (Figure 10 Panel c).

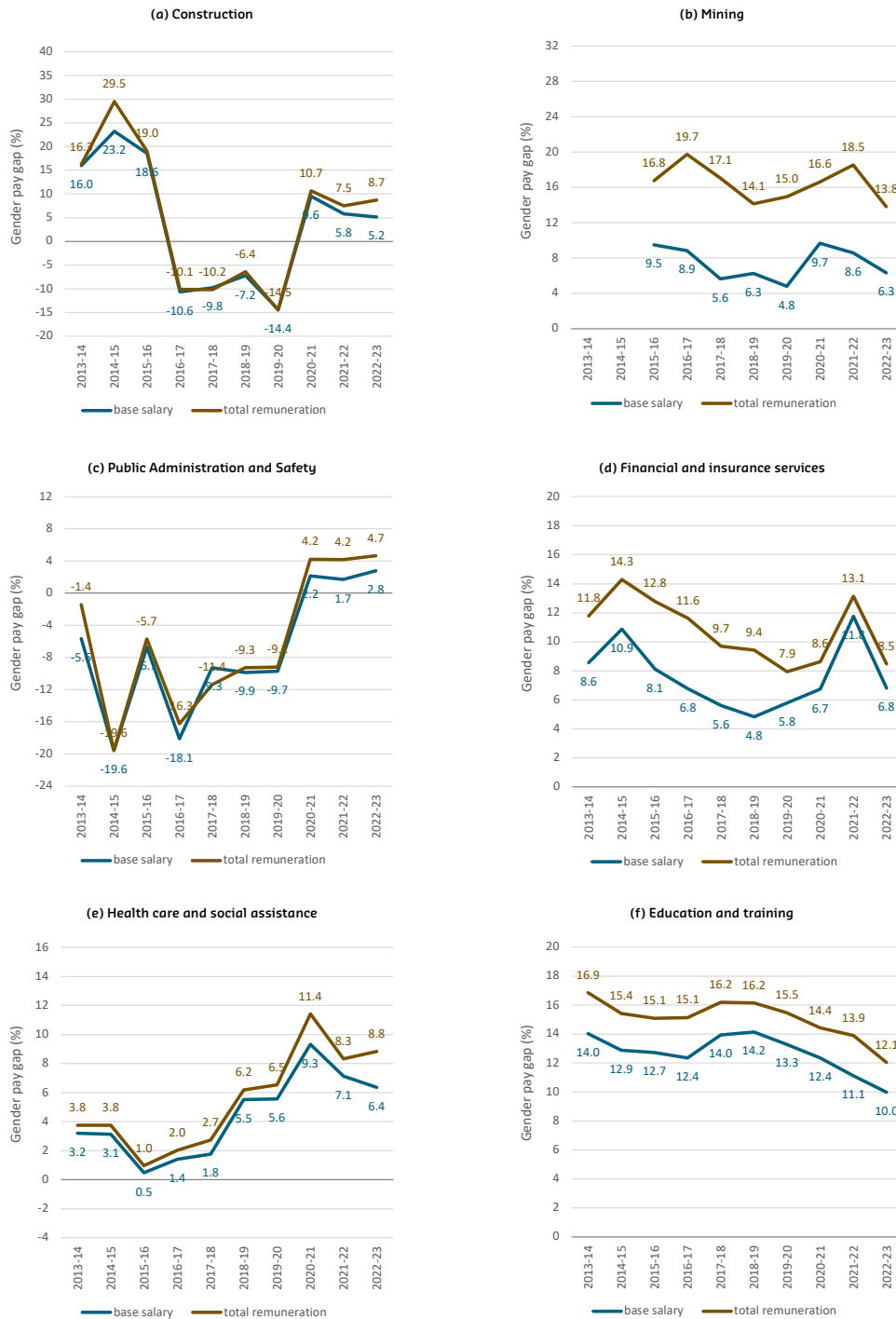
For the financial and insurance services sector, the part-time gender pay gap rose to above 10 per cent in 2021-22, but declined in the last year to below 7 per cent in base salary and to just over 8 per cent in total remuneration (Figure 10 Panel d).

In the largest female-dominated sector, health care and social assistance, the part-time gender pay gap had also been rising up to 11.5 per cent in total remuneration at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21. This rising trend has reversed from 2021-22 onwards, with the health sector's part-time pay gap falling to just under 9 per cent by 2022-23 (Figure 10 Panel e).

In the education and training sector, the part-time gender pay gap has been falling but remains strongly in favour of men. In 2022-23, the sector had part-time gender pay gaps of 10 per cent in base salary and 12 per cent in total remuneration (Figure 10 Panel f).

³ The 2019-20 WGEA Gender Equality data is essentially pre-pandemic covering 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

FIGURE 10
Gender pay gaps in part-time earnings: selected industries, 2013-14 to 2022-23



Notes: Gender pay gap exclude voluntarily reported pay data for CEOs and Head of Businesses.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2013-14 to 2022-23.





The total remuneration gender pay gap averages 35.5% for managers in female-dominated organisations, more than twice the pay gap for managers in male-dominated organisations.

Businesses should examine their processes for appointment, promotion, pay setting and access to discretionary pay among their part-time workforce to ensure equity and transparency.

To explore further the findings from our earlier analysis, we aggregate and compare the part-time gender pay gaps in female-dominated, male-dominated and mixed-gender employers.

This reveals a distinct separation in part-time gender pay gaps according to the gender composition of the workforce. The total remuneration gender pay gap averages 35.5 per cent for managers in female-dominated organisations (Figure 11 Panel a), more than twice the corresponding pay gap for managers in male-dominated organisations. The gender pay gap in total remuneration for non-managers (Figure 11 Panel b) is 7.8 per cent in favour of men in female-dominated employers, compared to pay gaps of 8.3 per cent in favour of women workers in male-dominated employers.

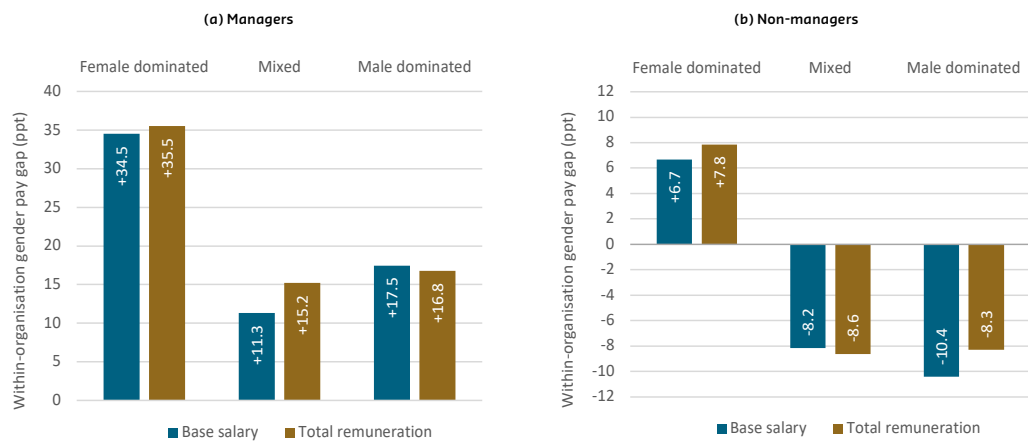
These paradoxical results are reminiscent of the concept of a ‘male pedestal’ effect highlighted in earlier *Gender Equity Insights* reports. This concept observes what appears to be a phenomenon whereby men appear to be awarded larger salaries in female-dominated industries.

What drives this consistent empirical result is perplexing, especially when there is definitionally a larger pipeline of women in female-dominated industries. And it’s interesting that no corresponding scenario exists whereby women are paid more than their male counterparts in male-dominated organisations.


It may be indicative of some sort of selection effect whereby female and male employees may harbour different motivations for part-time work, or where women are shifting at a greater rate towards full-time flexible roles. Or it could be that unconscious biases remain in selection, promotion or remuneration processes.

Whatever the reasons for the contrasting pay gaps in part-time earnings, these findings invite businesses to examine carefully their processes for appointment, promotion, pay setting and access to discretionary pay among their part-time workforce to ensure equity and transparency.

FIGURE 11
Gender pay gaps in part-time earnings: by gender workforce dominance, 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2022-2023.



WHY DO PEOPLE WORK PART-TIME?

WHY DO PEOPLE WORK PART-TIME?

Key Insights

- A rising share of women (29 per cent) and men (31 per cent) are choosing part-time work out of preference, with fewer citing care of children as the main reason for doing so.
- The majority of those who move from part-time to full-time work are driven by preference, rather than forced by financial need.
- The incidence of part-time employment among women rises to 35 per cent from the late 20s to mid 30s, and again from age 55, with the greatest increases in full-time work over the past three years taking place among women aged between 35 and 55.
- Flexible work entitlements have risen most rapidly for full-time workers and for managers, with over 65 per cent of full-time managers now able to access flexible start and end times.
- A part-time promotion cliff is apparent for non-managers, where promotion rates for women and men in part-time employment are half of their full-time counterparts.
- Job-related stress has been increasing for both part-time and full-time employees, but the pace of increase in work stress for women in part-time work has accelerated most rapidly.

In considering part-time employment and the future of work, and the extent to which part-time work arrangements meet people's preferences, accommodate their constraints and meet their financial needs, it is helpful to learn more about the reasons for people being in part-time work. This can help to inform employer support and targeted actions for part-time employees and flexible work options more broadly.

What might part-time work look like in light of emerging work practices and employee preferences that attach increased value to flexibility and autonomy? And how can employers support part-time employees to ensure a fulfilling experience at work?



REASONS FOR CHOOSING PART-TIME WORK

To learn more about the factors that contribute to women and men working part-time, we take advantage of information contained in the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey. The HILDA survey has been collected for over 20 years and includes a specific question on the main reasons why people work part-time. This allows us not only to compare the reasons that women and men work part-time, but also how those reasons have changed over the past two decades.

In 2001, one third of part-time women cited the care of their children as the main reason for choosing part-time employment (Figure 12 Panel a). One quarter of women preferred part-time work over full-time or casual employment, and just over 20 per cent chose part-time in order to combine work with education.

But what's revealing is the extent to which the care of children has declined as the main reason for women undertaking part-time work, and the increase in the share of part-time women who prefer part-time work, especially in the post-pandemic years.

Just under 25 per cent of women cite caring for children as the main reason for choosing part-time

employment in 2022, down from over 34 per cent in 2001 (Figure 12 Panel a). At the same time, a rising share of women prefer part-time work – around 29 per cent in 2022, according to the HILDA data. Around one in five women choose part-time work to combine work with education, and 12 per cent because part-time work is the only option available to them to continue in their job.

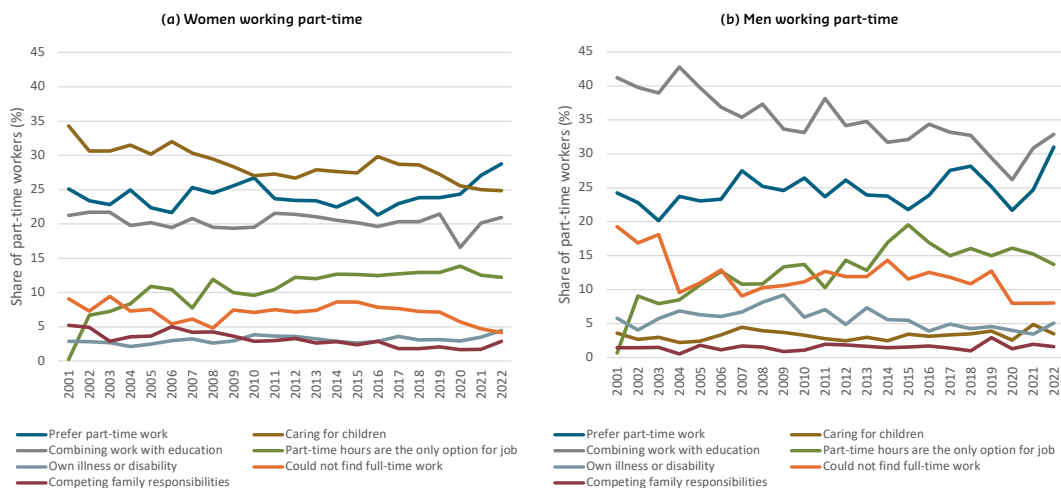
Caring for children features very low among the reasons for men choosing part time employment. Combining work with education is the main reason for men to choose part-time employment. The share progressively declined from 40 per cent in 2001 to around 28 per cent up to the onset of the pandemic, since which time it increased again (Figure 12 Panel b). The share of men citing a preference for part-time work has also increased to above 30 per cent, with 15 per cent having to work part-time as the only option for their preferred job.

One potential explanation for the lower shares of employees working part-time could relate to financial need, with rising costs of living and housing costs forcing more people into full-time work to gain access to higher earnings.



A rising share of women (29% in 2022) are choosing part-time work out of preference, with fewer citing care of children as the main reason for doing so.

FIGURE 12
Main reason for working part-time, by gender: 2001 to 2022



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations based on the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey waves 1 to 22.





The evidence provides a compelling justification for employers to broaden access to part-time employment and other forms of flexible work.

As a test of this conjecture, Figure 13 compares hours preferences for full-time employees who were employed in part-time roles in the previous year, and part-time employees who were employed in full-time roles in the previous year.

Among those moving from part-time to full-time work (Figure 13 Panel a), the share who would prefer to work fewer hours fell from 28 per cent to 23 per cent between 2019 and 2022, and satisfaction with current (full-time) hours rose to 70 per cent.

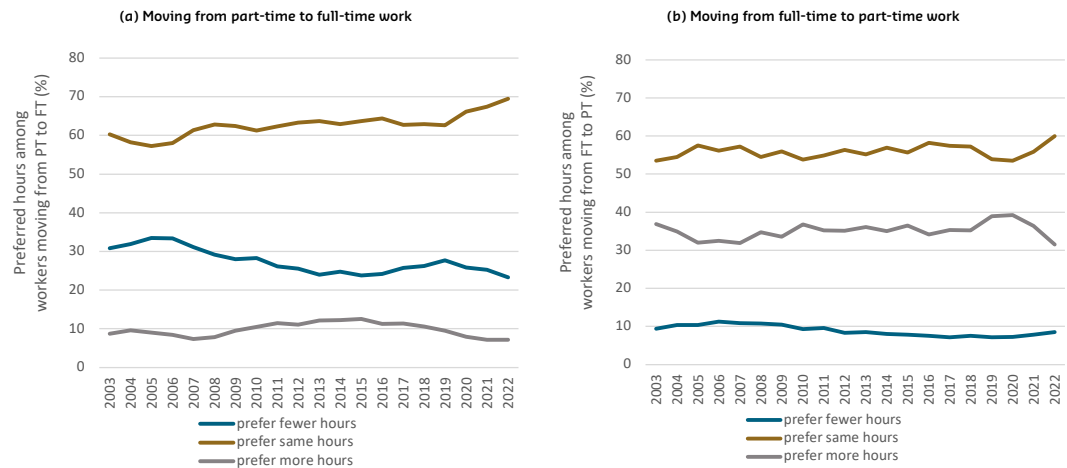
We also find that over 30 per cent of those who moved from full-time to part-time work would prefer to work more hours (Figure 13 Panel b). This share has declined by around 10 percentage points since 2020, but remains consistent with the insights drawn from the analysis in Figure 12.

These findings suggest that the shift towards full-time work is more driven by preference, rather than forced by financial need.

These findings raise some interesting questions about the value attached to part-time work arrangements between women and men, the apparent shift in people's preferences towards part-time employment in the post-pandemic world, and the potential erosion of orthodox gender norms.

The evidence provides a compelling justification for employers to broaden access to part-time employment and other forms of flexible work to ensure that other work arrangements are normalised within the organisational workplace culture. And as part of this normalisation, employers should also ensure that such arrangements do not carry career penalties in terms of perception of performance, pay and progression.

FIGURE 13
Preferred hours of work by change in labour market status: 2003 to 2022



Notes: Charts show the shares of employees that would prefer more or fewer hours, or the same hours, than their current role among (a) full-time employees who were employed in part-time roles in the previous year, and (b) part-time employees who were employed in full-time roles in the previous year.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations based on the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey waves 1 to 22.

HOW DOES PART-TIME WORK VARY BY AGE?

The 2022-23 WGEA Employer Census included information on the age of employees. This allows us to explore how the workforce composition between full-time, part-time, and casual employment changes by age for women and men.

There are some strong differences between women and men in the patterns of employment by age. Among women (Figure 14 Panel a), the share of full-time employees rises rapidly from age 20 and reaches just over 50 percent by the age of 30. But women’s representation in full-time work starts to decline through to the late 30s, with working women substituting into part-time work during the years

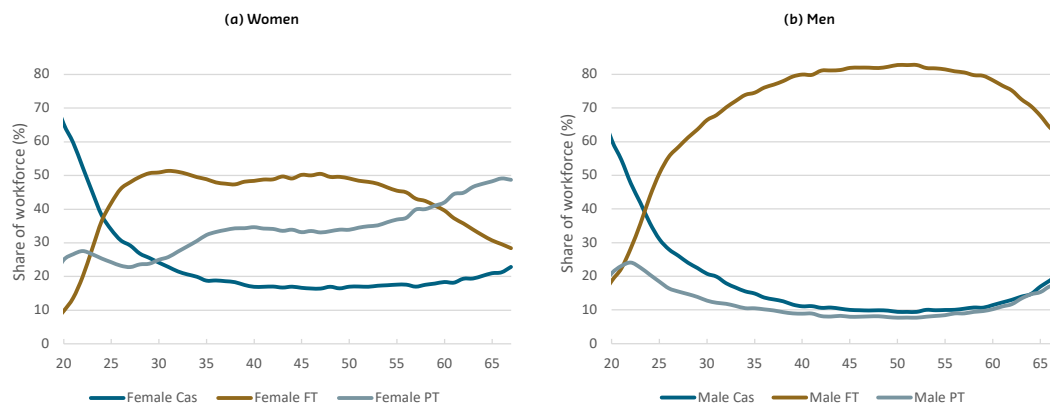
of family formation. Around one third of women are working part-time up to the age of 50, rising thereafter to 50 per cent at age 65. At the same time, the prevalence of full-time work among women drops from around 50 per cent at age 45 down to 30 per cent at age 65.

The employment pattern by age among men is substantially different. Full-time employment is the predominant labour force status for men from age 25 onwards, with more than three quarters of male employees working in full-time positions between ages of 35 and 60 (Figure 14 Panel b).



Around one third of women are working part-time up to the age of 50, rising to 50% at age 65.

FIGURE 14
Shares of workers by labour force status, gender and age: 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations from WGEA Gender Equality unit record data 2022-23.

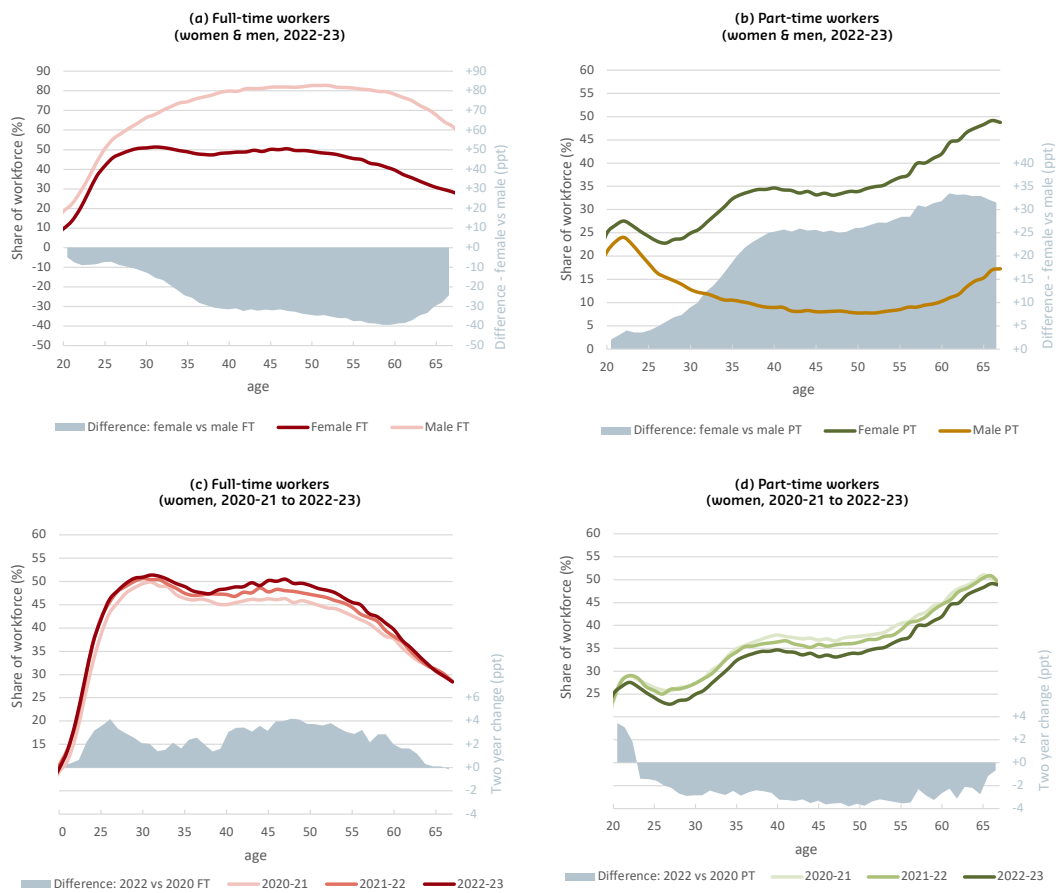


There has been a consistent decline between 2020-21 and 2022-23 in the share of part-time workers from age 25 through to 55.

A comparison of the age trajectories of full-time and part-time work between women and men (Figure 15) shows clear gender differences. The gender gap in full-time employment (expressed as the difference in shares of female and male employees in full-time jobs) exceeds 30 percentage points for all ages 35

and over. The differences in patterns of part-time work between female and male employees are especially pronounced between ages 30 and 45, with rising shares of part-time employment for all genders from ages 55 and upwards.

FIGURE 15
Shares of workers by labour force status, gender and age: 2020-21 to 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality unit record data 2022-23.

The 2022-23 reporting period is the third year that employee-level information on the age of workers has been collected, and it is instructive to compare the labour force status by age over those three years. The comparison reveals a reasonably consistent decline between 2020-21 and 2022-23 in the share of part-time workers from age 25 through to 55. This contrasts with an uplift in the shares of women aged between 35 and 55 who work full-time, and suggests that there has been something of a structural shift towards full-time employment and away from part-time work for many working women. The same isn't true for men, where patterns of work between full-time, part-time, and casual employment has remained more or less constant over the same three year period.

The shares of full-time, part-time, and casual employment among the managerial workforce differ substantially from non-managerial employees (Figure 16). Full-time work is the dominant labour force status for both female and male managers, with at least 80 per cent of managers across all genders working full-time for more or less the entirety of their working lives.

However, there are still some evident gender differences.

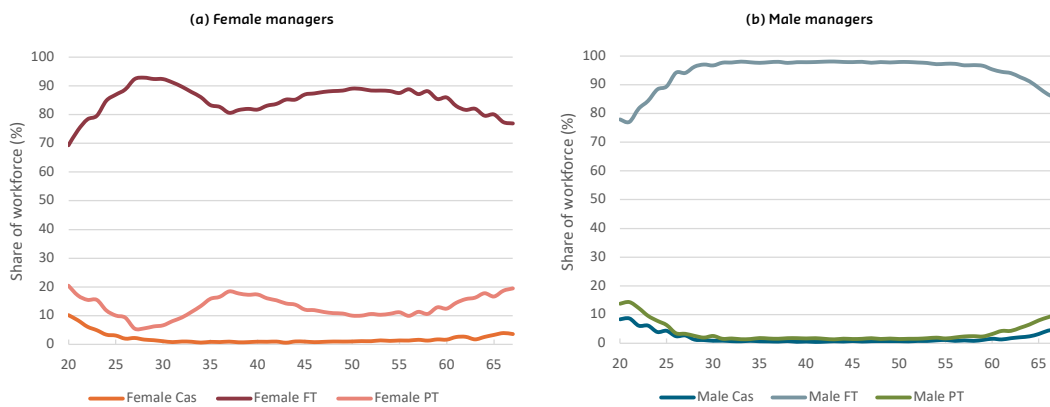
While almost all male managers work full-time after the age of 25, we see a steady decline in the share of female managers working full-time from 90 per cent at age 27 down to 80 per cent by the age of 37, with the balance of 20 per cent working in part-time positions.



At least 80% of managers across all genders work full-time for more or less the entirety of their working lives.

FIGURE 16

Shares of managers by labour force status, gender and age: 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality unit record data 2022-23.

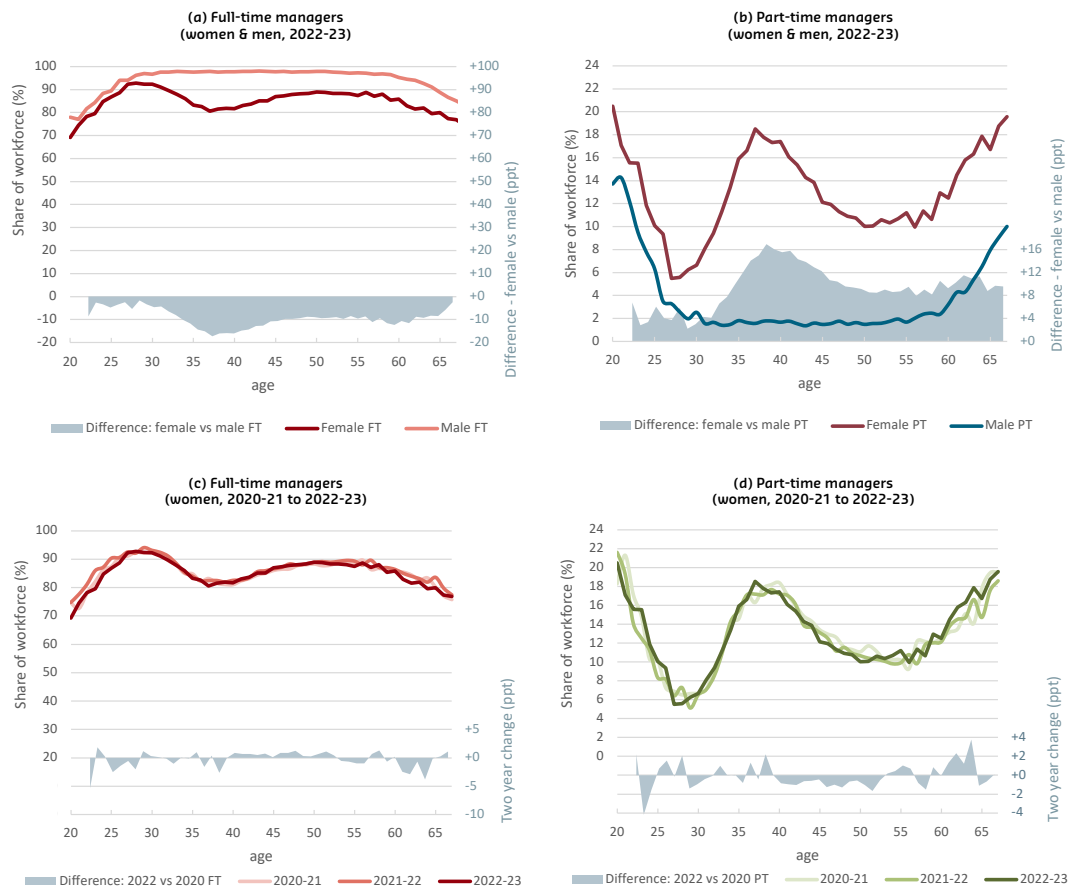


The difference in the shares of female and male managers working full-time is most pronounced between the ages of 35 and 45, with separation of over 10 percentage points. This is entirely driven by the gradual decline in the share of female managers working full-time.

The share of female managers in part-time employment peaks at 18 per cent at aged 37. This

compares to a part-time share for male managers that flatlines at around 2 per cent between ages 30 and 60. However, in contrast to the earlier results for the entire workforce, there has been relatively little change between 2020-21 and 2022-23 in the share of managers across labour force status by age (Figure 17).

FIGURE 17
Shares of managers by labour force status, age and gender: 2020-21 to 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality unit record data 2022-23.

ENTITLEMENT TO FLEXIBLE WORK BY LABOUR MARKET STATUS

When set against the increasing demand for flexible work options in the contemporary labour market, the systematic shift from part-time employment towards full-time work for non-managers, and the relatively low prevalence of part-time managers, may indicate that employees’ preferences are better met by flexible arrangements rather than part-time work.

While this would potentially enable more employees to progress to management roles, which continue to be mostly the domain of full-time employees, it also signals that employers need to do more to support part-time employees in progressing to management positions.

Insights from the HILDA survey into the changing prevalence of flexible work by formal labour market status may shed light on this dynamic.

The HILDA survey includes a question on whether a worker’s job includes any entitlement to flexible start or end times. A comparison of entitlements by gender and full-time/part-time status reveals a systematic and substantial rise in the share of full-time employees with entitlements to flexible work over at least the past decade. In 2009, around 43 per cent of women and men in full-time employment had access to flexible start and end times. These shares have risen to 52 per cent by 2022 (Figure 18).

For managers, the entitlement to flexible work has been rising progressively for at least the past 15 years and is now touching 70 per cent for male managers in full-time roles, as well as for part-time female managers.

When taken together with our previous analysis, the implications of these findings are both clear and important.

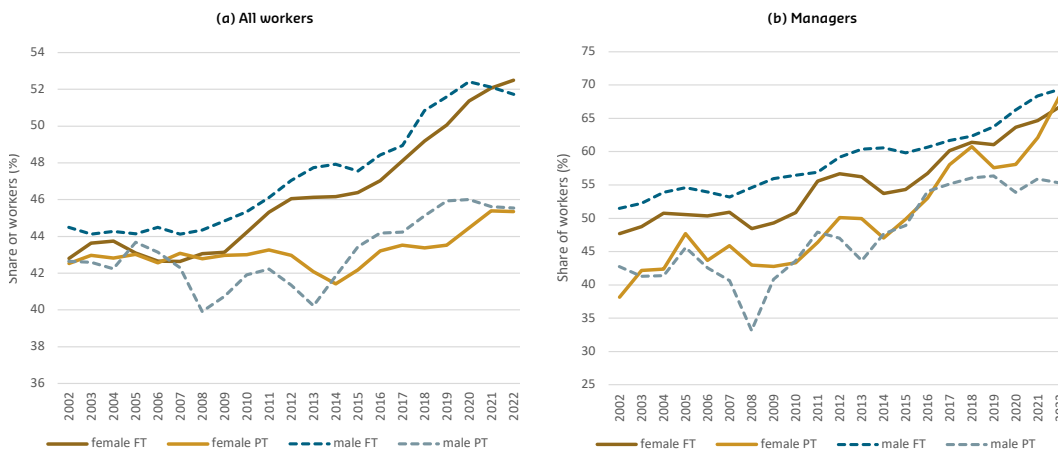
We are seeing a systematic move away from part-time employment towards full-time positions that include flexible work entitlements. This suggests that the traditional part-time work option is being gradually superseded by more fluid and adaptable work arrangements.

This invites a conversation on whether the normalisation and broadening of flexible work alternatives to the orthodox employment arrangements can support women’s economic participation and longer-term economic outcomes. At the same time, employers must consider how the broader range of flexible work options can support employees who choose or need to work part-time.



In 2009, around 43% of women and men in full-time employment had access to flexible start and end times. These shares have risen to 52% by 2022.

FIGURE 18
Shares of workers/managers with entitlements to flexible start/end times: 2002 to 2022



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations based on the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey waves 2 to 22.



IS THERE A PROMOTION PENALTY TO PART-TIME WORK?

One of the concerns with choosing part-time employment is the worry that this might be perceived by employers as a signal of less career commitment and risk career progression as a result – something the Workplace Gender Equality Agency term the part-time ‘promotion cliff’.

The question is: do we find evidence that promotion rates are lower for women or men in part-time roles compared to their counterparts in full-time employment?



PROGRESSION AND PROMOTION RATES AMONG PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

WGEA’s dataset includes promotion counts by gender and part-time status for managers and non-managers, and is a valuable information source to compare promotion rates by labour force status.

We calculate promotion rates as the number of promotions as a proportion of the number of people employed. WGEA’s Employer Census data include promotions information back to 2015-16, providing a basis to explore trends in promotion rates over the past eight years.

The part-time promotion cliff is clearly apparent for non-managers, where rates of promotion for both female and male part-time employees – lower than a 4 per cent chance each year – are consistently less than half the promotion rates of their full-time counterparts (Figure 19 Panel a).

There has been some uplift in rates of promotion among non-managers across genders and for both

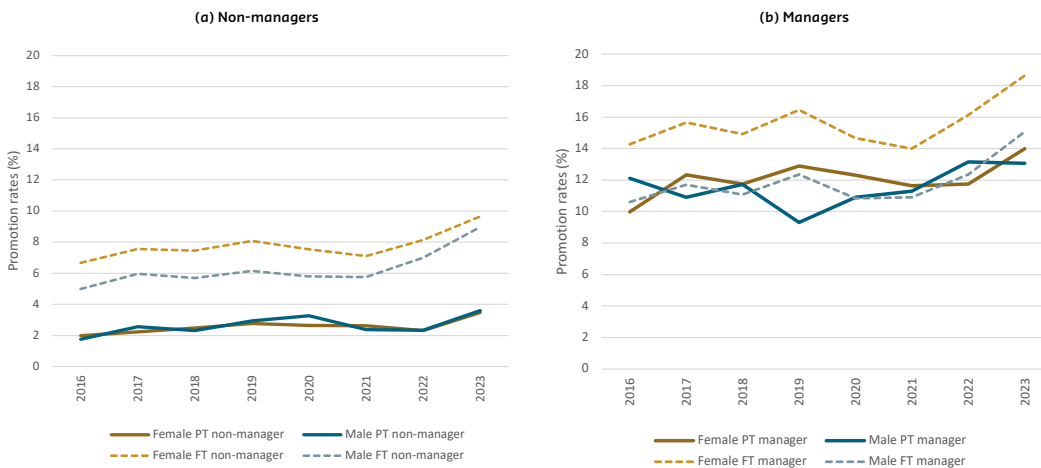
part-time and full-time work. This could reflect a reduction in stigma of part-time work and work arrangements that deviate from the full time “ideal employee” archetype (Chung H, 2020). This may also reflect the pressures that businesses are under to retain employees and support their career progression in light of the recent skills shortages and the costs of employee turnover (Allas *et al*, 2019; Rumbens and Xie, 2022; Tupper and Ellis, 2022).

The promotion rates for female and male part-time managers are more or less comparable and have also been increasing over the past two years (Figure 19 Panel b), but interestingly we find that promotion rates are higher for female full-time managers. This is consistent with the shifts seen in the rising shares of women moving to full-time managerial positions since 2020-21.



Rates of promotion for both female and male part-time employees are consistently less than half the promotion rates of their full-time counterparts.

FIGURE 19
Promotion rates by gender and labour force status: 2013-14 to 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2013-14 to 2022-23.

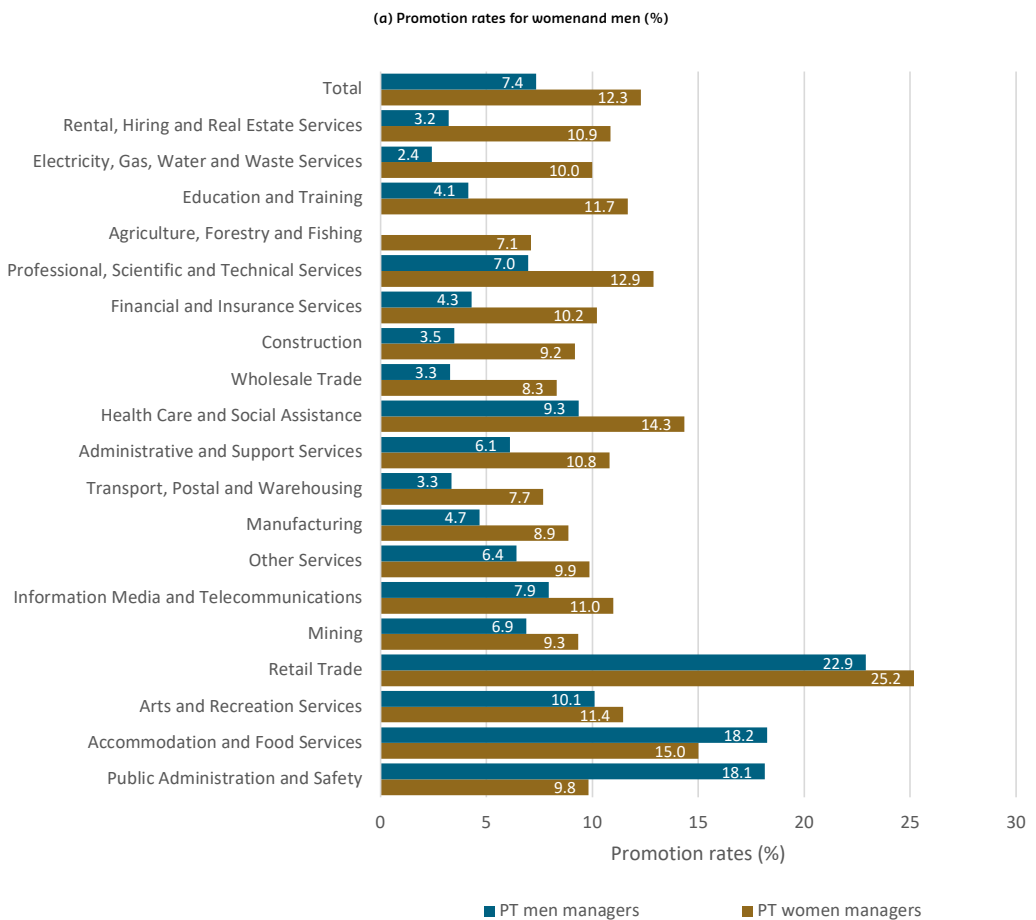


Promotion rates for part-time managers are generally higher in service industries like retail trade, accommodation and food services and public administration and safety (Figure 20 Panel a) and for women compared to men (Figure 20 Panel b).

Part-time promotion rates for the non-managerial workforce tend to be lower and more evenly

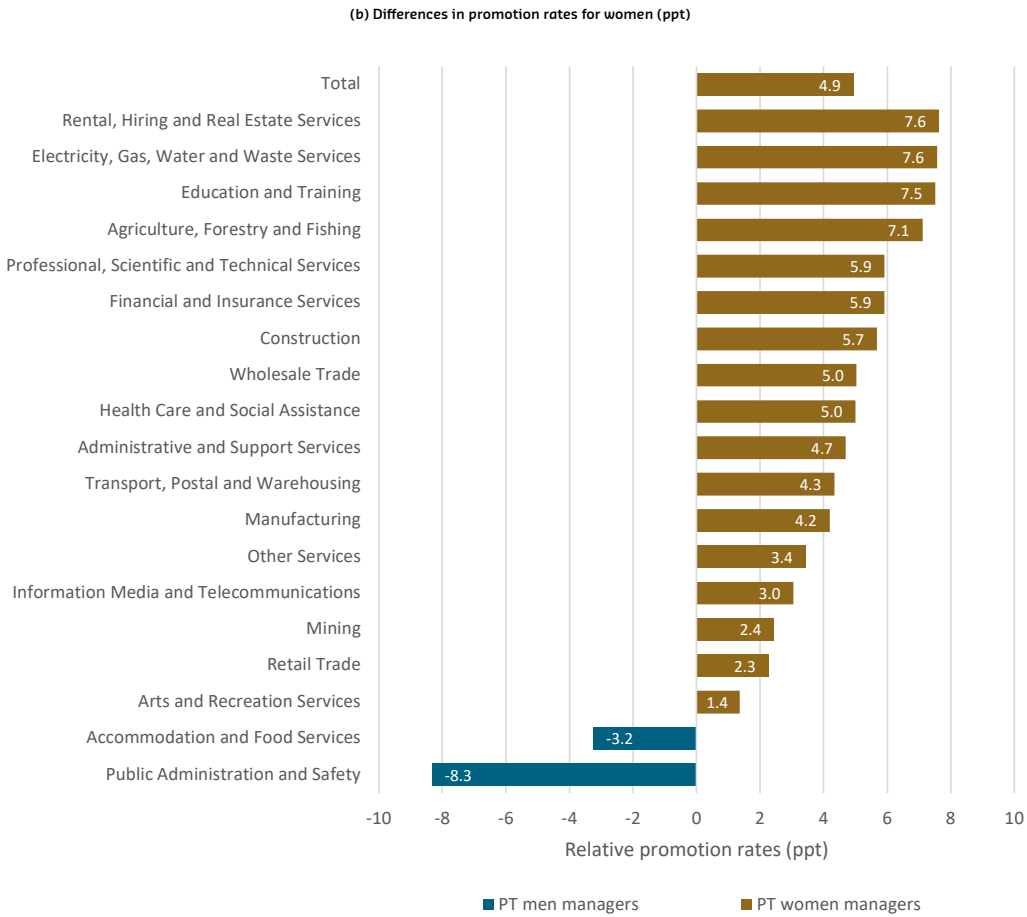
distributed across industry sectors (Figure 21 Panel a). Promotion rates for part-time non-managers are in favour of men in transport, postal and warehousing, and in the information media and telecommunications sector (Figure 21 Panel b). Electricity, gas, water and waste services, professional, scientific and technical services and retail trade also show promotion rates that are slightly in favour of men.

FIGURE 20
Relative promotion rates for part-time workers: managers, 2022-23



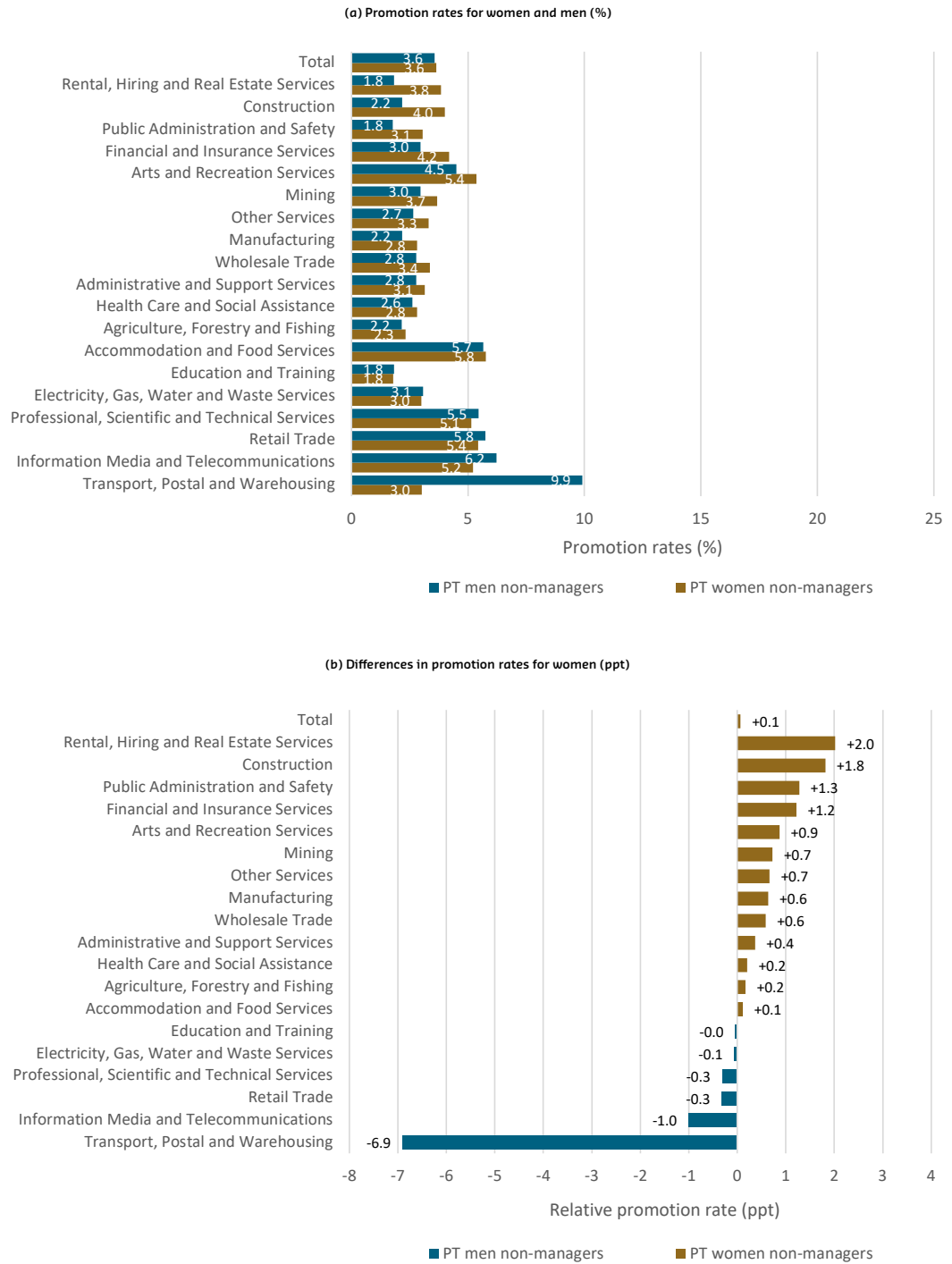
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2022-23.

FIGURE 20
Relative promotion rates for part-time workers: managers, 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2022-23.

FIGURE 21
Relative promotion rates for part-time workers: non-managers, 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2022-23.

HOW DO EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCE PART-TIME WORK?

This report has highlighted a gradual but consistent trend away from part-time employment towards alternative work arrangements, including flexible full-time employment. And although the incidence of part-time employment in Australia remains one of the highest across all OECD countries, the decline in the share of people working part-time in Australia reflects a much broader global trend.

This report puts forward a number of potential reasons for the changing incidence of part-time employment in Australia. One possible explanation relates to changing preferences among workers for alternative work arrangements. Another possible driver might relate to how people experience part-time employment, including their sense of job security, working conditions, flexibility, and their satisfaction with various aspects of the part-time role.

To better understand what's behind the changing mix of full-time, part-time and flexible working arrangements, it is instructive to learn more about the perspectives of employees towards their work situation. The HILDA survey includes detailed information on the self-reported opinions of employees regarding their jobs, including the level of satisfaction with pay, flexibility, work stress and job security, as well as the regularity or otherwise of work schedules and the ability to work remotely.

Part-time employees are more satisfied with their ability to balance work and non-work commitments than full-time workers (Figure 22 Panel a), although

work flexibility among full-time workers has also improved consistently over the post-pandemic period. The gap between part-time and full-time employees has been shrinking over time, due to the greater increase in satisfaction with work flexibility among men working full-time.

Levels of job-related stress look to have increased for both part-time and full-time workers (Figure 22 Panel b) but the pace of increase in work stress for women working part-time has accelerated more rapidly and is quickly catching up with that of full-time men.

Interestingly, despite earning salaries that are on average lower than for their full-time counterparts, part-time workers are nearly as satisfied with their pay (Figure 22 Panel c). This may relate to the greater value placed on non-pecuniary attributes of part-time work, such as flexibility, with a consequent trade-off in terms of pay. Job security for part-time workers has also improved over the past decade (Figure 22 Panel d).

Women and men in part-time employment are almost twice as likely to have irregular work schedules compared to their full-time counterparts (Figure 22 Panel e). And finally, there has been a significant improvement in the shares of employees who are able to work remotely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, a quarter of men and one third of women in part-time employment were able to work from home. This compares to more than half (55 per cent) of full-time workers (Figure 22 Panel f).



Part-time employees are more satisfied with their ability to balance work and non-work commitments than full-time workers.



FIGURE 22

Indicators of job satisfaction by gender and labour force status: 2007 to 2022



Notes: Higher magnitude = more dissatisfied.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations based on the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey waves 7 to 22.

The indicators in Figure 22 give us a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the job satisfaction experienced by part-time and full-time employees in Australia, and provide further context to the insights from WGEA's data.

To capture more comprehensively the relative attitudes of part-time and full-time employees towards their work arrangements, we develop a composite *job precariousness* indicator that takes into account of a wide array of job attributes across four different dimensions relating to work-related stress,

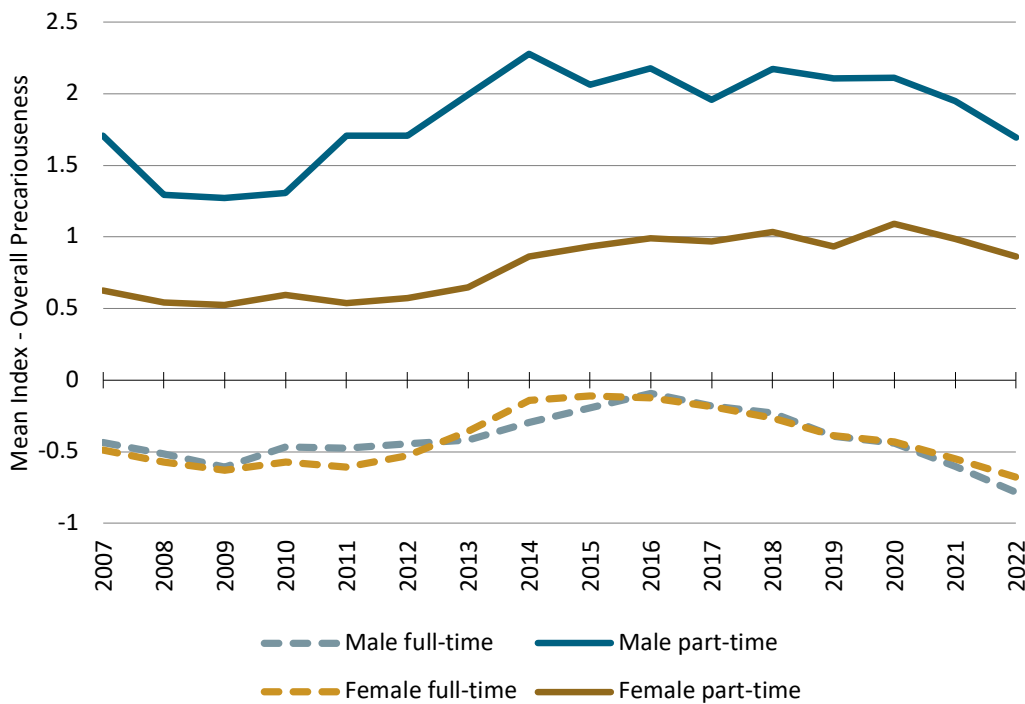
working conditions, job security and work flexibility. Each of these dimensions includes a set of measures as in Figure 22 that are correlated with the given category.⁴

The result of the overall precariousness index is shown in Figure 23: the higher the magnitude of the index, the greater the level of precariousness. As we can see, precariousness is higher for part-time workers relative to full-time workers, particularly for men working part-time. But the situation has improved since 2016 for full-time workers, and since 2020 for part-time workers.



Job precariousness is higher for part-time workers relative to full-time workers, but the situation for part-time workers has improved since 2020.

FIGURE 23
Precariousness index by gender and labour force status: Australia, 2007 to 2022



Notes: Index of job precariousness is constructed from a weighted average of indicators of job insecurity, contract type, control and work-related stress. Higher magnitude = more precariousness. Component indicators and precariousness domains are listed in Appendix Table 4.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations based on the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey waves 7 to 22.

⁴ These four dimensions of job precariousness and the set of component measures within each domain have been selected using a *principal component analysis*. The details of the methodology used to build the precariousness index and the measures included in each dimension can be found in the Appendix.





Levels of job-related stress for part-time workers have increased over time.

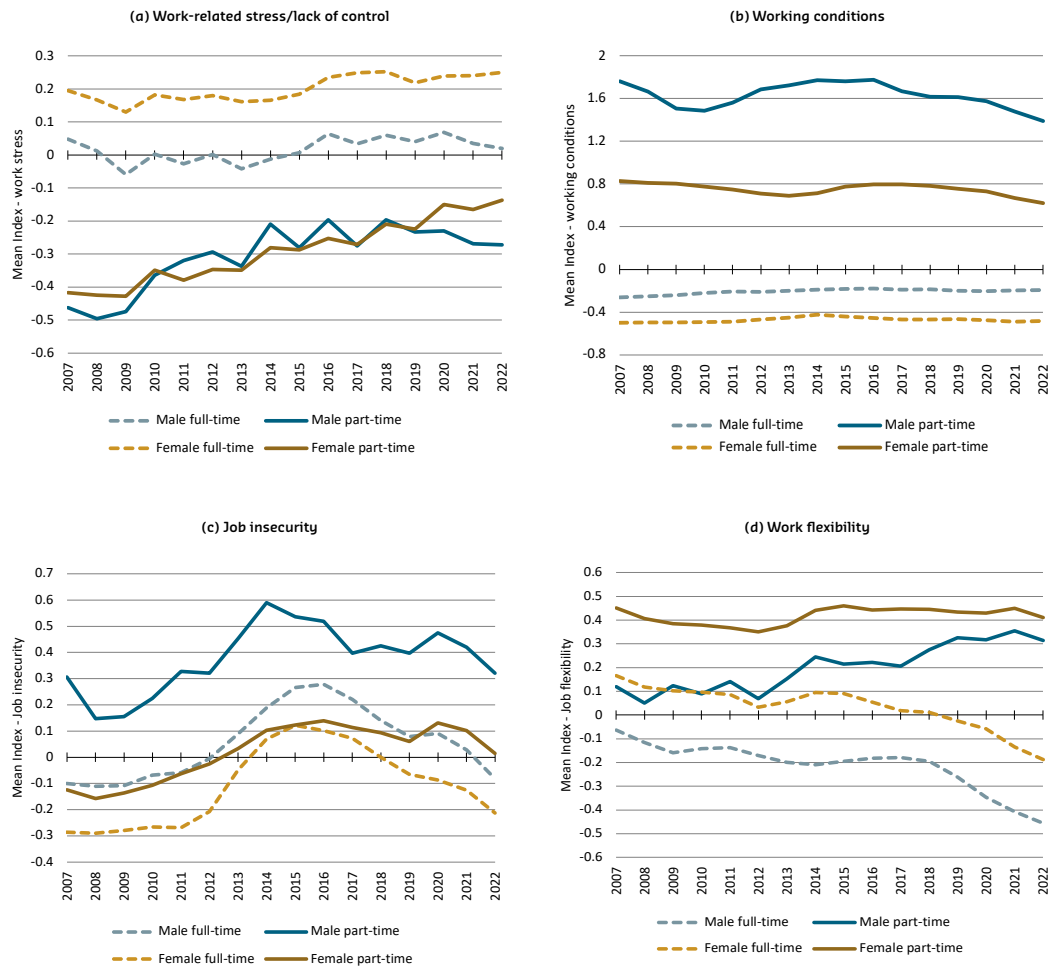
The four dimensions of the precarity index shown in Figure 24 allow us to form a clearer picture of the experiences and perspectives of part-time and full-time employees towards their jobs.

Full-time employees face substantially higher work-related stress and less control over their work requirements than do part-time workers (Figure

24 Panel a), although there has been a rise in work stress among women in part-time employment.

Part-time workers tend to experience inferior working conditions than full-time employees (Figure 24 Panel b), principally due to higher rates of casual employment, higher underemployment and a greater share of part-time employees who have to respond to irregular work schedules.

FIGURE 24
Job precarity by domain: 2007 to 2022



Notes: Index of job precarity is constructed from a weighted average of indicators of job insecurity, contract type, control and work-related stress. Higher magnitude = more precarity. Component indicators and precarity domains are listed in Appendix Table 4.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations based on the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey waves 7 to 22.

Job security has improved since 2016 for both women and men, and for workers in both part-time and full-time employment (Figure 24 Panel c). In fact, job insecurity is the only dimension where women working part-time have similar outcomes to full-time workers. Men working in part-time roles experience the greatest levels of insecurity, as shown by the separation in the job insecurity dimension between part-time male employees and other employees.

And finally, the ability to balance work and non-work commitments has improved since 2016 for women and men in full-time employment (Figure 24 Panel d) but has deteriorated for part-time male workers. Among part-time employees, women face greater challenges than men in balancing work and non-work commitments. However, the situation for part-time female employees has remained relatively stable over the past decade.

As we have seen, the reasons for choosing part-time work differ significantly between men and women. Women often work part-time as a way to reconcile family responsibilities and participation in the labour market. It is also possible that the perceived

job precariousness faced by men and women changes over the life course as preferences evolve and personal demands change.

Figure 25 shows job precariousness by age and gender for full-time and part-time employees, along with the contribution that the different dimensions of job precariousness make to the overall index.

Job precariousness tends to be highest for the youngest cohort of workers aged between 20 and 24, and lower for those between 25 and 44 years of age. Precariousness rises again after age 45 and closer to retirement age. Regardless of age and full-time/part-time status, men are always worse off than their female counterparts in terms of job precariousness, the only exception being for full-time working men aged 20 to 24 years old who have better outcomes than women.

The heightened job precariousness for the youngest generation of part-time workers is striking. Young women and men aged 20 to 24 both experience relatively poor working conditions due to irregular schedules, underemployment, and fewer work



Job precariousness tends to be highest for the youngest cohort of workers aged between 20 and 24.



benefits as a result of a higher prevalence of casual contracts. They also lack flexibility in their jobs. Job insecurity also contributes significantly to overall precarity for men working part-time and this continues to be a prominent feature until the age of retirement.

Job precarity falls significantly for full-time and part-time workers once they pass the age of 25. Nevertheless, working conditions and job flexibility continue to be a predominant contributor to job precarity for part-time workers until the age of retirement. This is the opposite of what we observe in full-time workers. In fact, working conditions is the dimension of job precarity that is the most favourable for women working full-time, while flexible work arrangements contribute the least to job precarity for male employees working full-time. This means that the determinants of job precarity are not only different for full-time and part-time workers but that age also plays an important role in what we consider a precarious job.

The flexibility - or otherwise - of a job is a significant concern for women of childbearing age (25-45 years old) in part-time employment. Most women in this age category who work part time cite caring for children and the elderly as the main reason for doing so. This is why flexibility to balance family responsibilities and work is a far more prominent concern for this group. Lack of flexibility also seems to become a bigger issue for people closer to retirement, across genders and part-time/full-time status.

Lastly, the dimension of work stress/lack of control affects women working full-time significantly regardless of age. Work stress is the most important determinant of job precarity for women age 20 to 24. However, the magnitude of this contributor declines with age. Surprisingly, this is not the case for their male counterparts who have low levels of work-related stress.

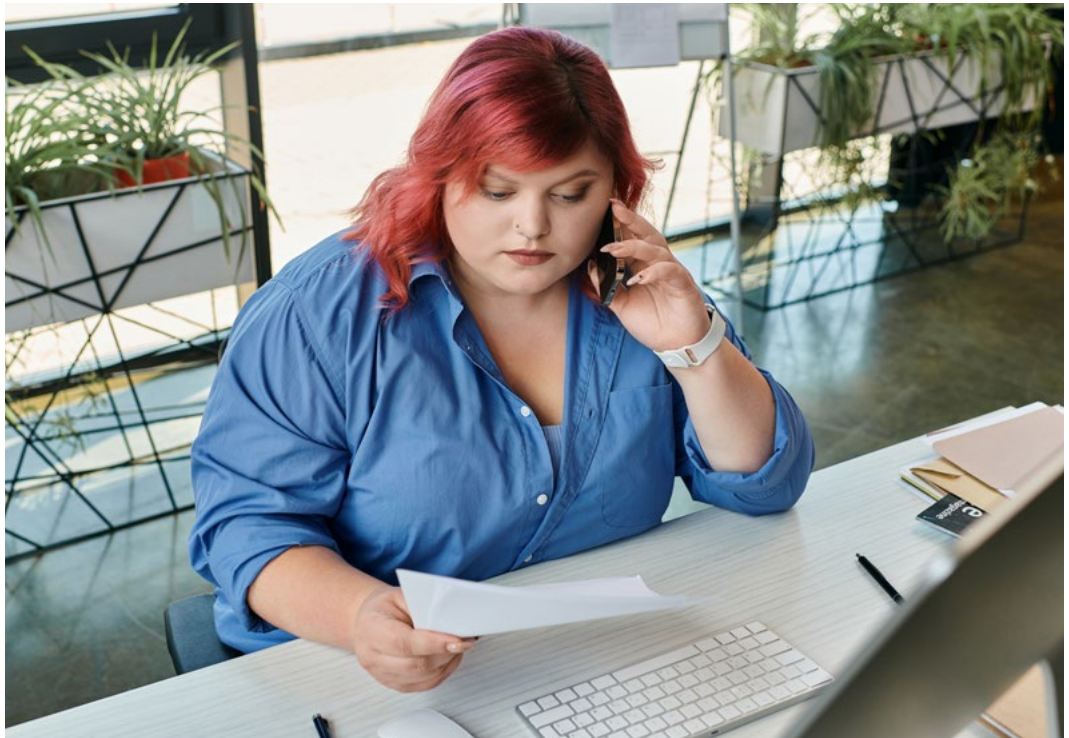
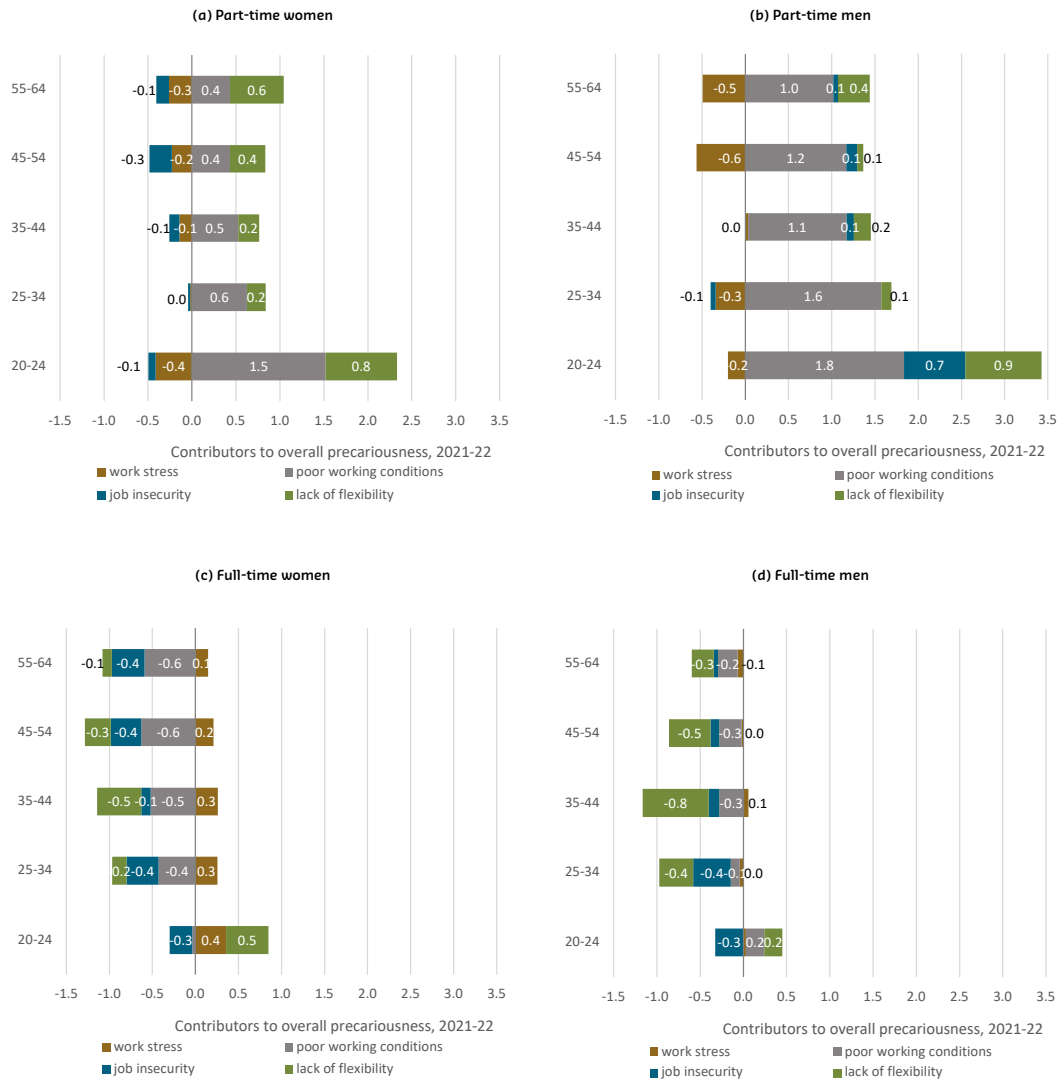


FIGURE 25

Job precarity by age and gender: 2021-22



Notes: Index of job precarity is constructed from a weighted average of indicators of job insecurity, contract type, control and work-related stress. Higher magnitude = more precarity. Component indicators and precarity domains are listed in Appendix Table 4.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations based on the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey waves 7 to 22.





Precarity is considerably higher for part-time employees relative to full-time employees, particularly for men.

The main takeaways of this section can be summarised below:

- Precarity is considerably higher for part-time employees relative to full-time employees. This is particularly true for men working part-time who experience the highest level of precarity.
- The precarity of men working part-time is mostly due to insecure job positions and poor working conditions.
- There is a significant gap in precarity coming from poorer working conditions for part-time employees relative to full-time employees, with men working part-time having significantly higher levels of precarity followed by women in part-time roles.
- The main contributors to poor working conditions for part-time employees are underemployment, the high share of part-time employees in casual employment and irregular schedules.
- Underemployment is a major concern among part-time employees. Close to 40 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women working part-time desire to increase the number of hours they work against only 8 per cent of men and 4 per cent of women working full-time.
- Poor job flexibility is one of the most important contributors to precarity for part-time employees and job flexibility has been deteriorating in the last 10 years. The improvements in this area as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have not affected part-time employees. In 2022, more than 74 per cent of men and 66 per cent of women working part-time could not work from home, compared to only 45 per cent of full-time employees.
- The difference in job precarity for the youngest generation of part-time employees is striking. Both men and women suffer from poor working conditions and lack of flexibility in their jobs, with the former being the most decisive characteristic of precarity.
- Precarity affects women working part-time and full-time differently. For example, a higher share of women than men work part-time in order to provide care to children and elderly family members. This is why the flexibility to balance work and non-work commitments is a more prominent consideration for women in this group.



**SHIFTING THE
BALANCE OF
PART-TIME WORK:
WHAT SHOULD
COMPANIES DO?**

SHIFTING THE BALANCE OF PART-TIME WORK: WHAT SHOULD COMPANIES DO?

Key Insights

- Flexible working arrangements, support for employees with caregiving responsibilities, gender pay gap audits, and gender equality initiatives in retention and promotion each contribute to higher shares of part-time employment.
- The share of women working part-time is nearly 5 percentage points lower for businesses with 5,000 or more employees compared to businesses with fewer than 250 employees.
- Flexible work policies matter – the share of women working part-time is up to 3.6 percentage points higher in companies with flexible work strategies
- The representation of women on company boards is positively related to the share of women in part-time employment.
- Implementing a flexible work strategy increases the share of female managers working part-time by up to 1.8 percentage points.
- The part-time managerial gender pay gap reduces by 1.8 percentage points for companies that introduce flexible work targets.



PROFILING COMPANIES THAT SHIFT THE DIAL IN PART-TIME WORK

As an introduction to our later analysis of policy impacts, this section seeks to capture some key aspects of company size, workforce structure and organisational governance that are associated with changes in the shares of women who work in part-time roles. To do so, we apply regression methods (shown in Table 3) to the WGEA Employer Census data to model how the share of women who work in part-time positions relate to company characteristics, policies or actions.

Our results highlight a number of important associations. The first is that the share of women working part-time is lower for larger organisations, by 4.7 percentage points for businesses with 5,000 or more employees compared to those businesses with fewer than 250 employees.

This association remains for managers, albeit to a lower degree, where the share of part-time managers is around 2.6 percentage points lower for the largest businesses compared to smaller enterprises (Figure 26 Panel a).

There are also important associations with two workplace gender equality indicators:

1. Flexible work policies and strategies matter. The share of women working part-time is up to 3.6 percentage points higher in companies with flexible work strategies (Figure 26 Panel b).
2. Female representation on company boards is positively related to the share of women who work in part-time roles. Relative to companies with no female board representation, the share of women in part-time positions is 3.4 percentage points higher when women make up at least 50 per cent of board members (Figure 26 Panel c).

But there has also been a significant drop in the share of women working in part-time roles, especially in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 26 Panel d). This speaks to trends highlighted in earlier sections of this *Gender Equity Insights* report and suggests that part-time work is being superceded by flexible full-time work arrangements.



Female representation on company boards is positively related to the share of women who work in part-time roles.

TABLE 3
Regression analysis for share of women who work part-time: managers and all workers

	Share of women who work part-time					
	All workers			Managers		
	Coeff.	Std error	t-statistic	Coeff.	Std error	t-statistic
Firm size (reference: <250)						
250-499	-0.83	0.23	-3.58	-1.53	0.45	-3.38
500-999	-0.85	0.28	-3.05	0.81	0.51	1.58
1000-4999	-2.13	0.28	-7.55	-0.33	0.50	-0.66
5000+	-4.67	0.54	-8.61	-2.63	0.88	-2.99
Women on boards (reference: none)						
Less than 30%	2.15	0.26	8.17	3.75	0.51	7.34
30% and less than 50%	2.69	0.29	9.33	5.56	0.55	10.17
At least 50%	3.37	0.31	11.01	5.88	0.58	10.16
No chairs/dirs/brdms	1.99	0.39	5.15	3.48	0.79	4.4
Missing data	3.23	0.66	4.92	7.56	1.38	5.46
Female board chair	1.50	0.29	5.2	1.87	0.51	3.65
Remuneration strategy	1.31	0.23	5.76	0.70	0.44	1.6
Pay equity objectives	-0.45	0.24	-1.89	-0.27	0.44	-0.62
Flexible work policies	1.05	0.22	4.72	3.58	0.44	8.21
Year (reference: 2014)						
2015	0.37	0.44	0.83	1.25	0.84	1.49
2016	0.44	0.44	1	2.02	0.84	2.41
2017	0.24	0.45	0.54	2.28	0.84	2.7
2018	-0.45	0.45	-1.02	2.73	0.84	3.25
2019	-0.25	0.49	-0.52	1.77	0.92	1.93
2020	-1.14	0.44	-2.59	1.38	0.83	1.67
2021	-2.76	0.46	-6.02	-0.97	0.85	-1.14
2022	-3.48	0.45	-7.76	-0.73	0.84	-0.87
2023	-3.90	0.44	-8.88	-0.54	0.82	-0.66
Constant	75.22	0.99	75.61	68.46	0.95	72.21

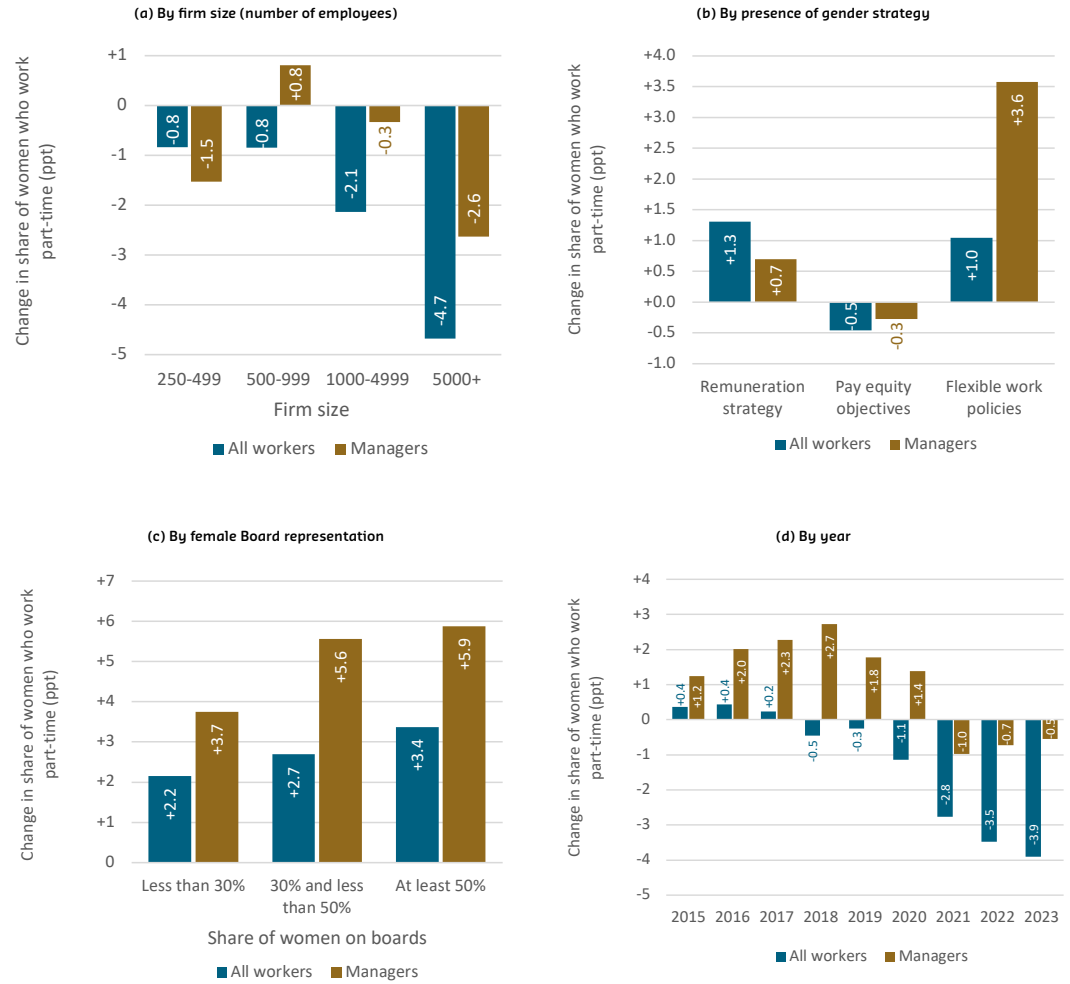
Notes: Estimates are based on total remuneration for businesses that reported to WGEA between 2013-14 to 2022-23.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Employer Census data 2014-15 to 2022-23.



FIGURE 26

Change in the share of women working part-time: by firm characteristic, 2021-22 to 2022-23



Notes: Figures show the regression parameters estimated in Table 3, with results capturing the annual change in share of part-time managers and overall share of part-time workers according to firm characteristics, policies or year.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Employer Census data, 2014-15 to 2022-23.

WHICH POLICIES WORK?

Part-time jobs have historically been an option for employees to remain in the workforce while balancing work with other non-work commitments. Women are twice as likely as men to work part-time, which means that any change in the conditions or prevalence of part-time work, or the outcomes for part-time workers, will consequently affect the state of gender equality in Australia.

So what do we know about the policies and actions that organisations put in place to support flexible work arrangements and part-time employment? And how might those policies enhance women's employment outcomes?

In this section, we utilise regression methods to explore which policies and practices are effective in changing the incidence of part-time employment. Using WGEA's data collected annually over a nine-year period from 2014-15 to 2022-23, which currently captures information from around 5,300 organisations covering over 4.9 million employees each year, we provide estimates for both the managerial and non-managerial workforces.

The outcome variables are constructed separately within each organisation for managerial and non-managerial roles. Our aim is to explore the effect of company policies and actions on the prevalence of part-time work for female and male employees. The purpose in so doing is to understand how different company policies and strategies influence workforce composition and employment outcomes, providing a comprehensive view of their impact on gender dynamics in both part-time and full-time roles. This approach allows us to assess whether gender equity policies and practices benefit specific groups more than others and identify any potential differences in their effectiveness.

The workforce outcomes examined in our analysis⁵ include:

- The annual change in the share of women working part-time;
- The relative change in the shares of women and men working part-time; and
- The relative change in the shares of women working part-time and full-time.

WGEA's data encompass information on company policies across multiple policy domains such as pay equity, career progression, recruitment and retention, performance management, promotion, talent identification, succession planning, training and development, policies supporting employees with caregiving responsibilities and those addressing job flexibility and safety at home and work.

In addition to modelling the effects of specific policies on each workforce outcome, we also consider the collective impact of a comprehensive suite of gender equity policies and actions. To do so, we again employ principal components analysis to create a composite index that captures the consistent implementation of gender equity policies and practices over time and across domains for each organisation. This enables us to distinguish between organisations that demonstrate strong commitment to gender equity practices, and those that are more limited in their commitment.

The findings reveal that the consistent implementation of gender equity policies and practices is associated with an increase in the share of women in part-time employment, and drive a faster pace of change in this share, compared to the change in part-time male and full-time female employment.

⁵ Each regression controls for the organisation's industry, number of employees, overall gender composition of the workforce, the share of women among board members and chairs and the year of collecting data. We use a panel fixed effects model to control for unobserved factors that vary between organisations but remain constant over time. These models allow us to isolate the effects of changes in the implementation of policies and practices on outcome variables.

Interestingly, the empirical evidence is statistically significant only for the managerial outcomes. For the non-managerial outcomes, the associations are marginal and not statistically significant.

The key findings from our analysis are summarised below:

- Implementing a formal policy and/or strategy on flexible work increases the share of female managers working part-time by between 1 percentage point and 1.8 percentage points.
- Establishing a policy and/or strategy that specifically supports gender equality in one of the areas of retention, promotion, succession planning and training and development increases the share of women in managerial part-time roles by between 1.1 and 1.5 percentage points.
- Conducting a gender pay gap audit and undertaking action after the audit is associated with a rise in the share of female managers working part-time of 1.1 percentage points.
- Having formal policies supporting workers with family and caregiving responsibilities increases the share of women in managerial part-time jobs by 1.1 percentage points.
- The difference in the share of female managers working part-time is 4.5 percentage points between organisations that are most and least consistent in implementing gender equity policies.
- The implementation of these policies and practices is associated with a faster pace of change in the share of female managers working part-time compared to the change in the share of part-time male and full-time female managers.

The findings underscore the critical importance of some specific policies and practices, including flexible working arrangements; support for employees with caregiving responsibilities; gender equality initiatives in retention, promotion, succession planning, training and development; conducting gender pay gap audits; and undertaking actions after the audits.

The results show that these impacts are more pronounced in the managerial workforce. This aligns with the conclusions of the 2019 Gender Equity Insights Report, which highlighted the influence of certain policies on the representation of women in managerial positions. The results may partially explain the declining trend in the share of women working part-time in non-managerial roles.

The findings suggest that, while gender equity policies and practices benefit female managers, further investigation is needed to determine how these measures can be optimised for female non-managers. Understanding the distinct needs and challenges faced by the non-managerial workforce is crucial for developing inclusive and effective gender equality policies and practices within Australian organisations.

WHICH POLICIES DRIVE BETTER PAY OUTCOMES FOR PART-TIME WORKERS?

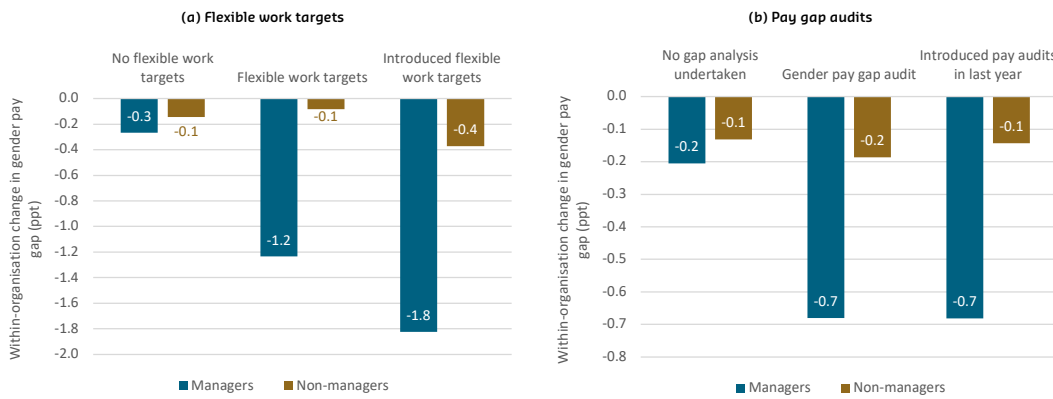
By applying similar statistical methods to those undertaken in the previous section, we are able to link company policies and actions to changes in gender pay outcomes for part-time employees.

The WGEA data collection contains a wide array of company actions across a host of different policy domains. Our analysis finds that the implementation of flexible work arrangements and pay gap audits lead to the strongest improvements in gender

pay outcomes for part-time workers, but these improvements are largely restricted to managers.

Specifically, our analysis found the part-time managerial gender pay gap to reduce by 1.8 percentage points for companies that introduce flexible work targets (Figure 27 Panel a) and by 0.7 per cent for those companies that either introduced pay audits in the past 12 months or maintained the implementation of regular pay audits.

FIGURE 27
Effects of organisational policies on part-time gender pay gaps: by enacted policies



Notes: Figures show the annual change in part-time (total remuneration) gender pay gaps for managers and non-managers according to selected policies enacted by organisations.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Employer Census data 2014-15 to 2022-23.



"PART-TIME WORK
HAS LONG BEEN AN
IMPORTANT FEATURE
OF AUSTRALIA'S
LABOUR MARKET."

A woman with curly hair is using a power sander on a wooden plank. She is wearing a maroon tank top and a gold necklace. The background is a workshop or construction site.

**WHERE DOES
PART-TIME WORK
FEATURE IN THE
FUTURE OF WORK?**

WHERE DOES PART-TIME WORK FEATURE IN THE FUTURE OF WORK?



Flexible positions with hybrid work options that combine remote and in-office work are becoming far more common in Australia.

Part-time work has long been an important feature of Australia's labour market, providing people with an option to balance paid work hours with other non-work commitments, such as caregiving, education, or other pursuits. Traditionally, part-time jobs have enabled a broader constituency of people to participate in the workforce.

However, despite its historical significance, the traditional concept of part-time work is being re-evaluated. The share of people working part-time in Australia has been declining over time, in favour of full-time work, with emerging non-traditional work arrangements that attach increased value to flexibility, autonomy, and the ability to work in ways that align to other responsibilities.

And since women are twice as likely to work part-time, this means that part-time work is necessarily a gendered issue, and any change in prevalence or outcomes for part-time workers will have a gendered impact.

This being the case, how do these evolving trends affect those (mostly women) who may previously have chosen part-time employment, but now choose flexible full-time work? Are employers doing enough to support part-time employees, providing access to other flexible arrangements and ensuring part-time options for those who need it without negative impacts?

The changing world of work

The share of women engaging in work formally defined as part-time has been falling over the past decade, gradually up to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic but more rapidly since then.

Over the last two years of WGEA's Employer Census, the share of women working part-time has fallen by 3.2 percentage points to 29.7 per cent by 2022-23 while the prevalence of full-time work for female employees has increased by 2.3 percentage points to 42.5 per cent over the same period. The share of women employed on casual contracts has also fluctuated over the past decade, but the use of casual work arrangements has increased in the past two years to a point where they are almost as common as part-time contracts.

The shift away from part-time work is especially apparent when we look at the change in labour force status for non-managers, with the pattern repeated for companies across the vast majority of industry sectors. Along with the growth in full-time work for female employees, we also see a rise in the proportion of full-time roles that include the option of flexible start and end times.

Taken together with the erosion of more traditional and rigid hours-limited part-time jobs, this suggests that flexible positions with hybrid work options that combine remote and in-office work are becoming far more common in Australian workplaces.

And this evolution may well be more beneficial to women's economic participation and their career development and progression opportunities, when compared to the retention of the traditional, rigid delineation of full-time and part-time work roles.

These trends suggest that the Australian labour market is undergoing something of a structural change in the status and attributes of different working patterns, including flexible work arrangements and part-time employment.

However, businesses need to be careful not to focus attention only on gender equity for managers and senior executives at the expense of non-managerial occupations, but instead ensure an equal commitment to driving improved gender equity outcomes across all occupational tiers.

Labour market outcomes for part-time workers

The overall part-time gender pay gap has historically been in favour of women, and despite the gap narrowing somewhat over the five years up to the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest gender gap in total remuneration sits at 2.6 per cent in favour of female workers.

The analysis in this report confirms findings from earlier reports in the series by showing that part-time gender pay gaps are typically *in favour* of male workers in female-dominated companies, and

in favour of female workers in male-dominated businesses – a paradox that speaks to the existence of a ‘male pedestal’ effect whereby male workers appear to be awarded larger salaries in female-dominated industries. Certainly, the average difference in part-time pay between female and male workers is larger in education and training than in construction, and has been rising within the health care and social assistance sector.

We find that a higher share of part-time workers feel that their job is precarious or uncertain compared to their full-time counterparts, mainly for male part-time workers and mostly due to insecure jobs and poorer working conditions. And at the same time, full-time workers have become progressively more satisfied with their ability to balance work and non-work commitments, which suggests that moves toward greater flexibility and remote work options are improving people’s satisfaction with full-time employment.

We also find evidence of a part-time promotion cliff for non-managers⁶, with promotion rates for both female and male part-time employees consistently less than half of those of their full-time counterparts. Promotion rates have lifted over the past two years – likely a result of recent skills shortages and the greater incentives for companies to retain workers – but the promotion rate gap between part-time and full-time workers remains for non-managerial roles, and for women in managerial roles.

These findings may indicate selection effects where women are moving towards full-time flexible roles. But it may be the case that female-dominated businesses still retain some unconscious biases in remuneration or promotion, and this highlights the obligation on businesses to review their recruitment, promotion and pay-setting processes for part-time workers to ensure transparency and equity.

What drives the choice of part-time work? And is it a choice?

Of the falling share of women who work part-time, around one quarter cite the care of their children as

the main reason for choosing part-time employment, with nearly 30 per cent actively preferring part-time work over other working arrangements and one in five choosing part-time to combine work with education.

But although there has been some growth in the share of women who actively prefer part-time work to either full-time or casual work in the post-pandemic years, we also see a rise in the share who work part-time because that is the only option available to them to continue in their job.

Age is an important driver of part-time work status, particularly among women. The share of female workers in full-time employment rises post-education to over 50 per cent by the age of 30 but declines through to the late 30s. Part-time work picks up during the years of family formation and is preferred as a labour market option by one third of women by age of 50, and by 50 per cent of working women at normal retirement age.

But the research presented in this report also reveals a consistent decline over the past two years in the share of part-time workers over most working age cohorts between age 25 and 55, with a corresponding increase in the shares of female workers between the ages of 35 and 55 who work full-time.

This indicates a structural shift towards full-time employment and away from part-time work for many working women. The same isn’t true for men, where patterns of work between full-time, part-time, and casual employment has remained more or less constant over the same three year period.

Company policies and part-time employment outcomes

The research findings presented in this *BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity Insights* report show that the share of part-time female employees is lower for larger organisations, and for male-dominated businesses, with the association remaining to a lower degree for managers. Female representation on company



There is evidence of a part-time promotion cliff for non-managers, with promotion rates consistently less than half those of their full-time counterparts.

⁶ See also the WGEA Gender Equality Scorecard 2022-23.



Age is an important driver of part-time work status, particularly among women.

boards is positively related to the share of women who work in part-time roles.

The report also shows that policies matter when it comes to broadening access to part-time or flexible work arrangements. The WGEA data collection contains a wide array of company actions across a host of different policy domains. However, our analysis shows that the introduction of flexible work arrangements and the implementation of pay gap audits are most strongly associated with improved gender pay outcomes for part-time workers, mainly among managers.

So, what policies and actions should Australian businesses consider when seeking to improve the experiences of, and support for, part-time employees?

This latest report shows that, while rates of part-time work are declining, a rising share of both women and men are in part-time work because it is their preference. This comes alongside an increased use of other types of flexible working arrangements since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This presents an opportunity for Australian employers to normalise

part-time employment and other flexible work options without negatively impacting an employee's experience or outcomes at work.

What role does part-time employment have to play in the future of work?

The concept of part-time work has traditionally been the orthodoxy for those seeking a balance between work and non-work obligations, or to protect personal or family time. But there is strong evidence that traditional part-time settings are declining in favour of other flexible work arrangements, including flexible full-time options.

With more workers seeking alternatives to rigid, hours-constrained work settings, and more companies adopting flexible work settings, the strict delineation between traditional full-time and part-time work is being superseded by more flexible, non-standard work arrangements.

This invites a conversation on whether flexible work options are more beneficial to women's economic participation and longer-term economic outcomes compared to orthodox work settings.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Mitigating downside effects of part-time employment

– the evidence in this report provides a compelling justification for employers ensuring that part-time employment and other forms of flexible work arrangements are normalised within the organisational workplace culture. And as part of this normalisation, employers should also ensure that such arrangements do not carry career penalties in terms of perception of performance, pay and progression. The report recommends that organisations should:

- keep workplace policies under regular review and, if necessary, take action to guard against unconscious biases and systemic penalties against part-time employees.
- record and monitor the career progression of part-time employees to identify promotion cliffs, and where necessary implement mitigating actions to remove progression penalties for part-time workers.

Normalisation of flexible work arrangements

– while rates of part-time work are declining, a rising share of both women and men are choosing part-time work because it is their preference. This comes alongside an increased use of other types of flexible working arrangements since the COVID-19 pandemic. This presents an opportunity for Australian employers to normalise part-time employment and other flexible work options without negatively impacting an employee's experience or outcomes at work. In support of this recommendation, employers should:

- create a positive, supportive workplace culture in which flexible and part-time work are normalised, and historic career penalties associated with these forms of work are reduced.
- reinforce the normalisation of part-time employment and flexible work through the role modelling of flexible work by executive leadership and senior management.
- invest in developing the skills and capabilities of managers and human resource professionals to manage a flexible workforce.

Work (re)design

– flexible work practices increasingly encompass a broader set of arrangements, including remote and hybrid working, flexible hours, job sharing, and compressed work weeks. These practices allow employees to adjust their work schedules and locations to better fit their personal needs, offering a level of autonomy that has

not been available historically either for part-time or full-time work. To broaden access to non-traditional forms of employment, businesses should:

- rethink job specifications and the task content of roles to identify opportunities for part-time roles or job share arrangements.
- ensure access to staff development and training opportunities for part-time employees and those with flexible work arrangements.
- explore hybrid and remote work options to attract part-time employees who want or need flexibility in their work location.
- ensure that public sector organisations are strong role models as employers in their support for part-time employment, flexible work arrangements, remote and hybrid work options.

Consultation and communication – in working towards the removal of the historical ‘flexibility stigma’ and career penalties associated with flexible work arrangements, businesses should establish and maintain a clear communication strategy that balances the needs of employers and employees. As part of this strategy, organisations should:

- consult with employees to better understand their needs and preferences in order to shape forms of work that can best meet employee and employer needs.
- ensure an inclusive culture that respects part-time status and normalises the organisational commitment to part-time employees that they are not expected to work on their days off.
- recognise and acknowledge the contributions of part-time employees equally with full-time employees.

Measuring impact – to ensure that the evolution of flexible working arrangements will deliver better outcomes for both businesses and employees, and to protect against any unintended consequences for either employers or workers, we recommend:

- * an expansion in the measurement and collection of labour force statistics to cover flexible working arrangements, to enable an effective assessment of their impact.
- * the evaluation of company policies and actions that successfully implement flexible work arrangements.



A rising share of both women and men are in part-time work because it is their preference.

"THIS REPORT USES A
UNIQUE DATA COLLECTION
THAT AUSTRALIAN
NON-PUBLIC SECTOR
EMPLOYERS HAVE BEEN
REPORTING TO THE
WORKPLACE GENDER
EQUALITY AGENCY (WGEA)
FROM 2013-14 TO 2022-23."

A photograph of two women in a professional office environment. The woman on the left has dark curly hair and is wearing a tan blazer over a white top. The woman on the right has long brown hair, wears glasses and a light blue button-down shirt. They are both smiling and looking at a laptop held by the woman on the left. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office space with other people working.

GLOSSARY & TECHNICAL NOTES

GLOSSARY & TECHNICAL NOTES

About the WGEA Employer Census

This report uses a unique data collection that Australian non-public sector employers have been reporting to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) from 2013-14 to 2022-23.

The 2022-23 WGEA dataset is based on reports from 5,377 reporting organisations covering 4,974,978 employees (approximately 40 per cent of all employees in Australia). Of these, 51.1 per cent were women and 48.7 per cent were men. The percentage does not add to 100 per cent due to people who did not identify as either a woman or a man in the WGEA dataset.

The dataset came to existence through the introduction of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, which was legislated to promote and improve gender equality in remuneration and employment within Australian workplaces. The Act requires relevant employers with 100 or more employees to report annually to WGEA against six gender equality indicators.

The dataset is effectively a Census of private and Commonwealth public sector employers with 100 or more employees and can be considered population level data. The first reporting period for private sector employers was 2013-14. The first reporting period for Commonwealth public sector employers was 2022.

The WGEA Gender Equality data collection does not cover small businesses and a significant proportion of medium-sized businesses that have fewer than 100 employees.



APPENDIX

TABLE 4
Indicators of job precarity: by domain

INFERIOR WORK CONDITIONS	
(a)	Difference between two questions: (1) <i>Total hours would choose to work</i> and (2) <i>Hours per week usually worked in all jobs</i> for people who answer positively of the question: <i>Would prefer to work fewer hours</i>
(b)	Difference between two questions: (1) <i>Total hours would choose to work</i> and (2) <i>Hours per week usually worked in all jobs</i> for people who answer positively to the question: <i>Would prefer to work more hours</i>
(c)	Indicator variable equal to one if people answer positively to the question: <i>Current work schedule = a rotating shift, split shift, on call, irregular schedule</i>
(d)	Indicator variable equal to one if people answer positively to the question: <i>Employed through labour-hire firm or temporary employment agency</i>
(e)	Indicator variable equal to one if people answer positively to either of the following questions: <i>Does employer provide paid sick leave / Does the employer provide paid holiday leave</i>
(f)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I don't have enough time to do everything in my job"
(g)	Indicator variable equal to one if people answer positively to the question: <i>Employment contract - Employed on a fixed-term contract</i>
(h)	Indicator variable equal to one if people answer positively to the question: <i>Employment contract - Employed on a casual basis</i>
WORK STRESS	
(a)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "My work is more stressful than I ever imagined"
(b)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I fear that the amount of stress in my job will make me physically ill"
(c)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale of 0 (totally satisfied) to 10 (totally dissatisfied) when asked about: " <i>Total pay satisfaction</i> "
(d)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "The company I work for will still be in business 5 years from now"
(e)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale of 0 (totally satisfied) to 10 (totally dissatisfied) when asked about: "Satisfaction with work-life balance"
JOB INSECURITY	
(a)	Percentage value of worker's probability to lose their job: " <i>Percent chance of losing job in next 12 months</i> "
(b)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale of 0 (totally satisfied) to 10 (totally dissatisfied) when asked about: "Job security satisfaction"
(c)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have a secure future in my job"
(d)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I worry about the future of my job"
LACK OF FLEXIBILITY	
(a)	Indicator variable equal to one if people answer positively to the question: <i>Workplace entitlements: flexible start/finish times - Yes</i>
(b)	Indicator variable equal to one if people answer positively to the question: <i>Workplace entitlements: home-based work</i>
(c)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I can decide when to take a break"
(d)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have a lot of freedom to decide when I do my work"
(e)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have a lot of choice in deciding what I do at work"
(f)	Variable indicating workers' score on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) when asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have a lot of freedom to decide how I do my own work"

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | HILDA survey waves 21 and 22.

FIGURE 28

Workforce shares by gender and labour force status: all workers, 2020-21 to 2022-23

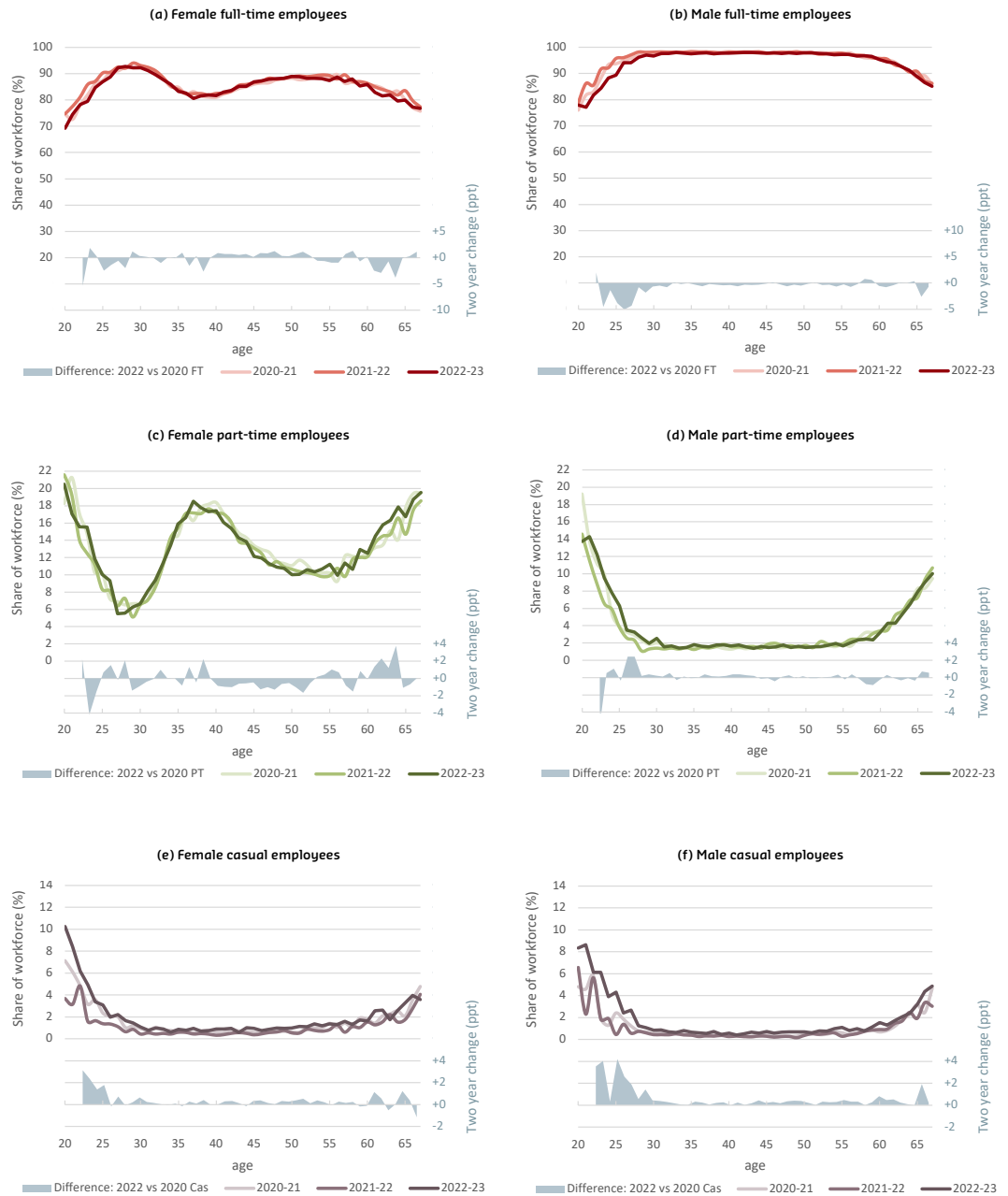


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2013-14 to 2022-23.



FIGURE 29

Workforce shares by gender and labour force status: managers, 2020-21 to 2022-23



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2013-14 to 2022-23.



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2016



2017



2018



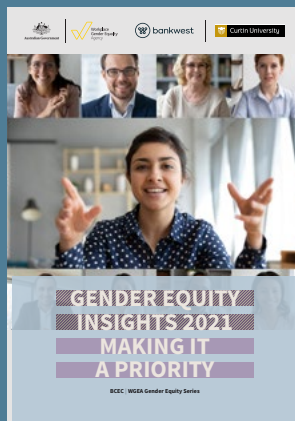
2019



2020



2021



2022



2023



2024



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