

WORKING TOGETHER

THE FACTS

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT PROVIDES IMPORTANT FLEXIBILITY

Businesses and workers value part-time employment. Part-time employment enables many people to participate in the workforce who would otherwise be unable or unwilling to do so because of family, caring, study or other commitments outside of work.

Businesses benefit from offering part-time work arrangements because providing this flexibility enables them to attract and retain staff who are not able or not willing to work full-time including, for example, employees returning from parental leave, older workers wanting to phase into retirement, and young people with study commitments.

THE NUMBER OF PART-TIME WORKERS IS INCREASING BUT MOST PART-TIME EMPLOYEES DO NOT WANT TO WORK FULL-TIME

In the ABS labour force data, 'part-time' work refers to the *number of hours*. Therefore, the number of part-time workers includes those that work part-time on a permanent basis, a casual basis, and as independent contractors. The ABS data defines part-time work as any paid work of less than 35 hours per week.

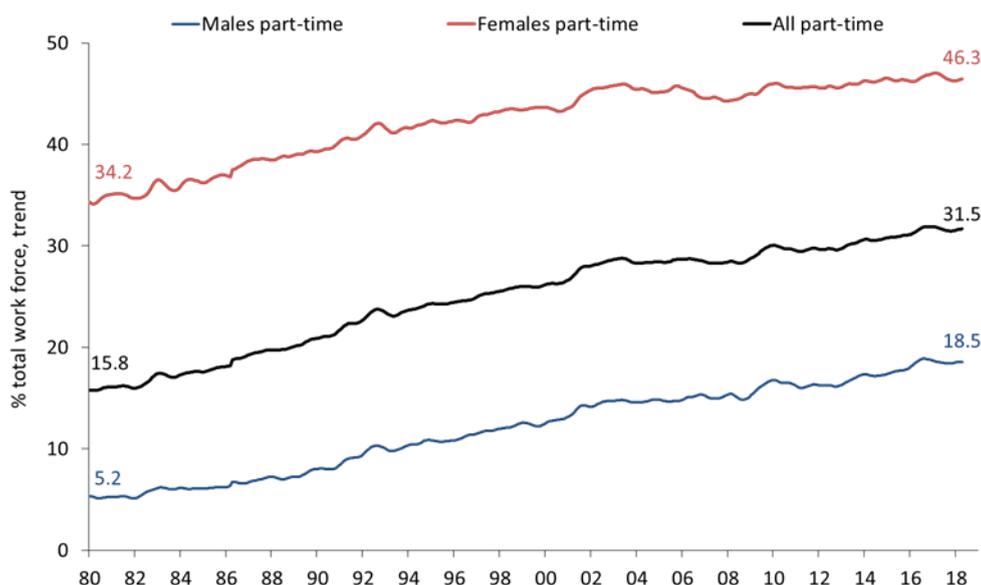
Part-time workers worked an average of 17 hours per week in 2017.

Although the proportion of casual work has not changed over the past two decades, the proportion of part-time work has increased steadily since at least the 1980s.

Part-time work has a strong gender element to it in Australia, since many more women work part-time (46.3% in April 2018 and over 45% since 2009) than men (18.5% in April 2018) (chart 1).

The strong rise in female workforce participation in recent years (to a record high of 60.6% of all adult women in April 2018) has contributed to the rise in part-time work. However, it is clear that the rate of part-time work has grown for both men and women, as well as for the whole population, since the 1980s (chart 1).

Chart 1: part-time work rates by sex, 1980 to 2018



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, Detailed Quarterly.

The number of part-time workers is highest in hospitality (food and accommodation services), retail, and arts and recreation.

Recent analysis by the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) indicates that the three most common reasons why women and younger people work part-time are: study, personal/lifestyle preferences and family commitments.¹

For workers aged 15-24 years, 'studying' is the single most common reason to be working part-time. The RBA notes that education participation has increased dramatically in Australia over the past two to three decades, with over half of all 15-24 year olds enrolled full-time in education in 2015, compared to 20% in the 1980s.²

RESTRICTING PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT WOULD DESTROY JOBS

Restricting part-time employment would destroy jobs. As mentioned above, part-time employment enables many people to participate in the workforce who would otherwise be unable or unwilling to do so.

The impact of imposing more restrictions on part-time work would be felt most acutely by female workers because more females than males work part-time (see Chart 1 above).

Footnotes and data

1. Cassidy N. and Parsons, S. 2017, "The rising share of part-time work", *RBA Bulletin*, September Quarter 2017

2. Ibid

ABS, *Characteristics of Employment*, various years.

ABS, *Forms of Employment*, various years.

ABS, *Labour force Australia, quarterly detail*, Feb 2018.

ABS, *Labour force Australia*, April 2018.