

# Mums are heading back to work sooner and it is stressing them out

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(Medical Xpress) -- Sole parents and married mums are working more, leading to more time in childcare for their kids and decreases in the parents overall life and job satisfaction, according to news stats from the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research.

The figures come as part of the sixth volume of the Institute's Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, released today, which analyses more than 12,000 thousand respondents in Australia's biggest longitudinal survey of 7000 households.

In 2001, the number of mothers with partners who went back to work while their child was under two years old was just over 40 per cent rising to 52 per cent in 2008. The number of single parents and partnered mothers involved in the workforce also increased over the same time period.

"Part of this increase is likely to be due to changes in eligibility for Parenting Payments which were part of the 2006 'Welfare to Work' changes," said HILDA Researcher Diana Warren. "The number of women returning to work while their child was aged between eight and eleven months has increased from five per cent to 11 per cent over the last ten years, presumably due to the increased availability of maternity leave."

"A mother's work-life satisfaction decreases slightly the more time their children spend in child care, particularly if their child is over the age of

two.”

“Mothers also seem to feel the pressure on their work time more because of families, recording a lower work satisfaction while for fathers the opposite is true, with many saying that [work](#) has a negative impact on their family time and satisfaction.”

Stress also plays a role in job and life satisfaction; every year women reported substantially higher levels of parenting stress than men, with single parents – men or women – recording higher stress levels than those with partners.

It’s not all bad news for parents. While the average life satisfaction for both mothers and fathers decreases slightly after their children reach two years old, it is at its highest when their youngest child is under the age of two.

Men also record higher [job satisfaction](#) the older their children get, while for mothers job satisfaction is higher if their partner is not employed and caring for the kids at home.

The proportion of Australian workers taking either paid or unpaid parental leave is also on the rise. In 2007, 53 per cent of women and 32 per cent of men took some form of leave, up from 41 and 19 in 2000.

Survey respondents have also recorded a significant change in attitudes towards marriage, children and gender roles when it comes to parenting and employment. “Australians are becoming less traditional or conservative,” said Diana Warren. “More people than ever agree that homosexual couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples, while only 30 per cent of respondents think men should be the sole bread winners in the family.”

Now in its tenth year, the HILDA Survey is administered by the Melbourne Institute at the University of Melbourne, and is commissioned and funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The HILDA Survey Statistical Report has been produced annually since 2006.

The full version report is available from  
[www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/statreport.html](http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/statreport.html)

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