

The work-child care interface: How working women with young children combine work and child care

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ABSTRACT

For women who are mothers of young children, the decision to participate in the labour force depends on a large number of co-determining factors. These factors range from the economic to social with attitudes, family background and access to child care all being influential. Unfortunately, data constraints have made it difficult to simultaneously test the strength of these influences. However the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey provides an opportunity to assess the extent to which access to a set of employment benefits, childcare arrangements and domestic arrangements facilitate the combination of work and family responsibilities for women with young children. This paper uses data from Wave 1 of HILDA, collected in late 2001, to identify women with preschool aged children classified as being either employed, unemployed and marginally attached to the labour force and those not in the labour force. The paper examines the extent to which there are significant differences in family background, personal characteristics, job characteristics, domestic arrangements and attitudes to parental roles and work for each of these sub-groups. Further, for the group of employed women, the paper compares reported work hours and child care hours and identifies women with a care deficit (non-parental care hours less than maternal work hours) and those with a care surplus (non-parental care hours exceed work hours) and endeavours to explain the difference.

