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**Working Paper**

## The changing gender distribution of paid and unpaid work in New Zealand

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# The changing gender distribution of paid and unpaid work in New Zealand

Paul Callister

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# Abstract

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This paper explores five main questions regarding the gender distribution of work, primarily in the context of couples with young children. These are: how much total paid and unpaid work is carried out in New Zealand?; how is this work shared between women and men?; how does this compare with other countries?; how might the mix of unpaid and paid work change in New Zealand in the future?; and should gender equity in paid and unpaid work be a key part of the discussion about labour market participation rates?

Overall, the data on paid and unpaid work show a pattern that is universal in industrialised countries. New Zealand men undertake more paid work, while women undertake more unpaid work. But there are differences between countries in the amount of paid and unpaid work undertaken by women and men. In particular, New Zealand stands out in terms of both the long hours worked by a group of men and, despite strong growth in maternal employment in recent decades, the low employment rates of a group of women with young children. Recent attention has focused on social policies which may potentially increase maternal participation rates or their hours of work. However, less attention has been given to how this might change the distribution of paid and unpaid work both within households, and the total amount of work undertaken by individuals and households.

This paper considers such issues, and also canvasses some of the reasons why as a society we might want to increase women's participation or hours of paid work. It suggests that such discussions need to be carried out within the context of debates around a wider range of issues including the impact of “overwork” on a group of individuals, families and wider society; how to support replacement fertility levels; and how to increase business productivity. The paper argues that choices made by individuals, households, employers and the government will all play a part in determining the amount of paid and unpaid work undertaken in New Zealand; how such work is distributed between women and men; and the levels of income, parental care of children and leisure that individuals and households are able to achieve.

**JEL CLASSIFICATION** J10, J21, J22

**KEYWORDS** employment; labour supply; gender equity, time use; New Zealand

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# The changing gender distribution of paid and unpaid work in New Zealand

## 1 Introduction

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The failure of highly educated women to stay in the labor market represents a wasted societal investment. ....Policy measures can address the reasons some women do drop out by making it more possible for professionals, as well as other workers, to combine work and family. In addition, the double standard in parenting needs to be attacked so that, eventually, men are just as likely as women to take care of children at the same level of intensity and women's and men's labor force participation patterns will look even more similar than they do today (Hartmann 2004).

This quote from Hartmann captures two important judgments that are sometimes made in relation to men's and women's patterns of paid and unpaid work. First, for a variety of reasons, including maximising investments in education and striving for gender equality in both society and the home, many commentators consider increasing women's employment rates to be an important goal.<sup>1 2</sup> Second, some analysts suggest that unless men increase their share of unpaid work, gender equality in both the home and the workplace will not be possible. Fulfilling these two goals would require a shift in the distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men.

Hartmann provides some reasons as to why a society might desire an increase in women's labour force participation, but there could be many other possible goals. In New Zealand, for instance, are we seeking to increase total paid labour supply (the combined hours worked by men and women), are we trying to replace unpaid work with (possibly more productive) paid work, are we aiming to achieve gender equity in both paid and unpaid work or, in fact, is the aim to achieve a mixture of goals?

Keeping in mind this overall question of the reasons for increasing participation rates, I begin the paper by outlining various longer-term changes in employment for men and

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<sup>1</sup> As an example, the New Zealand Women's Action Plan (Ministry of Women's Affairs 2004: 10) has as two of its goals to "improve women's participation in employment, earnings, and quality of employment" and to "increase women's participation in leadership and decision-making in the economic sector".

<sup>2</sup> Investments in education may, in fact, have payoffs in other markets as well, such as the marriage market, or in the quality of non market work at home or in the community.

women as individuals, in households and as couples in families. These are well known but are worth repeating to set the scene for the subsequent analysis. Monitoring changes in individual, household and family employment patterns is important if we are to fully understand employment choices, given that a significant number of working-aged individuals live in households with other working-aged individuals and will, therefore, often be making joint decisions about paid and unpaid work.

Drawing on a variety of data sources, including information on employment preferences, this section includes international comparisons of families' patterns of paid work. The data presented here complement the data on the employment of individuals presented by Johnston (2005).

The paper then moves onto a discussion of unpaid work. Due to there having been only one time use survey carried out in New Zealand, inevitably this section focuses on cross-sectional rather than time series data. It includes exploring some future options for changing the mix of paid and unpaid work, including the gender division of such work, in New Zealand. Based on the discussion of both paid and unpaid work, the paper concludes by exploring whether there is the potential to develop a high-productivity society in New Zealand, with an optimal balance between paid work and family life, as well as a high level of equality between men and women in both the home and the workplace.

In much of this discussion I focus on the 25-34 age group, since this is of particular interest.<sup>3</sup> In early 2005, the government stated that, while New Zealand's overall labour force participation rates are high, the rate for some groups of New Zealand women, particularly those aged 25-34, are below the OECD average (Clark 2005). While recognising the importance of sole parenthood in the analysis of changes in work, this paper primarily focuses on couples with young children. For couples, the period when children have yet to reach school age is a time where, traditionally, the differences in patterns of paid and unpaid work between women and men have been the most extreme.

In summary, the paper explores five main questions, primarily in the context of couples with young children. These are:

- How much total paid and unpaid work is carried out in New Zealand?
- How is this work shared between women and men?
- How does this compare with other countries?
- How might the mix of unpaid and paid work change in New Zealand in the future?
- Should gender equality be a key consideration in developing labour participation policies?

In considering the last point, there is a large and highly contested literature on what equality between the sexes might look like and what barriers, either culturally constructed or biologically based, there might be to change. While resolving these debates is very important, this paper considers equality at the basic level of male/female ratios of hours of paid and unpaid work.

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<sup>3</sup> There are some important underlying demographic and educational changes taking place in the 25-34 age group that potentially affect discussions about changes in paid and unpaid work. These are set out in Appendix 1.

In the discussions of paid and unpaid work, averages are primarily used. It is recognised that averages disguise much within-group heterogeneity and that the use of averages runs the risk of stereotyping the actual work performed by individual women and men. There is now much diversity within groups of individuals and households. The reader needs to keep in mind this heterogeneity when considering the data that are presented.

Finally, there is often an implicit assumption in the literature about households and the gender division of paid and unpaid work, that providing financially is not considered an investment in children in the same way unpaid work is (Christiansen and Palkovitz 2001). For example, attending a music lesson with your child is often considered a parental investment, whereas paying for the lesson is frequently not. The fact that both paid and unpaid work can be forms of parental investment needs to be taken into account when considering the balance of paid and unpaid work within families.

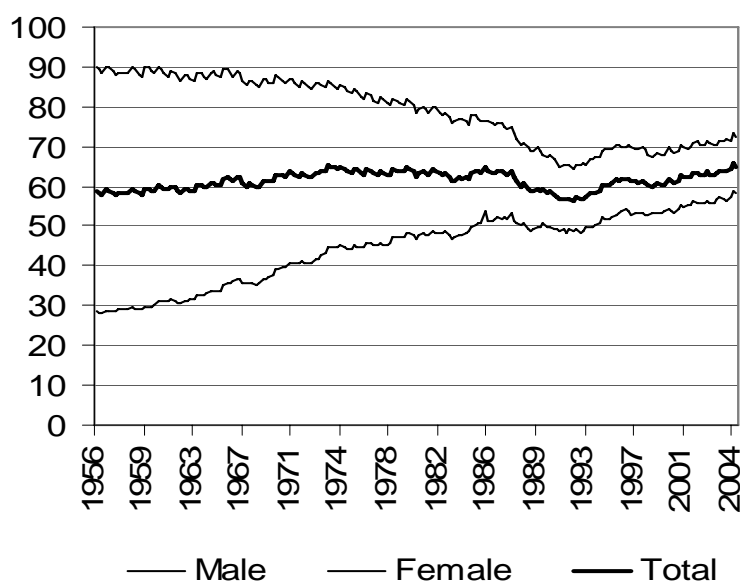
## 2 Changes in individual and household employment

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In the immediate post-WW2 period, most working-age men and women lived as married couples and raised children. In these couples, the main pattern of employment was the male working full time and the female at home looking after children. Women were also primarily responsible for most of the household production. This represented an extreme level of specialisation within the household.

Across industrialised countries, increases in divorce and non-marital childbearing, as well as shifts in the living arrangements of young adults and families, have increased rates of single parenthood and single adults living alone. There has also been a decline in the number of people living with their extended family. In parallel but, at times, connected with these changes in living arrangements, there has been a decline in the employment of prime-aged men, initially amongst older workers but in recent decades amongst low-skilled men. Over the same period, women's employment rates have risen dramatically as a result of various factors including changes in gender norms; increases in both women's level of education and in their real wage rates; decreased fertility; advances in household-production technology; the marketisation of unpaid work; and postponed childbearing (Figure 1). The changes in women's education in New Zealand have been particularly dramatic in recent years. For example, in 2001 in the 25-29 age group there were over 24,000 women with a degree or higher educational qualification compared with just over 18,000 men.

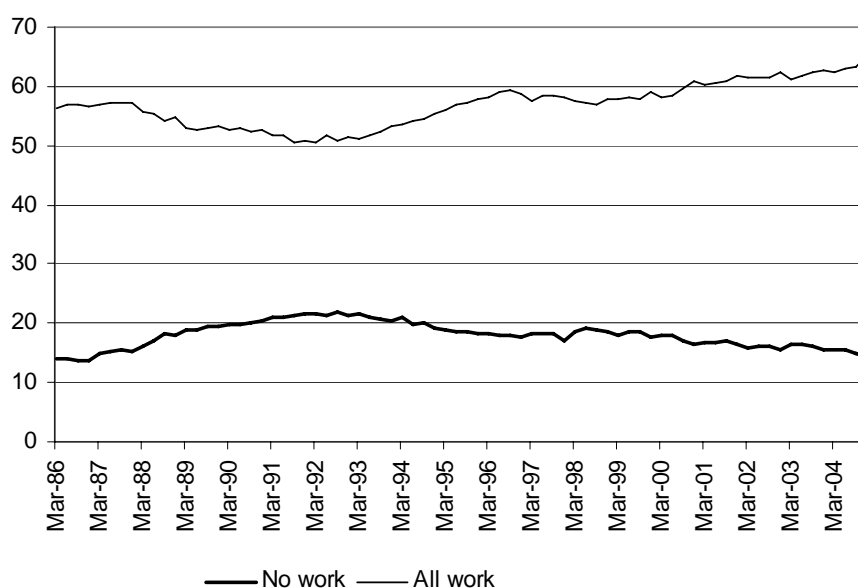
**Figure 1 – Employment rates for women and men aged 15 and over, 1956 to 2005**



Source: Derived from Chapple (1994, 1999) and the Household Labour Force Survey.

In recent years, researchers have identified a gap between individual-based and family/household-based measures of joblessness in certain OECD countries, including New Zealand (Singley and Callister 2004). Figure 2 uses HLFS data to show trends in household employment from 1986 to 2004. It shows the effect of the major loss of employment in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, after this period the chart shows a growth in all-work households and a decline in no-work households.

**Figure 2 – Proportion of working-aged households where all adults work or no adult was in paid work, 1986 to 2004**



Source: Household Labour Force Survey.

Households where all members are outside the ages of 18-64 years have been removed from the analysis

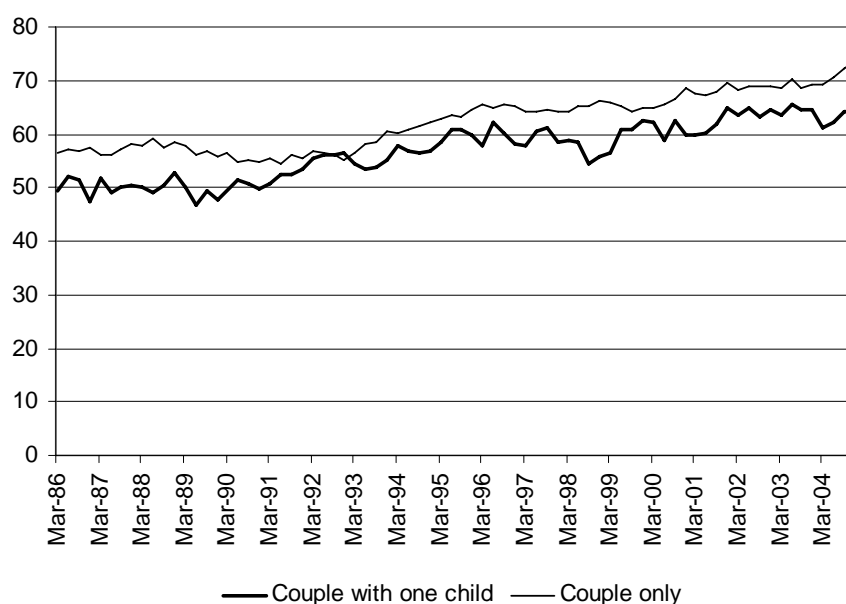
A growth in the number of adults living alone or in sole-parent families means that employment in these households will always be either no-work or all-work, and will thus contribute to the polarisation of work across households. But also of importance is the concentration of employment within couples, with the emergence of no-work couples and couples where both partners are employed. This is the subject of the following section.

## 3 Employment amongst couples

### 3.1 Changes in employment among couples

A key component of the growth in all-work households, illustrated in Figure 2, has been the growth of all-work couples, including couples raising children (Figure 3). One of the key drivers of this growth has been increasingly well-educated women joining their equally well-qualified partners in employment (Callister 1998). As Johnston (2005) demonstrates, using the 2001 Census, 47 percent of all partnered mothers with a child under five who had no formal qualifications participated in the labour market, while for those with post-school qualifications the figure was much higher at 64 percent.

**Figure 3 – Proportion of couples where both partners are employed, 1986 to 2004**

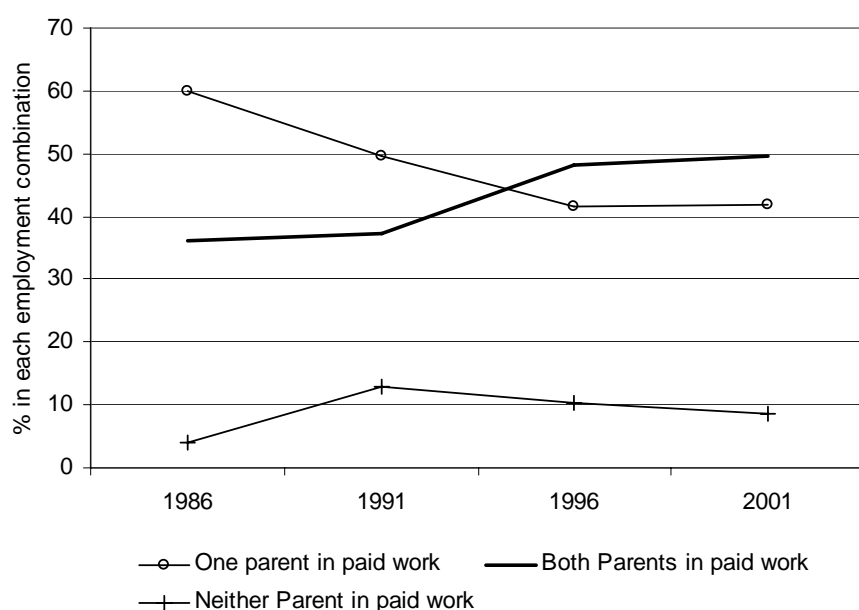


Source: Household Labour Force Survey.

Households where all members are outside the ages of 18-64 years have been removed from the analysis.

Figure 4 narrows the focus to couples with a child under five years of age. It uses Census data to show the growth of all-work and no-work childrearing couples over the period 1986 to 2001. It demonstrates that the major decline has been in “mixed work” couples, primarily those where the father worked full time and the mother was at home full time with the children. Future increases in partnered parents’ employment in New Zealand could come from those couples where neither partner is employed (where both, or either, mothers and fathers could move into employment) or from mixed-work couples (where it is mainly mothers who could move into employment).

**Figure 4 – Employment patterns of couples with a child under 5, 1986 to 2001**



Source: The Census.

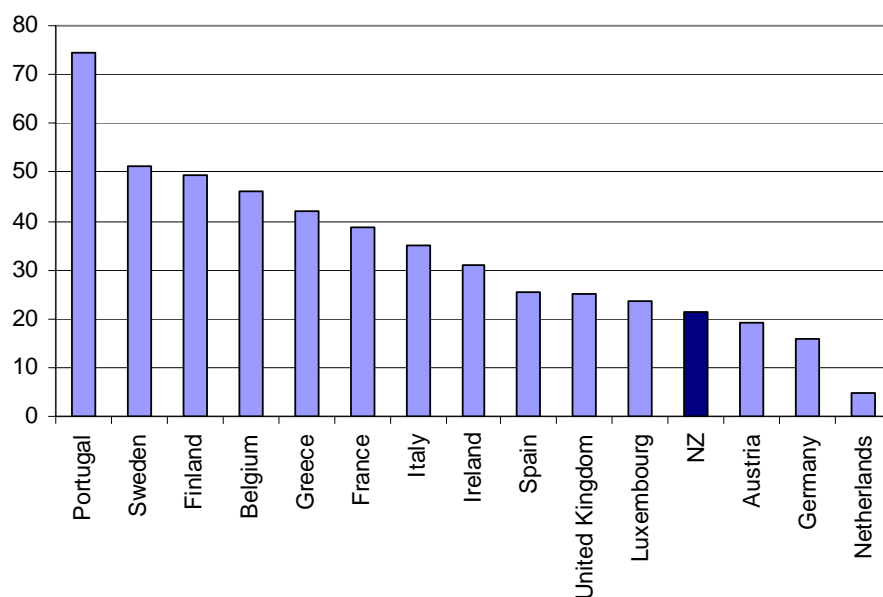
## 3.2 Full-time and part-time work

Figure 4 disguises the important dimension of hours worked. “Both parents in paid work”, for example, can be further divided into two key groups. One of these is where both partners work full time (the so-called “egalitarian” model), while in the other group the man works full time and the woman part time (the “neo-traditional” model).<sup>4</sup> To set the New Zealand data in an international context, Figures 5, 6 and 7 draw on European data to show patterns of employment for couples with pre-school children. (A preferred working arrangement in each country, based on the mothers’ responses, is shown in Appendix 2).

A number of patterns are discernable in these graphs. Firstly, when compared with European countries, New Zealand is not at the high end of the spectrum in terms of the proportion of dual, full-time employed couples with young children. Sweden and Finland, on the other hand, are amongst the countries with the highest proportion of couples both working full time. However, when the “neo-traditional” arrangement (where the woman works part time) is considered (Figure 6), New Zealand is higher in the rankings. Finally, New Zealand is in the middle ground in terms of “traditional” couples rather than being at the high end (Figure 7).

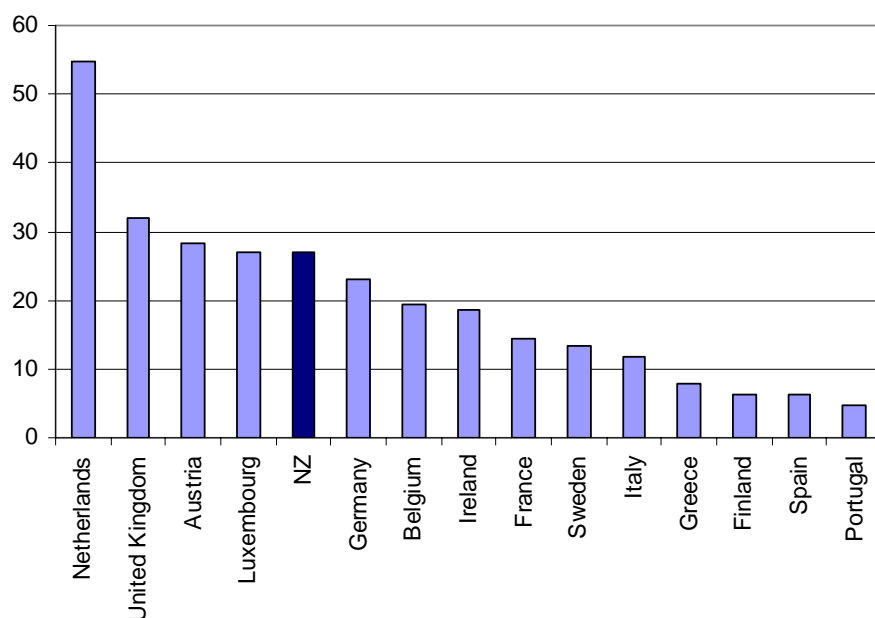
<sup>4</sup> In a United States context, Moen and Yu (2000) were amongst early users of the term “neotraditional”.

**Figure 5 – Proportion of couples with a child under 6 where both work full time, European countries and New Zealand**



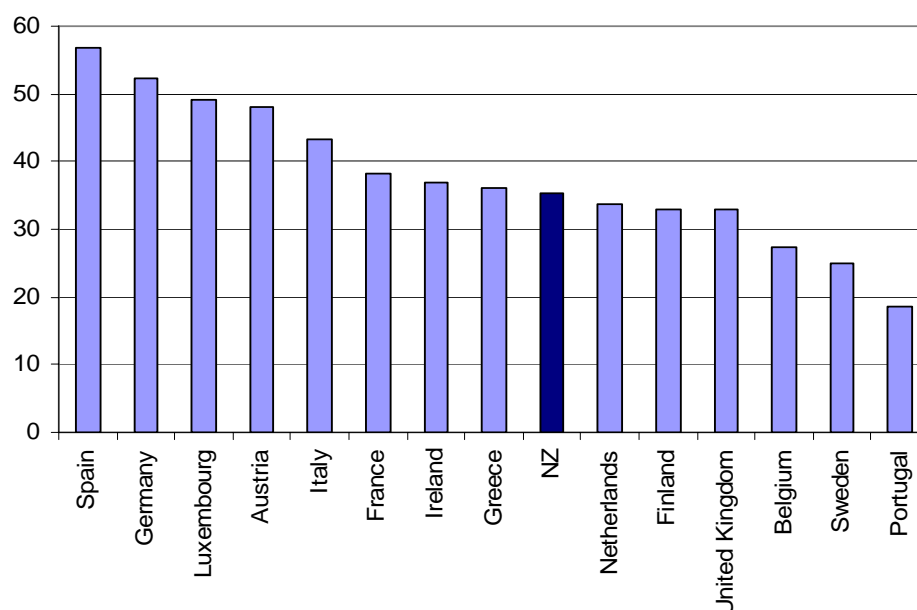
Source: European data from Table 2.1 of OECD (2003), New Zealand data from the Census.

**Figure 6 – Proportion of couples with a child under 6 where the male works full time and the female part time, European countries and New Zealand**



Source: European data from Table 2.1 OECD (2003), New Zealand data from the Census.

**Figure 7 – Proportion of couples with a child under 6 where the male works full time and the female is not employed, European countries and New Zealand**



Source: European data from Table 2.1 OECD (2003), New Zealand data from the Census.

The preference data shown in Appendix 2 indicate that in almost all countries a higher proportion of couples would prefer both partners working than the actual outcomes suggest. It is not clear what holds women back from fulfilling these preferences. For individuals, the reasons are likely to include a lack of affordable, quality childcare; insufficient flexible jobs offering the desired hours and income; and a lack of sharing of unpaid work in the home.<sup>5</sup> In addition, if Hakim (2000) is correct in her theory about the work preferences of women, there will be a residual group in each country who, no matter what incentives are offered (such as free out-of-home childcare), will want to remain “home centred”.

## 4 “Overworked” New Zealand households and gender equity in paid work

A comparison of the proportion of employees working 50 or more hours per week among a selection of OECD countries shows that New Zealand has one of the highest proportions of workers putting in long hours of paid work (Messenger 2004). When couples are considered, international comparative data also suggest New Zealand is at the high end of the working hours spectrum (see Appendix 3).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Other attitudinal data are also set out in Appendix 2. One set of data, based on attitudes in the mid 1990s, suggest that while New Zealand is not at the most liberal end of the spectrum in terms of sex roles for mothers and fathers, it is also far from being the most conservative. However, another data set, also a decade old, indicates that a high proportion of survey respondents think New Zealand mothers should be at home with their preschool children, but, if they are employed, should work relatively short hours.

<sup>6</sup> The OECD provides some estimates of total allocation of paid work, retirement and education across a lifecycle. While these data should be treated with considerable caution due to the nature of the estimates, they suggest that New Zealand men spend significantly more time in paid work than the OECD average, while for women the pattern is the opposite (OECD 2003: Table 1.2).

New Zealand couples with young children tend to work shorter total hours than other couples. However, between 1986 and 2001 there was an increase in the total hours worked by couples with preschool children. Table 1 shows the proportion of child-rearing couples working a total of under 30 hours per week or, in terms of long hours, between 80 and 100 hours, and 100 or more hours per week between 1986 and 2001. While it shows an increase at both ends of the weekly working hours' spectrum, the strongest growth was in longer hours.<sup>7</sup> The increasing hours of work for couples primarily reflect three trends: 1) an increase in the proportion of fathers working long hours; 2) increasing employment rates for mothers; and 3) at the same time, a decline in the number of employed mothers working short hours. This illustrates the importance of considering both changes in employment and in hours worked.

**Table 1 – Changes in weekly combined hours of paid work for employed couples with a child under five, 1986 and 2001**

	% in each group of hours					
	< 30	30 < 40	40 < 50	50 < 80	80 < 100	100+
1986	2.3	5.5	40.7	36.4	10.1	5.0
2001	4.2	3.4	27.4	42.2	15.6	7.2
Δ 86–01	1.9	-2.1	-13.3	5.8	5.6	2.2

Source: Callister (2004) using Census data.

At an aggregate level, between 1986 and 2001, there was a rise in average combined hours worked by employed couples aged 25-34 from 56 hours to 62 hours per week. While the differences are not great, education levels of both parents play some part in determining couples' working hours, with poorly educated couples more likely to work shorter hours than well-educated parents. Yet, this rise in total working hours for childrearing couples needs to be seen in an international context.

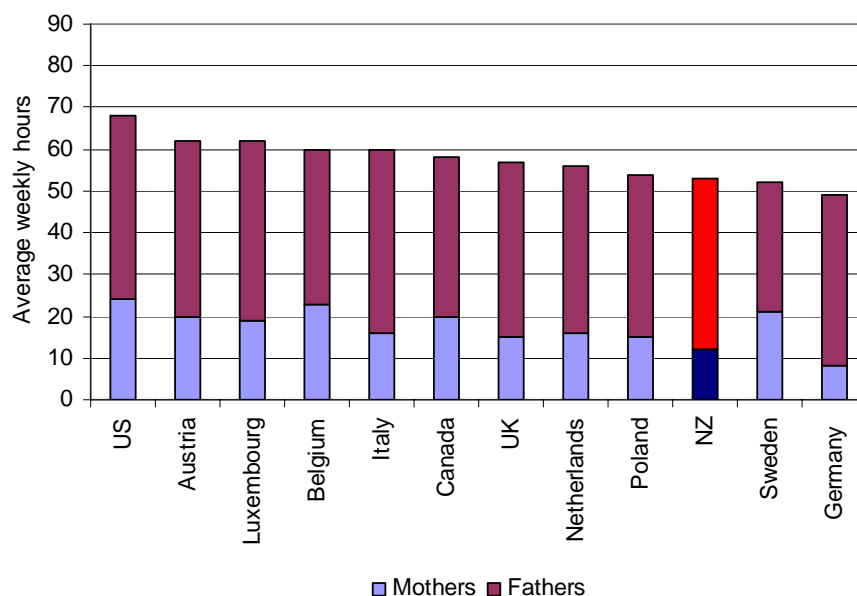
As Johnston (2005) shows, New Zealand has relatively low employment rates for mothers with young children, but when total paid working hours are considered across the whole of society, New Zealand is near the top of the OECD. The following data support this view, even though couples raising children are the only group considered. However, the data also show some gendered dimensions of working hours among couples that Johnston does not highlight. The international data are drawn from an OECD comparison undertaken by Gornick (2005). The New Zealand data used in the comparison are from the 2001 Census so already take into account the increase in working hours for parents of young children over recent decades. The data are all for partnered parents and constitute individual-level rather than couple-level data. However, other analyses by Gornick suggest that the true couple-level data are not all that different.

Figures 8 and 9 show the combined working hours of couples with a young child (the full dataset is attached as Appendix 4). The averages in Figure 8 include those not in paid work (thus taking into account employment differences between countries), while in Figure 9 the averages only include employed parents. Figure 8 is particularly affected by the relatively low employment rates of mothers with a young child in New Zealand (Johnston 2005), but even when this group is removed total hours worked by New Zealand couples are still only in the mid-range. Noteworthy is the position of Sweden in both figures. While

<sup>7</sup> These data indicate that in parallel to the polarisation of work across households (when measured simply by employment) there was also a polarisation of hours worked within households.

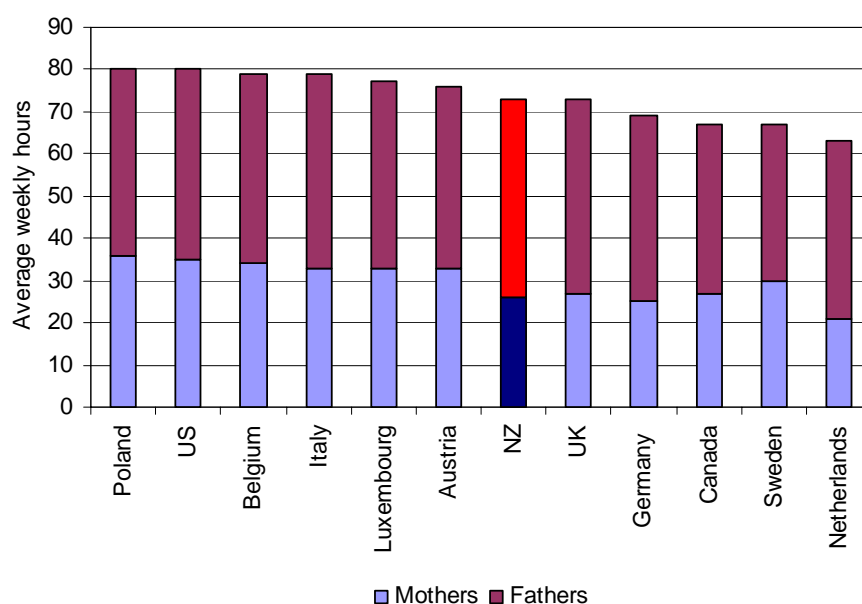
a much higher proportion of Swedish mothers of young children are employed relative to New Zealand (or, at least in the first year of the child's life are on paid parental leave), total hours of Swedish couples are lower than those of New Zealand couples. These figures alone suggest that both employment rates and working hours need to be considered in discussions about families and work and that single measure comparisons with Nordic countries can be misleading.

**Figure 8 – Mothers and fathers' average weekly hours in paid work (parents aged 25-50), child 0-2 (including those not working)**



Source: OECD data from Gornick (2005), New Zealand data from the Census.

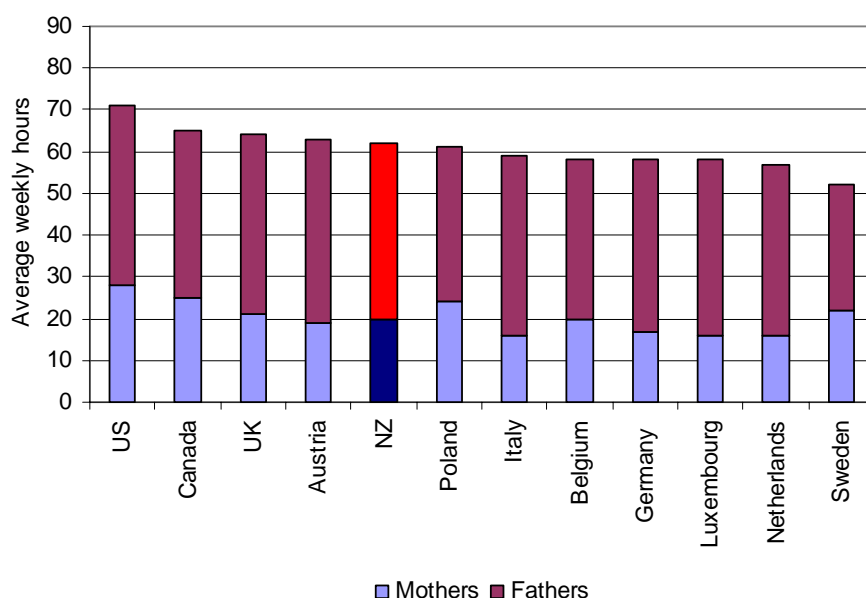
**Figure 9 – Mothers and fathers' average weekly hours in paid work (parents aged 25-50), child 0-2 (only those in paid employment)**



Source: OECD data from Gornick (2005), New Zealand data from the Census.

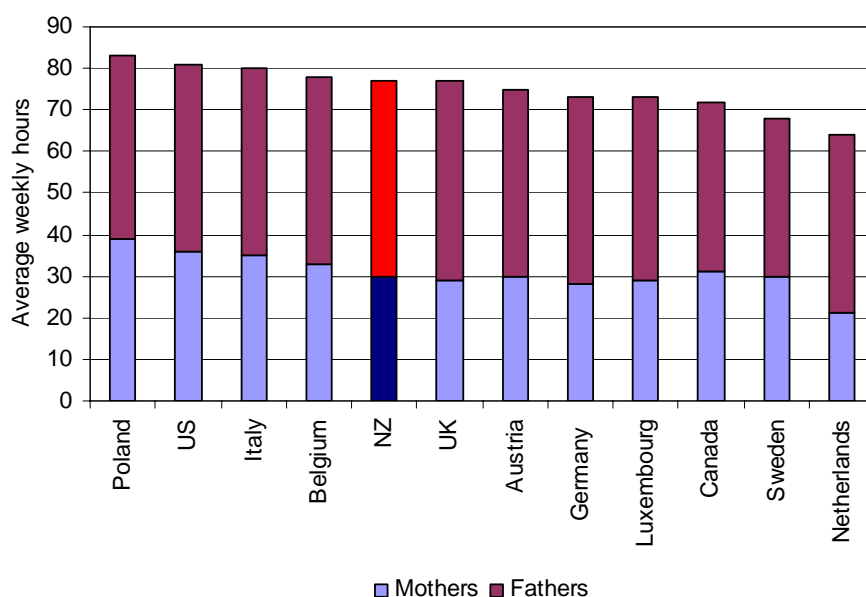
Figures 10 and 11 show patterns of work for couples with dependent children of any age (that is, between 0 and 17 years). They confirm the pattern illustrated by both the OECD (2004) and Johnston (2005). That is, New Zealand mothers move steadily back into paid work, including full-time work, as their children get older. So when a childrearing lifecycle approach is taken, New Zealand couples are at the upper end of the OECD in terms of weekly working hours, although well short of countries like the United States.

**Figure 10 – Mothers and fathers' average weekly hours in paid work (parents aged 25-50), child under 18 (including those not working)**



Source: OECD data Gornick (2005), New Zealand data from the Census.

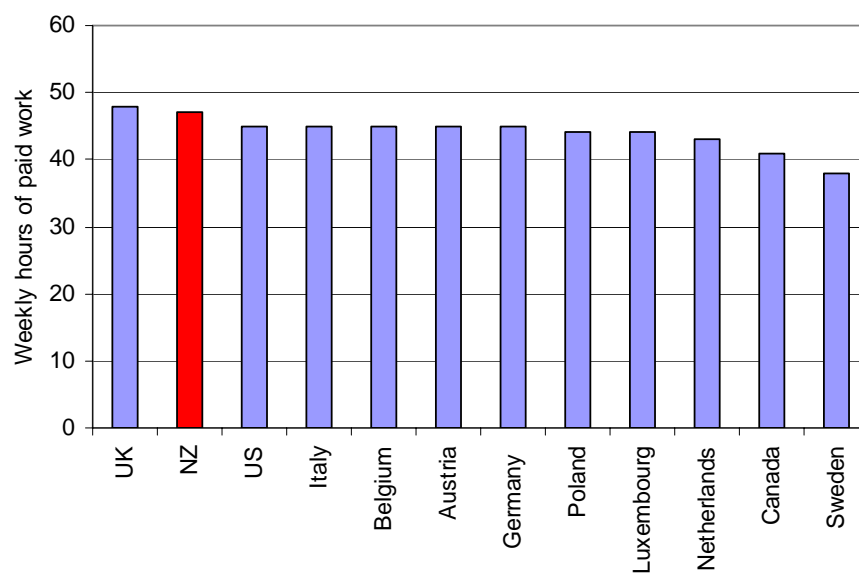
**Figure 11 – Mothers and fathers' average weekly hours in paid work (parents aged 25-50), child under 18 (only those in paid employment)**



Source: OECD data Gornick (2005), New Zealand data from the Census.

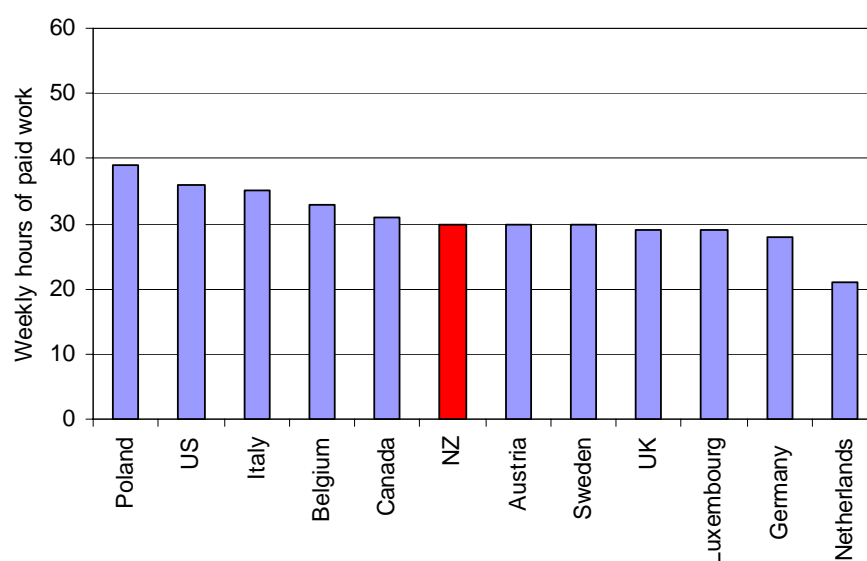
Yet, while mothers resume paid work as their child gets older, one of the factors that elevates the weekly working hours of New Zealand couples is the long average hours worked by fathers. Figure 12 shows that New Zealand is second only to the United Kingdom in terms of the average number of hours worked. Swedish fathers, on average, work the shortest hours. New Zealand mothers are more in the middle of the range, not dissimilar to Swedish mothers (Figure 13).

**Figure 12 – Fathers' average weekly hours of paid work, child under 18, only those in paid work**



Source: OECD data Gornick (2005), New Zealand data from the Census.

**Figure 13 – Mothers' average weekly hours of paid work, child under 18, only those in paid work**



Source: OECD data Gornick (2005), New Zealand data from the Census.

Given that New Zealand fathers work such long hours on average, a more equal distribution of paid work between fathers and mothers would require either that mothers hugely increase the number of paid hours they work when their children are young, or that fathers reduce their hours of paid work. When the hours worked of mothers and fathers are directly compared within each country, New Zealand is not high on the gender equity stakes for parents of dependent children (see Appendix 5).<sup>8</sup> The three countries that stand out as having a relatively high level of gender equality in paid work are Poland, Sweden and the United States.

Comparing the United States and Sweden, which are both high-income countries with a high level of gender equity, reveals two quite distinct models. In the United States the high level of gender equity is achieved by both partners in couples working relatively long hours. In contrast, both mothers and fathers work relatively short hours in Sweden. Across all age groups, time use data suggest that in Sweden the balance between women's and men's paid working hours improved between 1990/91 and 2000/1, with the change coming about through a reduction of an average three hours per week worked by men, together with no change for women (Statistics Sweden 2004).

In light of the Swedish model, it is possible that further increases in mothers' paid employment might allow New Zealand fathers to reduce their hours of work. But how likely is this? In recent times it appears the opposite trend has occurred, that is, on average, fathers' hours have increased as more women have moved into the workforce (Callister 2004). Yet, research carried out in Australia on the preferences of partnered fathers suggests that, overall, fathers' satisfaction with their work hours decreased as the number of hours worked increased (Weston *et al* 2004). In addition, the proportion of fathers who would prefer to work fewer hours (taking into account the impact of this on incomes) increases with the number of hours worked. The research also found, however, that a quarter of fathers working very long hours (60 hours or more a week) were satisfied with their working hours. In New Zealand, an online survey of fathers by the EEO Trust (2003) indicated that 80% of them wished they could spend more time with their children, although this survey was highly unrepresentative.<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to know what prevents concerned fathers from reducing their hours of paid work.

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<sup>8</sup> Overall, New Zealand census data for opposite-sex couples aged 25-59 (based on the women's age) suggest that there was a shift in the distribution of hours worked by men and women in couples. One measure of this change is where women worked half or more of the total hours worked by the couples. In 1986, just under 20 percent of women contributed half or more of the hours worked. By 2001, this has risen to 28 percent.

<sup>9</sup> An Australian study by Pocock (2004) also suggests that many young people want to spend more time with their fathers.

## 5 Unpaid work

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Looking at paid work only tells half the story. Total workload, both paid and unpaid, is important.<sup>10</sup> This has been shown by a range of research, including cross-country research (Bittman 2005, Freeman and Schettkat 2001). Using a variety of data sources, including time-use data, Freeman and Schettkat (2001) compared the total working hours of women from Europe and the United States and showed that these are quite similar. However, there has been a major growth in women's employment in the United States with American women currently being at the high end internationally in terms of working hours. In contrast, in countries such as Germany a considerable amount of women's working time is spent in unpaid work. The authors suggest various reasons for this. A major one is that unpaid work such as food preparation, childcare and cleaning houses tends to be marketised or professionalised in the United States. The importance of the marketisation of unpaid work as a means of facilitating an increase in women's employment has been identified by a number of time use researchers (eg Bittman 1999). Shifting from unpaid to paid work also increases GDP per capita because the previously unpaid work is then captured in national accounts.

In New Zealand, there has only been one time-use survey carried out, so changes in total working hours over time cannot be determined. Across the total population, the data show that men and women's total hours of work are very similar but, as in other industrialised countries, men undertake more paid work and women more unpaid work (Gershuny 2001, Statistics New Zealand 2000).<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, the New Zealand data also show some tradeoffs between paid and unpaid work. Women who work full time undertake, on average, less unpaid work than those working part time, while employed women undertake less unpaid work, overall, than those not in paid work.<sup>12</sup>

When the New Zealand sample is restricted to partnered men and woman with a child under five, Stevens (2002) demonstrates that total hours of work (paid and unpaid) are higher for parents of young children than for men and women without children.<sup>13</sup> Again, this is a pattern seen in all industrialised countries. Not surprisingly, mothers with young children spend a far lower proportion of their total work time in paid employment than fathers (19 percent, compared to 64 percent for fathers). Stevens's data also show that the ratio of total hours of women's to men's work was 0.96; that is, on average partnered men with a child under five work roughly the same number of total hours as partnered women.<sup>14</sup> This finding runs counter to popular belief. However, the potential for New Zealand fathers, not just mothers, to work long hours of combined paid and unpaid work should not be surprising. If New Zealand fathers work long hours in paid work, and are

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<sup>10</sup> In time use studies, unpaid work includes household work, caring for household members, shopping and any other unpaid work outside the home. Paid work activities normally include paid employment, travel to and from work, any education related to paid employment, and searching for a job. There are a number of boundary problems, however, with paid and unpaid work, and also between these activities and leisure time. For example, shopping may be a leisure activity for some people, while others may view it as an unpaid task (or consider that it incorporates elements of both). Also, while paid and unpaid work are usually seen as separate activities, New Zealand time use data show that there is a small, but nevertheless significant, amount of simultaneous paid and unpaid work undertaken in New Zealand (Callister and Singley 2004).

<sup>11</sup> In New Zealand, across the whole of society, women undertake slightly more total hours of work than men (Statistics New Zealand 2000).

<sup>12</sup> This, and subsequent reportage of unpaid work, only includes primary activities.

<sup>13</sup> These data are calculated not by using couples as the unit of analysis but according to individuals who live in couples.

<sup>14</sup> In older child age groups mothers undertake slightly more total work than fathers.

also expected to be good fathers, both in terms of providing quality and quantity time with their children, then total hours of work are likely to be high.<sup>15</sup>

These data are for all couples with young children, not just for couples where both partners are employed. They include “traditional” couples, where the father works full time and the mother stays at home, “neo-traditional” couples where the mother works part time, and a small number of couples where it is the father who stays home and looks after the children. It may be that in New Zealand the potential for mothers’ total hours of work to be lifted above those of fathers prevents some mothers from entering the workforce or from moving from part-time to full-time employment. International time-use data on couples where both partners work full-time suggest that in some, but not all, countries women do more total work. Table 2 shows the ratio of women’s to men’s total work time (paid and unpaid) in couple households with a child under five where both partners work full time. New Zealand is not included in these data.<sup>16</sup> The total work time for couples in Sweden (a country where, as already demonstrated, paid working hours are relatively short and where paid working hours are closer for women and men than in many other countries) is nearly equal. However, in the other countries shown, women working full-time have a higher total workload than men. It is likely that New Zealand’s outcomes would be closer to that of the United States or the United Kingdom than Sweden.

**Table 2 – Ratio of women to men’s total work time (paid and unpaid) in couple households with a child under 5 years and where both partners work full time**

	Ratio
US (1995)	1.05
UK (1999)	1.16
Sweden (1991)	0.99
Italy (1989)	1.26

Source: OECD (2001)

So how could long total working hours be reduced? Not having children is one way of drastically reducing the amount of unpaid work (Bittman 2005). This seems an option now being chosen by many Italian women and, in most industrialised countries, by a significant number of well-educated women (Callister 2002). However, parents also have a number of options for reducing total workload, or keeping a high paid workload but still protecting the time spent with their children. They could possibly cut back on leisure time or they may be able to reduce the time they spend in unpaid work.<sup>17</sup> Within the broad area of unpaid work, parents may be able to reduce housework, childcare or eliminate volunteer work.

<sup>15</sup> There is the question as to why there is now an emphasis on fathers spending more time with their children. As research findings have moved us away from worrying about maternal deprivation they have suggested there can be some benefits in partnered fathers investing both “quality” and “quantity” time with their children. There is also a growing body of research on the benefits (or otherwise) of separated fathers spending time with either their biological children or step children (eg Marsiglio et al 2000)

<sup>16</sup> Statistics New Zealand has not deposited the time use data at the international time use study centre at Essex University from where the data shown in Table 3 are drawn from. This calculation could be repeated using New Zealand time use data as there was couple level data collected in the survey.

<sup>17</sup> Research by Bond *et al* (2002) has supported the notion that working parents may be reducing leisure time. In the United States, in 2002 fathers spent 1.3 hours on themselves on workdays, down from 2.1 hours in 1977. But the study found mothers have even less time for themselves - 0.9 hours versus 1.6 hours in 1977.

It seems, however, that childcare time is one of the last areas to be reduced. Studies undertaken in the United States and Australia show that despite the rapid rise in mothers' labour force participation, their time with children has been quite stable (Bianchi 2000, Bond *et al* 2002, Craig 2005). Bianchi notes that in the past, non-employed mothers' time with children was reduced by the demands of unpaid family work and domestic chores and by the use of mother substitutes for childcare, especially in large families. Bianchi comments that employed mothers now try to find new ways to maximise time with children. For example, in all the years studied, employed mothers undertook less housework than non-employed mothers, although total hours of housework were also declining among both groups. The reduction in housework hours can occur in a variety of ways. Standards may be lowered or housework time may be intensified; that is, more work is carried out in less time. For example, dishwashers, microwaves, clothes driers, and disposable nappies may reduce or speed up housework, or individuals may simply work harder. For those who can afford it, "professionals" are increasingly cleaning houses, while other forms of household work, such as food preparation, are increasingly being outsourced. These changes may not only increase the time available for paid work (or for leisure) but also reduce the drudgery of many household tasks.

However, just as importantly, Bianchi (2000) also found that within couples, fathers are spending more time with their children than in the past, potentially increasing the total time children spend with parents even as mothers work longer hours outside the home. Despite a lack of growth in time spent by men on other aspects of unpaid work (such as house cleaning), the trend of increasing paternal care has also been shown by other overseas time use studies in a range of industrialised countries (eg Bittman 2005, Gershuny 2000, Yeung *et al* 2001). But in countries where fathers work long hours, such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, it is difficult to see how further advances in the sharing of childcare could occur without some reduction in either fathers' paid working hours or, alternatively, in mothers' time with children (that is, through a further professionalisation of childcare). This latter model would reduce the total amount of parental childcare that would need to be shared.

## 6 Finding a new balance in paid and unpaid work

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If New Zealand women, particularly mothers of young children, do keep increasing their rates of employment and/or hours of paid work, what are the likely implications for the overall balance of paid and unpaid work in our society? If greater gender equality is also a goal in New Zealand, what are possible models for achieving it in paid and unpaid work within households?

One model, which focuses on horizontal equity between women and men, is the "professionalisation" route where unpaid work can be contracted out and the focus of parents, particularly well-educated parents, can be primarily on paid work. Within this model, one option is low-income professionalisation (Freeman and Schettkat 2001). In Europe and the United States, relatively low-skilled immigrants from countries such as the Philippines, Turkey or Mexico are often among those who are employed by high-earning families to provide personalised family services. Individuals from these countries are over-represented in occupations such as nannies, gardeners, and house cleaners (Momsen 1999, Parreñas 2001). This pattern is more likely to occur in countries with higher levels of

income inequality such as the United States and the United Kingdom. If immigration rules were changed in New Zealand, it could also occur in this country to a greater degree than already takes place. This could be a high productivity option as it is likely to represent a high level of specialisation across the whole of society.

At another extreme the Swedish model, which has high employment rates for women, has at its heart both horizontal and vertical equality. Successive Swedish governments have long had an interest in the workings of households and, as such, have not considered the family and household sphere, and greater gender equity within it, as entirely private. In Sweden, government policies such as universal entitlements to paid parental leave (including special, non-transferable “pappa” months to encourage fathers to take leave), along with an aim to provide universal, high-quality subsidised childcare, as well as support for relatively low working hours, have all assisted parents in achieving a very different work-life balance compared to many other countries (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1994). In New Zealand, unlike Sweden, there has been almost no official promotion to increase men’s share of childcare. For example, New Zealand fathers in opposite-sex couples have no independent right to take a period of paid parental leave (Father and Child Society 2004). As part of supporting men’s involvement in childcare, the Swedish Government appointed a *Working Party on the Role of Men* in 1983. This working party organised seminars, publications and projects (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1994). In 1992, another working group, called *Fathers, Children and Working Life*, replaced this. This had the task of analysing men’s use of parental benefits and the possible labour market factors preventing men from taking parental leave.

All the family support in Sweden, particularly out-of-home childcare and paid parental leave, has obviously been achieved at a considerable cost to taxpayers, particularly given that workers undertaking jobs such as childcare are relatively well paid. Critics of the system also point to the extreme levels of gender-based, occupational segregation. In addition, the more equal income distribution in Sweden, along with the dominant notion that “each person should take care of her/his own dirt” has, in the past, made it harder for middle-class families to privately employ domestic labour even if they wanted to (Nyberg 2000: 12). Detractors of the Swedish model also suggest that “new” fathers are easier to find in theory than in practice. Often this is supported by anecdotal stories that interpret shifts in fathers’ behaviour as self centred, such as Swedish men taking time off to look after their children when important soccer games are taking place (Adema 2004). There is an assumption in such stories, if in fact true, that fathers should not be enjoying themselves in the time they spend with children. However, some official data do point to change, even if not dramatic, in fathers’ behaviour. For example, in 1974 fathers took no days of paid parental leave. In contrast, in 1995 they took 10 percent of days and, by 2003, this had risen to 17 percent of days (Statistics Sweden 2004). An increase in childcare time by fathers may not necessarily translate into an increase in total unpaid work time if other aspects of household work, such as food preparation, are being marketised at the same time. Whatever the underlying cause, Swedish time use data would suggest that some shifts in the mix of unpaid work have taken place.<sup>18</sup>

Assuming that New Zealand individuals and households favour the on-going professionalisation of unpaid work, particularly housework, are there limits to such marketisation? Ironmonger (1996), using Australian data, notes that despite the professionalisation of unpaid work, there is still more unpaid than paid work undertaken in

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<sup>18</sup> While Swedish women still undertake more unpaid work than men (on average around 28 hours per week compared with nearly 20 for men), between 1990/1 and 2000/1, women reduced the time they spent on unpaid work.

industrialised economies. This would suggest much scope for further shifts from unpaid to paid work. However, there is some debate about the impact of the professionalisation of unpaid work. For example, Hochschild (1983) discusses the “commercialisation of human feelings” in areas such as retailing and childcare. Hochschild suggests that workers, particularly female workers, are required to sell their emotional labour often at a low price. This results in a sense of subservience, which is not associated with other jobs, and also results in low incomes.

Aside from possible ethical and emotional issues, there may be other factors that limit professionalisation. Ironmonger argues that a main reason for the continuation of household production is that the final products are superior in terms of quality, time and location of delivery. For example, fast food may be of poorer quality nutritionally and lead to obesity. Weiss (1997) also notes that household production continues because of lowering costs of search (for goods and services), transaction costs and monitoring of the production and quality of goods and services.

The various models of paid and unpaid work suggest new balances between paid work, unpaid work and leisure and, if it is a goal, greater gender equality in each area, could, through a variety of tradeoffs, be achieved in a range of ways. One, which could be seen as a type of “South Seas” version of Sweden, could involve further increases in women’s participation in paid work; a reduction in men’s paid working hours; a further reduction in the childcare undertaken by women through both marketisation and an increase in that undertaken by men; and finally, through further outsourcing of housework, a reduction in housework time for both women and men. If also associated with productivity gains in paid work, this could move New Zealand closer to being a high-income, more gender-equal society while also allowing a high level of parental time investment in children. Whether such a model could actually evolve in New Zealand is, however, debatable. First it depends on business finding new ways of increasing productivity. It also depends on potentially significant changes in the preferences of New Zealanders in terms of paid and unpaid work. This, in itself, may partly depend on how much government support is given to achieving greater gender equality in both the home and the workplace. As yet, we still know very little about preferences and the potential barriers—cultural, biological and economic—which prevent people from fulfilling them. Preferred outcomes might be somewhat different from some idealised model of gender equality and work-life balance.

## 7 Conclusion

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Since WW2, there have been major changes in patterns of paid work for women and men in New Zealand, as there have been in other industrialised countries. To a lesser extent, there have also been changes in the quantity and distribution of unpaid work. Many factors have been driving these shifts, including changes in household type; levels of educational attainment of women and men; transformations in the labour market; reductions in fertility; increased use of household technology; and outsourcing of unpaid work. Some of these drivers of change will continue to influence patterns of paid and unpaid work. In particular, through both changes in education and the development of a skills’ shortage, there is the potential for women to increase both their employment rates and their hours of paid work.

Overall, the data on paid and unpaid work show a pattern that is universal in industrialised countries. Men undertake more paid work, while women undertake a greater share of unpaid work. This places women at an economic disadvantage. But there are differences

between countries in the amount of paid and unpaid work undertaken by women and men. In particular, New Zealand stands out in terms of both the long hours worked by a group of men and the low employment rates of women with young children. Recent attention has focused on the potential impact associated with increasing maternal employment rates. However, less attention has been given to how this might change the distribution of paid and unpaid work both within households and across the whole of society. There are various possible scenarios.

If an increase in women's hours of work is accompanied by a decrease in men's hours of work, then gender equity and men's involvement with their children might both be increased. Such a shift may not, however, increase overall labour supply in the country. On the other hand, if an increase in women's hours of work is not accompanied by a decrease in men's hours of work, then the resultant increase in paid labour supply might not lead to improved gender equity. Unless unpaid work continues to reduce through outsourcing and/or through men undertaking a greater share, total hours of paid and unpaid work are likely to be longer for a greater number of employed women than employed men.

So why might we want to increase women's participation in the labour force? What is the public policy goal? As raised in the introduction to this paper, are we merely seeking to increase total paid labour supply, are we trying to replace unpaid work with (possibly higher productivity) paid work, are we aiming to achieve gender equity in both paid and unpaid work or, in fact, are we aiming to achieve a mixture of goals? Moreover, should New Zealand instead be aiming for a high-productivity, leisure society that is also more gender equitable than it currently is? This paper portrays the latter goal as a "South Seas" version of Sweden. It will no doubt appeal to some people, but there is a considerable price in trying to achieve it, as there is in Sweden itself. In recent times in New Zealand, parallel discussions have been occurring about the impact of "overwork" on a group of individuals, families and wider society; how best to increase women's employment; how to support replacement fertility levels; as well as ways of increasing business productivity. These discussions should no longer occur in parallel, but need to be integrated as an important conversation for public policy. Overall, there needs to be a wider debate as to what our income, parental time investment in childrearing and leisure goals might be; what goals we might have for gender equality in all spheres of life; and how we might best achieve these goals.

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## Appendix 1

### Changing demographics for those aged 25-34 in New Zealand

In New Zealand in all age groups under 20 there have traditionally been more men than women. However, in prime working-age groups the Census shows a growing imbalance between the number of men and the number of women. For example, in 1981 there were 1% more women in the 25-29 age group; by 1991 this had risen to 5% and to 9% more women in 2001 (Appendix Table 1). In the 30-34 age group, the rise has been from an even balance in 1981, to 4% more women in 1991 and 11% more women in 2001. This imbalance is even more pronounced amongst those with higher levels of formal education. For example, in 2001 in the 25-29 age group there were 21% more women than men with a tertiary qualification, and 4% in the 30-34 age group before finally reversing in the 35-39 age group. This imbalance becomes even more extreme amongst those with degrees. For instance, in the 25-29 age group there were 36% more such qualified women than men.

**Appendix Table 1 – Ratio of women to men in prime working age groups**

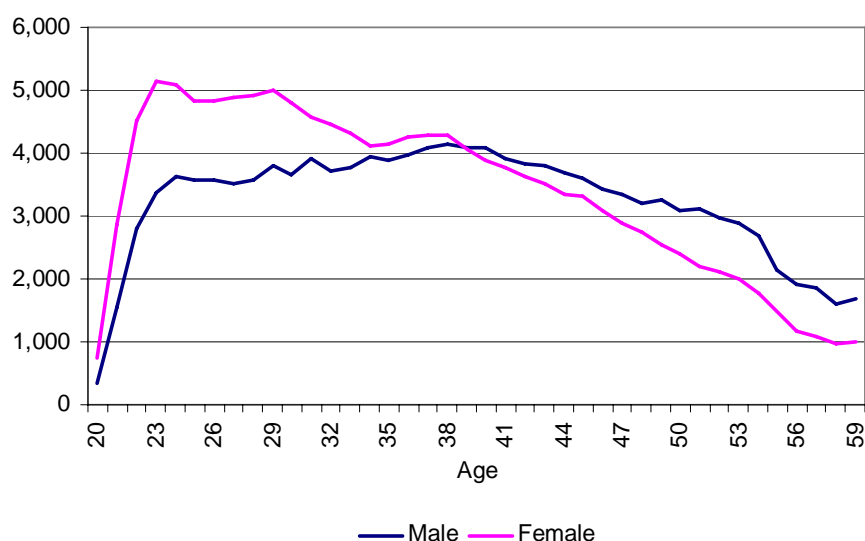
	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
20-24	0.97	0.96	0.98	0.99	1.02	1.02
25-29	0.98	1.01	1.01	1.05	1.06	1.09
30-34	0.98	1.00	1.02	1.04	1.06	1.11
35-39	0.97	1.00	1.00	1.02	1.05	1.08
40-44	0.96	0.99	0.99	1.01	1.03	1.06
45-49	0.94	0.96	0.99	0.99	1.01	1.04
50-54	0.99	0.95	0.97	1.00	1.00	1.02

Source: The Census.

When international comparisons are made, New Zealand stands out as having the highest imbalance of women to men in the OECD in the prime working and couple-forming age groups. The reasons for this imbalance in New Zealand are as yet unknown, but gendered migration must be a key factor.

The base numbers alone provide an indication as to why patterns of female employment could be more important than in the past. There are now more women than men in New Zealand: 53,000 more in the 20-49 age group if 2001 Census data are used, or nearly 36,000 if 2004 population estimates are used. But the “excess of women” becomes even stronger when younger age groups are considered and university-type qualifications are measured. Appendix Figure 1 shows the actual numbers of well-qualified women and men in each age group in 2001. In 2001, there were 46,686 women in the 25-34 age group with a degree or higher qualification but only 37,059 men with a similar qualification. Again this may reflect gendered migration patterns but, in addition, in recent years participation rates of women in tertiary education have been higher for women than for men.

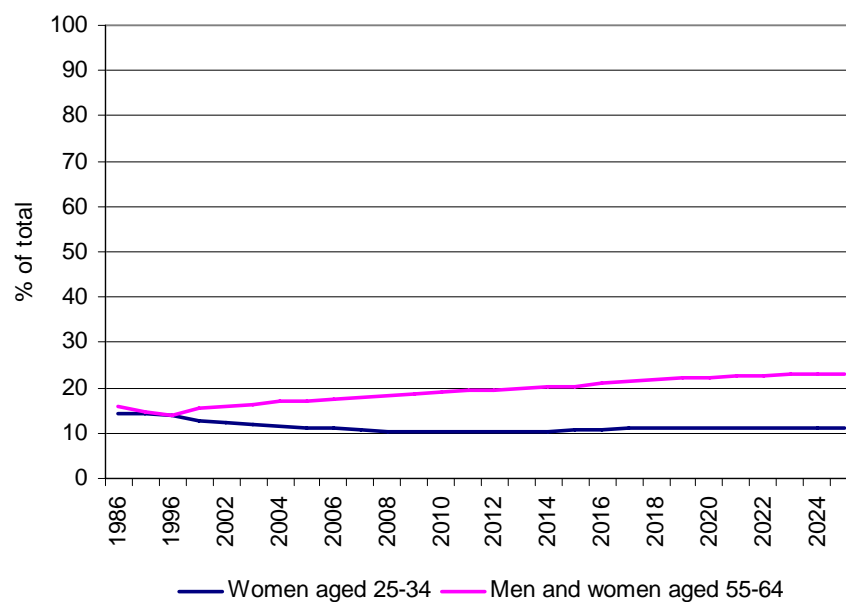
**Appendix Figure 1 – Actual number of women and men with a bachelors degree or higher, 2001**



The changes may affect marriage markets, labour markets and patterns of unpaid work in New Zealand. For example, well-educated women are more likely to be employed. The excess of well-educated women also means that when they do form couples, more of them are “marrying down” educationally than in the past. This may change the comparative advantage in the home relative to decisions about paid and unpaid work. It may also be that more educated women remain single and potentially childless than in the past. But if they do have children, whether in a couple situation or living alone, well-educated women are also more likely to have more liberal views about out-of-home childcare and the professionalisation of housework.

Yet, when considering basic demographic change it is worth noting that overall women in the 25-34 age group will become a less important group as the population ages (Appendix Figure 2). If there are to be on-going labour shortages, then finding ways for increasing employment rates of older workers will become more important. It is also worth keeping in mind that the women aged 25-34 in 2001, will be in the 55-64 age group in 2031. This group is likely to be under more pressure to be employed across their whole lifecycle than previous cohorts.

**Appendix Figure 2 – Historical and projected numbers of women aged 25-34 and women and men aged 55-64, % of total age group 20-64, 1986 to 2025**



## Appendix 2

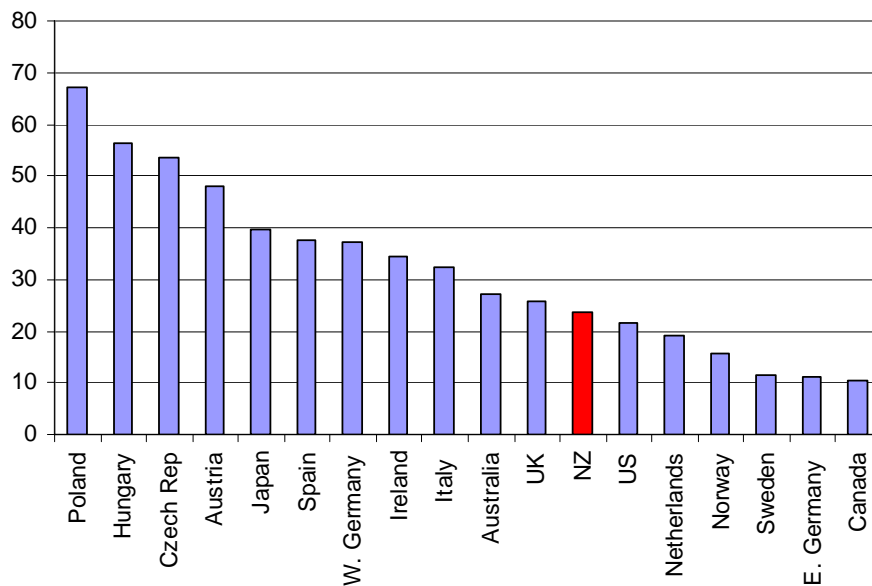
### Attitudes towards mothers' employment

**Appendix Table 2 – Actual and preferred employment patterns by full-time and part-time working, 1998, based on mothers responses**

	Both full time		Mother part time		Mother not employed	
	Actual	Preferred	Actual	Preferred	Actual	Preferred
Austria	19.1	35.6	28.2	39.9	48.1	3.9
Belgium	46.0	54.8	19.4	28.8	27.3	13.4
Finland	49.3	80.3	6.4	8.6	32.8	10.2
France	38.8	54.4	14.4	21.9	38.3	14.1
Germany	15.7	32.0	23.1	42.9	52.3	5.7
Greece	42.2	65.6	7.9	10.6	36.1	9.4
Ireland	30.8	31.1	18.7	42.3	37.0	8.1
Italy	34.9	50.4	11.8	27.7	43.3	10.7
Luxembourg	23.5	27.5	27.0	29.9	49.1	12.4
Netherlands	4.8	5.6	54.8	69.9	33.7	10.7
Portugal	74.5	84.4	4.7	8.0	18.7	4.0
Spain	25.6	59.7	6.3	11.6	56.9	19.7
Sweden	51.1	66.8	13.3	22.2	24.9	6.6
United Kingdom	24.9	21.3	31.9	41.8	32.8	13.3

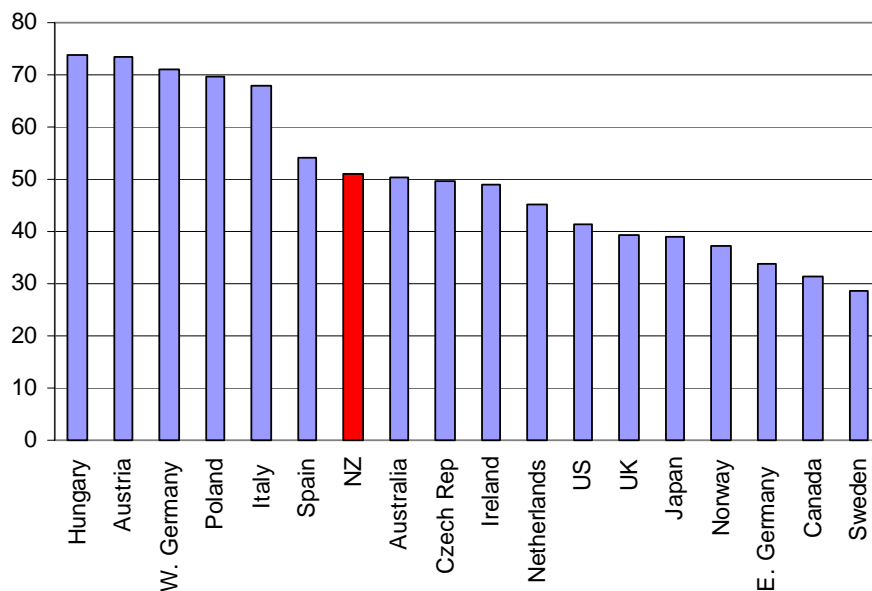
Source: Table 2.1 OECD (2003).

**Appendix Figure 3 – Proportion of respondents who strongly agree or agree that “A man's job is to earn money/a woman's job is to stay home and look after the family”**



Source: International Social Survey Programme 1994 as reported in OECD (2003).

**Appendix Figure 4 – Proportion of respondents who strongly agree or agree that “A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works”**



Source: International Social Survey Programme 1994 as reported in OECD (2003)

**Appendix Table 3 – Attitudes about whether mothers ought to work when they have preschool children and ideal mean hours of work for mothers, 1994-1995 (selected countries)**

	Percentage preferring to be at home	Ideal hours of work if working (mean)
Sweden	27	15.8
Netherlands	40	14.8
Canada	45	14.4
Norway	44	12.0
Ireland	52	11.4
United States	54	11.2
United Kingdom	62	8.7
Australia	64	7.8
New Zealand	71	6.3

Source: International Social Survey Programme Family-2 Survey, 1994-1995 as reported in Evans and Kelley (2002).

Note: When the full set of countries is considered, only Poland has a higher proportion of mothers preferring to be at home (74%). New Zealand has the lowest ideal hours for women of all the countries.

## Appendix 3

**Appendix Table 4 – Joint average hours of paid work for non-agricultural employed married couples aged 25-59, selected industrial nations**

Country and year	Average hours worked per week- All couples where one or both partners work	% dual earners	Average hours for dual earners
US (1997)	72	76	81
New Zealand (2001 & 1996)	71 (70)	74 (72)	81 (80)
Finland (1991)	70	81	77
Canada (1994)	65	66	77
Sweden (1995)	64	85	69
Belgium (1996)	64	58	79
France (1994)	62	61	76
Germany (1994)	60	56	75
Italy (1995)	59	46	78
UK (1995)	57	55	74
Netherlands (1994)	52	52	64

Note: The source of all non-New Zealand data is Jacobs and Gornick (2001). There are some differences in how the data were calculated between countries. The main one is that in some countries, including New Zealand, both defacto and married couples are included. In all countries the couples included are those where at least one partner was in paid work. In New Zealand, agricultural workers -ANZSIC Industry - Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing - were removed from the calculation to make the data internationally comparable. In addition, both partners needed to be in the 25-59 age group. Finally, the New Zealand and international data is rounded to the nearest hour or percentage.

## Appendix 4

**Appendix Table 5 – Mothers and Fathers' Average Weekly Hours in Paid Work, OECD countries, approximately 2000, (parents age 25-50, married/cohabiting)**

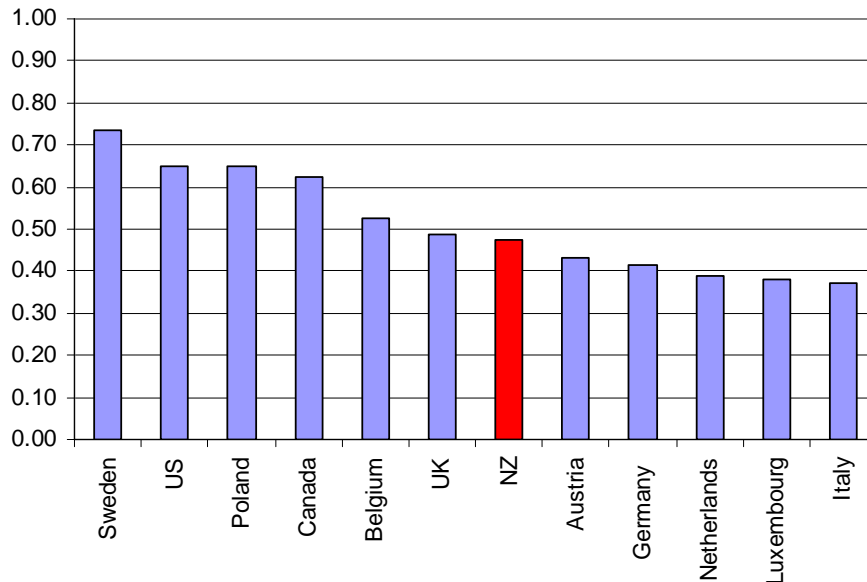
		including those with zero hours					excluding those with zero hours				
	age of youngest child	0-2	3-5	6-12	13-17	all	0-2	3-5	6-12	13-17	all
New Zealand 2001	Mothers	12	18	24	29	20	26	28	31	35	30
	Fathers	41	41	43	44	42	47	47	48	48	47
Austria 1997	mothers	20	17	17	24	19	33	29	27	33	30
	fathers	42	43	46	42	44	43	45	47	44	45
Belgium 1997	mothers	23	19	20	20	20	34	31	32	34	33
	fathers	37	38	39	38	38	45	43	46	46	45
Canada 2000	mothers	20	22	25	28	25	27	30	31	33	31
	fathers	38	39	41	39	40	40	41	42	41	41
Germany 2000	mothers	8	12	18	25	17	25	24	27	32	28
	fathers	41	41	41	42	41	44	45	45	45	45
Italy 2000	mothers	16	16	16	17	16	33	33	35	36	35
	fathers	44	44	42	42	43	46	45	44	44	45
Luxembourg 2000	mothers	19	15	15	16	16	33	30	27	27	29
	fathers	43	43	44	38	42	44	45	44	43	44

		including those with zero hours					excluding those with zero hours				
Netherlands 1999	mothers	16	14	15	17	16	21	21	20	23	21
	fathers	40	40	41	41	41	42	41	43	43	43
Poland 1999	mothers	15	23	26	28	24	36	39	39	40	39
	fathers	39	38	37	35	37	44	45	44	43	44
Sweden 1995	mothers	21	21	22	24	22	30	29	30	31	30
	fathers	31	31	29	31	30	37	38	39	38	38
UK 1999	mothers	15	17	22	27	21	27	26	29	33	29
	fathers	42	43	43	43	43	46	48	48	48	48
US 2000	mothers	24	24	28	31	28	35	35	35	37	36
	fathers	44	43	43	43	43	45	45	45	45	45

Source: International data from Gornick (2005), New Zealand data provided by Statistics New Zealand.

## Appendix 5

**Appendix Figure 5 – Ratio of mothers and fathers' average weekly hours in paid work, child under 18 (including those not working)**



**Appendix Figure 6 – Ratio of mothers and fathers' weekly hours of paid work, child under 18 (excluding those not working)**

