

Good jobs can lead to happy families

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Most people associate work with negative effects on family life, but new research from The Australian National University (ANU) has turned this view on its head, showing that the positives of jobs flow through too.

With both National Families Week and the Federal Budget this week, this finding is a timely reminder of the impact policy decisions about jobs, work and work conditions can have on Australian families.

"What happens at work matters to families. [Policy decisions](#) about work affect families and, in turn, children – both positively and negatively. When jobs are rewarding and supportive of parents the benefits flow through to children," lead researcher Associate Professor Lyndall Strazdins said.

Associate Professor Strazdins, a researcher at the ANU National Centre for Epidemiology & Population Health and a Families Australia Family Week Ambassador, surveyed more than 2,800 mothers and almost 4,000 fathers with children aged 4-5 years as part of the *Growing up in Australia* study to determine how work influences family life.

The messages were mixed. The majority of parents reported benefits and rewards from jobs, saying they were glad of the opportunities and income working provided, with many saying work supported them to be better parents. More than one third of parents sampled, however, reported that their work and family lives were often in conflict.

"These conflicts can be as simple as missing out on doing things with children, attending special events, or even taking them to the doctor. Mostly they mean that parents just don't have the time they'd like to devote to their kids, and this affects family life," Associate Professor Strazdins said.

The study showed children flourish when their parents have rewarding and supportive jobs, with children showing less signs of stress, such as being easily upset or reactive – a win-win for families and the economy. But the research team also found elevations in young children's signs of stress when their mothers or fathers reported that their jobs conflicted with running the family.

"We saw an association with children's wellbeing when their parents' [jobs](#) often conflicted with [family](#) life, regardless of socioeconomic circumstances, suggesting that having extra resources doesn't buffer children from their [parents'](#) work and care dilemmas," Associate Professor Strazdins said.

Provided by Australian National University

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