

Information note—Characteristics of award-reliant employees

This note provides an analysis of the characteristics of award-reliant and award-reliant low-paid employees compared with all employees using the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey for 2017.

Low-paid employees are defined as employees who earn below two-thirds of adult median hourly earnings (\$19.82 per hour).¹ The analysis is first presented for all employees (including juniors and adults) and then for adult employees (aged 21 years and over).

Sample—all employees

As shown in Table 1, award-reliant employees are more likely to be (compared with all employees):

- female;
- aged between 15 and 24 years;
- studying full time or part time;
- not married;
- employed on a part-time basis (fewer than 35 hours);
- employed on a casual basis;
- not working regular daytime schedules;
- underemployed;
- with fewer than two years of work experience;
- without dependent children; and
- a secondary earner for a couple household.

Compared with all award-reliant employees, award-reliant low-paid employees are more likely to be:

- aged between 15 and 20 years;
- not married;
- working part time;
- employed on a casual basis;
- with less than two years of work experience; and
- without dependent children.

There also appears to be a higher proportion of low paid award-reliant employees studying full time or part time, underemployed or a secondary earner for a couple household, but these differences were not statistically significant.²

¹ Two-thirds of median earnings is calculated by dividing usual weekly gross wages in main job (including amounts salary sacrificed) by usual hours per week worked in main job, with usual hours worked top-coded to 60 hours and earnings for casual employees deflated by 25 per cent.

Table 1: Personal, employment and household characteristics of award-reliant employees, 2017

	Within group distribution			Proportion who are award-reliant (%)
	Award-reliant employees (%)	Award-reliant low-paid employees (%)	All employees (%)	
Personal characteristics				
Gender				
Male	39.1	40.5	50.5	20.4
Female	60.9	59.5	49.5	32.6
Age Group				
15–20	20.6	42.8	9.9	59.0
21–24	12.2	13.3	9.5	34.5
25–29	9.7	8.7	12.6	20.5
30–49	34.6	23.1	43.3	20.7
50–64	20.1	10.6	22.4	23.5
65 and over	2.7	1.5*	2.3	31.2
Currently studying				
Not studying	80.3	73.4	85.4	24.7
Studying full-time or part-time	19.7	26.5	14.5	36.5
Marital status				
Married	35.4	23.7	46.5	19.9
De facto	11.7	9.3	13.7	22.4
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	9.8	3.5	8.4	30.3
Never married and not de facto	43.2	63.4	31.5	37.0
Has long-term health condition, disability or impairment				
Yes	17.1	16.8	16.4	27.5
No	82.9	83.2	83.6	26.2
Employment characteristics				
Full-time/part-time status				
Full time	48.6	34.7	67.5	18.9
Part time	51.4	65.3	32.5	42.2
Type of employee				
Permanent/fixed term	54.9	25.3	74.4	19.4
Casual	45.1	74.7	25.6	47.4
Hours				
0–19 hours	27.7	42.4	15.3	49.1
20–34 hours	25.8	25.7	18.9	36.1

² For this analysis, statistical significance refers to the 95 per cent confidence intervals between the particular characteristic of the two groups not overlapping.

	Within group distribution			Proportion who are award-reliant (%)
	Award-reliant employees (%)	Award-reliant low-paid employees (%)	All employees (%)	
35 hours and more	46.5	31.9	65.8	18.5
Work schedule				
Regular daytime schedule	70.2	66.3	77.4	23.9
Regular evening or night shift	10.1	13.4	6.5	43.0
Rotating shift, split shift, on call, irregular schedules	19.7	20.3	16.1	32.1
Underemployed				
Yes	20.4	26.2	11.1	48.8
No	79.6	73.8	88.9	23.4
Years of work experience				
Less than 2 years	9.2	19.3	5.0	48.9
2 years to less than 5 years	14.8	23.8	9.9	36.6
5 years and over	75.9	56.9	85.1	21.5
Household characteristics				
Have dependent children				
Yes	28.8	18.6	37.1	20.3
No	71.2	81.4	62.9	30.0
Earner status (for couple households)^				
Sole earner	14.3	14.6	13.5	20.9
Primary earner	32.4	22.2	46.8	13.6
Secondary earner	53.3	63.2	39.6	26.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	26.4
Sample size	2328	839	9236	

Note: *Estimate has a relative standard error of 25 to 50 per cent and should be used with caution.

Sample sizes for each characteristic may vary due to non-response. ^Earner status is based on the net regular market income of partners in a couple household over the financial year. Regular market income is the sum of wages, business income, investment income and regular private pensions (i.e. Superannuation and Worker's compensation). A partner is a sole earner if their partner has an income of zero and is not otherwise employed. Households with a non-responding partner were omitted.

Source: HILDA survey, Wave 17.

Sample—adult employees

The differences in characteristics between all adult employees and award-reliant adult employees are similar to the previous table, with the exception of having dependent children—there is no statistically significant difference between all adult employees and award-reliant adult employees.

Due to the lower sample size for award-reliant low-paid adult employees, differences between award-reliant adult employees and award-reliant low-paid adult employees, in regards to whether they work **permanent/fixed term** or **casual**, their **years of work experience** and whether they are employed on a **full-time** or **part-time** basis are not statistically significant.³

Table 2: Personal, employment and household characteristics of award-reliant adult employees, 2017

	Within group distribution			Proportion who are award-reliant (%)
	Award-reliant employees (%)	Award-reliant low-paid employees (%)	All employees (%)	
Personal characteristics				
Gender				
Male	38.5	39.2	50.9	17.4
Female	61.5	60.8	49.1	29.0
Age Group				
21–24	15.4	23.2	10.5	34.5
25–29	12.3	15.3	14.0	20.5
30–49	43.5	40.4	48.1	20.7
50–64	25.3	18.5	24.8	23.5
65 and over	3.4	2.6*	2.5	31.2
Currently studying				
Not studying	85.6	81.3	88.4	22.3
Studying full-time or part-time	14.4	18.7	11.6	29.0
Marital status				
Married	44.5	41.1	51.5	19.9
De facto	14.0	14.7	14.7	21.9
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	12.3	6.2	9.3	30.3
Never married and not de facto	29.2	38.0	24.4	27.9
Has long-term health condition, disability or impairment				
Yes	19.1	21.8	17.1	25.8
No	80.9	78.2	82.9	22.5
Employment characteristics				
Full-time/part-time status				

³ Relative to award-reliant adult employees, there appears to be a higher proportion of award-reliant low-paid adult employees aged between 21 and 24 years, studying full time or part time, not married, working part time, not working regular daytime schedules, underemployed, have less than two years work experience, not have dependent children, and be a secondary earner for a couple household. However, these differences were not statistically significant.

	Within group distribution			Proportion who are award-reliant (%)
	Award-reliant employees (%)	Award-reliant low-paid employees (%)	All employees (%)	
Full time	56.3	47.0	72.0	18.0
Part time	43.7	53.0	28.0	36.3
Type of employee				
Permanent/fixed term	64.2	33.1	79.6	18.6
Casual	35.8	66.9	20.4	41.0
Hours				
0–19 hours	17.7	22.0	10.8	38.4
20–34 hours	28.3	35.2	18.9	34.8
35 hours and more	54.0	42.8	70.3	17.7
Work schedule				
Regular daytime schedule	73.7	73.8	79.4	21.4
Regular evening or night shift	8.0	8.4	5.4	36.1
Rotating shift, split shift, on call, irregular schedules	18.3	17.8	15.2	27.6
Underemployed				
Yes	16.8	18.9	8.8	44.0
No	83.2	81.1	91.2	20.7
Years of work experience				
Less than 2 years	2.7	5.1	1.5	42.7
2 years to less than 5 years	13.7	23.5	8.8	36.0
5 years and over	83.6	71.4	89.6	21.5
Household characteristics				
Have dependent children				
Yes	36.2	32.4	41.2	20.3
No	63.8	67.6	58.8	25.0
Earner status (for couple households)^				
Sole earner	14.2	14.4	13.5	20.8
Primary earner	32.5	22.4	46.9	13.6
Secondary earner	53.3	63.2	39.6	26.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	23.1
Sample size	1879	483	1879	

Note: *Estimate has a relative standard error of 25 to 50 per cent and should be used with caution.

Sample sizes for each characteristic may vary due to non-response. ^Earner status is based on the net regular market income of partners in a couple household over the financial year. Regular market income is the sum of wages, business income, investment income and regular private pensions (i.e. Superannuation and Worker's compensation). A partner is a sole earner if their partner has an income of zero and is not otherwise employed. Households with a non-responding partner were omitted.

Source: HILDA, Wave 17.