

Gender divide hits working from home

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Women work from home to take on more childcare duties while men just want to get away from the distractions of the office, according to new UNSW research to be presented today at the Australian Social Policy Conference.

The study by UNSW researchers Dr Abigail Powell and Associate Professor Lyn Craig is the first in-depth look at how so-called telecommuting impacts on work-life balance.

Dr Powell says the study shows [men](#) use working at home to do "more work" away from the office, while women work at home so they can do more child care and domestic duties.

Significantly, says Powell, men who work at home did not increase their share of childcare.

The national study involved time-use analysis of more than 7000 employees, which shows a quarter of the participants' paid work from home accounted for less than 50 percent of their employment time while just 3.5 percent of people were [working from home](#) for the majority of their working hours.

In a bonus for managers, employees that work from home less than 50 percent of the time repay their employer by working longer than office-based staff.

Working-from-home men recorded an extra 51 minutes of "paid" work a day and women an extra 41 minutes.

The extra work comes at the cost of personal and [leisure time](#) for women who also spend an increased amount of time on childcare and domestic duties.

The study also shows men and women who [work](#) at home feel more stressed, but despite that are happy with the workplace arrangements.

Powell says further research is required to establish whether working at home caused them to be more stressed or whether working at home was used as a strategy to manage pre-existing stress.

In the same conference session today, Matthew Toohey from the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling asks the question for women of "whether it is worth working yet" as he examines how changes in the cost of childcare, government subsidies and tax impact on their participation in the workforce.

The [14th Australian Social Policy Conference](#) (16-18 September) addresses the theme, Contemporary Challenges for Social Policy.

More information: www.aspc.unsw.edu.au/program

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