



EIGHT HOUR DAY

Celebrate 150 years of
work, rest and play

Eight hours work...

Australia, once recognised as the 'working man's paradise' for its Eight Hour Day achievement, now has among the highest working hours in the developed world.

Many people feel stressed and 'time poor'.

Workers now encounter an increasingly complex and fragmented workforce. They face over-employment; under-employment; unemployment; part-time, casual and unpaid work; flexible shift and roster arrangements.

A 2004 report by the Australia Institute found that Australians work the longest hours in the world. The average Australian works around 1855 hours a year, compared to an international average of 1643 hours.

1.9 million employees were employed on a casual basis in 2003, an increase from 1.3 million in 1993.

Only 36% of Australian workers work a standard '9 to 5' week.

Overwork

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures reveal that in August 2002 around 1.7 million Australian worked 50 hours or more per week, twice as many as in 1982. As a proportion of full-time workers, those working 50 hours or more per week increased from 20% to 30%.

The proportion of employees who worked 60 hours or more a week rose from 8% in 1979 to 11% in 2003 (ABS).

Work/life balance

43% of working men and 53% of working women often felt tired and run down, but age was not a factor. The Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University of Technology reports that feeling rushed and tired is a warning sign that work is interfering with home life.

Overall, powerful evidence exists in a growing body of research that long hours are bad for individuals, couple relationships, children, and the community fabric, according to Dr Barbara Pocock and the Centre for Labour Research at Adelaide University.

From 1974 to 1997, the proportion of Sunday workers rose from 9% to just over 17%, with a sharp rise in the 1990s. Michael Bittman from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, concludes that approximately one in five workers now employed on Sunday 'forfeit[s] significant amounts of time for relaxation, family conviviality and civic association'.

Shiftwork

A person working the night shift is at greater risk of various disorders, accidents and misfortunes. Among the increased risks noted by the Victorian Government are obesity, cardiovascular disease, motor-vehicle and work-related accidents, as well as family problems including divorce.

Casual work

Between 1990 and 2003, the number of casual workers in Australia grew from 19.6% to 27.9% of the workforce (ABS).

Even with casual loading, casual workers are paid 21% less than permanent workers (ACTU).

37% of all casual workers say they want more hours of work because they need the income (ABS).

Eight hours rest...

The Eight Hour Day movement, led by the stonemasons, argued against labouring long hours in the heat and sought to reduce working hours to enable workers to be sufficiently rested.

Sleep is as important to the human body as food and water, but most of us don't get enough sleep. People now average a couple of hours less sleep than they did 100 years ago.

Annual Holidays

'If Australians keep working the average number of hours each week that they currently do, then, even if they had already taken their four weeks holiday earlier in the year, they could stop work on November 20th each year and still manage to work the average number of hours worked by employees in OECD countries.' (Australia Institute, 2004)

A 2003 Australia Institute survey found that 58% of full-time workers in Australia did not take all the annual leave they were owed. They were either too busy or unable to take a time that suited their needs.

ABS figures show that in 2005, 21% of employees were without paid leave entitlements.

Sleep

A report by Access Economics in 2004 states that over 1.2 million Australians (6% of the population) experienced sleep disorders, with associated costs of \$10.3 billion.

The report also claims that sleep disorders underlie 9.1% of work-related injuries and 7.6% of motor-vehicle accidents.

Shiftworkers get, on average, two to three hours less sleep than other workers according to the Victorian Government's Better Health Channel.

Approximately 10 million scripts are written annually in Australia for benzodiazepines (tranquillizers and sleeping pills).

According to Professor Stanley Coren of the University of British Columbia, evolution intended us to have between nine and ten hours sleep a day. However, 'in the Western world the average amount of sleep is 7 to 7-1/2 hours, that means that on average we're about 1-1/2 to 2 hours sleep deprived.'

Dr David Joffe, Secretary of the Australasian Sleep Association, has observed that 'a hundred and fifty years ago, you went to sleep when the candle burnt out, and got up when the sun came up.' Now, he argues 'there are increasing societal pressures that we think are impacting upon people's sleep performance, and their ability to get good quality sleep.'



The gaining of eight hours of leisure, gave workers time for recreation, self-improvement and full participation in civic society, and assisted in the development of Victoria's vibrant arts, cultural and sporting communities.

Sport and Recreation

Victorian Government figures show that 77% of adult Victorians take part in unstructured and organised sport and recreation activities.

Victorians' most popular team sports are netball, Australian Rules football, and basketball, while the most popular physical activities are walking for exercise, swimming, and golf.

Australian Rules football had the highest attendance of any sporting event in Australia according to ABS 2003 data. Almost 2.5 million people aged 18 or over reported that they had attended at least one match in the previous twelve months.

Cultural Events

Figures published by the ABS in 2003 indicate that the highest attendance rates at cultural venues were cinemas (70% of people), libraries (42%), botanic gardens (42%) zoological parks and aquariums (40%), popular music (26%), museums (25%), art galleries (25%), musicals and operas (19%), theatre (18%), dance (11%) and classical music (9%)

Parks and Gardens

In 2004–05 Parks Victoria recorded 42.7 million visits to Victoria's national parks.

About 2,000 nursery businesses operate in Victoria, according to the ABS figures.

Beaches and Boating

State Government figures indicate that Victorians make around 92 million individual visits to the beach annually, with each person making about 20 visits a year.

Each year, there are approximately 4.1 million recreational boating trips on Port Phillip Bay and the Western Port–Phillip Island region.

Eight hours play...

Books and Libraries

ABS survey data showed that during 2003–04, there were 105 million visits to local government, state and national libraries, representing an average of five visits per head of population.

ABS figures also show that in 2003–04 Victoria accounted for 43% of total book sales in Australia.





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History of the working week

48 Hour Week

- 1856 Building tradesmen win the Eight Hour Day in Melbourne.
- 1873 Victorian government gives female factory workers the Eight Hour Day.
- 1874 Victorian Government contracts make the legal working day eight hours.

44 Hour Week

- 1920 The 44 hour week awarded to timber workers and engineers.
- 1939 The 44 hour week is applied to all industries.

40 Hour Week

- 1948 Introduction of the five day 40 hour working week for all workers.

38 Hour Week

- 1981 Metal Industry gains the 38 hour week, which then becomes the current national standard.

36 Hour Week

- 2003 Building industry gains the 36 hour week with Rostered Days Off (RDOs).

History of Annual Leave entitlements

One Week

- 1936 A week of annual leave on full pay is awarded to printing workers. It had already been included in some State awards.
- 1941 Metal Trades award results in one week of annual leave becoming standard.

Two Weeks

- 1945 Metal Trades award results in two weeks annual leave becoming standard.

Three Weeks

- 1958 New South Wales Labor government grants three weeks annual leave.
- 1963 Following campaigns by Trades and Labour Councils, three weeks annual leave becomes standard.

Four Weeks

- 1973 Four weeks annual leave for public servant union members granted by the Federal Labor government.
- 1974 By 1974, today's standard annual leave of four weeks had been achieved.