

Changing work patterns (1)

Change in occupations

The kind of work people do has changed considerably over the past century. In 1900, nearly one-third of our **labour force** worked in **primary industries**, mainly farming and mining. Since then, the proportion of primary industry workers in the labour force has dwindled to about 4 per cent. Because of improved methods of farming and mining, and the use of mechanical equipment, fewer workers are needed to produce our food supply and minerals.

For a long time many of those who left the farms and mines moved into jobs within **secondary industries**. They took factory jobs in the city. In recent years, however, the proportion of the labour force needed to do factory work has been decreasing and is presently about 20 per cent. This is because many factory jobs have been eliminated by technology, especially automation.

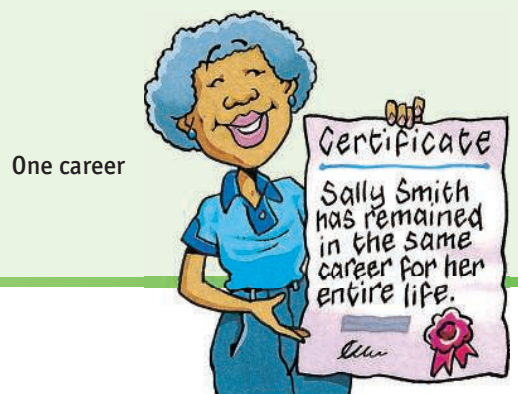
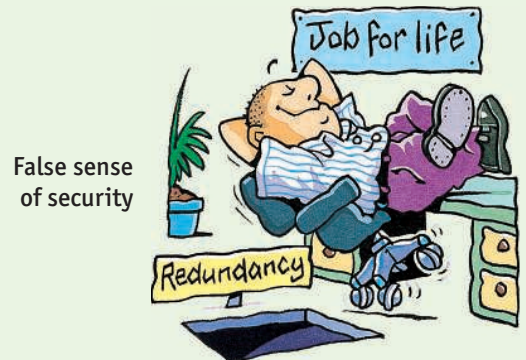
As opportunities for employment have decreased in some occupations, they have increased in others. The demand is great for jobs in **tertiary industries** providing services such as finance, education, health, computing, hospitality, tourism and child care. In fact, about 76 per cent of the labour force consists of people providing services. The growth in employment in tertiary services is expected to expand rapidly during the next two decades because of advances in computing, especially telecommunications, and social and lifestyle changes.

New work patterns

Tomorrow the world of work will be different from what it is today. No-one really knows how different. Certain jobs will change more than others, but all jobs are likely to experience some change. Many workers will find that they must learn new skills to adjust to changes in their jobs. Others will have to train themselves for new jobs that open up when old ones disappear. The idea of a job for life is disappearing and workers in the future will tend not to have a clear career path. For students preparing for the world of work, the most important ability to develop may be the ability to learn.

Old and new approaches to work

OLD VIEW



Glossary

labour force all those people who have jobs — that is, are employed; plus all those people who are *actively seeking* work — that is, are unemployed

primary industry industry involved in the growing or extracting of natural resources

secondary industry industry involved in turning raw materials into finished or semi-finished products

tertiary industry industry involved in providing a service to others

NEW VIEW



Sense of personal control



Employability



Competencies



Portfolio career

Activities

Understand

- 1 What is meant by the term 'labour force'?
- 2 How have the occupations of the labour force changed over the past century?
- 3 Use a table to list which industry each of the jobs below belongs to.
Lawyer, chef, farmer, dentist, carpenter, computer operator, real estate agent, tow-truck driver, factory hand, cleaner, teacher, child carer, welder, journalist, newsreader, miner, secretary, surgeon, writer, machinist
- 4 Use the table below to answer the questions that follow.

Proportion of employment by industry in Australia 1900–2020 (%)

Year	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1900	34	20	46
1940	21	25	54
1980	8	21	71
2000	5	21	74
2020 (est.)	3	17	80

Source: Data derived from ABS statistics.

- (a) In which year was the proportion of people employed in the following industries at its highest and lowest? (i) Primary (ii) Secondary (iii) Tertiary
 - (b) Which industry experienced the greatest increase and which suffered the greatest decline in employment over time?
 - (c) Which industry was the most stable, with regard to employment over time?
 - (d) Suggest reasons why the tertiary industry has grown so rapidly over time. What does this tell you about future employment prospects?
- 5 Examine the old and new approaches to work. Briefly describe three of the changes to work patterns.
 - 6 What ability will be an important one for future workers to have?

Think

- 7 In 1900, the average age of the person entering the labour force was 15. Today it has risen to 18 years. Why do you think this change has taken place?
- 8 When a worker's job is replaced by technology, who should be responsible for training the worker for another job: the worker, the business, the government? Give reasons for your answer.

4.3

Changing work patterns (2)

Many changes in work patterns today are driven by the desire of businesses to reduce labour costs and improve productivity. Some changes include:

- a preference in many businesses to hire casual employees as a flexible workforce to meet demand at peak times
- flexible working hours and arrangements, including telecommuting.

Demographic changes

The number of women in the workplace has risen rapidly in recent decades — women now comprise 45 per cent of the workforce and have a **participation rate** of 70 per cent.

Employers are recognising the cost savings and benefits of 'family friendly' workplace practices in order to motivate and retain skilled staff.

The Australian workforce is ageing, and health and superannuation costs related to age will increase, requiring employees to plan for these future expenses. Consequently, the federal government is recommending that employees consider extending their working life rather than retiring early.

Casualisation of the labour force

One of the most important changes to work patterns in the last 20 years has been the significant increase in casual employment. Casual workers currently make up approximately 25 per cent of the labour force, with some industry sectors — such as retail and hospitality — employing almost half their labour force as casuals.

Some casual employees, especially the young, find it difficult to gain full-time employment. Their working life is often dominated by periods of part-time and casual work. Consequently, they have few opportunities for promotion and are usually retrenched first if the business is experiencing financial difficulties. These people will sometimes experience long periods of unemployment. Exploitation of these employees can also occur.



A high proportion of casual workers are 15–24 years old.

Flexible working conditions and hours

Flexible working conditions are patterns of work that allow employees to balance work and family responsibilities more effectively. For example, some employer–employee agreements allow opportunities for home-based work, which gives employees more flexibility during working hours. This is becoming more practical as electronic methods of communication and other technologies improve. Many businesses also offer permanent part-time work in order to retain skilled and valued staff who have family commitments.

Flexible working hours are a common feature in many workplaces and may take the form of:

- *flexitime*, which allows employees to nominate starting and finishing times to suit their needs
- *maxiflex*, which allows employees to build up sufficient hours or overtime to take time off
- *job sharing*, which allows two employees to share the hours required for one job.

Conflicting views are emerging from employees (other than those who choose part-time work) about the benefits achieved from flexible working hours and permanent part-time work. Many employees now work 12-hour shifts, broken by days off, as part of their industrial agreements. Others have lost their weekends and their ability to enjoy time off with their families.

These difficulties have arisen because employees and employers may have a different meaning for the term 'flexibility'. For example, an employee may view flexibility as providing her or him with an opportunity to rearrange work hours to better suit lifestyle and family commitments. However, an employer may see flexibility as the introduction of longer shifts or the scrapping of penalty rates for weekend work.

Technological change

The so-called 'information revolution' has led to massive changes in the way people work. The main changes are:

- work can be contracted out to people working from home
- new jobs are being created using new technologies, while others become outdated.

Casestudy

From hot metal to mousepads

Interview with Jeff Hofmann, Graphic Pre-press Operator, John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd

Interviewer: When did you start work, and where?

Jeff: At Shipping Newspapers (Brisbane) in December, 1966. I worked as a copyholder for 12 months before starting a five-year apprenticeship.

Interviewer: What process did you use then to prepare type for printing?

Jeff: Text was then set on a linotype machine, which cast individual lines of metal type. These machines could only hold four fonts at a time. Display headings were often done with hand-set type.

Interviewer: How is the way you work now different from those days?

Jeff: The basic principles of layout and design are still the same, but the process involved in type assembly and pagination has changed drastically. The masses of metal type I started working with were later replaced by type on bromide paper (which was cut and pasted onto boards). Now, all



type assembly is computer-driven. The only work you do with your hands today is to push a mouse around.

Interviewer: Was it easy to adjust to this change in technology?

Jeff: I was young; so adjusting to it seemed like a natural progression. But many older compositors found the change a bit drastic. Typesetters had to learn a whole new keyboard layout, and with the onset of computerisation, many jobs became redundant.

Interviewer: What are the major advantages you see in working the way you do now?

Jeff: Probably the speed and accuracy with which text, photographs and artwork can be assembled into page format. Elaborate layouts using multiple applications have become less complicated. In fact, the storage and transfer of information electronically have revolutionised the industry.

Activities

Understand

- 1 Are the following statements *True* or *False*?
 - (a) This section was about the changes in traditional work patterns.
 - (b) Technology destroys some jobs and creates others.
 - (c) The number of females in the labour force has increased over the last 30 years.
 - (d) Flexible working arrangements are becoming common in workplaces.
- 2 Outline two effects of technology on work patterns.
- 3 What has been the impact on work patterns of an increase in the female participation rate in the workforce?
- 4 Why do many businesses offer 'family-friendly' workplace practices?
- 5 Why do employers and employees sometimes hold conflicting views with regard to flexible working hours and part-time work?

- 6 What are the advantages and disadvantages to employees of flexible working hours?
- 7 Carefully read the interview with Jeff Hoffman.
 - (a) How has Jeff's work changed?
 - (b) What has been the main cause of these changes?
 - (c) What major part of Jeff's job has remained the same?
 - (d) List three jobs that have disappeared from the printing industry due to changing technology.

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Worksheet 4.2 Analyse statistics on part-time employment within Australia.

Glossary

participation rate the proportion of people aged 15 or over employed or actively looking for work