

## Three charts on: how part-time work is growing more slowly, but more men are doing it

Written by The Conversation

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Even though part-time work is growing, this growth is slowing over time.

Employment figures for the early months of 2017 have shown stronger growth in full-time rather [than part-time employment](#)

. The pattern of slowing growth in part-time employment is a long-term phenomenon.

### Growth in part-time work slowing

From 1966 to 2016 the share of part-time employment rose from 10.1% to 31.9%. This increase reflects factors such as the need by employers in some industries (such as retail trade) to adapt to longer opening hours, and entry to the labour market of workers (such as students) who prefer part-time work. But looking at the change in the share of part-time employment by decade from 1966 to 2016, the smallest increases have occurred over the past 20 years.

### Part-time work more evenly spread between men and women

Fifty years ago, part-time employment was mainly concentrated among women – and this is still sometimes the image of part-time work today. However with the overall growth in part-time employment, it has become more evenly spread between men and women.

In 1966 less than one in 20 male workers was employed part-time, whereas in 2016 almost one in five worked part-time. For women, the share of part-time employment rose from 24.5% to 47.0% over the same period.

Growth in the share of part-time employment was most rapid for women between 1966 and 1976, and since then has continued at a slower pace. For men the opposite pattern is evident.

There was little increase in the share of part-time employment until 1976, and a faster (although not accelerating) pace after that time. One explanation for this is the rise in part-time work done by students, who are relatively evenly [distributed by gender in the workforce](#) .

### Concentration in certain industries

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Growth in part-time employment has not happened uniformly across industries. In some industries, such as mining and construction, there has been limited growth in part-time employment (about two percentage points). Whereas in other industries, including retail trade and accommodation and food services, there has been substantial growth (over 17 percentage points).

The variation across industries, obviously implies that some industries have contributed more than others to the increase in the overall share of part-time employment. In particular, growth in part-time employment in retail trade, accommodation and food services and health care and social assistance, has accounted for about one-half of the increase in the overall share of part-time employment since 1986.

The concentration of part-time employment by industry reflects differences in how production happens in the Australian economy. For example, in mining, where workers may need to move to remote locations, offering part-time work is unlikely to attract workers. By contrast, in retail trade or in accommodation and food services, businesses need to be open outside regular working hours, which makes part-time workers an attractive option for these businesses.

Part-time work is likely to continue to grow over the next 50 years, just as it has in the past 50 years, but just at a slower rate. What has occurred in the past should be a good guide to how this will happen.

Part-time employment will still be concentrated in industries such as accommodation and food services; and the share of men in part-time employment will also continue to increase. But this slowing in part-time work shows we are certainly not heading for a labour market where we all work part-time.

*Jeff Borland receives funding from the Australian Research Council*

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