

Relationships Australia

NOVEMBER 2006

Relationships Indicators Survey 2006

Acknowledgements

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NOVEMBER 2006

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ABOUT US

Relationships Australia (RA) Inc is a national body which aims to enhance human and family relationships, on behalf of its members, through representation, lobbying, promotion, research and social policy formation. It is a non-aligned, not-for-profit community-based organisation having a federated structure with large autonomous member organisations in every state and territory plus a national secretariat in Canberra.

RA member organisations provide relationship support services from 106 locations across Australia. While best known for its services in family dispute resolution, relationships education, counselling and children's contact services, Relationships Australia also provides assistance to a diverse range of clients including those afflicted by family violence, crime, problem gambling, drought and natural disaster.

RA services are provided to all people regardless of age, religion, cultural background, gender, social or economic status or lifestyle choice. The organisation as a whole, with its 800 staff, provides services to in excess of 90,000 clients per year and has annual revenues in the order of \$48 million.

To contact your nearest Relationships Australia service provider, call our nationwide number: 1300 364 277

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results from Relationships Australia's 2006 Relationships Indicators Survey. It is the fifth Relationships Indicators Survey completed since 1994. The survey provides information regarding the main issues and concerns that Australians have in their relationships today.

Survey Methodology

The research was quantitative and consisted of n = 1200 randomly selected telephone interviews amongst the general population across all states and territories of Australia. It was conducted in August 2006.

The sampling frame for the survey was the latest version of the electronic White Pages on CD-ROM. In order to ensure compatibility with the previous survey conducted in 2003, the birthday rule was used whereby the eligible respondent was identified as the household member, aged 18 or over, who most recently had a birthday.

Research Findings

The State of Australian Relationships

Australians as a whole are remarkably optimistic about the relationships they enjoy with their spouse or partner. Despite continuing high divorce rates, 90% of respondents stated that they were not at all worried or not very worried about the future of their relationship.

Nearly all respondents were able to say what the best thing was about their partner relationship. By far the most common response was the friendship and companionship they derive from the relationship - with this factor being mentioned by 38% of all respondents.

Clearly, however, respondents also had negative issues impacting their partner relationship. In all, 77% of respondents were able to cite negative influences on their relationships. As in previous surveys, time factors were the most common concern - with 36% of respondents mentioning 'lack of time spent together' and another 21% citing 'both partners working full-time' as negative factors that were influencing their relationship. Other negative influences were 'lack of understanding of each other's views' (23%), 'different perspectives/values' (22%) and 'lack of communication' (21%). These time and 'cultural' issues were more commonly mentioned by respondents as negative influences on their relationship than the harder social problems like violence, drugs and alcohol, gambling and unemployment.

The vast majority of respondents (91%) were able to mention things they did to improve their spouse/partner relationship. Reflecting a realistic understanding of some of these key negative influences, the most common things that respondents reported doing to improve their relationship were 'trying to communicate well' (31%) and 'spending time together' (29%).

Marriage and Divorce

When respondents were asked what they thought the main reasons were for people marrying these days, the majority said 'to signify a life long commitment' (68%), 'to make a public commitment to each other' (63%) and 'security for children' (62%).

When asked what the main reasons were for people not to get married nowadays, the top three responses were 'bad previous experience' (72%), 'avoidance of commitment' (67%) and 'strong commitment does not need marriage' (63%).

Balancing Work and Family Life

This continues to be a key issue with the majority of respondents agreeing that finding a balance between work and family life can cause problems in a relationship.

In terms of what is important to people, the vast majority agreed that being a good parent and a good spouse/partner were very important to them. However, there was also fairly high importance attached to economic factors, such as having a paid job and earning a lot of money, and this importance increased since the same questions were asked in 2003. Although family dominates people's perceptions of themselves, economic factors are becoming increasingly important. This is particularly so among younger age groups.

Respondents cited a number of factors or policies that would help them to better balance work and family life. Some of these were factors that could be driven by employers, such as more flexible working hours (42%), the option of part-time work (36%), a change in employer attitude or company culture (26%) and unpaid leave (21%). Others were related more to government policies, such as increased government financial assistance (35%), lower child care fees (21%) and improved access to quality aged care (20%).

One-third of respondents felt that they had no real choice in being able to better balance work and family life.

Relationship Support

The data highlights increasing acceptance of professional relationship support services with the majority of respondents agreeing that to seek help through counselling does not necessarily signify the end of a relationship. The percentage agreeing that they would have no hesitation seeking professional help if their relationship was in trouble increased from 56% in 2001 to 63% in the current survey. Acceptance of professional relationship services was considerably higher among women (69%) than men (52%).

The main resource used to overcome relationship problems was to talk to friends – cited by 48%. Many also mentioned parents (25%), books/magazines/internet (21%) and siblings (20%). Professional services had been used by 19% of respondents.

Awareness of Relationships Australia has increased from 15% in 1998 to 35% in 2006. Awareness was higher among women (42%), among respondents who were separated/divorced (47%) and those with a household income over \$75,000 a year (45%). It was also better known in Queensland (48%), Western Australia (46%) and South Australia (40%).

The Impact of Technology

New communications technology, such as the internet, mobile telephones and cheaper rates for long distance landline services, is having a considerable impact – largely positive – on the relationships of Australians.

In all, 88% of respondents had been able to improve important relationships in their life through the use of new communications technology. The main types used to improve relationships were mobile phones (61%), cheaper long distance calls (60%), internet/email (58%) and SMS text messaging (44%). Although it is the young that are making the most use of new technology, the impact cuts across all age groups with 77% of those aged over 60 using this technology to improve important relationships.

New communications technology has also had a significant impact in relationship formation. Four in ten (40%) respondents have used the new technology to form important relationships in their life. The relationships formed were mainly social, but also romantic and business.

For a significant minority (29%), however, new communications technology had also caused problems in their important relationships. This was particularly the case for the 18-29 age group of whom 45% had experienced relationship problems resulting from new technology – 28% specifically from SMS.

METHODOLOGY

Every two to three years, Relationships Australia conducts a survey of adults around Australia to investigate issues and emerging trends in families and relationships. Previous surveys were conducted in 1994, 1998, 2001 and 2003. This report details the findings from the 2006 survey.

The survey was designed by Relationships Australia and conducted by Woolcott Research using a CATI (computer assisted telephone interview) system. In total 1,200 randomly selected telephone interviews were completed during August 2006. The questionnaire took on average 12 minutes to administer.

Interviews were conducted across all states and territories of Australia. The sampling frame for the survey was the latest version of the electronic White Pages on CD-ROM. In order to ensure compatibility with the previous survey conducted in 2003, the birthday rule was used whereby the eligible respondent was identified as the household member, aged 18 or over, who most recently had a birthday. Interviews were conducted in the evenings and at weekends with households sampled at random within those periods. Up to four call backs were made to achieve an interview.

The data is unweighted and is analysed based on variables of state, region, gender, age, household income, employment status and marital status. Statistical tests at the 95% confidence level were conducted to establish whether differences between sub-groups were statistically significant.

The following is the demographic distribution of respondents for the 2006 Survey.

Figure 1 – Respondent profile

	n=1200
	%
STATE	
New South Wales	34
Victoria	25
Queensland	19
Western Australia	10
South Australia	8
Tasmania	2
Australian Capital Territory	2
Northern Territory	1
REGION	
Metro	64
Non-metro	36
GENDER	
Male	35
Female	65

Figure 1 continued...

	n=1200
	%
AGE	
Under 20	4
20-29	14
30-39	20
40-49	19
50-59	19
60-69	12
70+	12
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	
Under \$25,000	19
\$25,001-50,000	23
\$50,001-75,000	18
\$75,001-100,000	12
\$100,001+	16
Refused	12
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	
Employed full-time	39
Employed part-time	23
Unemployed/receiving a benefit	9
Retired	21
Home duties	8
MARITAL STATUS	
Married	51
Defacto	10
Divorced	8
Separated	3
Widowed	7
Single	20
Refused	1

Figure 2—Regional profile

	n=1200
	%
NSW	
Metro	62
Non-metro	38
VIC	
Metro	73
Non-metro	27
QLD	
Metro	47
Non-metro	53
SA	
Metro	74
Non-metro	26
WA	
Metro	71
Non-metro	29
TAS	
Metro	30
Non-metro	70
NT	
Metro	100
ACT	
Metro	100

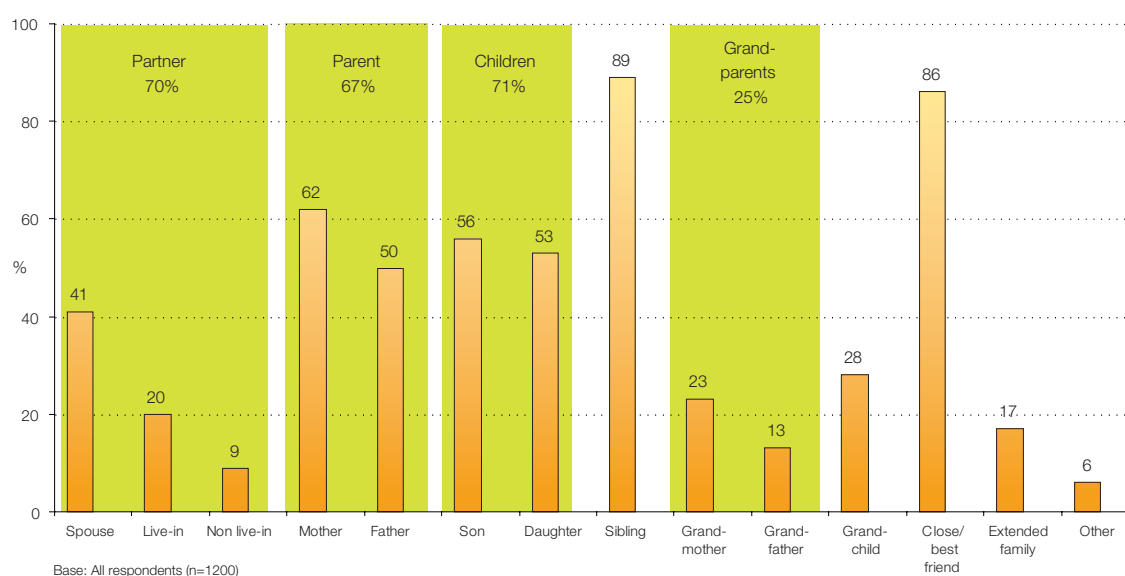
1. RELATIONSHIPS TODAY

Since the first Relationships Indicators study was conducted in 1994, a question has been included asking respondents what relationships they have in their lives. The current 2006 Survey found that approximately seven in ten respondents had a partner of some kind - either a spouse, de facto spouse or a non live-in boyfriend or girlfriend. The most common relationships cited, however, were a brother or sister (89%) and as many as 86% said they had a close or best friend.

The results for this question are shown in detail below.

Figure 3—Current relationships

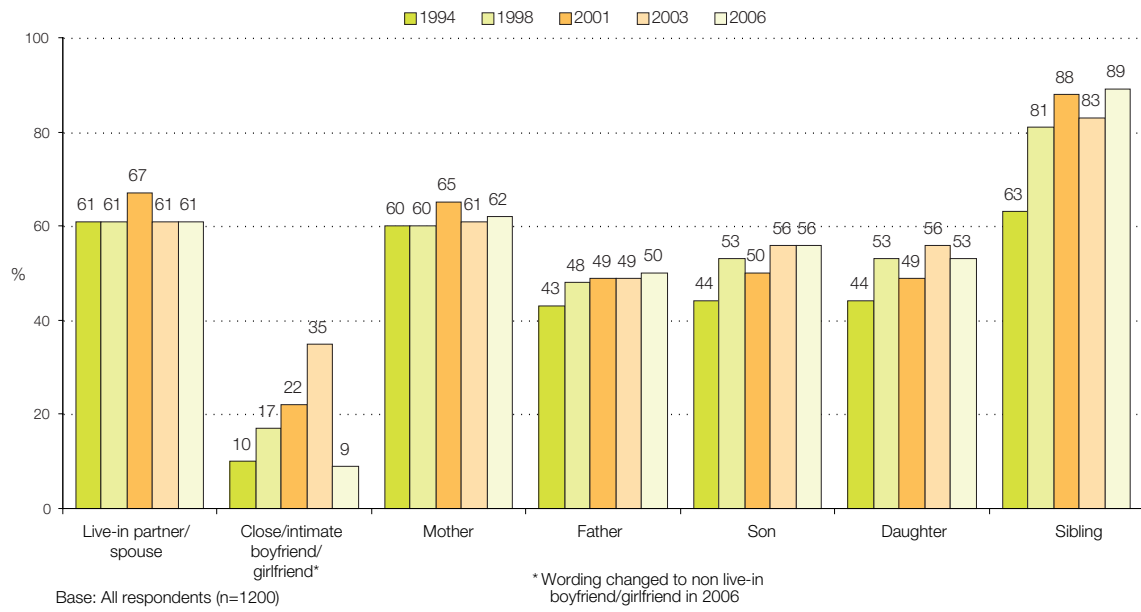
Q – Which of the following relationships do you have at the moment?



This question has been asked in every survey since 1994. However in 2006, the categories of grandmother, grandfather, grandchild and close/best friend were added for the first time.

Figure 4 below shows that there has been limited change over time except for a decrease in the proportion of respondents who said they had a close/intimate boyfriend/girlfriend which dropped from 35% in 2003 to 9% in 2006. Anecdotally, it appears that in 2003 some respondents who had indicated that they had a spouse felt they were being asked if they were having an affair when the follow up question was – do you have a close/intimate boyfriend or girlfriend. It is possible that in reassuring respondents, the interviewers may have encouraged them to answer ‘yes’ when thinking of a close friend with whom they were not in an intimate or sexual relationship. To avoid this confusion, the wording was changed to ‘non live-in boyfriend/girlfriend’ in 2006 and this may account for the decrease.

Figure 4—Current relationships - over time



2. THE STATE OF AUSTRALIAN RELATIONSHIPS

2.1 Best Thing about the Partner Relationship

The picture for partner relationships is very positive overall with 95% of those with a spouse, de facto or non live-in partner able to say what was best about their relationship.

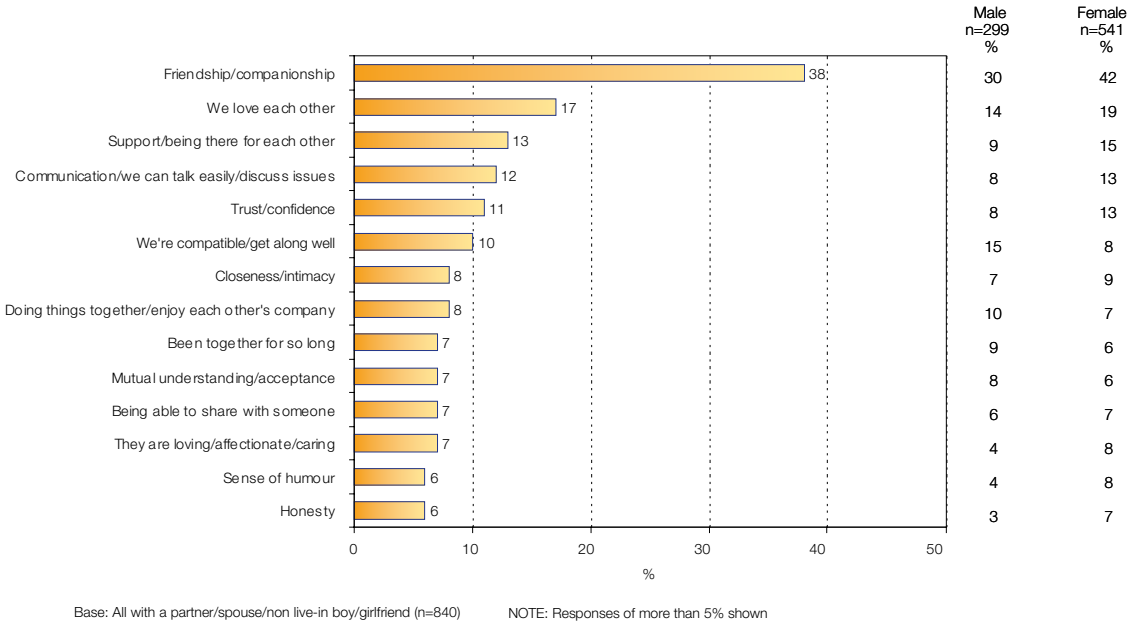
When asked to answer an open-ended question about what the best thing was about the relationship, by far the most common answer was 'friendship/companionship'. In fact, while other factors remained fairly stable over the years, the proportion citing 'friendship/companionship' jumped from 28% in 2003 to 38% in 2006. Other important factors were 'love' (17%), 'support' (13%), 'communication' (12%), 'trust/confidence' (11%) and 'compatibility' (10%).

There were some interesting differences between males and females with 'friendship/companionship', 'support', 'communication' and 'trust/confidence' more important to women, while men were twice as likely to say that 'compatibility' was the best thing about their relationship.

The main responses and also the differences between males and females are shown below.

Figure 5— The best thing about your partner relationship

Q – Thinking now about the relationship that you have with your spouse or partner, what is the best thing about your partner relationship? What else?



2.2 Negative Influences on the Partner Relationship

As well as positives, respondents were asked about whether or not certain things were currently negatively impacting upon their partner relationship. Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) were able to cite at least one negative influence on their partner relationship.

As in previous surveys, 'lack of time spent together' (36%) was the most commonly cited negative influence. Other important negative influences mentioned were 'lack of understanding each other's views'

(23%), 'different perspectives/values' (22%) and 'lack of communication' (21%). Related to the issue of lack of time was 'both partners working full-time' which was a negative influence added for the first time in the 2006 survey and was cited by as many as 21% of respondents. Another new factor added in 2006 was 'housework' which also scored high up in the list of common negative influences at 19%.

The harder social problems such as 'unemployment' (7%), 'alcohol and other drugs' (7%), 'gambling' (3%), 'an affair' (2%) and 'violence' (1%), although a serious problem for some, were not as commonly cited as the practical or cultural-type issues mentioned above.

Figure 6—Issues negatively impacting on partner relationship

Q – Are any of the following issues negatively impacting upon your partner relationship?

Base	840 %
Any issues	77
Lack of time spent together	36
Lack of understanding each other's views	23
Different perspectives/values	22
Lack of communication	21
Both partners working full time	21
Different goals/expectations	20
Housework	19
Financial insecurity/difficulties	18
Having/bringing up children	15
Serious illness or disability	12
Influence of in-laws	10
Inability to solve conflict	10
Job insecurity	10
Accident/traumatic event	10
Sexual difficulties	9
Different cultural background	7
Job loss/unemployment	7
Alcohol and other drug issues	7
Influence of ex-partners	7
Lack of trust	6
Being pushed around	4
Gambling	3
An affair	2
Violence	1

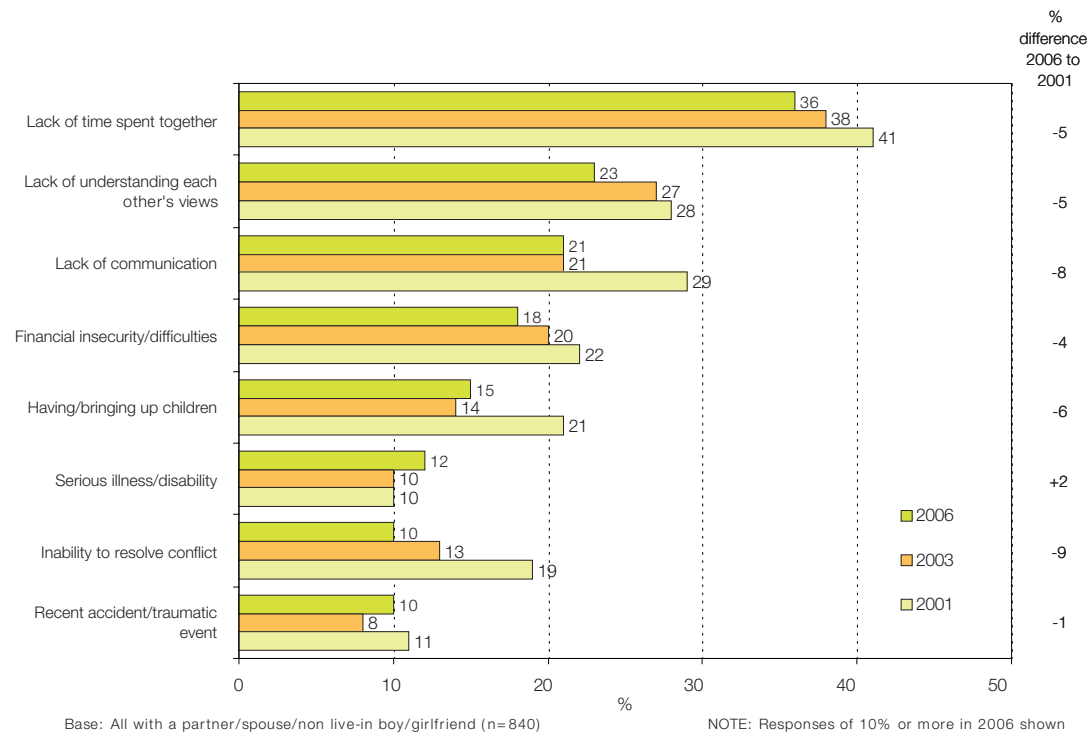
When respondents were asked which issue was having the main negative impact on their relationship, the principal responses were 'lack of time spent together' (15%), 'financial insecurity/difficulties' (7%), 'lack of communication' (6%) and 'both partners working full-time' (6%).

In terms of changes over time, the overall picture remained the same with the same issues of concern in 2001, 2003 and 2006. Although 'lack of time' was the number one negative issue in all three surveys, the

proportion citing it fell from 41% in 2001 to 36% in 2006. The proportion mentioning 'inability to resolve conflict' dropped most dramatically - from 19% in 2001 to 10% in 2006. This may reflect improved resources and awareness and/or improved help-seeking behaviour.

Figure 7—Issues negatively impacting on partner relationship - changes over time

Q – Are any of the following issues negatively impacting upon your partner relationship?



2.3 Making It Better

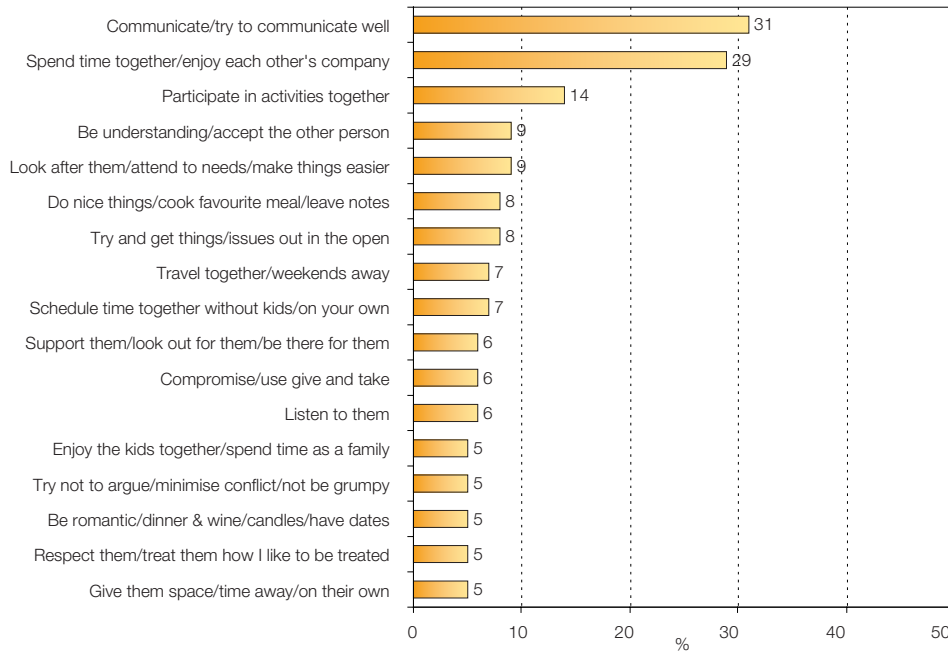
Nearly all respondents (91%) said they did something to improve or enhance the relationship they had with their spouse/partner. This was an open-ended question and there was a range of responses given.

Just under a third said they 'communicate/try to communicate well' (31%) and a similar proportion said they 'spend time together/enjoy each other's company' (29%). The third means of improving or enhancing the partner relationship was to 'participate in activities together' (14%). These responses correlate well with the findings on what respondents perceive as the main negatives influences on relationships (ie lack of time to spend together, lack of communication, lack of understanding).

The responses given by 5% or more are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8— Things done to improve or enhance partner relationship

Q – What things do you do to improve or enhance the relationship you have with your spouse/partner? What else?



Base: All with a partner/spouse/non live-in boy/girlfriend (n=840)

NOTE: Responses of 5% or more shown

There were some significant differences by gender with men more likely to be romantic (eg 'do nice things/cook favourite meal/leave notes') whereas women tended to be more practical (eg 'try and get issues out in the open'). These differences are shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9— Things done to improve or enhance partner relationship - differences by gender

Q – What things do you do to improve or enhance the relationship you have with your spouse/partner? What else?

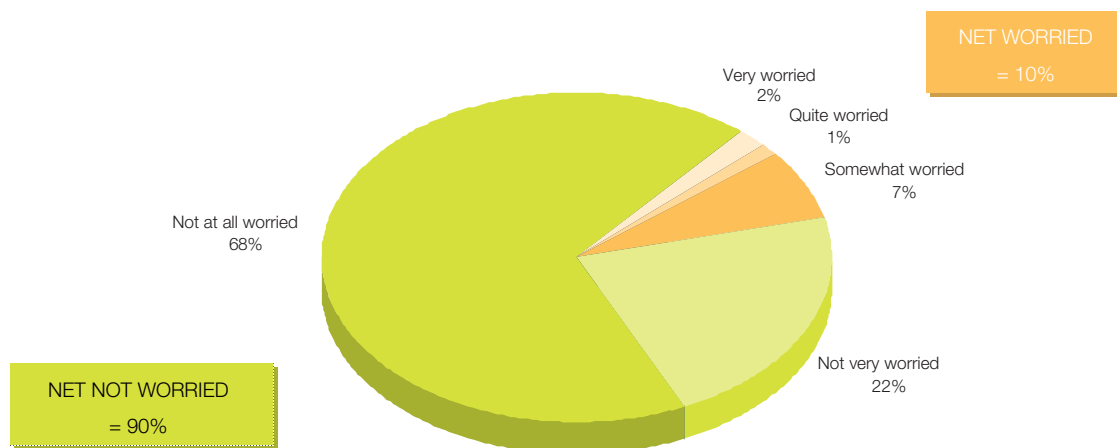
	Gender		
	Total	Male	Female
Base	840	299	541
	%	%	%
Spend time together/enjoy each other's company	29	23	33
Do nice things/cook favourite meal/leave notes	8	11	7
Try and get things/issues out in the open	8	4	10
Schedule time together without kids/on your own	7	3	9
Enjoy the kids together/spend time as a family	5	3	6
Be romantic /dinner and wine/candles/have dates	5	7	3

2.4 Future of the Partner Relationship

In 2006, a new question was included that asked respondents the extent to which they were worried about the future of their partner relationship. The results were very positive overall with only 10% saying that they were somewhat worried, quite worried or very worried. In fact, only 3% said that they were quite worried or very worried.

Figure 10—Degree of concern regarding future of partner relationship

Q – To what extent are you worried about the future of your relationship? Would you say you are ...
READ OUT?



Base: All with a partner/spouse/non live-in boy/girlfriend (n=840)

There were no differences between men and women. However, the data indicates that worry about the future of partner relationships tends to decrease with age.

There was a difference by type of partner relationship. Respondents who were married/de facto were more likely to be 'not at all worried' than those with a non live-in boy/girlfriend (71% compared to 45%). In addition, those respondents with children were less likely to be worried than those without (9% and 14% respectively).

3. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

3.1 Why People Get Married

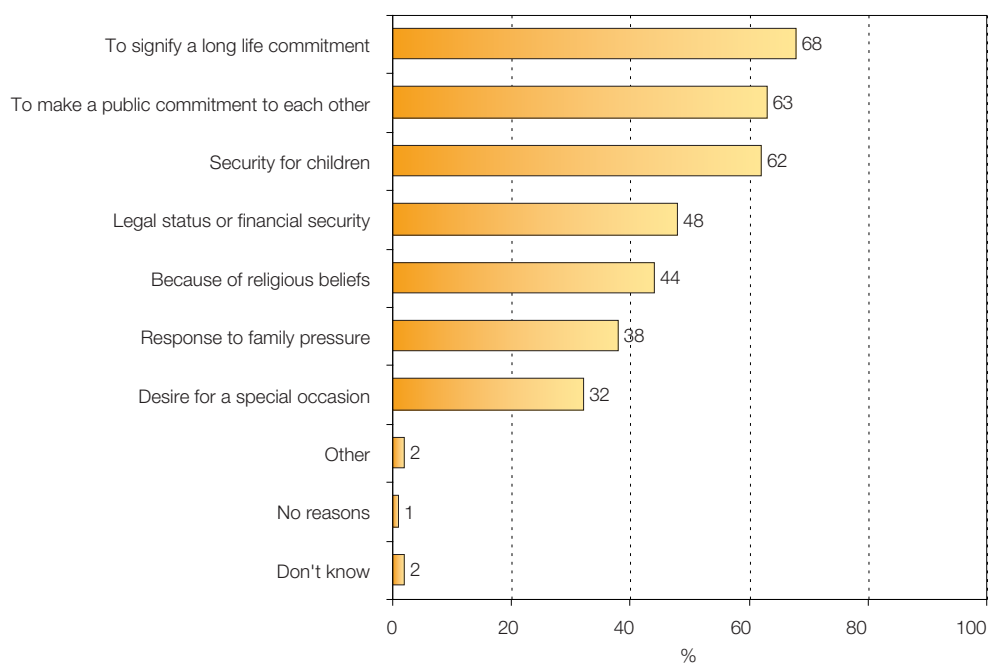
All respondents were asked why they think people get married these days. Possible responses to this question were read out and respondents were also offered an 'other specify' option.

The data shows that marriage is still very much perceived as a commitment with nearly seven in 10 saying that people get married to 'signify a life long commitment' (68%) and just over six in 10 said it was to 'make a public commitment to each other' (63%).

The full range of responses is shown below:

Figure 11 – Main reasons for getting married

Q – What do you think are the main reasons why people get married nowadays? READ OUT



Base: All respondents (n=1200)

Looking at the responses by sub-group, there were some significant differences by gender and age.

Younger respondents were more likely to say that 'to signify a life long commitment' was a main reason for people to get married with 77% of the 18-29 age group nominating this factor compared to 63% of those aged 60 and over.

Women as well as respondents of either sex aged 30-39 were more likely to say that people get married to provide 'security for children', 'because of religious beliefs' and as a response to 'family pressure'. This may suggest a sense of pressure to get married in order to make a public commitment or appease religious or family demands.

Figure 12—Main reasons for getting married - differences by gender and age

Q – What do you think are the main reasons why people get married nowadays?

	Total	Gender		Age				
	n=1200 %	Male n=425 %	Female n=775 %	<29 n=210 %	30-39 n=245 %	40-49 n=231 %	50-59 n=224 %	60+ n=288 %
To signify a long life commitment	68	66	69	77	76	65	63	63
To make a public commitment to each other	63	58	65	66	69	58	57	63
Security for children	62	57	64	60	70	58	58	61
Legal status or financial security	48	47	49	47	53	48	52	43
Because of religious beliefs	44	38	47	48	51	43	36	42
Response to family pressure	38	34	40	39	50	38	36	29
Desire for a special occasion	32	30	33	32	41	30	25	32

Base: All respondents (n=1200)

Similar questions were asked in both 2006 and back in 1998 as to what respondents thought were the three main reasons why people get married. Results were very similar in both surveys with the same top three responses being 'to signify a life long commitment', 'security for children' and 'to make a public commitment to each other'.

3.2 Why People Choose Not to Marry

Similarly, all respondents were asked why they thought people choose not to get married nowadays, and again, they were offered a pre-coded list of responses.

These response codes can be split into three categories as set out below:

Fear

NET mentions = 86%

- bad previous experience (72%)
- fear of making a mistake (61%)
- fear of divorce and what goes with it (59%)

Commitment

NET mentions - 85%

- avoidance of commitment (67%)
- strong commitment does not need marriage (63%)

Sacrifice

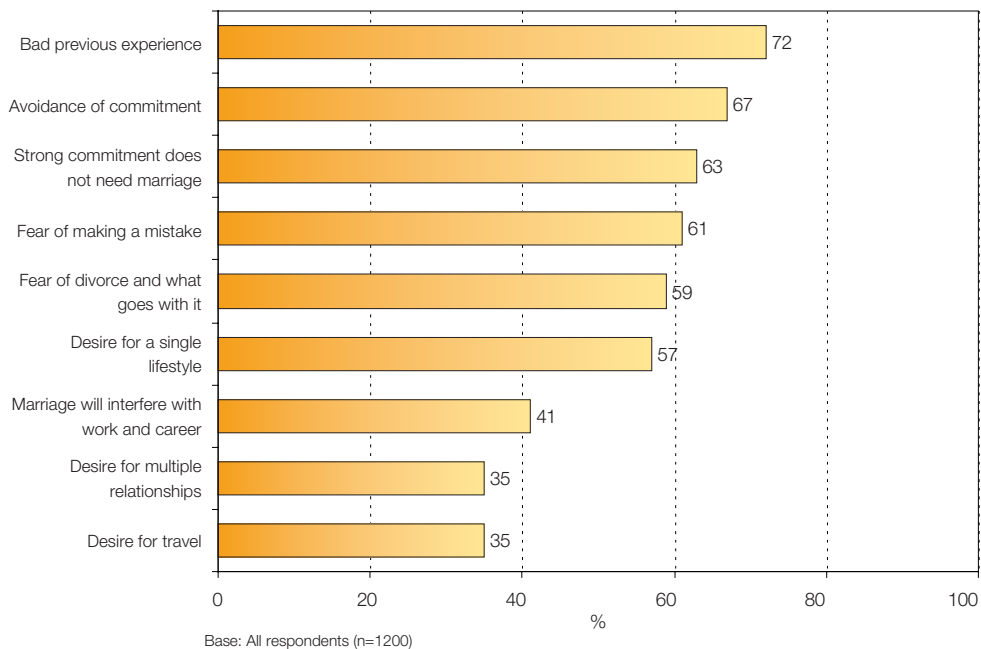
NET mentions = 75%

- desire for a single lifestyle (57%)
- marriage will interfere with work and career (41%)
- desire for multiple relationships (35%)
- desire for travel (35%)

The order of responses is shown below:

Figure 13—Main reasons for not getting married

Q – What do you think are the main reasons why people don't get married nowadays?



4. BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

4.1 Satisfaction with Current Employment Situation

Respondents were asked about their current employment situation, whether this is what they would like to be doing, and if not, what they would prefer to be doing.

Unsurprisingly, the unemployed and those in receipt of a benefit were least satisfied with their situation. Only 41% of this group was satisfied with their current situation - compared to 71% of those employed full-time, 76% of those employed part-time, 76% of those working at home and 83% of retirees.

The full results showing preferred employment situation based on current status is shown below:

Figure 14—Preferred employment situation - by current employment situation

Q – And thinking about your current circumstances, is this what you would prefer to be doing?

Q - What would you prefer to be doing?

Preferred Situation	Current Circumstance					
	Total n=1200 %	Full time paid n=467 %	Part time paid n=274 %	Retired n=254 %	Unemployed/ benefit n=112 %	Unpaid at home n=95 %
Full-time paid employment	8	n/a	14	6	35	7
Part-time paid employment	10	13	n/a	6	19	14
Retired	3	7	2	n/a	1	1
Unemployed/ receiving a benefit	-	-	-	-	n/a	-
Work full-time unpaid at home	1	2	2	-	1	n/a
Other	6	7	6	5	3	2
Happy with current situation	72	71	76	83	41	76

Overall, part-time employment was the most frequently preferred alternative option for people who were not happy with their current status (34%) followed by full-time employment (30%), retirement (12%) and unpaid work at home (5%). Trends were similar between this survey and the 2003 results.

In terms of differences by sub-group, women were far more likely to say they would prefer part-time employment (39% of women who are not happy with their current situation compared to 25% of men), whereas men were more likely to say they would prefer to be retired (22% of men not happy with their current situation compared to 7% of women).

4.2 Work-family Balance and Relationships

In today's society, one of the greatest challenges is how to balance the competing demands of work and home. To explore how this impacts on relationships, respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with three statements on this subject. The responses to two of the statements highlights the impact balancing the demands of a job and life outside work is having.

As many as 88% agreed (and 54% agreed strongly) that *these days more relationships are in trouble because finding a balance between work and family life is so difficult*. Agreement was particularly strong among women of whom 60% agreed strongly compared to 45% of men. The statement was previously asked in the 2003 Indicators Survey and there were no real differences between the waves in terms of overall agreement.

There was a similar level of agreement with the second statement with 83% agreeing that *these days more relationships are in trouble because of a lack of compromise with both men and women wanting careers*. However, the strength of agreement was slightly less strong for this statement with 42% agreeing strongly. Agreement with this statement was stronger among older age groups with 88% of those aged over 60 agreeing.

Overall, agreement with this statement decreased by 7% since the question was last asked in 2003 and this may reflect changing attitudes with regard to male and female roles.

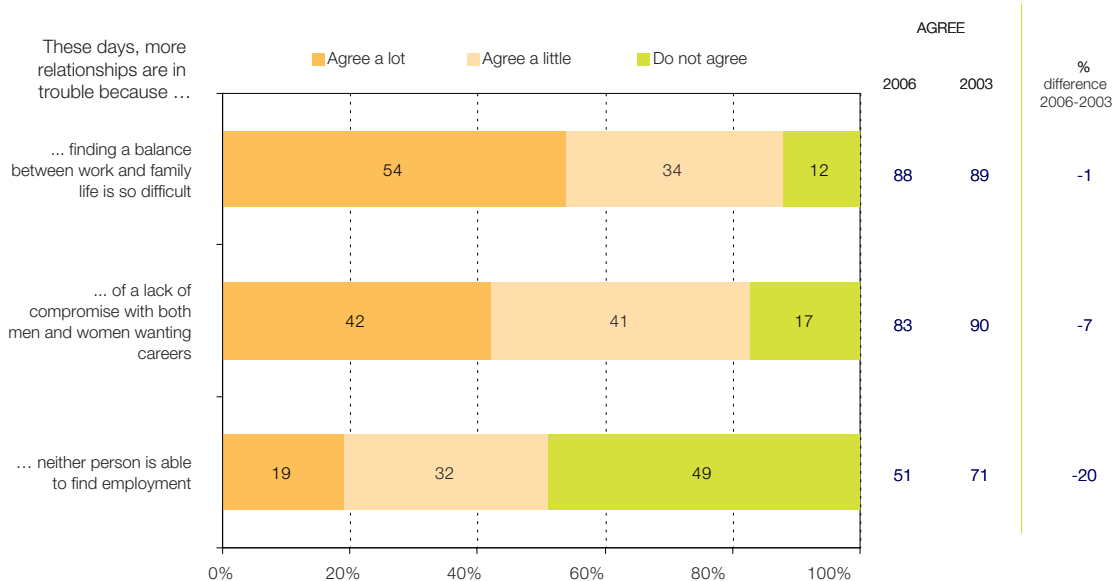
The third statement in the set had the lowest level of agreement. Only 51% of respondents agreed that *these days more relationships are in trouble because neither person is able to find employment*. This is a drop of 20% since 2003 reflecting increased levels of employment.

Agreement was significantly lower among younger age groups with only 38% of those aged 18-29 in agreement. Respondents living in non-metro areas and those over 50 were significantly more likely to agree.

Responses to these three statements and the changes over time are shown below.

Figure 15—Agreement with statements about relationships and work-family balance

Q – Now I am going to ask you some questions about how you view relationships. Please tell me to what extent you perceive these statements to be true about relationships in general. So taking the first statement ... would you say you ... with that statement?



Base: All respondents (n=1200)

4.3 Priorities – Work or Family?

In order to add another layer of understanding to how respondents managed their work and family commitments, we asked a series of statements about how they viewed themselves.

Looking first at family factors, nearly all respondents (90%) said that *being a good parent* was important to them, and 82% said it was very important.

There was a similarly very high level of importance attributed to *being a good husband/wife/partner*, with 91% saying this was important to them. For 76% it was very important.

Moving on to economic factors, 77% said that *having a paid job* was important to them and for 45% it was very important. Even for unemployed respondents and those on a benefit, 76% felt this was important to how they viewed themselves. Agreement with this statement was particularly strong among those aged 18-29 of whom 90% thought having a paid job was important (including 57% who thought it very important).

A similar proportion (74%) said that *their job or occupation* was important, although the strength of agreement was slightly lower with 37% saying it was very important. Younger respondents aged 18-29 were only slightly more likely to agree with this statement (80%) and only 34% of 18-29 year olds considered their job or occupation to be very important.

The findings tend to support the view that the young workers, although attaching importance to their work overall, are not overly loyal to a particular occupation or career choice.

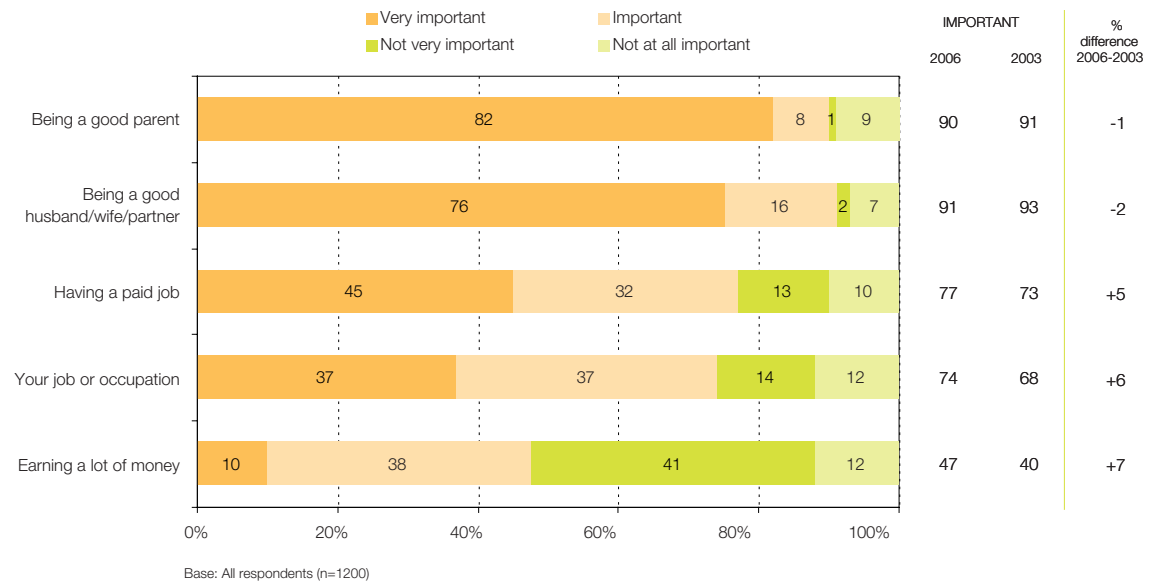
The final statement in this section asked how important earning a lot of money was. Nearly half of all respondents (47%) thought this was important, although only 10% thought it was very important. The level of importance attached to this factor was greater for younger respondents with 60% of those aged 18-29 considering earning a lot of money to be important compared to just 35% of those aged over 60.

There were some interesting shifts over time. Although attitudes to the family factors remained largely constant since 2003, there was an increase in the proportion of persons who view the economic factors (paid job, occupation and earning a lot of money) as important. This change may reflect increasing overall levels of employment and income. It certainly highlights the competing nature of work and family life in Australia today.

The findings and changes over time are shown below.

Figure 16—Importance of relationships and work

Q – And now some questions about how you view yourself. This time I would like you to tell me whether each statement is very important to you, important, not all that important, not important at all/not relevant. In describing who you are, how important is...?



4.4 Helping Address the Balance

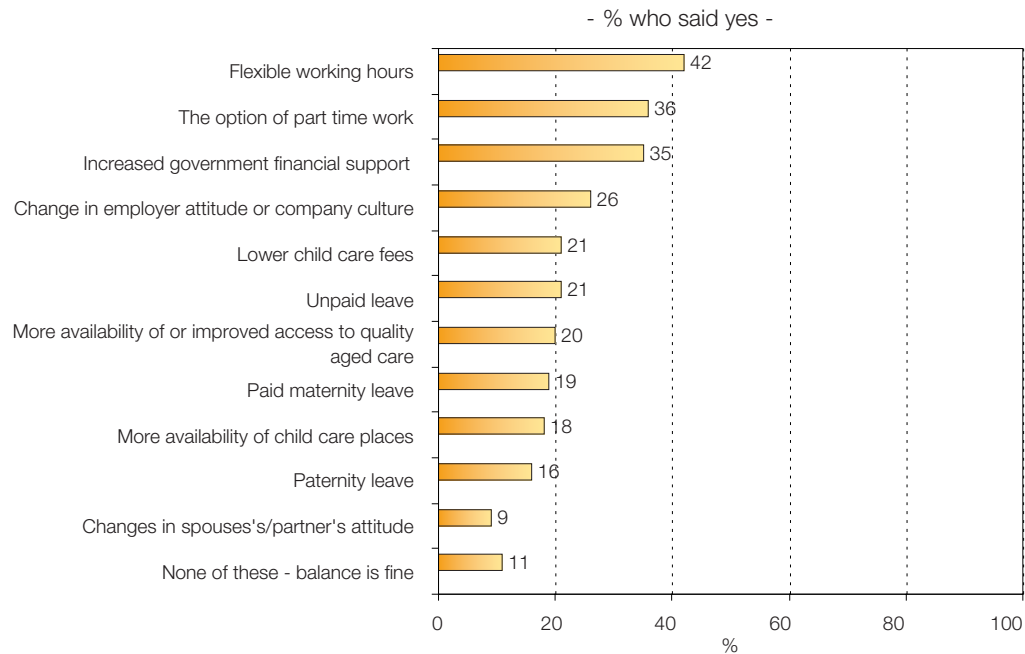
Respondents who had ever been in paid employment were asked whether they thought they had a choice in being able to better balance their work and family commitments. Interviewers were briefed to explain to those not currently in paid employment that the question was asking about the time that they had been in employment.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (61%) felt that they did have a choice in balancing their work and family commitments, while 34% felt they did not and 5% didn't know. Unsurprisingly, those not happy with their current employment status were more likely to say that they did not have a choice - 48% compared to 29% of those who were happy with their current work status.

Respondents were then read out a series of options and asked to say which would help them balance their work and family life. The results are shown below.

Figure 17—Ways to improve the work-family balance

Q – And which of the following would help you to better balance your work and family life? READ OUT



Base: All who have ever been in paid employment (n=1170) - interviewers briefed to explain that the question is asking about the time when the respondent was in paid employment if they were not at the time of interview. NOTE: Responses of 5% or more shown

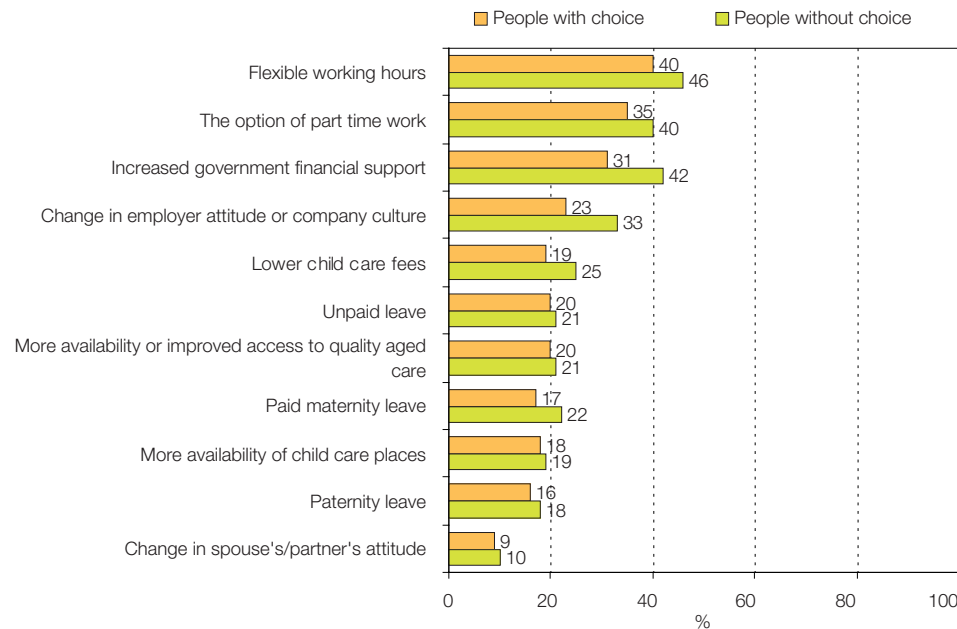
Unsurprisingly, more child-friendly policies such as lower child care fees, more child care places and parental leave options were far more likely to be mentioned by persons aged 30-39. For instance, lower child care fees was mentioned by 46% of those aged 30-39 compared to just 21% overall and 38% of this age group mentioned more availability of child care places compared to just 18% overall.

Those who felt that they did not have a choice about work-family balance were more likely to nominate increased government financial support, a change in employer attitude/company culture, lower child care fees and paid maternity leave as factors that would help. The following shows the breakdown of what would help based on whether respondents felt that they did or did not have a choice in balancing work and family commitments.

Figure 18— Ways to improve work-family balance - what helps for those who feel they have a choice and what would help for those who don't feel they have a choice

Q – Thinking about balancing work and family life, under your current circumstances do you feel that you have a choice in being able to better balance your work and family commitments?

Q - And which of the following would help you to better balance your work and family life? READ OUT



Base: All who have ever been in paid employment (n=1170) - interviewers briefed to explain that the question is asking about the time when the respondent was in paid employment if they were not at the time of interview. NOTE: Responses of 5% or more shown

This question was also asked in 2003. Interestingly, there has been a decrease in the proportion of respondents saying that they did not have a choice in being able to balance work and family life - down from 40% in 2003 to 34% in 2006.

With a few notable exceptions, the choice of possible ways to address the balance has remained largely unchanged since 2003. However, in 2006 respondents were more likely to nominate lower child care fees and more availability of child care places as things that would help. There was also a sharp fall in the proportion nominating change in spouse's/partner's attitude which dropped from being the second most common choice among those who felt they had a choice in 2003 to being the last of 11 options for both groups in 2006.

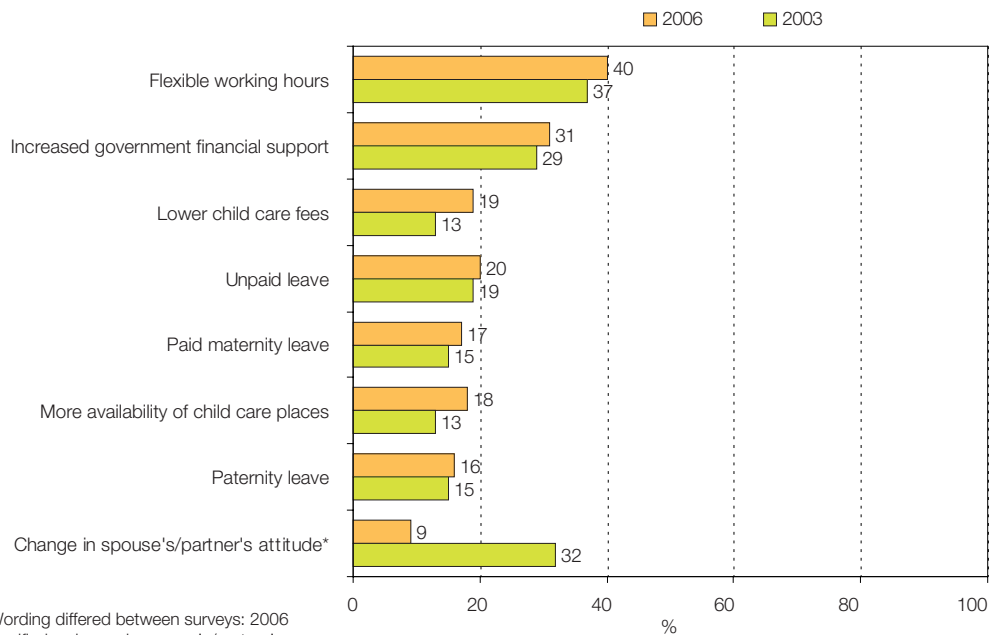
There was also a slight decrease among those who felt they did not have a choice in the proportion nominating increased government financial assistance as something that would help - perhaps reflecting the impact of increased family assistance measures.

The responses over time are shown in Figures 19 and 20 below.

Figure 19—Ways to improve work-family balance - changes over time for those who have a choice

Q – Thinking about balancing work and family life, under your current circumstances do you feel that you have a choice in being able to better balance your work and family commitments?

Q - And which of the following would help you to better balance your work and family life? READ OUT



*Wording differed between surveys: 2006 specified a change in spouse's/partner's attitude, whereas 2003 did not

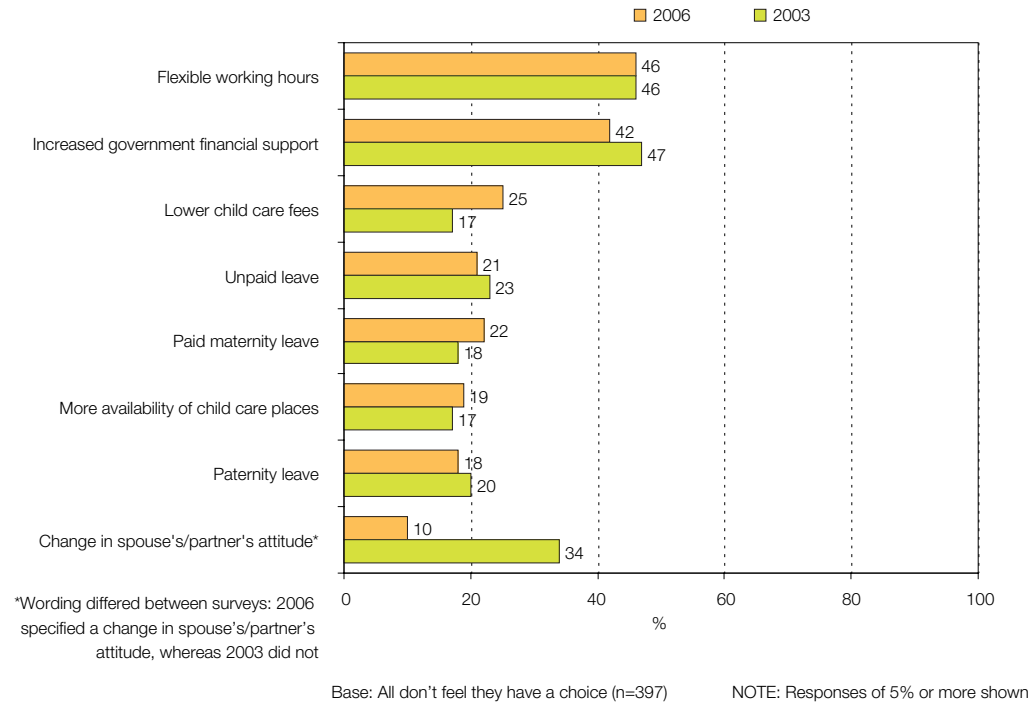
Base: All who feel they have a choice (n=709)

NOTE: Responses of 5% or more shown

Figure 20— Ways to improve work-family balance - changes over time for those who don't have a choice

Q – Thinking about balancing work and family life, under your current circumstances do you feel that you have a choice in being able to better balance your work and family commitments?

Q - And which of the following would help you to better balance your work and family life? READ OUT



5. RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT

5.1 Attitudes to Relationship Support Services

The results for our questions in this part of the survey were very positive and highlighted an increasing acceptance of the use of professional services to deal with relationship issues.

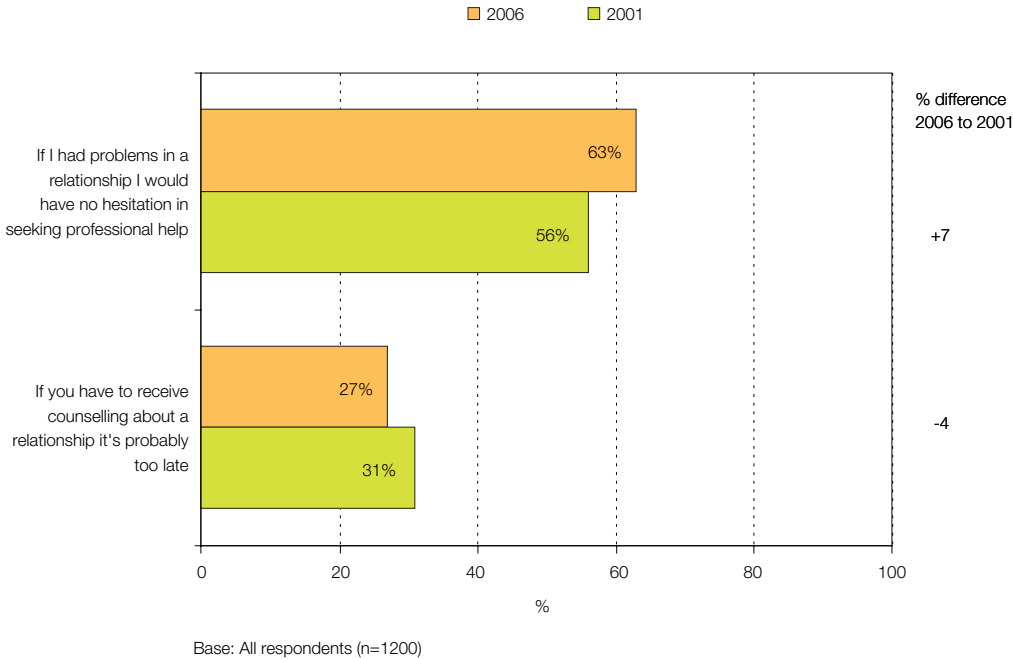
Respondents were read two statements and were asked whether they agreed with them. The first statement was: *If I had problems in a relationship, I would have no hesitation in seeking professional help.* This statement received agreement from 63% of respondents. Agreement was significantly stronger among females with 69% of women agreeing compared to 52% of men.

The second statement was: *If you have to receive counselling about a relationship, it's probably too late.* Just over a quarter (27%) agreed with this statement while 73% disagreed. Agreement was higher among men (38%), those aged over 60 (40%) and respondents living in non-metro areas (33%).

Both these statements were included in the 2001 Survey, and as Figure 21 below shows, there has been an increase in acceptance of professional services over the last five years.

Figure 21 – Attitudes toward professional relationship services

Q – I am now going to read out a couple of statements other people have made about relationships, please say whether you agree with each one.



5.2 Who Do You Turn To?

Respondents with a partner (spouse/de facto/non live-in boy/girlfriend) were then asked what resources they had used to overcome relationship difficulties with their partner. A pre-coded list was read out and respondents were asked to say which, if any, they had used.

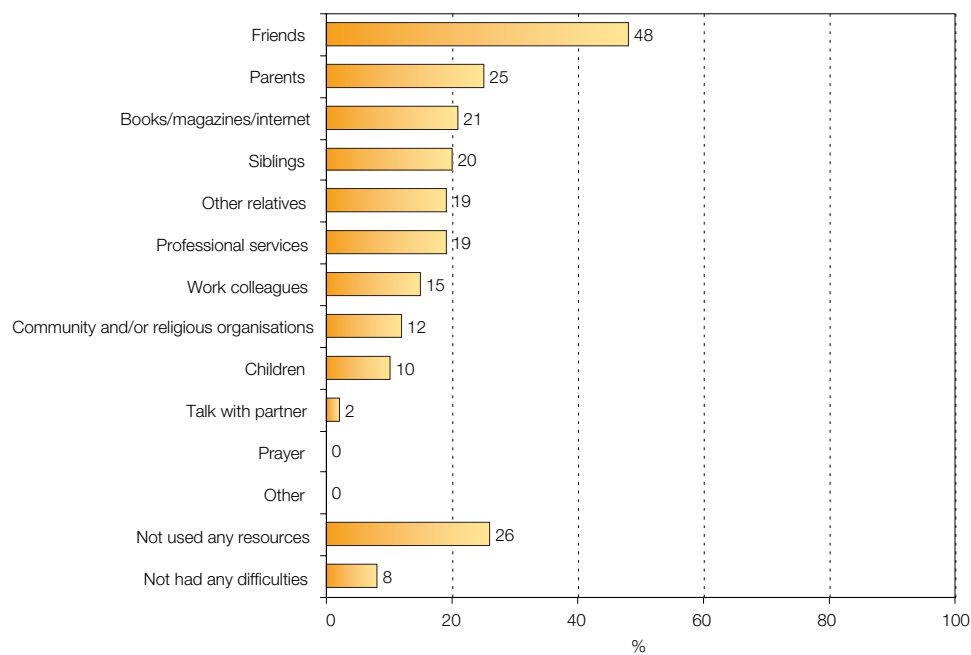
Just over a quarter (26%) had not used any resources to overcome their problems and a further 8% specifically said that they had not had any difficulties with their partner.

Two-thirds had used any of the nominated resources. Friends were by far the most commonly used resource for relationship difficulties - used by 48% of all respondents. Other family members such as parents (25%) and siblings (20%) as well as books/magazines/internet (21%) were also commonly used. Professional services had been used by 19%.

The full range of responses is shown below.

Figure 22—Resources used to overcome partner relationship difficulties

Q – Which, if any, of the following resources have you used to overcome relationship difficulties with your partner?



Base: All with a partner/spouse/non live-in boy/girlfriend (n=840)

There were clear differences by age with older respondents far less likely to use resources or to have any difficulties at all. Only 43% of those aged over 60 had used any resources compared to 83% of those aged under 30. Of those aged over 60, 15% said they had not had any difficulties compared to 8% overall. Respondents aged under 30 were particularly likely to turn to work colleagues with 32% using this resource compared to 15% overall. Friends (79%) and parents (46%) were, however, still the most commonly used resources for the 18-29 group.

Women were more open to discussing relationship issues with 70% saying they had used any of the resources compared to 60% of men. In particular, women were more likely to turn to friends (54% compared to 39% of men) and siblings (24% compared to 14% of men).

These gender and age differences are shown in more detail below.

Figure 23 – Resources used to overcome partner relationship difficulties - differences by age and gender

Q – Which, if any, of the following resources have you used to overcome relationship difficulties with your partner?

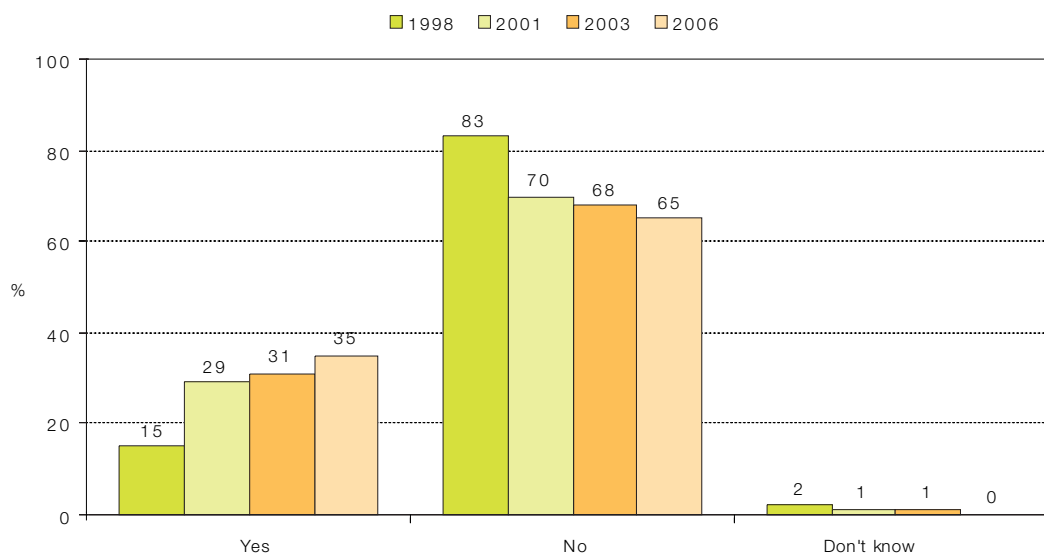
	Total	Gender		Age				
	n=840	Male n=299	Female n=541	<29 n=126	30-39 n=199	40-49 n=170	50-59 n=161	60+ n=183
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Any used	67	60	70	83	76	68	66	43
Friends	48	39	54	79	62	48	41	19
Parents	25	24	25	46	33	23	18	8
Books/ magazines/ internet	21	18	22	25	26	22	20	10
Siblings	20	14	24	29	24	24	17	8
Other relatives	19	18	19	28	26	19	19	7
Professional services	19	17	21	13	21	26	24	11
Work colleagues	15	14	15	32	16	17	9	5
Community and/or religious organisations	12	12	12	7	11	13	14	14
Children	10	9	10	4	5	12	12	14
Talk with partner	2	3	1	1	1	1	3	3
Prayer	0	-	0	-	-	1	-	1
Other	0	1	0	1	-	2	-	-
Not had any difficulties	8	10	6	6	4	8	7	15

5.3 Relationships Australia

Just over one-third of respondents (35%) had heard of Relationships Australia. Awareness of the organisation has steadily increased since the 1998 Survey when only 15% of respondents had heard of Relationships Australia.

Figure 24—Awareness of Relationship Australia

Q – Had you ever heard of Relationships Australia before today?



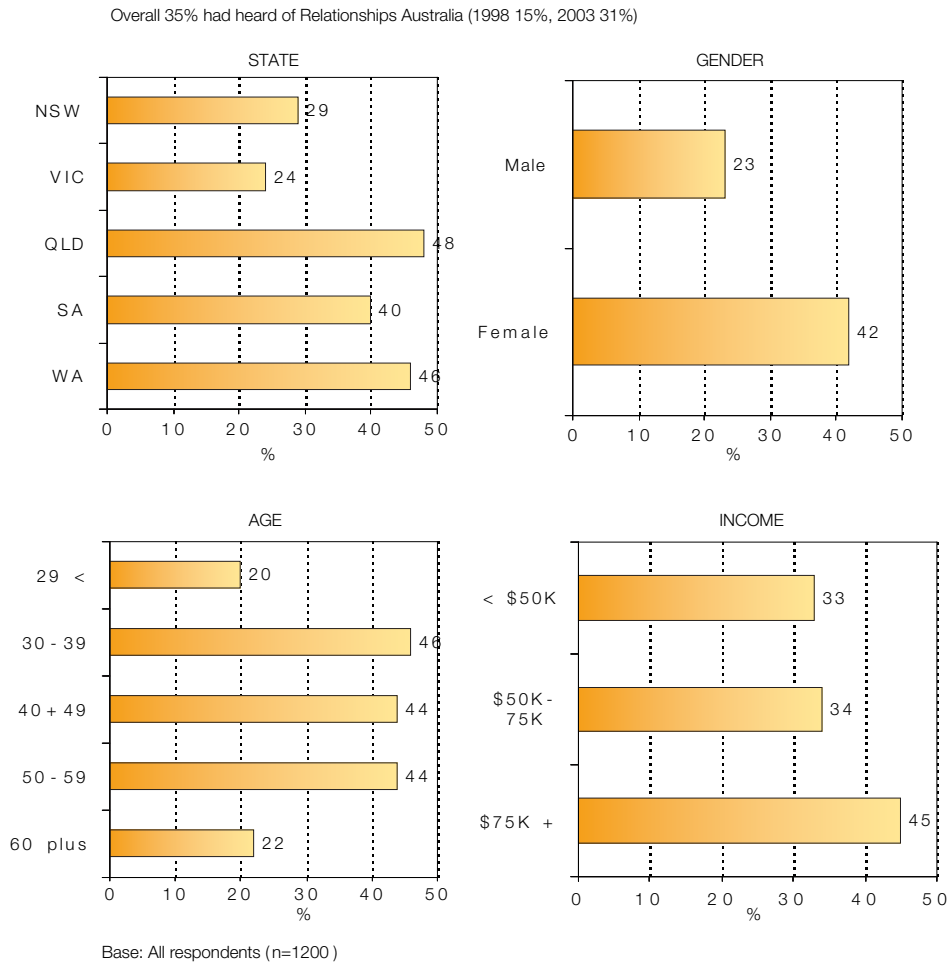
Awareness of Relationships Australia was higher in Queensland (48%), Western Australia (46%) and South Australia (40%) than in New South Wales (29%) and Victoria (24%). Awareness was also much higher among women (42% compared to 23% of men), those aged 30-59 (45% compared to 20% and 22% respectively for those aged younger or older) and among those with a household income over \$75,000 (45% compared to 33% of those earning less than \$50,000).

Unsurprisingly, awareness of the organisation was also higher among those who have a need or may have a need of relationship support services, such as those who are separated or divorced (47%) and those who expressed worry about the future of their relationship (44%).

Differences based on sub-groups are shown below.

Figure 25—Awareness of Relationships Australia - differences by sub-group

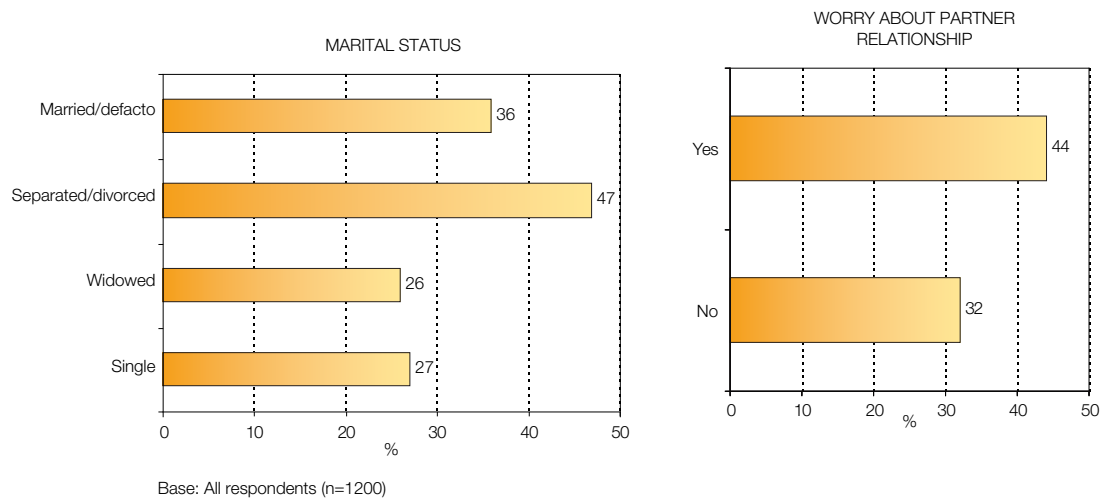
Q – Had you ever heard of Relationships Australia before today?



Note: Samples from Tasmania, Northern Territory and ACT were too small to draw statistically significant results

Figure 25 continued...

The data suggests that those who have had a need, or may have a need, for the services offered by Relationships Australia, are more aware of the organisation

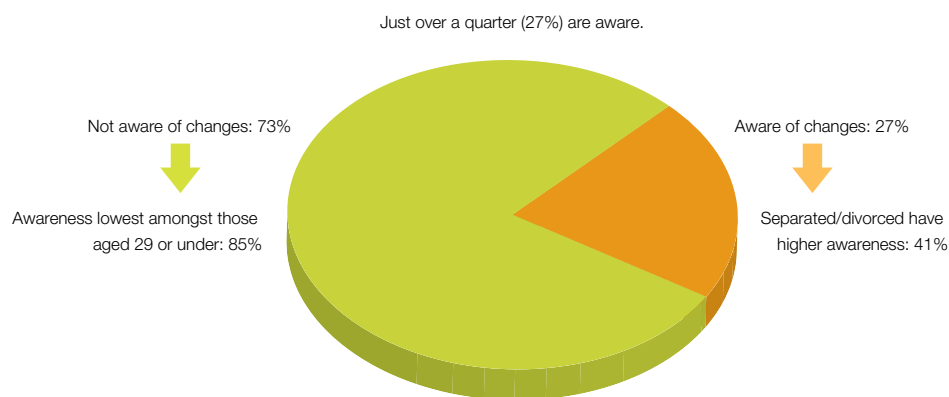


5.4 The Family Law System

Just over a quarter of respondents (27%) were aware of changes to the family law system that came into operation in 2006. Those with children (30%) were significantly more aware than those without (21%). Respondents who were divorced or separated (41%) were the largest sub-group to be aware of the changes. Awareness was particularly low amongst those aged 29 or under of whom just 15% were aware of the changes.

Figure 26—Awareness of changes to the family law system

Q – Are you aware of recent changes to the family law system?



6. THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

The 2006 Indicators Survey included a new section exploring the impact of new communications technology on relationships. Respondents were read out a list of types of new communications technology and asked to say whether any had enabled them to improve or form important relationships, or whether any had caused problems in their important relationships.

The findings were largely positive with the overwhelming majority (88%) saying they had used new communications technology to improve important relationships. A large proportion (40%) had also used technology to form new relationships. For a significant minority (29%), however, technology had led to problems in their relationships.

6.1 Use of Technology to Improve Relationships

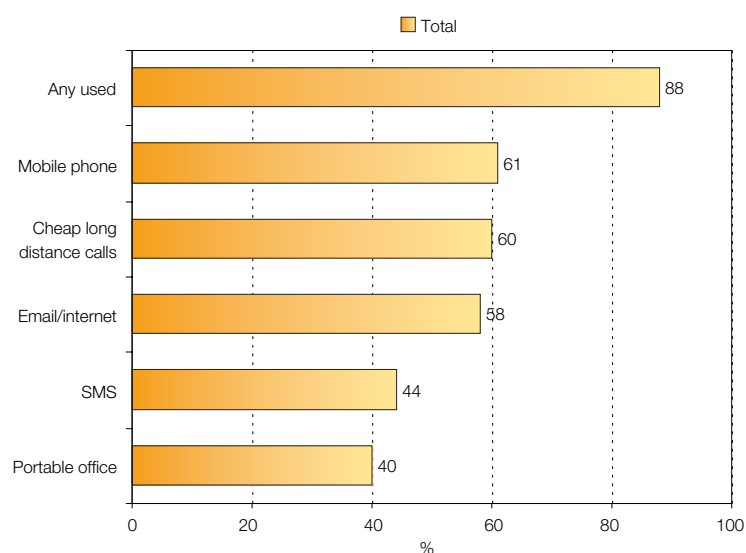
For nearly nine in ten (88%), technology had improved the important relationships in their lives and although this was true across all sub-groups, it was overwhelmingly the case for younger age groups. For instance, 99% of those aged 18-29 had used any of the types of technology listed to improve important relationships compared to 77% of those aged over 60.

Overall, the majority had used mobile phones to talk (61%), cheaper long distance calls (60%) and internet/email (58%) to improve important relationships, while large minorities had used SMS (44%) and portable office (40%).

The full range of responses is shown below.

Figure 27 – Improving relationships - type of technology used

Q – Over the last 10-15 years there has been a rapid increase in the use of new communications technology. Do you think that any of the following have enabled you to improve the important relationships in your life?



There were clear differences in the type of new communications technology used to improve important relationships based on life stage. Use of mobile phones (SMS and talk) and email were far more commonly used by single people, those with a non live-in boyfriend or girlfriend and younger age groups. In particular, SMS was used to improve important relationships by 68% of single respondents, 71% of those with a non live-in boyfriend or girlfriend and 77% of those aged 18-29. This compares with an overall figure of 44% using SMS and just 35% of those aged 50-59 and 14% of those over 60. Widowed respondents, on the other hand, tended to take advantage of cheaper long distance phone calls to improve important relationships (71% compared to 60% overall).

Figure 28—Impact of technology on improving relationships - differences by sub-group

Q – Over the last 10-15 years there has been a rapid increase in the use of new communications technology. Do you think that any of the following have enabled you to improve the important relationships in your life?

	Total	Marital Status				Partner	
		Married/ de facto	Separated/ divorced	Widowed	Single	Spouse/ de facto	Non-live in
Base	1200	734	135	84	242	745	105
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Any used	88	86	87	87	95	86	93
Mobile phone	61	59	59	44	74	59	79
Cheap long distance calls	60	57	62	71	63	57	61
Email/internet	58	55	57	36	73	55	70
SMS	44	37	49	25	68	37	71
Portable office	40	40	39	31	43	39	32

	Age:				
	<29 n=210 %	30-39 n=245 %	40-49 n=231 %	50-59 n=224 %	60+ n=288 %
Any used	99	95	88	84	77
Mobile phone	84	74	67	50	36
Cheap long distance calls	65	61	54	58	63
Email/internet	80	70	59	50	35
SMS	77	58	45	35	14
Portable office	50	52	41	37	23

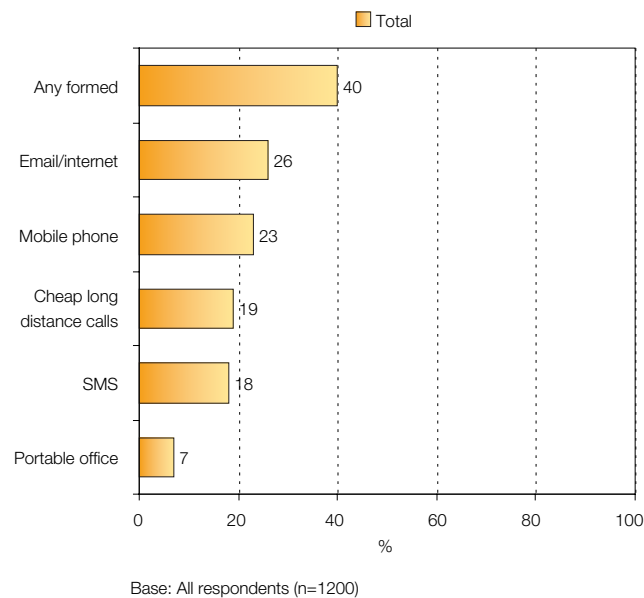
6.2 Use of Technology to Form Relationships

New communications technology had enabled 40% of respondents to form important relationships in their lives. This was particularly so for those aged 18-29 of whom 71% had formed new relationships using this technology. Interestingly, respondents who said they were worried about the future of their partner relationship were also more likely to have formed important relationships using technology - 46% compared to 35%.

In terms of the type of technology used to form relationships, the range of responses is shown below.

Figure 29—Forming relationships - type of technology used

Q – And has the availability of any of the following enabled you to form any important relationships in your life?

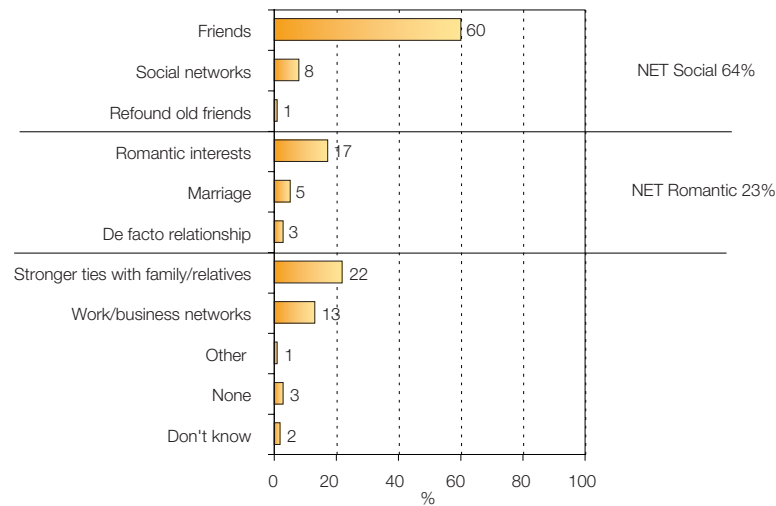


Looking now at the type of relationship formed as a result of the use of this technology, 64% had formed social relationships, 23% had formed romantic relationships (including 5% who had married), 22% had formed stronger ties with family and 13% had formed work/business networks. SMS was particularly used to form romantic relationships.

The full range of responses is shown below.

Figure 30—Relationships formed from use of new technology

Q – What types of relationships have formed from the use of this new technology?



Base: All who have formed relationships (n=472)

6.3 Relationship Problems Caused by Technology

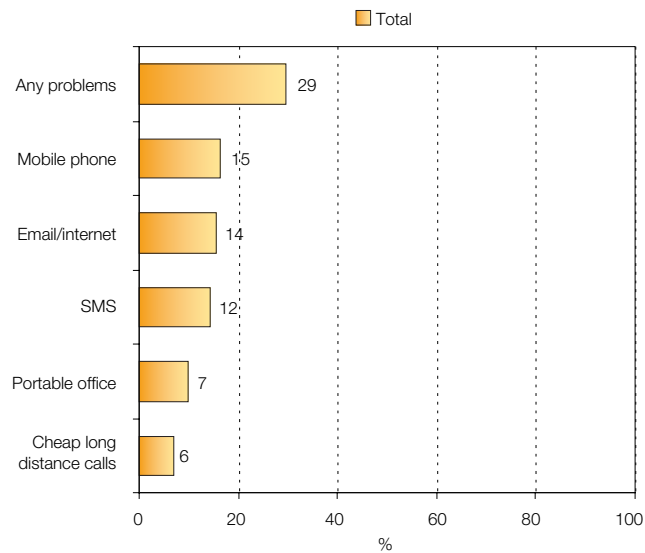
Although new communications technology has generally had a very favourable impact on relationships, it has also led to problems for some. Just under three in ten (29%) of respondents reported that the availability of new technology had caused problems in any of their important relationships.

This was particularly so for respondents aged 18-29 of whom almost half (45%) reported problems from the use of new communications technology. Those who were divorced or separated (40%), single (40%) and those who expressed worry about the future of their relationship (38%) were also significantly more likely to have experienced relationship problems as a result of technology.

In terms of the type of technology that had caused problems, mobile phones (15%), email/internet (14%) and SMS (12%) were the main offenders. The full range of responses is shown below.

Figure 31 – Problems caused by new technology

Q – And has the availability of any of the following caused problems in any of the important relationships in your life?



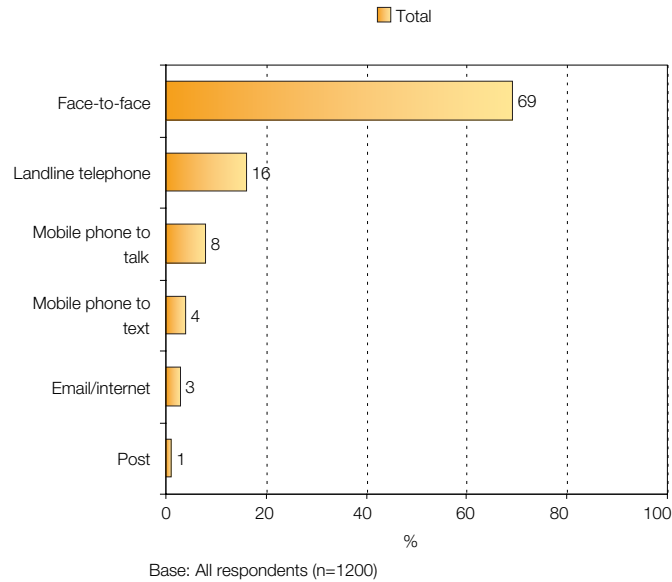
Among the key 18-29 age group, SMS was the most common source of relationship problems with 28% of this age group reporting relationship problems from SMS compared to just 3% of those aged over 60.

6.4 Mode of Communication

Respondents were asked what type of communication they used most frequently in their most important relationship from a list of pre-coded options. Overall, traditional forms of communication dominated with the majority (85%) nominating use of either face-to-face communications or landline telephone. The full range of responses is shown below.

Figure 32— Communication used most frequently

Q – Thinking about the relationship that you consider to be most important, which of the following types of communication do you use most frequently in this relationship?



Respondents aged under 30 and those aged over 60 were more likely to use a mode of communication other than face-to-face reflecting the fact that these youngest and oldest age groups were more likely to have an important ‘other’ living elsewhere. However, the mode of communication - other than face-to-face – differed between these age groups. For the over 60 age group, landline telephone (25%) was the most common form of communication other than face-to-face, whereas for the 18-29 age group it was mobile phone to talk (16%) and mobile phone to text (11%).

These responses are shown below.

Figure 33— Communication used most frequently - differences by age

Q – Thinking about the relationship that you consider to be most important, which of the following types of communication do you use most frequently in this relationship?

	Total	Age				
		29 or under	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Base	1185	209	241	229	221	283
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Face-to-face	69	62	74	72	73	63
Landline telephone	16	9	14	15	13	25
Mobile phone to talk	8	16	7	7	8	4
Mobile phone to text	4	11	3	3	3	1
Email/internet	3	3	2	3	2	5
Post	1	-	-	0	1	2

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