



Who cares for school age kids: staffing trends in Outside School Hours Care

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GENERAL CAVEAT

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These estimates may be different from the actual characteristics of the population because of sampling and nonsampling errors in the microdata and because of the assumptions underlying the modelling techniques.

The microdata do not contain any information that enables identification of the individuals or families to which they refer.

1 BACKGROUND

Research related to care arrangements for school children outside of school hours is very sparse in Australia, despite the substantial numbers of school children who receive non-parental care at least some of the time. In 2008, 16 per cent of children aged 6-8 years, and 9 per cent of children aged 9-12 years were using formal care services (ABS 2009, p. 4). This number appears to be increasing, with the percentage of children aged 5-11 years attending some type of formal before and/or after school care increasing from 8 to 14 per cent between 1996 and 2008 (ABS 2009, p. 37). Most parents (88%) report that they use before and after school care for work-related reasons (ABS 2009, p. 16).

Previous research indicates that factors that significantly influence the use of formal care services by school age children (children under 12 attending school) include living in a capital city, having couple parents who both work full-time, or a single parent working full-time, and living in a home where English is the main language spoken (Cassells and McNamara 2006). School age children living in single parent families are more likely to use both formal and informal care (Cassells and McNamara 2006). There is also some evidence suggesting a connection between the care needs of primary school and early adolescent children and maternal workforce participation. Costs of school age care have a smaller effect on mothers' labour supply than costs of care for preschool age children, but the effect is still significant, especially for low income women (Doiron and Kalb 2005). Other evidence suggests that 50 per cent of mothers of older children (11-14 years) work part-time rather than full-time in order to care for their children (even higher for 6-10 year olds), and time use data supports the idea that mothers of primary school children who work part-time spend their time after school with their children (Craig and Sawrikar 2008).

While forming an important part of the social and educational milieu of primary school children, the policy framework for Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) in Australia is somewhat complex, in that it falls within the purview of Early Childhood Education and Care, but relates to children of ages which are not generally seen as part of the 'early years'. Additional issues arise in regard to the nature of the relationship between OSHC services and schools (Seligson 2001), with OSHC advocates calling for a greater recognition of outside school hours care as part of the school environment (OSHC SA Association, undated).

Australian researchers have noted that policies related to child care as a whole tend to be complicated by the sharing of responsibility for funding and quality between Commonwealth and State governments (see Pocock and Hill 2007). Recent reforms proposed by the Council of Australian Governments seek to overcome some of these complexities, putting in place a new national framework for assessing child care quality, including OSHC (to be administered by the States) (COAG 2009a). Part of the new strategy involves the development of a new ratings system for child care services, as well as new standards for staff-to-child ratios and staff qualifications. While policies related to child care (including OSHC) are currently under review as part of the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) development of a National Quality Framework (COAG 2009a), at the time of writing no changes to staff-to-child ratios or staff qualification requirements for OSHC are proposed (Council of Australian Governments, no date). However, an Early Years Development Workforce strategy is due to be considered by COAG in 2010 (COAG 2009a), and workforce development across the early childhood sector is a key feature of

the National Early Childhood Development Strategy. The Productivity Commission is currently undertaking a study into the education and training workforce, including the early childhood workforce. At time of writing it is unclear to what extent staffing issues in OSHC services will be addressed within these initiatives, although OSHC services are included in a national census of the early childhood workforce currently being undertaken by the Commonwealth government (Ellis 2010).

Workforce issues, such as child-to-staff ratios, staff qualifications and experience and staff retention are generally seen as key drivers of quality in child care services (see, for example, Bretherton 2010; Pocock and Hill 2007). For example, reducing staff turnover improves the consistency of care provided to children, and gives staff the opportunity to improve their skills over time, through both increased experience and on-the-job training (Bretherton 2010). In this study, we focus on the characteristics of staff working in before and after school care, providing information about how these may differ across Australia, and setting the context for understanding staffing strengths and challenges in the OSHC sector. While little has currently been written about staffing issues in OSHC in Australia, literature related to the overall child care sector and early childhood settings, summarised below, provides some background to understanding staffing issues in OSHC.

The very low wages of child care workers overall “are recognised as a serious problem contributing to high labour turnover and difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled workers” (Pocock and Hill 2007, p. 32), and recruitment and retention of workers are acknowledged in Australia and internationally as key issues, with implications for the quality of care and the ability of the sector to respond to demand for care (Lyons 1996; Rolfe 2005; Rush 2006). While the influence of low pay in the sector is clearly a key driver of these problems, other issues identified in the literature as contributing to difficulties in staff recruitment include perceived low status and competition from other sectors (Rolfe 2005; Shpancer *et al.* 2008). A lack of satisfaction among child care workers with aspects of their work, such as career structures and training opportunities as well as pay, has been associated with high turnover rates in the international literature (Rolfe 2005). High turnover rates are also noted in Australian literature (Nyland 2001; Rush 2006), and low rates of unionization of child care workers in Australia have been linked with high labour turnover (Lyons 1996). Some Australian research has also focused on the effect of regulatory requirements related to service quality (with a focus on the early childhood sector) on staff and staffing (Nyland 2001; Purcal and Fisher 2007).

Short hours (a particular issue in OSHC services) can be a source of satisfaction for some workers, allowing them to combine paid work with other activities, or second jobs (Rolfe 2005). In a UK setting, research has also found that child care workers have high levels of satisfaction with their job content (as distinct from other aspects of their employment conditions), reinforcing “the intrinsic value of childcare work to the workforce undertaking it: childcare work is done by people who see it as meaningful work, who see caring for children as a highly valued and valuable activity” (Cameron *et al.* 2001, p.19). These attitudes are echoed in American and Australian literature (Rush 2006; Shpancer *et al.* 2008), although Meagher (writing in relation to care workers generally), notes that the high valuation of *care* by workers and the wider society does not translate into high valuation for *care work*.

The implications of the for-profit provision of child care services has emerged as a major focus of debate in relation to child care in Australia, especially in relation to the growth and subsequent collapse of ABC Learning (Brennan 2007; King and Meagher 2009; Press and Woodrow 2009). Differences in staffing levels and quality of care between provider types has been a focus of some Australian research in relation to long day care. Rush (2006) conducted a survey of staff in long day care centres across Australia, focusing on the perceptions of staff about the quality of care being provided, with a particular focus on how these perceptions differed between community-based, independent private and corporate chain providers. She found that staff in centres run by corporate chains perceived the lowest quality of care on a wide range of measures.

The Australian and international literature also pays some attention to diversity within the childcare workforce (see, for example, Cameron *et al.* 2001; Rolfe 2005), addressing issues such as gender (see Cameron's (2001) review of literature related to men working in the early childhood sector), older workers (see Mahmood's 2006 New Zealand study) and staffing of Indigenous children's services (Fasoli and James 2007).

The remainder of this paper provides a profile of staff working in Australia's before and after school care services, examining trends over time since 2002 (where data permits) and finding out what the most recent data available (for 2006) can tell us about staff demographics, qualifications, experience, training and turnover. It should be noted that this analysis relates only to staff working in Australian Government approved outside school hours care services that are eligible to accept Commonwealth child care funding. Many children participate in a range of other formal and informal activities and care arrangements outside of school hours, but these are not covered in this report. We also do not analyse staffing patterns in vacation care, but (at least in vacation care services provided by Commonwealth-funded centres) overlap between before and after school and vacation care staff is very high.

2 DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

The primary data source used for this analysis is the 2006 Census of Child Care Services. Special tables were requested from the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), to facilitate our analysis. Data was also requested from the 2002 and 2004 Census of Child Care Services, where definitional comparisons were possible, however this was confined to a very limited number of variables due to large changes between the 2004 and 2006 Censuses. Technical notes related to the definitions of variables are provided in the Appendix at the end of this report.

The scope of the Censuses included those child care services that were Australian government approved and supported services, and operational during the reference week of the Census. In 2006, a new electronic form was provided to services as an option for completing the Census and this option was used by 83 per cent of services (Australian Government 2008, p.5). Approved care is generally that which has met certain government standards, and is eligible to accept Child Care Benefit. More information on approved care can be found in the appendix.

Despite the data source being a Census, there was a non-response rate which, in 2006, was 16 per cent of outside school hours care services. Given this non-response rate, all data presented in this paper were weighted, so that the results provided here are representative of staffing characteristics of all Australian before and after school care providers.

In 2008, a child care survey was conducted, however this survey is not directly comparable to the previous Censuses, and to date no publications or data from the survey have been made available by DEEWR.

3 A PROFILE OF OSHC CHILD CARE WORKERS

In 2006, there were over 170,000 children attending outside school hours care. This number has increased at a rate of around 5,000 children every year since 2002, when around 150,000 children were attending OSHC. It is important to note that not all school age children who are in care attend OSHC, and that in 2006, around 56,000 children aged 5 and above were attending other types of care services, including long and family day care. In addition, as noted above, school age children may attend other after school activities (such as sport), or be cared for by grandparents or other informal care providers.

As the use of formal school age care has increased, the number of paid staff has also increased steadily over the period from 2002 to 2006, with the ratio of children to staff remaining steady at around 1 staff member for every 12 children in aggregate terms, as shown in Table 1¹. In 2006, there were almost 15,000 persons employed in OSHC centres across Australia.

Table 1 OSHC services profile, 2002, 2004 and 2006

	Number of services	Average children per service	Number of children	Number of staff	Ratio of staff to children
Year					
2002	2,098	70.5	148,040	12,250	12.08
2004	2,137	75.2	160,790	13,326	12.07
2006	2,256	77.0	173,770	14,705	11.82

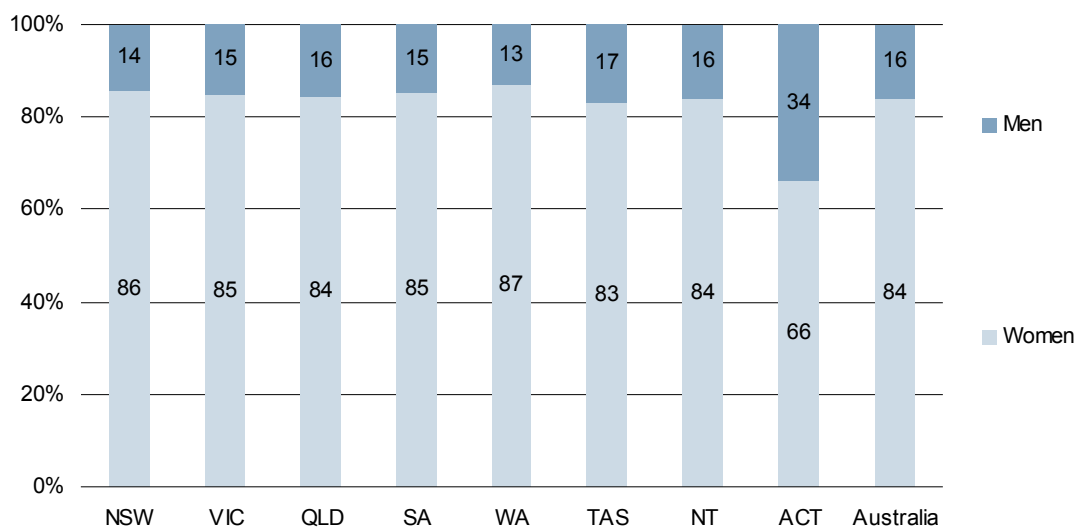
Source: 2002, 2004 and 2006 Census of Child Care Services publications.

¹ Note that this is a raw estimate for the whole of Australia, and staff ratios may vary from provider to provider.

AGE AND SEX

Of the almost 15,000 persons employed in OSHC in Australia in 2006, 84 per cent of these workers were women and 16 per cent men (Figure 1). These proportions are similar for all states and territories, except for the ACT, where a greater proportion of men are employed in OSHC – 34 per cent.

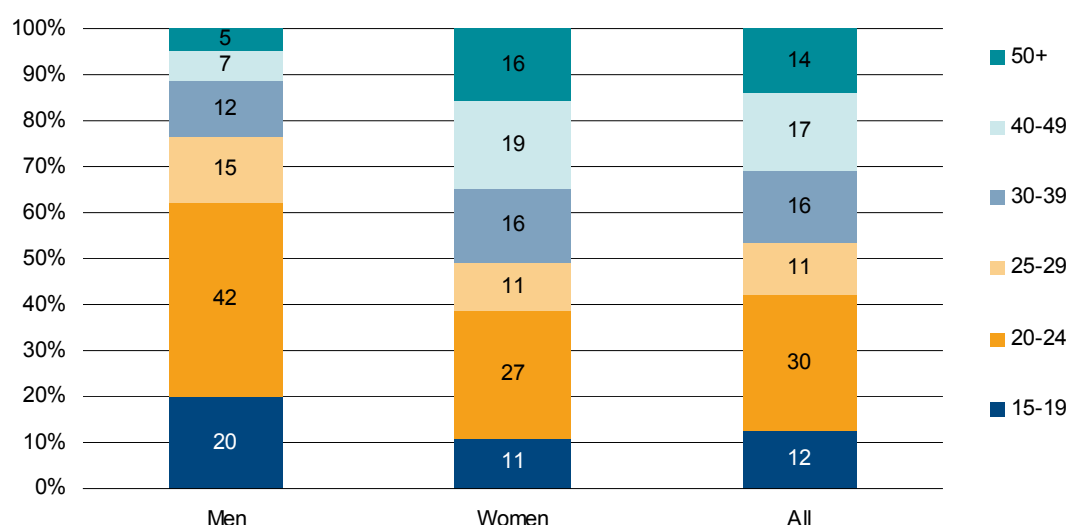
Figure 1 Outside school hours care staff by sex, 2006



Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

An analysis of OSHC staff by age group and sex shows that the age distribution varies considerably between men and women, with women workers on average being older than men. There is a much greater proportion of men aged between 15 and 29 years working in the OSHC sector – accounting for around 75 per cent of all men, compared with around 50 per cent of women in these age groups (Figure 2).

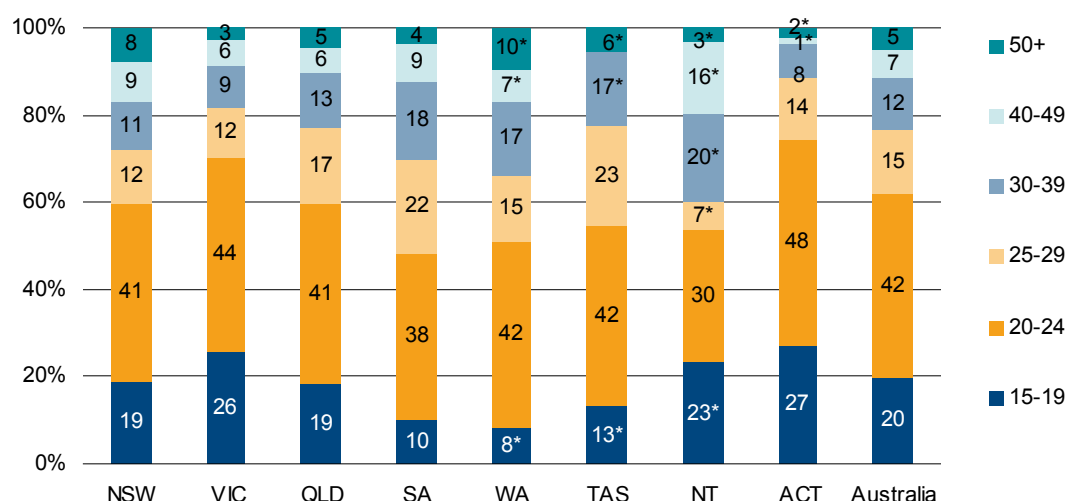
Figure 2 Outside school hours care staff by age group and sex, 2006



Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

Age and sex characteristics of OSHC workers vary somewhat by state and territory, as shown in Figures 3 and 4. There are similar proportions of men aged 20-24 years in each state and territory (around 40 per cent), with the exception of the Northern Territory and ACT. The Northern Territory has a lower proportion employed in this age group – 30 per cent, and the ACT a higher proportion – 48 per cent (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Outside school hours care staff by age group, men, 2006



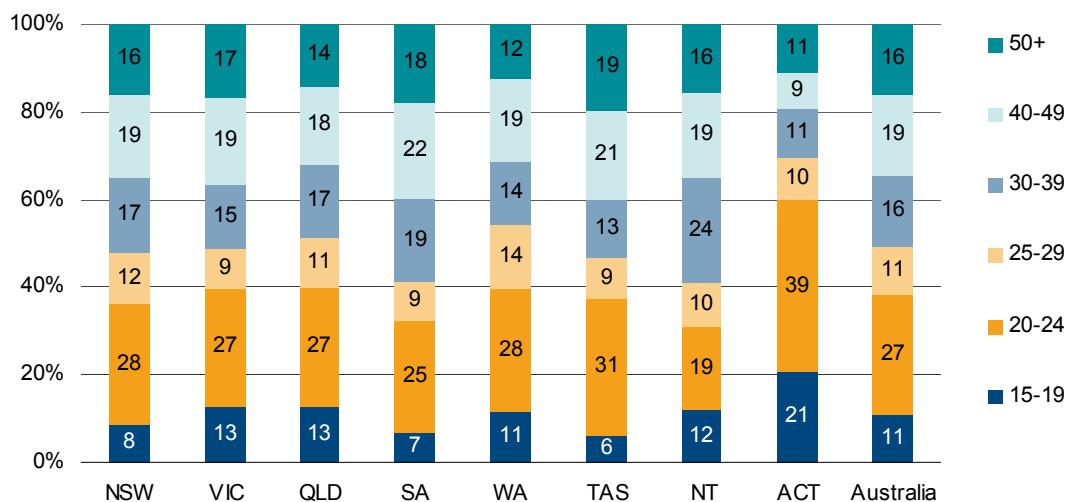
Note: * denotes population sizes of less than ten.

Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

For women, similar proportions of OSHC workers exist amongst all age groups, for all states except for the ACT, where there is a higher proportion of younger women employed compared to the rest of the states (Figure 4). This finding is similar to men working in OSHC in the ACT, and is likely to be due to a combination of factors, including the relatively youthful population overall,

and the large population attending tertiary education, where many engage in part-time and casual employment to supplement their income whilst studying.

Figure 4 Outside school hours care staff by age group, women, 2006

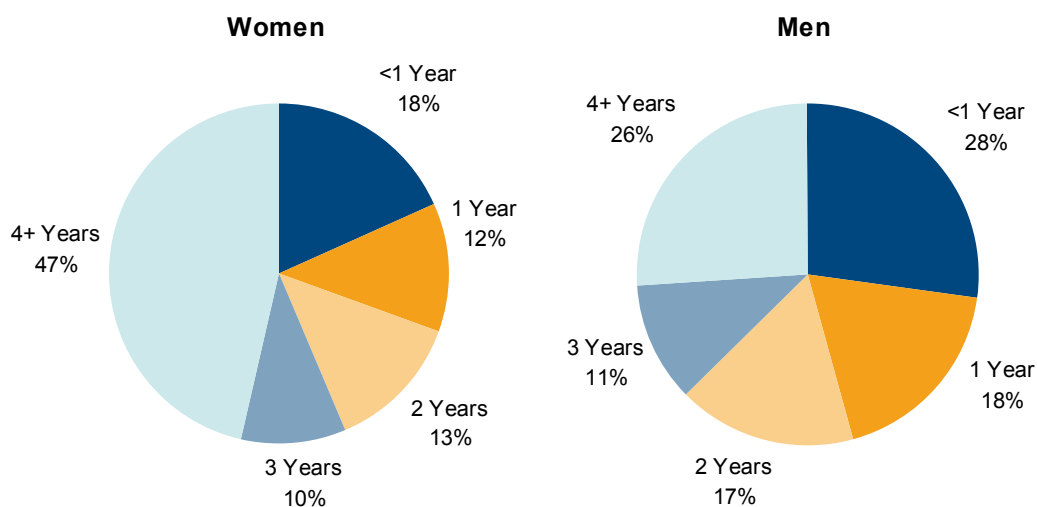


Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

EXPERIENCE AND TENURE

When looking at the experience of OSHC workers in the children's services sector, it is clear that women have on average more years of experience in the children's services sector than men (Figure 5). Almost 50 per cent of women have 4 or more years of experience, whereas only 26 per cent of men are in this category. A far greater proportion of men have less than one year of experience in the children's services sector – 28 per cent of men compared with 18 per cent of women.

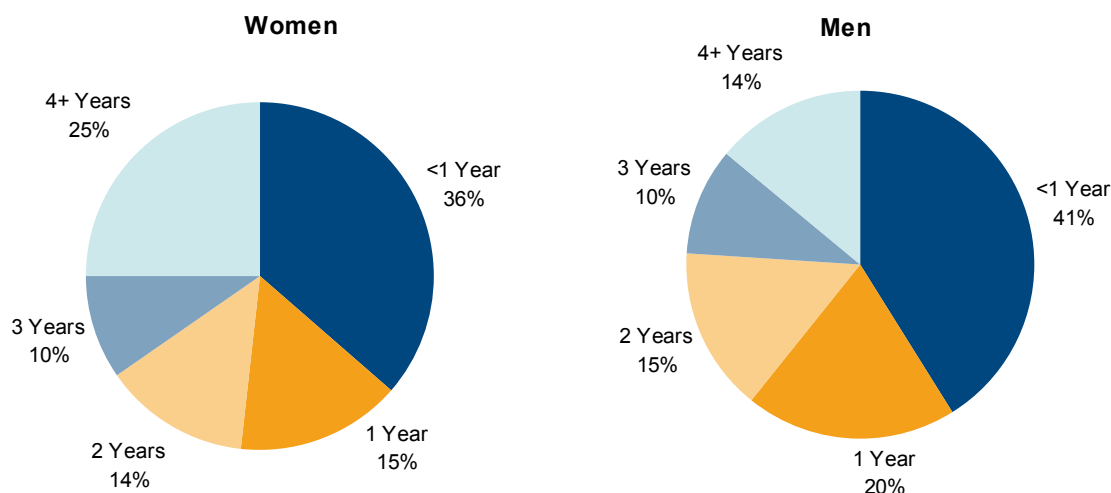
Figure 5 Number of years of experience in the children's services sector by sex, 2006



Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

As with overall experience in the children's services sector, women have on average more experience as a contact worker than men (Figure 6). Over 40 per cent of men had less than a year's experience as a contact worker compared to 36 per cent of women. In contrast, a quarter of women have 4 or more years experience as a contact worker, whereas only 14 per cent of men fall within this category. This, together with the younger ages of male workers (Figure 2) suggests that men working in this sector may perhaps be more likely to be transitory workers, using this type of employment to provide income whilst studying or training.

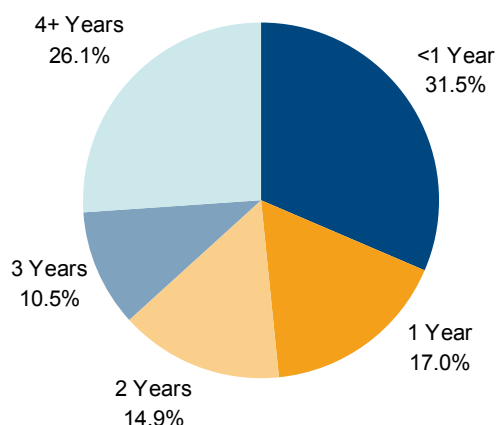
Figure 6 Number of years experience as a contact worker by sex, 2006



Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

When looking at the number of years experience with the current service (employer), we can see that around 1 in 3 OSHC staff in 2006 had worked for less than one year with their current employer. However, despite the large proportion of staff having short tenure with their current employer, a considerable proportion had tenure of four years or more – 26 per cent (Figure 7). Further insight into who the staff members are with the longest and shortest tenure with a service is provided in Table 3 below.

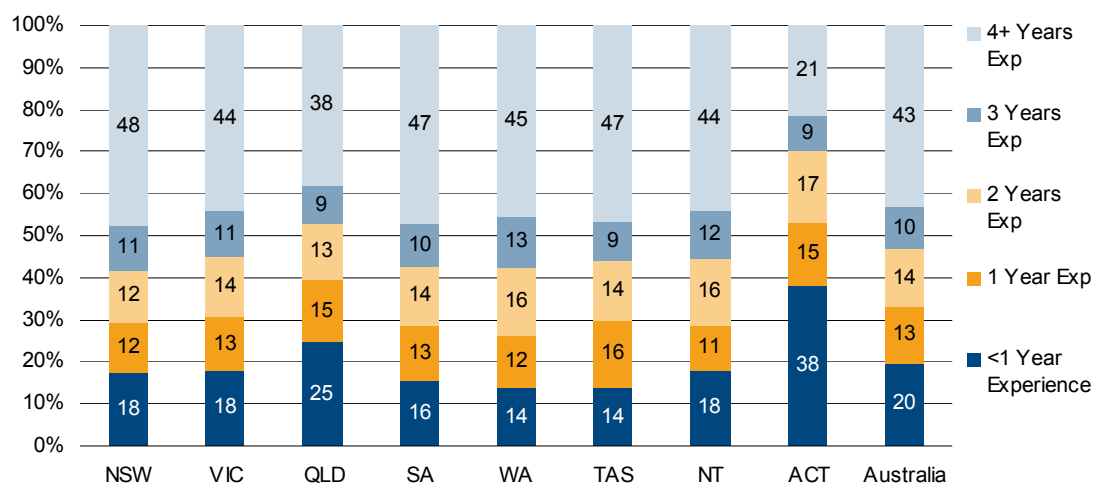
Figure 7 Number of years experience with current service, 2006



Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

A breakdown of the number of years experience in the children's sector by state shows that there are similar distributions for all states and territories, with the exception of the ACT and Queensland. In most states around 45-50 per cent of OSHC workers have 4 or more years experience in the children services sector, this compares to only around one fifth of OSHC workers in the ACT, and 38 per cent in Queensland. The majority of OSHC workers within the ACT have one year or less than a year's experience, suggestive of a highly mobile and transitory workforce within the ACT sector. For Queensland, the proportion of OSHC workers with one year or less than a year's experience is not as high as the ACT's, but still includes around 40 per cent of workers.

Figure 8 Number of years experience in the children's service sector by state, 2006



Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

When further teasing out the patterns of experience in the children's services sector by the role of each staff member, we can see that those with longer tenure in the child services sector are more likely to be those that are in higher positions within the centre, such as Director or Coordinator. Table 2 shows that 51 per cent of those persons with 4 or more years experience in the children's services sector were in the role of a Director, Coordinator or teacher-in-charge or a Group Leader/Teacher. These higher ranking staff members are likely to hold longer tenure within the children's service sector, as it is likely that this is a career choice, and higher rates of pay associated with more senior positions may be contributing to longer tenure at this level. Those with shorter tenure are more likely to be staff members at lower levels, such as Assistant Aids. These staff members made up 76 per cent of those with less than one year's experience, compared to 39 per cent of those with 4 or more years experience (Table 2). As can be seen from Table 2, this suggests that the main job group likely to have the highest level of child contact, and who make up by far the largest group of all OSHC staff members, are also the group that are more likely to have less than one year's experience in the children services sector.

Table 2 Number of years experience in the children's services sector by role of staff member, 2006

Role of staff member	<1 Year	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4+ Years	Role as proportion of all OSHC staff
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Director/Coordinator/Teacher in charge	4	6	8	13	36	20
Group Leader/ Teacher	8	9	13	14	15	12
Assistant Aid	76	75	68	63	39	58
Other specific contact worker	8	7	8	5	4	6
Non contact worker	4	3	3	4	6	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: See Appendix for definitions of the role of staff member.

Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

When analysing tenure with the current employer (or service), we find a similar pattern to that of tenure in the children's services sector, with those in higher positions more likely to be with the current service for more than four years, and those in less senior positions more likely to be with the current service for less than one year (Table 3).

Table 3 Number of years experience with current service by role of staff member, 2006

	<1 Year	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4+ Years	Role as proportion of all OSHC staff
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Director/Coordinator/Teacher in charge	10	13	15	21	37	20
Group Leader/ Teacher	9	12	14	14	15	12
Assistant Aid	69	67	62	55	36	58
Other specific contact worker	7	6	7	5	4	6
Non contact worker	4	3	3	5	8	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

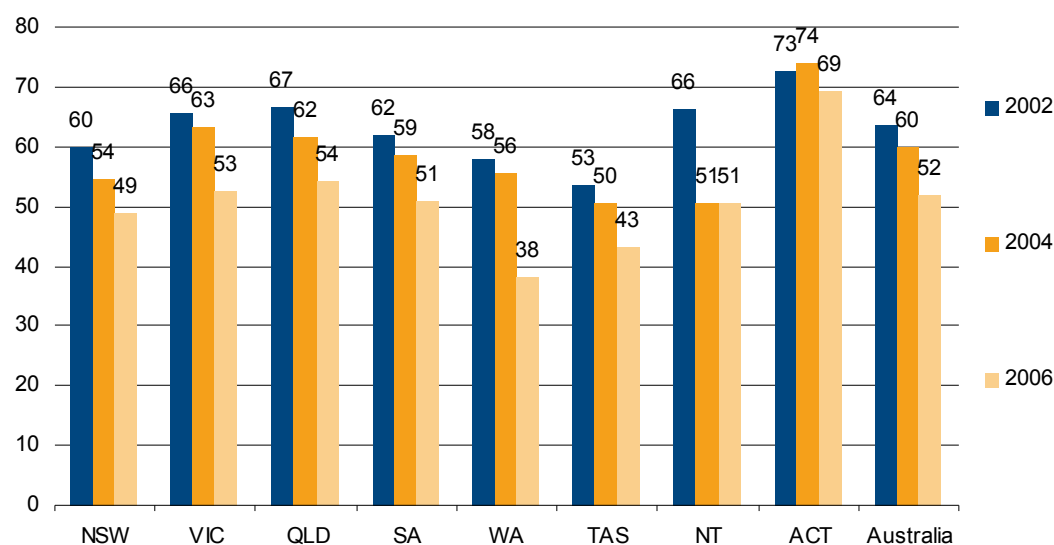
Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

From Figure 9 we can see that the proportion of OSHC workers without a qualification relevant to children's services has declined over the period from 2002 to 2006 in Australia and for each state and territory². In 2002, 64 per cent of OSHC workers were without a relevant qualification – this has since decreased substantially, by 12 percentage points, to 52 per cent in 2006. Some variation in the number of OSHC workers without a qualification can be seen when looking by state and territory. The ACT has the highest proportion of workers without a qualification in each of the three survey periods, followed by Queensland and Victoria. In 2002, 73 per cent of OSHC workers in the ACT did not have a qualification, and this decreased by 4 percentage points to 69 per cent in 2006. The proportion of OSHC workers without a qualification in Western Australia has decreased substantially over the survey periods, from 58 per cent in 2002 to only 38 per cent in 2006. These differences across states and territories in qualification levels and changes in qualification levels may reflect a range of factors, including different and changing qualification requirements between jurisdictions, differences in the availability and ease of obtaining qualifications and different recruitment challenges across states and territories.

² Children's services field includes teaching, child care, nursing, and other relevant qualifications in welfare studies and behavioural fields (e.g. psychology and social work).

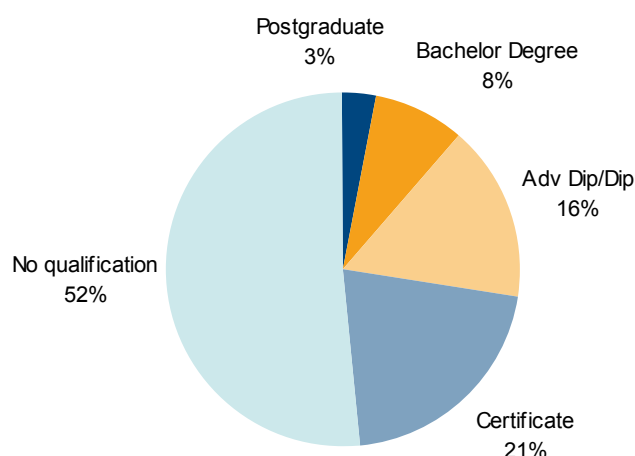
Figure 9 Proportion of OSHC workers without a relevant qualification in children's services related field, by state, 2002, 2004 and 2006



Source: 2002, 2004 and 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

Slightly over half of all OSHC workers (52%) do not have a formal relevant qualification. Comparing these qualification levels to those for the long day care workforce, published data on long day care staff in 2006 showed that a somewhat lower proportion of the latter (43%) were without a qualification (Australian Government 2008, p. 47). A further examination of the types of qualifications held by OSHC staff (Figure 10) shows that around one fifth of OSHC workers have a certificate level qualification, 16 per cent have an advanced diploma or diploma, a further 8 per cent have a bachelor degree, and 3 per cent have a post-graduate qualification.

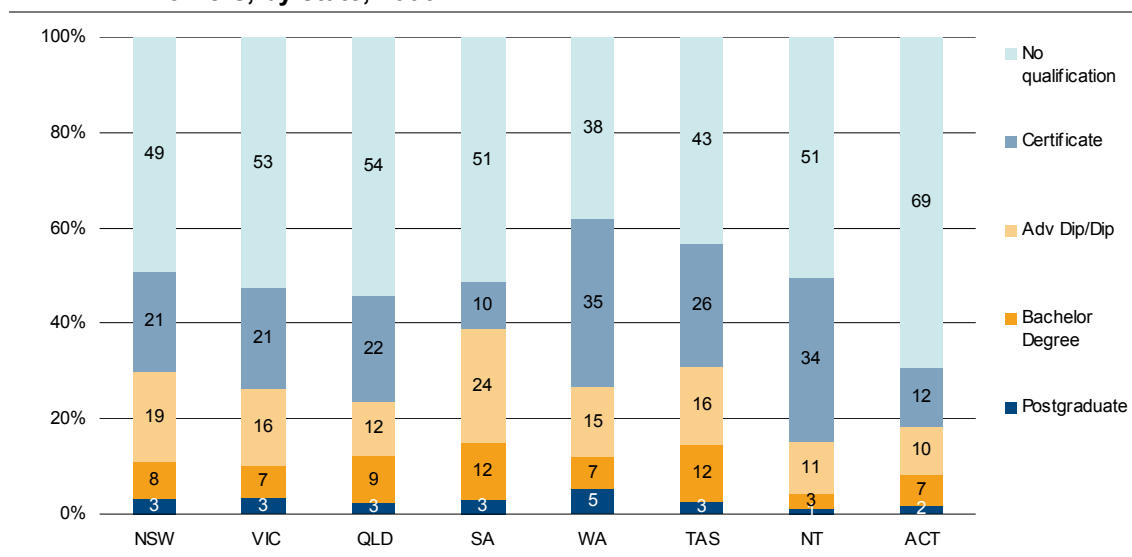
Figure 10 Highest educational qualification in children's services related field of OSHC workers, Australia, 2006



Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

When analysing the highest educational qualifications by state, it is clear that there is quite a lot of variation in the proportion of OSHC workers with particular qualifications. Western Australia has the highest proportion of OSHC workers with a formal educational qualification, the majority of whom have obtained a certificate level or advanced diploma/diploma level qualification. The most common qualification for OSHC workers for each state is Certificate level – with generally around 20 to 30 per cent of workers having this qualification. The exception is South Australia, which instead has 24 per cent of OSHC workers with a diploma or advanced diploma level qualification, compared with only 10 per cent of workers with a Certificate level. These results again may reflect how the qualification requirements for OSHC workers differ considerably for each state and territory, or how differing skills shortages in different regions may affect staff characteristics. In South Australia, for example, the high proportion of diploma qualifications may be driven by that state's requirement for half of all OSHC workers to have at least an Associate Diploma level qualification (COAG 2009b).

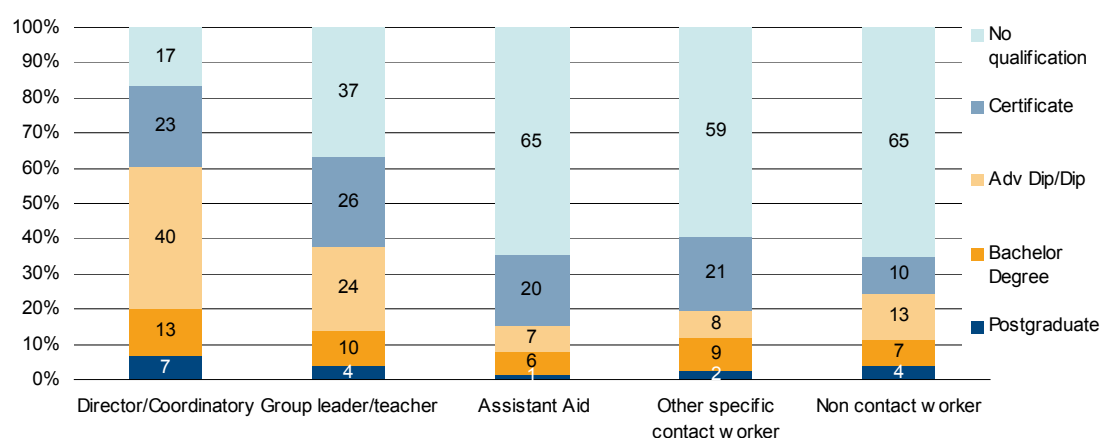
Figure 11 Highest educational qualification in children's services related field of OSHC workers, by state, 2006



Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

Unsurprisingly, those staff members who hold a more senior position within the service are also those that are more likely to hold a formal educational qualification (Figure 12). Less than one fifth of directors and coordinators hold no formal qualification, and over 60 per cent have either a bachelor's degree, diploma or advanced diploma. This is in contrast to assistant aids, with 65 per cent holding no formal qualification, 20 per cent a certificate level, and 14 per cent a diploma level or higher.

Figure 12 Highest educational attainment in children's services related field by role of staff member, 2006

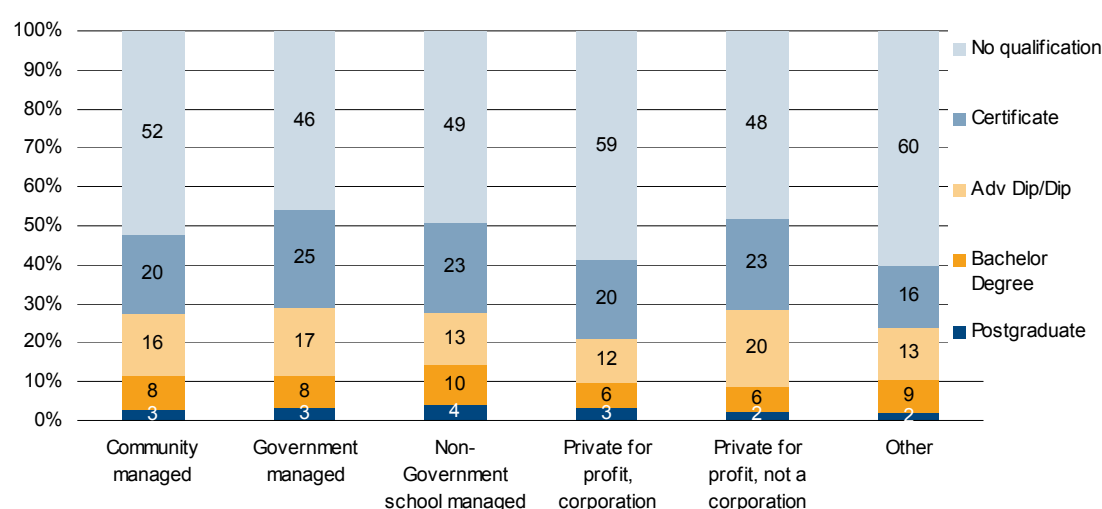


Note: Director/Coordinator also includes the classification of 'Teacher in charge'.

Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

A comparison of service management type reveals that there is some variation in educational qualifications of OSHC workers (Figure 13). The type of service with the largest proportion of OSHC workers without a formal qualification is 'other' (which includes services provided by employers), followed by private-for-profit corporations. Community, non-government school and private but not incorporated service management types all have around half of workers without a qualification. Government-managed services having the lowest proportion of OSHC workers without a qualification, at 46 per cent.

Figure 13 Highest educational attainment in children's services related field by service management type, 2006



Note: Definitions of service management type are provided in the appendix

Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

To put these results into context, it is important to note that community-managed services employ by far the majority of OSHC staff, with around 73 per cent of staff working in these

centres. This compares with just under 4 per cent working in centres run by a private-for-profit corporation (see Table 4).

Table 4 Staff by service management type, 2006

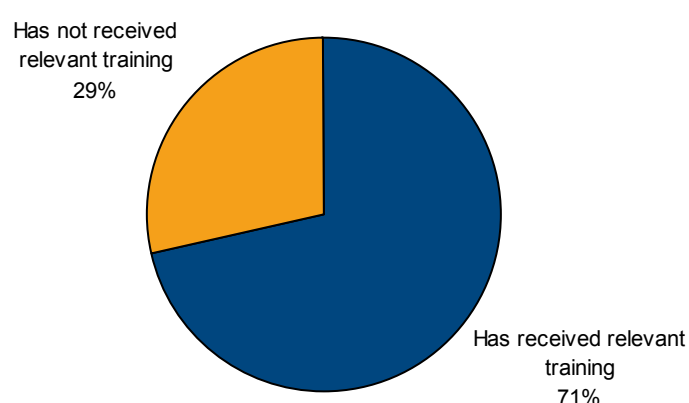
Service Management Type	Number of Staff	Proportion of all OSHC staff
Community managed	10774	73.27
Government managed	1288	8.76
Non-Government school managed, corporation	524	3.56
Non-Government school managed, not a corporation	727	4.95
Private for profit, corporation	529	3.59
Private for profit, not a corporation	665	4.52
Other, corporation	100	0.68
Other, not a corporation	97	0.66
Total	14705	100

Note: Definitions of service management type are provided in the appendix

Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

Staff in any sector will often undertake in-service training in their field. Here, we examine in-service training undertaken by OSHC workers in the previous 12 months from the time of the survey for 2006. In-service training includes formal training conducted in-house or externally. Almost three quarters of OSHC staff in Australia in 2006 undertook some type of in-service training in the last 12 months (Figure 14). This is not dissimilar to published figures for in-service training among long day care staff, of whom 77 per cent undertook relevant in-service training in the previous 12 months (Australian Government 2008, p. 49).

Figure 14 In-service training in the last 12 months, Australia, 2006

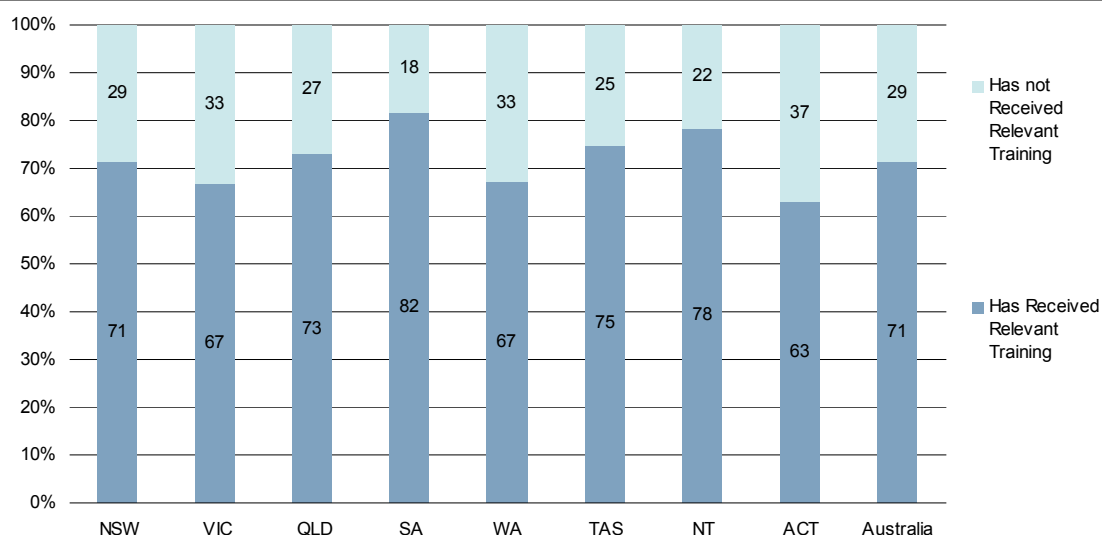


Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

By state, we can see that there is a degree of variation in the proportion of OSHC staff receiving in-service training in the last 12 months in 2006 (Figure 15). South Australia had the highest proportion of OSHC workers undertaking in-service training – over 80 per cent, followed closely by the Northern Territory – 78 per cent and Tasmania – 75 per cent. The ACT had the lowest

levels of in-service training – 63 per cent, followed by Victoria and Western Australia – both 67 per cent. The low levels of in-service training for the ACT could possibly reflect the highly transitory nature of the sector within this territory, with an overall higher proportion of OSHC workers having one year or less experience in the children’s services sector.

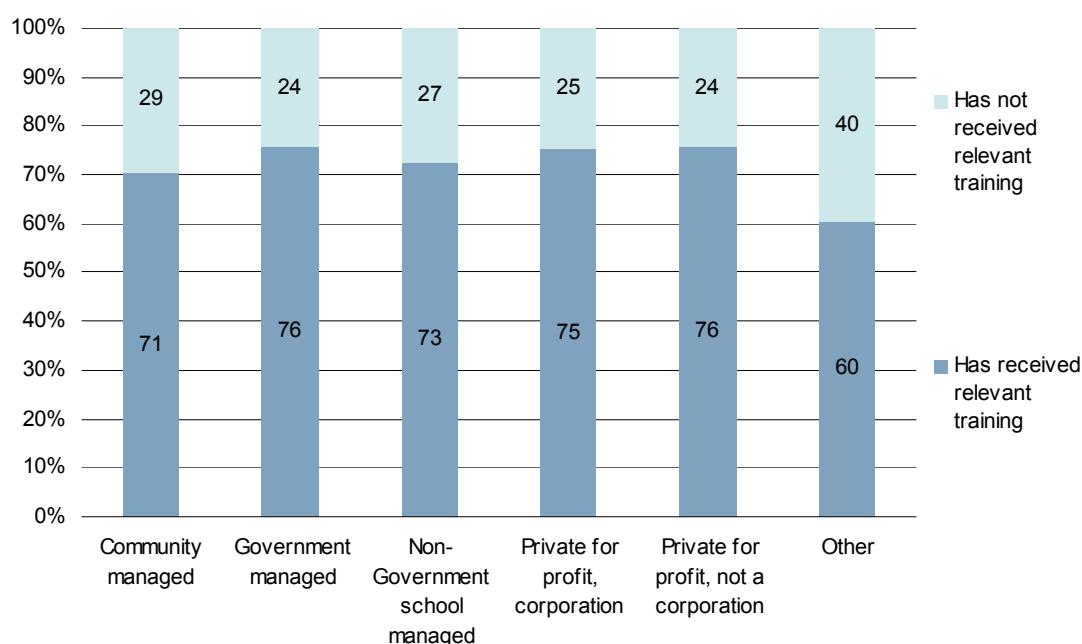
Figure 15 In-service training in the last 12 months, by state, 2006



Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

In-service training shows smaller degrees of variation across service management types, for all services except for those categorised as ‘other’, (Figure 16). Generally, most service types have had between 71 and 76 per cent of their staff engaged in some type of in-service training in the last 12 months.

Figure 16 In-service training in the last 12 months, by service management type, 2006



Note: Definitions of service management type are provided in the appendix

Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

Table 4 illustrates the proportion of OSHC workers within each type of service role who **have** been engaged in in-service training for each state and territory. On average across the whole of Australia, co-ordinators and group leaders are the most likely staff members to have received in-service training in the previous 12 months, followed by primary contact workers. However, patterns vary across states and territories. For example, 58 per cent of assistant aids in Western Australia and in Victoria received in-service training, compared with 77 per cent in South Australia.

Table 4 OSHC staff within each role who received in service training in the last 12 months by and state, 2006

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Australia
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Director/Coordinator	91	88	92	92	92	88	92	73	90
Group leader/teacher	82	70	93	91	67	83	89	71	80
Assistant Aid	65	58	68	77	58	69	69	67	65
Other specific contact worker	66	64	63	73	69	65	92	36	64
Non contact worker	61	61	55	71	50	80	*	*	60
Total	71	67	73	82	67	75	78	63	71

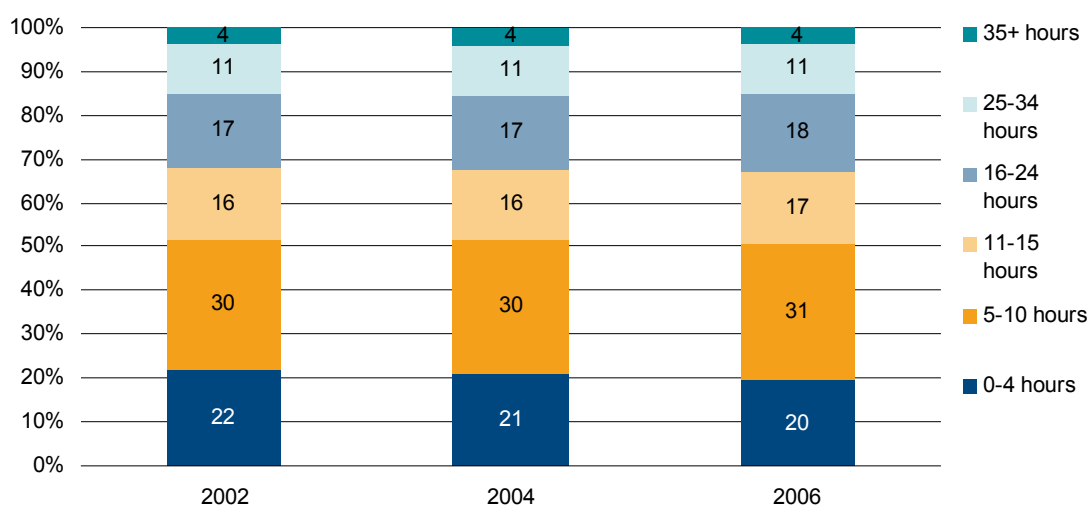
Note: Director/Coordinator also includes the classification of 'Teacher in charge'. * denotes population sizes of less than ten.

Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

HOURS OF WORK

It is commonly known that OSHC work usually involves short working hours each week, and is inherently a sector in which casual and part-time work will play a large role. Has this changed over time? Figure 17 shows that the average weekly hours of OSHC workers have remained relatively stable over time. The majority of OSHC employees (around 50 per cent) worked 10 hours or less per week in each of the three survey periods. There has been a negligible increase in OSHC staff working 11-34 hours per week, with these groupings increasing by 1 percentage point between 2004 and 2006. These working hours contrast sharply with those for long day care, in which 42 per cent of staff work full time (Australian Government, 2008, p. 45).

Figure 17 Average weekly hours of OSHC workers, 2002, 2004 and 2006

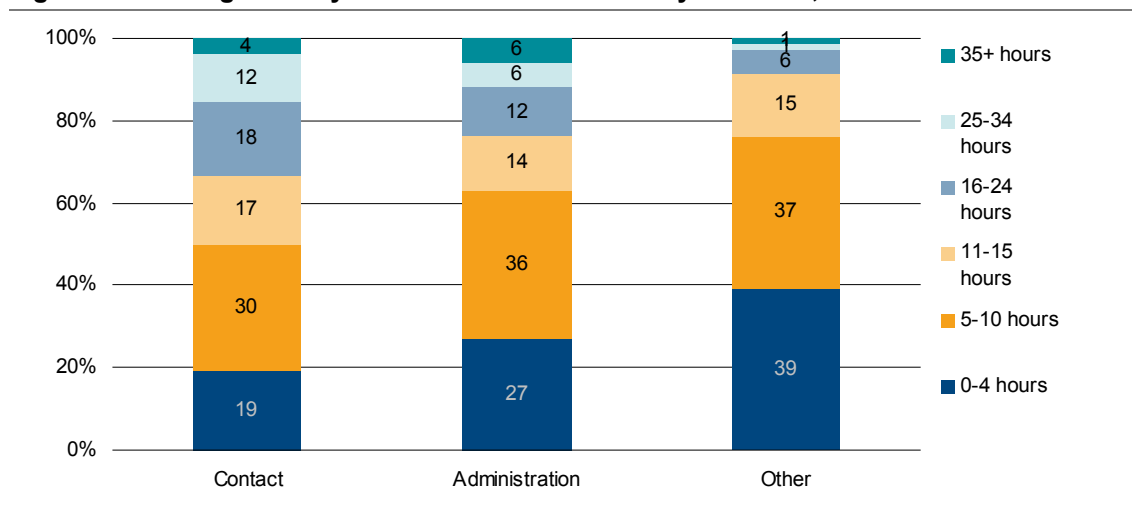


Note: OSHC workers include those employed as contact, other contact, administrative and other workers. Other employee is any worker who provides support services (e.g. cook, cleaner, driver). Definitions can be found in the appendix. Workers were not able to be separated out over time due to definitional changes between the survey periods.

Source: 2002, 2004 and 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

Figure 18 shows the average hours of work per week for OSHC workers by the role of the staff member in 2006. Overall, the majority of contact, administration and other workers are employed for 15 hours or less per week – 66, 77 and 91 per cent respectively. Other workers include support workers, such as cooks, cleaners and drivers. Average weekly hours for contact workers were distributed more widely amongst the groupings when compared with administration and other workers. Administration workers were more likely to work full-time hours each week than other types of workers (around 6 per cent). However, a larger proportion of contact staff worked between 16 and 34 hours per week than administration and other workers.

Figure 18 Average weekly hours of OSHC workers by staff role, 2006



Note: OSHC workers include those employed as contact, other contact, administrative and other workers. Other employee is any worker who provides support services (e.g. cook, cleaner, driver). Definitions can be found in the appendix. Workers were not able to be separated out over time due to definitional changes between the survey periods.

Source: 2006 Census of Child Care Services, special request data from DEEWR.

CONCLUSION

The results presented in this paper on the whole reflect the existing research on staffing in the broader child care sector summarised in our introduction, suggesting that characteristics such as staff turnover and formal qualifications are issues in OSHC just as they are in early childhood services. In regard to qualifications, for example, there is about a fifty-fifty split between those OSHC staff who do have some type of relevant educational qualification and those that do not, with the most common qualification being certificate level, for Australia overall. However this does vary considerably by state and territory, with Western Australia being substantially ahead of other states and territories in 2006 in this regard. While many OSHC workers in 2006 had worked in their current job for only a short period of time, a substantial minority (just over one-quarter) had worked in the same service for 4 or more years, with service co-ordinators particularly likely to experience relatively low turnover rates. Further research into the drivers of and barriers to staff retention and training in the OSHC sector could help enhance our understanding of these issues.

As expected, many staff in OSHC, particularly contact workers, work part-time hours, and the average hours worked in the sector remained stable over the period 2002 to 2006. The relatively high take-up of in-service training in most states and territories is noteworthy, given the challenges likely to be involved in carving out time for such training in the context of part-time work. However, the high numbers of staff receiving in-service training may perhaps be affected by the relatively short tenure of many OSHC staff, and further investigation into characteristics of in-service training in the sector, and the continuing training of workers with longer tenure (who form a substantial minority of all OSHC workers) would be interesting.

Our analysis shows some interesting differences between men and women workers. On average male OSHC workers are younger and women older. There are also differences between men and

women when examining the number of years experience in the children's service sector, with men having shorter tenure than women. This may well reflect the way in which the sector is viewed by each sex – with men perhaps more likely to be using the work as an income supplement whilst gaining qualifications for work outside the sector.

Differences between states and territories on a number of the variables presented in this paper are quite stark, and may reflect in part the different regulatory and structural arrangements operating across states. Regulations vary considerably across Australia, with some states having no formal qualification requirements for OSHC workers, and requirements in other states not uniform. However, the differences we found between states and territories do not always appear to reflect these regulatory differences, and further investigation of the drivers of these variations, and the ways in which regulatory requirements have changed over time, would be worthwhile.

Finally, the findings in this report also confirm that OSHC differs in important ways from child care services for younger children – for example, many more staff are part-time than full-time, and formal qualifications (an important issue across the sector) are somewhat less common among OSHC staff than, for example, long day care staff. Despite the challenges of short working hours for many staff, however, in-service training levels (at least as measured broadly in the data analysed here) do not differ very substantially from those in long day care. Understanding the unique staffing characteristics of the OSHC sector, and how these differ across states and service management types, is very important in optimising the availability and quality of care for the increasing numbers of Australian children using formal care services outside of school hours.

APPENDIX: VARIABLE DEFINITIONS

Approved Care

Child care services (including OSHC) are approved by the government because they meet certain standards and requirements. These include 'having a license to operate, qualified and trained staff, being open certain hours and meeting health, safety and other quality standards. Approved care services are approved by the Australian Government to accept Child Care Benefit directly from the Family Assistance Office on behalf of parents. This means that parents pay less out-of-pocket costs for child care" (Australian Government (2008, p.5).

Role of Staff

Primary contact worker/assistant aid

A primary contact worker mainly has direct contact with children (e.g. child care workers, therapists, teachers, teachers assistants and aides).

Other contact worker

Other contact worker has some duties involving direct contact with children, but deals mainly with staffing or management duties. These may include centre managers and coordinators.

Administrative worker

Administration worker has no direct contact with children but contributes to the running of the service (e.g. clerical or receptionist duties).

Other worker

Other worker is any worker who provides support services (e.g. cook, cleaner, driver).

Service Management Type

Community managed

Includes not-for-profit services provided or managed by parents, school councils, churches or co-operatives.

Government managed

Includes Australian, State or local government managed services.

Non-government school managed

Includes incorporated and unincorporated services which are attached (not necessarily physically attached) to, and managed by, a non-government school.

Private – for profit – incorporated/not incorporated

Includes for-profit services provided or managed by a company or private individual, excluding non-government schools.

Other

Includes incorporated and unincorporated services such as employer sponsored services.

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