

## 5.2 Jobless families

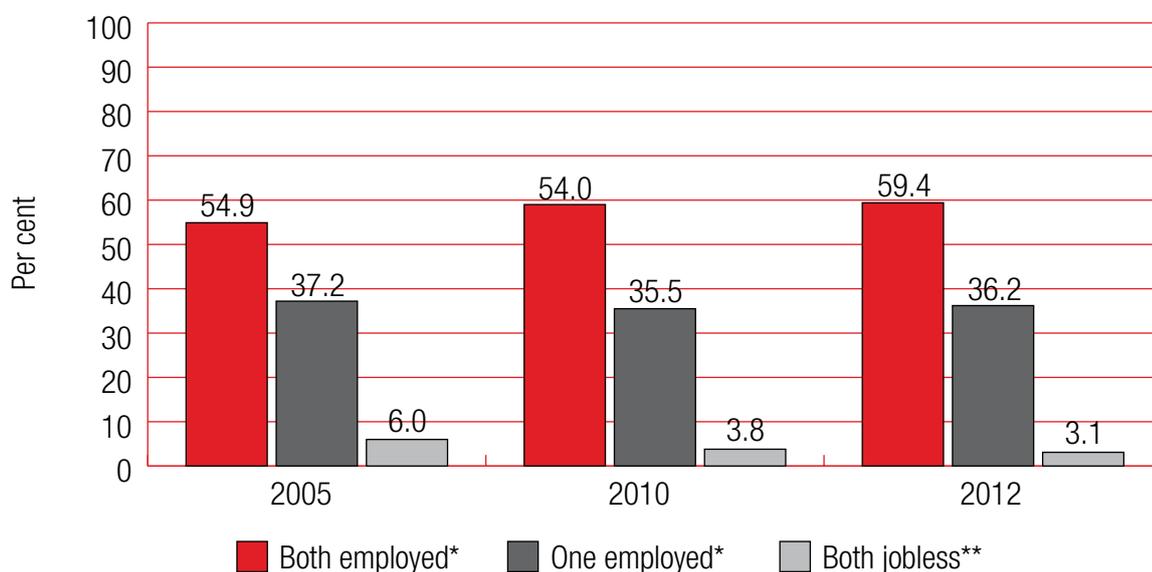
### Why this measure is included

Growing up in a jobless<sup>348</sup> family is an established measure of children and young people's wellbeing.<sup>349</sup>

Parental employment is associated with higher levels of adolescent psychological wellbeing, sociability, satisfaction and happiness.<sup>350</sup> Parental employment also provides for effective role modelling by encouraging aspirations of workforce participation for children and young people.<sup>351</sup>

By contrast, living in a family where parents are jobless can have negative short and long-term effects on children and young people's development, physical and mental health, social engagement and educational progress.<sup>352-353</sup> Parental joblessness may lead to family stress, conflict and domestic violence, substance abuse and child abuse.<sup>354-355</sup>

**Figure 5.3: Couple families with children less than 15 years of age: in per cent, by labour force status of parent/partner, Western Australia at June 2005, 2010 and 2012**



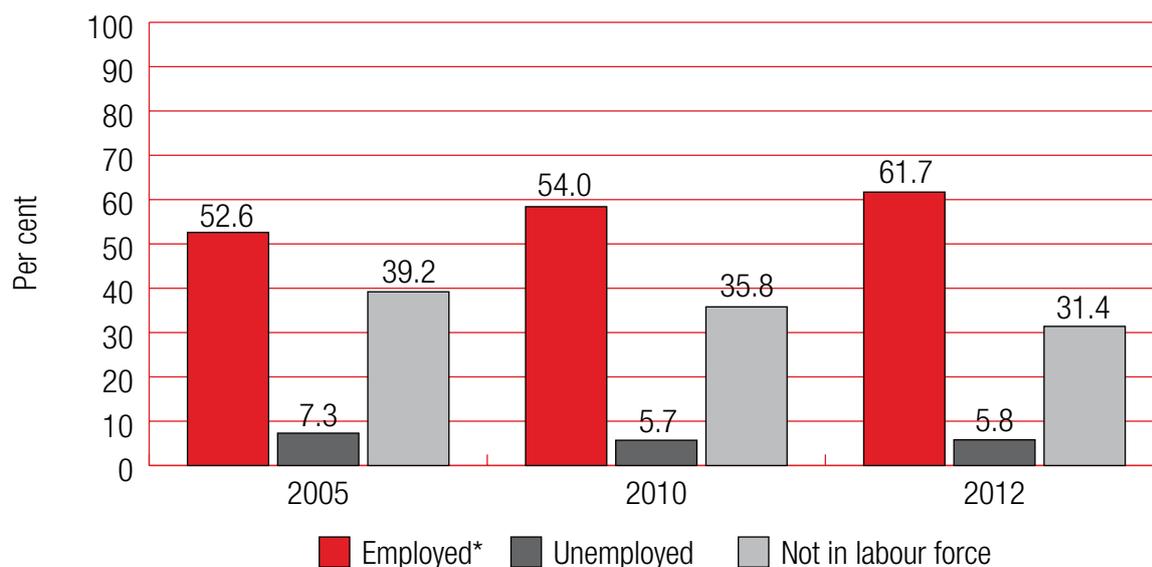
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families, June 2012*.

\* Includes full-time and part-time employment.

\*\* Includes families where both partners were unemployed or not in the labour force, and families where one partner was unemployed and the other not in the labour force.



**Figure 5.4: Single-parent families with children less than 15 years of age: in per cent, by labour force status of parent, Western Australia at June 2005, 2010 and 2012**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families, June 2012*.

\* Includes full-time and part-time employment.

**Table 5.3: Families with children under 15 years of age: number and in per cent, by family composition and labour force status in Western Australia and Australia in 2012**

		WA		Australia		Difference WA to Australia
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Percentage Point
Couple family	Both employed*	125,470	59.4	1,159,500	60.7	-1.3
	One employed*	76,530	36.2	629,490	32.9	3.3
	Both jobless**	6,610	3.1	91,410	4.8	-1.7
	Total***	211,210	100.0	1,910,990	100.0	
Single-parent family	Employed*	30,720	61.7	265,790	54.5	7.2
	Unemployed	2,910	5.8	31,020	6.4	-0.6
	Not in labour force	15,680	31.5	186,890	38.3	-6.8
	Jobless	18,590	37.3	217,910	44.7	-7.4
	Total***	49,820	100.0	487,810	100.0	

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families, June 2012*

\* Includes full-time and part-time employment.

\*\* Includes families where both partners were unemployed or not in the labour force, and families where one partner was unemployed and the other not in the labour force.

\*\*\* Total includes 'Labour status not determined'.



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## What is this measure?

This measure examines families with children aged less than 15 years who are considered jobless. The data for this measure is taken from the annual Australian Bureau of Statistics publication *Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families*, which is produced from data collected in the Labour Force Survey.

The definition of jobless includes all people who are unemployed (looking for work) and those who are not in the labour force (not actively looking for work).<sup>356</sup> It includes detailed family data not featured in the monthly *Labour Force, Australia* publication.

The data included for this measure shows the labour force status of single-parent and couple families with children and young people aged less than 15 years in June 2005, June 2010, and June 2012.

## Commentary

The majority of Western Australian (WA) children are living in a family where the resident parent or parents are employed. More than 95 per cent of couple families with children aged less than 15 years have at least one parent who is employed. In single-parent families, almost 62 per cent of resident parents are employed. Both proportions are higher than those recorded in 2010 and reported in edition one of this report<sup>357</sup> (Table 5.4).

In comparison, the proportion of couple families in WA with children aged less than 15 years who are considered jobless has decreased from 6.0 per cent in 2005 to 3.8 per cent in 2010 and then to 3.1 per cent in 2012. This represents a drop of 2.9 per percentage points or about one-third of jobless couple families less than there were in 2005 (decrease from 10,550 families in 2005 to 6,610 in 2012). This indicates a positive downward trend for this measure<sup>358</sup> (Figures 5.3 and 5.4).

The proportion of single-parent families in WA with children aged less than 15 years who are considered jobless has also decreased from 46.5 per cent in 2005 to 41.5 per cent in 2010, and then to 37.2 per cent in 2012. This represents a drop of 9.3 percentage points or more than 3,000 jobless single-parent families less than there were in 2005 (decrease from 21,760 families in 2005 to 18,590 in 2012) (Figures 5.3 and 5.4).

In comparison with Australia in 2012:

- the WA percentage of jobless single-parent families was significantly lower than the national percentage (37.3% compared to 44.7%)
- the WA percentage of couple families where both parents were jobless was also lower than the national percentage (3.1% compared to 4.8%).

It is evident from this data that the proportion of jobless families in WA and Australia-wide has fallen considerably in the past decade. A report<sup>359</sup> published by The Smith Family in 2011 aims to examine the factors that influenced this development:

*The decrease [...] is likely to have been influenced by a combination of factors, including strong economic growth and the introduction of the Welfare to Work reforms by the Commonwealth Government in July 2006. One of the main goals of the Welfare to Work reforms was to increase the labour force participation of single parents by changing the timing and nature of work requirements related to the receipt of income support.*<sup>360</sup>



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## Strategies

### Supporting Jobless Families, Commonwealth Government (released 2012)

The Supporting Jobless Families measure assists parents to prepare to return to the workforce once their youngest child is school age, and helps ensure their children are ready to start school. The measure is part of the Building Australia's Future Workforce package. The Supporting Jobless Families measure is taking place in 10 Local Government Areas across Australia, including Kwinana in WA. More information is available at [www.humanservices.gov.au/corporate/government-initiatives/supporting-families](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/corporate/government-initiatives/supporting-families)

### Want to know more?

#### Data on joblessness

*Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families, June 2012* is available at the Australian Bureau of Statistics website at [www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6224.0.55.001History%20of%20Changes0Jun%202012?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6224.0.55.001&issue=Jun%202012&num=&view=](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6224.0.55.001History%20of%20Changes0Jun%202012?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6224.0.55.001&issue=Jun%202012&num=&view=)

#### Research, reports and articles

The 2012 report *Parental joblessness, financial disadvantage and the wellbeing of parents and children* was prepared for the (then) Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and explores and analyses the effects of joblessness and short part-time hours on parents and children using data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). Further information is available at [www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/publications-articles/research-publications/occasional-paper-series/number-48-parental-joblessness-financial-disadvantage-and-the-wellbeing-of-parents-and-children](http://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/publications-articles/research-publications/occasional-paper-series/number-48-parental-joblessness-financial-disadvantage-and-the-wellbeing-of-parents-and-children)

The 2012 report *Making a Difference: Building on Young People's Experiences of Economic Adversity*, prepared by the UNSW Social Policy Research Centre, explores perceptions of children and young people who experience economic adversity with a view to understanding what it means to them, how they experience exclusion in the family, at school and in the community. The report is available at [www.thsmithfamily.com.au/~media/Files/Research%20and%20Advocacy%20PDFs/Research%20and%20Evaluation%20page%20PDFs/making-a-difference-2012.ashx](http://www.thsmithfamily.com.au/~media/Files/Research%20and%20Advocacy%20PDFs/Research%20and%20Evaluation%20page%20PDFs/making-a-difference-2012.ashx)

The Smith Family's 2011 report, *Unequal Opportunities: Life Chances for Children in the 'Lucky Country'*, showed that the most well off one-fifth of Australian children (ranked by household) had access to 3.1 times the economic resources of the poorest one-fifth of Australian children in 2009. The report is available at [www.thsmithfamily.com.au/~media/Files/Research%20and%20Advocacy%20PDFs/Research%20and%20Evaluation%20page%20PDFs/natsem-opportunities-final-report-2011.ashx](http://www.thsmithfamily.com.au/~media/Files/Research%20and%20Advocacy%20PDFs/Research%20and%20Evaluation%20page%20PDFs/natsem-opportunities-final-report-2011.ashx)

The Commissioner for Children and Young People's 2010 research report, *Speaking Out About Wellbeing*, showed that the 'basics' such as food, clothing, shelter, enough money to live, parents who looked after them and health care was important to children and young people. The report is available at [www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/content.aspx?cld=326](http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/content.aspx?cld=326)

*Addressing barriers for jobless families* identifies four elements that government and community-based organisations need to include when addressing social exclusion for jobless families:

- Sustainability – ensuring that work provided to jobless families is sustainable.
- Individualisation and flexibility – to meet the diverse and complex needs of jobless families.
- Incremental achievement – providing parents in jobless families with alternatives and choices that are realistically achievable and attractive to them.
- Accessibility – these issues may include structural barriers such as transport, internet access and childcare, as well as personal barriers such as poor education and health and stigmatisation.<sup>361</sup>



The report is available at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/81064808?q=addressing+barriers+for+jobless+families&c=book>

*Family Joblessness in Australia* (2009) provides an analysis of trends in family joblessness in Australia over the past 30 years and identifies factors that have driven trends in joblessness and future policy directions. The report can be accessed at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/32201314?q=Family+joblessness+in+australia&c=book>

The report lists the following international and national best practice examples to address family joblessness:

- The Family Centred Employment Project, Department for Education, Employment and Workforce Relations, Commonwealth Government (now Department of Employment) <http://employment.gov.au/family-centred-employment-project>
- The Brotherhood of St Laurence Centre for Work and Learning, Yarra, Victoria – [www.bsl.org.au/Services/Work-and-Learning/Centre-for-Work-and-Learning.aspx](http://www.bsl.org.au/Services/Work-and-Learning/Centre-for-Work-and-Learning.aspx)

## Other information

Centrelink, Commonwealth Government, has a range of programs and services to assist families and young people to become self-sufficient and to support those in need, including developing job skills, finding a job, and related incentive schemes. Further information is available at [www.humanservices.gov.au/](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/)

## Additional table

**Table 5.4: Families with children less than 15 years of age: number and in per cent, by labour force status of parent/partner, Western Australia at June 2005, 2010 and 2012**

		2005		2010		2012		Difference 2012 to 2005
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Percentage Point
Couple family	Both employed*	97,180	54.9	118,580	59.0	125,470	59.4	0.0
	One employed*	65,850	37.2	71,360	35.5	76,530	36.2	-1.0
	Both jobless**	10,550	6.0	7,630	3.8	6,610	3.1	-2.9
	Total ***	176,900	100.0	200,980	100.0	211,210	100.0	
Single-parent family	Employed *	24,590	52.6	27,990	58.4	30,720	61.7	9.1
	Unemployed	3,430	7.3	2,750	5.7	2,910	5.8	-1.5
	Not in labour force	18,330	39.2	17,160	35.8	15,680	31.4	-7.8
	<i>Jobless</i>	<i>21,760</i>	<i>46.5</i>	<i>19,910</i>	<i>41.5</i>	<i>18,590</i>	<i>37.2</i>	<i>-9.3</i>
	Total ***	46,720	100.0	47,900	100.0	49,820	100.0	

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families, June 2012*.

\* Includes full-time and part-time employment.

\*\* Includes families where both partners were unemployed or not in the labour force, and families where one partner was unemployed and the other not in the labour force.

\*\*\* Total includes 'Labour status not determined'.

