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TIME TRENDS IN PSYCHOSOCIAL WORKING CONDITIONS IN A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF WORKING AUSTRALIANS 2000–2008: EVIDENCE OF NARROWING DISPARITIES?

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Objectives Psychosocial working conditions are important, modifiable determinants of health, yet relatively little is known about how these conditions are trending over time. This paper presents an analysis of time trends in job control and security over an 8-year period in an Australian national sample.

Methods Measures of job control (5 items) and job security (2 items) were collected in 8 annual waves (2000–2008) from a large population-based Australian panel survey ($n = 10608$ individuals, 64302 observations). Population-weighted measures of control and security were calculated for the population as a whole, as well as separately by sex, age, occupational skill level and employment arrangements. Model-predicted time trends were generated using population-averaged longitudinal linear regression models, with year fitted as a categorical variable, adjusting for potential confounders of sex, age, education and Indigenous status. Differences in time trends by sex, age group, skill level and employment arrangement were tested as interactions with time.

Results Significant cross-sectional disparities were observed by sex, age, occupational skill level, and employment arrangement for both job control and security. Job control remained relatively flat over time, whereas job security increased from 2000 to 2007, followed by a decrease at the onset of the global financial crisis. There was no evidence of narrowing of disparities over time, with the exception of an improvement over time in job control among young workers compared to older groups.

Conclusions Most cross-sectional disparities in job control and security are persisting over time, with the positive exception of improving job control among young workers.