

Social impacts of Once-a-Day milking

Rupert Tipples and Nona Verwoerd

Agriculture and Life Sciences Division

Lincoln University

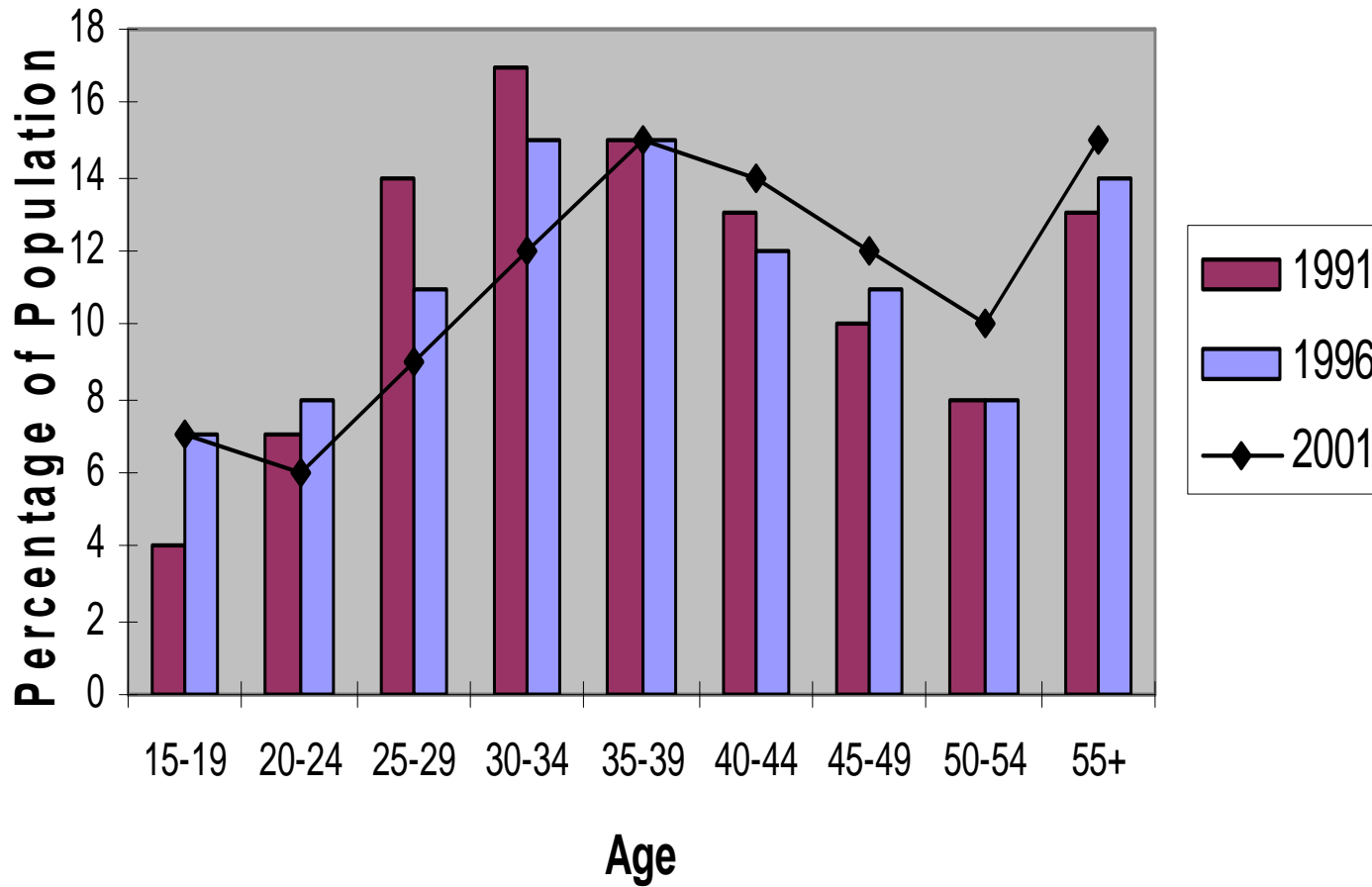
Research model used

- **Initial investigation 2005**
- **Main study 2006-2007 funded by *Dairy InSight*, *LIC* and Lincoln University**
- **To develop a more structured research programme**
- **Formal and informal interviews with 6 farmers (2 OAD, 2 thinking of changing to OAD, and 2 with no intention of changing); plus 8 workers and several of their wives and partners**
- **Interviews: September/October 2005**

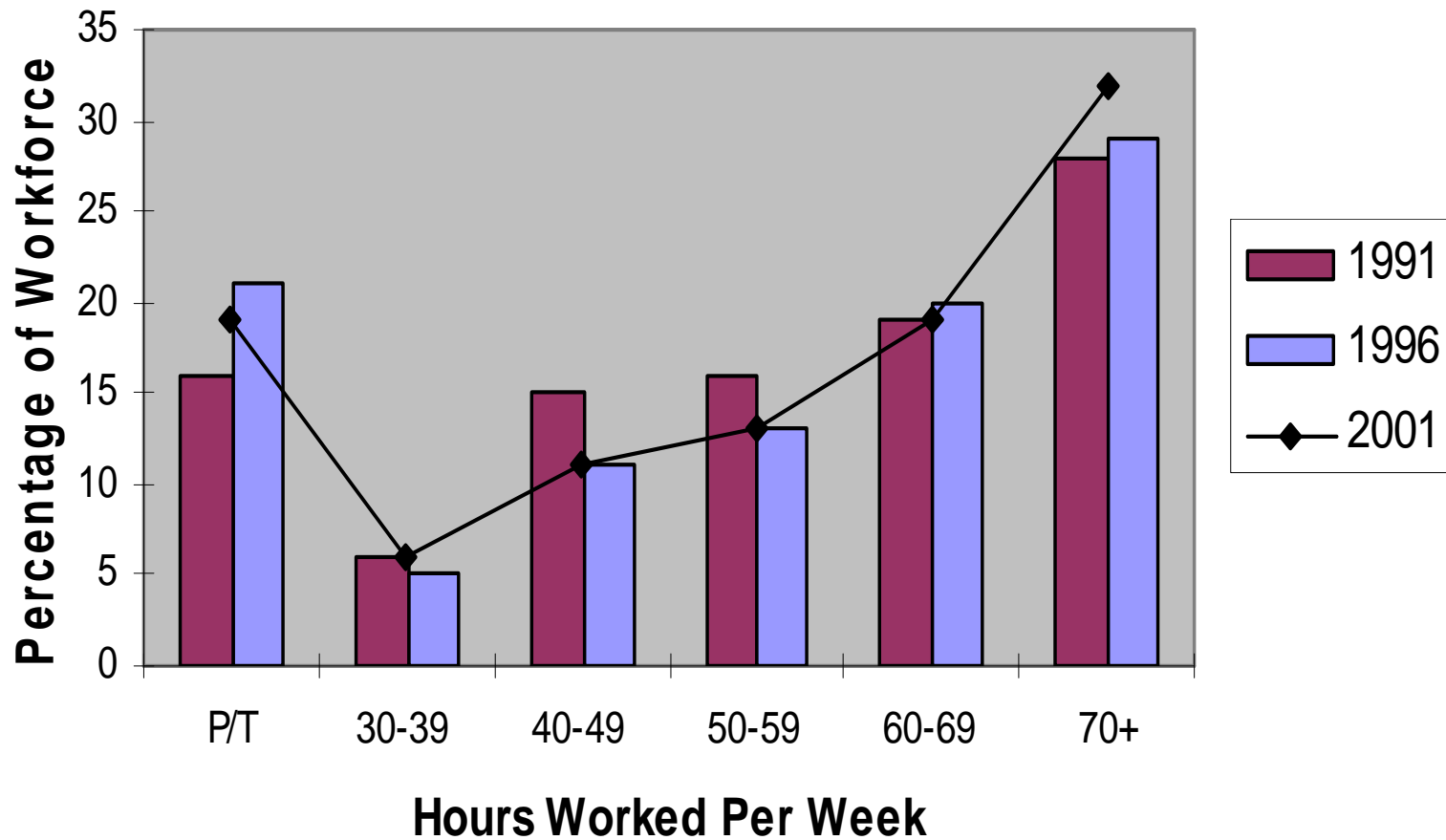
Background to study (a)

- 2004 study funded by *Dairy InSight* of ‘Future Dairy Farm Employment’
- Based on *Census of Population and Dwellings* data for 1991, 1996 and 2001
- Highlighted two structural problems with the dairy farm labour force:
 - Age structure
 - Hours of work
- Drew attention to recruiting problems

Age Distribution Dairy farmers/Dairy farm workers



Hours Worked by Census Year



Background to study (b)

- **Recruitment concerns have led to recent high profile TV advertising campaigns**
- **An increasing focus on the employment requirements of ‘Generation Y’**

INITIAL RESULTS

Dairy farmer reactions to OAD milking

- **Unclear whether OAD can lead to lower staffing levels – complex equation with a reduced length of working day, but more cows to milk etc**
- **Those not going for OAD claimed no saving of staff time – it was really not so long a day, just a shift in work patterns**
- **For many farmers OAD requires a higher level of staff competence, with only half as much time to observe stock**
- **The undecided reckoned employment was only one of many variables to consider**

Continued: OAD adopters

- **One larger employer was pressed by staff to adopt OAD: shorter working days, with wages and staffing unchanged**
- **Profitability down 7% first year, but extra maiden cows from higher stocking rate**
- **Staff turnover fell to zero**
- **Absenteeism, sick leave, accidents dropped dramatically**
- **Employer reported: staff were wide awake because they had a good night's sleep and that made a dramatic and money saving impact**

Further adopter comment

- **Morale was high → a ‘work smart’ attitude: staff worked faster, took more responsibility and combined jobs in effective ways**
- **With shorter working days, good intentions to train had converted into real training time**
- **There may be other ‘hidden’ benefits around staffing levels and staff management**

Dairy workers reactions to OAD milking

- **Former ‘bad’ image of dairy farming – dirty, sleep-depriving, thankless, and deadend (Kuriger, 2001)**
- **OAD is a ‘hot’ topic. Most wanted shorter working hours even if it meant a fall in income. Friends had left dairy farming for just that**
- **With OAD: shorter, more acceptable working hours, enhancement of family life, the prospect of a more balanced lifestyle, may all offset a possible fall in income**
- **One such farm worker believed she ‘...could get a life’!....**

Other OAD benefits

- **New sources of labour: one employer had divided his staff in two groups:**
 - (a) **Women: used as specialist milkers, very good milkers, took their time, gentle with the cows, gave slow milkers time to empty, cleaned up as they went, sang to the cows**
 - (b) **Both men and women: did the other farm jobs**
- **OAD opened up the untapped pool of women with children, who could milk between 9.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m., while their children were at school**
- **OAD permitted farmers thinking about retirement to withdraw by degrees and reduce their work gradually, while increasing their amount of leisure. Thus, their dairy experience might be preserved for the industry**