



Families and Work Institute

HIGHLIGHTS of THE NATIONAL STUDY OF THE CHANGING WORKFORCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The survey respondents who donated their honoraria in order that we might continue this kind of research

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Every five years, Families and Work Institute conducts its National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW)—*the only ongoing study of the U.S. workforce of its kind or scale*. By surveying large, nationally representative samples of workers, the NSCW provides a rare glimpse into the work, personal and family lives of Americans—and how home and work are changing over time. *Highlights of the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce* is the first of several planned reports drawing on this rich data set. This Executive Summary provides a brief synopsis of its major findings. For more information or to purchase the full study, go to www.changingworkforce.org.

Highlights of the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce examines five topics in some depth:

- **Women in the Workforce**
- **Dual-Earner Couples**
- **The Role of Technology in Employees' Lives**
- **Work-Life Supports on the Job**
- **Working for Oneself versus Someone Else**

Wherever possible, we examine changes over time—from 1977 to 2002 and 1992 to 2002.

Overview of Findings

Women in the Workforce: The proportion of women and men in the wage and salaried workforce is now nearly equal (51% men and 49% women), and men have become far more accepting of women's participation in the workforce over the past 25 years. Two in five men, however, still think women's place is in the home.

Over the past 25 years, women have achieved increasingly higher educational levels and steadily moved into managerial and professional occupations—such that today women employees are significantly better educated and significantly more likely to hold managerial and professional positions than men. However, women's annual earnings are still significantly less than men's earnings (\$36,716 versus \$52,908). Possible reasons for this persistent gender difference in earnings include women's greater likelihood of working part time and in administrative positions, as well as other factors explored in more detail in the full study. In addition, employees who have greater responsibility for care of their children—*whether men or women*—report lower earnings. In dual-earner couples, there is a significant *third job* that has to be done at home—family work. And women are still much more likely to assume primary responsibility for family work than men.

Dual-Earner Couples: The proportion of married wage and salaried employees who live in dual-earner couples has increased substantially over the past 25 years, from 66 percent in 1977 to 78 percent today. And together, these couples are working longer and longer hours. Combined work hours for dual-earner couples with children rose 10 hours a week, from 81 hours a week in 1977 to 91 hours a week today. Clearly, today's working couples have less time for their lives off the job. Given this, it comes as a surprise that the combined time that spouses with children spend caring for and doing things with their children on workdays has actually increased—from 5.2 hours in 1977 to 6.2 hours today. What has been sacrificed? Parents' time for themselves is one factor. Today's dads spend 1.3 hours on workdays on themselves, down from 2.1 hours 25 years ago. Moms have even less time for themselves—0.9 hours versus 1.6 hours in 1977.

Another change in the lives of American workers is apparent in the expanded roles of fathers in the home. Since 1977, fathers have increased the time they spend on workdays doing household chores by approximately 42 minutes, while mothers have reduced their time by the same amount, although they still do more than fathers. The amount of time, then, that couples with children spend on household work has not changed—what has changed is how that labor is divided. In other home activities such as cooking and child care, women are still much more likely to shoulder greater overall responsibility, though fathers appear to be taking more responsibility than they used to.

The Role of Technology in Employees' Lives: Nearly two thirds of wage and salaried workers use computers for their jobs daily. A majority also use computers for personal reasons at least several times a week. More than a third of employees sometimes use a computer at home for job-related work, and nearly one fifth use a computer at home to read and send job-related email. Among employees who ever use cell phones, beepers, pagers, or email for personal reasons, more than half (55%) feel these new ways of communicating help them a lot in managing their work, personal, and family lives. Interestingly, the study reveals that employees who experience the most spillover from their jobs into their home lives rely most heavily on technology to stay in touch with families and friends.

Work-Life Supports on the Job: Work-life supports on the job—both specific benefit entitlements and less formal policies and practices—have increased somewhat, although not a lot, in the past decade. One work-life program that has increased significantly is elder care resource and referral services. In 1992, only 11 percent of employees had access to this benefit, versus nearly a quarter (24%) today. And more and more employees are needing elder care services as the population ages: 35 percent of workers, men and women alike, say they have provided care for a relative or in-law 65 or older in the past year.

Despite somewhat increased work-life supports on the job, however, employees with families report significantly higher levels of interference between their jobs and their family lives than employees 25 years ago (45% versus 34% report this “some” or “a lot”). And men with families report higher levels of interference between their jobs and their family lives than women in the same situation. The National Study finds the importance of supportive work-life policies and practices, such as flexible work arrangements, is clear—when they are available, employees exhibit more positive work outcomes, such as job satisfaction, commitment to employer, and retention, as well as more positive life outcomes, such as less interference between job and family life, less negative spillover from job to home, greater life satisfaction, and better mental health. Specific policies and practices are identified in the report.

Working for Oneself versus Someone Else: Approximately one in five employed people in the U.S. work for themselves rather than someone else. We consider 30 percent of these workers to be *small business Owners* because they employ others for pay, and the remaining 70 percent to be *self-employed Independents* because they do not. Owners are much better educated and earn considerably more than wage and salaried Employees or self-employed Independents; however, those who work for themselves are significantly less likely to have family or personal health insurance. Small business Owners work the longest hours, with 38 percent working more than 50 hours a week, while self-employed Independents have the shortest workweeks, with 38 percent working fewer than 35 hours a week.

Small business Owners and self-employed Independents are more likely to say that their jobs require creativity, allow them to develop their skills and abilities, and give them freedom to decide what to do on their jobs.

Background—National Study of the Changing Workforce

Beginning in 1969, the Department of Labor funded three national studies of the U.S. workforce as part of the *Quality of Employment Survey* (QES). The last survey in this series, conducted in 1977, marked the first time that research on a large, representative sample of workers collected information about not only their work lives, but about their personal lives as well. When the QES program was halted in 1977, a 15-year gap ensued during which there were small-scale studies of life on and off the job, but no large-scale nationally representative studies. In the early 1990s, Families and Work Institute obtained private support for the National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) as an ongoing research program.

The NSCW surveys representative samples of the U.S. workforce every five years. Sample sizes average about 3,500, including both wage and salaried employees and self-employed workers. The first NSCW survey was conducted in 1992 and the second in 1997. The 2002 NSCW is the third in this series of surveys. The 2002 survey, which includes many questions used in the 1977 QES, provides a unique opportunity to examine workforce issues through the lens of history—with 25-year comparisons to the 1977 QES as well as ten-year comparisons with the 1992 NSCW for some measures.

Families and Work Institute (FWI) is a nonprofit center for research that provides data to inform decision-making on the changing workforce and workplace, changing family and changing community. Founded in 1989, FWI is known for ahead of the curve, non-partisan research into emerging work-life issues; for solutions-oriented studies addressing topics of vital importance to all sectors of society; and for fostering connections among workplaces, families, and communities. For more information, visit our Web site at www.familiesandwork.org.