TIME AND WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highlights of Findings</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Note</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Many Hours Are Employees Working</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Much Are Work and Family Interfering with Each Other?</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To What Extent Do Employees Value Workplace Flexibility?</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choices in Managing Time</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flextime and Flexplace</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced Time</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Off</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiving Leaves</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of Flexibility</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Is the Impact on Business of Providing Workplace Flexibility?</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 NSCW Technical Information</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>What Matters for Schedule Control in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Traditional Flextime in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Daily Flextime in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>What Matters for Shift Options in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Compressed Workweeks in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Flexplace in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>What Matters for Ability to Change Between Full- and Part-Time Status in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Part-Year Work in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Time Off During the Workday in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10</td>
<td>What Mattered for Access to Paid Time Off for Personal Illness in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Time Off for Sick Children in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12</td>
<td>What Matters for Taking Time Off for Elder Care in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Paid Vacation in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Paid Holidays in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Volunteer Work in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Parental Leave in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 17</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Workplace Support in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 18</td>
<td>What Matters for Access to Supervisor Support in 2008?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Average weekly work hours at main job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Average weekly work hours at all jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Employees with multiple jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How many more hours than their ideal are employees working each week at all their jobs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Employees reporting work and family interference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Levels of negative spillover from work to home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Employee reports of time deprivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Employees’ perceptions of control over their schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Frequency of being asked to work overtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Employees with access to traditional flextime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Frequency of use of daily flextime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Employees working daytime schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Percent of employees working non-standard shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Percent of employees who perceive that their work shift or schedule meets their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Employees with access to compressed workweeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Employees’ primary work locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Access to and preferences for working at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Employees working part time at their main job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Part-time employees who prefer part-time work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Employees working part of the year at their main job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Employees working part year by current status, accessibility and affordability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Difficulty in taking time off for family or personal reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Employees with paid time off for personal illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Employees with access to paid time off to care for sick children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Employees’ provision of elder care within the past 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Time off for elder care in the past year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Employees’ perceptions of employer helpfulness regarding time off for elder care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 28  Access to vacations.......................................................... 39
Figure 29  Access to paid vacation as a function of tenure with current employer ......................................................... 41
Figure 30  Access to paid holidays....................................................... 42
Figure 31  Employees who perform volunteer work or community service ............................................................... 43
Figure 32  Amount of time off work following birth or adoption of a child ................................................................. 45
Figure 33  Pay received during time off following birth or adoption ........................................................................ 46
Figure 34  Agreement that employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives ................................................................. 47
Figure 35  Agreement that employees who ask for time off for personal or family needs are less likely to get ahead in their jobs or careers ........................................................................ 48
Figure 36  By age/generation, employees who believe that asking for time off for personal or family reasons would jeopardize job or career advancement ................................................................. 49
Figure 37  Average agreement that supervisor is supportive ....................................................................................... 50
Figure 38  Job engagement by supportiveness and flexibility .................................................................................. 52
Figure 39  Job satisfaction by supportiveness and flexibility .................................................................................. 53
Figure 40  Intent to look for another job by supportiveness and flexibility ............................................................... 53
Figure 41  Mental health by supportiveness and flexibility .................................................................................. 54
Figure 42  Change in availability or use of different types of flexibility ........................................................................ 56
TIME AND WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

The 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) is the fourth in a series of studies assessing the work experiences of wage and salaried employees in the U.S. This report documents the status of U.S. employees regarding work hours, interference between work and home, and access to flexibility and support.

1. Flexibility is highly valued by employees.

A large majority—87%—of all employees report that having the flexibility they need to manage work and personal or family life would be “extremely” or “very” important if they were looking for a new job. Yet, 1 in 5 employees disagree “somewhat” or “strongly” that they now have the schedule flexibility they need to manage the demands of their work and personal lives.

2. Work hours are falling, but many employees still prefer to work fewer hours than they actually work.

Overall, work hours are falling and the gender gap between men and women is shrinking. Weekly work hours fell an average of 1.3 hours per week between 2002 and 2008, falling more for men than for women. As a result, the gender gap in hours worked has narrowed from 6.8 to 5.2 hours per week. Unlike other employees, work hours increased more than an hour per week for employees in the Millennial generation.

Women are more likely than men to work part time (23% vs. 11%) and to prefer to do so. Of those now working part time, 70% of women and 59% of men prefer to work part time. The gender gap in this preference also has narrowed from 15% to 11% since 2002.

Although in 2008 the gap between desired and actual hours is the smallest it has been since 1997, it is still 3 hours larger than in 1992. More than half of all employees would prefer to work fewer hours, about 35 hours per week, on average, compared with the 43 hours they are now working. Employees say they don’t work fewer hours because they need the money they are now earning.

About 1 in 5 employees wants to work more hours—these employees are more likely to be younger, less educated and in non-managerial occupations.

3. Employees experiencing work life conflict has remained stable, but those reporting a time famine have increased.

Levels of work-family interference and negative spillover from work to home have remained stable since 2002—42% report “some” or “a lot” of interference. Despite the lack of increases in interference and spillover, employees are more likely than in 2002 to report feeling deprived of time for themselves and much more likely to report feeling deprived of time with children—now reported by 3 in 4 employees. Employees who work more than 50 hours per week are more than twice as likely to report “a lot” of interference than employees who work less.
4. Access to some kinds of unpaid flexibility has increased, while access to some kinds of paid time off has decreased.

The overall news regarding access to flexibility in 2008 is generally good. There are more employees working day shifts and fewer working overtime without advance notice. The proportion of employees who are able to take time off during the workday to take care of personal or family matters has increased substantially—from 31% to 37%—and the proportions of employees with access to paid holidays and the ability to perform volunteer work during work time have both increased. Access to part-year work has increased, but most employees in these arrangements do not prefer them.

Access to paid time off for personal illness has declined steadily since 1997; in 2008 37% of wage and salaried employees have fewer than 5 days of paid time off for personal illness (including employees with no such time). Overall, almost half (43%) of all U.S. employees report that they do not have sufficient paid time off for personal illness. Likewise, access to paid time off to care for sick children has declined since 1997, though it has remained stable since 2002. Employees with access to paid time off take about half a day more than employees without access, but employees who experience child care breakdowns take about the same amount of time regardless of whether or not they have access to paid time off.

Access to other forms of flexibility has remained stable between 2002 and 2008, including traditional flexibility, flexplace, part-time work and paid time off for sick children, elder care or vacation.

More than three quarters (84%) of all employees are able to change their starting or quitting times on short notice. Supervisors who worry about the “floodgates opening” when they allow flexibility will be reassured to note that only 30% of employees use daily flexibility once a month or more.

5. There is often a misfit between the need for flexibility and access to it.

Unfortunately, access to several kinds of flexibility appears to be defined more by occupational characteristics, such as managerial status, than by need, such as care responsibilities. As a result, employees with the greatest needs are sometimes the least likely to have access. For example, employees who are more educated or in managerial or professional positions have greater access than other workers to most forms of flexibility, but care responsibilities are unrelated to access to almost any forms of flexibility.

6. Access to supportive workplace environments comes with a price for some employees.

In 2008, employees were somewhat more likely to believe that they must choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives, but there was only a 2% decrease in the percentage who believe that negative job consequences would really occur. Overall, close to 2 in 5 employees report that they would be less likely to get ahead if they worked more flexibly. Younger employees are more likely than older ones to believe that asking for time off for personal or family reasons would jeopardize job or career advancement.
7. Employers that provide flexibility and that have more supportive supervisors have employees who are more satisfied with their jobs, more engaged, more likely to remain and in better mental health.

As has been found in previous National Studies of the Changing Workforce, there is considerable evidence that supportive supervisors and access to flexibility are strongly related to employee behavior that is important to employers. In 2008, employees with both above-average supervisor support AND flexibility are more than twice as likely to report high job engagement and job satisfaction as employees with below-average support and flexibility.

Employees with above-average flexibility are less likely to report that they are looking for another job. More than three quarters of employees with above-average flexibility AND support say that they are “not at all” likely to look for another job, compared with 57% of employees with low flexibility. Employees with BOTH more flexibility and support are also significantly more likely to report good mental health.

Conclusions

In conclusion, a large majority of employees place high value on flexibility at work, but some do not have the flexibility they need to manage their lives at and away from work. Access to flexibility on balance is improving somewhat, but, on average, employees are working more than they want to and feeling increasingly time-deprived. Nonetheless, the evidence continues to suggest that increasing access to flexibility is not only good for employees, but is also good for businesses.
INTRODUCTION

Some say that “time” has become the new currency. Although it can never really replace monetary currency, there are some who would trade more time for more money. In fact, when employees have a choice among a variety of jobs with comparable salary levels, time can be the deciding factor in taking a job or in staying in a job. A new report from the Families and Work Institute’s 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) finds that 87% of employees report that having the flexibility they need to manage their work and personal or family life would be “extremely” or “very” important if they were looking for a new job.

The 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce is the most comprehensive ongoing nationally representative study of employees’ lives on and off the job. Because this study has been conducted for 3 decades, it gives us an opportunity to investigate issues of time in today’s working world in the U.S., asking:

• What are the issues that employees face in managing time today and in the past?
• Do employees have access to different kinds of workplace flexibility? If so, do they use it? Why or why not? If they don’t have it, do they want it?
• To what extent does workplace flexibility help employees manage time?
• What difference does workplace flexibility make to employees and employers?

We begin with the facts—the total hours that employees report working per week at their main job and any additional jobs they may have, including both paid and unpaid overtime or extra hours.

We then examine 6 different types of workplace flexibility:

• **Choices in Managing Time**, which includes control over schedule and satisfaction with schedule.
• **Flex Time and Flex Place**, which includes traditional flexibility, daily flexibility, shift work, compressed workweeks and working at home.
• **Reduced Time**, which includes part-time and part-year work.
• **Time Off** for small necessities, one’s own or family members’ illnesses, vacations and holidays, and volunteer work.
• **Caregiving Leave**, which includes maternity and paternity leave.
• **Culture of Flexibility**, which includes perceived jeopardy, supervisor support and general obstacles for using flexibility.

We describe current and historical patterns associated with each type of workplace flexibility. Using new questions available for the first time in the 2008 survey, we also describe not only the availability of different options, but also their use. For each type of flexibility, we examine differences among several different demographic groups. At the end of the report, we discuss the relationship between business outcomes and workplace flexibility and supervisor support.
The demographic groups we compared are defined by:

- **Gender:**
  ✓ Men
  ✓ Women

- **Age and Generation:**
  ✓ Millennial – under 29 years old in 2008
  ✓ Generation X – 29 through 43 years old in 2008
  ✓ Baby Boom – 44 through 62 years old in 2008
  ✓ Mature – 63 years old or older in 2008

- **Living Arrangement:**
  ✓ Singles – employees living alone
  ✓ Couples – employees living with a spouse or partner, but no children
  ✓ Two-Parent Families – employees living with a spouse or partner and at least 1 child
  ✓ Single Parents – employees living with at least 1 child, but no other adult
  ✓ Extended Families – employees living with at least 1 relative
  ✓ Other Families – employees living in other types of arrangements

- **Care Responsibilities:**
  ✓ No child or elder care responsibilities
  ✓ Either child or elder care responsibilities
  ✓ Both child and elder care responsibilities

- **Education (highest level achieved):**
  ✓ No more than high school diploma or equivalent
  ✓ Some postsecondary education
  ✓ At least 4 years of college education

- **Occupation:**
  ✓ Managers and professionals
  ✓ Employees who are not managers or professionals

- **Industry:**
  ✓ Goods-producing industries
  ✓ Service industries

Because we know that employees are not randomly distributed across family and work circumstances, we compared participants living in different family arrangements to check for demographic differences. These groups range in size from 117 participants (Single Parents) to 816 participants (Two-Parent Families).

Employees living in Couples or Two-Parent Families are more likely than employees living in other arrangements to be white, college-educated and hold managerial jobs. They also earn significantly higher family incomes than employees living in most other arrangements.

Employees living in Single-Parent Families are disproportionately likely to be female. Along with employees living in Two-Parent Families, they are also more likely to have dual-care responsibilities and young children.

Employees living as Singles tend to be older, white, female and to hold a college degree than employees in most other groups.
METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The participants in the National Studies of the Changing Workforce are randomly selected to form a sample that is representative of the U.S. labor force. Statistical adjustments are used to correct any discrepancies between the final sample and the labor force as a whole. Additional technical details about the methods used to conduct the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce appear at the end of this report.

Changes over time are not tested statistically because the large sample sizes across the multiple administrations of the NSCW make even very small changes statistically significant. Instead, we categorize trends as “stable” when the amount of change is 1% or less (out of 100%); as “slight” when the amount of change is between 1% and 2%, and simply as a “change” when the amount is larger than 2%.

Differences between groups were tested using statistical procedures including analyses of variance, t tests and chi-squared tests. Follow-up comparisons of means were conducted using Bonferroni tests. A significance threshold of p < .05 was used for all tests. We consistently indicate in the text when differences have been statistically tested.

For ease of reading, results reported in the text of the report are rounded to the nearest round number, with values of .5 rounded up; occasional exceptions are made when greater precision is needed (such as when we report work hours).

HOW MANY HOURS ARE EMPLOYEES WORKING?

As the following sections of this report show, employees’ work lives have many components. Most employees perform not only paid work, but also additional unpaid work at the workplace or at home. Many employees also have multiple jobs.

How many hours do employees work at their main jobs?

Overall, employees spend 42 hours per week in paid and unpaid work time at their main job in 2008, with men spending 44.1 hours and women spending 39.1 hours (a statistically significant difference). Figure 1 summarizes the hours worked by employees living in different kinds of households.

Overall, employees living in Extended Families work significantly fewer hours than employees in all other arrangements except Single-Parent Families. When we examine men and women separately, there are fewer significant differences. Men living in Extended Families work fewer hours than those living in Two-Parent Families, and women living in Extended Families work fewer hours than those living in Couples or Other Families living arrangements.

In all but the Other Families living arrangement, male employees in the NSCW report working significantly more hours per week than female employees. The “gender gap” is largest between male and female employees who live in Two-Parent Families.
**Figure 1: Average weekly work hours at main job**

Weekly hours, main job

![Graph showing average weekly work hours at main job]

**How many total hours are employees working at all their jobs?**

In 2008, U.S. wage and salaried employees worked an average of 43.6 total hours per week at all of their jobs, a decrease from 2002 and 1997, but more hours than employees reported in 1992. As Figure 2 shows, this decrease is concentrated mostly among men, whose work hours declined 2.1 hours per week since 2002, compared with a decrease of only .5 hours for women.

**Figure 2: Average weekly work hours at all jobs**
*(1992 reports restricted to range between 10 and 100 hours)*

Weekly hours, all job

![Graph showing average weekly work hours at all jobs]

*How many total hours are employees working at all their jobs?*

In 2008, U.S. wage and salaried employees worked an average of 43.6 total hours per week at all of their jobs, a decrease from 2002 and 1997, but more hours than employees reported in 1992. As Figure 2 shows, this decrease is concentrated mostly among men, whose work hours declined 2.1 hours per week since 2002, compared with a decrease of only .5 hours for women.
Changes in work hours are concentrated in some parts of the workforce. Between 2002 and 2008, total work hours at all jobs INCREASED 1 hour or more per week for employees in the Millennial generation (workers under 29 years of age in 2008). Between 2002 and 2008, total work hours at all jobs DECREASED 1 hour or more per week for the following groups:

- men;
- employees in the Generation X (29 to 43 years old in 2008), Baby Boom (44 to 62 in 2008) and Mature (63 years old or older in 2008) generations;
- employees living in Two-Parent and Single-Parent Families;
- employees with less than 4 years of college education;
- occupations other than managers and professionals; and
- employees in goods-producing industries.

These group differences show that employees with responsibilities for children and employees with less education or in non-managerial jobs—groups at risk for having difficulty achieving sufficient income—were more likely than other employees to have experienced declines in work hours.

**Multiple jobs**

Although the traditional expectation may be that most employees work full time, year-round in a single main job, many employees work in different kinds of arrangements, including holding multiple jobs.

The proportion of employees with more than 1 job in 2008 is 16%, double the percentage in 1992, but similar to the percentage in 2002. (See Figure 3.) Among employees with multiple jobs, most (85%) work a total of 2 jobs, but a small proportion (15%) work 3 or more jobs.

Most employees with multiple jobs (71%) work full time (defined as 35 or more hours per week) at their main job and part time at their other jobs. A smaller proportion of employees (25%) work part time at both their main and their other jobs, and a few (4%) work full time at both their main and their other jobs.

**Figure 3: Employees with multiple jobs**
How many hours would employees prefer to work?

We know how many hours employees are working, but are they working the hours they want to work? As in previous NSCW studies, employees in 2008 were asked the actual number of hours they would prefer to work each week. Overall, 57% of wage and salaried employees would prefer to work fewer hours. Figure 4 displays the differences between actual and preferred hours for men, women and the workforce as a whole.

On average, employees would prefer to work 35 hours per week, about 8 fewer hours per week than the 43 hours they actually work. Men would prefer to work more hours than women (38 versus 33 hours per week), but the gap between actual and preferred hours is not significantly different for men and women in any year. Overall, the number of hours employees say they prefer to work is fairly close to the regularly scheduled full-time work hours at their main job (37 hours), but not to the actual hours they work when overtime or extra time and paid and unpaid hours are included.

Figure 4: How many more hours than their ideal are employees working each week at all their jobs?

We compared groups of employees and found no differences in employees’ preferences according to care responsibilities. We did find statistically significant differences according to age, living arrangement, education, occupation and industry. Employees who would prefer to work fewer hours are more likely to:

- be members of the Generation X and Baby Boom generations;
- live in arrangements other than Extended Families;
- have at least 4 years of college education;
- be managers or professionals; and
- work in service industries.

We asked employees who want to work fewer hours why they do not do so. The table below suggests that the reasons have shifted since the last NSCW administration, but caution needs to be used in comparing these findings because in 2002, employees were given a list of reasons to endorse, but could generate their own list in 2008.
The top reasons in each year are presented below, with the most frequently mentioned reasons at the top of the chart:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Top reasons that employees said they cannot work fewer hours in 2002</th>
<th>Top reasons employees said they cannot work fewer hours in 2008</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To achieve my own standards</td>
<td>• Need the money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To keep up with the amount of work</td>
<td>• Could not keep my job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To be as successful as I want to be</td>
<td>• To keep up with the amount of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Could not keep my job</td>
<td></td>
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It is not clear whether the difference between employees’ responses in 2002 and 2008 is a result of changes in the U.S. economy or a change in the question format that allowed them to freely generate their own list of reasons. Regardless, concerns about income and job security figured more prominently in 2008 than 2002.

Another reason people do not work fewer hours is that many employees feel that they are expected to work extra hours. In fact, only 19% of all wage and salaried employees report that they have never been asked to work extra hours or overtime at their main job—and remember that 16% of all U.S. workers also have multiple jobs. Although more than half (52%) of NSCW participants report that they can refuse to work overtime without negative consequences, another 25% feel they cannot refuse such requests.

It is important to remember that not all employees want to work fewer hours: about 17% would like to work more hours. These employees most likely to want to work more hours:

- are members of the Millennial generation;
- live with relatives in an Extended Family;
- have less than 4 years of college education;
- work in occupations other than managerial or professional; and
- work in goods-producing industries.

In other words, the employees who want to work more hours tend to be among the less privileged in the workforce—younger, less educated or less likely to be in managerial occupations.

**Summary of patterns of hours worked**

Overall, total work hours among U.S. wage and salaried employees have decreased slightly since 2002, although not for employees from the Millennial generation. Men’s work hours have declined more than women’s, narrowing the gender gap. Most groups of employees want to work about 8 hours less per week (close to what they are scheduled to work), but report that they cannot do so because of concerns about income or job security, or because they are asked or expected to work overtime. About 1 in 5 employees want to work more; these tend to be employees who are among the less privileged—younger, less educated or less likely to be in managerial occupations.
HOW MUCH ARE WORK AND FAMILY INTERFERING WITH EACH OTHER?

Given that most employees would prefer to work fewer hours, we expected to find that a considerable portion of the workforce experience work-life conflict and that is indeed what we found. In 2008, 42% of employees report that their work and family life interfered with each other “a lot” or “somewhat.” As Figure 5 shows, this proportion is essentially unchanged since 2002, but is smaller than the proportions observed in 1997 and—especially—1992.

If we go back further to 1977, there has been jump in work-life interference—when 35% of employees experienced some or a lot of interference. This change over time is caused by an increase among men, not women. The difference between 1977 and today is especially striking because the 1977 sample was limited to employees who worked 20 hours or more per week, who presumably would have experienced more work and family interference than employees working less. Thus, the real difference between 1977 and today may be even larger than the available data suggest.

Figure 5: Employees reporting work and family interference

The number of hours that employees work is related to the degree to which they perceive interference. For example, compared with employees working fewer than 35 hours per week, employees working more than 50 hours per week are:

- more than twice as likely to report “a lot” of work-family interference (20% versus 8%); and
- less than half as likely to report “no” work-family interference (13% versus 31%).

We also examined perceived negative spillover from work to home, using 3 items assessing the degree to which employees perceived themselves as having compromised time, energy or mood with family or other important people because of their jobs. As Figure 6 below shows, the average negative spillover score has fallen since 1992, but has been stable since 2002.
We compared demographic groups and found no significant differences by gender or education. We do find statistically significant differences according to age, living arrangement, care responsibilities and occupation. Specifically, the following groups report significantly less negative spillover from work to home:

- Employees from the Mature generation (mean=2.1), compared with employees in all other generations (mean=2.6-2.7). In addition, employees from the Baby Boom generation report significantly less negative spillover than employees from Generation X (mean=2.6 and 2.7, respectively).

- Employees living in all but the Single-Parent living arrangement report lower negative spillover than employees living in Two-Parent Families (mean=2.7 for Two-Parent Families, versus 2.4-2.6 for other arrangements).

- Employees with no care responsibilities (mean=2.5, compared with 2.7 for employees with care responsibilities either or both children or elders).

- Non-managerial or professional employees (mean=2.5, compared with 2.6 for managerial or professional employees).

- Employees in service industries, compared with employees in goods-producing industries (mean=2.5 and 2.6, respectively).

To what extent do employees feel time-deprived?

Despite reported declines over the past 16 years in work-family interference and negative spillover from work to home, more than half of all employees report that they do not have enough time with their children, with their spouses or for themselves. In particular, employees are increasingly feeling deprived of time with their children, as Figure 7 shows.

- 75% of employed parents in 2008 report not having enough time with their children, a substantial increase over 2002 and 1992. Perceptions of time deprivation have risen more steeply in this area than any other.

- 59% of employees report not having enough time for themselves in 2008, an increase from 2002 levels, but similar to 1997 levels.

- 61% of employees who are married or living with a partner report not having enough time with their partner/spouse, a decrease from 1997 and 2002 levels, but still higher than 1992 levels.
Summary of interference between work and family

Both work-family interference and negative spillover from work to home have been essentially stable in the U.S. labor force since 2002, at levels lower than those seen in 1992. Not surprisingly, employees working more hours are considerably more likely to report interference. Even though interference and spillover have not changed overall, most employees still feel that they do not get sufficient time with their children, their partners or for themselves, and these perceptions have strengthened since 2002 regarding time with children and time for self. Why are feelings of time deprivation rising even though interference and spillover are not? It may be that factors other than job demands are increasing feelings of deprivation or that employees’ expectations for discretionary time are rising.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO EMPLOYEES VALUE WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY?

As we have seen, many employees are working longer hours than they prefer, and many feel pulled between their responsibilities at work and at home. Most feel what could even be called a time famine—they don’t have enough time with the children, with their husbands or wives, or for themselves. Responses to a new question added to the 2008 NSCW survey shows that a large majority—87%—of all wage and salaried employees report that having the flexibility they need to manage work and personal or family life would be “extremely” or “very” important if they were looking for a new job.

So now we turn to an investigation of the realities of workplace flexibility and some potential solutions.

- Do employees have access to workplace flexibility in how, when and where they work?
- Do they use it if they have access?
- If not, why not?
- And, if they don’t have access, do they want it—is there a demand?
CHOICES IN MANAGING TIME

Control over work schedule

Having control over their work schedule makes it more possible for employees to arrange their time to meet their responsibilities at work and away from work. As Figure 8 shows, in the 2008 NSCW, employees report having more control over their schedules than was the case in prior years, with more employees reporting “a lot” of control and fewer reporting “some” or “no” control:

- 36% of employees report that they have “complete” or “a lot” of control, an increase from 1992, but unchanged since that time.
- 39% of employees report that they have “some” or “very little” control, the same as in 1992, but a decrease from 2002.
- 25% of employees report that they have “no” control, a decrease from 1992, but an increase from 2002.

Figure 8: Employees’ perceptions of control over their schedule

![Figure 8: Employees’ perceptions of control over their schedule](image)

Which employees are most likely to be able to control their schedules?

We conducted statistical tests to compare employees’ perceptions of schedule control across demographic groups and found no differences according to age/generation, living arrangements or care responsibilities. We did find statistically significant differences according to gender, education, occupation and industry. Employees who are most likely to be able to control their schedule are:

- women, compared with men (38 versus 35%);
- employees with at least 4 years of college education (43%), compared with those with either some postsecondary (34%) or high school diploma/GED/less education (33%);

Table 1: What Matters for Schedule Control in 2008?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age/Generation</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Arrangement</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Responsibilities</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• managers or professionals, opposed to other occupations (44 versus 33%, respectively); and
• employees in service rather than in goods-producing industries (38 versus 30%, respectively).

**Being asked to work extra or overtime hours**

Employees cannot control their work schedules when they are frequently asked to work extra hours without notice. Since 1997, the likelihood of being asked to work extra hours with little or no advance notice has declined. (See Figure 9.) In the 2008 NSCW:

• 54% of employees are “never” or “rarely” asked, an increase from both 1997 and 2002;
• 32% of employees are asked no more than 3 times per month, a decrease from both 1997 and 2002; and
• 14% of employees are asked every week or more often, a decrease from 1997 and 2002.

More than half (52%) of all employees say they can refuse to work overtime without negative consequences, and 4% report that they <i>may</i> be able to refuse to work extra hours depending on the situation. One in 4 employees (25%) feels unable to refuse such requests. Only 19% of all wage and salaried employees have never been asked to work extra hours or overtime at their main job.

**Figure 9: Frequency of being asked to work overtime**

![Chart showing the percentage of employees asked to work overtime from 1997 to 2008.](chart)

**Do employees have the schedule flexibility they need?**

A new item in the 2008 NSCW asks employees whether they have enough schedule flexibility. Half (50%) of all employees “strongly agree” that they have the scheduling flexibility they need at work to manage their personal and family responsibilities—even though only 36% have “complete” or “a lot” of control over their schedule. An additional 30% “somewhat agree” that they have schedule flexibility to manage work and family. One in 5 employees (20%), however, disagree “somewhat” or “strongly” that they have the schedule flexibility they need to manage work and family.
In order to better understand these perceptions, we compared employees who do and do not strongly agree that they have sufficient flexibility. We find no statistically significant differences by living arrangement, care responsibilities, education or occupation. We do find that employees who strongly agree that they have sufficient flexibility are significantly more likely to be:

- women (52%, versus 48% men);
- members of the Mature (66%) generation, as opposed to members of the Millennial, Generation X or Baby Boom generations (48%, 49% and 50%, respectively); and
- employed in service rather than goods-producing industries (52% and 46%, respectively).

Summary of employees’ choices in managing time

Happily, there have been improvements in employees’ ability to control their time over the past 25 years, although most of those improvements occurred prior to 2002. In 2008, more employees have “a lot” of control over their time and fewer have “no” control over their time than in prior years. As with other resources at work, more educated and managerial employees tend to be able to control their schedules more than other employees, but unlike some other resources, women report having more control over their schedules than men. The proportion of employees being asked frequently to work extra hours or overtime has also declined.

Even though only about 1 in 3 employees has “a lot” or “complete” control over their work schedule, fully half of the wage and salaried employees in the U.S. labor force “strongly agree” that they have the schedule flexibility they need at work to manage their personal and family responsibilities.

FLEXTIME AND FLEXPLACE

Flextime includes traditional flextime, daily flextime, shift options and compressed workweeks. Flextime arrangements exist for a variety of reasons, some driven by the needs of the business—such as expanding hours of operation—and others primarily driven by employees’ needs to take care of responsibilities at home and at work. Ideally, work arrangements will work well for both employees and employers.

TRADITIONAL FLEXTIME

Traditional flextime arrangements allow employees to vary when they start and end their work days within a range of hours surrounding fixed core operating hours. For example, an employee might be able to begin working anytime between 7 a.m. and 10 a.m. and end the workday anytime between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., the core operating hours, all employees must be present at work. Traditional flextime arrangements typically require employees to commit to a schedule for a period of time.

Table 2: What Matters for Access to Traditional Flextime in 2008?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Access to Traditional Flextime in 2008?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age/Generation</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Arrangement</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Responsibilities</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Access, usage and demand

Based on data collected by National Study of the Changing Workforce surveys over the past 16 years, the percentage of wage and salaried employees with access to traditional flextime has been stable for the past decade, following a substantial rise between 1992 and 1997 (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Employees with access to traditional flextime

When comparing groups, we find no differences according to employee age, living arrangement or care responsibilities. We do find statistically significant differences according to gender, education, occupation and industry in access to traditional flextime. Employees with more access to traditional flextime are:

- men (47% versus 41% women);
- more highly educated (86% employees with at least some postsecondary education versus 82% employees with a high school diploma or less);
- managers and professionals (57% versus 37% other employees); and
- workers in service industries (45% versus 38% employees in goods-producing industries).

In 2008, the NSCW includes new items to assess employees' desire for and use of flexible scheduling options. Specifically, workers with access to traditional flextime were also asked if they actually use it to meet personal needs. More than three quarters of employees (79%) with access to traditional flextime report using it to meet their personal needs.

Employees without access to traditional flextime were asked if they would like to have that option. Of the 56% of U.S. workers who do not have access, two thirds (67%) express a desire for it. We find no differences in employees' response to this question based on gender, care responsibilities, education, occupation or industry. We do find statistically significant differences as a function of generation and living arrangement. The groups of employees without access to traditional flextime who want it are:

- younger workers (74% and 75% of workers from the Millennial and Generation X generations, respectively, compared with 64% and 47% of workers in the Baby Boom and Mature generations, respectively); and
- employees living in Two-Parent or Single-Parent Families (75% and 77%, respectively, compared with 58% for those living in Couples).
To summarize, of the 44% of U.S. employees who now have access to traditional flextime, about 8 in 10 use this flexibility to meet their needs. These employees are disproportionately highly educated and hold managerial positions. Of the employees without access to traditional flexibility, 2 in 3 would like to have it, regardless of most demographic characteristics. Employees who are younger or have children, however, are more likely than other employees to want access. Access to traditional flexibility rose markedly from 1992 to 1997, but has changed little since that time.

**DAILY FLEXTIME**

Daily flextime allows employees to change their starting and quitting times on short notice when special needs arise. This flexibility option allows workers to meet unexpected or special daily needs without scheduling far in advance. Because this item was asked in a new way in 2008, we do not compare answers across years.

**Access, usage and demand**

In 2008, 84% of all U.S. employees are able to change their starting or quitting times on short notice to meet special or unexpected needs. In terms of variations in access to daily flextime, we find no group differences by gender, age, education, living arrangement or industry. However:

- employees with no care responsibilities (85%) and those with *either* child or elder care responsibilities (84%) are significantly more likely than those with *both* child and elder care responsibilities (77%) to have access to daily flextime; and
- managers or professionals are significantly more likely than other employees to have access to daily flextime (88% versus 82%, respectively).

Regarding usage, about half (52%) of employees with access to daily flextime use it less than once per month (Figure 11.) Only 4% use it weekly or more often.

Employees without access to daily flextime were asked if they would like to have that option. Of the 16% of U.S. workers without access, more than three quarters (78%) express a desire to have it. We find no group differences in desire to have access to daily flextime. In other words, regardless of their gender, generation, living arrangement, care responsibilities, education, occupation or industry, employees without access to daily flextime are equally likely to want it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: What Matters for Access to Daily Flextime in 2008?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age/Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 11: Frequency of use of daily flextime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent of Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never/Don’t know</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once a month</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About once a month</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a month</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every week or more often</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is very encouraging that such a high percentage of employees are able to change their starting or quitting times on short notice to meet unexpected needs. Given that most employees use daily flexibility less than once a month, there is little evidence that employers need to worry about “floodgates” of employees missing work. Employees are more likely to want—and to have—daily flexibility than traditional flexibility, but unfortunately, employees with the most care responsibilities are less likely than other employees to have access.

SHIFT WORK

Employers use a wide variety of shift schedules to meet their organizational needs. The most common schedules include regular daytime, evening and night shifts. In addition, “rotating” shifts change by time or day, “split” shifts consist of 2 distinct periods in each workday and flexible or variable shifts have no set hours (often described as being “on call”).

Overall in 2008, 77% of employees in the U.S. work regular daytime schedules, while 9% work either evening or night shifts. An additional 6% of employees work rotating shifts, 1% work split shifts and 7% are either on call or work some other type of schedule.

Comparing the distribution of work shifts in the past decade reveals that the percentage of regular daytime jobs has steadily increased, from 72% in 1997 to 77% in 2008. In general, the increasing prevalence of daytime shifts applies to both part-time and full-time jobs, as Figure 12 shows. Employees with a single job are significantly more likely to work regular daytime schedules than employees with multiple jobs (29% versus 22%).
In contrast, the proportion of employees working non-standard schedules has decreased, from 28% in 1997 to 23% in 2008. The largest decrease in non-standard schedules is for on-call or other schedules (from 12% of all employees to 7%), and additional analyses reveal that the decline is concentrated primarily in part-time on-call jobs. The prevalence of other types of non-standard schedules remained relatively stable. (See Figure 13.)

**Access, usage and demand**

In order to better understand the 23% of employees who work non-standard schedules, we compared them to employees working daytime schedules. We find no differences by gender, care responsibilities or education. We do find differences according to age/generation, living arrangement, occupation and industry. Employees working non-standard schedules are significantly more likely to be:

- Millennial (47%) or Mature (28%) generation employees, which contain the youngest and oldest employees in the labor force, compared with employees Generation X (22%) or
Baby Boom (19%) generation employees; (Generation Y employees are significantly more likely to work non-standard schedules than all other workers; employees from the Mature generation are significantly more likely to work non-standard schedules than employees from the Baby Boom generation);

- Extended Families (31%) as opposed to Couples or Two-Parent Families (21% and 20%, respectively);
- less educated (25% of employees with high school educations or less and 28% employees with some postsecondary education, compared with 17% employees with college degrees);
- employed in non-managerial or non-professional occupations (27% versus 16% among managers and professionals); and
- employed in service rather than goods-producing industries (25% versus 18%).

**To what extent do shift schedules meet employees’ needs?**

In order to assess the match between employees’ needs and their current schedules, a new question in the 2008 NSCW asked respondents to evaluate the statement, “my work schedule or shift meets my needs,” with answer choices ranging from “not at all true” to “very true.” Overall, 64% of all U.S. employees respond “very true,” indicating that their current schedule fully meets their needs.

Figure 14 summarizes employees’ evaluations of different types of schedules. At least 60% of employees on regular daytime shifts, split shifts and evening/night shifts report that their current schedule fully meets their needs. Just over half of employees on on-call or other types of schedules report that their current schedule meets their needs. Less than half of employees with rotating shifts report that their schedule meets their needs.

**Figure 14: Percent of employees who perceive that their work shift or schedule meets their needs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule Type</th>
<th>Percent Responding ‘Very True’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular daytime</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening/Night shifts</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On call/other</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotating</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: What Matters for Shift Options in 2008?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matter</th>
<th>Considered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age/Generation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Arrangement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Responsibilities</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent responding ‘Very True’ that their work schedule meets their needs
We find no group differences based on care responsibilities, education or industry in the match between current work schedule and needs. We do find statistically significant differences in employees’ evaluations of their work schedules. Specifically, employees who report that their work schedules meet their needs are more likely to be:

- women (68% versus 60% men);
- older (76 and 65% of the Mature and Baby Boom generations, respectively, compared with 61% and 55% Generation X and Millennial generations, respectively);
- Couples (69%), as opposed to members of Extended Families (61%); and
- managers or professionals (66%), as opposed to employees in other occupations (62%).

Since 2002, access to daytime schedules has increased for both full-time and part-time employees, and the proportion of employees working non-standard schedules has declined, especially employees working on-call schedules. Overall, almost 2 in 3 employees agree that their schedule meets their needs; the employees least likely to agree are those working rotating schedules. Employees most likely to agree are women, older, living in Couples and managers or professionals.

**COMPRESSED WORKWEEKS**

In this type of schedule flexibility is defined by the 2002 and 2008 NSCW as the redistribution of weekly hours into fewer days, such as 10 hours per day for 4 days per week instead of 8 hours per day for 5 days. While some employees may have this option any time during a calendar year, other employees may have access only during the summer, such as 4 or 4 and a half day work weeks during the summer months. This latter option is often called “summer hours.”

As shown in Figure 15, the percent of employees with access to compressed workweeks fell from 2002 to 2008.

**Figure 15: Employees with access to compressed workweeks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of employees</th>
<th>100%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15: Employees with access to compressed workweeks
Access, usage and demand

Comparing employees with and without access to compressed workweeks, we find no differences based on gender, age, living arrangements or number of care responsibilities. There are statistically significant differences, however, by education, occupation and industry. Specifically, employees with access to compressed workweeks are significantly more likely to:

- have at least 4 years of college education (39% versus 33% for those with high school/GED or less education);
- be managers or professionals (39% versus 34% for non-managerial or professional employees); and
- work in service industries (36% versus 32% for those working in goods-producing industries).

Just under half (46%) of employees with access to compressed workweeks—or 16% of all wage and salaried employees—report using them. We compared employees with access to compressed workweeks who do and do not use them, and find no differences based on living arrangements, care responsibilities, education or occupation. We do, however, find statistically significant differences according to gender and industry:

- males with access are more likely than females to use compressed workweeks (52% versus 40%); and
- employees in goods-producing industries who have access are more likely than those in service industries to use compressed workweeks (55% versus 44%). As we reported above, employees in service industries are more likely to have access than those in goods-producing industries.

We also took a closer look at employees without access to compressed workweeks, more than half of whom would like to have access (60%). Our usual group comparisons find no differences between employees without access to do and do not want it based on gender, living arrangement, education or occupation. Those without access who want it are significantly more likely to be:

- Millennial (65%), Generation X (59%) or Baby Boom (63%) generation employees, as compared with Mature generation employees (37%);
- employees with both elder and child care responsibilities (70%), as opposed to those with neither responsibility or either child or elder care responsibilities (60% or 59%, respectively); and
- employees in goods-producing industries, rather than service industries (66% versus 59%).

Overall, access to compressed workweeks fell from 2002 to 2008. About half of the employees with access use compressed workweeks, and about half of the employees without access would like it. Those with access are more educated and more likely to be managerial or professional employees, and men are more likely to work compressed workweeks than women. Among employees without access, those most likely to want it are younger and have more care responsibilities. Unfortunately, there is a mismatch here—those with the greatest

| Table 5: What Matters for Access to Compressed Workweeks in 2008? |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Gender              | No               |
| Age/Generation      | No               |
| Living Arrangement  | No               |
| Care Responsibilities| No               |
| Education           | Yes              |
| Occupation          | Yes              |
| Industry            | Yes              |
care responsibilities are more likely to want access to compressed workweeks, but less likely to have access to this kind of flexibility.

**FLEXPLACE**

Flexplace is defined as working some or most of one’s regularly scheduled hours at a location other than the main location of one’s employer, including at the employee’s home. It includes both primary and occasional arrangements.

Compared with the 2002 NSCW, the proportion of employees whose primary work location is a fixed location other than home was stable from 2002 to 2008 (82% versus 81%). The proportion of employees whose primary work location is home also was stable from 2002 to 2008 (2% to 3%).

While most wage and salaried employees still work at a fixed location away from home, Figure 16 shows that almost 1 in 5 employees works at multiple locations including customer or client locations or on the road from vehicles, planes or hotel or motel rooms.

**Figure 16: Employees’ primary work locations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Location</th>
<th>Percent of Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A fixed location away from home</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing client or customer locations</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the road from a car, truck, train, plane, hotel or motel room</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Who has access to working from home?**

Due to weather, personal or family reasons, employees may prefer to work from home for some or all of their paid work time. Although only 3% of employees work mainly from home, about 16% of all employees are allowed to work some of their paid hours at home.

Our group comparisons reveal no differences in employees’ access to working from home by care responsibilities, but we do find statistically significant differences according to gender, age, living arrangement, education, occupation and industry. Employees significantly more likely to have access to working from home are:

- men (20% versus 13% women);
- employees from the Generation X (20%), Baby Boom (17%) and Mature (18%) generations, as opposed to the Millennial (7%) generation;
• employees living in Extended Families (9%), as opposed to employees living in Couples (18%), Two-Parent Families (21%) or Other types of families (17%);

• employees with at least 4 years of college education (34%, compared with 11% of employees with some postsecondary education and 7% of employees with no more than high school educations);

• managers and professionals, as opposed to employees in other occupations (30% versus 9%); and

• employees in service industries, as opposed to employees in other industries (17% versus 12%).

How many employees ever work at home? How many employees want to?

Among employees who are allowed to work part of their regular paid hours at home, two thirds (65%) have done so. (See Figure 17.) Among those who have not, but are allowed to work at home, slightly more than half (52%) want to work at home.

We conducted our usual statistical comparisons of groups and found that employees are equally likely to work part of the time from home regardless of gender, generation, living arrangement, care responsibilities, occupation or industry. We do, however, find a statistically significant difference according to education. Specifically, employees with at least 4 years of college education are significantly more likely to work from home than those with high school diplomas, GED or less education (69% versus 52%).

Among employees who are not allowed to work part of their regular paid time at home (representing 84% of the workforce), just under half (49%) express a desire to do so.

More than 8 out of 10 employees still work at a fixed location away from their homes, and this proportion has been stable since 2002. Almost 1 in 5 employees works at multiple locations. In general, older, more educated and more senior employees are more likely to have access to working at home than other employees, but regardless of whether or not they have access, about 1 in 2 employees want to work at home at least some of the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: What Matters for Access to Flexplace in 2008?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age/Generation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living Arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 17: Access to and preferences for working at home

Are you allowed to work at home?

Yes (16%)

No (84%)

Have worked at home (65%)

Haven’t worked at home (35%)

Want to work at home (49%)

Don’t want to work at home (51%)

Want to work at home (52%)

Don’t want to work at home (48%)

Summary of flextime and flexplace patterns

Employees’ access to flextime and flexplace has not changed a great deal since 2002, although there are at least 2 pieces of good news. First, responses to a new item in the 2008 NSCW revealed that more than 8 in 10 employees have daily flexibility. Second, access to daytime schedules has increased for both full-time and part-time employees since 2002, and almost 2 in 3 employees agree that their schedules meet their needs. Access to traditional flexibility and the ability to work at home some of the time have been stable since 2002, although access to compressed workweeks has declined.

In general, access to flextime and flexplace is shaped more by occupational characteristics, such as managerial status, than by need, such as care responsibilities. As a result, employees with the greatest needs for flexibility are sometimes the least likely to have it.

Most of the employees who have access to flexibility use it, although the evidence here suggests that they do not use it so frequently that employers need to worry about floods of lost work time. At least half of the employees who lack access to flextime or flexplace would like to have it.

REDUCED TIME

Reduced-time work may be part time, part year or both. For example, employees may work year-round, but fewer hours or days per week than full-time employees. Or employees may work full time during only some parts of the year. Employees may also work a combination of part time and part year. Reduced-time work arrangements can allow organizations to improve the match between their workload and workforce, and allow employees to improve the match between work and personal responsibilities. In this section, we consider who has access to reduced time, who uses these options and the barriers they confront when working part time or part year.
Part-time work

Part-time employees work less than full-time hours each day or fewer than 5 days per week. Job sharing—where 2 employees share 1 full-time job with pro-rated salary and benefits—is also a form of part-time work.

The proportion of employees working part time at their main job grew from 14% to 17% between 1992 and 2002, but has remained stable since (Figure 18). Slightly more than two thirds (67%) of these employees are part time by choice.

Figure 18: Employees working part time at their main job

![Graph showing the proportion of employees working part time from 1992 to 2008.]

Who works part-time?

We expected that employees with more care responsibilities would be more likely to work part time, but this turns out not to be the case, based on our statistical analyses. Even when men and women are analyzed separately, we find no differences in their likelihood of working part time based on care responsibilities.

We do find significant differences among employees in the likelihood of working part time as a function of gender, age, education, living arrangements, occupation and industry. The groups significantly more likely to work part time are:

- women, compared with men (23% versus 11%);
- employees from the Millennial and Mature generations (36% and 37%, respectively), compared with employees from the Baby Boom and Generation X generations (13% and 11%, respectively);
- employees with no more than a high school education, compared with those with at least 4 years of college (19% versus 14%);
- employees living in Extended Families (28%), compared with those living in Couples (15%), Two-Parent Families (13%), Single Parent Families (14%) or Other arrangements (15%);
- employees who are not managers and professionals (20% versus 12% of managers and professionals); and

Table 7: What Matters for Ability to Change Between Full- and Part-Time Status in 2008?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age/Generation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Arrangement</td>
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<td>Care Responsibilities</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
employees in service industries (20% versus 6% of employees in goods-producing industries).

Who can change their status between part- and full-time work?

In 2008, 44% of all U.S. employees report that they can change their work status between part time and full time. When we compare groups of employees statistically, we find that those who are significantly more likely to that they can change their status are:

- women (51%, versus 39% men);
- members of the Millennial or Mature generations (65 and 69%, respectively), as opposed to the Baby Boom or Generation X generations (38 and 43%, respectively);
- less educated (45% for those with some postsecondary education and 47% with those with high school or less education, versus 40% for those with at least 4 years of college);
- living in Extended Families (58%, compared with 45% for Singles, 41% for Couples, 39% for Two-Parent Families and 44% for those living in Other arrangements);
- non-managerial or professional employees (48%, compared with 39% of managerial or professional employees); and
- employees in service industries (49%, compared with 28% of employees in goods-producing industries).

To what extent is part-time work voluntary—and for whom?

Between 2002 and 2008, the percentage of employees voluntarily working part time increased from 63% to 67% following a long decline. Surprisingly, voluntary and involuntary part timers do not differ significantly as a function of care responsibilities. We find several other statistically significant differences, however, between voluntary and involuntary part timers. Specifically:

- as Figure 19 shows, the gender gap among part-time employees narrowed slightly between 2002 and 2008; while women are still more likely than men to prefer part-time work, preferences among men rose more than those among women, and, as a result, the gender gap narrowed from 15% to 11%;
- part-time employees in the Mature generation are much more likely to prefer it than younger employees (87%, compared with 68%, 65% or 51% for employees in the Millennial, Baby Boom and Generation X generations, respectively);
- part-time employees with at least 4 years of college education (77%) are more likely to prefer it than those with less education (60% for employees with high school/GED/less education);
- part-time managerial or professional employees are more likely than employees in other occupations to prefer it (81% versus 62%);
- part-time employees in service industries are more likely to prefer it than employees in goods-producing industries (70% versus 31%); and
- part-time employees living in Couples without children are more likely to prefer it than employees living in Other arrangements (80% versus 55%).
Figure 19: Part-time employees who prefer part-time work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>All employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there a penalty for working part time?

More than two thirds of the employees (69%) working part time at their main job in 2008 believe that part-time employees receive comparable pay to full-time employees in the same positions, based on the hours they work. We find only 1 statistically significant difference among employees regarding this perception: employees working part time in goods-producing industries are significantly more likely—almost twice as likely—than those in service industries to report that part-time employees receive less pay than full-time employees in the same positions (59% versus 29%). There are no differences by gender, living arrangement, care responsibilities, education or occupation.

When we look at employees’ benefits, however, we find that part-time employees are only about half as likely to have access to personal health insurance coverage from their employers: 46% of part-time employees report that they have access to personal health insurance offered by their employers, compared with 91% of full-time employees.

Within the population of part-time employees, we find no differences in access to health care coverage by gender, age, living arrangements, care responsibilities, education or industry. We do find a difference by occupation: part-time managers or professionals are more likely to have access to insurance provided by the employer than part-timers in other occupations (54% versus 44%).

Part-time employees are much less likely than their full-time counterparts to take advantage of personal health insurance coverage offered by their employers. Among employees with access to personal health insurance from their employers, 40% of part-time employees receive health coverage, compared to 83% of full-time employees. When they are covered, part-time employees are less likely to have their premium costs fully paid. The numbers of employees in these groups in our sample are quite small, however, so these results should be interpreted with caution.

In 2008, a new NSCW question asked about the number of work hours required for part-time employees to be eligible for employer health insurance coverage. The responses range from 4 to 40 hours per week, with an average of 24 hours per week. We find no significant differences among demographic groups in the average hours required for part-time employees.
to be eligible for employer-provided health insurance according to gender, age, living arrangements, care responsibilities, education, industry or occupation.

PART-YEAR WORK

Part-year work means working reduced hours on an annual basis rather than on a daily or weekly basis. For some employees, this means working full time during some parts of the year and not at all during others—such as employees who do not work during the summer. For other employees, this means working part time during some parts of the year.

In the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce, the question about part-year work focused only on “seasonal” jobs, but in 2008 the question was broadened to focus on “working part of the year.” As a result, the proportion of part-year employees increased substantially, from 8% in 2002 to 13% in 2008 (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Employees working part of the year at their main job

Who are part-year employees?

We find no group differences among part-year employees according to generation, living arrangements, or number of care responsibilities. We do find statistically significant differences by gender, education, occupation and industry, such that part-year employees are more likely to be:

- women (15% versus 10% men);
- employees with at least 4 years of college education (20% versus 9% for employees with some postsecondary education and 10% for employees with a high school education);
- managers and professionals (18% versus 10% other occupations); and
- employees in service industries (14% versus 10% for employees in goods-producing industries).

Table 8: What Matters for Access to Part-Year Work in 2008?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>2008 Access</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age/Generation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living Arrangement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Care Responsibilities</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
To what extent is working part of the year voluntary and for whom?

About 1 in 4 part-year employees (24%) report choosing this work arrangement voluntarily. We find statistically significant differences by educational status and type of industry, but not by gender, generation, living arrangement, care responsibilities or occupation. Employees more likely to be voluntarily working part of the year are more likely to be:

- college-educated (30% versus 14% of employees with high school educations or less); and
- working in service industries (28% versus 4% in goods-producing industries).

Can employees who are not working part of the year arrange to do so?

Among employees not currently working part of the year (87% of the workforce), 22% report that they could do so in their current job. We find no differences among employees based on gender, living arrangement, care responsibilities, education or occupation, but we do find statistically significant group differences in terms of generation and industry. Specifically,

- employees in the Mature generation are more likely than employees in any other generation to report that they could arrange to work part of the year (45%, compared with 29% for Millennial, 21% for Generation X or 19% for Baby Boom employees); and
- employees in service industries are more likely than those in goods-producing industries to be able to arrange to work part of the year (24% versus 18%).

About half of the employees not currently working part year (51%) would prefer to work part year if they were permitted and could afford the reduction in income. Only 27% of those employees, however, report that they could afford the reduction in income.

Figure 21 presents an overview of all employees in terms of their current work status and their ability to work part of the year, as defined by both access and affordability. In 2008, almost three quarters of all employees report that they would not be able to arrange to work part year at their current job; only 5% report that they can both arrange and afford to work part year.

Figure 21: Employees working part year by current status, accessibility and affordability

(Because employees who did not respond to questions about the ability to or affordability of working part of the year are excluded from this analysis, the percent already working part of the year is slightly higher than reported at the beginning of section: 14% versus13%.)
Summary of reduced-time work patterns

Between 10% and 20% of the employees in the U.S. workforce are working either part time or part year. There was no change between 2002 and 2008 in the overall prevalence of part-time work, but the proportion of employees working part time voluntarily increased to 67%. Women working part time are more likely than men to prefer it to full-time work, but the gender gap has been narrowing. Older employees working part time are also much more likely to prefer it. Although employees working part time do not perceive any disadvantage in terms of pay, they are only half as likely as full-time employees to receive health care coverage from their employers.

Employees working part year are much less likely to do so voluntarily than employees working part time: only 24% of part-year workers do so voluntarily, compared with 67% of part-time employees. About half of the employees not currently working part year would prefer to do so if they were permitted and could afford it, but only 5% of all employees report that they are in that category.

TIME OFF

Time away from work can be thought of in 2 categories—time off that is more likely to be unanticipated and unplanned, including time off during the workday to address personal and family issues and to care for sick children or family members, and time off that is more likely to be planned, including vacations, holidays and parental leaves.

Unanticipated leaves: time off during the workday to address personal and family issues

Some personal and family needs that arise within normal work hours are anticipated, like doctor and dentist appointments or parent-teacher conferences. Other needs cannot be anticipated or scheduled, such as waiting for a plumber to fix a broken pipe or picking up a sick child from school, yet they require employees to take time away from work—perhaps only a short period of time—whether they have their supervisor’s blessing or not.

How hard is it for employees to take time off during the workday?

The 2008 NSCW asked employees to rate the difficulty of taking time off during a regular workday for personal and family reasons. The percentage of employees who find it “very” or “somewhat hard” rose between 1997 and 2002 and then fell between 2002 and 2008, while the percentage of employees who found it “not at all hard” dipped and then rose. (See Figure 22.) These percentages are almost identical for part-time and full-time employees.

Being able to take some time off during the workday to respond to unexpected personal or family needs is critical for many employees. The increase in this type of flexibility may indicate that supervisors and managers are recognizing the importance of personal and family needs.
Who finds it “not hard at all” to take time off during the work day?

We found no statistically significant differences in employees’ ability to take time off during the workday according to gender, education, occupation or industry. There are differences, however, by generation, living arrangement and care responsibility. Employees able to take time of during the workday are more likely to:

- be members of the Baby Boom and Mature generations (40% and 50%, respectively), rather than members of the Millennial or Generation X generations (28% and 33%, respectively);

- live in Couples rather than Extended Families (41% versus 33%); and

- have no care responsibilities, rather than dual care responsibilities (38% versus 31%).

While the proportion of employees who can take time off during the workday to address personal and family issues without a great deal of difficulty improved between 2002 and 2008, unfortunately, the oldest and youngest employees, employees with children, and employees with care responsibilities are not among those with the most access to this form of flexibility.

Paid time off for personal illness

Previous National Studies of the Changing Workforce have asked employees if they are able to take paid time off for personal illness. In 2008, the question was revised to ask whether employees have “at least 5 paid days off.”

The percent of employees with paid time off for personal illness fell from 68% in 2002 to 63% in 2008. The decrease may not be due only to the change in the question wording, however, because it extends an already-established downward trend, as Figure 23 shows.
Which employees have access to paid time off for personal illness?

Our group comparisons show that access to paid time off for personal illness is not evenly distributed: we find no statistically significant differences based on gender or care responsibilities, but we do find differences based on generation, living arrangement, education, occupation and industry. Employees more likely to have access are:

- employees in the Generation X or Baby Boom generations (65% for both), compared with employees in the Millennial generation (51%);
- employees with 4 years or more of college education (76%), compared with 55% for those with high school or less and 59% for those with some post secondary education;
- employees living in Two-Parent Families (70%), compared with employees living in Extended Families (54%);
- employees who are managers or professionals, compared with non-managerial and professional employees (77% versus 55%); and
- employees in service industries, compared with employees in goods-producing industries (67% versus 47%).

Employees who do not have at least 5 paid days off for personal illness—in 2008, 37% of all wage and salaried employees, and disproportionately young workers and workers with children—must choose between taking time away from work without pay and coming to work ill. In a time of both economic recession and a global pandemic, this is a difficult choice for both employees and their employers.

How frequently do employees miss work because of personal illness? Is 5 paid days off for personal illness enough?

Although more than half of U.S. employees (63%) report having access to at least 5 paid days off for personal illness per year, it is important to know how many days employees actually use and whether the number of days is sufficient.
In 2008, the NSCW asked employees how many full or part days of work they had missed during the past 3 months, and, for the first time, specified that these days had not been scheduled in advance with supervisory approval. Employees were also asked about the reasons for missing work—including personal illness and whether the amount of time they had off for personal illness and for the illness of children (if they had children) was sufficient.

Among all of the employees who missed work, two thirds (68%) report doing so because of personal illness. The average duration of absence was 3 days in the past 3 months, which would suggest an annual need of about 12 days. Nonetheless, 91% of employees with access to at least 5 days of paid sick leave report having sufficient paid time off for personal illness.

Taking into account both the percent of employees with at least 5 days off and their self-evaluations of sufficiency, just over half of all U.S. employees (57%) report that they have sufficient paid time off for personal illness, while 43% report lacking sufficient time off.

Overall, access to paid days off for personal illness has fallen substantially over the past decade. In the 1997 NSCW almost 3 in 4 employees reported that they were permitted to take such time. In 2008, less than 2 in 3 give the same report, and the decline in access does not appear to be related to changes in the wording of the NSCW item. Patterns of use suggest that employees have an annual need of about 12 days, but 91% of employees who have access to at least 5 paid days off describe that time as sufficient.

**Paid time off to care for sick children**

Time off for sick children is defined in the NSCW as being allowed to take at least 5 days off to care for a sick child without losing pay, without using vacation days and without having to make up some other reason for one’s absence. Such leave typically begins without warning, since the onset of children’s illnesses cannot usually be predicted.

Time off to care for a sick child may consist of being allowed to use one’s own sick leave for this purpose, having formal paid family days off or making informal arrangements with one’s supervisor to take time off. In past administrations of the NSCW, the question asked about “a few days off,” but was modified in 2008 by specifying “at least 5 days off” to care for a sick child.

The proportion of employees with access to paid time off to care for a sick child has fallen since 1997, but has been stable since 2002, even with the new specification of at least 5 days off. (See Figure 24.)

**Figure 24: Employees with access to paid time off to care for sick children**
Who has access to time off to care for sick children?

Among employees who live with at least 1 child under 18, we find no statistically significant differences by gender or generation in their access to at least 5 paid days off to care for sick children. We do find differences according to education, occupation and industry. Specifically, employees more likely to have at least 5 days of paid time off to care for sick children:

- are more educated (64% for those with at least 4 years of college education, compared with 37% for those with no more than a high school education and 45% for employees with some postsecondary education);
- are managers and professionals (60% versus 41% non-managerial or professional employees); and
- work in service rather than goods-producing industries (52% versus 33%).

Employees with access to 5 paid days missed about half a day more in the past 3 months to care for sick children than employees without access—a statistically significant difference (1.71 days versus 1.29 days). Surprisingly, there was no significant difference in the number of work days lost due to child care breakdowns between employees with and without access to 5 paid days (.89 days versus .93 days during the past 3 months). Employees with at least 5 days of paid leave were asked whether the number of days was sufficient, and 91% reported that it was.

Overall, access to paid time off to care for sick children has been stable since 2002, and has declined since 1997. Employees with access to paid time off—who are disproportionately managerial and highly educated—take it at the rate of about 1.7 days per quarter, about half a day more than employees without access. Employees who experience child care breakdowns take about the same amount of time regardless of whether or not they have access to paid time off.

Time off for elder care

Besides caring for oneself or providing care for a sick child, employees also need time off to provide care for elderly relatives or parents. In this section, we assess the support and obstacles perceived by wage and salaried employees who have provided or are providing elder care; that is special attention or care for a relative or in-law 65 years old or older to help with things that are difficult or impossible for them to do themselves.

How many employees provide elder care?

According to the 2008 NSCW, 44% of all U.S. wage and salaried employees have provided elder care within the past 5 years (Figure 25). Of those, about one third have done so within the past 2 to 5 years, one fifth have done so within the past year and almost half are currently providing elder care.
Importantly, 1 of every 2 employees (50%) in the U.S. workforce expects to provide care for elderly relatives or in-laws in the next 5 years. Thus, this will become an increasingly important issue for employers and employees alike, calling for new directions in the business response to elder care.

**Do elder care providers take time off from work?**

Because employer policies rarely specify time off for taking care of elderly parents or relatives, employees with elder care responsibilities may stick to their original schedules, work fewer hours, take time off, or use non-work time to provide elder care. Among employees who have provided elder care within the past year, most (69%) did not take time away from work (Figure 26). Of the 31% who did take time from work, 16% took a few hours away and the remainder (15%) took a leave (a block of time off) to provide elder care. Among employees who provided care, there were no significant differences among demographic groups in the likelihood of taking time off to do so.

Taking time off for elder care may come at the expense of pay or career advancement. Among the 15% of employees who took time away from work during the past year to provide elder care responsibilities, about half (7%) were not worried that they would lose their income or their job. The remainder took time away from work, but worried about losing their income, their job or both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12: What Matters for Taking Time Off for Elder Care in 2008?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Age/Generation</td>
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<td>Living Arrangement</td>
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<td>Care Responsibilities</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Occupation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
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</table>
As Figure 27 shows, the percentage of employees who see their employer as being “very helpful” in supporting time off for elder care is similar in 2008 to the percentage in 1997. (These comparisons are limited to employees with at least 1 year’s job tenure.)

We find no statistically significant differences in employees’ ratings of helpfulness according to age, living arrangement, education, occupation or industry. We do find variations, however, according to gender and care responsibilities. Specifically, employees with responsibility for caring for elders who consider their employer helpful are significantly more likely to be:

- women (76%, versus 56% for men); and
- employees who are responsible for elder care only (73%), as opposed to care responsibilities for both elders and children (58%).

**Summary of unanticipated leaves**

Employees appear to be finding it somewhat easier in the past decade to take time off during the workday to respond to unexpected personal or family needs. Unfortunately, younger workers, workers with children, and workers with care responsibilities are not among those with the greatest access to this form of flexibility.
Access to paid time off for personal illness has declined steadily since 1997. In 2008, 37% of wage and salaried employees have fewer than 5 days of paid time off for personal illness (including employees with no such time). The average number of days taken in the past 3 months was 3, suggesting an annual need for about 12 days. Ninety-one percent of employees with access to at least 5 days reported that they had sufficient time. Overall, almost half (43%) of all U.S. employees report that they do not have sufficient paid time off for personal illness.

Overall, access to paid time off to care for sick children has been stable since 2002, and has declined since 1997. Employees with access to paid time off take about half a day more than employees without access, but employees who experience child care breakdowns take about the same amount of time regardless of whether or not they have access to paid time off.

Almost half of all U.S. wage and salaried employees have provided elder care within the past 5 years, and almost half of those are doing so now. One of every 2 U.S. employees expects to provide elder care in the next 5 years. Among employees who have recently provided or are now providing elder care, more than two thirds took no time away from work, and more than half of those who did took only a few hours away. Among the 15% of employees who took a leave to provide elder care, about half worried that they would lose either their income or their job or both.

ANTICIPATED LEAVES

Paid vacations

Vacations may help to provide a better fit between work and personal life as well as give employees time to rest and become re-energized, but not all employees have access to paid vacation days.

Who has access to paid vacation days?

As Figure 28 shows, the proportion of employees with paid vacations has been largely stable since 1992. Full-time employees are far more likely than part timers, however, to have access to paid vacation days (87% versus 41%).

Figure 28: Access to vacations
We find no statistically significant differences in employees’ access to paid vacations as a function of care responsibilities or industry, but we do find differences by gender, age, living arrangement, education and occupation. Overall, employees more likely to have access to paid vacation days are:

- men (82% versus 76% women);
- employees from the Generation X and Baby Boom generations (84 and 81%) rather than employees from the Millennial and Mature generations (64% and 68%, respectively);
- employees living as Singles (80%), in Couples (80%), Two-Parent Families (80%), Single-Parent Families (84%), or Other living arrangements (79%) are more likely to have access than employees living in Extended Families (71%);
- employees with at least some college education, rather than less well-educated employees (82% for some postsecondary education versus 75% with less education); and
- managers and professionals, rather than employees in other occupations (85% versus 76%).

**How much time do employees receive?**

Among employees who have worked for their employer for at least 1 year and have access to paid vacation days, the number of vacation days ranges from 0 to 40, with an average of 16 days. Employees who work full-time receive an average of 17 days per year, while employees who work part-time an average of 10 days.

We find no statistically significant differences in paid vacation days as a function of care responsibilities or industry. We do find differences as a function of gender, generation, living arrangement, education and occupation. Specifically, in 2008 among all employees who have access to paid vacation:

- women receive 1 paid vacation day less than men (16 versus 17 days);
- employees from the Millennial generation receive fewer days per year than employees from older generations (10 days per year, compared with 15, 18 and 16 days, respectively, for employees from the Generation X, Baby Boom and Mature generations);
- employees living with relatives in Extended Families receive fewer days of paid vacation than employees living in Couples or Other living arrangements (14 versus 17 days per year);
- employees with high school or less education receive fewer days than employees with some postsecondary or 4 years or more of college education (15 days, compared with 16 and 17 days, respectively); and
- managers and professionals receive more paid vacation days than other employees (17 versus 15 days per year).

Obviously, tenure with one’s current employer is another important factor in the number of paid vacation days employees receive, as Figure 29 shows.
How much of their paid vacation do employees use?

On average, employees use 13.5 days of paid vacation per year, less than the average of 16 days to which they are entitled. The number of days taken ranges from 0 to 40 days. Overall, 39% of all U.S. wage and salaried employees who receive paid vacation do not use all of the days they receive.

We find no statistically significant group differences by gender, generation, living arrangement or care responsibilities, but we do find differences by education, occupation and industry. Specifically, employees with unused paid vacation days are more likely to be:

- employees with at least 4 years of college education (49%), versus those with some postsecondary (39%) or high school/ GED or less (30%);
- managers and professionals versus employees in other occupations (48% versus 33%); and
- employees in service industries, versus employees in goods-producing industries (41% versus 30%).

Overall, almost 8 in 10 full-time and about 4 in 10 part-time employees have access to paid vacation, and these percentages have changed little since 1992. Full-time employees with vacation days receive an average of 17 days per year, almost double the 10 days that part-time workers receive. Employees least likely to have access are the youngest and oldest employees in the workforce, and employees who have not been with their employers very long: employees with 1 year or less of service are entitled to 9 days, compared with 21 for employees with more than 10 years of service. About 4 in 10 U.S. employees do not use all of the vacation days they have, using 13.5 days on average. More educated employees and employees in managerial or professional occupations receive more days of paid vacation, but use less of them than other employees.

Paid holidays

Because holidays are often related to religious or cultural traditions, they can be very important to employees. In 2008, 79% of all salaried and wage employees receive paid
holidays, a decrease from 1997, but an increase from 2002 (Figure 30). Thus, in 2008, about 1 in 5 wage and salaried employees lacked access to paid holidays.

**Figure 30: Access to paid holidays**

[Graph showing the percent of employees receiving paid holidays from 1997 to 2008]

Who receives paid holidays?

We find no statistically significant group differences in access to paid holidays as a function of care responsibilities or industry. We do find differences as a function of gender, generation, living arrangement, education and occupation. Specifically, employees who are more likely to receive paid holidays are:

- men (81% versus 76% women);
- employees from the Generation X and Baby Boom generations (80% and 82%), rather than employees from the Millennial and Mature generations (64 and 72%);
- employees living in Couples (80%) or Two-Parent Families (82%), rather than those living in Extended Families (71%);
- employees with some postsecondary education (81%) or at least 4 years of college education (82%), rather than those with high school/GED/ less education (74%); and
- managers or professionals, rather than employees in other occupations (84% versus 75%).

Overall, access to paid holidays is slightly lower in 2008 than in 1997. As with paid vacation, the oldest and youngest employees are least likely to have access to paid holidays.

**Flexibility for volunteer work**

In 2008, about 31% of all U.S. employees perform volunteer work or community service on a regular basis, representing a steady increase since 1992. (The 2002 NSCW did not include this question. See Figure 31.)

Employees who do volunteer work spend 4.5 hours per week, compared with 4.4 hours per week in 1997. In 2008, the number of volunteer hours ranges from less than 1 hour to 40 hours per week.
Among employees doing volunteer work in 2008:

- 69% cannot do any volunteer work during regular work hours without losing pay. These employees perform an average of 4.3 hours of service per week.

- 20% are allowed by their employers to do some volunteer work during regular work hours without losing pay. These employees perform an average of 5.1 hours of service per week.

- 12% are allowed by their employers to do all of their volunteer work during regular work hours without losing pay. These employees perform an average of 4.5 hours of service per week.

**Who can do volunteer work during work hours without losing pay?**

We examined variations between employees who are able to work some or all volunteer work without losing pay and those whose volunteer work is at the expense of their income. We found no statistically significant differences by gender, age, living arrangements, care responsibilities, education or industries. We did find, however, that managers and professionals are more likely than all other occupations to be able to perform some or all of their volunteer work without losing pay (36% versus 28%).

Contrary to what a number of people think, the number of hours employees spend working each week at their main job in 2008 is not significantly correlated with the number of hours they spend volunteering.

Overall, about 1 in 3 employees can do volunteer work during work time without losing pay, especially employees in managerial occupations. The proportion of employees performing community service has risen substantially since 1992. Regardless of whether employees are allowed to do any of their volunteer work during work hours, the average number of hours ranges between 4.3 and 5.1.
**Summary of anticipated leaves**

The proportion of employees with access to paid vacation has been stable since 1992, although access to paid holidays has declined somewhat during the past decade. Full-time employees have more access than part-time employees, and the oldest and youngest employees are less likely to have access than others. Almost half of all employees leave several days of vacation unused, particularly those who are more educated or in managerial and professional positions.

The proportion of employees performing community service has risen substantially since 1992, from 24% to 31%; employees who do so perform an average of 4.5 hours of service per week. About 1 in 3 employees can do volunteer work during work time without losing pay, especially those in managerial occupations.

**CAREGIVING LEAVES**

**PARENTAL LEAVE**

Parental leaves are planned time off for parents or guardians for the birth, adoption or care of a foster child. There are many federal, state and employer policies that cover parental leave, which may be paid or unpaid. Wage replacement, if any, may come from temporary disability insurance (for mothers giving birth), from the state, from the employer or all of the above.

What are the laws governing parental leaves?

The 1993 federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides new mothers and fathers—biological and adoptive—job-protected unpaid parental leaves of 12 weeks if they have worked at least 1,250 hours for their employer in the past year and are employed by an organization with 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius of the worksite. In 2009, the FMLA was updated to provide leave options for military families and to clarify regulations based on legal decisions made since the original passage of the law.

Employers with fewer than 50 employees, which include 96% of all U.S. firms and 28% of the workforce, are not covered by the FMLA. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 83% of private sector employees receive unpaid family leave and only 3% received paid family leave, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Who has access to parental leave?

In the 2008 NSCW, employees who were parents or guardians of children younger than 6 years of age living with them at least half of the year were asked whether they took time off work after their youngest child’s birth or adoption, how much time they took and whether they received any pay during that time. Among employees who were employed when their child was born or adopted (14% of all wage and salaried employees), a large majority (83%) reports taking time off. An additional 14% could have taken time off but did not, and 3% were not allowed to take any time off.

| Table 16: What Matters for Access to Parental Leave in 2008? |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Gender          | No               |
| Age/Generation  | No               |
| Living Arrangement | No             |
| Care Responsibilities | No        |
| Education       | No               |
| Occupation      | No               |
| Industry        | No               |
We find no significant group variations between those who are and are not allowed to take time off (regardless of whether or not they actually did so). In other words, employees’ access to parental leave is independent of gender, generation, living arrangement, care responsibility, education, occupation or industry.

**Which employees are likely to take time off after having a child?**

Among those with access to parental leave, we compared those who took time off with those who did not, and find no statistically significant differences according to living arrangement, care responsibilities, education or industry. We do, however, find differences by gender, generation and occupation:

- mothers are more likely than fathers to take time off (91% of mother versus 83% of fathers with access to leave);
- employees in the Generation X and Millennial generations (91% and 89%, respectively) are more likely than employees in the Baby Boom generation (58%) to take time off; and
- managers and professionals are more likely than employees in other occupations to take time off after the birth or adoption of their youngest child (92% versus 82%).

**How many days do employees take and are they paid?**

Although the FMLA authorizes up to 3 months of unpaid leave, the average amount of time taken off ranges from 1 week to 4 years, with an average of about 2 months, as seen in Figure 32:

- about one third of employees (34%) took only 1 week off;
- 20% of employees took more than 1 week, but less than 4 weeks;
- 22% of employees took between 4 and 10 weeks; and
- 24% of employees took more than 10 weeks.

Not surprisingly, women report taking significantly more time off than men (15 weeks versus 5 weeks). Specifically, more than half of male employees (53%) took only 1 week off, whereas almost half of female employees (47%) took more than 10 weeks off.

**Figure 32: Amount of time off work following birth or adoption of a child**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of employees</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 12 weeks or more
- 5 to 11 weeks
- 1 to 4 weeks
- Up to 1 week
There is also considerable variation in how much pay employees receive during their time off. In the 2008 NSCW, 36% of the employees who took time off following the birth or adoption of a child received full pay, 18% received partial pay and 46% received no pay (Figure 33). Male employees are more than twice as likely as female employees to receive full pay (46% versus 22%), a significant difference. Nevertheless, men and women are similarly likely (44% and 49%, respectively) to receive no pay if they take time off work following birth or adoption of a child.

Figure 33: Pay received during time off following birth or adoption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent of employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No pay</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial pay</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full pay</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Caregiving Leaves

More than 8 in 10 employees took time off after the birth of their youngest child. Only 3% of employees report that they had no access to any time off following the birth of the child. Women take about 15 weeks off, compared to the average of 5 weeks taken by men. Women, younger workers and managerial employees are more likely to take time off.

Almost half of employees received no pay. Men and women are equally likely to receive no pay, but women were less than half as likely as men to receive full pay.

CULTURE OF FLEXIBILITY

Workplace flexibility is much more than the existence of workplace flexibility programs and policies. These can exist, but if supervisors, management or co-workers “frown” on their use, it can be very difficult for employees to work flexibly. Thus, a culture of flexibility is an essential component of workplace flexibility.

Is there workplace support for flexibility?

Since 1992, the NSCW has asked employees to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “at my workplace, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.” As Figure 34 shows, in 2008, 41% of wage and salaried employees “somewhat” or “strongly” agreed with this statement, an increase since 1997. Unfortunately, employees appear to be experiencing rising tension between job advancement and family or personal lives.
**Figure 34: Agreement that employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives**

Who is most likely to feel employees must choose between job advancement and family or personal life?

We do not find any statistically significant group differences in terms of gender, age, care responsibilities and industry. We do find significant variations, however, by living arrangement, education and occupation. Specifically:

- employees living in Extended Families are more likely than those living in Couples to agree that employees must choose (46% versus 37%);
- employees with high school/GED/less education are more likely to agree (47%) than those with some postsecondary (38%) or at least 4 years of college education (37%); and
- employees in non-managerial or professional occupations are more likely to agree than managers or professionals (44% versus 35%).

Despite their perceptions of rising tension, when employees are asked whether they think negative job consequences would really occur—whether employees who ask for time off for personal or family needs are less likely to get ahead in their jobs or careers—they are not quite so pessimistic. According to the 2008 NSCW, 37% of all employees agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that employees who ask for time off for personal or family needs are less likely to get ahead in their jobs or careers. This represents a very small improvement over past years. (See Figure 35.)
Who is most likely to believe that asking for flexibility [using flexibility options] will interfere with job advancement?

Perhaps surprisingly, the only employee characteristic that does not appear to matter for employees’ beliefs about asking for flexibility is gender—men and women are equally likely to believe that employees who ask for time off for personal or family reasons would be less likely to get ahead in their jobs or careers. We do find statistically significant differences among other employees:

- Employees in younger generations are more likely than those in older generations to believe working flexibility would have negative consequences. Specifically, employees in the Millennial generation (45%) are more likely than employees in the Baby Boom or Mature generations (35% and 26%, respectively) to believe that using flexibility would have negative consequences. In addition, Generation X employees are more likely than employees in the Mature generation to report this belief (39% versus 26%).

- Employees living in Extended Families are more likely than those living in Couples to believe that there would be negative consequences for using flexibility (42% versus 32%).

- Employees with care responsibilities for both children and elders are more likely than those with no care responsibilities to report that using flexibility options would have negative consequences (44% versus 35%).

- Employees with less education are more likely than those with more education to believe that there would be negative consequences for using flexibility (43% for employees with no more than high school educations versus 34% of those with some postsecondary education and 31% of those with at least 4 years of college).

- Employees who are not managers or professionals are more likely than other employees to believe that using flexibility would have negative consequences (41% versus 30%).

- Employees in goods-producing industries are more likely than those in service industries to believe that using flexible work options would jeopardize their job advancement (44% versus 35%).
Employees vary widely in their beliefs about the consequences of using flexible work options. Unfortunately, those who are most likely to need such options or least able to afford alternatives—employees with care responsibilities who are young or less educated—are the ones most likely to believe that they would be penalized.

**SUPERVISOR SUPPORT**

In every National Study of the Changing Workforce, supervisor support has emerged as a key factor in employees’ quality of life. In this section, we examine supervisor support as defined by fairness, responsiveness and understanding in responding to employees’ personal and family needs, and employees’ level of comfort in bringing personal and family issues up with their supervisors.

Overall, employees have reported very favorable impressions of their supervisors’ supportiveness at every administration of the NSCW, and these have been stable for the past decade (Figure 37). On average in 2008, employees’ responses averaged between agreeing “somewhat” or “strongly” with these 4 statements:

1. My supervisor is fair and doesn’t show favoritism in responding to employees’ personal or family needs.

2. My supervisor is responsive to my needs when I have family or personal business to take care of for example, medical appointments, meeting with child’s teacher, etc.

3. My supervisor is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work.

4. I feel comfortable bringing up personal or family issues to my supervisor.
Figure 37: Average agreement that supervisor is supportive

Who is more likely to receive supervisor support for family or personal needs?

We find no statistically significant differences according to gender, generation, living arrangement, care responsibilities, education, occupation or industry. Regardless of their demographic characteristics, employees appear to perceive their supervisors similarly.

Summary of culture of flexibility

Employees appear to becoming more convinced that they must choose between advancing in their jobs and their personal or family lives, particularly if they are non-managerial or less educated. Their perceptions that employees who ask for time off actually do face career penalties, however, have been stable.

Younger employees are substantially more likely to perceive career risks than older employees. For example, 45% of employees from the Millennial generation believe they would face career jeopardy for asking for time off, compared to only 26% of employees from the Mature generation.

Employees’ perceptions of the supportiveness of their supervisors have been stable for the past decade, and are generally positive. Employees’ perceptions of supportiveness do not appear to depend on which demographic group they are in.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON BUSINESS OF PROVIDING WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY?

We know from earlier in this report that flexibility is important to employees, but businesses need to know how flexibility will impact them. We also know from many studies that supervisor support can be very important for both employees and businesses, and can affect how much real access employees have to flexibility. Work arrangements that are good for both employers and employees are likely to be much more sustainable than arrangements that are good only for one or the other.
In order to examine business impact, we divided NSCW respondents into 4 groups according to whether they experience levels of flexibility and supervisor support at or above the average, or below the average for all U.S. wage and salaried employees.

Flexibility scores were based on responses to the following 4 items:

1. I have the schedule flexibility I need at work to manage my personal and family responsibilities.
2. My work schedule or shift meets my needs.
3. Overall, how much control would you say you have in scheduling your work hours—complete control, a lot, some, very little or none?
4. How hard is it for you to take time off during your workday to take care of personal or family matters—very hard, somewhat hard, not too hard or not at all hard?

Employees with high flexibility scores were more likely to have reported that they have the flexibility they need, that their schedule meets their needs, that they have control over their schedules, and that it is not difficult to take time off during the work day to take care of personal or family matters.

Scores for supervisor supportiveness were based on responses to the following 5 items:

1. My supervisor is fair and doesn’t show favoritism in responding to employees’ personal or family needs.
2. My supervisor is responsive to my needs when I have family or personal business to take care of for example, medical appointments, meeting with child’s teacher, etc.
3. My supervisor is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work.
4. I feel comfortable bringing up personal or family issues to my supervisor.
5. My supervisor or manager really cares about the effects that work demands have on my personal and family life.

Employees with high supportiveness scores are more likely to have reported that their supervisor is fair, responsive, understanding, and really cares, and that they feel comfortable bringing up personal or family issues to their supervisor.

We divided employees into 4 groups based on whether their scores for flexibility and supervisor supportiveness were above or below average. The resulting groups are as follows:

**Employees’ Access to Support and Flexibility**

- More flexibility and more supervisor support: 39%
- Less flexibility and more supervisor support: 38%
- More flexibility and less supervisor support: 11%
- Less flexibility and less supervisor support: 13%
**Job engagement**

Job engagement was measured with 5 questions indicating the degree to which employees:

1. look forward to going to work;
2. devote more than the required effort;
3. feel that time passes very quickly while at work;
4. feel a part of the group of people they work with; and
5. think about good things related to their job when they are busy doing something else.

Employees who scored in the top 25% of the observed range of scores are considered to have “high” job engagement, comprising 24% of the workforce.

When we compared the 4 flexibility and supportiveness groups (Figure 38), we find that all of the groups are significantly different. We also find that employees with both above-average supervisor support AND flexibility are more than twice as likely to report high job engagement as employees with below-average support and flexibility (35% versus 14%).

**Figure 38: Job engagement by supportiveness and flexibility**

![Figure 38: Job engagement by supportiveness and flexibility](image)

**Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is measured with the mean of 3 items asking employees:

1. how satisfied they are in their job;
2. whether they would take the same job again knowing what they do now; and
3. whether they would recommend their job to a friend.

Employees who scored in the top 25% of the range of scores are considered to have “high” job satisfaction, comprising 53% of the workforce. Each of the flexibility and supportiveness groups reports significantly different levels of job satisfaction. More than 3 in 4 employees with above-average flexibility and support also report high job satisfaction, again, more than double the proportion of employees with below-average flexibility and support. (See Figure 39.)
Figure 39: Job satisfaction by supportiveness and flexibility

| More flexibility and more supervisor support | 75% |
| Less flexibility and more supervisor support | 42% |
| More flexibility and less supervisor support | 49% |
| Less flexibility and less supervisor support | 34% |

Intent to look for another job

Employees were asked about their intent to search for another job in the coming year. Overall, 65% report that they are “not at all” likely to search for another job, and their intentions vary depending on their access to flexibility and supervisor supportiveness. More than 3 in 4 employees with above-average flexibility and support—significantly more than in any other group—report that they are not at all likely to look for another job in the coming year. Employees with above-average flexibility, but below-average support, came in second, at 68%. Regardless of the level of support, employees with below-average flexibility are less likely to report that they are not looking for another job—when flexibility is low, supervisor support does not distinguish between the groups. (See Figure 40.)

Figure 40: Intent to look for another job by supportiveness and flexibility

| More flexibility and more supervisor support | 75% |
| Less flexibility and more supervisor support | 55% |
| More flexibility and less supervisor support | 68% |
| Less flexibility and less supervisor support | 57% |

Employee mental health

In the NSCW, mental health is measured by the mean of 7 items indicating how often during the past month employees have felt down or depressed, been bothered by minor health problems, have had trouble sleeping to the extent that it affects their functioning, have felt that they could not control important things in their lives, or that difficulties have been piling up so high they could not be overcome. Employees who scored in the top 25% of the range of scores are considered to have “good” mental health, comprising 26% of the workforce.
Access to flexibility and supervisor supportiveness is important for employees’ reports of mental health. Employees with more flexibility and support are significantly more likely to report good mental health than every other group; the other 3 groups do not differ significantly from each other. (See Figure 41.)

**Figure 41: Mental health by supportiveness and flexibility**

- More flexibility and more supervisor support: 32%
- Less flexibility and more supervisor support: 24%
- More flexibility and less supervisor support: 21%
- Less flexibility and less supervisor support: 21%

Top 25% mental health
CONCLUSION

The 2008 NSCW was conducted during a period when the national unemployment rate was increasing steadily. We wondered what we would see in terms of impact on employees’ patterns of work hours and work-family interference.

• **Total Work Hours**

  Overall, employees’ total work hours at all jobs declined slightly, from 44.9 hours per week in 2002 to 43.6 hours per week in 2008. Men’s hours declined more than those of women, narrowing the gender gap from 6.8 to 5.1 hours. Men now work 46.1 hours per week at all jobs, compared with 40.9 hours worked by women.

  Most employees would prefer to work less, on average about 8 fewer hours per week than they are currently working, which is close to the number of hours they are regularly scheduled to work. There are important divides in the workforce, however, on this issue. Highly educated managerial employees in the Generation X and Baby Boom generations are particularly likely to want to work less. The most popular reasons for not doing so are needing money or not being able to keep their job if they worked less.

  Almost 1 in 5 employees would like to work more, however, and these employees tend to be among the youngest in the workforce, less educated and working in non-managerial occupations.

• **Work-Family Interference**

  Work-family interference has been stable since 2002, with employees working more than 50 hours per week significantly more likely to report high interference than employees working fewer hours. Feelings of time deprivation are have been stable for time with partner, but have risen slightly for time for self, and significantly, for time with child.

• **Importance of Flexibility**

  A large majority—87%—of all wage and salaried employees reports that flexibility would be “extremely” or “very” important if they are looking for a new job.

  We also wondered what consequences the economic downturn would have for employees’ access to flexibility—would employers cut back or would they maintain or increase flexibility as a way to maintain engagement and perhaps save jobs? Between the 2002 and 2008 National Studies of the Changing Workforce, access to most types of workplace flexibility remained stable or improved.

• **Choices in Managing Time**

  In 2008, employees have more choices in managing their time than they did in 1992, but most of the changes occurred before the 2002 NSCW. Just over 1 in 3 employees (36%) reports having “complete” or “a lot” of control over their schedules, the same as in 2002, but there has been a slight increase in the proportion reporting “no” control, to 1 in 4. The percentage of employees being asked to work extra hours declined slightly. In 2008, half of all employees “strongly agree” that they have the schedule flexibility they need to manage their personal and family responsibilities.
Figure 42: Change in availability or use of different types of flexibility

- **Control over work schedule**: 36.0% (2002), 36.0% (2008)
- **Traditional flexibility**: 43.0% (2002), 44.0% (2008)
- **Daily flextime**: 1.0% (not asked in 2002), 84.0% (2008)
- **Shiftwork**: 26.0% (2002), 23.0% (2008)
- **Compressed work weeks**: 42.0% (2002), 35.0% (2008)
- **Flex-place**: 19.0% (2002), 18.0% (2008)
- **Part-time**: 17.0% (2002), 17.0% (2008)
- **Part-year**: 8.0% (2002), 13.0% (2008)
- **Time off during work day**: 31.0% (2002), 37.0% (2008)
- **Sick leave for self**: 68.0% (2002), 63.0% (2008)
- **Sick leave for child**: 47.0% (2002), 48.0% (2008)
- **Elder care**: 1.0% (not asked in 2002), 44.0% (2008)
- **Paid vacation**: 78.0% (2002), 79.0% (2008)
- **Paid holidays**: 76.0% (2002), 79.0% (2008)
- **Volunteer work**: 27.0% (2002), 31.0% (2008)
- **Parental leave**: 1.0% (not asked in 2002), 83.0% (2008)
- **Worried about job advancement**: 38.5% (2002), 39.0% (2008)
- **Supervisor support**: 50.0% (2002), 51.0% (2008)
• Access to Flextime and Flexplace

There are 2 pieces of good news regarding these types of flexibility. First, a large majority—84% of all employees—report that they can change their starting or quitting times on short notice. The other piece of good news is that access to daytime work schedules has increased for both full-time and part-time employees since 2002, and smaller proportions of employees are working on-call or rotating shifts, the schedules employees say are least likely to meet their needs. Access to traditional flextime and flexplace—the ability to work at home—has been stable, but access to compressed workweeks declined fairly markedly—from 42% to 35%.

Most of the employees with access to flexibility use it, although there is little evidence given the frequency of use that employers need to worry about floods of lost work time. For example, half of employees with access to daily flextime use it less than once per month. At least half of the employees who lack access to flextime or flexplace would like to have it.

• Access to Reduced Time

The proportion of employees working part time has been stable at 17% since 2002. Most part-time employees believe they receive comparable pay to their full-time counterparts, but in terms of benefits, they are only about half as likely to have access to health insurance coverage from their employers. About 13% of all employees work part year, including seasonal jobs. About half of the employees not currently working part year would prefer it if they were permitted and could afford it, but only 5% of all employees are in that category.

Although the proportions of employees working part time and part year are similar (17% and 13%), part-time work is much more popular. More than two thirds (67%) of employees working part time, but only 24% of employees working part year are doing so voluntarily. Women are both more likely than men to work part time and to prefer it over full-time work, but men’s preferences are changing faster than women’s. As a result, the gender gap has narrowed to 11%—70% of women and 59% of men working part time prefer it to full-time work.

• Time Off

The good news here is that there has been a noticeable increase since 2002 in the proportion of employees who find it “not at all hard” to take time off during the workday to respond to unexpected personal or family needs, from 31% to 37%.

Less encouraging is that almost half (43%) of all U.S. employees report that they do not have sufficient paid time off for personal illness. Access to paid time off to care for children has been stable, but access to paid time off for personal illness has declined from 68% to 63% of all employees. As a result, more than 1 in 3 employees have less than 5 days of paid time off per year for personal illness. On average, employees with access miss work about 3 days per quarter due to illness.

Almost half of all U.S. wage and salaried employees have provided elder care within the past 5 years, and 1 in 5 are doing so now. Half of all employees expect to provide elder care within the next 5 years. Among employees who have recently provided or are now providing elder care, 69% took no time away from work. Among the 15% of employees who
took a leave to provide elder care, half worried that they would lose either their income or their job or both.

Access to paid vacations has been stable since 2002, and access to paid holidays has risen slightly, but both are still below 1997 levels. Employees report having an average of 16 vacation days per year, but use an average of only 14. The proportion of employees performing community service has risen substantially since 1992, from 24% to 31%; employees who do so perform an average of 4.5 hours of service per week. About 1 in 3 employees can do volunteer work during work time without losing pay, especially those in managerial occupations.

- **Caregiving Leaves**

Younger employees are more likely to report taking time off following the birth of their youngest child than older employees. Women take about 3 times as much leave as men: 15 weeks, compared to 5. Almost half of employees received no pay. Men and women are equally likely to receive no pay, but women were less than half as likely as men to receive full pay.

- **Culture of Flexibility**

Unfortunately, employees’ perceptions that they have to choose between job advancement and family or personal life are continuing to rise, from 33% in 1997 to 41% in 2008. Perceptions of jeopardy are related to age—employees in the Millennial generation, for example, are much more likely than employees from the Mature generation to believe that asking for time off for personal or family reasons would jeopardize job or career advancement (45% vs. 26%). Supervisor support has been stable at a high level, and the good news here is that employees’ perceptions of support do not appear to vary across demographic groups.

Our comparisons of demographic groups show that access to flextime and flexplace is shaped more by occupational characteristics, such as managerial status, than by need, such as care responsibilities. As a result, employees with the greatest need for flexibility are sometimes the least likely to have it.

- **Gender**

Women are more likely than men to work part time and be able to change to part-time schedules. Women have more schedule control and are more likely than men to report having the flexibility they need. Men are more likely to have access to traditional flexibility, to be able to work at home and to have paid vacations and holidays.

- **Age/Generation**

Perhaps because employees from the Generation X and Baby Boom generations tend to be at a more stable period in their careers and jobs than employees from the Millennial or Mature generations, they are more likely to be full-time employees and receive paid time off for personal illness or vacation. Employees from the Millennial generation have greater ability to move between part- and full-time work than older employees, but they are also most likely to experience difficulty in taking time off from work and to feel that there is jeopardy for using flexibility. Employees from the Mature generation are most likely to be satisfied with their work schedule and to prefer part-time status.
Living Arrangement

Among all types of living arrangement, employees who live only with their spouse or partner are most likely to perceive a good match between their shift schedule and their needs. Employees living in Extended Families are more likely than employees living in other arrangements to work part time or to work non-standard schedules. Although they are most likely to have access to being able to move between full- and part- time jobs and part-year arrangement, they are least likely to receive paid time off for personal illness or paid vacations. They also are more likely to feel that there is job jeopardy for using flexibility.

Care Responsibilities

In most of the analyses, we did not find significant variations among employees according to their care responsibilities. Employees with dual-care responsibilities are more likely to work regular daytime schedules than other employees. In addition, employees with either child or elder care responsibilities are most likely to feel that there is job jeopardy for using flexibility.

Education

Educational level, not surprisingly, is related to access to flexibility as well as the match between the employees’ needs and available options. For example, employees with higher levels of education are most likely to have regular daytime schedules and access to various kinds of flexibility, such as compressed workweeks and the ability to shift between full- and part-time work. They are also most likely to work at home or work part of the year voluntarily. In contrast, employees with a high school education/GED or less are least likely to have access to traditional flextime or paid vacation days. They are also more likely to believe that using flexibility results in job jeopardy.

Occupation

Managers/professionals have more access to many types of flexibility than employees in other types of occupations. Employees who are not managers/professionals report being more able to move between full- and part-time jobs, but are also more likely to perceive job jeopardy for using flexibility. There are no occupational differences in employees’ access to daily flextime, working part of the year and health care insurance when working part time.

Industry

Overall, employees in service industries have greater access to several types of flexibility than those in goods-producing industries. For example, employees in service industries are more likely to have access to compressed workweeks, to be able to change between part-time and full-time schedules, to arrange to work part of the year, to have paid time off for personal illness or to care for a sick child and to work at home. Employees in good-producing industries are more likely to work full time and regular daytime job schedules. Perhaps, because employees in good-producing industries have less access to some flexible options, they are more likely to want compressed workweeks and to use them if they have access, and to believe that using flexibility results in job jeopardy than those in service industries.
Unfortunately, the comparisons among demographic groups revealed that access to several kinds of flexibility appears to be defined more by occupational characteristics, such as managerial status, than by need, such as care responsibilities. As a result, employees with the greatest needs are sometimes the least likely to have access. For example, employees who are more educated or in managerial or professional positions have greater access than other workers to most forms of flexibility, but care responsibilities are unrelated to access to almost any form of flexibility.

Analyses of the impact on business outcomes clearly show that when both access to flexibility and supportiveness are high, employees are more likely to report high job engagement, job satisfaction, low intent to look for another job and good mental health.

✓ 35% of those with above-average flexibility and support reported high job engagement, compared with only 14% of those with below-average flexibility and support.

✓ 76% of those with above-average flexibility and support reported high satisfaction, compared with only 34% of those with below-average flexibility and support.

✓ 76% of those with above-average flexibility and support reported low intent to look for another job, compared with 57% of those with below-average flexibility and support.

✓ 32% of those with above-average flexibility and support reported good mental health, compared with 21% of those with below-average flexibility and support.

A large majority of employees place high value on flexibility at work, but some do not have the flexibility they need to manage their lives at and away from work. Access to flexibility on balance is improving somewhat, but, on average, employees are working more than they want to and feeling increasingly time-deprived. Nonetheless, the evidence continues to suggest that increasing access to flexibility is not only good for employees, but it is also good for businesses.
2008 NSCW TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) survey was conducted by Harris Interactive, Inc. (formerly Louis Harris and Associates) using a questionnaire developed by the Families and Work Institute. Coding of open-ended responses was done by interviewers, with the exception of occupation and industry which were coded by the U.S. Bureau of the Census using 1990 3-digit occupation (SOC) and industry (SIC) classifications. Although interviewing began in 2007, 88% of interviews were completed in 2008. Thus, we refer to this survey as the 2008 NSCW. A total of 3,502 interviews were completed with a nationwide cross-section of employed adults between November 12, 2007 and April 20, 2008. Interviews, which averaged 50 minutes in length (47 minutes for substantive questions and 3 minutes for eligibility screening), were conducted by telephone using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system. Calls were made to a regionally stratified unclustered random probability sample generated by random-digit-dial methods.

Up to 60 calls were made to each telephone number that appeared to represent a potentially eligible household—busy signal, answer by non-eligible with some indication of a potential eligible in household, or answer by a potential eligible who wanted a callback. When eligibles were identified and requested callbacks, additional calls were made. If 25 consecutive calls were made to numbers where there were no answers and no busy signals (and no other dialing outcome), these number were considered non-residential, non-working numbers or non-voice communication numbers. Three to 5 attempts were made to convert each initial refusal. Despite the fact that the level of effort of 2008 interviewers went substantially beyond the efforts made in 2002, 1997 and 1992, the overall response rate was only slightly higher, indicating that it has become significantly more difficult to complete telephone interviews in recent years.

Sample eligibility was limited to people who 1) worked at a paid job or operated an income-producing business; 2) were 18 years or older; 3) were in the civilian labor force; 4) resided in the contiguous 48 states; and 5) lived in a non-institutional residence—i.e., household—with a telephone. In households with more than 1 eligible person, 1 was randomly selected to be interviewed. Interviewers initially offered cash honoraria of $25 as incentives. In order to convert refusals, a higher amount ($50) was offered.

Of the total 42,000 telephone numbers called, 24,115 were found to be non-residential or non-working numbers and 6,970 were determined to be ineligible residences (1,389 because no one spoke English or Spanish well enough to be interviewed). Of the remaining telephone numbers, 3,547 were determined to represent eligible households, and interviews were completed for 3,502 of these—a completion rate of 99%. Eligibility or ineligibility, however, could not be determined in the remaining 7,368 cases. Among those contacts for which eligibility could be determined, the eligibility ratio was 0.3886 [3547/(3547+5,581)]. Thus, we estimate that potentially 38.86% of the 7,368 cases for which eligibility could not be determined—2,863 cases in all—might have been eligible households. Dividing the number of completed interviews (3,502) by the number of known eligibles (3,547) plus the number of estimated eligibles (2,863) yields an overall response rate of 54.6% for potentially eligible households. [This method of response rate calculation follows the conservative CASRO and AAPOR recommendations.] Of the total sample of 3,502 interviewed, 2,769 are wage and salaried workers who work for someone else, while 733 respondents own their own businesses or are self-employed. This report focuses on wage and salaried employees.
All sample weighting was done in relation to the U.S. population using data from the March 2007 Current Population Survey. The sample was first weighted by the number of eligibles in the respondents’ households in relation to the percentage of households in the U.S. population with the same number of eligibles (i.e., number of employed persons 18 and older per household with any employed person 18 or older), eligible men and women in the U.S. population and eligibles with different educational levels in the U.S. population. [This is the same weighting algorithm used for the 2002 NSCW. Other weights were also calculated and can be found in the public-use data files.] The average design effect for the weighted sample is estimated to be 1.359. Applying this Design Effect, the average sampling error for wage and salaried sample statistics (n=2,769) is approximately +/- 1.1% versus +/- 1% for the unweighted sample. The weight variable used for this report is WAGEWT1.

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ENDNOTES

1 The primary sources for this report are the Families and Work Institute 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) surveys. The NSCW builds directly on the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey (QES) conducted by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, which was discontinued after the 1977 round of data collection. Both the NSCW and QES are based on random samples of the U.S. workforce. Wherever possible, the definitions of flexible work arrangements used in the report are adapted from those used in the 2002 report.

2 Mean values of the factor scores were used to construct the 2 variables: flexibility and supervisor support. According to the factor analyses, these 2 factors account for 42% of the variation in the component variables. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency of the flexibility factor is .64 while the alpha coefficient for supervisor support is .86.
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