

GENERATION  GENDER  
*in the Workplace*

An Issue Brief by  
**Families and Work Institute**

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# A NEW GENERATION AT WORK

## INTRODUCTION

There is a great deal of speculation about generational and gender differences in the workforce. However, until now, many of these assertions have been based on intuition or relatively limited data. The National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) conducted in 1992, 1997, and 2002 by the Families and Work Institute (FWI) and the Quality of Employment Survey (QES) conducted in 1977 by the U.S. Department of Labor offer an opportunity to bring hard data into this discussion. Because we have information about the workforce over the past 25 years, we can test some of the most current assumptions. Using rigorous research analyses, we can look at how today's workers differ from workers of the same age a generation ago as well as how workers of different generations have changed over time.

This Issue Brief was prepared by the Families and Work Institute for the American Business Collaboration (ABC), a groundbreaking collaboration of leading U.S. companies ("Champions") to inform their work together to help their employees manage their work and personal responsibility. Current ABC Champion companies are: Abbott Laboratories, Deloitte & Touche USA LLP, Exxon Mobil Corporation, General Electric, IBM Corporation, Johnson & Johnson, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and Texas Instruments. The basic principle guiding the ABC is the belief that companies can accomplish more by working together than by working alone.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

It is widely believed that the younger generations of the workforce—Generations X and Y—are different from the generations that preceded them—the Baby Boomers and the Matures. Members of Gen-Y were 18 through 22 years old when they participated in this study in 2002, Gen-X employees were 23 through 37, Baby Boomers were 38 through 57 and Matures were over 58. In this report, we examine the extent to which these perceived differences are true.

There are many reasons to assert that there are differences. Gen-X and Gen-Y employees are themselves increasingly the children of working mothers and the children of the downsized generation. They know first hand what is it like to have one or two parents in a workforce where work has become increasingly demanding and hectic and many, if not most, have known someone who lost a job due to workforce downsizing. They have seen the transition from the notion of relative job security to "employment at will" where employers are less loyal to employees and assume that the employee is responsible for remaining employable. They have lived through turbulence in the labor force in the early 90s, the rise and fall of the dot com bubble, and uncertainty in the

economy and the workforce over the past few years. They were coming of age when the horrific events of September 11, 2001 occurred, perhaps shaping or at least sharpening their priorities in life and in work.

Among the compelling findings that this issue brief uncovers are:

Boomers are more likely to be work-centric than other generations. Gen-X and Gen-Y are more likely to be dual-centric or family-centric.

- Boomers are more likely to be work-centric than other generations. Gen-X and Gen-Y are more likely to be dual-centric or family-centric. (Those placing a higher priority on work than family are considered *work-centric*, those placing higher priority on family than work are considered *family-centric*, and those placing the same priority on their job and family are considered *dual-centric*.) Twenty-two percent of Boomers are work-centric, compared with 12 to 13 percent of other generations. In contrast, 50 percent of Gen-Y and 52 percent of Gen-X are family-centric compared with 41 percent of Boomers.\*

Because we haven't asked these questions before, the extent to which the whole workforce has shifted away from being work-centric is unclear, but it is visibly true that most American workers today are rejecting the work-centric style of their father's workplace.

Is this a problem for the productivity of the American workplace? Common sense might say yes, but this assumption needs further exploration, since other interests in life do not necessarily impair productivity and effectiveness. A recent study conducted by the Families and Work Institute, Catalyst, and Boston College found that dual-centric employees had advanced farther in their careers than others, so there may be benefits to having more than one

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focus in life. In addition, there can be serious downsides to an all-work, all-the-time lifestyle for the individual, companies, and society in terms of burnout and stress-related illnesses and their attendant costs.

In this study, we found that:

- Employees who are dual-centric or family-centric exhibit significantly better mental health, greater satisfaction with their lives, and higher levels of job satisfaction than employees who are work-centric.

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\* All findings reported in this report are statistically significant at  $p < .05$ ; that is, all of the observed differences would occur by chance less than 5 in 100 times, unless otherwise noted.

There are many other indications that the workforce has become more family-focused—especially the fact that American fathers are spending more time with their children than fathers did a generation ago:

- Among married couples with children, mothers are spending the same amount of time doing things with and taking care of their children on days when they are working today as they did 25 years ago (approximately 3.3 to 3.4 hours per workday), but fathers' time has increased dramatically—from 1.8 hours to 2.7 hours.
- Single mothers are spending an average of 3.3 hours caring for and doing things with their children on workdays—the same amount of time as married mothers. There is no statistically significant difference in the amount of time single moms spend caring for and doing things with their children on workdays in 1977 and 2002—despite the fact that single moms in 2002 are working nearly 5 more hours per week on average (44 hours) than their counterparts in 1977 (39 hours).

Gen-X fathers are leading this trend toward more time with children:

- Gen-X fathers spend significantly more time with their children than Boomer fathers with children of the same age, an average of 3.4 hours per workday versus an average of 2.2 hours for Boomer fathers—a difference of more than 1 hour.

Although there are too few fathers in our sample under 23 years old—Gen-Y—to make a definitive statement about their time with children, it appears that they are spending even more time with their children than fathers in Gen-X.

Obviously, this trend is affected by the increase in the number of employed mothers, so we wondered if men and women have become more accepting of maternal employment. Our data show over the past 25 years that *men*, not women, have changed their minds about whether it is “much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children.” For example:

- 61 percent of women in both 1977 and 2002 disagreed that it was better for all involved if men earn the money and women take care of the children and family.
- In contrast, only 34 percent of male Boomers disagreed with this notion in 1977 when they were less than 32 years old compared with 58 percent of this same generation in 2002—a large difference of 24 percentage points.

Younger employees are more likely to disagree than older employees:

- 63 percent of Gen-Y employees disagree that traditional gender roles are better versus only 49 percent of Matures.

In this era when maternal employment is much more prevalent, one might wonder why only 63 percent of Gen-Y employees disagree with this statement. Rather than seeing this as an indictment of employed mothers, it may more nearly reflect the family focus of today's workforce—a belief that it would be “good” if one parent (the mother) could remain at home with children.

Moreover:

- 82 percent of Gen-Y employees agree that “a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who is not employed” versus 60 percent of Matures. Importantly, the majority of Gen-Y employees had employed mothers themselves and know firsthand the impact of maternal employment on mother-child relationships.

Nowhere is the rejection of “their father's workplace” more dramatic, however, than in the decrease in the number of employees who want to move ahead to positions of greater responsibility:

- Among college-educated men of Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer ages in 1992 and 2002, 68 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 1992 versus only 52 percent in 2002—a decline of 16 percentage points.
- Among college-educated women of Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer ages in 1992 and 2002, 57 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 1992 versus only 36 percent in 2002—a decline of 21 percentage points.

Although a lot has been written about the “Opt-Out Revolution,” defined as employed women leaving the workforce when they have very young children, we see this downtrend in career ambitions as *the real revolution*, where very sizeable numbers of women and men are working hard, but not wanting the trade-offs they would have to make by advancing into jobs with more responsibility.

It is important to note that employees today are working very hard. In fact, they are working longer and harder in more demanding jobs than employees 25 years ago.

- When we compare 2002 Gen-X employees with their age counterparts in 1977, we find that 2002 Gen-X employees actually work significantly more paid and unpaid hours per week

(45.6 hours on average) than employees of comparable ages in 1977 (42.9 paid *and* unpaid hours per week on average).

Thus, we wondered about who wants to advance among employees in general. For both groups, we found:

- Employees who are younger and have not yet advanced very far in their careers, employees in lower status occupations who earn less, and those in families with lower incomes are significantly more interested in getting ahead—and presumably earning more money. And men are more likely to want to advance than women.

Importantly, we also found that the hours one *wants* to work make a difference. Among college-educated employees, we found:

- College-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees who would prefer to work fewer paid and unpaid hours than they currently do are much less likely (40%) to want jobs with more responsibility than those who would like to work longer hours (75%).
- An extraordinary 80 percent of college-educated employees would like to work fewer paid and unpaid hours than they currently do. When we assessed how many hours employees *want* to work, their desires closely parallel the hours they are “scheduled” to work, but not the total hours they actually work.

Pursuing the notion of how the long-hours work culture affects aspirations for advancement further, we explored whether or not it makes a difference to have jobs that spill over into employees’ personal or family lives. Negative spillover includes not having enough time or enough energy for family or other important people in one’s life because of one’s job, not being able to do as good a job as one would like at home and not being able to concentrate on important things in personal or family life because of work, and not being in as good a mood as one would like to be at home because of one’s job. And spillover does make a difference:

- Although fully 60 percent of college-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees who experience low levels of negative spillover from job to home would like to have jobs with more responsibility, only 39 percent (21 percentage points less) who experience high levels of negative spillover want jobs with more responsibility. Findings are the same for men and women.

Furthermore, college-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees who more often feel “overwhelmed by how much they have to do on their jobs” are much less likely to want jobs with greater responsibility.

- Among college-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees, only 30 percent of those who very often feel overwhelmed by how much they have to do at work want jobs with more responsibility versus 53 percent of those who rarely or never feel overwhelmed.

Finally, we found that employees who want to move ahead do not necessarily see the path to advancement in their own organizations:

- More than half (52%) of employees who would like to have jobs with greater responsibility are “somewhat” or “very” likely to seek employment elsewhere in the coming year.

It is clear that the way we work today is having an impact on the advancement aspirations of employees.

## ISSUE BRIEF FINDINGS

This issue brief prepared by the Families and Work Institute (FWI) for the American Business Collaboration (ABC) explores generation and gender, beginning with a focus on younger employees. When data for this study was collected in 2002, members of Generation Y were 18 through 22 years old, and members of Generation X were 23 through 37 years old, compared with Baby Boomers, who were 38 through 57, and Matures, who were over 58. This brief moves beyond speculation and hype, by bringing a rigorous analysis to the debates and discussions, using data from the Families and Work Institute’s 1992, 1997, and 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) and from the U.S. Department of Labor’s 1977 Quality of Employment Survey (QES). In this issue brief, we explore how today’s employees differ from employees of the same age a generation ago as well as how employees of different generations have changed over time. We use a question and answer format to explore what has changed and what has stayed the same.

## ARE YOUNGER EMPLOYEES LESS “WORK-CENTRIC” THAN OLDER EMPLOYEES?

From two questions—“how often do you feel you put your job before your family” and “how often do you feel you put your family before your job”—we derived a single index of the degree to which respondents prioritize job versus family. Those placing a higher priority on work than family are considered *work-centric*, those placing higher priority on family than work are considered *family-centric*, and those placing the same priority on their job and family are considered *dual-centric*.

- Boomers are more likely to be work-centric than other generations. Gen-X and Gen-Y are more likely to be dual-centric or family-centric. Twenty-two percent of Boomers are work-centric, compared with 12 to 13 percent of other generations.

- In contrast, 50 percent of Gen-Y and 52 percent of Gen-X are family-centric—putting family first—compared with 41 percent of Boomers.
- Interestingly, employees 58 and older (Matures) are most likely (54%) to be dual-centric compared with an average of 36 percent of employees in younger generations.

Boomers are more likely to be work-centric than other generations. Gen-X and Gen-Y are more likely to be dual-centric or family-centric.

**Table 1:** Work Priorities Across the Generations

Relative Priority Placed on Work vs. Family	Gen-Y (under 23) N=250	Gen-X (23 – 37) N=855	Boomer (38 – 57) N=404	Mature (58 or older) N=276
Work-centric	13%	13%	22%	12%
Dual-centric	37	35	37	54
Family-centric	50	52	41	34

One could argue that the relative emphasis on work versus family is a function of employees’ lifestyles. That is, of course Boomers are more work-centric because they have older children. To explore this issue, we conducted two sets of analyses. First we asked:

**DOES HAVING CHILDREN CHANGE ONE’S PRIORITIES?**

Our analysis includes employees with children of any age whether or not they still live at home.

We find that as women move through the life cycle their relative priorities on work and family change, while this is not the case for men. Employed mothers are significantly less likely to be “family-centric” and significantly more likely to be “dual-centric” or “work-centric” when their children are older, but this is not the case for fathers. These findings support the view that having younger children constrains the commitment that women, but not men, make to paid work.



**Table 2:** Male Employees with Children of Any Age (N=368) and Living in Families

Relative Emphasis on Work and Family	Age of Youngest Child			
	under 6	6-12 years	13-17 years	18 or older
Family-centric	46%	44%	43%	36%
Dual-centric	37	38	40	41
Work-centric	18	19	17	23

*No statistically significant difference.*

**Table 3:** Female Employees with Children of Any Age (N=435) and Living in Families

Relative Emphasis on Work and Family	Age of Youngest Child			
	under 6	6-12 years	13-17 years	18 or older
Family-centric	60%	53%	51%	37%
Dual-centric	28	30	33	41
Work-centric	12	17	16	22

*Difference is statistically significant at  $p < .001$ .*

Then we asked a second question:

**ARE BOOMERS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 AT HOME MORE WORK-CENTRIC AND LESS FAMILY-CENTRIC THAN GEN-X PARENTS WHO HAVE CHILDREN UNDER 18?**

When we compare the priorities of Boomer parents with Gen-X parents who have children under 18 living at home with them, we find that Boomers are more work-centric. This finding suggests that there is a *generational* difference between Boomers and Gen-X rather than a life cycle difference related to parental responsibilities.

**Table 4:** Relative Emphasis on Work and Family among Parents with Children under 18 Years Old: Boomers versus Members of Gen-X

Relative Emphasis on Work and Family	2002 Ages	
	Gen-X (23-37)	Boomers (38-57)
Family-centric	55%	46%
Dual-centric	33	35
Work-centric	13	20

$p = .001$

Moreover, if we control (using multiple linear regression) for the age of the employee’s youngest child (1 - 17 years) who resides at home, we still find that Boomers are significantly more likely ( $p < .001$ ) than members of Gen-X to be work-centric. This reinforces our hypothesis that the observed difference is generational rather than life cycle related.

There are many possible reasons why Gen-X and Gen-Y employees might be more family- or dual-centric than Boomers. These generations are more likely to know first hand what it’s like to

have had a working mother. They also know what it’s like to have seen their parents or other adults put everything into work only to lose their jobs as wave after wave of downsizing hit the economy during their growing-up years. In fact, in FWI’s 1992 NSCW, we found that 42 percent of all U.S. employees worked for companies (including large, mid-sized and small companies) that had downsized over the past year. They have seen the notion of a job-for-life replaced by the notion of “employment at will,” where employers are less loyal to employees whom they see as “free agents” responsible for their own “employability.” Furthermore, today’s younger employees have seen work become more and more demanding as the 24/7 global economy has taken hold. Finally,

they have been shaped by September 11, 2001, which has caused many people to step back and ask themselves what is truly important in their lives.

It is important to note that employees who are dual-centric or family-centric exhibit significantly better mental health, greater satisfaction with their lives, and higher levels of job satisfaction than employees who are work-centric.

It can be argued that employees who are dual-centric manage work and family demands in a way that serves both their employers and their families well. This prioritization is, of course, dynamic, with work demands taking priority on some days or even hours and family responsibility on others.

- It is important to note that employees who are dual-centric or family-centric exhibit significantly better mental health, greater satisfaction with their lives, and higher levels of job satisfaction than employees who are work-centric.

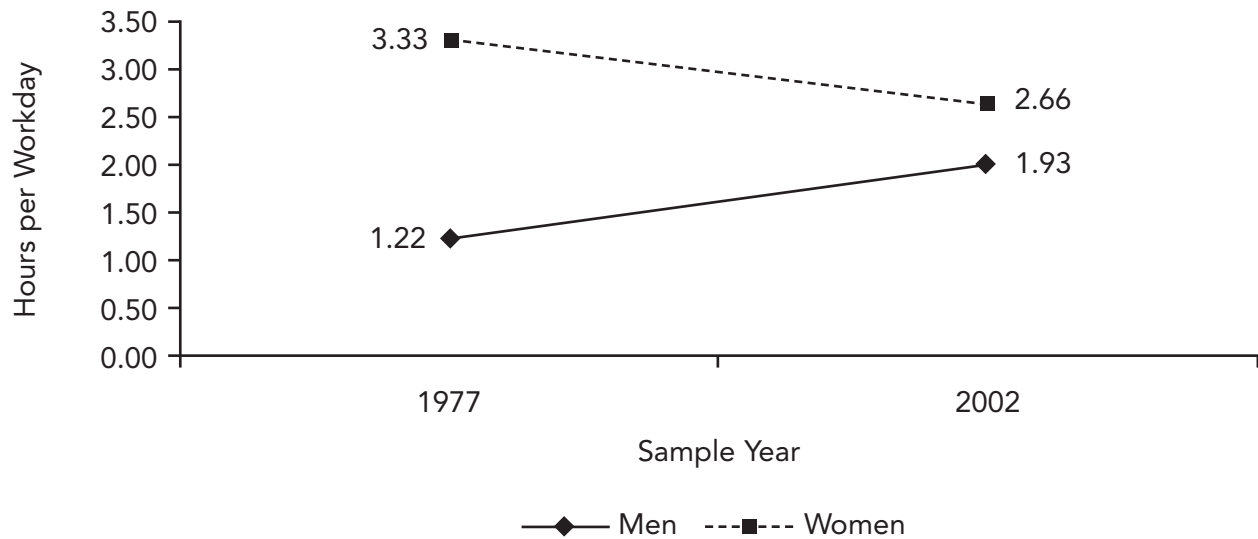
Although employers may want their employees to be work-centric—focusing on work to the exclusion of the rest of their lives—actually achieving this goal could be a pyrrhic victory, especially in light of escalating work stress and its potential cost in health care.

## **DO EMPLOYEES SPEND MORE TIME ON THEIR FAMILY LIVES THAN THEY DID 25 YEARS AGO?**

It is one thing for employees to say that they are focused on their families and other aspects of their lives, but quite another to see if they “walk the talk.” Mothers have traditionally taken the greatest responsibility for family life. We wondered, however, whether fathers’ time on household chores and caring for and doing things with their children had changed over the past 25 years as some have speculated. To explore this issue, we compared married employees of all ages in 2002 with married employees of all ages in 1977.

- In 2002, married men spend significantly more time on workdays (1.9 hours) doing household chores than married men did 25 years ago (1.2 hours).
- Although married women are spending significantly less time doing household chores—down from 3.3 hours in 1977 to 2.7 hours in 2002—on days when they are working, the reduction in women’s time doing chores—approximately 42 minutes less—is made up by their spouses, who are spending approximately 42 minutes more on chores.

**Figure 1:** Workday Hours Spent Doing Household Chores Comparing Married Employees in 1977 and 2002



- Among married couples with children, mothers are spending the same amount of time doing things with and taking care of their children on days when they are working today as they did 25 years ago (3.3 to 3.4 hours).
- On the other hand, fathers' time with children has increased dramatically—from 1.8 hours to 2.7 hours.
- Women's sustained levels of attention to their children, when complemented by the growing amount of time spent by spouses or partners, means that children in couple families are actually receiving more *combined* attention from their parents today than children did 25 years ago—6 hours per workday in 2002 versus 5 hours in 1977.

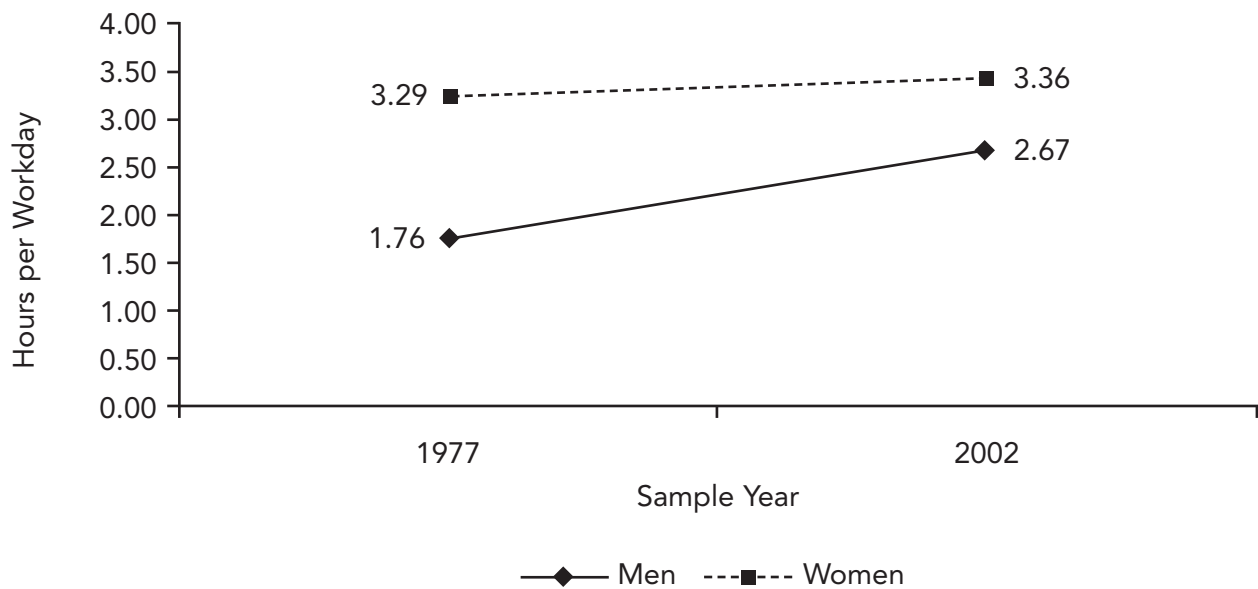
This finding does not reveal whether the nature of parent-child interaction has changed or stayed the same over the years. For example, although parents are spending more time with their children, they may also be doing more multi-tasking during that time or feeling more stressed and less able to focus on their children than in times past.

It is important to state that despite changes in the behavior of married men, employed married women still spend significantly

Children in couple families are actually receiving more *combined* attention from their parents today than children did 25 years ago—6 hours per workday in 2002 versus 5 hours in 1977.

more time than their husbands doing chores and caring for children, which is to say they are much more likely than their husbands to work “two shifts”—one at their paid job and one at home. Nevertheless, employers should take note of the rather dramatic changes in men’s responsibility and behavior off the job. As men take more responsibility for family work, they may want to have more reasonable hours, to avoid taking on additional responsibility at work, to resist demands for overtime work that are unscheduled or last minute, to take time off for child-related reasons, and so forth—behaviors that have traditionally been associated with female employees. Work-family issues are clearly family issues, not just women’s issues.

**Figure 2:** Workday Hours Spent Caring for and Doing Things with Children Comparing Married Employees in 1977 and 2002



### DO SINGLE MOTHERS SPEND MORE OR LESS TIME WITH THEIR CHILDREN THAN MARRIED MOTHERS?

In 2002, single mothers spend an average of 3.3 hours caring for and doing things with their children on workdays—the same amount of time as married mothers. There is no statistically significant difference in the amount of time single mothers spend caring for and doing things with their children on workdays in 1977 and 2002—despite the fact that single moms in 2002 are working nearly 5 more hours per week on average (44 hours) than their counterparts in 1977 (39 hours). Clearly single mothers are doing everything they can to prevent the job-related time crunch they experience from keeping them from their children.

## DO TODAY'S GEN-X FATHERS SPEND MORE TIME CARING FOR AND DOING THINGS WITH THEIR CHILDREN THAN BOOMER FATHERS?

It is assumed by some and hoped by others that with each generation fathers are becoming more involved in the lives and care of their children. The previous findings suggest that this is happening, but here we address the question more directly.

- When we compare the workday hours Gen-X and Boomer fathers spend caring for and doing things with their children in 2002, we find that Gen-X fathers spend significantly more time, an average of 3.4 hours per workday versus an average of 2.2 hours for Boomer fathers—an average difference of more than 1 hour.

When we compare the workday hours Gen-X and Boomer fathers spend caring for and doing things with their children in 2002, we find that Gen-X fathers spend significantly more time, an average of 3.4 hours per workday versus an average of 2.2 hours for Boomer fathers—an average difference of more than 1 hour.

Because Gen-X fathers have younger children on average than Boomer fathers, we then made the previous comparison with adjustments for the age of youngest child and found the same significant difference favoring Gen-X.

Although the number of Gen-Y fathers (under 23 years old when the 2002 NSCW was conducted) in our sample is very small, it appears Gen-Y will continue this trend—with Gen-Y fathers spending more time with their children than fathers in Gen-X, who in turn spend more time than fathers in the Boomer generation.

## HOW DO MEMBERS OF THE BOOMER GENERATION (38 – 57 YEARS OLD IN 2002) FEEL ABOUT WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PAID LABOR FORCE? HAVE THE ATTITUDES OF MEN AND WOMEN CHANGED OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS?

*Men, but not women, have changed their views about maternal employment.*

Obviously, fathers' increased involvement in family life is affected by the increase in the number of mothers who are employed, so we wondered if men and women have become more accepting of maternal employment. In the National Study of the Changing Workforce, employees were asked whether they agreed or disagreed

with the following statement: "It is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children."

We find that over the course of 25 years and in the face of societal and economic changes, including the fact that the majority of male Boomers now have employed wives, members of the

Boomer generation are significantly more likely in 2002 (61%) to disagree with this statement than they were when they were 25 years younger in 1977 (36%). This overall change reflects the fact that *men*, but not women, have changed their views about maternal employment.

- The views of employed women have not changed significantly over this period, remaining steady at about 61 percent.
- The views of men have changed dramatically. In 1977, only 34 percent of male Boomers (then under 32 years old) disagreed with the notion that it is better for all involved for men to bring home the bacon and for women to take care of the home and children. In contrast, 58 percent of this same generation disagree in 2002—a large difference of 24 percentage points.

In 1977, only 34 percent of male Boomers (then under 32 years old) disagreed with the notion that it is better for all involved for men to bring home the bacon and for women to take care of the home and children. In contrast, 58 percent of this same generation disagree in 2002.

Today's reality is that most employed married men (68%) have employed wives.

## ARE YOUNGER WORKERS IN 2002 LESS LIKELY TO SUPPORT TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES THAN OLDER WORKERS?

Yes, the new generation is less likely to support traditional gender roles.

- 63 percent of Gen-Y employees disagree that it is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children, compared with 49 percent of Matures.

In addition, there is *no* statistically significant difference between all Gen-X and all Boomer employees, with about 60 percent disagreeing with the notion that it is better for all concerned if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children.

In 2002, Gen-X and Boomer women were equally likely (62%) to *disagree* with the statement that it is better for all concerned if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children. However, Gen-Y women were significantly more likely (73%) to disagree, while Mature women (54%) were less likely to disagree.

In this era where maternal employment is much more prevalent, one might wonder why only 63 percent of Gen-Y employees

63 percent of Gen-Y employees disagree that it is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children, compared with 49 percent of Matures.

disagree with this statement. Rather than seeing this primarily as an indictment of employed mothers, it may more nearly reflect the family focus of today's workforce—a belief that it would be “good” if one parent (the mother) could remain at home with children.

In addition:

- 82 percent of Gen-Y employees agree that “a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who is not employed” compared with 60 percent of Matures.

The very high percentage of young employees who agree that employed mothers can have just as good a relationship with their children as their stay-at-home counterparts may well reflect their positive firsthand experiences having employed mothers as they were growing up.

## DO THE GENERATIONS DIFFER IN THEIR DESIRE TO ADVANCE?

Given the family focus of today's workforce, particularly among younger employees, we next explore the issue of advancement, looking at generational differences in who wants to move to jobs with more responsibility, who wants to stay at the same level of responsibility, and who wants jobs with decreased responsibility.

- Not surprisingly, the proportion of employees who want jobs with more responsibility is highest for Gen-Y (60%), which has lower-status and lower-paying jobs on average, and lowest for Matures (15%) who are nearing retirement.
- Mature employees (58 – 64 years old) are most likely (70%) to want to stay in jobs with the same level of responsibility.
- Regarding gender, men are more likely (45%) than women (32%) to want jobs with greater responsibility, while women are more likely (59%) than men (47%) to prefer staying in jobs at the same level of responsibility.
- It's interesting and possibly disconcerting that only 40 percent of the total wage and salaried workforce under age 65 in 2002 want jobs with greater responsibility.



**Table 5:** Advancement Across the Generations

Group in 2002	% Wanting Job with Less, Same or More Responsibility			Sig.
	Less	Same	More	
Generation:				
Gen-Y (under 23)	7%	33%	60%	***
Gen-X (23 – 37)	7	40	54	
Boomer (38 – 57)	10	60	31	
Mature (58 – 64 years)	15	70	15	
Gender:				
Men	9	47	45	***
Women	9	59	32	

Significance: ns = not significant; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

## HAVE U.S. WORKERS BECOME LESS EAGER TO ADVANCE IN RECENT YEARS?

Some senior managers have expressed concern that fewer employees today are interested in job/career advancement than was the case as recently as 10 years ago.

Among all employees, the desire to move into jobs with greater responsibility has declined from 1992 to 2002 for all age groups—from 54 percent in 1992 to 40 percent in 2002. Comparisons of different age groups are presented in Table 6. The most dramatic decline is seen among the youngest workers (under 23 years old who were members of Gen-Y in 2002). In 1992, only 10 years ago, 80 percent of employees under 23 years old wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility; in 2002, that proportion had dropped to 60 percent, a decline of 20 percentage points. Less dramatic but still statistically significant declines also occurred for employees 23 – 27 years old (Gen-X in 2002), and employees 38 – 57 years old (Boomers in 2002). Only so-called “Mature” employees (defined as those 58 – 64 years of age in this analysis) in 1992 and 2002 exhibited no change in their desires to move into jobs with greater responsibility (14% and 15%, respectively).

**Table 6:** Desire for Job Advancement by Generations in 2002

Age Group/Generation	Employees Wanting Jobs with Greater Responsibility		Stat.Sig.
	1992	2002	
Under 23 years old (Gen-Y in 2002)	80%	60%	**
23 – 37 years old (Gen-X in 2002)	69	54	***
38 – 57 years old (Boomers in 2002)	41	31	***
58 or more years old <sup>i</sup>	14	15	ns

Statistical significance: \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ ; ns = not significant.

<sup>i</sup> These percentages refer only to employees

Management concern is probably greatest when it comes to Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer college- and graduate-level educated hires upon whom many companies count to gradually replace current managers. When we looked only at these employees, we found:

- Among college-educated men of Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer ages in 1992 and 2002, 68 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 1992 versus only 52 percent in 2002—a decline of 16 percentage points.
- Among college-educated women of Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer ages in 1992 and 2002, 57 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 1992 versus only 36 percent in 2002—a decline of 21 percentage points.

One might wonder if these changes in the desire to advance reflect the aging workforce and the fact that there are more Boomers who might skew the results. To test for this, we conducted a generation by generation analysis and found that with the exception of employees 58 or more years old, employees’ ambitions to move into jobs with greater responsibility have declined (on average) over the past decade, controlling for age.

Although there has been a lot of press about the “Opt-Out Revolution,” defined as employed women leaving the workforce

Among college-educated women of Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer ages in 1992 and 2002, 57 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 1992 versus only 36 percent in 2002—a decline of 21 percentage points.

when they have very young children, we see the apparent downtrend in career ambition as *the real revolution*, where very sizeable numbers of women and men are working hard, but not willing to make the trade-offs required by advancing into jobs with more responsibility.

For organizations particularly concerned about moving college-educated women—and men—into managerial ranks, these findings should give pause. Adjustments to workplaces and jobs may well be necessary to accommodate younger women and men and motivate them to pursue higher-level jobs.

We see the apparent downtrend in career ambition as *the real revolution*, where very sizeable numbers of women and men are working hard, but not wanting the trade-offs they would have to make by advancing into jobs with more responsibility.

### WHO WANTS TO MOVE INTO JOBS WITH GREATER RESPONSIBILITY?

Overall, only 40 percent of today's total wage and salaried workforce under 65 years of age would like to have jobs with greater responsibility versus 54 percent a decade ago. This decline is not due to aging of the workforce as is clear from findings presented in Table 6 indicating that the decline in ambition is greater for the youngest workers.

Examining data for 2002, the main explanatory variables are demographic: younger employees, employees with lower incomes, employees in lower-status occupations, men, employees with an education beyond high school, unmarried employees, and employees who have children are more likely than other employees to want to move into jobs with more responsibility. It is obvious why many of these employees would want to better their situation.

In addition, several non-demographic factors make a difference:

- Employees who would like to work fewer paid and unpaid hours per week are much less likely than those who would like to work more hours to want to move into jobs with greater responsibility.
- Curiously, employees who place a higher priority on work than family—that is are work-centric—are less likely than employees who are family-centric to want jobs with greater responsibility. This finding may be explained by the fact that employees who are work-centric have significantly more difficulty managing the demands of their work, personal and family lives. Having a job with greater responsibility would only exacerbate this problem.
- Employees who experience high levels of negative spillover from their jobs into their home lives are less likely to want jobs with greater responsibility.

- Employees who more frequently feel overwhelmed by all they have to do at work are less likely to want jobs with greater responsibility.

It appears that when evaluating whether or not they want a job with more responsibility, a significant number of employees may consider its impact on their personal and family lives.

## WHO AMONG COLLEGE-EDUCATED EMPLOYEES WANTS TO ADVANCE?

College-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees represent the employees that many companies count on to replace current managers as they retire. Only 43 percent of these prime candidates for promotion—46 percent of four-year college graduates and 39 percent of employees with graduate and professional degrees—want to move into jobs with greater responsibility. Because this is a much smaller proportion than one might expect and employers might hope for, we conducted a series of analyses to explain these findings. Note that these analyses are restricted to employees who are Boomers or younger and thus the findings differ from those reported above that include employees of all ages.

Only 43 percent of these prime candidates for promotion—46 percent of four-year college graduates and 39 percent of employees with graduate and professional degrees—want to move into jobs with greater responsibility.

As with employees in general, the main explanatory variables for the desire to advance or not to advance are demographic—age, gender, occupation, marital status, parental status, earnings, and family income (Table 7):

- Employees who are younger and have not yet advanced very far in their careers, employees in lower-status occupations who earn less, and those in families with lower incomes are significantly more interested in getting ahead—and presumably earning more money.
- Men are more likely (52%) than women (36%) to have career advancement ambitions.

**Table 7:** Demographic Factors Predicting Ambition among College-Educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer Employees

Group in 2002	% Wanting Job with Less, Same or More Responsibility			Sig.
	Less	Same	More	
Generation:				
Gen-Y	0%	36%	64%	***
Gen-X	4	37	58	
Boomer	9	56	34	
Gender:				
Men	6	41	52	***
Women	8	56	36	
Marital Status:				
Married or living with partner	8	51	41	*
Not married or partnered	6	44	50	
Spouse/Partner Employed:				
Yes	8	54	39	ns
No	8	41	51	
Parental Status:				
Child(ren) under 18 at home	9	51	40	*
No child(ren) under 18 at home	6	48	47	
Occupation:				
Manager/Professional	9	53	38	***
Other occupation	5	40	55	
Respondent Earnings in Quartiles:				
Less than \$20,600	3	39	59	*
\$20,600 - \$34,314	6	50	44	
\$34,315 - \$53,000	8	56	37	
More than \$53,000	10	45	45	
Family Income in Quartiles:				
Less than \$28,000	3	32	65	**
\$28,000 - \$49,999	6	51	44	
\$50,000 - \$79,000	6	49	45	
\$80,000 or more	10	52	38	

Significance: ns = not significant; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Percentages total to 100% from left to right except when there is rounding error.

Other factors predicting ambition are examined in Table 8.

- As with employees in general, we find that college-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees who would prefer to work fewer paid and unpaid hours than they currently do are much less likely (40%) to want jobs with more responsibility than those who would like to work longer hours (75%).

It is striking that 80 percent of these prime candidates for promotion would like to work fewer hours than they currently work.

Because we have found that workplace flexibility is critical to an effective workplace in other studies, we wondered if having access to workplace flexibility makes a difference in the desire to advance. We have found in other studies (see FWI's *When Work Works*, [www.whenworkworks.org](http://www.whenworkworks.org)), that employees with access to flexibility are more likely to be engaged and committed, to be satisfied with their jobs, to want to remain with their employers, and to have better mental health. However, flexibility is not related to the desire to advance. Perhaps some forms of flexibility today actually encourage employees to work longer hours, as some employers hope. At some point, work hours on the job, however flexible, so reduce available waking hours off the job that employees' personal and family lives are negatively affected and that is what affects the desire to advance (or not).

College-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees who would prefer to work fewer paid and unpaid hours than they currently do are much less likely (40%) to want jobs with more responsibility than those who would like to work longer hours (75%).

80 percent of these prime candidates for promotion would like to work fewer hours than they currently work.

We also wondered if the other ingredients that we have identified of effective workplaces make a difference. They are job autonomy, learning opportunities and challenges on the job, supervisor support for job success, coworker team support for job success, and involvement in management decision-making. Although all of these factors, like flexibility, are linked with positive job outcomes, they are not linked to the desire to advance. It may be that stressful jobs with very long hours negate the good things that employers do to create effective and productive workplaces.\*

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\* Being work-centric, dual-centric or family-centric did not help to explain Gen-X, Gen-Y, and Boomer college-educated employees' desire to advance.

On the other hand, feeling overworked and multi-tasking are linked in negative ways with the desire to move ahead:

- Among college-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees, only 30 percent of those who very often feel overwhelmed by how much they have to do at work want jobs with more responsibility versus 53 percent of those who rarely or never feel overwhelmed.
- Similarly, only 41 percent of those who very often have to work on too many tasks at the same time want to move into jobs with more responsibility versus 65 percent of employees who never have this experience.
- While only 40 percent of those who are interrupted very often, making it difficult for them to get their work done, want jobs with more responsibility, 59 percent of employees who are never interrupted want to advance.

Among college-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees, only 30 percent of those who feel overwhelmed by how much they have to do at work very often want jobs with more responsibility versus 53 percent of those who rarely or never feel overwhelmed.

In addition, we find that the ambitions of potentially “promotable” employees are diminished by experiences of negative spillover from their jobs into their family lives. Negative spillover includes not having enough time or enough energy for family or other important people in one’s life because of one’s job, not being able to do as good a job as one would like at home, not being able to concentrate on important things in personal or family life because of work, and not being in as good a mood as one would like to be at home because of one’s job.

- Although fully 60 percent of college-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees who experience low levels of negative spillover from job to home would like to have jobs with more responsibility, only 39 percent (21 percentage points less) who experience high levels of negative spillover want jobs with more responsibility. Findings are the same for men and women.

Although fully 60 percent of college-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees who experience low levels of negative spillover from job to home would like to have jobs with more responsibility, only 39 percent who experience high levels of negative spillover want jobs with more responsibility.

In addition,

- 50 percent of those who find it easy or very easy to manage their work, personal and family lives want jobs with more responsibility versus 44 percent who find it difficult or very difficult and 39 percent who find it sometimes easy and sometimes difficult.

It is clear that the way we work today is having an impact on the advancement aspirations of employees.

Managers and professionals and higher-earning employees in the workplace may not present particularly attractive role models for those employees that companies are hoping to move into the management pipeline. They report significantly higher levels of negative job-to-home spillover, more often feel overwhelmed by how much they have to do at work, more often report that they have to work on too many tasks at the same time, more often report that they are interrupted on the job making it difficult for them to get their work done, and have greater difficulty managing their work, personal and family lives. As one employer recently put it, the “bad mood meter” among managers is obvious to those in the pipeline.



**Table 8:** Other Factors Predicting Ambition among College-Educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer Employees

Other Explanatory Factors	% Wanting Job with Less, Same or More Responsibility			Sig.
	Less	Same	More	
Desired Work Hours:				
Fewer Hours	9%	51%	40%	***
Same Hours	2	50	47	
More Hours	2	23	75	
Negative Spillover from Job to Home:				
Low	4	37	60	**
Moderate	5	53	41	
High	14	48	39	
Frequency Felt Overwhelmed by How Much You Had to Do at Work in the Past 3 Months:				
Very often	16	54	30	***
Often	11	49	40	
Sometimes	4	51	45	
Rarely	5	43	53	
Never	0	48	53	
During a Typical Workweek, How Often Have to Work on Too Many Tasks at the Same Time?				
Very often	11	47	41	***
Often	11	53	36	
Sometimes	5	46	49	
Rarely	3	55	42	
Never	2	33	65	
During a Typical Workweek, How Often Interrupted During the Workday Making It Difficult to Get Work Done?				
Very often	10	51	40	**
Often	9	49	42	
Sometimes	6	50	44	
Rarely	4	45	51	
Never	0	41	59	
Difficulty Managing Work, Personal and Family Life:				
Easy/very easy	5	45	50	**
Sometimes easy/sometimes difficult	8	53	39	
Difficult/very difficult	15	40	44	

Significance: ns = not significant; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Percentages total to 100% from left to right except when there is rounding error.

## WHY ARE WOMEN LESS LIKELY TO WANT TO ADVANCE THAN MEN?

We have noted that women are less likely than men to desire jobs with greater responsibility. Why?

Some of the factors we have explored relate directly to women. For example, women are more likely than men to have jobs where they are multi-tasking which in turn is strongly linked to feeling more overwhelmed by how much they have to do at work. Both of these factors are associated with ambitions to advance (Table 8).

Does the fact that women are more likely than men to work a “second shift” at home make a difference? In fact, this does not appear to be the case. Women who *currently* spend more time on family work or take more responsibility for family work are no less likely than other women to want jobs with more responsibility.

Differences related to gender role attitudes among women, however, are significant:

- 33 percent of women who strongly agree that men should earn the money and women should take care of the home and children do not want jobs with greater responsibility versus 41 percent of women who strongly disagree with this statement.

Gender role attitudes among men have no bearing on their ambitions.

As some have observed from interviews and focus groups, it may also be the case 1) that women tend to be more future-oriented than men, thinking about the potentially negative future consequences of taking a job with greater responsibility and 2) that women have broader concerns about the way in which more demanding jobs might disrupt not only their immediate personal and family lives but also other primary social relationships with friends and extended family that they highly value. These are factors that this study did not include but we suspect might make a difference.

The decreasing desire to advance should be of concern to all those who care about leadership and the economy and calls for further study and action. Employers might think about providing ways for women—and men—to step on and off the fast track and about re-defining the fast track all together.

## ARE AMERICANS WORKING LONGER?

Given our finding that employees who work longer paid and unpaid hours than they desire are less likely to want to advance, we next explored the issue of work hours. Remember that fully 61 percent of the total U.S. workforce and 80 percent of college-educated employees in Gen-Y and Gen-X, as well as Boomers, would like to work fewer hours.

There is no question that work hours have increased for many Americans over the past 25 years. In comparing the 2002 NSCW with the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey for *employees who work 20 or more hours per week*,<sup>1</sup> we find that:

- In 2002, men work 49 paid and unpaid hours per week on average at *all jobs* or the only job they have, an average of 2 more hours than the 47 hours men worked in 1977.
- The increase in hours worked by women is even larger. Women work an average of 43.5 paid and unpaid hours per week now at *all jobs*, compared with 39 hours in 1977.

In reality, most people work much longer hours because *unscheduled* hours have been climbing.

In 2002, 72 percent of men and 55 percent of women report that their regularly *scheduled* work-week in their main jobs is 40 hours, with the average being 39.3 hours per week for men and 35 hours for women. In reality, most people work much longer hours because *unscheduled* hours have been climbing.

- In 2002, men worked an average of 46 paid and unpaid hours at their main job (5 hours more than their regularly scheduled hours) and women worked 39.8 hours (3.8 hours more than their regularly scheduled hours).

Men would like to work an average of 38.5 hours, women, an average of 32.5—in other words, more closely paralleling the hours they are scheduled to work than the total hours they actually put in.

When asked about how many hours employees would prefer to work, we find:

- Men would like to work an average of 38.5 hours, women, an average of 32.5—in other words, more closely paralleling the hours they are scheduled to work than the total hours they actually put in.

## DO MANAGERS AND PROFESSIONALS AND HIGHER EARNERS WORK LONGER HOURS AND HAVE MORE STRESSFUL JOBS THAN THOSE IN OTHER OCCUPATIONS?

It is within the context of increasing hours that the desire to advance has declined. Employees are well aware that taking on more responsibility means taking on longer work hours. They have only to look around them, at managers and professionals, to reach that conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> The QES only surveyed workers who worked 20 hours or more; thus we have to restrict the sample of the 2002 NSCW to this group when we make comparisons.

- On average, managers and professionals work 45.3 hours per week at their main/only jobs while employees in other occupations work 41.9 hours.
- Even more striking, employees in the top quartile of the earnings distribution (more than \$53,000 per year) work an average of 49.7 hours per week, 15 hours per week more than those in the bottom quartile of the earnings distribution (less than \$20,600 per year).

There are not only greater time demands associated with job advancement, but often additional stresses and disruptions. For example:

- Half as many managers and professionals (24%) as employees in other occupations (48%) report that they are *never* contacted about work matters outside normal work hours by coworkers, managers/supervisors, or customers/clients. The findings are the same when we compare low- and high-earning employees.
- Overnight business trips can also be disruptive of personal and family life, and higher-level jobs frequently require more business travel. While 87 percent of non-managers and non-professionals said they had not traveled overnight on business in the past three months, only 70 percent of managers and professionals reported no travel.
- The difference by earnings is even more striking: 91 percent of employees in the bottom quartile of earnings (less than \$20,600 per year) reported that they had not engaged in overnight business travel in the past three months versus 62 percent of employees in the top earnings quartile—a difference of nearly 30 percentage points.

Employees in the top quartile of the earnings distribution (more than \$53,000 per year) work an average of 49.7 hours per week.

The visible personal and family downsides to job or career advancement discourage many employees from wanting to get ahead.

### ARE GEN-Y AND GEN-X EMPLOYEES IN 2002 LESS WILLING TO WORK HARD THAN EMPLOYEES IN OTHER GENERATIONS OR THAN EMPLOYEES OF COMPARABLE AGES IN 1977?

Because Gen-X and Gen-Y employees are more likely to be dual- or family-centric than Boomers, the question arises: Are they less willing to work hard? In fact, the popular press has frequently characterized the younger generations as “slackers.”

To explore whether this characterization is accurate, we first compared the work hours of members of different generations. We found:

- Employees in the Boomer and Gen-X generations work the longest (paid and unpaid) hours at their main or only jobs—an average of 45 and 44 hours per week, respectively. There is no statistically significant difference in the hours members of these two generations work.
- Matures and Gen-Y employees work significantly fewer hours—an average of 39 and 35 hours, respectively. It should be remembered that 48 percent of Gen-Y employees are still enrolled in school.

Employees in the Boomer and Gen-X generations work the longest (paid and unpaid) hours at their main or only jobs—an average of 45 and 44 hours per week, respectively.

Secondly, when we compare Gen-Y and Gen-X employees in 2002 with their age counterparts in 1977 to investigate whether younger employees today work shorter hours than employees their age 25 years ago we find:

- There is no statistically significant difference between Gen-Y in 2002 and their age counterparts (18-22 year olds) in 1977 with respect to the total paid *and* unpaid hours they work per week.
- In 2002, Gen-X employees actually work about three more paid and unpaid hours per week than employees of comparable ages in 1977.

In 2002, Gen-X employees actually work about three more paid and unpaid hours per week than employees of comparable ages in 1977.

Clearly, members of Gen-Y and Gen-X are not averse to hard work.

It is important to note that working long hours is not necessarily undesirable, distasteful, or stressful. Indeed, employees who really like their jobs tend to work longer hours (paid and/or unpaid) because they want to. It is when hours consistently exceed personally acceptable levels that problems appear to occur.

### **ARE GEN-Y AND GEN-X EMPLOYEES IN 2002 ANY MORE LIKELY TO LEAVE THEIR CURRENT EMPLOYERS WITHIN THE NEXT YEAR TO SEEK EMPLOYMENT ELSEWHERE THAN EMPLOYEES OF COMPARABLE AGES IN 1977?**

Both Gen-Y and Gen-X employees have also been portrayed as “job hoppers” with little allegiance to their employers.

- We find that Gen-X employees in 2002 are *no* more likely than their age counterparts (23 – 37 years old) in 1977 to plan to leave their current employers within the next year (43% somewhat or very likely).

- In contrast, Gen-Y employees in 2002 are significantly more likely (70% somewhat or very likely) to plan to leave their current employers in the next year than their age counterparts (under 23 years old) in 1977 (52% somewhat or very likely).

This appears to be a *generational* difference—perhaps related to the fact that employees of Gen-Y age today are more likely to be attending college or junior college while moving in and out of the labor force than their counterparts 25 years ago, perhaps due to lowered expectations of long-term jobs with the same employer because of the downsizing experiences of their parents, but perhaps also to higher expectations on the part of Gen-Y employees about the kinds of jobs they find acceptable. Gen-Y appears to be a choosier generation posing more challenges for retention.

Gen-Y employees in 2002 are significantly more likely (70% somewhat or very likely) to plan to leave their current employers in the next year than their age counterparts (under 23 years old) in 1977 (52% somewhat or very likely).

## DO EMPLOYEES WHO WANT JOBS WITH MORE OR LESS RESPONSIBILITY FEEL THAT THEY CAN FIND THESE JOBS WITH THEIR CURRENT EMPLOYERS?

Not necessarily.

- More than half (52%) of employees who would like to have jobs with greater responsibility are “somewhat” or “very” likely to seek employment elsewhere in the coming year, suggesting that these employees feel that their current employers do not or cannot offer desirable opportunities for advancement.
- Interestingly, 44 percent of employees who would like to move into jobs with less responsibility are also “somewhat” or “very” likely to seek employment elsewhere in the coming year. While promotion opportunities may be limited, it is not clear why employers cannot accommodate employees who for whatever reason want to have jobs with less responsibility—assuming they provide added value.

Among employees who want to stay in jobs at the same level of responsibility, the majority (73%) are satisfied staying with their current employers.

More than half (52%) of employees who would like to have jobs with greater responsibility are “somewhat” or “very” likely to seek employment elsewhere in the coming year, suggesting that these employees feel that their current employers do not or cannot offer desirable opportunities for advancement.

## IN CONCLUSION

Today's workplace is a far different workplace than in the past. Work has become faster paced, 24/7 and fiercely competitive in this global economy.

Findings from *Generation and Gender* make it clear that the workforce has changed too. Nowhere is this trend more evident than in the dramatic decrease in the numbers of employees, especially those who are college educated, who want to advance. Especially important are the findings revealing that the very large numbers of those who want to work fewer hours and those who are experiencing feelings of overwork are much less likely to want to advance than other employees. Clearly the way we work today is taking a toll on the pipeline of talent for American business. The findings of this study are a clarion call for rethinking work and rethinking advancement.

## APPENDIX 1: GENERATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

- Employees in the Boomer (post-war 38 – 57 year olds) and Mature (58 or more year olds) generations are more likely to be women (52% and 53%, respectively) than men (48% and 47%, respectively). In contrast, employees in Gen-X (23 – 37 year olds) and Gen-Y (18 – 22 year olds) are more likely to be men (57% in both generations) than women (43%). Why this pattern? Men tend to retire earlier and women are more likely to take time off for childbearing and childrearing.
- As everyone knows from firsthand observation, the workforce has become more racially and ethnically diverse. The proportion of white, non-Hispanic employees varies significantly by generation. While 80 percent of Matures and 79 percent of Boomers are white, non-Hispanic, only 70 percent of Gen-X and 68 percent of Gen-Y are.
- Perhaps less well known is that each generation is becoming much better educated as judged by the rate of high school and college completion. Statistics on college completion at any given point in time are difficult to interpret because many members of younger generations of employees—Gen-X (21%) and Gen-Y (fully 48%)—are still in school. Continuing education among Gen-Y and Gen-X employees obviously places constraints upon their workforce participation. However, many need employment to cover educational costs and also seek quality employment to obtain valuable work experience.
- Marital status also varies significantly by generation. Matures (64%) and Boomers (70%) are most likely to be legally married, followed by Gen-X (53%) and Gen-Y (only 11%). Members of Gen-Y (12%) and Gen-X (11%) are much more likely to be living with someone as a couple—that is, to have a domestic partner—than older employees (4%). Matures are much more likely (19%) than others (1%) to be widowed. And Mature women are much more likely (30%) than Mature men (5%) to be widowed. Partly because their husbands have died and partly because of divorce not followed by remarriage, Mature women are also less likely (47%) than Mature men (82%) to live in a couple. Among married employees, Boomers are most likely (82%) to have spouses who are employed for pay versus 61 percent of Matures, 79 percent of Gen-Y and 74 percent of Gen-X.
- Partly as a function of differences in marital status, household composition also varies by generation. Only 64 percent of Gen-Y employees live with any family members (spouse, partner, children, and/or other relatives) at home versus 84 percent of Gen-X, 88 percent of Boomers, and 77 percent of Matures. Parental status also varies by generation: only 7 percent of Mature and 15 percent of Gen-Y employees have children under 18 at home compared with 55 percent of Gen-X and 48 percent of Boomer employees.



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## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The research findings reported here are drawn from the Families and Work Institute National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW). The NSCW is conducted every five years, beginning in 1992 and most recently in 2002. This representative sample of approximately 3,500 workers includes both wage and salaried employees, self-employed workers, and business owners. The data presented here pertain only to wage and salaried employees, ranging in number from 2,800-2,900 across the three administrations of the survey.

In addition to the National Study of the Changing Workforce, we sometimes include data from the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey (QES) conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, which was commissioned by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. A number of questions in the NSCW parallel questions in the QES, making historical comparisons possible. The 25-years separating the 2002 NSCW and 1977 QES represents what demographers typically consider a generation. Visit [www.familiesandwork.org](http://www.familiesandwork.org) for more information.

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