

**Family Life and Work Life**  
*An Uneasy Balance*

*by Roger Sauvé, People Patterns Consulting*  
*January 2009*



## Foreword

Sage elders have always been the repository of insightful thought. One observation that has resonated strongly with me came from Gandalf in *Lord of the Rings* when he told one of the Hobbits: “*All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.*” In today’s world, managing the tension between career time and family time seems to be getting tougher rather than easier. In adding its voice to the dialogue with this paper, The Vanier Institute continues its tradition of not only laying out the facts, but also asking the all important “And so what” question, which puts those facts into a useful context for all those involved: employers, governments, and individual family members. We hope you find it helpful in finding that elusive work-family balance.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allan D. MacKay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and 'K'.

Allan D. MacKay

Former President, The Vanier Institute of the Family



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## Executive Summary and Highlights

Families are changing and so are the organizations for which they work. Families need and want the work that employers provide and employers need the workers to produce goods and services for sale and distribution. It is a two-way street.

This report highlights the dynamic relationship between these two entities and examines whether or not Canadians are achieving an acceptable balance between family life and work life. The result seems to be an uneasy balance.

- This report concludes that while many families are satisfied with their family life and work life arrangements, a growing number are clearly not. This dissatisfaction often negatively impacts families and their employers. A looming labour shortage will likely worsen the situation.
- Persons who live in family households comprise 84% of the total supply of Canadian labour. The last decade has seen rising labour participation by all family members, with the largest increase among female lone-parent families and wives with young children. Flat hourly earnings are leading more family members into the paid workforce.
- Family members are spending more time on work and work-related activities. Commuting times are increasing and modern technology has blurred the lines between work and family.
- It is undeniable, more work time clearly means less family time. The average time spent with family on a typical work day has shrunk by about three-quarters of an hour, from 250 minutes per day in 1986 to 206 minutes in 2005 - a drop of 18%.
- Women still do most of the juggling in bringing about a balance between family time and work time. Women are much more likely to work part-time, simply drop out of the paid workforce or work two-jobs to accommodate family needs.
- The job market is strong but is slowly shifting towards more temporary employment and increasing overtime, both with or without pay. Organizations are continually re-engineering, rotating workers, integrating functional groups, downsizing and re-organizing the workplace.
- The ongoing stress and change is leading to more dissatisfaction, more time off for illness and family reasons, more workers who are thinking of leaving their current employers and lower ratings for their employers.

**There is more that can be done to improve the *uneasy balance*.**

Families and employers are encouraged to continue working together to strengthen their partnership with a view of building and/or maintaining healthy work life and family life relationships. Governments at all levels are similarly encouraged to take a leadership role in establishing the context and opportunities for continuing dialogue, discussion and policy development in this critically important area.



## 1 – It’s a fact ... family members make up most of the labour force

Most businesses are family businesses. The reality is that 84% of Canadian workers currently live in households with two or more persons with whom they are related by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption.

Family heads (or the main statistical reference person as per Statistics Canada) comprise over one-third (36%) of the total workforce. The spouses of the family heads make up another 30% of all workers. Children of any age, who still live with their parents, are considered as part of these “economic” families and encompass another 14% of the total workforce. Digging deeper, 4% of the workforce are other relatives living with a family head.

The term “unattached individual” is reserved for the 16% of the labour force who live on their own or with someone with whom they are not related. But many, if not most of these people are members of extended families.

### And so what?

The relationship between families and employers can only be understood if we begin by acknowledging the overlap and dependence between family life and work life. Families need and want their workplaces to be successful and secure. Employers, on the other hand, rely on families for the health and well being of their current and future employees. This mutual appreciation, backed by supporting actions, is at the root of healthy and sustainable work life relationships.



## 2 –More family members doing paid work

Labour force participation rates are up... in some cases way up. The participation rate among all family members is at a record high and, dual-income earning couples make up a growing share of Canadian families.

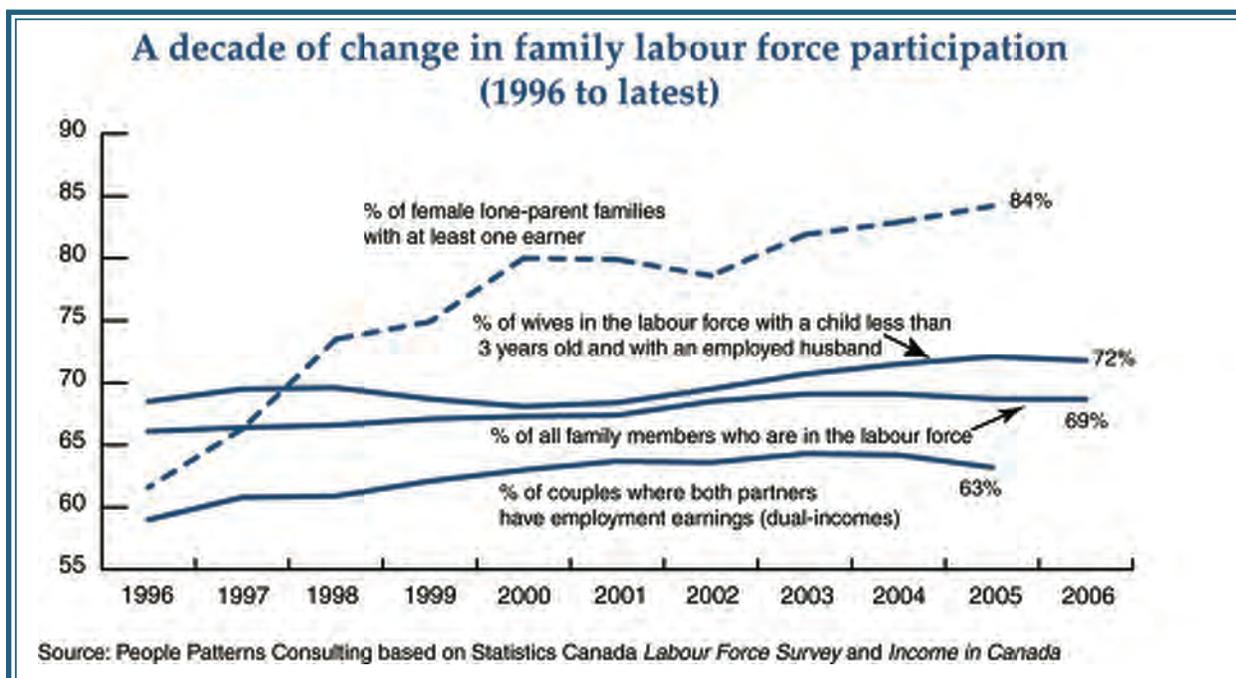
The participation rate of married or common-law mothers with a child less than three years of age, who also have an employed husband, is now at a record 72%. This rate has been above 50% every year for almost a quarter of a century. The participation rate among mothers whose youngest child aged 6-15 is at 84% and has been above 50% for at least three decades.

The sharpest increase in labour force participation is for female lone-parent families wherein 84% of these families have at least one earner, up from 62% a decade ago.\* Changes in government policies and a healthier job market have contributed to this shift. Even so, about one-third of these families are in a low-income (poverty) situation.

### And so what?

The “wife stays home while hubby goes to work” stereotype disappeared several decades ago. For better or worse, dual earner families are today’s new norm, and one that is likely irreversible. The roles and expectations of both men and women with respect to their families have been fundamentally altered. The variety of ways in which families organize their lives and their daily activities has also changed, as have the supports they require to carry out their family responsibilities.

\* It should be noted that the employed person in this type of household is most likely the mother but it could also be a child or another relative living in the same household.



### 3 – “Core Age” group key to current and future labour supply

The degree of participation in the paid labour force varies significantly by age and family status. Taking all family members aged 15 and up, the level of labour force participation has risen from 62% in 1976, to 66% in 1996 and to a record of about 69% during each of the last five years. (See chart on previous page)

The most active are family heads and their partners (both 71%), followed by their children (66%) who are still living at home and then by other relatives (53%) living in the same household.

By age, the level of participation peaks for those aged 25-54 when 86% of all family members are in the labour force. The participation rate falls sharply for those aged 55-64 (59%) and then falls to less than 10% for those aged 65 and over.

#### And so what?

The high labour force participation by the “core age” group is significant given its current and future size. Over the last 20 years, the number of workers aged 25-54 has grown by almost 40%. A recent report by People Patterns Consulting<sup>i</sup> projects that this “core age” group will grow by less than 10% during the next 20 years. The end result could be a worsening labour shortage.

New challenges confront employers faced with an aging workforce and families faced with aging members. In the face of a pending wave of retirements, fewer workers will be available to maintain and/or enhance existing supports for an aging population. Potential labour shortages will, by extension, place additional pressure on families to spend more time in the labour market while, in all likelihood, providing additional care and support to aging members.

<b>Labour force Participation rates over the life course - % of each age group in the labour force, 2006</b>					
	Age groups				
	Total 15+	15-24	25-54	55-64	65+
All members of economic families	69%	65%	86%	59%	9%
Family head	71	76	86	59	10
Spouse of head	71	81	88	61	11
Child of head	66	62	82	56	*
Other relative of head	53	65	80	52	4
Unattached individuals	60	77	86	56	6

Source: People Patterns Consulting based on Statistics Canada *Labour Force Survey*

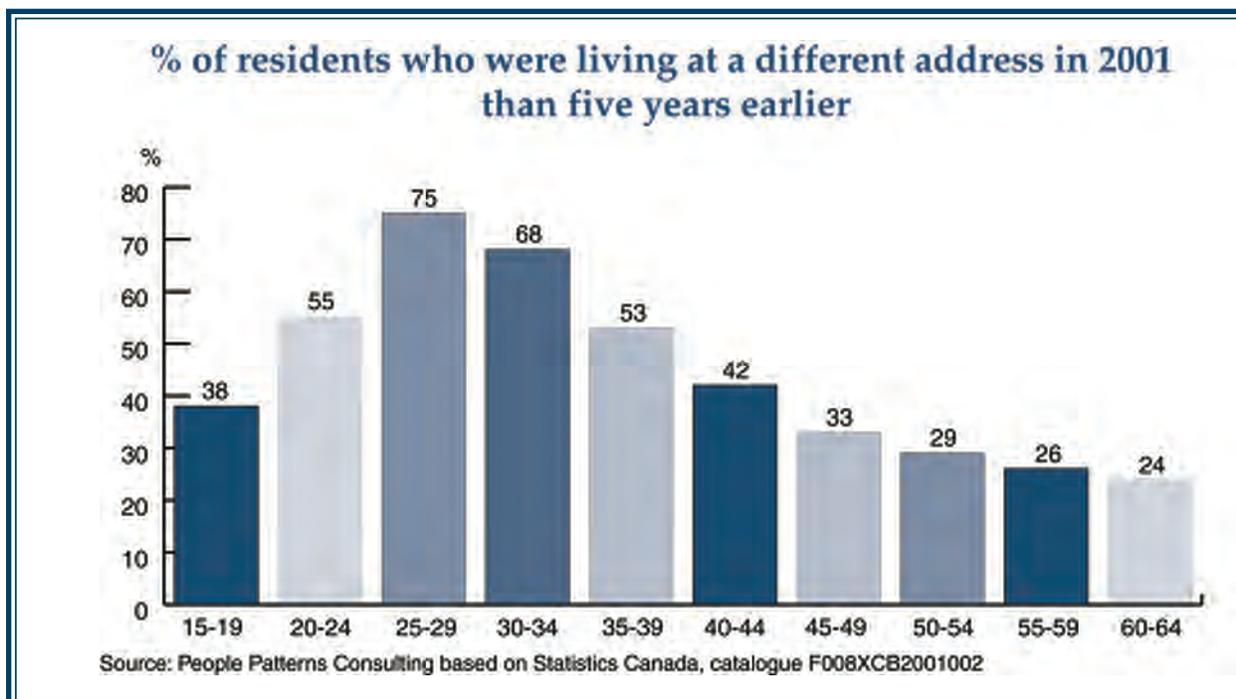
## 4 - Families who move ... mostly move up in earnings

Canadians move between provinces for personal and economic reasons. Between 1996 and 2001, about 35% of the total population moved within their own province, about 3% moved between provinces and about 4% moved from another country for a grand total of 42%. Those most likely (75%) to move were aged 25-29. Within this age group, about 85% of those that were legally married had moved during the five-year period being reported. From 2000 to 2005, about 400,000 families moved to a different province and many more moved within their own provinces.

A Statistics Canada report<sup>ii</sup> “found that inter-provincial mobility is associated with statistically significant and often large changes in individuals’ earnings.” Over a three year period, the average earnings of *movers* grew twice as fast as those who did not move. Movers from Newfoundland and Labrador saw their earnings grow almost 30% faster than did those who did not move. It is noteworthy that the earnings of men improved much more than did the earnings of women, which the study suggested “were consistent with a family-based earnings model whereby women tend to move in support of their spouses careers, even when this results in a decline of their own earnings.”

### And so what?

Mobility is generally viewed as a good idea among employers. Currently, governments at all levels are developing new trade agreements to facilitate the movement of labour in an effort to address regional differences in the labour supply and demand. But mobility also creates challenges for Canada’s families. The critical links of support and affection that bind families are often strained by distance. Of particular concern are the challenges that families will face in their care giving roles as they endeavour to help support the needs of aging members remotely.



## 5 – Immigrants ... family links are important to residence selection

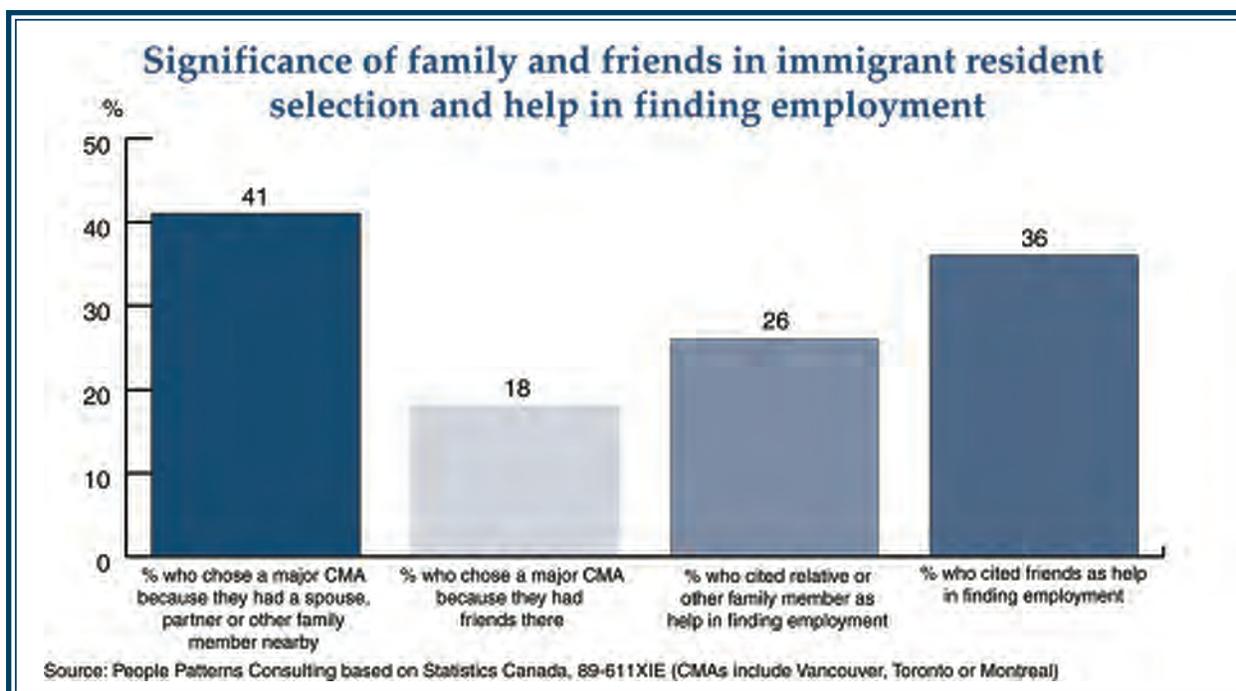
International immigration is now the key component of labour force growth. Based on Census data, about 70% of the net growth in the labour force in the 1990s was due to international immigration<sup>iii</sup>. By 2001, some 20% of the labour force was comprised of persons born outside of Canada.

The Federal Government has a target of some 240,000 to 265,000 immigrants to be admitted to Canada in 2007. This is the highest target in 25 years and reflects Canada’s “extraordinary” labour market requirements<sup>iv</sup>. Over one-quarter of these newcomers will be admitted to unite or re-unite families. Others are to be admitted on a refugee status or for humanitarian reasons. The majority will be admitted based on the economic needs of Canadian employers - of these immigrants, about three-quarters will be married.

For all immigrants, families play a major role in the settlement process. Over 40% of immigrants chose to live in a specific CMA (Census Metropolitan Area) because they had a spouse, partner or other family member nearby another 18% did so because they had friends there. Families (26%) and friends (36%) also provide much needed help in finding employment.

### And so what?

Employers looking to immigration as a means of addressing labour shortages are encouraged to remember one key factor: family matters. Research has made it abundantly clear that one of the most important determinants of settlement location among immigrants is proximity to family and friends. Workplaces that acknowledge and support the integration of family and community living are likely to experience greater success attracting and retaining international workers.

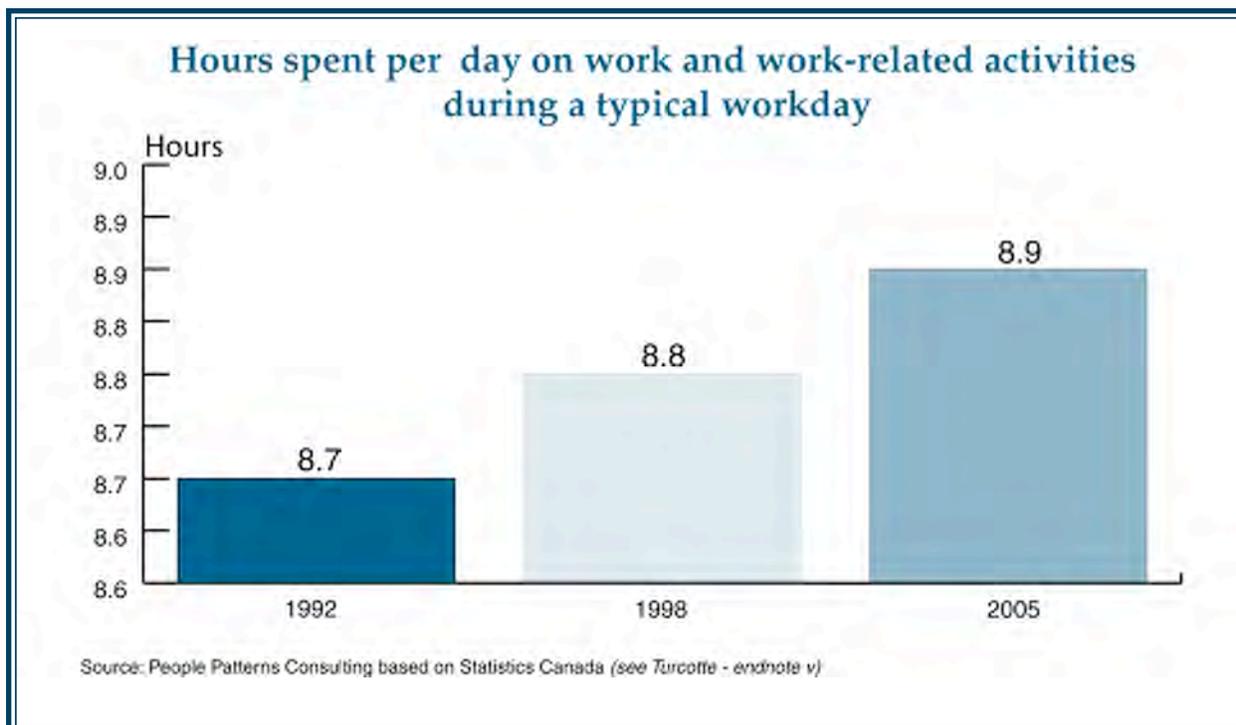


## 6 – More time allocated to work ... directly and indirectly

A detailed Statistics Canada report suggests that workers spent an extra 13 minutes a day on work and work-related activities in a typical workday in 2005 compared to 1992. (This is an extra 54 hours per year.) Most of the increase was due to additional commuting time, which averaged 63 minutes (round trip) in 2005, up nine minutes from 1992<sup>v</sup>. The rest is likely explained by additional working time at home as improved office technology has extended the links between work life and family life. In 2005, just over half of all households were connected to a high-speed Internet<sup>vi</sup> and another 14% had dial-up access. Virtually all households now have a telephone with over two-thirds of them carrying a cellular phone. An AP-Ipsos<sup>vii</sup> survey found that 20% of Americans bring their computers with them on vacation and 80% bring their cell phones.

### And so what?

Modern communication technologies have eliminated many of the physical boundaries that once separated the workplace and the home. This may be beneficial for family members wishing to stay in touch, co-ordinate busy schedules, or complete job assignments under flexible arrangements. But it also raises concerns about the extent to which job demands encroach on personal time, or adversely affect the amount and quality of interaction between parents and children, spouses, or other family members.



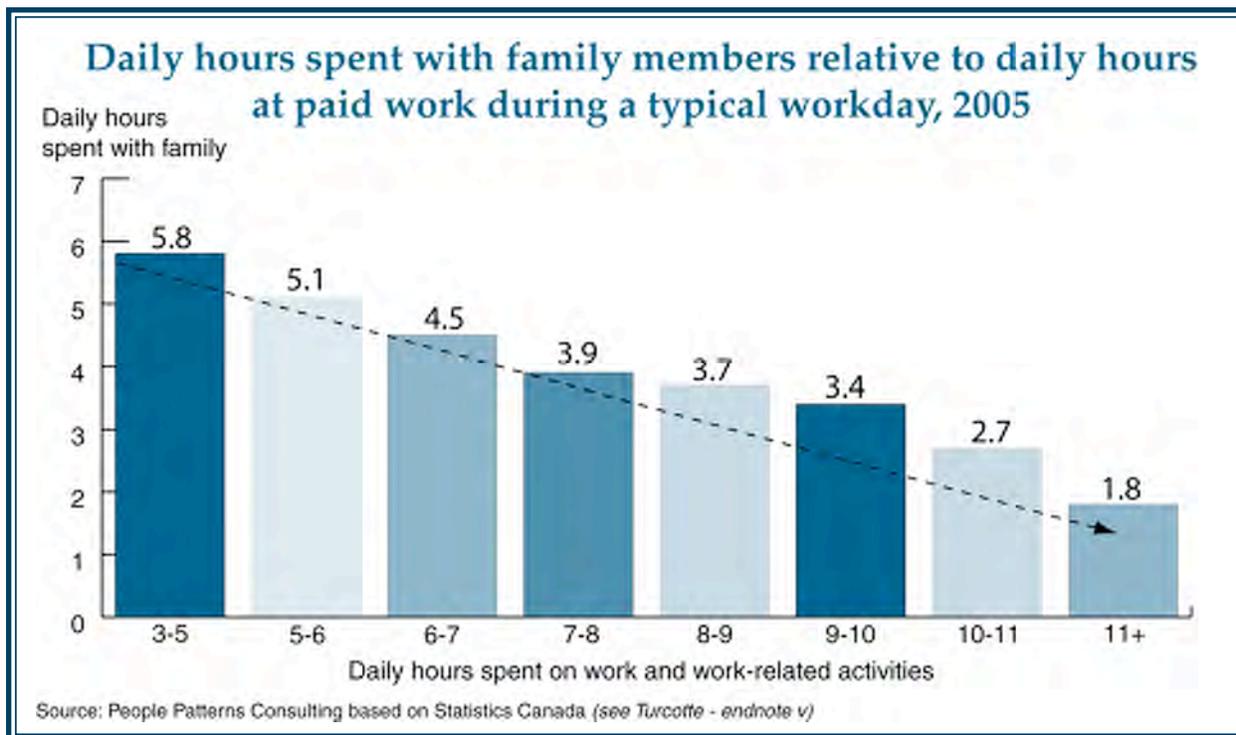
## 7 – As work time increases ... family time falls

There is a direct trade-off between work and family time. In 2005, people who spent 3 to 5 hours per day doing paid work and work-related activities had 5.8 hours of family time. Those with 7 to 8 hours of paid work spent 3.9 hours with their family, and people with 11 hours or more of paid work had, on average, just 1.8 hours of family time. According to a recent Statistics Canada report, “it is not surprising that the amount of time spent at work is the factor that correlates most strongly with time spent with family: as work hours rise, family time falls.”<sup>viii</sup> In this context, “time spent with family” comprises the time workers are with their families while engaged in activities other than paid work, personal care or sleep.

The same report found that the average time spent with family on a typical working day has decreased significantly over the past two decades, from 4.2 hours per day in 1986 to 3.4 hours in 2005 - a decline of about three-quarters of an hour per day or about 18%. On an annual basis, the reduced time with family is equivalent to about five 40-hour work weeks. The largest declines in percentage terms were among those aged 45 and over (-22%) and among lone-parents with at least one child under five years of age (-27%). The latter is the same group that had the most rapid jump in labour force participation.

### And so what?

The “trade-off” between work *time* and family *time* should not be seen as a trade off between work and family. For many families, more hours on the job brings a welcomed increase to the household budget – to pay the rent, buy the groceries, pay down debt, save for a child’s education, or simply enjoy a few “extras.”



## 8 – Paid work and housework combined ... lone-parents do the most

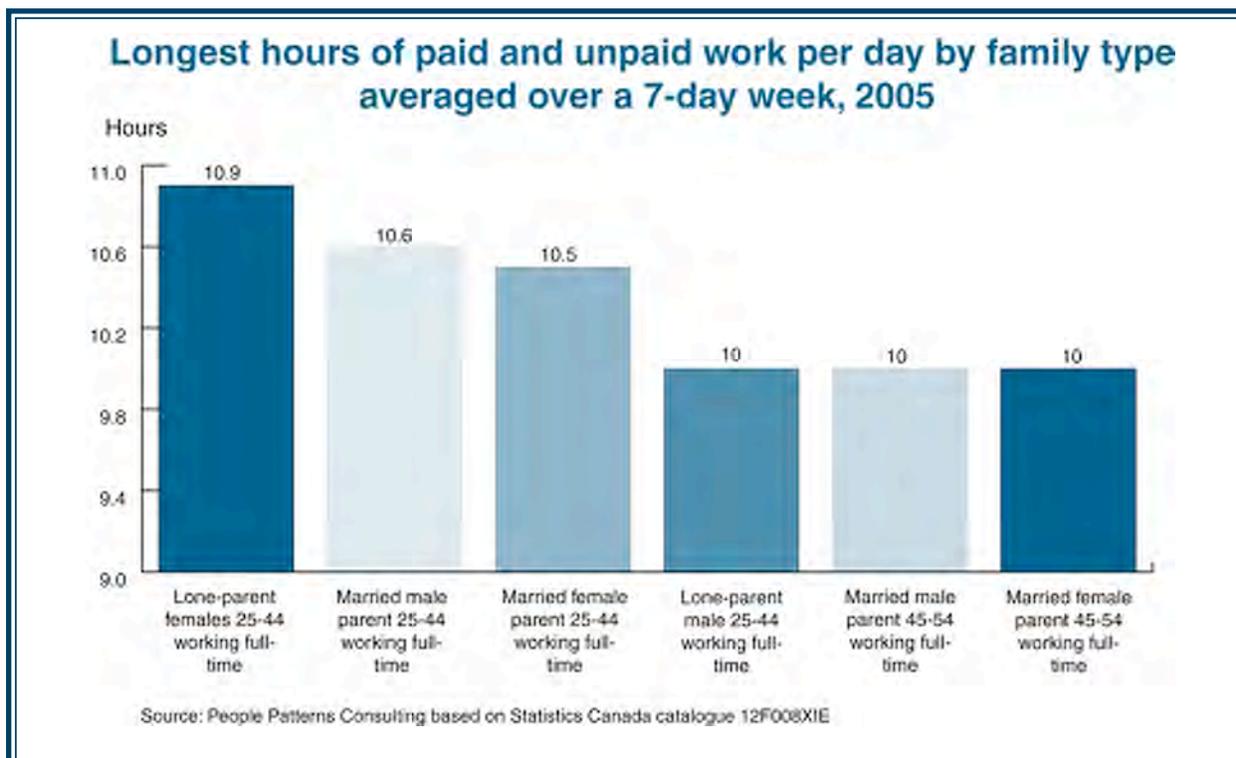
There is paid work (including paid and unpaid overtime and commuting). There is also unpaid work relating to households plus civic and voluntary service. Household work includes cooking, washing up, housekeeping, maintenance, shopping and child care.

Not surprisingly, those working the longest hours (10.9 hours of paid and unpaid work per day averaged over a 7-day week) are female lone-parents aged 25-44 with full-time employment. A married male parent aged 25-44 working full-time comes in second (10.6 hours) followed closely by a female in the same situation (10.5 hours) - a difference of six minutes a day. A bigger difference between the latter two is that the husbands put in an average of 7.4 hours per day at paid work while wives put in 5.6 hours. The roles are reversed relative to unpaid work, with wives doing more and husbands doing less.

Overall, the group working the longest hours is aged 35-44 who, on average, do 5.4 hours of paid work plus another four hours of unpaid work in a day. They also put in the most time on child care (0.9 hours as a primary activity). Not surprisingly, this group has the least “free time”: 4.3 hours per day. Seniors (65+) have the most ‘free time’ (7.6 hours per day) and are tied with those aged 55-64 for doing the most volunteer activities (30 minutes per day).

### And so what?

The need that families have to meet their functional responsibilities within the labour market and at home is vital to understanding the complexities of how time is allocated. The 25 to 54 age groups, especially those with children and who work full-time are the most time stressed, constantly juggling to find an acceptable balance between their various responsibilities and aspirations.



## 9 – The Sandwich Generation ... caring for both kids and parents

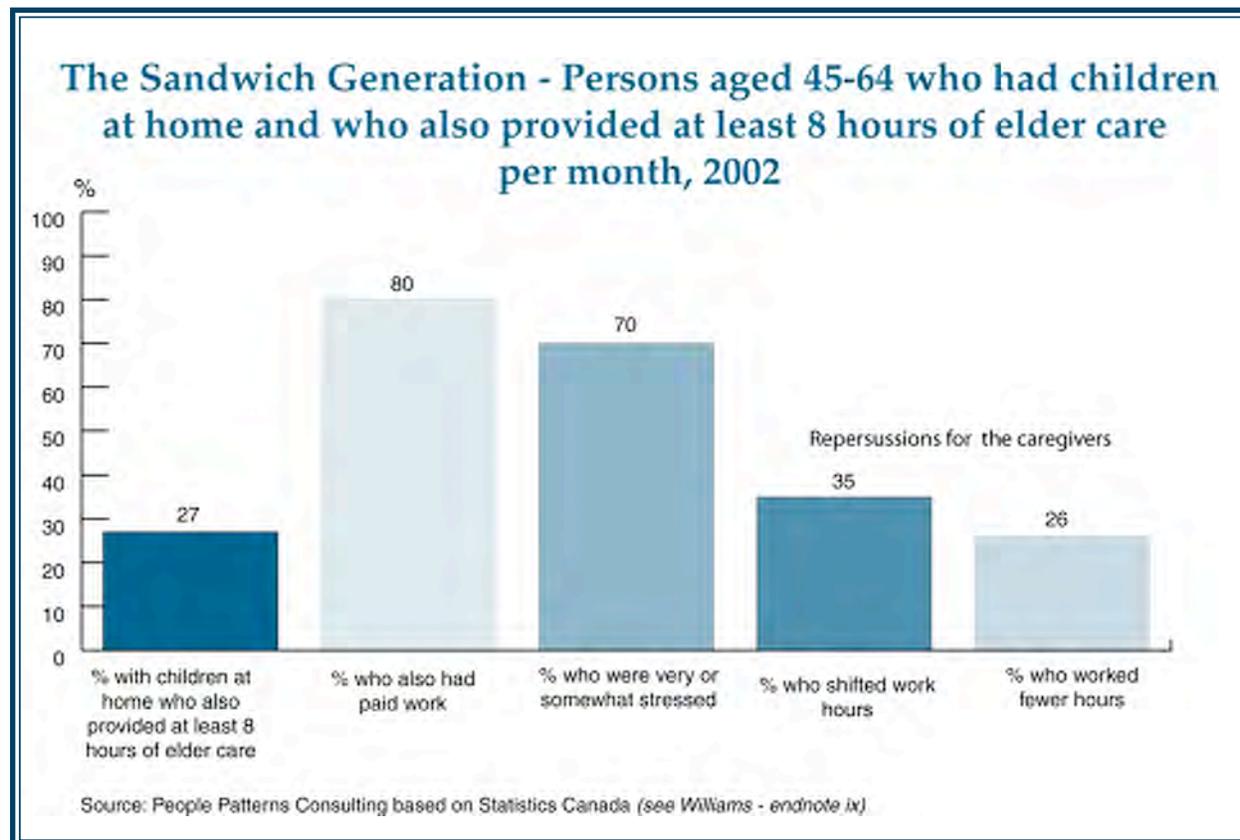
And there is the *Sandwich Generation* — people providing ongoing care and support to children and older parents or other relatives. Care-giving between generations is not new. What is new is that most caregivers (usually women) are now also doing paid work outside the home. In 2002, about 80% of the sandwiched workers had paid work.

According to Statistics Canada<sup>ix</sup>, some 712,000 individuals aged 45-64, who have children under the age of 25 living at home, were also providing elder care. Most of this care was for parents or parents-in-law, but about one-quarter was caring for other relatives, friends, neighbours or co-workers. One-quarter of caregivers were caring for more than one senior. The kind of help provided includes doing outdoor or indoor chores or providing assistance such as bathing, dressing or feeding.

### And so what?

About 70% of the *Sandwich Generation* felt very or somewhat stressed as a result of their care giving responsibilities. Often, people providing care to children and seniors adjust the work hours (35%) or work fewer hours (26%) to accommodate needs of their families.

The size of the *Sandwich Generation* could expand substantially to the extent that an aging population results in rising needs for elder care.



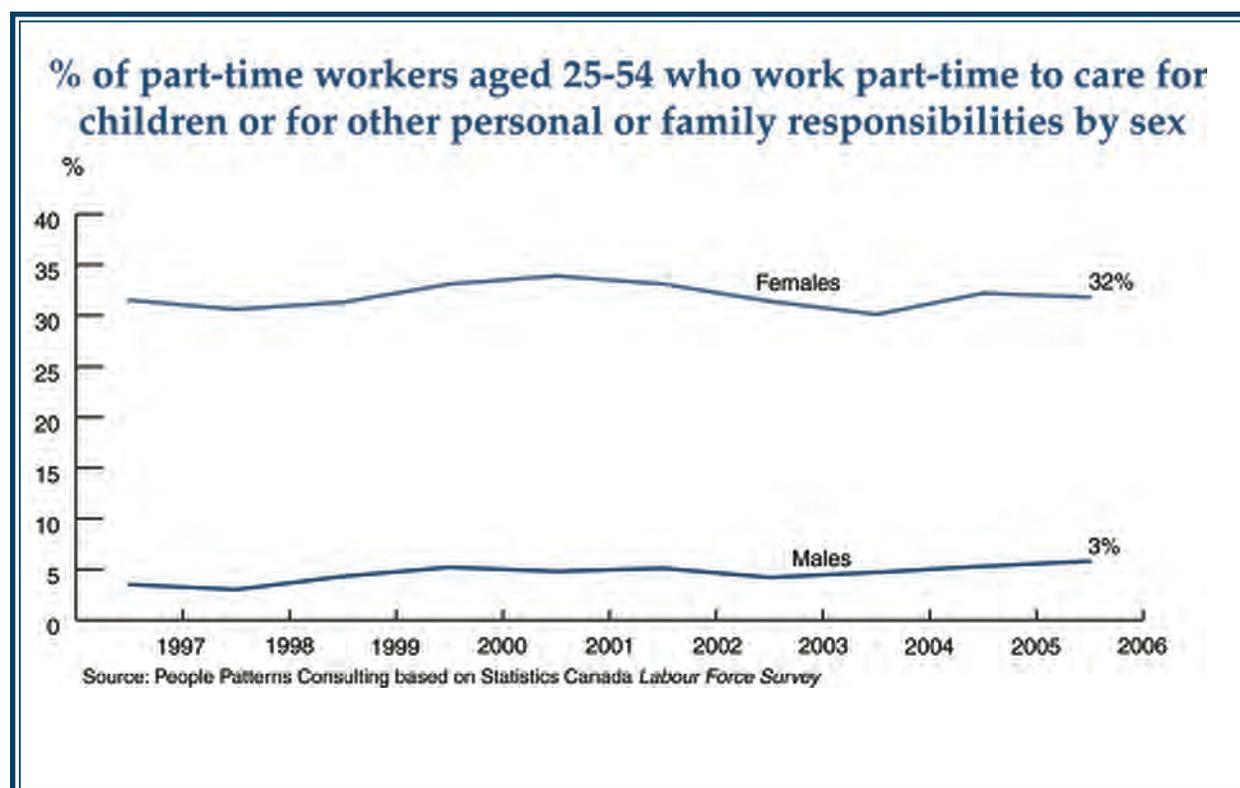
## 10 – Reality check ... women still do most of the juggling

There are many reasons for working part-time. In 2006, over one-quarter of those aged 25-54 who were working part-time were doing so in order to care for children or to meet other personal or family responsibilities. Females were much more likely (32%) to be working part-time for these reasons than were males (6%). Among this same age group, about one-quarter of those who voluntarily left their jobs and who remained out of the workforce did so for personal or family reasons (34% for women and 8% for men).

Regardless of the reason, part-time workers have fewer non-wage benefits (only 42% have any benefits at all compared to 77% for full-time workers<sup>x</sup>) they also have lower incomes. In 2006, about one-third of those aged 15 and up who worked part-time did so because they were going to school. Another one-third just preferred part-time work over full-time work. About one-quarter were working part-time because of weak economic conditions<sup>xi</sup>.

### And so what?

Families alter their levels of labour force participation to best accommodate their needs and aspirations. Women are far more likely than men to do this type of adjusting. For some women, these decisions negatively impact income and career advancement. Options that create more job flexibility for both men and women and that allow them to provide essential care services without jeopardizing employment prospects are essential to addressing this challenge.



## 11 – Flat hourly earnings ... offset with more earners per family

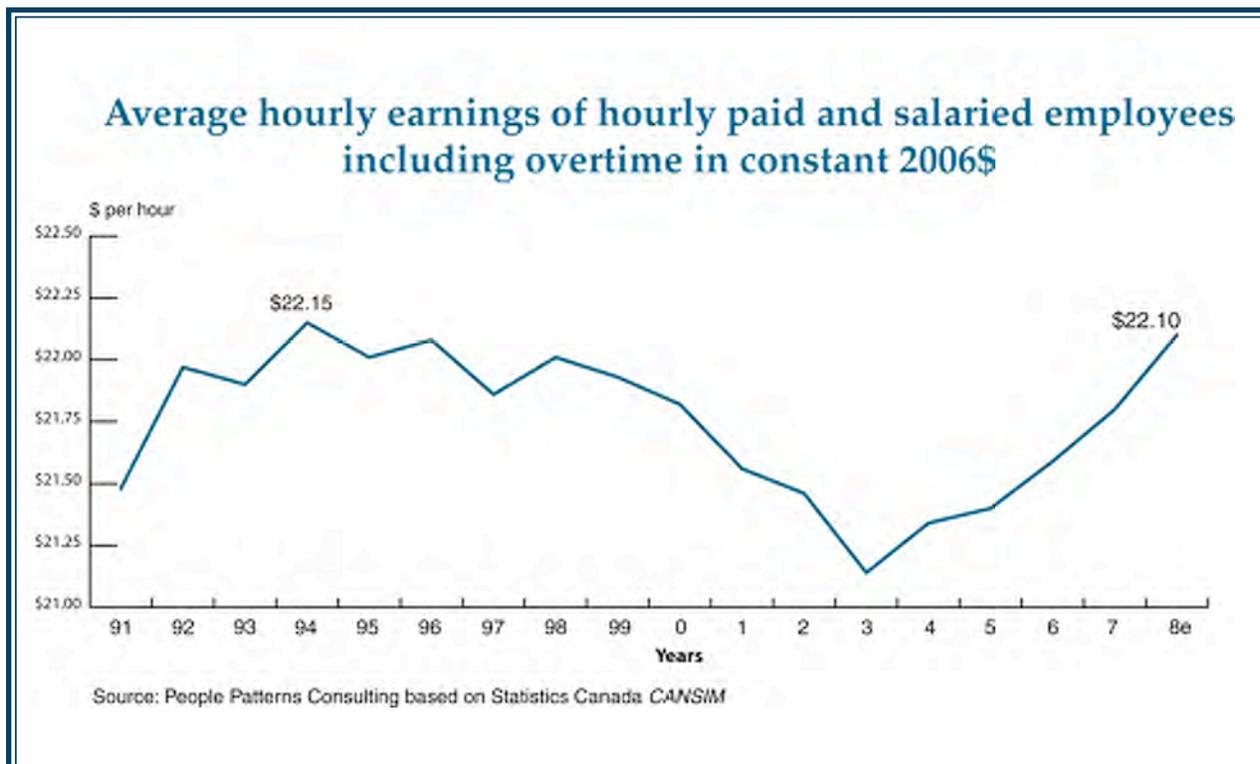
Over the past 15 years, hourly earnings have barely kept pace with rising prices. In 2008, average hourly earnings of all workers stood at about \$22.10 – down by a nickel since 1994. Nonetheless, families have made income gains over this period – mainly because they have increased the number of earners they send to the job market.

In 2006, incomes, after government transfers and after paying income taxes, averaged \$70,800 for families of two or more - up by 24% since 1991. This rise reflects the growing number of earners per family.

Among couple families with children, an average family with two earners brought in \$21,000 more income than an average family with only one earner. This is the largest second-earner contribution over the quarter-century for which this data is available.

### And so what?

The increase in family incomes has come mostly from more family members holding more paid jobs. In some instances families are doing this just to keep up, in others they are producing rising incomes. In both instances families are now busier both at home and at work.



## 12 – More overtime ... with more than half being unpaid

One of the big work stressors is working overtime. More workers are putting in overtime. Currently, some 23% of all employees work overtime in a typical week and about 12% of all employees work unpaid overtime. As such, over half of all overtime hours are worked on an unpaid basis. These numbers have risen over the last decade.

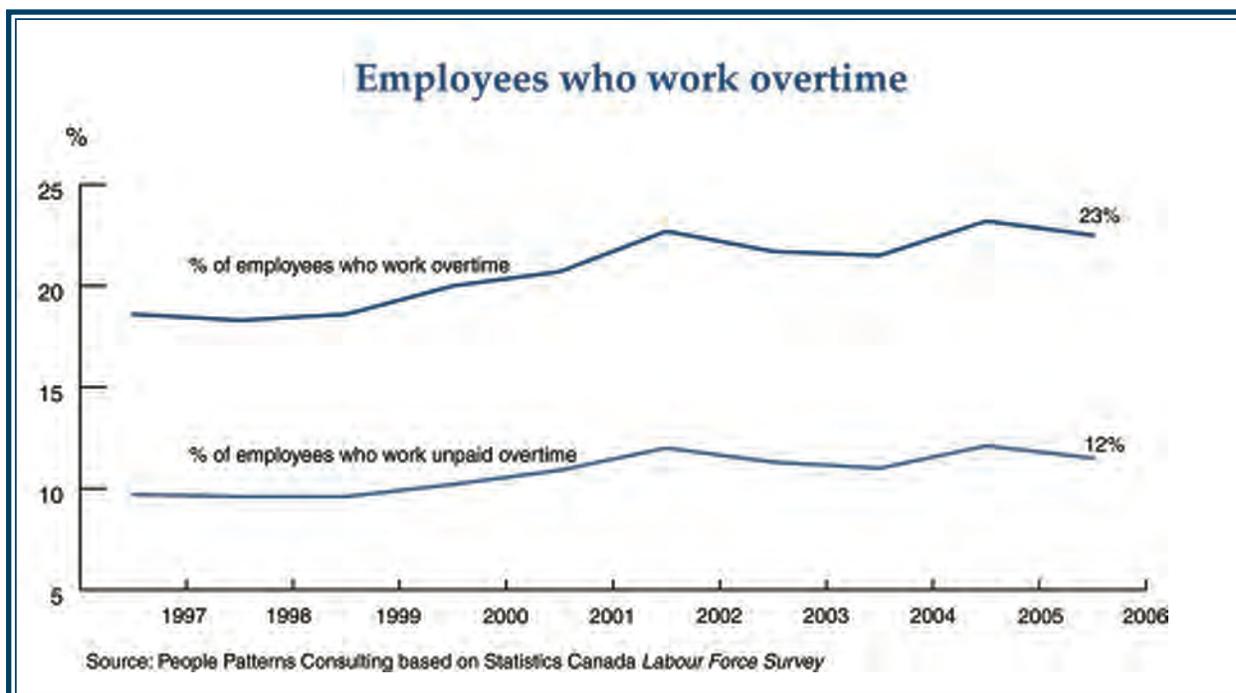
Men (26%) are much more likely to put in overtime than are women (19%). Men who work overtime do so for an average of 9.3 hours per week while women work an average of 7.4 hours. The most surprising part of this story is that 62% of the overtime put in by women is unpaid compared to 44% among men.

The most overtime is done by those in the “core labour force” aged 25-54, with 29% of men in this group working overtime and 22% of women doing so. Senior managers (50%) and teachers (44%) are the most likely to put in overtime hours.

Some of this overtime is being done at home. In 2001, about 17% of workers did overtime at home, of which over 80% was unpaid<sup>xiii</sup>.

### And so what?

Overtime work, notably work that is unplanned, can create tremendous stress on families. The kids may be at home alone, children may miss out on scheduled activities, meals may be late or rushed and parents may miss out on their own activities. Employers may appreciate the overtime, especially the free time by hourly workers, but the end product could be negative in terms of lost days and lower productivity due to family stress and worker burnout.

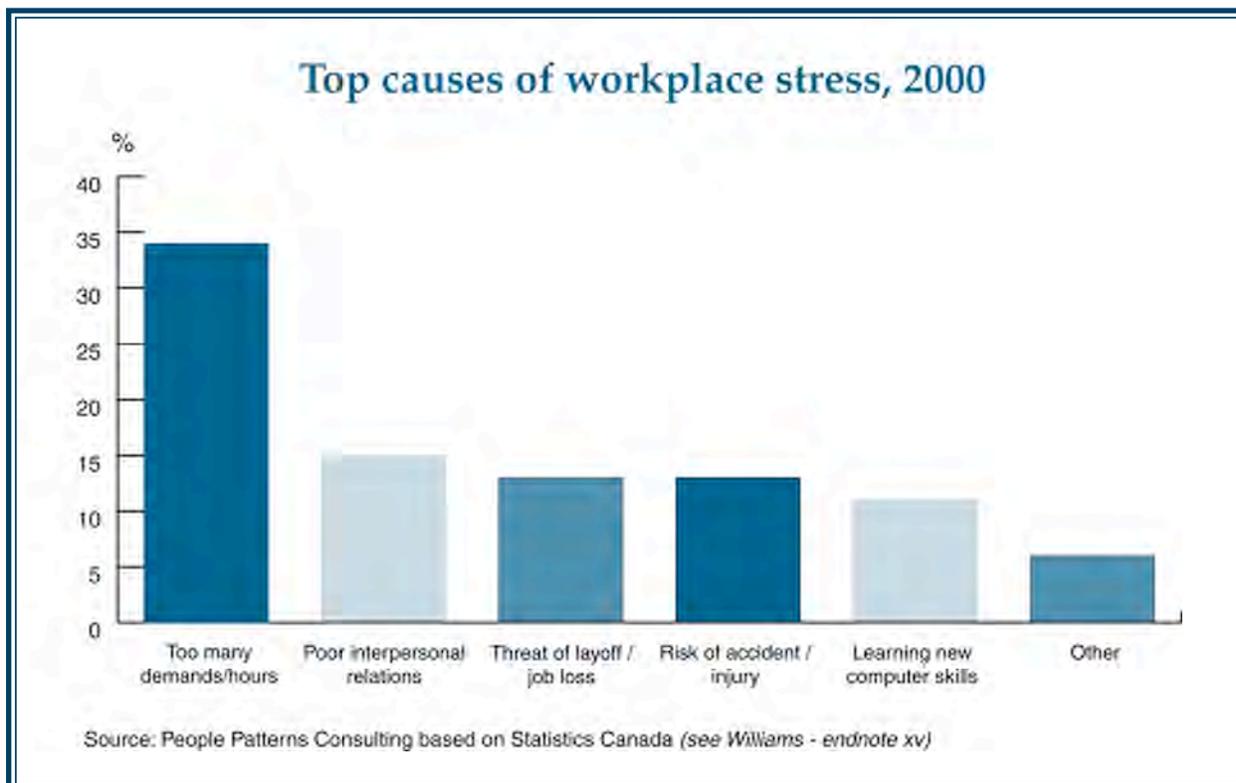


### 13 – Sources of stress... too many hours and too many demands

Over one-third of all workers list “too many demands and too many hours” as the main source of stress<sup>xiii</sup> in the workplace. Persons most likely to cite this factor are workers in health occupations (50%), in management, social science and education occupations (all 48%), full-time workers who put in 41 or more hours per week (47%) and women aged 45-54 (41%). Generally, women are more pre-occupied with too many demands and too little time than are men.

#### And so what?

The sources of workplace stress vary by worker, occupation and by family circumstances. Workplace stress affects not only the health and well-being of individual employees but can lead to poor business outcomes including high levels of absenteeism and sick leave, poor employee retention and high turnover.



## 14 – Organizations make many changes ... for efficiency

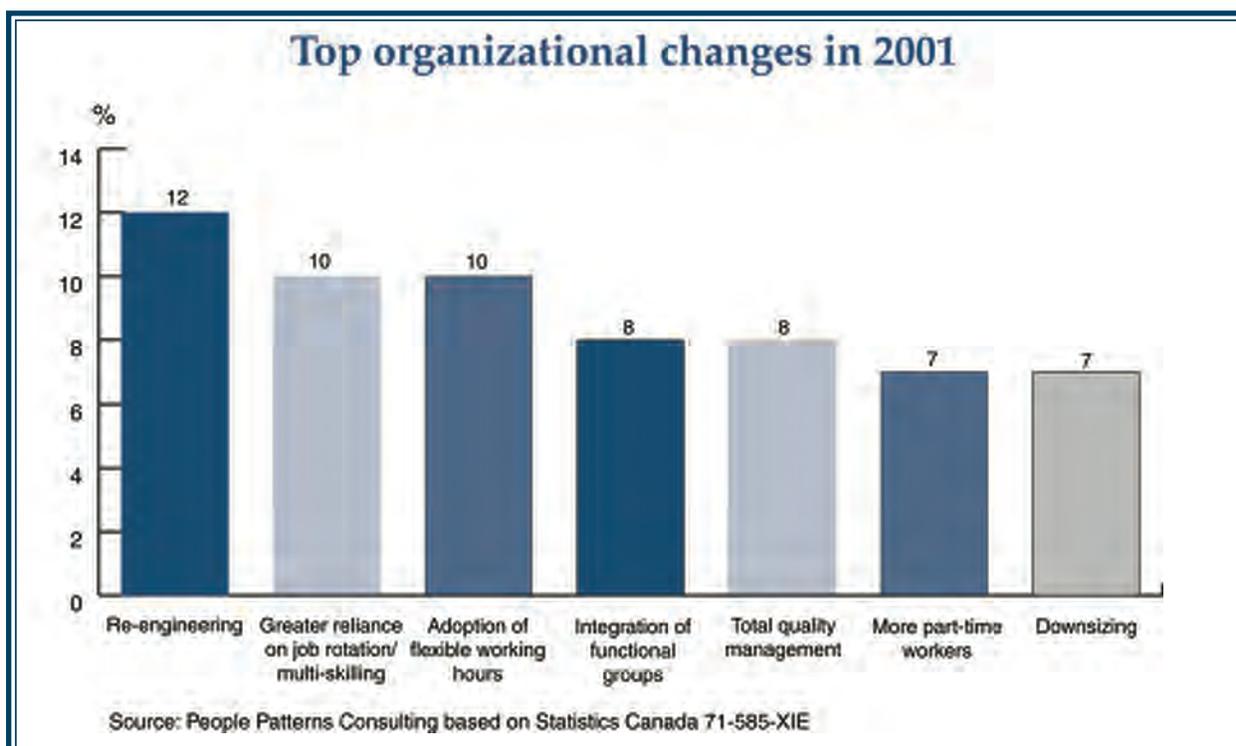
Organizations in all sectors of the economy are constantly changing the nature of the workplace in an effort to remain competitive, to increase productivity and to improve service delivery. The extent of these changes was estimated through a Statistics Canada *Workplace and Employee Survey*<sup>xiv</sup>. In 2001 alone, one-third of all organizations carried out some type of change, ranging from one-quarter of all organizations with fewer than 20 employees to 85% for organizations with 500 or more employees. Over half of all employees received some kind of training.

The most frequent (12%) change was re-engineering (focusing on the redesign of business processes to improve performance and cost), followed by greater reliance on job rotation and multi-skilling, adoption of flexible working hours (both 10%), integration of functional groups and total quality management (both 8%), more part-time workers and downsizing (reducing the number of employees) (both 7%).

In 2001, about 45% of all workplaces reported the introduction of product or process innovation. In 2001, over 60% of employees were using a computer on the job. Over one-quarter of all workplaces adopted new computer-based technologies in 1999.

### And so what?

Innovative workplaces require a labour force that is motivated, committed, adaptable and ready and willing to upgrade skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis. Flourishing in this type of environment will require employees that are supported in their pursuit of training and employment related goals while also being given the flexibility to accommodate the various demands of family.

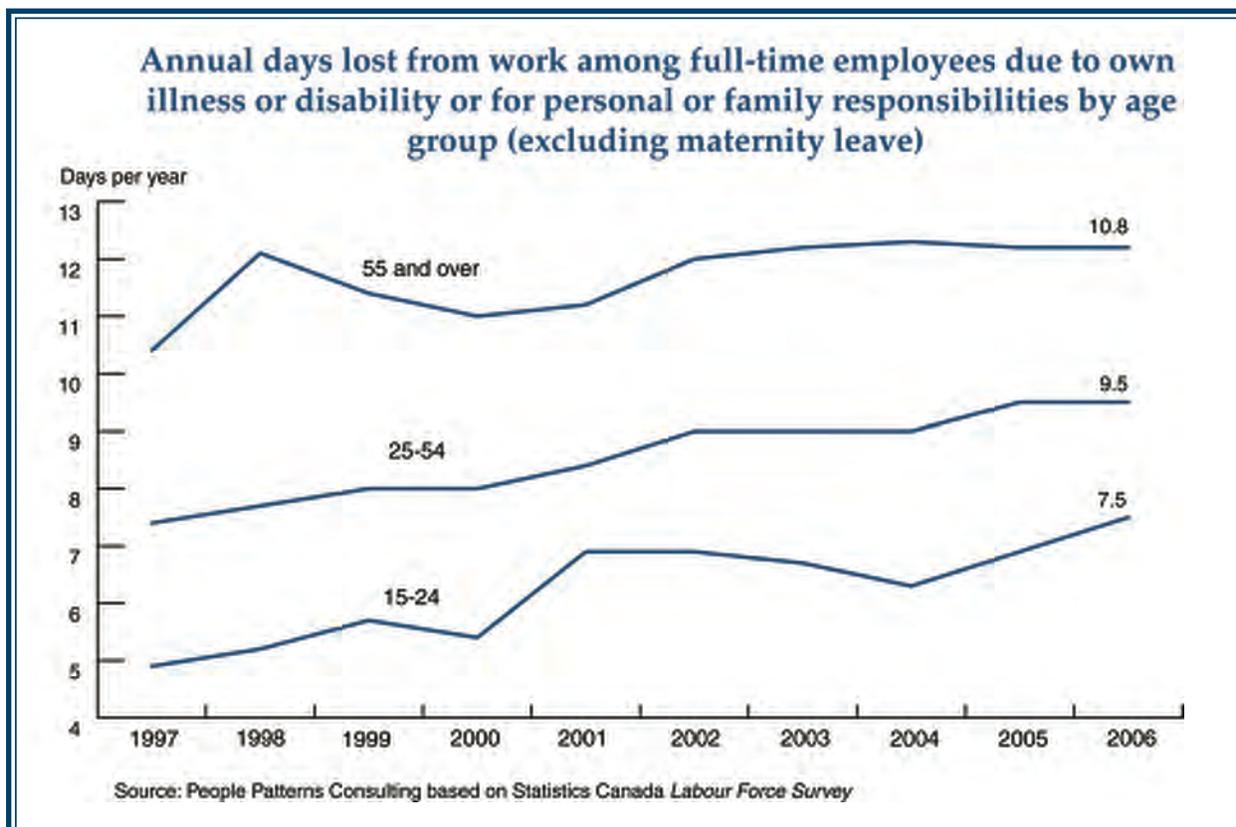


## 15 – More days off ... for illness and family

More people are staying away from work due to illness and personal and family responsibilities. Among all full-time employees, the average number of days taken (excluding maternity leave) for these reasons rose from 7.3 days per year in 1997 to 9.6 days in 2006 ... up by almost one-third over a relatively short period. This increase has been evident among all age groups.

### And so what?

The reality is that people do get sick and do need to help care for sick family members. Acknowledging this reality is essential to building healthy work/family relationships. There is a strong role for flexible workplace policies to play that enable workers to manage their family or personal care-giving responsibilities without also having to abdicate their workplace commitments. Flexible and responsive work/families reduce absenteeism.



## 16 – More balance wanted ... but don't cut pay

Is family life and work life in balance? What are we really measuring? How do we interpret the results? These are not easy questions to answer.

A breakthrough Canadian study<sup>xv</sup>, by Duxbury and Higgins conceptualized and measured the degree of work-life conflict. The authors evaluated several types of conflicts, of which two relate specifically to forms of work-life interference.

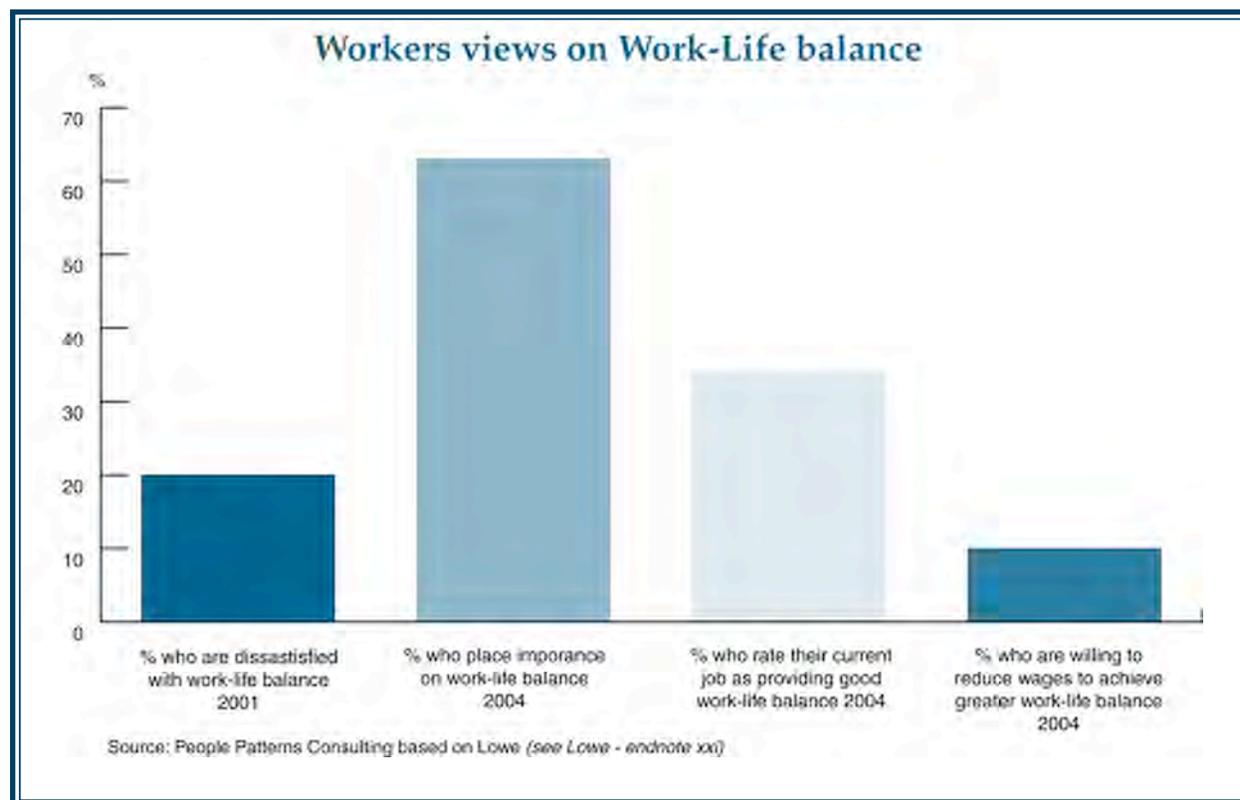
*Work to family interference* – About 40% of respondents to a survey reported moderate interference of their work life with their family life.

*Family to work interference* – About 43% reported either high or moderate interference of their home life with their work life.

Another report<sup>xvi</sup>, prepared for the Federal Labour Standards Review Committee, found that 20% of workers were dissatisfied with their work-life balance ... this is up from about 17% in 1990. Of those surveyed, about 63% placed importance on work-life balance but only 34% rated their current job as providing a good work-life balance ... a very large expectations gap. Only 10% of workers were willing to reduce their wages to improve the situation.

### And so what?

A significant number of workers seem to have problems finding the right balance between family life and work life. The source of the problems comes from the demands and responsibilities originating in both the family and the workplace. Finding the solutions must originate from both sources, as well.



## 17 – High stress ... negative outcomes for organizations and families

So why be concerned about family and work life conflicts? The Duxbury and Higgins report<sup>xvii</sup> divided workers into two groups ... those with *low* work and family interference and those *with high* work and family interference.

Only 11% of those with *low interference* had high job stress ... two-thirds of those with *high interference* had high job stress.

About 44% of those with *high interference* think about leaving their employers at least once a week.

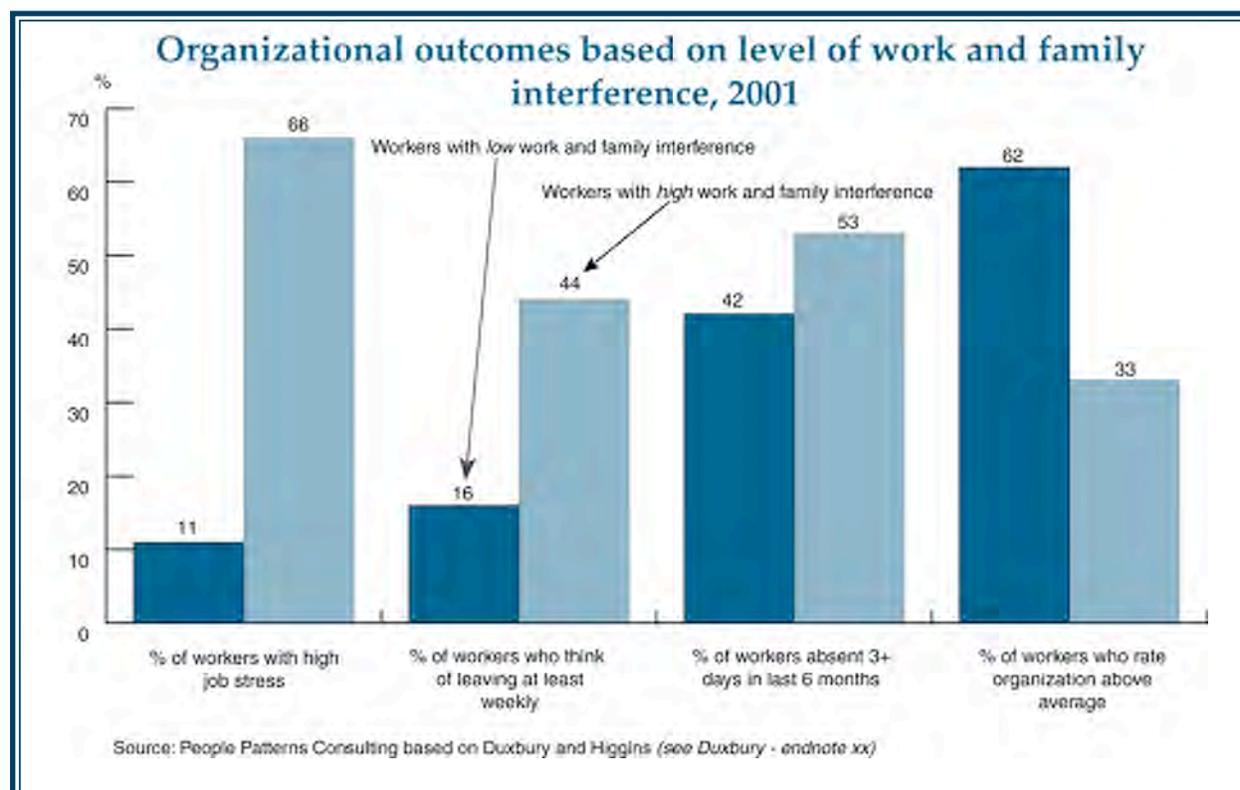
Those with *high interference* were 11% more likely to be absent for 3 or more days in the previous six months.

About two-thirds of those with *low interference* rated their organization as above average while only one-third of those with *high interference* did so.

“The negative impacts are also felt in the family. High work-life conflict is associated with diminished levels of family and parental satisfaction and impaired family functioning.” High work-life conflict negatively affects employees’ abilities to enjoy and nurture their families.

### And so what?

Family life and work life conflicts affect the health of families and organizations. Organizations suffer due to higher turnover of employees, costs of absentee workers and lower morale. Families, especially those with dependents, suffer from a reduced level of satisfaction with their family lives which leads to stress and family instability.



## FOOTNOTES PART ONE

- <sup>i</sup> Sauvé, Roger, *Labour Crunch to 2021 – National and Provincial Labour Force Projections*, People Patterns Consulting, March 2007.
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- <sup>iv</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration*, 2006.
- <sup>v</sup> Turcotte, Martin, *The time it takes to get work and back 2005*, Statistics Canada catalogue 89-622-XIE, July 2006.
- <sup>vi</sup> Statistics Canada, *Spending Patterns in Canada 2005*, catalogue 62-202.
- <sup>vii</sup> Fram, Alan, *Taking your laptop to the cottage? You're not alone*, Globe and Mail, June 1, 2007.
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- <sup>x</sup> Statistics Canada, *Workplace and Employee Survey Compendium 2001*, catalogue 71-585-XIE, October 2004.
- <sup>xi</sup> Sauvé, Roger, *Canada Job Trends Update 2007*, People Patterns Consulting, March 2007.
- <sup>xii</sup> Statistics Canada, *Workplace and Employee Survey Compendium 2001*, catalogue 71-585-XIE, October 2004.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Williams, Cara, *Sources of workplace stress*, Perspectives on Labour and Income, Statistics Canada catalogue 75-001-XIE, June 2003.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Statistics Canada, *Workplace and Employee Survey Compendium 2001*, catalogue 71-585-XIE, October 2004.
- <sup>xv</sup> Duxbury, Linda and Chris Higgins, *Work-Life Conflict in Canada in the New Millennium – A Status Report*, Funded by Health Canada, October 2003.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Lowe, Graham, *Control over time and work-life balance: An empirical analysis*, prepared for the Federal Labour Standards Review Committee, November, 2005.
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## Part Two

### Who is doing what and what else can be done?

#### 1 – What are families doing to improve the balance? ... Plenty

Is a good balance between family life and work life even possible? A recent survey<sup>i</sup> found that “only 27% of respondents are convinced that work-life balance is attainable in our society and only 17% strongly believe our society supports its workers having good work-life balance.”

One thing which seems clear is that workers are now placing more importance on their families than in the past. The survey noted above, found that 54% of Canadians placed a high value on family versus only 10% who place a high value on work. Another study found that the percentage of working Canadians who give priority to family rather than work has doubled over the last decade<sup>ii</sup>.

For a large and diverse group, the balance seems to be an uneasy and uncomfortable one. The degree of uneasiness ranges anywhere from the 20% who are clearly dissatisfied with the balance, to perhaps as high as two-thirds who believe that the workplace is not meeting their family life and work life expectations.

Families are making significant adjustments.

For most families, work is necessary to obtain the financial resources needed to support themselves and their dependents. As such, more family members are joining the paid workforce to help achieve these ends.

More families are adjusting by having no children, having fewer children or delaying children until their education, their family finances and their careers are in better shape.

Families are adjusting their work schedules, such as working part-time or dropping out of the labour force for long periods of time. This is especially so among women with young children. Even so, labour force participation rates are climbing for this group as well.

Some families are adjusting by not spending as much time together, especially with their children.

The stresses and increased absences from work are viewed as a negative offset to the benefits of paid work.

#### What else can families do? ... Get informed and push for more

More families need to re-evaluate how they share the paid and unpaid work loads of the household. The original deal may not fit as well as it once did.

Families need to make themselves aware of the family programs that are available at their place of work or through government programs. Families should use those that are available ... while pushing for even more of these programs.

## 2 – What are organizations doing to improve the balance? ... Not enough

In a context of growing international competition, private-sector employers must continuously increase efficiency to sustain and enhance shareholder value. In the short-term, these goals are in direct conflict with improving the family life and work life balance. In the medium and longer-term, addressing these issues may be a pre-requisite to hiring, motivating and keeping employees. Dissatisfied employees leave and/or suffer from more physical or mental health problems.

There has been little research in Canada and elsewhere of organizational responses to the uneasy balance. In part, this is so because it is difficult to separate specific family life and work life issues from the concerns that affect all employees.

Many organizations are not doing enough to create family-friendly work places.

In 2001, only 40% of organizations had personal support, family service, or counselling programs, only 9% had childcare services (on-site, external assistance or informal arrangements) and even fewer (5%) had eldercare services<sup>iii</sup>. In 2001, about 70% of all employees had at least one non-wage benefit (30% had no benefits at all) ranging from a high of 93% for organizations with 500 or more employees to a low of only 7% for those working in organizations with fewer than 20 employees<sup>iv</sup>.

Small businesses may be doing something but on an informal basis. A CFIB (Canadian Federation of Independent Business) survey<sup>v</sup> suggested that 92% of senior managers in small and medium-sized enterprises had a flexible work time policy ... however, three-quarters of these were informal.

According to a major study “The majority of Canada’s largest employers cannot be considered to be best practice employers<sup>vi</sup>.” Another major report suggested that “Most employers have not voluntarily embraced work-life balance policies<sup>vii</sup>.”

While many organizations accept the reality that “one-size does not fit all” they find it difficult to provide more targeted programs or want to keep control of hours and schedules.

### What else can organizations do? ... Much more

There is a “business case” to be made. There are real costs of not doing enough and there are real benefits to doing what is right for employees and their families. Estimates suggest that the direct costs of absenteeism range from \$3 to \$5 billion a year<sup>viii</sup>. Indirect organizational costs (lower productivity, recruitment, training, low morale) certainly push the total much higher.

Organizations should incorporate the concept of both family life and work life support into their strategic and operational planning processes. This should include awareness sessions, setting targets, measurements, roles and accountability.

### 3 – What are governments doing to improve the balance? ... Leading

Governments are key players in setting the principles and standards that protect workers and families from unacceptable practices by their employers. Many of these standards refer to the control of time and who has the power to control this limited resource ... the employer, the employee or both. Governments typically set the minimum standards. In a market economy, setting the minimum standards is politically and technically challenging. Ensuring that there is compliance with these minimum standards is an even greater challenge. These difficulties are compounded by differing standards across Canada.

According to the ILO (International Labour Organization), Governments should be guided by five principles in developing a “decent work time” agenda: (1) that it should be safe and healthy (2) that it should be family-friendly (3) that it promotes gender equality (4) that it advance productivity (5) and that it facilitate worker choice and influence<sup>ix</sup>.

In Canada, Governments set standards for several key concerns<sup>x</sup>.

*Hours of work* – Sets maximum hours of work per day, per week or per period, overtime compensation, rest periods and many exemptions for specific situations and industries. The various work rules and the numerous ways that they can be combined means that the work rules are very detailed and complex.

*Paid time off work* – Sets minimum weeks of holidays or payments for holidays not taken and statutory holidays.

*Leaves* – Maternity, parental and adoption, compassionate care, sickness, family obligations responsibility, emergency, wedding or civil union, and bereavement leave. Regulations include eligibility requirements, entitlements and employment protections before and after leaves. Some leaves are paid and some are not.

*Occupational health and safety* – Worker rights with respect to being informed of hazards, worker rights to be able to participate in activities to prevent hazards and worker rights to legitimately refuse to perform dangerous work without dismissal or disciplinary action.

*Human rights and employment equity* – Prohibits discrimination on a variety of grounds including sex, marital status, family status and religious and ethnic origin.

#### What else can governments do? ... Increase family priorities

Governments must shift their priorities more towards protecting the rights and needs of families and family members, while still providing adequate flexibility for sound organizational effectiveness.

Ensure that policy changes reflect the current situation of families rather than the one-earner (usually male) model of many years ago. The provision of affordable day-care services for working and non-working families should be a top priority.

Influence, motivate and lead organizations to develop programs to promote family friendly workplaces.

## FOOTNOTES PART TWO

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