

Families and Work Institute  
2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce

# NSCW 2008

## **TIMES ARE CHANGING**

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Gender and Generation  
at Work and at Home

**Revised August, 2011**

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**Families and Work** Institute

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## TIMES ARE CHANGING: GENDER AND GENERATION AT WORK AND AT HOME

### For the first time, young women and young men don't differ in their desire for jobs with more responsibility<sup>1</sup>

Families and Work Institute's National Study of the Changing Workforce is designed to reveal new insights about changing generational and gender dynamics in the American workforce, workplaces and families. In comparing 1992 with 2008, two emerging trends are striking:

#### Among Millennials (under 29 years old), women are just as likely as men to want jobs with greater responsibility.

This was not the case among employees under age 29 as recently as a decade and a half ago.

When we first started asking this question in 1992, significantly more men under 29 wanted jobs with greater responsibility (80%) than women under 29 (72%). Although the desire to advance to jobs with greater responsibility declined for all young workers between 1992 and 2008, the lowest point we have recorded was in 1997 (Figure 1).

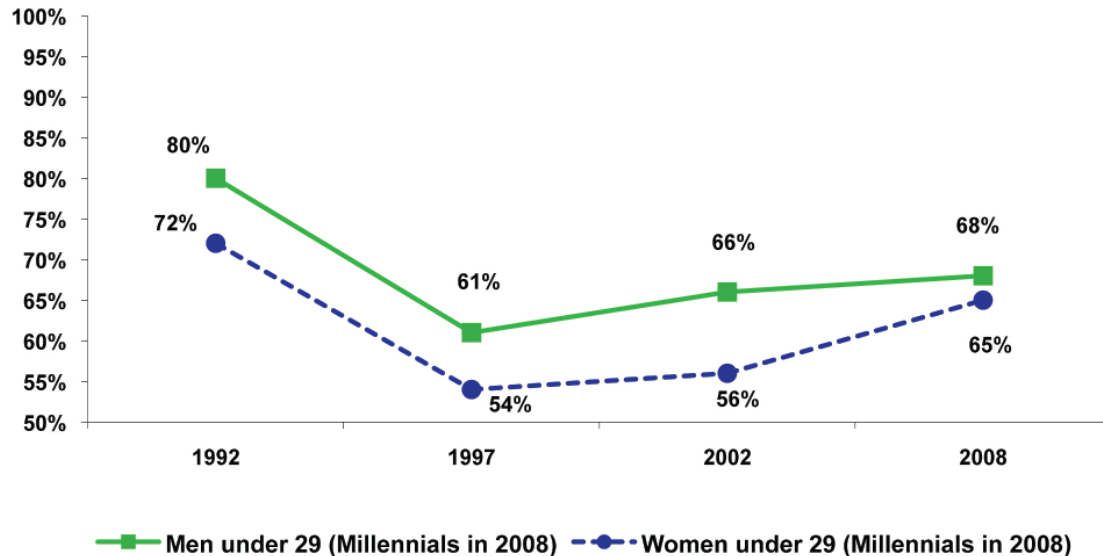
It is not clear what contributed to this decline between 1992 and 1997. It was a time when there was a great deal of discussion about increasing job pressure, but because we didn't ask employees why they didn't want to move to jobs with more responsibility back then, as we do now, we can only speculate.

Since 1997, the desire to move to jobs with more responsibility among young workers has increased. This increase has been greater for young women—from 54% to 65%—than young men—from 61% to 68%.

Now, there is no longer any difference between young women and men in wanting jobs with greater responsibility.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of young men and women (under 29) who want to advance to jobs with more responsibility in 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2008.

**Figure 1: Young men's and women's desire to have jobs with greater responsibility (1992–2008)**



Statistically significant differences between men and women: 1992 \*\*; 1997 \*; 2002 \*\*; 2008 ns<sup>2</sup> (1992 n=686; 1997 n=657; 2002 n=590; 2008 n=598)

Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2008

**Today, there is no difference between young women with and without children in their desire to move to jobs with more responsibility.**

This was not the case in 1992, when young women with children were substantially and significantly less likely to want to move to jobs with greater responsibility than women without children.

In 1997, the desire for jobs with more responsibility decreased for both young women with and without children; this decline, however, was more substantial for women with children.

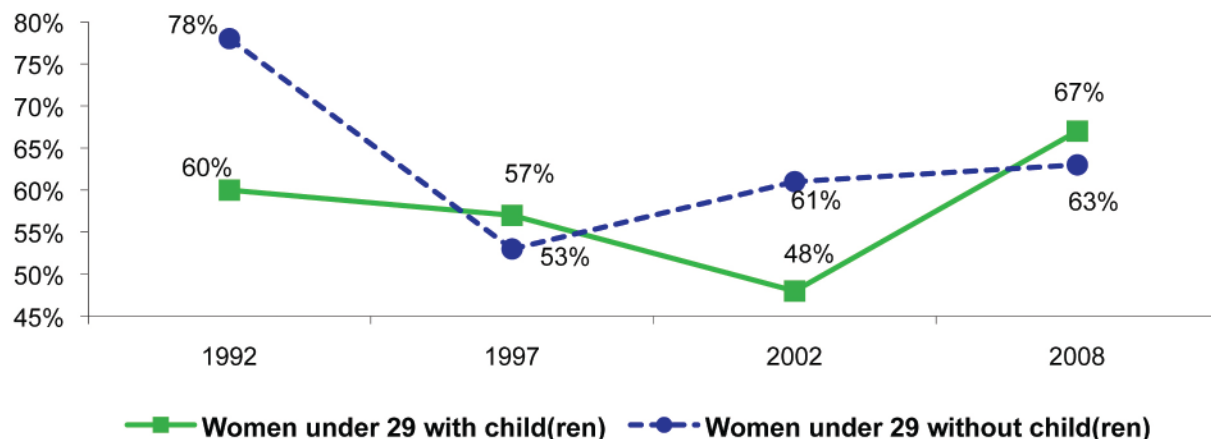
For the first time in the 2008 survey, we asked those who didn't want more responsibility at work why this is the case. Their responses point to concerns associated with job pressures. Among Millennial women (under 29) who did not want jobs with more responsibility:

- 31% cited concerns about the increased job pressure that goes along with greater responsibility at work;
- 18% said they already have a high-level job with a lot of responsibility; and
- 13% were concerned about not having enough flexibility to successfully manage work and personal or family life in a job with more responsibility.

Since 2002, the data for desire to advance show a clear upward trend for young women both with and without children. In fact, in 2008, the desire for jobs with more responsibility among young women with children is at its highest point since we first started asking about this in the 1992 National Study of the Changing Workforce.

Figure 2 depicts the percentages of young women (under 29) with and without children who want to advance to jobs with more responsibility in 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2008.

**Figure 2: Desire to move to jobs with more responsibility among young women with and without children (1992-2008)**



Statistically significant differences between young women with and without children: 1992 \*\*\*; 1997 ns; 2002 \*; 2008 ns (1992 n=339; 1997 n=296; 2002 n=269; 2008 n=271)

Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2008

Taken together, these two trends suggest that Millennial women are on a similar footing with their male colleagues when it comes to career ambitions and expectations. This has implications for both men and women of all age groups at work and at home.

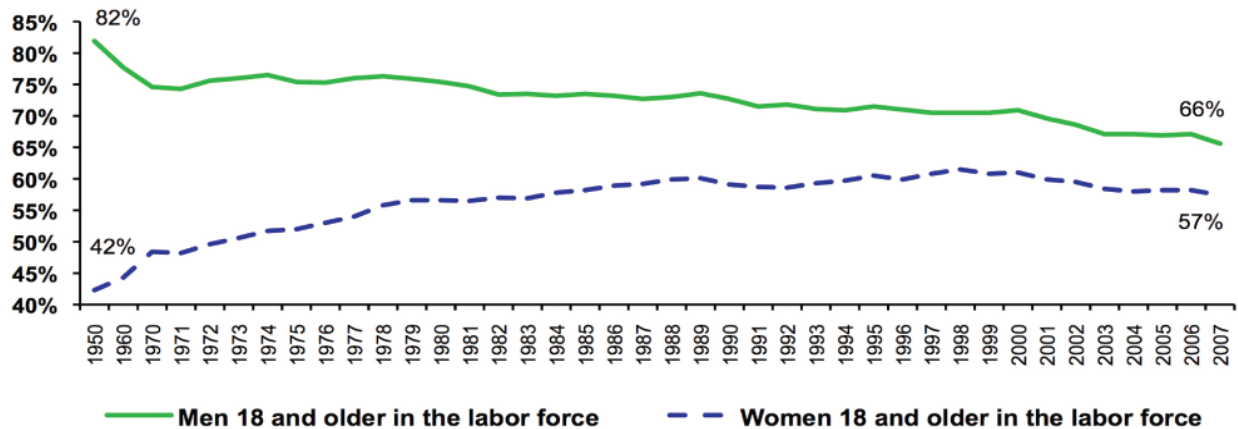
Over the past several decades, far-reaching demographic changes within our society have laid the groundwork for these trends as we detail in the next section of this report.

**Long-term demographic changes driving current gender and generational trends at work and at home**

**Women’s labor force participation has increased substantially and significantly in recent years.<sup>3</sup>**

The labor force participation of women 18 and older has increased very substantially since 1950, while participation by men has decreased.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 3: Labor force participation by women and men 18 and older (1950–2007)**



U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note that there was a 40 percentage point difference in labor force participation favoring men 18 and older in 1950, but only a nine percentage point difference in 2007. Two factors are likely to have been responsible:

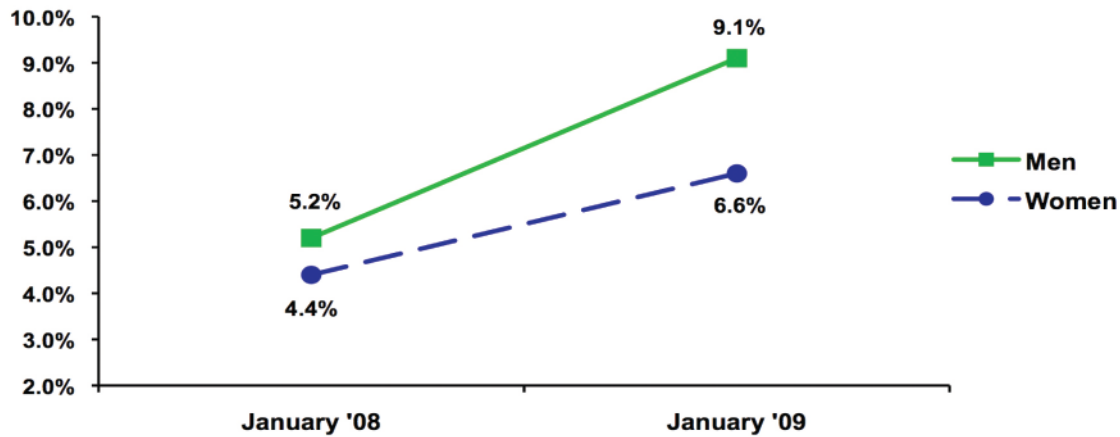
- more men, and particularly young men, are not in the labor force while pursuing post-secondary education; and
- earlier retirement by men than women may also be a contributing factor in later years.

The decline in labor force participation by women 18 and older beginning in the 1990s is much less pronounced than the decline among men, but, as with young men, is influenced by their growing participation in postsecondary education, including graduate and professional degree programs. (See the discussion below.)

**The current recession has increased women’s prominence in the labor force.**

The most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)<sup>5</sup> indicate that unemployment rates have increased more rapidly for men than for women over the past year or more.

**Figure 4: Unemployment rates for men and women (January 2008–2009)**



Bureau of Labor Statistics

This appears to be due to the fact that men are more likely to be employed in industries (for example, manufacturing and construction) that have experienced the most severe job losses over the past year.

Although the 2009 BLS data do not enable us to distinguish among wage and salaried employees, self-employed workers and small business owners, March 2007 data from the Current Population Survey (which we analyzed as part of the National Study of the Changing Workforce), were already reflecting the economic downturn, revealing that 49% of wage and salaried employees were women, while 47% of self-employed workers and small business owners were women.

Men are also more likely to be working reduced hours (under 35 hours a week) than in the past—from 9.5% in 2007 to 10.2% in 2008. Women’s level has remained stable—23.5% in 2007 and 23.6% in 2008.<sup>6</sup>

In sum, the proportions of employed men and women are rapidly approaching parity, and women may actually represent a larger proportion of the wage and salaried labor force than men by now.

**It is well known that the labor force participation by mothers has increased substantially and significantly in recent years, but the upward trend shown in Figure 5 is striking.<sup>7</sup>**

Figure 5 presents data on the labor participation of women with children under 18 by overlaying their trend line (in red) on the trend lines shown in Figure 3 for all women and men 18 and over.

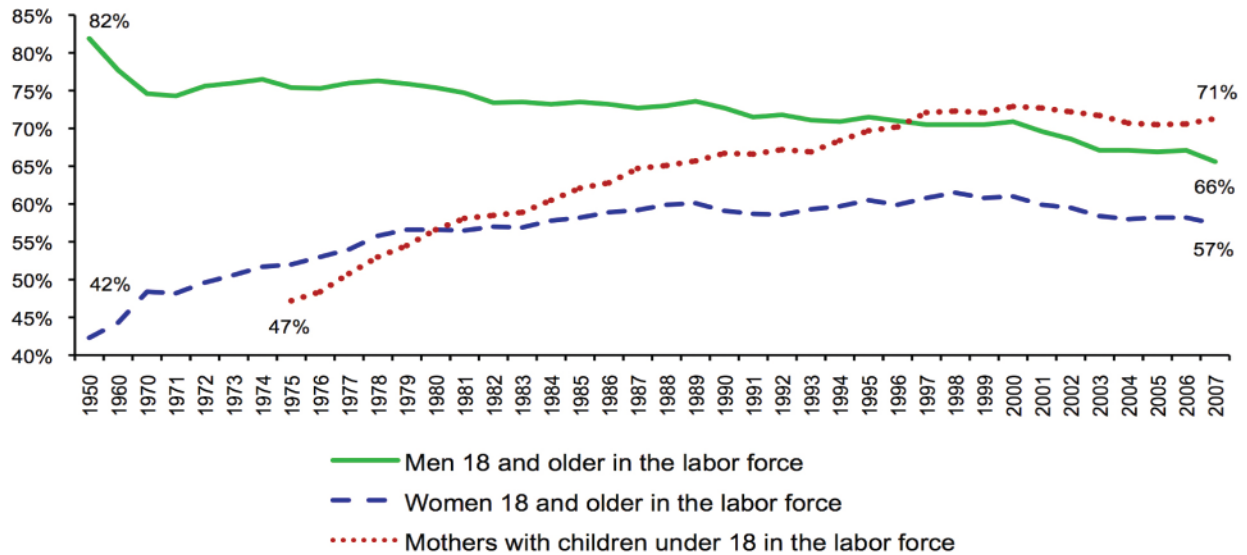
In 1975, 47% of mothers with children under 18 participated in the U.S. labor force. By 2007, 32 years later, that proportion had risen to 71%.

- One reason why the labor force participation of women with children is higher than that of both all women and all men 18 and older may be that the average age of these women with children is older than the average ages of women and men who participate in the labor force.



- Another reason that mothers' participation is higher may be that many employed women (and men) with children have already completed their educational careers. People who are older and more educated are more likely to participate in the labor force.

**Figure 5: The labor force participation by women with children under 18 (1950–2007)**



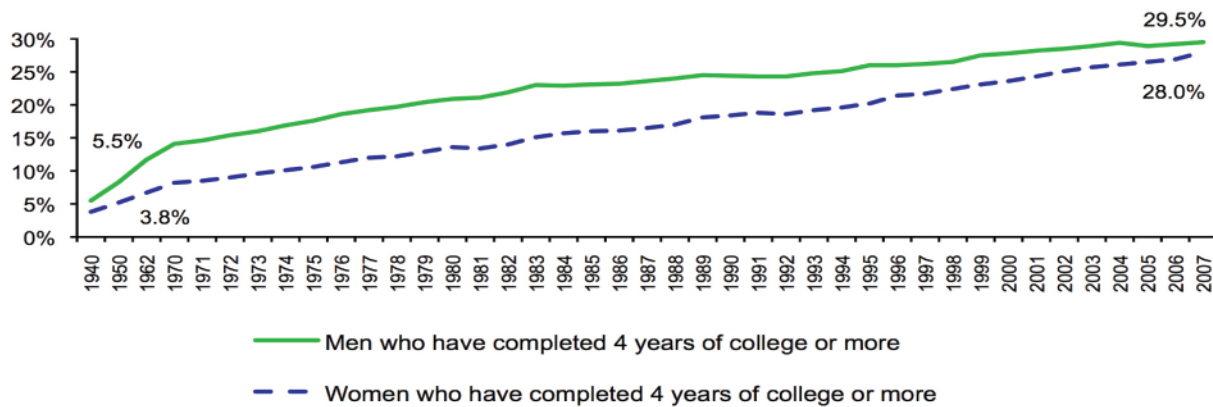
U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Women’s level of education has increased relative to men’s.**

In every year from 1940 through 2007, men 25 years old and older are at least somewhat more likely (in absolute terms) than women of the same ages to have completed four years of college or more (Figure 6). The differences between men and women are smallest in 2007 (1.5 percentage points) and, interestingly, in 1940 (1.7 percentage points) when college graduation rates were very low for everybody except the well-to-do.

A major inflection point marking men’s increasing college graduation rates occurs between 1940 and 1970. This is probably related to the post World War II GI Bill, which provided veterans with financial support to attend college. Between the late 50s and the mid 90s, men had an advantage over women in college graduation of about six to seven percentage points.

**Figure 6: Completion of four years of college or more by men and women 25 years old and older<sup>8</sup> (1940–2007)**



U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Subsequently, however, women have steadily gained ground, surpassing men’s educational attainment in several areas, which are reflected in the narrowing gap between women and men depicted above.

According to the U.S. Department of Education,<sup>9</sup> women have been earning more bachelor’s degrees than men since 1982 and more master’s degrees than men since 1981.

- In the 2005-2006 academic year (the most recent year for which data are available), women earned 58% of all bachelor’s degrees and 60% of master’s degrees.
- By comparison, men earned 42% of bachelor’s degrees and 40% of master’s degrees in 2005-2006.
- By 2016, women are projected to earn 60% of bachelor’s, 63% of master’s and 54% of doctorate and professional degrees.

**Table 1: First professional degrees<sup>10</sup> (e.g., medical, law) earned by men and women (1970-2006)**

Year	Total number of degrees	Percent earned by men	Percent earned by women
1970-1971	37,946	94%	6%
1974-1975	55,916	88%	12%
1979-1980	70,131	75%	25%
1984-1985	75,063	67%	33%
1989-1990	70,988	62%	38%
1994-1995	75,800	59%	41%
1999-2000	80,057	55%	45%
2004-2005	87,289	50%	50%

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

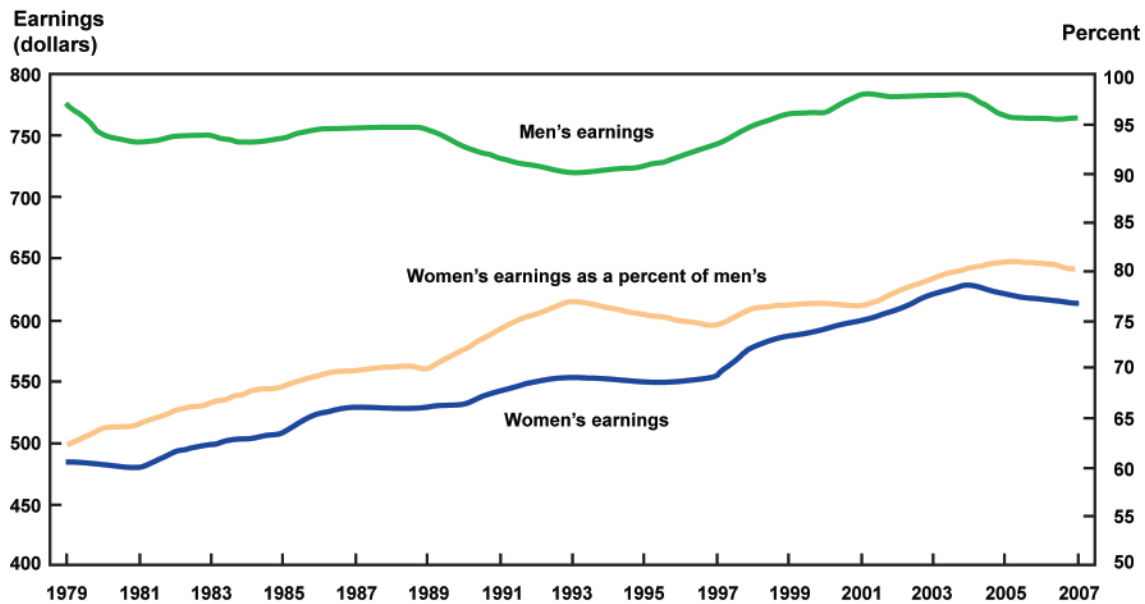
We do not know to what extent this trend has been due to the women’s movement, general cultural change, the growing availability of government grants/loans, or other factors. But change has definitely occurred.

**The gender gap in earnings is slowly narrowing.**

- In 1979, the average full-time employed woman earned 62% of what men earned on a weekly basis.
- In the early 1990s, the wage gap narrowed, largely as a function of a decline in men’s wages.
- By 2007, however, the average full-time employed woman earned 80% of what men earned on a weekly basis, a big increase, but still a large gap.

It is important to note, however, that women have always been more likely than men to work part-time in order to manage their family and work responsibilities.

**Figure 7: Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salaried employees in 2007 dollars, by sex (1979-2007 annual averages<sup>11</sup>)**



U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics

If we look only at hourly-wage earners (not salaried employees) in the U.S. workforce today, women’s hourly pay (which controls somewhat for part-time employment) as a percentage of men’s hourly pay, the discrepancy between men and women has lessened:<sup>12</sup>

- In 1979, the hourly pay of women working in hourly jobs was 58% of the hourly pay of men in hourly jobs.
- In 2007, the hourly pay of women working in hourly jobs was 82% of the hourly pay of men in hourly jobs—an increase of 24 percentage points since 1979.

More interesting and quite striking: employed women 20 to 24 years old in 2007 who were paid on an hourly basis earned 90% of what their male counterparts earned, and teenage women 16 to 19 years old earned 95% of what their male counterparts earned. Although teenagers of both genders generally have rather menial jobs, teenage women may have higher expectations about wage parity than women have had in the past.<sup>13</sup>

### **Women in dual-earner couples are contributing more to family income.**

In 2008, 80% of married/partnered employees lived in dual-earner couples—86% of women and 75% of men. In 1977, 66% of all married/partnered employees in the workforce lived in dual-earner couples—91% of women and 53% of men.

As the earnings of women in the workforce have increased, so has their contribution to family income.<sup>14</sup>

- In 2008, employed women in dual-earner couples contributed an average of 45% of annual family income.
- This reflects a significant increase from an average of 39% in 1997—only 11 years ago.

Clearly, many families would fall on hard times if women were not in the labor force.

### **Women's annual earnings in dual-earner couples have increased compared with the earnings of their spouses/partners over the past decade and a half.**

In a 2001 Families and Work Institute report based on data from the 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce, we compared the earnings of men and women living in couples.<sup>15</sup> For the purposes of this study, we considered one partner to be earning more than the other if his or her earnings exceeded the partner's earnings by at least 10 percent.<sup>16</sup>

- In 2008, just more than one in four (27%) of women living in dual-earner couples had annual earnings at least 10 percentage points higher than their spouses/partners, up from 15% in 1997.
- In 2008, 62% of men had annual earnings at least 10 percentage points higher than their spouses/partners, down from 72% of men in 1997.
- The proportion of couples earning comparable amounts (within plus or minus 10 percentage points relative to each other) remained steady during this period: 14% in 2008 and 13% in 1997.

As women's educational achievement and work experience continue to increase, they are likely to have even greater earning potential and earnings expectations in the future. And as women's earnings increase, their contributions to family income have and will become increasingly important. This is particularly the case at this time when the unemployment rate for men is rising more rapidly than that for women.

It is well known, however, that "a motherhood penalty" remains—specifically, that the length of the time that mothers take out of the workforce or work reduced hours to care for their children diminishes their lifetime earnings.

- FWI research has shown that the greater responsibility employees—men or women—take for the routine care of their children, the lower their earnings<sup>17</sup>. Women are more likely than men to be primary caregivers.

- A recent study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research<sup>18</sup> showed that over a 15-year period, employed women, on average, earned only about 38% of what employed men earned. This gap is largely the result of an unequal distribution of family labor, with women being significantly more likely than men to work fewer hours or temporarily leave the workforce due to caregiving responsibilities. Fewer than half of all women (48.5%) had earnings in all 15 years of the study compared with six of seven men (84%), and one third of women had four or more years with no earnings compared with only 5% of men.

The demographic changes outlined above have profoundly changed how American men and women view their roles both in the workplace and at home. The following sections describe changes in attitudes and behaviors related to gender roles at work and within the family over the past three decades.

### **Attitudes about women's and men's work and family roles have changed**

Given the changes in the realities of men and women's lives at work, we next turn to see whether their attitudes about the proper roles of men and women have changed. We find they have.

#### **Both men and women are less likely to *agree* in 2008 that men should earn the money and women should take care of the children and family than they were in 1977.<sup>19, 20</sup>**

The percentage of all employees of all ages who agree (strongly or somewhat) that it's better for all involved if "the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children" has dropped significantly and substantially over the past three decades—from 64% in 1977 to 39% in 2008, a decline of 25 percentage points. Nevertheless, it is important to note that two in five employees still endorse traditional gender roles.

#### **This change has been more dramatic among men than women.**

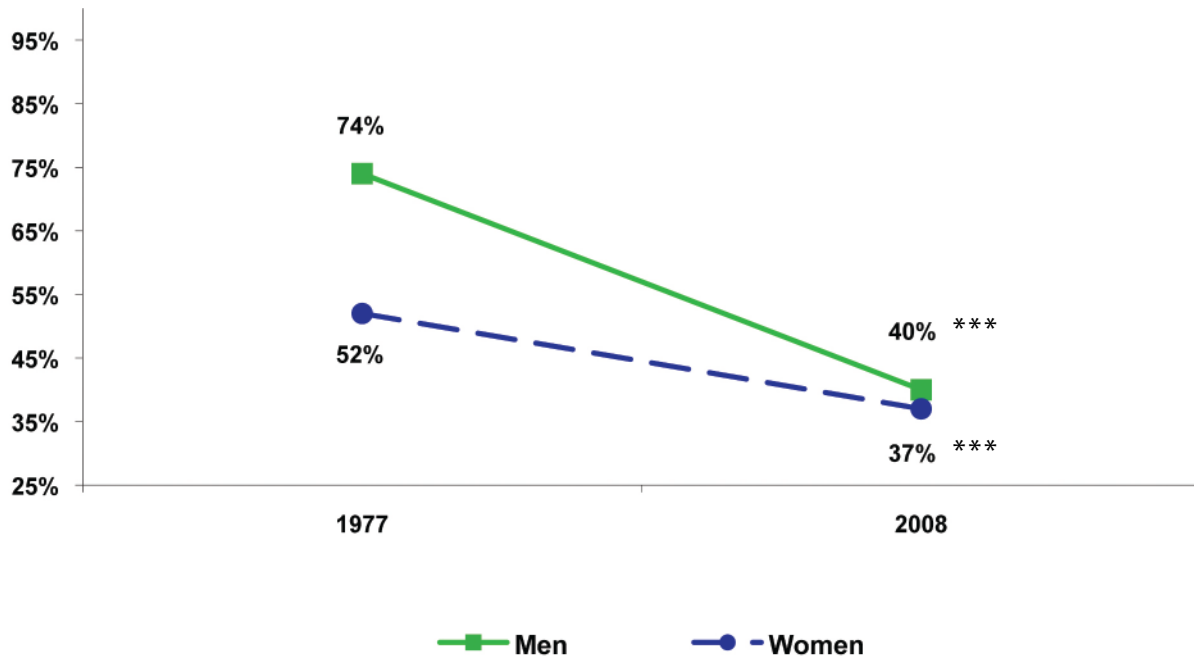
For the first time in 2008, men's and women's views about appropriate work and family roles have converged to a point where they are virtually identical and not significantly different:

- among men, the percentage who agreed with that statement fell from 74% in 1977 to 40% in 2008; and
- among women, the percentage dropped from 52% in 1977 to 37% in 2008.

Thus, while the attitudes of men and women were significantly and substantially different in 1977, the gender difference was inconsequential and not significantly different in 2008—a striking and seminal change in attitudes over the past three decades.

Figure 8 shows the percentages of men and women who agree (strongly or somewhat) that "it is better for all involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children" in 1977 and 2008.

**Figure 8: Attitudes about gender roles among men and women (1977–2008)**



Statistically significant differences between men and women: 1977 \*\*\*; 2008 ns  
 (1977 n=1,193; 2008 n=2,730)  
 U.S. Department of Labor, Quality of Employment Survey, 1977  
 Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008

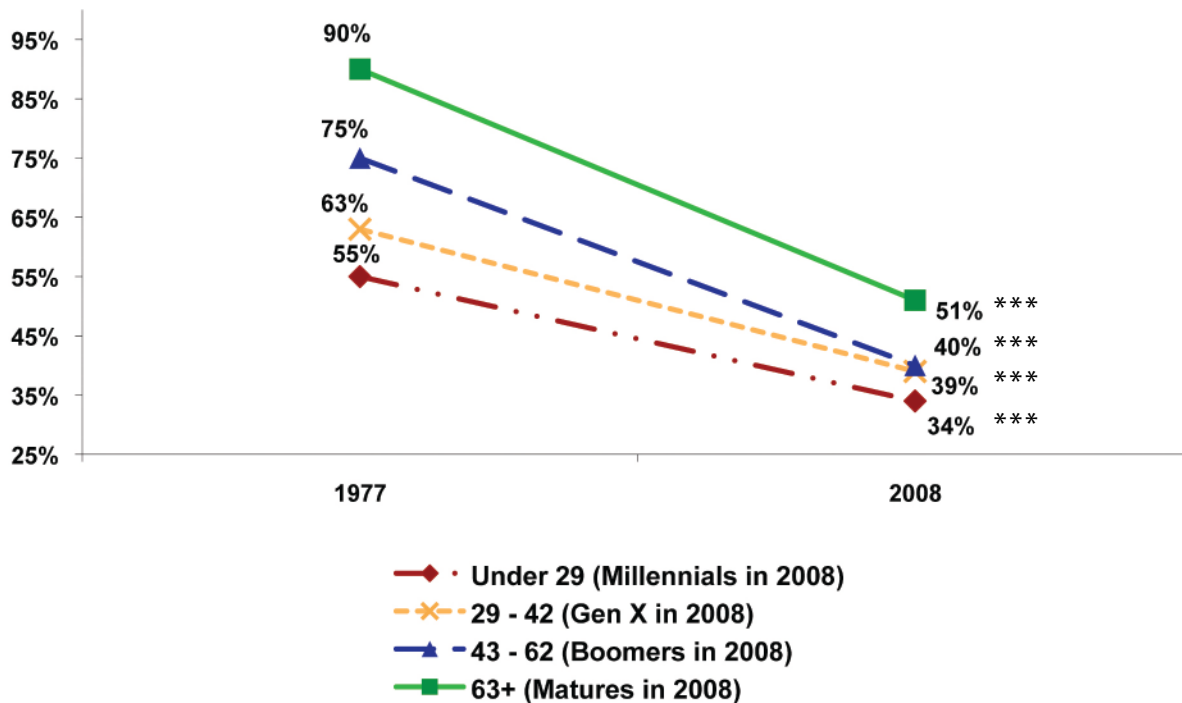
**A significant and substantial shift in attitudes about gender roles has occurred for all generations, but it is greatest among those in older generations.**

Convergence in attitudes about appropriate work and family roles has not only occurred among men and women, but also across generations.

Members of older generations are generally more likely than members of younger generations to agree with traditional views of gender roles. Although this pattern is still true in 2008, a greater shift in attitudes about gender roles has occurred among older generations. As a result, the gaps between older and younger generations are far less in 2008 than they were three decades ago.

Figure 9 depicts employees of different generations who agree (strongly or somewhat) that “it is better for all involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children” in 1977 and 2008.

**Figure 9: Employees of different generations who agree (strongly or somewhat) with traditional gender roles (1977–2008)**



Statistically significant differences between generations: 1977 \*\*\*; 2008 \*\*  
 (1977 n=1,188; 2008 n=2,713)  
 U.S. Department of Labor, Quality of Employment Survey, 1977  
 Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008

- For employees age 28 and younger (Millennials in 2008), the percentage agreeing with this statement fell from 55% in 1977 to 34% in 2008—a decline of 21 percentage points.
- For employees age 29 through 42 (Gen X in 2008), the percentage dropped from 63% in 1977 to 39% in 2008—a decline of 24 percentage points.
- For employees age 43 through 62 (Boomers in 2008), the percentage dropped from 75% in 1977 to 40% in 2008—a decline of 35 percentage points.
- And for employees age 63 and older, the percentage fell from 90% to 51%—a decline of 39 percentage points.

**Although employees in both single- and dual-earner couples are significantly less likely to endorse traditional gender roles today than they were three decades ago, the attitudes of men in dual-earner couples have changed the most.**

- In 1977, 70% of men in dual-earner couples thought it was better for men to earn the money and for women to care for the home and children.
- By 2008, only 36% of men in dual-earner couples felt this way, perhaps in part reflecting the fact that family income has become increasingly dependent on women’s earnings (above).

**Attitudes about employed women and mothering have shifted as well<sup>21</sup>**

**Employees in 2008 are more likely than in 1977 to agree that employed women can be good mothers.**

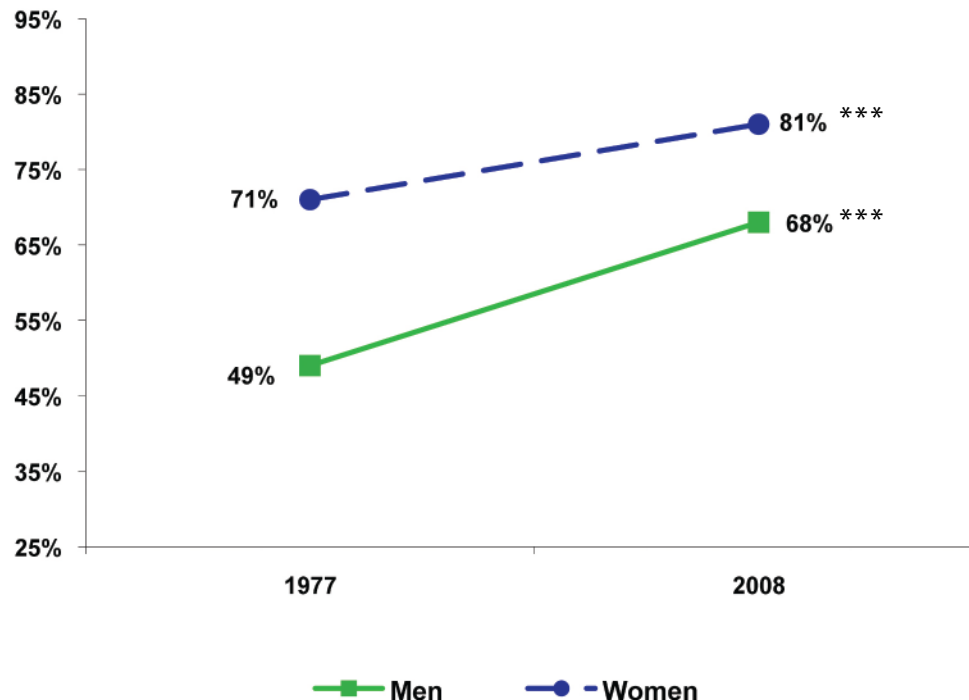
The percentage of employees who agree (strongly or somewhat) that “a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work” has increased significantly over the past three decades from 58% in 1977 to 74% in 2008.

**Men’s views have shifted more than women’s in a positive direction.**

- Among men, the percentage agreeing (strongly or somewhat) with the above statement increased from 49% in 1977 to 68% in 2008—19 percentage points.
- Among women, the percentage increased from 71% in 1977 to 81% in 2008—10 percentage points.
- The attitudes of older men (over 63) changed most in a positive direction.
- Nonetheless, men in 2008 are still significantly more likely than women to doubt that mothers who work outside the home can have relationships with their children that are just as good as those of mothers who are not employed.

Figure 10 shows the percentages of men and women who agree (strongly or somewhat) that a mother who works outside the home can have as good a relationship with her child as a mother who doesn’t work in 1977 and 2008.

**Figure 10: Attitudes about women’s roles as mothers (1977-2008)**



Statistically significant differences between men and women: 1977 \*\*\*; 2008 \*\*\*  
 (1977 n=1,231; 2008 n=2,746)  
 U.S. Department of Labor, Quality of Employment Survey, 1977  
 Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008



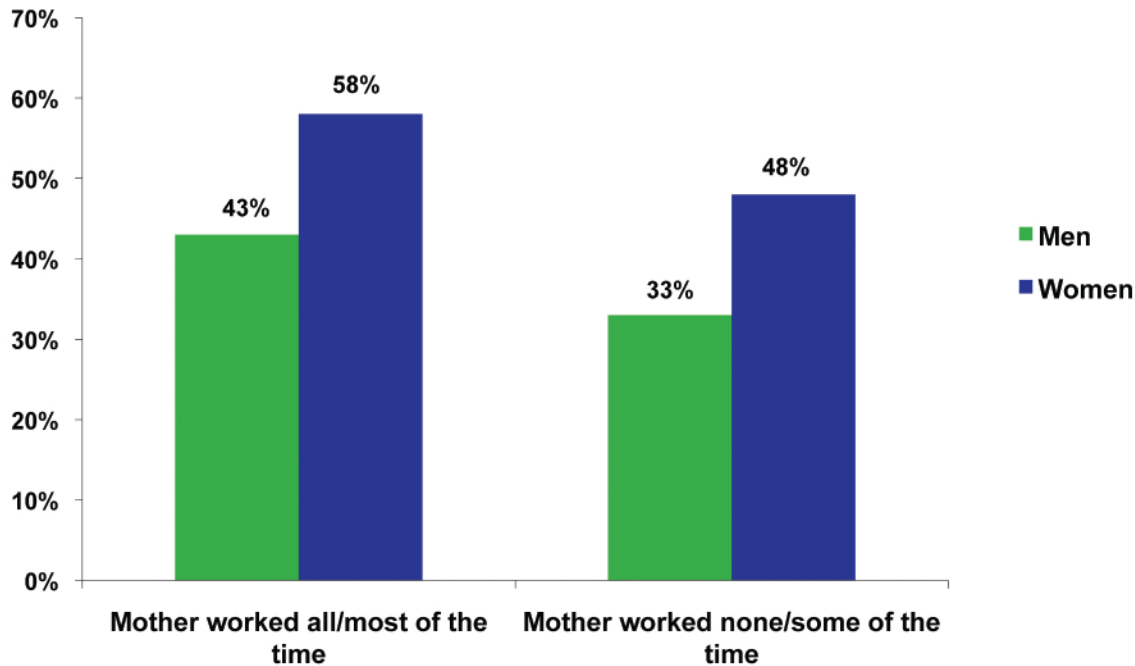
**Having a mother who worked while one was growing up affects the attitudes of both men and women.<sup>22</sup>**

Our findings from 2008 show that men who had mothers who worked all or most of the time while they were growing up are significantly more likely to “strongly agree” (46%) that working mothers can have relationships with their children that are just as good as mothers who stay at home than men whose mothers worked none or only some of the time outside the home (33%).

The data show a similar pattern for women, with 58% of women whose mothers worked all or most of the time and 50% of women whose mothers worked none or only some of the time strongly agreeing that working mothers can have relationships with their children that are just as good as mothers who stay at home.

Figure 11 depicts the percentage of men and women whose mothers worked all or most of the time versus those whose mothers worked none or only some of the time who strongly agree that a mother who works outside of the home can have as good a relationship with her child as a mother who doesn’t work.

**Figure 11: Percent strongly agreeing that working mothers can have good relationships with their children by employment of own mother**



(n=2,703)  
Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008

**By 2008, we find no statistically significant difference in attitudes about the quality of relationships that working mothers can have with their children across the four age groups representing Millennials, Generation X, Boomers and Matures.**

Not surprisingly, however, those who embrace the traditional view that “men should be the breadwinners” also tend to believe that “mothers who stay at home with their children are better mothers.”

**Men’s roles and behaviors at home are changing too**

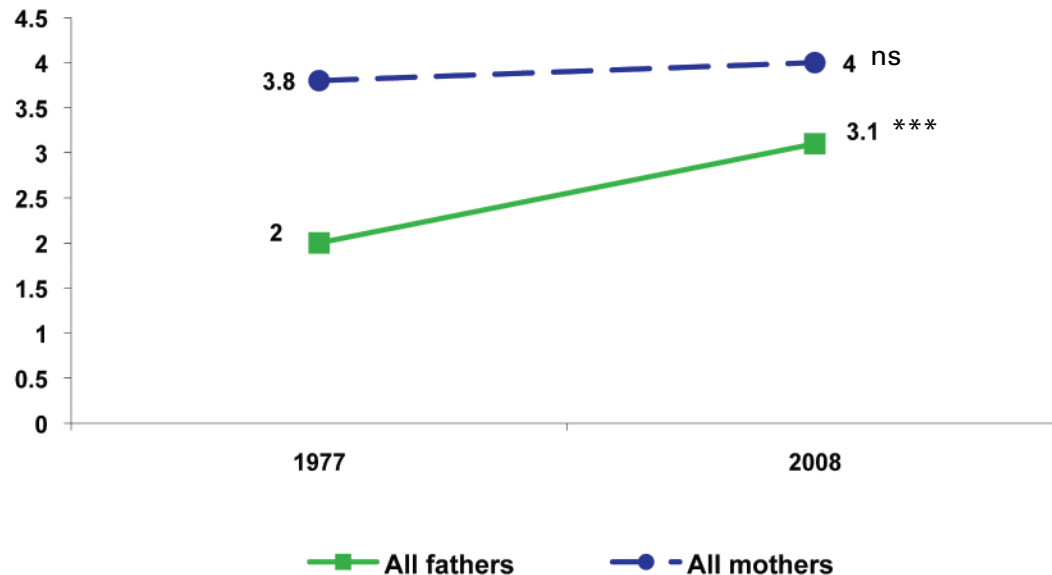
**Fathers are spending more time with their children today than three decades ago.**

Employed fathers spend significantly more time per workday with their children under 13 today than they did three decades ago, while the amount of time employed mothers spend with their children under 13 per workday has not changed significantly.

- The amount of time fathers spend with their children under 13 on workdays has increased from two hours to three hours—an increase of one hour.
- At the same time, the amount of time mothers spend with their children under 13 on workdays has remained constant at an average of 3.8 hours.

Thus, mothers still spend significantly more time per workday, on average, caring for their children than fathers, but fathers are catching up! While there used to be a difference of 1.8 hours between the time that men and women spent with their children on workdays, that difference has been cut by one hour. (See Figure 12.)

**Figure 12: Mothers’ and fathers’ average time (in hours) spent with their children under 13 years old on workdays (1977-2008)**

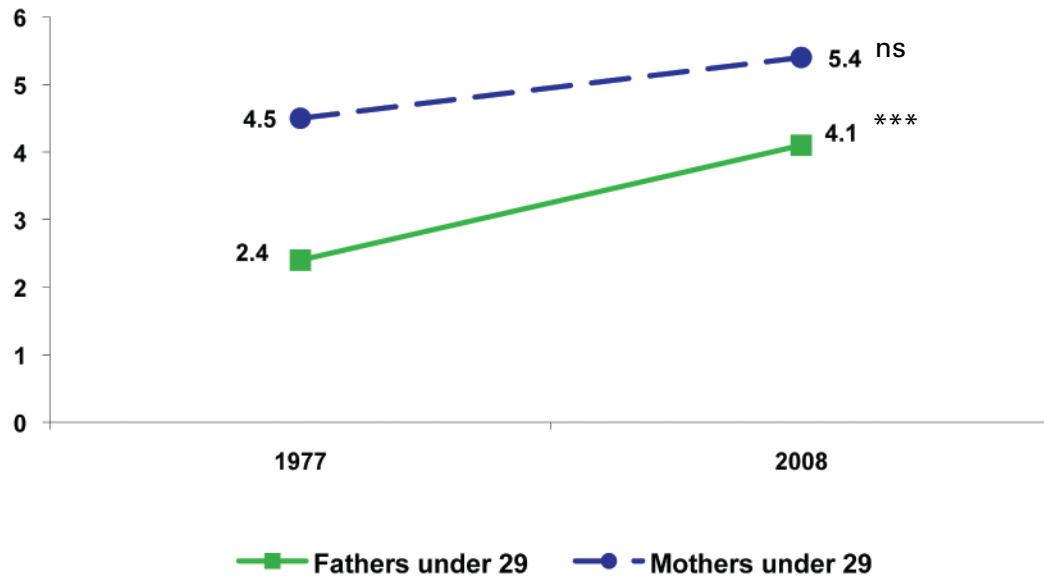


Statistically significant differences between fathers and mothers: 1977 \*\*\*; 2008 \*\*\* (1977 n=455; 2008 n=512)  
 U.S. Department of Labor, Quality of Employment Survey, 1977  
 Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008

Both Millennial fathers and mothers are spending considerably more time with their children.

- Today’s Millennial fathers spend an average of 4.1 hours per workday with their children under 13, significantly more than their age counterparts in 1977 who spent an average of 2.4 hours per workday with their children—a dramatic increase of almost two hours (1.7 hours).
- Mothers under 29 spend an average of 5.4 hours per workday with their children under 13 in 2008, up from 4.5 hours in 1977—a .9 increase. (See Figure 13.)

**Figure 13: Young mothers’ and fathers’ (under 29) average time (in hours) spent with their children under 13 years old on workdays (1977-2008)**



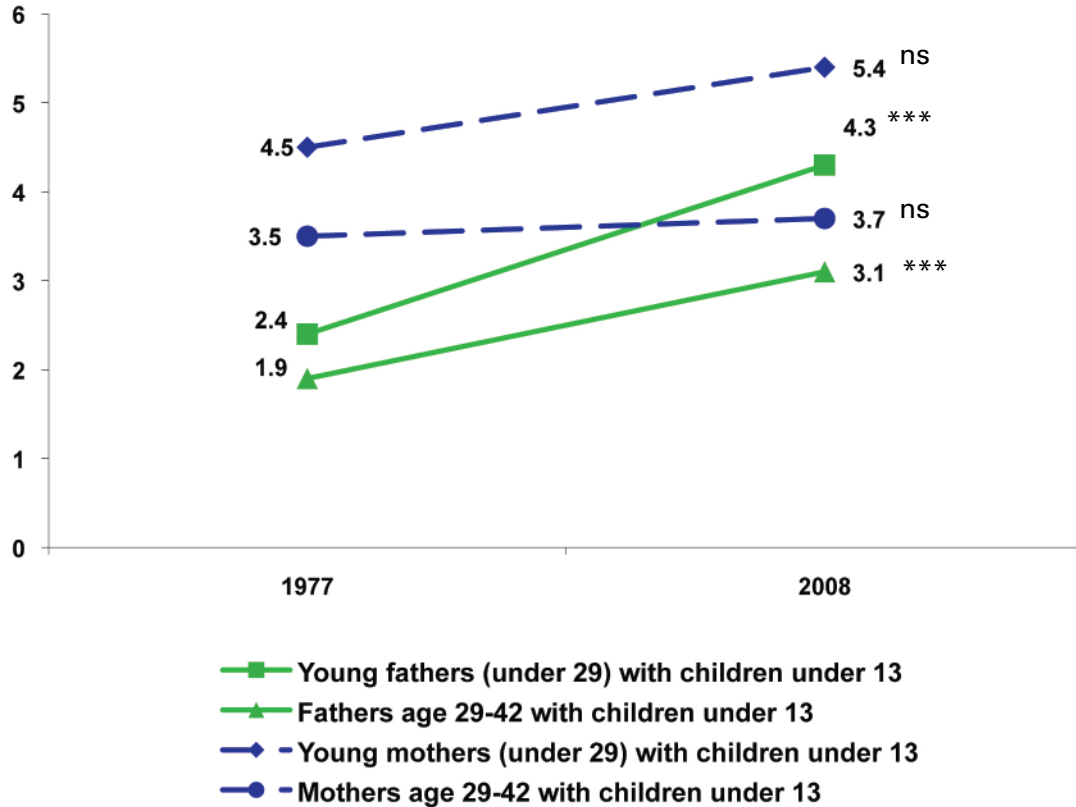
Statistically significant differences between young fathers and mothers: 1977 \*\*\*; 2008 ns (1977 n=124; 2008 n=95)  
 U.S. Department of Labor, Quality of Employment Survey, 1977  
 Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008

**By comparison, Millennial fathers spend more time with their children than Gen X fathers and mothers.**

- While the average time per workday spent with children under 13 has increased for both young parents and parents ages 29 to 42, the increase is more dramatic among young parents (under age 29) than among older parents (ages 29 to 42).
- The rate of increase in workday time spent with children under 13 is greatest among men under 29. Fathers under 29 today spend an average of 4.1 hours per workday with their children, up by 1.7 hours since 1977.
- Fathers age 29 to 42 today spend more than a full hour less than younger fathers on average with their children per workday (3.1 versus 4.1 hours); the increase since 1977 was 1.2 hours.
- Time spent with children per workday increased by .9 hours for young mothers and 0.2 hours for mothers 29 to 42.

Figure 14 shows trend lines for young fathers and mothers (under 29) overlaid with trend lines for fathers and mothers ages 29 to 42.

**Figure 14: Mothers’ and fathers’ under age 29 and ages 29 to 42 average time (in hours) spent with their children under 13 years old on workdays (1977-2008)**



Statistically significant differences between fathers and mothers age 29-42: 1977 \*\*\*; 2008 \* (1977 n=385; 2008 n=322)  
 U.S. Department of Labor, Quality of Employment Survey, 1977  
 Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008

**Men are taking more overall responsibility for the care of their children in 2008 than in 1992, according to themselves and their wives/partners.**

“Taking responsibility for the care of children” means not only providing one-on-one care, but also managing child care arrangements.<sup>23</sup>

In 2008, men who say their wives or partners take the most responsibility for child care are no longer the majority (46% in 2008 compared with 58% in 1992). The nearly half of employed men (49%) who now say they take most or an equal share of child care responsibilities is up from 41% in 1992.

Importantly, employed women agree that their husbands or partners are taking more responsibility for child care:

- The percentage of women reporting that they take most responsibility for child care has dropped (from 73% in 1992 to 66% in 2008).
- Alternatively, the percentage of those who say their spouse takes or shares the responsibility increased significantly (from 21% in 1992 to 30% in 2008).

**Table 2: Who takes most responsibility for child care (1992-2008)?**

Gender	Who takes most responsibility for child care?	1992	2008	Sig.
Men	I do or share equally	41%	49%	*
	My spouse/partner does	58%	46%	
	Others do	1%	4%	
Women	I do	73%	66%	**
	My spouse/partner does or shares equally	21%	30%	
	Others do	6%	4%	

Statistical significance: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ ; ns = not significant.  
(1992 n=388; 2008 n=1,240)

Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 1992, 2008

**Men are taking more responsibility for other family work as well, according to themselves and their wives/partners.**

**Cooking:** The percentage of men who report they do most or an equal share of cooking has increased substantially since 1992, from 34% to 55%.

The percentage of women who say they do most of the cooking has dropped from 75% in 1992 to 67% in 2008, while the percentage of women who say their husbands do most or an equal share of cooking increased from 15% in 1992 to 26% in 2008.

Although women agree that their husbands are more involved in cooking, there is still a difference between the 67% of women who say they do most of the cooking and the 55% of men who say they take at least an equal share.

It may be that some men have different perceptions about what is involved in food preparation than their wives do, and may be not be including certain aspects of the meal preparation process, such as meal planning and shopping for ingredients. But it does appear that men are, on average, assuming more responsibility for this aspect of family work.

**Table 3: Who takes most responsibility for cooking (1992-2008)?**

Gender	Who takes most responsibility for cooking?	1992	2008	Sig.
Men	I do or share equally	34%	55%	***
	My spouse/partner does	56%	35%	
	Others do	9%	9%	
Women	I do	75%	67%	***
	My spouse/partner does or shares equally	15%	26%	
	Others do	9%	6%	

Statistical significance: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ ; ns = not significant.  
(1992 n=1,122; 2008 n=2,763)

Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 1992, 2008

**House Cleaning:** There is an even bigger difference in the views of husbands and wives/partners when it comes to cleaning. While a significantly larger percentage of men say they are involved in cleaning responsibilities in 2008 than in 1992, women do not report any change over that period.

**Table 4: Who takes most responsibility for house cleaning (1992-2008)?**

Gender	Who takes most responsibility for cleaning?	1992	2008	Sig.
Men	I do or share equally	40%	53%	**
	My spouse/partner does	51%	36%	
	Others do	9%	10%	
Women	I do	73%	71%	ns
	My spouse/partner does or shares equally	18%	21%	
	Others do	9%	8%	

*Statistical significance: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ ; ns = not significant.*  
(1992 n=1,122; 2008 n=2,764)

Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 1992, 2008

Our previous studies have revealed that the gender that has traditionally been assumed by society to have primary responsibility for particular aspects of family work tends to see itself as doing more in those areas.

The overall conclusion we draw from the trends reported in this section is quite profound. Whatever the precise objective degree of responsibility men are assuming for various aspects of family work, it has clearly become more socially acceptable for men to be and to say they are involved in child care, cooking and cleaning over the past three decades than it was in the past!

## Converging work and family roles, diverging levels of work-life conflict for fathers and mothers

**Changing gender roles appear to have increased the level of work-life conflict experienced by men.**

Men's reported level of work-life conflict<sup>24</sup> has risen significantly over the past three decades, while the level of conflict reported by women has not changed significantly.

- In 1977, the proportions of men and women reporting some or a lot of work-life conflict were similar.
- Men's work-life conflict, however, has increased significantly from 34% in 1977 to 49% in 2008, while women's work-life conflict has increased less dramatically and not significantly: from 34% in 1977 to 43% in 2008.<sup>25</sup>

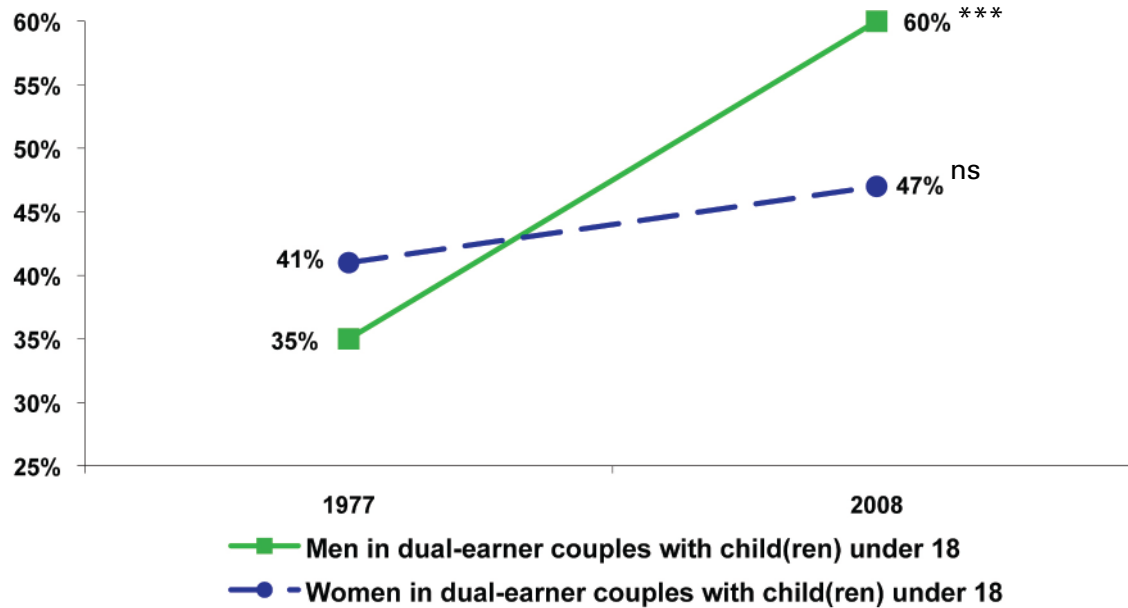
**Employed fathers in dual-earner families, especially, are experiencing conflict.**

The majority of fathers in dual-earner couples (60%) report experiencing some or a lot of conflict today, up from 35% in 1977.

The level of work-life conflict experienced by employed mothers in dual-earner couples has not changed significantly over the past three decades.

As a result, employed fathers in dual-earner couples are now significantly more likely to experience some or a lot of work-life conflict than mothers in dual-earner couples.

**Figure 15: Percentage of fathers and mothers in dual-earner couples working at least 20 hours per week report work-life conflict (1977–2008)**



Statistically significant differences between men and women in dual-earner couples with children under 18: 1977 ns; 2008 \*\*\* (1977 n=339; 2008 n=391)  
 U.S. Department of Labor, Quality of Employment Survey, 1977  
 Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008

In 2008, fathers in dual-earner couples experience more work-life conflict than fathers in single-earner families (59% versus 49%). [Note: This percentage includes fathers in dual-earner couples working any number of hours, not just those working at least 20 hours per week.]

In past studies, we found no significant difference between fathers in dual- and single-earner couples. This increase possibly reflects our finding that fathers in dual-earner couples are taking more responsibility for family work today than in the past.

**Factors predictive of work-life conflict among employed parents.**

**Fathers:** We were able to identify a number of factors that predict (that is, are significantly associated with) work-life conflict among employed fathers.

**Table 5: What factors predict work-life conflict among fathers?**

Predictor	Effect	Sig.
All hours worked/week in all jobs	Each additional hour worked per week increases the probability of experiencing some degree of work-life conflict	*
Time/week spent on self	Each additional hour spent doing things for oneself decreases the probability of work-life conflict	*
Dual-earner couple	Having a spouse/partner who works for pay increases the probability of experiencing work-life conflict	*
Work-life centrism <sup>26</sup>	Fathers who are family centric or dual centric are less likely to experience work-life conflict than those who are work-centric	***
Who takes most responsibility for child care	The probability of experiencing work-life conflict is less for fathers in families where someone other than the parents takes most responsibility for child care	*
Supervisor support	Greater support from one's supervisor decreases the probability of work-life conflict	***
Autonomy at work	Greater autonomy on the job decreases the probability of work-life conflict	**
Job pressure	High levels of job pressure increase the probability of work-life conflict	**

Statistical significance: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ ; ns = not significant.  
 (n=367)  
 Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008

**Mothers:** There are fewer factors predictive of work-life conflict among mothers than among fathers. Predictors shared by mothers and fathers include the total number of hours worked per week, number of hours per week spent on self, work-life centrism and job pressure (Table 6).

**Table 6: What factors predict work-life conflict among mothers?**

Predictor	Effect	Sig.
All hours worked/week in all jobs	Each additional hour increases probability of experiencing some degree of work-life conflict	***
Time/week spent on self	Each additional hour decreases the probability of work-life conflict	**
Work-life centrism	Mothers who are family centric or dual centric are less likely to experience work-life conflict	***
Job satisfaction	Job satisfaction decreases the probability of work-life conflict	***
Job pressure	Job pressure increases the probability of work-life conflict	***

Statistical significance: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ ; ns = not significant.  
 (n=517)  
 Families and Work Institute, National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2008



What is clear from the above findings is that one's attitudes about work and family roles (whether one is dual centric or family centric versus work centric) affect how torn one feels between these two roles. Both men and women who place greater or equivalent priority on personal and family life (family centric and dual centric) experience less work-life conflict than men and women who place greater priority on their work lives (work centric).

Giving a lot of attention to one's job, however, doesn't necessarily mean giving less attention to one's personal and/or family life. Achieving some semblance of the right fit may simply involve allocating time differently from day to day, which is the customary strategy of dual-centric people who place equivalent priority on their jobs and their personal/family lives over time. There are, of course, limits imposed by length of day, days in week, etc. that constrain time allocation options, but these limits are fairly flexible.

There are other unavoidable limitations to flexibility in time allocation—e.g., the needs of young children, elders or other dependents. Also note above that finding more time to spend doing things for oneself—jogging, reading, spending time with friends, fishing or whatever—reduces work-life conflict.

## Conclusion and implications

There is no question that the American workforce has changed. Women, and particularly mothers of children under 18, have reached a critical mass in American workplaces. Women are earning the majority of bachelors and advanced degrees. In light of these changes, it is not surprising that young women today are equal with young men in their desire to move to jobs with more responsibility.

The findings presented in this report give some reason for optimism—the realities of employees' lives are more closely aligned with their attitudes. We use the word optimism because when there is a disconnect between expectations and realities, conflict and tension typically ensue.

As a result of these changes, young mothers no longer necessarily feel compelled or pressured to reduce their career aspirations. Attitudes about working mothers are more favorable today than ever before. In addition, husbands are more likely to be involved in family work, providing much needed support for working mothers.

Change is never simple, however, and our data indicate a downside of the trend toward converging gender roles. Men are beginning to feel the effects of assuming greater responsibilities for family work by experiencing more conflict, and men and women in dual-earner families especially are facing challenges in managing the day-to-day realities of their lives in a highly pressured 24/7 work environment. The current economic downturn adds to these pressures.

Companies cannot assume that traditional attitudes or gender roles prevail. They need to assure that both **women** and men are helped to succeed at work and that both **men** and women are helped to succeed at home. Greater stress and strain on the home front rebounds negatively on work.

Specifically, you can share this report with your leaders and managers and discuss the implications for your company and/or your workgroup.

- **Find out** what motivates your women and men of different generations. Are you providing the kind of workplaces to engage them?
- **Review** your company communications. Are you inadvertently sending the wrong messages, such as men are going to be most interested in advancement and women are going to be most interested in work life assistance? Are you communicating the business benefits in having diverse leaders? Are you sharing stories that dispel common but incorrect assumptions about gender and generation?
- **Revisit** your talent management processes and programs. Are you providing special help to women—and men—to advance? Do these talent management initiatives take into account the needs of employees with family responsibilities? Are managers being held accountable for helping both women and men to advance? Are you providing career flexibility with diverse pathways and timetables?
- **Revisit** your work life policies and programs. Are you providing special help to men—and women—to achieve a good fit between their lives on and off the job? Are you sharing examples of men and women who have successful lives off the job with their families and in their communities as well as achieving success at work?
- **Create** opportunities for employees of different generations to network with and learn from each other. Are you supporting the creation of networks that meet the needs of your employees? Are you providing opportunities for younger employees to learn from older employees and older employees to learn from younger employees?

Change is very much a work in progress—one that clearly calls for changing business responses.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> **Technical Background:** Various data sources were used for this report. Primary sources were the Families and Work Institute 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) surveys, as well as the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey (QES) conducted by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor. The NSCW builds directly upon the 1977 QES, which was discontinued after the 1977 round of data collection. Both the NSCW and QES are based on random samples of the U.S. workforce.

The present report is based on 2,769 wage and salaried employees from the 2008 total sample. Total samples include wage and salaried employees who work for someone else, independent self-employed workers who do not employ anyone else, and small business owners who do employ others. NSCW total samples for each year average about 3,500 employed people. All NSCW samples are adjusted to reflect (i.e., weighted to) recent U.S. Bureau of the Census statistics on the total U.S. population to adjust for any sampling bias that might have occurred. The response rates for all NSCW surveys are above 50%, applying the conservative method of calculation recommended by the American Association for Public Opinion Research. In 2008, the response rate was 54.6%. The estimated maximum sampling error for the total wage and salaried sample is approximately +/- 1%.

The report also incorporates findings published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and U.S. Department of Labor, which are drawn from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Specifically, findings are from the March Supplement to the annual CPS representing a random sample of approximately 60,000 U.S. households. Some data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics are also included. Data drawn from government sources are always noted as such.

Various statistical tests for significance were used for this report: Pearson Chi square for comparing nominal scale variables, Mantel-Haenszel Chi square for comparing ordinal scale variables and logistic regression for evaluating relationships between ordinal scale variables. When we speak of “differences” between groups over time or “relationships between variables,” these differences/relationships always represent statistical significance at the  $p < .05$  level or (typically) better.

When reporting findings from US government surveys, we do not provide information about the statistical significance of group differences. Because these survey samples are so large, an absolute difference of almost any size is statistically significant at  $p < .05$  or much better.

All cross-year comparisons of independent random samples made adjustments for the design effects associated with each sample. These adjustments reduce the “effective size” of the samples for purposes of statistical tests, making it more difficult to find statistically significant differences. When sample sizes are reported, we use the original sample weightings without adjustments for design effects.

<sup>2</sup> Statistical significance: \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \* =  $p < .05$ , ns = not significant

<sup>3</sup> Data regarding labor force participation were drawn from data series from the Current Population Survey published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Although data are available for all years from 1950 through the present for men and women 18 years and older, we do not present published annual data for all available years, only data from 1950 and 1960 as historical points of reference, followed by data from 1970 to the present.

<sup>4</sup> “Labor force participation” refers to all people who are currently employed or unemployed but looking for jobs.

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economic News Release, February 2009—Table A-1, Employment status of the civilian population by sex and age.

<sup>6</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

<sup>7</sup> Published data about the labor force participation by women with children are only available from the Census beginning in 1975.

<sup>8</sup> All data are drawn from the U.S. Bureau of the Census Current Population Survey, which surveys approximately 60,000 households and provides the most reliable estimates of population characteristics available. The data series is complete by year for 1970–2007, but prior to that, data are not available for each year. We have provided data for 1940, 1950, and 1962 to provide important historical reference points.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Earned Degrees Conferred*, 1869-70 through 1964-65; *Projections of Education Statistics to 2016*; Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), “Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred” surveys, 1965-66 through 1985-86; and 1986-87 through 2005-06 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Completions Survey” (IPEDS-C:87-99), and Fall 2000 through Fall 2006. (This table was prepared June 2007.)

<sup>10</sup> A first-professional degree is one that signifies both completion of the academic requirements for beginning practice in a given profession and a level of professional skill beyond that required for a bachelor’s degree. A first-professional degree is based on a program requiring at least 2 academic years of work beyond the bachelor’s degree. Degree fields include dentistry, medicine, law and theological professions.

<sup>11</sup> The comparability of historical labor force data has been affected at various times by methodological and conceptual changes in the Current Population Survey (CPS). For an explanation, see the Historical Comparability section of the Household Data technical documentation provided at [http://www.bls.gov/cps/eetech\\_methods.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/cps/eetech_methods.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Data are from the Current Population Survey, published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics.

<sup>13</sup> Data are from the Current Population Survey, published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics. Census tables reporting annual earnings for men and women included both full time and part time employees. Hourly earnings paint a very different picture—both among employees who are paid on an hourly basis and (according to NSCW findings from the 2002 Highlights) salaried employees’ hourly equivalent pay.

<sup>14</sup> Data are drawn from the 1997 and 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce surveys. For purposes of this study, we only count *earnings* from men/women and their spouses/partners as family members. We, however, ask respondents to estimate *total family income* from all sources, which may dilute the estimates of contributions to family income for both men and women.

<sup>15</sup> Kim, S., Galinsky, E., and Bond J.T. (2001). *Women who earn more than their husbands or partners*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

<sup>16</sup> Because respondents’ estimates of their spouse’s or partner’s annual earnings—and even their own annual earnings—are often merely estimates, we only considered one member of a couple to be earning more than the other when his or her total estimated annual earnings exceeded that of his/her spouse/partner by 10 percentage points or more. We considered the earnings of couples to be *comparable* if neither had total annual earnings exceeding the other by at least 10 percentage points.

<sup>17</sup> Bond, J.T., Thompson, C., Galinsky, E. and Prottas, D. (2002). *Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce*. New York, NY: Families and Work Institute.

<sup>18</sup> Hartmann, H. and Rose, S. (2004). *Still a man’s labor market: The long-term earnings gap*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research. The sample is drawn from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics using data from 1983 to 1998. It includes all prime-age workers 26 to 59 years old who reported at least one year of positive earnings during that period.

<sup>19</sup> The following question was asked of wage and salaried employees in the 1977 U.S. Department of Labor *Quality of Employment Survey* and in the 2008 Families and Work Institute *National Study of the Changing Workforce*: “How much do you agree or 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? Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?”

<sup>20</sup> Note that the 1977 sample is limited to employees working at least 20 hours per week. As a result, to compare 1977 and 2008 data, the 2008 sample was also restricted to employees working at least 20 hours per week.

<sup>21</sup> The following question was asked of wage and salaried employees in the 1977 U.S. Department of Labor *Quality of Employment Survey* and in the 2008 Families and Work Institute *National Study of the Changing Workforce*: “How much do you agree or disagree that a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work? Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?”

<sup>22</sup> This is a new question in 2008, so we do not have any historical data. In 2008, 44% of men and 43% of women had mothers who worked all/most of the time while they were growing up.

<sup>23</sup> We first asked questions about taking responsibility for family work in 1992.

<sup>24</sup> Work-life conflict is a “bi-directional” measure, reflecting both work interfering with life off the job and life off the job interfering with work.

<sup>25</sup> Recall that comparisons between 1977 and 2008 data include only employees working 20 or more hours per week because the 1977 QES only provides data on employees working at least 20 hours per week.

<sup>26</sup> Work-life centrism measures the degree to which employees prioritize work over family (*work centric*), family over work (*family centric*) or both equivalently (*dual centric*).