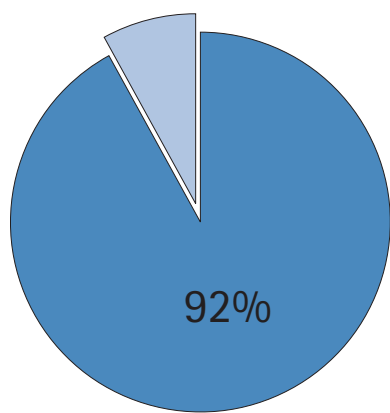


Promoting Children's Well-Being: The Role of Workplace Flexibility

The interaction of work and parenting.

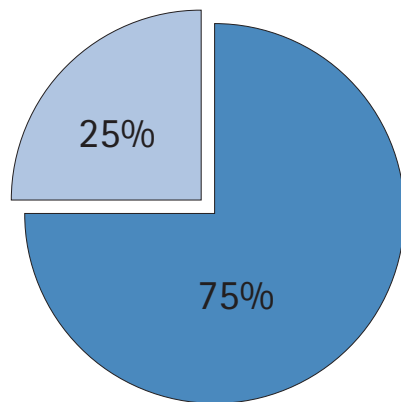
- 92% of all American workers feel that they don't have enough flexibility at work to meet the needs of their children and families.¹



WORKERS REPORTING THEY DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH FLEXIBILITY FOR FAMILY NEEDS

- Most parents want to be more involved with their children. According to one nationally representative survey, 60% of fathers and 55% of mothers reported that they did not have enough time to spend with their oldest child, and had similar concerns with their younger children.²
- Young fathers are particularly interested in spending more time with their families. According to a nationally representative study, men ages 20 to 39 place a much higher priority on having time to spend with their families than fathers in other generations. Among all age groups, however, 74% of men rated having a work schedule that allows them to spend time with their families as very important.³
- Children's educational and health care needs present particular challenges for working parents.
 - In one study, more than 40% of parents reported that their working conditions negatively affect their children's health in ways that range from a child missing a needed appointment with a doctor to a child failing to receive adequate early care and causing an illness or condition to worsen.⁴

- A national study of working parents found that nearly 75% could not consistently rely on flexibility at work to take time to meet with teachers and learning specialists.⁵

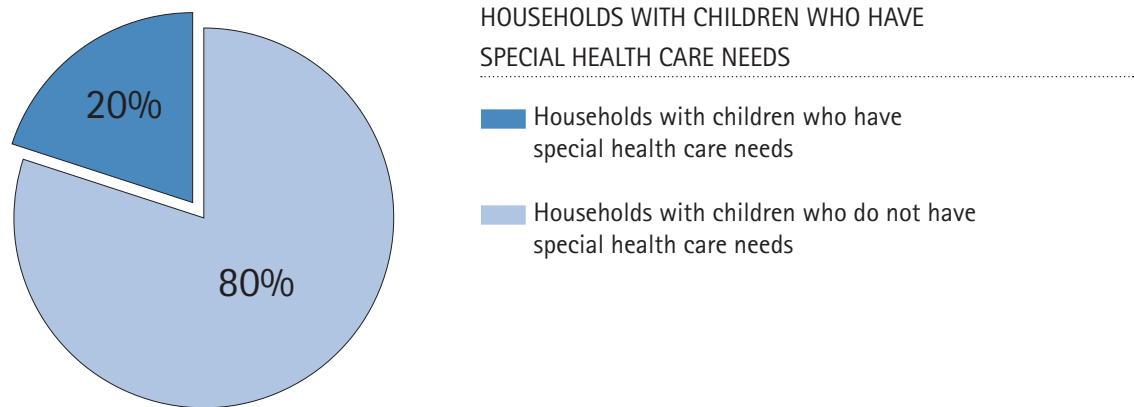


PARENTS' ACCESS TO FLEXIBILITY TO MEET WITH TEACHERS AND LEARNING SPECIALISTS

- Could not rely on job flexibility
- Could rely on job flexibility

- According to another study, only 30% of all workers are covered by policies that allow them to take paid time off specifically to care for sick children. This means 86 million workers have no formal policies guaranteeing them short term time off to care for the health of their children.⁶
- According to a nationally representative survey, only 27.5% of the workforce worked a flexible schedule in 2000.⁷
 - Parents' access to flexible work arrangements varies by gender. The 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce found that fathers in dual earner couples were more likely to report having little access to flexible work arrangements than mothers in dual earner couples (28% compared to 18%) and less likely to report high access to these arrangements (20% compared with 28%).⁸
- Work spillover into the home and lack of sufficient flexibility diminishes parents' knowledge about and interactions with their children.
 - Both mothers and fathers are less likely to know about their children's daily experiences, activities and whereabouts when fathers experience high levels of work-related stress, bring work home, and spend long hours at work.⁹
 - Parents also express more negative emotions towards their children when they feel a mismatch between the demands of their job and the demands of their family.
 - In one study, researchers found that high levels of work pressure produced heightened feelings of overload for both mothers and fathers, which led to higher levels of conflict between parents and their adolescent children and lower levels of adolescent psychological well-being.¹⁰ This has particular implications for fathers' relationships with their adolescents.¹¹
 - Another study found that mothers were more withdrawn from their preschool age children on days when they reported greater workloads or interpersonal stress at work.¹²

- One study found that fathers are more than twice as likely to report conflicts with their children on days they experienced stress due to work overload or home demands compared to days when they did not experience such stressors.¹³
- Parents of children with special needs face particular challenges.¹⁴
 - According to a national survey, 1 in 5 households has a child with special health care needs.¹⁵



- These children often require extensive care. For instance, 45.6% of children in the same survey needed more medical care, mental health or educational services than what is usual for most children of the same age; 29% required emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental services.¹⁶
- Both predictable and unpredictable care required by special needs children can impact working parents.
 - For instance, the most common chronic disorder among children is asthma, affecting an estimated 6.2 million children under 18 years of age.¹⁷ Among children under the age of 15, it is the third leading cause of hospitalization,¹⁸ resulting in over half a million emergency room visits for children under 15 in 2002.¹⁹
 - Among parents of children with special health care needs, 17% reported having to cut back on work and 13% stopped work entirely due to their children's needs.²⁰
 - In a study specifically focused on children with mental health disorders, 48% of parents reported that at some time they had to quit work to care for their children, and 27% indicated that their employment had been terminated because of work interruptions due to care responsibilities.²¹
 - One study found that 60% of working parents who had two or more children with a chronic condition at times had no access to either short term time off for health purposes or time off for vacation.²²

- Parents suffer greater stress and are at an increased risk for mental health and substance abuse problems when work conditions do not provide the flexibility they need to balance their work and family demands.
 - Workers who have difficulties making after school and other child care arrangements experience significantly more stress than other employees.²³
 - A national study demonstrated that individuals who faced work-family conflict were 2.5 to 3 times more likely to suffer from a mood or anxiety disorder, respectively, than individuals who did not face such conflict.²⁴
 - Work-family conflict is also associated with heavier alcohol consumption and more frequent intoxication.²⁵
 - Estimates from one study suggest workers experiencing work-family conflict are almost 2 times more likely to have a substance dependence disorder than those with no work-family conflict.²⁶

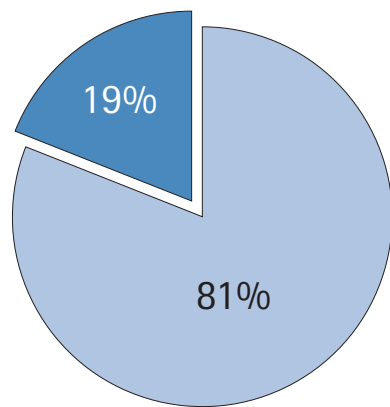
Parental involvement helps children lead healthy and successful lives.

- Parental involvement contributes to higher academic achievement for children.²⁷
 - According to an analysis of the National Education Longitudinal Survey, the more time parents spend discussing school activities and educational programs with their children, the higher the children perform on achievement tests in both reading and mathematics.²⁸
 - Another study also found that parent-child discussion was positively related to increased achievement in science and reduced truancy for some students.²⁹
- Parental availability and involvement is particularly crucial for adolescents' overall sense of well-being and their ability to develop positive self esteem, especially for disadvantaged youth.
 - Positive parental relationships are protective factors against the effects of economic hardship for adolescents living in poverty. Conversely, when adolescents perceive a lack of parental affection and communication and harsh or inconsistent discipline by their parents, they report lower self-esteem and higher levels of loneliness and depression.³⁰
 - Adolescents who spend more than 40% of their time outside of school by themselves are more likely to have lower self-esteem, feel less happy and active, and are less likely to enjoy what they are doing.³¹
- Parental involvement also diminishes the likelihood that children will become involved in problematic behavior.
 - Researchers have found that positive parental involvement reduces the chances that children will engage in risky behaviors including fighting and sex at an early age.³²
 - According to a study of the National Survey of Families and Households, children exhibit fewer behavioral problems when both mothers and fathers spend more time with their children, when they demonstrate support of their children, and when they report close relationships with their children.³³

- Similar results were found in an analysis of the National Educational Longitudinal Study. According to this nationally representative survey of teenagers, teens in families with high levels of parental support and monitoring report higher levels of self-esteem and report less substance use and problem behavior than teens in families where parents show low levels of support or provide less monitoring.³⁴
 - A study of fathers' work experiences also found that teachers report fewer behavioral problems among children whose fathers have more autonomy and who are better able to balance the demands of their jobs with the needs of their families.³⁵
 - Family rituals, such as sitting down to dinner together and sharing activities on weekends and holidays, positively influence children's health and development.
 - One study reported that children who ate dinner with their family every day consumed nearly a full serving more of fruits and vegetables per day than those who never ate family dinners or only did so occasionally.³⁶
 - The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse found that teens who have dinner with their families five or more times a week are almost twice as likely to receive As in school compared to teens who have dinner with their families two or fewer times a week (20 percent vs. 12 percent).³⁷

Workplace flexibility enhances workers' ability to be effective parents.

- Workers with flexible work arrangements experience less stress handling child and family responsibilities than those without such arrangements.
 - In a 2001 study, only 29% of employees with flextime benefits reported work-family conflict vs. 44% of those who did not have such benefits.³⁸
 - In a recent assessment of the impact of flexible work arrangements in one organization, 81% of users said the availability of this flexibility made them more effective in managing work/family responsibilities.³⁹



IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS ON MANAGING WORK/FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

81% report FWAs made them more effectively in handling work/family responsibilities

- A recent study indicated that “fit,” or the extent to which employees are able to adjust their work schedule to meet their life needs, moderates the effects that long work hours have on burnout.⁴⁰
- Being involved in the care of sick children has proven to be beneficial for parents by reducing their anxiety and increasing their confidence and competency in dealing with their child’s illness.⁴¹
- Flexible work options allow caregivers to be more involved in their children’s lives.
 - For example, the ability to make decisions regarding flexible work use impacts dads’ interactions with their children. An analysis of the National Study of Daily Experiences found that fathers who have greater discretion and control over their work environment spend more time with their children on those days when they work fewer hours as compared to fathers with less autonomy.⁴²
 - Having access to short term time off that is paid is the primary factor in parents’ decisions about staying home when their children are sick.⁴³ Working parents who lack such time are one-fifth as likely to care for their children at home when they are sick as compared to parents who have such time.⁴⁴
 - According to a 2001 nationally representative survey, 15% of children 5-14 years old were in “self-care” at the time of the survey, meaning that they were caring for themselves unsupervised by an adult or family member.⁴⁵ Increased access to flexible work arrangements would ameliorate the stress working parents face in arranging for the care of their children particularly during after school hours.

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