

## Highlights from Families and Work Institute's 2008 National Study of Employers

Families and Work Institute's *2008 National Study of Employers* (NSE) is the most comprehensive and far-reaching study of the practices, policies, programs and benefits provided by U.S. employers to address the changing needs of today's workforce and workplace. The 2008 NSE sample includes 1,100 employers with 50 or more employees—77 percent are for profit employers and 23 percent are nonprofit organizations; 40 percent operate at only one location, while 60 percent have operations at more than one location.

### Definition of Flexibility

Our definition of flexibility includes the following types of flexibility:

- **Flex Time and Place**
- **Choices in Managing Time**
- **Reduced Time**
- **Caregiving Leaves**
- **Time Off**
- **Flex Careers**
- **Culture of Flexibility**

### Prevalence

Of the 20 options for working flexibly we consider in this report (Table 3), employers with 50 or more employees most frequently allow at least some groups of workers to have control over when they take breaks (84%) and change their starting and quitting times within some range of hours (79%). They are next most likely to allow at least some groups of employees to return to work gradually after leaves for childbirth and adoption (77%), take time off for education or training to improve job skills (74%) and take time off for important family and personal needs without loss of pay (73%).

### Predicting Flexibility

Our findings show that those most likely to be flexible are employers that:

- are nonprofits;
- are in the finance and in professional services sectors;
- operate in more than one location;
- have fewer union members;
- have fewer hourly employees;
- have more women and more minorities in top positions or who report directly to those in top positions; and
- have more part-timers.

## Small versus Large Employers

In this study we define small employers as those with 50 to 99 employees nationwide and large employers as those with 1,000 or more employees nationwide. In 2008, there is only one statistically significant difference between smaller and large employers in the provision of various forms of flexibility. Small employers are more likely to offer a compensatory time off program—in other words, salaried employees who work overtime are allowed to receive compensation in the form of extra time off rather than monetary compensation. In the *2005 National Study of Employers*, small employers were more likely to provide flexibility than large employers in about half of the types of flexibility investigated. What has happened in the past three years is that large employers have increased some types of flexibility (e.g., periodic flextime, control over breaks, phased retirement) and smaller employers have reduced other types (e.g., part-time positions, time off for education or training). As a result, the **differences between employers of small and large sizes have largely disappeared.**

A few differences remain. Smaller employers (64%) are more likely than large employers (47%) to report that “supervisors are encouraged to be supportive of employees with family needs and by finding solutions that work for both employees and the organization.” Not surprisingly, large employers that presumably have HR departments are more likely to provide an Employee Assistance Program and to implement formal training and counseling programs focused on work and family needs, diversity and management and leadership roles for women.

In terms of health care benefits, small employers are somewhat less likely (93%) to offer personal health insurance coverage than large employers (100%), but when they do, small employers are more likely (29%) than large employers (7%) to pay all of the premiums. This is an important finding, in our view. In recent years, as health care costs have risen dramatically, employers have begun to shift more of the costs of premiums to employees. Large employers are more likely (75%) than small employers (42%) to offer Wellness programs for employees and their families.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The figures for all employers surveyed are as follows: 95% provide health insurance coverage; 23% cover the full cost of health insurance for employees; 51% offer Wellness programs to their employees and employees' families.