Working in a 24/7 Economy
Challenges for American Families

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Major Points

• The movement toward a 24/7 service economy has created a demand for millions of Americans, including parents with young children, to work evening, night, or rotating shifts, as well as weekends.

• The demand for late-hour employment has profound consequences for individual well-being, the nature and stability of family life, the way we care for children, and child well-being.

• Our failure to take into account the temporal complexity of work time and its consequences for family life compromises the effectiveness of work and family policies; we need more public discourse on this issue.
Reasons for the 24/7 economy

1) Growth of service economy
   - Increased employment of women

2) Changing demography
   - Aging population
   - Postponement of marriage
   - More dual-earner households

3) Changing technology
   - Able to be ‘on call’ at all hours
   - Reduced costs

NOTE: ‘SELECTED SERVICES’ include ‘Information,’ ‘Professional and business services,’ ‘Education and health services,’ ‘Leisure and hospitality,’ and ‘Other services.’

NOT SHOWN: ‘Natural resources and mining,’ ‘Construction,’ ‘Trade, transportation, and utilities,’ ‘Financial activities,’ and ‘Government.’
Prevalence of non-daytime and weekend employment

• **All** employed Americans
  – *1 in 5* work **most** of their hours in the evenings or nights, or work a rotating schedule
  – *1 in 3* work Saturdays and/or Sundays
  – Considering both together, *2 in 5* work late shifts and/or weekends

• **Dual earner couples with children under age 5**
  – *1 in 3* have a spouse who works **most** hours in the evenings, nights, or has a rotating schedule

• **All these ratios are higher for low-income Americans**

• **Single mothers more** likely to work late shifts than married mothers
Consequences for family life

- Poorer quality of marriages (evenings and nights)
- Greater marital instability (nights only)
- Greater participation of men in household chores
- Less parent-child interaction (e.g., fewer dinners as a family with evening shifts)
- Greater participation of fathers and grandmothers in child care
- Greater complexity of child care arrangements (e.g., reliance on more providers)
Need for more public discourse

• Unmet need for evening and night care for children of low-income single mothers is substantial, yet difficult to find providers for late hour care. Many young children left unsupervised.
  – Need to expand the availability of evening and night care
  – Need to provide more child care subsidies to low-income mothers so they can afford to work during the daytime

• Desires of consumers (and business) versus health and social consequences for employees and their families.
  – We want 24/7 service
  – Growing demand creates new (low paying) jobs