

Impact of Gender and Life-cycle Stage on the Findings The 2012 National Study on Balancing Work and Caregiving in Canada

Linda Duxbury, PhD, Professor, Sprott School of Business,
Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Linda_Duxbury@Carleton.ca

Christopher Higgins, PhD, Professor, Ivey School of Business,
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada
Chiggins@Ivey.UWO.ca

This document summarizes the impact of four lifecycle stages on the various predictors, moderators and outcomes in our model: no dependent care, childcare, sandwich responsibilities (childcare and eldercare), and eldercare.

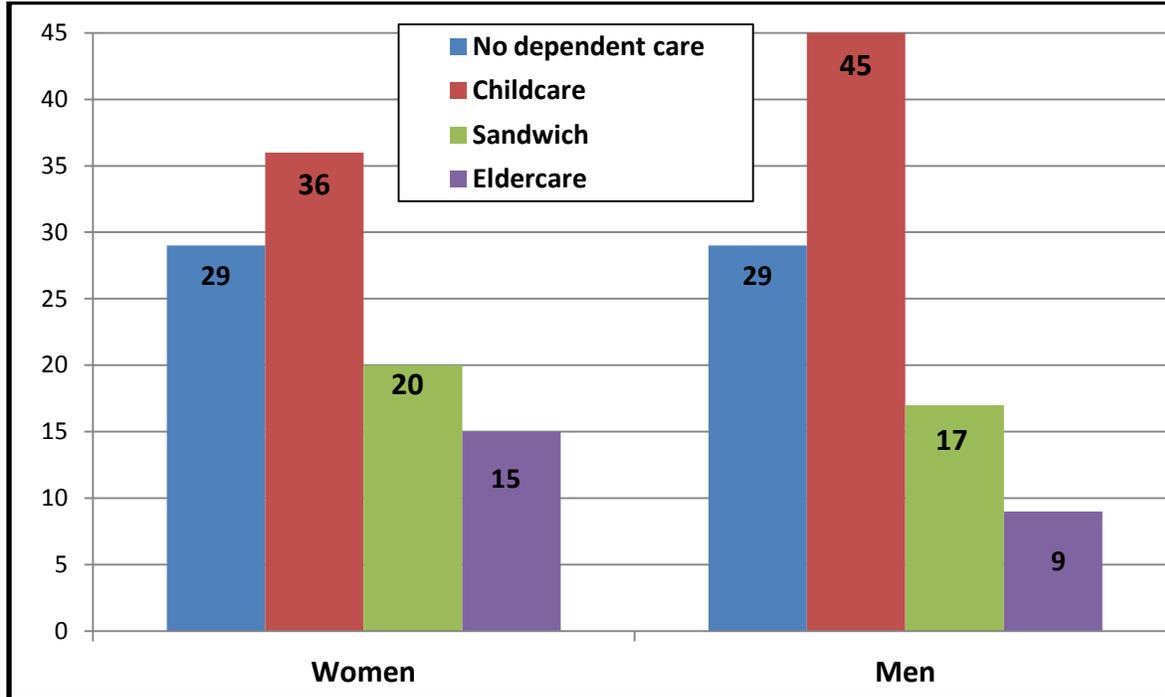
Women more likely than men to spend time each week in eldercare

Despite the fact that the men and the women respondents were very similar in age, the women in the sample were more likely than the men to have eldercare responsibilities (35% of women in the sandwich and eldercare only groups as compared to 26% of men), a finding that is consistent with research in the area that indicates that women are more often than men to be the ones who takes on this type of caregiving.

Of the 9107 men in the sample, 29% had no dependent care, 45% had children at home that required care, 17% were in the sandwich group (both childcare and eldercare) and 9% spent time each week in elder.

Of the 15,914 women, 29% had no dependent care, 36% had children at home that required care, 20% were in the sandwich group (both childcare and eldercare) and 15% spent time each week in eldercare.

Sample distribution: Gender by Lifecycle Stage



What impact does gender have on work-life conflict?

Key findings with respect to gender are summarized in Table 1. A number of conclusions can be drawn from these data.

What has changed?

Women are the primary earner or equal partners in the breadwinning equation in just over half the families in our study. Men share dependent care in a quarter of the families under study. These findings suggest that we need a new paradigm to describe and evaluate women's participation in Canada's labour market and their contribution to their families' economic well-being.

Almost one in three of the women said that their partner had primary responsibility for childcare in their families. These data suggest that men are assuming primary responsibility for childcare in families where the woman is the primary breadwinner.

Men and women were equally likely to miss work due to childcare and eldercare - a finding that is consistent with our data showing that caregiving is a shared responsibility in a substantive number of dual-income Canadian families.

Gender is not associated with any of the forms of work-life conflict considered in this study. This suggests that as men do more at home and breadwinning is shared, work-life becomes more of an

issue for men who now have to balance competing career demands with their partner and assume more responsibility at home.

What has not changed?

Women are still working a "double shift" (expend more energy at home than their male counterparts and almost the same amount of energy at work). They are also more likely than men to devote a lot of energy to the parent and home maintenance roles.

Women are still more likely than men to report higher levels of stress and depressed mood and to have sought care from their family physician. Others have questioned whether these differences reflect actual gender differences in mental and physical health or can be attributed to the fact that women are more willing to disclose such issues and seek care.

What impact does lifecycle stage have on these issues?

Key findings with respect to life cycle stage are summarized in Table 2. A number of conclusions can be drawn from these data.

Lifecycle stage is significantly associated with demands, overload, employee well-being and work-life conflict.

Employees without children are better off in all respects - a finding that could explain why many younger Canadians are waiting longer to have children and having fewer children overall.

Lifecycle stage is not associated with the amount of energy spent in following roles: parents to adult children, the spouse/partner role, the grandparent role, the employee role, the manager role, the second job role, the volunteer role. These roles seem to require the same amount of energy regardless of what else the employee has on their plate.

With one exception (employees in the Sandwich group are more likely to take work home to complete in the evening - a finding that is likely associated with the heavy demands they face at home) time in work is not associated with lifecycle stage. This finding is consistent with the fact that people in our sample are more likely to give priority to work and work for an organization that expects employees to give priority to work.

Employees, with both childcare and eldercare demands, face more challenges than their counterparts with only one caregiving role. More specifically they report the highest levels of work, family and total role overload, the highest levels of stress and depressed mood, the highest incidence of both work interferes with family and family interferes with work, and the poorest levels of physical health. They are also more likely to be absent from work, to say that work-life balance issues had negatively impacted their productivity at work and increased their use of company benefits. These findings are a wake-up call to employers as the proportion of Canada's workforce with dual demands is likely to increase in the next decade as our population ages and knowledge workers continue to have their children in their thirties.

Family interferes with work appears to be more a function of childcare demands than the need to provide eldercare (those in the childcare and sandwich stages of the lifecycle are more likely to report this form of work-life conflict).

Perceived stress appears to be more a function of childcare demands than the need to provide eldercare (those in the childcare and sandwich stages of the lifecycle are more likely to report high levels of perceived stress).

Control over the family domain appears to be more a function of childcare than eldercare (those in the childcare and sandwich stages of the lifecycle are more likely to report low control over their family domain while those in the eldercare group report higher levels of control).

Employees with children at home are more likely to report that money is tight in their families - an unfortunate finding given the fact that money seems to help employees cope with increased demands at home.

Depressed mood appears to be more a function of eldercare than childcare (those in the eldercare and sandwich stages of the lifecycle are more likely to report high levels of depressed mood).

Employees in the childcare stage of the lifecycle are more likely than their counterparts in the sandwich group to miss work due to childcare. This difference might be due to the fact that these employees have younger children at home. Alternatively, it might be that elderly dependents are able to help employees deal with unexpected issues at home.

The data suggest that managers either are unsure of how best to support employees with eldercare needs and/or that the culture is not supportive of employees with this type of demand (those in the sandwich and eldercare groups are less likely to feel that their manager is supportive and more likely to report that the culture is one that values employees who give priority to family).

Employees who have the greatest need for flexibility at work (those in the sandwich group) are the least likely to perceive that such flexibility exists in their organization. It could be that these employees have a more realistic view of what is and what is not possible with respect to changing work hours etc than are their colleagues (especially those in the no dependents group) who have less of a need for such flexibility (i.e., those in the sandwich group have asked for flexibility and been denied while those with no dependents have not asked for special treatment).

Gender differences within lifecycle stage

Finally there were a number of gender differences that could be observed within lifecycle stage. These are summarized below.

Women spend less time and their husbands spend more time in paid employment when there are younger children in the home. These data suggest that families in the childcare and sandwich stages of the lifecycle accommodate an increase in demands at home by having the female

partner reduce the amount of time in paid employment while the male partner increases his time in this role.

Men and women in the sandwich group do not spend more time in dependent care (childcare and eldercare) per week than their counterparts with just children at home (childcare only), suggesting that there is some kind of synergy between these two roles (i.e., children help with eldercare).

Women with children (sandwich, childcare only) were more likely to say that they wanted to work fewer hours for less money. No such finding was observed for the men in the sample.

Lifecycle stage differences of note in our sample of men:

Men in the sandwich group were twice as likely to say that work-life challenges had caused them to turn down a promotion than were the men in other lifecycle stages. This finding was not observed for the females in the sample.

Men in the sandwich and eldercare stages of the lifecycle are more likely to be absent from work due to mental and emotional fatigue and report very low levels of management support (lower than other men and their female counterparts).

Men in the sandwich and childcare stages of the lifecycle report higher levels of work-interferes with family (higher than other men and their female counterparts). This would suggest that having dependent children in the home is more problematic for men than for women when it comes to this form of work-life conflict.

Men in the childcare stage of the lifecycle are more likely to agree that the culture in their place of work values people who put work ahead of family (more likely than other men and their female counterparts).

In conclusion

The above gender and lifecycle stage differences suggest that we are in a period of transition in Canada with respect to how men and women function at work and at home. These transitions, along with concomitant demographic (reduced fertility, aging workforce and population) and labour market (jobs without people - people without jobs) changes suggest that organizations and society are facing episodic change in the very near future. Organizations who do not address the issues articulated in this report are likely to face real challenges with respect to recruitment and retention of talent. They are also likely to see their bottom line impacted by these issues. Society will also pay a price in terms of increased health care costs, reduced productivity and increased dependency ratios (age-population ratio of those typically not in the labor force versus those typically in the labor force).

Table 1: Impact of Gender on the Findings

	No Gender Differences in	Women more likely than men	Men more likely than women
Demographic Characteristics	Age, where people live (community size, province), educational attainment, families' financial status, and the age of the children for those respondents who were parents	To be single, to work in clerical/administrative positions, to make less than \$60,000 per year, to say that their partner worked as a manager or in a retail/production position, to say that their partner made \$80,000 or more per year, to live in families where breadwinning is shared, to say that they balanced work and family by having fewer children/no children, and to either have no children or only one child	To be married, to work in executive/management and technical positions, to make more than \$100,000 per year, to have a partner with a university degree who worked in a clerical or professional position, to say that their partner did not work outside the home, to be the primary breadwinner in their family, and to have two or more children
Work Profile	Works in a professional position (half the respondents of both genders), use of flexible work arrangements, years in current position, the likelihood of belonging to a union, the extent to which the employee sees a link between pay and performance	To work a fixed "9 to 5" work schedule, and to want to spend less time in work, even if this means a reduction in pay	To work a rotating shift (16% versus 7%), to have more years working for their current employer, to be within five years of retirement, to say that they plan on working post-retirement, and to say that they want to spend more time in work for more money
Family Demands	The amount of time spent per week in eldercare	To assume primary responsibility for childcare within their family, to spend more time per week in childcare (23 hours) and eldercare (7 hours), to have a partner who spent fewer hours per week in childcare (19 hours) and eldercare (6 hours)	To have a partner who worked fewer hours than they did (one in three were married to women who worked part time or not at all) but spent more time per week in childcare (29 hours) and eldercare (8 hours) than they did. To spend time in dependent care (fathers spent 19 hours per week in childcare and those with eldercare spent 7 hours per week in caregiving)

	No Gender Difference In:	Women more likely than men	Men more likely than women
Work Demands	The time spent using e-mail on either work or non-work days, the impact of work extension technology (WET) on the employee, the amount of unpaid overtime performed per week for those who engage in supplemental work at home (SWAH), the amount of time spent per week commuting to/from work		To spend more than 45 hours per week in work per week and to perform SWAH
Total Roles		To engage in a greater number of high energy roles and to indicate that the following roles require a lot of energy: parent to a child under the age of 19, parent to an adult child, caregiver to a disabled dependent, and maintaining the home.	To participate in a higher number of roles
Overload		To experience high levels of total role overload, work role overload and family role overload	
Work-life Conflict	Work interferes with family, family interferes with work, total caregiver strain, physical caregiver strain and financial caregiver strain		
Employee Well-Being	Life satisfaction, visits to the hospital or the emergency department	To report higher levels of stress and depressed mood, to have visited a physician in the past six months, to report that work-life challenges have reduced the amount of energy they have, the amount of time they have for themselves, for sleep, and for recreational activities, to report being overwhelmed by caregiving weekly or more	

	No Gender Difference In:	Women more likely than men	Men more likely than women
Organizational Outcomes	Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, intent to turnover, absenteeism due to childcare and eldercare	To say that work life challenges had caused them to be absent from work and to increase their use of employee benefits, to be absent from work because of health issues and emotional, mental or physical fatigue.	
Moderators	How employees perceive the organizational culture, control over work, perceived flexibility, management support, the likelihood that an employee will say that they cope with work-life issues by reducing their productivity at work and their work hours.	To report high levels of control over their family domain	

Table 2: Impact of Lifecycle Stage (when gender taken into account)

	No dependents	Childcare	Sandwich	Eldercare
Demographic Characteristics	Predominately young (Gen Y and Gen X), single employees who live in larger cities	Predominately married employees in Gen X cohort with younger (under 5 and 5 to 12) children	Predominately married employees in Gen X/Baby Boomer cohort with adolescent (5 to 12)/teen age children. These employees are more likely to be responsible for the care of 3 + elderly dependents	Predominately single Baby Boomers who either have no children or have older children who do not live at home. More likely to care for an elderly dependent in their home
Work Demands	More likely to say that they wanted to work more hours for more money		Spend more time in work related activities. More likely to perform SWAH. More likely to say that WET has increased their stress and their workloads	
Family Demands	Almost no time in family activities	More time in dependent care	Most time in dependent care	Less time in dependent care
Total Roles	Engaged in fewer roles	Engaged in a higher number of high energy roles - Spent the most energy in the parent role	Engaged in the highest number of high energy roles	
Overload	Lowest levels of work, family and total role overload	Higher levels of family role overload	Highest levels of work, family and total role overload	
Work-life Conflict	Lowest levels of work interferes with family and family interferes with work	Highest levels of family interferes with work	Highest levels of work interferes with family and family interferes with work	
Employee Well-Being	Employees in this group are in the best physical health	Higher levels of perceived stress	Highest levels of perceived stress and depressed mood and lowest levels of perceived health. Most likely to have seen physician in last six month.	Higher levels of depressed mood
Organizational Outcomes	Work-life issues have little impact on this groups performance of work role	Most likely to miss work due to issues with their children	Highest levels of absenteeism overall, lower levels of job satisfaction and most likely to say that work-life issues had lead them to reduce productivity and increase use of benefits	

	No dependents	Childcare	Sandwich	Eldercare
Moderators	<p>Most likely to say that money is not an issue in their families and they have money for extras</p> <p>More likely to report that they work for a supportive manager</p> <p>Most likely to report high levels of perceived flexibility</p>	<p>More likely to say that money is tight in their families</p> <p>More likely to report that they work for a supportive manager</p> <p>Lower levels of control over their family domain</p>	<p>More likely to say that money is tight in their families</p> <p>Least likely to report that they work for a supportive manager</p> <p>Most likely to report that the culture in their organization is one that values employees who give priority to work over family</p> <p>Lowest levels of perceived flexibility</p> <p>Lowest levels of control over family domain</p>	<p>More likely to say that they live comfortably on their family incomes</p> <p>Report higher levels of control over their family domain</p> <p>Less likely to report that they work for a supportive manager</p> <p>More likely to report that the culture in their organization is one that values employees who give priority to work over family</p>