

# Family life and work life: An uneasy balance <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

- Report in pdf <sup>[2]</sup>

Description: Families are changing and so are the organizations for which they work. Families need and want the work that employers provide and employers need the workers to produce goods and services for sale and distribution. It is a two-way street. This report highlights the dynamic relationship between these two entities and examines whether or not Canadians are achieving an acceptable balance between family life and work life. The result seems to be an uneasy balance. • This report concludes that while many families are satisfied with their family life and work life arrangements, a growing number are clearly not. This dissatisfaction often negatively impacts families and their employers. A looming labour shortage will likely worsen the situation. • Persons who live in family households comprise 84% of the total supply of Canadian labour. The last decade has seen rising labour participation by all family members, with the largest increase among female lone-parent families and wives with young children. Flat hourly earnings are leading more family members into the paid workforce. • Family members are spending more time on work and work-related activities. Commuting times are increasing and modern technology has blurred the lines between work and family. • It is undeniable, more work time clearly means less family time. The average time spent with family on a typical work day has shrunk by about three-quarters of an hour, from 250 minutes per day in 1986 to 206 minutes in 2005 - a drop of 18%. • Women still do most of the juggling in bringing about a balance between family time and work time. Women are much more likely to work part-time, simply drop out of the paid workforce or work two-jobs to accommodate family needs. • The job market is strong but is slowly shifting towards more temporary employment and increasing overtime, both with or without pay. Organizations are continually re-engineering, rotating workers, integrating functional groups, downsizing and reorganizing the workplace. • The ongoing stress and change is leading to more dissatisfaction, more time off for illness and family reasons, more workers who are thinking of leaving their current employers and lower ratings for their employers. There is more that can be done to improve the uneasy balance. Families and employers are encouraged to continue working together to strengthen their partnership with a view of building and/or maintaining healthy work life and family life relationships. Governments at all levels are similarly encouraged to take a leadership role in establishing the context and opportunities for continuing dialogue, discussion and policy development in this critically important area.

**Region:** Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

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