

## 2009 Work+Life Fit Reality Check Summary

First conducted in 2006, The Annual Work+Life Fit™ Reality Check monitors progress on issues related to work life flexibility from the individual's point of view. The telephone survey of a national probability sample of 757 full-time employed adults, sponsored by Work+Life Fit, Inc. and conducted by Opinion Research Corporation March 26-30, 2009, has a margin of error of +/- 4 percent. For the purpose of this survey, work life flexibility was defined as having flexibility in when, where and how you work. It allows you to flexibly allocate time and energy between your work life and personal life. For a copy of the companion news release or for more information, please email [pam@superpear.com](mailto:pam@superpear.com).

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Work life flexibility survives and is here to stay. We now need to shift our attention to making flexibility work to achieve the goals of individuals and business in both up and down cycles. The recession will transform the work+life flexibility landscape in ways that will have ramifications long after the recovery begins:

- Most respondents said they would accept a change or reduction in schedule, or take a cut in pay to save their jobs.
- The recession has dramatically changed the career plans with more people saying they plan to work in retirement and are less likely to take a career break to care for children and aging relatives.
- What has not changed, however, is access to and use of flexibility by employees. A majority continue to have access to the same amount or more flexibility than they have in the past.

### EMPLOYEES WILLING TO ACCEPT FLEXIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO SAVE JOBS

More than 9 out of 10 employees (94%) would be willing to accept a change or reduction in their schedule, or take a pay cut to avoid layoffs.

Which of the following would you be willing to accept instead of a job layoff?

	Total	Male	Female
Four-day workweek, but the same amount of hours worked	78%	80%	76%
Add additional unpaid vacation days to the year	59%	62%	56%
Take one to two weeks unpaid leave, also known as a furlough	59%	61%	56%
Share your job with another individual	48%	47%	50%
Reduced hours with reduced pay	47%	47%	48%
Work on a project basis as a contractor	41%	44%	37%
A pay cut, but the same amount of hours worked	41%	39%	43%
Take a month or more unpaid sabbatical	31%	34%	28%
None of these	5%	4%	7%

### RECESSION HAS LITTLE IMPACT ON WORK LIFE FLEXIBILITY OFFERINGS OR USE

The recession is having little to no effect on the amount of flexibility being offered by organizations and being accessed by employees:

- 98% of respondents indicated they currently have work life flexibility.
- 81% of respondents indicated the amount of flexibility they currently have either increased or stayed the same from this time last year.

- 85% said the flexibility opportunities at their company either increased or stayed the same last year.
- 85% reported there was either an increase or no change in the likelihood they would use work life flexibility with the increase in the amount of layoffs at companies.

When thinking about the amount of work life flexibility you currently have, do you have:

	Total	Male	Female
Have work life flexibility	98%	98%	98%
More work life flex than this time last year	19%	17%	22%
Less work life flex than this time last year	17%	18%	16%
About the same	62%	63%	60%
I don't have work life flex	2%	2%	1%

Have work life flexibility opportunities at your company:

	Total	Male	Female
Increased from this time last year	19%	19%	19%
Decreased from this time last year	13%	14%	12%
There's been no change	66%	66%	67%

With the increase in the amount of layoffs at companies, has the likelihood of your use of work life flexibility:

	Total	Male	Female
Increased from this time last year	11%	13%	8%
Decreased from this time last year	14%	16%	11%
There has been no change	74%	70%	80%

#### RECESSION CAUSES DRAMATIC CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS, LEADS TO NEED FOR MORE FLEXIBILITY, NOT LESS

Nine out of ten (90%) respondents indicated the recession changed the way they think about and/or plan their careers, with a majority staying with their current employer longer than anticipated. A number of the reported shifts will require even greater flexibility in when, where and how work is done, with:

- A majority saying they expect to work in retirement, and
- Almost half indicating they are less likely to take time off or career breaks to care for children or aging parent, *with women significantly more likely (56%) than men (40%) to say this will be true for them.*

As a result of the recent economic downturn, which of the following are true for you? (Choose as many as apply)

	Total	Male	Female
Plan to stay with current employer longer than anticipated	58%	56%	60%
Expect to do some form of paid work during retirement	58%	56%	61%
Save more or spend less money in anticipation of future job changes	56%	54%	57%
Less likely to voluntarily leave the workforce for periods of time or take a career break, for example to raise children or care for an aging parent	47%	40%	56%
Taken on a second job	13%	16%	10%
Work as an independent, project-based contractor	9%	13%	3%
None of these	10%	11%	8%

#### DAY-TO-DAY AND FORMAL FLEXIBILITY—WORKING DIFFERENTLY, NOT LESS

Nine out of ten respondents (91%) indicated interest in using some type of flexibility in the coming year, with no significant difference between men and women. Occasional, or day-to-day, flexibility was preferred by 80% of respondents, followed closely by formal flexibility (73%). Most said the flexibility they wanted involved working differently in terms of schedule or location, not less. Only a small minority (12%) said they wanted to reduce their schedule.

Which of the following types of work life flexibility would you like to use in the coming year?

	Total	Male	Female
Occasional, or “day-to-day,” flexibility	80%	78%	82%
• Change in schedule	71%	70%	73%
• Work from remote location other than office	57%	55%	60%
Officially agreed upon, or “formal,” flexibility	73%	72%	75%
• Compressed workweek	62%	64%	59%
• Change in schedule	60%	61%	57%
• Work from remote location other than office	57%	56%	58%
• Reduced Schedule	12%	12%	12%
None of above	9%	9%	7%

Flexibility is surviving the recession. Other surprising findings given the economic climate included:

- While 66% said they didn’t improve or use flexibility for one or more reasons, this was a decrease from 71% in 2007.
- Only 22% said fears about losing their job kept them from using or improving their work life flexibility, and
- Fewer respondents, when compared to previous years’ findings, let concerns about making less money, hurting their career, and/or the perceptions of others get in their way of flexibility. Interestingly, women (38%) were significantly more likely than men (28%) to report being challenged by the fear they might make less money.

Employees reported the most difficulty with how to make flexibility work with the type of job they have. Every job is flexible in some way, but we need to improve the process for matching flexibility with the job, and finding more flexible ways work can be done.

Please indicate which reasons may have kept you from using or improving your work life flexibility (Choose as many as apply):

	Total 2009	Total 2007	Total 2006
No reason for not improving, already have work life flex	21%	25%	15%
The type of job	42%	N/A	N/A
Might make less money	32%	39%	45%
Boss will say “no”	30%	26%	32%
Might lose job	22%	20%	28%
Might hurt career	19%	27%	N/A
Others think don’t work hard	16%	30%	29%

#### OPTIMISM ABOUT PRESIDENT OBAMA’S SUPPORT OF FLEXIBILITY

As a reflection of the interest in work life flexibility, a majority felt there should be national legislation supporting flexibility, and were optimistic that this type of policy will happen in the Obama administration. Women were significantly more likely than men to say there should be legislation and to feel that it will pass.

Should there be national legislation or programs that would make it easier for organizations to offer and for individuals to have more work life flexibility?

	Total	Male	Female
Yes	60%	55%	67%
No	34%	40%	27%
Doesn’t matter to me	3%	4%	3%

Are you optimistic that under President Obama there will be national legislation or programs that make it easier for organizations to offer and for individuals to have more work life flexibility?

	Total	Male	Female
Yes	56%	51%	62%
No	37%	42%	29%
Doesn't matter to me	3%	3%	2%

Note: The *CFO Perspectives on Work Life Flexibility* study was conducted in 2008 in lieu of the Work+Life Fit Reality Check.

Work+Life Fit Inc. develops innovative business-based work life flexibility strategies for organizations and individuals. Clients include BDO Seidman LLP, the United States Navy, Ernst & Young, Barclays Global Investors, and Quaker, as well as thousands of individuals. CEO Cali Williams Yost has been a flexibility consultant since 1995, starting at the Families and Work Institute and then Bright Horizons Family Solutions two of the industry's leading organizations. She is the author of *Work+Life: Finding the Fit That's Right for You* (Riverhead/Penguin Group 2005), blogs for *Fast Company* magazine and is a frequent speaker, including recent engagements with the Department of Labor and the United Nations.

**Contact:** Pam Kassner, 414-510-1838, [pam@superpear.com](mailto:pam@superpear.com)