

Family to work interference appears to be a function of parental status and dependent care responsibilities rather than gender or job type. In both 1991 and 2001 samples, parents, mothers and employees who spent more time in dependent care were more likely to report medium and high family to work interference. This form of work-life conflict was also the only form of role conflict that varied with lifecycle stage with family to work interference increasing when one first becomes a parent, peaking when ones' children reaches their teens, and declining when the children are over 18 and no longer at home. While the pattern of association was the same for both men and women in the 1991 and 2001 samples, mothers did report higher levels of family to interference than fathers at all stages of the lifecycle. These findings suggest that mothers place a different priority on the family role than fathers.

4.0 Why Should Organizations and Government Care About Work-Life Balance?

The 90's can definitely be described as a decade of change for Canada. Extrapolation of our findings to Canadians employed in medium and large organizations would suggest the following. Compared to ten years ago:

- Work-life conflict (particularly role overload) has increased indicating that a greater proportion of the workforce is having difficulties balancing the competing roles of employee, parent, spouse, and eldercare giver.
- Employees have become more stressed and physical and mental health levels have declined as has satisfaction with ones life.
- Jobs have become more stressful and less satisfying.
- Employees have become less committed and loyal to their organization.
- Employees are devoting a greater amount of their time to work at the office and are more likely to extend their work day by taking work home to complete in the evenings and on the weekend.

In many ways these findings, while depressing, are not surprising. The Canadian press have been preoccupied over the past several years with things such as the "Canadian time crunch" "going back to a simpler lifestyle" and "coping with stress". Anecdotally, we know that people are having more difficulties balancing. Empirically, researchers in disparate disciplines (i.e. business, psychology, sociology, economic, gerontology, nursing, social-work, legal human resource, and technology) are dealing with the issue of work-life balance and research in this area.

It is also important to note that high work-life conflict is not a recent phenomena as the conditions that contribute to work-life conflict have been apparent in Canada for the last several decades. Neither is it a problem that will "just go away" without some form of intervention. For the problem to go away we would need to return to the gendered division of labour that characterized Canadian society for generations. This is unlikely to happen since: (1) many Canadian women enjoy working for pay outside the home, (2) many Canadian families are economically dependent on a second income, and (3) with a looming labour shortage Canadian employers cannot afford to abandon half their workforce.

Unfortunately, however, organizational efforts to address the issue of work-life balance have been slow and sporadic at best. As Scott (2000) notes:

"despite efforts to publicize the benefits of having work-life programs and policies, few employers see it as being in their financial self interest"