



Families and Work Institute

**NSCW**

2008 National Study of  
the Changing Workforce

**2008**

**The State of Health  
in the American Workforce**

---

**Does Having an  
Effective Workplace Matter?**

Report Written by Kerstin Aumann and Ellen Galinsky  
Data Collection Funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

NSCW 2008

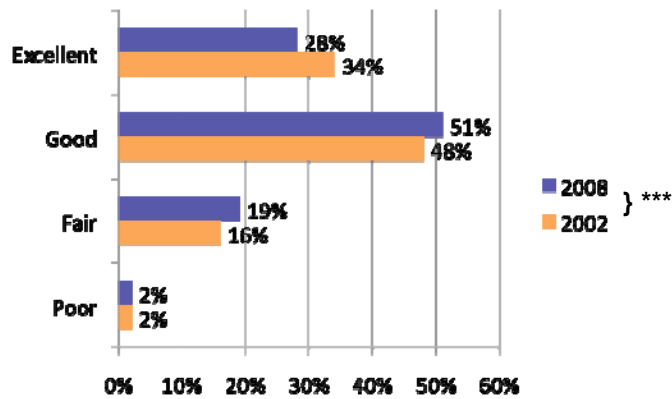
**PART ONE:**

**What is the State of Health in the  
American Workforce?**

Families and Work Institute

## FINDING: 28% employees in 2008 say their overall health is “excellent” — a significant decline of 6% since 2002

Employees’ self-assessment of their current state of overall health

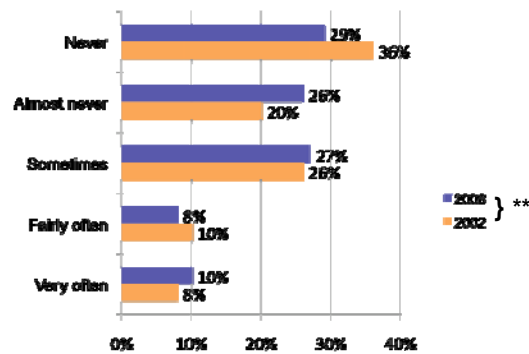


Source: Families and Work Institute. 2002 NSCW (N=2,810), 2008 NSCW (N=2,764). Statistically significant changes between survey years are denoted as \* (p<.05), \*\* (p<.01), \*\*\* (p<.001), n.s. (not statistically significant).

3

## FINDING: Fewer employees *never* experience minor health problems — such as headaches, upset stomachs or insomnia — in 2008 (29%) than in 2002 (36%)

Frequency of minor health problems in last month

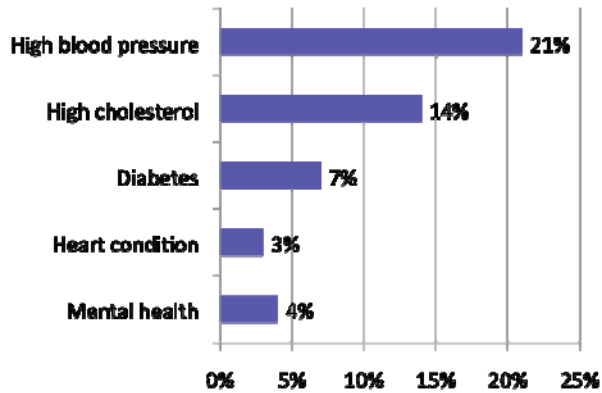


Source: Families and Work Institute. 2002 NSCW (N=2,803), 2008 NSCW (N=2,768). Statistically significant changes between survey years are denoted as \* (p<.05), \*\* (p<.01), \*\*\* (p<.001), n.s. (not statistically significant).

4

## FINDING: Just more than one in five employees is currently receiving treatment for high blood pressure

Percentage of employees who currently receive treatment for...



Source: 2008 NSCW

5

## FINDINGS: A closer look at the lifestyles of American employees reveals that there is room for improvement

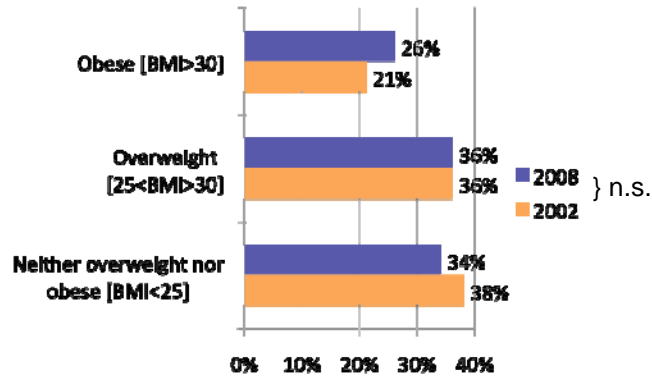
- Despite widespread efforts to reduce smoking and the pervasiveness of strict non-smoking policies in American workplaces, one in four employees still smokes
- Nearly half of U.S. employees (49%) have not engaged in regular physical exercise in the last 30 days

On how many different occasions did you do vigorous physical exercise during the past 30 days?

0 times	22%
1-7 times	27%
8-16 times	27%
More than 16 times	24%

## FINDING: Nearly two out of three employed individuals (62%) are overweight or obese, up from 57% in 2002

Body Mass Index categories of employed adults age 18 and older

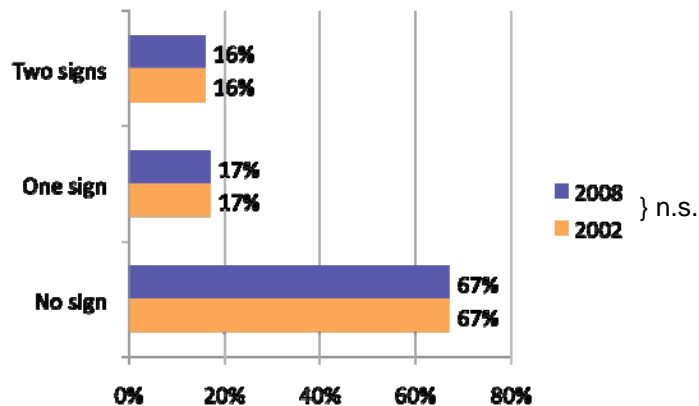


Source: 2002, 2008 NSCW; statistically significant differences between sample years are denoted as \* (p < .05), \*\* (p < .01), \*\*\* (p < .001), n.s. (not statistically significant)

7

## FINDING: One third of the workforce shows signs of clinical depression

Number of signs of clinical depression

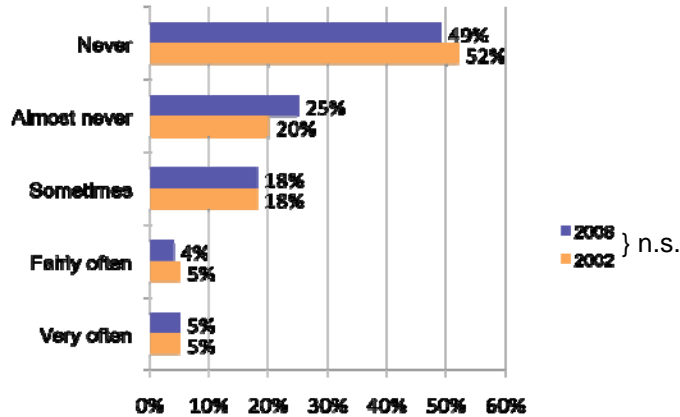


Source: 2002, 2008 NSCW; statistically significant differences between sample years are denoted as \* (p < .05), \*\* (p < .01), \*\*\* (p < .001), n.s. (not statistically significant)

8

## FINDING: 28% of the American workforce have sleep problems at least *sometimes*

Frequency of sleep problems affecting job performance in last month



Source: 2002, 2008 NSCW; statistically significant differences between sample years are denoted as \* ( $p < .05$ ), \*\* ( $p < .01$ ), \*\*\* ( $p < .001$ ), n.s. (not statistically significant)

9

## FINDING: Sleep problems include trouble falling asleep and awakening too soon

- One in five employees (20%) *very often* or *fairly often* has trouble falling asleep. Another 22% *sometimes* have trouble falling asleep. Only one third (34%) reports *never* having had trouble falling asleep in the last month
- Nearly one third (31%) of employees reports awakening too soon and having trouble going back to sleep *very often* or *fairly often* with another 27% reporting *sometimes*. Just more than one in five (21%) employees has *never* experienced awakening too soon in the last month

10

## FINDING: Stress levels are rising

The National Study of the Changing Workforce includes a five-item standardized measure of perceived stress that has been linked to physical health problems in other research. The questions are:

In the *last month*, how often have you felt...

- nervous and stressed?
- that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
- confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
- that things were going your way?
- that difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

41% of employees report experiencing three or more indicators of stress *sometimes, often or very often* — an increase since 2002

11

## PART TWO:

### What Demographic Characteristics Make a Difference?

12

## FINDINGS: Significant differences in employee health in 2008 exist not only across age groups, but also across other demographic characteristics

### Demographics characteristics predicting more positive health outcomes in 2008

More positive health indicators	Age	Gender	Income level	Relationship status	Any child aged < 18
Better overall health	Under age 30		Middle- and high-wage and income	Married/partnered	
Less frequent minor health problems		Men	Middle- and high-wage- and income		No child(ren)
Less likely to receive treatment for chronic health problem	Under age 30				Child(ren) at home
Less likely to receive treatment for mental health issue					
Fewer signs of depression			Middle- and high-wage- and income	Married/partnered	
Less frequent sleep problems		Men	Middle- and high-wage- and income	Married/partnered	No child(ren)
Lower stress level		Men	Middle- and high-wage- and income	Married/partnered	No child(ren)

13

Source: Families and Work Institute. 2008 NSCW (N=2,231 to 2,736). Only significant relationships are depicted.

## FINDING: The downward trend in employee health over the last six years cannot be explained by age — other factors make a difference

The health of older employees (age 30 and older) has not changed more than that of their younger colleagues (under 30) — while employees of other demographic groups have experienced significant declines over this time period

14

**FINDING: Men have experienced more significant declines in the last six years than women**

As a result, the gap between men and women is narrowing with respect to their physical and mental health and well-being

15

**FINDING: Middle- and high-wage and –income employees fare significantly better in mental health than low-wage/low-income employees**

This gap is decreasing as trends in mental health converge across income levels

16



## **PART THREE:**

### **Do Vacations Affect Employee Health?**

17

### **FINDING: 79% of American employees receive paid vacation time**

- American employees receive an average of 16 paid vacation days per year, although there is quite a bit of variability and half of the workforce receives 15 days or less

18

## FINDINGS: The average number of vacation days taken in the last year is 13.5; half of the workforce took 14 days or less and 39% did not take all of the vacation days to which they were entitled

What was your longest vacation (including weekend days and paid holidays)?

5 days or less	24%
6-12 days	53%
13 days or more	23%

7 days was the most frequent length of longest vacation

19

## FINDING: Longer vacations offer greater benefits than shorter ones

Relationships between length of longest vacation and positive outcomes

Positive outcomes	Longest vacation <6 days	Longest vacation 6-12 days	Longest vacation 13+ days	Sig.
High engagement	26%	24%	28%	n.s.
High job satisfaction	53%	52%	59%	n.s.
Not at all likely to leave job	67%	68%	82%	***
Excellent overall health	27%	29%	29%	n.s.
Low frequency of minor health problems	53%	58%	63%	**
No sign of depression	65%	71%	75%	**
Low frequency of sleep problems	19%	24%	27%	***
Low stress level	19%	25%	27%	*

Source: Families and Work Institute. 2008 NSCW (N=1,510 to 1,750); statistically significant differences are denoted as \* (p<.05), \*\* (p<.01), \*\*\* (p<.001), n.s. (not statistically significant).

20

## **PART FOUR:**

### **Does Having an Effective Workplace Make a Difference?**

21

### **FINDINGS: Demographic Changes in the Workforce Call for Changes in the Workplace**

- Women are now in the workforce in almost equal numbers as men, a trend bolstered by the current recession, which has cost more men their jobs than women
- Four out of five couples are dual-earner couples today. The percentage of dual-earner couples has increased substantially over the past three decades — from 66% in 1977 to 79% in 2008
- Women in dual-earner couples contribute about 44% of the family income on average, a significantly greater portion than in 1997 when women contributed an average of 39%

22

## FINDING: Work-life conflict is rising

- The percentage of employees experiencing some or a lot of work-life conflict has increased significantly from 34% in 1977 to 44% in 2008
- Work-life conflict has increased especially among men — by eleven percentage points from 34% in 1977 to 45% in 2008. In comparison, the percentage of women experiencing work-life conflict has increased by five points from 34% in 1977 to 39% in 2008

23

## What is an effective workplace?

### Job Challenge and Learning

- My job lets me use my skills and abilities.
- The work I do is meaningful to me.
- My job requires that I be creative.
- I get to do different things on my job.
- My job requires that I keep learning new things.

### Autonomy

- I have a lot of say about what happens on my job.
- I have the freedom to decide what I do on my job.
- I can be myself on my job.

### Work-Life Fit

- My supervisor cares about the effect of work on my personal/family life.
- My supervisor is responsive when I have personal/family business.
- I have the co-worker support I need to successfully manage my work and family life.
- I have the schedule flexibility I need to successfully manage my work and family life.
- My work schedule/shift meets my needs.

### Supervisor Task Support

- My supervisor is supportive when I have a work problem.
- My supervisor recognizes when I do a good job.
- My supervisor keeps me informed of things I need to know to do my job well.

### Climate of Respect and Trust

- I trust what our managers say.
- My managers deal ethically with employees and clients.
- My managers seek information and new ideas from employees.

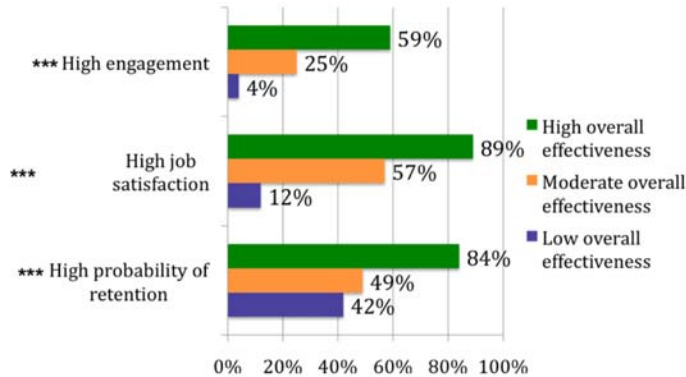
### Economic Security

- I am satisfied with my earnings from my job.
- I am satisfied with my benefits from my job.
- I am satisfied with my opportunities for career advancement.

24

## FINDING: Employees in effective workplace have better work outcomes

Relationships varying levels of overall workplace effectiveness and positive work outcomes



Source: Families and Work Institute. 2008 NSCW (N=1,952 to 2,296); statistically significant differences are denoted as \* (p<.05), \*\* (p<.01), \*\*\* (p<.001), n.s. (not statistically significant).

25

## FINDING: Some aspects of an effective workplace are more important than others in affecting work outcomes

Effective workplace dimensions significantly predicting work outcomes rank-ordered by relative importance

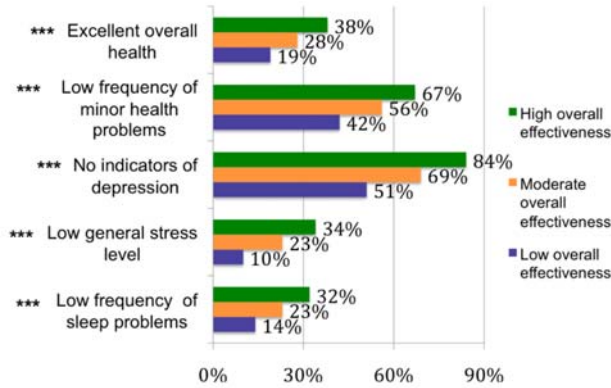
Greater engagement	Greater job satisfaction	Greater probability of retention
1. Job Challenge and Learning	1. Economic Security	1. Economic Security
2. Climate of Respect	2. Work-Life Fit	2. Work-Life Fit
3. Autonomy	3. Climate of Respect	3. Job Challenge and Learning
4. Work-Life Fit	4. Autonomy	4. Supervisor Task Support
5. Economic Security	5. Supervisor Task Support	5. Autonomy
6. Supervisor Task Support	6. Job Challenge and Learning	

Source: Families and Work Institute. 2008 NSCW (N=2,470 to 2,769).

26

## FINDING: Employees in effective workplaces have better health and well-being outcomes

### Relationships between overall effectiveness and positive health outcomes



Source: Families and Work Institute. 2008 NSCW (N=2,243 to 2,295); statistically significant differences are denoted as \* (p<.05), \*\* (p<.01), \*\*\* (p<.001), n.s. (not statistically significant).

## FINDING: Some aspects of an effective workplace are more important than others in affecting health and well-being outcomes

### Effective workplace dimensions significantly predicting health outcomes rank-ordered by relative importance

Better overall health	Less frequent minor health problems	Fewer signs of depression	Less frequent sleep problems	Lower stress level
1. Economic Security	1. Economic Security	1. Economic Security	1. Economic Security	1. Economic Security
2. Work-Life Fit	2. Autonomy	2. Autonomy	2. Work-Life Fit	2. Work-Life Fit
	3. Work-Life Fit	3. Work-Life Fit	3. Autonomy	3. Autonomy
	4. Job Challenge and Learning		4. Job Challenge and Learning	4. Supervisor Task Support

Source: Families and Work Institute. 2008 NSCW (N=2,471 to 2,769).

## **PART FIVE:**

# **What Are the Implications of These Findings?**

29

## **Implications for Employees**

Take care of yourself by eating well, getting enough sleep and exercising

Find ways to improve your working situation by:

- ✓ Seeking learning opportunities
- ✓ Taking one step to improve your work-life fit
- ✓ Encouraging a culture of respect
- ✓ Finding ways to have more say about how you do your job

Manage your stress with your children

30



Families and Work Institute

**nscw**

2008 National Study of  
the Changing Workforce

**2008**

**The State of Health  
in the American Workforce**

---

**Does Having an  
Effective Workplace Matter?**

Report Written by Kerstin Aumann and Ellen Galinsky  
Data Collection Funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation