

# WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY:

## *Findings from the Age & Generations Study*

Marcie Pitt-Catsoupes, Christina Matz-Costa, and Elyssa Besen

---

### INTRODUCTION

Flexible workplaces are “all the rage.”

Why? In part, because flexible work options have the potential to contribute to workplace effectiveness and can offer benefits to employees as well as to the organizations where they work.<sup>1</sup>

This Issue Brief presents selected findings about workplace flexibility using data from the Age & Generations Study. This study, conducted by the Sloan Center on Aging & Work, was designed and implemented in collaboration with forward-thinking employers to gather information about contemporary multi-generational work teams. Over 2,200 employees participated in the study, providing rich information about their employment experiences (See Box Insert on pages 17-18, “About the Age & Generations Study.”)

There is ample evidence that employees of all ages and across career stages seek options for work flexibility. A 2008 survey by Randstat<sup>2</sup> found that flexible work hours are among the top three benefits employees identify as contributing to “happiness at the workplace,” with more than 4 of every 10 of the employees indicating that flexible work hours and increased paid time off are important, just after competitive pay and health insurance (See Figure 1, page 2.) These rankings differed a bit by generational group. For example, flexible work schedules ranked 4th among Gen Y employees, 3rd among the Gen X employees, 4th among Baby Boomers, and 3rd among the Matures (as indicated by the percentage of employees who reported that the individual benefit is important for happiness on the job).<sup>2</sup>

As discussed in this Issue Brief, we found that when employees have “the flexibility they need,” there are positive outcomes such as higher employee engagement, perceptions of less work overload, better mental health, and more positive assessments of work-family balance.

---

*This Issue Brief addresses the following questions:*

- Is it important to employees that they have access to flexible work options?
- Who does have access to different types of workplace flexibility? And, which kinds of flexibility do employees use (if they are available)?
- Do employees feel they have access to the flexibility they need to manage their work and their family lives?
- Why do some employees report that they have the flexibility they need and others don't?
- Does having access to the flexibility employees need matter? Does it predict important outcomes, such as employee engagement and perceptions of work overload?

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

*Does having access to flexible work options matter?*

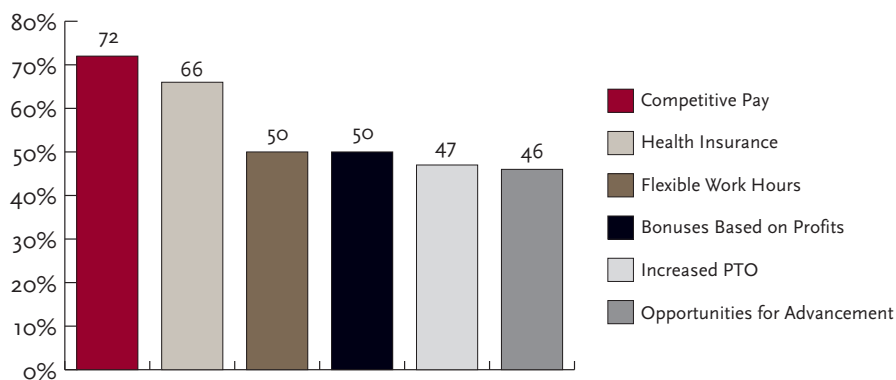
The employees who participated in the Age & Generations Study said a resounding “yes.”

- Over seventy-eight percent of respondents reported that having access to flexible work options contributes to their success as employees to a “moderate” or “great extent.”
- Ninety percent reported that having access to flexible work options contributes to their overall quality of life to a “moderate” or “great extent.”
- As can be seen in Figure 2 (page 3), the largest percentage of the Gen X’ers and the Older Baby Boomers said that having access to flexible work options contributes to their success as an employee “to a great extent,” while the most frequent response from Gen Y’ers, Younger Baby Boomers, and Traditionalist was “to a moderate extent.”

A majority of each of the age groups/generations reported that having access to flexible work options contributes to their overall quality of life “to a great extent.” Employees between the ages of 36-52 were the most likely to indicate that workplace flexibility contributes to their success as an employee. (See Figure 3, page 3)

Given this clear indication that workplace flexibility matters to employees, we wanted to dig a bit deeper and find out the availability of different types of flexibility and patterns in employees’ use of these options.

Figure 1. Benefits Assessed as “Important for Happiness on the Job” by at least 40% of Employees in 2008 (among 12 benefits listed, study with 2,199 employees)  
% of respondents

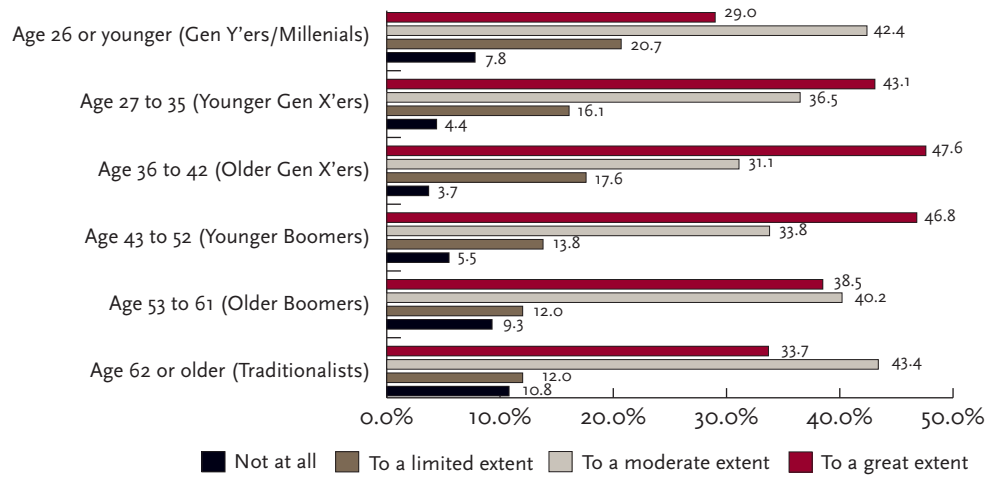


Source: Randstad, 2008<sup>2</sup>

### Acknowledgements:

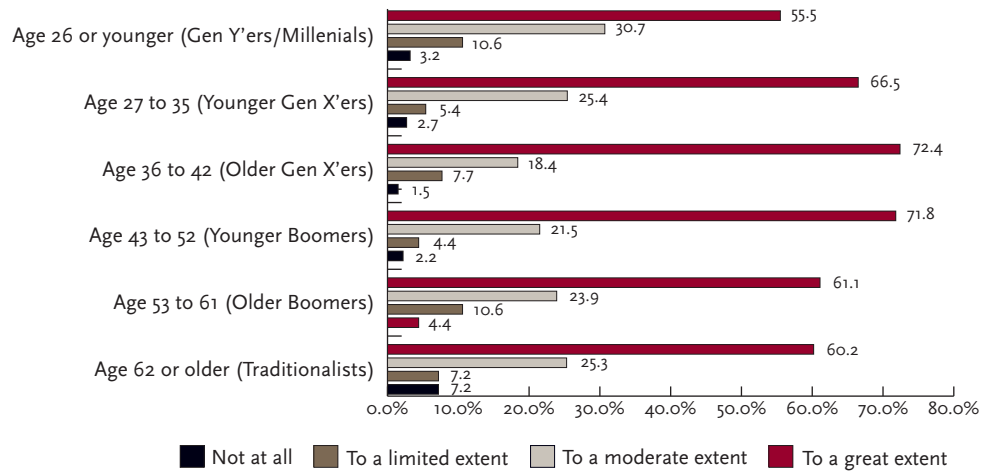
The Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College is grateful for the generous support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for the Age & Generations Study as well as other Center activities. We also want to express our appreciation for the patient support of the 12 worksites that collaborated with us to make this study a success. The research team for the Age & Generations Study included (in alphabetical order): Elyssa Besen, Javier Boyas, Jackie James, Kathy Lynch, Christina Matz-Costa, Marcie Pitt-Cat-souphe (Co-Principal Investigator), Michael Smyer (Co-Principal Investigator), Jennifer Swanberg, and Monique Valcour.

Figure 2. Flexibility Contributing to Success as an Employee by Generation\*<sup>3</sup>  
 % of respondents



\* Items developed by the Sloan Center on Aging & Work, 2007

Figure 3. Flexibility Contributing to Overall Quality of Life by Generation\*<sup>4</sup>  
 % of respondents



\* Items developed by the Sloan Center on Aging & Work, 2007

## THE AVAILABILITY AND USE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

The Sloan Center on Aging & Work defines workplace flexibility to mean that employees and their supervisors have some choice and control over when, where, how work gets done, and what work tasks are assumed by which employees/work teams.

There are many different types of flexibility. For this purposes of this report, we have organized flexible work options into five categories. (See Figure 4, page 5)

1. **Flexibility in the Number of Hours Worked.** Employer provides options for the number of hours one works in a given week, month or year. The items in our survey included: part time work, part year work, job share, phased retirement, and input into overtime.
2. **Flexible Schedules.** Employer provides options with regard to work schedule. The items in our study included: frequent requests for changes in starting/ quitting times, occasional requests for changes in starting/quitting times, in compressed work, schedule that varies from typical schedule, choices about shifts.
3. **Flexible Place.** Employer provides options with regard to the location of work. The items in our study included: being able to work from home/remote site, or being able to select or periodically/seasonally change the work location (if the employer has more than a single worksite).
4. **Options for Time Off.** Employer allows the employee to take time off, for either short or extended periods of time, so that the employee can meet responsibilities at work and/or at home. The items in our study included taking: paid leave for caregiving/personal/family responsibility, extra unpaid vacation days, paid/unpaid time for education/training, paid/unpaid sabbatical, and paid time to volunteer.
5. **Other Options.** There are several other flexible work options that employers might offer that do not fall into any of these categories. Two of these other options were included in our survey: control over the timing of breaks, and allowing employees to transfer to a job with reduced responsibilities and reduced pay, if they want to.

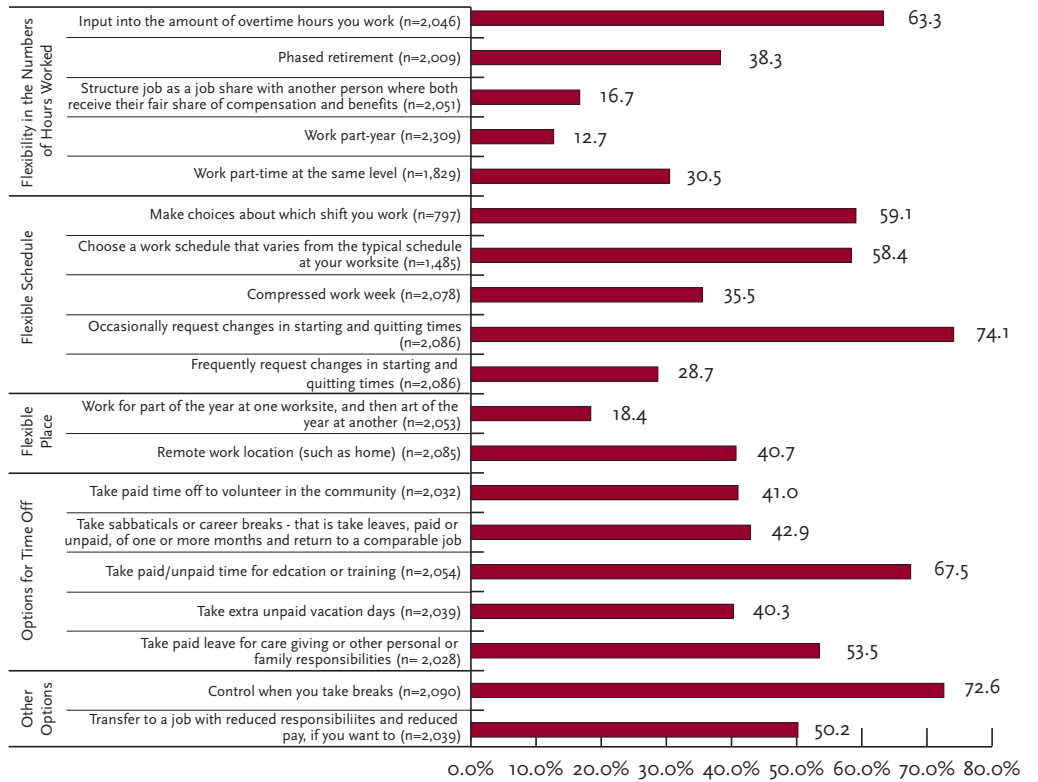
Figure 4 presents information about the percentage of employees who participated in the Age & Generations Study who reported having access to different types of flexible work options relevant to the five categories discussed above.

---

*Do employees' perceptions of access to flexible work options vary by age/generational groups?*

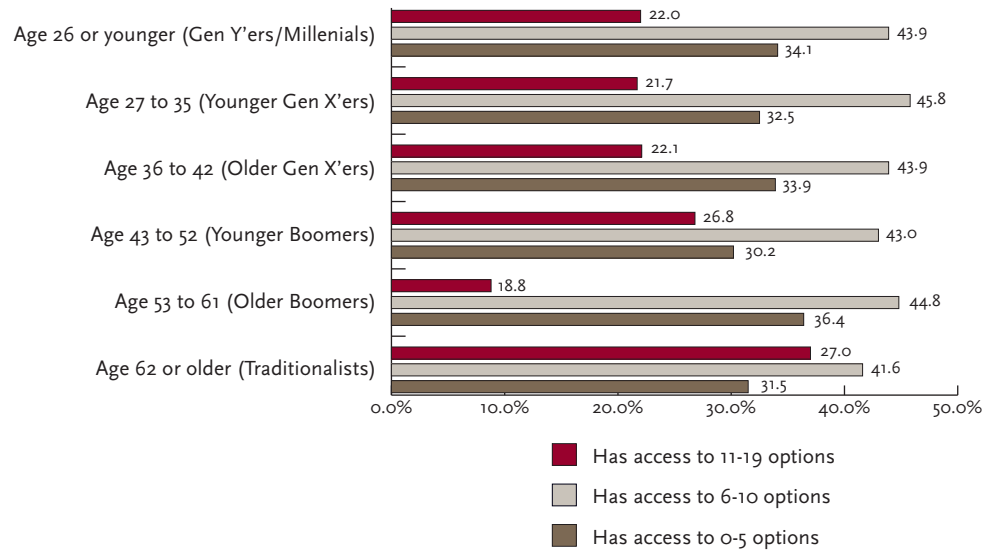
As suggested by the information in Figure 5 (page 5), employees from different age/generational groups report they have similar access to different types of flexible work options.

Figure 4. Access to Flexible Work Options  
 % of respondents



\*All items adapted from Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Protzas, 2002<sup>5</sup>

Figure 5. Perceived Access to Flexible Work Options by Age/Generational Groups<sup>6</sup>  
 % of respondents



We were interested in examining which flexible work options are used most often by employees (assuming they have access to them). As indicated by the information in the right-hand column of Table 1, the flexible work options used most often are: control over breaks, input into overtime, decisions about shifts (if the employee works on a shift), remote work, and occasionally requesting changes in start and quit times. However, employees used the following options most often (when they had access to them): occasionally request changes in start and quit times, control over breaks, take paid or unpaid time for education/training, input into overtime, and decisions about shifts.

**Table 1. Access to and Utilization of Flexible Work Options\***

	Who has access?	Of those who have access, who use it?
Control when you take breaks.	72.6% (2)	91.8% (1)
Have input into the amount of overtime hours you work.	63.3% (4)	84.1% (2)
Make choices about which shift you work.	59.1% (5)	69.8% (3)
Work from an off-site location (such as home) for part (or all) of the regular work week, possibly linked by telephone and computer.	40.7% (11)	67.5% (4)
Occasionally request changes in starting and quitting times.	74.1% (1)	66.9% (5)
[IF YOU DON'T WORK A SHIFT] Choose a work schedule that varies from the typical schedule at your worksite.	58.4% (6)	57.7% (6)
Take paid or unpaid time for education or training to improve job skills.	67.5% (3)	55.0% (7)
Compress the work week by working longer hours on fewer days for at least part of the year.	35.5% (14)	44.5% (8)
Frequently request changes in starting and quitting times, such as on a daily basis.	28.7% (16)	34.4% (9)
Take paid time off to volunteer in the community.	41.0% (10)	31.6% (10)
Work part-year; that is work for a reduced amount of time on an annual basis (e.g., work full-time during the fall, winter, and spring and then take the summer off).	12.7% (19)	29.3% (11)
Work for part of the year at one worksite, and then part of the year at another worksite.	18.4% (17)	28.0% (12)
Take extra "unpaid" vacation days.	40.3% (12)	25.5% (13)
Take a paid leave for caregiving or other personal or family responsibilities (e.g., parental or elder care giving responsibilities) beyond that which is required by law.	53.5% (7)	20.4% (14)
Structure jobs as a job share with another person where both receive their "fair share" of compensation and benefits.	16.7% (18)	20.4% (15)
Take sabbaticals or career break— that is take leaves, paid or unpaid, of one or more months and return to a comparable job.	42.9% (9)	19.4% (16)
Phase into retirement by working reduced hours over a period of time prior to full retirement.	38.3% (13)	10.9% (17)
[IF WORKING FULL TIME] Reduce your work hours and work on a part-time basis while remaining in the same position or at the same level.	30.5% (15)	10.8% (18)
Transfer to a job with reduced responsibilities and reduced pay, if you want to.	50.2% (8)	6.4% (19)

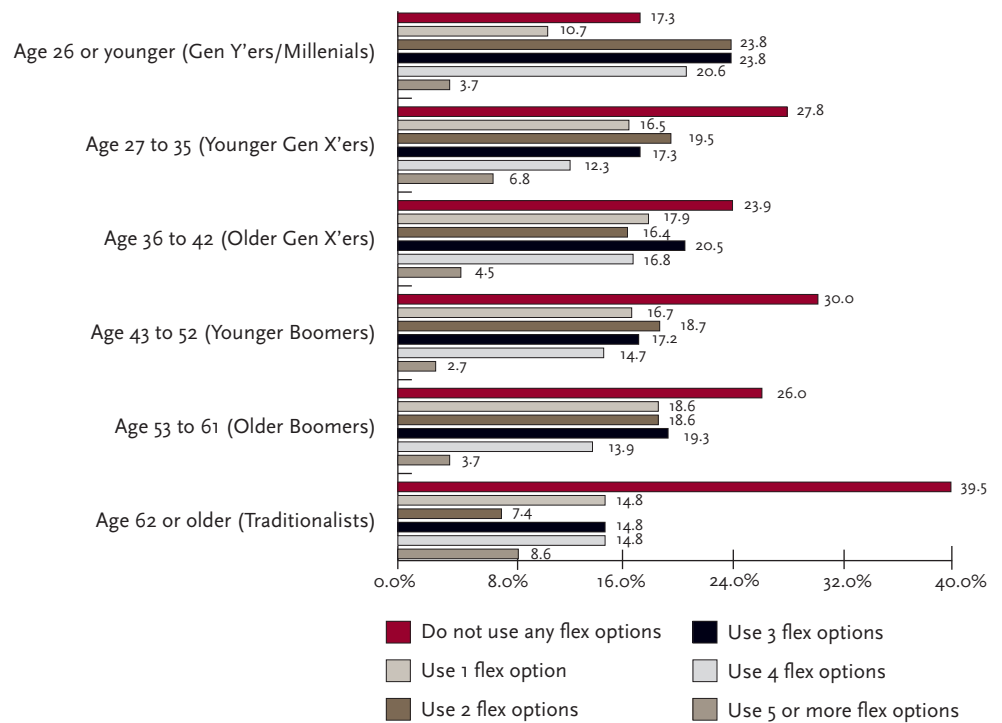
\*All items adapted from Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002<sup>3</sup>

- **For consideration by employers:** It can be instructive to explore why some flexible work options are used more often than others. Employers could use focus groups to identify the reasons why some flexible work options are used more often than others.

*Does utilization vary by age/generation?*

Among the employees who participated in our study, Older Boomers and Traditionalists were more likely to report that they use 5 or more of the 19 options listed in Table 1 above. On the other hand, Traditionalists were also more likely to indicate that they do not use any flexible work options when compared to the other age/generation groups. (See Figure 6 below)

Figure 6. Utilization of Flexible Work Options by Employees Participating in the Age & Generations Study by Generation<sup>7</sup>  
 % of respondents



## WHY DOESN'T “EVERY” EMPLOYEE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS?

Understandably, a number of factors affect whether an employee uses one or more of the flexible work options available to them. The nature of some employees' jobs might make it difficult to use specific types of flexible work options. It is impossible, for example, for bus drivers to telecommute!

When employees consider whether they should use different types of flexible work options, they tend to think about three basic questions:

1. Would my supervisor and work team be supportive of my use of flexible work options?
2. Do I anticipate that there might be any negative consequences if I use a particular type of flexible work option?
3. If I use a particular type of flexible work option, will it fit with my needs and help me to better manage my work and/or my family responsibilities?

Information gathered from the employees who participated in the Age & Generations Study provides some insight into these questions.

### 1. Supervisor and Team Support

As employees weigh the advantages and the disadvantages associated with using specific types of flexible work options, they may factor-in the attitudes of their supervisors and co-workers. Barnett, Gareis, Gordon, & Brennan (in press) refer to employees' calculus of workplace attitudes as the “usability” of flexibility.<sup>8</sup>

Nearly two-thirds (61.7%) of the respondents agreed to a “moderate/great extent” that their team leaders/supervisors support the use of effective flexible work arrangements. When compared to the other age/generational groups (see Figure 7, page 9), Gen Y'ers/Millennials were the least likely to indicate that their supervisors supported the use of flexible work options “to a great extent.”

As suggested by Figure 8 (page 9), approximately half of the employees who participated in our study agreed/strongly agreed that the members of their work teams were supportive of flexible work options.

When we combined the items listed in Figure 8 into an overall index of work team support for flexible work options, our analyses did not find any variation in the perceptions of work team support across the different age/generational groups.

Nearly two-thirds (64.2%) of the respondents agreed that their work team links workplace flexibility with overall business effectiveness to a “moderate/great extent.” As indicated by the information contained in Figure 9 (page 9), employees in the Traditionalist generational group were more likely to report that their organizations have linked flexibility to business effectiveness to a great extent (but also most likely to report “not at all”).

Figure 7. Supervisor Support of Flexible Work Options by Generation<sup>9</sup>  
 % of respondents

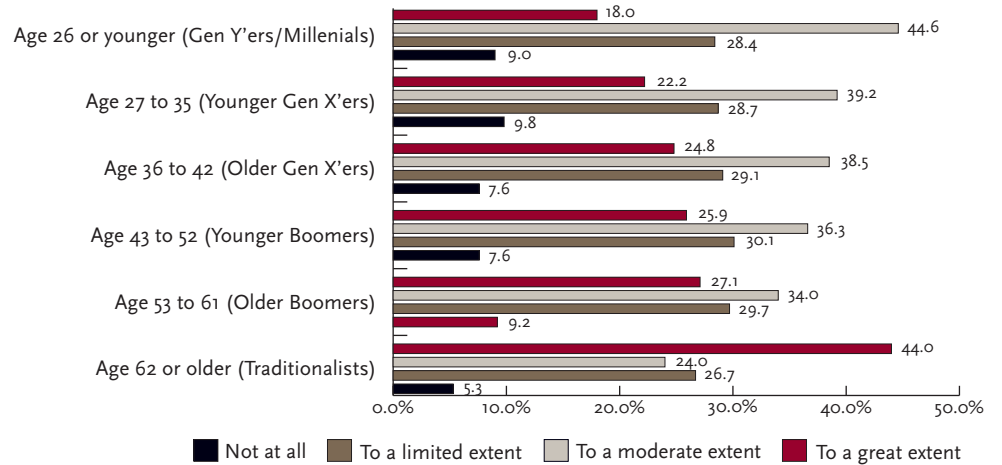
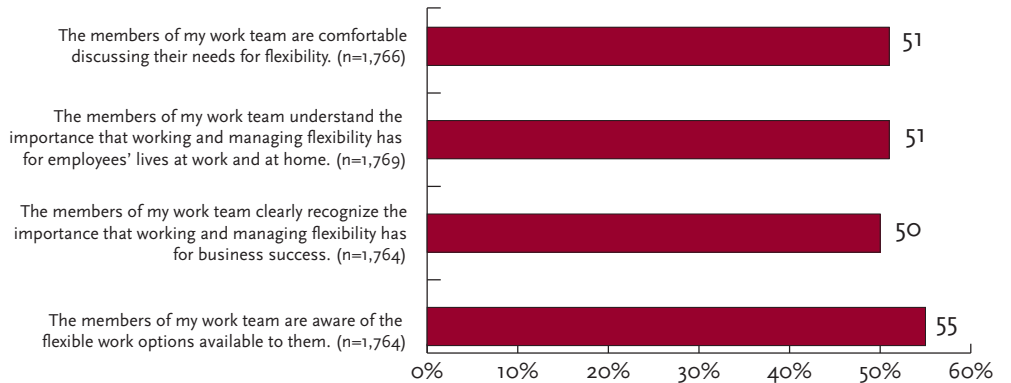
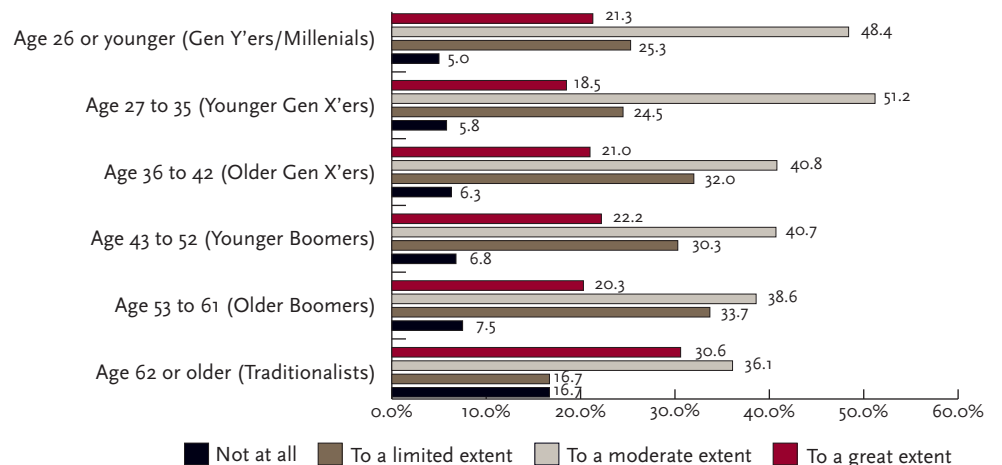


Figure 8. Perceptions of Work Team Support for Flexible Workplaces\*  
 % Agree/Strongly Agree



\* Items developed by the Sloan Center on Aging & Work, 2007.

Figure 9. Extent to which Workplace has Linked Flexibility with Overall Business Effectiveness by Generation\*<sup>10</sup>  
 % of respondents



\* Items developed by the Sloan Center on Aging & Work, 2007.

## 2. Unintended Consequences

Employees may consider both the intended and unintended consequences associated with using flexible work options. Employees might be reluctant to use flexible work options if they anticipate a negative impact on their careers.

In general, 40.6% of the respondents felt that there might be negative career consequences associated with the use of flexible work options (those responding “somewhat agree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree”). As the data depicted in Figure 10 (page 11) suggest, Younger Boomers and Traditionalists are more likely to strongly disagree/disagree that people who use flexible work options are viewed as being less serious about their career.

Rather than assuming that existing flexible work options are effective, employers may want to examine the extent to which employees’ access to flexible work options and their use of these options help them to succeed at the workplace as well as at home.

---

## 3. Flexibility Fit: The Extent to Which Flexible Work Options Promote Employee Effectiveness at Work and at Home

Employers offer flexibility to promote business effectiveness and to help employees better manage their work and personal lives.

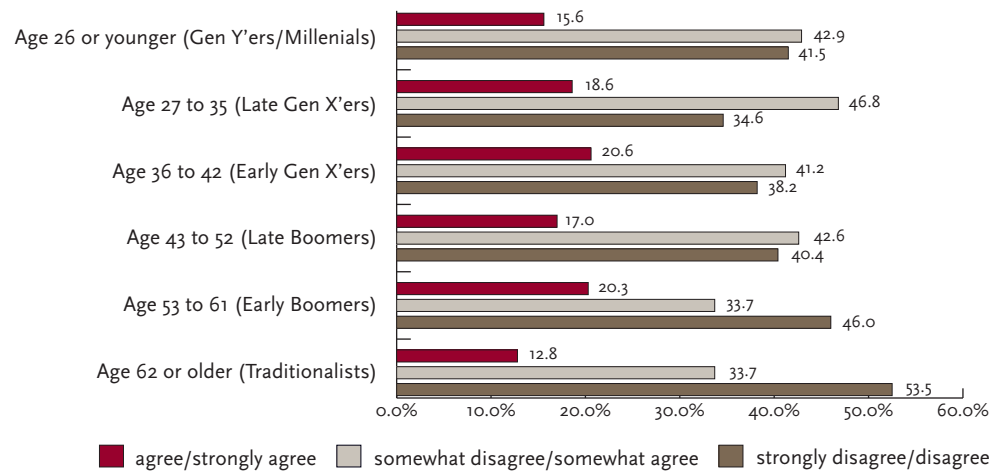
Of course, the types of flexibility that might meet the needs of one worker could be very different than those that meet the needs of another worker. As a result, some employers adopt a comprehensive set of flexibility initiatives in an effort to give employees as much choice as possible, hoping that at least “some” of the options respond to the needs of most employees. Utilization of available flexible work options is bound to be low if the options are not a good fit with their needs and preferences.<sup>16</sup>

The only sure way to find out whether employers’ menu of flexible work options “fits” with employees’ needs is to ask them. A majority of the participants in the Age & Generations Study (58.7%) report that they have access to the flexible work options they need to fulfill their work and personal needs to a “moderate/great extent.” (See Figure 11, page 11)

Figure 12 (page 11) depicts flexibility fit by generation. On average, employees 26 years of age and younger who participated in our study were less likely to report that they have access to the flexible work options they need “to a great extent” when compared to the other age/generational groups.

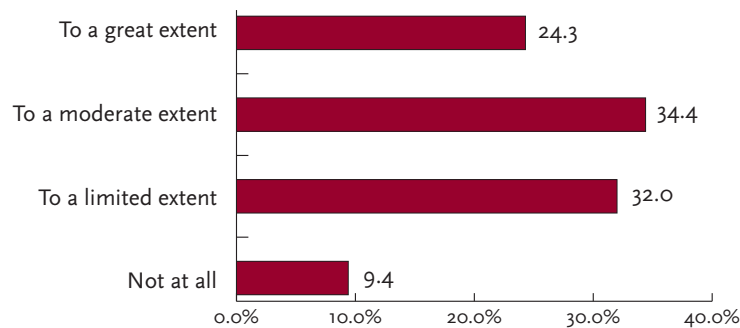
Figure 10. Perceptions that Employees Who Use Flexibility Are Viewed as Less Serious About Their Careers by Generation\* <sup>11</sup>

*“Employees who make use of flexible work options are viewed as less serious about their careers than those who do not use these options”*



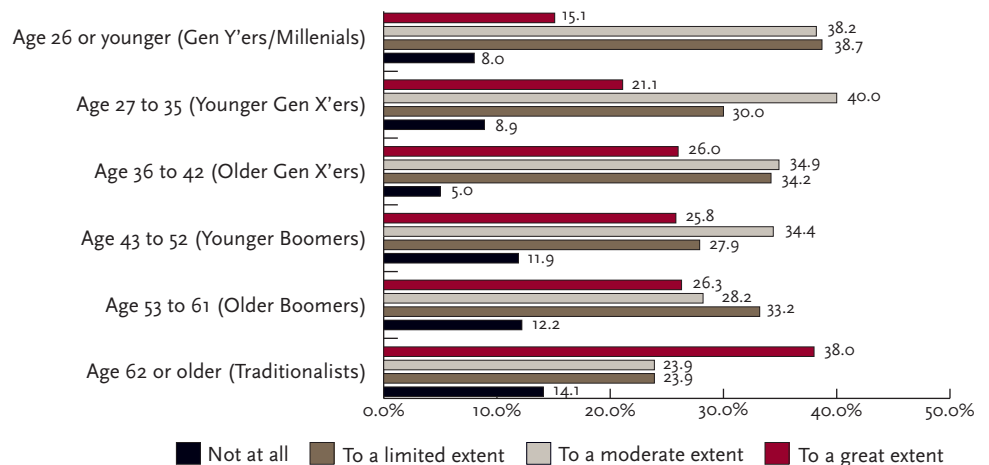
\* Item developed by Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness (1999). <sup>12</sup>

Figure 11. Access to the Flexible Work Options Needed to Fulfill Work and Personal Needs\* <sup>14</sup>  
 % of respondents



\* Item developed by Sloan Center on Aging & Work, 2008

Figure 12. Access to the Flexible Work Options Needed to Fulfill Work and Personal Needs by Generation\* <sup>15</sup>  
 % of respondents



\* Item developed by the Sloan Center on Aging & Work, 2007

The Age & Generations Study used information about this concept of “flexibility fit” to explore two important questions:

- Does it make a difference whether employees experience flexibility fit?
- If flexibility fit is related to positive outcomes that are important to employers, what might employers do to promote flexibility fit among employees?

We address these questions in the next sections of this Issue Brief.

## **Flexibility Fit and Business/Employee Outcomes**

Understandably, employers will want to know whether flexibility fit really matters.

We found that having flexibility fit is associated with outcomes that are connected to employees’ passion about their work, their perceptions of work pressures, their well-being, and their satisfaction with work-life balance (even when we account for the expected variations that result from gender, marital status, race/ethnicity, education, age, and employees’ sense of themselves).<sup>16</sup>

### *Does flexibility fit matter?*

Having access to the flexibility needed to fulfill work and personal needs was found to be predictive of greater employee engagement, lower perceptions of work overload, better physical health and mental health, and greater satisfaction with work-family balance.<sup>16</sup>

Employers might consider any one of these outcomes a “plus,” and the findings present a strong business case for paying attention to flexibility fit.

### *But how much does flexibility fit matter?*

When compared to those who **do** not have flexibility fit, those who do have flexibility fit scored:<sup>16</sup>

- *Higher* on the employee engagement scale (1.23 points higher on a scale which ranges from 1 to 7).
- *Lower* on the work overload scale (.19 points lower on a scale which ranges from 1 to 6).
- *Higher* on the physical health measure (10.9 points higher on a scale which ranges from 17 to 68).
- *Higher* on the mental health measure (11.29 points higher on a scale which ranges from 10 to 65).
- *Higher* on a measure of satisfaction with work-family balance (.37 points higher on a scale which ranges from 1 to 6).

Figure 13. Outcomes Associated with Flexibility Fit <sup>16</sup>



**What might employers do to promote increased flexibility fit?**

As suggested by the information contained in Table 2 below, flexibility fit could depend on a range of workplace factors as well as characteristics that employees “bring” to work. This list includes factors that employers might want to consider when they are thinking about ways to increase flexibility fit.

**Table 2. Examples of Factors that Might Affect Flexibility Fit**

Individual Characteristics Employees Bring to Work	Workplace Characteristics
Age	Extent of Access to Flexible Work Options
Gender	Supervisor Support of Flexibility
Marital Status	Team Support of Flexibility
Parental Status (having children under 18 years of age)	Negative Work-Family Culture <sup>17</sup>
Race/ethnicity	Extent of Utilization of Flexible Work Options
Household Income	
Education	
Employees Sense of Self (core self evaluation)	

Our analyses found that seven sets of factors help explain variation in employees' flexibility fit: employees' age, education, access to flexible work options, supervisor support of workplace flexibility, team support of workplace flexibility, the lack of a negative work-family culture, and the extent of use of flexible work options.<sup>18</sup> Importantly, employers can take steps to leverage employees' access to flexible work options and the extent of team support for workplace flexibility.

#### *How much do these factors matter?*

The odds of having flexibility fit are greater for those employees age 27 to 35 than for those age 53 or older and greater for those with a graduate degree than for those with less than a graduate degree.<sup>18</sup> Specifically:

- Compared to employees who are age 53 or older, the odds of having flexibility fit are 74% higher for those who are age 27 to 35.
- Compared to those who have a graduate degree, the odds of having flexibility fit are 52% lower for those whose highest level of education is a high school degree or GED and 27% lower for those whose highest level of education is a bachelor's degree or associate's degree.

The odds of having flexibility fit increase when employees have greater access to workplace flexibility, feel that their supervisors and work teams are supportive of workplace flexibility, when there is not a negative culture in their workplace around flexibility, and when employees use workplace flexibility options available to them.<sup>18</sup> Specifically:

- Using our measure of supervisor support of flexible work options, employees' odds of having flexibility fit were 243% *higher* when an employee's supervisor was supportive of flexible work options.
- Using our measure of access to workplace flexibility (an index which ranges from 0-19), we found that employees' odds of having flexibility fit were 125% *higher* with every 1-point increase from the average (7.94) in access to flexible work options.
- Using our measure of employees' use of those flexible work options that were available to them (an index which ranged from 0-19) we found that the odds of having flexibility fit were 84% *higher* with every 1-point increase from the average (3.54) in utilization of flex.
- Using our measure of work team support for workplace flexibility (a scale which ranges from 1-6), we found that employees' odds of having flexibility fit were 28% *higher* with every 1-point increase from the average (4.33) in team support for workplace flexibility.
- Using the measure of negative work-family culture (a scale that ranges from 1-6), we found that employees' odds of having flexibility fit were 22% *lower* with every 1-point increase from the average (3.18) in negative work-family culture.

Figure 14. Factors that Explain Extent of Flexibility Fit <sup>18</sup>



## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

These analyses have important implications for employers.

- Employers expect positive outcomes when they invest time and resources into their flexibility initiatives. It may seem obvious, but it is important for employers to pay attention to the extent to which these initiatives actually fit the needs of their employees. Specific types of workplace flexibility that work for one company, might not be the most effective approach for another.
- Flexibility fit matters. It matters at the workplace and at home.
- Employers can take steps to enhance flexibility fit. These steps include:
  1. Having access to a comprehensive range of flexible work options is important. Having different flexibility options creates the possibility that employees will be able to find at least one type of flexibility that works best for them. Employers might be reluctant to offer a comprehensive set of flexible work options if they think that a small percentage of employees might use a particular type. However, it may be that some of the options used less often are very important to those employees who use them.
  2. In order to achieve a sense of “fit,” it may be necessary for employees to use more than a single type of flexible work option. Some employees might need to be able to reduce their work hours and occasionally work from home, for example, in order for them to achieve positive outcomes, such as enhanced engagement.
  3. Work teams can be pivotal for reaching the successful outcomes that can be associated with workplace flexibility. Oftentimes, teams have to make adjustments when one employee uses flexible work options. For instance, if one employee works a compressed work schedule, that limits the options for team meetings because the individual employee is not working on one day. Involving teams in the structure of team work can go a long way toward team support for the utilization of workplace flexibility by individual team members. Employers should consider how teams could become involved in workplace flexibility rather than assuming that arrangements for flexibility should only be a private negotiation between a supervisor and an individual employee. This could mean that supervisors need to pay attention to the understanding that their teams have about workplace flexibility, whether or not most team members use available options at any particular point in time.
  4. It is worth stating the obvious, many of the benefits of having flexibility initiatives depend on employees using them. Periodically, employers should consider new ways to “remind” employees of the availability of existing initiatives and sharing success stories of employees who use available flexible work options.

## ABOUT THE AGE & GENERATIONS STUDY

The Age & Generations Study team collaborated with 9 organizations (12 departments) to collect three types of data: information about the organization (as a whole) from a key respondent (typically someone from HR), information about a selected department(s) in each organization from a key respondent (typically the department manager), and information about employees from the department(s).

We used surveys to gather the information from the employees. Most organizations elected to complete the surveys online, but some employees used written questionnaires.

The employee survey asked a series of questions about employees' perceptions of their work, organization/ department as a whole, work group, supervisor/team leader, work style, and outlook on life.

In total, 2,210 employees from 12 departments participated in this study.<sup>19</sup> Although the data we have collected are very rich and allow us to examine a range of experiences at the workplace, readers should keep in mind that the findings may not be representative of all employees, departments, or organizations in the United States, nor are the respondent employees from each organization necessarily representative of the overall organizations where they work. Therefore, in the section below, characteristics of the organizations who participated in the study are described, followed by characteristics of the employees who completed the survey. Readers should keep these characteristics in mind as they read this report and know that specific findings might not apply to other groups of employees.

### Organizational Characteristics:

- The participating organizations are affiliated with a range of industry sectors: 2 of the organizations are in the educational services industry; 2 are in health care and social assistance; 1 is in retail trade; 2 are in finance and insurance; 1 is in professional, scientific and technical services; and 1 is in the pharmaceutical industry.
- Five of the participating organizations have a worksite located outside of the U.S. and 4 do not.
- All of the organizations in our sample were considered large businesses, each having over 1,000 employees: 4 of the organizations had between 1,000 and 10,000 employees, 4 had between 10,000 and 50,000 employees, and 1 had over 50,000 employees.
- While 4 of the participating organizations were for-profit, 5 were non-profit.

## Employee Characteristics:

	Total sample	U.S.
% women	61.6%	46.4% <sup>1</sup>
% men	38.4%	53.6% <sup>1</sup>
% full-time	89.0%	76.9% <sup>2</sup>
% part-time	11.0%	23.1% <sup>2</sup>
% hourly employees	47.2%	60.0% <sup>3</sup>
% salaried employees	51.8%	40.0% <sup>3</sup>
Median wage for hourly employees	\$20/hour	-
Median salary for salaried employees	\$71,000/year	-
Average age of employees	42 years	41 <sup>4</sup>
% under age 25	7.1%	13.6% <sup>4</sup>
% age 25 to 39	37.2%	33.0% <sup>4</sup>
% age 40 to 54	38.1%	35.7% <sup>4</sup>
% age 55 or older	17.5%	17.6% <sup>4</sup>
% with supervisory responsibilities	34.7%	-
% reporting that they have an additional job with a second employer	7.0%	-
% temporary employees	4.9%	-
% consultants	6.5%	-
% reporting that they were “working in retirement”; that is, they had officially retired from a previous job	3.7%	-

<sup>1</sup> % of the U.S. Labor Force in 2007, See: Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor (2008). Current population survey [raw data] Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm>

<sup>2</sup> % of the U.S. Workforce in 2007, full-time was measured by working 35 hours or more at one job, See: Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor (2008). Current population survey [raw data] Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm>

<sup>3</sup> % of the U.S. Workforce in 2007, See: Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor (2008). Current population survey [raw data] Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Labor Force in 2007, See: Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor (2008). Current population survey [raw data] Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm>

## REFERENCES

- 1 See, for example:

Eaton, S. C. (2003). If you can use them: Flexibility policies, organizational commitment, and perceived performance. *Industrial Relations*, 42(2), 145-167.

Galinsky, E., Bond, J. T., & Hill, E. J. (2004). *When work works: A status report on workplace flexibility*. New York: Families and Work Institute. Retrieved from <http://familiesandwork.org/3w/research/downloads/status.pdf>

Hill, E.J., Grzywacz, J.G., Allen, S., Blanchard, V.L., Matz-Costa, C., Shulkin, S., & Pitt-Catsouphes, M. (2008). Defining and conceptualizing workplace flexibility. *Community, Work, & Family*, 11(2), 149-163.

Moen, P., & Kelly, E. L. (2007). *Flexible work and well-being study: Final report*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota. Retrieved from [http://www.flexiblework.umn.edu/FWWB\\_Fallo7.pdf](http://www.flexiblework.umn.edu/FWWB_Fallo7.pdf)

Shockley, K. M., & Allen, T. D. (2007). When flexibility helps: Another look at the availability of flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 71(3), 479-493.
- 2 Randstad. (2008). *The world of work 2008*. Rochester, NY: Harris Interactive, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.us.randstad.com/2008WorldofWork.pdf>
- 3 1,731 employees answered this question. The results are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 45.09, p < .01$ ).
- 4 1,731 employees responded to this item. The results are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 43.73, p < .01$ ).
- 5 1,796 employees responded to this item. Our statistical test suggests that the differences could have occurred by chance; that is, the findings are not statistically significant.
- 6 Bond, J. T., Thompson, C., Galinsky, E., & Prottas, D. (2002). *Highlights of the national study of the changing workforce*. New York, NY: Families and Work Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.familiesandwork.org/summary/nscw2002.pdf>
- 7 1,702 employees responded to the relevant items. The results are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 53.77, p < .01$ ).
- 8 Barnett, R. C., Gareis, K. C., Gordon, J. R., & Brennan, R. T. (in press). Usable flexibility, employees' concerns about elders, gender, and job withdrawal. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*.
- 9 1,771 employee responded to this item. The results are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 28.52, p < .05$ ).
- 10 1,760 employees responded to this item. The results are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 39.18, p < .01$ ).
- 11 1,759 employees responded to this item. The results are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 22.78, p < .05$ ).
- 12 Thompson, C. A., Beauvais, L. L., & Lyness, K. S. (1999). When work-family benefits are not enough: The influence of work-family culture on benefit utilization, organizational attachment, and work-family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54(3), 392-415.
- 13 For more on the concept of "flexibility fit", please see Pitt-Catsouphes, M. & Matz-Costa, C. (2008). The multi-generational workforce: Workplace flexibility and engagement. *Community, Work & Family*, 11(2), 215-229.
- 14 2,123 employees responded to this item.
- 15 1,815 employees responded to this item. The results are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 51.59, p < .00$ ).
- 16 Flexibility fit was found to be a statistically significant predictor of these factors in a multi-level regression model that controlled for gender, marital status, race/ethnicity, education, age, and core self-evaluations.
- 17 The three items used to measure work-life culture were selected from a larger scale developed by Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness (1999). One of these items is, "In this organization, employees who make use of flexible work options (e.g., flextime, job sharing, part-time work) are viewed as less serious about their careers than those who do not make use of such options." See: Thompson, C. A., Beauvais, L. L., & Lyness, K. S. (1999). When work-family benefits are not enough: The influence of work-family culture on benefit utilization, organizational attachment, and work-family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54(3), 392-415.
- 18 These factors were found to be statistically significant predictors of flexibility fit in a multi-level Bernoulli regression model that contained all of the predictors listed in Table 2.
- 19 Although 2,210 employees responded to the survey, not all respondent completed every section. The results presented in this report were based on the total number of people who responded to a particular question or to a series of related items.

## Authors

*Marcie Pitt-Catsouphe*, Ph.D. directs the Sloan Center on Aging & Work. She is an Associate Professor at the Boston College Graduate School of Social Work and also holds appointments at the Boston College Carroll School of Management as well as the Middlesex University Business School in London. Dr. Pitt-Catsouphe received the 2006 Work-Life Legacy Award from the Families and Work Institute.

*Christina Matz-Costa*, MSW is a Research Associate at the Sloan Center on Aging & Work and a doctoral candidate in Social Work at Boston College. She was the Senior Project Manager for the Age & Generations Study. She has been a lead researcher for several of the Center's studies, including the National Study of Business Strategy and Workforce Development. She has co-authored publications in the areas of work-family and employer response to the aging of the workforce.

*Elyssa Besen* is a Research Assistant at the Center on Aging & Work at Boston College and a 1st year doctoral student in the Applied Development Psychology Program in the Lynch School of Education at BC. Elyssa earned her BA in Psychology from Brandeis University. She is interested in studying the impact of work on adult development.

---

## The Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College

The Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College was founded in 2005. Working in partnership with workplace decision-makers, the Center promotes the quality of employment for the 21st century multi-generational workforce. The Center strives to put evidence into practice to improve employment experiences for both employers and employees. We place a particular emphasis on workplace flexibility that supports 21st century ways of getting work done and enhances employees' work experiences. Our multi-tiered strategy includes combining employer engaged research and academic rigor with innovative communications. We engage multi-disciplinary teams of researchers from around the world to forward three research streams – the US National Initiatives, the State Initiatives, and the Global Initiatives.

The Sloan Center's US National Initiatives partners with scholars and employers across the United States, placing a particular emphasis on workplace flexibility. Together we explore the intersection of employee preferences with employer practices, and chronicle emerging strategies as they evolve. Current projects include analyses of the Health and Retirement Study, Eldercare, Workplace Flexibility and Multi-Generational Talent, and the *Age & Generations Study*.

The Center on Aging & Work is grateful for the continued support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

For more information about the Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College, please visit: [agingandwork.bc.edu](http://agingandwork.bc.edu).

**Contact us:** Sloan Center on Aging & Work  
140 Commonwealth Avenue - 3 Lake Street Bldg.  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467  
Phone: 617.552.9195 • Fax: 617.552.9202  
[age.work@bc.edu](mailto:age.work@bc.edu)

For previous publications, visit our website at [www.bc.edu/agingandwork](http://www.bc.edu/agingandwork)

Issue Briefs

- Issue Brief 1: Older Workers: What Keeps Them Working?
- Issue Brief 2: Businesses: How Are They Preparing For the Aging Workforce?
- Issue Brief 3: Getting the Right Fit: Flexible Work Options and Older Workers
- Issue Brief 4: How Old Are Today's Older Workers?
- Issue Brief 5: One Size Doesn't Fit All: Workplace Flexibility
- Issue Brief 6: Down Shifting: The Role Of Bridge Jobs After Career Employment
- Issue Brief 7: Civic Engagement: Volunteering Dynamics and Flexible Work Options
- Issue Brief 8: Does Health Insurance Affect The Employment of Older Workers?
- Issue Brief 9: The 21st Century Multi-Generational Workplace
- Issue Brief 10: Today's Multi-Generational Workforce: A Proposition of Value
- Issue Brief 11: Responsive Workplaces for Older Workers: Job Quality, Flexibility and Employee Engagement
- Issue Brief 12: Generational Differences in Perceptions of Older Workers' Capabilities
- Issue Brief 13: Quality of Employment and Life Satisfaction: A Relationship that Matters for Older Workers
- Issue Brief 14: The Interlocking Careers of Older Workers and Their Adult Children
- Issue Brief 15: Self Employment As A Step in The Retirement Process
- Issue Brief 16: Older And Out Of Work: Trend in Older Worker Displacement
- Issue Brief 17: Older And Out Of Work: Employer, Government and Nonprofit Assistance
- Issue Brief 18: Time Use Across the Life Course

Research Highlights

- Research Highlight 1: Context Matters: Insights About Older Workers From the National Study of the Changing Workforce
  - Research Highlight 2: The Diverse Employment Experiences of Older Men and Women in the Workforce
  - Research Highlight 3: The Benchmark Study, Phase I of The National Study of Business Strategy and Workforce Development
  - Research Highlight 4: The National Study, Phase II of The National Study of Business Strategy and Workforce Development
  - Research Highlight 5: The Citi Sales Study of Older Workers
-