

## 2011 Work+Life Fit™ Reality Check Summary

The Work+Life Fit™ Reality Check is a biennial study that monitors the national progress of issues related to work life flexibility from the individual's point of view.

First conducted in 2006, this telephone survey of a national probability sample of 637 full-time employed adults was sponsored by Work+Life Fit, Inc., conducted by Opinion Research Corporation on March 3-7, 2011, and 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 contact Pam Kassner, [pam@superpear.com](mailto:pam@superpear.com).

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Flexibility is no longer a bright, shiny, novelty item. It's here to stay, but, according to the 2011 Work+Life Fit™ Reality Check, evolving roadblocks still unnecessarily hinder how we optimize and benefit from flexibility personally and professionally. The survey provides insight into where we need to focus for flexibility to become meaningful and deliberate part of the way we manage our business, work and lives.

Here's what's new:

- **The flexibility that existed before the downturn survived intact and is growing;** therefore, flexibility in how, when and where work is done - and life is managed - is here to stay, in good times and bad. It's not a fad, but a foundational part of how to live and work.
- **Since 2006, people are significantly less afraid of the financial impact and the negative perceptions of flexibility, but today too little time and too much work get in the way.** The struggle remains to get beyond these roadblocks and use flexibility as a targeted, deliberate strategy to achieve business and personal goals.
- **The majority of respondents concur that without optimal work life flexibility business will suffer** particularly in terms of employee health, morale, and productivity. And the employee desire to optimize flexibility continues to be a primary recruitment and retention issue.

Here's what we learned about the current state of flexibility:

- **Day-to-day, informal flexibility is most common form,** and flextime leads the way as the most popular formal arrangement.
- **Men and women are equally as likely to want and use work life flexibility,** with men more likely than women to use formal flextime and compressed workweeks.

### RECESSION: WORK LIFE FLEXIBILITY WITHSTOOD ITS TOUGHEST TEST

Eight out of ten respondents reported that the levels of work+life flexibility not only survived unchanged, but 1 out of 10 respondents said flexibility actually increased during the recession.

Thinking about the effects of the recent economic downturn on your use of work life flexibility *would you say your use of flexibility during the past recession?*

	Total	Men	Women
Has been no change	76%	77%	74%
Increased	11%	10%	13%
Decreased	11%	12%	11%

**RECOVERY: WORK LIFE FLEXIBILITY CONTINUES TO GROW**

Now that the economy is recovering, most said the amount of flexibility that they expect to use will stay the same (82%), but 10% did expect it to increase with women (14%) outpacing men (6%).

Thinking about the effect of the recent economic downturn on your use of work+life flexibility would you say that **your plans to use work+life flexibility now that the economy is recovering:**

	Total	Men	Women
No change in use	82%	85%	78%
Increased	10%	6%	14%
Decreased	5%	6%	5%

**COMPARED TO LAST YEAR, WORK LIFE FLEXIBILITY IS THE SAME OR GROWING**

Compared to this time last year, more than eight out of ten report they have the same (66%) or increased amount (17%) of work life flexibility.

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

	Total	Men	Women
Same as last year	66%	65%	67%
More than last year	17%	17%	18%
Less than last year	15%	17%	12%

**THERE’S LESS FEAR, BUT OBSTACLES NOW INCLUDE WORKLOAD, TIME, “PERK” PERCEPTION, LIMITED COMMUNICATION AND A LACK OF POWER TO INITIATE**

With regard to the obstacles that stand in the way of individuals using or improving work life flexibility, the 2011 findings are a mix of progress and continued difficulty.

In 2011, fewer respondents reported that there were obstacles that kept them using or improving their work life flexibility (61% in 2011 versus 76% in 2006). However, six out of ten still report difficulty. The survival and growth of work life flexibility during the recession and recovery doesn’t mean the race is won. To make the most of work life flexibility for individual and business, there is still work to do.

**Despite the recession, concerns related to the financial impact of flexibility and fears regarding the negative perception of others decreased dramatically since 2006, but they are still there:**

- You might make less money: 21% in 2011 versus 45% in 2006
- You might lose your job: 16% in 2011 versus 28% in 2006
- Others will think you don’t work hard: 11% in 2011 versus 39% in 2006
- You worry that your boss would say “no”: 13% in 2011 versus 32% in 2006

**However, in 2011, 29% of respondents reported that the biggest obstacle to using or improving work life flexibility was “increased workload or no time for flexibility.”**

In addition to challenging lingering fears, and tackling workload and resource issues, the optimization of work life flexibility will require developing and implementing ways to:

- **Change the perception amongst the 50% of respondents who think that work life flexibility is either an “employee perk or benefit” or “don’t know” what it is.** They need to align with the 50% who recognize that work life flexibility is a “strategy your employer uses to help retain talent, manage the workload and grow.” It is noteworthy to point out men are more likely than women to see flexibility as a strategy versus a perk.

You view work life flexibility in your organization as...?

	Total	Men	Women
A strategy your employer uses to help retain talent, manage the workload and grow	50%	55%	44%

	Total	Men	Women
An employee perk or benefit	36%	33%	40%
Don't Know	14%	12%	16%

- **Expand the circle of communication when work life flexibility is used beyond just the supervisor (79%) and partner/family (63%) to include colleagues (52%) and anyone we supervise (45%).** This increases the likelihood that flexibility will work for the individual and the business. Interestingly, men are more likely than women to discuss their use of flexibility with a wider circle of stakeholders. This challenges the perception that men are more likely to use flexibility without talking about it, whereas women are more likely to ask.

When you make those occasional changes in how, when and where you work, do you discuss those changes with:

	Total	Men	Women
Your supervisor	79%	80%	77%
Your spouse, family or partner	63%	68%	56%
Your colleagues	52%	59%	41%
Those you supervise	45%	45%	45%
No one	7%	6%	9%

- **Increase the sense of power individuals feel to take the initiative because a majority (73%) believes that work life flexibility is only possible if their employer and/or boss provide it.** This is important because the individual is best suited to know when she/he needs flexibility and what type of flexibility will work for her/his unique work and personal realities.

Is the following statement true or false: Work life flexibility is only possible if my employer and/or boss provide it.

	Total	Men	Women
True	73%	74%	73%
False	25%	25%	25%
Don't Know	2%	2%	2%

#### WITHOUT EFFECTIVE WORK LIFE FLEXIBILITY, THE BUSINESS SUFFERS

In 2011, a majority of respondents agreed (66%) that the business would suffer in a number of key areas without work life flexibility, with no difference between the responses of men and women. The top three areas of impact were health (48%), morale (41%) and productivity (36%).

Without work+life flexibility...

	Total	Men	Women
There is a negative effect	66%	67%	66%
There is NO negative effect	24%	26%	22%
Health is affected—you're stressed or lack time for exercise	48%	45%	51%
Morale is affected—you don't feel good about working at your company or organization	41%	41%	42%
Productivity is affected—you can't get your work done as fast as you like	36%	37%	37%
Focus and attention, or engagement is affected—you can't concentrate the way you would like to on your work	34%	36%	31%
Loyalty is affected—you're not as committed to your employer and/or boss	34%	34%	33%
Creativity is affected—you have a harder time problem solving or coming up with new ideas	31%	33%	27%

**SEARCH FOR WORK LIFE FLEXIBILITY KEY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ISSUE**

*(Questions in this section co-sponsored by CareerOwners.com)*

According to the 2011 Work+Life Fit Reality Check, 35% of respondents plan to look for a new job either inside or outside of their organization.

In the next year do you plan to...

	Total	Men	Women
Look for a new job within your company or organization	18%	22%	14%
Look for a new job outside of you company or organization	17%	16%	18%
Neither/ Plan to stay at current job	67%	64%	72%

The top two reasons cited for looking were to make more money (76%) and to have responsibilities that better use your talents, strengths and skills (67%).

However, 65% respondents looking for a new job wanted a more flexible schedule (32%), the ability to telework (25%), or to work a reduced schedule for less money (8%). In other words, a majority of respondents may have access to flexibility, but two-thirds of jobseekers want to improve it.

Interestingly, the 8% of full-time employees seeking a new job indicated that they wanted reduce their hours and pay. This low percentage challenges a common employer fear that, if given the option, most people will choose to work less even if it reduces their compensation. Not true. Most people who currently work full-time want to work differently, not less.

Why do you plan to look for a new job either within or outside of your company or organization:

	Total	Men	Women
Make more money	76%	78%	72%
Responsibility that better use your talents, strengths or skills	67%	62%	76%
Work the same amount of hours but have a more flexible schedule	32%	30%	36%
Work from a location outside of the office	25%	21%	30%
You don't like your boss	14%	12%	16%
Work reduced number of hours with reduced pay	8%	8%	8%
Other	4%	3%	4%
Don't Know	2%	1%	4%

**CURRENT STATE OF FLEXIBILITY: MOST USE DAY-TO-DAY FLEXIBILITY; FLEXTIME AND MEN LEAD FORMAL PLANS**

According to the 2011 Work+Life Fit Reality Check, 8 out of 10 full-time employees currently use some type of day-to-day or formal work+life flexibility. Although the difference is not statistically significant, men are more likely to use flexibility than women. And they are significantly more likely than women to have a formal flextime arrangement, or compressed workweek.

Which of the following types of work life flexibility do you currently use?

Type of Flexibility	Total	Men	Women
Any type of flexibility	82%	84%	78%
Some of type of day-to-day, ad hoc flex	62%	62%	63%
Day-to-day flex hours	55%	54%	56%
Day-to-day telework	34%	36%	30%
Formal Flextime	46%	51%	39%
Formal Telework	33%	35%	31%
Compressed work schedule	27%	32%	19%
Reduced hours with reduced pay *	9%	9%	9%
None of these	18%	15%	21%

*\*Employees in this sample identify as working full-time however reduced schedule could be explained by a temporary furlough or schedule change.*

## **ABOUT WORK+LIFE FIT, INC.**

For more than 15 years, Work+Life Fit, Inc. and its parent company, the Flex+Strategy Group, have helped leaders strategically rethink inflexible ways of working for profit, growth and individual work+life fit (not, balance). Clients include BDO Seidman, LLP, Novo Nordisk, EMC, the United States Navy, the Internal Revenue Service, and the United Nations, as well as tens of thousands of individuals. CEO and founder, Cali Williams Yost, is the author of the critically-acclaimed, *Work+Life: Finding the Fit That's Right for You* (Riverhead, 2004), the first work+life fit “how to” guide for individuals. Yost is also an expert blogger for Fast Company magazine, and her Work+Life Fit blog was voted one of the Top 100 Sites for Women by Forbes.com in 2010.

**For 2011 Work+Life Fit Reality Check Takeaway Tips for Individuals, go to:**

<http://bit.ly/wlfitindividtips>

**For 2011 Work+Life Fit Reality Check Takeaway Tips for Employers, go to:**

<http://bit.ly/wlfitemployertips>

To connect with Work+Life Fit, Inc, the Flex+Strategy Group and Cali Williams Yost:

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