

**Where To Work in Canada?**  
**An Examination of Regional Differences in Work Life**  
**Practices**

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## **Executive Summary**

The issues associated with balancing work and family are of paramount importance to individuals, the organizations that employ them, the families that care for them, the unions that represent them and governments concerned with global competitiveness, citizen well-being and national health. At this point in time, we have little understanding about how the ability to balance work and life varies across Canada. While we know that social policies that may affect work-life conflict vary by province we do not know to what extent these policies manifest themselves in terms of lower or higher levels of stress, work-life conflict etc. Similarly, while we know that the types of employment and employment conditions vary across the country, we do not know how these differences are associated with key employees attitudes and outcomes. Such information is necessary to policy makers who are responsible for designing appropriate social and workplace policies as well as to employees and employers who are deciding in which part of Canada to locate. This report seeks to fill some of these gaps in our knowledge.

### **Objectives for this Report**

This report uses data collected in conjunction with the 2001 Balance Work, Family and Lifestyle National Study to create a report card on work-life and employment practices in five regions of Canada:

- British Columbia (B.C.),
- the Prairies (i.e. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba),
- Ontario,
- Quebec, and
- the Maritimes (i.e. Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island).

Specifically, it "takes the pulse" of the nation by assessing "vital" signs in six areas:

- work and non-work demands (time in work and non-work activities),
- work environment (culture and benefits),
- work and family outcomes (role overload, role interference, caregiver strain),
- family outcomes (family satisfaction, parental satisfaction, family adaptation, family integration, positive parenting, decision to have children)
- organizational outcomes (view of ones' employer, commitment, job stress, job satisfaction, intent to turnover, absenteeism, spending on prescription medication), and
- employee wellbeing (perceived stress, burnout, depressed mood, life satisfaction, health).

### **The Sample**

In total, 100 companies with 500+ employees participated in the 2001 "National Study on Balancing Work and Family" (referred to throughout the rest of the report as the 2001 study): 40 from the private sector, 22 from the public sector and 38 from the Not for Profit (NFP) sector. Private sector companies from the following sectors were included in the sample: telecommunications, high technology, retail, transportation, pharmaceutical, financial services, entertainment, natural resources and manufacturing. The NFP sector

sample consisted of 15 hospitals/district health councils, 10 school boards, 8 universities and colleges, and 5 “other” organizations that could best be classified as NFP/greater public service (e.g. social service, charity, protective services). The public sector sample included 7 municipal governments, 7 provincial government departments, and 8 federal public service departments/agencies. A total of 31,571 people responded to the “National Study on Balancing Work and Family” survey. Residence was examined in this study by asking respondents to indicate their postal code (used to determine province of residence, region of the province and whether or not the individual lived in an urban or rural area) and the approximate population of the community in which they lived. This report is based on the responses of the 28,538 Canadian employees who gave us their postal code .

### **Respondents Come From Across Canada**

The respondents to this survey came from across the country: 41% lived in Ontario, 12% lived in Quebec, 12% lived in British Columbia, 13% lived in the Maritimes and 22% lived in the Prairies. While the percent of the sample coming from Quebec is smaller than desired, the sample size (just over 3000) is deemed to be sufficient to make meaningful observations with respect to trends. It is also important to note that we have excellent distributions within the different regional groupings. For example, the “Prairies” grouping is obtained by combining the 11% of respondents who live in Alberta with the 5% who live in Saskatchewan and the 5% who live in Manitoba.

### **What do we know about work-life balance in Canada?**

The following broad conclusions can be drawn from the data reviewed in this report.

- A significant proportion of the Canadian workforce is having difficulties balancing the competing roles of employee, parent, spouse, and eldercare giver.
- Work-life conflict has increased over the decade.
- Work demands have increased over the decade as has time in both paid and unpaid work.
- The majority of Canada’s largest organizations cannot be considered to be best practice employers. Fewer than half of the Canadian employees in this sample were satisfied with their job and committed and loyal to their employer. Just over one in three reported high levels of job stress.
- Conditions within Canadian organizations employing 500 people or more have declined over the past decade.
- The “health” of the families in which Canadian employees live is under stress. While the majority of the Canadian employees in this sample were satisfied with their families and their performance as a parent and engaged in behaviours associated with positive parenting several times a week or

more, only one in three were completely satisfied with their families' well-being and one in four frequently engaged in activities which have been linked to family stability.

- Many Canadians working for Canada's largest employers are in poorer mental health (i.e. report high levels of perceived stress, depressed mood and burnout and lower levels of life satisfaction).
  - The mental health of Canadians employed in our counties larger firms has deteriorated over time.
  - These trends can be observed in all regions of Canada - no area has been left unscathed.
- C There are important regional differences in the data that can likely be linked with employment legislation, government policies and community practices in place in the different areas of Canada.

## **Common Concerns**

While each region of Canada has something that makes it unique, as a country we have a number of commonalities with respect to issues associated with work-life balance. These include the following:

There were no regional differences in this sample with respect to the average age of the workforce. The fact that half the respondents were over the age of 43 indicates that companies across Canada will, in the near future, need to place a high priority on recruitment as well as succession planning.

The majority of employees in all regions of Canada lived in dual-income families. Fewer than one in ten of the respondents belonged to a "Traditional" (i.e. male breadwinner, wife at home) family. Employers therefore need to realize that for the majority of their employees, balancing work and life is a relevant issue.

There were no regional differences with respect to the percent of the workforce that have eldercare and sandwich responsibilities. The heavier demands faced by these groups needs to be addressed by employers in all parts of Canada.

Canadian employers are not paying enough attention to career development. The average Canadian employee has spent approximately 7 years in their current job. Employers need to address this issue if they wish to remain globally competitive given the strong association between career development and motivation.

There were no regional differences in amount of the amount of time per month that Canadians devote to parenting, eldercare, SWAH, paid overtime, education and volunteering for those employees who engaged in such activities. Similarly, the amount of time spent in work is approximately the same across the country: 39.3 hours per week for the non-professionals in the sample and 42.0 hours in work per week for the typical professional, when time in overtime is not considered.

The majority of employees in this sample, regardless of region, perceive a disconnect in their organization between work-life policies and practice. Similarly, almost half of the professionals in the sample believe that if they do not work long hours they will not get ahead. This last finding is consistent with the fact that across the country, one in four professionals have pursued a strategy of limiting family size to help them cope with their work demands.

One in ten Canadians experience high levels of one form of work-life conflict: family interferes with work. One in ten have missed work due to elder care concerns and 15% perceive that their health is fair/poor. There were no regional variations in any of these data

While Canadians share a number of common concerns with respect to work life balance, there are some interesting regional variations in the data that are worthy of note. It is these differences that are profiled below.

## **Work and life in B.C.**

Demographically, our sample from B.C. was unique in the following ways:

- Employees in B.C. were more likely to live in mid-sized communities with 25,000 to 99,000 people. Employees in B.C. were less likely to live in a dual-income family with children, less likely to be working single parents, less likely to have eldercare, less likely to be part of the sandwich group and less likely to be parents. They were also less likely to spend time each week on childcare and eldercare.
- Employees in the B.C. sample BC were more likely to work in production and operational positions and less likely to perform clerical and administrative work.
- Professional employees in B.C. were less likely than other professionals to be unionized.
- Professionals in B.C. had lower personal incomes and were more likely to say that in their family money was tight.
- Non-professionals in B.C. had higher personal incomes
- The typical employee in B.C is a “survivor” and has been with their current employer for almost 16 years - longer than in other regions.

The following work and non-work demands also differentiate B.C. from other regions:

- C Employees living in B.C. spend more time per week commuting to work (due to influence of Vancouver), more time per week in educational activities and more time per week in leisure.
- C Employees in B.C. have fewer family demands (due to the lower percent of workforce with children and eldercare).
- C Employers in B.C. place a very high reliance on paid overtime. Compared to their counterparts in other provinces, professionals in B.C. were more likely to work paid overtime less likely to work unpaid overtime (in fact, this group of professionals devoted the fewest hours of unpaid overtime to their employer per month) and less likely to take work home to complete in the evening (i.e. supplemental work at home or SWAH).

What makes the B.C. work environment unique? The data suggests the following:

- C Employees in BC were less likely to work a regular, “9 to 5” work day. This finding can be explained by the higher number of shift workers and employees who work a compressed work week in this province. Employees in B.C. were less likely to work flextime arrangements.
- C Professionals in the B.C. sample were less likely to report high levels of workplace flexibility and less likely to say that it was easy for them to vary their work hours.
- C Professionals in the B.C. sample were significantly less likely to agree that the environment in their organization supported balance.
- C Non-professionals in B.C. were more likely than other professionals to say that they could take a paid day off to care for a sick child or an elderly dependent. This finding is ironic since this group is less likely to have elderly dependents or children.
- C The culture of hours (the belief that if one does not work long hours they will not advance and that it is unacceptable to say no to more work) is very strong in B.C. firms and more likely to be espoused by employees in this province.
- C Employees in the B.C. sample were the most likely to perceive that the culture within their organization is one that forces a choice between work and family (i.e. agree that family leave and family responsibilities make it difficult to advance). This is consistent with the fact that there is a higher proportion of single employees and employees without children in this province.
- C Employers in BC appear to be more likely than employers in other provinces to offer employees (both professional and non-professional alike) time off in lieu of overtime. Employers in BC were also more likely to offer its non-professional employees unpaid LOA, emergency days off, short term leave and pro-rated benefits for part time work. Both professionals and non-professional groups in B.C. were less likely to be allowed to take personal days off with pay and to be able to telework. This list of benefits suggests that many employers in B.C. are not prepared to offer financial assistance to employees who have personal problems.

Are employees in B.C. more or less able than other Canadians to balance work and family demands? The data would say no.

- Non-professionals in B.C. were more likely to report high role overload and high work interferes with family
- Employees in B.C sample. were more likely than other employees to say that if they had extra time it would be spent in sports and fitness and less likely to identify family as a place where one would devote extra time.
- Employees in B.C. sample were more likely than their counterparts in other provinces to agree that they have not yet started a family due to the demands of work and that they have had fewer children due to the demands of work.
- Non-professionals in B.C. sample were less likely to report high family satisfaction and high parental satisfaction.
- Employees in B.C. sample were more likely to off-shift with their spouse as a way to balance work and family.

What do we know about the work attitudes and outcomes of employees in B.C.

- C Employees in B.C. sample were less likely to have missed work due to childcare issues (this is not surprising since this group less likely to have children).
- C Employees in BC sample were more likely to have purchased prescription medication in the 6 months prior to the study being done.
- C Professionals in B.C. sample reported lower absenteeism due to eldercare.
- C Professionals in the B.C. sample were less likely to be committed to their employer.
- C Non-professionals in the BC sample were less likely to report high levels of job satisfaction.
- C There was only one area where employees in the B.C. region expressed higher levels of job satisfaction than their counterparts elsewhere: job security (59% of non-professionals and 75% of professionals satisfied). It should be noted, however, that this survey was done before the provincialelection. All employees in the B.C. sample had lower levels of job satisfaction with their ability to meet their career goals. Professionals were less satisfied than other professionals with their work schedules and their workloads.
- C With two exceptions, the respondents in B.C. reflected opinions that were neither higher nor lower than the respondents in other regions of Canada with respect to intent to turnover. The exceptions occurred with the non-professional sample who were less likely to say they would leave because they did not feel their efforts were being recognized and because their work environments were non-supportive.

With respect to employee wellbeing, B.C. differed from the other regions of Canada in only one respect - Professionals in the B.C. sample were more likely to report that their health was poor.

From the following data we would conclude that B.C. offers a less favourable work environment for Canadian professionals who wish to have a meaningful career as well as a family. Issues with respect to career development of employees and the work environment itself need to be addressed within this province.

## **Work and life in the Prairies**

Demographically, the sample from the Prairies was unique in the following ways:

- A greater percent of the workforce in the Prairie region live in rural communities of under 25,000 people.
- Employees who work in the Prairies have lower personal incomes
- Professionals in the Prairies were more likely to report that they can live comfortably on their incomes while non-professionals in this sample were more likely to say that in their families money was tight.
- Employees in the Prairies sample were more likely to work in technical positions and less likely to perform clerical and administrative work.
- Employees in the Prairies sample were less likely to work in contract positions.
- There appears to be more job mobility in the Prairies. Professional employees in the Prairies

sample have spent fewer years in their current organization than other professionals and worked in their current position for substantially fewer years. Consistent with this is the fact that a higher proportion of the employees in the Prairies sample were single employees with no children.

The work and non-work demands reported by the non-professionals in the Prairies sample were very similar to those reported elsewhere. The same cannot be said for those in the professional group. Compared to other professionals, professionals in the Prairies

- C spent the fewest hours per week in work (45.3),
- C were more likely to work paid overtime,
- C devoted the fewest hours of unpaid overtime to their employer per month (17.8) , and
- C were more likely to engage in volunteer activities (52%).

Non-professional employees in this region also spent more time in volunteer activities and were also more likely to work paid overtime.

In terms of the work environment, there were only a few key differences between the Prairies region and the rest of Canada. These differences include the following:

- C Employees in the Prairies sample were more likely to work shifts.
- C Employees in the Prairies sample were less likely to perceive that their manager was supportive.
- C Non-professional employees in the Prairies region were significantly less likely to agree there were open and respectful discussions in their organization.
- C Professionals in the Prairies sample were less likely to say they could interrupt their work day and return.

Finally, it is interesting to note that employers in the Prairies region appear to be behind the rest of the country with respect to the types of benefits which they offer employees. With one exception, none of the supportive benefits considered in this analysis were more available in the workplaces we surveyed in the Prairies region. Furthermore, employers in the Prairies were less likely to have implemented policies which provide employees with personal days off with pay or the opportunity to telework. Employers were, however, more likely to offer their professional employees the opportunity to take time off in lieu of overtime.

There were also several interesting differences noted between the Prairies sample and the rest of the country with respect to work and family and family outcomes. For example:

- C Non-professionals in the Prairies were more likely to report high work interferes with family and less likely to report high family satisfaction.
- C Professionals in the Prairies sample were less likely to report high caregiver strain and more likely to off-shift with their spouse in an attempt to balance.
- C Professional employees in the Prairies were more likely to indicate that if they had any extra time they would give it to their family and to agree that they have not yet started a family due to the demands of work.

With respect to work attitudes and outcomes, employees in the Prairies sample were:

- less likely to rate their organization as an above average place to work,
- less likely to be committed to their employer,
- more likely to be thinking of leaving the organization (i.e. had higher intent to turnover), and
- more likely to have spent \$200+ dollars on prescription medications in the six months prior to the study being completed.

The professionals in the Prairie samples were more likely to have taken at least one “mental health” day off work and more likely to have been absent from work in the six months prior to the study being done. These results are consistent with the fact that professionals in the Prairies sample were less likely to perceive that they were in good health.

In terms of job satisfaction, there were no instance where employees in the Prairies region were more satisfied than their counterparts in other provinces. Employees in the Prairies regions did, however, express lower levels of job satisfaction with respect to their job in general and their ability to meet their career goals.

In terms of employee well being, there are two differences that are worthy of note - both of which were observed in the non-professional sample. Non-professionals in the Prairies sample were more likely to report high levels of perceived stress and depressed mood.

The above data would suggest that employers in the Prairies regions need to work on the benefits they provide employees and focus on work environment and supportive management issues. Right now many of their employees do not view them favourably. This will make it difficult for them to attract and retain employees in an increasingly competitive labour market.

## **Work and life in Ontario**

Demographically, the sample from the Ontario was unique in the following ways:

- C Approximately two thirds of the respondents working in Ontario lived in communities larger than 100,000. In fact, one in four worked in communities of 500,000 or greater.
- C Professional employees in Ontario have more formal education and earn higher incomes.
- C A higher proportion of the professional workforce in Ontario were part of a dual-income family with children. There were also more single parents in professional positions in Ontario.
- C A lower proportion of the professional group in Ontario were single employees without children.
- C A higher proportion of the professional workforce in Ontario moonlighted and worked part-time.
- C A higher proportion of the non-professional workforce in Ontario worked in contract positions

The work and non-work demands faced by those in Ontario were very similar to those noted for the total sample with the following exceptions:

- C Employees in Ontario spent more hours per week commuting to work, largely due to the higher travel demands associated with living in the greater Toronto area.

- C Non-Professional employees in Ontario were less likely to work paid overtime and less likely to spend time in volunteer activities.
- C Professionals in Ontario were less likely to work unpaid overtime.

The work environment in Ontario is somewhat unique and appears to be less supportive of the work-life concerns of its employees. For example:

- Employees in Ontario have lower perceived flexibility at work.
- Employees in Ontario were more likely to indicate that it was hard for them to take a paid day off to care for an elderly dependent, interrupt their work day and return, or take a paid day off to care for a sick child.
- The culture of hours is stronger in Ontario than in any other region.
- Professionals in the Ontario sample were less likely to perceive that their manager was supportive.
- Professionals in Ontario were less likely to agree that supportive policies were in place within their organization, or that the environment in their organization supported balance.
- Employers in the Ontario appear to be behind the rest of the country with respect to the types of benefits which they offer to employees. None of the supportive benefits considered in this analysis were more available in the workplaces we surveyed in the Ontario region. Furthermore, Ontario was less likely to offer its employees (professional and non-professional alike) EAP, emergency days off, short term leave, personal days off with pay and support for relocation.

Given the above data it is not surprising to note that work-life balance and family outcomes appear to be more problematic in Ontario than elsewhere.

- Employees in Ontario were more likely to report high role overload and high caregiver strain.
- Employees in the Ontario sample were more likely to indicate that they would spend any extra time they had in personal activities and relaxation.
- Professionals in Ontario were less likely to report high levels of family satisfaction.

Employees in our Ontario sample reported more negative work attitudes and outcomes than any other regional sample. Employees in Ontario were:

- less likely to be committed to their employer,
- less likely to rate their organization as above average,
- were more likely to have taken at least one “mental health” day off work, and
- more likely to have spent \$200 + dollars on prescription medications in the six months prior to the study being completed.

In addition to the above, those in the professional group in Ontario were more likely to be thinking of leaving their organization (i.e. higher intent to turnover), and more likely to be absent from work in the six months prior to the study being conducted. Respondents from Ontario scored at the mean or higher with respect to all the reasons for leaving the organization examined in this analysis. The professionals in the Ontario sample were more likely than other group of professionals in Canada to indicate that they would leave due to unrealistic work expectations and because of frustrations with their work environment. Non-

professionals in Ontario were more likely to say that they would leave for a pay increase

Finally, it is interesting to note that although we looked at 9 facets of job satisfaction as well as overall job satisfaction, there were no cases where job satisfaction was higher in the Ontario sample than in the other regions of Canada. All employees in the Ontario sample were, however, less likely than employees in other regions of Canada to be satisfied with their levels of job security. Professionals were also less likely to be satisfied with their jobs in general.

Not surprisingly, given the above data, employee well being in Ontario does not compare favourably to that reported elsewhere in Canada. Compared to their counterparts in other regions of the country the employees in the Ontario sample (professional and non-professionals alike) were more likely to report high levels of perceived stress. The non-professionals in the Ontario sample were also more likely to report high levels of depressed mood.

The above data supports the following conclusions. Ontario needs to address workplace issues if it wishes to remain the economic powerhouse of Canada. At this point in time the employment practices in this province as well as the organizational culture do not make this an attractive place for many Canadians to work. The workforce itself is highly skilled and well paid - but the extra money does not appear in this case to be compensating for non-supportive work cultures.

## **Work and life in Quebec**

The sample from Quebec stood out from the rest in many ways. Demographically this province had a number of distinct characteristics including the fact that, not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of respondents from Quebec indicated that French was their mother tongue. Other differences included the following:

- A higher proportion of those in the Quebec sample worked in clerical and administrative jobs.
- There was a lower number of professionals in the Quebec sample and a higher number of managers.
- Professionals in Quebec had higher personal incomes.
- A lower proportion of the workforce in Quebec were dual-income parents. A higher proportion were single parents.
- A higher proportion of the employees in the Quebec sample had children.
- Respondents from Quebec were more likely to be unionized.
- Employees in the Quebec sample were less likely to moonlight.
- Managers in the Quebec sample had the lowest number of direct reports (18), a finding consistent with the higher number of managers.

With respect to work and non-work demands:

C Employees in the Quebec sample spent more time per week commuting to work. These data are

consistent with the longer commute times experienced by employees who lived in and around Montreal.

- C Employees in Quebec were less likely to work unpaid overtime and supplemental work at home. Furthermore, those who did work unpaid overtime spent far fewer hours per month in such activities.
- C Non-professional employees in Quebec were more likely than any other group of employees to spend time each week in eldercare.
- C Respondents in the Quebec sample spent the least amount of time per week in homechores, continuous learning and education, leisure and volunteer activities.

The data from this study would suggest that work environments in Quebec are far more supportive of the needs of their employees than in any other region of Canada. These findings are consistent with the fact the greater emphasis placed on social policy in this province. How are work environments more supportive? Consider the following. Employees in Quebec, regardless of the type of job they perform, perceived that they had more flexibility with respect to when and where they work. They were significantly more likely than their counterparts in any other region of Canada to agree that it was easy for them to vary their work hours, interrupt their work day and return, take a paid day off to care for a sick child, and take a paid day off to care for an elderly dependent. Professional employees in Quebec were approximately twice as likely as other professionals to work flextime arrangements and all employees in the Quebec sample were more likely to perform Guerilla telework.

Quebec can also be considered to be best practice in Canada with respect to the provision of supportive benefits. Employers in Quebec were more likely than the employers in other regions to offer personal days with pay, telework and on-site day care (18% of the sample said this was available!) They were also more likely to offer their professional workers the opportunity to work flextime. Furthermore, they were less likely to offer unpaid LOA and emergency days off. Rather, employees in this province were more likely to be offered paid personal time off to deal with personal or family issues.

The cultures within the Quebec based organizations in our sample were also more supportive. For example, the non-professionals in the Quebec sample were the least likely to describe the culture in their organization a culture of hours, as one that forced a choice between work and family and the most likely to indicate that the culture in their workplace was one that was supportive or work and family. In fact, the non-professionals in the Quebec sample were 14 percentage points more likely than their counterparts in any other region of Canada to agree that they felt comfortable using the supports offered by their company and more likely to agree that there were open and respectful discussions of these issues in their company.

Compared to their counterparts in other regions of the country, the professionals in the Quebec sample were more likely to agree that they felt comfortable using the policies in place in their organization and that there were open and respect respectful discussions of work-life issues in their organization. They were less likely than other professionals to feel that the culture in their organization forced a choice between work and family (i.e. only one in four of the professionals in the Quebec sample agreed that family leave limits

advancement and that family responsibilities make it difficult to advance). Employees in Quebec were also less likely to “off- shift” with their spouse and more likely to agree that if they had any extra time it would be spent on sports and fitness.

Giving the above data it should come as no surprise that the respondents in the Quebec sample reported the highest levels of balance and the best family outcomes in the study (though it should be noted that even in this “best” case scenario there is a lot of room for further improvement). Consider the following:

- C Non-professionals in Quebec were less likely to report high levels of work interferes with family.
- C Professionals in the Quebec sample were less likely to report high role overload and less likely to report high levels of work interferes with family. Consistent with the earlier data on eldercare responsibilities employees in this group were, however, more likely to report high caregiver strain.
- C Employees in the Quebec sample were more likely to report high levels of family adaptation, family satisfaction, parental satisfaction, family integration and positive parenting.
- C Employees in Quebec were less likely to agree that they have not yet started a family due to the demands of work

The positive outcomes noted above are mirrored in the findings with respect to work attitudes and outcomes. Compared to their counterparts in the other regions of Canada, employees in the Quebec sample were:

- more likely to be highly committed to their employer,
- more likely to report high levels of job satisfaction, and
- less likely to be thinking of leaving their organization, especially for reasons associated with work-life balance.

Employees in the Quebec sample, regardless of job type, reported higher levels of satisfaction with their work schedule, their job in general, their ability to meet their career goals, and their workloads. Non-professionals in Quebec were also more likely than other non-professionals to be satisfied with their pay.

Respondents from Quebec scored at the mean or lower with respect to all of the reasons for leaving the organization examined in this analysis. All employees, regardless of job type, were less likely to say they were thinking of leaving because of frustration with the work environment in their current organization or for more balance. Non-professionals were less likely to mention that they were thinking of leaving because of non-supportive work environments and to obtain higher pay. Professionals, on the other hand, were less likely to say they were thinking of leaving because the work expectations in their organization were unrealistic.

While employees in the Quebec sample were more likely to have been absent from work, this higher level of absenteeism could be linked to a higher absenteeism due to childcare issues. Employees in the Quebec sample were less likely than other employees to have taken a “mental health” day.

The link between work life balance, healthy workplaces and employee wellbeing is supported by the fact

that when compared to their counterparts elsewhere in Canada, employees in the Quebec sample were:

- less likely to report high levels of perceived stress,
- less likely to report high levels of burnout,
- less likely to report high levels of depressed mood, and
- more likely to report high levels of life satisfaction.

Professionals in the Quebec sample were also more likely to more likely to report that their health was above average.

From these data there are two key conclusions that can be drawn. First, sound and progressive social policy and an emphasis on family appears to make a real difference with respect to work-life outcomes and employee wellbeing. Second, employees who wish to balance work with family and life demands should consider working in Quebec. These data also suggest that other regions in Canada who wish to address issues associated with employee wellbeing and work-life balance examine the policies and practices in place in Quebec. Finally, these data indicate a need for the government of Quebec to address issues associated with eldercare.

## **Work and life in the Maritimes**

Demographically the Maritimes sample is quite different from what was observed in the rest of Canada. Our data supports the following observations:

- Professionals in the Maritimes sample had lower personal incomes and were more likely to say that in their family money was tight: non-professionals were more likely to say that money was not an issue.
- A greater proportion of the workforce in the Maritimes indicated that French was their first language (second only to Quebec).
- A greater percent of the workforce in the Maritimes lived in rural communities of under 25,000 people.
- A higher proportion of the workforce in the Maritimes were part of a dual-income family with children.
- There were fewer employed single parents in the Maritimes (6%).
- Employees in the Maritimes were more likely to work in technical positions.
- Employees in the Maritimes were more likely to be unionized.
- Employees in the Maritimes were less likely to moonlight.
- Non-professional employees in the Maritimes are survivors who have worked in their current organization for a longer period of time (15 years).
- The number of direct reports per manager in the Maritimes sample (23) was higher than in any other region in Canada.
- Professional employees in the Maritimes sample were more likely to work in contract positions

The work ethic also appears to be quite different in the Maritimes. For example:

- C Respondents in the Maritime sample spent more time in work per week (44.5) than their counterparts in the other regions of Canada.
- C Professional employees in the Maritimes sample donated the highest number of overtime hours per month to their organization.
- C Employees in the Maritimes sample were more likely to take work home with them to complete (i.e. perform SWAH). They also performed more hours of SWAH per week than any other group in the sample.
- C Employees in the Maritimes were more likely to engage in volunteer activities in the community.

The work environments in the Maritimes also have a number of unique characteristics. For example:

- C Employees in the Maritimes were more likely to work regular schedule and less likely to work flextime or a CWW. They were also more likely to have to work shifts.
- C Employees in the Maritimes sample had lower perceived flexibility. They found it harder to take a paid day off to care for an elderly dependent and to vary their work hours.
- C The culture of hours was less strongly held by employees in the Maritimes sample.
- C Employees in the Maritime sample were more likely to indicate that they would give any extra time to their family.

With respect to benefits, employers in the Maritimes were less likely to offer their employees the opportunity to work flextime or to provide pro-rated part-time work. They were, however, more likely to offer their non-professionals unpaid LOA, emergency days off, time off in lieu of overtime, short term leave, personal days off with pay, support for relocation and telework. None of these benefits were as available to the professionals in the Maritimes as they were to professionals in other regions of Canada.

Work-life balance in the Maritimes is very similar to what was observed elsewhere although employees in the Maritimes were more likely to report high positive parenting and family satisfaction.

Employees in the Maritime sample were more favourably predisposed towards their organization than was observed elsewhere in Canada. They were more likely to report:

- high levels of job satisfaction,
- high levels of organizational commitment,
- high levels of job stress,
- lower intent to turnover, and
- lower intent to leave for more balance

than their counterparts in the other regions of Canada. That being said, the professionals in the Maritimes sample were also more likely than other professionals to indicate that they would leave their current organization due to unrealistic work expectations and because of frustrations with the work environment. This finding is consistent with the fact that the professionals in the Maritimes sample (especially the managers) have heavier work demands. Professionals in the Maritime samples were also less likely to have been absent from work.

All employees in the Maritimes sample reported higher levels of satisfaction with their job in general, and their workloads (despite the fact that they are working harder!) Professional employees in the Maritimes were also more likely to be satisfied with their work schedule (although they had less flexibility) and their ability to meet their career goals. Non-professionals, on the other hand, were more likely than their counterparts in other provinces to be satisfied with their pay (although their pay was lower). Finally, it is interesting to note that, despite the longer hours the employees in this sample were less likely to report high levels of burnout and more likely to report high levels of life satisfaction.

What can we conclude from these data. First, that employers who value a committed, hard working workforce should consider locating in the Maritimes. Second, further research into the Maritimes workforce is warranted from these data . It would be interesting to determine to what extent the findings reported above can be attributed to the lifestyle “out east” (i.e. small, close knit communities, short commutes) rather than the work itself. It may be that there are real benefits to employees and employers alike from living in smaller communities where work, family and community are more easily integrated.

## **Recommendations**

There is “no one size fits all” solution to the issue of work-life conflict. That being said, the data would indicate that there are a number of strategies and approaches that the various stakeholders in this issue (i.e. employers, employees, families, unions and governments) can use to reduce of work-life conflict. We have offered a number of recommendations in our previous reports in this area. The interested reader is directed to the following reports for suggestions on ways forward:

- Work-Life Balance in the New Millennium: Where Are We? Where Do We Need to Go? CPRN Discussion Paper No. W|12 October 2001  
Website: <http://www.cprn.org/cprn.html>
  - The 2001 National Work-Life Conflict Study: Report One (2002)  
Website: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgsp/publicat/work-travail/index.html>
  - Voices of Canadians (2003)  
Website: <http://labour-travail.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/worklife/>
- C Work-life Conflict in the New Millennium: A Status Report (2003)  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgsp/publicat/work-travail/report2/index.html>