

## EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE SERIES

### WORK-FAMILY INFORMATION ON: SINGLE WORKERS

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### WHY ARE THE NEEDS OF SINGLE WORKERS AN IMPORTANT WORKPLACE ISSUE?

*“Changing demographics are causing employers to reevaluate benefits plans and work-life programs so they are fair to an ever diversifying workforce. In order to attract and retain qualified employees, and increase profit, smart employers develop personnel policies that do not discriminate on the basis of the marital status or the family structure of their employees.”* **Thomas Coleman, Executive Director, Unmarried America**

#### DEFINING SINGLE WORKERS

A single worker is an employed individual without a current spouse, who has never married or may have been married in the past and is now separated, divorced, or widowed. Single workers can be single parents; in fact, nearly 12 million single workers have children living at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

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#### ISSUES FACED BY SINGLE WORKERS (CASPER & SWANBERG, 2009, P. 98-100)

- “... 62% of participants [single workers] provided examples of ways in which they felt that they were treated differently from their co-workers with families.”
- “30% of participants described some kind of double standard regarding work expectations for single and married workers.”
- “19% of participants reported feeling stigmatized because of their single identity, and 16% reported that married workers were perceived to be more stable and mature than singles.”
- Single workers without children were perceived as not having important responsibilities outside of work.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

- Unmarried and single U.S. residents numbered 95.9 million in 2008, making up 43 percent of all U.S. residents 18 and older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).
- “When explicitly asked whether they thought singles might be a stigmatized group, only 30% of singles and 23% of coupled people said that they were. This level of awareness is low compared to the 100% of gay people, 90% of obese people, 86% of African Americans, and 72% of women who acknowledged their groups’ stigma” (DePaulo & Morris, 2006, p. 252).
- “65% of the participants [single workers] were providing some kind of financial assistance to family or friends and 24% were providing some kind of direct caregiving to family or friends. Responsibilities to pets were very common, with 57% reporting having and caring for pets in the home” (Casper & Swanberg, 2009, p. 100).
- “... the extra growth in labor force participation [U.S.] of single mothers is raising the total growth of the workforce from about 1.2 percent to about 1.4 percent or 1.5 percent per year” (Lerman, 2001, p. 7). (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009, p. 4).

#### Want more STATISTICS or the full references for above statistics?

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#### HOW CAN WORKPLACES SUPPORT SINGLE WORKERS?

- Create equity-based rules for promotions, assignments, and schedules.
- Maintain equal performance expectations for single childless employees and married employees with children.
- Develop organizational support systems that consider employees’ needs regardless of family status.
- Offer social events that are appropriate for single childless employees and employees with families.



#### REPORTS WITH MORE INFORMATION

- Balderrama, A. (2009). Are single workers treated differently? Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/LIVING/worklife/02/23/cb.single.workers/index.html>
- Darcey, S. (2005). When employees take time off for parenting, childless co-workers may feel resentment. BNA’s Human Resources Report. Retrieved from [http://www.unmarriedamerica.org/News-About-Us/Childless\\_workers\\_feeling\\_resentment.htm](http://www.unmarriedamerica.org/News-About-Us/Childless_workers_feeling_resentment.htm)
- Leonardi, N., & Kafenstok, S. (2005). Work hard, play hard: Majority of workers satisfied with work-life balance. Retrieved from <http://www.hudson-index.com/documents/us-hudson-index-081705.pdf>
- Wells, S. J. (2007). Are you too family friendly? As the proportion of single and childless workers increases, so do complaints of unfairness in employers’ benefits and policies. HR Magazine, 52. Retrieved from <http://www.shrm.org/Publications/hrmagazine/EditorialContent/Pages/1007cover.aspx>

#### Want more OVERVIEWS AND BRIEFS or the full references for the above reports?

[http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic\\_extended.php?id=45&type=7&linktype=overview](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic_extended.php?id=45&type=7&linktype=overview)



#### SUGGESTED READINGS

- Ciabattari, T. (2007). Single mothers, social capital, and work-family conflict. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28, 34-60.
- DePaulo, B. (2006). *Singled out: How singles are stereotyped, stigmatized, and ignored, and still live happily ever after*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Howe, B., & Pidwell, R. (2004). Single parents and paid work. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 39, 169-181.

#### Want more READINGS?

[http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic\\_extended.php?id=45&type=2&linktype=suggested&area=All](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic_extended.php?id=45&type=2&linktype=suggested&area=All)

The Effective Workplace Series provides a summary of the Single Workers Topic Page. To visit the Single Workers Topic Page, go to <http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic.php?id=45>