



Questions and Answers about GENERATION X/GENERATION Y: A Sloan Work & Family Research Network Fact Sheet

Introduction

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared Fact Sheets that provide statistical answers to some important questions about work–family and work–life issues. This Fact Sheet includes statistics about Generation X/Generation Y. (Last updated: November 2008)



What percent of the U.S. population are in Generation X and Y?

❑ **Fact 1** In 2003, people between the ages of 20 to 24 comprised 7.1% of the population (20,728,000) and people ages 25 to 29 years old comprised 6.6% of the population (19,168,000) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004–05).



How have women’s roles in the workforce and at home changed for Generation X and Generation Y?

❑ **Fact 1** “About three–quarters of women aged 25 to 34 years participated in the labor force in the year 2000, compared with a little more than half in 1975” (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002, p. 3).

❑ **Fact 2** “...women aged 25 to 34 years in 2000 were less likely to be married than their counterparts 25 years earlier and less likely to be mothers. In 1975, more than 3 out of 4 women in this age group were married, by 2000, the proportion had dropped to 3 out of 5” (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002, p. 6).

❑ **Fact 3** “In 1975, 76 percent of women in the 25–to 34–year age group had children; this figure had declined to 60 percent by 2000. Also, as the average age of childbearing rose, women aged 25 to 34 were far less likely to have older children, but they were nearly as likely to have children under age 3 as were their counterparts a generation earlier” (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002, p. 6).

❑ **Fact 5** “Average weekly hours for young women working in nonagricultural industries increased by 2.5 hours over the period, rising from 35.4 in 1976 to 37.9 in 2000, while men’s average weekly hours grew only slightly, from 43.2 hours in 1976 to 43.9 hours in 2000” (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002, p. 10).

❑ **Fact 6** “Among college–educated women of Gen–Y, Gen–X and Boomer ages in 1992 and 2002, 57 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 1992 versus only 36 percent in 2002 • a decline of 21 percentage points” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 5).



✔ **Fact 7** “Among married couples with children, mothers are spending the same amount of time doing things with and taking care of their children on days when they are working today as they did 25 years ago (3.3 to 3.4 hours)” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 10).



What are the different generations’ perceptions of women’s roles as employees and mothers?

✔ **Fact 1** “Eighty-two percent of Gen-Y employees agree that ‘a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who is not employed’ versus 60 percent of Matures” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 5).

✔ **Fact 2** “Sixty-three percent of Gen-Y employees disagree that it is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children, compared with 49 percent of Matures” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 13).



How many hours are people working and how have work hours changed over the past 25 years?

✔ **Fact 1** “When we compare 2002 Gen-X employees with their age counterparts in 1977, we find that 2002 Gen-X employees actually work significantly more paid and unpaid hours per week (45.6 hours on average) than employees of comparable ages in 1977 (42.9 paid and unpaid hours per week on average)” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 5).

✔ **Fact 2** “Matures and Gen-Y employees work significantly fewer hours— an average of 39 and 35 hours, respectively. It should be remembered that 48 percent of Gen-Y employees are still enrolled in school” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 25).

✔ **Fact 3** “There is no statistically significant difference between Gen-Y in 2002 and their age counterparts (18–22 year olds) in 1977 with respect to the total paid *and* unpaid hours they work per week” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 25).

✔ **Fact 4** “Employees in the Boomer and Gen-X generations work the longest (paid and unpaid) hours at their main or only jobs— an average of 45 and 44 hours per week, respectively. There is no statistically significant difference in the hours that members of these two generations work” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 25).

✔ **Fact 5** “Among college-educated men of Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer ages in 1992 and 2002, 68 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 1992 versus only 52 percent in 2002— a decline of 16 percentage points” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 5).



How does Generation Y make employment decisions?



✔ **Fact 1** “Nearly three quarters of Gen Y professionals visit company websites to learn more about perspective employers, more than two-thirds use job boards, and nearly one-quarter use social networking sites” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 8).

✔ **Fact 2** “More than half of Gen Y job seekers check newspaper or magazine want ads, nearly one-third use staffing and recruiting firms, and one-quarter ask their parents for leads” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 9).



About what employment issues are Generation Y concerned?

✔ **Fact 1** According to the Gen Y workers polled in this survey their top three career concerns are, “financial security (33%), job stability (26%), and career satisfaction (23%)” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 6).

✔ **Fact 2** “Twenty-six percent [of Gen Y workers polled] worry about finding work, whether jobs will be available in their chosen fields and if they will have career longevity” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 3).

✔ **Fact 3** “Twenty-three percent [of Gen Y workers polled] are most concerned with finding fulfillment on the job, working in a positive environment and advancing in their careers” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 3).

✔ **Fact 4** “Seventy-three percent [of Gen Y workers polled] worry about balancing professional and personal obligations” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 3).



What does Generation Y expect from and value about their careers?

✔ **Fact 1** “Compared to previous generations, Gen Y expects to have, more frequent job/career changes (15%), greater focus on personal/family life (12%), more knowledge of advanced technology (10%), and more education (9%)” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 3).

✔ **Fact 2** “Nearly three-quarters [of Gen Y workers polled] think it’s likely they will go back to school to obtain another degree during the course of their careers” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 4).

✔ **Fact 3** “Gen Y respondents ranked the following job considerations on a one-to-10 scale, with 10 being most important, and one least important” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 5).



Salary	9.05
Benefits (health insurance, 401(k), etc.)	8.86
Opportunities for career growth/advancement	8.74
The company's location	8.44
Company leadership	7.95
The company's reputation/brand recognition	7.56
Job title	7.19
In-house training programs	6.95
Tuition reimbursement programs	6.44
The diversity of the company's staff	6.07
The company's charitable/philanthropic efforts	6.06

❑ **Fact 4** Gen Y respondents ranked benefits as they pertain to their overall job satisfaction on a one-to-10 scale, with 10 being most important, and one least important,” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 9).

Healthcare coverage	9.02
Vacation (paid time off)	8.82
Dental care coverage	8.80
401 (k) program	8.58
Bonuses	8.25
Flexible working hours/telecommuting	8.06
Profit-sharing plans	7.52
Subsidized training/education	7.51
Mentoring programs	6.41
Housing or relocation assistance	6.38
Free/subsidized snacks or lunch	6.02
Subsidized transportation	5.73
On-site perks (such as dry cleaning, fitness center)	5.59
Subsidized gym membership	5.59
Matching-gifts programs for charitable contributions	5.33
Sabbaticals	5.26
On-site childcare	4.92
Adoption assistance	4.05

❑ **Fact 5** “Gen Y respondents ranked how much the following factors would influence them to leave one job for another on a one-to-five scale, with five having the most influence, and one the least” (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 14).

Higher pay	4.63
Better perks and benefits	4.44
More opportunities for advancement	4.22
More interesting work	4.14
Better work environment	3.99
Shorter commute	3.51
More prestigious job title	3.39



? What does Generation Y look for in a supervisor?

Fact 1 "Thirty-five percent of those surveyed want to communicate with the boss several times a day. Once per day is sufficient for one-quarter of respondents, while only 10 percent would be content with weekly communication" (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 11).

Fact 2 "Gen Y respondents were asked, "How would you describe your dream boss?" The top responses were as follows: Good management skills, Pleasant/easy to get along with/approachable, Understanding/caring, Adviser/supporter, Flexible/open-minded, Respects/values/appreciates employees" (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 11).

? What type of workplace culture is Generation Y looking for?

Fact 1 Forty-one percent of Gen Y workers surveyed want to dress in 'business casual,' 27% prefer 'jeans and sneakers,' 26% prefer 'a mix depending on the situation,' and only 4% prefer 'business attire' (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 14).

Fact 2 "Gen Y respondents ranked the following aspects of their work environment on a one-to-10 scale, with 10 being the most important, and one least important" (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 10).

Working with a manager I can respect and learn from	8.74
Working with people I enjoy	8.69
Having work/life balance	8.63
Having a short commute	7.55
Working for a socially responsible company	7.42
Having a nice office space	7.14
Working with state-of-the-art technology	6.89

? How important is family time to Generation X and Generation Y?

Fact 1 "...50 percent of Gen-Y and 52 percent of Gen-X are family-centric compared with 41 percent of Boomers" (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 3).

Fact 2 "Gen-X fathers spend significantly more time with their children than Boomer fathers with children of the same age, an average of 3.4 hours per workday versus an average of 2.2 hours for Boomer fathers- a difference of more than 1 hour" (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 4).

? Are flexible work arrangements available and important to Generation X and Generation Y?



✔ **Fact 1** “...roughly equal proportions of young women and men in this age group (Generation X) work flexible schedules. In addition, 25- to 34-year old women were more likely than women of other ages to have this kind of flexibility in their jobs” (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002, p. 13).

✔ **Fact 2** “The vast majority of 25-to 34-year old women worked only partly at home, with just 4 percent reporting that they had worked exclusively from home” (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002, p. 13).

✔ **Fact 3** “According to information collected in May 1997 CPS supplement, about 3 million women aged 25 to 34 who worked full-time held jobs that allowed flexibility in their work schedules (numbers in thousands)” (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002, p. 12).

✔ **Fact 4** “Although fully 60 percent of college-educated Gen-Y, Gen-X and Boomer employees who experience low levels of negative spillover from job to home would like to have jobs with more responsibility, only 39 percent (21 percentage points less) who experience high levels of negative spillover want jobs with more responsibility. Findings are the same for men and women” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 6).



Are Generation X and Generation Y loyal to their employers?

✔ **Fact 1** “More than four in five 18- to 29-year-old workers report having a strong sense of loyalty to their companies” (Saad, 2003, p. 1).

✔ **Fact 2** “We find that Gen X employees in 2002 are no more likely than their age counterparts (23-37 years old) in 1977 to plan to leave their current employers within the next year (43% somewhat or very likely)” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 25).

✔ **Fact 3** “...Gen Y employees in 2002 are significantly more likely (70% somewhat or very likely) to plan to leave their current employers in the next year than their age counterparts (under 23 years old) in 1977 (52% somewhat or very likely)” (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 26).

✔ **Fact 4** Gen Y workers were asked, “How much time do you think professionals entering the workforce should have to spend ‘paying their dues’ in entry-level positions?” Sixteen percent thought less than a year, 51% thought one to two years, 19% thought two to three years, 5% thought more than three years and 9% weren’t sure. (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 10)

✔ **Fact 5** Gen Y workers were asked, “How long do you expect to stay at your current position?” Sixteen percent thought less than a year, 24% thought one to two years, 19% thought three to five years, 22% thought six years or more and 19% weren’t sure. (Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International, 2007, p. 10)



The Network has additional resources related to this topic.

1. Visit a topic page on Generation X/Generation Y at: <http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic.php?id=6>
Topic pages provide resources and information, including statistics, definitions, overviews & briefs, bills & statutes, interviews, teaching resources, audio/video, suggested readings, and links.
2. Visit our database of academic literature with citations and annotations of literature related to the issue of Generation X/Generation Y. You can connect to this database at:
http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-0&local_base=BCL_WF



References

DiNatale, M. & Boraas, S. (2002). The labor force experience of women from 'Generation X'. *Monthly Labor Review*, 125(3), 3-15.

Most of the data in this chapter were derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS). The Current Population Survey (CPS) is conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. "(It) is a monthly nationwide survey of a scientifically selected sample representing the non-institutional civilian population. The sample is located in 754 areas with coverage in every state and the District of Columbia and is subject to sampling error. At the present time, about 60,000 occupied households are eligible for interview every month; of these between 6 and 7 percent are, for various reasons, unavailable for interview." (U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States (2003). No. 605. Persons Doing Job-Related Work at Home: 2001. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/pop.pdf>, p. 1-2).

"While the primary purpose of the CPS is to obtain monthly statistics on the labor force, it also serves as a vehicle for inquiries on other subjects. Using CPS data, the Bureau issues a series of publications under the general title of Current Population Reports, which cover population characteristics (P20), consumer income (P60), special studies (P23), and other topics. Estimates of population characteristics based on the CPS will not agree with the counts from the census because the CPS and the census use different procedures for collecting and processing the data for racial groups, the Hispanic population, and other topics. Caution should also be used when comparing estimates for various years because of the periodic introduction of changes into the CPS. Beginning in January 1994, a number of changes were introduced into the CPS that effect all data comparisons with prior years. These changes include the results of a major redesign of the survey questionnaire and collection methodology and the introduction of 1990 census population controls, adjusted for the estimated undercount. Beginning with the 2001 CPS Annual Demographic Supplement the independent estimates used as control totals for the CPS are based on civilian population benchmarks consistent with Census 2000. In March 2002, the sample size of the Annual Demographic Supplement was increased to approximately 78,000. These changes in population controls had relatively little impact on derived measures such as means, medians, and percent distribution, but did have a significant impact on levels." (U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States (2003). No. 605. Persons Doing Job-Related Work at Home: 2001. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/pop.pdf>, p. 1-2).

For more information about this survey, go to <http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm>

Families and Work Institute. (2004). *Generation & gender in the workplace*. Watertown, MA: American Business Collaboration.

The findings in this report were drawn from the Families and Work Institute National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW).

"The NSCW surveys representative samples of the nation's workforce once every five years (1992, 1997, 2002). Sample sizes average 3,500, including both wage and salaried employees and self-employed workers" (Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2002, p. v).

Several of the questions in the National Study of the Changing Workforce were taken from or based upon questions in the Quality of Employment Survey (QES) conducted three times by the Department of Labor from 1969 to 1977. Although the NSCW is more comprehensive than the QES in addressing issues related to both work and personal life and has a stronger business perspective, having comparable data from over a 25 year period has provided a unique opportunity to look at trends over time. The 2002 NSCW uses 25 years of trend data to examine five topics in depth:



women in the workforce; dual earner couples, the role of technology in employees' lives on and off the job, work-life supports on the job, and working for oneself versus someone else (Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2002).

Saad, L. (2003, October 14). Are young employees harder to manage? *Gallup Poll Tuesday Briefing*, p.1-5.

"Data are based on a combination of three Gallup Polls, each of approximately 580 adults aged 18 and older who are employed full time or part time. Interviewing dates were Aug. 4-6, 2003, Aug. 5-8, 2002, and Aug. 16-19, 2003. For the total sample of 1,754 employed national adults, the maximum margin of error attributable to sampling is ± 3 percentage points. For the sample of 316 young workers (aged 18 to 29), the maximum margin of error attributable to sampling error is ± 6 percentage points. For the sample of 896 (aged 30 to 49), the maximum margin of error attributable to sampling error is ± 4 percentage points. For the sample of 542 older workers (aged 50+), the maximum margin of error attributable to sampling error is ± 5 percentage points." (p. 5)

U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States (2004-05). *No. 11. Resident population by age and sex: 1980 to 2003*. Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

The chief source of these data is the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The sample includes employed full-time wage and salary workers 16 years old and over in the US., and excludes the self-employed. Data relate to the primary job. For description of data sources, see <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/labor.pdf>

Yahoo! HotJobs & Robert Half International (2007). *What millennial workers want: How to attract and retain gen y employees*. Retrieved from <http://www.hotjobsresources.com/pdfs/MillennialWorkers.pdf>

The survey was conducted in the second quarter of 2007 by an independent research firm. It includes a total of 1,007 web interviews of people 21 to 28 years old who are employed full-time or part-time and have college degrees or are currently attending college. Among those surveyed, 505 were males, and 502 were females. The majority of respondents (79 percent) were college graduates employed full-time; the rest were employed part-time and/or still attending college.
