

Dependent Care Survey, May-June 1998

By Patricia A. Gwartney, Ph.D., OSRL Director



OREGON SURVEY RESEARCH LABORATORY

5245 UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

EUGENE, OR 97403-5245

telephone: 541-346-0824

fax: 541-346-5026

email: osrl@oregon.uoregon.edu

World Wide Web: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~osrl>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

METHODS

- 617 confidential telephone interviews were completed with Oregon state employees in May 28 – June 10, 1998, including 316 in the Willamette Valley and 301 outside the Willamette Valley (170 in Eastern counties, 74 in the South area, and 57 on the Coast).
- The survey response rate was 74% and the refusal rate was 4%.
- For the total sample, the margin of error for a variable with a 50-50 proportional split is 4.0 percentage points, at the 95% confidence level. This means you can be 95% sure that the true population figure is between 46% and 54% (i.e., 50% \pm 4 percentage points). For the regional sub-samples, the margin of error is \pm 5.6 percentage points.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 50% of the sample is male.
- 8% is non-white, 88% white, and 4% declined to specify.
- The median age of the sample is 44. The mode is age 49.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- 73% of survey respondents work 40 hours per week, 13% report working 50 or more hours per week, 9% work 41-49 hours per week, and 5% work 35 hours per week or less.
- 74% of survey respondents work Monday-Friday and 93% work days. (Interviewing was attempted at non-standard work times and on weekends.)

FAMILY STATUS

- Two-thirds of the survey respondents are married, one-fifth are divorced or separated, 8% are never married, and less than 2% each are widowed or cohabiting.
- 53% have no children age 18 or younger in the home; 23% have one child, 18% have two, 5% have three, 2% have 4 to 7 children in the home.
- Among families with children age 18 or younger, 3% have one or more child with lasting disabilities (n=20).

CHILD CARE

- 34% of the sample have children age 13 or younger in the home, and were asked the child care question module (n=208).
- Respondents with multiple children in the home were asked to talk about a “focal child,” namely the one who had had the most recent birthday (a valid randomization technique).
- 55% of the children are male.
- The median age of the focal children is 8.
- 54% have some kind of regular, non-parental child care, inside or outside the home (not including regular school).
- Of those 113 children, 31% attend a day care center, 23% receive paid care in a non-relative’s home, 15% receive unpaid care from friends or relatives, 9% receive paid care in their own home, 9% are in paid group activities (such as after-school care), 8% receive paid care in a relative’s home, and 5% are “other”.
- The median hours in child care per week is 20, the mode is 40, and the average is 26.
- 96% are satisfied with the quality of their child’s current child care situation (73% “very satisfied” and 23% “somewhat satisfied”).
- Among those who use paid child care, the median monthly cost (for all children) is \$300, the mode is \$400, and the average is \$326.
- Among those who use paid child care, 29% have a Flexible Spending Account.
- 57% said that child care was easy to find (25% “very easy” and 32% “somewhat easy”), but 22% said it was “somewhat difficult” and 18% said it was “very difficult” to find.

DEPENDENT ELDERLY AND DISABLED RELATIVE CARE

- About one-fifth of state employees have major responsibility for elderly or disabled relatives (including the 20 who have disabled children).
- 78% of survey respondents have *zero* elderly or disabled relatives for whom they have major responsibility.
- 14% have 1 elderly or disabled relative, 6% have 2, and 2% have 3 or more for whom they have major responsibility.
- The median hours per week respondents care for elderly or disabled relatives is 8. The range is 0 – 168 (or 24 hours per day, 7 days per week).
- Of those who put in hours caring for elderly or disabled relatives, about one-fifth give 2 hours or more per day, on average. (This is about 5% of all state employees.)
- Only 5% of state employees’ dependent elderly or disabled relatives receive regular other care, inside or outside the home.
 - Of these, 34% receive paid care in their own home, 25% are in a nursing home or residential care facility, 22% are in the survey respondent’s home, and the remaining receive various other types of care.
- Only 10% pay all or part of the care for their elderly or disabled relatives, with costs ranging from \$50 to \$2,000 per month, out of employees’ own pockets.
- Ease and difficulty of finding dependent care is very split: 22% said “very easy,” 28% “somewhat easy,” 22% “somewhat difficult,” and 19% “very difficult.”

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES IN THE WORKPLACE

- 98% could leave work in the middle of the day if a family member suddenly became sick or injured.
- 97% could attend a special family event in the middle of a workday if arrangements were made in advance.
- 43% could work at home in the event of a sick child, bad weather, or needing a stretch of time to complete a special work project.
- 41% could telecommute from home to work (if they had the equipment) in the event of a sick child, bad weather, or needing a stretch of time to complete a special work project.
- 93% could use sick leave if a family member got very ill.
- 93% could use vacation time if a family member got very ill.

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES IN THE WORKPLACE (CONTINUED)

- 84% could take a leave without pay if a sick or injured family member needed their help for an extended period of time; 4% could not 11% did not know.
- 88% could use flex-time to take a child or elderly relative to the doctor at the beginning or end of the work day.
- 37% could arrange a job share for a year to care for children or elderly or disabled relatives; 27% could not; 36% didn't know.
- 56% have used one of the above family-friendly policies in the past year.
 - The most often used are: sick leave to care for a relative (69%), arranging in advance to leave work midday for a special family event (37%), leaving work suddenly midday for a family emergency (29%), flex time (27%), and using vacation time to care for a very ill family member (26%). (Note: Respondents could check more than one item above.)
 - 95% said it was easy for them to arrange to use these policies on their job (66% "very easy" and 29% "somewhat easy").
 - The one most important policy to employees is sick leave to care for a relative (36%), the ability to leave work suddenly midday for a family emergency (24%), and flex time (16%).
 - 82% say that people who use these policies at work are *not* seen as less committed to their jobs than people who don't; 10% said yes, and 8% said "it depends" or "don't know."
- 96% say that the present family-related policies are adequate to meet their needs.
- But one-fifth have been unable to obtain needed services.
- 38% say the state could do more to assist themselves and other state employees in meeting child and dependent care needs.
 - Those who think the state could do more are more likely to: have dependents, have used family-related policies in the workplace in the past year, be represented by a union, have fewer years of service, and be young, female, and/or non-white.
- Most say that the best improvements the state could make would be to supply child care on site.
- 86% say they support the family-related work policies discussed in this survey "a lot," 12% "some," 1% "a little" and just 2 persons (0.3%) "not at all."

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

- Considering all the survey questions asked, regional variations in the findings are few and relatively small.
- Fewer state employees in the South could work at home if they needed to (30% compared to 41%-48% in other regions).
- Only 11% of those in the East have had to leave work suddenly during the day, compared to 22% in the South, 18% in the Willamette Valley, and 16% on the Coast.
- Only 16% of those in the East have made arrangements in advance to leave work mid-day, compared to 30% in the South, 20% in the Willamette Valley, and 21% on the Coast.
- Parenthood varies widely: Only 25% of employees interviewed on the Coast have children age 13 or younger at home, compared to 67% of those in the East, 59% of those in the Willamette Valley, and 48% of those in the South.
 - Among those with children age 13 or younger and who use paid child care, Flexible Spending Account use is greatest in the Willamette Valley (33%) and lowest on the Coast and in the East (about one-fifth).
 - Quality child care is substantially more difficult to find in the South and East (over half of respondents, compared to one-third or less in the Willamette Valley and Coast).
- Somewhat more in the South report being unable to obtain needed services than elsewhere (26%, compared to one-fifth or less).

MISCELLANEOUS

- 59% of state employees anticipate having dependent children or disabled or elderly relatives in 5 years.
 - 27% expect 1 dependent, 22% expect 2 dependents, and 10% expect 3 or more dependents in 5 years; 2% don't know.
- 29% have long-term care insurance, 66% do not, 5% don't know.