

Survey Brief 06:

A Survey of Alliance
for Work-Life Progress
Members (AWLP)



State of the Work-Life Profession: April 2006

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WorldatWork

14040 N. Northsight Blvd., Scottsdale, Arizona 85260-3601
480/348-7239 • Toll free: 877/951-9191 • Fax: 480/483-8352
www.worldatwork.org



About AWLP



The Alliance for Work-Life Progress is a membership organization committed to the development and advancement of the field of work-life effectiveness. Founded in 1996, AWLP addresses work-life issues through publications, forums and professional development strategies. AWLP strives to improve the professionalism of those working in the work-life arena, and influence better integration of work and personal life. An affiliate organization of WorldatWork, AWLP is headquartered in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Alliance for Work-Life Progress

14040 N. Northsight Blvd., Scottsdale, Arizona 85260-3601
480/922-2007 • Toll free: 800/874-9393 • Fax: 480/603-0791
www.awlp.org



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Introduction and Methodology

This report summarizes the results of a 2006 survey of Alliance for Work-Life Progress (AWLP) members. Because the survey was designed to examine the current state of the profession from the practitioner perspective, it intentionally screened out service providers, vendors and academics after a few initial questions. These results represent the views and practices of current practitioners in the field.

The survey questions were organized according to the AWLP seven-category model of work-life effectiveness. The seven categories are:

- 1) Workplace flexibility
- 2) Paid and unpaid time off
- 3) Health and well-being
- 4) Caring for dependents
- 5) Financial support (e.g., adoption assistance, financial planning, etc.)
- 6) Community involvement (e.g., volunteering, philanthropy, etc.)
- 7) Culture change initiatives (diversity/inclusion, work redesign etc.)

In January, surveys were sent electronically to 516 AWLP members. Ninety-six completed surveys were received, representing a 19-percent response rate of the total AWLP membership. A high response rate and a similar demographic profile between survey respondents and the general AWLP membership as a whole provides a high level of confidence regarding the validity of the data contained in this report.

Executive Summary

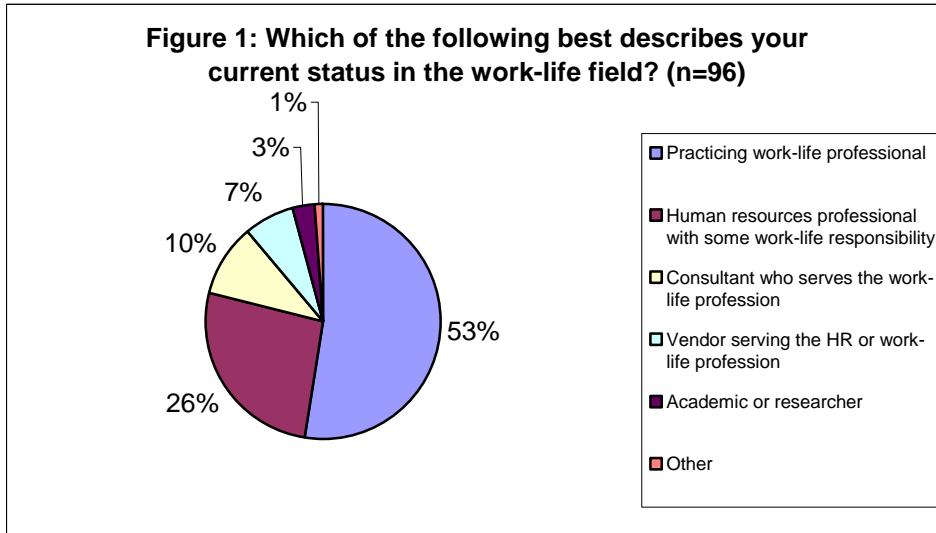
Where is the work-life profession headed in 2006? Will work-life professionals follow the charted territory of the previous year or map a new course? Are the numbers of work-life professionals changing? Are priorities shifting as organizations try to manage rising health-care costs and respond to the needs of a diverse workforce?

The findings of this year's survey are consistent with many of the 2005 survey results, suggesting a steady course for 2006. Three out of four participants report the number of full-time work-life practitioners in their organizations has remained stable since 2005. Of the seven areas central to the AWLP model of work-life effectiveness, health and well-being and workplace flexibility compete for top priority on practitioners' agendas. Given the volume of recent research linking workplace stress to anything from reduced productivity to the soaring costs of health care, it is not surprising that health and well-being needs sit at the forefront of the work-life professionals' conscience. Similarly, more research has demonstrated the positive impact of flexibility on business results, while employees consistently rank workplace flexibility at the top of their total rewards wish lists.

The champions of work-life in 2005 continue to rally the cause into 2006. Like last year, the CEO and organization leaders in HR and work-life remain the primary advocates, with slightly more involvement from top work-life professionals and employees. Approximately 11 percent of respondents indicated employees are the biggest proponents of work-life effectiveness, suggesting that employees may be taking ownership and better communicating their needs to organizational leadership.

Detailed Survey Results

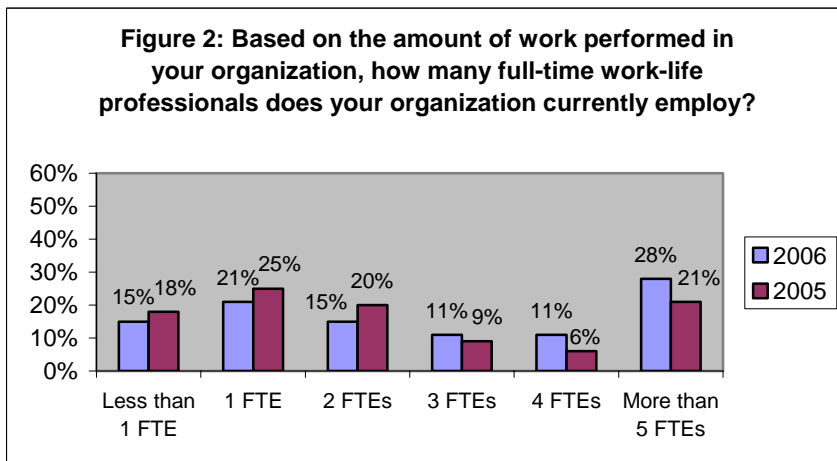
Almost 8 in 10 respondents practice at least part-time in the work-life arena. More than half of respondents identified themselves as practicing work-life professionals, while an additional 26 percent indicated they possess at least some work-life responsibilities within a broader HR position. Only about 11 percent identified themselves as consultants, vendors or academics, and their responses were not included in the analysis.



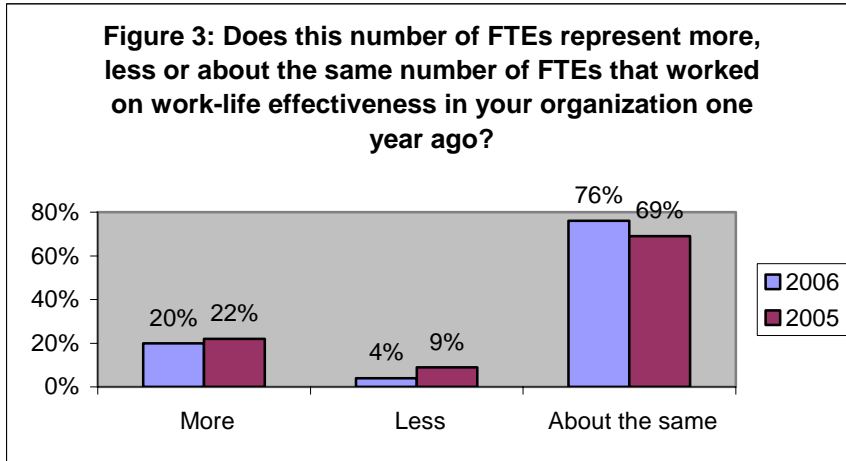
The survey used the seven-category AWLP model of work-life effectiveness to ask respondents how many employees worked on these issues within their organization. Eighty-six percent reported that their organization had at least one full-time employee (FTE) position dedicated to work-life effectiveness.

Approximately 28 percent of respondents report that more than five FTEs are dedicated full-time to the work-life area, a figure that has jumped 7 percent since the 2005 survey. (See Figure 2.) Still, approximately 36 percent of participants indicate that their organization employs one FTE or less for work-life responsibilities.

A closer look at these specific organizations indicates that they are predominantly large companies. Additionally, because “health and well-being” is specifically listed as a component of the AWLP work-life model, it is possible that some respondents counted benefits staff members who work on employee health care in this count, but this could not be verified.

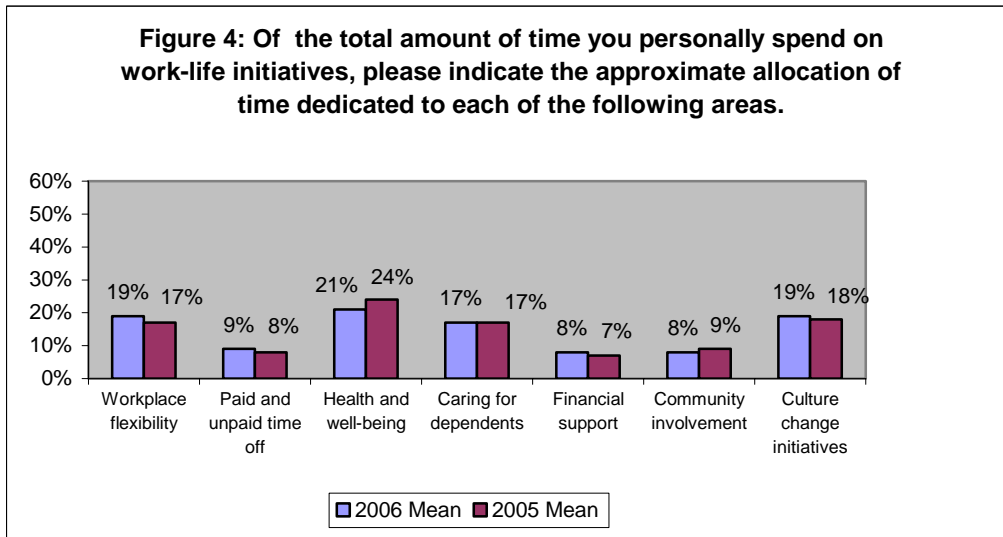


How does the number of FTE's compare to last year? As shown in Figure 3, a combined 96 percent indicated that the number has either remained static (76%) or increased (20%). Only 4 percent said the number of work-life FTEs decreased in their organization over the year before, representing a 5-percent decrease from 2005.



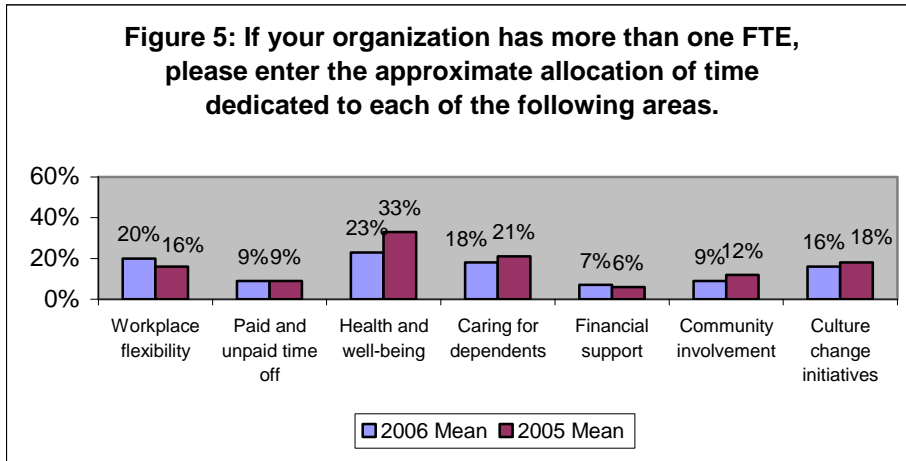
Given the number of FTEs, how do individual practitioners dedicate their time on the job? Like last year, participants painted a rather balanced picture of how they distribute their time, involving all the areas of the work-life portfolio. (See Figure 4) No one area of the model dominates the agenda, but the single largest allocation of time goes to health and well-being, which occupies about one-fifth of the job. Workplace flexibility and culture/change management tied for second at 19 percent, followed by dependent care at 17 percent.

Work life professionals dedicate the least amount of time, in the 8 percent to 9 percent range, to community involvement, paid and unpaid time off and financial support.

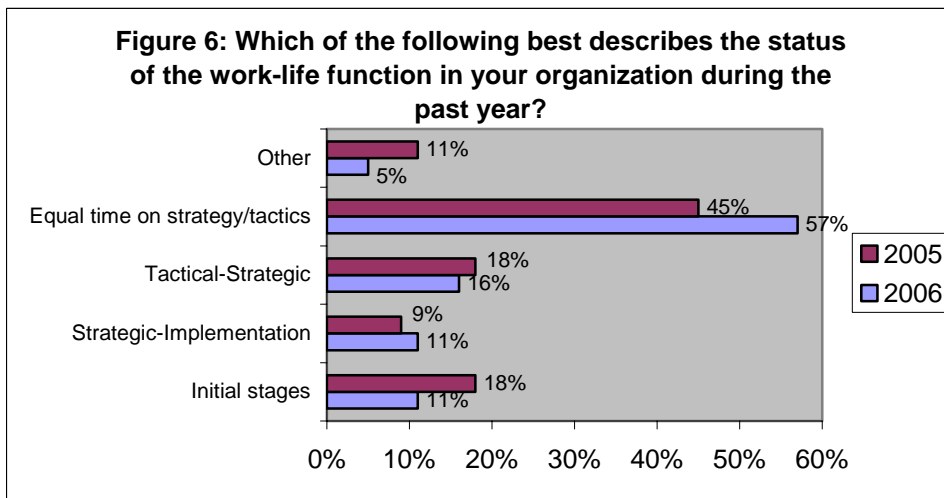


From there, the survey shifted the line of inquiry from the individual to the team. Respondents were asked how the entire group of FTE employees dedicated to work-life allocates its time. (See Figure 5.) Although the question shifted, the answers did not. Both individuals and their teams spend the most time on health and well-being, which occupies about 23 percent of the team's total work time.

Interestingly, this number has dropped considerably since 2005 when nearly 33 percent of all work-life FTE time was dedicated to health and well-being. Other than that notable change, personal and team time was consistent with 2005 on the remaining items on the work-life agenda. The team gives about 16 percent to 20 percent of its time to workplace flexibility, caring for dependents and culture change, while they reserve 9 percent or less for paid and unpaid time off, community involvement and financial support.



In addition to understanding how work-life professionals spend their time, it also is important to check the status of the work-life function within the broader organization. (See Figure 6.) Here, 57 percent indicated that nearly equal amounts of time were spent on strategy and tactics, a number that has increased 12 percent since 2005. The relatively small number of respondents within the “other” category talked more specifically about the split between strategic and tactical (80 percent tactical, 20 percent strategic for one respondent).

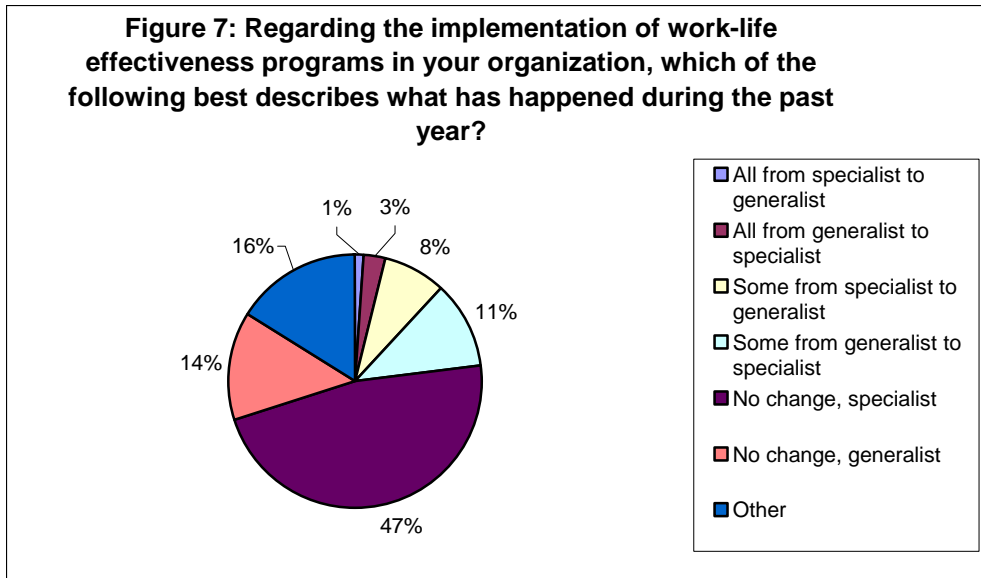


Who performs work-life functions? Are work-life issues reserved to a specialist in the work-life area or do generalists assume the responsibilities? When asked if either a generalist or a specialist occupied the organizational work-life function during the past year, about half of all respondents (47percent) said that their organization had a work-life specialist in the role. (See Figure 7.) Additionally, 14 percent more indicated that at least some responsibility for implementing work-life effectiveness has moved from a generalist to a specialist role within the

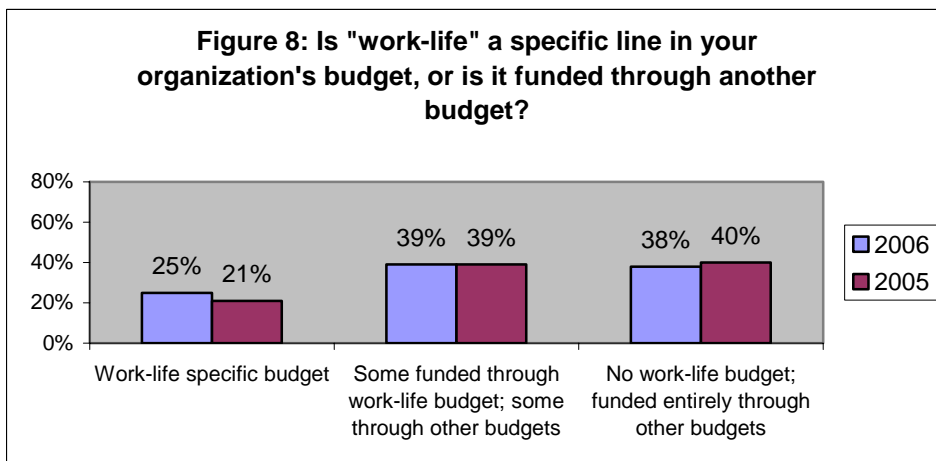
past year. Thus, almost two-thirds of the organizations represented in the survey reported they have a specialist devoted to work-life issues.

About 23 percent said that an HR generalist was either given responsibility for implementing work-life programs during the past year or already had the responsibility, which represents a decrease of 7 percent since the 2005 survey.

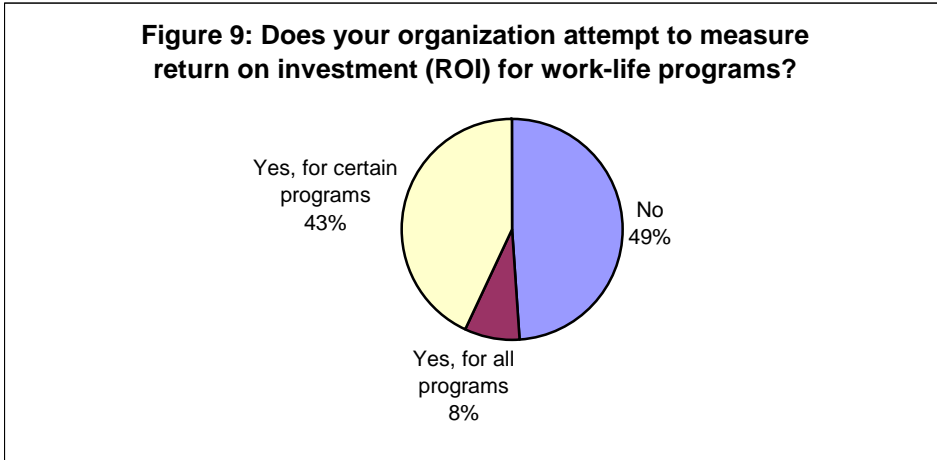
Some of those in the "other" category report work-life has been moved to the "back burner" or has been outsourced to a vendor. Others indicated that new programs were going to specialists, generalists now manage ongoing programs or that there was some other type of shared arrangement between specialists and generalists.



Like any programs within a budget, work-life effectiveness must be funded. Where does the money come from? As shown in Figure 8, one in four (25 percent) participants have a specific work-life budget or line item within their organizational budget, and that number represents a 4-percent increase since the 2005 survey. This year, the largest percentage of respondents indicated their work-life budget is a combination of specific work-life line items and parts of other budgets. These numbers have changed slightly from 2005, when the majority of respondents did not have a specific work-life budget.



Funding work-life effectiveness is only part of the equation. To continue justifying funding, work-life practitioners may need to show return on investment. Thus, in this year's survey, participants were asked whether they measured the return on investment for work-life initiatives. Almost half replied in the negative, although 43 percent do measure ROI for at least some work-life programs. Only 8 percent calculate ROI for all work-life programs. Measuring the return on investment for work-life programs may be an avenue of growth as work-life programs expand and mature.



Before programs can receive funding, they need proponents. Who champions work-life effectiveness? Respondents were asked who they believe was the primary champion of work-life five years ago compared to who advocates for work-life today, and the results show a slight shift toward more involvement from the top organizational leader or CEO and top work-life leaders. (See Figure 10.) Employees may be getting more involved, as well. Last year, only 8 percent said employees were the primary champions compared to 11 percent this year. (See Figure 11.) This movement suggests that top leaders in the organization, HR and work-life are leading the charge, but employees may be taking ownership of their work-life needs and communicating those needs more effectively to key leadership.

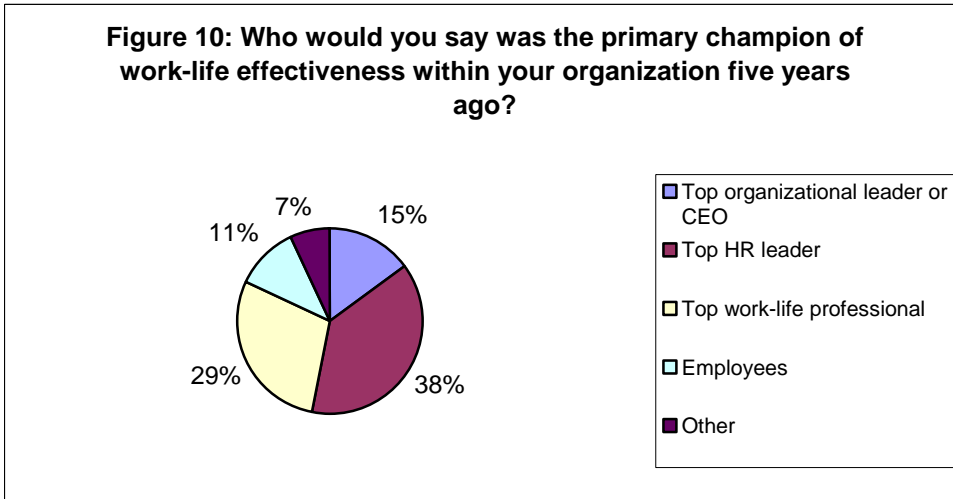
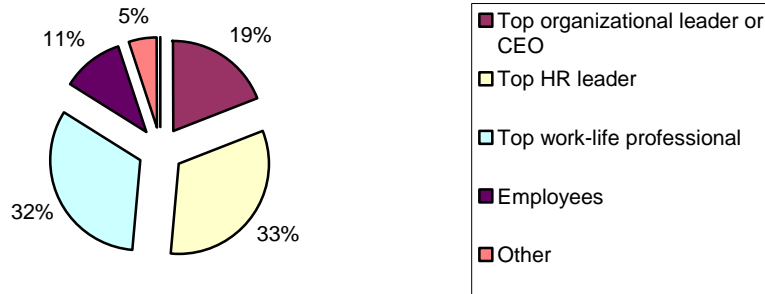


Figure 11: Who would you say is the primary champion of work-life effectiveness within your organization today?



Do work-life professionals perceive themselves as competent in the areas in which they spend the most time? The answer appears to be a resounding “yes.” (See Figure 12.) In 2006, work-life professionals ranked themselves as very competent in the areas of workplace flexibility and health and well-being, where they also report spending the majority of their work time.

As in 2005, respondents rated they were most competent in workplace flexibility and health and well-being followed by dependent care and culture change initiatives. (See Figure 13.) However, one small change since 2005 deserves mention. In the 2005 survey, participants stated they were equally competent addressing workplace flexibility and health and well-being, while this year work-life professionals rate themselves most competent at workplace flexibility (mean = 5.5), with health and well-being ranking second (mean = 5.3). Similar to 2005, financial support was consistent with time allocation in that relatively lower feelings of competency match the relatively low percentage of time spent on the area.

Figure 12: Competency in Work-life Areas: 2006

	Mean	Median	25th	50th	75 th
Workplace flexibility	5.5	6	4.5	6	7
Paid and unpaid time off	5	5	4	5	6
Health and well-being	5.3	5	5	5	6
Caring for dependents	5.2	6	4	6	7
Financial support	4.3	4	3	4	5.5
Community involvement	4.5	5	3	5	6
Culture change initiatives	5.2	6	4	6	6

Scale: 1=Least Competent; 7=Most Competent

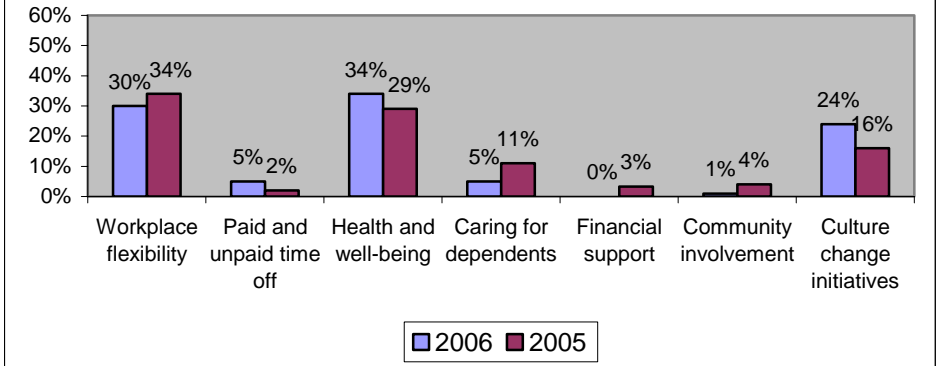
Figure 13: Competency in work-life areas: 2005.

	Mean	Median	25th	50th	75 th
Workplace flexibility	3.1	2.5	1.3	2.5	5
Paid and unpaid time off	3.6	3	2	3	5
Health and well-being	3.1	3	1.8	3	5
Caring for dependents	3.6	3	2	3	5
Financial support	4.6	5	3	5	6.3
Community involvement	4.2	4	2	4	6
Culture change initiatives	3.8	4	2	4	6

****Please note the scale was reversed last year and 1=Most Competent and 7=Least Competent. ****

What does 2006 hold for the work-life field? Respondents were asked to identify which of the seven areas of work-life effectiveness would receive the most attention from their organization this year. According to the survey findings, organizations will place the greatest emphasis on health and well-being with workplace flexibility as a close second priority. These two areas have switched places since 2005. Culture change initiatives were the third priority, followed by dependent care. The three categories where respondents were spending the least time in 2005 also made the bottom three in 2006.

Figure 14: In 2006, in which of the following facets of work-life effectiveness do you believe your organization will be placing the greatest emphasis in order to attract, retain and motivate employees?



Demographics

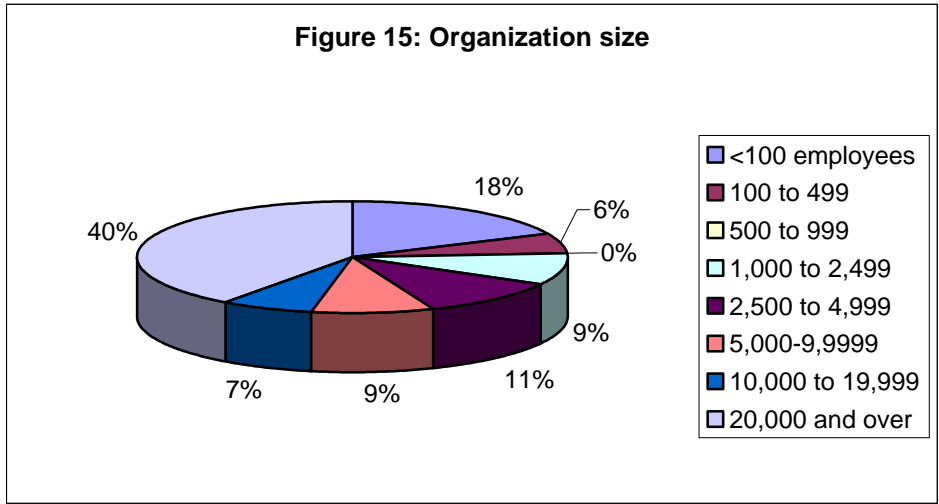


Figure 16: Industry

Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	26%
Finance & Insurance	16%
Health Care & Social Assistance	16%
Other	16%
Public Administration	7%
Educational Services	7%
Retail Trade	3%
Transportation & Warehousing	3%
Information (Includes Publishing-Electronic & Print, IT, etc.)	3%
Other services (except Public Administration)	3%