

Higher Education Support Professionals: Demographics and Worklife Issues

By Linda K. Johnsrud

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Johnsrud writes extensively on work life issues of administrative staff and faculty. She is co-editor (with Vicki J. Rosser) of *Understanding the Work and Career Paths of Midlevel Administrators* (Jossey-Bass, 2000), and author of *Maintaining Morale: A Guide to Addressing the Morale of Midlevel Administrators and Faculty* (College and University Personnel Association, 1996). A frequent speaker on campus and in the community, Johnsrud has worked with colleges and universities in Hawaii, Minnesota, Arizona, Guam, Japan, Korea, and Western Australia.

What does the most recent national-level demographic data tell us about Higher Education Support Professionals (ESPs)? How do ESPs feel about their worklives? This article compares the 1999 demographics with 1993, 1995, and 1997 data.¹ It then reports on the latest NEA national survey of ESP worklife satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

The National Center for Education Statistics provides data on eight classes of higher education employees:²

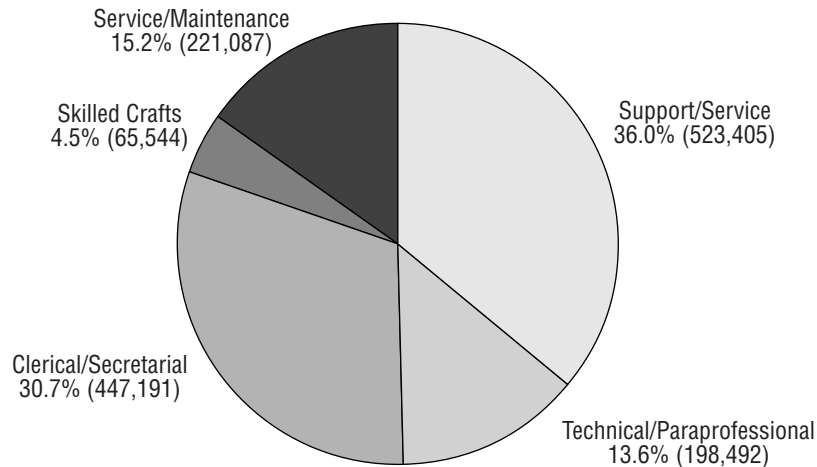
- 1) Executive/administrative/managerial
- 2) Faculty (instruction and research)
- 3) Instructional and research assistants
- 4) Technical and paraprofessional
- 5) Other professionals (support/service)
- 6) Clerical and secretarial
- 7) Skilled crafts
- 8) Service/maintenance

Our analyses focus on groups 4-8—the five ESP groups—and exclude groups 1-3, the executives, faculty, and instructional and research assistants.

DISTRIBUTION BY OCCUPATION

Figure 1 provides the percentage distribution of the ESP staff in two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions in 1999. The support/service professional group represents the largest proportion of ESPs (36.0 percent). The clerical and secretarial group follows (30.7 percent). The service/maintenance, technical and paraprofessional, and skilled crafts groups are relatively smaller (15.2 percent, 13.6 percent, and 4.5 percent, respectively).

Disaggregated data on the percentage distribution of ESPs indicate modest differences between two- and four-year institutions. The relative proportions of staff at four-year colleges reflect the aggregate rank order. The support/service professionals (38.1 percent) and the clerical and secretarial group (29.3 percent) are the two largest groups.

Figure 1**Percent of Education Support Professionals (ESP) by Occupation, 1999**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, *Postsecondary Staff Surveys, 1993-1999 and Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*.

Service/maintenance, technical and paraprofessional, and skilled crafts again follow: (15.1 percent, 12.8 percent and 4.7 percent, respectively) (Figure 2). In contrast, the clerical and secretarial group leads at two-year institutions (38.9 percent); support/service professionals follow (23.3 percent). The rank order and proportions of the technical and paraprofessional, and service/maintenance staff at two-year colleges differ from four-year colleges (18.7 percent, and 15.8 percent, respectively). Skilled crafts professionals are 3.3 percent of all ESPs employed in two-year institutions (Figure 3).

COMPARATIVE DATA

By Occupational Group. Figure 4 shows the number of ESPs by occupational group for 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999. Total ESP staff increased by 5.8 percent between 1991 and 1999 (from 1,376,477 to 1,455,719).³ Support/service professionals showed the greatest increase at 10.9 percent (51,389) between 1997 and 1999. The technical and paraprofessional, clerical and secretarial, and

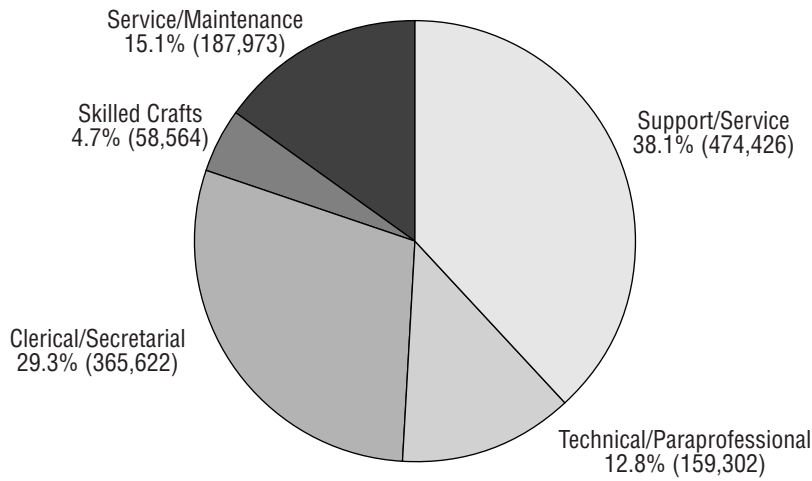
skilled crafts groups also reported gains, 5.2, 1.3, and 1.0 percent, respectively (9,889, 5,900, and 662). Only the service/maintenance group showed a decrease: (0.3 percent = 725).

Figure 5 shows the number of part-time ESPs by occupational group for 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999. The use of part-time ESPs increased in all occupational groups except service/maintenance, which showed a 6.0 percent decline. The skilled crafts group showed the greatest percentage increase in part-time employees between 1997 and 1999 (10.9 percent). Support/service professionals followed (8.3 percent). The clerical and secretarial and technical and paraprofessional groups showed the same slight increase (0.4 percent).

By Sex. The representation by sex across the total ESP staff remained roughly the same from 1993 to 1999: 38 percent men and 62 percent women. The representation by sex within the occupational groups varied in expected patterns in 1999 (Figure 6). Women vastly outnumbered men in the clerical and secretarial (86.3 percent to 13.7 percent) and men vastly outnumbered women in the skilled crafts (93.1 percent to 6.9 percent). The technical and paraprofessional and support/service groups

Figure 2

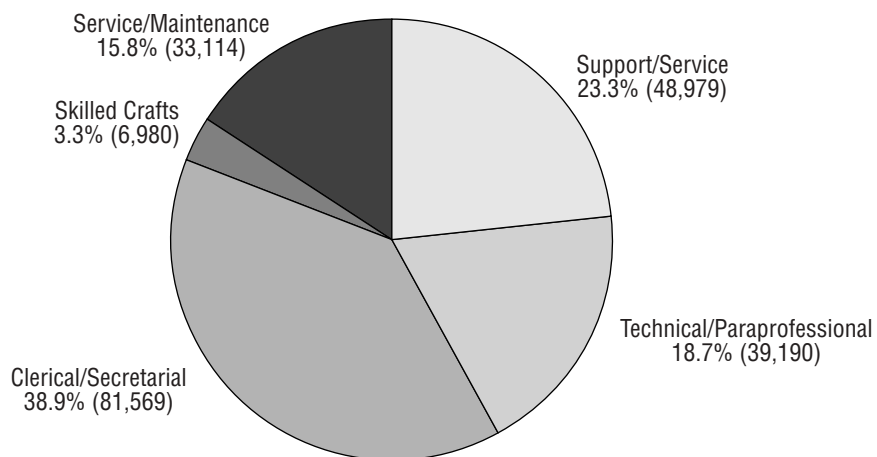
Percent of Education Support Professionals (ESP) by Occupation, Four-Year Colleges, 1999



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Postsecondary Staff Surveys, 1993-1999 and Digest of Education Statistics, 2001.

Figure 3

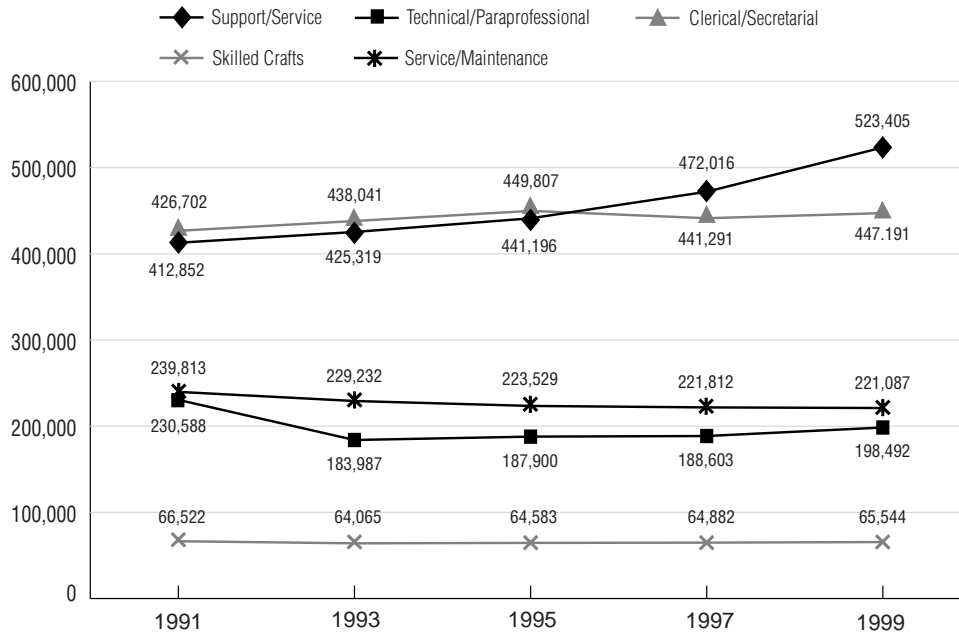
Percent of Education Support Professionals (ESP) by Occupation, Two-Year Colleges, 1999



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Postsecondary Staff Surveys, 1993-1999 and Digest of Education Statistics, 2001.

Figure 4

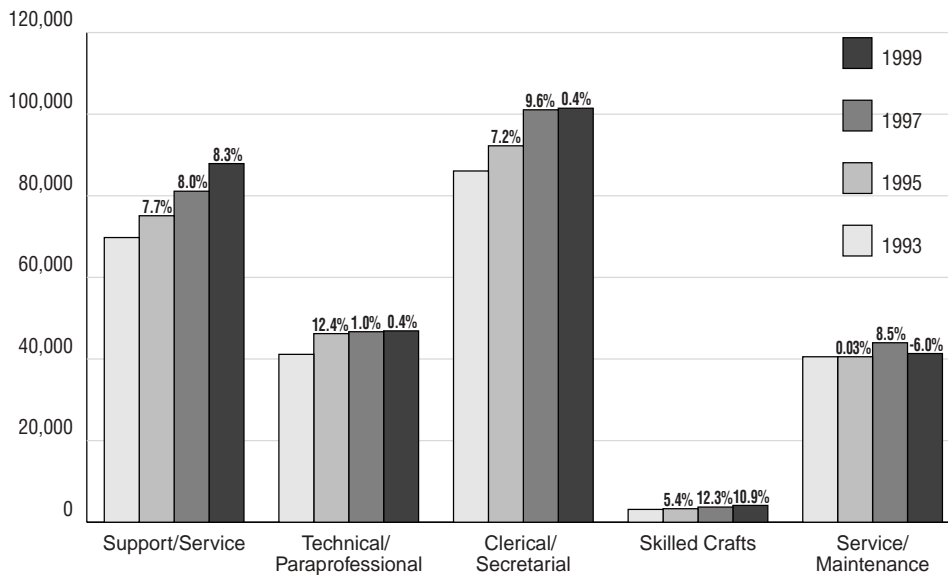
ESP Staff by Year, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999



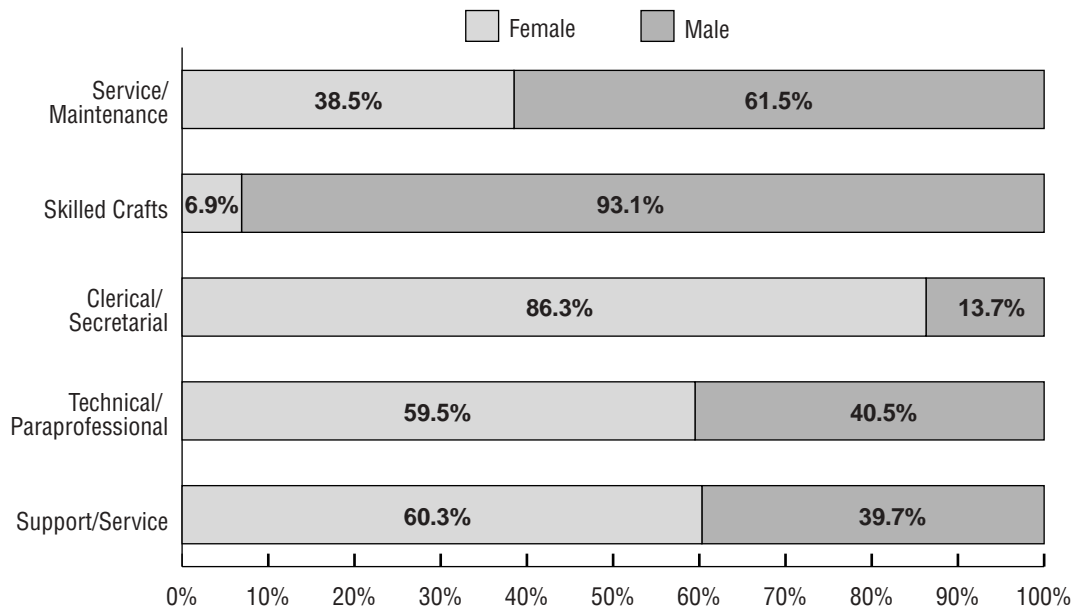
Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission "EEO-6 Higher Education Staff Information" survey, 1987-91; National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Postsecondary Staff Surveys, 1993-1999 and Digest for Education Statistics, 2001. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Postsecondary Staff Surveys, 1993-1999.

Figure 5

Percent Change, Part-Time ESP Staff, 1993-1999



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Postsecondary Staff Surveys, 1993-1999 and Digest of Education Statistics, 2001.

Figure 6**Percent ESP Staff by Occupation and Sex, 1999**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, *Postsecondary Staff Surveys, 1993-1999 and Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*.

each included 60 percent women and 40 percent men. The proportions are reversed in the service/maintenance group (61.5 percent men; 38.5 percent women).

Table 1 provides the percentage change in representation by sex within the occupational groups between 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999. The changes between 1997 and 1999 were modest, except for the support/services group where females and males showed 10.9 and 10.8 percent increases, respectively. Positions in the technical and paraprofessional group increased by 5.2 percent (men = 6.0 percent, women = 4.7 percent). Positions in the clerical and secretarial groups grew by 1.3 percent since 1997 (men = 3.9 percent; women = 0.9 percent) and by 2.1 percent since 1993 (men = 20.7 percent; women = -0.4 percent).

Summary. Most changes in ESP demographics between 1997 and 1999 were modest. Only the support/service professional group experienced substantial growth since 1997 (10.9 percent). This growth continued the upward trend reported between 1995 and 1997 (7.0 percent). The use of part-time employees increased in every occupational group except

service/maintenance. The representation of women and men in each occupation remained fairly constant.

These data provide a snapshot of ESP staff as they are distributed across the nation's colleges and universities. Now let's look at what ESPs say about the quality of their worklives.

THE 2002 NEA ESP SURVEY

The 2002 NEA-sponsored survey of ESPs—their worklives, especially the sources of their satisfaction and dissatisfaction—replicated (with some changes) its 1997 survey.⁴ The study involved telephone interviews with 1009 NEA ESP members, representative of geography, age, and other demographic variables. Here, we give the key findings of the 2002 survey, and compare the results with 1997 results.

NEA divides the higher education ESP population into nine work groups:

1. Custodial Services
2. Security Services
3. Food Services

Table 1**Percent Change in Numbers of ESP Staff by Occupation and Sex, 1993–1999**

Occupation and Sex	1993	1995	1997	1999	% Change from 1993 to 1999	% Change from 1997 to 1999
Service/Maintenance	229,232	223,529	221,812	221,087	-3.6%	-0.3%
Female	88,168	86,183	84,791	85,087	-3.5	0.3
Male	141,064	137,346	137,021	136,000	-3.6	-0.7
Skilled Crafts	64,065	64,583	64,882	65,544	2.3	1.0
Female	4,164	4,089	4,498	4,535	8.9	0.8
Male	59,901	60,494	60,384	61,009	1.8	1.0
Clerical/Secretarial	438,041	441,196	441,291	447,191	2.1	1.3
Female	387,143	386,490	382,137	385,742	-0.4	0.9
Male	50,898	54,706	59,154	61,449	20.7	3.9
Technical/ Paraprofessional	183,987	187,900	188,603	198,492	7.9	5.2
Female	110,746	111,904	112,721	118,020	6.6	4.7
Male	73,241	75,996	75,882	80,472	9.9	6.0
Support/Service	425,319	449,807	472,016	523,405	23.1	10.9
Female	258,641	272,655	284,370	315,482	22.0	10.9
Male	166,678	177,152	187,646	207,923	24.7	10.8

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 2001.

4. Health and Student Services
5. Paraprofessional or Teaching Assistance
6. Administrative, Clerical, Secretarial Services
7. Technical Services
8. Skilled Trades or Crafts
9. Transportation Services

We reclassified these nine groups into four respondent clusters because of the small numbers in some categories:

1. **Service/maintenance** (custodial services, security services, food services, and transportation services) = 11.2 percent of all respondents (n = 113).
2. **Technical/paraprofessional** (technical services, health and student services, and paraprofessional or teaching assistance) = 28.6 percent (n = 289).
3. **Skilled crafts** (skilled trades or crafts) = 5.4 percent (n = 54).
4. **Clerical** (administrative, clerical, secretarial services) = 54.8 percent (n = 553).

Figure 7 shows the relative representation of the respondents by occupational group (n = 1,009) in the four groups.

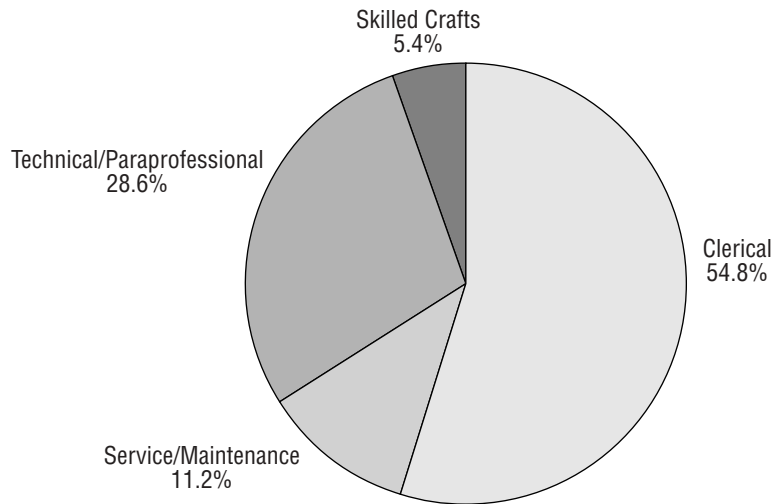
DEMOGRAPHICS

About 79 percent of the 2002 NEA survey respondents were women (n = 799, men = 210). Figure 8 breaks down the occupational groups by sex and includes the relative proportions of respondents to the 1997 and 2002 surveys. Substantial segregation by sex continued across the groups, but the proportions of women respondents increased relative to men in each group. Two groups showed large increases: skilled crafts (from 2.0 percent to 24.1 percent), and service/maintenance (from 28.7 percent to 42.5 percent). Women continued to dominate the clerical group (94.9 percent in 2002)—a slight increase from 93.3 percent in 1997. The technical/paraprofessionals showed a similar pattern (from 72.5 percent to 73.7 percent).

Most respondents were white (88.9 percent); the next largest groups were Blacks (6.5 percent), mixed/others (1.9 percent), Hispanics

Figure 7

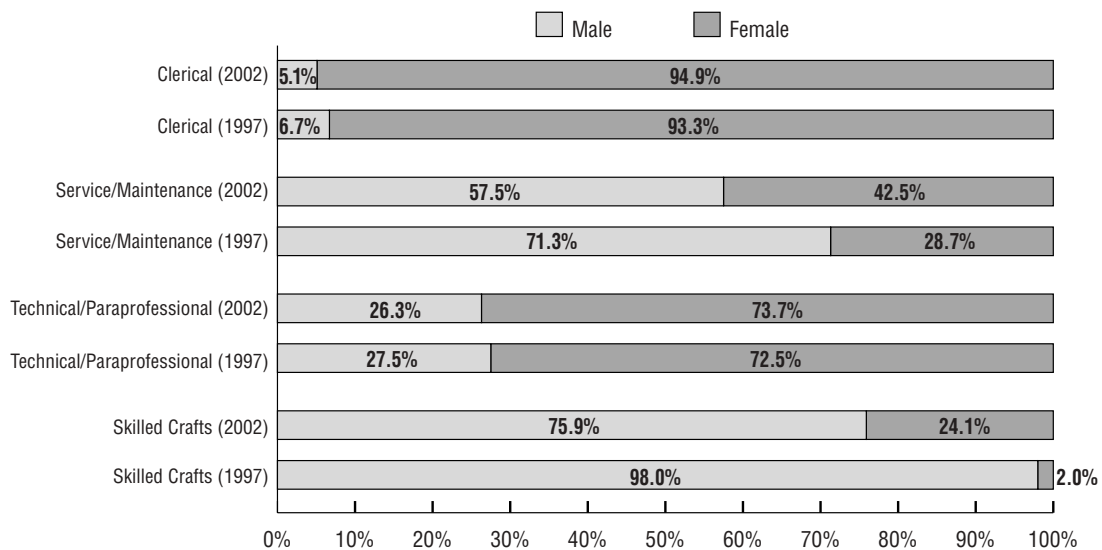
Respondents by Occupational Group, 2002 (n = 1,009)



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 8

Respondents by Sex and Occupational Group, 1997 and 2002



Source: 1997 and 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

(1.4 percent), American Indians or Alaskan Natives (1.0 percent) and Asian/Pacific Islanders (0.3 percent) (Figure 9). The changes from 1997 (not shown here) included slight increases among whites (+3.8 percent) and mixed/others (+1.1 percent), and slight decreases among Blacks (-2.5 percent), Hispanics (-1.5 percent), Asian/Pacific Islanders (-0.8 percent), and American Indians or Alaskan Natives (-0.1 percent) respondents.

Table 2 breaks down the respondents by race/ethnicity. The proportion of whites—the majority in every group—ranged from 79.6 percent (service/maintenance) to 89.3 percent (clericals). The service/maintenance group showed the highest *proportion* of Blacks (11.5 percent of 113 respondents). But most of the 64 Black respondents were clericals (26) or technical/paraprofessionals (23). Hispanics, American Indians or Alaskan Natives, and Asian/Pacific Islanders represented less than 3.7 percent of the respondents from each group.

Table 3 shows the highest degree earned by respondents for each occupational group. About 24 percent of the technical/paraprofessional had bachelor's degrees—the largest

proportion of any occupational group. About 33 to 34 percent of the clerical, skilled crafts, and service maintenance respondents reported "some college, but no degree." Figure 10 shows little variance in mean age among the respondents (46 to 47 years).

Average annual salaries and the percentage increase between 1997 and 2002 salaries differed by occupational group (Figure 11). Technical/paraprofessional respondents reported the highest salaries (\$34,672) and the highest percentage increase (40.0 percent). Skilled crafts professionals averaged \$33,446 (27.3 percent), while clericals reported \$31,307 (36.1 percent). Service/maintenance workers reported the lowest salaries (\$25,000) and percentage increase (17.3 percent).

Figure 12 breaks down salary by gender. Males reported higher average annual salaries in every occupational group. Male clericals (\$45,467), technical/paraprofessionals (\$39,709), and skilled crafts workers (\$35,143) reported the highest mean salaries. Women in these occupational groups averaged \$30,539, \$32,254, and \$31,467, respectively. Service/maintenance respondents earned the lowest average salaries (men = \$26,036; women = \$23,188).

Figure 9

Respondents by Race/Ethnicity, 2002 (n = 1,009)

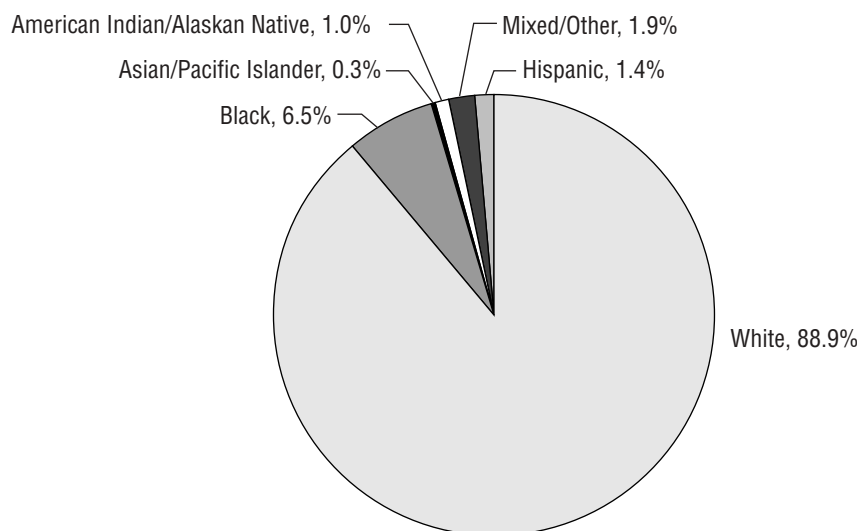


Table 2**Respondents by Race/Ethnicity and Occupational Group, 2002 (n = 1,009)**

Race/ethnicity	Clerical		Service/Maintenance		Technical/ Paraprofessional		Skilled Crafts	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
White	494	89.3%	90	79.6%	247	85.5%	48	88.9%
Black	26	4.7	13	11.5	23	8.0	2	3.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	0.5	0		0		0	
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	3	0.5	2	1.8	3	1.0	2	3.7
Hispanic	9	1.6	2	1.8	2	0.7	1	1.9
Mixed/Other	3	0.5	3	2.7	13	4.5	0	
Refused	15	2.7	3	2.7	1	0.3	1	1.9
Totals	553		113		289		54	

Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

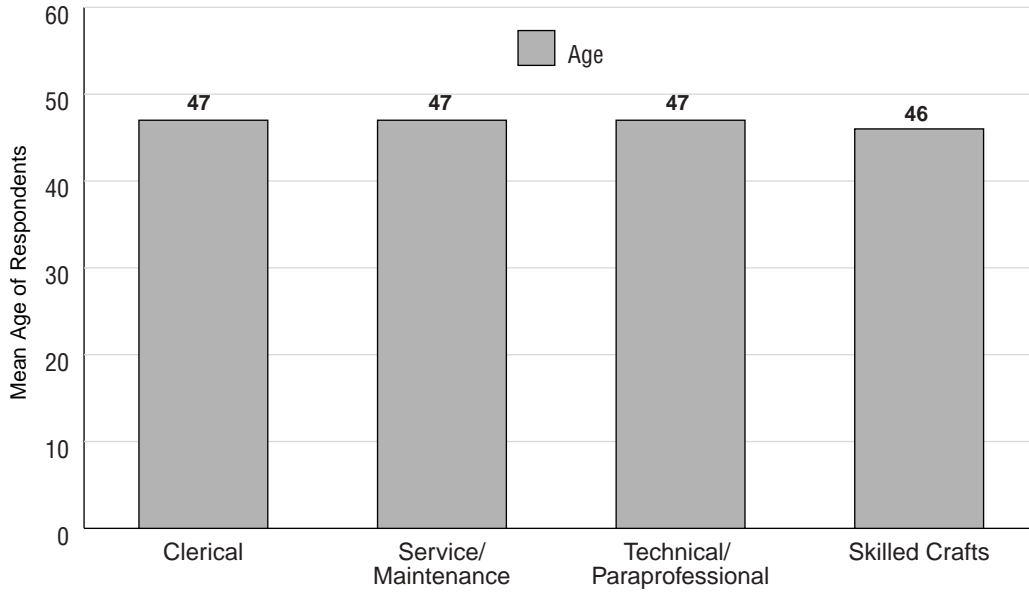
Table 3**Respondents by Educational Level Completed and Occupational Group, 2002 (n = 1,009)**

Race/ethnicity	Clerical		Service/Maintenance		Technical/ Paraprofessional		Skilled Crafts	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Did not complete high school	0	0.0%	4	3.5%	2	0.7%	0	0.0%
High school diploma	66	11.9	37	32.7	22	7.6	17	31.5
Some college, but no degree	183	33.1	39	34.5	62	21.5	18	33.3
Associate 2 yr degree	162	29.3	21	18.6	83	28.7	9	16.7
Bachelors degree	108	19.5	8	7.1	68	23.5	7	13.0
Masters, Professional, or higher degree	27	4.9	3	2.7	51	17.6	2	3.7
Refused	7	1.3	1	0.9	1	0.3	1	1.9
Totals	553		113		289		54	

Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 10

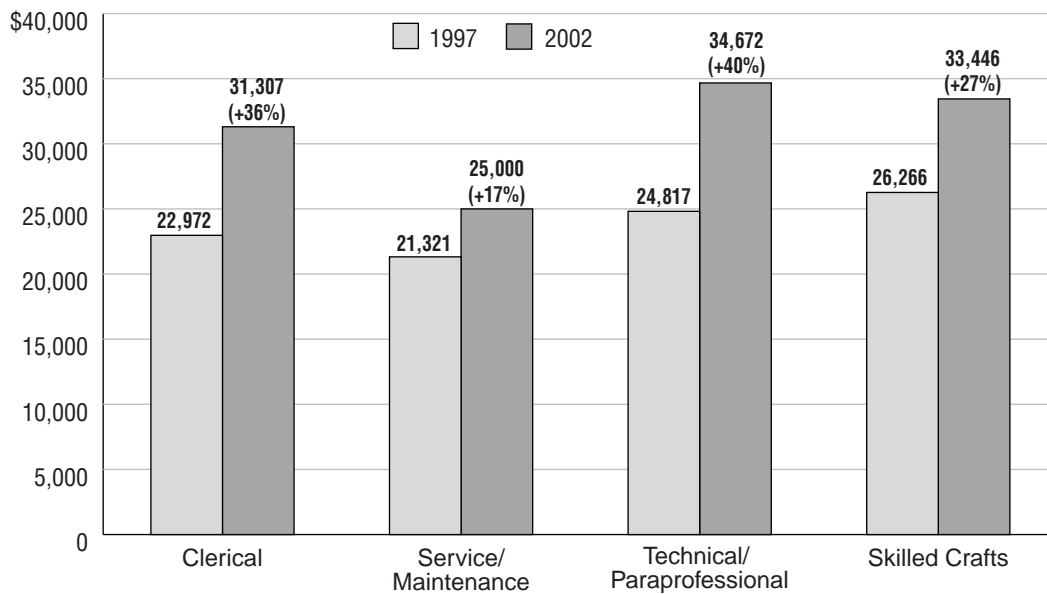
Respondents' Mean Age by Occupational Group, 2002



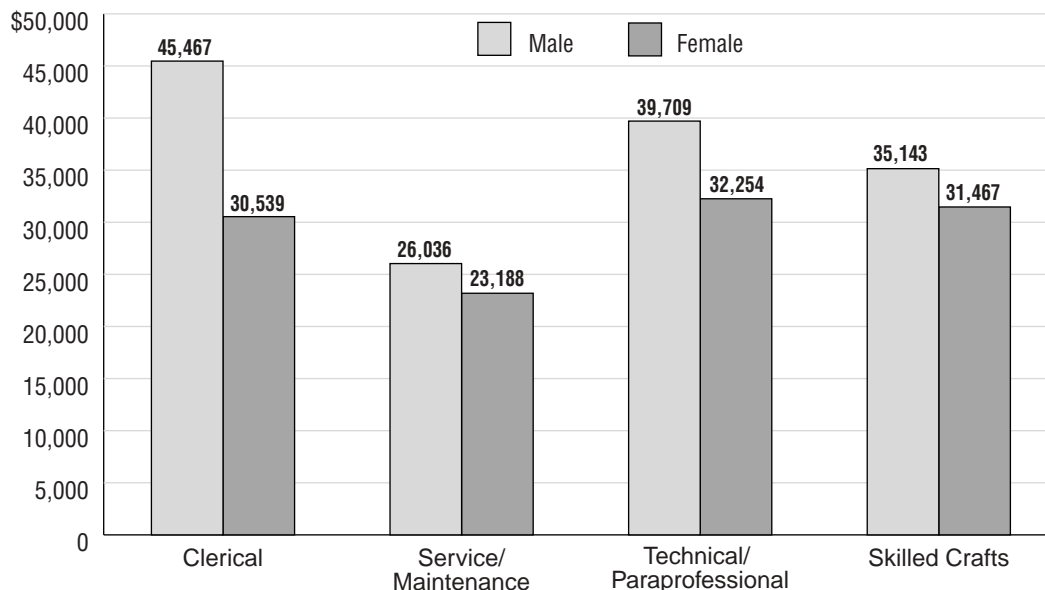
Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 11

Respondents' Mean Salary by Occupational Group, 1997 and 2002



Source: 1997 and 2002 NEA Surveys of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 12**Female and Male Respondent Mean Salary by Occupational Group, 2002**

Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION

Table 4 summarizes levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with each of the 14 work-life items in the 2002 NEA survey. The table compares 1997 and 2002 data when available, and asterisks denote differences between the two surveys. The 2002 survey asked specific questions about health and dental insurance and retirement benefits; the 1997 survey, in contrast, asked one general question about benefits. A question about professional development opportunities replaced two questions about the availability of training to improve skills, and of retraining to develop new skills. The 2002 survey replaced questions asked in 1997 about the kind of work done, and the amount of work expected with questions about the number of hours worked and the daily work schedule. Questions about support and respect received from the institution replaced questions about support received from the supervisor and from the faculty.

Across all occupational groups, the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction differed markedly by issue and between the surveys.

Respondents in 1997 expressed the highest levels of satisfaction—defined as the sum of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” answers—to: benefits provided by the employer (88.5 percent), health and safety protections (81.4 percent), and job security (80.7 percent). In 2002, respondents gave the greatest proportions of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” responses to: number of hours worked (95.5 percent), daily work schedule (95.2 percent), health and safety protections (92.5 percent), and fulfillment from the job (92.2 percent). The proportion of workers reporting satisfaction with “overall” worklife issues increased from 73.2 percent to 96.0 percent.

The two sources of highest dissatisfaction—the sum of “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” responses—across the occupational groups remained the same: wages earned and chances for promotion or advancement. But the levels of dissatisfaction *decreased*. Respondents were most dissatisfied with wages earned (43.6 percent in 1997, 27.2 in 2002), and with chances for promotion or advancement (68.1 percent in 1997, 38.5 percent in 2002). The overall level of dissatisfaction with worklife issues also declined (26.8 percent in 1997, 3.7 percent in 2002).

Table 4**Summary: Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction by Worklife Issues, 1997 and 2002**

Worklife Issue	1997		2002 ¹	
	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %
Your wages	56.4	43.6	72.6	27.2
Health insurance provided by employer	— ³	— ³	87.4	9.7
Dental insurance provided by employer	— ³	— ³	74.7	18.5
Retirement benefits provided by employer	— ³	— ³	87.5	9.1
Benefits provided by employer ²	88.5	11.5	83.2	12.4
Fulfillment from job	77.5	22.5	92.2	7.3
Job security	80.7	19.3	88.6	9.8
Health and safety protections	81.4	18.6	92.5	6.7
Professional development opportunities	— ³	— ³	83.3	15.3
Number of hours worked per week	— ³	— ³	95.5	4.4
Daily work schedule	— ³	— ³	95.2	4.2
Promotion opportunities	31.9	68.1	57.6	38.5
Support from institution	— ³	— ³	77.6	20.5
Support from association	73.7	26.3	83.0	12.4
Respect received from institution	— ³	— ³	82.3	17.0
Overall	73.2	26.8	96.0	3.7

Source: 1997 & 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members

¹ Percentages do not add up to 100% due to non-responses.

² Mean of health and dental insurance and retirement benefits responses.

³ Items were not measured in 1997.

Figures 13 through 26 show the levels of satisfaction with many worklife issues. The four groups offer similar proportions of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” responses to wages (71 to 77 percent, Figure 13). The respondents expressed greater satisfaction with their health insurance benefits (84 to 88 percent, Figure 14) than with their dental coverage (71 to 76 percent, Figure 15). The proportion of satisfied respondents ranged from 83 to 90 percent for retirement benefits (Figure 16), 86 percent to 94 percent for overall fulfillment (Figure 17), and from 86 to 91 percent for job security (Figure 18). Respondents expressed even higher levels of satisfaction with health and safety protections (89 to 94 percent, Figure 19).

The occupational groups showed greater disparity when reporting on professional development opportunities (Figure 20). The range of respondents reporting satisfaction: 67 (skilled crafts) to 88 percent (clericals). The proportion of satisfied respondents ranged

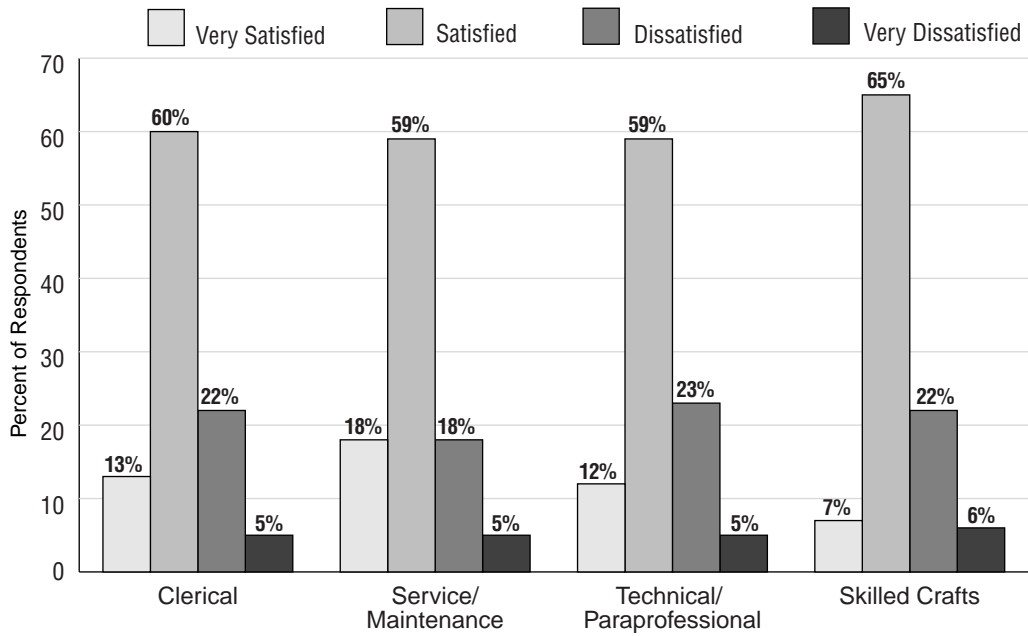
from 93 to 98 percent for hours worked per week and from 92 percent to 99 percent for their daily work schedule (Figures 21 and 22).

Satisfaction with promotion opportunities was highest among the service/maintenance workers (65 percent) and the clericals (59 percent). At the low end, technical/paraprofessionals (51 percent) were satisfied. Skilled crafts respondents fell in the middle (55 percent) (Figure 23). Figures 24 and 25 show the levels of ESP satisfaction with the support from their institution and their local association, respectively. Between 72 percent and 80 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with their institutional support. Employees expressed greater satisfaction with association support: 79 percent to 84 percent. In both cases, the clericals were most satisfied; the service/maintenance workers were the least.

The level of satisfaction with the respect received from their institution ranged from 71 to 85 percent; the clerical group reported

Figure 13

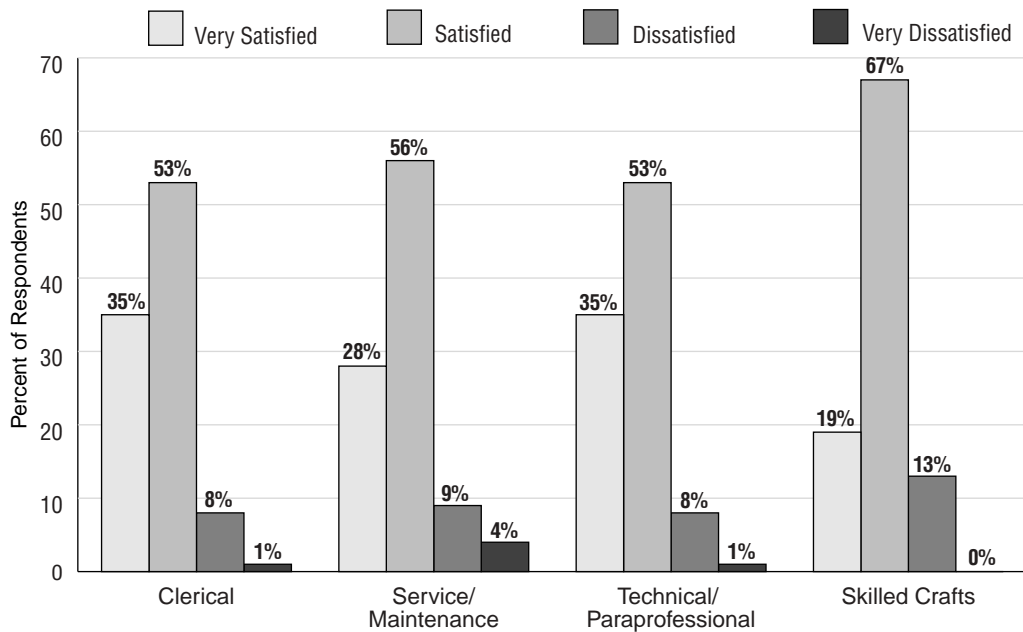
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Wages



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 14

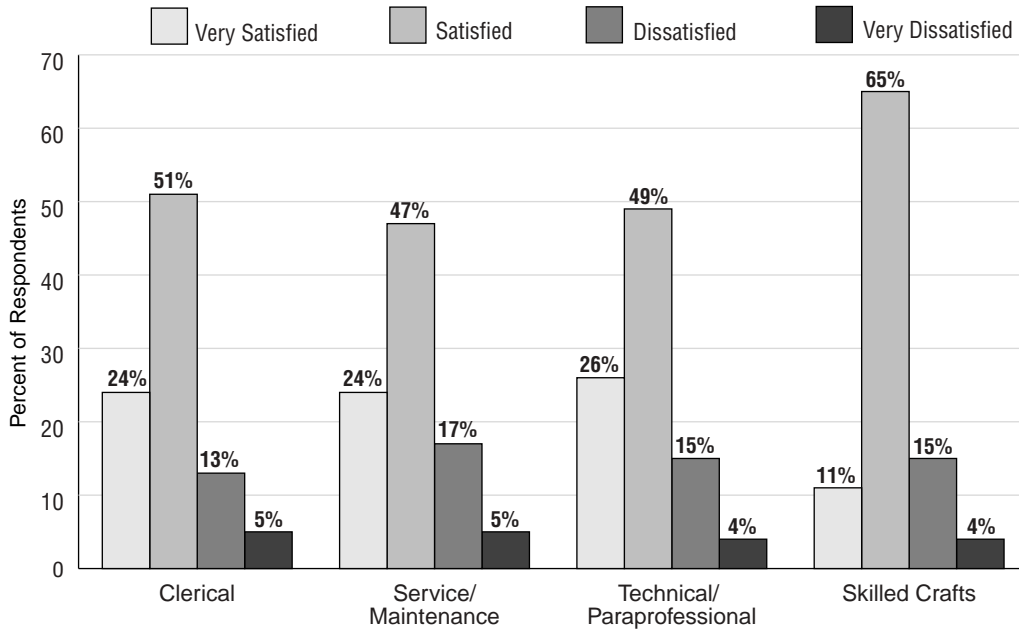
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Health Insurance



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 15

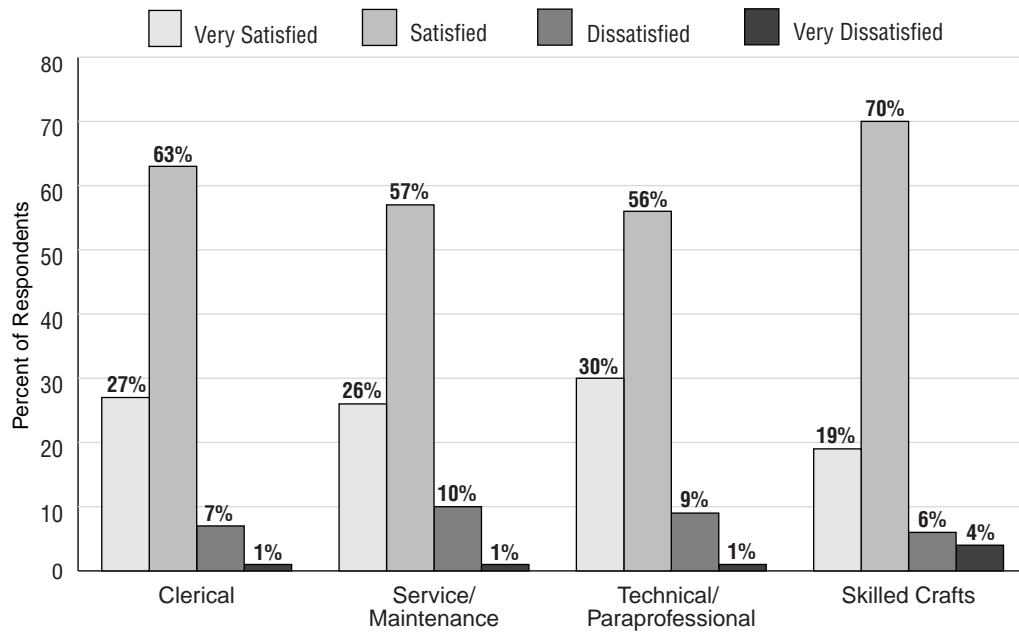
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Dental Insurance



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 16

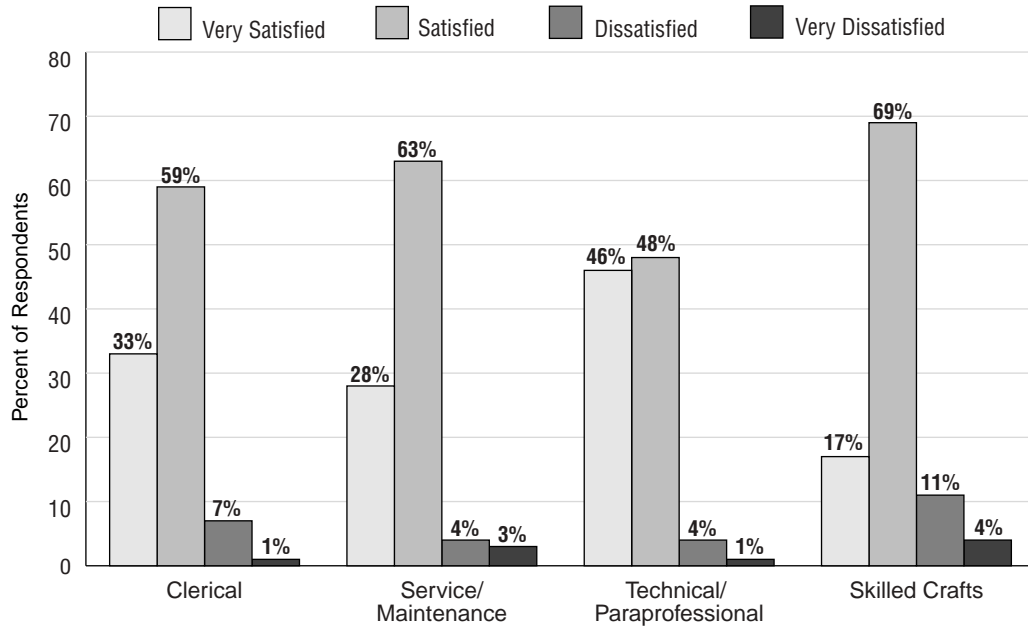
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Retirement Benefits



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 17

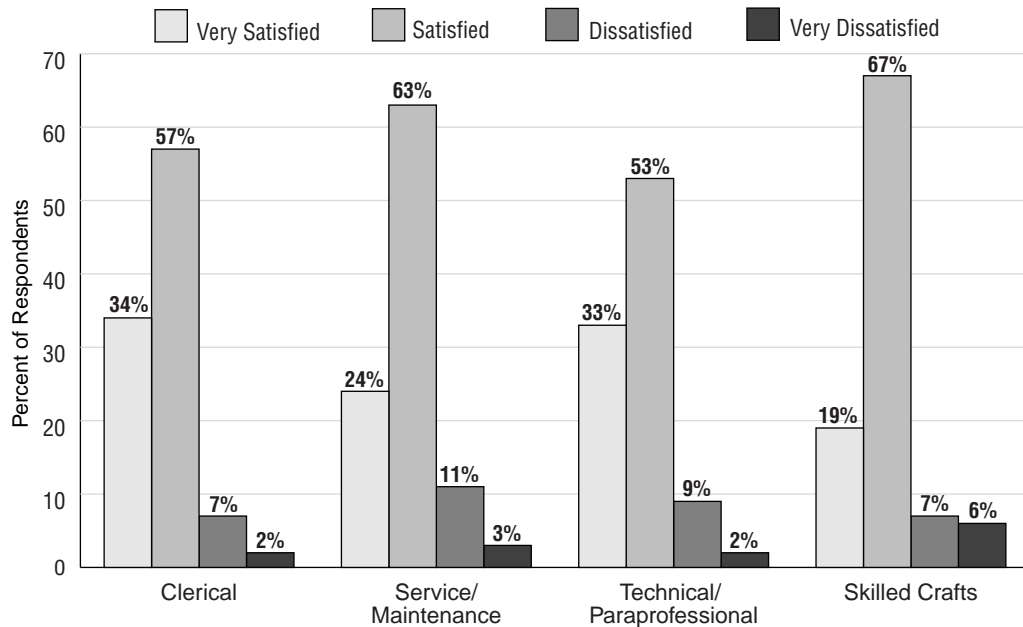
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Personal Fulfillment



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 18

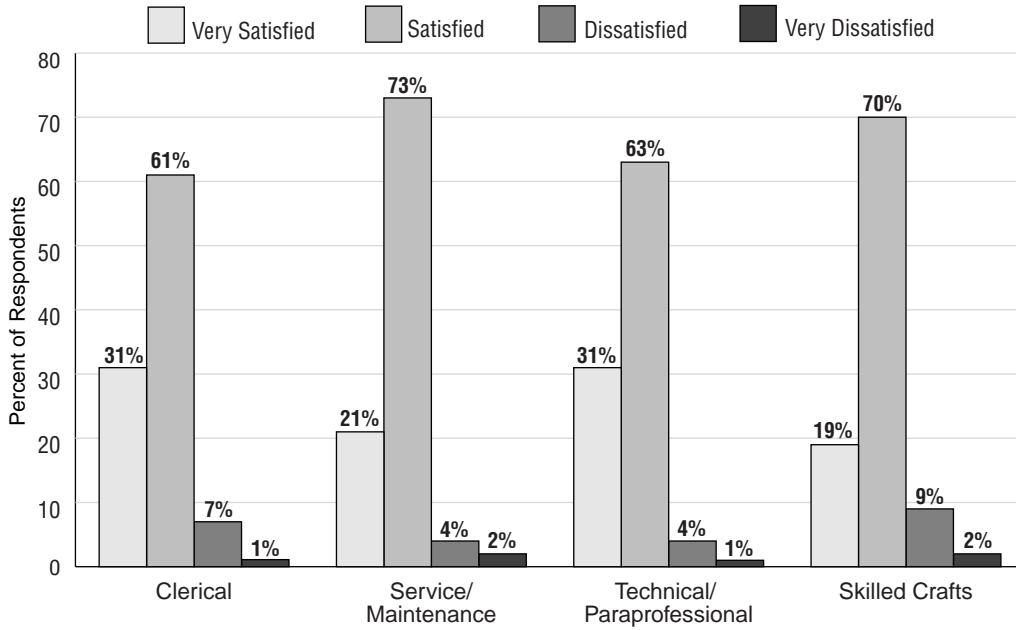
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Job Security



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 19

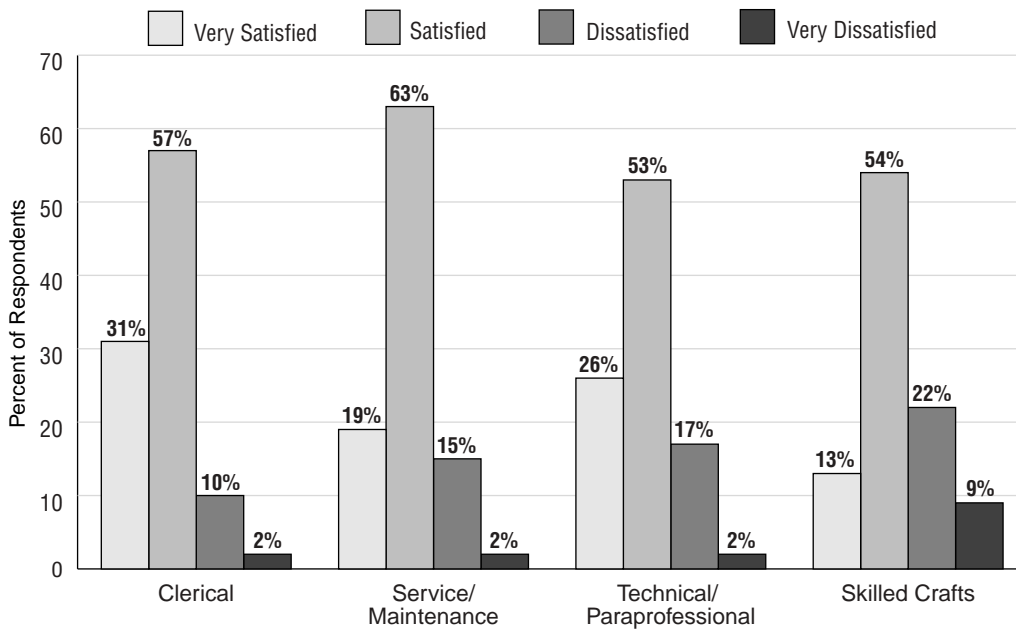
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Health and Safety Protections



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 20

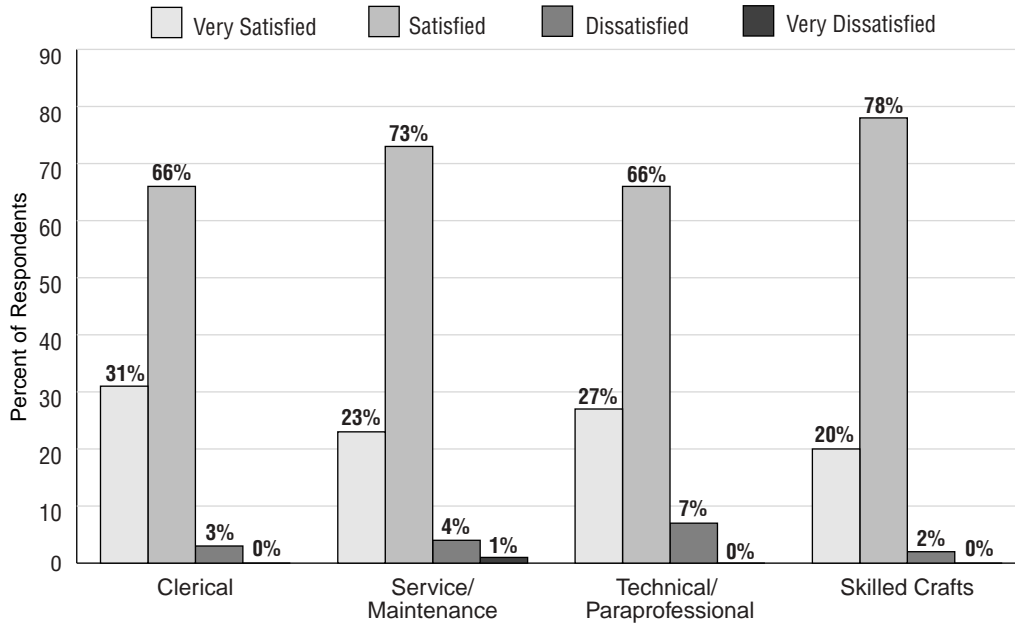
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Professional Development Opportunities



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 21

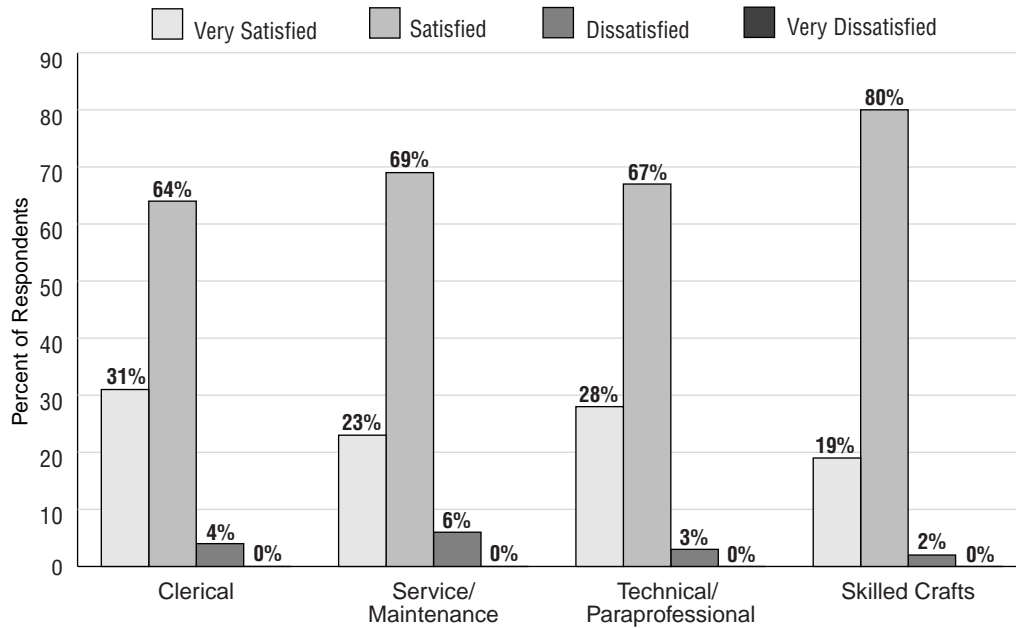
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Hours Worked per Week



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 22

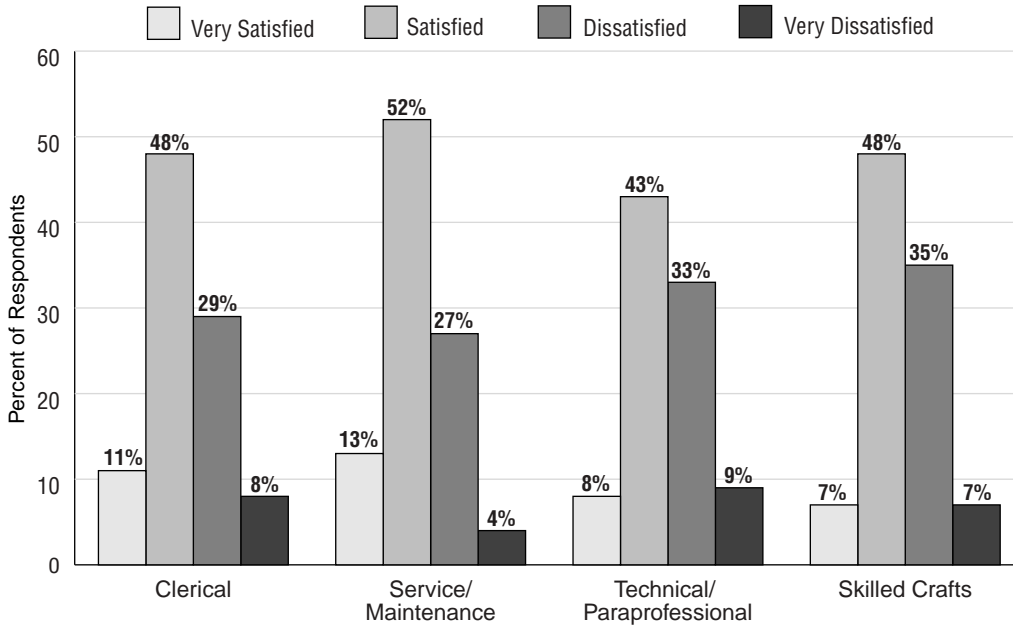
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Daily Work Schedule



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 23

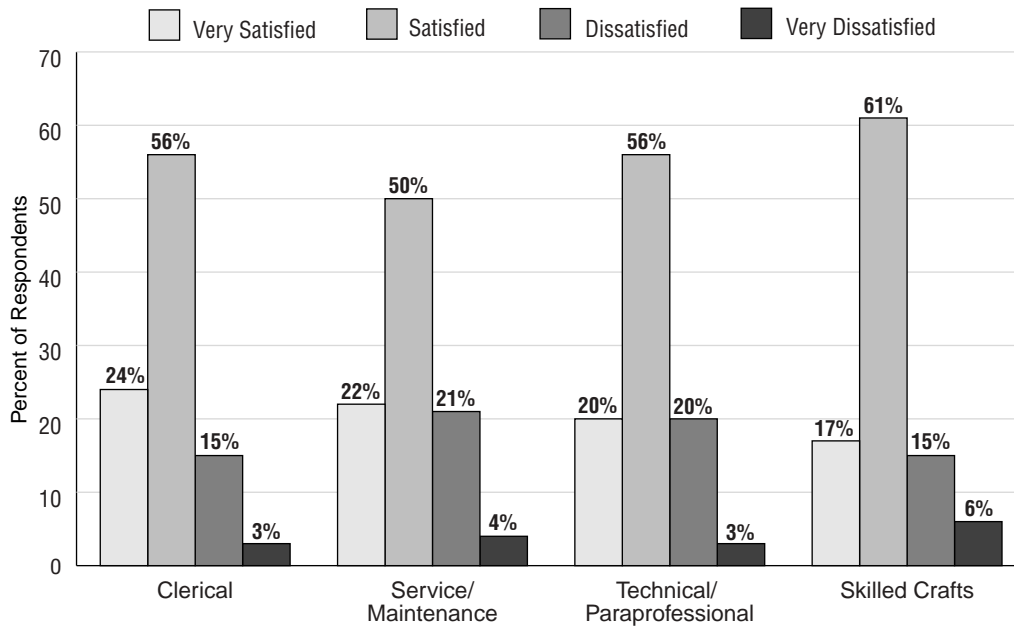
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Promotion Opportunities



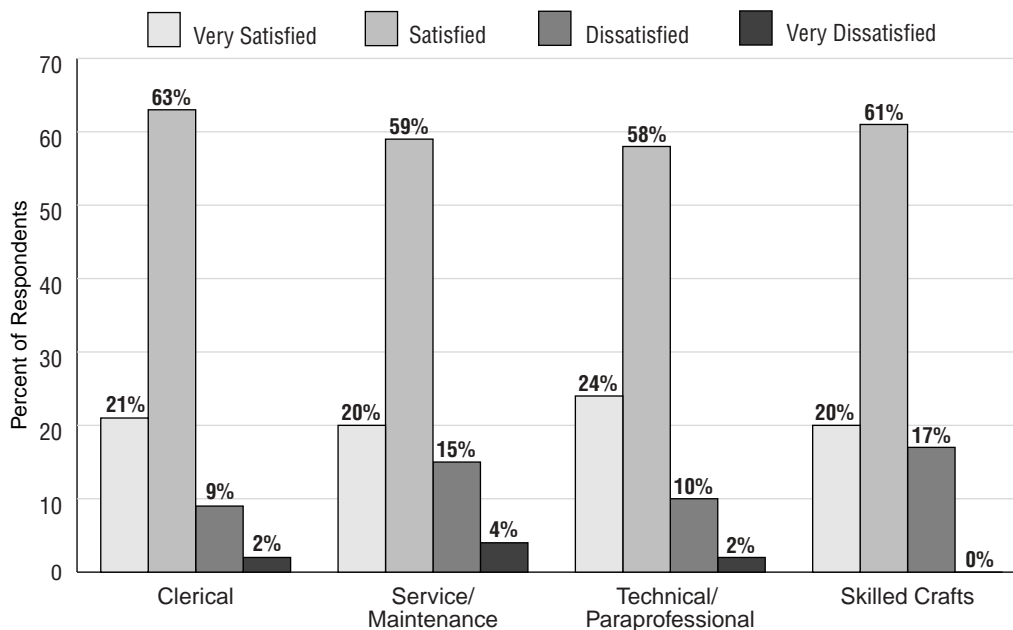
Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 24

Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Support from Institution



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 25**Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Support from Association**

Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

the highest level of satisfaction and the skilled craft respondents indicated the most dissatisfaction (Figure 26). A final question asked respondents to indicate their overall satisfaction with their ESP job (Figure 27). From 91 to 96 percent of the respondents indicated satisfaction with their jobs. In all cases, the percentage of "very satisfied" exceeded the percentage of "satisfied," and 50 percent and above of every group indicated they were "very satisfied." The skilled crafts group showed the most dissatisfaction (nine percent); dissatisfaction among members of the other three groups ranged from three to four percent.

WORKLIFE ISSUES: SUMMARY

Respondents were more satisfied with their worklives in 2002 than in 1997. The percent of satisfied workers increased on every comparable measure, and the overall satisfaction increased from 73 percent to 96 percent (Table 4). That only two issues—personal fulfillment and professional development—differed significantly by group in 2002 suggests

a convergence in responses. In 1997, eight of 14 worklife issues showed significant differences by occupational group. Most respondents held strikingly similar opinions about the quality of their worklives despite some interesting variations among the groups.

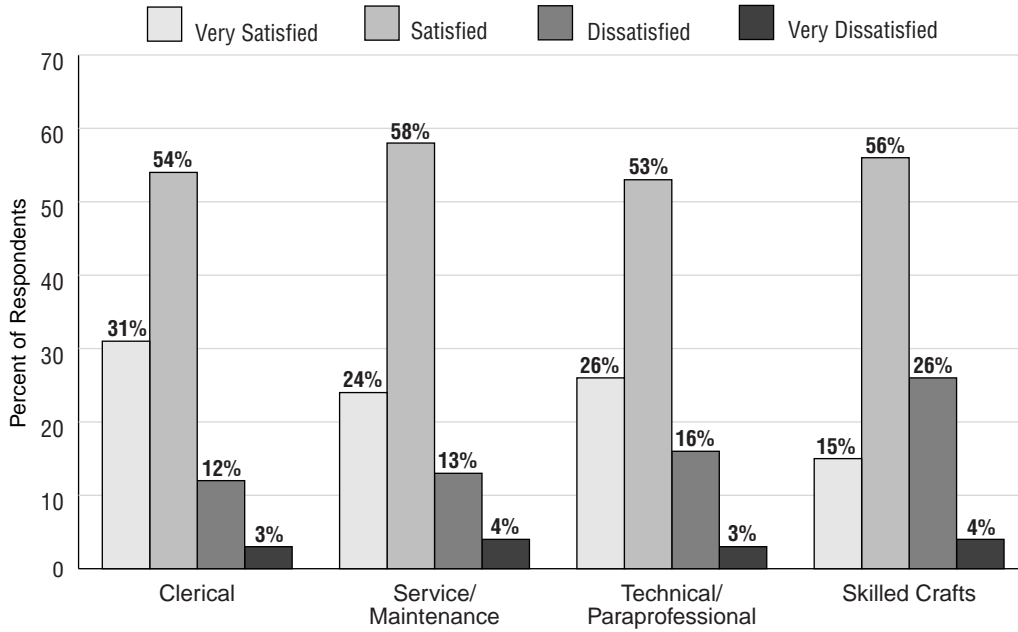
Wages earned and the chances for promotion were the sources of greatest dissatisfaction for all four occupational groups. Respondents were more satisfied in 2002 than in 1997, but considerable dissatisfaction remained (promotion opportunities = 39 percent; wages = 27 percent).

RESPONDING TO WORKLIFE ISSUES

Wages and promotion opportunities demand the most attention from administrators and collective bargaining units seeking to identify worklife issues of most concern to employees. The ability to provide wage increases in the public sector is directly related to the fiscal environment of the state. Most state and local governments will face continuing difficulty financing services with current

Figure 26

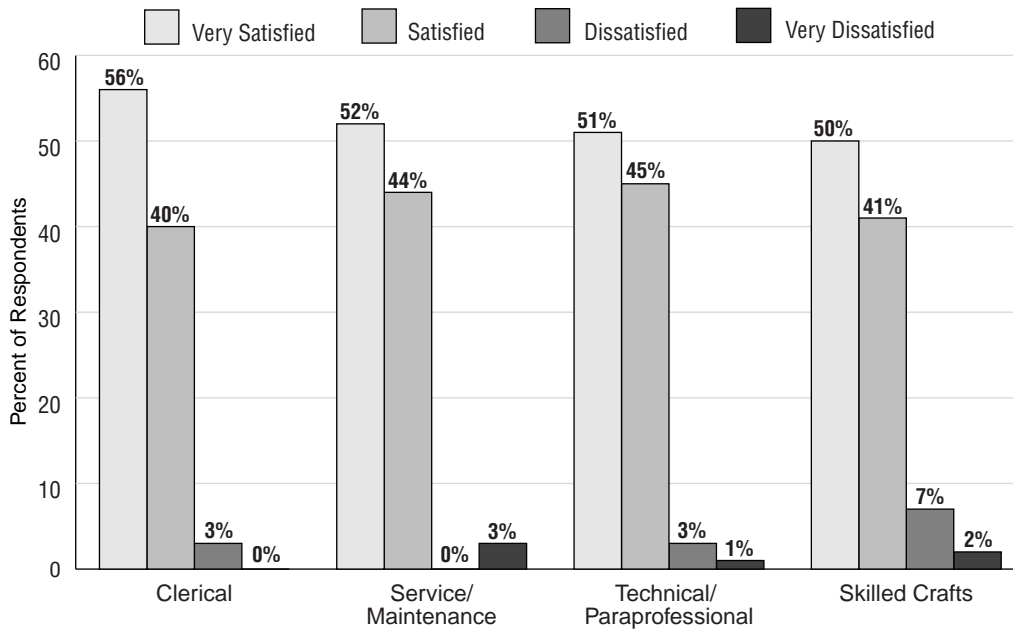
Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Respect Received from Institution



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

Figure 27

Percent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: Overall Satisfaction



Source: 2002 NEA Survey of Higher Education Support Professional Members.

revenue structures, and will lack resources for substantial increases in real spending.⁵ Independent institutions, though not dependent on state funding, also feel the impact of tough economic times on their sources of revenue. Absent new money for raises, employers must ensure equity in their treatment of ESPs. ESPs must perceive decisions to allocate scarce resources as transparent and fair to all employees. The absolute level of wages is often less a source of dissatisfaction than is the perception of unfairness in earnings.

Promotion opportunities become all the more important when wages are not increased.⁶ Many ESPs believe there are no means for advancement within their work units. Employers and collective bargaining groups must therefore make promotion opportunities a priority. Vacant positions must be filled from within to maximize employee satisfaction with internal mobility. Policies and contract language must give current employees opportunities for advancement before they consider external candidates. Unions and employers can identify or build career ladders within job groups that provide clear steps for advancement. For such efforts to succeed, employers must also provide the training and skill development that prepares ESPs for opportunities to advance.

Employees want to know that they matter to their institutions. In the 2002 survey, 15 to 30 percent of the respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the respect they receive from their institutions. Treating all employees with civility and respect is a no-cost item. Establishing a climate that values the work performed by all members of the campus community begins with administrative leadership. This ethos should permeate the training that all supervisors receive.⁷

CONCLUSION

The NEA 2002 study of ESP worklife issues helps us to understand how these workers perceive key issues across the nation's campuses. But, the realities on any given campus may differ. Improving the worklives of ESPs depends on data specific to that campus. Administrators and bargaining agents must look within their units to discover the worklife issues of greatest concern to

their own workers. Bargaining units or administrators can survey their ESPs to identify issues and concerns that matter on their campus.⁸ Not all worklife issues are equally important to all employees. Identifying the issues that are most important to each group is a first step in improving worklife satisfaction. The NEA survey provides a template of questions for campuses to use.

Asking ESPs about the sources of their satisfaction and dissatisfaction should accomplish two missions. First, it should demonstrate that employers and unions are concerned with the quality of ESP worklife. Second, it should commit employers and unions to respond to the answers. ESPs deserve attention and respect for their contributions to their colleges and to members of the campus community.

NOTES

¹ The data source is the series of Postsecondary Staff Surveys, 1993-1999, published by the National Center for Education Statistics, U. S. Department of Education. A staff survey was not published using the 1999 data; thus, the data used for this article were extracted from the *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*. This source did not include salary and race/ethnicity data by occupation. Users of the 1997 Postsecondary Staff Survey were cautioned in making comparisons with earlier releases due to differences in the data for less-than-two-year institutions; the data reported here do not include less-than-two-year institutions.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Johnsrud, 1999.

⁵ Boyd, 2002.

⁶ Johnsrud, 1996.

⁷ Johnsrud, Perreira, Miller, Inoshita, & Hart, 2002.

⁸ Johnsrud, 1996.

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