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# More women now work to support family

By JOAN FLEISCHER TAMEN

Twenty-six years and a record 20 Wimbledon Tennis titles later, Billie Jean King says she still wakes up sometimes thinking that she hasn't played that match yet.

"That match was not about tennis. It was about social change," King told an audience of diversity and human resource professionals meeting in Miami on Wednesday. "I felt I was going to die if I didn't win."

But in one of the greatest moments in sports history, King empowered women and educated men when she defeated Bobbie Riggs in that illustrious Battle of the Sexes tennis match in 1973.

Many credit that moment with not only helping female athletes but also boosting efforts to win recognition for women in the United States for achievements in other areas.

The tennis great, who now lives in Chicago and runs her own business, was a keynote speaker at Working Mother's Workplace Diversity Conference at the Hotel Intercontinental. King helped present results of the Virginia Slims Opinion Poll 2000, a national study on women's issues.

Some interesting findings from that study:

The proportion of women working to support their families more than doubled over the past 20 years, from 19

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percent in 1980 to 46 percent today. Since 1970, the number of women working full-time has more than doubled from 18 percent in 1970 to 43 percent today.

More working mothers now than in 1990, 43 percent vs. 29 percent, feel that demands of family life make it difficult for them to devote their complete attention to work. Yet pursuing the modern trinity of career, marriage and children continues to be perceived as the most satisfying life.

Hispanic women experience higher levels of stress and guilt over juggling family and work than non-Hispanic women. Fifty-six percent of Hispanic women report conflicting demands of job and family put them under a lot of stress, compared to 46 percent of non-Hispanic women.

More so now than in the past, working mothers are looking for more support from their employers. The proportion who feel their supervisor does not understand their responsibility to the family has increased to 40 percent, up 12 points since the 1990 survey.

Women's concerns in the workplace are similar to their male colleagues. Both are looking for the same things

from employers: benefits, rewarding tasks, feedback and incentives.

The Virginia Slims Opinion Poll was commissioned by food and tobacco giant Philip Morris Cos. and this year surveyed 2,177 women and 826 men. The comprehensive look at changing trends and attitudes among men and women is done every five years.

The first ever Virginia Slims Opinion Poll was done in 1970, at the height of women's movement, said Josephine R. Holz, vice president of research firm Roper Starch Worldwide, which conducted the survey.

"These are the factors that affect us all every day, work, family and relationships," she said.

In the 1970 survey, a majority of those surveyed thought an American woman would be in the White House by 2000. Respondents then also said most women should put pleasing their husbands at the top of the "to do" list.

A key finding of the 2000 survey was a convergence of gender roles. Men are coming to value many of the same things that women do, especially how to successfully combine family and work. Men, 82 percent, and women, 84 percent, favor increased sharing of child-rearing responsibilities to greater numbers than ever before, Holz said.

Joan Fleischer Tamen writes for Sun-Sentinel, South Florida.

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