Leaks in the Pipeline: Results from the AAPG PROWESS Workforce Retention Survey

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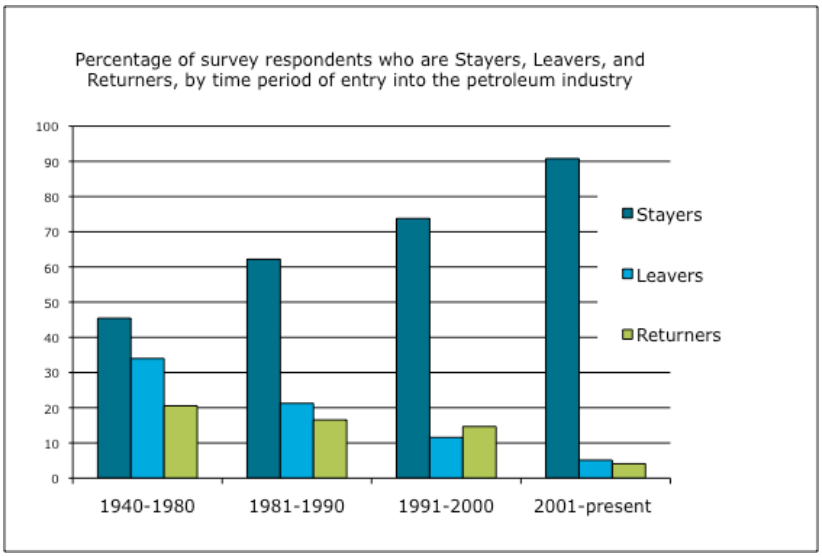
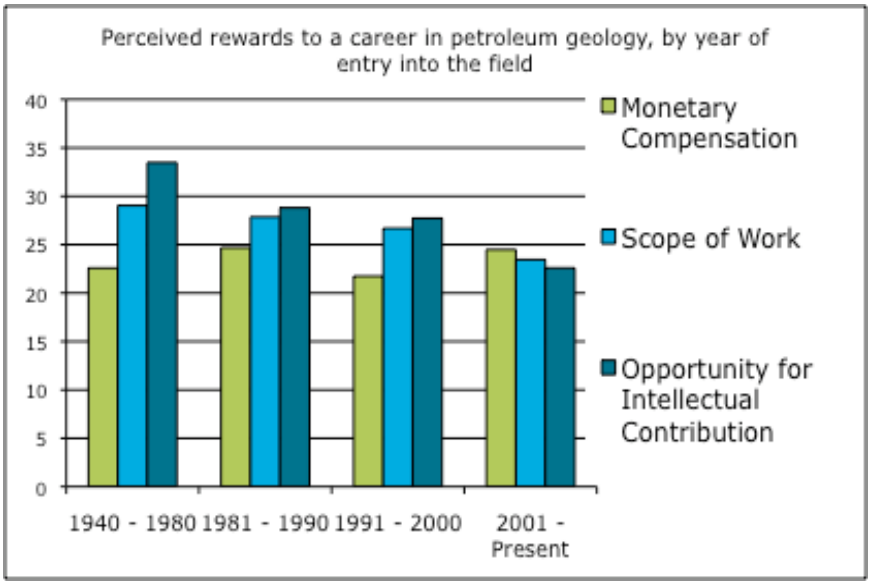
The AAPG PROWESS survey respondents included approximately 1,700 geoscientists currently or previously working as geoscientists in the petroleum industry. They can be divided into three main groups on the basis of employment status within the industry at the time of survey: Stayers (73%), Leavers (15%), and Returners (12%). The majority (63%) of survey respondents entered the field in the last two decades.



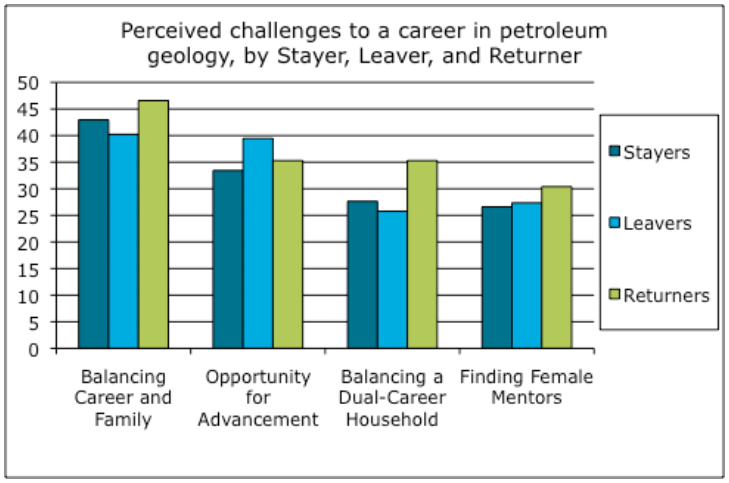
Frequently used words by respondents to describe rewards:

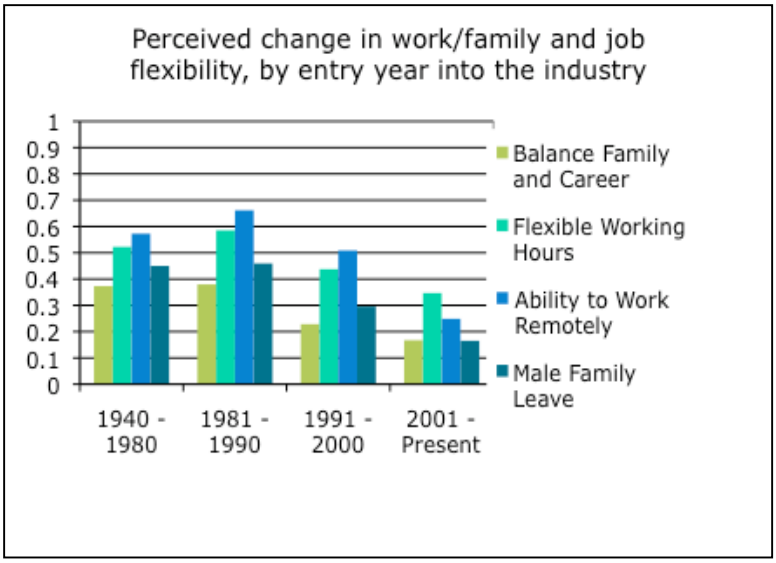
PERCEIVED REWARDS FROM WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY:

Overall, the scope of work, opportunities for making an intellectual contribution, and monetary compensation were seen as the most rewarding aspects of a geoscience career in the petroleum industry. Respondents who entered the industry more recently tended to identify monetary compensation, and those who entered during earlier periods found the opportunity for intellectual contribution to be more important.



PERCEIVED CHALLENGES TO WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY: The areas of greatest concern were balancing career and family, (lack of) opportunity for advancement, balancing a dual-career household, and finding female mentors; respondents were most likely to identify balancing career and family. Over 70% of respondents identified some type of family concern as a serious challenge to working in industry, and over one-third of respondents said that both career/family balance and dual careers were a challenge.





CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: Flexible working hours and the ability to work remotely have improved the most, whereas family/career balance and male family leave—although improved—have been slower to change. When leavers were asked what would entice them to return to industry, job flexibility was at the top of the list. Similarly, 75% of all survey respondents said that improvements in flexible work options would help retain women geoscientists in the petroleum industry.

On issues related to industry recognition or valuation of accomplishments, the majority of respondents viewed monetary compensation and advancement opportunities as having improved the most, whereas career advancement opportunities commensurate with years of service and industry recognition of females were perceived to have undergone less change.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Collect representative data for geoscientists in the petroleum industry. The data should be longitudinal, with data collected about geoscientist's careers over time, to study why people stay or leave industry. Data should be collected from both men and women to fully understand the conditions, the climate, and the status of women and men in the petroleum industry. A more in-depth analysis of potential industry-specific policy solutions would benefit from a mixed-methods approach, in which representative quantitatively derived measures could be triangulated with rich, qualitative data to arrive at profitable policies to improve the climate for women and to work toward the primary goals of the industry.