



Disconnecting from Work

The Varied Experiences of Canadian Workers



Environics Institute for Survey Research conducts relevant and original public opinion and social research related to issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it has been changing, and where it may be heading.

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The Diversity Institute conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Our action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by underrepresented groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results. The Diversity Institute is a research lead for the Future Skills Centre.

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The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.



Survey on Employment & Skills

About the Survey on Employment and Skills

This report is based on data from the third wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills. The survey is conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the Future Skills Centre and the Diversity Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University. In early 2020, the Survey on Employment and Skills began as a project designed to explore Canadians' experiences with the changing nature of work, including technology-driven disruptions, increasing insecurity and shifting skills requirements. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was expanded to investigate the impact of the crisis on Canadians' employment, earnings and work environments. A second wave of the survey was conducted in December 2020, and a third wave in June 2021.

The third wave of the study consists of a survey of 5,913 Canadians age 18 and over, conducted between June 1 and June 28, 2021, in all provinces and territories. It was conducted both online (in the provinces) and by telephone (in the territories). This wave of the survey includes oversamples of Canadians living in smaller provinces and territories, those under the age of 34, racialized Canadians and Canadians who identify as Indigenous, in order to provide a better portrait of the range of experiences across the country. The survey results in this report are weighted by age, gender, region, education, racial identity and Indigenous identity, to ensure that they are representative of the Canadian population as whole.

Survey reports can be found online at:

> environicsinstitute.org/projects

> fsc-ccf.ca/research/2020-survey-on-employment-and-skills

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Executive Summary

Computers, email, texting and Zooming provide workers with greater flexibility as to where and when they work, but the use of this technology can also make it harder to keep professional and personal lives separate. The pandemic has blurred the lines between work and family still further, as millions of employees shifted to working from home. The Survey on Employment and Skills confirms that many Canadians find it a challenge to keep their work, family and personal lives in balance. But it also shows that experiences vary widely, with some workers, such as those who are self-employed, more likely to appreciate the flexibility of modern work arrangements.

Overall, only one in three employed Canadians say they can often find the right balance between their job, the work they do to care for their households, and the things they like to do for themselves. Slightly more can sometimes find the right balance, while somewhat fewer say they only seldom or never find it. Older workers and self-employed workers are among those most likely to often find the right balance; professionals (such as teachers, nurses and therapists) are among the least likely to often do so. The proportion that says they can often find the right balance also is lower among employed women in their 30s (22%).

The shift to working from home during the pandemic does not appear to have adversely affected the ability to balance responsibilities at work and at home. In fact, those who have been working at home

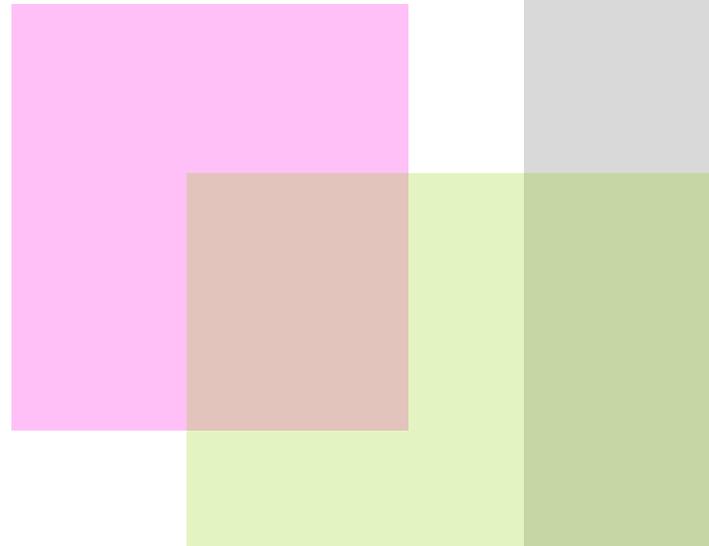
are more likely to say they can often find the right balance, compared to those who have continued to work at their regular workplaces. However, while working from home has not eroded work–life balance, the same cannot be said about having children who are attending school online rather than in person. Among working Canadians between the ages of 25 and 54 with at least one child in their household, those whose children were attending school in person are much more likely than those whose children were attending school online in the months before the survey to say they can often find work–life balance. Employed women in this age group whose children are attending school in person are twice as likely than their counterparts whose children are attending online to say they can often find work–life balance. In short, in the case of parents, the benefits of working from home, in terms of balancing work and family responsibilities, are only realized when their children are able to attend school in person.

About one in three employed Canadians always or often continue to do work after their regular work day or shift is over. Similar proportions say this happens some of the time, and roughly the same proportion say it happens seldomly or never. The proportion who always or often work after the regular work day is over is higher among younger workers, especially among younger men.



The most common reason why some workers do work after their regular work day or shift is over is that they enjoy their work and don't mind putting in extra time. While enjoyment of their jobs is the most common reason given by workers in almost every type of occupation, there is one important exception: professionals. The most likely

reason why professionals continue to do work is because they don't have enough time to get everything done during their regular work day. The survey's findings related to professionals hint at the prospect of burnout among many of those workers on whom we rely to deliver key services to the public.



Introduction

Are Canadians having trouble finding the right balance between work and family? Are they finding it difficult to disconnect from work when their regular shift or work day is done?

For many, particularly those who have spent much of the past two years working from home, the pandemic has blurred the boundaries between work and family. With child care centres closed and learning moved online, countless employees have become experts at taking Zoom calls with infants on their laps, or jumping from their own spreadsheets to help with their children's multiplication tables or art projects. Parents who have had to spend at least part of their regular work days keeping their children from putting the family pet in the clothes dryer have had to catch up on work late in the evening or at the crack of dawn.

Yet boundaries were blurred long before anyone had heard of COVID-19, in many cases due to advances in technology. Computers and smartphones allow workers to bring the office home with them; they are constantly connected to work by phone, email and instant message. This is both convenient and invasive. Even if bosses don't insist that their teams check their email after hours, the ping of a new message landing in the inbox can upend the mood of anyone trying to relax at home after a busy day at work.

With these scenarios in mind, the Ontario government recently proposed legislation to make it easier for employees to disconnect from work. According to the provincial government, the proposed legislation would require employers with 25 employees or more "to develop disconnecting from work policies" that would "make it easier for people to relax and spend quality time with their loved ones."

Work–Life Balance

One in three employed Canadians say they can often find the right balance between their job, the work they do to care for their household, and the things they like to do for themselves. The likelihood of often finding the right balance varies by age, as well as by type of employment and occupation, but does not appear to be related to having children.

The government of Ontario’s proposed “right to disconnect” legislation comes at a time when, according to the Survey on Employment and Skills, only one in three employed Canadians say their lives are typically in balance.

Specifically, only 34 percent of those who are employed say they can often find the right balance between their job, the work they do around their house or to care for their household, and the things they like to do for themselves or for recreation.

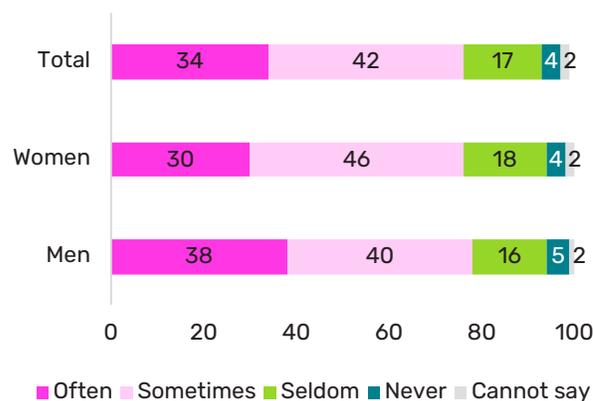
A greater proportion (42%), however, say they can sometimes find the right balance. This leaves one in five of those who are employed who say they only seldom (17%) find the right balance between work, home and recreation, or never (4%) find it.¹

¹ Results from surveys conducted earlier in the pandemic (in August 2020 and December 2020) are broadly similar.

FIGURE 1

**How often can you find the right balance?
By gender**

Subsample: those who are employed



Q.10c. Generally speaking, how often do you feel you can find the right balance between the work you do for your job or at school, the work you do around your house or to care for your household, and the things you like to do for recreation?

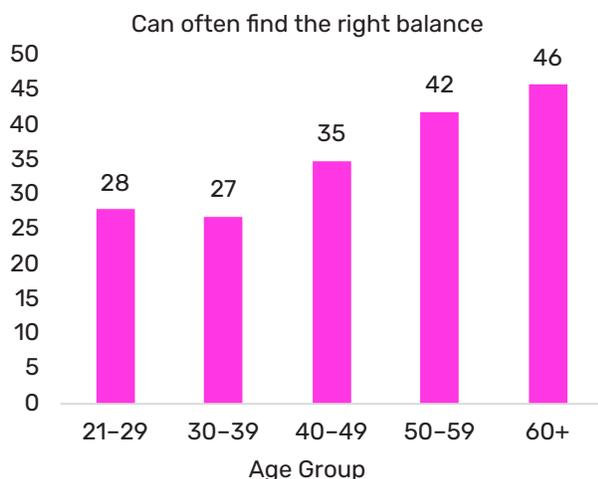
The likelihood of often finding the right balance varies somewhat by type of employment and occupation.

- > The proportion that can often find the right balance between their job, their family and recreation is somewhat higher among those who are self-employed (41%) or work part-time (38%), compared to those who work full-time (32%).
- > The proportion is also higher among those who work in food services (42%), in a skilled trade (41%) or in an office or clerical position (40%), and lowest among professionals (28%).

The likelihood of often finding the right balance also increases with age and differs somewhat between women and men.

- > The proportion is lowest (27%) among employed Canadians between the ages of 21 and 39, but rises to 35 percent among those in their 40s, 42 percent among those in their 50s, and 46 percent among those age 60 and older.
- > Women (30%) are less likely than men (38%) to say they can often find the right balance. The proportion that says they can often find the right balance is especially low among employed women in their 30s (22%).

FIGURE 2
Can often find the right balance, by age
 Subsample: those who are employed



Q.10c. Generally speaking, how often do you feel you can find the right balance between the work you do for your job or at school, the work you do around your house or to care for your household, and the things you like to do for recreation?

Notably, however, the ability (or inability) to balance work, family and personal activities does not appear to be related to having children. Among working Canadians between the ages of 25 and 54, those with at least one child in their household under the age of 19 are just as likely as their counterparts with no children in their households to say they can often find some balance.^{2,3} This is the case even when looking specifically at employed women in their 30s, who are less likely than others to say they can often find the right balance. Employed women in their 30s who do not have children at home (20%) are actually slightly less likely to say they can often find the right balance than their counterparts with children under the age of 18 at home (24%).

- 2 The survey asks about the presence of children in the home, but does not establish the relationship between the child and the survey respondent. Restricting the analysis to those age 25 to 54 makes it more likely that the respondent is the child's parent, rather than a sibling or a grandparent. It also minimizes the effect of early and late career phases on the results reported.
- 3 This finding was verified using a more sophisticated analysis of the factors relating to work-life balance that assessed the significance of several factors while controlling for others. This analysis confirmed that the presence of children in the household is not a significant factor. This finding holds both for all those employed and for employed women and employed men separately. The author would like to thank Justin Savoie for conducting this analysis.

The Impact of Working and Learning Online

Workers who have switched to working from home due to the pandemic are more likely than those who have continued to work at their regular workplaces to say they can often find the right balance between work, family and personal activities. Among parents, those who have been working from home during the pandemic are more likely to balance their work, family and personal lives, provided their children are able to attend school in person.

The shift to working from home during the pandemic does not appear to have adversely affected the ability to balance responsibilities at work and at home. In fact, those who had been working from home due to the pandemic in the months prior to the survey (43%) are more likely to say they can often find the right balance, compared to both those who had been working from home some days but not every day (31%), and those who had continued to work at their regular workplaces (32%). Those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic (38%) are also a little more likely than average to say they can often find work–life balance.

This pattern generally holds both for parents and non-parents: in both cases, those who have been working at home due to the pandemic are more likely than those who have continued to work at their regular workplaces to say they can often

find the right balance between work, family and personal activities (and this is the case for both mothers and fathers).

However, while working from home is associated with greater work–life balance, having children who are attending school online rather than in person is not. Among working Canadians between the ages of 25 and 54 with at least one child in their household, those whose children were attending school in person (42%) are much more likely than those whose children were attending school online in the months before the survey (28%) to say they can often find work–life balance.⁴ Employed women in this age group whose children were attending school in person (39%) are twice as likely as their counterparts whose children were attending online (19%) to say they can often find work–life balance.

Strikingly, however, this overall difference—between those whose children are attending school in person and those whose children are learning online—in fact only applies to those who are themselves working from home during the pandemic (see Table 1).

4 Those attending school online include both those who were always attending online and those who experienced a mix of online and in-person learning. Children include all those under the age of 25. On the restriction of the analysis to those age 25 to 54, see note 2. However, these results also hold for respondents of all ages.



For those who have continued to work at their regular place of employment outside the home, the school situation of their children makes no real difference to the likelihood that they can often find work–life balance.⁵

This finding can be better summarized by identifying the combination of parents’ and children’s situations that can be characterized as an “outlier.” It might be expected that working from home while one’s child is learning online is the situation that stands out most, in terms of the ability (or inability) to often find work–life balance. But, in fact, parents in this situation are just as likely (30%) to always be able to find this balance as are parents who are working in their regular workplace and have experienced no change to their work situation or their child’s school situation (31%), or who are working in their regular workplace and have no children (31%).

5 Note that someone who works outside the home while their children are learning online may have a spouse or other family member who is able to supervise the children.

Instead, the outlier situation is parents who have switched to working from home but whose children have continued to attend school in person: 55 percent of those in this situation can often find a balance between their work, family and personal activities.⁶ Thus, while at first blush, the survey findings appear to suggest that having children learning online is related to the ability of parents to find work–life balance, it is more accurate to say that being able to work from home is related to the ability of parents to find work–life balance, provided their children are able to attend school in person. This may help to explain why the experiences of working from home during the pandemic have generally been more positive than negative, and raises questions about how parent-friendly regular workplaces are (or were), pandemic aside.⁷

6 There are 135 survey respondents in this situation.

7 See: Environics Institute for Survey Research, Future Skills Centre, and Diversity Institute, *Work at Home or Live at Work: The Complexities of New Working Arrangements* (April 2021); <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/work-at-home-or-live-at-work-the-complexities-of-new-working-arrangements>.

TABLE 1**Work-life balance, by parents' work situation and children's school situation**

This table shows the percentage of respondents who say they can often find the right balance between their job, the work they do around their house or to care for their household, and the things they like to do for themselves or for recreation.

Subsample: employed Canadians, age 25 to 54

Work situation	Children's school situation (for those with children in their households)			Those with no children in their households	Total – all employed Canadians, age 25 to 54, with and without children in their households
	Attending school in person	Attending school online (always or some of the time)	Total – all school situations*		
Working at regular workplace outside the home during the pandemic	31	28	30	31	30
Switched to working from home at least some days during the pandemic	55	30	35	30	33
Total – all work situations**	42	28	32	30	31

* This total includes those whose children were attending school in person or online, were homeschooled or were not attending school.

** This total includes those who were working outside the home, who had switched to working from home (whether every day or some days), and who were already working from home prior to the pandemic and continued to do so.

Working After Regular Hours

About one in three employed Canadians always or often continue to do work after their regular work day or shift is over. This proportion is higher among younger workers, especially among younger men.

To explore the issue of work-life balance further, the Survey on Employment and Skills also asked employed Canadians how often they find themselves doing work for their job after their regular work day or shift is over (for instance, by answering emails, making phone calls or finishing up other tasks).

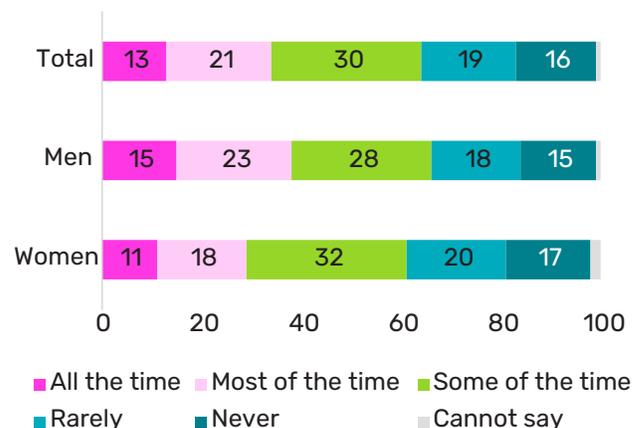
About one in three employed Canadians say they find themselves working after their regular work day or shift is over all the time (13%) or most of the time (21%). Almost as many say this happens some of the time (30%). For another one in three, this happens rarely (19%) or never (16%).

Since the likelihood of often finding a balance between work, family and recreation increases with age, it is not surprising that the likelihood of working after the regular work day or shift is over decreases with age. The proportion that does extra work all the time or some of the time is higher (37%) for employed Canadians between the ages of 21 and 39, and falls to 31 percent among those in their 40s and 50s and 27 percent among those age 60 and older.

FIGURE 3

Working after the regular work day, by gender

Subsample: those who are employed

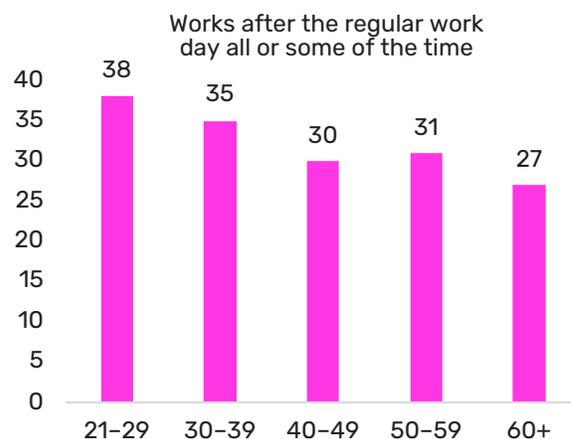


Q.20c. Generally speaking, how often do you find yourself doing work for your job after your regular work day or shift is over - for instance, by answering emails, making phone calls or finishing up other tasks?

FIGURE 4

Working after the regular work day, by age

Subsample: those who are employed



Q.20c. Generally speaking, how often do you find yourself doing work for your job after your regular work day or shift is over - for instance, by answering emails, making phone calls or finishing up other tasks?

But while women are somewhat less likely than men to say they can often find the right balance between work, family and recreation, they are nonetheless also less likely than men to say they always or often work after the regular work day or shift is over. Thirty-eight percent of men, compared to 29 percent of women, say they find themselves doing work for their job after their regular work day or shift is over either all or some of the time.

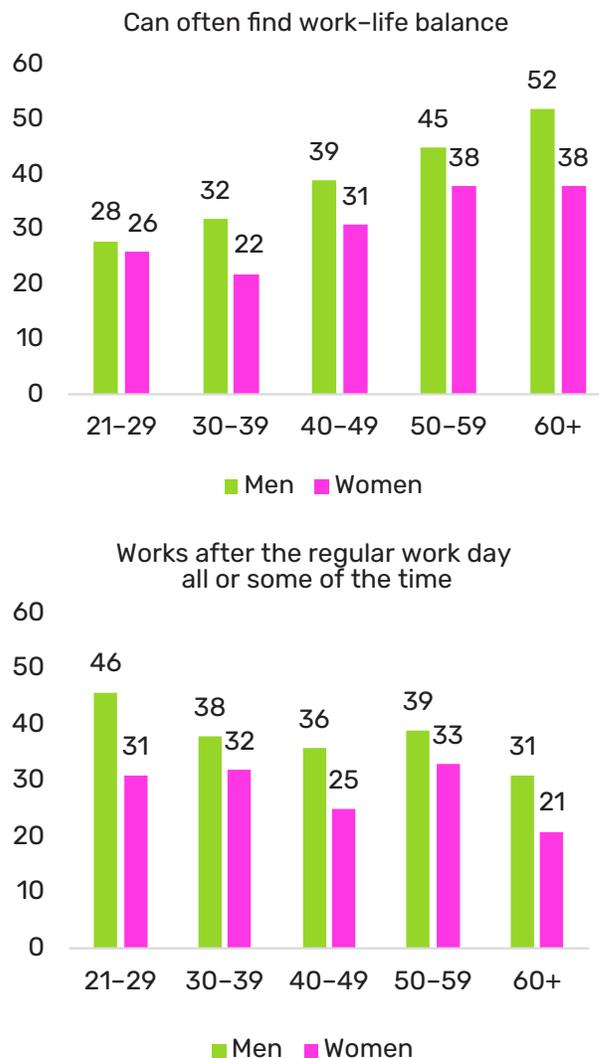
The responses to both of these questions vary more by age in the case of men than in the case of women. While, in general, men are more likely than women to say they can often find the right balance between work, family and recreation, this is especially true for older men. And while, in general, men are also more likely than women to say they always or sometimes work after the regular work day or shift is over, this is especially true for younger men.

The proportion that says they always or often work after their regular work day or shift is over does not vary much according to whether or not there are children in the household. Among employed Canadians between the ages of 25 and 54, the proportion working after regular hours is only slightly higher among those with children at home under the age of five (37%) and among those with children at home between the ages of 5 and 18 (34%), compared to those without children at home (32%).

FIGURE 5

Work-life balance and working after regular hours, by age and gender

Subsample: those who are employed



Q.20c. Generally speaking, how often do you find yourself doing work for your job after your regular work day or shift is over - for instance, by answering emails, making phone calls or finishing up other tasks?

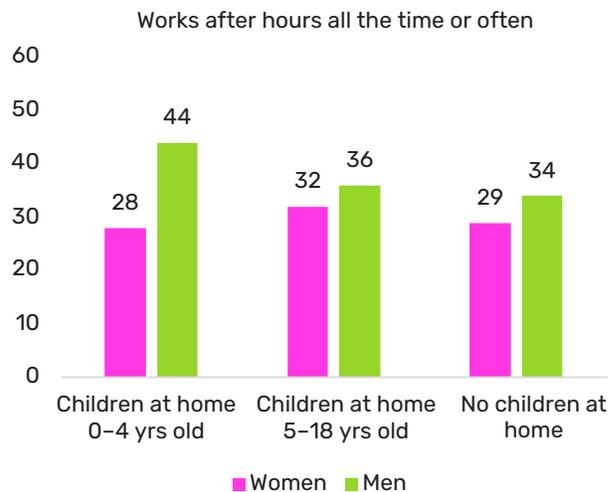
The difference between those with and without young children at home is, however, somewhat greater in the case of men than in the case of women. As a result, men with at least one child under the age of five at home are 16 points more likely than women in that situation to work after the regular work day is over, compared to a much smaller five-point gender gap in the case of men and women with no children at home. Assuming men and women are equally likely to answer accurately, this result might have two explanations. The first is that it is more acceptable for mothers than fathers to limit their availability to employers after regular hours because of their family responsibilities (in other words, men are penalized in the sense that their family responsibilities are taken less seriously). The second is that women are expected to forgo work opportunities more than men because of their family responsibilities (in other words, women are penalized in the sense that their work responsibilities are taken less seriously). These two explanations are not mutually exclusive.

As is the case for the likelihood of finding work-life balance, the likelihood of working after the regular work day or shift is over varies by type of employment and occupation. The proportion that finds themselves working after the regular work day is over all or most of the time is higher among those who are self-employed (48%), compared to those who work full-time (33%) or part-time (29%). It is also higher among executives, managers and business owners (49%) and professionals (36%), and lower among those working in sales or services (32%), in office or clerical jobs (31%), and in jobs related to trades, transportation or manual labour (30%).

FIGURE 6

Working after regulars hours, by gender and number of children in the household

Subsample: those who are employed, age 25 to 54



Q.20c. Generally speaking, how often do you find yourself doing work for your job after your regular work day or shift is over - for instance, by answering emails, making phone calls or finishing up other tasks?

The finding related to self-employment is notable: while those who are self-employed are the most likely to say they find themselves doing work after the regular work day, they are also the most likely to say they can often find the right balance between their job, their family and recreation. This suggests that for many self-employed workers, part of the advantage of self-employment is the flexibility it offers in terms of combining work with other activities. Indeed, when these workers are asked why they are self-employed, flexibility is the second-most-common response: 42 percent say that they are self-employed because this provides them with the flexibility they need to balance their work with their family responsibilities.⁸

8 The most common reason for people to be self-employed is the desire to be one's own boss (50%).



The situation of full-time workers is different: they are more likely than average to find themselves doing work after the regular work day, but—not surprisingly—less likely than average to say they can often find the right balance between their job, their family and recreation.

Not surprisingly, overall, those who minimize work after hours are more successful in balancing their work, family and personal activities: 42 percent of those who rarely or never find themselves doing work after their regular work day or shift is over say they can often find the right balance, compared to 29 percent of those who work after hours some of the time, and 32 percent of those who do so all or most of the time.

Despite this, working after regular hours does not appear to be associated with lower job satisfaction. In fact, those who work after the regular work day is over all or most of the time are more likely to be very satisfied with their jobs (38%), compared to those who work after the regular work day is over some of the time (28%) or rarely or never (34%). It is also not associated with poorer mental health. Again, the opposite appears to be the case: those who work after the regular work day is over all or most of the time are more likely to report that their mental health is excellent or very good (45%), compared to those who work after the regular work day is over some of the time (36%) or rarely or never (39%). The following discussion of the reasons why some workers do work after their regular work day is over sheds some light on why this might be the case.

Reasons for Working After Regular Hours

The most common reason why some workers do work after their regular work day or shift is over is that they enjoy their work and don't mind putting in extra time. Enjoyment of their jobs is the most common reason given by workers in every type of occupation—with one important exception: professionals. The most likely reason why professionals (such as teachers, nurses and therapists) work extra hours is because they don't have enough time to get everything done during in their regular work day.

To understand more about this issue, those who work after their regular work day or shift is over (at least some of the time, if not more frequently) were asked to say which of a number of reasons, if any, best explains why.⁹

Of the reasons offered, the one most likely to be chosen (34%) is: “because I enjoy my work and don't mind putting in some extra time.” This reason is even more likely to be chosen by those who say they work after their regular work day is over all of the time (44%), rather than most of the time (32%) or some of the time (32%).

The two next-most-common reasons, however, are less positive. One in five (22%) say it is because “I don't have enough time to get everything done during the regular work day.” Somewhat fewer say it is because

“my employer expects me to be available even when my work day or shift is over” (14%). Taken together, just over one in three (36%) select one of these two reasons—reasons that imply being over-worked (having too much to do or having a boss who is too demanding).

Other reasons include:

- > “I have difficulty ‘switching off’ after my regular work day or shift is over” (11%).
- > “My employer is flexible and allows me to arrange my work day so I can better balance my responsibilities at work and at home” (8%).
- > “Because the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have made it harder to keep my work and home life separate” (5%).

For workers in every type of occupation, enjoyment of their jobs is the most common reason why they work after their regular work day is over—with one important exception: professionals. For professionals (such as teachers, nurses and therapists), the most likely reason why they work extra hours is because they don't have enough time to get everything done during their regular work day. The proportion of professionals who give this reason (34%) is much higher than that of those in all other occupations combined (19%). While 27 percent of professional say they work extra hours because they enjoy their work, this is lower than for workers in any other type of occupation (the average for all other occupations combined is 36%).

⁹ Those asked this question could only select one reason.

Other differences in the reasons given by those in different occupations are not as striking. Those who work as manual labourers (22%) are the most likely to say they work extra hours because their employer expects them to be available even when their regular work day or shift is over. Those who work in the skilled trades (16%), food services (15%), and sales or retail jobs (14%) are the most likely to say they keep working because they have difficulty “switching off” after their regular work day or shift is over.

Self-employed workers are the most likely to say they work after regular hours because they enjoy their work (40%), and the least likely to say it is because they don’t have enough time to get everything done (16%).

Men (35%) and women (34%) who work after the regular work day is over are equally likely to say it is because they enjoy their work and don’t mind putting in some extra time. Women (25%) are somewhat more likely than men (19%) to say it is because they don’t have enough time to get everything done during the regular work day.

TABLE 2

Working after regular hours: reasons

Subsample: those who work after regular hours at least some of the time

Reason	Total	Men	Women
I enjoy my work and don't mind putting in some extra time	34	35	34
I don't have enough time to get everything done during the regular work day	22	19	25
My employer expects me to be available even when my work day or shift is over	14	16	12
I have difficulty “switching off” after my regular work day or shift is over	11	11	12
My employer is flexible and allows me to arrange my work day so I can better balance my responsibilities at work and at home	8	10	6
Because the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have made it harder to keep my work and home life separate	5	3	7

Q.20d. Which of the following reasons, if any, best explain why you end up doing work for your job after your regular work day or shift is over?

Comparatively few men (10%) and women (6%) say they continue to work after their regular work day because they are allowed the flexibility to arrange their work day to balance their responsibilities at work and at home. Even among those between the ages of 25 and 54 with children in their households under the age of 19, this reason is far from common (9%), though it is slightly more common among men in this situation (12%) than among women (5%).

The reasons why some workers continue to do work after their regular work day is over also vary by age. Both younger workers (age 18 to 24) (41%) and older workers (age 55 and older) (45%) are more likely than those age 25 to 54 (30%) to say it is because they enjoy their work and don't mind putting in some extra time. Conversely, those age 25 to 54 (25%) are more likely than younger workers (17%) and older workers (16%) to say it is because they don't have enough time to get everything done during the regular work day.

Finally, and not surprisingly, there is a connection between the reasons why some workers do work after their regular work day is over and their ability to find a balance between their work, family and personal activities. Among those who say they are working after regular hours either because they don't have enough time to get everything done during the regular work day, or because their employer expects them to be available even when their work day or shift is over, only 16 percent say they always find a balance. The proportion that can always find a balance is twice as high (34%) among those who do work after their regular work day is over because their employer is flexible and allows them to arrange their work day to balance their responsibilities at work and at home. And it is three times as high (51%) among those who continue to work because they enjoy it and don't mind putting in some extra time.

Conclusion

Do employed Canadians have trouble disconnecting from work or balancing their work, family and personal lives?

The results from the Survey on Employment and Skills are open to interpretation. On the one hand, only one in three employed Canadians say they can often find the right balance between their job, their household responsibilities and the things they like to do for themselves; and only about the same proportion say they rarely or never find themselves working after their regular work day or shift is over. On the other hand, fewer (about one in five) say they can seldom or never find the right balance between work, home and recreation, and only about one in three say they do work after their regular work day or shift is over all or most of the time. Many workers, unsurprisingly, are in between these extremes, sometimes able to find the balance, and working after regular hours some of the time.

What the survey does clarify, however, is that these experiences vary among different types of workers. Self-employed workers, for instance, are the most likely to continue working after their regular work day is over, but they are also the most likely to say they do so because they enjoy their work and the most likely to say they can find the right balance between the different facets of their lives. Many self-employed workers choose self-employment precisely because of the flexibility it provides, and, for this reason, don't see the blurring of boundaries between work and home as a problem.

The situation of professionals is quite different. Professionals (including teachers, nurses and therapists) are more likely than average to work extra hours, and when they do, they are the most likely to say it is because they don't have enough time to get everything done during in their regular work day and the least likely to say it is because they enjoy their work. As a result, they are the least likely to say their lives are in balance. These results hint at the prospect of burnout among many of those workers on whom we rely to deliver key services to the public.

Men, and young men in particular, are more likely than women to continue working after their work day or shift is over. But these men are also more likely to say they can balance their work, family and personal lives. Furthermore, men—and again, young men in particular—are much more likely to report that their mental health is excellent or very good. The likelihood of having this positive assessment of their mental health is especially high for young men who are employed.¹⁰ Some young men may be having trouble disconnecting from work, but

10 See: Environics Institute for Survey Research, Future Skills Centre, and Diversity Institute, *Mind and Body: Impact of the Pandemic on Physical and Mental Health* (June 2021); <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/mind-and-body-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-physical-and-mental-health>; and also: Environics Institute for Survey Research, Future Skills Centre, and Diversity Institute, *Making Up Time: The Pandemic's Impact on Young Adults in Canada* (November, 2021); <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/making-up-time-the-pandemic-s-impact-on-young-adults-in-canada> (especially page 44).

it is arguable that society as it is currently structured rewards this behaviour, not only in terms of pay and advancement at work, but also in terms of perceptions of masculinity (e.g., being a good potential husband or father). Efforts to change norms around doing extra work therefore may initially be resisted by some men, but could ultimately result in more equity between men and women both at work and at home.

Finally, the survey findings draw attention to the situation of parents, though perhaps not in the way that might be expected. In general, workers with children in their households are not less likely to find some balance in their lives, nor are they more likely to continue working after their regular work day is over. However, those who have switched to working from home during the pandemic are more likely than others to often find some balance between work, family and personal activities—provided that their children are able to attend school in person. This finding certainly highlights the challenge that online learning poses to working parents, as well as to young students. But it also hints at why many

parents have reacted positively to the switch to online work: for parents, it is not just online learning for children that impedes greater work–life balance, but also their regular working arrangements outside the home.

The impact of the Ontario government’s “right to disconnect” legislation remains to be seen. The legislation won’t apply to those who choose to work after regular hours because they enjoy their jobs, but may benefit others who report that their boss expects them to be continuously available. Overworked professionals, however, might argue that, in the absence of further investments in staffing in the health care or education sectors, the proposed legislation is unlikely to help. And the situation of young men will evolve in response, not to new regulations, but to shifting attitudes about gender roles. Finally, once the pandemic passes, working parents may push for greater flexibility from their employers to allow them to continue to work from home, rather than a policy on the right to disconnect, as the most promising pathway to better work–life balance.

