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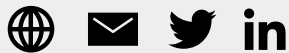
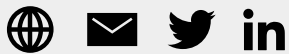
MAY 2023

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WORK IN CANADA: Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic



EKOS





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The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, and are funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

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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.

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Acknowledgements

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Table of contents

1	Executive summary
3	Introduction
4	Research project overview
7	Findings
16	Implications and future directions

Executive summary

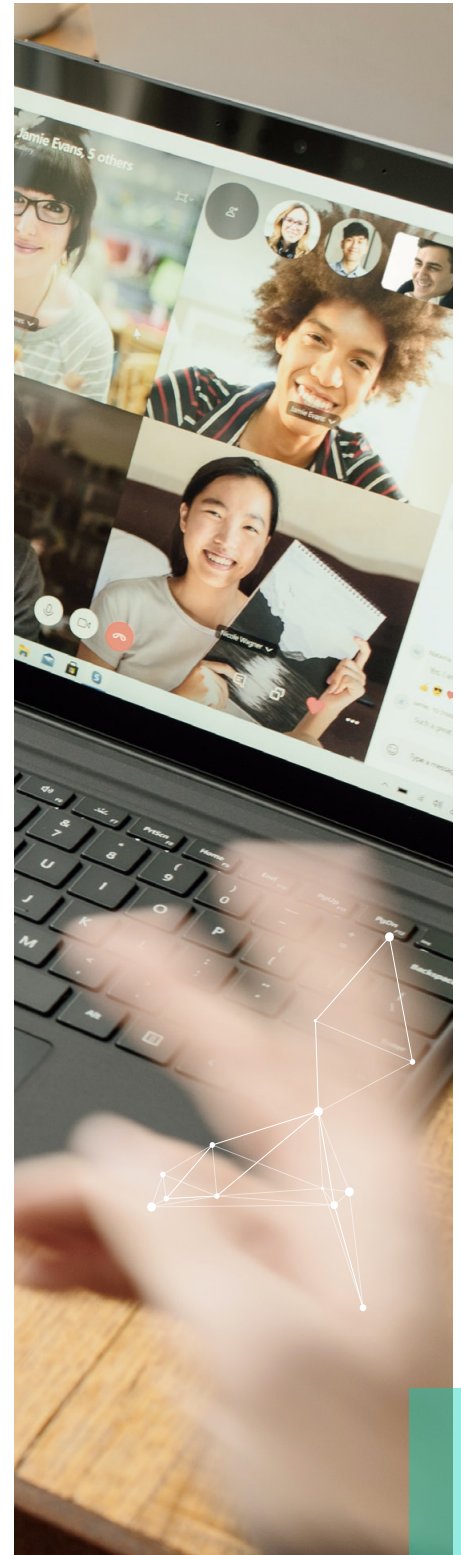
Three years after the declaration of a global pandemic, there is a growing body of research on how the pandemic has affected work and workers in Canada. Yet, lacking is a finely grained analysis, based on representative data, of how working arrangements, job quality, well-being, worker's future expectations and aspirations are changing in Canada as a result of the pandemic shock.

The Shaping the Future of Work in Canada project was designed to fill this gap. It contributes rich data that can inform public debates about evolving work arrangements, workers' aspirations, and how employers can design healthy, high-quality, and productive jobs as Canada moves into post-pandemic recovery in 2023 and beyond.

The centrepiece of the project is the Shaping the Future of Work in Canada Survey (FWCS), a representative adult population survey involving over 5,000 respondents in Canada. Carried out in the Fall of 2022, the FWCS gathered detailed information on worker's socio-demographic status and their work experiences during the pandemic, including their labour force activity, experiences of remote work, job satisfaction, well-being, and future expectations and plans.

Amongst the FWCS key findings:

- The pandemic has clearly reshaped established working patterns in Canada. Since the pandemic was declared in March 2020, over 40% of workers surveyed currently or until recently worked from home, and another 25% had worked from home for several months. Over one-third did not work from home at any point.
- The pandemic shock and sudden shift to virtual, home-based, work has accentuated existing labour market and social inequalities. Most remote workers are well-educated knowledge workers with high household incomes, typically aged 35-54 years. Between 70% and 90% of workers in sciences, government services, business and finance, education, law, social services, management, arts, culture and recreation worked remotely during the pandemic. One exception was in healthcare, where many professionals continued to provide in-person services in an increasingly strained system.



- Job quality and satisfaction differs significantly between remote workers and those who have continued working at an employer's worksite. Across 14 distinct measures, remote workers report being far more satisfied with their work – often by more than 10 percentage points – than those working on-site. Between 70% and 83% of remote workers were satisfied or very satisfied with the respect they received from co-workers, their independence, how they go about doing their work, job security, work-family balance, and doing meaningful work.
- Questions about well-being also find remote workers feeling more hopeful, having better self-rated mental health, higher life satisfaction and well-being than non-remote workers. Remote workers also report a variety of resultant personal and family benefits, including reduced commuting time and costs, and more positive financial expectations for the future.
- Yet, while remote work has enhanced workers' job quality and overall well-being, it appears to have weakened the employment relationship. Notably 42% of workers who had been able to work remotely at some point during the pandemic agreed that "Remote work has shown me that I can work anywhere and, as a result, I feel less attached to a specific organization or employer."
- When asked about future work arrangements, 76% of remote workers indicated that they would prefer to work remotely all or most of the time. Only 4% did not want to continue working from home.
- Only half of remote workers in Canada have been consulted by their employer about their future work arrangements. And only 40% of this group were satisfied with their input into their employer's post-pandemic work plans. Even fewer non-remote workers (35%) were satisfied with their input into their employer's post-pandemic work plans.
- But amongst those FWCS respondents who did have input, 86% reported being satisfied with their jobs, and 73% said they were unlikely to switch careers. Only about one third of those satisfied with input would seek another job if asked to return to the workplace. This compares to 58% of those dissatisfied with their planning input.



The FWCS findings have direct implications for employers' recruitment and retention strategies, and for how they go about planning their post-pandemic work arrangements. They also highlight for employers the need to provide all employees with meaningful input into post-pandemic work plans. Employers who succeed in doing this are more likely to build a loyal and committed workforce.

Introduction

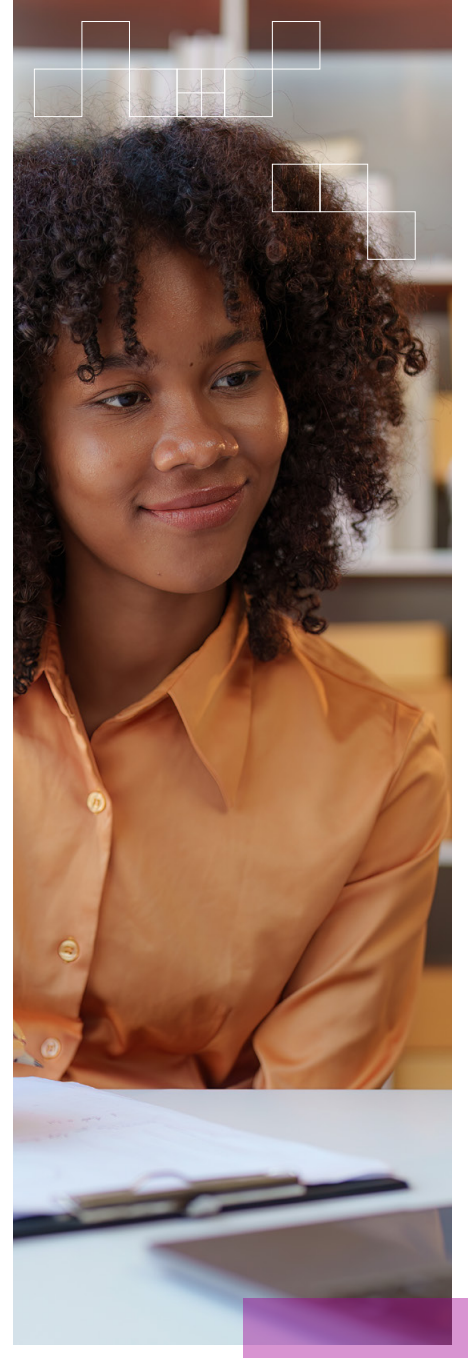
Much speculation swirls around the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and public health responses on workers and the future of work. As the pandemic passes the three-year mark, this project examines the experiences of workers in Canada since March 2020, when the pandemic was declared, and their future work preferences and expectations.

Although there is a growing body of research on how the pandemic has affected work and workers, most of this focuses on other countries, particularly the US.¹ What's lacking is a fine-grained, detailed analysis of how workers in Canada experienced the pandemic. To fill this gap, the Shaping the Future of Work in Canada project documents workers' assessments of their job quality – broadly defined to include psychosocial and economic features of employment – that affect their well-being and job performance.

The centrepiece of the project is the Shaping the Future of Work in Canada Survey (FWCS), conducted in fall 2022. The FWCS was designed to inform public discussions about evolving workplace arrangements and expectations, and how employers can design healthy, high-quality, and productive jobs. A central goal of the survey is to contribute to evidence-informed discussions and decision-making about the future of work in Canada as workers and employers move into post-pandemic recovery in 2023 and beyond.

Prominent issues documented by the FWCS include how the pandemic has impacted job quality and affected workers' mental and physical well-being, how work-from-home arrangements can evolve in sustainable ways, and the degree to which workers' experiences during the pandemic have prompted some people to fundamentally rethink what they want out of a job.

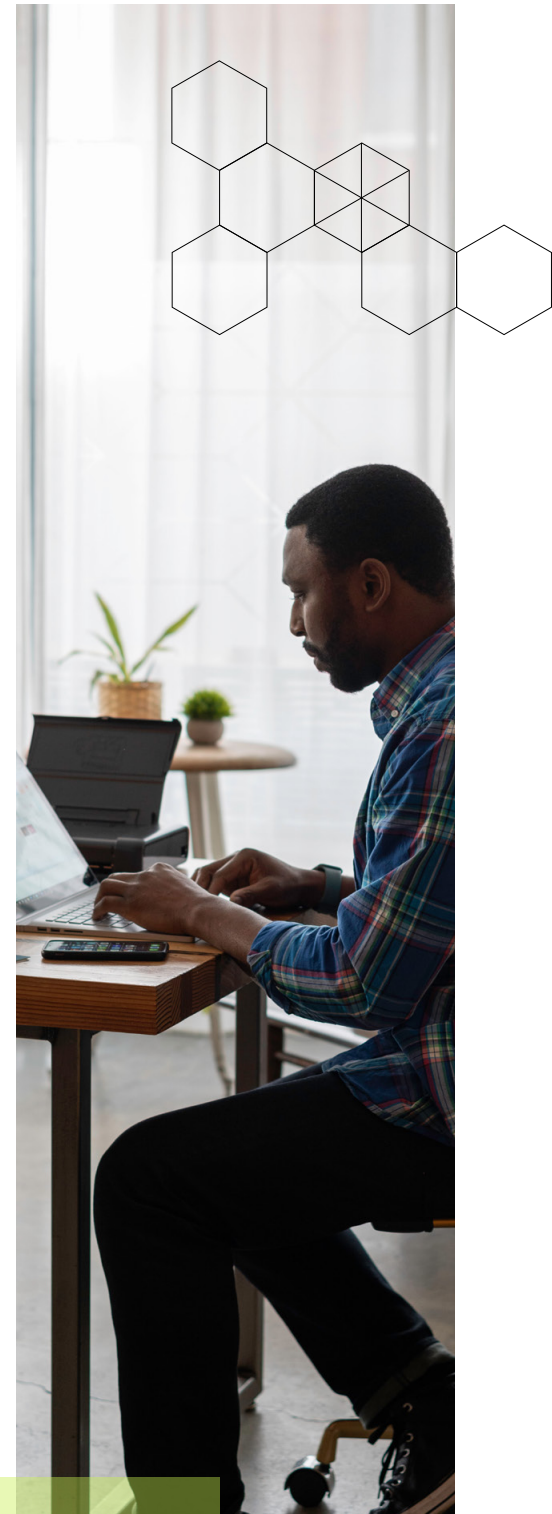
Our Shaping the Future of Work in Canada Survey (FWCS) is designed to inform decisions about future work arrangements, job conditions and optimal policy directions in Canada.²



Research project overview

Specifically, the FWCS addresses these questions:

- Who worked from home and how do their experiences, particularly job quality, differ from those who continued working from their employer's workplace?
- How do remote and non-remote workers assess their work experiences, and what are the key differences between these two groups?
- Comparing remote and non-remote workers, how has the pandemic affected workers' mental, physical, and financial well-being?
- Looking at the pandemic's impact on the quality of work, were there 'winners and losers', and what's the likelihood of these patterns persisting into the post-pandemic recovery?
- What are the future work preferences, expectations, and plans of remote workers compared to non-remote workers?
- How have work experiences during the pandemic shaped workers' decisions about training and development, job-relevant education, and future employment plans and preferences?
- Looking at quality of work changes through an EDI (equity diversity and inclusion) lens, are there significant variations by self-defined social class, race/ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, gender identity, disability?
- To what extent does vaccination status and having contracted COVID-19 impact work experiences during the pandemic?
- How do different groups of workers evaluate the input they have had into their employer's post-pandemic work plans?
- To what extent has the pandemic resulted in workers seeking



new career, educational, training and skill development opportunities?

- What approaches to planning post-pandemic work arrangements will contribute most to worker well-being and human capital development?

The survey's insights contribute to evidence-informed public discussions about how the future of work can be shaped in ways that optimize benefits for workers, employers, and Canadian society.

Research Consortium members have extensive experience studying the issues being addressed in this project. Lowe & Graves' 2016 book, *Redesigning Work: A Blueprint for Future Well-being and Prosperity*, examined a wide range of job quality issues. Lowe's 2020 book, *Creating Healthy Organizations: Taking Action to Improve Employee Well-Being*, documents the strong links between employee job quality, worker well-being, and organizational performance. Gilbert's involvement in evaluating the implementation of the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, as well as the development of the Guarding Minds@Work survey assessing workplace factors contributing to psychological well-being, ensures that our survey will include key determinants and outcomes of psychological well-being. Hughes has conducted extensive research on the Canadian labour market and is currently involved in a large SSHRC-funded project comparing job quality for employees and entrepreneurs in Canada, and an international SSHRC-ESRC funded project on gender and racial bias in job hiring in Canada and the U.K. Sugiman's research has centred on documenting and understanding the experiences of women, immigrants, and racialized workers in Canada, across a range of regional and industrial settings, and thus enhances the project's capacity to integrate gender, race, and status dimensions into our analysis. Stanford's Centre for Future Work reports highlight the need for thorough and effective channels of workers' voice in the face of dramatic workplace changes wrought by the pandemic, as well as the critical importance of paid sick leave and other basic protections.

The FWCS was conducted using EKOS Research Associates' unique, hybrid online/telephone research panel, Probit. This panel offers extensive coverage of the Canadian population (i.e., Internet, phone, cell phone), random recruitment (in other words, participants are recruited randomly, they do not opt themselves into our panel), and equal probability sampling. All respondents to the panel are recruited by telephone using random digit dialling and are confirmed by live interviewers. Unlike opt-in online panels, Probit supports margin of error estimates.

The field dates for the FWCS were September 9 to October 4, 2022. In total, a random sample of 5,869 Canadians aged 18 and over who participated in the workforce at any time since March 2020 responded to the survey. This included employees and the self-employed. The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/- 1.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

For the purposes of analysis, all data have been statistically weighted by age, gender, and region based on the proportions of employed people from the 2016 Census to ensure the sample's composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada.

The FSCW research methodology and questionnaire were approved by Research Ethics Boards at the University of Alberta and Toronto Metropolitan University.

Project results complement the three waves of The Environics Institute's Survey on Employment and Skills, in addition to Statistics Canada's Canadian Social Survey and other Canadian and international surveys examining the impact of the pandemic on workers.³ For example, Wave 2 of the Survey on Employment and Skills examines the pandemic's impact on new working arrangements, employment and income inequalities and workers' physical and mental health. Using these findings as a starting point, we examine how the pandemic has amplified labour market inequalities based on job quality and the quality of work-life. Another Environics' FSC report examines Canadians' experiences working from home during the pandemic.



Findings

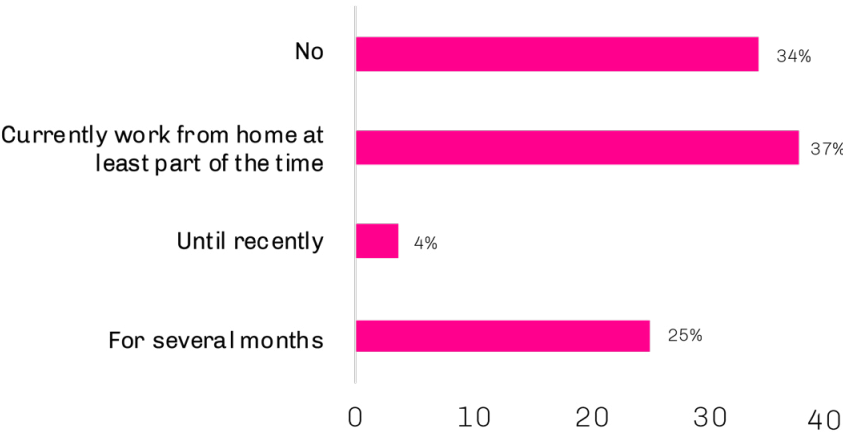
Given debates over ‘return to work’ mandates and hybrid workplaces, the FWCS focused on workers’ experiences of working from home. We surveyed employees, the self-employed, and workers in temporary or contract positions, comparing those who worked remotely during the pandemic with those who did not. This enabled us to compare the demographic characteristics of remote and non-remote workers, looking for differences by age, gender, and race.

Who works from home?

The FWCS asked all respondents: “At any time since March 2020, when a global COVID-19 pandemic was declared, have you carried out paid work from your home?” Their answers are summarized in Figure 1.

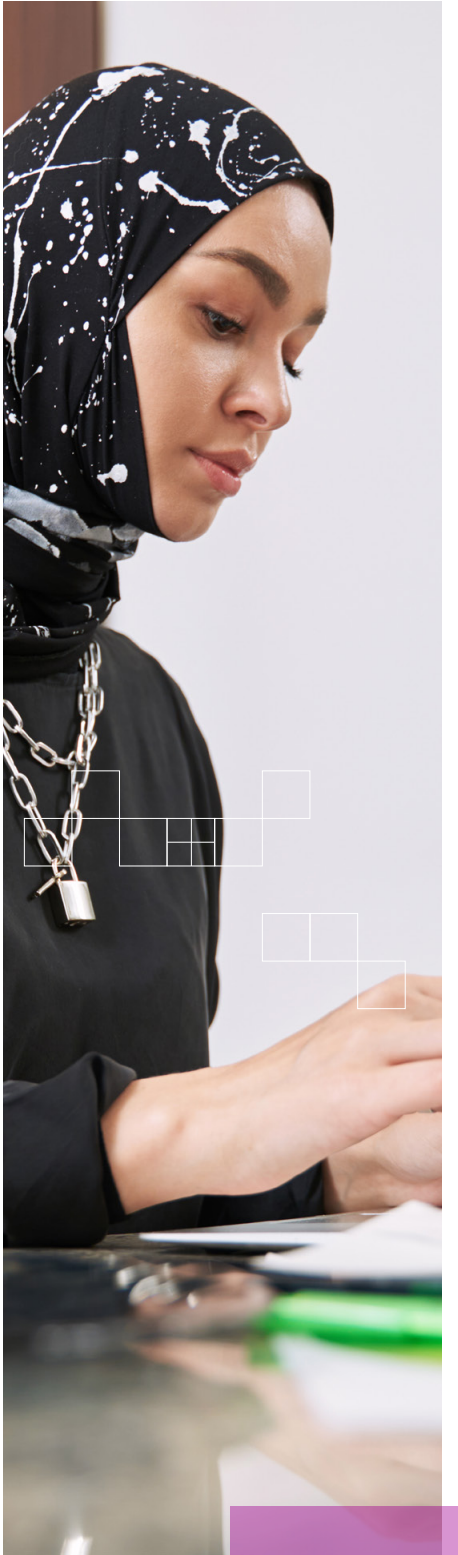
Since the pandemic was declared in March 2020, over 40% of workers we surveyed currently or until recently worked from home, and another 25% had worked from home for several months. In contrast, just over one-third did not work from home at any point.*

FIGURE 1:
Who works from home?



N=5326
Employees and self-employed

* In this report, we used the terms ‘home-based work/workers’, ‘work from home’ and ‘remote work/workers’ interchangeably.



About two-thirds of home-based workers worked from their home location for at least 80% of their work time. The same proportion of remote workers usually worked 31 to 40 hours weekly. Compared with their non-home-based counterparts, fewer remote workers put in more than 40 hours weekly (20% vs. 29%).

Looking at respondents' demographics through an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion lens reveals some interesting observations. Comparing remote and non-remote workers, there are no significant gender differences.[†] Significantly more remote workers (71% versus 65% of those not working remotely) are immigrants to Canada. More identify as a visible minority (17% vs 13% of those not working from home). The predominant age range is 35-54 years, with few younger (under age 25) and older (age 65 and older) reporting remote work. Respondents who identify as a member of a visible minority or having a disability that limits the work they can do are more likely to work remotely. In contrast, respondents who self-identify as First Nations, Inuit or Metis are less likely to work remotely.

Most home-based workers report a high annual household income (81% > \$160,000) and consistent with this, 82% identified as 'upper class'. These individuals are well-educated knowledge workers, or members of what Richard Florida calls 'the creative class'.⁴ Just over three quarters have an undergraduate degree (76%) and 84% have a postgraduate degree. This helps to explain why immigrants and visible minorities are well-represented among remote workers. Compared with non-remote workers, more of both self-identified groups have post-secondary education.

Compared with those in the labour force who did not work from home, there is a significantly higher percentage of public sector union (26%) and professional association (16%) members among remote workers. We asked FWCS respondents who worked from home about the location of their employer's worksite (i.e., the one they would return to if not working from home). For 36% of home-based workers, it was in the same community where they lived. And for close to half (47.4%) it was in a community close to where they live.

Relatively few reported that their employer's worksite was in another community in their province of residence (8.2%), in another province (5.6%) or in another country (2.1%).

Significantly more home-based workers, compared with non-remote workers, are in permanent full-time jobs (77% vs. 70%) or self-employed (13% vs. 10%). And fewer home-based workers are found in seasonal, term, contract, or temporary positions (4% vs. 6%). Just under 1 in 5 (18%) of workers in both groups reported working at more than one job.

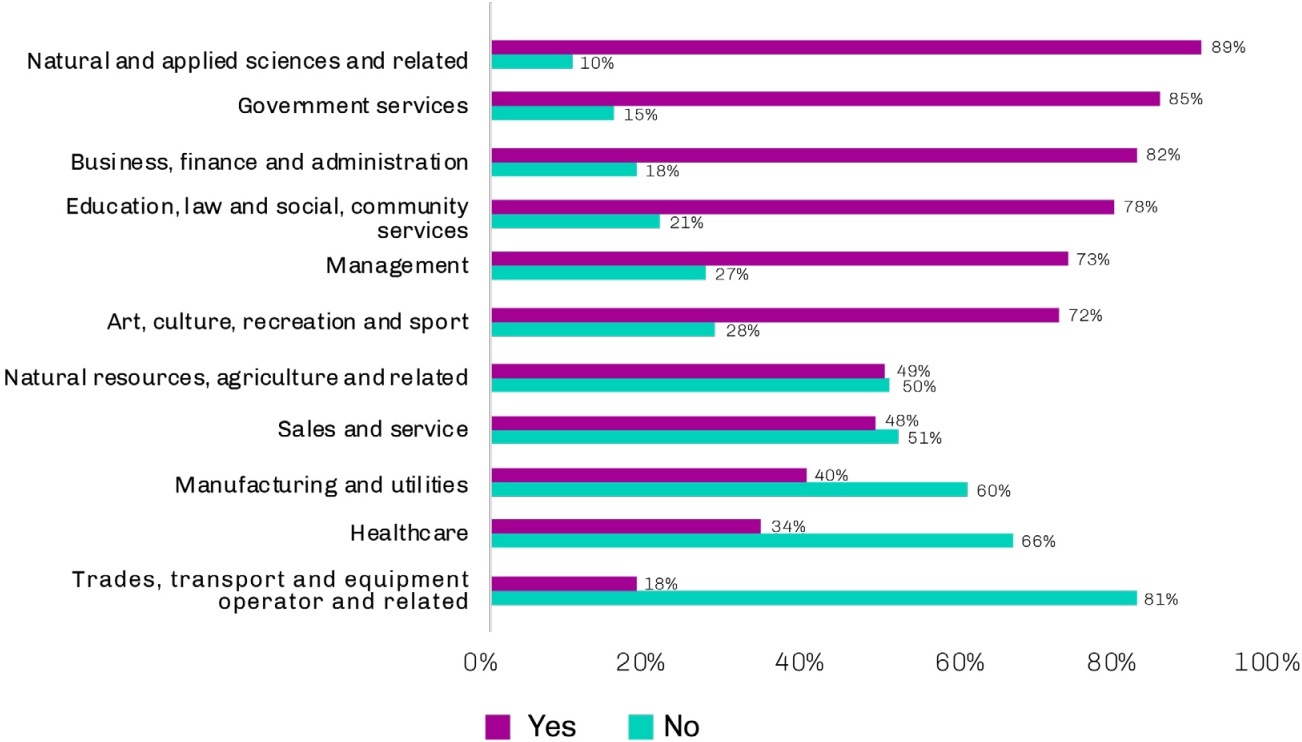
[†] When 'significant differences' are identified in Figures and in the text between home-based and non-home-based workers, these are based on a Chi-square statistical test ($p < .001$) that confirms group differences are real, and do not occur by chance. Except for gender, all the demographic comparisons in this paragraph reveal significant differences between remote and non-remote workers.

Pandemic-fuelled inequalities show up in the wide gap between well-educated 'knowledge' workers, far more likely to work from home, and those working in service and manual jobs



Pandemic-fuelled inequalities show up in the wide gap between well-educated ‘knowledge’ workers, far more likely to work from home, and those working in service and manual jobs. The exception is healthcare, where many professionals provided in-person services in an increasingly strained system. As Figure 2 shows, between 70% and 90% of workers in sciences, government services, business and finance, education, law, social services, management, and arts culture and recreation worked remotely at some point during the pandemic.

FIGURE 2:
Occupation in main job by worked from home any time since March 2020



N=5266
Group differences statistically significant, $p<0.001$, Chi-Square test

Home-based workers have better job quality

Working from home is linked to more positive work experiences and better job quality. All workers surveyed rated their satisfaction with 14 job features, ranging from respectful co-workers, meaningful work, and trustworthy managers to job security, work-life balance, and income.

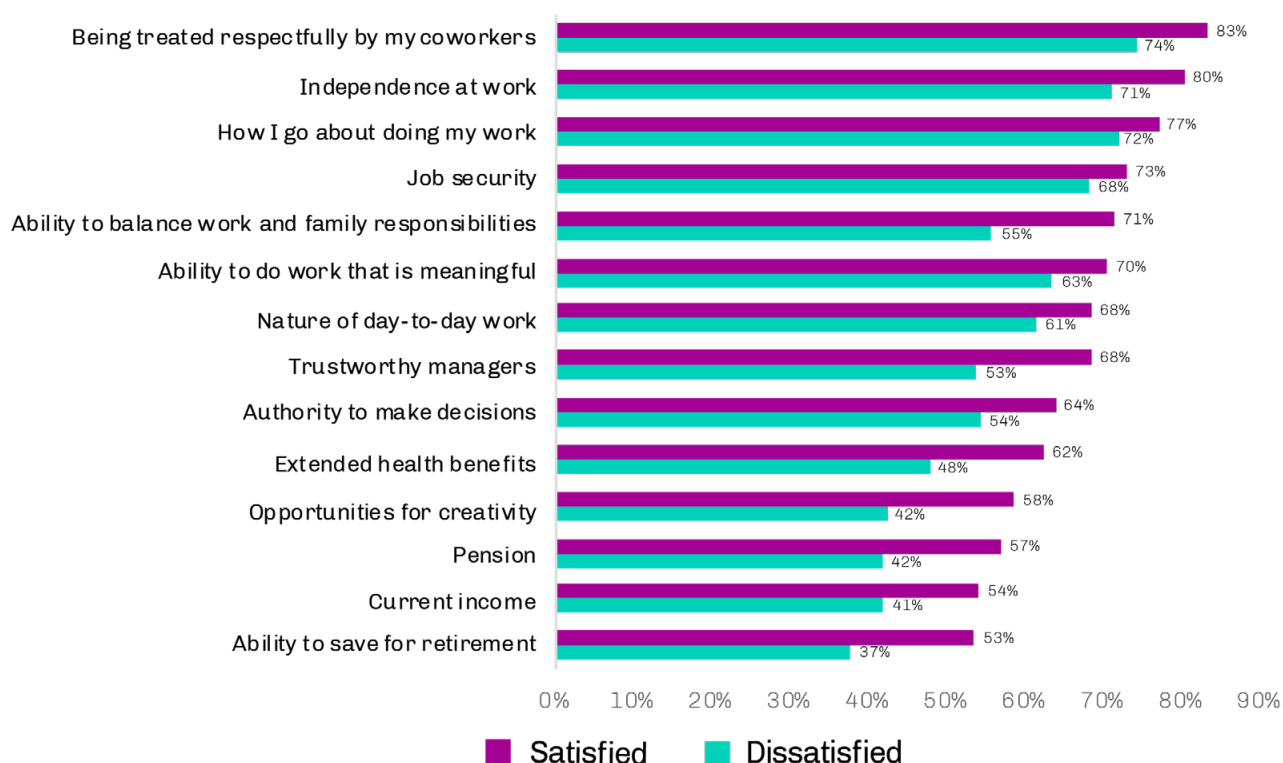
On every measure, remote workers were significantly more satisfied than those who had not worked from home (Figure 3). Notably, between 70% and 83% of home-based workers were satisfied or very satisfied with the respect they received from coworkers, independence, how they carry out their work, job security, work-family balance, and doing meaningful work.

Two other points from Figure 3 should interest employers. First, both groups are least satisfied with their

pension, current income, and ability to save for retirement (all are closely related indicators). Second, while just over two-thirds of remote workers are satisfied with the trustworthiness of their managers, the same can be said for just over half of non-remote workers. Low trust in an organization reflects a weak culture, which undermines job performance and employee well-being.⁵

FIGURE 3:

Satisfaction with specific job features by worked from home at any time since March 2020



Indeed, 70% of home-based workers in the FWCS expressed overall satisfaction with their job, compared to 57% of non-home-based workers. While less than half of both groups reported being able to manage job stress most or all the time, fewer remote workers felt burned out by their job. This group's overall higher level of job satisfaction helps to explain why significantly more remote workers also report positive well-being.

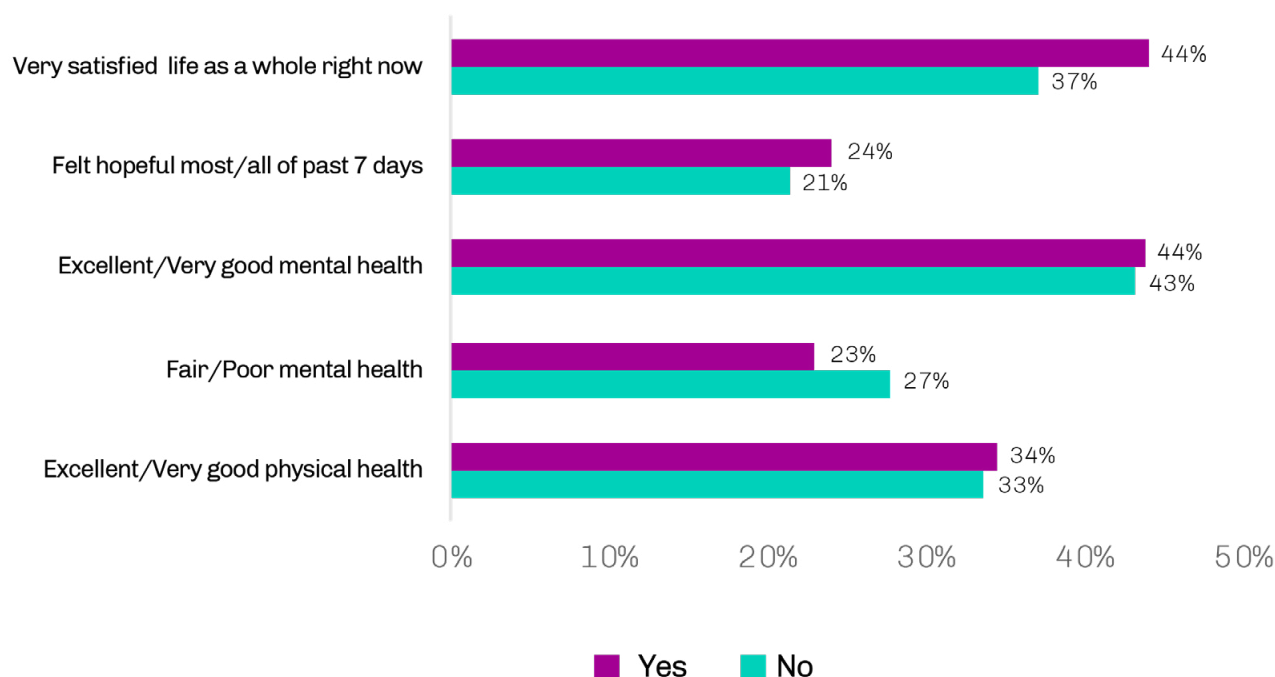
Home-based workers experience better well-being

The impact of the pandemic on the well-being of Canadians has been a prominent concern since the start of the pandemic.⁶ Another important FWCS finding is that remote workers have better well-being, compared to workers whose jobs had to be done at their employers' workplaces.

Figure 4 compares these two groups on four key well-being measures: overall life satisfaction; feeling hopeful during the past 7 days; self-rated mental health; and self-rated physical health. Remote workers have significantly better well-being than the comparison group on all but one measure – self-reported physical health – where the groups show no difference.

FIGURE 4:

Key well-being indicators by worked from home at any time since March 2020



*N ranges from 5305-5318. Includes employees and self-employed. **p<.001*

We also examined the effects of testing positive for COVID-19 on respondent's self-rated mental and physical health. Interestingly, their experience of having contracted COVID-19 (or not) has no bearing on either of these health self-assessments.

The FWCS also measured other indicators of psychological well-being. Employees and self-employed individuals who worked from home any time since March 2020 were significantly less likely than the comparison group in the past 7 days to report having trouble sleeping and feeling lonely or depressed. This is an important finding, considering that, according to Statistics Canada, one in three Canadians said their mental health had gotten worse a year into the pandemic.⁷

We also asked respondents two questions that document their financial well-being:

- “Thinking ahead over the next year or so, do you think your personal financial situation will be better or worse than it is today?”
- “Thinking ahead over the next five years or so, do you think your personal financial situation will be better or worse than it is today?”
- The response options for both questions are ‘Worse’, ‘Same’, or ‘Better’.

On both measures, remote workers expressed significantly more positive financial expectations. Specifically, one-third expect to be doing better financially in the next year, compared with 27% of non-remote workers. And 45% of the former group expect to have a better financial situation over the next five years, compared with 36% of the comparison group.

Explaining job quality and well-being differences

Knowing the socio-economic status of the two groups we are comparing tells us a great deal about why they have such different job quality and well-being outcomes. To reiterate an earlier point about income differences, over 80% of home-based workers have an annual household income over \$160,000 and consider their household to be ‘upper class.’ In contrast, under 20% of non-remote workers have an annual household income in this range or consider their household to be upper class (a significant difference on both counts).

We included a self-reported social class question in the FWCS that presented four response options: Poor, Lower Class, Middle Class, or Upper Class. It turns out that household social class is an accurate predictor of both job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Specifically, fewer than half of FWCS respondents who identify as poor or lower class are satisfied with their job, compared with 68% in the middle class and 78% in the upper class. Similarly, when rating their life satisfaction, 22% of respondents identifying as poor or lower class are ‘very satisfied’, compared with 44% in the middle class and 65% in the upper class (all group differences are statistically significant.)

These self-reported social class and income differences help to explain why home-based workers are significantly less likely to agree with the statement “If I could have a guaranteed annual income, I would choose not to work” (26% agreeing, compared with 31% of non-remote workers).

Currently, the federal government provides a non-taxable Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) to low-income, Old Age Security pensioners based on income.⁸ However, the financial strain imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent inflation increase has renewed interest in the concept of a universal basic income, or a guaranteed annual income.⁹ Our finding that lower-income respondents are more supportive of this concept is not surprising, given that Statistics Canada reports that in fall 2022, over one-third of Canadians found it difficult for their household to meet its financial needs in the previous 12 months.¹⁰

A follow-up question (asked only of those who disagreed that if they could have a guaranteed annual income, they would choose not to work) probed why they answered this way. The largest group responding (46%) said they would miss the sense of identity and fulfillment that comes from having a job. This particular finding stands out because employers should be able to cultivate these job characteristics in both remote and non-remote work. Another 30% were concerned they would not make as much money. The smallest group (24%) said they would miss the relationships they form with co-workers.

All told, these findings reveal a well-ingrained work ethic, along with the personal and financial benefits of a paying job. Clearly, if a guaranteed annual income is to become a viable government response to inequality, it will need to be targeted at those most in need. On this point, we note that over 30% of respondents with household incomes under \$60,000 annually would choose not to work if they could receive a guaranteed annual income, compared with only 22% of those with household incomes of \$220,000 or more.

Assessment of home-based work arrangements

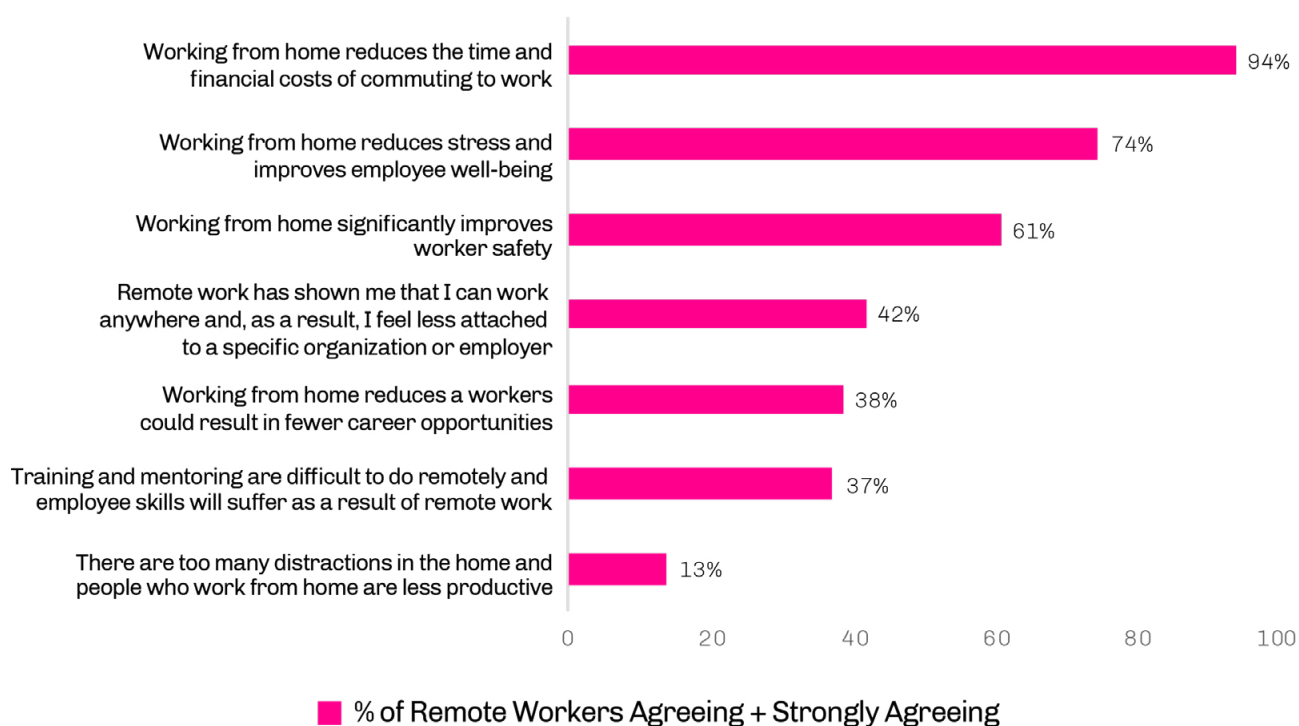
In addition to better job quality and well-being, home-based workers experienced other tangible benefits documented in Figure 5. These include reduced commuting time and costs, mentioned by 94% of remote workers, less stress and improved overall well-being (reported by 74%), and improved safety (reported by 61%).

However, what should concern employers is that 42% of home-based workers agreed or strongly agreed that: “Remote work has shown me that I can work anywhere and, as a result, I feel less attached to a specific organization or employer.” This finding has potentially big implications for employers’ recruitment and retention strategies, and for how they go about planning post-pandemic work arrangements that are psychologically healthy and safe for workers.¹¹

Furthermore, just over one-third of remote workers raised concerns about two potential downsides of home-based work. And less than 40% agree that fewer career and skill development opportunities can result due to reduced visibility, and that training and mentoring are difficult to do remotely and that their skills will suffer as a result. Clearly, these are two issues that employers will need to address directly in order to maintain productive and engaging remote work arrangements in future. Interestingly, only a small minority (13.5%) agreed that there were too many distractions at home to be productive.

Taking these concerns into account, it is important to emphasize that the overall experiences of home-based workers documented by the FWCS are highly positive.

FIGURE 5:
Evaluating working from home



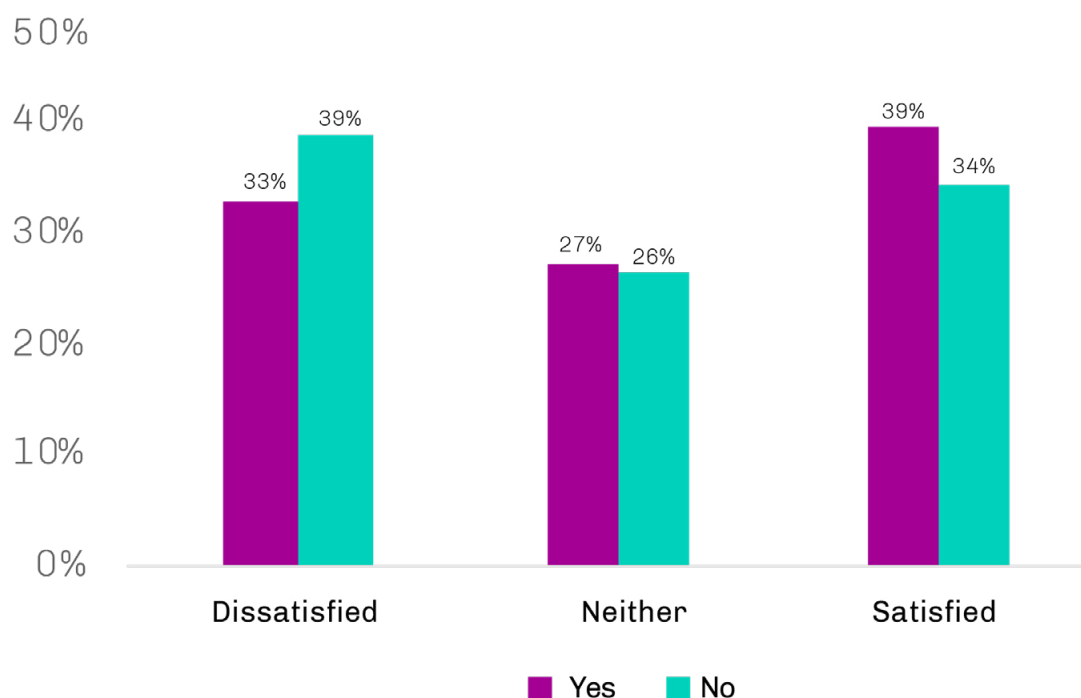
Future work preferences and plans

When the FWCS asked remote workers about future work arrangements, 40% said they prefer to work remotely all the time, 36% most of the time, and 20% some of the time. Only 4% did not want to continue working from home. At the start of the pandemic, Statistics Canada estimated that about four in ten Canadian workers are in jobs that can be carried out from home. The FWCS suggests that workers' current aspirations far exceed that, which should encourage employers to approach the design of post-pandemic work arrangements very carefully.¹²

Yet, when asked, only half of home-based workers in Canada we surveyed have been consulted by their employer about their future work arrangements. In the fall of 2022, about three-quarters (74.2%) of those who were working at home had been given the option of hybrid work, combining working from home with some days spent at their employer's traditional place of work. And just over a quarter (26.2%) had been required to return to their employer's workplace full time.

The FWCS asked all respondents whether they were satisfied with their input into their employer's post-pandemic work plans (Figure 6). Only 40% of home-based workers responded positively. By comparison, fewer workers who did not work from home were satisfied with their input into their employer's post-pandemic work plans (35%).

FIGURE 6:
Satisfaction with input into employer's post-pandemic work plans by worked from home at any time since March 2020



N=4115
Chi-Square Test $p < .001$

Based on the FWCS results, it appears that providing employees with input into post-pandemic work plans can have important consequences for employers in achieving a loyal and committed workforce. Indeed, 86% of FWCS respondents who had the opportunity to provide input reported being satisfied with their jobs, and 73% were unlikely to switch careers. Just over one third (37%) of those satisfied with input would seek another job if asked to return to the workplace, compared with 58% of those dissatisfied with their planning input.

The FWCS also explored respondents' future work plans and expectations. In the next year or two, 14% of all respondents indicated they are likely to switch careers or enter a new line of work, and 15% are likely to enroll in a job-relevant education program. There are significant differences – albeit small – between remote and non-remote workers, with the latter group more likely to change careers or jobs, and the former group more likely to acquire job-relevant education. Results showed no difference between these two groups regarding plans to retire or reduce their work hours, with 14% saying they are likely to do this.

Interestingly, relatively few FWCS respondents (12%) agreed that there is a good chance they could lose their job over the next couple of years. Even fewer (7%) expressed concern about being displaced by automation (“Due to automation, the type of work I do won’t exist five to ten years from now”), with slightly more non-remote workers agreeing with this statement. Clearly, the low level of concern about these two potential threats to job security should be a relief to employers, encouraging them to focus on other workforce priorities.



Implications and future directions

The Shaping the Future of Work in Canada project was designed to inform current debates and discussion over evolving work arrangements, expectations, and job quality, as workers and employers in Canada move into post-pandemic recovery in 2023 and beyond.

The Future of Work in Canada Survey (FWCS), involving over 5,000 respondents, sheds light on key questions concerning the impacts of the pandemic for job quality, job satisfaction, and workers' mental, physical, and financial well-being. The FWCS also provides insights into workers' future work preferences and plans, and the extent to which they have been consulted on evolving work arrangements.

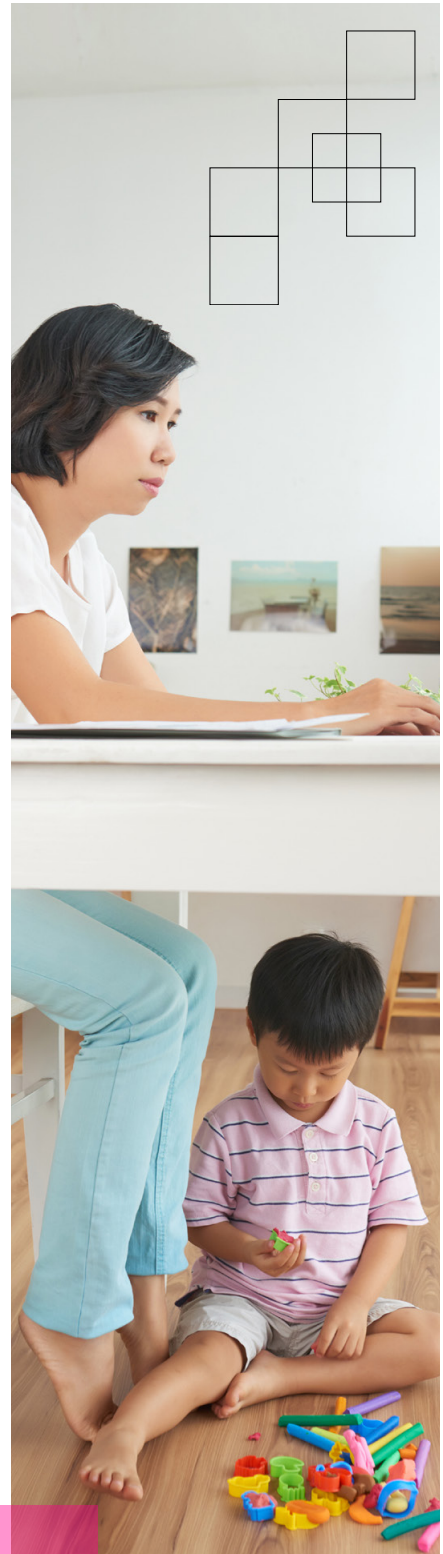
Implications for employers and policy makers

For employers, the FWCS findings highlight the need to provide all employees with meaningful input into post-pandemic work plans. Employers who succeed in doing this are more likely to build a loyal and committed workforce.

Yet, most employers in Canada appear to have a long way to go in this regard. Only half of workers in Canada who worked remotely at some point during the pandemic have been consulted by their employer about future work arrangements, and fewer than half were satisfied with the input they had. But amongst those who had input, satisfaction with jobs was exceptionally high (86%). And just one-third who had input into future plans would seek a job elsewhere, compared to 58% of those dissatisfied with opportunities for input.

A key lesson is that when planning future work arrangements, it pays for employers to consult with employees, listen, and respond appropriately. This does not require a new human resource strategy. All that is needed is open and meaningful two-way communication. By doing so, employers will signal to employees that they care about them and can be trusted – essential features of a positive culture that supports employee well-being and job performance.¹³

For employers and policy makers alike, there is also an ongoing need to consider how to bridge the job quality gaps between remote and



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non-remote workers that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This may require redesigned human resource strategies to ensure that the diverse needs of all workers – both remote and non-remote – for a healthy, safe, and productive work environment can be achieved.

Through the pandemic, public health experts and employers also have been adjusting work policies and practices to keep workers safe who are not working remotely.¹⁴ An ongoing challenge as Canada transitions out of the pandemic will be how workspaces can be redesigned, both physically and behaviourally, to provide the utmost health protection to workers. Worker well-being and mental health remain a paramount concern, especially for some occupational groups. Although the FWCS finds remote workers experiencing better life satisfaction, mental health, and feelings of hopefulness, there is a notable group of workers – both remote and on-site, – for whom positive changes are still needed.

Future research directions

Given ongoing changes across workplaces in Canada, there is a need to continue tracking the issues raised by the FWCS. Both survey research, as well as qualitative case studies of workplaces or occupational groups, offer valuable approaches for learning more about the unprecedented changes sparked by the pandemic. Key questions of interest concern the ways in which new remote and on-site work arrangements may play out in the ongoing post-pandemic context and what types of arrangements, employment relationships, and expectations will become normalized across Canadian workplaces.

Currently, some employers are pushing back against remote work. Others are embracing it. This raises questions about the varied configurations of work—across industries, occupations, and geographical locales—that might emerge. Understanding more about employers' decisions would be valuable, as would documenting and analyzing successful cases of workplace transformation.

Central to understanding the future of work in Canada, of course, is a continued focus on how workers are adjusting their traditional labour force activity and expectations to some of the unprecedented changes of the last few years. Follow-up surveys, building on the FWCS model, can offer valuable insights into questions of job quality, satisfaction and well-being, as well as employer-employee consultation and changing employee expectations and aspirations, as workplace change continues to unfold.



Endnotes

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