

# Aspects of quality of employment in Canada, February and March 2020

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The labour market in Canada has experienced unprecedented changes over the last 12 months. Entire sectors of the economy have been subject to temporary restrictions on business activities as a result of public health measures aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19. At the same time, many workers have seen changes in working conditions, such as teleworking, reduced work hours and greater job insecurity.

From mid-February to mid-March 2020, the 2020 Survey on Quality of Employment (SQE) collected information on aspects of job quality in Canada from the perspective of workers. Estimates reflect employment characteristics before the full onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to establishing a baseline for future analysis of quality of employment in Canada. Unless otherwise stated, the analysis focuses on the 23.5 million workers who were employed in February or March 2020 or who had last worked in 2018 or after, and excludes unpaid family workers.

## **About half of workers in Canada had access to paid sick leave in their jobs prior to the pandemic**

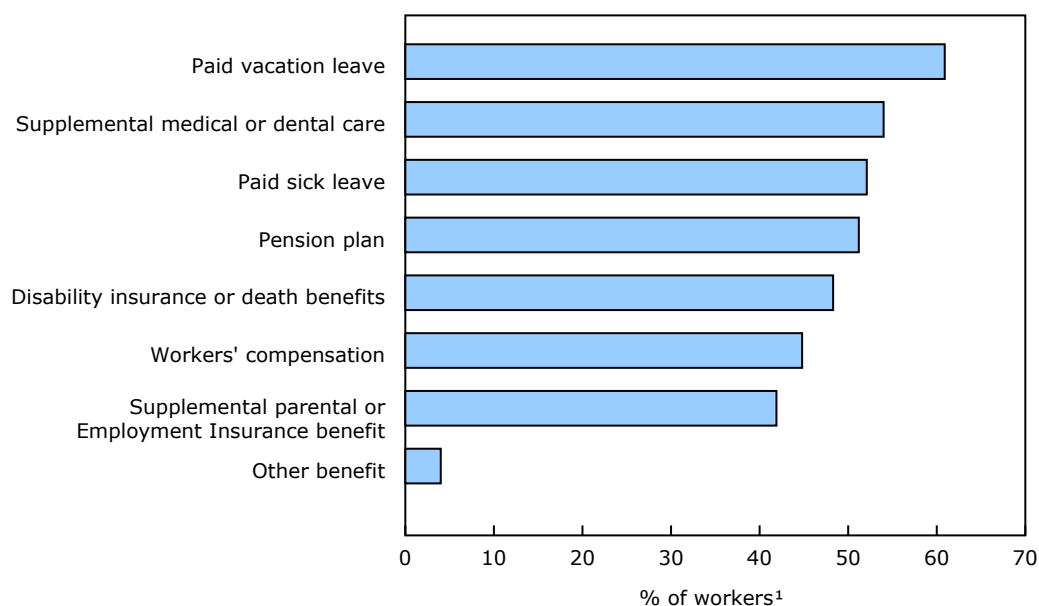
As Canada entered the pandemic in March 2020, just over half (52.1%) of people who worked in the previous two years had access to paid sick leave in their current or last job.

Just under 7 in 10 permanent employees had access to paid sick leave (66.3%). Among temporary employees, 4 in 10 employees with a contract of a fixed duration (41.0%) had access to paid sick leave, compared with 1 in 10 (12.6%) among other temporary employees, including on-call, seasonal, and casual workers.

Few self-employed Canadians (6.2%) had access to paid sick leave through their job, particularly self-employed workers without employees (1.1%).



**Chart 1**  
**Just over half of workers had access to paid sick leave prior to the pandemic**



1. With access to benefits in their job(s).

**Note(s):** Population aged 15 and over who worked in 2018 or after, as of February or March 2020 (provinces only), excluding those who were unpaid family workers in their main job.

**Source(s):** Survey on Quality of Employment, 2020 (5313).

## Most workers with an irregular schedule would have preferred regular hours

In February and March 2020, about 2 in 10 workers (22.6%), including unpaid family workers, had an irregular work schedule in their current or last job. For most (62.3%), this involved variation in both the schedule and the number of hours worked.

Among people with an irregular schedule, 6 in 10 would have preferred a regular schedule (58.4%) and 2 in 10 worked less than they would have liked (22.0%). Workers with a regular schedule were generally more satisfied with their work hours; less than 1 in 10 worked less than they would have liked (8.8%).

As a result of the pandemic, more Canadians have faced greater uncertainty in their hours. In February 2021, according to data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), 1.2 million workers had a job, but worked less than half of their usual hours for reasons likely related to COVID-19.

## Autonomy and control was the main reason for self-employment

Data from the LFS indicate that the recovery in self-employment has slowed in recent months, with employment levels further behind pre-COVID levels than among paid employees.

There are a number of reasons why Canadians become self-employed. According to the SQE, in February and March 2020, 4 in 10 self-employed workers (40.4%) reported that the main reason why they were working or had recently worked in this capacity was to have autonomy and control over their work hours, wage rate and other aspects of work. Other common reasons include being passionate about the work (17.9%) and working in their field of expertise (17.2%).

In contrast, less than 1 in 20 (4.1%) self-employed workers were unable to find work as an employee.

**Table 1**  
**Type of payment received in the last 12 months worked by type of employment (main job),**  
**persons who worked in 2018 or after, Canada (provinces only), 2020**

	Workers who received type of payment	Lower limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>	Upper limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>
	%		
<b>Total, last worked in 2018 or after</b>			
Wage or salary	90.4	88.9	91.8
Overtime pay	17.3	15.4	19.3
Cash, cheque or e-transfer after sending invoice	9.6	8.1	11.1
Merit, performance pay or bonus	15.0	13.2	16.9
Stock options or profit sharing	6.2	4.9	7.5
Tips, commissions or piecework	6.5	5.2	7.8
Cryptocurrency, gift cards or traded skills or services	3.8	2.8	4.7
Other	3.6	2.7	4.5
<b>Type of employment</b>			
<b>Permanent employees</b>			
Wage or salary	97.7	96.7	98.6
Overtime pay	20.9	18.4	23.3
Cash, cheque or e-transfer after sending invoice	4.6	3.2	5.9
Merit, performance pay or bonus	19.1	16.7	21.5
Stock options or profit sharing	7.0	5.3	8.7
Tips, commissions or piecework	5.1	3.7	6.5
Cryptocurrency, gift cards or traded skills or services	4.2	3.0	5.4
Other	2.6	1.7	3.5
<b>Fixed-term employees<sup>2</sup></b>			
Wage or salary	98.3	96.5	100.0
Overtime pay	17.2	8.5	25.9
Cash, cheque or e-transfer after sending invoice	7.6	2.5	12.6
Merit, performance pay or bonus	3.6	0.2	7.0
Stock options or profit sharing	x	x	x
Tips, commissions or piecework	1.1	0.0	2.5
Cryptocurrency, gift cards or traded skills or services	2.3	0.0	5.1
Other	3.7	0.7	6.7
<b>Other temporary employees<sup>3</sup></b>			
Wage or salary	94.3	89.5	99.2
Overtime pay	12.4	6.5	18.2
Cash, cheque or e-transfer after sending invoice	8.9	3.6	14.1
Merit, performance pay or bonus	7.1	2.2	12.1
Stock options or profit sharing	x	x	x
Tips, commissions or piecework	4.7	0.0	10.1
Cryptocurrency, gift cards or traded skills or services	x	x	x
Other	2.4	0.1	4.7
<b>Self-employed with employees</b>			
Wage or salary	54.3 <sup>E</sup>	43.0	65.7
Overtime pay	1.9 <sup>E</sup>	0.0	5.1
Cash, cheque or e-transfer after sending invoice	28.2 <sup>E</sup>	17.8	38.7
Merit, performance pay or bonus	6.0 <sup>E</sup>	1.3	10.8
Stock options or profit sharing	16.5 <sup>E</sup>	7.6	25.3
Tips, commissions or piecework	8.7 <sup>E</sup>	2.7	14.7
Cryptocurrency, gift cards or traded skills or services	1.6 <sup>E</sup>	0.0	4.0
Other	9.5 <sup>E</sup>	3.4	15.6
<b>Self-employed without employees</b>			
Wage or salary	41.3	33.1	49.4
Overtime pay	1.6	0.0	3.2
Cash, cheque or e-transfer after sending invoice	42.1	34.3	49.9
Merit, performance pay or bonus	5.0	1.3	8.6
Stock options or profit sharing	3.3	1.1	5.4
Tips, commissions or piecework	21.2	14.5	27.9
Cryptocurrency, gift cards or traded skills or services	4.9	0.8	9.0
Other	9.6	4.8	14.5

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

E use with caution

1. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

2. The category "fixed-term employees" includes workers who had an employment contract of a fixed duration.

3. The category "other temporary employees" includes on-call, seasonal, casual, and temporary agency workers.

**Note(s):** Population aged 15 and over who worked in 2018 or after, as of February or March 2020 (provinces only), excluding those who were unpaid family workers in their main job.

**Source(s):** Statistics Canada, Survey on Quality of Employment , 2020 ([5313](#)).

**Table 2**  
**Reasons for being a multiple job holder by gender and employment relationship status (main job), persons who worked in 2018 or after, Canada (provinces only), 2020**

	Distribution of workers within category	Lower limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>	Upper limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>
	%		
<b>Total, last worked in 2018 or after</b>			
<b>All workers</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Not a multiple job holder	86.5	84.6	88.5
Multiple job holder to meet essential needs	2.8	2.0	3.6
Multiple job holder to earn extra income	5.8	4.4	7.2
Multiple job holder to engage in work they are passionate about	3.2	2.2	4.2
Multiple job holder, other reasons	1.6	1.0	2.3
<b>Employees</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Not a multiple job holder	87.4	85.3	89.5
Multiple job holder to meet essential needs	2.7	1.8	3.5
Multiple job holder to earn extra income	5.8	4.2	7.3
Multiple job holder to engage in work they are passionate about	2.7	1.7	3.7
Multiple job holder, other reasons	1.5	0.8	2.1
<b>Self-employed</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Not a multiple job holder	82.0	76.6	87.4
Multiple job holder to meet essential needs	3.7	1.5	5.9
Multiple job holder to earn extra income	5.6	2.8	8.4
Multiple job holder to engage in work they are passionate about	6.5	2.4	10.5
Multiple job holder, other reasons	2.2	0.5	3.9
<b>Gender<sup>2</sup></b>			
<b>Men</b>			
<b>All workers</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Not a multiple job holder	87.4	84.6	90.2
Multiple job holder to meet essential needs	2.7	1.5	3.9
Multiple job holder to earn extra income	5.0	3.1	6.9
Multiple job holder to engage in work they are passionate about	3.3	1.7	4.8
Multiple job holder, other reasons	1.6	0.7	2.6
<b>Employees</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Not a multiple job holder	88.2	85.3	91.2
Multiple job holder to meet essential needs	2.6	1.3	3.9
Multiple job holder to earn extra income	5.2	3.0	7.4
Multiple job holder to engage in work they are passionate about	2.6	1.2	4.0
Multiple job holder, other reasons	1.4	0.4	2.3
<b>Self-employed</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Not a multiple job holder	83.6	76.3	90.9
Multiple job holder to meet essential needs	3.3	0.4	6.2
Multiple job holder to earn extra income	4.5	0.7	8.2
Multiple job holder to engage in work they are passionate about	6.8	0.9	12.6
Multiple job holder, other reasons	1.9	0.1	3.7
<b>Women</b>			
<b>All workers</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Not a multiple job holder	85.6	82.9	88.3
Multiple job holder to meet essential needs	2.9	1.7	4.0
Multiple job holder to earn extra income	6.6	4.6	8.7
Multiple job holder to engage in work they are passionate about	3.2	1.9	4.5
Multiple job holder, other reasons	1.7	0.7	2.6
<b>Employees</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Not a multiple job holder	86.5	83.6	89.4
Multiple job holder to meet essential needs	2.7	1.5	3.9
Multiple job holder to earn extra income	6.4	4.2	8.7
Multiple job holder to engage in work they are passionate about	2.8	1.5	4.1
Multiple job holder, other reasons	1.5	0.6	2.5

**Table 2**  
**Reasons for being a multiple job holder by gender and employment relationship status (main job), persons who worked in 2018 or after, Canada (provinces only), 2020**

	Distribution of workers within category	Lower limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>	Upper limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>
<b>Self-employed</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Not a multiple job holder	79.7	72.1	87.3
Multiple job holder to meet essential needs	4.4	0.8	7.9
Multiple job holder to earn extra income	7.3	3.1	11.4
Multiple job holder to engage in work they are passionate about	6.1	0.4	11.7
Multiple job holder, other reasons	2.6	0.0	5.7

... not applicable

1. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

2. Estimates for the "other gender" category are included in totals, but cannot be published separately in order to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*.

**Note(s):** Population aged 15 and over who worked in 2018 or after, as of February or March 2020 (provinces only), excluding those who were unpaid family workers in their main job.

**Source(s):** Statistics Canada, Survey on Quality of Employment, 2020 (5313).

**Table 3**  
**Access to structured training and typical training arrangement in the last 12 months worked by type of employee (main job), persons who worked as paid employees in 2018 or after, Canada (provinces only), 2020**

	Distribution of workers within category	Lower limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>	Upper limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>
	%		
<b>Total, paid employee in 2018 or after</b>			
<b>Access to structured training</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Yes	55.2	52.4	58.0
No	44.8	42.0	47.6
<b>Had access to structured training: Typical arrangement</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
At the workplace, outside working hours	8.2	6.1	10.3
At the workplace, during working hours	51.2	47.3	55.2
Outside the workplace, outside working hours	6.4	4.5	8.3
Outside the workplace, during working hours	13.4	10.8	16.0
More than one arrangement	20.8	17.7	23.9
<b>Type of employee</b>			
<b>Permanent employees</b>			
<b>Access to structured training</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Yes	55.6	52.6	58.7
No	44.4	41.3	47.4
<b>Had access to structured training: Typical arrangement</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
At the workplace, outside working hours	7.4	5.2	9.6
At the workplace, during working hours	49.0	44.7	53.3
Outside the workplace, outside working hours	6.9	4.7	9.1
Outside the workplace, during working hours	14.9	11.9	17.9
More than one arrangement	21.8	18.4	25.2
<b>Fixed-term employees<sup>2</sup></b>			
<b>Access to structured training</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Yes	64.6	55.7	73.5
No	35.4	26.5	44.3
<b>Had access to structured training: Typical arrangement</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
At the workplace, outside working hours	8.2 <sup>E</sup>	0.9	15.5
At the workplace, during working hours	61.0 <sup>E</sup>	49.1	73.0
Outside the workplace, outside working hours	6.0 <sup>E</sup>	0.7	11.4
Outside the workplace, during working hours	6.2 <sup>E</sup>	1.8	10.6
More than one arrangement	18.6 <sup>E</sup>	9.3	27.8
<b>Other temporary employees<sup>3</sup></b>			
<b>Access to structured training</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Yes	41.6	30.7	52.5
No	58.4	47.5	69.3
<b>Had access to structured training: Typical arrangement</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
At the workplace, outside working hours	18.5 <sup>E</sup>	6.0	31.0
At the workplace, during working hours	60.6 <sup>E</sup>	43.8	77.4
Outside the workplace, outside working hours	1.3 <sup>E</sup>	0.0	2.6
Outside the workplace, during working hours	6.6 <sup>E</sup>	0.0	14.1
More than one arrangement	13.0 <sup>E</sup>	2.0	24.0

... not applicable  
E use with caution

- Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.
- The category "fixed-term employees" includes workers who had an employment contract of a fixed duration.
- The category "other temporary employees" includes on-call, seasonal, casual, and temporary agency workers.

**Note(s):**

Population aged 15 and over who worked as paid employees in 2018 or after, as of February or March 2020 (provinces only).

Structured training refers to structured learning with defined learning objectives and a schedule for activities. Examples include classroom instruction, e-learning courses, workshops, seminars, webinars, web-based training and remote labs.

**Source(s):** Statistics Canada, Survey on Quality of Employment, 2020 (5313).

**Table 4**  
**Access to benefits in current or last job(s) by gender and type of employment (main job), persons who worked in 2018 or after, Canada (provinces only), 2020**

	Workers with access to benefit	Lower limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>	Upper limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>
	%		
<b>Total, last worked in 2018 or after</b>			
Pension plan	51.2	48.6	53.7
Paid sick leave	52.1	49.3	54.8
Paid vacation leave	60.9	58.3	63.6
Disability insurance or death benefits	48.3	45.6	51.0
Supplemental medical or dental care	54.0	51.3	56.7
Workers' compensation	44.8	42.3	47.4
Supplemental maternity, paternity, parental or Employment Insurance benefit	41.9	39.4	44.4
Other benefit	4.0	3.0	5.0
<b>Gender<sup>2</sup></b>			
<b>Men</b>			
Pension plan	51.7	48.1	55.4
Paid sick leave	49.8	45.9	53.7
Paid vacation leave	59.9	56.0	63.7
Disability insurance or death benefits	51.4	47.6	55.2
Supplemental medical or dental care	56.1	52.4	59.8
Workers' compensation	47.9	44.2	51.5
Supplemental maternity, paternity, parental or Employment Insurance benefit	40.3	36.7	43.8
Other benefit	4.1	2.7	5.5
<b>Women</b>			
Pension plan	50.4	46.8	54.0
Paid sick leave	54.4	50.7	58.1
Paid vacation leave	62.1	58.5	65.6
Disability insurance or death benefits	44.8	41.2	48.5
Supplemental medical or dental care	51.7	47.9	55.4
Workers' compensation	41.4	37.9	45.0
Supplemental maternity, paternity, parental or Employment Insurance benefit	43.6	40.1	47.2
Other benefit	3.9	2.5	5.3
<b>Type of employment</b>			
<b>Permanent employees</b>			
Pension plan	61.3	58.3	64.3
Paid sick leave	66.3	63.2	69.4
Paid vacation leave	77.2	74.5	79.9
Disability insurance or death benefits	61.7	58.5	64.9
Supplemental medical or dental care	67.5	64.4	70.6
Workers' compensation	54.0	50.9	57.1
Supplemental maternity, paternity, parental or Employment Insurance benefit	52.8	49.7	55.9
Other benefit	4.8	3.5	6.1
<b>Fixed-term employees<sup>3</sup></b>			
Pension plan	42.8	33.6	52.0
Paid sick leave	41.0	31.2	50.7
Paid vacation leave	47.5	37.3	57.6
Disability insurance or death benefits	28.3	20.0	36.7
Supplemental medical or dental care	39.1	29.6	48.6
Workers' compensation	34.8	25.3	44.2
Supplemental maternity, paternity, parental or Employment Insurance benefit	32.2	23.2	41.3
Other benefit	2.1	0.0	4.5
<b>Other temporary employees<sup>4</sup></b>			
Pension plan	21.5	12.4	30.5
Paid sick leave	12.6	5.8	19.3
Paid vacation leave	16.5	10.0	23.1
Disability insurance or death benefits	7.7	1.9	13.6
Supplemental medical or dental care	14.3	7.1	21.4
Workers' compensation	26.9	17.7	36.0



Table 4 - continued

**Access to benefits in current or last job(s) by gender and type of employment (main job), persons who worked in 2018 or after, Canada (provinces only), 2020**

	Workers with access to benefit	Lower limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>	Upper limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>
Supplemental maternity, paternity, parental or Employment Insurance benefit	19.4	11.5	27.4
Other benefit	0.7	0.0	1.6
<b>Self-employed with employees</b>			
Pension plan	28.0 <sup>E</sup>	17.5	38.5
Paid sick leave	17.0 <sup>E</sup>	8.2	25.7
Paid vacation leave	20.1 <sup>E</sup>	10.7	29.4
Disability insurance or death benefits	23.4 <sup>E</sup>	13.8	33.0
Supplemental medical or dental care	28.0 <sup>E</sup>	17.1	38.9
Workers' compensation	28.6 <sup>E</sup>	17.8	39.5
Supplemental maternity, paternity, parental or Employment Insurance benefit	4.5 <sup>E</sup>	0.0	9.5
Other benefit	5.0 <sup>E</sup>	0.4	9.5
<b>Self-employed without employees</b>			
Pension plan	14.8	8.9	20.6
Paid sick leave	1.1	0.0	2.1
Paid vacation leave	3.0	0.2	5.8
Disability insurance or death benefits	7.3	4.0	10.6
Supplemental medical or dental care	6.9	3.7	10.2
Workers' compensation	5.5	2.8	8.1
Supplemental maternity, paternity, parental or Employment Insurance benefit	2.4	0.0	5.1
Other benefit	1.8	0.0	3.7

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

1. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

2. Estimates for the "other gender" category are included in totals, but cannot be published separately in order to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*.

3. The category "fixed-term employees" includes workers who had an employment contract of a fixed duration.

4. The category "other temporary employees" includes on-call, seasonal, casual, and temporary agency workers.

**Note(s):** Population aged 15 and over who worked in 2018 or after, as of February or March 2020 (provinces only), excluding those who were unpaid family workers in their main job.

**Source(s):** Statistics Canada, Survey on Quality of Employment, 2020 (5313).

**Table 5**  
**Usual work schedule at current or last main job and scheduling preferences, persons who worked in 2018 or after, Canada (provinces only), 2020**

	Distribution of workers within category	Lower limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>	Upper limit – 95% confidence interval <sup>1</sup>
	%		
<b>Type of work schedule</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Regular daytime hours or daytime shift	69.3	66.7	71.8
Regular evening hours or evening shift	6.4	4.9	7.9
Regular night hours or night shift	1.7	1.1	2.4
Irregular hours, irregular shifts, on call, or other schedule	22.6	20.3	24.9
<b>Irregular or other schedule<sup>2</sup>: Weekly scheduling</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Schedule and number of hours did not change	10.9	7.7	14.1
Schedule did not change but number of hours did	14.3	10.4	18.2
Schedule changed but number of hours did not	12.5	8.6	16.4
Both schedule and number of hours changed	62.3	56.6	67.9
<b>Irregular or other schedule<sup>2</sup>: Preference for regular schedule</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Yes	58.4	53.1	63.8
No	41.6	36.2	46.9
<b>Satisfaction with hours</b>			
<b>Regular schedule</b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Worked less than would have liked	8.8	7.1	10.5
Worked as much as would have liked	69.5	66.6	72.5
Worked more than would have liked	21.7	19.1	24.2
<b>Irregular or other schedule<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>100.0</b>	...	...
Worked less than would have liked	22.0	16.7	27.3
Worked as much as would have liked	54.8	49.2	60.5
Worked more than would have liked	23.2	18.8	27.6

... not applicable

1. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

2. Irregular or other schedule includes respondents who selected the response category "other".

**Note(s):** Population aged 15 and over who worked in 2018 or after, as of February or March 2020 (provinces only).

**Source(s):** Statistics Canada, Survey on Quality of Employment, 2020 (5313).

### Note to readers

The 2020 Survey on Quality of Employment (SQE) aims to provide a better understanding of aspects of job quality in Canada from the perspective of workers, including both employees and the self-employed.

The SQE was conducted as part of Statistics Canada's RapidStats Program and was funded by Employment and Social Development Canada.

Data were collected in the provinces in February and March 2020. The approximated response rate for in-scope persons for the SQE is 37.2%. After applying survey sampling weights, the survey is representative of non-institutionalized persons 15 years of age or older who have worked in a job or business in the past two years, who lived in one of Canada's 10 provinces, and who were not living in a collective dwelling or on a reserve.

### Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5313.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).