

Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: COVID-19 and working from home, 2020

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The novel coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) is having a profound effect on the labour market activities, health and social activities of Canadians. Federal, provincial and territorial governments have introduced a series of measures to limit the spread of the virus, including physical distancing. To get timely information about how Canadians are coping with COVID-19, Statistics Canada developed a new web panel survey. More than 4,600 people in the 10 provinces responded to this survey from March 29 to April 3. In addition to content on the concerns of Canadians and the precautions they took to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, the survey includes questions on work location, perceptions of job security, and the impact of COVID-19 on financial security.

Impact of COVID-19 on the labour market continues into late March

The [March Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#) reported that employment declined by more than 1 million from February to March, and that a further 2.1 million Canadians remained employed but worked less than half their usual hours, including zero hours, during the week of March 15 to 21.

New data from Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19 indicate that, as expected, the effect of COVID-19 on the Canadian labour market continued to deepen after the March LFS was conducted. During the week of March 22 to 28, 2.8 million workers were absent from their job for reasons related to COVID-19, including temporary lay-offs.

Not only were millions of workers absent from their jobs, but many who continued to work shifted to working from home.

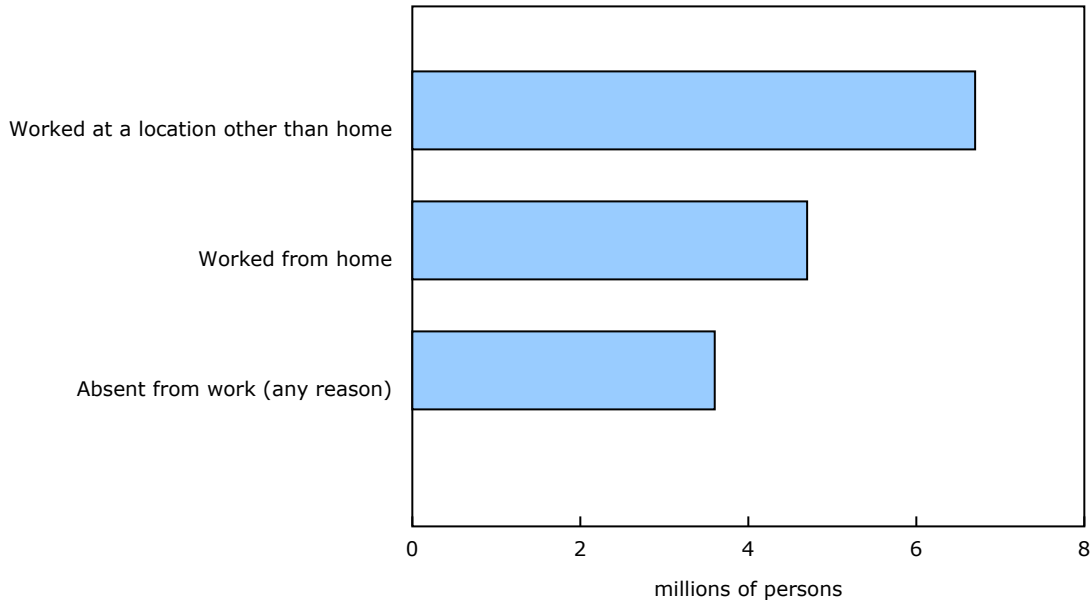
Large increase in Canadians working from home

Approximately 4.7 million Canadians who do not usually work from home did so during the week of March 22 to 28.



Chart 1

Almost five million workers who don't usually work from home did so during the week of March 22 to March 28, 2020



Note(s): The chart shows work locations during the week of March 22 to 28 for workers who usually work from a location other than home.
Source(s): Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19 (5311).

When those who usually work from home are included, 4 in 10 workers (39.1% or 6.8 million) worked from home during the week of March 22. About the same number (38.5% or 6.7 million) worked at locations other than home. In addition, approximately 2 in 10 workers (22.4% or 3.9 million) were absent from their jobs, with 2.8 million of them being absent for reasons related to COVID-19.

Working from home more common for those with higher levels of education

Developing a full understanding of the number of Canadians working from home is essential for measuring Canada's capacity to support ongoing economic activity, while protecting the health and safety of both workers and the greater public.

An important finding of the March LFS was that employment declines were greatest in occupations—such as those in sales and services—which require face-to-face interactions or where working from home is not practical. In contrast, employment was little changed in several broad occupational categories for which previous Statistics Canada data suggest telework is more feasible, including management, natural and applied sciences, and business, finance and administration.

Based on results from the Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19, those who do not normally work from home but did so during the week of March 22 were much more likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher (58.4%) than those who had continued to work outside the home (21.5%) and those who were absent from work (26.9%). This provides further evidence that working from home is more feasible for workers employed in professional or managerial occupations, which typically require higher levels of education.

The April LFS will provide further information on the sustainability of working from home and whether employment losses in March, concentrated in public-facing jobs in the services-producing sectors, will spread to other occupational categories.

Table 1
Change in main place of work by level of education, Canada, March 22 to March 28, 2020

	High school or less	Postsecondary below bachelor's level	Bachelor's degree or higher
	%		
Work location has changed from outside the home to at home	F	31.1	58.4
Work location remains at home	F	30.9	45.5
Work location remains outside the home	25.9	52.6	21.5
Absent from work (any reason)	31.8	41.3	26.9

F too unreliable to be published

Note(s): Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source(s): Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19 (5311).

Workers new to working from home just as likely to report having good to excellent mental health

Of those who reported that they did not normally work from home but did so during the week of March 22, about 4 in 10 (39.6%) live with a child under the age of 18, and likely experienced new challenges in balancing work and family life.

Despite this, they were just as likely to report having good, very good or excellent mental health as those who usually work from home and those who continued to work at locations other than home. There was also little difference between these groups in terms of the level of concern with family stress from confinement.

Additional information from the Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impact of COVID-19, focusing on job security and financial impacts, will be released on April 20.

Note to readers

Data in this release are from Statistics Canada's new Canadian Perspectives Survey Series (CPSS), for which a panel of Canadians have agreed to complete a number of short online surveys. The CPSS is a probabilistic panel survey and is therefore representative of the general population. The CPSS enables Statistics Canada to collect important information from Canadians more efficiently, more rapidly and at a lower cost, compared with traditional survey methods. The first iteration of the survey collected data on the current economic and social situation, as well as on people's physical and mental health, to effectively assess the needs of communities to implement suitable support measures during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics Canada would like to thank Canadians who took the time to answer questions for this survey at this time of crisis.

The analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Detailed results from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for March were published on April 9 in *The Daily*. For more information on the LFS methodology and population coverage, please consult the *Guide to the Labour Force Survey (71-543-G)*.

The concepts of worker and work absence in the CPSS are not equivalent to LFS concepts. In the CPSS, workers include all persons who worked or were absent for any reason, including temporary lay-offs. Those who have been temporarily laid off are not treated as absent or employed in the LFS.

Methodology

For more information on the methodology used to produce the data presented in this release, please consult the web page [Canadian Perspective Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19](#).

Canadians are invited to participate in an important data collection on the impacts of COVID-19

All Canadians living in the 10 provinces and 3 territories can participate in this data collection by completing a short online questionnaire through our secure platform. To find out more and to participate, visit the [online platform](#).

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300;
STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca).

To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Vincent Hardy (613-290-3707;
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