

Canadian Social Survey – Well-being, Unpaid Work and Family Time

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Working from home, satisfaction with family time, and work-life balance

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the work environment, which has, in turn, altered daily experiences of family life.

Though working from home was not an option for many, new data from the Canadian Social Survey (CSS) show that some changes were associated with favourable views about family life.

For example, among Canadians working from home all of the time, satisfaction with the amount of time spent as a family and satisfaction with work-life balance was higher than among those who commuted to a workplace outside of the home.

At the same time, remote work had real effects on the economy and businesses, and some workers may have faced challenges while working from home. However, this release focuses only on specific aspects of satisfaction with family time and work-life balance associated with working from home.

This third iteration of the CSS, released today, focused on well-being, unpaid work and family time. The data were gathered from October 26 to December 7, 2021, before Canada's fifth wave of the pandemic. This was also a time when public health measures were less restrictive across the country and most schools and many workplaces were open ("Covid-19 Restrictions Index Construction and the Effect of Restrictions on economic variables," forthcoming).

The results presented in this release apply to people in Canada aged 15 to 64, highlighting their work location at that time, their satisfaction with the amount and quality of time spent as a family, and satisfaction with their work-life balance.

Further information gathered in the CSS, including some key indicators from the [National Quality of Life Framework](#), as well as data on unpaid work and division of chores in the household, will continue to be released in the coming months.

About one in five people in Canada work from home all of the time

From October to December 2021, 21% of working Canadians reported working from home all of the time, while an additional 18% worked from home some of the time. The remaining 62% of respondents worked outside of the home. In contrast, in 2016, before the pandemic, about 1 in 20 employees [worked most of their hours from home](#).

Table 1
Current work location, by selected characteristics, among working-aged population (15 to 64 years) in Canadian provinces

	Working from home all of the time	Working from home some of the time	Working at workplace outside home all of the time
	%		
Total	20.6	17.8	61.6
Gender			
Men	19.1	16.6	64.3
Women	22.6	19.3	58.1
Age group			
15 to 34 years	19.1	15.5	65.4
35 to 54 years	22.0	19.1	58.9
55 to 64 years	19.6	18.4	62.0
Rural vs. urban			
Rural	13.5 ^E	11.3 ^E	75.2
Urban	21.6	18.7	59.7
Region			
Atlantic provinces	15.1	16.4	68.5
Quebec	21.1	18.3	60.6
Ontario	25.7	17.8	56.5
Prairie provinces	14.8	17.3	67.9
British Columbia	16.2 ^E	18.2 ^E	65.6
Highest level of education			
High school diploma or below ¹	9.5	8.1	82.4
Postsecondary certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level ²	17.1	17.8	65.1
University certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor's level or higher	32.5	25.0	42.5

^E use with caution

1. High school diploma or below includes less than high school diploma or its equivalent as well as high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate.
2. Postsecondary certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level includes trades certificate or diploma, college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma, and university certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level.

Source(s): Canadian Social Survey: Well-being, unpaid work and family time, 2021 (5354).

Those in urban areas were more likely to work from home than those in rural areas, regardless of whether or not it was all or some of the time. In addition, workers with a bachelor's degree or higher were also more likely to work from home than those whose highest level of education is below a bachelor's degree.

Regionally, workers from Ontario were the most likely to work from home all of the time (26%, compared with 16% in British Columbia and 15% in both the Atlantic and the Prairie provinces). According to the [Labour Force Survey](#), the share of people in Canada working from home has remained stable since August 2021, despite the easing of many public health restrictions.

Conversely, the groups more likely to work outside the home were men, workers aged 15 to 34, those living in rural areas, and those whose highest level of education is below a bachelor's degree.

Canadians working from home all of the time are more satisfied with amount of time spent as a family

The results from the CSS showed that the largest proportion of those reporting high satisfaction with the amount of time spent as a family was among those who worked from home all of the time (70%), and was lowest for those who worked outside of the home (60%). For comparison, the proportion reporting high satisfaction for those who worked from home some of the time was 64%.

For both men and women, working from home was associated with higher satisfaction with the amount of time spent as a family. Note that men and women reported similar levels of satisfaction, both when working from home and when working outside the home.

In addition, satisfaction with the amount of time spent as a family was higher for those working from home, regardless of whether there were children present in the home.

Specifically, among workers who lived in a household with children, 67% of those who worked from home all of the time reported high satisfaction with the amount of time spent as a family. This percentage was higher than among their counterparts who worked outside of the home (56%).

Among workers without children (in a multiple person household), those who worked remotely all of the time (71%) were also more likely to report high satisfaction with the amount of time spent as a family than those who worked outside of the home (62%).

Table 2
Satisfaction with time spent with family, by work location and presence of children in the household, among working-aged population (15 to 64 years) in Canadian provinces

	Working from home all of the time	Working from home some of the time	Working at workplace outside home all of the time
	% very satisfied/satisfied		
Total	69.9	64.3	59.9
Multiple person household, with children	67.3	60.3	56.3
Multiple person household, without children	71.4	67.1	62.1

Source(s): Canadian Social Survey: Well-being, unpaid work and family time, 2021 (5354).

The work location of partners within a family matters as well. Three-quarters (75%) of those with both partners working from home reported high satisfaction with the amount of time spent as a family, compared with 63% of those with one partner working outside the home and 57% of those with both partners working outside the home.

While satisfaction with the amount of time spent with the family varied by work location, satisfaction with the quality of that time did not. Overall, 69% of Canadian workers said they were very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of time they spent as a family.

Satisfaction with work-life balance is highest among those who work from home all of the time

Satisfaction with work-life balance varied significantly by work location. Specifically, the proportion who reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the balance between their job and home life was higher among those who worked from home all of the time (75%).

The proportion of those satisfied with work-life balance was lower for those who worked from home some of the time (69%) and was still lower for those who worked outside of the home (61%).

Men who work at home and women who work at home were as likely to be satisfied with their work-life balance. The same was true of men who work outside the home and women who work outside the home.

Among workers with children in the household, 72% of those who worked from home all of the time reported high satisfaction with their work-life balance compared with 58% of those working outside of the home. The same was true for respondents who lived in a multiple-person household without children.

People living in households where both partners worked at home reported a higher satisfaction with work-life balance, compared with those where both partners worked outside of home. Nearly four in five workers with both partners at home reported a high level of satisfaction with their work-life balance (78%). In contrast, 61% of those with both partners working outside the home reported the same.

Table 3
Satisfaction with work-life balance, by work location and presence of children in the household, among working-aged population (15 to 64 years) in Canadian provinces

	Working from home all of the time	Working from home some of the time	Working at workplace outside home all of the time
	% very satisfied/satisfied		
Total	75.3	68.6	61.0
Multiple person household, with children	71.9	63.3	58.1
Multiple person household, without children	77.0	73.6	61.9

Source(s): Canadian Social Survey: Well-being, unpaid work and family time, 2021 (5354).

The COVID-19 pandemic has abruptly changed how and where people work. As more Canadians have stopped commuting, worked from home or came to consider working from home to be the norm, these shifts have also affected their family lives.

As with all aspects of this pandemic, the proportion of people in Canada working from home and perceptions about family time and work-life balance will likely continue to evolve over the coming months. Statistics Canada will continue to examine other aspects of overall well-being that may be affected by work location, as well as the factors associated with peoples' ability to work from home.

Next steps in pandemic data collection

From February 21 to March 13, 2022, Statistics Canada is conducting a new data collection through crowdsourcing titled [Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians—Testing and Vaccination](#). The results will be released on the Statistics Canada website in April 2022.

Note to readers

The data in this release are from the third wave of the Canadian Social Survey: Well-being, unpaid work, and family time (collected between October 26 and December 7, 2021). The goal of this survey is to understand social issues rapidly by conducting surveys on different topics every three months.

The Canadian Social Survey collects information on a variety of social topics such as health, well-being, impacts of COVID-19, activities, time use, and emergency preparedness. The target population for this voluntary survey is all non-institutionalized persons 15 years of age and older, living off-reserve in Canada's 10 provinces. Statistics Canada collects the statistical information by either inviting a respondent to self-respond to an electronic questionnaire, or by having an interviewer contact a respondent to collect the information using the computer-assisted telephone interviewing method.

The purpose of the [Canadian Social Survey – Well-being, unpaid work, and family time](#) is to gather information about paid and unpaid work, family time, changes to your household, and intentions to have children. Survey results will provide important information about the well-being of people in Canada and help decision makers develop programs and policies to better serve all Canadians.

The aim is to fully understand the needs of communities in order to implement suitable support measures during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics Canada would like to thank all Canadians who took the time to answer the questions during this time of crisis.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5354](#).

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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).