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Quality of Employment in Canada

Relationship with supervisor, 2016

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Relationship with supervisor, 2016

Overview

In 2016, not all employees in Canada had a supervisor who often or always helped and supported them. Employees working at work locations with fewer workers, and in natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations were more likely to have a supportive supervisor. At the same time, fewer employees who belonged to a population group designated as a visible minority, who were a woman, or who had a disability, reported having a supportive supervisor.

An employee's relationship with their supervisor or manager has important implications for their well-being. Having a supportive supervisor may directly reduce work stress or mitigate the impact of other sources of stress. Along with relationships between colleagues, the relationship between employee and supervisor is an important dimension of the social environment at work. The indicator is the proportion of employees who report that their supervisor often or always helps and supports them.

Historical trends

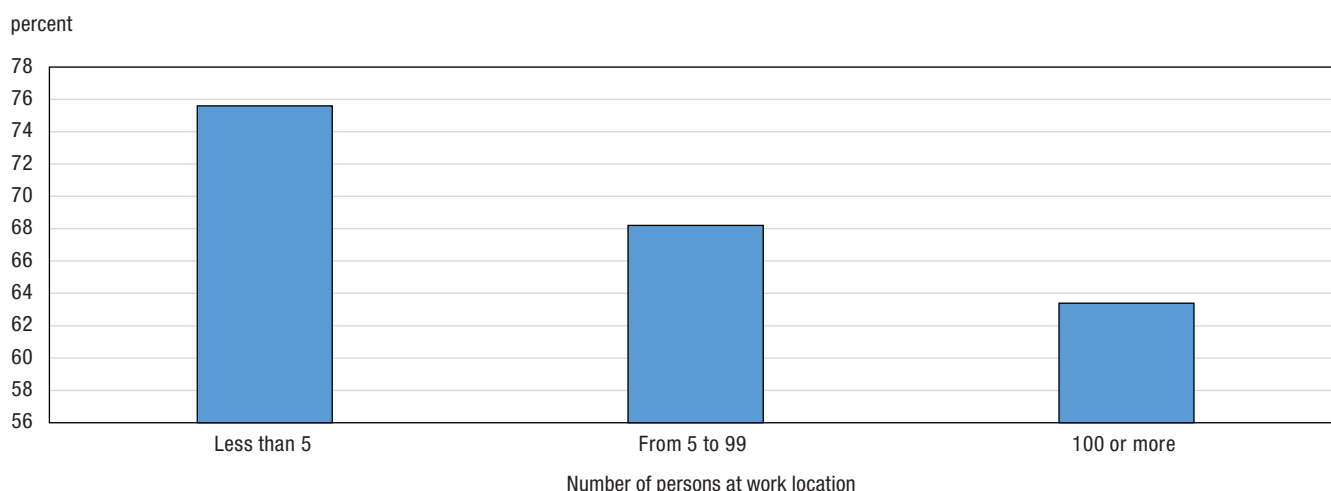
Statistics Canada data from the General Social Survey (GSS) on the relationship between employees and supervisors are currently available for one year. However, the International Social Survey Program (ISSP)—a survey managed by an international consortium of researchers—includes a question which asks respondents about relations between management and employees at their work. Data for Canada are available for 1997 and 2005. In 2005, 63.5% of employees in Canada believed the relationship between management and employees was quite good or very good at their workplace. This proportion was 67.1% in 1997.

According to data from the GSS, among employees with a supervisor, 66.9% reported that their supervisor often or always helped and supported them in 2016. While the GSS measure is different from what is examined by the ISSP, data from both surveys suggest that the majority of employees in Canada had a good relationship with their supervisor in the recent past.

A recent snapshot

GSS data for 2016 indicate that by broad occupational category, the highest proportion of employees who had a good relationship with their supervisor was in natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations (83.5%) while the proportion was lower in health occupations (54.9%). Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations also had the highest proportion of employees with supportive colleagues.

Chart 1
Percentage of employees 15 and over who have a good relationship with their supervisor, by the number of persons employed at their work location, Canada, 2016



Note: Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, custom tabulation.

Working in a smaller establishment was also associated with a greater likelihood of having a supportive supervisor. About three-quarters (75.6%) of employees working at a location with less than 5 workers had a supervisor who often or always helped and supported them. In contrast, the proportion was 63.4% among those working at locations with more than 100 workers. Among industries, mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (76.9%) and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (76.4%) had higher proportions of employees with a supportive supervisor. At the same time, a lower proportion was observed in the health care and social assistance industry (57.7%).

According to the quality of employment indicator on discrimination, in 2016, population groups designated as visible minorities, persons with a disability, Indigenous people living off-reserve, and women, were more likely to have experienced unfair treatment or discrimination at work in the previous 12 months. At the same time, a lower proportion of employees with a disability reported having a good relationship with their supervisor (60.0%) than did their counterparts without a disability (69.1%). Moreover, a smaller proportion of female employees (65.4%) reported having a good relationship with their supervisor than did male employees (68.2%). Visible minority employees differed little in terms of the support they received from their supervisor compared to non-visible minority employees, and Indigenous employees were more likely to often or always receive help and support from their supervisor (74.1%) than their non-Indigenous counterparts (66.6%).

There was also variability across age groups. In 2016, younger employees aged 15 to 24 were more likely to often or always receive help and support from their supervisor (74.7%) than employees aged 25 to 54 (65.9%) or 55 and over (64.5%).

The presence of conflicts can provide further indication of the quality of relationships between supervisors and employees. In 2016, 4.1% of employees in Canada frequently or always had conflicts with their supervisor.

Information on the indicator

Description or definition

The **relationship with supervisor** indicator is the proportion of employees who report that their supervisor often or always helps and supports them.

Information is also provided on the proportion of employees who frequently or always have conflicts with their supervisor.

Source

General Social Survey: Canadians at Work and Home, 2016 (Cycle 30).

ISSP Research Group (1999): *International Social Survey Programme: Work Orientations II - ISSP 1997*. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA3090 Data file Version 1.0.0, [doi:10.4232/1.3090](https://doi.org/10.4232/1.3090).

ISSP Research Group (2013): *International Social Survey Programme: Work Orientation III - ISSP 2005*. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA4350 Data file Version 2.0.0, [doi:10.4232/1.11648](https://doi.org/10.4232/1.11648).

Information for interpretation

The mandate of the General Social Survey (GSS) Canadians at Work and Home is to explore people's views about work, home, leisure and well-being, and the relationships between these life domains. For more information on the methodology and collection, please consult [General Social Survey: Canadians at Work and Home \(GSS\)](#).

The International Social Survey Program is a cross-national collaboration programme conducting annual surveys on diverse topics relevant to social sciences. The "Work Orientations" module was collected in Canada in 1997 and 2005. For more information on the methodology and variables, please consult the following pages for the [1997](#) and [2005](#) surveys.

Occupations are coded according to the National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016, while industry coding is based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 2012. Disability status is established on the basis of the [Disability Screening Questionnaire \(DSQ\)](#).

As the GSS is based on a sample, all estimates are subject to sampling variability. The analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

In the GSS, the concept of Indigenous people includes persons who reported being an Indigenous person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit), or those who reported more than one identity. Excluded from the survey's coverage are persons living on reserves and other Indigenous settlements in the provinces as well as those living in the territories.

The concept is distinct from others used in the Census of Population and the Aboriginal Peoples Survey because it does not depend on Registered or Treaty Indian status, membership in a First Nation or Indian band, or ancestry. As such, self-identification as belonging to an Indigenous group for the purposes of the GSS is entirely subjective. It is similar to the concept of "Indigenous identity" used in the Census.

Other related information

Data on the quality of relationships with supervisors from the GSS are included in the Statistics Canada publication: [Assessing Job Quality in Canada: A Multidimensional Approach](#).

Additional Statistics Canada data are available on the following subject:

[Equity and inclusion](#)