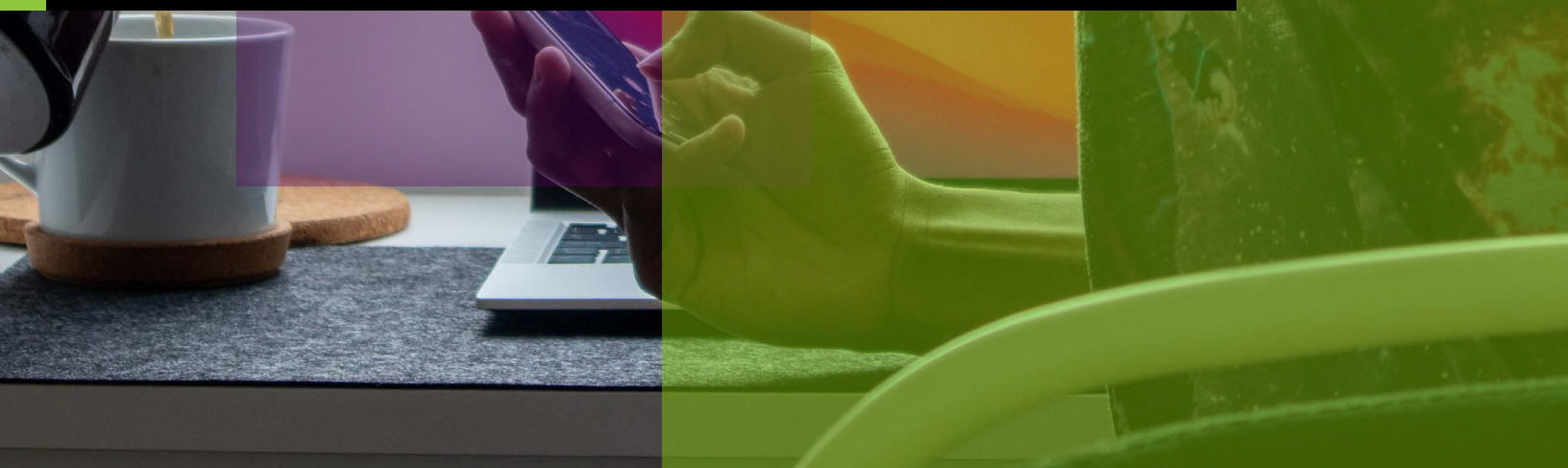




# The shift to remote work:

How workers in Canada are adapting to working from home



**Environics  
Institute**  
For Survey Research



Environics Institute for Survey Research conducts relevant and original public opinion and social research related to issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it has been changing, and where it may be heading.

The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint ADE, and The Conference Board of Canada, and is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

The Diversity Institute conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Our action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by underrepresented groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results. The Diversity Institute is a research lead for the Future Skills Centre.

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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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# About the Survey on Employment & Skills

This report is based on data from the fourth wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills. The survey is conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the Future Skills Centre and the Diversity Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University. In early 2020, the Survey on Employment and Skills began as a project designed to explore Canadians' experiences with the changing nature of work, including technology-driven disruptions, increasing insecurity and shifting skills requirements. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was expanded to investigate the impact of the crisis on Canadians' employment, earnings and work environments. A second wave of the survey was conducted in December 2020, and a third wave in June 2021.

The fourth wave of the study consists of a survey of 6,604 Canadians age 18 and over, conducted between March 1 and April 18, 2022, in all provinces and territories. It was conducted both online (in the provinces) and by telephone (in the territories). This wave of the survey includes oversamples of Canadians living in smaller provinces and territories, those under the age of 34, racialized Canadians and Canadians who identify as Indigenous, in order to provide a better portrait of the range of experiences across the country. The survey results in this report are weighted by age, gender, region, education, racial identity and Indigenous identity, to ensure that they are representative of the Canadian population as whole.

Survey reports can be found online at:

- > <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/listing/-in-tags/type/survey-on-employment-and-skills>
- > [fsc-ccf.ca/research/2020-survey-on-employment-and-skills](https://fsc-ccf.ca/research/2020-survey-on-employment-and-skills)

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# Executive summary

The Survey on Employment and Skills has been tracking experiences with working from home since 2020. The latest wave of the survey, conducted in the spring of 2022, finds that these experiences have become more positive over the course of the pandemic. The majority of those who have been working from home say they prefer this arrangement and want it to continue once the pandemic is over. And most of those who want to continue to work from home prefer to do so on a regular basis, rather than occasionally.

In early 2022, almost one in two employed Canadians worked from home at least some days. Working from home due to the pandemic was more common among people working in office or clerical positions or who are professionals or executives, those with a university education, and those earning higher incomes.

For those working from home during the pandemic, experiences continue to be more positive than negative. Moreover, between late 2020 and early 2022, those working from home became more likely to report positive experiences, and less likely to report negative ones. This is the case both for men and women, as well as for workers employed in different occupations. In the case of parents, experiences of working from home have also become a little more positive (or less negative) since the earlier stages of the pandemic; this change is especially notable in the case of mothers.

While overall, concern about the potential impact of working from home on careers has declined, this concern remains higher than average among younger workers, workers with a disability, and Indigenous Peoples.

The survey also provides evidence that some workers have begun to choose jobs that offer the possibility of working from home, or to reorganize their lives to take advantage of new possibilities offered by remote work. Slightly more than one in ten workers say that, since the start of the pandemic, they have changed jobs and found a new job that is easier for them to do while working from home. And about one in ten have moved to a different community because they now have the option to work from home. These choices are more common for younger workers and those working part-time, and less common for those who are more settled in their careers. They are also more common for those who identify as Indigenous, and for those with a disability that occasionally limits their activity.

Among those who have been working from home, and who want to continue doing so, a plurality would prefer to keep working from home almost every day, and most (two in three) would prefer to do so at least two to three days a week. Less than one in three wish to work from home only occasionally. The preference for working at home most days, rather than occasionally, varies significantly among different groups, however. The most notable difference is by age: younger workers are much less likely to





prefer working from home on a regular basis. The preference for working from home on a regular basis is higher among women, compared to men, and among those with no children in their households, compared to those with children.

Finally, there is no evidence that the experience of working from home during the pandemic is associated with poorer mental health. In fact, the opposite is true: those who have been working at their regular place of work in early 2022 are somewhat more likely to report poorer mental health than those who have been working remotely. This difference is more pronounced for younger workers: among those age 18 to 29, those who have continued to work in their regular place of work report poorer mental health,

and are more likely to feel anxious, lonely or depressed, compared to those who have been working from home.

Employers and managers will need to adapt to the preference for working from home among many workers, while managing the implications for fairness and equity in the workplace (as the option of remote work continues to be more available to those in white-collar occupations). And they will need to be attentive to employee well-being, not only for those working off-site, but for those not working from home but who may now be less directly connected to many of their colleagues.

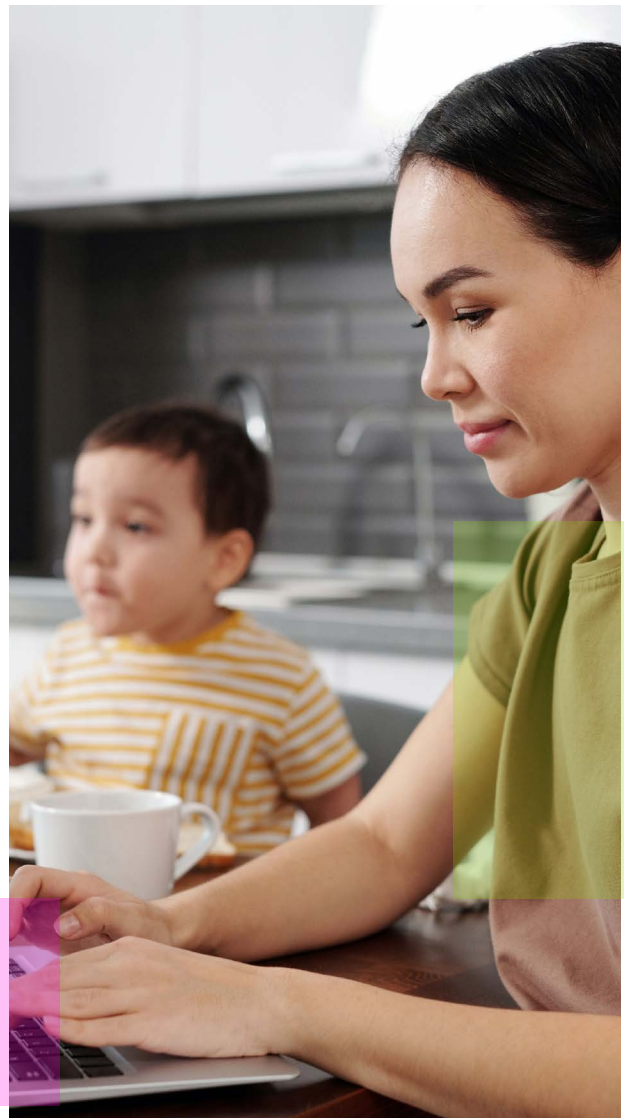
# Background

The COVID-19 pandemic had an immediate and dramatic effect on the working lives of Canadians. Many lost their jobs or had their hours of work reduced as their workplaces closed. Others kept working in difficult circumstances to deliver essential services. And across the country, millions transitioned to working from home.

Some of this disruption was temporary. Once lockdowns were lifted, many workplaces, such as restaurants, bars, gyms and entertainment venues, reopened, allowing their employees to return to work. By June 2021, the employment rate had returned to pre-pandemic levels.

One aspect of the changes sparked by the pandemic, however, appears to be more enduring: the switch to working from home. Despite the difficulties associated with working from home – such as finding an adequate workspace and juggling work and family responsibilities – research quickly showed that overall experiences were generally positive. Now, more than two years after the pandemic started, many want to continue to work remotely. And many employers are coming to terms with the fact that work arrangements may never return to the way they were.

The Survey on Employment and Skills has been tracking experiences with working from home since 2020. The latest wave of the survey, conducted in the spring of 2022, provides more details on the extent to which Canadians have been working remotely, and wish to continue to do so even once the pandemic is over.



# The incidence of working from home

**In early 2022, almost one in two employed Canadians worked from home at least some days. Working from home due to the pandemic was more common among people working in office or clerical positions or who are professionals or executives, those with a university education, and those earning higher incomes.**

Prior to the pandemic, relatively few workers in Canada regularly worked from home. This quickly changed once the pandemic hit, as many workplaces closed. Over the past two years, the Survey on Employment and Skills

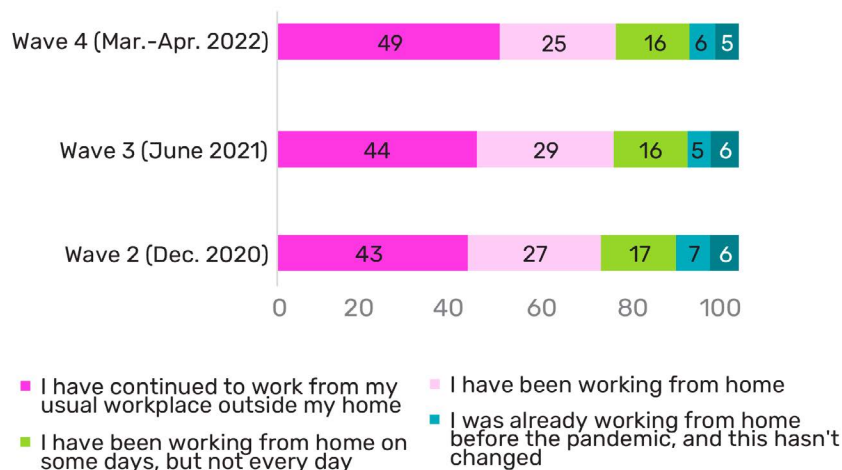
has shown that about one in two employed Canadians has been working from home at least some of time.<sup>1</sup>

The latest wave of the survey finds that, during the first few months of 2022, this situation remained more or less unchanged: almost one in two employed Canadians (46%) were working from home at least some of the time, a decrease of only four percentage points from June 2021.

Specifically:

<sup>1</sup> This includes those already working from home prior to the pandemic.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Location of Work during Pandemic**  
 Subsample: employed



Q24D. Which of the following best describes your work situation during the past three months of the COVID-19 pandemic?



- > One in four (25%) employed Canadians described themselves as working at home because of the pandemic, and an additional 16 percent said they were working from home some days, but not every day.
- > Six percent said they were already working from home prior to the pandemic and that this hadn't changed.
- > One in two (49%) employed Canadians described themselves as working from their usual workplace outside the home, an increase of five points from the proportion that was in this situation June 2021<sup>2</sup> (44%).

The likelihood of working from home during the pandemic varies according to type of employment, occupation, and employee characteristics.<sup>3</sup> In the spring of 2022, working from home at least some days due to the pandemic (excluding those already working from home prior to the pandemic) is

- 
- 2 This figure is higher than that reported by Statistics Canada (for example, in March of 2022, the [Labour Force Survey](#) reported that 27 percent of employed Canadians were working at home either exclusively or some of the time). Statistics Canada uses a different question than that used in the Survey on Employment and Skills, bases its result on workers in a different age range, and includes those with no hours of work. Most importantly, the Labour Force Survey asks about a worker's situation in a specific week, whereas the Survey on Employment and Skills refers more generally to the period over the past three months. Other data from the Labour Force Survey indicate that in January 2022, 43 percent of workers report working most of their hours at home (Statistics Canada, "Main work location of persons who worked at least one hour, by province, week of January 9, 2022," [custom tabulation from the Labour Force Survey Supplement]).
- 3 These patterns generally align with [Statistics Canada's finding](#) that "the feasibility of working from home varies substantially across wage deciles, education levels, industries and regions."

more common among:

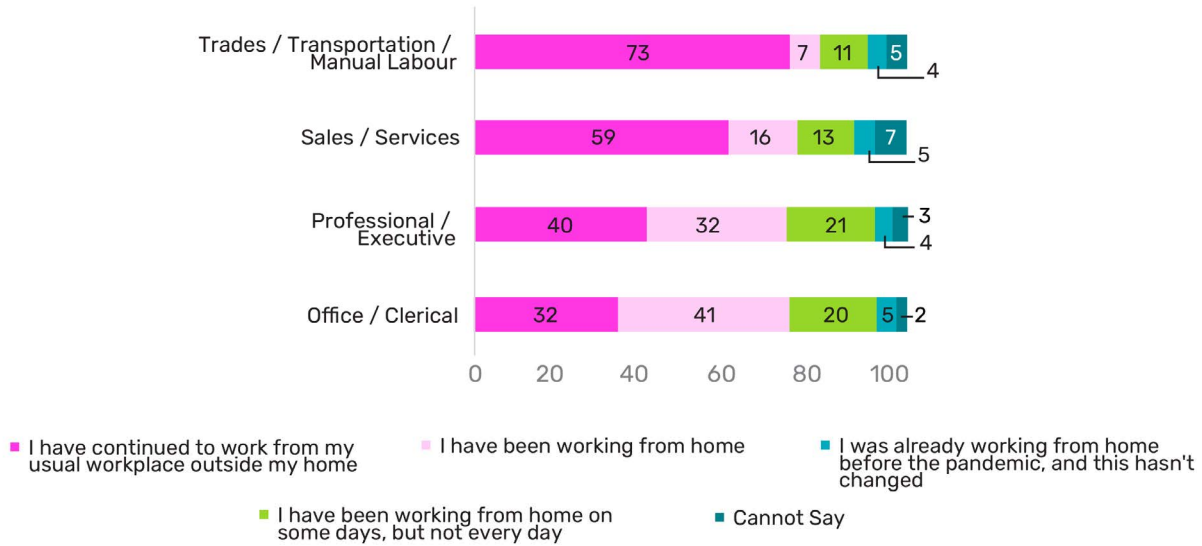
- > Those who are self-employed (48%) or employed full-time (42%), compared to those employed part-time (29%).
- > Those working in office or clerical positions (61%) or who are professionals or executives (53%), compared to those working in sales or service occupations (29%) or who work in trades, transportation or manual labour (18%).
- > Those who have a university degree (52%) or college diploma (44%), compared to those with a trades or apprenticeship training (31%) or who did not continue their education past high school (30%).
- > Those who earn higher incomes (51%), compared to those who earn middle (44%) or lower incomes (32%).<sup>4</sup>
- > Workers under the age of 35 (43%) compared to workers age 55 and older (33%).
- > Those who have a disability (48%) compared to those who do not (37%).

- 
- 4 In this report, low income includes those whose annual household income in 2021 was below \$60,000; middle income includes those with incomes between \$60,000 and \$99,999; high income includes those with incomes of \$100,000 or more.

**FIGURE 2**

**Location of work during pandemic, by occupation (March-April 2022)**

Subsample: employed

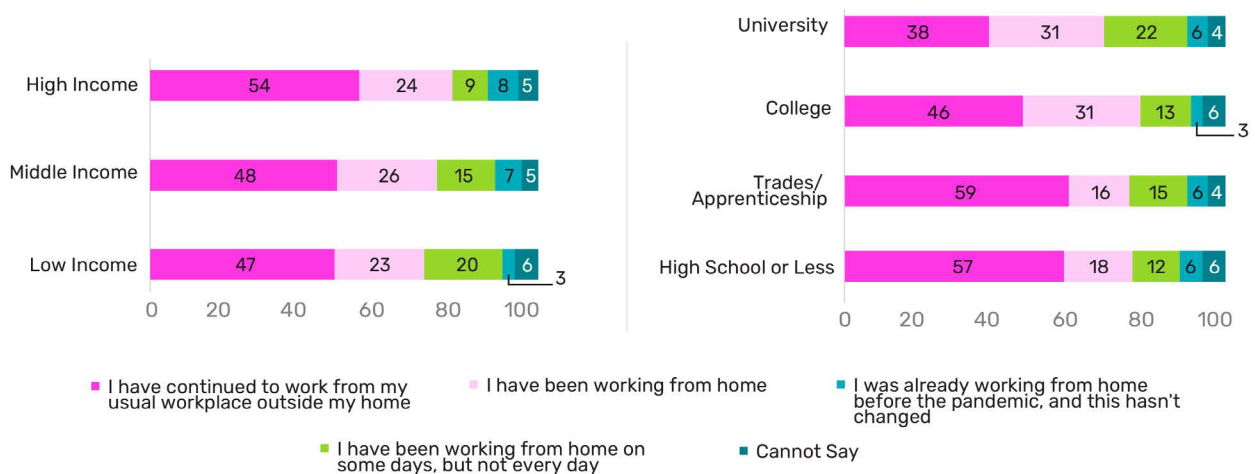


Q24D. Which of the following best describes your work situation during the past three months of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**FIGURE 3**

**Location of work during pandemic, by income and education (March-April 2022)**

Subsample: employed

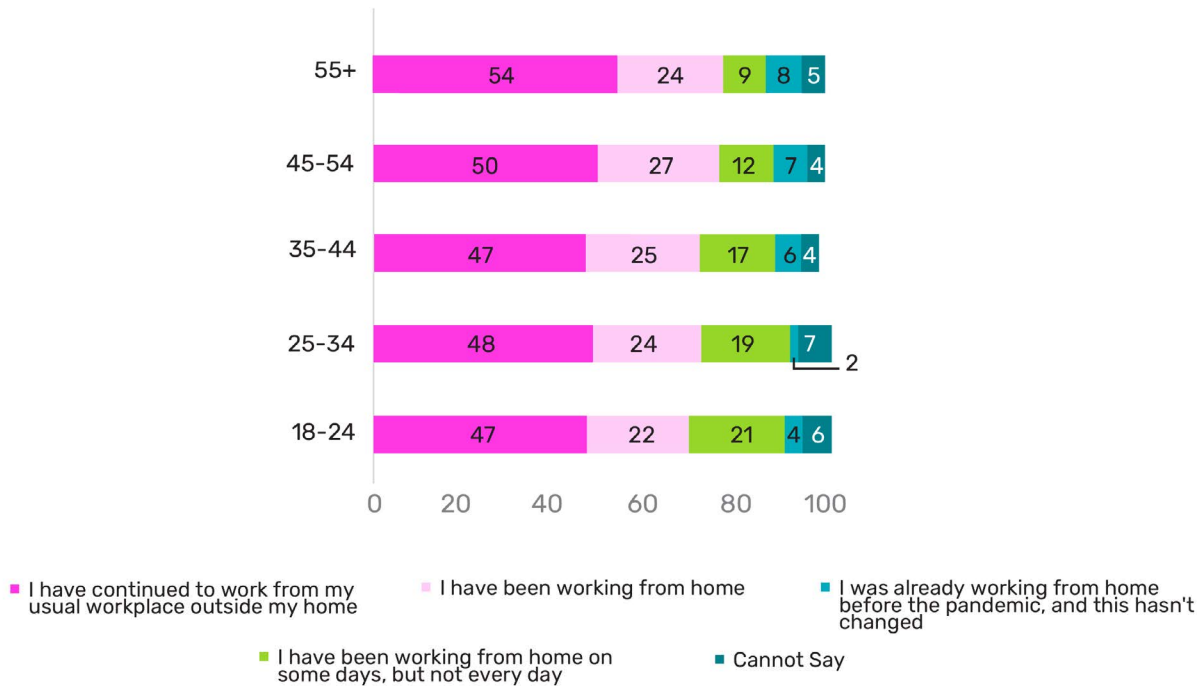


Q24D. Which of the following best describes your work situation during the past three months of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**FIGURE 4**

**Location of work during pandemic, by age group (March-April 2022)**

Subsample: employed



Q24D. Which of the following best describes your work situation during the past three months of the COVID-19 pandemic?

These patterns may have implications for employers and managers as remote work becomes permanent. Certain types of employee, including those who are better paid or in more senior roles, may be better able to work from home than those who are more junior or more on the front lines of service delivery. This situation could exacerbate issues related to inequities or perceptions of fairness in the workplace.



# Experiences of working from home

**For those working from home during the pandemic, experiences continue to be more positive than negative. Moreover, between late 2020 and early 2022, those working from home became more likely to report positive experiences, and less likely to report negative ones.**

Earlier waves of the Survey on Employment and Skills reported that, for those working from home during the pandemic, experiences were more likely to be positive than negative. The latest wave of the survey shows that this remains the case. In the spring of 2022, among those who were working at home at least some days during the prior three months of the COVID-19 pandemic (but excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic):

- > 78 percent agree that they like working from home a lot better than working in their regular workplace.
- > 76 percent agree that once the pandemic is over, their employer should continue to allow them to work from home at least a couple of days a week.

Negative experiences were less common, though still reported by a significant minority.

- > 45 percent agree that when they work from home, they feel like they are working all the time and never have time for themselves or their family.

- > 35 percent agree that they worry that working from home will have a negative impact on their career.
- > 34 percent agree that it is impossible to do their job well when they are working from home.
- > Additionally, among those with children in their household, 40 percent agree that they cannot be a good parent and be good at their job at the same time when they work from home. This figure rises to 52 percent among those with children under the age of five.<sup>5</sup>

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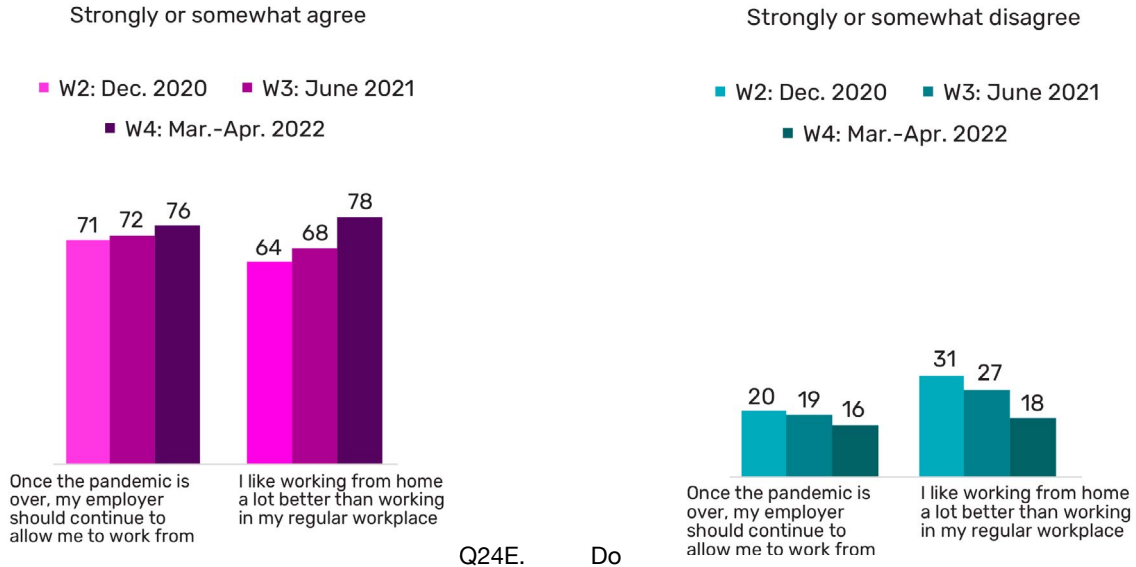
<sup>5</sup> These figures are also based on those who, in Spring 2022, had been working at home at least some days during the prior three months of the COVID-19 pandemic, excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic.



## FIGURE 5

### Positive experiences of working from home

Subsample: those working from home all or some days (excluding those working from home prior to the pandemic)



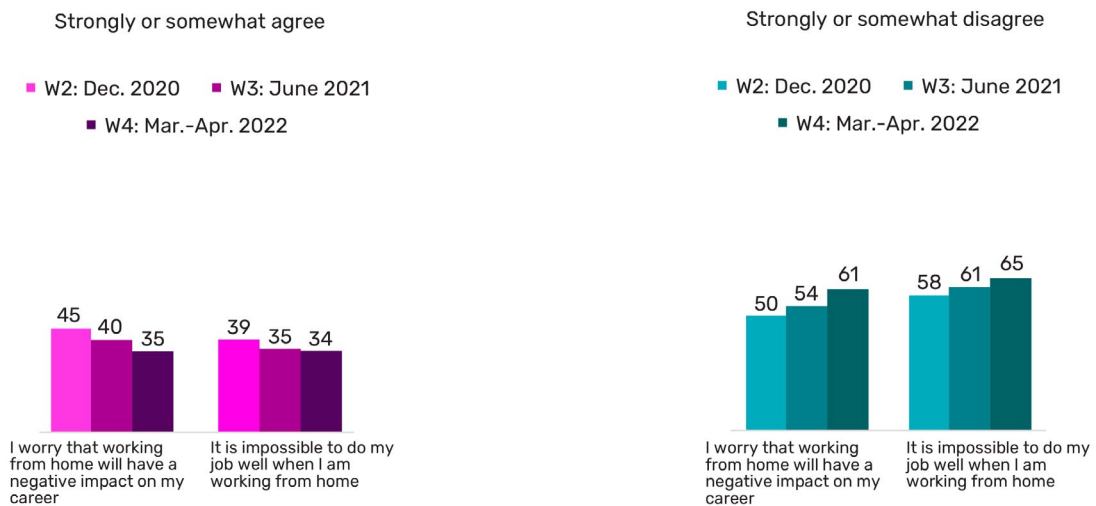
you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home:

\* Asked only to those with at least one child age 24 or younger in their household.

## FIGURE 6

### Negative experiences of working from home (I)

Subsample: those working from home all or some days (excluding those working from home prior to the pandemic)



Q24E. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home:

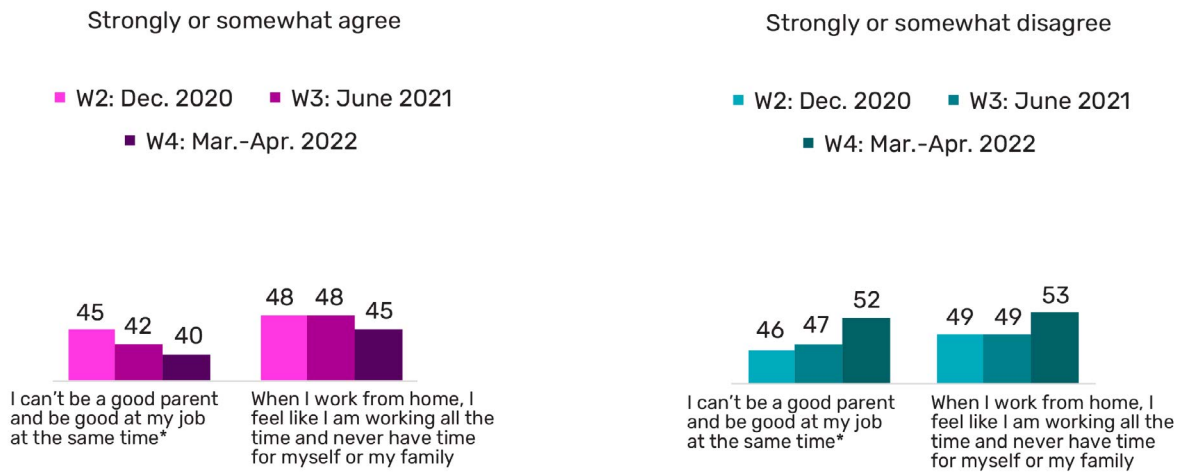
\* Asked only to those with at least one child age 24 or younger in their household.



## FIGURE 7

### Negative experiences of working from home (II)

Subsample: those working from home all or some days (excluding those working from home prior to the pandemic)



Q24E. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home:

\* Asked only to those with at least one child age 24 or younger in their household



The most recent wave of the survey, however, shows that between late 2020 and early 2022, those working from home became *more likely* to report positive experiences, and *less likely* to report negative ones. Most notably, the proportion agreeing that they like working from home a lot better than working in their regular workplace increased from 64 percent in December 2020 to 78 percent in March-April 2022. In the case of the proportion agreeing that their employer should continue to allow them to work from home once the pandemic is over, the change is more modest, but in the same direction: agreement is up five points, from 71 percent to 76 percent.

Turning to the four statements describing more negative experiences, the change generally is also quite modest, but the direction is consistent: disagreement in each case has increased. For instance, the proportion *disagreeing* that it is impossible to do their job well when they are working from home rose seven points, from 58 percent to 65 percent. But, there is one more significant shift: the proportion *disagreeing* that working from home will have a negative impact on their career increased from 50 percent in December 2020 to 61 percent in March-April 2022.<sup>6</sup>

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6 Had the incidence of working from home dropped significantly over this period, then these changes could be explained by selection bias: with the passage of time, those who continue to work from home are likely to be those who feel more positively about the experience. However, between December 2020 and March-April 2022, the proportion working from home at least some days (excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic) declined only slightly, from 44 percent to 41 percent. Therefore, selection bias likely accounts for only a small portion of the shift in assessment of experiences.

Generally speaking, the change in the experiences of working from home have been similar for workers from all backgrounds: in most cases, agreement with statements describing positive experiences of working from home has increased, while agreement with those describing negative experiences has decreased.

This is the case, for instance, for both men and women. However, in the case of the proportion agreeing that they like working from home a lot better than working in their regular workplace, the change has been more noticeable for men (up 19 points) than for women (up nine points). While women were previously more likely than men to agree with this statement, this is no longer the case.

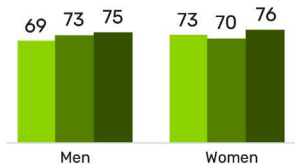
**FIGURE 8**

**Experiences of working from home, by gender**

Subsample: those working from home all or some days (excluding those working from home prior to the pandemic)

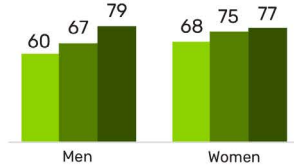
Once the pandemic is over, my employer should continue to allow me to work from home

■ W2: Dec. 2020 ■ W3: June 2021  
■ W4: Mar.-Apr. 2022



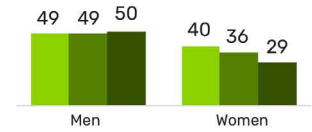
I like working from home a lot better than working in my regular workplace

■ W2: Dec. 2020 ■ W3: June 2021  
■ W4: Mar.-Apr. 2022



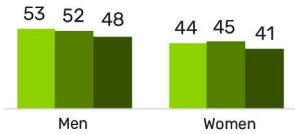
I can't be a good parent and be good at my job at the same time\*

■ W2: Dec. 2020 ■ W3: June 2021  
■ W4: Mar.-Apr. 2022



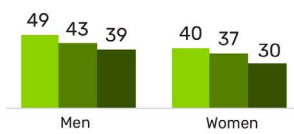
When I work from home, I feel like I am working all the time and never have time for myself or my family

■ W2: Dec. 2020 ■ W3: June 2021  
■ W4: Mar.-Apr. 2022



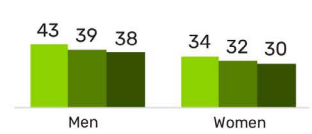
I worry that working from home will have a negative impact on my career

■ W2: Dec. 2020 ■ W3: June 2021  
■ W4: Mar.-Apr. 2022



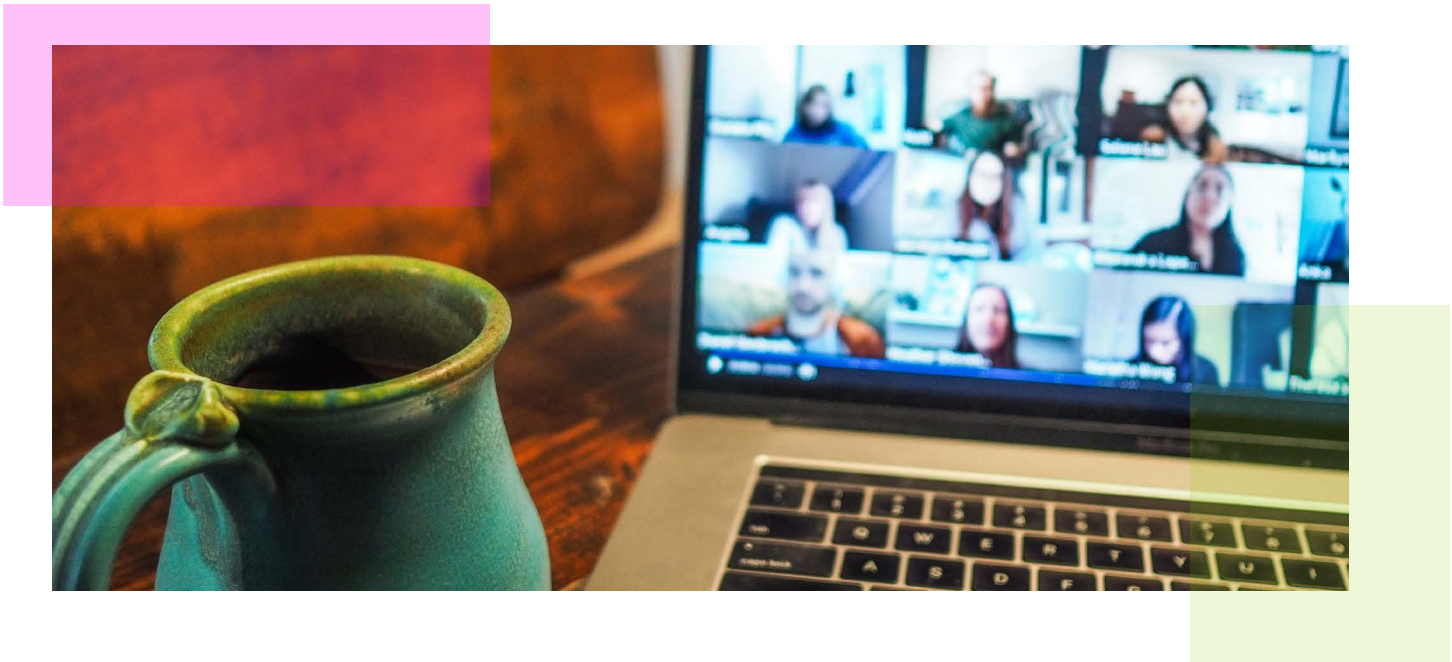
It is impossible to do my job well when I am working from home

■ W2: Dec. 2020 ■ W3: June 2021  
■ W4: Mar.-Apr. 2022



Q24E. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home:

\* Asked only to those with at least one child age 24 or younger in their household.



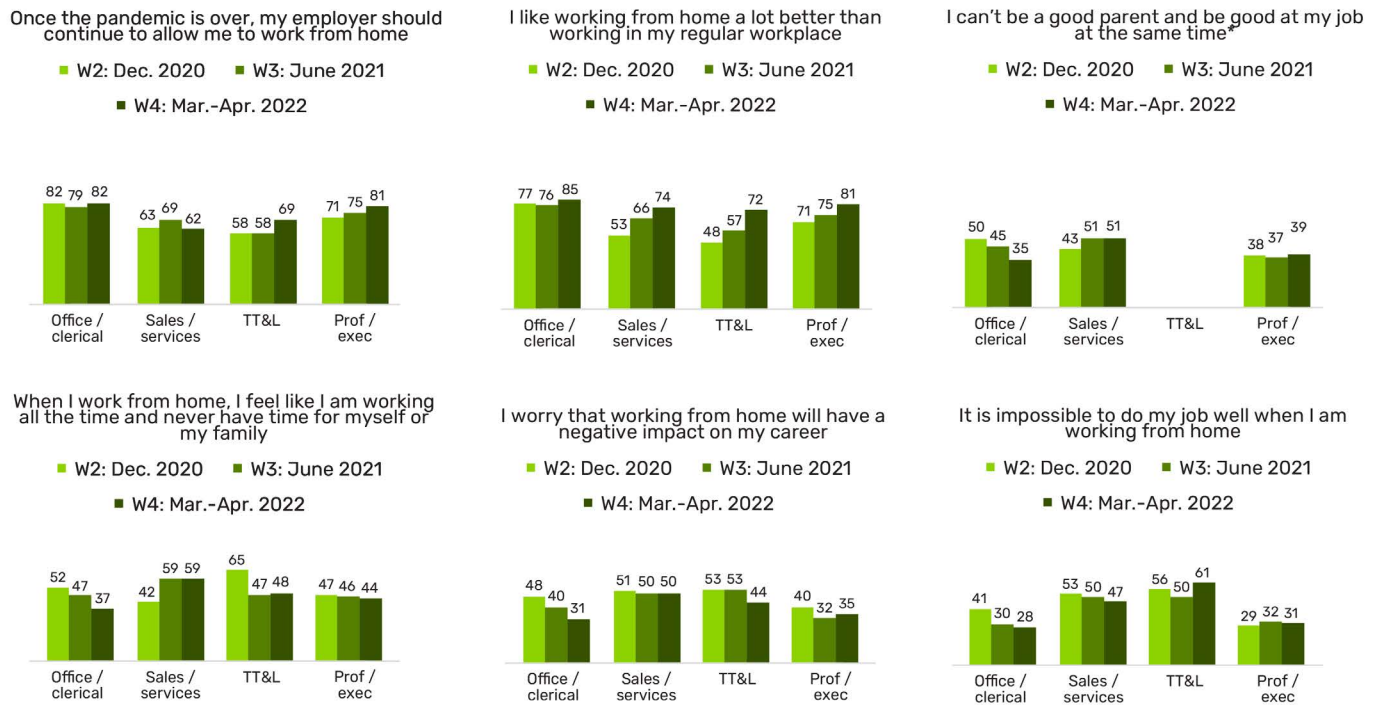
The overall pattern also holds for workers employed in different occupations. That said, agreement with negative experiences has declined most sharply among those employed in office or clerical jobs: concern about the negative impact of working from home on one’s career has dropped by 17 points among office workers, while the feeling that they are working all the time and never have time for themselves or their family has dropped by 15 points. At the same time, agreement with positive experiences has increased most noticeably among those employed in occupations related to trades, transportation or manual labour.

The proportion of workers in these types of occupation who agree that they like working from home a lot better than working in their regular workplace increased from 48 percent in December 2020 to 72 percent in March-April 2022.<sup>7</sup>

7 It is important to recall that workers employed in occupations related to trades, transportation or manual labour are less likely to be working from home, thus this larger change occurs within a smaller group (the sample size for those in these occupations who have been working from home due to the pandemic ranges from 133 in Wave 2, to 149 in Wave 4).

**FIGURE 9**  
**Experiences of working from home, by occupation**

Subsample: those working from home all or some days (excluding those working from home prior to the pandemic)



Q24E. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home:

\* Asked only to those with at least one child age 24 or younger in their household.



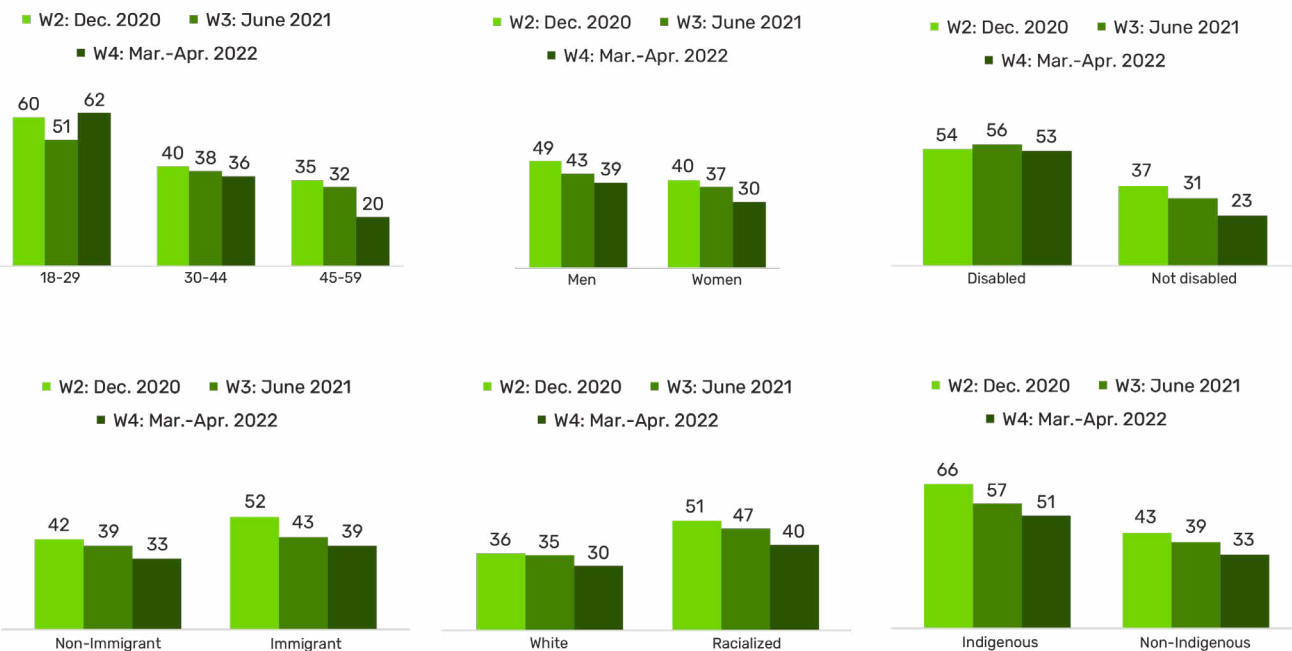
## Concern about the impact of working from home on careers

In the earlier stages of the pandemic, concerns about the impact of working from home on careers was higher among more workers less securely employed or those more susceptible to experiences of discrimination. This included younger workers, immigrants, racialized Canadians, Indigenous Peoples, and those with a disability. The latest survey shows that this remains the case.

**FIGURE 10**

**Agree: I worry that working from home will have a negative impact on my career**

Subsample: those working from home all or some days (excluding those working from home prior to the pandemic)



Q24E. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home:

\* Asked only to those with at least one child age 24 or younger in their household.



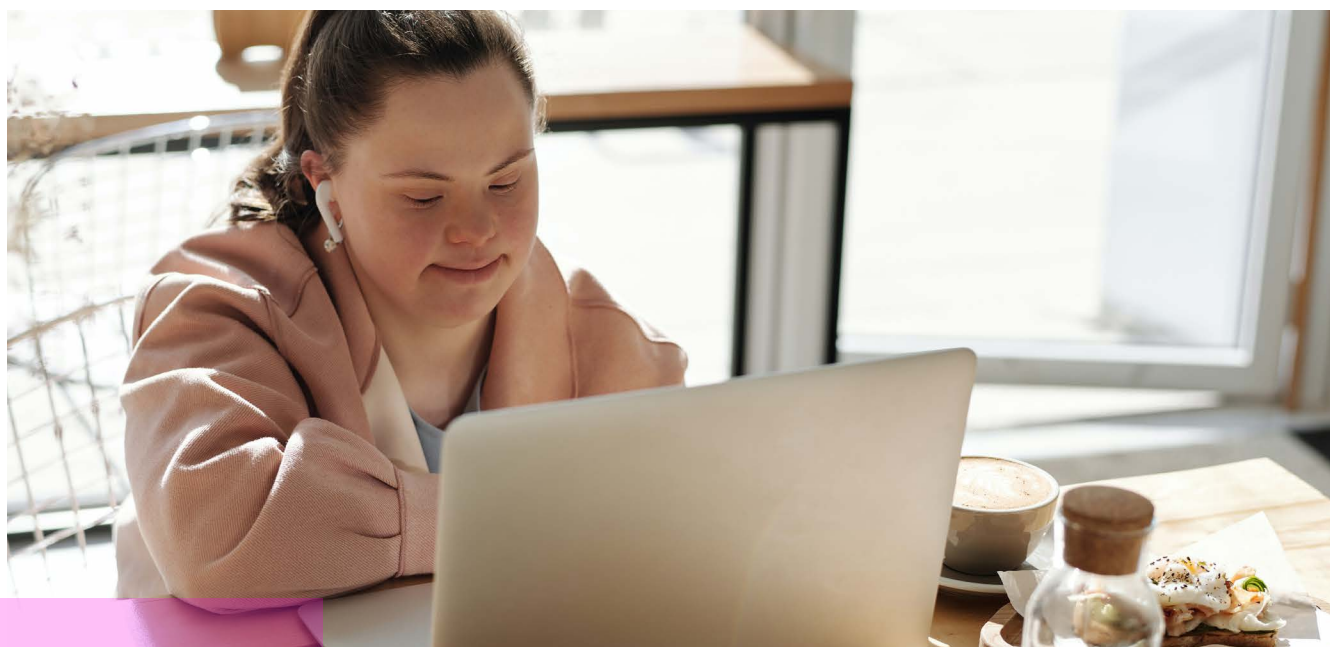
In some instances, the extent of the differences in opinion have narrowed slightly between December 2020 and March-April 2022. For instance:

- > the difference in agreement (with the statement that “I worry that working from home will have a negative impact on my career”) between Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers has narrowed from 23 points to 18 points.
- > the difference in agreement between racialized workers and those identifying as white has narrowed from 15 points to 10 points.
- > the difference in agreement between immigrants and non-immigrants has narrowed from 10 points to six points.

In other cases, however, the extent of the differences in opinion have widened.

- > the difference in agreement between workers age 18 to 29 and those age 30 to 44 has widened from 20 points to 26 points.
- > the difference in agreement between workers with and without disability has widened from 17 points to 23 points.

Overall, concern about the potential impact of working from home on careers remains highest among younger workers (age 18-29) (62%), workers with a disability (53%), and Indigenous Peoples (51%). These results provide a clear indication of where employers and managers should devote more attention in overseeing the transition to more permanent working-from-home arrangements.



## The experiences of parents

Working from home can be more difficult for parents<sup>8</sup>, as the lines between working and family life become more blurred. However, the Survey on Employment and Skills finds that parents' perspectives on working from home have become a little more positive (or less negative) over the course of the pandemic. For instance, in December 2022, among those with children at home, 45 percent agreed that they cannot be a good parent and be good at their job at the same time when they work from home. By March-April 2022, this figure had fallen slightly to 40 percent. The proportion of those with children at home agreeing that when they work from home, they feel like they are working all the time and never have time for themselves or their family, declined from 53 percent to 47 percent over the same period.

These changes are more notable in the case of those with younger children in their households. In the case of those with children under the age of five, the proportions feeling negatively about working from home decreased as follows:<sup>9</sup>

- > the proportion worrying that working from home will have a negative impact on their career declined by 16 points, from 63 percent in December 2020 to 47 percent in March-April 2022.
- > the proportion agreeing that when they work from home, they feel like they are working all the time and never have time for themselves or their family declined by 15 points, from 66 percent to 51 percent.
- > the proportion feeling they cannot be a good parent and be good at their job at the same time when they work from home declined by 10 points, from 62 percent to 52 percent.
- > the proportion agreeing that it is impossible to do their job well when they are working from home declined by five points, from 56 percent to 51 percent.

At the same time, the proportion of those with children under the age of five in their household who feel positively about working from home increased:

- > the proportion agreeing that they like working from home a lot better than working in their regular workplace increased by 13 points, from 66 percent to 79 percent.

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8 For results from March-April 2022, the figures in this text box are based on those who had been working at home at least some days during the prior three months of the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. in early 2022), excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic. For results from December 2020, the figures in this text box are based on those who had been working at home at least some days during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. since March 2020), excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic.

9 The survey asks about the presence of children under the age of 25 in the household. While most of those reporting the presence of children in their household can be assumed to be the children's parents or guardians, some may be siblings or grandparents.

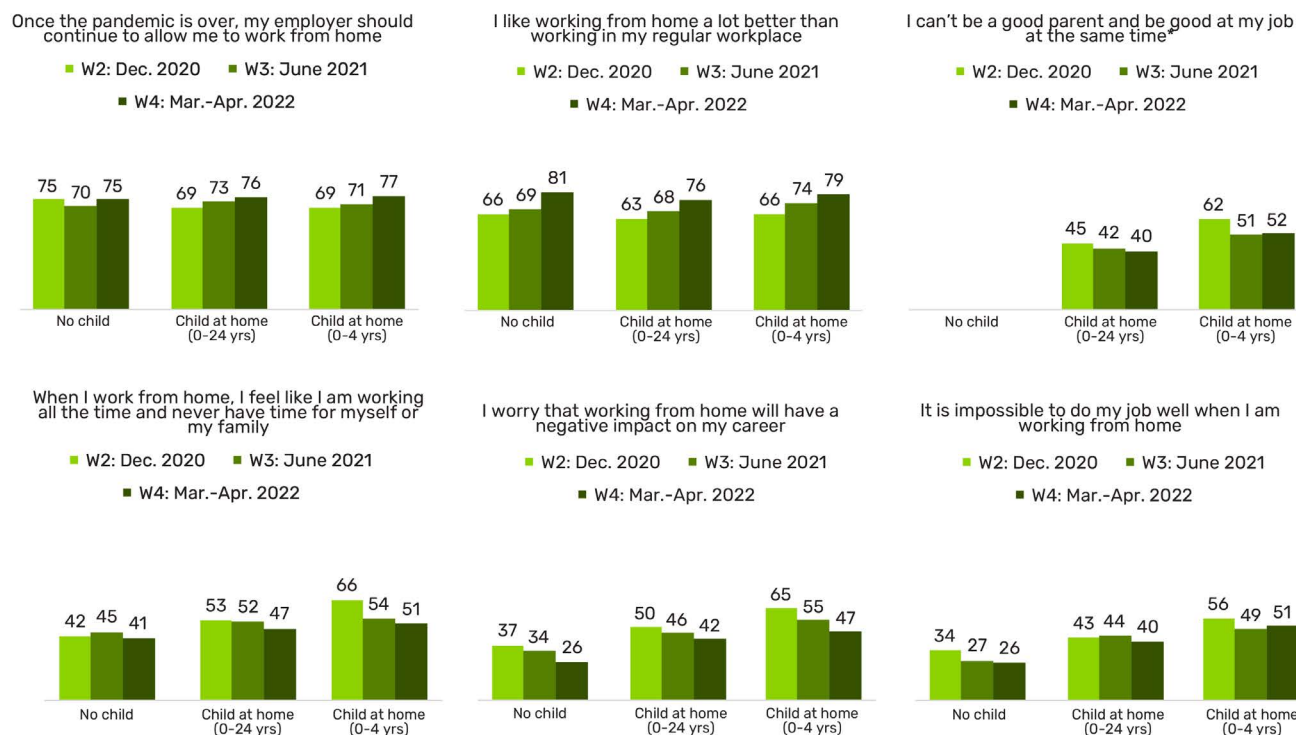
> the proportion agreeing that once the pandemic is over, their employer should continue to allow them to work from home at least a couple of days a week increased by eight points, from 69 percent to 77 percent.

Taking these changes into account, the overall pattern observed earlier in the pandemic continues to hold: parents (and especially parents of younger children) are more likely to experience some of the challenges associated with working from home, yet no less likely to prefer working from home, or to want it to continue after the pandemic is over.

**FIGURE 11**

**Experiences of working from home, by presence of children in household**

Subsample: those working from home all or some days (excluding those working from home prior to the pandemic)



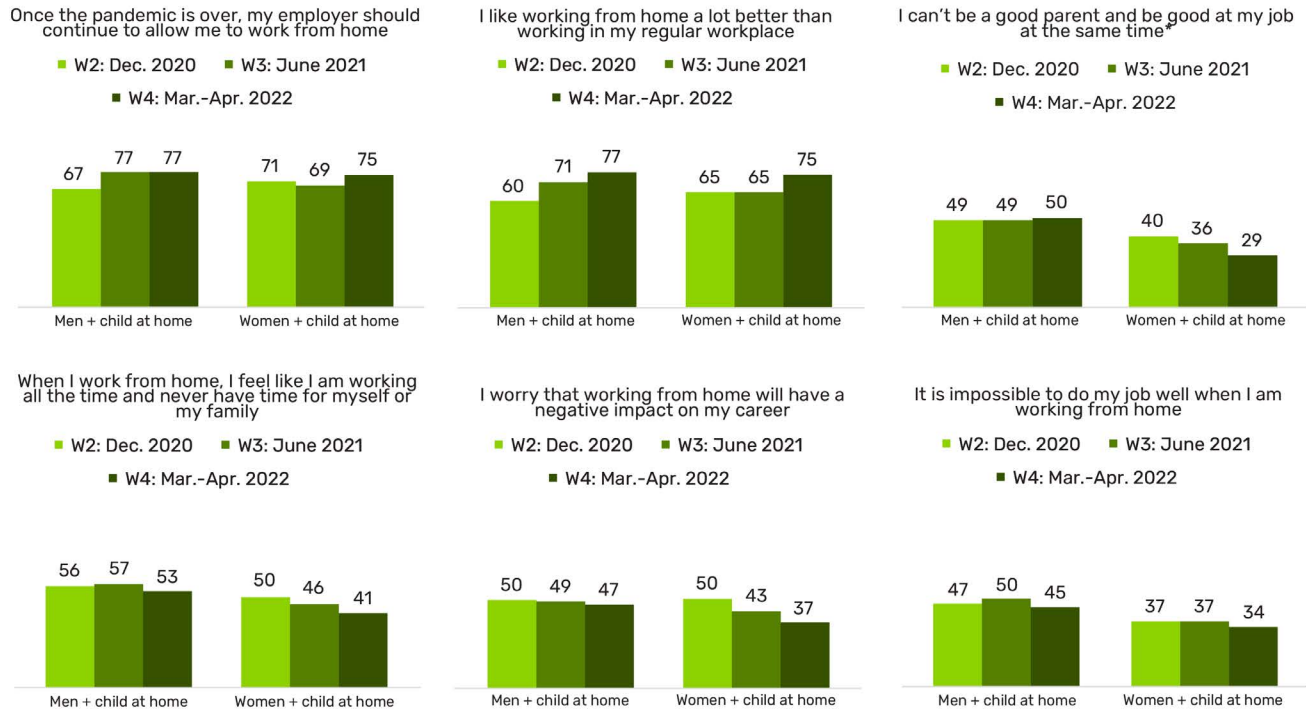
Q24E. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home:

\* Asked only to those with at least one child age 24 or younger in their household.

**FIGURE 12**

**Experiences of working from home, by gender and presence of children in household**

Subsample: those working from home all or some days (excluding those working from home prior to the pandemic)

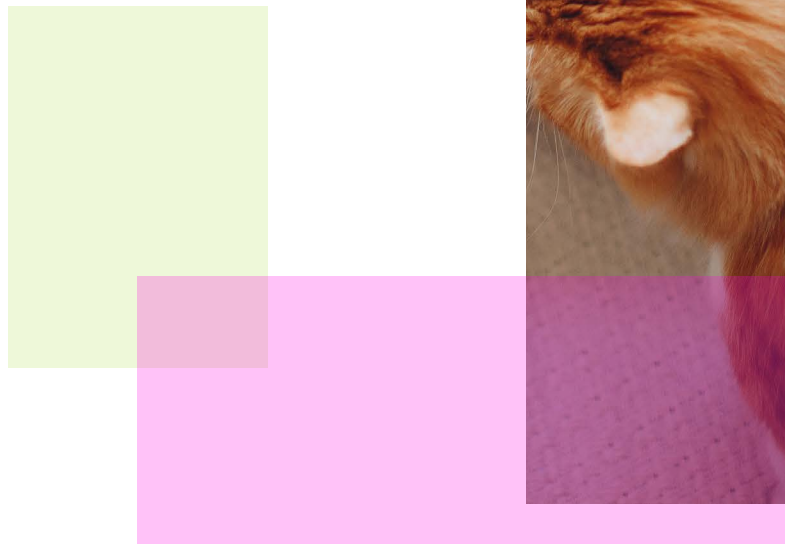
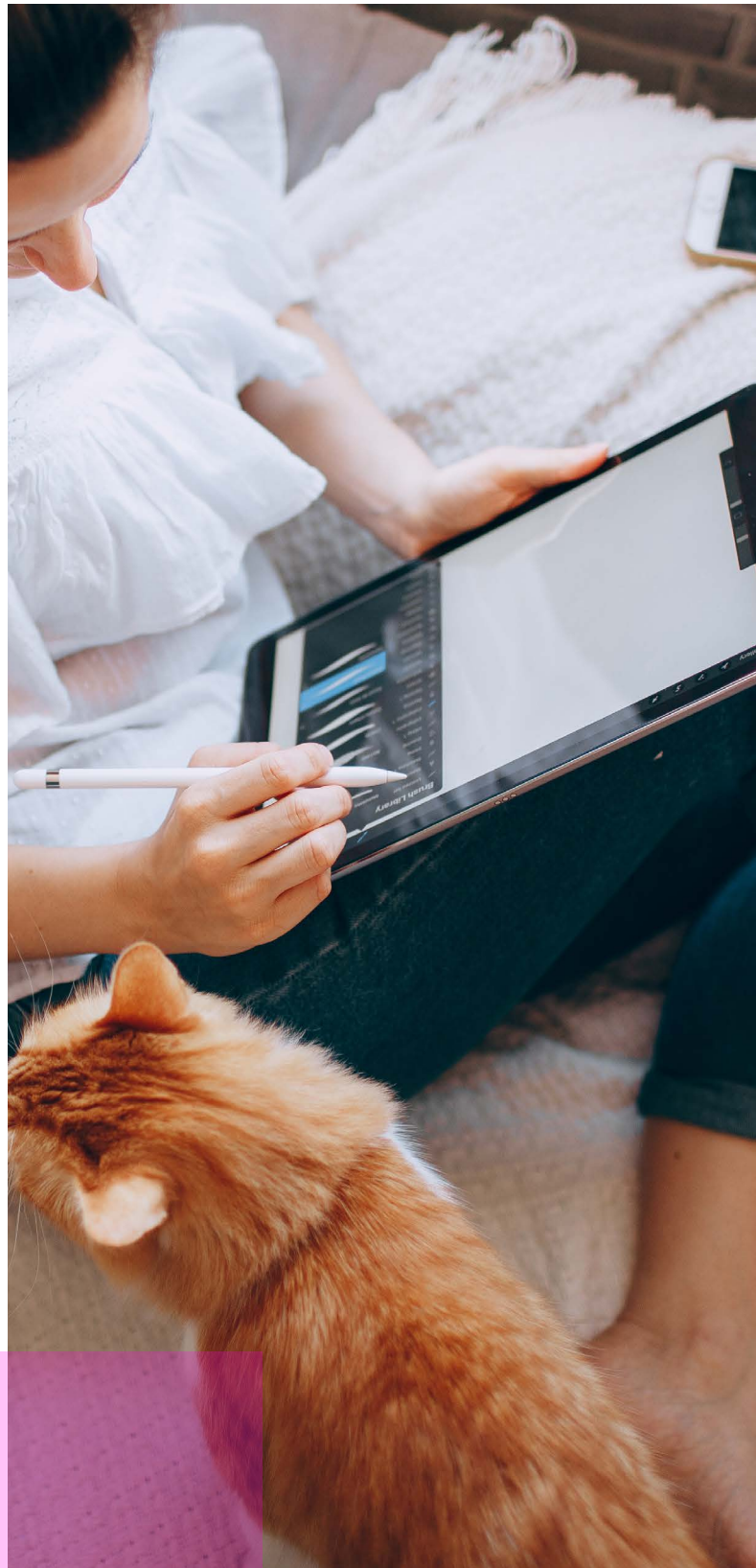


Q24E. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home:

\* Asked only to those with at least one child age 24 or younger in their household.

One additional finding is that decline in negative experiences with working from home noted above is more likely to have been reported by women with children in their households, rather than men. For instance, among women with children in their households, the proportion agreeing that they cannot be a good parent and be good at their job at the same time when they work from home, declined by 11 points (from 40% in December 2020 to 29% in March-April 2022); among men, there was no real change. Similarly, among women with children in their households, there was a nine point drop in the proportion agreeing that when they work from home, they feel like they are working all the time and never have time for themselves or their family, and a 13 points drop in the proportion worrying that working from home will have a negative impact on their career; the corresponding decline for men is only three points in each case.

The result of these changes is a widening gender gap: earlier in the pandemic, mothers were somewhat less likely than fathers to report negative experiences with working from home; now they are now much less likely to do so. (Men and women with children in their households, however, remain equally likely to prefer working from home, or to want it to continue after the pandemic is over.)





# Prioritizing working from home by changing jobs and relocating

Slightly more than one in ten workers say that, since the start of the pandemic, they have changed jobs and found a new job that is easier for them to do while working from home. And about one in ten have moved to a different community because they now have the option to work from home.

As noted, a majority of those who have been working from home during the pandemic like working from home better than working in their regular workplace, and want to continue to work remotely at least some days after the pandemic is over. This raises the question of whether the shift to working from home, originally seen as a temporary response to a public health emergency, may in many cases become more permanent. Some workers may now be actively selecting jobs that offer the possibility of working from home. Others may be reorganizing their lives to take advantage of new possibilities offered by remote work, including the possibility of relocating further away from their employer.

These developments were explored in the fourth wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills by asking two additional questions of those who have been working from home due to the pandemic:

- > Since the start of the pandemic, did you change your job and find a new job that is easier for you to do while working from home?
- > And since the start of the pandemic, have you moved to a different community because you now have the option to work from home?

## Changing jobs to keep working from home

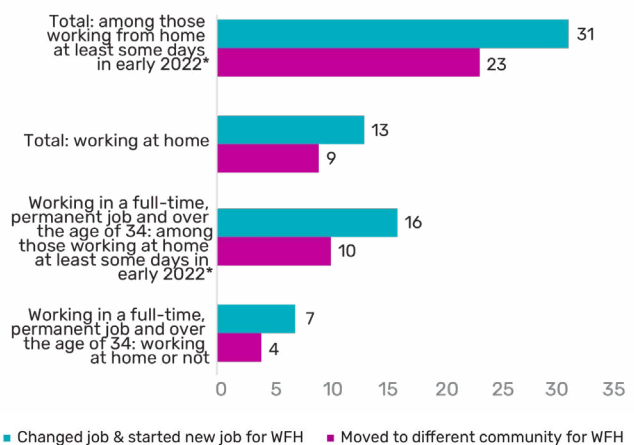
Among those who were working from home in the first few months of 2022 (but excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic), three in ten (31%) say that they have changed their job and found a new employment that is easier for them to do while working from home.<sup>10</sup> This represents 13 percent of all those employed.<sup>11</sup>

10 This does not necessarily mean a change of employer, as some workers may have changed jobs within the same organization.

11 13 percent corresponds to 31 percent of the 41 percent of employees who were working from home in the first few months of 2022, excluding those who were working from home prior to the pandemic.

FIGURE 13

## Changing jobs or moving communities to work from home



WFH2. Since the start of the pandemic, did you change your job and find a new job that is easier for you to do while working from home?

WFH3. And since the start of the pandemic, have you moved to a different community because you now have the option to work from home?

\* excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic

Changing jobs to take advantage of the option of working from home is more common for some types of workers than others (the figures below refer to those who were working from home in the first few months of 2022, excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic).

- > It is much more common for younger than older workers. More than one in two (53%) of those between the ages of 18 and 24, and more than one in three (37%) of those between the ages of 25 and 34, say they have changed their job and found a new job that is easier for them to do while working from home, compared to 22 percent of those age 35 and older.
- > It is much more common among those working part-time (50%) than those working full-time (28%).
- > It is much higher among those working in sales and services occupations (52%) than in other occupations.
- > It is higher among those who earn lower incomes (43%), compared to those who earn middle (32%) or higher incomes (23%).
- > It is higher among those with at least one child under the age of 25 in their household (37%), compared to those with no children in their household (25%).
- > It is much higher among those who identify as Indigenous (64%) compared to non-Indigenous workers (29%).
- > It is higher among those with a disability that occasionally limits their activity (57%), compared to those with a disability that

always limits them (34%), or to those with no disability (20%).

- > It is somewhat higher among those working in the public sector (35%) than in the private sector (29%).
- > It is higher among those who are members of a labour union (41%) compared to those who are not (28%).

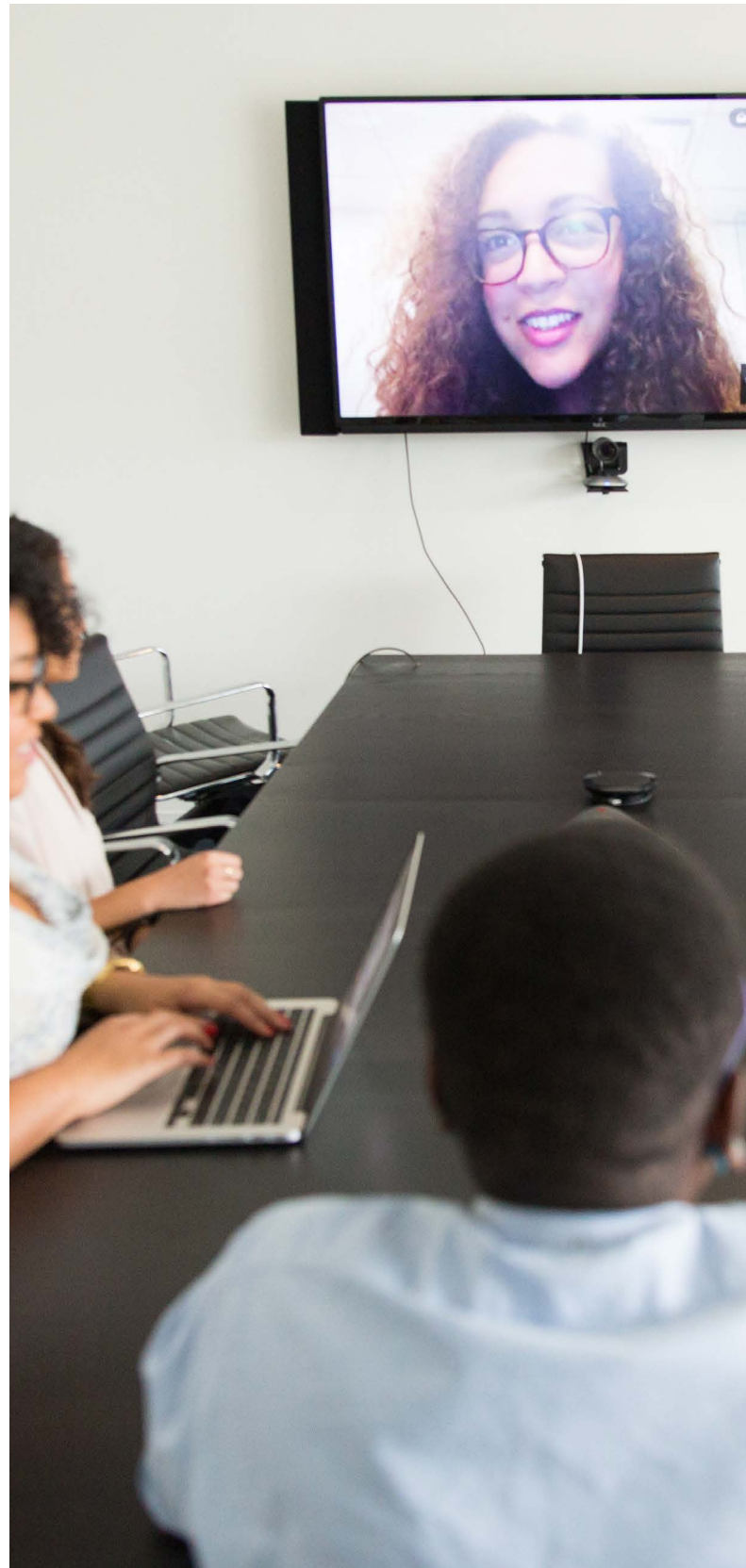
Reviewing these findings, it is clear that changing jobs to take advantage of the option of working from home is less common for those who are more settled in their careers. For instance, among those who are working in a full-time, permanent job and who are over the age of 34, and who have been working at home in early 2022 (but not prior to the pandemic), 16 percent changed their job and found a new job that is easier for them to do while working from home. This represents seven percent of all full-time, permanent workers who are over the age of 34.

There are important interactions between the likelihood of some types of employees have been working at home due to the pandemic, and the likelihood that they have changed jobs to take advantage of the option of working from home.

- > In some cases, those who are less likely to have been working from home are nonetheless more likely to say they have changed jobs in order to work from home (see Table 1). This is the case, for instance, for part-time workers: compared to full-time workers, part-time workers are less likely to have been working from home. But among those who have been working at home, part-time workers are much more

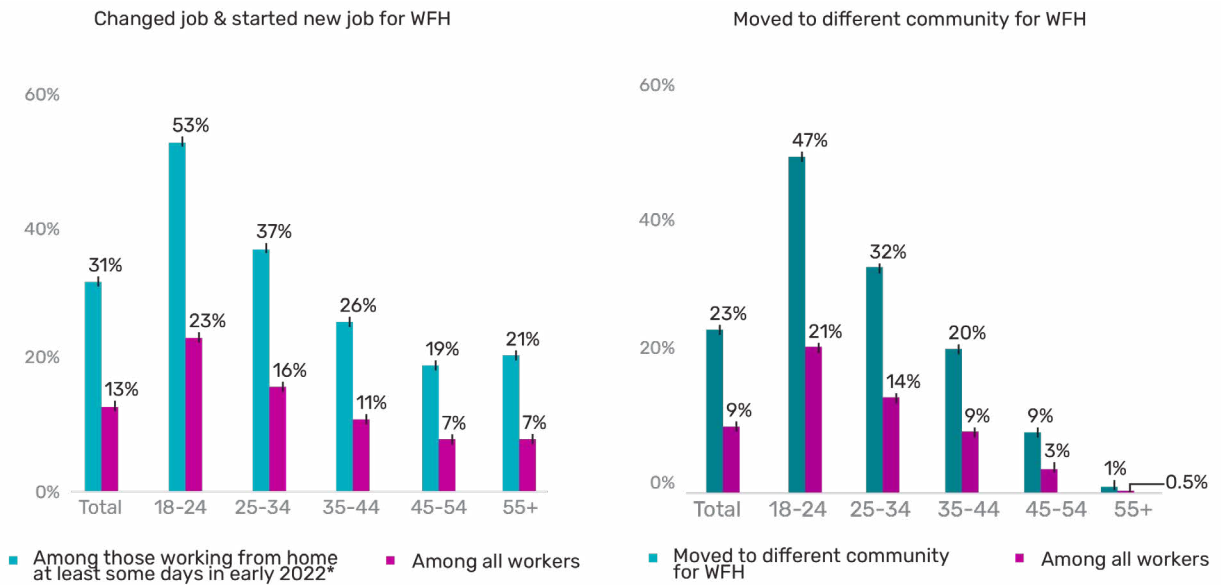
likely to say they changed their job and found a new job that is easier for them to do while working from home. As a result, the difference between the proportion of all part-time (15%) and all full-time workers (12%) who have changed jobs in order to work from home is relatively modest. This same pattern holds for workers in different occupations and with different incomes as well. For instance, as a proportion of all workers (and not just of those working from home), there is not much difference between the proportion of sales and services workers (15%) and office workers (17%) who have changed jobs in order to work from home.

- > In other cases, however, those who are more likely to have been working from home are also more likely to say they have changed jobs in order to work from home; in these cases, the differences between groups are not diminished. As a proportion of all workers, for instance, younger workers are three times more likely than older workers to say they changed their job and found a new job that is easier for them to do while working from home. This pattern also holds for Indigenous workers compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts, and those with a disability that occasionally limits their activity compared to those with no disability.



**FIGURE 14**

**Changing jobs or moving communities to work from home, by age group**



WFH2. Since the start of the pandemic, did you change your job and find a new job that is easier for you to do while working from home?

WFH3. And since the start of the pandemic, have you moved to a different community because you now have the option to work from home?

\* excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic

Taking these patterns into account, the three groups of workers that stand out as most likely to say they have changed jobs in order to work from home, when viewed as a proportion of all workers (and not just those who have been working at home), are those who identify as Indigenous (40%), those with a disability that occasionally limits their activity (28%), and those who are between the ages of 18 and 24 (23%).





## *Moving communities while working from home*

Among those who were working from home in the first few months of 2022 (but excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic), 23 percent say that, since the start of the pandemic, they have moved to a different community because they now have the option to work from home. This represents nine percent of all those employed.<sup>12</sup>

As is the case with changing jobs, moving communities to take advantage of the option of working from home is more common for some types of workers than others (the figures that follow continue to refer to those who were working from home in first few months of 2022, excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic). It is much more common among younger workers, those who identify as Indigenous, those with a disability that occasionally limits their activity, those working in sales and services occupations or in trades, transportation, or manual labour, those earning lower incomes, those with at least one child under the age of 25 in their household, those working in the public sector, and union members.

Once again, however, some of those who – if they are working from home – are more likely to move communities to take advantage of the option of working from home, are nonetheless less likely to be working from home (see Table 1). This is the case, for instance, for those with jobs related to

trades, transportation or manual labour. Among those working from home, they are among the most likely to have moved communities to take advantage of the option of working from home, but as a proportion of all workers, they are the least likely to have done so. Similarly, among those who are working from home, part-time workers are more likely than their full-time counterparts to say they have moved communities to take advantage of the option of working from home; among all workers, however, there is little difference between these two groups.

Taking this into account, the three groups of worker that stand out as most likely to say they have moved communities to take advantage of the option of working from home, when viewed as a proportion of all workers (and not just those who have been working at home), are once again those who identify as Indigenous (35%), those with a disability that occasionally limits their activity (26%), and those who are between the ages of 18 and 24 (21%). Movers are also twice as likely to work in the public sector (15%) than in the private sector (7%).

The proportion who have moved communities to take advantage of the option of working from home is lower among those who are working in a full-time, permanent job and who are over the age of 34: among those in this group who have been working at home in early 2022 (but not prior to the pandemic), 10 percent moved to a different community because they now have the option to work from home. This represents four percent of all full-time, permanent workers who are over the age of 34.

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<sup>12</sup> Nine percent corresponds to 23 percent of the 41 percent of employees who were working from home in the first few months of 2022, excluding those who were working from home prior to the pandemic.



**Table 1: Changing jobs and moving communities to continue working from home**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Working from home during past three months*</b>	<b>Changed jobs to work from home (% of those working from home)</b>	<b>Changed jobs to work from home (% of all employed)</b>	<b>Moved communities to work from home (% of those working from home)</b>	<b>Moved communities to work from home (% of all employed)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>31.4%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>9.2%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>40.2%</b>	<b>31.1%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>24.7%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>
	<b>Women</b>	<b>40.4%</b>	<b>31.5%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-24</b>	<b>43.4%</b>	<b>52.9%</b>	<b>23.0%</b>	<b>47.2%</b>	<b>20.5%</b>
	<b>25-34</b>	<b>43.4%</b>	<b>52.9%</b>	<b>23.0%</b>	<b>47.2%</b>	<b>20.5%</b>
	<b>35-44</b>	<b>42.8%</b>	<b>36.6%</b>	<b>15.7%</b>	<b>31.6%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>
	<b>45-54</b>	<b>39.0%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
	<b>55+</b>	<b>32.9%</b>	<b>20.5%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>42.2%</b>	<b>28.0%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>22.5%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
	<b>Part-time</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>49.4%</b>	<b>14.5%</b>	<b>31.0%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Office or clerical</b>	<b>60.9%</b>	<b>28.4%</b>	<b>17.3%</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>
	<b>Sales or services</b>	<b>28.8%</b>	<b>52.5%</b>	<b>15.1%</b>	<b>45.0%</b>	<b>13.0%</b>
	<b>Trades, transportation or manual labour</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>39.4%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>40.2%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>
	<b>Professional or executive</b>	<b>53.3%</b>	<b>21.9%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>15.7%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>Low income</b>	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>42.8%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>33.0%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>
	<b>Middle income</b>	<b>44.3%</b>	<b>32.0%</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>20.2%</b>	<b>8.9%</b>
	<b>High income</b>	<b>51.3%</b>	<b>23.3%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>9.2%</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Disability: occasionally limits</b>	<b>49.8%</b>	<b>56.8%</b>	<b>28.3%</b>	<b>51.6%</b>	<b>25.7%</b>
	<b>Disability: always limits</b>	<b>45.2%</b>	<b>33.9%</b>	<b>15.3%</b>	<b>25.3%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>
	<b>No disability</b>	<b>37.4%</b>	<b>20.3%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>
<b>Children in the household</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>15.8%</b>	<b>29.5%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>
	<b>No children</b>	<b>37.4%</b>	<b>25.2%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>15.2%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
<b>Sector of employment</b>	<b>Public sector</b>	<b>45.4%</b>	<b>35.0%</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>32.2%</b>	<b>14.6%</b>
	<b>Private sector</b>	<b>39.8%</b>	<b>29.1%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>17.4%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>

<b>Union membership</b>	<b>Union member</b>	<b>38.6%</b>	<b>41.5%</b>	<b>16.0%</b>	<b>36.2%</b>	<b>14.0%</b>
	<b>Non-union</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>17.8%</b>	<b>7.3%</b>
<b>Indigenous Identity</b>	<b>Indigenous</b>	<b>63.0%</b>	<b>63.1%</b>	<b>39.8%</b>	<b>56.2%</b>	<b>35.4%</b>
	<b>Non - Indigenous</b>	<b>39.1%</b>	<b>28.7%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>



# Continuing to work from home after the pandemic is over

Among those who have been working from home, and who want to continue doing so, a plurality would prefer to keep working from home almost every day, and most (two in three) would prefer to do so at least two to three days a week.

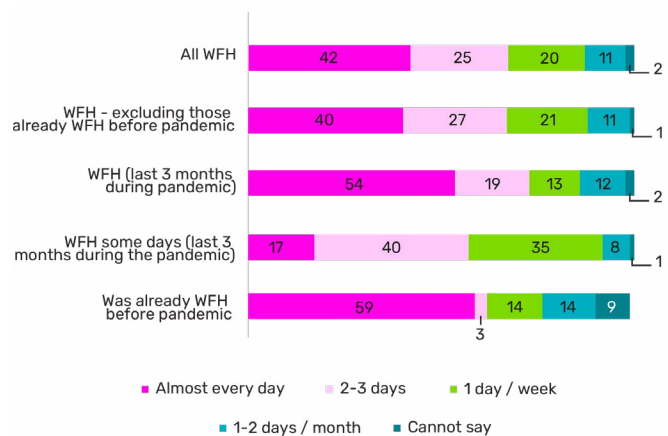
As noted, in the Spring of 2022, among those who were working at home at least some days during the prior three months of the COVID-19 pandemic (but excluding those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic), three in four (76%) agree that once the pandemic is over, their employer should continue to allow them to work from home at least a couple of days a week.

These workers – that is, those who are working from home and agree that they wanted to continue doing so – were asked how often they would like to work from home, instead of working in their regular workplace, after the pandemic is over. The results are an indication of the strength of the preference for working from home. A plurality (42%) wishes to keep working from home almost every day, and an additional 25 percent say they would like to work from home two to three days a week. Fewer than one in three only wish to work from home occasionally, whether one day a week (20%) or only one or two days a month (11%) (these results exclude those who were already working from home prior to the pandemic).

The preference for working from home most days is much higher among those who are already working at home regularly. Among those who describe themselves as working from home during the past three months, a majority (54%) say they prefer to continue to do so at least almost every day once the pandemic is over. But among those who describe themselves as working from home only some days during the past three months, the proportion with this preference falls to 17 percent. This suggests that many workers have already been able to adjust their actual work location (i.e. working from home all the time, or just some of the time) according to their preferences.

**FIGURE 15**  
Preference for frequency of working from home after the pandemic

(Among those working from home at least some days in early 2022, and who agree their employer should continue to allow them to work from home after the pandemic)



Q24F. After the pandemic is over, how often would you like to work from home, instead of working in your regular workplace? Would it be ...?

The preference for working home most days, rather than occasionally, varies significantly among different groups. The most notable difference is by age: younger workers are much less likely to prefer working from home on a regular basis. The preference for working from home almost every day rises from only 16 percent among those between the ages of 18 and 24, to 52 percent among those age 45 to 54. The preference for working from home at least two to three days per week rises from only 36 percent among those between the ages of 18 and 24, to 83 percent among those age 45 to 54.

Among those who wish to continue working from home, the preference for working from home at least two to three days per week is also higher among several other groups, including:

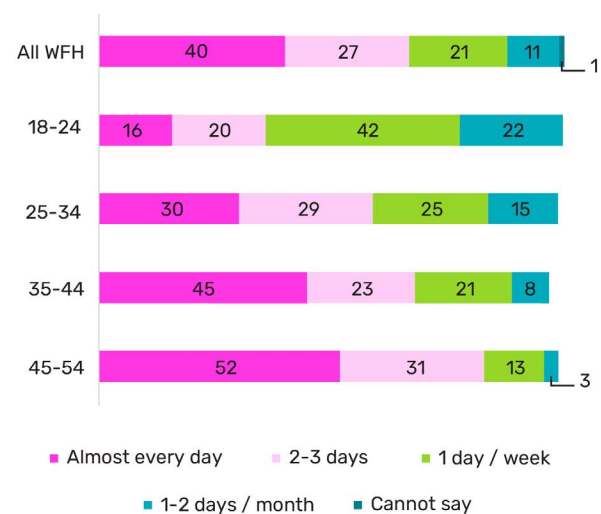
- > Women (74%), compared to men (60%).
- > Those with no children in their households (77%), compared to those with children (58%).
- > Those with office or clerical jobs (77%) or who work as professionals or executives (71%), compared to those who work in sales or services (44%) or in trades, transportation or manual labour (39%).
- > Those who work in the private sector (71%), compared to those who work in the public sector (58%).
- > Those who do not have a disability (80%), compared to those who have a disability that always (56%) or occasionally (40%) limits their activity.
- > Those who are not Indigenous (70%), compared to those who identify as Indigenous (34%).

- > Those who identify as white (73%), compared to those who are racialized (64%).

**FIGURE 16**

**Preference for frequency of working from home after the pandemic, by age group**

(Among those working from home at least some days in early 2022, and who agree their employer should continue to allow them to work from home after the pandemic)



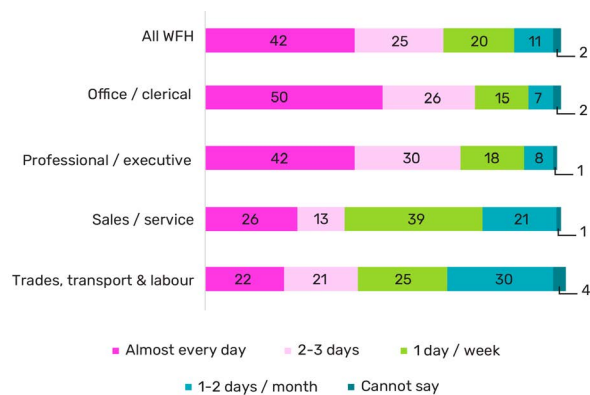
Q24F. After the pandemic is over, how often would you like to work from home, instead of working in your regular workplace? Would it be ...?



**FIGURE 17**

**Preference for frequency of working from home after the pandemic, by occupation**

(Among those working from home at least some days in early 2022, and who agree their employer should continue to allow them to work from home after the pandemic)



Q24F. After the pandemic is over, how often would you like to work from home, instead of working in your regular workplace? Would it be ...?

Once again, however, it is helpful to keep in mind that there are also differences among these groups in their likelihood to have been working from home during the pandemic.

Taking this into account, the following findings are most notable:

- > Those with office or clerical jobs stand out as being both much more likely to have been working at home over the past three months, and much more likely to want to continue to work from home at least two to three days per week once the pandemic is over.
- > Workers who identify as Indigenous stand out as being much more likely to have been working at home over the past three months, but much less likely to want to continue to work from home at least two to three days per week once the pandemic is over.

- > Older workers are slightly less likely than average to have been working at home over the past three months, but much more likely to want to continue to work from home at least two to three days per week once the pandemic is over. In contrast, younger workers are slightly more likely to have been working at home over the past three months, but much less likely to want to continue to work from home at least two to three days per week once the pandemic is over.

In short, most office or clerical workers are hoping that the remote work arrangements put in place during the pandemic will continue after the pandemic ends; in contrast, most workers who are Indigenous are hoping that things will go back to how they were. Older workers are also more likely than average to hope the change to remote work is made permanent, while younger workers are more likely to hope that it will prove temporary.





## Gender differences in the preference for working from home

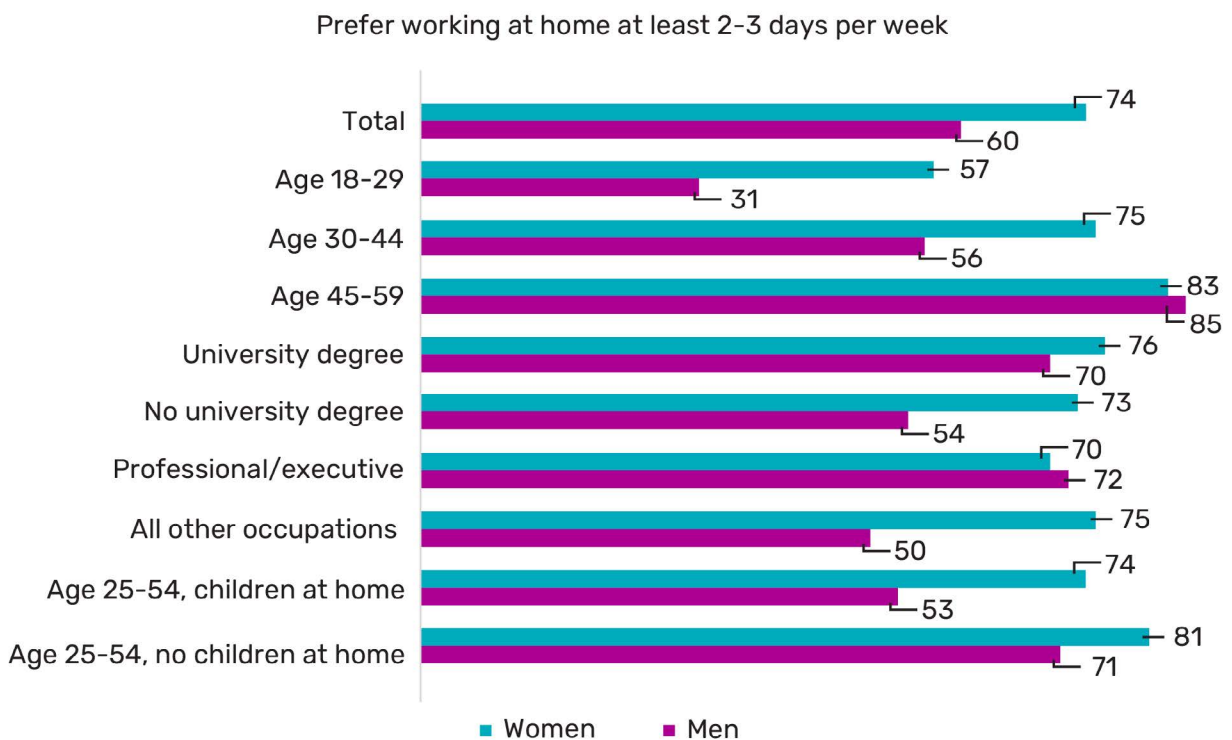
Men (75%) and women (76%) are equally likely to agree that their employer should allow them to continue to work from home at least some days, once the pandemic is over.

Among those with this preference, however, women (74%) are more likely than men (60%) to want to work from home as often as two to three days a week (or more). Moreover, the extent of this gender difference varies widely among different groups within the population.

**FIGURE 18**

### Preference for frequency of working from home after the pandemic, by gender

Subsample: those working from home all or some days (excluding those working from home prior to the pandemic) who agree that their employer should allow them to continue to work from home at least some days after the pandemic



Q24F. After the pandemic is over, how often would you like to work from home, instead of working in your regular workplace? Would it be ...?

For instance, the gender difference is much larger than average among 18 to 29 year-olds: within this age group, men (31%) are much less likely than women (57%) to want to work from home at least two to three days a week (a gap of 25 points). But in the case of those age 45 to 59, there is no significant gap: men (85%) and women (83%) are more or less equally likely to express this preference. It is notable that older men are among the most

likely to prefer working from home regularly, while younger men are among the least likely to have this preference.

The extent of the gender difference is smaller in the case of those without children in their household, compared to those with. Among those age 25 to 54, women without children at home (81%) are 10 points more likely than their male counterparts (71%) to want to work from home at least two to three days a week; among those with children at home, the difference is 21 points, with only 53 percent of men in this group have this preference, compared to 74 percent of women.

Finally, the extent of the gender gap varies by occupation and educational attainment. Among those who work as professionals or executives, or those with a university education, the gender difference in the preference for working from home at least two to three days a week is quite small: at least seven in ten of both men and women in these situations express this preference. The gap is larger in the case of those in all other occupations (25 points) or those without a university degree (19 points), as only about one in two men in these situations express this preference.

In general, these gender differences vary because there is a greater variation in the preference for working from home among men from different backgrounds than among women. In other words, women in different situations are more consistently likely to express a preference for working from home regularly. In the case of men, this preference drops off more noticeably for those in younger age groups, who have children at home, who do not work in professional or executive occupations, and who do not have a university degree.



# Location of work and mental health: a focus on youth

Among younger workers, those who have continued to work in their regular place of work report poorer mental health, and are more likely to feel anxious, lonely or depressed, compared to those who have been working from home.

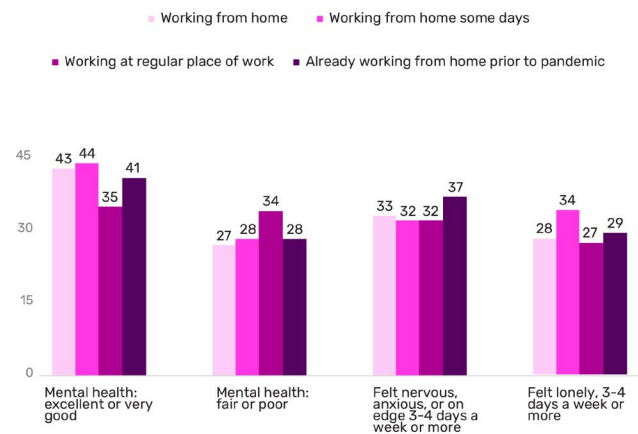
It is difficult to assess the possible *impact* of working from home on workers' well-being. While it is possible to compare the well-being of those who are and are not working from home, it cannot be assumed that any differences are in fact due to their location of work. Differences could be due, for instance, to the nature of the job: some jobs that are more stressful may also be less likely to have allowed for remote work during the pandemic. Certain characteristics related to well-being may also motivate workers to opt for a certain work situation, rather than being the result of the situation.

That said, overall, there is no evidence that the experience of working from home during the pandemic is associated with poorer mental health. In fact, the opposite is true: those who have been working at their regular place of work in early 2022 are somewhat more likely to report poorer mental health than those who have been working remotely. And those who have been working from home every day in early 2022 (due to the pandemic) are no more likely to feel anxious or lonely, compared to those who have been working at their regular place of work.

**FIGURE 19**

**Well-being and location of work (in early 2022)**

Subsample: employed



The situation is somewhat different, however, in the case of younger workers (those between the ages of 18 and 29) (see Table 2). Among those in this age group, there are significant differences in the mental health and well-being of those who have and have not been working from home. But it is those who have continued to work in their regular place of work who report poorer mental health, or who are more likely to feel anxious, lonely or depressed. Among those in older age cohorts, the differences between those who have and have not been working from home are more modest, or in some cases non-existent.

These findings remain difficult to interpret, for two reasons. First, as mentioned, it is not clear whether the differences can be attributed to the location of work in and of itself, as opposed to other factors (such as the types of job that are less amenable to

remote work). Second, it is not clear why these differences should appear only in those in the younger age group.

**Table 2: Location of work and mental health, by age group**

Measure	Age 18-29 (%)		Age 30-44 (%)		Age 45-54 (%)	
	Working from home	Working in regular place of work	Working from home	Working in regular place of work	Working from home	Working in regular place of work
Felt nervous, anxious, or on edge, 3 to 4 days a week or more	38	48	37	41	29	28
Felt depressed, 3 to 4 days a week or more	29	36	25	24	24	24
Felt lonely, 3 to 4 days a week or more	32	40	27	27	27	24
Mental health: excellent or very good	51	29	38	38	38	35
Mental health: fair or poor	23	45	27	33	29	30

\* In this table, figures for those working from home refer only to those working from home regularly due to the pandemic in the first few months of 2022.

It should also be recalled that younger workers who would like to continue to work from home are less likely to want to do so regularly (rather than occasionally), even though it appears that for those in this age group, working at the regular workplace is associated with poorer mental health.

These results emphasize the need for employers and managers to continue prioritize the well-being of younger members of the workforce, and for researchers studying labour market experiences during and after the pandemic to continue to focus on the particular challenges facing youth in Canada.

# Conclusion

The shift to remote work triggered by the onset of the pandemic appears set to last. In early 2022, almost one in two Canadian workers continued to work from home at least some of the time. The majority of these workers say they prefer working from home and want this arrangement to continue once the pandemic is over. In most cases, the preference is to keep working from home at least two to three days a week, rather than only now and then. Moreover, some workers have started to take significant steps in order to keep working from home, just as changing jobs, or relocating to a different community.

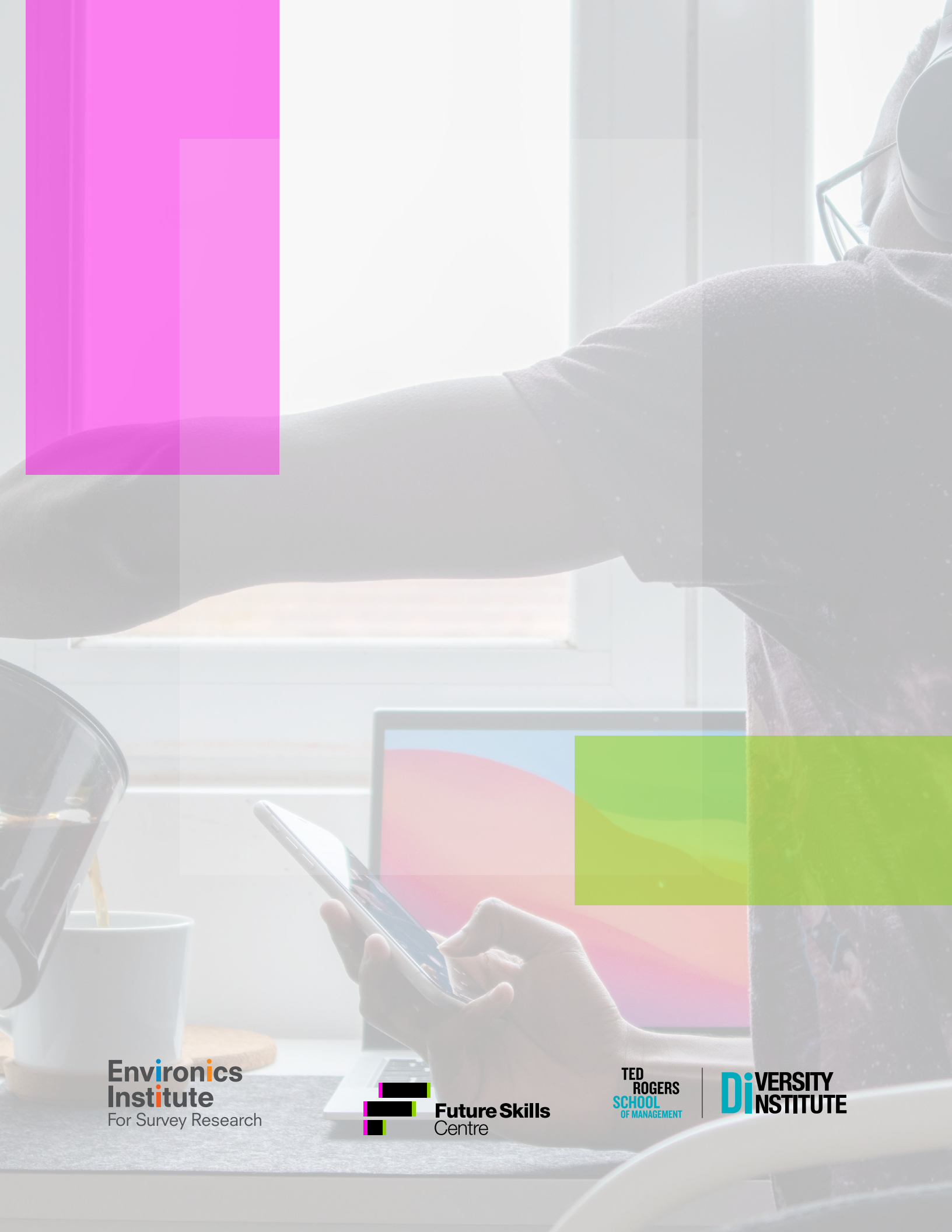
Some of those who have been working from home find it difficult to do their jobs well, struggle to balance work and family life, or worry about the longer-term impact on their careers. But, over the course of the pandemic, the proportion reporting these negative experiences has declined. Rather than getting tired of working from home, it seems that more workers are getting accustomed to it. This is true for parents, and especially for working mothers.

At the same time, the opportunity to work from home is not equally available to all workers. Remote work is more common for office and clerical workers, professional and executives, higher income workers, and workers with higher education attainment. Making remote work a more permanent feature of the working world for some may thus introduce a new form of inequality in the labour market: greater flexibility in work location for some, but not others.

The downsides of working from home are also experienced more acutely by workers from certain backgrounds. Most notably, concern about the potential impact of working from home on careers remains highest among younger workers, workers with a disability, and Indigenous Peoples. Moreover, while many younger workers remain open to remote work arrangements after the pandemic, they are much less likely than their older counterparts to want to work at home on a regular basis.

The world of work is changing, and both employers and employees are in a process of adaptation. New work arrangements and workplace policies should be developed with an eye to addressing both long-standing and emerging forms of inequity. At the same time, employers should question why so many workers are reluctant to return to the workplace, and why younger workers who do report poorer mental health than those who continue to work from home. Employers should focus not only on facilitating remote work on a permanent basis, but also on improving the experience of employees working on-location.





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