

# 24 The percentage of employees working from home has more than doubled since 2016

In recent decades, there have been many changes regarding where, when, and how people in Canada work. This shift has been driven by multiple factors, including technological advancement (i.e., Internet, mobile phones), shifting labour market needs, and changing worker preferences and expectations. More recently, many workers had to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic when public health measures were in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

Data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS)<sup>a</sup> show that in May 2024 nearly one-quarter of employees aged 15 to 69 in the 10 provinces worked from home at least some of the time, either exclusively (13.2%) or in a hybrid arrangement (10.3%).<sup>b,1</sup> Although the percentage of those working most hours from home has declined since a record of 41.1% was recorded in April 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>2</sup> it is more than double the percentage recorded in May 2016 (7.1%).<sup>3</sup>

Although LFS data excludes workers living in the territories and those on reserves, earlier data from the 2021 Census showed

that those in Nunavut (7.3%), Northwest Territories (9.7%), and Yukon Territory (11.4%) had the lowest proportion of employees aged 15 and older who worked from home.<sup>4</sup> The highest proportion that year was in Ontario, where nearly three in 10 (29.7%) employees aged 15 and older worked from home. The census data also showed that working from home was most common for workers aged 75 and older (38.0% of women and 34.6% of men), and least common among the youngest workers, aged 15 to 24 (13.3% of women and 11.5% of men).<sup>5</sup>

Some people prefer to work from home to better manage their work and family responsibilities and commitments.<sup>6</sup>

Among surveyed employees aged 15 to 69 working from home in February 2021 who had usually worked outside the home before the COVID-19 pandemic, 38.9% said that they would like to work most or all of their hours at home after the pandemic.<sup>7</sup> A similar proportion (40.9%) said that they would like to work at least half of their hours from home, while only 20.2% wanted to return to working most or all of their hours outside the home.



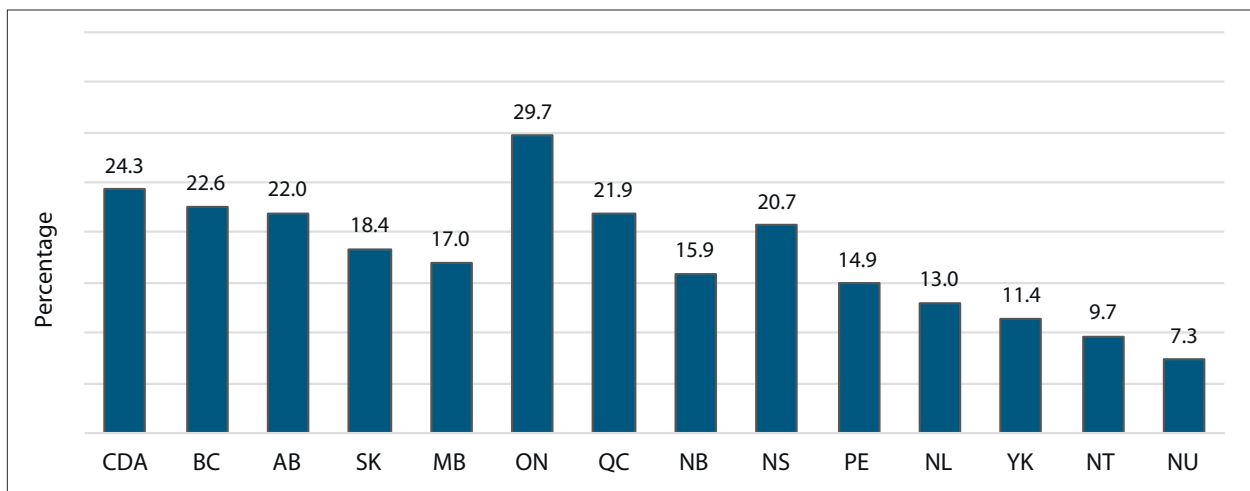
## Why this matters

The growing proportion of jobs that can be done from home can provide workers and their families with a greater degree of flexibility, and can help them integrate work and family responsibilities. Working from home can also open doors to employment options at a distance without requiring families to relocate from their home communities, where job options may be limited. However, recent estimates show that most jobs (60%) cannot be performed from home,<sup>8</sup> and many will likely never be able to be performed from home due to the nature of the sector or job.

On the positive side, working from home limits or even eliminates commuting for workers. Long commutes, particularly by

car, can be detrimental to workers' health and negatively affect their ability to maintain work-life balance.<sup>9</sup> Research has also shown that working from home can lead to negative outcomes. In families with children, working from home can strengthen stereotypical gender differences. Some studies indicate that mothers who work from home increase their time spent on care-related activities more than fathers.<sup>10</sup> Data from the 2022 General Social Survey show that fathers working from home did more childcare and spent more time with children than fathers not working from home, but still less than mothers who worked from home.<sup>11</sup>

### Percentage of employees aged 15 and older who worked at home, Canada, provinces and territories, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada. (2022, November 30). Table 98-10-0456-01 Place of work status by industry sectors, occupation broad category and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Data from the LFS excludes the territories, persons living on reserves, full-time members of the regular Canadian Armed Forces, and persons living in institutions.

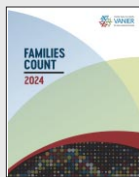
<sup>b</sup> Note that this figure includes people who telework, as well as those in employment sectors where work normally takes place at home, such as agriculture.



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## References

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*Families Count 2024* is a publication of the Vanier Institute of the Family that provides accurate and timely information on families and family life in Canada. Written in plain language, it features chapters on diverse topics and trends that have shaped families in Canada. Its four sections (Family Structure, Family Work, Family Identity, and Family Wellbeing) are guided by the [Family Diversities and Wellbeing Framework](#).

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