

## **Romance in the Workplace: It's happening, but is it allowed?**

*New study reveals need for clarity surrounding office relationship policies; nearly half of Canadians in a workplace relationship kept it secret*

**June 25, 2019, TORONTO:** Canadians are finding love at work but many are hiding it from their coworkers, according to a new study by ADP Canada. Based on self-reported figures, one-third of working Canadians are now or have been romantically involved with a coworker.

Despite the prevalence of workplace romance across Canada, many employees still feel the need to keep their relationship secret. Nearly half (45%) of those in workplace relationships kept it a secret from someone, with 27 per cent keeping it a secret from *everyone* at work. The study, by Leger Research for ADP Canada, revealed Canadians are more likely to hide a relationship from human resources (37%) or management (40%) than from their colleagues.

Part of this secrecy could be credited to a fear of penalization or a misunderstanding of workplace policies. Approximately half (49%) of participants claim their company does not have a formal policy that addresses workplace relationships. This percentage was even higher in Quebec, with 65 per cent reporting there was no clear policy at their company.

But employees aren't opposed to workplace romance. In fact, a large majority (83% combined) are open to relationships at work, indicating relationships between colleagues should be allowed, or they don't care if people they work with are in romantic relationships.

Highlighting the importance of clear codes of conduct for workplace relationships, the survey also found that two-in-ten (19%) of those who have been a relationship with someone at work, said they have felt pressure to be part of a romantic relationship at work, whether it be to be considered for favourable projects, in order to progress in their career, to keep in good standing with the company or with a senior member of the organization, and/or to keep their current role.

"HR policies should not exist to control employees, but to protect them," said Heather Haslam, VP Marketing, ADP Canada. "We know people are finding love at work, but many are keeping it a secret. These statistics represent a call to action for organizations to make their policies clear to employees and to offer them the support and resources they need to feel comfortable navigating these situations."

### **Survey Highlights**

- One-in-three participants have been involved in a workplace relationship
- One-in-ten have been in a relationship with a colleague holding a senior position at the same company; this was most common in Canadians aged 18-34 (16%)
- Overall, 7.5% of participants say they have felt pressured to be in a romantic relationship at work, whether it be to be considered for favourable projects, in order to progress in their career, to keep in good standing with the company or with a senior member of the organization, and/or to keep their current role
- 16% indicate they had or are currently in a casual relationship
- 10% have had or currently have a spouse at work
- 12% have had or currently have a partner at work

- Only about one-third (31%) claimed to be aware of a policy or code of conduct that clearly outlines what is and is not acceptable, in terms of an office relationship
- Younger Canadians (18-34) are more likely to have had a casual relationship at work (41% vs. 33% overall)
- Younger Canadians (18-34) are significantly more likely to say their organization has a code of conduct for workplace relationships (44% vs 25% for 35+)

The survey also revealed interesting workplace relationship trends across each of Canada's major regions:

### **Atlantic Canada**

- Highest percentage of respondents who indicate they have never been in a romantic relationship with a coworker (81% vs. 66% for the rest of Canada)

### **Quebec**

- Significantly more likely to have met a spouse in the workplace (19%), and to still have that spouse (13%)
- 96.5% of respondents indicate they have never been pressured to be part of a romantic relationship at work (vs. 91% for rest of Canada)
- Significantly more likely to indicate that relationships, while they are taking place at work, have a positive effect on performance

### **Ontario**

- Most likely to indicate workplace relationships have a negative impact on work while they are taking place (47% vs. 43% for the rest of Canada)

### **Manitoba and Saskatchewan**

- More likely to think (17%) that colleagues finding out about a romantic relationship at work will have a positive impact on those in the relationship (vs. 9% for the rest of Canada)

### **Alberta**

- 97% of respondents indicate they have never been pressured to be part of a romantic relationship at work (vs. 91% for rest of Canada)
- Highest percentage of participants were aware of a policy or code of conduct on office relationships (41% vs. 31% for the rest of Canada)

### **British Columbia**

- Participants in British Columbia were significantly more likely to report feeling pressured to be in a relationship at work (16% vs. 7.5% for the rest of Canada)
- 69% indicate that workplace relationships have a negative impact on work after they are finished

### **Survey Methodology**

An online survey of 885 Canadian full time and part time employees was completed between May 3-6, 2019, using Leger's online panel. The margin of error for this study was +/-3.3%, 19 times out of 20.

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### **For further information:**

Keera Hart  
Kaiser Lachance Communications  
647-725-2520 ex. 221  
[keera.hart@kaiserlachance.com](mailto:keera.hart@kaiserlachance.com)