

Canadians Concerned About Post-Pandemic 'Proximity Bias'



Employees and leaders agree that hybrid, flex options should stay, but in-office employees perceived to have inherent career advantages

A survey by ADP Canada and Maru Public Opinion reveals most Canadians feel in-person workers have inherent advantages over remote or hybrid workers. According to the survey, Canadian workers believe that proximity bias, which is the unconscious tendency to provide preferential treatment to employees sharing the same physical work location, impacts key aspects of the workplace, including relationships, career advancement and social encounters.

In-Office Employees Seen as Better Suited for Career Advancement

While most Canadian workers say they have not felt pressured to come to their physical workplace, 63 per cent still believe being physically present provides a better opportunity for career advancement. In addition, over a third (36%) feel employees going back to the office will have a better chance of being offered a promotion by their superiors, or will get it faster, than those who work from home. Around half also believe in-person workers will benefit from more social encounters (53%) and have a better chance of maintaining positive relationships with their managers (48%). Interestingly, younger workers were slightly more inclined than their older counterparts to believe in the benefits of in-person

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63% of employed Canadians believe that being physically present provides better opportunities for career advancement



work when it comes to career advancement. Managers were also more likely than business owners and employees to feel concerned with proximity bias, with scores up to 14 percentage points above the national average.

While career advancement risks associated with proximity bias remain top of mind, the findings also indicate there have been positive outcomes of remote and hybrid models, including strengthened relationships between managers and employees. Over a half of remote and hybrid workers surveyed (56%) say their relationship with their managers has been positively impacted by remote work. As for how remote and hybrid work has strengthened relationships, several key benefits were cited, but flexibility topped the list at 77 per cent, followed by autonomy at 54 per cent and trust between employees and their managers (47%).

It's important for employers to recognize proximity bias and better understand the needs of a dispersed workforce. This may include encouraging equal presence and participation in virtual meetings, investing in technology and platforms that promote employee engagement and feedback, and providing remote learning and training programs.

'Work from Anywhere' Expectations will Design the Future of Work

Canadians expect an increasingly flexible workplace and the freedom to work from anywhere. Over half of surveyed respondents believe their employers should allow them to choose their preferred work location (55%). This was especially true for younger workers aged 18 to 34, with two thirds of respondents wanting the freedom to choose their place of work. Leaders were also keen to embrace a flexible workplace, as over 6-in-10 surveyed managers and business owners say they would allow employees to work from anywhere.

Resources

[Focus on these five 'rights' to quickly drive higher levels of engagement](#)

[Learning in a virtual world \(tip sheet\)](#)

[2022: Are you prepared for the year of the employee? \(webinar\)](#)



Workers will define the future of work

Workers will define the future of work, according to [ADP's 2022 Workforce Trends](#), and it's encouraging to see a human-centric approach that leads with empathy and autonomy can help drive trust, success and growth. As the world of work continues to evolve, embracing the post-pandemic workplace requires employers to be agile, embrace flexibility and actively listen to employees. These findings indicate that many Canadian workplaces are on the right track.

Survey Methodology

From November 18th to November 21st 2021, an online survey of 3,021 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Maru Voice Canada panelists (of whom 1,556 were employed) was executed by Maru/Blue. For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size has an estimated margin of error (which measures sampling variability) of +/- 1.6%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been weighted by education, age, gender and region (and in Quebec, language) to match the population, according to Census data. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

