

**Ekos Research Associates Inc.**

# Press Release

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*Ottawa-Hull*

**November 4, 1998**

## **Canadians and Telework**

### **The Information Highway and Canadian Communications**

#### **Household Study**

"These are the kinds of findings which are hard for employers not to notice. They might make many of them pay closer attention to telework and see it as a strategic way to recruit or hold on to key employees", says Frank Graves, President of Ekos Research Associates. Graves was commenting on findings from the ongoing Information Highway and Canadian Communications Household Study. Launched last year as a public-private sector partnership, the study is one of the most comprehensive efforts to date relating to the information highway, underlying attitudes, and behaviour within Canadian households.

Overall, the study found that some of the more important impacts of the information highway relate to the nature of work, and its correspondence to family and home life. While most people still work from what is considered a traditional workplace, the study pointed to enormous receptivity to the concept of working from home [Exhibit 1]. Moreover, many expect to work from the home in the future; 29 per cent of Canadians who work for an employer said that they expect to work from home at least some of the time in the next year. Bob Fortier, President of the Canadian Telework Association and an advisor on the study, commented that "these findings are truly significant. They will help to focus the debate around telework, dispel some of the myths and to develop a better understanding of the benefits as we mark our first ever Canadian Telework Day".

The study found that a surprising number say they would switch employers or forego a pay increase to be able to work from home, even on a part-time basis. Four in ten Canadians who

currently work for an employer indicated that they would switch jobs if another employer offered them an equivalent job in terms of pay and responsibilities, but that the new job allowed them to telework [Exhibit 2]. Likewise, close to three in ten also said that they would forego either a 5 or 10 per cent pay increase to be able to telework [Exhibit 3].

Graves added that "even if we were to discount the numbers significantly, we are still talking about a sizeable number of employees who could be lured away to another company or would be willing to trade off pay increases. We are also talking about employees who for the most part are satisfied with their jobs."

Another important finding is that part-time telework appears to have as much if not more appeal than working at home on a more regular basis. This lean to splitting the work week between the office and home appears to be explained, in part, by the perception that teleworkers are more likely to be passed over for promotions [Exhibit 4]. Other likely factors are the importance of social interaction in the workplace and maintaining networks.

On balance, teleworkers are seen as being no less likely to work as hard as their colleagues who are based in the company's office. There is, however, less consensus around whether teleworkers are actually more productive than their counterparts [see Exhibit 4].

Employers are not likely to convince a significant number of employees if they say that there is no scope for telework in their particular company. First, 3 in 4 Canadians (77 per cent) believe that new technology is making working at home more possible than in the past. Second, and perhaps more important, 51 per cent of those who work for an employer that there are 'parts of their job that could be done at home instead of their place of work even if it would only involve, for example, one day a month'.

One in four Canadians who work for an employer reported that their company has either a formal or informal arrangement where some employees can do some of their work from home. More individuals report working at home only some of the time rather than teleworking on a full-time basis. For more than 1 in 3 "teleworkers", the work done at home involves overtime work.

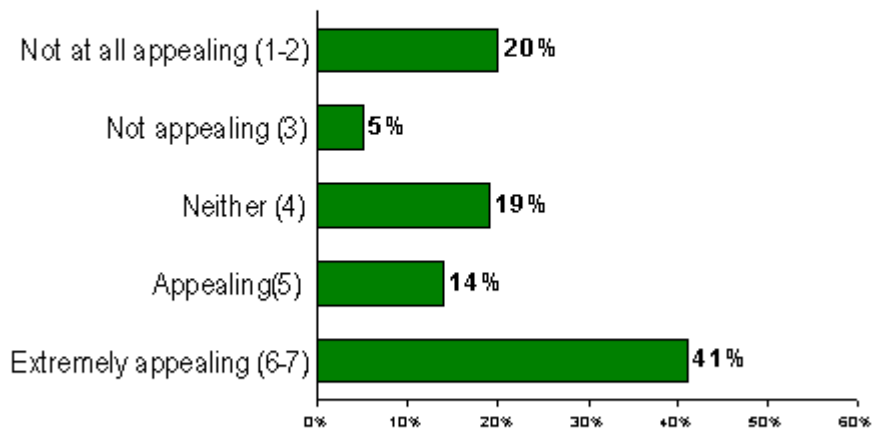
Despite a plethora of cautionary statements from commentators, there is a general sense that the positive impacts from working from home far outweigh the negative impacts. In fact, those who are working from home are considerably positive about their own experience, particularly in relation to finances, family life, time pressures and working hours [Exhibit 5].

## METHODOLOGY:

The study was panel-based in nature, and involved interviewing many of the same Canadians over the period between September 1997 and June 1998. The first wave involved an initial base-line telephone survey in September 1997 with a random sample of 3,522 Canadians aged 18 and over. Results from the second wave are based on a mail-back survey received from 1,271 of the same individuals between mid-February and April 1998. The third wave of the study involved a telephone survey undertaken in June, 1998 with 2,201 Canadians (1,767 of which had also participated in the first interview, and the remaining were new cases). The sampling errors from the three waves are +/- 1.7, +/- 2.7 and +/- 2.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

## I. Desirability of Telework

**“How appealing do you find the idea of working at home?”**  
[employed respondents]



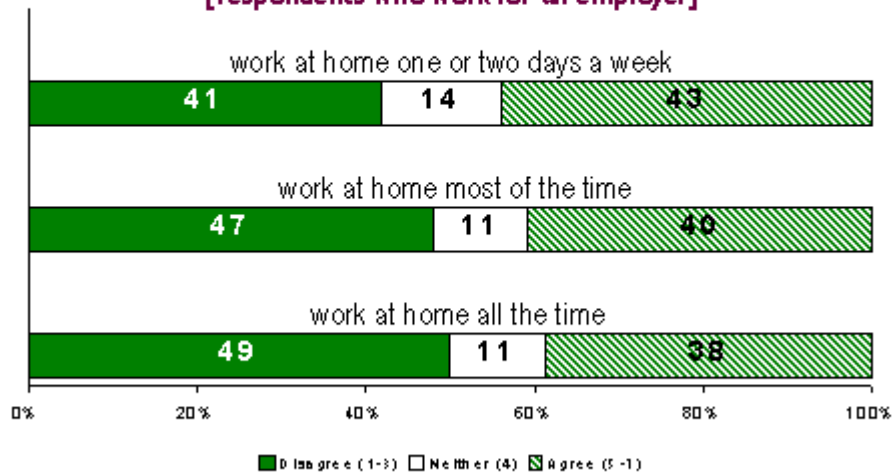
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Wave 1; n=2332

Information Highway and the Canadian  
Communications Threshold, 1998

## 2. Switching Jobs and Telework

**“I would switch jobs if another employer offered me an equivalent job in terms of pay and responsibilities, but that the new job allowed me to ...”**  
 [respondents who work for an employer]



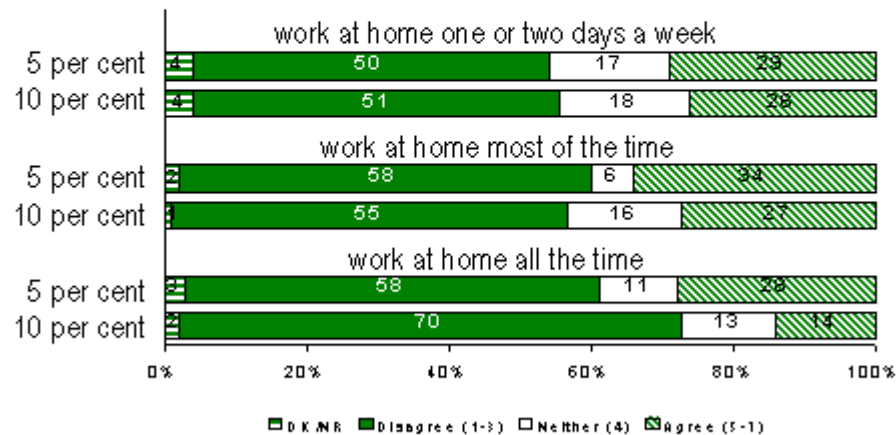
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Wave 3; n = approx... 400 for each

Information Highway and the Canal in  
 Communications Household, 1998

## 3. Salaries and Telework

**“I would prefer that my employer allow me to ... over getting a [5/10] per cent increase in pay”**  
 [respondents who work for an employer]



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Wave 3; n = approx... 200 for each

Information Highway and the Canal in  
 Communications Household, 1998

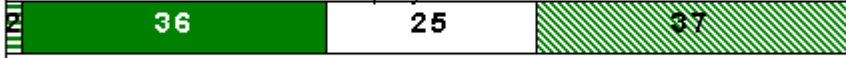
## 4. Employee-Employer Relations

[respondents who work for an employer]

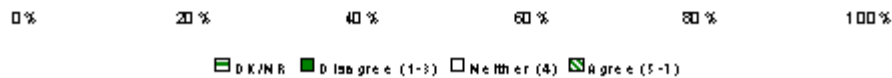
Employees who work in an office where their employer sees them every day are more likely to get promotions than employees who work from their home\*



Employees who work at home part of the time are more likely to be productive than other employees who do the same work for the company but always work at the company's offices\*\*



Employees who work from home are less likely to work as hard as their colleagues who work at their company's offices\*\*



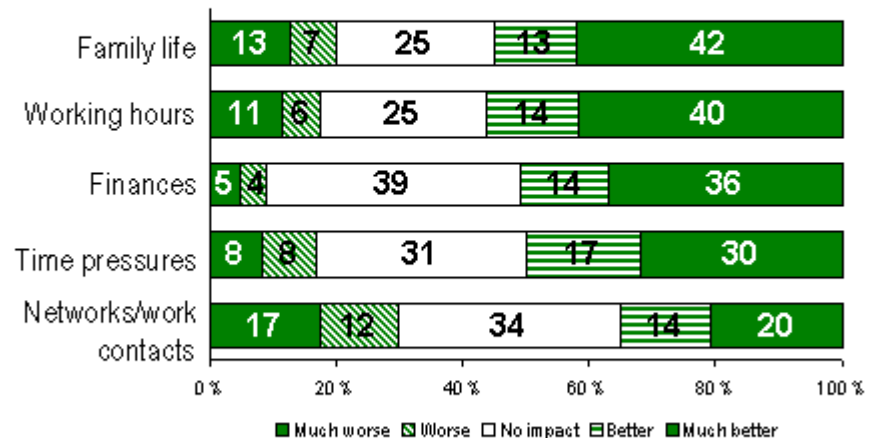
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\*Wave 2; n=835 \*\*Wave 3; n=1201

Information Highway and the Canal in  
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## 5. Impacts of Working from Home

[respondents who work at home at least some of the time]



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Wave 1; n=1139

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