



EKOS RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

## **CANADIANS AND WORKING FROM HOME**

OTTAWA, May 18, 2001

"In today's competitive workforce, it's hard to ignore the fact that one in four employed Canadians find the notion of working from home 'extremely appealing'. If it comes down to choosing between two similar jobs, many will take the one where they can work from home, even if it is for only a portion of their workweek", says Malcolm Saravanamuttoo, Vice President at EKOS Research Associates. Mr. Saravanamuttoo was making reference to recent findings from *Rethinking the Information Highway*. He went on to add, "As time pressures continue to mount and individuals look for ways to balance work and other commitments, I think that more employers will begin to view telework as a strategic way to recruit or to hold on to their best employees".

At this stage, the study found that nearly three in four employed Canadians still report working primarily in a more traditional workplace setting (73 per cent), with 11 per cent working primarily from home. Another 15 per cent report working primarily in other locations. While only 11 per cent work primarily from home, many others report doing so, at least occasionally. When probed, four in ten employed Canadians report that they work from home, at least some of the time (whether involving telework, overtime, or time on their business) [Figure 1]. This rises sharply among certain segments, with 77 per cent of self-employed Canadians reporting the same. Likewise, over half of those who describe their job as being in either a professional or managerial category work from home, at least occasionally (52 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively).

Not surprisingly, the extent to which these individuals work from home in a typical week varies quite sharply. One in three (34 per cent) report spending no more than five hours working from home, and another 8 per cent report that they do not work from home at all in a typical week. In contrast, almost one in three (31 per cent) spend more than 20 hours working from home in a typical week [Figure 2].

Looking to the future, telework is expected to become a more common fixture of the labour market. Already, many Canadians are familiar with telework. Overall, 17 per cent of all Canadians report being "highly" familiar with the term, with another 39 per cent reporting moderate familiarity. While not for everybody, there is also sizeable interest in working from home, at least for a portion of the workweek. In fact, our past research in this area has shown that there is as much interest (and sometimes more) in working from home only some of the time. Overall, more than one in two employed Canadians find the idea of working from home appealing, with 27 per cent viewing it as "extremely appealing" [Figure 3].

The strong appeal of telework is reinforced by what is found among those already spending at least some of the workweek from home. Saravanamuttoo added that "those who work from home are telling us that it has made a substantial difference in their lives, and perhaps equally important, many are telling us that some of the

perceived drawbacks do not exist". A healthy majority of Canadians who work from home for at least part of their workweek say that it has improved their overall quality of life (68 per cent), improved their working hours (60 per cent), improved their finances (57 per cent), and their standard of living (56 per cent). More important, only a small number report that working from home is having a negative impact in these areas, with others indicating that its impact is neutral. While working from home is sometimes viewed as a possible hindrance to one's career, this was not found among those actually teleworking. In fact, the overwhelming majority report that teleworking has had either a neutral (49 per cent) or positive (36 per cent) impact on career advancement [Figure 4].

### **ABOUT EKOS RESEARCH & RETHINKING THE INFORMATION HIGHWAY**

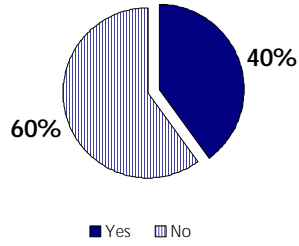
For more than two decades, EKOS Research Associates has been transforming research into credible knowledge and reliable advice. Today, EKOS is one of the country's leading full-service research consulting practices. With offices in Ottawa, Toronto, and Edmonton, EKOS specializes in market research, public opinion research and strategic communications advice, program evaluation and performance measurement, and human resources and organizational research.

Launched in 1997, *Rethinking the Information Highway* continues to be one of the most comprehensive ongoing studies examining how technology and the information highway is impacting the day-to-day lives of Canadians, and what implications this has for the environment within which organizations are operating.

This year's methodology involved a panel-based design, beginning with a telephone survey of a random sample of 5,008 Canadians, aged 16 and over, in September and October 2000. Upon its completion, a second survey was mailed to about three in four of the same individuals. A total of 2,006 of these self-administered surveys were completed and returned between mid-October and early December 2000. With sample sizes of 5,008 and 2,006, the results may be considered accurate within +/- 1.4 and 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out 20.

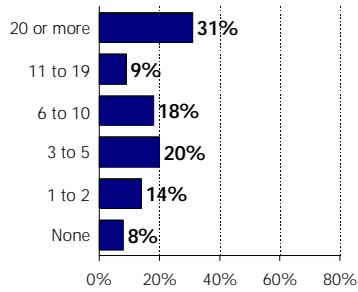
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**Fig 1**  
**working from home**



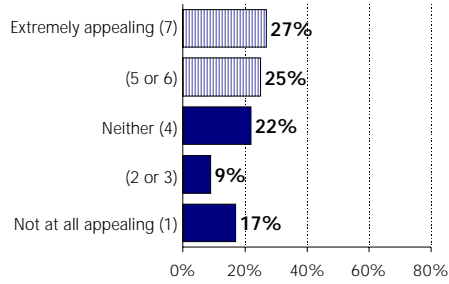
**Q:** Do you ever work from your home (including any teleworking, overtime, or time on your own business)?  
(Base: Employed Canadians; n= 3301 Sept./Oct. 2000)

**Fig 2**  
**hours spent working from home**



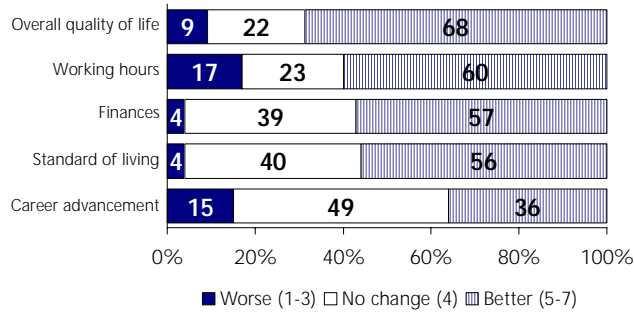
**Q:** Thinking about the past three months, approximately how many hours did you spend working from home in a typical week?  
(Base: Employed Canadians who work from home at least occasionally; n= 1277 Sept./Oct. 2000)

**Fig 3**  
**appeal of working from home**



**Q:** How appealing do you find the idea of working at home on a 7-point scale, where 1 means not at all appealing, 7 means extremely appealing and 4 means neither?  
 (Base: Employed Canadians; n=3301 Sept./Oct. 2000)

**Fig 4**  
**impacts of working from home**



**Q:** What impact do you think working at home has had on the following aspects of your life?  
 (Base: Canadians who do (paid) work from home; n=466 Oct./Nov. 2000)