

Canada Memo

Date: February 15, 2022
To: Express Employment Professionals
From: The Harris Poll
Subject: Boomer and Blue Collar Refresh – Canada

The survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between September 28 and October 13, 2021 among 2,065 Canadian adults ages 18+ who are employed full-time, part-time, or self-employed. Data were weighted where necessary by age by gender, education, region, household income, household size, and marital status to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

This sample of employees includes 191 blue collar workers (defined as employees who perform manual labour and work in agriculture, automotive services, construction, maintenance, manufacturing, transportation, or utilities) and 445 Boomers employees (defined as employees ages 57-75) that were weighted individually.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, The Harris Poll avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

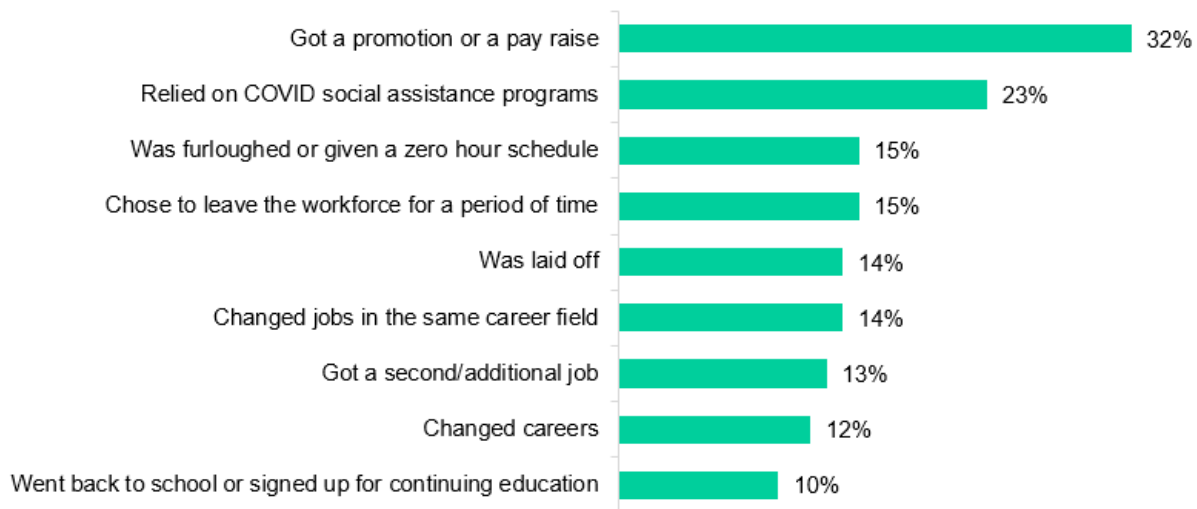
Respondents for this survey were selected among panel members who have agreed to participate in surveys. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Employee Profile

While some employees advanced in their responsibilities or pay grade over the past year, others had to pick up a second job.

Canadian employees, on average, have been working for 21 years and have been at their current job for 9 years. In a typical week they work 36 hours and 60% of employees' time, on average, is spent working in-person; before the COVID-19 pandemic, an average of 78% was in-person. Within the past year, nearly 3 in 5 (58%) received a pay increase at their current job, 43% had increased job responsibilities, and 25% received a promotion. Of those who received a pay increase, about 3 in 10 (29%) report the increase was more than 5%. And, the majority of employees (57%) believe they will next receive a pay increase either this year or next. Still, during the pandemic, some had to pick up a second/additional job (13%), change jobs in the same career field (14%), or change careers altogether (12%).

Experiences of Canadian Employees During COVID-19 Pandemic



Subgroup Spotlight: Generation

Younger employees – Gen Z and Millennials – are more likely than Gen Xers and Boomers to have been impacted by the pandemic in various ways. While they are more likely to report getting a promotion or pay raise (47% and 39% vs. 27% and 20%, respectively), they are also more likely to have made changes to their work situation during this time:

- Chose to leave the workforce for a period of time (28% and 18% vs. 8% and 10%)
- Changed jobs in the same career field (25% and 17% vs. 12% and 5%)
- Went back to school or signed up for continuing education (29% and 10% vs. 6% and 3%)

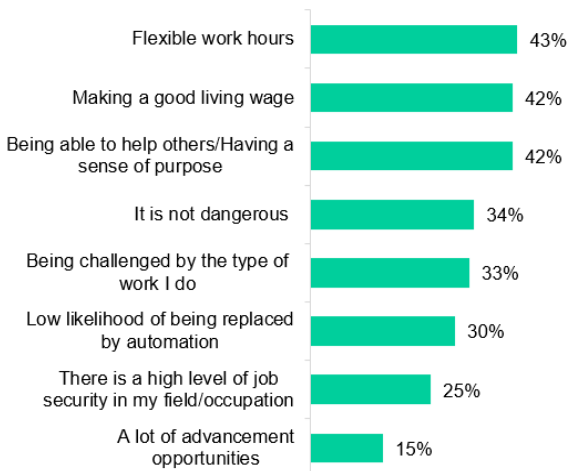
Experiences and Satisfaction at Work Dependent on Job Level

While most Canadian employees are satisfied with their current jobs, pay and hours are consistently top of mind in the workplace – both as pros and cons. Due to the current labour shortage, some employees have received higher pay or more fringe benefits; most commonly, those at higher job levels.

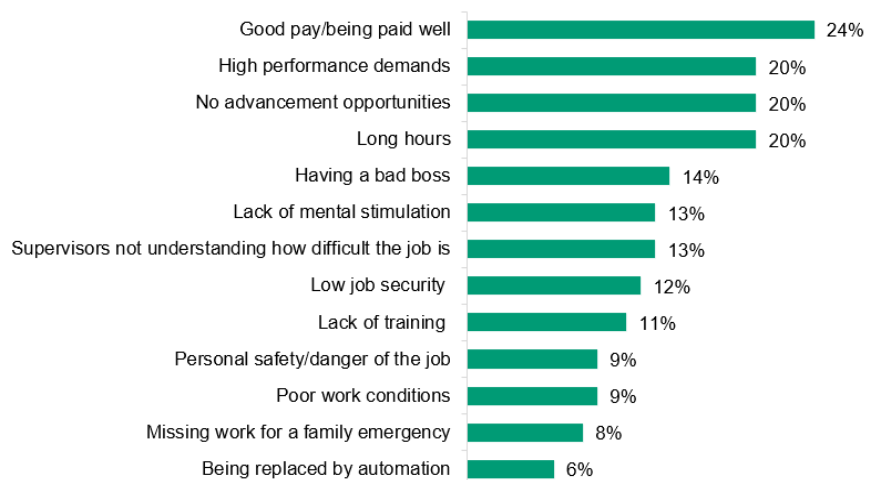
The majority of Canadian employees (82%) are satisfied with their job, including nearly 3 in 10 (27%) who are very satisfied. Nearly, 9 in 10 Canadian employees (86%) say they are proud of the work they do. When asked how they currently feel at their job, positive sentiments rise to the top. More than 2 in 5 say they feel confident (48%), knowledgeable (46%), helpful (42%), and valued (42%). To this point, nearly 3 in 5 (59%) say they like their job. Specifically, the most common aspects of their job field/occupation that Canadian employees like include flexible work hours (43%), making a good living wage (42%), and being able to help others/having a sense of purpose (42%).

Despite the optimism and aspects of work that many employees like, there are challenges in the workplace. Around 2 in 5 (41%) use negative words to describe how they feel at work, such as overwhelmed (20%), frustrated (18%), and disrespected (9%). Further, the majority of Canadian employees (77%) have concerns about their current workplace; most commonly, good pay/being paid well (24%), high performance demands (20%), no advancement opportunities (20%) and long hours (20%). Around half (51%) report their employer does not offer all of the benefits that they want. These concerns are presenting challenges – more than a third of Canadian employees (38%) say keeping themselves motivated is a challenge in the workplace and 31% say the same of maintaining work/life balance.

Aspects of Job Field/Occupation Canadian Employees Like



Aspects of Job Field/Occupation Canadian Employees are Concerned About



Subgroup Spotlight: Job Level

Job level seems highly associated with workplace experiences. Employees with a title of manager or above are more likely than non-managers to say:

- They are satisfied with their job (87% vs. 81%) and they like their job (66% vs. 57%)
- They feel positively at their job (86% vs. 77%), such as confident (55% vs. 47%), knowledgeable (54% vs. 45%), and valued (50% vs. 41%)
- They are proud of the work they do (90% vs. 86%)

Meanwhile, non-managers are more likely to say they feel negatively at their job (43% vs. 35%).

Beyond on-the-job challenges, the workforce as a whole is going through unprecedented times. Most employees (87%) foresee threats to the future of the workforce, including the skills gap¹ (40%), the current labour shortage² (39%), and automation replacing jobs (38%). Further, more than 3 in 5 (63%) say the current labour shortage has impacted their work-life. While some impacts are negative like experiencing a heavier workload due to staff shortages (29%) or having team members quit (25%), other impacts are more positive – such as having been provided more financial compensation (e.g., pay raise, bonus, etc.) due to the current shortage (14%) and having received more fringe benefits (e.g., extra time off, flexible hours, etc.) (13%). Notably, employees with a title of manager or above are more likely than those at lower job levels to have received more financial compensation (18% vs. 13%) or fringe benefits (18% vs. 12%) due to the labour shortage. Further, those who have been at their companies for 1-4 years or 5-9 years are more likely than longer tenured employees to have received more financial compensation during this time (1-4 years: 16% and 5-9 years: 17% vs. 10+ years: 11%) and have been given more fringe benefits (1-4 years: 16% and 5-9 years: 16% vs. 10+ years: 9%).

High Desire to Receive More Job Training and Expand Skills

Canadian employees generally feel that skills needed to do their job are constantly changing and that more job-specific training or skill development would be helpful in the workplace. Given this, there is also consensus that the skills gap is impacting employees in some industries more than others.

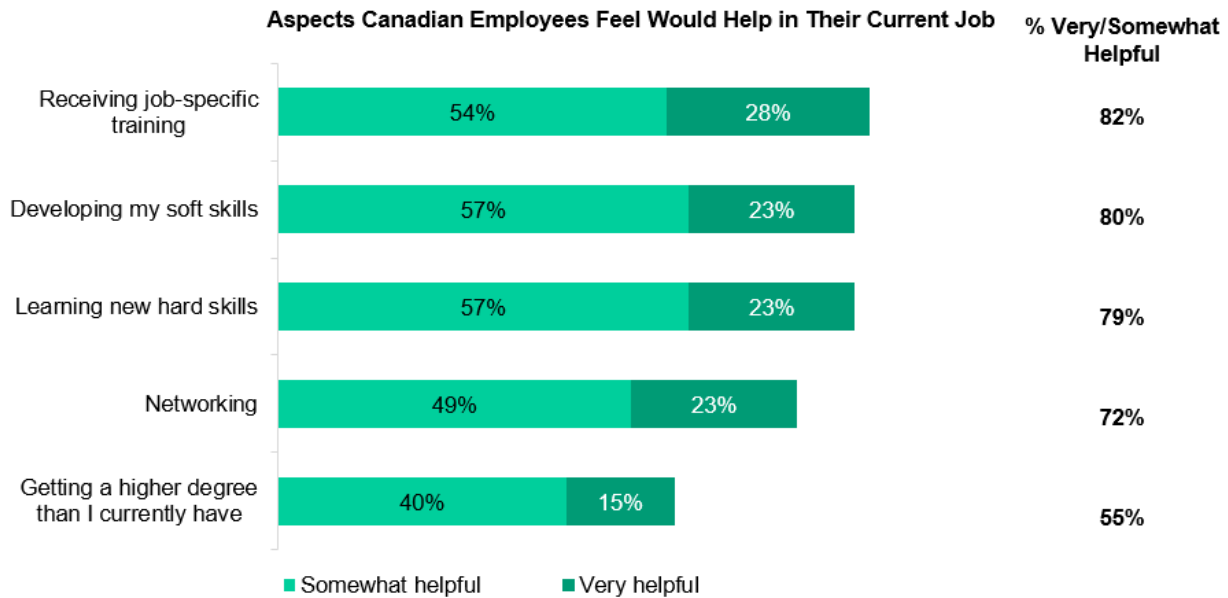
When entering the workforce after their highest level of education, the majority Canadian employees (73%) felt prepared. Despite this, 3 in 4 employees (75%) wish they had more exposure to the world of work when they were in school and 65% of those with a high school degree or less believe they would've had more opportunities available to them if they had gone to college.

While more exposure or degrees may have been helpful in the past, there is always an opportunity – and a need – for continual learning. While slightly more than two thirds of employees (67%) believe their employer does a good job of offering trainings for them to update their skills, around two-thirds (68%) say the skills they need to do their job are constantly changing.

To this point, the vast majority feel that receiving job-specific training (82%), developing their soft skills (80%), or learning new hard skills (79%) would be helpful in their current job. Networking (72%) is also seen as helpful. Fewer (55%) think getting a higher degree than they currently have would be beneficial, and 1 in 10 (10%) went back to school or signed up for continuing education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ Definition provided: A gap between the skills an employee has and the skills necessary to perform a job well

² Definition provided: Not enough employees to fill open jobs



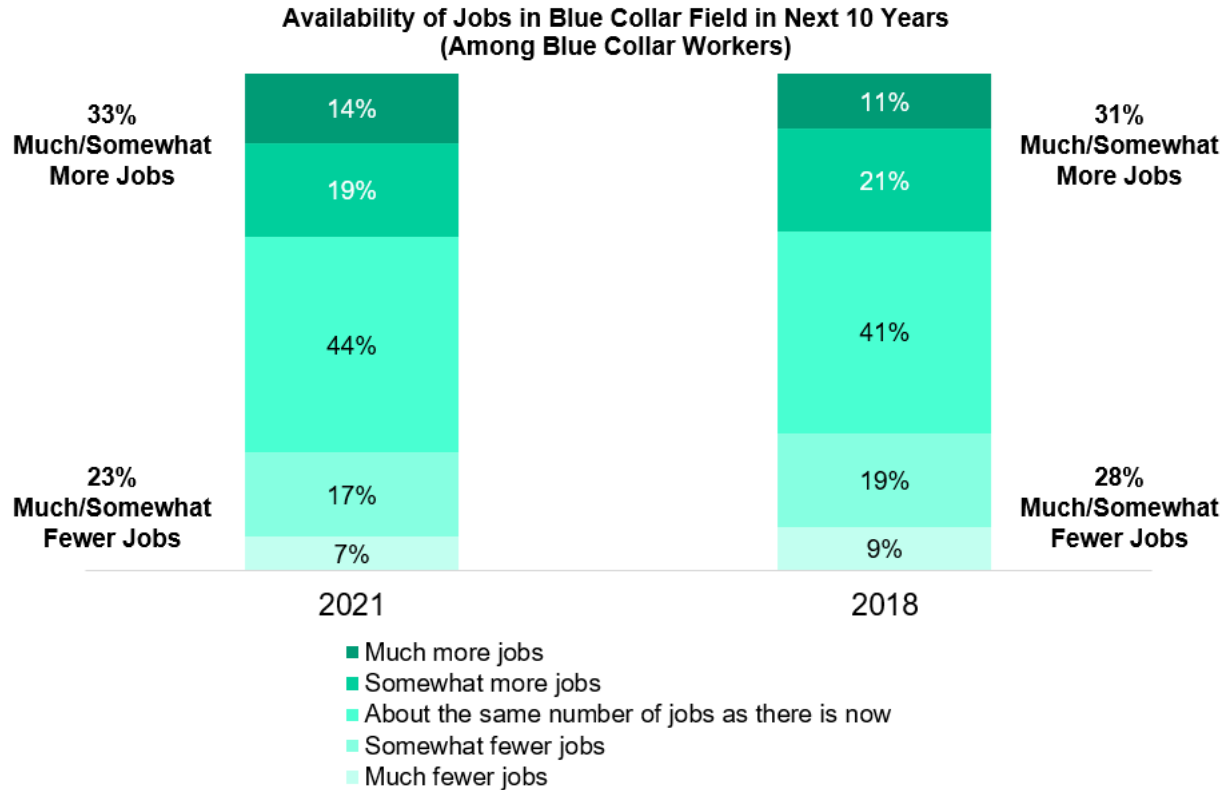
Considering the skills gap and need to continually refresh skills in the workforce, it is no surprise that employees believe these experiences would be helpful. Certain industries though may benefit from continual learning more than others. When asked the job fields in which a skills gap is impacting workers, skilled trades (84%), technology (84%), healthcare (83%), and business, management, and administration (79%) rise to the top.

Respect for Blue Collar Work on the Rise

Compared to 2018, blue collar workers are more likely to expect growth in their job field over the next ten years and many Canadian employees say blue collar work is more respected in society as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although lower than the optimism reported in 2018 (76%), blue collar workers in Canada are still generally optimistic about their future (64%). A third (33%) believe they are better off now than they were five years ago, slightly less than the 41% of blue collar workers who said the same in 2018. Still, most say they can make ends meet (75% in 2021 and 77% in 2018), remain confident that they will be able to reach their lifestyle goals (64% and 72%, respectively), and are satisfied with the lifestyle that they have (59% and 58%).

Most blue collar workers (83%) say they are proud of the work they do. Three in 4 blue collar workers in Canada (75%) are satisfied with their job and the top things they like about their job field/occupation, which remain relatively unchanged from 2018, include making a good living wage (50%), flexible work hours (36%), low likelihood of being replaced by automation (36%), and being able to help others/having a sense of purpose (33%). Further, nearly 3 in 10 (29%) say they are working in the job field they expected to have. Even if some did not expect to be in their blue collar role, more than two thirds (68%) believe there is a good career path in their line of work. To this point, nearly three quarters (72%) believe more young adults should pursue careers in their field. When it comes to getting a job, the majority (69%) say it's easy to find a job in their field currently and a third (33%) believe there will be more jobs available in their field in the next ten years, on par with 2018 (31%).



While there are encouraging sentiments shared about their job field, blue collar workers also face long-standing stigma. Nearly two-thirds agree society generally looks down on blue collar workers (65%). To this point, blue collar workers are more likely than those in white collar roles to say workers in their job field receive less respect than other job fields (34% vs. 20%).

Despite these findings, nearly 3 in 5 blue collar workers in Canada (57%) – and 68% of white collar employees – agree having a blue collar job is respected more now than it was 10 years ago. One contributing factor to this is the pandemic: nearly 2 in 3 blue collar workers (65%) believe the COVID-19 pandemic changed how people view blue collar jobs, and the majority of white collar (72%), pink collar (70%), and grey collar workers (68%) agree. In fact, when asked how views of blue collar jobs changed during the pandemic, many Canadian employees shared encouraging sentiments about essential work and skilled trades:

Essential work

- “I think people are now realizing how essential blue collar jobs are to both society as a whole and business.” – Female, age 37, white collar
- “People realize how absolutely necessary these jobs are and give the people doing them more respect.” – Male, age 58, grey collar
- “In many cases, blue collar jobs are on the frontline. I think/hope society recognized how critical they are and how easy it is to take them for granted.” –Male, age 29, white collar

Skilled trades

- “With the increase of new builds in Canada, skilled trades are in such high demand that anyone with that knowledge is seen as an asset.” – Female, age 39, white collar
- “We now have opened our eyes to truly see how essential and valuable they are.” – Male, age 58, white collar

Employees Agree COVID-19 Vaccine Will Spur Return to Normalcy but Are Split on Mandates

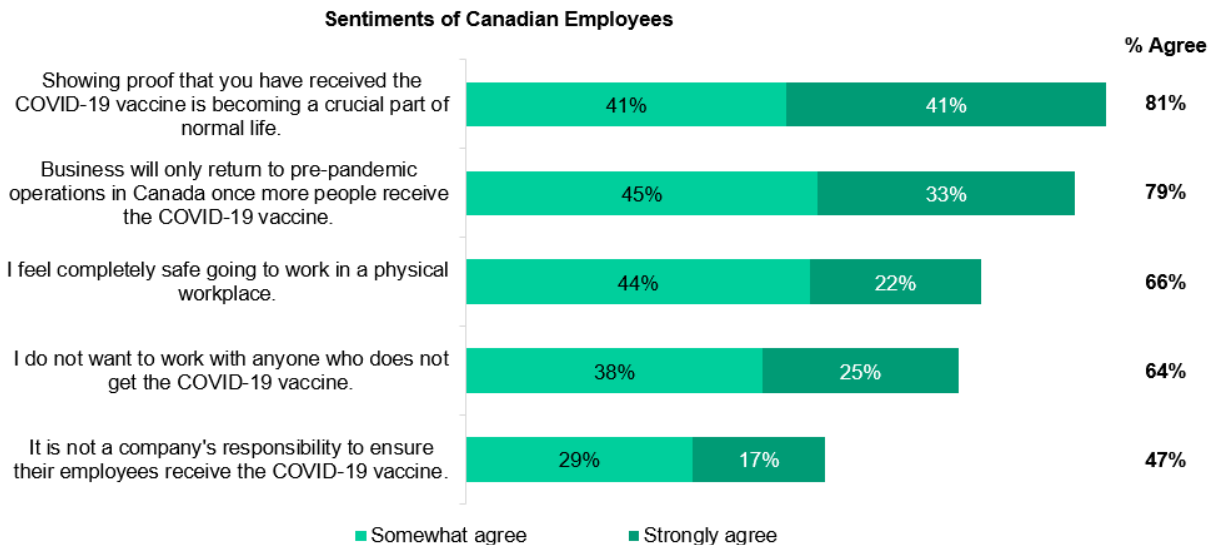
A majority of employees believe proof of COVID-19 vaccination is key to normal life. Still, there is no agreement on whether it's a company's responsibility to mandate the vaccine even though some employees are uncomfortable – or unwilling – to work with others who don't get the vaccine and/or booster shot.

The stimulus behind many present workforce changes and challenges is the COVID-19 pandemic. Most employees (70%) grade their employer's handling of the pandemic favorably – either as an A, excellent (30%) or B, good (41%). Keeping COVID out of the workplace has been a new challenge for employers so nearly half have required that employees receive the COVID-19 vaccine (47%) or booster shot (21%) and around a third of employees say their employer has recommended they receive each (vaccine: 34%, booster: 32%). Employees at companies with at least 100 employees are more likely than those at smaller companies to report a vaccine requirement (100-999 employees: 50% and 1,000+: 54% vs. 1-9: 39% and 10-99: 40%). When it comes to a booster shot requirement, the largest companies are lagging behind other companies (1-9 employees: 21%, 10-99: 21%, 100-999: 22%, 1,000+: 20%). However, as of November 2021, provinces across Canada are updating or delaying their vaccine mandates amid concerns of labour shortage that could be triggered by suspension of unvaccinated workers.

If the booster shot is recommended annually by the FDA, similar to the flu shot, nearly 7 in 10 employees (68%) say they would be willing to get it. Boomers (74%) are more likely than Millennials (63%) and Gen Z (65%) to say they'd be willing to get the booster shot, and those with at least a 4-year degree (75% vs. 63% of those who have less than a 4-year degree) are also more likely than their respective counterparts to report willingness to get the booster shot.

Two-thirds of Canadian employees (66%) say they feel completely safe going to work in a physical workplace right now. A similar proportion (64%) say they don't want to work with anyone who does not get the COVID-19 vaccine. Further, some (14%) would not be willing to work with others who do not get the COVID-19 vaccine *booster shot* if it is recommended annually by the FDA, similar to the flu shot, and nearly a quarter (24%) would be willing to work with them but would not be comfortable doing so.

Even though nearly half of employees (47%) say it is not a company's responsibility to ensure their employees receive the COVID-19 vaccine, there is acknowledgement that business will only return to pre-pandemic operations (i.e., not limited by restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic) in Canada once more people receive the COVID-19 vaccine (79%). A similar proportion (81%) believe showing proof that you have received the COVID-19 vaccine is becoming a crucial part of normal life.



Many Employees Optimistic about Being Prepared for Retirement, Despite Some Concern about Saving Enough and Lack of Semi-Retirement Options

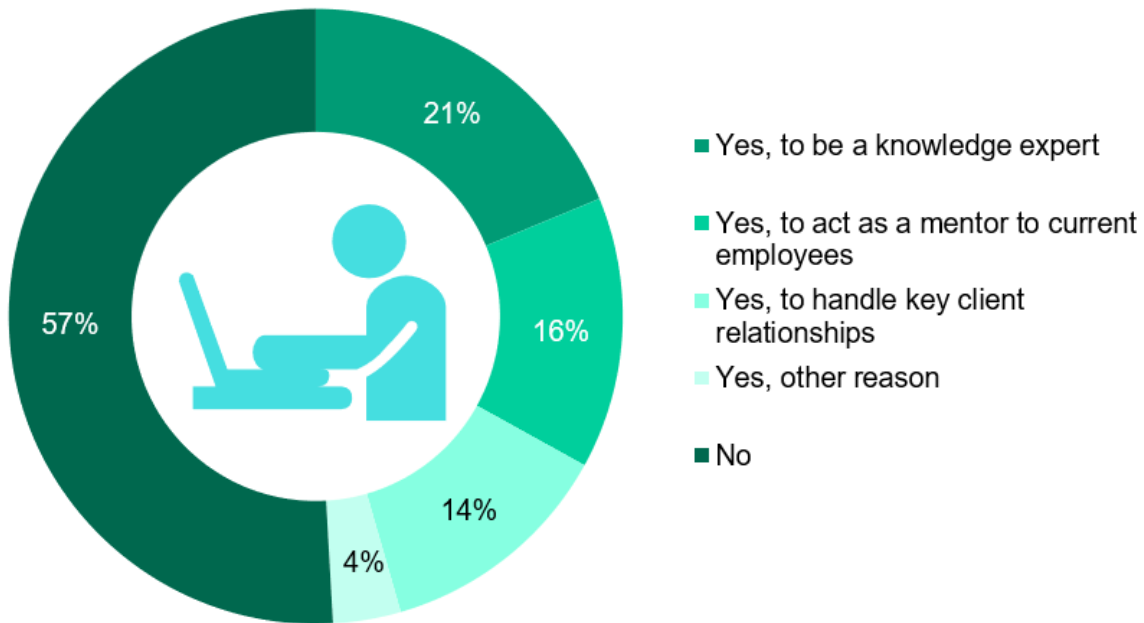
Fully two-thirds of employees are worried about saving enough for retirement even though a similar proportion believe they'll be prepared financially for that stage. While some employers offer semi-retirement, it seems more could be done on their part to ease the transition for both the employees retiring and those continuing to work.

Planning for retirement is top of mind for employees and planning for older employees' departure is a common consideration for employers. Many Canadian employees changed when they plan to retire due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with around 1 in 5 planning to do so later (23%) and 12% planning to retire sooner. Top of mind when considering when to retire is financial preparedness. The majority (75%) are worried about saving enough for retirement. To this point, only around 2 in 5 (44%) say they are currently putting aside money for their retirement and around a quarter (26%) say planning for retirement is a challenge they face in the workplace. Given this, it is surprising that nearly 3 in 5 Canadian employees (57%) think they will be prepared financially (i.e., having enough money saved) to retire.

Beyond financially preparing for retirement, the transfer of knowledge is important to avoid a "brain drain" in the workforce. Nearly two thirds of Canadian employees (65%) say it's absolutely essential or very important for employees to share the knowledge needed to perform their job responsibilities with others. The vast majority (83%) believe it's a big loss when older employees retire without passing along their years of knowledge to younger employees. When the transfer of knowledge does not happen, employees can be left learning how to do a job on their own, and around 2 in 5 Canadian employees (41%) have experienced this. Encouragingly, around 3 in 5 (59%) believe their employer is taking the right steps to make sure they don't experience a "brain drain" (i.e., when older employees retire without sharing knowledge of how to do their job with younger generations).

One way to help ease the transition is "semi-retirement" in order to postpone the time to retirement for employees. The majority of employees say they'd be likely to partake in semi-retirement, either by having a flexible work schedule (79%), transitioning to a consulting role (62%), or working reduced hours with reduced benefits (57%). However, only around 1 in 5 (22%) say their employer offers semi-retirement. Instead, another way employers ease the retirement transition is by bringing former employees back to the company. More than 2 in 5 of employees (43%) say their employer has brought retired employees back, either to be a knowledge expert (21%), act as a mentor to current employees (16%) or handle key client relationships (14%).

Companies Who Have Ever Brought Back Retired Former Employees



Subgroup Spotlight: Company Size

Employees at companies with at least 100 employees are more likely to say:

- It's absolutely essential or very important for employees to share the knowledge needed to perform their job responsibilities with others (1-9 employees: 57%, 10-99: 61%, 100-999: 68%, 1,000+: 69%)

Employees at companies with at least 100 employees are more likely than those with 1-9 employees to say:

- Their organization offers semi-retirement (1-9 employees: 15%, 100-999: 25%, 1,000+: 24%)

Boomers in the Workplace Synonymous with Sources of Knowledge

Employees of all ages share the sentiment that Boomers in the workplace have valuable knowledge. Compared with 2018, common work challenges are mitigating while the practice of knowledge sharing is on the rise.

In the workplace, Boomer employees are more apt than their younger counterparts to report feeling knowledgeable (52% vs. Gen Z (43%), Millennials (44%) and Gen X (46%)) and this is reiterated by younger employees who say they view Boomers in the workplace as having valuable knowledge (61%), people they can learn a lot from (48%), and as role models to look up to (36%). Fewer younger employees view Boomers as behind the times of technology (22%), less productive (15%), or as a source of delays on projects (10%). Further, only 14% of Canadian employees say figuring out how to work with employees of other ages is a current challenge for them in the workplace; among Boomers, this challenge has decreased from 2018 (11% in 2021 vs. 19% in 2018). Other challenges such as keeping up with new technology (28% vs. 36%), maintaining work/life balance (25% vs. 35%), and figuring out ways to share their knowledge with others at their company (10% vs. 18%) are also less common for Boomers now than four years ago.

When it comes to retirement, more than 2 in 5 employed Boomers in Canada (41%) say there are certain benefits their company offers its active employees that prevent them from retiring. More than 3 in 5 (63%) wish their company offered more help for transitioning to retirement and nearly 2 in 5 (38%) say planning for retirement is a challenge they're currently facing, though this has decreased significantly from 2018 (49%). Regarding their employers, around two-thirds of Boomer employees (65%) say their company is well prepared to handle their retirement and around half (51%) report their company has an adequate successor in place for their role when they retire.

To prepare those successors for their retirement, more than half of Boomers (54%) have shared all or more than half of the knowledge needed to perform their job responsibilities with others who will need the information after they retire. This has increased significantly from 2018 (40%). Despite this uptick in knowledge sharing, more than a third (35%) say the processes at their job change so often that their knowledge and experience in their role will be irrelevant by the time they retire – which has increased slightly from 2018 (32%). Further, nearly 1 in 5 (19%) are hesitant to mentor younger employees because they may lose their job after sharing what they know with them.

