



# Widening inequality

Effects of the pandemic on jobs  
and income

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Environics Institute for Survey Research conducts relevant and original public opinion and social research related to issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it has been changing, and where it may be heading.

The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Ryerson University, Blueprint ADE, and The Conference Board of Canada, and is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

The Diversity Institute conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Our action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by underrepresented groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results. The Diversity Institute is a research lead for the Future Skills Centre.

Widening inequality: effects of the pandemic on jobs and income survey report is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

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# Executive summary

The second wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills was conducted in late 2020, as the pandemic's second wave gathered momentum in Canada and the number of new COVID-19 cases steadily increased. The survey investigates how Canadians have been affected by, and are coping with, the disruptions caused by the pandemic. This report focuses on the overall impact of the pandemic, as well as more specific experiences such as lost hours of work, employment or income. It also looks at who was more likely to receive one or more of the emergency support benefits provided by the government, and how helpful these benefits have been.

## Overall impact of COVID-19

As the second wave of the pandemic progressed, a growing proportion of Canadians reported that COVID-19 was affecting their day-to-day lives. The proportion saying they were greatly affected by the pandemic increased between August and December among all age groups, but more significantly among younger Canadians.

## Impact of COVID-19 on employment

Among those in the labour force, almost one in four experienced a reduction in the number of hours worked per week as a result of the pandemic; and just under one in five became unemployed (with unemployment being either temporary or ongoing). However, almost as many experienced an increase in the hours worked per week. This suggests the pandemic had somewhat of a polarizing affect, with some workers losing hours of work, but others being required to work more.

The loss of hours of work and the experience of unemployment have been more common outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic for some groups of workers than others. Younger workers, those earning lower incomes, those less securely employed, recent immigrants, workers who are racialized and Indigenous workers have all been more adversely affected. Almost one in four 18 to 24-year-olds in the labour force became unemployed; and one in two in that age group either became unemployed or had their hours of work reduced (or both). Workers who identify as Indigenous are two and a half times more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to have become unemployed as a result of the pandemic, and not found a new job.

## Impact of COVID-19 on earnings

Even though some workers may have avoided being laid off from work, they may nonetheless have been impacted by the pandemic in terms of a loss of employment income. In fact, the survey finds that just over one in three Canadians in the labour force are earning less than they were before as a result of the pandemic, while just over one in ten say they're earning more. The likelihood of earning less as a result of the pandemic declines as household income increases, suggesting the pandemic impacted lower-income workers more severely and, by so doing, may be widening income gaps in Canada.

Other groups more likely than average to be earning less include those who are self-employed or employed part-time, those employed in sales or service occupations, those under the age of 35, recent immigrants and Indigenous Peoples.

## Emergency support benefits

To mitigate this loss of income, the government introduced a number of emergency support measures for those who lost work due to the pandemic, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB). According to the survey, one in four Canadians report receiving either the CERB or the CESB, but this rises to more than three in five among those who say they became unemployed as a result of the pandemic. Younger Canadians were significantly more likely to receive the CERB or CESB. Most Canadians – as many as four in five – who received support through one or more of these emergency programs found the benefits to be helpful. By a large margin, recipients of the CERB are most likely to see their emergency support benefits as helpful.

## Support from employers

Two in three employees say their employer has been helpful to them as they managed the changes to their work situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, those who switched to working from home at least some days, as well as employees with young children, are more likely than average to say their employers have been helpful.

Most employees do not mention anything in particular when asked if there is something more their employer could have done to make it easier for them to manage the changes to their work situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Among those who did identify something their employers could have done, responses are spread across a variety of actions, none of which is named by more than five percent. These include: follow safety protocols properly (such as mask wearing, social distancing and better access to PPE); provide better or more communication, information or guidance on short- and medium-term plans; allow employees to work from home so that they don't have to return to the office before the pandemic is completely over; and increase pay or include pay for sick leave.

# Introduction

The Survey on Employment and Skills was designed to explore Canadians' experiences with the changing nature of work, including technology-driven disruptions, increasing insecurity and shifting skills requirements. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was expanded to investigate the impact of the crisis on the lives of Canadians, particularly in terms of employment. The expanded survey explores how different types of workers have been affected by the pandemic, in terms of such things as their hours of work, earnings, location of work, and ability to combine work and family responsibilities.

The initial wave of the survey was conducted between late February and early April 2020; a preliminary report was published in May, and a final report in September. This report is the second in a series based on the second wave of the survey, which was conducted between November 24 and December 22, 2020, with a large sample of 5,351 Canadians age 18 and over, in all provinces and territories.

This wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills was conducted as the pandemic's second wave gathered momentum and the number of new COVID-19 cases steadily increased. The continued spread of the virus brought with it the realization that the adjustments to work and school arrangements that were suddenly implemented in March 2020 would need to remain in place for many more months to come. Many employees affected by the lockdowns remained unemployed; while others marked more than half a year working from home, or working in reorganized workplaces while observing new public health and physical

distancing protocols. Students undertook a new school year, either learning online or attending school in-person, while navigating shifting rules about testing and self-isolating for potential COVID-19 exposure. In some parts of the country, initial steps to reopen workplaces or schools were soon reversed as governments moved to implement new restrictions to inhibit the spread of the virus. Toward the end of this period, however, hopes were raised by the announcement that vaccines were in production and would start to become available in Canada early in the new year.

In this context, the Survey on Employment and Skills sought to gain better insight into how Canadians of all backgrounds have been affected by, and are coping with, the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The results of this wave of the survey will be presented in a series of reports, including this one focusing on employment and earnings. This report will examine the overall impact of the pandemic, as well as more specific experiences such as loss of hours of work, loss of employment or loss of income. It will also look at who was more likely to receive one or more of the emergency support benefits provided by the government, and how helpful these benefits have been. The report finds that many workers in Canada have been adversely affected by the pandemic, in terms of lost hours of work, employment or income, but that these adverse effects are more common among certain groups, especially younger workers, those earning lower incomes, those less securely employed, recent immigrants, workers who are racialized, Indigenous workers, and workers with disabilities. As a result, the pandemic has likely served to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities within Canadian society.

## About the Survey on Employment and Skills

The Survey on Employment and Skills is conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the Future Skills Centre and the Diversity Institute at Ryerson University. The second wave of the study consists of a survey of 5,351 Canadians age 18 and over, conducted between November 24 and December 22, 2020, in all provinces and territories. It was conducted both online (in the provinces) and by telephone (in the territories). The survey includes oversamples of Canadians living in smaller provinces and territories, and Canadians who identify as Indigenous, in order to provide a better portrait of the range of experiences across the country. Unless otherwise indicated, the survey results in this report are weighted by age, gender, region, education and Indigenous identity, to ensure that they are representative of the Canadian population as whole.

The second wave of the survey was accompanied by a companion survey of an additional 260 adults living in northwest Toronto (north of Eglinton Avenue and west of Bathurst Street), where the per capita number of COVID-19 cases has been particularly high. This companion survey was conducted at the same time as the main survey, both online (following initial cellphone contact) and by landline telephone, bringing the total second wave survey sample to 5,611. However, the results for the companion survey are reported separately, when relevant, and are not combined with the results for the main survey.

Detailed data tables are available under separate cover; these present the results for the survey questions covered in this report by population demographics and other relevant characteristics (see the study project page at [www.environicsinstitute.org](http://www.environicsinstitute.org)). All results are presented as percentages unless otherwise noted.

## Acknowledgements

This research was made possible through the hard work and contributions of a number of individuals, including Noel Baldwin, Pedro Barata and Tricia Williams from the Future Skills Centre; and Wendy Cukier, Alexandra Macdonald, Karen McCallum and Michael Urban from Ryerson University's Diversity Institute. The study partners would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Keith Neuman from the Environics Institute for Survey Research for assistance with questionnaire development and analysis; John Otoo of Environics Research Group for leading the data collection; and Steve Otto and Cathy McKim for their work in designing and producing this report. Finally, we express our sincere thanks to the thousands of Canadians from all backgrounds who took the time to participate in the study.

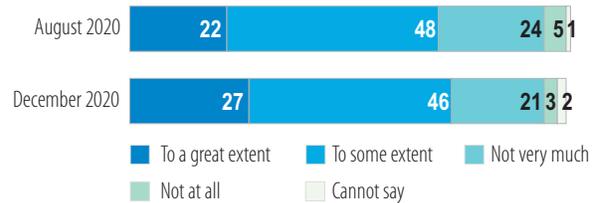
# Overall impact of COVID-19

*At the time of the second wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills, three in four Canadians reported that their day-to-day lives had been affected to a great or to some extent by the COVID-19 pandemic. The proportion saying they have been greatly affected increased between August and December among all age groups, but more significantly among younger Canadians.*

In a separate study conducted at the end of the Summer of 2020, and prior to the resurgence of COVID-19 cases associated with the pandemic's second wave, 70 percent of Canadians reported that their day-to-day lives had been affected to a great or to some extent by COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> The second wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills, conducted at the end of 2020 as COVID-19 cases were increasing, found that this proportion had risen slightly, to 74 percent. The proportion of Canadians saying that their day-to-day lives had been affected to a *great extent* by the COVID-19 pandemic grew from 22 percent in August of 2020, to 27 percent in December. This proportion increased slightly in every part of the country, except in Newfoundland and Labrador, where the proportion saying they have been greatly affected by the pandemic decreased.

The proportion saying they've been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic increased between August and December among all age groups, but more significantly among younger Canadians. Among those age 18 to 34, the proportion increased from 23 to 32 percent. This increase was even greater among younger women (from 22 to 36%) than younger men (from 25 to 29%).

## Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on day-to-day life

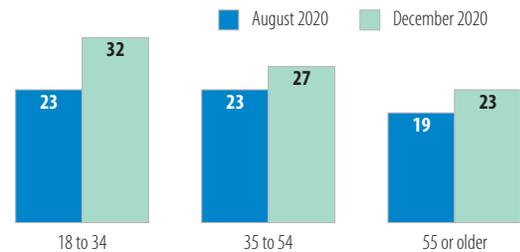


Q.24a

*This question is about your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally speaking, to what extent has your day-to-day life been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?*

## Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on day-to-day life

Affected to a great extent, by age



Q.24a

*This question is about your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally speaking, to what extent has your day-to-day life been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?*

The proportion saying they've been *greatly* or *somewhat* affected by the COVID-19 pandemic does not vary significantly among other groups within the population; however, some groups are more likely to report being affected to a *great extent*. These include recent immigrants (36%), Indigenous Peoples (36%), racialized Canadians (32%), those with young children at home (32%) and Canadians with disabilities (32%).

<sup>1</sup> Environics Institute for Survey Research, *A Better Canada: Values & Priorities after COVID-19* (Toronto: Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2020); <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/a-better-canada-values-priorities-after-covid-19>.

# Impact of COVID-19 on employment

***Almost one in four Canadians in the labour force experienced a reduction in the number of hours worked per week as a result of the pandemic; and just under one in five became unemployed. The employment situation of younger workers, those earning lower incomes, those less securely employed, recent immigrants, workers who are racialized, Indigenous Peoples and workers with disabilities have all been significantly more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.***

Most Canadians currently in the labour force have had their employment situation affected, in one way or another, by the pandemic.

- The most common experience is the reduction in the number of hours worked per week. Almost one in four (23%) Canadians in the labour force have experienced this as a result of the pandemic.
- However, the next most common experience is an *increase* in the hours worked per week, which occurred in the case of 16 percent of those in the labour force. Thus, the pandemic appears to have had somewhat of a polarizing effect, with some workers losing hours of work, but others being asked to work more.
- Thirteen percent of Canadians in the labour force became unemployed as a result of the pandemic, and remained unemployed at the time of the survey; and an additional six percent became unemployed, but had been able to find a new job.<sup>2</sup> As there is some overlap between the two groups, the total proportion of Canadians in the labour force who became unemployed as a result of the pandemic (regardless of whether or not they had found a new job at the time of the survey) is 18 percent.<sup>3</sup>
- Seven percent of Canadians in the labour force remained employed, but were re-assigned by their employer to a different job from the one they were doing before the pandemic.
- As a result of the pandemic, five percent have taken on another job in addition to their main one in order to help make ends meet.
- Forty-six percent of Canadians in the labour force have experienced none of these things as a result of the pandemic (i.e., they neither became unemployed, had their hours of work reduced or increased, were re-assigned to a different job, nor took on an additional job).

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<sup>2</sup> This does not include those who may have lost their job as a result of the pandemic and then left the labour force (e.g., given up searching for a new job) at the time of the survey. According to Waves 1 and 2 of the Employment and Skills Survey, between March and December of 2020, the proportion of the population between the ages of 25 and 54 that was employed or looking for work (the labour force) declined from 90 to 88 percent for men, and from 78 to 77 percent for women. These figures are similar to the official labour force statistics from Statistics Canada, which shows no net decline between March and December in the size of the labour force for either men or women within this age group (see Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0287-01).

<sup>3</sup> By way of comparison, Statistics Canada reports that, at the pandemic's peak, employment in Canada declined by 15.6 percent (see Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0287-01). Note also that the method and samples of Statistic Canada's Labour Force Survey and the Survey on Employment and Skills differ in a number of ways, including the age of respondents and the questions asked.

It is also possible to combine the mentions of either unemployment (whether temporary or ongoing) or reduced hours, to count the number who might have experienced at least one of these as a result of the pandemic. This shows that 36 percent of Canadians in the labour force either became unemployed and remained unemployed, or became unemployed but had been able to find a new job, or had the number of hours they work per week reduced – or experienced a combination of these.

There is some variation in the prevalence of these experiences across the country, which likely reflects differences in the impact of the pandemic and types of measures enacted to contain it. The proportion that became unemployed as a result of the pandemic, and remained unemployed at the time of the survey, is slightly higher in the Maritimes (17%) and the Prairies (17%) than in Ontario (12%), Quebec (12%) or the North (9%).<sup>4</sup> The proportion that became unemployed, either with or without finding a new job, is also slightly higher in the Maritimes (23%) and the Prairies (21%). Similarly, the proportion that experienced either unemployment or a reduction of hours (or

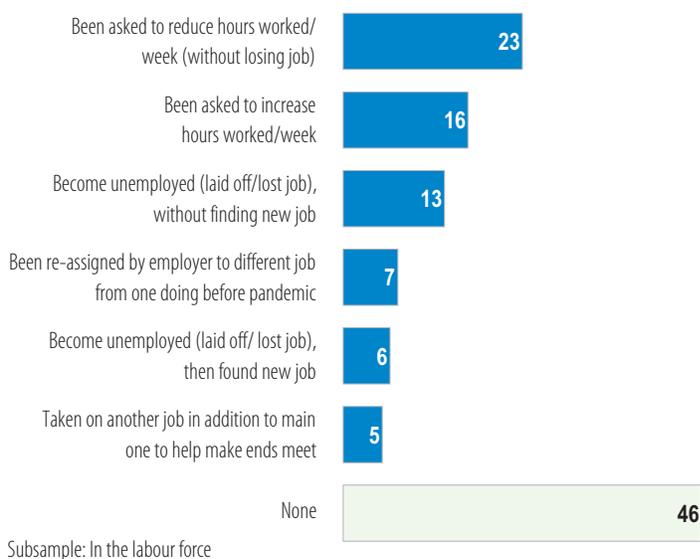
both) is highest in the Maritimes (40%) and the Prairies (40%); and somewhat lower in Quebec (37%), B.C. (34%) and the North (27%).

Other factors, notably age, income, type of employment, identity and disability are much more important than region when considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment.

### Age

- The employment situation of younger workers has been significantly more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic than that of their older counterparts.<sup>5</sup> Workers between the ages of 18 and 34, especially the youngest cohort between the ages of 18 and 24, are much more likely than those age 35 and older to have lost their jobs or had their hours of work reduced as a result of the pandemic. One in two (26%) 18 to 24-year-olds, and the same proportion (25%) of 25 to 34-year-olds, became unemployed, while 51 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds, and 45 percent of 25 to 34-year-olds, either became unemployed or had their hours of work reduced (or both).

### Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment



Q.24b

And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

<sup>4</sup> The North refers to the three Territories, combined. Results for the North, when reported separately, are unweighted.

<sup>5</sup> This finding is also generally consistent with those from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey.

## Gender

- When the first restrictions to control the pandemic were imposed in the Spring of 2020, women were more likely to lose their jobs than men. By December, however, at the time of Wave 2 of the Survey on Employment and Skills, Statistics Canada reports that the gap in job loss between women and men had narrowed considerably, with employment for women standing at 96 percent of the pre-pandemic level, compared to 97 percent for men.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the Survey on Employment and Skills finds that men and women in the labour force are equally likely to report experiencing either a loss of hours or work, or unemployment, or both, as a result of the pandemic. Significantly, however, this roughly equal impact is itself unprecedented, as previous recessions in Canada impacted men much more than women.<sup>7</sup>

## Education and income

- Workers earning lower incomes have been much more adversely affected by the pandemic. Compared to their counterparts with higher incomes, they are more likely to have had their hours of work reduced or to have lost their jobs.<sup>8</sup>
- The same is true of those without a college diploma or university degree: 43 percent of those with no formal education or training after high school, and 45 percent of those with trades or apprenticeship training, have experienced either reduced hours or unemployment as a result of the pandemic (or both), compared to 36 percent of those with a college diploma and 29 percent of those with a university degree.

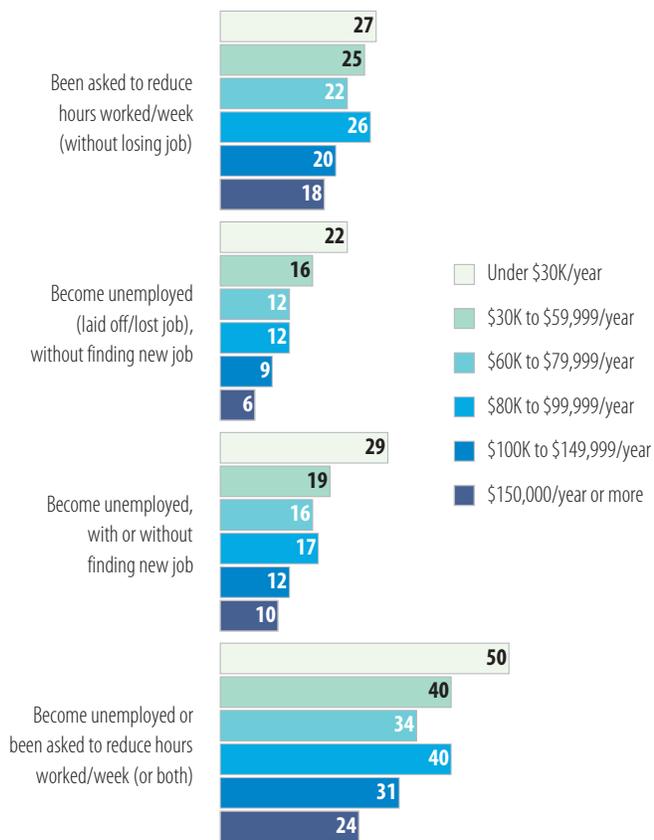
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<sup>6</sup> See Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0287-01. Note also that the method and samples of the Labour Force Survey and the Survey on Employment and Skills differ in a number of ways, including the age of respondents and the questions asked. See also notes 2 and 3.

<sup>7</sup> These figures do not account for those who had left the labour force (that is, lost their job and stopped looking for a new one) as a result of the pandemic, as the questions about loss of hours of work or employment were asked only of those currently in the labour force. As is the case with employment, Statistics Canada reports that, by December 2020, there was little difference in the proportion of women and men that had left the labour market since the start of the pandemic. Similarly, according to Waves 1 and 2 of the Employment and Skills Survey, between March and December of 2020, the drop in the proportion of the population between the ages of 25 and 54 that was employed or looking for work (the labour force) was similar for women (from 78% to 77%) and men (from 90% to 88%) (see note 2).

<sup>8</sup> Note that survey participants were asked to report their total household income for 2019, the year prior to the pandemic; this means that the survey finding is that those with lower incomes prior to the pandemic are more likely to subsequently be adversely affected (and not simply that lower incomes are an outcome of reduced hours or job loss during the pandemic).

## Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment By household income

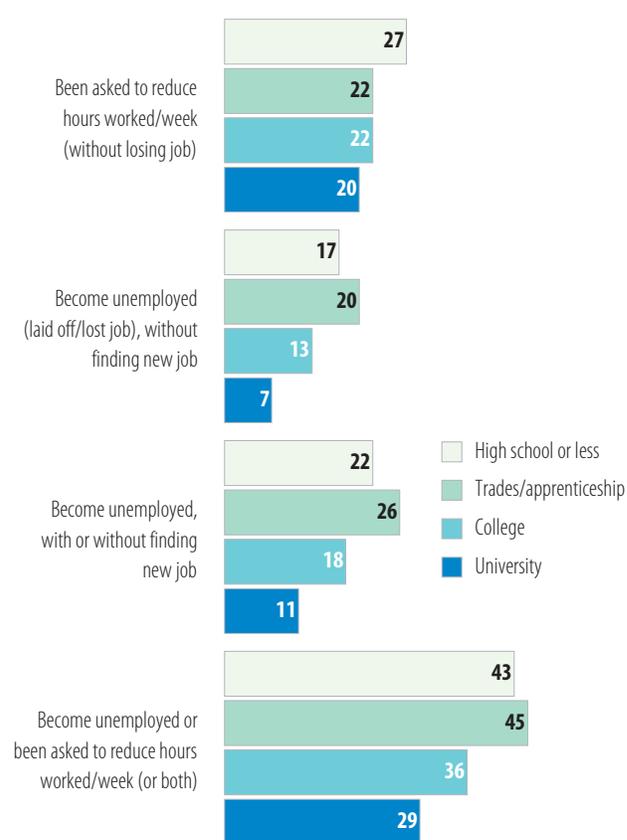


Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24b

And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

## Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment By educational attainment



Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24b

And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

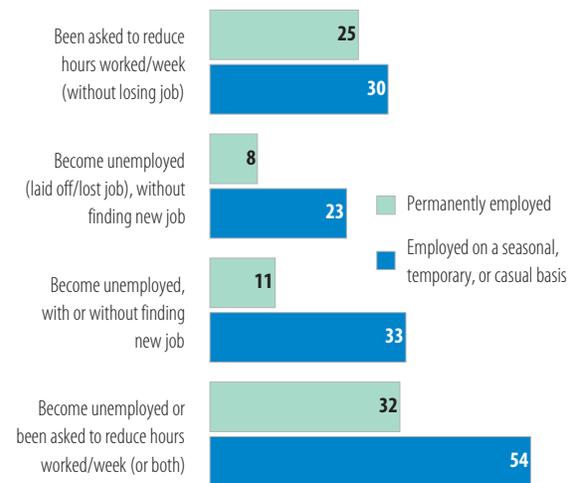
## Employment status and occupation

Not surprisingly, those less securely employed – including those employed part-time, or on a seasonal, temporary or casual basis – have been more adversely affected by the pandemic.

- Thirty-seven percent of part-time employees have had their hours of work reduced, compared to 22 percent of full-time employees. Part-time employees (18%) are also more than twice as likely as full-time employees (8%) to have become unemployed, without finding a new job. Looking at different experiences in combination, 26 percent of part-time employees, compared to 11 percent of full-time employees, became unemployed (whether or not they subsequently found a new job), and 55 percent of part-time employees, compared to 30 percent of full-time employees, became unemployed or had their hours of work reduced (or both).
- Those employed on a seasonal, temporary or casual basis (33%) are three times more likely than those with permanent employment (11%) to have become unemployed as a result of the pandemic (whether or not they subsequently found a new job).
- Those working in sales or services occupations were more adversely affected than others, particularly in terms of unemployment. Sales and services workers (24%) are five times more likely than professionals and executives (5%) to have lost their job, without finding another one, as a result of the pandemic. One in two sales and services workers (51%) became unemployed or had their hours of work reduced (or both), compared to 38 percent of those working in trades, transportation or labour, 34 percent of office or clerical workers, and 29 percent of professionals or executives.

## Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment

By employment status



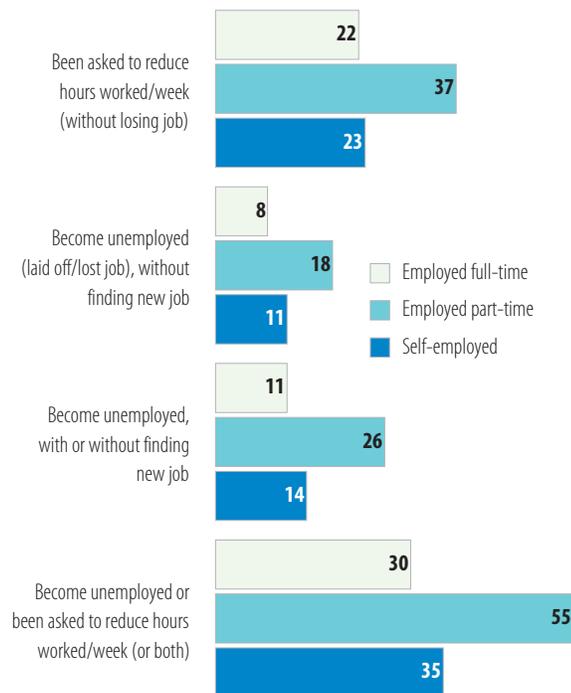
Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24b

And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

## Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment

By employment type



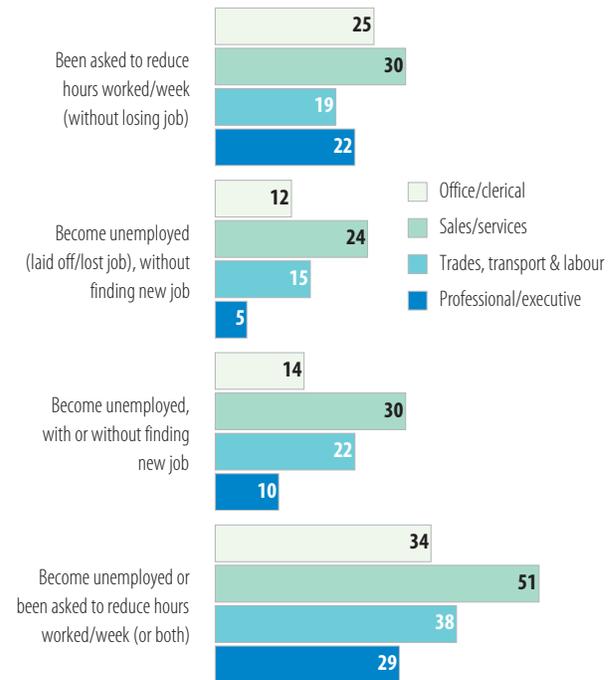
Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24b

And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

## Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment

By occupation



Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24b

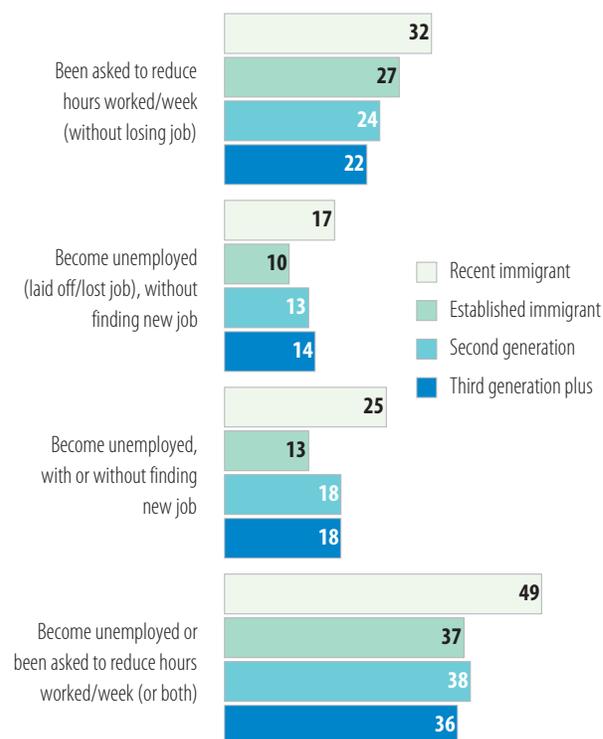
And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

## Immigration background and racial identity

- Immigrants are more likely to have experienced job loss or a loss of hours at work during the pandemic. It is recent immigrants, however, who have been the most adversely affected; whereas the experience of established immigrants does not differ much from that of second or third generation-plus Canadians. One in four (25%) recent immigrants became unemployed (whether or not they subsequently found a new job), and one in three (32%) had their hours of work reduced. Combining these experiences, one in two (49%) became unemployed or had their hours of work reduced (or both).
- Workers who are racialized are more likely than those who identify as white to have experienced a reduction of hours of work or unemployment as a result of the pandemic. Forty-five percent of those who are racialized became unemployed or had their hours of work reduced (or both), compared to 32 percent of those who are white. Workers who identify as Black appear to have been particularly affected: 52 percent report either a loss of hours of work or job loss (or both).<sup>9</sup> The same is true of racialized workers who are also recent immigrants: in this case, 55 percent report either a loss of hours of work or job loss (or both).

## Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment

By immigration background



Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24b

And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

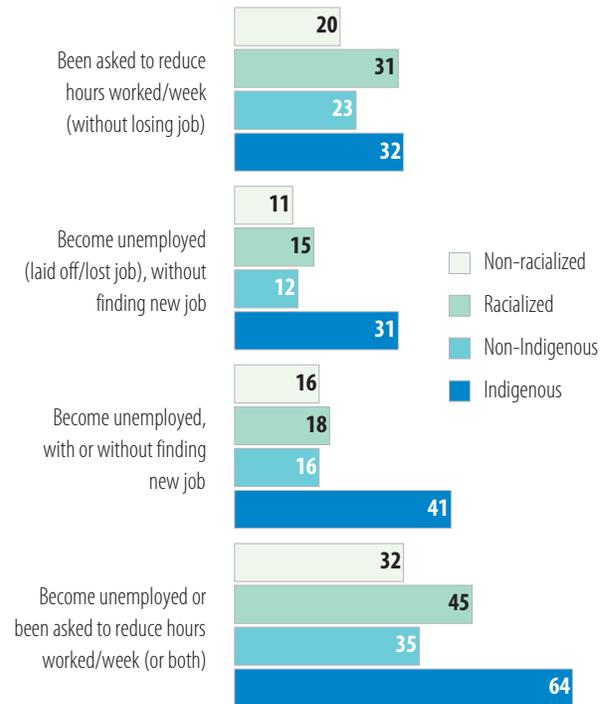
<sup>9</sup> The sample of respondents who identify as Black and who are in the labour force (and were therefore asked this question) is relatively small (n=96), and so this result should be treated with caution.

## Indigenous Peoples

- Workers who identify as Indigenous have been particularly affected. Indigenous Peoples (31%) are two and a half times more likely than non-Indigenous people to have become unemployed as a result of the pandemic, without finding a new job. Almost two in three (64%) people who identify as Indigenous, compared to 35 percent of who do not, report either a loss of hours of work or job loss (or both). The impact appears to be most pronounced for those who identify as First Nations and who are living in their traditional First Nations communities (however, they do not differ significantly between Indigenous men and women).

## Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment

By identity



Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24b

And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

## Living with disabilities

Those who report having a physical or mental condition or difference that limits the amount or the kind of activity that they can do on a typical day are much more likely to experience a loss of hours of work or loss of employment than are those who do not report such a condition or difference.<sup>10</sup> One in four of those who say that such a condition or difference *occasionally* limits the amount or the kind of activity that they can do on a typical day (24%), and one in five of those who *always or often* have limits on their activity (20%), became unemployed as a result of the pandemic without finding a new job, compared to nine percent of those who do not report such a condition or difference. Almost one in two (48%) of those with a physical or mental condition or difference that limits their daily activity report

either a loss of hours of work, or temporary or ongoing job loss (or both), compared to 31 percent of those who do not report such a condition or difference. This pattern, in part, reflects the fact that those who report having a physical or mental condition or difference that limits the amount or the kind of activity that they can do on a typical day are more likely to have other characteristics that are associated with a greater likelihood of being adversely affected by the pandemic. For instance, compared to those who do not report such a condition or difference, they are younger, are less likely to have completed high school, are more likely to be working part-time, are more likely to be employed in sales and services occupations, have lower incomes, and are more likely to identify as Indigenous.

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<sup>10</sup> The survey asked: "Do you currently have a physical condition; a cognitive difference; an emotional, psychological or mental health condition; or a health problem that limits the amount or the kind of activity that you can do on a typical day? For this question, please consider only conditions or difficulties that have lasted or are expected to last for six months or more."

# Impact of COVID-19 on earnings

*Just over one in three Canadians in the labour force say they're earning less than they were before as a result of the pandemic, while just over one in ten say they're earning more. The likelihood of earning less from work as a result of the pandemic declines as income increases, suggesting the pandemic impacted lower-income workers more severely and, by so doing, may be widening income gaps in Canada.*

Even though some workers may have avoided being laid off from work, they may nonetheless have been impacted by the pandemic in terms of a loss of employment income. Others, however, may have been earning more, possibly because they were working longer hours in response to the pandemic (for example, through the delivery of medical or other essential services).

To explore these experiences, the survey asked Canadians in the labour force whether the total amount of money they earn from work changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A plurality of Canadians (46%) say there has been no change. However, 36 percent say they are earning less than they were before as a result of the pandemic, while 12 percent say they are earning more.

There are only modest regional variations in responses to this question. Albertans are the most likely to say that they've been earning less than they were before as a result of the pandemic (46%), while residents of the Territories are the most likely to say there has been no change (73%).<sup>11</sup> Among metropolitan areas, those in Calgary/Edmonton (combined) (46%) and Toronto (41%) are the most likely to say they've been earning less.

## Change in earnings from work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic



Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24c

*Has the total amount of money you earn from work changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?*

<sup>11</sup> Forty-seven percent of residents of PEI also say they've been earning less than they were before as a result of the pandemic, but the sample size of Islanders in the labour force is relatively small (112, compared to 380 in Alberta). The figure for the Maritimes as a region is lower (35%).

There is an obvious relationship between the changes in Canadians' hours of work and their earnings, but with some exceptions worth noting.

- Naturally, most (76%) of those who say their hours of work have been reduced also say they're earning less than they were before. But almost one in four (23%) of those who lost hours did not lose earnings (likely because many are full-time salaried and not wage-based employees).
- One in three (35%) of those who have worked increased hours during the pandemic also say they're earning more. While this group is much more likely than average to be earning more, it nonetheless means that most of those (64%) who are working more hours are doing so without receiving extra pay. (Those who are

working more, without earning more, are more likely to be working full-time and less likely to be working part-time.)

- Those who have become unemployed during the pandemic, whether or not they have found a new job, (61%) are much more likely than those who kept their jobs (30%) to be earning less than they were before. But a small portion (18%) of those who became unemployed report earning more (this latter group is more likely to include younger workers, those working in both sales and services; and trades, transportation and labour; as well as those employed on seasonal basis).

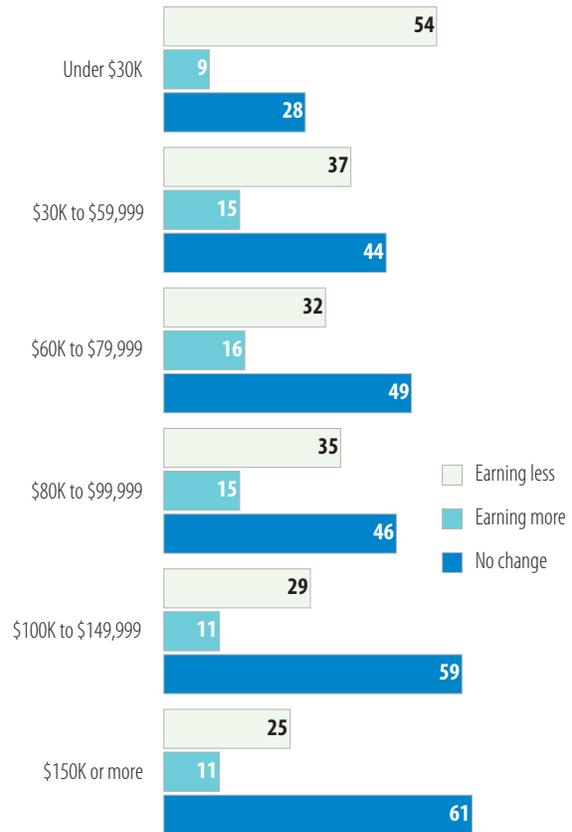
The impact of the pandemic on earnings from employment also varies significantly among other groups within the population.

## Education and income

- The likelihood of earning less from work as a result of the pandemic declines as income increases, suggesting that the pandemic impacted lower-income workers more severely and, by so doing, may be widening income gaps in Canada. Over one in two workers in households earning \$30,000 a year or less, and about one in three in households earning between \$30,000 and \$100,000 a year, are earning less, compared to about one in four in households earning more than \$100,000 per year.
- Workers with a university (33%) or college (33%) education are slightly less likely than those with trades or apprenticeship training (38%), or those without any education or training after high school (39%), to be earning less from work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Change in earnings from work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

By annual household income



Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24c

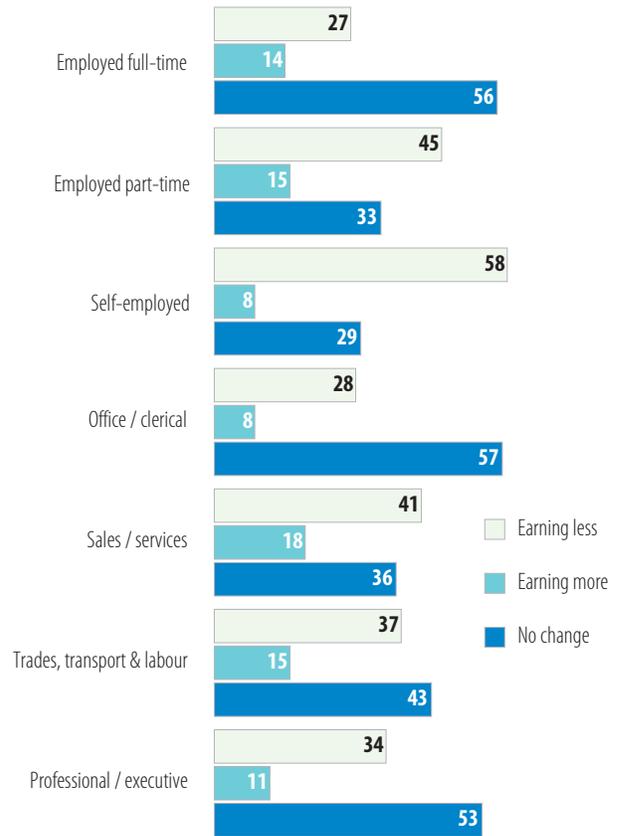
Has the total amount of money you earn from work changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

## Employment status and occupation

- The pandemic affected the earnings of part-time and self-employed workers to a much greater extent than those of full-time workers. A majority (56%) of full-time workers have seen no change in their earnings as a result of the pandemic, compared to one in three part-time workers and 29 percent of those who are self-employed. Conversely, a majority (58%) of self-employed workers have seen a decrease in earnings, compared to 45 percent of part-time workers, and 27 percent of full-time workers.
- One in two (51%) permanently employed workers experienced no change in earnings as a result of the pandemic, compared to one in three (33%) of those employed on a seasonal, temporary or casual basis. Conversely, 40 percent of those employed on a seasonal, temporary or casual basis have seen a decrease in earnings, compared to 33 of permanently employed workers.
- Office and clerical workers (57%), and professionals and executives (53%), are more likely than those in other occupations to have seen no change in their earnings as a result of the pandemic. Those working in sales and services occupations (41%) are the most likely to have experienced a drop in earnings.
- Workers who are members of a labour union (54%) are more likely than those who are not (46%) to have seen no change in their earnings; and less likely to have experienced a decrease in earnings (24% of union members are earning less as a result of the pandemic, compared to 38% of those who are not union members).

## Change in earnings from work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

By employment status and occupation



Subsample: In the labour force

Q.24c

Has the total amount of money you earn from work changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

## Immigration background and racial identity

- Recent immigrants and racialized Canadians are both somewhat more likely than their non-immigrant and non-racialized counterparts, respectively, to be earning less as a result of the pandemic; although, in this case, the differences among groups are relatively modest. However, the difference is greater when the categories are combined: 43 percent of immigrants who are racialized, including 46 percent of recent immigrants who are racialized, are earning less, compared to the average of 36 percent.

## Indigenous Peoples

- Indigenous Peoples are only half as likely as non-Indigenous people to have experienced no change in earnings. They are somewhat more likely than non-Indigenous people to be earning less (42%, compared to 35%), but also more likely to be earning more from work as a result of the pandemic (28% of Indigenous Peoples in the labour force are earning more, compared to 12% of non-Indigenous people). This is explained in part by the fact that Indigenous Peoples are much more likely to be employed on a seasonal rather than a permanent basis, and more likely to work in trades, transportation and labour occupations, where experiencing an increase in earnings is more common.

## Living with disabilities

- Those who report having a physical or mental condition or difference that limits the amount or the kind of activity that they can do on a typical day are more likely to be earning less than they were before, as a result of the pandemic; this is the case for 44 percent of those whose daily activity is either often or always, or at least occasionally, limited, compared to 31 percent for those who do not report such a condition or difference.
- A much smaller proportion of those whose daily activity is limited (19%) are earning more, but this is also greater than the proportion of those who do not have a condition or difference that limits their activity (9%).
- One in three (32%) of those whose daily activity is limited experienced no change in earnings, compared to more than one in two (55%) of those who do not have a condition or difference that limits their activity.

## Age

- Workers age 35 or older are more likely to have seen no change in their earnings from work as a result of the pandemic. Younger workers, however, are more likely than older workers to be both earning less and earning more – suggesting that there has been a wider range of outcomes within the younger age cohorts.

## Gender

- The pandemic has had a broadly similar impact on the earnings of men and women. Women (37%), however, are slightly more likely than men (34%) to be earning *less*, while men (14%) are slightly more likely than women (11%) to be earning *more*.

Table 1: Change in earning as a result of the pandemic among those currently in the labour force by type of worker

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**MORE LIKELY THAN AVERAGE TO BE EARNING LESS THAN BEFORE**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Self-employed                                      | 58%        |
| Household income less than \$30,000/year           | 54%        |
| Employed part-time                                 | 45%        |
| Those whose daily activity is restricted           | 44%        |
| Immigrants who are racialized                      | 43%        |
| Albertans  | 46%        |
| Recent immigrants                                  | 42%        |
| Indigenous Peoples                                 | 42%        |
| Sales/services occupations                         | 41%        |
| Employed on seasonal/temporary/casual basis        | 40%        |
| Age 18-34  | 39%        |
| <b>Average (among those in the labour force) =</b> | <b>36%</b> |

**MORE LIKELY THAN AVERAGE TO HAVE EXPERIENCED NO CHANGE IN EARNINGS**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Residents of the Territories                       | 73%        |
| Household income \$150,000/year or more            | 61%        |
| Office/clerical workers                            | 57%        |
| Employed full-time                                 | 56%        |
| Age 55+  | 54%        |
| Members of labour unions                           | 54%        |
| University graduates                               | 53%        |
| Professionals/executives                           | 53%        |
| Permanently employed                               | 51%        |
| <b>Average (among those in the labour force) =</b> | <b>46%</b> |

**MORE LIKELY THAN AVERAGE TO BE EARNING MORE THAN BEFORE\***

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Indigenous Peoples                                 | 28%        |
| Those whose daily activity is restricted           | 19%        |
| Sales/services occupations                         | 18%        |
| Age 18-34  | 17%        |
| <b>Average (among those in the labour force) =</b> | <b>12%</b> |

\* Note that each of the population groups listed below is also significantly more likely than average to have become unemployed as a result of the pandemic.

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# Emergency support benefits

***One in four Canadians report receiving either the CERB or the CESB, but this rises to more than three in five among those who say they became unemployed as a result of the pandemic. Younger Canadians were significantly more likely to receive the CERB or CESB.***

As the pandemic took hold in Canada, the government introduced a number of measures to support Canadians who were experiencing a loss of income or employment. The most important of these was the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), which provided \$2,000 per month to replace lost income for those unable to work due to COVID-19. A parallel measure, the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB), provided benefits to students and recent graduates who were unable to find work. Another benefit, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), was paid to employers experiencing a loss in revenue, to help them cover part of their employee wages. And Canadians already eligible for programs, such as the Canada Child Benefit, received temporary increases to their benefits.

The second wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills asked Canadians whether, at any time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada in March of 2020, they received any of a list of six emergency support benefits from the government.<sup>12</sup> Nearly one in two Canadians indicated that they received at least one of the benefits mentioned. The most commonly received benefits are the CERB, received by 19 percent of

adult Canadians; and a one-time additional GST or HST credit payment, received by 17 percent. The CESB was received by only six percent of Canadian adults, but by 29 percent of current students.

One in four Canadians report receiving either the CERB or the CESB, the two main benefits available to those who lost their jobs or who were unable to find a job as a result of the pandemic. But this rises to almost one in three among those currently in the labour force – and, most importantly, to 62 percent among those who say they became unemployed as a result of the pandemic.

Receipt of the CERB or CESB also varies among other groups in ways that mirror the likelihood of losing hours of work or employment as a result of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The CERB or CESB are more likely to have been received by those working part-time (47%), who are self-employed (39%), or who remain unemployed (35%), compared to those working full-time (25%) at the time of the survey. Those employed on a seasonal, temporary or casual basis (60%) were also much more likely to receive either of these benefits than are those who are permanently employed (24%).
- Younger Canadians were significantly more likely to receive the CERB or CESB; 51 percent of women, and 43 percent of men, between the ages of 18 and 24 received one of these two benefits, compared to 26 percent of women and 29 percent of men between the ages of 25 and 54.

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<sup>12</sup> The proportion of survey participants that report receiving one or more of these benefits can be expected to be lower than the actual proportion for a variety of reasons. In the case of existing benefits that were automatically increased, recipients may not have been aware of, or may no longer recall, the change. In the case of benefits that required an application, recipients may not recall the appropriate name or description of the program. In some cases, despite the confidentiality of the survey, participants may be reluctant to disclose the fact that they received certain benefits, perhaps because, at the time of the survey, the news media was highlighting stories about the Canadian Revenue Agency requiring certain benefits to be repaid to the government.

- Those in sales and services occupations (38%) were more likely than those in other occupations (21%) to receive the CERB or CESB.
- Recent immigrants (34%) and racialized Canadians (36%) were both more likely than average to receive the CERB or CESB.
- Indigenous Peoples (51%) were more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous people (22%) to receive the CERB or CESB.
- Those who report having a physical or mental condition or difference that limits the amount or the kind of activity that they can do on a typical day (28%) were more likely than those who do not report such a condition (21%) to receive the CERB or CESB.

While the CERB and CESB reached a majority of those who experienced unemployment due to the pandemic, they were not received mainly by those with lower household incomes, as they were not targeted in this way; they replaced a proportion of lost employment income for anyone whose job was disrupted by the pandemic, regardless of how much they had earned.

Other benefits, however, were more effectively targeted to lower-income households. For instance, while 17 percent of adult Canadians reported receiving the one-time additional GST

or HST credit payment, the figure is higher (29%) among Canadians living in households with annual incomes under \$30,000, and reaches 49 percent among seniors in these lower-income households; 45 percent of those who report having a physical or mental condition or difference that often or always limits the amount or the kind of activity that they can do on a typical day, and who are in this income group, also received this benefit. One in four (25%) seniors in low-income households also report receiving an increase to the amount of the Old Age Supplement (OAS) or Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) that they were already receiving. About one in four mothers with children age 18 and under, and living in low-income households, report receiving a one-time additional GST or HST credit payment, and an increase to the amount of the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) that they were already receiving.

Overall, 54 percent of adult Canadians living in households with annual incomes under \$30,000 report receiving at least one of the six benefits mentioned in the survey, compared to 32 percent of those living in households with annual incomes of \$150,000 or more. Canadians with young children at home (65%) were also more likely to report receiving one of the six benefits than those without any children at home (41%).

**Table 2: Receipt of emergency support benefits**  
By employment situation

|   | Total<br>(all adults) | CURRENT EMPLOYMENT SITUATION |                       |                   |            |         |         | Became unemployed<br>as a result of pandemic<br>(without finding a new job) |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------|---------|---------|---|
|   |                       | Employed<br>full-time        | Employed<br>part-time | Self-<br>employed | Unemployed | Retired | Student |   |
| A benefit to help you because you had to stop working due to COVID-19, such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) or the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) | 19                    | 21                           | 36                    | 33                | 34         | 3       | 23      | 53  |
| A one-time additional GST/HST credit payment  | 17                    | 8                            | 12                    | 12                | 15         | 29      | 13      | 11  |
| An increase to the amount of the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) that you were already receiving   | 6                     | 7                            | 7                     | 6                 | 5          | 1       | 5       | 10  |
| An increase to the amount of the Old Age Supplement (OAS) or Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) that you were already receiving   | 6                     | 2                            | 5                     | 5                 | 0          | 17      | 3       | 8   |
| A benefit to help you because you were a student and were unable to find work due to COVID-19, such as the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB)  | 6                     | 5                            | 14                    | 6                 | 2          | 0       | 29      | 12  |
| A subsidy paid to a business you own, to help pay the wages of the people who work for you, or to help pay your commercial rent   | 3                     | 4                            | 6                     | 6                 | 2          | 0       | 2       | 10  |
| A deferral on your mortgage or taxes.   | 3                     | 3                            | 3                     | 2                 | 3          | 1       | 3       | 5   |
| Either CERB or CESB (or both)   | 24                    | 25                           | 47                    | 39                | 35         | 3       | 52      | 62  |
| None of these   | 54                    | 61                           | 38                    | 43                | 51         | 57      | 41      | 24  |

Q.33a

At any time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada in March of this year, did you receive any of the following emergency support benefits from the government? (Select all that apply)

# Impact of emergency support benefits

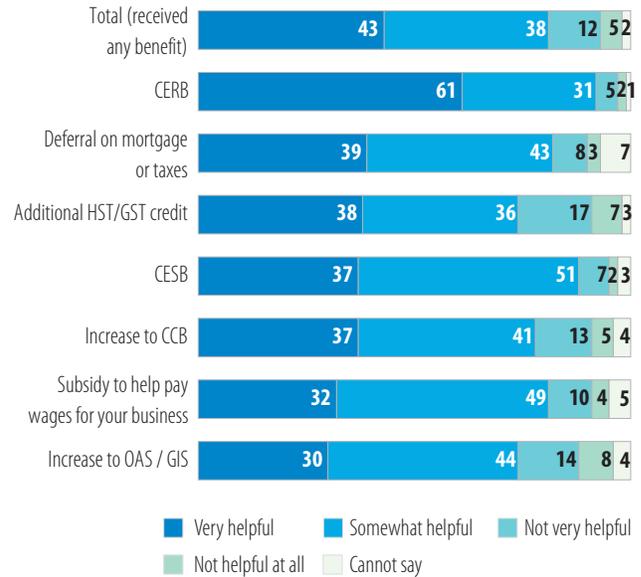
**Four in five Canadians who received one or more of the emergency support benefits put in place by the federal government as part of its response to the pandemic found these benefits to be helpful. By a large margin, recipients of the CERB are most likely to see their emergency support benefits as helpful.**

Most Canadians who received support through one or more of the emergency benefits put in place by the federal government as part of its response to the pandemic found these benefits to be helpful. In fact, as many as four in five (81%) recipients found the benefits they received to be either very (43%) or somewhat (38%) helpful, compared to 17 percent who found them not very helpful (12%) or not helpful at all (5%).

By a large margin, recipients of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), which offset earnings lost for those forced to stop working due to COVID-19, are the most likely to see their emergency support benefits as helpful; 61 percent of those who received the CERB found the benefits to be very helpful, and nine in ten (91%) found them to be either very or somewhat helpful. (Note that the question asks about the helpfulness of all of the emergency support benefits received, and not just one particular benefit such as the CERB.)

The emergency support benefits are especially likely to be seen as very helpful by those who received the CERB and are currently self-employed (80%), but also by majorities of those who are employed full-time (57%) or part-time (58%), or who remain unemployed (61%). Women who received the CERB (66%) are somewhat more likely than male recipients (56%) to say their benefits were very helpful.

**Helpfulness of emergency support benefits**  
By type of benefit received



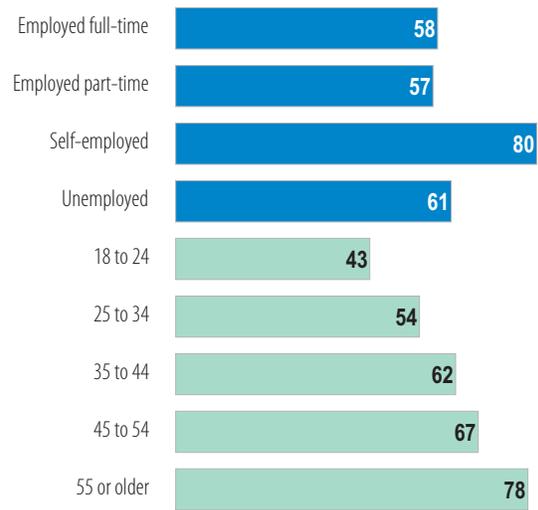
*Q33b*  
Overall, how helpful did you find the emergency support benefits that you received?

Among CERB recipients, the proportion finding their emergency support benefits to be very helpful also increases significantly with age, from 43 percent of those between the ages of 18 to 24, to 78 percent of those age 55 and older. Younger CERB recipients, however, are more likely to say the benefits they received were somewhat helpful – meaning that the total saying the benefits to be either very or somewhat helpful is very similar (and very high) across all age groups.

Not surprisingly, those who received other benefits that were tailored to their particular situation tend to have favourable views of emergency support benefits as a whole. For instance, 54 percent of students who received the CESB found the emergency support benefits they received to be very helpful; and 96 percent found them to be very or somewhat helpful. Among those with children age 18 or younger at home who received an increase to their Canada Child Benefit, 38 percent found the emergency support benefits they received to be very helpful; and 78 percent found them to be very or somewhat helpful.

Finally, there are only modest differences among income groups, with 43 percent of those in lower-income households, 41 percent of those in middle-income households, and 49 percent of those in higher-income households saying the emergency support benefits they received were very helpful.<sup>13</sup> The pattern is similar among those who received the CERB: in this case, 62 percent of those in lower-income households, 58 percent of those in middle-income households, and 63 percent of those in higher-income households say the emergency support benefits they received were very helpful.

**Helpfulness of emergency support benefits, among those who received the CERB**  
Very helpful, by employment status and age group



*Q33b*  
Overall, how helpful did you find the emergency support benefits that you received?

<sup>13</sup> The income brackets in this case are: below \$60,000 per year; \$60,000-\$99,999 per year; and \$100,000 per year or more. The reference year for annual income is 2019, prior to the onset of the pandemic.

# Support from employers

***Two in three employees say their employer has been helpful to them as they managed the changes to their work situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, those who switched to working from home at least some days, as well as employees with young children at home, are more likely than average to say their employers have been helpful.***

While the government has acted to provide financial support to Canadians coping with the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, employers have also been in a position to help. Employers can, for instance, allow for flexibility in schedules or project deadlines to take into account employees' unusual work situations, including working from home and juggling work with their children's online learning from home.

Overall, Canadian employees have a favourable view of how their employers have responded. Two in three (68%) employees say their employer has been very (27%) or somewhat (41%) helpful to them as they managed the changes to their work situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Only one in four (24%) say their employer has been not very (15%) or not at all (9%) helpful (and additional 8% cannot say).

Those employed in two of Canada's major urban areas, Toronto (78%) and Vancouver (75%), are more likely than average to say their employer has been very or somewhat helpful to them. Notably, those who switched to working from home at least some days (77%) during the pandemic are

more likely than those who have continued to work in their regular workplace (62%) to see their employers as helpful to them in managing their work situation. Employees with young children at home are slightly more likely than average to say their employers have been helpful.

While majorities of employees in all income groups see their employers as having been helpful to them as they managed the changes to their work situation, those in higher-income households are somewhat more likely to hold this view. On this question, there is no significant difference between the views of those who do and do not report having a physical or mental condition or difference that limits the amount or the kind of activity that they can do on a typical day.

The relative satisfaction with the response of employers can also be illustrated by the answers to a follow-up, open-ended question, which asked employees whether there's something more that they wish their employer would have done to make it easier for them to manage the changes to their work situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of employees (62%) choose not to provide any answer, meaning that nothing comes immediately to mind in response to the question. Moreover, the next most common answer provided (15%) is "no" or "all is good," meaning that these employees answered by explicitly saying that there's nothing more they wish their employer would have done to make it easier for them during the pandemic.

Among the remainder who did identify something their employers could have done, responses were spread across a variety of suggestions, none of which is mentioned by more than five percent. These include:

- Follow safety protocols properly (such as mask wearing, social distancing and better access to PPE) (4%);
- Provide better or more communication, information or guidance on short- and medium-term plans (3%);
- Allow employees to work from home, so they don't have to return to the office before the pandemic is completely over (3%);
- Increase pay or include pay for sick leave (3%);
- Provide better access to office equipment or technology needed to work from home, or more funding to set up home offices, or more training on how to work remotely (3%);
- Be more compassionate, supportive or understanding of employee needs, or show more appreciation of employees (3%);
- Increase (or don't reduce) hours of work or benefits (3%);
- Allow more flexibility at work, including the ability to work flexible hours or shorter hours (2%).

It should be emphasized that the question clearly framed the issue around managing the impact of the pandemic, and not conditions of work more generally. The fact that most employees choose not to mention anything in response to the question possibly reflects the recognition that the pandemic imposes challenges that are beyond employers' control and that there are few, if any, easy ways of minimizing the disruption.

