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# The Prosperity Project

## Workplace Changes & Challenges

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Wave 6  
April 2023

**pollara**  
strategic insights

# Methodology

On behalf of the Prosperity Project, Pollara Strategic Insights conducted an online survey among a randomly-selected, reliable sample of N=1,001 adult Canadians.

- **Field dates:** April 3 to 11, 2023
- This dataset mainly includes men and women who are currently working and some recent retirees that have retired since 2020 onwards. It also includes few who are unemployed or stay at home/care for family.
- The dataset is weighted as per the profile of these groups of Canadians by age, gender within the region to be representative of the proportions of this population.
- **\*Reliability:** Online surveys do not permit the application of a margin of error. However, as a guideline, a probability sample of N=1,001 carries a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1$ , 19 times out of 20. The margin of error is larger for sub-segments.

| Region           | Number of Interviews (Weighted) | Number of Interviews (unweighted) | Margin of error*              |
|------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| British Columbia | 135                             | 125                               | $\pm 8.8\%$                   |
| Alberta          | 114                             | 125                               | $\pm 8.8\%$                   |
| Saskatchewan     | 35                              | 100                               | $\pm 9.8\%$                   |
| Manitoba         | 33                              | 100                               | $\pm 9.8\%$                   |
| Ontario          | 409                             | 250                               | $\pm 6.2\%$                   |
| Quebec           | 214                             | 201                               | $\pm 6.9\%$                   |
| Atlantic Canada  | 60                              | 100                               | $\pm 9.8\%$                   |
| <b>Canada</b>    | <b>1,001</b>                    | <b>1,001</b>                      | <b><math>\pm 3.1\%</math></b> |

# Key Insights

- Women are more likely to feel they are not fairly compensated because of their gender. Similarly, BIPOC Canadians feel that they are not fairly compensated or are passed over for a promotion because of their ethnicity. Women of colour experience this intersectionality, as they are much more likely to feel both – that they are not fairly compensated and are not considered for promotion – when compared to how White women, BIPOC men or White men feel. In general, women are also less likely to report moving to a more senior role than men.
- Men are more ambitious and optimistic than women when it comes to moving to a senior role. Women are more stressed about handling a senior role, while men are more concerned about getting paid enough for the amount of hours they put in. For women to accept a senior role, they need more flexible working options such as flexible hours or location, they need to be valued as a team member and feel they need mentoring and affordable education and training options.
- A few have taken or are considering taking a step back from work. Women are more likely to do so than men. Women are also more likely to say they are not looking to move to a higher position than men. The main reasons for taking a step back from work, are related to dissatisfaction with their jobs – mainly the work stress, fatigue, or not getting paid enough. Women are also considering a step back to manage family responsibilities and childcare. Thus, getting additional support from their partner or other family members, reduced household responsibilities and more affordable childcare options for parents may help women stay in their current role.
- Among parents, when it comes to childcare responsibilities, not surprisingly, it still rests primarily on the mothers' shoulder. They are more likely to be the primary caregiver and are more likely to arrange work schedules to allow them to look after their children. Though fathers are taking time off to help care for their children when they are sick, there is a higher likelihood that women will be doing this than men. Thus, arranging for childcare and balancing work and home life is a more difficult task for mothers than for fathers.

# Key Insights

- Nine-in-ten Canadians feel that people are quitting the Canadian workforce due to stress and burn out. While a third feel many people are doing so, close to half feel this is happening at least occasionally. For most, the reasons are work-related, that is, feeling stressed, not getting paid enough or not getting enough support.
- Over half of working women find it difficult to balance their household and work. It is not surprising that three-quarters have considered quitting their jobs. In fact, four-in-ten women report leaving a job at some point, compared to just a quarter of men. Women are more likely to experience work stress, feel like they are not getting enough support or feel like they are not appreciated enough than men. Additionally, they've also felt like they could not do it all or had to constantly prove themselves.
- Majority see those who prioritize themselves over work as a step in the right direction and don't see stepping down as a sign of weakness. However, men are more likely than women to see stepping down as a sign of weakness and feel that burn out is a part of the job. Women on the other hand, are more likely to consider quitting because they want to prioritize themselves and disagree that burn out is just part of the job.
- The hybrid model is considered as a good thing for employees and employers as it allows work flexibility. Most feel this model is here to stay and prefer it. For both men and women, working from home makes it easier to balance home and work responsibilities and they feel more productive. That said, there are some that feel people won't work as hard or that the economy will be negatively impacted and are worried about what is happening in the office or not being considered for promotions. Men are more concerned about these factors than women.

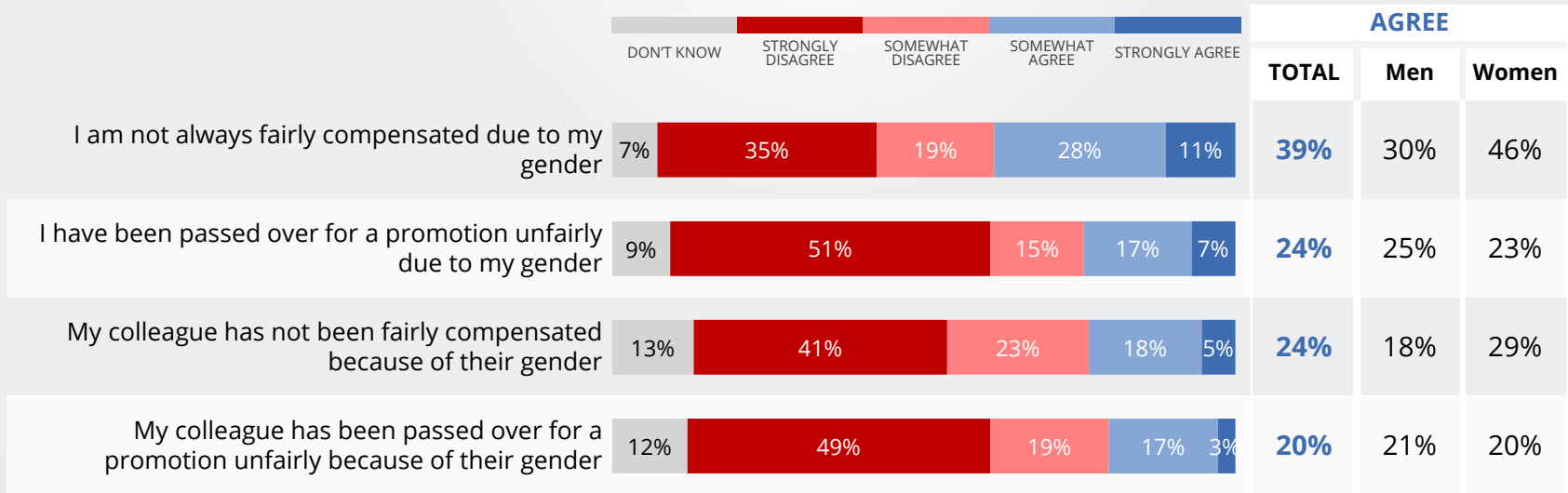
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# Workplace Challenges and Changing Job Levels

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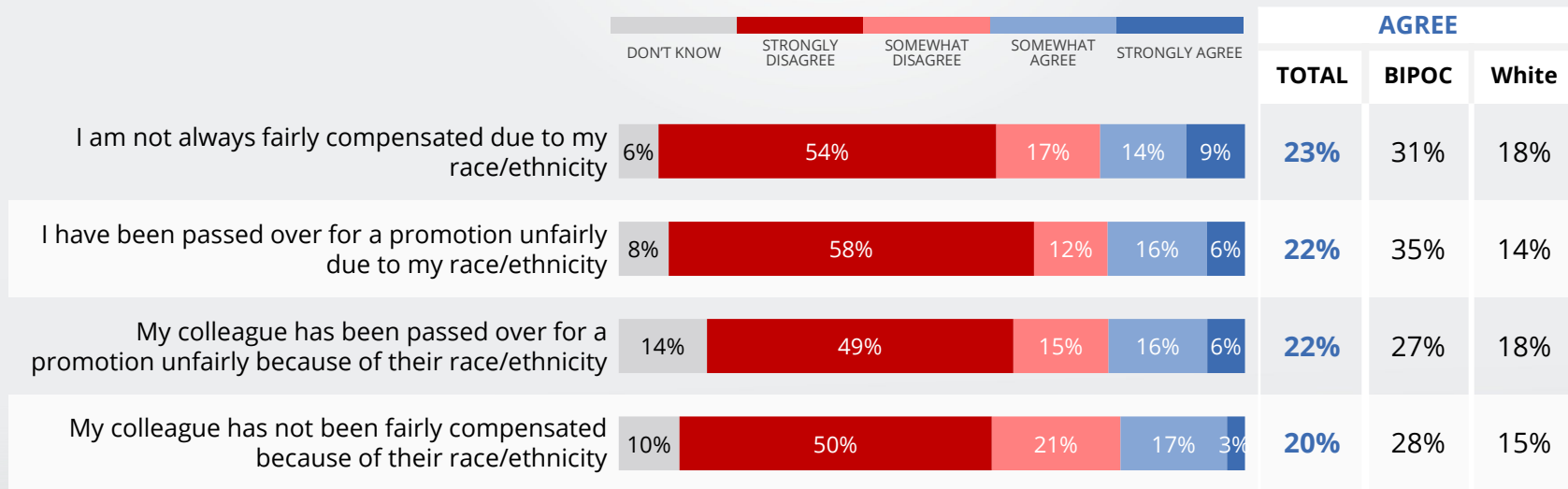
# Employed women are more likely to feel that they are not being fairly compensated because of their gender than men

- Women are also more likely to feel that their colleagues are not fairly compensated because of their gender (29% vs. 18%).
- White women (47%) are somewhat more likely to feel they are not compensated fairly due to their gender than BIPOC women (42%).



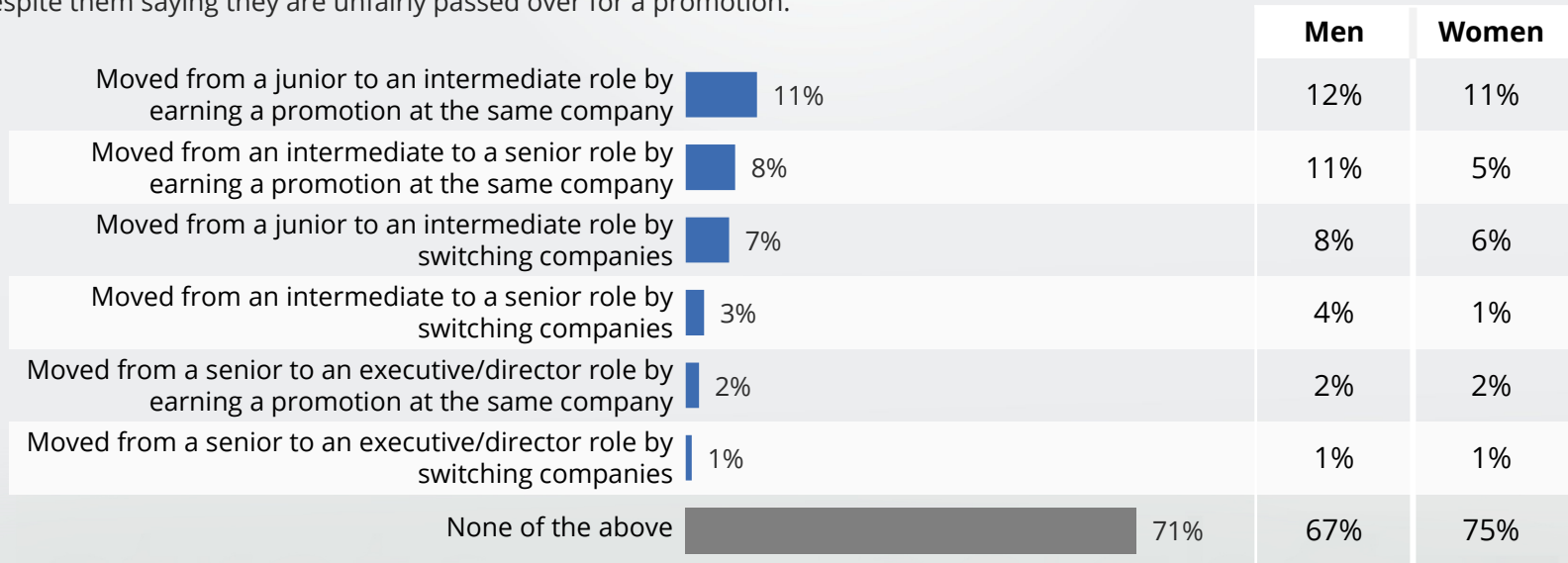
# Employed BIPOC Canadians, are much more likely to feel that they are unfairly compensated and not promoted at the workplace due to their racial identity

- They are also much more likely to feel that their colleagues are not fairly compensated or are passed over a promotion because of their racial identity. Fewer White Canadians feel this way about themselves or their colleagues.
- BIPOC women (36%) are much more likely to feel they are not fairly compensated because of their ethnicity compared to BIPOC men (26%) or White women (16%) and feel they've been passed over for a promotion (44%) compared to BIPOC men (29%) or White women (9%).



# Only one-third of employed Canadians report moving to a more senior role over the past year

- This proportion is lower among women – just 25% say they have moved to higher position compared to 33% of men.
- This disparity is starker between younger (under 35 years) men and women – 46% of young men moved to a senior role compared to 33% of young women. The proportion of 35+ year old men and women moving up the ladder is nearly the same, though the 35-54 year old men still have a slight edge (28% vs. 24% women).
- BIPOC Canadians (36%) are more likely to say they have been able to move to higher position than White Canadians (24%) – this is despite them saying they are unfairly passed over for a promotion.





# Six-in-ten employed Canadians are working towards moving to a higher job level – men being notably more inclined to do so than women

- While one-third (33%) overall are not looking to change job levels at the moment, a few (7%) are considering or have already taken a step back from current responsibilities. Employed women are more likely to not look at changing job levels (36% vs. 31%) and are more likely to take on a less demanding role (9% vs. 5%) compared to employed men.
- BIPOC Canadians are more actively looking to move to a senior role than White Canadians (73% vs. 51%) – BIPOC women (71%) and men (74%) are almost equally ambitious, whereas White women are not as ambitious as the men (45% vs. 58%).

|   |     | Men        | Women      |
|---|-----|------------|------------|
| <b>Moving or considering moving to a senior role (NET)</b>                              | 59% | <b>64%</b> | <b>55%</b> |
| I am currently gaining experience so I can get a more senior role                       | 18% | 20%        | 17%        |
| I am currently trying to get a more senior role   | 14% | 16%        | 12%        |
| I might consider a more senior role, it would depend on the circumstances               | 14% | 15%        | 14%        |
| While I would be open to a more senior role, I am not actively working towards this     | 13% | 14%        | 12%        |
| <b>Stepping back or considering stepping back (NET)</b>                                 | 7%  | <b>5%</b>  | <b>9%</b>  |
| I have taken a step back into a role with less responsibilities                         | 3%  | 3%         | 3%         |
| I might consider a role with less responsibilities, it would depend on the circumstance | 3%  | 1%         | 4%         |
| I am currently trying to take a step back into a role with less responsibilities        | 2%  | -          | 3%         |
| <b>I am not looking to change my job level at this time</b>                             | 33% | <b>31%</b> | <b>36%</b> |



Q6: Are you currently working towards or open to changing your job level, whether it be at the same company where you are now or a different company? Please select the statement that best describes your situation. Base: Those who are Employed (N=700)

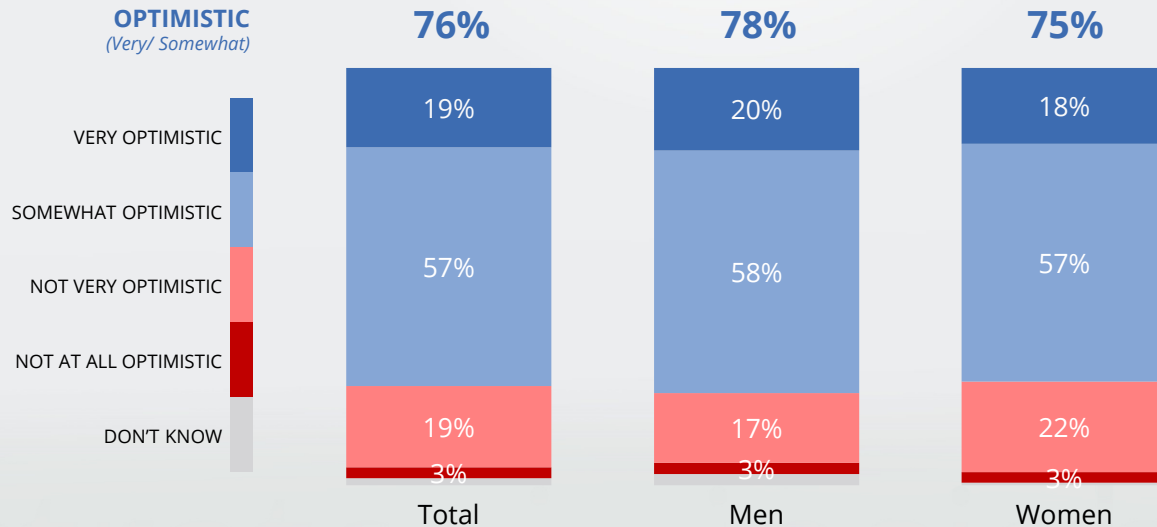
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# Moving to a More Senior Role

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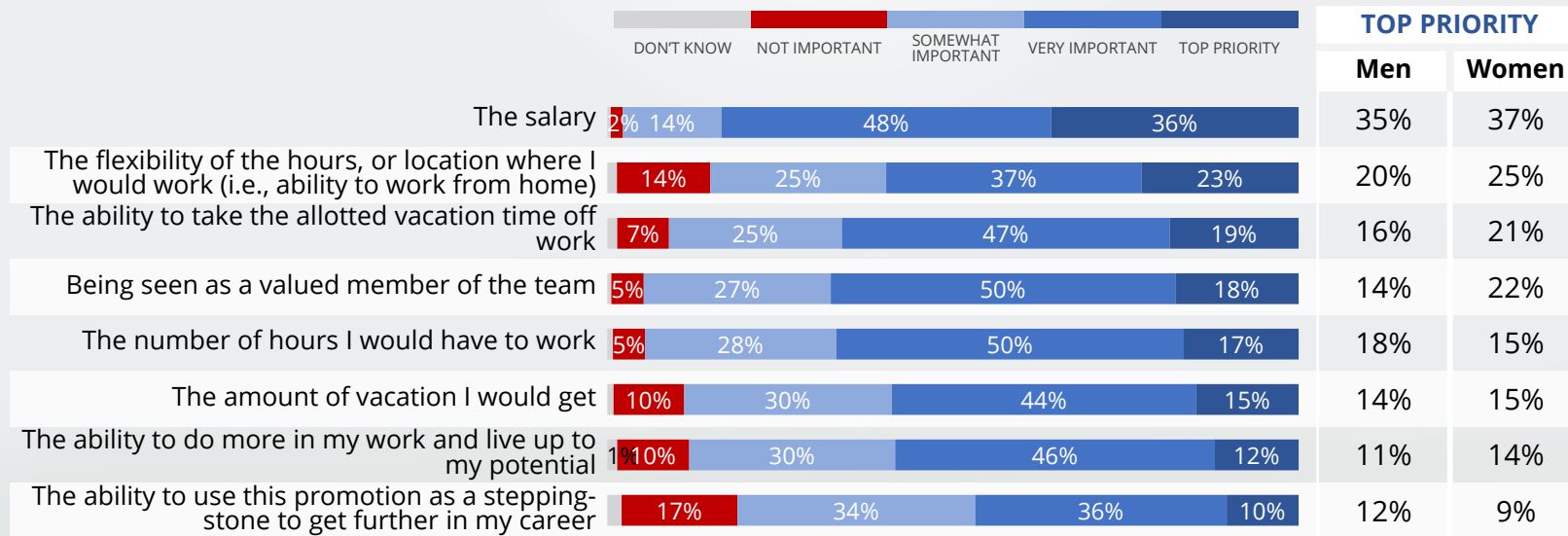
# Three-quarters of those looking to move to a more senior job level, are optimistic about their chances

- While men are more ambitious about moving to a senior level than women, both are relatively highly optimistic about their chances – men are only slightly more optimistic than women.
- Younger Canadians (18-34 year olds) are much more optimistic about this move (82%) than 35-54 year olds (69%). Notably, both young men and women are equally optimistic about their future growth (81% vs. 83%).
- BIPOC Canadians, though highly optimistic are less likely to feel optimistic about being able to get a more senior role than White Canadians (72% vs. 79%).



# For both men and women, salary followed by work flexibility are the top factors they consider when looking to move to a more senior role

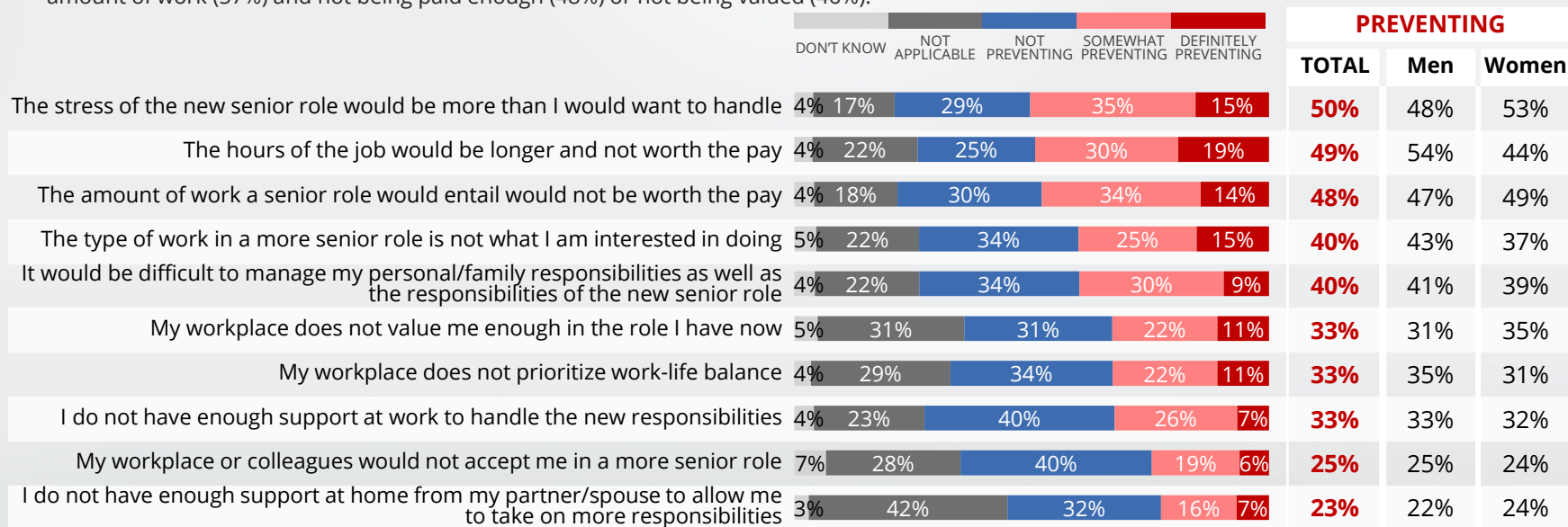
- Working women are more likely to want work flexibility in terms of hours and location (25% vs. 20% men), to be seen as a valuable member of the team (22% vs. 14% men) and to be able to take the allotted vacation time off (21% vs. 16%).
- Mothers are much more likely to want work flexibility as a top priority compared to fathers (34% vs. 21%), especially those who have kids under 13 years (41% vs. 23%).
- BIPOC Women are more likely to need flexible work options (30% vs. 22% White women, 20% BIPOC men), and also feel they need to be valued as members of the team (29% vs. 19% and 11% respectively).



Q11. How important would each of the following factors be, if you were considering a more senior role in your industry?  
Base: Those looking to move to senior role or not looking to move (N=656)

# Half of those looking to move to a senior role, are concerned about the additional stress that would come with that level and that the amount of work or hours may not be worth the pay

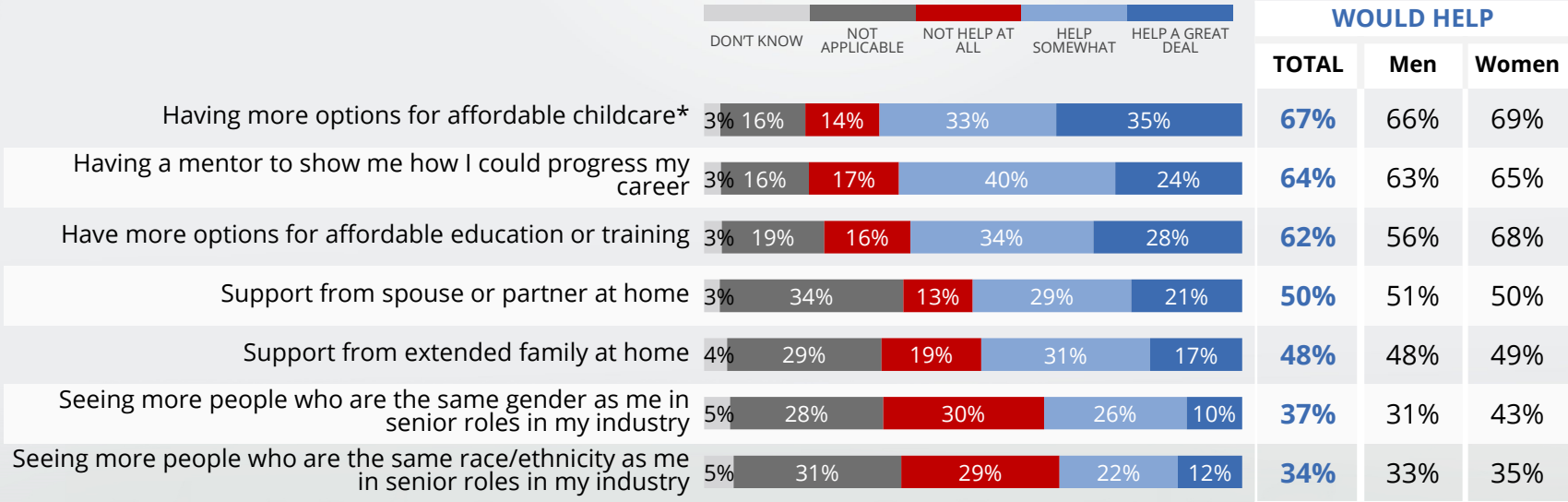
- Women are more likely to say they are stressed about handling a more senior role (53% vs. 48% men), while men are more likely to be skeptical about getting paid enough for the number of hours they'd be putting in.
- Women are also slightly more likely to feel one of the factors preventing them from moving up is that they are not valued enough in their current role (35% vs. 31%).
- BIPOC women, overall, are much more likely to feel multiple of these reasons are preventing them from moving ahead, particularly the stress (65%), amount of work (57%) and not being paid enough (48%) or not being valued (46%).



Q12. Which of the following factors, if any, are preventing you from accepting a more senior role within your industry?  
Base: Those looking to move to senior role or not looking to move (N=656)

# Both men and women feel having a mentor to guide them would encourage them to take on a more senior role

- For women, having affordable options for education or training (68% vs. 56% men) and seeing more people of the same gender in senior roles (43% vs. 31% men) is much more helpful than it is for men.
- Two-thirds (67%) of parents of children under 13 years feel having more options for affordable childcare is definitely a factor that would help encourage them to move ahead.
- BIPOC women are more likely to feel having education options (81%), having a mentor (73%), or seeing someone of the same race in that role (61%) would encourage them to take on a senior role.



Q13. To what extent would each of the following help to encourage you to get a more senior role in your industry?  
 Base: Those looking to move to senior role or not looking to move (N=656) | \*Base: Parents of children under 13 years (N=189)

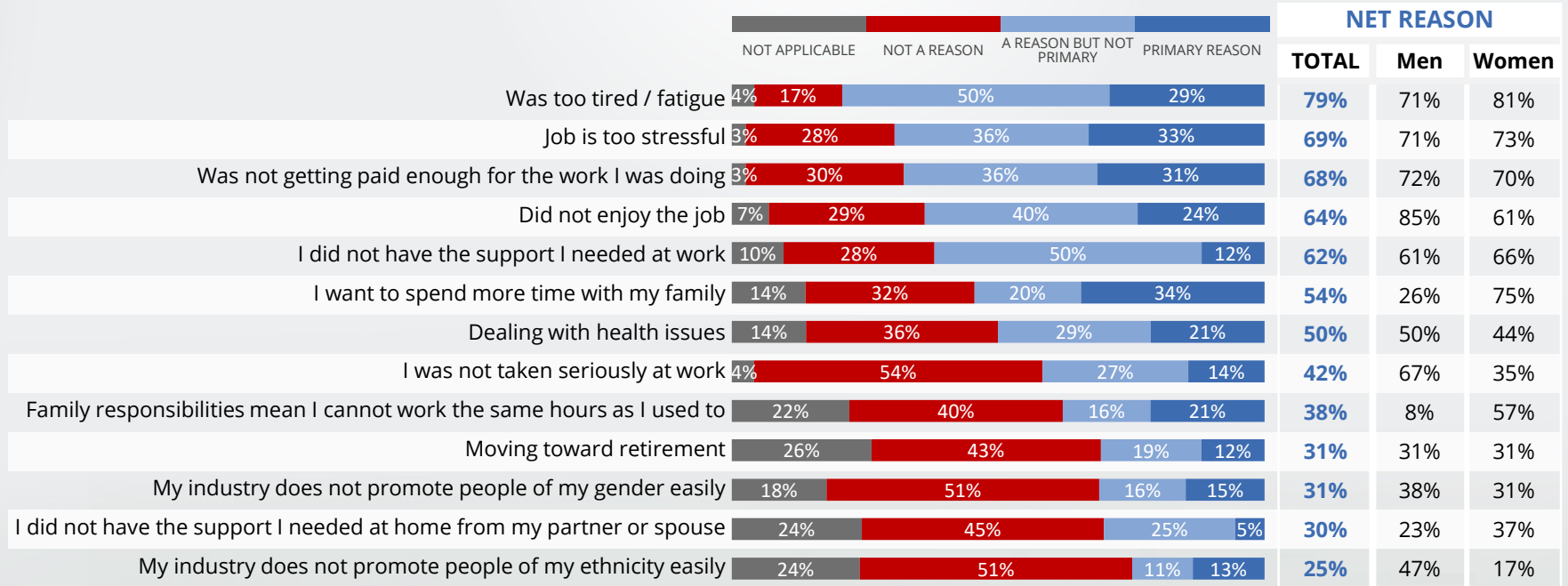
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# Taking a Step Back from the Current Role

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# Among those who are considering a step back\*, some of the main reasons are dissatisfaction with their job

- That is, fatigued, stressful job, not getting paid enough, not enjoying the job or not getting the support they need at work.
- For women, wanting to spend more time with their family or managing family responsibilities are also some of the reasons for stepping back. Very few men cite these as reasons for their choice.



Q8. Which of the following were reasons why you have moved to or are considering moving to a role with less responsibility?

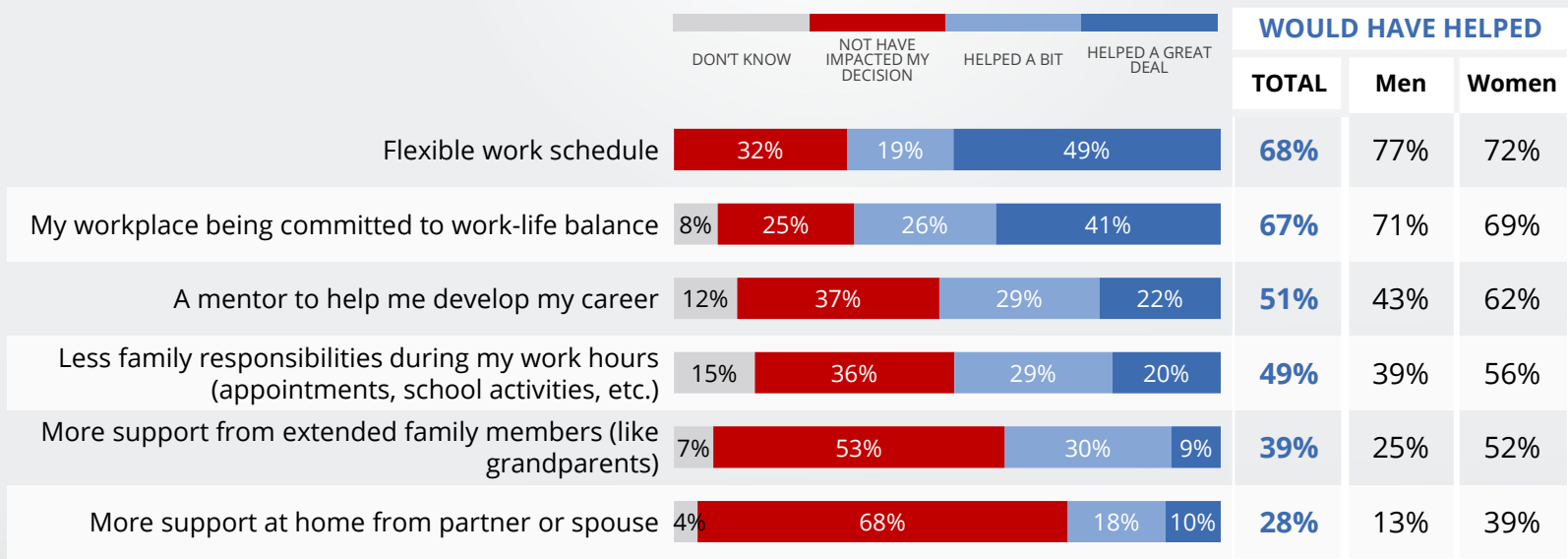
Base: Those looking to step back (N=44)

**\*Note: The base sizes for these questions are very small, thus results provide a direction but are not statistically significant**



# Most feel that a flexible work schedule or having a work-life balance would help them continue in their current role

- Women are more likely to feel that getting support from their partner and/or extended family and less family responsibilities would help them to stay in their current roles.

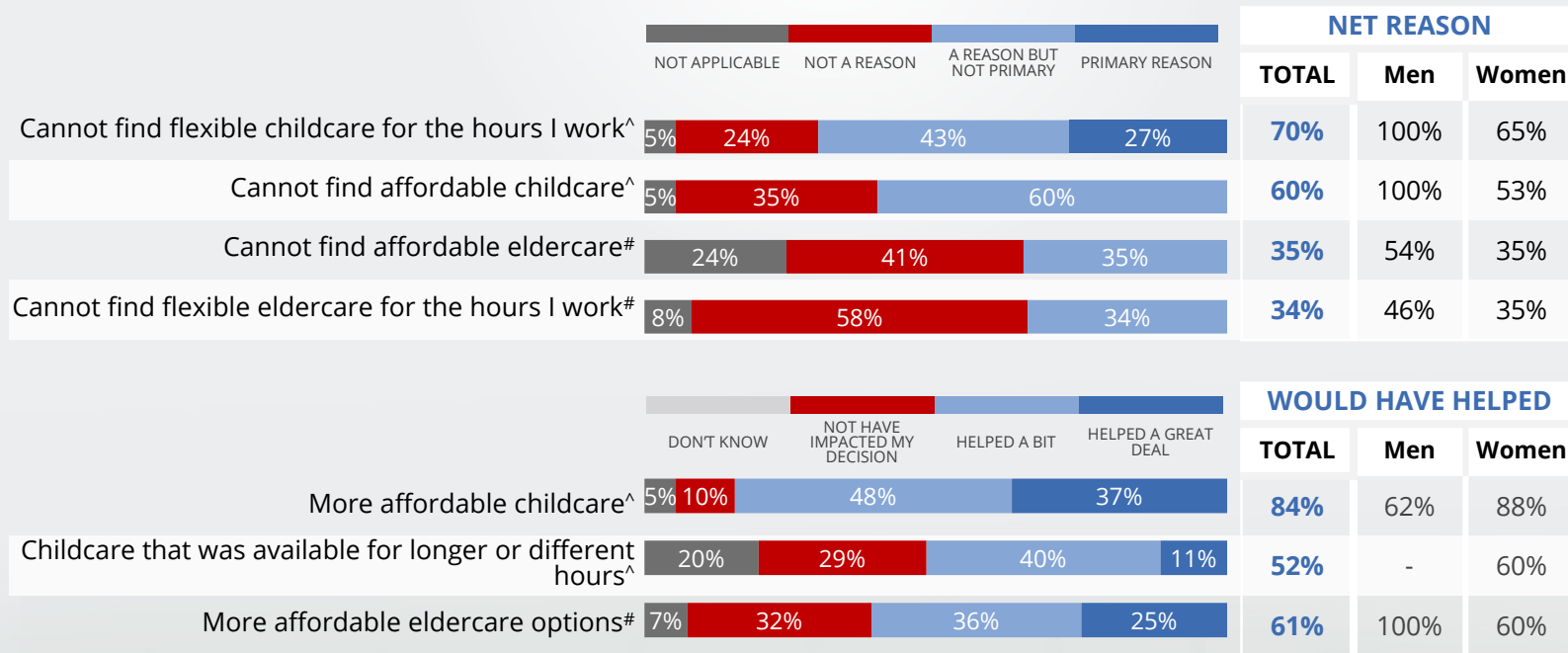


Q9. To what degree would each of the following have helped you to stay in the role you were in, without considering stepping back to a role with lesser responsibility?

Base: Those looking to step back (N=44)

**\*Note: The base sizes for these questions are very small, thus results provide a direction but are not statistically significant**

Among parents\*, the inability to find flexible and affordable childcare are some of the primary reasons for wanting to take a step back from work. Thus, getting affordable childcare would be a great help.



Q8. Which of the following were reasons why you have moved to or are considering moving to a role with less responsibility?

Q9. To what degree would each of the following have helped you to stay in the role you were in, without considering stepping back to a role with lesser responsibility?

Base: Those looking to step back <sup>^</sup>Parents of children under 13 years (N=12) | <sup>#</sup>Providing eldercare (N=14)

**\*Note: The base sizes for these questions are extremely small, thus results provide a direction but are not statistically significant**

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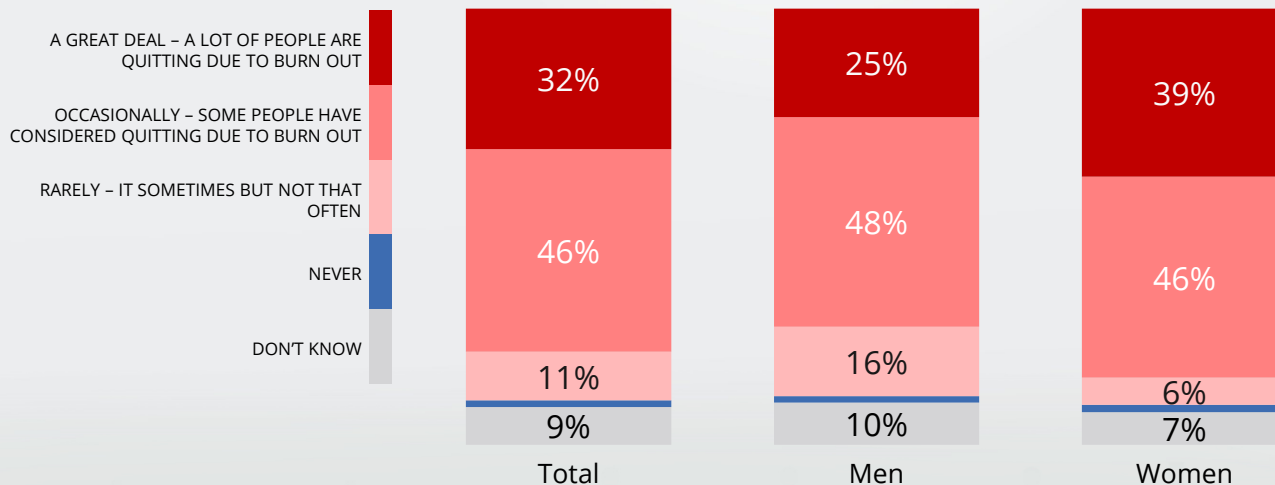
# Opting Out of the Labour Force

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# Nine-in-ten Canadians believe that burn out is prevalent in the Canadian work force

- A third (32%) feel a lot of people are quitting their jobs due to burn out, 46% feeling that this is happening occasionally and 11% feel this is happening but rarely.
- Women are more likely to think that many Canadians are quitting due to burn out then men (39% vs. 25%).
- 18-34 year olds are more likely to feel a lot of Canadians are quitting (40%) compared to 35+ year olds (28%).

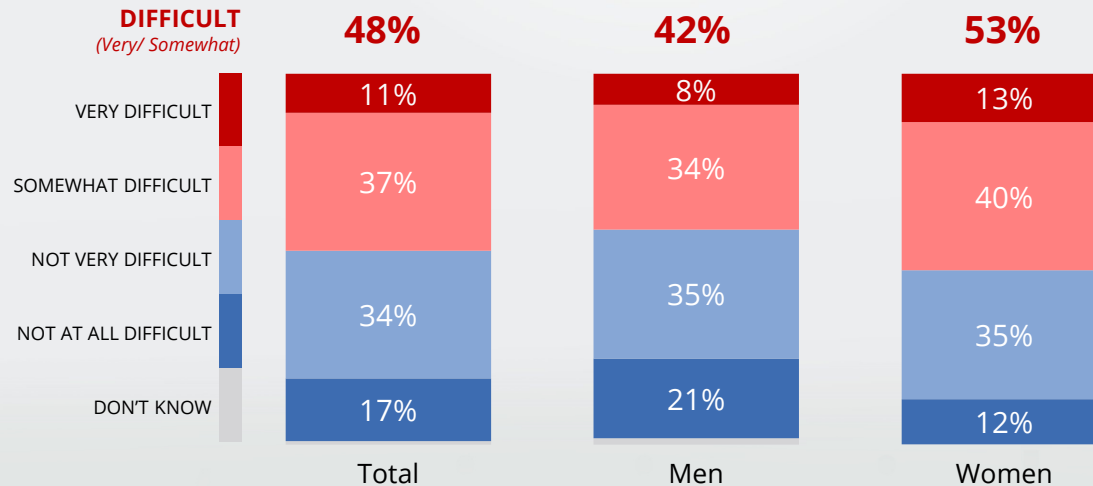
## QUITTING DUE TO BURN OUT



Q23. Recently, we have seen some prominent people choosing to opt out of specific jobs or roles due to stress or burn out. An example of this is the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, who stepped down from her role due to burn out. In your opinion, how frequently does this happen in the Canadian workforce? Base: Total (N=1001)

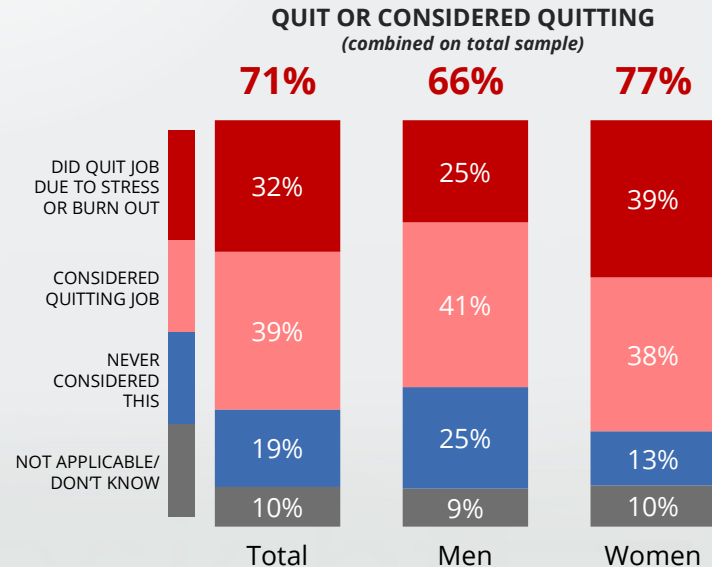
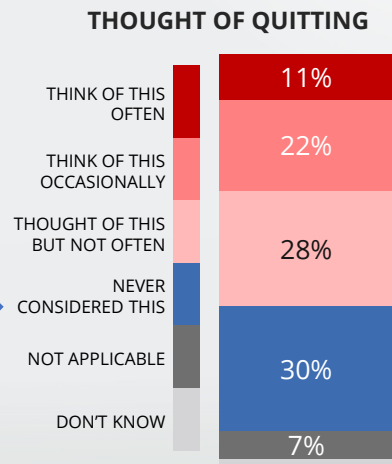
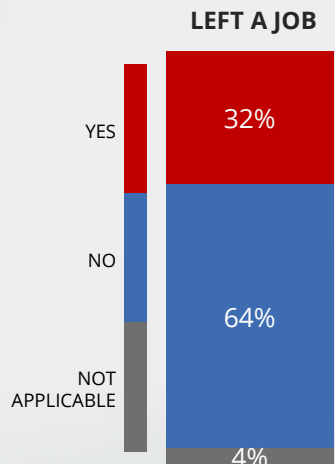
# Over half of the working women find it difficult to balance their households and work responsibility

- Comparatively, two-fifths of working men feel the same way.
- Younger Canadians (18-34 years) find it much more difficult to manage both responsibilities (54% compared to 48% of 35-54 year olds and 35% of 55+ year olds); young women finding it more difficult than young men (60% vs. 50%).
- Not surprisingly, for working parents balancing work and home gets a lot more difficult (59%). That said, it is still the working mothers that have it more tough than the fathers (72% vs. 55%).
- For BIPOC Canadians, maintaining this balance is more difficult (53% vs. 45% White), especially for BIPOC women (59%) compared to BIPOC men (48%) or White women (51%).



# Seven-in-ten (71%) Canadians have at least considered quitting their jobs due to burn out. One-third (32%) say they have left a job because of burn out.

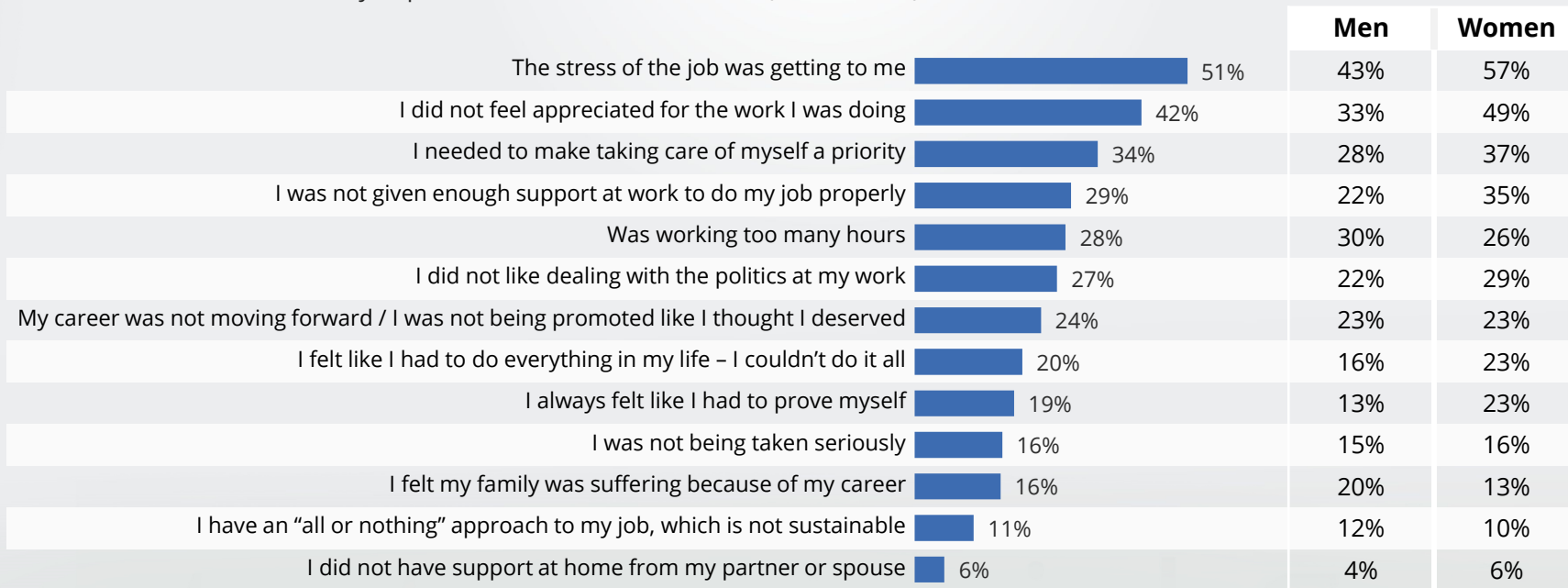
- Women are more likely to have considered quitting their jobs than men (77% vs. 66%) – with 39% saying they’ve quit their jobs at some point compared to only 25% of men.
- Mothers of kids under 13 years have considered quitting much more often than the fathers (80% vs. 63%) – among them, four-in-ten (41%) say they have left a job, compared to 24% of the fathers.
- BIPOC women (42%) are more likely to say they have quit a job, compared to 38% of White women and 26% of BIPOC men.



Q24. Have you ever left a job due to stress or burn out? Base: Total (N=1001)  
 Q25. Have you ever wanted to quit your job due to stress or burn out, even if you didn't do it? Base: Those who have never left a job (N=647)  
 Combined Questions Base: Total (N=1001)

# Most of the reasons for considering taking a step down are related to job stress, not feeling appreciated for the amount of work they put it or not getting enough support at work

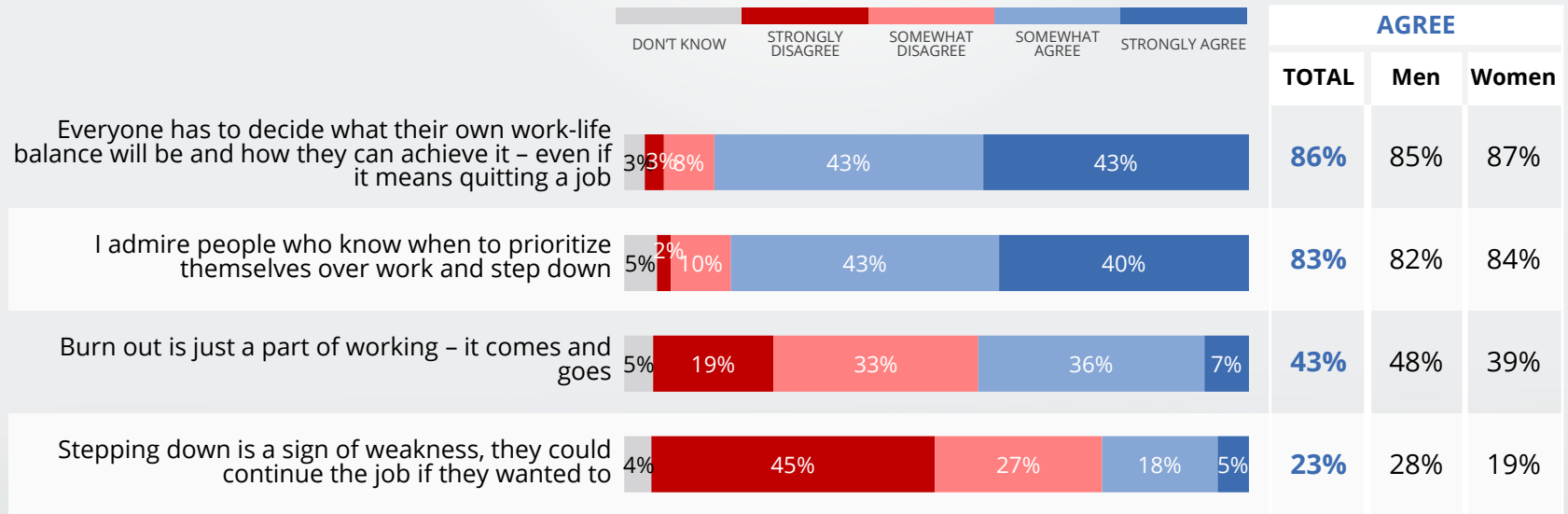
- Women are more likely to experience these situations than men. Additionally, they've also felt like they could not do it all (23%) or had to constantly prove themselves (23%). Women across the demographics are more likely to feel all these sentiments.
- Women were also more likely to prioritize themselves than men (37% vs. 28%).



Q26. Why have you thought about stepping down from your job, whether or not you actually did it? Please select all that apply.  
Base: Those who left or are considering quitting their job due to stress or burn out (N=707)

# Majority see those who prioritize themselves over work as a good thing and don't see stepping down as a sign of weakness

- That said, men are more likely than women to see stepping down as a sign of weakness (28% vs. 19%).
- A small majority disagree (52%) that burn out is part of the job, while notably 43% agree that it is part of the job. Women are more likely to disagree on this topic (58%) than men (46%).
- Surprisingly, Canadians under 55 are not only more likely to feel that burn out is a part of the job (45-46%), but they also look at stepping down as a weakness (25-29%) compared to 55+ year olds (38%; 13% respectively).



Q27. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this phenomenon?  
Base: Total (N=1001)



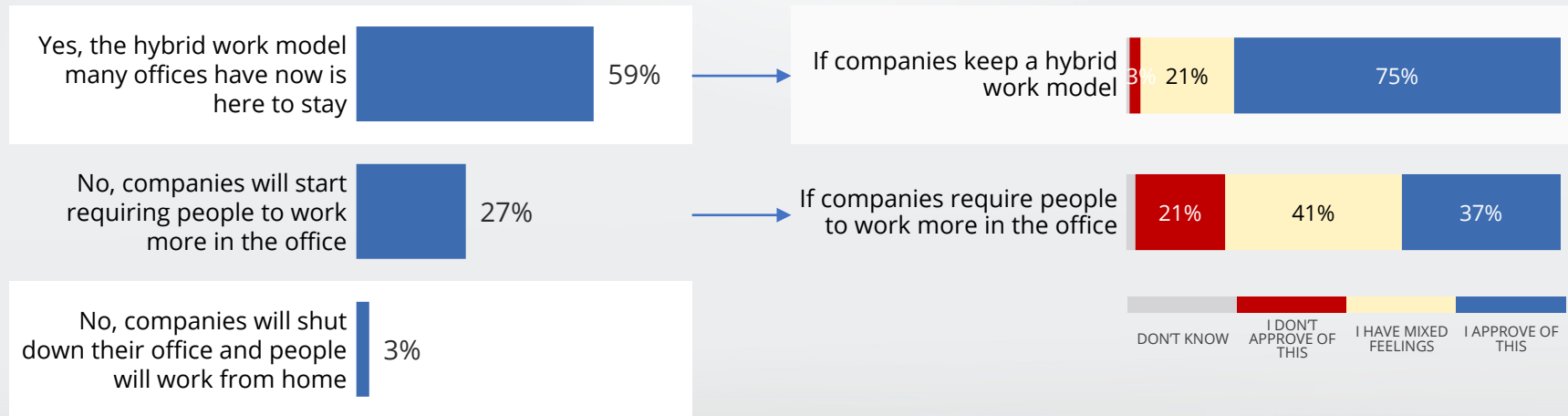
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# The Hybrid Work Model

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# Six-in-ten employed Canadians feel the hybrid work model is here to stay and only a quarter feel that companies will start asking employees to come back to office

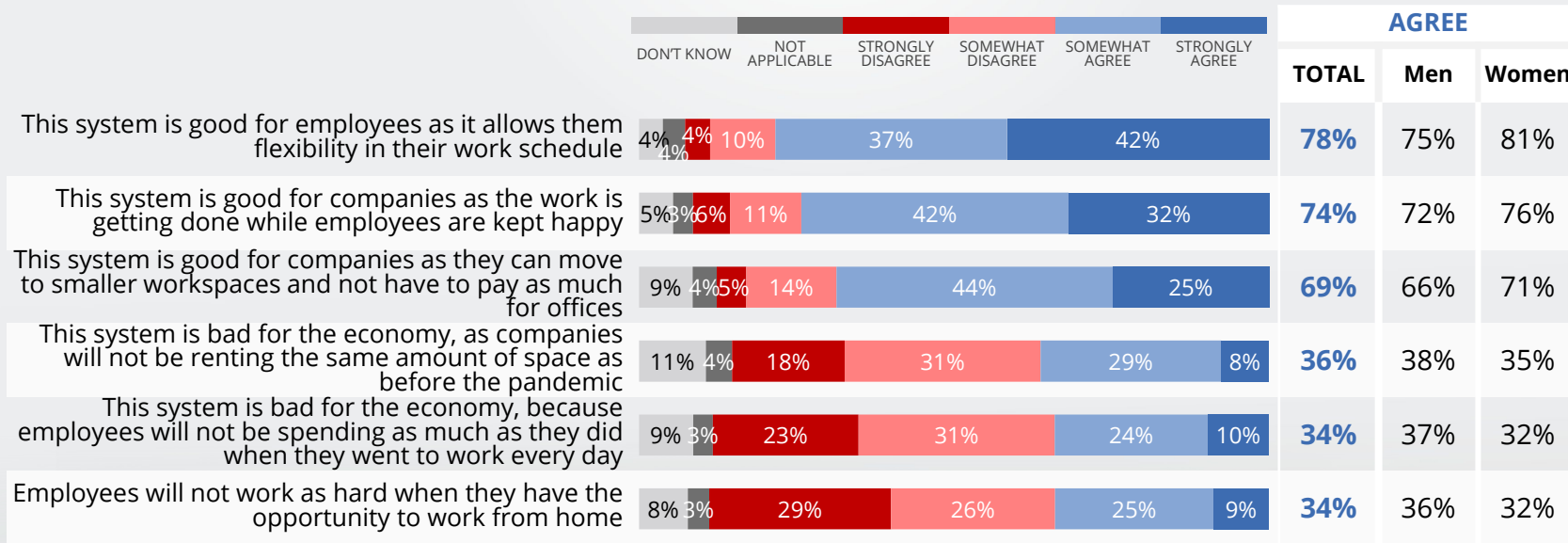
- Among those who feel the hybrid work model is here to stay, three-quarters (75%) approve of this model. That is, 45% of employed Canadians approve of companies keeping the hybrid model.
- Less two-fifths (37%) of those who feel that companies will require employees to come back to office prefer going back to office. This translates to 10% of employed Canadians, overall, that approve of going back to office. Men are more likely to approve of going back to office than women.



Q20. In your opinion, do you think most Canadian companies will continue to keep this hybrid work model into the future? Base: Those who are employed (N=700)  
 Q21. How do you feel about Canadian companies... keeping a hybrid work model Base: (N=418) |... requiring people to work more in the office Base: (N=184)

# Majority of employed Canadians feel the hybrid work model is good – it allows work flexibility, keeps employees happy and saves companies costs by moving to smaller spaces

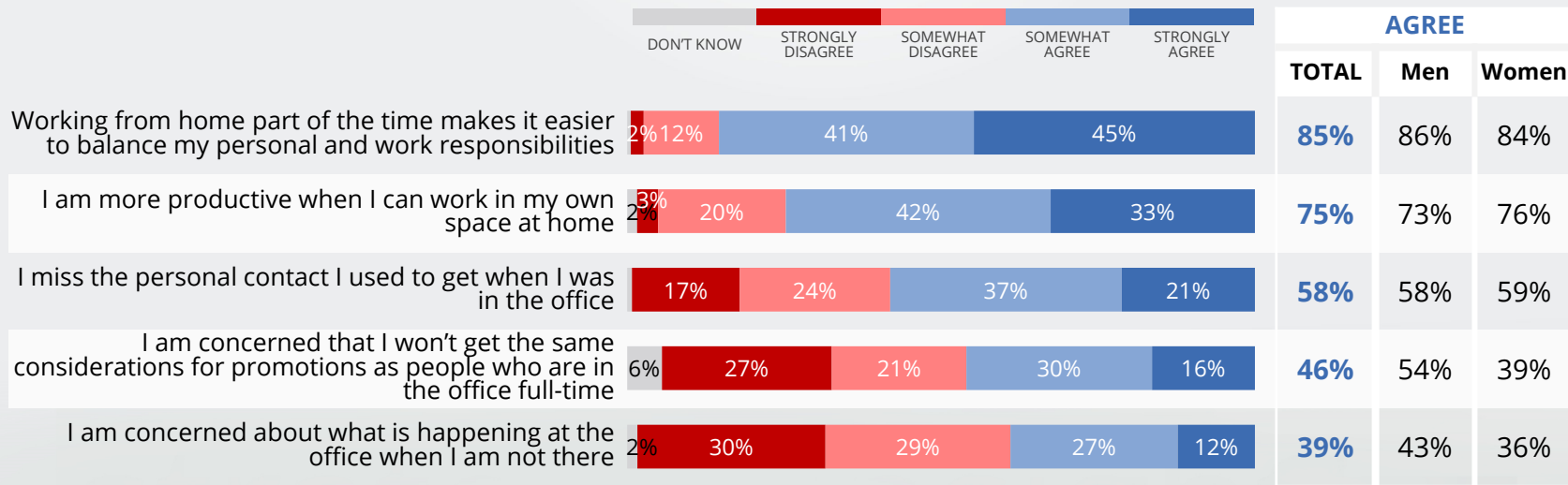
- However, one-third feel the opposite where this model is not good for the economy as fewer companies will rent spaces (36%) and employees will spend less (34%), and some feel that employees won't work as hard (34%).
- In general, women are more likely to approve of the hybrid work model, saying it is good, especially because of work flexibility (81% vs. 75% men), while men are somewhat more likely to be concerned about the economy and feel that employees won't work as hard.



Q19. As companies are returning to work after the pandemic, many are offering a hybrid work model, where a certain number of days are spent in the office and a certain number of days can be spent working from home. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this system? Base: Those who are employed (N=700)

# Similar positive sentiments are expressed re: the hybrid work model by those who are currently working in this system

- 85% agree that working from home makes it easier for them to balance their family and work life and 75% feel more productive when they can work from home.
- That said, about four-in-ten are concerned about not being considered for promotions (46%) or are concerned about what is happening at the office when they are not there (39%). Men are much more likely to be concerned about these aspects than women.
- While BIPOC Canadians are much more concerned about what is happening in the office (45% vs. 33% White) and worried they won't get the same consideration for promotions (55% vs. 36%), White Canadians are more likely to feel working from home allows them to balance responsibilities better (91% vs. 79% BIPOC) and feel more productive at home (80% vs. 71%).



Q22. You mentioned earlier that you work on a hybrid work model - sometimes at a location, sometimes working from home. To what extent do you agree or disagree with your personal experiences? Base: Those working in a hybrid model (N=223)

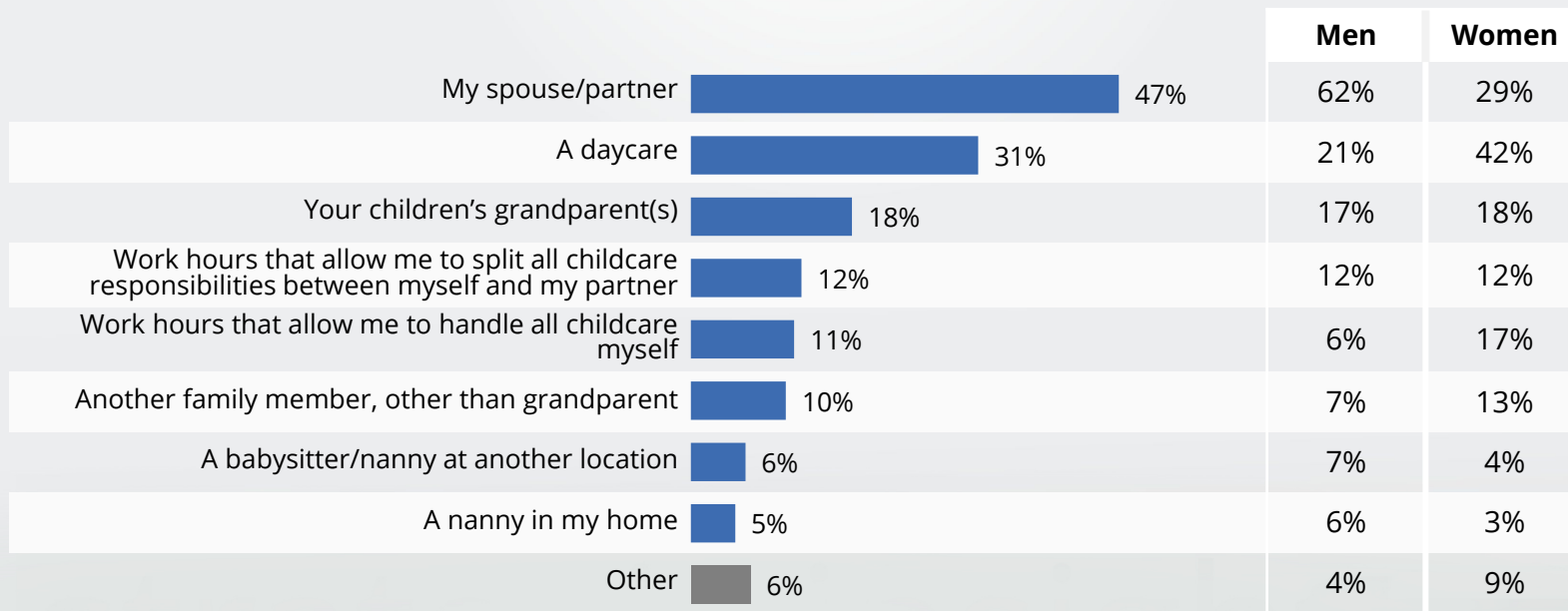
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# Childcare Challenges at Home Among Working Parents

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# Working Canadians with young children (under 13 years) typically have their spouse – more often the women – looking after the kids while they are at work

- Not surprisingly, working fathers (62%) are far more likely to say it is their spouse that cares for the children while they are at work, with 21% saying their child goes to daycare. In comparison, just 29% of working mothers say their spouse cares for the children, while 42% send their children to daycare.
- Almost one-fifth of women specifically work hours that allow them to handle the childcare as well as work (17% vs. 6% of men).



Q1. Who regularly looks after your children while you are at work, and they are not at school (such as before or after school care).  
Base: Working parents with children under 13 years old (N=208)

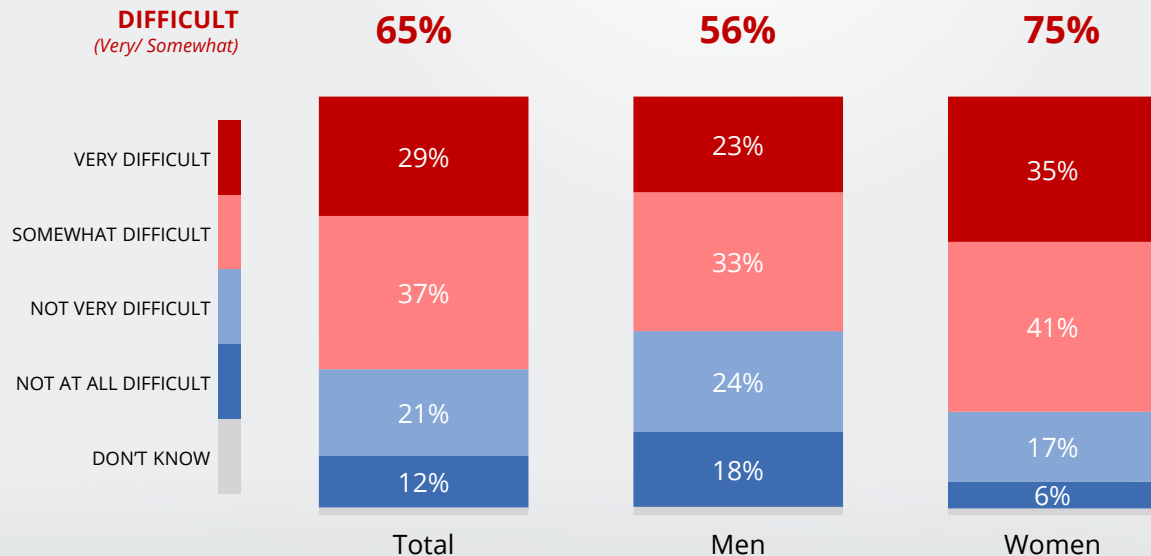
# While both parents say they take time off from work to care for their sick child, there is a higher likelihood that women will be doing this than men

- Notably, the working fathers are much more likely to say their spouses/partners may take time off work (49%), or that their spouse works from home to care for the child (25%), compared to only some of the working mothers saying their spouse takes time off work (23%) or that their spouse works from home (8%).

|   |     | Men | Women |
|---|-----|-----|-------|
| I take time off work  | 56% | 53% | 58%   |
| My spouse takes time off work                                 | 37% | 49% | 23%   |
| I work from home – take care of child while working           | 25% | 26% | 25%   |
| Your children's grandparent(s)                                | 21% | 17% | 24%   |
| My spouse works from home – takes care of child while working | 17% | 25% | 8%    |
| Another family member, other than grandparent                 | 7%  | 5%  | 8%    |
| A nanny/babysitter  | 5%  | 5%  | 5%    |
| Other   | 4%  | 5%  | 4%    |

# While arranging for childcare is a difficult task for two-thirds of parents, considering that the onus of childcare is more on the mother, it is much more difficult for mothers than for fathers

- Notably, BIPOC Canadians find it more difficult to arrange for childcare than White Canadians (72% vs. 59%) – with BIPOC women (81%) finding it a much more difficult task than White women (68%) or BIPOC men (63%).



Q3: How difficult do you find arranging for childcare to cover all times that you need it (regularly, during holidays, when your child is sick, etc.)  
Base: Working parents with children under 13 years old (N=208)



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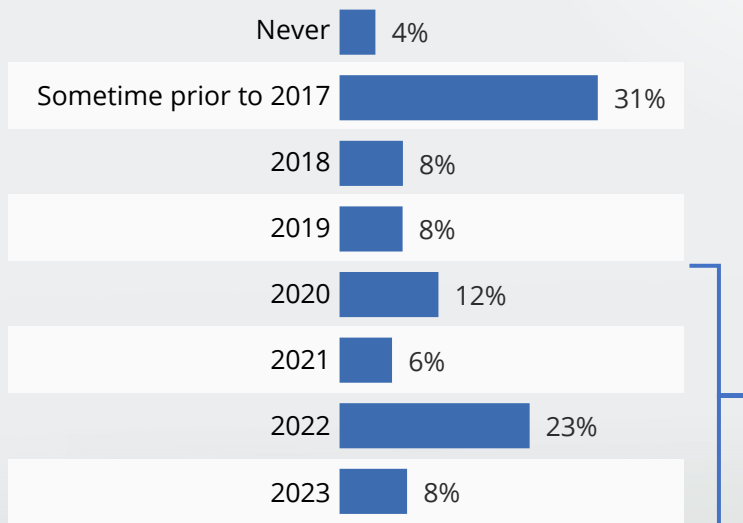
# Canadians Who are Not Working: Reasons for Ending Employment

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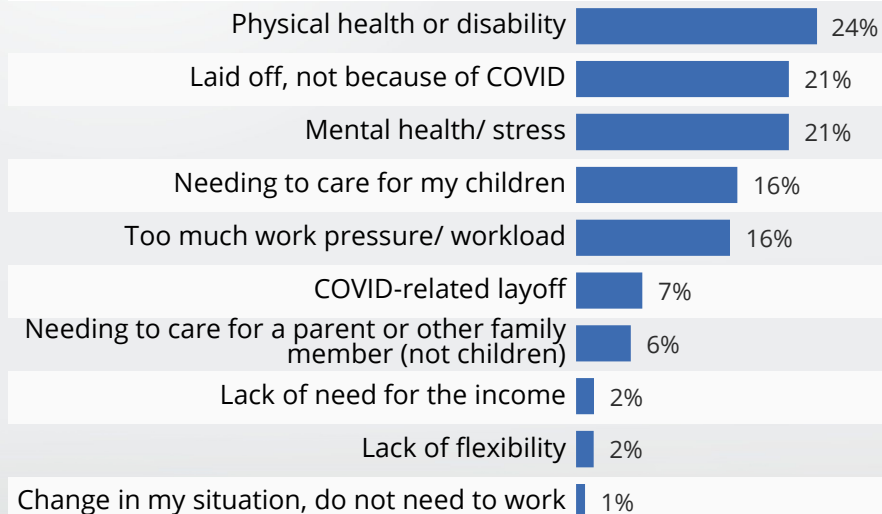
# Those who stopped working since 2020, mention physical health or mental health as some of the reasons for ending employment

- Women were more likely to be laid off due to COVID than men (11% vs. 3%). Women are more likely to say they stopped working to care for their children (34%), while no men mention this as a reason.

## LAST TIME EMPLOYED FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME



## REASONS FOR ENDING EMPLOYMENT (Since 2020)



Q15. You mentioned you are not currently employed by a company... When was the last time you were employed in a full-time or part-time capacity at a company? Base: Not working (N=119)  
Q16. What were the reasons for ending your employment with this company? Please select all that apply. Base: (N=55) **\*Base is very small**

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# Canadians Who are Retired: Reasons for Early Retirement

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# Among those who have retired since 2020, almost half have retired earlier than they had planned, while one-fifth retired later than they had planned

- Those who retired earlier were dealing with health issues, and state this as one of the main reasons for retiring early.



Q17. Did you retire earlier or later than you had originally planned? Base: Retired (N=100)

Q18. Which of the following were reasons that you have chosen to retire early? Please select all that apply. Base: (N=39) \*Base size is very small



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# The Prosperity Project

## Workplace Changes & Career Challenges

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Lesli Martin, Senior Vice President  
Mubashera Kothawala, Associate Vice President

March 2023

**pollara**  
strategic insights