

One-third of Canadian women consider quitting jobs

National survey cites family pressures and guilt as ongoing workforce barriers

TORONTO, September 10, 2020 – A landmark national survey shows a third of Canadian women have considered quitting their jobs to take care of home responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights in partnership with The Prosperity Project, the cross-country survey of more than 1,000 adults found two-thirds of respondents – working men and women – agreeing that it has been stressful managing children, family and work during the lockdown. However, a third of women have considered quitting their jobs, compared to less than 20% of men.

“We need collective strategies and actions to address the pressures that are forcing so many women to think about leaving the workforce,” said Pamela Jeffery, founder of The Prosperity Project – a volunteer organization created to ensure Canadian women are not left behind in the COVID-19 recovery. “Many families are dual-income and if that changes, the economic consequences will be catastrophic.”

This research, Jeffery notes, confirms the critical importance of childcare – a key focus of The Prosperity Project’s national policy advocacy efforts.

“Parents – mothers and fathers – need flexibility, quality and affordability in childcare. A lack of childcare is not a women’s issue: it is an issue for all working Canadians who can’t be the professionals they want to be in their workplaces without supports in place based on their particular needs,” she said.

Pollara confirmed other research findings indicating that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted women, with more females reporting being laid off (11%) or losing work hours/pay (14%) compared to men (6% and 12% respectively).

The new research also indicates that longstanding household stereotypes continue to drive workplace decisions – an ongoing barrier to women exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional “homemaking” roles – childcare, assisting with homework, grocery shopping, cooking and cleaning – are predominantly women’s responsibilities, adding to the pressure.

“Women feel more guilty about not spending as much time with their kids than men,” said Pollara Vice-President Lesli Martin. “They are also likely to feel more stressed about juggling work and family responsibilities – turning down jobs, overtime, promotions and in some cases leaving the workforce entirely.”

“These results are not entirely surprising, but they are discouraging,” Jeffery added. “Even in 2020 they show an ongoing systemic bias, reinforcing the need for a dramatic change in thinking so that women can fully contribute to Canada’s economic future.”

On behalf of the Prosperity Project, Pollara Strategic Insights conducted an online survey among a randomly-selected, reliable sample of 1,002 adult Canadians from August 21-24, 2020. A probability sample of this size carries a margin of error of $\pm 3.1\%$, 19 times out of 20. Demographic and regional quotas were used to ensure reliable and comparable sub-segment analysis, and the data was weighted by the most current gender, age, and region Census data to ensure the sample reflects the actual population of adult Canadians.

Full survey [results](#) are available.

About The Prosperity Project

Launched in May 2020, The Prosperity Project is a volunteer driven, non-profit organization conceived by a diverse group of 62 female leaders from across the country – women who have historically made a difference and are committed to continuing to promote positive change as active participants in The Prosperity Project.

The organization was founded and is being led by Pamela Jeffery, founder of the Women’s Executive Network and Canadian Board Diversity Council. The Prosperity Project is taking action to explicitly link women and prosperity, underscoring the economic importance of gender equality during the COVID-19 recovery. Specific initiatives will include an awareness campaign – modelled on the famous “Rosie the Riveter” campaign from World War II – to promote women’s workforce participation and advancement, and a matching program connecting not-for-profit organizations with business expertise to bolster these organizations’ in-house skills and expertise.

Visit The Prosperity Project website at www.canadianprosperityproject.ca.

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Media Contact:

JoAnne Caza
comms@canadianprosperityproject.ca
[416 587 1977](tel:4165871977)