

# Hybrid and Remote Work

2023 UPDATE

**EHRC Employer Survey 2023**

Thematic Snapshot on place of work  
and hybrid/remote work arrangements

**EHRC is Canada's leading provider of trusted HR research intelligence for our national sector. Our primary role is to strengthen the ability of the Canadian electricity and renewable energy industry to meet current and future workforce needs.**



**EHRC develops the resources that inspire our next generation, and is the steward of forward-thinking initiatives that drive positive change as together we build Canada's low carbon economy.**

Our vision is to build a world-class electricity workforce. We will achieve this by growing our Canadian electricity labour force to be safety-focused, innovative and inclusive.

**Our mandate is to:**

- Deliver critical business intelligence to inform labour market decision-making.
- Forge partnerships that enable the industry to adapt, upskill and innovate.
- Lead the industry in creating and sustaining a skilled and inclusive workforce.
- Inspire our future workforce to build a low carbon economy.

**Further information on EHRC is available at [ehrc.ca](http://ehrc.ca)**

Ce rapport est également disponible en français sous le titre: Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet nunc consectetur. This report is also available in French.

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has left a profound and enduring impact on the global economy, reshaping societal norms and introducing unprecedented changes to the way work is conducted.

One of the most notable changes has been the growing amount of work done remotely. The line between the “office” and “home” continues to blur, as technology provides numerous opportunities to work in this way. For the purposes of this report “remote”, “hybrid” and or “hybrid/remote” work refers to a situation in which an employee is permitted to allocate his/her weekly hours of work between an employer’s premises and his/her home.

An efficient and reliable electricity sector is imperative for Canada’s economy to achieve its potential and assure a good quality of life for its citizens. Therefore, the link between the sector’s ability to attract, recruit and retain a sufficient pool of well-trained personnel and its use of work-from-home arrangements warrants careful consideration. This brief report, which reflects the views of human resources practitioners surveyed by EHRC, as well as official data, examines the prevalence, perceptions and consequences of hybrid/remote work performed in Canada’s electricity sector.

Many types of alternative work arrangements are available to employees in Canada to help them balance work and family obligations. They include flexible work hours; a compressed work week; part-time work; job sharing and self-funded leave, among others. Giving employees options and resources to balance their personal lives and professional obligations can reduce their stress and positively affect their engagement, commitment, and level of satisfaction at work. An employee’s ability to take advantage of such options depends on his/her job duties, as well as an employer’s operational requirements and management philosophy.

In 2023 Electricity Human Resources Canada (EHRC) conducted a national survey of employers

in the electricity sector to garner information and perspectives on various aspects of the workforce, as well as human resources management practices. (Box 1).<sup>1</sup>

Many of the questions posed in the survey focused on the issue of hybrid/remote work arrangements. The responses to the questions, as well as relevant data from Statistics Canada, are discussed below.

### Box 1. EHRC’s Employer Survey

In July 2023, EHRC surveyed employers in Canada’s electricity sector, as well as education and training institutions that provide the skills and training that employees require to work within it. The Employer Survey, which was completed by more than 70 organizations from every province and territory, represented more than \$4 billion in total annual wages.

*Source: Electricity in Demand: Labour Market Insights 2023-2028*

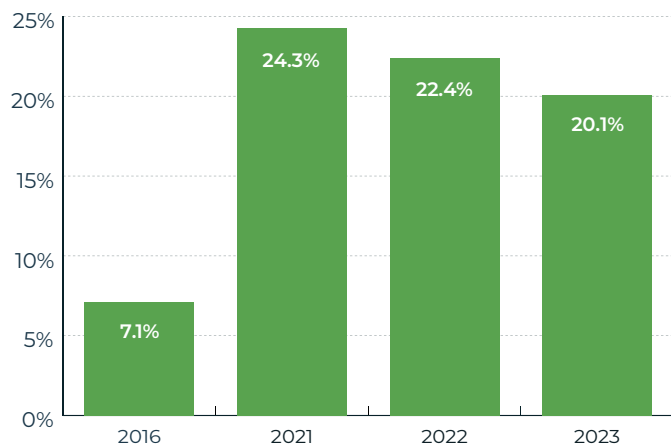
<sup>1</sup> The electricity sector is defined as occupations within the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 2211 – Electric power generation, transmission, and distribution industry group. This industry group (or “sector,” in common parlance) encompasses hundreds of different occupations involved in the generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity.

# PREVALENCE OF HYBRID WORK

Not surprisingly, the number of employees who work from home in Canada significantly increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

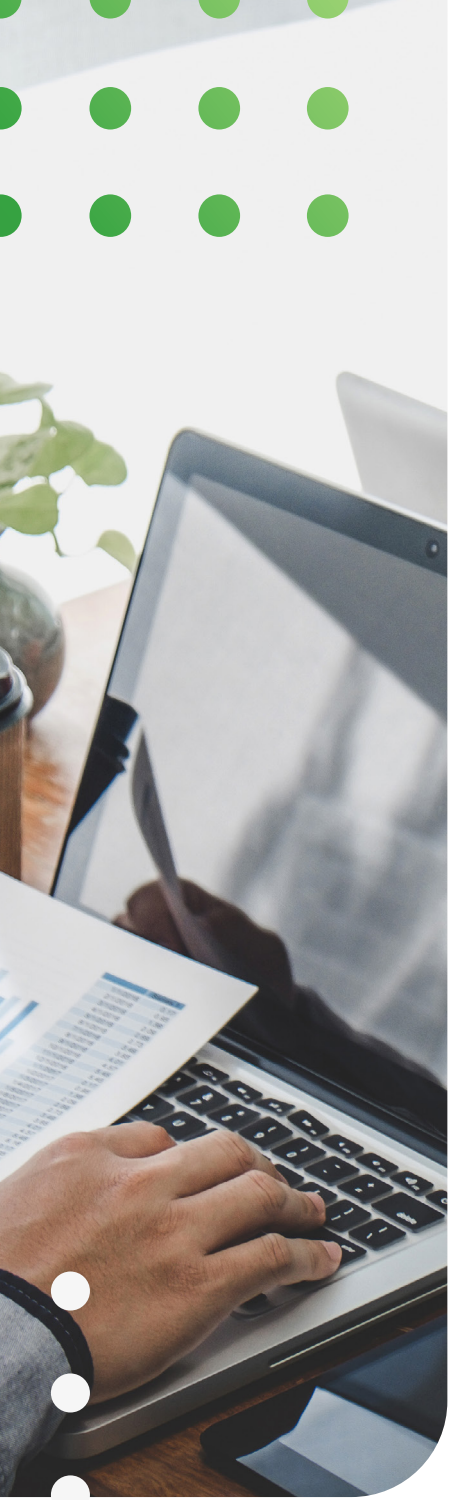
Data from the Census of Canada indicates that only 7.1% of employed Canadians worked most of their hours from home in 2016 (Statistics Canada, Census of Canada). Five years later (2021), the proportion had more than tripled, reaching 24.3% (Figure 1). This was largely driven by COVID-19 “lockdowns”, which began in 2020. By November 2023, the ratio of employees working from home had declined to 20%. However, this is nearly three times above pre-pandemic levels.

**Figure 1. Share of workers usually working from home, Canada, 2016 to 2023**



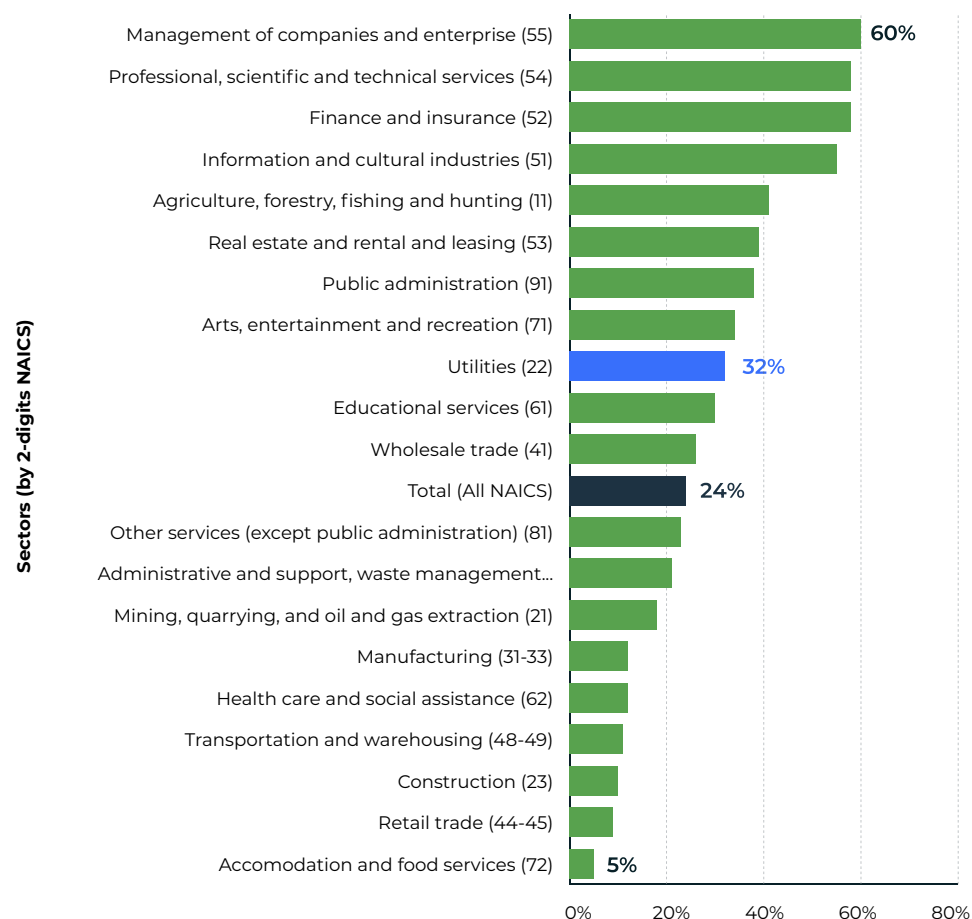
**Source(s):** Labour Force Survey supplements, 2022 and 2023 (3701) and Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901), custom tabulations. **Note(s):** Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables. Estimates from the Labour Force Survey supplements are based on a smaller sample and have a wider margin of error.





**The proportion of employees working from home reflects demographic and economic considerations.** In May 2021 a higher share of women (26.8%) than men (22.1%) worked most of their hours from home. Across sectors, as defined by 2-digit North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) codes, the share of the employed labour force working from home ranged from 5% in the Accommodations and food services sector, to 60% in the “Management of companies and enterprises” sector (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Share of employed labour force with primary place of work as “Worked at home”, by sector, May 2021**



**Source:** Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0456-01. Place of work status by industry sectors, occupation broad category and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions

In the Utilities sector (NAICS 22) — where the electricity industry (NAICS 2211) accounts for 75% of employment – the work-from-home rate was 32% in 2021. This exceeded the corresponding economy-wide figure (24%).

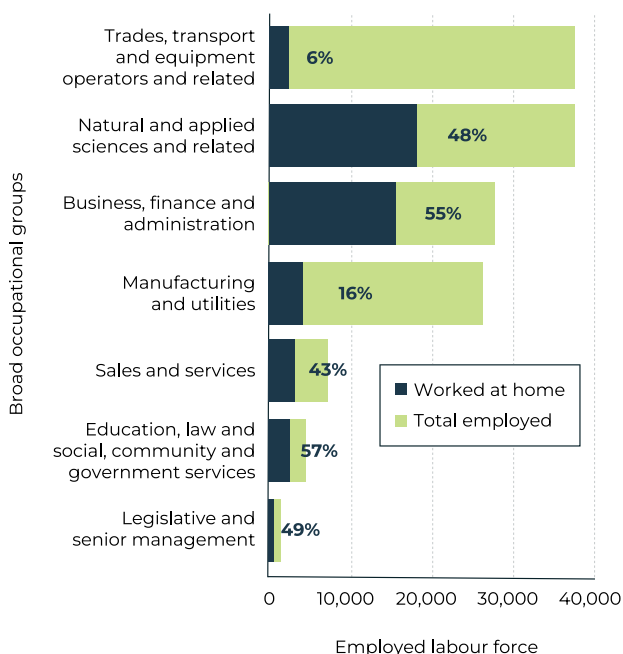
<sup>2</sup> NAICS 22 also includes Natural gas distribution and Water, sewage and other systems.

# RATIONALE FOR HYBRID WORK

## Work-from-home rates in the electricity sector tend to vary by occupational group.

Comparing key occupational groups in the utilities sector (NAICS 22) reveals much variation in work-from-home rates. For example, one of the largest occupational groups – “Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations” (NOC 7) – had a 6% rate (Figure 3). In contrast, the corresponding rates for “Natural and applied sciences and related occupations” and “Business, finance and administration” were 48% and 55%, respectively.

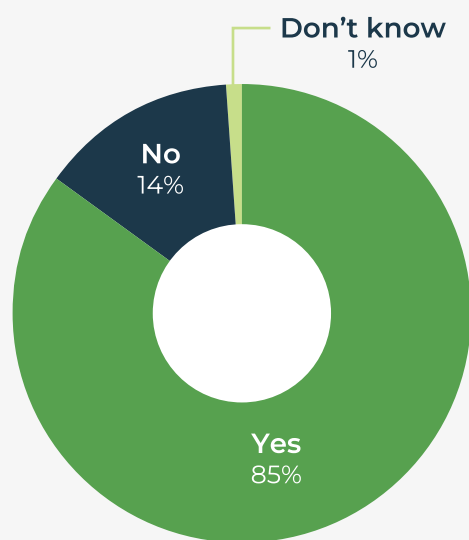
**Figure 3. Share of employed labour force with primary place of work as “Worked at home”, by broad occupational category, Utilities sector, May 2021**



**Source:** Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0456-01. Place of work status by industry sectors, occupation broad category and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions Notes: Utilities sector is NAICS 22. Broad occupational groups are based on 1-digit National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 codes.

EHRC’s Employer Survey 2023 revealed that most organizations in Canada’s electricity sector offer some type of hybrid/remote work arrangement. Among the 72 organizations that responded to the survey, 85% offer such an arrangement (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Employer responses to the question “Does your organization allow hybrid/remote work arrangements?”**



**Source:** EHRC Employer Survey, 2023. n=72

Employers offer such arrangements for many different reasons. The most frequently cited reasons are the desire to promote employees’ work/life balance, and the need to compete effectively with other organizations when recruiting potential employees. (Figure 5). The absence of a work-at-home option may deter some potential employees from viewing an organization as a potential employer.



**Figure 5. Most frequent reasons for offering hybrid/remote work options**



**Source:** EHRC Employer Survey, 2023. n=61. Percentages do not sum to 100 since respondents were asked to select their top 3 reasons.

The employers' most frequently cited rationale for not offering a remote work option is the "Nature of work" (selected as a top factor by 90% of such organizations). This echoes the variation in work-from-home rates across occupational groups, as shown in Figure 3 on page 6, and likely reflects the operational requirements and responsibilities associated with certain jobs in the electricity sector. Some of the key informants interviewed by EHRC noted that it is not always feasible or financially viable for an employee to work from home. Moreover, legal and/or security considerations may prevent some utility company employees from working outside their base province of operation.

**An organization's decision to offer a hybrid/remote work sometimes creates friction among employees.** The vast majority (98%) of organizations that have implemented a hybrid/remote work arrangement did not adjust their

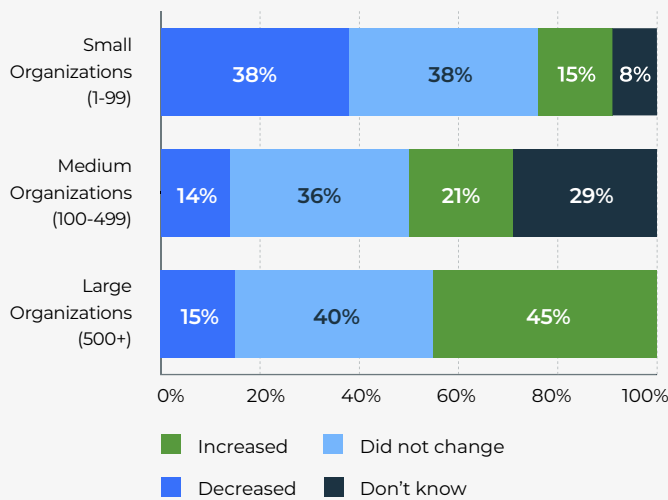
employees' compensation, as part of the process. This may explain why 37% of organizations that have such an arrangement indicated that it created friction between those who can and can't, avail the option.

**Employer sentiment regarding the impact of hybrid/remote work on employee productivity is mixed.** A significant proportion of employers (38%) reported that their organization's productivity did not change with the introduction of such an arrangement. One-quarter observed an increase, while 12% reported a decrease. One quarter of the respondents revealed that their organization lacks the means to make such a determination.

An analysis of responses by organization size reveals that those with less than 100 employees yielded the largest productivity gains from transitioning to remote work (Figure 6 on page 8). It also shows that the larger the organization, the greater the likelihood that it failed to track productivity changes.

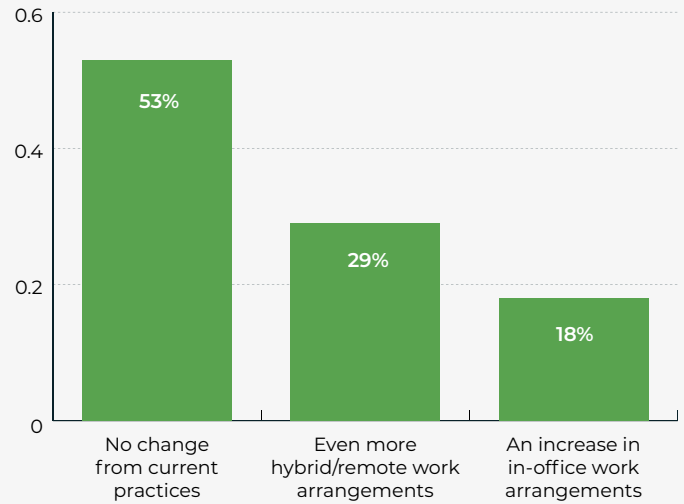


**Figure 6. Employer responses to the question “How did the overall level of productivity/efficiency change due to the transition to a flexible work arrangement?” by organization size (number of employees)**



Source: EHRC Employer Survey, 2023. n=60

**Figure 7. Employer responses to the question “In the future, how do you see workplace arrangements changing?”**



Source: EHRC Employer Survey, 2023. n=72

## EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS

**Looking ahead, most survey respondents do not expect work arrangements in the electricity sector to change.** More than one-half (53%) of employers don't expect a change from current practices, while just under one-third (29%) anticipate that hybrid/remote work will become more widespread. A smaller share (18%) anticipate that in-office work will become more pervasive over time (Figure 7).

Only 5% of the respondents who represent organizations with at least 500 employees expect an increase in the proportion of in-office work. Conversely, small and medium sized organizations are more likely to expand in-office employment opportunities in the future.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Canada's work environment is changing rapidly. Technological considerations have always impacted how and where work is done. The COVID-19 pandemic caused Canadian employers to increase their use of telework and technologies that enable employees to efficiently work-at-home and communicate seamlessly with their colleagues.

Among other things EHRC's *Electricity in Demand: Labour Market Insights 2023-2028* report revealed that within Canada's electricity sector there is intense competition among employers to hire highly skilled individuals, particularly those who are proficient in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) field.





**Offering a hybrid/remote work arrangement is often necessary to recruit and retain such employees. In situations where it isn't feasible to do so, due to the nature of the work, it won't likely be viewed as a "deal-breaker" by prospective employees, since no other employer can offer such an option.**

Despite recent societal trends with respect to how and where work is carried out, some employers oppose flexible work arrangements, and in some quarters, there is a stigma associated with requesting a hybrid/remote work arrangement. If an employer declines to offer such an option for reasons unrelated to the nature of the work, it may need to compensate the employee – financially or otherwise, to obtain his/her services. Competition for employees dictates that employers offer them a comparable level of value to what is available via a work-at-home option. Not doing so will increase the likelihood that a potential employee will accept an offer of employment from another organization.

**Elements of a remuneration package that may serve to compensate an employee for the absence of a work-at-home option include:**

- Company-sponsored and supplemental pension plans
- Additional paid vacation or other forms of leave (parental, educational, etc.)
- Group insurance
- Childcare support (supplements, on-site childcare centres)

Forbes Magazine suggests that employers provide employees with a rejoining bonus to compensate them for the absence of a work-at-home option. More generally, organizations should regularly engage with employees to be aware of their concerns and level of satisfaction. Based on such interactions they may choose to adjust their compensation, perks and/or working conditions.<sup>3</sup> An issue that may require greater attention in the context of working at home, is the "right to disconnect" – which allows employees to be free from work-related communications, outside of their regular working hours. Implementing such a provision has proven to be challenging for many employers and employees.

Given increasingly complex work arrangements, and an increased focus on preserving employees' work-life balance and mental health, human resources professionals in the electricity sector need better data and mechanisms to maintain an appealing, rewarding and productive work environment. Doing so will advance the sector's ability to create an environmentally sustainable and prosperous future for Canadian energy consumers.

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<sup>3</sup> Forbes, Jack Kelly; "[These Incentives Can Help Get Workers Back To The Office](#)"; Published: July 24, 2023