
POWER AND SEX IN THE WORKPLACE: WHEN OLDER MEETS YOUNGER



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Public Release Date: Tuesday March 24, 1998
at 11:00PM EST

This CTV/Angus Reid Poll was conducted by telephone between February 9th and 12th 1998 among a representative cross-section of 1,000 Canadian adults.

These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1996 Census data.

With a Canada-wide sample of 1,000, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within +/-3.2 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

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Women find both scenarios less acceptable than men do

Canadians were read two scenarios about sex in the workplace. In one situation, a powerful man who is over 50 is having a sexual relationship with a 21 year old woman who is under his employ. The second scenario involved a powerful woman over 50 having a sexual relationship with a 21 year old man under her employ. Canadians were then asked to indicate whether they find the person's actions acceptable or unacceptable.

Canadians nix workplace sex when one person is older and more powerful than the other. Two thirds (68%) of Canadians believe that it is unacceptable for either a powerful man or woman over 50 to have a sexual relationship with a 21-year-old under their employ (Table 1). Atlantic Canadians (78% find it unacceptable) and residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (76%) are the least accepting of both situations. Residents of Quebec are the most accepting of both situations; however, they are split on the issue. Specifically, 51% of Quebecers find the scenario with the powerful woman acceptable and 51% find it unacceptable*.

Women find both scenarios less acceptable than men do. Specifically, 73% of Canadian women believe that one (or both) scenario is "unacceptable" while only 62% of men find one (or both) situations "unacceptable".

In addition, women are consistent in their assessments of both scenarios while men are more inclined to find the scenario with the powerful woman slightly more acceptable (40% of men find

* Totals exceed 100% because respondents may have responded differently to each situation

the scenario with the powerful woman acceptable compared to 36% who find the scenario with the powerful man acceptable) (Table 2).

The tendency for someone to find the scenarios unacceptable increases with age. Specifically, 62% of those between 18 and 34 find it unacceptable for a powerful 50 year old man to have an affair with a 21 year old woman compared to 65% among those 35-54 and 76% among those over 50. With regard to the powerful 50 year old woman having an affair with a 21 year old man, 60% of those between 18 and 34 find it unacceptable compared to 64% among those 35-54 and 72% among those over 50 (Table 2).

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