

# URBAN CANADIAN OFFICE WORKERS SAY THAT SHARING INFORMATION AND COLLABORATION AT WORK IS BECOMING MORE IMPORTANT

*Survey of Office Workers in Six of Canada's Leading Economic  
Centres Show Workplace Trends and Attitudes*



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## **Microsoft®**

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## **URBAN CANADIAN OFFICE WORKERS SAY THAT SHARING INFORMATION AND COLLABORATION AT WORK IS BECOMING MORE IMPORTANT**

### ***Survey of Office Workers in Six of Canada's Leading Economic Centres Show Workplace Trends and Attitudes***

**Toronto, ON** — A survey released today, conducted by Ipsos-Reid and sponsored by Microsoft Canada Co., shows that fully three-quarters of office workers (75%) in six of Canada's leading economic centres say that sharing information with their co-workers has become more important over the last five years. The survey also revealed that:

- On average, 5.2 hours each week are spent in meetings.
- Workers in larger organizations (500 employees or more) spend much more time on average in meetings than those in smaller (less than 50 employees) or medium organizations (50-499 employees) -- 6.9 hours versus 3.8 and 4.6 hours respectively.
- Montreal workers spend less time each week in meetings (3.8 hours) than their counterparts in other major urban centres (5.7 hours).

Most workers (91%) report that they collaborate with others in their organization on the same documents or electronic files (52% frequently and 39% sometimes).

- Collaboration is even more common among workers in larger organizations (60% frequently collaborate versus 42% in smaller organizations and 53% in medium organizations).

*These are the main findings of an Ipsos-Reid survey conducted between May 2nd – May 11th, 2001. The survey was sponsored by Microsoft Canada Co. in connection with the launch of Microsoft Office XP and Visio 2002 drawing and diagramming software.*

*The survey was conducted with 800 office workers in six of Canada's major urban business centres — which included Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, Edmonton and Ottawa. The workers were identified from a business sample database, which included proportional sector representation. Office workers qualified for the study based on office computer usage (at least four hours per day). With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire office worker population been polled. However, individual city samples of 200 have a margin of error of  $\pm 7.1\%$ , 19 times out of 20.*

Almost all workers (96%) agree that “fast and easy access to information is a critical part” of their job. Furthermore, more than half (57%) say that the need to work in teams as opposed to working individually has increased over the last five years. Further highlighting the need to share information, a quarter (26%) of workers say that job sharing in their organization has increased over the same time period.

**Table 1.1:** Changes in the Workplace on Sharing Information and Collaboration Over the Last Five Years

	Total	Size of Organization		
		Small	Medium	Large
	%	%	%	%
The need to share information with others in the organization.				
Increased	75	67	80	80
Stayed the same	23	29	19	19
Decreased	2	3	1	1
Don't know	--	1	--	--
The need to work in teams as opposed to working individually.				
Increased	57	50	57	63
Stayed the same	37	44	36	32
Decreased	6	6	6	5
Don't know	--	--	1	--
Job sharing, that is people in the organization who share a job between them.				
Increased	26	26	21	28
Stayed the same	59	58	62	58
Decreased	9	7	11	10
Don't know	6	9	6	4

## Diagrams

Visuals, such as diagrams, charts or pictures, are an important and growing means of sharing information in the Canadian workplace. Indeed, four-in-five workers (81%) use such visuals to illustrate their work (39% frequently and 42% sometimes). Furthermore, 42 percent say that their use of visuals has increased compared to five years ago. Only 8 percent say it has decreased.

- Larger organizations use visuals, such as diagrams, charts or pictures, more frequently (47%) than smaller (30%) or medium organizations (36%).

- Moreover, use of visuals in larger organizations has increased more significantly (53%) than in smaller (31%) or medium organizations (41%) over the last five years.

## ***Pace of Work***

Workers say that their work life encroaches upon their personal time, and that this trend has worsened over the last five years. For example, half of workers (50%) say that the number of hours they work in total has increased over the past five years. (On average, they work 47.5 hours during a typical week).

Three-in-five workers (59%) say they often skip lunch or eat at their desk in order to leave work on time. Moreover, 59 percent sometimes have to take work home to be able to meet their personal commitments too. Forty-two percent also say that they try to visit the gym, bank or dentist during working hours so they can get it all done. More than two-thirds (69%) have to come in early or leave late just to keep up with their workload. Furthermore, 55 percent often have to bring work home to finish in the evening or on the weekend.

- In Calgary and Edmonton, workers are more likely to have to work during evenings or weekends (61%), while Montreal workers are less likely to do so (48%).
- Men (60%) are also more likely than women (46%) to do work at home during the evenings or weekends.

Table 1.2: Proportion of Workers Who Agree with Personal and Professional Lives Management Statements\*

	Total	Region				Gender	
		Toronto/ Ottawa	Vancouver	Montreal	Calgary/ Edmonton	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I often bring work home to finish in the evening or on the weekend.	55	57	53	48	61	60	46
I often skip lunch or eat at my desk in order to leave on time.	59	61	65	55	56	55	64
I sometimes have to take work home with me to be able to meet my personal commitments too.	59	65	57	51	63	63	53
I try to visit the gym, bank or dentist during working hours so I can get it all done.	42	40	44	39	45	45	37

\* Percent strongly/somewhat agree with each statement.

## ***Mobility***

Workers are pursuing flexible hours, working in non-traditional locations, and using mobility technology to stay connected. Indeed, three-in-five (60%) agree that they vary their work schedule from day to day or with their partner simply to get personal or family things done. Moreover, close to half (45%) will work at home if the babysitter is sick or when they are expecting a delivery or a service person.

- Montreal workers are more likely to vary their schedule (70%) and work from home (52%) if obliged by personal commitments than are their counterparts in other major urban centres.

Finally, close to three-quarters (73%) of workers agree that mobility technology helps them meet their personal commitments as well as do their work.

Table 1.3: Proportion of Workers Who Agree with Following Mobility Technology Statements\*

	Total	Region			
		Toronto/ Ottawa	Vancouver	Montreal	Calgary/ Edmonton
	%	%	%	%	%
Mobility technology helps me meet my personal commitments as well as do my work.	73	74	77	66	78
I vary my work schedule from day to day or with my partner simply to get personal or family things done.	60	58	57	70	56
I'll work at home if the babysitter is sick or when I'm expecting a delivery or a service person.	45	46	40	52	44

\* Percent strongly/somewhat agree with each statement.

## ***Software Experimentation and Learning***

When it comes to software, workers like to experiment. Eighty percent of workers experiment with new features of the software they use at work rather than using the same features and not experimenting. When they want to learn new features in software applications, half just experiment on their own (50%), while one-fifth (19%) ask friends or colleagues, 13 percent read books or manuals and 12 percent find on-line help. Only 6 percent take a training course to learn more about software applications.



- Montreal workers are more likely to experiment on their own (59%) than workers in other Canadian major centres (47%).

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