



APEX EXECUTIVE WORK AND HEALTH STUDY ANALYSIS:

Gender differences among executives in the Canadian Public Service balancing the demands of work and personal life

STATISTICS CANADA ANALYSIS

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Leaders balancing the demands of work and personal life during the COVID-19 pandemic: Gender differences among executives in the Canadian Public Service

The COVID-19 pandemic altered and disrupted nearly every aspect of life in Canada, both on the professional and personal fronts. Canada's Public Service was no exception. Against the backdrop of lockdowns and rolling school and daycare closures, work arrangements for thousands of federal employees shifted, with massive role restructuring and a move to remote or hybrid work.¹ As leaders, executives faced unprecedented pressures to oversee these changes, while also managing a public health emergency that impacted every sphere of Canadian life.

These heightened demands of work often led to a disequilibrium with family and personal needs, as longer work hours and ever-shifting work priorities made achieving a healthy work–life fit challenging. Likely, these challenges disproportionately affected women leaders, despite the increasing contributions of men in performing unpaid work within the home, such as housework and caregiving, this work still often falls on women.²

To examine the possible differences in work–life fit among women and men in executive positions within the Public Service, this study uses the 2021 Executive Work and Health Survey (EWS). Results highlight the heightened levels of work–life imbalance among female executives compared to their male counterparts, shedding light on possible reasons for this elevated imbalance among women leaders.

- Female executives were more likely than their male counterparts to frequently experience some form of work–life conflict, with the most common being sacrificing time with family and friends, which was experienced by 37% of female executives and 29% of male executives.
- When all measures of work–life balance collected by the survey were combined, 54% female executives had work–life conflict, significantly higher than the 46% of male executives.
- For both men and women, work–life imbalance was directly tied to work conditions. For instance, among executives working 56 hours or more a week, the vast majority (84%) had work–life conflict. This proportion dropped to 60% for those

working 46 to 55 hours and to 22% who worked 45 hours or less. Working overtime, including on weekends, was more often reported by female executives.

- In terms of workplace support, female executives more often believed that they had few options for varying their work hours (53% versus 59% of men) and were more likely than male executives to state that their immediate supervisor could not be relied during difficult periods at work (44% versus 52%). Both of these factors were tied to work–life imbalance.
- Overall, executives nearing retirement, namely those aged 50 and over, were the least likely to experience work–life conflict, with the likelihood of work–life conflict decreasing to a low of 37% among those aged 60 and over. In general, female executives tend to be younger than their male counterparts, with 52% of female executives being under 50, compared to 46% of male executives.
- When differences in work hours, workplace supports, and demographic differences were taken into account, female executives (51%) remained slightly more likely to experience high work–life conflict compared to male executives (49%).
- Overall, most of the gender difference in work–life conflict (76%) could be explained by differences in work conditions, work support and age. The leading contributor to this imbalance was the number of hours worked. Women’s greater likelihood of working over 45 hours per week explained almost a third of the difference in work–life conflict between female and male executives.

These findings highlight the benefits of a healthy workplace culture that recognizes and values work-life fit, emphasizing family-friendly policies and supports, such as flexible work hours and an ability to disconnect from work after regular work hours. The [2021 Executive Work and Health Survey](#) also includes information on physical and mental health as well as chronic conditions. Future work can explore these health indicators in the context of the gendered nature of work–life imbalance within Canada’s Public Service.

Leaders balancing the demands of work and personal life during the COVID-19 pandemic: Gender differences among executives in the Canadian Public Service

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic altered and disrupted nearly every aspect of life in Canada, both on the professional and personal fronts. Canada's Public Service was no exception. Against the backdrop of lockdowns and rolling school and daycare closures, work arrangements for thousands of federal employees shifted, with massive role restructuring and a move to remote or hybrid work.³ As leaders, executives faced unprecedented pressures to oversee these changes, while also managing a public health emergency that impacted every sphere of Canadian life.

These heightened demands of work often led to a disequilibrium with family and personal needs, as longer work hours and ever-shifting work priorities made achieving a healthy work–life fit challenging. Likely, these challenges disproportionately affected women leaders, as despite the increasing contributions of men in performing unpaid work within the home, such as housework and caregiving, this work still often falls on women.⁴

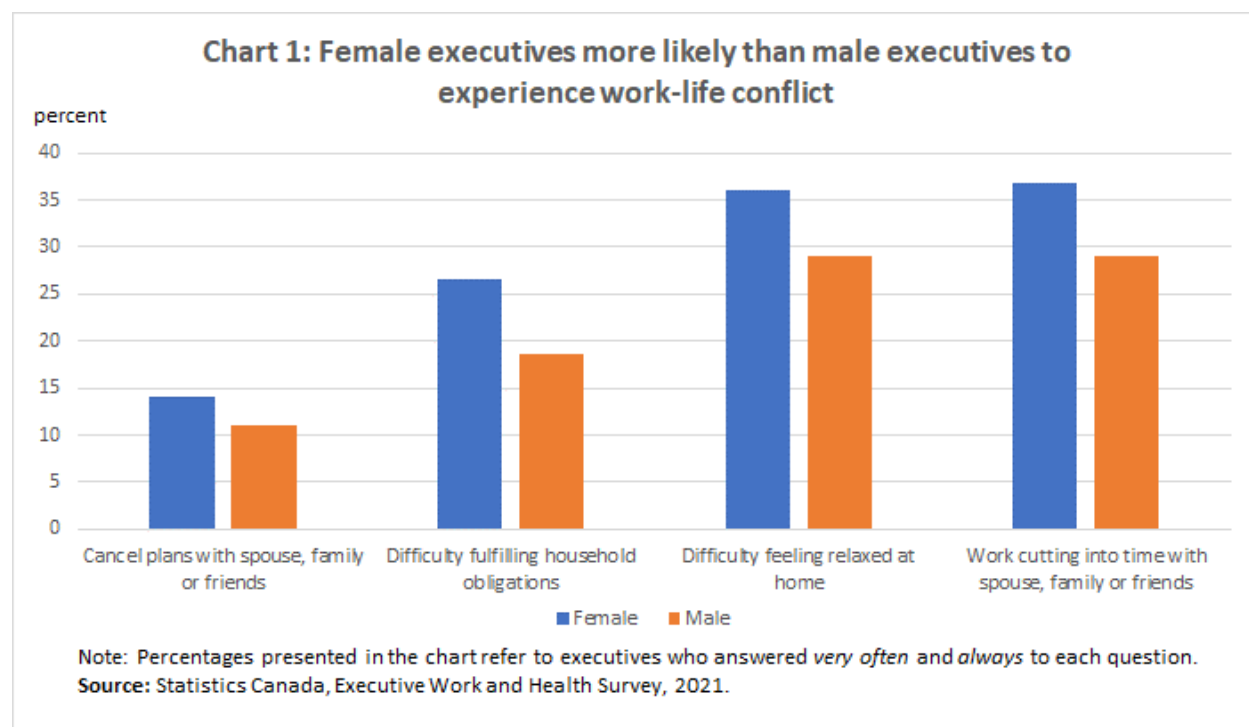
The consequences of work–life conflicts are well-documented. On an individual level, the stress associated with these conflicts has been linked to negative health outcomes such as poorer physical and mental health.⁵ And, from an organizational perspective, work–life conflicts can lead to increased absenteeism, which among the executive ranks, can have logistical consequences for the organization.⁶

In this context, this study uses the 2021 Executive Work and Health Survey (EWHS) to explore the differences in work–life conflict between female and male executives in Canada's Public Service. Research on the gendered nature of work–life conflict among executives—which is mostly in the private sector—have often relied on small samples of female executives, limiting the ability of researchers to make statistically meaningful gender comparisons.⁷ A focus on executives in the Public Service of Canada provides a unique opportunity to examine this question, particularly given that the proportion of female executives in the Public Service of Canada (50%) is considerably higher than the proportion in private sectors (17%).⁸

The paper starts by examining gender differences in the four measures of work–life fit collected by the EWHS. This is followed by an examination of the work-related and demographic factors that are often related to overall work–life imbalance. Next, the paper investigates the extent to which these factors explain the difference in work–life conflict between female and male executives. Identifying these factors may be useful for helping to inform policies and support specifically tailored to the unique situation of male and female executives.

Work cutting into family time more commonly reported by female executives

Overall, female executives were more likely than their male counterparts to frequently experience some form of work–life conflict, whether it was cutting back on time with family and friends, feeling unrelaxed on their off-time, or not being able to keep up with household demands (Chart 1).



For both women and men in executive positions, one of the most common forms of work–life imbalance related to reduced time with family and friends. Specifically, 37% of female executives reported that their work always or very often took up time they would have liked to spend with family and friends. This compared to 29% of male executives who felt the same way ([Table 1](#)).

Difficulty fulfilling household obligations was another common outcome of heavy work requirements, with 27% of women and 19% of men stating that their work schedule made it difficult to do household work or take care of children. Work schedules also forced some to cancel plans with their spouse, family or friends. Again, this situation was more common among women (14%) than men (11%) in executive positions.⁹

Even when the workday was done, winding down was often difficult for public sector executives. In 2021, 36% of female executives and 29% of male executives reported that their work obligations very often or always made it difficult to feel relaxed at home.

To better understand the complex and multidimensional nature of work–life conflict, this study combined the questions on work–life fit into an index, where higher scores indicate

higher levels of work–life conflict. This index was sorted into two evenly sized groups, capturing the top 50% (high work–life conflict) and bottom 50% (low work–life conflict) of the index. (For more information, see Data sources, methods and definitions.)

When all measures of work–life fit were combined, a higher proportion of female executives (54%) had an overall work–life imbalance compared to their male counterparts (46%) ([Table 2](#)).

Work conditions and supports tied to overall work–life imbalance

Knowing the factors tied to work–life fit or imbalance can help better assess the areas requiring organizational change or improvements. For both men and women, work–life imbalance was directly tied to work conditions and supports ([Table 3](#))

Time is a finite resource, and as such, longer work hours translates into fewer hours for other pursuits and responsibilities, and the heightened possibility of work–life imbalance. Among executives working 56 hours or more a week, the vast majority (84%) had work–life conflict. This proportion dropped to 60% for those working 46 to 55 hours and to 22% who worked 45 hours or less. Similarly, frequently working on weekends was tied to high levels of work–life imbalance (60%) compared to rarely working on weekends (21%).

Another source of work–life conflict was being available during off-time. In particular, 63% of executives who felt obligated to respond to work messages in the evening had work–life conflict. This compared to 28% among executives who were able to disconnect. In addition, not taking sick days or taking few vacation days was also linked to high levels of work–life imbalance.

While stressful work conditions can create imbalance, support in the workplace can conversely play a role in reducing work-related stress and increasing job satisfaction.¹⁰ For this study, flexible work arrangements and support from supervisor were examined as measures of workplace support.

Previous research suggests that flexible work arrangements, such as determining start and end times, can allow for the better management of work and personal and family responsibilities.¹¹ The lack of this flexibility can lead to heightened work–life imbalance, as evidenced by the results from the EWHS. Specifically, high work–life conflict was recorded for 71% of executives with a perceived lack of flexibility in their work hours. This was 1.6 times higher than executives who were satisfied with work hours flexibility (45%).

Other forms of workplace support are also important. Among public service executives, high work–life conflict was more prevalent among those who reported that their supervisor could not be relied on very much when things get tough (61%) as compared to executives who were able to count on support from their supervisors (45%).

Gender differences in these work conditions and supports, as well as stage in career and life, may help to explain the gender gap in work–life conflict. Therefore, the next section examines whether these characteristics differ between women and men in executive positions ([Table 4](#)).

Female executives were more likely than male executives to work overtime

Overall, some conditions of work varied between women and men working in executive positions. In particular, overtime was more common among female than male executives, with a larger share of female executives than male executives working more than 55 hours per week (21% and 16%) and a smaller share of female executives working a regular workweek of 45 hours or less (34% versus 42% of male executives). Furthermore, women in executive positions were slightly more likely than men to give up their weekends for work (67% versus 65%)¹².

However, the feeling of being perpetually connected to work through the use of technology was equally experienced by women and men. Specifically, 64% and 63% of women and men felt obliged to respond to work messages on their off time, during the evenings.¹³ This inability to disconnect from work can be a source of stress, as is the inability to decompress by skipping vacation days. About a quarter (26%) of executives took 10 or fewer vacation days, with no difference between female and male executives.

Gender differences, however, emerge for taking sick days, which was more common among female than male executives, with 64% of women taking one or more sick days, compared to 54% of men. Female executives were also more likely than male executives to take four or more sick days throughout the year (22% versus 16% of males). Taking sick days could be directly related to higher-level of work–life imbalance among female executives, as workplace stress and occupational burnout is often a cause of workplace absenteeism.

Female executives had lower levels of workplace support

Having adequate workplace supports were not equally available to men and women in executive positions. A smaller proportion of female executives (53%) were satisfied with the flexibility of work hours, compared to male executives (59%). Not only did female executives feel like they had fewer options for varying their work hours, they also were more likely to state that their immediate supervisor could not be relied during difficult periods at work (44% versus 52% of male executives).^{14, 15} This coupled with an heightened belief that they could not take time off work when sick (26%) compared to their male counterparts (20%), may help explain, at least in part, female executives' higher levels of work–life conflict.¹⁶

Female and male executives aged 50 or older were the least likely to experience work–life conflict

Another possible explanation for gender differences in work–life balance (or imbalance) relates to the stage of career and life. Work–life conflict often peaks in middle-age when many people have increased responsibilities in both their work and private lives, such as caring for children and aging parents. In addition, the average promotion age to an executive position is generally higher than other public service positions, meaning that at the middle-age mark, some executives may be managing new job expectations at the same time as dealing with other life commitments.

Overall, executives nearing retirement, namely those aged 50 and over, were the least likely to experience work–life conflict, with the likelihood of work–life conflict decreasing to a low of 37% among those aged 60 and over. In comparison, those under 50, particularly middle-aged executives aged 40 to 49, had the highest levels of work–life imbalance, at 56% for those aged 40 to 44 and 54% for those aged 45 to 49.

The age distribution of female and male executives may provide some clues for the gender difference in work–life conflict. In general, female executives tend to be younger than their male counterparts. In 2021, 52% of female executives were under 50, compared to 46% of male executives. On the other end of the age continuum, about 1 in 5 female executives were 55 or older (21%), compared to over 1 in 4 male executives (27%).

Female executives were still more likely to experience work–life conflict after controlling for key factors

To take into account the range of gender differences in work conditions, work support and demographic profiles, multivariate logistic regression analysis was employed (for more information, see Data sources, methods and definitions). After taking into account factors such as work hours, workplace supports, and demographic differences, female executives (51%) remained more likely to experience high work–life conflict compared to male executives (49%), albeit the gender gap narrowed. This narrowing of the gender difference suggests that if all factors were identical for female executives and male executives, the likelihood of experiencing high work–life conflict for female executives could be reduced. For instance, working fewer hours and having a greater flexibility in work arrangements could have a positive impact on women’s work–life fit.

Most of the factors associated with work–life conflict for both women and men, particularly overtime, low support from supervisor, and inability to disconnect, remained significant in the multivariate analysis. There were some exceptions. For example, the number of vacation days taken was not associated with work–life conflict when all other factors were taken into account.

When looking at the relative influence of factors for male and female executives separately, similar results emerge ([Table 5](#)). Most of the same factors were associated with work–life conflict among female and male executives, though a few gender differences lessened, such as for satisfaction with flexible work hours.

In contrast, other differences were magnified ([Table 5](#)). When considering the frequency of not being able to take necessary sick days, the difference in work–life conflict between female and male executives among those with a high frequency of being unable to take sick days was larger (12%) than those with a low frequency of being unable to take sick days (6%). This finding suggests that protecting sick leave allowances and promoting a workplace culture where sick leave is supported may be particularly beneficial in reducing work–life conflict for female executives.

Female executives experience higher work–life conflict in part because they are working longer hours than male executives

To further understand the relative contributions of various factors to work–life conflict, this study employed Oaxaca–Blinder analysis ([Table 6](#)). About three-quarters (76%) of the difference in work–life balance between female and male executives could be explained by gender differences in work conditions, work supports and age. The leading contributor to the difference in work–life imbalance was the number of hours worked. Women’s greater likelihood of working over 45 hours per week explained 29% of the difference in work–life conflict between female and male executives.

Furthermore, support factors significantly contributed to the difference in work–life conflict between female and male executives, with the biggest support factor being the inability to take needed sick days (15%). This was followed by dissatisfaction with flexible work hours (9%) and lack of supervisor support (7%). Finally, the difference in age distribution between male and female executives explained 11% of the gap in work–life conflict.

Conclusion

Existing workplace management literature recognizes that work–life conflict disproportionately affects women. However, it pays little attention to whether executives experience a similar gender difference in work–life conflict. Relying on the survey of female and male executives in the Public Service of Canada, this study broadly points to two important observations. First, high work–life conflict is indeed more prevalent among female executives compared to male executives. Second, the complex interplay of work conditions, work supports, and age profile differences contribute to gender disparities in work–life balance.

Topping the list of factors related to women’s higher work–life imbalance was the higher prevalence of working overtime, with female executives putting in more hours per week than their male counterparts. In addition, female executives more often lacked the needed work supports, with organizational gaps in flexible work arrangements and supervisor support during critical work periods. The younger age profile of female executives, compared to male executives, was another important contributor in women’s high work–life imbalance.

The results of this study highlight the importance of a healthy workplace culture that recognizes and values the importance of downtime and corresponding need to temper executive expectations relating to overwork. A healthy workplace culture also means having the resources and policies needed to support women leaders in the Public Service, such as allowing greater work flexibility, encouraging the use of sick leave when needed (recognizing the importance of both physical and mental health), and training supervisors to play an active role in executives' overall wellbeing. These efforts may have the added effect of ensuring that the next generation of women leaders are eager to join the executive ranks, as both recruitment and retention have been linked to the availability of work–life supports.¹⁷

It is important to recognize that there are some limitations to this study. For example, due to the cross-sectional nature of the 2021 EWHS, the results are limited to statistical associations about work–life conflict among female and male executives and other variables, rather than causal associations. In addition, previous research indicates that family factors such as marital status, number of children, and age of children can impact work–life conflict.¹⁸ However, the 2021 EWHS did not collect any information on these familial factors. It is also important to note that the 2021 EWHS includes a sample of executives in Canada's Public Service, which means the results of this study are not necessarily generalizable to executives outside of the Public Service. Finally, the literature points to the bidirectional nature of work–life conflict.¹⁹ In other words, while work can interfere with life, it is also possible that life interferes with work (i.e., life–work conflict). This study was not able to examine life–work conflict, due to a lack of relevant information in the 2021 EWHS.

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Data sources, methods and definitions

Data sources

The 2021 Executive Work and Health Study (EWHS) is a cross-sectional survey of individuals who are employed in executive occupation groups and levels, in organizations and agencies which fall under the Public Service Employment Act. The 2021 EWHS is the sixth cycle of the survey, with a focus on the working environment and the health and well-being of executives in the federal public service.

The Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX) has conducted the EWHS every five years since 1997. In 2021, Statistics Canada managed the data collection on behalf of APEX for the first time. More information about the 2021 EWHS can be found on [APEX's website](#).

The 2021 EWHS is suitable for the purpose of this study, as the large sample of female and male executives allows for a detailed analysis. In this case, the analysis is based on a sample of 2,105 female executives and 1,849 male executives who work full-time. In addition, since it was collected from May 28, 2021 to July 9, 2021, the 2021 EWHS provides a better understanding of working environments among executives during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To make the results representative of the population of public service executives, weighted estimates were calculated using methods that take into account the survey design of the 2021 EWHS. Variance was estimated using 1,000 sets of bootstrap weights. Logistic regression analysis was used to examine whether differences were significant at the 0.05 level.

Methods

Logistic regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between work–life conflict and gender while isolating the impact of demographic, work, technological, and support factors on work–life conflict. Results from the logistic regression analysis are presented as predicted probabilities. A probability of 1 indicates a 100% chance of experiencing work–life conflict, while a probability of 0 indicates a 0% chance.

Oaxaca–Blinder decomposition analysis was also used to understand the relative contributions of demographic, technological, work, and support factors to the difference in work–life conflict between female and male executives. This analysis first estimates the difference in the average values of the dependent variable (i.e., work–life conflict) between two groups (i.e., female and male executives). Second, this difference is decomposed into two components, namely the “explained” component (i.e., the gap that is attributable to the differences in the average values of demographic, technological, work, and support factors between female and male executives) and the “unexplained” component (i.e., anything that is not explained by the “explained” component). This study

focuses on the “explained” component, as the “unexplained” component simply indicates that there are other unobserved factors that are not captured in this study that may influence the difference in work–life conflict between female and male executives.²⁰

It is noteworthy that Oaxaca–Blinder decomposition analysis uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to estimate the probability of being in high or low work–life conflict. The advantage of Oaxaca–Blinder decomposition analysis is that overall difference can be decomposed while the disadvantage is that estimated probabilities can fall outside of the range when the outcome is highly skewed. Since the distribution falls well within the OLS range, this approach is preferable to others such as Even and Macpherson.²¹

Definitions

The work–life conflict scale is designed to measure the extent to which work roles interfere with other personal and family life roles. In the 2021 EWHS, there are four relevant questions which are as follows:

Q1. In the past 12 months, how often did you experience the following? - You had to cancel plans with your spouse, family or friends due to work.

Q2. In the past 12 months, how often did you experience the following? - Your work schedule made it difficult for you to fulfil your household obligations.

Q3. In the past 12 months, how often did you experience the following? - Your work obligations made it difficult to feel relaxed at home.

Q4. In the past 12 months, how often did you experience the following? - Your work took up time you would have liked to have spent with your spouse, family or friends.

For each question, there are seven possible response categories including 1) never, 2) almost never, 3) rarely, 4) sometimes, 5) often, 6) very often, and 7) always. This study relied on principal component analysis to combine these four questions into a single index. A higher score on this index indicates higher levels of work–life conflict.

Table 1 Responses to work and life module questions for female and male executives in Canada's Public Service, 2021

	Percentage		
	Total	Female	Male
Q1. You had to cancel plans with your spouse, family or friends due to work			
Never	7.5	7.0	7.9
Almost never	13.1	12.3	14.1
Rarely	18.5	17.0	20.0
Sometimes	35.2	36.1	34.2
Often	13.3	13.7	12.9
Very often/always	12.5	13.9	11.0
Q2. Your work schedule made it difficult for you to fulfil your household obligations			
Never	5.1	4.5	5.8
Almost never	9.0	6.8	11.4
Rarely	11.9	10.5	13.3
Sometimes	31.4	30.3	32.6
Often	19.8	21.4	18.2
Very often	17.0	19.7	14.0
Always	5.8	6.8	4.7
Q3. Your work obligations made it difficult to feel relaxed at home			
Never	2.7	2.1	3.3
Almost never	5.6	4.8	6.5
Rarely	8.3	7.3	9.3
Sometimes	27.0	27.0	27.2
Often	23.7	22.8	24.7
Very often	24.2	27.0	21.1
Always	8.5	9.0	8.0
Q4. Your work took up time you would have liked to spend with your spouse, family or friends			
Never	2.4	1.8	3.1
Almost never	5.8	4.5	7.1
Rarely	9.0	8.0	10.2
Sometimes	28.9	27.7	30.3
Often	20.8	21.2	20.3
Very often	25.3	28.2	22.1
Always	7.8	8.6	7.0

Note: For the first question, "very often" and "always" were combined to meet the minimum cell counts for release guidelines.

Source: Statistics Canada, Executive Work and Health Study, 2021.

Table 2 Unadjusted and adjusted probability of female and male executives experiencing high work–life conflict, logistic regression, 2021

	Marginal effect	
	Bivariate	Multivariate
Gender		
Male (ref.)	0.455	0.488
Female	0.538*	0.508*

* significantly different from the reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, Executive Work and Health Study, 2021.

Table 3 Unadjusted and adjusted probability of executives experiencing high work–life conflict, logistic regression, 2021

	Marginal effect	
	Bivariate	Multivariate
Gender		
Male (ref.)	0.455	0.488
Female	0.538*	0.508*
Age		
Under 40	0.519*	0.548*
40-44	0.555*	0.544*
45-49	0.540*	0.528*
50-54	0.491*	0.490*
55-59	0.435*	0.445*
Over 60 (ref.)	0.370	0.399
Racialized group		
Not racialized group (ref.)	0.496	...
Racialized group	0.515	...
Self-reported Indigenous identification		
Not Indigenous (ref.)	0.499	...
Indigenous	0.470	...
Education		
Below university (ref.)	0.417	0.427
University	0.492*	0.489*
Above university	0.512*	0.513*
Occupational group		
EX01-02 (ref.)	0.482	0.507
EX03-05	0.545*	0.474*
Feeling obliged to respond to work messages during evening hours		
Do not agree (ref.)	0.278	0.419
Agree	0.625*	0.540*
Work hours per week		
45 or fewer (ref.)	0.217	0.326
46-55	0.595*	0.548*
56 or more	0.842*	0.716*
Frequency of working weekend		
Low (ref.)	0.215	0.376
High	0.644*	0.554*
Number of sick days taken in the last 12 months		
None (ref.)	0.541	0.503
1-3	0.460*	0.482*
4 or more	0.488*	0.524
Number of vacation days taken in the last 12 months		
21 or more (ref.)	0.427	0.498
11-20	0.504*	0.501

10 or fewer	0.545*	0.495
How much supervisor can be relied on when things get tough		
Very much (ref.)	0.420	0.465
Not very much	0.571*	0.531*
Level of satisfaction on flexibility of work hours		
Satisfied (ref.)	0.343	0.434
Not satisfied	0.693*	0.581*
Frequency of not being able to take needed sick days		
Low (ref.)	0.436	0.471
High	0.708*	0.594*

* significantly different from the reference category (ref.) (p<0.05)

Source: Statistics Canada, Executive Work and Health Study, 2021.

Table 4 Characteristics of female and male executives in Canada's Public Service, 2021

	Percentage		
	Total	Female	Male
<u>Demographic characteristics</u>			
Gender			
Female	52.2
Male	47.8
Age			
Under 40	5.7	5.5	5.9
40-44	17.5	18.2	16.9
45-49	25.6	27.9	23.2
50-54	27.1	27.4	26.7
55-59	16.9	15.6	18.4
60 or over	7.2	5.5	9.1
Racialized group			
Not racialized group	89.8	88.9	90.8
Racialized group	10.2	11.1	9.2
Self-reported Indigenous identification			
Not Indigenous	96.8	96.7	96.9
Indigenous	3.3	3.3	3.1
Highest Level of Education			
Below bachelor's degree	6.5	6.2	6.8
Bachelor's degree	37.8	39.2	36.2
Above bachelor's degree	55.7	54.7	56.9
Occupational group			
EX01-02	74.0	76.3	71.5
EX03-05	26.0	23.7	28.5
<u>Technological characteristic</u>			
Feeling obliged to respond to work messages during evening hours			
Do not agree	36.3	35.7	36.8
Agree	63.7	64.3	63.2
<u>Work characteristics</u>			
Work hours per week			
45 or fewer	38.0	34.4	41.9
46-55	43.7	44.8	42.5
56 or more	18.3	20.8	15.7
Frequency of working weekend			
Low	34.2	33.4	35.0
High	65.8	66.6	65.0
Number of sick days taken in the last 12 months			
None	40.9	36.1	46.1
1-3	39.9	42.4	37.1
4 or more	19.2	21.5	16.8

Number of vacation days taken in the last 12 months

21 or more	20.7	20.3	21.2
11-20	53.4	53.8	53.0
10 or fewer	25.8	25.9	25.8

Support characteristics**How much supervisor can be relied on when things get tough**

Very much	47.9	44.4	51.8
Not very much	52.1	55.6	48.2

Level of satisfaction on flexibility of work hours

Satisfied	55.9	53.2	58.7
Not satisfied	44.1	46.8	41.3

Frequency of not being able to take needed sick days

Low	76.9	73.6	80.5
High	23.1	26.4	19.5

Note: Due to a small sample size issue, this study combined multiple Indigenous groups (e.g., First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) and racialized groups (e.g., South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin America, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, Visible minority, n.i.e, and multiple visible minorities) into binary groups such as non-racialized vs. racialized group as well as non-Indigenous vs. Indigenous group. For frequency of working weekend, the “high” category is combined with “always” and “often” while “rarely” and “never” are included as part of the “low” category. For frequency of not being able to take needed sick days, the “high” category includes “most of the time” and “all the time,” while the “low” category consists of “sometimes,” “rarely,” and “never.”

Source: Statistics Canada, Executive Work and Health Study, 2021.

Table 5 Adjusted probability of female and male executives experiencing high work–life conflict, logistic regression, 2021

	Marginal effect		
	Female	Male	Difference
Age			
Under 40	0.618 *	0.473 *	0.145
40-44	0.565 *	0.522 *	0.043
45-49	0.572 *	0.478 *	0.094
50-54	0.533 *	0.444 *	0.089
55-59	0.459 *	0.428 *	0.031
Over 60 (ref.)	0.439	0.358	0.081
Education			
Below university (ref.)	0.490	0.367	0.123
University	0.524 *	0.454 *	0.070
Above university	0.555 *	0.467 *	0.088
Occupational group			
EX01-02 (ref.)	0.544	0.467	0.077
EX03-05	0.520 *	0.427 *	0.093
Feeling obliged to respond to work messages during evening hours			
Do not agree (ref.)	0.453	0.385	0.068
Agree	0.584 *	0.492 *	0.092
Work hours per week			
45 or fewer (ref.)	0.350	0.303	0.047
46-55	0.588 *	0.502 *	0.086
56 or more	0.728 *	0.707 *	0.021
Frequency of working weekend			
Low (ref.)	0.416	0.332	0.084
High	0.594 *	0.512 *	0.082
Number of sick days taken in the last 12 months			
None (ref.)	0.545	0.459	0.086
1-3	0.521	0.440	0.081
4 or more	0.563	0.478	0.085

Number of vacation days taken in the last 12 months

21 or more (ref.)	0.537	0.453	0.084
11-20	0.538	0.461	0.077
10 or fewer	0.540	0.445	0.095

How much supervisor can be relied on when things get tough

Very much (ref.)	0.496	0.430	0.066
Not very much	0.575	0.483	0.092

*

*

Level of satisfaction on flexibility of work hours

Satisfied (ref.)	0.484	0.379	0.105
Not satisfied	0.601	0.561	0.040*

*

*

Frequency of not being able to take needed sick days

Low (ref.)	0.501	0.438	0.063
High	0.650	0.527	0.123*

*

*

* significantly different from the reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, Executive Work and Health Survey, 2021.

Table 6 Percentages explaining the difference in work–life conflict between female and male executives, Oaxaca–Blinder decomposition analysis, 2021

	Percentage
Age	
Under 40	-0.4
40-44	2.4*
45-49	8.7*
50-54	0.9
55-59	-0.8
Over 60 (ref.)	
Education	
Below university (ref.)	
University	1.2
Above university	-2.0
Occupational group	
EX01-02 (ref.)	
EX03-05	1.6
Feeling obliged to respond to work messages during evening hours	
Do not agree (ref.)	
Agree	1.4
Work hours per week	
45 or fewer (ref.)	
46-55	6.2*
56 or more	23.1*
Number of vacation days taken in the last 12 months	
21 or more (ref.)	
11-20	0.0
10 or fewer	0.0
Number of sick days taken in the last 12 months	
None (ref.)	
1-3	-2.0
4 or more	1.1
Frequency of working weekend	
Low (ref.)	
High	4.0
Frequency of not being able to take needed sick days	
Low (ref.)	
High	14.6*
Level of satisfaction on flexibility of work hours	
Satisfied (ref.)	
Not satisfied	9.3*
How much supervisor can be relied on when things get tough	
Very much (ref.)	
Not very much	7.2*
Total explained	76.4

Total unexplained	23.6
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* significantly different from zero ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, Executive Work and Health Survey, 2021.

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Notes

¹ See Government of Canada (2020).

² See Moyser and Burlock (2018).

³ See Government of Canada (2020).

⁴ See Moyser and Burlock (2018).

⁵ See Gisler et al. (2018).

⁶ See McLean et al. (2003).

⁷ See Young and Schieman (2017).

⁸ See MacDougall et al. (2020).

⁹ In this paper, all differences reported are statistically significant, unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁰ See Martin (2018).

¹¹ See Chung and Van der Lippe (2020).

¹² From WRK_Q30 In the past 12 months, how frequently have you worked on weekends? The "high" category is combined with "always" and "often" while "rarely" and "never" are included as part of the "low" category.

¹³ From TEC_Q10B: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about e-technology?—Most days, I feel obliged to respond to work-related messages during the evening hours The "agree" category includes "agree" and "strongly agree" while the "do not agree" category includes "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree."

¹⁴ From STR_Q30 How much can your immediate supervisor be relied on when things get tough during work? Respondents who answered "very much" are included in the "very much" category while the "not very much" category contains other categories such as "somewhat," "a little," and "not at all."

¹⁵ From SAT_Q10D What is your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of your work?—The flexibility of your work hours "Satisfied" and "very satisfied" are grouped into the "satisfied" category while the "not satisfied" category is composed of "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied," "dissatisfied," and "very dissatisfied."

¹⁶ From WRK_Q70: In the past 12 months, how often did you work even though you wanted to take a sick day because you were not feeling well physically or mentally? Two categories are created to measure the frequency of not being able to take needed sick days. The "high" category includes "most of the time" and "all the time," while the "low" category consists of "sometimes," "rarely," and "never."

¹⁷ See Higgins et al. (2008).

¹⁸ See Luhr et al. (2022).

¹⁹ See Higgins et al. (2008).

²⁰ See Fairlie (2005).

²¹ See Even and Macpherson (1994).