

COPARENTING AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

CLOSE-UP ON TELEWORK



COPARENTS: Adults, recognized as a child's parents, who act and communicate to ensure the child's well-being, regardless of their parenting situation.

Since the pandemic, working remotely has become a new reality.

In Quebec today, nearly 35% of employed people telework, mainly in hybrid mode. Many parents divide their week between home and the office.

Teleworking is a very popular way of balancing work and family. However, the rules vary widely from place to place, and they can change within a given organization. For families, this requires regular adjustments. And while working from home is generally seen as an advantage, it also entails risks for finding balance and coparenting.

About **40%** of jobs in Canada can theoretically be done as telework. About **24%** of employed people in Canada telework, compared with **35%** in Quebec.

(Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024b ; ISQ, 2024)

REALITIES

Working hours

A major, widely appreciated time-saver

Telework is viewed positively by the vast majority of parents. Its main advantage is the reduction in travel time, which can represent two to three hours a day, or up to 10 to 15 hours a week.

This time-saving helps reduce stress, makes starting and ending the day easier, and helps family life run more smoothly. It's all the more appreciated when it's accompanied by flexible working hours, enabling work organization to be adapted to family realities.

Telework is seen as facilitating work-family balance by **79%** of those surveyed, and even more so by women (**85%**), parents of children with special needs (**87%**) and parents of school-age children (**84%**).

(Concillivi, 2025)

Redefining boundaries

Telework is transforming the way people organize their days. Some parents maintain highly structured schedules, while others, depending on their type of job or the way they work, may work more flexibly, in projects or time blocks.

This flexibility is often beneficial, but it can also blur the boundaries between work and family life. Working hours can stretch to the end of the day, just as family demands can intrude on scheduled working hours.

Telework can also make it easier to manage unexpected situations when a child has to stay home (e.g., if they are sick, or if there is a snowstorm) as a solution, on an exceptional basis. Teleworking does not replace providing childcare – combining work and childcare quickly leads to fatigue, stress and difficulty in meeting both family and professional needs

Workspaces

A new family equation

Telework is also transforming living spaces. Few families have a dedicated closed office, especially in smaller or open-plan homes. This raises concrete questions: Who gets the quietest space? Who works at the kitchen table? Who works from their bedroom? Who needs to travel often?

These issues are not neutral: we observe that women are more likely to find themselves in less suitable workspaces. Sharing space then becomes a question of equity, in the same way as sharing time, tasks and the mental load.



Telework benefits and risks for coparents

Benefits	Risks and challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant time savings (less travel) • Less stress from morning and evening routines • More flexibility to adjust schedules to family realities • Better ability to manage transitions and the unexpected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of telework being wrongly perceived as a way of simultaneously looking after children • Risk of work spilling over into family life, and vice versa • Increased domestic tasks for the parent working from home • Increased mental load • Risk of inequality between coparents • Implicit expectations (by family or the employer) that the working parent will be more available

! TELEWORK: A POWERFUL DRIVER... TO BE CONSIDERED AS A TEAM

While it facilitates finding balance for several parents, it can also accentuate imbalances if expectations, roles and limits are not clearly defined between coparents. If work no longer requires leaving the house, who takes the children to school in the morning? Who manages transitions, appointments and the unexpected? What time do the children come home from school? Without clear discussions, there is a real risk that the parent who works from home will take on more tasks (transport, meals, laundry, day-to-day management), in addition to their professional and mental load.

BEST PRACTICES for teleworking coparents

So that telework can best support work-life balance and equity:

- **Explicitly discuss expectations:** clarify what is and isn't possible during teleworking hours
- **Recognize that teleworking is working:** avoid a situation where the at-home parent automatically takes on more tasks
- **Share the mental load:** planning, school follow-ups, appointments and organization must be split up
- **Set clear rules:** protected working hours, periods of concentration, planned parental responsibilities
- **Divide working space equitably:** discuss access to quiet areas and alternate them if necessary
- **Regularly readjust the agreement:** reconciling work, family and studies is an evolving process and requires regular adjustments
- **Maintain dialogue with the employer** whenever possible, to identify parenting realities and limits

! THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCUSSING... AND ADJUSTING

Though neither perfect nor problematic in itself, telework does require regular adjustments. In a telework context, the key is ongoing discussion between coparents. As soon as a new arrangement is put in place (number of days at home, schedules, use of space), it's useful to discuss it openly and review the agreement as needed.

Telework changes proximity, routines and expectations: it therefore calls for continuous improvement in coparenting arrangements to preserve everyone's balance.

Sources:

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Participants in the *Coparenting and Conciliation* video (five filmed interviews):

- Tremblay, D.-G. (2025). Ph.D., CHRP, Professor, Université TÉLUQ, specialist in work organization, human resources management and labour economics/sociology.
- Vachon Croteau, C. (2025). CHRP, M.Sc., Executive Director, Réseau pour un Québec Famille / Concilivi
- The parents: Erika and Charles, Marianne and Faty, Karine and James.



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