



RESEARCH2REALITY

Shining a light on research & innovation.

Everything Changed Overnight for Him, and All of Us

An interview with **Scott Schieman**, Professor and Canada Research Chair,
Sociology
University of Toronto

For a sociologist, the pandemic has brought to life once-in-a-generation shifts in the way we live. We were in the field in September of 2019 with a large national survey before the pandemic hit, had no idea any of that was coming. Our plan was to do repeated surveys every year for the next decade to track long-term trends. When the pandemic hit, we immediately pivoted to follow the same Canadians over time to understand their experiences throughout the pandemic.

So we have about 12 waves of survey points throughout the pandemic where we're following individuals and asking them about their economic hardship, their job loss, work-life experiences, all of that. And the pandemic, how it ultimately has shaped their well-being and their concerns about the future.

Everything really changed for a lot of people. So in our data we saw vast numbers, almost overnight — about 35 to 40 percent of Canadian workers — shift to working at home. Unprecedented shift, like at an office one day, Monday you're staying at home. So all of the different transformations that occurred with that, including simple things like, "How do I get on Zoom? I've never done this before." And for managers, "How do I manage a team that I can no longer see?"



We also saw roughly in the Canadian population about 1.1 million Canadians became temporarily laid off. April and May of 2020 was this just unexpected dramatic shift in how they were understanding their own experiences with work, what they were going to do in the future, whether a job would still be there. And that really took a toll on their well-being and sense of self.