Report:
2024 OCASI survey results

Ontario immigrant and refugee-serving sector's experiences and feedback on Hybrid Work and 4-Day Week Work models

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)

October 2024

OCASI survey results
HWM & 4DWWM

In 2024, OCASI in partnership with The Public Good Initiative (*University of Toronto*) launched 2 surveys to address the Ontario immigrant and refugee-serving sector's perception of the hybrid work model and the 4-day work week model. Each survey was bilingual: English and French

The hybrid work model (HWM) is characterized by a mixture of remote and in-office work tailored to meet both operational and employee needs.

The four-day work week model (4DWWM), as its name indicates, refers to a working week comprising four days instead of five.

Survey questionnaires:

We conducted two surveys:

- One was for employees (including department managers). Throughout this report, we call it "**Staff**" Survey.
- The other one was for the organization and had to be responded to by a CEO, ED, Vice-President or a high-level Senior Director. Throughout this report, we call it "**EDs**" Survey.

581 employees responded to our Staff survey. It contained 37 questions, 7 of which were open-ended.

93 organizations responded to the EDs survey which contained 36 questions including 9 open-ended questions.

In both surveys (Staff / EDs), one section was dedicated to the HWM and another section to the 4DWWM.
In each section, in addition to multiple-choice and open-ended questions, we asked respondents to choose from five levels for several statements regarding each model: Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree.

At the end of each section, we asked open-ended questions to solicit opinions, feedback, comments, recommendations and suggestions about obstacles and benefits of implementing the model as well as the best practices the agencies should adopt.
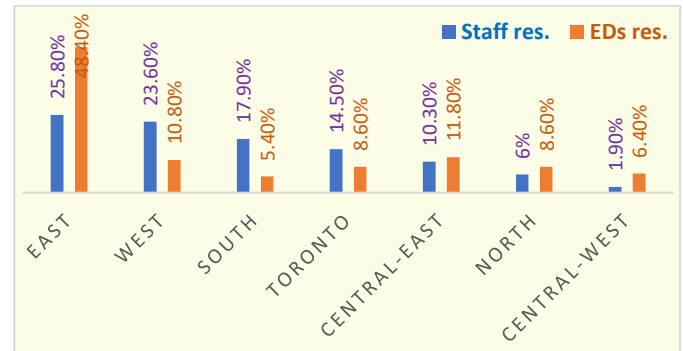
1. Demographics

## Who responded to OCASI surveys?

We received responses from all 7 OCASI regions in Ontario: North, South, East, West, Central-East, Central-West, and Toronto. ([OCASI regions](#)) Most respondents to the EDs survey are from the Toronto, East and Central West regions. Most respondents to the Staff survey are from Toronto, Central-West and South regions.


All agency sizes are represented. The vast majority of respondents (**85.20**% *of Staff and* **90.10**% *of EDs*) represent agencies with fewer than **200** employees.
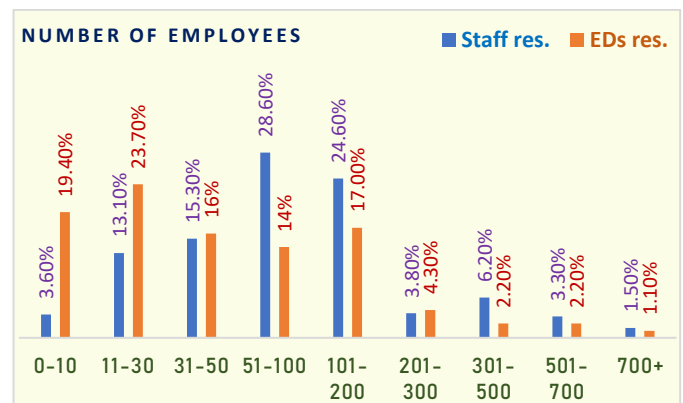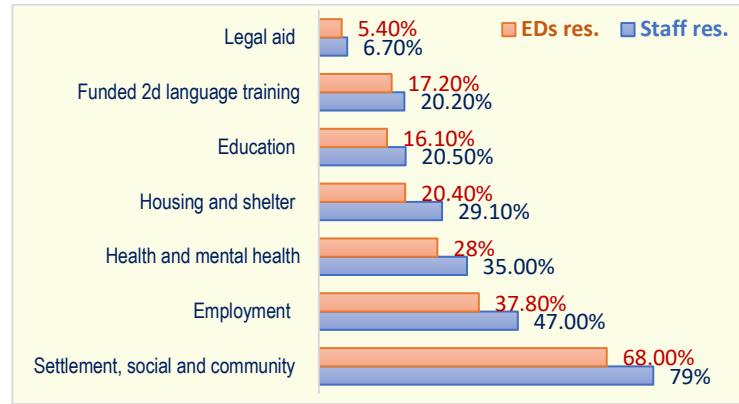

The majority of respondents are from agencies providing direct services to clients (92.40% of Staff and 84.90% of EDs). Organizations offering indirect services also responded to the surveys.
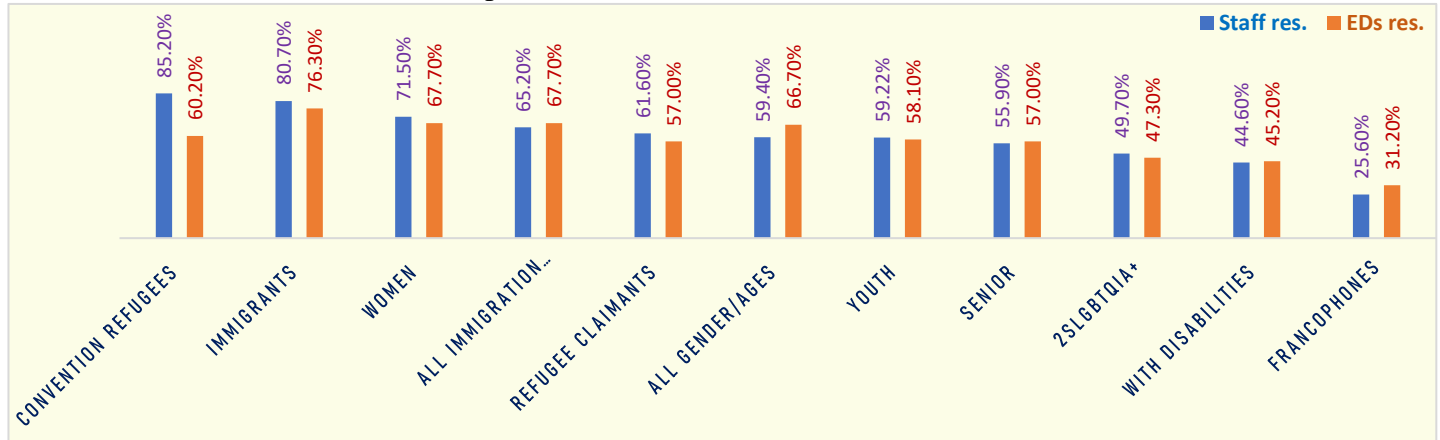
The majority of respondents (66% of Staff and 78.50% of EDs) work in non-unionized organizations.
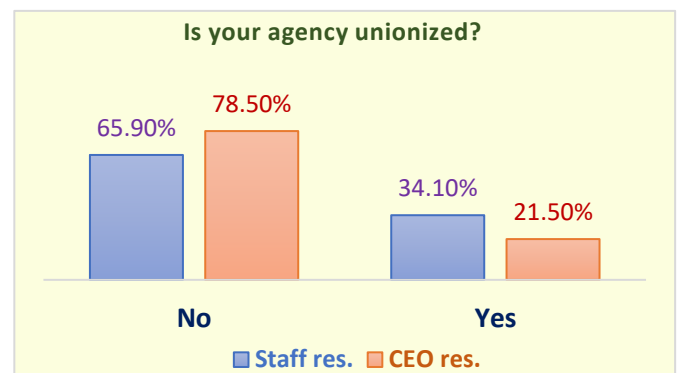
Agencies responding to both surveys provide a variety of direct services to clients. The difference in percentage of responses between the two groups (Staff / EDs) is not significant.
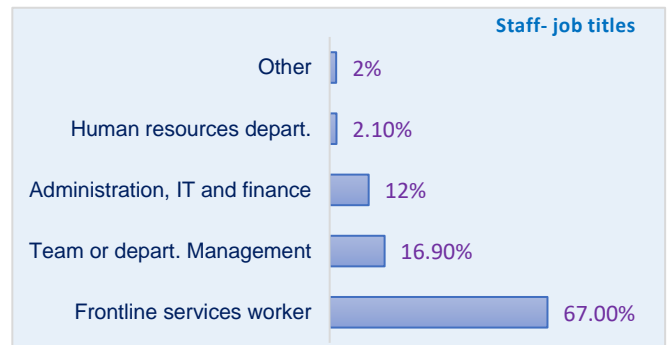

	EDs res.	Staff res.
Legal aid	5.40%	6.70%
Funded 2d language training	17.20%	20.20%
Education	16.10%	20.50%
Housing and shelter	20.40%	29.10%
Health and mental health	28%	35.00%
Employment	37.80%	47.00%
Settlement, social and community	68.00%	79%

The main clientele served by the agencies is diverse. In many of the categories there is no significant difference between EDs and Staff responses.

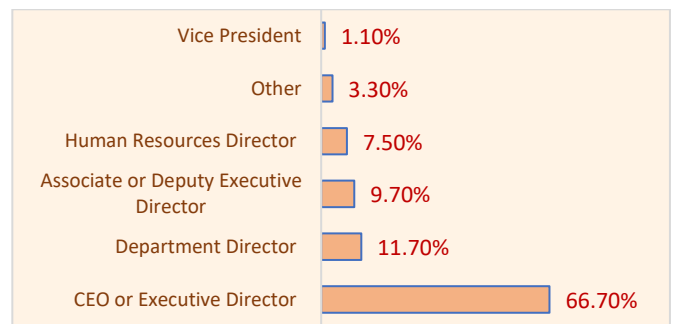|	Staff res.	EDs res.
CONVENTION REFUGEES	85.20%	60.20%
IMMIGRANTS	80.70%	76.30%
WOMEN	71.50%	67.70%
ALL IMMIGRATION…	65.20%	67.70%
REFUGEE CLAIMANTS	61.60%	57.00%
ALL GENDER/AGES	59.40%	66.70%
YOUTH	59.22%	58.10%
SENIOR	55.90%	57.00%
2SLGBTQIA+	49.70%	47.30%
WITH DISABILITIES	44.60%	45.20%
FRANCOPHONES	25.60%	31.20%

67% of respondents to the Staff Survey are frontline workers and 33% work in other departments.
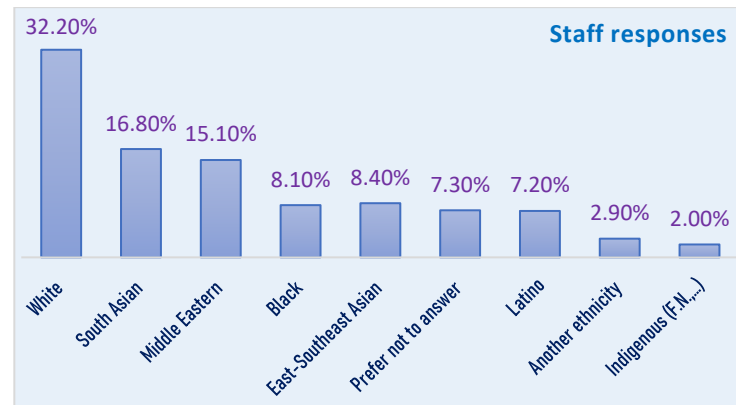92% of Staff work full-time and 18% are part-time employees.
Staff gender: 81.80% are women, 12% are men, 3.30% preferred not to say, and 2.90% are fluid.

Staff- job titles

Other	2%
Human resources depart.	2.10%
Administration, IT and finance	12%
Team or depart. Management	16.90%
Frontline services worker	67.00%

67% of respondents to the ED Survey work as CEO or ED and 33% are senior directors.

Vice President	1.10%
Other	3.30%
Human Resources Director	7.50%
Associate or Deputy Executive Director	9.70%
Department Director	11.70%
CEO or Executive Director	66.70%

A variety of ethnicities are represented by Staff respondents.

Staff responses

White	32.20%
South Asian	16.80%
Middle Eastern	15.10%
Black	8.10%
East-Southeast Asian	8.40%
Prefer not to answer	7.30%
Latino	7.20%
Another ethnicity	2.90%
Indigenous (F.N.,...)	2.00%

# 2. Hybrid Work Model

Key findings:

- ❖ Most of respondent agencies have already implemented a Hybrid Work Model.
- ❖ Staff are more in favor of HWM than EDs.
- ❖ The majority in both groups (Staff & EDs) support many aspects of the HWM.
- ❖ They confirm the positive effect of HWM on their agency efficiency and productivity, mental health, retention of employees and volunteers, and work/life balance.
- ❖ Front-line workers have an overwhelmingly positive view of the Hybrid Work Model.
- ❖ Women associated work life balance with the HWM in higher proportions than men.

HWM's implemented structure:

81.10% of Staff and 77.40% of EDs confirmed that their agencies have already implemented an HWM.

Nearly half of agencies have implemented a HWM for more than 24 months. About a quarter of them have installed a HWM for 12 to 24 months.

The weekly structure of the HWM is diversified. The proportion between remote (R) and in-person (P) varies by agency. Around 35% of respondents do more than 50% of their weekly work in-person (P). Almost 30% of respondents do more than 50% of their weekly work remotely (R).
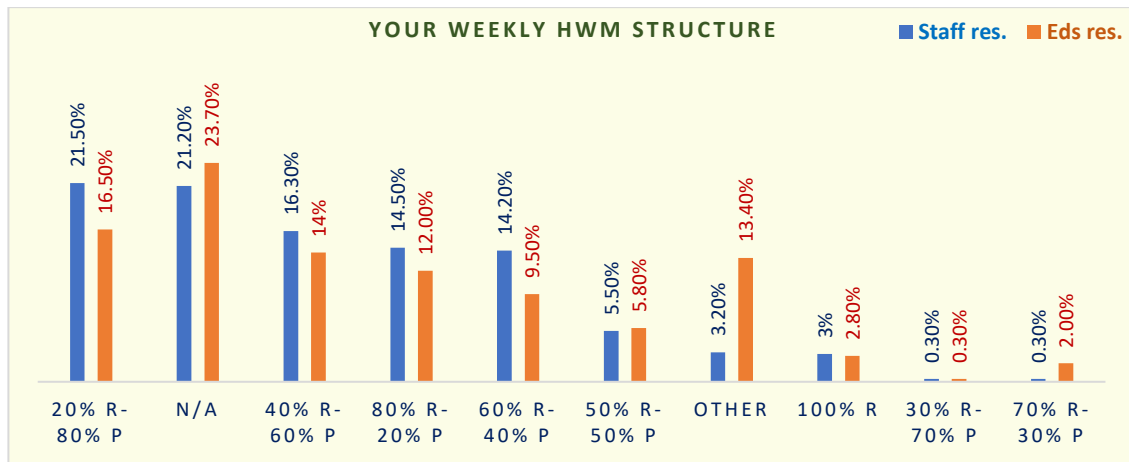
We asked both groups (Staff & EDs) if their respective organization consulted the staff on the HWM development. Their responses show a remarkable disagreement between the 2 groups:

Staff responses: 63.50% NO / 36.50% YES

EDs responses: 28% NO / 72% YES

We also asked Staff if they were given the opportunity to opt in or opt out of the deployment of an HWM in their organization. Responses: 66.10% of staff said NO (They didn't have this opportunity) while 33.90% said YES.

Respondents' statements:

89.5% of Staff and 62.36% of EDs believe that the HWM improves their overall work experience.

The majority in both groups confirm the positive effect of HWM on their agency efficiency and productivity. However, the approval rate is much higher among Staff (88.29%) than EDs (61.29%).

A large majority in both groups declare that the HWM improves their work/life balance: 91% Staff, 83% EDs

About 70% of Staff and 42% of EDs claim that HWM improves the ability to collaborate with others, while 58% of Eds disagree or are uncertain.

The majority in both groups believe that the HWM positively impacts their mental health: 86% of Staff, 70% of EDs.

77% of Staff and 42% of EDs mention that the HWM positively impacts the service they provide to their clients. But 58% of EDs are uncertain or disagree.

Most representatives of both groups think that the HWM results in better retention and attraction of employees: 86% Staff, 62% EDs. While 38% of EDs are unsure or disagree.

Most respondents from both groups believe that the HWM has a positive impact on the recruitment and retention of their volunteers: 71% Staff, 52% EDs. However, 48% of EDs are uncertain or disagree.

Impact of various factors on the perception of HWM:

Over 90% of female staff, 88% of male staff and 100% of non-binary employees support the HWM and believe it has a positive impact on their work/life balance.

89% of Staff in agencies that have already adopted the HWM and 95% of Staff in agencies without HWM are in favor of this work model. While 69% of EDs in agencies that already have a HWM agree with this model, the majority of Eds in agencies without HWM disagree or are uncertain: 74%

Non-unionized agencies' Staff and EDs support the HWM slightly more than those in unionized agencies.

In Unionized agencies, Staff (80%) support the HWM much more than EDs (50%).

In Non-Unionized agencies, the majority of Staff (85%) and the majority of EDs (64%) are in favor of the HWM.

Staff and EDs in agencies providing indirect services are slightly more in favor of HWM than those in agencies providing combined services or direct services.

EDs of agencies providing indirect services (71%) support the HWM more than those in agencies providing combined services (66%) or direct services only (57%).

Staff in agencies providing indirect services (88%) are slightly more in favor of the HWM than those in agencies providing combined services (83%) or direct services only (80%).

The majority of staff in all organization sizes find the HWM efficient (71% to 90%).

The majority of senior directors in agencies having less than 300 employees think that HWM increases the productivity and efficiency of their organization (54% to 75%). In the agencies with 301-700 employees, the EDs' agreement rate is 50%.

What do staff describe as an ideal job structure (model)?

72% of staff are in favor of hybrid work, 18% prefer remote work, 6% have no preference, and 4% like to work in-person.

3. Four-Day Week Work Model

Key findings:

- ❖ The 4DWWM is not widely adopted within Ontario's immigrant and refugee-serving sector.
- ❖ Staff and EDs have conflicting opinions about many aspects of the 4DWWM.
- ❖ Responses from both surveys show that less than 9% of organizations have implemented the 4DWWM.
- ❖ The implementation of a 4DWWM faces more challenges than that of a HWM.
- ❖ Among Staff respondents, the vast majority of workers viewed the 4DWWM favorably. They consistently highlighted the benefits of the 4DWWM, echoing improvements to mental health, work-life balance, staff retention, and client service delivery.

4DWWM's implemented structure:

Only 8.60% of EDs and 7.10% of Staff mentioned that their agencies have already implemented the 4DWWM.

Most organizations operating under 4DWWM have adopted this model for 12-24 months. A few have implemented this model for less than 12 months or more than 2 years.

The agencies that have adopted 4DWWM operate mostly on 35 hours/week on rotating days. Other formats are: 35h on the same days (no rotation); 37.5h, 28h and 32h per week.
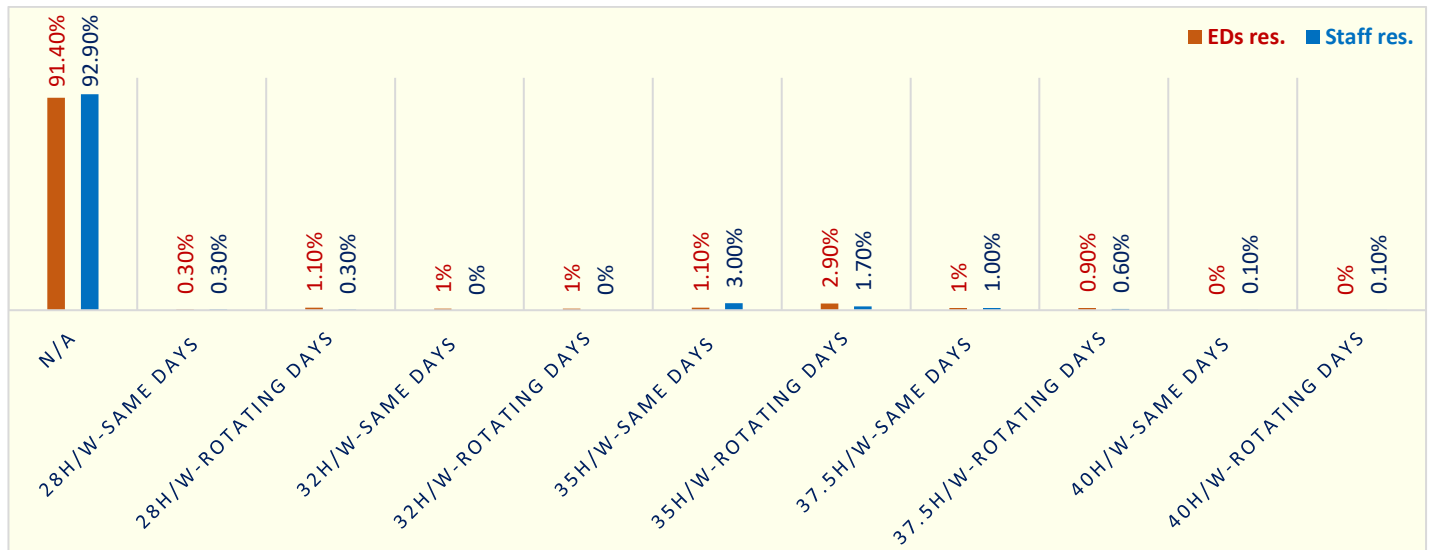
In both surveys, we asked respondents who already switched to a 4DWWM model if their organization conducted an evaluation or review of the model. 80% of EDs and 64% of Staff said YES while 20% of EDs and 36% of Staff said NO.

Respondents' statements:

A) Aspects on which both groups are almost in agreement

The majority of Staff (92%) and EDs (78%) believe that the 4DWWM can result in a better work-life balance.

The majority of Staff (84%) and EDs (78%) felt that the 4DWWM can positively impact their mental health.

82% of Staff and 77% of EDs mention that 4DWWM may result in better retention and attraction of employees.

B) Difference of opinion/contrary opinions

While 59% of Staff think that the 4DWWM may have a positive impact on the recruitment of their volunteers, 57% of EDs are uncertain or disagree.

67% of Staff and 53% of EDs mention that the 4DWWM positively impacts their services provided to clients and the organization's culture. However, 47% of EDs are uncertain or disagree.

29% of EDs say that the 4DWWM improves their ability to efficiently manage their staff and supervise the progress of their team. Meanwhile, 71% are unsure or disagree.

58% of EDs think that the 4DWWM will result in scheduling issues. 30% are uncertain and 12% think that 4DWWM will not result in scheduling issues.

81% of Staff claim that 4DWWM can increase the quality of the work while 61% of EDs are uncertain or disagree.
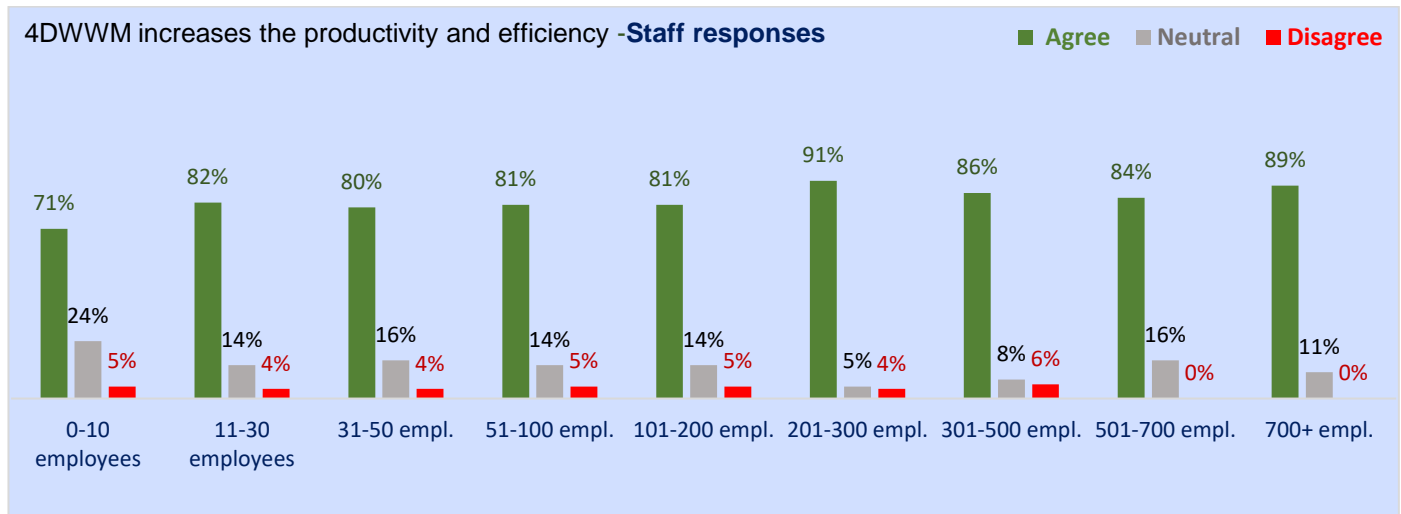
Impact of various factors on the perception of 4DWWM:

87.37% of female Staff, 82.85% of male Staff and 100% of non-binary employees are in favor of the positive effects of the 4DWWm on work-life balance.
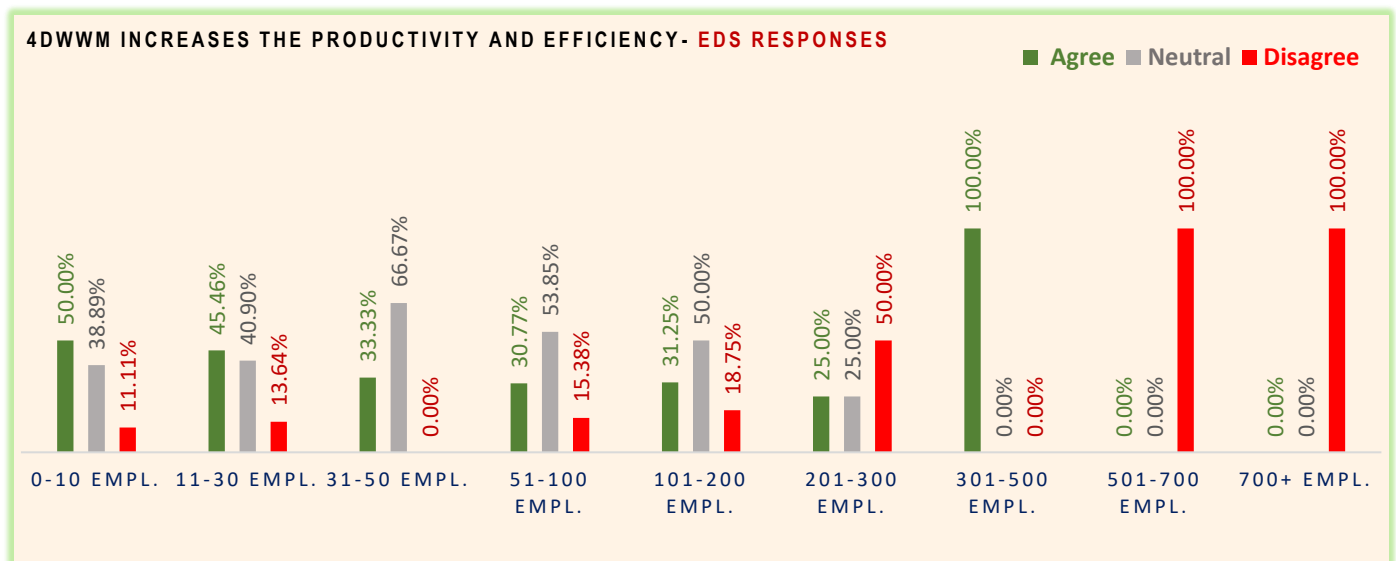
Less than half of EDs of agencies providing combined services (43%), direct services (41%) and indirect services (21%) support the 4DWWM. More than half are uncertain or disagree regarding adopting the 4DWWM.

Staff in agencies providing indirect services (86%) are slightly more in favor of 4DWWM than those in agencies providing combined services (83%) or direct services (80%).

The majority of Staff in all organization sizes find the 4DWWM to be efficient. (71% to 91%)

4DWWM increases the productivity and efficiency -Staff responses

Legend: ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree

Organization size	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
0-10 employees	71%	24%	5%
11-30 employees	82%	14%	4%
31-50 empl.	80%	16%	4%
51-100 empl.	81%	14%	5%
101-200 empl.	81%	14%	5%
201-300 empl.	91%	5%	4%
301-500 empl.	86%	8%	6%
501-700 empl.	84%	16%	0%
700+ empl.	89%	11%	0%

EDs responded differently. In agencies with less than 300 employees, 25% to 50% of EDs believe in the efficiency of the 4DWWM. In agencies with employees between 501 to 700, all EDs disagree with the 4DWWM. In agencies with employees between 301 to 500, all EDs support the 4DWWM.

4DWWM INCREASES THE PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY- EDS RESPONSES

Legend: ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree

Organization size	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
0-10 EMPL.	50.00%	38.89%	11.11%
11-30 EMPL.	45.46%	40.90%	13.64%
31-50 EMPL.	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%
51-100 EMPL.	30.77%	53.85%	15.38%
101-200 EMPL.	31.25%	50.00%	18.75%
201-300 EMPL.	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%
301-500 EMPL.	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
501-700 EMPL.	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
700+ EMPL.	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%

4. Obstacles and challenges

Hybrid Work Model:

The HWM is found to have a positive impact on mental health, attributed to improved work-life balance, reduced commuting times, and increased scheduling flexibility. However, concerns were raised about reduced face-to-face interaction and increased monitoring, which some respondents (Staff & EDs) found to detract from the benefits of teamwork and personal autonomy.

In response to challenges in digital accessibility among clients, organizations have successfully and confidently implemented various training initiatives, including online tutorials and laptop loan programs, to ensure inclusive access to digital services. These measures have proven highly effective in bridging the digital divide and facilitating remote service delivery, particularly to clients in remote locations or with restrictive personal circumstances.

Despite these positive outcomes, the transition to HWM has introduced specific challenges, notably the lack of adequate resources for remote work setups and the necessity for some in-person services. The feedback underscores the need for organizations to provide essential equipment and maintain flexibility in service delivery to meet diverse client needs.

Based on insights from Staff, optimizing the HWM requires fostering robust internal communication and coordination, maintaining flexibility in work arrangements, and ensuring comprehensive training in technology use for both staff and clients. Learning from other organizations and conducting pilot tests are also advised to refine the HWM strategies. By addressing these points, organizations can better tailor their hybrid work policies to enhance both employee satisfaction and operational efficiency.

The analysis of EDs responses to the Hybrid Work Model (HWM) reveals their engagement with the complexities and potential of this modern work arrangement. Most senior managers highlighted the positive impact of HWM on mental health, with a majority noting improvements in work-life balance and flexibility. However, a minority reported adverse effects due to reduced in-person interactions, leading to increased feelings of isolation. This underscores the need to carefully consider the psychological impacts of HWM on staff.

Challenges in hiring and retention were also prominently discussed, with managers pointing to difficulties in maintaining organization personnel and ensuring effective communication/collaboration across dispersed teams. These insights suggest the necessity for innovative recruitment and retention strategies tailored to the dynamics of hybrid working. This emphasis on innovation is one of the senior managers' concerns.

Specific challenges related to communication gaps, technology disparities, and the potential dilution of company culture in remote settings were identified. These challenges call for tailored management strategies that support effective operation across remote and on-site environments.

Despite these challenges, managers recognized significant benefits of HWM, including improved employee satisfaction and operational efficiency, attributed to enhanced flexibility and access to a broader talent pool. These positive outcomes of HWM can inspire optimism in senior managers about the future of this model. Strategies recommended for optimizing HWM involve clear communication policies, flexible scheduling, robust support for digital literacy, and regular team-building activities to maintain cohesion and a positive organizational culture. These recommendations provide a roadmap for senior managers to navigate the complexities of hybrid work arrangements effectively.

Four-Day Week Work Model:

225 Staff respondents (out of 581) responded to the open-ended question on the challenges associated with 4DWWM.

The survey brought to light some challenges, particularly concerning the availability of direct services. Staff rotation schedules could exacerbate this issue, potentially overburdening existing employees and affecting service delivery and employee welfare, especially in smaller organizations or specific departments.

Some respondents expressed concerns about potential pay reductions which aim to reduce hours without cutting pay. They reveal different understandings and interpretations of what a 4DWWM might mean. This underscores the need for more discussion about the model.

Efficient scheduling, maintaining adequate staff levels, and clear communication were identified as crucial factors for the successful implementation of the 4DWWM. By emphasizing these points, the agencies can instill confidence in the audience about the model's potential to improve their work environment.

71 EDs (out of 93) responded to question which focused on the challenges associated with the 4DWWM. Key challenges highlighted by directors include logistical difficulties such as scheduling conflicts, reduced service hours, and increased workload on the remaining days, particularly in smaller offices where five-day service is crucial. Some EDs also noted that the nature of their organization's activities does not align seamlessly with the 4DWWM, suggesting its varying applicability across different non-profit agencies.

In contrast to the Staff, the EDs responded significantly differently to the survey on specific aspects. Notably, as opposed to Staff, they did not link the 4DWWM to increases in productivity. EDs were more likely to view scheduling issues and inadequate time to complete tasks as problematic.

EDs mentioned the need for further exploration and adaptation, emphasizing the crucial role that senior management plays in fully harnessing the potential of the 4DWWM in the immigrant and refugee-serving sector.

5. Recommendations and suggestions from respondents

What did respondents recommend?

Alternative work models such as Hybrid Work Model and the 4 Day Work Week (4DWWM) have the potential to advance Decent Work by improving a better work-life balance, positive impact on mental health, improving employee satisfaction, and while reducing the carbon footprint.

As non-profit organizations in Ontario explore and consider adopting alternative work models, it is useful to develop strategies that maximize potential benefits and mitigate challenges for clients, employees and agencies while delivering value for investment. This section elaborates policy recommendations provided by survey respondents.

Pilot Programs: Testing and Adaptation

- Implementation Strategy: Start with pilot programs in selected departments to test the viability of HWM and 4DWWM. This step-wise approach allows for controlled observation and fine-tuning based on real-time feedback and performance metrics.
- Feedback Mechanism: Establish robust mechanisms to collect participant feedback throughout the pilot phase. Use structured surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews to gather comprehensive insights into the program's effectiveness and areas for improvement.
- Adjustment and Optimization: Based on the pilot outcomes, adjust work model parameters to better align with organizational goals and employee needs. This may involve tweaking work hours, communication protocols, or support services to enhance efficiency and satisfaction.

Structured Flexibility in Work Arrangements

- Flexible Scheduling Options: Develop a framework that offers flexibility while maintaining an element of predictability and structure. This could include fixed "core hours" where all employees are expected to be available, paired with flexible "bandwidth" hours that employees can adjust to suit their personal and professional commitments.
- Team Coordination: Encourage teams to coordinate their schedules to maximize overlapping hours for collaboration. Tools like shared calendars and scheduling apps can facilitate this coordination, ensuring that all team members know each others' availability.

Enhanced Communication and Support Systems

- Investment in Technology: Allocate resources to upgrade existing communication tools or introduce new technologies that enhance connectivity and collaboration among remote and in-office teams. This includes secure instant messaging platforms, video conferencing tools, and collaborative project management software.

- Mental Health Resources: Implement support systems that address the mental health challenges associated with remote and hybrid work. This could involve partnerships with mental health professionals, access to therapy and counselling services, and regular wellness seminars.
- Regular Check-Ins: Schedule regular check-ins between managers and their teams to ensure open lines of communication. These check-ins can help address any issues promptly and maintain a strong rapport among team members.

Training and Development for Digital and Management Skills

- Management Training: Offer specialized training for managers on leading hybrid teams effectively. This includes mastering remote team dynamics, performance assessment in a hybrid setup, and fostering a culture of trust and accountability without micromanagement.
- Digital Literacy: Organize training sessions to boost digital literacy among all employees. Focus on making employees proficient in using digital tools critical for remote work, which will help reduce any friction in day-to-day operations.
- Career Development Opportunities: Ensure that remote and hybrid work arrangements do not impede employee career progression opportunities. Develop clear pathways for advancement that are accessible to all, regardless of their chosen work model.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

- Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Define clear KPIs to measure the success of the implemented work models in terms of productivity, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. These indicators help objectively assess the impact of the work models on organizational performance.
- Ongoing Evaluation: Conduct ongoing evaluations to monitor the effectiveness of the work models. Utilize qualitative and quantitative data gathered through employee feedback, performance metrics, and other relevant indicators.
- Iterative Process: Embrace an iterative process for continuous improvement. Based on evaluation outcomes, refine and adjust the work models better to meet the needs of the organization and its employees.

Inclusive and Diverse Policy Design

- Accessibility and Inclusivity: Design work model policies that consider the diverse needs of the workforce, including different age groups, parental responsibilities, and physical abilities. Ensure that policies are flexible enough to accommodate various life circumstances.
- Equity in Implementation: Strive for equity in implementing these models to prevent any group of employees from feeling disadvantaged. This includes ensuring that part-time and full-time employees have equal access to the benefits of flexible work arrangements.

Effective Change Management

- Stakeholder Engagement: Involve all stakeholders in the planning and implementation phases to garner support and address any concerns proactively. This includes engaging with employees, management, and board members.

- Transparent Communication: Maintain transparency throughout the process. Regularly communicate any changes, their rationale, and expected outcomes to all employees. This transparency will help manage expectations and reduce resistance.

Community and Employee Engagement Initiatives

- Building Community: Foster a sense of community among remote and office-based employees through regular virtual meet-ups, team-building exercises, and social events. These activities can help in mitigating feelings of isolation among remote workers.
- Recognition Programs: Implement recognition programs that highlight and reward the achievements of employees working in both traditional and alternative work models. This helps maintain motivation and promotes a culture of appreciation across the organization.

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