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Women seek more from the modern workplace

Expectations vary by gender, University of Alberta survey finds

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The workplace gender gap may be closing, but women and men with university degrees have very different expectations of their jobs.

Employers who don't meet those expectations risk low morale and high turnover among their highly skilled, technology-savvy workers, says a study to be released today by the Canadian Policy Research Networks.

The study, based on a telephone survey of 2,500 Canadians conducted in 2000 by polling firm EKOS Research Associates, found female university graduates are much more likely than their male peers to value respect, commitment, communications and relations at work.

But many women said they're not finding those qualities in their jobs.

"Men's and women's experi-

ences of the new economy are quite different," said Graham Lowe, a professor of sociology at the University of Alberta and a co-author of the study.

"There are major gender dif-

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ferences . . . in the expectations that people bring into the workplace.

Beyond that, the gaps that men and women experience in what they want and what they have is also quite substantial."

One-third of female university graduates reported a gap between their desire for work-family balance and flexibility and what their jobs allowed. One-quarter were dissatisfied

with on-the-job commitment and respect, while one in seven said communication fell below expectations.

University-educated men, however, placed far less value on those aspects of job quality and reported less dissonance between their expectations and experience in those areas.

Women, the study says, "are more likely to experience frustration in finding employment that meets their expectations."

"The image of the free-agent knowledge

worker who puts himself first and really isn't looking for the commitment to the employer (and) is willing to jump to another job if the economics are right — that basically is a male scenario," Lowe said.

"The female knowledge worker is looking for . . . a two-way commitment to an employer, and is far less likely to be foot-loose and willing to . . . move from employer to employer."