

Working From Home: Findings Summary

Context

Who

- Full-time office workers: 35+ hours/week
 - Before: Work in office (WIO) 4+ days/week
 - After: Work from home (WFH) 4+ days/week at home

How

- Survey & interviews
 - Survey (27 items): 40 respondents
 - Interview (45 mins): 10 interviewees
- When: Nov - Dec 2020

Why

- Outline pain-points & advise workers/employers

Research Goals

1. Describe workers' *perceived* changes from WIO to WFH in three areas
 1. Productivity
 2. Work environments (physical, work-life)
 3. Employer operations (expectations, support)

Research Questions

Productivity

1. *Perceptions of productivity*: How productive do office workers feel when working from home relative to the office?
2. *Factors impacting productivity*: What factors have affected their productivity from home, if any?

Working environments

3. *Physical environment*: How have office workers modified their physical space at home to accommodate remote working, if at all?
4. *Work-life balance*: How has bringing the office into the home affected workers' work-life balance and daily routines, if at all?

Employer support

5. *Support received*: In what ways have employers supported office workers in their new working environments?
6. *Employer expectations*: How have employers changed work expectations to match the added difficulties faced by workers during the pandemic?
7. *Employee expectations*: How do workers feel about the support that employers are providing during the pandemic to support remote working?

Notable Findings

Productivity

1. How productive do office workers feel when working from home relative to the office?
 - Many feel as productive or more productive working from home
 - 75% of respondents, 70% of interviewees
 - Majority feel they spend more hours to achieve same productivity (output) level
 - 58% of respondents
 - Many feel (perceptions of) productivity is important to them and their employers
 - 73% of respondents
2. What factors have affected their productivity from home, if any?
 - Majority cite work-related communication as a factor
 - 55% of respondents, 100% of interviewees
 - Schedule conflicts, reduced frequency, delayed responses
 - Majority also cite mental health as a factor
 - 55% of respondents, 40% of interviewees
 - Non-trivial factors include environment distractions, tech barriers, personal obligations
 - Various mentions of positive effects as well as negative ones

Work Environments

3. How have office workers modified their physical space at home to accommodate remote working, if at all?
 - Most common change is modifying existing space dedicated to work
 - 40% of respondents
 - Other changes are acquiring new hardware (monitors) and/or furniture (desk, chair)
4. How has bringing the office into the home affected workers' work-life balance and daily routines, if at all?
 - Majority report *minimal* change to overall work-like balance
 - 51-58% of respondents

- Sizeable minority report negative (disruptive) change to work-life balance
 - 38% of respondents
- Most mention or describe some changes (positive or negative) to daily routines
 - Sleep, exercise, diet, commute
- Changes result from various combinations of choice and necessity

Employer Support

5. In what ways have employers supported office workers in their new working environments?
 - Most common types are technical and directional
 - Technical (60% of respondents): Access, knowledge of hardware/software
 - Directional (48% of respondents): Communication of expectations, updates
 - Non-trivial minority (23-40% of respondents) mention personalized/private support
 - Wellness, finances, careers
 - Small minority (~10% of respondents) describe receiving no support
 - WFH is more challenging for some, *not* more challenging for others
 - 45% of respondents vs 40% respondents, respectively

6. How have employers changed work expectations to match the added difficulties faced by workers during the pandemic?
 - Employers have not changed (lowered) expectations
 - Majority (80% of respondents) report working overtime at least once per month
 - Most overtime work is not compensated despite employers' awareness
 - Small minority report employers having unreasonable expectations
 - 10% respondents, 10% of interviewees

7. How do workers feel about the support that employers are providing during the pandemic to support remote working?
 - Majority (80% of respondents) are at least neutral or satisfied
 - Majority (84% of respondents) report employers meeting or exceeding expectations
 - Met expectations does not equate satisfaction
 - More satisfied with mental-health support compared to physical-health support
 - 53% of respondents vs 28% of respondents

Conclusions & Considerations

Productivity

- Participants feel as productive with WFH, yet they work harder/more
 - Factors: Work communication, mental health, technology, personal obligations
 - Identify, communicate specific practices (and periods) to address said factors

Work Environments

- Participants have modified their spaces/houses to work from home
 - Budget/reimburse for meaningful, useful additions to home workspaces
- Some participants report disruptions to work-life balance
 - Identify and communicate healthy practices for living

Employer Support

- Participants are almost evenly divided whether WFH is less or more difficult
 - Have extensive yet modular support to fit different levels and types of need
- Participants working (unpaid) extra hours is tacit norm
 - Employers: Compensate or reward workers for accumulated overtime
- Participants' expectations are best viewed as predictions, not preferences
 - Employers: Note how meeting predicted support doesn't necessarily satisfy workers
 - Also note predicted quality (levels, type) correlates with workers' satisfaction

Bonus

- Almost all interviewees prefer hybrid WIO-WFH setup, with more days for latter