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Research Report

Working from home around the globe: 2023 Report

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Working from Home Around the Globe: 2023 Report

*Cevat Giray Aksoy, Jose Maria Barrero, Nicholas Bloom, Steven J. Davis,
Mathias Dolls and Pablo Zarate*

Key Messages

- English-speaking countries exhibit the highest working from home (WFH) levels around the globe (on average 1.4 days per week). WFH levels average 0.9 days per week in Latin American countries and South Africa, 0.8 days per week in European countries, and 0.7 days per week in Asian countries.
- A third of full-time workers in the G-SWA have a hybrid or fully remote working arrangement.
- Employees want to WFH about 1 day a week more than their employers plan for them.
- Regulations that raise WFH costs, or restrict the set of WFH options, limit the capacity of markets to satisfy these preferences.



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Working from Home Around the Globe: 2023 Report¹

*Cevat Giray Aksoy, Jose Maria Barrero, Nicholas Bloom, Steven J. Davis, Mathias Dolls and Pablo Zarate**

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant and rapid increase in the adoption of remote work, as individuals and organizations responded to concerns about contagion and government-imposed restrictions on commercial and social activities. Recent evidence suggests that remote work arrangements are highly valued by employees (Barrero et al. 2021; Aksoy et al. 2023b). Nevertheless, some business executives have started to reduce remote work options, aiming to bring their employees back to the traditional office environment.

In light of these conditions, several questions arise: How prevalent is remote work on a global scale? What are the prevailing modes of working arrangements at present? What are the foremost advantages of working from home and on employer's business premises? Is there a need for policy intervention? Our new Global Survey of Working Arrangements (G-SWA) provides new insights to answer these questions.

¹ For the financial assistance that made it possible to conduct our Global Survey of Working Arrangements (G-SWA), we gratefully acknowledge the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Asociación Mexicana de Cultura A.C., the Becker Friedman Institute at the University of Chicago, the ifo Institute, King's College London, the Smith Richardson Foundation, and the Templeton Foundation. Views presented are those of the authors and not necessarily of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) or any other organization.

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The Global Survey of Working Arrangements

The Global Survey of Working Arrangements (G-SWA) is an online survey of full-time employees aged 20-64 who have completed secondary or tertiary education. The third wave of the G-SWA² has been fielded in 34 countries in April-May 2023. Sample sizes range from slightly more than 700 respondents in New Zealand to more than 2,500 respondents in France, Germany, Italy, the UK and the US. Our analysis sample contains 42,426 observations across the 34 countries in Wave 3. Conditional on the exclusion of persons who did not complete secondary school, our samples are broadly representative of full-time employees in each country with respect to age, gender and education. More information on the G-SWA including some summary statistics can be found in the Appendix.

WFH Levels Around the World

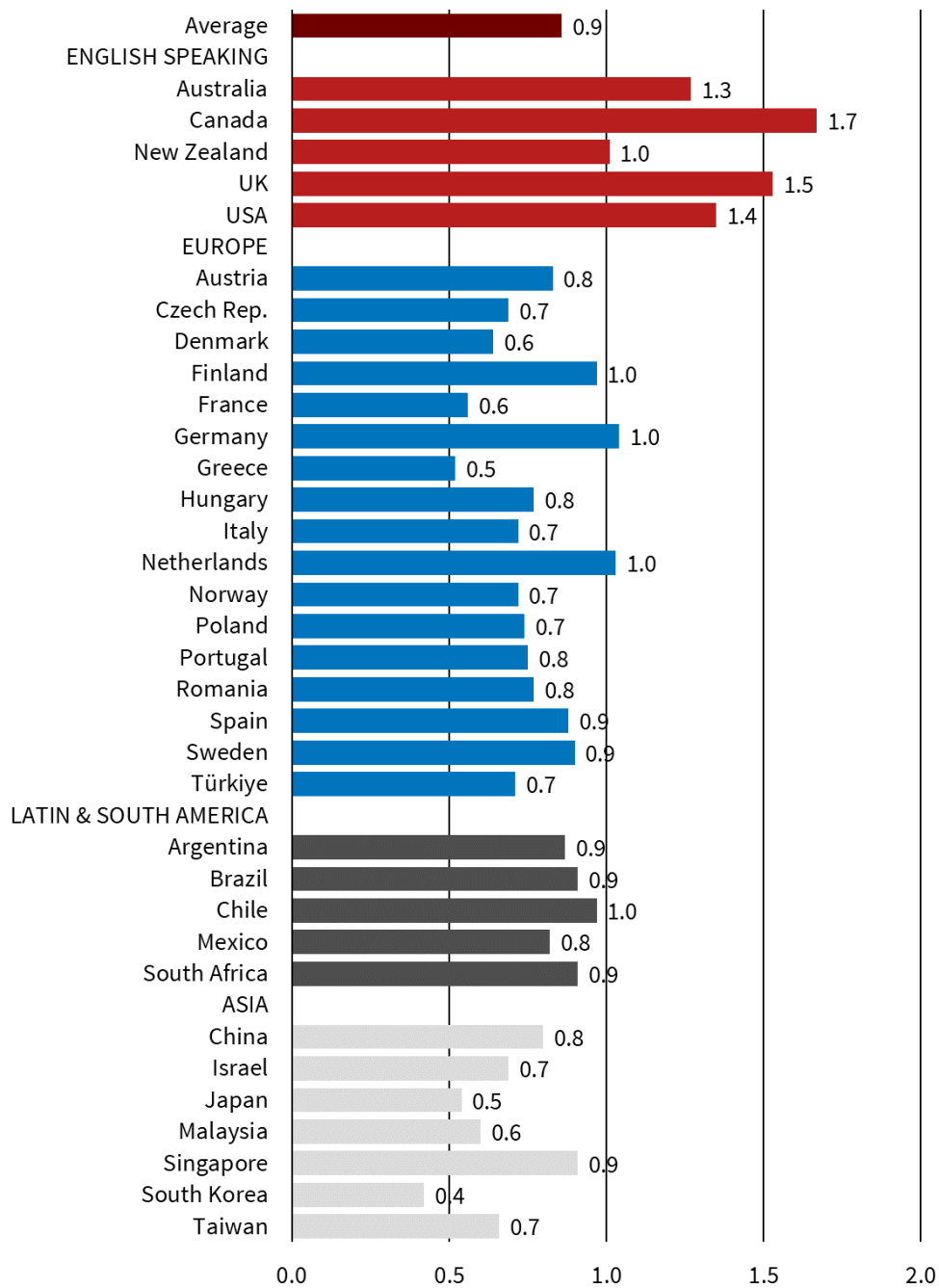
As shown in Figure 1, work from home (WFH) levels are higher in English-speaking countries. Full-time employees worked an average of 1.4 full paid days per week from home across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US. By way of comparison, WFH levels average only 0.7 days per week in the seven Asian countries covered by the G-SWA, 0.8 in the European countries, and 0.9 for four Latin American countries and South Africa.

These averages hide some notable variation in WFH levels within the four country groups. Among the English-speaking countries, average WFH days per week range from 1.0 in New Zealand to 1.7 in Canada. In Europe, we find the lowest WFH incidence for Greece (0.5 WFH days per week) and the highest values for Finland, Germany and the Netherlands (1.0 WFH days per week). In Asia, WFH days range from 0.4 in South Korea to 0.9 in Singapore. In Latin America, WFH days per week range from 0.8 in Mexico to 1.0 in Chile.

² Aksoy et al. (2023a,b) report results for Waves 1 and 2.

Figure 1

Paid Full Days Worked from Home per Week (April - May 2023)



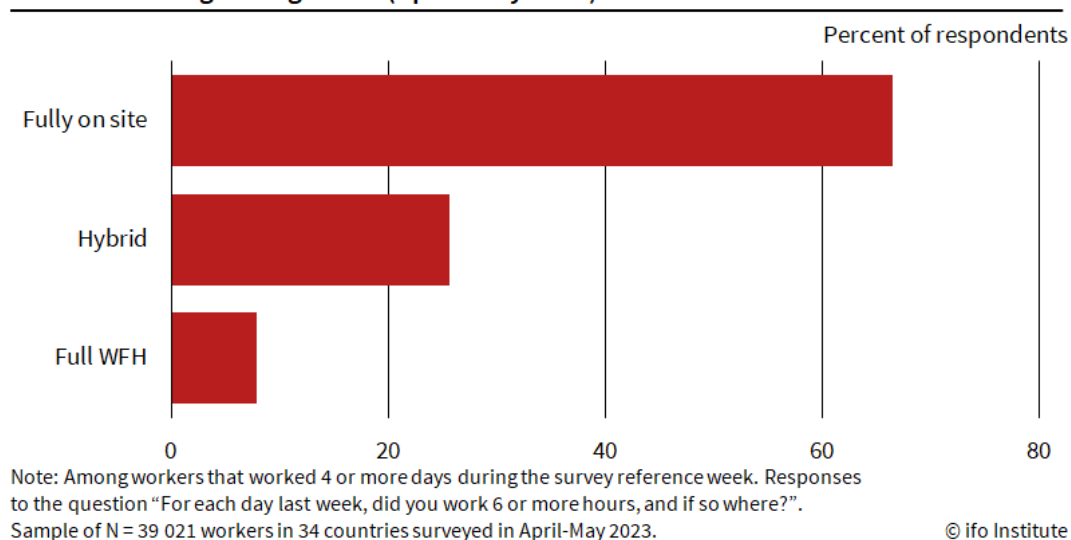
Note: Note: Responses to the question "For each day last week, did you work 6 or more hours, and if so where?". Sample of N = 42 426 workers in 34 countries surveyed in April-May 2023. © ifo Institute

Current Working Arrangements

Figure 2 shows that 67 percent of full-time employees work five days per week on business premises. 26 percent have hybrid arrangements, in which they split the workweek between home and the employer's premises. 8 percent of full-time employees work entirely from home.

Figure 2

Current Working Arrangement (April - May 2023)



Employees Want More WFH Days per Week than Employers Plan in Every Country

We also asked our G-SWA respondents how often they would like to have paid workdays at home (Figure 3a), and how often their employer is planning for them to work full days at home (Figure 3b). There is a gap between the number of WFH days per week desired by employees and planned by employers. While employees would like to work from on average 2.0 days per week around the globe, employers only plan 1.1 WFH days per week. This gap is present in all 34 countries. It is largest in Latin America and South Africa, where employees would like to work on average 1.3 days more from home than their employers plan for them. The gap is smallest in the English-speaking countries, where it amounts to 0.7 days on average. The largest gaps are in Argentina (1.6 days), Brazil (1.2) and Mexico (1.2), while the smallest ones are in Japan (0.2), the Netherlands (0.3), and Denmark (0.4).

Figure 3a

Average Number of WFH Days per Week That Employees Desire

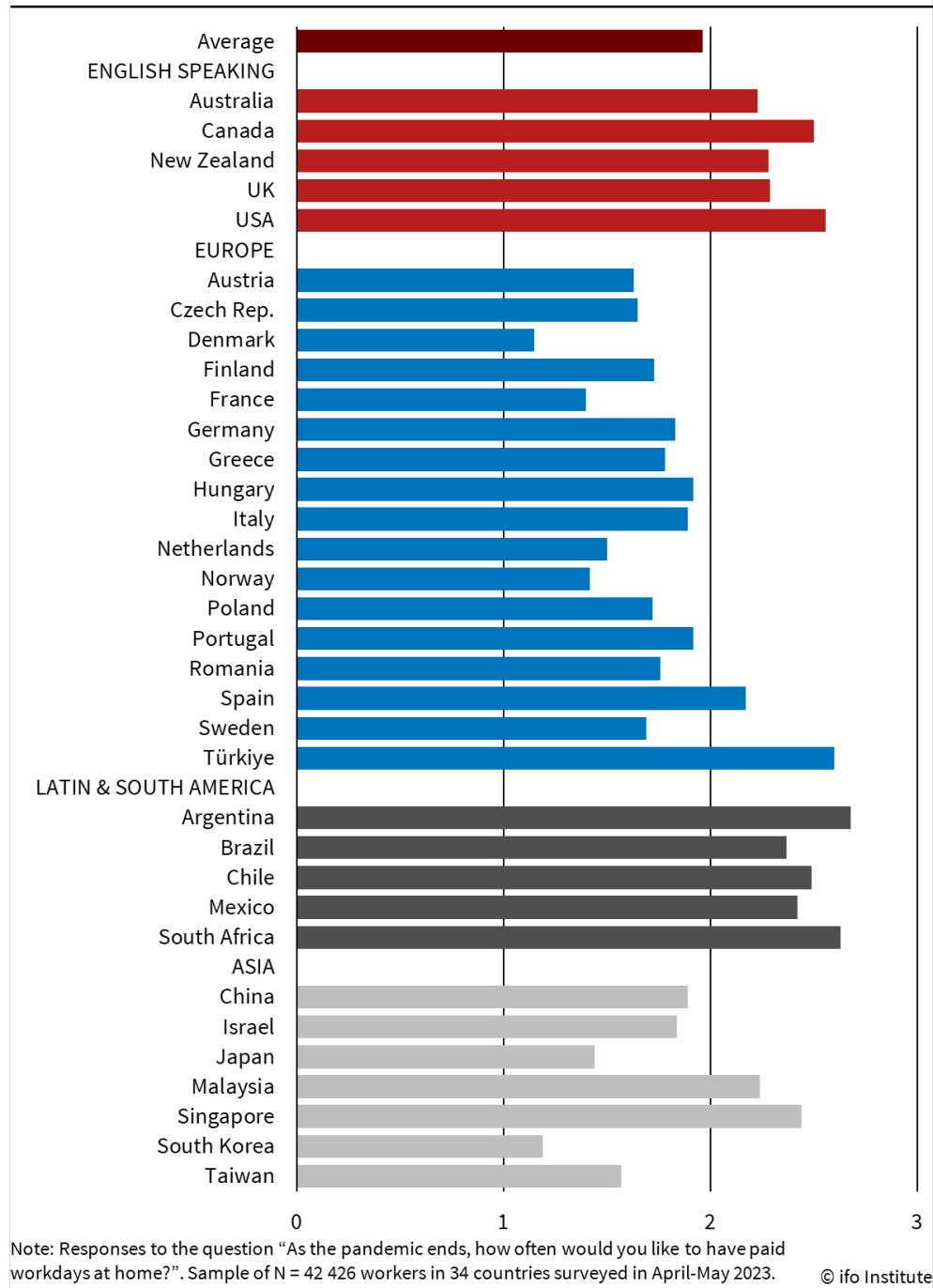
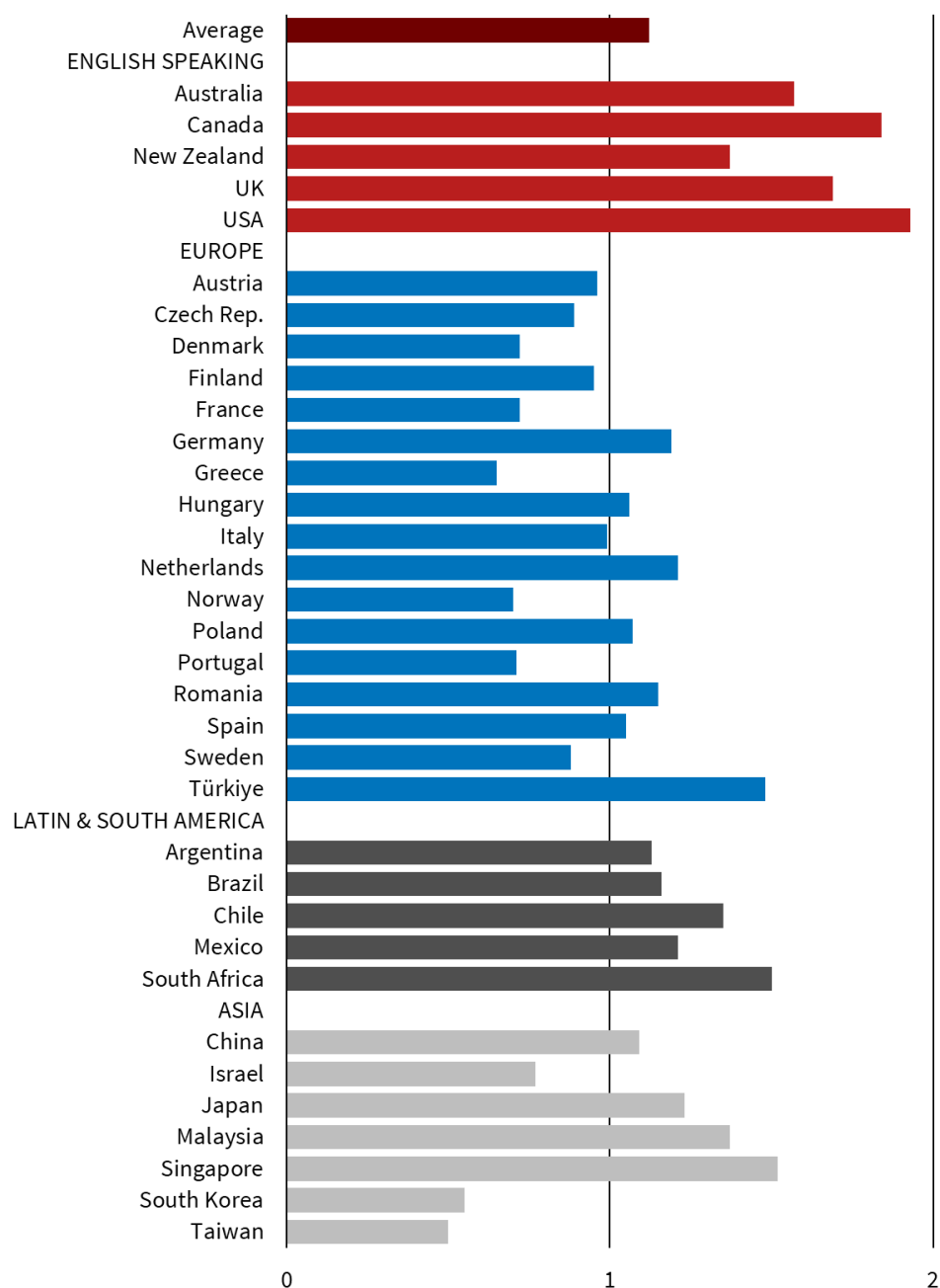


Figure 3b

Average Number of WFH Days per Week That Employers Plan



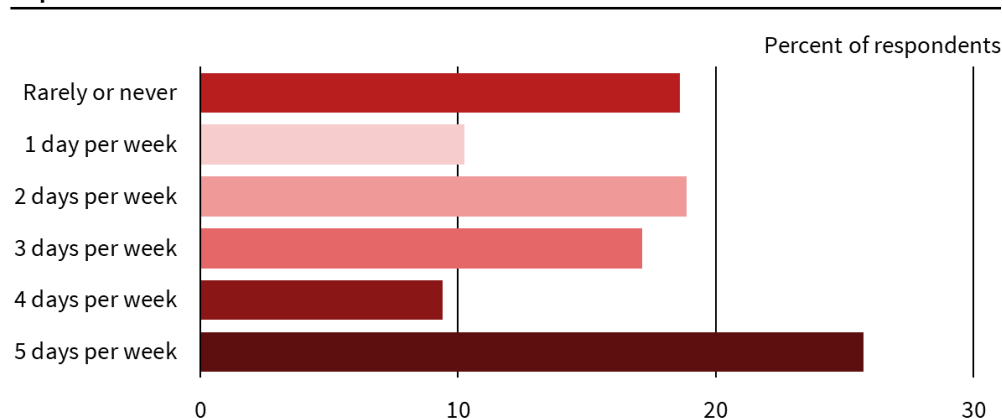
Note: Responses to the question “As the pandemic ends, how often is your employer planning for you to work full days at home?”. Sample of N = 34 657 workers in 34 countries surveyed in April-May 2023 .

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There is also a gap between the desired and the actual number of WFH days among employees with WFH experience (Figures 4a and 4b). Figure 4a shows that 26 percent of respondents with WFH experience during the COVID-19 pandemic would like to work from home 5 days per week. 56 percent would like to work in hybrid mode, that is, either 1 day per week from home (10 percent), 2 days (19 percent), 3 days (17 percent), or 4 days (9 percent). 19 percent prefer to work fully on site. These numbers differ strongly from the actual number of WFH days among employees with WFH experience. 46 percent currently work fully on site, 41 percent in hybrid mode, and 13 percent fully WFH.

Figure 4a

Workers Desired Number of Post-Covid WFH Days among Workers with Wfh Experience

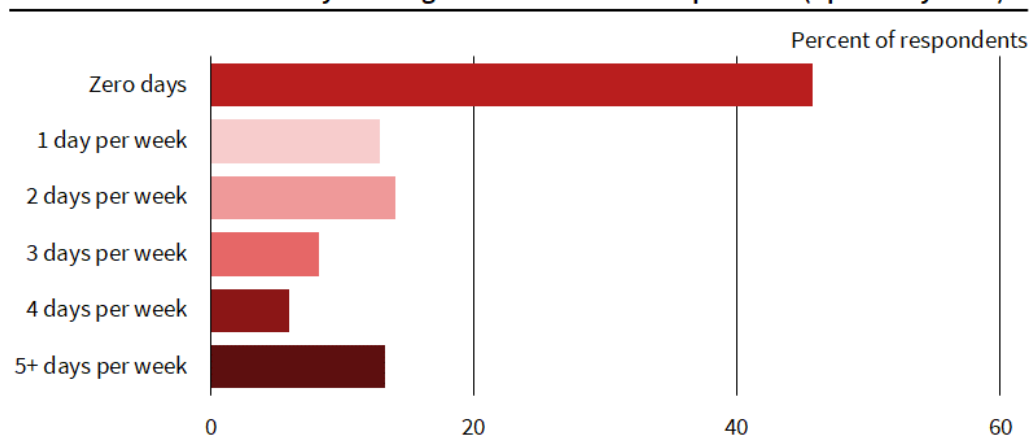


Note: Among workers that have work-from-home experience during the pandemic and worked 4 or more days during the survey reference week. Responses to the question “As the pandemic ends, how often would you like to have paid workdays at home?”. Sample of N = 19 248 workers in 34 countries surveyed in April-May 2023.

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Figure 4b

Current Number of Wfh Days among Workers with WFH Experience (April – May 2023)



Note: Among workers that have work-from-home experience during the COVID-19 pandemic and worked 4 or more days during the survey reference week. Responses to the question “For each day last week, did you work 6 or more hours, and if so where?”. Sample of N = 19 248 workers in 34 countries surveyed in April-May 2023.

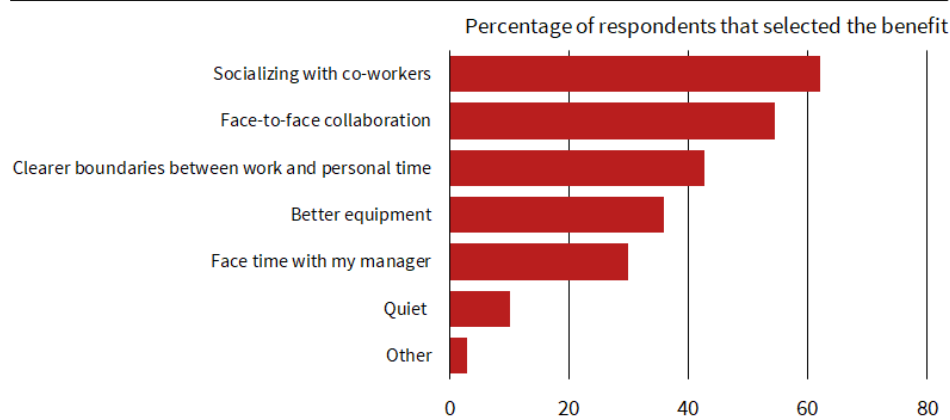
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Top Benefits of Working Onsite vs. from Home

Finally, we asked our G-SWA respondents about the top benefits of working on their employer's business premises and of working from home, respectively (Figure 5a and 5b). Socializing with co-workers (named by 62 percent of respondents), face-to-face collaboration (54 percent) and clearer boundaries between work and personal time (43 percent) are perceived as the top three benefits of working on the employer's business premises. 60 percent of our G-SWA respondents say that no commute is the top benefit of working from home. 44 percent of the respondents view their savings on gas and lunch costs and 42 percent the flexibility over when they work as top benefits of WFH.

Figure 5a

Top Benefits of Working on Employer's Business Premises

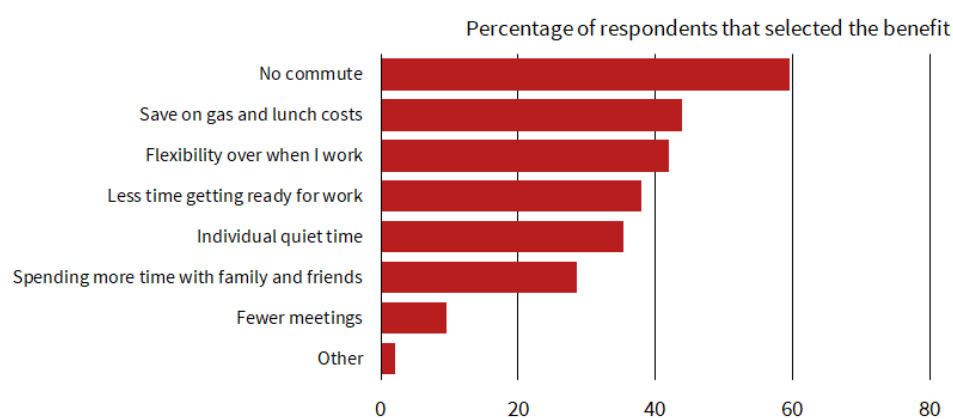


Note: Among workers that have work-from-home experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses to the question "What are the top benefits of working on your employer's business premises? Please choose up to three". Sample of N = 20 732 workers in 34 countries surveyed in April-May 2023.

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Figure 5b

Top Benefits of Working From Home



Note: Among workers that have work-from-home experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses to the question "What are the top benefits of working from home? Please choose up to three". Sample of N = 20 732 workers in 34 countries surveyed in April-May 2023.

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Policy Conclusion

Our findings demonstrate that even in the aftermath of the pandemic, the majority of workers highly value the opportunity to work from home for a portion of their work-week, with some placing significant importance on it. Notably, employees still desire more remote workdays per week than what employers currently plan to offer across all countries.

Preferences around WFH vary greatly across individuals and demographic groups though. Regulations that raise WFH costs, or restrict the set of WFH options, limit the capacity of markets to satisfy these preferences. Especially in economies with fluid labor markets, it is more efficient to accommodate WFH preference heterogeneity via the sorting of workers to employers.

Appendix: The Global Survey of Working Arrangements (G-SWA)

The third wave of the G-SWA has been fielded in 34 countries in April-May 2023 (see Appendix Table A.1).³ It covers full-time workers, aged 20-64, with completed secondary or tertiary education. Our samples are broadly representative with respect to age, gender and education (see Appendix Table A.2). In France, Germany, Italy, the UK and the US, sample sizes amount to more than 2,500 respondents, respectively. In all other countries, samples consist of roughly 1,000 full-time workers.⁴

In addition to basic questions on demographics, employment status, earnings, industry, occupation, marital status and living arrangements, the survey asks about current, planned and desired WFH levels, and more. We screen out respondents who fail to answer an attention check at the beginning of the survey.⁵ We design the G-SWA instrument, adapting questions from the U.S. SWAA developed by Barrero et al. (2021). We enlist professionals to translate our original English-language questionnaire into the major languages of each country. To ensure high-quality translations, we also enlist an independent third party with knowledge of the survey to review the translations and revise as needed.

To field the G-SWA, we contract with [Bilendi](#) (a professional survey firm), which implements the survey directly and in cooperation with its external partners. The survey effort taps pre-recruited panels of people who previously expressed a willingness to take part in research.⁶ Recruitment into these panels happens via partner affiliate networks, multiple advertising channels (including Facebook, Google Adwords, and other websites), address databases, and referrals. New recruits are added to the panel on a regular basis. When it is time to field a survey, Bilendi or its partner issues email messages that invite panel members to participate. The message contains information about compensation and estimated completion time but not about the survey topic. Clicking on the link in the invitation message takes the recipient to the online questionnaire.

³ Aksoy et al. (2023a, b) report results from the previous two waves that were conducted in July-August 2021 (1st wave) and January-February 2022 (2nd wave).

⁴ The sample size in New Zealand is somewhat smaller and amounts to 733 respondents.

⁵ The attention check reads: “What is 3+4?”

⁶ Bilendi and its external partners do not engage in “river sampling,” whereby people are invited to take a survey while engaging in another online activity. Relative to river sampling, the use of pre-recruited panels affords greater control over sample composition and selection.

Respondents who complete the survey receive cash, vouchers or award points, which they can also donate.⁷

Before proceeding to our analysis of the G-SWA data, we drop “speeders,” defined as respondents in the bottom 5% of the completion-time distribution for each country. After these drops, our analysis sample contains 42,426 observations across the 34 countries in Wave 3. Appendix Table A.1 reports statistics on response time, observation counts and dates in the field for each country. Our samples are broadly representative by age, gender, and education for the group of full-time workers in each country.⁸ This is shown in Appendix Table A.2 which compares our country-level G-SWA samples to summary statistics retrieved from Gallup data for 2020-22 and OECD statistics (OECD 2022).

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OECD (2022), *Education at a Glance: Educational Attainment and Labour Force Status*.

⁷ We do not contact respondents ourselves, do not collect personally identifiable information, and have no way to recontact them.

⁸ Respondents take the survey on a computer, smart-phone, iPad or like device, so we miss persons who don’t use such devices.

Table A.1: Statistics on Response Time (in minutes), Sample Size, and Dates in the Field

Country	Mean	5%	Median	95%	N	Start date	End date
Argentina	17.76	7.71	13.98	42.17	1,033	April 24	May 23
Australia	12.59	4.77	9.51	29.94	970	April 24	May 22
Austria	14.75	5.81	10.55	32.97	1,039	April 24	May 10
Brazil	18.52	7.12	14.52	42.89	1,030	April 24	May 4
Canada	13.19	4.56	9.8	34.52	1,030	April 24	May 20
Chile	19.53	7.82	14.88	48.05	1,035	April 24	May 4
China	12.66	4.75	10.2	26.53	1,039	April 24	May 10
Czech Rep.	12.65	5.65	10.43	24.24	1,047	April 24	May 12
Denmark	12.44	5.45	9.96	24.3	1,043	April 24	May 23
Finland	11.93	5.53	9.52	24.46	1,040	April 24	May 7
France	13.67	5.22	10.16	31.69	2,588	April 24	May 10
Germany	12.78	4.8	9.5	30.31	2,594	April 24	May 10
Greece	11.79	5.49	10.01	21.17	1,044	April 24	May 12
Hungary	13.81	5.31	10.19	31.57	1,043	April 24	May 13
Israel	14.02	6.06	11.25	27.98	1,044	April 24	May 15
Italy	12.96	4.65	9.57	30.07	2,589	April 24	May 10
Japan	11.41	4.72	9.01	22.81	1,037	April 24	May 8
Malaysia	15.99	5.86	12.3	35.8	1,039	April 24	May 31
Mexico	20.08	8.05	14.75	49.76	1,028	April 24	May 5
Netherlands	12.02	4.35	8.95	25.95	1,039	April 24	May 11
New Zealand	13.56	5.81	10.56	28.56	733	April 24	May 22
Norway	12.79	5.32	10.04	27.24	982	April 24	May 23
Poland	13.13	5.33	9.96	31.56	1,042	April 24	May 10
Portugal	15.6	6.56	11.91	37.22	1,040	April 24	May 4
Romania	13.56	5.94	11.14	28.39	1,044	April 24	May 11
Singapore	14.27	4.84	10.53	37.13	943	April 24	June 2
South Africa	18.75	8.41	15.58	37.79	1,065	April 24	May 8
South Korea	12.61	4.25	8.59	34.82	934	April 24	June 2
Spain	12.61	4.98	9.63	26.74	1,040	April 24	May 16
Sweden	12.7	5	9.55	27.7	1,032	April 24	May 10
Taiwan	10.82	4.74	8.72	20.32	1,037	April 24	May 23
Turkey	11.82	4.6	9.65	25.31	1,045	April 24	May 11
UK	12.77	4.41	9.1	35.31	2,587	April 24	May 16
USA	12.56	4.59	9.43	28.78	2,551	April 24	May 23
Full sample	13.86	5.01	10.44	32	42,426		

Table A.2: Comparisons of G-SWA Data with Gallup World Poll Data and OECD data for Full-Time Workers

	Share of women		Aged 20 to 33		Aged 34 to 46		Aged 47 to 64		Secondary education (%)		Tertiary or more (%)	
	Gallup	G-SWA	Gallup	G-SWA	Gallup	G-SWA	Gallup	G-SWA	OECD	G-SWA	OECD	G-SWA
Argentina	35.08	35.14	44.42	44.43	33.3	33.21	22.27	22.36	69.9	69.92	30.1	30.08
Australia	42.88	45.63	30.52	32.58	33.25	35.53	36.23	31.89	48.22	51.32	51.82	48.68
Austria	43.51	43.18	26.46	26.35	37.88	38.06	35.67	35.59	65	65.32	35	34.68
Brazil	33.91	34.13	45.03	44.93	34.92	35.24	20.05	19.83	71.33	71.4	28.69	28.6
Canada	45.29	45.3	29.63	29.7	33.25	33.03	37.12	37.27	36.92	36.9	63.08	63.1
Chile	39.08	39.03	35.72	35.72	33.48	33.52	30.8	30.76	65.3	65.56	34.7	34.44
China	42.1	41.9	44.3	44.19	32	31.93	23.7	23.88	77.15	77.22	22.82	22.78
Czech Rep.	42.34	42.4	21.49	21.38	39.54	39.58	38.97	39.04	73.45	73.52	26.55	26.48
Denmark	42.42	42.75	27.11	26.71	29.04	28.81	43.85	44.48	57.33	57.06	42.67	42.94
Finland	48.22	47.99	25.11	24.86	36.74	36.84	38.15	38.3	57.01	57.31	42.99	42.69
France	47.3	47.69	30.43	29.96	32.82	32.93	36.75	37.11	57.21	57.27	42.79	42.73
Germany	48.1	47.95	25.6	25.42	33.13	33.04	41.27	41.54	67.42	67.51	32.58	32.49
Greece	38.3	38.25	27.22	27.14	38.37	38.52	34.42	34.34	61.15	61.2	38.85	38.8
Hungary	39.83	40.02	26.77	26.8	41.02	40.93	32.21	32.27	70.42	70.65	29.58	29.35
Israel	47.65	47.18	35.67	35.79	31.72	31.6	32.61	32.6	47.16	47.36	52.84	52.64
Italy	37.69	37.69	21.77	21.47	45.79	45.76	32.44	32.77	78.91	79.52	21.09	20.48
Japan	36.72	37.4	26.75	25.66	33.11	33.46	40.14	40.88	44.44	44.73	55.56	55.27
Korea	37.72	36.52	23.26	17.29	36.62	41	40.12	41.71	46.58	39.47	53.42	60.53
Malaysia	38.38	38.7	51	50.78	30.33	31.02	18.66	18.21	73.6	73.38	26.4	26.62
Mexico	36.11	36.41	45.53	45.75	30.57	30.31	23.9	23.94	72.83	72.92	27.17	27.08
Netherlands	31.57	31.93	30.02	30.01	29.67	29.46	40.31	40.53	54.17	54.44	45.83	45.56
New Zealand	42.57	60.31	34.54	49.03	28.8	34.63	36.66	16.34	59.5	42.41	40.5	57.59
Norway	43.36	45.69	28.25	27.01	32.98	34.75	38.77	38.24	52.37	49.47	47.63	50.53

Table A.2 (Continued): Comparisons of G-SWA Data with Gallup World Poll Data and OECD data for Full-Time Workers

	Share of women		Aged 20 to 33		Aged 34 to 46		Aged 47 to 64		Secondary education (%)		Tertiary or more (%)	
	Gallup	G-SWA	Gallup	G-SWA	Gallup	G-SWA	Gallup	G-SWA	OECD	G-SWA	OECD	G-SWA
Poland	42.8	43.07	30.65	30.66	37.84	38.05	31.51	31.3	66.44	66.61	33.56	33.39
Portugal	47.04	46.71	34.07	34.28	35.54	35.56	30.38	30.16	60.23	60.33	39.77	39.67
Romania	40.06	40.07	28.33	28.32	36.18	36.25	35.49	35.43	75.7	75.68	24.3	24.32
Singapore	41.79	45.36	34.29	29.23	37.34	40.73	28.38	30.04	52	46.67	48	53.33
South Africa	40.95	43.53	42.6	42.28	40.24	43.26	17.16	14.45	81.62	81.18	18.38	18.82
Spain	44.77	45.06	28.38	27.79	41.96	42.32	29.66	29.89	56.09	55.39	43.91	44.61
Sweden	45.38	45.07	25.42	24.98	32.3	32.63	42.27	42.4	52.14	52.9	47.86	47.1
Taiwan	42.4	42.9	31.71	31.16	38.85	39.41	29.44	29.42	48.6	47.75	51.4	52.25
Turkey	27	27.05	57.27	57.19	29.97	30.05	12.77	12.75	59.82	59.74	40.18	40.26
UK	46.75	47.02	26.77	25.86	36.99	37.25	36.24	36.88	49.77	49.12	50.23	50.88
USA	43.65	44.58	34.61	35.27	28.7	29.42	36.69	35.31	48.07	44.1	51.93	55.9