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**New Working Practices:
Examining the future of remote working**

By Conor Tomkins-20145721

A dissertation submitted to the School of Business
National College of Ireland
As part of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Science in Management (MSCMGMT)
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Supervised by Ciara Deane

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The last year has presented many challenges for everyone, returning to study at the National College of Ireland not only allowed me to further develop my professional skills but also to have something to focus on and to develop personal skills. Writing a dissertation has been a tough but enjoyable experience. Choosing the topic of remote working has allowed me the chance to learn a lot about method of working that the vast majority of people have experienced in the last year and hopefully this dissertation can enlighten others as the research enlightened me.

Writing this dissertation would not have been possible without the support from my family, who have always been there to provide me with the advice and guidance that I needed not only in writing this dissertation but also the completion of the master's degree as a whole. It is important for every student thinking of doing a master's degree to have a strong support network around them. My family showed an interest in what I was writing about which allowed me to discuss my research topic and organise it in my head. Without their support I would not have completed my dissertation as successfully as I have.

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the current state of remote working practices and determine what needs to be done to make remote working a success in the future. This dissertation will involve research to find out what makes remote working successful, what risks does it pose and provide understanding as to how a successful remote working strategy might be implemented. Remote working may play a big role in the future work context as during the past year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic many workplaces were forced to implement remote working strategies and they may be here to stay.

The literature review provided a strong overview of how remote working is viewed by the workforce and has highlighted gaps in the existing research that require answers. The literature review has helped to direct the primary research on to the correct path to ensure that the gaps identified are acknowledged and answers are found. The literature review has helped the researcher to focus the primary research on specific areas of remote working that require further development which will help to indicate what the future of remote working looks like.

The primary research for this project was conducted with the use of two surveys. The results of the surveys indicated that remote working is desired amongst the workforce. Having experienced remote working in the last year many people wish for some form of remote working to remain in the future. Furthermore, it was established that there are some issues that need to be resolved before it can be a viable method of working in the long run. These issues include, how to deal with the loss of socialisation, the importance of disconnecting at the end of the day regardless of where one is working from and how much funding- if any- should the employer provide the employee to help them setting up a home office. The research provided a strong insight into how people feel about remote working, the benefits of remote working and most importantly what needs to be done to ensure that remote working is a success in the future.

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Executive summary

This dissertation aims to discover what the future of remote working in the workplace is. During the last year, the workforce had to engage in remote working due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and for many people, it may have been their first-ever experience with remote working. During this experience, many people will have seen the benefits of remote working while others may have seen drawbacks and issues. The fact is that remote working may become commonplace in the future, even post-pandemic, as many businesses and politicians will have seen the positive impact it has made on productivity, finances, and the environment. However, before remote working can become a regular part of the working procedure, systematic efforts need to be made to establish an efficient system that works for those involved with room for adaptation in different industries.

This research aims to answer the main question is “what is the future of remote working?” Several sub-questions must be asked to answer this question as this research needs to find out if remote working is desirable. If remote working is overwhelmingly undesired, then designing a remote working strategy would be an exercise in futility. Furthermore, it is essential to discover what employees like and dislike about remote working to find what opportunities can be capitalised on and what issues need to be resolved to ensure any remote working strategy designed is successful. It is also essential to establish what role the government will need to play in the future of remote working. Currently, there is a lack of clear legislation governing remote working. It will be important to establish what legislation is needed to help guide employers and employees alike. For remote working to succeed, clear guidance will be required to ensure the successful development of remote working strategies. It will be necessary for the government to set out the rights and responsibilities of the employees and employers. Essentially, the research aims to establish what needs to be done to set up an efficient remote working strategy that works for all those involved.

The research for this dissertation will be carried out using both primary and secondary methods of research. To establish a base of information on the area of remote working, a review of existing literature will be carried out. This will help provide the researcher with a general overview of remote working so that a hypothesis can be developed. The literature review will help establish exactly what remote working is, what the benefits and drawbacks are and what opportunities exist for further research. This will help the researcher focus the

primary research by providing a strong indicator of what the view of remote working is. The literature review will provide the opportunity to focus the research on a more specific area of remote working for the primary research.

The primary research will be carried out with the use of surveys which will examine how people feel about remote working. Initially, a pilot survey will be carried out and will ask a diverse range of questions to obtain a general overview of remote working. This survey will be posted on LinkedIn as it will reach a large network of professionals who are the subject of the research and will remain available for approximately one month. The main aim of the pilot study will be to establish a background of information regarding remote working. The pilot study will also provide the researcher with a strong insight into the opinions of remote workers and allow the research to be further narrowed down for a second survey. The surveys that will be carried out will largely feature yes/no or multiple-choice questions. The analysis of these questions will be straightforward as the questions with the highest answers will indicate how survey respondents feel about that particular question. Further questions will require respondents to input their own answers. To analyse these questions the researcher will use content analysis to analyse these types of questions. Content analysis involves the identification of keywords and themes to identify common assumptions regarding the data.

The literature review has provided the researcher with a lot of information regarding remote working and the role it may play in the future. Remote working practices have existed as far back as the 1970's however have not had a major widespread deployment in business worldwide until the COVID-19 pandemic. Until the pandemic most businesses preferred to use the traditional methods of working which may be because of fears over the effectiveness of remote working or the lack of necessity to implement remote working strategies. There are many benefits to using remote working practices for both the employer and the employee.

- Working remotely will mean less time spent stuck in traffic on long commutes for employees. This time can be better spent preparing for the day ahead and unwinding after a long day. Remote working helps provide employees with a better work life balance.
- An aspect of a better work life balance is that people can spend more time with their families and socialising with their friends which will help them live happier lives.
- The business will benefit from this as with happier staff there will be less turnover and higher levels of productivity which in turn makes the business more efficient.

- As more people are working from businesses would not need as much office space, they could sell their existing office space and move into a smaller office that better fits their needs. This will save them money in rent and other utilities and help maximise the amount of profit that they might make.
- Being trusted to work from home might inspire employees to work harder and in turn they may end up being offered promotions or other career development opportunities.
- Recently the Irish government has proposed tax breaks for both employers and employees who engage in remote working. These tax breaks are designed to both ease the financial burden that employees may face with remote working (being home more means higher electricity bills etc) and incentivise remote working for employers.
- The benefits for the environment must not be forgotten, if less people are commuting then less cars will be on the roads and cars will spend less time in traffic therefore there will be less damage to the environment.

The benefits of remote working are clear and indicate why businesses should consider using remote working in their organisation. However, it is important to remember that there are certain drawbacks to remote working that cause some people to dislike it. There are drawbacks for both employers and employees to using remote working.

- The loss of socialisation presents a big issue for employers and employees alike. The fact that people are spending more time working remotely will mean they may not be able to see their work friends as much as they would like which could lead to a feeling of isolation. This will cause employees to become depressed and less productive. They may then seek to leave the company to work in a traditional office or if not, they may work less hard and cause their productivity to reduce.
- It is important for employers to prioritise their employee's mental wellbeing. The loss of socialisation will not only affect the company's productivity, but increased turnover will affect the company's reputation which could hinder their ability to hire quality staff.
- Remote working could have a negative effect on how well employees work together. If the employees are working from home, it may be difficult to arrange times to meet up and work on a project whilst many people may find it difficult to work with people over video chats because of poor internet connections.

- Many employees find it difficult to switch off at the end of the day. As they are working from home to find it hard to stop at the end of the day and they continue working. They may also continue to check their email after their day has finished. Disconnecting is very important and the failure to do so could lead to workplace fatigue and increased levels of stress.
- Employers may find it difficult to manage employee's performance which could result in employees not being appropriately rewarded. Employees may miss out on career development opportunities and decide to leave the business to find a role where they do get these opportunities. The failure to properly reward and manage staff could result in increased levels of turnover and even before that absenteeism might increase whilst productivity may decrease.

The literature review has provided a key insight into the highs and lows of remote working. It has provided the researcher with a clear indication as to where the primary research needs to be directed to discover what the future of remote working looks like. The literature review has also illustrated that there is a lack of in-depth research into remote working specifically in regard to the ethics of managing remote workers and the effect of remote working on the mental health of the employee. A pilot study will be carried out to gain an understanding of how remote working is viewed by the workforce and improvements that may need to be made.

The pilot study posed sixteen questions that covered a range of areas of remote working with the aim of acquiring a general overview of remote working and how the workforce felt about it. The pilot study provided information regarding the best and worst aspects of remote working, how it can be improved, if the government are doing enough to help remote working and if physical and mental wellbeing was protected during remote working. There were many key takeaways from the pilot study.

- The most important aspect to a person's job is the opportunity for progression with this being mentioned three times- the most any one single aspect was mentioned.
- 60% of people like the idea of working remotely which shows that it is a popular method of working.
- 80% of respondents have worked remotely at some point in their life however 90% of respondents had not worked remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This shows that it has not had major widespread use prior to the pandemic and there is still a long

way to go and a lot of work to be done before it can become a viable method of working.

- The reduction in commuting and improved work life balance were the best things about remote working with each of those receiving 44.4% of the votes. This shows that people desire a more balanced lifestyle and the reduction in commuting will certainly contribute to this.
- The loss of socialisation was the thing people hated the most about remote working with 80% of respondents choosing this option. This indicates that despite the improved work/life balance the loss of socialisation is a negative for employees and something must be figured out to remedy this to prevent social isolation.
- Many people did exercise at least somewhat often during their time in remote working however 80% said that this was not encouraged by their employer. This shows that whilst people will make the effort to exercise, they are not receiving motivation to do so from their employer.
- The employees' finishing time was not always respected with 50% of responses indicating that their finish time was respected. This shows that half of the people surveyed did not feel they could switch off at their finishing time which can become a major problem as the inability to switch off can lead to feelings of stress, fatigue and frustration and reduced productivity for the employer.
- The main suggestions for improvement were for employers to provide funding to help employees set up home offices and to carry out initiative to keep people engaged and connected.
- 80% feel that legislation is needed to protect remote workers.
- 70% of survey respondents stated that they wish to work remotely in the future.

The pilot study has indicated how people feel about remote working. There is a desire for remote working in the future, but legislation will be needed to help govern remote working. The pilot study has also indicated the role that employers must acknowledge regarding remote working which is to not only help develop an employee's career by effectively managing them but also to ensure their physical and mental wellbeing does not suffer as a result of remote working. The pilot study has helped indicate what needs to be done to make remote working a success whilst also highlighting areas that require further research.

The pilot survey allowed the research to be focused more closely on what needs to be done to make remote working successful specifically regarding how to set up an efficient remote working system. The primary study was also carried out in the form of a survey which was posted on LinkedIn to maximise its exposure to working professionals. The primary survey consisted of five questions which were yes or no as it was desired to simply acquire straightforward data. The primary survey provided the researcher with some key information.

- 69.2% of people want to work remotely following the pandemic (see Figure 1). This shows that despite the drawbacks to remote working that may have been experienced during the last year people still want to work remotely. Despite this it is important for the drawbacks to be addressed to ensure remote working has a long-term future.
- 76.9% feel that employers should not be allowed to use AI software to track employees' keystrokes and active hours when they are remote working. This indicates that an alternative method of monitoring employees may be needed or clearer information regarding the use of AI software needs to be provided to staff.
- When asked who should have more control over the number of hours a person works from home, 73.1% of people felt that employees should. This is fair as it will be the employee doing the hours however it is still important that the employer has a say in the matter as it needs to fit their own needs and they will need to prevent employees from working from home too much. The employer may need to set up maximum and minimum remote working hours to govern remote working in their organisation.
- The respondents to the survey felt that employers should be required to provide their employees with a grant to help pay for a home office if they expect them to work from home with 92.3% of respondents voting this way.
- 65.4% of people feel that the government need to do more regarding legislation to govern remote working. It is important for them to establish rules that will guide all parties engaged in remote working to ensure that it is a success in the long-term.

The primary and secondary research has indicated that remote working is something that has its benefits and is desirable from amongst the workforce. However, for it to be successful there is a lot of work needed to eliminate certain issues that exist. There are a lot of benefits to remote working however it is the issues that will require the most attention. The loss of socialisation is one of the biggest drawbacks to remote working and is something that will certainly need to be resolved before remote working can be a success. The lack of socialisation can cause people to become stressed and unhappy in their jobs which ties into

the importance of disconnecting. The research indicated that finishing times where not always respected and the failure to disconnect at the end of one's work day can also contribute to increased levels of stress. It is important for employers to know their role in all this. They have a duty of care for their employees, and they should encourage employees to disconnect at the end of their day, to meet up with their co-workers- run social events to assist with this- and to exercise on a regular basis. This will help their employees physical and mental health remain strong whilst also ensuring that their employees appreciate them and are more productive as a result. A blended approach may be the best approach to remote working, this would allow an employee to come into the office a few days a week and work from home a few days a week. This will help them fulfil their social needs and also allow managers to monitor their employees better which will help them regarding performance management.

To ensure the success of remote working businesses need to support it and not simply view it as a cost cutting measure. They need to fund home offices for their employees and support them regarding their physical and mental wellbeing. To assist with this the government needs to establish legislation to set out the roles that the employer and the employee must play to make remote working a success. The legislation needs to set out the responsibilities of everyone involved in remote working to ensure that everyone plays their part well.

After the pandemic do you want to work remotely?
26 responses

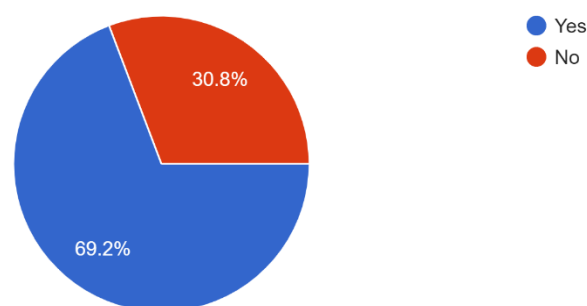


Figure 1

Introduction

Over the course of the last year remote working has become commonplace in the workplace as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many workplaces have been left with no option other than to instruct their employees to work from home. The purpose of this research is to examine remote working not just regarding its use during the pandemic but the benefits of using it, how it originated and if there is a place for it in the future. The research that will be carried out will aim to establish what issues there are with remote working, what benefits exist for remote working and whether or not remote working can become a viable method of working in the future. This research will shed a light on what needs to happen for remote working to be successful, how the government may play an important role in remote working and to discover what types of support employees need to reduce issues and stresses they may encounter.

The aim of this research is to establish what the future of remote working in the workplace looks like. As it has had widespread use because of the COVID-19 pandemic there is a lot of attention on remote working and whether or not it will become a part of the average working week in the future. This research will shed a light on a number of key aspects of remote working and what needs to happen to make it a successful method of working in the future. A key question that requires answering is “Do people want to work remotely?” It is important to establish whether remote working is actually desired by the workforce as otherwise it is pointless to establish remote working practices. Furthermore, this research aims to establish whether there is need for legislation to be introduced to govern remote working and if so what areas of remote working need the most protecting. Essentially, the major aim of the primary research will be to establish how to implement a successful and efficient remote working strategy that works for all those involved.

With the advancement of technology working remotely is easier now than it ever was. With the emergence of video conferencing applications such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams it is very easy to video chat with one’s co-workers whilst the improvements of cloud sharing applications such as OneDrive means that co-workers can quickly share files and work collaboratively as if they are in the office together. It may be that as a result of this and people’s experiences with remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic that remote working may be the future.

To acquire data research will be carried out in both the primary and secondary methods of research. Secondary research will involve the analysis of existing research regarding remote working and flexible working arrangements to establish a foundation of information regarding remote working. Primary research will be conducted in the form of surveys designed based on the information gathered in the secondary research with the hopes of establishing how people feel about remote working and how accurate past research has been. The primary research will aim to back up or disprove the secondary research whilst also providing its own unique insight into remote working and its future. The primary research will begin with a pilot study and will contain one further study.

The fact that remote working is becoming more and more common in the workplace makes it crucial that proper systems are put in place to ensure that is effective and successful for all those involved. It is important to find out what the benefits and drawbacks of remote working is and what can be done to maximise the benefits and minimise the drawbacks. The fact remains that remote working is still a relatively new concept and there is a lot of work to be done to make it a normal part of the working routine. The first strategies that will be implemented will likely require perfecting and feedback from the employees to make improvements. It is not going to be a strategy that will work for every business in an industry and will likely be altered to fit various industries however the acquisition of feedback from remote workers will help make the remote working strategies improve for all as time goes on and potentially become a normal part of working in the future.

Literature Review

Background

The concept of flexible working arrangements has existed as far back as the 1970s when Flexitime arrangements became quite popular in the American Workplace (Kim & Campagna, 1981). Flexitime is a system where the employee has more control over their working hours than they would in standard work practices, for example, when they start/finish their day as well as how they complete the total hours in a set period time such as one month. Flexible working arrangements can generally be defined as any work arrangements that differ from the normal hours, this can include half days, flexitime, and remote working. Flexible working arrangements have become increasingly popular in recent years with high demand for a better work-life balance from employees (White & Maniam, 2020). When put into practice flexible work arrangements such as remote working often work best when used in a blended approach for example two days a week working remotely and three days a week working in the office. These arrangements require the business to put special systems in place to enable remote working and to ensure the safety of their employee's wellbeing and the security of their data (Mudditt, 2020).

Why should an organisation consider using flexible working arrangements?

The availability of flexible working arrangements has contributed to a better work-life balance for the employee. The employee has more control over how their work week will look and by working remotely they can cut down the time they spend commuting and spend more time with their families, partners and/or friends (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020). However, this does not completely eliminate all the stress that an employee may face for example having a strong work/life balance does not eliminate the fact that it may be tiring to jump from work to caring for young children, it does however, help the individual to balance their life much better which may assist in the reduction of stress by allowing workers to change their hours around family responsibilities in a manner suitable for them (Idowu, 2020)- for example a school run may take place at 8am so starting at 10am may be more suitable and less stressful for the employee.

Having increased control in their daily work lives is very desirable for employees and as mentioned increased control over start and finish times will increase satisfaction for employees as they can plan their schedule to fit their needs (Idowu, 2020). However, having

more control and autonomy over one's workload is also a very desirable trait of flexible working specifically with remote working. Generally, the majority of people do not like to be micromanaged and therefore when trusted to complete their work at home will excel given the increased control and will make far more effective use of their time (Anka, Thacker, Penhale, 2020). The result of increased autonomy over workload will increase the employee's overall satisfaction with their job which will improve their mental health and help them to live healthier lives as discussed by (Wadhawan, 2019).

For the employer increased productivity and employee job satisfaction are a very positive factor to using remote working and other flexible working arrangements. Past studies have indicated that employees report a higher level of productivity when working from home, as they may be free of distractions that may be present in work whilst they also avoid the early morning commute which may allow them to better organise themselves ahead of starting the day (KŁOPOTEK, 2017). The increased productivity will naturally benefit the employer as work is being completed at a faster rate and potentially to a higher quality, however, another key benefit to using remote working for the employer is the increased job satisfaction.

According to a study carried out by (Felstead & Henseke, 2017) the employees' perception towards the company becomes increasingly more positive when the company allows flexible working arrangements such as remote working and that the majority of staff members that were surveyed stated that they were committed to the organisation and would not move to a different company. When staff have a high level of commitment towards the organisation, they will be more productive and less inclined to desire to depart the company, in fact, reduced turnover is a positive benefit to using flexible working arrangements. Companies that are more flexible with employees on how working hours are performed and allowing remote work, have often shown a reduced level of turnover (Ierodiakonou & Stavrou, 2017).

A key goal for any company is profit maximisation and flexible working arrangements such as remote working have enabled businesses to save significant amounts of capital as they do not have to pay for a larger office space. They can acquire a smaller office space than they previously would have required as people are working from home at least a couple of days per week and make massive savings on real estate costs (Narayanan, Menon, Plaisent, Bernard, 2017). The saved costs a company will potentially make if they adopt remote working within their company makes it a very attractive prospect, in fact, IBM once saved \$75 million by selling buildings and reducing their office space after adopting remote working (Narayanan, et al., 2017).

Benefits to remote working exist not only to the employees and employers, for instance those directly affected, but also to the wider community and environment. The more employees that are working from home even for a couple of days a week will result in less cars on the road and less damage to the environment. This is great for the environment as a whole as not only will the air be less polluted, but traffic will move quicker meaning cars on the roads will spend less time in traffic burning fuel and more time driving. This is important for the company's social responsibility as the community will see key benefits such as less traffic congestion and less damage to the environment. Furthermore, governments often introduce initiatives to encourage companies to install remote working for example tax cuts, an example of this is Clean Air Act 2007 which was supported by the United States Congress (Narayanan, et al., 2017).

The Irish government has also proposed tax breaks to incentivise remote working for both the employer and the employee. These tax incentives are expected to be confirmed in the 2021 budget and are intended to make remote working a more appealing option for all. As remote working will cut down electricity bills, rent and other utility costs that the employer may encounter the employer will be expected to provide equipment for their remote workers whilst employees may benefit by having less transportation but will encounter increased utility costs by working from home. These tax breaks are designed to ease this burden that employers and employees alike may face. The tax incentives will not be a one size fits all system rather it will depend on each individual and organisation (McConnell, 2021).

Drawbacks to using flexible working arrangements.

There are many benefits to using flexible working arrangements, however, there are also disadvantages to using it as well. A key part of a person's workday is interaction with other staff members which help to build social relationships that ease the stress of work. Accidental meetings play a big role in the workplace as they can lead to positive working relationships between people of different departments or even different companies developing (Azasu & Babatunde, 2020) . The use of remote working will reduce the likelihood of these chance encounters being created and therefore employees will miss out on these important relationships which may also have a negative affect for the organisation as their employees may have fewer valuable connections. As Azasa & Babatunde state, remote working can lead to less work relationships being created, it may also cause difficulties amongst employees regarding collaboration. Employees may find it difficult to collaborate with their co-workers

due to different schedules being adopted, increased use of email and working individually (Flores, 2019). Collaboration is an important part of work as different people will see things differently and can maximise the potential success of a project and without this projects may be less successful. Additionally, difficulties in collaboration are an indicator of the difficulties of socialisation when working remotely.

With an increasing number of employers adopting work from home initiatives particularly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic the social needs of an employee are often neglected. Working remotely can result in reduced social networking and lead to people becoming less well known in their industry as well as affecting their status within their own company as they may not be awarded their own office if they work from home often (KŁOPOTEK, 2017). The missing social aspect is considered to be very important for the long-term success of the business (Mudditt, 2020) and the loss of this may result in employees suffering from stress. Stress can be caused by a variety of things when a person is working from home. Social isolation is a big cause of stress as mentioned, but the constant usage of emails, video conferencing software such as Zoom and the lack of differentiation between work and home can be a major cause of stress for an employee (Spagnoli, Molino, Molinaro, Giancaspro, Manuti and Ghislieri, 2020) additionally, due to the boundaries between home and work life becoming blurred (KŁOPOTEK, 2017) it may become difficult for employees to switch off which will lead to more stress. A stressed-out employee is not good as their output will be lower and the company will be failing its duty of care to employees. As (Spagnoli, et al., 2020) stated, technostress is caused by frequent use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and common symptoms include, “anxiety, behavioural strain, feelings of exhaustion, mental fatigue, poor concentration, physical diseases, and insomnia”. This is clearly not a positive thing for any organisation and this along with the blurred lines between work and home may cause people to be unable to switch off at the end of the day and become workaholics which will only contribute to their stress more (Spagnoli, et al., 2020). The negative consequences of stress could result in long term health issues and therefore it is very important for these issues to be addressed.

The negative consequences of remote working exist not only for employees but for employers as well. As mentioned, remote working may cause stress for employees which could lead to issues such as insomnia and anxiety which will naturally affect the productivity of employees and potentially increase the rate of turnover (Spagnoli, et al., 2020). However, there are other issues for employers to consider. Insurance risks are a key problem as

employers cannot install camera's in employees homes and therefore employees could make claims of workplace injury or stress and there would be no witnesses, the employer is still responsible for the employee even if they are remote working, therefore, a lot of trust would need to be placed in employees however, insurance premiums may increase with the added risk (Mudditt, 2020). Information is also at risk if an employee is working from home as they may not possess secure WIFI which could put company data at risk, cybersecurity is a genuine risk for businesses considering allowing remote working (Azasu & Babatunde, 2020).

Managing performance is a major difficulty regarding the use of remote working and is on par with social isolation as a key problem for businesses considering its use (Anka, et al., 2020). Managing performance will naturally be tough as it will be hard for managers to see how hard their employees are working, how long it takes for them to complete a task which will make it difficult to effectively reward and motivate staff (as they may take three hours to complete a one-hour task). In fact, remote working employees may prefer different ways of reward which they may not even realise until they start working remotely, this means that employers must communicate with employees to ensure that they do not under appreciate them. Rewarding employees is important and if done incorrectly can result in higher levels of absenteeism, low productivity and high turnover, remote working has made it more difficult to manage reward (White, 2018). As seen in this paper it is important to assess different reward measures that remote employees may desire. Employees may become fearful that if they are made to work remotely that they are not valued by the company. They may not see the benefits for themselves in working at home which could result in them becoming fearful that they may be damaging their career prospects. This may result in them becoming less productive as they do not see what they will receive in return for their work (fearful of not being 'seen' for promotions) which will negatively affect business operations (Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019).

Limitations of Research

There is a lack of significant research into the overall effectiveness of flexible working arrangements such as flexitime, for instance why a business should use it and why would it benefit them (Ierodiakonou & Stavrou, 2017). Further research limitations surrounding the effect that remote working has on mental health exist. Past studies have shown that flexible working arrangements can have a positive effect on an employee's mental health as they have

more control, although these successes may be present mainly in companies that encourage healthy eating and exercise (Wadhawan, 2019). Conversely, (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020) have stated that remote working may be a cause of conflict in the home and whilst more recent studies show it may lower work related stress there is insufficient research done on the effect it may have on other parts of a person's life.

There is a significant lack of research into the ethics of remote working regarding the monitoring of employees by employers. As employers cannot directly monitor their employees should they be working from home systems must be put in place to monitor remote workers. However, there is a lack of research regarding how it is best to do this especially in a manner that is ethical and does not infringe a person's right to privacy. The government has recently suggested that employers may be allowed to use AI technology to monitor keystrokes and active hours of remote workers but there was a lack of in-depth research regarding how the employees right to privacy and to disconnect will be respected and protected. For remote working to be viable long-term a method of monitoring employees that is ethical must be designed and implemented. This particular issue could benefit from further research.

Conclusion

There are positive aspects to using remote working, studies have shown that it increases productivity and increases employee satisfaction whilst reducing turnover and also having a positive effect on the environment (Narayanan, et al., 2017). However, research also shows it can have a negative effect on the development of important workplace relationships as well as causing some employee's greater stress. There is a dire need for increased research surrounding this topic as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that remote working and other flexible arrangements may be the future. There may be many benefits and risks to using flexible work arrangements however what is clear that with a proper plan in place and good leadership it can be a very useful and profitable tool for an organisation.

There is limited research on how remote working will affect the manager-subordinate relationship however it is clear that leaders will have to put in added effort to ensure that remote working does not have an adverse effect on the company (Neufield, Zeying, Yulin, 2010). It is important for leaders to motivate employees to continue to work to the best of their ability and make it clear that common fears such as less progression opportunities because of remote working are unnecessary (Dahlstrom, 2013), as Dahlstrom says, it may

become difficult for leaders to lead off site workers however with added effort and planning leaders can make remote working a very successful thing for the business.

Research Questions

The main aim of this research is to find an answer to the question “what is the future of remote working in the workplace?” This research will aim to discover how people feel about remote working, the benefits and drawbacks to remote working and what work needs to be done to make remote working a viable option for businesses. This research will aim to discover what needs to be done by the government, by the employer and the employee to make remote working successful and beneficial to all involved.

To fully achieve the research goals a number of sub questions will also be answered to fully understand what the future of remote working looks like. As discussed in the literature review remote working has been in existence for many years already however it did not have widespread use in most businesses until the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that knowledge on how best to administer remote working practices is sorely lacking. This research will aim to find out the answer to the sub question “How can remote working be managed in a way that is beneficial to all stakeholders involved?” The research aims to find out what employers need to do to help remote workers regarding all aspects of remote working from setting up a home office to creating a schedule that works best for them.

A major sub question that this research aims to answer is “what legislation is needed to ensure the rights of both the employer and the employee are protected?” There is no specific legislation that governs remote working practices and although the government recently unveiled a code of practice regarding the right to disconnect for remote workers this may not be enough. This research aims to discover what people disliked about remote working, if there were any issues regarding mental and physical health and if employers encouraged physical activity to remote workers. Furthermore, legislation may be required to control how employers can monitor their employees who are working remotely, the research will aim to discover how employees feel about it and how this may affect proposed legislation. The research will aim to shed light on how the employers’ rights may need to be protecting as well, whilst the employees’ rights are very important the rights of their employers are too. It is clear that legislation should also cover employers’ rights particularly regarding data security and safeguarding measures they may be allowed to put in place to protect their data. The research will shed light on how employees feel about proposed methods of achieving this.

A final sub question that this research may answer is “Do employees actually want to work remotely?” This is a more obvious and straightforward question however it may sometimes be overlooked. A product of the COVID-19 pandemic is that many people had to work from home regardless of whether they wanted to or not. This research aims to discover if remote working is actually an attractive prospect for employees and whether or not they would like to work remotely long-term.

Research Methodology

The qualitative method of research will be used to conduct research and analyse data for this topic. Making use of existing data secondary research will play a big part in the overall research. Secondary research is the use of existing research papers, academic books, and conference notes to assist in the development of hypothesis and theories related to the research question. The use of secondary data will be instrumental in finding out what the current trends and feelings towards remote working is and what issues and benefits there may be. The secondary research shall allow the researcher to focus their research more specifically on an aspect of remote working.

To support theories and hypothesis developed from secondary research an element of primary research will be carried out. Primary research is research that is carried out by the researcher, it is original research that has not been found in another author's work. Primary research will be carried out in the method of surveys. The surveys will consist mainly of multiple-choice questions and yes or no questions which will make analysing the acquired data easier as the answers with the highest percentages will provide the researcher with a key indication regarding the feelings the respondents have over the particular issue the question was questioning. The surveys may also contain questions which allow the respondent to give their own answer in this case the use of content analysis will be employed. Content analysis involves the identification of keywords and themes to determine common opinions regarding the research.

Primary research surveys will be carried out in two forms, first a pilot survey will be published, the pilot survey will be used to discover the general feelings that workers have towards the idea of remote working and the various advantages and disadvantages that it may entail. The results from the pilot study will then be used to focus the research on a more specific area of remote working which will lead to the second and primary survey being published (please see Appendix A and C for the pilot and primary surveys).

The surveys will be posted on LinkedIn and will be available for anyone who wants to answer them to answer them. LinkedIn has been chosen as the most suitable place to publish these surveys as the research is focused on the working life and the future of the working life of professionals. As LinkedIn is a professional network publishing the surveys here is the best way to reach professionals. The surveys will be carried out anonymously respondents

will not have to provide an email address or any data that may identify them or their employer, the survey questions will also not require answers that may violate the respondents right to privacy. The beginning of each survey will contain an ethics statement that will inform the respondent that their identity will remain anonymous, and the student email address of the researcher will be provided should the respondent have any further questions regarding this. The only data that the researcher requires, and desires is the answers to the survey questions.

The primary research will begin with a pilot study. A pilot study is a small-scale preliminary study that is conducted to assess the feasibility, cost, duration and to improve upon the study design prior to the performance of full-scale research. The pilot study for this research project aims to discover the general feeling amongst workers regarding remote working including what needs to be improved, what is enjoyable about it and whether there is a desire amongst both employers and employees to engage in remote working practices in the long run. The pilot study will allow the researcher to focus the primary study more efficiently and pay closer attention to more important aspects of remote working that may be indicated during the course of the pilot study. The pilot study will consist of 16 questions, the majority of which will be multiple choice questions that will provide the researcher with an indication on how the majority of people feel regarding each aspect questioned, the survey will also contain a small number of non-multiple-choice questions, these will be questions that will allow the respondent to provide their own opinion free of influence regarding the question. The pilot study will aim to discover answers to the following areas: what the most important aspect of one's job is, do people like the idea of remote working, do people want to work remotely, what the most favourite and least favourite aspects to remote working are, if finish times are respected and if their employer encouraged physical activity. These areas have been chosen as they will cover a broad range of areas related to remote working which will help the researcher gain a good view of how people perceive remote working and allow the researcher to focus the research further.

The primary study will be conducted following the pilot study with the aim of acquiring answers to more refined questions. The purpose of this research is to discover what people think about regarding the big aspects of remote working and its future. The results of the pilot study have allowed the research to become more focused on this regard. The primary study will consist of five simple yes or no questions as the aim is to acquire convenient and easily measurable data regarding the major aspects of remote working. The primary study aims to

shed light on how remote working may be managed, what legislation is needed to protect the stakeholders of remote working, whether remote working is desirable and above all is remote working a feasible option for employers and employees in the long-term.

Research Analysis

Pilot Study

The respondents of the pilot study were primarily from the finance/HR/marketing/legal industry with 60% of respondents falling under this category. The majority of respondents- 70%- fell into the age category of 18-30. These figures indicate that remote working is of most interest to those who work in traditional office-based jobs such as Human resources and marketing particularly those who are under the age of 30. (Please see Appendix B for the results of the pilot study).

A key part of the pilot study was establishing what an employee values most about their job. This will give an indication into potential issues down the line with remote working, namely, can these values be maintained by remote working. The most mentioned value was progression this was mentioned three times which indicates that progression is a very important value for a person, they want to know that they have a chance to move up within the organisation and are not going to be stuck where they are forever. Tying into this responsibilities, autonomy, and caring employer whilst all mentioned only once points to the fact that an employer that cares and entrusts responsibilities and independence to their employees is a good and desired employer. A key indication from this section of the research is that what employee's value most are aspects that require good management which may be difficult regarding remote working. As remote working is still a relatively new concept to businesses there is limited understanding on how best to manage remote workers. To ensure that employees are protected and receive the same opportunities as they would they be working in office, a management process for remote workers must be designed.

The analysis of the pilot study has indicated that a majority of people- 80%- have worked remotely at some point in their life however an overwhelming majority-90% of these people had not worked remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This indicates that whilst remote working has become increasingly popular as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic it was not a method of working that had widespread use. Furthermore, only 60% of respondents like the idea of remote working which indicates that in its current form that employees do indeed desire the opportunity to work from home however the fact that 40% do not like the idea of working from home indicates that there is still work to be done to make it a viable long-term method of working for businesses. The fact that 60% of people like the idea of remote working based on their current perception and experiences of it shows that it does indeed

have a future in the workforce but there is still work to be done to improve it to ensure that it works for everybody. Interestingly, 70% of respondents want to work remotely in the future which shows that despite only 60% liking the idea of remote work, it is still a popular idea with people maybe desiring to work remotely in the future when the current issues are resolved. The fact that 70% of people who responded to the pilot study want to work remotely shows that it is a desirable way of working and something that certainly has a future in the workplace.

Approximately 78% of respondents feeling that there is motivation for employers to allow remote working in their organisation. This indicates that in the opinion of the employee there is sufficient reason for the employers to design remote working programmes for their employees to avail of. The motivation for this may be paying for a smaller office space which will mean less rent and utilities costs as well as the fact that remote working may help staff have a better work life balance and in turn allow for a happier workforce. In fact, in response to the survey question “what did you enjoy most about remote working?” 44.4% of respondents stated that a better work/life balance was the best aspect whilst 44.4% said less commuting was the best aspect. This indicates that the best aspects of remote working were those that may improve the balance and quality of life for employees and in turn make them happier. Happy employees are productive employees and if higher rates of productivity do not serve as motivation for the business to incorporate remote working practices into their organisation, then nothing will.

A significant portion of responses (50%) to the survey felt that their finishing times were not respected by either their employer/manager or their co-workers (see Figure 2). This represents a major issue for the future of remote working. For it to be a viable method of conducting work there must exist ground rules that ensure that an employee’s rights are protected just the same as they would be if they were physically going in to the office. It is not fair to expect an employee to be instantly available all day, following the conclusion of their day an employee must be allowed to disconnect from the work devices and unwind so they can destress and prepare themselves for the next day. Employees should be allowed to disconnect at the end of the day and not face repercussions should they not answer a call or email outside of working hours. For remote working to be a success there must be similar rules to traditional office working, for instance, if a person normally works 9-5.30 in office, then this should remain the same if they are working at home, at 5.30 they should be allowed to switch off and not face repercussions. To enforce this the company should set out a right to

disconnect policy that ensures that all employees respect each other's right to disconnect and that employees are not penalised for disconnecting.

The majority of respondents did exercise regularly whilst working from home however, 80% stated that this was not encouraged by their employer. Whilst adults will be aware of the importance of exercising not all of them will engage in exercise. The employer has a duty of care to ensure the safety of their employees, and this should hold true even if their employees are working from home. The fact that employers did not encourage their employees to engage in exercise shows that there is still a level of confusion regarding how best to administer remote working practices. The employer must encourage remote workers to disconnect from their computers and go outside and exercise as this will reap great benefits for both the employees mental and physical health.

The loss of socialisation represents potentially the biggest issue for employers, particularly employers who may require employees to work from home at least some of the time. The loss of socialisation can be difficult for employees who work with people better face-to-face not to mention the loss of lunchtime conversations which help build friendly relationships. 80% of the respondents to the pilot survey felt that the loss of socialisation was the biggest drawback to remote working. The loss of socialisation could lead to feelings of loneliness and have a negative effect on people. Therefore, it may be prudent to adopt a blended approach to remote working where a person only works remotely two or three days a week and works in office the rest of the time. Additionally, employers should have open and honest discussions with their employees to ensure that remote working is right for them in the way it is administered and allow them the opportunity to bring up issues they have or make suggestions on how it can be improved.

Despite some drawbacks to remote working there does exist many positives that should not be ignored. A better work/life balance was one of the major benefits of remote working with 44.4% of survey respondents saying that this was the best aspect of remote working. When working from home people will spend less time getting ready for work and commuting to and from the office which means they can get more rest and prepare themselves at their own pace and be able to spend more time at home with their loved ones or have more time after they finish work to go out and socialise or even simply go out for a walk. Having a better work/life balance is a positive thing for both employers and employees. For employees they

can enjoy their life outside of work and be happier and a happy employee is a productive employee which will benefit the employer.

Leading on from this 44.4% of people felt that the best aspect to remote working was in fact that they commuted less which ties in directly with having a better work/life balance. Commuting can often take up a significant portion of a person's day, for instance someone may see a thirty-minute journey take two hours during rush hour times. Long commutes can be exhausting for everyone, and the pilot survey has indicated that a lot of people feel that no commute is the best aspect to remote working. If an individual does not have to commute, they can spend that time in the morning getting prepared for the day at a better pace for them and in the evening when they finish work the rest of the evening is theirs and will not be spend sitting in traffic but rather spent engaging in activities that help the person destress and prepare for the next day.

The pilot survey responses included indications on how remote working may be improved to ensure its long-term viability. A balance between office and remote work was mentioned which is a commonly mentioned method of how remote working could work best. Instead of having employees working from home all the time adopting a blended approach could help ensure that an employee's socialisation needs are not lost. Employers should also ensure that remote workers remain engaged and do not just fade into the background. Having cameras on during meetings may promote interaction whilst having a virtual coffee may also help in this regard particularly if it was open to all as this may create the potential for chance meetings that may occur in the office. The capital that the employer saves on reduced utilities and rent should be used (or at least part of it) to provide supplies such as laptops, laptop raisers, desks, and other home office equipment to employees. Helping employees get a home office set up will remove stress for them and make it a more efficient process. Taking these suggestions gathered from the pilot study into consideration provides a key indication into what employees feel is needed to ensure that remote working is successful long-term, and this is simply support from their employer.

The results of the pilot study have indicated that there are benefits and drawbacks to remote working and employers do not fully understand how best to administer it. If remote working practices are to be successful long-term legislation and further guidelines are needed to help employers put remote working systems into practice successfully. From the pilot study 80% of respondents felt that legislation is needed to protect remote workers. Legislation would help

ensure that remote working practices are administered properly and the rights of both employers and employees are respected. Legislation may include right to disconnect clauses and a system for the supervision of remote workers.

Further research

The pilot study has indicated that whilst people do want to work remotely in the future there is still a long way to go before it becomes a viable long-term method of working. Most people had not worked remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which indicates that it is not a common practice for businesses. People want to work remotely or at least have that option however there are areas that need to be improved and legislation to be introduced before it becomes a strong long-term option. Based on the pilot study a further survey has been designed to better understand the perspectives of the employee regarding remote working. For instance, how employers should be allowed to monitor remote workers, and should employers help pay for home offices and who should more control over their schedule if they are expected to work remotely, the employer or the employee?

When working remotely, did you coworkers and employer respect your finish time?

10 responses

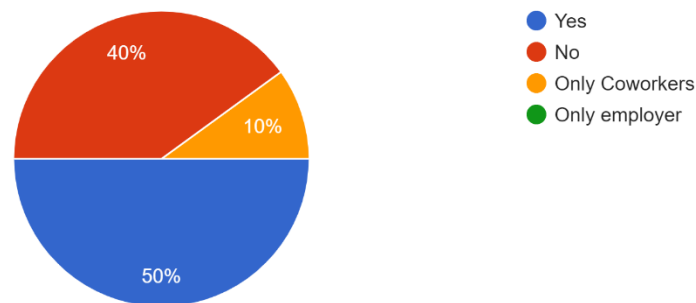


Figure 2

Primary Survey

Based on the second survey results it can be determined that people do want to work remotely with 69.2% of people stating that they would like to work remotely after the pandemic. These results show that the majority of people do want to work remotely even when it is not entirely necessary, the benefits of remote working have had an effect on people enough that they want it to continue in the long run. However, a substantial percentage- 30.8%- of respondents answered that they do not want to work from home following the pandemic. This indicates that whilst the majority of people do want to work remotely a significant- albeit minority- portion of people do not want to work remotely. This shows that there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that if a company does install remote working practices, they do so in a way that works for everyone. (see Appendix D for the results of the primary study).

The monitoring of employees using AI software to track active hours and keystrokes was not a popular idea with 76.9% of people stating they do not feel employers should be allowed to use this (see Figure 3). This indicates that employers will have to come up with an alternative way of monitoring employees and protecting their interests regarding remote workers. Employers have rights too and these must be protected, and measures must be put in place to ensure that remote workers do not take liberties and not do their work. The use of AI software to track employees however is clearly not a popular idea and an alternative method of monitoring employees must be devised ideally with consultation with employers, employees, and governmental bodies. The management of employees is a very important part of the work experience as to identify and reward high performing employees they must be monitored in some way, however, a method that is not as invasive as the mentioned AI (citation needed) software may be best although employees may need to compromise to ensure that a process is designed that works for all and is of high quality.

If employees are working from home, they should have a significant input regarding the number of days they work from home. Based on the survey, 73.1% of respondents answered that employees should have more control over the number of days they work from home. It is important for employers to still have a level of influence over remote working- it has to fit their needs after all-, but employees are the ones who will be working from home and therefore should have the most input. Giving employees a voice in this matter will reduce the risks of mental health issues and low productivity as employees will be able to decide how many days working from home works for them.

Leading on from this if employers are expecting employees to work from home, then they should have to provide employees with a grant or access to a fund to finance a home office. If an employee is working in an office the office will have a desk, computer, and everything else that is needed, therefore, if an employee is working from home, they should receive financial assistance from their employer to pay for a laptop, laptop raiser, printer, desk, desk chair and anything else that is needed. According to the survey, 92.3% of respondents feel that employers should have to pay for an employee's home office if they want them to work from home.

According to 65.4% of respondents to the survey, the government's current legislative plans to protect remote workers is insufficient. This figure indicates that work needs to be done but the plans are not too far off track that they cannot be salvaged. Legislation is needed to ensure that the rights of employers and employees are protected. Legislation is needed to guide employers' policies on monitoring remote workers, duty of care for remote workers and the right to disconnect amongst many other aspects. The fact that almost two thirds of survey respondents feel that the government's current plans are not good enough shows that the government need to consult with employers and employees who can guide them towards creating legislation that will protect everyone. The legislation needs to ensure that employee wellbeing is protected too and set out how responsible employers are for this.

The primary study has indicated that whilst the majority of people want to work remotely there is work to be done to ensure that it is successful for all parties involved. Valuable information has been gathered from this study, specifically, that employees do not feel comfortable being monitored with the use of AI technology. Furthermore, it is apparent that employers should provide funding to employees to help them set up a home office whilst, it was established that employees should be given the loudest voice when determining how many days they may work remotely to ensure they are not forced to constantly work from home. It was also established that the government needs to put more resources into developing legislation that protects all parties of remote working. This legislation could set out right to disconnect policies, guidelines on the management of remote workers including supervision and a provision for financing home offices for remote workers in addition to protections for the employer and the employee.

Do you feel that employers should be allowed to use AI software to track keystrokes and active hours on laptops provided to remote workers provided it is during working hours?

26 responses

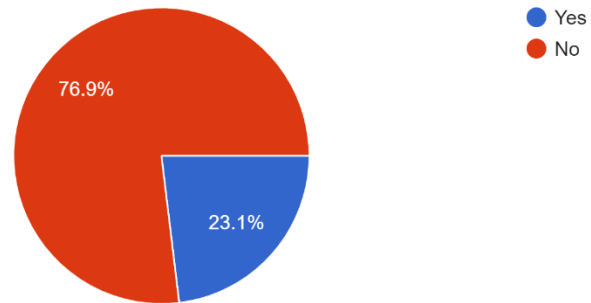


Figure 3

Discussion

What motivation is there for employers to use remote working?

The primary and secondary research have provided a key insight into what the future of remote working looks like. Primary research has provided the researcher with a valuable insight into how workers regard remote working and what needs to be done to make it a viable method of working. Primary research has verified opinions established in secondary research whilst also providing the researcher with fresh perspectives of remote working.

Ahead of conducting research a key question that required answering was “Why should a company use remote working practices?” This question had been asked many times by other researchers in past studies. It has been established that there are many reasons why a company should employ the use of remote working practices in their organisation. There are many benefits to using remote working practices, such as the saved costs a company will make on office space and utilities. If they are allowing staff to work a couple of days a week from home then there will be no need for a large office, they can move to a smaller and cheaper office and make massive savings on real estate costs (Narayanan, et al., 2017). The job satisfaction and improved work/life balance that staff will experience will also benefit the company greatly. In fact, during the pilot study 44.4% of survey respondents answered that better work/life balance was the best aspect of remote working whilst a further 44.4% answered that less time spent commuting was the best aspect. This backs up points made by (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020) that remote working improves work/life balance, having a better work/life balance allows that employee to spend more time with family and friends and may contribute to reduced levels of stress. This will help the company’s workforce become happier and more satisfied with their work which in turn will improve their productivity.

A key aspect of remote working is the increased level of control that an employee has over their daily work lives, this may help them to plan around school runs or doctor appointments. Having increased control is another factor that increases job satisfaction and productivity which will naturally benefit the employer (Idowu, 2020). In the pilot study one of the most important aspects of a job was established to be autonomy. This is essentially when employees are trusted to set their own schedules and get their work done without intense supervision. As people do not like to be micromanaged allowing staff more independence and autonomy they will likely excel and make better use of their time (Anka, et al., 2020). Having

a more satisfied, motivated, and productive workforce will naturally benefit the employer as work will likely be done quicker and to a higher quality whilst turnover levels will also be lower. It is worth noting that the employee values responsibilities and autonomy highly in what they look for in a job, they are important aspects to the employee. Furthermore, the employee's perception towards their employer improves massively when the company allows flexible working arrangements such as remote working (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). The benefits of remote working are quite clear and indicate there is strong motivation for employers to use remote working practices. It is clear that there is significant motivation for employers to use remote working practices and when asked this question in the pilot study 78% of respondents felt that there was indeed sufficient motivation for employers.

What challenges do employers face?

Although there are many reasons why a company should consider the use of remote working practices, there is also a number of drawbacks to remote working that must be considered and planned for before implementing remote working practices. The loss of socialisation represents a major issue for employers. During the pilot study 80% of respondents stated that the loss of socialisation was the biggest drawback to remote working. The loss of socialisation can potentially lead to feelings of loneliness furthermore the loss of chance encounters could cause the company to miss out on valuable relationships that staff may form when working in office (Azasu & Babatunde, 2020). This may negatively impact the employees career plans and make them decline to work from home and the company could also miss out on the benefits of the connections their employee makes during their day for example a chance encounter at a café. The fact that the loss of socialisation was the biggest drawback to remote working for employees shows that a blended approach to remote working may be the best course of action. Given that the respondents to the survey missed socialisation the most when working remotely it is evident that the social aspects of a person's work are very important. A blended approach could help the business cut down office rental costs but also still fulfil the employees' social desires by having them work two days from home and three days in office. The employee would therefore not lose out on socialising face to face with their co-workers and the opportunity for chance encounters still exists.

The loss of socialisation can also contribute to difficulties amongst employees regarding collaboration. Employees may find it difficult to collaborate with each other if they cannot

speak to them face to face or just pop into their office to speak with them. Remote working means increased usage of emails and video calls, and this may prove irritating and lead to employees just working individually (Flores, 2019). Collaboration is important as different people have different perspectives and valuable insights that can help make a project very successful, losing this will mean the organisation has lost highly successful projects and their productivity may suffer as a result. The pilot study has also indicated the importance for employers to keep their employees engaged. This indicates the importance of keeping employees engaged with each other as it can have an impact of the company's productivity. If employees are engaged, they will be more likely to work with each other and therefore the quality of work will be greater and could also lead to positive working relationships being created. It has been suggested-in the pilot study- the virtual meetings and virtual coffee meetings may be an effective way of keeping people engaged.

Managing performance has the potential to be a major obstacle to overcome for employers if remote working is to be a success. The pilot study established that progression opportunities is the most important part of their job. The company must ensure that they give people the right training & development opportunities, manage performance correctly to ensure that the employees skills are developed correctly, and the right people are progressed. This may prove difficult with remote working as managers are not physically with their employees so they cannot see how long it takes them to do each task, how hard they are working, when they stop working and what areas of their work, they find difficult and could use assistance or further training to help them. To ensure that staff do not lose out on progression and career development opportunities it is important for managers and subordinates to communicate with each other regularly and honestly, this will help managers know what their employee needs and how to manage/reward them more efficiently whilst it will also allow employees the chance to bring issues to their managers attention. Managing performance is very important as the failure to progress employees or reward employees can result in increased levels of turnover, decreased productivity and high levels of absenteeism (White, 2018). As the pilot study showed, employees place a high value in progression opportunities and for progression opportunities to be possible good management is needed to ensure staff are motivated, receive the training they require and are properly equipped for their role. Effectively managing performance is a major challenge to remote working for the employer and something that will need to be overcome for remote working to be successful and as the employer cannot install cameras in an employee's home an alternative method of supervision

may be in order. This again points to the benefit of using a blended approach of remote working and traditional office working as managers will be able to work with their employees at least for a couple of days each week in office and when they are remote working a simple measuring of tasks completed and their quality may provide managers with an indication as to who deserves to be progressed.

How does remote working benefit the employee?

The benefits of remote working for the employer greatly outweigh the drawbacks and serve as clear motivation as to why employers should consider the use of remote working practices in their organisation. There are benefits to remote working for employees as well and this indicates that remote working may be beneficial to all. In the last year and a half many people have had to work remotely regardless of whether they wanted to or if there was even a proper system put in place and based on results from the pilot study 60% of respondents like the idea of working remotely whilst 70% want to work remotely in the future. This shows that a lot of people like remote working based on its current form and their experience with it whilst even more want to work remotely provided improvements are made.

The availability of remote working practices has contributed to a better work/life balance for employees. As employees will not need to commute to work, they can cut down the amount of time they spend sitting in traffic and use that time how they would like whether it be getting more sleep in the morning, spending time with family in the evenings or merely using the time to organise themselves better (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020). This will help the employee's life become more balanced and they will have to rush less and have more time to themselves after work to unwind and rest ahead of the next day. The decreased commuting and improved work/life balance were the most positive aspects of remote working according to the pilot study with each of them be chosen by 44.4% of respondents. This indicates that the major benefits of remote working are the fact that people have more time to spend at home and less commuting, they have more time to relax after work and prepare themselves before work, more time to spend with their family and friends or to simply do whatever they want to do. This is a key benefit for the employee, the fact that they have a better balance between their work and their lives is a key motivation for them to work remotely even for one or two days per week. They will experience less stress and will potentially be able to focus more on work which in turn could enhance their career prospects. The improved work/life

balance is definitely a point that needs to be considered by employees when approached with the opportunity to integrate some form of remote working into their work life.

No employee likes to be micromanaged and every employee desires some level of control in their daily work life. In the pilot study 11.1 % of respondents felt that the increased autonomy/independence was the best aspect of remote working. Whilst this is a minority it is still important to note that employees do desire autonomy in their work and for an employer to allow their employees a level of autonomy this will improve an employee's satisfaction with their job and also their mental health (Wadhawan, 2019). Having an increased level of control is a major aspect of remote working, as employees are not under the watchful eye of their supervisor or line manager, they are being trusted to get their work done and to the expected high quality. Having control over when they work remotely or work in office will also help the employee plan their work schedule around their lives particularly if they also have flexibility on when the hours are worked. This will allow them to have more balance in their lives which ties into the above point about the benefit of work/life balance. A major result of having more control over their work is improved job satisfaction and improved mental health which in turn may motivate the employee to work harder especially as autonomy is desired. This may lead to increased responsibilities, promotions, or other career development opportunities for the employee.

Taking these two points into consideration it is evident that a major benefit of remote working for employees is that it improves mental health and reduces stress. Providing an employee with more control and trust in their work will improve their mental health as they will feel more positive about their abilities and their career progression opportunities. Furthermore, in the pilot study it was stated that nice employers were a key element that employees look for in a job whilst progression opportunities were another key element to a job with that being mentioned three times. Therefore, it can potentially be established that a major benefit of remote working is how it improves an employee's mental health, and this can be backed up by the fact it provides employees with things they want such as independence, progression opportunities, improved work/life balance and caring employer which was established during the course of the pilot study.

What challenges do employees face with working remotely?

The use of remote working has some major benefits for the employee but there are also several drawbacks to remote working for the employee. The loss of socialisation was the

most disliked aspect to remote working based on pilot study results with 80% of respondents choosing this option. The social aspects of one's employment are very important, firstly, having a good relationship with one's co-workers will make it easier to work with them and as a result work will be done more efficiently, secondly, the social relationships that co-workers develop with each other can help ease the stress of work. Many employees enjoy the opportunity to chat with their co-workers about work and non-work-related topics, this produces a sense of camaraderie that can help the employee work harder and become more positive about their work. With the loss of this as a result of remote working employees clearly have found this difficult. The loss of socialisation can lead to feelings of loneliness and increased stress, this indicates that a blended approach may be best for employees to consider. If they are going to be expected to work remotely than they should insist on some form of blend of remote and office work to ensure that they maintain a level of socialisation. If this is not possible than by communicating how important socialisation is to their employer will encourage the employer to arrange social meetups for employees at locations out of the home such as at cafes, restaurants, or bars so that employees can get out of their home office and socialise with their co-workers.

An employee working from home may find it difficult to switch off at the end of the day or differentiate between work and home life as they are working from home. For an employee working from home, they will be required to communicate with email, phone calls and video conferencing to replace the regular face to face conversations. The increased use of technology could have a harmful effect on employees and as (Spagnoli, et al., 2020) stated can lead to technostress. It is important therefore for employees to reduce the amount of technology the use when they are not in work to avoid this. However, the lines between work will naturally become blurred if someone is working from home (KŁOPOTEK, 2017). When someone finishes work in the office, they go home but when they finish remote working, they just move into a different room. It is important therefore for employees to have finish times regardless of whether they are at home or in office and that these finish times are respected. Based on the pilot study results, 50% of people felt that their finish times where not respected by either their boss or their co-workers. This indicates the need for a disconnect policy to control the employees right to disconnect at the end of their work day. This will help employees to switch off at the end of the day because if their employer has ordered people to switch off at their finish time and to respect each other's finish times, employees will be more likely to do so. This will help remote workers to differentiate between work and home life

which may be further helped by having a post work activity. Therefore, it is worth noting that the increased remote working may be difficult for employees as their home and work life may become blurred and the increased use of technology can lead to technostress, however, with proper policies these issues can be avoided. It is also worth mentioning that whilst 50% of pilot study respondents felt their finish times were not respected, 50% felt that their finish times were respected which indicates that many employers are on the right track.

What needs to be done to set up a remote working system successfully?

The primary study has indicated that most people (69.2% of respondents) do want to have some form of remote working in their future work lives. Furthermore, the pilot study has indicated that most people (90% of respondents) had not worked remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This shows that whilst it is desirable it has not had widespread use prior to 2020 which means for remote working to be implemented successfully work must be done to ensure that the remote working practices that are implemented are suitable for all and maximise the benefits whilst minimising the drawbacks. The fact that people desire remote working should make the implementation process easier however it is important that employees do not ignore the people who do not desire remote working and ensure that they are given a voice too.

The employer has a duty of care for the employee when the employee is working in the office. They have to ensure that the workplace is safe to work in and that the employee will not come to any harm. This should be no different regarding remote working, employee wellbeing is very important and can have a direct impact on the companies' goals and objectives. If the employees of the company are miserable then they will be less productive, and turnover will be higher. For remote working to be a success, employee wellbeing must not be disregarded.

During the pilot study respondents were asked if they had exercised whilst working from home and how often they had done so. The results were that 90% of people exercised and this was divided between somewhat often and very often. This shows that when working from home the majority of people did try to exercise. The question was posed with a scale with 1 being very little exercise and 5 being a lot of exercise. The levels 3, 4 and 5 each received 30% of votes which indicates that remote workers did at least exercise some of the time (see Figure 4). The more intriguing part of this however is gathered from the next question, "Was this encouraged by your employer?" 80% of respondents said that it was not encouraged by

their employer. The fact that employers were not encouraging their employees to exercise when they are working from home is a cause for concern and is a prime example of something that needs to improve if remote working is to be a viable long-term method of working. Employers may aim to set up challenges between departments to further motivate employees, these challenges could be ‘most steps in a week’ with small prizes such as being allowed to go home an hour or two early to motivate people to try. It is very important for the employer to encourage their employees to exercise at all times but especially regarding remote workers.

How often did you exercise when working remotely
10 responses

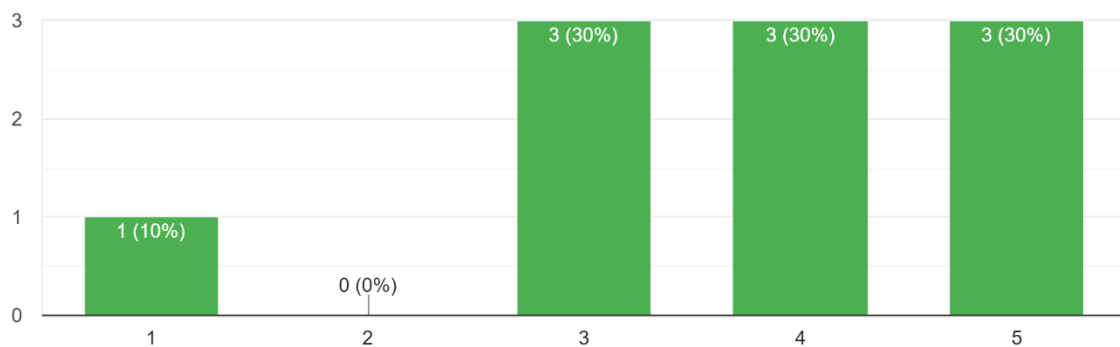


Figure 4

If remote workers are at home all day in front of the computer screen and then when five o'clock comes, they simply switch rooms and stare at a different screen they may become depressed and stressed out in addition to the physical effects that they may suffer. Naturally, the employer wants what is best for the employee but also if the employee is unfit mentally and physically, they will be less productive, and turnover may potentially increase with workers wishing to find a new job that does not have remote working.

The importance of physical wellbeing draws into the importance of mental wellbeing and the avoidance of technostress and social isolation which may be an issue with remote working and for remote working to be a success, a system must be implemented to support employee's wellbeing in this regard also. If employees are constantly looking at computer screens and not seeing people face to face this may cause them to be overwhelmed and stressed. To avoid this

and ensure that people do not suffer this a blended approach to remote working must be considered. This will have benefits to both sides as employees will be able to see their colleagues and have friendly conversations whilst managers may find it easier to manage their employees if they can see them face to face. This will allow them to assign them work to be completed when working remotely and better manage performance as they will still have the chance to work with their subordinates in the office. The blended approach will help the employees fulfil social needs, but it will also provide them with a change of scenery and a chance to get out of their homes as constantly being in the same place would cause them to become stressed out.

When implementing a remote working strategy, it is important for the employer to ensure that they include an up to date and relevant right to disconnect policy. This policy sets out the employees right to switch off at the end of their day and not respond to emails and phone calls from work unless they are of extreme important. The policy should also set out that other employees must respect this, and that the employer must not penalise an employee for disconnecting. This policy is needed to ensure that people switch off at the end of their work day and this is respected. It is important for the employee to have rest time at the end of their day and be able to switch off from work, this will help them prepare for the next day and will contribute to the avoidance of work-related stress. Having a right to disconnect policy will help the business and the employee to understand working hours and when they can switch off and it will also provide the employee with safety knowing that they can shut off and not have to fear a reprimand. Respecting ones right to disconnect is important, 50% of respondents to the pilot study felt that their finishing times where not respected, a right to disconnect policy may help remedy this.

For remote working to be a success communication between the employer and the employee is key. Both parties need to communicate with each other to ensure that whatever strategy is implemented it is beneficial to all involved. It is important for employees to have a voice to ensure that they are not forced to do more remote days than they would like, in fact based on results from the primary survey 73.1% of respondents feel that the employee should have more control over how many days an employee works from home. It is important for the employer to keep this in mind as this indicates that employees feel they should have a strong element of control regarding remote working. This is fair as they will be the ones working from home, for remote working to be successful the employer should be up front regarding their needs, for instance how many people they need to be working remotely every day. This

will allow each side to understand the others needs and allow the management to establish a system that works for everyone. It is important for management to allow employees input on how many days they wish to work from home provided it is not in excess of what the company needs, by communicating with employees the management can ensure that no one works more days remotely than they desire, this will help the company reduce workplace stress and ensure that their remote working policy works for everyone.

Another important thing that must not be forgotten when setting up a remote working system is the home office of the employee and who shall pay for it. If a business is setting up remote working system where they will expect employees to work from home at least one day a week, then they must communicate with their employees to ensure that firstly everyone has the necessary internet capabilities at home to allow them to work efficiently and remain connected with their co-workers and secondly what they need to be provided with to make their job easier. If the company expects people to work from home, then they should provide them with laptops, laptop raisers and if needed office furniture. The business will be saving money on real estate costs and this money should be reinvested to ensure the success of their remote working system. According to the primary survey 92.3% of respondents feel that the employer should provide their employees with a grant to pay for home office equipment if they expect them to work from home. If the employees were working in office, they would have a desk, a computer and everything else they would need for their job, and it should not be any different if they are working from home. It would be unreasonable to expect the employee to pay for home office equipment themselves or to use their personal computer for work purposes, this would also put the companies' data at risk. The fact that over 90% of survey respondents feel that the employer should provide their remote workers with funding for a home office shows that this is definitely needed for remote working to be a long-term success. This will also make it easier for employees to set up a home office as they will not have to worry about using their own computer or affording a desk and they can simply focus on their new system of working.

Implementing a remote working strategy is very important and an important aspect of this strategy must be the management and supervision of employees. A recent article (McGlynn, 2021) has detailed the government's plans to allow employers to monitor remote working employees by using AI technology to monitor active hours, keystrokes and sites visited. This would allow the employer to ensure that employees are fulfilling their work hours, are actually working during the day, and not just logging in and procrastinating and it will also

protect the company's data as they will be able to see which files and websites are accessed. During the primary study, the respondents were asked how they felt about this potentially being used and 76.9% of people said that they felt it should not be allowed (see Figure 5). With this in mind it is evident that people do not feel comfortable with this type of technology being used. This may be because it is invasive or an over-the-top measure. Managing performance is important however and a system must be put in place to ensure that an employee's performance is adequately managed so that they get the training and progression opportunities that they deserve. The results of the primary survey indicate that the use of AI software to track employees is unpopular and as a result may lead to disgruntled employees and therefore employers may be better served finding a different method to manage employees. A blended approach may be the best way to manage remote workers, in this approach employees would work a mixture of in office days and remote days. This will allow managers to meet with their employees, assign work and discuss projects. It will also allow them to monitor how well people work. When the employee is working from home their performance may simply be measured by how much work they get through, the quality of this work and how fast they get through their work. Employers should provide their employees with a level of trust to get their work done, this will improve employee morale and reduce turnover.

The fact that AI monitoring is unpopular however does cause a problem for employers as (Mudditt, 2020) points out that insurance premiums may be increased with remote working. This may be because employees cannot be directly monitored and if they suffer from workplace fatigue or similar the company may be liable even if they have disconnect policies. They must take care to enforce policies however this may not prevent insurance premiums from increasing and without an adequate way to monitor employees and ensure that disconnect there may be no other solution than use AI or a blended approach. Additionally, the security of the company's data may be at risk and without an appropriate monitoring method the company's confidential files may be at risk (Azasu & Babatunde, 2020). It is clear though despite the fact that issues may arise from the lack of monitoring that employees do not like the idea of being monitored through AI. Regarding the security of data, the company should provide the employee with a laptop that has access to company files, the company's servers will require a login and each employee should only have access to what they need. Keeping track of files accessed and websites visited on a company laptop is not unreasonable and may help the company manage their cybersecurity. Establishing a policy

that sets out what files are permitted to be accessed and detailing the sharing of work files with someone outside the company would constitute gross misconduct will also ensure that cybersecurity is properly managed.

The future of remote working

The company should provide their employees with an element of trust to get their work done when working remotely. This will improve employee morale and reduce the likelihood of turnover and data breaches. Communication between employers and employees will help the remote working strategy be a success and make it a viable long-term option for the workforce. A blended approach may be the best course of action for the employer in the long run as this will help with performance management and ensure that employees do not have to work from home too much.

The future of remote working is bright as many people wish for remote working to become part of their work lives even after the COVID-19 pandemic when it is no longer necessary. The primary study has revealed that 69.2% of respondents wish to work remotely following the pandemic. Whilst this is not a majority, it does indicate that people do desire to work remotely in the future, they have experienced the benefits of remote working and wish for it to become a permanent part of their work life. It would be impossible to have 100% of people desiring remote working as some people will prefer going into the office however the fact that almost 70% of survey respondents want to work remotely in the future indicates that remote working is here to stay. There is work to be done though before it can be successful.

The need for legislation to govern remote working is essential. The government has unveiled a code of practice for the right to disconnect (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021) whilst making various suggestions about the monitoring of staff and whether or not staff can request remote working. However, there is a lack of definitive legislation- code of practices are merely guidelines and not law- to govern remote working. According to the primary survey, 65.4% of respondents indicated that do not feel the government has done enough regarding legislation for remote working. This is very important as remote working may be the future of working and it is vital that there are laws to protect the rights of all those involved. The fact that roughly 65% of people feel the government has not done enough in this regard indicates that much work needs to be done. Legislation is needed to protect the workers right to disconnect, right to request remote working, how many days they should work remotely, set forth the employer's role regarding

wellbeing and set forth a provision to monitor remote working amongst other areas.

Legislation is needed to ensure that all parties are protected and therefore should only be designed following direct communication with employers and employees to ensure that the laws passed cover everything and protect everyone. It is important for any legislation passed to be comprehensive and have room for update as remote working is still relatively new and will need to be updated as time goes on. It is important regardless that any legislation protects the employees right to disconnect, right to choose if they want to work remotely and how often and the right for the employee to be provided with the tools to work remotely. The legislation should also provide a provision for the protection of employer's data and rules on how employers can monitor employees without infringing their right to privacy.

Legislation may soon be introduced and recently it was reported that the Irish government has proposed tax breaks to incentivise remote working for both the employer and the employee (McConnell, 2021). These tax breaks will likely be confirmed in the 2021 budget with the intention of making remote work appealing to all those involved. The tax breaks will ease the burden taken on by both sides when setting up remote working as the employer will be expected to provide their employees with equipment such as laptops to work remotely whilst the employee will experience increased utility costs such as electricity as a result of working from home. These tax breaks are a positive indication that the government is taking remote working seriously and is aiming to introduce legislation to help it develop.

As indicated in the primary survey, people want to work remotely in the future at least some of the time. There are many benefits to working remotely for all parties and people have realised this. There are also several drawbacks and these need to be rectified before remote working can become a normal part of the working world. To ensure its success communication between employers, employees, trade unions and politicians is important to ensure that the remote working system works for all.

Do you feel that employers should be allowed to use AI software to track keystrokes and active hours on laptops provided to remote workers provided it is during working hours?

26 responses

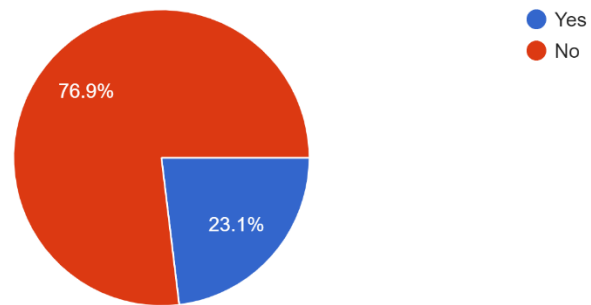


Figure 5

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to discover what the future of remote working looks like. As remote working has become more and more common as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic there has been discussion over whether it will become a normal part of the working routine. This research aimed to discover if employees desired remote working in the future, what the highs and lows of remote working were and what needs to be done to make sure remote working is a success in the future. Additionally, the research also aimed to discover if legislation were needed to protect remote workers and what areas in particular would need legislative support.

To find the answers to these questions two surveys were carried out to pose questions to the workforce. Firstly, a pilot study consisting of sixteen questions was posted on LinkedIn. The pilot survey provided a strong overview of how remote working is viewed and allowed for the research to be further narrowed down for a second survey. The questions were mainly multiple choice although there were a couple of questions that allowed respondents to write their own answer. The multiple-choice questions can be analysed easily enough as the option with the most choices will indicate the preference on that question. To analyse the questions that respondents could insert their own answer, content analysis was used. This is a process of identifying patterns of words and themes in the answers to a survey including the number of times a particular answer is given. This provides the researcher with a good indication of how people feel about that particular question. The second survey consisted of five questions and was also posted on LinkedIn. The second survey provided simple data regarding what the future of remote working looks like. The questions were all choose one option out of two and therefore provided the researcher with simple data regarding what the future of remote working looks like and what needs to be done to make remote working a success.

The pilot study provided the researcher with some key takeaways and allowed for the research to be further narrowed down for a second survey (the primary survey). The pilot study established that the majority of people like remote working and would like to experience it in some form in the future although the vast majority of people had not experienced it prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The improved work/life balance and less time spent commuting were key benefits to remote working which indicated that remote working is helping people organise their lives better and as a result they may be happier. However, the loss of socialisation in work was deemed the worst thing about remote working

and it is important for this not to be disregarded as social isolation can lead to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. It was established in the pilot study that employers did not always motivate their employees to exercise whilst working remotely and only half of respondents felt their finishing times were respected. This shows that the employers need to do better regarding protecting their employee's wellbeing. To ensure that remote working is a success it was suggested that employers provide funding to help set up home offices and run initiatives to keep employees engaged and interacting with each other. A key takeaway from the pilot study was that legislation will be needed to ensure that everyone knows their role, and everyone is protected.

The second survey (the primary survey) has provided several very key findings for the researcher. Remote working has a place in the future as the majority of survey respondents desire it in the future. However, for employers to manage their employees they will have to think of something other than AI software- used to monitor keystrokes and active hours- as this was an overwhelmingly unpopular idea. Respondents feel that the employee should have more control in the regard of how many days they work from home, this would prevent anyone from being forced to work from home more often than they would like but it is important that employers have a say in the matter to and install maximum and minimum remote working days to ensure that employees do not work from home excessively and that employees work from home enough to fit the business needs. The survey also indicated that employers should provide funding for a home office if they expect employees to work remotely. The second (primary) survey has indicated that remote working is desirable, but legislation is required to set out the role of all parties involved and also to set out the responsibilities when it comes to employee wellbeing, home office funding and how often one can work remotely.

The fact that the vast majority of people desire remote working shows that it does have a role in the future working world. For it to be a success everyone involved- employers, employees, and government for instance- must play their part well. The use of remote working during the past year has been a chance for everyone to experience what it is like however these remote working strategies were set up in haste and only because a pandemic required it. The remote working practices will need time to evolve to ensure that the system works well for everyone. To achieve this regular communication and feedback will be required as well as guidance from the government. The research has indicated that employers may need to more to protect their employees mental and physical wellbeing. In fact, the loss of socialisation has been

mentioned as a key drawback to remote working. In a similar vein, employers have noted in past research that performance management was an issue when it came to remote working. To rectify both of these problems it may be that a blended approach to remote working may be the best course of action. This would involve an employee splitting their week between the office and remote working. This would allow managers to manage and support their employees while they are in office and ensure that they are given all the support and motivation that they need, whilst also providing the employees the chance to see their co-workers face to face and socialise.

The primary research provided significant back up to facts discovered during the secondary research phase. As discovered in secondary research the major benefit of remote working is the better work/life balance that it provides for employees, and this was stated in the primary research as the biggest benefit to remote working. Furthermore, the primary research confirmed that the loss of socialisation is one the biggest drawbacks to remote working which was also indicated in the secondary research. The primary research did not disprove anything in the secondary research however it did further highlight the lack of in-depth research into the effect on mental health that remote working may have. The primary research has provided a more modern insight into how people feel about remote working as the secondary research whilst accurate in its findings of remote working was lacking in regard to the funding of home offices, managing remote workers and the need for legislation.

The primary research provided a strong insight into how desirable remote is and what the low points of it are. This has helped to show that remote working does have a place in the future working world. The research has showed that it is desired by employees and has provided an insight into how it can be set up successfully. The primary research was lacking however in the area of mental health. Whilst some conclusions could be drawn from the research it was still limited in its results regarding how remote working might affect mental health and physical wellbeing. For a further study being conducted it is vital not to disregard the wellbeing aspects of remote working.

There are many opportunities for further research into the area of remote working that would provide a great addition to existing research. The area of wellbeing as mentioned above is an area that would benefit greatly by further research to allow the workforce and government to fully understand the effect that remote working can have on a person's physical and mental wellbeing. Furthermore, there is a lack of research in the area of the ethics of remote working

specifically relating to the monitoring and management of remote working staff. As suggestions have been made to allow employers to use AI software to track employees' keystrokes and active hours whilst remote working, research into this would provide an interesting insight into how people feel about it, how it could be set up and how successful it might be. It is clear that remote working has opportunities for further research and wellbeing and ethics are certainly two areas that could result in interesting findings should further research be conducted.

From the results of the primary and secondary research it is clear that remote working does have a place in the future and with further work done to develop a strong remote working system it could play a very prominent role in the future working context and become a normal and accepted part of the working world.

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Appendix

Appendix A- pilot study questions

The future of Remote working in Ireland

Form description

This research survey aims to discover what the future of remote working is in the organisation * and how remote working is viewed by the Irish workforce. All information gathered in this survey will be stored securely by the surveyor. The survey consists of 16 questions and will take 5 minutes to complete. The surveyor can be contacted at x20145721@student.ncirl.ie , this survey is completely anonymous, and answers cannot be traced back to any individual or organisation. You may opt out of the survey at any time and incomplete surveys will not be used in the findings of the study.

- I have read and understand this ethical declaration
- Other...

What age range do you fall under

- 18-30
- 31-45
- 46+

What category does your current/most recent industry fall under

- Finance, Human resources, Marketing, Legal services
- Public Sector
- Healthcare
- Education
- Technology/Engineering/STEM
- Other...



What is the most important aspect of your job for you?

Short answer text

Do you like the idea of working remotely

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Have you ever worked remotely during your life?

- Yes
- No



Did you ever work remotely prior to the pandemic?

- Yes
- No

If yes, What did you enjoy most about remote working

- Less commuting
- Increased autonomy/independence
- Work/life balance
- Less formal atmosphere
- Other...

⋮
What did you enjoy least about remote working

- Loss of socialisation
- Difficult internet connections
- Other...

Do you feel there is much motivation for organisations to allow remote working?

- Yes
- No

How do you feel remote working could be improved

Short answer text
.....

⋮
How often did you exercise when working remotely

- | | | | | | | |
|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Rarely | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Very Often |

Was this encouraged by your employer?

- Yes
- No



When working remotely, did you coworkers and employer respect your finish time?

- Yes
- No
- Only Coworkers
- Only employer

Do you feel legislation to protect remote workers is needed?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Would you like to work remotely in the future?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Any further suggestions or opinions regarding remote working and how it can be improved?

Long answer text

Appendix B- pilot study results

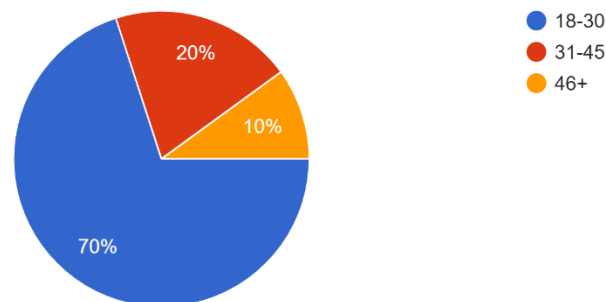
This research survey aims to discover what the future of remote working is in the organisation and how remote working is viewed by the Irish workforce. All information gathered in this survey will be stored securely by the surveyor. The survey consists of 16 questions and will take 5 minutes to complete. The surveyor can be contacted at x20145721@student.ncirl.ie, this survey is completely anonymous, and answers cannot be traced back to any individual or organisation. You may opt out of the survey at any time and incomplete surveys will not be used in the findings of the study.

10 responses



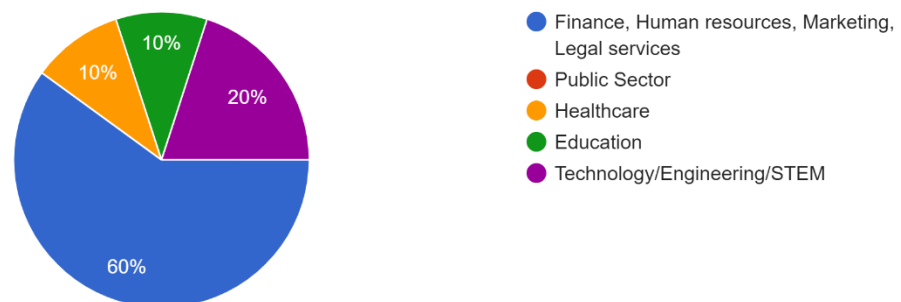
What age range do you fall under

10 responses



What category does your current/most recent industry fall under

10 responses



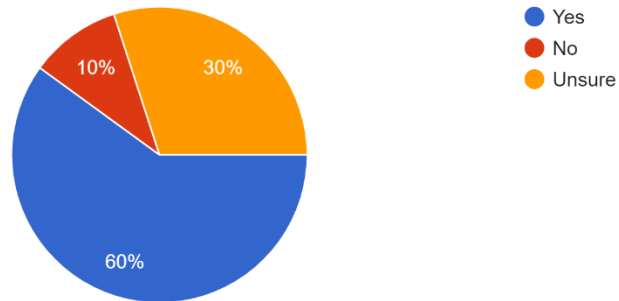
What is the most important aspect of your job for you?

9 responses

Autonomy
Progression opportunities
Nice colleagues
Wellbeing
Patient Interaction
Responsibilities
Progression, Social aspects
Doing something I have passion for
Progression, Caring employer

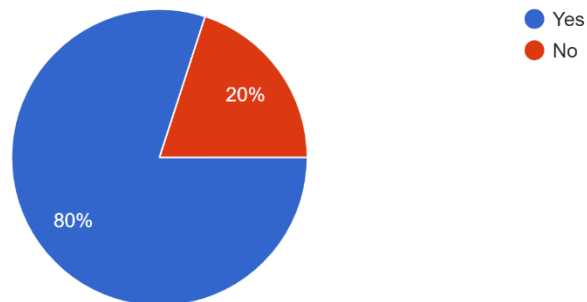
Do you like the idea of working remotely

10 responses

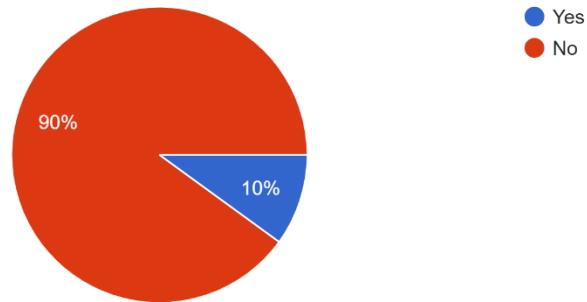


Have you ever worked remotely during your life?

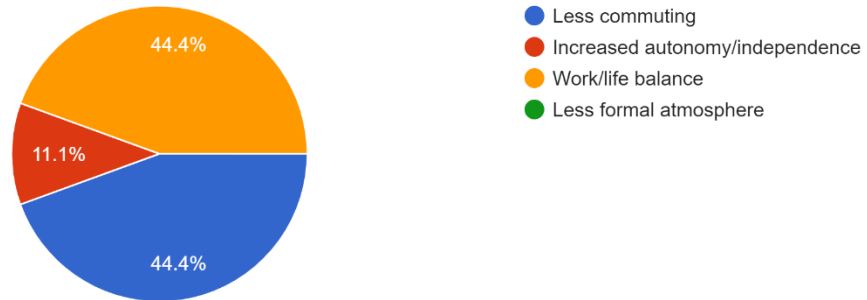
10 responses



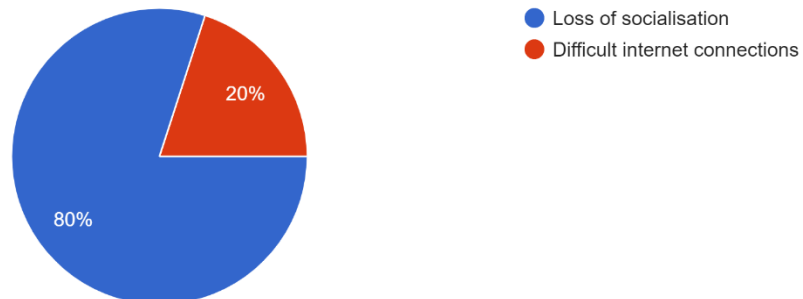
Did you ever work remotely prior to the pandemic?
10 responses



If yes, What did you enjoy most about remote working
9 responses

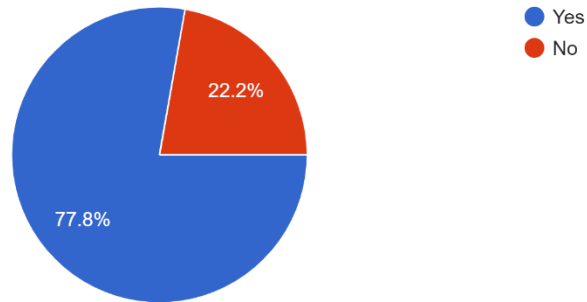


What did you enjoy least about remote working
10 responses



Do you feel there is much motivation for organisations to allow remote working?

9 responses



How do you feel remote working could be improved

4 responses

Make sure staff are given a laptop, desk, laptop raiser etc.

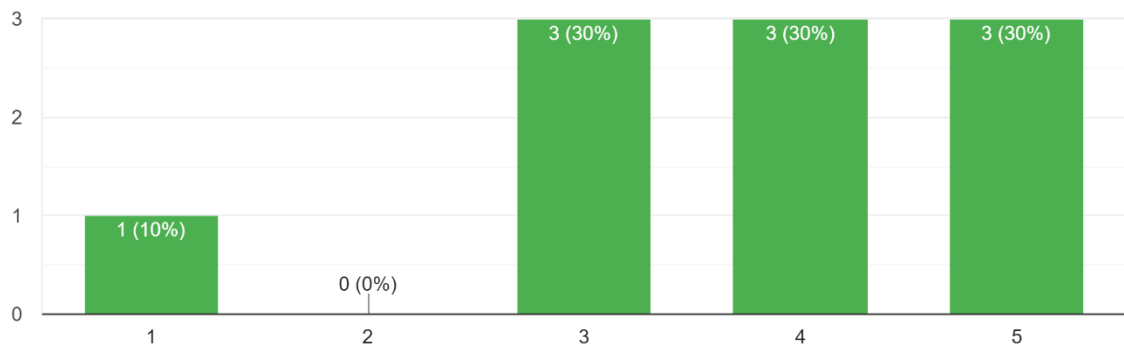
more emphasis on pushing employees to stay engaged, have cameras on, have a social virtual coffee

Spend money that would go towards paying utility bills to provide supplies for employees to work at home instead

Balance between office and remote work

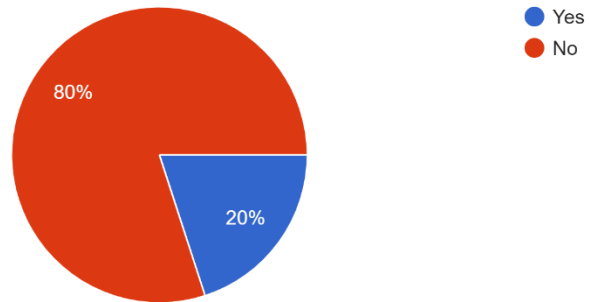
How often did you exercise when working remotely

10 responses



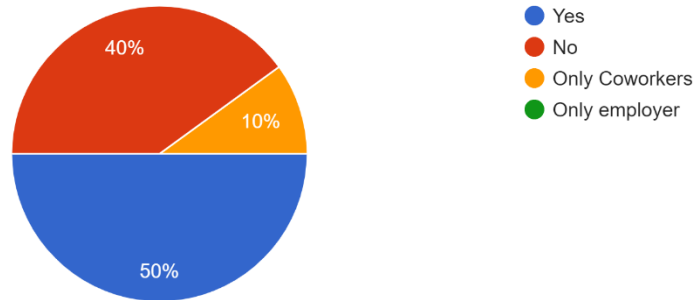
Was this encouraged by your employer?

10 responses



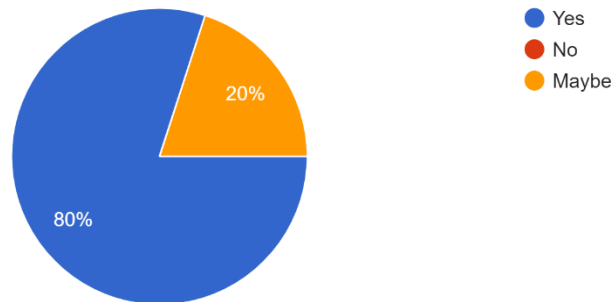
When working remotely, did you coworkers and employer respect your finish time?

10 responses



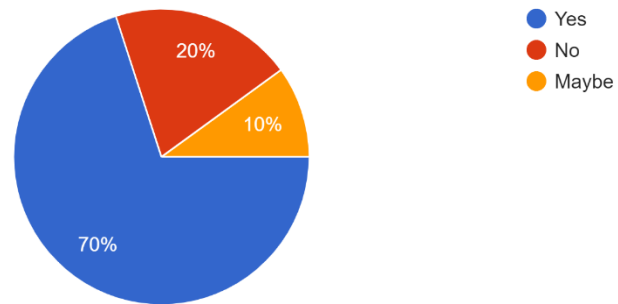
Do you feel legislation to protect remote workers is needed?

10 responses



Would you like to work remotely in the future?

10 responses



Any further suggestions or opinions regarding remote working and how it can be improved?

0 responses

No responses yet for this question.

Appendix C- primary study questions

The Future of remote working in Ireland

<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/6b64a-tanaiste-signs-code-of-practice-on-right-to-disconnect/>

This research survey aims to discover what the future of remote working is in the organisation * and how remote working is viewed by the Irish workforce. All information gathered in this survey will be stored securely by the surveyor. The survey consists of 5 questions and will take 2 minutes to complete. The surveyor can be contacted at x20145721@student.ncirl.ie , this survey is completely anonymous, and answers cannot be traced back to any individual or organisation. You may opt out of the survey at any time and incomplete surveys will not be used in the findings of the study.

I have read and understand this ethical declaration

After the pandemic do you want to work remotely? *

Yes

No

Do you feel that employers should be allowed to use AI software to track keystrokes and active hours on laptops provided to remote workers provided it is during working hours? *

Yes

No

Who should have more control over how many days an employee works from home? *

Employers

Employees

Should employers provide a grant to employees to pay for home office equipment if they are expected to work from home *

Yes

No

Do you think the governments current legislative plans to protect remote workers is sufficient? *
(see link in description for further details)

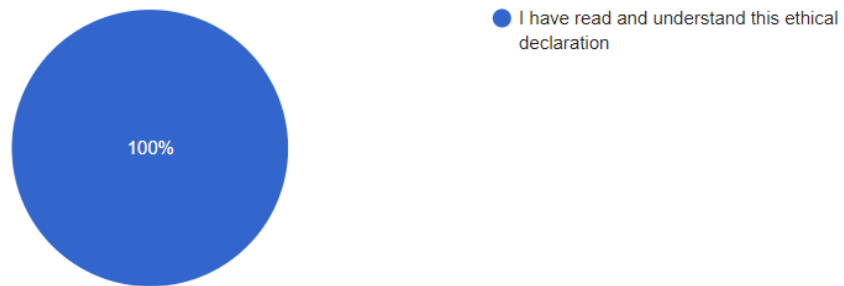
Yes

No

Appendix D- primary study results

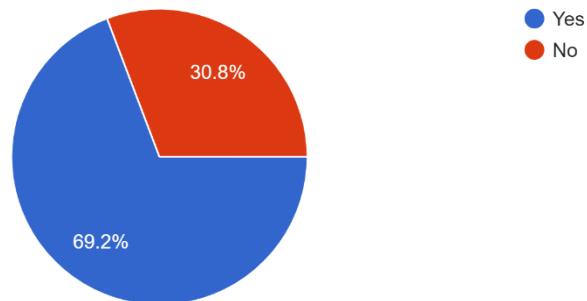
This research survey aims to discover what the future of remote working is in the organisation and how remote working is viewed by the Irish workforce. All information gathered in this survey will be stored securely by the surveyor. The survey consists of 5 questions and will take 2 minutes to complete. The surveyor can be contacted at x20145721@student.ncirl.ie , this survey is completely anonymous, and answers cannot be traced back to any individual or organisation. You may opt out of the survey at any time and incomplete surveys will not be used in the findings of the study.

26 responses



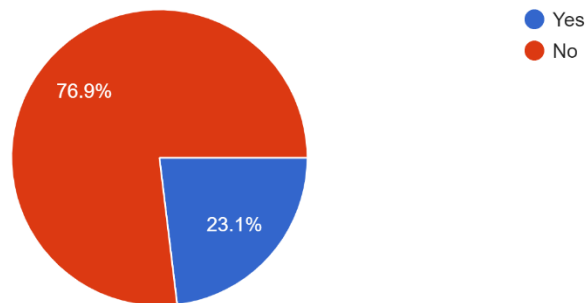
After the pandemic do you want to work remotely?

26 responses



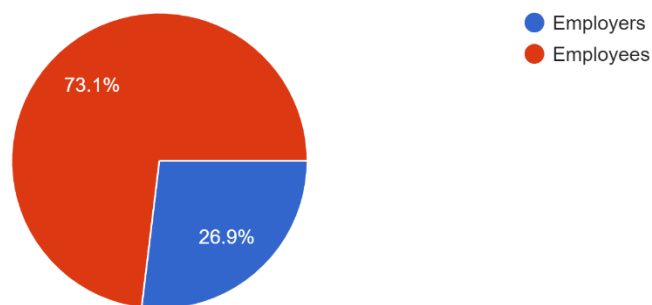
Do you feel that employers should be allowed to use AI software to track keystrokes and active hours on laptops provided to remote workers provided it is during working hours?

26 responses



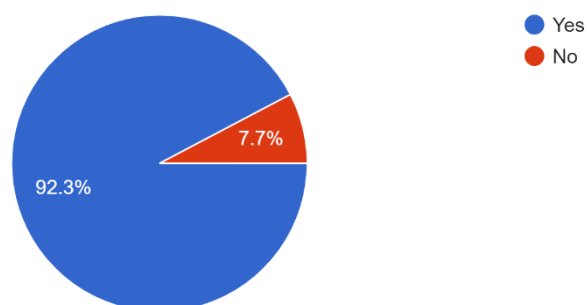
Who should have more control over how many days an employee works from home?

26 responses



Should employers provide a grant to employees to pay for home office equipment if they are expected to work from home

26 responses



Do you think the governments current legislative plans to protect remote workers is sufficient?
(see link in description for further details)

26 responses

