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# ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKING IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

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# ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKING IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

People in Government Lab



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## Addressing Challenges to Remote and Hybrid Working in Public Organisations

### POLICY REPORT

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This policy report was written by Margarita Gómez, Pedro Arcain Riccetto, Pia Iocco Barias, and Javier Fuenzalida as part of the Remote Work and People in Government Project (SSD/CUREC1A/BSG\_C1A-21-07), conducted by the People in Government Lab.

The People in Government Lab is a global, interdisciplinary research centre within the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. It focuses on people and performance management and aims to improve the motivation, effectiveness and responsiveness of people working in government, by creating and spreading the evidence base for a better government workforce. The People in Government Lab is funded by BRAVA Foundation, Lemann Foundation, República.org and Humanise Institute.

The authors would like to thank the public organisations involved in the project: Brazil's Ministry of Economy, Federal Court of Accounts, Supreme Court, Electoral Supreme Court; General Directorate of the Civil Service, Public Attorneys' Office; and the UK Cabinet Office, Ministries and Departments participating in this study. We also would like to thank the researchers participating in the Remote Work and People in Government Project: Lars Tummers, Jake Bowers, Sebastiano Massaro, Joseph Sherlock, Lucia Macchia, Henrico van Roekel, Ariella Kristal, Aung Hein, Hannah Collis, Thais Cardarelli, Pablo Soto Mota, and Thai (Russell) Li. Thanks to Luana Faria, Henna Khan, Clare Leaver, and Ben Roseth for their suggestions on the first versions of this policy report. Finally, we highlight that participation in this study does not mean endorsement of the report's recommendations.



# ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKING IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

Policy Report

## **Executive Summary**

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The forced adoption of remote and hybrid working in public organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic is a people management innovation that will reverberate for years to come. This policy report gathers evidence to help respond to four general questions related to the adoption of remote and hybrid work in the public sector:

- How do remote and hybrid work impact public servants in particular?
- What are the challenges it poses to public organisations?
- Which groups are more affected by these challenges?
- How can governments ensure the success of teleworking?

The People in Government Lab at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, conducted the *Remote Work and People in Government Survey* in public organisations in Brazil, Chile and the United Kingdom to provide insights into these issues. This policy report discusses the four main findings focused on the challenges faced by public servants when teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Most respondents are satisfied with remote and hybrid work, but relational and work-life balance challenges clearly emerged.
- Established regulatory frameworks and teleworking policies affected respondents' previous teleworking exposure and their remote and hybrid work experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Respondents who are less educated, female or non-managers had substantially less remote work experience and these groups needed to adapt more quickly to remote and hybrid working.
- Managers and younger public servants faced more challenges teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic than non-managers and older public servants.

This report identifies the main challenges and proposes a set of evidence-based recommendations to improve remote and hybrid working in the public sector. The recommendations are divided into two groups: the first group looks at the regulatory framework and policies and the second focuses on management practices.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Regulatory framework and policies**

**#1:** Governments should develop a regulatory framework on remote and hybrid working which should define the different schemes of flexible working arrangements, employees' and employers' duties and remote and hybrid workers' rights. Recent legal initiatives include legislation on the right to disconnect.

**#2:** Public organisations should adopt manuals and policies to evaluate their organisational needs and define specific programmes and management tools. Current manuals on flexible working provide guidelines to assess public organisations' capacities regarding people, processes and financial resources and to develop an implementation plan. Such policies and manuals will guide the adoption of teleworking, develop ad hoc remote working programmes and define clear organisational policies on collaboration and communication.

### **Managerial Practices**

#### **Strengthen leadership skills and team practices**

**#3:** Leaders of virtual and hybrid teams should receive specific training to improve their ability to oversee team members' processes and to reinforce team collaboration and communication to act as change agents. Training can include instruction on coaching and mentoring, delegation, goal setting, role clarification, self-management, monitoring team progress, managing team boundaries, and conflict resolution.

**#4:** Leaders of virtual and hybrid teams should strive to communicate with their team, ensuring they increase pre-remote work standards. Two effective communication techniques are the use of frequent check-ins and timely feedback. They should use technology such as videoconferencing to ensure the timeliness of feedback and check-ins and use it to empower employees.

**#5:** Members of a virtual or hybrid team should be held accountable for the frequency, quality, timeliness and content of communications. Tools such as chat function, emails, anonymous forms should be used to increase opportunities to contribute and promote clear and timely communication.

**#6:** Leaders of virtual and hybrid teams should, in discussion with their team members, establish agreements related to communication, collaboration and decision-making processes. Teams need to understand what is expected of them, how the communication should be, and how their work fits with the grand scheme of the organisation. Some useful practices are weekly updates, team meetings, or "48-hours response time" agreements.

#### **Improve induction and support for new team members, especially for younger public servants**

**#7:** Public organisations should create virtual or hybrid informal sessions to allow new team members and younger public servants to interact with senior managers and colleagues to enhance

performance, socialisation and career outcomes. These informal sessions should also be applied to the induction of new team members. Organisations can adopt practices such as virtual water cooler sessions to connect senior managers with new team members and facilitate knowledge sharing and advice.

**Enact supportive systems to improve public servants' well-being**

**#8:** Members of virtual and hybrid teams should adopt supportive mechanisms such as team charters to define goals, assets, and obstacles, team building activities to maintain connectedness and engagement, and informal check-ins and feedback to better manage virtual teamwork while providing support for team task accomplishment and socio-emotional needs.

**Improve public servants' planning and time management skills**

**#9:** Public organisations, leaders and individuals might use planning prompts to improve time and workload management by prompting employees to define specific goals and setting action plans.





# ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKING IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

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## 1. Introduction

Public organisations depend on public servants to fulfil their mandates and obligations, from analysing counterterrorism intelligence to processing applications for conditional cash transfer programmes. When the work of civil servants is disrupted, there is a risk that these fundamental functions of government are also disrupted. The COVID-19 pandemic obliged many public institutions to implement ad-hoc remote and hybrid work<sup>1</sup> policies for an unprecedented number of civil servants. However, these emergency measures were generally imposed without having answers to key questions:

- How do remote and hybrid work impact public servants in particular?
- What are the challenges it poses to public organisations?
- Which groups are more affected by these challenges?
- How can governments ensure the success of teleworking?

The pandemic-induced teleworking in the public sector is a people management innovation that will reverberate for years to come. The widespread adoption of these teleworking arrangements by governments worldwide represents a unique opportunity to gather more evidence about these practices to better understand the challenges they pose to the public workforce, which groups are more affected by these challenges and effective strategies to tackle them. The evidence suggests a myriad of positive consequences of remote and hybrid work on public servants' working life (Gajendran, Harrison, 2007; Hone et al., 1998; Hill et al., 1998), the most common being the increased productivity fostered by the greater autonomy and the flexibility it provides (Standen et al., 1990). However, studies conducted during the pandemic are less clear about the extent of

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<sup>1</sup> The terms 'teleworking', 'remote working', 'hybrid working', 'flexible working' and 'new ways of working' are used interchangeably in this report. The literature, however, considers 'teleworking' and 'remote working' to be situations in which employees perform their duties at home ('work from home') or at an atypical location that is not a traditional office (Caillier, 2012). In this case, the work is performed with the support of information communication technology outside the employer's premises (ILO, 1990; 2020). 'Hybrid working' happens when employees move between work-in-home spaces and traditional offices. Hybrid working has also been called 'multi-location work', 'smart working', 'agile work', 'flexible work' and 'flexi-office' (Iannotta et al., 2020; Gastaldi et al., 2014).

these positive consequences. For instance, García-Contreras et al. (2021) show that teleworkers presented higher self-reported productivity rates when teleworking during the pandemic, which is strongly associated with the desire to work-from-home (OECD, 2021), but other studies report a productivity decrease when teleworkers work overtime or if teleworking imposes an increase in their workload (García-Contreras et al., 2021; Kazekami, 2020; Andrade & Petiz, 2021). These findings showcase the need to better understand the implications of teleworking in the public sector and to learn from and improve what was done in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We designed the *Remote Work and People in Government Survey* to gather evidence on how public servants are being affected by the adoption of remote and hybrid work, better understand the challenges they are facing and use this evidence to make suggestions to mitigate potential negative consequences. This will inform the design, implementation and adjustments of telework and hybrid work schemes in the public service, especially important because most employees have declared their preferences to continue working under flexible work arrangements in the future (OECD, 2021). The purpose of this report is to discuss the main challenges faced by public servants in remote and hybrid working dynamics and suggest actionable recommendations to improve teleworking practices. In Section 1, we present the results of the *Remote Work and People in Government Survey* distributed in public organisations in Brazil, Chile and the United Kingdom. In Section 2, we use original data collected by the survey to identify and discuss the challenges public servants faced while teleworking. Section 3 then presents recommendations drawn from the available evidence and literature (pre and during the COVID-19 pandemic), divided into two groups of actions: the first is related to the development of proper regulatory frameworks and policies, and the second focuses on managerial practices.

## 2. The Remote Work and People in Government Survey

Remote and hybrid work disrupted the way public organisations function. This presents an opportunity for governments to improve service delivery, rethink organisational procedures, advance digital transformation strategies, enhance workforce experience or even rationalise their estate. However, making good use of these opportunities does not come without its challenges, which need to be further explored so that they can be tackled properly. Digging deeper into some of the main challenges related to remote and hybrid workers' experiences, this section presents the first results of the *Remote Work and People in Government Survey*, a study conducted in Brazil, Chile and the United Kingdom (UK).

The *Remote Work and People in Government Survey* was designed to understand how the adoption of remote and hybrid working impacted public servants' work-life and what were the challenges they faced while working remotely. It was conducted in August and September 2021 in a range of public organisations in three countries: Brazil (Ministry of Economy; Federal Court of Accounts; Supreme Court; Electoral Supreme Court), Chile (Department for Civil Service; Office of Public Attorneys) and the UK (UK Civil Service, distributed to all ministerial and non-ministerial departments).

A total of 1,715 responses were received in the period (Brazil, 245; Chile, 120; UK, 1,350). Of the participants, 60% were female, with an average age ranging from 43 (Brazil) to 47 (UK and Chile). Most respondents in Brazil and Chile held undergraduate (50% Chile, 58% Brazil) or graduate (45% Chile, 41% Brazil) degrees, while in the UK these numbers were more distributed (15% less than high school, 29% high school, 37% undergraduate, 19% graduate). Some 34% of respondents

were managers versus 66% without management responsibilities and 85% were working under full-time contracts (99% Chile, 78% Brazil, 76% UK). On remote and hybrid work, 71% of participants were not working from the office at all (83% UK, 70% Brazil, 63% Chile) and 53% did not have any previous experience working remotely (68% Chile, 48% Brazil, 42% UK).<sup>2</sup>

In Brazil, the public organisations participating in the survey were: the Ministry of the Economy, part of the federal government structure and responsible for formulating and executing the country's economic policy; the Federal Court of Accounts which supervises the federal organisations' finance and budget; the Supreme Court, the highest tribunal in the country, responsible for hearing final appeals and interpreting the Constitution; and the Electoral Supreme Court which runs the country's elections and decides over electoral matters. In Chile, respondents worked in: the Department for the Civil Service, a decentralised organisation focused on the professionalisation of the public workforce and improving public management; and the Office of Public Attorneys, the organisation providing legal services for the population. In the UK, respondents were spread over the country's Civil Service, with a majority working at the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. The UK Civil Service helps the government of the day develop and implement a wide range of policies as effectively as possible.

### 3. The challenges of hybrid and remote work in government

The analysis of the survey data offers some insights into respondents' exposure to remote and hybrid work. The results also provide evidence of their experiences working remotely during the pandemic, the challenges they have faced and the groups that have been more affected by these working dynamics. Four major findings emerge from the survey data. First, most respondents are satisfied with remote work during COVID-19 and intend to continue under this arrangement, but important relational and work-life balance challenges were also reported. Second, the existence of regulations and other teleworking policies in public organisations are positively linked to respondents' previous teleworking exposure and their experiences working remotely during the pandemic. Third, women, non-managers and respondents with lower educational levels had substantially lower previous exposure to telework, which affects their teleworking circumstances. Finally, managers and younger civil servants have faced particular challenges in teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 3.1 Most respondents are satisfied with working remotely and would like to continue under this scheme, but relational and work-life balance challenges clearly emerged

Most respondents were required to adopt remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 80% declared to be teleworking when this survey was distributed (August and September 2021). In general, they reported positive experiences working remotely: most reported being very satisfied (60.1%) or satisfied (27.16%) with telework and only a very few reported being dissatisfied (4.6%) or very dissatisfied (1.8%). A great majority (98.4%) would like to continue working remotely in the future through various arrangements, 36% would like to maintain full-time remote arrangements and 80.2% continue teleworking at least three days per week.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 with participants' demographics.

Figure 1a. Satisfaction with remote work during COVID-19

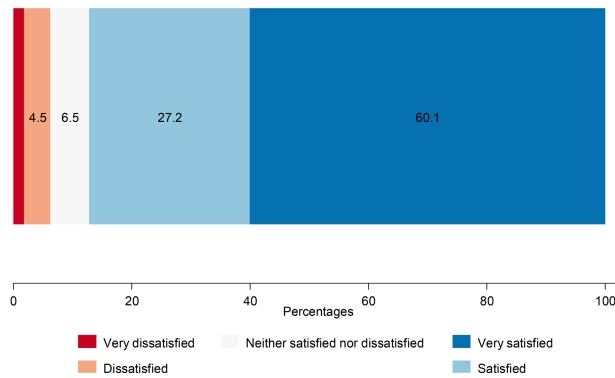
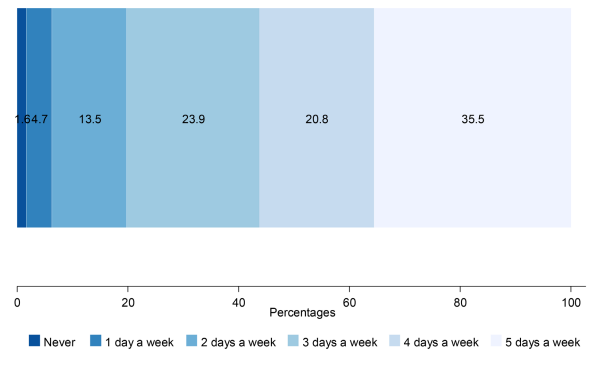


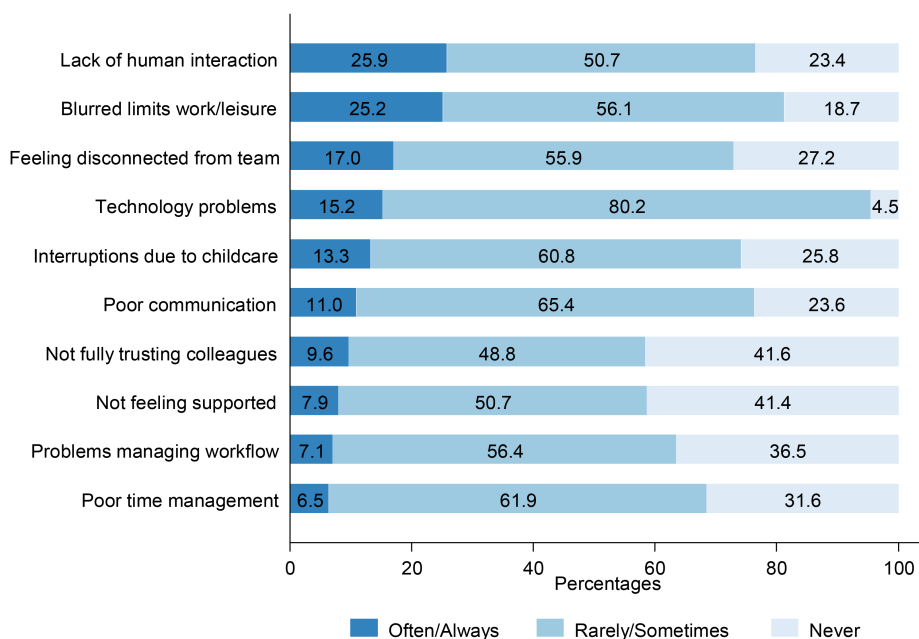
Figure 1b. Number of days preferred to continue teleworking in the future



Source: Remote Work and People in Government Survey (2021)

This general trend of remote work satisfaction and intention to continue teleworking contrasts with the challenges reported by respondents to have emerged while working remotely. Two main problems were noticed: the lack of human interaction in remote work settings and the blurred boundaries between their work and leisure time created by remote and hybrid work; a quarter of respondents reported experiencing these challenges. Work-life balance deterioration and isolation were also acknowledged as negative implications of remote work, particularly due to employees extended working hours in remote arrangements and their poor relationships with their colleagues (Buomprisco et al., 2021; Wöhrmann & Ebner, 2021).

Figure 2. Challenges working remotely during COVID-19

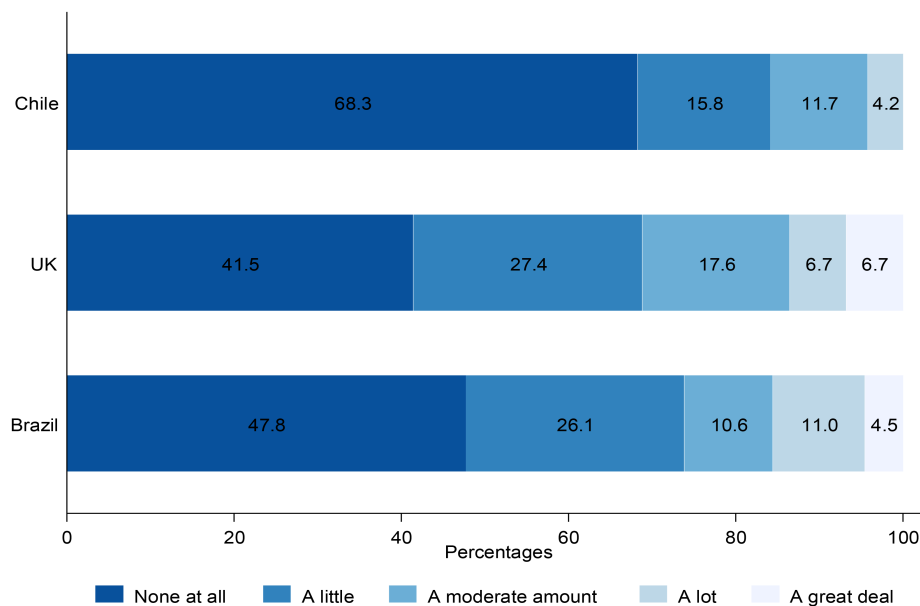


Source: Remote Work and People in Government Survey (2021)

### 3.2 Established regulatory frameworks and teleworking policies affected respondents' previous teleworking exposure and their remote and hybrid work experience during the COVID-19 pandemic

The existence of a clear regulatory framework for teleworking policies has a major explanatory power when looking at respondents' previous exposure to remote work across the study. Most had no (44.3%) or little or moderate experience with remote working (42.6%). Only a minority declared having a lot or a great deal of experience in teleworking (13%). However, this previous remote work experience varies substantially by country (see Appendix 2). Chilean civil servants had less previous exposure to remote working than Brazilian and UK respondents; 68% of Chilean respondents reported not having any experience of working remotely. In contrast, 48% of Brazilian workers and 41% of UK respondents stated they had no previous experience working remotely. The Chilean public sector did not have teleworking regulations or established civil service policies in place, and remote working was forbidden for almost all the Chilean public agencies. The exception was a handful of organisations developing remote work pilots involving a reduced number of employees. These included the National Industrial Property Institute and the National Institute of Statistics. The UK, by contrast, had an existing agenda on smarter working which included more flexible patterns (UK Cabinet Office, 2021). In Brazil, some organisations including the Supreme Court were expanding teleworking before the pandemic, with almost one-third of employees participating in pilot remote work programmes in early 2020.

Figure 3. Previous remote work experience by country



Existing teleworking regulations and established policies seem to have determined respondents' previous exposure to telework. The differences in these regulations and policies between countries were also linked to respondents' experience of teleworking during the pandemic. UK respondents reported a higher rate of telework (83%) than their Brazilian (69.4%) or Chilean comparators (61.7%) during the pandemic, despite restrictions being lifted earlier in the UK. The results also show substantial differences in reported satisfaction under this work arrangement and respondents' intention to continue teleworking in the future (see Appendix 3). UK respondents were the most satisfied, followed by the Brazilians and then the Chileans. Respondents from Chile declared

being substantially less satisfied with teleworking during the pandemic and intend to continue teleworking fewer days per week than the UK and Brazilian respondents.

Figure 4a. Satisfaction with remote work during COVID-19 by country

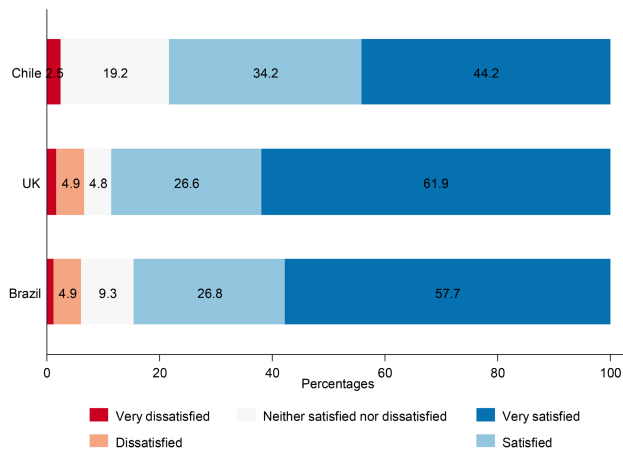
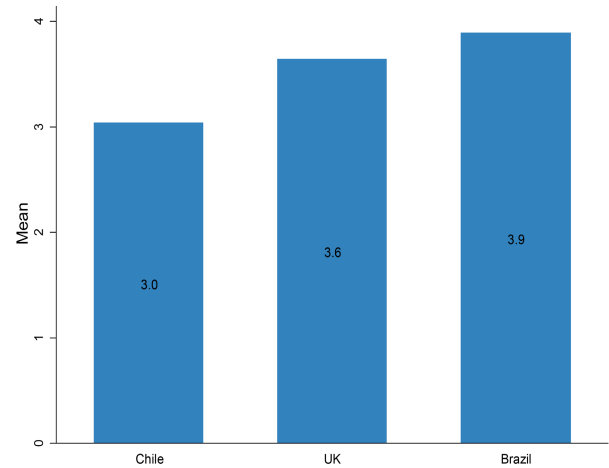


Figure 4b. Number of days preferred to continue teleworking in the future



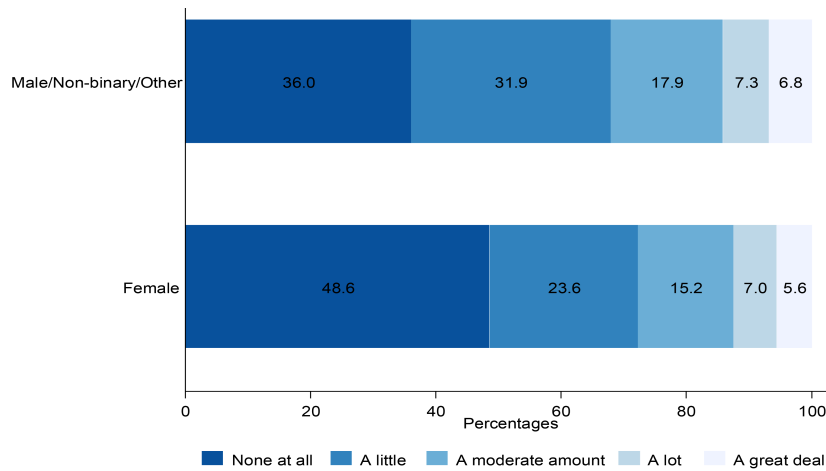
Source: Remote Work and People in Government Survey (2021)

Chilean respondents' challenges also suggest the need for more robust institutional measures for remote and hybrid work in the public sector (see Appendix 5). Regulation and established policies could contribute to addressing most of the problems reported by respondents in Chile. For instance, Chilean respondents more frequently reported technology problems than their Brazilian and UK counterparts, a lack of human interaction and being disconnected from their teams. They acknowledged the need for more or better ways to socialise within and across teams. They also experienced blurred boundaries between work and leisure time at a higher rate and distractions due to childcare or elderly care were more often reported.

### 3.3 Respondents who are less educated, female or non-managers had substantially lower previous remote work experience and these groups needed to adapt more quickly to remote and hybrid work

Sociodemographic and administrative characteristics are also associated with respondents' previous remote work experience (see Appendix 2). Women had considerably less exposure to remote work before the COVID-19 pandemic than other gender groups; nearly half declared no previous experience teleworking while only 36% of other gender groups were in this situation. There is strong evidence that women are more directly affected by remote work and tend to be more resistant to its adoption (Lott & Abendroth, 2020). This resistance is not without a reason, as studies have shown that 'teleworking conditions have unsettled [the] professional work rhythm of women and have detached them from their work environment', with, for example, the increase of domestic workload for women (Coban, 2021). The adoption of gender policies to support women working remotely could help to make the adjustment to flexible ways of working smoother for this group.

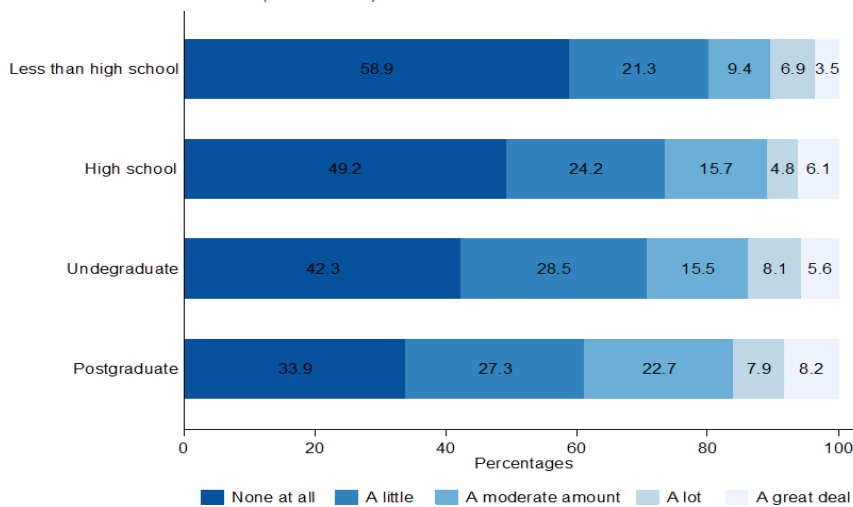
Figure 5. Previous remote work experience by gender



Source: Remote Work and People in Government Survey (2021)

People with higher educational levels consistently reported more previous exposure to remote working. This result is in line with previous studies and reflects differences in respondents’ occupations and formal education (Haddon & Brynin, 2005; Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Most people with educational levels lower than high school did not have previous exposure to remote work (58.9%) and this rate gradually decreases as the educational level increases: 49.2% of people with high school, 42.3% of people with undergraduate degrees and 33.9% of those with postgraduate education had no previous remote working experience. Likewise, the rates of people with a little, a moderate amount, a lot or a great deal of experience increase along with levels of education. Thus, the pandemic-induced adoption of remote working by most respondents, regardless of their education and qualifications, posed a challenge to governments’ management policies and practices. Studies show that low-skilled workers were disproportionately affected by the pandemic and should not be overlooked when it comes to designing remote and hybrid working policies (OECD, 2021). A closer look at these groups of respondents, with potential targeted actions, could reduce this.

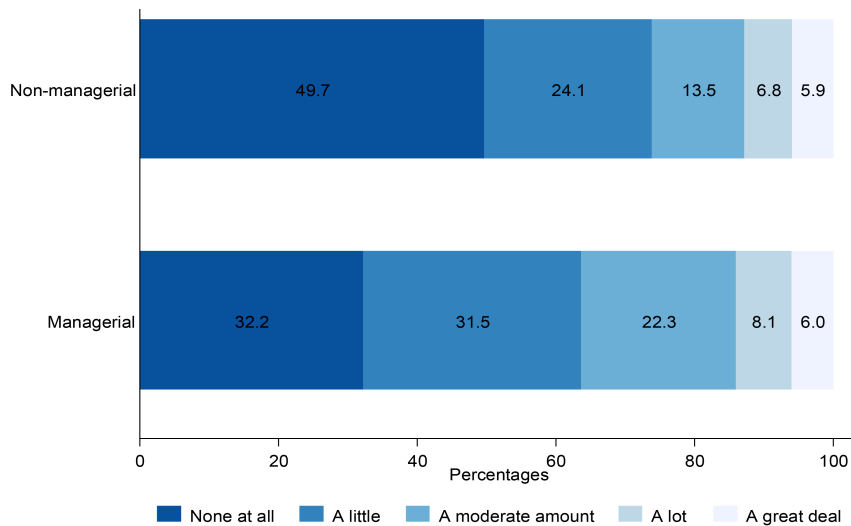
Figure 6. Previous remote work experience by education



Source: Remote Work and People in Government Survey (2021)

In line with the greater prevalence of previous remote working exposure of respondents with higher educational levels, those holding managerial positions had more exposure before the pandemic. Nearly half of non-managers declared not having previous teleworking experience (49.7%), while most managers had little to a great deal of experience working remotely before COVID-19 (67.8%). Recent evidence suggests that managerial tasks are among the easiest to perform remotely and therefore managers tend to telework more than other occupations (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020; Holgersen & Svenkerud, 2021). Although less experienced in remote work, non-managers had to quickly adjust to pandemic-driven teleworking regimes. Respondents holding non-managerial positions reported working remotely more than 10% less than managers during the pandemic (71.7% versus 83.1%). This suggests that remote working's spontaneous adoption by respondents, regardless of their teleworking experience or occupation's suitability for this work arrangement.

Figure 7. Previous remote working experience by position



Source: Remote Working and People in Government Survey (2021)

### 3.4 Managers and younger public servants have faced more challenges in teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic than non-managers and older public servants.

Respondents holding managerial positions were less satisfied with working remotely than those without (see Appendix 4); 52.6% of managers declared being very satisfied, while this rate for non-managers was 63.5%. Likewise, on average, respondents in managerial positions would like to work remotely for fewer days than those in non-managerial positions. Managers reported more frequent relational challenges such as a lack of human interaction and poor communication and the need for more or better socialisation both within and between teams. They also declared more problems managing their own time and work and reported more often experiencing blurred boundaries between work and leisure time, poor time management and prioritisation and having challenges managing their workflow. They reported the need for better methods and practices to track their tasks and manage their time and reported more often not feeling supported. One supporting practice suggested by managers is to secure better technology for team meetings, provide recommendations on how to manage virtual and hybrid group meetings, and training dedicated to improving their time management and planning skills.



Figure 8a. Satisfaction with remote working during COVID-19 by position

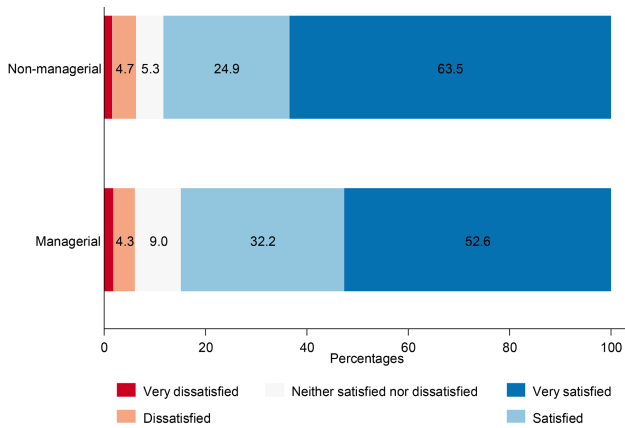
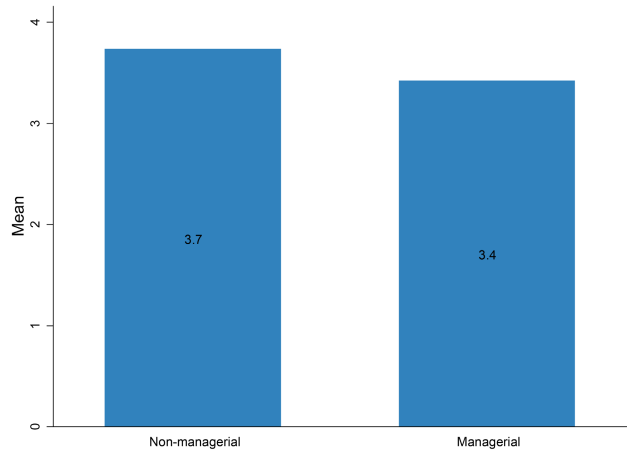


Figure 8b. Number of days preferred to continue teleworking in the future by position



Source: Remote Working and People in Government Survey (2021)

Younger respondents (20-39) faced more challenges while working remotely during the pandemic (see Appendix 4). The percentage of individuals between 20 and 29 who were very satisfied with teleworking during the pandemic was 52%, nearly 10 percentage points less than the other age groups. Their rates of reporting that they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with working remotely were 5.9% and 8.1%, respectively. These rates are generally much lower for the other groups. Their rates of reporting that they were very satisfied with teleworking were almost 5 percentage points lower than older age groups (56%). Some 7% of respondents between 30 and 39 years old were dissatisfied, while older individuals were dissatisfied at much lower rates. Likewise, respondents between 20 and 29 and between 30 and 39 intend to telework substantially fewer days in the future than older age groups, on average.

Younger respondents experienced problems managing their own work and interacting with colleagues (see Appendix 5 and 6). Respondents between 20 and 39 and those between 20 and 29 were challenged by blurred boundaries between work and leisure time, poor time management and workflow management. They also reported more often than older age groups a lack of human interaction, poorer communication and the need for more or better socialisation mechanisms with colleagues.

Figure 9a. Satisfaction with remote working during COVID-19 by age

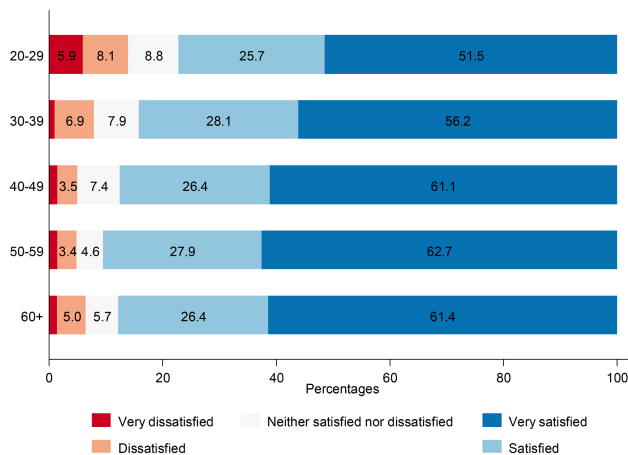
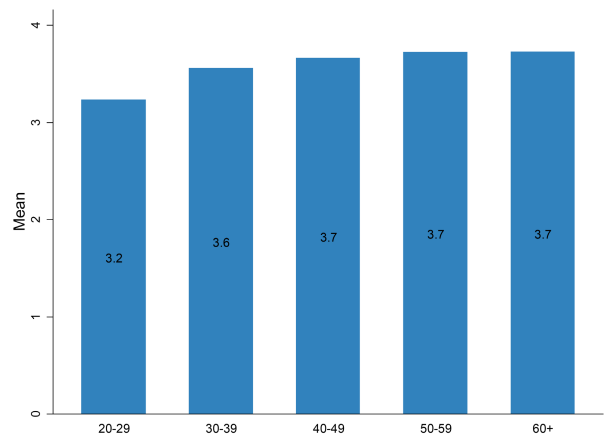


Figure 9b. Number of days preferred to continue teleworking in the future by age

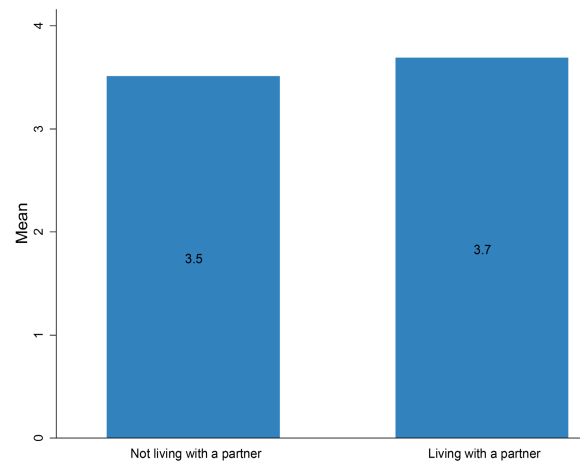
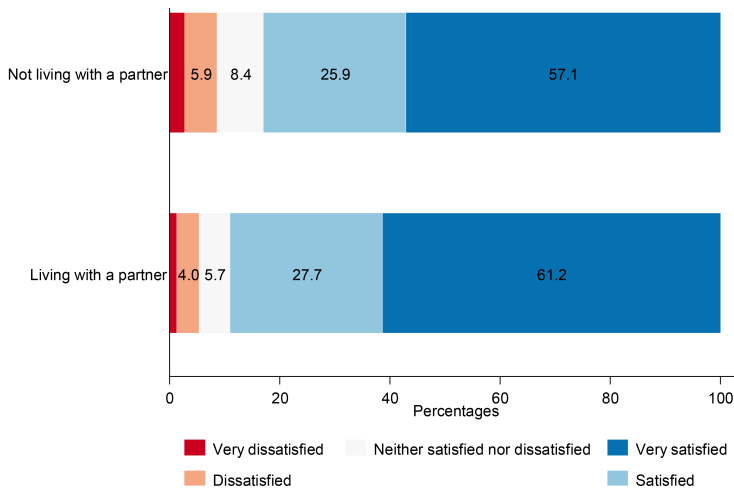


Source: Remote Working and People in Government Survey (2021)

People living with partners, as opposed to those not living with partners, teleworked more frequently during COVID-19 (82%) and reported a better remote working experience during the pandemic (see Appendix 5). 61% of respondents living with partners were very satisfied with the pandemic-induced remote working, while this rate for people not living with partners was 57%. Likewise, respondents living with partners would like to continue working remotely for a higher number of days than those not living with partners, on average. These differences could be partially linked to relational challenges while working remotely during the pandemic. People living with partners reported lower distrust of their work colleagues or feeling less disconnected from them, and less often a lack of human interaction, poor communication or not feeling supported. Those living with partners experienced disruptions or interruptions due to childcare or eldercare. Similarly, respondents with children face more disruptions while working remotely than those without.

Figure 10a. Satisfaction with remote working during COVID-19 by whether people live with partners

Figure 10b. Number of days preferred to continue teleworking by whether people live with partners



Source: Remote Working and People in Government Survey (2021)

### 3.5 Summary

The results of the *Remote Working and People in Government Survey* applied in Brazil, Chile and the UK provide insights into the challenges faced by public servants while working remotely during the pandemic. First, the data suggest a general satisfaction of respondents with their remote working experiences during the pandemic and a desire to continue working under full or hybrid remote working arrangements. Despite these positive results, respondents also reported relational and work-life balance challenges during their pandemic teleworking regimes. Second, regulations and established formal policies influenced respondents' previous remote working exposure and teleworking experiences during the pandemic. Of the countries participating in the study, Chilean respondents showed the lowest levels of remote working satisfaction during COVID-19 and the lowest desire to keep teleworking in the future. The challenges Chilean respondents faced working remotely such as problems with technology, social isolation and work-life imbalance illustrate the need for more robust regulations and policies for telework in the public sector. Third, women, non-managers and less educated respondents had substantially lower exposure to remote working before the COVID-19 pandemic and needed to adapt quickly to the pandemic-induced remote and hybrid dynamics. Governments should ensure these groups receive sufficient training and build the skills needed to work remotely. Fourth, managers and younger public servants have been

severely challenged during their remote working experience. Both groups have been particularly affected by work-life imbalance and experienced problems managing their own time and workload. They also expressed a clear need for more and better socialisation in their organisations. Managers reported needing more support from their organisations, especially in managing virtual or hybrid teams.

#### 4. What can public organisations do to improve remote and hybrid work experiences?

Building on the four main findings presented in Section 2 and based on the evidence from the review of the literature on what works to improve remote and hybrid working, this section provides a series of actions that governments can implement to address the challenges identified. Changes need to be done comprehensively and holistically to improve public servants' remote and hybrid working experience and we suggest two sets of recommendations that can be implemented by public organisations. The first is related to the definition and adoption of teleworking regulations and policies aimed at designing, implementing and improving remote working in the public sector. The second focuses on changes in managerial practices to improve teams' and individuals' performance and well-being. These are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1. Recommendations to improve public servants' performance and well-being while working remotely**

Type	Recommendations
<b>Regulation and policies</b>	<p><b>#1:</b> Governments should develop a regulatory framework on remote and hybrid working which should define the different schemes of flexible working arrangements, employees' and employers' duties and remote and hybrid workers' rights. Recent legal initiatives include legislation on the right to disconnect.</p> <p><b>#2:</b> Public organisations should adopt manuals and policies to evaluate their organisational needs and define specific programmes and management tools. Current manuals on flexible working provide guidelines to assess public organisations' capacities regarding people, processes and financial resources and to develop an implementation plan. Such policies and manuals will guide the adoption of teleworking, develop ad hoc remote working programmes and define clear organisational policies on collaboration and communication.</p>
<b>Managerial practices</b>	<p><b>Strengthen leadership skills and team practices</b></p> <p><b>#3:</b> Leaders of virtual and hybrid teams should receive specific training to improve their ability to oversee team members' processes and to reinforce team collaboration and communication to act as change agents. Training can include instruction on coaching and mentoring, delegation, goal setting, role clarification, self-management, monitoring team progress, managing team boundaries, and conflict resolution.</p>

Type	Recommendations
<b>Managerial practices</b>	<p><b>#4:</b> Leaders of virtual and hybrid teams should strive to communicate with their team, ensuring they increase pre-remote work standards. Two effective communication techniques are the use of frequent check-ins and timely feedback. They should use technology such as videoconferencing to ensure the timeliness of feedback and check-ins and use it to empower employees.</p> <p><b>#5:</b> Members of a virtual or hybrid team should be held accountable for the frequency, quality, timeliness and content of communications. Tools such as chat function, emails, anonymous forms should be used to increase opportunities to contribute and promote clear and timely communication.</p> <p><b>#6:</b> Leaders of virtual and hybrid teams should, in discussion with their team members, establish agreements related to communication, collaboration and decision-making processes. Teams need to understand what is expected of them, how the communication should be, and how their work fits within the grand scheme of the organisation. Some useful practices are weekly updates, team meetings, or “48-hours response time” agreements.</p> <p><b>Improve induction and support for new team members, especially for younger public servants</b></p> <p><b>#7:</b> Public organisations should create virtual or hybrid informal sessions to allow new team members and younger public servants to interact with senior managers and colleagues to enhance performance, socialisation and career outcomes. These informal sessions should also be applied to the induction of new team members. Organisations can adopt practices such as virtual water cooler sessions to connect senior managers with new team members and facilitate knowledge sharing and advice.</p> <p><b>Enact supportive systems to improve public servants’ well-being</b></p> <p><b>#8:</b> Members of virtual and hybrid teams should adopt supportive mechanisms such as team charters to define goals, assets, and obstacles, team building activities to maintain connectedness and engagement, and informal check-ins and feedback to better manage virtual teamwork while providing support for team task accomplishment and socio-emotional needs.</p> <p><b>Improve public servants’ planning and time management skills</b></p> <p><b>#9:</b> Public organisations, leaders and individuals might use planning prompts to improve time and workload management by prompting employees to define specific goals and setting action plans.</p>

#### 4.1 Regulation and formal policies on remote and hybrid work

The results of our survey show that respondents working in organisations with formal policies and norms regarding flexible, remote or hybrid working have a better experience than those who do not. Few governments had a specific set of norms regulating remote or hybrid work before the first COVID-19 outbreak, but its adoption has shown satisfactory results, including increased levels of productivity (Pizarro et al., 2021).

During the pandemic, two sets of norms have been developed to provide more certainty to public servants working remotely: (1) the adoption of a general legal framework to define different schemes of flexible work, conditions and employees' and employers' duties and, in some cases, (2) the adoption of legal provisions establishing the right to disconnect.

From March 2020 to November 2021, countries including Argentina, Belgium, Colombia, Mexico, Turkey and Taiwan passed legislation to establish a clear framework related to teleworking. These legal frameworks consider four key elements. First, they define the different schemes of flexible and hybrid working being adopted. Second, they state the need to have a written teleworking agreement that outline parties' obligations for working hours, technological support, reporting and supervising. Third, they establish the employer's responsibility to provide the necessary tools and equipment to teleworkers and to cover the expenses related to remote working arrangements. Finally, they highlight that remote workers and in-site workers have the same rights (see Appendix 7 for more details).

Recent legal initiatives have been put in place to respond to a challenge that has consistently appeared in recent surveys: the blurred boundaries between work and personal life (People in Government Lab, 2021; Center for Advanced Hindsight, 2020). These initiatives seek to guarantee public servants' right not to be online outside of working hours, even in flexible arrangements. Countries including Argentina, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Spain and more recently Colombia have introduced legislation on the right to disconnect. These legal frameworks emphasise the benefits and risks of teleworking and provide employees with legal certainty about their rights while working remotely.

At the organisational level, the use of manuals to guide teleworking policies and practices can contribute to improving employee performance and wellbeing. In particular, they can help organisations, managers and teams to evaluate their needs before introducing and developing remote working in the organisation, guide strategic decisions during the design of such telework schemes, offer concrete tips during the programme's implementation, and provide tools to monitor, assess and improve the remote work programme. For instance, some manuals offer specific questions to assess IT-related security risks of remote work and dos and don'ts to control them (e.g., Uhereczky & Vadkerti, 2020). Other manuals have examples of focus groups and interview protocols and surveys to be self-administered by organisations adopting a telework programme (Soto et al., 2021). Adopting official frameworks and regulations to support communication, trust and etiquette can contribute to avoiding information gaps between employees who are in the office and those working elsewhere and thus avoid or resolve such conflicts (Edelmann et al., 2021). The purpose of establishing teleworking regulations is to give certainty to public servants and to define a clear framework that promotes and enables the effective and comprehensive development of teleworking.

## 4.2 Managerial practices to improve team and individual performance and well-being

Managers and new team members in the survey faced severe challenges while working remotely. Leadership is one of the most important contributors to effective remote teamwork. The adoption of remote working in the public sector has forced public managers to adapt their leadership styles while developing new skills to manage virtual teams under very high levels of uncertainty. The pandemic has reduced informal interactions affecting specific groups of public servants such as new team members (Ford and Chang, 2021). Specific actions should be taken to improve leadership support and development and to promote younger public servants' and new team members' socialisation and learning. Public servants who participated in the survey reported feeling a lack of support and poor planning and time management, which can be enhanced by the adoption of new managerial practices both at a team and individual level.

### 4.2.1 Strengthen leadership skills and team practices

Leaders play a critical role in team processes, development and performance (Ostroff et al., 2012). While the rapid deployment of teams to remote settings may not allow leaders to prepare for remote leadership, where possible organisations should provide team leaders with training focused on managing virtual teams, which can include instruction on coaching and mentoring team members, delegation, goal setting, role clarification, self-management, monitoring team progress, diagnosing team problems, managing team boundaries and conflict resolution (Ford et al., 2017; Rosen et al., 2006; Kilcullen, Feitosa & Salas, 2021). It is also recommended that leaders of virtual or hybrid teams should communicate frequently with their supervisees, particularly one-on-one (Kirkman et al., 2002). Leaders should also attempt to make check-ins with their team members as engaging as possible (Kilcullen, Feitosa & Salas, 2021; Feitosa & Salas, 2020). Additionally, managers should receive training on inclusion and diversity to be more aware about the needs of their team members.

The literature also suggests that discipline is key to leaders of virtual and hybrid teams, and leaders need to develop discipline in everything from returning calls and emails to managing tasks and meetings (Connaughton & Daly, 2004). Without appropriate discipline from virtual team leaders, team processes can quickly fall apart and result in degraded team performance. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of team leaders to establish positive team processes, create effective team-based reward systems and develop supportive team member relations (Lurey & Raisinghani, 2001).

### Leadership communication practices

Recommendations related to communication are perhaps the most prevalent in literature on remote and hybrid working (Connaughton & Daly, 2004; Ford et al., 2017; Grant et al., 2013; Kirkman et al., 2002; Lurey & Raisinghani, 2001; Malhotra et al., 2007). Ensuring good communication is consistently identified as an effective strategy to enhance team performance (Marlow et al., 2017) and to establish and maintain trust within virtual and hybrid teams (Malhotra et al., 2007). Leaders should actively check that team members' workload is appropriate, ensuring their well-being and helping promote performance (Grant et al., 2013). Leaders should dedicate more actively to communicating with their team beyond the standard practices in place before the implementation of virtual work.

Technology should be used to ensure effective team communication (Kirkman et al., 2002) so that team members can efficiently exchange information and easily engage in problem-solving. Effective communication can be facilitated through teleconferencing, which enables immediate delivery of feedback and an interactive setting for problem-solving (Kirkman et al., 2002). Providing frequent feedback to team members has been identified as an essential, actionable item

to address challenges in virtual teams (Feitosa & Salas, 2020). Face-to-face interaction through video conferencing may help to establish and maintain personal connections between team members (Lurey & Raisinghani, 2001; Kilcullen, Feitosa & Salas, 2021).

Clear agreements around communication expectations should be established to ensure routine communications between virtual teams (Ford et al., 2017). Expectations and ground rules about communication must be established from the start (Connaughton & Daly, 2004). All elements of communication, including frequency, quality, timeliness, content and closed-loop communication should be considered (Marlow et al., 2017). Individuals should have a variety of tools to allow them to contribute including a chat function, emailing the supervisor after the meeting and anonymous forms (Kilcullen, Feitosa & Salas, 2021).

Effective communication is the responsibility of each team member. While the leader may establish communication norms and expectations, it is up to every team member to take responsibility and perform communication behaviours effectively. The literature reports that strong individual initiative for communication and predictable communication with substantive and timely responses is associated with higher trust in virtual teams (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Kilcullen, Feitosa & Salas, 2021).

#### **Agreements regarding team collaboration and decision-making**

The literature on virtual teams advises the adoption of clear agreements on remote and hybrid work dynamics to set expectations regarding how the team will inform, collaborate and make decisions to reduce uncertainty (Bates, 2020; Feitosa & Salas, 2020; Ford et al., 2017; Gibson & Cohen, 2003; Kirkman et al., 2002). It emphasises setting agreements for the team revolving around communication patterns (Ford et al., 2017; Gibson & Cohen, 2003). Teams should understand what is expected of them, how often they should be communicating with team members and leaders and how their work fits within the grand scheme of the organisation level efforts. For instance, a communication agreement that teams may establish is that when remote teams are first deployed, members should send weekly updates to team leaders who then share them in an organisation-wide meeting to discuss the team's progress and accomplishments. However, as the team adjusts to remote working, weekly reports and organisation-wide meetings may shift to different patterns of communication. Evidence also suggests that agreements which establish that everyone has 48 hours to respond to communications can be helpful (Feitosa & Salas, 2020). These are examples to help leaders and teams to reflect on their own circumstances and set agreements that work for them as individuals, teams and organisations (Kilcullen, Feitosa & Salas, 2021).

#### **4.2.2 Improve induction and support for new team members, especially for younger public servants**

Organisational researchers have opined that the absence of face-to-face interactions between new team members working remotely and senior managers might reduce the opportunities for remote workers to build ties with peers and supervisors (Golden 2006). This leads to remote new team members missing out on mentoring opportunities and other forms of information exchange that might affect their performance (Cooper and Kurland 2002, Nardi and Whittaker 2002). Our study suggests that younger civil servants have been more affected by the lack of human interaction and poor communication. For this group, face-to-face interactions seem important in creating professional and social networks, but the negative results could be mitigated by other forms of virtual interactions, as we shall see below.

Different strategies can be implemented to improve the induction and socialisation of younger team members and new team members. Some of them are informal interactions such as



virtual water coolers sessions. The results of a randomised field experiment conducted in a global organisation show that interns who have interacted informally with senior managers are significantly more likely to receive offers of full-time employment, achieve higher weekly performance ratings and have more positive attitudes toward their remote internships. The results are stronger when the interns and senior managers come from similar demographic backgrounds. Secondary results also hint at a possible explanation for their performance effects: virtual watercoolers between interns and senior managers may facilitate knowledge sharing and advice. The study demonstrates that hosting brief virtual water cooler sessions with senior managers might have job and career benefits for organisational new team members working in the remote workplace (Bojinov, Choudhury and Lane, 2021).

The lack of human interaction and the feeling of social disconnection that public servants reported can be reduced by creating informal interactions between team colleagues which can contribute to knowledge transfer and social integration. Evidence shows that socialisation fosters outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and individual performance while reducing stress (Romzek, 1990; Bauer et al., 2007). There is strong evidence for how organisational socialisation is affected by formal mentorships, training and courses, but also by individual personality traits, proactivity and self-efficacy (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Crant, 2000). Socialisation agents and social relationships frequently appear in the organisational socialisation literature as the most important factors influencing socialisation outcomes (Ashfort et al., 2007).

#### **4.2.3 Enact supportive systems to improve public servants' well-being**

One key element for the effectiveness of remote teams is the establishment of supportive systems that should provide support for team task accomplishment and socio-emotional needs (Ford et al., 2017; Kilcullen, Feitosa & Salas, 2021). Some supportive mechanisms that can be implemented by organisations and leaders are adopting a team charter to define goals, assets, and obstacles, deploying team building exercises to maintain connectedness and engagement, and providing regular feedback. A team charter should be collectively developed by the team leader in conjunction with team members to encourage the maintained acceptance of established norms (Kirkman et al., 2002). They can act as a supportive mechanism in virtual teams by developing a shared mental model amongst the team on expectations for team behaviour and performance within the rapidly changing contexts of moving to remote and hybrid work. This helps to avoid confusion and conflict inside the team.

Team building is frequently cited as an important activity for virtual teams (Ford et al., 2017; Kirkman et al., 2002). Typically, it is used to bond nascent teams; however, in the case of hybrid teams, it can be used to aid in the normalisation of technological communications between team members and to cultivate interpersonal relationships. Recent research suggests that team building can have a positive effect on affective (e.g., trust, team potency) and process (e.g., coordination, communication) outcomes (Klein et al., 2009). For teams that have quickly turned virtual, team building can be a way to remain connected, engaged and feel part of something bigger regardless of their different circumstances. Particularly, investing in strategies that can enhance team trust, focus on team process and allow for personal growth will likely lead to the best results (Holton, 2001). Some examples of team building activities are: "About me", in which team members share stories and photos that represent who they are as a person or an interesting aspect of themselves, and "Strengths and weaknesses", in this activity each member of the team write an essay describing a few strengths of each of their teammates and a few of their own weaknesses in regards to their contribution to the project. Teams share these individual essays with each other and write a document summarizing how the team could work better together for the remainder of the project. The purpose of these activities is to further nurture interpersonal relations and to



foster respectful engagement (Hastings, et al., 2018)

Another predominant recommendation for virtual teams is related to delivering and receiving feedback (Kirkman et al., 2002). The effectiveness of feedback delivery can be enhanced by using two-way communication options such as teleconferencing so that a discussion can take place (Kirkman et al., 2002). This more personal, informal check-in from a team leader is fundamental to contextualise criticism and emphasise more tangible and meaningful goals for the team. The literature advises virtual team members to openly discuss cultural differences and reach a consensus on a comfortable range of behaviours (Gibson & Cohen, 2003). These discussions should include conversations about both work practices and the values of the team and individuals within the team.

#### 4.2.4 Improve public servants' planning and time management skills

While organisations, team leaders and supportive conditions influence the effectiveness of remote teams, individual behaviours also have a significant effect on remote and hybrid work experiences, including those related to planning and time management.

The behavioural science literature provides some strategies to improve time management, workflow and management of work. One action consists of prompting people to make firm and specific plans. Planning prompts seem to work because scheduling tasks makes people more likely to carry them out. They also help people recall in the right circumstances and at the right moment that they need to carry out a task. Prompts to make plans are simple, inexpensive and powerful interventions that help people do what they intend to get done (Roger et al., 2015). The increasing popularisation of planning and time management software and apps (e.g., Trello, Microsoft MyAnalytics, Asana) makes these prompts even more accessible to individuals, teams and organisations. Considering organisations and managers might use planning prompts to elicit planning, these actions can improve time and workload management by defining specific goals and action plans.

## 5 Conclusion

The pandemic-induced telework in public organisations is a people management innovation that will reverberate for years to come. It is important to gather evidence to better understand how this innovation affects public servants, what challenges it poses and which groups are most affected by these challenges. The evidence gathered can then inform the design, implementation or adjustment of telework, including in public organisations. This policy report presented four main findings coming from the *Remote Working and People in Government Survey*. First, respondents were satisfied with teleworking but faced relational and work-life balance challenges. Second, those in countries without a clear regulatory framework and teleworking policies were less exposed to remote work. Third, respondents who were part of certain demographic groups (less educated, female, non-managers) had less experience of remote working. Fourth, managers and younger respondents face more challenges when working remotely.

Two groups of recommendations were suggested. The first concerned the development of a clear regulatory framework and teleworking policies and the second focused on managerial practices in public organisations. When looking at the first group, the policy report suggests ways to develop teleworking legislation, including a discussion on the right to disconnect and the adoption of instructions and manuals to evaluate organisational needs and the definition of a specific teleworking programme. Recommendations on management practices covered the strengthening

of leadership skills and team practices, improvement of the induction of new team members, support mechanisms for younger team members, the introduction of supportive systems focused on public servants' well-being and the improvement of public servants' planning and time management skills.

This policy report also shed light on the need to generate and use available data to improve teleworking in the public sector systematically, especially given that remote and hybrid work models have the potential to be a good model for public organisations when well-implemented. The report does not provide a checklist of actions to be taken, but rather discusses possible regulations, policies and management practices to be adopted by governments depending on their circumstances and needs.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1. Remote Working and People in Government Survey participants

<b>Brazil</b>	
Organisation	No. Participants
Ministry of Economy	49
Supreme Court	78
Electoral Supreme Court	71
Federal Court of Accounts	47

<b>Chile</b>	
Organisation	No. Participants
National Civil Service Directorate	55
Public Attorneys' Office	65

<b>UK</b>	
Organisation	No. Participants
Work and Pensions	747
HM Revenue and Customs	255
Defence	113
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	65
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	57
Cabinet Office	30
Other	83

Variable	Categories	Total	Chile	Brazil	UK
		1,716	120	246	1,350
<b>Gender</b>	Female	66%	57%	57%	68%
	Male/Non-binary/Other	34%	43%	43%	32%
<b>Age</b>	20-29	8%	3%	3%	9%
	30-39	19%	19%	34%	16%
	40-49	27%	46%	33%	24%
	50-59	38%	25%	28%	41%
	60+	8%	7%	3%	9%
<b>Education</b>	Less than high school	12%	1%	0%	15%
	High school	23%	3%	0%	29%
	Undergraduate	46%	51%	80%	39%
	Postgraduate	19%	45%	20%	17%
<b>Position</b>	Managerial	31%	31%	39%	30%
	Non-managerial	69%	69%	61%	70%
<b>Employment</b>	Full time	78%	99%	78%	76%
	Part-time/Job share	22%	1%	22%	24%
<b>Partner</b>	Living with a partner	70%	63%	68%	71%
	Not living with a partner	30%	37%	32%	29%
<b>Childcare</b>	Yes	30%	59%	41%	26%
	No	70%	41%	59%	74%

## Appendix 2. Regressions results on public servants' previous remote working experience

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)
	Previous remote work experience (continuous)	Previous remote work experience (ordinal level)
UK	0.903*** (0.0974)	1.001*** (0.132)
Brazil	0.596*** (0.120)	0.683*** (0.149)
Living with a partner	0.125** (0.0629)	0.125** (0.0626)
Female	-0.150** (0.0605)	-0.169*** (0.0570)
Manager	0.185*** (0.0622)	0.214*** (0.0572)
Children	0.0919 (0.0683)	0.0923 (0.0657)
High school	0.234** (0.0955)	0.260** (0.104)
Undergraduate	0.465*** (0.0943)	0.492*** (0.1000)
Postgraduate	0.731*** (0.110)	0.732*** (0.110)
Full time	0.293*** (0.0743)	0.320*** (0.0771)
30-39	0.361*** (0.0988)	0.288*** (0.101)
40-49	0.392*** (0.0967)	0.305*** (0.0998)
50-49	0.518*** (0.0931)	0.414*** (0.0950)
60+	0.562*** (0.140)	0.425*** (0.140)
Constant cut1		1.817*** (0.208)
Constant cut2		2.557*** (0.211)
Constant cut3		3.166*** (0.216)
Constant cut4		3.605*** (0.217)
Constant	0.111 (0.181)	
Observations	1,687	1,687
R-squared	0.085	

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1



## Appendix 3. Regressions results remote working experience during COVID-19

	(1)	(2)
VARIABLES	Work_from_office (probit)	Days_office
UK	-0.625*** (0.137)	-0.645*** (0.158)
Brazil	-0.260* (0.153)	-0.437** (0.169)
Living with a parter	-0.291*** (0.0796)	-0.183*** (0.0581)
Female	0.0702 (0.0770)	0.0608 (0.0520)
Manager	0.374*** (0.0763)	0.181*** (0.0542)
Children	0.0494 (0.0848)	0.0799 (0.0587)
High school	0.116 (0.138)	-0.00664 (0.0787)
Undergraduate	0.101 (0.135)	-0.0311 (0.0781)
Postgraduate	0.140 (0.146)	0.0451 (0.0909)
Full-time	-0.0134 (0.0938)	0.0432 (0.0539)
30-39	0.112 (0.153)	0.0697 (0.110)
40-49	0.0466 (0.149)	0.0277 (0.103)
50-49	-0.0869 (0.144)	-0.0411 (0.0950)
60+	-0.324* (0.197)	-0.175* (0.102)
Constant	-0.374 (0.262)	0.984*** (0.209)
Observations	1,687	1,684
R-squared		0.058

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

Appendix 4. Regressions on public servants' remote work satisfaction during COVID-19 and number of days intended to continue working remotely after the pandemic

VARIABLES	(1) Remote work satisfaction (continuous)	(2) Remote work satisfaction (ordinal level)	(3) Number of days preferred working remotely
UK	0.174* (0.0972)	0.261** (0.110)	0.645*** (0.130)
Brazil	0.159 (0.106)	0.239* (0.124)	0.947*** (0.147)
Living with a partner	0.136** (0.0531)	0.162** (0.0658)	0.188*** (0.0719)
Female	0.0461 (0.0493)	0.0715 (0.0619)	-0.0244 (0.0681)
Manager	-0.132*** (0.0500)	-0.202*** (0.0619)	-0.355*** (0.0683)
Children	-0.0533 (0.0511)	-0.108 (0.0673)	-0.0205 (0.0731)
High school	-0.0242 (0.0689)	-0.0223 (0.106)	-0.121 (0.110)
Undergraduate	-0.116* (0.0694)	-0.148 (0.102)	-0.151 (0.105)
Postgraduate	-0.211*** (0.0815)	-0.286** (0.112)	-0.241** (0.119)
Full time	-0.0419 (0.0534)	-0.0580 (0.0757)	0.213*** (0.0808)
30-39	0.242** (0.119)	0.265** (0.128)	0.309** (0.141)
40-49	0.330*** (0.116)	0.388*** (0.127)	0.499*** (0.139)
50-49	0.316*** (0.112)	0.338*** (0.121)	0.494*** (0.132)
60+	0.237* (0.133)	0.239 (0.152)	0.497*** (0.166)
Constant cut1		-1.715*** (0.230)	
Constant cut2		-1.133*** (0.213)	
Constant cut3		-0.734*** (0.215)	
Constant cut4		0.180 (0.215)	
Constant	4.018*** (0.181)		2.547*** (0.235)
Observations	1,688	1,688	1,688
R-squared	0.035		0.056

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## Appendix 5. Regressions results on public servants' challenges experienced while working remotely during COVID-19

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Technology problems (e.g. slow internet)	Blurring boundaries between work and leisure time	Distractions interruptions /child or elder care	Poor time management/ prioritisation	Lack of human interaction	Poor communication	Feeling disconnected from team members	Not fully trusting colleagues/ management	Not feeling supported	Problems managing workflow
UK	-0.364*** (0.108)	-0.855*** (0.112)	-0.811*** (0.101)	-0.506*** (0.103)	-0.415*** (0.102)	-0.233** (0.107)	-0.271** (0.106)	-0.0862 (0.106)	-0.0796 (0.121)	-0.258** (0.105)
Brazil	-0.212* (0.122)	-0.714*** (0.124)	-0.269** (0.114)	0.156 (0.117)	-0.265** (0.116)	-0.0240 (0.119)	-0.208* (0.118)	-0.403*** (0.125)	-0.225 (0.141)	0.0316 (0.120)
Living with a partner	-0.0983 (0.0598)	-0.142** (0.0594)	0.163*** (0.0623)	-0.166*** (0.0605)	-0.264*** (0.0601)	-0.202*** (0.0606)	-0.154*** (0.0598)	-0.226*** (0.0611)	-0.187*** (0.0610)	-0.198*** (0.0612)
Female	0.206*** (0.0569)	0.0348 (0.0548)	-0.0316 (0.0576)	-0.0724 (0.0575)	0.0186 (0.0567)	0.0265 (0.0552)	0.0500 (0.0562)	0.0920 (0.0581)	0.0270 (0.0584)	-0.0475 (0.0574)
Manager	0.0525 (0.0577)	0.426*** (0.0574)	0.00441 (0.0575)	0.205*** (0.0582)	0.160*** (0.0562)	0.239*** (0.0568)	0.0604 (0.0570)	0.0799 (0.0591)	0.133** (0.0587)	0.277*** (0.0591)
Children	0.0748 (0.0620)	0.244*** (0.0621)	0.764*** (0.0601)	0.207*** (0.0637)	0.0616 (0.0608)	0.103* (0.0600)	0.120* (0.0615)	0.0889 (0.0635)	0.0959 (0.0627)	0.103* (0.0622)
High school	0.138 (0.0965)	0.0815 (0.0971)	0.0395 (0.0976)	0.215** (0.0988)	-0.00545 (0.0951)	0.162* (0.0977)	0.111 (0.0949)	0.109 (0.0995)	0.0181 (0.0965)	0.0725 (0.103)
Undergraduate	0.130 (0.0938)	0.213** (0.0947)	0.208** (0.0955)	0.368*** (0.0950)	0.201** (0.0923)	0.249*** (0.0943)	0.277*** (0.0932)	0.119 (0.0962)	0.0209 (0.0944)	0.198** (0.0982)
Potsgraduate	-0.00337 (0.106)	0.337*** (0.106)	0.208** (0.105)	0.429*** (0.106)	0.258** (0.105)	0.279*** (0.106)	0.367*** (0.104)	0.158 (0.105)	0.133 (0.104)	0.321*** (0.108)
Full time	0.0350 (0.0658)	0.159** (0.0669)	0.0702 (0.0663)	0.122* (0.0714)	0.0641 (0.0688)	0.0535 (0.0667)	0.0670 (0.0679)	-0.0159 (0.0692)	-0.0113 (0.0672)	0.0640 (0.0696)
30-39	-0.317** (0.130)	-0.227** (0.114)	0.106 (0.132)	-0.154 (0.122)	-0.241** (0.110)	-0.164 (0.115)	-0.172 (0.116)	0.0221 (0.118)	-0.150 (0.116)	-0.125 (0.122)
40-49	-0.309** (0.125)	-0.316*** (0.113)	0.00928 (0.130)	-0.290** (0.119)	-0.441*** (0.107)	-0.373*** (0.115)	-0.382*** (0.115)	-0.188 (0.119)	-0.289** (0.114)	-0.320*** (0.121)
50-49	-0.0771 (0.122)	-0.283*** (0.107)	0.0215 (0.126)	-0.248** (0.114)	-0.454*** (0.101)	-0.363*** (0.110)	-0.319*** (0.108)	-0.186* (0.113)	-0.339*** (0.111)	-0.250** (0.117)
60+	-0.0652 (0.147)	-0.218* (0.129)	0.0256 (0.145)	-0.303** (0.143)	-0.338*** (0.131)	-0.251* (0.139)	-0.124 (0.132)	-0.140 (0.139)	-0.184 (0.134)	-0.390*** (0.143)
Constant cut1	-1.990*** (0.212)	-1.552*** (0.196)	-0.862*** (0.200)	-0.763*** (0.199)	-1.403*** (0.189)	-0.992*** (0.197)	-0.882*** (0.201)	-0.420** (0.200)	-0.581*** (0.204)	-0.627*** (0.200)
Constant cut2	-0.425** (0.206)	-0.652*** (0.195)	0.105 (0.201)	0.398** (0.199)	-0.714*** (0.188)	-0.00171 (0.197)	-0.0549 (0.201)	0.463** (0.200)	0.287 (0.204)	0.361* (0.201)
Constant cut3	0.768*** (0.207)	0.119 (0.195)	1.147*** (0.204)	1.385*** (0.202)	0.0302 (0.188)	1.014*** (0.199)	0.723*** (0.201)	1.119*** (0.202)	1.076*** (0.207)	1.259*** (0.206)
Constant cut4	2.033*** (0.224)	1.119*** (0.198)	2.115*** (0.217)	2.368*** (0.224)	1.017*** (0.192)	2.124*** (0.212)	1.542*** (0.206)	1.897*** (0.213)	1.831*** (0.215)	2.170*** (0.223)
Observations	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## Appendix 6. Regression results on the changes demanded by public servants to improve their remote work experience

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	Better technology for team/group meetings	Best practices for effective team/group meetings	More effective one-on-one meetings with team members	Better documentation and methods of sharing work internally	Better methods of tracking work activities and day to day operations	Better methods of giving/receiving feedback	Better technology for time management and calendar planning across the team	Better time management practices for myself	More or better ways of socialising as a team	More or better ways of socialising between teams	More transparency from my leadership on things that affect my team
UK	-0.228* (0.117)	-0.604*** (0.130)	-0.446*** (0.117)	0.0272 (0.121)	0.0595 (0.117)	-0.451*** (0.123)	-0.422*** (0.110)	-0.516*** (0.120)	-0.248** (0.116)	-0.353*** (0.114)	0.0213 (0.111)
Brazil	-0.0764 (0.135)	-0.273* (0.150)	-1.019*** (0.141)	0.223 (0.138)	0.267** (0.132)	0.0112 (0.141)	-0.0883 (0.128)	-0.0374 (0.135)	-0.231* (0.127)	-0.492*** (0.126)	-0.206 (0.127)
Living with a partner	0.0281 (0.0619)	0.00192 (0.0601)	-0.0721 (0.0596)	-0.00968 (0.0595)	-0.0645 (0.0591)	-0.0572 (0.0592)	0.00537 (0.0599)	-0.114* (0.0602)	-0.0294 (0.0604)	-0.0527 (0.0613)	-0.0297 (0.0604)
Female	0.0534 (0.0577)	0.0996* (0.0581)	0.0893 (0.0575)	0.0989* (0.0569)	0.0903 (0.0568)	0.116** (0.0562)	0.103* (0.0564)	-0.0190 (0.0560)	0.219*** (0.0569)	0.287*** (0.0573)	0.0627 (0.0571)
Manager	0.179*** (0.0598)	0.125** (0.0604)	0.0538 (0.0566)	0.0889 (0.0588)	0.156*** (0.0573)	0.0104 (0.0589)	0.171*** (0.0575)	0.115** (0.0566)	0.215*** (0.0568)	0.261*** (0.0572)	0.00929 (0.0570)
Children	0.0176 (0.0644)	-0.0251 (0.0651)	0.0386 (0.0629)	-0.0929 (0.0637)	-0.0426 (0.0622)	0.0136 (0.0642)	-0.0123 (0.0636)	0.0739 (0.0637)	0.168*** (0.0606)	0.164*** (0.0602)	0.0590 (0.0624)
High school	0.126 (0.0970)	0.0868 (0.0938)	0.0219 (0.0921)	0.129 (0.0926)	-0.0126 (0.0905)	0.114 (0.0944)	-0.000410 (0.0918)	0.0241 (0.0928)	0.0843 (0.0882)	0.0296 (0.0886)	0.0806 (0.0928)
Undergraduate	0.228** (0.0926)	0.0777 (0.0912)	0.0284 (0.0900)	0.164* (0.0915)	0.00772 (0.0892)	0.126 (0.0929)	-0.00245 (0.0887)	0.0337 (0.0900)	0.168* (0.0874)	0.161* (0.0880)	0.0332 (0.0891)
Postgraduate	0.231** (0.105)	0.147 (0.106)	0.102 (0.101)	0.271*** (0.105)	-0.0288 (0.103)	0.148 (0.108)	-0.0163 (0.104)	0.0789 (0.106)	0.152 (0.102)	0.132 (0.102)	0.0234 (0.103)
Full time	0.0736 (0.0670)	0.0662 (0.0661)	0.102 (0.0670)	0.0903 (0.0672)	0.133** (0.0644)	0.141** (0.0686)	0.0283 (0.0677)	0.0542 (0.0654)	0.0986 (0.0649)	0.133** (0.0646)	0.0267 (0.0685)
30-39	0.0212 (0.119)	-0.108 (0.115)	-0.00530 (0.115)	-0.0765 (0.121)	0.0493 (0.130)	0.0258 (0.121)	-0.00882 (0.124)	-0.0807 (0.126)	-0.299** (0.126)	-0.286** (0.122)	-0.252** (0.119)
40-49	0.159 (0.114)	-0.101 (0.109)	-0.0101 (0.111)	-0.282** (0.115)	0.0462 (0.124)	-0.0693 (0.117)	0.00141 (0.119)	-0.171 (0.122)	-0.501*** (0.121)	-0.462*** (0.118)	-0.241** (0.115)
50-49	0.219** (0.108)	-0.0995 (0.103)	-0.0235 (0.105)	-0.293*** (0.110)	0.0618 (0.120)	-0.107 (0.112)	0.0132 (0.115)	-0.126 (0.116)	-0.474*** (0.116)	-0.458*** (0.115)	-0.249** (0.111)
60+	0.260* (0.133)	-0.0288 (0.126)	0.0422 (0.132)	-0.288** (0.136)	0.0373 (0.142)	-0.0119 (0.135)	-0.148 (0.140)	-0.360** (0.141)	-0.299** (0.145)	-0.415*** (0.142)	-0.197 (0.136)
Constant cut1	-2.207*** (0.224)	-2.944*** (0.237)	-2.553*** (0.219)	-2.430*** (0.231)	-1.647*** (0.208)	-2.420*** (0.220)	-2.490*** (0.226)	-2.432*** (0.219)	-1.976*** (0.218)	-2.019*** (0.207)	-2.287*** (0.221)
Constant cut2	-1.605*** (0.210)	-2.258*** (0.210)	-1.738*** (0.211)	-1.660*** (0.203)	-0.868*** (0.202)	-1.754*** (0.203)	-1.539*** (0.201)	-1.530*** (0.207)	-1.237*** (0.210)	-1.284*** (0.200)	-1.613*** (0.208)
Constant cut3	-0.434** (0.204)	-1.140*** (0.206)	-0.572*** (0.206)	-0.407** (0.202)	0.131 (0.201)	-0.508** (0.199)	-0.398** (0.198)	-0.487** (0.204)	-0.418** (0.209)	-0.428** (0.199)	-0.507** (0.206)
Constant cut4	0.805*** (0.204)	0.258 (0.205)	0.675*** (0.205)	0.816*** (0.203)	1.263*** (0.204)	0.778*** (0.199)	0.735*** (0.198)	0.587*** (0.204)	0.720*** (0.209)	0.680*** (0.200)	0.528** (0.206)
Observations	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,688	1,687	1,688	1,687	1,688

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## Appendix 7. Legal frameworks for remote, hybrid and flexible work across the world.

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### Argentina

Teleworking law (No. 27,555) and Regulatory Decree No. 27/202, entered into effect on 1 April 2021. The new legislation, which applies to partially and entirely remote employees, introduced the following obligations:

- The employer is now required to establish a written teleworking agreement for each employee. The agreement must outline the parties' obligations and agreement in advance on the working hours.
  - Employees' right to disconnect after completion of their working hours.
  - A flexible working schedule should be available to employees with children under 13 years of age in their care or if the employee has people with disabilities or retired adults who live with them.
  - Employers are required to provide teleworkers with the necessary work tools and bear their installation, repairs and maintenance costs.
  - Employers are required to reimburse employees for teleworking-related expenses which are not normally incurred by employees. This can include compensation for the use of employees' own tools and partial reimbursement of employees' internet services.
  - Remote employees should enjoy the same rights as on-site employees
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### Belgium

On 14 July 2020, the Belgian government released its initial circular letter (2020/C/100) granting employees working from home a monthly, employer-paid, tax-free work-from-home allowance, backdated to 1 March 2020. The tax-free allowance applies to full- and part-time employees regularly working from home (at least one day per week/five days per month). The allowance has been temporarily increased to €144.31 from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021. Employers should monitor for new maximums.

The Belgian government released a second circular (2020/C/100) clarifying the terms of the allowance effective from 1 March 2021. This measure lists the office expenses (the use of the office space, maintenance, insurance, property tax, snacks, office supplies, printer and computer equipment and utilities) that are covered under the tax-free allowance. In addition, the measure extends the tax-free status to additional reimbursements or provision of equipment. Originally a temporary measure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Belgian Minister of Finance recently confirmed it is a permanent measure.

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## Colombia

On 3 August 2021, the Colombian government passed law No 2121 establishing a remote working regime. The new regime applies to all workers and all employers (private and public sector) in Colombia. The main requirements of the new remote working regime include:

- The modalities of remote working must be agreed on by the employer and the employee.
- Remote working should apply for the entire duration of the employment contract.
- Any labour agreement between the employer and the employee requires an electronic or digital signature.
- Employers should provide teleworkers with the necessary tools and equipment to carry out remote work.
- Employers should perform medical examinations for their remote employees when they are hired and periodically.

In addition, remote workers who are caring for minors under age 14, individuals with disabilities or adults over age 60 are now allowed to organise their work schedule around their caregiving duties.

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## Luxembourg

A new legal framework for teleworking implementing the latest version of the social partners' collective agreement entered into force on 2 February 2021. The convention will remain valid for three years from its entry into force. The main changes include:

- A wider definition of telework – the new definition does not restrict telework to working from home anymore. It is now defined as the work performed outside the premises of the employer.
- Introduction of the new concept of 'occasional teleworking,' defined as 'teleworking carried out to deal with unforeseen events or when teleworking represents less than 10% on average of the teleworker's normal annual working time.' Occasional teleworking is now also considered regular teleworking. However, unlike regular teleworking, occasional teleworking does not require a written agreement as a simple written confirmation (e.g., email) will suffice, nor is the employer required to provide work equipment or bear the associated costs.
- Teleworking now requires the written agreement of both the employee and the employer outlining the place of telework, the working hours, telework allowance (if any), overtime, benefits in kind, etc. The written agreement may result from an individual agreement with an employee, a collective bargaining agreement or a company agreement.
- Employees have a right to disconnect after working hours and should have the same rights as on-site employees.
- Employers should provide teleworkers with the necessary equipment to carry out their work.
- All remote employees should be able to enjoy the same rights and protections as other employees. This includes all benefits in kind that on-site workers are entitled to but excludes compensations specifically linked with the employee's presence on-site such as a gym or parking space.

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## Mexico

The Mexican government passed amendments to the federal labour law on teleworking. The amendments clarify existing teleworking regulations and create new obligations for both employers and employees.

The reform took effect on 12 January 2021. The reform applies to any worker who performs paid work activities at least 40% of the time outside the employer's workplace, either at home or another location chosen by the employee. Employers are now mandated to:

- Provide, install and maintain the necessary working equipment and training needed by the employee to perform the work.
- Pay for any appropriate telework-related cost.
- Record teleworking arrangements in a written agreement.

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## Portugal

The Portuguese government recently passed a law on remote working arrangements. The new legislation, which applies only to employers with at least 10 employees, creates the following new obligations:

- Employers are now required to pay for any appropriate telework-related costs including, electricity and internet.
- Employees will be required to meet in person with their employer once every two months.
- Employees with children under age 8 have the right to work remotely.
- Employers are prohibited from contacting their employees after office hours. Employers who fail to comply with this new rule would face penalties (amount still yet to be determined).

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## Russia

Legislation on remote work, amending the Russian Labour Code, entered into effect on 1 January 2021. The legislation introduces the following changes:

- There are now three different types of remote working agreements: permanent teleworking, combined agreements when teleworking does not exceed six consecutive months per year and combined agreements when employees can alternate between remote working and on-site working. Before the new legislation, only permanent teleworking was regulated.
  - Teleworking agreements should be written and outline all remote arrangements, including the working hours, the location of telework, etc.
  - Employers now have the right to introduce mandatory teleworking in exceptional circumstances such as a pandemic. The terms and conditions of this new right should be outlined in employers' internal policies.
  - Employers are required to provide remote employees with necessary work tools and bear their installation, repairs and maintenance costs.
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## Slovakia

New legislation on remote working, amending the Slovak Labour Code, entered into effect on 1 March 2021. The legislation introduces the following changes:

- Working from home must be agreed between the employer and the employee in writing in an employment contract.
- Teleworking may be performed anywhere outside the employer's premises. It is no longer necessary to be only performed from the home of the employee.
- Employees and employers may agree that employees will determine their own working hours for more flexibility. In that case, the employee may lose their entitlement to certain salary premiums.
- Employees' right to disconnect outside working hours must be agreed between the parties.
- Employers are now required to reimburse employees for increased expenses related to telework as agreed on in the collective agreement or negotiated in the employment contract.
- Teleworkers should enjoy the same rights as on-site employees.

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## Spain

On 9 July 2021, Law 10/2021 replaced Royal Decree-law 28/2020, which passed on 22 September 2020. The legislation applies only to 'regular' remote working when at least 30% of the employee's total hours over any three-month period are carried out remotely. The main characteristics of the new remote working legal framework include:

- All remote working arrangements should be established in a written agreement and voluntarily.
  - Remote employees should enjoy the same rights as on-site employees.
  - Employers are required to provide all employees, including those with disabilities, with the necessary resources, tools and equipment (including digital) to perform their jobs. Employers should also pay for any maintenance of such tools and equipment as needed.
  - Employers are required to cover expenses related to remote work. Reimbursement of the expenses and details on what should be provided to enable the remote working of employees must be agreed on between the employee and the employer in the employment contract unless already established by a collective agreement.
  - Employers are prohibited from discriminating against remote employees on the grounds of age, gender, seniority, disability or professional group.
  - Employers are required to carry out a risk assessment of remote employees' workspaces. The risk assessment should not only apply to psychosocial, ergonomic and organisational factors, but also the accessibility of the actual working environment. Further application decrees should clarify this new factor.
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## Taiwan

On 23 June 2021, the government of Taiwan passed a new work-from-home regulation requiring employers to:

- Provide remote employees with the necessary tools and equipment to perform the job, which should include the use of ergonomically sound work equipment and up-to-date software on electronic devices.
- Pay for any maintenance of such tools and equipment as needed.
- Provide education and training on mental and physical health to ensure the well-being of their remote employees.

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## Turkey

The Turkish government passed legislation clarifying the existing legal framework of remote work. The new remote working legislation entered into effect on 10 March 2021. Remote working is defined as the work performed outside the employer's workplace using technology tools. The main changes include:

- The obligation to establish a written remote working agreement including the location where the job will be performed, the working hours, the communication methods between the employer and the employee, any additional compensation related to the telework, the equipment that will be provided, etc.
  - The employer is required to provide teleworkers with the necessary tools and equipment to perform the job.
  - Expenses related to telework should be reimbursed by the employer to the employee. Compensation for such expenses should be agreed on between the employee and reflected in the employment contract.
  - Employees can start working remotely on hiring or may be hired to work on-site and agree with the employer to be converted to remote working later on. The employment contract should reflect the change. Mutual consent of both the employee and the employer is needed to switch from on-site work to remote work, except for in unforeseen circumstances. In such cases, employers can unilaterally decide that employees should work remotely.
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## Ukraine

Law No 4051, which entered into force on 27 February 2021, introduced a new legal framework for remote work. The law distinguishes between:

- Home-based work is defined as the work that is done from home or a designated location agreed on between the employer and the employee. Such a work arrangement is more structured as employers can inspect employees' remote workspace and employees are required to follow regular work hours (unless agreed otherwise). In addition, employment agreements including should be established in writing and the location may not be changed unless approved by the employer.
- Remote working is a more flexible option that allows employees to work from any location of the employee's choosing and according to their own schedule. Remote working arrangements should be established in writing unless emergency circumstances prevent it (such as a pandemic).

The employer is required to provide remote and home-based work employees with the necessary tools and equipment to perform the job. Expenses related to remote and home-based work arrangements should be reimbursed by the employer to the employee.

In addition, the law introduced a specific provision for flexible working hours. Flexible working hours may be available at the request of the employee or the initiative of the employer in the following circumstances:

- When there is a substantial change in working conditions (with two months' notice).
- When there is a threat of epidemic or any emergency (no prior notice is needed).

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Source: Authors' elaboration with information from countries' official websites and Lockton Global Compliance (2022).





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