

Work From Home Survey Results

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Summary and Key Findings

COVID-19 has affected people in myriad ways: school closures, restrictions of activities, as well as a large-scale move to work from home (WFH). However, research shows there are benefits (e.g., time and money savings) and challenges (e.g., social isolation) to WFH. To provide a positive work experience, organizations must evaluate the impact of WFH arrangements and work towards enhancing benefits and ameliorating challenges. Therefore, the SHA commissioned a study to understand how employees have experienced this move and the effect it has had on work practices and well-being.

A comprehensive survey was created to assess how people have adapted to working from home, their experiences of working from home, and the benefits and challenges of working from home. The survey was distributed through REDCap and was open for one month. SHA employees who are working from home were invited to participate through a bi-weekly invitation published in the SHA daily newsletter (N=1950).

People agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to take the equipment they needed (79.3%), that they were able to install and/or set-up system platforms (90.8%) and access system platforms and information the needed (91%). Overall, people agreed they found it easy to adapt to WFH (78.8%) and that their supervisors were helpful in facilitating the move (79.7% agreement).

Most people felt their work was productive while at home (90.6%) and they were able to cope with working at home (91.5%). The majority of people had positive experiences with their supervisors while working at home. Most agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported by their supervisor (86.8%) and that their supervisor trusted them to do their work (90.9%). People generally knew what was expected from them (92.8%) and felt that their supervisor had reasonable performance expectations of them (88.6%). Additionally, people felt they were able to collaborate with their team as necessary (90.4%) and where applicable, were able to manage their teams effectively (46.1%). This question did not apply to 42.3% of respondents.

Concerning their home life, many people were able to draw distinct lines between work and home (75.7%) and were able to create a relatively healthy routine while working from home (80.6%). There were mixed feelings about whether the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the way people worked at home. Approximately the same amount of people strongly agreed (11.8%) and strongly disagreed (13%) that COVID-19 affected the way they worked at home. The largest group of responses agreed that they had been affected (27.7%), while 20.8% disagreed they were affected. However, 20.5% said they neither agreed nor disagreed that they were affected. Thus, we have 39.7% of people saying they were affected by the pandemic and 33.7% saying they were not affected. One fifth of respondents did not have an opinion on this issue, which is surprising given the impact of the pandemic on society as a whole.

Respondents were asked to indicate benefits they had experienced while working from home. 'Time savings' was the biggest benefit (77.7%), followed by 'fewer work disturbances' (69.4%) and 'money savings' (67.8%). Only 5.7% of respondents said they have not experienced any of the listed benefits.

Although responses to survey questions were generally very positive, some people did experience challenges with WFH. 'Professional isolation' (34.4%) was the biggest issue faced, followed by 'lack of

innovation' (33%) and 'lack of resources' (31.8). It should be noted that 27.4% said that they had not experienced any of the listed challenges.

When asked about their experiences with on-line meetings, 82.6% agreed or strongly agreed that meetings with fewer than 10 people were productive, 50.5% agreed or strongly agreed that meetings with 10-20 people were productive, and 28.9% agreed or strongly agreed that meetings with more than 20 people were productive. There seems to be general consensus that on-line meetings work better with fewer people.

It is noteworthy that 3,546 comments were made in this survey. It is unusual to receive so many comments in a survey; however, the number and length of comments showed that people felt strongly about this issue. The benefits of WFH appeared to outweigh the challenges for participants. The percentages of responses to the listed benefits ranged from 49% to 78% whereas the range of responses to the listed challenges was 6% to 33%. Many people elaborated further on the survey questions, giving a more holistic view of the experiences of WFH.

Although this survey focused on the effect of WFH on employees, there are also organizational ramifications to this. The SHA workforce has grown but infrastructure has not paralleled in growth, resulting in increasingly smaller workspaces. Having a WFH option is likely to free up valuable real estate and reduce demand on resources. Additionally, recruitment and retention of rural employees is an ongoing issue as there are lower job application rates for rural positions. Having a WFH option where possible would allow people to live where they choose but still fulfill the responsibilities of the role.

While the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the movement towards WFH, there remains uncertainty and skepticism over the long-term use of these practices. Our findings suggest that WFH is a viable and preferred working arrangement amongst SHA employees that would provide benefit to the individual as well as the SHA through increased engagement and reduced use of resources. However, it may require a shift in thinking to be seen as acceptable within the organization. This study assessed the experiences of WFH employees, but not associated issues, such as work productivity or difficulties faced by colleagues who remained in the office. Future research is needed to gain a holistic picture of the effectiveness of WFH arrangements within the SHA.

WORK FROM HOME SURVEY

Introduction

COVID-19 has affected people in myriad ways: school closures, restrictions of activities, as well as a large-scale move to work from home (WFH). However, research shows there are benefits (e.g., time and money savings) and challenges (e.g., social isolation) to WFH. To provide a positive work experience, organizations need to evaluate the impact of WFH arrangements. Therefore, the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) commissioned a study to understand how employees have experienced this move and the effect it has had on work practices and well-being.

It is difficult to separate the effects of the pandemic from the work from home experience. For many employees, workload increased quickly with little chance to adapt to the demands. The move to WFH also happened rapidly, which brought about specific challenges that would otherwise not be encountered through a chosen move. Most people were told whether they could work from home or not, without much choice on their part. Many did not have the proper equipment or space to set up a home office. The fact that children were at home and required supervision with schooling compounded the distractions and disruptions of home life. The population was asked to stay at home and not interact with friends and family which led to feelings of isolation and anxiety.

Methods

Literature and existing surveys on remote work were examined to inform the creation of a comprehensive survey that assessed how people have adapted to working from home, their experiences of working from home, and the benefits and challenges of working from home. Face and content validity was tested by initially distributing the survey to knowledgeable staff, who checked for comprehension and potential gaps. The survey was distributed through REDCap¹ and was open for one month. SHA employees who are working from home were invited to participate through a bi-weekly invitation published in the SHA daily newsletter. Participation was encouraged through the opportunity to enter into a draw for a gift card. After survey completion, participants were automatically re-directed to a separate site to ensure their contact details could not be linked to the survey responses.

¹ REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) is a secure, web-based application designed to support data capture for research studies.

Results

Participant Demographics

A total of 1950 people responded to the survey. Most participants were female (84%). The age of participants had a wide range: 25 years of age and under (1.6%), 26 - 40 (36%), 41 - 55 (46%), and 56 years of age or above (15.2%). Households generally had two adults (58%), with 26% being single adult households. Only 36% of respondents had children under the age of 12 and 25% had children between the ages of 12 - 18 years in the household. Participants were mostly White (78%) and Indigenous (5%); they had a diploma (34%), undergraduate degree (33%) or post graduate degree/professional designation (33%). The majority of participants earned between \$50,000 - \$75,000 (25%) or between \$75,000 - \$100,000 per annum (35%). Portfolios were represented as follows:

Integrated health urban and rural:	37.7%
Human resources:	14.6%
Infrastructure, information and support:	12.7%
Quality, safety, and strategy:	11%
Provincial programs:	9.6%
Finance:	6.9%
Community engagement and communications:	1.2%
Practitioner staff affairs:	1.1%
Governance and policy:	0.6%
Other:	4.6%

The majority of respondents had not worked from home prior to the pandemic (80%), but would like to work from home full-time (58.4%) or part-time (33%) in the future. Only 8.5% said they would like to work full-time at the office.

Adaptation to Working from Home

People agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to take the equipment they needed (79.3%), that they were able to install and/or set-up system platforms (90.8%) and access system platforms and information the needed (91%). Overall, people agreed they found it easy to adapt to WFH (78.8%) and that their supervisors were helpful in facilitating the move (79.7% agreement).

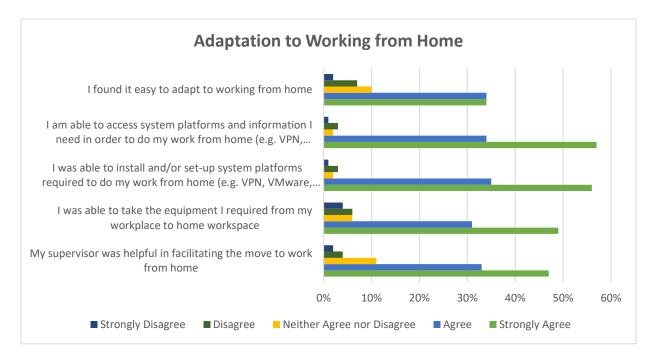


Figure 1. Adaptation to Working from Home Graph

Although the majority of respondents said they were able to adapt to working from home, the comments showed that the initial transition was often not easy. Many people had difficulties with internet access, printing, and faxing, which created challenges for working remotely. Issues related to IT predominated, followed by a lack of resources (e.g., appropriate desks and chairs).

"Because working from home was being brought in quickly to try and get people out of the building the process felt a little scattered. There was some delays and miscommunication in getting VPN set up. Each worker was left to determine their own processes. While I appreciated the autonomy and trust, it felt a bit like re-inventing the wheel when figuring out how to do remote patient contact."

Not only did people have to adapt to working from home, they also experienced the challenges of having children at home with none of the usual facilities open to support them (e.g., libraries). Most parents had to adjust to home schooling children while also working a full day. However, many people said they had been able to find new routines and adjust to the WFH processes.

"At the start of remote working in March there were the challenges of having everyone at home and also trying to sort out remote school for the kids. However, everyone adjusted fairly quickly to the new norm and the expectations."

Some people seemed to struggle with the initial mental shift to working from home, but were able to adapt to the new routine.

"I hated working from home in the beginning because I was not mentally prepared but now I would love to do this long term. I'm more productive with less interruptions from coworkers."

However, some were not able to do their work at home due to lack of access to files or the need for personal discussions. Others did not adjust and far preferred to work from the office.

"Working from home is emotionally distressing. It puts strain on my whole household as it ties up space and furniture resources in my home."

Adaptation Word Cloud



Experience of Working From Home

Most people felt their work was productive while at home (90.6%) and they were able to cope with working at home (91.5%). The majority of people had positive experiences with their supervisors while working at home. Most agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported by their supervisor (86.8%) and that their supervisor trusted them to do their work (90.9%). People generally knew what was expected from them (92.8%) and felt that their supervisor had reasonable performance expectations of them (88.6%). Additionally, people felt they were able to collaborate with their team as necessary (90.4%) and where applicable, were able to manage their teams effectively (n = 1072;46.1%). This number is lower as the question did not apply to 42.3% of respondents.

With regards to their home life, many people were able to draw distinct lines between work life and home life (75.7%) and were able to create a relatively healthy routine while working from home (80.6%). There were mixed feelings about whether the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the way people worked at home. Approximately the same amount of people strongly agreed (11.8%) and strongly disagreed they were affected (13%). The largest group of responses agreed that they had been affected (27.7%) while 20.8% disagreed they were affected. However, 20.5% said they neither agreed nor disagreed that

they were affected. Thus, we have 39.7% of people saying they were affected by the pandemic and 33.7% saying they were not affected. One fifth of respondents did not have an opinion on this issue, which is surprising given the impact of the pandemic on society as a whole.

Supervisor support and increased productivity are elaborated on below, while issues relating to home life and health are addressed in the Benefits section.

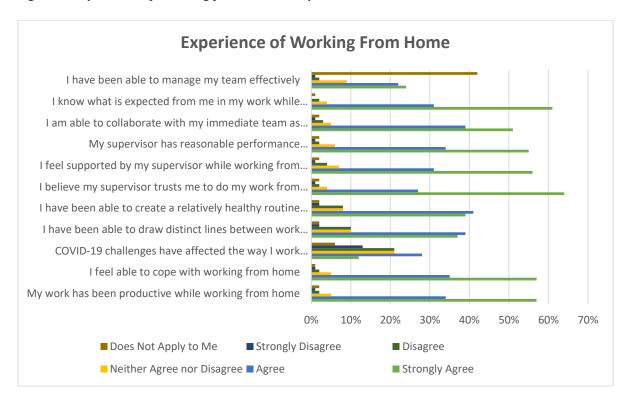


Figure 2. Experience of Working from Home Graph

Supervisor Support

Many people mentioned the positive effect of a supportive supervisor in the move to WFH. Supervisors helped make the transitions smooth, particularly when IT issues were encountered. The effect on personal well-being was also emphasized by some.

"My Managers are the Best I am compromised with heart issues and I feel they have truly cared about my well being during these changes. I am very well set up here at home - same set up as I had at work."

However, permission to WFH has not been consistent throughout the SHA and sometimes appeared to depend on whether the supervisor was in favour of the move.

"I am in-scope and have been supported throughout this pandemic to work from home which I really appreciate as my work is easily adaptable to a home environment. I largely attribute this to who my direct supervisor is; she is flexible and understands my work well. I know some of my colleagues, who are in the same position but in others areas of SHA, have not been supported to do so. This opportunity was not equitable; it should have been equitable based on the nature of

the required work not the supervisor. They have been forced to go to the office even though I know from experience that their work could be done in a home environment."

Some people did not understand why they were not given permission to work at home, given the provincial guidelines for people to do so where possible.

"Despite asking my supervisor and already being set up for VPN, I was not given permission work from home until the end of April 2020. I felt like I wasn't following public health guidelines when I was going to work each day in a hospital when I could have easily started working from home in March."

Some also mentioned pressure from their supervisor and/or team not to work from home.

"Although my job could be done remotely, there was a lot of pressure to come into work, just to be here and all of my team members felt this. Other teams doing similar work have been "mandated" to work from home for their safety. Why is my team pressured to be present when work can be equally achieved off site? I had VPN set up before this. Even though it can kick you out repeatedly, I know how to manage this and can work effectively."

Increased Productivity

Most people felt their work had been productive while working from home largely due to the fact that people had fewer distractions at home, such as interruptions from colleagues or office tension. The increased peace and quiet meant that people were able to focus on work and be more productive.

"My children are older so it has been a smooth transition to working from home. Even though my children do not require much attention from me during the work day (so I am able to focus on work effectively) I am still looking forward to them returning to school in September so I can work with zero distractions! I believe I have been more productive working from home than I was in the office as my children are actually less distracting than the in-office distractions and interruptions I used to experience. Removing the in-office micromanagement, tensions, and negativity has also made working for the SHA more enjoyable, I have heard this from others as well and I have been happier with work over the past few months!!"

General office noise was also flagged as an obstacle to productive work that no longer existed at home. "I work in an environment that is open concept [where] it has been very challenging to work due to all the noise. I cannot believe how much more productive I have become being able to work mainly from home."

Flexibility in work was something that many people enjoyed having and thought it had contributed to productivity.

"I feel I am more relaxed and productive and enjoy having access to my work before or after hours. I no longer feel the pressure of leaving work with something not completed. Or going in having to sort through several emails before I start my day, I can do it anytime from home."

People also mentioned they were able to deal with clients more easily from home, either due to increased flexibility of work or the guieter work environment.

"Greater flexibility with work hours. Able to accommodate to clients availability better. For example, although Friday is typically a non-working day for me, I have booked clients on a Friday when that is that suits their schedule best and adjusted other days accordingly. I have also made calls in the evening if that is when it was best to talk to client or family members."

Experience Word Cloud



Benefits to Working From Home

Respondents were asked to indicate benefits they had experienced while working from home. The graph below shows that 'time savings' was the biggest benefit (77.7%), followed by 'fewer work disturbances' (69.4%) and 'money savings' (67.8%). Only 5.7% of respondents said they have not experienced any of the listed benefits.

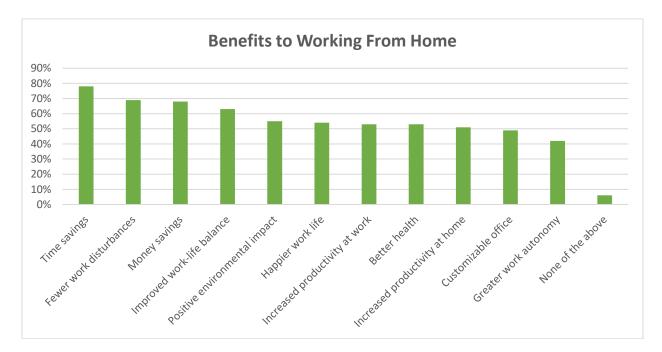


Figure 3. Benefits to Working from Home Graph

Savings

Many people commented on the savings of time and money from WFH, particularly those who commute longer distances in rural areas. Some people also mentioned that they appreciated being able to reduce their carbon footprint.

"I save an hour per day on travel and prep time, and reduced cost in gas and food. It is a green initiative, for I have reduced my carbon footprint. Come winter, I will not miss brushing off snow, travelling in the cold, and braving icy roads."

Improved Work Environment

Many people felt that their work environment had improved by being at home through better lighting, temperature control, privacy, and less noise that inevitably arises from working in a busy, crowded space. Improving their work environment had the effect of improving their physical and mental health.

"This would fall into "better health", but I would like to add that the physical environment of my department office had no natural light, all florescent lights, poor air circulation, and extremely poor temperature control. On average 3 out of 5 work day I would end my day with a headache, greatly impacting my home life at the end of the day. Since moving to my home office I have not experienced the same impacts or ailments."

People with physical issues also commented on the difference it made for them to be able to work at home.

"I suffer from UC and now working from home has eased so many stressors for me. What a wonderful change it has been! Even from the smallest thing of not worrying about if the bathrooms are free when I am desperate for them to the free from panic of everyday of when I

have to go, noises etc. HUGE blessing this is for me. Also I have been able to exercise before work now, as that was not an option before ... MUCH more comfortable for me"

Some commented on how the lack of office politics has improved their mental health and quality of work.

"What a blessing this is! I work In a VERY negative work environment, and that causes a LOT of stress, again, that is really not good for my medical condition! My dr told me (pre-covid when at the office) that the negative stress of my co-workers affects me more than I am even aware! and now, I can tune that all out and just focus on my work. And I find I get even MORE work done because I have NO distractions at my house, and no constant interruptions from working in a busy office."

Overall, many people emphasized the difference between their home office and work office and how much better they felt with working at home.

"I feel so much better physically and mentally. Today, the workplace is not a healthy environment. People are so stressed and bring that to work. I feel so much happier in my home environment and am not bombarded with all the negative chatter. My life is so less rushed and I feel so connected to my family. All in all the most positive experience! Thank-you for the opportunity."

Improved Work-Life Balance

Many people commented on the improved work-life balance they have been able to achieve through working at home.

"Working from home has been fantastic ... having that option and the equipment needed to be productive at home has improved my work/life balance. I can get ready after morning exercise quicker ... I like being able to access work files anytime, meaning I can sign on earlier than my usual start time some days, just to get things going ... Having a supportive manager is also helpful as she respects the fact that I know what is expected of me and will ensure that I get it done, regardless of where I'm physically located. I really hope we can continue to have the workfrom-home option."

Many people wanted to emphasise that WFH has had a positive impact on their family life as they have been able to work and have time with their family. Some mentioned that their family relationships have improved through working at home.

"Improved personal relationships with family - more time to spend with them when not commuting, when on lunch break at home, etc. and due to lower stress levels and the improved work-life balance or increased productively at home have all helped to improve those relationships."

"I feel supported as a professional mom and did not feel as though I had to choose between doing an amazing job at work or at home."

People also mentioned the relief of being at home with their family in a time of increased anxiety and uncertainty, particularly when family members had health issues.

"I think everything is covered above but I don't feel like a check box really lets the survey know just how beneficial this has been. I have two children with difficult mental health concerns. My ability to be home with them during this uncertain time has been life changing. I am here. They

can be near. They know I am home and feel safe. As a family we have directly benefitted from me being able to work from home. I am grateful for this experience."

Improved Health

Many people felt that their overall physical and mental health had improved through the ability to WFH. Comments showed that people were able to eat better, exercise more, and get better sleep. They took fewer sick days as they were able to work through any minor ailments. Some also mentioned the therapeutic effect of having their pets around. People often felt safer working from home, mostly due to lessened potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus, but also because some did not feel safe walking to and from work or leaving work after dark.

"I ate less, lost weight, able to use down time to step-outside for fresh air, able to do breaks that involved something other than looking at the computer or talking to staff - play with the dog, look at garden, start preparing a meal, somewhat more contact with spouse. I did not have to travel 100 km per day which gave an extra one hour of free time to my day ... If we had to work from home in the winter there would be no stress of having to drive in bad weather."

Many comments showed that people felt better overall and would like to continue to work remotely. "I very much enjoy the quietness of working from home with no noise or drama. I have been working with the SHA for 25 years and I feel better than I have in years. This has been a great experience for me. I love it. I wish I could continue working from home forever."

Other Benefits

Some respondents mentioned changes in work processes due to the shift to remote work. These included an increase in paperless methods, a decreased need to travel for work, becoming more innovative in finding solutions to problems, and creating effective virtual teams.

Benefits Word Cloud



Challenges to Working From Home

Although responses to survey questions were generally very positive, some people did experience challenges with WFH. The graph below shows that 'professional isolation' (34.4%) was the biggest issue faced, followed by 'lack of innovation' (33%) and 'lack of resources' (31.8). It should be noted that 27.4% said that they had not experienced any of the listed issues.

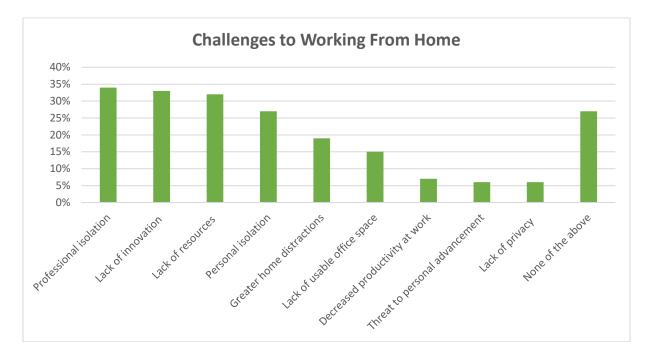


Figure 4. Challenges to Working from Home Graph

Resource Issues

There were many challenges in the large-scale transition to WFH. The biggest problems centered around IT, with issues of connectivity and setting up of equipment and platforms. Many people reported that they were not able to print or fax from home, which created difficulties for them. There was often a lack of clarity about regulations regarding equipment.

"My supervisor did not have time to assist me with getting set up to work at home. When I was told that I needed to work from home in March, I was told that I was not allowed to take the equipment I needed to do my work. I have now been allowed to take the equipment I need home with me. I have always had VPN access but all of the information I needed in order to support [my team] was not readily available and it took several days for IT to get back to me to assist me with anything, by then it was usually too late to be helpful. I am sure they were doing their best but were not able to meet the demand."

People who lacked the necessary equipment at home, such as office furniture or a second screen, often had to purchase these at their own expense. Some respondents noted that their home office was not ergonomic, which sometimes led to physical issues.

"I miss the ergonomic options of my work desk and chair. My desk is a sit/stand and my home office is not as well set up leading to new strains on wrists and shoulders."

However, those who had done remote work previously and were set up for this generally experienced very few problems. This again highlights the unique challenges with a large-scale move to remote work that would not be experienced with a more controlled transition with fewer people.

"This transition was very smooth for me because pre-covid I had occasionally worked from home. My position requires me to be mobile therefore I already had a laptop and all programs required to efficiently work from various SHA sites and this made the transition home quite easy."

Isolation

The biggest drawback to remote working was the lack of interpersonal connection and relationships with co-workers.

"Adapting to working from home was an adjustment, taking away the team atmosphere was the hardest part to adjust to. My team and I work very closely together on processes and consistencies. Though working from home as its perks, it also has negative effects."

Apart from the general feeling of isolation, some noted the issue of lack of connection with team members. Informal communication was seen as helpful in problem solving and keeping abreast of issues.

"Professional isolation is a big one, it's been much harder to connect with the broad range of collaborators in our department. And certainly we benefit greatly from casual interactions with workmates in our group. Those interactions are very important for innovations and driving new work."

Team Issues

Difficulties with communication and collaboration with colleagues were highlighted by some respondents.

"I did find it harder to collaborate/consult in the moment, as I could not walk down the hall to chat quickly with a colleague. Instead would have to use email/text/phone and often wait for a reply, which did not always happen in a timely fashion."

Some managers noted the difficulties in trying to manage and mentor staff in a virtual setting.

"Extremely difficult to hire and orientate new employees. Relationship development foundational to a great work environment is compromised in creating an effective t team. I believe face to face communication, while it can be obtained through webex, is required when managing performance."

Difficulties with team and supervisor relationships were also noted, particularly for new staff. Physical distance was a challenge to creating and/or maintaining workplace relationships.

"My team managed to stay fairly well connected but it was a challenge to ensure we maintained good communication and worked together as a team. Workplace relationships that were somewhat strained prior to working from home became more strained."

Leadership Lack of Support

People emphasized difficulties associated with WFH when their supervisor did not support this.

"Initially, management did not want us working from home. ... We are still required to return to work for faxing and scanning forms. Management repeatedly states "working from home is not mandatory" and "if you want your space at work back, we can accommodate that", yet there is not enough room for us all to return to work. Recently we've been informed that others will be

using our cubicles to space out others working in the building. Working from home has become necessary, yet management will not admit this. I am not sure why other than this seems to be the culture in my department."

There were communication issues between different levels of leadership regarding WFH decisions.

My manager instructed us to work from home. It was a Director who works on the same floor as us but is not in charge of our program that bullied my Director to make us come back to work. I find this utterly unprofessional and I am unsure how the SHA can keep people like that employed. My manager and Director were forced to make us come back to work by the hands of another Director who isn't in charge of our program because she didn't like the idea, yet we are all supposed to be encouraging working from home as much as possible I am a very very unhappy SHA employee to see bullying happening.

Work-Life Challenges

Some respondents found that working at home led to a reduced work-life balance as they found it difficult to disconnect from work. Children sometimes did not understand that parents had to work even though they were at home.

"It's been difficult to separate home from work. I have felt isolated with not being able to go out to work. It's been difficult not to have all the resources at my fingertips working from home - example no files, no printer, scanner, etc. Office space is the middle of my family's activities - when visible it's easy for them to think I am 'free'."

Lack of defined office space also led to difficulties disconnecting from work after hours.

"Between balancing childcare and home priorities, as well as an increased workload with covid work on top of day to day, working from home has been a challenge. My computer is set in the living room and has taken over our home. I find it difficult to unplug / tempting to work outside of regular hours."

People often noted that there are benefits and challenges to both work environments. However, challenges were often offset by the benefits of WFH. Some people noted that you may be able to have the best of both worlds by splitting work locations between the office and home.

"There is a general misconception employees may be less productive at home. This is absolutely untrue. There are hardly any distractions for me (people with young children would maybe disagree) and I meet all deadlines. I sometimes miss the support of an office environment and a sense of connected-ness to my team but I also love not commuting and rushing in the mornings. In the future, splitting my time I think might be ideal. Making organic connections and networking are important to me."

Other Challenges

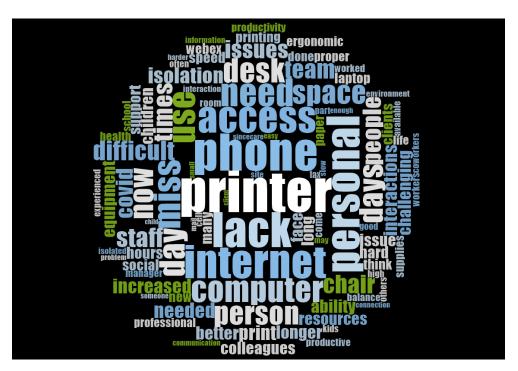
Although many people said they were able to create a healthier routine at home through better nutrition and increased exercise, a few found that being at home had the opposite effect.

"Decrease in movement has been a challenge, no longer walking from parking lot to office 2x/day, or walking around the building for printing/talking to others. Some days the steps taken at home are limited, thus I have tried to walk around the block a few times/day."

Some respondents mentioned that their absence from the office created more work for those who continued to work there full-time. This was emphasized in separate email communications from those who did not complete the survey because they had not worked from home, and wanted to voice that this had created difficulties in the workplace.

"I would like to voice my opinion on this aspect of those that had to attend in facility work. We found that the communication was severed and was difficult to make connections with the employees that were working remotely. Long delays occurred with receiving supports as well, at times, no phone numbers were shared to reach the individual working from home. This added to our stress and workload on the front line navigating through this pandemic. A survey from those that worked in facility would be appreciated as well."

Challenges Word Cloud



Experience of On-Line Meetings

When asked about their experiences with on-line meetings, 82.6% agreed or strongly agreed that meetings with fewer than 10 people were productive, 50.5% agreed or strongly agreed that meetings with 10 – 20 people were productive, and 28.9% agreed or strongly agreed that meetings with more than 20 people were productive. There seems to be general consensus that on-line meetings work better with fewer people. However, 8% of participants had not experienced small meetings, 18% had not experienced medium-sized meetings, and 26% had not experienced larger meetings. It was difficult to assess the utility of tools such as Mural as most participants had not used these (69%) and 15% neither agreed nor disagreed that these were helpful. However, 13% agreed or strongly agreed that these tools were helpful.

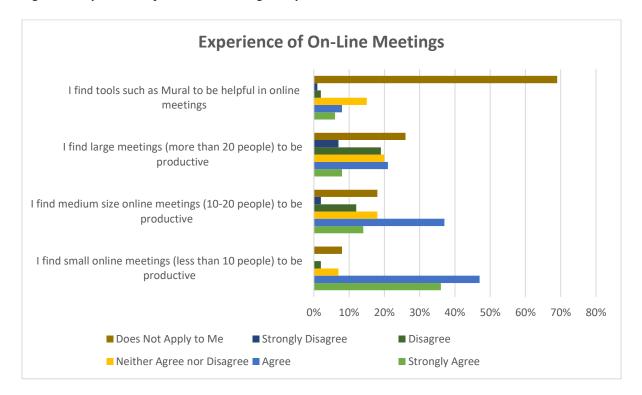


Figure 5. Experience of On-Line Meetings Graph

Conclusions

It is noteworthy that 3,546 comments were made in this survey. It is unusual to receive many comments in a survey; however, the number and length of comments showed that people felt strongly about this issue. The benefits of WFH appeared to outweigh the challenges for participants. The percentages of responses to the listed benefits ranged from 49% to 78% whereas the range of responses to the listed challenges was 6% to 33%. Many people elaborated further on the listed benefits and challenges, giving a more holistic view of the experiences of WFH.

Working from home appears to be beneficial for the vast majority of respondents. Some employees reported their work conditions were less than favourable, including crowded, noisy workspaces with little light and poor temperature control. Allowing people to work remotely would ameliorate this for those people as well as allowing more space for those who do have to be in the office. Many people reported feeling less stressed and more productive in their work.

Studies repeatedly show that autonomy in work is a large predictor of work engagement. Giving employees the option to work from home is likely to result in higher levels of job satisfaction and work engagement in those who choose to do so. Greater flexibility in work hours that allows people to attend to child needs or appointments is highly valued. Working from home will not suit everyone and will be difficult for some due to role responsibilities or their home environment. However, many people clearly desire this and would be pleased to be given the choice to work remotely. Those who have successfully transitioned to remote work have emphasized the benefits of this in their work and personal lives.

Although this survey focused on the effect of WFH on employees, there are also organizational ramifications to this. The SHA workforce has grown but infrastructure has not paralleled in growth. Workspaces are increasingly smaller to try to accommodate this. Having a WFH option is likely to free up valuable real estate and reduce demand on resources. Additionally, recruitment and retention of rural employees is an ongoing issue as there are lower application rates for rural positions. Having a WFH option where possible would allow people to live where they choose but still fulfill the responsibilities of the role.

While the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the movement towards WFH, there remains uncertainty and skepticism over the long-term use of these practices. Our findings suggest that WFH is a viable and preferred working arrangement amongst SHA employees that would provide benefit to the individual as well as the SHA through increased engagement and reduced use of resources. However, it may require a shift in thinking to be seen as acceptable within the organization. This study assessed the experiences of WFH employees, but not associated issues, such as work productivity or difficulties faced by colleagues who remained in the office. Future research is needed to gain a holistic picture of the effectiveness of WFH arrangements within the SHA.