## Executive Summary

The Telecommuting Survey was created to help the University identify the benefits and challenges employees are experiencing related to remote work, with the intent to gather information to be used to help shape the University's telecommuting policy in the future. The survey was sent to 7,251 employees and 2,987 responded, for a response rate of 41%. The survey consisted of mostly multiple-choice questions, with a few open-ended questions. Overall, most employees enjoy working remotely, and feel that they are as, or more productive working remotely compared to working in the office. The majority of employees would prefer some combination of working in the office and working remotely, although specific preferences vary greatly. Likewise, the majority of supervisors feel that their employees are as, or more productive while working remotely and said that they trust their subordinates to get their work done while working remotely.

## Key Findings

### Key Statistics

- 49.61% of respondents are currently working remotely on all working days. An additional 28.76% are working mostly remotely with occasional visits to campus. (Fig. 1)

**Fig. 1**
**Q1: Currently, you are**
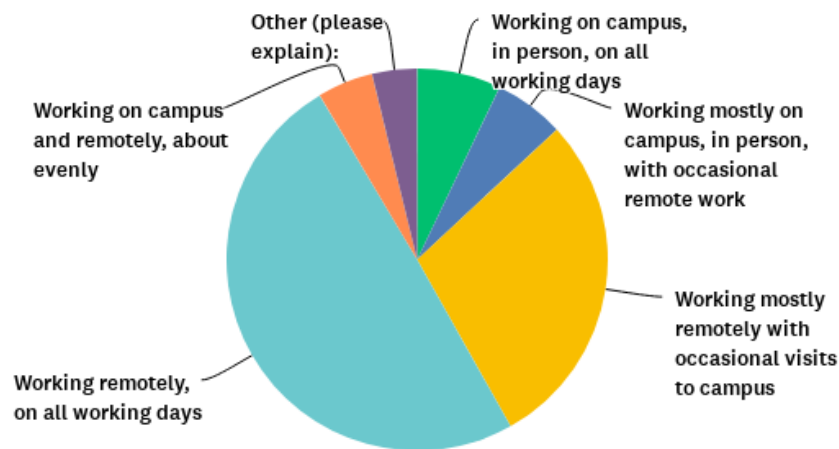


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Working on campus, in person, on all working days | 7.13% | 213 |
| Working mostly on campus, in person, with occasional remote work | 5.96% | 178 |
| Working mostly remotely with occasional visits to campus | 28.76% | 859 |
| Working remotely, on all working days | 49.61% | 1,482 |
| Working on campus and remotely, about evenly | 4.72% | 141 |
| Other (please explain): | 3.82% | 114 |
| TOTAL | | 2,987 |

- 28.49% of respondents worked remotely on occasion, as needed, prior to COVID. Fewer than 10% worked remotely more frequently, and 63.84% never worked remotely prior to COVID. (Fig. 2)

**Fig. 2**
**Q2: How often did you work remotely prior to COVID-19?**
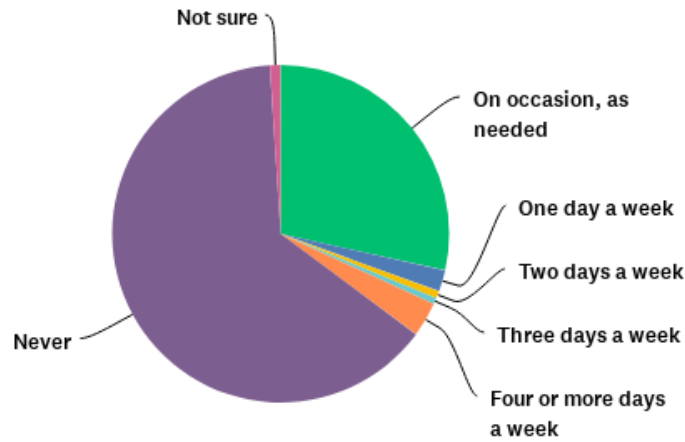


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| On occasion, as needed | 28.49% | 851 |
| One day a week | 2.04% | 61 |
| Two days a week | 0.70% | 21 |
| Three days a week | 0.60% | 18 |
| Four or more days a week | 3.31% | 99 |
| Never | 63.84% | 1,907 |
| Not sure | 1.00% | 30 |
| TOTAL | | 2,987 |

**Opinions and Preferences Regarding Remote Work**

Of those that responded to the survey, 44.9% said they are "Extremely Satisfied" with working from home, and 30.42% said they are "Very Satisfied." (Fig. 3) The vast majority of employees also feel that they have access to a physical space that is conducive to working effectively (Fig. 4), and that they have the equipment, supplies, and tools needed to do their job effectively while working remotely (Fig. 5).

**Fig. 3**
**Q7: How satisfied are you when working from home?**
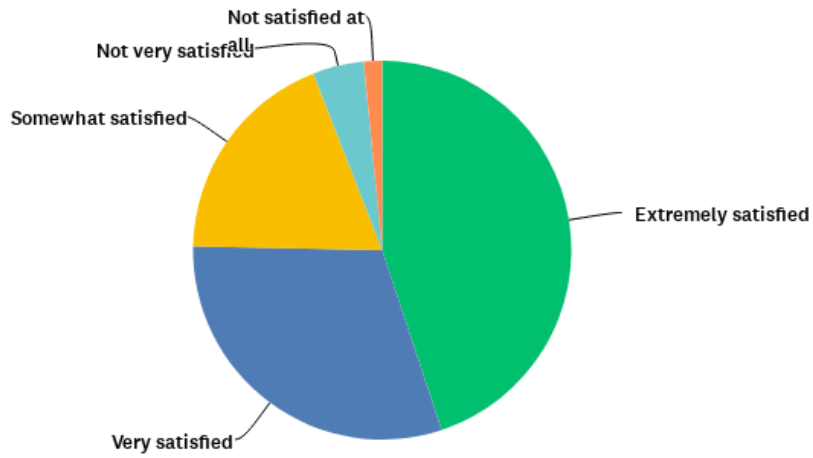


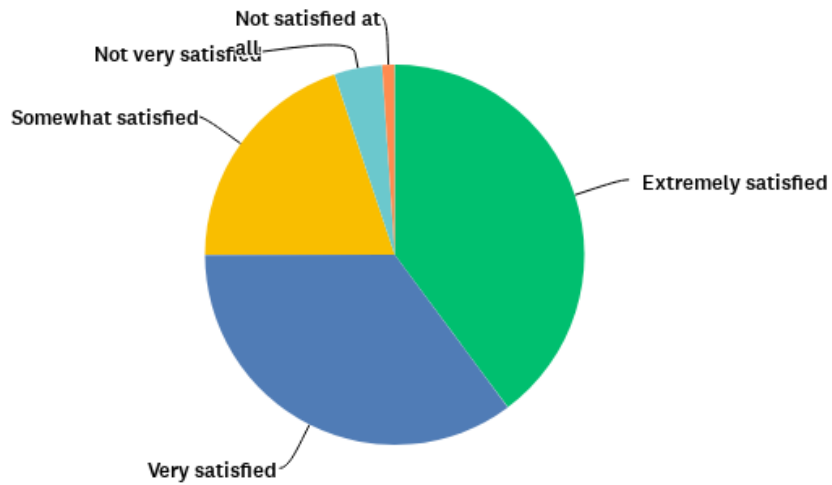| | EXTREMELY SATISFIED | VERY SATISFIED | SOMEWHAT SATISFIED | NOT VERY SATISFIED | NOT SATISFIED AT ALL | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 44.90% 1,181 | 30.42% 800 | 18.75% 493 | 4.37% 115 | 1.56% 41 | 2,630 | 4.13 |

**Fig. 4**
**Q8: When working remotely, do you have access to physical space that is conducive to working/working effectively/job productivity?**
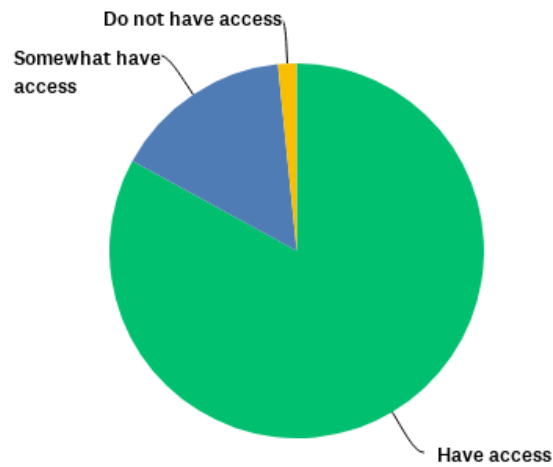


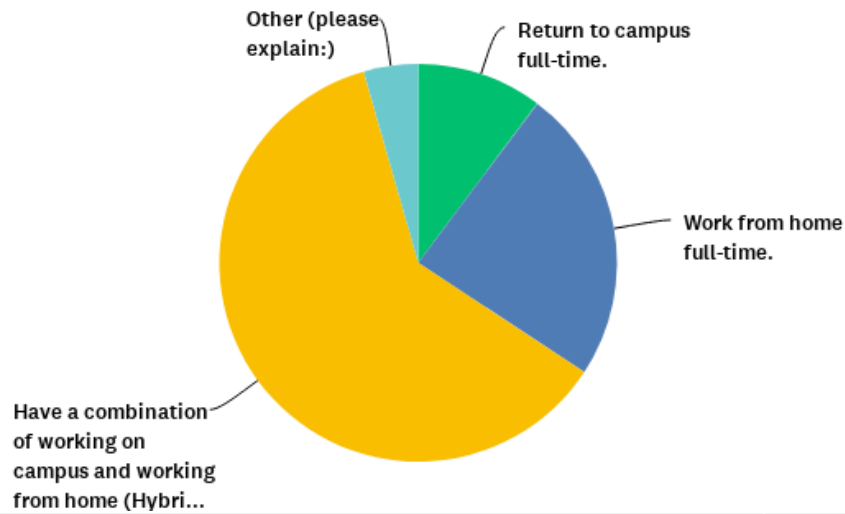| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Have access | 82.96% | 2,181 |
| Somewhat have access | 15.44% | 406 |
| Do not have access | 1.60% | 42 |
| TOTAL | | 2,629 |

**Fig. 5**
**Q9: How satisfied are you that you have the equipment, supplies, and tools you need to be able to do your job effectively while working remotely?**



| | EXTREMELY SATISFIED | VERY SATISFIED | SOMEWHAT SATISFIED | NOT VERY SATISFIED | NOT SATISFIED AT ALL | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 39.83% 1,048 | 35.16% 925 | 19.88% 523 | 4.07% 107 | 1.06% 28 | 2,631 | 4.09 |

The majority of respondents would prefer a combination of working on campus and working from home, with 61.33% choosing this option. Just over 24% of respondents would prefer to work from home full-time, 10.23% would prefer to return to campus full-time, and 4.41% answered "Other." (Fig. 6) Among the "Other" responses, most employees explained preferences for hybrid work schedules, ranging from primarily working remotely and coming to the office when needed, to set schedules split between working in the office and working remotely, to primarily working in the office with the flexibility to work from home when needed. In general, respondents are satisfied with the level of communication from and among the University, their supervisor, and their co-workers.

**Fig. 6**
**Q34: My preference for the future would be to:**



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Return to campus full-time. | 10.23% | 269 |
| Work from home full-time. | 24.03% | 632 |
| Have a combination of working on campus and working from home (Hybrid model). | 61.33% | 1,613 |
| Other (please explain:) | 4.41% | 116 |
| TOTAL | | 2,630 |

Among supervisors who responded to the survey, 32.29% said they "Extremely Trust" their subordinates to get their work done well while working remotely, and 52.21% said they "Very Much" trust their subordinates to get their work done. (Fig.7) When asked how productive their employees have been while working remotely compared to working on campus, 52.9% of respondents said there has been no difference, while 3.69% said their employees have been "Much More" productive while working remotely and 12.13% said their employees have been "Somewhat More" productive. (Fig. 8) Comments from respondents also noted that the current situation with the pandemic may not give an accurate picture of employees' productivity while working remotely under more normal circumstances, and many believe productivity would be even higher.

**Fig. 7**

**Q47: How much do you trust your employees to get their work done well while working remotely?**
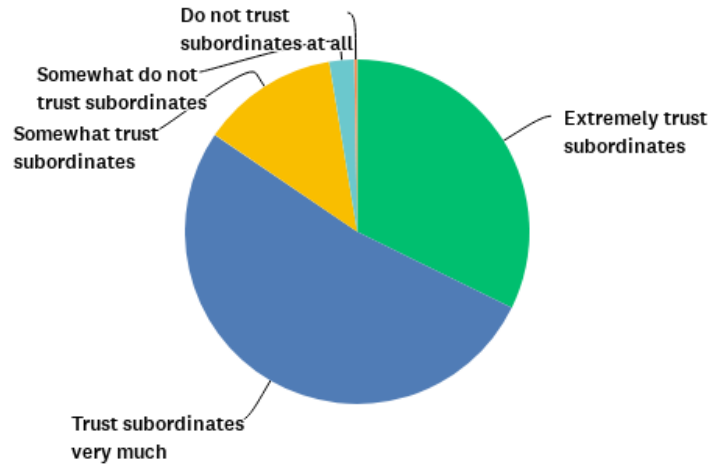


| | EXTREMELY TRUST SUBORDINATES | TRUST SUBORDINATES VERY MUCH | SOMEWHAT TRUST SUBORDINATES | SOMEWHAT DO NOT TRUST SUBORDINATES | DO NOT TRUST SUBORDINATES AT ALL | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 32.29% 373 | 52.21% 603 | 12.90% 149 | 2.34% 27 | 0.26% 3 | 1,155 | 4.14 |

**Fig. 8**

**Q49: Compared to when they were working on campus, in person, how productive have your employees been when working remotely?**
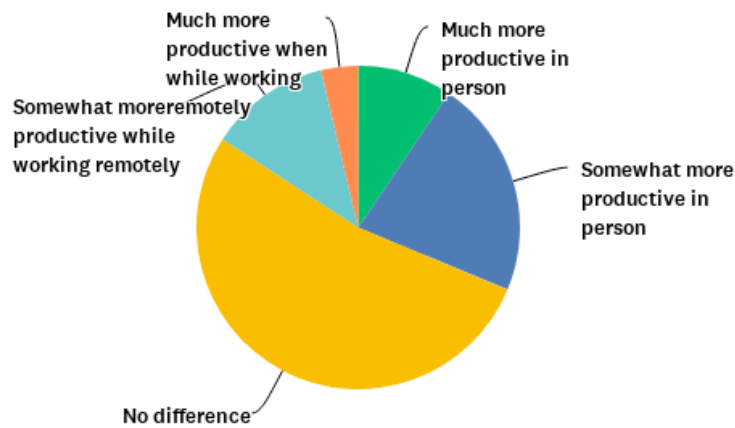


| | MUCH MORE PRODUCTIVE IN PERSON | SOMEWHAT MORE PRODUCTIVE IN PERSON | NO DIFFERENCE | SOMEWHAT MORE PRODUCTIVE WHILE WORKING REMOTELY | MUCH MORE PRODUCTIVE WHEN WHILE WORKING REMOTELY | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 9.49% 108 | 21.79% 248 | 52.90% 602 | 12.13% 138 | 3.69% 42 | 1,138 | 2.79 |

## Benefits of Remote Work

There are many perceived benefits to remote work, from both an operational and a personal standpoint. Among supervisors who completed the survey, many noted that the shift to remote work has allowed their teams to identify changes that lead to greater efficiency. One such change has been the creation of online processes that did not exist before, such as online forms and use of Microsoft Teams and Box for collaborating and sharing files. Many supervisors also noted that remote work has forced some employees who may have been resistant to change to try new ways of doing things, which in many cases has led to positive change.

Employees who responded to the survey noted having fewer distractions at home, with the ability to focus more on work tasks without co-workers "popping in" throughout the day. Respondents reported a variety of benefits related to elimination or reduction of commute times. Benefits included sleeping later or time to do home tasks before or after work, more time to spend with family, and less money spent on gas and vehicle maintenance. Some employees have also cancelled parking passes, further reducing personal expenses. Employees also noted the benefit of increased flexibility related to remote work, ranging from being home with children whose schools or daycares are closed, running errands and scheduling appointments or home maintenance, and using normal break times to complete small tasks around the house, such as starting a load of laundry or completing minor home repairs. Many respondents said that they have used fewer sick and vacation days since the beginning of the pandemic and the implementation of remote work. While the decrease in vacation usage is generally more related to the pandemic and limitations on travel, many employees noted that they used fewer sick days because they have less exposure to illnesses. The flexibility of allowing employees to work from home while caring for children who are sick or out of school also contributes to a reduction in the number of sick and vacation days employees use.

## Challenges of Remote Work

The most common challenges noted by respondents relate to lack of face-to-face interaction. This includes:

- feeling isolated (especially for those employees who live alone),
- lack of direction from their supervisor,
- missing "water cooler" talk to connect with co-workers, and walking down the hall to ask a co-worker a quick question

Many respondents also find it challenging to separate work from home, including:

- difficulty "turning off work mode,"
- difficulty taking regular breaks, and
- distractions of home tasks that need to be done, as well as children, pets and partners who are working at home

Other common challenges relate to workspace, equipment, and resources.

- not having room for a separate workspace

- not having an ergonomic home set up, not having adequate equipment (ex: dual monitors, no printer/scanner at home), and
- not having access to resources (books, references, files, etc.)

Some respondents indicated that they have not wanted to spend money on a better set up because they do not know how long they will be working remotely, and if they knew the arrangement was more permanent they would invest in a better set up.

## Recommendations and Considerations

The University should increase the use of remote work in the future, taking into account operational needs and employee preferences, among other factors. Based on survey responses, the following considerations should be considered when developing the telecommuting policy and strategy:

- Many employees noted challenges related to not having dual monitors, having uncomfortable chairs, etc. The policy should clarify what equipment employees who work remotely are allowed to take home, or what the University will purchase for a home office. Another factor to consider is how to manage equipment needs for employees who work a hybrid schedule and need equipment both at home and at the office.
- Some respondents also noted that they have had to purchase their own office supplies, including things like pens, post-it notes, and printer ink and paper. The policy should address what supplies are reimbursable or will be provided by the University.
- Several employees mentioned issues related to ergonomics of their workspace, especially office chairs. In development of the policy, consideration should be given to the University's liability related to potential workers' compensation claims due to poor ergonomic conditions of home offices. The University should consider making a requirement of working remotely to have an employee's home workspace evaluated for ergonomic concerns.
- Many respondents noted challenges related to childcare and caring for children who are home while they are working. Most of these challenges are due to COVID-related closures of schools or daycares and will be eliminated or reduced when the pandemic is over, however some childcare issues will continue to arise when children are home sick, on school holidays, etc. It is recommended that the policy address situations where it would be acceptable to work remotely while caring for children.