REMOTE WORKING IN AN ORGANIZATION –
AN EVERYDAY PRACTICE OR JUST AN ATTRACTIVE
EMPLOYEE BENEFIT?

Anna Szulc

PhD student of University of Economics in Katowice

Department of Labour Market Forecasting and Analysis

E-mail: annaszulc.ezg@gmail.com

Abstract: *Remote work (also known as home office) is a growing in popularity in many organizations. While it is becoming a daily occurrence for some, for others it remains a novelty, innovation or an attractive benefit for employee retention. Over the past few years, the routine of working in an office for 8 hours a day has gone much further thanks, in part, to the implementation of new technologies and the introduction of relevant provisions in the Labour Code. Since the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, there has been much debate about the advantages and disadvantages of such a work model. Home office has a major impact on employees' approach to work, as well as their ability to self-actualize. Among the benefits of remote working is maintaining a work-life balance. For managers, this poses a challenge to developing and managing teams, as well as recruitment of staff. The workplace has become virtual not so much physical and has resulted in organizational culture being redefined. There has been an increase in job listings addressing three work systems for consideration by both the employer and employee: remote, hybrid and office. Working remotely requires managers to have developed soft skills and emotional intelligence to support the development and engagement of the employee, thus providing needed support and security.*

Key words: remote work, employment benefits, home office, flexibility
JEL codes: J21, J23, I31

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, remote working is becoming an increasingly common and significant phenomenon. Working in this model is referred to as virtual officing, remote work or networking (Sęczkowska, 2019). It is related to the way employment and contracts are established, affecting the place of work and the performance of duties. It refers to activities performed outside the employer's premises (Jeran, 2016). This may include the use of a contract of mandate or contract for work, or other solutions adopted in the workplace.

To make remote working solutions effectively operate in the workplace, it is necessary to implement strategies to motivate employees and develop a strong organisational culture. For many employees, remote working has become an integral part of their employment. When discussing this topic, it is worth focusing on the social, economic and technological factors that continuously create and support this trend. Through an interdisciplinary approach, both the positive perspectives of this system as well as the challenges it presents to both employee and employer, can be taken into account. The understanding thus aims to explore the essence of the implications of this phenomenon in the context of modern private and professional life.

The article aims to present a comprehensive analysis of the nature of remote working and its importance in the context of contemporary economic approaches in the labour market. Various aspects of the remote working model will be discussed, including its definition, methods of its use and key advantages and risks. When considering the phenomenon of the increasing popularity of home office working, it seems important to understand its impact on employees and managers and, more broadly, on society as a whole.

2. Remote working and its conditions

The concept of remote working first appeared in Polish legislation in 2020. For a long time, it was referred to as remote work or, more precisely, telework. Article 67 of the 2007 Labour Code said that it was 'work performed regularly outside the workplace using electronic communication means'. Jack M. Nilles argued that the emergence of the concept of teleworking was born of mundane economic reasons, saving fuel and caring for the environment. The above concept was therefore based on finding a way to eliminate communication problems - commuting to/from work (Nilles, 2003, Bailey, Kurland. 2002).

The definition of teleworking is described in more detail in Article 67 5 § 1 of the Labour Code. In order to address the topic of telework, however, it is still necessary to mention the concept of teleworker, which is contained in § 2 of the aforementioned article. The delivery of outcomes is emphasized and transmitted electronically,. In summary, the provision of work in the form of telework was not only evidenced by the mere fact of performing work away from the workplace, but also by the manner in which the outcomes of the work would be transmitted to the employer. It can be deduced from this that, at the time, not every employee performing work duties at home was considered a teleworker by the Act.

Remote working began to be defined in Poland in Article 3 of the Act of 2 March 2020 on special solutions related to the prevention, and combating of Covid-19, other infectious diseases and crisis situations caused by them. The situation of continuation and development of remote working after the epidemic time either under the same or much more broadly codified conditions, i.e. their entrenchment in the Labour Code, was not considered at the time. Because of the above-mentioned premise, changes to labour legislation became necessary. This is because the Covidium Act did not introduce a clarification and proper understanding of the definition of remote working.

On 6 February 2023, the law of 1 December 2022 was promulgated, which introduced the concept of remote working into the Labour Code, while repealing the existing regulations on the aforementioned telework. On 7 October 2023, the transitional period ended and the new definition is still in force today. Remote work consists of performing work wholly or partially at a place indicated by the employee (including at the employee's home address) and agreed with the employer on a case-by-case basis, in particular using means of direct communication at a distance.

The Labour Code provides for both total remote working and hybrid remote working (partly at home, partly at the company office), according to the needs of the individual employee and the employer.

The new regulations have imposed additional obligations on the employer, i.e. to provide the employee performing remote work with the work materials and tools, including the technical equipment required to perform remote work, to provide the employee with the training and technical assistance necessary to perform remote work, to cover the costs related to the installation, service, operation and maintenance of work tools and electricity, as well as telecommunication services.

According to data from the Central Statistical Office, obtained during the 'Demand for Work' survey, and concerning the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic on selected elements of the labour market in Poland, in the fourth quarter of 2020, the proportion of people who worked remotely due to the epidemic in the total number of employees was highest at the beginning of the pandemic and in the period to 31 March was 11%. In the following two quarters, the share gradually decreased to 10.2% in the second quarter and 5.8% in the third quarter to again reach a level very close to that at the beginning of the pandemic, i.e. 10.8%, at the end of the year.

The remote working system, especially in Poland, is conditioned by many factors, both social, economic and technological. Here are some of the key determinants:

- Legal regulations: In Poland, there are regulations on remote working, defining, inter alia, the terms of employment contracts in this mode, the employer's responsibility for providing the necessary resources for remote working and the obligation to pay remuneration. These regulations have an impact on the organization of home office work.

- Technological infrastructure: Effective use of remote working requires access to a stable internet connection and appropriate communication and remote working tools. In Poland, the availability of broadband internet and technologies supporting this working model is increasing, but there may still be local deficiencies in connection quality and stability.

- Organizational culture: The introduction of remote working may require a change in the organizational culture within companies. Some organizations may be more open to this form of collaboration, while others may prefer traditional office working methods.

- Data security: Remote working requires that adequate data security measures are in place, especially if employees have access to confidential information. Companies must ensure that appropriate technological safeguards and procedures are in place to protect confidential data from unauthorized access.

- Social issues: Remote working can affect the social aspects of work, such as relationships between employees and the sense of belonging to a team. Therefore, it is important that employers take measures to build engagement and cooperation among remote workers.

- Work-life balance: Remote working can bring benefits in terms of greater time flexibility, but at the same time can lead to difficulties in separating work and private
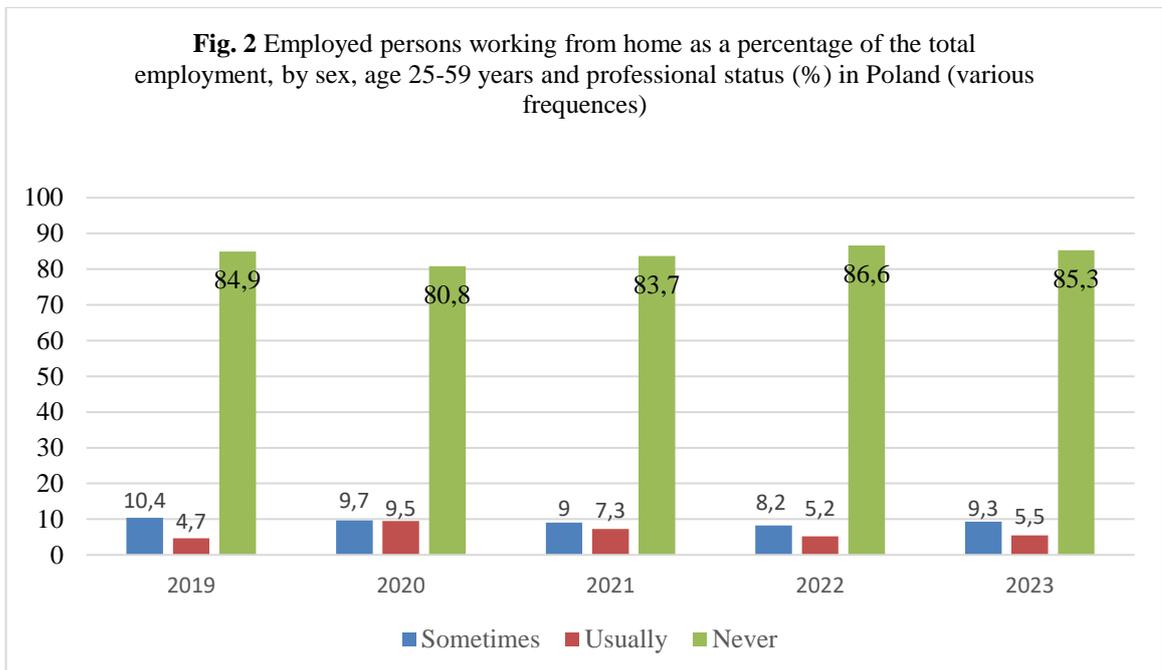
life. It is important that employees and employers understand the important issue of maintaining a healthy balance.

- Availability of technical support: Remote workers may need technical support for problems with their work tools. Companies need to ensure that adequate technical support is in place to ensure smooth operations within the organization.

- Communication and project management: Effective communication and project management are key to company performance. Therefore, organizations need to use appropriate communication tools and project management methods to ensure effective collaboration between remote workers (Urbaniec, 2022).

As the author has already mentioned, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic assured a new approach to remote working, which was also linked to the prevention, prevention and control of infectious diseases. The data approaching from this period becomes a determinant of new norms and conclusions. The graph below of employed women and men in the 25-59 age bracket between 2019 and 2023 and usually working in a home office model clearly shows an increase in the trend of remote working in 2020. The graph below of employed women and men in the 25-59 age bracket between 2019 and 2023 and usually working in a home office model clearly shows an increase in the trend of remote working in 2020, when, through the outbreak of the pandemic, the percentage of remote workers reached its peak. In the following years, relatively high levels of those performing their duties from home are observed to be maintained, suggesting a lasting impact of the pandemic and changing attitudes towards remote working. These data confirm the growing importance of this system as an alternative employment model, which we already know has long-term implications for work organisation and the labour market as a whole.

Fig. 1 Employed persons working usually from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age 25-59 years and professional status (%) in Poland

Source: own elaboration based on (www10)

Fig. 2 Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age 25-59 years and professional status (%) in Poland (various frequences)

Source: own compilation based on (www6)

The Eurostat data above was intended to show what the percentage distribution of remote working frequency looked like over several years, including 2020 for the same group of employees as in the previous chart. The data demonstrated that workers were only marginally affected by the difference at the point of lockdown and restriction. Considering the other

statistics, namely the age of employees of both sexes, between 35 and 49 in the April-May 2020 period, and their response to the question on the frequency of remote working before the pandemic outbreak, there is a clear difference in attitude.

Prior to the pandemic, the majority of respondents, 58.4%, had no experience of working remotely, suggesting that the desk-based working model was dominant for them. There was a group of respondents who worked remotely with varying frequency, from occasional to daily, suggesting that there was a degree of flexibility in some workplaces. Despite the low percentage of people always working remotely before the pandemic, there was already a group of people who used this working model, which may indicate a growing interest in this form of performing their professional duties. This supports the thesis that the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly influenced attitudes towards remote working, as well as the frequency with which it is performed (Sidor-Rządkowska, 2021). This is also evidenced by the Future Business Institute Report, showing that a large proportion of staff prior to the pandemic, as much as 30%, did not carry out work in this way. The report also shows that as a result of Covid-19, remote working became a continuous solution for 73% of employees, with only 7% of respondents declaring that they did not work in this system for a single day.

3. Consequences of remote working

Remote working involves mediated communication and the way in which this is assessed is largely linked to the quality of the internet, the reliability of the links and available bandwidth. The following advantages and limitations of remote working from an employer's perspective can be identified (Lorenz, 2011).

Tab. 1 Advantages and disadvantages of remote working

Advantages of remote working	Disadvantages of remote working
Reduction in office maintenance costs (device, utilities, rent).	The need to secure sensitive data and protect it from possible leakage from the organization.
Challenge of the employee's identification with the company and the need to belong to a group.	The chance to hire specialists, without the need to relocate and the additional costs involved.
The possibility of introducing an employee's accountability for the completion of a task without accruing any overtime.	Establishing contact with clients for whom face-to-face contact was important.
Wider pool of potential job applicants and therefore the possibility to negotiate a lower salary.	Lack of direct control over the employee.

	Lower staff turnover due to, for example, relocation, commuting problems, etc. possible technical failures preventing contact with the employee.

Source: own elaboration based on (Lorenz, 2011, s. 155-156)

Remote working has a high impact on reducing employment costs. From the employer's perspective, it is an option, allowing for the levelling of needed equipment or dedicated space (Sęczkowska, 2019). Flexibility, production and also upskilling can also be influenced in this way (Carillo et al. 2021).

Furthermore, remote working reduces the frequency that employees take holidays and sick leave. For employees, it represents a solution that reduces, among other things, the cost of commuting to the workplace (Biron, Peretz, Turgeman-Lupo. 2020). It is also associated with certain psychosocial benefits, including: lower stress levels, flexibility of work, adaptation to needs and abilities, higher levels of satisfaction, balance of personal and professional life (Sęczkowska, 2019). However, as many as 36% of people surveyed declare that flexible working hours are a significant benefit for them. The opportunity to spend more time with loved ones is the overwhelming advantage of remote working for only 10% of the employees surveyed. This may indicate a significant shift in society, where personal convenience and independence in the form of flexible working hours or the ability to work from any location are of greatest value to the modern employee.

Social aspects such as family or daily meetings at work are much further down the statistics (Smoder, 2021). According to Eurofound, in 2021, 16.6% of employees in European countries declared that they prefer this system of performing work duties.

Ensuring work is effectively organized will result in more leisure time being made available, which also has a bearing on the overall psycho-physical workload (Sęczkowska, 2019). In practice, it is also very important to reduce noise, noise, which promotes concentration, creativity, speed of work performance.

It has been observed that there are not only benefits associated with remote working, there are also disadvantages. This could be due to the generally reduced in-person contact of employees (Jeran, 2016). This may lead to difficulties with effective communication or personal conflicts (Petts et al., 2021, Clark et al., 2020, Biron et al 2020). The following data, however, shows that the isolation enforced by the introduction of covidien restrictions was not a problem for as many as 26% of respondents in Poland. Only 9% of employees aged 35-49 indicated that they always feel uncomfortable in the mentioned situation.

Fig. 3 Feeling isolation when working - July 2020
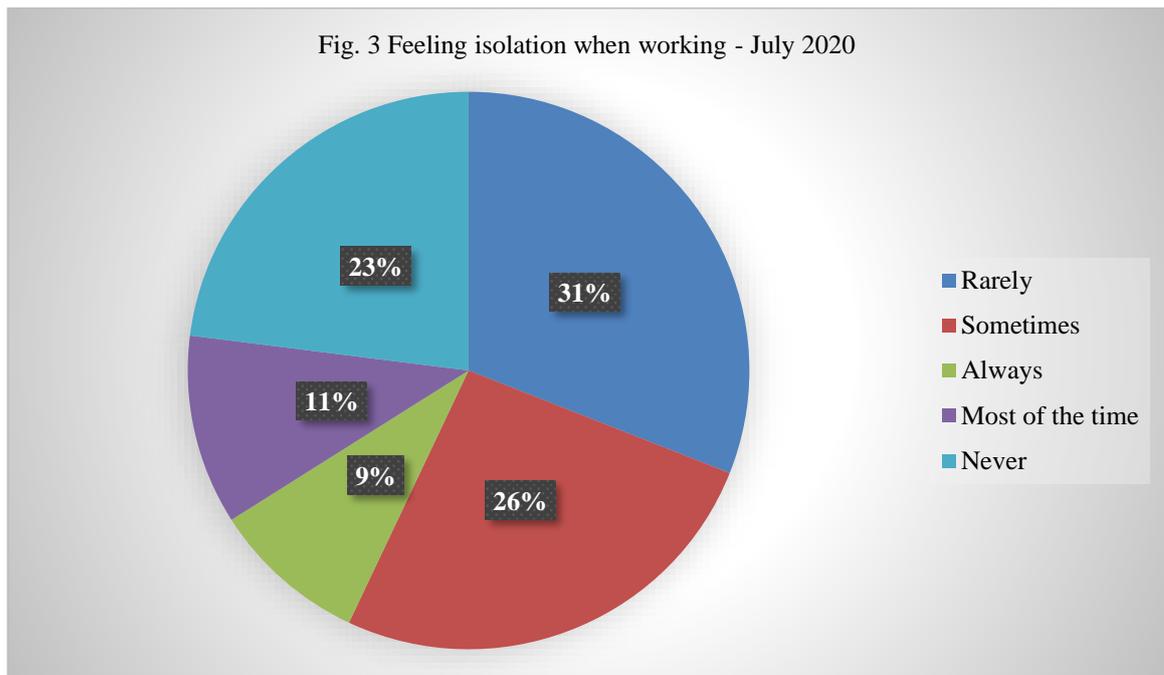
Source: (www7)

However, in extroverted individuals, this phenomenon may translate into decreased energy and reluctance to work (Dolot, 2020). It has been suggested that this may lower productivity and in the longer terms, wages may decrease (Sikora, 2012, Toscano, Zappalà, 2020).

4. Conclusions

Remote working occupies an important place in the contemporary workspace. It presents challenges for employers, but also has financial, cost-saving benefits (Sęczkowska, 2019). It has been observed to improve levels of satisfaction, motivation and job and life satisfaction (Lorenz, 2011). Referring to the Kantar TNS report, it can be seen that 90% of people who do their work in this way are satisfied with their work (Aguenza, Som, 2012). It therefore presents a higher rate than that of those who are employed as an office worker (Kantar, 2018). With less stress, commitment to duties, tasks can increase at the same time, shaping loyalty (Slazak, 2012).

From the employees' perspective, remote working can bring many benefits in the form of a flexible workplace, higher levels of motivation, satisfaction, productivity. However, how remote working affects each individual employee is yetto be determined. Much depends on his or her predisposition, temperament and way of life (Jeran, 2016).

Much of the available evidence suggests that remote working is a benefit for employees as well as employers. However, it can bring challenges, becoming a routine that also has some drawbacks and risks.

In conclusion the most flexible working model is a hybrid system. It consists of a combination of remote and stationary work. According to the report '2022 Hybrid Ways of Working Global', this type of work has been introduced by 45% of respondents from 6 different countries. The ability to complete tasks remotely is an important element in choosing a future employer. Research, conducted in March 2022, confirms that as many as 74% of respondents say they will look for an organization that will allow them to operate in a remote working model. Remote working offers an attractive employee benefit and in any case, is becoming the norm. While remote working provides significant advantages, the hybrid system combines the best of both worlds, ensuring balance and maximizing the benefits for employees and employers alike. The hybrid model of working is better than remote working in the 21st century because it provides a balanced approach, allowing employees to enjoy the flexibility of remote work while maintaining the social interaction and collaborative benefits of in-office work. This model also helps mitigate the isolation and communication challenges often associated with full-time remote work. Additionally, the hybrid system allows for better work-life balance and adaptability to individual preferences and job requirements.

References

Aguenza B.B., & Som A.P.M. (2012). Motivational Factors of Employee Retention and Engagement in Organizations, *International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics*, 1, 6, 88-95.

Bailey, D. E., & Kurland, N. B. (2002). A Review of Telework Research: Findings, New Directions, and Lessons for the Study of Modern Work. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 23 (4): 383-400.

Biron, M., Peretz. H., & Turgeman-Lupo, K. (2020). Trait Optimism and Work from Home Adjustment in the COVID-19 Pandemic: Considering the Mediating Role of Situational Optimism and the Moderating Role of Cultural Optimism. *Sustainability* 12 (22): 9773.

Carillo, K., Cachat-Rosset, G., Marsan, J., Saba, T., & Klarsfeld, A. (2021). Adjusting to Epidemic-Induced Telework: Empirical Insights from Teleworkers in France. *European Journal of Information Systems* 30 (1): 69-88.

Clark, S., McGrane, A., Boyle, N., Joksimovic, N., Burke, L., Rock, N., & O'Sullivan, K. (2020). You're a Teacher You're a Mother, You're a Worker: Gender Inequality during COVID-19 in Ireland. *Gender, Work & Organization* 28 (4): 1352-1362.

Dolot, A. (2020). Wpływ pandemii COVID-19 na pracę zdalną – perspektywa pracownika, *E-mentor*, 1 (83), 35-43.

Jeran, A. (2016). Praca zdalna jako źródło problemów realizacji funkcji pracy, *Opuscula Sociologica*, 2, 50.

Lorenz, K. (2011). Telepraca a środowisko naturalne, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego. Studia Informatica*, 27, 156.

Nilles J. M. (2003). *Telepraca. Strategie kierowania wirtualną załogą,* Warszawa, 7-8.

Petts, R. J., Carlson, D. L., & Pepin, J. R. (2021). A Gendered Pandemic: Childcare, Homeschooling, and Parents' Employment during COVID-19. *Gender, Work & Organization* 28 (S2): 515-534.

Sęczkowska, K. (2019). Konsekwencje psychospołeczne pracy zdalnej, *Problemy Nauk Humanistycznych i Społecznych. Teoria i Praktyka*, 2, 10.

Sidor-Rządkowska, M. (2021). Kształtowanie przestrzeni pracy. Praca w biurze, praca zdalna, coworking, *Wolters Kluwer Polska*, Warszawa.

Sikora, J. (2012). Telepraca – o walorach i pułapkach elastycznego zatrudnienia, [w:] Z.E. Zieliński (red.), Rola informatyki w naukach ekonomicznych i społecznych. Innowacje i implikacje interdyscyplinarne, *Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Handlowej*, Kielce, 55.

Smoder, A. (2021). Praca zdalna w warunkach pandemii - wybrane zagadnienia, *Polityka Społeczna*, 5-6, 8-11.

Toscano, F., & Zappalà, S. (2020). Social Isolation and Stress as Predictors of Productivity Perception and Remote Work Satisfaction during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Concern about the Virus in a Moderated Double Mediation. *Sustainability* 12 (23): 9804.

Urbaniec, M., Małkowska, A., & Włodarkiewicz-Klimek, H. (2022*). The Impact of Technological Developments on Remote Working: Insights from the Polish Managers' Perspective*, *Sustainability*, Vol. 14, No. 1, art. 552.

Ustawa z dnia 1 grudnia 2022 r. o zmianie ustawy – *Kodeks pracy* oraz niektórych innych ustaw (Dz.U. z 2023 r. poz. 240).

Ustawa z dnia 26 czerwca 1974 r. – Kodeks pracy, Dz.U. z 1974 Nr 24, poz. 141.

Online sources:

(www1) http://www.proto.pl/aktualnosci/jak-efektywni-sa-pracownicy-podczas-pracy-zdalnej-carrotspot-dzieli-sie-wynikami-badania

(www2) Raport Future Business Institute, Praca zdalna - rewolucja, która się przyjęła teraz czas na zmiany, http://www.pte.pl/pliki/2/36/Future_Business_Institute.pdf

(www3) Statistics Poland, *Wpływ epidemii COVID-19 na wybrane elementy rynku pracy w Polsce w IV kwartale 2020 r.*

(www4)   https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/popyt-na-prace/wplyw-epidemii-covid-19-na-wybrane-elementy-rynku-pracy-w-polsce-w-czwartymkwartale-2020-r-,4,4.html

(www5)
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsa_ehomp/default/table?lang=en&category=labour.employ.lfsa.lfsa_emp

(www6) https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/data-catalogue/working-during-covid-19

(www7)   https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/data-catalogue/living-working-and-covid-19-2nd-round-july-2020/feeling-isolation-when-working

(www8) https://www.jabra.com/thought-leadership/hybridwork-2022

(www9) Dwa lata nowej normalności. Pracownicy i kandydaci w nowym świecie pracy https://media.pracuj.pl/181808-dwa-lata-nowej-zawodowej-normalnosci-raport-pracujpl

(www10) https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsa_ehomp__custom_11152598/default/line?lang=en