

Strategies and Resources around Work from Home (WFH) and Alternate Work Schedule

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The Center makes these customized briefs available during TA and on the program website to identify evidence-based/informed strategies, promising practices, examples of ESMs from the field and peer-reviewed resources. Please [contact us](#) if you would like us to develop a similar report for topics that you are working on.

Initial Query for this Brief. Research on resources and strategies around WFH and alternate work schedules.

Evidence-based Strategies

The following evidence-based strategies are related to work from home options and alternate work schedules.

- [Telecommuting](#): Some Evidence
Allow employees to work outside a central office, using technology to interact with others inside and outside the organization; also called remote work, telework, or flexible working arrangements.
- [Flexible Scheduling](#): Scientifically Supported
Offer employees control over an aspect of their schedule through arrangements such as flex time, flex hours, compressed work weeks, or self-scheduled shift work.
- [Job-sharing programs](#): Insufficient Evidence
Offer flexible working arrangements, allowing the duties of a single full-time position to be covered by two part-time employees.
- [On-site child care](#): Insufficient Evidence
Provide employees with childcare options at work; care may be provided free of charge, partially subsidized as part of an employee benefit package, or offered at market rates.

Federal Resources and Guides

- [Engaging Remote Employees in Their Health and Workplace Wellness Programs](#)
- [Work Flexibility and Worker Well-being: Evidence from the United States](#)
- [Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules](#)
- [Flexible Schedules](#)

Primary Research around Work from Home

Seminal Study with Recommendations:

George TJ, Atwater LE, Maneethai D, Madera JM. [Supporting the productivity and wellbeing of remote workers: Lessons from COVID-19](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2021.100869). *Organizational Dynamics*. Volume 51, Issue 2, 2022, 100869, ISSN 0090-2616, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2021.100869>. **Findings:** Overall experience of transitioning to WFH was positive in how individuals felt transformed by the experience and in their willingness to continue WFH (work from home) even when it is no longer necessary. However, WFH varied in how it was experienced by workers across aspects of wellbeing. We identify a number of sources of support and friction that help explain how these changes were experienced. These associations are the guideposts that organizations can use to identify factors that are key to providing support to the productivity and wellbeing of remote workers.

Recommendations:

- 1. Focus on what employees are getting done and not on when they are doing it.* Attempting to maintain the control that one has in the workplace regarding hours or how time is spent is ill advised. Flexibility and control for workers are highly significant contributors to productivity and other aspects of wellbeing.
- 2. Assist employees in maintaining co-worker support.* This suggests that investments in communications technology that facilitate contact with supportive coworkers helps both the organization and the individual outside of work. Advances in telepresence technology will assist with this objective while remaining distant is essential for health reasons. In addition, coworker support might also manifest in informal socializing at the workplace, which suggests that employees who work remotely might need times or activities that support informal, non-work related, socializing with coworkers (when WFH becomes part of our work life outside pandemic circumstances). Thereafter, organizations can also create opportunities for coworkers to meet face-to-face periodically to maintain bonds and deepen connections that support their work relationships.
- 3. Managers should assist employees who work remotely in setting boundaries.* This could include providing funds to set up a proper home office, computing equipment, and separate communications devices for work and personal lives. Boundaries between work and home are very important. Our results suggest that while increased productivity is associated with greater intensity of work, productivity, meaning, stress, and health are all enhanced by a separation between work and activities that constitute life outside of work.
- 4. Help employees develop their core self-evaluation.* CSE is composed of 4 dimensions (locus of control, emotional stability, self-esteem, and self-efficacy). Leaders can give feedback to boost confidence, or assignments to create greater self-efficacy (belief in their abilities). Training, webinars, or even counseling services could also be useful.
- 5. Clearly communicate the organization's higher purpose.* Why are we doing what we are doing and why does it matter? Sadly, many employees go to work every day without a clear understanding of why their work matters. Managers and leaders can make a point of clearly communicating the organization's purpose particularly when supervising remote workers who are not in the workplace to "absorb" this easily.
- 6. Capitalize on the benefits that can be gained from reduced stress when working from home but take care to address health challenges that may also occur.* Consider offering wellness screenings and other types of assistance with health challenges employees may be facing.

7. *Keep in mind that employees need ways to increase their sense of meaning when life in the workplace disappears.* Going to work and being at work and the interactions and stimulation that come from doing so are greatly reduced when employees WFH. Consider encouraging employees to engage in volunteering or giving back, and in engaging in mindfulness exercises. There are a variety of self-help books available on these topics that companies could recommend or actually invest in for their employees.

8. *Lastly, remember that because you do not see your WFH employees every day or even every month, they are still on the front lines keeping your business running and they need encouragement, support, and care.*

Supporting Research for WFH:

Hunter P. [Remove working in research](#). EMBO Reports (2019) 20:e47435.

<https://doi.org/10.15252/embr.201847435>. **Findings:** The major benefits—the ability to continue careers while starting families or avoiding the upheaval of moving for a temporary position—often outweigh disadvantages, such as the lack of face-to-face encounters around a laboratory or meetings. There are also unanticipated advantages, such as increased creativity resulting from an improved work–life balance, which has spurred not just scientific research, but also other professions to adopt flexible working. According to a survey by telecoms group Vodafone, 75% of companies worldwide have now introduced such policies, and of those 83% reported improved productivity.

Tleuken A, Turkyilmaz A, et al. [Effects of the residential built environment on remote work productivity and satisfaction during COVID-19 lockdowns: An analysis of workers' perceptions](#). Building and Environment. Volume 219, 2022, 109234, ISSN 0360-1323, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.buildenv.2022.109234>. **Findings:** The SEM analysis indicated that the residential built environment indeed had an effect on remote work productivity and satisfaction, but its direct impact is not very large. However, the indirect effect of the built environment on satisfaction through productivity was more substantial. In more detail, factors such as 'Health and Safety' (safety from virus propagation, mental and physical health), 'Working Comfort' (light, noise, humidity, temperature, indoor air), 'Facilities' (separate from living and ergonomic working space, greens) and 'ICT' (equipment for work and internet) affect remote work satisfaction. Although the dataset is limited, this study also provided some possible gender-, country-, and working sector-specific features, which might be a basis for a more thorough and data-rich study in the future. In general, for different sex, countries, and working sectors, the most important factor was comfortable working facilities, which include comfortable working space, ergonomic furniture, and greeneries. Overall, results imply that focusing efforts on workers' remote work satisfaction and productivity in these three areas would likely provide the highest return on investment of resources. In contrast, the hypothesis about built environment working comfort effect on remote work productivity is not supported during analysis. Thus, light, noise, humidity, thermal, and air comfort are found to be non-priority factors in pursuing better teleworking productivity.

Galanti T, Guidetti G, Mazzei E, Zappalà S, Toscano F. [Work From Home During the COVID-19 Outbreak: The Impact on Employees' Remote Work Productivity, Engagement, and Stress](#). J Occup Environ Med. 2021 Jul 1;63(7):e426-e432. doi: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000002236. PMID: 33883531; PMCID: PMC8247534. **Findings:** Employees' family-work conflict and social isolation were negatively related, while self-leadership and autonomy were positively related, to WFH productivity and WFH engagement. Family-work conflict and social isolation were negatively related to WFH stress, which was not affected by autonomy and self-leadership.

ALTERNATE WORK SCHEDULES (including compressed work week):

Current Business-Based Summary with Recommendations. Morrison S. [What Is a Compressed Work Schedule, and Should You Offer It?](#) Business News Daily (2023). **Findings:** A compressed work schedule allows employees to work a full 40-hour week in fewer than the typical five days. A shorter workweek can help increase productivity and give employees more personal time.

Recommendations:

1. *Coordinate with all departments.* Employees and management must coordinate closely when switching to the new schedule. Managers must ensure that they have proper coverage on the days other employees are off, that new schedules allow for a smooth workflow, and that everyone meets their deadlines. This may require managers to set and approve compressed work schedules for their employees and coordinate with other departments.
2. *Create a policy.* Before implementing a compressed work schedule, write a policy (perhaps as part of your time-off policy) that outlines who is eligible for a compressed workweek, when it can be utilized, who is in charge of setting schedules and how it's formally requested.
3. *Stay flexible.* Each department may implement a compressed workweek differently, and your policy should keep that flexibility in mind. For example, customer service departments may benefit from longer hours on fewer days, while the accounting department may not have as pressing a need to be in the office Monday through Friday during certain months.
4. *Consider the law.* Your city or state may have laws restricting how many hours an employee can work in a certain amount of time. Always check with your state labor office to ensure you're in compliance before switching to a new schedule.
5. *Set core office hours.* Some businesses face staffing challenges implementing a compressed workweek. Make sure you schedule employees carefully to ensure adequate coverage at the office.
6. *Ask employees what they prefer.* A new arrangement can have a profound impact on your employees. What works for one employee may not work for another. Ask employees what works best for them.
7. *Modify as needed.* Your compressed work schedule policy shouldn't be set in stone. As your employees and managers settle into a routine, you will likely find gaps that need to be addressed. Regularly solicit feedback from your workers and implement those suggested changes.

Systematic Review. Bambra C, Whitehead M, Sowden A, et al. "A hard day's night?" [The effects of Compressed Working Week interventions on the health and work-life balance of shift workers: a systematic review](#). Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health. 2008;62:764-777. **Findings:** Forty observational studies were found. The majority of studies only measured self-reported outcomes and the methodological quality of the included studies was not very high. Interventions did not always improve the health of shift workers, but in the five prospective studies with a control group, there were no detrimental effects on self-reported health. However, work-life balance was generally improved. This review suggests that the Compressed Working Week can improve work-life balance, and that it may do so with a low risk of adverse health or organizational effects. However, better designed studies that measure objective health outcomes are needed.

Supporting Research for Alternate Work Schedules:

Facer, R. L., & Wadsworth, L. (2008). [Alternative Work Schedules and Work–Family Balance: A Research Note](#). Review of Public Personnel Administration, 28(2), 166–177.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X08315138>. **Findings:** Employees perceived that the alternative schedule increased their productivity and their ability to serve the citizens. The authors report that employees working the 4/10 workweek experience lower levels of work–family conflict than their counterparts who are working other schedules, but no significant difference for most measures of job satisfaction.

Amendola, KL, Weisburd, D, Hamilton, EE, et al. [An experimental study of compressed work schedules in policing: advantages and disadvantages of various shift lengths](#). J Exp Criminol 7, 407–442 (2011).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-011-9135-7>. **Findings:** Those working 10-hour shifts had a significantly higher quality of work life and averaged significantly more sleep than those on 8-hour shifts.

Furthermore, those working 8-hour shifts averaged significantly more overtime than did those assigned to 10- and 12-hour shifts. In addition, officers working 12-hour shifts experienced greater levels of sleepiness and reported lower levels of alertness at work than officers on 8-hour shifts. The implementation of 10-hour shifts may be a viable alternative to traditional 8-hour schedules considering the findings of this study. It is important to note that the benefits associated with 10-hour shifts did not inure to 12-hour shifts.

Hyatt E. and Coslor E. (2018). [Compressed lives: how “flexible” are employer-imposed compressed work schedules?](#), Personnel Review, Vol. 47 No. 2, pp. 278-293. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-08-2016-0189>.

Findings: Employee satisfaction with the schedule is influenced by previous 4/10 pilot experience, work schedule preference, and happiness with the 4/10 schedule’s implementation. Additionally, sick leave figures and survey results regarding informal substitute work schedules suggest that worker fatigue may limit the overall organizational value of the 4/10 schedule. Analysis suggests that the potential work-life benefits of flexible work schedules may not apply equally to employer-imposed vs employee-chosen compressed work schedules. Further, compressed work weeks (CWWs) engender greater fatigue despite employee satisfaction, an issue managers should consider when weighing schedule costs and benefits.

Brown K, Bradley L, Lingard H, Townsend K, Ling S (2011). [Labouring for leisure? Achieving work-life balance through compressed working weeks](#). Annals of Leisure Research, 14:1, 43-59, DOI:

[10.1080/11745398.2011.575046](https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2011.575046). **Findings:** A work schedule allowing a long break between working weeks, specifically on a weekend, enables workers to achieve synchronous time, particularly with family, and improves work-life balance satisfaction. It was found that a well-defined break across a weekend also offers the opportunity to synchronize schedules with others to spend time away on short breaks.

Work from Home and Alternate Work Options

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Access other resources at <https://www.mchevidence.org>

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