



# Survey summary

November 2024 survey of PSA members in  
the public service about working from home



**For a better working life**

New Zealand Public Service Association  
Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

[www.psa.org.nz](http://www.psa.org.nz)

Prepared for the Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi in December 2024 by Andrew McCauley, PSA Policy Advisor.

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We would like to acknowledge and thank the PSA members who shared their time and their perspectives to participate in the survey.

# Executive summary

In November 2024 we surveyed almost 2,700 PSA members working in the public service about their experiences of working from home and other flexible work. The survey was carried out to better understand the value of working from home for our members, and how well it's currently managed by employers. This was to inform the PSA's feedback on draft guidance being developed by Te Kawa Mataaho | Public Service Commission in response to new Government expectations on working from home that were announced by Public Service Minister Hon Nicola Willis in September.

The survey asked about a range of types of flexible work, but the survey mainly focused on working from home.

The results of the survey showed that:

- About 85% of respondents who work from home do so at least once a week on average, and most commonly either two or three days a week.
- Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that working from home helped them get more work done and concentrate better, and that it improved the performance of their organisation overall.
- Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that working from home had benefits to their lives such as reduced expenses, reduced stress, and more time to spend with their families or doing things that matter to them.
- Respondents overwhelmingly disagreed that working from home has caused issues such as a loss of collaboration, social/professional interaction or mutual learning; however, a small but not insignificant minority of respondents had experienced these issues or others.
- The vast majority of members who work from home consider it to be important to them.
- Over half of respondents who work from home sometimes do so to be at home with children or dependents that are unwell, rather than taking sick or dependent leave; this suggests that working from home is an enabler of reduced unplanned leave for situations where caregivers need to be at home but still have capacity to work.
- The majority of respondents (around 60%) think their employer manages working from home well, although a small but not insignificant minority think their employer manages it poorly.
- A sizeable minority (around 31%) thought their employer had become less willing to allow flexible work since the Government's new expectations on working from home were announced in September, and some respondents talked about unreasonable limits their employers had introduced, and/or a culture of micromanagement around working from home.

# About the survey

## ***Participants***

The survey was distributed to PSA members working in the public service sector (i.e. public service departments and departmental agencies) and ran from 18-20 November 2024. There were 2691 responses to the survey.

The survey was undertaken to help inform our feedback on Te Kawa Mataaho's draft Flexible Work Guidance, and to inform our other advocacy regarding working from home (e.g. what we say to media or to government).

Flexible work can take many forms (e.g., it can be flexible in terms of start and finish times, location, total hours and how they're divided, and changes over time as people transition in or out of work). The survey asked about a range of types of flexible work, but the survey mainly focused on working from home. This was defined as "working from home within normal working hours" (i.e., it wasn't intended to cover things like being on call or going home from the office and continuing to work past people's usual finish time).

Of the participants, 2294 described "working from home in normal working hours" as a type of flexible work they currently engage in, and 397 didn't. People who said they worked from home were asked specific questions about their experience of it, while all respondents were asked wider questions about how it's managed, what effect it has on their organisation, and whether anything's changed since the new ministerial expectations were announced.

We also asked about what other types of flexible work members are engaged in as a comparison, but the main focus of the survey was on working from home.

Questions were not compulsory. Percentages referred to in this document generally refer to people who responded to the question.

## ***Limitations***

Technical issues with the email to members mean that:

- we're unable to calculate the response rate of the survey is, as we're not sure how many of the members we sent it to received it
- workplaces may be unevenly represented as the technical issues will have affected emails getting through to some workplaces more than others.

Because the survey was communicated to members as being about working from home and other flexible working, and because of the current political and media context, it's likely that this survey will be skewed towards people who work from home and/or have strong feelings about working from home. Because of this the results may be less representative than if we'd asked the same questions as part of a general working conditions survey as we have in the past.

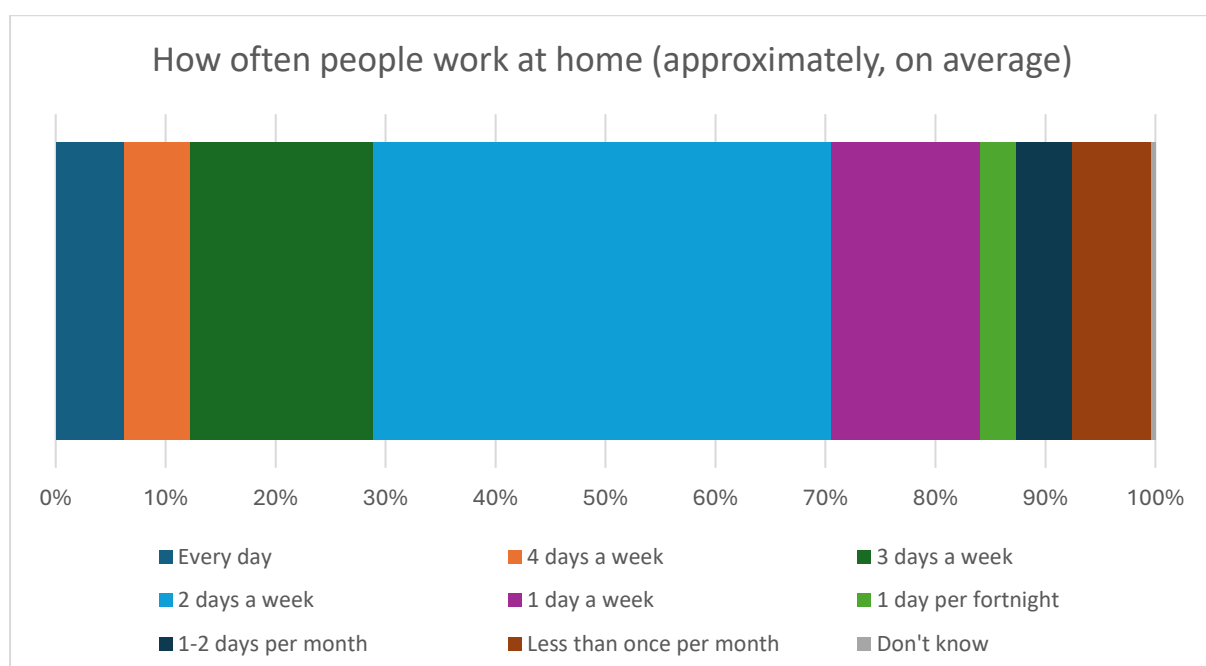
We note that in our survey around 85% of respondents said they sometimes work from home, while the most recent data from Te Kawa Mataaho suggested that around 58% of public servants have

working from home arrangements<sup>1</sup>; however, we also note the Te Kawa Mataaho's data was from 2021 so rates of working from home may have changed since then.

## Frequency of working from home

Of the people who said they sometimes work from home, around 45% said the arrangement was a formal agreement with their employer while around 55% said it was an informal agreement with their manager.

Around 84% of the people who sometimes work from home said they work from home at least one day per week. The most common prevalence of working from home was two days per week (42% of people) and three days per week (17% of people).



## Benefits of working from home

People who said they sometimes work from home in normal work hours were asked about the benefits of working from home.

Regarding the benefits to the work they do and their performance of that work:

- 89% agreed that working from home enabled them to work with greater concentration
- 85% agreed that working from home enabled them to get more work done
- 79% agreed that working from home enabled them to stay motivated
- 87% agreed that working from home enabled them to have greater control over their work environment

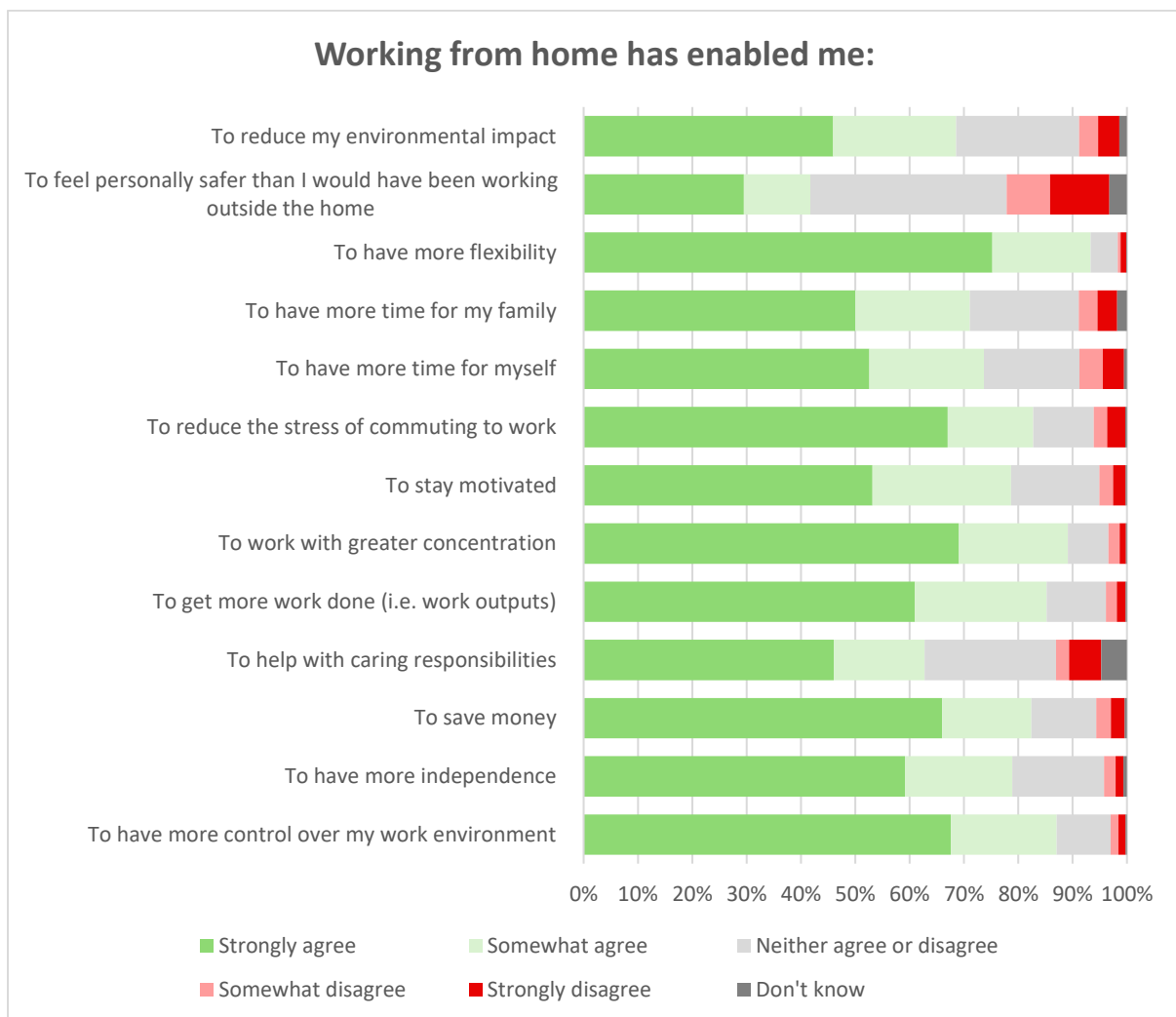
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<sup>1</sup> [Workforce Data - Balancing life and work - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

- 78% thought it made the performance of their organisation better or much better.

Regarding the personal benefits to workers themselves:

- 93% agreed that working from home enabled them to have greater flexibility (this was a general question, so people could interpret flexibility however they chose to)
- 82% agreed that working from home enabled them to save money
- 83% agreed that working from home enabled them to reduce the stress associated with commuting
- Around 71% agreed that working from home enabled them to have more time for their family and 74% agreed (either strongly or somewhat) that it enabled them to have more time for themselves.



This suggests that our members who work from home overwhelmingly see it as a positive, both in terms of making their lives better and in terms of helping them work more effectively.

We also asked respondents about other benefits they experienced from working from home. The following themes came through in comments:

- **Health:** Health was one of the most common themes to emerge, with around 7-8% saying working from home helped them deal with a particular disability, injury or health issue.

Around 10% of people said it benefited their mental health and/or wellbeing (mainly through reduced stress and better ability to look after their wellbeing), and around 7% mentioned physical health aspects such as getting more exercise, getting sick less often through less communicable disease, or being able to work when they were contagious but still well enough to work.

- **Care responsibilities:** Around 5.5% of people said working from home helped them manage caring responsibilities through things like being able to look after unwell children (either with ongoing health issues or just day-to-day illnesses), being able to do school drop-offs and pick-ups, and through having more time to spend with their children.
- **Commute:** Almost 5% of people mentioned benefits relating to commuting, including the time savings, cost savings, and reduced stress involved.
- **Life admin:** Around 4% mentioned the ability to better fit household tasks or 'life admin' into their down-time or breaks – like hanging out washing, letting in tradespeople or attending appointments.
- **Productivity and focus:** Almost 4% mentioned increased productivity, and a similar number mentioned the ability to focus and avoid distractions.
- **Inadequate office environments:** Around 2% of people specifically mentioned finding it difficult to deal with office noise. A similar number said their home environment was better for having meetings and phone calls because of their office not being well-equipped (e.g., with sufficient quiet spaces for confidential calls). Several said that they prefer working from home because they have difficulties finding a desk at their office, and others mentioned other environmental factors such as better lighting and better ergonomic and IT equipment at home due to a failure of their employer to provide them at work.
- **Geography:** There were several comments relating to people living further away having more employment options. Several people commented about how working from home had enabled them to live in areas with better housing affordability, or that working from home had given them access to jobs they might not otherwise have been able to take.

Appendix 1 contains a selection of verbatim comments from members about the benefits of working from home.

## Challenges and disadvantages of working from home

People who said they sometimes work from home in normal work hours were asked about the downsides of working from home.

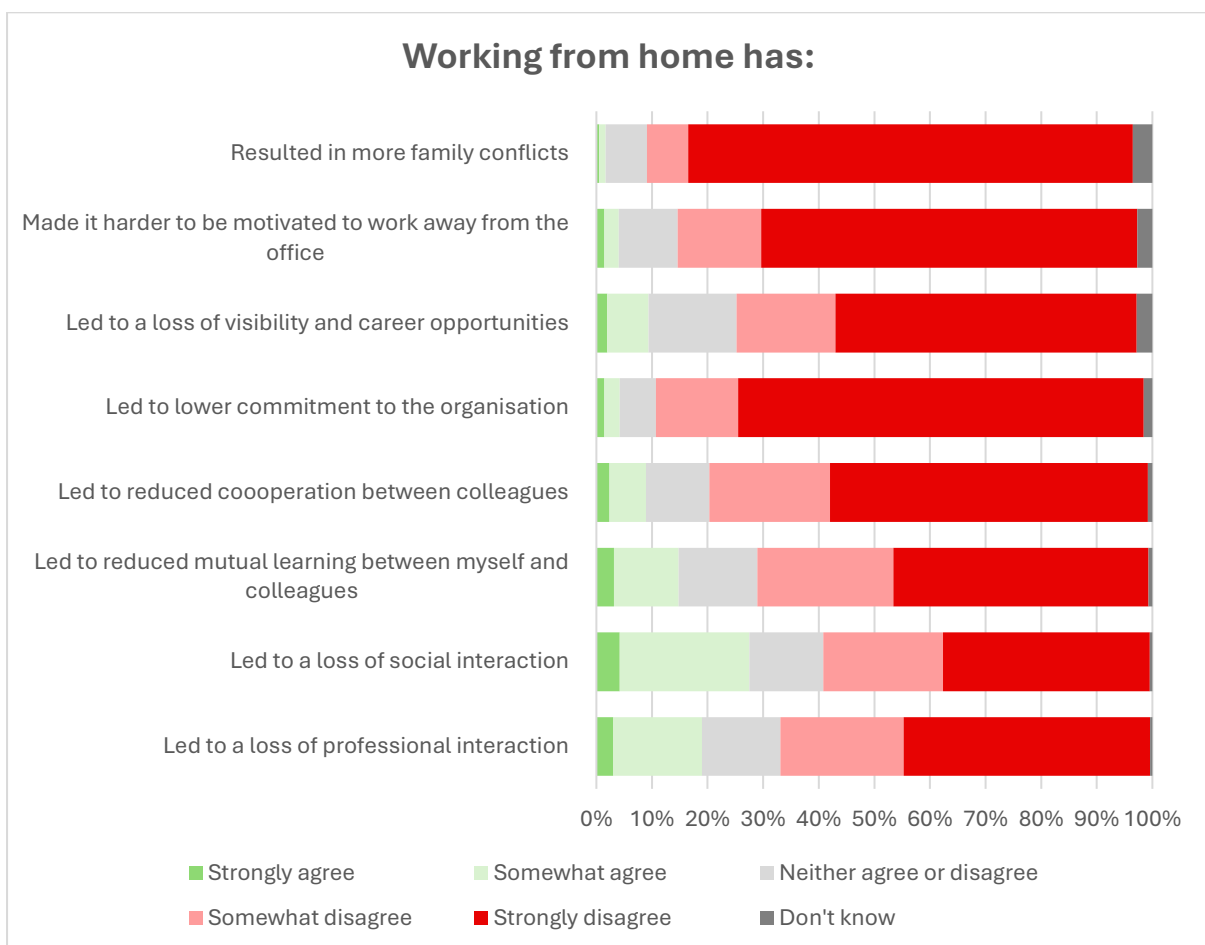
Regarding the possible disadvantages to work and performance:

- Around 9% agreed that working from home had led to reduced cooperation between colleagues, while around 85% disagreed
- Around 19% agreed that working from home had led to a loss of professional interaction, while around 67% disagreed

- Around 15% agreed that working from home had led to a loss of mutual learning, while around 70% disagreed
- Around 9% of people agreed that working from home had led to a loss of visibility and career opportunities, while around 72% disagreed
- Around 4% agreed that working from home had made it harder to be motivated, while around 83% disagreed.

In terms of disadvantages to workers personally:

- Around 28% agreed that working from home had led to a loss of social interaction, while around 59% disagreed
- Around 2% agreed that working from home had resulted in more family conflicts, while around 87% disagreed.



This suggests that working from home presents some disadvantages but these generally affect a small minority of workers.

When people were asked about other disadvantages beyond the ones mentioned above, the main responses related to the following themes:

- Relationships and social interaction
- Work life balance, with people working longer hours or taking fewer breaks

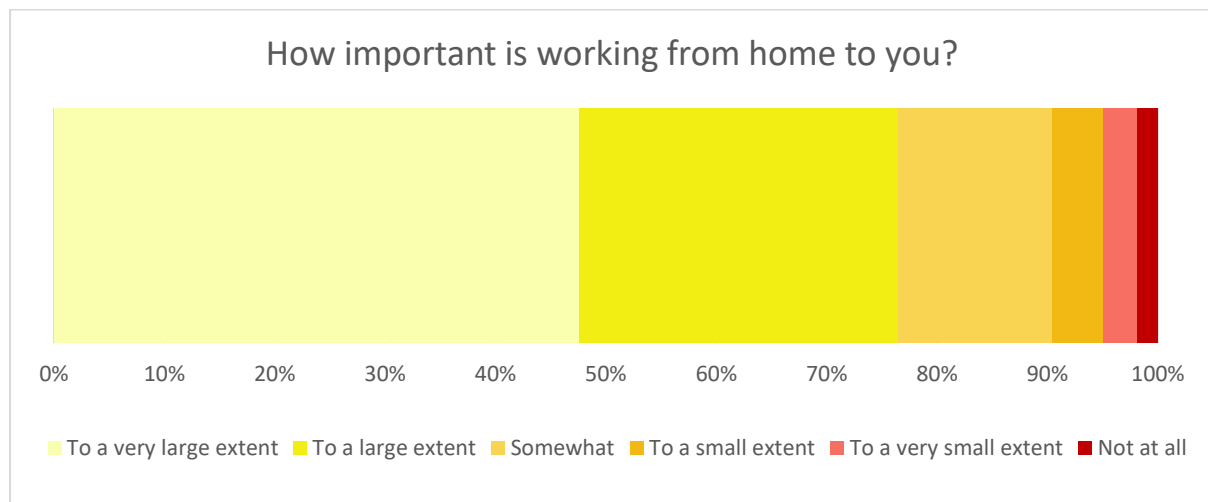


- How working from home is managed – including micromanagement, managers’ preferences for office-based work, inability to manage mixed teams, and dealing with suspicion from managers and team members about whether they are working hard enough at home
- Cost, especially for heating
- Inadequate equipment at home, in particular a lack of suitable equipment provided by their employer for use at home
- Health, in particular a lack of exercise.

Each of these themes was raised by roughly 1-2% of respondents.

## The importance of working from home

People who said they sometimes work from home in normal work hours were asked about how important it was to them. Around 77% said it was important to a “large” or “very large” extent.



Respondents who said that working from home was important at all (i.e., everyone who didn’t answer “not at all” was asked to explain in their own words why they think working from home is important. Appendix 3 contains a selection of verbatim comments from members about what’s changed in their workplace since the new government expectations were announced.

## Working from home and caring responsibilities

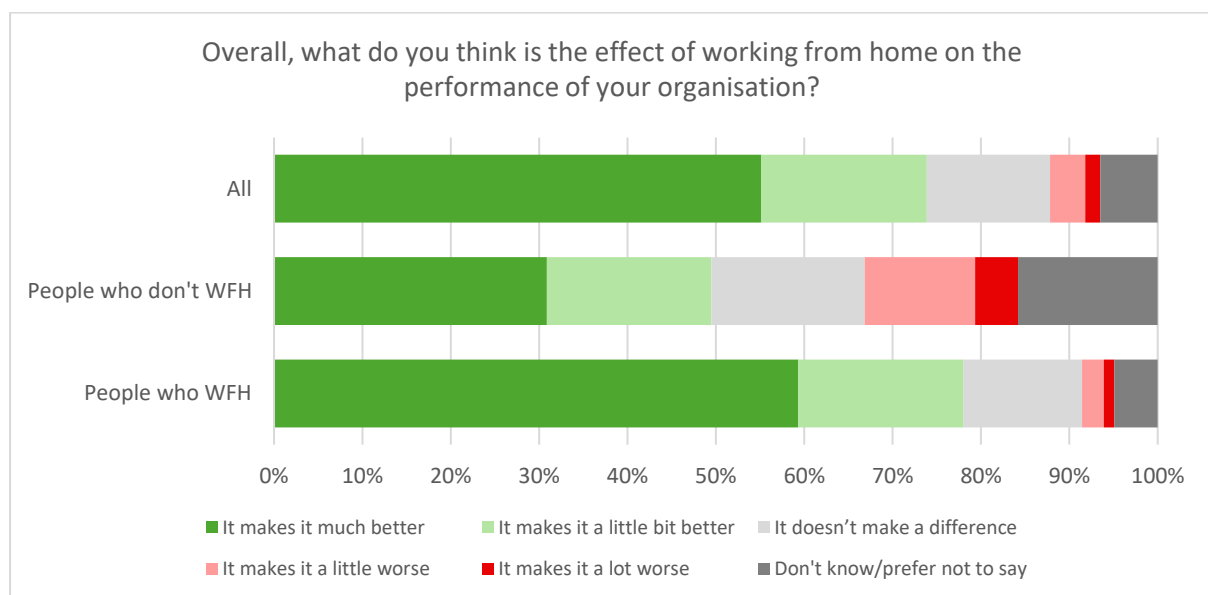
Of the people who said they sometimes work from home, we asked if they ever work from home rather than using sick leave/dependent leave to be with a child or dependent that is unwell. Around 52% of respondents said yes, with around 43% saying no (and around 5% don’t know or prefer not to say). These rates were similar for women and men, and the sample size was too small to look at other genders.

This suggests that working from home is an enabler of reduced unplanned leave for situations where caregivers need to be at home but still have capacity to work. And this suggests that working from

home is likely to reduce the amount of working time and productivity that is lost from workers taking sick or dependent leave. However, there is also a possibility this could include people who should take leave but who are pressured (or feel pressured) to work at home instead.

## Effect of working from home on organisational performance

We asked all respondents about what they thought the effect of working from home was on the performance of their organisation. Around 74% of respondents thought it made their organisation perform better or much better, and around 14% didn't think it made any difference either way. Around 6% thought it made their organisation perform worse or much worse.

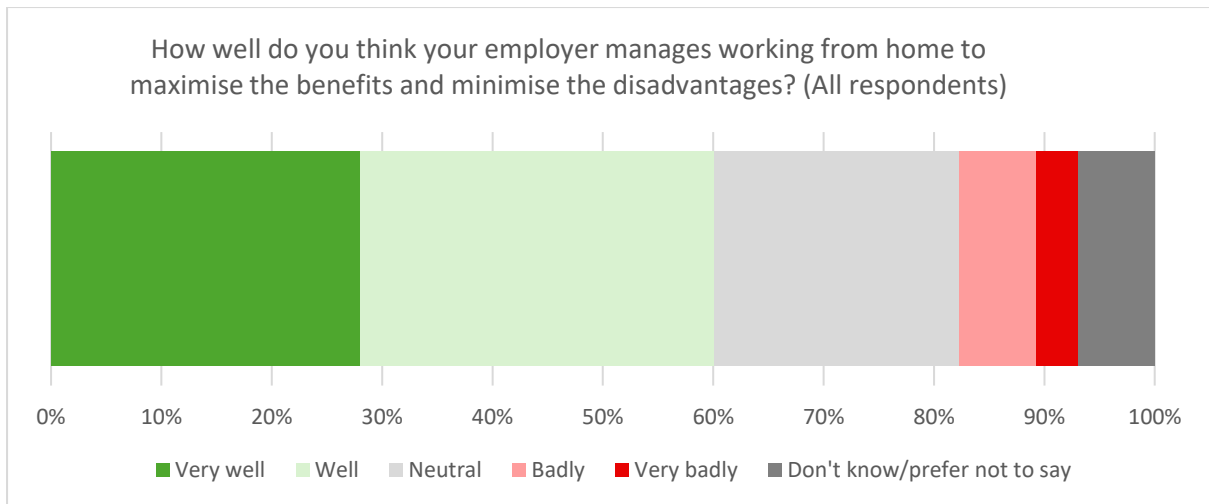


There was a difference in views between people who work from home and people who don't. Of people who don't work from home only around half thought it improved organisational performance. This could possibly suggest that people working from home are more likely to see wider organisational benefits based on their own experience of being more productive, while people working in the office are less likely to see the benefits and more likely to see the problems.

Performance wasn't quantified and described in more detail, so people's responses will be based on their subjective experience of what constitutes high performance.

## How well employers manage flexible work

We asked all respondents about how well they think their employer manages working from home. Around 60% of respondents thought their employer managed it well or very well, while around 22% rated their employer's performance as neutral and around 11% said their employer managed it badly or very badly. While this is positive overall it shows there is room for improvement in some workplaces, which points to the importance of lifting and supporting good practice.



We noticed a difference in response between people who work from home and people who don't. Of people who work from home, 65% thought it was managed well or very well. Of people who don't work from home, only 34% thought it was managed well or very well, and 21% thought it was managed badly or very badly (almost double the rate of people who work from home). This could suggest several things, for example:

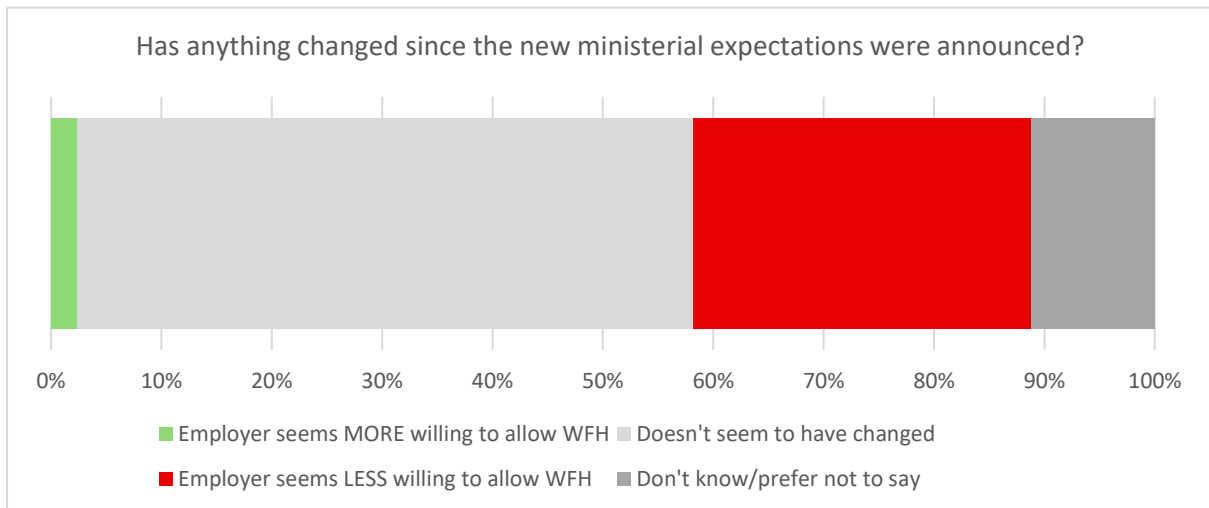
- that people's interpretation of how well working from home is managed are informed by their personal experience of working from home, or
- that people who are more likely to want to work from home if they think it's being well-managed by their organisation.

## What's changed since the new ministerial expectations

At the time of writing, the Flexible Working Guidance is still under development and is in a draft state. However, the Minister for the Public Service issued a press release in September 2024 describing her expectations on working from home, and Te Kawa Mataaho wrote to department chief executives around the same time asking them to look at their current policies and approaches and ensure they meet the Government's expectations in the interim while the guidance is still in development. We wanted to look at whether the Minister's announcement was already affecting what employers did, in absence of finalised guidance. As the guidance is not finalised yet we would not expect the full effect to be felt yet.

We asked all respondents (both those who work from home and those who don't) whether anything has changed since the new ministerial expectations on working from home were released in September 2024.

The majority of people (around 56%) said their employer didn't seem to have changed how likely they were to allow working from home. Around 31% said their employer seemed less willing to allow working from home, while about 2% said their employer seemed more willing.



Those who said something had changed were asked about what. There was a wide range of comments, and a selection of verbatim comments has been included as Appendix 2. The following main themes emerges (in order of frequency):

- Some people saw a general shift in how their employers communicated about working from home. Some spoke about being “pressured” or “encouraged” to work in the office more, and others talked about their employers or managers expressing “preferences” or “expectations”. The comments often talked about a change in balance with people being expected to work at home “more” or “more often than not” rather than employers introducing clear requirements.
- Some people talked about much more micromanagement of their movements, with a shift towards a lower trust environment in which managers spend more of their time monitoring staff movements, and workers have to spend more of their time explaining reasons for being at home or justifying how their productivity would be maintained. Some respondents talked about their access cards being monitored to track how much time they spent in the office.
- Some people talked about it becoming more difficult to get working from home arrangements, with requests needing to be escalated to directors or deputy secretaries, and staff being forced to have good enough reasons to justify working from home.
- Some people said their employer had set mandatory minimum days in the office, either formally or through a less formal “expectation” that they nevertheless felt they needed to comply with.
- Some people said their employer had stopped allowing working from home outright (although some of these noted that they continued to allow existing arrangements).
- Some people said the existing arrangements that they or their colleagues had, were changed without their consent. Others said their requests for working from home had been declined.

Appendix 3 contains a selection of verbatim comments from members about what’s changed in their workplace since the new government expectations were announced.

## Other types of flexible work

We asked about other types of flexible work in the survey. Working from home was the most common type of arrangement (at 84%) but this may not be representative as the survey was communicated to members as being related to working from home, in the context of new government announcements about working from home, so may have been more likely to be filled out by people who work from home.

The next most common type of flexible work was flexible start and finish times (74%), followed by ability to take time off occasionally for special events (67%), ability to change hours to regularly attend activities involving family members (54%) and sometimes working longer or shorter hours (54%).

## Appendix 1

# Comments from members about how working from home has benefited them

A selection of verbatim quotes from members about how working from home has benefited them. Quotes are arranged around key themes.

### **MANAGING HEALTH ISSUES**

*Has enabled me to continue to deliver public services, using 18+ years of experience, which may otherwise have been lost due to health issues.*

*I have chronic fatigue so working from home - and working in a team that supports people working from home - has allowed me to keep working full time. If I couldn't work from home I probably couldn't work at all.*

*Over the last two years I have not had leave which has not related to either a significant medical event, operation or health / medical related burn out. The ONLY reason I believe I have made it through this challenging time is due to the formalised flexible working I had until recently and the informal - looking to turn into formal arrangement I am currently trying now. Plain and simple flexible working has allowed me to be a contributing member of my workforce despite my hidden disability.*

*Recovering from an injury meant I could return to work faster than if I had to be in the office all the time. I am able to take less sick leave due to my disability because I have the wfh option.*

*Supported recovery from long COVID. Stopped exposure to bugs during winter. Made it easier to do exercise during the day. Helped with work life balance e.g. can prepare dinner during lunch break. Helped manage sensory sensitivities.*

*It means I can work as a disabled person without encountering the disabling barriers and attitudes that exist at work.*

*It helped my health as I am immune compromised.*

*Helped particularly in returning to work following an accident, and after Covid.*

*Helps me manage a chronic illness while remaining in full time work.*

*It helps when I need to change medication and am unsure if the impact that will have, being home in a controlled environment helps and means I can use less leave.*

*I have a chronic pain due to disability and working from home enables me to do my work while accommodating my pain level. It means I can be a much more efficient worker even when I am in a flare up.*

*It allows me to have more natural light in my work week which reduces the number of migraines I get each week.*

*Yes, as I suffer medical conditions and mental health being able to work from home has made my life more manageable. It has also helped me stay in full time employment.*

*I am neurodiverse and working from home two days per week helps me to maintain the mental bandwidth required to do my job.*

*It helps with concussion recovery - it is quiet and it is easy to make a 5 minute brain break at home. This is not possible in the office (the sick room is not quiet and you have to sign in and out)*

*Immunosuppressant drugs and anemia make me vulnerable to illness. Working from home allows me to avoid exposure. Flexibility allows me to work lighter hours when I'm not 100% and keep on top of my responsibilities.*

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

*Makes it easier to fit exercise around work hours, which has improved my mental and physical wellbeing.*

*Great for my mental health and less stressful.*

*My mental wellbeing is vastly improved by having some days working at home. I feel over stimulated with all the activity round me in the office which makes it hard to concentrate.*

*I can go walking and interact with my dogs to reduce stress and also have a more balanced life style. It is also easier to prepare meals and manage domestic chores while still completing a full work day.*

*A flexible working arrangement has drastically reduced my stress overall because it also generally reduces the complexity in my life.*

*Helped me to manage my mental health.*

*I am able to use my commuting time and break times for exercise and jobs around the house, freeing up the weekends and time after work to spend time with family. This helps with my mental health.*

## **PHYSICAL HEALTH**

*I have been able to dedicate more time to eating better. I am able to prepare nutritious and fresh lunches and snacks and have lost a significant amount of weight, which has all but resolved some chronic health issues. As a result I am better able to focus and take significantly fewer sick days.*

*Enables me to get to the gym instead of commute, which manages RSI symptoms, which increases productivity at work.*

*Can work from home when showing signs of illness, e.g. cough, runny nose, but don't feel ill enough to stop altogether.*

*I can work from home when I'm sick (but not so unwell that I need to take sick leave). That flexibility is great.*

*Allows me to fit my gym workouts into my arrangements.*

*Able to use the usual commuting time to do recreational activities for physical health and wellbeing*

*I have more time in my day to priorities my wellbeing which means doing exercise, cooking healthy meals or meditating and yoga. I often find it easier to fit these things in when I'm working from home because I can start earlier and finish earlier. I also usually have more sleep because I don't need to worry about finding an early parking spot.*

*Easier to go for a run during lunch, when working from home (work life balance, exercise, wellness and wellbeing) -because of the ease of changing and showering etc.*

*I take far fewer sick days than I used to when I worked from the office. This is due to two reasons - no longer being exposed to the sickness in the office as well as being able to better manage my chronic illness from home.*

### **CARE RESPONSIBILITIES**

*Working from home also allows me to work around my children and care for my mother who is 82 and blind.*

*To help with child caring responsibilities after my child's school instead of putting the child in after school hours putting a dent on the family finance.*

*Being a solo parent, I can care for children (including one who is disabled) better and more effectively.*

*I am living with a parent with early-onset dementia, and myself have chronic health issues. I couldn't work without the ability to be this flexible - and sometimes I can and do go into the office every day, but I haven't been able to do that for 2 years now, so I'm at home and I pop in when I can. Without this, I wouldn't be able to have a job at all - a real pity, given I have skills and drive we need in the public service.*

*I have a dependent child who has been in and out of hospital for the past 18 months. Working from home means I can reduce the community care required when he is at home with me.*

*I look after my 4 year old grand daughter 2 days a week. Working from home on these days means I can do my required hours for work in between daycare drop off and pick up time. I wouldn't be able to do this if working in the office on those days due to parking and the time it takes to get to work and set up.*

*I can do pre-school drop offs and pick ups, I can walk the dog during my morning tea break, I can finish work and walk into my lounge and play with my kids and help my wife without sitting on the bus for an hour, I can hang a load of washing out in my breaks and all of this helps me actually have time off in the weekend!*

*It also allows me to save money on after school care for my two children. I currently pay \$100 a week to cover the two in office days. If I was required to work 5 days in the office I would have to pay \$250 per week for after school care. Additionally during school holidays this cost would double as costs for holiday programs range from \$55-\$100 per child per day. The cost of care would out weigh the benefit of working in government.*

*Not having to commute back from work means that I am able to be present for my children when they have their sports training and other extra curricular activities.*



*Yes absolutely. Flexible working has enabled me to work fulltime and still be able to do the school run. I have also signed up at the gym and go during my lunch break. This is for my wellbeing and the only chance I get as 4pm my household is busy with children's schedules. My children get to see me at their school events during the day which I never been able to do in the past. I am able to stay home with my child during the school holidays. In my previous role, I had to work part-time. Not only was the pay so low I lost more. I often needed to stay back which at times I get stung with a late pick up fees at daycare. I also had to put my primary school child in after school care. I had used up a lot of sick days. I had to use the school holiday program subsidy but that doesn't cover a lot.*

*It has made two mornings a week easier - instead of getting myself and the kids ready, I only have to get the kids ready. It just takes away some of the rush and stress.*

### **FOCUS AND PRODUCTIVITY**

*A more relaxed environment with less distractions at home.*

*I find that I'm more productive when working from home as there is no disruption throughout the day.*

*Able to work on things that require limited interruption at home, compared to being in the office.*

*I get way more work done at home due to the constant disruptions in the office.*

*I work on a lot of documentation and assessments, working from home allows me to focus on these with no interruptions. My work output has increased enough that my manager has commented favorably, and so has her manager.*

*Office work is typically open plan, where you can sit beside multiple people conducting phone conversations. This is distracting, and it's harder to work in flow. Being at home allows me to experience flow in my work, with minimal distractions.*

*To do more research on work topics and produce more well informed advice and deliverables. Allows me to do more planning and thinking of complex situations at times when my brain works best. Less interruptions which enables me to meet deadlines and short time frames.*

*Enables me to get straight into work without the distractions of colleagues and complete tasks more efficiently. I also find it beneficial when I have online hui with my team and don't have the background noise of being in the office.*

*My productivity is a little better at home than in the office. In the office you sometimes can't escape the team chitter chatter :-)) which is okay, and it is part of being in an office environment.*

*I am less distracted when I am working from home hence productivity is greater.*

*I feel I can contribute better to my work and my team when I work from home*

*I believe having one day a week at home helps my wellbeing and productivity when needing the space and quietness to complete tasks.*

## **BUSINESS CONTINUITY**

*It has benefited my employer recently when there were facilities issues in our building for 2 weeks like no power and flooded toilets. They had no problem telling us to wfh then.*

*When COVID takes down a whole team at once, it's a relief to have someone working remotely who's unaffected and able to carry on with urgent pieces of work.*

*It has benefitted the Ministry by me working from home during power cuts which are quite common in the Far North where I have power supply when the power goes out.*

*Bad weather disrupts travel for me regularly including road closures, flooding and fallen debris, in these instances I request to WFH but keep in contact with work via Teams.*

*A robust and resilient workforce that does not depend on office as a single point of failure (for example, office flooding and fires).*

## **WORKSPACE SET-UP**

*I have the tools at hand to take notes, share screens and appropriate lighting that does not cause visual distress like some of the rooms in the office do.*

*I couldn't get a place or room in the office to discuss sensitive topics or meetings. When I was working on projects that could not be shared I was locked in a small room with no natural light the whole day in the office. It was better for my mental health to work at home and see natural light.*

*Ability to have sensitive conversations without colleagues overhearing*

*Also, I also have a lot of sensitive conversations in my job that should not be over heard. I did find it was not efficient in an open plan office as I would always have to find a quiet room and shut the door to have those conversations - quite disruptive to any flow of work. Working at Home is more efficient as I do not have to leave my desk at all.*

*I take WFH days when I need to attend a long training or workshop online. This lets me avoid using my headphones for a long time, avoids booking a room just for me and decreases distractions from the office. Better for my coworkers, other attendees and myself.*

*I COULD NOT do my job if I had to be in the office due to the nature of the conversations I have to have with other psychologists, lawyers and clients around the country*

*The type of work I do requires talking to customers about personal experiences and this means I need a quiet space with no chance of background noise intruding on the conversation. The office only has a limited number of meeting rooms I can use for this purpose, the home is better suited.*

*Able to have professional conversations in a more private setting rather than an open plan office - rooms are hard to find in the office.*

*Working in an office with so many people in online meetings is challenging e.g. noise and hard to concentrate.*

*I work in an office where noise is a problem, working from home allows me to concentrate.*

*I found that the office was incredibly noisy when working from home was not an option, so it is nice to be able to schedule work that requires more concentration for my 'at home' days because I can get more done. It is better for my health too because I'm not burning energy trying to concentrate in the noisy office conditions. I schedule meetings and catch-ups for my 'in office' days to make the most of that time too.*

*Quieter working environment at home (alternative is a large open-plan office with high noise level).*

*Yes, because our work requires us to hot desk, I cannot always find a desk at work and so I HAVE to work from home in order to work at all.*

*There are not enough desks in our main offices to accommodate all the workers if we all went in together.*

*There are insufficient desks in the office so working from home is a must for everyone in my agency. It makes us more efficient because if we all had to come in everyday a lot of time would be wasted searching for somewhere to sit.*

*I spent 60% of my time in online meetings. It was far more productive not going into the office as I'd be stuck in a room all day all by myself. I was much happier doing those meetings at home and having access to the outdoors during the day.*

*My home set-up is generally more comfortable than my office chair, desk, etc.*

*The office building that I work on has aircon that is not consistent temperature control and after doing my office days can start to feel unwell in my time off due to air con temp drops and being told it has been looked at but nothing has improved. I should not have to put a puffer jacket on to stay warm inside an office.*

*I have a dry eyes diagnosed problem and the office environment has no fresh air at all, and the nature of this environment means by the end of the day my eyes are red, stinging and painful and working from home allows me to have natural air rather than air conditioned air and reduces my symptoms almost completely. I also get less headaches at home, which I get from the office being so dark with tinted windows and being far from a window in the middle of the office with poor lighting.*

## **PARTICIPATING IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY**

*Working from home has enabled me to feel more connected to my local community, supporting local businesses and participating in community sports and events that I would otherwise be unable to participate in due to a lengthy commute. This commute involves a bus and a not-so-reliable train that is expensive and crowded during peak times.*

*Benefits the local businesses around my home. Money on things like coffees which would have been spent in the CBD are now being shared locally.*

*I have been better able to contribute to my volunteering roles in my community.*

*Working from home allows me to volunteer for a charity that it only open during work hours. Volunteering gives me the satisfaction of contributing to my community and helping others.*

## **COLLABORATION**

*Since my team is scattered all over the country most of my work is completed in meetings and online collaboration. Being able to work from home gives me a quieter space to and means I am not pulled by other staff demands.*

*The vast majority of my team are based in Wellington. Working remotely makes me feel like I'm more on a level playing field and I feel more included as remote working encourages my team to include people from other cities rather than just having the conversations in person in Wellington*

## **COMMUTE**

*It takes me an hour to travel to work, so I gain an extra two hours a day working from home.*

*Being that I live out of town it certainly helps not travelling 50mins to work for a few hours then having to drive 50mins home again and take leave to attend an appointment or attend kids events. Almost two hours of my day is consumed with travel.*

*Working from home allows me the time to exercise. Because my commute is over 1.5 hours each way, there's no time to exercise on my office days, plus I'm too tired to anyway.*

*Enabled me to work in the community closer to where I live. As my role is community facing this saves work travel time by up to 3 hours and avoids traffic congestion.*

*I am able to use my commuting time and break times for exercise and jobs around the house, freeing up the weekends and time after work to spend time with family. This helps with my mental health.*

*Yes, it is helping me a lot to balance work life balance. It saves me 1.5 hours of travel time each day to commute and return from work.*

*My commute to work takes 90minutes, a daily drive of 3 hours, much of which is out of cell phone coverage, meaning 15 hours of unproductive time. Working from home means I have more productive time available.*

*I leave home at 5.15am when I'm working in the office, just to get free parking. I don't need to worry about parking, and I get an extra 30mins sleep in when I'm working from home.*

*It gives me more time to focus on my studies than to focus on commute as it takes me around 40 minutes to get to work and during heavy traffic more than an hour which adds more stress to my day.*

*I save an hour of commuting time each time I work from home.*

*I couldn't afford to drive to work everyday and I have limited public transport in the town I live. I live 35mins away from work*

## **COST**

*On my WFH days, I save petrol costs and \$5.50 on parking costs that day.*

*Working from home helps save money with petrol and paying parking in town.*

*Saves money (less commuting, less bought food, less money spent on work clothes).*

*With the incremental inflation, and lower opportunities for appraisals and jobs it becomes harder to save incase the government decides to shave jobs.*

*Working from home represents a significant financial advantage given the costs associated with public transport in Wellington. This is without thinking about driving to work and the associated parking costs.*

*I just want to emphasise the money I save not having to drive to work one day a week. I live 50 min drive from work and the savings in fuel are noticeable. Now with a cost of living crisis plus no pay rise for NZDF civilians, every little bit of savings bit helps!*

*Cost savings working from home twice a week, as it costs me \$7.50 one way by public transport. This is crucial to my wellbeing in this economy with managing living costs and being able to save money.*

### **HOUSING AFFORDABILITY**

*My employer's flexible by default policy enabled me to take a public service role I would not normally be able to take outside of Wellington.*

*I was able to afford a house when I was priced out of the market that was a little further out of the city.*

*I save money and time. I live >100km away from the office. I accepted the job at the govt agency because of flexibility.*

*I couldn't afford to buy my first home in the Wellington region and WFH has enabled me to purchase an affordable property and still keep my job.*

### **LIFE ADMIN AND HOUSEHOLD TASKS**

*Honestly the ability to get the washing done on a sunny day is transformative.*

*Reduced need to take annual leave or be away from work in times where I need to be at home for tradespeople etc.*

*I am able to lessen the load on personal appointments i.e. Drs, Dentist, tradies than say having to take them later on in the evening or weekends. I can support local businesses in my area.*

*Being able to work from home for home related emergencies. I.e., not having to take leave to be home for a trades person, can organise home related fixes earlier if I have the flexibility to work from home.*

*It has really helped at times when family commitments would have been more of a preoccupation if I had been working in the office. This is not just about work/life balance, but about the fact that life administration can sometimes be more manageable outside the office given one is more fully able to manage one's focus.*

*Can be home to pick up parcels, let trades in, do household chores over lunch break. Gives me more hours in the day.*

*Flexibility to run errands at lunch time.*

## **MANAGING WORK AROUND OTHER OBLIGATIONS**

*It means I have the mental space to do after work activities on those days - being in the office all day then going straight to the class is a lot of people interaction, I function better if I work from home those days.*

*It gives me more time to focus on my studies than to focus on commute as it takes me around 40 minutes to get to work and during heavy traffic more than an hour which adds more stress to my day.*

*My area of study ties in directly with my work. Being able to cut out the commute to and from work four days per week means that I have an extra eight hours per week that I can dedicate to the studies, that I would have otherwise spent either driving or on an overcrowded bus. The flexible working agreement benefits me personally as I am able to dedicate more time to juggling work and uni, whilst at the same time as benefitting work as the learning is relevant to my day-to-day work.*

*I'm able to have better work life balance for non-profit work that I engage in.*

## **IMPROVED WORK CULTURE**

*I feel more trusted and respected in my current role than I ever have in previous, less flexible, work arrangements. Not coincidentally, the quality of my work has improved greatly.*

*It makes me feel respected, trusted and appreciated by my employer.*

*Overall, the flexibility of being able to work from home makes me feel that I am valued and trusted, which increases my commitment to the organisation that offers this option.*

*I believe that working from home arrangements help put more trust in your employees and can show that micromanaging is not required for your team to be productive.*

## Appendix 2

# Comments from members about why working from home is important to them

A selection of verbatim quotes from members summarising why working from home is important to them.

*Working from home once a week allows me to recharge my social batteries while still maintaining a high output. I save money on commuting and am more refreshed and energized when I return to the office.*

*It is the one day a week I am able to catch up on my admin work without being interrupted by duty calls, or by other things that crop up in our office.*

*It allows me to have more flexibility in this current economic crisis. I can save on parking and also hours my child attends daycare. My mental health is great and I am less stressed. I have better stats being at home in comparison to being in the office/on site*

*Working from home enables people flexibility for a better work-life balance. Sometimes you need to be home for tradies. Sometimes you're a little bit sick but don't have sick leave. Sometimes you have an important event after work or during a lunch break that you can only access if WFH. Having the flexibility to WFH or work in the office based on day to day needs (both of personal life and work life) is incredibly helpful for everything.*

*Provides balance and choice, but also the option for deep concentration and focus which is very challenging in a busy, open plan office. Also, with public sector job cuts and having to do more work with fewer people, when working consistently long hours its sometimes nice to already be home and not have to commute on top of an already much longer and more stressful day.*

*The flexibility to work from a quiet environment when I need concentrated time, to be at home for the plumber or sparky, to hang out the washing on a sunny day and get it in before it rains, to do yoga on my lunch break, or simply to skip an unproductive commute makes a huge difference to me both professionally and personally. I think it helps me bring my best self to work!*

*As a woman, child care still lies mostly with me. Working from home allows me to still engaged really well with my job but the less time commuting means I am more here for my child also.*

*There is nothing more important than family. Working from home made me feel more confident about starting a family and being able to balance important time with them, whilst still being able to get my work done. WFH supported me whilst I was pregnant and didn't feel like commuting, but I could still work. WFH has allowed me to save money on commuting everyday, and that better also supports my family. WFH allows me to work in a team that is geographically distant, even prior to COVID, and in a team that consistently performs.*

*Working from home is crucial to me as a single father. It allows me to be present for my kids while also taking on greater responsibilities at work. This flexibility has enabled me to achieve a balance*

*between a fulfilling family life and a career I'm proud of. Without it, I'd face higher costs for daycare and commuting, leaving less for what truly matters most.*

*I think having the option open to everyone is necessary to help reduce congestion on the roads and public transport, to ease the cost of living on people, to stop the spread of illness in the workplace and for people to achieve work life balance for their physical and mental health.*

*WFH allows people to have flexibility that suits their individual needs, which ultimately results in a much more focussed, engaged and happy workforce. It gives people more time, and money, for their personal lives, which leads to greater job satisfaction and retention for the employer. WFH has allowed me to recover from and/or manage better some severe chronic health issues, which had forced me to leave my previous job due to the lack of flexibility it gave me.*

*The option to work from home allows a diverse workforce with varied skills and experiences. It allows choice of workplace to suit your working style or your daily work commitments if you are in commuting distance from an office. Personally it lets me conserve energy to use for work thinking. My commute is 75 minutes each way so this is considerable time saving, and travel cost saving.*

*I have mental health issues, which are better managed at home. I am also a menstruating woman, so for a week to 10 days a month I have to deal with pain and discomfort which is again, more easily managed at home. I can work at my required noise level, set at the right temperature and have more time in my day. Flexibility goes both ways, so I adjust my work hours when needed to fit busy times which works when utilising WFH. Not so much in the office environment. Giving people autonomy in where and when they work goes a long way in showing trust and basic humanity. We all adults.*

*I have had one of the most productive periods of my career in terms of deliverables since working from home. I can produce high quality work undistracted and in an efficient manner. It has been a profoundly positive experience in terms of productivity and I have objective evidence in terms of projects completed and peer reviewed publications produced to back that assertion.*

*Having the flexibility to work from home has improved dramatically my work/life balance; I am mentally and physically healthier, I have saved money and I have been able to connect with family more often. Because of all the above, plus not having the noise and distractions of an office, my work productivity has improved and I am happy doing my job. Happy employees work far better :)*

*My job requires me to provide subject matter expertise and there is no other equivalent formal position in the organisation. To stay on top of this role, I need to be up to date with relevant material - basically a lot of reading and thinking, peer reviewing and writing. WFH allows me to do this with a lot less stress than working in a noisy office. I'm able to have Teams meetings easily, straight from my desk and without booking meeting rooms. My interactions online from home are often much easier and less stressful than from the office - where many people have online meetings from their desks, adding to the existing noise from chatting or training people while at their desks.*

*I wouldn't be able to work at all without the ability to work from home. I would be on the benefit and, given my health needs, in abject poverty. This way, I'm earning enough to survive, and I'm contributing to something important - good for the country, good for my mental health too.*

*It is the freedom to choose a method where you know yourself and your working style best, and can maximise that.*



*Without the flexibility to WFH, more days than not I will drive in to the office, sit next to colleagues who I support but who do not require me to be sat next to them to be supported, spend most of my day on Teams meetings anyway because enough colleagues live and work either outside of commuting distance or at another Stats site, then go home. So, no different than if I had worked from home, except I've lost 1.5 - 2 hours of my day commuting, extending my workdays from 8 to 10 hours and significantly increasing the demand on my partner to provide more caregiving for our children.*

*While I generally prefer to work in the office, a small amount of time WFH significantly improves both my ability to balance work and home commitments (including reducing the time away from work that would otherwise be required), and improves my productivity on some work tasks.*

*We are leading the way for future and how anyone can work within means for government to be possible regardless of how central you are to a cbd. Our people can have a choice to live remotely which in return goes into the small townships lots of people i work with believe in putting back into our locals but also are volunteers for different organisations that in return help our economy. the opportunities are endless but I would like the choice to live where fills my heart and still serve my public by being a public servant who wants to keep helping making a impact with our community through our work.*

*I have three adults who depend on me for daily care and quality of life, and they also have frequent medical appointments I need to take them to. Working at home has been the key enabler for me to both continue working (part-time, 24 hours over four days) and have a manageable caregiving workload. No commute has given me the time back I need to care for them and working extra hours when needed is not an issue as I am home-based.*

*I believe that working from home arrangements help put more trust in your employees and can show that micromanaging is not required for your team to be productive.*

*The flexibility it provides was a part of why i changed from my previous job to this one. If this job no longer provides the flexible hours and wfh option then I would genuinely consider other jobs.*

*Working from home can have a big impact on reducing stress levels and being able to balance work and family life, especially for those with little ones. I would find it significantly harder to continue in my role without the flexibility to work at least some time from home.*

*It is much better for my family. I am not so wound up and stressed, better for my health. I don't waste time commuting, I can use that time to work or to do things with the family.*

*The 9 to 5 type of job is completely out of touch and mothers like myself are hugely disadvantaged. It is sad that women are having to choose between being a mum or a career and to do both is extremely hard. Circumstances can change at anytime. So flexible working is a lifeline.*

*Working from home is the way that the world is moving on. Remaining in an office is just punitive, stale, and unnecessary. We already don't get payrises, but the cost of transport, parking, etc has increased, and with more cars on the road than ever before, I couldn't afford to drive in daily and park. Public transport isn't easily available for all of us. I can save money (personally) by being at home, and also save the department money by not needing a desk. It also gives me about three hours back in my day. I actually feel joyful in my work, and have more energy, which in turn allows me to do a better job and bring my best self to work on the days that I am in the office. This is the main*

*reason I remain with the department, and if this was not an option, then I would certainly look elsewhere, and take my experience with me.*

*To give those who have responsibilities in the home caring for others, the flexibility to manage those responsibilities without further stress, and it also shows that the immediate manager trusts us to continue to work efficiently whilst not physically in the office*

*The modern office is not really designed for people. We hot desk (introduced for cost savings) so there is no guarantee you will end up with your team. It is open plan with very few quiet areas. A heavy laptop has to be lugged home each night. Working from home just allows you to breathe and saves me on transport costs, about \$50 per fortnight.*

*It's important to have control over my work life and be treated as an adult who can make reasonable decisions about when to be in office and how to conduct my work. As a disabled person, it gives me so much more energy and time and makes me like my job more when I have a day here and there at home.*

*Flexibility is key. From my perspective, I feel a hybrid arrangement balances my week and enables me more time to exercise and take care of myself. And as a Team Manager, I'm aware that several of my team members rely on flexible working for school drop-offs/pick-ups. If they are asked to be at the office full-time (rather than hybrid) they will likely have to resign.*

*We had to work from home when the pandemic hit - we knuckled down and helped the country in a massive time of need and continue to do that, whether we Work From Home or Worked in Office we committed ourselves to delivering the best outcome for many many people with integrity and professional work ethics.*

*It allows flexibility around some household obligations, it allows things like doctors appointments to be scheduled rather than having to take time off to attend these. It allows more control over your physical environment. For me it is a less stressful environment as it is quieter and there are a lot less distractions in the form of other people talking. It gives me back 2 hours of my day and allows me to have more energy for my family obligations.*

## Appendix 3

# Comments from members about what's changed recently

A selection of verbatim quotes from members about what has changed regarding their employer's willingness to allow working from home since the Minister's announcement about new government expectations and the review of the guidance in September 2024.

Quotes are arranged around key themes. Quotes focus on cases where people said their employer was less willing to allow working from home. This is because there were very few people who said their employer was less willing; and because people who said nothing had changed were not asked to explain in more detail.

### **INFORMAL PRESSURE, ENCOURAGEMENT OR CHANGES IN EXPECTATIONS**

*My employer says it's an expectation that I am in the office*

*Our manager asked us to reduce time spent working from home.*

*We have been more strongly encouraged to work from the office.*

*There is more pressure for us to work from the office, less flexibility to work from home.*

*It's been mentioned by leadership that they are wanting people to return to the office.*

*We have been told the expectation is to be in the office unless we have external appointments.*

*We have been asked to minimize our working from home time.*

*Management messaging coming through strongly - 'We are a people facing business therefore you must be in the office to fulfil your work obligations'*

*My organization seems to be using it as an excuse to justify more in office work disregarding the benefits and not listening to the workers, nothing official has been said yet but there is a lot of mention of increasing in office hours.*

*There has been nothing formal come out that I'm aware of, but managers have passed on comments from above that they would like to see more staff in the office.*

*The discussion around working at home and how much is acceptable has increased significantly. A polar opposite from after COVID when it was praised how well it worked having staff working at home.*

*First our managers verbally said it's likely to come that they want to see us more, then they verbally shared we should be in the office 3 days, then they verbally shared that they'd be counting heads every day for a week to report. Based on that they found a rough average of 40% capacity in our building on a given day, and initially said they'd like to see it above 50-60%.*

*Formally the policy has not changed - HR indicated we are aligned with the requirements. However, there has been a serious chilling effect, informally, amongst managers and staff.*

*As a union delegate I have been made aware that in some parts of the Ministry managers are telling people they need to be in the office more than they had been previously.*

### **MICROMANAGEMENT**

*Management has been asking for more reasons as to why staff want to work from home despite these not being required by policy (ad hoc flexible 2 days from home is granted under policy and procedures of my employer and relevant positions).*

*Now require to update Manager start & finish times in office - first time this has been asked in 2 years.*

*We have had to formally discuss our work from home arrangements, complete surveys, let the whole office know if someone is working from home.*

*Now filling out weekly spreadsheet that has to be approved in advance by our director*

*My manager is more likely to ask why you need to work from home and ask what tasks you will complete from home*

*Our GM is now wanting to see who is wfh on the daily from the managers, it's so micro managing*

*Any Working From Home needs to be referred through to GM for prior approval for any new request since announcement.*

*Our swipe cards are monitored to ensure we are in the office at least 3 days a wk. Even though they don't have enough desks for all of us if we all turned up together.*

*every staff member has been asked to confirm working arrangements and a spreadsheet is kept. this is intimidating.*

*All WFH requests from people leaders will require approval from the organisation's Deputy Secretary. This includes all ad hoc or one-off requests to WFH. This excludes formal arrangements. For people leaders who do not report directly to a Deputy Secretary, all requests to WFH need to be made to their one-up manager, who will then seek approval from the Deputy Secretary.*

*Leads now have to create and submit reports, this seems like a wild waste of time.*

### **DIFFICULTY ACCESSING WORKING FROM HOME**

*Managers have been told they must work in the office all of their contracted days (e.g. 5 days a week) unless they get formal approval which requires high levels of leadership approval. There are limited reasons why these formal arrangements will be accepted.*

*I feel anxious having to ask for any flexibility now. With burnout being very prominent in my organisation, the flexibility to WFH has previously supported me to be far more productive as opposed to being confined to a garage-type office space with little natural lighting and air. Something's gotta give.*

*Less willing to accept new formal flexible working arrangements. These are now only being put forward for consideration if we have 'exceptional circumstances'. We have been told that we can*

*continue to work from home on an informal agreement until the new guidance policy comes out, but should be preparing ourselves in the event we need to return to the office*

*There used to be an approach of saying yes unless there was a reason to say. Now there is more a need to have a reason to say yes. It may not make much difference, as my team aren't really in of a position to do much work from home so when they do, it makes sense*

*Manager has been more firm on working from home stating only in exceptional circumstances, but does not go into detail why - even when that particular job/task would benefit from a distraction-free environment.*

*We have moved from an informal 1 day a week at home to now only working from home on request and with a good enough reason*

### **MANDATED MINIMUM DAYS IN THE OFFICE**

*Formal minimum number of days in the office has been introduced.*

*We are expected to come into the office 3 times a week as opposed to just once a week following the Ministers announcement.*

*The organisation has stipulated for everyone in National Office that staff are to work no more than 1 day a week from home unless a formal exception has been agreed at Group Manager level. No other information or guidance has been provided relating to this change.*

*min of 3 days in the office has been stipulated across the organisation.*

*As of 14 november my team was told that a directive has come down from our C-Suite executive that we can have a maximum 1 day a week.*

*There is now a requirement that you have to be in the office a minimum of 3 days a week, no exceptions*

*We now have to go in 3 days a week and we have been told which days. We were given one weeks' notice and told working from home is not an entitlement. Previously I worked 2 days a week in the office and agreed which days with my manager. I have always delivered a lot of work.*

### **EMPLOYERS REFUSING TO ALLOW WORKING FROM HOME**

*It seems that no more people have been able to arrange formal agreements recently.*

*We've been told that no new flexible working arrangements will be approved at this stage. Current ones continue as normal.*

*We have been asked to return to office fulltime.*

*No new flexible arrangements are being considered.*

*The ad hoc ability to work from home has gone. If you had a formal arrangement that still stands but where there was flexibility there is no longer any.*

*Working from home has ceased completely and immediately*

*We have been told all informal WFH arrangements have to end and everyone is expected to be in the office. Formal flexible working applications will need to be approved by the DCE, the message seemed to be that any applications for flexible working will be scrutinised and likely not be approved, regardless of our policy about how to make decisions about flexible working.*

### **EMPLOYERS CHANGING EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS**

*I'm feeling a lot of pressure to come into the office despite having a permanent flexible working arrangement.*

*Firstly I had to adjust my WFH days so they weren't consecutive, then they were reduced to 1 day per week.*

*Some people have been told to go back to the office, including people who moved cities and are now having to move back. This seems to have been allied inconsistently*

*I had enjoyed an informal agreement for several years that I would start an hour earlier and finish an hour earlier (7:30am till 4 pm). this was stopped outright, and I was told I must now work my contracted hours (8:30am till 5pm). I was also able to work one day a week from home and this was stopped also*

### **EMPLOYERS DECLINING REQUESTS**

*First time in 1.5 years I was told its a privilege and not a right and my WFH request was declined*

*My doctor has suggested that I work only two days in the office during the warmer months and work refused to listen to his advice and make me come into the office.*

*My manager was in support of my 3 days WFH flexible working arrangement and acknowledged my input and contribution to the team. However, after the announcement, my manager requires us to work a minimum of 3 days in the office. While the flexi work policy hasn't changed, my request to retain the 3 days WFH has been declined. The reason given was that team performance can be impacted due to 'lack of in person collaboration'.*