

TELECOMMUTING IN THE VALENCIAN COMMUNITY



executive report



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TELECOMMUTING IN THE VALENCIAN COMMUNITY II

Executive report

The present investigation is designed to identify the primary characteristics of telecommuting in the Valencian Community. Its objective is to ascertain the extent and trends, recognize challenges, threats, and opportunities for both employees and companies, and to detect weaknesses and strengths in this work modality, along with its attendant risks and motivational factors for workers. Additionally, the aim is to define and analyse the profile of telecommuting individuals and their working conditions in order to comprehend this phenomenon and provide recommendations to diverse stakeholders, thereby enhancing their ability to address the challenges posed by this mode of employment. To this end, a survey was conducted with 2005 respondents from the Valencian Community between April 26 and May 26, 2023, and the comprehensive results are expounded in the body of the report. Subsequently, the principal conclusions drawn from the study are presented.

1. QUANTIFICATION

Considering those who report telecommuting at least once a month, the percentage of telecommuters indicating that they are currently telecommuting and are part of the active population at the time of the survey is 25.86% of the employed workers in the studied sample. This rate has been calculated in accordance with the ILO definition, excluding those telecommuters who are actually platform workers; for whom a separate report has been produced (Todolí, et al, 2023).

2. PROFILE OF THE TELECOMMUTERS

The most common telecommuter is male, although a substantial number of women also engage in telecommuting. They are typically over 36 years old, have a high or upper-middle socio-economic status, and a high level of education. They reside in households with 2 to 4 people, where two of them provide income, and have one or two financially dependent individuals. The prevalent sectors for telecommuters include social sciences and legal fields, as well as engineering and architecture. They primarily work as employees, mostly on a full-time basis. **Telecommuters are less inclined to seek a change of employment or start their own businesses compared**

to in-person workers. A small but significant percentage of individuals share with other workers the practice of dedicating at least one hour to complementary work in addition to their primary occupation (around 21%).

GENRE

Our data indicates that among those who do not telecommute, **women are a majority by only 2.6%. However, in the case of telecommuters, men are a majority by 9.2%.** Comparing this figure with the previous year, a narrowing of the gender gap in the proportions of telecommuters can be observed. These findings are surprising from the perspective of the traditional use of telecommuting as a work-life balance measure, which might lead us to expect a higher utilization by women. However, the reality does not seem to follow this pattern.

Nevertheless, when asked about their preference for telecommuting as a work-life balance measure, women express a preference for this alternative more frequently (90.9%) than men (79.7%), and this difference is significant. That said, it should be put in context that a significant portion of these workers are characterised by a high or upper-middle socio-economic status.

Regarding other variables, men are more likely to exceed their working hours and work nights and weekends to a greater extent than women (69.5% versus 56.9%). An interesting observation is the change in gender differences concerning the company's unilateral decision to implement telecommuting. In 2022, the percentage of women in this condition was higher than that of men, and in 2023, it remains similar, both cases slightly above one-fourth of the total for both women and men. Concerning compliance with telecommuting regulations, significant differences are noted between men and women regarding the evaluation of occupational risks inherent to telecommuting situations and the availability of technical support or appropriate communication channels with superiors or colleagues. Women also present a less favourable situation than men in terms of their assessment of the company's preparation for telecommuting, the preparedness of colleagues for that activity, and the preparation of the supervisor or organisation of the work processes. However, the situation reverses regarding the choice of working hours, where the advantage clearly favours women in this case. Finally, gender differences are also significant in terms of transgression of the right to disconnect, as in most cases, men are the ones receiving communications or demands from the company outside of working hours.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

There are no significant differences in the geographical distribution of telecommuting compared to non-telecommuting across the various provinces of the Valencian Community. However, on this occasion, there is a slightly higher representation of telecommuters residing in the province of Valencia compared to the overall sample. Regarding rural or urban environments, telecommuters are more concentrated in urban areas than the rest of the population (56.8% compared to 46.8%), a situation which was not the case last year. This outcome may be attributed to the fact that jobs suitable for telecommuting are more frequently found in urban areas. It is important to analyse the evolution of this distribution to determine whether a gradual shift of telecommuters towards rural areas can be expected over time if telecommuting becomes a structural practice (changing residences requires time, extensive planning, and security).

ORIGIN OF TELECOMMUTERS

There are no significant differences between Spanish and foreign workers regarding telecommuting compared to in-person work. The obtained data indicate that 8.7% of telecommuters are from outside Spain, a percentage very similar to the rest of the surveyed individuals (9.2%). This suggests that the phenomenon known as digital nomadism (professionals who work remotely and frequently change locations, adopting a nomadic lifestyle) does not appear to be significant, at least at a cross-border level, in the Valencian Community at the moment.

DEPENDANTS

The marital status of telecommuters does not differ significantly from the situation of other working individuals, especially considering the higher percentage of individuals over 36 years old engaged in telecommuting. Nevertheless, as observed in the previous year, there is still a higher representation of married individuals among telecommuters, along with a lower representation of single people.

In this context, it is noticeable that telecommuters tend to live in larger households than those who do not telecommute. In the case of households with three or more individuals, the percentages are 53.8% among non-telecommuters and 65.38% among telecommuters. This trend was not clearly observed the previous year. Additionally, telecommuters are more likely to live in households where two or more individuals contribute to the family income compared to those who do not telecommute (72% versus 56%), which may be related to the higher socio-economic level typically associated with telecommuters. Finally, it's worth noting that telecommuters are more likely to have one or more dependents compared to those who do not telecommute (63.6% versus 53.3%). This situation should be considered in relation to the age of telecommuters, who tend to be concentrated in the middle age groups (36 to 55 years) more than others, and also in relation to the size of households. Additionally, it indicates a greater need for work-life balance among telecommuters than among those who do not telecommute.

EDUCATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Telecommuting exhibits a significant overrepresentation of individuals with a high level of education, constituting three-quarters of telecommuters compared to 42.9% in the rest of the workforce. This trend is also observed in other recent studies, such as the one conducted in the Community of Madrid. These data should be seen in connection with the types of jobs typically carried out by telecommuters, which often require a university qualification (50%), to which should be added a substantial portion of the 13.6% who engages in management activities, overseeing businesses, leading people, or managing teams, and a part of those who declare working in positions requiring a medium level of qualification.

The presented reality is correlated with the socio-economic level, with 61.1% having a high or upper-middle socio-economic status, nearly doubling the figures obtained for those who do not telecommute.

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF THE EMPLOYER

If we compare the significance of telecommuting between the public and private sectors, we find certain disparities in almost all indices. 23.6% of telecommuters work in the public sector (to which should be added the 4.2% of workers in the

mixed sector), while in terms of the overall working population of the Valencian Community, only 16.37% work in the public sector. This implies a higher incidence of telecommuting in the public sector, which, however, does not align with preferences for this type of work in that sector. 29% of public sector workers prefer in-person work, and only 17.7% prefer telecommuting. The trend is the opposite in the private sector. This means that telecommuting is still more common in the public sector than in the private sector, although there has been a notable decrease compared to the previous year when 29.1% reported telecommuting for the public sector and 6.2% for the mixed sector.

Regarding the size of the company, the majority of telecommuters work in companies with more than 50 employees (71.3%), mostly in companies with 250 or more employees (43.1%), where individuals with a high socio-educational level are also concentrated. By gender, men are more represented in large companies, while women have a higher percentage in companies with fewer than 50 employees. In small companies, telecommuters more commonly express a preference for in-person work (33.3%) compared to telecommuting (23.7%).

TIME OF COMMENCEMENT OF TELECOMMUTING

61.2% of individuals who telecommute in the Valencian Community started doing so after March 2020. Women have significantly joined telecommuting more than men since the pandemic began, and although men predominate among workers, it should be noted that before the pandemic the predominance of male telecommuters was almost ten percentage points higher than women.

It is also shown that, among telecommuters who are employees, 70.2% joined after March 2020, while this percentage is 42.7% for self-employed telecommuters. This clearly indicates that companies embraced telecommuting following the lockdown and have maintained this work modality afterward.

There is a higher incidence of adaptation to telecommuting by company imposition among those who joined after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (73.9%). Furthermore, it is also observed that there is less preference for telecommuting among new telecommuters compared to those who have been in this situation for a longer period (likely related to the fact that it was an employer imposition).

DECISION TO ADOPT TELECCOMUTE

In 27.9% of respondents, telecommuting is mandated by the company. However, the most prominent choice in nearly half of the cases (47%) is mutual agreement, and a quarter is by the employee's decision. **In the private sector, the employer imposed their will to a greater extent than in the public sector.** This is noteworthy as the Remote Work Law prohibits the imposition of telecommuting by the employer. Compared to the previous year, there is an increase in those who choose to telecommute themselves (in 2022, it was 18.2%) and a reduction in those who find themselves in this situation due to employer imposition (in 2022, it was 33%), although those in mutual agreement have barely changed (48.8% in 2022).

SELF-EMPLOYED

A 26.5% of individuals who telecommute are self-employed. When comparing this rate with in-person workers, where 12.5% work as self-employed, we observe that the incidence of self-employment in telecommuting is more than double. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the percentage of self-employed individuals telecommuting has significantly increased compared to the previous year (17.2%).

DECLARATION OF ACTIVITY

An 8% of people who telecommute admit to doing so informally or irregularly. This percentage increases to just under 10% among those under 36 years old, and across different sectors, it is more common in the education and arts sector (15.9%). Notably, 16.7% of self-employed telecommuters do not declare their activity. Thus, we observe both a higher usage of self-employed individuals in telecommuting and a higher rate of undeclared work in this group. This could suggest that telecommuting may end up being a source of fraud, at least to a greater extent than in-person work.

3. CHARACTERISTIC OF TELECOMMUTE AND COMPANY PREPAREDNESS

SCHEDULE AND WORK HOURS

Those who telecommute do not usually work during the night; only 9.3% do so always or quite frequently. However, sporadic telecommuting during night-time is reported by 28.1% of telecommuters, with self-employed individuals engaging in night-time telecommuting more frequently (51.3%) than those employed by others (30.3%). On the other hand, telecommuting during weekends, although not generally occurring either, is more prevalent than night-time work. Even so, more than half never work during weekends, and 34.5% do so only occasionally. Notably, **in this edition of the report, men more frequently report working always or often on weekends (15.9% compared to 8.3%)**. Looking at age, younger individuals never telecommute on weekends in a higher percentage than those over 36 years old (55.2% versus 49.6%), but at the same time, they also show a higher percentage of those who do so always or quite frequently (21% of the younger age group versus 11.4% of those over 36 years old).

The majority state that they telecommute at least occasionally outside their established working hours (71.3%). Almost half (47.8%) say they telecommute outside their hours only occasionally, while it is somewhat common for 23.5% (15.8% do so quite frequently, and 7.7% always or almost always). The data does not differ significantly from the observations of the previous year, although there is a slight decrease in the percentage of those who say they never telecommute outside their hours (32% in 2022, 28.7% this year) and an increase in those who do so regularly (20.2% in 2022, 23.5% this year). Only 12.5% of self-employed telecommuters say they telecommute within their working hours, compared to 36.6% of employed telecommuters, and a high 36.3% say they work outside their regular hours regularly (23.4% quite frequently, and 12.1% always or almost always).

A total of 43.9% of telecommuters work excessively long hours at least occasionally, with 12.6% considering it somewhat common (always or quite frequently). These data indicate a worsening situation compared to the previous year when 61.8% of telecommuters never or rarely worked more than 10 hours a day, 25.5% did so only occasionally, and it was habitual for 12.7%. Among the younger age group, it is significantly more common to work daily hours exceeding 10 always or quite frequently (8.4%) than among those over 36 years old (4.1%).

As observed in the previous year, self-employed telecommuters are much more likely to work long daily hours than those employed by others. Indeed, while about a third of employees (33.7%) occasionally work daily hours exceeding 10 (25.1% of the sample, only occasionally), nearly two-thirds of self-employed individuals do so (65%), with a high 20.9% doing it regularly (9.8% quite frequently, and 11.1% always or almost always).

In summary, the workday of telecommuters does not seem to have extensive flexibility, although it usually maintains suitable conditions. Additionally, sporadically but significantly, it involves exceptional workloads on weekends, night-time hours, and long daily hours without digital disconnection.

FREQUENCY OF TELECOMMUTING

52.6% of surveyed telecommuters spend more than 30% of their working hours telecommuting. In fact, 28.1% report telecommuting daily. These figures highlight that more than half of those who have telecommuted have reached a frequency sufficient to be considered regular remote workers according to regulations. Women telecommute regularly more than men, and the same is true for younger telecommuters. Regular telecommuting is also more common among self-employed individuals and those who prefer telecommuting. Compared to the previous year, the overall data shows a clear decrease in the number of workers considered "regular" according to legislation. It is worth considering whether this legislation may have had an impact on these changes (See the report from the Community of Madrid on telecommuting, 2022).

An important piece of information, in line with the telecommuting legislation, is determining whether the telecommuter has worked at least 30% of their working hours for a minimum of three months. The data shows that the majority of telecommuters claim to meet these conditions (71.7%), triggering the requirement to formalize a telecommuting contract. However, when asked if they have formalised such a contract, more than half of telecommuters (56.8%) have not done so, 6.1% are unsure, and 37.1% have formalized the contract.

WORKPLACE

An overwhelming majority of telecommuters, 9 out of 10 (89.8%), usually telecommute from their own homes. However, 6.6% work from a private office, 2.1% from a public or publicly accessible space, and 1.4% in a coworking space. This represents a slight decrease in home-based telecommuting compared to the previous year (93.4%), corresponding to an increase in the use of private offices (4.7% in 2022) and public spaces (0.3% in 2022).

PREPARATION OF THE COMPANY

A 33.5% of telecommuters express that their company is poorly or not at all prepared for telecommuting in terms of technical resources, with public companies being in a worse situation, where more than half state this fact. On the other hand, larger companies are better prepared than smaller ones, and the sectors of information and finance, as well as administration and defence, are better prepared compared to others. This situation is replicated concerning the preparedness of supervisors (32.2%), co-workers (33.5%), and the organisation of work processes (31.13%) that telecommuting must integrate into. Therefore, while overall corporate preparedness exhibits significant deficiencies, it is more pronounced among smaller companies and in the public sector, which seem to be in greater need of training and resources. Additionally, women are the ones who perceive these deficiencies more significantly.

4. MATERIAL RESOURCES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION

USE OF TOOLS

Among the most commonly used tools for telecommuting, the laptop is the most prevalent (80.5%), followed by the work desk (63.7%), mobile phone, and phone line (63.1%), the work chair (61.7%), and to a lesser extent, the printer (39.5%), desktop computer (35.3%), and landline phone (15.3%).

CONTRIBUTION OF WORK TOOLS

Given that the laptop is the most commonly used tool for telecommuting, it is noteworthy that **almost half (46.8%) of telecommuters are the ones providing this work tool themselves**. This percentage increases significantly in the public sector (64.4%) and among small businesses (60.6%). The same pattern applies to the mobile phone and the phone line (46.2%), with similar figures. **In the case of the work desk and chair, the percentages rise to 89.1% and 83.7%, and for the printer, it is 74.1%.** These percentages consistently remain higher in the public sector and among small businesses in all cases.

5. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

WRITTEN AGREEMENT

We have mentioned above that a majority of telecommuters meet the conditions (71.7%) to formalize a telecommuting contract. However, more than half of telecommuters (56.8%) have not formalized that contract, 6.1% are unsure, and 37.1% have done so.

PAYMENT OF EXPENSES

Approximately in **71.1% of cases, the company does not cover the costs for current expenses related to telecommuting that the employee must face due to being in such a situation, nor those related to the place or space where telecommuting takes place (77.7%, and 9.5% do so partially).** These percentages increase even more when we talk about the **public sector and small companies**. It is worth considering that there is a tendency to outsource labour costs through telecommuting by companies, and even more so by the administration, which ends up being borne by those who work.

DISCONNECTION PROTOCOL AND OCCUPATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENT

57.6% of respondents report that their company does not have a protocol for enabling digital disconnection, and 54.9% state that their company has not conducted a proper assessment of the occupational risks inherent in telecommuting. In both cases, these percentages are higher in small companies, and the public sector fares worse regarding the proper assessment of occupational risks. In any case, no percentage falls below 55%, quite the opposite, resulting in a very deficient landscape in compliance with these obligations. On a positive side, it is worth highlighting a reduction in these percentages when compared to those obtained in 2022, especially concerning the analysis of psychosocial risks.

MONITORING, CONTROL AND INFORMATION FOR TELEWORKS

Over a third of people (37.4%) report being monitored by the company through technology, with this monitoring being much more common in the private sector (39.0%) than in the public sector (30.1%). It is also noteworthy that 10.6% of workers are unaware of whether such monitoring takes place, with greater unawareness in private companies than in the public sector. **Regarding the communication of the results of the monitoring to telecommuters, in cases where this monitoring is known to workers, only 43% of telecommuters claim to be informed about it.** Future studies will determine whether monitoring will increase or not, a very interesting phenomenon considering the blurred lines between the right to privacy and the company's prerogatives of surveillance and control.

TRAINING FOR TELECOMMUTING

In this regard, a majority of telecommuters (59.8%) report that they have not received any form of training from their employer for telecommuting. It should be noted that this percentage has decreased by more than 10 percentage points compared to the previous year. This year, the percentage is higher among those working in small companies. Regarding the extent to which respondents believe their colleagues are prepared for telecommuting, two-thirds of telecommuters believe they are prepared (66.5%), with a lower percentage observed in the public sector (55.8%). Concerning the training of supervisors, slightly lower percentages are found (60.1%), again with a difference against the public sector (51.9%). The

data shows that in **four out of ten companies**, there are situations of **telecommuting without sufficient training for both staff and managerial positions**. This deficiency can lead to lower productivity, greater adaptation difficulties, data protection issues, and increased risks.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATION

A significant 29.5% state that they lack the necessary **technical support** from the company for addressing computer or connection issues that may hinder the proper execution of their work. This percentage is notably higher in the public sector (38.1%) and small businesses (43.8%), increasing to 45.8% in the education and artistic activities sector. Concerning the availability of **communication channels with superiors**, it is generally satisfactory, although 16.9% report a lack of suitable channels, with a higher percentage in the public sector.

Regarding the availability of appropriate **communication channels with colleagues**, a similar picture emerges (14.7% find it inadequate). Deficiencies increase in small businesses (26.1%). Thus, there is room for improvement, especially in cases where the situation is less than adequate.

6. DIGITAL DISCONNECTION

One of the biggest challenges posed by telecommuting is ensuring respect for the right to digital disconnection of teleworkers, as recognised in Article 18 of Law 10/2021, dated July 9. Certainly, the regulations in this respect lead to the drafting of a disconnection protocol without specifying a list of practices that violate the right to disconnection, however, this study has collected data on the frequency with which certain actions potentially harmful to this right are endured by teleworkers with the intention of being able to observe the degree of compliance with the regulation. 42.4% of respondents indicate that their companies have a protocol to facilitate digital disconnection. This percentage is significantly higher in private companies than in public ones and in larger companies than in smaller ones. Considering this data and the findings presented in this study on various actions related to this issue, it can be inferred that there are still serious difficulties in guaranteeing the right to disconnection. Certain sectors exhibit more deficiencies than others (education, arts, information, finance, professional, and scientific), and the right is more frequently violated among workers in small companies than in large ones.

E-MAILS

51% state that they receive e-mails outside their working hours, and this percentage rises to 60.6% among individuals who started telecommuting before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to those who started afterward. Correspondingly, with slightly lower percentages, about 5% less, the same data is maintained regarding e-mails that are answered outside working hours.

PHONE CALLS

In this case, phone calls outside working hours are common for 33.8% of telecommuters, with this practice being more prevalent among men than women. The same pattern is repeated regarding answered calls, with very similar percentages this time.

TEXT OR AUDIO MESSAGES

A total of **39% affirm that they quite frequently or very frequently receive text or audio messages outside their working hours,** with this occurrence being more frequent among employees of small businesses and in the information, finance, professional, and scientific sectors.

7. SUPERVISION

Telecommuting implies a greater effort on the part of management to co-ordinate and direct the production process. The advantages of telecommuting can be undermined by poor management, leading to inefficiencies and failures that compromise its sustainability and conditions. The collected data provide the perspective of telecommuters regarding how their supervisors carry out this task. In general, we observe significant deficiencies, which can be related to the lack of training mentioned in this regard, along with a certain gender bias that should be considered for the development of equality plans within the company. There is also a greater deficiency among small businesses compared to larger ones. It is interesting to note a downward trend when comparing the percentages

obtained in 2023 regarding low ratings for the preparedness of supervisors in the different aspects considered.

ORGANISATIONAL TASKS

One in four respondents believes that their supervisors do not properly allocate goals, tasks, and workloads, rising to 42% in the tertiary sector, 31.5% among workers in small businesses, and 45% when workers are compelled by the company to telecommute. These percentages are replicated when evaluating the direction of work meetings, with women being more critical of their superiors than men.

SUPPORT AND EVALUATION

Once again, a quarter of telecommuting individuals believe that the support received from their supervisors is insufficient, and it is also one in four who feel they do not receive a proper performance assessment. In both cases, it is evident that women perceive this lack of support and accurate evaluation significantly more, as do telecommuters in small businesses, those in the tertiary sector, and those who telecommute by the company's decision.

PERSONAL TREATMENT AND CONTRIBUTION TO A GOOD WORKING ENVIRONMENT

While the majority of respondents rate their personal relations with their supervisors positively, nearly one in five respondents report poor personal treatment, and one in four feel their supervisor does not contribute to fostering a suitable work environment. This suggests that, in a significant portion of cases, supervisors lack or do not implement necessary attitudes for effective communication and team leadership. Specifically, women tend to rate their supervisors more negatively in these aspects. Additionally, those working in the public sector (in terms of the work environment), the tertiary sector, and small businesses express more critical evaluations. The same applies to those who telecommute due to a unilateral decision by the company.

8. TELECOMMUTING AND SELF-EMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

It is interesting to ascertain whether individuals who claim to telecommute on a self-employed basis truly exhibit the characteristics associated with genuine self-employed workers, or whether the shift away from the traditional workplace may conceal irregular situations leading to a higher number of false self-employed individuals, especially considering that the percentage of self-employed workers in telecommuting is higher compared to other work arrangements. In this sense, although certain percentages indicating potential irregularities have been identified and should be taken into account, a widespread reality of false self-employed workers cannot be extrapolated from the data obtained in this study, but the findings do suggest the existence of a significant number of self-employed individuals who could be subject to reclassification as employees.

DETERMINATION OF WORKING HOURS

34.5% of self-employed individuals who telecommute state that their **schedule is imposed by a third party, preventing them from self-organizing**. This percentage increases to 40.5% among those who started telecommuting after the pandemic-related lockdown.

OUTSOURCING

Here, we observe how individuals who telecommute on a self-employed basis are generally very limited in their ability to subcontract or hire substitutes. In 82.6% of cases, their clients demand that they personally provide the service, leaving only 17.4% with the capacity to act freely in this regard.

DETERMINATION OF WORKING MODE

Regarding this factor, we observe that in a vast majority of cases, self-employed telecommuters (81.4%) usually have freedom regarding their clients to operate as they see fit. However, in 18.6% of cases, the mode of operation is imposed by the client. This percentage increases to 29.4% for self-employed individuals who started telecommuting after the pandemic lockdown.

PRICE AND FINAL DESTINATION OF THE SERVICE

In terms of price, one in three self-employed telecommuters lacks the ability to negotiate the price with the client, as it is determined by the client. **This percentage rises to 38.2% for telecommuters in households of one or two members.** Finally, one in four self-employed telecommuters does not work for a final client. Instead, **their work is purchased by an intermediary who then sells their services to the final client.** This proportion almost reaches one in three for those who started telecommuting with the pandemic.

9. EVALUATION OF TELECOMMUTING ASPECTS

Telecommuters generally have a positive view of most aspects associated with telecommuting. We inquired about the assessment of eleven aspects, also analysed in other studies, and obtained the following ranking: In the first place is the reduction in commuting time, with 90.7% positive evaluations. In second place is the flexibility and organization of working hours (88.7%), and in third place is autonomy in the development of work (88%). In fourth place comes the possibility of choosing the workplace (85.9%), and in fifth place is the improved capacity for work-life balance (84.8%).

A second block is constituted by aspects that receive a rating close to 80 percent but do not reach that value. Thus, cost savings are in sixth place (79.3%), the possibility of maintaining employment is in seventh place (78.5%), and improvement in performance and concentration (78.1%) is in eighth place.

A third block is made up of aspects that receive a valuation close to two-thirds of telecommuters. Thus, gaining experience for a better job (65.1%), access to job opportunities in other countries or locations (64.8%), and finally, the choice of clothing (64.2%).

It is interesting to note that these evaluations have remained fairly stable in the ranking in the years 2022 and 2023. Perhaps as an exception, the possibility of work-life balance has dropped from second to fifth place in 2023, and the valuation of autonomy allowed by telecommuting has moved from fifth place in 2022 to third in 2023.

Regarding the variables that make a difference in the ratings of the considered aspects, a *preference for telecommuting* has a generally positive effect. In all cases, those who prefer telecommuting report greater importance for all the analysed aspects than those who

prefer on-site work. A similar trend is observed in the variable that considers *who decided on telecommuting*. The assessment of many aspects studied is significantly higher when the individual decides, either independently or in agreement with the company, to telecommute. Occupational status also plays a significant role, with employees valuing many of the considered aspects more than self-employed individuals. Other considered variables play a minor role by showing differences in the intensity of assessments made by different groups considered.

10. PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS IN TELECOMMUTING

Given the transformations that have taken place in telecommuting over the last few years and its widespread adoption by a portion of the working population, it is important to understand and identify occupational risks associated with telecommuting, considering its progressive implementation with multiple configurations. We asked respondents to indicate whether telecommuting presented a range of possible physical, organizational, and psychosocial risks. Sometimes, it was relevant to assess whether telecommuting posed an increased risk compared to the risks perceived in on-site work. The considered risks were classified into seven categories: 1) General assessment of telecommuting on workers' health; 2) Risks derived from performing tasks and work activities; 3) Risks derived from relationships with supervisors and co-workers; 4) Risks derived from interpersonal relationships at work; 5) Risks derived from the lack of work-life balance; 6) Risks derived from the lack of necessary resources for telecommuting; and 7) Risks related to employment relationships and career development. The following points summarize the main results obtained from the information provided by the surveyed individuals.

IMPLICATIONS OF TELECOMMUTING FOR WORKER HEALTH

The analysis of issues directly examining the negative impact of telecommuting on health shows that one in four workers agrees that telecommuting generates **health problems such as back pain, weight gain, etc.**, indicating the sedentary nature of many activities performed in this mode. Additionally, 17.8% of respondents indicate that telecommuting **causes them more stress** than on-site work, with this experience being more common among younger individuals, those with a medium level of education, those working in small companies, those telecommuting at the company's decision, and those who prefer to work in the office always or almost always. 15.6% of respondents state that **telecommuting poses additional health**

risks, and 13.7% indicate that it *increases the risks of occupational accidents*. In all cases, young individuals perceive these effects to a greater extent in comparison.

RISKS ARISING FROM THE PERFORMANCE OF WORK TASKS AND ACTIVITIES IN TELECOMMUTING

In the block of task-related risks, two are frequently cited: *data and equipment protection* (41.1%) and the need for digital skills (32.8%). Excessive workload (21%) is perceived as a risk by approximately one in five workers. The rest have lower frequencies. Thus, *reduced flexibility in task management* (16.1%), *insufficient information and documentation* (15.6%), and *reduced productivity* (14%) are noted stressors. These stressors show either stability or a slight decrease in percentages compared to the previous year's edition. Different variables influence the incidence of risks in this block. The risk derived from data and equipment protection demands is perceived more by those who prefer on-site work, and the risk derived from a lack of digital skills is more pronounced among those who started telecommuting during or after the pandemic.

RISKS DERIVED FROM WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPERVISOR AND CO-WORKERS

Telecommuting hinders the *relationship with the supervisor* for 27.2% of respondents, and for 20.4%, it has increased surveillance and *supervision control*. Additionally, it deteriorates the *trust relationship with supervisors and managers* (26.7%). On the other hand, this working arrangement increases the *difficulty of coordination with colleagues* for 24%. It is interesting to note that the risks associated with relationships and coordination with supervisors and colleagues are higher in the secondary sector, while increased surveillance and control are more prevalent in the tertiary sector. Generally, these risks have decreased slightly, except for the one related to the deterioration of trust with supervisors and managers, which has increased by just over 3 percentage points. In this case, higher scores are observed among males and young workers.

RISKS DERIVED FROM INTERPERSONAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN TELECOMMUTING

In this category, risks of high incidence have been identified, such as the ***lack of relationships and social contact with others*** (41%), along with other relatively lower-level risks, such as ***problems with clients*** (16.8%), and ***toxic work relationships*** (***verbal aggression*** at 10.2%, and ***sexual harassment*** at 13.2%). In the first three cases, prevalence has decreased compared to the previous year (with a 5.2 percentage point decrease in loneliness), while in sexual harassment, there is an increase of 3.5 percentage points. In all cases, the incidence of risks is higher among younger workers, and in the case of the risk of loneliness, it is also higher among those working in the secondary sector.

RISKS DERIVED FROM BALANCING WORK WITH OTHER LIFE ASPECTS

The risks considered in this category are in the high-incidence zone, **surpassing** the 25% threshold. Problems with ***disconnecting from work outside working hours*** (29.7%), ***confusion of schedules between work and other life areas*** (26.5%), and ***work extending beyond working hours*** (33.5%) are among these. The first two have decreased in prevalence by just over 5 percentage points; however, the risk of working more hours has increased by 3 percentage points. The risk of a lack of disconnection occurs more frequently in women, those with a high level of education, in the education sector, in employees of large companies, and in those who prefer working in the office. On the other hand, the risk of work extending beyond working hours is higher among those living in households of 1-2 people, working in the public sector, and those who prefer in-person work.

RISKS ARISING FROM LACK OF RESOURCES FOR TELECOMMUTING

The risks considered in this section fall into the intermediate zone, with a slightly higher prevalence of those ***implying new personal costs*** (21.6%) compared to the ***lack of technical support to address technological issues*** (19%). Both have decreased slightly in prevalence compared to the previous edition. The risk related to increased personal costs is more prevalent among those with a higher level of education, employees, in the public sector, and among those whose telecommuting has been unilaterally decided by the company.

RISKS DERIVED FROM EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The three risks considered in this section fall into the middle range of incidence, with those related to **automation** (30.2%) having the highest prevalence and increasing by almost 5 percentage points compared to the previous year. Risks related to a **lack of control over working conditions** (22%) and **difficulty in promotion** due to telecommuting (19.7%) have decreased slightly. The fear of automation is more concentrated among young people, the tertiary sector, and freelancers, while the other two risks are more prevalent among employees (especially in the public sector in the case of a lack of control over working conditions) and those who prefer on-site work.

AN OVERVIEW

The overall analysis of different psychosocial risks shows that the most frequent ones are located in the block of tasks and work activities (those derived from the demands of **data and equipment protection** and the **need for digital skills**), in the block related to interpersonal and social relationships (due to a **lack of relationship and social contact with others**), and in the block related to work-life balance (**work extending beyond working hours**). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the preference for working always or almost always on-site increases the prevalence of people indicating that risk in their work, as does the group that telecommutes due to the company's unilateral decision. Additionally, age is a modulating factor in many risks, with younger individuals (under 36 years) perceiving comparatively higher risks in many cases. Similarly, working in the public sector also has a higher prevalence in the perception of many of the studied risks. Finally, those who are employees experience an increased level of risk in many of the analysed aspects.

11. SATISFACTION, PREFERENCES AND PROPENSITY TO ABANDON TELECOMMUTING

We present here the conclusions related to satisfaction with telecommuting, preferences for it, and a measure of the strength of that preference, indicated by the propensity to leave the company if telecommuting were not possible.

SATISFACTION WITH TELECOMMUTING

An overall assessment of *workers' satisfaction with telecommuting* can be obtained using a classic indicator that evaluates this satisfaction on a scale from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). The mean obtained in this edition for all surveyed telecommuters is 7.78, a value practically identical to that of 2022. There is a wide dispersion. Comparatively higher levels of satisfaction are found among women, telecommuters with a high level of education, those in the quaternary sector (financial, scientific, and educational professionals), those who decide personally or with the company to telecommute, and those who have a clear preference for telecommuting.

A second approach to studying satisfaction with telecommuting explores the assessment of the transition to telecommuting. 48.7% of respondents indicate that telecommuting has improved their job satisfaction, 42.7% say it has not changed their job satisfaction, and 8.6% have worsened. These data are very similar to those of the previous year, and the concentration of higher levels of positive change occurs practically in the groups we have already described when analysing satisfaction with telecommuting.

PREFERENCES FOR TELECOMMUTING

At this point, telecommuters are almost evenly split. 50.4% prefer telecommuting, and 49.6% prefer in-person work. This indicates that, given a dichotomous choice, many people who experience satisfaction with telecommuting do not prefer it if it were to be full-time. The prevalence of the preference for telecommuting is concentrated among workers in the quaternary sector dedicated to finance, universities, and research, those who are self-employed, those working in the private sector, and those working in large companies (>250 employees).

PROPENSITY TO LEAVE THE JOB IF THE COMPANY REQUIRED IN-PERSON WORK ALWAYS

32.7% of telecommuters assert that they would definitely not leave the company, while another 36.1% indicate that they probably would not leave. On the contrary, 23.2% would probably leave if required to work in person all the time, and 8% would decisively leave. Thus, a strong attachment to telecommuting, at least in a hybrid situation, is present in almost a third of telecommuters and has increased by approximately 5 percentage points, showing an upward trend in favour of telecommuting as an important component of working conditions. These intentions are significantly higher among those under 36 years old, those living in households of three or more members, and those who want to telecommute always or almost always.

12. JOB SEARCH AND CAREER PROSPECTS AMONG EMPLOYEES WHO TELECOMMUTE

This issue is of particular interest because prior to the first edition of this study, information regarding the specific demands and preferences of those practicing telecommuting, with varying frequency in relation to employment and career development, was limited. More information is needed to tailor active employment policies and the adaptation, training, and guidance of these workers.

JOB SEARCH: ON-SITE VS TELECOMMUTING EMPLOYMENT AND PRIORITIES IN THAT SEARCH

At the time of the survey, 33.2% of the surveyed telecommuters were actively **looking for a job**. More specifically, 8.8% stated that they don't mind the modality of the job (onsite and/or telecommuting), 12.3% are seeking employment in a hybrid modality, 5.3% are looking for onsite work, and 6.8% are seeking telecommuting opportunities. Comparing these figures with last year's edition, the job-seeking rate remains consistent, and the percentages slightly lean towards configurations involving telecommuting.

Regarding the priorities set to determine the sought-after job, the ranking of various job qualities by priority is as follows: **The most chosen reason is a suitable salary**

(55.5%), followed by employment contract (33.5%), workplace flexibility (28.6%), and job stability (27.4%). It is worth noting a significant increase in the importance of workplace flexibility, clearly associated with telecommuting. In the previous year, this option was chosen as a priority by 16%, increasing by more than 12 percentage points in this edition. These four reasons are followed by flexible working hours (22.5%), opportunities for progression (16.2%), and full-time employment (15.3%). As seen, these are valued aspects of work with a long tradition and are "classic" in our culture. Generally, the percentage weight of these reasons decreases in almost all cases, in favour of the increase in the importance of workplace flexibility. This indicates that something is changing in the evaluations of telecommuters regarding telecommuting. To better understand these changes, we will pay special attention to the differences that are significant in this specific aspect. Those over 36 years old, those with lower education levels, those working as freelancers, and logically, those who prefer telecommuting, value workplace flexibility more.

METHODS USED IN THE SEARCH FOR EMPLOYMENT

Based on the information obtained from the 128 workers currently seeking for a job who have answered this question, there is a predominance of electronic means (internet job portals, 86.3%), although they are combined with more direct and personal contacts (family, friends, and acquaintances, 73.1%). Job searching on social networks like LinkedIn (69.2%) ranks third, followed by sending CVs directly to companies (50.4%). It's interesting to note the significant weight of public employment services (37.7%), which are more commonly used than private recruitment agencies (35.2%). A comparison with the previous year's results shows a fairly similar ranking, although electronic means such as social networks are advancing compared to more traditional methods like CV submissions. A differential analysis does not show many clear trends on this occasion, with the exception that job seekers with higher education levels use electronic means and social networks more.

PREFERENCE FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT VS. EMPLOYMENT AS AN EMPLOYEE

We have asked the respondents about their preference for employment status: self-employed or employed by others? The results strongly indicate a preference for salaried employment (72.4%), with 13.2% expressing a preference for self-employment, and 14.4% being undecided. The preference for salaried employment

prevails among those with a higher level of education, those already employed as salaried workers, those working in the private sector, those who telecommute by their own choice or in agreement with the company, and those who prefer to work always or almost always in the company.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Workers who engage, at least partially, in telecommuting have provided information about the role they envision telecommuting playing in their career development. It is evident that the perception that telecommuting will play a relevant role in work in the coming years is gradually spreading. In fact, 48.2% believe that their career development will occur entirely or predominantly with some level of telecommuting, while 18.5% do not think so, and 36.5% are unsure. These figures represent a clear increase in the recognition of the role of telecommuting in the future, with an increase of nearly 10 percentage points in the clearly positive outlook. Specifically, men, those with a higher level of education, those working in the quaternary sector of finance, teachers, and researchers, those in large companies, those who prefer to telecommute always or almost always, and those who started telecommuting before the pandemic anticipate a greater role for telecommuting in their career development.

More specifically, we asked them to anticipate the most probable employment situation in five years' time, indicating whether it will be better, the same, or worse than the current situation. The data show **clear optimism because only 11.4% indicate that the employment situation in five years will be worse than the current one, while 41.8% perceive it to be clearly better**, and 46.7% do not expect significant changes, although this does not inform whether their current situation is good or bad. These percentages are very similar to those from a year ago, showing clear stability.

In the differential analysis, optimistic views predominate among those under 36 and those who prefer to telecommute always or almost always. On the other hand, this vision is significantly lower among those working in the quaternary sector in administrative roles and those for whom telecommuting is unilaterally decided by the company. The groups with a more positive outlook in this edition include those working as employees and those in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In conjunction with the aforementioned, where some suggestions to consider were already outlined, the recommendations that the authors have drawn from the study are listed below.

1

Both companies and employees benefit from the telecommuting modality. Public Administration should promote it where it is underrepresented. This study confirms that telecommuting is less common in small businesses. Additionally, it is identified that the reasons may include a lack of necessary technical elements for telecommuting and insufficient training for supervisors and employees to carry out their work remotely. In this regard, it is recommended to enhance training in these companies, in particular, and to provide the necessary technical support.

2

Beyond small-sized companies, the data indicates the need for specific training for middle management and supervisors in telecommuting matters. Leadership, management, and directive skills differ between in-person and telecommuting work. Improving training in this area would enable the development of telecommuting without productivity losses.

3

There is a greater divergence between those who express a preference for telecommuting and those who actually telecommute, especially among women compared to men. While women telecommute less than men, they express more interest in telecommuting. Thus, the promotion of telecommuting could be specifically targeted at the female demographic in order to reduce this gap.

4

There is an overrepresentation of self-employed individuals who telecommute without declaring their activity and labour employees who telecommute informally. These data could be useful to focus inspection campaigns to reduce the informal economy.

5

A reduction in telecommuters providing services regularly (i.e., in accordance with applicable legislation for more than 30% of their working hours) has been observed. It is recommended to analyse whether this reduction in regular telecommuting is an unintended effect of the regulation itself. It is possible that parties, in order to



circumvent regulations, are reducing the number of telecommuting hours below their actual preferences.

6

Satisfaction with telecommuting is not only high (7.78 out of 10) but also remains stable over time. Therefore, it is recommended to promote telecommuting wherever technically feasible to increase talent retention (telecommuters seek alternative employment less than their non-telecommuting counterparts) and improve the quality of the work environment. At the same time, abrupt or sudden processes of "abandonment" of telecommuting are not recommended. Specifically, around 30% of telecommuters would leave their company if telecommuting were eliminated. These data strongly suggest that telecommuting is here to stay.

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