# Parents are less likely to work from home than people without children

Patricia Michaud
19th June 2025



**Working from home has become a political issue. In particular, working hours and rest periods for remote work are to be regulated more flexibly in the Employment Act. In May 2025, the Federal Council supported a corresponding proposal from the National Council's Economic Affairs and Taxation Committee. But how do employees deal with working from home? A study by the National Research Programme 80 'Covid-19 in Society' (NRP 80) shows that many employees – especially parents – work from home less often than they would actually like and are allowed to. The study also shows that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for companies when it comes to implementing remote work.**

In collaboration with
80 NRP Covid-19 in Society
National Research Programme

Covid-19 has caused a boom in working from home. However, the extent to which this development also meets the needs of employees has not yet been conclusively ascertained. Parliament will soon be discussing a revision of the Employment Act with the aim of regulating working hours and rest periods for remote work more flexibly. As part of the NRP 80, a research group is currently working to lay the groundwork for companies and organisations to develop remote work regulations for their employees that meet their needs and are perceived as fair.

The research group 'Fair and beneficial home-working' is investigating the experiences and preferences of the Swiss workforce regarding working from home. The researchers led by Michaela Knecht (FHNW Olten) and Laurenz Linus Meier (University of Neuchâtel) surveyed over 2,300 Swiss employees in 2024, including over 800 parents. The results of the survey are rather surprising.

**Parents want to get out of the house**

Although it is commonly assumed that working from home offers the flexibility needed to manage everything at once, from childcare to work, with some household chores thrown in, it turns out that parents are actually less likely to work from home than their childless colleagues. In specific terms, the study shows that parents perform work tasks at home 1.47 days a week on average versus 1.69 for those without children. "This gap persists even if we take account of the number of home-working days possible and the average working hours," adds Michaela Knecht.

One potential explanation could be interruptions when working from home, which are more likely to affect those with children. "In these conditions, maintaining a productive working environment can prove tricky." The figures on this subject are telling: despite similar equipment in terms of ergonomics and technology, 20 percent of parents assess their home-working environment as average to very poor with regard to interruptions, versus only 13 percent of childless employees. But that doesn't stop parents expressing an interest – like those without children, for that matter – in working from home at least 2 days a week, as also highlighted by the occupational psychologist.

**Hybrid working – the magic formula**

Overall, however, it seems that those surveyed as part of the study work from home less than they would like or than they could. "This finding surprised us a little," says Knecht. In specific terms, the employees questioned work from home 1.6 days a week on average, although their organisations allow them to do 2.41 days, and they express a preference for 2.05 days.

To understand these differences, it's useful to look at the broader implications of remote working, particularly its impact on professional well-being. The study highlights slightly lower levels of exhaustion and slightly higher levels of work satisfaction in those who have the option of working from home. However, it's the fact of being able to work remotely that seems to be significant, rather than working a large number of days from home. Conversely, too much homeworking can cause or accentuate feelings of loneliness in workers.

“In this sense, our results confirm what we already know, that when it comes to work setup, there’s no one-size-fits-all solution, and it’s important to adapt case by case,” says Michaela Knecht. Hybrid models, which allow workers to split their time between the workplace and an external location, such as their home, a café or a co-working space, have the advantage of offering flexibility while combining the best of both worlds. Michaela Knecht adds that these models are becoming established in Switzerland. “This is obviously good news in itself, but only provided that organisations rethink the way they work to take account of this change and to guarantee fair treatment for all staff.”

**Work, sleep, repeat**

Noémi Swoboda, head of workplace health management at Promotion Health Switzerland, agrees wholeheartedly. “To ensure that remote working has a positive effect and doesn’t become counter-productive in terms of workers’ health and productivity, compensatory measures should be systematically introduced.” Organisations shouldn’t merely inform staff of the number of days that they are allowed to work off-site. “They need to draw up a proper strategy on remote working.”

A key element to consider in such a strategy is the question of communication and social interaction. “What can be done to ensure that workers continue to have access to all the information they need to do their jobs and to feel part of a team?” For middle managers in the organisation, solutions need to be found to respond to the challenge of managing staff remotely. “It’s crucial that tools are put in place to allow them to gauge where the team is at and to check whether employees need specific support.”

Unsurprisingly, one of the other major challenges linked to the spread of remote working – whether fully or in a hybrid arrangement – is maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Noémi Swoboda: “Boundary management works in both directions: it’s about not carrying out too many personal tasks during working hours and not being overwhelmed by work during free time.” Here, too, employers should draw up clear rules, particularly regarding the handling of emails outside of working hours and rest time when sick.

Based on their research findings, the research group ‘Fair and beneficial home-working’ now aims to develop tools to support organisations in implementing remote work regulations that are perceived as fair. These should meet employees’ needs and thus have a positive impact on their well-being and, in turn, their performance.

## Covid-19 has changed the job market

As part of the NRP 80, the ‘Covid-19, trade and labor’ research group analysed the job market in Switzerland. The researchers analysed job advertisements to determine the impact of the pandemic on companies’ recruitment needs, both in terms of the overall volume of labour required and the desired qualifications. Using text analysis methods, they examined the job descriptions to identify what types of jobs are being sought, what characteristics the hiring companies have and which skills they are looking

for.

The preliminary results of the analyses show the following: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Switzerland saw a significant decline in demand for labour. After the pandemic, however, the number of vacancies quickly picked up again, even exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Looking at the detail, according to figures compiled by the company x28, around 80,000 jobs were listed in the first quarter of 2019. In the second quarter of 2020, there were only 60,000. However, a year later – in the second quarter of 2021 – the figure had returned to pre-COVID levels, with 80,000 vacancies. Just a year later (the second quarter of 2022), the labour market peaked, with around 140,000 vacancies advertised, before gradually falling to 110,000 by the end of 2024.

Apparently, the pandemic has not only affected the number of jobs posted but also the content of job listings. Preliminary results show that the importance of geographical mobility and management skills has decreased. By contrast, applicants' entrepreneurial and social skills, as well as their ability to act proactively, have become more important to employers.

Overall, initial results indicate that transferable skills are becoming increasingly important in the labour market. Transferable skills are skills that are acquired in a specific context, position, function or area of responsibility and can also be directly applied in other contexts. These include communication skills, time management and teamwork. The numbers further indicate a trend away from a highly hierarchical management model toward more horizontal professional collaboration.

---

**References**


- NRP 80, research project 'Fair and beneficial home-working'
- NRP 80, research project 'Covid-19, trade and labor'


**Picture:** Keystone.