# Analysis of the perception of labor force about working from home in Mexico: Guanajuato Case

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## Abstract

Derived from pandemic caused by Covid-19, many institutions were forced to implement telework, since they had to protect employees and this form of work offered the possibility of being able to continue their activities. The objective of this research is to describe the perception of the workforce about telework, a descriptive and cross-sectional study was carried out about the perception of telecommuting in the State of Guanajuato in Mexico, where 276 self-administered surveys were applied to people who had work from home in their current jobs, it included the following dimensions: productivity, motivation, organizational climate, flexibility, worker satisfaction, workspace conditions, current situation of workers, efficiency, and prospects of telework in Mexico. The field work was carried out during June, July, and August 2021. With the information collected, a database was generated in SPSS to perform the analysis of descriptive statistics. The results obtained include findings about the benefits and challenges of telework, the average time of working hours per day, as well as the changes it has undergone, plus an analysis of the level of productivity and a study on whether organizations are prepared to implement telecommuting.

# Análisis de la percepción de la fuerza laboral sobre el teletrabajo en México: Caso Guanajuato

## Resumen

Derivado de la emergencia sanitaria por la Covid-19, muchas instituciones se vieron obligadas a implementar el teletrabajo, ya que tuvieron que resguardar a los empleados y esta forma de trabajo ofrecía la posibilidad de poder continuar sus actividades. El objetivo de la presente investigación es describir cuál es la percepción de la fuerza laboral acerca del teletrabajo. Se realizó un estudio descriptivo y transversal acerca de la percepción del teletrabajo en el Estado de Guanajuato en México, se aplicaron 276 encuestas autoadministradas a personas que se encontraban realizando o habían realizado trabajo a distancia en sus empleos actuales, contemplando las siguientes dimensiones: productividad, motivación, clima organizacional, flexibilidad, satisfacción del trabajador, condiciones del espacio de trabajo, situación actual de los trabajadores, eficacia y prospectivas del teletrabajo en México. El trabajo de campo se llevó a cabo durante junio, julio, y agosto de 2021. Con la información recabada se generó una base de datos en SPSS para realizar el análisis de estadísticos descriptivos. Los resultados obtenidos incluyen hallazgos acerca de los beneficios y retos de realizar trabajo a distancia, el tiempo promedio de la jornada laboral, así como los cambios que ésta ha sufrido, un análisis del nivel de su productividad y un estudio respecto a si las organizaciones están preparadas para implementar el teletrabajo.

# 1. Introduction

Working From Home (WFH), also known in Mexico as teleworking, is a work modality in which employees can carry out their professional activities remotely, without having to physically appear at the company's facilities. In the current context, derived from the health emergency caused by Covid-19, many organizations were forced to implement home office, since they had to protect employees, implementing work from home, and therefore, seeing the need to combine their personal space with work (Martínez, 2021).

In specific, this form of work has been in operation for years, thanks to the expansion of the use of the Internet, the development of different digital tools and the possibility that some professions can be carried out from home. However, the Covid-19 pandemic contributed to more companies and institutions implementing it to be able to continue their activities during the health emergency (García, 2020).

Clearly, with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, large portions of the world's workforce shifted to WFH, joining hundreds of millions of other workers who had already been working from home for decades. Specifically, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 3% of workers in Latin America were performing their work under the modality of work at home in 2019; however, this figure increased in 2020 to 20% of wage earners (Business Insider Mexico, 2021). According to statistics, nine out of 10 workers would choose to continue with home office, but 56% do not see a balance between personal and work activities (Forbes Staff, 2021).

Over history, there had been technological, political-economic, and social forces that have shaped shifting public discourse on working at home in the twentieth century (Patton, 2020). Considering this, the objective of this research is to analyze nowadays the perception of labor force about home office in the State of Guanajuato in Mexico. This is particularly important in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, especially as some people

come to believe that working at home is possible, desirable, and productive, and something that could potentially help a family achieve work-life balance (Patton, 2020).

The research paper starts reviewing the theoretical framework of telework including the origin of telecommuting, the conceptualization of Working From Home (WFH), worker's productivity when WFH, and identifying some benefits and challenges associated with telework. Regarding research methodology, the study was conducted with a descriptive and cross-sectional design, with a predominantly quantitative mixed approach with a qualitative complement, data was collected through a self-assisted online survey. Finally, the analysis and discussion of results is presented exposing the main findings of labor force productivity and performance, monitoring; advantages and disadvantages of WFH and the extended schedule when WFH.
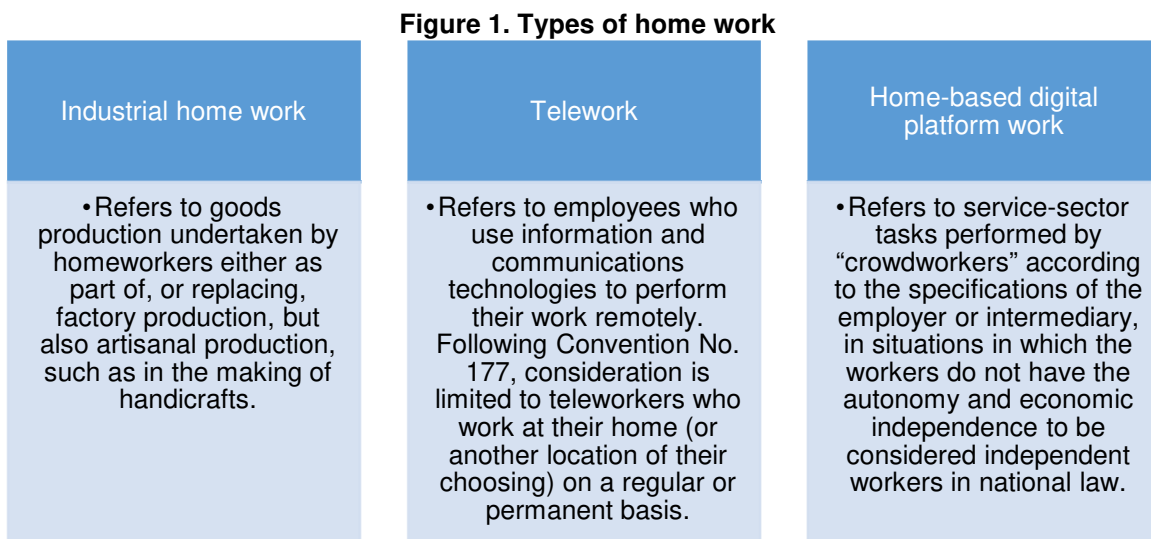
## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 The origin of telecommuting

The current discourse on the ever-present status of work in the home has a longer history and individuals were encouraged through public discourse to believe that by working at home they could achieve work-life balance (Patton, 2020). Looking back in history, Alan Kiron coined the term "dominetics" in 1969 in an article published in The Washington Post. Interestingly, that article could have been written yesterday. Later, around 1971, Frank Schiff began talking about "flexiplace"; and around 1974, Jack Nilles began telling us about "telework." Now we hear, talk, and write about telecommuting, remote work, location independence, new forms of work, and technology push (National Research Council, Division on Engineering and Physical Sciences, Commission on Engineering and Technical Systems, & Board on Telecommunications and Computer Applications, 1985). In fact, one of the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic has been the massive increase in the number of people working from home (International Labour Organization, 2021).

**2.1 Conceptualization of Working From Home (WFH)**

Home work is defined by the International Labour Organization's Home Work Convention (No. 177) and Recommendation (No. 184), 1996, as "*work carried out by a person ... (i) in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer; (ii) for remuneration; (iii) which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used*" (Convention No. 177, Art. 1). For instance, this definition does not extend to individuals who have "the degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered independent workers under national laws, regulations or court decisions" (International Labour Organization, 2021).

Correspondingly, Figure 1 details three different types of home work according to data from International Labour Organization in their report from 2021 entitled "Working from home, from invisibility to decent work".

**Figure 1. Types of home work**

| Industrial home work | Telework | Home-based digital platform work |
|---|---|---|
| • Refers to goods production undertaken by homeworkers either as part of, or replacing, factory production, but also artisanal production, such as in the making of handicrafts. | • Refers to employees who use information and communications technologies to perform their work remotely. Following Convention No. 177, consideration is limited to teleworkers who work at their home (or another location of their choosing) on a regular or permanent basis. | • Refers to service-sector tasks performed by "crowdworkers" according to the specifications of the employer or intermediary, in situations in which the workers do not have the autonomy and economic independence to be considered independent workers in national law. |

*Souce: own elaboration with data from the International Labour Organization (2021, p.8)*

The current research scope of study is the telework. Work from home is considered to be home-based telework, the difference being that teleworking may include various locations away from the primary worksite or the employer's premises (such as mobile

working). Telecommuting refers to substituting telecommunications for commuter travel. Therefore, there are some differences between the terms "teleworking" and "telecommuting", essentially because telework is broader and may not always be a substitute for commuting, but they are relatively minor. In specific, for the purposes of the current research, the terms "teleworking" and "telecommuting" are used interchangeably (International Labour Organization, 2020).

It is evident that telecommuting—people working at home with computers connected to offices many miles away—could reshape the way Mexico works. In this context, to some analysts, electronic homework represents freedom from the drawbacks of the traditional workplace, results in economies due to reduced commuting, and perhaps, most important of all, an increased sense of worker autonomy and job satisfaction (National Research Council, Division on Engineering and Physical Sciences, Commission on Engineering and Technical Systems, & Board on Telecommunications and Computer Applications, 1985).

Considering all the above mentioned, it should be added that home office has also gained popularity among employees, since 91% confirm that if they had the opportunity they would adopt this scheme after the pandemic, working more than 40% of the time remotely. In contrast, 56% of employees state that unfortunately there is no balance between personal and work activities under the home office modality, since professional activities occupies part of their personal time (Forbes Staff, 2021), and therefore is practically impossible to achieve a work-life balance.

Clearly, it is a reality that the Covid-19 pandemic led many Mexicans to WFH, a practice that came to stay, since, according to studies carried out by KPMG, at least 6 out of 10 companies plan to maintain the scheme after the pandemic ends. In fact, 63% of the companies consider continuing with this type of work once the contingency ends; on the other hand, 40% of the companies estimate that between 26% and 50% of their workforce will remain in this modality. It should be noted that, according to the consultancy, 91%

consider that their collaborators will continue to work remotely two or more days a week (Forbes Staff, 2021).

## 2.3 Workers' productivity when WFH

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a significant increase in telework since mid-March 2020 (Mehdi & Morissette, 2021). In this context, companies with remote workers are generally concerned about productivity and performance from two viewpoints. Some employers wonder "are they working at all?" while others are more concerned with "are they working efficiently?" However, measuring the productivity and efficiency of a remote workforce should not be any more challenging or different than assessing a physically present workforce (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Mehdi & Morissette (2021) in their study entitled "*Working from home: Productivity and preferences*" found that most of the new teleworker's report being at least as productive at home as they were in their usual place of work, accomplishing at least as much work per hour at home as they did previously in their usual place of work before the Covid-19 pandemic started and they started working remotely. In addition, it is important to point out that a large proportion of the employees that participated in this study reported doing more work per hour, and report working longer hours per day than they did in the past.

In fact, there is a paradigm shift at work. Clearly, if we prioritize objectives, reward productivity, and promote the development of talent, flexibility becomes a great ally. Likewise, and equally important, productivity is not linked to strict compliance with the schedule, to presenteeism, to the number of hours that the chair is heated and that is a phenomenon on the rise in Mexico (Ricoh Mexicana, 2021, p.5). In other words, well managed remote teams can be far more productive than physically managed workers as companies are required to measure productivity by objective metrics and KPI's rather than the physical presence of "time in the building" (International Labour Organization, 2020).

The International Labour Organization (2020) highlights that before a company determines how to track and measure a workers' performance, it should identify what exactly needs to be measured. Therefore, choosing the most impactful and qualitative metrics is key. Accordingly, performance is best determined by outcomes, and whether an employee is meeting measurable benchmarks or goals. In fact, like any goal, worker performance cannot be achieved if no one knows what it is. Correspondingly, the key to working well with remote workers is to be very clear and specific with all expectations.

For instance, the International Labour Organization (2020) in their report entitled "*An employers' guide on working from home in response to the outbreak of COVID-19*" suggest five elements to consider in measuring remote workers' productivity:

- Set and communicate clear goals, expectations, and deadlines in the same way with workers in a physical workspace.
- Form plans to increase accountability.
- Analyze important tasks and track progress on a time bound basis.
- Evaluate quality and quantity instead of time worked – shift the metrics to "tasks accomplished and their quality" versus "hours spent".
- Track achievements on a regular basis.

On the other hand, Mehdi & Morissette (2021) consider that employees face different barriers to productivity, such as a lack of interaction with co-workers, caring for children or other family members, accessing work-related information or devices, having to do additional work to get things done, having an inadequate physical workspace, or having trouble with Internet speed. Likewise, Martínez (2021) believes that at home the number of distractions increases, thus reducing efficiency in achieving expected results.

Finally, although working from home passed the litmus test of productivity, the reality is that some organizations intend to return their collaborators to full-time offices. According

to the latest report from the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) every day there are fewer companies that want to adopt remote work. It should be noted that the number of home office employees represents only 10% of the total labor force in Mexico (Business Insider Mexico, 2021).

### 2.4 Benefits and challenges associated with WFH

According to the International Labour Organization (2020), there are several benefits associated with WFH, including the reduction in commuting times; greater autonomy and flexibility in the organization of work; a better work-life balance; increased motivation and reduced turnover; plus, enhanced productivity and efficiency. Moreover, reduced travel associated with WFH leads to a reduction in carbon emissions.

In addition, Aczel, Kovacs, van der Lippe, & Szaszi (2021) believe that home-working has several straightforward positive aspects, such as not having to commute; easier management of household responsibilities (Wheatley, 2017) and family demands (Singley & Hynes, 2005); along with increased autonomy over time use (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007); and fewer interruptions (Kurland & Bailey, 1999).

Additionally, personal comfort is often listed as an advantage of the home environment, though setting up a home office comes with physical and infrastructural demands. People working from home consistently report greater job motivation and satisfaction (Binder & Coad, 2016) which is probably due to the greater work-related control and work-life flexibility. In this context, previous research had concluded that homeworking is positively related with leisure time satisfaction (Reuschke, 2019), suggesting that people working from home can allocate more time for leisure activities.

Considering the previously described research from Nielsen et al. (2021) in their research paper entitled "Participation in social leisure activities may benefit mental health particularly among individuals that lack social connectedness at work or school" conclude that participation in social leisure activities may benefit employee´s mental health. In other

words, participation in social leisure activities (i.e., participation in community/social groups such as a sports association, art club, book club, running group, card game club, cultural or political group) is positively associated with mental well-being and negatively associated with depression/anxiety symptoms.

However, in such an unexpected and urgent situation as the Covid-19 pandemic, it is evident that both employers and workers may be unprepared physically, mentally, or infrastructure-wise to meet all challenges posed by WFH. Therefore, according to a recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 71 per cent of employers are struggling to adjust to remote work; 65 percent of employers say maintaining employee morale has been a challenge; and more than one third of employers are facing difficulties with company culture, employee productivity and leave regulation (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Particularly, according to Aczel et al. (2021) often-mentioned negative aspects of WFH include being disconnected from co-workers, experiencing isolation due to the physical and social distance to team members. Correspondingly, home-working employees reported more difficulties with switching off and they worked beyond their formal working hours (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). In fact, working from home is especially difficult for those with small children (McCloskey & Igbaria, 2003), but intrusion from other family members, neighbors, and friends were also found to be major challenges of WFH. Furthermore, being away from the office may also create a lack of visibility and increases teleworkers' fear that being out of sight limits opportunities for promotion, rewards, and positive performance reviews (Cooper & Kurland, 2002).

**Table 1. Positive and negative consequences of WFH**

| Mostly positive | Mostly negative |
|---|---|
| Less commuting | Isolation from colleagues |
| More control over time | Less defined work-life boundaries |
| More autonomy | Higher need for self-discipline |
| Less office-related distractions | Reliance on private infrastructure |
| More comfortable environment | Communication difficulties with colleagues |
| More flexibility with domestic tasks | |

*Source: Aczel, Kovacs, Lippe and Szaszi (2021)*

In this context and to address some of the challenges of WFH, it is therefore highly recommended that employers develop a workplace policy to provide clear guidelines and address the challenges. In addition, employers should regularly assess the effectiveness of the company policies and guidelines. Finally, it is vital that workers should regularly communicate challenges experienced with company policies and guidelines to their employers (International Labour Organization, 2020).

## 3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted with a descriptive and cross-sectional design, with a predominantly quantitative mixed approach with a qualitative complement. During the first stage, the research instrument was designed as a self-assisted online survey, which covers the following dimensions: productivity, motivation, organizational climate, flexibility, job satisfaction, workspace conditions, current situation of workers, effectiveness, and prospects of the home office. For the design of the instrument was taken as gold standard the instrument designed by Cardenas-Gutierrez and La Madrid Silva in 2020, in their thesis entitled "*El teletrabajo, una modalidad especial como propuesta de mejora en el desempeño laboral. Revisión sistemática de la literatura*", serving as initial reference for the design of the instrument.

In this same stage the validation of the instrument was carried out, obtaining 0.83 in reliability statistics in the Cronbach's Alpha scale according to the statistical software

SPSS V.25, as for the validity, the instrument was evaluated by professionals in areas of administration and marketing.

In the second stage, the sample was calculated, having as population of people between 18 and 60 years old, who are working in companies within the State of Guanajuato in Mexico and have performed WFH. Also, given that the topic addressed is very recent, it is not possible to accurately count the number of people who have performed home office derived from the pandemic caused by COVID-19, therefore, an infinite population has been considered. In specific, the sample was calculated using Statdisk V.13 statistical software with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 0.059, resulting in a sample of 276 surveys to be applied. Finally, the type of sampling selected for data collection was non-random and by convenience.

In the third stage, the data collection was carried out, starting with a pilot survey applied to 70 respondents, and then adjustments were made to the way the instrument was applied, to carry out the final survey of the entire sample. Respondents were contacted via e-mail, through which the instrument was sent to them and stored in the Google Forms platform. The survey period covered the months of June, July, and August 2021. Table 1 summarizes the most important data of the methodology.

After the survey, in the fourth stage, the data was organized, filtered, categorized, and coded using Microsoft Excel 365 and the data obtained was used to create the database with the SPSS V.25 statistical software, and it was with this same software that the data was processed to obtain the descriptive statistics with which an analysis and interpretation of the descriptive statistics was performed.

**Table 1. Technical details of the research methodology**

| Characteristics | Survey |
|---|---|
| Scope of study | Local (State of Guanajuato in Mexico) |
| Sampling unit | People between 18 and 60 years old, who are working in companies within the State of Guanajuato and have performed home office |
| Data collection method | Self-administered survey |
| Sampling type | Non-random by convenience |
| Initial sample size | 276 |
| Final sample size | 276 |
| Sampling error margin | +/-5.9% globally, with a confidence level of 95% (p,q=0.5) |
| Date of the fieldwork | June, July and August 2021 |
| Duration of the fieldwork | 3 months |

*Souce: own elaboration*

# 4. Analysis and discussion of results

The following section details the main findings of the research. To begin with, regarding the descriptive data of the sample, the age of the respondents was grouped by generation gap, resulting in four classifications: *Generation Z,* with 1.5%, *Millennials*, with 72.3%, *Generation X*, with 23.3% and *Baby Boomers*, with 3%. Thus, it can be concluded that Millennial's are the largest surveyed group (Graph 1).

**Graph 1. Age group of respondents**
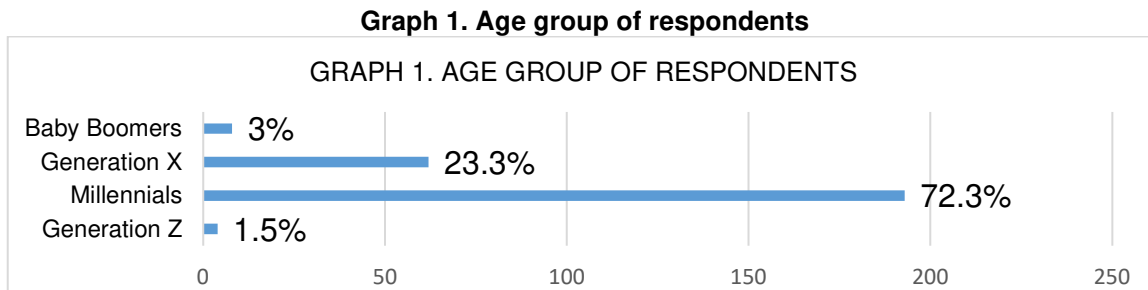


*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

Afterwards, the respondents were asked if they currently implement home office, this as a filter, so the subsequent questions were applied only to that part of the sample that answered yes to this question, being 65%.
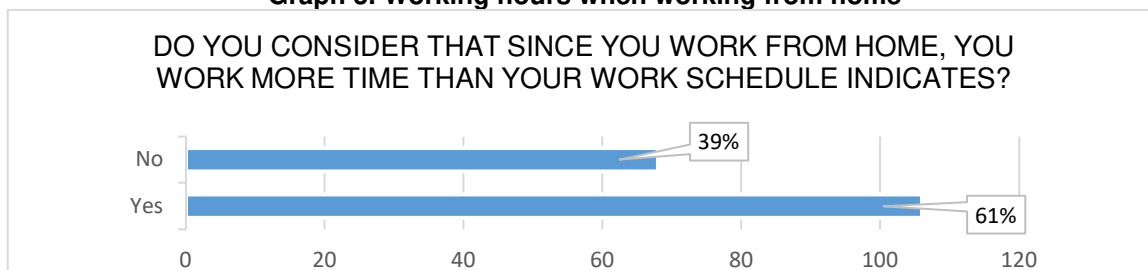
**Graph 2. Do you currently work from home?**

GRAPH 2. DO YOU CURRENTLY WORK FROM HOME?

No — 34.8%
Yes — 65.2%

(scale: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70)
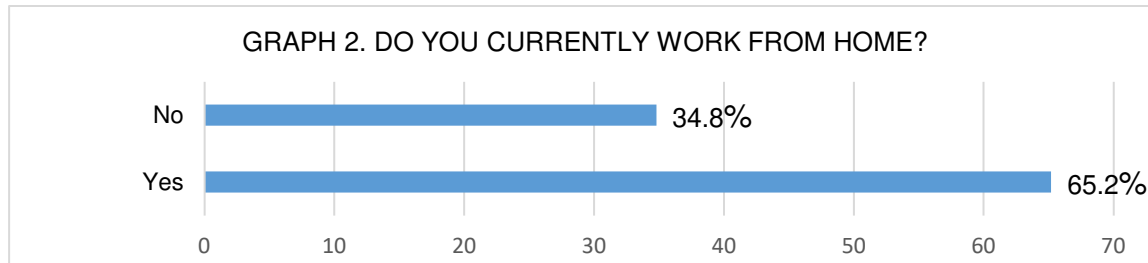
*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

In particular, when moving the workplace home, it could be easier and more involuntary to extend the time that the worker dedicates to their work activities because their personal or private environment and work are in the same "ecosystem", therefore, this question is of interest for this research, since it allows us to have a better description of the current employment situation, from which we can observe that 39% consider that they have not worked longer since they have been working from home, however, 61% have detected that their working hours have been extended. This can be summarized in Graph 3.
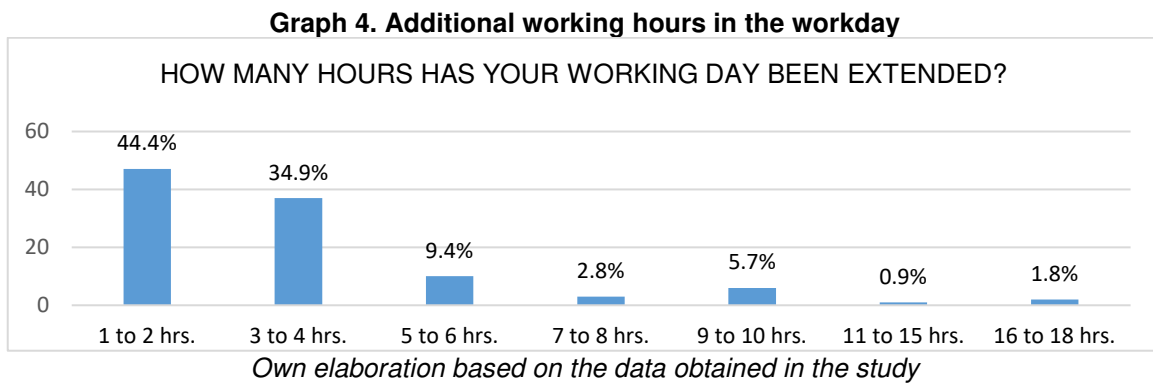
**Graph 3. Working hours when working from home**

DO YOU CONSIDER THAT SINCE YOU WORK FROM HOME, YOU WORK MORE TIME THAN YOUR WORK SCHEDULE INDICATES?

No — 39%
Yes — 61%

(scale: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100, 120)

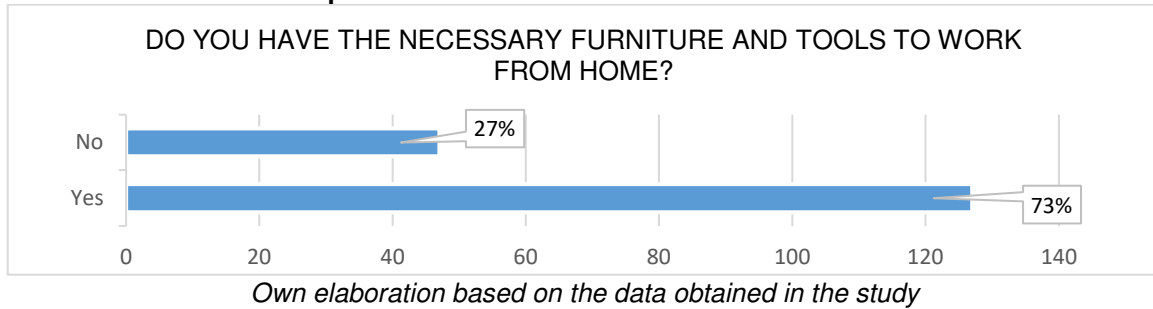*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

Derived from the previous question to those surveyed who answered that their working hours have increased, we asked them to specify the number of hours that their working schedule increased, to which we obtained that the increase from 1 to 2 hours per day was the most reported, with 44.4%, followed by the increase from 3 to 4 hours, with 34.9%. It is interesting and alarming that in some cases the increase of the working day was more than 5 hours, so this represents an opportunity to further investigate the reason for this significant increase in working hours when implementing the home office, this factor may

be related to productivity, an aspect that we will review later in Graph 8 (Graph 4). This aspect is interesting, since according to the findings of Mehdi and Morissette (2021), if most new teleworkers report that they complete at least the same amount of work per hour working from home, compared to their performance working at the office, it would not be necessary for their working hours to be extended. However, just as Mehdi and Morissette, we have identified that although workers do the same amount of work per hour as before WFH, their working hours have been extended, which could suggest that derived from the comfort of working at home, employees decide continuing working beforehand to advance in future activities.

**Graph 4. Additional working hours in the workday**



HOW MANY HOURS HAS YOUR WORKING DAY BEEN EXTENDED?

| | 1 to 2 hrs. | 3 to 4 hrs. | 5 to 6 hrs. | 7 to 8 hrs. | 9 to 10 hrs. | 11 to 15 hrs. | 16 to 18 hrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 44.4% | 34.9% | 9.4% | 2.8% | 5.7% | 0.9% | 1.8% |

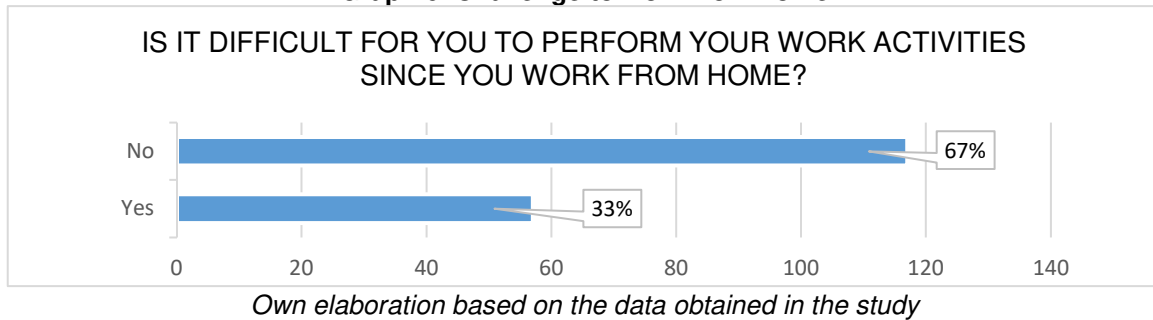*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

It should be noted that the transition from face-to-face work to virtual work that took place in 2020 was very abrupt, which makes us question whether the labor force has the necessary furniture and tools to work from home, in this question, we concluded that 73% of those surveyed consider that they have the necessary tools and furniture, but 27% still do not have everything that they need to carry out their activities in home office scheme, despite the fact more than a year passed since the beginning the pandemic derived from Covid-19 (Graph 5).

**Graph 5. Tools and furniture to work from home**

DO YOU HAVE THE NECESSARY FURNITURE AND TOOLS TO WORK
FROM HOME?

No ──── 27%

Yes ──────────── 73%

0   20   40   60   80   100   120   140

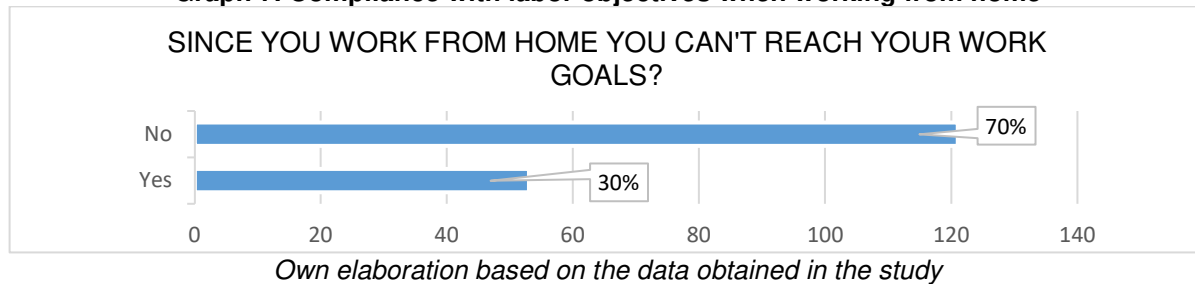*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

Given that working at home was an unconventional work modality in Mexico, a large part of Mexican workers were not familiar or used to work in this way, therefore, it is interesting to know if the workers have identified a certain difficulty to carry out their usual activities. We obtained that 67% do not consider that carrying out their work activities has been difficult, while 33% have presented several difficulties (Graph 6). The development of work activities at home is closely related to the use of information and communication technologies, so it is a factor to be considered, since if workers are not familiar with these digital tools, the difficulty in performing their activities could be greater compared to workers who are familiar with them, as we can clearly see in the proportion of Graph 6. However, it is necessary to perform a detailed analysis of the relationship between these two factors (the generation gap and the difficulty in developing activities working from home, derived from the use of digital tools) to be able to affirm it. Another important factor to consider are the distractions, as mentioned by McCloskey & Igbaria (2003), since the family, neighbors, or even pets, can become a distractor or challenging factors to control for workers. Thus, this can be an issue to consider when achieving optimal development of their working activities, without losing the balance between personal and work life. The fulfillment of the objectives is a factor closely related to this question and we analyzed it in Graph 7.

**Graph 6. Challenge to work from home**

IS IT DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO PERFORM YOUR WORK ACTIVITIES
SINCE YOU WORK FROM HOME?

No     67%
Yes     33%

*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

Ultimately, having key performance indicators for meeting goals is very important for productivity. In this case, we can observe that the percentage of respondents who do not have difficulties in carrying out their usual work activities have a huge difference if compared with the percentage of respondents who fail to meet their objectives. For further research, it would be good to analyze the fulfillment of work objectives considering training as one of the factors that influence the fulfillment of these and achieving the expected performance (Graph 7).

**Graph 7. Compliance with labor objectives when working from home**

SINCE YOU WORK FROM HOME YOU CAN'T REACH YOUR WORK
GOALS?

No     70%
Yes     30%

*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

Also, to know the perception of personnel about their own productivity, we asked them how productive they felt when working from home, we could perceive that only 43.7% is considered very productive. On the other hand, we notice an increase in productivity, since 35.1% is considered a little more productive than before, in addition to the fact that the percentages corresponding to low productivity are minimal which suggest that working from home provides better conditions for employees. Since the perception of productivity may differ depending on the employee, it would be enriching to examine a little deeper into the subject, to discover what the factors are involved in this increase in productivity.

In addition, it is suggested to know the perspective of employers to contrast the perception of employee productivity with the actual productivity of the company (Graph 8).

Returning to the point seen in Graph 3, 61% of the respondents consider that since they have been working from home their working hours have been extended, this fact may be related to the idea of being more productive by working more hours per day, therein lies the importance of contrasting this information obtained from workers with the reality that companies live when reviewing their KPI's achievement, since as mentioned by the International Labour Organization (2020), employees' performance cannot be achieved and measured if we do not know what the objective is, so having clearly defined expectations is key. In fact, companies could consider the five points suggested by The International Labour Organization to measure the productivity of remote workers, which have been mentioned above in the theoretical framework.

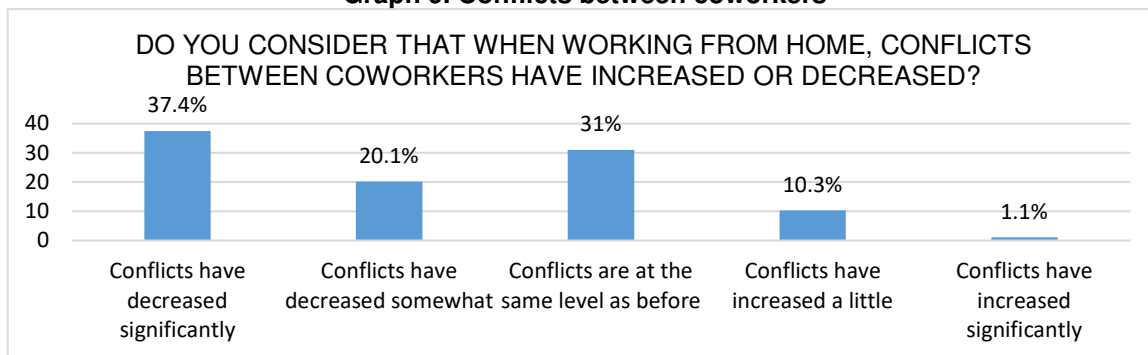**Graph 8. Productivity after implementing WFH**
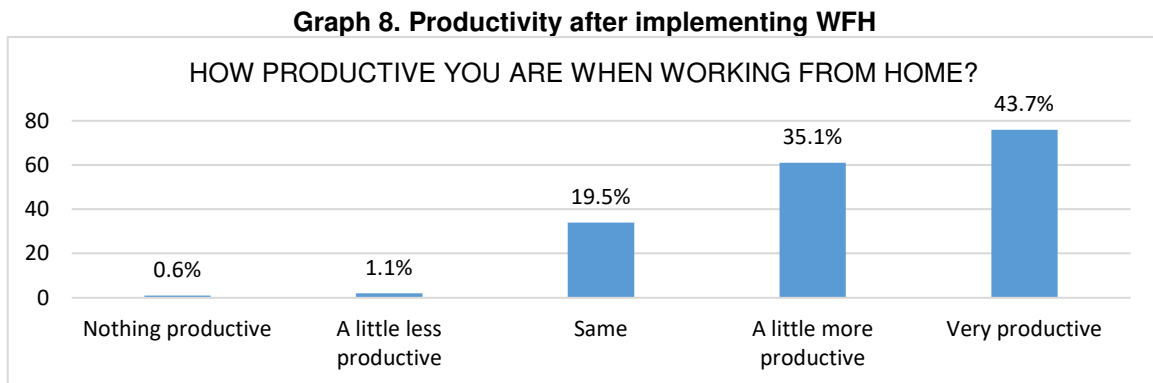


*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

Group dynamics is essential in organizations, since it is vital for a team to function properly when working together to achieve company objectives, which is why conflict management is very important, but what about conflicts that arise when working from home? To answer this question, we asked respondents if they consider that conflicts between employees have increased or decreased. On the one hand, we obtained that according to 37.4%, by not having to interact in person, conflicts have decreased significantly; 20.1% said they have only decreased slightly; on the other hand, we obtained

that 10.3% considered that conflicts increased slightly; while only 1.1% considered that conflicts have increased significantly. The remaining 31% said that conflicts have remained the same as before starting to work from home.

Since telework decreases the interaction between employees, as a result conflicts have decreased because of this distancing. This suggests that we have a possible indicator that companies have a great opportunity to work on the way in which the organizational culture and climate is forged, so that regardless of whether they work remotely or not, the levels of conflict remain stable or do not show significant changes. This analysis leads us to the following question: Have companies really been concerned about creating a positive organizational culture focused on their employees?
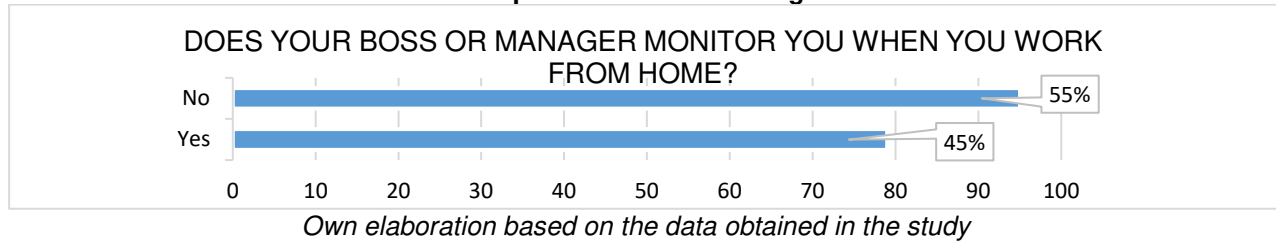
**Graph 9. Conflicts between coworkers**

DO YOU CONSIDER THAT WHEN WORKING FROM HOME, CONFLICTS BETWEEN COWORKERS HAVE INCREASED OR DECREASED?

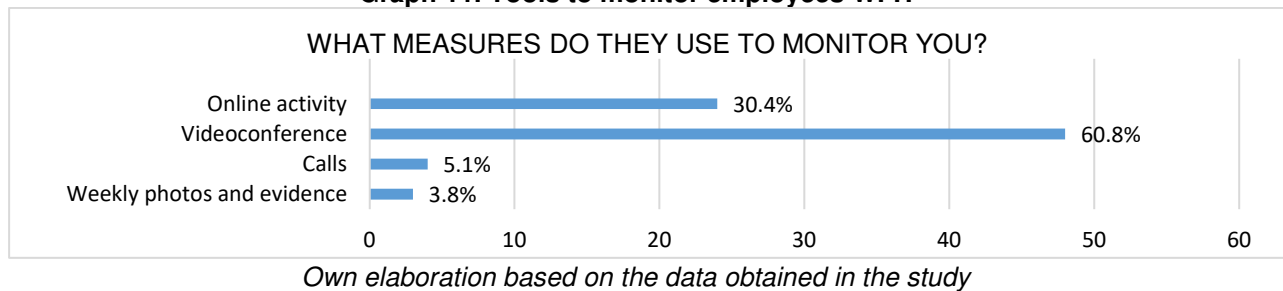| | |
|---|---|
| 37.4% | Conflicts have decreased significantly |
| 20.1% | Conflicts have decreased somewhat |
| 31% | Conflicts are at the same level as before |
| 10.3% | Conflicts have increased a little |
| 1.1% | Conflicts have increased significantly |

*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

Another very interesting point is how the monitoring of activities by the companies to their personnel was carried out. When asked if their bosses or managers monitor them when working from home, we found that 45% are monitored, while 55% have not been monitored (Graph 10). But, to know what workers think about being monitored, we added two follow-up questions, which can be seen in the next two graphs (Graph 11, Graph 12).

**Graph 10. WFH monitoring**

DOES YOUR BOSS OR MANAGER MONITOR YOU WHEN YOU WORK FROM HOME?

| | |
|---|---|
| No | 55% |
| Yes | 45% |

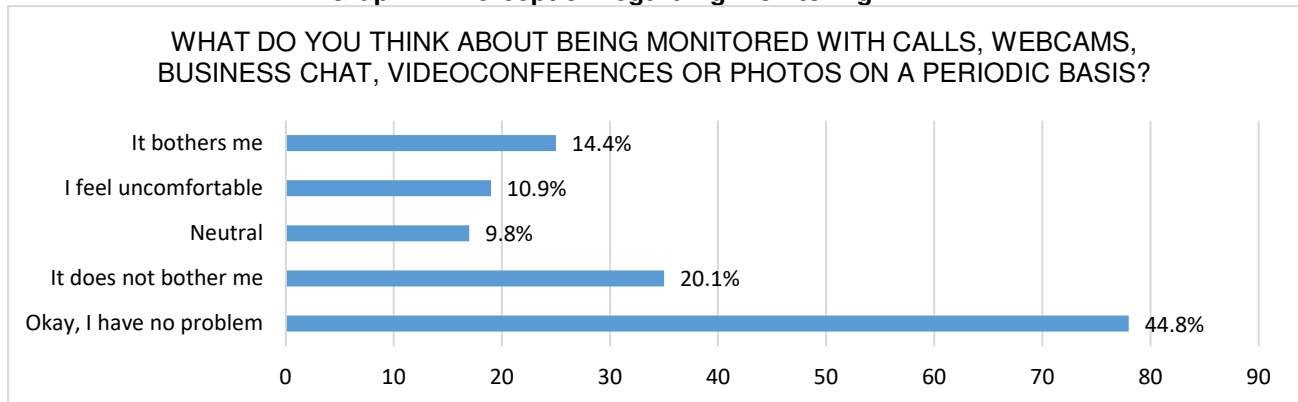*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

Specifically, in terms of monitoring measures, we obtained that 60.8% are monitored by videoconference, followed by the verification of online activity, with 30.4%, these two being the main forms of monitoring (Graph 11).

**Graph 11. Tools to monitor employees WFH**

WHAT MEASURES DO THEY USE TO MONITOR YOU?

| | |
|---|---|
| Online activity | 30.4% |
| Videoconference | 60.8% |
| Calls | 5.1% |
| Weekly photos and evidence | 3.8% |

*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

Although, it could be thought that monitoring the activities of personnel may be annoying or uncomfortable for them, not entirely, since 44.8% feel comfortable and have no objection to being monitored in these ways, followed by 20.1% that indicate not feeling uncomfortable, 9.8% indicate that they are indifferent, while 10.9% and 14.4% feel uncomfortable and are bothered by being monitored (Graph 12).

**Graph 12. Perception regarding monitoring WFH**

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT BEING MONITORED WITH CALLS, WEBCAMS, BUSINESS CHAT, VIDEOCONFERENCES OR PHOTOS ON A PERIODIC BASIS?

| Response | Percentage |
|---|---|
| It bothers me | 14.4% |
| I feel uncomfortable | 10.9% |
| Neutral | 9.8% |
| It does not bother me | 20.1% |
| Okay, I have no problem | 44.8% |

*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

It should be emphasized that all the changes have benefits and disadvantages, therefore, knowing the opinion of the respondents regarding the benefits and disadvantages of working from home is of great interest for the present study. Since the number of benefits and disadvantages mentioned by the workers is very broad, they were classified into six groups, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Groups of advantages when WFH**

| Group | Description | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Group 1 | I save money on commute to work, I wear comfortable clothes, I don't take risks on the street. | 20.7% |
| Group 2 | I adjust my schedule, I can exercise, I organize myself better. | 5.7% |
| Group 3 | I can change my place of residence, save money on commute to work, better work schedule, I can exercise, I don't take risks on the street, I organize myself better. | 35.6% |
| Group 4 | I eat better, I save money on commute to work, I dress comfortable, I adjust my schedule according to my needs, I can exercise, I don't take risks on the street, I organize myself better. | 30.5% |
| Group 5 | I can exercise and organize myself better. | 2.3% |
| Group 6 | I wear comfortable clothing, I adjust my schedule according to my needs, I don't take risks on the street, I organize myself better. | 5.2% |

*Source: Own elaboration*

As can be seen in Table 2, the most mentioned benefit groups were group 3 and group 4, so we can infer that the following aspects are quite relevant for workers: place of residence, economic impact on savings, better working schedule, they have time to exercise, reduced risk of commuting to work, better organization, improved eating habits, and greater comfort.

Since the number of disadvantages of WFH mentioned by the workers is very broad, they were classified into six groups, which are detailed in Table 3 below.

**Table 3. Groups of disadvantages when WFH**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Group 1 | I get distracted, face Internet problems, poor communication, I use my personal cell phone, I don't have the necessary tools. | 34.5% |
| Group 2 | No disadvantages perceived. | 1.7% |
| Group 3 | I don't organize myself, bad communication, I use my personal cell phone. | 5.2% |
| Group 4 | I do not interact with people; I use my personal cell phone. | 2.3% |
| Group 5 | Internet problems, bad communication, I use my personal cell phone. | 12.6% |
| Group 6 | I work longer, I get distracted, Internet problems, poor communication, I don't interact with people, I use my personal cell phone. | 43.7% |

*Source: Own elaboration*

Regarding the disadvantages identified when working from home, the predominant groups were group 6 and group 1, from this, we can infer that the following factors are very important for the performance of the work force: distractors, Internet problems, poor communication, invasion of their personal space, lack of tools, additional working hours, distractions, and isolation.

Another point that is analyzed in this study is the support provided by the companies to their personnel so that they could work from home, unfortunately, 36.2% of those surveyed were not supported by their corporation; while 22.4% and 18.4 % indicated having received greater support from their company, as they provided tools, equipment, furniture, training and flexible schedules; 10.9% only received training; 10.3% digital tools and training; while 1.7% received the Internet as only company support. Although most of them received some type of support, it is necessary to formulate and implement measures so that 36.2% receive the support they need from their company to carry out their functions remotely (Graph 13).

**Graph 13. Support from the company to WFH**

ASPECTS WITH WHICH THE COMPANY SUPPORTS YOU TO HAVE WHAT YOU
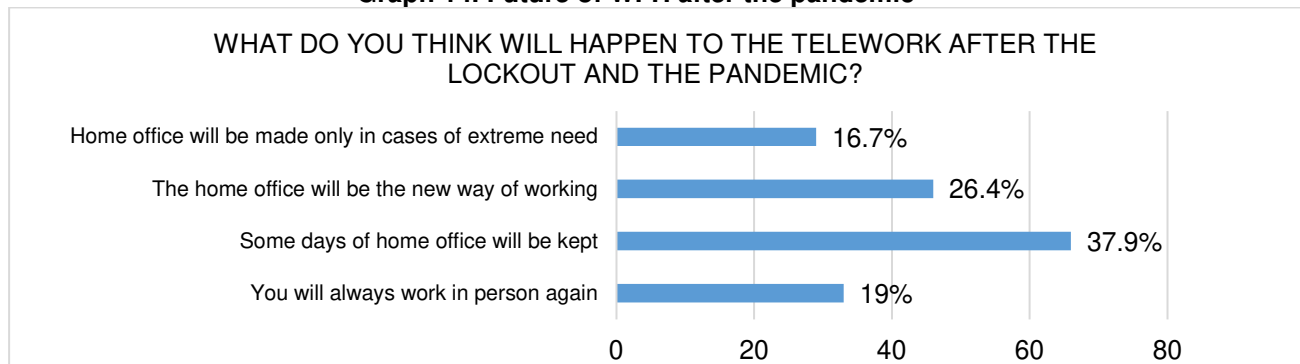NEED TO WORK FROM HOME
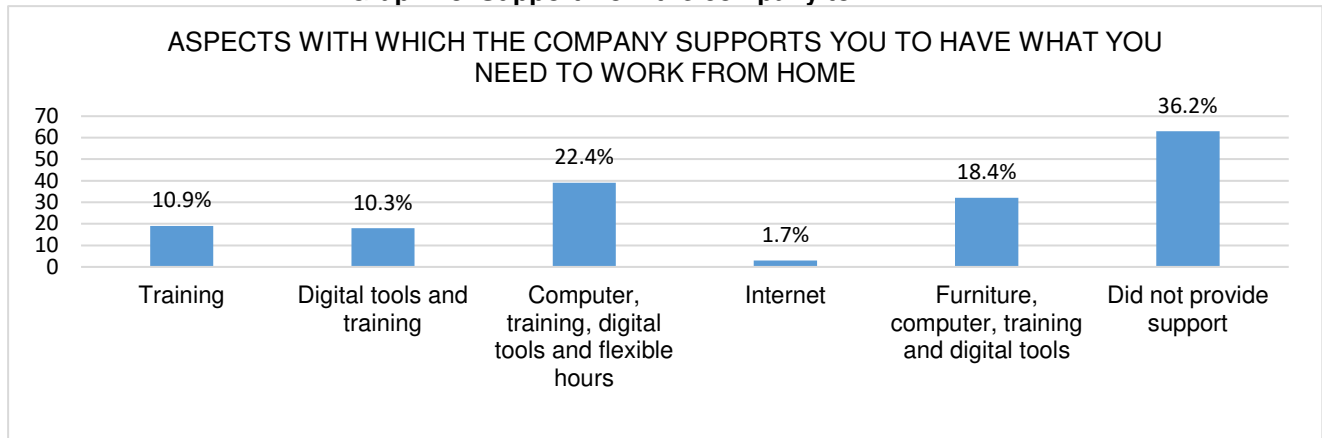


*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

The prospects of the employees about what will happen to the telework after the pandemic indicate that it is a well-received, appreciated work modality and that it is expected to continue being implemented in Guanajuato in Mexico, since 37.9% consider that some WFH days will be preserved even after the pandemic ends; and 26.4% consider that the telework will be the new way of working. Additionally, 19% believe that they will always work in person again, and 16.7% consider that the WFH will be implemented only in case of extreme need.

Considering the findings reported by Forbes Staff in 2021, companies are really considering remote work as a modality of work that should continue to be implemented in the coming years. In fact, they believe that 91% of their employees will continue with remote work two or more days a week. Thus, both perspectives (companies and employees) suggest that there is really compatibility between both parties to continue working remotely. Though, the way in which work began remotely in Mexico was somewhat abrupt or sudden, current teleworkers are already familiar with this modality of work. This represents a big advance in labour practices and can be the foundation to continue formalizing the implementation of this work modality in a regular basis and without being related to emergency or contingency cases.

Still, in this scenario it is important to remember that according to Business Insider Mexico (2021) currently only 10% of the workforce in Mexico is under a remote modality, therefore, it is interesting to delve into the causes that prevent companies from taking that big step and stop considering remote work, to really start implementing it as a standardized modality.

**Graph 14. Future of WFH after the pandemic**

WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN TO THE TELEWORK AFTER THE LOCKOUT AND THE PANDEMIC?

| | |
|---|---|
| Home office will be made only in cases of extreme need | 16.7% |
| The home office will be the new way of working | 26.4% |
| Some days of home office will be kept | 37.9% |
| You will always work in person again | 19% |

*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

In Mexico, the implementation of WFH in companies was the consequence of a global health emergency, it should be noted that previously this work modality was not a common practice. However, this work practice had to be implemented in response to the global context. Consequently, this opened a great field of possibilities to change the way of working in Mexico and take the rhythm of work that other countries in North America, Europe and other continents have already implemented with great success, improving the living condition of their workers, and obtaining better results in terms of productivity.

Thus, in this context, we cannot help but ask ourselves: *Is Mexico ready to carry out and keep the telework?* to which we obtained that 57% do not consider that the country is ready, while 43% consider that Mexico is a country that is prepared for this way of working. Although it seems to indicate that there is still a long way to go, the most difficult step in this transition in the way of working has already been taken and we went from considering WFH as not very feasible, to consider the telework as something real and a way of working that will continue to be implemented in Mexico more and better prepared (Graph 15).

**Graph 15. Perception in Mexico of WFH**

DO YOU THINK MEXICO IS PREPARED FOR THE TELEWORK?

| | |
|---|---|
| No | 57% |
| Yes | 43% |
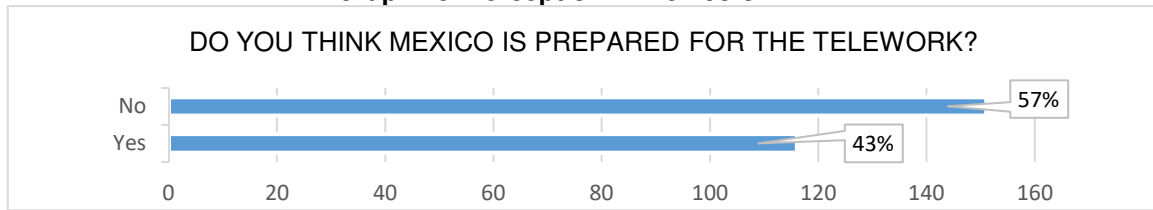
*Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the study*

## 5. Conclusions

Even when telework has a longer history (Patton, 2020), considering the worldwide context, one of the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic has been the massive increase in the number of people that work from home (International Labour Organization, 2021). In fact, the health emergency caused by Covid-19 has caused a radical change in labor practices in Mexico, thus, many organizations were forced to implement telecommuting due to the need to continue working remotely and to safeguard life and health of its collaborators. Data from the International Labour Organization in 2019 confirm that nine out of ten workers in Latin America would choose to continue with telework after the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Considering the case of Mexico, this research analyzed the perception of the work force about WFH specifically in the State of Guanajuato.

Particularly, the literature states that there are advantages and disadvantages of implementing this modality of remote work, such as the work-life balance (Patton, 2020), the total time of the work schedule, monitoring and the productivity of personnel who are under a scheme of telework. It is important to note that in this research, the highest percentage of respondents, specifically, 72.3% of all participants were Millennials.

In addition, current research findings state that most of the labor force agreed that they have the furniture and tools to work from home, they do not have difficulties to perform telework or meet their work objectives, they perceive that they are very productive, and their performance has increased when working remotely. This matches Mehdi & Morissette's (2021) previous study, where these researchers found that most of the new

teleworker's report being at least as productive at home as they were in their usual place of work, accomplishing at least as much work per hour at home as they did previously in their usual place of work before the Covid-19 pandemic started and they started working remotely.

On the other hand, employees pointed out that in some cases the boss or manager monitors them, usually making use of videoconferencing or reviewing their online activity. They specified that they have no problem in carrying out this monitoring and control practice. In fact, according to the International Labour Organization (2020), measuring the productivity and efficiency of a remote workforce should not be any more challenging or different than assessing a physically present workforce.

Now, regarding the perception of the benefits of working from home, current research confirms that working in this way allows employees the possibility of changing their place of residence to where they feel more comfortable living for personal reasons, save money when commuting to work, either on public transport or on gasoline in cases where they have their own car. They also perceive that they have a better work schedule by being able to organize their time flexibly according to their interests and personal priorities. This matches Aczel *et al.* (2021) previous study where they found that teleworking has some advantages such as less commuting, more control over time and more autonomy.

In this context, according to Reuschke (2019) research, homeworking is positively related with leisure time satisfaction. In fact, people working from home can allocate more time for leisure activities and according to Nielsen *et al.* (2021) participation in social leisure activities is positively associated with mental well-being and negatively associated with depression/anxiety symptoms. Thus, telecommuting can be a human resource practice that can not only improve personnel performance but contribute to their overall wellbeing as human beings.

One remarkable finding of current research is that employees expressed that working remotely allows them to reduce the risks when commuting to work, especially now that particularly the State of Guanajuato in Mexico is facing a situation of general insecurity due to organized crime. Finally, it is vital to highlight that when employees are working at home, they can wear more casual and comfortable clothes. This matches Aczel *et al.* (2021) research, where they found that working from home provides a more comfortable enviroment.

Now, in contrast to the previously described advantages, this study has allowed us to identify some disadvantages of telework. Employees stated that they noted that sometimes when working at home, they feel distracted. Some expressed that they have experienced problems with the Internet connection, they also identified that, by not interacting with other people, sometimes they feel alone. In addition to this, in some cases they specified that they do not have the necessary working tools to perform well, they even had to use their personal cell phone for work matters.

Also, the findings indicate that the organizations in which they work did not provide support to their workers so that they could carry out home office scheme. Only in some cases were computers, digital tools, training, and flexible hours provided. This matches Aczel *et al.* (2021) previous research, where they found that one of the mostly negative consequences of working from home is isolation from colleagues, less defined work-life boundaries, higher need for self discipline, reliance on private infraestructure and communication difficulties with colleagues.

Employees indicated that they work longer because their working hours in their work schedule have increased by a few hours every day. Specifically, this research findings conclude that most of the people surveyed confirm that since they have been working from home, they work longer hours than their working schedule indicate; 44.4% consider that they work one to two hours more daily, while 34.9% indicate that their working hours

increased from 3 to 4 hours. In other words, an increase in working hours is identified in the work schedule.

This research finding matches Mehdi & Morissette (2021) ideas published in their study entitled *"Working from home: Productivity and preferences"* where they concluded that a large proportion of the employees that participated in this study reported doing more work per hour also report working longer hours per day than they did in the past. Furthermore, this research finding also matches Felstead & Henseke (2017) previous study, where these authors confirmed that home-working employees reported more difficulties with switching off and they worked beyond their formal working hours; and Aczel, Kovacs, van der Lippe, & Szaszi (2021) study where they concluded that a teleworking negative consequence is employees having less defined work-life boundaries.

It is convenient to underline that even though the future of telework in Mexico remains uncertain until now, employees perceive that when the pandemic ends and the majority return to working at the office, they will keep a few days to work from home. In contrast, others believe that telecommuting will be the new way of working. In addition, most of the participants in this study specified that they perceive that Mexico is a country that is not prepared for this form of remote work.

Accordingly, this represents an opportunity for companies to invest resources and capabilities in ensuring that telework becomes a successful practice, so that a win-win scheme is achieved, in which companies improve their overall performance derived from commitment and increased productivity by its coworkers. For this, it is crucial that every manager ensures to set and communicate clear goals, expectations, and deadlines in the same way with workers in a physical workspace; evaluate quality and quantity instead of time worked, and track achievements on a regular basis (International Labour Organization, 2020). Finally, it should be noted that working from home implies a huge paradigm shift at work, where compliance with objectives and employee productivity must

be prioritized. In the longer term, this will certainly influence overall company's performance.

Teleworking practices represent a great research opportunity. Therefore, future lines of research in this context are listed below.

- Carry out an analysis and comparison of the perception of telework by the labor force of the organizations that belongs to a different age group (*Generation Z, Millennials, Generation X* and *Baby Boomers*).
- Perform a study of the length of the working schedule, measure and analyze if employees are working longer hours and if this has an impact on them experiencing burnout syndrome.
- Conduct a study on the measurement of the productivity of employees who work in person in full-time offices versus employees who work from home.

## 5.1 Limitations of the study

Because the current research focuses on the analysis of the perception of work from home from a point of view of the employees in general, it would be interesting to conduct a study on the perception of top executives of the organizations regarding the implementation of telework. Would also be interesting to analyze the perception of Human Resources Department specialists of advantages and challenges of teleworking.

Since the findings of the current research are limited to the State of Guanajuato in Mexico, it would be interesting to replicate the study using the same questionnaire that was used for this research in other states of the Mexico and other countries and regions. Would be good to do a study on companies' overall performance KPI's achievement when the employees that work from home to see if company's performance is improving due to these human resources practices and can contribute to the competitive advantage of the organizations.

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