

# EVIDENCE BRIEF

The **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council** in collaboration with **Employment and Social Development Canada**

SSHRC's Imagining Canada's Future initiative mobilizes social sciences and humanities research to address emerging economic, societal and knowledge needs for Canada, and help guide decision making across all sectors, toward a better future. This evidence brief addresses the Future Challenge Area of: **The Emerging Asocial Society**

## Outcomes of remote work from home and employee mental well-being: A scoping review

### About the project

With remote work from home being on the rise, in combination with the large-scale adoption of working from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to better understand the impacts of remote work from home is significant. As evidence on the topic has grown, so too has the need for synthesis of available knowledge. However, a structured scoping review has not been completed in this area, resulting in lack of readily available information on the various effects of remote home-based workplace outcomes as they relate to mental well-being. The goal of this study was to identify and summarize qualitative and quantitative evidence to make it more accessible, and to develop a conceptual model illustrating the relationships between remote work outcomes and mental well-being.

A total of 2,311 research papers published between 2017 and 2022 were reviewed; 65 were eligible for in-depth analysis. The outcomes of remote work were categorized in the conceptual model(s), which includes all factors that may be influential, and highlights the direction of their relationship to outcomes.

### Key findings

Multiple terms are used in this field: telecommuting, telework, remote work, distance work and virtual office are different terms referring to the same concept. The most commonly used terms in the literature include telework, remote work and work from home.

- Remote work from home and telework from home may provide the most accurate description of those working from home, away from the central organization.

Remote work from home has both positive and negative effects on mental well-being. Negative effects include:

- Increased loneliness and social isolation, although job autonomy has been shown to reduce feelings of loneliness
- Anxiety and nervousness, although organizational support may help
- Depression, mood drop and negative feelings/emotions
- Increased experiences of stress and or strain; mental overload, time pressure—the lack of a schedule and emotional exhaustion contribute to these experiences; emotional stability and high levels of autonomy may help
- Burnout and emotional exhaustion, lack of boundaries between work and family—less support from coworkers may exacerbate these outcomes; family support is important in reducing experiences of burnout, leadership approaches may also reduce burnout related to work-family balance challenges
- Increased work-family conflict which may be influenced by workload, monitoring and a lack of boundaries—manager support, co-worker support, job autonomy and job control increases work-home balance; women are more likely to find it challenging to maintain balance between office work and domestic responsibilities
- Reduced psychological well-being—role ambiguity, organization climate, job satisfaction, work-life imbalances and stress influence negative outcomes; family and supervisor supportive behaviours may help employees balance the exchange between work and life, improving overall well-being

Positive effects include:

- Greater work-life balance satisfaction
- Reduced work-family conflict
- Reduced experiences of stress and/or strain
- Improved well-being
- Improved psychological well-being; age and adaptability may also contribute to improved psychological well-being

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## Policy implications

As leadership approaches and supervisor support improve outcomes for the remote employee, training is needed at that level to promote balance between the positive and negative effects of working from home. In particular, awareness of the challenges helps managers to anticipate the needs of their employees and foster open communication. Such training for newly remote workers may serve as a preventative intervention. Further, organizational communication strategies must be adapted to mitigate feelings of isolation, loneliness and lack of supervisor and social support among remote workers.

Given that the evidence in this area includes both negative and positive outcomes, mental well-being among remote workers is likely to be also affected by individual characteristics, personal situation and organizational traits. Further research should be dedicated to understanding the individual and organizational factors that may impact mental well-being outcomes in those working remotely from home.

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## CONTACT THE RESEARCHERS

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## FURTHER INFORMATION

▶ [Read the full report](#)

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