

# Is work from home here to stay? Look from Mexico

Is work from  
home here to  
stay?

## El trabajo desde casa llegó Para quedarse? Mirada desde México

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## O trabalho em casa veio Para ficar? Olha do México

Alexander Lapshun

*Business School, Tecnológico de Monterrey, CDMX, Mexico, and*

Sergio Madero Gómez

*Business School, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Queretaro, Mexico*

### Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to answer the question of the future of work-from-home (WFH) from the position of productivity and employee well-being. In this research, the authors studied the future of WFH by analyzing perceived home productivity and work-life balance (WLB) in the WFH environment. This paper attempts to say that WFH is here to stay, and business leaders should acknowledge this fact and adjust their strategy.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The authors used a heterogeneous sampling method, surveying 1,157 employees in Mexico on productivity and WLB. The authors did three independent interventions in different pandemic stages: beginning – in 2020, peaking – in 2021, and calming down – in 2022. The authors used contingency table analysis to research the influence of perceived productivity and WLB in WFH on employees' propensity to WFH.

**Findings** – The results show that employees perceive productivity the same or higher when WFH and WLB same or better. The findings of this study are a wake-up call for managers who refuse to embrace changes in employees' perceptions and needs. Companies refusing to acknowledge the existing need for WFH may face significant challenges in terms of employee satisfaction and retention.

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All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.



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**Originality/value** – This study contributes to the broader literature by addressing whether WFH is here to stay. The dynamics of returning to office vary from country to country, industry to industry and business to business. This paper is an answer to the future of WFH for Mexico and the Latin American region.

**Keywords** Work from home, Productivity, Work–life balance, Postpandemic business  
Future of work

**Paper type** Research paper

## Resumen

**Objetivo** – Este artículo tiene como objetivo responder a la pregunta sobre la relevancia del futuro del trabajo desde casa (WFH por sus siglas en Inglés) desde la perspectiva de la productividad y el bienestar de los colaboradores. En esta investigación, se estudia el futuro del trabajo desde casa analizando la productividad percibida y el equilibrio entre la vida laboral y personal en el entorno del trabajo desde casa. Este documento intenta decir que el trabajo desde casa llegó para quedarse y que los líderes empresariales deberían reconocer este hecho y ajustar sus estrategias.

**Diseño/metodología** – Se ha utilizado un método de muestreo heterogéneo, encuestando a 1157 colaboradores que trabajan en México sobre el tema de productividad y balance vida-trabajo (WLB por sus siglas en Inglés). Se realizaron tres intervenciones independientes en diferentes etapas de la pandemia del COVID-19: al inicio (2020), un año después que fué el pico (2021) y finalmente cuando está a la baja y en calma (2022). Se utilizaron diversas herramientas estadísticas como el análisis de tablas de contingencia para investigar la influencia de la productividad percibida y el WLB en el trabajo desde casa en los colaboradores que son propensos a trabajar desde casa.

**Resultados/hallazgos** – Los resultados muestran que los colaboradores perciben la productividad igual o mayor cuando trabajan desde casa y el balance vida-trabajo son iguales o en ocasiones mejores. Los hallazgos de este estudio son para llamar la atención de los directivos y gerentes que se niegan a aceptar que han existido cambios y ajustes en las percepciones y necesidades de los colaboradores en las maneras de realizar el trabajo. Las empresas que se niegan a reconocer la necesidad existente de trabajar desde casa pueden enfrentar desafíos importantes en el corto plazo en términos de satisfacción y retención de los empleados.

**Originalidad/valor** – Este estudio contribuye para ampliar la literatura y poder abordar el tema de las modalidades de trabajo, en particular para profundizar si el trabajo desde casa (WFH) llegó para quedarse. Así mismo, se puede mencionar que la dinámica del regreso a las oficinas puede variar de un país a otro, de una industria a otra y de una empresa a otra, ofreciendo una variedad de reflexiones y puntos de vistas, finalmente este documento es una respuesta a la reflexión sobre el futuro del trabajo, los beneficios del trabajo en casa para México y para la región de LATAM.

**Palabras clave** Trabajo desde casa, Trabajo a distancia, Productividad, Balance vida-trabajo  
Negocios y post-pandemia, Futuro del trabajo

**Tipo de artículo** Trabajo de investigación

## Resumo

**Objetivo** – Este artigo pretende responder à questão sobre a relevância do futuro do trabalho a partir de casa (WFH, Work from home, por suas siglas em inglês) na perspectiva da produtividade e do bem-estar dos colaboradores. Nesta investigação, o futuro do trabalho a partir de casa é estudado através da análise da produtividade percebida e do equilíbrio entre vida pessoal e profissional no ambiente de trabalho a partir de casa. Este artigo tenta dizer que o trabalho a partir de casa veio para ficar e que os líderes empresariais devem reconhecer este facto e ajustar as suas estratégias.

**Desenho/metodologia** – Foi utilizado um método de amostragem heterogêneo, pesquisando 1.157 funcionários que trabalham no México sobre o tema produtividade e equilíbrio entre vida profissional e pessoal (WLB). Foram realizadas três intervenções independentes em diferentes fases da pandemia da COVID-19: no início (2020), um ano após o pico (2021) e finalmente quando estava em declínio e calma (2022). Várias ferramentas

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estatísticas, como a análise de tabelas de contingência, foram utilizadas para investigar a influência da produtividade percebida e do WLB no trabalho em casa em funcionários propensos a trabalhar em casa.

**Resultados** – Os resultados mostram que os colaboradores percebem uma produtividade igual ou superior quando trabalham a partir de casa e que o equilíbrio entre vida pessoal e profissional é igual ou por vezes melhor. Os resultados deste estudo são para chamar a atenção de diretores e gestores que se recusam a aceitar que tenham havido mudanças e ajustes nas percepções e necessidades dos funcionários nas formas de fazer o trabalho. As empresas que se recusam a reconhecer a necessidade existente de trabalhar a partir de casa podem enfrentar desafios significativos a curto prazo em termos de satisfação e retenção dos colaboradores.

**Originalidade/valor** – Este estudo contribui para ampliar a literatura e poder abordar a questão das modalidades de trabalho, em particular para aprofundar se o trabalho em casa (WFH) veio para ficar. Da mesma forma, pode-se mencionar que a dinâmica de retorno aos escritórios pode variar de um país para outro, de uma indústria para outra e uma empresa para outra, oferecendo uma variedade de reflexões e pontos de vista. Em última análise, este documento é uma resposta. para refletir sobre o futuro do trabalho, os benefícios de trabalhar em casa para o México e a região LATAM.

**Palavras-chave** Trabalho em casa, Trabalho remoto, Produtividade  
Equilíbrio entre vida pessoal e profissional, Negócios e pós-pandemia, Futuro do trabalho

**Tipo de papel** Trabalho de pesquisa

## Introduction

The past few years have taught humanity to cherish personal human-to-human interactions, which was considered evident before the COVID-19 pandemic covered the world and forced people to comply with new rules. This virus has made humans suspicious of each other at a level we have never seen before. Businesses are used to address various challenges. Economic, climate or political changes; competition; strategic decisions; social causes; and many other factors could cause a need for significant changes in a firm's business or operational mode. However, the physical setup of a working environment is rarely the subject or part of these changes. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the world and Latin America (Maurizio, 2021). Regardless of size, industry and location, firms were asked to adjust their immediate working environment and organization to protect their workforce and survive. Everybody who could operate from a safe remote place, in most cases at home, moved to this mode. Work productivity from home became central to many firms and researchers.

While the world is slowly recovering from the pandemic, business organizations face a new challenge, bringing the workforce back to the office. This study contributes to the broader literature by addressing whether work from home (WFH) is here to stay. Discussions on this topic shifted gears, as the world started believing that the worst was already over. However, the dynamics of returning to office vary from country to country, industry to industry and business to business. The world learned that business might be done differently – meetings can be virtual, business lunches and dinners could happen over the Zoom platform, and not every international contract would require a physical presence. Smite *et al.* (2021, 2023) have discussed the controversy surrounding this concept. We suggest that WFH is here to stay. This study sheds light on the situation in the Latin American (LATAM) region by discussing employees' views on WFH productivity and staff willingness to return to the office.

## Review of existing literature

Although the WFH was not an invention of the century, the past two and a half years have dramatically boosted the importance of this setup and the discussion around it. COVID-19 dramatically changed the balance between office work and WFH. In the USA, the number of WFH employees doubled over a month, from 31% in March 2020 to 62% in April of the

same year (Restrepo and Zeballos, 2022). Employers have offered flexible working opportunities to millennials and Gen-Z candidates for years (Aczel *et al.*, 2021). In this literature review, we presented foundational historical discussions on the topic and the most recent trends in WFH productivity, performance and, most importantly, the future.

### **Evolution of the work from home concept**

Historically, agricultural workers, packaging employees, even teachers were always allowed to bring some work home. With globalization and technology evolution thousands of employees, especially in multinational organizations, work from different places, such as home offices, airports and customer sites. Term teleworking became part of our world in the second half of last century and means work that is done outside of the company premises (Baruch, 2000). Co-sharing workspaces have emerged in the past few years of the second decade of the century (Gillen, 2019; Höcker *et al.*, 2022) to address the needs of teleworkers and provide temporary office services to emerging businesses and entrepreneurs.

Also, the number of jobs that can be performed at home has increased over the past two decades (Dingel and Neiman, 2020). Changes in the working environment have gradually occurred. Harris (2015) described three drivers of this change:

- (1) striving for organizations to react to innovation;
- (2) the new requirement profile for employees; and
- (3) technological developments that enabled smooth and effective work from any location.

Essentially, WFH is beneficial to both companies and employees. The latter has more flexibility and better work-life balance (WLB) (Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012), even if this is only a perception. The former may optimize real estate assets and obtain more engaged employees. With increasing real estate prices, working from home arrangements is an excellent opportunity for companies to optimize costs (Gillen, 2019; Höcker *et al.*, 2022). According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005), 15% of employees worked regularly from home in 2005. In 2017/2018, three years ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the number of WFH employees in the USA was 25% (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Leyva and Mora (2021) estimated this amount for Mexico before outbreak of the pandemic as 10.6% of officially employed population, based on information from Mexican National Social Security Institute (IMSS in Spanish).

The concept of working outside a company's office is much broader than that of working at home. It includes working in sharing areas, working while travelling, working from public spaces, etc. Terms of teleworking, virtual work, mobile teleworking and remote work are descriptions of job-related activities outside company's facilities. COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent health safety limitations have reduced the number of options available to work outside the company's facilities to a minimum. The only option to work outside of the office, often the only option to work, was at home. Between 20% and 30% of individuals (depends on country) worked from home in the second half of 2020 in the LATAM region, compering to 2%–3% only in pre-pandemic period (Maurizio, 2021). For simplicity and convenience of the reader, we referred to all types of working outside of the office as WFH.

### **Performance challenges**

The idea of working at home is older than most others can imagine. Newton developed his law of gravity along with the breakthrough principles of optics and calculus at home, away from being covered by the Great Plague Cambridge in 1665. The scientist referred to this period as one of the most productive periods in his career (Aczel *et al.*, 2021). Harris (2015) explained the technological drivers behind WFH enablement. Since 2015, dramatic progress

has been made worldwide. Digital transformation and virtual workspaces have enabled employees from different locations to work together (Tunk and Kumar, 2022). With the rapid development of the information technology (IT) sector, particularly web and cloud technologies, the number of professionals who do not require fixed office locations has increased. The discussion on WFH employees' performance has taken an important place in the literature over the past two decades.

What are the factors that influence performance in WFH environment? Kaushik and Guleria (2020) suggested that behavioral and environmental factors are not crucial for successful WFH performance. Removing commuting time and unnecessary meetings in an office may contribute to employee productivity (Barrero *et al.*, 2021). However, would this increase time directly invested in work or would it be spent on home- and family-related errands? Restrepo and Zeballos (2022) found that WFH employees spent much more time sleeping, socializing, communicating and engaging in leisure than working away from home (WAFH) employees before the pandemic. The WAFH population includes freelancers, self-employed individuals, IT employees and anyone who prefers to co-share workplaces with other environments. During the COVID-19 outbreak, this employee population moved from the WAFH to the WFH. Working from home requires different time-management skills. The authors found clear evidence that WFH knew how to do so better before the pandemic than those who had just started WFH because of the social distancing requirements. Experienced WFH employees spend 65% less time working than those who work at WAFH. What is the motivation behind this significant gap?

Tudu and Singh (2022) investigated the performance of WFH employees using self-determination theory. The researchers asserted that WFH employees might have higher performance and productivity owing to less engagement in both formal and informal physical office meetings, as well as greater flexibility and freedom. These employees may also have a better WLB. Nakrošiene *et al.* (2019) opposed this view, saying that WFH employees are less engaged, committed and, as a result, less motivated. Physical disconnection leads to stagnation in professional development and career growth. Despite much discussion in the literature, prepandemic scholars have not clearly understood the best way to maintain remote performance remotely (Amis and Janz, 2020; Tudu and Singh, 2022).

Personal productivity can be defined as an individual's ability to manage time. Time management capabilities are equally important at home and in work environments. In both cases, time-management capability was measured by the number of accomplished activities over a unit of time, the ability to resist temptations, manage distractions and focus on the most important task at every moment. It is important to understand that if work-related activities are the ultimate priority during normative working hours, doing home-related chores, having fun or simply resting activities is equally important during off-hours. In productivity research among German employees, Pfnür *et al.* (2021) detected an increase in productivity of 14% along with solid self-perception by 40% of respondents with similar or even lower productivity.

Breideband *et al.* (2022) interviewed 53 employees from IT sector and explored their relationship with WFH productivity and performance. In this grounded theory qualitative review, the authors concluded that WFH employees adapted over time to find an excellent WLB that allowed them to optimize performance. Smite *et al.* (2022) concluded that the recent WFH experience is evidence of a new psychological contract between employers and employees. In this psychological contract, the flexibility and trust that the employer gives the employee is paid back through extended loyalty and productivity.

### Trust challenges

Trust is one's willingness to exhibit vulnerability to someone else's ward actions of someone else (Rousseau *et al.*, 1998). Applying this definition to the manager–employee or leader–

follower relationships, we define trust as a manager/leader's willingness to be exposed to uncontrolled action by an employee. This definition may be challenging to implement in the context of the generally low trust environment in Mexican businesses (Coria-Sánchez, 2016). La Falce *et al.* (2020) investigated cultural differences among automotive manufacturers in LATAM and found that Mexican culture is far more uncertainty-averse. Hernandez-Pozas (2020) and Pigozzi (2020) found that Mexican employees might be more motivated by relationships with colleagues than by the meaningfulness of the task or satisfaction from individual achievement. In this environment, WFH seems even more problematic.

Mexico is considered as moderate high-context culture (Würtl, 2005). In such culture, communication is often indirect and situational. Face-to-face communication plays significant role in interpersonal interactions (Pigozzi, 2020). Employees often expect direct and clear guidance rather than looking for solutions independently. Marcial and Launer (2019) discussed aspects of digital trust in contemporary businesses of LATAM, Asia, USA and Europe. Joyce (2018) defined digital trust as confidence in people's capability to build a secure digital world. This aspect is more related to employer's trust in employees loyalty, ability to protect confidential data outside of the office walls in a responsible way.

Times of uncertainty require different thinking and approaches from everyone. Trust and safety in the workplace are fundamental to team performance (Lapshun and Fusch, 2021). The results of the blended mini-ethnography and case study research conducted during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in a Fortune 500 IT company in Singapore showed that employee-leader mutual trust drives high performance despite limited in-person communication (Lapshun and Fusch, 2023). Trust is crucial for every organization. The level of confidence and trust among employees and employer influences organizational processes and setup (Marcial and Launer, 2019). It will be crucial for consideration of any future change.

#### *Back to normal*

Almost three years after an outbreak of COVID-19, the world is on the recovery path, summarizing recent experience and planning the future. Overstaying at home might negatively affect motivation (Bouziri *et al.*, 2020; Xiao *et al.*, 2021). Elements of interpersonal communication work better for people Boyle (2013) demonstrated that face-to-face feedback in a physical environment creates a better logical sense and has a better effect than in a virtual or remote setup. What is normal? However, this question is interesting. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Tunk and Kumar (2022) investigated the correlation between employees' willingness to engage in WFH in the future and current perception on WFH productivity. The survey results of 138 participants showed a positive correlation between future willingness to engage in WFH and current performance at home. About 82% of the participants mentioned that employee engagement was better in the WFH environment than in the office (Tunk and Kumar, 2022).

Smite *et al.*'s (2022) research on Scandinavian companies showed that companies preferred to continue WFH practices in the wake of the postpandemic period. Kong *et al.* (2022) studied 1389 respondents in Washington State, USA. The results of this comprehensive study show a unified opinion of a positive future for WFH. However, there may be different setups with different number of days in the office. There are different views on the future of WFH. Employees with prepandemic WFH experience tended to believe that full-time WFH setup had a positive influence. They prefer a minimum of in-office days, whereas employees without prepandemic WFH experience prefer two to three days in the office per week (Kong *et al.*). These findings concur with Jain *et al.* (2022) research in Australia. The researchers examined psychological and behavioral factors of WFH, impact of COVID-19 and concluded that WFH will in the postpandemic normal at least as a valid choice.



### Study questions and hypothesis

In this study, we analyzed the potential future of WFH in Mexico. We assumed that the future of WFH depends on employees' productivity and WLB. These assumptions are consistent with those of Shen *et al.* (2023) and Smite *et al.* (2022, 2023). Shen (2023) conducted quantitative research on tech sector employees, stating that there is no significant difference in employee productivity between office and WFH setups. The overarching research question of this study is as follows:

*RQ1.* Is WFH here to stay in the postpandemic world in Mexican business?

Both productivity and WLB have evolved over the past three years. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of these changes is essential. We approached this challenge by examining changes in WFH productivity perceptions among working professionals in Mexico. We also analyzed future developments in work-setup environments and potential options for the new normal. The first question we asked was: *Does WFH positively influence employees' productivity?* We approached this question from two perspectives: the individual's perspective on others and their opinions on the self.

*H1.* The WFH employees will report higher perceived productivity talking about their WFH colleagues.

*H2.* There will be no change in perceived colleagues' productivity among WFH employees.

*H3.* WFH perceived personal productivity is different from in-office productivity.

*H4.* There is no change in perception of personal productivity among WFH employees.

We also investigated how perceptions of personal and colleagues productivity changed over the three years of working under restrictions.

The second question in our study was related to the *differences between the perceived workload at home and in the office.*

*H5.* WFH employees perceive working more hours.

*H6.* There is no change in perceived working hours between WFH and office setup.

Our last question was about the future of the WFH setup.

*H7.* During COVID-19, people's perception on WFH evolved.

*H8.* There was no change in people's perceived working hours during the years of COVID-19.

We analyzed employees' propensity for WFH (dependent variable) based on perceived productivity and WLB (independent variables). The conceptual model and proposed framework for hypothesis testing are shown in [Figure 1](#).

## Methods

### Data collection process

Using a questionnaire, we collected data from Mexico during three independent interventions during the pandemic. We used a heterogeneous sampling method. The questionnaire consisted of six demographic questions and five close-ended questions on the work environment setup and perceived productivity ([Appendix](#)). During the first year of the pandemic, no one knew the

possible magnitude of the event and its length. Therefore, we planned longitudinal study, comparable along the prolonged period.

We measured the participants' evaluations using three categorical close-ended questions:

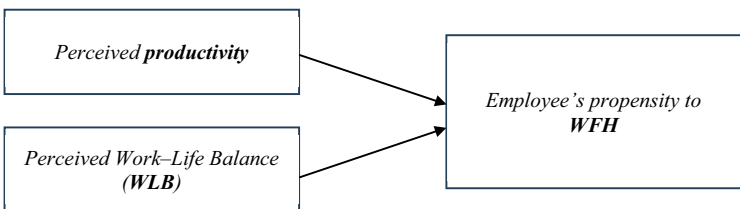
- Q1. How do you perceive the effect of moving to WFH due of COVID-19 health restrictions on your colleague's productivity?
- Q2. How do you perceive the effect of moving to WFH due of COVID-19 health restrictions on your productivity?
- Q3. Comparing your workday before COVID-19 and today, how much time do you dedicate to your work, working from home?

All three questions had three possible categorical answers: worse than before, similar or better than before the COVID-19. To address the potential seasonality effect, we intervene during the same month of the year. The first occurred in October 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic and in the first wave of health safety rules. The second intervention occurred in October 2021, during the peak of COVID-19 restrictions. The third occurred in October 2022, when the world began to release its ban and restrictions. We surveyed different individuals for each type of intervention. All three samples were independent of one another.

We used random convenience sampling applying the snowball selection technique. Only responses of employees engaged in remote work were included for the final analysis. We excluded responses from participants if they failed an integrity-check item: completed the survey too quickly (−2 standard deviations) or consistently displayed patterns in their responses. A total of 1,157 employees from different businesses in Mexico answered our criteria and were included in the final data set. Of these, 47.8% were male, 50.6% were female and 1.6% did not identify themselves. Among the participants, 53.1% were single, 41.7% were married and 5.2% did not determine their marital status. Of the participants, 24.4% were above 40 years of age and belonged to Gen X Baby Boomers. The remaining 75.6% of participants were aged < 40 years. Most of the participants (95.2%) held at least one academic degree. The remaining 4.8% had completed 12 years of education (high school). A survey was conducted in 2020. Of the participants, 4.8% were junior (less than one year) employees and 28.1% had between one and five years of professional experience. The remaining 67.1% had six and more years of professional experience; 58.9% reported international experience working for either a multinational company in Mexico or a local company with tight connections to international business partners (customers or vendors). The descriptive analyses of the participants are summarized in [Table 1](#).

*Independent Variables*

*Dependent Variable*



**Figure 1.**  
Conceptual model  
and proposed  
framework for  
hypothesis testing

**Source:** Figure by authors



	Frequency	%	Is work from home here to stay?
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	553	47.8	
Female	586	50.6	
I prefer not to say	18	1.6	
<i>Marital Status</i>			
Single	614	53.1	
Married	483	41.7	
I prefer not to say	60	5.2	
<i>Generation</i>			
Baby boomers (before 1963)	36	3.1	
Gen X (1964–1980)	246	21.3	
Millennials (1981–1995)	703	60.8	
Centennials (after 1995)	172	14.9	
<i>Years of working experience</i>			
Less than one year	56	4.8	
Between 1 and 5 years	325	28.1	
Between 6 and 10 years	257	22.2	
More than 10 years	519	44.9	
<i>Educational Attainment</i>			
High school	55	4.8	
Undergraduate	780	67.4	
Graduate-master	305	26.4	
Postgraduate-PhD	17	1.5	
Total	1,157	100	

**Source:** Authors' elaboration

**Table 1.**  
Descriptive analysis of the sample

### Survey response analysis

The first question that we asked our participants was about their relationship with WFH: Did you experience WFH due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak? [Table 2](#) reports the responses as percentages. Although the percentage of WFH or WAFH employees has decreased from 65.3% in 2020 to 62.8% in 2021, the number of employees who have experienced WFH or WAFH has increased from 81.8% in 2020 to 84.5% in 2021. We did not ask this question in 2022 intervention.

Our second question established participants' familiarity with WFH. This year, because of COVID-19, was you experiencing WFH for the first time? The results show that the

Response (%)	2020	2021	Total
Continue WFH	39.5	33.9	36.8
Working on hybrid mode	25.8	28.9	27.3
Full time in the office	16.5	21.7	19.1
My job cannot be done remotely	18.2	15.5	16.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Authors' elaboration

**Table 2.**  
Did you experience WFH due to COVID-19 pandemic outbreak?

percentage of first experience dropped from 45.4% in 2021 to 28.4% only (Table 3), proving that with growing health restrictions, more employees and different sectors moved to WFH.

We approached the question of employee productivity from two perspectives: employees' perceptions of their colleagues' productivity and their self-perceived productivity. Our first question was: How do you perceive your colleague's productivity after moving to WFH due of COVID-19 health restrictions? Table 4 presents the answers of 1,157 participants to both questions. Overall, across the sample, only 25.4% of the participants perceived their colleagues' WFH productivity to be less than that of an office; 33.1% of the respondents thought that productivity from home was higher, whereas 41.5% saw no significant difference. Second, when answering the question on personal productivity, the overall response was even more optimistic regarding WFH. Only 12.7% of participants indicated a reduction in WFH productivity. A total of 39.2% of the participants suggested that WFH productivity was higher and almost half (48.1%) of the participants did not see any change.

The World Health Organization has applied various regulations during the different stages of the pandemic. We collected information on three instances representing the different stages of the pandemic: October 2020 and the first year of the pandemic. October 2021 – the second year – the peak of the restrictions – and October 2022 – the decline of the pandemic – started discussions back to normal. During this period, more people and businesses practiced WFH voluntarily or followed restrictions on health-governing bodies. Employees' and employers' perceptions of WFH and WAFH productivity have changed during this period (Cho et al., 2022).

Analyzing the response trends regarding productivity, approximately 25% of the respondents perceived WFH as less productive for colleagues. The percentage of responses supporting higher productivity due to WFH grew over the first two years of the pandemic

**Table 3.**  
This year, because of COVID-19, was the first time you experienced WFH?

Response (%)	2020	2021	2022	Total
No	54.6	64.3	71.6	64.2
Yes	45.4	35.7	28.5	35.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Authors' elaboration

**Table 4.**  
Perceived productivity

Response (%)	2020	2021	2022	Total
<i>Colleagues productivity perception</i>				
Lower	25.8	24.4	25.9	25.4
No change	44.5	40.8	39.7	41.5
Higher	29.7	34.8	34.5	33.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Self-perceived productivity</i>				
Lower	17.7	13.7	8.2	12.7
No change	49.0	44.1	50.2	48.1
Higher	33.3	42.3	41.6	39.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Authors' elaboration

from 29.7% in 2020 to 34.8% in 2021 and dropped slightly to 34.5% in 2022 (Table 4). Regarding personal productivity perception, we asked, how do you perceive your productivity after moving WFH due to COVID-19 health restrictions? The trend in the perception of personal productivity shows that more respondents feel that personal productivity is similar or higher when WFH: 17.6% perceived themselves as less productive in 2020, 13.7% in 2021 and 8.2% in 2022 (Table 4).

A balance between business-related and other activities is called WLB (Bellmann and Hübler, 2021). Camacho Peláez and Higuaita López (2013) studied engineering companies in Latin America and concluded that WLB was a driver of successful WFH. Based on their findings, we considered WFH WLB as one of the factors influencing the future of work. Better WLB improves employee satisfaction and productivity (Bellmann and Hübler, 2021). We asked our respondents, When WFH, how much time do you commit to work? The proposed answers included three options:

- (1) less than in an office, now have more time for other activities;
- (2) no difference; and
- (3) more than usual in the office, now have less time for other activities.

In this section, we share the results of our analysis, using contingency tables to test our hypotheses. These tables are useful for examining the joint distribution of two categorical variables, allowing us to determine their relationship and significance. Contingency table analysis relies on several statistical tests. The chi-square test compares the observed frequencies (or proportions) against the expected frequencies under the assumption of independence (i.e. no association between the variables). If the observed frequencies deviate significantly from what would be expected under the assumption of independence, there is evidence in favor of a significant relationship. Similarly, the log-likelihood ratio (G-test) also tests deviations from the expected frequencies but is more robust because it accounts for the likelihood of the observed data under the null and alternative hypotheses.

In addition to the association tests, the analysis incorporates two more indicators that complement the results: Cramer's  $V$  and Goodman and Kruskal's lambda. Cramer's  $V$  indicator quantifies the degree of association between categorical variables beyond the significance level obtained from the chi-square test. It provides a standardized measure that is not influenced by the sample size or number of categories in the variables. Cramer's  $V$  ranges between 0 and 1, where 0 indicates no association and 1 represents a perfect association between the variables; thus, it can be interpreted as a measure of the association magnitude. Although there is debate about determining the appropriate cutoff value to interpret the strength of the association using Cramer's  $V$ , we relied on the criteria suggested by Lee (2016).

Finally, we used the Goodman and Kruskal–Wallis's lambda ( $\lambda$ ) indicators to measure the explained variation between variables. The lambda indicator can range from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates no association and 1 indicates a perfect association. The in-between values show how much error reduction is achieved by using one variable to predict the other, which helps to measure the extent to which one variable explains the variation in the other.

The first question asked was: *Does WFH positively influence employees' productivity?* We proposed the following four hypotheses: The first two hypotheses relate to perceived colleagues' productivity, whereas the latter two relate to self-perceived productivity. Table 5 presents a contingency table that allowed us to answer questions  $H1$  and  $H2$ . Percentages were used instead of frequencies to simplify interpretation of the analysis.

**Table 5.**  
*H1 and H2*  
contingency table

<i>How do you perceive your colleague's productivity after moving WFH due to COVID-19 health restrictions? (%)</i>				
	Lower	No change	Higher	Total
Back at the office	29.24	43.52	27.24	100
WFH setup	17.99	39.11	42.9	100
Total	21.72	40.57	37.71	100
<i>Measures of association among variables</i>				
Pearson Chi <sup>2</sup> (2) =	25.76	Prob = 0.0000	There is evidence of a significant association among the variables <i>V</i> < 0.2 indicates a weak association Propensity to WFH explains about 4.27% of the variation on perceived colleagues' productivity	
Log likelihood ratio (2) =	25.91	Prob = 0.0001		
Cramer's <i>V</i> =	0.1685			
Goodman and Kruskal <i>λ</i> =	0.04267			
<b>Source:</b> Authors' elaboration				

The results presented in Table 5 suggest that respondents who remain under some WFH setup (propensity to WFH) perceive their colleagues' productivity differently than do those working back at the office. Specifically, the WFH group perceived higher productivity in their colleagues than in the office group. The Pearson's Chi<sup>2</sup> test and G-test demonstrated that the relationship between the variables was statistically significant at the 99% level. However, Cramer's  $V$  indicator suggests that the relationship between the variables is weak ( $V < 0.2$ ) because the variation in perceived colleagues' productivity is barely explained ( $\lambda = 4.27\%$ ) by the WFH propensity group. The results in Table 5 allow us to partially agree with the *H1: The WFH employees will report higher perceived productivity talking about their WFH colleagues* and reject the *H2: There will be no change in perceived colleagues' productivity among WFH employees*.

The results presented in Table 6 suggest that respondents who remained in a WFH setup (propensity toward WFH) perceived their productivity to be similar to those in the office. The WFH group perceived productivity levels to be similar to those reported by the back-at-the-office group. Both the Pearson's Chi<sup>2</sup> test and the G-test demonstrated that there was no statistically significant relationship between the variables. This result is consistent with

**Table 6.**  
*H3 and H4*  
contingency table

<i>How do you perceive your productivity after moving to WFH due to COVID-19 health restrictions? (%)</i>				
	Lower	No change	Higher	Total
Back at the office	12.62	45.51	41.86	100
WFH setup	13.7	41.91	44.39	100
Total	13.34	43.11	43.55	100
<i>Measures of association among variables</i>				
Pearson Chi <sup>2</sup> (2) =	1.073	Prob = 0.5847	There is no evidence of a significant association among the variables <i>V</i> < 0.1 indicates a negligible association Propensity to WFH explains about 2.15% of the variation on self-perceived productivity	
Log likelihood ratio (2) =	1.072	Prob = 0.5852		
Cramer's <i>V</i> =	0.0344			
Goodman and Kruskal <i>λ</i> =	0.02148			
<b>Source:</b> Authors' elaboration				

Cramer's  $V$  indicator, suggesting that the relationship between the variables is negligible ( $V < 0.1$ ) because the variation in perceived colleagues' productivity is barely explained ( $\lambda = 2.15\%$ ) by WFH propensity group. The results in Table 6 allow us to reject the  $H3$ : *WFH perceives personal productivity as different from in-office productivity* and favor the  $H4$ : *There is no change in perception of personal productivity among WFH employees*.

The second question in our study was related to perceived workload differences between WFH and in-office setups. Table 7 summarizes the findings of the contingency table analysis performed to evaluate it.

The results presented in Table 7 suggest that respondents who returned to the office perceived that WFH significantly reduced their workloads. In contrast, the WFH group perceived more working time than did the WFH group. Both the Pearson's  $\chi^2$  test and G-test demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between the variables. Nevertheless, the result is inconsistent with Cramer's  $V$  indicator, suggesting that the relationship between the variables is negligible ( $V < 0.1$ ) because the variation in perceived colleagues' productivity is barely explained ( $\lambda = 1.0\%$ ) by WFH propensity group. The results in Table 7 allow us to support the  $H5$ : *WFH employees perceive working more hours* and reject the  $H6$ : *There is no change in perceived working hours between WFH and office setup*.

To answer our third question, we investigated whether the perceived amount of time spent working from home affects one's WLB. We analyzed data from each year separately to account for the differences in WFH intensity levels caused by the pandemic restrictions. Table 8 presents the results of this study.

By analyzing the trends across the years, we found interesting results (Figure 2).

For example, we found an increasing trend in the proportion of respondents who perceived that WFH represented less time committed to work (or better WLB), despite the working setup group. Moreover, this trend is especially noticeable among those who returned to the office, as the percentage of respondents almost doubled (from 15.69 to 30.25) between 2020 and 2022. However, there was also a noticeable decline in the percentage of individuals who perceived that WFH increased their working hours. Again, this trend was consistent for both the work arrangements. For respondents who did not perceive a change in the time devoted to work during WFH, the trend barely changed over time. In contrast, the same metric among those who returned to office rapidly increased in 2021 and fell dramatically by 2022. Overall, although most respondents (around 41%) still perceived that

	When WFH, how much time do you commit to work? (%)			Total
	Less than in an office	No difference	More than usual	
Back at the office	23.66	39.07	37.28	100
WFH setup	18.08	35.16	46.77	100
Total	19.84	36.39	43.76	100
<i>Measures of association among variables</i>				
Pearson $\chi^2$ (2) =	7.7198	Prob = 0.0211	There is evidence of a significant association among the variables $V < 0.1$ indicates a negligible association Propensity to WFH explains about 1% of the variation on WLB	
Log likelihood ratio (2) =	7.7353	Prob = 0.0209		
Cramer's $V$ =	0.0935			
Goodman and Kruskal $\lambda$ =	0.01008			

**Table 7.**  
*H5 and H6*  
contingency table

**Source:** Authors' elaboration

**Table 8.**  
*H7 and H8*  
contingency table

		When WFH, how much time do you commit to work? (%)			Total
		Less than in an office	No difference	More than usual	
2020					
	Back at the office	15.69	41.18	43.14	100
	WFH setup	13.97	34.93	51.09	100
	Total	14.29	36.07	49.64	100
2021					
	Back at the office	13.64	53.03	33.33	100
	WFH setup	20.31	35.94	43.75	100
	Total	18.6	40.31	41.09	100
2022					
	Back at the office	30.25	32.72	37.04	100
	WFH setup	20.88	34.62	44.51	100
	Total	25.29	33.72	40.99	100
Measures of association among variables					
2020	Pearson $\chi^2$ (2) =	1.0678	Prob = 0.586	There is no evidence of a significant association among the variables	
2021	Pearson $\chi^2$ (2) =	5.9688	Prob = 0.051		
2022	Pearson $\chi^2$ (2) =	4.232	Prob = 0.121		
2020	Cramer's $V$ =	0.06175	$V < 0.2$ indicates a weak association		
2021	Cramer's $V$ =	0.15292			
2022	Cramer's $V$ =	0.11091			
2020	$\lambda$ =	0.000	Propensity to WFH explains about 0% of the variation on WLB		
2021	$\lambda$ =	0.000			
2022	$\lambda$ =	0.000			
Source: Authors' elaboration					

WFH implies more time devoted to work than in-office work, there was an apparent downward trend in both groups.

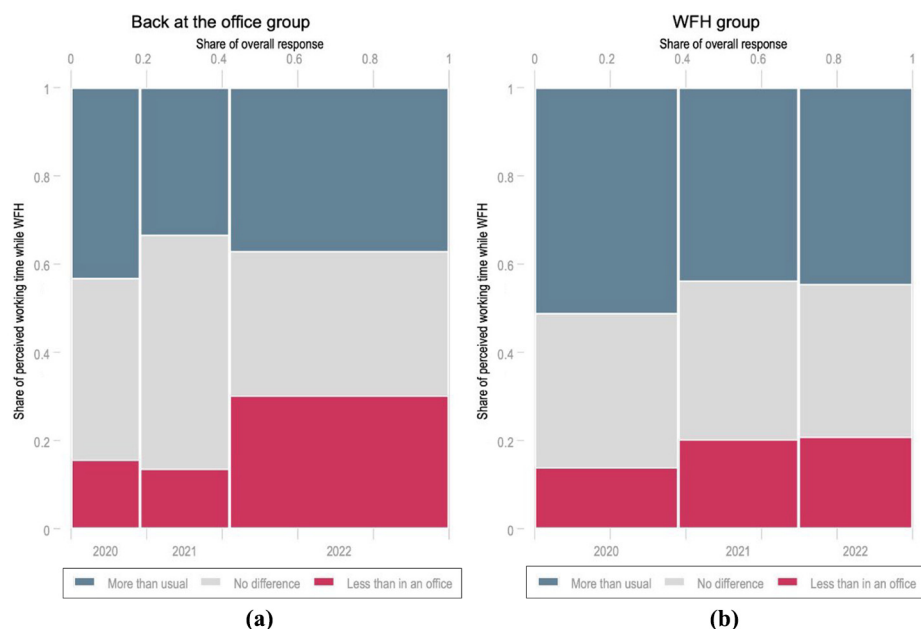
To statistically test whether the time dimension plays a role in the differences among working groups and levels of perception, we must introduce a new test designed to assess the relationship between three-dimensional contingency tables: the Cochran–Mantel–Haenszel (CMH) test. The CMH test is a statistical method used to assess the association between two categorical variables, while controlling for the effect of a third categorical variable. The CMH test is often used when data is collected from multiple sites or at different time points, and it is necessary to control the effects of confounding variables. The CMH null hypothesis states that there is no association between two variables after controlling for the stratifying variable.

In our case, we repeated the analysis described in [Table 8](#) but now using time as the stratifying variable to control for its effects. The results of the CMH test ( $\chi^2 = 5.096$ ,  $p$ -value = 0.04824) suggest that there is a significant relationship between the perceived differences in workload and WFH and the working setups controlling for yearly variation. Thus, this result allows us to support the *H7: WFH employees perceive they worked more hours over the years of COVID–19* and reject the *H8: There has been no change in perceived working hours between the setups over the years of COVID-19*. This result is similar and consistent with the one presented in [Table 7](#), but now we can provide more robust evidence supporting *H5*.

**Discussion and conclusions**

In a white paper on WFH productivity in LATAM, [Mercer \(2023\)](#) asserted that employers could not expect the same working hours and productivity at home they used to get in the





Is work from  
home here to  
stay?

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**Figure 2.**  
Perception on  
working hours

**Source:** Figure by authors

office. Our participants reported same or better on productivity and working hours during the WFH. [Diamantidis and Chatzoglou \(2019\)](#) and [Kundi et al. \(2021\)](#) stressed the importance of family atmosphere for successful WFH operations. The findings of our study prove this assumption; after three years of WFH research, the participants adapted well to the new work setup. They improved productivity with less working hours and improved their WLB. [Bobbio et al. \(2022\)](#) analyzed WFH cultures. They concluded that firms and managers who acknowledge the challenges of WFH setup and provide necessary support to employees, both technological and mental, enjoy higher employee engagement, satisfaction and productivity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges for people and businesses. Effective coordination in a WFH setup is challenging ([Breideband et al., 2022](#)). The International Labor Organization (ILO) published a guide for businesses in the work environment during the pandemic and beyond ([ILO, 2020](#)). In this guide, ILO states that the WFH is here to stay. Governments should prepare or adjust laws and regulations to enable smooth and easy WFH operations ([ILO, 2020](#)). This study assessed the future of WFH using two main questions: perceived productivity and WLB. We believe that once started, the WFH cannot disappear. While many struggled to maintain appropriate WLB at the beginning of the pandemic ([Battur and Kandagal, 2022](#)), our findings revealed that by 2022, 67.7% of the respondents found WLB in the WFH setup to be no different or better than in a traditional office environment.

[Palomera-Chávez et al. \(2021\)](#), surveying 1,184 participants in LATAM and concluded that long-lasting continuous WFH might lead to feelings of social isolation and harm employees' psychological state. [Chung \(2017\)](#) and [Chung et al. \(2020\)](#) discussed how different population groups react differently to the WFH setup and found other challenges in adjusting their WLB. Younger individuals respond better to WFH and report better WLB ([Chung et al.](#)). Our study revealed no differences in the perceptions of WLB among different age groups.

Beauregard (2011) recommended that managers shift their focus from presenteeism to work outcomes. In the Mexican business environment, where a lack of trust is part of usual interpersonal and business behavior (Coria-Sánchez, 2016), the idea of working unsupervised is complex. In high-context culture, there is a special role for unsaid communication such as mimics and body language (Pigozzi, 2020). The pandemic has forced many businesses to adopt remote setup. However, Mexican culture, being medium to high context (Baruch, 2000), might be a challenging environment to adopt the concept of WFH for good.

Another challenge for adopting WFH for good is the culture of low trust (Pigozzi, 2020) and concerns about digital trust (Joyce, 2018). There is no way to control or manage employees in a WFH environment. Thus, with proper organization, the impact of distance and lack of immediate control is negligible (Shen, 2023). This setup does not suit every organization or every occupation. We prefer that remotely guided life-saving surgery will always remain on the TV screen only. We also cannot deny the boost in digital nomadism among salaried employees (Cook, 2023).

We hope that this study might help to managers and business leaders to consider a new view of the employee–employer relationship. Once enforced by the pandemic, the WFH is here to stay at least as a choice option (Jain *et al.*, 2022). The findings of our study demonstrated that the productivity of working from home is the same or higher than working from the office and that most employees achieve the best WLB in a WFH environment. Regulatory and legal bases are available for WFH (ILO, 2020). Although WFH may be dangerous to mental well-being and social health (Palomera-Chávez *et al.*, 2021), it does not harm the hybrid model. The degree of hybridization, number of days per week and freedom of decision-making are subject to further discussion.

Our study is a wake-up call for action for leaders, managers and business practitioners who do not believe in WFH and consider this setup dangerous and nonproductive for employees. Crisis and uncertainty affect human behavior at home and at work (Madero Gómez *et al.*, 2020). An environment of trust and safety is necessary to achieve a high performance (Lapshun and Fusch, 2021). Managers, leaders and business practitioners should create an environment of trust and security among employees with WFH.

### **Contribution to business practice**

Understanding the future of WFH might help business leaders shape organizational culture, adopt structures and organize resources to support efficiency and performance (Bobbio *et al.*, 2022). It can also contribute to rebuilding organizational trust, which in the LATAM context might be a significant factor in building high-performance organizations (Coria-Sánchez, 2016; La Falce *et al.*, 2020). Organizations with cultures built on trust have a significant and sustainable competitive advantage.

### **Implications for social change**

Businesses bear significant social responsibility for their immediate and distant communities (Kim and Thapa, 2018; Saha *et al.*, 2020). Business leaders striving for excellence in a business organization are likely to create positive reciprocity in a closed social environment. A positive and widely accepted WFH policy may improve employees' WLB and positively affect their confidence, job security and general well-being. Working in a positive environment may enable employees to experience enhanced job opportunities and steady financial security, which could benefit their families, friends and community.

WFH might open more opportunities for engaging females in the workforce (Alon *et al.*, 2022; Arntz *et al.*, 2020). Higher engagement of females will contribute to more equal representation of males and females in different sectors of economy and in different positions. This dynamic will help to erase historical stereotypes of gender dominated industries (Leung *et al.*, 2020). In return, it will open more opportunities for both genders and contribute to grows of bias-free society. It will positively benefit business too – firms with more equal gender representation have 25% more chances to excel in financial performance (Mahajan *et al.*, 2020).

Continues technological development and digitalization may put at risk certain occupations and certain communities. WFH might offer a valid alternative for those who find themselves outside of familiar work environment. In addition, WFH might create equal opportunities to societies with limitations to commute or grounded at home by circumstances.

### Limitations and recommendations for the future studies

Like other studies, this study has some limitations. This study focused on employee productivity, WLB and WFH. We decided to focus on participants' age and job seniority as selected factors for productivity and ability to manage WLB. Other factors such as gender, marital status, the number of children in the family and living conditions may also affect the propensity to WFH. Chung *et al.* (2020) attempted to consider marital status, number of children in the family and gender in their research. However, the study took place in 2020, in the wake of the pandemic, and therefore does not necessarily represent the situation in its decline at the end of 2022 or the beginning of 2023.

We deliberately omitted questions regarding the employees' positions in the company. All the participants in our study were remunerated. The managers and individual contributors were in the same position. Their views on self and colleagues' productivity should not be different. However, in the local context of risk aversion and low trust in general (Coria-Sánchez, 2016; La Falce *et al.*, 2020), future research should explore the relationship between WFH among managers and individual contributors in LATAM.

An additional limitation of our study is related to the deep dive into differences by age and generation. Xiong *et al.* (2021) studied the relationship between representatives of different generations and WFH. We divided the participants into two groups: those aged < 40 years and those aged  $\geq$  40 years. This separation does not necessarily reflect the generational differences. We found correlations between our findings and those of this study. However, the timing of Xiong *et al.*'s study may not have allowed us to accurately understand the current stage of the pandemic. Further research is required to understand how different generations of employees relate to WFH.

We recommend to continuing studying and optimizing the WFH setup, including setup elements that address concerns of digital trust and cyber security (Joyce, 2018; Marcial and Launer, 2019). Our findings echo the ILO (2020) report and analyses of several others (Aczel *et al.*, 2021; Barrero *et al.*, 2021; Bellmann and Hübler, 2021; Carillo, 2003; Maurizio, 2021; Restrepo and Zeballos, 2022). We believe that the WFH is here to remain as a valid option to do business. However, we did not perform any study to understand the desirable format of the future WFH setup. Future researchers should closely examine this subject to guide business practitioners to maximize the benefits of the WFH environment.

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## Appendix

- (1) At this time, in what way are work activities carried out in your workplace?
  - Continue WFH;
  - Working on hybrid mode;
  - Full time in the office; and
  - My job cannot be done remotely.
- (2) Due to COVID-19, it was the first time you carried out remote work activities or work from home?
  - Yes/No
- (3) How do you perceive the effect of moving to WFH due of COVID–19 health restrictions on your colleague’s productivity?
  - Negative impact;
  - Moderate or no impact; and
  - Positive impact.
- (4) How do you perceive the effect of moving to WFH due of COVID–19 health restrictions on your productivity?
  - Negative impact;
  - Moderate or no impact; and
  - Positive impact.
- (5) Comparing your workday before COVID–19 and today, how much time do you dedicate to your work, working from home?
  - Less than before COVID-19;
  - The same time; and
  - More than before COVID-19.

## Corresponding author

Alexander Lapshun can be contacted at: [alapshun@gmail.com](mailto:alapshun@gmail.com)