

The relationship between working from home, job quality and psychological well-being

Zuzanna Kowalik

The concept of job quality has been gaining importance in economic research for the last 30 years. Recent approaches to defining it have challenged the traditional view that it should be measured mainly by wages or job security and underline aspects such as employee autonomy, decision latitude, or workers' overall well-being. This has recently become even more important because of the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers worldwide experienced increased job insecurity, work-related stress, and job loss. The work environment has altered drastically, and few enterprises or employees were prepared for such a disruption. One of the biggest challenges was a shift toward working from home, which noticeably impacted working conditions and boundaries between private and professional life. Moreover, working from home will likely stick, and organisations will continue mandating it for the foreseeable future.

Before the pandemic, relatively few employees were allowed to work from home regularly, so studies on this phenomenon had limitations. This has substantially changed as working from home became more widespread, and that is why the new post-pandemic reality requires a fresh, systematic examination based on country-representative surveys.

In this project, I aim to shed light on working from home for job quality and workers' psychological well-being. First, I will employ a quantitative approach to assess the effect of working from home on job quality and psychological well-being in the European Union. Second, I will conduct interviews with social partners and experts on organisational psychology and occupational safety and health. The qualitative part aims to boost understanding of specific mechanisms behind the effect assessed in the first step.

The project's objective is fundamental in the context of the ongoing discussion about psychosocial risks, work-related stress, and possible solutions to mitigate them. Over half of EU workers consider stress common in their workplace, contributing to around half of all lost working days. Its prevalence and costs are high for organisations and the public health system. The results may be of interest to social partners engaged in implementing the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027, but also to organisations committed to designing internal policies addressing the problems of psychosocial risks at work. My research can add to the discussion about how to protect workers' well-being and increase their job satisfaction and organisational commitment.