

Report
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SACOG Employee Telework Survey Analysis – Full Survey Results

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The logo for Steer, featuring the word "steer" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font.

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1 Introduction

Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of findings from the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Telework Pilot Survey gathered from responses received from employees across the region. The Telework Pilot Survey was conducted in February 2021 and engaged a range of employers in the SACOG region. The purpose of the Telework Pilot Survey is to obtain views on the strengths and challenges of teleworking during the COVID-19 Pandemic for SACOG region employers, to help them best plan their approach to providing telework as an option long-term.
- 1.2 The results from this survey will be used to help SACOG understand the type of support employers need most moving forward. Individual employers will be provided with results to help them plan 'back to work' and long-term telework programs.

Report Structure

- 1.3 The Telework Pilot Survey examines the views of SACOG-region based employees relating to teleworking and commuting patterns prior to, and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the survey aims to better understand and assess:
 - Instances and experiences of select employees teleworking and commuting patterns prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - Instances and experiences of employees teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - Views of employee teleworking after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.4 This report presents individual analysis from each of the survey responses from the Telework Survey conducted with employees of the following organizations, in Chapter 2:
 - Air Quality Management District (AQMD)
 - Cal/OSHA Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH)
 - California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS)
 - City of Elk Grove
 - City of Sacramento
 - Uptown Studios
 - Breathe California Sacramento Region (Sac Breathe)
 - Valley Vision
 - Yolo County
- 1.5 The analysis is followed by conclusions and key insights from this survey in Chapter 3.

2 Telework Pilot Survey Analysis

Introduction

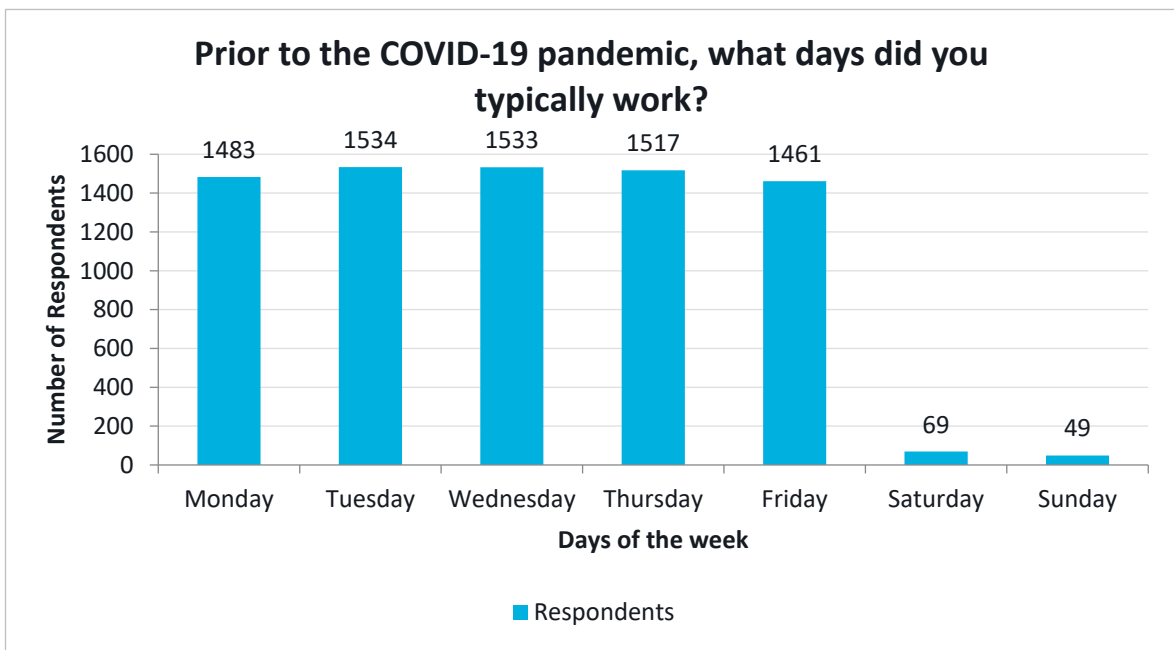
2.1 This chapter of the report outlines the individual survey responses received through the SACOG Telework Pilot Survey. The number of survey responses received from all employers is 1,592.

Detailed Summary of Survey Responses

2.2 The following section outlines a detailed summary of individual questions based on analysis of responses received.

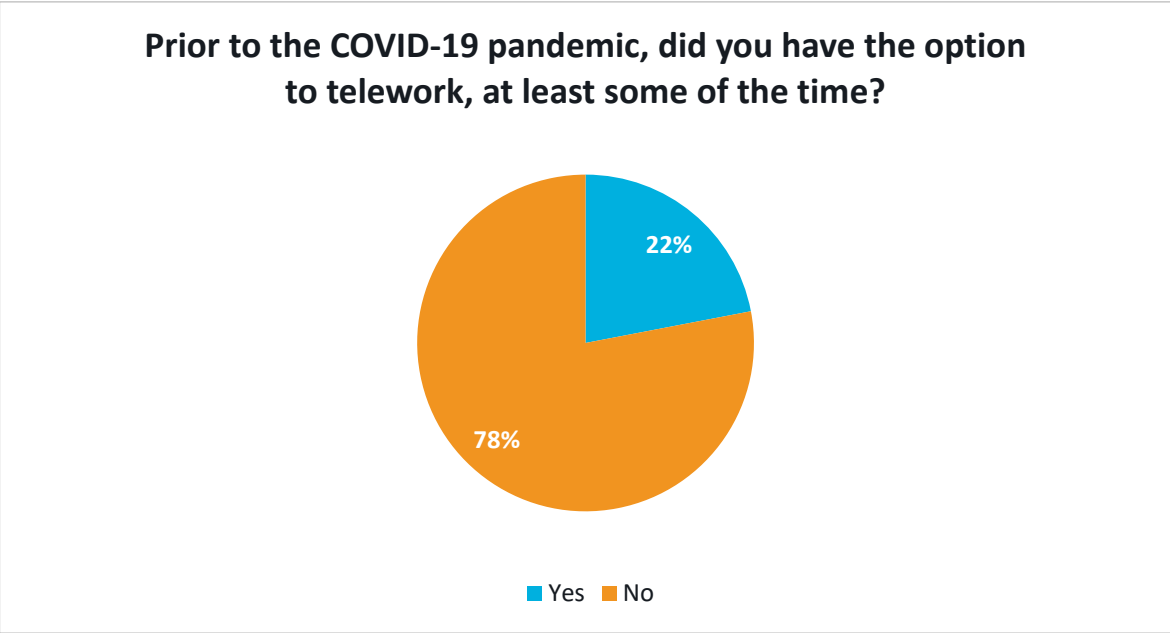
Q1. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, what days did you typically work?

- Most respondents typically worked Monday through Friday with very few respondents working on Saturdays or Sundays



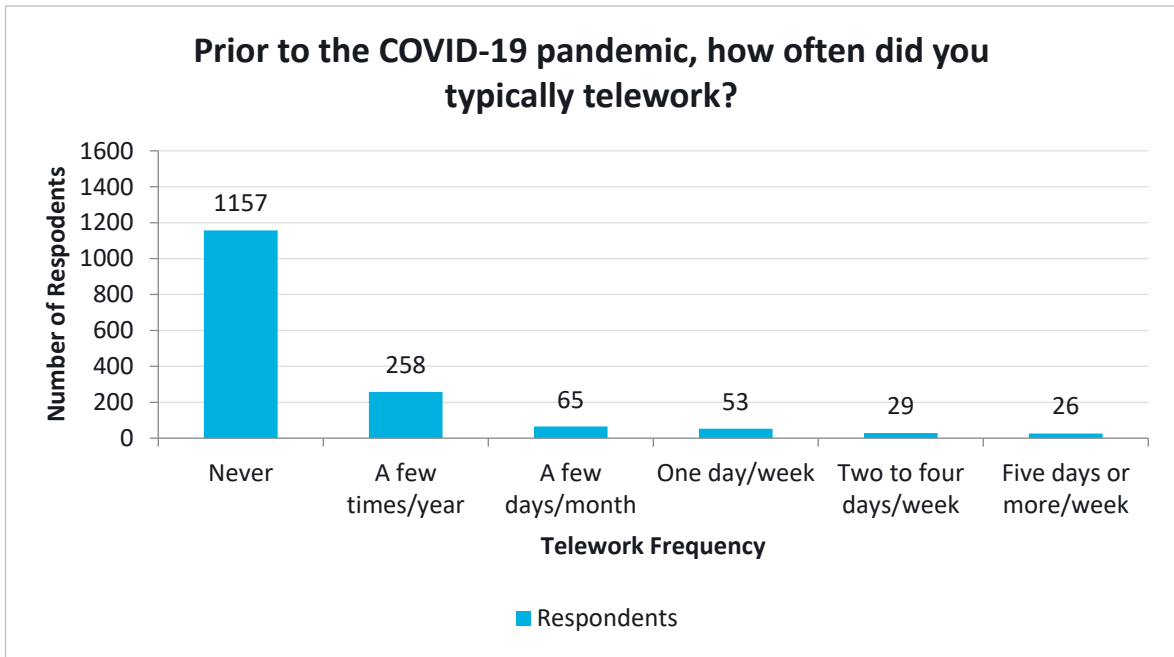
Q2. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, did you have the option to telework, at least some of the time?

- 78% of respondents did not have the option to telework before the COVID-19 pandemic
- 22% of respondents did have the option to telework before the COVID-19 pandemic



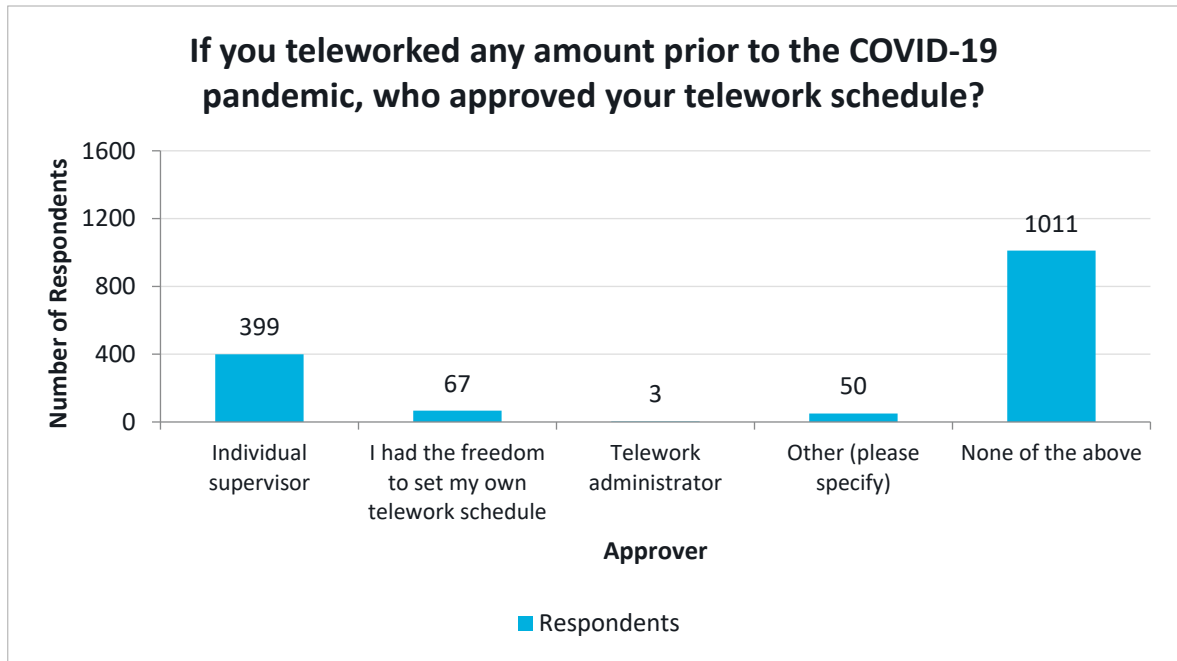
Q3. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you typically telework?

- 73% of respondents never teleworked before the COVID-19 pandemic
- 16% of respondents teleworked a few times per year
- 4% of respondents teleworked a few times per month
- 3% of respondents teleworked one day per week
- 2% of respondents teleworked two to four days per week
- 2% of respondents teleworked five days or more per week



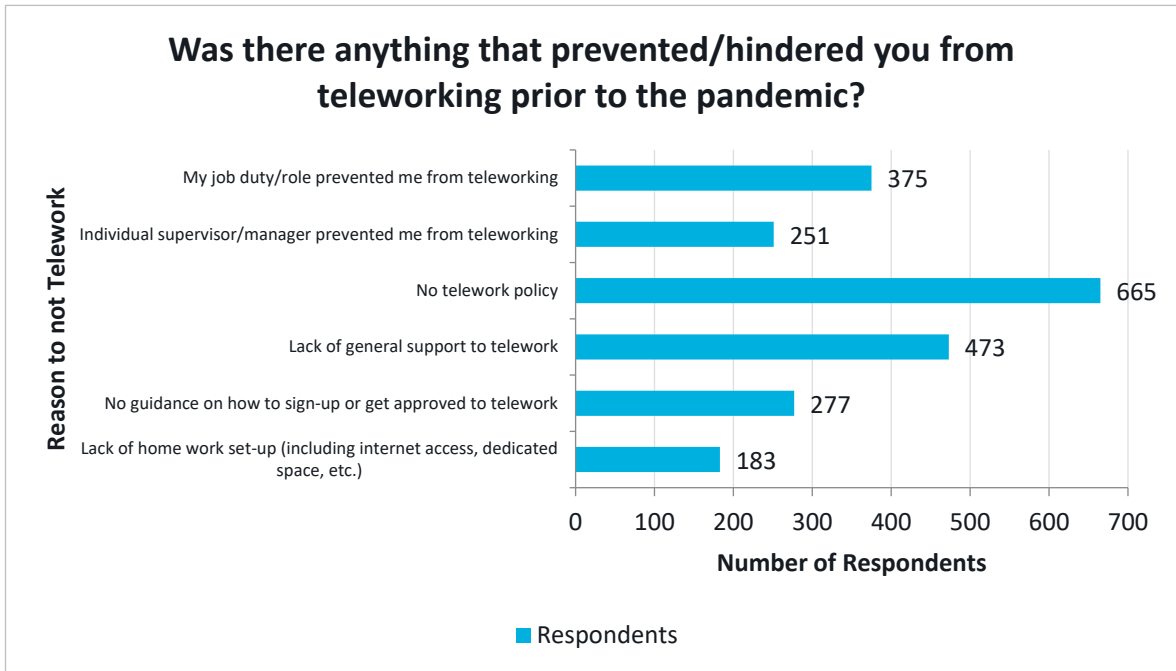
Q4. If you teleworked any amount prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, who approved your telework schedule?

- 25% of respondents coordinated their telework schedule with an individual supervisor
- 6% of respondents had the freedom to set their own telework schedule
- Only 3 respondents had their schedule approved by a telework administrator
- This question did not apply to 64% of respondents
- 3% of respondents answered “Other”



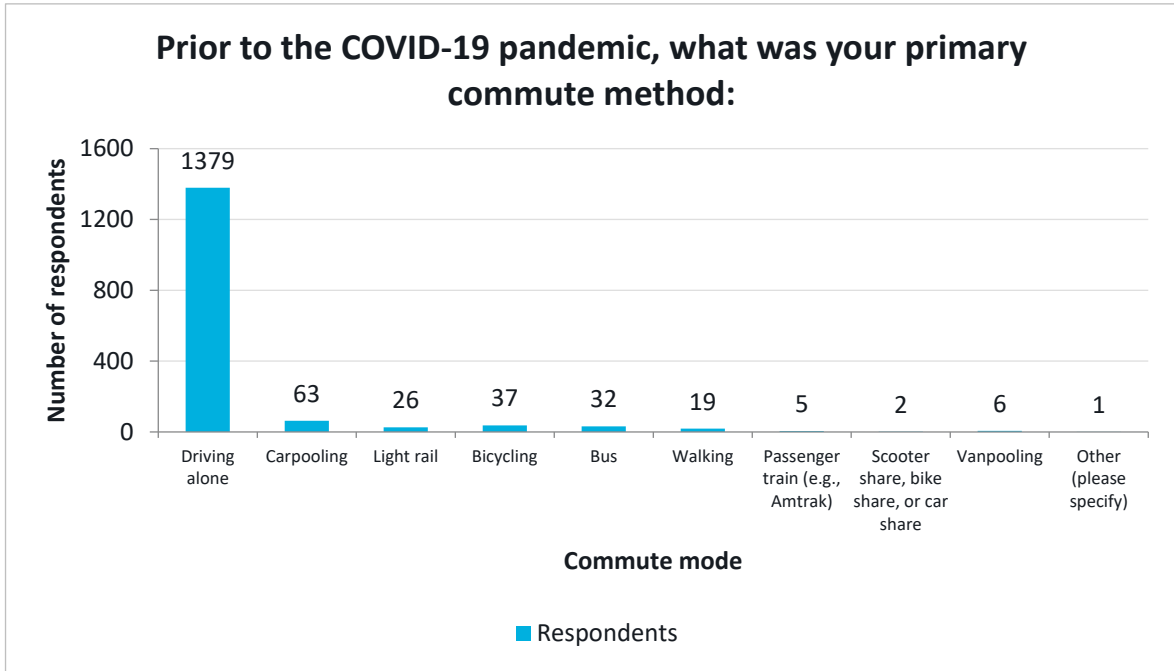
Q5. Was there anything that prevented/hindered you from teleworking prior to the pandemic?

- 42% of respondents said not having a telework policy a hindrance to teleworking
- 30% of respondents said lack of general support was a hindrance to teleworking
- 17% of respondents said they had no guidance on how to sign up or get approved to telework prevented them from teleworking
- 24% of respondents said their job role and duties were a hindrance for teleworking
- 16% of respondents said their supervisor or manager prevented them from teleworking
- 11% of respondents said a lack of a home work set-up was a hinderance to teleworking



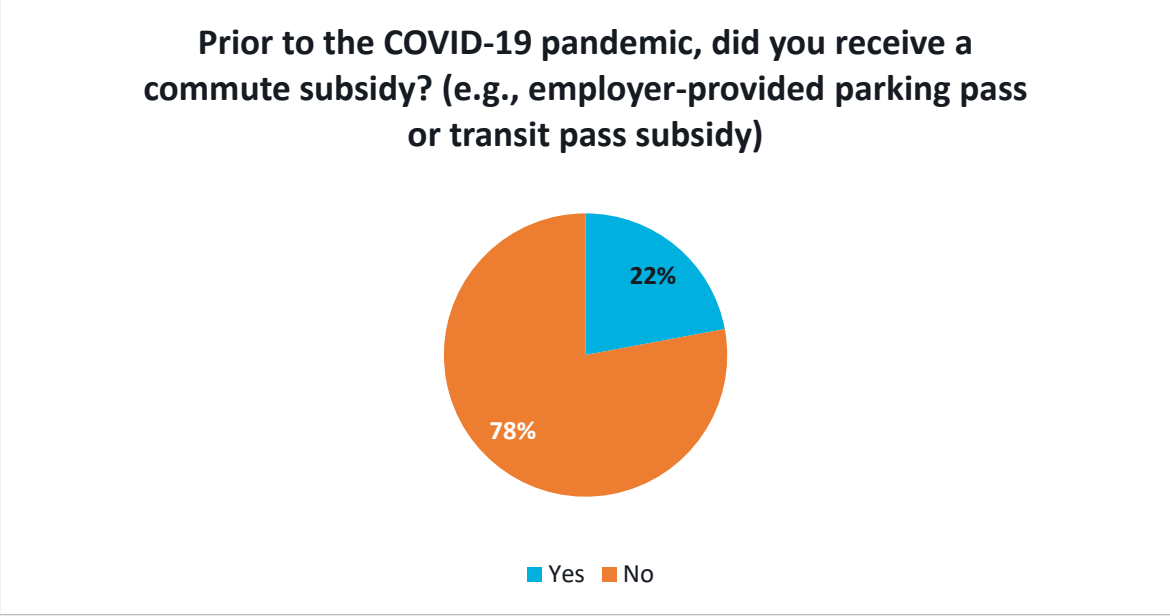
Q6. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, what was your primary commute method:

- 88% of respondents commuted by driving alone
- The next most popular modes were: Carpooling (4%), Bicycling (2%), Bus (2%), Light rail (2%), and Walking (1%).



Q7. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, did you receive a commute subsidy? (e.g., employer-provided parking pass or transit pass subsidy)

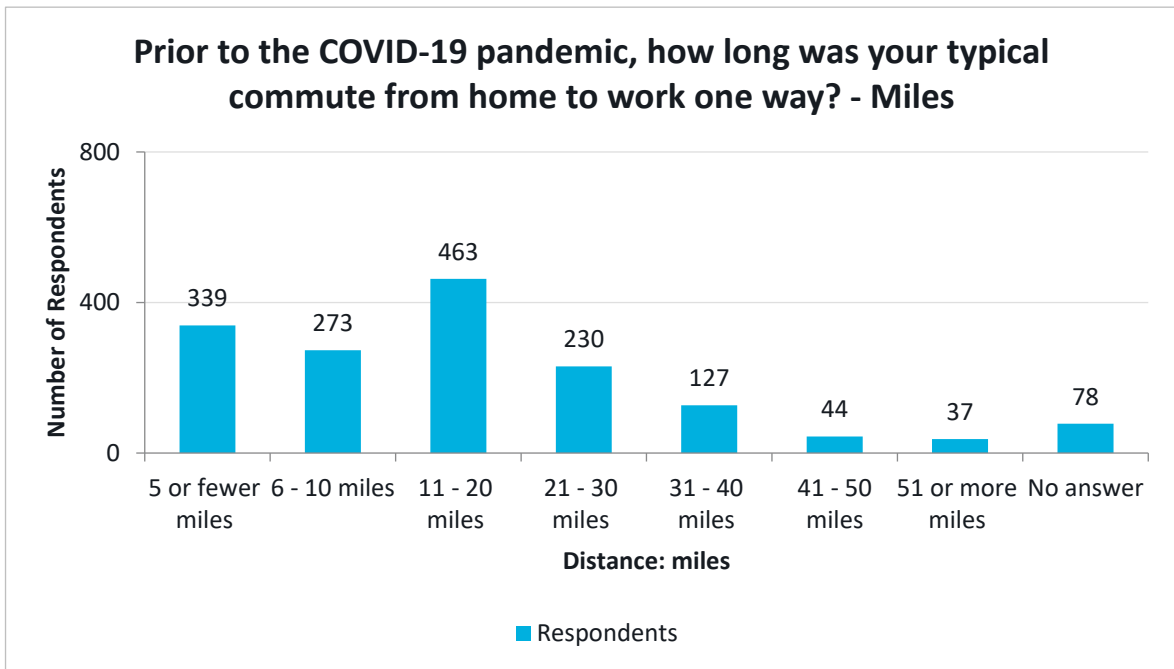
- 78% of respondents did not receive a commute subsidy prior to the COVID-19 pandemic
- 22% of respondents did receive a commute subsidy prior to the COVID-19 pandemic



Q8. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how long was your typical commute from home to work one way?

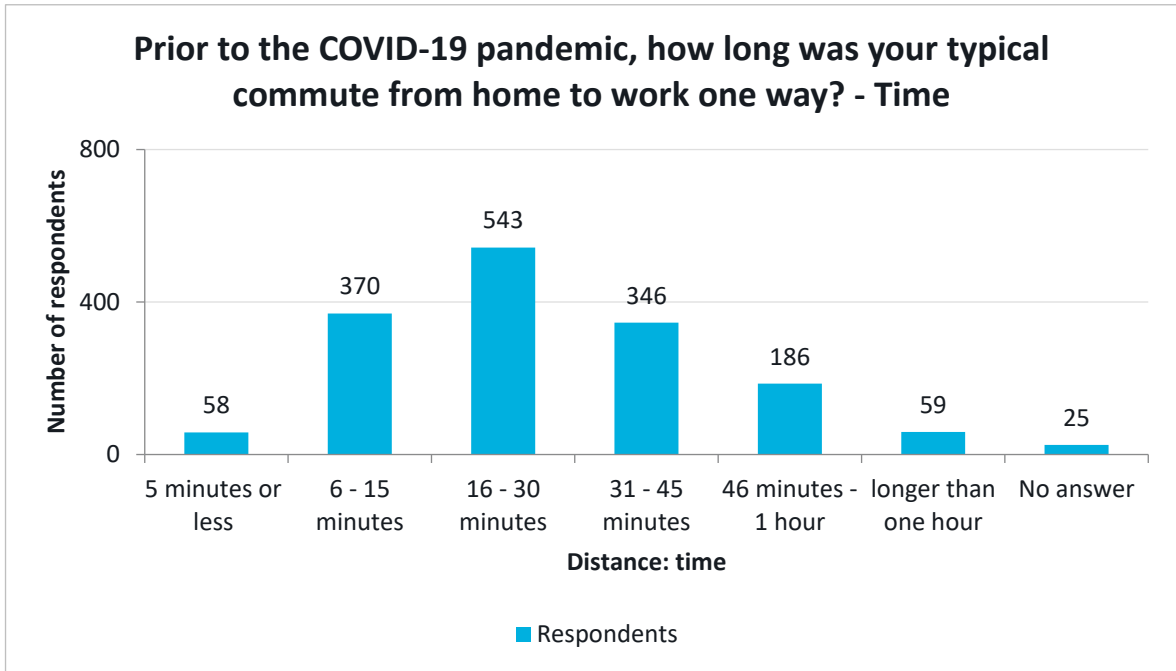
Miles

- 21% of respondents live 5 or fewer miles from work
- 17% of respondents live 6 to 10 miles away from work
- 29% of respondents live 11 to 20 miles away from work
- 14% of respondents live 21 to 30 miles away from work
- 8% of respondents live 31 to 40 miles away from work
- 3% of respondents live 41 to 50 miles away from work
- 2% of respondents live 51 or more miles away from work
- 5% of respondents did not answer the question



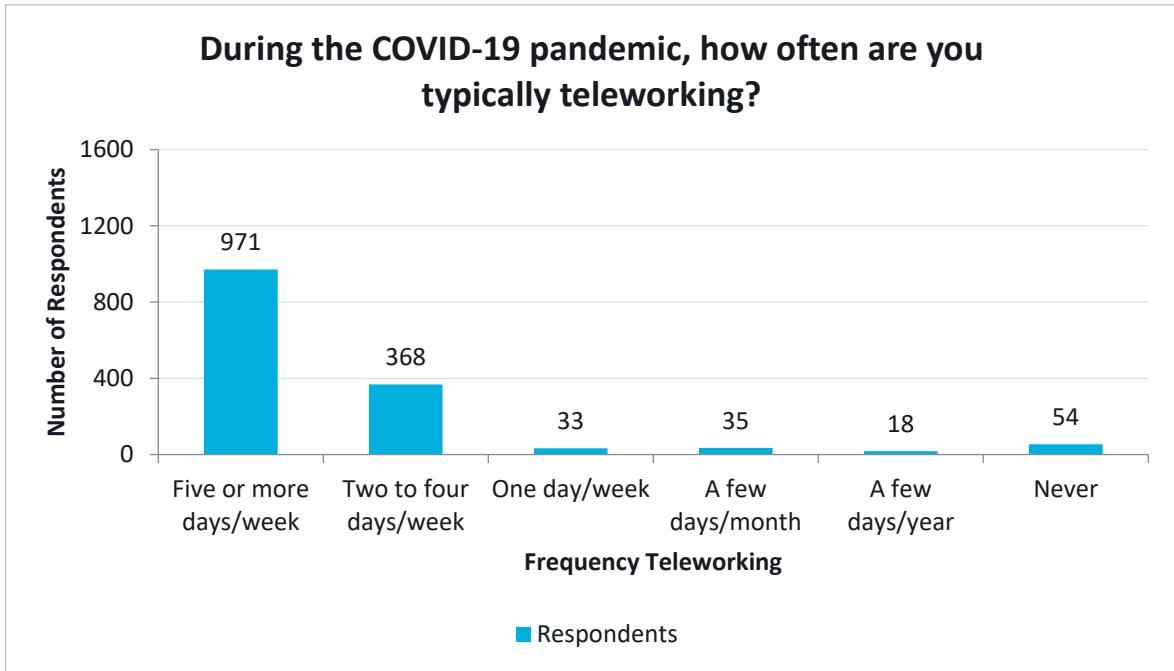
Time

- 4% of respondents live 5 minutes or less from work
- 23% of respondents live 6 to 15 minutes away from work
- 34% of respondents live 16 to 30 minutes away from work
- 22% of respondents live 31 to 45 minutes away from work
- 12% of respondents live 46 minutes to an hour away from work
- 4% of respondents live 1 hour or more away from work
- 2% of respondents did not answer the question



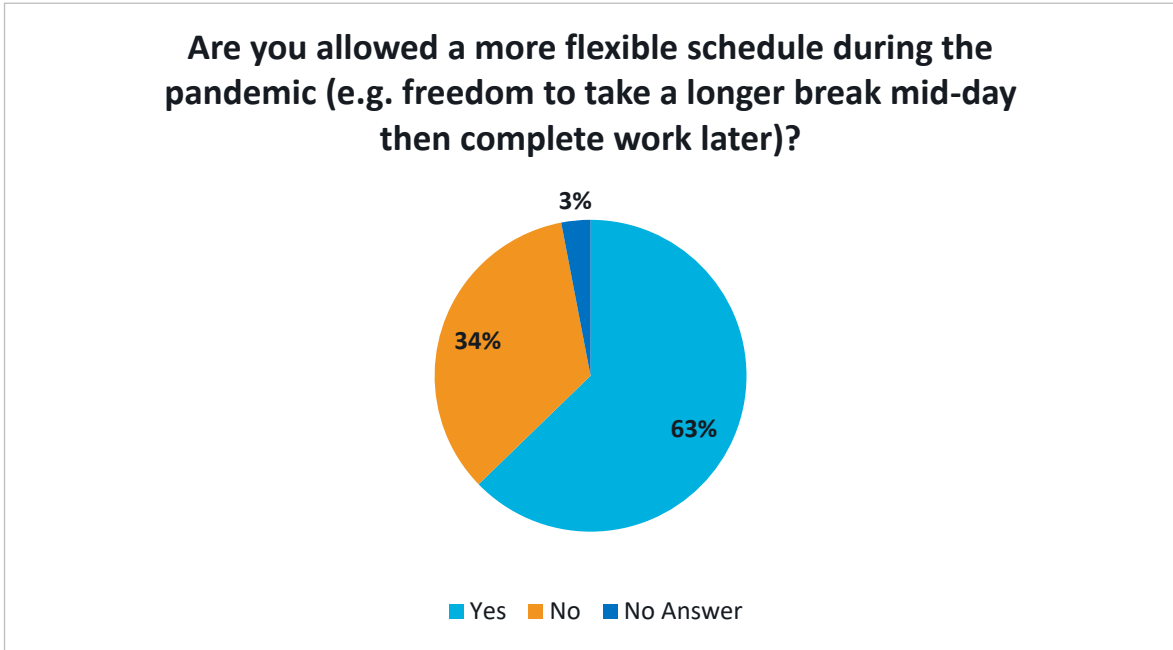
Q9. During the COVID-19 pandemic, how often are you typically teleworking?

- 61% of respondents teleworked five or more days per week during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 23% of respondents teleworked two to four days per week during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2% of respondents teleworked one day per week during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2% of respondents teleworked a few days per month during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 1% of respondents teleworked a few days per year during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 3% of respondents never teleworked during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 4% of respondents answered “Other”
- 3% of respondents did not answer the question



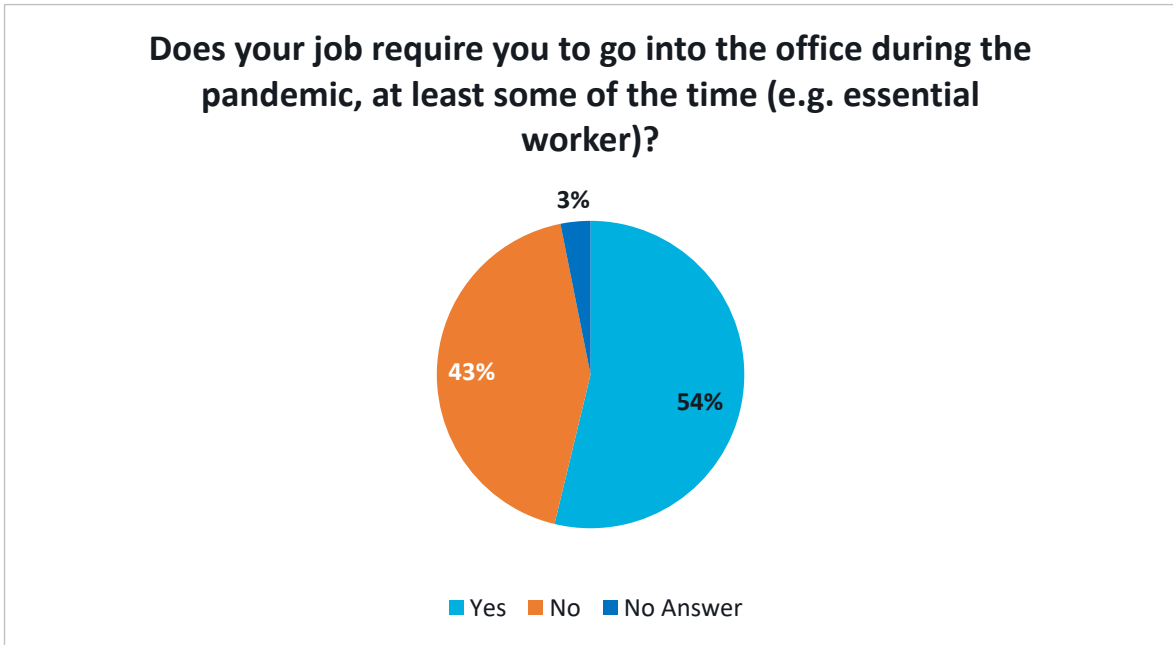
Q10. Are you allowed a more flexible schedule during the pandemic (e.g. freedom to take a longer break mid-day then complete work later)?

- 63% of respondents were allowed a more flexible schedule during the pandemic
- 34% of respondents were not allowed a more flexible schedule during the pandemic
- 3% of respondents did not answer the question



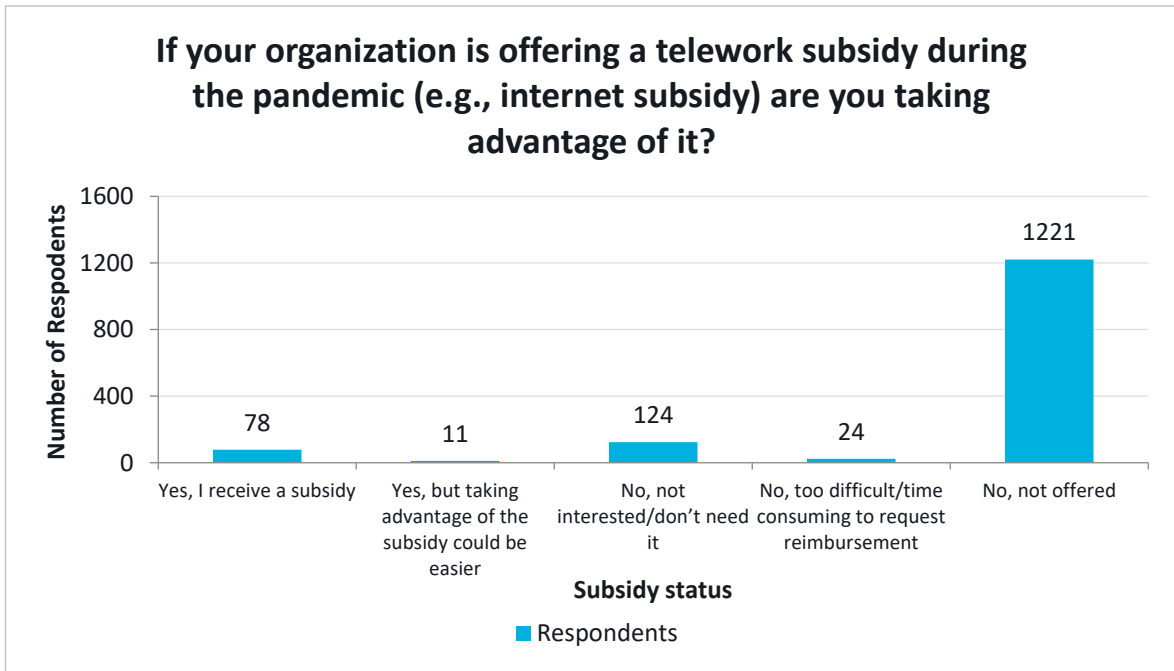
Q11. Does your job require you to go into the office during the pandemic, at least some of the time (e.g. essential worker)?

- 54% of respondents have a job that required them to go into the office during the pandemic
- 43% of respondents do not have a job that required them to go into the office during the pandemic
- 3% of respondents did not answer the question



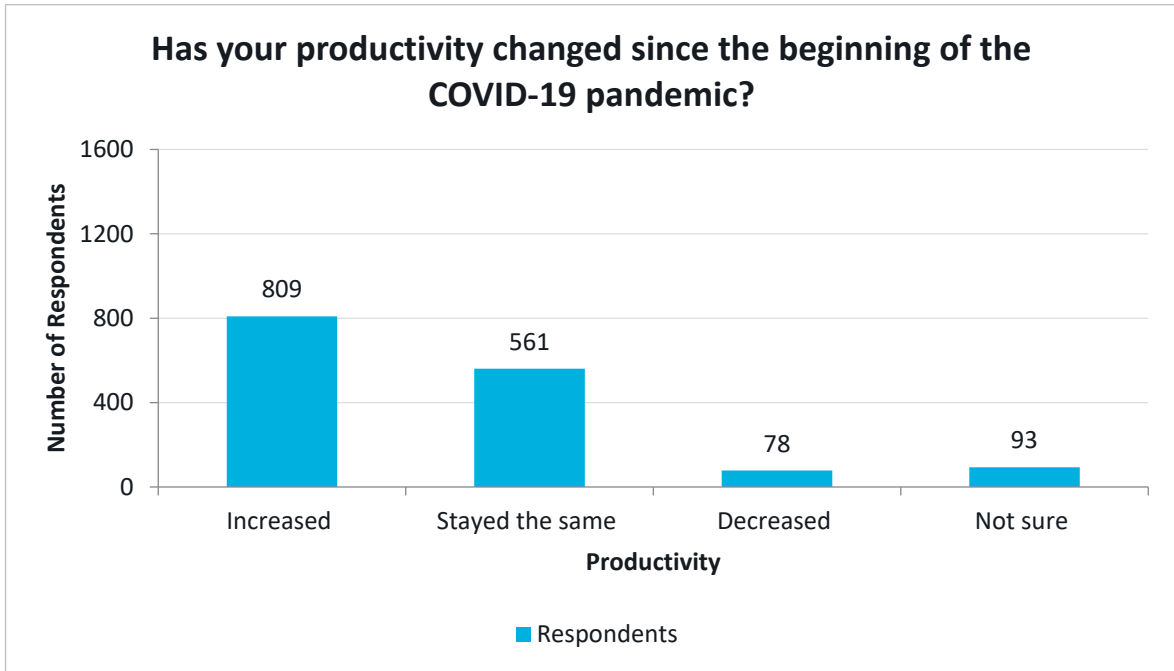
Q12. If your organization is offering a telework subsidy during the pandemic (e.g., internet subsidy) are you taking advantage of it?

- 79% of respondents are not offered a subsidy
- 8% of respondents said they are not interested or do not need a subsidy
- 5% of respondents said they are receiving a subsidy
- 2% of respondents said it is too difficult or time consuming to request a reimbursement
- 1% are receiving a subsidy but taking advantage of it could be easier



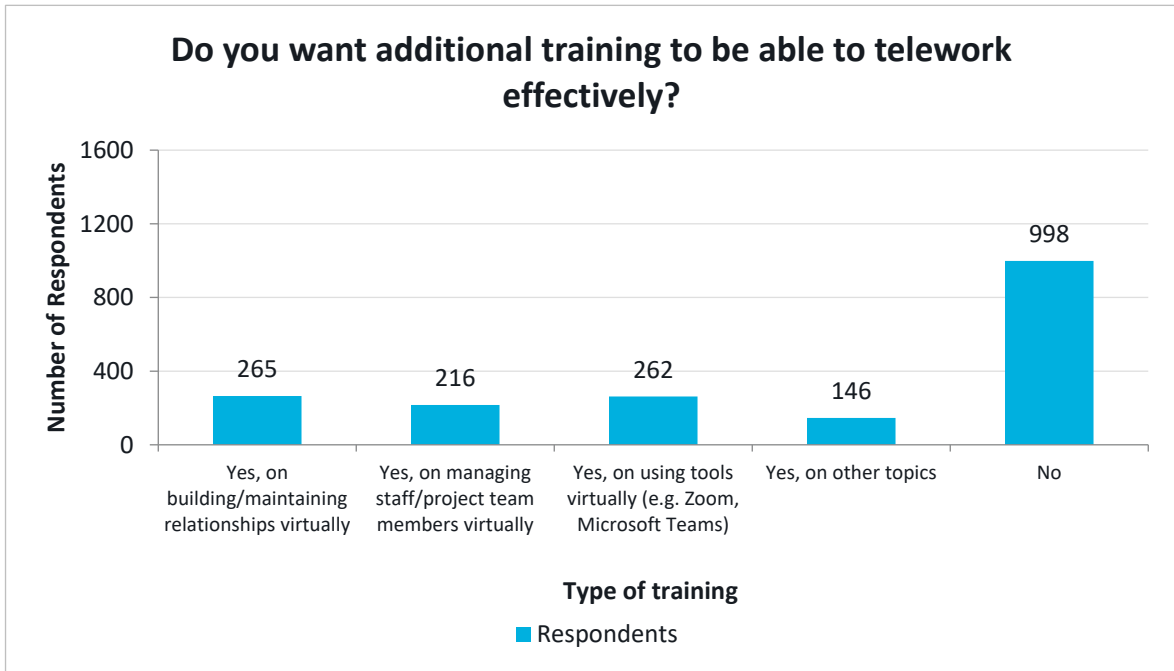
Q13. Has your productivity changed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- 51% of respondents reported that their productivity increased
- 35% of respondents reported that their productivity stayed the same
- 5% of respondents reported that their productivity decreased
- 6% of respondents are not sure
- 3% of respondents did not answer



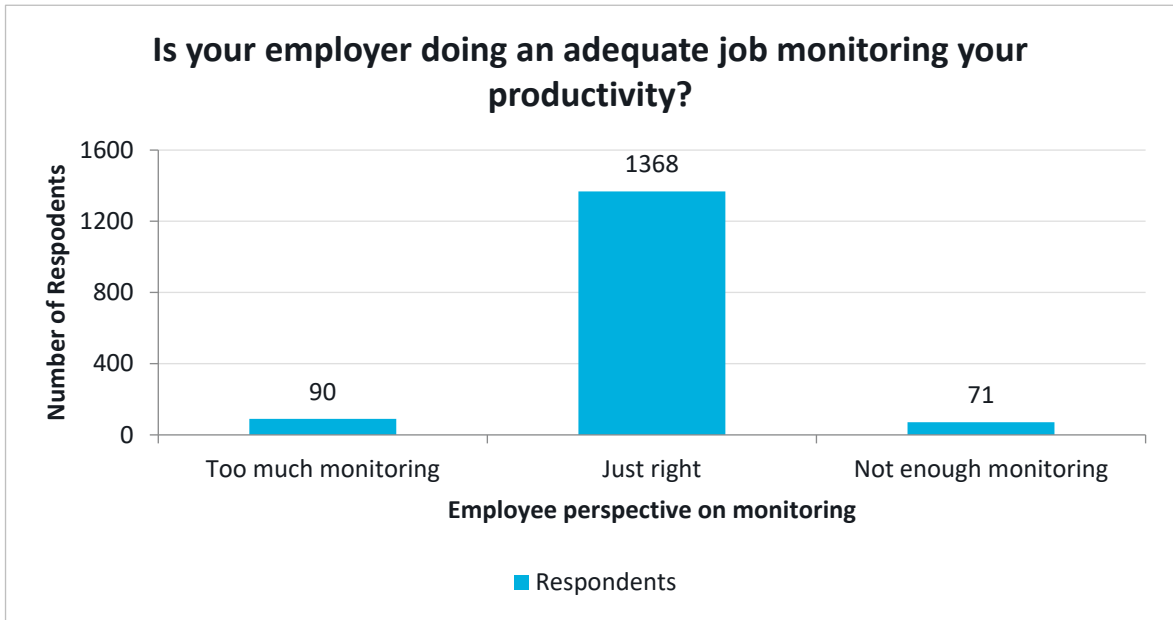
Q14. Do you want additional training to be able to telework effectively?

- 63% of respondents do not want additional training to telework
- 17% of respondents want additional training on building and maintaining relationships virtually
- 14% of respondents want additional training on managing staff and project team member virtually
- 16% of respondents want additional training on using tools virtually
- 9% of respondents want additional training on other topics



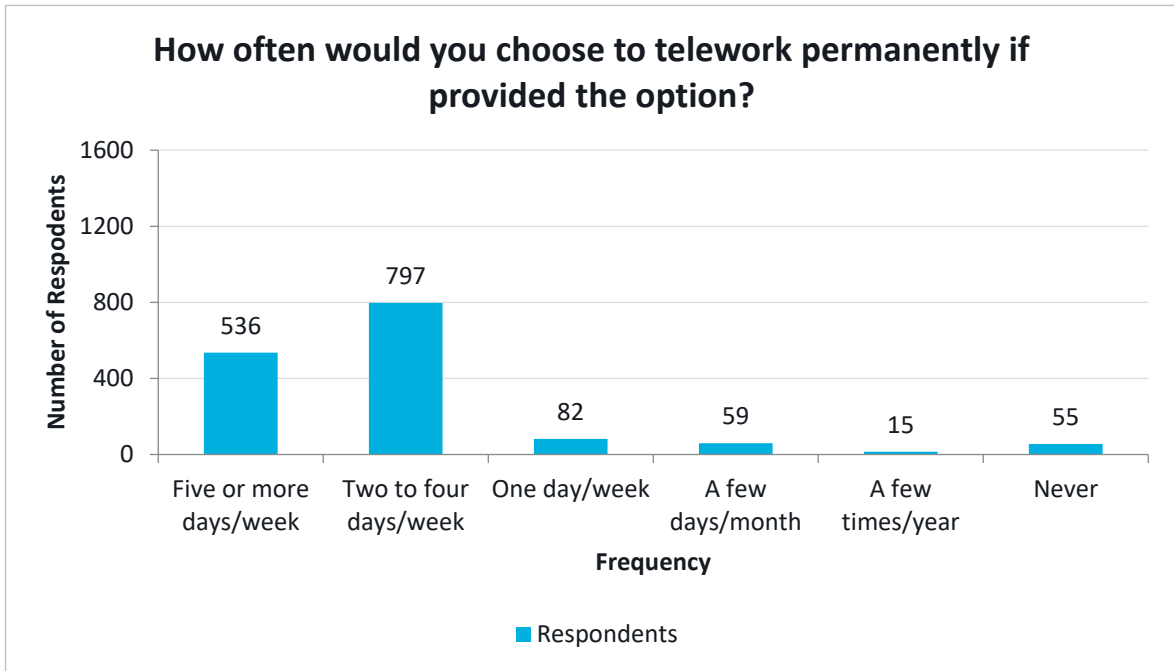
Q15. Is your employer doing an adequate job monitoring your productivity?

- 6% of respondents believe their employer is monitoring their job too much
- 86% of respondents believe their employer is monitoring their work just right
- 4% of respondents believe their employer is not monitoring their work enough
- 4% of respondents did not answer the question



Q16. How often would you choose to telework permanently if provided the option?

- 34% of respondents would choose to telework five or more days per week
- 50% of respondents would choose to telework two to four days per week
- 5% of respondents would choose to telework one day per week
- 4% of respondents would choose to telework a few times a month
- 1% of respondents would choose to telework a few times a year
- 3% of respondents would never choose to telework
- 3% of respondents did not answer the question



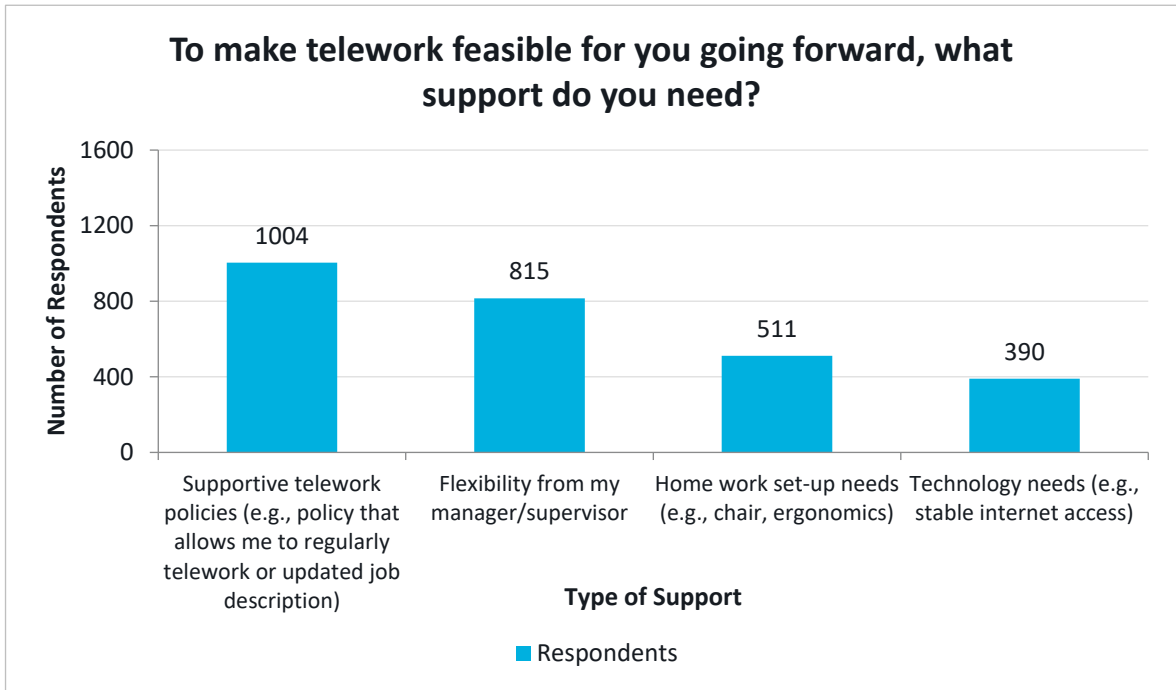
Q17. & Q18. How important are the following factors in your desire to telework?

- 80% of respondents said “Maintain better work/life balance” was very important
- 71% of respondents said “Gain greater schedule flexibility” was very important
- 69% of respondents said “Protect against illness” was very important
- 68% of respondents said “Allow for more ‘focus’ work time” was very important
- 67% of respondents said “Save time that would otherwise be spent commuting” was very important
- 67% of respondents said “Have less stress when not commuting every day” was very important
- 63% of respondents said “Able to manage distractions and interruptions” was very important
- 59% of respondents said “Increased productivity” was very important
- 56% of respondents said “Save money on transportation costs (including parking, etc.)” was very important
- 52% of respondents said “Reduce pollution” was very important
- 33% of respondents said “Able to manage childcare responsibilities” did not apply to them

Telework Statements	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Doesn't Apply
Save time that would otherwise be spent commuting	67%	18%	10%	5%
Protect against illness	69%	20%	10%	2%
Increased productivity	59%	24%	7%	11%
Able to manage distractions and interruptions	63%	24%	7%	6%
Gain greater schedule flexibility	71%	19%	5%	5%
Allow for more ‘focus’ work time	68%	22%	5%	5%
Have less stress when not commuting every day	67%	18%	10%	5%
Reduce pollution	52%	32%	11%	5%
Able to manage childcare responsibilities	33%	8%	8%	50%
Save money on transportation costs (including parking, etc.)	56%	24%	11%	9%
Maintain better work/life balance	80%	14%	3%	3%

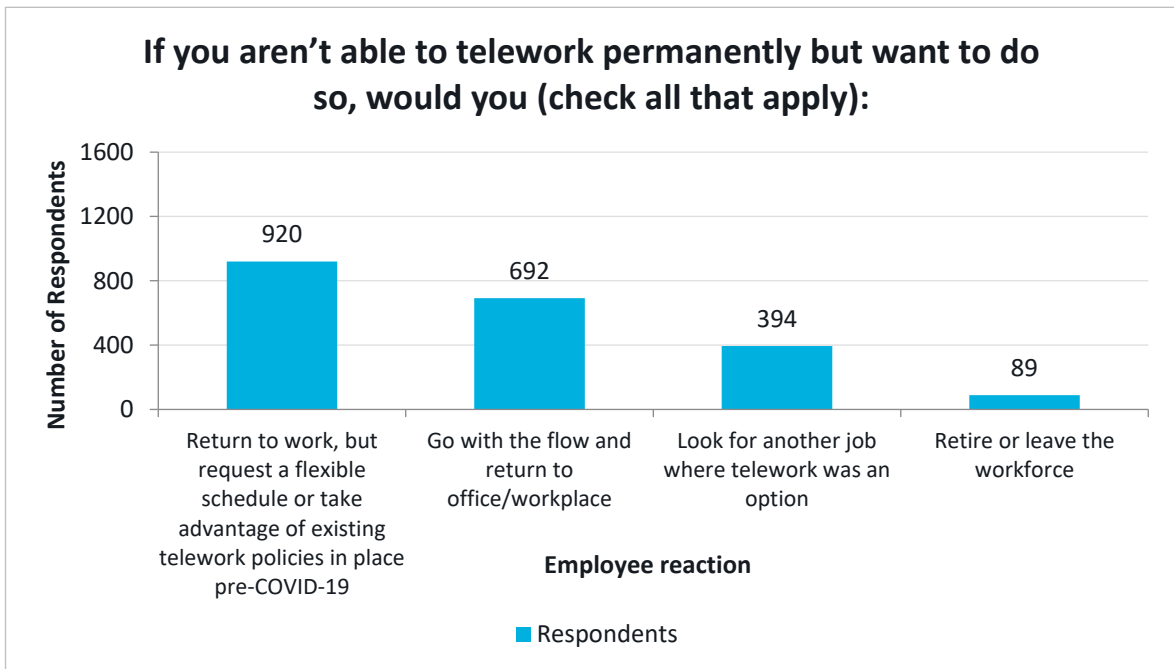
Q19. To make telework feasible for you going forward, what support do you need?

- 63% of respondents would want supportive telework policies
- 51% of respondents would want flexibility from their manager
- 32% of respondents want home work set up support
- 24% of respondents want technology support



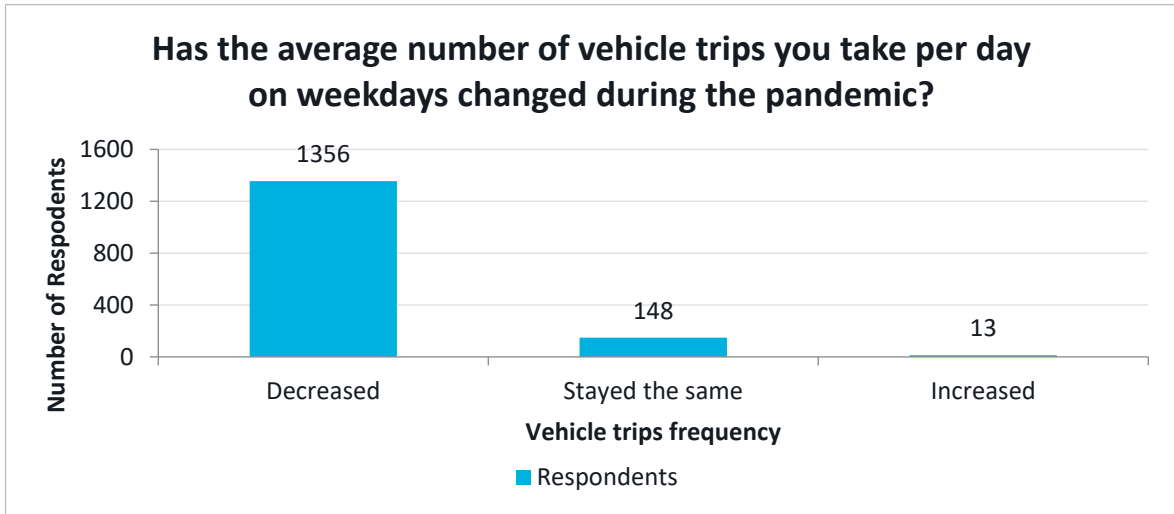
Q20. If you aren't able to telework permanently but want to do so, would you (check all that apply):

- 58% of respondents would return to work, but request a flexible schedule or take advantage of existing telework policies in place pre-COVID-19 if they weren't able to telework permanently
- 43% of respondents would go with the flow and return to office/workplace if they weren't able to telework permanently
- 25% of respondents would look for another job where telework was an option if they weren't able to telework permanently
- 6% of respondents would retire or leave the workforce if they weren't able to telework permanently



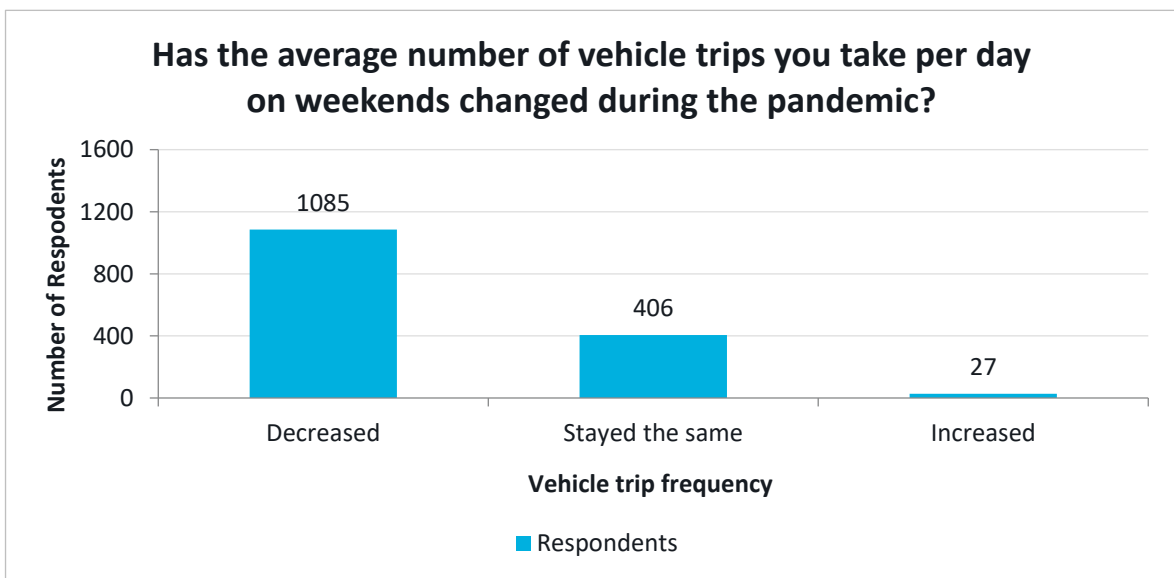
Q21. Has the average number of vehicle trips you take per day on weekdays changed during the pandemic?

- 85% of respondents said their vehicle trips per weekday decreased
- 9% of respondents said their vehicle trips per weekday stayed the same
- 1% of respondents said their vehicle trips per weekday increased
- 5% of respondents did not answer the question



Q22. Has the average number of vehicle trips you take per day on weekends changed during the pandemic?

- 68% of respondents said their vehicle trips per day on weekends decreased
- 26% of respondents said their vehicle trips per day on weekends stayed the same
- 2% of respondents said their vehicle trips per day on weekends increased
- 5% of respondents did not answer the question



Q24. Which of the following best describes your job role?

- 52% of respondents are general staff members
- 15% of respondents are management or executives
- 11% of respondents are team managers
- 7% of respondents are project managers
- 7% of respondents selected “Other”
- 9% of respondents did not answer the question



3 Summary of Key Findings

Key Findings

3.1 The key insights of the Teleworking Pilot Survey of employees are presented as follows.

Most respondents did not have the option to telework before the COVID-19 pandemic

According to the survey, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 22% of respondents reporting having the option to telework compared to 78% who did not. Almost three quarters (73%) of employees never teleworked before the pandemic suggesting that a small group of employees had the option to telework but chose not to. Among those who did telework during this time, 16% teleworked a few times per year, 4% teleworked a few times per month and the remaining 7% teleworked between one day per week and five days or more per week.

Among those who did not have the option to telework, the most frequently reported reasons preventing employees from teleworking prior to the pandemic was that there was not a teleworking policy in place to enable it (42%) and that a lack of general support was a hindrance to telework (30%). Other common reasons cited included that their job role and duties prevented them from doing so (24%) and that they had no guidance on how to sign up or get approved to telework (17%). 16% of respondents said that their supervisor/manager prevented them from teleworking while 11% did not have a home work set-up to do so.

88% of survey respondents drove alone to work prior to the COVID-19 pandemic

The primary method of commuting among all respondents prior to the pandemic was driving alone, reported by 88% of respondents. The remaining modes were split across carpooling (4%), public transit (4%), cycling (2%) and walking (1%).

Most respondents' typical commute from home to work (one way) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic was between 6-20 miles (reported by 67% of respondents). A further 14% lived between 21 and 30 miles from work, with 13% living 31 miles or further (8% of respondents did not answer this question). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most respondents (94%) reported living between 6 and 45 minutes from work. Of these, 79% of respondents lived between 6 and 30 minutes from work. 4% reported living 5 minutes or less away from work, while a further 4% reported living more than 45 minutes from work.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, just 22% of all surveyed respondents reported receiving a commute subsidy, for example an employer-provided parking pass or transit pass subsidy.

There is a high degree of interest in teleworking regularly long-term among employees, and some interest in shifting to permanent teleworking

During the COVID-19 pandemic, 61% of respondents of the survey reported teleworking five or more days a week, while 23% of respondents reported teleworking two to four days per week. Just 3% of respondents did not telework during the pandemic at all. 85% of respondents reported a drop in the average number of vehicle trips taken per day on weekdays and 68% reported a decrease on weekends. In comparison, just 1% stated their weekday vehicle trips had increased and 2% stated their weekend vehicle trips had increased during the pandemic.

More than half (54%) of those surveyed reporting having a job that required them to go into the office during the pandemic. Around two thirds of respondents (63%) reported that they were allowed a more flexible schedule during the pandemic, compared to 34% of employees who felt they did not (a further 3% did not answer the question).

During the pandemic, 78% of employees surveyed reported not being offered a telework-related subsidy, compared to 5% who reported receiving a subsidy. A further 8% stated they are not interested or in need of a subsidy, while 2% stated it too difficult or time consuming to request a reimbursement.

If permanent teleworking were to continue to be provided as an option by the employer in the long-term, 92% of employees indicated that they would want to telework at least one day per week. That included 34% of respondents who stated that they would choose to work 5 or more days per week remotely and 50% who would choose to work 2-4 days per week, suggesting that a hybrid working model would suit a high proportion of employers. Just 3% of respondents would opt to never telework permanently. This suggests a high degree of interest in continued teleworking in the future among surveyed employees in the SACOG region.

Most employees are motivated to continue teleworking to enhance their work/life balance and flexibility, and few report productivity decreases from teleworking in the pandemic

Teleworking has had a positive effect on employee productivity, in the view of surveyed employees, according to 51% of surveyed respondents. Meanwhile, 35% of respondents reported that productivity had stayed the same, while just 5% reported that it had decreased and a further 6% were unsure. A high proportion (86%) of surveyed respondents believe their employer is monitoring their workplace productivity “just right”, while 6% felt they were being monitored too much and 4% felt they were being monitored too little.

In relation to teleworking training, 63% of employees reported not wanting to receive additional training. The remaining surveyed respondents indicated an interest in training, specifically related to building and maintaining relationships (reported by 17% of respondents), using tools virtually (16%), managing staff/project team members virtually (14%) and on other topics (9%).

The most important factors in respondents’ desire to telework were work/life balance, protecting against illness, and the opportunity to have greater schedule flexibility. The most frequently reported factors in the desire to telework permanently were:

- Ability to maintain a work/life balance (viewed as very important by 80% of respondents)
- Gain greater schedule flexibility (viewed as very important by 71% of respondents)

- Protect against illness (viewed as very important by 69% of respondents)
- Allow for more focus work time (viewed as very important by 68% of respondents)
- Have less stress when not commuting every day (viewed as very important by 67% of respondents)
- Time saved that would otherwise be spent commuting (viewed as very important by 67% of respondents)

Overall, 94% of respondents viewed maintaining a better work/life balance as either somewhat important or very important in their desire to telework.

If teleworking permanently is not an option in the future, almost a third of surveyed employees would either look for another job where teleworking was an option or leave the workforce

If surveyed employees weren't able to telework permanently, the majority (58%) would "go with the flow" and return to their workplace. Meanwhile, 43% of respondents stated that they would request a flexible schedule or take advantage of existing telework policies in place pre-COVID-19 if they weren't able to telework permanently. Furthermore, 25% of surveyed respondents stated that they would look for another job where teleworking was an option if they weren't able to telework permanent at the City of Sacramento, while 6% would retire or leave the workforce.

Employees want supportive teleworking policies and support from their managers to make teleworking feasible going forwards

To make telework feasible for employees going forwards, 63% of respondents would want supportive telework policies, while 51% would want flexibility from their manager. Around a third of respondents (32%) would home-work set up support around quarter (24%) would want technology support to make telework feasible.

Conclusions

Overall, the survey highlights the shift of employees within the SACOG region for whom, prior to the onset of COVID-19, teleworking was not commonplace and sparsely practiced to a sample workforce which is operating in a largely remote working environment in the pandemic. This has had an impact on reducing vehicle miles travelled among a workforce who mostly reported driving alone to work in a pre-pandemic context. However, as 54% of those surveyed reported having a job that required them to go into the office during the pandemic, a full return to work would likely reverse this trend to some extent. This could be mitigated with improved programming encouraging non-drive alone modes, particularly for the 21% who live 5 miles or fewer from home (more than 330 employees).

During the pandemic, most employees reported either an increase in their productivity while teleworking or no change in productivity. Speculative interest in permanent teleworking among surveyed employees was very high, with 84% of employees surveyed interested in teleworking 2 or more days per week if it continued to be provided as an option by their employer in the long-term. The survey results highlight that the ability to telework in the future is a major pull factor for employee satisfaction and retention, with 1 in 3 of those surveyed reporting that they would either look for another job where teleworking was an option or leave the workforce if permanent teleworking was not an option in the future.

Work/life balance, lower levels of commuter-related stress and greater schedule flexibility emerged as key motivators for continued teleworking among employees. Flexible and supportive teleworking policies, supported by managers, were the most frequently reported means by which to support this trend.

