

A Czech Employee's Perspective on the Benefits and Drawbacks of Working from Home During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The widespread use of remote labour as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic has created new opportunities and problems for individuals and companies alike. This article seeks to examine the pros and cons of working remotely during the 2020 and 2021 pandemic from the perspective of the Czech Republic's workforce. The gender gap in Gen Z's views and experiences with remote work is one area that this research

Introduction

Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, which started in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and has since spread all over the world, has caused massive social and economic disruption. It has greatly affected the lives of Czech residents in both their personal and professional lives (ManpowerGroup, 2021). For many companies, 2020 and 2021 were challenging years. The pandemic has taught us all to be more flexible. Many businesses have seen a complete transformation in company culture as a result of these changes (HR Forum, 2021a). The COVID-19 epidemic has had a negative impact on 57% of Czech firms, according to the "ManpowerGroup Index of the job market" study by ManpowerGroup Czech Republic. 10% of these businesses have had to shut their doors permanently. A mere 3% of companies have reported an increase in activity, while 35% have reported no change all. Compared to other nations, the Czech Republic's business sector has been hit hard by the pandemic (EIPA, 2020;

aims to address. The primary objective was achieved via the selection and analysis of 475 print and online sources that offered quantitative and qualitative data related to the topic. Next, we have a greater understanding of these concerns thanks to the survey, comparison, and synthesis.

Keywords: home working, positives, negatives, Czech Republic.

Deloitte, 2021; TfN, 2021). Consistent with the global average, 63% of Czech Republic firms have claimed that the pandemic has negatively affected their operations (ManpowerGroup, 2021).

Workplaces and employees have been hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak, which has accelerated digitalization in a number of industries. Employees' routines have evolved, supervisors and subordinates no longer meet face to face on a regular basis, and employees' priorities regarding benefits have been reevaluated. However, a new phenomenon—working from home—has emerged as a result of the pandemic. Among human resources concerns, remote work has received the most attention recently. In the first case, when people seek it out but are unable to get it; in the second case, when people encounter it without wanting it (202.212). This is further supported by the large number of publications discussing the topic of working from home. From 2019 to 2020, the number increased by a factor of eight, as stated by Hájková (2021). From what we can tell from the literature and the

authors' own accounts, none of the several studies that have looked at the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on Czech businesses and employees have come to any kind of conclusion. This may be useful for arranging remote employment in the future. Therefore, this article intends to fill this information gap by offering a thorough evaluation, from the viewpoint of employees in the Czech Republic, of the benefits and drawbacks of working remotely over the 2020 and 2021 COVID-19 pandemic. One goal is to gauge the sentiment towards remote work among Generation Z, the generation that will make up the workforce in the years to come. In the future, people will see working remotely more as the standard than a benefit.

Theoretical background

In the ten years before the COVID-19 epidemic, there was a steady rise in intermittent distant employment. Prior to the pandemic, only 5.4% of workers in the EU-27 sometimes worked remotely; this figure has remained almost unchanged since 2009 (Eurostat, 2021). This impacted around 4% of Czech Republic workers (Kyzlinková et al., 2020). Dandová (2021) states that employees have the opportunity to accomplish their jobs remotely. A growing number of companies throughout the world, including those in the Czech Republic, are embracing the concept of remote work from home as a strategy in preparation for the impending COVID-19 pandemic (Mustajab et al., 2020). Telecommuting will play a significant role in the workforce of the future (Bai et al., 2020). Working from home is advantageous for most firms and individuals. According to many studies (Bathini and Kandathil, 2019; Galanti et al., 2021; Nakrošienė et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2018; Rupietta Beckmann, 2018), employees who exercise more autonomy tend to put in

more effort, take more initiative, be more engaged, and have better overall health. Furthermore, several studies have shown that there are various advantages to remote workers. Hylland and Prottas (2017) and Okuyan and Begen (2021) listed a number of benefits that businesses can take advantage of in the modern workplace. These include being able to respond quickly to changes in the market, attracting and retaining top talent, increasing productivity and morale, improving work-life balance, decreasing sick days, cutting down on transportation costs, and making work easier through technological advancements. On the other hand, there are downsides to working from home that affect both employers and employees. A number of studies, including one by Galanti et al. (2021) and another by Eng et al. (2010), have shown that telecommuting may lead to problems including stress, loneliness, and tension between the workplace and home life. On top to that, several studies have proven that there are a lot of negative aspects to having employees work remotely. Not everyone is comfortable working remotely, there are a lot of problems with staff development and lack of transparency in the workplace, employees are more prone to distractions while working, costs are higher, burnout and work-related fatigue are more likely, and there are a lot of other issues.

problems including: not all jobs can be done remotely, mental and physical exhaustion, poor morale among employees, threats to data security, unreliable home access to critical files and devices, and trouble striking a balance between work and personal life (Galanti et al., 2021; Palumbo, 2020; Okuyan and Begen, 2021; Vione and Kotera, 2021). It is critical to find ways to lessen the negative aspects of working from home and to maintain productivity and individual well-being, which is of the highest importance, particularly during the

COVID-19 pandemic (Okuyan and Begen, 2021). A shift towards remote work doesn't mean employees have to give up all face-to-face interaction with coworkers. Combining in-office and remote work may be a very efficient arrangement, and holding regular meetings is a terrific way to keep staff interested and informed (Businessinfo, 2021). Because of the outbreak, many specialists had no choice but to work remotely. Companies began to reevaluate their office space, size, and location in addition to implementing hybrid work arrangements (Szumilo and Wiegelmann, 2021). In October 2020, 76% of CEOs who participated in the Fortune/Deloitte CEO Survey anticipated a future in which their companies will need less physical space. This has the potential to drastically cut down on both operating and capital costs. One of the top three expenses for most businesses is real estate and facilities, which constitute 2% to 5% of revenues (Gryphon and Asker, 2021). Research indicates that coworking spaces are poised for a significant surge in popularity.

Several changes in perspective and expectations among employees have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic; according to Aon's 2021 UK Benefits and Trends Survey, 79% of companies are worried they will need to adjust employee benefits to meet the new normal (Aon, 2021). Worldwide insurance brokerage and consultancy firm Willis Towers Watson performed research in the UK and found that 42% of companies changed their benefit packages due to the outbreak. While it's true that COVID-19 did not eliminate the need for benefits, it did create new ones for many people (Rappaport, 2020). The study's aims, methods, and findings The major purpose of this article is to provide an overview,

from the point of view of the Czech Republic's employees, of the pros and cons of working remotely during the pandemic of 2020 and 2021. In July 2021, the project's first stage got underway with the selection of 87 relevant print newspapers (often available online) and 365 virtual retrospective quantitative and qualitative pieces on the pandemic's impact on the Czech Republic's workforce and the world economy. In the Czech language, writers with substantial expertise accounted for about three quarters of the articles. Local specialists in fields such as economics, management analysis, personalisation, company ownership and management, and recruitment consultancy were among these persons. Hájková, A., Očenášková, A., Černohlávková, L., Housková, S., Kazdová, A., Kvapil, K., Hovorková, L., Jarošová, B., Reiner, T., Stegura, T., and other writers are instances of these. These authors provide their expertise to well-known Czech specialised journals like *Praktická personalistka*, *Ekonom*, *Personál*, *HR Forum*, etc., which cover a wide range of topics. Web of Science and Scopus databases also included around 25% of the English-language publications, which was necessary for showing the whole studied area and giving the possibility of comparing the Czech Republic's condition to that of other countries. Relevant search terms like "remote," "work," "home," COVID-19, affects, positives, negatives, and combinations of these were used to get these articles. These were articles published in renowned magazines such as *Journal of Applied Psychology* (Dutch authors Stollberger, J. et al.), *International Journal of Manpower* (Israeli author Nativ, R.), *Journal of Corporate Real Estate* (American authors Eunhwa, Y. et al.), *Frontiers of Psychology* (Swiss authors Zurcher, A. et al.), *Stress and Health* (Dutch authors Darouei, M. and

Pluut, H.), Journal of Labour Market Research (Norwegian authors Holgersen, H. et al.), Technology in Society (Macedonian authors Prodanova, J. and Kocarev, L.), Gender, Work and Organisation (British authors Antonacopoulou E. P. and Georgiadou A.) and others. The articles were filtered using the identical set of keywords in both English and Czech, with 80% of the material being authored in English and 20% in Czech. Both languages covered topics related to remote work. Czech writers including Drahošová, B., Vacková, H., Verner, I., Klímová, Z., and others wrote the pieces, and they were joined by overseas professionals in the subject who publish on news servers and specialised websites. Some examples of authors from this group include the following: Cook, J., Laljee, J., Zeidner, R., Dalzell, S., Partridge, J., and others from the UK and France. On top of that, 23 scholarly articles on the topic of remote work were also found during that time. The Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as well as consulting and recruiting companies both domestic and international, as well as other groups and people, were among the many sources of these documents. Hence, 475 digital and print sources were used. Publications of the works appeared in print and online media throughout the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021. References are only included in the list if they fairly represent the content of all sources that were utilised to conduct the study. We used content analysis to produce the state-of-the-art report; descriptive research was used to collect secondary data for the project's subsequent phases in July 2021. In August 2021, researchers in the Czech Republic looked into the benefits and drawbacks of remote work from the perspective of employees there in light of the country's transition to this kind of employment. The first research question

was formulated based on the previously specified major goal: First Question: From the perspective of the Czech Republic's workforce, what are the benefits and drawbacks of remote work? Following this, the writers offered recommendations for the future of remote work based on their own experiences, inductive reasoning, and deduction, all of which built upon the main purpose. These recommendations were expanded to similar economies, such as the Czech Republic's. In an attempt to complete the half-goal, we asked respondents to offer their ideas on Generation Z's home-based work in June 2021. Employees' thoughts on the benefits and drawbacks of telecommuting were the intended focus of the survey. Considering the previously mentioned partial aim, two questions were posed: Second Question: Can members of the millennial generation identify the pros and cons of Considering remote work from the standpoint of employees, comparable to those who worked remotely for a year during the pandemic, does this perception persist when considering gender as well? Q3: Is there a difference in perspective between Generation Z and those that worked remotely for a year due to the pandemic? To what extent are these distinctions true? Are gender considerations also important? In the second year of bachelor's degree programmes in economics, management, marketing, and trade at one of the Czech Republic's state institutions' Faculty of Economics, 172 students (110 female and 62 male) registered. A 100% return rate was guaranteed by the high sample size. Thanks to the free-form nature of the comments, people were able to expound on the benefits and drawbacks of remote work from the employee's point of view. To assess the replies, we used descriptive statistics with a second-level gender classification and content analysis. The scope of this research was so constrained

that it could only apply the aforementioned statistical approaches and analysis.

Final Product The ability to set one's own schedule (68%), spending less time on boring activities (e.g., makeup application, commuting, etc., 64%), saving money on lunches and commuting (30%), feeling more independent (59%), multitasking (63%), and spending more time with family (33%), are all benefits that have been previously shown to individuals who have worked from home. Citations: Hájková (2021) and Očenášková (2021a). Data published last year by the ABSL organization—which connects business service centers—also makes it possible to see that some employees have taken advantage of the outbreak to further their own professional growth. The percentage of centres offering online education increased by 66%, the percentage of workers taking language lessons by 33%, the percentage of workers seeking to learn new capabilities by 41%, and the percentage of workers improving their soft skills by 64% (Profi HR, 2020b). The results show that when working remotely, 51% of employees are more productive, 36% see no change, and 13% see a decline, according to research from the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice. Workers are able to get more done in less time since they don't have to worry about as much on the route to work, they don't have to deal with colleague disruptions, and they can plan their duties more efficiently (Novinky.cz, 2021). Černošková and Housková (2021) reference studies conducted by LMC, which showed that 60% of managers were taken aback by the impressive outcomes of remote work during the spring and fall coronavirus outbreaks. Managers who were first sceptical about remote work eventually came to accept the reality that their staff performed just as well, if not

better, when given the freedom to do so. Researchers Hájková (2021) and Langvik et al. (2021) found that remote workers often encounter problems like missing coworkers (37%), having trouble communicating with coworkers (31%), lacking necessary tools (28%), having problems with time management (23%), and having children interrupt and distract them (14%). There is a lack of distinction between people's private and public lives, and many report feeling lonely as a result. Because micromanagers don't trust them, information flows badly, and they can't see how the company runs, people in this role typically feel alone. There is a decrease in teamwork as well as socialisation chances, a distinct organisational structure, and regular routines associated with workdays (Novinky.cz, 2021; Očenášková, 2021b; Kvapil, 2021). Očenášková (2021b) and IDnes.cz (2021) state that workers have been assessing the impact of complete or long-term home working on their relationships with superiors and colleagues, as well as their sense of belonging to the firm, in a negative light. During this period, ApuTime and DAP Service both discovered a decline in motivation. According to this research (IDnes.cz, 2021), long-term remote work decreases intrinsic motivation by 6.5% compared to 2019. While some companies see a little decrease, others witness a loss in the tens of percent. Research done by the SC&C firm for System4u indicates that not all people are well-suited to work remotely. Fifty percent or more of employees say it's very difficult or very challenging to work remotely. Of those who work in the office, 42% say that the hardest part is trying to get a hold of colleagues by email or phone; these people miss the days of more relaxed, one-on-one conversations; A large portion of the workforce is impacted by problems including insufficient hardware, unreliable

connections, restricted user rights, difficult and non-functional connections to the company's internal network, and incomplete access to programmes (Buřinská, 2021). This is supported by research conducted by the communication firm AMI Communications: One in eight workers perceive the group situation as deteriorating due to factors such as cooled relationships and jealousy of working conditions (Profi HR, 2020a). Nearly half of respondents (48%) say that the present situation has impacted relationships amongst colleagues. Similarly, 34% say that their relationship with their employer has changed, either for the better or worse. Working remotely for long periods of time was associated with greater unfavourable outcomes for less experienced employees who need more regular face-to-face interaction with their mentors, according to a spring 2021 study by Survio (Kvapil, 2021). The emotional and physical toll of the pandemic was heavy on those who had the option to work remotely (Okuyan and Begen, 2021). Research done by the company MultiSport found that one-third of the population did not exercise at all, not even once weekly but just every two weeks or once a month; while just 20%

exercised with the same intensity as before the pandemic (HR Forum, 2021b). The writers of this piece set out to partly find the attitude of young people, prospective workers, and representatives of Generation Z on home working since they are in constant touch with them. Aiming to fill this information gap, the paper cites no studies that addressed the processing of findings based on identity markers (age and gender). Generation Z is about to join the workforce, so it would benefit employers to understand their perspectives on remote work and other work-related issues. This will help employers balance their own ideas with employees' and leverage Generation Z's strengths to reach their goals and remain competitive. A total of 172 students from Generation Z (110 female and 62 male) participated in the poll. They were given the opportunity to provide detailed, first-person explanations of the benefits and drawbacks from the viewpoint of the employee in the aforementioned question. Following their investigation, the authors were able to

Tab. 1: Positive and negative aspects of home working from the employees' point of view

Positive aspects	Total	Men	Women
Time saving	79 (45.9 %)	31 (50 %)	48 (43,6 %)
Cost saving	56 (32.6 %)	24 (38.7 %)	32 (29,1 %)
Growth of self-reliance, responsibility, and efficiency	41 (23.8 %)	28 (45.2 %)	13 (11,8 %)
Flexibility	41 (23.8 %)	5 (8.1 %)	36 (32.7 %)
No need to care about appearance	23 (13.4 %)	8 (12.9 %)	15 (13.6 %)
Less stress	21 (12.2 %)	11 (17.7 %)	10 (9.1 %)
Higher productivity	15 (8.7 %)	9 (14.5 %)	6 (5.5 %)
Skills development	10 (5.8 %)	2 (3.2 %)	8 (7.3 %)
Prevention of workplace-related conflicts	8 (4,7 %)	6 (9.7 %)	2 (1,8 %)
Negative aspects	Total	Men	Women
Missing personal contact	97 (56.4 %)	38 (61.3 %)	59 (53.6 %)
Worse work ethic, motivation, lower efficiency	75 (43.6 %)	29 (46.8 %)	46 (41.8 %)
Disturbance by other members of the household	35 (20.3 %)	12 (19.4 %)	23 (20.9 %)
More time spent working	27 (15.7 %)	6 (9.7 %)	21 (19.1 %)
Health issues	12 (7 %)	4 (6.5 %)	8 (7.3 %)
Connectivity issues	9 (5.2 %)	5 (8.1 %)	4 (3.6 %)
Impossibility to use employee's benefits	9 (5.2 %)	3 (4.8 %)	6 (5.5 %)
Increased household costs	8 (4.7 %)	4 (6.5 %)	4 (3.6 %)

Feeling to be constantly online	8 (4.7 %)	2 (3.2 %)	6 (5.5 %)
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Source: Authors' own research

conclusion

Research, comparison, and synthesis of the survey data provided above may provide a response to the first question, Q1: What are the main pros and cons of remote work for employees in the Czech Republic? this manner: The main reason why workers see working from home as a benefit is that it gives them more control over their schedules and helps them save both time and money. Another perk is that they have more time to spend with their family as they are able to take care of housework while they are at work. Workers also like that it helps them develop professionally, gets them more done in less time, and prevents them from being distracted by their colleagues. Time management issues, improper communication with colleagues, insufficient tools, and missing coworkers are the most negative aspects, according to the employees. a lack of motivation, strained relationships with coworkers and supervisors, an inadequate flow of information, a lack of insight into company activities, isolation, a blurred boundary between work and personal life, children's interruptions and distractions, a lack of full access to company applications, connection instability, limited user rights, and negative effects on physical and mental health. The benefits and drawbacks of remote work in the Czech Republic are fairly similar to those in other countries with similar economies, such as Slovakia, Germany, or Poland (Deloitte, 2020; EIPA 2020). The impacts of the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on Czech Republic workers were examined in this article. We can also affirmatively answer Q2 after reviewing the responses: Does Generation Z, from an employee perspective, view the pros and

cons of remote work in the same way as those who worked remotely for a year during the pandemic? And does this perception hold true when we also consider gender? All of the aforementioned surveys found that members of Generation Z agree with the employees who worked remotely for a whole year during the pandemic on the benefits and drawbacks of remote work. There are certain differences between the sexes in terms of the benefits and drawbacks of remote employment. It is also feasible to answer the third question, Q3, based on the examination of the responses: What, if any, differences exist in how Generation Z and the workers who worked remotely for a year during the pandemic see home working? Do these disparities also vary when we take gender into account? There are some distinctions; gender also plays a role in shaping these views. When asked about the pros and cons, respondents from the employee perspective cited the prevention of conflicts related to work as an additional positive, while those from the employer perspective cited the inability to use benefits and higher household expenses as negatives. Another potential plus from the employer's perspective was the ability to recruit talented individuals from outside the country, whereas respondents listed the inability to communicate with their supervisor as a negative. These were minor additional thoughts pertaining to the aforementioned polls; a bigger proportion of respondents did not mention any of these favourable or negative elements. The effects of the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on Czech Republic workers were the focus of this article. The research technique of this study is centred

on a positive-objective approach. It primarily employs a literature review of 475 articles, both online and in print, that discuss the impact of the pandemic on the Czech Republic's workforce and the job market. We used descriptive statistics and content analysis with a second-level gender categorization to evaluate the responses. Due to the serious nature of the epidemic, home employment was the subject of much research. From the perspective of Czech Republic workers, several surveys were used to identify the good and bad elements of this scenario. The writers also polled members of Generation Z to get their thoughts on the pros and cons of working from home.

One potential drawback of the overview study is that, despite the authors' best efforts, they may not have been able to capture all the material available on the particular subject in terms of the number of published papers. The article's exclusive emphasis on the Czech Republic is another limitation. But if we look at the papers that have been examined and digested, we can say that, with a few exceptions (like how we handle productivity control), the Czech Republic is not so different from other similar states. Another potential issue is the use of secondary data analysis. Because of this, the writers had no say in how the study was conceived or what data was collected. However, secondary data allowed us to save time and money while simplifying the study's implementation. According to the authors, where this field of study may go from here is towards a survey of the pros and cons of remote work from the perspective of employers; this could lead to more insightful predictions on the future of remote work.

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