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The Global Persistence of Work from Home

Cevat Giray Aksoy,¹ Jose Maria Barrero,² Nicholas Bloom,³
Steven J. Davis,⁴ Mathias Dolls⁵ and Pablo Zarate⁶

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HOOVER INSTITUTION
434 GALVEZ MALL
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
STANFORD, CA 94305-6010

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Work from home (WFH) surged worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic, then partially receded as the pandemic subsided. Using our Global Survey of Working Arrangements (G-SWA) for 40 countries, we find that average WFH rates among college-educated employees stabilized after 2022. The average number of WFH days per week is steady at roughly one day per week globally from 2023 through early 2025. Cross-country variation persists: WFH is about twice as common in advanced English-speaking economies as in much of Asia. These results indicate that the pandemic-driven shift to remote work has persisted and reached a new equilibrium with implications for urban economies, workforce flexibility, and future research on labor markets.

Keywords: Work from home, working arrangements, remote work

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¹ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and King's College London cevat.aksoy@kcl.ac.uk

² Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México jose.barrero@itam.mx

³ Stanford University nbloom@stanford.edu

⁴ Hoover Institution at Stanford University StevenD5@Stanford.edu

⁵ ifo Institute dolls@ifo.de

⁶ Princeton University pzarate@princeton.edu

Introduction

Is widespread work from home (WFH) coming to an end? In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work soared to unprecedented levels, becoming a defining feature of modern labor markets. But as office mandates return and commuting picks up in many cities, there is growing debate over whether the WFH revolution is now receding—and if so, by how much and for whom. At the same time, cross-country differences in remote work adoption remain stark, raising questions about the global reach and staying power of this shift.

Prior to the pandemic, WFH was relatively rare. In 2019, only about 5–7% of paid workdays in the United States occurred at home; by spring 2020, that share had spiked to nearly 60% during lockdowns (Barrero et al. 2023). Although WFH levels declined in subsequent years, they remained well above pre-pandemic norms—around 28% of days in the U.S. by mid-2023 (Barrero et al. 2023). Globally, similar patterns emerged, though with notable regional variation: remote work became more common in English-speaking and Northern European countries in the early 2020s but remained limited in much of Asia and Latin America (Aksoy et al. 2022, 2023). These gaps reflect a mix of institutional, technological, and cultural factors (Choudhury et al. 2021). Yet, limited data exist to compare WFH rates consistently across many countries and to determine whether the global expansion of remote work would continue or plateau.

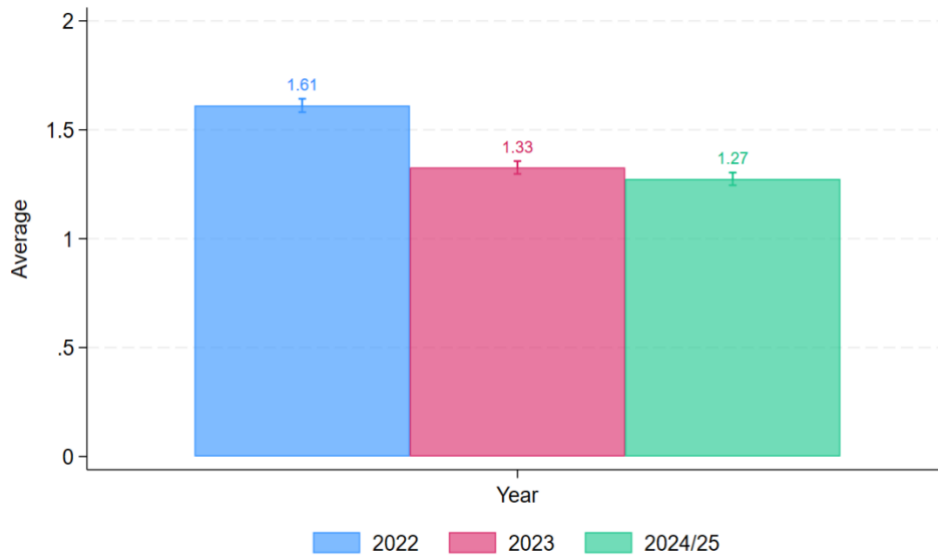
Understanding where WFH stands today is crucial because remote work influences a wide range of outcomes. A large body of evidence shows mixed effects on productivity—positive in some contexts (Bloom et al. 2015; Choudhury 2021) and negative in others (Gibbs et al. 2022; Emanuel and Harrington 2024). WFH also shapes labor supply, particularly for women with young children, caregivers, and workers with disabilities, who value flexibility and are more likely to participate in the workforce when remote options are available (Mas and Pallais 2017; Aksoy et al. 2022; Bloom et al. 2025). And at a macro level, WFH is transforming urban economies—affecting real estate markets, wage setting, and commuting patterns (Barrero et al. 2022; Gupta et al. 2024; Delventhal et al. 2023). These broad and lasting effects make it essential to track how WFH is evolving and where it may be heading.

To address these gaps, we draw on data from the Global Survey of Working Arrangements (G-SWA)—the only recurring, stratified globally harmonized survey on remote work. In its latest wave, the G-SWA surveyed 16,422 full-time, college-educated workers across 40 countries between November 2024 and February 2025. Covering all major world regions – and matching gender, age, and education distributions within each country – the G-SWA data yield insights about WFH around the world. Our analysis centers on two key questions: (i) Has the decline in remote work continued, or have WFH levels stabilized? and (ii) How large are the differences in WFH rates across countries?

Results and Discussion

Global stabilization of WFH rates. Our central finding is that the overall prevalence of WFH has stabilized since 2023 at the global level. Figure 1 shows the average number of fully paid days worked from home per week, based on the last three waves of the G-SWA, for the 22 countries surveyed in all three waves. Globally, this average fell from about 1.6 days in 2022 to 1.3 days in 2023, and stands at 1.27 days in late 2024 / early 2025 (Wave 4). In percentage terms, this implies that roughly 25% of workdays are now done from home among college-educated workers, on average. The small change from 2023 to 2024/25 (1.33 to 1.27 days) suggests the post-pandemic pullback in remote work has bottomed out.

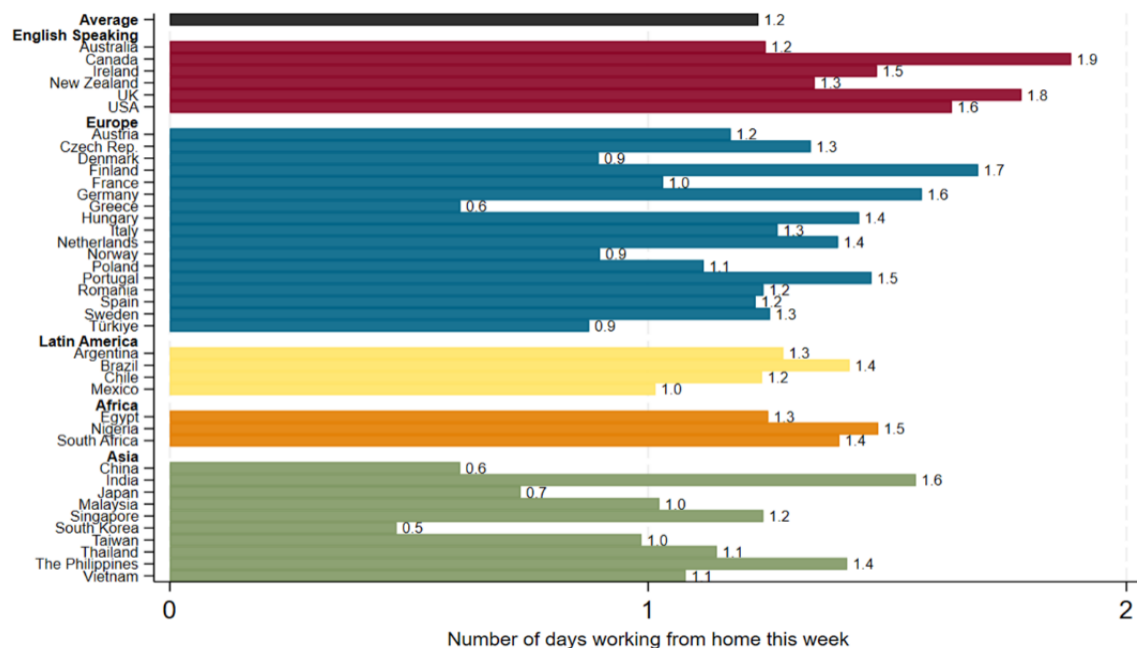
Figure 1: Work from home levels have stabilized since 2023



Note: Responses to: “For each day last week, did you work 6 or more hours, and if so where?”. N=40,751 college-educated workers in 22 countries surveyed in 2022, 2023 and 2024/25. Source: Global Survey of Working Arrangements.

This global plateau in WFH echoes patterns observed in other data. For example, office occupancy rates, cell-phone mobility data and job posting indicators also point toward a stabilization in remote-work levels after 2022 (Buckman et al. 2023). In the United States, a large panel of businesses and workers likewise indicates that WFH settled at just over one-quarter of workdays by 2023 (Barrero et al. 2023). Our multi-country evidence confirms that a similar stabilization has occurred broadly across the world’s advanced and emerging economies. The global average of roughly 1.3 days/week global average obscures wide variation in working arrangements across countries.

Figure 2: Work from home is more common in North America and Europe, and less common in Asia, College-Educated Workers



Note: Responses to the question “For each day last week, did you work 6 or more hours, and if so where?” N=16,422 college-educated workers in 40 countries surveyed in November 2024 – February 2025. Source: Global Survey of Working Arrangements.

Cross-country variation in WFH adoption. Rates of work from home continue to exhibit wide geographic variation (Figure 2). For example, college-educated employees in the United States, Canada, the UK, and Australia typically report about 1.5–2.0 WFH days per week on average. In contrast, workers in several East Asian countries average well below 1 WFH day per week. European and Latin American countries fall in between, generally around 1 day per week. These patterns in the 2024-2025 data closely mirror those from our previous 2022 and 2023 survey waves. The rank ordering of countries by WFH levels has remained consistent year-to-year. This persistence suggests that structural factors – such as the occupational mix, pandemic experiences, housing markets, and cultural norms – play a significant role in how much work from home happens in each country (Alipour et al. 2023).

Discussion

Our study provides new evidence that WFH arrangements have become an enduring feature of the post-pandemic global workplace. Using unique survey data from 40 countries, we show that the share of work performed from home has plateaued since 2023, following an initial decline from its 2020–2022 highs. The world has seemingly arrived at a new equilibrium with much higher WFH rates than before the pandemic, even as most work continues to happen at employer worksites. Cross-country differences in WFH rates remain large, reflecting structural and cultural influences that merit further investigation.

Materials and Methods

Data and sample. We analyze data from the Global Survey of Working Arrangements (G-SWA) Wave 4, conducted between November 2024 and February 2025. The G-SWA is an international survey administered to adult workers via professional survey firms in each country. Wave 4 covers 40 countries, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, dozens of European and Asian economies, as well as a selection of Latin American and African countries. To focus on jobs with WFH potential, the analysis sample targets respondents who are college-educated full-time employees aged 20–64. National samples are constructed to be broadly representative of the college-graduate workforce in each country with respect to age, gender, and other demographics (quota sampling is used to ensure balance). The total sample size is 16,422 respondents. In analyses of changes over time (Figure 1), we restrict to the 22 countries that were surveyed in all three comparison waves (2022, 2023, 2024) to form a balanced panel; results are similar when using all available countries per wave.

Supporting Information. The online SI Appendix provides additional details on the Wave 4 data and fieldwork. All data and replication code will be made publicly available through an open-access repository upon publication.

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Competing interests The authors declare no competing interest.

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Supporting Information

The fourth wave of the G-SWA has been fielded in 40 countries from November 2024 to February 2025. The survey includes two equally sized subsamples in each country. The first subsample consists of adults aged 20 to 64, while the second is restricted to full-time working adults aged 20 to 64 who have completed at least secondary education. In France, Germany, Italy, the UK and the US, total sample sizes amount to more than 2,500 respondents, respectively. In all other countries, total samples consist of roughly 1,000 responses.¹ In this report, we restrict attention to full-time workers, aged 20-64, with completed tertiary education, coming from both subsamples.

In addition to basic questions on demographics, employment status, earnings, industry, occupation, marital status and living arrangements, the survey asks about current, planned and desired WFH levels, and more. We design the G-SWA instrument, adapting questions from the U.S. SWAA developed by Barrero et al. (2021). We enlist professionals to translate our original English-language questionnaire into the major languages of each country. To ensure high-quality translations, we also enlist an independent third party with knowledge of the survey to review the translations and revise as needed.

To field the G-SWA, we contract with [Bilendi](#) (a professional survey firm), which implements the survey directly and in cooperation with its external partners. The survey effort taps pre-recruited panels of people who previously expressed a willingness to take part in research.² Recruitment into these panels happens via partner affiliate networks, multiple advertising channels (including Facebook, Google Adwords, and other websites), address databases, and referrals. New recruits are added to the panel on a regular basis. When it is time to field a survey, Bilendi or its partner issues email messages that invite panel members to participate. The message contains information about compensation and estimated completion time but not about the survey topic. Clicking on the link in the invitation message takes the recipient to the online questionnaire. Respondents who complete the survey receive cash, vouchers or award points, which they can also donate.³

Before our analysis of the G-SWA data, we drop “speeders,” defined as respondents in the bottom 5% of the completion-time distribution for each country. Additionally, we remove those who fail either of three attention check questions, removing another 15% of respondees.⁴ After these drops, our analysis sample contains 16,422 observations across the 40 countries in Wave 4. Appendix Table A.1 reports statistics on response time, observation counts and dates in the field for each country. Our samples are broadly representative by age, gender, and education for the group of full-time workers in each country.⁵

¹ The sample size in India and Nigeria is somewhat smaller and amounts to 875 respondents.

² Bilendi and its external partners do not engage in “river sampling,” whereby people are invited to take a survey while engaging in another online activity. Relative to river sampling, the use of pre-recruited panels affords greater control over sample composition and selection.

³ We do not contact respondents ourselves, do not collect personally identifiable information, and have no way to re-contact them.

⁴ “What is 3+4?”, “In how many big cities with more than 500.000 inhabitants have you lived? Irrespective of the truth, please insert the number 33 in order to continue with the survey”, and we ask “Age” at the start of the survey and “Year of birth” at the end of the survey.

⁵ Respondents take the survey on a computer, smart-phone, iPad or like device, so we miss persons who don’t use such devices.