

Press release

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Remote working: most employees want to go back to the office after the pandemic - but not as often as before

In mid-January 2021, the Federal Council imposed new rules requiring people in Switzerland to work from home. Many people now apparently like to work from home: office workers in Switzerland would like to work partly (62%) or even completely (26%) from home even after the pandemic. This was revealed in a representative survey conducted by Deloitte Switzerland in mid-February. Young people have a more positive attitude towards working from home than older employees, who are more attracted to their familiar working environment. The survey respondents also consider themselves more productive at home than in the office, but a majority see the lack of personal contact as the biggest drawback. The trend towards remote working is likely to have lasting and far-reaching effects on the economy and society. Companies must consider how they want to organise work in the future and come up with solutions that on the one hand enable employees to work flexibly and on the other hand ensure competitiveness in the market.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic a year ago, remote working has become the topic on everyone's lips. In February 2021, 52 per cent of the working population in Switzerland was working wholly or partly from home: during the initial lockdown a year previously, the figure was 50 per cent. For 36 percent, working from home is not possible due to the nature of their profession. This is the result of a representative survey conducted by the auditing and consulting firm Deloitte between 12 and 23 February among around 2,000 people of working age living in Switzerland.

Majority for combination of working from home and being in the office

According to the Deloitte survey, a large majority (88%) of office workers do not want to spend every working day in the office in the future (see chart 1). Almost two-thirds (62%) of respondents want to work from home on some days each week even after the pandemic, and 26 percent would prefer to work from home all the time.. Only 12 percent want to work full time in the office.

"The last twelve months have shown that remote working works very well for many people. The fact that so few want to return to the office completely after the pandemic confirms this," says Reto Savoia, CEO of Deloitte Switzerland. "A clear majority wants a suitable mix of remote working and office presence for the work of the future and wants to take advantage of both working models.

Companies cannot and should not close their minds to these needs. The trend towards remote working is bringing about major economic and social changes and will, for example, have an impact on public transport, the real estate market, and the hospitality sector and retail trades. At the same time, flexible and attractive remote working models also open up new opportunities for companies and their workforce, be it in an expansion of the recruiting radius or the establishment of new family models."



- Solely in the office
- Less than half of my working time in the home office
- At least half of my working time in the home office
- Solely in the home office

Chart 1: How would you like to work in the future if you had the choice?

Differences between generations of employees

When it comes to individual preferences, there are also differences between the generations: Among those under 30, only 9 percent want to return to the office completely; and among those over 50, 16 percent no longer want to work from home. On

the other side of the spectrum, the picture is similar: 31 percent under 30 want to work full time from home even after the pandemic, compared to only 22 percent of the over-50s.

"The younger generations want more flexibility at work," explains Veronica Melian, Human Capital Leader at Deloitte Switzerland. "Attracting young talented people remains a major challenge for many companies. It is important that employers understand the preferences and work styles of their younger employees and provide for them in their companies in a targeted and productive way. Companies need to offer flexible workplace models to attract much-needed young talent who are geographically flexible and consciously seek a modern and forward-thinking work environment. This is a key strategic challenge for many companies given the worsening skills shortage."

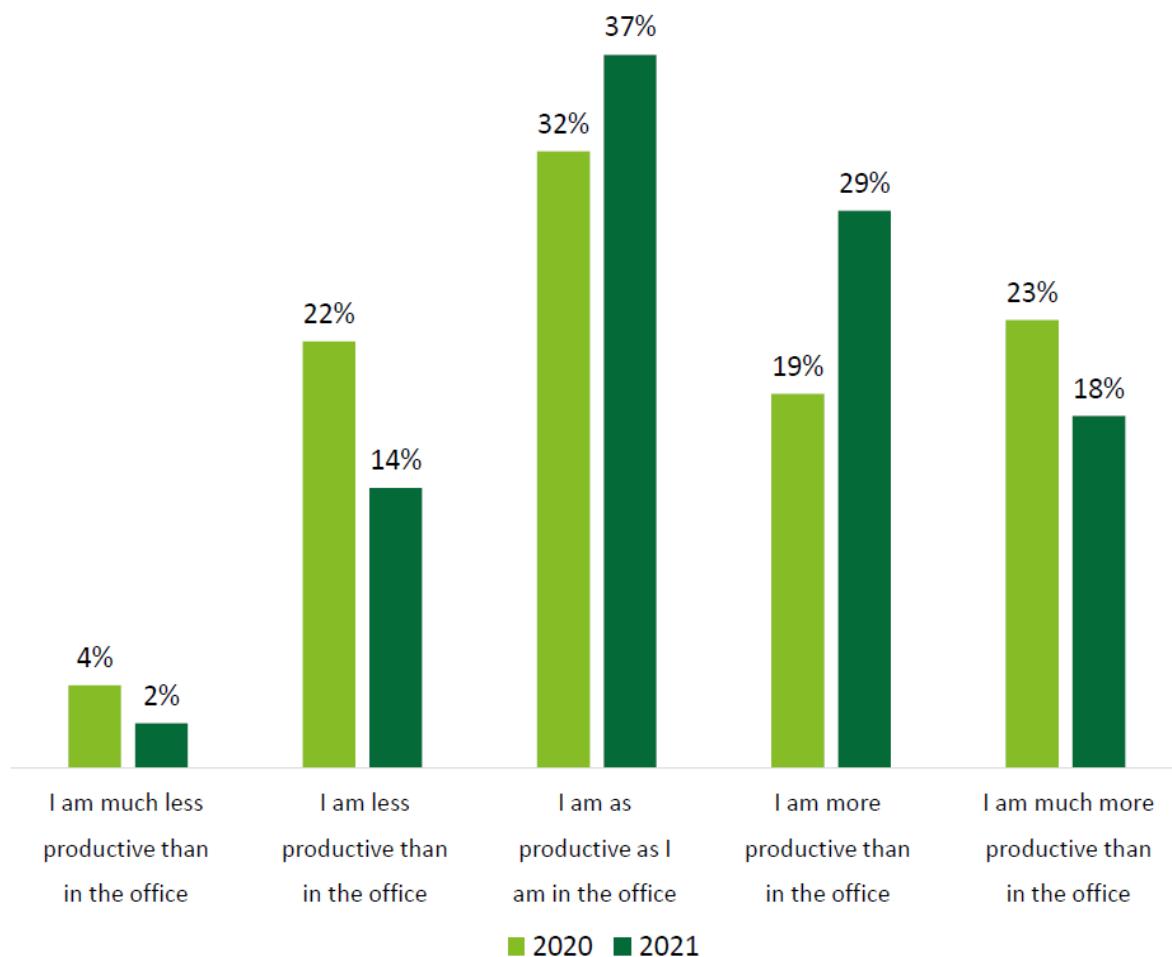


Figure 2: How productive do you think you currently are when working from home?

Higher productivity levels at home?

Almost half the survey respondents (47%) have the impression that they are more productive when working from home than together with their colleagues in the office; only 16% think they are less productive, while for 37% productivity has remained the same. Comparing these figures to the Deloitte survey conducted during last year's lockdown shows improved productivity (see chart 2).

The fact that employees feel their productivity has increased compared to the previous year could be partly due to the fact that schools remained open, which helped many parents to better balance childcare," explains Veronica Melian. "In addition, employees as well as companies were technically better prepared than during the first lockdown and more experienced in using digital tools."

Personal interaction is missing

However, remote working also has its pitfalls. Besides problems of working space (20%) and a lack of infrastructure (22%), the lack of personal interaction is the biggest problem for many respondents (44%). "Conscious personal exchange continues to be important for many, also for the corporate culture," says Reto Savoia. "People come to the office to exchange ideas, to create ideas together - essential aspects of innovation require personal interaction and can best be realised on site. This is where there are great opportunities for companies to combine the need for personal contact with customers and colleagues as well as the targeted use of digitalisation into an attractive overall package that best meets the needs of employees."

"Companies need to position themselves for the post-lockdown era, finding a good mix of remote working and office presence," Savoia continues. "I imagine that on the one hand, employees are conscious and focused on working at home. On the other

hand, when it comes to the collaborative and creative aspects of work, a modern office makes more sense. Companies need to create new spaces and 'collaboration spaces' accordingly, which allow employees to be inspired, encourage the exchange of ideas and help to develop new strategies."

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About the Survey

The online survey was conducted between 12 and 23 February 2021. It is representative by age, gender and region. 2000 people of working age (16 to 64 years) living in Switzerland were surveyed. We already conducted a large survey during the first lockdown in 2020 to find out how the Corona crisis affects our everyday lives. You can find the detailed results on our specific website.

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