LIFE AFTER COVID-19

FUTURE TRENDS
WORK SPACES

→

INSIGHTS
IN BRIEF

Working remotely is set to be the norm for the foreseeable future, with employers developing more flexible workforces and organizations drawing up business continuity plans to ensure their sustainability.

Remote working has also opened up wider questions around the nature of work, including that of whether a work space is actually necessary.

In the short term, **HR policies will need to adapt to the current situation,** focusing on employee happiness and productivity. In the longer term, **employers will need to consider whether working remotely may be beneficial** for employees, and whether jobs can be automated or digitized to allow for more multi-disciplinary work.
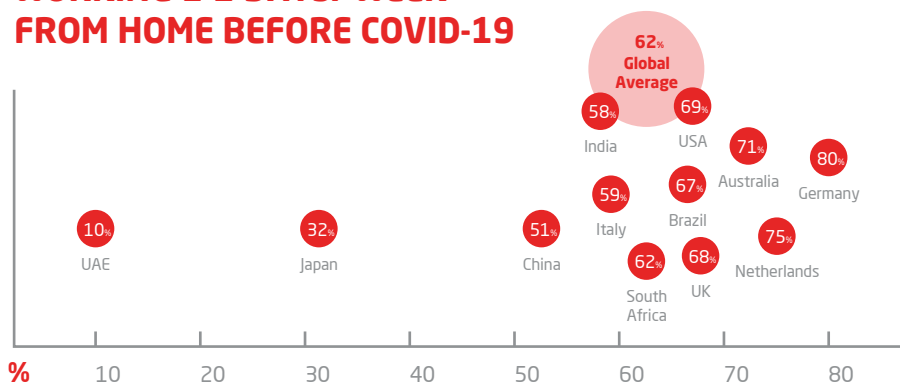
CURRENT SITUATION

As a clear directive from the government, public entities, private sector companies and all universities and schools in the UAE have begun working remotely.

Although the assumption is that this is a temporary change, it has raised a number of questions. Will this change the nature of work and the occupations that people have? How do employees interact with each other? Will this alter the relationship employees have with their employer?
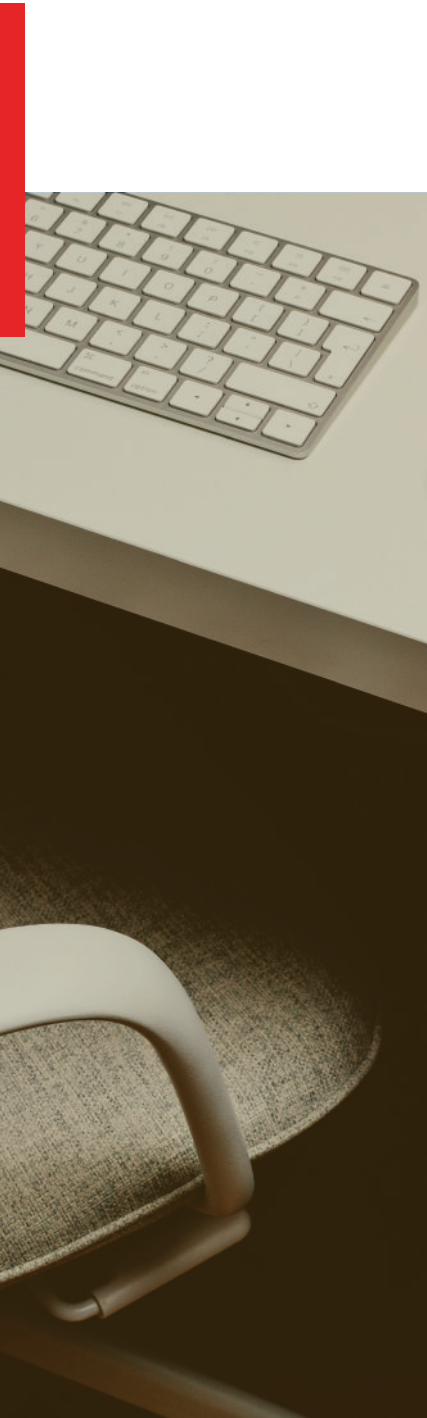
Will this change visa processes that are now in place, especially if people now work from their own homes? How is productivity measured? Can people continue to find value in work if so much of it becomes digital?

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES WORKING 1-2 DAYS/ WEEK FROM HOME BEFORE COVID-19

62%
Global Average

58% India

69% USA

71% Australia

80% Germany

59% Italy

67% Brazil

10% UAE

32% Japan

51% China

62% South Africa

68% UK

75% Netherlands

%   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80

IWG Global Workplace Survey
Date: March 2019

OPPORTUNITY

Working remotely has typically been common in certain sectors, such as IT, marketing, app development and some forms of retail. It has meant increased productivity, virtual collaboration, and for some companies, lower costs, including office rental, travel and events. Companies that have adopted remote working policies have also been able to reduce their carbon footprint, with employees commuting less and using less energy. [1] Operating remotely is also well-suited to certain forms of activity such as 'deep work', where intensive research and thinking is required.

In today's pandemic, however, the workforce is set to become more flexible and dispersed by necessity as more people are asked to stay home. This will lead to a more agile, human-centered, inclusive system that depends on individuals as much as the management of their companies. [2]

To meet this rapid change, key policies and processes will need to be put in place. Organizations need to have a 'business continuity plan' to ensure that essential tasks are carried out. [3] Other jobs that are rarely undertaken remotely will need to be rethought, with a view to employees using their skills and knowledge for other forms of work.

Companies that have adopted remote working policies have also been able to reduce their carbon footprint, with employees commuting less and using less energy.

[1] Although there are reports that claim this is incorrect as office buildings tend to be more sustainable than houses (BBC).

[2] Lau, Y., "The Future of Work is the Liquid Workforce", Forbes, 2020.

[3] Mohammadi, E., "The future of work brought closer to reality by Coronavirus", VIA News, 2020.

WHAT NEXT >

Short term
(During Coronavirus)

Well-being models, such as happiness indices, and activities to promote social interaction, such as digital community events, will become prevalent in HR policies to ensure employees remain healthy mentally while working remotely.

Productivity will be measured through outputs rather than inputs, with employees managing their own time, instead of being subject to mechanisms that monitor hours or visibility.

Long term
(Post Coronavirus)

Working remotely may become an integral part to work post-COVID-19 with entities maintaining a remote working structure, except for meetings that have to be held face-to-face.

Large events, seminars and workshops will go digital, with virtual and augmented reality used to create 'real-life' inclusive experiences.

Automation will increase rapidly. Employees will need to diversify their skills or use their existing skills for other jobs. Creativity will increase as traditional jobs are replaced.

As well-being workplace models are implemented, they will need to be designed to achieve and maintain **happiness at work and avoid mental health issues.**

4 Buffer, "State of Remote Work", Buffer, 2019