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Conditions

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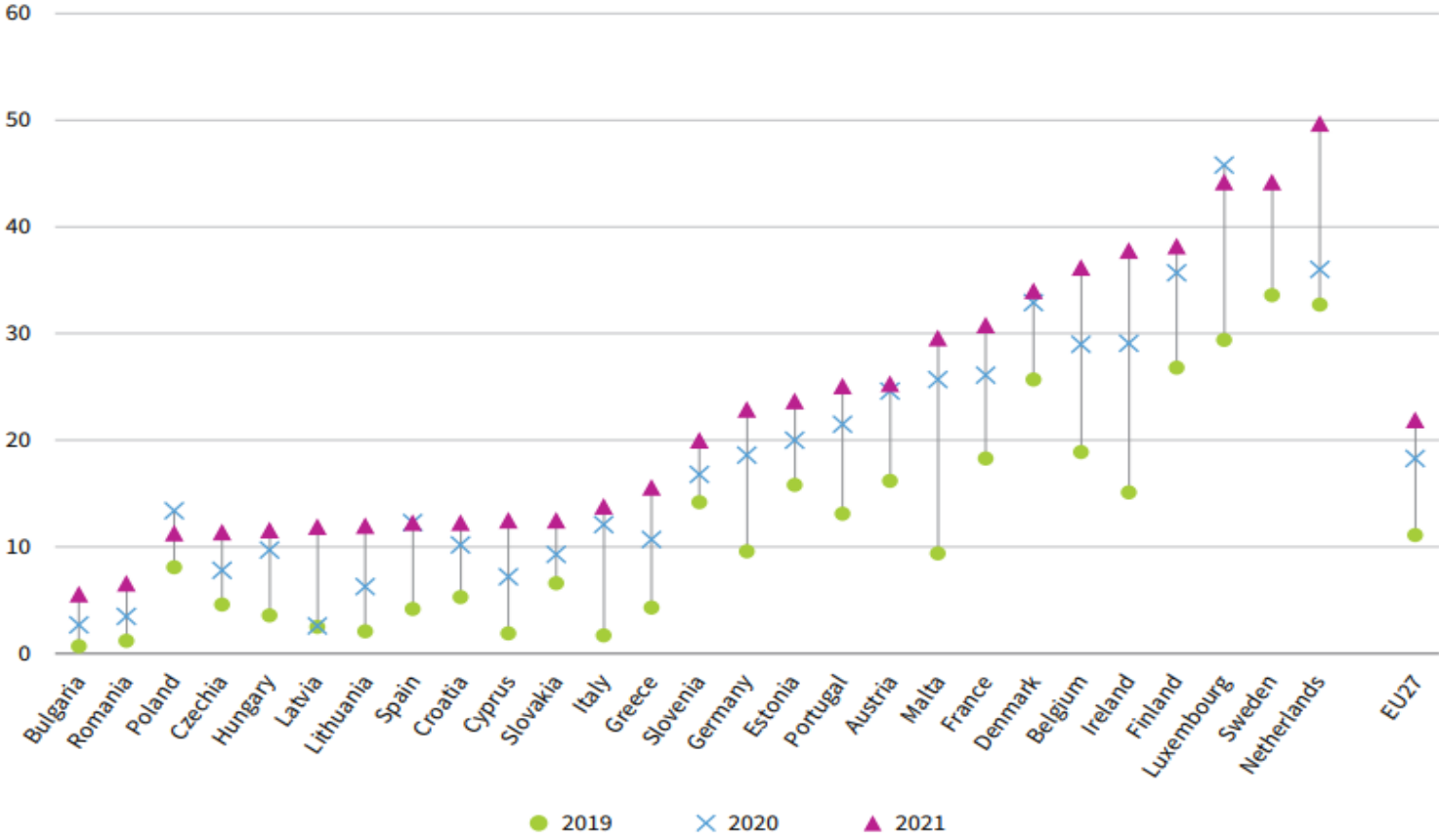
Telework and the right to disconnect: Findings of Eurofound research

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Context for the discussion on the right to disconnect

- Increase in workers usually or sometimes working from home from 7% pre-pandemic to 22% in 2022
- Increasing use of digital tools for work
- Evidence of increased working hours and adverse physical and psychological health impacts for tele- and hybrid workers
- 2021 European Parliament resolution on the right to disconnect
- Upcoming two stage consultation of the social partners on telework and the right to disconnect

Trend in share of employees working from home



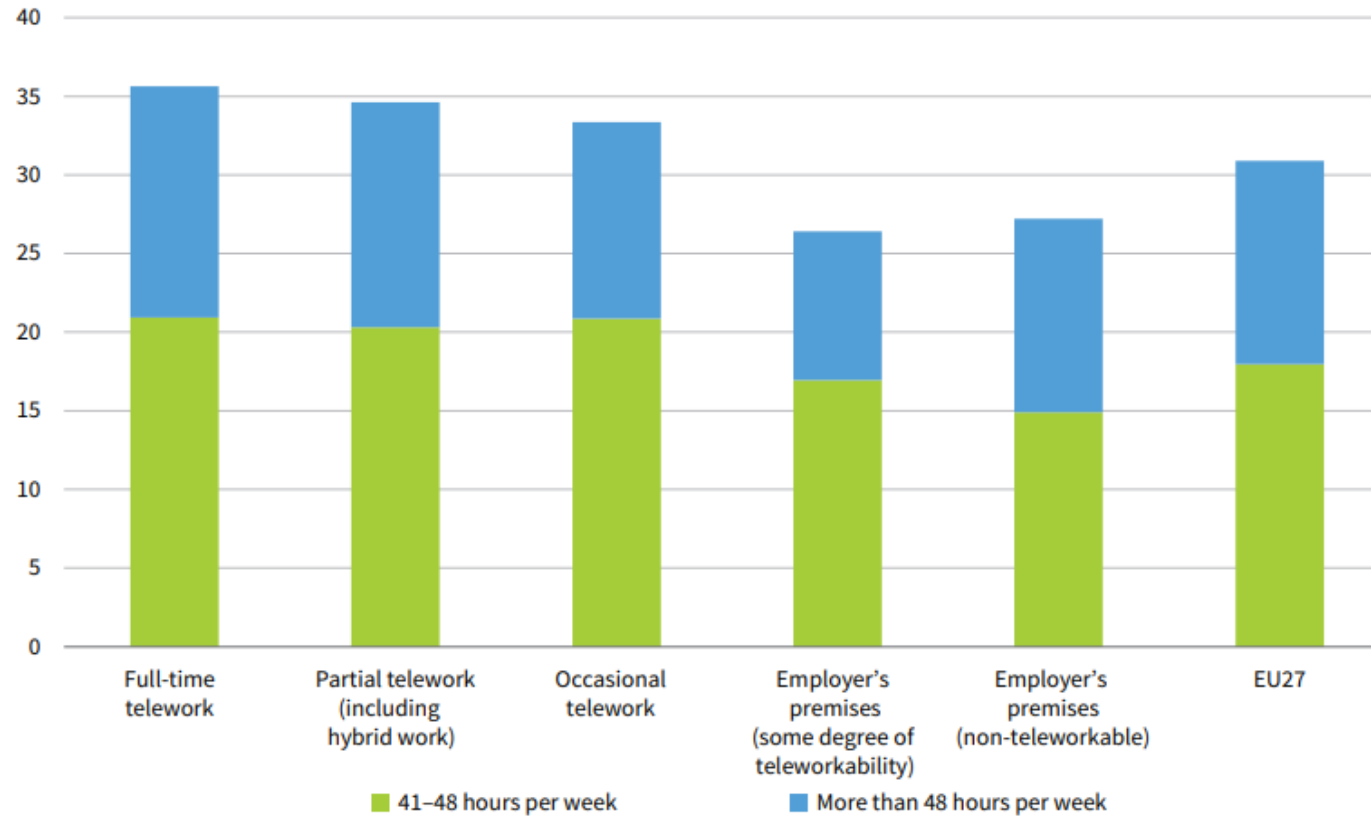
Note: Sweden did not provide data on working from home in 2020.
Source: Eurostat [lfsa_ehomp]

Emergence from pandemic restrictions brought a limited decline in telework, particularly among women



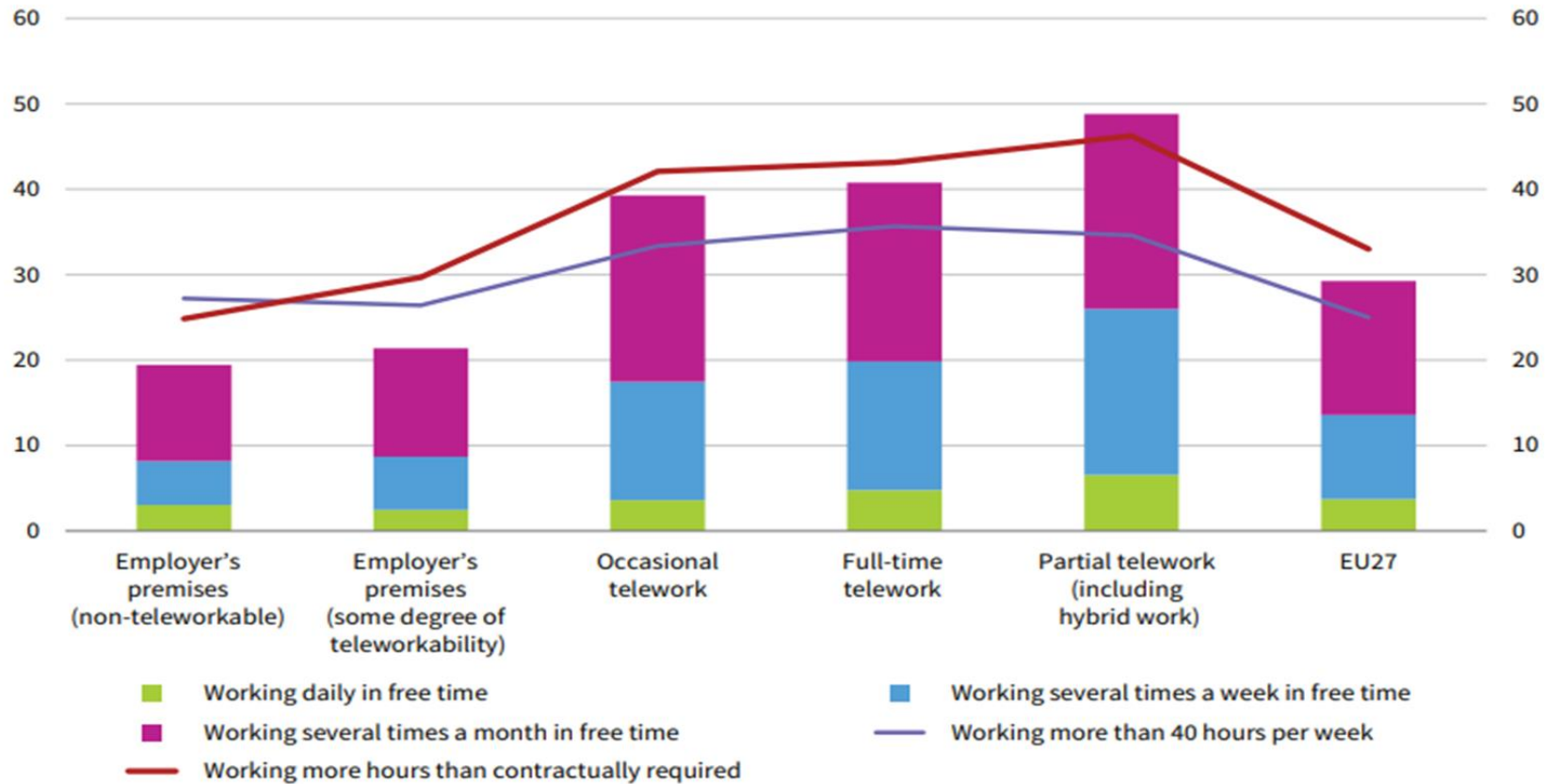
	Males	Females
Portugal	-5.9	-7.7
Greece	-3.3	-7.6
Luxembourg	-4.9	-5.1
Belgium	-4.4	-4.3
Ireland	-1.9	-4.2
Romania	-1.5	-3.6
Lithuania	-2.5	-3.5
Italy	-1.9	-3.5
Poland	-2.2	-3.4
Hungary	-2.4	-3.2
Slovakia	-0.8	-3.2
Malta	0.2	-3.2
Bulgaria	-1.6	-2.5
Latvia	-1.9	-2.4
Denmark	-2	-2.3
EU27	-1.4	-1.9
Croatia	-1.4	-1.7
Sweden	-1.4	-1.6
Slovenia	0.1	-1.6
Cyprus	-2.3	-1.5
Spain	-1.6	-1.4
Finland	-0.7	-1.1
Estonia	-0.6	-1
Austria	-1	-0.9
Germany	-0.7	-0.8
Netherlands	-1.1	-0.7
France	-0.8	0
Czechia	2	0.3

Impact of telework and hybrid work on working hours



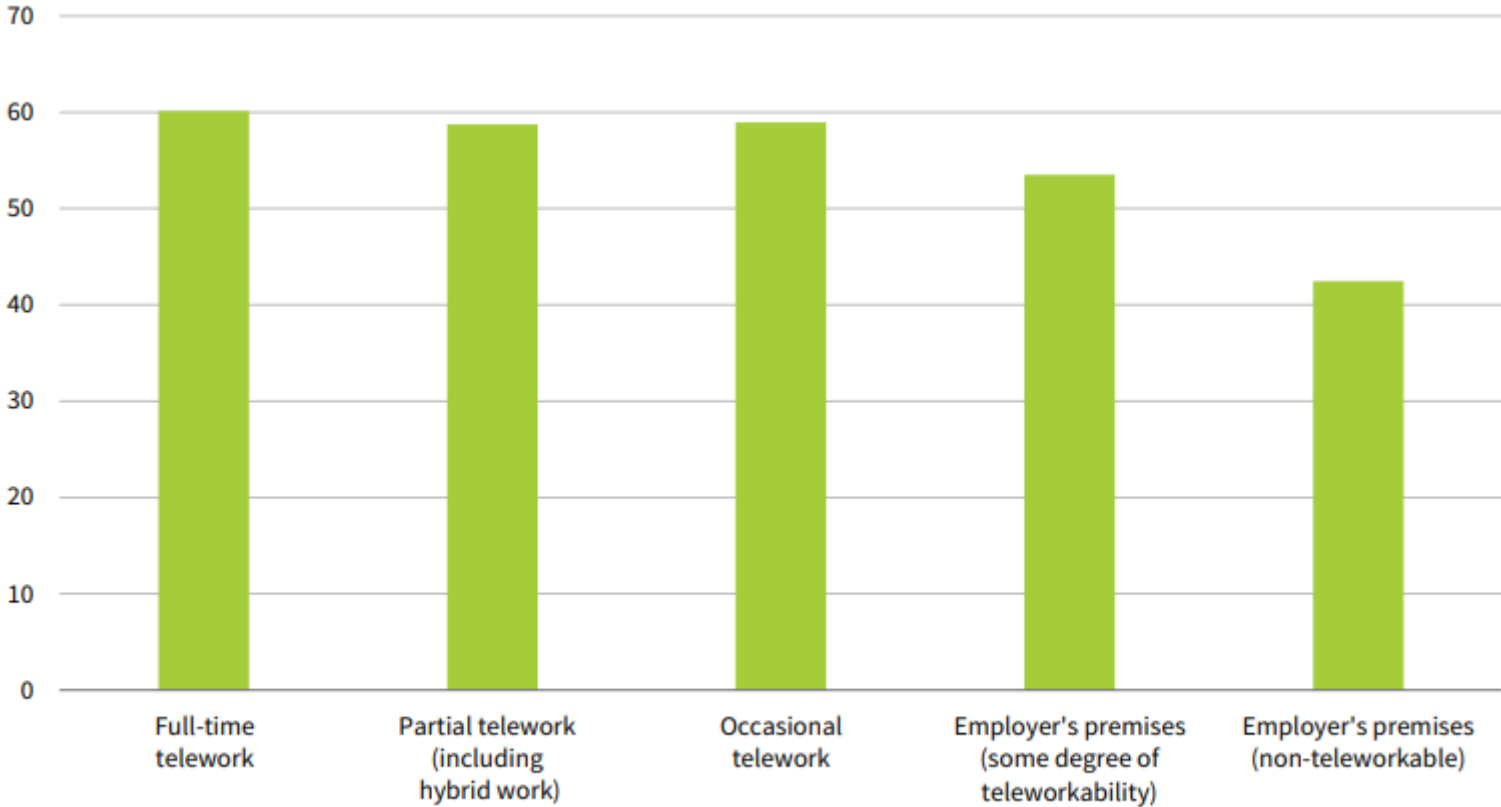
Source: EWCTS 2021

Impact of telework and hybrid work on working in free time



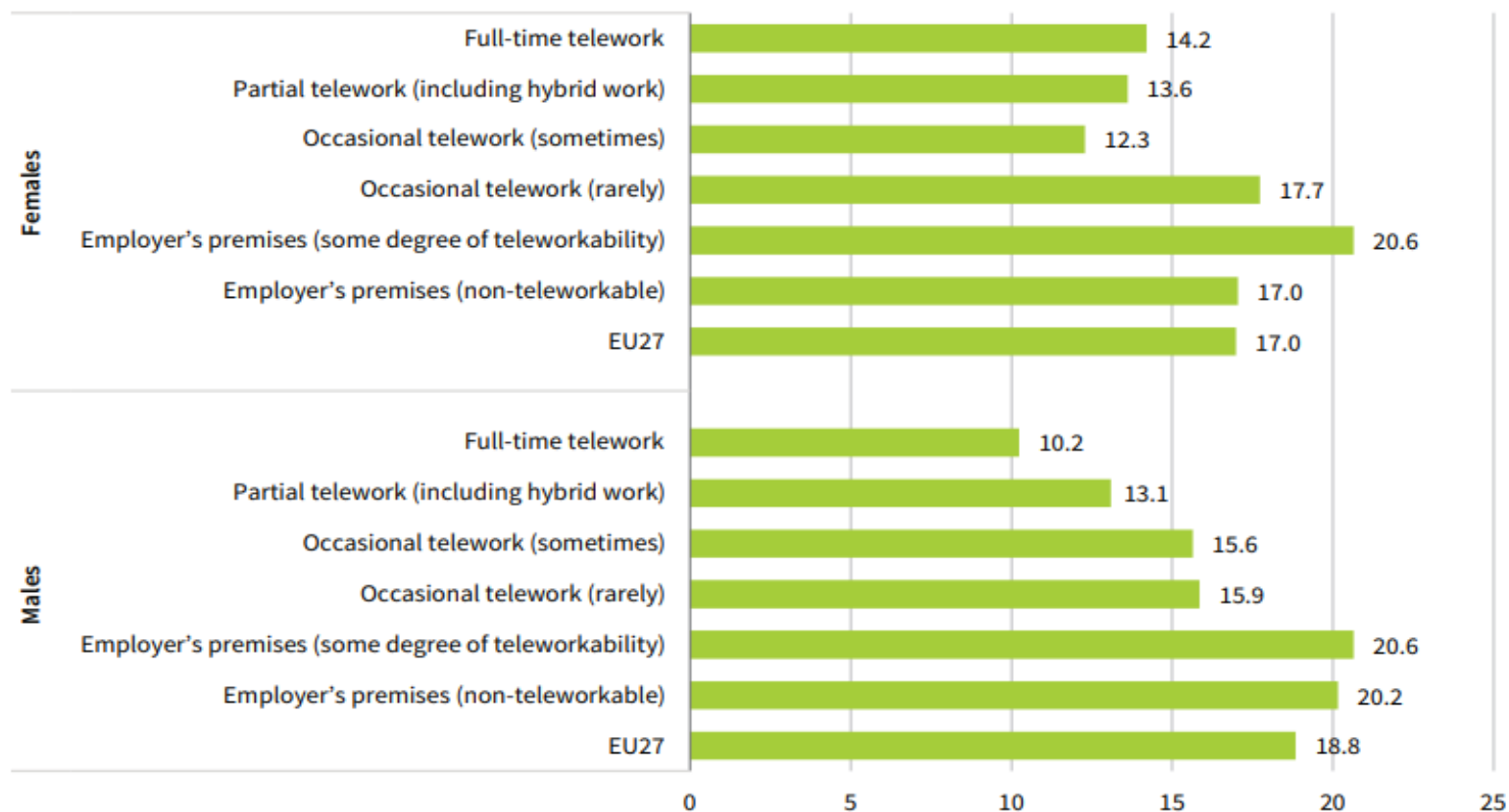
Source: EWCTS 2021

Impact of telework and hybrid work on experience of headaches and eyestrain



Source: EWCTS 2021

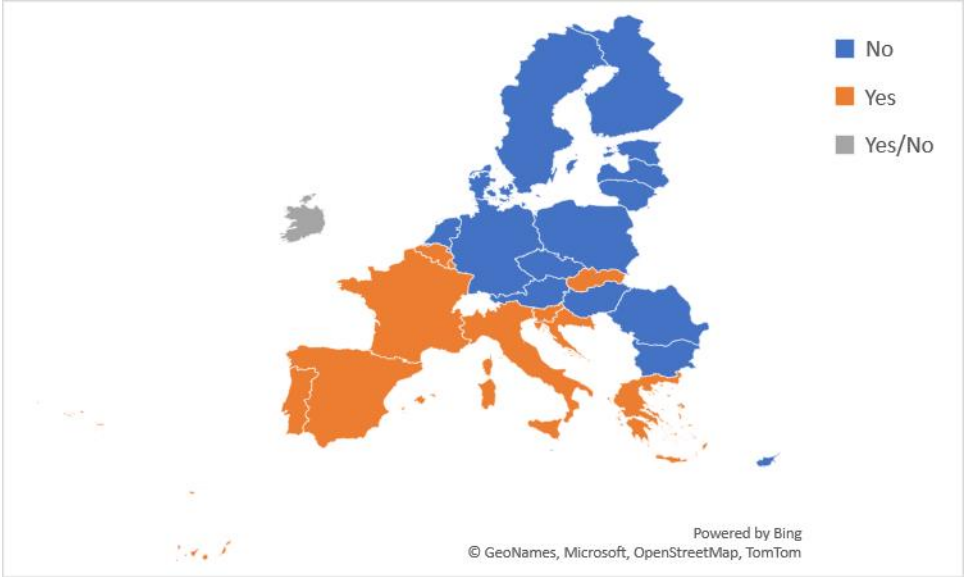
Gendered impact of telework on work-life balance



Note: Poor work-life balance includes employees responding 'not very well' or 'not at all well' to the question about 'how working hours fit in with their family or social commitments outside work'.

Source: EWCTS 2021

Countries with a right to disconnect



Coverage and role of social partners



2022
Organisations with >20 employees must negotiate agreement on implementation of R2D. Employees to be contacted out of working hours only in



2016
Companies >50 employees Can be extended by collective agreement Social partners negotiate Fallback: company policy



2021
Teleworkers Right to refrain from work related duties and not answer communications outside working hours



2017
Smart workers Agreement between employer and Smart worker Sectoral or company agreement can extend coverage



2021
All workers using ICT Employers must not contact employees outside of working hours or risk facing administrative fines



2021
Right not to use digital work tools outside of working hours



2018
All workers Sectoral or company agreement but also directly enforceable



2023
All workers using ICT Sectoral or company level collective agreements. If fewer than 150 staff representation must be informed and consulted; if more than 150 mutual agreement



2023
All teleworkers Employers must not contact workers outside of working hours



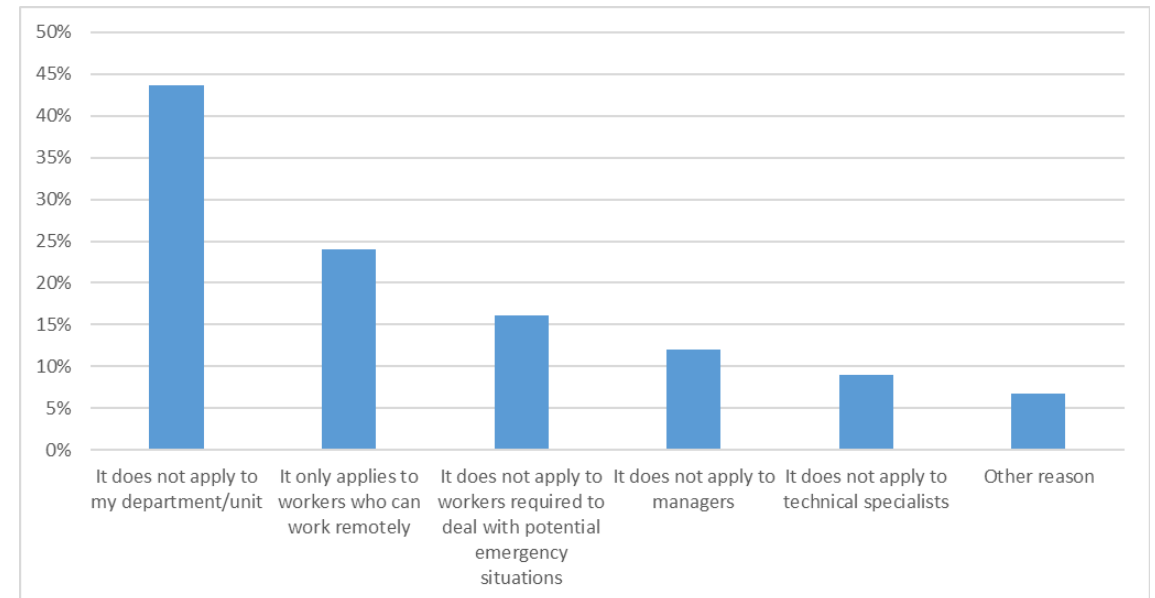
2023
Employer must inform workers of measures to implement R2D and must communicate the measures to the trade union or works council before they are adopted.

Core features of implementation of R2D at company level

Key considerations	Main elements
Context	Basis in legislation or collective agreement; context linked to gender equality, working time, work-life balance, teleworking, flexible working, data protection etc.
Type of text	Signatory parties; (company) collective agreement, policy, guidelines, etc. – impact for monitoring and enforcement
Coverage	All workers/managers; only specific groups of workers; how ‘future proof’ is coverage?
‘Hard’ or ‘soft’ implementation	Right ‘to be disconnected’ through severing link between message delivery and digital devices OR soft disconnection – impact on flexibility and employee protection
Implementing actions	Awareness raising; training; management of out of hours communication; assessment of factors contributing to over-connection; agreement of hours of availability
■ Approach to monitoring	Monitoring of: out of hours email traffic; working hours; complaints; impact on work-life balance and wellbeing through staff surveys etc. – Joint or unilateral

Prevalence and scope of the right to disconnect

- 45% respondents have right to disconnect in place - 80% 'applies to me' - 50% aware of implementing actions
- Main reason for limited scope: only some departments, only for workers who work remotely



Actions to implement the right to disconnect

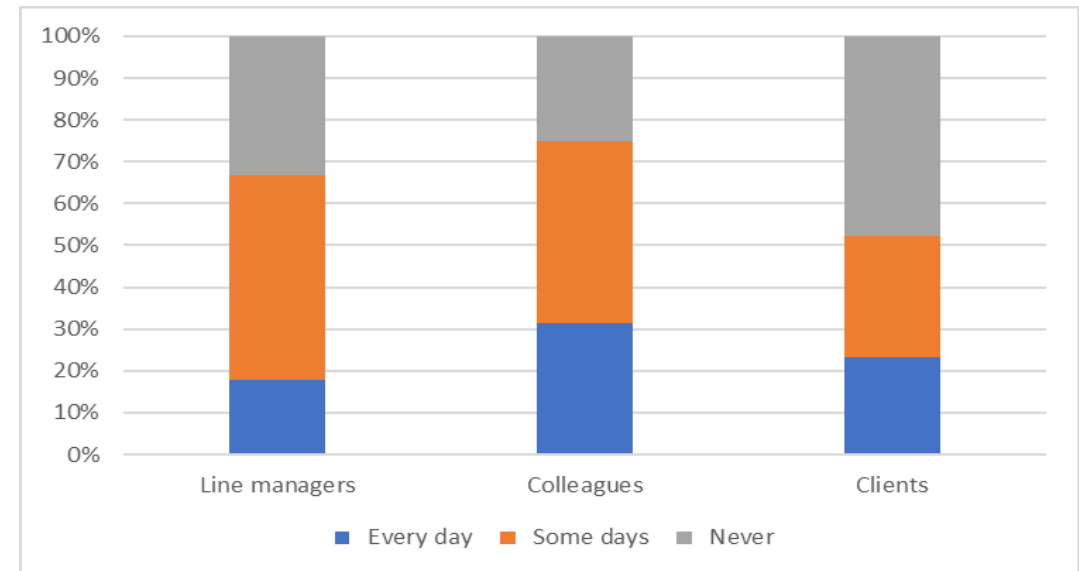
- ‘Hard disconnection’ appears more common – but could be due to increasing use of automatic tools for email management
- Training efforts for managers and employees limited



	Actions implemented	Actions applicable to respondent
Automatic deletion of email messages received during holidays	40%	42%
Stopping work email delivery during certain times	32%	24%
Raising awareness of the right to disconnect policy	25%	17%
Setting of email/communication corridor	25%	21%
Management of out of hours connection	21%	18%
Prohibition of contact with colleagues outside of working hours	21%	23%
Training for managers	19%	11%
Training for employees	12%	11%

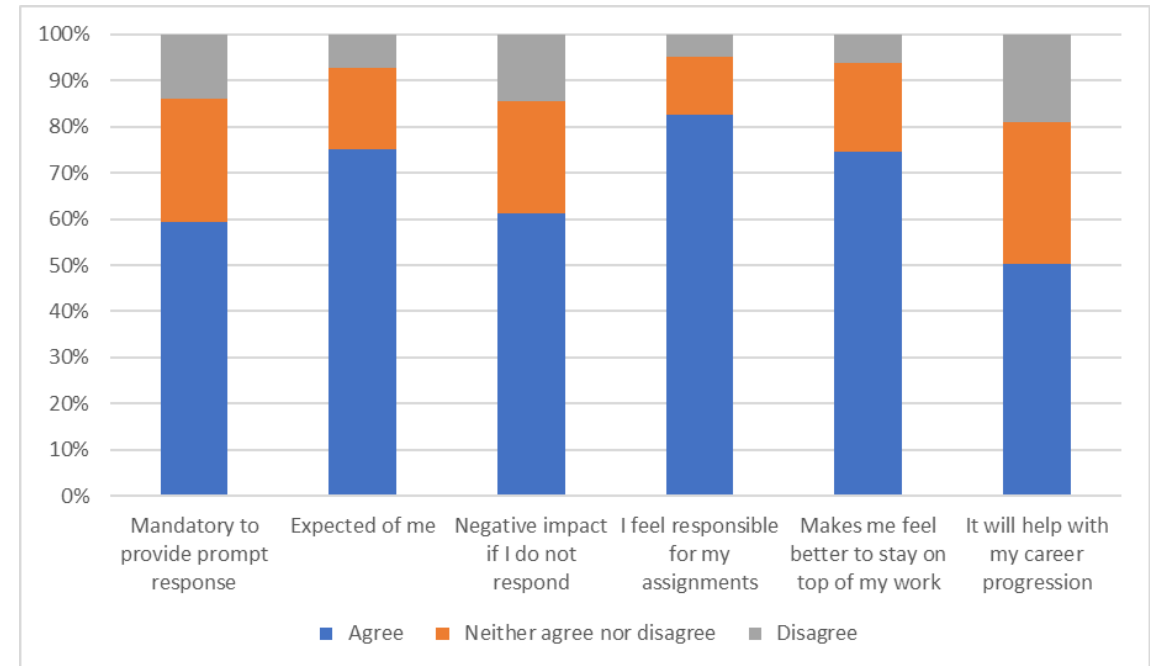
An 'always on' culture? - Frequency and patterns of out of hours contact

- Over 80% of respondents are contacted on work related issues outside working hours
- Most frequent contact by colleagues followed by line managers and clients
- Contact mainly by email (58%, work phone 44%, private phone 33%, video call (22%))



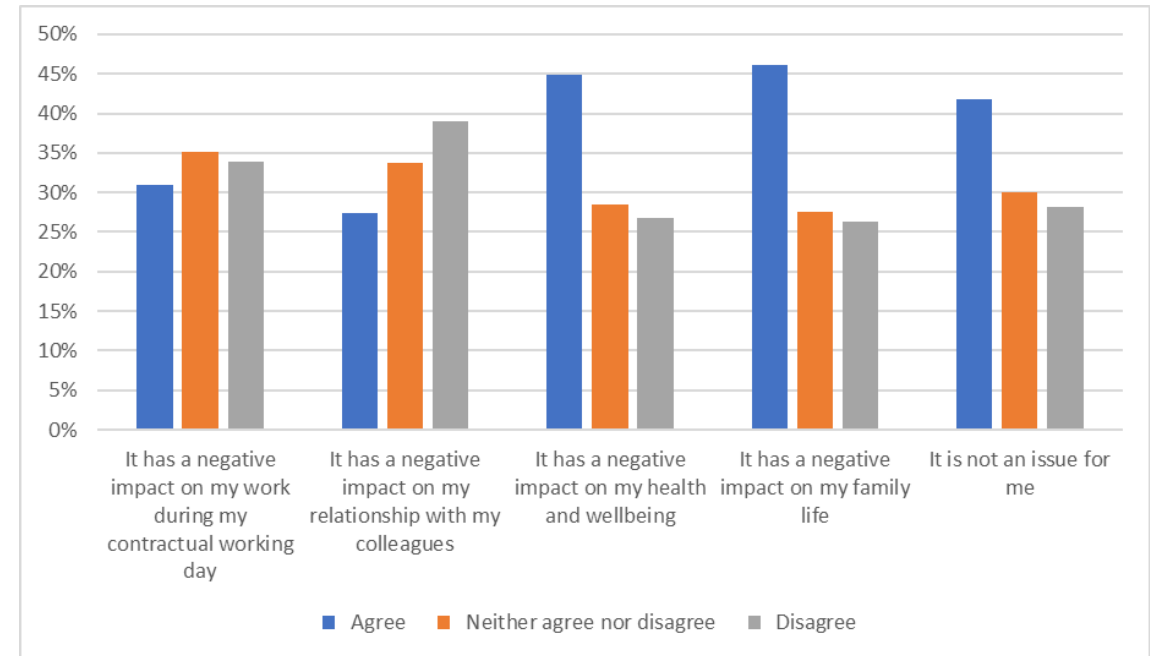
Frequency and reasons for responding

- Nine in ten take some form of action; 23% reply to all messages; 38% reply to most messages
- 82% feel responsible for assignments; 75% want to stay on top of work; 75% say it is expected for them; 61% fear negative consequences



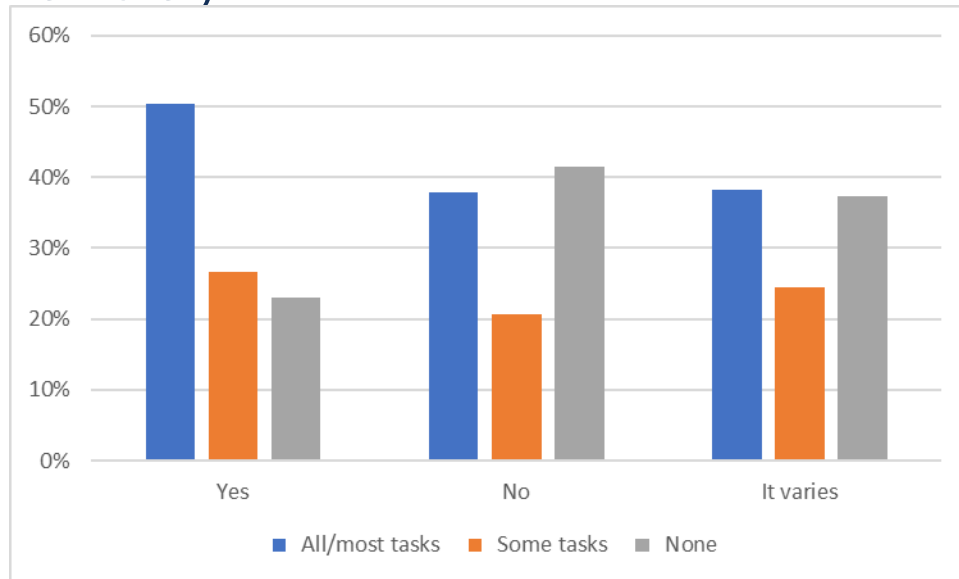
Impact of being contacted

- Out of hours connection has negative impact on family life and health and wellbeing
- 42% say 'it is not an issue for me'

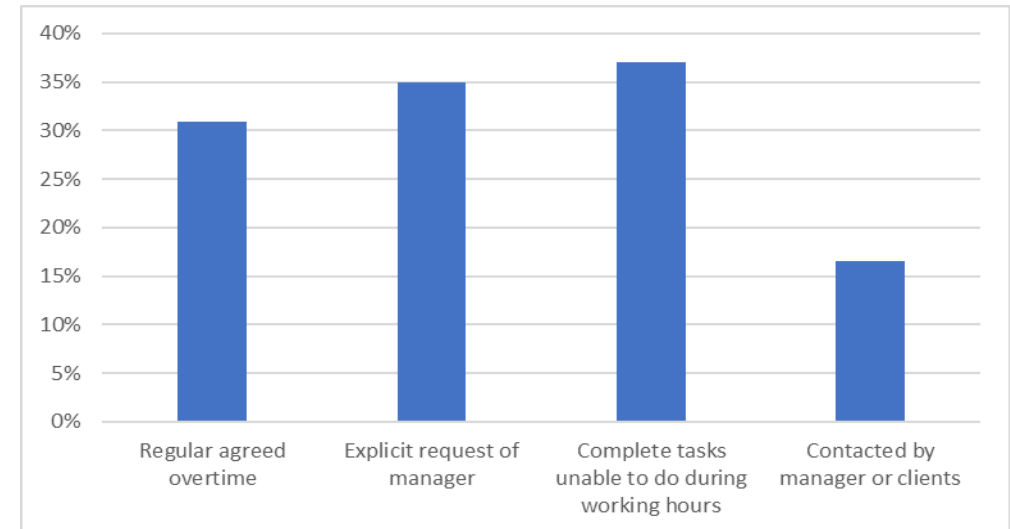


Working additional hours

- Nearly half of respondents worked additional hours on a regular basis
- More common among those able to work remotely



- Most additional hours performed to complete tasks
- Additional hours done for this reason and because contacted least likely to be paid



Right to disconnect, working additional hours and flexible working time arrangements

- A higher share of respondents in companies without a right to disconnect reported working additional hours because there are contacted out of hours (19% compared to 14% in companies with a right to disconnect policy).
- In companies with a right to disconnect policy additional hours worked are mainly likely to be on the basis of agreed overtime and are more likely to be compensated with additional pay or time off.
- Workers stating that the right to disconnect applies to them are more likely to report greater autonomy over determining their own working hours.
- The possibility to adjust working hours patterns during the pandemic is also more likely to be reported by workers in companies with a right to disconnect in place.



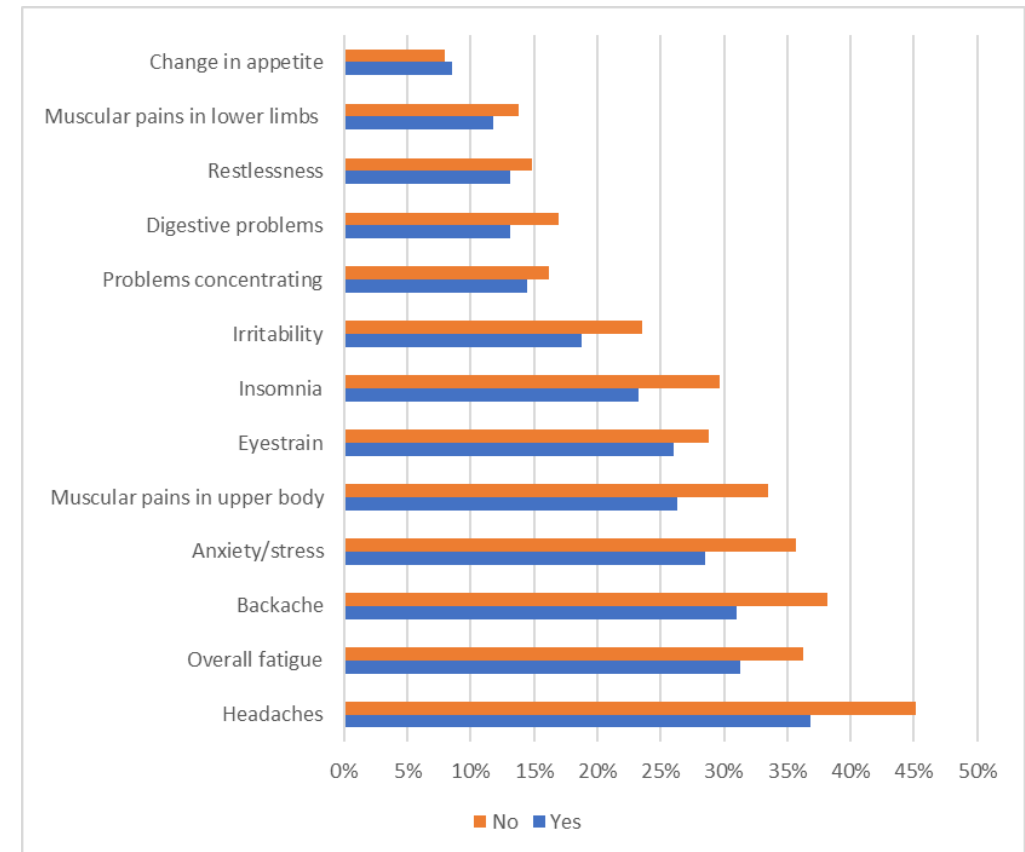
Right to disconnect and work-life balance

- 25% of respondents indicate work and private commitments fit very well; 60% fairly well
- Those being able to do fewer tasks remotely are less likely to consider that there is a good fit
- Workers in companies with a right to disconnect policy report better work-life balance (92% compared to 80%)



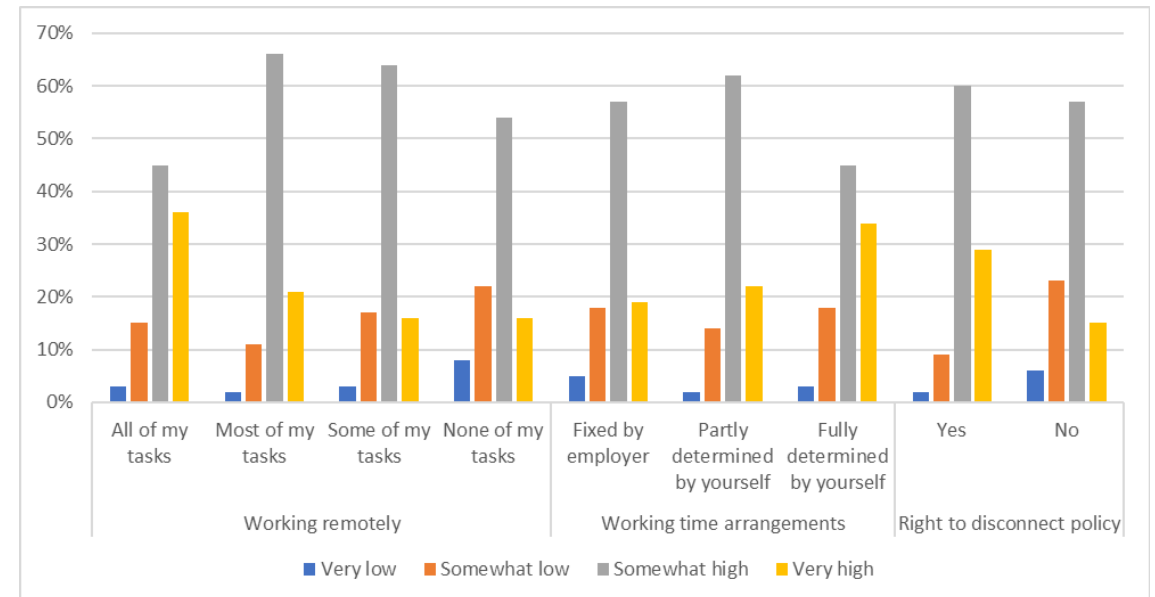
Health, wellbeing and the right to disconnect

- Almost all health issues less likely to be experienced by workers in companies with a right to disconnect policy



Satisfaction with working conditions

- Overall levels of satisfaction with working conditions are high (21% very high, 58% somewhat high)
- Higher among those able to work remotely
- Higher among those with a right to disconnect policy



Conclusions

- Workers in companies with a right to disconnect policy are:
 - Less likely to work additional hours because they are contacted out of hours
 - More likely to have greater autonomy over their own working hours
 - More likely to report better work life balance
 - Less likely to report common health issues
 - More likely to express satisfaction with their overall working conditions
 - This is not necessarily linked to being less likely to be contacted and working fewer hours overall
- However, presence of right-to disconnect alone is insufficient. To be effective it must be accompanied by awareness raising, effective implementation measures, ongoing joint monitoring and review by management and employee representatives

Relevant Eurofound research

Telework

- [Working anytime, anywhere: The effects on the world of work | \(2017\)](#)
- [Telework and ICT-based mobile work: Flexible working in the digital \(2020\)](#)
- [Regulations to address work–life balance in digital flexible working \(2020\)](#)
- [Telework in the EU: Regulatory frameworks and recent updates | \(2022\)](#)
- [The rise in telework: Impact on working conditions and regulations | \(2023\)](#)

Right to disconnect

- Working paper: Right to disconnect in the 27 EU Member States (2020)
- [Right to disconnect: Exploring company practices | Eurofound \(2021\)](#)
- [Right to disconnect: Implementation and impact at company level \(2023\)](#)