



Policy Briefing No. 11

Working from Home in 2023 *Regional Patterns and Outlook*

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The Western Development Commission promotes economic and social development in the Western Region of Ireland (counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare). WDC Policy briefings highlight and provide discussion and analysis of key regional policy issues

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Introduction

While there were always some who worked from home, the pandemic prompted a huge growth in the practice. Before 2020, there was some evidence of an increase, see ([Frost 2022](#)). Examining the limited data over the longer term, there is evidence of a negative correlation between unemployment and working from home where rates of working from home tend to decline as unemployment rises. There is a discussion on longer term trends related to economic cycles and the labour market in [Frost 2020](#).

While the phenomenon of remote working has taken on a much greater significance since the pandemic and can include not just home working but also working from a co-working or hub space, working from home is a very significant element of working remotely¹.

The experience of working from home during the pandemic was welcomed by many employees with many expressing the wish to continue doing so post pandemic². Now that we are a year on from the lifting of Government guidelines on working from home, are we any closer to a new normal on the prevalence of working from home and what might that be?

In this Policy Briefing, I first review the recently published data from Census 2022 on working from home. I then examine the latest CSO Labour Force Survey data from 2023. Following this, I review the trends pre and during the pandemic and consider what the outlook and new normal might be.

Census 2022

In Census 2022, a new question was asked about whether people ever worked from home and if so the number of days per week³. The answers relate to April 2022, a few months after the Government lifted its guidance on working from home⁴. Close to a third of all workers (747,900) reported that they worked from home for at least part of their working week. Map 1 shows the percentage of the workforce who reported having worked from home by administrative county. The highest rate was in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown with over 56.6% and the lowest rate was in Monaghan with 20.7 %.

¹In the 2022 WDC-NUIG Remote Work Survey, up to 8% of respondents expressed an interest in working from a hub, see p.11 [here](#)

²76% either agreed or strongly agreed that working remotely makes their job easier and 95% either agreed or strongly agreed that working remotely makes their life easier. [Remote Working in Ireland 2022 Survey findings](#). A CSO survey in 2021 see [here](#), found that of those in employment who can remote work, 88% would like to continue to do so when all pandemic restrictions are removed.

³This was decided before the pandemic and the WDC had requested its inclusion in a pre Census consultation, see [here](#).

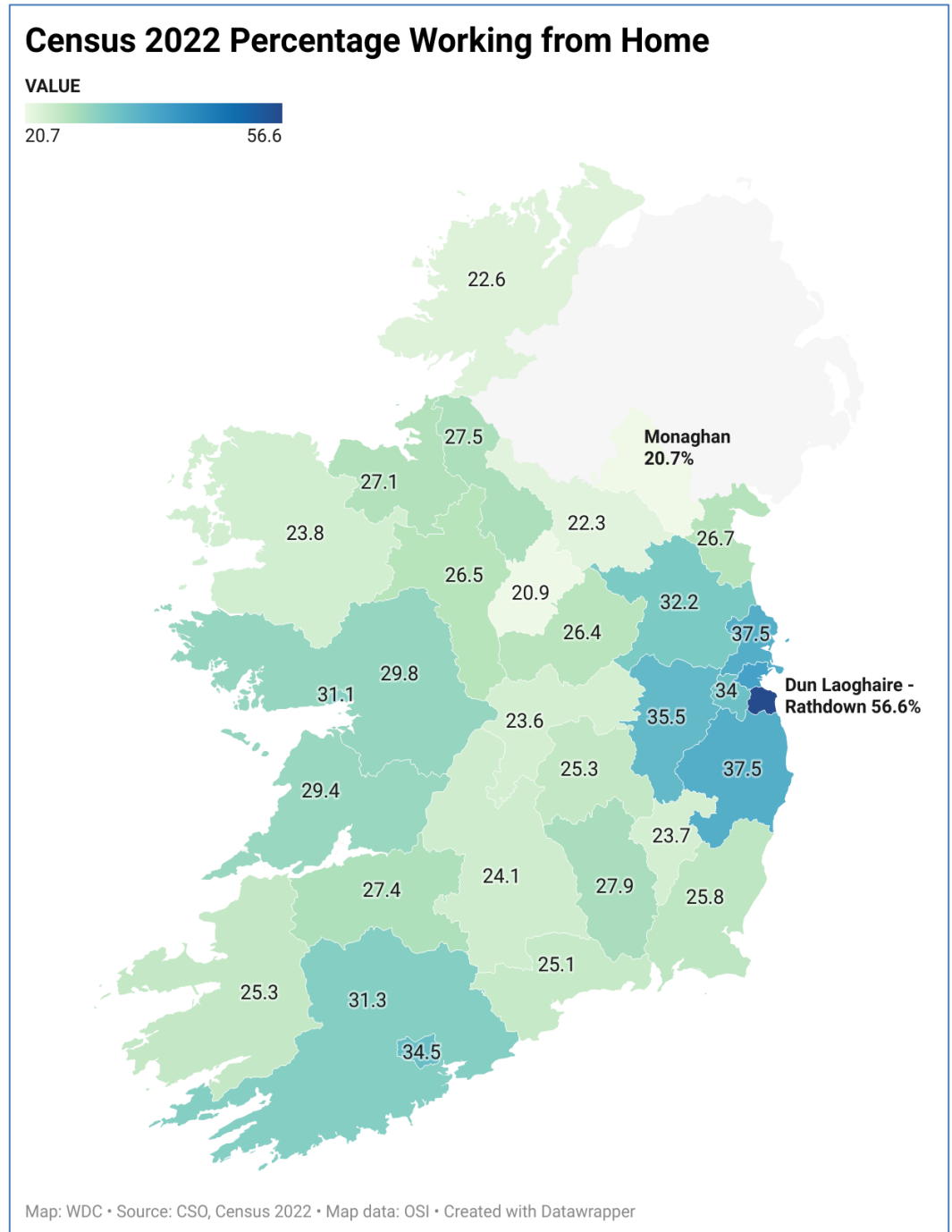
⁴At the end of January 2022, the Government advised that people working from home could return to the workplace on a phased basis.

Map 1 Percentage of Workers availing of Working from Home by County

In census 2022 a third (32%) of all workers said they worked from home for some of their working week.

The administrative counties with the highest rates were in Dublin and the Greater Dublin Area.

The counties in the Border region had the lowest rates of working from home.



The rates are highest around the largest urban centres such as Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick. Most administrative counties had in excess of a quarter of its workers reporting that they worked from home. Generally the more rural counties had a little less, but all administrative counties had at least one fifth of their workforce availing of working from home.

The more rural counties have a higher share of workers working just 1 day a week but also report the highest share working 6 or 7 days a week.

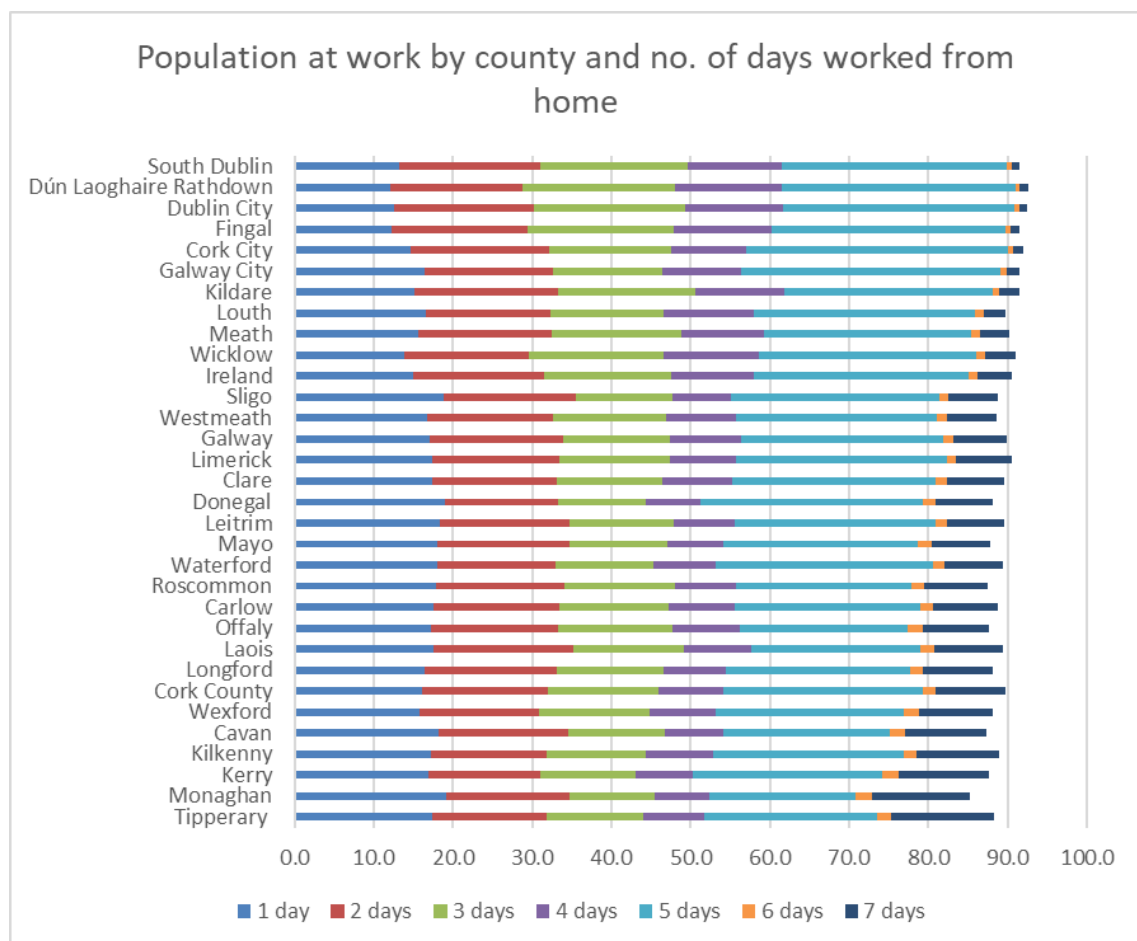
The cities and administrative counties in the Greater Dublin Area have the highest shares working 5 days a week from home

Census Working from Home – number of days per week

The chart below shows the percentage of workers in each administrative county by the number of days per week they were working from home. It is evident that the larger urban centres have the highest shares working five and four days of the week from home.

The more rural counties at the other end of the scale have a higher share working just 1 day a week, but also report the highest share working 6 and 7 days a week. As we will see these are associated with agricultural occupations.

Chart 1 Share of workers by county, number of days worked from home



Source CSO, Census 2022

Nationally, of all those who availed of working from home, over half (53.5%) did so between 3 and 5 days per week. The pattern weekly pattern is as follows;

- 15% work 1 day a week from home
- 16.6% work 2 days from home
- 16% work 3 days from home
- 10.3% work 4 days from home
- 27% work 5 days from home
- 1% work 6 days from home
- 4.4% work 7 days a week from home

Over half of all workers that availed of working from home did so between 3 and 5 days a week

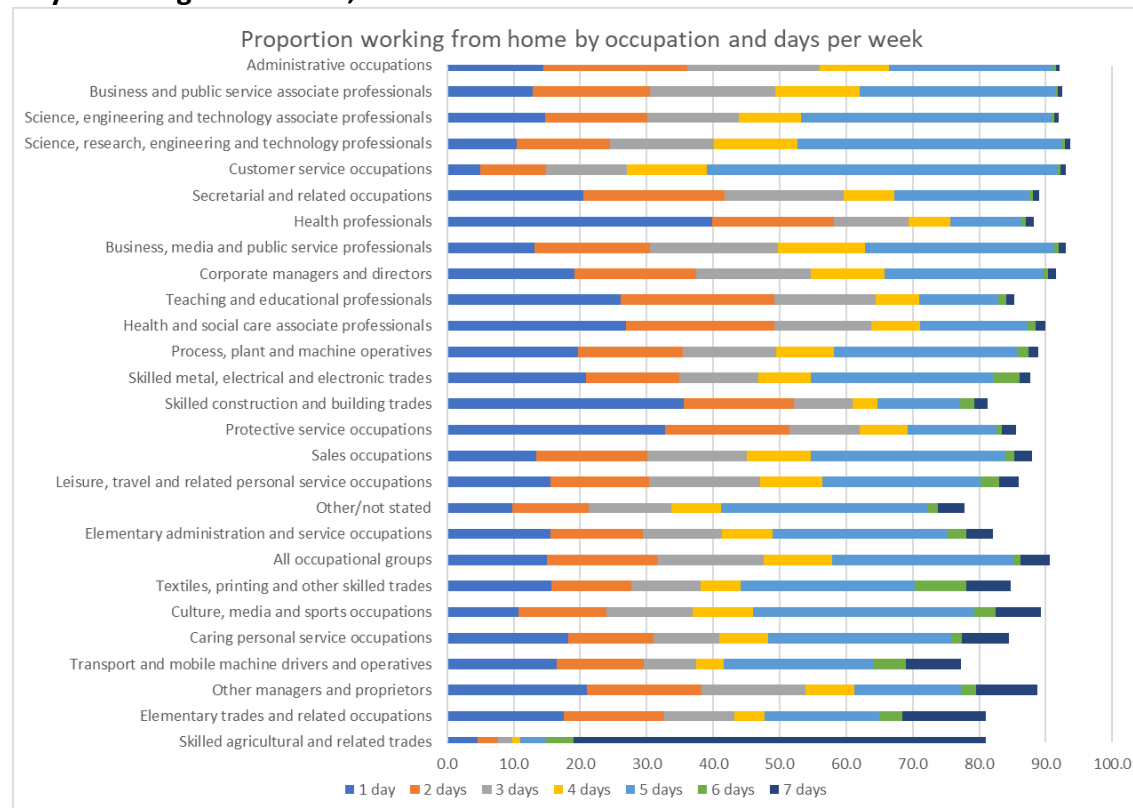
Those working in the administrative and customer service occupations as well as science, engineering and technology professionals, tend to work more days at home than other occupations.

Agricultural workers have the highest share working 7 days a week from home – however this is generally their place of work.

Occupation and Working from Home

The Census summary results provides detail on the number of days worked from home by occupational profile. Chart 2 below shows the proportion working from home by the number of days working from home and occupation.

Chart 2 Share of workers by intermediate occupational group and number of Days working from home, 2022



Source CSO, Census 2022

It is clear that some occupations have higher rates of working from home. The skilled agricultural and related trades have the highest share engaged in working from home 7 days a week. Apart from agriculture typically being a 7 day a week occupation, for most farmers and agricultural workers their place of work is also their home.

Those occupations at the top of chart 2 are those with a high proportion are working 5 days a week from home. For example 52% of those engaged in customer service occupations were working from home 5 days a week. Among Science, research, engineering and technology professionals the share was 39.9% and among administrative occupations the share was 24.8%.

Those who report 'At least half of the days worked at home', are categorised as usually works from home.

Nationally 21.1% were usually working from home, though there are quite significant regional differences.

The regions with the highest rates of usually working from home are Dublin (26.9%), followed by the Mid-East region (22%).

Working from Home 2023

The CSO Labour Force Survey (LFS) data includes a question on working from home and data from 2023 is now available. This data is available from every quarter for many years, so is particularly useful in examining changes over the last few years. The data examined here refers to Quarter 1 where the survey was conducted in the period January-March.

The CSO Labour Force Survey asks how often you worked at home. The definitions are as follows;

- If you worked for at least one hour from home in the last four weeks, it is categorised as 'sometimes works from home'.
- If the response is 'At least half of the days worked at home', then it is categorised 'as usually works from home'.

In the context of the much discussed changing work patterns following the pandemic, both *usually* and *sometimes* capture a pattern of hybrid working, which typically describes a mix of remote working and onsite where the pattern could broadly be between 1 and 4 working days off-site (for a typical 5 day week).

Working Usually from Home 2023

Map 2 shows the levels of those *usually* working from home as a percentage of total employment at a regional level in 2023. While, nationally the rate was 21.1%, there are quite significant regional differences. The regions with the highest rates of usually working from home are Dublin (26.9%), followed by the Mid-East region (22%). This reflects the relatively high rates of jobs in the capital amenable to working from home and the residence of workers, many of whom commute from the Mid-East. There is a 14.4 percentage point difference in the region with the highest level – Dublin (26.9%) and the region with the lowest – the Border region (12.5%).

The profile of employment in terms of occupation – discussed earlier are some of the factors explaining the regional differences in working from home. This was discussed in the WDC Policy briefing [Working from Home Pre and Post Pandemic](#) Other factors such as distance to work and commuting times are also important in that they may incentivise the demand to work from home.

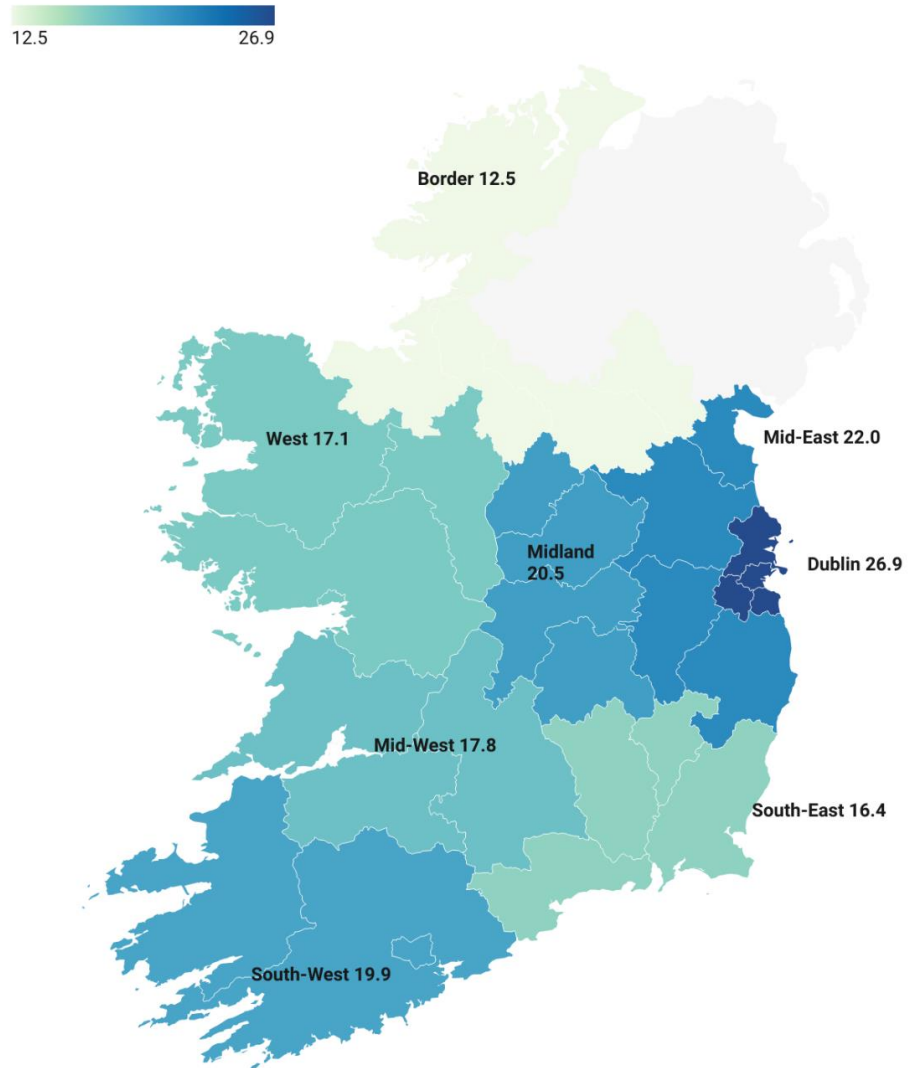
The Border region had the lowest rate 12.5% or one eighth of employment usually working from home in 2023.

Three regions; Dublin, the Mid-East and the Midlands had rates in excess of 20%.

Those who worked for at least one hour from home in the last four weeks, are categorised as sometimes works from home.

Map 2 Usually working from home as a % of total employment

Percentage of employment Usually working from Home Q1 2023



Map: WDC • Source: CSO, LFS • Map data: OSI • Created with Datawrapper

Working Sometimes from Home 2023

Map 3 below shows the levels of *sometimes* working from home as a percentage of total employment across regions in 2023. It is worth reiterating the different definitions. Those who report 'At least half of the days worked at home', are categorised as *usually* works from home. Those who worked for at least one hour from home in the last four weeks, are categorised as *sometimes* works from home.

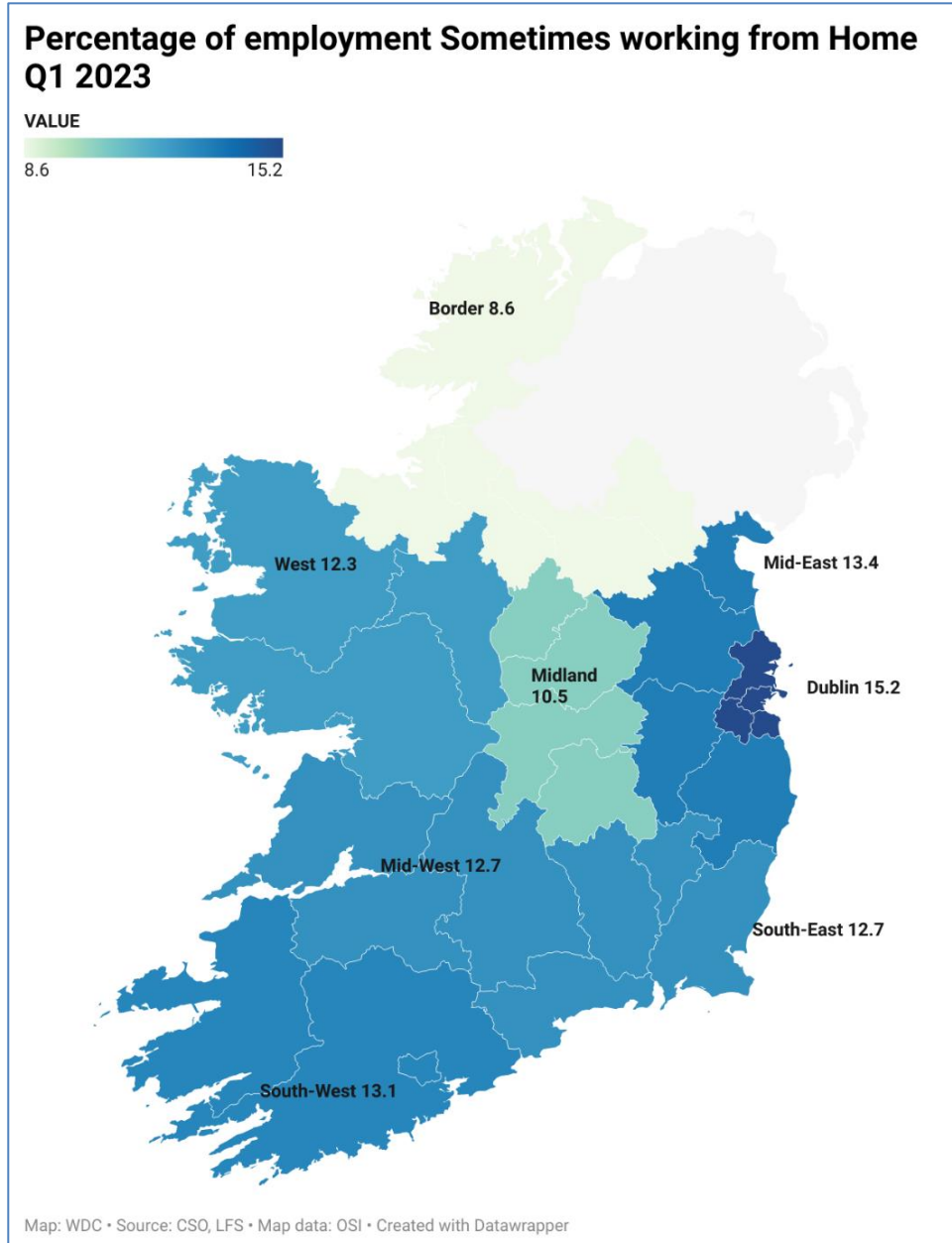


In 2023 the levels of sometimes working from home range from 8.6% in the Border region to 15.2% in Dublin.

The Dublin region had the highest rate of sometimes working from home followed by the Mid-East and South-West.

Both categories – usually and sometimes capture a pattern of hybrid working, where the pattern could be anywhere between 1 and 4 working days off-site (for a typical 5 day week).

Map 3 Sometimes working from home as a % of total employment



The Dublin region has the highest rate of *sometimes* working from home followed by the Mid-East and South-West. The lowest rate of *sometimes* working from home is the Border region with 8.6%.

The differential in rates of *sometimes* working from home is less than those *usually* working from home – ranging from 15.2% to 8.6%, a difference of just 6.6 percentage points (14.4 percentage points for *usually*).

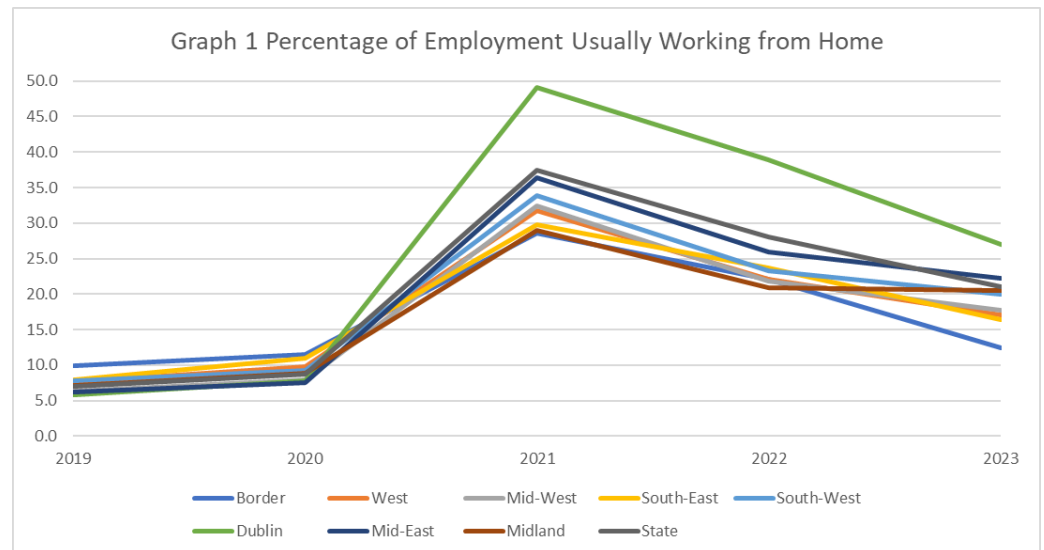
From 2019 to 2020 there is relatively little change in the share of those in employment working usually from home.

However between 2020 and 2021 nationally there was a fourfold increase in the share of the workforce usually working from home – the pandemic effect.

All regions recorded large increases, Dublin had the largest – a six-fold increase in the share of workers usually working from home.

Trends 2019-2023 – Usually Working from Home

This section examines the trends in usually and sometimes working from home, looking at the pre pandemic situation in 2019 and examining the trends to 2023. The data in graph 1 shows the regional trends at NUTS⁵ from 2019 through to 2023 in the share of employment *usually* working from home. Table 1 provides the data for the same period.



Source: CSO, LFS

From 2019 to 2020 there is relatively little change in the share of those in employment working usually from home⁶. All regions in 2019 (with the exception of the Border) have less than 10% share in employment working usually from home. Note the data reported here is from Qtr 1 of the LFS (Jan-March)⁷.

Table 1 below shows the percentage of employment by region, *usually* working at home over the period 2019-2023 and the percentage point change in 2022-23. The pandemic effect is clear when we examine quarter 1 in 2020 and 2021, with an over fourfold increase nationally, from 8.8% of the workforce to 37.4%. Every region recorded a significant increase in the percentage of those in employment *usually* working at home, with the highest increases in Dublin – a six fold increase and the Mid-East with over a four fold increase. The next largest increases are in the regions home to the largest urban centres, the South-West (Cork), the Mid-West (Limerick) and the West (Galway) and this obviously reflects the profile of employment there with higher concentrations of occupations with an ability to work from home.

⁵NUTS is an acronym for the EU Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics. This regional classification in Ireland is Level 1 - Ireland, Level 2 - Regions and Level 3 - Regional Authorities.

⁶ In Q3 2017 there was a change in the data series when the QNHS changed to the LFS and there was a break in the data series. Nonetheless examining the data pre 2017 shows that the level of *usually* working from home remained relatively stable and below 5% between 2012 and 2016.

⁷ The pandemic and work from home guidelines were just being introduced at the end of Qtr 1 2020.

Between 2021 and 2022 nationally the share of those usually working from home declined from a high of 37.4% to 28%.

All regions reported a decline in the share usually working from home between 2021 and 2022.

This decline has continued into 2023, though all regions still have higher rates of usually working from home than pre pandemic

Nationally in 2023, there was a drop of 6.9 percentage points in the rates of usually working from home. This follows a decline of 9.4 percentage points in the preceding years

Table 1: Percentage of employment, usually working at home, 2019-23

Q1	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	% points Change 2022-23
Border	10.0	11.5	28.6	22.1	12.5	-9.6
West	7.7	9.8	31.7	22.1	17.1	-5.0
Mid-West	6.3	8.0	32.4	21.8	17.8	-4.0
South-East	7.9	11.0	29.8	23.7	16.4	-7.3
South-West	7.9	9.3	33.9	23.2	19.9	-3.3
Dublin	5.9	7.8	49.1	39.0	26.9	-12.1
Mid-East	6.2	7.6	36.4	26.0	22.0	-4.0
Midland	7.2	8.8	29	20.9	20.5	-0.4
State	7.0	8.8	37.4	28.0	21.1	-6.9

CSO LFS, Special run.

A year later in the first quarter of 2022 and following the lifting of Government restrictions along with the gradual return to the workplace, the rates in all regions have declined. However all still have rates at least double that of pre pandemic rates and the rate in Dublin is just below 40%.

Since then there have been further declines across all regions suggesting we may not yet have arrived at a new normal. Between 2022 and 2023 there was a national decline of 6.9 percentage points, with greater declines in the Dublin, Border and South-East regions.

Nonetheless all regions continue to have rates of usually working from home much higher than the rates in 2019, before the pandemic – with the exception of the Border region which is just marginally higher. It is not clear why the pattern in the Border region is a little different. The Border region is a rural region and it is possible that the small sample sizes may be a factor. In addition cross border working is an important feature between Donegal and Derry and this may influence work from home rates due to different tax codes.

Over the entire period 2019-2023, every region has shown an overall increase in the share of those *usually* working from home. This ranges from a slight increase in the Border region to an over four fold increase in the Dublin region. Generally the regions with the lowest rates pre pandemic have shown the greatest increases over the period.

Regional patterns have changed since before the pandemic.

In 2019 Dublin had some of the lowest rates of usually working from home, whereas the more rural regions, such as the Border and West had some of the higher rates.

This pattern is reversed in 2023, where the Dublin region has the highest rate and the Border and South-East regions having the lowest rates.

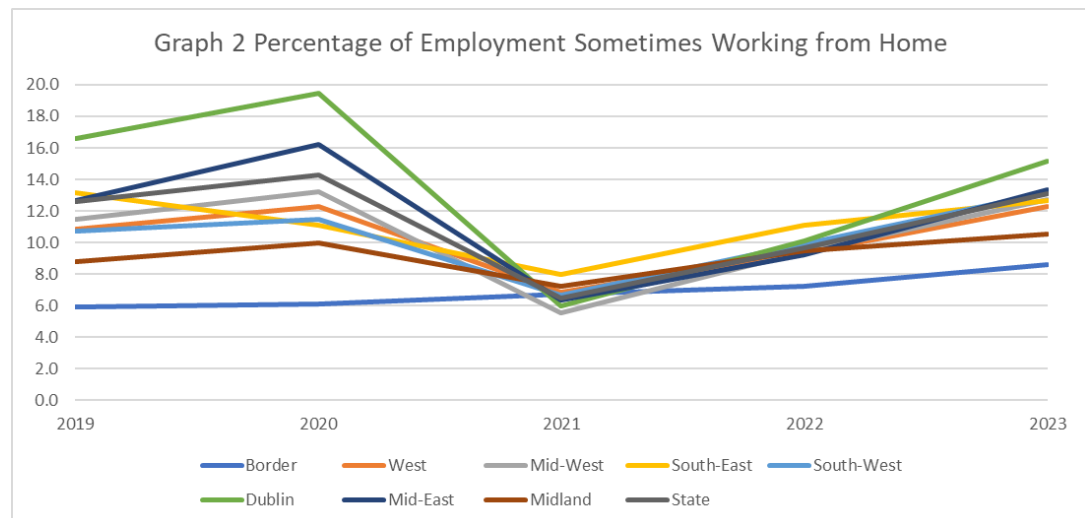
A new normal may have emerged with Dublin and the Mid-East having the highest rates of usually working from home.

These regional patterns have changed somewhat since before the pandemic. In 2019 the Dublin region had some of the lowest rates of *usually* working from home, whereas the more rural regions, such as the Border and West regions had some of the higher rates of those *usually* working from home. This pattern is reversed in 2023, where the Dublin region has the highest rate and the Border and South-East regions having the lowest rates.

This is likely to be a pandemic effect where more employers are now accepting and supporting a greater incidence of working from home and this is most evident in Dublin with a greater share of occupations amenable to working from home. A new normal may well have emerged with Dublin and the Mid-East regions having the highest rates of *usually* working from home.

Trends 2019-2023 – Sometimes Working from Home

Those categorised as *sometimes* working from home are those who have worked for at least one hour from home in the last four weeks. Graph 1 below shows the share of employment of those working *sometimes* from home by region over the period 2019-2023. Between 2019 and 2020 the trends across the regions vary but it is apparent that there are increases in the Dublin and Mid-East regions suggesting a pre-pandemic increase in *sometimes* working from home, see also Table 2.



Source: CSO, LFS

Between 2020 and 2021, all regions apart from the Border, showed a decline in the share of those *sometimes* working from home

Examining pre and post pandemic shares, nationally the rate *sometimes* working from home is higher in 2023 than in 2019.

This suggests a shift toward higher shares *sometimes* working from home and lower shares of *usually* working from home.

Between 2020 and 2021, all regions apart from the Border, showed a decline in the share of those *sometimes* working from home, which can be explained by the move to usually work from home, as part of the pandemic response. Examining the trend between 2022 and 2023, every region recorded an increase in the share of those *sometimes* working from home. It is clear that many of those who were *usually* working from home during 2022 reverted to work *sometimes* from home. This pattern was evident in 2021-22 and this has continued into 2023.

Table 2: Percentage of employment, sometimes working at home, 2019-2023

Q1	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	% point Change 2022-23
Border	5.9	6.1	6.8	7.2	8.6	1.4
West	10.8	12.3	6.9	9.3	12.3	3.0
Mid-West	11.5	13.2	5.5	9.4	12.7	3.3
South-East	13.2	11.1	7.9	11.1	12.7	1.6
South-West	10.7	11.5	6.6	9.9	13.1	3.2
Dublin	16.6	19.5	6.0	10.1	15.2	5.1
Mid-East	12.7	16.2	6.3	9.2	13.4	4.2
Midland	8.8	9.9	7.2	9.5	10.5	1.0
State	12.6	14.3	6.5	9.6	13.1	3.5

CSO LFS, Special run.

Census and Labour Force Survey data

Census 2022 was conducted in April 3rd, a month later than the reference period for the LFS Q1 2022. Combining the two categories *sometimes* (9.6%) and *usually* working from home (28%) gives a share of 37.6% working from home. This is a little higher than the Census definition (32%), but the labour force survey has a broader definition based on monthly rather than weekly patterns.

The Census data provides a lot more detail in terms of days per week and occupation discussed here. There will also be more data from the detailed Census volumes to follow. Separately the LFS will allow us to track changes in the intercensal period.



Working from home is continuing though the weekly frequency may be less reflecting a more hybrid pattern.

The declines in those usually working from home are greater than the increases in sometimes, indicating an overall decline in the rates of working from home.

Regional patterns have changed. In 2019, Dublin had the lowest rates of working from home. In 2022 and 2023 the Dublin region has the highest.

Employment policy needs to ensure occupational and sectoral diversity. This is to mitigate against sector specific shocks as well as providing opportunities to work from home.

Conclusions

This briefing reviewed national and regional data on work from home patterns from the Census and Labour Force Survey over the period 2019-2023 and provides a pre and post pandemic picture of the extent of working from home.

The rates of working from home are clearly dependent on occupational profile and working from home potential. Over the period reviewed the Government guidance on working from home was also a key factor. While the LFS shows that rates of those *usually* working from home continue to decline from the pandemic high of 2021, there have been increases in those *sometimes* working from home. The practice of working from home is continuing, though the frequency may be less with a move from *usually* to *sometimes* reflecting a more hybrid pattern.

The declines in those *usually* working from home have been greater than the increases in *sometimes* working from home suggesting a continued decline in working from home.

Regional patterns have changed since before the pandemic. In 2019 the Dublin region had some of the lowest rates of *usually* working from home, whereas the more rural regions, such as the Border and West had some of the higher rates of those *usually* working from home. This pattern is reversed in 2022 and 2023, where Dublin has the highest rate and the Border and South-East having the lowest rates. Those regions with greater rates of working from home are those large urban centres, and regions adjacent to them with relatively high shares engaged in occupations amenable to working from home.

From a regional and rural development perspective, regional employment should be diverse supporting a range of occupations including those amenable to working from home. A diverse employment base is also important to protect against sector specific shocks which will have a greater impact if employment is overly concentrated in some sectors. For example Covid and Brexit had disproportionate impacts on tourism and agriculture, both sectors with particularly high concentrations in the Western Region, discussed in [McGrath, Frost, McHenry 2021](#) and [Lydon & McGrath 2020](#)

WDC reports on publications on Remote Work are all available on <https://westerndevelopment.ie/policy/policy-areas/remote-work/>

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