

RESEARCH REPORT

What do homeworkers need?

The Homework Research

In collaboration with



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Many Dutch people have been working from home since March, because of the Corona measures. The advice of the government is to continue working from home as much as possible in the coming period. Working from home for a few days a week may even become the norm in the future. But how do you, as an employer, ensure that your employees remain productive and engaged? Together with Nationale Nederlanden we investigated what homeworkers find important. As it turns out, customization is crucial. The main conclusions of the research can be found in this report.

Some employees enjoy working from home: get away from that busy office garden. Other employees experience difficulty concentrating at home. We were curious about the experiences of homeworkers from various sectors. What support do they need from their employer?

Research into the preferences of homeworkers

Early April 2020, we started a broad research into the preferences of homeworkers, together with Nationale Nederlanden. The research was conducted with our Crunchr Preference tool, which provides insights into employee preferences.

Almost 2,000 employees from 75 companies were asked about their experiences. They ranked sixteen different measures related to their homework conditions, such as technical support, collaboration tools or regular updates from management based on what they personally find important.

About the participants

The participants work in different sectors: mainly in industry and financial services, but also for example in education and agriculture. Their average age is 46. Most respondents (52%) live with a partner and children. About 29% lives with a partner and 10% are living alone.

General conclusions: what measures do homeworkers need?

With Crunchr Preference, we discovered different patterns in the answers.

- In general, homeworkers appreciate the support they receive from their employers,
- About 87% of the respondents indicate that they can work well from home. We measured the experiences of homeworkers at different times, they have become more and more satisfied. At the beginning of April, about 83% of the homeworkers indicated that they could work well from home. A month later at the beginning of May, this number has increased to 90%,
- Only a quarter of the respondents experience a negative effect on their productivity. This number has fallen considerably over time. Between April 3rd and April 21st, 34% of respondents believed that working from home had a negative impact on their productivity. At the end of the study in May, this was dropped to 21%,
- 64% of the participants are above average concerned about the economic consequences of the pandemic,
- About 25% of respondents believe that working from home has a negative impact on their mental health. This effect is particularly great for millennials: one in three struggles with mental health. One in four homeworkers with children experiences a negative influence of working from home on mental health.

- What does the average homeworker need to stay engaged and productive? Number 1 is the access to easy to use collaboration tools (59%) such as good meeting software, flexible working hours follows, this is important for 56% of the homeworkers. Social interaction also scores high: 50% considers this important. Social interaction can be anything from virtual lunches to online Friday afternoon drinks.
- We asked whether participants have any tips for other homeworkers, the answer is often: 'move in-between', 'take a break' and 'provide structure or rhythm'. Tips for employers: 'give confidence', "communicate" and 'be involved'.

'Employers benefit from customized solutions'

What are the main conclusions per group?

The need for measures differs greatly per homeworker. For example, 'staying fit' is important for a quarter (24%) of the participants, while at the same time it is very unimportant for 15% of the respondents. Millennials experience a more negative impact on their productivity by working from home than respondents with children. What employees need therefore depends very much on their age and home situation. They benefit most from custom solutions. What are the main needs of each group?



1. Millennials (21% of the participants)

Employees up to the age of 34 mainly miss social interaction (56%). Moreover, they value flexible working hours (57%), and also focus is an important point of attention (50%). How can you contribute as an employer? For example, the employers we spoke mentioned soundproof headphones.

Millennials desire to feel understood by their employer, need commitment, contact, and communication. For example, respondents told us that updates and digital pep talks would work well.



2. Homeworkers with children (55%)

Especially homeworkers with children living at home need flexible working hours (61%) and access to easy to use collaboration tools (60%). Updates from the manager are also highly appreciated by 50% of the homeworkers with children. They often advise employers: "Give confidence and be flexible."

3. People living alone without children (10%)

Most people that live alone (60%) consider collaboration tools as important. About 57% of the respondents need social interaction and 52% of respondents that live alone benefit from manager updates. The tip they often give employers: "Check regularly how your employees are doing."



4. Employees aged 55+ (22%)

The group of 55+ employees especially needs technical support while working from home. By this, they mean, for example, that they can call a help desk if they experience ICT related problems. This age group has a markedly greater need for this than other groups. An ergonomic workplace with a good office chair is also important for many respondents aged 55+ (51%), 59% of the respondents in this 55+ age group finds collaboration tools crucial and having good work supplies to work from home (51%) such as a telephone, laptop, and extra computer screen. They also benefit from trust, attention and clarity from the employer.



5. Employees who struggle above average with mental health (25%)

What do employees need who experience a negative impact of working from home? Compared to the "average" homeworker they have a greater need for staying fit and mental support. That does not mean that these are their greatest needs. If you ask them to rank their needs, social interaction (57%), flexible working hours (55%), and collaboration tools (54%) emerge most often. Updates from managers are less important for them than the overall group. An employer tip that was often mentioned: "Show understanding for someone's personal situation."

'Homeworkers are increasingly positive about their productivity.'

Differences in periods

The Homework research was open from April 3rd to May 15th, 2020. Is there any distinction in the results in different periods?

Let's take a look at the moments when our cabinet announced changes, we can focus on 3 different periods during this research. First, the start of the lockdown, in which home workers had no prospect of changing measures. This lasted until April 2nd, then the extension of the measures, from April 22nd to May 6th. And finally, the first relaxations of the measures, from the 6th till the 15th of May.

What stands out is that flexible working hours and collaboration tools are in the top 3 measures from start to finish whereas updates from the manager are rarely mentioned at the beginning of the lockdown. As time passes, homeworkers find it increasingly important to receive regular updates on the current situation and the impact of the pandemic on the company. On the other hand, social interaction drops further down for the overall population.

Homeworkers satisfaction increased

Homeworkers are more and more satisfied on how they can work from home, also people have become less worried about the economic situation over time. They also struggle less with their mental health. In addition, their satisfaction level increased with the way they can work from home. At the beginning of the lockdown, 83% of the participants indicated that they could work well from home. This percentage increased to 90% between the 6th and 15th of May.



83%

21 April

84%

6 May

90%

16 May

Homeworkers are also increasingly positive about their productivity. In the first period, 34% of the participants felt that working from home had a negative impact on their productivity. A month later, this went down to only 21%.

Tip for employers: ensure a differentiated approach

As you have noticed, there are many different conclusions and outcomes. What can you do as an employer regarding your employees? The above results mainly show that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. If you align your policy with the greatest common denominator in the study, for example, flexible working hours, you run the risk of not really helping anyone well. Therefore, customized solutions are very important.

At the same time, as an employer, you cannot create 1,000 different combinations of measures to offer everyone a personal tailor-made package. The solution: workforce analytics, such as the Crunchr Preference tool.

By using smart math on personnel data, you can compose choice packages for different groups of employees. An algorithm collects measures based on importance. The algorithm calculates the optimal packages (for example, 4 packages) that match the main needs of a particular employee group best. Such packages with measures that offer focus, or packages with measures that ensure that homeworkers can work independently. Our research shows that when an employer uses a tailor-made approach, on average, **20%** of the employees are more satisfied with the support at home.

Satisfaction about the measures



48%

One-size-fits-all offer: 1 package



68%

Group-oriented offer: 4 packages

With a differentiated approach, you help your employees with a tailor-made offering, but at the same time keep it organized. A win-win situation!

Want to learn more?

Crunchr would like to help employers with the Homework Research to prepare for a future where working from home is considered as the new normal. These insights can help you as an employer to ensure that your employees will continue staying engaged and productive while working from home. Would you like to know more about the Homework Research? Or do you have specific questions about certain target groups? We are happy to dive into the data with you, for example, to compose the most effective package for your organization.

It all starts with listening to your employees!

For more information about how you can use [Crunchr Preference](#) for your own customized research or how you can participate in this homework research contact us!

[Contact us](#)

About us

Many organisations face change and other challenges. And need to make important workforce decisions.

Crunchr supports workforce decisions with relevant insights, using expertise, data and analytics. Without clear insight, accurate decision making is at risk. And achieving your business objectives even more.

Most organisations have HR systems, but struggle to translate data to insight. Crunchr gets the basics right with simple workforce reporting. Our play-learn-build methodology and learning portal drive easy adoption. This helps to accelerate with workforce analytics in a natural way.

Crunchr is a fully serviced solution. It works on top of existing HR systems, collects workforce data into one secure place and makes it accessible for everyone who needs it. Our technology is globally recognized by Gartner and Bersin.

It's time to embrace the power of workforce analytics. Act now. Be different.





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