

Press Release: Work

10% of Indians employed during lockdowns worked from home -- over half of which continue to work remotely on a full time or hybrid basis

12 November 2021

A recent national survey showed that only 10% of Indians aged 15 and above who were employed during what they considered the most severe lockdown worked from home. 68% of respondents considered the Janata curfew and subsequent nationwide lockdown between March and May 2020 to be the most severe lockdown.

The survey was conducted by LIRNEasia, a regional think tank working on digital policy issues across the Asia Pacific, and ICRIER, a policy-oriented economic policy think tank based out of New Delhi.

The 2021 survey showed that the prevalence of working from home differed by industry. Those who worked in finance and insurance, and information and communication technology (ICT) worked from home more than their peers from other industries. In contrast, those working in industries such as transportation and storage, and water supply, sewerage and waste management were among the least likely to.

Those who worked from home faced numerous challenges: 43% said they had to work more hours and undertake more tasks, and 27% said they had to share a device with another household member with competing needs. However, they *also* saw the benefits of working from home: 31% said they had more time to spend with their family, 25% said they incurred lower costs (such as transportation costs), and 24% experienced greater autonomy.

The research also indicates that the shift to working from home was not a lockdown-only phenomenon for many. Even after the lockdown periods, 35% of those who worked from home during the lockdown said they continued to do so on a full time basis. Meanwhile another 15% said they only physically go into their workplaces on select days and weeks, and continue to work from home on other days.

The survey was conducted by LIRNEasia, a regional think tank working on digital policy issues across the Asia Pacific, and ICRIER, a policy-oriented economic policy think tank based out of New Delhi. The survey findings were released at a virtual launch event conducted on 12 November 2021, which included a panel discussion with leading government, private sector and civil society representatives. Panelists included Dr. Jaijit Bhattacharya (President, Centre for Digital Economy Policy Research), Abhishek Singh (President & CEO, National e-Governance Division, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology), Nishanth Baghel (Director of Technology Innovations, Pratham) and Helani Galpaya (CEO, LIRNEasia). The discussion was moderated by Dr. Rajat Kathuria (Senior Visiting Professor, ICRIER).

“Given the size of the IT sector, one could have expected a much higher level of work-from-home facilitated by digital connectivity. This turned out not to be the case, with only a small percentage of the workforce doing so. But in the long run, we hope the lockdowns have prompted employers to consider more flexible working arrangements for men and women“ said the CEO of LIRNEasia, Helani Galpaya.

According to Dr. Rajat Kathuria, Senior Visiting Professor at ICRIER, “Some sectors such as IT services adapted very quickly to a complete remote setup. However, our survey finds that even where remote working was available, some employers did not make the option available. Post lockdown we are in a new equilibrium that offers a flexible mix of remote and onsite work. However, where such options were not available, job losses and poverty increased significantly.”

About the research: The research was conducted by LIRNEasia and ICRIER, and funded by IDRC through a joint grant given to three regional think tanks: LIRNEasia, Research ICT Africa and Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. The nationally representative sample for the survey consisted of 7,000 households across India including 350 villages and wards. The sampling methodology has been designed to ensure representation of the target group (population aged 15-65) at a national level with a confidence level of 95-percent and a +/-1.7% margin of error. The data also allows for disaggregation by urban/rural divide, gender and socio-economic classification at the national level and at the state level for 4 focal states, Delhi, Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra.

About LIRNEasia: LIRNEasia is an Asia Pacific ICT policy and regulation think tank. Its mission is to catalyze policy change through research to improve people’s lives in the emerging Asia Pacific by facilitating their use of hard and soft infrastructures through the use of knowledge, information and technology.

For more information see <https://lirneasia.net/>

About ICRIER: ICRIER is an autonomous economic policy think tank. ICRIER’s main focus is to enhance the knowledge content of policy making by undertaking analytical research that is targeted at informing India’s policy makers. The Digital Economy, Startup and Innovation (DESI) team at ICRIER is deeply invested in areas of digital access, internet governance and market competition.

For more information see <http://icrier.org/>

For more queries kindly contact:

Prashant Subramaniam – 9899125503

prashant@kaizencomm.com

Piyush Sharma – 9140717877

Piyush.sharma@kaizencomm.com