

AT WORK

Is Telecommuting The Way to Go?

If you want to convince the boss you should start working from home, chances are there is a study out there that says it makes employees more productive. If you're a boss and would prefer your employees stay tethered to their office cubicles, a sheaf of academic research will bolster that argument, too.

A team of social scientists set out to review the research in hopes of finding out once and for all whether it's a net positive.

The resulting study, published last week in the journal *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, boldly declares: It depends.

Remote work has undeniable benefits, researchers found. Remote workers are happier with their jobs, feel less work stress and show improved performance. People who frequently work from home show loyalty to their jobs and fewer intentions of quitting than do workers on-site.

But there are plenty of exceptions. At the start of new projects, "face-to-face time may be particularly important," wrote researchers Tammy D. Allen of the University of South Florida, Timothy D. Golden, of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Kristen M. Shockley, of the City University of New York.

In 2015, some 60% of companies permitted employees to work in any sort of telecommuting arrangement, up from about 53% in 2011, according to a survey of more than 450 employers of all sizes by the Society for Human Resource Management.

The time employees spend telecommuting may make a difference when it comes to employee satisfaction. Previous research reviewed by the authors of the latest study found that employees who telecommute just a few hours a week—around 15 hours—are more satisfied than those who telecommute far less or more, perhaps because these moderate telecommuters get both the social ties of the office and the joys of doing laundry while typing up reports.

—Rachel Emma Silverman

WSJ 11/4/15