

Submitted question to the Help Desk of the OSMET on February 8th, 2023.

Question: What are the best practices to set up a hybrid work mode and attenuate effects on workers mental health?

The OSMET has proceeded with a systematic review of existing studies published since 2020. The Annex-1 displays the methodological details of the answer to this question.

Answer:

Obtained results lead us to conclude that the actual state of the scientific literature does not permit us to target best practices setting up ideal hybrid work modes regarding workers mental health, based on the post-pandemic period. Moreover, we found no meta-analyses on said topic because recent studies are too few or of an insufficient quality. One systematic review published in 2022 (Shiri & al., 2022) on the effects of flexible work on mental health ends up confirming the conclusion that it would be necessary to conduct more intervention and controlled randomized trial studies to document the effects of teleworking on mental health. This same systematic review comprised studies published prior to November 2020 and concluded that flexible work modes, regarding workplace location and flexible working hours, increase self-reported mental health. Tracks can nevertheless be followed based on the best study we have found, and which partially answers the question using data collected during and after lockdown (Oksanen & al., 2023). This study's results suggest that efforts aimed at promoting social support and self-regulation at work would be necessary in protecting teleworkers' mental health.

A synthesis of the obtained results is displayed in the following table:

Hybrid mode type/Profession/Country/Research design	Mental health indicator	Risk factors	Protection factors	References
At least 3 days of telework/Active population/Finland/Longitudinal	Anxiety	Being a woman Being young Loneliness Technostress Psychological distress Burnout	Social support at work Self-regulation (control)	Oksanen & al. 2023
100% Telework/Active population/USA/Longitudinal	Low depressive symptoms	Few or too many working hours	-	Shiri & al. 2022
Partial teleworking (1 or 2 days)/Workers in a variety of activity sectors/USA	Low burn-out	High interpersonal interactions	-	Shiri & al. 2022
<p><u>References:</u></p> <p>Oksanen, A., et al. (2023). COVID-19 Anxiety and Wellbeing at Work in Finland during 2020-2022: A 5-Wave Longitudinal Survey Study. <i>Int J Environ Res Public Health</i> 20, 680. DOI: 10.3390/ijerph20010680</p> <p>R. Shiri, J. Turunen, J. Kausto, P. Leino-Arjas, P. Varje, A. Vaananen, et al. (2022) The Effect of Employee-Oriented Flexible Work on Mental Health: A Systematic Review. <i>Healthcare</i> 10(5). DOI:10.3390/healthcare10050883.</p>				

Annex 1 - Methodology

The OSMET has proceeded with a systematic review of existing studies that were referenced on the following databases: PsycInfo, Medline, Embase and EBM Reviews - Cochrane database of systematic reviews. The used syntaxes comprised several terms and keywords associated with the concepts of hybrid work modes (such as "telework*" or "flexible adj2 workplace*") and mental health (such as "burnout" or "depression"). The research limited itself to studies in French or in English. Moreover, manual research was completed by the researchers, and, after extraction of duplicates, 99 references were sorted. Studies were retained if their data emerged from an OECD country and if it was collected since September 2021. This selected date is justified by the vaccination rates in sampled populations judged to be sufficient in initiating the lifting of lockdown measures in most OECD countries. Based on titles or abstracts, 24 potential studies were retained. After a thorough reading, only two corresponded to the appropriate research criteria to answer the question submitted to the Help Desk.