



Report Title:	Results from the Public Service Working From Home Collection – November 2024		
Report No:	2024-0312		
Date:	10 December 2024		
To:	Hon Nicola Willis, Minister for the Public Service		
Action Sought:	Note and agree	Due Date	18 December 2024
Contact Person:	Paula Davis, Manager, Workforce Capability; Alex Chadwick, Deputy Chief Executive		
Contact No:	9(2)(a) privacy		
Encl:	Yes – 1 appendix	Priority:	High
Security Level:	IN CONFIDENCE		

Executive Summary

1. In September 2024 the Government set out expectations for Public Service departments operating policies allowing staff to work from home. This included an expectation that the use of working from home will be actively monitored and reported on by those agencies.
2. The Public Service Commission collected data about public servants working from home patterns in October and November 2024; this was the first such collection of its kind for the Public Service. Whilst each agency was able to collate their data in a method that best suited their organisation, we required agencies to collect this data at a team level, from managers who best know the **typical** working from home patterns of their teams.
3. Results indicate:
 - a. Averaged across all public servants, the number of days typically worked from home is 0.9 days per week
 - b. 55 percent of public servants do not typically work from home, or only do so infrequently
 - c. 33 percent of public servants typically work from home either 1 or 2 days per week
 - d. 12 percent of public servants are contracted to work remotely, or have a typical working from home pattern of 3 days per week, or more.
 - e. The most common day on which to work from home is a Friday, with 23 percent of public servants typically working from home on a Friday.
4. We plan to publish results in mid-February 2025. Published information will include work from home frequency and proportion of the Public Service typically working from home on a given day for the Public Service overall, and work from home frequency information for individual agencies.

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Purpose of Report

5. On 23 September 2024 the Government set out expectations for Public Service departments and departmental agencies about the working from home practices of public servants. This included a requirement that agencies must actively monitor the prevalence and impact of working from home agreements, and be able to regularly report to the Public Service Commission about the number and nature of agreements they have in place.
6. In response, the Public Service Commission collected information from all Departments and Departmental agencies about the prevalence of working from home arrangements of their staff.
7. This report details the results of the recent collection.

Analysis

The Commission designed a process for agencies to gather working from home data from managers

8. Working from home data had not previously been systematically gathered from across the Public Service. The Commission designed a standard process to collect this data from agencies based on the **typical** working patterns of their staff. Our process reinforced the need for managers to actively manage working from home arrangements, and for agencies to have a central view of the practices employed within their organisations. The standardised process enables agency leaders to compare their organisation against the Public Service as a whole.
9. The process required managers to report on the **typical** working from home patterns of each of their direct reports¹. Capturing typical work from home arrangements means they are less influenced by seasonal disruption (e.g., school holidays), explainable absence (e.g., illness or annual leave), and work locations which vary due to the work performed.
10. This was not intended to measure office attendance, but to record typical working from home patterns directly. Working from home, and office attendance are likely correlated, but for many reasons, including those previously stated, they will not be entirely aligned.
11. The collection was developed in consultation with agencies, and additional support was provided. For example, collection and collation templates were provided for agencies that did not have centralised monitoring systems in place.
12. Data was collected between 18 October and 22 November. All agencies responded, collectively providing information for around 62,850 Public Servants.
13. There are options to repeat this collection, if required. These include:
 - Option one: repeat in May 2025, with data published alongside results from the Public Service Census 2025 (recommended)
 - Option two repeat in October 2025, with data published alongside September 2025 quarterly workforce data
 - Option three, do not repeat the survey

¹ Some employees were not in scope of the collection, including staff employed overseas, and casual staff. Where an employee did not have a typical pattern (e.g. they frequently changed their pattern to accommodate the needs of their work), managers were asked to report on the actual use of work from home in the previous week.

14. The collection has a cost for the Commission, and participating agencies, noting that our recommended process required that all managers participate in the collection. Options one and two enable evaluation of implementation of the guidance, while not repeating this exercise would acknowledge that agencies are operating working from home as an exception, and not as an entitlement. We can also explore whether there are other options to ensure adherence with the guidance, including through direct engagement with agencies.

Public Servants work from home less than 1 day per week

15. On average, public servants typically work from home 0.9 days per week. This is broadly consistent with a recent study of working from home² conducted across 34 countries which found the average days of working from home in New Zealand was 1.0 days per week. The average across English-speaking countries surveyed was 1.4 days per week.
16. The number of days employees work from home per week varies by agency, from 0.1 days per week on average at the Government Communications Security Bureau, to 2.2 days per week at the Ministry for Ethnic Communities.
17. While occupation level data is not available from this survey, analysis indicates staff at agencies with a focus on service delivery, including, for example, the Department of Corrections, Ministry for Social Development, and Ministry of Justice, work from home less, on average, than staff at other departments. Some analysis on the basis of occupation will become available following the Public Service Census 2025.

More than half of public servants do not typically work from home at all

18. More than half of all public servants (55 percent) typically do not work from home when performing their role³. This includes where staff cannot work from home due to the nature of their work (e.g., their work location is a port, or a corrections facility), the security requirements of their role prevent working from home, and where staff can work from home, but typically do not.
19. A recent Statistics NZ survey⁴ found 33 percent of employed people worked some or all of their time at home, compared to around 45 percent of public servants⁵. Stats NZ found that working from home was more common in some workforces than others. Financial and Insurance workers or Information, Media, and Telecom professionals had the highest work from home rates (66.8 percent and 59.4 percent respectively), while Transport, post, and warehousing, and Retail Trade and Accommodation had the lowest (19.8 percent and 13.8 percent respectively).
20. One third (33 percent) of public servants typically work from home one or two days per week; of staff who do work from home, 2 days per week is most common (22 percent of public servants). Ten percent of public servants typically work from home 3 days per week, or more.

² Working from Home Around the Globe: 2023 Report https://www.econpol.eu/publications/policy_brief_53

³ At least 1 day per week.

⁴ Stats NZ Household Labour Force Survey, September 2024.

⁵ 45 percent includes staff who work fully remotely (for example, where they work in a remote geographic location from where their team is based); these staff are generally not considered to be “working from home” as this is their contracted location of work. They are included here for comparability with the Statistics NZ Survey.

21. Little research has been undertaken on frequency of working from home, but a recent 2024 New Zealand study of office workers by CBRE⁶ indicated 29 percent worked from home two days per week, 7 percentage points higher than the equivalent Public Service result.

Working from home is not consolidated on any one day of the week

22. Table 1 below shows the proportion of the public service who typically work from home on any given day. Working from home is most common on a Friday with 23.0 percent of the Public Service typically working from home on a Friday, and least common on a Wednesday at 15.5 percent of the Public Service.

Table 1: The Proportion of the Public Service typically working from home on a given day

Days of the Week						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
18.4%	16.1%	15.5%	17.2%	23.0%	0.1%	0.1%

23. As with working from home patterns, the proportion of staff working from home on any given day varies by agency, and by day of the week. Variability of working from home practices within and between agencies is expected due to different requirements for location-based work, (e.g., staff working in corrections facilities, airports, conservation land, or courts), security requirements, and property management limitations within existing office space. Appendix 1 provides the proportion of each agencies workforce which typically work from home on any given day.

Next Steps

Data will be published in February 2025

24. Data will be published on the Public Service Commission website in mid-February as discussed in (2024-0285), meeting agencies obligations to report on Working from Home patterns, and our obligations to publish this data transparently.

Public Service Census 2025 will include questions relating to working from home

25. In March 2025 the Public Service Commission will be running the Public Service Census. The census survey includes questions on the impact of working from home, and other questions relating to productivity. Both agency and system results from this survey are expected in May 2025.
26. Census data will be used in conjunction with the current Working from Home data collection, and any further iterations thereof, to develop a richer picture of the prevalence and impact of working from home across the Public Service, as well as the regional and occupational differences in working from home.

We plan to repeat the Public Service Working from Home collection in 2025

27. The Commission intends to repeat the Public Service Working from Home collection in 2025 to monitor the impact of the new guidance, and will report on system level changes as agencies give effect to the Government's expectations. We anticipate running the collection in May 2025, with data being published alongside reporting from the Public Service Census in mid-2025. After this collection we will again explore the ongoing need to centrally monitor this activity.

⁶ <https://www.cbre.co.nz/insights/books/new-zealand-office-occupier-survey-2024>

Recommended Action

We recommend that you:

- a **note** the Public Service Commission surveyed all Public Service departments and departmental agencies to collect information regarding typical working from home patterns for all public servants. Data was collected between 18 October and 22 November 2024.
- b **note** the main findings:
 - a. Averaged across all public servants, the number of days typically worked from home is 0.9 days per week
 - b. 55 percent of public servants do not typically work from home, or only do so infrequently
 - c. 33 percent of public servants typically work from home either 1 or 2 days per week
 - d. 12 percent of public servants are contracted to work remotely, or have a typical working from home pattern of 3 days per week, or more.
 - e. The most common day on which to work from home is a Friday, with 23 percent of public servants typically working from home on a Friday.
- c **note** that these findings, along with agency-level frequency of working from home results, will be published on the Public Service Commission website in mid-February
- d **note** that the full data set in Appendix 1 has not yet been shared with agencies. This will occur late January, before the data is published
- e **note** that additional measures of working from home impacts will be collected through the Public Service Census in March 2025.
- f **agree** that the Public Service Working from Home survey should be repeated in 2025:
 - a. Option 1, repeat in May 2025, with data published alongside results from the Public Service Census 2025 (recommended)
Agree/disagree.
 - b. Option 2, repeat in October 2025, with data published alongside September 2025 quarterly workforce data
Agree/disagree.
 - c. Option 3, do not repeat
Agree/disagree.
- g **agree** that Te Kawa Mataaho release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.
Agree/disagree.

Hon Nicola Willis
Minister for the Public Service

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Appendix 1:

November 2024 Public Service Working From Home Survey – Agency Table

Org Name Long	Typical number of days per week working from home							Ave. days WFH	% who regularly WFH	Proportion of the workforce typically working from home on each day				
	0	1	2	3	4	5	Remote*			Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Aroturuki Tamariki - Independent Children's Monitor	12%	24%	57%	5%	0%	0%	2%	1.5	86%	29%	24%	28%	28%	52%
Cancer Control Agency	14%	14%	61%	5%	0%	0%	6%	1.5	80%	13%	27%	22%	44%	45%
Charter School Agency	45%	15%	30%	5%	0%	0%	5%	0.9	50%	25%	15%	5%	0%	45%
Crown Law Office	42%	27%	26%	1%	0%	1%	3%	0.9	55%	14%	17%	18%	23%	14%
Department of Conservation	58%	9%	23%	3%	1%	1%	4%	0.8	38%	15%	14%	14%	15%	19%
Department of Corrections	80%	9%	6%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0.3	19%	7%	7%	7%	7%	9%
Department of Internal Affairs	47%	11%	27%	8%	2%	2%	3%	1.0	50%	23%	21%	20%	22%	32%
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	66%	24%	6%	2%	0%	0%	2%	0.4	32%	6%	7%	9%	10%	14%
Education Review Office	74%	9%	6%	1%	1%	0%	9%	0.3	17%	6%	5%	4%	8%	7%
Government Communications Security Bureau	89%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.1	11%					
Inland Revenue Department	18%	7%	63%	7%	1%	2%	2%	1.7	80%	38%	27%	24%	34%	45%
Land Information New Zealand	18%	21%	30%	15%	7%	5%	4%	1.8	78%	39%	34%	33%	32%	41%
Ministry for Culture and Heritage	30%	25%	34%	4%	2%	1%	5%	1.2	66%	24%	21%	21%	19%	34%
Ministry for Disabled People	29%	18%	32%	14%	1%	2%	4%	1.4	67%	25%	27%	25%	25%	30%
Ministry for Ethnic Communities	6%	19%	31%	35%	5%	3%	0%	2.2	94%	32%	8%	55%	45%	84%
Ministry for Pacific Peoples	65%	9%	10%	6%	2%	1%	6%	0.6	29%	9%	14%	8%	10%	17%
Ministry for Primary Industries	58%	12%	21%	5%	2%	1%	2%	0.8	40%	16%	17%	18%	18%	21%
Ministry for Regulation	29%	47%	18%	1%	0%	0%	5%	0.9	66%	9%	8%	14%	14%	28%
Ministry for the Environment	57%	6%	5%	4%	5%	4%	18%	0.7	25%	18%	8%	13%	4%	25%
Ministry for Women	29%	31%	33%	7%	0%	0%	0%	1.2	71%	14%	31%	29%	19%	29%
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment	21%	13%	47%	13%	3%	1%	2%	1.6	77%	33%	27%	26%	29%	39%
Ministry of Defence	63%	27%	8%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0.5	36%	6%	9%	10%	8%	14%
Ministry of Education	42%	14%	19%	16%	3%	2%	5%	1.2	53%	24%	22%	22%	22%	28%
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	49%	25%	18%	2%	0%	1%	5%	0.7	46%	12%	13%	13%	13%	18%
Ministry of Health	20%	19%	38%	10%	2%	2%	8%	1.4	71%	26%	25%	22%	27%	34%
Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	23%	26%	45%	3%	1%	0%	2%	1.3	75%	22%	27%	24%	24%	34%
Ministry of Justice	74%	10%	11%	2%	1%	2%	2%	0.5	24%	9%	11%	12%	11%	12%
Ministry of Māori Development-Te Puni Kōkiri	54%	16%	24%	2%	0%	1%	3%	0.8	43%	16%	13%	20%	18%	22%
Ministry of Social Development	64%	7%	15%	11%	1%	1%	1%	0.8	35%	17%	14%	12%	15%	19%
Ministry of Transport	36%	22%	36%	2%	1%	0%	2%	1.1	62%	17%	23%	18%	12%	28%
National Emergency Management Agency	49%	23%	18%	5%	1%	0%	4%	0.8	47%	17%	15%	6%	15%	34%
New Zealand Customs Service	64%	5%	29%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0.7	36%	13%	11%	9%	16%	20%
New Zealand Security Intelligence Service	89%	3%	5%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0.2	10%					
Office for Māori Crown Relations-Te Arawhiti	44%	41%	5%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0.5	46%	11%	5%	17%	8%	12%
Oranga Tamariki-Ministry for Children	77%	6%	9%	5%	1%	1%	1%	0.5	21%	6%	7%	6%	7%	14%
Public Service Commission	37%	21%	35%	4%	1%	2%	1%	1.1	62%	23%	18%	16%	27%	27%
Serious Fraud Office	18%	24%	58%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.4	82%	33%	21%	23%	23%	39%
Social Investment Agency	68%	19%	11%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0.4	30%	2%	13%	6%	17%	2%
Statistics New Zealand	14%	10%	23%	12%	7%	9%	25%	1.7	62%	38%	30%	31%	30%	39%
The Treasury	37%	29%	22%	8%	2%	0%	3%	1.1	61%	21%	20%	25%	14%	33%
Grand Total	55%	11%	22%	7%	2%	1%	3%	0.9	43%	18%	16%	15%	17%	23%

Note: Security agencies have not reported the proportion of their workforce typically working from home on each day due to national security risks.

* Remote workers are not considered to be working from home as this is their contracted and primary location of work.