

Work from home success linked to work/life boundaries

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Remote jobs can help workers craft more satisfying lives, with higher psychological well-being and work engagement, but only if that work occurs during regularly contracted hours, according to new ILR School

research.

The [negative impacts](#) of working at home during off hours were particularly high for women, the researchers found.

The COVID-19 pandemic piqued interest in [remote work](#), but research from Duanyi Yang, assistant professor of labor relations, law and history, yielded mixed findings on the impact of working from home on worker well-being and job attitudes.

In "Working from Home and Worker Wellbeing: New Evidence from Germany," forthcoming in the *ILR Review*, Yang and her co-authors focus on the distinction between working from home during regular work hours—which they refer to as replacement work-from-home—and working from home outside of those hours—which they refer to as [extension](#) work-from-home.

Using a survey of 7,857 employees within 814 German establishments, their research found that extension work-from-home is associated with lower psychological well-being, higher turnover intentions and higher conflict between work and family. By contrast, replacement work-from-home brings greater engagement, and it is not associated with higher work-family conflict, or turnover.

Additionally, they found that extension work-from-home has more negative effects for women's well-being and work-to-family conflict. Specifically, psychological well-being is 11% lower for women who do extension work-from-home than women with similar characteristics who do not work from home. However, well-being is 5% higher for women whose work-from-home is bounded to their regular workday, as compared to women with similar characteristics who do not work-from-home.

"Given the evidence that remote work can bring benefits to [workers](#) and to employers, but only when work from home is bounded and not extended, an important next step is to determine how new labor standards and [management practices](#) may help guard against extension work-from-home," Yang said.

For instance, she said, in 2016, France passed a law that gives workers the "right to disconnect" from workplace communication devices to ensure work does not spill into private time. Similarly, in Australia, large public sector unions are currently bargaining with government employers to include the right to disconnect in upcoming collective bargaining agreements.

"In the United States, managers, executives and worker representatives also have the opportunities to counteract implicit 'always on' expectations and develop new norms that welcome both remote work and clear boundaries between work and family lives," Yang said. "In the context of a tight labor market, employers may be more open to encouraging temporal boundaries to avoid worker burnout and limit turnover."

More information: Duanyi Yang et al, Working from Home and Worker Well-being: New Evidence from Germany, *ILR Review* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/00197939221148716](https://doi.org/10.1177/00197939221148716)

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