

Work and Social Justice: Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Age From flexibility to stress? The impact of telework on paid work-life balance and well-being

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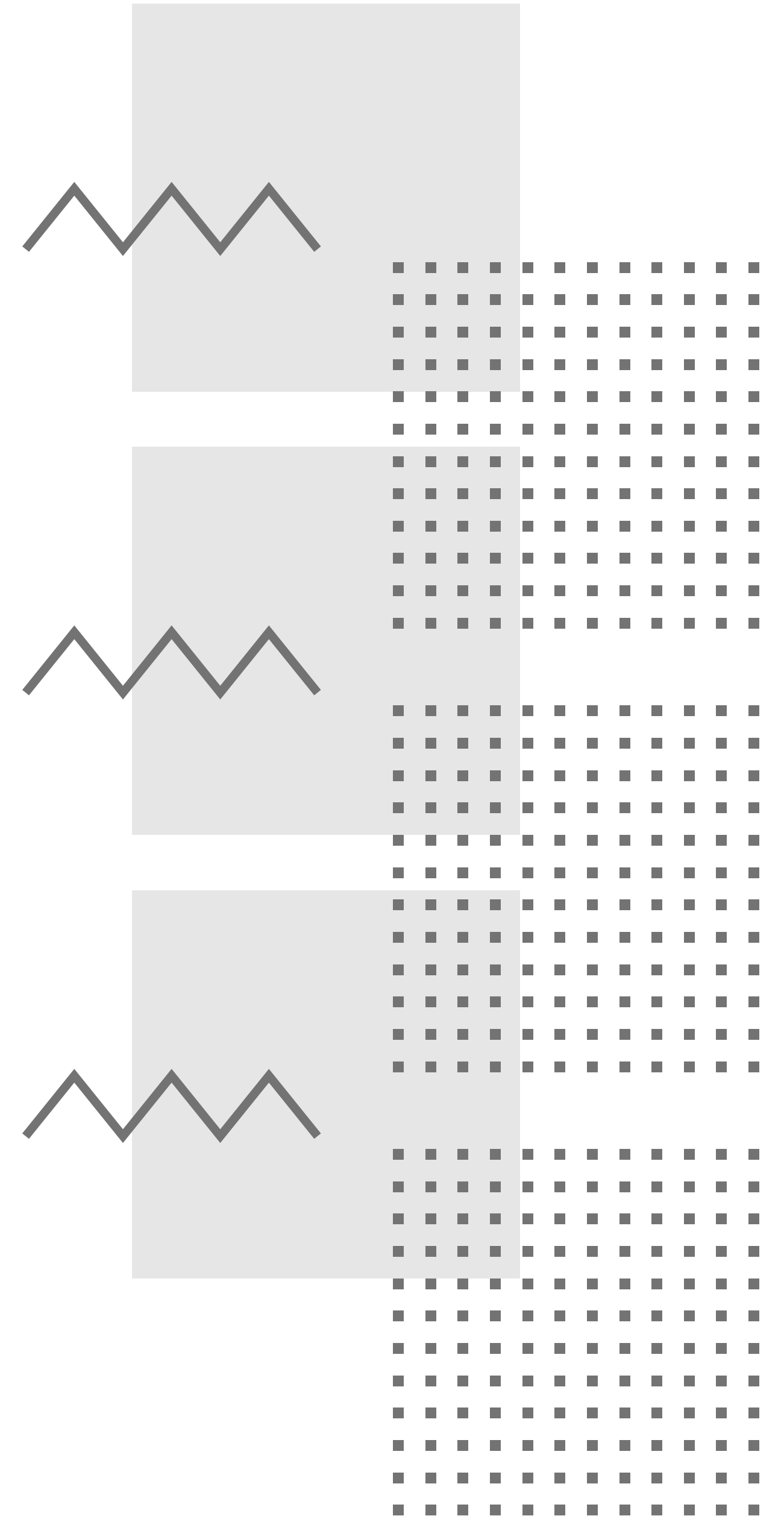
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Introduction to teleworking

Digitalization and the expansion of knowledge-based activities (Krasilnikova & Levin-Keitel, 2022) have made employment more **spatially and temporally flexible** (Ravalet & Rérat, 2019).

Teleworking is understood as paid work activities that are done outside the traditional workplace (Morganson et al. 2010).

Teleworking has some **advantages** such as autonomy, efficiency and productivity (Vayre et al. 2022), or coordination between paid work and personal or family needs.

In the context of teleworking, individual well-being is often discussed in relation to and as a way of improving their **paid work-life balance** (Haddad et al. 2009; Mokhtarian & Salomon 1997; Ravalet & Rérat 2019).

Teleworking may increase worker and family **well-being and paid work-life balance** when the time saved by not commuting can be used for additional activities, such as social interactions, the organization of housework or childcare (Pabilonia & Vernon 2022).

On the negative side, telework may blur the boundaries between paid work and private life and increasingly extend into free time, with teleworkers working outside regular working hours (Thulin et al., 2019).

Study aim and research question

The terms 'work-life balance' reference the **ability to be well** in different aspects of life and to feel well about the connection between one's paid work and one's non-work life (Brough et al. 2020; Como & Domene 2023; Como et al. 2021), thus contributing to individual well-being.

Well-being is a state of thriving in which all human needs are satisfied, and it manifests itself in life satisfaction and a healthy life (O'Neill et al., 2018).

Empirical studies have sought to determine the influence of teleworking on the paid work-life balance and well-being with mixed results (Vayre et al. 2022; Zhang et al. 2020).

Individuals play **multiple roles** simultaneously in their daily lives, which can lead to conflicts between paid work and life or family relations (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985; Sirgy & Lee 2016; Zhang et al. 2020).

From our point of view, it should be realized that there are **complex relationships** between gender, teleworking, everyday mobility practices, and well-being. Against this background, we ask the following **research questions**:

- How satisfied are teleworkers with their paid work-life balance?
- How do teleworkers experience potential conflicts between paid work and private life?
- What factors impact the individual well-being of teleworkers?

Literature review – teleworking, well-being and gender

In the context of teleworking, well-being is often discussed in relation **to paid work-life balance or family and paid work conflicts** (e.g. Como & Domene 2023; Zhang et al. 2020).

Workers have certain resources of time at their disposal and different roles in paid work and (family) life (Frone 2003; Morris & Madsen 2007). Through teleworking they acquire the **spatial flexibility and autonomy** to control their time schedules. Working time flexibility allows employees to organize their working hours themselves, leading to greater satisfaction and a better work-life balance (Wöhrmann et al., 2021). It allows employees to adjust their working hours to personal needs, leading to greater control over the boundaries between work and private life (Matthews & Barnes-Farrell, 2010).

Telework provides more flexible paid work arrangements (Allen et al., 2015). Improving the paid work-life balance is one of the important **drivers** of teleworking (Haddad et al. 2009; Mokhtarian & Salomon 1997; Aguilera et al. 2016).

However, too much autonomy can have negative effects, especially when combined with high work intensity or pressure (Lott 2018; Seitz and Rigotti 2018). This can lead to paid work-life conflicts and unhealthy working hours. **Teleworking blurs the spatial boundaries** between paid work and home and therefore potentially increases paid work-family conflicts (Mann & Holdsworth 2003; Russell et al. 2009). The expectation of constant availability can lead to increased pressure and, stress and exhaustion (Dettmers et al., 2016; Dettmers, 2017).

The flexibility paradox (Chung, 2022) and gendered paradox

Factors affecting the individual well-being of teleworkers

Workplaces	Work locations (at home vs. coworking; Morganson et al. 2010)
Workload and time allocation	Workload, working hours (Chung, 2022; Thulin et al., 2019) Time allocation of paid work, household- and carework (Brough et al. 2020; Restrepo & Zeballos, 2020) Workload (amount of work, pace of work, pressure to perform) (Carmenisch et al. 2022; Stab & Schulz-Dadaczynski, 2017)
Coordination of paid work and private life	Flexibility in the timing and location of work (Chung, 2022; Chung & van der Horst, 2020) Satisfaction with paid work-life balance (Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Kalliath & Brough, 2008) Work-family conflicts (Castro-Trancon et al., 2024; Como & Domene, 2023; Dettmers, 2017; Tremblay, 2006) Separation between paid work and private life (Lott, 2020; Wepfer et al. 2018)
Satisfaction and health	Mental health (Crawford, 2022; Dettmers, 2017; Mann & Holdsworth, 2003; Wöhrmann, 2016) Physical health (Beckel & Fischer, 2022) Satisfaction with paid work (Konradt et al. 2003; Lu & Zhuang, 2023) Life satisfaction (Schimmack, 2008; Sirgy, 2021)
Commuting	Commuting time and distance (Bergstad et al., 2011; Borowsky et al., 2020; Clark et al. 2020; Ducki, 2010) Means of transport (Burns & Brown, 2019; Edle von Hoessle, 2020; Häfner et al., 2007; Hupfeld et al., 2013; Rapp 2003; Rüger et al. 2017) Gendered mobility (Augustijn, 2018; Brömmelhaus et al., 2020; Chatterjee et al., 2020; Chidambaram & Scheiner, 2020; Farré et al., 2020; Hofmeister et al., 2010; Kley, 2016; Künn-Nelen, 2016; Lien, 2017; Roberts et al., 2011)
Soziodemo-graphic	Income, socio-economic conditions (Dolan et al., 2008; Vogel et al. 2021) Household structre, parenting, number and age of children (Song & Gao, 2020) Gender (Giovanis, 2018; González Ramos & García-de-Diego, 2022)

Study background

SWICE – Sustainable Wellbeing for the individual and the Collectivity in the Energy transition

Quantitative online survey on teleworking, well-being and lifestyle

Different groups based on recruitment strategy:

- Suurstoffi residents,
- coworkers via Coworking Switzerland as project partner,
- teleworkers in Switzerland via SWICE project and personal networks
- teleworkers in Switzerland via a market research institute

The survey runs between **October 17, 2024, and December 2024.**
For the analysis, completed 148 surveys are used.



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SWICE



Gender perspective of teleworking

	Total	Female		Male		Others	N
Gender		54%		44 %		2%	148
Age	42 years	40 years		44 years			115
Children (yes)	53%	46%		65%			
Employment rate	78%	77%		78%			145
<i>Where do you regularly work? (children no/yes; multiple responses)*</i>		<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>		294
Regular workplace	35%	33%	39%	32%	50%		
At home	66%	56%	78%	55%	60%		
Coworking Space	54%	56%	53%	41%	78%		
Employer’s regular workplace in the coworking space	27%	21%	33%	41%	5%		
On the move (e.g. on the train)	16%	16%	17%	23%	25%		
In other places	5%	7%	3%	9%	5%		
<i>Office in the apartment (yes)</i>	61%	44%	76%	52%	69%		145
<i>Flexibility (1-5; 5= fully applies)</i>							
I can decide for myself when I work.	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.9		141
I can decide for myself where I work.	3.9	3.8	3.6	4.0	4.1		141
I can decide for myself what I work on.	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.4		140
I work at similar times every working day.	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.4	3.5		141
<i>N</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>40</i>		

* percentages have been calculated on the basis of the number of participants in each category.

Well-being

Imagine a **ladder** with rungs numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. What rung of the ladder do you personally think you are currently on?

	Total	Female		Male		
<i>(children no/yes)</i>		<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>	
Ladder <i>(0-10)</i>	7.4	7.3	7.7	6.9	7.6	
<i>How do you rate your overall health? (1-7)</i>						
General state of health	6.0	6.1	6.1	5.9	5.8	
Mental health	5.8	5.9	5.8	5.8	5.6	
Physical health	5.8	6.0	6.0	5.8	5.5	
<i>How satisfied are you in general ... (1-5)</i>						
... with your paid work?	4.1	4.0	4.2	3.7	4.3	
... with your private life?	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.2	4.4	
How well can you coordinate paid work and private life? <i>(1-5)</i>	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.1	
To what extent does your paid work keep you from your private activities (including family commitments)?	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.6	<i>CH-SHP</i>
To what extent do your private activities (including family commitments) keep you from your paid work?	2.1	2.0	2.3	1.9	2.2	<i>2.3</i>
How exhausted are you after work to do things you actually enjoy?	2.7	2.6	3.0	2.4	2.7	<i>2.6</i>
How difficult is it for you to switch off after work?	2.6	2.3	2.7	2.8	2.8	<i>2.1</i>
<i>N</i>	140	42	35	22	40	6964

Conclusion & outlook

In conclusion, the **first results** show a good well-being of teleworkers. They report high levels of general health and a high mental health. Teleworkers with and without children are satisfied with their paid work and private life. They are able to coordinate the paid work and private life relatively well.

Differences by gender and parental status are relatively small. A slight difference is that woman with children are more likely to work at home; men with children are more likely to work at regular working space. Teleworkers with children are more likely than teleworkers without children to have a separate room as an office in the home.

A first indication of difficulties can be seen in the higher rate of difficulties in separating paid work and private life among teleworkers compared to the SHP.

More research is needed on the effects of teleworking on everyday life patterns and individual well-being. Moreover, longer periods of analysis and a holistic view are useful.

- Daily activity patterns are part of weekly or monthly patterns and take place in households.
- To subject mandatory and non-mandatory activities (Viana Cerqueira & Motte-Baumvol 2022).
- To analyze different purpose of mobility, like care work, household-related tasks and leisure time (Parnell et al. 2022).

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