



► Room document*: 13

Remote work, telework, work at home and home-based work



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1. Introduction

1. Flexible working arrangements, the impact of new technology and work–life balance have long been areas of analytical interest. The different concepts of remote work, teleworking, working at home and home-based work are all related to these issues. Working from a distance and working at home are not new phenomena, but its significance surged with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As lockdowns and social distancing measures took effect, an unprecedented number of people transitioned to working from home. This profound shift that took place is likely to have a longer-term impact on several different aspects, including how people organize their work and where the work is performed. The measurement of these concepts is therefore more relevant now than ever. Currently, different countries are using slightly different and sometimes overlapping definitions, and different terms are being used interchangeably (Eurofound and ILO 2017). This situation affects the measurement of the concepts and the possibility of accessing internationally comparable data.
2. The following room document is based on the guidance note [Defining and measuring remote work, telework, work at home and home-based work](#) (ILO, 2019) and includes some minor adjustments and updates based on countries feedback from implementing the guidance . The guidance provides recommendations for how the four different concepts of “remote work”, “telework”, “work at home” and “home-based work” should be understood in terms of statistics, how they relate to each other and how they can be measured in a household survey. This enables the measurement of the prevalence and the frequency and intensity with which workers work at home, telework or work remotely to be measured, as well as their development over time. The statistical identification of the four different concepts also creates an opportunity to explore further the situation of workers with these types of working arrangements, thus making it possible to shed light on how these working arrangements impact on work–life balance, working time, performance, and occupation health and well-being.
3. Examples of questions to use for collecting the data in household surveys are presented in the Annex together with an overview of how the different concepts can be derived based on these model questions.
4. *The participants in the conference are invited to:*
 - a) *Take note of the guidance.*
 - b) *Provide any relevant input that can further improve the definitions, concepts and proposed measurement methods including any national experiences of measurement of these concepts.*

2. Defining and measuring remote work, telework, work at home and home-based work

5. Remote work, telework, work at home and home-based work are clearly related concepts and have some degree of overlap. Remote work and telework both refer to an arrangement where workers perform their tasks and duties from an alternative location of their own choosing. “Alternative” in this case should be understood as an alternative to a default expectation that work is performed in a specific place, depending on the type of work, as discussed further in the next section. This is typically, but not necessarily, in a worker’s own home – which creates an overlap between the concepts of work at home and home-based work – but could also be in a number of different types of locations, such as a co-working space, café or library.

2.1. Default place of work

6. The default place of work can be understood as the place or location where the work would typically be expected to be carried out, taking into account the profession and status in employment. As such, it is a theoretical concept, and not intended to be measured separately; its only function is to provide a reference concept for the definitions of remote work and telework. The default location does not necessarily imply that all or most of the work would typically take place in a single location, and thus differs from the concept of the main place of work, for example. Instead, the location defined as the default place of work for a given worker should be viewed as a default expectation of where the work should be carried out, taking into account the type of job.
7. In broad terms, the expectation is that work is performed on the premises of the economic unit for which the work is carried out, that is the employer (if the worker is an employee), the family business (if the worker is a contributing family worker), the worker’s own premises (if the worker is an independent worker) or on the premises of a client of the economic unit. In addition, there are also a variety of workers who must necessarily carry out work activities in public spaces, such as street vendors and police officers on patrol. These locations can be viewed as the default place of work, and remote work or telework provides the worker with the opportunity to carry out the work in an alternative location.
8. There might be situations where there is no clear default place of work for a worker. This could be the case, for example, when the work is not carried out on the client’s premises or in public spaces, and the economic unit for which the work is carried out does not have any fixed premises. In such cases, the situation of independent workers and dependent workers as defined by the 2018 International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18) (ILO 2018) would be conceptually different. For dependent workers, remote work and telework could still be of relevance for example and employee could still carry out telework in the persons own home even if the employer does not have a fixed premisses such as an office. However, for independent workers in this situation, the

two concepts would have little relevance, as there would be no default place of work where the work could be performed. The one exception would be independent workers who mainly carry out their work in their own home. In that case, their own home could be considered as the premises of the economic unit and would thus constitute the independent worker's default place of work.

9. Depending on the particular job or business, the default place of work would be:
 - *the premises, facilities or site of the economic unit for which the work is carried out;*
 - *a client's premises, facilities or site; or*
 - *public spaces.*

2.1.1. The premises, facilities or site of the economic unit for which the work is carried out

10. This category refers to all jobs or businesses with a theoretical default location – whether in theory or in practice – that is the premises, facility or site of the economic unit for which the work is performed. This has different implications for dependent workers (employees, contributing family workers and dependent contractors) than for independent workers (employers and own-account workers) respectively.
11. Dependent workers carry out work for an economic unit on which they are dependent. The premises or facilities of the economic unit for dependent workers can therefore be understood as the facilities or premises belonging to, or controlled by, the economic unit for which the work is carried out. This would include the premises of the employer (in the case of employees), the premises of the owner-operator of the business (for contributing family workers) or the premises of the enterprise, business or organization on which the worker is dependent (in the case of dependent contractors).
12. Independent workers, however, own the economic unit for which they work, and control its activities. The premises of the economic unit are therefore the facilities or premises controlled and used by the independent worker for the purposes of carrying out the work. This could also include the independent worker's place of residence if the work is mainly carried out in the independent worker's own home.

2.1.2. A client's premises, facilities or site

13. This category includes all jobs or business where the work would be expected to be carried out at a client's premises, facility or site (which is not owned or controlled by the economic unit for which the worker works).
14. While, the type of location may vary, it refers to a location where goods or services are provided to the client, and could include a factory, mine, construction site, farm, office building, shop, restaurant, warehouse, a client's home, or other type of business premises or sites (ILO 2020, para. 280). For employees, the concept of "clients" should be understood as the employer's clients, for

example a plumber who works for a company but carries out the work in the client's home, or a caretaker employed by a company to look after a shopping mall.

15. For these types of jobs or businesses, any work that is carried out on the client's premises, facilities or site can be viewed as work performed in the default place of work, as the tasks and duties would typically be required to be performed within the physical space of the client. The client's premises in this situation are not an alternative place of work, but rather the default place of work to perform the specific tasks and duties, due to the nature of the work carried out.

2.1.3. Public spaces

16. This category includes any job or business that would be expected to take place in spaces that are open to the public, such as a street, highway, public park, car park or railway station (ILO 2020, para. 274). A variety of types of productive activities require the work to take place in public spaces, such as work carried out by street vendors, push-cart operators and police officers on patrol. As these type of work activities has to be carried out in a public space, the public space itself becomes the default place of work for these types of workers.

2.2. The physical location where the work is actually carried out

17. This concept captures the dimension of where the work is actually carried out. This information is essential for the statistical identification of remote work, telework, work at home and home-based work. In many cases, the physical location where the work is actually carried out is the same as the default place of work, as previously defined, for example an employee working at the employer's office or an own-account worker working in his or her own shop. However, if work is carried out in an alternative location to the default place of work, that work would fall within the scope of remote work and telework. Further, if the physical location where the work is actually carried out is the worker's own home, the work would fall within the scope of the concepts of work at home and home-based work. A person might carry out the work in a given job in one single location or in multiple locations. The aspect of the main place (physical location) of work is thus important to identify the type of location in which the worker typically works.
18. A starting point for identifying the different concepts of remote work, telework, work at home and home-based work is an understanding of how the underlying concepts of the default place of work and the physical location where the work is actually carried out relate to a given job. A person can have multiple jobs that are carried out in different locations. However, the concepts of remote work, telework, work at home and home-based work and the underlying concepts of the default place of work and the physical location where the work is actually carried out need to be related to a specific job. This job would typically be a worker's main job but could also be extended to additional jobs.

2.3. Remote work

19. Currently, there is no international statistical definition of remote work. However, remote work can be described as situations where the work is fully or partly carried out on an alternative worksite other than the default place of work. Remote work can be performed in a variety of possible locations, all of which can be viewed as an alternative to the location where the work could typically be expected to be carried out, considering the profession and the status in employment. This has different implications for dependent workers and independent workers:
 - a. For dependent workers, this implies that the work should be carried out at a worksite other than:
 - i. the premises, facilities or sites of the economic unit on which the worker is dependent (such as an employer's office, a construction site, a farm or a workshop); or
 - ii. the client's facilities or sites of the economic unit on which the worker is dependent (such as a client's home, a shop, an office or a factory); or
 - iii. a public space, if the nature of the duties means that they have to be carried out in a public space (in the case of a street vendor, bus driver or patrolling police officer, for example).
20. Contributing family workers who work for a family business that has no fixed premises for performing the work are excluded from remote work.
21. The arrangement to work from an alternative worksite has to be approved by the economic unit on which the worker is dependent. For employees, this implies an approval by the employer; for contributing family workers, the owner-operator of the family business; and for dependent contractors, the enterprise, business, organization on which the contractor is dependent. Such alternative worksites could include the worker's own home, co-working spaces, telework centres, cafés and so on that are not under the control of the economic unit on which the worker is dependent or of its clients.
 - b. For independent workers, this implies that the work should be carried out at a worksite other than:
 - i. premises, facilities or sites controlled by the independent worker for the purpose of carrying out the work (such as the worker's own office, a construction site, a farm or a workshop). If the independent worker mainly carries out the work in his or her own home, then the home would be considered as premises controlled by the independent worker for the purposes of performing the work.
 - ii. a client's facilities or sites (such as a client's home, shop, office or factory); or
 - iii. a public space, if the nature of the duties means that they have to be carried out in a public space (in the case of a street vendor, taxi driver or performance artist, for example).
22. Independent workers who do not control any fixed premises used for carrying out the work and who do not work mainly from their own home are excluded from remote work.

23. The issue of how remote work should be understood in relation to independent workers is complex, and there is a tendency to restrict the concept of remote work to employees only. Part of the complexity arises from the difficulties in handling cases where the independent workers do not have any fixed premises that clearly define the boundaries of the premises of the economic unit owned by the worker, for example when the work is carried out at home. At the same time, there are clearly situations in which an independent worker is working from a distance and thus is carrying out remote work. This could be the case, for example, of an own-account worker who has a separate office located outside the home but who also regularly works from home. A pragmatic approach that eliminates the conceptual challenge while allowing the possibility for independent workers to perform remote work would be to limit this possibility to independent workers who have both fixed and separate premises for the purpose of performing the work or who perform their work mainly from home. In these situations, the independent worker has fixed premises that, together with a client's premises, could constitute the default place of work. This category of independent workers could thus be defined as working remotely if they carry out work in an alternative location other than the fixed premises of the enterprise or a client, or a worker's own home (whichever is the default for the particular activity).

2.4. Telework

24. Similar to remote work, telework is currently not covered by any international statistical standards. Countries have used slightly different operational definitions, which are typically based on two different components (Eurofound and ILO 2017, p. 5):
- a. **The work is fully or partly carried out at an alternative location other than the default place of work:** This criterion is based on the previous definition of remote work.
 - b. **The use of personal electronic devices such as a computer, tablet or telephone (mobile or landline) to perform the work:** The use of personal electronic devices needs to be an essential part of carrying out the work. (Eurofound and ILO 2017, p. 5). The different devices or tools can be used for communicating with colleagues, clients and so on, as well for carrying out specific job-related tasks without being directly in contact with other persons.
25. Telework, as defined above, is a subcategory of the broader concept of remote work. It includes workers who use information and communications technology (ICT) or landline telephones to carry out the work remotely. Similar to remote work, telework can be carried out in different locations outside the default place of work. What makes telework a unique category is that the work carried out remotely includes the use of personal electronic devices.

2.5. Work at home

26. Work at home refers to *work that takes place fully or partly within the worker's own residence*. The physical location where all or some of the work is carried out is thus the worker's own home. The

work at home category is independent of the default place of work, but might overlap where the worker's home is both the place where the work is carried out and the premises of the economic unit (in the case of an independent worker who has an office at home, for example). Work at home is part of the cross-cutting variable "type of workplace" in the resolution concerning statistics on work relationships (ILO 2018), which provides information on the type of location where the work is usually performed. Based on the definition of the type of workplace provided in the resolution, work at home is any work taking place within the residential building or other type of dwelling in which the worker normally resides. Premises such as retail shops or repair workshops attached to the residence that are not an integral part of the residence (if, for example, they have their own entrance), and agricultural and garden fields, pastures or plots used primarily for the purposes of crop, livestock, forestry, fishery and aquaculture production are excluded. However, outside areas immediately adjacent to the residence, such as yards and gardens, are included within the premises of the own home (ILO 2020, paras 268–270). Work at home is independent of the status in employment, and both independent and dependent workers can carry out work at home.

2.6. Home-based work

27. Home-based workers are defined in the resolution concerning statistics on work relationships as "workers whose main place of work is their own home" (ILO 2018, para. 110). In other words, home-based workers *are those who usually carry out their work at home*, regardless of whether the own home could be considered as the default place of work. Home-based *work* is thus a subcategory of the category of work at home.

2.7. Combining the four concepts

28. The four concepts are interrelated and have some degree of overlap. Telework, for example, can be performed in the worker's home, and a home-based worker can also telework. These overlaps can be viewed as additional concepts that can either add to the understanding of the four core concepts or can be measured separately. Creating separate statistical terms for these overlaps would contribute to increased clarity on the statistical meaning of a given category or measurement. As can be seen in figure 1, three additional overlapping categories can be identified:

2.7.1. Remote work from home

29. Comprises workers carrying out remote work from their own residence. The physical location where the work is carried out is thus the worker's own home, that is, an alternative location to the default place of work.

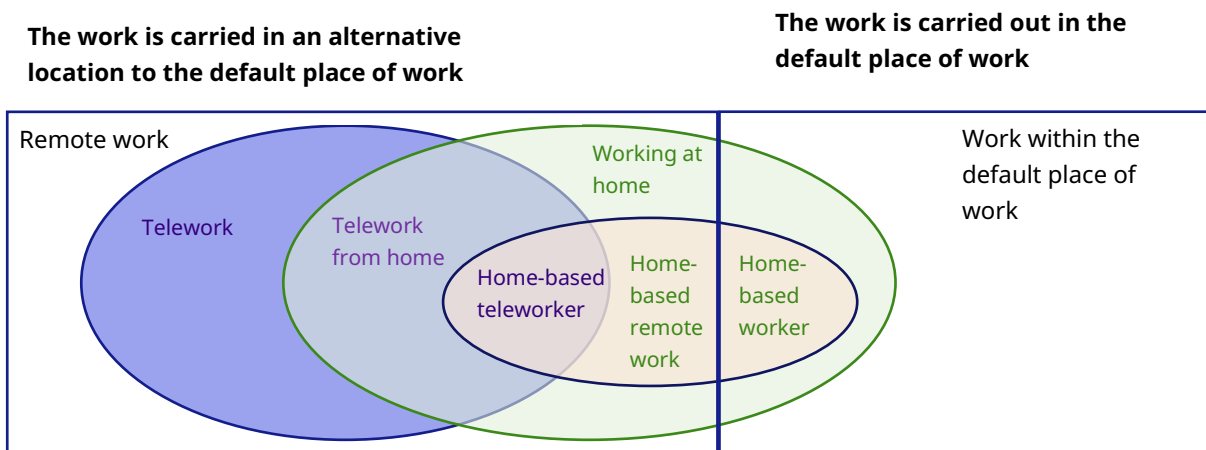
2.7.2. Telework from home

30. Comprises workers who carry out work defined as telework in their own residence. Similar to remote work from home, the physical location where the work is carried out is the worker's own home, that is, an alternative location to the default place of work, but in addition the worker uses personal electronic devices as part of carrying out the work.

2.7.3. Home-based teleworker

31. Comprises home-based workers who carry out work defined as telework.

32. **Figure 1. Combining the concepts of remote work and work in the default place of work**



2.8. Frequency

33. A key aspect in relation to remote work, telework and work at home is the frequency with which the worker carries out this type of work. The research makes a distinction between regular home-based work (defined as workers who work remotely at least several times a month) and occasional work at home (Eurofound and ILO 2017). The distinction in the frequency of remote work, telework and/or work at home is essential to reflect the incidence of the remote work. Such a differentiation or categorization could be based on whether the home is the usual place of work or whether work at home is a regular or occasional occurrence. Operationally, these boundaries could be set by distinguishing between mainly (understood as usually or most frequently), regularly (at least once a week in the last four weeks) and occasionally (at least once in the last four weeks), as can be seen in table 1.

34. **Table 1. Frequency of working at home, remote work and telework**

Place of work	Work at home	Remote worker	If personal electronic device is always or almost always used in combination with work at/from home
Main place of work at home	Home-based worker	If dependent worker, then home-based remote worker	If dependent worker, then home-based teleworker

Work at home, remote work or telework at least once a week in the last four weeks, but the home is not the main place of work	Regular work at home	Regular remote work at home	Regular telework from home
Work at/from home at least once in the last four weeks	Occasional work at home	Occasional remote work at home	Occasional telework from home

Mobility

35. Remote workers or teleworkers might carry out their work from one or multiple alternative locations. There is therefore a need to identify the mobility of these workers in order to distinguish between teleworkers who frequently carry out work in several different places (high-mobility workers) and those who work in a more limited number of places with less frequency (low-mobility workers) (Eurofound and ILO 2017, p. 7). Operationally, this boundary could be set by a distinction between those who carried out remote work or telework at least twice a week in two different locations in the last four weeks (high-mobility workers), and those who performed remote work or telework less frequently but at least once in the last four weeks (low-mobility workers).

36. Table 2. Distinction between high-mobility and low-mobility remote workers

Frequency working at different locations	Without the use of personal electronic devices	If personal electronic devices are used always or almost always
Works at least twice a week in two different locations other than the default place of work	High-mobility remote worker	High-mobility teleworker
Worked in at least one location other than the default place of work in the last four weeks	Low-mobility remote worker	Low-mobility teleworker

3. Annex Data collection

37. The method of collecting data and the set of questions to be used depend on the category or categories that are of interest. The identification of home-based workers, for example, only requires the inclusion of a question capturing the main place of work, while the identification of persons who occasionally telework from home or high-mobility teleworkers would require an additional set of questions that probe the use of ICT, among other things. The following questions are based on the approach used in the Labour Force Survey of the United Kingdom (UK 2018) to identify home-based work and telework, but have been developed and aligned to enable the identification of all categories discussed above. The questions are put in relation to a worker's main job but, if deemed relevant, could also be asked in relation to second jobs.

3.1. WORK AT HOME AND HOME-BASED WORKERS

MAIN_PLACE (Filter: all employed, Main job)

Q1. In what kind of place do you typically work?

1. At (your/name's) own home
2. At the client's or employer's home
3. At a farm, agricultural land or fishing site
4. At a business, office, factory, fixed premises or site
5. On the street or another public space without a fixed structure
6. In/on a vehicle (without daily work base)
7. Door-to-door
8. Other
9. Cannot say

Operational note: The operational definitions of the various response categories can be found in the *Conceptual framework for statistics on work relationships* (ILO 2020, section 6.7).

INWK_HOMWK (Filter: MAIN_PLACE =2-9)

Q2. (In your main job) have you spent at least one full day in the last four weeks working... (READ ALL)

1. In your own home?
2. In the same grounds or buildings as your home, but in a separated space?

3. I have not worked at home in the last four weeks.

REG_HOMWK (Filter: INWK_HOMWK =1)

Q3. How frequently did you work from home in the last four weeks?

(READ ALL)

1. Once a week or more
 2. Less than once a week
-

3.2. TELEWORK AT HOME

ICT_HOMWK (Filter: (Employees, dependent contractors and (MAIN_PLACE= 1) or (INWK_HOMWK=1)) or (independent workers, contributing family workers and MAIN_PLACE=4 and INWK_HOMWK=1)).

Q4. Did you use a computer, smartphone or tablet to carry out your work at home?

1. Yes
2. No

Operational note: The status in employment used for the filter is the derived ICSE-18 status. Depending on the country, landline phones could also be explicitly stated in the question, if relevant.

3.3. REMOTE WORK NOT AT HOME

MPLA_TELEWK

(Filter: independent workers, contributing family workers and (MAIN_PLACE=4) or (MAIN_PLACE=1))

Q5A. In the last four weeks, did you (in your main job) work in a place other than your own home, own premises/office, client's premises?

1. Yes
2. No

(Filter: All employees, dependent contractor's main job).

Q5B. In the last four weeks, did you (in your main job) work in a place other than your own home, or (INSERT TEXT FROM MAIN JOB?)

1. Yes
2. No

(Filter: Employees, dependent contractors and MPLA_TELEWK=1)

MPLA_REMOU

Was this outside your own premises, an employer's premises or a client's premises?

1. Yes
2. No

Operational note: The status in employment used for filtering the different formulations of the question would depend on the self-declared status in employment. Contributing family workers do not have an employer so the employer's premises should be understood to be the premises of the household's or family member's business.

3.4. TELEWORK NOT AT HOME

ICT_TELEWK (Filter: MPLA_REMOU =1)

Q6. Did you use a computer, smartphone or tablet to carry out the work that took place in this/these different locations?

1. Yes
2. No

Operational note: Depending on the country, landline phones could also be explicitly stated in the question, if relevant

3.5. HIGH-MOBILITY TELEWORKERS

INWK_TELEWK (Filter: ICT_TELEWK =1)

Q7. In the last four weeks, how frequently did you work in a place other than your own home, own premises or an employer's premises?

(READ ALL)

1. Once a week or more
 2. Less than once a week
-

MOB_TELWK (Filter: REG_HOMWK ne 1 (i.e. REG_HOMWK=2, DK, NA) and INWK_TELEWK =1)

Q8. In the last four weeks, have you (in your main job) worked at least twice a week in two different locations other than the employer's premises or your own office?

1. Yes
2. No

Operational note: Identifies potential teleworkers who do not work from home and workers who have worked from home but have also worked in additional alternative locations, as well as persons who have not worked from home but have worked in two additional places outside the employer's premises or their own office.

3.6. Deriving the different categories:

38. Based on the questions, the following categories of work at home, home-based work and telework can be derived:

39. Table 3. Derivation of categories

Work at home	MAIN_PLACE=1 or INWK_HOMWK=1
Home-based work	MAIN_PLACE=1
Regular work at home	(INWK_HOMWK=1 and REG_HOMWK=1)
Occasionally work at home	INWK_HOMWK=1 and REG_HOMWK=2
Telework from home	<p><u>Employees and dependent contractors</u> (MAIN_PLACE=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1) or INWK_HOMWK=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1</p> <p><u>Employers, own-account workers and contributing family members</u> Main place of work=4 and INWK_HOMWK=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1</p>
Home-based telework	<p><u>Employees and dependent contractors</u> MAIN_PLACE=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1</p>
Regularly telework from home	<p><u>Employees and dependent contractors</u> INWK_HOMWK=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1 and REG_HOMWK=1</p> <p><u>Employers, own-account workers and contributing family members</u> MAIN_PLACE=4 and INWK_HOMWK=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1 and REG_HOMWK=1</p>
Occasionally telework from home	<p><u>Employees and dependent contractors</u> INWK_HOMWK=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1 and REG_HOMWK=2</p>

	<u>Employers, own-account workers and contributing family members</u> MAIN_PLACE=4 and INWK_HOMWK=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1 and REG_HOMWK=2
Remote work	<u>Employees and dependent contractors</u> MAIN_PLACE=1 or INWK_HOMWK= 1 or MPLA_REMOUMPLA_TELEWK=1 <u>Employers, own-account workers and contributing family members</u> (MAIN_PLACE=4 Main place of work=4 and INWK_HOMWK=1) or (MAIN_PLACE =1,4 and MPLA_TELEWK=1)
High-mobility remote work	(REG_HOMWK =1 and INWK_TELEWK =1) or MOB_TELWK=1
Low-mobility remote work	(REG_HOMWK =2) or (INWK_TELEWK =1 and MOB_TELWK=1)
Telework	<u>Employees and dependent contractors</u> (MAIN_PLACE=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1) or (INWK_HOMWK= 1 and ICT_HOMWK=1) or (MPLA_REMOU=1 and ICT_TELEWK=1) <u>Employers, own-account workers and contributing family members</u> (MAIN_PLACE=4 and INWK_HOMWK=1 and ICT_HOMWK=1) or (MAIN_PLACE=1,4 and MPLA_TELEWK=1 and ICT_TELEWK=1)
High-mobility telework	(REG_HOMWK =1 and ICT_HOMWK =1 and INWK_TELEWK =1 and ICT_TELEWK =1) or (MOB_TELWK =1 and ICT_TELEWK =1)
Low-mobility telework work	(REG_HOMWK =2 and ICT_HOMWK=1) or (INWK_TELEWK =1 and MOB_TELWK=1 and ICT_TELEWK=1)

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