

SWAA September 2021 Updates

Jose Maria Barrero, Nicholas Bloom, and Steven J. Davis
5 September 2021

Latest survey wave included: August 2021

To sign up for regular results updates, please email us [here](#).

Introduction & Methodology (1/2)

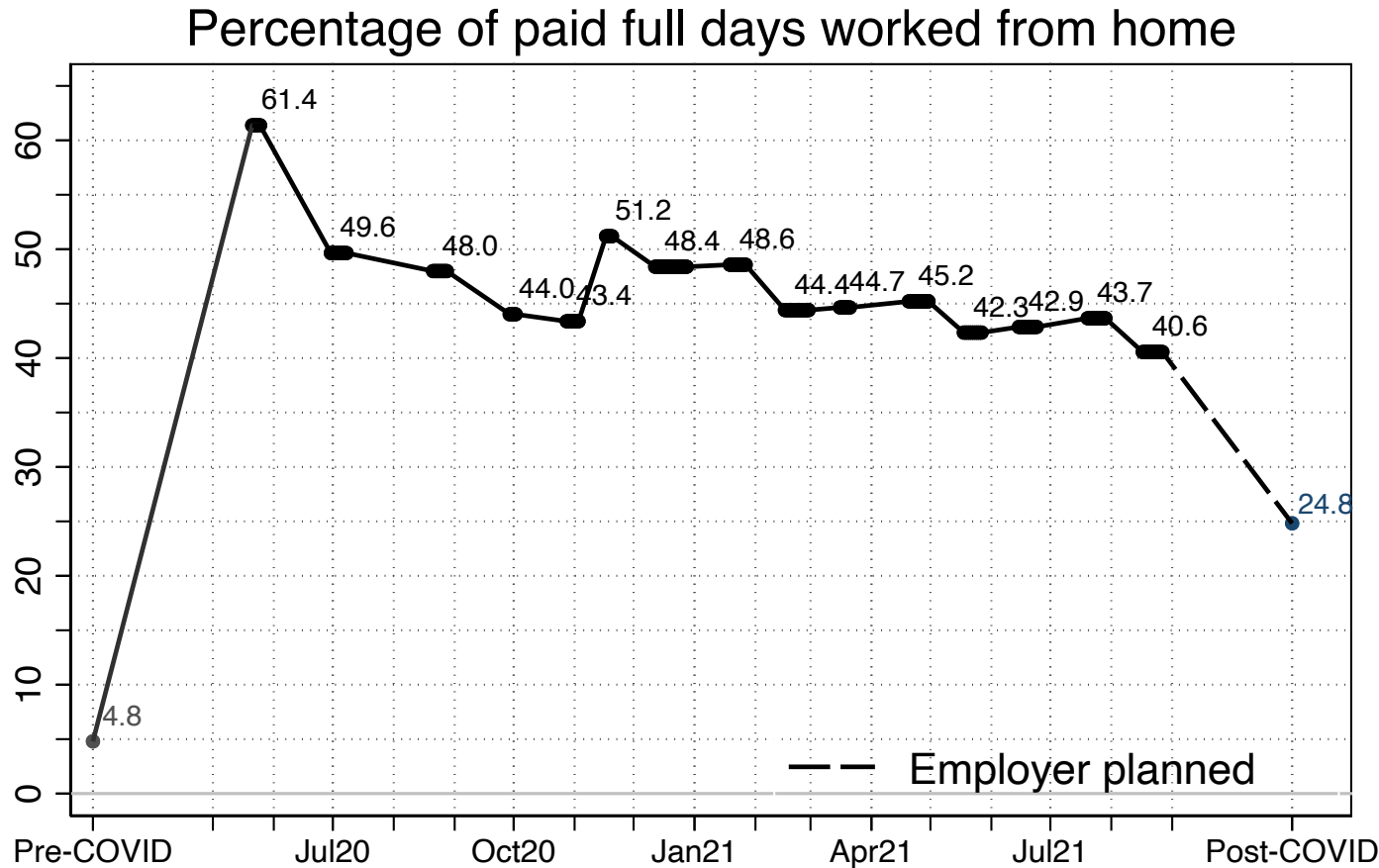
- **Source of all data (unless noted):** Survey of Working Arrangements and Attitudes (SWAA), see www.wfhresearch.com
- **When referring to these results please cite:**
Barrero, Jose Maria, Nicholas Bloom, and Steven J. Davis, 2021. “Why working from home will stick,” National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 28731.

Introduction & Methodology (2/2)

- **Target population:** US residents aged 20 to 64 who earned \$20k or more in 2019. Between April and September 2021 we are gradually moving to include individuals who earned \$10k to \$20k in 2019.
 - Each survey wave goes into the field on the 3rd Tuesday of the month and data collection typically takes 10 to 12 days.
 - Each wave collects 2,500 or 5,000 responses.
 - April 2021 and later waves collect 5,000 responses
 - Prior to April 2021 most waves collected 2,500 responses, but August 2020, December 2020, and January 2021 collected 5,000.
 - We drop respondents who “speed” through the survey, so the actual usable number of responses in each wave is somewhat less than the number we collect.
- **Representativeness:** Commercial providers field the survey on our behalf, drawing from a variety of sources for potential respondents.
 - We reweight the raw survey data to match the share of the population in a given {age x sex x education x earnings} cell in a pooled sample of 2010-2019 Current Population Survey data. See Figure 2 in Barrero, Bloom, and Davis (2021).
 - Unless noted, all statistics and charts use reweighted data.

The percentage of paid full days worked from home was at pandemic lows at 40.5% in August 2021.

The latest data suggest 24.8% of full paid working days will be worked from home post-COVID



Responses to the following questions:

- How many full days are you working this week (whether at home or on business premises)?
- How many **full paid working days** are you **working from home** this week?
- **After COVID, in 2022 and later, how often is your employer planning for you to work full days at home?**

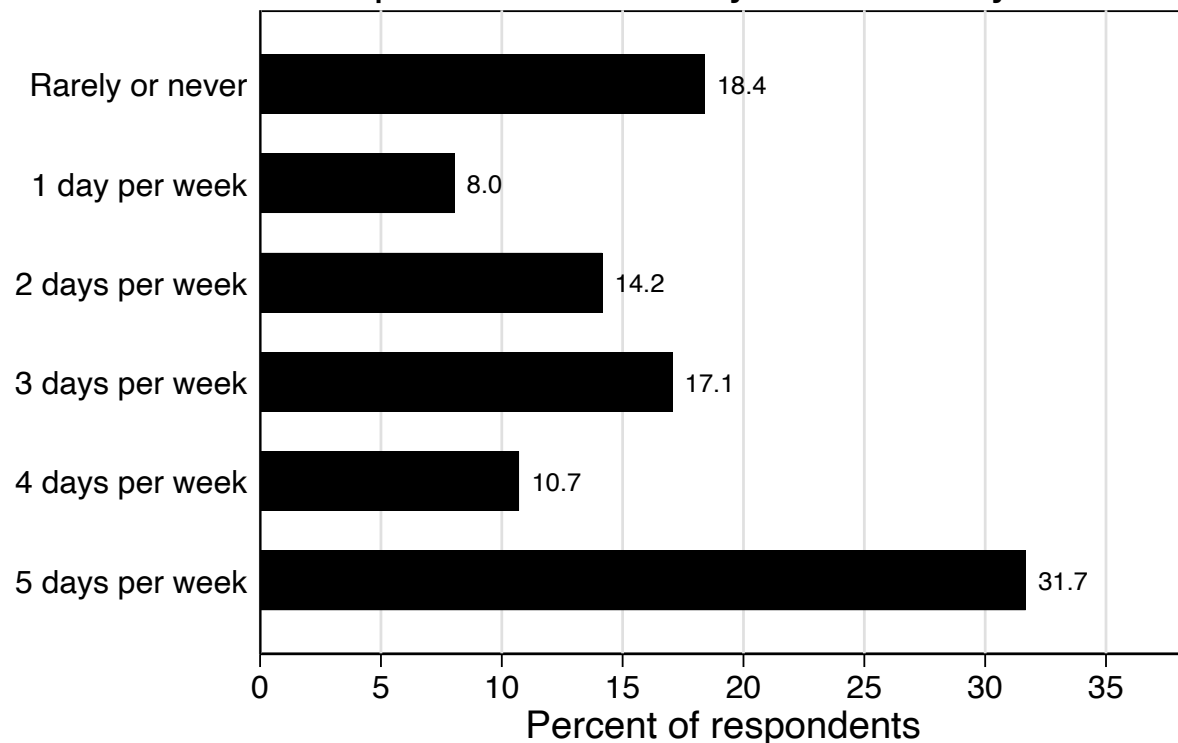
Sample: Data from all SWAA waves, covering May 2020 to August 2021. For the monthly percent of days WFH we focus on respondents who worked during the survey week. For the post-COVID projection, we focus on August 2021 respondents who did not report having no employer. **N = 39,313**

*Pre-COVID estimate taken from the 2017-2018 American Time Use Survey

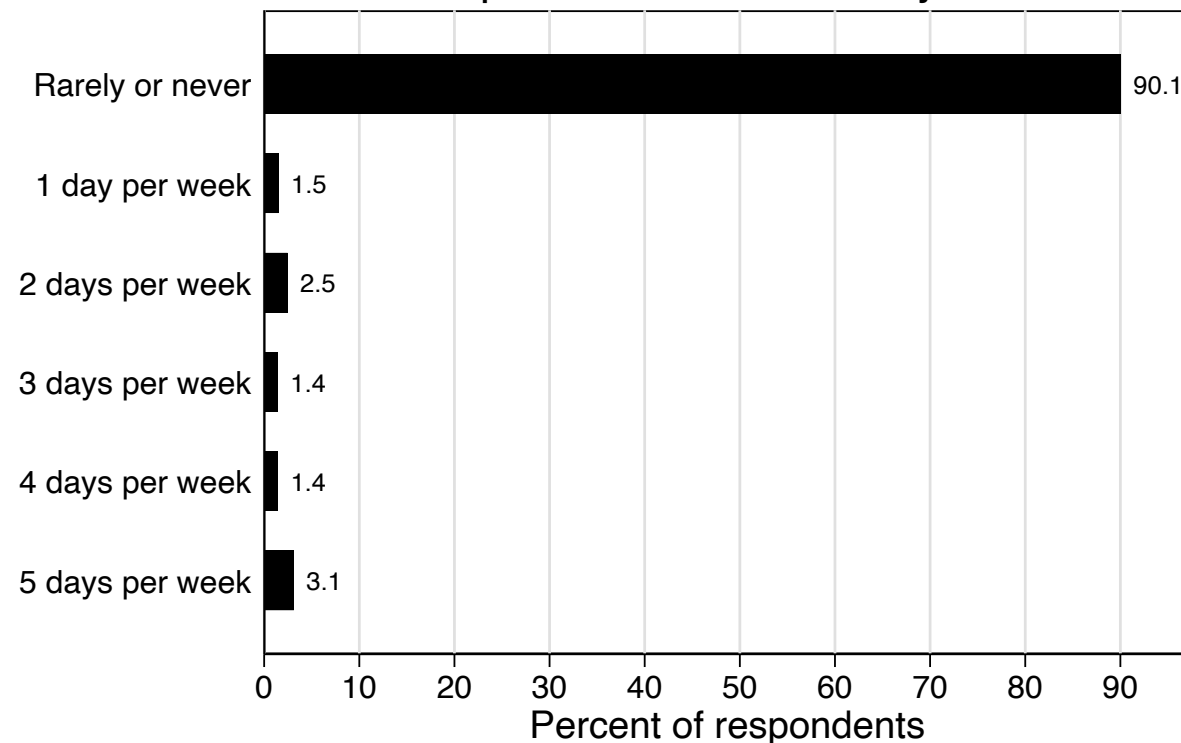
**Post-COVID estimate based on the latest survey wave

The great divide: Those currently WFH look likely to keep WFH at least a few days per week post-pandemic. Those not currently WFH are very unlikely to do so post-pandemic

Employer plans for post-COVID WFH:
Respondents Currently WFH 1+ days/week



Employer plans for post-COVID WFH:
Respondents Not Currently WFH



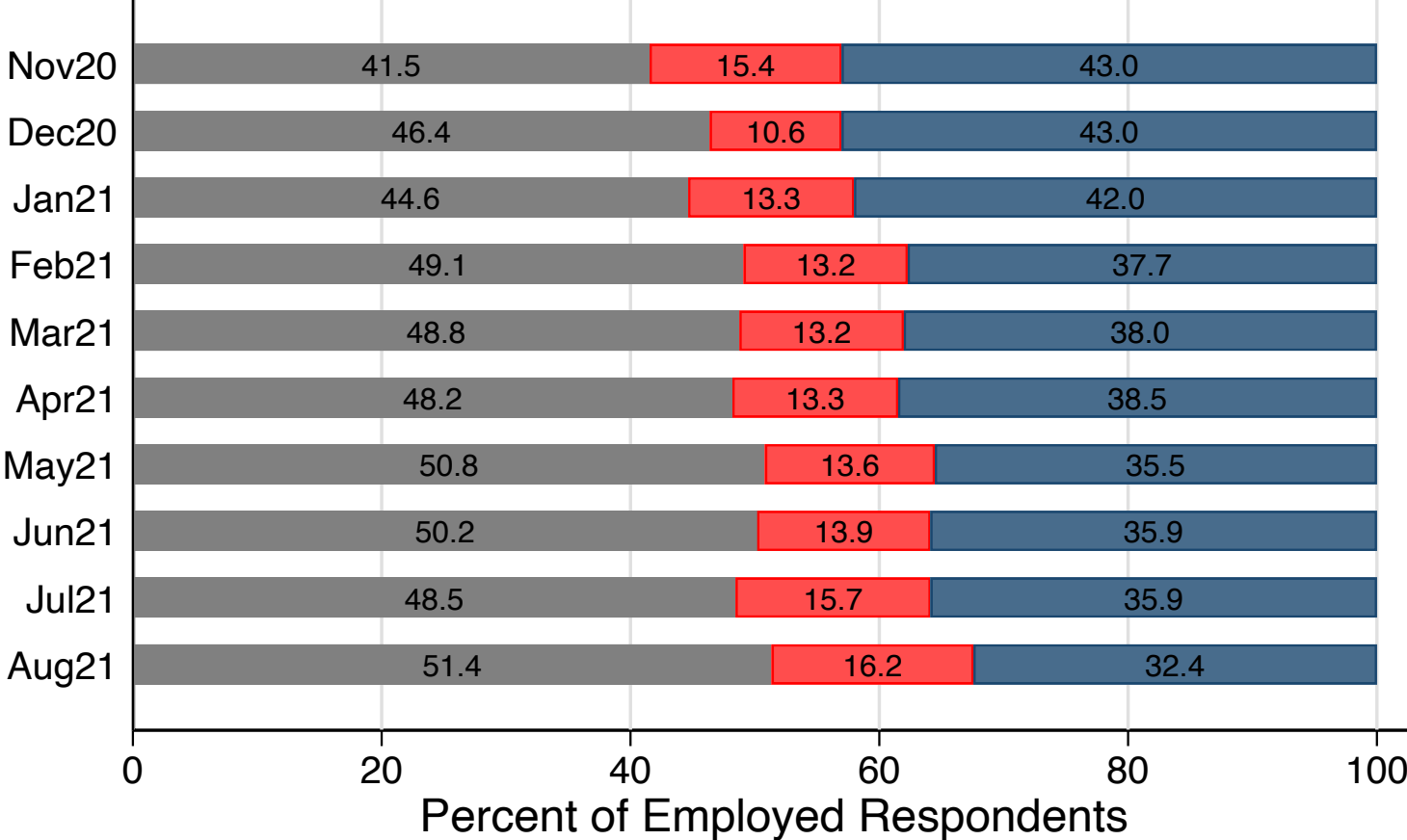
Responses to the questions: *How many **full paid working days** are you working from home this week? **After COVID, in 2022 and later, how often is your employer planning** for you to work full days at home?*

Sample: Data from June, July, and August 2021 SWAA waves. We exclude respondents who report having no employer or who report their employer has not discussed post-COVID WFH with them, or made an announcement about plans in that regard. 18% of workers currently WFH 1+ days per week and 15% of those not currently WFH have not received clear guidance from their employer on post-COVID WFH.

N = 8,260

Hybrid working is yet to start. Only 16.2% of employed respondents worked from home part of the week in August 2021. About 30%, nearly twice as many, report their employer plans for them to have hybrid working arrangements after COVID, in 2022 and later.

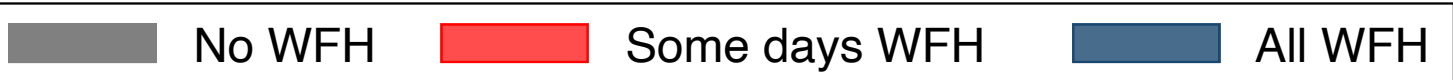
Evolution of Working Arrangements During COVID



Responses to the questions:

- *How many full days are you working this week (whether at home or on business premises)?*
- *How many **full paid working days** are you working from home this week?*

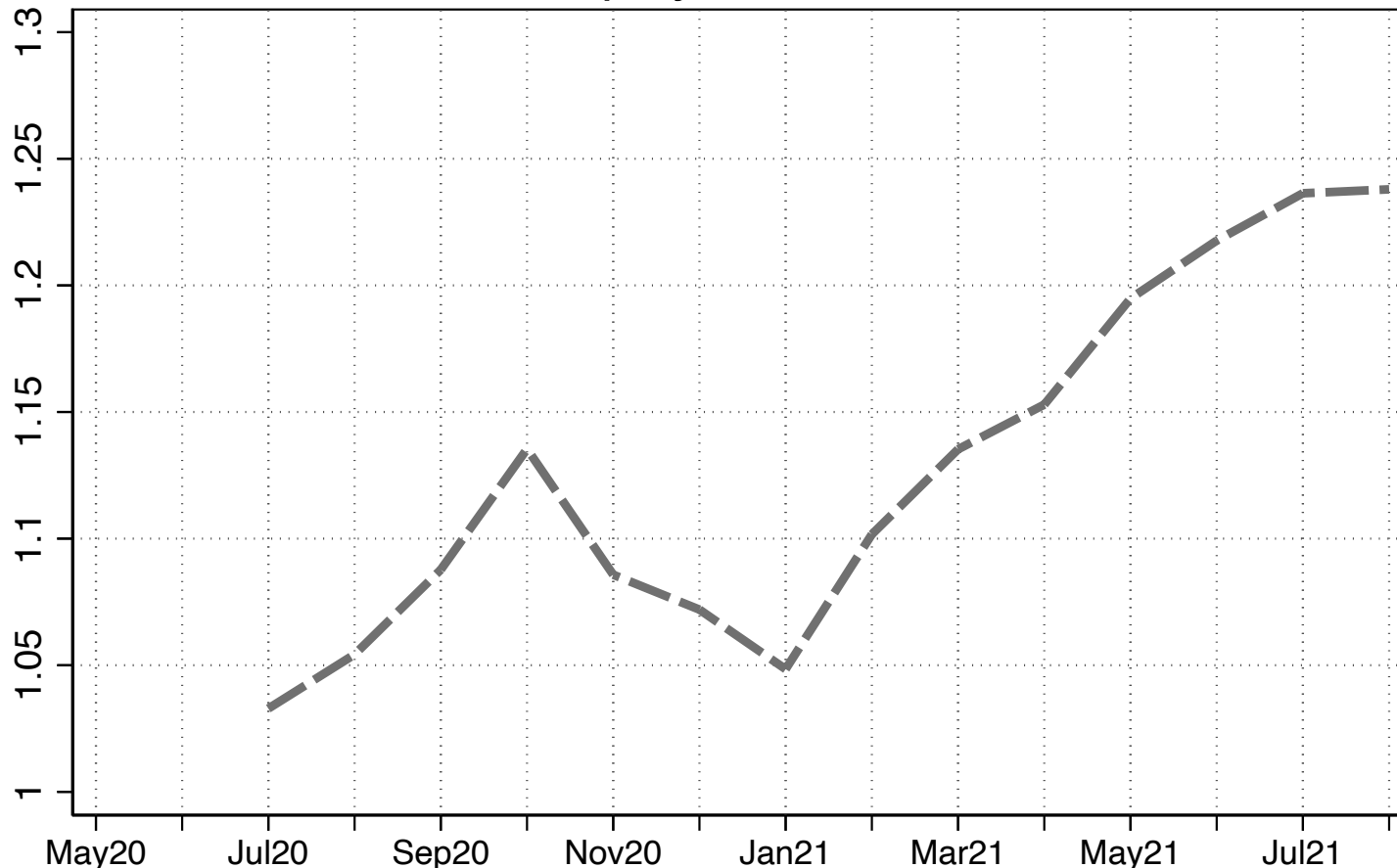
Sample: Data from all SWAA waves, covering November 2020 to August 2021. The sample includes respondents who worked for pay during the survey week. **N = 27,999**



Employers increasingly embrace post-COVID WFH.

Since the start of 2021, employer plans for post-COVID WFH have increased by 18%, from 1.05 to 1.23 days per week.

Avg. Days/Week WFH After the Pandemic Ends:
Employer Plans



Responses to the question:

- *After COVID, in 2022 and later, how often is your employer **planning** for you to work full days at home?*

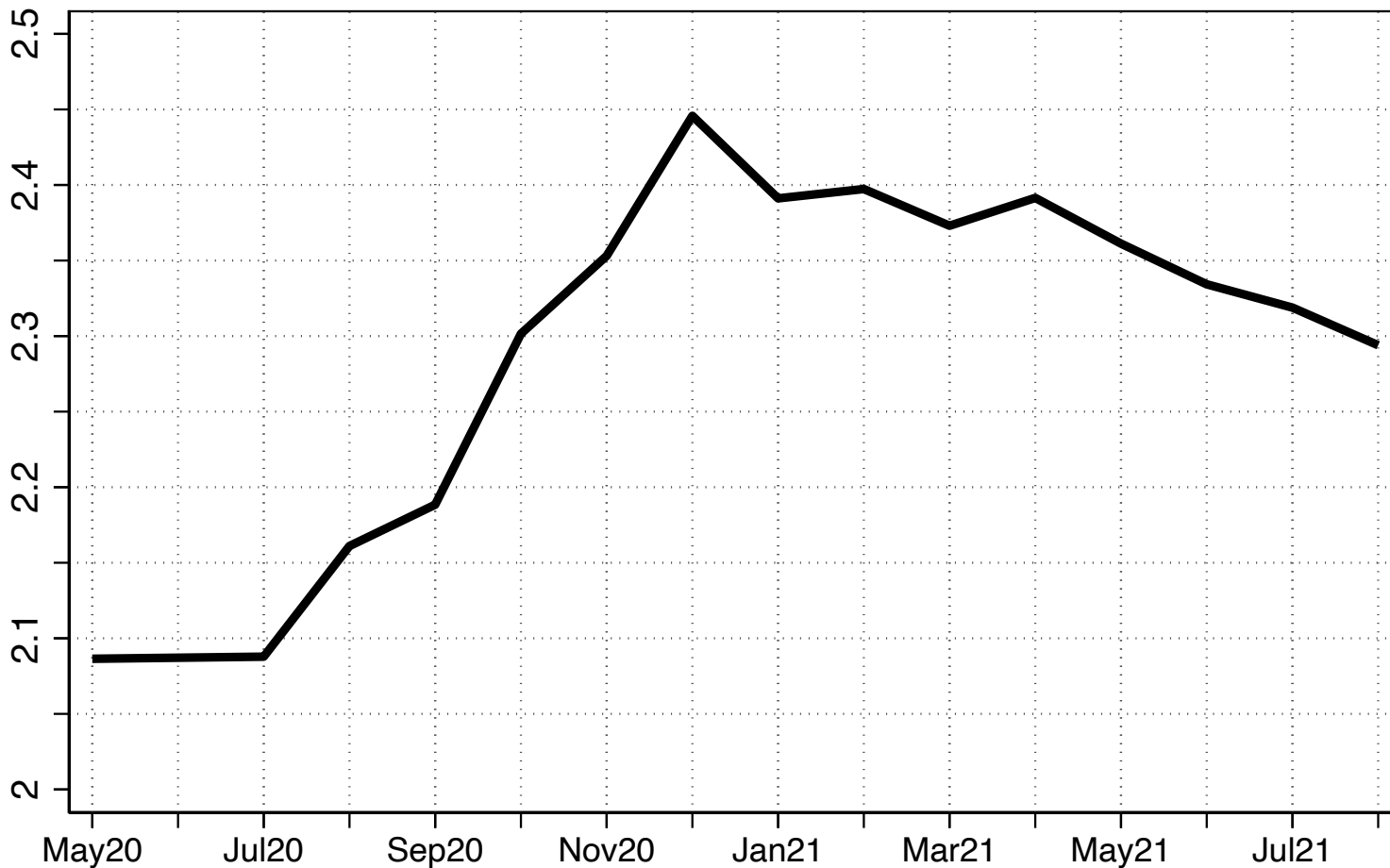
Sample: Data from all SWAA waves, covering July 2020 to August 2021. The sample includes all respondents who reported their employer's plans for post-COVID WFH. In particular, we exclude respondents who report having no employer. **N = 41,460**

Worker desires for post-COVID WFH increased by 17% from 2.09 to 2.45 days per week in the 2nd half of 2020.

But as of August 2021 they have dropped back down to 2.29 days per week

Avg. Days/Week WFH After the Pandemic Ends:

Worker Desires

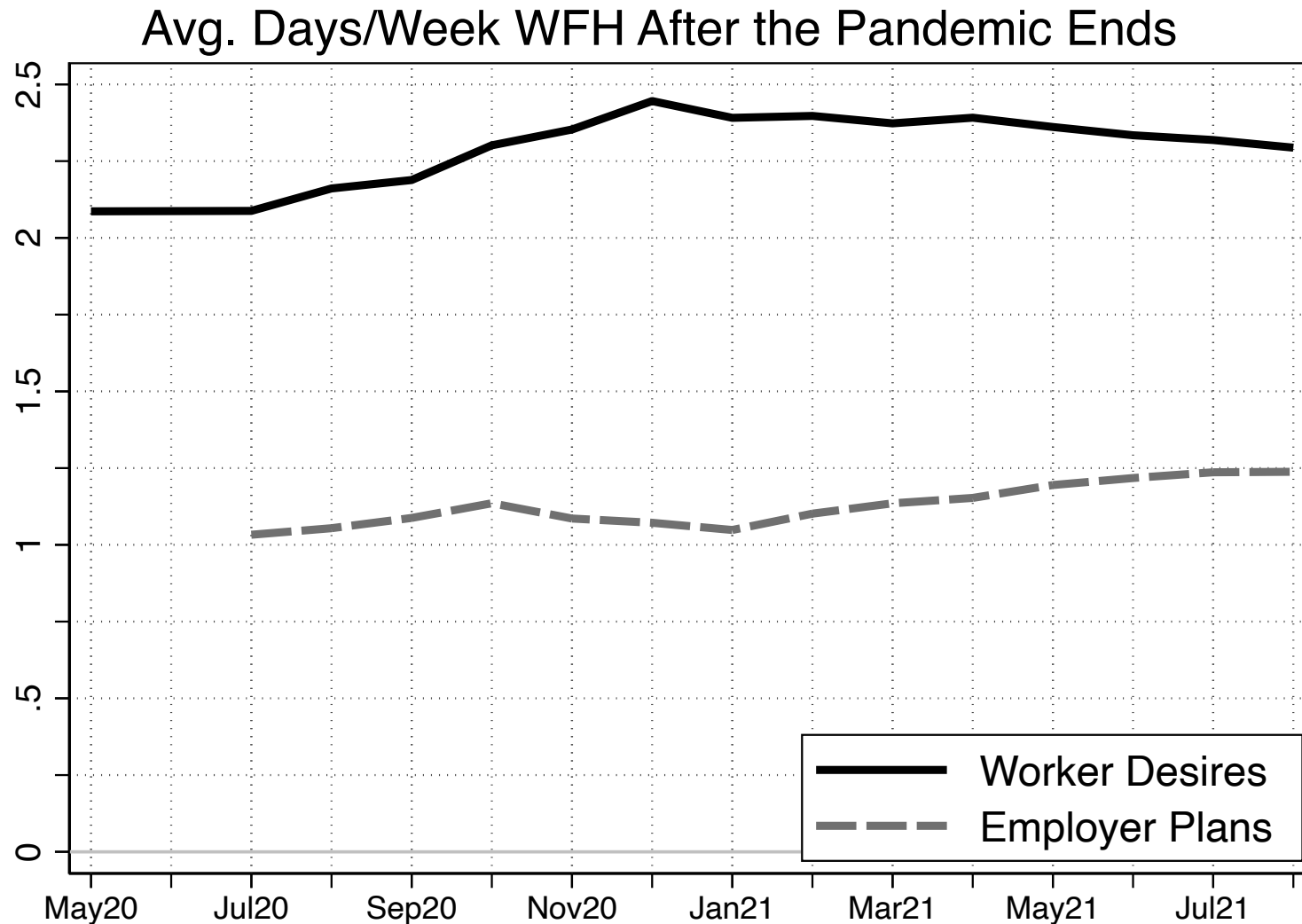


Responses to the question:

- ***After COVID, in 2022 and later, how often would you like to have paid workdays at home?***

Sample: Data from all SWAA waves, covering May 2020 to August 2021. The sample includes all respondents. **N = 49,924**

Still, as of August 2021 the average worker wants to WFH 1 more day per week (86% more) than their employer is planning for them to do so.



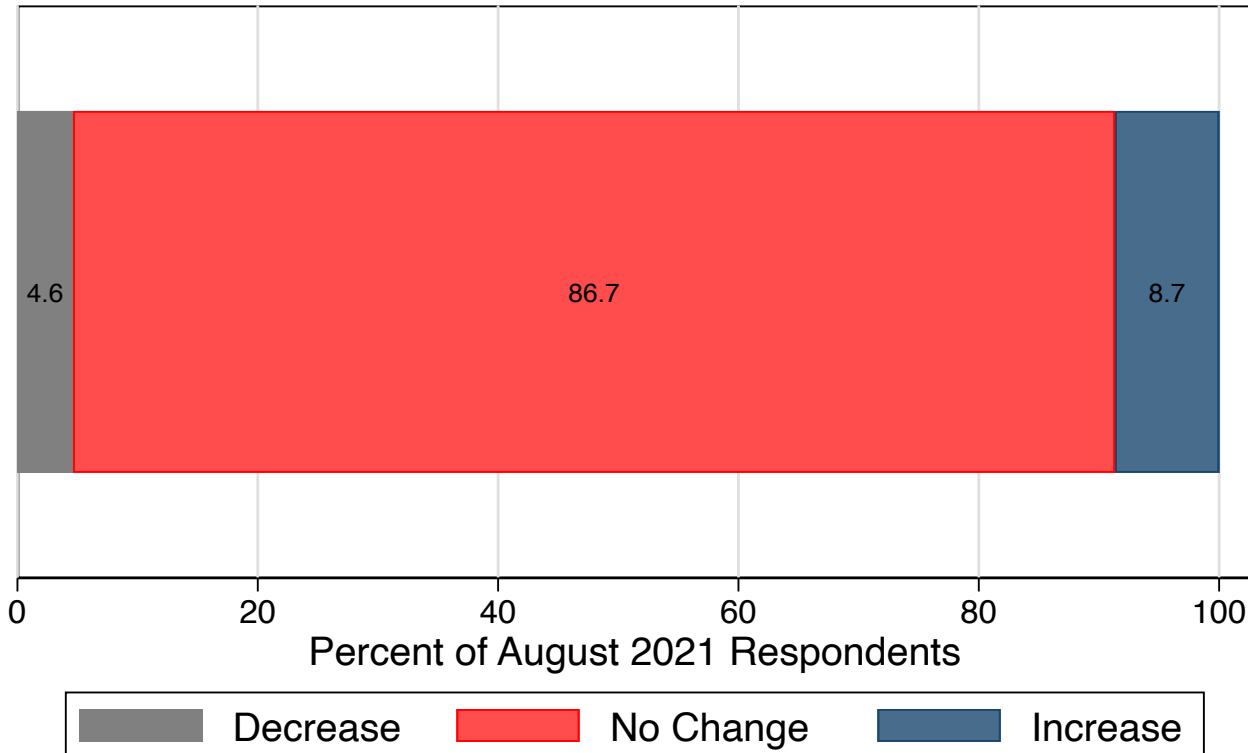
Responses to the questions:

- *After COVID, in 2022 and later, how often is your employer planning for you to work full days at home?*
- *After COVID, in 2022 and later, how often would you like to have paid workdays at home?*

Sample: Data from all SWAA waves, covering May 2020 to August 2021. For worker desires, the sample includes all respondents. **N = 49,924** For employer plans, the sample includes all respondents who reported their employer's plans for post-COVID WFH. In particular, we exclude respondents who report having no employer. **N = 41,460**

8.7% of respondents in August 2021 report that their employers have announced increases to the amount of WFH they will get after COVID in the past 6 months. About half as many (4.6%) report their employers have announced a decrease.

Changes in Employer Plans for the Amount of Post-COVID WFH in the Past 6 Months



Among respondents whose employers have made new announcements about post-COVID WFH in the past 6 months, the most recent plans reflect an extra 0.5 (SE = .07) days WFH per week.

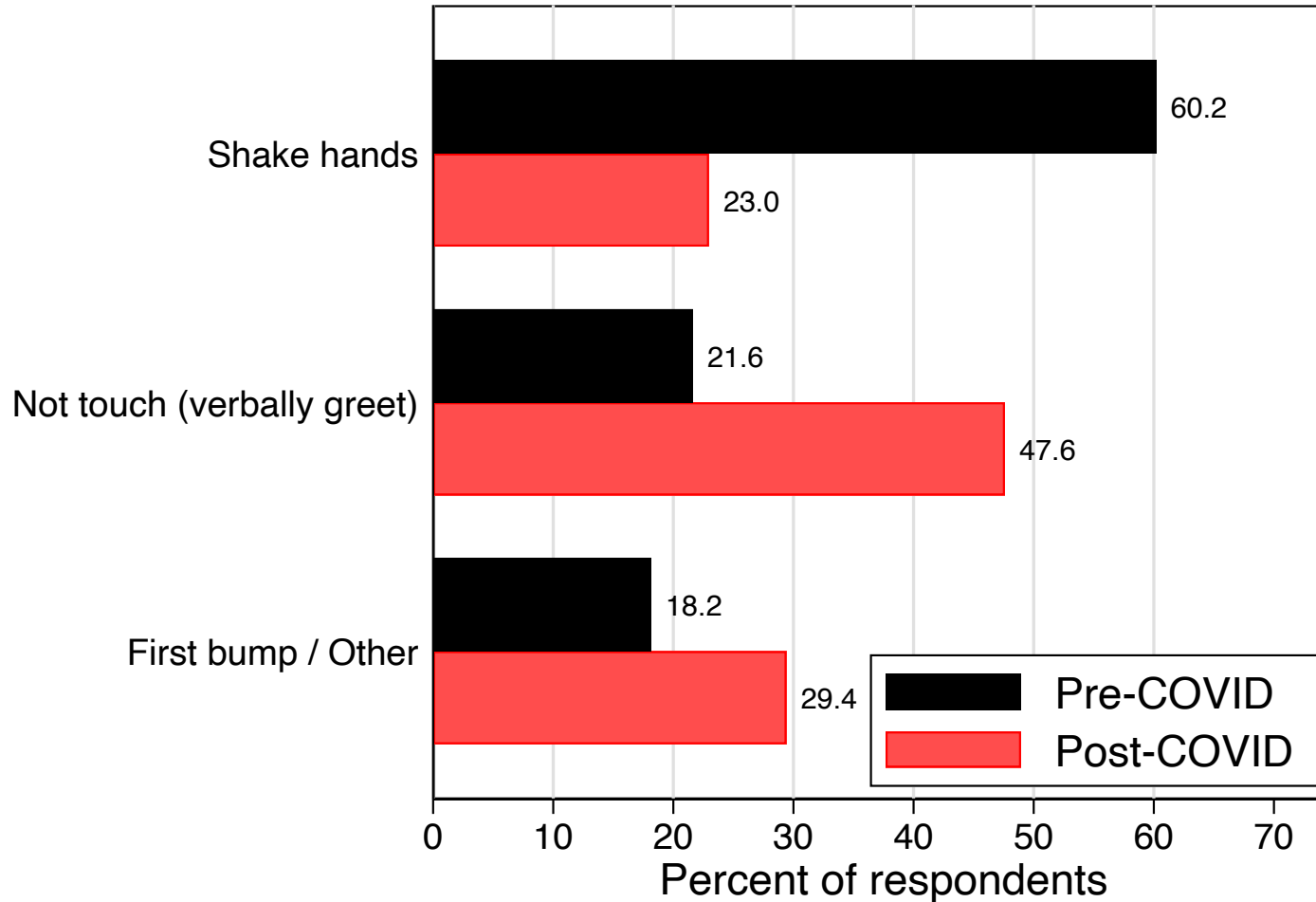
Responses to the questions:

- ***After COVID, in 2022 and later, how often is your employer planning for you to work full days at home?***
- In the last six months, has your employer **announced new plans about working from home** after the pandemic ends, in ***2022 or later?***
- ***Before the latest announcement, how often did your employer plan for you to work from home after COVID, in 2022 and later?***

Sample: Respondents to the August 2021 SWAA who report concrete plans from their employers for post-COVID WFH. **N = 3,923**

COVID-19 looks like a death blow to the handshake

Greetings at work, pre- and post-COVID

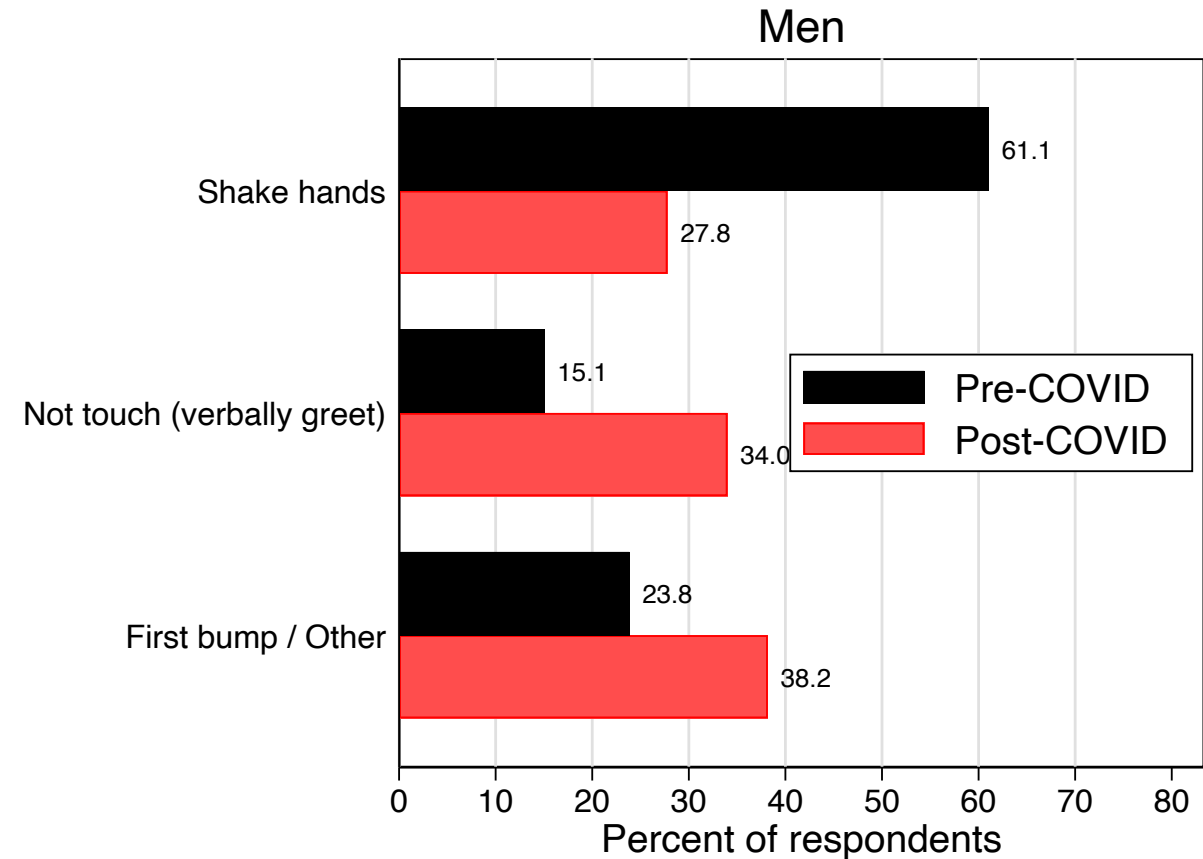
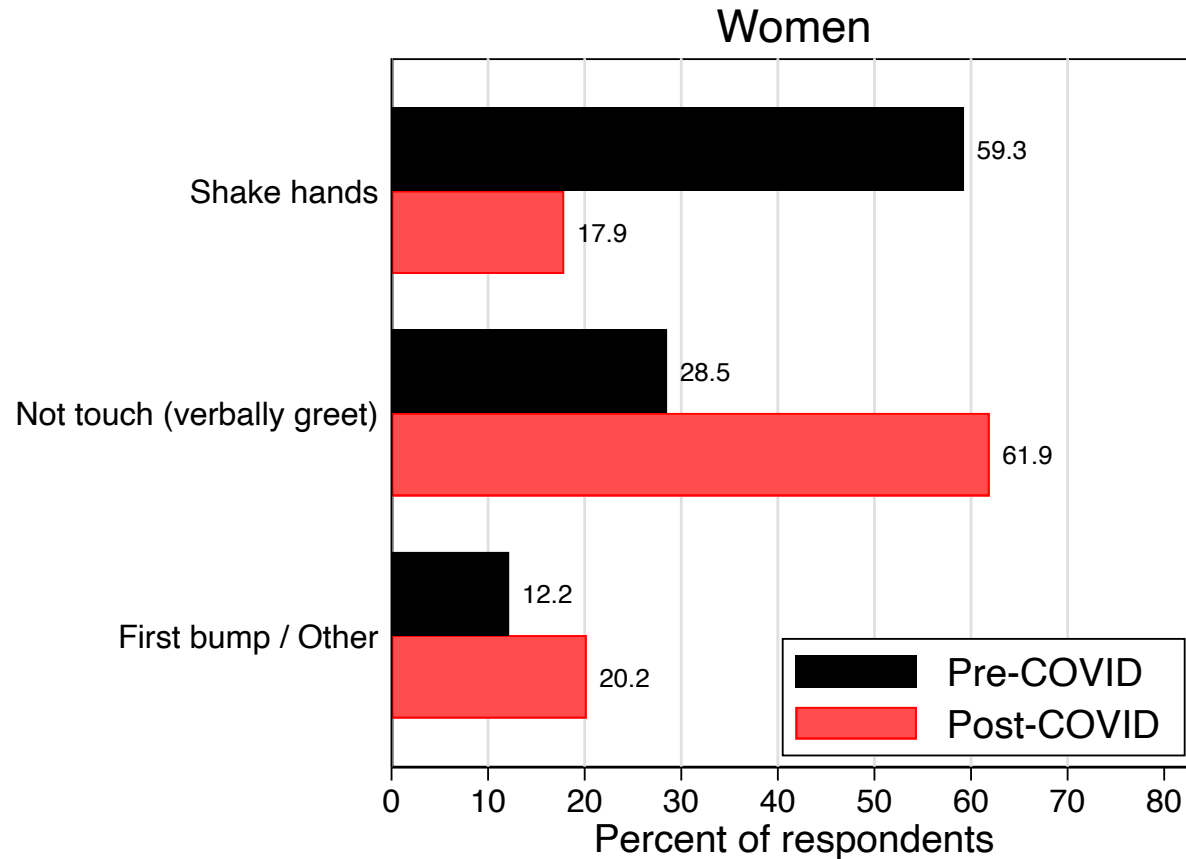


Responses to the questions:

- ***Before COVID (in 2019), when you were introduced to somebody at work what did you do?***
- ***When you return to work in person, and you are introduced to somebody [which] will you [do]?***

Notes: Data are from the July and August 2021 SWAA waves. N = 6,800

What people do instead of shaking hands varies starkly across women and men



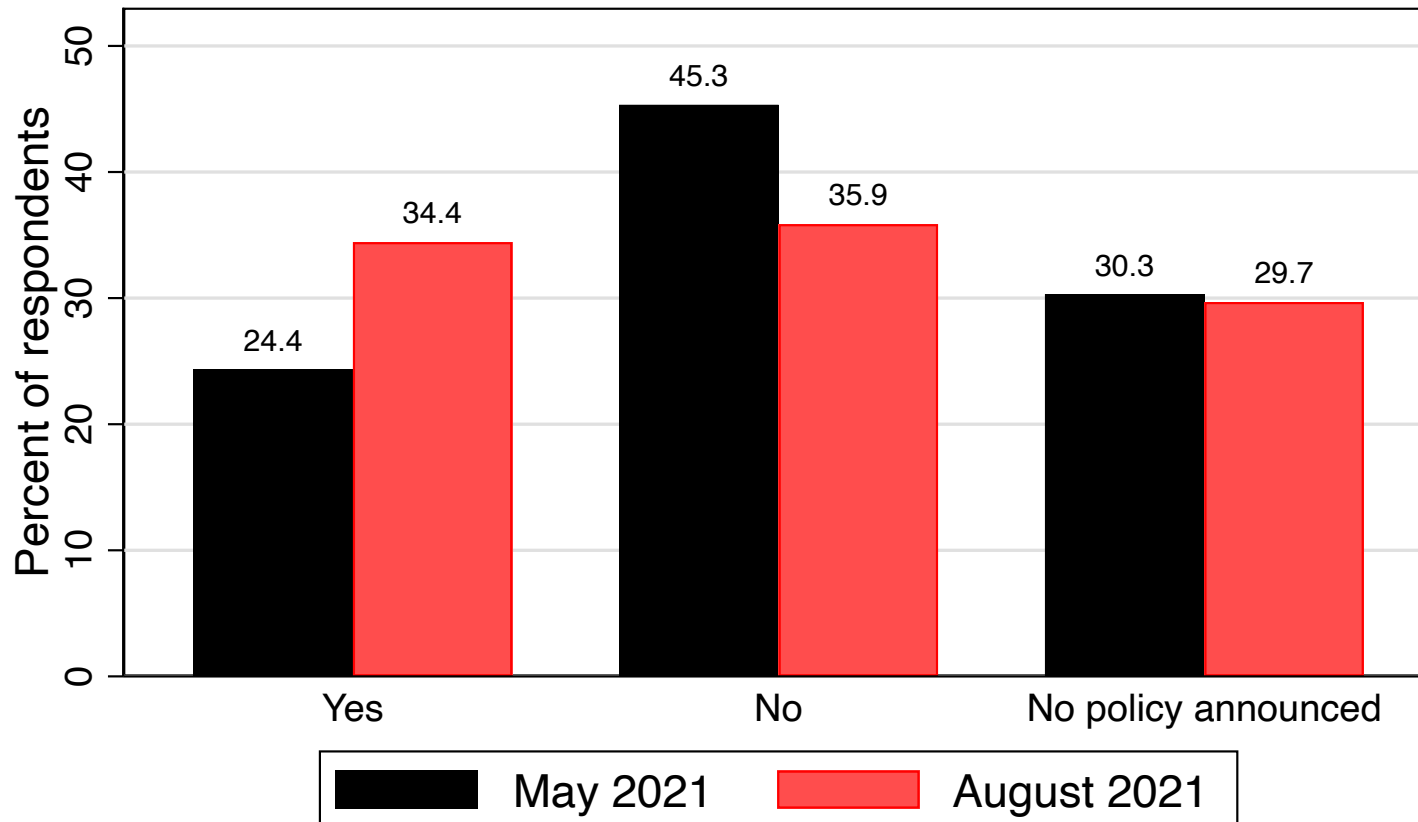
Responses to the questions:

- *Before COVID (in 2019), when you were introduced to somebody at work what did you do?*
- *When you return to work in person, and you are introduced to somebody [which] will you [do]?*

Notes: Data are from the July and August 2021 SWAA waves. N = 6,800

Vaccine mandates have grown between May and August 2021, but the share of respondents who report that their employer has not announced a vaccine mandate policy is unchanged.

Does or will your employer require you to be vaccinated to work on business premises?



Responses to the question:

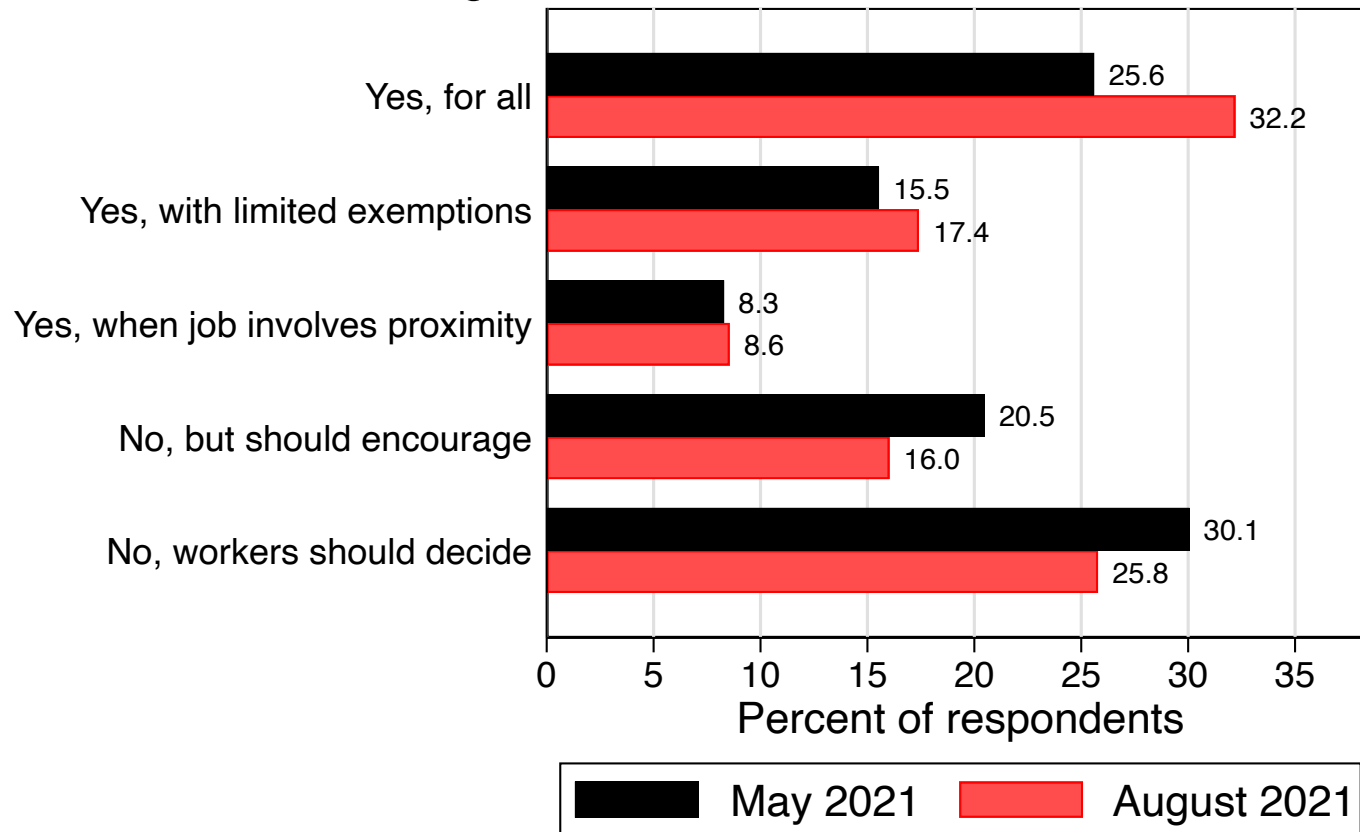
- Does or will your employer require you to be vaccinated to work on business premises?
 - Yes / No / My employer has not announced a policy about this

Sample: Employed respondents in the May and August 2021 SWAA waves. **N = 6,976**

Sample: Currently employed respondents.

Respondent support for vaccine mandates has grown between May and August 2021.

Should your employer require vaccination before letting workers return to the worksite?



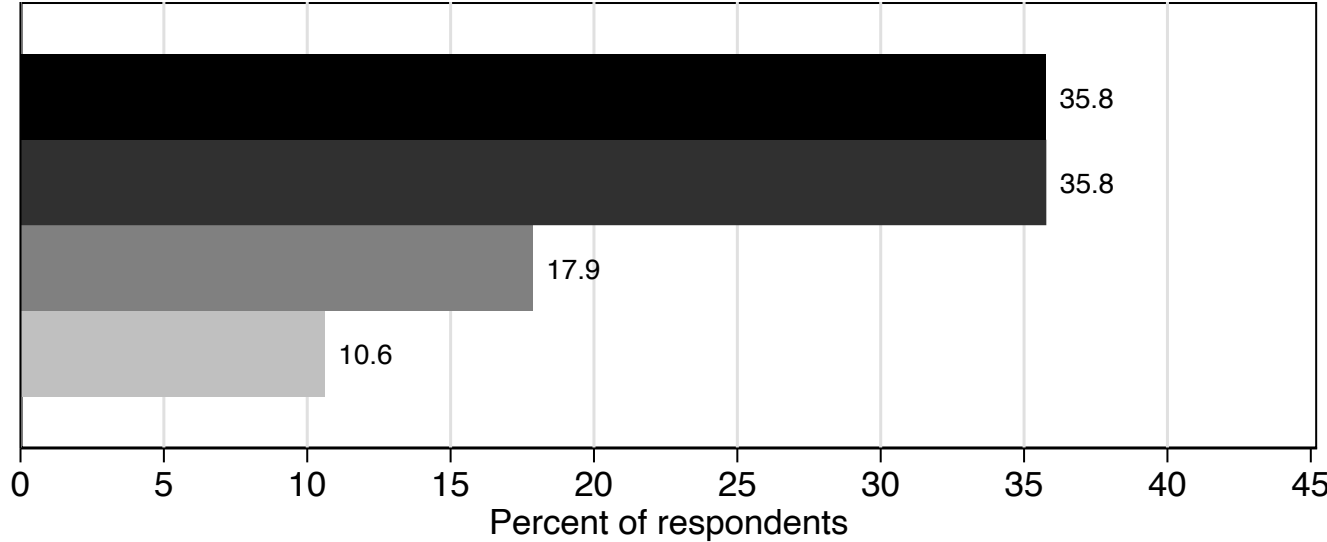
Responses to the question:

- *Should your employer require vaccination before letting you and your co-workers return to the worksite?*

Notes: The sample includes respondents who are currently employed or furloughed (awaiting recall) in the May and August 2021 SWAA waves. **N = 3,657.** We randomly assigned this question to 50% of respondents and assigned a similar question referring to generic vaccine mandates to the other 50%. Results from that other question are very similar.

In June to August August 2021, only a minority of respondents would return to their pre-COVID activities “completely” once most of the population is vaccinated against COVID.

Once most people are vaccinated,
I would return to pre-COVID activities



- Completely
- Substantially - I'd avoid the subway, crowded elevators
- Partially - I'd avoid eating out, taxis
- Would not - continued social distancing

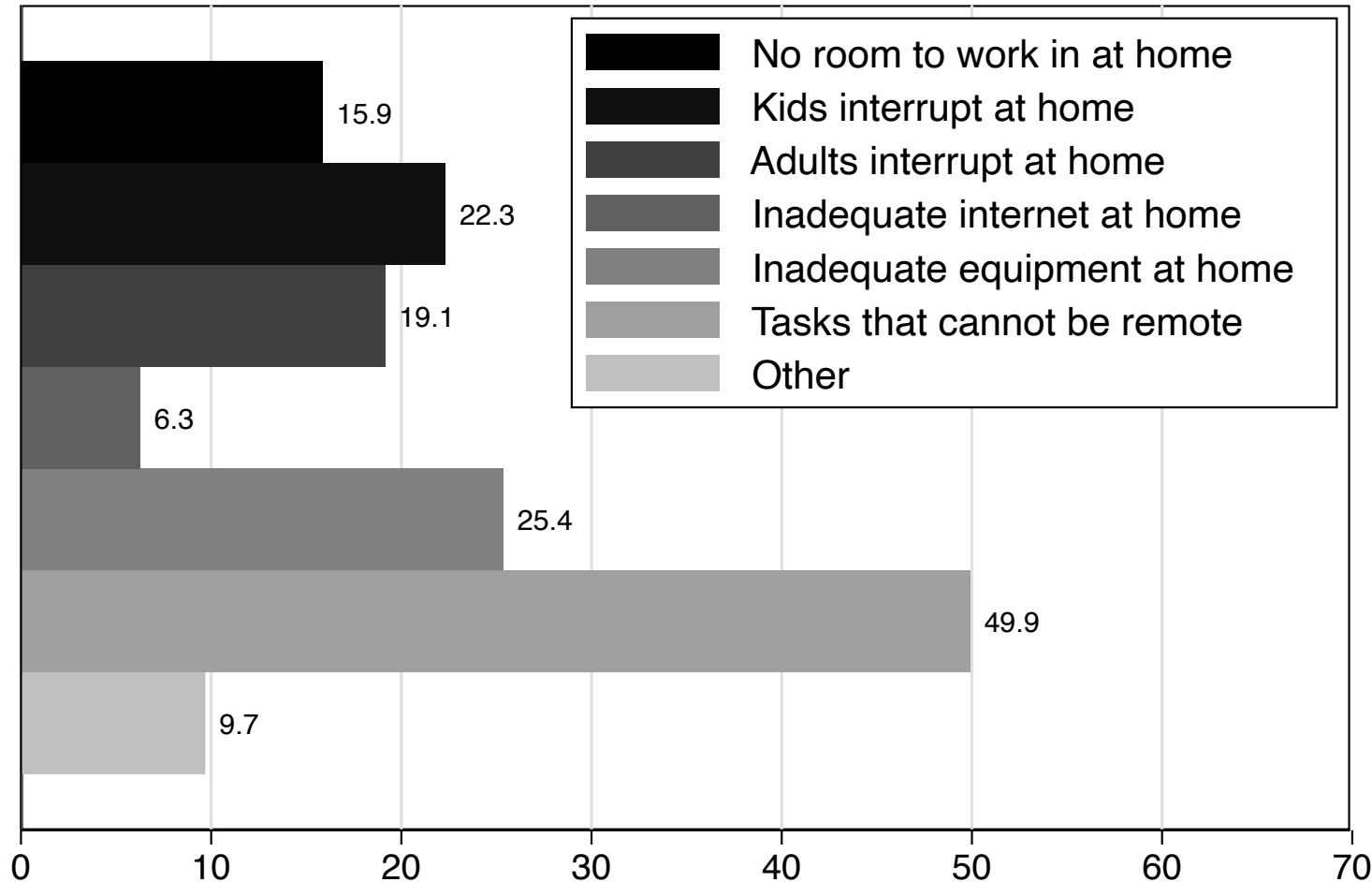
Responses to the question:

- *Once **most of the population has been vaccinated** against COVID, which of the following would best fit your views on social distancing?*
 - *Complete return to pre-COVID activities*
 - *Substantial return to pre-COVID activities, but I would still be wary of things like riding the subway or getting into a crowded elevator*
 - *Partial return to pre-COVID activities, but I would be wary of many activities like eating out or using ride-share taxis*
 - *No return to pre-COVID activities, as I will continue to social distance*

Notes: Data are from the June to August 2021 SWAA waves. The wording above reflects the most recent version of the question. Please see <https://wfhresearch.com/survey-design-and-question-repository/> for previous versions. **N = 12,968**. The percent of respondents in the first 2 categories is not exactly identical, but looks so after rounding to the nearest 10th of a percentage point.

Among respondents who report lower efficiency while WFH, half say this is because some of their job's tasks cannot be done remotely.

Why are respondents less efficient while WFH?



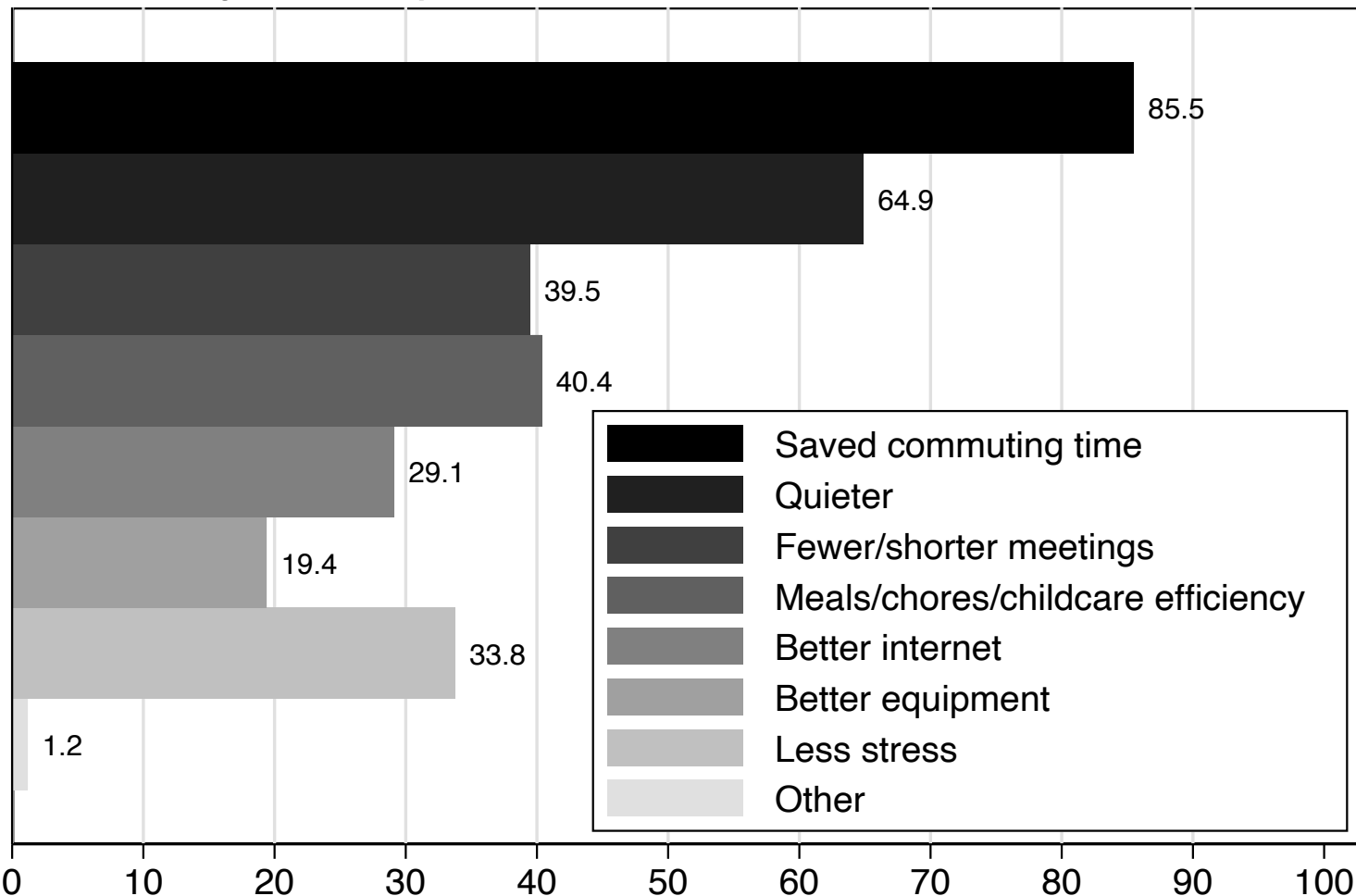
Responses to the questions:

- *Why are you **less efficient** when working from home? Please select all that apply.*

Notes: Data are from the August 2021 SWAA, focusing on respondents who have WFH experience during the pandemic and report being less efficient WFH than working on business premises. Heights of the bars don't add up to 100 because the question asked respondents to select all reasons that apply to them. **N = 274**

Respondents who report higher efficiency while WFH overwhelmingly cite commute time savings and (somewhat less so) a quiet environment at home as reasons.

Why are respondents more efficient while WFH?



Responses to the questions:

- *Is time saved by not commuting part of your **extra efficiency** when working from home?*
- *Apart from saving time by not commuting, **why are you more efficient when working from home?** Please select all that apply.*

Notes: Data are from the August 2021 SWAA, focusing on respondents who have WFH experience during the pandemic and report being more efficient WFH than working on business premises. Heights of the bars don't add up to 100 because the survey asked respondents to select all reasons that apply to them. **N = 1,524**

References

- Barrero, Jose Maria, Nicholas Bloom, and Steven J. Davis, 2021. “Why working from home will stick,” National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 28731.