

11 February 2021

Working from home – Labour Force Survey ad hoc module  
4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020

---

**The share of the employed population who has worked remotely decreased to 11.6%**

In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020, 12.3% of the employed population reported having worked always or almost always from home in the reference week or in the three weeks before (597.5 thousand people), 1.9 percentage points (pp) (84.4 thousand) less than in the previous quarter. Of these, 474.4 thousand people (79.4%) indicated that the main reason for having worked at home was the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among those having worked always or almost always from home, 94.3% (563.5 thousand) used information and communication technologies (ICT). In other words, they have worked remotely. That estimate represented 11.6% of total employed population, 1.8 pp less than in the previous quarter, and has decreased by 12.6% (80.9 thousand) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2020.

As seen in the previous quarter, there was no difference between the average number of hours weekly worked at home and those worked in another place (37 hours in both places) (estimates that exclude the employed population absent from work). If considered the total employed population, these averages drop to 35 and 33 weekly hours, respectively.

Among the employed population who has not worked at home in the reference week or in the previous three, 166.9 thousand (4.5%) were absent from work during that period, 15.4% (25.6 thousand) of which due to the COVID-19 pandemic, down 60.6% (39.4 thousand) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2020.

---

## 1. Introduction

The results herein presented result from the Labour Force Survey module on “Working from home”, on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the labour market dynamics, namely on the evolution of working from home following the measures to contain the pandemic. Given this goal, the module is held each quarter, as long as it is deemed necessary to better characterise the labour market.

The target population of this module is the employed population, estimated at 4,859.5 thousand people in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020.

The questions asked made it possible to meet three objectives:

1. Assess how many employed persons have worked in the reference period always or almost always at home and if that occurred due to the pandemic.
2. Estimate how many, among the employed population who have always or almost always worked from home, have used information and communication technologies to carry out their work.

3. Find out how many employed persons absent from work in the four reference weeks did not work during that time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Excel tables attached are presented more detailed results, relating the questions of the module with several characterization variables (NUTS II region, sex, age group, highest completed level of education, professional status, work duration regime, employment contract of employees, main activity (NACE-Rev.2), and occupation (ISCO-08). This does not exhaust the richness of the module data when crossing with Labour Force Survey data. For a more in-depth exploration of the data collected, Statistics Portugal provides, upon request, tables with cross tabulation of variables, safeguarding the principle of statistical quality.

## 2. Main results

### 2.1. Working from home due to the pandemic

*(Tables 1 to 3 of the attached file)*

The employed population who has always or almost always worked at home<sup>1</sup> in the reference week or in the three weeks before was estimated at 597.5 thousand people, representing 12.3% of the employed population, and having decreased by 12.4% (84.4 thousand) from the previous quarter. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020, that population had been estimated at 1,094.4 thousand (23.1% of the employed population)

---

<sup>1</sup> In order to turn the analysis more easy-reading, the group of those who "have always or almost always worked at home" will be referred to hereinafter as those who "worked at home". The group of those who "have not worked from home or not always nor almost always at home" will be referred to as those who "have not worked at home".

and, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the same year, it had been 681.9 thousand (14.2%).

As in the previous quarter, the *Área Metropolitana de Lisboa* was the region with the highest share of employed people who have worked at home during the four reference weeks (23.3%), although a decrease of 3.3 percentage points (pp) in this share has been observed. The same pattern was observed among those with an education level corresponding to the tertiary education (26.0%, down 7.0 pp) and among those working in the services sector (15.0%, down 2.5 pp). However, unlike in the previous quarters, the economic activity of education was no longer the one in the tertiary sector with the highest share of workers stating to have worked from home in the reference period (10.0%, down 16.5 pp). That position was taken by the activities of information and communication (20.5%, up 2.7 pp). Among those working at home, the professionals' occupation remained as the one with highest share (58.2%, down 4.3 pp).

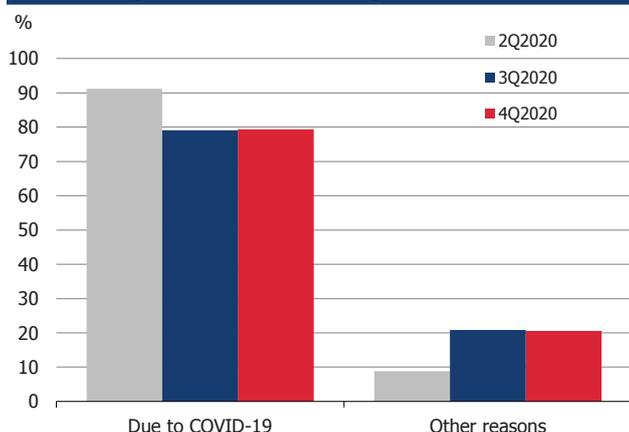
As in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2020, the share of the employed population working at home in the four reference weeks remained similar among men (12.2%) and women (12.4%). In the analysis by professional status the difference between self-employed workers (13.9%) and employees (12.0%) has increased, although both shares have decreased from the previous quarter (1.0 pp and 2.1 pp, respectively).

To the 597.5 thousand people who reported having worked always or almost always at home in the reference week or in the three weeks before it was asked if the main reason for having worked from home was the COVID-19 pandemic and 79.4%

(474.4 thousand) responded positively, a share similar to the previous quarter one (79.1%), but corresponding to minus 65.2 thousand people.

Among the latter, as in the previous quarter, 50.4% were women, 56.5% lived in *Área Metropolitana de Lisboa*, 71.4% had a tertiary education degree, 91.6% were employees, 61.3% were professionals, and 86.1% were working in the tertiary sector. However, unlike in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2020, only 8.4% of these activity sector workers stating to have worked from home were working in the education field (this share was of 28.6% in that quarter). The field with the majority of tertiary sector workers working at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic was the information and communication one (21.1%, up 1.4 pp).

**Figure 1: Employed population who worked always or almost always at home in the reference period by reason for working from home**



As in the previous quarter, it was for those aged 45 and over that it was observed a greater proportion of people who worked always or almost always at home for reasons other than the COVID-19 pandemic (25.0%). This share has increased by 0.4 pp.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020, the population who worked at home has worked, on average, in the reference week, 35 hours per week, 2 hours more than the population who did not work at home (33 hours on average).

Excluding from this analysis those who were absent from work in the reference week (due to annual or bank holidays, own illness, slack work for technical or economic reasons (includes layoff), and parental leave, among other reasons), it was observed that both population have worked, in average, the same number of hours (37).

## 2.2 Use of information and communication technologies for working from home

*(Tables 4 to 6.1 of the attached file)*

To the employed population who mentioned to have always or almost always worked at home in the reference week and in the three weeks before it was asked if, to work from home, they needed to use a computer and/or smartphone, and to those who used at least one of these devices, it was asked to indicate the type of connection or communication they used: virtual private network (VPN), email, remote connection to a computer in the company, videoconference, web applications, extranet, shared folders in the cloud or any other type of information and communication technology.

It was found that 563.5 thousand people have used information and communication technologies (ICT) to work from home in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020, 12.6% (80.9 thousand) less than in the previous quarter. In

other words, they have worked remotely<sup>2</sup>. That estimate represented 11.6% of the total employed population (1.8 pp less than in the previous quarter) and 94.3% of those who have worked at home in the reference period. Among those who worked at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 99.0% (469.7 thousand) used ICT.

in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles. Finally, it was again among service and sales workers that a smaller use of ICT was used to work from home (63.9%), 17.3 pp less than in the previous quarter.

### 2.3 Absence to work due to the pandemic

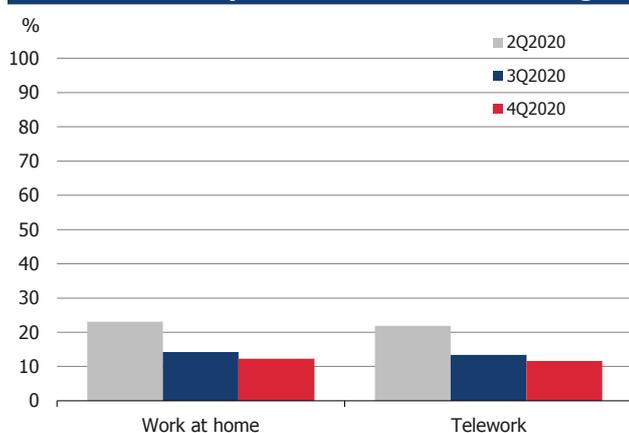
(Tables 7 and 8 of the attached file)

In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020, there were 3,727.2 employed persons who indicated to never having worked from home in the four reference weeks<sup>3</sup>, 76.7% of employed population. That estimate has decreased by 1.4% (52.5 thousand) from the previous quarter and by 10.0% (411.9 thousand) from the same quarter of the previous year.

Of these, 166.9 thousand people (4.5%) did not work in their main job during the four reference weeks (they were absent), 29.5% (69.8 thousand) less than in the previous quarter. To these it was asked if the main reason for not having worked was the COVID-19 pandemic and 15.4% (25.6 thousand) said yes, down 60.6% (39.4 thousand) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2020.

Unlike in the previous quarter, this percentage was highest among those with tertiary education (20.8%), having remained higher among men (20.1%) than women (12.9%).

**Figure 2: Employed population who worked always or almost always at home and in teleworking**

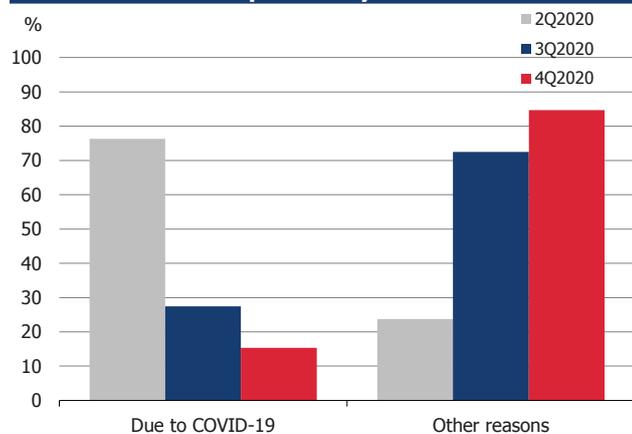


As in the previous quarter, the use of ICT by the employed population who has worked at home was more intense among those who lived in the *Área Metropolitana de Lisboa* (97.9%), among women (94.5%) and among those with a tertiary education degree (98.7%). The share of employees who used these technologies (98.4%) remained above the one observed for self-employed workers (76.8%). On the other hand, the use of these technologies in the different economic activities wavered between 100.0% in financial and insurance activities and in administrative and support service activities and 89.0%

<sup>2</sup> Telework corresponds to the remote work using information and communication technologies in producing and/or transferring the labour outputs, as in the concept approved by the Statistical Council (<https://smi.ine.pt/Conceito/Detalhes/188>; only available in Portuguese).

<sup>3</sup> This is a subgroup of those not working at home or who have not always or almost always worked at home.

**Figure 3: Employed population absent from work in the reference period<sup>1</sup> by reason of absence**



<sup>1</sup> Reference week and the previous three.

**Employed population by work from home in the reference week and in the three weeks before  
Portugal - 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2020**

	Total		Due to COVID-19	
	Thousands	%	Thousands	%
<b>Employed population</b>	<b>4,859.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>		
Has worked always or almost always from home	597.5	12.3	474.4	79.4
Has not worked from home or not always or almost always at home	4,262.1	87.7		
Has never worked at home	3,727.2	76.7		
<b>Equipment needed to work</b>				
Computer and smartphone	409.3	68.5	340.6	71.8
Only computer	153.9	25.8	131.6	27.7
<b>Use of ICT<sup>(a)</sup></b>				
Used ICT <sup>(b)</sup>	563.5	94.3	469.7	99.0
Did not use ICT or does not know <sup>(c)</sup>	33.9	5.7	§	§
<b>Type of connection or communication used<sup>(d)</sup></b>				
<b>Virtual private network (VPN)</b>				
Yes	381.5	66.8	350.4	73.9
No	164.1	28.7	101.6	21.4
Do not know	26.0	4.5	22.0	4.6
<b>Email</b>				
Yes	553.9	96.9	461.1	97.3
No	11.7	2.1	8.6	1.8
Do not know	§	§	§	§
<b>Remote connection to a computer in the company</b>				
Yes	317.5	55.6	284.9	60.1
No	236.4	41.4	173.0	36.5
Do not know	17.6	3.1	16.2	3.4
<b>Videoconference</b>				
Yes	482.7	84.5	417.4	88.1
No	83.8	14.7	52.2	11.0
Do not know	§	§	§	§
<b>Web applications, extranet</b>				
Yes	345.3	60.4	293.0	61.8
No	196.6	34.4	153.0	32.3
Do not know	29.6	5.2	28.1	5.9
<b>Shared folders in the cloud</b>				
Yes	350.0	61.2	303.1	63.9
No	190.4	33.3	142.5	30.1
Do not know	31.0	5.4	28.5	6.0
<b>Other type</b>				
Yes	8.5	1.5	§	§
No	540.8	94.6	446.6	94.2
Do not know	22.2	3.9	21.7	4.6
<b>Employed population absent from work</b>	166.9	4.5	25.6	15.4

Total	Due to COVID-19
Average weekly hours <sup>(e)</sup>	

<b>Employed population worked hours</b>		
Has worked always or almost always from home	35	36
Has not worked from home or not always or almost always at home	33	

Source: Statistics Portugal, Labour Force Survey ad hoc module "Working from home".

**Conventional sign:**

§ Extremely unreliable value

**Notes:**

(a) ICT - Information and communication technologies

(b) Corresponds to the employed population who has worked always or almost always from home in the reference period using computer and/or smartphone together with some type of information and communication technology: VPN, email, remote connection, videoconference, web applications, extranet, shared folders in the cloud or any other type of ICT.

(c) Corresponds to the employed population who has worked always or almost always from home in the reference period using computer and/or smartphone, but without using any type of ICT.

(d) Only asked to those who have used computer and/or smartphone.

(e) The reference period of the average weekly hours actually worked corresponds to the reference week.

## TECHNICAL NOTE

The main purpose of the Labour Force Survey is to characterise the population in terms of the labour market. It is a quarterly sample survey, addressed to families occupying the same dwelling in the national territory, which makes available quarterly and annual data.

Most of the characteristics observed in this survey report to the situation in one pre-defined week (from Monday to Sunday), known as *reference week*. The reference weeks are uniformly distributed throughout the quarters and years. The interviews usually take place in the week following the reference week.

The information is obtained directly, through computer-assisted interview, by using a mixed data collection mode: the initial interview is done face-to-face by an interviewer visiting the household and the other five interviews are done by telephone, if certain requirements are met.

The Labour Force Survey methodological document is available (only in Portuguese) at:

<http://smi.ine.pt/DocumentacaoMetodologica/Detalhes/1362>

### Module “Working from home”

This module of Portuguese origin corresponds to a thematic survey, of small dimension, on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the labour market dynamics, namely on the evolution of working from home following the measures to contain the pandemic. The questions of this survey are intended to supplement the information gathered from the core questionnaire of the Labour Force Survey and are meant primarily to obtain more detailed information on this specific topic that will be used to define and/or monitor specifically national and European policy initiatives. Given this goal, the module will be held each quarter, as long as it is deemed necessary and there is interest in the topic.

The module is performed together with Labour Force Survey and is directed to the resident population aged 15 and over throughout the national territory.

The extrapolation of the results, such as in the Labour Force Survey, is made from a regional weights system, determined from independent population estimates. These weights are a function of the following variables: NUTS II region by sex and five-year age groups and also NUTS III region (or aggregations) by sex or large age groups.

**Employed concept:** person aged 15 years old or over whom, during the reference period, was in one of the following situations:

- had worked for at least one hour for a wage or salary, in cash or in kind;
- had a formal attachment to his/her job but was temporarily not at work;
- had an enterprise but was temporarily not at work for any specific reason;
- was in early retirement but working in the reference period.

Published data were calibrated by using the population estimates calculated from the final results of Census 2011.

Due to rounding, the totals in tables do not always match the sum of parts.