



COVID-19 at workplaces, psychosocial work environment and health

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Background

- COVID-19 pandemic brought changes to work, work arrangements, and work environment.
- Prospective studies are needed to assess these changes, and their associations with psychosocial work environment and employee health.

Methods

- We followed a cohort of Finnish public sector employees using biennial survey data from 2016 to 2022 (n=22,688).
- Those who reported a change (working from, home, other tasks, or team reorganization) due to the pandemic in 2020 were compared to those who did not report such a change. Multilevel linear and logistic regression was applied.
- To examine the potential difference between the groups, time x group interaction was tested.

Main results

- Of the participants, 47% were transferred partially or totally to working from home, 7% to other tasks, and 5% reported that the work unit/team was reorganized.
- Working from home was associated with improved psychosocial environment, with a smaller decline of work ability and self-rated health compared to those who did not work from home.

Main results

- Physical inactivity was reduced among those who changed to working from home, but not among those who did not.
- The decline in work ability was larger among those who were transferred to other tasks than among those who were not. Those who were transferred to other tasks reported a decline in physical inactivity, whereas those who did not change tasks reported a small increase in physical inactivity.

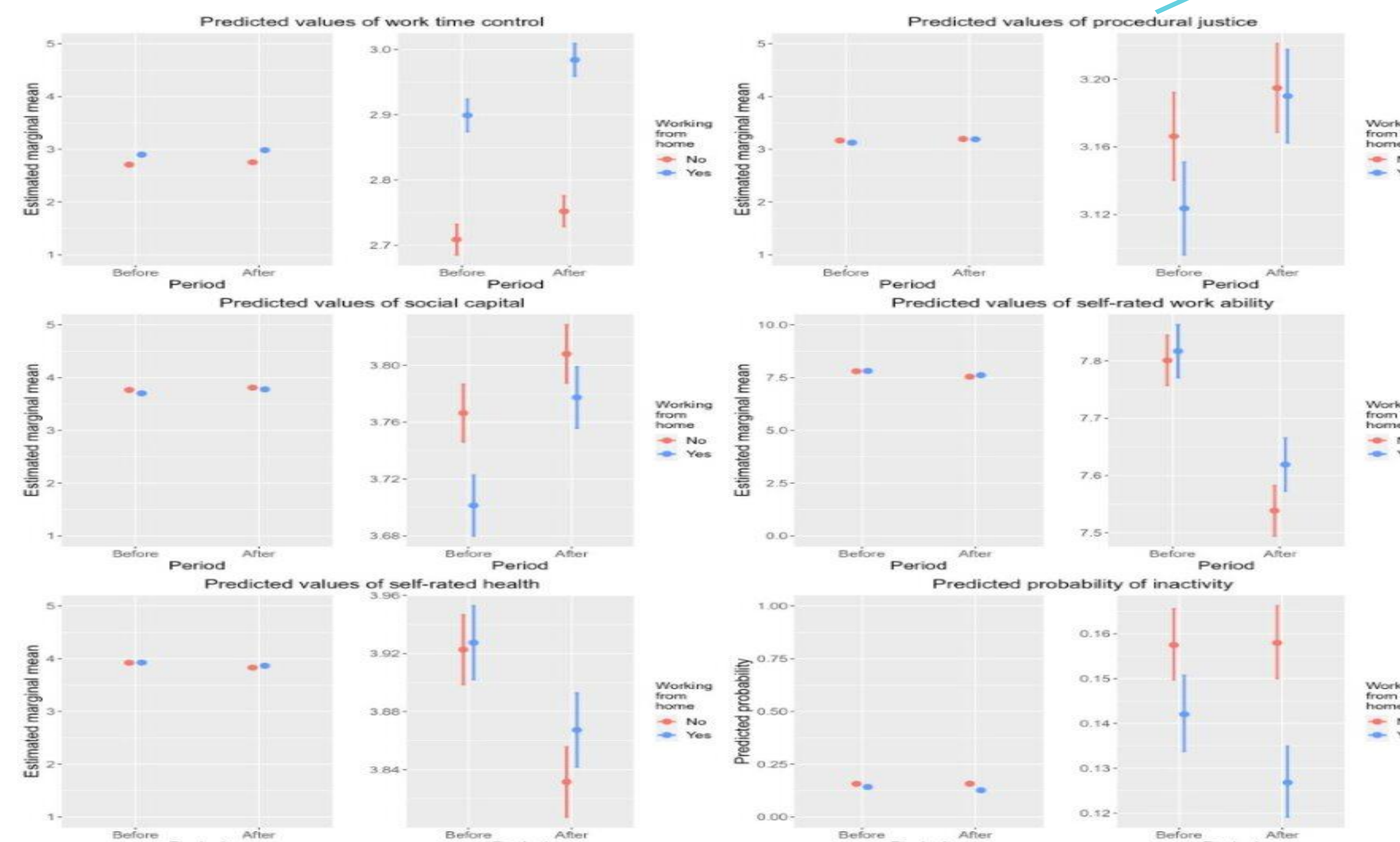


Figure 1. Adjusted means for outcome per year by change to working from home (statistically significant difference between groups).

Main results

- Those who went through team reorganization reported no change in work time control, while those who did not experience team reorganization reported a slight increase in work time control.

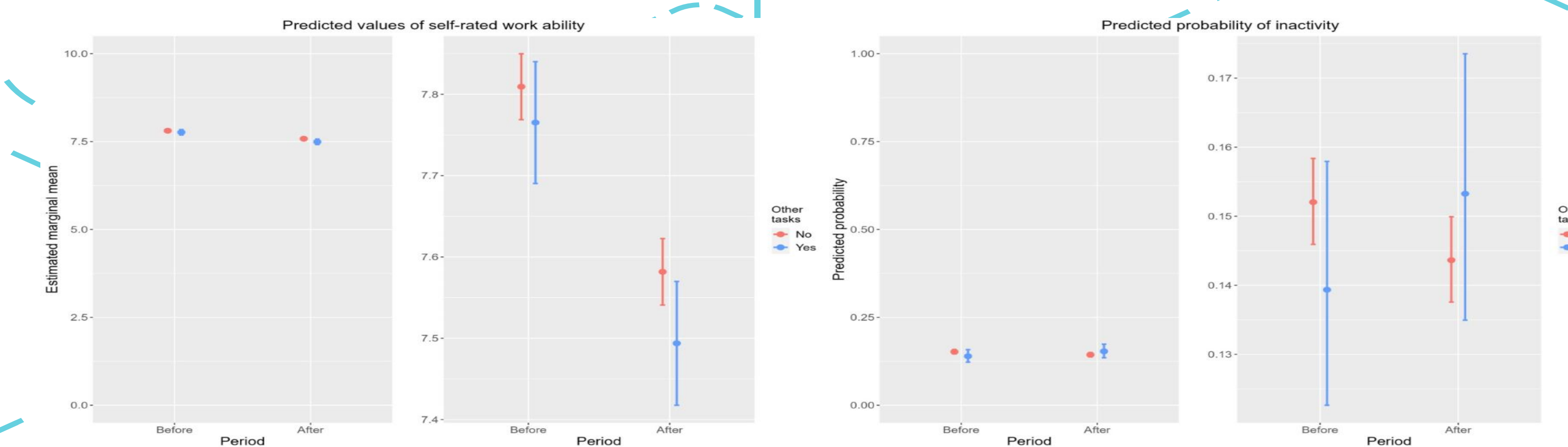


Figure 2. Adjusted means for outcome per year by reporting changes at work (statistically significant differences between groups).

Conclusions

- Working from home may protect from the negative impacts of the pandemic.
- Occupational health care and the management of organizations need to target preventive measures and support to increase the resilience of the vulnerable employee groups.