Performance, productivity and well-being outcomes in hybrid work

**Motivation and Performance session.
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*'Hybrid is something that is formed by
combining two or more things'*

BUT THE QUESTION IS:

What are these two or more things?

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Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetarskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund
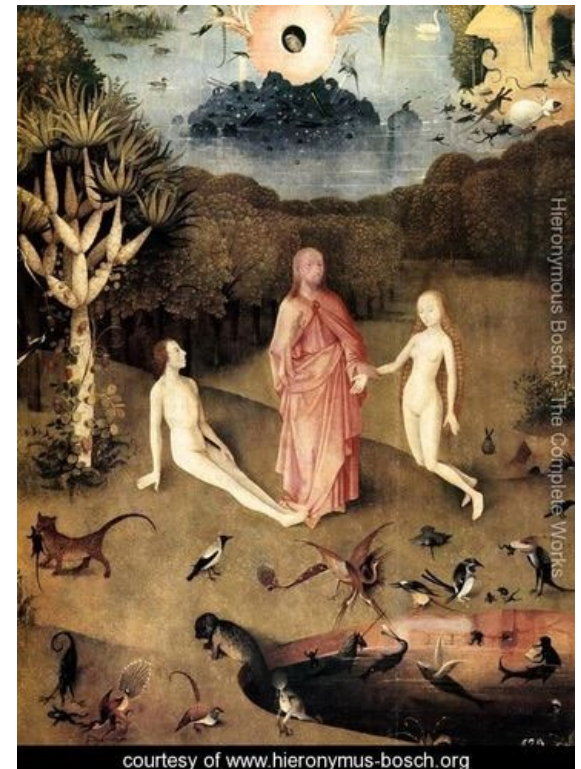
Background and research question

Prevalence of work-from-home globally

Globally WFH is highest in North America, UK and Australasia, then Europe, Latin America and South Africa and then Asia
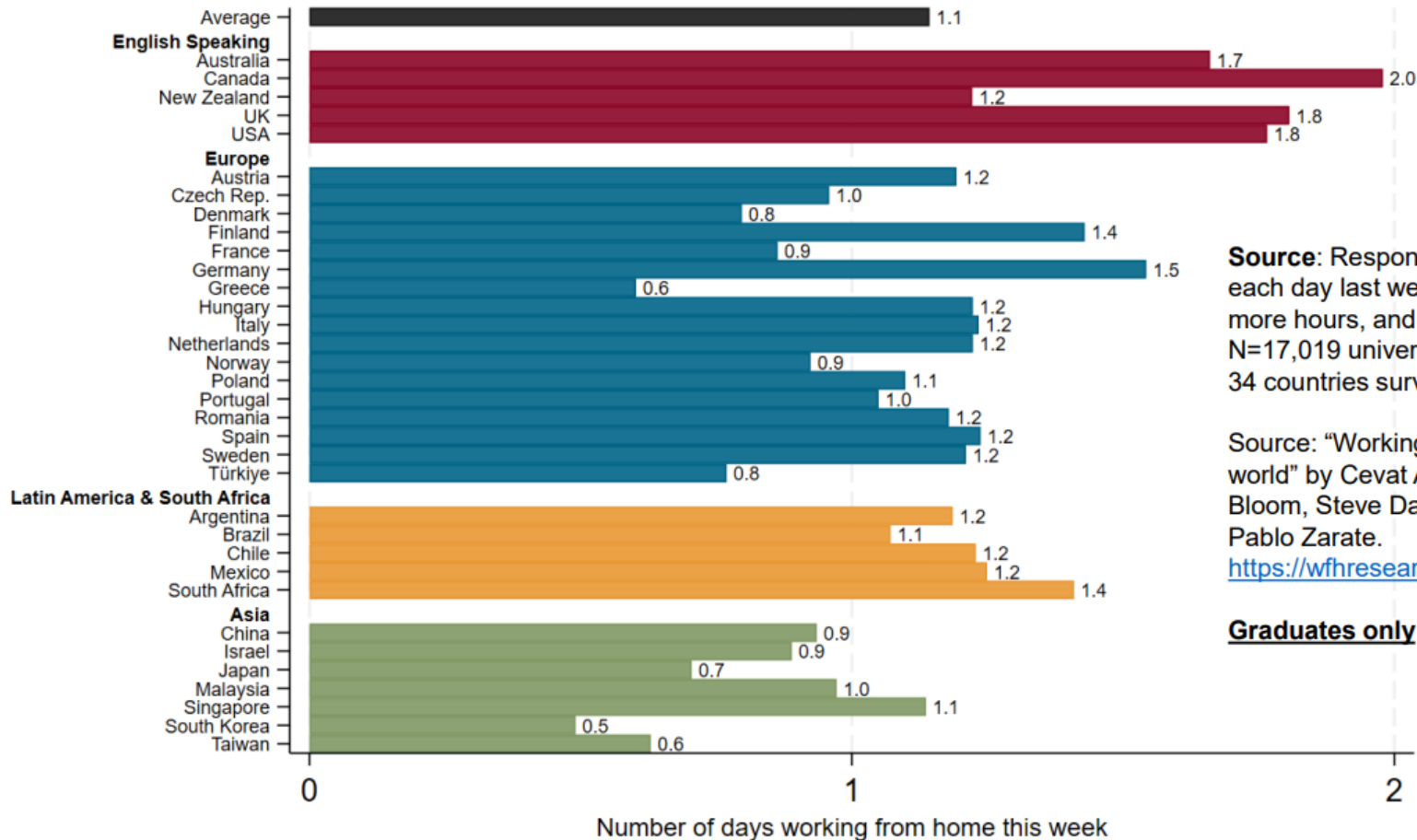
Source: Responses to the question "For each day last week, did you work 6 or more hours, and if so where?". Sample of N=17,019 university graduate workers in 34 countries surveyed in April-June 2023.

Source: "Working from home around the world" by Cevat Aksoy, Jose Barrero, Nick Bloom, Steve Davis, Mathias Dolls and Pablo Zarate.
https://wfhresearch.com/gswadata/

Graduates only

Back-to-the Office -movement

- **A landmark** of the debate on returning to the office, especially among large corporations, was the letter of Andy Jassy, CEO of Amazon, to the personnel on **16th September 2024**: "*... being better set up **to invent, collaborate,** and **be connected** enough to each other and **our culture** to **deliver the absolute best for customers and the business**, we've decided that we're going to return to being in the office the way we were before the onset of COVID.*"

- https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/company-news/ceo-andy-jassy-latest-update-on-amazon-return-to-office-manager-team-ratio
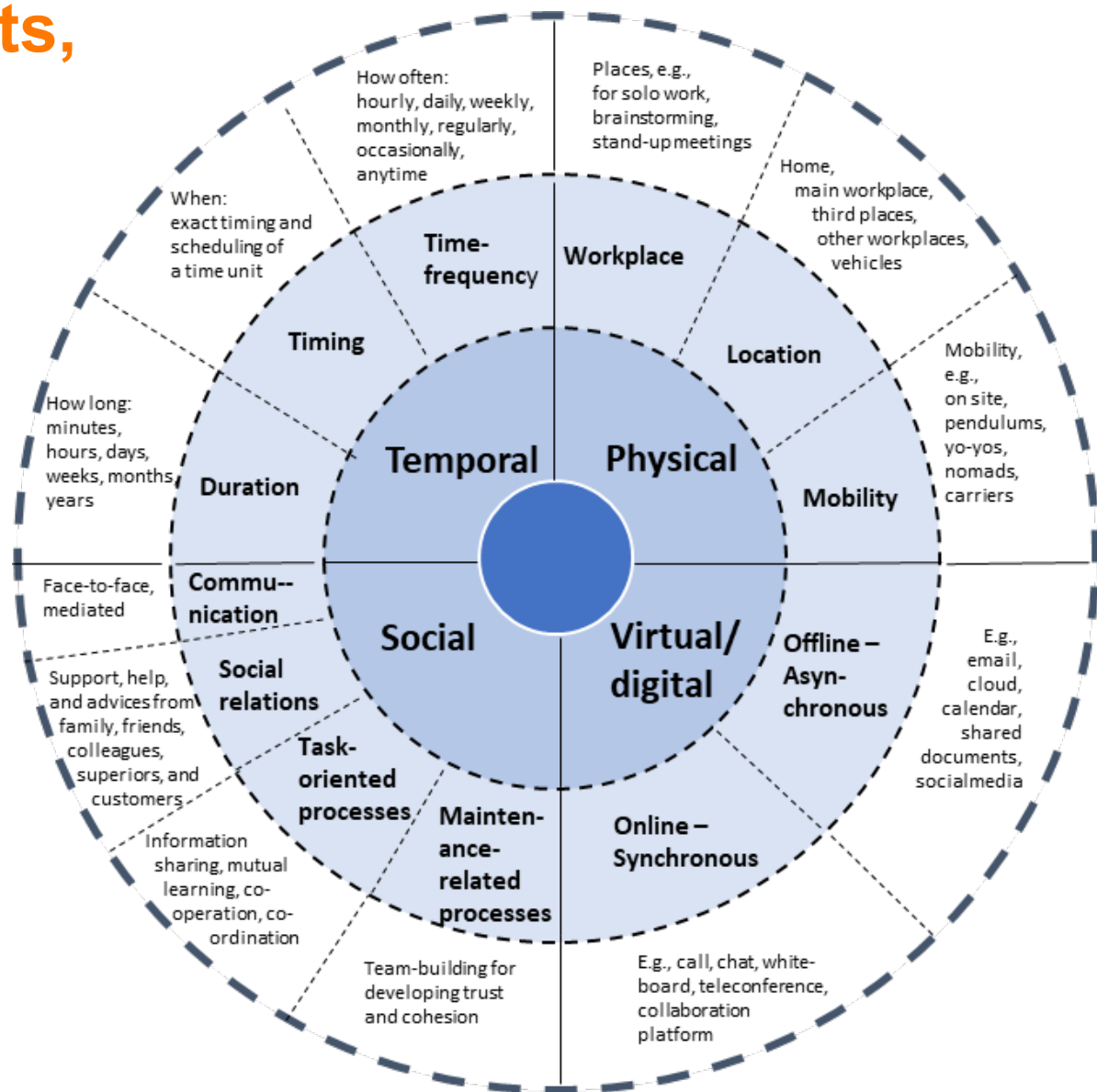
Research question (RQ)

- RQ: What are the potential performance and well-being outcomes of the various hybrid work (HW) types?

Basic concepts, data and its analysis, and findings

Basic concepts: What is hybrid work?

- **Remote and telework**: Traditionally, telework (telecommunting) is defined as an alternative work arrangement in which employees perform tasks elsewhere that are normally done in a primary or central workplace, using electronic media to interact with others inside and outside the organisation (e.g., Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).

- **Hybrid work (HW):** HW is a flexible combination of basic work elements and their sub-elements and features. Traditional remote work and telework are just specific forms of hybrid work (Vartiainen, 2024).

Basic elements, sub-elements and some designable features of hybrid work

Inner circle elements:
- Temporal
- Physical
- Social
- Virtual/digital

Temporal sub-elements:
- Time-frequency — How often: hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, regularly, occasionally, anytime
- Timing — When: exact timing and scheduling of a time unit
- Duration — How long: minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years

Physical sub-elements:
- Workplace — Places, e.g., for solo work, brainstorming, stand-up meetings
- Location — Home, main workplace, third places, other workplaces, vehicles
- Mobility — Mobility, e.g., on site, pendulums, yo-yos, nomads, carriers

Social sub-elements:
- Communication — Face-to-face, mediated
- Social relations — Support, help, and advices from family, friends, colleagues, superiors, and customers
- Task-oriented processes — Information sharing, mutual learning, co-operation, co-ordination
- Maintenance-related processes — Team-building for developing trust and cohesion

Virtual/digital sub-elements:
- Offline – Asynchronous — E.g., email, cloud, calendar, shared documents, socialmedia
- Online – Synchronous — E.g., call, chat, whiteboard, teleconference, collaboration platform

Basic concepts continues ….

- Well-being outcomes:
  - As a context-free, e.g., general quality of life, or as a domain-specific concept, e.g., work-related well-being, and
  - As an affective state or multi-dimensional construct (e.g., Taris and Schaufeli, 2015).
  - Health as a well-being indicator is often studied objectively

- Performance:
  - Process performance, i.e., what is done and how it is done, and
  - Outcome performance, i.e., whether these actions achieve the intended goal (Taris and Schaufeli, 2015, p. 21) = effectiveness!
  - Productivity is typically concerned with a ratio of output (O) and input (I).
  - Measured subjectively based on employees' perceptions of their performance, those of their colleagues, or the employer's assessment. An objective measurement relies on the actual outcomes of performance, i.e., the number and quality of concrete products or services.

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Data and its analysis

- Data: the potential well-being and performance outcomes were studied using a sample of prior systematic literature reviews (N=14, review articles k = more than 662) on remote and telework by doing **a meta-review**.

- Types of reviews: narrative reviews, systematic literature reviews, meta-analyses, and bibliometric analyses

- Analysis:
  - In each review: the objective or research question, the analysis method, including the number of types of data, measures of telework and well-being and performance outcomes, and the findings concerning them.
  - The impacts of intervening variables as mediators or moderators, e.g., autonomy, isolation, perceived autonomy, lower work-family conflict, etc., on outcomes.

Findings

- Positive well-being outcomes:
  - On the individual level were shown as job satisfaction (N = 6/14), reduced stress, strain, and exhaustion (N = 5/14), increased positive emotions, affective attitudes, work-related flow, and happiness (N = 5/14).
  - On the organisational level, positive well-being outcomes were seen in organisational commitment, work engagement, and support (3/14).
  - One review shows no effects on job satisfaction (Bailey and Kurland, 2002), while another has mixed but primarily negative well-being outcomes (Hill et al., 2022).

- Positive performance impacts:
  - Were noticed in organisational performance and productivity (N = 5/14) and supervisor-reported (N = 3/14), self-reported (N = 2/14), and objective (N = 2/14) performance.

Moderators' and mediators' impacts - examples

- Moderators:
  - **Well-being outcomes**: telecommuting experience and the frequency → lower role stress, lower work exhaustion, and sense of comfort, women → are more satisfied, family obligations decrease satisfaction, and, reduced commuting → lowers stress.
  - **Performance outcomes**: schedule flexibility, time saved on commuting → productivity inreases, raising children → negative productivity, women → supervisor-rated performance higher.

- Mediators:
  - **Well-being outcomes**: Isolation → decreases satisfaction, control of work (autonomy) → decreases stress, job satisfaction
 - **Performance outcomes**: the higher the life satisfaction, the higher the productivity.

Discussion and conclusions

Discussion: Controversial findings

- Almost all reviews informed about controversial outcomes and their reasons in addition to positive results. Similar limited evidence has been found in other systematic reviews (e.g., Crawford, 2022; Vleeshouwers et al., 2022).

- In practice, hybrid work—and remote and telework—are flexible configurations, as stated above. How they are arranged depends on the organization's purpose, task contents, object of work, contextual demands, and available resources, including employees' needs. It is evident that some critical work elements, sub-elements, or features have remained in shadow when designing the research settings:

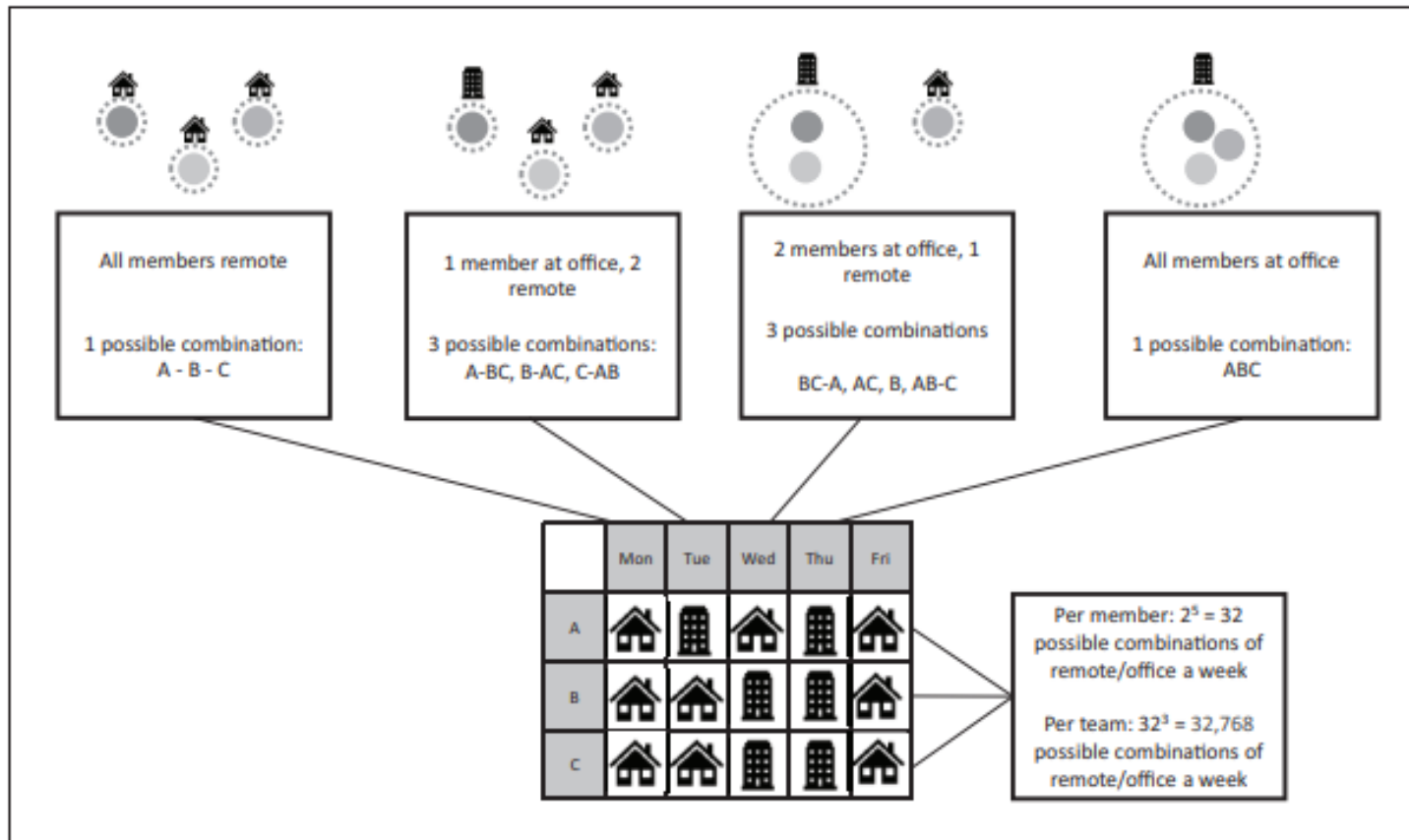 *"One research design does not fit all empirical studies."*

Challenges in defining HW: A basic understanding of hybrid work
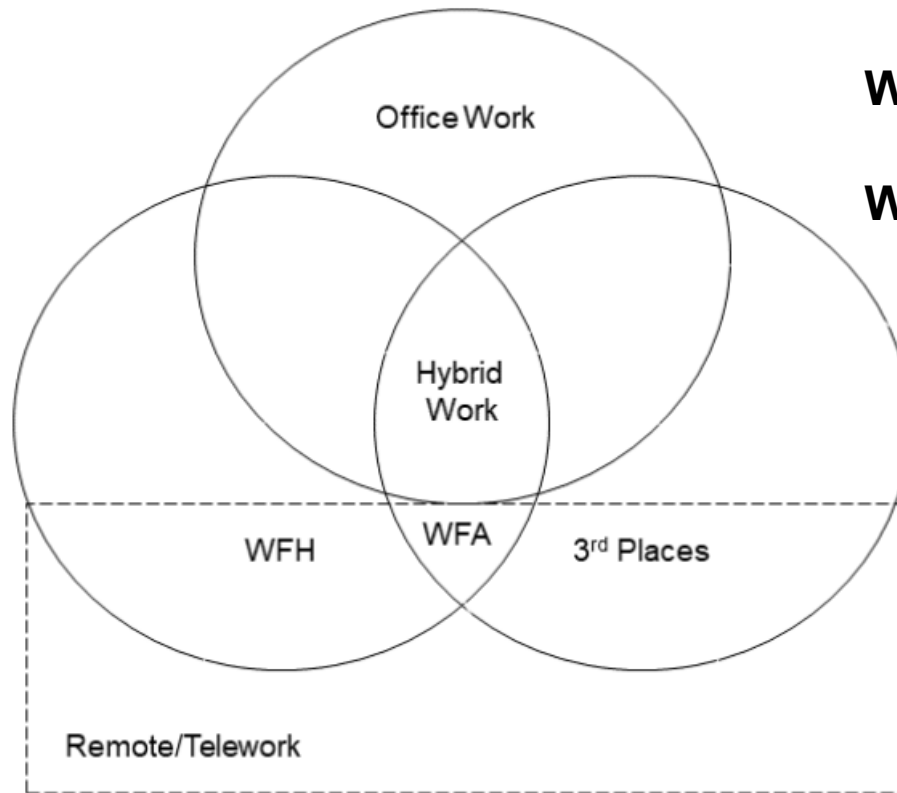
WFH = Work-from-Home

WFA = Work-from-Anywhere

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Challenges in defining hybrid teams: Example of a three-person hybrid team

An exemplary illustration of hybrid teamwork combinations in a three-person team over one work week. Note. **Grey circles** symbolise team members A, B, and C**. Dashed lines** indicate work sites, with **several grey circles surrounded by the same dashed line** representing co-location at the office.

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MORE TO READ

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