



3rd Report

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON

SOCIAL SERVICES AND

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

An Inquiry into the Impact of Work-from-Home and Alternative Work Arrangements, Policies and Initiatives on Public Sector Productivity and Service Delivery

SECOND SESSION (2021/2022) 12TH PARLIAMENT

OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

3rd REPORT

OF THE

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

ON

**AN INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF WORK-FROM-HOME AND
ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS, POLICIES AND INITIATIVES
ON PUBLIC SECTOR PRODUCTIVITY AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

Date Laid in the HoR:

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The Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration

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MEMBER



Mr. Rohan Sinanan
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Mr. Avinash Singh
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Mr. David Nakhid
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Committee Mandate and Establishment

- 1.1.1 Section 66 of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago declares that not later than three months after the first meeting of the House of Representatives, the Parliament shall appoint Joint Select Committees to inquire into and report to both Houses in respect of Government Ministries, Municipal Corporations, Statutory Authorities, State Enterprises and Service Commissions, in relation to their administration, the manner of exercise of their powers, their methods of functioning and any criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions.
- 1.1.2 Motions related to this purpose were passed in the House of Representatives and Senate on November 13 and 17, 2015, respectively and thereby established, *inter alia*, the ***Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration***.
- 1.1.3 Standing Order 91 of the Senate and 101 of the House of Representatives outline the general functions of a Committee of this nature. They are as follows:
- a) “To examine Bills and review all legislation relating to the relevant Ministries, departments or bodies or as may be referred to it by the House;
 - b) To investigate, inquire into, and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management, activities, administration and operations of the assigned Ministries, departments or bodies;
 - c) To study the programme and policy objectives of Ministries, departments or bodies and the effectiveness of the implementation of such programmes and policy objectives;
 - d) To assess and monitor the performance of Ministries, Departments and bodies and the manner of the exercise of their powers;
 - e) To investigate and inquire into all matters relating to the assigned Ministries, Departments and bodies as they may deem necessary, or as may be referred to them by the House or a Minister; and
 - f) To make reports and recommendations to the House as often as possible, including recommendations for proposed legislation.”

Powers of the Joint Select Committee

1.1.4 Standing Orders 101 of the Senate and 111 of the House of Representatives outline the core powers of the Committee which include *inter alia*:

- to send for persons, papers and records;
- to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the Senate;
- to adjourn from place to place;
- to report from time to time;
- to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not otherwise readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's or Sub-Committee's order of reference;
- to communicate with any Committee of Parliament on matters of common interest; and
- to meet concurrently with any other Committee for the purpose of deliberating, taking evidence or considering draft reports.

Membership

1.1.5 The Committee comprises the following members:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Mr. Paul Richards | Chairman |
| 2. Mr. Roger Munroe, MP | Vice-Chairman |
| 3. Mr. Esmond Forde, MP | Member |
| 4. Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP | Member |
| 5. Mr. Rohan Sinanan | Member |
| 6. Ms. Penelope Beckles | Member |
| 7. Mr. David Nakhid | Member |
| 8. Mr. Avinash Singh | Member |

Change in Membership

1.1.6 The following changes were made to the Committee:

- (i) Mr. Avinash Singh was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Ms. Allyson West with effect from January 12th, 2022

(ii) Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh, MP with effect from November 12th, 2021.

Secretariat Support

1.1.7 The following officers were assigned to assist the Committee:

1. Mr. Julien Ogilvie - Secretary
2. Mr. Brian Lucio - Assistant Secretary
3. Ms. Aaneesa Baksh - Researcher
4. Ms. Nicole Brown - Researcher

ABBREVIATIONS

MPA	Ministry of Public Administration
MDT	Ministry of Digital Transformation
MPD	Ministry of Planning and Development
WFH	Work from Home

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1.1. At its 7th meeting held on November 17th 2021, the Committee resolved to inquire into the impact of Work-from-Home and alternative work arrangements, policies and initiatives on public sector Productivity and Service Delivery. The Committee agreed on the following inquiry objectives:

1. **To examine the types of Work-from-Home and Hybrid policies and arrangements utilised in the public service in Trinidad and Tobago during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions;**
2. **To assess the methods used to design, deploy monitor and evaluate/measure work output/ employee deliverables of public sector employees;**
3. **To evaluate the efficiency of service delivery and infrastructural provisions in key ministries that utilise Work-from-Home and hybrid arrangements; and**
4. **To examine the feasibility of implementing Work from Home arrangements in the Public Sector as a (hybrid) working option.**

2.1.2. The Committee acquired both oral and written evidence based on the objectives listed above. Oral evidence was received during one (1) public hearing held with various stakeholders (*See Appendix I*) on February 16, 2022. The Committee also conducted a survey of Ministries, Departments, Municipal Corporations and State Enterprises to assess their experiences with Work from Home arrangements during the Covid-19 restrictions. A summary of the survey findings is provided in this report. The Complete survey report can be found at **Appendix II**.

2.1.3. Some of the significant issues highlighted during the inquiry were:

- i. Use of digital technology as a tool for Human Resource Management;

- ii. The critical requirements for the successful implementation of WFH arrangements in the public sector environment
 - iii. Tools used to assess the Work from Home experience;
 - iv. Public Service Productivity and Service Delivery during Work from Home period;
 - v. Status Update on the Ministry of Planning and Development's Public Sector Work from Home Policy;
 - vi. Information security and data protection while engaging in Work from Home arrangements;
 - vii. Benefits and drawbacks of Work from Home arrangements;
 - viii. The impact of job design and work responsibilities on the feasibility of engaging in alternative work arrangements such as WFH; and
 - ix. The impact of WFH arrangements on Terms and Conditions of Employment.
- 2.1.4. The Committee looks forward to reviewing the Minister's response to this Report, which becomes due, sixty (60) days after it is presented to the Houses of Parliament.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

OBJECTIVE 1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- A. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Digital Transformation should provide the Committee with an update on the results achieved thus far in the 2021/2022 fiscal year in relation to projects and initiatives aimed at digitising the Public Service.
- B. The Ministry of Planning and Development, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of Digital Transformation should develop a Business Continuity Plan for the Public Service that includes formal policies for Work from Home and Alternative Work arrangements to be used during emergencies, natural disasters, pandemics and other extraordinary circumstances which may restrict employees being physically present in office.
- C. The Committee commends the level of investment in Digital Transformation by the Ministry of Planning and Development. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Planning and Development should provide a breakdown of expenditure from the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) toward digital transformation for fiscal years 2019/2020, 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

OBJECTIVE 2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- A. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Public Administration should provide an update on the reassessment of the eHRM (Electronic Human Resource Management) system.
- B. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Labour should provide an update on the National Productivity Council's assessment of Public Sector Productivity.
- C. The Ministry of Digital Transformation should develop guidelines for Ministries and Departments on how to use Digital Technology to improve employee performance management.

- D. Given that some MDAs were unable to gauge or measure employee productivity, the Ministry of Digital Transformation in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Administration should develop a standardised system for measuring and monitoring employee productivity.
- E. In light of the finding that the majority of State Entities surveyed reported that employees were able to work just as effectively from home, the Chief Personal Officer (Personnel Department) should provide an update to the Parliament on its reclassification exercise inclusive of its assessment of Public Sector jobs that can be done from home.

OBJECTIVE 3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- A. The Ministry of Planning and Development in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Labour should develop standardised benchmarks to measure Service Delivery in the Public Sector.
- B. As part of its Ministerial response, the Ministry of Digital Transformation should provide an update on its plans to assess the use of technology to improve service delivery across the public service.

OBJECTIVE 4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- A. As Part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Planning and Development should provide the Committee with a progress report on its National Work from Home Policy.
- B. The Ministry of Planning and Development is welcome to review the findings of the JSC Social Services and Public Administration’s survey on the Public Sector Experience to supplement its research. The complete report can be found at Appendix II.
- C. The Ministry of Planning and Development should conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine how a Work from Home Policy could provide cost savings to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.
- D. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer should provide an update on the process of evaluating Civil Service positions, inclusive of the assessment of which jobs can be done remotely.

- A. The Committee endorses the Recommendations of the Ministry of Planning and Development with regard to interim WFH policy guidelines. These recommendations can be found on **page 32** of the MPD's Work from Home Policy Guidelines for the Civil Service of Trinidad and Tobago, which can be found at **Appendix III, page 122 of this report.**

INTRODUCTION

Work from Home Arrangement as a Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

- 3.1.1. The Covid-19 Pandemic has brought with it several lifestyle adjustments. One of the measures used across the globe to circumvent the restrictions imposed on person-to-person interaction has been the implementation of Work-from-Home (WFH) arrangements. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), WFH is “a working arrangement in which a worker fulfils the essential responsibilities of his/her job while remaining at home, using information and communications technology (ICT).”¹ These measures allow for business continuity and job retention while reducing the potential of exposure to the coronavirus.
- 3.1.2. Other terms used interchangeably with Work-from-Home include *Teleworking*, *Telecommuting* and *Remote Work*. However, WFH is specific to work done from the employee’s home. The other terms can refer to work done from any location outside of the official work location.²
- 3.1.3. With the first case of Covid-19 recorded in Trinidad and Tobago on March 12, 2020, the Government instituted various public health measures to curtail the spread of the virus. Some of these measures included closing schools, reducing the passenger load of public transportation operators and reducing the size of public gatherings. Another major change implemented included stay-at-home orders, which were issued in varying degrees to limit person-to-person interaction. As a result of these stay-at-home orders, several organisations in both the Public and Private Sectors implemented Work-from-Home and Alternative Work Arrangements wherever possible.
- 3.1.4. With the initial relaxation of the Stay-at-Home orders, the full Public Sector returned to work in October 2020. However, in April of 2021, Trinidad and Tobago experienced a

¹ International Labour organization, *An employers’ guide on working from home in response to the outbreak of Covid-19*, 5

² *Ibid.*

rising number of Covid-19 cases and deaths. As such, several public health measures that had been rescinded were reinstated. Public Servants returned to a rotational system in April 2021. By May 2021, only essential Public Service employees were required to remain in the workplace and WFH measures were recommended for employees whose jobs permitted such an arrangement.

3.1.5. As a result of the ever-evolving changes elicited by the Covid-19 pandemic, consideration has been given by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to implementing an official Work-from-Home policy. The Minister of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, Senator Allyson West indicated in her 2020/2021 National Budget address that **“Work from Home is something that is here to stay and...it is something that should be encouraged.”**³ She acknowledged that though the WFH measures were instituted as part of the Government’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, these arrangements had the potential for continuation upon return to “normal life.”⁴ She noted that WFH has a “positive impact on families”⁵ and has the possibility to improve the relationship between parents and children if “parents work from home some days of the week.”⁶ The Minister also mentioned that her **Ministry will “work with the Minister of Labour to develop a national remote work policy.”**⁷

3.1.6. Plans for an official Work from Home Policy were reiterated in 2021 by the Minister of Planning and Development, Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis. She indicated that the Ministry of Planning and Development has “commenced the process for the development of a national Work from Home policy” and has intentions of hiring a consultant “to undertake the project.”⁸ The Central Statistical Office has provided data which shows “small but

³ Office of the Parliament Trinidad and Tobago Hansard: Appropriation Bill, 2020, 92 <http://www.ttparliament.org/hansards/hs20201023.pdf>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ <https://newsday.co.tt/2021/07/25/government-explores-work-from-home-policy/>

notable increases in productivity during work from home periods.”⁹ However, the statistics are not yet sufficient to inform data-driven policies.

- 3.1.7. Trinidad and Tobago does not currently have any legal framework to govern Work-From Home policies. However, based on the current unpredictable environment surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic and anticipation that other pandemics will take place in the future, there is a need to formalise the Government’s position on WFH measures, particularly for Public Sector employees. The ever-present threat of future pandemics was highlighted by a June 2020 BBC article, which stated that there have been six major virus threats in the past 20 years- SARS, MERS, Ebola, Avian Influenza, Swine Flu and the coronavirus responsible for Covid-19. Of all these viruses identified as threats, the coronavirus responsible for Covid-19 has had the most devastating impact on the human population.¹⁰
- 3.1.8. Given concerns expressed by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago “that weak management had allowed the situation (the rotational and WFH arrangements) to grow out of control, resulting in a situation where some workers were just not bothering to come out to work, and that there was a general free for all,”¹¹ **this inquiry seeks to evaluate how Public Sector WFH arrangements impacted both productivity and service delivery during the Government-mandated Covid-19 restrictions in Trinidad and Tobago for the period March 2020- September 2021.**

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-52775386>

¹¹ https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/pm-eases-some-restrictions-blowout-for-public-servant-slackers/article_5820dd8a-0b2c-11eb-8681-2bf803c9e0ad.html

Timeline of Stay-at-Home Measures in Trinidad and Tobago

Date	Announcement Made
March 26, 2020:	The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago announced, “ <i>during a post Cabinet press conference in Port of Spain that non-essential workers were to stay home from March 30 to April 15th.</i> ” ¹² As a result of this proclamation, several employees from both the private and public sectors were placed on WFH arrangements wherever possible. However, no formal WFH policy was implemented at the governmental level. Essential workers included those involved in the health sector, financial services sector, emergency and protective services, Parliament, media and public utilities. ¹³
April 6, 2020:	The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago “announced in a Press Conference in Port of Spain that the Stay at Home Order that was initially to end on April 15 was extended until April 30. ” ¹⁴
April 25, 2020:	“At a media conference hosted by Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, it was announced that the-stay-at-home order would be extended to May 15. ” ¹⁵
May 30, 2020:	The Prime Minister announced that as of June 1, 2020, all public service managers were required to be at work full-time. Subordinate workers were required to report to work on a rotational basis until further notice. ¹⁶

¹² https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/non-essential-workers-stay-home/article_2207a2da-8b46-11ea-9299-6b3a93f21586.html

¹³ https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/national-security-minister-identifies-essential-services/article_8436cca6-8b46-11ea-b581-631bdbd6f152.html

¹⁴ https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/pm-rowley-stay-at-home-order-extended-until-april-30/article_3ed1a340-8b49-11ea-9f37-b3f0f8997555.html

¹⁵ https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/stay-at-home-order-extended/article_ee35f2e0-91f8-11ea-aa2c-436e7ba08772.html

¹⁶ <https://newsday.co.tt/2020/05/30/retail-stores-malls-reopen-public-servants-back-to-work-on-monday/>

July 31, 2020:	The Prime Minister announced that the Public Service would be asked to reduce the number of public servants in office at any one time through rotation for the subsequent 14 days
October 10, 2020:	The Prime Minister announced that Public Service should continue to operate on a 50% rotation basis
October 24, 2020:	The Prime Minister Announced that the Public Service was required to return to 100% capacity with effect from Monday October 26, 2020 with the understanding that protocols regarding congregation and sanitisation would be observed.
October 30, 2020:	Circular Memorandum 4 of 2020 was issued by the Chief Personnel Office (CPO). The document indicated that public servants were expected to return to office at 100% capacity and reiterated the Prime Minister’s appeal for proper monitoring and oversight of staff attendance and service delivery to the public during the pandemic.
May 7, 2021:	Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Stewart Young announced that as of midnight on May 8, 2021, “persons should not be in the workplace unless they are part of essential services, and even in those services, work from home is encouraged where possible.” ¹⁷

¹⁷ TTT Live Online Press Conference Summary, <https://www.facebook.com/tttliveonline/posts/10159064794160610>

Conduct of the Inquiry

3.1.9. Prior to the commencement of the public hearings, the Committee issued invitations to specific stakeholders and requested written submissions based on the following objectives:

1. **To examine the types of Work-from-Home and Hybrid policies and arrangements utilised in the public service in Trinidad and Tobago during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions;**
2. **To assess the methods used to design, deploy monitor and evaluate/measure work output/ employee deliverables of public sector employees;**
3. **To evaluate the efficiency of service delivery and infrastructural provisions in key ministries that utilise Work-from-Home and hybrid arrangements;**
4. **To examine the feasibility of implementing Work from Home arrangements in the Public Sector as a (hybrid) working option.**

3.1.10. Evidence gathering for this inquiry included **one (1) public hearings** held with the stakeholders listed below on **February 16, 2022**.

- Ministry of Public Administration
- Ministry of Planning and Development
- Ministry of Digital Transformation
- Chief Personnel Department

3.1.11. Subsequent to these public hearings, additional information was requested from specific stakeholders and was submitted accordingly.

- 3.1.12. Oral and written submissions received from the entities appearing before the Committee provided a frame of reference for the Committee's deliberations on the subject inquiry.
- 3.1.13. The Committee also designed a survey to assess the Public Sector experience with Work from Home and Alternative Work Arrangements for the period March 2020-September 2021 and sent the survey to all Government Ministries, all Divisions of the Tobago House of Assembly, all Municipal Corporations and select State Enterprises and Statutory Authorities.
- 3.1.14. This survey was conducted during the period December 6, 2021- January 14, 2022. Both qualitative and quantitative questions were asked.
- 3.1.15. Requests were sent to 66 entities and responses were received from 58 entities. This translated to a response rate of 87.87%.
- 3.1.16. Of the responses received, 36.21% were Government Ministries, 6.90% were Divisions of the THA, 18.97% were Municipal Corporations, 17.24% were statutory bodies and 20% were State Enterprises.
- 3.1.17. The **Minutes of the Meetings** during which the public hearings were held are attached as **Appendix IV** and the **Verbatim Notes** as **Appendix V**. The complete Work from Home survey report has been attached as **Appendix II**.

KEY ISSUES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OBJECTIVE 1: To examine the types of Work-from-Home and Hybrid policies and arrangements utilised in the public service in Trinidad and Tobago during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

Situational analysis of Work from Home arrangements utilised during the pandemic

- 4.1.1. According to a written submission from the Ministry of Planning and Development, prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Work-from-Home in the civil service was being considered at the level of the Board of Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments in response to concerns over loss of productivity relating to traffic congestion, work-life balance and workers' physical and mental health and their impact on public service delivery.
- 4.1.2. In response to the issues outlined by the Ministry of Planning and Development in a written submission, a subcommittee of the Board of Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments was established to develop a Work-from Home initiative to improve performance in public services delivery.
- 4.1.3. The Ministry of Planning and Development's submission further stated that the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the ensuing mitigation measures employed by the Government, including remote work in the civil service for non-essential services, served to accelerate the need for and urgency of a Work-from Home policy in the Public Service.
- 4.1.4. The Ministry of Planning and Development shared with the Committee that a survey it issued to Public Service employees indicated that 82% of respondents (853 out of 1,068) stated that they were able to work from home during the pandemic. The reasons given for not being able to work from home mainly focused on lack of digital records and lack of remote access to official databases.
- 4.1.5. Jobs in the manipulative class of the establishment such as Messenger, Maid and Driver are unable to be done from home.

- 4.1.6. The MPA stated that Work from Home is not a right. Rather, it is a mechanism to allow the work of the organisation to continue within the context of jobs that are able to be done remotely.

Role of Digital Transformation in Facilitating WFH/ Alternative Work Arrangements

- 4.1.7. According to the Ministry of Planning and Development, the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the incorporation of ICT not only to deliver services to customers online, but also to streamline and modernise processes for efficiency gains and to accommodate Work-from-Home policies.
- 4.1.8. Based on the Ministry of Planning and Development's written submission, the Committee learnt that in Fiscal Year 2021/2022, a total allocation of \$34.064 million, which is 8.17% of the Public Sector Investment Programme, was put towards Digital Transformation projects and programmes, spread across all Ministries and Departments.
- 4.1.9. Based on information provided by the Ministry of Public Administration, Work from Home has the possibility to contribute to modernising of the Public Service.
- 4.1.10. The Ministry of Public Administration instituted a system whereby phone calls made to the office were forwarded to employees' cellular phones during the Work from Home period. The ministry did not receive any complaints regarding staff using personal phones for work-related/ customer service calls.

Security of Information

4.1.11. During the Public Hearing held on February 16, 2022, the Ministry of Digital Transformation noted the following protocols, policies and best practices regarding information security within the Public Sector:

- a. Employees are expected to keep information confidential.
- b. Methods to protect confidentiality of documents accessed by employees include signing of Nondisclosure Agreements/Confidentiality Agreements.
- c. Employees needing to access information remotely should do so via a Virtual Private Network (VPN).
- d. There are existing consequences to Public Sector Employees for disclosure of confidential information whether this information is accessed from digital or paper-based sources.
- e. If employees are using shared devices, the Ministry of Digital Transformation recommends that they should set up a unique, password-protected profile that is inaccessible to other members of the household.

4.1.12. The Telecommunication Amendment Bill is currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Digital transformation and will be forwarded to the Office of the Attorney General. This Bill will include provisions for electronic transactions.

JSC on Social Services and Public Administration Survey Findings Relevant to Objective 1

4.1.13. Survey questions and responses relevant to Objective 1 have been outlined below. For the complete survey report, please see **Appendix II**.

4.1.14. In response to the survey question, “*what types of work arrangements were used during the period identified?*” the most frequently reported arrangements used were a Partial Work-from-Home Arrangement, Rotational Arrangement and Staggered Working Hours.

4.1.15. The most common assistance given to employees in order to facilitate working from home was computer equipment (32 entities), followed by mobile phones (19 entities). However, there were 27 entities that reported that no assistance was given.

4.1.16. In response to the question “*How did the transition of services to digital platforms impact work arrangements?*”

- a. **81.03%** of respondents indicated that digital platforms facilitated employees being able to work from home **partially**;
- b. **5.17%** of respondents indicated that digital platforms facilitated employees being able to work from home **exclusively**;
- c. **13.79%** of respondents indicated that **digital platforms did not have an impact** on employees being able to work from home as these digital platforms were utilized in the office setting.

4.1.17. In response to the question “*what are the main factors and circumstances which hampered the transition to WFH or alternative work arrangements?*” the most frequently mentioned challenges were ranked as follows:

- a. Insufficient technical or financial resources (42 instances);
- b. inability to access files and documents (23 instances); and
- c. the nature of work not being conducive to working from home (16 instances).

4.1.17.1. A tabular representation of responses to this question is outlined below:

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
1. Little or no challenges experienced:	8
2. Limited experience with technology:	9
3. Insufficient Technical or Financial Resources	42
4. Performance Management Issues	12
5. Job tasks not able to be done from home	16

6.	Communication Issues	1
7.	Lack of Clear policy directives on alternative work arrangements	7
8.	Accessibility issues/unable to access documents	23
9.	Lack of Work/Life Balance	1
10.	Mental Health Challenges	1
11.	Employees being in quarantine and/or testing positive for Covid-19	2

Findings

Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee's findings are as follows:

- i. Public Sector Entities had mixed experiences with Work from Home Arrangements/Alternative Work Arrangements during the pandemic;
- ii. While some experienced little or no challenges with these arrangements, others were not able to adapt as quickly. Other entities were unable to implement WFH or Alternative Work Arrangements due to the nature of the work carried out;
- iii. A major predictor for the success of Work from Home and Alternative Work Arrangements was the level of ICT infrastructure and systems available. Entities with higher levels of ICT resources were better able to implement successful work from home arrangements.
- iv. The ability to adapt to WFH or alternative work arrangements depended on the following variables:
 - Nature of work to be done/services provided to the public
 - Degree of digitization of processes and documents
 - Family situation of employees
 - Home Environment and its suitability for work
 - Level of competence of staff in using digital platforms
 - Level of confidentiality required by the organization in handling documents

- Degree to which the organization was able to provide technical and other support to facilitate working from home
- v. Given the unprecedented nature and sudden onset of the pandemic, Work from Home policies were not standardised across the public sector and each State entity developed its own policies and procedures for Work from Home;
- vi. Within entities, the experience with WFH arrangements varied depending on the department. Some departments were able to continue operating under a WFH/ alternative work arrangement while others were not;
- vii. The jobs least conducive to work from home arrangements were jobs in the manipulative class. Jobs that were more conducive to work from home were jobs in the technical and administrative classes;
- viii. While individual entities were able to provide information on the Work from Home policies utilised during the pandemic, documentation of the macro-level Public Sector experience is limited.

Recommendations

Considering the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:

- A. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Digital Transformation should provide the Committee with an update on the results achieved thus far in the 2021/2022 fiscal year in relation to projects and initiatives aimed at digitising the Public Service.**
- B. The Ministry of Planning and Development, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of Digital Transformation should develop Business Continuity Plan for the Public Service that includes formal policies for Work from Home and Alternative Work arrangements to be used during emergencies, natural disasters, pandemics and other extraordinary circumstances which may restrict employees being physically present in office.**
- C. The Committee commends the level of investment in Digital Transformation by the Ministry of Planning and Development. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Planning and Development should provide a breakdown of expenditure from the**

Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) toward digital transformation for fiscal years 2019/2020, 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

OBJECTIVE 2: To assess the methods used to design, deploy monitor and evaluate/measure work output/ employee deliverables of public sector employees.

Human Resource Management Software

- 4.1.18. The Committee learnt during the February 6, 2022 Public Hearing that the Ministry of Public Administration utilises a PeopleSoft-based Electronic Human Resource Management (eHRM) system called IRIS.
- 4.1.19. IRIS was implemented in 1999/2000 and has been primarily used for payroll administration. However, the full functionality of the software has not been utilised.
- 4.1.20. The IRIS system was previously assessed by a consultant. The consultant found that there is a need for change management to improve acceptance and optimal utilisation of the system within the public Service.
- 4.1.21. The Ministry of Public Administration noted the following requirements for improving the eHRM system:
- a. There is still a need for broad-based training in the use of the eHRM system.
 - b. There is also a need for manual systems to be integrated with electronic systems.
 - c. There is also a need to evaluate whether other software systems are better suited for use in the Public Service.
- 4.1.22. There is no specific timeline established for completing an assessment of the eHRM system. However, this assessment is included in the PSIP for 2022.
- 4.1.23. The Ministry of Public Administration indicated that while digitisation is not a panacea for monitoring staff, it has the potential to alleviate some of the challenges associated with productivity.

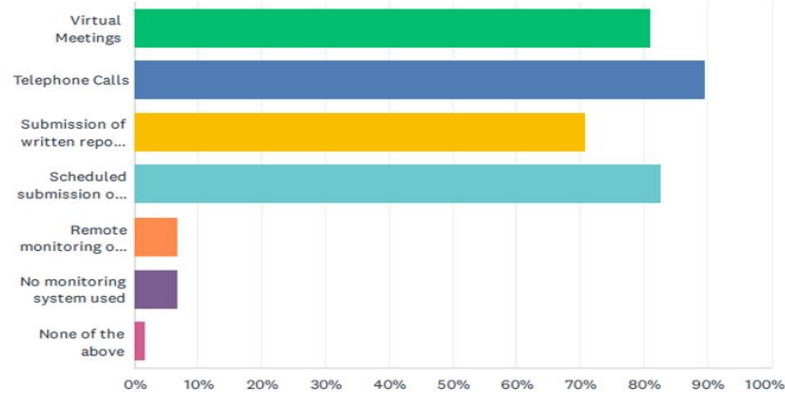
Evaluating Productivity during the WFH period

- 4.1.24. The National Productivity Council, which falls under the Ministry of Labour, is engaged in a process to analyse Public Sector Productivity.

- 4.1.25. According to the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA), the view that there is low productivity and poor service delivery in the Public Service has not been substantiated by data.
- 4.1.26. The MPA stated that there must be baseline studies to determine the level of productivity and output in the public service. When baseline figures have been established, then there can be an evaluation of the impact of WFH on Public Service productivity and service delivery.
- 4.1.27. According to the Personnel Department, the current performance evaluation system measures individual productivity but not organisational productivity.
- 4.1.28. The Personnel Department also indicated that individual evaluations focus on technical competence but not behavioural competence. There is a need to include behavioural indicators when evaluating performance.

JSC Social Services and Public Administration Survey Findings Relevant to Objective 2

- 4.1.29. Survey questions and responses relevant to Objective 2 have been outlined below. For the complete survey report, please see **Appendix II**.
- 4.1.30. In response to the question “*What system was used to monitor employee productivity during the work-from-home period?*” the most frequent responses were Telephone Calls, Scheduled submission of completed deliverables and virtual meetings. A graphical representation of responses to this question is outlined below:



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Virtual Meetings	81.03% 47
Telephone Calls	89.66% 52
Submission of written reports on tasks completed	70.69% 41
Scheduled submission of completed deliverables	82.76% 48
Remote monitoring of employee computers/electronic devices	6.90% 4
No monitoring system used	6.90% 4
None of the above	1.72% 1
Total Respondents: 58	

4.1.31. In response to the question “*what were the main challenges encountered in attempting to monitor employee productivity during the WFH period?*” the most frequently mentioned challenges related to Management Issues, Technical Issues and Communication Issues. A tabular representation of responses to this question is outlined below:

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
Little or no challenges experienced	6
Low levels of technological competence among staff	4
Technical Difficulties	22
Management Issues	29
Nature of Work Issues	3
Communication Issues	16
Accessibility Issues	7

Lack of work/life balance	6
Social isolation	3
Employees being in quarantine and/or testing positive for Covid-19	2

4.1.32. In response to the question “*How has employee productivity been affected by WFH or alternative work arrangements?*,” the responses were as follows:

- 46.55% of respondents indicated that productivity remained the same;
- 10.34% of respondents indicated that productivity increased;
- 34.48% of entities indicated that productivity decreased;
- 8.62% were uncertain about how productivity was affected by WFH or alternative work arrangements.

4.1.33. In response to the request to “*choose the statement that applies best to your organisation for the period March 2020-September,*” the responses were as follows:

- a. 60.34% of respondents indicated that most employees who worked from home did so just as effectively as when they worked at their assigned place of work;
- b. 34.48% of respondents indicated that most employees who worked from home did so less effectively than when they worked from their assigned place of work;
- c. 5.1% of respondents indicated that most employees who worked from home did so more effectively than when they worked from their assigned place of work.

4.1.34. Digital technology played a major role in monitoring staff performance in only 39.66% of entities. Technology played a moderate role in monitoring staff performance in 25.86% of entities surveyed, a minor role in 22.41% and no role in 12.07% of respondents

4.1.35. WhatsApp and Zoom were the most popular platforms utilised to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on employee productivity.

Findings

Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee’s findings are as follows:

- i. In the area of productivity, the majority of entities reported that productivity remained the same during the WFH period, when added to the percentage of entities that reported an increase in productivity, the data shows that overall, productivity was not negatively affected by WFH arrangements.

- a. It was noted that some MDAs were unable to gauge or monitor the productivity of their staff. The absence of these arrangements may be attributed to the urgency in which the public service was required to transition to WFH arrangements.
- ii. It was encouraging to note that the majority of state bodies reported that their employers were able to work just as effectively at home as they did in the office. If extrapolated to the wider public service this finding suggests that there is significant potential for the standardisation of WFH arrangements in the public sector within an appropriate regulatory framework.
- iii. Problems with monitoring staff performance were largely due to lack of adequate systems implemented to do so.

Recommendations

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:

- F. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Public Administration should provide an update on the reassessment of the eHRM system;**
- G. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Labour should provide an update on the National Productivity Council's assessment of Public Sector Productivity;**
- H. The Ministry of Digital Transformation should develop guidelines for MDAs on how to use Digital Technology to improve employee performance management;**
- I. Given that some MDAs were unable to gauge or measure employee productivity, the Ministry of Digital Transformation in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Administration should develop a standardised system for measuring and monitoring employee productivity;**
- J. In light of the finding that the majority of State Entities surveyed reported that employees were able to work just as effectively from home, the Chief Personal Officer (Personnel Department) should provide an update to the Parliament on its reclassification exercise inclusive of its assessment of Public Sector jobs that can be done from home.**

OBJECTIVE 3: To evaluate the efficiency of service delivery and infrastructural provisions in key ministries that utilise Work-from-Home and hybrid arrangements.

Impact of Work from Home Arrangements on service delivery

- 4.1.36. The Ministry of Public Administration indicated that Work from Home has the possibility to improve the Ease of Doing Business by improving productivity and efficiency due to factors such as reduced traffic congestion.
- 4.1.37. Similar to its stance on assessing Public Sector Productivity, the Ministry of Public Administration also indicated that there must be baseline studies conducted to assess the level of service delivery in the Public Service.
- 4.1.38. The Committee noted that the JSC on Finance and Legal Affairs conducted a detailed examination of some of the key elements of the ease of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago. In its report, the committee acknowledged the importance of consistency and standardisation of service delivery across the public service as an important prerequisite for improving client interface¹⁸.

JSC Social Services and Public Administration Survey Findings Relevant to Objective 3

- 4.1.39. Survey questions and responses relevant to Objective 3 have been outlined below, for the complete survey report, please see **Appendix II**.
- 4.1.40. The majority of entities (75.86%) indicated that services have been partially transitioned to a digital platform. 3.45% reported that services were completely transitioned to a digital platform while 20.69% of entities indicated that services have not been transitioned to a digital platform

¹⁸ <http://www.ttparliament.org/reports/p12-s1-J-20210702-FLA-R1.pdf> pp 42 and 62

4.1.41. The services most frequently transferred to digital platforms were application forms being made available for download and printing (40 entities) and customer service interactions (41 entities). Only 19 entities indicated that payments were transitioned to digital platforms.

4.1.42. The digital platforms/applications used most frequently to improve service delivery were telephone/mobile calls and WhatsApp (and other messaging services). The platforms used least frequently were Google Drive and TT Connect . 48.28% of respondents indicated that service delivery decreased for the period indicated 39.66% of respondents indicated that service delivery remained the same 12.07% of respondents indicated service delivery increased. Combined, 51.73% of respondents experienced either the same level of service delivery or increased service delivery.

Findings

Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee's findings are as follows:

- i. With regard to service delivery, there were more entities that experienced a decrease in service delivery than those that experienced no change or an increase in service delivery. However, when the figures reported for service delivery improvements are added to the figures reported for service delivery remaining the same, this adds up to 51.73%. This shows that there was a relatively equal distribution of entities that had a positive experience with service delivery during the pandemic and entities that had a negative experience with service delivery during the pandemic.
- ii. The majority of entities were not able to measure the degree to which service delivery increased or decreased, suggesting that systems to measure service delivery in the Public Service need to be developed and implemented.
- iii. Service delivery was largely affected by the unprecedented nature of the pandemic and the consequent inability to rapidly transform service delivery systems to the virtual space.
- iv. There is room for improvement with regard to state entities being able to successfully transition services to digital platforms.

Recommendations

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:

- C. The Ministry of Planning and Development in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Labour should develop standardised benchmarks to measure Service Delivery in the Public Sector.**

- D. As part of its Ministerial response, the Ministry of Digital Transformation should provide an update on its plans to assess the use of technology to improve service delivery across the public service.**

OBJECTIVE 4: To examine the feasibility of implementing Work from Home arrangements in the Public Sector as a (hybrid) working option

Role of the Ministry of Digital Transformation in facilitating Work from Home Arrangements

- 4.1.43. The Ministry of Digital Transformation became a standalone Ministry in July 2021 and has oversight for the National Information and Communication Company Limited (iGovTT) and the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT). The mandate of the Ministry is to transform the way public goods and services are delivered to the public using digital technology. TATT and iGovTT both spearheaded initiatives that support WFH in the Public Service.
- 4.1.44. The Ministry is at the beginning phase of delivering policies that will underpin the digitisation and digitalisation process of the Public Service and indicated that there is a need to conduct an assessment on the baseline standards for ICT support needed to effectively facilitate WFH in the Public Service.
- 4.1.45. The Ministry is working on a document that provides a framework to guide ministries on how to support employees engaged in WFH and other remote work arrangements. The document will outline minimum standards required for hardware and software applications and will also cover issues of security and data classification of sensitive versus non-sensitive matters.

Supportive Technology to facilitate Work from Home Arrangements

- 4.1.46. There is currently a network provided to MDAs called GovNetTT. This network provides seamless access to e mails and provides a platform for cross-agency collaboration. There is currently a utilisation rate of over 70% by government ministries of this platform.

- 4.1.47. There is also a Microsoft Enterprise Agreement that gives access to Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, Online calling and Screen Sharing. There have been 7, 200 deployments of these software and programs at 113 out of 159 MDAs.
- 4.1.48. The systems currently in place do not cater for monitoring of service delivery and productivity. However, as the government moves towards increasing levels of digitisation and digitalisation, developing this level of functionality is in progress.
- 4.1.49. Digitalisation will help to monitor levels of access to public services. However, the process is not yet standardised across government entities. As such, data is collected as Ministries implement digital transformation technologies.
- 4.1.50. Due to the increase in numbers of people working from home during the pandemic, there has been an increased demand for internet service. There has been a need for higher standards of service provision with regard to reliability of internet connections to facilitate effective remote work and schooling.
- 4.1.51. There is no data available on Public Service employees using Access Centres managed by the Ministry of Digital Transformation as options for working remotely. However, there are no restrictions on anyone using these centres for this purpose.
- 4.1.52. TATT currently does not have data to determine the level of performance of TTTWiFi Access services as the project is in the early stages of implementation.
- 4.1.53. Trinidad and Tobago has 100% mobile access. However, the rate of access to fixed line internet is 87% in Trinidad and 80-85% in Tobago.
- 4.1.54. Rural communities are disproportionately affected by lack of fixed line internet connectivity.
- 4.1.55. The Universal Service Fund, managed and administered by the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, has been used to reduce the cost of service provision and thereby reduce gaps in access to internet service. TATT provided additional Spectrum devices to improve access capabilities.
- 4.1.56. The Committee was informed that the results of the Digital Inclusion Survey will provide information regarding areas needing an improvement in internet service access.

Progress on Work from Home Policy for the Public Sector

- 4.1.57. Interestingly, the Committee was advised that the Ministry of Planning and Development is spearheading the development of the Work from Home Policy for the Public Service in the context of National Development as it relates to improving good governance by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service.
- 4.1.58. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the sub-Committee of the Board of Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department examined the impact of traffic congestion on productivity and were in the process of embarking upon a pilot WFH arrangement using select departments.
- 4.1.59. A Work from Home policy will have an impact on terms and conditions of employment.
- 4.1.60. The Ministry of Planning and Development aims to complete the TOR and consultations regarding the development of the WFH policy by mid-June 2022. The Ministry plans to advertise for the consultancy to develop the policy by the end of the current fiscal year (i.e. by the end of September, 2022).
- 4.1.61. The MPD is working with partners, including the Ministry of Public Administration in the establishment of the Productivity and Work Ethic Unit to address the issue of productivity in the Public Service.
- 4.1.62. The technical support research committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and members of the Tripartite advisory Committee.
- 4.1.63. In fiscal year 2021/2022, the Ministry of Planning and Development received an allocation of \$300,000 under the Public Sector Investment Programme for the *Development of the Work from Home Policy for the Public Service*.
- 4.1.64. According to the Ministry of Planning and Development, some of the critical requirements for the successful implementation of a WFH Policy are:

- a. A robust change management plan and its effective implementation, as institutionalising Work-from-Home in the public service will bring changes in operations, skill-sets, structures, systems and jobs;
 - b. Sensitisation and education on the new systems, processes, structures and products in the new work environment;
 - c. Review of the existing legislation for the public sector in light of legislative changes that may be needed pertaining to human resource management;
 - d. An effective monitoring and evaluation framework; and
 - e. Buy-in from Trade Unions.
- 4.1.65. A survey of 1,068 Public Sector Employees representing 10 MDAs conducted by the Ministry of Planning and Development indicated that 853 (82%) of them were able to work from home. The complete report of findings from the MPD survey can be found at **Appendix III**. Some key findings of this survey included the following:
- i. Younger members of staff made up the majority of respondents with 37.8% of responses coming from the 25-34 age group and 31.5% of respondents coming from the 35-44 age group. The MPD therefore assumed that younger members of staff may be more familiar with the use of technology and therefore would have had greater access to the survey. Given the large cohort of employees that had access to technology, the Ministry suggested that this would make the implementation of a Work from Home policy easier.
 - ii. 73% of respondents were female and 26.9% were male, which suggests that there may be more females than males in the civil services. The MPD used this data to suggest that the WFH policy should address the gender-based considerations of women who will be working from home.
 - iii. The highest number of respondents lived in the Borough of Chaguanas (178), followed by the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation (141).

- iv. While there was a wide distribution of areas where employees lived, the overwhelming majority (764) worked in Port of Spain with the second highest area of work being Chaguanas (72).
- v. Reasons for not working from home included not having access to digital files, IT infrastructure not allowing working from home, the nature of the work not allowing for work from home, no clear policy on working from home and not receiving permission to work from home.
- vi. Work e mail and cellular phone were deemed to be the most effective communication channels while WhatsApp was the preferred method of other forms of communication.
- vii. 73.5% of respondents were provided with a laptop or tablet to facilitate WFH arrangements. 8.5% were provided with a cellular phone and 1.9% were provided with MiFi.
- viii. 36.8% of the respondents stated that they worked from home two (2) days per weeks, 27.1% worked from home three (3) days per week, 21.9% worked from home every day, 8.3% worked from home, one day per week and 5.8% worked from home four (4) days per week.
- ix. 58.6% of the respondents stated that they were very comfortable working from home, 19.2% stated that they were comfortable, 12.4% stated that they were fairly comfortable, 6.9% remained neutral and 2.9% were not comfortable.
- x. 91% of the respondents stated that they wanted to continue working from home and 9% stated that they did not wish to continue working from home. Some of the reasons for wanting to continue to work from home includes, it allows for more productivity, flexibility and reduced transportation cost, projects will be delivered on time and less time spent in traffic.
- xi. Some of the reasons for not wanting to continue to work from home include getting more done at the office, preferring to separate work life from home life, social isolation and distractions. According to the MPA, while the responses were in favour of wanting to continue working from home, there is need to look into reasons for not wanting to work from home with the aim of offering assistance or solutions where practicable.
- xii. 87.1% of the respondents stated that they have to facilities to enable them to work from home, while 12.9% stated no.

4.1.66. The Ministry's survey on WFH did not initially include members of the Private Sector. However, there are plans to widen the scope of the research to include the Private Sector given the linkages with the Public Sector.

Progress on Digitisation by the Ministry of Planning and Development

4.1.67. Legislative amendments needed to facilitate a WFH/Alternative Work Arrangement policy include liability for health and safety issues, e-transactions, e-signatures, confidentiality issues and remote access to databases.

4.1.68. Between mid-2020 and February 2022, approximately 5,810 applications to Town and Country Planning have been processed online

Possible Impact of a Work from Home Policy on Terms and Conditions of Employment

4.1.69. The Personnel Department will be responsible for any adjustment made to terms and conditions of employment related to any WFH policy implemented and indicated that majority unions will need to be consulted should any changes need to be made to terms and conditions of employment.

4.1.70. The Personnel Department indicate that there are currently 1,621 jobs in the Civil Service under evaluation. 35% of these jobs can be done remotely, while 36% are considered to be hybrid and can be done partially from home.

4.1.71. Based on ILO guidelines, when employees are working from home, the home space becomes an extension of the work space. There is currently no case law in Trinidad and Tobago to govern employer responsibility when employees work from home. However, there is precedent established in other jurisdictions.

4.1.72. The CPO is currently evaluating civil Service jobs to determine which jobs can be done remotely. The CPO is also examining which jobs have become obsolete, which jobs can be consolidated, and which positions need to be created.

4.1.73. Given the Government’s emphasis on digital transformation of the Public Service, the CPO anticipates that there will be a need to upgrade the ICT Human Resource capacity of the Public Service as the government moves towards digitisation.

JSC Social Services and Public Administration Survey Findings Relevant to Objective 4

4.1.74. Survey questions and responses relevant to Objective 4 have been outlined below. For the complete survey report, please see **Appendix II**.

4.1.75. The majority of entities (70.69%) solicited feedback from staff on WFH or alternative work arrangements while the remainder (29.31%) did not.

4.1.76. The most frequently mentioned benefits from the employee perspective were improved work/life balance, improved productivity and being able to avoid traffic. Responses have been summarized in the table below.

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
Improved work/life balance	43
Improved productivity	33
Use of technology to improve processes	9
Less time in traffic/Not having to commute	19
Reduced Exposure to Covid-19	15
Cost savings	9
Better client interactions	1
Improved employee morale and employee engagement	2

Not applicable, work environment not able to facilitate working from home, no feedback received from employees	14
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4.1.77. The most frequently reported challenges from the employee perspective were in the areas of technical difficulties, poor work/life balance and inability to access documents from home. The responses have been summarized on the table below.

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
Little or no challenges experienced/not applicable	9
Difficulty understanding the technology	3
Technical Difficulties	37
Home environment not suitable for WFH arrangements:	13
Job tasks not able to be done from home	4
Communication Issues	9
Poor work/life balance	32
Information Access Issues	22
Mental health issues	7

4.1.78. The most frequently mentioned recommendations related to creating standardised policies, implementing ICT infrastructure and implementing Performance Monitoring systems. The responses have been outlined in the following table:

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
Creating a Standardised Work from Home/ Alternate Work Arrangement Policy for the Public service	45
Development of ICT infrastructure	39
Robust systems for monitoring performance	22
Implementation of Alternative Work Arrangements for Employees who cannot work from home	9
WFH not recommended/Not applicable	2
Engage staff in the process	14
Planning and Training	19
Reduce travel allowances for employees who work from home	1

Findings

Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee's findings are as follows:

- i. The Pandemic experience showed that the Public Sector Work from Home Policy being developed by the Ministry of Planning and Development has the potential to be translated into policy implementation. However, success of this policy will be largely dependent on:
 - improving access to technology to facilitate WFH/alternative work arrangements;
 - developing clear performance indicators for WHF arrangements and creating standardized policies for WFH.

- ii. Benefits of WFH arrangements from an organizational standpoint focused largely on increased efficiency through the use of digital platforms and operational cost savings. As such, the Ministry of Digital Transformation will need to play an integral role in supporting any National WFH Policy Initiative.
- iii. Drawbacks of WFH arrangements from an organizational standpoint focused largely on lack of accountability, communication challenges and difficulties with measuring performance. These challenges can be mitigated by improved management practices.
- iv. From an individual standpoint, the benefits and drawbacks of WFH arrangements fell under very similar categories depending on the perspective of the individual. For example, entities reported that some staff experienced improved work/life balance with the WFH arrangements while other staff felt that they experienced a decline in work/life balance. Given this variable nature of the Work from Home Experience, any standardised Work from Home Policy would need to give some measure of flexibility for MDAs to determine which employees are eligible for WFH arrangements on a case-by-case basis.
- v. Based on the survey of Public Sector employees conducted by the Ministry of Planning and Development, there is general support for a WFH Policy; however, there are certain issues that should be dealt with to allow for the effectiveness of WFH. Issues such as remote access to files, the provision of relevant tools to allow for such and providing support to those who may not want to WFH for personal reasons should be addressed.

Recommendations

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:

- E. As Part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Planning and Development should provide the Committee with a progress report on its National Work from Home Policy.**
- F. The Ministry of Planning and Development is welcome to review the findings of the JSC Social Services and Public Administration’s survey on the Public Sector Experience to**

supplement its research. The complete report can be found at **Appendix II**.

- G. The Ministry of Planning and Development should conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine how a Work from Home Policy could provide cost savings to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.
- H. As part of its Ministerial Response, the CPO should provide an update on the process of evaluating Civil Service positions, inclusive of the assessment of which jobs can be done remotely.
- I. The Committee endorses the Recommendations of the Ministry of Planning and Development with regard to interim WFH policy guidelines. These recommendations can be found on **page 32** of the MPD's Work from Home Policy Guidelines for the Civil Service of Trinidad and Tobago, which can be found at **Appendix III**.

Mr. Paul Richards
Chairman

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP
Vice-Chairman

Mr. Avinash Singh, MP
Member

Mr. David Nakhid
Member

Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP
Member

Mr. Roger Munroe, MP
Member

Mrs. Penelope Beckles, MP
Member

Mr. Rohan Sinanan, MP
Member

July 7, 2022

APPENDICES

Appendix I – List of officials who appeared and provided oral evidence

Name of Official	Portfolio	Organization
Public Hearing Held on February 16, 2022		
Mr. Claudelle McKellar Mrs. Sherry Ann Smith-Simmons Ms. Candice Mohan	Permanent Secretary Ag. Human Resource Manager Public Management Consultant	Ministry of Public Administration
Mr. Richard Madray Mr. Charles Bobb-Semple Ms. Denyse White Ms. Cynthia Reddock-Downes	Permanent Secretary Chief Executive Officer, National Information and Communication Technology Deputy National Chief Digital Officer Chief Executive Officer, Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago	Ministry of Digital Transformation

<p>Mrs. Joanne Deoraj</p> <p>Ms. Meera Ramesar Director Ag,</p>	<p>Permanent Secretary</p> <p>Socio Economic Policy Planning Division</p>	<p>Officials of the Ministry of Planning and Development</p>
<p>Dr. Daryl Dindial</p> <p>Ms. Sherraine Genas</p>	<p>Commander (Ret'd) Chief Personnel Officer</p> <p>Director, Legal Services</p>	<p>Chief Personnel Department</p>

Appendix II – Report on JSC Social Services



Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

DRAFT SURVEY REPORT: WORK FROM HOME AND ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS UTILISED BY THE PUBLIC SERVICE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

An Inquiry into the Impact of Work-from-Home and Alterna- tive Work Arrangements, Policies and Initiatives on Public Sector Productivity and Service Delivery

Survey period: December 06, 2021-January 14, 2022

Responses received: 58

Survey Design

The JSCSSPA sought to undertake primary research to assess the impact of Work from Home and Alternative Work Arrangements on Public Service productivity and service delivery.

The Committee designed a survey to assess the Public Sector experience with Work from Home and Alternative Work Arrangements. The Committee sent the survey to all Government Ministries, all Divisions of the Tobago House of Assembly, all Municipal Corporations and select State Enterprises and Statutory Authorities. Instructions for completing the survey were as follows:

“You are kindly reminded that one complete response of the survey should be submitted by or on behalf of the Executive Management of each entity receiving this letter.”

Both Qualitative and quantitative questions were asked. This survey was conducted during the period December 6, 2021- January 14, 2022.

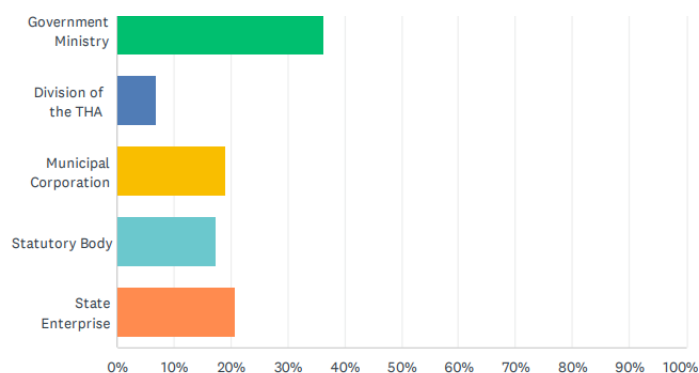
This report provides both a summary and analysis of the data received from the survey.

Question 1: Name of Entity:

Requests were sent to 66 entities and responses were received from 58 entities. **This translated to a response rate of 87.87%.**

Question 2: What category does your organisation belong to?

As illustrated in figure 1 below, of the responses received, 36.21% were Government Ministries, 6.90% were Divisions of the THA 18.97% were Municipal Corporations 17.24% were statutory bodies and 20% were state enterprises.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Government Ministry	36.21% 21
Division of the THA	6.90% 4
Municipal Corporation	18.97% 11
Statutory Body	17.24% 10
State Enterprise	20.69% 12
TOTAL	58

Question 3: How many locations does your organisation have? (number)

Responses ranged from a low of 1 location to a high of 731 locations

Questions 4: How many of these locations facilitate customer service to the general public?

Responses ranged from a low of zero (0) locations to a high of seven hundred and thirty one (731).

Question 5: How many people are employed by your organisation?

The number of employees ranged from a low of 4 to a high of 23,384.

Questions 6: Approximately how many employees have consistently worked from home for periods exceeding 3 months during the period March 2020-September 2021?

The number of employees who consistently worked from home for periods exceeding 3 months ranged from a low of zero employees to a high of 12,800.

Question 7: Approximately how many employees were working from home on a part-time/rotational basis during the period March 2020-2021?

The number ranged from a low of zero employees to a high of 11,916.

Question 8: Approximately how many employees are parents of students at the early childhood, primary and secondary school levels?

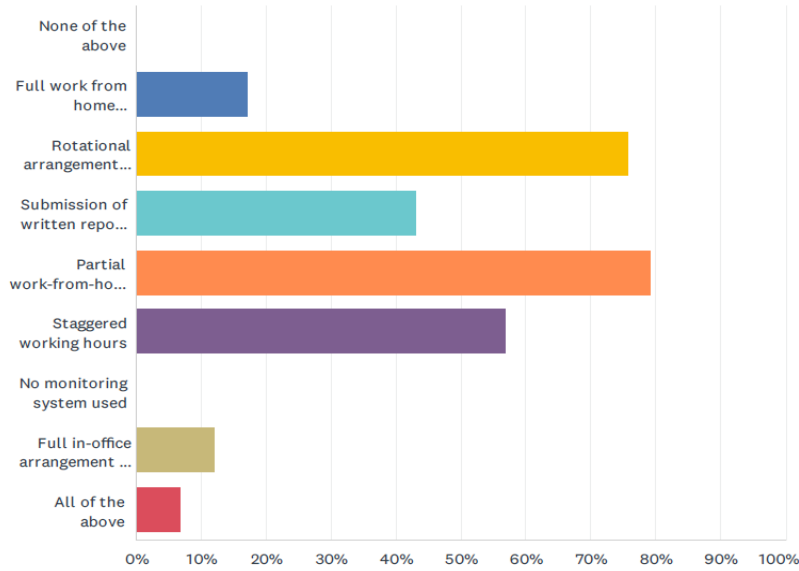
The number ranged from a low of zero to a high of 6,155.

Question 9: Of these employees, how many were given the option to work from home in order to facilitate supervising their children due to closures of schools and day care facilities?

The number of employees allowed to work from home in order to supervise school-aged children ranged from a low of zero to a high of 3,250.

Question 10: What types of work arrangements were used for the period identified? (Please select all that apply)

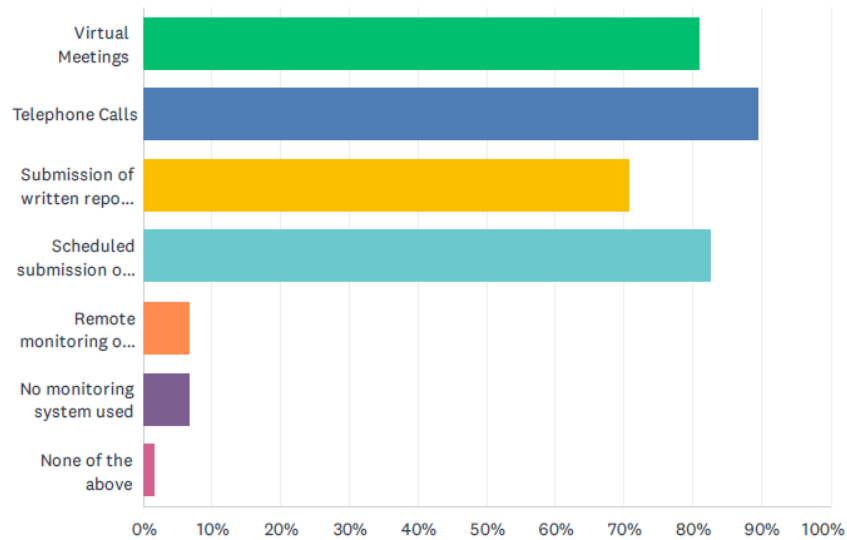
As shown below, the most frequently reported arrangements used were a Partial Work-from-Home Arrangement, Rotational Arrangement and Staggered Working Hours.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
None of the above	0.00% 0
Full work from home arrangement for all staff	17.24% 10
Rotational arrangement (employees work exclusively from the office on a rotational basis, employees not in office are not engaged in work)	75.86% 44
Submission of written reports on tasks completed	43.10% 25
Partial work-from-home arrangement (some employees working from home while others work from the office)	79.31% 46
Staggered working hours	56.90% 33
No monitoring system used	0.00% 0
Full in-office arrangement for all staff	12.07% 7
All of the above	6.90% 4
Total Respondents: 58	

Question 11: What system was used to monitor employee productivity during the work-from-home period? Please select all that apply

As illustrated below, telephone calls, scheduled submission of completed deliverables and virtual meetings were the most frequently used systems to monitor employee productivity.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Virtual Meetings	81.03%	47
Telephone Calls	89.66%	52
Submission of written reports on tasks completed	70.69%	41
Scheduled submission of completed deliverables	82.76%	48
Remote monitoring of employee computers/electronic devices	6.90%	4
No monitoring system used	6.90%	4
None of the above	1.72%	1
Total Respondents: 58		

Questions 12: What were the main challenges encountered in attempting to monitor employee productivity during the WFH period?

This was a qualitative question. While several responses were received from all entities, there were recurring themes. Responses have been grouped under the headings outlined in Table 1

below. Management Issues, Technical issues and communication issues were the most frequently mentioned challenges.

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
1. Little or no challenges experienced	6
2. Low levels of technological competence among staff	4
3. Technical Difficulties: Internet/technology outages/failures Lack of technical support (for example hardware, software and internet connectivity) to facilitate staff working from home; staff reluctant to use personal devices for work-related tasks, shared devices at home	22
4. Management Issues: KPIs not established, Lack of management/monitoring protocols, poor management practices, lack of accountability for productivity, lack of tools to monitor time spent working and output	29
5. Nature of Work Issues: Job tasks not able to be done from home, feelings of inequality in instances where some staff members worked from home while others were in office/ on rotation	3

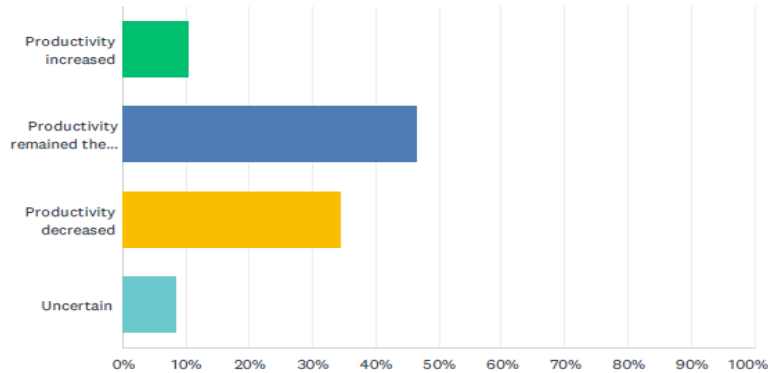
6. Communication Issues: Staff unresponsive to communication, miscommunication, poor communication	16
7. Accessibility Issues: Lack of digitization of documents, inability to access hard copy documents from home, inability to access work servers or intranet	7
8. Lack of work/life balance: Increased workload, distractions at home	6
9. Social isolation	3
10. Employees being in quarantine and/or testing positive for Covid-19	2

Question 13: How has employee productivity been affected by WFH or alternative work arrangements?

46.55% of respondents indicated that productivity remained the same while 10.34% of respondents indicated that productivity increased. 34.48% of entities indicated that productivity decreased while 8.62% were uncertain about how productivity was affected by WFH or alternative work arrangements.

Q13 How has employee productivity been affected by WFH or alternative work arrangements?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 0



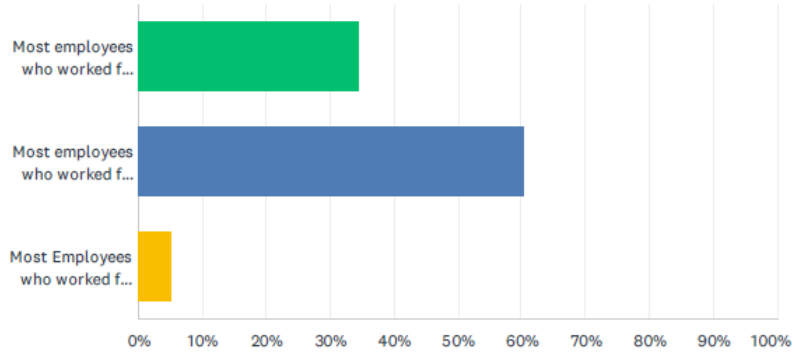
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Productivity increased	10.34%	6
Productivity remained the same	46.55%	27
Productivity decreased	34.48%	20
Uncertain	8.62%	5
TOTAL		58

Question 14: Please choose the statement that applies best to your organisation for the period March 2020-September 2021.

Options:

- **Most employees who worked from home did so less effectively than when they worked from their assigned place of work**
- **Most employees who worked from home did so just as effectively as when they worked at their assigned place of work**
- **Most Employees who worked from home did so more effectively than when they worked from their assigned place of work**

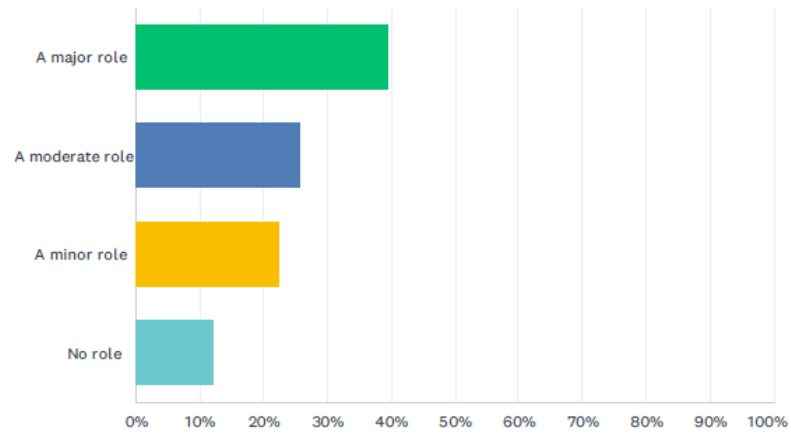
The majority of entities (60.34%) indicated that most employees who worked from home did so just as effectively as when they worked at their assigned place of work while 34.48% indicated that most employees who worked from home did so less effectively than when they worked from their assigned place of work. 5.1% of entities indicated that most Employees who worked from home did so more effectively than when they worked from their assigned place of work.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Most employees who worked from home did so less effectively than when they worked from their assigned place of work	34.48% 20
Most employees who worked from home did so just as effectively as when they worked at their assigned place of work	60.34% 35
Most Employees who worked from home did so more effectively than when they worked from their assigned place of work	5.17% 3
TOTAL	58

Question 15: What role has digital technology played in monitoring staff performance while working from home?

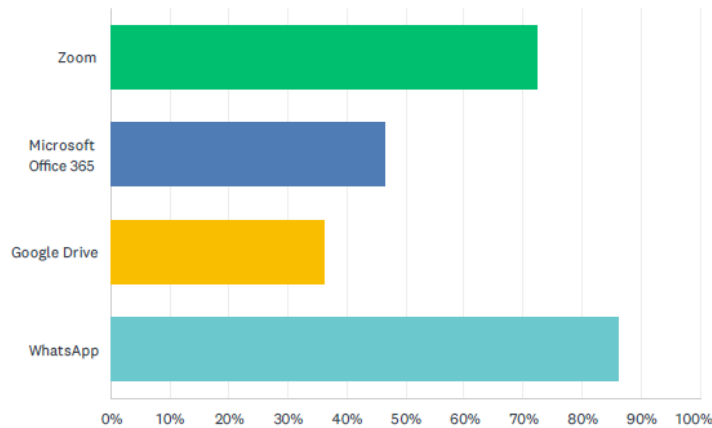
As shown below, technology played a **major role** in monitoring staff performance in only 39.66% of entities. Technology played a **moderate role** in monitoring staff performance 25.86% of entities surveyed, a **minor role** in 22.41% and **no role** in 12.07% of respondents.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A major role	39.66%	23
A moderate role	25.86%	15
A minor role	22.41%	13
No role	12.07%	7
TOTAL		58

Question 16: What digital platforms did your organisation use specifically to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on employee productivity? Please select all that apply.

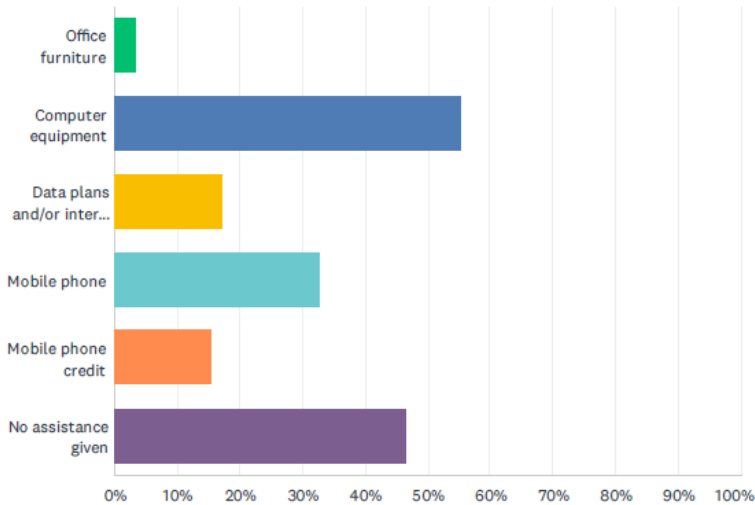
As illustrated below, WhatsApp and Zoom were the most popular platforms utilized to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on employee productivity.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Zoom	72.41% 42
Microsoft Office 365	46.55% 27
Google Drive	36.21% 21
WhatsApp	86.21% 50
Total Respondents: 58	

Question 17: What assistance, if any was given to employees to facilitate working from home? Please select all that apply.

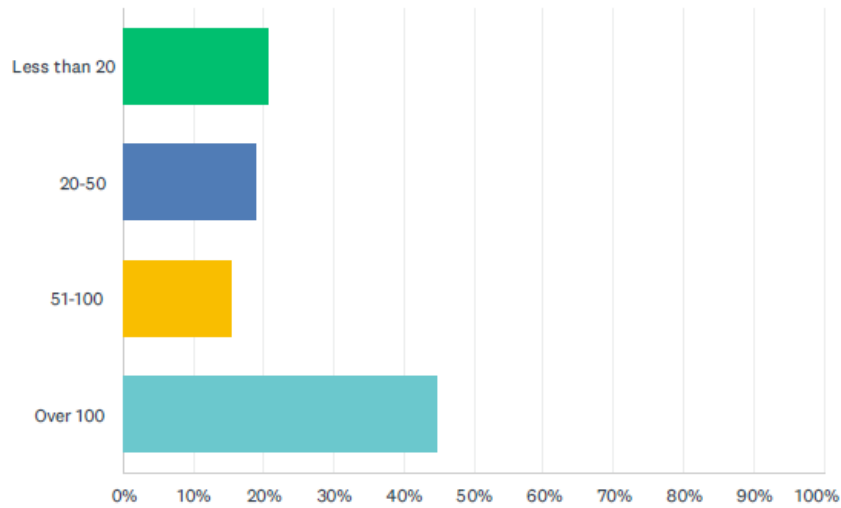
The most common assistance given was computer equipment (32 entities), followed by mobile phones (19 entities). However, there were 27 entities that reported that no assistance was given.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Office furniture	3.45% 2
Computer equipment	55.17% 32
Data plans and/or internet service	17.24% 10
Mobile phone	32.76% 19
Mobile phone credit	15.52% 9
No assistance given	46.55% 27
Total Respondents: 58	

Question 18: Prior to March 2020, how many people accessed your services in person on a daily basis?

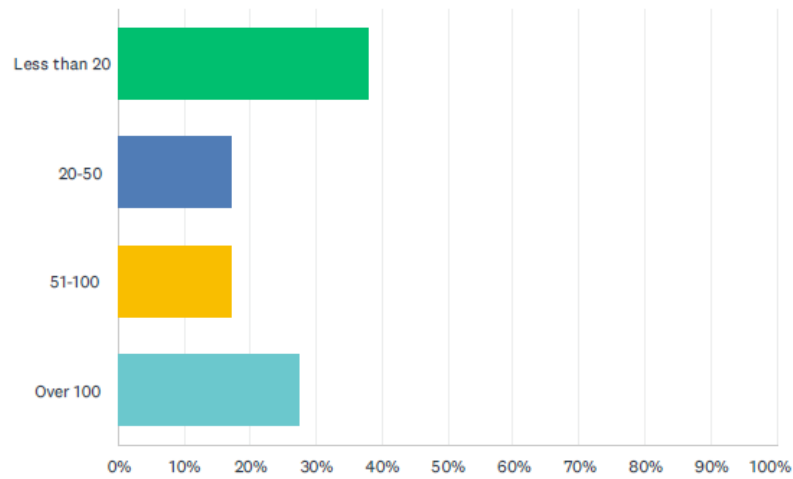
As shown in below, prior to the pandemic, the majority of entities (44.83%) provided access to services for over 100 people on a daily basis.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 20	20.69%	12
20-50	18.97%	11
51-100	15.52%	9
Over 100	44.83%	26
TOTAL		58

Question 19: For the period March 2020-September 2021, how many people accessed your services in person on a daily basis?

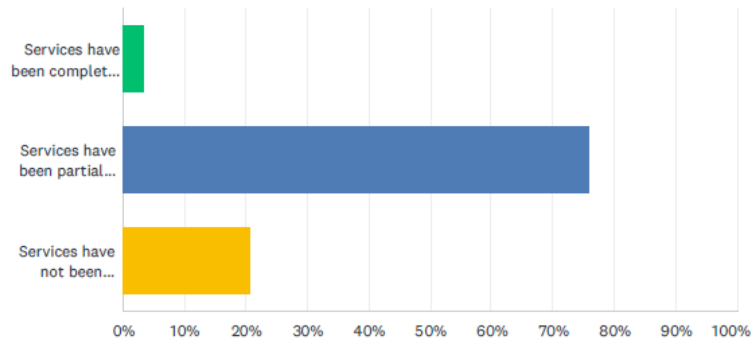
As shown below, during the pandemic, the majority of entities (37.93%) provided access to services for less than 20 people on a daily basis.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 20	37.93%	22
20-50	17.24%	10
51-100	17.24%	10
Over 100	27.59%	16
TOTAL		58

Question 20: Please identify which statement below applies to your organization (related to degree to which services were transitioned to a digital platform):

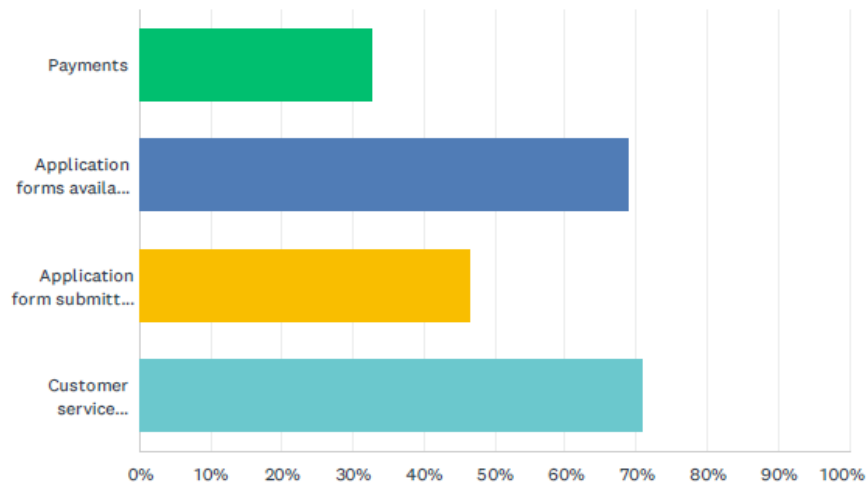
The majority of entities (75.86%) indicated that services have been **partially** transitioned to a digital platform, while 3.45% reported that services were **completely** transitioned to a digital platform/ 20.69% of entities indicated that services **have not** been transitioned to a digital platform.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Services have been completely transitioned to a digital platform	3.45%	2
Services have been partially transitioned to a digital platform	75.86%	44
Services have not been transitioned to a digital platform	20.69%	12
TOTAL		58

Question 21: If digital technology was used to improve service delivery in the period March 2020- September 2021, please indicate which aspects of service delivery were transferred to digital platforms? Please select all that apply.

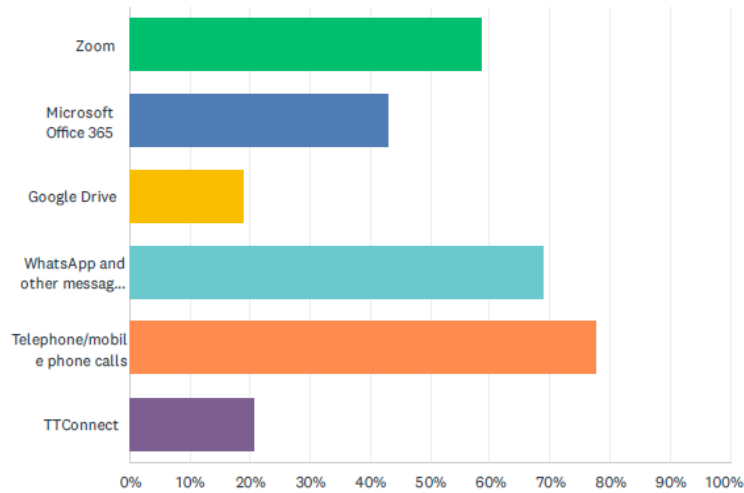
The services most frequently reported that were transferred to digital platforms were application forms being made available for download and printing (40 entities) and customer service interactions (41 entities).



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Payments	32.76% 19
Application forms available for download and printing (hard copy returned to organisation)	68.97% 40
Application form submitted and processed online	46.55% 27
Customer service interactions (helpdesk services, counselling/advisory services, FAQs etc.)	70.69% 41
Total Respondents: 58	

Question 22: What digital platforms/applications did your organisation use specifically to improve service delivery? Please select all that apply.

The digital platforms/applications used most frequently used to improve service delivery were telephone/mobile calls and WhatsApp (and other messaging services). The platform used least frequently was Google Drive. Please see below for further details.

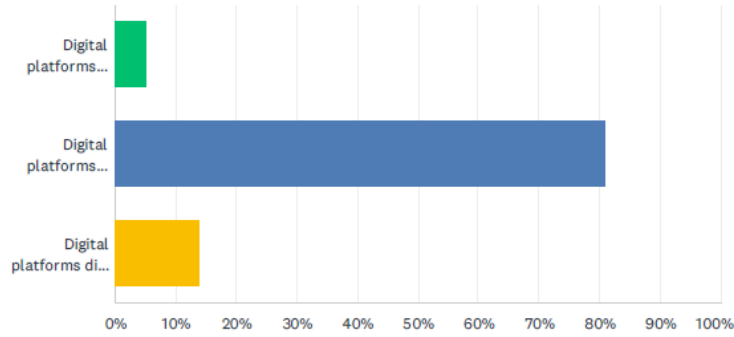


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Zoom	58.62%	34
Microsoft Office 365	43.10%	25
Google Drive	18.97%	11
WhatsApp and other messaging applications	68.97%	40
Telephone/mobile phone calls	77.59%	45
TTConnect	20.69%	12
Total Respondents: 58		

Question 23: How did the transition of services to digital platforms impact work

arrangements?

As shown below, the majority of entities (81.03%) reported that digital platforms facilitated employees being able to work from home **partially**. 5.17% of entities indicated that digital platforms facilitated employees being able to work from home **exclusively**. 13.79% of entities indicated that digital platforms **did not have an impact** on employees being able to work from home as these digital platforms were utilized in the office setting.

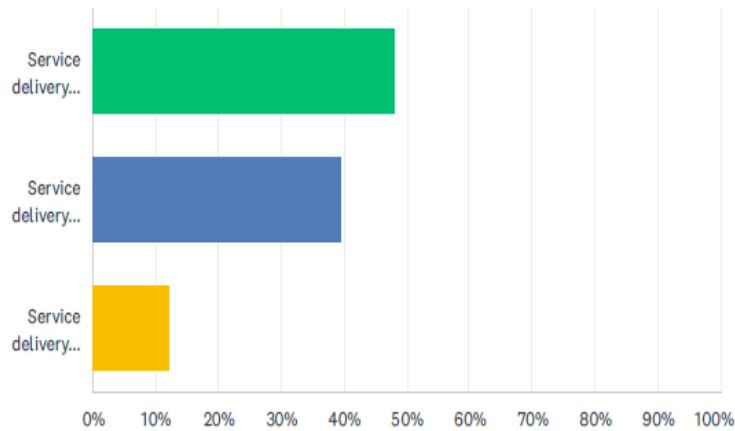


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Digital platforms facilitated employees being able to work from home exclusively	5.17% 3
Digital platforms facilitated employees being able to work from home partially	81.03% 47
Digital platforms did not have an impact on employees being able to work from home, employees used platforms from the office	13.79% 8
TOTAL	58

Question 24: How have the work-from home or alternative work arrangements Affected the delivery of services to the public?

The graph below shows that the majority of entities (48.28%) indicated that service delivery decreased while under WFH/Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA), 39.66% indicated that service delivery remained the same while 12.07% indicated that service delivery increased. It is important to note that though the figures show that the majority of entities indicated that service delivery decreased, **when the figures reported for service delivery increasing are added to the**

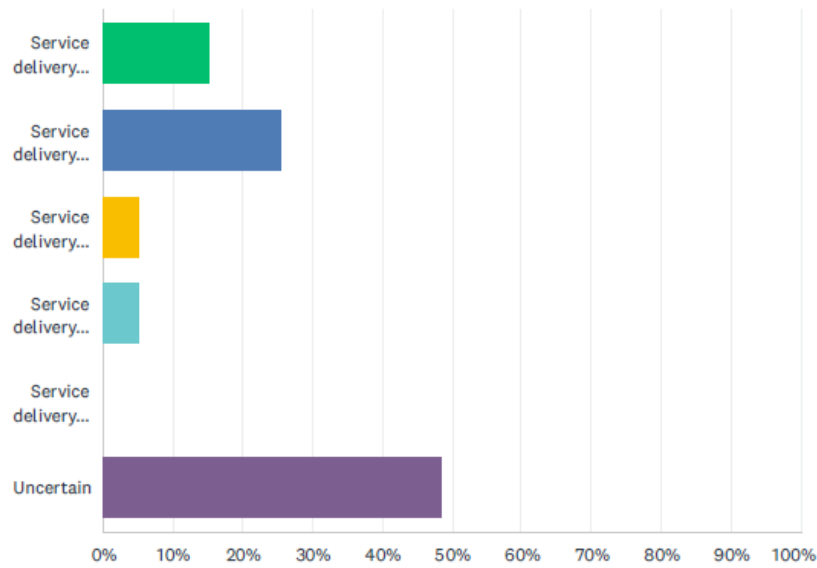
figures reported for service delivery remaining the same, this adds up to 51.73% showing that the percentage of entities that were adversely affected in the area of service delivery was marginally lower than those that were not.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Service delivery decreased	48.28%	28
Service delivery remained the same	39.66%	23
Service delivery increased	12.07%	7
TOTAL		58

Question 25: If service delivery decreased, how much did it decrease by?

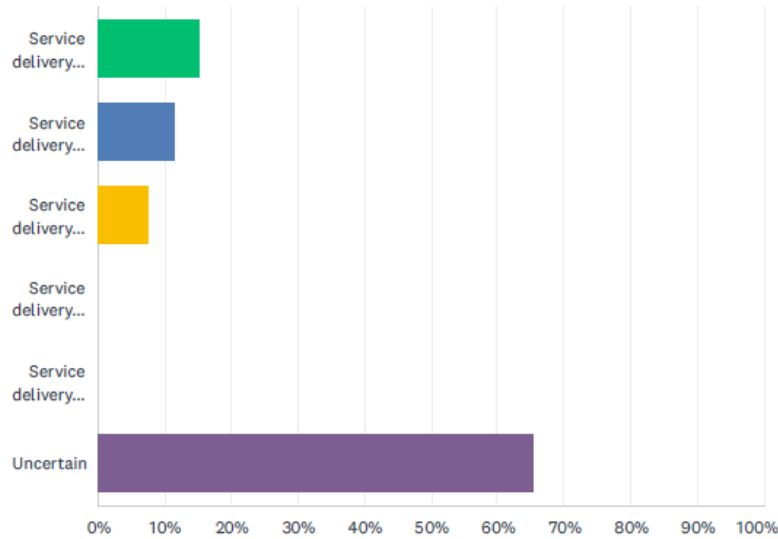
The graph indicates that of the entities that reported a decrease in service delivery, the majority (48.72%) were uncertain of the degree to which service delivery decreased. 25.64 % estimated that service delivery decreased by 10%-30% while 15.38% indicated that service delivery decreased by less than 10%.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Service delivery decreased by less than 10%	15.38%	6
Service delivery decreased by 10%-30%	25.64%	10
Service delivery decreased by 30%-50	5.13%	2
Service delivery decreased by 50%-75%	5.13%	2
Service delivery decreased by 75%-100%	0.00%	0
Uncertain	48.72%	19
TOTAL		39

Question 26: If service delivery increased, how much did it increase by?

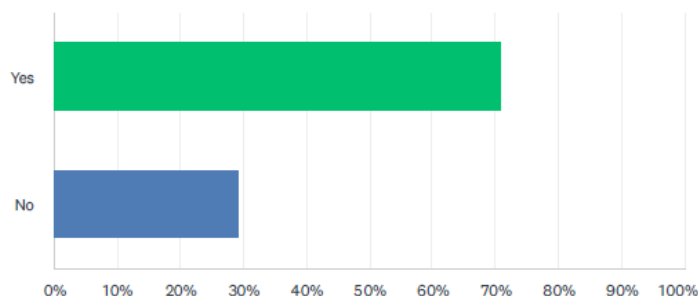
The graph below indicates that of the entities that reported an increase in service delivery, the majority (65.38%) were uncertain of the degree to which service delivery increased. 15.38% estimated that service delivery increased by less than 10% while 11.54% indicated that service delivery increased by 10%-30%. 7.69% indicated that service delivery increased by 30%-50%.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Service delivery increased by less than 10%	15.38% 4
Service delivery increased by 10%-30%	11.54% 3
Service delivery increased by 30%-50%	7.69% 2
Service delivery increased by 50%-75%	0.00% 0
Service delivery increased by 75%-100%	0.00% 0
Uncertain	65.38% 17
TOTAL	26

Question 27: Has your management team solicited feedback from staff on WFH or alternative work arrangements?

The graph below indicates that the majority of entities (70.69%) solicited feedback from staff on WFH or alternative work arrangements while the remainder (29.31%) did not.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	70.69%	41
No	29.31%	17
TOTAL		58

Question 28: If yes, what are some of the benefits identified by staff who engaged in a WFH or alternative arrangements?

This was a qualitative question which asked entities to summarise feedback received from employees on the benefits of the WFH/alternative work arrangements. While several responses were received from all entities, there were recurring themes. Responses have been grouped under the headings outlined in Table 2 below. **The most frequently mentioned benefits were improved work/life balance, improved productivity and being able to avoid traffic.**

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
1. Improved work/life balance: more family time, ability to supervise school-aged children, improved eating habits developed, improved mental and physical health, more comfortable work environment, improved sleep patterns	43

2. Improved productivity: improved time management, greater flexibility for working hours, greater ability to focus better on work, ability to work longer hours to meet deadlines if needed, fewer distractions and interruptions	33
3. Use of technology to improve processes: greater collaboration via digital platforms, more efficient meetings due to use of digital platforms	9
4. Less time in traffic/Not having to commute	19
5. Reduced Exposure to Covid-19: ability to adhere to Public Health measures, peace of mind about reduced risk of catching Covid-19	15
6. Cost savings: reduced operational expenditure (eg. Reduced use of consumables such as paper and ink), reduced personal expenditure (eg. parking fees, transportation costs, food costs)	9
7. Better client interactions	1
8. Improved employee morale and employee engagement	2
9. Not applicable, work environment not able to facilitate working from	14

<p>home, no feedback received from employees</p>	
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Question 29: What are some of the challenges identified by staff who engaged in a WFH or alternative work arrangements?

This was a qualitative question which asked entities to summarise feedback received from employees on the drawbacks of WFH/alternative work arrangements. While several responses were received from all entities, there were **recurring themes**. It is important to note that challenges reported by staff were similar to the challenges identified by managerial staff in question # 12, which asked respondents to identify challenges experienced in monitoring employee productivity. Responses have been grouped under the headings outlined in Table 3 below. The most frequently reported challenges were in the areas of **technical difficulties, poor work/life balance and inability to access documents from home.**

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
<p>1. Little or no challenges experienced/not applicable</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>2. Difficulty understanding the technology</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>3. Technical Difficulties: Internet or technology outages/failures, lack of technical support (for example hardware, software and internet connectivity) to facilitate staff working from home; staff reluctant to use personal devices</p>	<p>37</p>

for work-related tasks; shared devices at home	
4. Home environment not suitable for WFH arrangements: lack of ergonomic furniture, no access to printer, home environment not suitable for turning on camera during virtual meetings; uncomfortable work space, eye strain from excessive screen time, lack of privacy	13
5. Job tasks not able to be done from home: feelings of inequality in instances where some staff members worked from home while others were in office/ on rotation, needing to go into office to perform some tasks, staff found rotation system disruptive to work flow	4
6. Communication Issues: delays in communication, difficult to collaborate with co-workers, delayed feedback, instructions not issued in time	9
7. Poor work/life balance: Distractions at home, difficult to properly supervise children while working, no boundaries between home and work, extended work hours, inability to find childcare when rostered for work, increased	32

utility costs: internet, phone and electricity	
8. Access Issues: Lack of digitization of documents, inability to access hard copy documents from home, inability to access work servers or intranet	22
9. Mental health issues: Social isolation, missing co-workers, stress	7

Question 30: If applicable, please estimate the number of man-hours that were lost per day due to reduced working hours during the period in question.

Each entity reported lost man hours differently. Responses to this question show that there was an error in the survey design and that the question should have specified how to calculate the estimated number of man-hours lost per day. Based on the responses received, it seems as though some reported based on the total number of hours lost multiplied by the number of employees and others reported based on hours lost during the day without multiplying it. This therefore affected interpretation of the data. The lowest number reported was zero man-hours lost and the highest number reported was 2,000 hours. The Raw data has been presented in Table 4 below.

Number of Man-Hours Lost (as reported by respondents)					
Difficult to Estimate	4 hours	4 hours per day for those whose work cannot be performed at home and work on rotational basis.	553 man-hours lost per day	0 Hours	N/A
Unable to provide information as this data was not captured.	3 hours	4	Not Available	2	undetermined
Nil	N/A	uncertain	4	N/A	2-3 hours
Unable to quantify	0	-	There were more working hours	N/A	Maximum four (4)
88 hours per day	Highly dependent on the nature of the work	-	480 (60x8)	four (4) hours per day	This would be a loose estimate:3-4 hrs per day

Uncertain	2,000 hours	uncertain	No	N/A	N/A
Unable to quantify at this time but applies to 7 hours per day for manipulative, clerical and secretarial staff.	3	2 hours	Not applicable	About 1.5 hours per day per person working from home (60 persons)	2 Hours
unknown	2-3 hours	Not applicable	NIL	Uncertain	N/A
N/A	47	N/A	2-3 hours	N/A	N/A
Working hours were not reduced	2	2-3 man-hours lost per day	4	Undetermined	

Question 31: Given your organisation's experience, what are the main factors and circumstances which hampered the transition to WFH or alternative work arrangements?

This was a qualitative question. While several responses were received from all entities, there were recurring themes. It is important to note that challenges reported by staff were similar to the challenges identified by managerial staff in question # 12 which asked respondents to identify challenges experienced in monitoring employee productivity.

Answers also reflected the ones reported in question 29, which asked respondents to identify challenges with WFH arrangements identified by employees. Responses not previously covered included **lack of alternative work policies, challenges from unions and lack of legislative arrangements to cover alternative work arrangements**. Responses have been grouped under the headings outlined in Table 5 below. The most frequently mentioned challenges related to lack of supportive technology followed by inability to access files and documents and the nature of work not being conducive to working from home.

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
1. Little or no challenges experienced: nothing hampered the transition, organization was equipped and prepared, not applicable	8
2. Limited experience with technology: staff not familiar with online platforms used, lack of computer literacy	9
3. Insufficient Technical or Financial Resources: Internet/technology outages/failures Lack of technical support (for example hardware, software and internet connectivity) to facilitate staff working from home; staff reluctant to use personal devices for work-related tasks, shared devices at home, inability to pay for software licenses, inability	42

to provide resources needed for staff to work at home	
4. Performance Management Issues: KPIs not established, Lack of management/monitoring protocols, poor management practices, lack of accountability for productivity, lack of tools to monitor time spent working and output	12
5. Job tasks not able to be done from home: staff classified as essential workers, organization did not implement any alternative work arrangements	16
6. Communication Issues	1
7. Lack of Clear policy directives on alternative work arrangements: challenges with unions, no clear legislation on alternative work arrangements	7
8. Accessibility issues: Lack of digitization of documents, inability to access hard copy documents from home, inability to access work servers or intranet, issues with security of confidential files and documents	23
9. Lack of Work/Life Balance: Increased workload, Distractions at home	1

10. Mental Health Challenges: Social isolation, employees feeling unsupported	1
11. Employees being in quarantine and/or testing positive for Covid-19	2

Question 32: Based on your experience, what recommendations do you have for the implementation of a WFH/Alternative Work Arrangement Policy in the Public Service?

This was a qualitative question. While several responses were received from all entities, there were recurring themes. Responses have been grouped under the headings outlined in Table 6 below. The most frequently mentioned recommendations related to **creating standardised policies, implementing ICT infrastructure and implementing Performance Monitoring systems.**

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
1. Creating a Standardised Work from Home/ Alternate Work Arrangement Policy for the Public service: legislative amendments, engage unions in developing policies, define eligible job categories, include policy on compensation for use of personal resources and/or provision of resources, staff allowances, health and safety standards, define where employees are allowed to conduct work outside of the office, policy on working outside of jurisdiction	45
2. Development of ICT infrastructure: digitisation and digitalisation of documents, legislation to allow for use of digital signatures, policies for remote	39

<p>monitoring of devices, free internet for employees working from home, free access to government websites, policies for accessing confidential documents and servers</p>	
<p>3. Robust systems for monitoring performance: improving feedback mechanisms, centralised system for monitoring and evaluating all public service employees, WHF should be allowed based on evaluation of employee's ability to work effectively from home</p>	22
<p>4. Implementation of Alternative Work Arrangements for Employees who cannot work from home: implementation of flexi-time, equitable system for rotation, develop flexible arrangements based on personal circumstances, station staff close to home wherever possible</p>	9
<p>5. WFH not recommended/Not applicable</p>	2
<p>6. Engage staff in the process: identify challenges and provide solutions, understand strengths and weaknesses of staff members, help staff to achieve</p>	14

work/life balance, personal and professional development, implement performance-based incentives	
7. Planning and Training: ICT training, supervisory skills training, change management, business continuity plans, process mapping, establishment of expectations from WFH/ Alternative Work Arrangements	19
8. Reduce travel allowances for employees who work from home	1

Question 33: If you have any additional comments or feedback on alternative work arrangements utilised during the pandemic, please state.

This was a qualitative question. Responses were similar to those expressed in question 32, which asked for recommendations for implementation of a WHF policy in the public sector. Given that responses were similar, the list below encompasses comments not fully covered in Question 32.

- The use of alternative work arrangements during the Pandemic as a means of managing the risk of infection and spread among employees and by extension the national community would have been successful / effective as it enabled a reduction of the numbers of persons within the workplace and in the transportation network. Proper supervision of the persons utilising the alternative arrangements is a critical to ensure that performance and output are at the required levels. Guidelines must be put in place to prevent abuse of arrangements such as "Rotation" as there were instances of employees applying for Sick Leave on the days that they were rostered for in-office work. This led to situations where on occasion, an employee may have only reported for duty for as little as one day during the work week, when he or she was rostered to report on two or three days.
- It can also include provisions for other future hazards which may restrict movement within Trinidad and Tobago. Accordingly, it is recommended that a framework, inclusive of a WFH policy be developed for future use

- within the public sector.
- questions 13 - some departments productivity increased while other departments decreased, the total effect on the organization's productivity reminded the same
 - Leadership and communication skills were critical during the early period of the disruption employees need to be kept abreast of information. The need for a crisis management team and policies became evident. Social support was needed to treat with the level of sickness, death and uncertainty
 - Employees who worked from home performed well and their productivity increased. However reduced productivity was realised among employees who worked rotational, because then they only worked half day or every other day and did not work from home.
 - WFH once adequately funded and managed will facilitate increased output and performance
 - The effect of WFH on productivity and service could be positive or negative as such the responses to questions 13, and 24-26 varied dependent on the Division/location and the nature of the task performed. Data as at Question 27 was captured through informal means Data not available for questions 8 and 9.
 - Improved communication is needed; it should not be assumed that employees are being intentionally difficult in an attempt to avoid work. Offer increased assistance to accommodate a better work-life balance.
 - To maximise the gains for productivity and welfare
 - Inherent in the use of more widespread telework, the government should promote investments in the physical and managerial capacity of state enterprises, firms and workers to telework and address potential concerns for worker well-being and longer-term innovation related in particular to the excessive downscaling of workspaces.
 - The EMA had a pilot run on Work From Home in 2019 . A policy was approved in March 2019. Therefore, when the pandemic hit the EMA was well prepared. The policy was reviewed and renamed "Remote Work Arrangement." The policy was shared with Government Ministries and

- State Enterprises on request.
- As a result of work from home, more decisions were issued during 2020 as letters were dispatched outside of the traditional working hours. This is reflected in the comparative statistics for 2019, where 1262 decisions were issued, whilst in 2020, 1896 decisions were issued. This increase indicates that work from home promotes flexible work hours for staff which increases output and employee morale. Additionally, the increase in registrations, from 1026 for the financial year 2019 to 2020 to 1420 for the financial year 2020 to 2021, is the result of an increase in the number of searches performed on pending applications, subsequent examination of the applications post searching and determination and publication of the marks. Approximately 79% of our trademark filings was done online during this period. The total revenue received via online payments over the period was an estimated two million and two hundred thousand dollars (\$2,200,000.00). Work from home can definitely improve the public service work product provided technological advancements and implementation of electronic filing and payments.
 - Approvals for WFH/Alternative Work needed to be move timely. In some cases there was slimily no response from the line Ministry. The research need to be conducted to determine the true impact from WFH/Alternative Work.
 - Salaries can be re-negotiated to bring about reduced operational expenditure for any organization.
 - This initiative is an excellent one and definitely should be continued especially given the thrust towards digitalisation.

Preliminary Findings and Conclusions

5. Public Sector Entities had mixed experiences with Work from Home Arrangements/Alternative work arrangements during the pandemic. While some experienced little or no challenges with these arrangements, others were not able to adapt as quickly. Other entities were unable to implement WFH or Alternative Work Arrangements due to the nature of the work carried out.

6. Ability to adapt to WFH or alternative work arrangements depended on the following variables:
 - Nature of work to be done/services provided to the public
 - Degree of digitization of processes and documents
 - Family situation of employees
 - Home Environment and its suitability for work
 - Level of competence of staff in using digital platforms
 - Level of confidentiality required by the organization in handling documents
 - Degree to which the organization was able to provide technical and other support to facilitate working from home
7. In the area of productivity, the majority of entities reported that productivity remained the same during the WFH period, when added to the percentage of entities that reported an increase in productivity, **the data suggests that overall, productivity was not negatively affected by WFH arrangements.**
8. With regard to service delivery, there were more entities that experienced a decrease in service delivery than those that experienced no change or an increase in service delivery. However, when the figures reported for service delivery increasing are added to the figures reported for service delivery remaining the same, this adds up to 51.73% showing that the percentage of entities that were adversely affected in the area of service delivery was marginally lower than those that were not.
9. Problems with monitoring staff performance were largely due to lack of adequate systems implemented to do so.

10. Within entities, the experience with WFH arrangements varied depending on the department. Some departments were able to continue operating under a WFH/ alternative work arrangement while others were not.
- 11. Recommendations made by entities focused largely on improving access to technology to facilitate WFH/alternative work arrangements, developing clear performance indicators for WHF arrangements and creating standardized policies for WFH.**
12. Benefits of WFH arrangements from an organizational standpoint focused largely on increased efficiency through the use of digital platforms and operational cost savings.
13. Drawbacks of WFH arrangements from a managerial and organizational standpoint focused largely on lack of accountability, communication challenges and difficulties with measuring performance.
14. From an individual standpoint, the benefits and drawbacks of WFH arrangements fell under very similar categories depending on the perspective of the individual. For example, entities reported that some staff experienced improved work/life balance with the WFH arrangements while other staff felt that they experienced a decline in work/life balance.
15. The majority of entities were not able to measure the degree to which service delivery increased or decreased, suggesting that systems to measure service delivery in the Public Service need to be developed and implemented.

Committees Unit

February 13, 2022

Appendix III– Ministry of Planning and Development Work from Home Policy Guidelines for the Civil Service of Trinidad and Tobago

Report

Work from Home Policy Guidelines for the Civil Service of Trinidad and Tobago

Janelle Mills
Ministry of Planning and Development
February 23, 2021

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1.0 Introduction

The Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD), was given the responsibility for the development of Work from Home (WFH) Policy for the Public Sector in Trinidad and Tobago. This has become necessary as the current COVID-19 pandemic has not only disrupted the traditional working arrangements but has fast tracked, at the global level, a new permanent reality of working from home. The project will be undertaken in two phases as follows:

1. **Phase 1:** This phase will be done “in house” and will focus on the Civil Service, due to the urgent need for interim guidelines within the Civil Service, pending the approval of the Policy for the Public Service.
2. **Phase 11:** This Phase will focus on the wider Public Service and will involve the hiring of a consultant.

This report focuses on **Phase 1** of the project.

2.0 Methodology

The process for the development of the policy guidelines entailed the conduct of a survey. The purpose of the survey, which was deemed the most appropriate tool for this initiative, was to obtain from officers, their experiences of working from home and their opinion on the development of a Work from Home Policy for the Public Service.

The survey was divided into two (2) parts. (1) The WFH experience during the Covid-19 lock down period and (2) The Post Covid-19 Office, and was conducted during the period November 17, 2020 to December 18, 2020. A link using Google forms (which allowed for real time responses) was disseminated to the ten (10) Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) as follows; eight (8) Ministries, the Tobago House of Assembly and one (1) Department as follows:

1. Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries (MEEI)
2. Ministry of Works and Transport (MOWT)
3. Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)
4. Ministry of Planning and Development (MOPD)
5. Ministry of Labour (MOL)
6. Ministry of Finance (MOF)
7. Personnel Department (PD)
8. Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF)
9. The Tobago House of Assembly (THA)
10. Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation (MPADT)

3.0 Limitations

One of the drawback of the survey is that it only represented a sample and not the full population. A survey link was sent to a representative in each of the MDAs to disseminate to all members of staff. It, however, cannot be verified that all members of staff in the MDAs received the survey link.

4.0 Analysis of Responses

4.1 Part 1 - The WFH experience during the Covid-19 lock down period

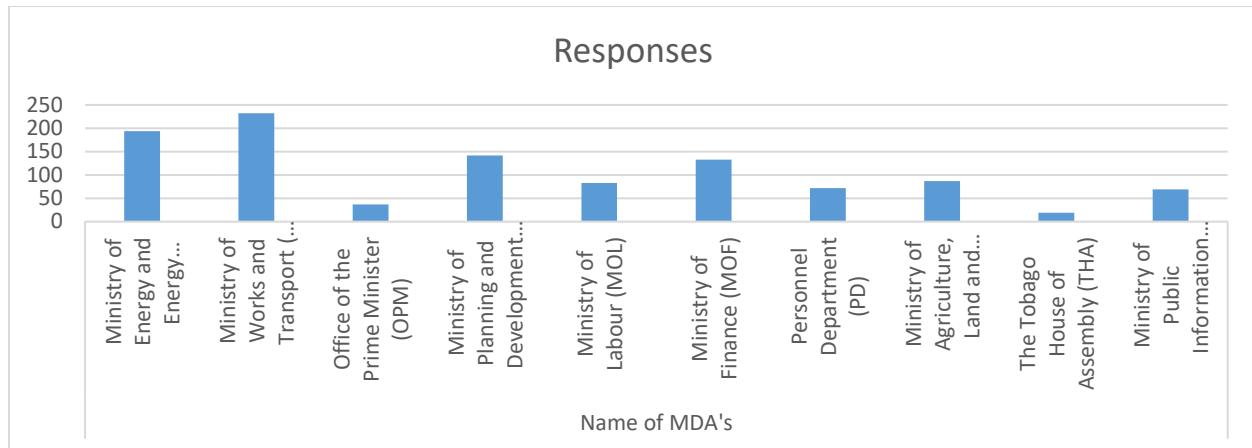
- **Please indicate the Ministry/Department in which you work**

As **Table 1** shows, the highest number of responses, 232 or 21.7% was received from the MOWT, the ministry with the highest population. The second highest response, 18.2% or 194, was received from the MEEI. However, when analyzed by the survey's participation rate by MDAs, the MEEI had the highest rate of 45% followed by the MPD with 36%. The responses can also be seen at **Figure 1** hereunder.

Table 1: Population and No. of responses from MDAs

Name of Ministry	Total Number of employees	Number of responses received
Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries (MEEI)	434	194
Ministry of Works and Transport (MOWT)	6700	232
Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)		37
Ministry of Planning and Development (MOPD)	400	142
Ministry of Labour (MOL)	252	83
Ministry of Finance (MOF)		133
Personnel Department (PD)	178	72
Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF)	4,000	87
The Tobago House of Assembly (THA)	-	19
Ministry of Public Information and Digital Transformation (MPADT)	258	69
Total		1068

Figure 1: Responses from MDAs.

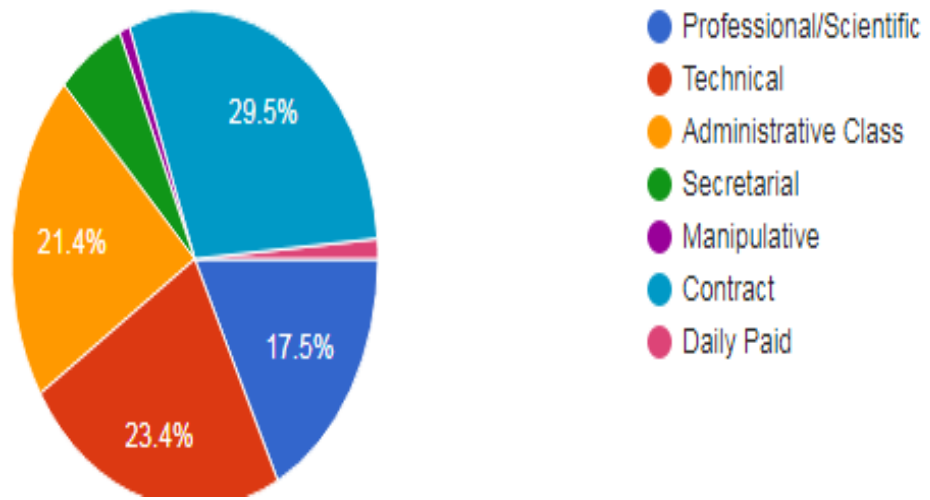


- **Please indicate what category of staff are you**

Figure 2: Category of Staff

The highest response, 315 or 29.5%, was received from contract staff with the second highest, 250, or 23.4% coming from the technical staff. This be attributed to both categories of staff having an interest in the development of the policy.

1,068 responses



- **Please indicate your age group**

According to **Figure 3**, the highest responses came from the younger members of staff in the age groups 25-34 with 37.8% and 35-44 with 31.5%. Further analysis was done using MDAs by age, and category of staff and age as shown in **Figures 4 and 5**, respectively. In both categories most of the responses were received from the younger age groups of 25-34 and 35-44.

It can therefore be assumed that younger members of staff may be familiar with the use of and had access to technology. This should make the implementation of the working from home policy a lot easier.

Figure 3: Age group

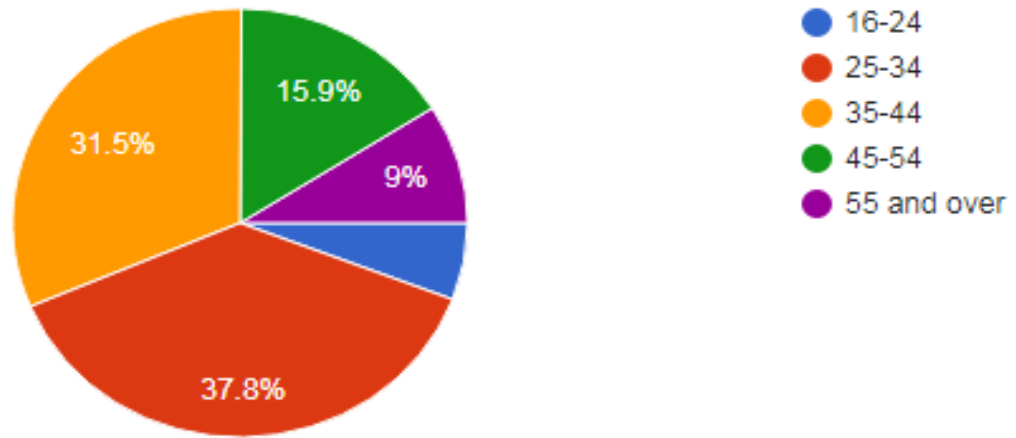


Figure 4: MDAs and Age

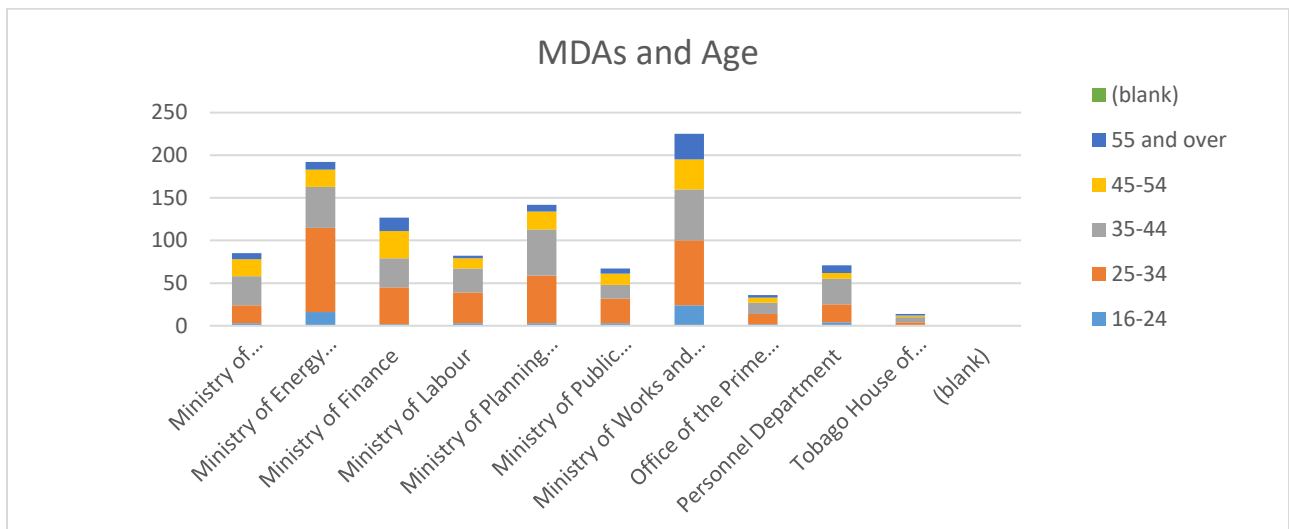
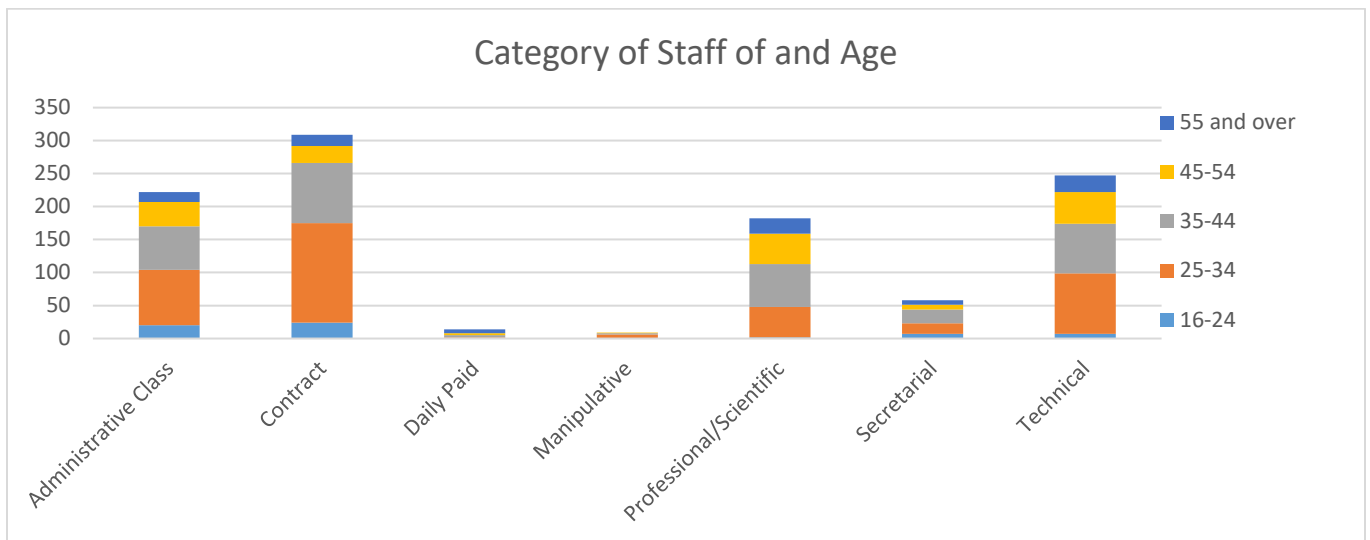


Figure 5: Category of staff and age

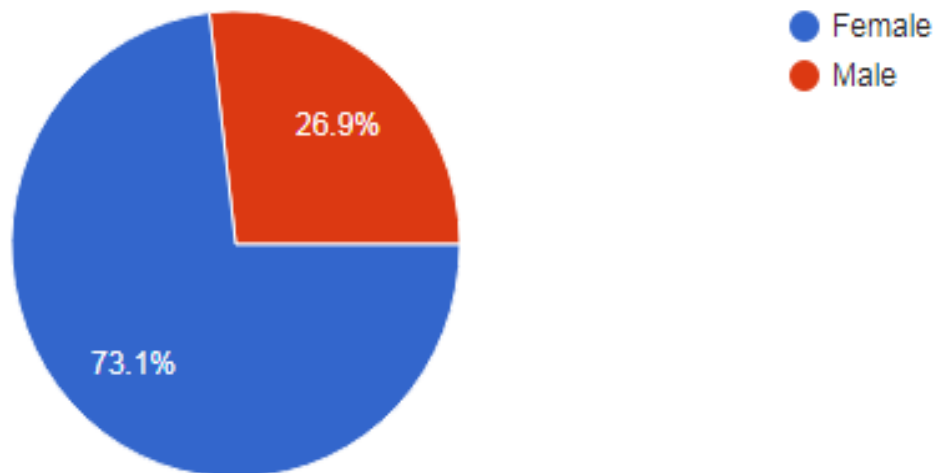


- **Please indicate your sex**

73.1% of the responses were from females, and 26.9% were from males this indicates that there may be more females than males in the civil service. The policy should therefore address the gender dimension of women who will be working from home.

Figure 6: Count of male and females

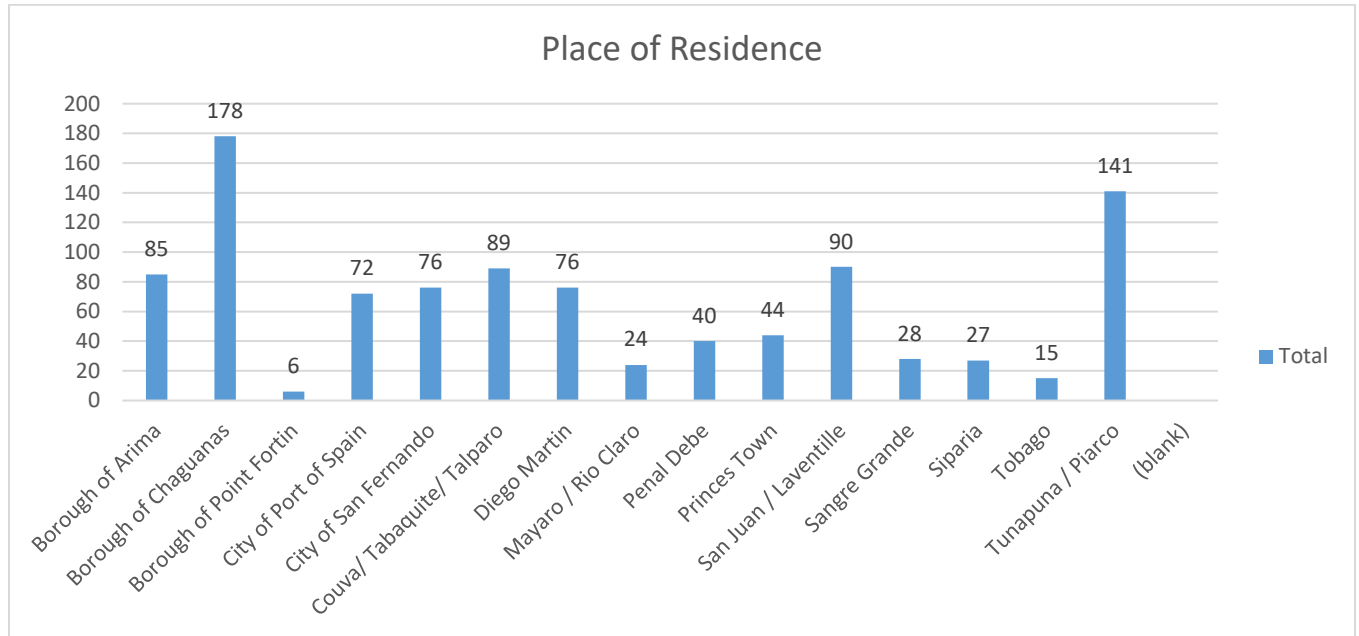
1,068 responses



- Please state in which City/Borough/Region/Parish you reside.

Figure 7: Place of Residence

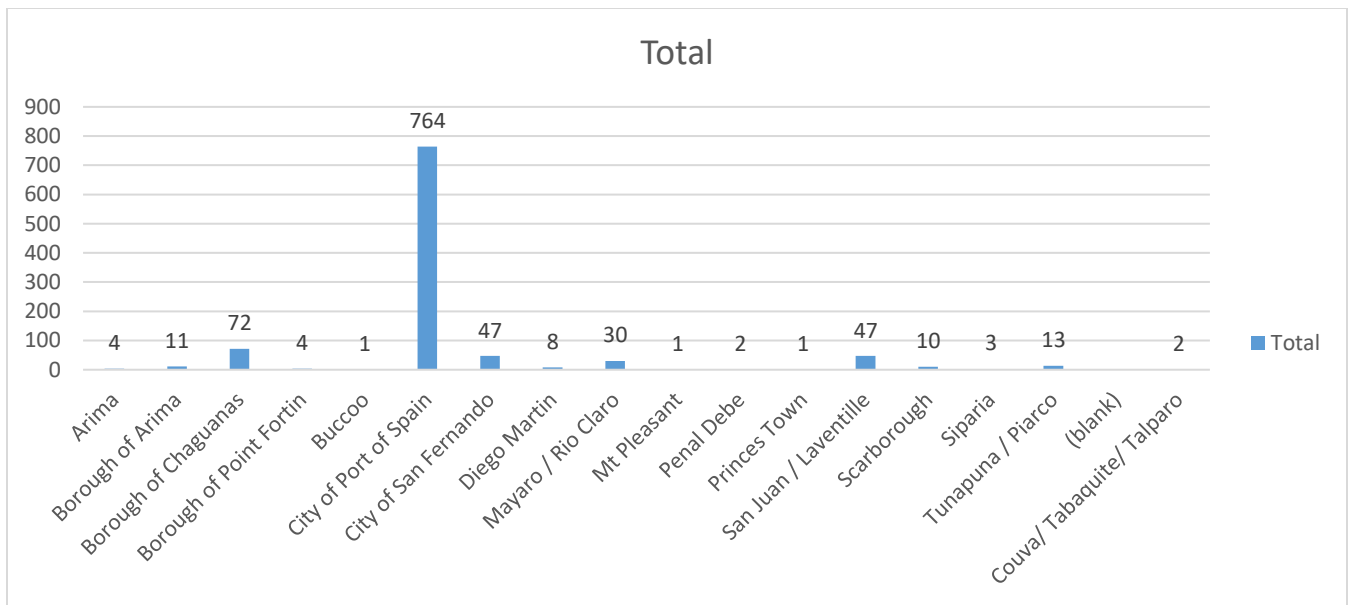
The survey revealed that the highest number of the respondents, 178, lives in the Borough of Chaguuanas, followed by the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation with the second highest of 141. This may as a result of internal migration due to the increase of new housing developments in those areas.



- **Please state in which City/Borough/Region/Parish you work**

The highest number of respondents, 764, work in the City of Port of Spain, the capital city of Trinidad. The result is also the same for Tobago, as the highest number of respondents, 10, work in Scarborough, the capital of Tobago. This result was expected as shown in **Figure 8**, as most of the head offices and other government offices are located in Port of Spain and Scarborough.

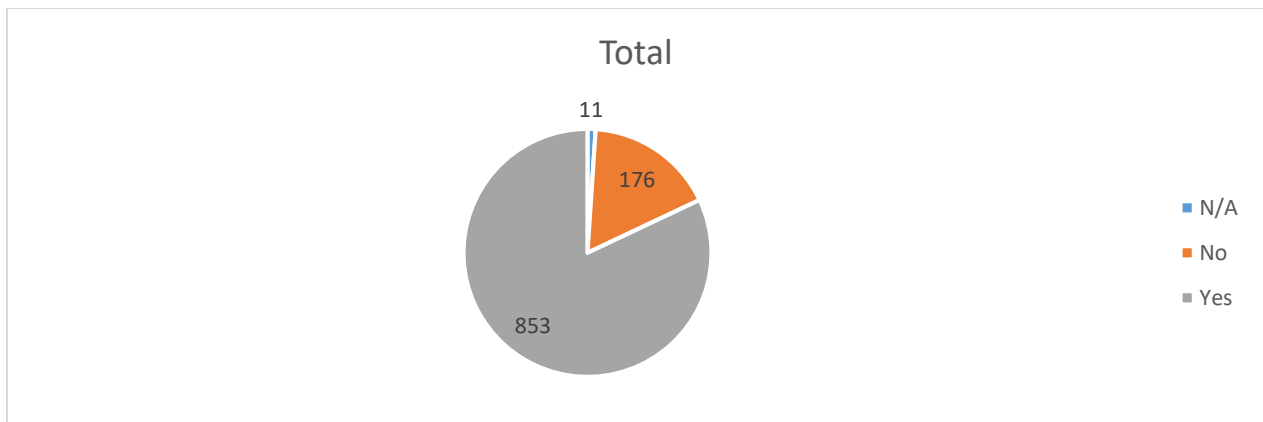
Figure 8: Place of Work



- **Were you able to work from home**

82% of the respondents as shown in **Figure 9**, hereunder, indicated that they were able to work from home. This indicates that despite not having a formal working from home policy, decisions were taken by MDAs to facilitate such to allow for business continuity.

Figure 9: Ability to work from home



• **Reasons for not Working from Home**

A number of reasons were given for not being able to work from home. Many of the reasons ranged from not having access to digital files from home, the IT infrastructure did not allow for working from home, the nature of the work does not allow for working from home, no clear policy or guidelines for working from home and not receiving permission to work from home. The responses indicate that there is need for a robust IT system to allow for working from home, for those who are able to. In addition there is need for a policy for work from home policy. The responses also indicated that not all categories of staff, because of the nature of their jobs, will be able to work from home. **Table 2** hereunder shows a sample of the reasons given for not being able to work from home.

Table 2: Reasons for not working from home

No Access to Files from home	May not be relevant for work from home policy	Other reasons
Don't have access IHRIS at home	I have to visit sites and workers.	I am a recent contract employee of Personnel Department.
Client's request came via email and was unable to access it from home.	Because of nature of work	I was not able or permitted to work from home because no arrangements were made by supervisors.
Everything needed for administrative duties are in office e.g. files, photocopying machine.	Had to direct supervision of workers on job sites	I was not able to do so. Basically I am more or less a support staff we need to be there physically
I deal with personal files which are not accessible outside of the office	I am required to conduct checks on the buildings so that they can be functional for the Ministry staff, as well as, the general public can utilize in a safe manner and all aspects of the facility is operational and hazard free.	No instructions given by Supervisor.
I work with files which are required and use information which must be researched in order to process my work.	My work is field work	No ministry laptop was given. If given I would have been able to.
The division I work in deals with physical files that is not allow to leave the building.	Agriculture is an essential service and the issues that arise on a daily basis are numerous and requires that I work from office to effectively deal with them.	Senior never give the directive to do so.

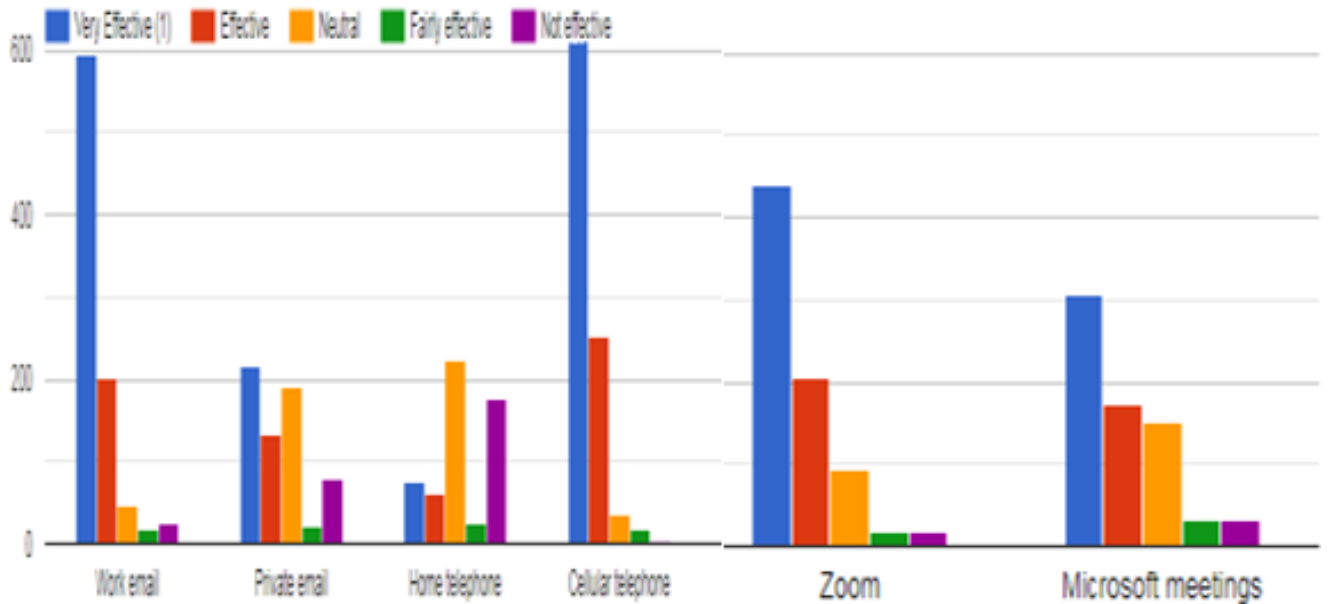
No Access to Files from home	May not be relevant for work from home policy	Other reasons
Everything needed for administrative duties are in office e.g. files, photocopying machine.	Had to direct supervision of workers on job sites	I was not able to do so. Basically I am more or less a support staff we need to be there physically
I deal with personal files which are not accessible outside of the office	I am required to conduct checks on the buildings so that they can be functional for the Ministry staff, as well as, the general public can utilize in a safe manner and all aspects of the facility is operational and hazard free.	No instructions given by Supervisor.
I work with files which are required and use information which must be researched in order to process my work.	My work is field work	No ministry laptop was given. If given I would have been able to.
The division I work in deals with physical files that is not allow to leave the building.	Agriculture is an essential service and the issues that arise on a daily basis are numerous and requires that I work from office to effectively deal with them.	Senior never give the directive to do so.
I work in the Pension and Leave section where information is confidential and is not permitted to carry home work.	My job entails visiting farms to provide medical and surgical treatments to anima, so I had to work every day during the entire period.	At my level, I had to supervise staff everyday
IT infrastructure was not in place to facilitate effective and efficient work from home.		Job required me to be there.
Lack of access to relevant work material; communication with Ministries, Other related clients.		Due to my position, I was required to attend work every day
Resources needed to perform duties are only available at the work place.		I am a new employee.

No Access to Files from home	May not be relevant for work from home policy	Other reasons
Access to the network was not granted.		I was not. It was not given as an option at this Division.
Cannot remove government files		Management said it was impossible
Systems needs to be computerize		Not Just yet. Recently assumed position
Dealing with hard copy files and walk in customers. It did not physically make sense		Tools were not provided to aide me to achieve same
I had to physically check files for information to respond to queries.		I will be able to work from home if I can get access
I work in the Accounting Division which is not computerized and therefore not available remotely, being physically away from the office hampers my ability to complete tasks as official documents are not permitted to leave the building.		Due to unclear policies and guidelines
		Had to be in office to attend to matters.

- **Which Communications Channels were used and its effectiveness**

According to **Figure 10**, work email and the cellular phone were deemed to be the most effective communication channels. This may be as a result of having email access on the cellular phone.

Figure 10: Level of effectiveness of communication channels



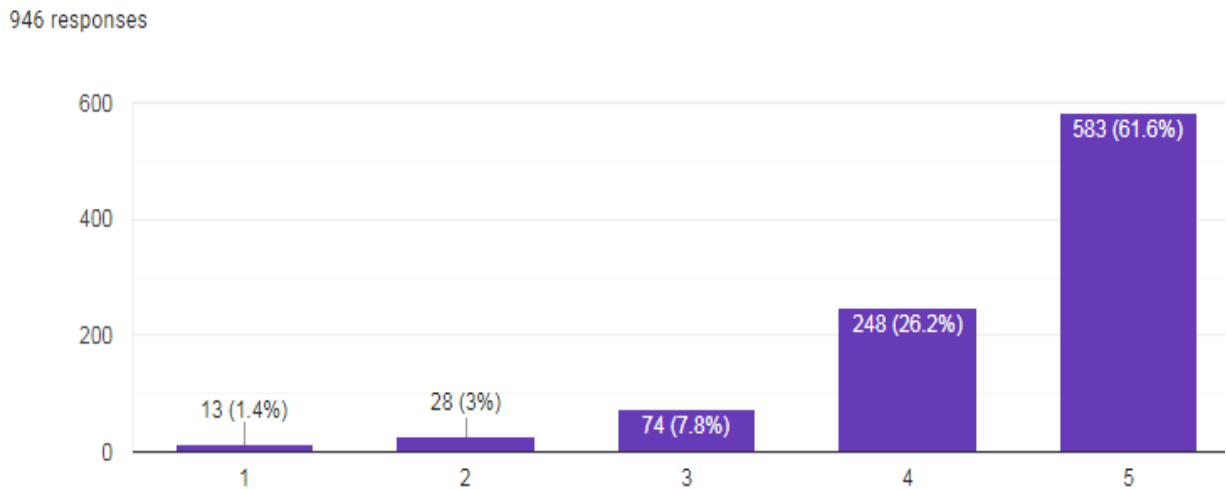
- **Other method of communication**

Whatsapp was the preferred method of other communication. This is consistent with the rating of the cellular phone as being one of the most effective means of communication in **Figure 10**, above.

- **How easy was it to communicate with colleagues**

61.6% of respondents indicated it was very easy to communicate with their colleagues and 26.2% indicated that it was easy. 7.8% were neutral, while 3% and 1.4% indicated that it was fairly easy and not easy, respectively. The responses are shown at **Figure 11**, hereunder. This indicates that there is room for improvement of communication with colleagues when working from home.

Figure 11: Ease of communication with colleagues.

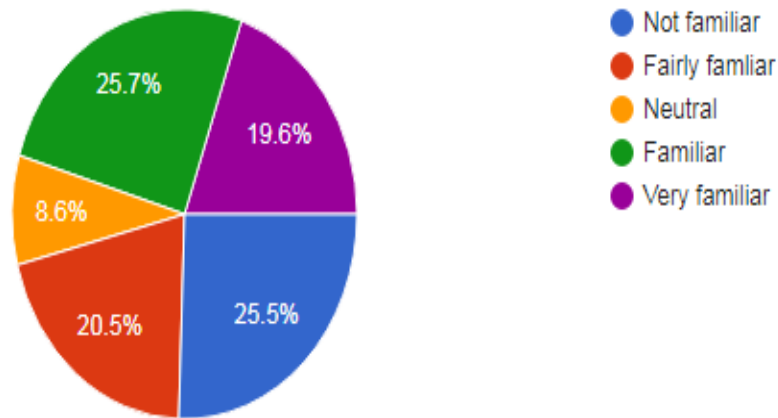


- **Familiarity with Virtual Meetings before the Covid-19 Pandemic**

According to **Figure 12**, of the 946 responses, 19.6% or 187 respondents stated that they were very familiar with virtual meetings before the Covid-19 pandemic, while 245 or 25.7% stated that they were familiar. 20.5% or 195 stated that they were fairly familiar and 25.5% or 243 stated that they were not familiar. 82 or 8.6% remained neutral. The responses indicates that there is need for training in the use of virtual meetings in the MDAs.

Figure 12: Familiarity with Virtual Meetings

952 responses

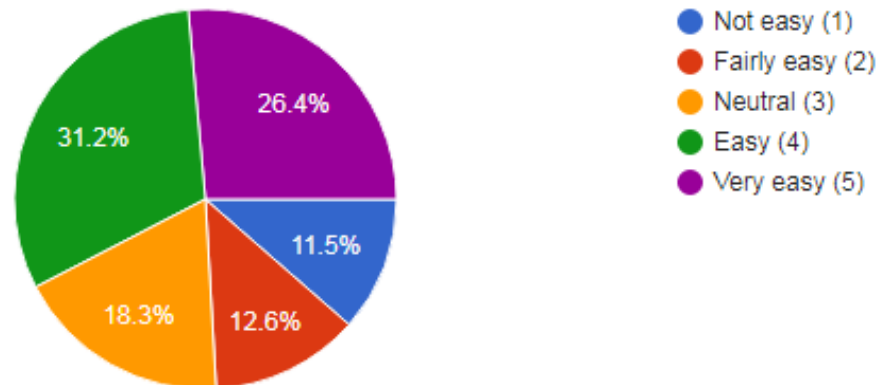


- **How easy was it to obtain what was needed from the office**

26.4% of the 942 respondents stated that it was very easy to obtain what was needed from the office and 31.2% stated that it was easy. 12.6% stated that it was fairly easy, 11.5% stated that it was not easy, while 18.3% remained neutral. This indicates that there is need to improve access to what is needed from the office to facilitate working from home.

Figure 13: Ease of obtaining what was needed from the office.

942 responses



- **If answer was fairly easy or not easy, please indicate the challenges faced**

As a follow up to question 13, above, this question sought to obtain what were the challenges faced by the fairly easy and not easy respondents. Some of the reasons given were, finding out what days to report to the office, challenges entering the building, Lack of access to work email and reliance on hard copy files for authorization. A sample of the reasons are listed at **Figure 14**, hereunder. Apart from the need for digitization of systems, processes and some services of the public service, there is need to examine the reasons given and see how they can be eliminated or improved.

Figure 14. Challenges faced for obtaining was needed from the office.

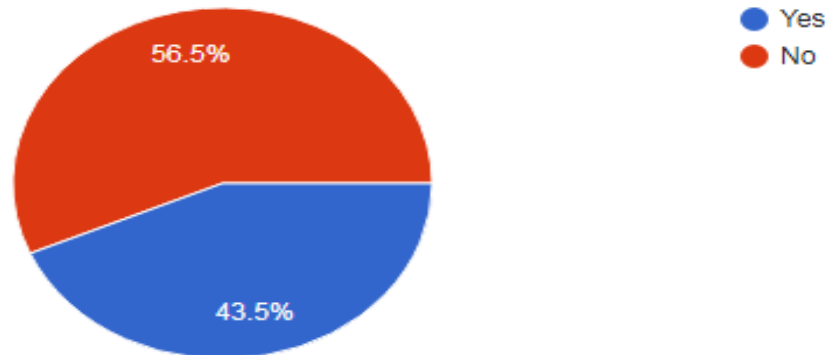
- Finding out what days I could go into the office.
- Being allowed to physically travel and enter the workplace without an authorized letter
- The Division's network file server (which stores soft copies of files) was not available remotely. To access it, officers had to physically go into the office and log into their office desktop computers.
- In terms of sending out correspondence, there was no way of inputting my signature on the document for email and I had no access to a printer home. I had to come into the office to print out a copy and sign it and scan the document and then email it.
- Challenges entering the building - not easy.
- Some files were physical which meant a trip to the office.
- Not having access to the department's shared drive since the Ministry's Share Point is not up to date.
- The majority of our files are hard copies. Additionally, the reports, databases and correspondences that are soft copy cannot be accessed outside of the office. Officers now have to email themselves documents to work on them. This now allows for duplication and corruption of files (compatibility issues) among other things.
- You could not take home office files.
- Files were used by multiple officers at the same time, causing delays.
- Technology for access to electronic files was not allowed for non-management.
- Files had to be obtained by myself but I had to care for my child; children were not allowed in the office.
- Other sections such as non-technical staff was not doing their duties and being present or as effective with prompt delivery of requested files etc. Even when some non-technical staff was scheduled to be at office, they did not show up, left early or did not have a senior present to authorise them to give the files etc.
- Accounting documents not digital.
- Reliance on hard copy files for authorisation.
- Could not work from home because information was not allowed to leave the office.
- IT refused to update my personal laptop with software such as MS word.
- The lack of electronic filing systems meant that the physical documents were unavailable for use by officers. To circumvent this, electronic scans were used. However, the existing procedures for requiring supervisors to give approvals on file jeopardise the ability to facilitate the ease of working from home.
- Lack of access to work email (Outlook). Ministry very reliant on paper files.
- Voluminous files.
- Permission for us to obtain officers files were not granted. So we had to come in the office in order to obtain information from files etc.
- A few processes required hard copy files or hard copy approvals from PS. For this, it was required to be in office. Once the policy is changed to accept approval from PS electronically, this would make the work from home process easier.
- Not having a laptop made it difficult as it is a bit problematic reading files and other documents via cell phone.
- There were too many files to transport back and forth to home/office. Transportation was not easily accessible as well.

- **Were you provided with the necessary tools and equipment to work from home**

Of the 941 responses, 56.5% of respondents stated that they were given the tools to work from home, while 43.5% or 409 stated that they were not given the tools to work from home as indicated in Figure 15 hereunder. This indicates that there is need to provide, as much as possible, the tools that will be needed to make working from home a success.

Figure 15: Provision of tools to work from home

941 responses

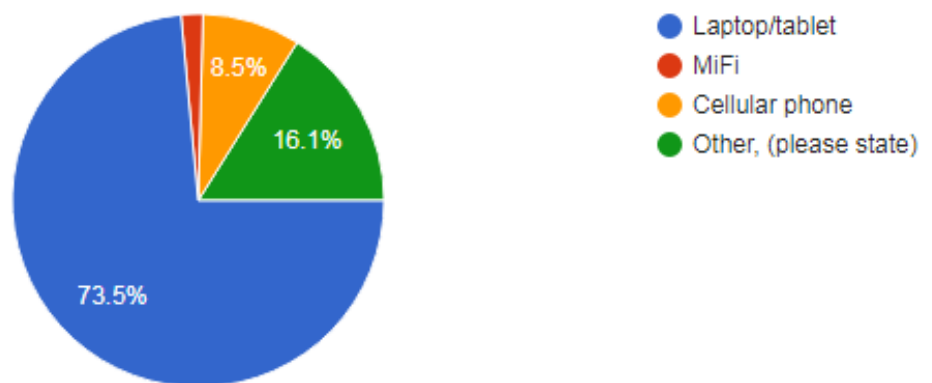


- **If yes, please state what you were provided with**

According to Figure 16, hereunder, 73.5% of the respondents stated that they were provided with a laptop/tablet, 16.1% stated that they were provided with other tools but did not state the tool they were provided with. 8.5% stated that they were provided with a cellular phone and 1.9% stated that they were provided with MiFi.

Figure 16: Tools provided to work from home

423 responses

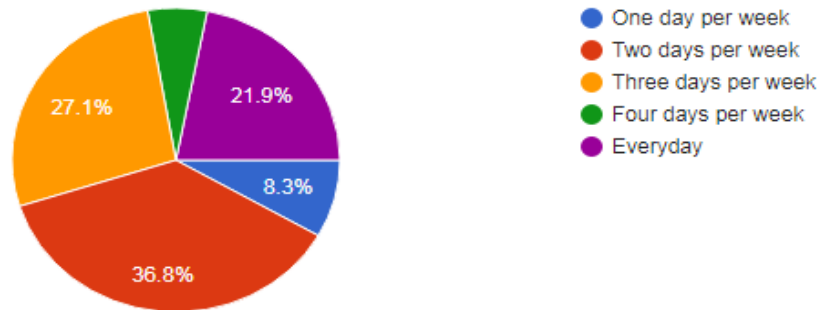


- **How often did you work from home**

There were 907 responses to this question. As depicted in **Figure 17**, 36.8% of the respondents stated that they worked from home two (2) days per weeks, 27.1% worked from home three (3) days per week, 21.9% worked from home everyday, 8.3% worked from home, one day per week and 5.8% worked from home four (4) days per week.

Figure 17: Days worked from home

907 responses

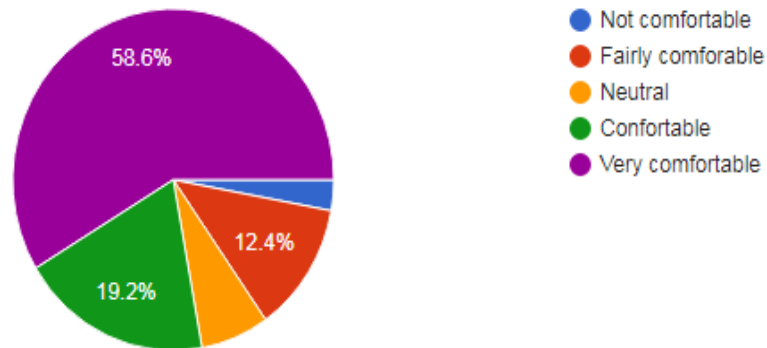


- **How comfortable were you working from home**

This question was to determine how comfortable persons were working from home. According to **Figure 18**, hereunder, 58.6% of the respondents stated that they were very comfortable working from home, 19.2% stated that they were comfortable, 12.4% stated that they were fairly comfortable, 6.9% remained neutral and 2.9% were not comfortable. This indicates that there is need to look into the factors that caused some levels of discomfort working from home.

Figure 18: Levels of comfort working from home

931 responses



Part II - The Post Covid-19 Office

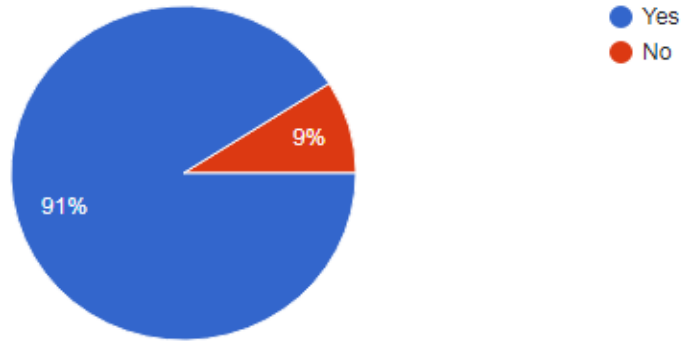
- **Do you want to continue to work from home**

This question was to determine whether or not, persons wanted to continue working from home. As **Figure 189** shows, 91% of the respondents stated yes and 9% stated no. A sample of the reasons for wanting to continue to work from home and not wanting to continue to work from home are at **Figures 20 and 21**, respectively. Some of the reasons for wanting to continue to work from home includes, it allows for more productivity, flexibility and reduced transportation cost, projects will be delivered on time and less time spent in traffic.

Some of the reasons for not wanting to continue to work from home includes, getting more done at the office, preferring to separate work life from home life, social isolation and too many distractions. While the responses were in favour of wanting to continue working from home, there is need to look into reasons for not wanting to work from home with the aim of offering assistance or solutions where practicable.

Figure 19: Indication of continuation of working from home

944 responses



- **If yes, please state why**

Figure 20: Reasons for continuing to work from home

843 responses

- Due to child care support, until schools resume. Of course even if schools reopen there must be a near 100% certainty that the threat of the virus is gone and will not impact young children.
- It allows for more productivity.
- Environment more comfortable given the current Covid-19 situation. Easier to participate in meetings as at home my laptop has a mic and camera when needed in meeting. No commute.
- Get more work done and can focus more. Less phone calls, or interruptions.
- Flexibility and reduced transportation costs.
- Saves commuting time & money, more productivity, less pollution.
- Fear of contracting Covid-19.
- I prefer to work from home firstly as it provides the flexibility to work from very early in the morning to late at night. I also have the energy to dedicate more hours to work as I do not have to face useless and draining traffic time. I was also able to balance taking care of my 10 month baby as well as assisting my 10 year old daughter with virtually schooling.
- It was much easier and productivity level increased. The 4 hours of commute to and from work which diminishes quality of life was no longer there.
- No traffic, no standing in a bus line at 4 am to get to work at Port of Spain, no getting up at 3 am no reaching home at 6 pm. No stress.
- We live in a modern society where we have access to internet and are able to work from a mobile location. A physical environment does not determine the efficiency and work output from an individual. The regulation of persons having to come into an office between the hours of 8 to 4 is outdated. Having to endure hours of traffic to and from work exhausts the individual. A roster system should be implemented which would allow a decrease in traffic congestion and more work output from employees.
- As a parent with young children (who have virtual classes daily) it is not always possible to arrange alternative supervision for them, when required to be in office every day. In addition, technology is available to facilitate remote work activities.
- It's more efficient. As a young female who is regularly verbally sexually harassed and has been physically followed by strange men in the course of my commute to and from the office, minimizing the chance of such incidents should be something that any concerned employer should factor into considering a WFH policy. This experience is not uncommon for females and is extremely disturbing. Frankly the less I am in situations where I am alone and at risk of assault, the better for me.
- Working from home allows an officer to perform their duties at any time during the day or night and not necessarily the standard 8-hour work time. In some cases, where assignments required
- I only need this to be an option if necessary and not necessarily the norm.]
- My assigned projects were always delivered on time.
- The working from home arrangement also eases transportation woes and allows for saving some resources in these trying economic times.
- My mental and physical health gained a large boost and my productivity was improved.
- Could work from home 2-3 days per week.
- I wouldn't have to pay for monthly parking.
- Do have to deal with personalities that undermine the process.
- My portfolio does not entail servicing the public and most of my work can be done remotely.
- Less distractions and members of my staff are very responsible. They comply with the needs of the Department and I saw an improvement in the quality of their reports
- Better work/life balance, more productive and well rested by saving 3-4 hours of daily commute time
- The government can now accommodate smaller office space, and reduce rental expensive.
- Eat healthier by cooking.
- This option promotes my mental health as my approximately 5-hour commute to and from work is eliminated and I am more focused on my tasks, with added mental clarity and heightened effectiveness.

• **If your answer is no, please state why**

Figure 21: Reasons for not wanting to continue to work from home

102 responses

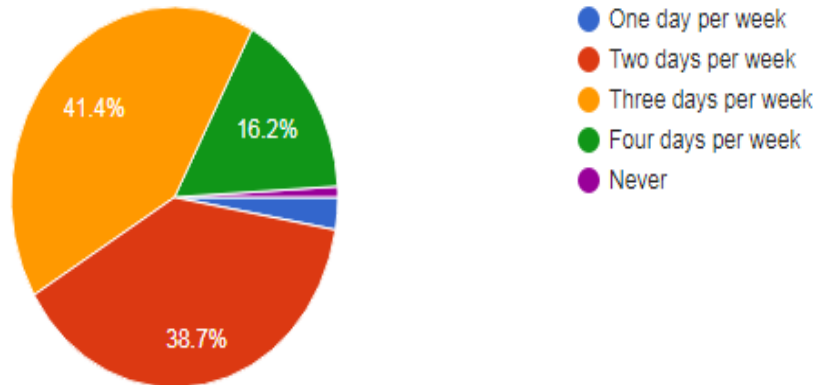
- It is easier to physically have access to work files or the work network share drive for important tasks to be completed compared to limited or no access allowed from home.
- It is very difficult to work from home because there are lots of files that are needed to do certain task but these files are hard copy and should really not be taken out of the office.
- Work is a short commute away. Also, home is noisy and distracting due to children being home and having classes remotely.
- Social isolation.
- It seems as if more is required to be accomplished with limited resources and it becomes stressful.
- Inability to access shared network files from home.
- I need the social interaction with peers and the ease of accessing the files.
- I will have easier access to all resources needed to complete my tasks.
- No separation of private life from work life, hard to concentrate, feeling anxious.
- Accountability for files.
- HR depends heavily on the use of files to complete work. I cannot take home files from the office to complete my work. I have to be in office to use the files to complete my work accurately.
- The job entails working with farmers in their fields and having a hands on approach, it is difficult to communicate effectively from home.
- My home will become my permanent workplace.
- Need to change my environment and separate my work/personal spaces.
- There was pressure to work and be available outside of regular working hours; it was difficult to care for my toddler and do the same amount of work as in the office; it was difficult to retrieve files.
- Limited resources at home and a workable space at home does not exist.
- Public service back in full service.
- I prefer to be in a working environment, where I leave the work at the end of the day.
- Gets more done at the office.
- I prefer to interact face to face and the link to my office kept breaking down.
- Easier access to data, easier communication with co-workers.
- Easier access to work resources. Reliability of access - internet, access to work databases and reduced costs for use of my personal mobile. Company phone and plan is not provided.
- Some work are not virtual.
- Currently, I cannot justify working from home as I live a short distance away from my workplace.
- I prefer work and home life to be separate for my peace of mind as much as possible.
- It's better to be in office when dealing with pay-sheets
- I tend to be more productive when I work at my office desk.
- I must see the work.
- Too many distractions
- Love Is Dying

- **If your answer is yes, how often do you want to work from home?**

As **Figure 22** shows, 41.4% of the respondents stated that they want to work from home three (3) days per week, 38.7% two (2) days per week, 16.2% four (4) days per week, 2.7% one (1) day per week and 0.9 stated never. This indicates that while persons want to work from home, they still want to perform some of their jobs from the office.

Figure 22: Preferred no of days wanting to work from home

876 responses

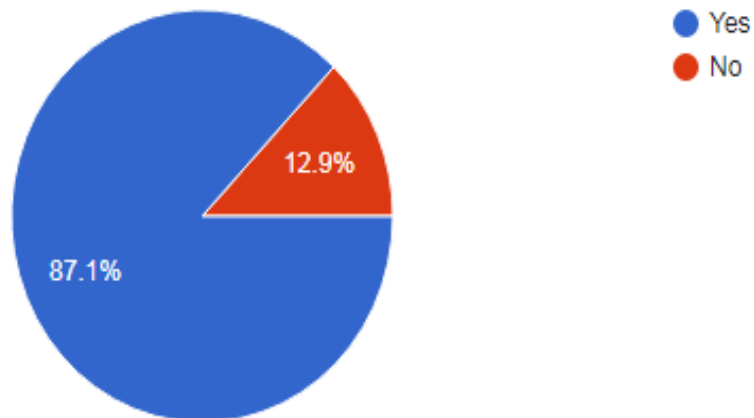


- **Do you have the facilities (dedicated work space) to work from home?**

Of the 947 responses, 87.1% of the respondents stated that they have to facilities to enable them to work from home, while 12.9% stated no as shown in *Figure 23*, hereunder.

Figure 23: Facilities to work from home

947 responses



- **If your answer is no, please indicate what is needed.**

As a follow up to question 23, above, a sample of the responses from those that stated that they did not have to facilities to work from home and what was needed are at **Figure 24**, hereunder. Some of the responses include, need for a dedicated room, laptop with internet access, a chair and a house.

Figure 24: No facilities to work from home

149 responses

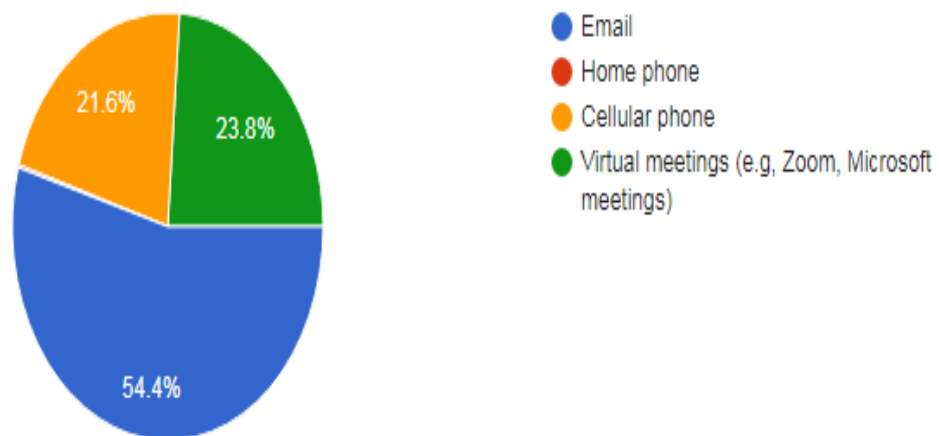
- A dedicated room
- Laptop
- Desk, chair, stationaries, laptop and air conditioning.
- I need a better chair though.
- MIFI
- I have the space, but I would need a better functioning laptop, printer/scanner
- Space not an issue but require stronger internet connection
- Desk top computer
- Ergonomic chair
- A separate room with ac, internet, desk chair
- Laptop with internet
- A dedicated work table
- A larger monitor would suffice
- Laptop; head set; work issued cell phone; electronic work services
- In my community there is poor internet quality.
- A House
- If I am doing work then I think that the ministry should pay part of my internet bill
- Better lighting for my living room area which is my workspace.
- I need to renovate a spare room.
- Privacy.

- **What will be your preferred means of communication**

54.4% of the respondents stated that email will be the preferred means of communication, 21.6% stated the cellular home and 23.8% stated virtual meetings as depicted in **Figure 25**, hereunder. This means, among others, that there is need to improve the IT infrastructure to allow for effective communication via email and to host virtual meetings. While communication via the cellular phone is well accepted, it may be costly to provide one to every member of staff who can work from home. Additionally, if members of staff use their personal phone to conduct the business of the office, the issue of compensation may arise. In this regard, there is need to determine the categories and levels of staff that may be afforded the cellular phone to work from home.

Figure 25: Preferred means of communication

946 responses



- **Other, please specify**

Figure 26 hereunder, shows the other means of communication identified by the respondents.

Figure 26: Other means of communication

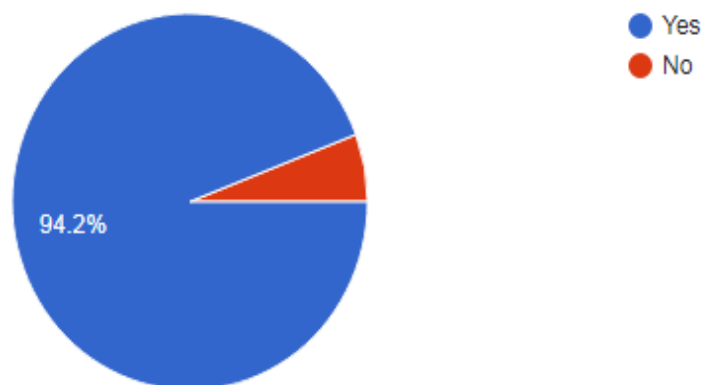
- WhatsApp messages, video and groups
- Google Meet and Google Drive for comment/feedback.
- A virtual office platform/ programme
- Project management/team coordination platforms, such as, Trello, Asana and Wrike
- Slack
- Telegram
- WebEx

- **Do you think that there should be dedicated resources for public officers to access psycho-social support?**

This question was asked within the context of working from home. 94.2% of the respondents stated yes, and 5.8% stated no as shown in **Figure 27**, hereunder. In this regard, there may be the need to examine and include, if possible the current EPA programme to enable to meet the needs for the working from home population

Figure 27: Psycho-social support for Public Officers

947 responses



- **Please state any other comments with respect to working from home.**

This question was asked to obtain open responses from the respondents about working from home. A sample of the responses are shown at **Figure 28**, hereunder. Some of those responses included, it's the new norm, hope that it is actually implemented, it should be optional for those who choose to; The IT Unit should ensure that access to files, it would be a great ease for persons living very far and it should be monitored.

Generally, most of the responses indicates that persons are willing to make the transition, however, there is need for that sensitization about the benefits and training in the various tools to allow for the effectiveness of working from home for the individual and the country.

Figure 28: Any other responses with respect to working from home.

- Performance has to be measurable to ensure abuse is not the new norm.
- Consideration should be given to offsetting the cost associated with working from home.
- Given the current pandemic it is less stressful to work from home as in the office the risk of infection is much higher which makes working environment a bit tense.
- Department heads not recognising the standard, Monday to Friday, 8am - 4:15pm work day. They know you're home which means you are available any day any time.
- It's the new norm.
- Although I prefer to continue working from home, I must say that there was difficulty in separating personal and work life after 4pm as there were assignments, calls, emails, and WhatsApp messaging occurring frequently after the typical time that we would physically leave the office.
- It would be nice for employers to acknowledge that work from home was successful in cases where it was and do not single out persons for not wanting to come into the physical office knowing a pandemic is killing people.
- I strongly believe that in light of traffic constraints in particular, this is a very effective solution to promote productivity, however, this must be well managed as there are persons who may take advantage of the situation and become unproductive as a result.
- This will be a great ease for persons living very far. It would be convenient for people with children.
- I hope this is actually implemented.
- My experience both personal and with staff working from home who are under my supervision is that there was increased productivity.
- The I.T. Unit should ensure that officers can access all server/ database files on their laptops to facilitate remote work.
- Working from home should be optional for those who choose to.
- I highly recommend that you survey women on their experiences with harassment getting to and from the office, I drive myself to and from work and still experience a lot of harassment, women using public transport have way worse experiences).
- The current system in the public sector can be viewed as archaic. Flexible work is the future, especially in terms of creating a society where there is good work-life balance and a sense of wellbeing.
- Officers need to be honest and dedicated to ensure working from home be a success.
- There was no offer of if staff need resources to work from home. It was assumed and then a larger output was expected. If the resources can't be supplied then there can't be an expectation of more work being done from home than in office.
- In as much as we are able to be socially distant at our desks, there are shared spaces such as washrooms and elevators which make this difficult.
- I believe more people should get familiar with technology and how it can't be used to make life and work a whole lot easier. Simple and basic training will help. So much public servants do not like change. They rather meet in an office than communicate through emails or teams. Also, ministries should invest in making this possible. So much people do not have laptops at home. Rid the ministries of desktops and training staff one ways to adapt to the new normal.
- A monitoring team may be needed to ensure the transition is smooth and staff members are not shirking their responsibilities during the work-from-home days.
- The pandemic has provided us an opportunity for true public service reform and to increase efficiency and accountability. The Work from Home Policy is something that should be given positive consideration.
- The IT Department in the Ministry need to be on par with the officer's needs.
- Access to work information should be given beyond 4pm.
- It should be a permanent feature of work in the Public Service. Let us benefit from the many positives features that are inherent in a work from home policy.
- Having experienced this it will be very hard to return to full time in office.

- The government should make greater steps toward the digitization of the public service. This will allow greater access and increased efficiency throughout the service. It will also reduce expenditure incurred by the government in the long run.
- I think Work from home was a great initiative for persons who live in remote areas and should not only be allowed for persons with children.
- Working from home will lack efficiency until old paper based processes move online and use physical files as a form of annual backup.
- I think that the realities of Covid-19 has challenged the perception that an officer is required to sit at a desk in an office to be productive. In today's society, workplaces should take advantage of the vast advancements in information communication technology and recognize the flexibility and benefits which a work from home arrangement can afford, not only to the individual, but to the organization as well.
- It can also save the government money if building spaces can be reduced and rental fees would be less.
- Working from home will also be a blessing financially.
- There is a cost to the officer working from home re electricity, printer cartridges. However, this will balance the money saved on petrol in many cases.
- There will also be those persons whose homes are not conducive to working from home.
- This is true work life balance. When we can spend less time and money going to work; we can perform better. While at home we can multitask - so everyone wins.
- Managing the amount of time spent behind the screen. At home, I ended up on the computer screen for more hours than I was at the office.
- This can lead to improved traffic flow on our nation's roadways due to less vehicles on the roads each day.
- It would be feasible for certain duties associated with different positions.
- This should definitely looked into seriously for the long term. It has the potential to eliminate certain stresses caused by the commute to come to the office.
- A work from Home policy should be the way forward with our without a pandemic. This arrangement really aids employees by decreasing fatigue and improving work-life balance and will really boost productivity once managed properly.
- After doing it, I wondered why it had never been an option before.
- Senior officers should still respect subordinates space and time and not call at inappropriate hours and not unnecessarily.
- Technology should be made available to staff and not just those who are in senior positions.
- Working from home reduced my food bill and car gas bill but increased my electricity bill.
- Need to have work from home guidelines especially with regards to confidentiality.
- The public service seems to be wanting to head in this direction, yet the heads of departments want to still see physical beings in the office. The mindset must change first.
- That there is an immense need for workshops for officers (on all levels) to assist in their adjustment / approach to working from home. To know how to supervise, manage time and respect the boundaries of others.
- I grew as an officer and became a lot more productive when I worked from home.
- It should also be noted that a minority of individuals used the working from home situation as an excuse not to perform the functions required of them. Measures should be put in place to ensure that such is stymied.
- Less money spent on clothes.
- Training in emotional intelligence for management ought to be considered.
- Finally, Trinidad and Tobago is trying to catch up with the rest of the developed countries in the world

5.0 Conclusion

Generally, there is support for a WFH Policy, however there are certain issues that should be dealt with to allow for the effectiveness of WFH. Issues such as remote access to files, the provision of relevant tools to allow for such and providing support to those who may not want to WFH because of personal issues.

5.1 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations for the interim WFH policy guidelines:

- a. Outside of a pandemic or natural disaster, WFH should be a discretionary measure and not an entitlement.
- b. Outside of a pandemic or natural disaster, the maximum number of days to WFH should be two (2) days per week or eight (8) days per month for those who can WFH.
- c. Officers should apply for the number of days that they want to WFH. This is to differentiate from sick, casual and vacation leave. The application procedure should be the same as applying any other leave.
- d. A record should be kept of the number of days an officer applied for.
- e. The output of officers WFH should be monitored by a senior officer.
- f. IT should as much as possible, and if it can be facilitated, allow remote access to files to those who can and are approved to WFH.
- g. If no tools or devices, such as laptops, are provided by the MDAs and officers are willing to use their own, then IT should facilitate such as much as possible.
- h. A confidentiality agreement, stating that the work would be kept confidential, should be signed between the Permanent Secretary, Head of Department or a representative and the applicant.
- i. As far as practicable, training should be provided to members of staff in the use of tools to allow for WFH.

Appendix IV– Minutes of 9th Meeting

**EXCERPT MINUTES OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF
PARLIAMENT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,**

HELD ON February 16, 2022

This meeting was facilitated via the Zoom video conferencing program

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Mr. Paul Richards	Chairman
Mr. Roger Monroe, MP	Vice-Chairman
Ms. Pennelope Beckles, MP	Member
Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP	Member
Mr. David Nakhid	Member
Mr. Avinash Singh	Member
Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member

ABSENT/EXCUSED

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP	Member
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Secretariat

Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Mr. Brian Lucio	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Aaneesa Baksh	Researcher
Ms. Nicole Brown	Researcher

CALL TO ORDER

1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and welcomed members present.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2.1 The Chairman advised that Mr. Esmond Forde, MP asked to be excused from the day's proceedings.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 08, 2021

- 3.1 The Minutes were confirmed without amendments on a motion moved by Mr. Avinash Singh and seconded by Ms. Penelope Beckles, MP.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 4.1 The Chairman highlighted the following matters:
- i. **Item 4.1, page 2** – A Final Draft of the Report on the Committee’s Survey was prepared by the Secretariat and was circulated by email on February 15, 2022.
 - ii. **Item 6.2, page 3-** The Secretariat was working towards completing the Inquiry Proposal on Mental Health and will circulate upon completion.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS RE: 1st Public Hearing pursuant to an inquiry into the impact of work-from-home and other alternative work arrangements, policies and initiatives on Public Sector productivity and service delivery

- 5.1 The Chairman indicated that later in the proceedings, the Committee will convene its 1st hearing with stakeholders pursuant to its *inquiry into the impact of work-from-home and other alternative work arrangements, policies and initiatives on Public Sector productivity and service delivery*.
- 5.2 The Members were advised that officials of the following entities were expected to participate in the day’s hearing:
- i. Ministry of Public Administration;
 - ii. Ministry of Digital Transformation;
 - iii. Ministry of Planning and Development; and
 - iv. Personnel Department.
- 5.3 The Chairman confirmed that all Members were in receipt of the following documents:
- i. Written Submissions from the entities listed above (inclusive of the revised submission from the Ministry of Planning and Development); and

- ii. Issues Papers prepared by the Secretariat on the Written Submissions from Stakeholders.
- 5.4 The Secretariat presented the main findings of the Committee's survey into the impact of work-from-home and other alternative work arrangements, policies and initiatives on Public Sector productivity and service deliver.
 - 5.5 The Committee discussed the approach to be taken to examine the Officials during the hearing.

OTHER BUSINESS

Proposed Date and Agenda for Next Meeting

- 6.1 The Committee agreed to next meet on Wednesday March 16, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. and convene its first public hearing pursuant to its inquiry into *the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the prevalence of mental health and psychosocial issues and the State's capacity to provide adequate support to the population (with particular focus on substance abuse, depression, suicide)*.
- 6.2 Members agreed to send their proposed stakeholders for the Committee's first hearing by email.

SUSPENSION

- 7.1 The Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING RE: 1st Public Hearing on an inquiry into the impact of work-from-home and other alternative work arrangements, policies and initiatives on Public Sector productivity and service delivery

1. The meeting resumed in public at 10:17 a.m.
2. The following persons joined the meeting:

Ministry of Public Administration

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Mr. Claudelle McKellar | Permanent Secretary Ag. |
| 2. Mrs. Sherry Ann Smith-Simmons | Human Resource Manager |
| 3. Ms. Candice Mohan | Public Management Consultant |

Ministry of Digital Transformation

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Mr. Richard Madray | Permanent Secretary |
| 2. Mr. Charles Bobb-Semple | CEO, National Information and
Communication Technology |
| 3. Ms. Denyse White | Deputy National Chief Digital Officer |
| 4. Ms. Cynthia Reddock-Downes | CEO, Telecommunications Authority of
Trinidad and Tobago |

Ministry of Planning and Development

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Mrs. Joanne Deoraj | Permanent Secretary |
| 2. Ms. Meera Ramesar | Director Ag, Socio Economic Policy
Planning Division |

Chief Personnel Department

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Daryl Dindial Commander (Ret'd) | Chief Personnel Officer |
| 2. Ms. Sherraine Genas | Director, Legal Services |

Opening Statements

3. The chief officials of the aforementioned entities made brief opening remarks.

Key Issues Discussed

The following are the main issues arising from discussions with the **Ministry of Public Administration**:

Human Resource Management Software

- i. The current eHRM system used is a PeopleSoft-based system called IRIS.
- ii. This system was implemented in 1999/2000. The system has been primarily used for payroll administration.
- iii. However, the full functionality of the software has not been utilised.
- iv. The IRIS system was previously assessed by a consultant. The consultant found that there is a need for change management to improve acceptance and optimal utilisation of the system within the public Service.
- v. There is still a need for broad-based training in the use of the eHRM system.
- vi. There is also a need for manual systems to be integrated with electronic systems.
- vii. There is also a need to evaluate whether other software systems are better suited for use in the Public Service.
- viii. There is no specific timeline established for completing an assessment of the eHRM system. However, this assessment is included in the PSIP for 2022.

Assessment of Work from Home Experience

- ix. Work from Home has the possibility to contribute to modernising of the Public Service.
- x. The Ministry of Public Administration did not receive any complaints regarding staff using personal phones for work-related/ customer service calls.
- xi. Jobs in the manipulative class of the establishment such as Messenger, Maid and Driver are unable to be done from home.
- xii. Work from Home is not a right. It is a mechanism to allow the work of the organisation to continue within the context of jobs that are able to be done remotely.
- xiii. Work from Home has the possibility to improve Ease of Doing Business by improving productivity and efficiency due to factors such as reduced traffic congestion.

Public Service Productivity and Service Delivery

- xiv. Digitisation is not a panacea but can alleviate some of the challenges associated with productivity.
- xv. The National Productivity Council is engaged in a process to analyse Public Sector Productivity. This Council falls under the Ministry of Labour.
- xvi. The TTCSI highlighted that its comprehensive report on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sectors amongst its membership will be completed by the end of 2021.
- xvii. The view that there is low productivity and poor service delivery in the Public Service has not been substantiated by data.
- xviii. There must be baseline studies to determine the level of productivity and output in the public service. Once baseline figures have been established, then there can be an evaluation of the impact of WFH on Public Service productivity and service delivery.

The following are the main issues arising from discussions with the **Ministry of Digital Transformation**:

Mandate of the Ministry

- i. The Ministry of Digital Transformation became a standalone Ministry in July 2021 and has oversight for the National Information and Communication Company Limited (iGovTT) and the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT).
- ii. The mandate of the Ministry is to transform the way public goods and services are delivered to the public using digital technology.
- iii. The Ministry is at the beginning phase of delivering policies that will underpin the digitisation and digitalisation process of the Public Service.
- iv. TATT and iGovTT both spearheaded initiatives that support WFH in the Public Service/
- v. There is a need to conduct an assessment on the baseline standards for ICT support needed to effectively facilitate WFH in the Public Service.

- vi. The Ministry is working on a document that provides a framework to guide ministries on how to support employees engaged in WFH and other remote work arrangements.
- vii. The document will outline minimum standards required for hardware and software applications.
- viii. The document will also cover issues of security and data classification of sensitive versus non-sensitive matters

Security of Information

- ix. Employees are expected to keep information confidential.
- x. Methods to protect confidentiality of documents accessed by employees include signing of Nondisclosure Agreements/Confidentiality Agreements.
- xi. Employees needing to access information remotely should do so via a Virtual Private Network (VPN).
- xii. There are existing ramifications for disclosure of confidential information whether this information is accessed from digital or paper-based sources.
- xiii. If employees are using shared devices, they should set up a unique, password-protected profile that is inaccessible to other members of the household.
- xiv. The Telecommunication Amendment Bill is currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Digital transformation and will be forwarded to the Office of the Attorney General. This Bill will include provisions for electronic transactions

Access and Accessibility: Supportive Technology

- xv. There is currently a network provided to MDAs called GovNeTT.
- xvi. This network provides seamless access to e mails and provides a platform for cross-agency collaboration.
- xvii. There is currently a utilisation rate of over 70% by government ministries of this platform.
- xviii. There is also a Microsoft Enterprise Agreement that gives access to Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, Online calling and Screen Sharing. There have been 7, 200 deployments at 113 out of 159 MDAs.
- xix. The systems currently in place do not cater for monitoring of service delivery and productivity. However, as the government moves towards increasing levels of digitisation and digitalisation, developing this level of functionality is in progress.
- xx. Digitalisation will help to monitor levels of access to public services. However, the process is not yet standardised across government entities. As such, data is collected as Ministries implement digital transformation technologies.
- xxi. Due to the increase in numbers of people working from home during the pandemic, there has been an increased demand for internet service.
- xxii. There has been a need for higher standards of service provision with regard to reliability of internet connections to facilitate effective remote work and schooling.
- xxiii. There is no data available on Public Service employees using Access Centres as options for working remotely. However, there are no restrictions on anyone using these centres for this purpose.
- xxiv. TATT currently does not have data to determine the level of performance of TTWiFi Access services as the project is in the early stages of implementation.

- xxv. Trinidad and Tobago has 100% mobile access. However, the rate of access to fixed line internet is 87% in Trinidad and 80-85% in Tobago.
- xxvi. Rural communities are disproportionately affected by lack of fixed line internet connectivity.
- xxvii. The Universal Service Fund has been used to reduce the cost of service provision to reduce gaps in access to internet service.
- xxviii. TATT provided additional Spectrum devices to improve access capabilities.
- xxix. The results of the Digital Inclusion Survey will provide information regarding areas needing an improvement in internet service access.

The following are the main issues arising from discussions with the **Ministry of Planning and Development**:

Progress on WFH Policy

- i. The Ministry of Planning and Development is spearheading the development of the Work from Home Policy for the Public Service in the context National Development as it relates to improving good governance by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service.
- ii. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the sub-Committee of the Board of Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department examined the impact of traffic congestion on productivity and were in the process of embarking upon a pilot WFH arrangement using select departments.
- iii. A Work from Home policy will have an impact on terms and conditions of employment.
- iv. The Ministry aims to complete the TOR and consultations regarding the development of the WFH policy by mid-June 2022.
- v. The Ministry plans to advertise for the consultancy to develop the policy by the end of the current fiscal year (i.e. by the end of September).
- vi. The MPD is working with partners, including the Ministry of Public Administration in the establishment of the Productivity and Work Ethic Unit to address the issue of productivity in the Public Service.
- vii. The technical support research committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and members of the Tripartite advisory Committee.
- viii. A survey of 1,068 Public Sector Employees indicated that 853 of them were able to work from home.
- ix. The Ministry developed a questionnaire on WFH but did not initially include members of the Private Sector. However, there are plans to widen the scope of the research to include the Private Sector given the linkages with the Public Sector.

Progress on Digitisation

- i. Legislative amendments needed to facilitate a WFH policy include liability for health and safety issues, e transactions, e signatures, confidentiality issues and remote access to databases.
- ii. Between mid-2020 and February 2022, approximately 5,810 applications to Town and Country Planning have been processed online

The following are the main issues arising from discussions with the **Personnel Department**:

Impact of WFH Policy on Terms and Conditions of Employment

- i. The Personnel Department will be responsible for any adjustment made to terms and conditions of employment related to any WFH policy implemented.
- ii. Majority Unions will need to be consulted should any changes need to be made to terms and conditions of employment.
- iii. There are currently 1,621 jobs in the Civil Service under evaluation.
- iv. 35% of these jobs can be done remotely while 36% are considered to be hybrid and can be done partially from home.
- v. Based on ILO guidelines, when employees are working from home, the home space becomes an extension of the work space.
- vi. There is currently no case law in Trinidad and Tobago to govern employer responsibility when employees work from home. However, there is precedent established in other jurisdictions.
- vii. The CPO is currently evaluating civil Service jobs to determine which jobs can be done remotely.
- viii. The COP is also examining which jobs have become obsolete, which jobs can be consolidated, and which positions need to be created.
- ix. The COP anticipates that there will be a need to upgrade the ICT Human Resource capacity of the Public Service as the government moves towards digitisation.

Productivity Indicators

- x. There is a need to adequately measure productivity in the Public Service.
- xi. The current performance evaluation system measures individual productivity but not organisational productivity.
- xii. Individual evaluations focus on technical competence but not behavioural competence. There is a need to include behavioural indicators when evaluating performance.

ADJOURNMENT

9.1 The meeting was adjourned accordingly at 12:21 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

March 18, 2022

Appendix V – Verbatim Notes of 9th Meeting

