

Younger Firms and CEOs Allow More Work from Home[†]

By CEVAT GIRAY AKSOY, JOSE MARIA BARRERO, NICHOLAS BLOOM, KATELYN CRANNEY,
STEVEN J. DAVIS, MATHIAS DOLLS, AND PABLO ZARATE*

We document three facts about work from home (WFH) in the United States. First, employees WFH more often at younger firms—almost twice as often at firms founded after 2015 as compared to those founded before 1990. Second, employees WFH more often at firms with younger CEOs. The average WFH rate is 1.4 days per week when the CEO is under 30, compared to 1.1 days when the CEO is 60 or older. Third, the self-employed WFH two to three times as often as wage and salary employees, depending on employer size. Because the self-employed comprise around one-tenth of the US workforce, they account for a large share of all WFH days in the economy. These facts highlight the influence of organizational and managerial attributes on the prevalence of WFH.

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a global rise in WFH with large, enduring differences in WFH rates across countries (Aksoy et al. 2022; Aksoy, Barrero, et al. 2025; Zarate et al. 2025). Our evidence pertains to US outcomes in the postpandemic era, after WFH rates settled down to roughly 25 percent of paid workdays (Barrero, Bloom, and Davis 2023). The rise of WFH drew attention to the value of flexible working arrangements. It altered commuting and time-use patterns, with implications for labor supply and worker welfare (Mas and Pallais 2017; Aksoy, Bloom, et al. 2025). It also impacted residential location choices and the spatial distribution of economic activity, with knock-on effects for city centers and commercial real estate (Delventhal, Kwon, and Parkhomenko 2023; Gupta, Mittal, and Van Nieuwerburgh 2024; Akan et al. 2025). Our paper contributes to this research by showing how WFH rates vary with the *organizational attributes* of firms rather than across geographies, industries, workers, and jobs. It complements prior work on the return-to-office policies of publicly traded firms, including Flynn, Ghent, and Nair (2025) and Ding and Ma (2023).

I. Data

We use data from the Survey of Working Arrangements and Attitudes (SWAA), a monthly online survey of roughly 2,500 to 10,000 US residents aged 20–64 (Barrero, Bloom, and Davis 2021). In addition to asking about the respondent’s age, gender, education, earnings, industry, occupation, and employer characteristics, the SWAA elicits information about working arrangements. For each day in the prior week, respondents report whether they worked a full paid day (six or more hours) and, if so, their main place of work (home or employer or client premises). We use these data to measure the number of full paid WFH days in the prior week, ranging from zero to five. We designate workers as *fully remote* if they WFH at least five full paid days in the prior week. The SWAA also asks whether respondents are wage and salary employees or are “self-employed and run my own business.”

* Aksoy: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and King’s College London (email: aksoyc@ebrd.com); Barrero: Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (email: jose.barrero@itam.mx); Bloom: Stanford University (email: nbloom@stanford.edu); Cranney: Stanford University (email: kcranney@stanford.edu); Davis: Hoover Institution at Stanford University (email: stevend5@Stanford.edu); Dolls: ifo Institute (email: dolls@ifo.de); Zarate: Princeton University (email: pzarate@princeton.edu). We thank the Asian Development Bank (SPC TA 6556/2024-03), the Japan Fund for Prosperity and Resilience, the EBRD (2024.012104 and 2025.014800), Asociación Mexicana de Cultura, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research through the project “Development of poverty and inequality in Germany and France over the past 25 years” (grant 01UI2208A), the International Growth Centre, the Russell Sage Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation, and the World Bank (7213347 and 7215093) for financial support. Views presented are those of the authors and not necessarily of the EBRD or any other institution. The usual disclaimer holds.

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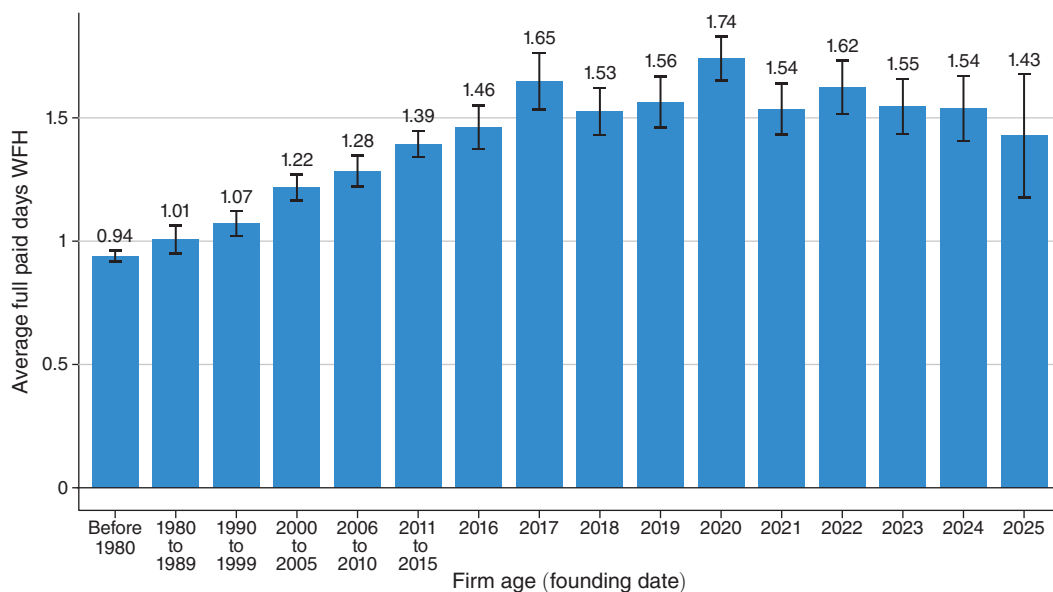


FIGURE 1. AVERAGE WFH RATES BY FIRM AGE

Notes: Based on $N = 76,716$ SWAA responses from January 2024 to December 2025. The sample includes wage and salary employees who worked four or more days during the reference week. Based on responses to the questions “When did your employer hire its first employee (at any location)?” and “For each day last week, did you work a full day (6 or more hours), and if so where?”

For wage and salary employees, the SWAA elicits data on firm size by asking: “Counting all of its locations, how many employees work for your primary employer?” The response options are: fewer than 10, 10–49, 50–99, 100–499, 500–4,999, or 5,000+ employees. It elicits firm age by asking when the firm first hired a paid employee. And it asks “What age is your employer’s CEO?” with response options for under 30, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, and 60+.

Our SWAA analysis sample excludes “speeders” and respondents who fail attention-check questions. The data are reweighted to match the share of persons in the 2010–2019 Current Population Survey in cells defined by age-sex-education-earnings. To focus on the postpandemic era, we use SWAA waves from January 2024 through December 2025.

II. Results

Figure 1 shows that WFH days per week are higher among employees of younger firms. WFH rises steadily as we move from older cohorts of firms to younger ones founded in the 2000s and 2010s. WFH rates are highest for firms founded around the pandemic (especially the 2020 cohort). Later cohorts show some pullback, but their employees continue to WFH at rates that are about 50 percent higher than the employees of firms founded before 1990.

These patterns suggest that newer firms find it easier to operate with remote-friendly practices. It might be easier for newer firms to adopt new technologies that support WFH, whereas older firms find it harder to alter their long-standing organizational practices. Indeed, many firms in the 2020 cohort had no choice but to operate with WFH practices at inception, which might explain why they continue to exhibit higher WFH rates than other cohorts.

Figure 2 links WFH patterns to a salient leadership characteristic: CEO age. Average WFH days decline monotonically as CEO age rises. Firms led by CEOs under 30 have an average of 1.4 WFH days per week, compared with 1.1 days at firms led by CEOs who are 60 or older. In a regression of

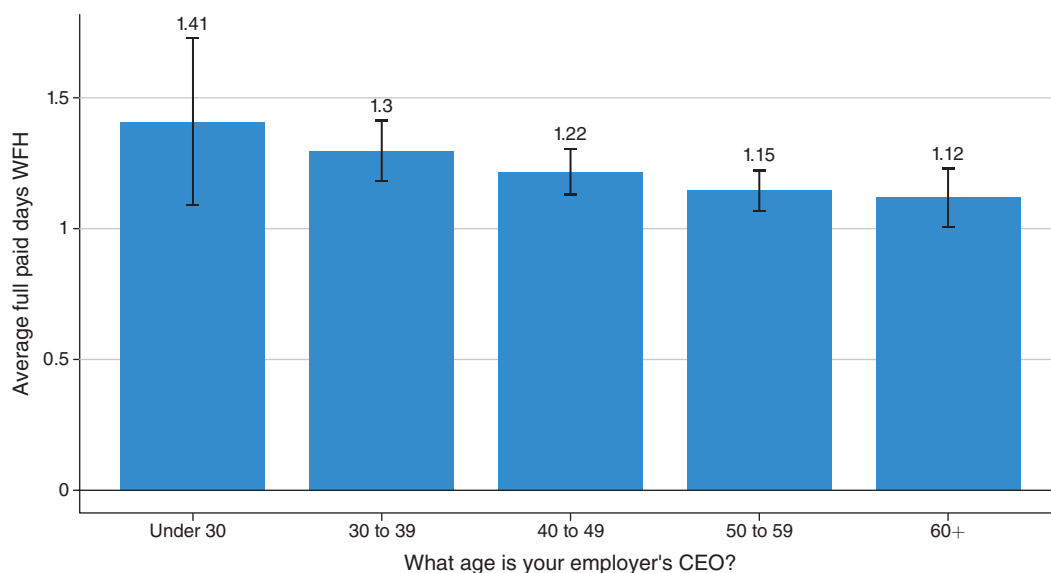


FIGURE 2. AVERAGE WFH RATES BY CEO AGE

Notes: Based on $N = 9,469$ SWAA responses from 2025. The sample includes wage and salary employees who worked four or more days during the reference week. Based on responses to the question “For each day last week, did you work a full day (6 or more hours), and if so where?”

“full days WFH per week” on “CEO age in years,” the coefficient is -0.007 with a standard error of 0.002 . However, the CEO age pattern is no longer statistically significant when conditioning on firm age effects (using the same firm age categories as in Figure 1). In contrast, the firm age pattern remains statistically significant when we condition on CEO age.

We also find that WFH rates are higher at firms with women CEOs, but this effect is statistically insignificant in the raw data and when conditioning on firm age and CEO age. A regression of “full days WFH per week” on “CEO=female” yields a coefficient of 0.078 with a standard error of 0.053 .

Finally, Figure 3 shows how WFH intensity varies with employer size. Self-employed workers report two to three times as many WFH days per week as wage and salary employees, depending on employer size. Compared to wage and salary employees, the self-employed are more than three times as likely to work in a fully remote capacity. There are modest differences by employer size among wage and salary workers. Specifically, both WFH rates and the incidence of fully remote work are somewhat lower for midsize employers (10 to 100 employees). But these differences are quite small compared to the large gaps between the self-employed and wage and salary employees.

Taken together, Figures 1 to 3 suggest that WFH is more prevalent in organizations that are more amenable to new technologies and work practices—namely, at younger firms, those with young CEOs, and among self-employed workers. Coordination and agency problems “within the firm” are presumably not an issue for self-employed persons, which may partly explain their high WFH rates.

III. Conclusion

Our findings yield several messages. First, they caution against interpreting aggregate WFH trends as reflecting a uniform shift across all workplaces. Much of the long rise of WFH before 2020 likely reflected shifts toward employment at newer firms, with younger CEOs, who adopted new ways of doing business to exploit new technologies. Second, the gradient in WFH rates with firm age and CEO age point to management and organizational attributes as important influences on working arrangements.

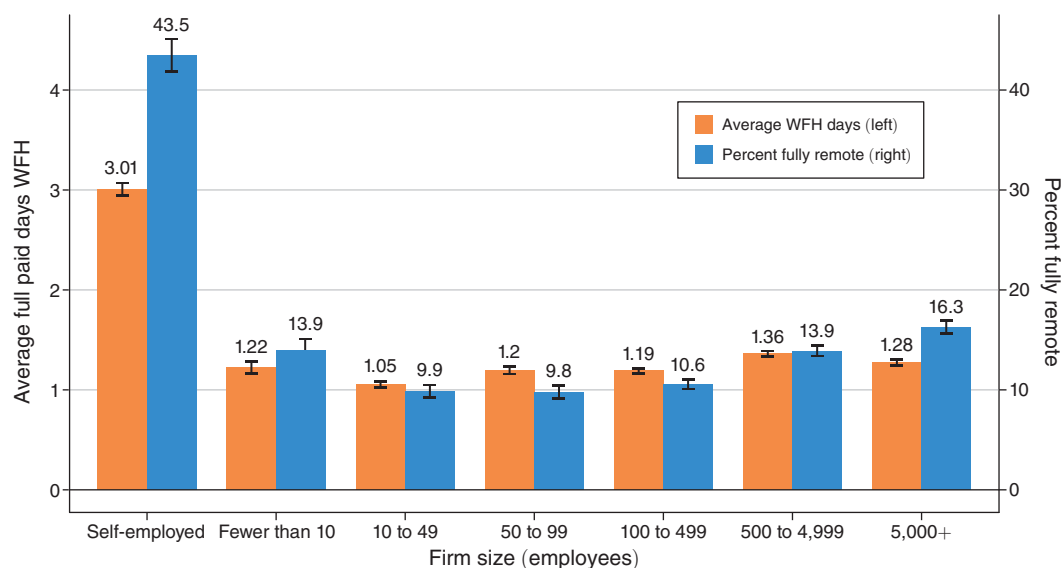


FIGURE 3. AVERAGE WFH RATES BY EMPLOYER SIZE

Notes: Based on $N = 82,729$ SWAA responses from January 2024 to December 2025. The sample includes wage and salary employees who worked four or more days during the reference week. Based on responses to the questions “Counting all of its locations, how many employees work for your primary employer?” and “For each day last week, did you work a full day (6 or more hours), and if so where?” Left axis reports the average full paid days WFH, and the right axis reports the share working fully remote (five or more days).

WFH has high amenity value to many workers, but it is also a production and coordination choice. Third, because younger firms and business leaders are potentially more amenable to newer digital tools and management practices, WFH may continue to expand as firms and business leaders turn over. These shifts might occur even as incumbent firms and business leaders maintain strict in-office norms.

Our work also raises questions about whether, and to what extent, differences in the industry and occupation mix of employment can account for the patterns we find by firm and CEO age and for the much higher WFH rates among the self-employed. Future work could combine richer firm-level data or linked employer-employee records to isolate within-occupation and within-industry differences in WFH intensities, isolating the effect of leadership characteristics, firm age, and other organizational attributes on WFH adoption.

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