

OPP: WORK, LEISURE, & SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Experiences and contexts of remote work among older, mid-life and young adults: The case for age-specific remote work interventions

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Purpose Over half of the U.S. workforce works from home at least one day per week. The shift to remote work, catalyzed by the Covid-19 pandemic, has revolutionized our relationship with work. Evidence from multiple nationally-representative surveys indicates that working remotely, at least some of the time, has benefits for worker well-being (Parker Horowitz, & Minkin 2020; 2022; Saad & Wigert, 2021). However remote workers also have been found to struggle with stress and social isolation. To date there has been little research conducted on the impact of remote work on well-being across the adult life course. This study examines how older remote workers (aged 65+) compare to mid-life (aged 45-64) and young adult (aged 18-44) remote workers in terms of their experiences with remote work and its impact on well-being (Figure 1). **Method** Data are from a survey module within a large U.S. nationally representative monthly survey, The Survey of Consumer Attitudes (SCA), (Curtin, Presser, & Singer, 2005; Curtin, Singer, & Presser, 2007). The SCA has been conducted since 1940 and monthly since 1977 (Curtin et al., 2005; Curtin et al., 2007). The SCA captures the impact of the expectations of consumers on their spending and saving behavior. It is administered monthly by telephone to a nationally representative sample of adults age 18 and older (Curtin et al., 2007). Participants provided informed consent prior to being surveyed. We developed a 5-minute supplemental module focused on remote work that was included in the SCA's December 2021 and January 2022 surveys. Participants in this study (n=370) were all working remotely at least part of the time. **Results and Discussion** Bivariate analyses indicate that mid-life and older remote workers were significantly less likely than younger remote workers to report feeling stressed sometimes or more often. In a multivariate regression model, the findings remained after adjusting for sociodemographic characteristics for mid-life ($b = -0.26$; $p < 0.001$) and older remote workers (-0.19 ; $p = 0.001$). The non-linear relationship between age and stress highlights the need for development of age and environment-specific interventions to promote remote worker well-being across the adult life course.

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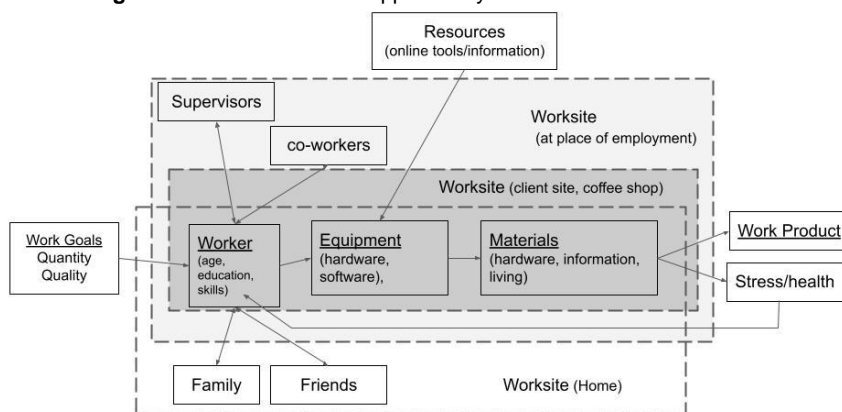


Figure 1. The work context, remote, home or employer, and the technological aspects of the equipment and tools affect the worker's ability to interact with co-workers & supervisors and with family and friends. It is related to worker stress/health and productivity. The dark gray area shows a worker in a remote setting, such as a coffee shop or client site. The light gray area shows a worker at their employer site. The white area shows the worker in a home setting.