



## 3<sup>rd</sup> 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) 12<sup>TH</sup> PARLIAMENT

OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

# 3<sup>rd</sup> 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: 09/09/2022

Date Laid in the Senate:

An electronic copy of this report can be found on the Parliament website: <https://www.ttparliament.org/committees/show/the-committee-on-social-services-and-public-administration-2/reports/>

**The Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration**

**Contact the Committee's Secretariat**

**Telephone:** 624-7275 Extensions 2277/2284/2283, **Fax:** 625-4672

**Email:** [jcsspa@ttparliament.org](mailto:jcsspa@ttparliament.org)

## THE COMMITTEE

---



Mr. Paul Richards  
**CHAIRMAN**

---



Mr. Esmond Forde, MP  
**VICE-CHAIRMAN**



Mrs. Penelope Beckles, MP  
**MEMBER**

---



Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP  
**MEMBER**



Mr. Rohan Sinanan  
**MEMBER**

---



Mr. Roger Munroe, MP  
**MEMBER**



Mr. Avinash Singh  
**MEMBER**

---



Mr. David Nakhid  
**MEMBER**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Committee Mandate and Establishment</b> .....	6
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	9
TABLE OF APPENDICES.....	10
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	11
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS .....	13
OBJECTIVE 1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION.....	13
OBJECTIVE 2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION.....	13
OBJECTIVE 3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION.....	14
OBJECTIVE 4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION.....	14
INTRODUCTION.....	15
Work from Home Arrangement as a Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic .....	15
Timeline of Stay-at-Home Measures in Trinidad and Tobago .....	17
Conduct of the Inquiry.....	19
KEY ISSUES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	21
<b>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.</b> .....	21
<i>Findings</i> .....	24
<i>Recommendations</i> .....	25
<b>OBJECTIVE 2: To assess the methods used to design, deploy monitor and evaluate/measure work output/ employee deliverables of public sector employees.</b> .....	27
<i>Findings</i> .....	30
<i>Recommendations</i> .....	31
<b>OBJECTIVE 3: To evaluate the efficiency of service delivery and infrastructural provisions in key ministries that utilise Work-from-Home and hybrid arrangements.</b> .....	32
<i>Findings</i> .....	33
<i>Recommendations</i> .....	33
<i>Findings</i> .....	42
<i>Recommendations</i> .....	43
APPENDICES .....	45
Appendix I – List of officials who appeared and provided oral evidence .....	45
Appendix II – Report on JSC Social Services.....	47
Appendix III– Ministry of Planning and Development Work from Home Policy Guidelines for the Civil Service of Trinidad and Tobago .....	79

Appendix IV– Minutes of 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting..... 109  
Appendix V – Verbatim Notes of 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting..... 117

## 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 Monroe, 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 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- (ii) Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh, MP with effect from November 12<sup>th</sup>, 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

## **TABLE OF APPENDICES**

<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>PAGE NUMBER</b>
<b>Appendix I: List of officials who appeared and provided oral evidence</b>	45
<b>Appendix II: Summary Report: JSC Social Services Work from Home Survey</b>	46
<b>Appendix III: Report of the Ministry of Planning and Development Work from Home Policy Guidelines for the Civil Service of Trinidad and Tobago</b>	79
<b>Appendix IV: Minutes of the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Committee</b>	109
<b>Appendix V: Verbatim Notes of the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Committee</b>	117

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1.1. At its 7<sup>th</sup> meeting held on November 17<sup>th</sup> 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.
- E. 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 114 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).”<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>
- 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 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> International Labour organization, *an employers’ guide on working from home in response to the outbreak of Covid-19*, 5

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

- 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.”**<sup>3</sup> 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.”<sup>4</sup> She noted that WFH has a “positive impact on families”<sup>5</sup> and has the possibility to improve the relationship between parents and children if “parents work from home some days of the week.”<sup>6</sup> The Minister also mentioned that her **Ministry will “work with the Minister of Labour to develop a national remote work policy.”**<sup>7</sup>
- 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.”<sup>8</sup> The Central Statistical Office has provided data which shows “small but notable increases in productivity during work from home periods.”<sup>9</sup> 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-

---

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

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*



19. Of all these viruses identified as threats, the coronavirus responsible for Covid-19 has had the most devastating impact on the human population.<sup>10</sup>

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,”<sup>11</sup> **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.**

### 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 <b>non-essential workers were to stay home from March 30 to April 15<sup>th</sup>.</b></i> ” <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup>
April 6, 2020:	The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago “announced in a Press Conference in Port of Spain that the <b>Stay at Home Order that was initially to end on April 15 was extended until April 30.</b> ” <sup>14</sup>

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

<sup>11</sup> [https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/pm-eases-some-restrictions-blowout-for-public-servant-slackers/article\\_5820dd8a-0b2c-11eb-8681-2bf803c9e0ad.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/pm-eases-some-restrictions-blowout-for-public-servant-slackers/article_5820dd8a-0b2c-11eb-8681-2bf803c9e0ad.html)

<sup>12</sup> [https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/non-essential-workers-stay-home/article\\_2207a2da-8b46-11ea-9299-6b3a93f21586.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/non-essential-workers-stay-home/article_2207a2da-8b46-11ea-9299-6b3a93f21586.html)

<sup>13</sup> [https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/national-security-minister-identifies-essential-services/article\\_8436cca6-8b46-11ea-b581-631bdbd6f152.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/national-security-minister-identifies-essential-services/article_8436cca6-8b46-11ea-b581-631bdbd6f152.html)

<sup>14</sup> [https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/pm-rowley-stay-at-home-order-extended-until-april-30/article\\_3ed1a340-8b49-11ea-9f37-b3f0f8997555.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/pm-rowley-stay-at-home-order-extended-until-april-30/article_3ed1a340-8b49-11ea-9f37-b3f0f8997555.html)

Date	Announcement Made
April 25, 2020:	“At a media conference hosted by Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, it was announced that <b>the-stay-at-home order would be extended to May 15.</b> <sup>15</sup>
April 25, 2020:	“At a media conference hosted by Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, it was announced that <b>the-stay-at-home order would be extended to May 15.</b> <sup>16</sup>
May 30, 2020:	The Prime Minister announced <b>that as of June 1, 2020, all public service managers</b> were required to be at work full-time. <b>Subordinate workers were required to report to work on a rotational basis until further notice.</b> <sup>17</sup>
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.” <sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> [https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/stay-at-home-order-extended/article\\_e35f2e0-91f8-11ea-aa2c-436e7ba08772.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/stay-at-home-order-extended/article_e35f2e0-91f8-11ea-aa2c-436e7ba08772.html)

<sup>16</sup> [https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/stay-at-home-order-extended/article\\_e35f2e0-91f8-11ea-aa2c-436e7ba08772.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/coronavirus/timeline/stay-at-home-order-extended/article_e35f2e0-91f8-11ea-aa2c-436e7ba08772.html)

<sup>17</sup> <https://newsday.co.tt/2020/05/30/retail-stores-malls-reopen-public-servants-back-to-work-on-monday/>

<sup>18</sup> TTT Live Online Press Conference Summary, <https://www.facebook.com/ttlliveonline/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; and**
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; and
- 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**; and
- 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).

4.1.18. 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; and
- 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**

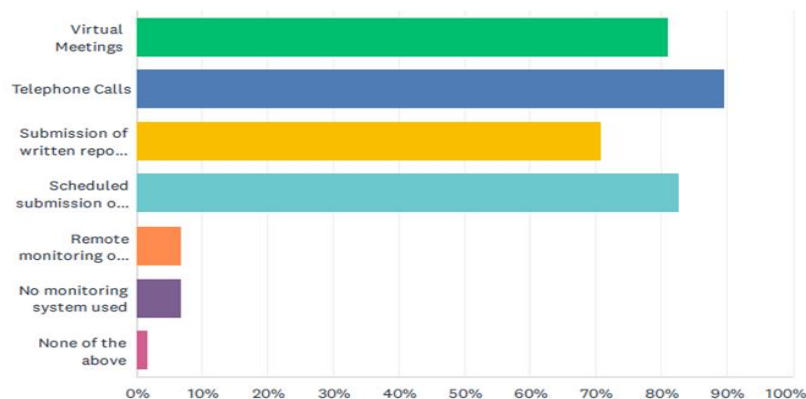
- 5.1.1. The Committee learnt during the February 6, 2022 Public Hearing that the Ministry of Public Administration utilises a PeopleSoft-based Electronic Human Resource Management (eHRM) system called IRIS.
- 5.1.2. IRIS was implemented in 1999/2000 and has been primarily used for payroll administration. However, the full functionality of the software has not been utilised.
- 5.1.3. 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.
- 5.1.4. 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; and
  - c. There is also a need to evaluate whether other software systems are better suited for use in the Public Service.
- 5.1.5. There is no specific timeline established for completing an assessment of the eHRM system. However, this assessment is included in the PSIP for 2022.
- 5.1.6. 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**

- 5.1.7. The National Productivity Council, which falls under the Ministry of Labour, is engaged in a process to analyse Public Sector Productivity.
- 5.1.8. 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.
- 5.1.9. 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.
- 5.1.10. According to the Personnel Department, the current performance evaluation system measures individual productivity but not organisational productivity.
- 5.1.11. 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**

- 5.1.12. Survey questions and responses relevant to Objective 2 have been outlined below. For the complete survey report, please see **Appendix II**.
- 5.1.13. 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	

5.1.14. 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

5.1.15. 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.

5.1.16. 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; and
- 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.

5.1.17. 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

5.1.18. 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.
- ii. 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.
- iii. 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.

- iv. 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:

- A. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Public Administration should provide an update on the reassessment of the eHRM 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 MDAs 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: 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**

- 6.1.1. 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.
- 6.1.2. 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.
- 6.1.3. 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 interface<sup>19</sup>.

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

- 6.1.4. Survey questions and responses relevant to Objective 3 have been outlined below, for the complete survey report, please see **Appendix II**.
- 6.1.5. 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.
- 6.1.6. 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.

---

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ttparliament.org/reports/p12-s1-j-20210702-FLA-R1.pdf> pp 42 and 62



6.1.7. 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:

- 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: 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**

- 7.1.1. 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.
- 7.1.2. 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.
- 7.1.3. 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**

- 7.1.4. There is currently a network provided to MDAs called GovNeTT. 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.
- 7.1.5. There is also a Microsoft Enterprise Agreement that gives access to Microsoft Teams, Share-Point, Online calling and Screen Sharing. There have been 7, 200 deployments of these software and programs at 113 out of 159 MDAs.

- 7.1.6. 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.
- 7.1.7. 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.
- 7.1.8. 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.
- 7.1.9. 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.
- 7.1.10. 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.
- 7.1.11. 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.
- 7.1.12. Rural communities are disproportionately affected by lack of fixed line internet connectivity.
- 7.1.13. 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.
- 7.1.14. 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

- 7.1.15. 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.
- 7.1.16. 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.
- 7.1.17. A Work from Home policy will have an impact on terms and conditions of employment.
- 7.1.18. 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).
- 7.1.19. 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.
- 7.1.20. 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.
- 7.1.21. 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*.
- 7.1.22. 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.

7.1.23. 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.

7.1.24. 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**

- 7.1.25. 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.
- 7.1.26. 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**

- 7.1.27. 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.
- 7.1.28. 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.
- 7.1.29. 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.
- 7.1.30. 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.
- 7.1.31. 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

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

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

7.1.34. 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



7.1.35. 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.

<b>Categories of Responses</b>	<b>Number of times mentioned</b>
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

7.1.36. 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:

<b>Categories of Responses</b>	<b>Number of times mentioned</b>
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; and
  - 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:

- 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 CPO should provide an update on the process of evaluating Civil Service positions, inclusive of the assessment of which jobs can be done remotely.**
  
- E. 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 114 of this report.**

Your Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of the Parliament.

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

Name of Official	Portfolio	Organization
<b>Public Hearing Held on February 16, 2022</b>		
<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**



**PARLIAMENT**  
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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 Alternative 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.

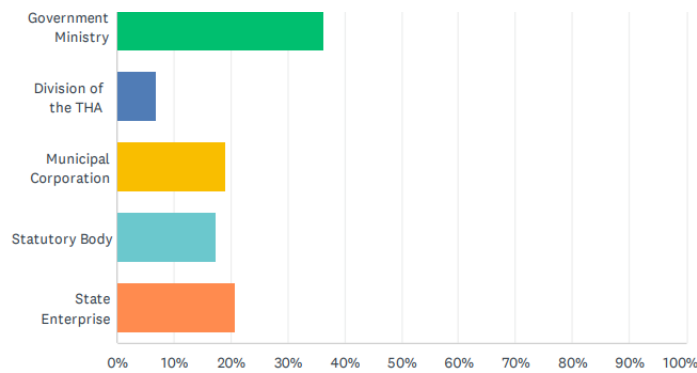
#### **Question 1: Name of Entity:**

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?**

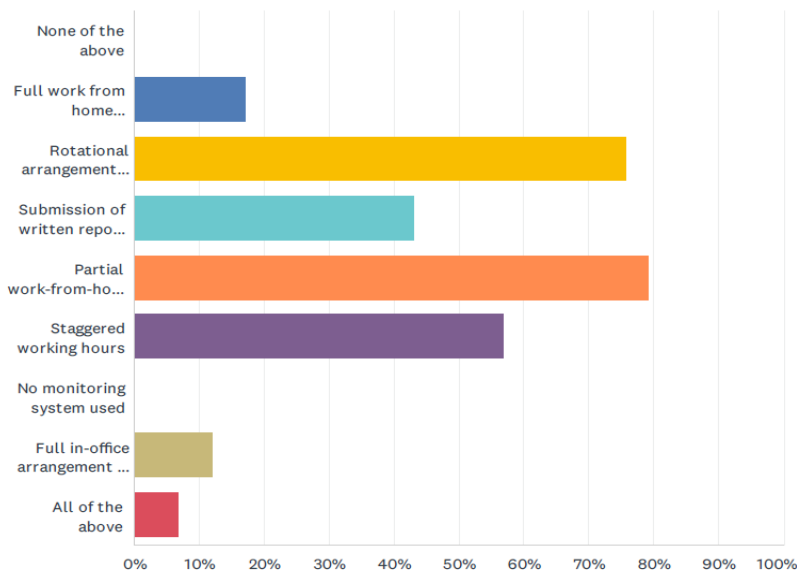
The number ranged from a low of zero to a high of 6,155.

**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)**

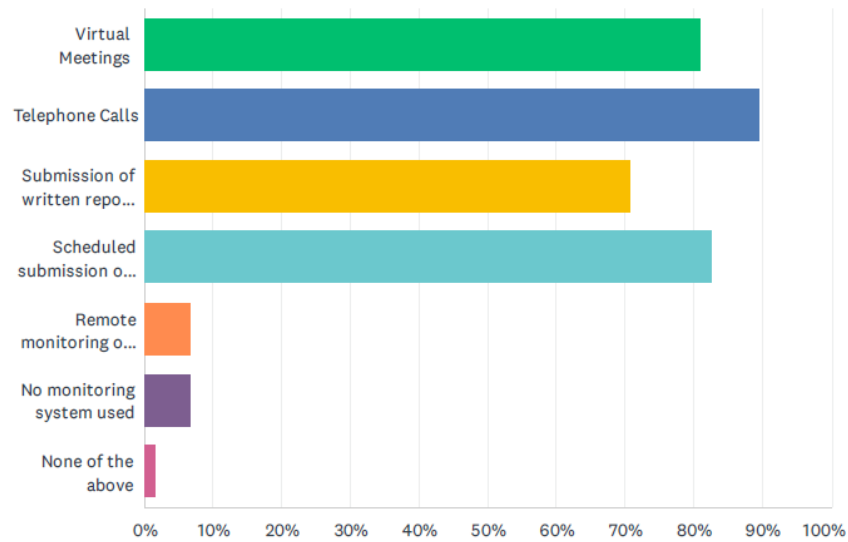
As shown below, the most frequently reported arrangements used were a Partial Work-from-Home Arrangement, Rotational Arrangement and Staggered Working Hours.



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. <b>Little or no challenges experienced</b>	6
2. <b>Low levels of technological competence among staff</b>	4
3. <b>Technical Difficulties:</b> 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. <b>Management Issues:</b> 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. <b>Nature of Work Issues:</b> 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. <b>Communication Issues:</b> Staff unresponsive to communication, miscommunication, poor communication	16

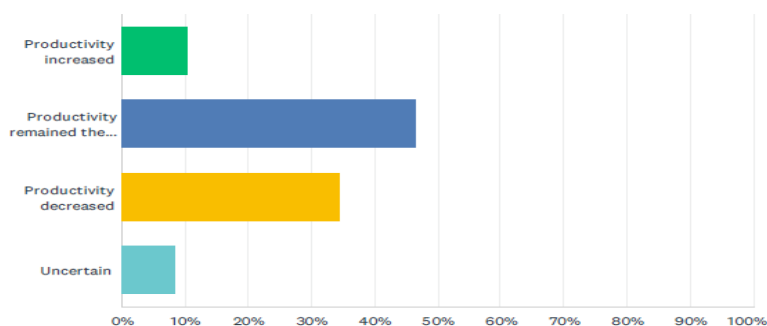
Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
7. <b>Accessibility Issues:</b> Lack of digitization of documents, inability to access hard copy documents from home, inability to access work servers or intranet	7
8. <b>Lack of work/life balance:</b> Increased workload, distractions at home	6
9. <b>Social isolation</b>	3
10. <b>Employees being in quarantine and/or testing positive for Covid-19</b>	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



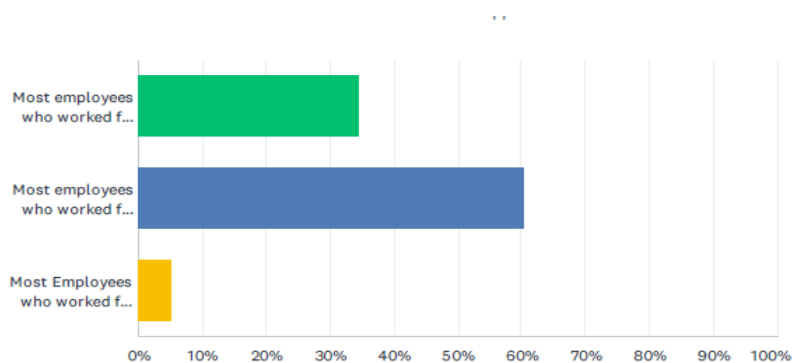
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Productivity increased	10.34%	6
Productivity remained the same	46.55%	27
Productivity decreased	34.48%	20
Uncertain	8.62%	5
TOTAL		58

**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**

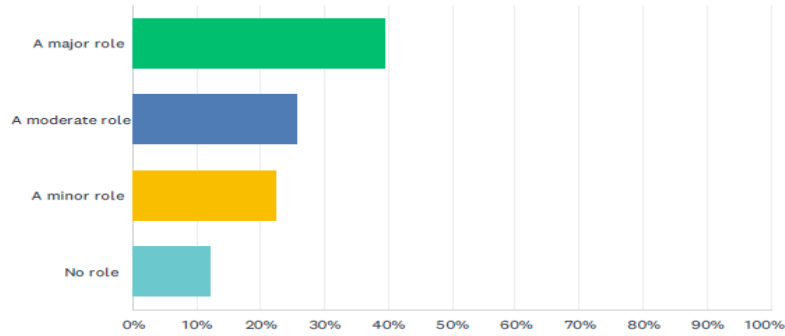
The majority of entities (60.34%) indicated that most employees who worked from home did so just as effectively as when they worked at their assigned place of work while 34.48% indicated that most employees who worked from home did so less effectively than when they worked from their assigned place of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

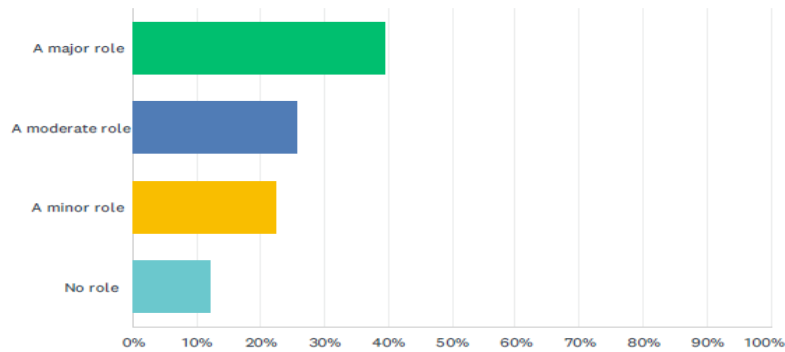
**Question 15: What role has digital technology played in monitoring staff performance while working from home?**

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

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.

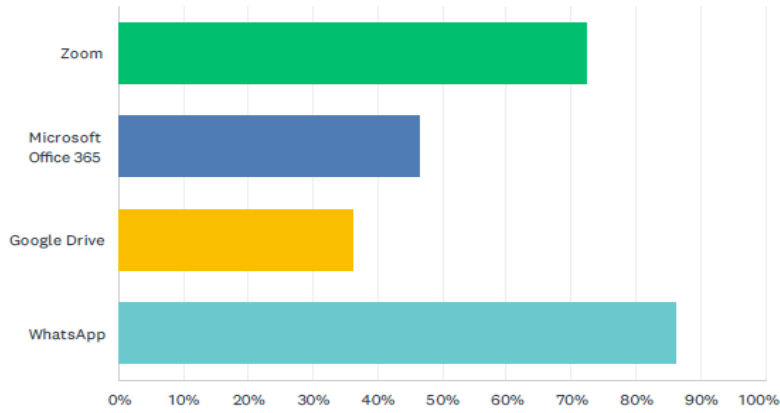


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A major role	39.66%	23
A moderate role	25.86%	15
A minor role	22.41%	13
No role	12.07%	7
TOTAL		58

**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.

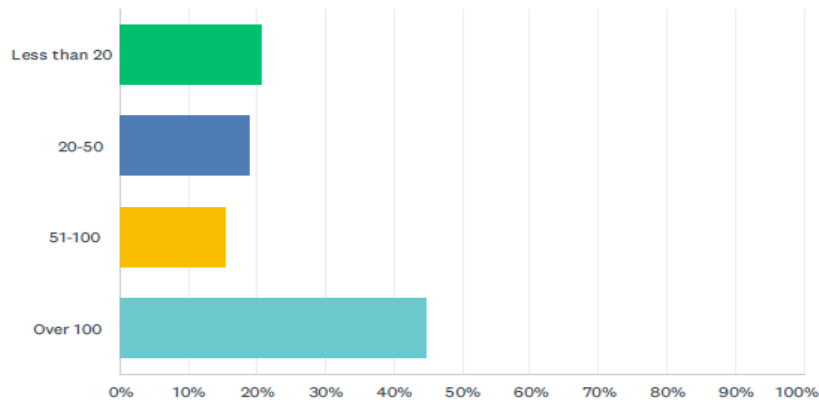




ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Zoom	72.41%	42
Microsoft Office 365	46.55%	27
Google Drive	36.21%	21
WhatsApp	86.21%	50
Total Respondents: 58		

**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.



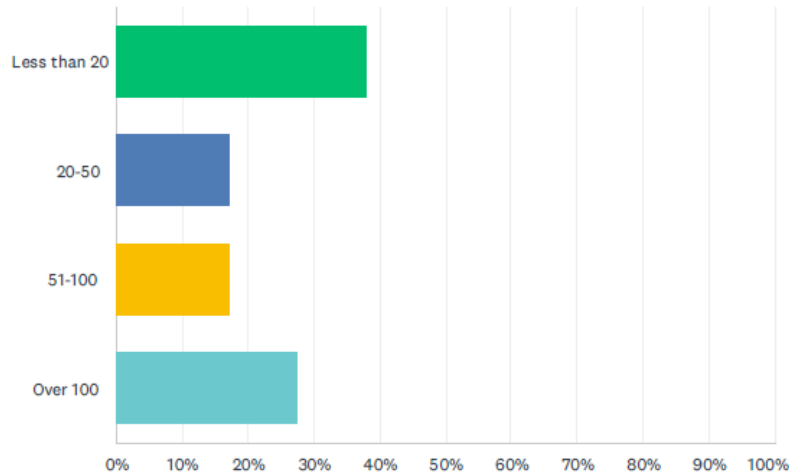
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 20	20.69%	12
20-50	18.97%	11
51-100	15.52%	9
Over 100	44.83%	26
TOTAL		58

**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.

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

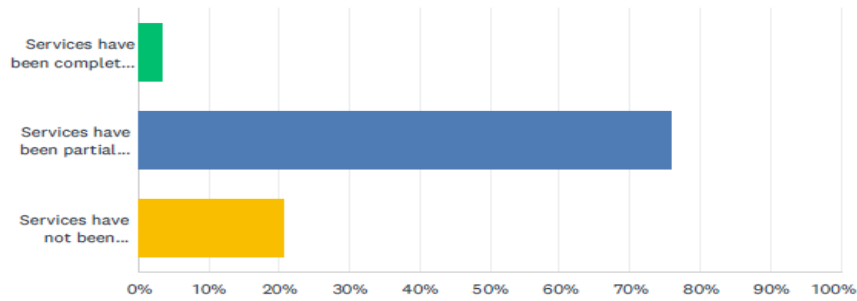
As shown below, during the pandemic, the majority of entities (37.93%) provided access to services for less than 20 people on a daily basis.



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):**

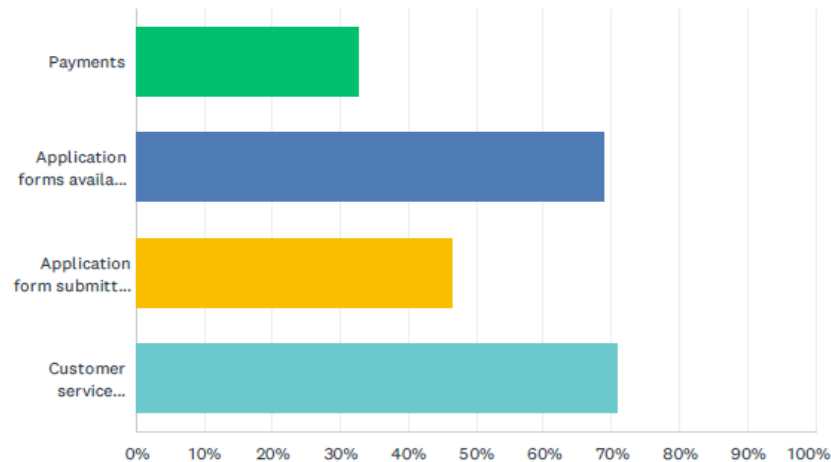
The majority of entities (75.86%) indicated that services have been **partially** transitioned to a digital platform, while 3.45% reported that services were **completely** transitioned to a digital platform/ 20.69% of entities indicated that services **have not** been transitioned to a digital platform.



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.**

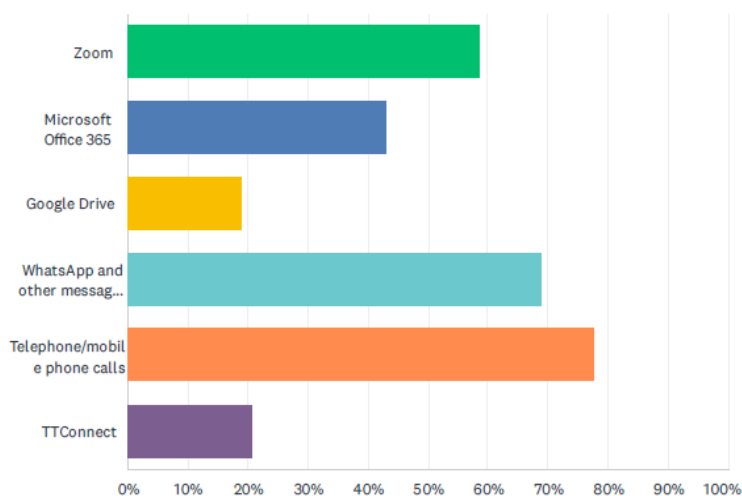
The services most frequently reported that were transferred to digital platforms were application forms being made available for download and printing (40 entities) and customer service interactions (41 entities).



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.**

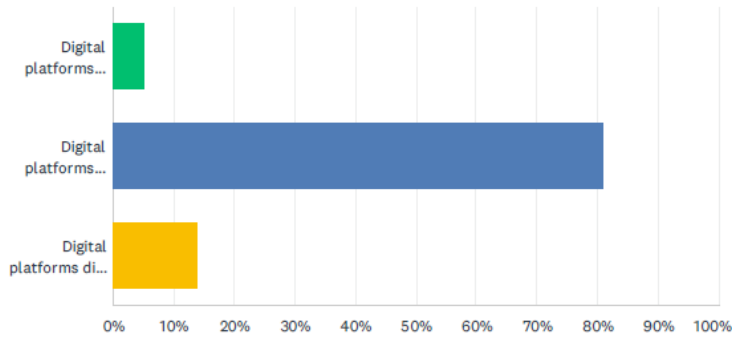
The digital platforms/applications used most frequently used to improve service delivery were telephone/mobile calls and WhatsApp (and other messaging services). The platform used least frequently was Google Drive. Please see below for further details.



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?**

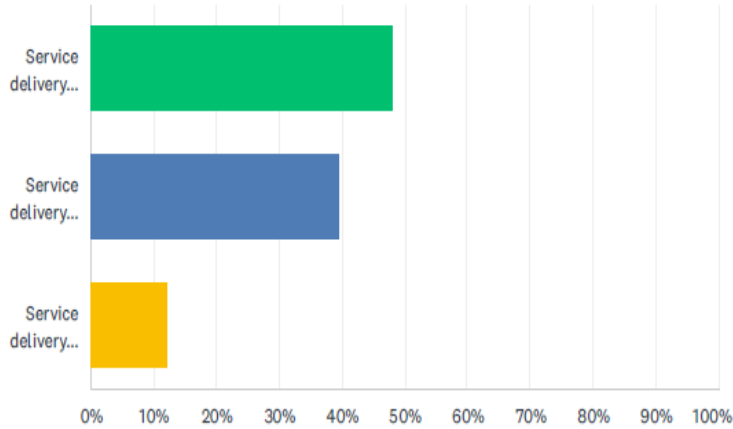
As shown below, the majority of entities (81.03%) reported that digital platforms facilitated employees being able to work from home **partially**. 5.17% of entities indicated that digital platforms facilitated employees being able to work from home **exclusively**. 13.79% of entities indicated that 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?**

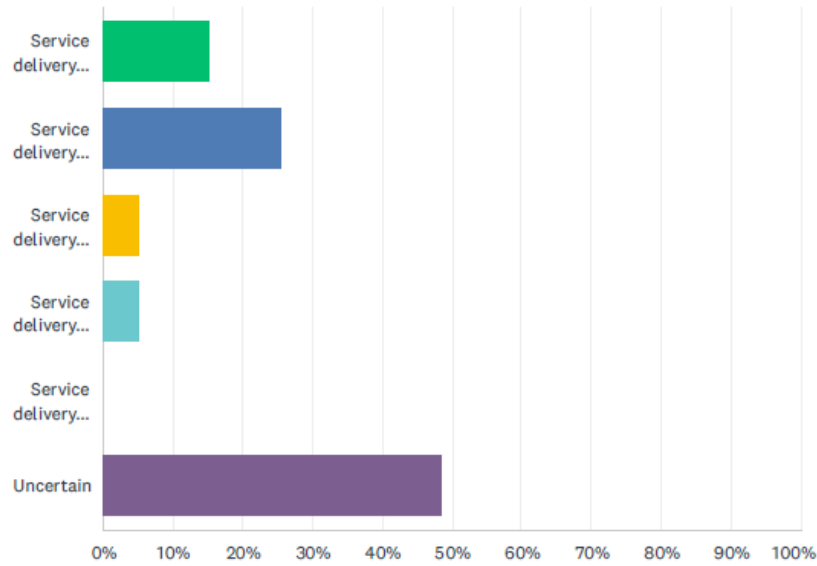
The graph below shows that the majority of entities (48.28%) indicated that service delivery decreased while under WFH/Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA), 39.66% indicated that service delivery remained the same while 12.07% indicated that service delivery increased. It is important to note that though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

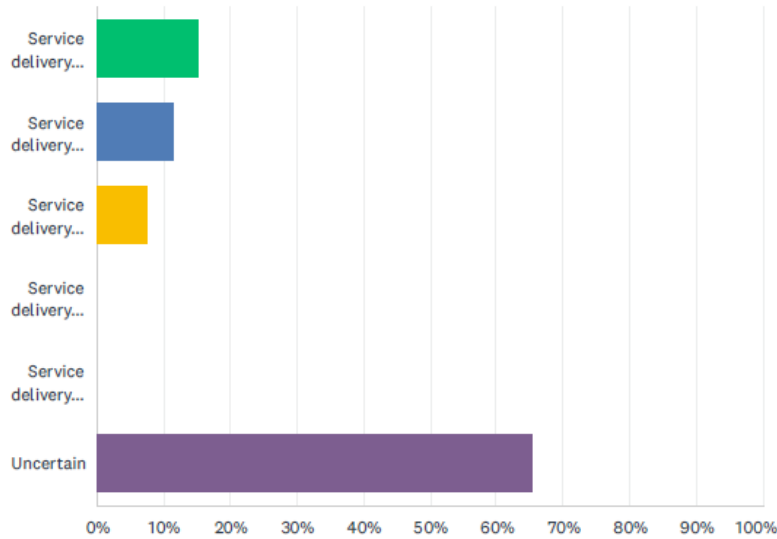
The graph indicates that of the entities that reported a decrease in service delivery, the majority (48.72%) were uncertain of the degree to which service delivery decreased. 25.64 % estimated that service delivery decreased by 10%-30% while 15.38% indicated that service delivery decreased by less than 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
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>39</b>

**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%.

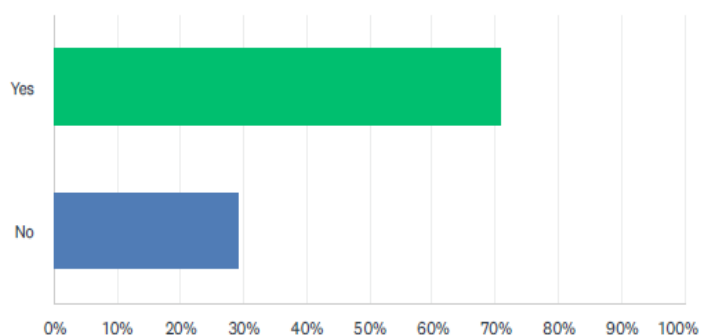


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Service delivery increased by less than 10%	15.38%	4
Service delivery increased by 10%-30%	11.54%	3
Service delivery increased by 30%-50	7.69%	2
Service delivery increased by 50%-75%	0.00%	0
Service delivery increased by 75%-100%	0.00%	0
Uncertain	65.38%	17
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>26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

**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. <b>Improved work/life balance:</b> 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

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
2. <b>Improved productivity:</b> 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. <b>Use of technology to improve processes:</b> greater collaboration via digital platforms, more efficient meetings due to use of digital platforms	9
4. <b>Less time in traffic/Not having to commute</b>	19
5. <b>Reduced Exposure to Covid-19:</b> ability to adhere to Public Health measures, peace of mind about reduced risk of catching Covid-19	15
6. <b>Cost savings:</b> 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. <b>Better client interactions</b>	1
8. <b>Improved employee morale and employee engagement</b>	2
9. <b>Not applicable, work environment not able to facilitate working from home, no feedback received from employees</b>	14

**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
1. <b>Little or no challenges experienced/not applicable</b>	9
2. <b>Difficulty understanding the technology</b>	3
3. <b>Technical Difficulties:</b> 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 for work-related tasks; shared devices at home	37
4. <b>Home environment not suitable for WFH arrangements:</b> 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

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
<p>5. <b>Job tasks not able to be done from home:</b> 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</p>	4
<p>6. <b>Communication Issues:</b> delays in communication, difficult to collaborate with co-workers, delayed feedback, instructions not issued in time</p>	9
<p>7. <b>Poor work/life balance:</b> 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 utility costs: internet, phone and electricity</p>	32
<p>8. <b>Access Issues:</b> Lack of digitization of documents, inability to access hard copy documents from home, inability to access work servers or intranet</p>	22
<p>9. <b>Mental health issues:</b> Social isolation, missing co-workers, stress</p>	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.

<b>Number of Man-Hours Lost (as reported by respondents)</b>					
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

Number of Man-Hours Lost (as reported by respondents)					
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. <b>Little or no challenges experienced:</b> nothing hampered the transition, organization was equipped and prepared, not applicable	8

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
<p>2. <b>Limited experience with technology:</b> staff not familiar with online platforms used, lack of computer literacy</p>	9
<p>3. <b>Insufficient Technical or Financial Resources:</b> 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 to provide resources needed for staff to work at home</p>	42
<p>4. <b>Performance Management Issues:</b> 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</p>	12
<p>5. <b>Job tasks not able to be done from home:</b> staff classified as essential workers, organization did not implement any alternative work arrangements</p>	16

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
6. <b>Communication Issues</b>	1
7. <b>Lack of Clear policy directives on alternative work arrangements:</b> challenges with unions, no clear legislation on alternative work arrangements	7
8. <b>Accessibility issues:</b> 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. <b>Lack of Work/Life Balance:</b> Increased workload, Distractions at home	1
10. <b>Mental Health Challenges:</b> Social isolation, employees feeling unsupported	1
11. <b>Employees being in quarantine and/or testing positive for Covid-19</b>	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
<p>1. <b>Creating a Standardised Work from Home/ Alternate Work Arrangement Policy for the Public service:</b> 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</p>	45
<p>2. <b>Development of ICT infrastructure:</b> digitisation and digitalisation of documents, legislation to allow for use of digital signatures, policies for remote monitoring of devices, free internet for employees working from home, free access to government websites, policies for accessing confidential documents and servers</p>	39
<p>3. <b>Robust systems for monitoring performance:</b> 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. <b>Implementation of Alternative Work Arrangements for Employees who cannot work from home:</b> implementation of flexi-time, equitable system for rotation, develop flexible arrangements based on personal circumstances, station staff close to home wherever possible</p>	9

Categories of Responses	Number of times mentioned
<b>5. WFH not recommended/Not applicable</b>	2
<b>6. Engage staff in the process:</b> identify challenges and provide solutions, understand strengths and weaknesses of staff members, help staff to achieve work/life balance, personal and professional development, implement performance-based incentives	14
<b>7. Planning and Training:</b> ICT training, supervisory skills training, change management, business continuity plans, process mapping, establishment of expectations from WFH/ Alternative Work Arrangements	19
<b>8. Reduce travel allowances for employees who work from home</b>	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 slimly 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**

8. 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.
9. 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
10. 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.**
  11. 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.
  12. Problems with monitoring staff performance were largely due to lack of adequate systems implemented to do so.
  13. 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.
  14. **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.**
  15. Benefits of WFH arrangements from an organizational standpoint focused largely on increased efficiency through the use of digital platforms and operational cost savings.
  16. Drawbacks of WFH arrangements from a managerial and organizational standpoint focused largely on lack of accountability, communication challenges and difficulties with measuring performance.

17. 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.
18. 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**

---

### **List of Tables**

Table 1: Population and No. of responses from MDAs

Table 2: Reasons for not working from home

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1: Responses from MDAs.

Figure 2: Category of Staff

Janelle Mills  
Ministry of Planning and Development  
February 23, 2021

- Figure 3: Age group
- Figure 4: MDAs and Age
- Figure 5: Category of staff and age
- Figure 6: Count and Males and Females
- Figure 7: Place of Residence
- Figure 8: Place of Work
- Figure 9: Ability to Work from Home
- Figure 10: Level of effectiveness of communication channels
- Figure 11: Ease of communication with colleagues
- Figure 12: Familiarity with virtual meetings
- Figure 13: Ease of obtaining what was needed from the office
- Figure 14: Challenges faced for obtaining what was need from the office
- Figure 15: Provision of tools to work from home
- Figure 16: Tools provided to work from home
- Figure 17: Days worked from home
- Figure 18: Levels of comfort working from home
- Figure 19: Indication of continuation for working from home
- Figure 20: Reasons for continuing to work from home
- Figure 21: Reasons for not wanting to continue to work from home
- Figure 22: Preferred number of days to work from home
- Figure 23: Facilities to work from home
- Figure 24: No facilities to work from home
- Figure 25: Preferred means of communication
- Figure 26: Other means of communication
- Figure 27: Psycho-social support for Public Officers
- Figure 28: Any other comments



## Table of Contents

<a href="#">List of Tables</a> .....	79
<a href="#">List of Figures</a> .....	79
<a href="#">1.0 Introduction</a> .....	82
<a href="#">2.0 Methodology</a> .....	82
<a href="#">3.0 Limitations</a> .....	82
<a href="#">4.0 Analysis of Responses</a> .....	83
<a href="#">4.1 Part 1 - The WFH experience during the Covid-19 lock down period</a> .....	83
<a href="#">Part II - The Post Covid-19 Office</a> .....	98
<a href="#">5.0 Conclusion</a> .....	108
<a href="#">5.1 Recommendations</a> .....	108

## 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

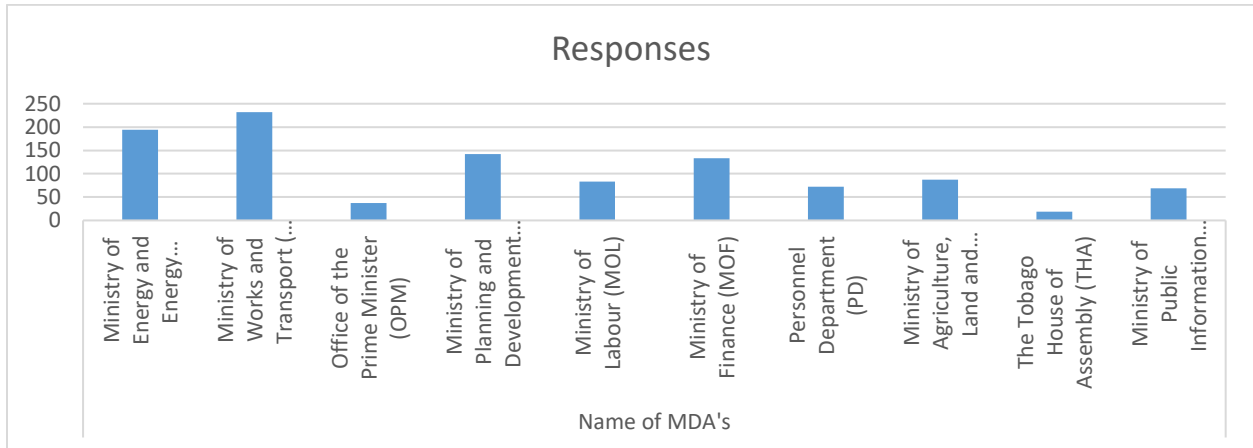
- **Please indicate the Ministry/Department in which you work**

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*

<b>Name of Ministry</b>	<b>Total Number of employees</b>	<b>Number of responses received</b>
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
<b>Total</b>		<b>1068</b>

Figure 1: Responses from MDAs.

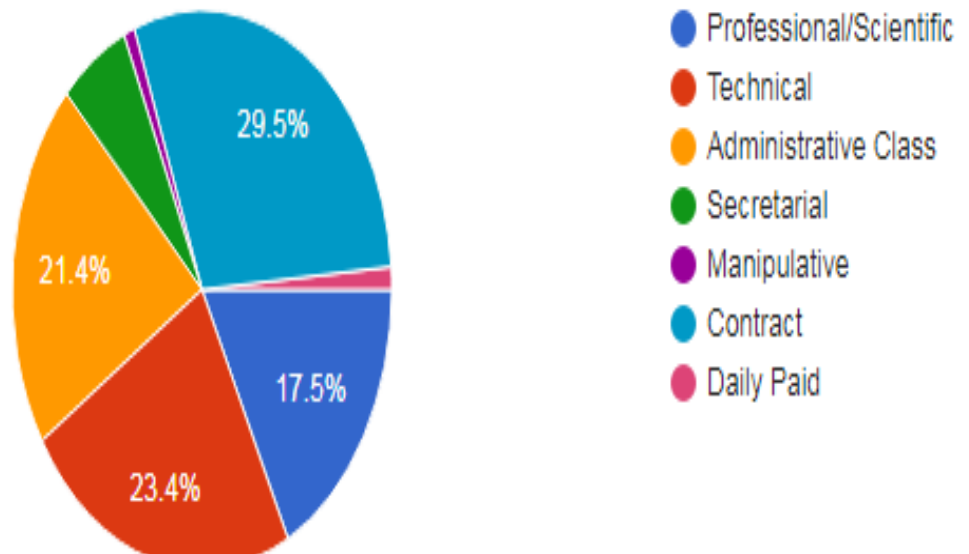


• Please indicate what category of staff are you

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

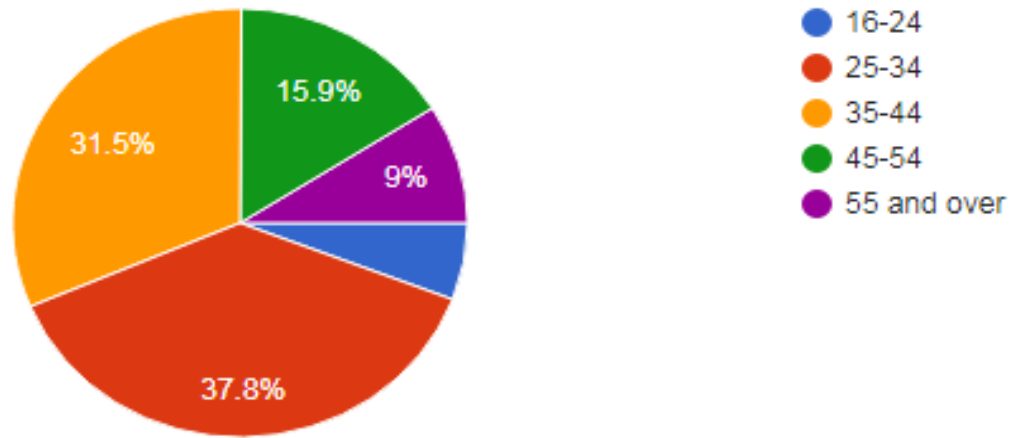


Figure 4: MDAs and Age

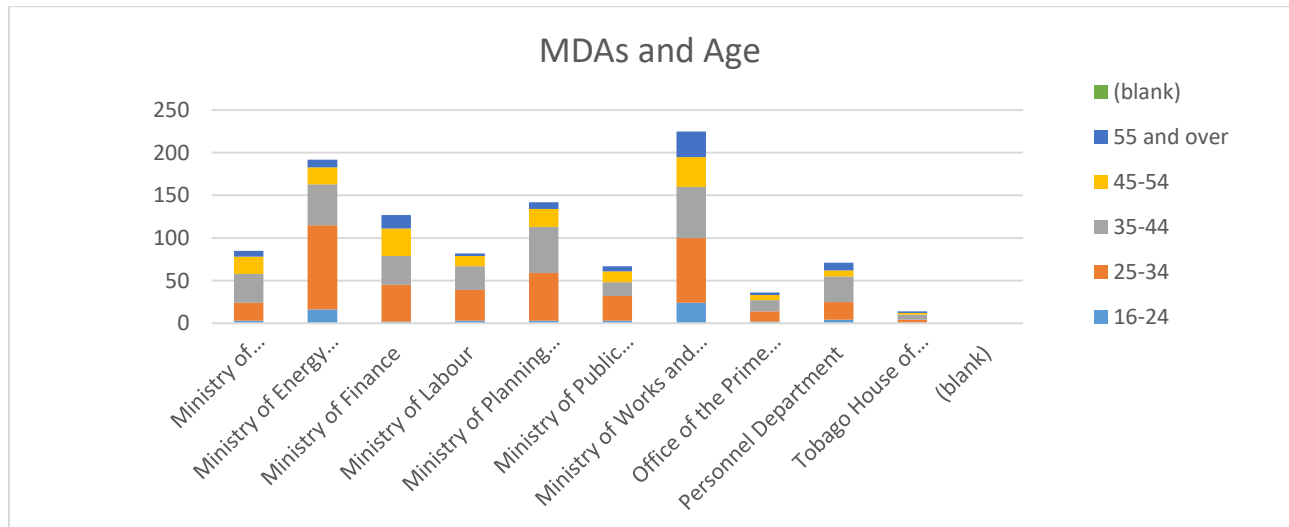
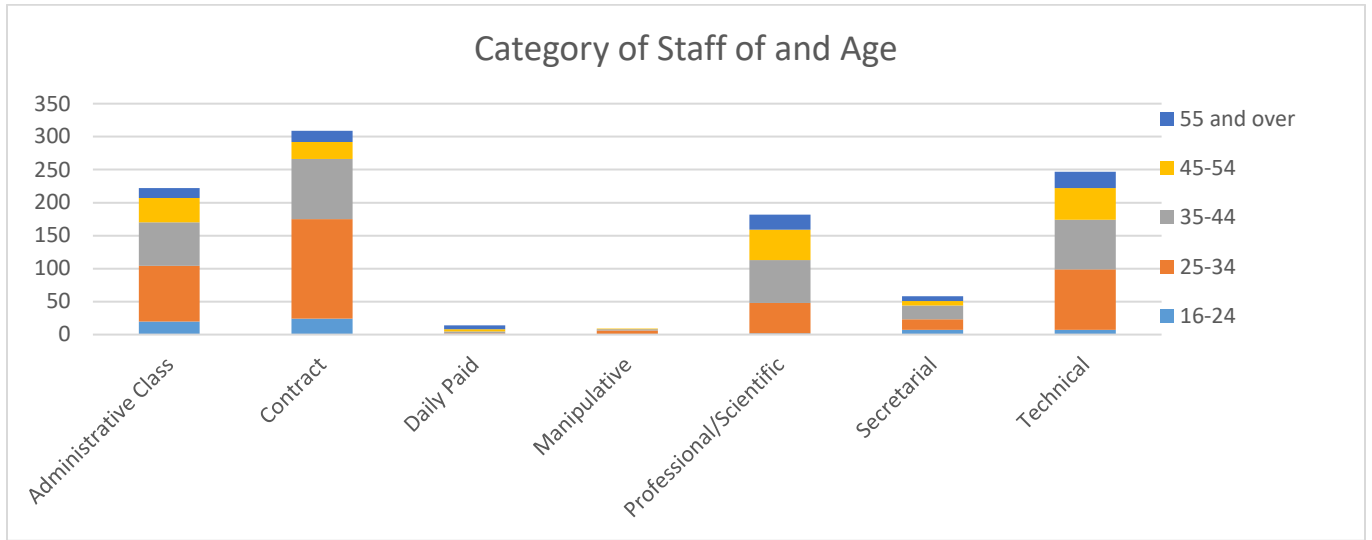


Figure 5: Category of staff and age

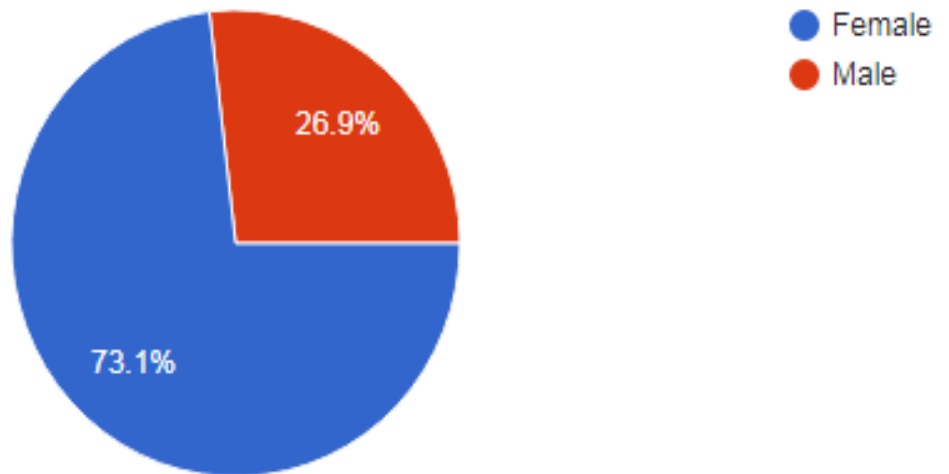


• **Please indicate your sex**

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

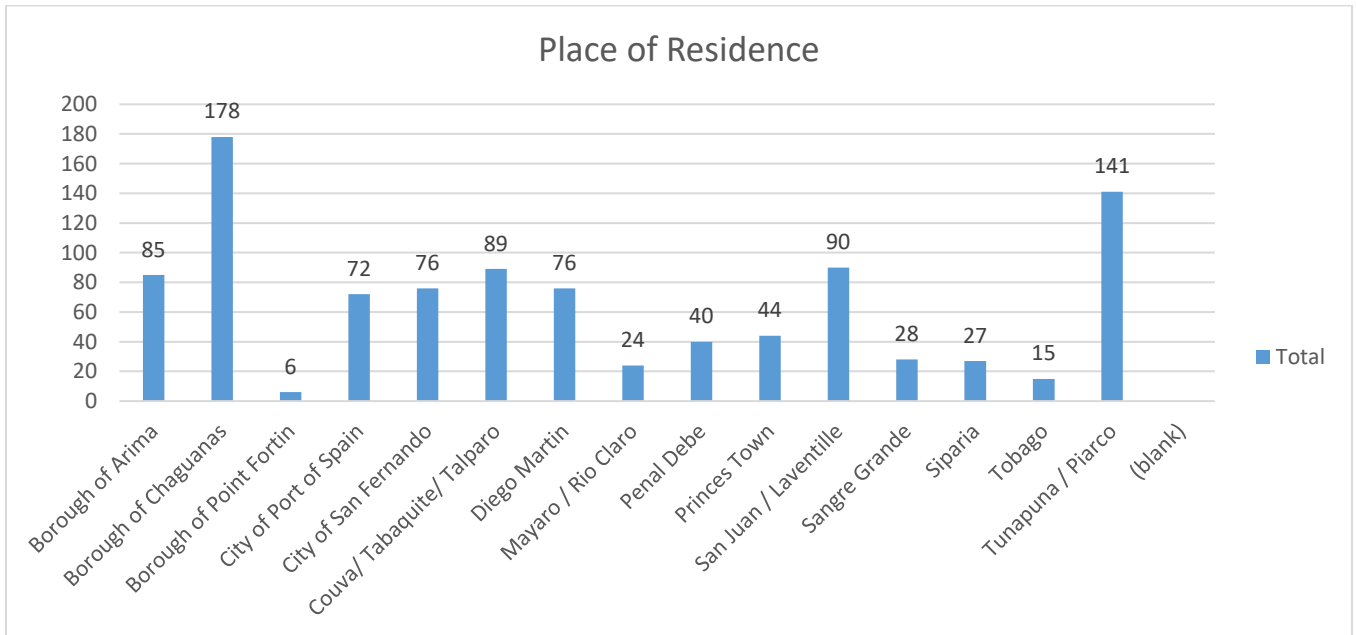
1,068 responses



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

**Figure 7: Place of Residence**

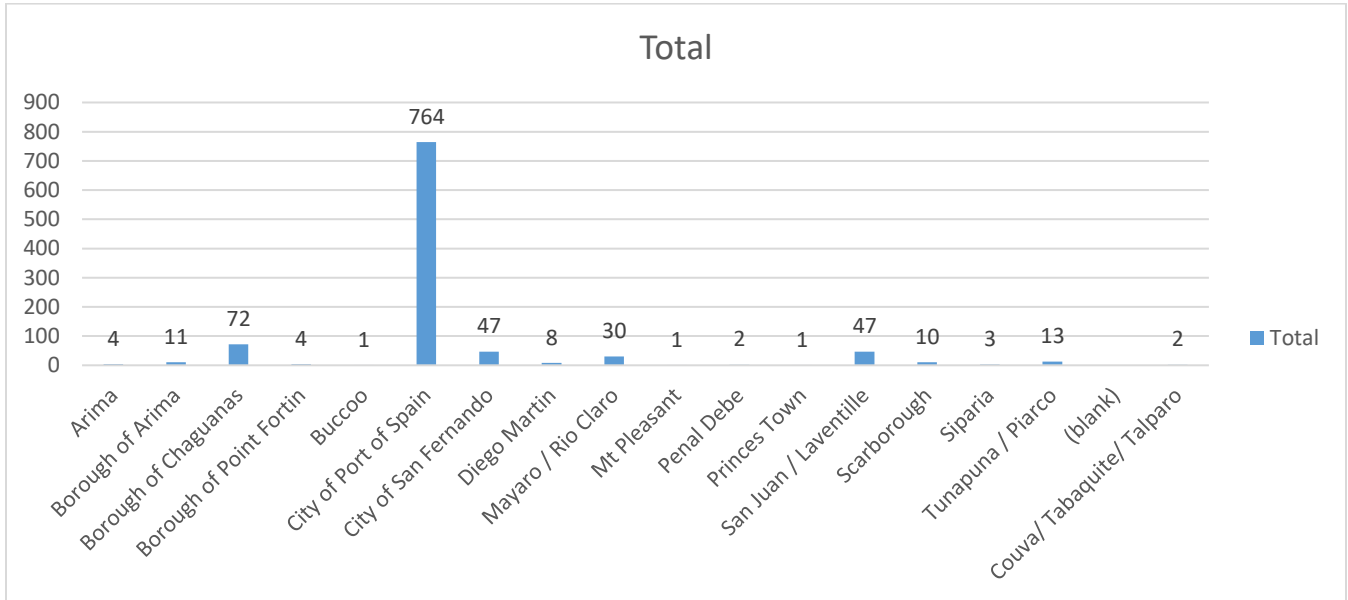
The survey revealed that the highest number of the respondents, 178, lives in the Borough of Chaguanas, followed by the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation with the second highest of 141. This may as a result of internal migration due to the increase of new housing developments in those areas.



• **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.

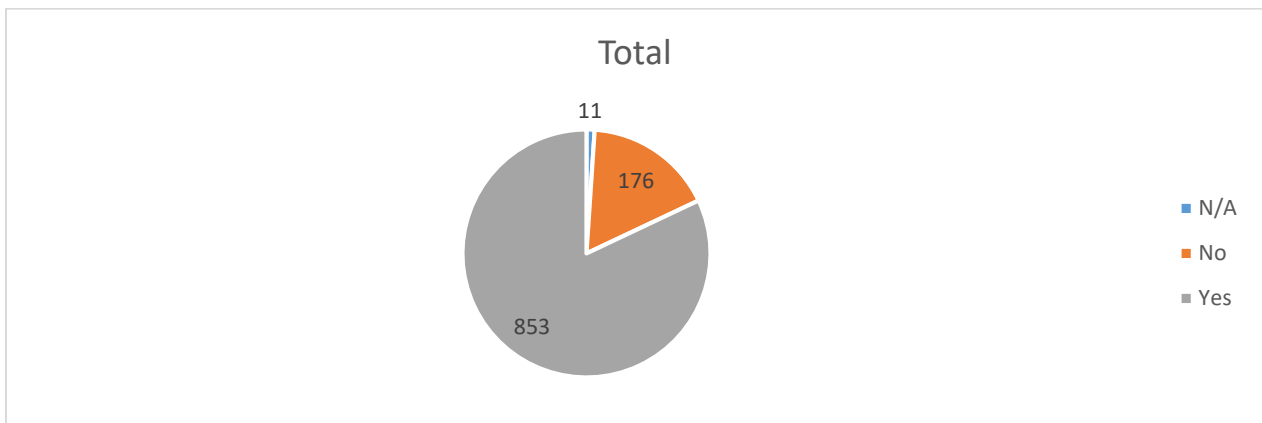
Figure 8: Place of Work



• **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.

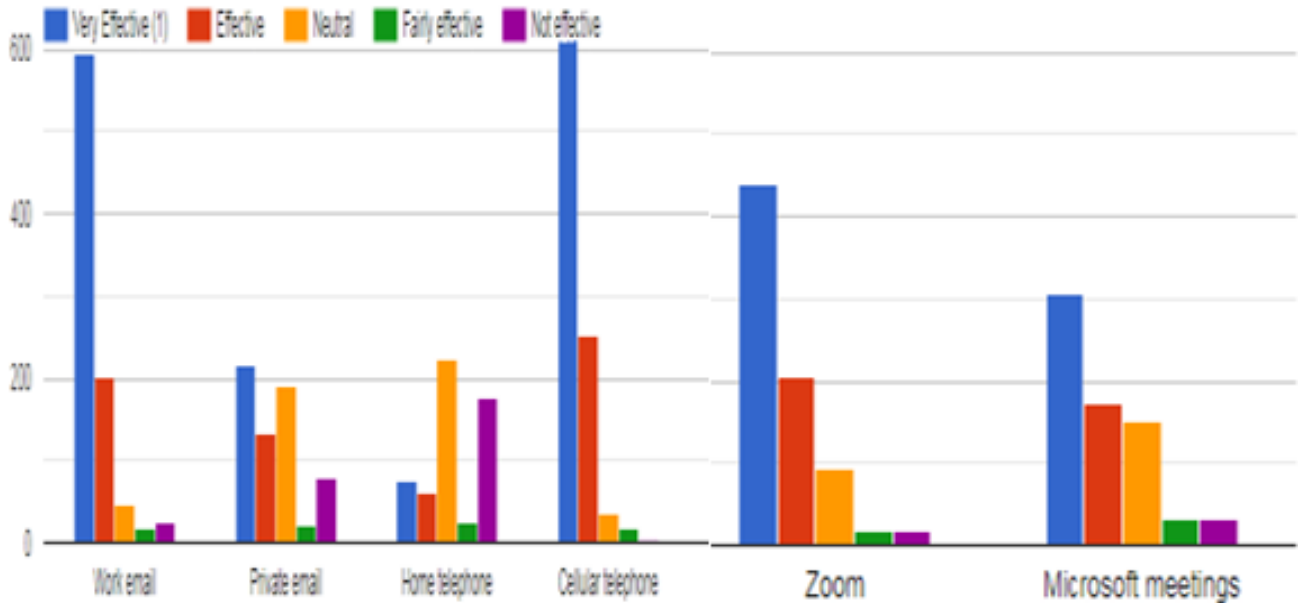
No Access to Files from home	May not be relevant for work from home policy	Other reasons
Everything needed for administrative duties are in office e.g. files, photocopying machine.	Had to direct supervision of workers on job sites	I was not able to do so. Basically I am more or less a support staff we 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*



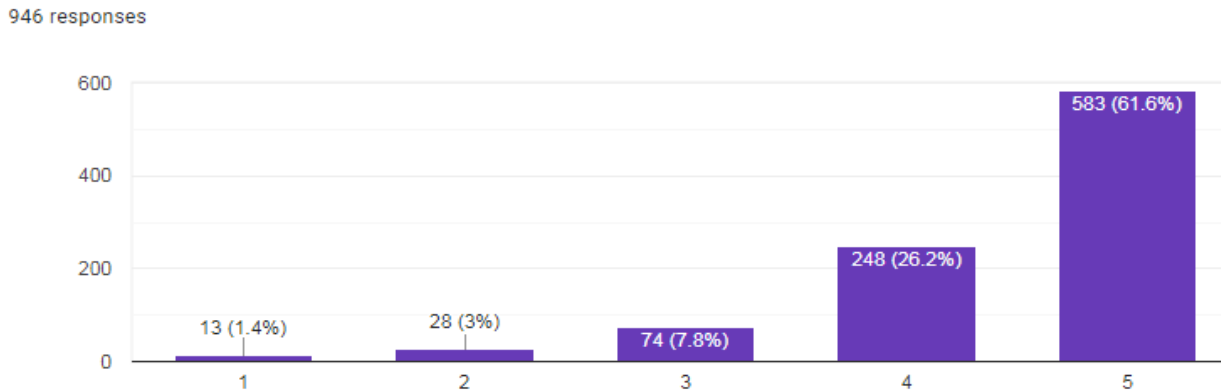
- **Other method of communication**

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.

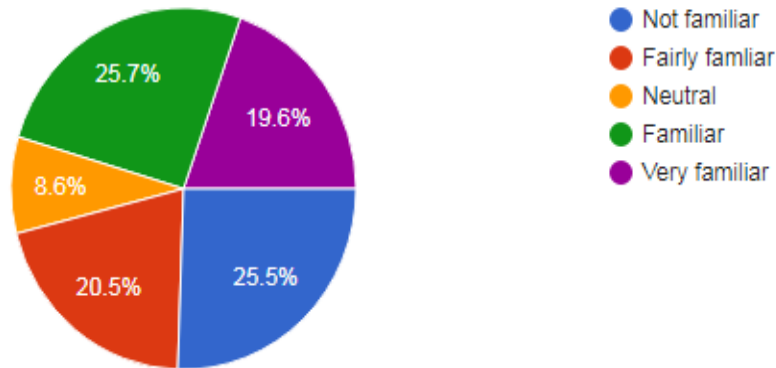


- Familiarity with Virtual Meetings before the Covid-19 Pandemic**

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

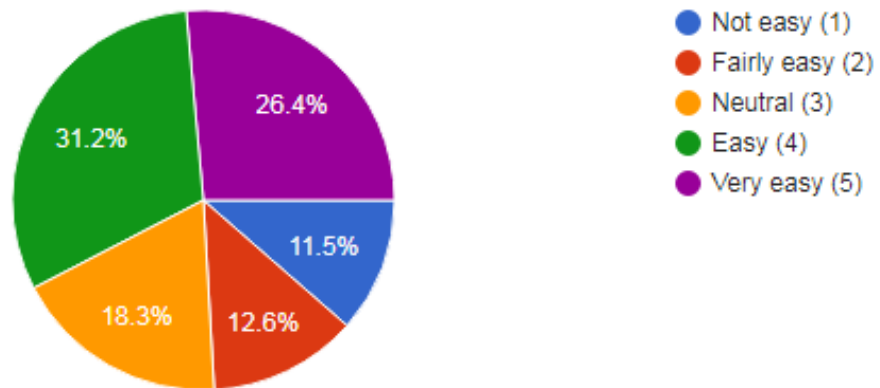


- How easy was it to obtain what was needed from the office**

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.**

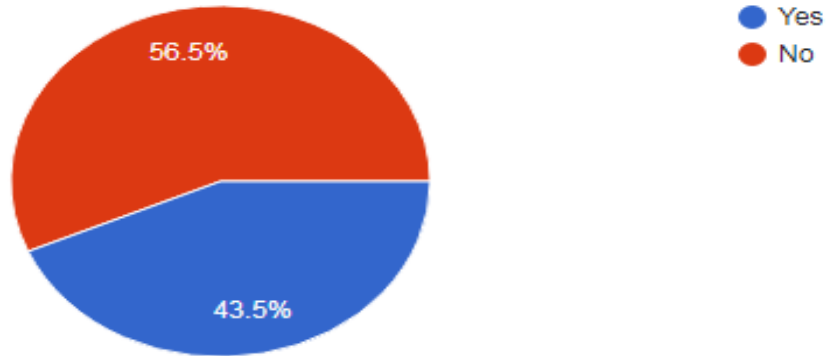
- Finding out what days I could go into the office.
- Being allowed to physically travel and enter the workplace without an authorized letter
- The Division's network file server (which stores soft copies of files) was not available remotely. To access it, officers had to physically go into the office 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

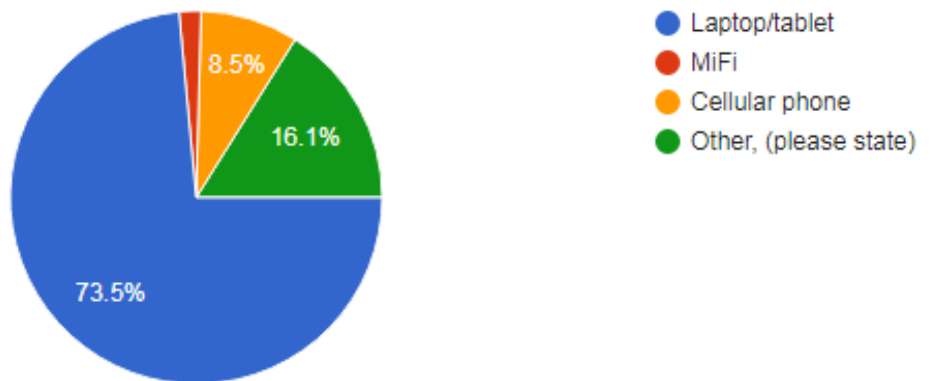


- **If yes, please state what you were provided with**

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



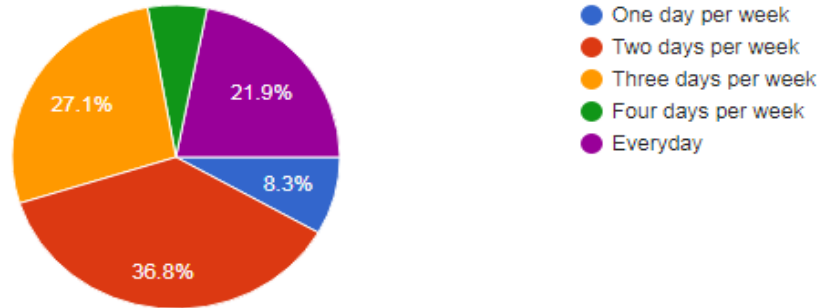


- **How often did you work from home?**

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 week, 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

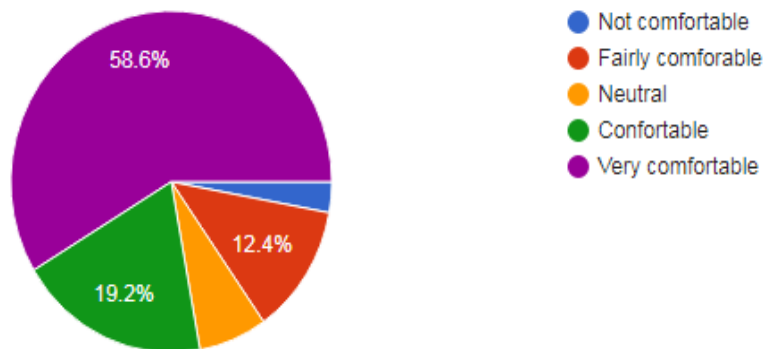


- **How comfortable were you working from home?**

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

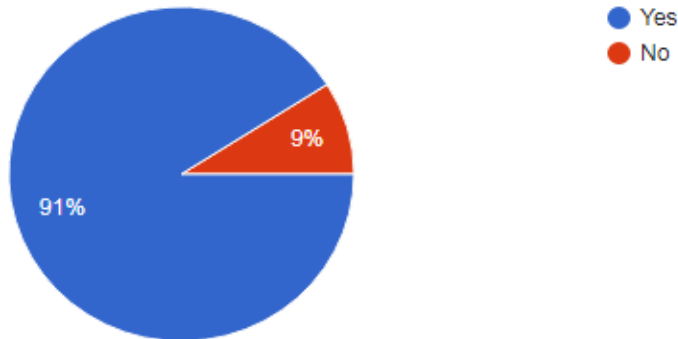
- **Do you want to continue to work from home?**

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**

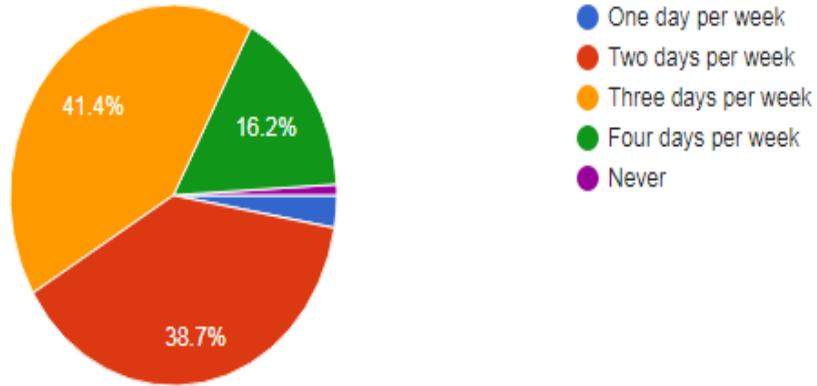
- It is easier to physically have access to work files or the work network share drive for important tasks to be completed compared to limited or no access allowed from home.
- It is very difficult to work from home because there are lots of files that are needed to do certain task but these files are 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

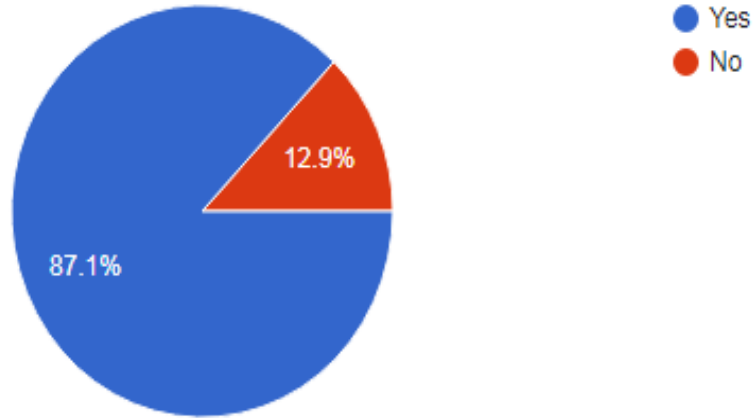


- **Do you have the facilities (dedicated work space) to work from home?**

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**

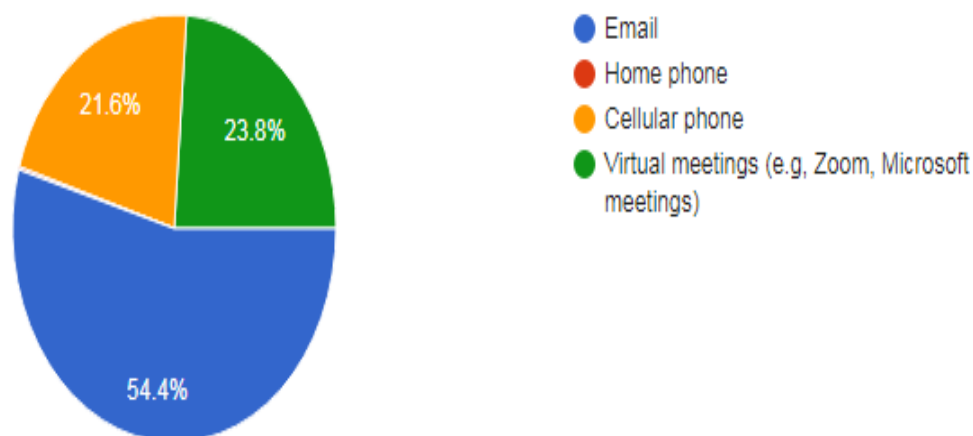
- A dedicated room
- Laptop
- Desk, chair, stationaries, laptop and air conditioning.
- I need a better chair though.
- MIFI
- I have the space, but I would need a better functioning laptop, printer/scanner
- Space not an issue but require stronger internet connection
- Desk top computer
- Ergonomic 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

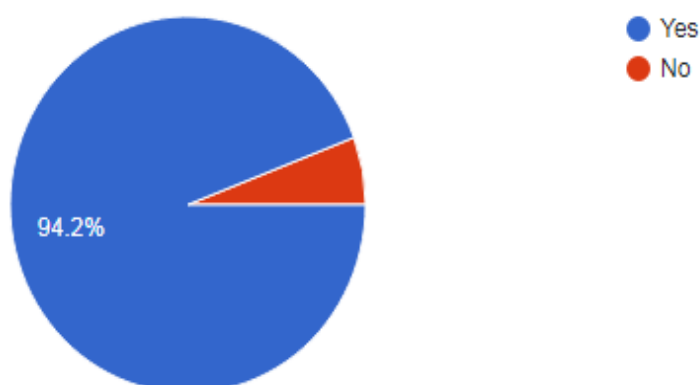
- **Do you think that there should be dedicated resources for public officers to access psycho-social support?**

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.

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

- 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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
----------------------	--------

#### 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: 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 deliver*.
- 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: 1<sup>st</sup> 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 |
|-----------------------|---------------------|





### **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 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting

### VERBATIM NOTES OF THE NINTH VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE HELD (IN PUBLIC) ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2022, AT 10.15 A.M.

#### PRESENT

Mr. Paul Richards	Chairman
Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member
Mr. Roger Monroe	Member
Ms. Penelope Beckles	Member
Mr. Avinash Singh	Member
Mr. David Nakhid	Member
Ms. Vandana Mohit	Member
Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Mr. Brian Lucio	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Aaneesa Baksh	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Nicole Brown	Graduate Research Assistant

#### ABSENT

Mr. Esmond Forde	Vice-Chairman [Excused]
------------------	-------------------------

#### MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Claudelle McKellar	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mrs. Sherry Ann Smith-Simmons	Human Resource Manager
Ms. Candice Mohan	Public Management Consultant

#### MINISTRY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Mr. Richard Madray	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Charles Bobb-Semple	Chief Executive Officer,

#### NATIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Denyse White	Deputy National Chief Digital Officer
Ms. Cynthia Reddock-Downes	Chief Executive Officer, Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago

## MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Joanne Deoraj

Permanent Secretary

Ms. Meera Ramesar

Director (Ag.), Socio Economic  
Policy Planning Division

## CHIEF PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

Dr. Daryl Dindial Commander (Ret'd)

Chief Personnel Officer

Ms. Sherraine Genas

Director, Legal Services

**Mr. Chairman:** Good morning and welcome to the viewing and listening audience to the Ninth Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration. This is the Committee's first hearing with stakeholders pursuant to its enquiry on the impact of work-from-home and other alternative work arrangement, policies and initiatives on public sector productivity and service delivery. Members of the public are invited to submit your comments and questions via the social media platform of the Parliament including YouTube, ParView or via Facebook or Twitter. Before us today, the enquiry, we are happy to have officials from the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Planning and Development and the Personnel Department.

At this point, I would like to invite members from each of the entities to introduce themselves and their teams starting with the officials at the Ministry of Public Administration.

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. We move now to the officials of the Ministry of Digital Transformation.

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Now onto the Ministry of Planning and Development.

*[Introduction made]*

*[Technical difficulties]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Ramesar, you are there? Okay. I think that is Ms. Meera Ramesar, acting Director, Socio Economic Policy Planning Division of the Ministry of Planning and Development and we hope to get that technical sorted out. And now we move to the officials of the Chief Personnel Department please. Go ahead please.

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much. At this point I will invite members of this Committee to please introduce themselves starting with member Beckles. Member Beckles? Okay, let us go to member Monroe please.

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** The only absent member on the Committee is member Esmond Forde who had a conflicting engagement. I am the Committee's Chairman, Paul Richards, and we are happy to have you with us today. Today's enquiry has four main objectives:

1. To examine the types of work-from-home and other alternative work policies and arrangements utilized 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, and measure work output of public sector employees;
3. To evaluate the efficiency of service delivery and infrastructural provisions in key Ministries and Departments that utilized or utilize the work-from-home and alternative work arrangements; and
4. To examine the feasibility and implementing of work-from-home arrangements in the public sector as an alternative work option.

I must add that in our opening deliberations this morning although the official enquiry is focused on work arrangements, and policies, and initiatives on public sector productivity and service delivery during the pandemic, we as the Committee think it is also a chance to get a sense, a deep dive, into some of the factors that affect productivity and service delivery in the public sector generally in Trinidad and Tobago because we know we have some challenges where that is concerned that are easily manifest in our competitive indices globally. At this point, we would like to invite members leading the teams before us today to make brief opening remarks, starting with Mr. McKellar, acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration. Mr. McKellar, could you unmute? Thank you.

**Mr. McKellar:** Chair, thank you for inviting the Ministry of Public Administration to participate in the Committee's enquiry into the impact of work-from-home and other alternative working arrangements, polices and initiatives on the public sector productivity and service delivery. The Ministry's mandate includes public service modernization and, as such, it recognizes changes to the way that work is conducted within the public service have the potential to modernize and therefore increase the effectiveness and efficiency of public service delivery. The Ministry is also mindful that work-from-home and other alternative arrangements are indeed relevant to the current and future environment.

In our written response to the Committee, we shared how the Ministry implemented some of these arrangements to enable the safety of our staff and the continuity of our operations. We also shared some considerations to inform the way forward. The Ministry of Public Administration believes that the adoption of alternative working arrangements as a response to the pandemic allowed the public service to take meaningful steps forward albeit in an experimental way towards its modernization. As such, we look forward to benefiting from the collective experience of the other participating Ministries and Departments in this enquiry.

The Ministry remains committed to working with all stakeholders to advance public sector modernization as well as defining appropriate alternative work arrangement systems and processes. Chair, in closing, I wish to assure you that my team and I undertake to support the Committee's enquiry by responding as best as we can to your questions and providing subsequently any additional information

that may be required. We also welcome any insights and recommendations that this Committee may proffer towards public service productivity and service delivery. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much, Mr. McKellar. We move now to Mr. Madray in the Ministry of Digital Transformation, the Permanent Secretary.

**Mr. Madray:** Chairman and other members of the Committee, I and other representatives of this Ministry, iGovTT, and the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago present in this meeting today, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the efforts made in supporting the work-from-home arrangements of the public service. This Ministry was formed in July of last year and has oversight for the National Information Communication Technology Company Limited, or iGovTT as it is branded, which is a state enterprise established in 2009, and the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, TATT, a statutory body created by the Telecommunications Act of 2004. The mandate of the Ministry is to transform the way public goods and services are delivered to consumers. In the words of the Minister of Digital Transformation, we want to develop a new way to address the interim consumption and delivery of goods and services to customers using appropriate digital technology.

Having been recently formed, the Ministry is at the early stages of developing policies that will underpin the digitization and digitalization process of the public service. In the meantime, we are guided by policies created by other government agencies to support remote work. We have also been able to carry out a number of initiatives through iGovTT and TATT that support the work-from-work strategies in the public service. Again, thank you for this opportunity to be present before this Committee and to respond to your questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Madray. Now, onto to Mrs. Joanne Deoraj of the Ministry of Planning and Development, the Permanent Secretary. Mrs. Deoraj?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to you and other members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present to this enquiry today. The Ministry of Planning Development as you are aware is charged with the mandate to develop national policy as articulated through the National Policy Statement and documentation Vision 2030, the Road to Recovery, and the Community Recovery Reports. The task presented to the Ministry of Planning and Development to develop the work-from-home policy falls within this context of national development as it relates to improving good governance and productivity, improving efficiency and effectiveness of the public service and, of course, the community of Trinidad and Tobago.

Recognizing the complexity and multi-dimension nature of the policy requires coordinating and coherent policy reform linked to, of course, impacting systems, human resource development, legislative amendments, and, of course, several financial provisions for the changes that are required in such an initiative. The first level of committee and the sub-technical committees that have been developed to move this process forward continue to work, and we anticipate that the discussions this morning will help us improve and articulate our own development of the national policy and we look forward to rich and rewarding contributions from the members. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Deoraj. And now Dr. Daryl Dindial, CPO. Dr. Dindial.



**Dr. Dindial:** Thank you, Chair, and good morning to all members. The Personnel Department is responsible for determining and advising on pay and terms and conditions for employees in the public service estimated to be around 90,000. The department determines through consultations and negotiations with appropriate recognized majority unions in terms and conditions of service for the civil service, statutory authorities subject to the Statutory Authorities Act, the teaching service, the police service, the fire service and the prison service. In this connection, Chair, we are here to discuss any legal implications on how terms and conditions are impacted by any work-from-home policy that may be considered and implemented on behalf of the State. The Personnel Department wishes to thank the Chairman and members of the Committee for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's work. I thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Dr. Dindial. So on now to the actual enquiry. We have decided on a particular format this morning where members of the Committee have been assigned to begin questioning the four entities before us. The members will start with a first 10-minute round, after which the other members will be allowed to propose different questions to each entity. So we start with the officials of the Ministry of Public Administration and I give way to members Beckles and Monroe.

**Ms. Beckles:** Chair, are you ready for me? Is that it?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, please. Go ahead members Beckles. Thank you.

**Ms. Beckles:** Sorry. My apologies. Okay, and let me, of course, thank all the agencies for giving us—let me just put up some volume. Let me first of all thank all the agencies for their introductory presentations as well as the information provided to this Committee. My first question is: Could the Ministry of Public Administration indicate what software or digital platform will be used for the EHRM, or what we call the Electronic Human Resource Management?

**Mr. McKellar:** Thank you, member Beckles for that question. Right now the Electronic Human Resource Information System that is being utilized in the public service is commonly known as IHRIS, the Integrated Human Resource Information System. That is by brand. It is PeopleSoft and it is a system that has been in place in the public service since approximately 1999/2000 thereabouts. That is what has been used to date, and that is what we are looking at closely with a view to further rollout and optimization of the system within the public service.

As it is right now the system contains a number of modules that deal with different human resource management functions, for example, recruitment, payroll, performance management, selection, whatever leave administration, but not all of these modules are currently utilized. I think most effectively it is the payroll system that is most utilized, and workforce administration. So the intention really is to examine how can we optimize and roll out all of the other modules so that the system could be better utilized.

**Ms. Beckles:** Okay. So can I just ask a follow-up then? So basically this system is almost 23 years old right? The utilization of—well, it is capable of doing a number of other things as you have said. So is there any reason why they have not traditionally used the other, you know [Technical difficulties] or what is also available through IHRIS; or is it that the focus has always been just exclusively on that of the payroll?

**Mr. McKellar:** The response to that number is a multifaceted one. So there are a number of factors. Some years ago there was an evaluation of the roll out, of implementation of the IHRIS system by an external consultant and some of the findings pointed to the need and the continued need for change management because it was a new system being introduced back then, a computerized system that was particularly new to the public service at the time. So there is an extent to which we did not do at the time and probably still need to do significant change management to get public officers to accept and to utilize the system.

There is still a need I believe for training, broader based training in the use of the system. There is the need for business process reengineering because the system is an off the shelf system developed by PeopleSoft, and there is the extent to which the existing—well, if you want manual systems within the public service, the systems that are guided by existing regulations and legislations marry and fit with the software. So there is an extent as I said to which we need to do some significant business process reengineering, so that how things are done or should be done mesh with the existing system. So those are some of the issues. It is change management, it is business process reengineering, there is training to name a few.

**Ms. Beckles:** So can you say whether there is a time frame? I mean, is that a decision that has been taken to do this business process and the reengineering? Is that a decision that has been taken—

**Mr. McKellar:** I—

**Ms. Beckles:**—recognizing, of course, the benefits that could be had if other things other than just the payroll was done?

**Mr. McKellar:** Right. I would have to say that it is widely acknowledged and that subject to that these are things that need to be done. In our submission when we mentioned the EHRM system—so we acknowledge that right now the system that we have in place is PeopleSoft IHRIS, but at the same time I think there is also the need to examine, notwithstanding the expenditure on IHRIS to date, that maybe we need to consider what are some of the other systems that are out there, software systems that are out there, to see if IHRIS is the most appropriate or if there are other systems that we could use. But still, as I said, there is the need regardless of which system we go with, whether we continue with PeopleSoft or we go with something else that is out on the market, the factors that I mentioned, the need for change management, training, business process, reengineering, people management, will need to be put in place to facilitate the effective use of anything that we go with.

**Ms. Beckles:** So I think, Chair, well—so I think you—well, save and except is there anything else you want to mention as it relates to the key components or do you think in your answer you answered that satisfactorily?

**Mr. McKellar:** I think I am good with the response so far, member.

**Ms. Beckles:** All right. Okay. I think you also dealt with more or less in terms of how you are implementing the EHRM system. Okay, Chair, so that is my first question. I do not know if any of my colleagues—

**Mr. Chairman:** You can go ahead to the second question, member.

**Ms. Beckles:** Okay. Thank you very much. Okay. Can you indicate what was the feedback from the employees regarding the use of their personal phones for work-related calls?

**Mr. McKellar:** Okay. Thank you again, member. So, for example—I will just go back to the Ministry's submission to the Committee where we indicated that in general our responses spoke to what was done within the Ministry of Public Administration, but that we suspected that it would have represented in fair measure what took place across the rest of the public service. So, for example, one of the measures that we put in place to facilitate work-from-home alternative arrangements is that we allowed telephone calls that were coming in to the Ministry to officers' desks to be forwarded to their mobile phones so that persons were always reachable and in contact with the office. That maintained the contact. It allowed service delivery to continue.

I do not think there were any complaints. Officers were briefed beforehand, particularly those who had Ministry issued mobile phones. So it was understood that you have a facility that would allow you to be in contact, to be reached, to maintain the service. So that there was no push back or resistance from persons who had been issued Ministry mobile phones. Those who had to use their personal phones, there was not any resistance as far as I am aware. What we did there are officers who are not on the Ministry's corporate telephone plan, they are normally issued with phone cards if they have to make calls. So I do not think there was any resistance or push back with respect to the forwarding of phone calls to mobile phones. That seemed to have worked well.

**Ms. Beckles:** And just for my own interest, the utilization of the phone cards, I mean, that is a policy of your Ministry?

**Mr. McKellar:** This is something that we have in place pre-pandemic and it is particularly for officers who are travelling officers. So if they are working off site and they need to be in contact with the office or some other agency as part of their work function, they have that facility.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Beckles, can we go to member Monroe now please?

**Ms. Beckles:** Sure.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Monroe, go ahead please.

**Mr. Monroe:** Thank you very much, Chairman. Thank you to all the different or various departments that come before us this morning. Thank you for making the time to be available to answer the necessary questions to this Committee. Good morning to the viewing and listening public. To the Ministry of Public Admin my question this morning is four questions to the Ministry of Public Admin based on their work-from-home arrangement and my first question is based on submissions made by the Ministry of Public Admin which I would like to know. Employees who by virtue of their job function who are not able to work from home may feel unfairly treated in relation to their other colleagues whose jobs allow them to work from home, and the question is: What does the Ministry of Public Admin recommend to address any disparity or inequity regarding employees who are unable to work from home due to the nature of their job?

**Mr. McKellar:** Thank you member for that question. That is a rather interesting one and it is something that we acknowledged. Now, again we would appreciate that all jobs are not the same, and by definition there are some jobs—and in our submission we did indicate that there are a number of job positions, for example, those within the manipulative class, the driver, the messenger, the maid, their

jobs cannot be performed from home. Right? The maid cannot make and serve tea from home. And even in the clerical class, we currently have, for example, cashiers. The cashier cannot receive funds at home. Right?

So I do not want—and it can happen that some officers will feel that, look, the ability or the facility to work from home is an entitlement or a right. No, it is not. It is a mechanism of allowing the work of the Ministry, of the organization, to continue using different methodologies. People have to be, sorry to use the term, mature enough to recognize that not all jobs are the same, and that the present time I might be in a job function that does not lend itself to such an arrangement. It is not an issue of unfair treatment, it is not an issue of bias, but it is just the nature of the work and I suppose that this is something that organizations not only in the public sector but also in the private sector face as well. It is an equitable situation. It is not about equality, it is equity.

**Mr. Monroe:** Okay, thank you. Further to the previous question, the Ministry's SWOT analysis indicated a work-from-home policy can positively impact factors contributing to the ease of doing business ratings across the public service. I would like to know how does the Ministry of Public Administration foresee a work-from-home policy having a positive impact on the ease of doing business?

**Mr. McKellar:** Thank you again, member. Now, in large measure our responses to the Committee sought to deal with work-from-home arrangements and other alternative arrangements implemented to treat with the situation that the pandemic has presented to us. But we also recognize that work from home and other alternative arrangements have a bigger role to play in the service delivery model that could be adopted or implemented for the public service. We are now in the age of digitization, digitalization of the public service and the wider national community.

**10.45 a.m.**

The Government has clearly stated its intention to move us towards a digital economy, a digital Trinidad and Tobago. In such an environment, in such a scenario, we want to move to a situation where citizens, stakeholders, whether locally or abroad, can access Government services online. One of my pet terms is, "The only line is online." When and if we move to such a situation, it is possible—and it applies in other jurisdictions and maybe in some organizations locally. Where services are available online, the service providers, let us say the clerk or whoever it is, is doing the interaction, the CSR does not necessarily need to be in an office eight to four. That person can, with the appropriate technology and training, provide services to customers and clients from the comfort of their home. Right?

If you have, let us say, a telecentre or whatever-type operations, staff can be at home. There is a system that receives the calls and shunts calls to available service providers from the comfort of their home. So there is reduced wait time, there is loss of efficiency and productivity associated with the traffic situation that we all endured so much during pre-pandemic times. So it could really contribute and facilitate the ease of doing business both for the citizenry who seek to access services as well as from the supply side; both the demand and supply side.

So, as I said, work from home could be part of not just a response to pandemic but also as part of the service delivery model for the public service.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Thank you, member Monroe. I am going to open the floor to the other members but before I do, I have a couple of questions myself for Mr. McKellar and the team. You indicated

earlier on, Mr. McKellar, that the agency is thinking about after 23 years of the effectiveness of this present E-HRM system. Has an assessment been done—an audit been done to determine how effective it is in the many aspects of HR in the country? And I ask that question in the context of there seems to be the presumption—and you could correct me if I am wrong—by just by digitalizing or digitizing the society, it is going to solve all of our productivity problems and if there are factors that affect productivity from an HRM perspective, digitization may only solve some.

Has an enquiry been done to find out why we have these productivity issues generally in the public service that we can remediate including performance evaluation, including incentive, including systemic issues that may be anathema to productivity in various sectors of society as opposed to thinking that digitalization may be the cure-all for it?

**Mr. McKellar:** Thank you, Chair. Again, that is a multifaceted question and you are quite right. Digitalization, digitization is not a panacea for all the productivity and service delivery challenges that the public service or any organization for that matter may be confronted with. It will certainly assist in alleviating some of the challenges that currently exist.

I am not aware per se of any specific audit that has been done to assess and determine what are all of the many issues that impact and lead to low productivity and output within the public service. In some respects, it may be anecdotal but there are many issues that we cannot deny. Again, we go back to issues related to availability of resources, training of staff, proper attitudes of staff, facilities, et cetera.

**Mr. Chairman:** So what you are identifying is, with the greatest of respect, what any HRM undergrad or master's student could identify. I am talking about the Ministry of Public Administration going through an exercise of finding out which of these are contributing to low productivity in the country, whether it be systemic, personnel or otherwise upon which that data and analysis of that data could inform policy direction and how we remediate these problems. So the technicals—we all know what the main factors in any HRM system is that will either contribute or diminish productivity. How is the Ministry identifying what our issues are in various sectors? Because in one sector, it may be different to another sector and is that something the Ministry is pursuing upon which to base their decisions?

**Mr. McKellar:** It is not a piece of work that we are currently engaged in but it is certainly something that we should and that we can consider engaging. I would like the Chair and the Committee to be aware that there is also a National Productivity Council that has operated under the Ministry of Labour that has been looking at issues related to productivity not just from a public service standpoint but from a national perspective.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am going to open the floor to other members who may wish to question the Ministry of Public Administration. And while we await those: Is there a timeline on the assessment of the present E-HRM system with a view to changing it if it is necessary or is an assessment done on how effective it is in monitoring, measuring productivity and service delivery particularly during the pandemic? Part one. And part two: How has the pandemic, if at all, impacted your assessment protocols and monitoring protocols for service delivery in the public service?

**Mr. McKellar:** Chair, I am not able to say that we have a specific timeline for the completion of the assessment of E-HRM but it is definitely on the cards because it is a project that we have under our 2022 PSIP. So it is something that is very much on the front burner. With respect to the very HR

system that exists, IRIS, as I pointed out before, we have not utilized the system to its full capacity in terms of—

**Mr. Chairman:** Why not? Is there a reason why not?

**Mr. McKellar:** Well, I think I responded to that, Chair, in my responses to member Beckles when I talked about the need for change management, appropriate training for staff, business process, re-engineering. Those are some of the contributing factors.

**Mr. Chairman:** And yes, you did but are you addressing those issues?

**Mr. McKellar:** Yes, we are. Again, within the Ministry's 2022 PSIP programme, we do intend and have funding to look at issues related to change management and again, the implementation of the HR system.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Any other questions from any of the members of the Committee for Mr. McKellar and his team? Thank you for now, mister

**Mr. Monroe:** Yes—[Inaudible]

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, go ahead, please. Go ahead, member.

**Mr. Monroe:** Member Monroe again. Chair, my question again to the Ministry of Public Administration is just: Based on conversations that are being held about the changes within the dynamics of the work environment, are there provisions being implemented to subsidize or to cover additional cost associated to the employees?

**Mr. McKellar:** Member, I think that that is something that could be referred to the Chief Personnel Officer. And I do not want to put my colleague on the spot but that certainly speaks to issues, if so determined, that have to relate to the terms and conditions of employment. Right? The very work from home policy which is currently being examined by the Ministry of Planning and Development will turn up and address such issues as they relate to what you have just raised in terms of compensation, allowances to officers, who will be working from home. So it is a consideration but we are going to see what are the many issues that will turn up such as what you mentioned.

**Mr. Monroe:** Thanks. And my last question before we close on this matter is: Based on the long-standing issue in our country regarding low productivity or employees not functioning to their fullest capacity, what is the Ministry of Public Administration's projected success rate with the implementation of the work from home policy and what measures are being put in place to ensure a high level of productivity and supervision?

**Mr. McKellar:** First of all, let me respectfully say that while, you know, for years, we continue to hear about the low levels of productivity and poor service delivery in the public service, we would not deny that there are instances of that but that may not necessarily be representative of the entire public service. Again, the specific measures to be put in place to address a work from home programme will come out of the work that is being done by the Ministry of Planning and Development. We still also need to do a fair amount of baseline studies to determine what really is the level of productivity and output so that we could make comparisons with any proposed work from home or alternative arrangements to see how they actually impact positively or negatively on existing productivity.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. McKellar and thank you, member Monroe. And I am glad that Mr. McKellar identified that in the absence of a study and data and analysis, we are just basically guessing. Because yes, there are sectors of the public service that perform very admirably as we have seen during the pandemic, go beyond and above the call of duty, but there are some sectors that we know from our general interfaces on a regular basis that are woefully inadequate sometimes because of personal attitude and sometimes because of systemic issues. So in the absence of data, I think we are just guessing. All right. Thank you so much. Let us move on now to the Ministry of Digital Transformation and I invite members Mohit and Sinanan. Member Mohit, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me begin by thanking the members of the Ministry of Digital Transformation as well as all other Ministries for being present here today to answer and to inform us. So, Chairman, quickly I will move into the questions.

Made mention by the Ministry, you know, they are involved in early stages of policymaking to support the public—the delivery of goods and services to customers in a time where customers too are looking forward to the delivery of goods and services remotely. And, Mr. Chairman, I will begin with question one which has a few parts and I will go along to ask all of it—about four parts so that, you know, the Ministry can respond accordingly.

The first question is based on the technological standards and guidelines to support remote work. Mr. Chairman, can the Ministry answer: Has the Ministry assessed and determined the baseline standards for ICT systems required by all Ministries, departments and agencies? One. What is the estimated cost of implementing the ICT changes according to the guidelines? In addition to that: What are the short-term deliverables associated with the document based on the submissions and what is the estimated timeline for the finalization of the guidelines?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Madray and team, I think this goes to you.

**Mr. Madray:** Well, firstly, let me address the deliverable period. Right? So the work has been conducted prior to the establishment of the Ministry and since the establishment of the Ministry on the particular document that we referred to. Right? The technological standards. Our intention is to submit it to the—what is—the GLAC which is basically a network community of IT practitioners across the public service for further review and I believe that there is a subcommittee of that GLAC that will specifically examine that document. Our goal is that within the next quarter of this calendar year—by the end of the next quarter of this calendar year, that we would have that document finalized and approved, moving through the various approval processes.

I believe the member referred to the technological standards and I think perhaps between the two of us, myself and the Deputy National Chief Digital Officer, Ms. White, if we can probably address that particular segment of the enquiry. So I will hand over to Ms. White for her response.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, PS. Good morning, again, Chair and members. As it relates to the design standards, the document is intended to be a framework that provides guidelines for Ministries in a flexible way that they can support their employees who are participating in work from home arrangements. So it speaks broadly to three areas: what are the requirements of the remote environment; what are minimum standards required for hardware, software applications, connectivity, issues of mobile devices in terms of security, physical security as well as data security; and then it treats with general security issues in terms of how do we classify data knowing that the employees have to understand

what is to be treated as sensitive versus non-sensitive and the specific safeguards that have to be put in place when working outside of the office where there are secured networks.

So it treats it from two points of view or two perspectives in terms of Ministry-issued equipment as well as employee-owned devices because we do recognize that there are scenarios where they can—as PS McKellar in the Ministry of Public Administration said, you can issue equipment or there are circumstances where—and we saw that being brought about by the pandemic—employees have to use their own equipment. So this is about providing the guidelines to say, “Okay. If you have to work from home, here are some of the minimum standards that you would have to apply when looking at equipment, when looking at connectivity.” For example, you want to have to minimum amount of bandwidth so that if you are engaging in videoconferencing, you can have a successful session. So it is issues like that that we are looking at in terms of that document.

**Mr. Madray:** So to give you some specific ideas of what areas the document will be addressing, the following technology-based elements as they relate to remote working will be addressed by the framework. It will help us to understand the technological enablers required to successfully support to remote working. It will highlight the importance of data classification to ensure that confidential and sensitive information remains protected. It will provide minimum technical standards and specifications for the remote work environment, mobile device management and information security. It will recommend mechanisms for audit and security monitoring and it will encourage the development of user engagement and awareness programmes to ensure employee compliance.

There was a question related to estimated cost. At this time, there has been no work undertaken to estimate what those costs would be.

**Mr. Sinanan:** Chair, can I just ask one follow-up question on this?

**Mr. Chairman:** Please go. Go ahead, member Sinanan.

**Mr. Sinanan:** Yeah. You spoke about a combination of government assigning equipment and using your own personal devices. Has consideration been given to the fact that if people use their own personal devices that information may be very, very critical? And in their own personal devices, how do you protect that information, say after someone has completed their job tenure or to guarantee you that somebody else using that device—[Technical difficulties]—after that?

**Mr. Chairman:** And I could add to that, member Sinanan, and the question could be additionally: What are the legal liabilities involved in those scenarios?

Mr. Madray: I would like to ask the CEO of iGovTT if he can address that question.

**Mr. Bobb-Semple:** Sure. So good morning, again everyone. With regard to the devices, usually persons will give access to stakeholders via a virtual private network. And the way that operates, essentially on your phone, you can open a portal to conduct and continue work as if you were physically in the building.

With regard to tenure has ended, the administrators of the solutions are to now deactivate that person from the system. So immediately, they will not have access remotely on their system.

So with regard to the administration, that will reside at the Ministry and you will require the person's device per se because it is managed according by roles and privileges.



**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Simple, is it? Semple?

**Mr. Bobb-Semple:** Semple, yes, Bobb Semple.

**Mr. Chairman:** But what about the—that scenario covers someone whose tenure has ended. What about someone who is currently employed, has transitioned to working from home without the issuance of a device and/or network from the agency and the data going to that person to and from the agency is sensitive and for some reason, there is a breach, what are the liabilities involved there and has there been training regimen instituted so that persons understand cyber security, basic cyber security protocols when they are operating from their home which may not be as firewalled as an agency office?

**Mr. Bobb-Semple:** Sure. Yes, Chair. So what I will do, I will share what happens by us and probably PS could share on a wider scale. So first of all, we have non-disclosure agreements that everyone has to sign. So on one level, in terms of the legal aspect of it, persons are expected to keep certain information confidential. Secondly, with regard to the sensitive data and desire to share beyond the reach, depending on the level of data, it will only be accessible via that virtual private network. And if indeed there was a breach and information were to go forward, according to our non-disclosure agreements and the person's contract—because, again, our environment is— everyone is on contract, there can be legal ramifications.

With regard to the wider public sector, I will leave the sharing of that to either MPA or PS, but that is our experience and those are some of the things that we do to curb what you mentioned there.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members Mohit and Sinanan, you can continue, please.

**Ms. Mohit:** Sure. Mr. Chairman, I go straight into my second question where the submission by the Ministry highlighted, during the pandemic, iGovTT would have provided e-services to the public including that of governmentpayTT, EmployTT and e-Tender. Has the deployment of these e-government service platforms made it more feasible to facilitate remote work? Can the Ministry answer?

**Mr. Madray:** Sure. I would just like to, again, address the earlier question and simply say that the issue of misuse of government information applies whether one is utilizing manual documents or whether one is using the technology. Right? So the issue would apply universally.

One of the things—so this particular document, hopefully it will in fact be addressing some of those issues of data management, information management and, of course, the way that we would tend to treat with many of these issues right now is by ensuring that employees do sign confidentiality agreements and so on. Of course, having the technology at home, whether it is the Ministry-issued device or the private device also means that you have to ensure that those systems are adequately protected, that there will be policies on whether it should remain in a car overnight or whether it should be in house, how do you secure it, what kinds of anti-virus and security applications would have to be installed on the device and so on. So it is expected that these standards would address some of those matters.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Madray and Mr. Bobb-Semple, does the Ministry or do the agencies, if persons are using their own devices, retrofit those devices for security and encryption issues, et cetera, or is it that they do it themselves? Is there a process for safeguarding those devices which are personal devices essentially and which may come into the possession of persons in the household unwittingly who may

or may not have been the person who signed on to use the device through the Ministry but, you know, how some households in Trinidad and Tobago have multiple users because of their circumstances?

**Mr. Bobb-Semple:** Sure. So, Chair, we take it at two levels. So first on the application side, the deployment of anything on the devices will be done by the requisite IT manager at the various Ministries or departments or agencies. So that will take care of the access to the applications, utilizing your user name or your password.

Now, on the next side, which is on the softer side of things and awareness in terms of security of your device and your password, is usually on devices, persons will have different profiles. So I may have one profile, you may have a different and we switch profiles. And if that is the case, we do not have the issue that you raised. The issue that you raise would come into play if there is one profile, so there is one log in on a device.

Now, with regard to that aspect, what PS Madray would have shared comes into play where at that point, you are dependent on the person exercising what they would have been taught in terms of “do not share your password with persons and ensure that if you were in your email when you have ended, you close it down before you hand over your device”.

So with regard to the first part, it is IT. The second part is IT in terms of awareness. But then there is a personal responsibility as well in terms of exercising proper security protocols.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, member Mohit. Go ahead, please or member Sinanan.

**Ms. Mohit:** Sure. Thank you, Chair, again. In the submission to the members, iGov would have also completed the GovNeTT stabilization. Can you state for us what is the estimated number of Ministries and agencies that are expected to benefit from this project? And in addition to that, an estimated cost of this project?

**Mr. Bobb-Semple:** Sure. Government stabilization is—well, the Government is the backbone on which the network is provided to the Ministries, divisions and agencies. At present, there is upward of 70 per cent utilization of the services on GovNeTT by the Ministries. What it provides for is seamless email and so we can utilize the same hashtag @gov.tt and we have an environment in which we could collaborate with each.

Sitting on top of that, we have the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement which is housed within that data centre and you would see also within the note that we would have deployed Microsoft Teams at several of these Ministries, divisions and agencies. Actually, at present, it resides at just over 7,200 deployments among these MDAs and at 113 of the MDAs, there are 159 MDAs in total. And what Microsoft Teams will allow for, it allows for the meetings and collaboration, it allows for document storage in SharePoint and online video calling and screen sharing as well as chat function that most of us would be aware. So it assists in the collaboration among Ministries.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am going to open the floor to other members who wish to pose questions to the Ministry of Digital Transformation. I am posing this question to Mr. Madray and possibly, Ms. White and Mr. Semple. Based on the questions that we posed to Mr. McKellar before, do these systems, as are being implemented by the Ministry of Digital Transformation, cater for measuring, monitoring productivity on time, off time, in the context of service delivery and productivity in the public service? Because I would imagine one of the advantages touted by the Government, the State, in terms of

digitizing the country is to in part to deal with that very productivity issue. So I am presuming that as in other jurisdictions these systems come with built-in solutions for measuring and monitoring productivity.

**11.15 a.m.**

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Chair. So, one of the benefits of going through digitization, digitalization, and of course the end of that digital transformation, means that we are now moving into a data driven environment and that data allows us to perform analytics that will enable a better assessment or evidence driven assessment of how well services, not just the number or quantity, but it also gives us a qualitative feel depending on what kind of analytics are used.

So it may be difficult to make a clear comparison against what happens in the physical environment to what happens in the virtual environment. Understanding that when we move something into the digital environment we are not just porting a process that exists now. We have to look at what are the business requirements, what is the end state that we are going after. So it is just not how we are doing things differently but what is being done differently. So it may be difficult to get a true comparison as to increases in service delivery, but we can from the data that is provided by creating service delivery, in that virtual environment get a better measure as to how the services are being delivered, the rate at which the services are being delivered, how many people are getting access to the services and doing it in a more timely manner than we would have in the physical environment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is that data presently being collated or collected?

**Ms. White:** Well, it is a function of systems as they are put in. So as Ministries and you know that Ministries are at different levels of maturity in terms of how they are approaching their digital transformation agendas and initiatives. So part of putting that service delivery online is looking at collecting that data or putting functions in it. We cannot say that it is being done across the board, but it is a recommendation from the Ministry of Digital Transformation that when you are putting your services into the virtual environment, you need to be looking at the impact assessments and building the functionality for the data to be collected to demonstrate that.

**Mr. Chairman:** So it is not standardized is what you are suggesting? It is a recommendation?

**Ms. White:** Correct.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any other questions from the members of the committee for digital transformation? We have a question from the public. Any questions from the members of the committee?

**Ms. Mohit:** Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if I missed it but in terms of the estimated cost of the project, I do not think we got that.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think the answer was, there was no conversation about that from Mr. Madray. Am I correct?

**Mr. Madray:** That is correct, yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. We have a question from the audience, the committee has noted that the Ministry of Digital Transformation has sought to establish access centres in underserved areas throughout Trinidad and Tobago, does the Ministry of Digital Transformation plan to allow employees to access

those centres to work remotely? And I can add another part to that, the submission highlighted that tax funds the Government's TTWiFi free Internet access service, what feedback has the Ministry of Digital Transformation received regarding access and availability to TTWiFi?

**Mr. Madray:** So, towards the first question, the Ministry has access centres implemented at Marac, Carenage, Guayaguayare, Todds Road, Cumana and Penal, and of course during the course of this year we would be looking to implement additional centres. Those centres allow for different options. A person can in most cases go and sit outside of the centre and access WiFi. If they need to, they can enter into the actual physical building and perhaps access some training. They can also access devices that we have within those centres, and they can also to a certain extent print documents that they might be working on. And those centres are available to the communities, generally speaking to any citizen of the community. So it means that whether you are an employee of the Ministry, or you are just a general citizen employed or engaged in some other activity you can access the centre. As to whether employees have been making use of those centres, well I do not think that we would keep those records, but they are available for their utilization.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Can Ms. Reddock-Downes comment on the issue of TTWiFi access as funded by TATT, and also the estimated population of these areas that can now access these TTWiFi free areas and how many persons are benefiting or expected to benefit?

**Ms. Reddock-Downes:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members. Regarding TTWiFi at access centres the Authority is now in the process of implementing that project and so we are not yet in a position to identify how well the services are performing at access centres. What—the information that we do have relates to TTWiFi at public spaces, for instance transportation hubs, libraries, as well as COVID-19 hospitals. Those are the areas where TTWiFi is already rolled out. And at those locations in the contracts with service providers we have asked them to meet certain standards, performance standards, and we have received some metrics arising from those performance standards that we have identified in the contracts. And we are in the process of reviewing those metrics at this time.

Regarding members of the public, we have not had substantial feedback from members of the public except for them to say that they are happy that the services are actually being provided, but we do not have any quantitative data at this time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Downes, also, as CEO of TATT in the environment of expansive exploration of and positive exploitation of the digital space in every jurisdiction on earth, are there new areas of consideration for legislation governing TATT as more bandwidth is used and more digitization takes place in a jurisdiction as small as Trinidad and Tobago? Because we have seen in some other areas there are new possible legal considerations and consumer protection considerations legislatively that regulatory bodies like yourself have had to contemplate.

**Ms. Reddock-Downes:** Thank you, Chair. The Authority currently has 10 communications amendment Bill that is before our Ministry and certainly will go on to the Office of the Attorney General. And in that Bill, based on the changes in the technological environment, the Authority has made proposals in terms of some other areas of responsibility within that Bill. A number of these areas have already been consulted on with the public and we are awaiting the response of the Attorney General's Office when the Bill comes forward to Parliament.

In addition to that, some aspects of the fact that the Electronic Transactions Act also speak to work that the Authority can do, particularly with regard to ISPs being able to monitor certain types of traffic on the networks, and being in a position to provide some—deal with some of the concerns that the public may have with regard to perhaps information that should not be accessed particularly by children and things like that. So there are elements within the Electronic Transactions Act that allow for further work by the Authority and Internet service providers. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, members Mohit and Rohan, we have time for one more question from you for digital and then we go on to the Ministry of Planning and Development.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you. In terms of TATT can the member state for us present, in terms of monitoring and communicating with service providers to address challenges, can you state for us what challenges the service providers communicate to TATT regarding the availability rather and quality of the services?

**Ms. Reddock-Downes:** Thank you. Service providers certainly, in terms of availability and quality of service, let us know very early on in the pandemic that the issue of maintaining service levels would have been challenging. Largely because the majority of the population was at that time at home, and of course children were at home from school. That has changed considerably now but at that time, because of that the Authority made additional spectrum available to the mobile service providers to enable them to cope with the uptick in the use of online platforms.

What changed in Trinidad and Tobago was the fact that you know persons were no longer on the go, everybody was at home and what that meant was that the usage of home systems increased quite considerably, and that meant that there was need for more service provision particularly for home services. And the Authority sought to do that. What we were told is that on a normal day you would find that there would be peaks and troughs in the use of the service.

However, there was a requirement for the service to be always on and that meant that there would be challenges whenever there were difficulties that would be normally be experienced during the day that people were not aware of. So for example if there was a cable break in a particular area, when persons were not working from home, a lot of them did not recognize that there was a problem. But then soon as, you know, the situation changed, all issues, any off times, any service interruptions were well known by everyone, and therefore there was a requirement for them to have the services operating at a very high standard throughout the day and evening.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any other question from members for Digital Transformation?

**Mr. Sinanan:** Chair, can I just ask one question if the information is available from TATT. What percentage of Trinidad at this point you would say that you have a fairly acceptable signal? What percentage of the island is covered at this point in time? And also, Tobago, if you could give us something for Tobago as well?

**Ms. Reddock-Downes:** In terms of coverage mobile internet coverage 100 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago is covered by mobile services, 100 per cent. In terms of fixed Internet coverage, approximately 87 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago is covered by fixed Internet services. In terms of Tobago the service provision is also quite high. In Tobago we probably have—the latest figures we have would show that the service provision in Tobago is somewhere in the region of 80 to 85 per cent.

Of course, what we found is that there in some rural communities the service provision is not to the standard that we require it to be, and that regard our digital inclusion survey that we have recently completed and we are in the process of reviewing would tell us the areas where we need to improve service provision and make sure that the persons, the citizens, and residents, in those areas with connect to the highest level standard. But in terms of—

**Mr. Chairman:** Now that you have mentioned that Ms. Downes, is that part of TAT's mandate, given the fact in this new environment the protection of persons in what may be considered vulnerable communities to provide access to broadband services? Because now, education is through broadband services, and it puts many in those communities at a great disadvantage and widens the inequity gap in the country. Particularly if they are left—and I am trying to be kind here—at the vagaries of the prices of the telecom suppliers sometimes, who I know have provided some baseline packages, but which may also not be within the reach of some persons in those really poorer communities in the country. And one you mentioned the access to, but also the access in terms of economics is another big concern.

**Ms. Reddock-Downes:** Yes, Chair. And you are correct. And the Authority's responsibility to bridge that gap which would be affordability as well as access is the use of the Universal Service Fund to support those areas where the terrain may be challenging, or where it may not be economical for service providers to provide service. And that is what we are actively working on now, to use the Universal Service Fund to bridge those gaps in those locations and so reduce the cost-of-service provision in those locations.

**Mr. Sinanan:** And Chair, if I could, just to clarify, is there any—based on the licenses that were approved for the service provider, is there any clause there that they are required to provide a service that is acceptable in these rural areas? Or if it is just about the economics if it is not feasible, they just forget about the area? The reason why I am asking that, is that at the Ministry of Works and Transport we have launched the new mobile buses. That seems to have taken off where we actually have more service being provided at these buses especially for renewals, and so compared to even the Caroni site. Yesterday we had 300 and odd at one location with the buses whereas Caroni would do 175. But what we find is certain areas the signal is so low that we cannot transmit at these sites. And the information is that yes, we have Internet connection, we have everything there, but once we go in the quality is so poor that it is almost unusable. Is it that the providers are committed, or it is just a matter of the feasibility of it and they do not have to provide it in those areas although they are licensed to provide I guess throughout Trinidad?

**Ms. Reddock-Downes:** Thank you for that question. We do have service standards that service providers are required to meet. I think what has happened is that in recent time the requirement for the level of service requirement is so much more now than when those service standards were established. Because of course we are doing so much more with, you know, the combination of devices, and you know, laptops, desktops, you know, tablets, phones. So the combination of devices now that we are using require us to have higher standards in terms of the service provision. But operators are required to maintain certain standards.

In fact, what we have, we also have network standards that we just recently got sent out for consultation and once those standards have completed the consultation process, they will become a requirement for all operators. In addition to that, we have quality of service standards that are meant to be in place and they are also with the Ministry for consideration and for taking to Parliament.

But you are right, there are some areas where we do have dips in service provision, and in those areas where the service is what we consider underserved we are aiming to use the fund, the Universal Service Fund to remove those gaps.

**Mr. Chairman:** We have one more question, member Sinanan let me just welcome member Beckles and then we have to go to the Ministry of Planning and Development. Member Beckles quickly your question, intervention.

**Ms. Beckles:** Very very quickly. Would we be able to know at any point in time what are the areas you are targeting under the Universal Service Fund? And when you talk about 100 per cent coverage by mobile service, are you able to provide maybe what area you would say have better quality than others? Because I mean I will admit I represent a large part of the rural community in the north coast, Blanchissusse, La Fillette, Morne La Croix, most of those areas really have in some instances only one provider is available, and even in that case the service is not very good.

The second one is when you talk about 87 per cent internet service that is fixed, to repeat what the Chairman said, I mean most of those areas specifically because of COVID and you have the online service children simply have not been in school at all, and I do know you all have something called “hotspots.” So are you exploring the possibility of those areas that do not have Internet, if you are looking at the possibility of having hotspots? Thank you.

**Ms. Reddock-Downes:** Regarding the issue of mobile service provision, the access is 100 per cent meaning that persons throughout Trinidad and Tobago are able to use their mobile phones. In some areas, you are correct, one mobile service provider may be available when another is not. However, when you combine the service provision the mobile network is available throughout Trinidad and Tobago. In terms of the fixed network it means that they are services of available in your home. And I had identified that that is in the region of 87 per cent of the homes in Trinidad and Tobago actually have fixed services—sorry—fixed internet services. And the level of service provision we consider to be quite reasonable and quite high in those, depending upon the service providers that you have in place.

In terms of the north coast we are aware that the north coast there are issues in certain areas and those areas do have mobile service, but the fixed services, broadband services, are not as available as they should be, and in fact we are looking at projects in those location. I think one of the areas that was mentioned was Rincon at some point and we have actually done site visits and so on to that location to determine whether—to establish for ourselves the quality of service provision in those areas. And we have also asked service providers about their plans for those north cost areas.

In terms of hotspots—

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead.

**Ms. Reddock-Downes:** In terms of hot spots sorry, I will quickly finish. This is another possibility in terms of service provision and it is something that we would consider once we have our digitalization inclusion survey, and we know we have the results, and we know exacting the areas that we need to pay close attention to. Because the service provision that you provide or the projects you provide will depend upon the areas that would need the services, and what sort of services it can actually role out. But it is under consideration.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. We move now, thank you to the Ministry of Digital Transformation. We move now to the Ministry of Planning and Development, and we invite members Nakhid and Singh. Member Nakhid, go ahead please. Member Nakhid.

**Mr. Nakhid:** I would like to thank the Ministry for being here. My first question has to do with the discussions with the stakeholders that you had, and the preparation for the terms of reference or consultancy to support the development policy. Given that the views of Government labour and public officers were obtained via the IRAC, the Industrial Relations Advisory Committee, with further consultations be necessary? And if so why?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Thank you very much member for that question. Our work at the Ministry of Planning and Development would have been the very beginning of the preliminary work for the consultation. As you would look at the work of the IRAC it is really a set of guidelines. But looking at the policy, as we see the policy and the conversation this morning has certainly pointed us in that direction. The complexity of the work from home as it relates to systems, as it relates to legislation, and relates to people, capacity building, regulations guiding the way that we operate, even moving infrastructure from the workplace in to the home, and the liability issues. So there are quite a broad set of parameters that you would have to consider in a policy. And therefore, how that policy will then—when it is developed how it will be impacted by programming to effect all. So when we did the initial work we did not really consider the business community. Our questionnaire and our work has been within the public service so we need to widen it because of course there are a lot of implications, in the trade union, and I am sure the Chief Personnel Office will speak to that more about what work from home would mean in terms of terms and conditions of employment. So when we look at our consultation those are the kinds of things we would be considering through the process.

**Mr. Nakhid:** So given your submission now, any idea of the schedule for these consultations that you have in mind?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Yes. We anticipate that all this activity, the completing the terms of reference and the consultations would be completed by mid-June, and then we would be advertising for the consultancy to award before the end of this fiscal year, which is before the end of September. Okay. The Ministry of Planning and Development has an overall responsibility for establishing what they call a productivity and work ethic unit to address of course the issues of productivity and so forth in the public sector, apparently advised by the National Tripartite Advisory Council. Given the nature of this, that is productivity and work ethics, would it not have been better to be placed under the Ministry of Public Administration?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Well, the Ministry of Public Administration is one of our partners, and from a research point of view, the National Tripartite Advisory Council asked that the Ministry of Planning—but we



are not, no, we actually have a technical support committee of which we have other Ministries including Labour, Education, Health and members of the Tripartite Advisory Committee. But it is not limited to them, maybe we can coopt as necessary. The productivity research and work ethic is really about doing that, finding out what are the parameters of productivity. And you know productivity can deal with a number of things. It deals with people, it deals with technology, it deals with work environment. So you are looking at all those variables and trying to assess how those things impact the way we behave, the way the organizations perform, and of course what sort of systems will help us develop to be more productive. And whether—how to you respond to the needs of persons as we try to evolve into a much more complex work environment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Can I ask one question member Nakhid before you go ahead? Member Singh, Mrs. Deoraj is that correct?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is part of the exploration of this stage regarding what member Nakhid asked regarding the National Tripartite Advisory Council an exploration as to why—because to me it is a critical element moving forward why the relationship between labour and the State continues to be so tenuous when you have an establishment of a National Tripartite Advisory Council and very often that conflict is contributory in some way to how workers see themselves in the country, and the consequent impact on productivity?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Well, that is indeed a very complex question. But tripartism—if I may just draw on some little bit of knowledge and a little bit of research—really talks about the three entities coming to the table. The objective is to build consensus, and I think the Tripartite Advisory Council has been working towards that. Having decided that we need to have such a committee as what they have asked us to do dealing with productivity and work ethic, means that they see collectively that there is something that needs to be addressed in this area. Our findings will then influence how the Tripartite Advisory Committee sees the interventions being executed.

So I think there is consensus building that has already been identified by the Advisory Council by agreeing that we should have such work done. And work ethic for years we have been talking about what they call values, attitudes, and behaviours in our Vision 2020 and repeated it in the Vision 2030. Those are fundamental things that impact the way people work. And it starts even from the school system and how do you introduce concepts of work ethic? Civics, the way we conduct ourselves in the daily living, how we treat, respect each other. All of those things are part of nation building and building the right attitudes and values as we have—not only talking about the workplace but in every aspect of our development.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am trying to phrase my question without trying to draw you into any controversy honestly, but to me, if there are issues with the framework for interaction in the Council itself, how can we move forward to consensus in a real inclusive sense? Because I am not asking you the question again to draw you into controversy, but I am talking about maybe our examination of the framework for consultation may be at the foot of some of these issues here, because as you said the entities need to be able to come together to work productively together.

**11.45 a.m.**

**Mrs. Deoraj:** And that is what tripartism is—that is the fundamentals of tripartism. That is what my understanding is that they do come as separate entities, but to work together is what tripartism really works with. So I do not know if there is a flaw in that methodology. I do not know if it is a methodology that has been used throughout—is one of the fundamentals of the International Labour Organization and there are ways that that is done on an international national level. And I think the National Tripartite Advisory Council would be working with those fundamentals. So I do not want to—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, I appreciate the answer. Member Nakhid go ahead please, sorry for the interruption.

**Mr. Nakhid:** That is okay Chairman. In my final question, which is—I think with would be the crux of the matter in the implementation of the work from home policy, you had in your submission, you had a review of the existing legislative framework for the public sector. What amendments, if any, that you can identify for that legislative framework for the public sector that will be so critical to us?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Well, in this, our preliminary work identifies several legislative instruments. So there will be issues with respect to the Occupational Safety and Health legislation. How do you call the home the workplace, that is one of the things that will have to be considered and then when you have the home as the workplace, what do you do in terms of providing the worker with the right tools and responsibilities to do their jobs? And that could be from a computer, to printers, ergonomic chairs, furniture, et cetera. Then you of course, how, if something happens to that worker in the workplace, there is a liability issue. Those things would have to be considered if we are going in this direction.

We also have legislation in terms of e-Transactions, e-Signatures, whether those things are actually form as legal instruments or legal documentation in decision and work environments. Access to the databases, even as digital transformation has indicated, if an officer is accessing a database what is the confidentiality aspect, confidential clauses that need to be done, making sure that the data that you are accessing remains within the remit of the organization. [Interruption] There is quite a bit—bits of legislation that will have to be considered when we move forward with this.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Singh.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam PS of Planning, thank you for being here. I just have a few brief questions. The first one spoke to—your submission rather spoke to a subcommittee of the Board of Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments that were established to develop the work from home initiatives. I am interested to know, because from your submission, it also spoke to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this whole conversation about working from home was a feature, certainly in your Ministry. So I wanted to get an idea of when was this subcommittee established and just for you to give us a little feel in terms of how often does this committee meet and is it a fixed session or, you know, rather how does that go in terms of this committee, the subcommittee?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Thank you very much member. So, prior to COVID-19, the issues of productivity were occupying the attention of the Board of Permanent Secretaries. Several—we have had issues of persons concerned about the traffic, the congestion, of course, delays in traffic, caused persons to come to work late or come to work in a state of discomfort, because two hours in the traffic, leaving early

homes, the impact on family life, the impact on even returning at home and children, and taking care of family life.

So a number of things were occupying the attention of the Board of Permanent Secretaries. Some of the Ministries were looking at perhaps doing some pilot projects on departments that could possibly work at home, those who mainly were technical officers, and whether they were greater levels of output. But having—and this was just prior to COVID, this was just about two or three months prior to the COVID pandemic taking root. And therefore, we did not meet as a subcommittee in person more than once but we set up a technical working subcommittee of all the technocrats of the different Ministries and also recognized the need to bring other persons into the discussions. And that technical subcommittee has been working, they are the ones who have been developing the terms of reference and met with the International Labour Office, talk about what has been happening in other countries. And we have just been working towards trying to develop the terms of reference and that is why Ministry of Planning and Development in the Public Sector Investment Programme decided to put a line item for a consultancy for 2022.

So it has been a little journey but of course with the pandemic itself we have also been impacted in terms of rotation, work from home, getting the technology, getting everything in place to be able to do this work.

**Mr. Singh:** Great, I saw that you—the survey which was mentioned in the documentation, spoke to 1,068 survey respondents were received. And out of that 853 persons indicated that they were able to work from home. Would you mind going into a little more detail in terms of what were some of the findings and recommendations that arose as a result of that survey report that you all would have conducted?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** We can subsequently provide that member if you would allow us but we did acknowledge that while persons were working from home, there were some other issues in terms of access to digital records, remote access to databases and of course, there were also competing—some families only have one or two devices and children were home, so that they would have to be looking at different working hours to complete work. So what we would provide that information in writing.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay and finally, Chairman, if you would permit me. Seeing that the conversation was happening prior to COVID-19 about work from home initiatives, and now we are in an environment where COVID-19 has forced us to come into that scenario even before whether were prepared fully or not, or whether were getting in the environment of being, you know, virtually ready. I saw on the website of the Ministry of Planning and Development, a couple releases and one in particular—a couple in particular, spoke to some of the online services being offered by the Ministry and I saw we have already gone to, which is very, very laudable we have moved to no paper application for some of the services, in particular the southern regional office and that was advertised in the Ministry's website recently for planning permission, stamp duty exemptions and so on. So is it that we are now in the realm of accepting only online application for these types of services? And how is that going at the Ministry seeing that persons who are accustomed to paper based applications and now they have had to go into this new realm of digital, you know, planning permissions and so on. Could you share how is that going? And I have one follow up question I could pose it one time. How are we tracking and monitoring the productivity issues that you referred to, which led to the conversation about work from home initiatives? How are we able to track especially some of these confidential documents and

these files as you have mentioned—records and our security in terms of guarding the databases and so on, for these online services that we offering?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Thank you very much for the questions member. So yes, prior to the pandemic, the Ministry of Planning, Town and Country Planning Division was involved in an IDB project through the Single Electronic Window Loan, which was two components, the digitization of the records of Town Country Planning Division, and the DevelopTT Software, which would be allowing persons to do applications online. So we had done more than 57,000 or I think it was a little bit more than that of digitization of records of the Town and Country Planning Division. The pandemic forced us to move a little faster with DevelopTT in terms of the applications because we had done the training, we had been doing—the bringing the—all the different stakeholders in the process for the construction permitting process to be sensitized, trained, to provide equipment and so to be able to deliver that service. As you know, the construction permit process takes about 14 different entities in addition to Town and Country Planning. But during the first, I would say the first six to eight months of the pandemic, recognizing that we were having persons trying to drop applications, were doing rotation, were working at home, there were a lot of complex challenges with even drop off boxes, we mobilized the north regional office, and we were able to do a status of land, stamp duties and online applications. So to date, from around mid-2020 to now, we have had over 2,997 planning permission applications being processed—for the east office we only have status of land and stamp duty; we are still trying to bring the online applications on board. For the South office 363 status of land, 279 stamp duty, 161 online applications and Tobago, we have also status of land and stamp duty.

Currently, we would—that tallies about 5,810 applications that we have been able to process through the digital process. We are hoping that the Tobago office will come into being within the next six to eight months. The digitization of records is our priority project and that is in Tobago currently and we are working to work with the THA to be able to get the execution of that services as quickly as possible.

With respect to tracking and monitoring of productivity, as I had indicated, that would be a very important part of the work from home policy because standards have to be established in measuring how persons' access and use work from home policy equipment and things like that. Currently, under the National Performance Framework, Vision 2030, we have been putting those sorts of governance indicators into that framework. But building consensus on what should be measured is quite a challenge because in developing indicators, you have to look at making sure that all the systems and processes are behind the indicators so that when you put those things into place, you can say well yes, because I have done certain types of interventions, I am going to get a change in the result that I am looking for. So we cannot measure productivity without looking at what is our baseline of human capacity. If you have done training, if you have done development, whether there is a change in the behaviour. Likewise, the introduction of technology, you cannot just say here that there is technology, here is the system, you have to be able to get the change management. This is the thing that is going to cause your work to be different and people's acceptance and utilization of the technology.

So we have been working on standards, we have been working on measures and indicators within our national development framework and we hope that that would continue to be strengthened as we move forward to develop more robust systems. I hope that answers your question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mrs. Deoraj. I am going to open the floor quickly to any other members who have questions for the Ministry of Planning and Development at this time. Members, do you have any questions for Mrs. Deoraj and Ms. Ramsumair—Ramesar sorry? Or you must have answered all your questions really well, because they have no follow-up questions so we will come back to you later on.

We are going to move now to the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer. Thank you for your patience, Dr. Dindial and Ms. Genas. I am going to pose the first question. Your submission outlined some of the issues which must be considered in attempting to formalize any work from home arrangement for the public service.

Question 1 (a) and (b), do you anticipate that the formal adoption of any work from home arrangements throughout the public service would require:

1. A renegotiation of collective arrangements with the relevant trade unions; and
2. A revision of existing terms and conditions for public officers, contract staff and other workers?

**Dr. Dindial:** Thank you Chair, so thank you for the opportunity to respond. So in treating with the questions posed to us, with the introduction of any work from home policy been introduced, there is an expectation that there will have to be meaningful consultation with recognized majority unions, in so far as to say that there is currently a personnel department circular, it is called No. 1 of 20—1974 that speaks about the introduction of a five day working week. That is the circular that Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department would use to stagger working hours for public officers. Now a public officer can work from 7am to 5pm, depending on the exigencies of the service, and as required by a permanent secretary for those individuals to be in the office.

In treating with the pandemic and prior to the pandemic where there was a requirement for persons to be rostered, the Personnel Department was always very carefully at the Civil Service Regulations—paragraph 62 and 63 that allow the Permanent Secretary to have persons in the physical workspace and to have people come into the workspace as required.

In treating with the work from home policy going forward, once there is a decision by the State to have a work from home policy being implemented, it is not unreasonable to expect a recognized majority union to come with a proposal to request for instance, an allowance to be paid for persons who are asked to be working remotely where they will be incurring personal costs so we do have that expectation. As it is right now we have in the public service the 40-hour workweek and we do have provisions over time. As an example, in the civil service, there are 1,621 jobs, all of them are currently under evaluation. A recent survey, and this preliminary data, 35 per cent of those jobs are jobs that can be worked remotely based on the nature of those jobs. Thirty-six percent of those jobs are considered to be hybrid, meaning to say that it may require some form of work on the field and there is a class of jobs that cannot be conducted remotely.

So, there is an expectation that if a policy decision comes into effect, where you are going to have persons working remotely, terms and conditions will be impacted, and it is likely that the Personnel Department through the Office of the CPO would have to consult with recognized majority unions

to treat with terms and conditions relative to personal costs they may incur in conducting work on behalf of the State.

The other issue, and it was mentioned by several members, was the issue of liability, which is a key concern, the issue of appreciating and accepting that the work from home policy accepts that working in a home environment really is an extension of your home—of your workspace and the liability that will be incurred by the State is something that must be given serious consideration. In Trinidad and Tobago there is no case law to treat with that particular issue but we have noted in at least in two jurisdictions one, in the Commonwealth in Canada, the other in Germany, where the court would have ruled favourably where persons would have been impacted based on the pandemic, working from home, and the court in those jurisdictions ruled that it is, in fact, an extension of the workplace and liability must be considered. There is also the International Labour Organization guideline that speak very broadly about the work—the home space being in an extension the workspace, and that is also something that we also have to consider.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the OSH Act provides some guidance as well, but it speaks about not residential properties, a home space is a residential property. So, we have to consider to what extent the OSH Act is applicable.

So we do expect that if there is the implementation of a work from home policy, Chair, that there will be implications with terms and conditions that will have to be discussed, negotiated and consulted with recognized majority unions, insofar as to treat with issues of personal cost, issues of liability as they may arise, because persons will be performing duties remotely outside of the formal workspace on behalf of the State and so those are considerations that must be given attention to Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Does the current public service evaluation that you referenced exercise take into consideration these and other work from home alternative arrangements in the context of the factors that you have identified?—the ongoing evaluation. And also I will add to that, is there a delineation between some of the outstanding negotiations that the CPOs officers may be engaged in for retroactive collective agreements that have not been yet resolved, and upcoming ones in relation to work from home arrangements with the trade union movement?

**Dr. Dindial:** Thank you Chair, I will take the first one. The current job evaluation exercise terms of reference speak about evaluating the existing jobs. But of course, on the onset of the pandemic, we saw the opportunity to ask the consultant to map what they are saying in the job descriptions, what they are developing, which type of jobs based on the new standard that is being developed through that process could be the discerned as jobs that can be worked remotely.

So that process is engaging the work of the eyes and the work of the consultant insofar as to share with us the nature of those jobs. It is not one of the outcomes of the exercise, but something that the consultant is working on to share on the side, mapping the data as the project is ongoing. So the terms of reference to that particular project was simply the job in public service. But even when we are in that data, looking at all jobs across all those classifications of jobs that exist, the consultant along with the department is looking to see where jobs have changed, where some rules and responsibilities have been adapted, where jobs are no longer applicable and where the use of technology, those jobs to be considered as jobs that can be worked from a remote sense. So the consultant is working on that and

that is where we got the preliminary data 35 per cent of those jobs be evaluated, that has the ability to be worked remotely.

On the second question with the terms and conditions, I have no proposal before the CPO or from any recognized majority union that seeks to take into consideration any impact on the only pandemic in terms of remote working, in terms of proposals from any of them. I do expect that they may raise it at the table and when that time comes, of course, we will have meaningful discussion and the process really is to determine to what extent the State could be able to afford any considerations treating with requests and proposals for allowances—once there are cost implications there is that process.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, the floor is open for questions for Dr. Dindial and Ms. Genas. Dr. Dindial, do you expect the present pandemic and the consequent conversation and evolution of work from home situations to impact and influence new job categories in the public service, given what we have discussed so far, and what you have heard from other sectors who have been before us this morning?

**Mr. Dindial:** Chair, thank you I do. I think we have to look at this very holistically, I recognize that there are some jobs in the public service that perhaps it is contemplated to be amalgamated into other jobs. There may be some jobs for instance, that we no longer require because of technology but that does not mean to say that we cannot make a nexus between the creations of new jobs because with the emerging technologies that exist and the way we are treating with how we want to have an effective public service with jobs that are required for the 21st Century to support our national development thrust, we have to consider that there are some jobs that may no longer be required, there are some jobs that will have to be created to support this trust. A good example Chair, is the issue of the ICT jobs in the public service. At this point in time Ministries and Departments have what we call standardize ICT jobs. There are 11 types of jobs across 22 different standards that exist that support ICT work of Ministries and Departments. There is an expectation based on the assessment being conducted by other Ministries, insofar as treating with the State's intent to implement a fully digitized economy, that the skills that are currently required for those jobs is inapplicable. We will require more skills in different areas and different types of ICT jobs. So as an example, I am seeing it is clear that there will be an emergence of new jobs that will be created to support the digitalization thrust. The job evaluation exercise provides us with an excellent opportunity to identify which jobs are quite frankly obsolete, are not required, where they are number of jobs which are similar and therefore you do not need to have many people conducting the same type of function, but the functions that they are, in fact, undertaking to be done through the use of technology in a more effective and efficient manner. All of these are difficult but important conversations that we must have in order to treat with having a public service and I am speaking specifically on the civil service side that is more effective and can deliver the type of services expected by all of our nationals. So yes, I do anticipate, Chair, that there will be some changes in the demography of jobs that exist, even the type of skills that may be required to map what is required of the civil service in implementing the promises made to the public.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any questions from members before I move on with my next question?—because I have quite a few and I do not want to over dominate. Any questions from members for Dr. Dindial and his team? While we await this, Dr. Dindial, how much do conversations about productivity factor in when the CPO's office is having conversations with majority representative trade unions in the context of, there are some sectors that are more productive for whatever it may be, personnel, it may be HR issues, it may be systemic issues, and some that are not. In the context of negotiations and

applying incentives based on productivity levels, or is that too advanced for us now in terms of our conversations, given the fact that we have had so many challenges in the past?

**Mr. Dindial:** Chair, thank you. I cannot speak for my predecessors in terms of what was discussed but what I can say is that it is certainly a key issue that we have to confront. When we do meet around the table, it tends to be about what percentage increase workers are going to be getting. Unions are not concerned about productivity, when they come around the table, what they are concerned about is what they are getting for the persons who have elected them to those offices. So we tend to focus to a large extent on what the State could provide and what the State can sustain and what they can get for their members. Without a doubt Chair, there is a nexus between what the State is compensating the public service for and what the citizens of this country are receiving in terms of services. That issue productivity is a complex one. In my respectful view, it has to be considered in the context of organizational productivity, and individual productivity. At this point in time, we do not have a system in place to look across all Government Ministries and Departments. It says this is the Government performance management system that assesses and monitors and identifies the impact on what is expected in terms of an outcome. That does not exist. On a personal assessment system process we have a system which is on paper seems very good, a lot of people get the marks of good and very good but institutions are underperforming.

In my respectful view, and looking very carefully at the system of performance management and the forms and the systems that exist for public officers to be assessed, there is some weakness in that system. For example, the system focuses on technical competencies. So you could decide and assess individual on whether or not he or she can in fact perform the duties excellent or good or very good as the case may be but the system does not take into account issues of behaviour. So an individual in a composite view has technical competencies, but there is also behavioural competencies. So you see a lot of people getting good and very good because on a technical point of view, they could do the work. Is it being measured in a context that supports and it be could be mapped with indices for national development?—that is something that is been worked on a national level, and one of my colleagues spoke about the challenges with that. So from an individual perspective, Chair, I would say that there is an urgent requirement to change the performance management system for public officers to include behavioural competencies, because they cannot assess an individual who is technically sound but there is challenges with their character. In other words, there is no issues with their competence, but there may be issues with that character, and you have to marry the both of them.

In terms of measurement, I can speak about the issue of key performance indicators. And these key performance indicators do not exist across the board for staff. What you may have is targets been met in a qualitative way. So how do we treat with measuring individuals throughout the organization, not just the Permanent Secretary, throughout the organization, in addition to key indicators that map the performance of the institution, and in that regard, Chair, I think there is a lot of work to be done on the management side, to strengthen those systems to treat with the issue of performance, but going back—

**Mr. Chairman:** Put a pin there, Dr. Dindial. I am glad you brought that up because it was going to be my next question if the members have no other questions. Earlier on, we spoke to the officials at the Ministry of Public Administration who identified a 23-year-old system that they were looking at in parentheses in terms of its effectiveness in monitoring performance evaluations, and productivity—they were looking at and I stress that. With the survey that this Committee has been able to perform,



29 respondents mentioned management issues, including: key performance indicators not clearly established, a lack of management monitoring protocols poor management practices, a lack of accountability for productivity, a lack of tools to monitor time spent working and output and deliverables, as their challenges in their own personal productivity and departmental productivity. Is now the time, the opportune time for us to re-engineer the public service for more of that kind of accountability because very often, the lack of a standardized HRM protocol in the public service is a key factor contributing to a lack of productivity? We have a tendency in Trinidad and Tobago to think, well Trinis have a bad attitude and Trinis do not like to work but we have seen under different circumstances, especially the pandemic that public sector workers can perform and go beyond and above the call of duty when the systems are in place. So how much is that—should that be factored in moving forward in terms of a re-engineering of the public service for more effective HRM management?

**12.15 p.m.**

**Dr. Dindial:** But Chair, let me add by stating that the HR systems are standardized throughout Ministries and Departments. It is the issue of efficiency and effectiveness is the key cause for concern. So we have, in my respectful view, made decisions in the past to create HR departments in Ministries and Departments over the years. So we have these HR departments existing in Ministries and Departments. We have two central HR agencies namely, the Office of the CPO and the Service Commissions Department which would have either devolved or delegate functions to Permanent Secretaries and Ministries and Departments. That was an attempt to allow Permanent Secretaries more leeway to manage what they have to do in terms of their HR requirements in Ministries and Departments.

There is an issue in terms of the amount of codified competent individuals we have filling those positions, at this point in time, and it impacts significantly on the ability of a Permanent Secretary to treat with the mandate that is provided before them. So, the issue, it is multi-faceted, it is complex, but without a doubt, there is a need to ensure that the public service transformation initiatives geared towards looking very carefully at how those HR functions are delegated and devolved and whether or not those decisions are, in fact, decisions that have turned out to be good decisions for the public service to allow the Permanent Secretaries, through a cadre of professional staff to manage those issues have, in fact, turned out to not be in the benefit of those Ministries providing services to our people.

I am aware that there are, at least, three central HR agencies: the Office of the CPO, the Ministry of Public Administration and the Service Commissions Department who are working very closely with the Minister of Public Administration in treating with identifying the appropriate strategy for civil service reform, in the context of driving and developing the institutional strengthening of those three agencies. Chair, I will put it very mildly, those three institutions do not have the adequate human resources required. Those are the three institutions that provide the guidance, the policy for Ministries and Departments to operate in the ecosystem. Without the required resources, both human and capital, those are Ministries—those are organizations rather, that will not be able to adequately satisfy the requirements of Ministries and Departments. So, to a large extent, Permanent Secretaries who are awaiting staff to be recruited by the Service Commissions Department cannot, because they are challenged with staffing requirements.

Ministries and Departments that are requiring the CPO to classify or reclassify positions in the civil service, and the CPO is unable to do it because of the required staff, there is a challenge with

them getting the required staffing needed to do what they have to do. So, what I am saying is that the first thing that we should be considering in the ecosystem of HR is to strengthen those pre-HR agencies. They are the ones who are charged with different levels of responsibilities in the ecosystem to help manage the ecosystem and provide the support that is required for a permanent secretary. So that is what is required, and there is a firm undertaking to address those issues in a strategy that is being developed that I am hopeful that soon would be released with the view of being implemented in the foreseeable future, Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, I am glad you were that candid, because you have described a serious deficit in what I could describe as the engine room of productivity in the public service. We are heading to the closing phases of our interaction today. Do members have any other questions for Dr. Dindial or any of the other agencies before us before we ask for their closing comments? If not, can I call on Mr. McKellar, acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration for closing comments? Thank you, Dr. Dindial.

**Mr. McKellar:** Thank you, Chair and good afternoon. I would just like to thank you again for the opportunity for the Ministry of Public Administration to provide responses to the questions presented by the Committee, the opportunity to be present today to respond to questions and, again, we look forward to the recommendations that the Committee would proffer, in terms of improving alternative work arrangements, and the general productivity and service delivery of the public service. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Mr. Madray, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Digital Transformation.

**Mr. Madray:** Chairman, my team and I would like to extend our appreciation to you and the Committee for your in-depth approach to addressing the issue of work from home and its impact on public sector productivity. We value your comments and your recommendations, and I assure you that we will use your observations and advice in developing our policies and programmes to support these alternative working arrangements. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much for your contribution. We move now to the Ministry of Planning and Development. Mrs. Deoraj?

**Mrs. Deoraj:** Mr. Chairman, thank you very much and to the members of the Committee for allowing us to make our contributions today. We too, like our colleagues, look forward to the recommendations of the Committee and to share our data with you as we move forward in this exercise. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much. And Dr. Dindial, CPO.

**Dr. Dindial:** Thank you, Chair for the opportunity to contribute to the discussions this morning. We as well look forward to the recommendations of the Committee, because recommendations of the Committee would certainly lead us in that direction, particularly, as it impacts terms and conditions of employment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much. I just want to say for myself, I hope we as a country realize that while the pandemic has been extremely challenging and resulted in tragic loss of life, there are also opportunities that we can benefit from as a country because we have had to digitize and go online and

take a look at our systems and the way we do things, and I hope we use the opportunity to move Trinidad and Tobago forward significantly.

Thank you to all the agencies coming before us today. I would also like to thank the members of the Committee, including, MP Beckles, Monroe, Mohit, Sinanan, Singh and member Nakhid. Member Forde could not be with us today, and we would like to thank the Secretariat for always providing yeoman service and the support we need as a Committee in terms of the interface with the agencies that come before us. The agencies are also asked if they have additional commentary or suggestions to submit them to the Secretariat and they would be certainly considered and added to our final report. On behalf of the entire team, we would like to thank you for viewing, the listening and viewing audience. This meeting is now adjourned.

**12.21 p.m.:** *Meeting adjourned.*