



An Roinn Fiontar,
Turasóireachta agus Fostaíochta
Department of Enterprise,
Tourism and Employment

Statutory Review Report

Part 3 of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023



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Foreword

A key goal of my Department, and this Government, is to drive prosperity and high standards of living through creating and maintaining high quality jobs and increased productivity.

Remote working is critical to achieving this vision. Over the last number of years it has meant less time spent commuting, more time spent with family, more opportunities to enter and stay in the workforce – particularly for women, the growth of regional community development, and overall improvements in work life balance.

Introducing a statutory right to request remote working was a key action of the last Government through the National Remote Work Strategy, *Making Remote Work*, which aimed to make remote work a permanent, mainstream feature of Irish working life.

The evidence shows that this aim is now a reality, with data from the Central Statistics Office showing that last year almost one million people worked from home at least some of the time, with over half a million people working from home more than half of the time. Eurofound ranked Ireland second in Europe for the frequency of working from home. At the same time, Ireland has been found by Eurostat to have the highest rate of productivity per person employed and per hours worked across the 27 EU Member States.

Of course, not all jobs are suitable for remote work and the law governing the right to request remote work attempts to set a workable balance between the needs of employees and employers.

That being said, it is clear that remote work is a central part of the way we work in Ireland now and my hope is that the numbers of us working remotely at least part of the time will continue to grow.

That is why Government has brought in a number of reinforcing measures to date, including investing in broadband infrastructure, the provision of connected hubs and tax relief for home working. Over the coming months there will be a suite of strategies and supports unveiled including the Strategy for the National Hub Network, the continued roll-out of the National Broadband Plan, and the completion of an analysis by the National Economic & Social Council (NESC) on the impact of remote and hybrid work.

This review focuses on a discrete but important part of the Government's commitment on remote work – the operation of the legislation providing the right to request remote working since its commencement in March 2024. The excellent response rate to the public consultation which forms part of this review, shows how much this matters to people, with over 8,000 individuals and businesses responding. This is complemented by a nationally representative survey of employers and employees which provides a key insight into the factual reality of remote working in our labour market. The importance of comparing and contrasting these two elements of the review is reflected in the statistic that, while only 42% of the nationally representative employee sample are in a hybrid or fully remote arrangement, this figure more than doubles to 88% among Public Consultation respondents. This distinction is fundamental to a correct interpretation of the findings in this report, clarifying a specific and key role of the Public Consultation: it provides an invaluable "deep dive" into the views of particularly informed and experienced stakeholders. The National Surveys, in turn, provide the essential "big picture," grounding those views in the statistical reality of the nation as a whole. Using these two lenses together is the key to a complete and balanced understanding.

The Act introduced a statutory right to request remote working, a key step in modernising Ireland's workplaces.

Clear, effective legislation is essential to ensure the benefits of remote working are realised. What this review shows is that people highly value remote working, the legislation is effective when used and the administrative burden on business is low. However, awareness of the statutory right to request remote work is also quite low and this is a key challenge we need to address. We've also listened carefully to people's views on improvements which could make applying for remote working more effective.

I am fully committed to progressing these recommendations to makes sure that the statutory right to request remote working is operating as intended. This is very much in keeping with the Programme for Government commitment to promote flexible working arrangements that benefit both workers and employers, ensuring a balanced approach – making remote work, work for everyone.

I would like to thank employees, employers, representative associations, the Workplace Relations Commission, the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality and members of the public who contributed to this important review.

Alan Dillon, T.D.

Minister of State for Employment, Small Business and Retail

Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

March 2026

Executive Summary

Section 1: Introduction

Section 1 of this report is introductory and sets out the background to the development of the remote working provisions within Part 3 of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023. It explains Part 3 and its key elements, in addition to the Code of Practice on the Right to Request Flexible Working and the Right to Request Remote Working, which is placed on statute and supports the practical implementation of the legislation.

This section also references the number of complaints made to the Workplace Relations Commission under the Act, in addition to the provisions of Section 29 of the Act which provide for the review.

Section 2: Approach to the Review

Section 2 sets out the approach taken by the Department to carrying out the review. It details the public consultation process, the representative survey and the engagement with key stakeholders identified by the Act. It explains how these elements were implemented and analysed.

Section 3: Analysis

Section 3 provides an analysis of the responses to the public consultation, the responses to the representative survey of employees and employers, and the engagement with the WRC and employer and employee representatives.

Section 4: Key Findings

Section 4 collates the key findings across the data gathering streams. In brief, the review finds that Ireland's remote-work landscape is fundamentally uneven, with access largely driven by employer size and sector. Many workers—especially in smaller firms and sectors such as construction and hospitality—are structurally excluded from remote work due to the nature of their roles.

Where the Act is used, it works: formal requests under the legislation are rarely refused. However, its impact is severely limited by low awareness, particularly outside urban areas. The primary barrier is not the legislation's effectiveness but its visibility.

Critiques that the Act is a “toothless tiger” reflect a specific concern about accountability. Stakeholders highlight wide employer discretion and the lack of a merits-based appeals process, calling for clearer, more balanced decision-making rather than absolute employee rights.

The legislation is also functioning as a constructive catalyst for negotiation. Partial approvals indicate that the formal process often drives compromise between employees and employers, aligning individual needs with business realities.

Overall, the evidence supports a finding that the Act has acted as a stabilising, evolutionary force—not a disruptive one—prompting more organisations to formalise remote-work policies. Stakeholders broadly agree it has had a positive effect and has helped embed remote work as a growing feature of the Irish labour market.

Section 5: Recommendations

Taking account of the key findings, the recommendations of the report are set out within this section. The statutory review finds that Ireland’s right to request remote work legislation is functioning effectively, with 94% of requests approved fully or partially. Although uptake remains low, the process is straightforward for employers, and no amendments to the Act are proposed at this time. The provisions will remain under ongoing review.

A major barrier to the Act’s impact is low public awareness: fewer than half of employees know they have a legal right to request remote work. To address this, the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment will launch a targeted national information campaign, tailored by demographics and geography, to improve understanding and uptake.

The Government reiterates that the legislation provides a right to request, not a right to remote work. While this framework aims to balance employee flexibility with business needs, some perceive the system as favouring employers. In response, the Minister will ask the WRC to revise the Code of Practice to strengthen clarity, transparency and dialogue. Changes under consideration include improved application templates, clearer reasoning requirements for employers, structured internal appeals processes, enhanced consultation, clarified timelines and greater use of WRC mediation services.

Aligned with the Programme for Government, the State will continue supporting remote and flexible work more broadly through national broadband rollout, the hub network, tax supports and ongoing evaluation of remote working's economic and social impact, while keeping the Act's provisions under continuous review.

Section 6: Conclusion

Section 6 summarises the review.

1. Introduction

1.1 Development of the Legislation

The introduction of a statutory right to request remote working was an outcome of Ireland's National Remote Work Strategy, published in January 2021. The strategy, *Making Remote Work*, set out a vision to make remote working a permanent and accessible feature of the Irish labour market, highlighting benefits such as improved work-life balance, reduced commuting, regional development, and environmental gains. Among its key commitments was the introduction of legislation to give employees a formal right to request remote working.

The right to request remote working was initially developed as standalone legislation, with the draft scheme of the Right to Request Remote Work Bill published in January 2022.

Following the Pre-Legislative Scrutiny Report from the Joint Oireachtas Committee, the Government agreed that amending the Work Life Balance Bill was the most efficient and practical way to deliver the right to request remote work to all workers.

Developing an integrated Bill meant that employers and employees would be making and considering requests for flexible or remote working under one piece of legislation and one Code of Practice to be developed by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). This streamlined the process and helped avoid inconsistencies and uncertainty.

The right to request a remote working arrangement was integrated into the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 (Work Life Balance Act), which was enacted on 4 April 2023. A 'remote working arrangement' is defined in the Act as "*an arrangement whereby some or all of the work ordinarily carried out by an employee at an employer's place of business under a contract of employment is provided at a location other than at the employer's place of business without change to the employee's ordinary working hours or duties*".

The Department of Children, Disability and Equality is the lead Department for the Act, which also provides the right to request flexible working arrangements for parents and carers. The Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment is responsible for the provisions within the Act in relation to the right to request remote working arrangements.

1.2 Key Elements of the Legislation

Remote work is an arrangement where some, or all, of the work is carried out at a location other than at the employer's place of business without change to the employee's ordinary working hours or duties.

The Work Life Balance Act does not provide a direct right to work remotely. Part 3 of the Act provides a right to request and sets out requirements including how a request must be made, considerations both the employer and employee must take into account timelines and referrals to the WRC.

Employees can make a request for remote working under Section 20 of the Act. The request must be made in writing, specify the details of the proposed remote working arrangement including the proposed commencement date and specify, having regard to the Code of Practice, the reasons for the request, the proposed remote work location and details on the suitability of the remote working location. The request must be submitted no later than 8 weeks before the proposed commencement date.

Under the Act, the request can be made by the employee upon commencement of employment, however employees must have completed 6 months continuous employment before an approved remote working arrangement can commence.

Under Section 21 of the Act, the employer must consider a request, having regard to his or her needs, the employee's needs and the requirements of the Code of Practice. The employer must also respond to a remote work request as soon as reasonably practicable, but not later than four weeks after receiving the request. This can be extended by a further period, not exceeding 8 weeks, where more time is needed to assess the viability of the request.

Where an employer approves a request, the employer and the employee must sign an agreement setting out the details of the remote working arrangement and the commencement and expiration date, if any, of the arrangement. Where the employer refuses a request, they must inform the employee in writing of the reasons for refusal.

The referenced Code of Practice has been prepared by the WRC in consultation with the social partners and is available on the WRC's website.¹

Employers can terminate an approved remote working arrangement in certain circumstances under Section 22 of the Act, such as seasonal variations in the volume of work or any other matters relevant to the substantial adverse effect on the operation of the employer's business.

Section 23 of the Act enables the employer and the employee to agree, in writing, to change the remote working arrangement.

Section 24 sets out the procedure for an employee to request to return to a previous working arrangement and requires the employer to consider the request having regard to the employee's needs and the Code of Practice and to provide a written response to the employee no later than 4 weeks after receipt of the request.

Furthermore, employers can terminate an approved remote working arrangement under Section 25 of the Act if they have reasonable grounds for believing that abuse of the remote working arrangement has taken place.

The legislation also contains anti penalisation provisions with Section 26 to protect employees who make requests for remote working arrangements under the Act. Employers are prohibited from penalising employees, which includes suspension, layoff, dismissal, demotion, and a reduction in wages or working hours, for exercising their right to request a remote working arrangement.

Employees can refer a dispute to the WRC where an employer fails to fulfil their obligations under the Act. The role of the WRC is to promote and improve industrial and employment relations generally. The main functions of the WRC include, among others, the promotion of, and compliance with, relevant employment legislation, the provision of guidance through codes of practice and the provision of adjudication and mediation services. Where an employee believes their employment rights have been breached, they may submit a complaint to the WRC and this complaint may then be referred to an

¹ https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/what_you_should_know/codes_practice/code-of-practice-for-employers-and-employees-right-to-request-flexible-working-and-right-to-request-remote-working/

Adjudication Officer for adjudication. Adjudication Officers are statutorily independent, and their role is to hold a hearing where both parties are given an opportunity to be heard by the Adjudication Officer and to present any evidence relevant to the complaint. Following the hearing, the Adjudication Officer will decide the matter and issue a written decision. Decisions of an Adjudication Officer can be appealed to the Labour Court on a point of law. The Code of Practice can be admissible in evidence in proceedings before a court, the Labour Court or the WRC.

The WRC and the Labour Court can direct employers to comply with the requirements of the Act however, neither the WRC nor the Labour Courts are empowered to assess the merits of the employer's decision, nor are they empowered to overturn a refusal of remote working. The obligation on the employer is to comply with the procedures set out in the Act. Employees do not have a right under the Act to challenge the substantive refusal of a request, but rather, only the failure to follow the prescriptive process in considering such requests.

An employee can however be awarded monetary compensation of up to 4 weeks remuneration where they have successfully demonstrated that the employer has not discharged their obligations under the Act when dealing with remote working applications.

Section 28 of the Act requires employers to keep a record of approved remote working arrangements for a period of 3 years.

1.3 Complaints to the Workplace Relations Commission

As of the 29 January 2026, the WRC has received 70 individual complaints under the redress act “Complaint seeking adjudication by an Adjudication Officer under section 27 of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 2023”.

WRC Cases in relation to the right to request remote working	2024	2025	2026
Total Number of Complaints Received	33	34	3
Total Number of Complaints Closed	29	10	
Number of Complaints Upheld	1	0	
Number of Complaints Rejected	11	1	
Number of Complaints Resolved by Mediation	3	2	
Number of Complaints Withdrawn	14	7	
Number of Complaints Awaiting Hearing or Decision by Adjudication Officer	4	14	3

1.4 Statutory Review under Section 29

The purpose of the review project is to fulfil the legislative requirement to conduct a review of the operation of the remote working provisions of the Work Life Balance Act, which are set out in Part 3 of the Act. Specifically, Section 29 of the Act requires that the Minister:

“shall, not earlier than one year and not later than 2 years after the commencement of this section, after consultation with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Commission, persons whom he or she considers to be representative of employers

generally and persons whom he or she considers to be representative of employees generally, conduct a review of the operation of this Part and shall prepare a report in writing of the findings of the review and shall cause copies of the report to be laid before each House of the Oireachtas.”

2. Approach to the Review

2.1 Scope of the Review

The purpose of the review project is to fulfil the legislative requirement of Section 29 of Act - to conduct a review of the operation of the remote working provisions of the Work Life Balance Act, which are set out in Part 3 of the Act

The scope of the review was confined to what was required by the Act, i.e. to review of the operation of the provisions.

Therefore, the review assessed the operation of the following Sections of the Act:

- 16. Interpretation (Part 3)
- 17. Voidance or modification of certain provisions in agreements
- 18. Regulations
- 19. Expenses
- 20. Right to request a remote working arrangement
- 21. Obligation on employer to consider request under section 20
- 22. Termination in certain circumstances of remote working arrangement
- 23. Changes to remote working arrangements
- 24. Return to previous working arrangement
- 25. Abuse of remote working arrangement
- 26. Protection of employees from penalisation
- 27. Decision under section 41 or 44 of Act of 2015
- 28. Records

2.2 Objectives of the Review

The review sought to achieve the following objectives:

- Assess effectiveness of the legislation to provide the new entitlements, by assessing, for example, awareness of the legislation, interpretation and understanding of the elements providing a right to request, level of consideration of the Code of Practice when considering requests, suitability of timelines set down by the legislation, challenges faced by both employers and employees when requesting or responding to a request under the legislation, operation of the provisions to address termination, changes, or abuse of a remote working arrangement, challenges for specific sectors and perception of negative consequences for making a request.

- Evaluate the clarity of the legislation.
- Identify any unintended consequences of the legislation.

Key areas of focus included:

- Interpretation and application of the right to request (Section 20)
- Employer response obligations and grounds for refusal (Section 21)
- Termination and modification of arrangements (Sections 22–24)
- Abuse and penalisation protections (Sections 25–26)
- Record-keeping and enforcement (Sections 27–28)

2.3 Methodology of the Review

The review process comprised of four key strands of research, (1) a public consultation; (2) an employer and employee nationally representative survey; (3) engagement with the WRC and employer and employee representatives; and (4) engagement with the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality.

In order to review the operation of the legislation within the timelines set down by the legislation, in addition to the level of public interest in remote working policy, the Department engaged a research consulting firm to assist with two of these strands; the public consultation, and the employer and employee representative survey. Following a competitive procurement process under the Office of Government Procurement, the research consulting firm Ipsos B&A were awarded the contract.

The Public Consultation

On 18 November 2025, the Department launched a public consultation seeking the views of members of the public, employers, employees and other interested parties on the right to request a remote working arrangement, provided for within the Work Life Balance Act. The objective of the public consultation was to develop an understanding of the effectiveness of the legislation in providing the new entitlements, to evaluate the clarity of the legislation and to identify any unintended consequences of the legislation. The questions for the public consultation were designed in collaboration with Ipsos B&A, and the public consultation was hosted on Microsoft Forms on the Department’s website.

The public consultation received a significant number of responses from employees, employers, representative bodies, and members of the public. When the consultation closed at 3pm on 9 December a total of 8,181 responses were

received. There were 7,861 responses to the employee form and 320 to the employer/all other responses form. The final figure of 8,181 was determined following a process to clean the data.²

Following closure of the public consultation, Ipsos B&A carried out analysis of the responses and provided a report to the Department.

The Representative Survey

A further component of the review comprised of a representative employer and employee survey. The purpose of the survey was to gather data from employers and employees on the operation of the remote working legislation and capture responses from a representative section of the workforce, achieving equal representation geographically. The survey represents both large and small workforces, and a wide range of industries, professions, positions and trades.

Ipsos B&A designed and conducted the survey using a sample size of 1,000 employees and 500 employers. The sample size of 1,000 employees was determined by Ipsos B&A on the basis that it provides a high degree of statistical reliability, with a confidence interval of +/- 3.2% at the 95% confidence level. The sample size of 500 employers was also determined by Ipsos B&A on the basis that it is a robust and achievable sample size for a survey of the business community, providing a strong base for analysis.

To achieve a sample that is sufficiently robust for meaningful analysis in each region of Ireland, Ipsos B&A set target quotas for each of the eight NUTS³ III regions. It was noted that, for reporting purposes, it may be appropriate to combine the data from one or two of the smaller adjacent regions to create a larger, more statistically reliable base for analysis.

Further information on the national surveys is provided in Ipsos B&A's final report contained in Section 3.1 below.

² At the time of the consultation, Microsoft Forms did not offer a concept of a 'screenout' with their software. For example, while it recorded 536 completes for the 'employer/all other responses form', this included 216 that answered "I am an employee" at Q.1. This group of 216 were then asked to return to the home page and click the Employee survey link, however their response to Q.1. was counted by Microsoft forms as a complete answer to the public consultation.

³ Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics.

The surveys were conducted between 18 November 2025 and 12 December 2025. Following completion of the survey, Ipsos B&A carried out analysis of the responses and provided a report to the Department. See Section 3 below.

Engagement with the Workplace Relations Commission and Employer and Employee Representatives

Section 29 of the Act requires that the Minister to consult with, inter alia, the WRC and '*persons whom he or she considers to be representative of employers generally and persons whom he or she considers to be representative of employees generally*'.

To satisfy this strand of Section 29, the Department engaged with the WRC and with the social partners, Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ITCU) and invited each body to nominate representatives to participate in interviews with the Department on the operation of the remote working provisions of the Act.

A total of 7 of interviews were held between 5 January 2026 and 19 January 2026. Analysis of the interviews was carried out within the Department.

Consultation with the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality

Section 29 of the Act also requires that the Minister consult with, inter alia, the '*Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth*,' (presently known as the Department of Children, Disability and Equality).

To satisfy this strand of Section 29, the Minister of State for Employment, Small Business and Retail, Alan Dillon T.D., wrote to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality on 23 October 2025 requesting comments or observations on the operation of Part 3 of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023.

3. Analysis

3.1 Ipsos B&A Analysis of the Public Consultation and the Nationally Representative Surveys

Ipsos B&A conducted the nationally representative employee and employer survey and analysed their findings, alongside the findings of the public consultation. Ipsos B&A's final report of their findings is set out below.

Ipsos B&A Report of Findings

Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of a comprehensive statutory review into the operation of the 'Right to Request' remote working legislation, which was introduced as part of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 and commenced in March 2024. Commissioned by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, this research provides a robust, evidence-based assessment of the Act's real-world impact during its initial period of operation.

The findings detailed in this report are drawn from a large-scale, multi-pronged research programme conducted in late 2025. This programme was designed to capture a complete and nuanced picture of the legislation's performance by engaging with all relevant stakeholders, from the general public to individual employees and employers across the Irish economy.

1.2 Research Objectives

The core objective of the research was to move beyond anecdote and provide a definitive, evidence-based assessment of the Act's operation. To achieve this, the research was designed to address several key questions:

- To measure the extent of national awareness and understanding of the new legislation and the associated WRC Code of Practice among both employees and employers.

- To capture the direct, practical experiences of the small but vital group of employees and employers who have formally engaged with the request process.
- To evaluate the legislation’s broader impact on the prevalence of remote working and the formalisation of remote working policies in Ireland.
- To understand the perceptions of all stakeholders regarding the fairness, balance, and effectiveness of the legislative framework.

1.3 Research Methodology

To meet these objectives, a comprehensive methodology was implemented between November 17th and December 9th, 2025, comprising three distinct surveys:

1. A **Public Consultation**, open to all interested parties, which was delivered via two separate online surveys: a main survey for employees which received an exceptionally high level of engagement generating approximately c. 7,800 detailed responses, and a survey which received c. 300 responses from other interested parties.
2. A **National Employee Survey**, a nationally representative survey of 1,041 employees, providing a statistically robust benchmark of the entire Irish workforce.
3. A **National Employer Survey**, a nationally representative survey of 517 employers, delivering a crucial ‘360-degree’ perspective from Irish businesses of all sizes and sectors.

This multi-pronged approach is a key strength of the review, allowing the findings from the highly engaged Public Consultation to be benchmarked against a representative national sample, enabling the direct comparison of employee and employer experiences.

1.4 Ensuring a Nationally Representative Sample

A cornerstone of this research programme is the use of two nationally representative surveys to benchmark the findings from the Public Consultation. To ensure the findings from the National Employee Survey and the National Employer Survey accurately reflect their respective populations, a rigorous,

multi-stage process was used to achieve statistically robust and representative samples.

1.4.1 The National Employee Survey

The sample for the National Employee Survey was sourced from a proprietary ‘research only’ online consumer panel, ensuring that participants were recruited exclusively for research purposes.

To guarantee the sample was truly representative of the Irish workforce, a robust quota system was implemented. These quotas, covering key demographic variables including gender, age, social class, region (including NUTS III level), and urban/rural location, were set based on the latest available Central Statistics Office (CSO) data, cross-referenced with aggregated data from other recent large-scale national surveys.

Furthermore, a rigorous screening question was included at the start of the survey to identify and exclude any self-employed individuals, ensuring the final sample consisted strictly of employees under a contract of employment, in line with the legislation’s scope.

Following the completion of the fieldwork, the final dataset was then meticulously weighted to match the known national profile of the employee population, providing a high degree of confidence that the findings accurately reflect the views of all employees in Ireland.

1.4.2 The National Employer Survey

Achieving a representative sample of the diverse Irish business community, from micro-enterprises to large corporations, required a different but equally robust approach. A hybrid methodology, combining both telephone and online interviewing, was employed to maximise reach across all business types with respondents screened for eligibility as owner/ managers or, in large businesses, having HR responsibilities.

Given the structure of the Irish economy, where a very large number of businesses are small, a simple random sample would not capture a sufficient number of large employers for meaningful analysis. Therefore, a

disproportionate sampling plan was implemented. This involved strategically over-sampling larger businesses to ensure their views were adequately captured.

Following the completion of the fieldwork, the final dataset was then carefully weighted back to the true profile of the Irish business population, using the latest CSO data on company size and sector. This ensures that while the analysis of specific business sizes is robust, the total results presented in this report accurately reflect the voice of the entire Irish business community.

1.5 A Note on Sample Profiles

As outlined, this review draws on evidence from three distinct surveys. While the National Employee and National Employer surveys were designed to be statistically representative of their respective populations, the Public Consultation was, by its nature, a self-selecting sample.

A comparison of the final respondent profiles reveals key differences between the nationally representative employee sample and the highly-engaged group who participated in the Public Consultation. These differences provide important context for the findings detailed in this report. A similar pattern was observed among the employers who responded to the Public Consultation, who also demonstrated significantly higher levels of awareness and a more critical perspective on the legislation's fairness compared to the nationally representative employer sample.

For example, the Public Consultation sample is composed of a higher proportion of employees from large companies (250+ employees), who make up 73% of its respondents compared to 33% in the National Employee Survey. Similarly, there is a greater concentration of respondents from the Professional & Financial Services and the Public Sector, Health & Education super-sectors in the Public Consultation.

These differences in profile underscore the complementary roles of the surveys, as discussed in the following section. The Public Consultation provides a valuable deep dive into the views of those most embedded in the remote work economy, while the National Surveys provide the definitive, representative benchmark for the nation as a whole.

Sample profile

	Public Consultation Employees	National Employee Survey
Base	7823	1041
Gender		
Male	45	53
Female	52	47
Age		
16-24	1	11
25-34	22	22
35-44	40	27
45-54	27	24
55-64	9	13
65+	0	3
Region		
Dublin	36	32
RoI	31	26
Munster	19	26
Conn/ UIs	15	17
Area		
Urban	77	66
Rural	23	34

	Public Consultation Employees	National Employee Survey	National Employer Survey
	7823	1041	517
Business Size			
1-9 employees	3	27	92
10-49 employees	8	21	4
50-249 employees	16	19	2
250+ employees	73	33	1
Business Sector			
Primary & Production	8	14	8
Construction	1	5	19
Distribution, Transport & Hospitality	3	16	26
Professional & Financial Services	42	22	36
Public Sector, Health & Education	37	27	2
Other Services	9	15	9

1.6 Interpreting the Findings: The Role of Each Survey

To correctly interpret the findings contained in this report, it is important for the reader to understand the distinct and complementary roles that the Public Consultation and the Nationally Representative Surveys were designed to play.

The **Public Consultation** was designed to explore the depth of opinion. Its purpose was to gather rich, detailed, and nuanced feedback from the most engaged stakeholders in the country—those who have a strong interest in and often a detailed knowledge of the legislation. As a self-selecting sample, its key strength is its qualitative depth. It is best understood as a "deep dive" that tells us WHY people feel a certain way and WHAT the core arguments and concerns are.

The **Nationally Representative Surveys**, by contrast, were designed to measure the breadth of experience across the entire population. Using

statistically robust, random sampling, their purpose is to provide a definitive picture of the national landscape. Their key strength is their quantitative breadth. They are best understood as the "big picture", telling us with confidence HOW MANY people across the country hold a particular view or have had a certain experience.

Throughout this report, these two lenses will be used together to provide a complete and balanced assessment of the legislation's impact.

1.7 A Note on Sectoral Analysis

This report includes analysis presented by business sector to provide a deeper understanding of how experiences of the legislation vary across the Irish economy.

The survey questionnaires captured data across a detailed list of more than 18 individual sectors based on standard economic classifications. For the purposes of clear and meaningful analysis in this report, this granular list has been aggregated into six high-level 'super-sectors'. This is a standard approach in research reporting which provides greater clarity and allows for a more powerful narrative by comparing the experiences of broader economic categories. It also ensures that the analysis is more statistically robust by increasing the sample size within each of the summary groups.

The six super-sectors used for the analysis in this report are composed as follows:

1. Primary & Production: Agriculture; Mining & Quarry; All Manufacturing Codes; Electricity, Gas, Steam; Water Supply, Sewerage.
2. Construction: Construction.
3. Distribution, Transport & Hospitality: Wholesale; Retail Trade & Repairs (Motor and Non-Motor); Transportation & Storage; Accommodation & Food Service Activities.
4. Professional & Financial Services: Information & Communication; Financial & Insurance Activities; Real Estate Activities; Professional, Scientific & Technical; Administrative & Support Service Activities.
5. Public Sector, Health & Education: Public Sector; Education; Human Health & Social Work Activities.

6. Other Services: Arts, Entertainment & Recreation; Other Service Activities.

1.8 A Note on Key Demographic Definitions

Throughout this report, the analysis presented includes the key demographic classifications of Area and Social Grade. For the purposes of clarity, their definitions are outlined below.

Area: The 'Area' classification is based on respondents' answers to the question: 'Which of the following best describes the area you live in?'. For the purposes of analysis, 'Urban' includes responses of 'A City', 'A large town (5000+ population)', or 'A small town (1,500 - 4,999 population)'. 'Rural' is defined by the response 'A rural area'.

It is important to note that for a self-completion online survey methodology, this self-classification is the standard and most robust approach available. As there is no interviewer present, it is not possible to incorporate other layers of definition that would be used in a different context, such as an interviewer's observation of the area or sampling from specific geographic areas pre-classified by the CSO. The approach taken therefore uses clear, commonly understood categories and allows the respondent to place themselves in the one that best describes their area, providing a clear and consistent basis for the analysis.

Social Grade: The 'Social Grade' classification is a standard demographic metric in research. It is determined by the occupation of the chief income earner within the respondent's household, providing a proxy for socio-economic status.

Chapter 2: The Landscape of Remote Work in Ireland

2.1 The Structural Reality: The Boundaries of Remote Work

Before analysis of the ‘Right to Request’ legislation is undertaken, it is important to first establish the fundamental landscape of remote working across the Irish economy. The research findings make it clear that the conversation around remote work does not begin from a universal starting point. A substantial portion of Irish businesses respond that the practical, operational nature of their work defines the boundaries of what is possible.

The National Employer Survey suggests that over four in ten employers (44%) state that it is not possible for their employees to work remotely. This finding informs the scope of the legislation’s relevance, highlighting that for a significant part of the economy, the debate around remote working arrangements may be a non-starter due to operational constraints.

Such a structural constraint is not evenly distributed; it is heavily concentrated in specific sectors and among smaller businesses. The possibility of offering remote work is strongly linked to an organisation’s scale. While it is a viable option for 90% of the largest companies (those with 250 or more employees), this figure falls to 54% for the smallest micro-enterprises (1-9 employees). A similar divide is evident by sector. In the office-based Professional and Financial Services sector, 78% of employers can offer remote work. This contrasts sharply with the hands-on nature of the Distribution, Transport, and Hospitality sectors, where a third (34%) can do so. This foundational assessment is an essential context in which the legislation operates.

2.2 The National Picture: How the Irish Workforce Operates

The structural constraints identified among employers are clearly reflected in the day-to-day working arrangements of the national employee population. The findings from the National Employee Survey confirm that, despite the significant public conversation around new ways of working, a clear majority of the Irish

workforce (57%) remains fully office or workplace-based. Over a third of employees (33%) operate in a hybrid model, combining remote and on-site work, while a smaller cohort of 9% works on a fully remote basis.

Within this national picture, the research reveals further demographic and geographic divides, illustrating the different working realities experienced across the country.

The data indicates that hybrid and remote working arrangements are more common among male (48%) and urban (48%) employees. In contrast, their female (63%) and rural (66%) counterparts are significantly more likely to be fully office-based.

This highlights that the prevalence of remote and hybrid work is not uniform but is more concentrated within specific demographic and geographic groups.

It is in this context that the research reveals a telling contrast between the working reality of the average Irish employee and that of the highly engaged individuals who participated in the Public Consultation.

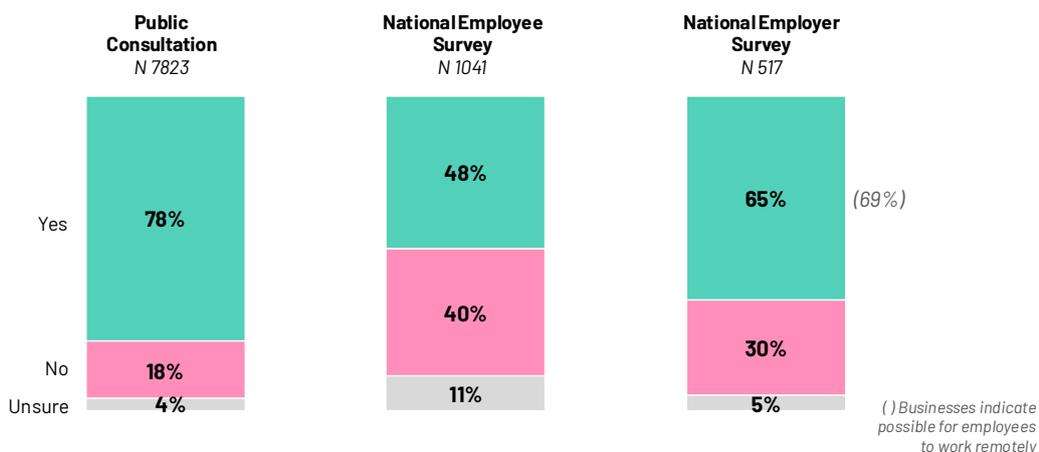
While only 42% of the nationally representative employee sample are in a hybrid or fully remote arrangement, this figure more than doubles to 88% among Public Consultation respondents. This distinction is fundamental to a correct interpretation of the findings in this report, clarifying a specific and key role of the Public Consultation: it provides an invaluable "deep dive" into the views of particularly informed and experienced stakeholders. The National Surveys, in turn, provide the essential "big picture," grounding those views in the statistical reality of the nation as a whole. Using these two lenses together is the key to a complete and balanced understanding.

Chapter 3: Awareness and Understanding of the Legislation

3.1 A Fundamental Challenge of Visibility

For any piece of legislation to be effective, its intended audience must first be aware of its existence. The findings of this review establish that the primary challenge facing the ‘Right to Request’ legislation is not a flaw in its core function, but a fundamental issue of visibility. The research reveals a significant awareness gap across the national workforce, indicating that the Act has not yet fully penetrated the public consciousness.

Awareness of the Legislation



Q. B1. Before today, were you aware that legislation was introduced in March 2024 giving employees in Ireland a formal "right to request" a remote working arrangement (i.e., a legal process for formally asking your employer for a remote work arrangement)?

The data shows that less than half (48%) of all employees in Ireland were aware that a formal, legal right to request a remote working arrangement had been introduced in March 2024. This means that for a majority of the Irish workforce, this statutory right remains unknown.

This national figure, however, exists in sharp contrast to the awareness levels of other key stakeholders. Among employers, who have a professional obligation to

understand their legal duties, awareness is considerably higher at 65%. Unsurprisingly, it was highest among the self-selecting respondents to the Public Consultation, a highly engaged group for whom the topic is of keen interest, where awareness stood at 78%. This divergence is telling; it demonstrates that while the message has reached those who are professionally required or personally motivated to seek it out, it has not yet successfully crossed over into the daily reality of the average employee.

Drilling deeper into the national employee data reveals that this awareness gap is not uniform. It is shaped by geography and demography. Awareness is notably higher among urban employees (53%) compared to their rural counterparts, where it falls to 38%. A similar divide exists along gender lines, with male employees (55%) being significantly more likely to be aware of the legislation than female employees (41%). This suggests that awareness is most concentrated in traditional professional and urban centres and has been slower to disseminate to other parts of the workforce.

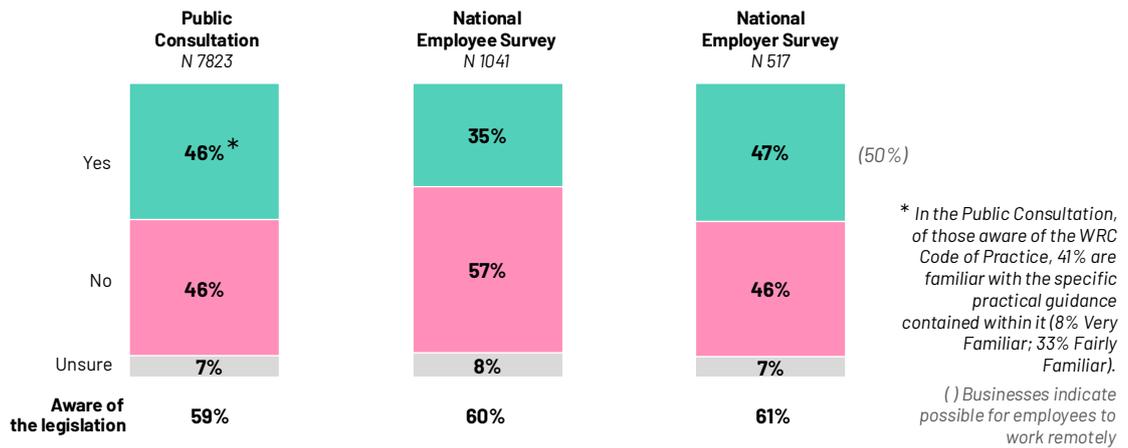
3.2 Visibility of the Official Rulebook

Beyond awareness of the Act itself, the research explored familiarity with the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) Code of Practice. This Code is the official 'rulebook', designed to provide practical, operational guidance to both employers and employees on how to apply the legislation correctly. The findings show that awareness of this key document is lower than for the Act itself.

Just over a third of employees (35%) and less than half of employers (47%) were aware of the Code's existence. This lack of familiarity with the official guidance is a critical issue. If the "how-to" guide for the legislation is largely unknown, the process itself will inevitably feel opaque and difficult to navigate for both sides.

Even among the highly informed Public Consultation group, where awareness of the Code was higher (46%), a subsequent question revealed that only 41% of that group felt they were actually familiar with the specific practical guidance contained within it. This highlights a further challenge: the journey from knowing a document exists to confidently understanding its contents is a significant one.

Awareness of Workplace Relations Commission Code of Practice



B2. Before today, were you aware that the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) (i.e., the independent state body for resolving workplace disputes) has published a Code of Practice (i.e., the official guide for employers and employees on how to apply the legislation) to provide guidance on this 'right to request' legislation?

B.2.1 How familiar are you with the specific practical guidance contained within the WRC's Code of Practice?

3.3 The Confidence Gap: A Barrier to Engagement

This lack of awareness and familiarity naturally translates into a lack of confidence, particularly among employees. When asked how confident they were in their understanding of the process an employer must follow, a clear confidence gap emerged between employers and employees.

While 45% of employers described themselves as 'very' or 'fairly' confident in their understanding, this figure dropped to just 33% for employees. This disparity represents a significant, intangible barrier to the Act's use. An employee who lacks confidence in their understanding of the process is less likely to initiate a formal request, fearing they may misstep, be at a disadvantage, or be unable to challenge a decision they feel is unfair. It can create a power imbalance before the process begins.

Significantly, the data shows that confidence is directly linked to awareness. Among the subset of employees who were aware of the legislation, the confidence level rises to 40%. This suggests that the act of simply making employees aware

of their rights is the first and most important step in empowering them to use those rights effectively.

3.4 Practical Knowledge: Gaps in Understanding Employer Obligations

This lack of confidence is rooted in tangible gaps in practical knowledge. To test this, the research asked employees what they believed an employer was legally required to do when refusing a request.

While a majority (57%) correctly identified that an employer must provide reasons for a refusal in writing, knowledge of other key obligations was significantly lower. Only 40% knew that a response must be provided within a specific timeframe, and just 28% believed an employer must prove a refusal would not be discriminatory.

Once again, the contrast with the highly-informed Public Consultation group was stark. In that group, knowledge of these obligations was far higher, at 81% and 65% respectively.

This confirms that for the majority of the general workforce, the specific mechanics of the legislation and the protections it offers remain unclear. The journey from basic awareness to confident, practical understanding is one that a majority of employees are to complete.

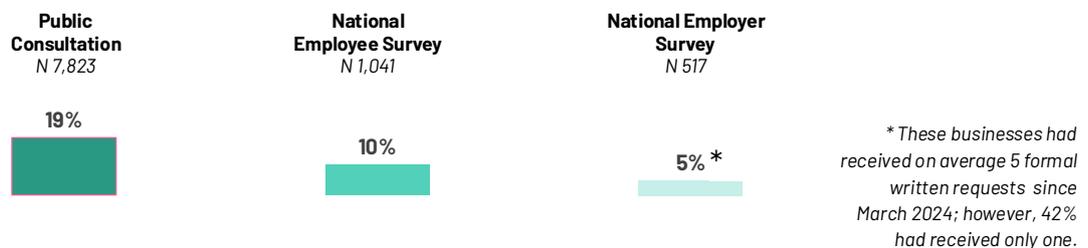
Chapter 4: The Formal Request Process: A Direct Experience

4.1 A Low Level of Formal Engagement

The first key finding regarding the direct experience of the legislation is that formal engagement remains at a relatively low level.

The research shows that since the Act's introduction in March 2024, only one in ten employees (10%) has made a formal written request for a remote working arrangement. From the other side of the desk, just 5% of all employers report having received such a request.

Making/ Receiving Request for Remote Working under Legislation



Q.C1 Since March 2024, have you made a formal written request to your employer for a remote working arrangement under this new legislation?
C.1.1 Approximately how many formal written requests for remote working has your organisation received since March 2024

These figures suggest that, to date, the formal mechanism of the Act is not a widely used tool. This low incidence is likely a direct consequence of the significant awareness gap detailed in the previous chapter; employees who are unaware of their formal right cannot be expected to exercise it. It also likely indicates that many remote working arrangements continue to be agreed through informal channels, outside the statutory framework.

4.2 Who is Using the Act?

Drilling into the profile of the 10% of employees who have made a formal request reveals a pattern of separation. The data clearly shows that engagement with the Act is being driven by those already embedded in the remote working world. Urban employees are more than four times as likely to have made a formal request (14%) as their rural counterparts (3%). Similarly, employees already in a hybrid work arrangement are the most likely group to have used the process (17%), while engagement from fully office-based employees is minimal (7%).

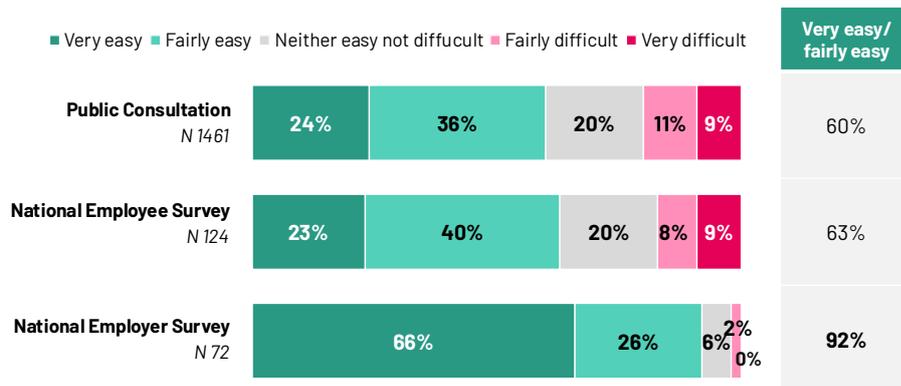
This finding demonstrates that the legislation is currently being used primarily by those with pre-existing proximity to remote work culture and infrastructure. It has not yet become a tool that is widely used by those outside of this sphere to initiate a move towards remote working.

4.3 The Experience Gap: A Tale of Two Journeys

For the small cohort who have engaged with the formal process, the research reveals a significant and telling 'Experience Gap' between employers and employees.

When asked about the ease of the process, the two groups are positive while also reporting different experiences.

Ease of Submitting/ Considering Request



Q.C2.1 How easy or difficult did you find the process of preparing and submitting your formal request?

For employers, the process of receiving and considering a request was perceived as overwhelmingly straightforward, with 92% describing it as ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ easy. For employees, however, the journey of preparing and submitting that same request was found to be considerably more challenging, with a much lower figure of 63% finding it easy.

This significant disparity points to a fundamental friction in the process. While from an administrative perspective the task may be simple, from the employee’s perspective, it is a more complex and burdensome undertaking.

4.4 Explaining the Gap: The Power of a Clear System

The rich qualitative feedback gathered from the open-ended questions included in the survey questionnaires provides a clear and compelling explanation for this ‘Experience Gap’. The disparity is not about the concept of the request, but about the quality and clarity of the internal company process.

For employers, ease is a function of having a good system. Their feedback consistently links a smooth experience to process-driven factors, citing "clear internal guidelines," "straightforward online portals," and "effective communication." For them, it is a manageable administrative task.

For employees, difficulty stems from the absence of such a system. Their feedback describes a journey that can be accompanied with ambiguity and inconsistency. They can speak of "confusing paperwork," "unclear and hard-to-find information," "opaque approval processes," and the significant challenge of "manager gatekeeping."

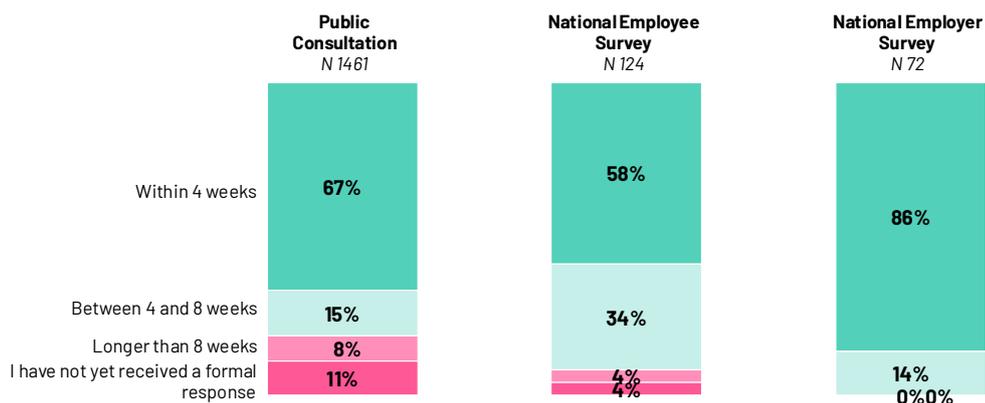
The qualitative data can also suggest some fear of being penalised for making a request, including employees describing unsupportive environments where they feel the process is designed to discourage applications.

In essence, while employers see a simple workflow, some employees can experience a challenging navigation of unclear rules and cultural resistance.

4.5 A Further Friction Point: The Perception of Time

A disconnect can also be evidenced by a perception gap regarding response times. While the vast majority of employers (86%) report that they responded to requests within the first four weeks, a smaller majority of employees (58%) recall receiving a response in that same timeframe.

Employer Response: Time Taken



Q.C2.2 Approximately how long after you submitted your request did your employer formally respond?

This suggests a difference in how each side experiences the timeline. For an employer, the clock may stop once the decision is processed internally; for the employee, the wait is not over until that decision is formally and clearly communicated.

Notably, a significant 11% of employees in the Public Consultation who had made a request reported that they had not yet received any formal response at all, highlighting that in some cases, the process is not concluding as the legislation intends.

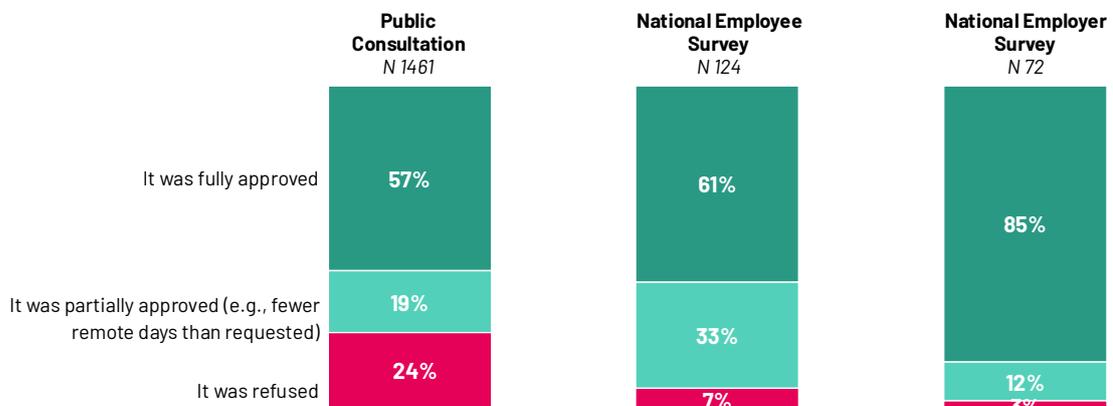
Chapter 5: Outcomes, Impacts, and Perceptions

5.1 The Headline Outcome: A High Incidence of Approval

The central question for any review of this legislation is whether it is effective in practice. The data from this research provides a clear and overwhelmingly positive answer: when the formal process is used, it is highly likely to result in a remote working arrangement being secured.

Across all three surveys, the outright refusal of a formal request is a rare event. The National Employee Survey shows a refusal rate of just 7%, a figure that drops to an even lower 3% in the National Employer Survey. This is a critical finding, demonstrating that the legislation is successfully facilitating positive outcomes.

High Incidence of Approval



Q.C2.3 What was the final outcome of your request?

Where requests were refused, the data from the Public Consultation provides insight into the reasons cited. The most common justifications given by employers related to concerns about a potential negative impact on performance or service quality (cited in 30% of refusals) and the view that the specific role was not suitable for remote work (15%). Within the Public Consultation group, a

demographic difference was also noted, with men (30%) being significantly more likely to report having their request refused than women (21%).

However, the story is more nuanced than a simple yes or no. The data reveals that the process is often one of negotiation and compromise.

While a clear majority of requests are fully approved as submitted, a significant minority—33% according to the National Employee Survey—are "partially approved." This may involve, for example, an agreement for fewer remote days than were initially requested. This finding should not be seen as a failure of the process, but rather as evidence of it working as a catalyst for constructive dialogue, leading to a mutually agreeable compromise that balances the needs of the employee with the operational requirements of the employer.

The research findings also indicate that an initial approval of a remote working request is often the beginning of a new, dynamic phase, rather than a final, static outcome. The data shows that a majority of approved arrangements are subject to subsequent changes.

Overall, 64% of employees in the National Survey with an approved arrangement report that they have since mutually agreed to make a change to it. The data reveals two major types of change that can occur, initiated by either party:

Over half (52%) of all employees with an approved arrangement have, at some point, requested to end the arrangement and return to their previous working pattern.

Separately, over a third (38%) of this same group report that their employer has ended or terminated the arrangement, citing business needs.

It is important to note that these are overlapping groups, as a single change could be initiated by one party and concluded by the other. The key finding is that approved arrangements are not permanent; they are often subject to further evolution, negotiation, and conclusion, driven by the changing needs of both employees and their employers.

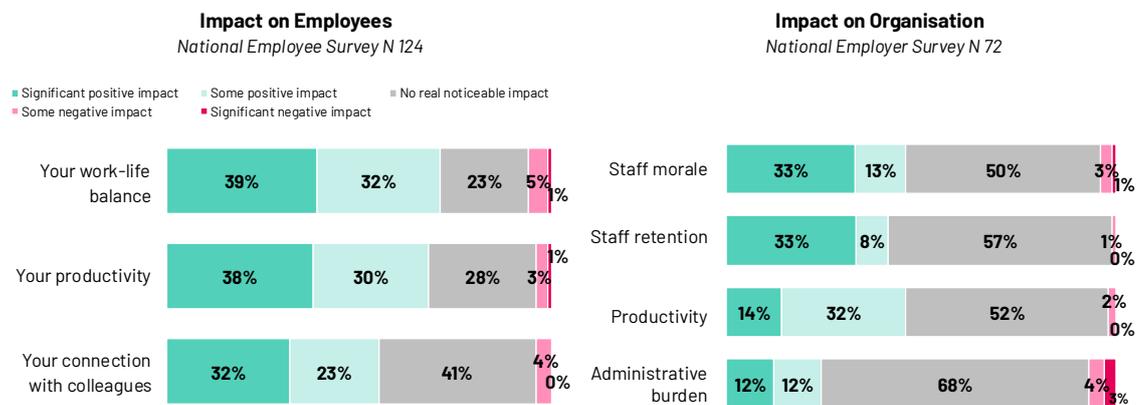
5.2 The Impact of Engagement: A Positive Experience for Participants

For the cohort of employees and employers who have engaged with the formal process, the impact has been largely and demonstrably positive.

Employees who have been through the process report significant benefits, particularly in relation to their work-life balance (71% positive impact) and personal productivity (68% positive impact). This suggests that securing a formal remote work arrangement delivers tangible, positive outcomes for the individual.

Crucially, this positive view is mirrored by employers. Employers who have managed a formal request also report positive impacts on key business metrics, including staff morale (46% positive impact) and staff retention (41% positive impact). This is a vital finding, indicating that the process is not a zero-sum game, but one that can deliver a "win-win" outcome, benefiting both the employee's wellbeing and the organisation's health.

High Incidence of Approval: Impact of Process



D.3 You mentioned that your organisation received a formal request for remote working. Thinking about the process of managing that request, what impact, if any, did it have on the following?

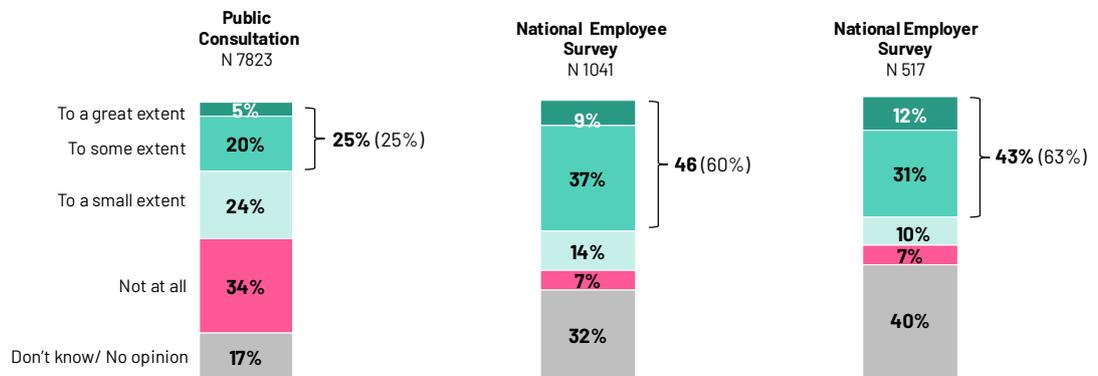
5.3 The "Perception Gap": National Reality vs. Engaged Criticism

While the direct experience of the process is positive, the research reveals a stark 'Perception Gap' regarding the legislation's fairness. The most effective way to illustrate this gap is to compare the dominant narrative that defines each of the two key groups.

In the National Employee Survey, the dominant narrative is a positive one. A plurality of employees (46%) believe the current legislation provides a balanced process, a figure more than double the proportion who view it as unfair (21%).

This dominant positive view in the national sample contrasts sharply with the dominant negative view in the Public Consultation group, where a clear majority (58%) view the process as unfair

Legislation provides a fair and balanced request process



() Aware of Legislation

D.1 To what extent do you feel the current legislation provides a fair and balanced process for requesting remote work?

This perception gap extends directly to the issue of employee protection. While 47% of the national employee sample believe the legislation protects them, only 22% hold a negative view, with the remaining 32% stating they 'Don't Know'. This is again a very different picture from the Public Consultation group, where a majority (52%) feel the legislation offers little or no protection.

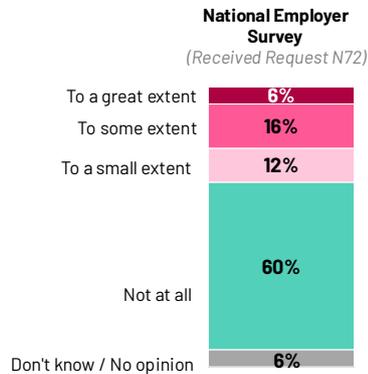
The qualitative feedback explains this negative perception is not a vague complaint, but a specific and targeted critique of the legislative framework. Any "toothless tiger" sentiment is rooted in a perceived power imbalance and a lack of independent accountability. The most engaged stakeholders consistently called for stronger safeguards, specifically citing the wide scope of employer discretion in using vague "business needs" for refusal, and the absence of a meaningful, independent appeals process to challenge a decision on its merits.

5.4 The Impact on Business: The Administrative Burden That Wasn't

A key concern for the business community prior to the Act's introduction was the potential for it to create an excessive administrative burden.

The findings from this review provide a clear and reassuring answer on this point: for the vast majority of businesses, this fear has not been realised.

The Feared "Administrative Burden" Has Not Materialised for Most



National Employer Survey (N 72) D.2 To what extent do you believe the legislation creates an excessive administrative burden for employers?

Among the group of employers who have actually received and managed a formal request, a clear majority (72%) report that the administrative burden was low ('to a small extent' or 'not at all'). Only a small minority (6%) felt the burden was particularly high. This is one of the most positive findings for the legislation, suggesting its design has been implemented successfully without creating undue friction or cost for the majority of businesses.

5.5 The Act's Broader Role: A Constructive Force for Formalisation

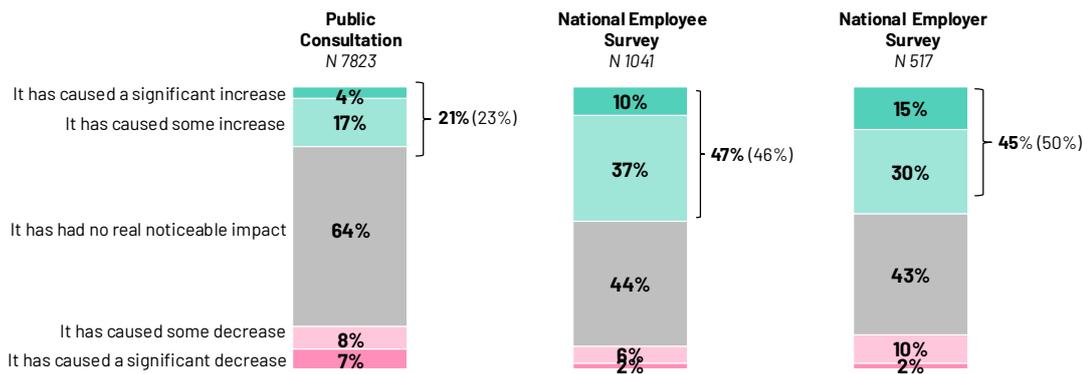
Finally, the research shows that the legislation has acted as a positive, evolutionary force in the Irish workplace.

While it has not caused a sudden revolution, it has encouraged a gradual and welcome move towards formalisation. The proportion of both employers and employees reporting that a formal remote working policy is in place has increased since March 2024.

Perhaps most tellingly, the Act is viewed as a constructive force. Nearly half of all employers (45%) and employees (47%) believe it has been a direct catalyst, causing an increase in the prevalence of remote work. Notably, almost no one believes it has had a negative effect.

This positions the legislation as a successful enabler and formalizer, providing a stable and effective framework for a trend that continues to reshape the Irish economy.

A Net Positive Impact: The Act is seen as a catalyst not a hindrance



() Aware of Legislation

National Employee Survey (N 1041) & National Employer Survey (N 517) 06. To what extent do you believe the introduction of this legislation in March 2024 has impacted the overall prevalence (i.e., the total amount) of remote working in Ireland? (Public Consultation N 7823: It has caused a significant increase 4%/ It has caused some increase 17%/ It has had no real noticeable impact 64%/ It has caused some decrease 8%/ It has caused a significant decrease 7%).

Chapter 6: The Future of the Process: What Stakeholders Want

6.1 A Consensus on the Path Forward: Evolution, Not Revolution

When asked to look to the future, a remarkable consensus emerges across all audiences—from the highly-engaged public to the average employee and employer.

The feedback does not call for a radical overhaul of the legislation, but for a concerted focus on improving its practical, day-to-day operation. The dominant desire is for a process that is simpler, more transparent, and better supported by practical tools and clear guidance.

6.2 The Primary Demand: A Simpler, More Transparent Process

The single most common suggestion for improvement, raised by over a third of Public Consultation respondents (36%), was a call to simplify the request process from start to finish. This sentiment was echoed by both the national employee (10%) and employer (15%) samples.

This is not merely a desire for less paperwork. The qualitative feedback provides a detailed blueprint for what a better process would look like. Stakeholders want shorter, more intuitive application forms, standardised timelines for decisions, and clear, published criteria for how requests will be evaluated.

Crucially, there is a strong and consistent demand for greater transparency when a request is refused. Employees, in particular, want a mandatory requirement for employers to provide detailed, written reasons that clearly explain the specific business grounds for the decision, moving away from any vague justifications that can currently be a source of frustration and mistrust.

6.3 A Shared Goal of Flexibility

Beyond the mechanics of the process, there is a shared desire for greater flexibility in remote working arrangements themselves. This was a top-three theme for all audiences, including a quarter (25%) of all employers.

While the highly-engaged Public Consultation group often frames this as a formal "right" that should be strengthened in law, the feedback from the national surveys suggests a more pragmatic focus on workable internal policies.

Employees and employers alike see value in options such as variable hybrid days, trial periods for remote work, and a regular, structured review process for existing arrangements.

The underlying message is a call for less rigidity and a greater willingness to find mutually beneficial compromises based on the specific needs of the role and the business.

6.4 The Need for Practical Tools and Guidance

This call for clarity is echoed in the feedback on what additional supports would be most effective.

Again, a clear consensus emerges. The demand is not for more legislation, but for practical, accessible tools to help all parties navigate the process more confidently.

The most frequently requested supports include:

- **User-friendly toolkits:** Simple, downloadable resources such as standardised application templates and checklists for both employees and employers.
- **Plain-language information:** Publicly accessible guides and FAQs that explain the process and the rights and responsibilities of each party in clear, non-legalistic language.
- **Pragmatic examples:** Real-world case studies and examples of what constitutes an acceptable request and what constitutes legitimate grounds for refusal.

This consistent call for practical support from all audiences, including employers, suggests that there is a clear opportunity to improve the operation of the Act through education and the provision of better resources.

6.5 The Voice of the Unengaged: The Significance of "Don't Know"

Finally, it is important to note the high proportion of respondents in the national surveys who offered no suggestion for improvement or support. Across the questions in this section, the "Nothing/Don't Know" response was consistently high, reaching 39% among employees when asked about additional supports.

This high "Don't Know" rate should not be interpreted as a sign of widespread satisfaction with the current process. Rather, it is a direct and logical consequence of the awareness gap detailed in Chapter 3. It is a standard analytical conclusion that a respondent who is unaware of the legislation's existence, or who lacks confidence in their understanding of it, cannot reasonably be expected to offer a detailed critique of its operation. This high "Don't Know" rate is a powerful finding, underscoring the fact that for a large portion of the workforce, the journey with this legislation has not yet begun.

3.2 The Department's Engagement with the Workplace Relations Commission and Employer and Employee Representatives

Officials in the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment analysed the stakeholder interviews carried out as part of the review.

Analysis of WRC Engagement

The WRC contributed to the Department's review of the right to request remote working provisions of the Act through an interview and a written submission. As the statutory body responsible for key elements of the Act's implementation, the WRC's feedback reflects its statutory responsibilities for adjudication and mediation, the Code of Practice on flexible and remote working, and inspection and enforcement functions. The WRC's observations draw on operational experience to date, stakeholder engagement during development of the Code of Practice, and emerging trends from the initial period of implementation.

With regard to adjudication and mediation, the WRC is responsible for handling complaints concerning alleged breaches of statutory obligations related to the right to request remote working under the Act. Section 27 of the Act clarifies that an Adjudication Officer (AO) of the WRC has a strictly procedural remit. The AO's role is confined to assessing whether an employer complied with the requirements of Section 21 when considering a remote working request and whether the process aligned with the Code of Practice. The AO cannot review or overturn the merits of an employer's decision, including refusals or approvals that do not match an employee's preferred working pattern. This means that in practice, the WRC ensures that employers follow a fair, objective, and documented process, but it does not have authority to dictate outcomes.

According to the WRC, AOs are confident in applying the procedural requirements of the Act as their remit under legislation is procedural. The WRC considers that the existing legislative approach, namely providing employees with a right to request remote working, rather than a guaranteed entitlement, is appropriately balanced. It views any proposal to empower AOs to compel employers to grant requests as inappropriate, as this would exceed the proper limits of adjudication and intrude on employers' operational decision-making.

For these reasons, the WRC does not support expanding adjudication powers in this area.

At the time of the interview, the WRC Adjudication Service had issued 12 decisions under the Act, which collectively provide the earliest authoritative guidance on how the statutory right to request remote working is being interpreted and applied in practice. The volume of complaints is low and the WRC interprets this as an indication that employees are gaining a better understanding of the WRC's procedural remit. Complaints were commonly brought to the WRC because employees felt their employer did not meaningfully engage with their stated needs. Complainants often felt employers provided high-level or insufficient rationale for refusals. In many of the cases, the WRC found employers had complied with Section 21 when they met with the employee; considered the employee's needs; proposed alternatives to remote working to meet the employee's needs and provided business or operational reasons for refusing remote working.

Although the dataset is relatively small, the WRC's data suggests that the complaints regarding remote working are relatively successfully resolved through mediation, with 14% (5 out of 36 adjudication cases) being resolved in this manner. All mediation services offered by the WRC are voluntary in nature and require the agreement of all parties to proceed.

The introduction of Part 3 of the Act has not significantly increased the WRC's workload across its adjudication, mediation, or inspection functions.

Based on the WRC's operational experience, adjudication decisions, consultation engagement, and enforcement insights, the WRC provided a number of recommendations to be considered by the Department as part of the statutory review of the right to request remote working under Act. The WRC reiterates its view that the current legislative approach should be maintained and that AOs should not be empowered to compel employers to grant remote-working arrangements. In terms of dispute resolution, the WRC supports early and proactive use of mediation in remote working disputes, given the WRC's experience of relatively high-resolution rates in this area. The WRC supports the promotion of best practice among employers by encouraging the adoption of clear, consistent, and transparent internal policies for processing remote working

request. In relation to enforcement and compliance, the WRC recommends considering the introduction of Fixed Payment Notices for record-keeping breaches, the extension of enforcement limitation periods, and the addition of corporate liability provisions. The WRC also recommends that the publishing of statistical data on the operation of the Right to Request Remote Working, including trends in requests, refusals, adjudication outcomes, and mediation resolution rates, is continued.

The WRC concluded by affirming its ongoing commitment to supporting the effective implementation of the right to request remote working provisions through its adjudication, mediation, inspection, advisory, and code-development functions.

Analysis of Employer Representative Engagement

This assessment analyses feedback from three employer representatives regarding the operation of the remote working provisions of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023, synthesising insights from written submissions and interviews with nominated employer representatives. The analysis shows diverging views regarding some elements of the legislation. While the legislative framework was viewed as fit for purpose and technically manageable by some, substantial operational friction was also reported.

There was general agreement from the three representatives that the legislation provides structure and transparency for employees, though support for the framework varies. It was asserted by one representative that while the legislation may be effective for companies which do not currently facilitate remote working, it disadvantages companies with pre-existing hybrid models by forcing the formalisation of practices. Due to scale, global policy context, and the volume of employee requests, it was reported by one representative that following a 2024 mandate for 60% office attendance, the resulting surge in statutory requests required six months of full-time administrative work to process. It was advised that ongoing renewals now consume over half of a full-time equivalent role, in their view creating unnecessary bureaucracy without materially altering employee outcomes. To further minimise the administrative burden, it was suggested that the Act's scope should be refined to apply primarily to companies that lack formal, pre-existing remote work policies.

In contrast, another representative reported no challenges in terms of complying with the legislation or in managing remote working requests. Their concerns were more broadly focused on the societal trend of remote work and its broader impacts rather than the statutory framework itself.

In considering the impacts of the legislation in general, it was also stated that a fair balance must be maintained between the importance of achieving the objective of the legislation and the need to support business to sustain employment and competitiveness, contending that any legislative amendments must take account of the disproportionate impact of any further cost and administration burden for employers.

A procedural challenge identified by some of the representatives is the statutory timelines. The initial four-week response window is found to be challenging. Complex cases, particularly those involving medical assessments, often render the additional four week extension insufficient. In addition, it was contended that Section 21(2) of the legislation, which concerns extending the response period to a maximum of eight weeks, is somewhat ambiguous, creating compliance risks for employers.

While the WRC Code of Practice provides robust protections against penalisation, the need for enhanced guidance from the WRC, the Data Protection Commission, and the Health and Safety Authority regarding compliance with employment protections legislation, GDPR and health and safety while facilitating remote working was identified as a potential improvement.

Finally, it was raised within the engagement that the WRC jurisdiction should remain strictly limited to procedural compliance to prevent adjudicators from questioning substantive business decisions, such as data security or operational requirements. The need to preserve employer discretion in determining the suitability of roles for remote work was stressed.

Analysis of Employee Representative Engagement

This assessment examines feedback from four employee representatives regarding the remote working provisions of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023, synthesising insights from interviews and written inputs. The findings indicate that while member awareness is considered

to be high in some sectors, there is frustration among employees with regard to the legislation providing only a procedural framework to request, perceived to be weighted in favour of the employer.

In relation to awareness of the legislation, the representatives find awareness to be high in sectors where remote working is considered to be a viable option, however in the technology sector, awareness can be event-driven, triggered primarily by return-to-office mandates rather than proactive engagement.

While the Code of Practice is seen to offer useful standard templates and the application process perceived to be relatively easy and quick to use by some, others are of the view that there is an onerous burden on employees to consider and include a high level of detail within the request on matters such as technology setup and data protection when working from home. The rigid statutory timelines and technical steps were also considered by certain representatives to present significant hurdles for neurodivergent or employees for whom English is their second language.

The rate of applications made under the legislation was reported to be low, with employees reported to seek remote working arrangements under pre-existing company policies in many cases. It is perceived that local agreements facilitate iterative dialogue, allowing for compromise when compared to the procedural nature of the legislation. Where employees have requested remote working under the legislation, some representative bodies viewed the legislation as weighted in favour of the employer.

A tension exists between the employees' right to request and employers providing blanket justifications for denial. The consensus among the representative bodies is that the legislation is weighted in favour of the employer in this regard. The representatives shared the view that the current framework allows employers to circumvent substantive engagement by providing generic refusals. Concerns relate to whether refusals are based on a genuine occupational requirement or simply an employer's stance against remote working. This was reported to have created a transparency gap as employers are not required to provide objective evidence or documentation to support a refusal.

The view that the legislation lacks a strong appeals mechanism for employees was also raised within the feedback. The role of the WRC was considered to be largely technical. It is perceived that the limited jurisdiction of the WRC results in dismissal of complaints if an employer has met the basic response deadline. In instances where a complaint is well founded, the outcome for employees was considered inconsequential as it results in no material change to the employee's working location.

In terms of areas for improvement, there was consensus among representatives that a greater onus should be placed on employers to provide clearer grounds for refusal, justified with objective criteria and evidence rather than broad business interests. A strengthened appeals process was also raised, allowing for refusals to be challenged on substantive grounds. It was the view of the representatives that employees should have the right to challenge whether a refusal was reasonable. Reporting on the number of granted versus denied requests was also suggested to improve transparency.

3.3 Consultation with the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality

In response to Minister Dillon's letter of consultation to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, Norma Foley, T.D., Minister Foley affirmed her Department's support for the right to request remote working measures, observing that remote working is a critical lever for tackling women's underrepresentation in the labour market. Minister Foley further explained that the right to request remote working can help to address structural barriers that disproportionately affect women, such as caregiving responsibilities and their interaction with commuting constraints. By enabling remote work, employers create more inclusive environments where women can participate fully and employers can unlock untapped talent for a more diverse and resilient workforce.

4. Key Findings

These key findings represent the definitive conclusions of the review, drawing together the quantitative data and the qualitative feedback from all stakeholders.

4.1 The Remote Working Landscape is Fundamentally Divided

A primary learning from this research is that the ability to work remotely is not a universal reality in the Irish economy.

The findings paint a clear picture of a divided landscape, where access to remote work is heavily influenced by an employer's size and sector. For a substantial portion of the economy—over four in ten employers, particularly smaller businesses and those in sectors like construction and hospitality—remote work is not considered a viable operational model.

This creates a structural divide, meaning a significant segment of the workforce is automatically excluded from the potential benefits of this legislation, not by policy or choice, but by the practical nature of their work.

4.2 The Primary Challenge is Awareness, Not Effectiveness

One of the most conclusive findings of this review is that when the formal legislative process is used, it is overwhelmingly effective.

The data consistently shows that outright refusal of a formal request is a rare outcome. The legislation is, therefore, successfully facilitating positive outcomes for the small cohort of employees who engage with it.

The core challenge, however, is that the vast majority of employees are not engaging with it. This is not due to a lack of desire, but a fundamental lack of awareness. With less than half of the employee population—and significantly fewer in rural areas—aware that this formal right exists, the legislation's potential impact is constrained.

The central barrier to the Act's success is not a flaw in its design, but a deficit in its reach.

4.3 Any "Toothless Tiger" Critique is a Specific Call for Accountability

Throughout the research, a perception of the legislation as a "toothless tiger" was voiced, particularly by the highly-engaged respondents in the Public Consultation.

The qualitative findings clarify that this is not a vague or general complaint, but a specific and targeted critique of the perceived power imbalance within the current framework.

This sentiment is rooted in two core issues: the wide scope of employer discretion to refuse a request based on subjective "business grounds," and the absence of a clear, independent, and merits-based appeals process to challenge a decision. The call is not necessarily for the right to be absolute, but for the process of decision-making to be more transparent, objective, and accountable.

4.4 The Act is a Catalyst for Negotiation and Compromise

While the high rate of approval is a headline success, the significant minority of requests that are "partially approved" points to a more nuanced and equally positive function of the legislation.

This finding suggests that the Act is often operating as a formal catalyst for negotiation. Rather than a simple yes/no transaction, the formal request process appears to be prompting constructive dialogue between employers and employees, leading to a compromise that balances the desires of the individual with the operational needs of the business. This role as a facilitator of compromise is a key, if sometimes overlooked, success of the current framework.

4.5 The Act's Role is as a "Constructive Formaliser"

Finally, the research indicates that the legislation has not caused a sudden or disruptive revolution in the Irish workplace. Instead, it has acted as a positive and evolutionary force.

The data shows a clear, albeit modest, increase in the number of organisations with formal remote working policies since the Act's introduction. Furthermore, it is viewed by nearly half of all stakeholders—including employers—as a constructive catalyst that has helped to increase the prevalence of remote work.

Importantly, almost no one believes it has had a negative effect. This positions the legislation as a successful enabler, providing a stable and effective framework that is helping to formalise and support a trend that continues to reshape the Irish economy.

5. Recommendations from the Report

In consideration of the findings of the review, the final report makes the following recommendations:

1. The evidence gathered under the statutory review shows that the legislation is highly effective in practice, with 94% of those using their right to request remote work being approved either fully or partially. While the number of requests made under the legislation is currently low, when employees do avail of their right, the legislation works well and does not impose an excessive administrative burden on employers. On this basis, amendments to the primary Act are not proposed at this time. As with Ireland's broader suite of employment legislation, the remote working provisions of the Act will be kept under ongoing review to ensure it remains fit for practice.
2. A key finding of the report is that less than half of all employees are aware that they have the right to request remote work under law. This low awareness level correlates with low usage of the legislation. Given that almost all requests to remote work are approved, at least in part, increasing awareness of the statutory right to request remote work is likely to be highly impactful. To address this awareness gap, the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment will commence a targeted national information campaign to increase knowledge and understanding of the right to request remote working. The campaign will be targeted using the findings of the review, which considered gender, age and urban and rural locations.
3. The Government has always been clear that it legislated for a right to request remote working, not a right to remote work, and was among the first EU Member States to do so. Providing a right to request strikes the right balance between flexibility and the need for businesses to remain competitive, profitable and viable. It is considered that the right to request does not interfere with the operation of a business and, in this context, the Government has also been consistently clear that it cannot dictate terms agreed between an employee and employers. It is further considered that it

would be inappropriate to provide adjudication officers of the WRC with the power to assess the merits of a remote working decision or direct employers on how to run their business. While 94% of those who use the Act get some or all of the flexibility that they seek, to respond to findings that there is a perception that the legislation may favour employers, the Minister will request that the WRC revise the Code of Practice on the Right to Request Remote Working, in consultation with employer and worker representatives/the social partners. The Code of Practice is placed on statute and is admissible in evidence in proceedings before the WRC, the Labour Court or the Courts. In order to encourage employees and employers to engage directly to unlock elements of work which are currently done in the office, but which could be done remotely, the Minister will request that the WRC consider a range of elements when revising the Code of Practice including:

- the revising of remote working application templates to support employees to consider and demonstrate which parts of their role could be done remotely, even if only a small portion of their work;
- supporting employers to provide clear and comprehensive reasoning alongside decision criteria when responding to a remote working request;
- devising a clearer internal process for employers to incorporate into their remote working policies, including that an appeal must be considered by a person other than the original approver where possible;
- encouraging greater employee-employer consultation as part of the remote work request process, as far as practicable;
- clarifying the timelines stipulated in the legislation; and
- explaining how the mediation services which the WRC provides could be utilised by employers and employees to support negotiation and partial or full agreement to remote working requests.

4. In line with the Programme for Government commitment to prioritise flexible and remote work to maximise economic and social benefits, the Government will continue to facilitate and encourage the uptake of remote and flexible working arrangements including through a range of balanced measures such as the completion of the installation of high-speed fibre broadband to 1.1 million people, the national Hub Network and National

Hub Strategy, the income tax deduction for people working from home, ongoing evaluation of its impact e.g. through the current NESC research work; in addition to keeping the remote working provisions of the Work Life Balance Act 2023 under ongoing review to ensure it is fit for purpose.

6. Conclusion

The introduction of the right to request a remote working arrangement in the Work Life Balance Act 2023 reflected a profound shift in how people live, work, and participate in today's economy. To facilitate and support the increased and continued uptake of remote working, it is imperative that the legislative framework is operating effectively and as intended. To assess its operation in practice, the Department undertook a multipronged approach with the support of an independent research organisation, Ipsos B&A, to develop a robust evidence base. The findings of this review have been presented in this final report.

Importantly, the statutory review has found that the remote working legislative framework introduced under the Work Life Balance Act 2023 is functioning effectively when used. Although the number of requests made under the legislation has been low, an overwhelming majority of employees' requests are either partially or fully approved. Employees who avail of their right are, in practice, accessing meaningful flexibility, while employers are not experiencing undue administrative burden. These findings affirm that the legislation remains fit for purpose at this early stage of implementation.

The review also identified a major challenge, that awareness of the right to request remote work is low across Ireland, particularly in rural areas. Addressing this gap will be essential to ensuring that workers across all demographics—women and men, younger and older workers, and those living in both urban and rural communities—have equal opportunity to request a remote working arrangement. The Department will therefore launch a targeted national information campaign to improve understanding and uptake of the right to request remote working.

In response to feedback that the legislation may be perceived as favouring employers, this report also highlights the importance of strengthening the Code of Practice on the Right to Request Remote Working. By requesting that the WRC revise the Code in consultation with the social partners, the Department is committed to providing greater clarity, transparency, and consistency for both employees and employers. Enhanced guidance on decision-making and internal processes for appeals, strengthened consultation, and greater visibility of WRC

mediation services will all support more constructive and balanced engagement at workplace level.

More broadly, this review reinforces the Government's ongoing commitment to promote flexible working arrangements that benefit both workers and employers, ensuring a balanced approach. Alongside legislative measures, the continued delivery of high speed broadband, development of the National Hub Network and Strategy, targeted tax relief for working from home, and the publication of NESC's research will work to ensure that remote working continues to drive economic competitiveness, regional development, labour market participation, and an improved work-life balance for workers.