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EMPLOYMENT STABILITY AND REMOTE WORK – AN ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEE PREFERENCES IN A MUNICIPAL COMPANY

STABILNOŚĆ ZATRUDNIENIA A PRACA ZDALNA – ANALIZA PREFERENCJI PRACOWNIKÓW SPÓŁKI KOMUNALNEJ

Keywords: employment stability, remote work, survey research, municipal sector, employee preferences

Słowa kluczowe: stabilność zatrudnienia, praca zdalna, badania ankietowe, sektor komunalny, preferencje pracowników

Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the relationship between the importance attached to employment stability and preferences regarding remote work in the municipal sector, using the example of Wodociągi Miasta Krakowa S.A. The article presents the results of survey research conducted among the company's employees in 2023 and 2025. The analysis confirmed that employment stability remains the most important factor influencing job satisfaction. At the same time, there is a growing openness to flexible forms of work, such as remote work, especially among office staff and management. The key finding of the study is the lack of a statistically significant relationship between the value placed on employment stability and preferences for remote work. This indicates that the need for job security and the willingness to engage in remote work function independently of each other. The article also provides recommendations for those managing HR policies in the public sector.

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie zależności między znaczeniem przypisywanym stabilności zatrudnienia a preferencjami dotyczącymi pracy zdalnej w sektorze komunalnym, na przykładzie spółki Wodociągi Miasta Krakowa S.A. W artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań ankietowych przeprowadzonych wśród pracowników przedsiębiorstwa w latach 2023 i 2025. Analiza potwierdziła, że stabilność zatrudnienia pozostaje najważniejszym czynnikiem satysfakcji zawodowej. Jednocześnie odnotowano rosnącą otwartość na elastyczne formy pracy, takie jak praca zdalna, zwłaszcza wśród pracowników umysłowych i kadry kierowniczej. Kluczowy wniosek z badań wskazuje na brak statystycznie istotnego związku między wagą przywiązywaną do stabilności zatrudnienia a preferencjami dotyczącymi pracy zdalnej. Wskazuje to, że potrzeba bezpieczeństwa etatowego oraz skłonność do korzystania z

pracy zdalnej funkcjonują niezależnie od siebie. Artykuł zawiera także rekomendacje dla zarządzających polityką kadrową w sektorze publicznym.

INTRODUCTION

The volatility of economic and technological conditions has a significant impact on employees' expectations regarding the work environment. Although the traditional need for employment stability continues to play an important role – and may even be reinforced by environmental uncertainty – other, more contemporary expectations toward the workplace are increasingly evident. These include, among others, the need for comfort, greater work-life balance, and access to non-wage benefits. In this context, there is a growing interest in flexible organizational solutions such as remote work, although their acceptance and perceived value may vary depending on the sector and organizational culture. This phenomenon is particularly noteworthy in the municipal sector, where the traditional dominance of stability is beginning to coexist with new trends and employee expectations.

The aim of this article is to examine whether there is a relationship between employees' assessment of the importance of employment stability and their preferences regarding remote work. The theoretical section presents a literature review, with particular emphasis on studies concerning the factors influencing employees' expectations toward flexible forms of work. The empirical part takes the form of a case study and focuses on a municipal enterprise – Wodociągi Miasta Krakowa SA. The choice of a municipal company as the subject of research is justified by the fact that such entities are typically characterized by a high level of employment stability, which enables a more comprehensive analysis of the relationships between the variables under study.

The analysis is based on the results of two editions of a survey conducted in 2023 and 2025 among employees of the aforementioned company. On this basis, the authors seek answers to the following questions: (1) How important is employment stability to employees? (2) What is their willingness to perform their duties remotely or in a hybrid model, and what benefits and challenges do they perceive in this form of work? (3) Is a high value attached to employment stability associated with a greater or lesser preference for remote work? The findings made it possible to formulate recommendations for management in the public sector regarding the implementation or improvement of remote work solutions, taking into account employees' needs and concerns related to job security.

THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The social and economic transformations observed over recent decades, including dynamic technological change, have become a source of employee anxiety related to job insecurity [Chirumbolo et al., 2020, as cited in Medina et al., 2022], which is regarded as one of the most significant stressors in organizations [DeWitte, 2005, as cited in Medina et al., 2022]. The perception of job insecurity can vary among employees, even within the same work environment [Jiang, Lavaysse, 2018], and may negatively affect their performance – this is particularly true for older employees and those with longer tenure, as shown by research findings [Cheng, Chan, 2008, as cited in Medina et al., 2022]. The literature further suggests that frustration caused by the threat of insecure working conditions is felt most acutely by employees who desire stability [Schabracq, Cooper, 2000; Sverke, Hellgren, 2002, as cited in Medina et al., 2022]. Disruption of an employee's sense of security and the ability to fully perform work functions may

result from changes in the organization of work – such as the introduction of remote work – particularly if its conditions are not clearly regulated [Jeran, 2016].

As recently as 2019, remote work accounted for only 7% of all work arrangements, but the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced its perception as a standard practice adopted by many organizations. According to research conducted by Stanford University in the United States, a total of 40% of employees perform their professional duties remotely, with 10% working fully remotely [Barrero, Bloom, Davis, 2023]. In Poland, it is estimated that approximately 35% of employees have the possibility to work remotely, a figure comparable to the European Union average of 37% [Sidor-Rządowska, Sienkiewicz, 2023, p. 168].

The use of remote work is associated with a range of benefits for both organizations and their employees. According to the Future Forum report from 2022, a key advantage for enterprises is the 4% higher productivity of remote employees compared to those performing their duties at the company's headquarters. An additional increase in productivity (by 29%) is achieved when employees are able to independently plan their working hours. Employees who have the opportunity to manage their schedules flexibly also report a 53% improvement in their ability to concentrate [FFE, 2022]. In addition to effective time management, remote work requires employees to structure their tasks – these factors, considered significant work resources, further enhance efficiency and increase job satisfaction [Barbieri et al., 2025, p. 119]. Satisfaction with remote work is also linked to increased autonomy in completing tasks without the need for constant consultation with supervisors or colleagues [Sidor-Rządowska, Sienkiewicz, 2023] and to an easier balance of various life activities [Pogorzelska, Wójcik, Wójcik, 2020].

However, it should be noted that the lack of direct contact with colleagues in the workplace translates into difficulties in communication, coordination, and learning, as well as a weakening of professional relationships and networks, and a decline in creativity [Brower, 2023]. Challenges related to digital communication – such as the absence of nonverbal cues, delays in information transfer, and information overload – can lead to reduced team performance and lower job satisfaction [Aburumman et al., 2021; Van Zoonen, Sivunen, 2021; Sanusi et al., 2023]. At the same time, it has been observed that organizational support fosters a sense of security [Eisenberger et al., 2020], which can be particularly difficult to achieve in remote work conditions. There is also an increased risk of experiencing “invisibility” within the organization, which may result in exclusion from opportunities for professional development, training, or promotion. From the perspective of both individual and organizational development, remote work may hinder employees' ability to achieve a state of deep work that supports their growth [Gulewicz, 2019; Newport, 2018]. Working in teams that are dispersed in various ways also creates challenges in building trust [Morrison-Smith, Ruiz, 2020].

In summary, changes in work organization under remote work conditions can positively affect employee well-being but may also generate new sources of stress and dissatisfaction [Tavares, 2017], as well as have both positive and negative effects on employees' overall sense of well-being [Tabor-Blazewicz, 2022]. Current research examines employees' attitudes and behaviors that indicate their sense of psychological safety in various work models [Tkalic et al., 2023], as well as elements and factors influencing remote work in the context of their significance for psychological safety [Ozimek, 2020; Gazdecka, Sadłowska-Wrzesińska, 2021]. Studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between employees' attitudes toward remote work and psychological safety, as well as a positive relationship between attitudes toward remote work and job performance, which is stronger when psychological safety is high. According to these findings, remote work can further enhance psychological safety by promoting employees' freedom to express their opinions and ideas, and by strengthening teamwork and trust [Radu et al., 2023]. Its negative aspects, on the other hand, can be mitigated through the

introduction of a hybrid work model. Research conducted among employees and their managers in a Polish enterprise showed convergence in their preferences regarding the distribution of remote workdays and office work, with 1–3 days of remote work being favored. For both groups, working in the office is attractive due to the opportunities for team integration [Piotrowicz, 2023]. These findings confirm other researchers' observations regarding the integration of the benefits of on-site work – such as a sense of stability and closeness to the team – and remote work, including the individualization of tasks, cost reduction, and environmental impact within a hybrid work organization [Juchnowicz, Kinowska, 2021]. Given the diverse aspects and challenges of remote work, it is important to take into account employees' perspectives and preferences regarding the desired level of work flexibility [Chafi et al., 2022], as well as the specific nature of the business, since, for example, remote work poses particular challenges for employees in sales departments [Radu et al., 2023].

Remote work can also be particularly demanding for employees in organizations with a public mission aimed at ensuring the continuity, safety, and reliability of service delivery, where operations are subject to strict legal regulations and high-quality standards [Bryson et al., 2014]. In such organizations, tolerance for potential disruptions is minimal, and there may be a considerable aversion to organizational risk [Hood, 1991; Van der Wal et al., 2008; Osborne, 2010; Christensen, Lægreid, 2020]. These organizations include municipal sector enterprises, where the implementation of remote or hybrid work models should be thoroughly considered, closely monitored, and supported by an appropriate human resource management system. Effective personnel management directly affects the organization's ability to fulfill its mission and maintain high-quality services under changing work conditions [Meier, O'Toole, 2011].

Based on the aforementioned premises, it can be assumed that employees in the municipal sector, due to the specific nature of their work, will expect greater employment stability. At the same time, changes in the organization of this work to remote or hybrid models may become a factor that disrupts the perception of such stability. However, the literature does not offer consistent conclusions in this regard. Studies conducted in public organizations have shown that requiring employees to work exclusively from the office has a negative impact on organizational engagement and job satisfaction (Perego & Belardinelli, 2024). Other studies in public sector organizations have also demonstrated that productivity when working from home is a key mediator in the relationship between structured forms of work and job satisfaction. This means that the positive effects of well-organized work, tasks, and schedules extend beyond the physical workplace, influencing satisfaction through the quality of work-life integration [Barbieri et al., 2025].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objectives adopted in this article, a survey was conducted at Wodociągi Miasta Krakowa SA. This is a municipal enterprise with the status of an autonomous municipally owned corporation (MOC), owned by a local government unit, operating outside the structures of local administration, with its own tariffs and commercial revenues, and providing local public services [Voorn et al., 2017]. It is a large entity, employing nearly 1,200 staff and serving over one million customers in the areas of water supply and sewage services [WMK, 2022]. Importantly, the company is among the global leaders in terms of water quality, which testifies to its high technological and organizational standards. Professionalism in management was a significant factor in the selection of this entity as the subject of analysis.

The survey research technique was employed in this study. The questionnaire was distributed to all employees of the company, excluding members of the management board. It was made available in two formats: paper and electronic, with the latter accessible via a link to an online form. The survey was conducted in two rounds, in February 2023 and February 2025, with a total response rate of just under 50% (535 questionnaires in the first edition, 551 in the second).

The main part of the analysis, aimed at identifying the relationship between the importance attached to employment stability by individual employees and their willingness to work remotely or in a hybrid mode, was conducted using contingency tables and Cramér's V coefficient, which enables the assessment of the strength of association between two qualitative variables. The analysis included only complete and unambiguous responses – “no opinion” answers and missing data were excluded. The statistical significance of the observed relationships was assessed based on p-values. Results were considered significant if they met the standard threshold of $p < 0.05$.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYMENT STABILITY AND THE PERCEPTION OF REMOTE WORK: FINDINGS FROM WMK SA

Employees' Perception of Employment Stability

According to theoretical findings, employment stability may play a significant – If not leading – role in shaping job satisfaction. In light of ongoing changes in the labor market and increasing economic uncertainty, it is particularly interesting to examine whether the importance of this factor changes over time. Below, the results of an analysis are presented, aimed at answering the question of how WMK SA employees perceived this factor two years ago and how they perceive it today.

In the survey conducted in 2023, “employment stability and security” was identified by 77.0% of respondents as one of the four most important factors influencing job satisfaction. A detailed analysis revealed significant differences in opinions only in relation to job position: manual workers were less likely (71.1%) than office staff (81.2%) and management (82.6%) to consider stability a key element of job satisfaction. The hypothesis that older employees might have a different perspective than their younger colleagues was not confirmed. Similarly, the level of education did not significantly differentiate perceptions of job security in this edition of the study.

In the second edition of the survey, conducted in 2025, the percentage of respondents indicating stability and job security as one of the most important factors in job satisfaction increased to 81.9%. Once again, no significant differences were observed with respect to age or job position; however, a clear differentiation emerged based on educational attainment. Individuals with secondary education as well as those holding a master's degree and having completed postgraduate studies more frequently valued employment stability (86.1% and 87.7%, respectively) than employees with vocational education (76.5%) or a master's degree without postgraduate studies (76.2%).

A comparison of both editions of the survey reveals a consistent increase in the importance of job security for respondents. In both periods studied, it remained by far the leading factor influencing job satisfaction. No other aspect came close to this level of significance – the closest were “a good working atmosphere” (60.2% in 2023 and 53.4% in 2025, respectively) and “a job that provides sufficient time for private life” (55.9% vs. 52.8%). Notably, there was a marked increase in the importance of “modern” motivational factors, such as a sports card or medical care, which were indicated by 24.7%

of respondents in 2023 and already 33.0% in 2025. It is worth emphasizing that the survey covered only non-wage factors—salary level was not listed as a possible answer.

The increasing importance of employment stability as a factor in job satisfaction may indicate a growing sense of uncertainty or increased caution among employees regarding changes in the labor market and the socio-economic environment. Stability is becoming an increasingly desirable value, especially in the context of recent experiences such as the pandemic, inflation, or global economic instability.

The shift in the differentiating factor for the perception of stability – from job position in 2023 to educational attainment in 2025 – is difficult to interpret unambiguously. The blurring of differences between job positions (e.g., a greater sense of uncertainty also among office staff) may result from changes in the organizational structure or in the way occupational risk is perceived. The distribution of responses by education level, on the other hand, is not straightforward and finds no clear confirmation in the literature; this may be the result of specific, hard-to-capture processes within the organization, such as changes in HR policy or organizational culture. The most important conclusion remains the very high and growing importance of employment stability in the eyes of employees – regardless of age and, more recently, job position. This underscores the need to treat stability as a strategic element in building engagement and satisfaction in a municipal organization.

It is worth noting that the opinions of WMK SA employees are fully consistent with nationwide data. According to the latest Workmonitor 2025 report [Randstad, 2025], as many as 87% of employees in Poland consider employment stability a very important value and one of the most significant elements of job satisfaction. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the report of the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP, 2024), in which stability and job security are indicated as key components of overall job satisfaction, especially in the energy and municipal services sectors. It can therefore be concluded that the expectation of stability and job security is a universal trend in the Polish labor market.

Interest in Remote and Hybrid Work Arrangements

The literature does not provide a clear answer to the question of how changes in work organization under remote work conditions affect employee satisfaction, sense of security, and well-being [Tavares, 2017; Tabor-Blazewicz, 2022]. This issue has been considered particularly important in the municipal sector due to its specific characteristics and the tendency of employees in this sector to place a higher value on employment stability.

In the survey conducted in 2023, 55.7% of respondents indicated that at least some of their duties could be performed remotely. However, this potential varied greatly depending on job position – office employees assessed the possibility of remote work the highest (84.5%), as did management (79.3%). In contrast, among manual workers, this percentage was only 7.2%, clearly demonstrating the limitations resulting from the specific nature of their tasks.

In terms of preferences, 33.3% of all respondents stated that they definitely or rather would like to work remotely. Here as well, the willingness to work remotely was highest among office employees (55.5%) and management (42.4%), while it was almost nonexistent among manual workers (1.1%).

Among those expressing a willingness to work remotely, the most important motivating factor was the saving of time and costs, resulting primarily from the lack of commuting (indicated by over 80% of respondents). The next most frequently mentioned factor was the ability to perform duties despite minor health issues, such as a cold, cited by about two-thirds of respondents. An analysis of barriers

showed that the main obstacles to remote work are limited access to documents (indicated by more than half of respondents) and the lack of appropriate technologies and equipment enabling work outside the company's premises (over 40%). Additionally, a significant factor limiting the implementation of remote solutions remains the reluctance of supervisors toward this form of work organization (indicated by 42% of employees not holding managerial positions).

In the 2025 edition of the survey, 53.5% of respondents indicated that some of their duties could be performed remotely. The highest percentage of such responses was recorded among office employees (83.5%) and management (71.8%), while among manual workers this percentage was marginal, at only 5.4%.

A willingness to work remotely was declared by 40.1% of all respondents, with these preferences once again varying significantly depending on job position. Office employees most frequently expressed interest in this form of work (64.6%), while among management the percentage was 41.8%, and among manual workers – only 7.1%.

Among the most important motivators for remote work, respondents indicated the same factors as two years earlier, primarily the saving of time and costs associated with commuting. The next most frequently mentioned motivators were the possibility of achieving greater work-life balance and the ability to perform duties despite minor health issues. Notably, the reluctance of supervisors toward this form of work organization became the leading barrier to remote work, while limited access to necessary documents and the lack of appropriate technology or equipment enabling effective remote work continued to rank high among the obstacles identified.

In summary, there were no significant changes in employees' opinions regarding the possibility of performing their duties remotely during the 2023–2025 period. However, the proportion of employees declaring a willingness to carry out at least part of their responsibilities remotely increased noticeably during this time (from 33.3% to 40.1%). In both editions of the study, this preference was clearly higher among office staff and management, and marginal among manual workers. It is also worth noting that in 2025, respondents placed greater emphasis on supervisors' reluctance to implement remote work solutions as a limiting barrier. This trend demonstrates that employees' openness to flexible forms of work is growing, even if the actual opportunities for remote work remain largely unchanged. At the same time, the increase in responses pointing to managerial resistance suggests that the key barrier to the implementation of remote work is increasingly becoming a cultural and organizational factor, rather than technical possibilities or the nature of the job.

Employment Stability Perceptions and Remote Work Preferences

A comparison of employees' opinions on employment stability and their willingness to work remotely did not reveal a statistically significant relationship between these variables, as presented in Table 1. The analysis included responses from those employees who had the opportunity to work remotely and at the same time expressed a clear opinion on their willingness to work in a remote or hybrid mode ("no opinion" responses were excluded). The Cramér's V coefficient was 0.02 ($p = 0.76$), indicating a negligible strength of association. Among employees who identified stability and job security as an important factor in job satisfaction, 68.9% (144 out of 209) expressed a positive attitude toward remote work ("rather yes" or "definitely yes"), while 31.1% (65 out of 209) had a negative attitude ("rather no" or "definitely no"). In the group of those who did not indicate employment stability as an important factor, the proportion with a positive attitude toward remote work was 66.7% (34 out of 51), and negative – 33.3% (17 out of 51). These differences are not statistically significant, which

indicates that the preference for stability and job security does not significantly affect attitudes toward remote work in the studied sample. These results suggest that attitudes toward remote work are shaped by determinants other than the declared importance of employment stability. Key encouraging factors, such as saving time or the ability to perform duties in case of minor ailments, remain important regardless of one’s attitude toward stability.

Table 1. Respondents by Perception of Employment Stability and Interest in Remote Work (2023)

	Interested in Remote Work	Not Interested in Remote Work	Total
Valuing Employment Stability	144	65	209
Not Valuing Employment Stability	34	17	51
Total	178	82	260

Source: Own elaboration based on survey results

As in the survey conducted in 2023, the analysis of data from 2025 did not reveal a statistically significant relationship between valuing employment stability and willingness to work remotely (Cramér’s V coefficient = 0.01; p = 0.89). Among those who declared that employment stability is important to them, 74.9% (164 out of 219) expressed a positive attitude toward remote work (“rather yes” or “definitely yes”), while 25.1% (55 out of 219) had a negative attitude (“rather no” or “definitely no”). In the group of respondents who did not identify employment stability as an important factor, the percentage with a positive attitude toward remote work was 73.9% (34 out of 46), and negative – 26.1% (12 out of 46). Thus, the overall increase in interest in remote work compared to the 2023 results remains independent of preferences regarding employment stability. These findings confirm that the importance attached to employment stability does not significantly affect employees’ attitudes toward remote work in the sample studied.

Table 2. Respondents by Perception of Employment Stability and Interest in Remote Work (2025)

	Interested in Remote Work	Not Interested in Remote Work	Total
Valuing Employment Stability	164	55	219
Not Valuing Employment Stability	34	12	46
Total	198	67	265

Source: Own elaboration based on survey results

In summary, in both years analyzed, no relationship was observed between the importance attached to employment stability and preferences regarding remote work. This indicates that the need for job security and the motivations to take advantage of flexible forms of work function independently of each other. It is worth noting that in the company studied, there are unmet employee expectations regarding the possibility of remote or hybrid work – the proportion of people who would like to work in this way (and whose roles allow for it) is higher than the number who actually perform their duties remotely. For managers and HR departments, this means that remote work programs should be developed as an autonomous area of HR policy, addressed to a broad group of employees – regardless of their expectations concerning employment stability.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research confirmed the exceptionally high importance of stability and job security among employees of the analyzed municipal enterprise – it was the most important factor influencing job satisfaction, surpassing aspects such as workplace atmosphere or work-life balance. Notably, its significance increased further during the period under analysis, which can be interpreted as a consequence of growing uncertainty in the labor market resulting from changes in the economic and legal environment. At the same time, the importance of non-wage factors, such as employee benefits, also increased, which may indicate a gradual broadening of employees' expectations toward the employer in the area of well-being.

At the same time, a growing willingness to work remotely and in hybrid models was observed – especially among office employees and management. The main motivators for this form of work – saving time and costs, as well as flexibility in balancing professional and private responsibilities – are consistent with the literature and confirm that remote work is primarily perceived as a tool for increasing day-to-day comfort. Despite the increasing acceptance of flexible forms of work, organizational barriers (such as low levels of digitalization and lack of equipment) and social barriers (such as supervisors' reluctance) remain significant limitations, which is also consistent with findings reported in the literature.

The key finding of the study is the lack of a statistically significant relationship between the importance employees attach to employment stability and their preferences regarding remote work. This means that, within the analyzed group, the scenarios predicted in the literature – according to which individuals who highly value stability might approach new, flexible forms of work more cautiously due to concerns about losing control, a sense of belonging, or job predictability – were not confirmed. Likewise, the alternative hypothesis that a willingness to work remotely is associated with lower attachment to employment stability and security also finds no support in the results. Thus, it can be concluded that the motivations to engage in remote work and the need for job security coexist without excluding one another.

These findings suggest that remote work programs in municipal enterprises should be treated as an autonomous element of HR policy, aimed at a broad group of employees. A dual approach is recommended: maintaining the sense of job security characteristic of this sector, while simultaneously developing a range of flexible work arrangements tailored to the capabilities and expectations of different employee groups. Such an approach not only responds more effectively to the contemporary needs of employees, but also helps to build greater engagement and satisfaction in the context of a dynamically changing work environment. This conclusion corresponds with the emerging view in the literature that a sense of security can enhance the effectiveness of remote work.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the analysis presented is a case study limited to a single municipal company. Therefore, its results should be interpreted with caution, and it is not justified to automatically generalize them to the entire sector. To deepen and verify the conclusions obtained, it would be worthwhile to consider further research, including both quantitative analyses in other municipal enterprises and qualitative studies – such as in-depth interviews. It would also be advisable to monitor employee attitudes and trends over time in order to better understand the evolution of expectations regarding the form and conditions of work in the municipal sector.

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