



INSTITUTE
FOR THE
PUBLIC SERVICES

Research Report

Work-life Balance Measures

Institute for the Public Services
2021



Title:
Work-life Balance Measures (WLBM) Report

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In collaboration with the People Support and Wellbeing Directorate within the People & Standards Division.

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1. Introduction

The Malta Public Service continues to rely on the effectiveness and productivity of its employees. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the take-up of work-life balance measures has now stabilised to levels prior to the pandemic.

The utilisation of work-life balance measures continues to capture the attention of policymakers, academics, and public officers given the ever-growing importance to providing work-life balance opportunities. By analysing the impact and utilisation of work-life balance measures every year, the Malta Public Service continuously strives to improve these measures to ensure a healthy working environment.

This report evaluates the take-up of work-life balance measures in the Malta Public Service in 2021 and compares it to the previous year's trends. By analysing this research report, one can identify which measures match the current needs of public officers, as well as further explore possible alternatives and opportunities.

Of special note in 2021 was the introduction of the remote working measure on 1st October 2021. Given that it was introduced relatively late in the calendar year, take-up figures are not high. Furthermore, official data comparisons with previous years could not be made.

This report is divided into four main sections. Highlights from each sections are provided below:

- i. Work-life balance Measures Utilisation: Overall
- ii. Work-life balance Measures Utilisation: Scale
- iii. Work-life balance Measures Utilisation: Gender
- iv. Work-life balance Measures Utilisation: Ministry

Details on the measures outlined in this report may be found in the [Manual on Work-Life Balance Measures](#).

2. Utilisation by Type of Measure

This table below depicts the difference in utilisation of all work-life balance measures between 2020 and 2021:

	2020	2021	Difference
Maternity Leave – First 14 weeks (WLB Manual - Section 1.3)	769	689	- 10.40%
Maternity Leave – Additional 4 weeks (WLB Manual - Section 1.3)	597	302	- 49.40%
Parent Leave (WLB Manual - Section 1.4)	196	127	- 35.20%
Parental Leave (WLB Manual - Section 2.2)	519	505	- 2.70%
Career Break (WLB Manual - Section 2.3)	233	203	- 12.88%
Work on Reduced Hours (WLB Manual - Section 3.1)	1317	1193	- 9.42%
Teleworking (WLB Manual - Section 3.2)	1840	2176	+ 18.26%
Flexitime (WLB Manual - Section 3.3)	1418	1544	+ 8.86%
Remote Working (WLB Manual – Section 4)	-	184	-

From the table above, one notes that there is a drastic decrease in the use of the additional 4 weeks of maternity leave, 49.40%, when compared to the take-up in previous year.

There is also a significant decrease of 12.88% in career breaks. This trend has been observed during the last few reports.

In observing these findings, one should also keep in mind that the COVID-19 pandemic still had a major impact in year 2021. Indeed, this report shows an increase in teleworking and flexitime.

The remote working measure was introduced in the last quarter of 2021 (on 1st October 2021). Therefore, one cannot compare figures with 2020 and the utilisation figures could not be high given that it was introduced relatively late in the year.

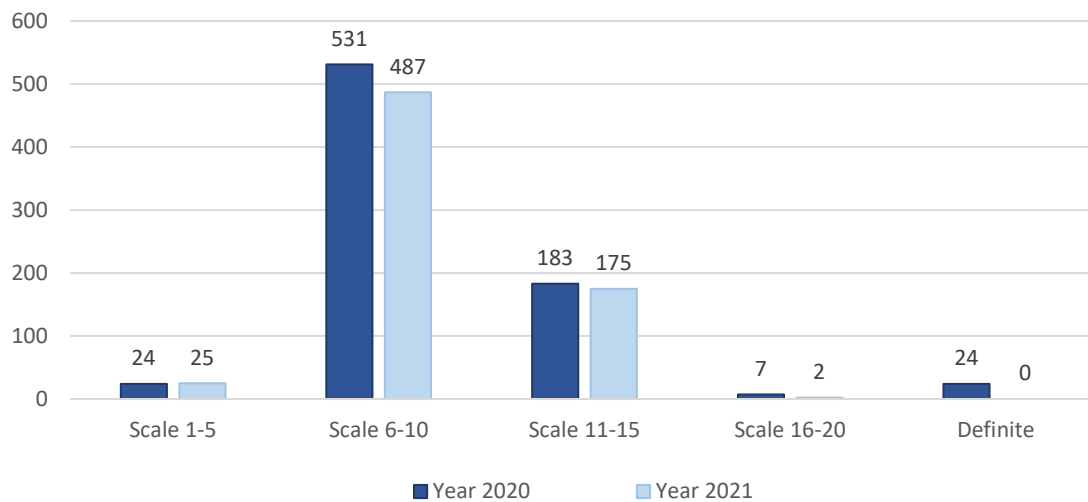
3. Utilisation by Scale

This section illustrates the take-up of work-life balance measure by salary scales, namely:

- Top Management (Scale 1 – 5)
- Middle Management & Professional (Scale 6 – 10)
- Administrative / Executive / Clerical (Scale 11 – 15)
- Supervisory / Technical / Industrial (Scale 16 – 20)
- Definite Contract (Scale 1 – 20)

3.1 Maternity Leave – First 12 Weeks

(WLB Manual - Section 1.3)

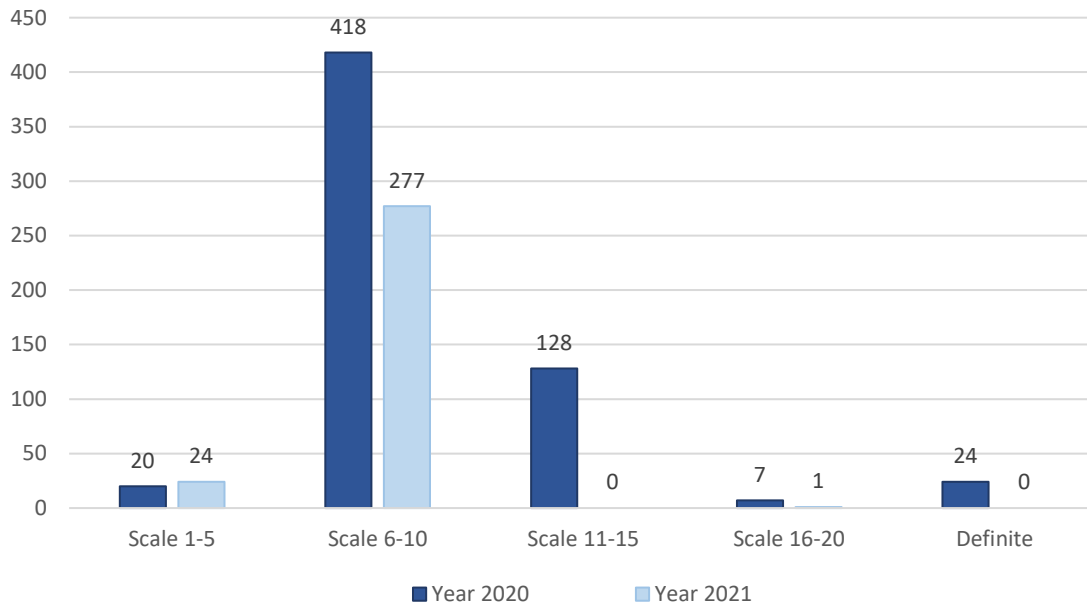


Scale 1-5	Scale 6-10	Scale 11-15	Scale 16-20	Definite
+ 4.17%	- 8.29%	- 4.37%	- 71.43%	- 100%

The table above further elaborates on the overall decrease in the take-up of maternity leave noted in the previous section. The most significant decrease in take-up can be seen in those engaged in a definite contract where there was no maternity leave taken whatsoever in 2021 by officers in this category. Other significant decreases in take-up are noted in Scales 16-20 (-71.43%) and Scales 6-10 (-8.29%).

3.2 Maternity Leave – Additional 4 Weeks

(WLBM Manual - Section 1.3)

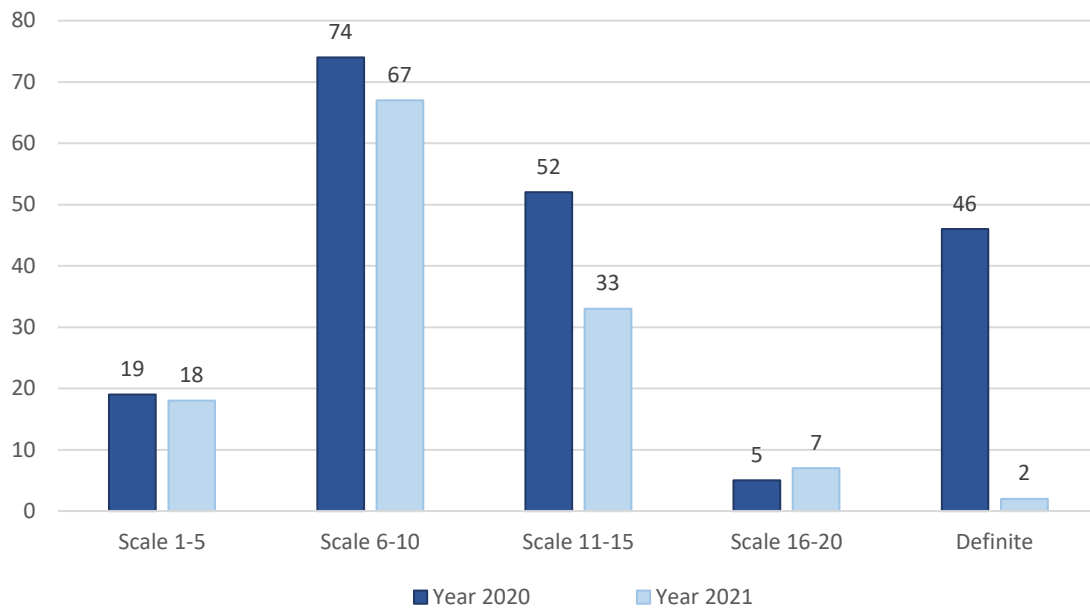


Scale 1-5	Scale 6-10	Scale 11-15	Scale 16-20	Definite
+ 20%	-33.73%	-100%	- 85.71%	-100%

In considering the additional 4 weeks of maternity leave, one must always consider that their utilisation is always left at the discretion of the employee. This is why we see very interesting figures such as an increase of 20% in utilisation of the additional 4 weeks by employees in Scales 1-5, whereas decreases in take-up in all other salary scales. Such results require further investigation, such as interviews, to probe and identify the possible factors causing them.

3.3 Parent Leave

(WLBM Manual - Section 1.4)

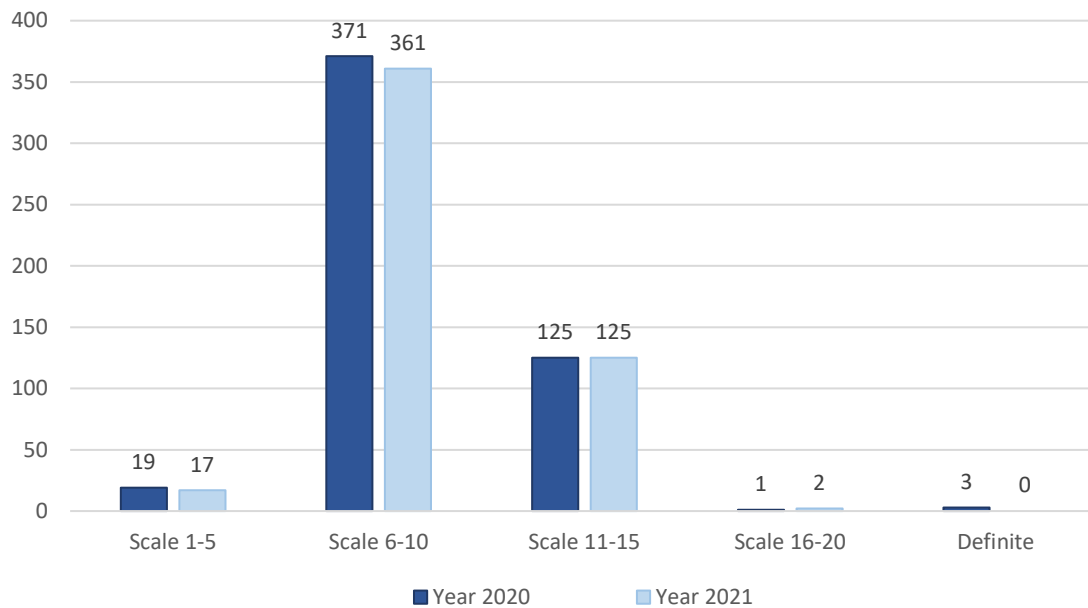


Scale 1-5	Scale 6-10	Scale 11-15	Scale 16-20	Definite
-5.3%	-9.5%	-36.5%	+40%	-95.7

The use of parent leave, i.e. 10 working days following the birth/adoption of the child for the second parent has decreased across all scales, except for those between scales 16 and 20.

3.4 Parental Leave

(WLB Manual - Section 2.2)

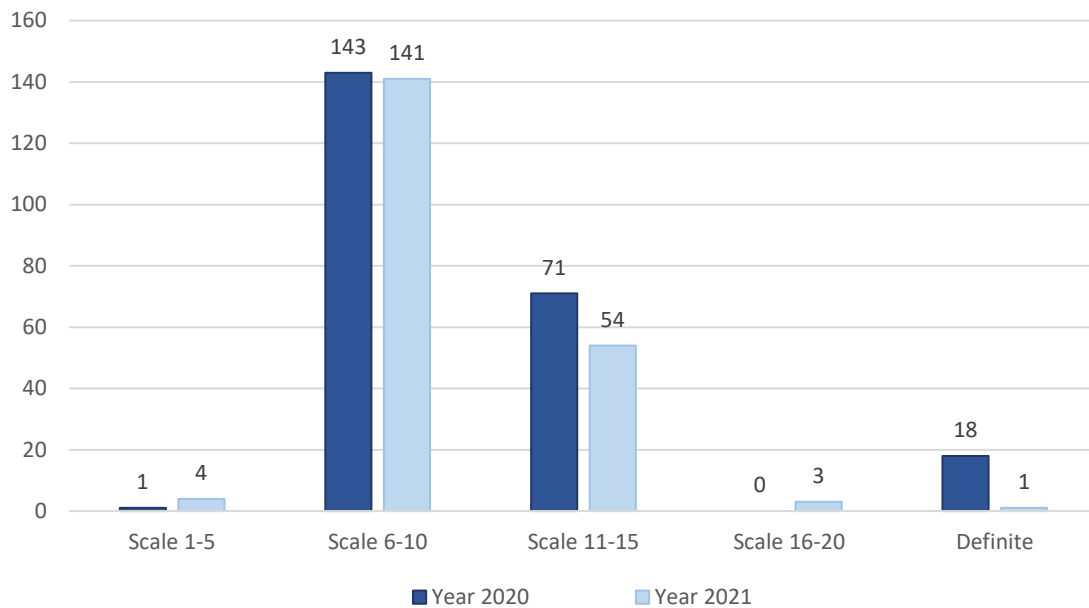


Scale 1-5	Scale 6-10	Scale 11-15	Scale 16-20	Definite
-10.5%	-2.7%	0%	+50%	-300%

Utilisation of parental leave across all scales demonstrate a stable trend with minimal changes.

3.5 Career Break

(WLBM Manual - Section 2.3)

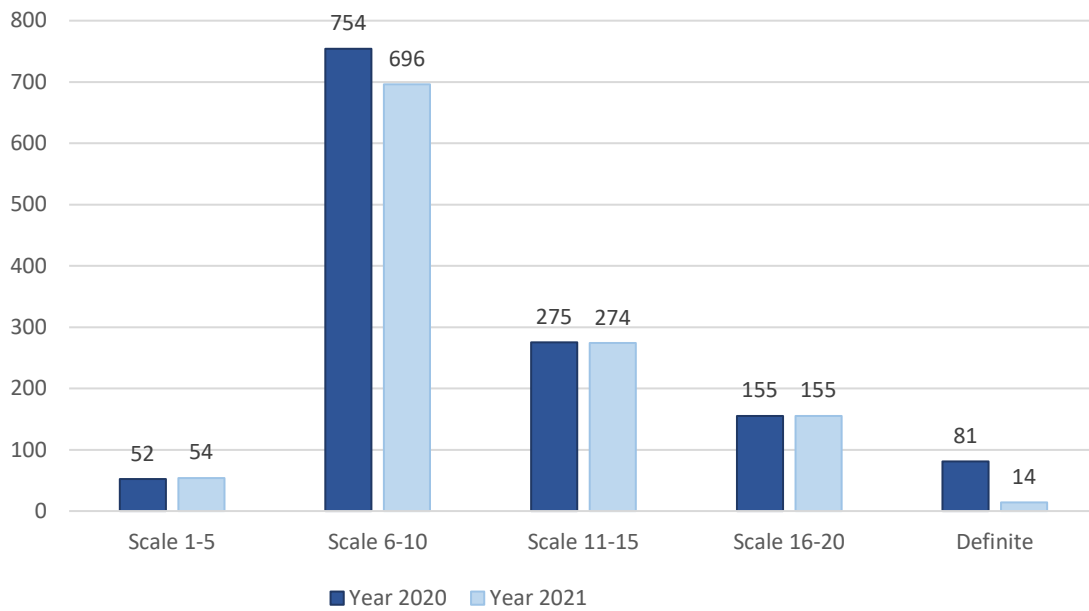


Scale 1-5	Scale 6-10	Scale 11-15	Scale 16-20	Definite
+300%	-1.40%	-23.94%	+300%	-94.44%

The graph above also reflects a stable trend in the utilisation of the career break measure. Although the percentages seem to show drastic changes, such as the case of Scale 1-5 and Scale 16-20, one should take into consideration that the totals are relatively small.

3.6 Work on Reduced Hours

(WLB Manual - Section 3.1)

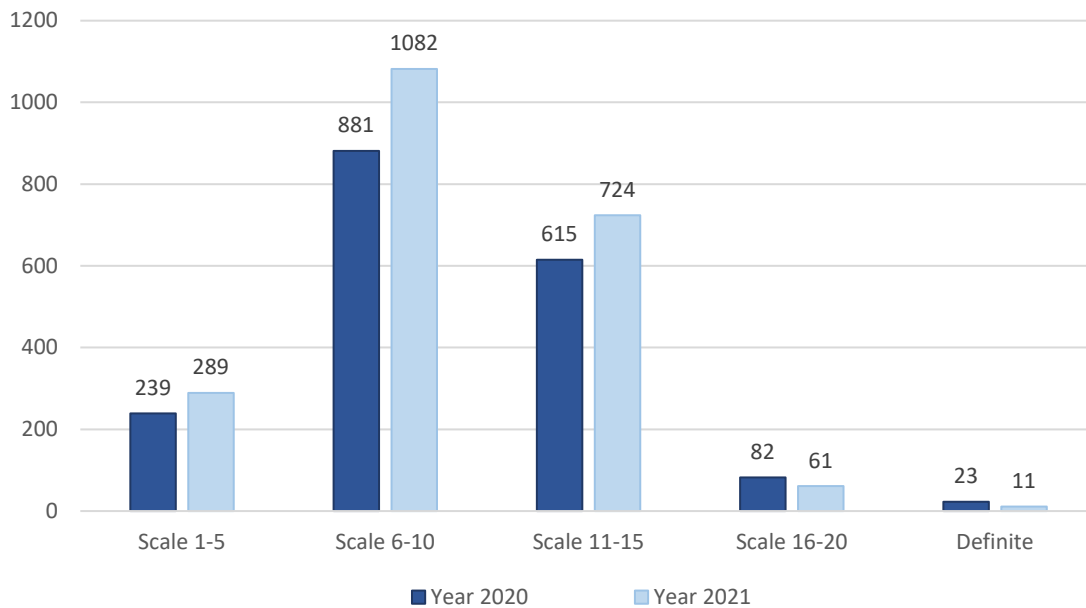


Scale 1-5	Scale 6-10	Scale 11-15	Scale 16-20	Definite
+3.85%	-7.69%	-0.36%	0%	-82.72%

The utilisation of reduced hours among those in top management positions has increased by 3.85%. On the other hand, a decreased take-up was seen by those in lower scales, while the take-up by those in Scales 16-20 remained the same.

3.7 Teleworking

(WLBM Manual - Section 3.2)

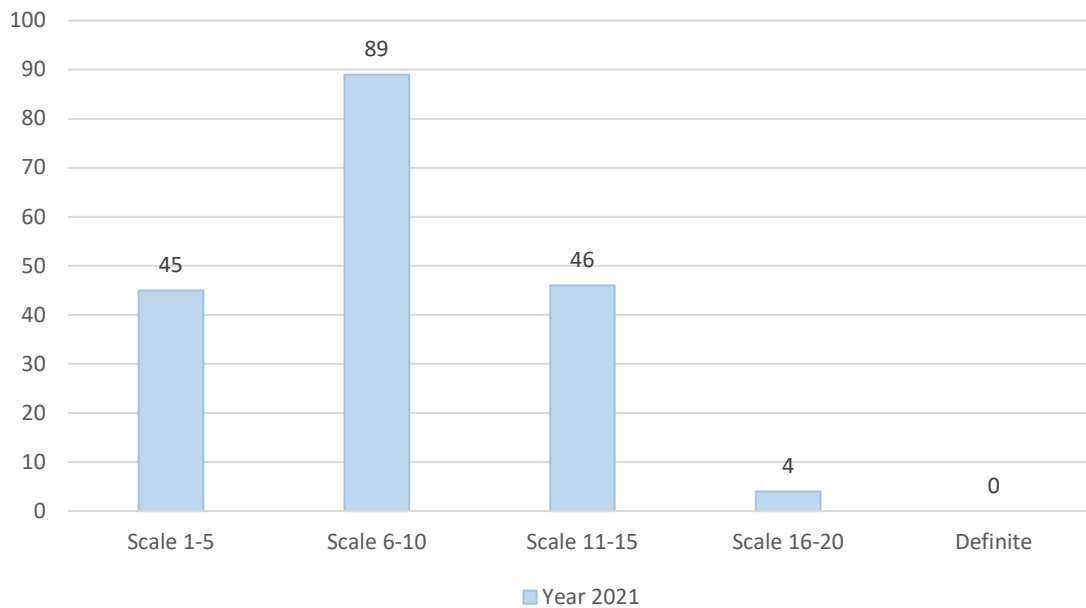


Scale 1-5	Scale 6-10	Scale 11-15	Scale 16-20	Definite
+20.92%	+22.81%	+17.72%	-25.61%	-52.17%

The utilisation of telework by employees in Scales 16-20 and those on definite contract has reduced significantly. This situation may merit further investigation.

3.8 Remote Working

(WLBM Manual – Section 4)

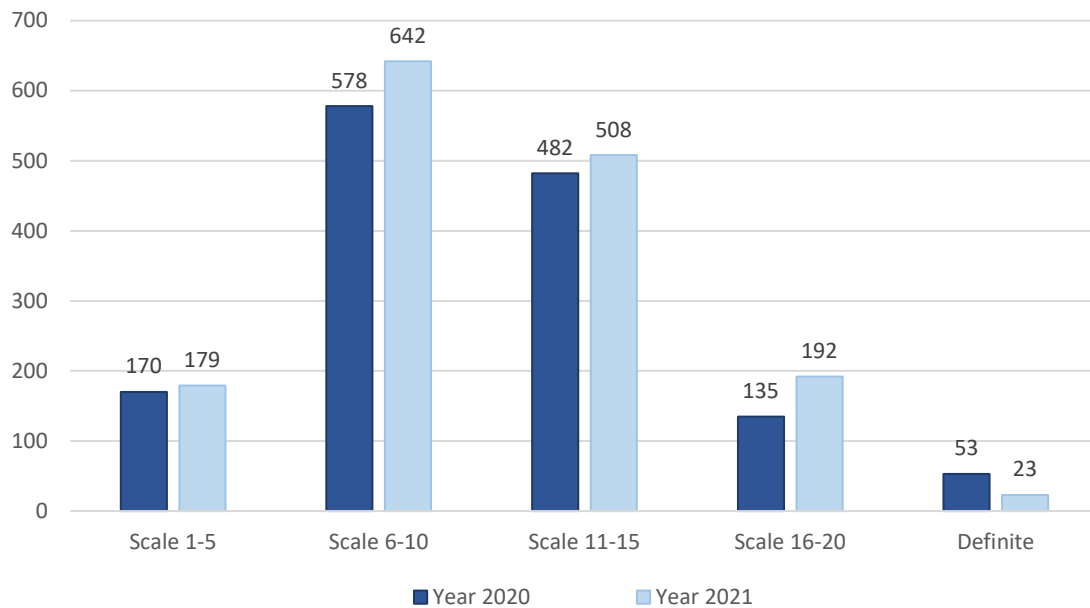


The remote work-life balance measure was the latest addition to the respective Manual, only coming into force on 1st October 2021. Therefore, comparison with previous years' figures is not possible.

From the table above, it seems that remote working has been approved mostly for those in Scales 6-10. When considering the utilisation of remote working, it is imperative to note that it highly depends on the nature of employees' duties.

3.9 Flexitime

(WLB Manual - Section 3.3)



Scale 1-5	Scale 6-10	Scale 11-15	Scale 16-20	Definite
+5.29%	+11.07%	+5.39%	+42.22%	-56%

There is an overall increase in flexitime across all scales, except those on definite contracts. It is interesting to note the increase can be seen across all scales in a proportional manner.

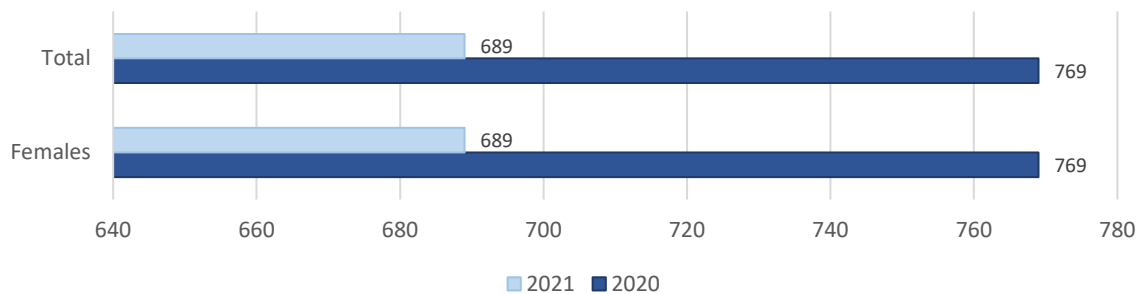
4. Utilisation by Gender

This section illustrates the utilisation of work-life balance measures by gender namely by:

- Female Public Officers
- Male Public Officers

4.1 Maternity Leave – First 14 Weeks

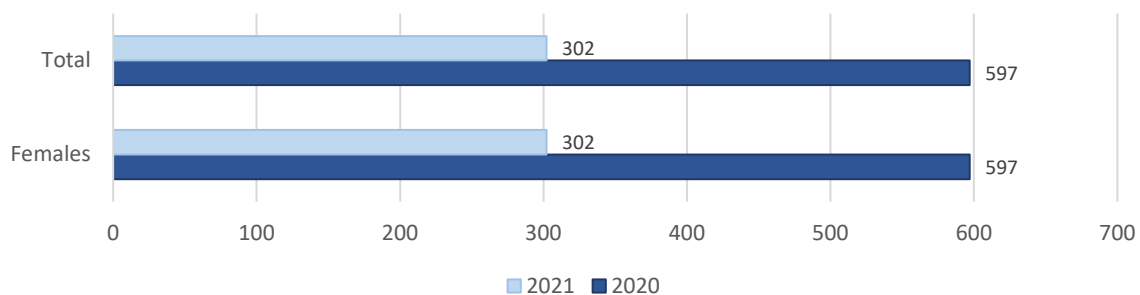
(WLBM Manual - Section 1.3)



Maternity leave rates continue to decrease.

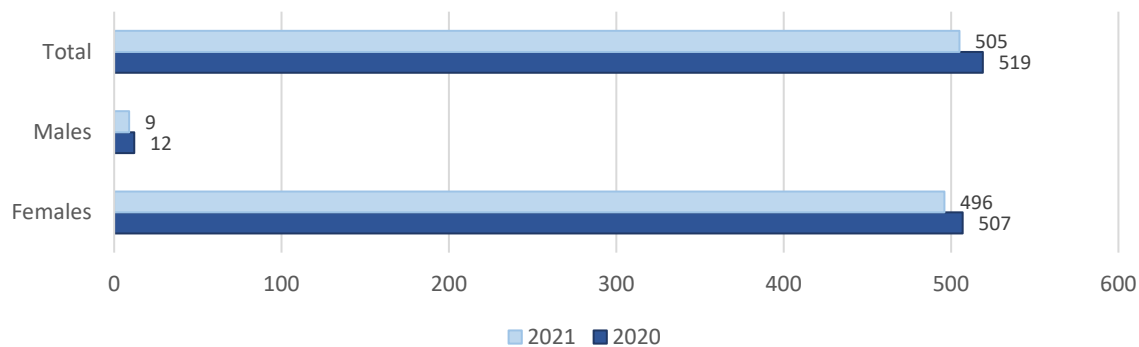
4.2 Maternity Leave – Additional 4 Weeks

(WLBM Manual - Section 1.3)



4.3 Parental Leave

(WLBM Manual - Section 2.2)

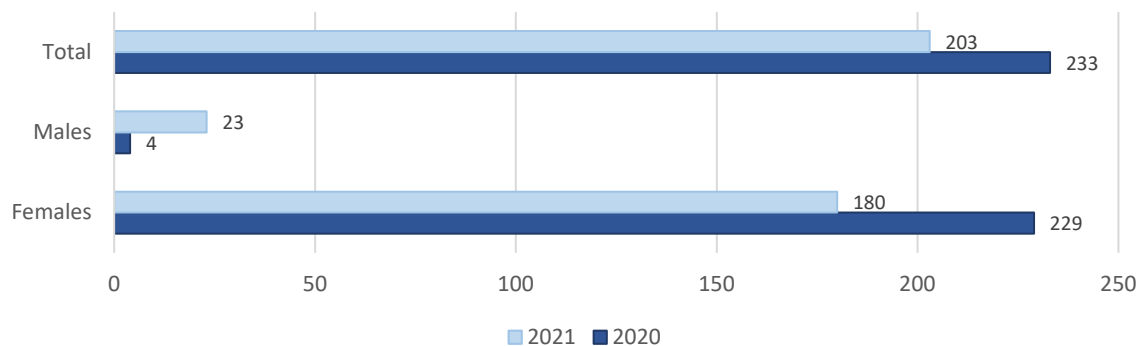


Males	Females	Total
-25%	-2.17%	-2.70%

The utilisation of parental leave has decreased since last year. The decrease can mostly be seen in the use of parental leave by males (-25%). However, one should keep in mind that the utilisation of parental leave among male employees was already low.

4.4 Career Break

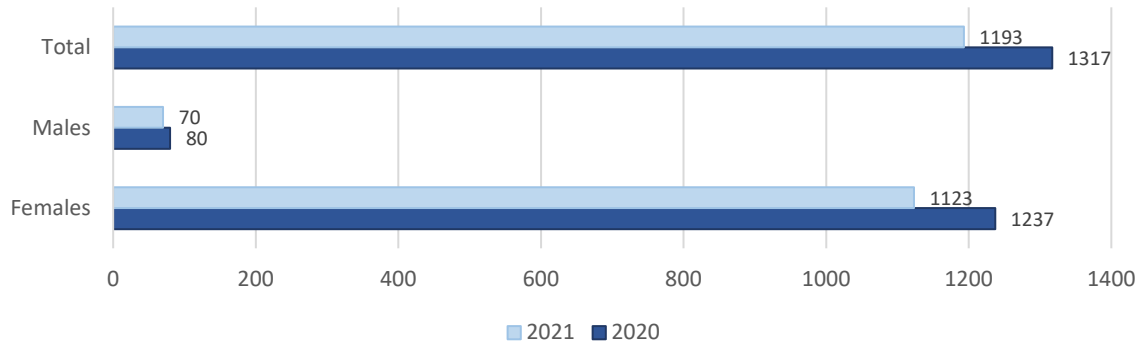
(WLBM Manual - Section 2.3)



Males	Females	Total
+475%	-21.40%	-12.88%

On the other hand, the utilisation of career break has attracted more male employees in 2021. It bears noting that the career break measure is taken solely for the reason of care of children under 10 years of age.

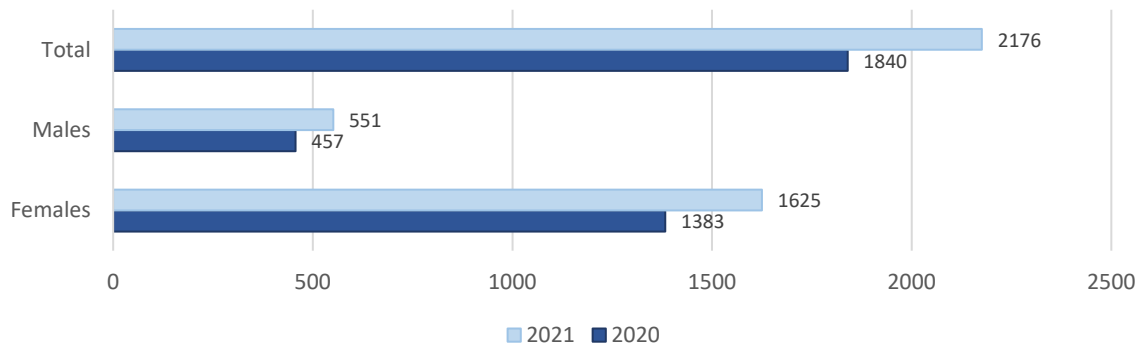
4.5 Reduced Hours (WLMB Manual - Section 3.1)



Males	Females	Total
+12.50 %	-9.22 %	-9.42 %

When comparing with previous years' reports, the reduced hours measures continues to maintain a constant pattern from one year to another.

4.6 Teleworking (WLMB Manual - Section 3.2)

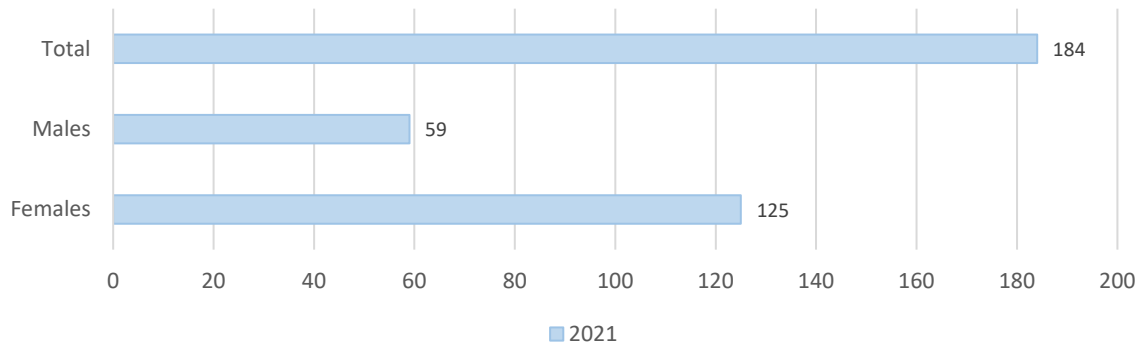


Males	Females	Total
+20.57 %	+17.50 %	18.26 %

The graph above indicates that there has been an increase in the utilization of the telework measure for both genders. Nevertheless, this measure is still predominantly used by female employees.

4.7 Remote Working

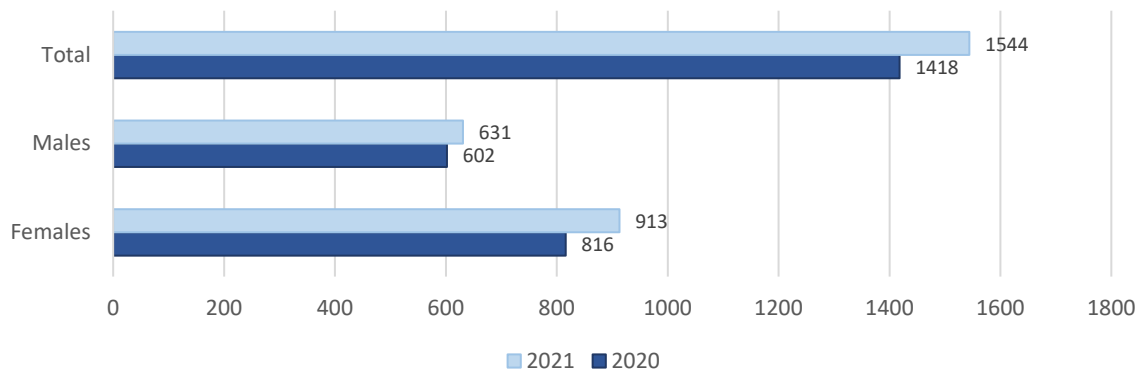
(WLMB Manual – Section 4)



The data above indicates that the remote working measure was predominantly used by female employees. This statistic merits further investigation.

4.8 Flexitime

(WLMB Manual - Section 3.3)



Males	Females	Total
+11.89 %	+4.82 %	+8.89 %

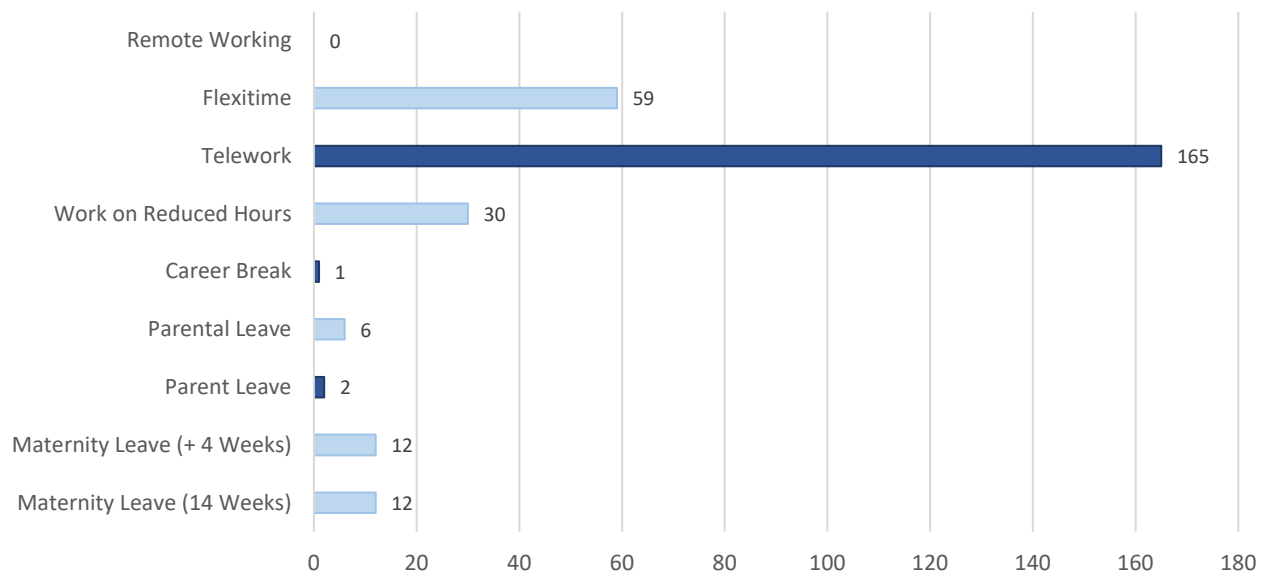
There was an overall increase of 8.89% in the take-up of the flexi-time measure, interestingly the majority of this increase was by male employees (11.89%) when compared to 2020 figures.

5. Utilisation by Ministry

This section demonstrates the utilisation of work-life balance measure, divided by ministry.

5.1 MAFA

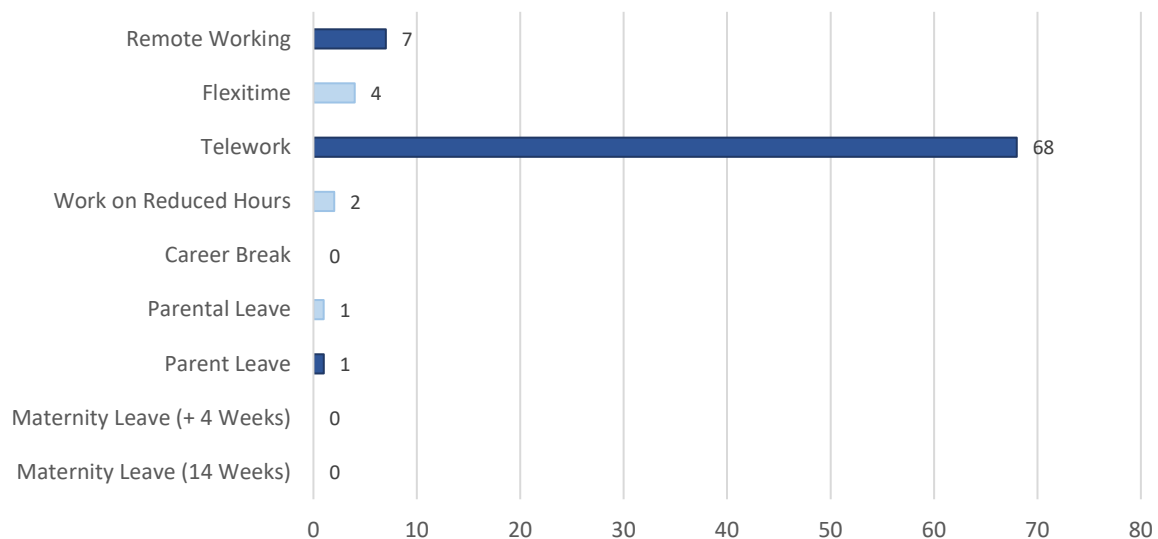
(Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, and Animal Rights)



Within this Ministry, telework is the most popular work-life balance measure.

5.2 MECP

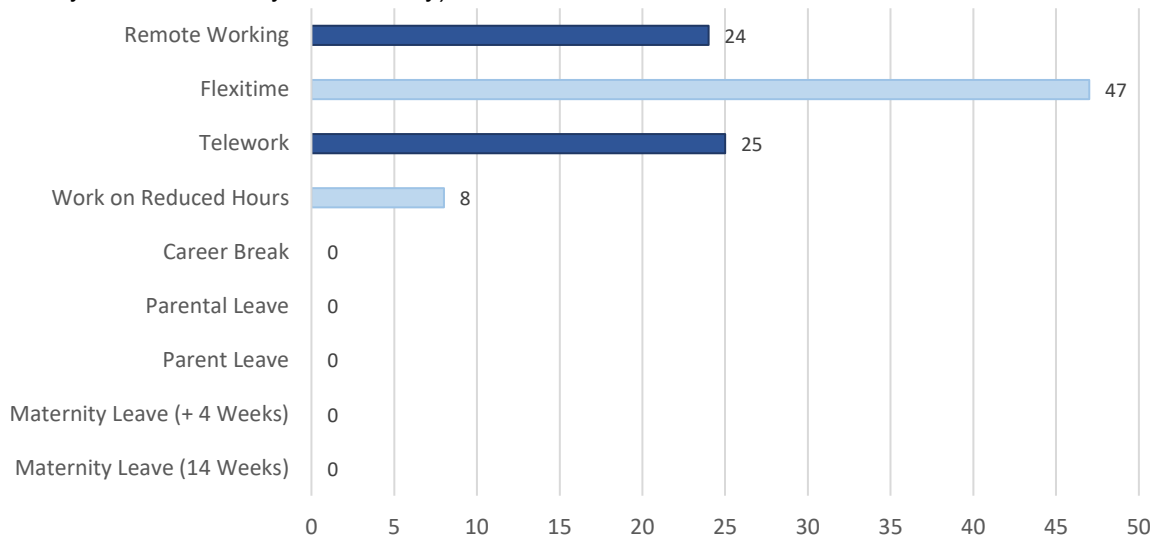
(Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change, and Planning)



Once again, telework is the most popular work-life balance measure.

5.3 MEI

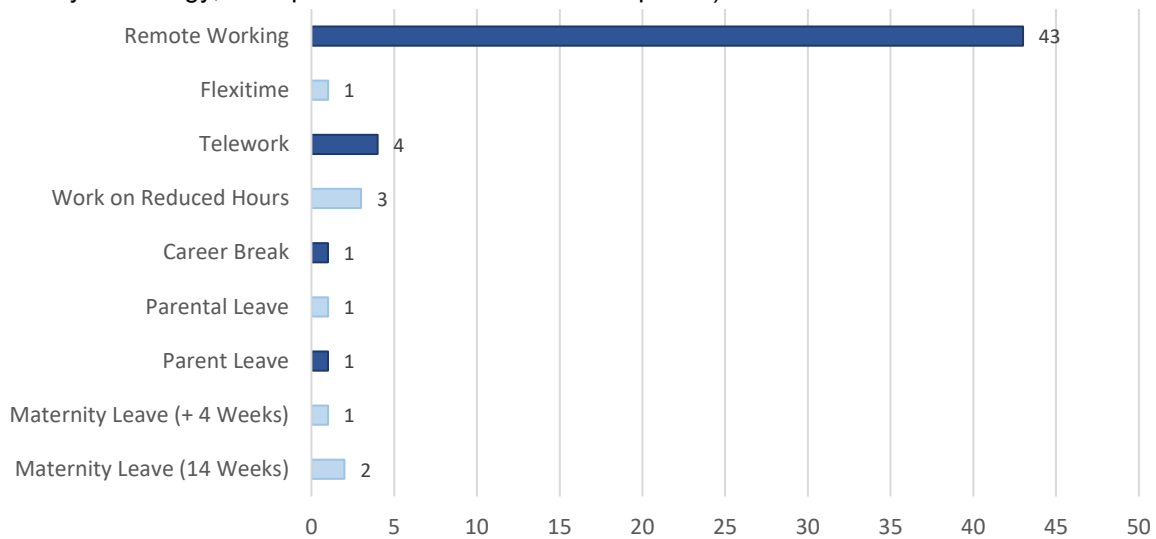
(Ministry for the Economy and Industry)



Unlike the previous two Ministries, flexi-time is the most popular work-life balance measure in MEI.

5.4 MESD

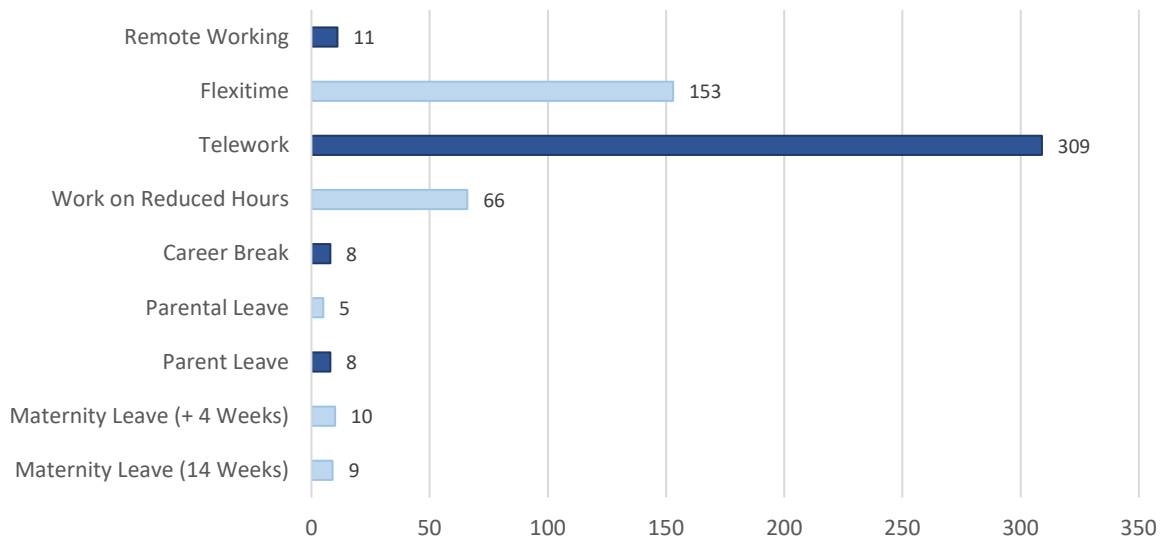
(Ministry for Energy, Enterprise and Sustainable Development)



It is notable that the most popular measure available of within MESD is Remote Working.

5.5 MFE

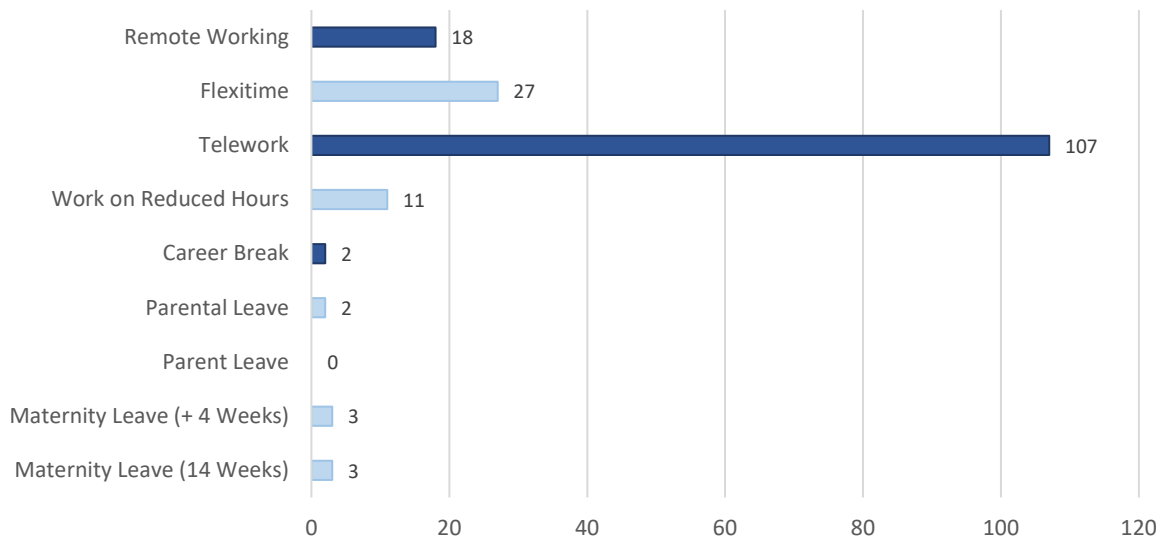
(Ministry for Finance and Employment)



Like many other ministries, MFE's employees mainly opt for teleworking. Perhaps, telework provides a better possibility for the employees to work closer to their children rather than opting for childcare facilities.

5.6 MFEA

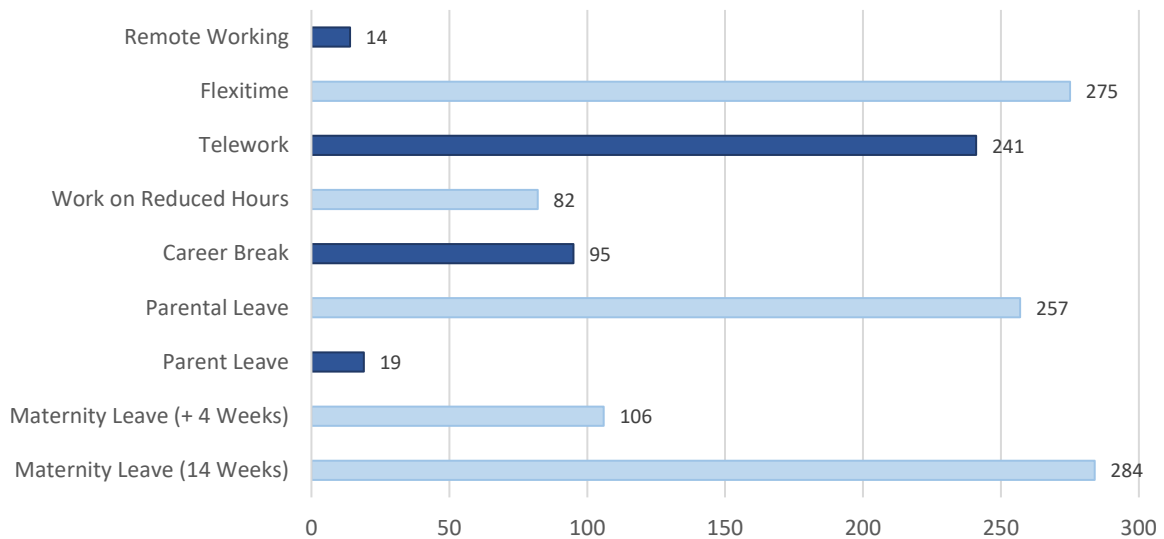
(Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade)



While yet again we see that telework and flexi-time are the most popular work-life balance measures, this Ministry is notable for its immediate use of the new remote working measure.

5.7 MFED

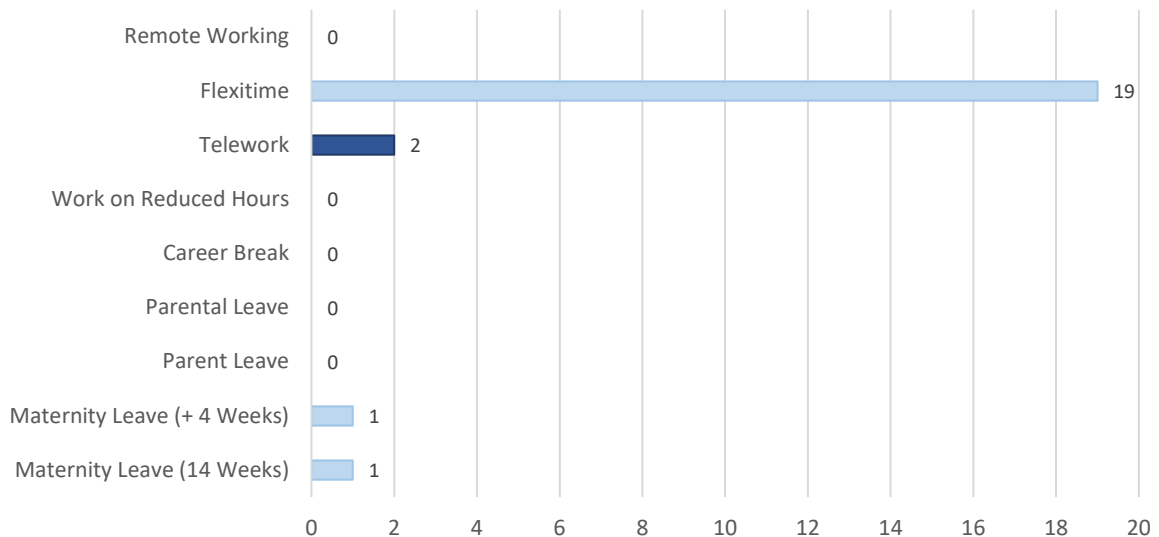
(Ministry for Education)



MFED is notable in that it has the highest utilisation of maternity leave from all Ministries. The take-up of other measures such as flexi-time, parental leave and telework are also significant.

5.8 MFER

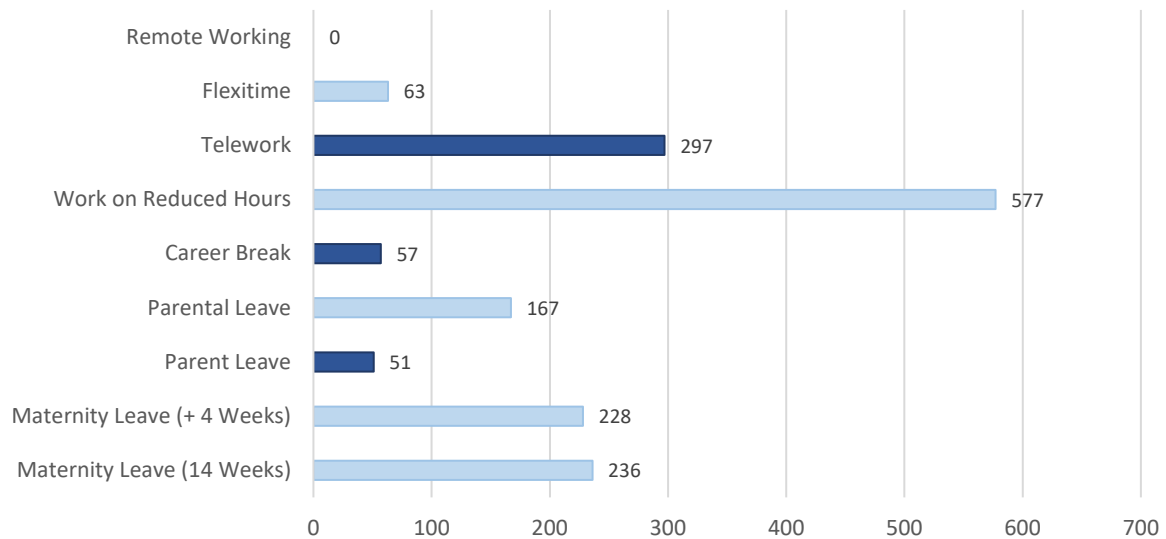
(Ministry for Equality, Research and Innovation)



Similarly to MEI, flexi-time is the most utilised work-life balance measure within MFER.

5.9 MFH

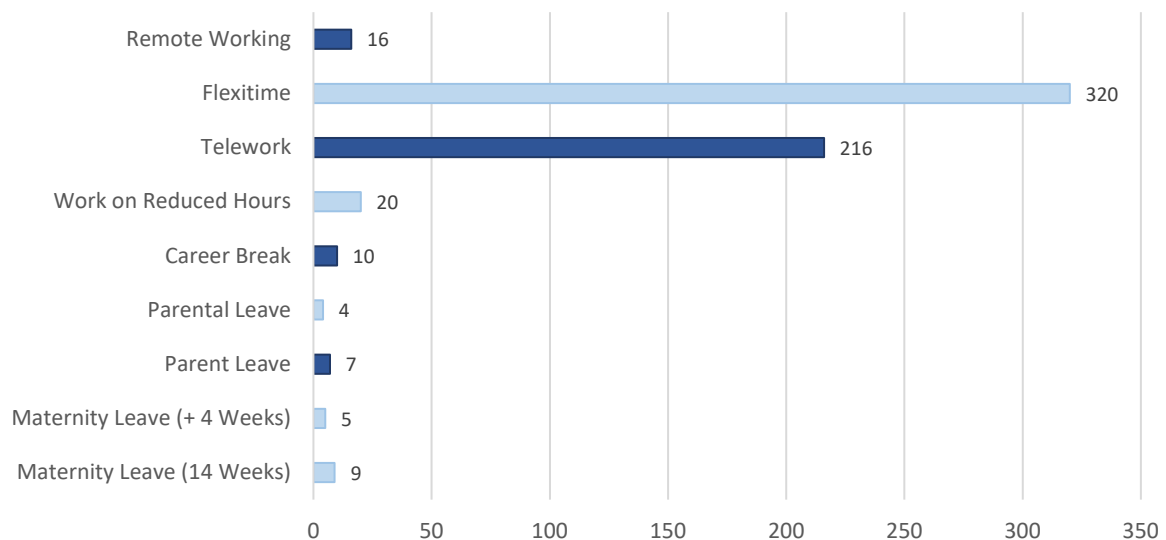
(Ministry for Health)



MFH is notable in that, together with MSCA below, the most popular measure availed of is reduced hours. Identifying what are the reasons for this similar take-up between the two Ministries merits further investigation.

5.10 MGOZ

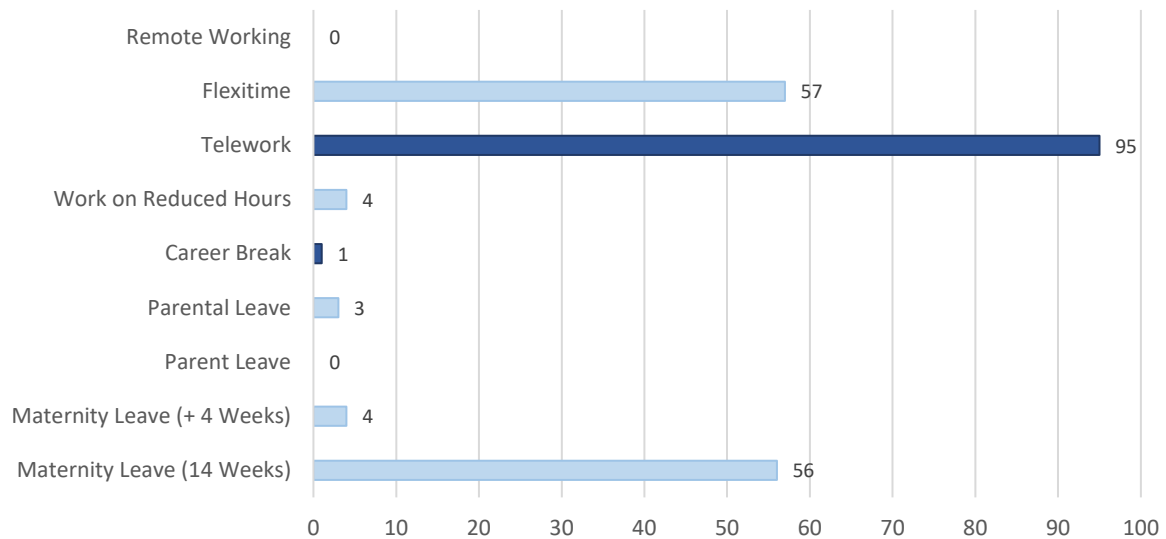
(Ministry for Gozo)



Both flexi-time and telework are popular measures within MGOZ.

5.11 MHAL

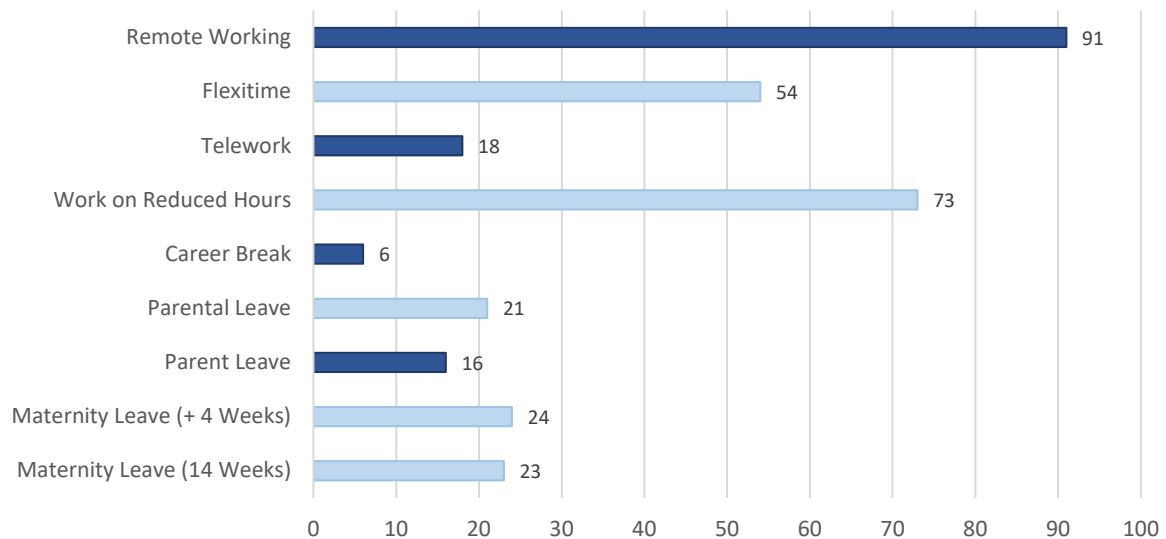
(Ministry for National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government)



Within MHAL, telework is once again the preferred measure.

5.12 MHSE

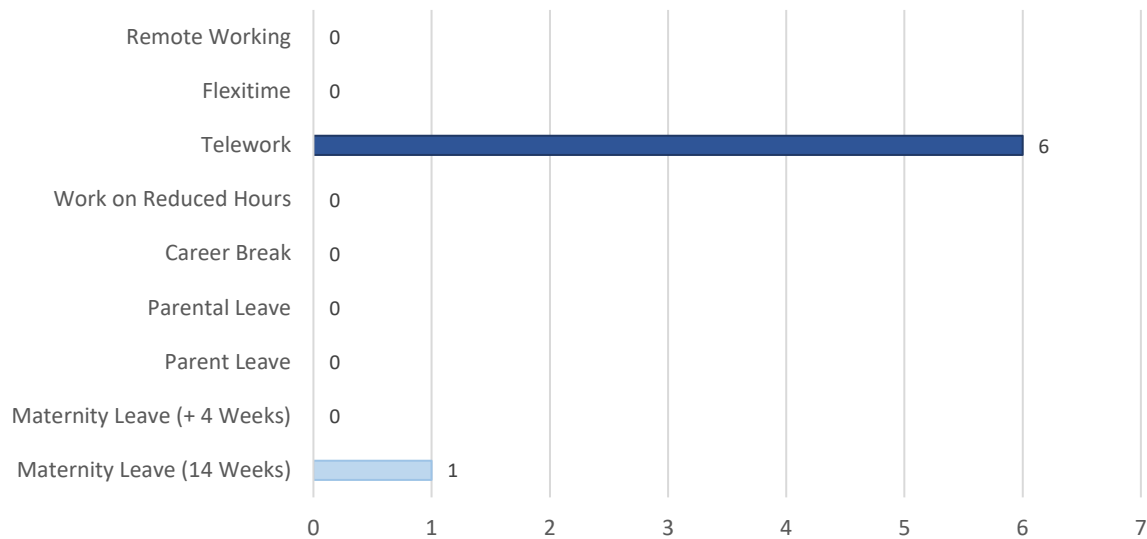
(Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality)



MHSE demonstrates a mixture of utilisations for the work-life balance measures. Interestingly, it has the highest take-up of remote working at a significant number of 91 employees having an approved application of remote working despite the fact that this measure was introduced relatively late in the year.

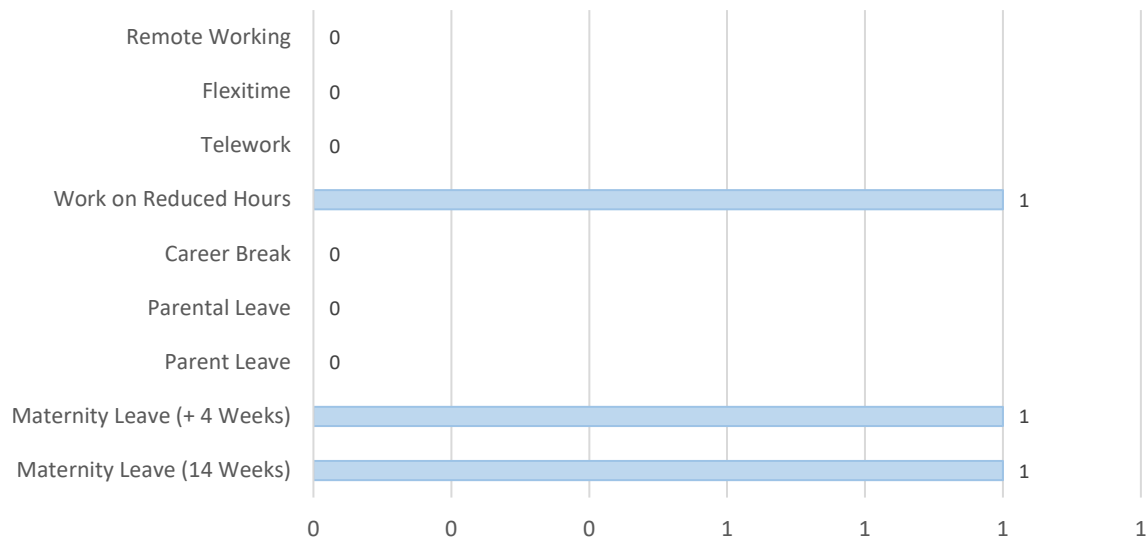
5.13 MISW

(Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing)



5.14 MSA

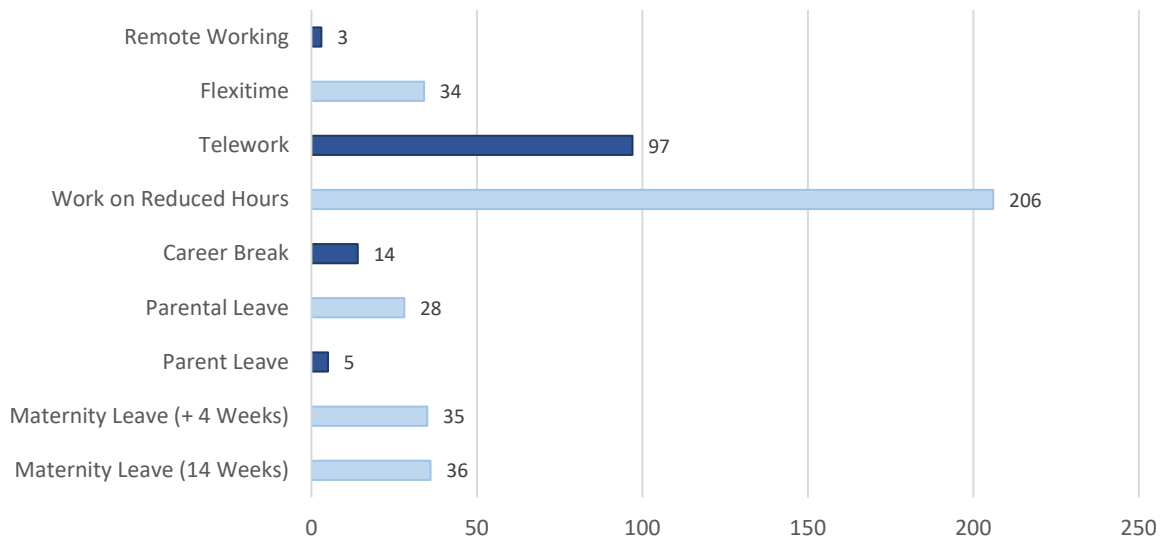
(Ministry for Social Accommodation)



Only three work-life balance measures were utilised within MSA. However, it is worth noting that this Ministry has a significantly low number of public officers.

5.15 MSCA

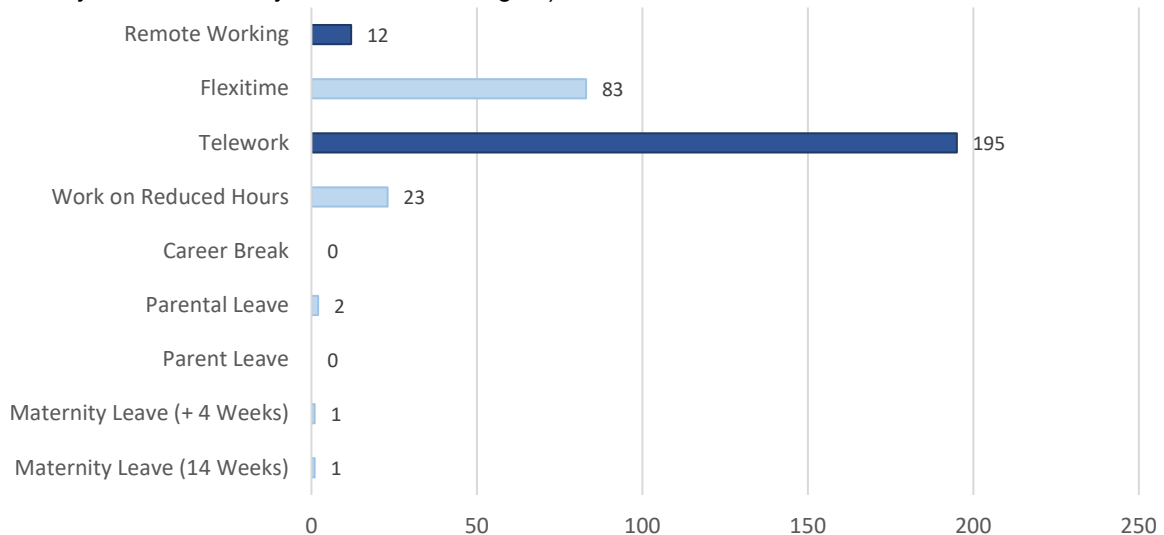
(Ministry for Senior Citizens and Active Ageing)



MSCA is notable in that, together with MFH above, the most popular measure availed of is reduced hours. Identifying what are the reasons for this similar take-up between the two Ministries merits further investigation.

5.16 MSFC

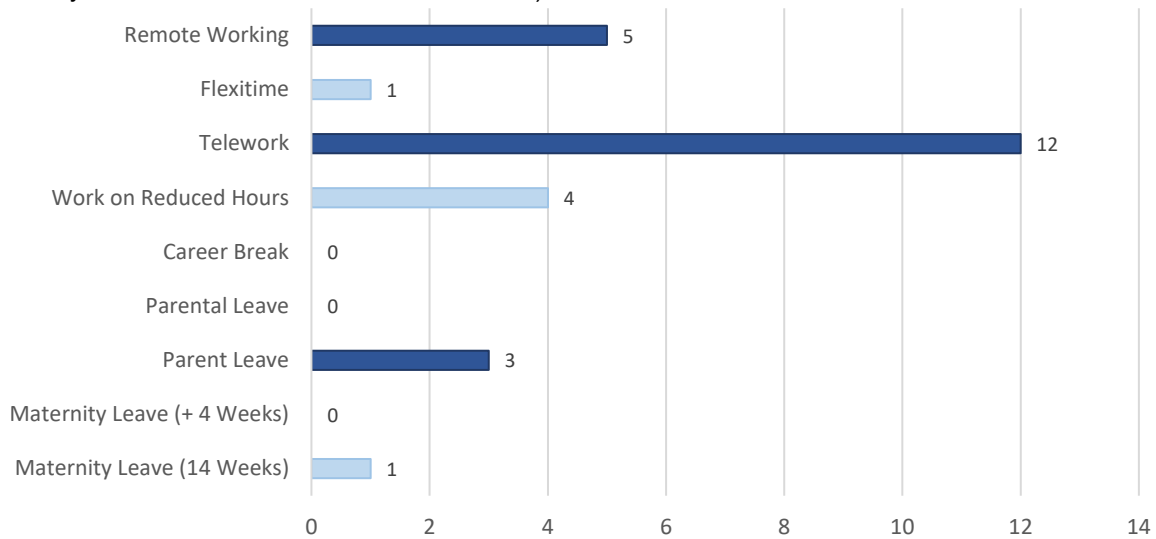
(Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights)



Once again, teleworking is the most popular work-life balance measure.

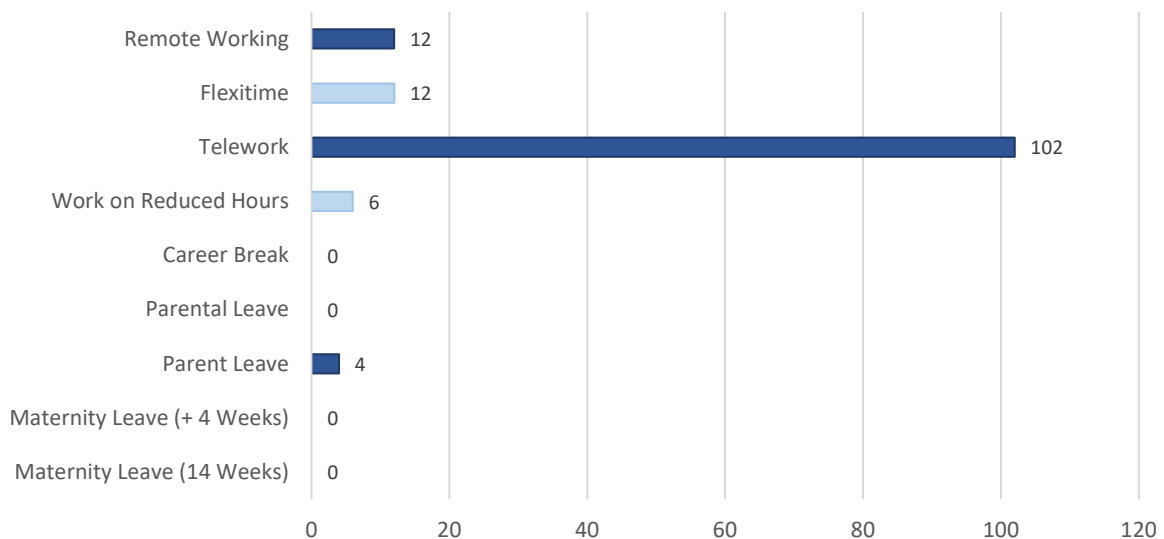
5.17 MTCP

(Ministry for Tourism and Consumer Protection)



5.18 MTIP

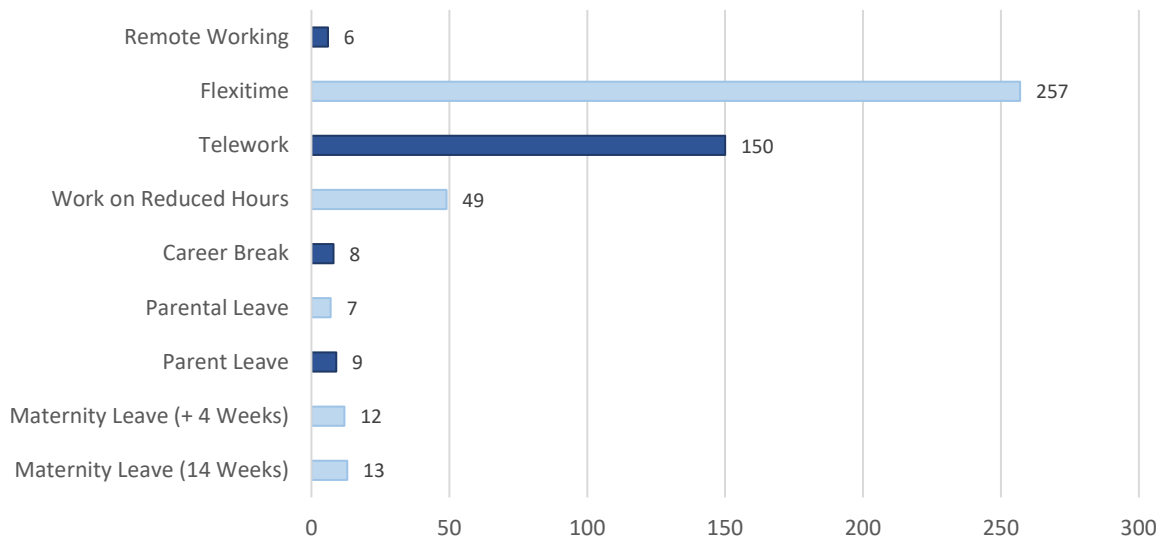
(Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects)



The graph above shows a significant amount of utilisation of telework within MTIP. As has been noted above, this is not uncommon. However, the difference in take-up with other measures is significant. This gap merits further investigation to explain why MTIP employees, in particular, are opting for teleworking so predominantly.

5.19 OPM

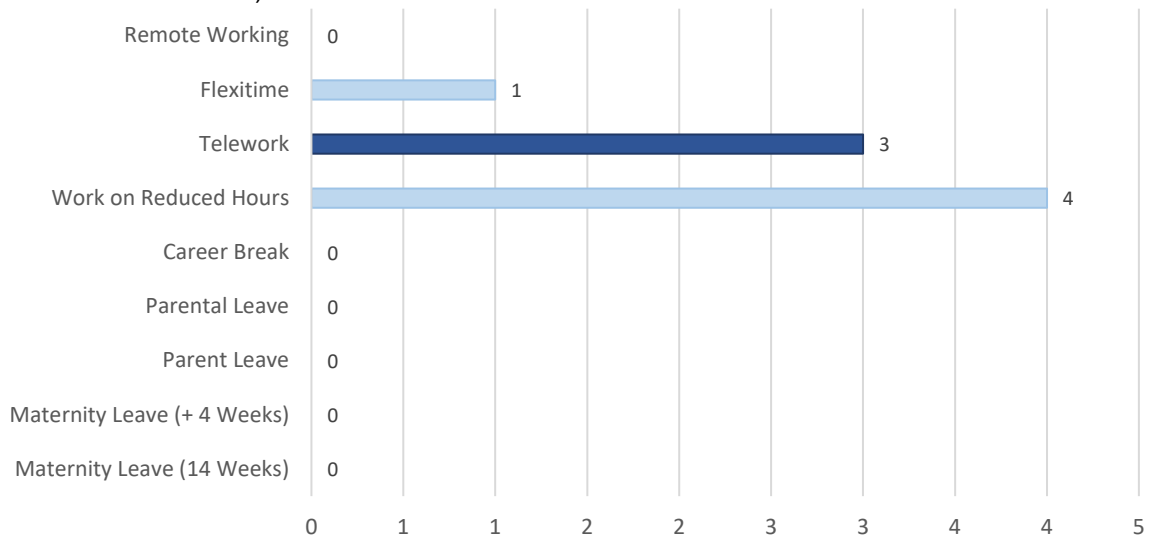
(Office of the Prime Minister)



Within OPM, flexi-time is the most popular work-life balance measure availed of.

5.20 OPR

(Office of the President)



The most popular measure availed of within OPR is reduced hours.

6. Conclusion

Now that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are slowly stabilising, this year's report shows a steady return to pre-pandemic trends.

Employees within Middle Management & Professional levels (Scale 6 – 10) are most likely to resort to work-life balance measures, notably maternity leave, parental leave, reduced hours and teleworking.

Furthermore, as in previous years, female employees are most likely to avail themselves of work-life balance measures. However, there was a surge, when compared to previous years' statistics, of male employees making use of career break, which is taken in order to take care of young children, a sign that gender roles are slowly being reversed among families. Furthermore, there was an overall increase in the take-up of teleworking and remote working among both genders, but mostly by female employees.

When one considers the statistics across ministries, the importance given to telework and flexi-time is immediately evident. This implies that employees are not struggling with the number of hours or the workload per se but are rather more concerned about how and where they carry out their duties. The reasons may be several, including, but not limited to, those related to family commitments, the internal organisation of the ministry itself and the nature of the work, yet these figures merit further studies. The Ministry for Health together with Ministry for Education (MFED) had the greatest number of public employees availing themselves of overall work-life balance measures. It is important to note that they also have the highest number of public employees employed.

To sum up, there was an overall decrease in the use of work-life balance measures. However, the increase of teleworking/ remote working demonstrates that the pandemic brought about the idea that one can still successfully meet targets whilst working from a place other than the traditional office, so long as service delivery is not impacted negatively.