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Trust and surveillance of work during the Covid-19 pandemic

In our article, we analyse the large-scale and rapid transition of workers to remote work during the Spring and Autumn 2020 pandemics, as well as the surveillance of remote work as reported by workers themselves. We study what in general might explain the smooth transition and the reported lack of supervision of employees' remote work in Finland. Our research material is based on an Internet panel survey collected by Taloustutkimus Oyj. The number of respondents to our survey questions was 1,518 persons. The data are weighted according to the working (aged 18–64) population and generalised according to age, gender, level of education, and place of residence. In this article, we analyse the transition to remote work and the nature of the supervision of remote work, as well as the trust and uncertainty experienced by employees. We use institutional trust as the key theoretical concept. Institutional trust in the case of working life is based on a strong tripartite system that leaves little need for individual negotiations and consultation between individual employees and employers. Our claim is that institutional trust, combined with technological digitalisation, has embedded a structural transition to teleworking, and it has reduced or made redundant the need for the close supervision of individual employees.

Keywords: trust, remote work, pandemic, hybrid work, digitalisation