



PART 1

Read the text below and answer questions 1–13.

THE RISE OF REMOTE WORK: A DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

A

Telecommuting existed long before video calls became routine, but for decades it was restricted to a narrow set of occupations and to employees with unusually high autonomy. Over the last decade—and especially following large-scale disruptions to office life—remote and hybrid arrangements expanded rapidly. What began as a temporary workaround in many organisations has since evolved into a redesign of how work is organised, monitored, and evaluated. The shift has exposed hidden dependencies: office work was not only about desks and devices, but also about shared routines, informal access to colleagues, and a built environment that quietly coordinated schedules. Remote work replaces some of those functions with digital systems, and it reveals where those systems succeed or fail.

B

The technological foundations of remote work are real, but unevenly distributed. Cloud software, secure networks, and collaboration platforms reduce the need for physical proximity, and cheaper devices lower entry barriers for many roles. Yet access to reliable broadband, a quiet home workspace, and secure authentication tools remains unequal across regions and income groups. Cybersecurity constraints also matter: some tasks require protected data environments that are difficult to reproduce at home. As a result, remote work can widen opportunities for some workers while excluding others whose jobs, housing conditions, or infrastructure make participation impractical. The digital transformation therefore has a “participation gap” alongside its productivity claims.

C

Early debate focused on whether output would collapse when teams became dispersed. Evidence has been mixed, partly because “remote work” describes different realities. Some employees gain uninterrupted time, fewer casual interruptions, and the freedom to structure tasks around peak attention. Others face fragmented schedules, inadequate equipment, and competing care responsibilities. Over time, many firms concluded that individual productivity can remain high, but coordination costs often rise. Decision-making that once relied on quick clarification can become slower, because remote teams must deliberately share context: background assumptions, dependencies, and the reasons behind choices. Asynchronous collaboration can reduce the need for constant meetings, but it also depends on strong writing habits and well-maintained shared records.



D

Management practices have consequently been reshaped. Some organisations attempted to replicate office oversight through digital surveillance: tracking activity, screen time, and response speeds. Critics argue that this encourages presenteeism—performative busyness that looks productive but does not necessarily produce value—and that it can erode trust, prompting employees to optimise for visibility rather than outcomes. Other firms moved toward outcome-based management, measuring deliverables rather than hours online. This approach can support autonomy, but it requires clear goals, explicit ownership, and reliable documentation so that work remains legible when people are not co-located. It also demands a shift in managerial skill: coaching and prioritisation become more important than policing.

E

Remote work has also altered the geography of daily life. When workers are no longer tied to a central office, some relocate to smaller towns or cheaper regions, changing local housing demand and spending patterns. At the same time, central business districts can experience lower weekday footfall, affecting retail, property markets, and public transport revenue. These changes complicate urban planning. Cities built around peak-hour commuting may need to rebalance land use toward mixed-purpose districts, while outlying areas must consider whether new demand will translate into long-term investment in services. In this sense, remote work contributes to spatial decentralisation, but it does not eliminate the need for cities; it changes what cities are for.

F

Labour market effects are similarly complex. Remote hiring allows firms to recruit beyond major employment hubs, which can benefit employers and some workers, particularly those previously excluded by geography. However, it can also intensify competition for roles that can be done from anywhere, and it raises new questions about bargaining power. Some companies adjust pay by location, while others keep uniform salaries to attract scarce talent, producing uneven outcomes across occupations and regions. Organisational culture and learning present another challenge: workplace norms and tacit knowledge transfer often occur through observation and informal conversation, which are harder to reproduce online. Mentoring can become more deliberate but also more fragile, depending on managers' effort, psychological safety in calls, and the quality of digital communication.

G

For many organisations, the likely endpoint is neither fully remote nor fully office-based, but a negotiated hybrid model. Roles differ in their need for real-time teamwork,



confidentiality, specialised equipment, or rapid iteration, and the “right” arrangement depends on task design rather than ideology. Many firms therefore experiment with periodic in-person sessions to strengthen relationships and accelerate onboarding, even while keeping routine work remote. However, hybrid systems introduce equity concerns: employees who can travel easily may benefit more from in-person access, and career signals may still favour those seen more often. The long-term challenge is governance—policies that protect wellbeing, clarify expectations for availability, and ensure that flexibility does not quietly become inequality.

Questions 1–4

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph.

List of Headings

- i The infrastructure divide that shapes access to telecommuting
- ii Surveillance versus results: competing logics of remote supervision
- iii Spatial decentralisation and the changing role of city centres
- iv From niche telecommuting to system-wide organisational redesign
- v The challenge of knowledge transfer when observation disappears
- vi Why coordination slows when shared context must be made explicit
- vii Remote labour markets and new forms of wage competition

1 Paragraph A

2 Paragraph B

3 Paragraph C

4 Paragraph D

Questions 5–9

The text has seven paragraphs, **A–G**. Which paragraph contains the following information? Choose the correct letter, **A–G**. **NB** You may use any letter more than once.

5 The view that the appropriate degree of remote work depends on role requirements such as confidentiality or specialised equipment.

6 The claim that digital monitoring can undermine trust and reward presenteeism rather than meaningful output.



7 An example of workers relocating because employment is no longer tied to an office, affecting housing demand and local spending.

8 The idea that remote recruitment broadens the talent pool but can also intensify competition and reshape pay-setting.

9 The difficulty of passing on norms and tacit knowledge when informal observation is harder to replicate online.

Questions 10–13

Complete the sentences below. Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the text for each answer.

10 Some employees gain uninterrupted time and fewer casual

11 Remote decisions may take longer because teams must communicate the wider needed to interpret a choice, including its assumptions and dependencies.

12 Work remains legible when colleagues are not co-located through reliable

13 Many organisations supplement online work with periodic sessions to strengthen relationships.

Answer Key

1. iv

2. i

3. vi

4. ii

5. G

6. D

7. E

8. F

9. F

10. interruptions

11. context

12. documentation



13. in-person