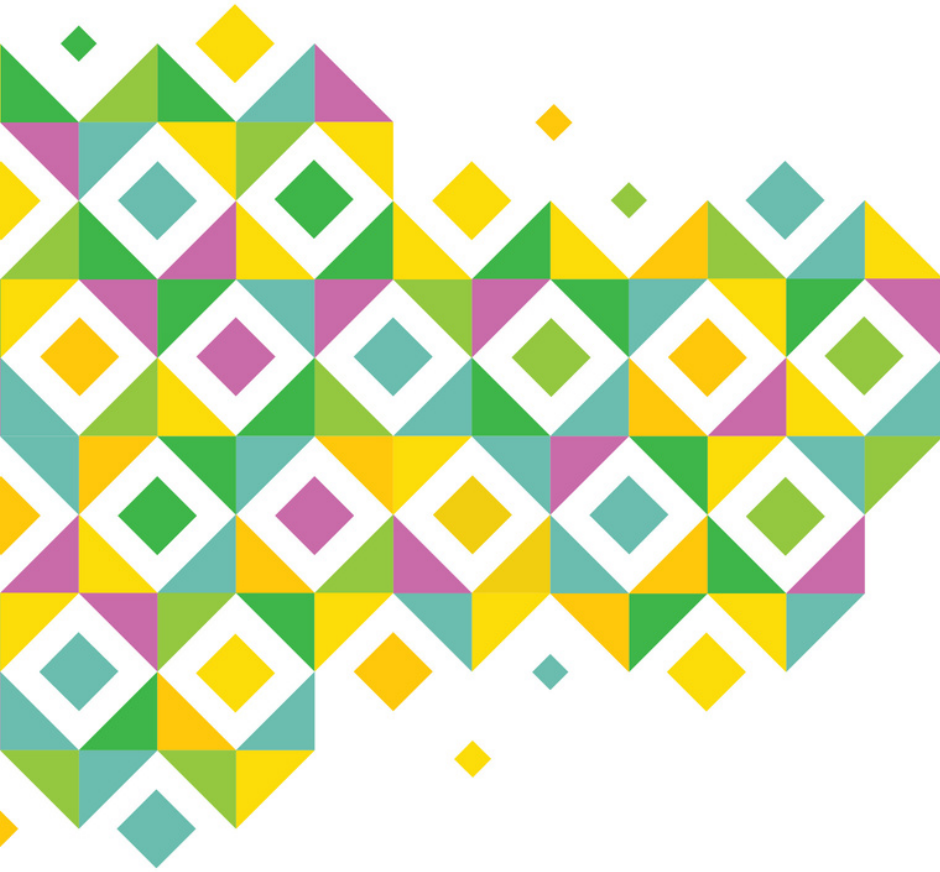




White Paper

A Review of Workplace-Led Strategies to Improve Health for Work-From-Home Workers

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Abstract

Work-from-home (WFH) models are still prevalent among many employees, particularly those in white-collar positions. Despite some job and work-life balance benefits, WFH practices have also led to harmful health effects. We conducted a rapid review of reviews (n=12 reviews included) and an environmental scan of workplace interventions (n=167 companies) to identify the scope and breadth of workplace interventions designed to promote healthy eating, physical health (including physical activity), alcohol misuse, tobacco use, mental health, psychological wellbeing, and job satisfaction and performance in high-income countries. Given the lack of interventions on alcohol misuse, we performed an additional brief, targeted search on the topic. This white paper presents findings from the three methods, including recommended interventions. It concludes with a call for public health to provide evidence-based guidance for workplaces to specifically act on the causes and consequences of alcohol misuse, addressing the complex, intersecting social determinants of health.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic affected workers and organizations worldwide, prompting organizational change and re-imagination of conventional work-day practices. Although not a new way of working, work-from-home (WFH) was widespread among many employees, especially white-collar professional workers.¹ In the post-pandemic era, many companies, mainly in sectors like insurance, finance, information, and professional and technical services, still embrace WFH practices.^{1,2}

Benefits from working online at home include job autonomy, independence and flexibility in choosing working hours and work location, increased productivity and job satisfaction, better concentration, greater work-life balance, and reduced commute expenses.¹⁻³ However, a concerning trade-off of WFH practices is the potential for work hours to intrude into time periods and physical spaces reserved for personal life², leading to increased work-family conflict and work-life imbalance in a WFH context.⁴ WFH may harm physical, mental, and social health of WFH employees, resulting in burnout, family violence, musculoskeletal disorders, alcohol misuse, and prolonged sitting.⁵

To prevent and mitigate some harmful effects of WFH practices required during the pandemic, companies implemented a range of health-related strategies. Some of them are still in place to support employees who continue working full-time or part-time from home. We conducted a rapid review of reviews and an environmental scan to identify workplace-led health-related strategies for WFH employees described in the academic and practice-based literature, respectively.

Unfortunately, little was found on alcohol-related interventions. This is worrisome given the worldwide increases in alcohol consumption and the reporting of hazardous drinking behaviour in the general population⁶ and among WFH employees during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷ A Canadian web-based survey in January 2021 found 18% of people aged 15+ reported consuming five or more drinks on one occasion in the last month, considered binge drinking.⁸ Prior to the pandemic, that prevalence was 11%.⁸ These findings are even more troubling considering there is a continuum of risk whereby the risk for those who consume more than two standard drinks weekly are at moderate-to-high risk of alcohol-caused consequences such as injuries, violence, and death.⁹

In this white paper, we discuss findings from our rapid review of reviews and environmental scan on the health-related strategies workplaces have implemented to support WFH employees. We also describe findings from a brief, targeted search on alcohol interventions delivered by companies. Further, we reflect on the missed opportunities in addressing alcohol misuse and present a call to action for researchers and public health organizations to strengthen evidence-based guidance for workplaces as an important setting to target the reduction of alcohol-related harms.

Rapid Review of Reviews

The rapid review of reviews¹⁰ identified workplace strategies designed for WFH employees to promote healthy eating, physical health (including physical activity), mental health, psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, and job performance, as well as address alcohol and tobacco misuse. Given the unique context of WFH, public health authorities needed rapid evidence on health-related strategies for WFH workers to inform the development of policy guidelines for local workplaces; therefore, this rapid review methodology was chosen. Considering the breadth of evidence on the topic, only review-level evidence was included (e.g., systematic reviews). A research librarian developed the search strategy, using WFH-related concepts (e.g., teleworking, hybrid work). A search of OVID Medline, EBSCO CINAHL, and EBSCO Business Source Complete was conducted on December 13, 2021. Articles published in a language other than English were excluded. Included reviews reported on interventions for WFH workers in high-income countries and focused on the implementation or the outcome of the intervention. We defined WFH employees as adults aged 16+ in paid employment who work from home on a part-time (≥ 1 -day/week) or full-time basis using specific information and communication technologies for digital work interactions (e.g., software applications, wireless networks). We used Covidence¹¹ to perform primary and secondary screening. We designed a data extraction form to collect information from the included reviews. Quality appraisal was performed using the Health Evidence Quality Assessment Tool.¹²

The search retrieved 465 reviews: 63 duplicates were removed. One-hundred-two reviews underwent secondary screening. Twelve articles were included: nine narrative reviews, two systematic reviews, and one rapid review. After reference screening of the included articles, no additional references were included. [Table 1](#) presents the reviews' recommended interventions by studied outcomes with most of them targeting organizations, supervisor and workers relationships, relationships between co-workers, and workers' behaviours in their private lives.

Table 1. Summary Table of Evidence from the Rapid Review.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Charalampous et al., 2017 ¹³	Systematic review Understand the relationships between remote e-working and five dimensions of wellbeing at work (i.e., affective, social, cognitive, psychosomatic, and professional). Strong	Knowledge employees who remote e-work, which were defined as employees who work away from the offices at least once per week, use ICT (information and communication technologies) in their working tasks, and apply contextual knowledge or action-centred skills.	- Emotional exhaustion - Job satisfaction - Professional wellbeing - Strain - Trust	Promote opportunities for social support among co-workers through informal and formal communication.
				Foster informal communication.
			- Frustration - Emotional exhaustion - Communication	Provide employees upgraded, latest version of software and technology.
			Positive relationship with organization	Offer training opportunities for employees to transition to virtual work.
			- Positive relationship with organization - Isolation - Job satisfaction - Job performance	Provide professional training and development opportunities.
				Guide supervisors to support their employees and recognize employees' efforts.
				Accommodate for individual employee needs by allowing for work flexibility.
			- Job satisfaction - Job performance (concentration)	Allow for independence and autonomy in working from home.
			Musculoskeletal problems	Promote access to adequate equipment and furniture when working from home.
			- Job satisfaction - Strain - Emotional exhaustion - Trust	Create clear boundaries between work and non-working hours and home spaces.
			Job satisfaction	Offer part-time flexible arrangement e-working with recommendation of working no more than 2.5 days or up to 15 hours a week from home.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Chen, 2021 ¹⁴	Narrative review Examine strategic management innovations within a human resource management perspective that support work from home employees' wellbeing, while maintaining job performance. Weak	Work from home employees, which were defined as home-based workers using virtual work communication.	- Stress - Mental health	Ensure human resources (HR) take the lead in organizing relevant skills through online courses.
			Stress	Provide compensation and benefits.
				Provide stress relief training through HR.
				Offer opportunities for job promotion and career development through department transfer and training within the organization.
				Implement policies of not working long hours.
				Implement supportive family policies.
				Implement working flexible hours for enhanced family-work balance.
			- Stress - Job performance	Ensure HR leaders develop strong leadership skills to deal with conflict and crisis.
				Adopt an online performance and evaluation system.
				Consider if the individual's personality, skills, and traits are a good fit for the organization culture when HR is hiring.
			- Psychological stress - Job performance	Develop a 'supportive family-friendly program' and a 'supportive family management team'.
				Provide employment assistance regarding relationships management, reconciliation of family and work responsibilities, and post-conflict resolution.
			- Job satisfaction - Exhaustion - Stress - Anxiety	Consider an individual's preference in working schedule and offer a flexible working schedule.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Craig et al., 2021 ¹⁵	Narrative review Highlight the impacts of restorative greenery use in employees' breaks (green breaks) and in office design (green spaces) on mental health and job performance. Weak	Work from home employees, which were defined as employees working from home under the social distancing requirement of COVID-19 using 'socio-technical systems' for work.	- Chronic stress - Mood - Job performance (cognitive performance) - Loneliness - Depression	Take breaks and be in nature or physical greenery.
				Take breaks and be visually immersed in greenery, such as through the computer simulated greenery.
				Take breaks and be acoustically immersed in the sound of nature.
				Incorporate green plants into workspace.
				Be close to a window view with nature.
Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶	Narrative review Analyze the effects of COVID-19 lockdown on work from home employees and provided suggestions to improve health to reduce cardiovascular risk factors (e.g., smoking, unhealthy diet, alcohol misuse). Weak	Work from home employees, which were defined as full-time or part-time employees working from home, whose work does not always utilize the use of ICT.	- Weight - Hypertension - Cardiovascular disease risk	Take regular breaks during the workday.
			- Physical health - Depression - Distress - Stress	Eat healthy foods.
				Encourage employees to maintain a routine of regular physical activity.
				Reduce sitting time in the workplace by using smartphone applications, pedometers, cycling workstations, height-adjustable workstations, etc.
			Physical health	Provide opportunities for working from home employees to work together with healthcare professionals in the creation of personalized exercise programs.
				Establish cooperation between governments, companies, and services to deliver programs promoting healthy lifestyles.
				Counsel workers regarding the impact of physical activity and risks associated with sedentary behaviour.
				Implement policy on not working long hours.
			- Psychological stress - Cardiovascular disease risk	Specify boundaries between work time and private life especially those with family members.
				Provide smoking cessation interventions and alcohol treatment programs in the organizations.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (continued)			• Distress • Depression • Cardiovascular disease risk • Physical health	Set a schedule for adequate quality sleep.
			• Depression • Anxiety • Psychological stress • Isolation	Adopt regular online communication using videos.
Emerson et al., 2021 ¹⁷	Narrative review Examine the physical risk factors associated with computer use and musculoskeletal pain and symptoms to develop a method for remote computer workstation evaluation and provide recommendations to improve workers' physical health, safety, and comfort. Weak	Work from home employees, which was defined as those who work from home, using ICTs.	• Musculoskeletal pain and symptoms	Establish correct chair and body position (e.g., feet on floor or stable support, knees approximately 90°, stable and support back on chair, shoulder relaxed with elbows at a 70-90°, and wrists in neutral position without contact stress on table).
				Establish the correct desk height to the employee's height.
				Adjust position for keyboard and mouse position into correct ergonomics (e.g., height should be just below elbow height, close to torso with minimal forward reach, keyboard flat or slightly inclined, keeping wrist extension between 15° to 30°, mouse directly beside keyboard).
				Encourage employees to adopt an ergonomic setup to their workstation equipment.
				Consider workstation organization; documents, equipment, and work tools are not overloaded on one side of the workstation.
				Consider employing a physical therapist or ergonomics consultant to remotely evaluate employee's workstation and provide education.
			• Musculoskeletal pain • Eye fatigue	Establish correct monitor position (e.g., main monitor aligned with keyboard and trunk and distance of monitor and font size adjusted for employees to maintain a neutral neck).

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Kalischko & Riedl, 2021 ¹⁸	Narrative review Investigate the use of electronic performance monitoring (EPM) on digital workers and its impact on mental health and job performance. Weak	Digital workplace employees, which were defined as workers who sometimes use ICT.	- Stress (technostress) - Fatigue/burnout - Depression - Job satisfaction - Boredom - Anxiety - Motivation - Positive organization relationship - Job performance - Privacy	Use EPM to monitor employees' work.
			Job satisfaction	Provide positive feedback through EPM on quality aspects of performance rather than behaviours for employees.
			- Job satisfaction - Privacy	Consider control options for employees to turn off EPM.
			- Job satisfaction - Trust - Privacy	Provide transparency about policies within the organization: employees are appropriately informed about EPM use beforehand; they are provided with comprehensive reasons for monitoring; and they are aware of what is being monitored (e.g., laptop, smartphone, etc.), what is collected (e.g. individual data, group data, aggregated data), and how this information will be used and secured.
			- Trust - Privacy	Find the 'zone of acceptance' between employee and employers and discuss the fairness of organizational monitoring and what can or will be monitored.
				Develop a holistic data protection strategy within the organization through implementing measures for data protection and providing employee training to ensure data privacy and security.
			- Motivation - Job performance - Trust	Consider the individual and the organizational culture fit to use EPM.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹	Narrative review Analyze the implications of COVID-19 on work practices and moderating factors to support health and work-related outcomes among employees. Weak	Employees in general, which were defined as 1) workers during the pandemic whose work was mandatorily made virtual or remote; 2) 'essential workers'; 3) and those temporarily or permanently laid off. In particular, work from home employees were defined as employees whose work is virtual and/or remote.	- Stress - Privacy	Consider the impact of work surveillance on various working from home arrangements.
			- Safety - Psychological wellbeing - Job performance - Trust	Develop strong leadership with effective communication. Create 'structural scaffolds' by clearly outlining team process, creating transparent team goals, and providing clear descriptive roles to reduce conflict among the team, foster team coordination, and establish safe processing of information.
			- Mental health - Physical health	Integrate regular social interactions with co-workers during the workday.
			- Mental health (loneliness and chronic stress) - Resilience - Exhaustion - Absenteeism	Use a top-down or bottom-up approach to balance job demands and employee wellbeing. Provide resources to balance job demands and achieve employee wellbeing (e.g., employee assistance, counselling, therapy, and training).
				Offer psychological resources (e.g., support, feedback) virtually and on a regular basis.
			- Stress - Presenteeism	Address presenteeism in the organization by clearly defining within the compensation policy if taking sick days/snow days are allowed while working from home.
			Alcohol misuse	Provide internet-based brief interventions through text, video resources, and personalized feedback to address the negative emotional states leading to alcohol misuse.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Nayani et al., 2017 ²⁰	Systematic review Examine leadership and management styles to ensure occupational safety and health for distributed workers. Weak	Distributed workers, which were defined as employees who work part-time or full-time remotely from their organization's main location and do not necessarily use ICT. The review included: virtual workers (those who work at different locations), teleworkers (those working from home and using ICT), truck drivers, construction workers, oil rig employees, community workers, healthcare workers, and police officers. Note: Given the target population, some of the findings reported are for distributed workers in general; however, review stated 90% of the distributed workers are teleworkers.	- Isolation - Occupational safety and health outcome (encompassing satisfaction, safety behaviours, burnout, stress, and depression) - Job satisfaction	Provide employees opportunities for formal and informal communication with leaders, managers, and supervisors.
			- Stress - Occupational safety and health outcome	Model safe working practices in leadership by encouraging and exhibiting desired behaviours.
			Occupational safety and health outcome	Reflect on 'organizational-level safety climate' and understand employees' perception of organization's commitment to their health and safety through organization's policy, procedures, and leadership.
			Job satisfaction	Ensure better understanding of the work conditions of distributed workers among managers regardless of if they are or are not distributed workers themselves.
			- Motivation - Trust	Adopt transformative leadership to inspire employees.
			Stress	Define roles and goals of employees working from home.
			- Occupational safety and health outcome - Job satisfaction - Motivation	Utilize motivational language when communicating.
			- Stress - Frustration	Support and encourage knowledge seeking and sharing of health and safety within the organization through supervisory or managerial support.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Ng, 2010 ²¹	Narrative review Analyzed the relationships between home offices and teleworkers' work behaviours, while also comparing conventional office environment and workspace at home. Moderate	Home-based teleworker (also named telecommuters), which were defined as those who use ICT and tend to be employees of organizations applying advanced technologies.	• Job performance (concentration) • Stress • Job satisfaction • Eye fatigue	Reduce ambient and disruptive noises in the workspace. Integrate quality lighting to the workspace.
			• Job satisfaction • Mood • Boredom • Stress	Choose a workspace with a window view of nature that provides natural light.
			• Job satisfaction • Job performance (concentration) • Privacy	Consider having a private office space in their home, especially employees with other family members. Teach children the difference between when not to disturb a parent who is at home working and when a parent is at home for family time.
			• Stress • Musculoskeletal pain • Eye fatigue	Establish ergonomic and adjustable work equipment (e.g., desk, chair, computer, keyboard, mouse). Provide employees' up-to-date equipment and software, skill training, and technical assistance for information technology (IT) issues.
			• Job satisfaction • Safety and health	Compensate or provide for data use, computing, telecommunications equipment, and maintenance.
			• Job performance (concentration) • Job satisfaction	Provide employees with flexible work arrangements and hours, especially those with family demands.
			• Isolation • Job satisfaction • Job performance	Maintain regular communication with co-workers.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Oakman, et al., 2020 ²²	Rapid review Examine the effects of working at home (WAH) on employees' mental and physical health by gender and provided recommendations to employers to improve health outcomes. Strong	Working at home employees, which were defined as white-collar/professional teleworkers working from home. Teleworkers were defined as employees working outside of the organizations' premises at least one day a week and utilizing ICT.	- Isolation - Fatigue - Wellbeing - Stress	Establish clear communication of role expectations; define appropriate performance measures and workloads; and improve access to supports provided by human resources within the organization.
				Collaboratively develop and implement a communication strategy between employees and employers.
			- Isolation - Emotional exhaustion - Stress - Wellbeing	Facilitate formal and informal co-worker support through 'face-face' online contact.
			- Stress - Fatigue	Provide technical support.
				Provide technology training, as well as necessary software and systems.
			- Stress - Fatigue - Strain	Facilitate and educate employees on boundary management of working hours.
			- Stress/ technostress - Privacy - Strain - Wellbeing	Consider part-time arrangements, such as working no more than 2.5 days per week from home.
			- Depression - Emotional exhaustion	Provide autonomy to employees to choose their work arrangements and schedule.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Okuyan & Begen, 2022 ²³	Narrative review [overview] Analyze negative effects from working from home and provided recommendations on how to mitigate negative outcomes. Weak	Employees working from home, which were defined as those forced to work from home due to 'stay-at-home' call.	• Job performance • Job satisfaction • Fatigue • Musculoskeletal pain	Maintain ergonomic posture and use ergonomic equipment (e.g., computer, keyboard, mouse, desk, and chair).
				Setup home office space similar to the workplace at the official work environment.
				Maintain an ergonomic environment, which includes appropriate temperature, low noise level, low humidity, and low dust.
			• Mental health • Fatigue • Stress • Job performance • Mood	Establish adequate amount of quality sleep in schedule.
				Take regular breaks and maintain a routine.
			• Fatigue • Musculoskeletal pain • Mental health • Cardiovascular disease risk	Maintain regular exercise and encourage co-workers and families to exercise.
			• Stress • Job performance • Burnout	Create work-life boundaries by separating work and personal time and physically separating work and family space if possible.
				Coordinate working time and family demands, by establishing a schedule, routine, or providing activities to their children.
				Consider virtual caregivers to occupy children.
			• Cardiovascular disease risk • Hypertension • Obesity	Be mindful of diet and reduce or eliminate trans-fatty acids and high calorie drinks.
			• Stress • Job performance • Anxiety • Motivation	Maintain social interactions with co-workers.

Reference	Review Type ^a Review Objective Quality Appraisal	Population	Outcome(s) Related to Health Behaviours, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance	Recommendation(s)
Turnea, 2021 ²⁴	Narrative review Compare the advantages and disadvantages of working remotely, reviewed the organizational rewards implemented in online work environments, and indicated which strategies can be more successful in attracting and retaining employees. Weak	Homeworking employees (also called teleworkers, telecommuters, and remote workers), which were defined as employees working from home at least 20 hours a week and with flexible work arrangements.	- Productivity - Job performance	Consider flexible working hours for employees.
			- Job satisfaction - Motivation - Job performance	Provide extrinsic rewards within the organization (e.g., pay, bonuses, benefits, and career development opportunities). Acknowledge employees' contributions through recognition programs and rewards.
			- Stress - Wellbeing - Job satisfaction	Support employees to define space and time boundaries between work and personal life to achieve work-life balance.

^a After careful consideration by reviewers conducting this rapid review, review types were (re)classified according to Temple University guidelines

(<https://guides.temple.edu/c.php?g=78618&p=3879604>) and Grant MJ and Booth's protocol (DOI: [10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x)) Review authors' original classification of their review is shown within the brackets [].

Through an inductive approach, we identified seven major themes across the health-related strategies: organization structure; organization support and commitment; individual and organization relationship fit; family work environment; flexible work schedule; home office design; and healthy habits in private life. [Table 2](#) organizes the targeted health outcomes by those themes. The main health outcomes were related to mental health, psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, and job performance. Only two papers described outcomes related to alcohol misuse, which were framed as moderating factors between stress and coping¹⁹ and cardiovascular disease.¹⁶ Most interventions were classified as organizational support and commitment, organizational structure, and healthy habits in the context of WFH employees' private life.

Table 2. Outcomes of interest and major themes emerging from the rapid review of reviews.

Themes	Alcohol Misuse	Healthy Eating	Physical Health/ Activity	Tobacco Use	Mental Health	Psychological Wellbeing	Job Satisfaction and Job Performance	Other ^a
Organization Structure (i.e., daily operational functions)	Kniffin et al, 2021 ¹⁹ (alcohol misuse)				Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (mental health) Kalischko & Riedl, 2021 ¹⁸ (depression, anxiety) Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹ (chronic stress)	Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (stress) Kalischko & Riedl, 2021 ¹⁸ (stress, fatigue/burnout, boredom, motivation) Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹ (stress, loneliness, exhaustion, resilience) Oakman et al., 2020 ²² (isolation, fatigue, stress) Turnea, 2021 ²⁴ (motivation)	Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (job performance) Kalischko & Riedl, 2021 ¹⁸ (job performance, job satisfaction) Turnea, 2021 ²⁴ (job satisfaction, job performance)	Kalischko & Riedl ¹⁸ , 2021 ¹⁸ (positive organization relationship, privacy) Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹ (privacy, absenteeism, wellbeing)
Home Office Design			Emerson et al., 2021 ¹⁷ (musculoskeletal pain and symptoms) Ng, 2010 ²¹ (musculoskeletal pain) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (musculoskeletal pain)		Craig et al., 2021 ¹⁵ (chronic stress, depression)	Craig et al., 2021 ¹⁵ (mood, loneliness) Ng, 2010 ²¹ (stress, mood, isolation, boredom) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (fatigue)	Craig et al., 2021 ¹⁵ (cognitive performance) Ng, 2010 ²¹ (job performance, concentration) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (job performance, job satisfaction)	Emerson et al., 2021 ¹⁷ (eye fatigue) Ng, 2010 ²¹ (eye fatigue, privacy, safety and health)
Individual and Organization Relationship Fit						Charalampous et al., 2019 ¹³ (isolation) Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (stress)	Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (job satisfaction) Charalampous et al., 2019 ¹³ (job satisfaction, job performance)	Kalischko & Riedl, 2021 ¹⁸ (privacy, trust)

Themes	Alcohol Misuse	Healthy Eating	Physical Health/ Activity	Tobacco Use	Mental Health	Psychological Wellbeing	Job Satisfaction and Job Performance	Other ^a
Family Work Environment					Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (anxiety)	Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (stress, psychological stress, exhaustion) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (stress, burnout)	Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (job satisfaction) Ng, 2010 ²¹ (job performance, job satisfaction) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (job performance)	Ng, 2010 ²¹ (privacy)
Flexible Work Schedule					Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (anxiety) Oakman et al., 2020 ²² (depression)	Charalampous et al., 2019 ¹³ (isolation) Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (stress, psychological stress, exhaustion) Oakman et al., 2020 ²² (stress, strain, emotional exhaustion) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (fatigue)	Charalampous et al., 2019 ¹³ (job satisfaction) Ng, 2010 ²¹ (job performance, job satisfaction) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (job performance) Turnea, 2021 ²⁴ (productivity, job performance)	Oakman et al., 2020 ²² (privacy, wellbeing)
Healthy Habits in Private Life	Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (alcohol misuse) Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹ (alcohol misuse)	Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (weight) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (obesity)	Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (physical health) Emerson et al., 2021 ¹⁷ (musculoskeletal pain) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (musculoskeletal pain)	Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (tobacco consumption)	Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (depression, anxiety) Craig et al., 2021 ¹⁵ (chronic stress, depression) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (mental health)	Craig et al., 2021 ¹⁵ (mood, loneliness) Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (psychological stress, distress, isolation) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (fatigue, mood, stress)	Craig et al., 2021 ¹⁵ (cognitive performance) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (job performance)	Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (hypertension, cardiovascular risk) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (hypertension, cardiovascular disease risk)

Themes	Alcohol Misuse	Healthy Eating	Physical Health/ Activity	Tobacco Use	Mental Health	Psychological Wellbeing	Job Satisfaction and Job Performance	Other ^a
Organization Support and Commitment (including programs and policies)			Charalampous et al., 2019 ¹³ (musculoskeletal pain) Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹ (physical health)		Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (mental health) Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (depression, anxiety) Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹ (mental health) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (anxiety)	Charalampous et al., 2019 (strain, emotional exhaustion, frustration) Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (stress) Di Fusco et al., 2021 ¹⁶ (psychological stress, isolation) Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹ (psychological wellbeing, stress, resilience, exhaustion) Nayani et al., 2018 ²⁰ (isolation, motivation, stress, frustration) Oakman et al., 2020 ²² (isolation, fatigue, stress, emotional exhaustion, strain) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (stress, motivation, anxiety) Turnea, 2021 ²⁴ (motivation, stress)	Charalampous et al., 2019 ¹³ (job performance, concentration) Chen, 2021 ¹⁴ (job performance) Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹ (job performance) Nayani et al., 2018 ²⁰ (job satisfaction) Ng, 2010 ²¹ (job satisfaction, job performance) Okuyan and Begen, 2020 ²³ (job performance) Turnea, 2021 ²⁴ (job satisfaction, job performance)	Charalampous et al., 2019 ¹³ (positive relationship with organization, trust, communication, professional wellbeing) Kalischko & Riedl, 2021 ¹⁸ (privacy, trust) Kniffin et al., 2021 ¹⁹ (safety, trust, absenteeism, presenteeism) Nayani et al., 2018 ²⁰ (occupational safety and health, trust) Oakman et al., 2020 ²² (wellbeing) Turnea, 2021 ²⁴ (wellbeing)

Environmental Scan

An environmental scan of workplace interventions was performed to capture new or emerging evidence from the practice-based literature between January-March 2022. We used the list of the 2022 national winners of Canada's Top 100 Employers²⁵ and provincial winners of Alberta's Top 75 Employers.²⁵ This is an open competition for organizations of any size, in public or private sectors, and with head offices or main business locations across Canada (for the national competition) and within Alberta (for the provincial competition). It uses eight criteria (e.g., Work Atmosphere & Social, Health, Financial & Family Benefits) to identify employers that provide programs considered progressive, forward-thinking and inspiring for other employers. We developed a data extraction form to gather information from each organization (e.g., company name, flexible work options). We used a deductive approach to organize the data by the seven themes identified in the rapid review.

The environmental scan included 167 organizations, which included eight overlapping organizations from Canada's Top 100 Employers and Alberta's Top 75 Employers. Seventy-four percent of organizations were classified as companies of large size (500+ workers), with workers across Canada, and from diverse work sectors (e.g., mining, post-secondary education). [Table 3](#) presents examples of strategies, such as compensation and benefits and virtual social events.

Table 3. Examples of interventions from the environmental scan.

Themes	Examples of Interventions	Health Outcomes
Organization Structure	Virtual events celebrating WFH workers and their achievements; gifts in various forms (comfort/care packages, gift cards, holiday gift packages); and additional day offs (paid and unpaid).	Psychological Wellbeing Job Satisfaction and Job Performance
	Regular wellbeing surveys.	Mental Health Psychological Wellbeing
Organization Support and Commitment	Monetary compensation to cover internet costs; expanded compensation and benefits plan (flex credit for caregiving).	Job Satisfaction and Job Performance
	Availability of internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy programs, mental health first aid training, and formal mental health strategies.	Mental Health Psychological Wellbeing
	Offer of virtual fitness classes (e.g., yoga), designated wellness days, and cooking classes, and availability of digital wellness platforms for physical activity or meditation apps.	Healthy Eating Physical Activity Mental Health Psychological Wellbeing
	Offer of smoking cessation programs.	Tobacco Use
Individual and Organization Relationship Fit	Utilization of a results-focused approach, which identified trusting their employees to work productively in any environment they choose.	Job Satisfaction and Job Performance

Themes	Examples of Interventions	Health Outcomes
Family Work Environment	Sharing resources with family members; offering options for elder care (e.g., use of wellness account for items related to elder care); and availability of unique monetary and in-kind support (e.g., virtual summer camps) during school and daycare closures.	Psychological Wellbeing Job Satisfaction and Job Performance
Flexible Work Schedule	Flexible hours; telecommuting; compressed work week; and earned day offs program.	Psychological Wellbeing Job Satisfaction and Job Performance
Home Office Design	Compensation or reimbursements for ergonomic office equipment acquisition; provision of discounted rates for office equipment; equipment loans program; and educational resources on setting up ergonomic office spaces.	Physical Activity Psychological Wellbeing Job Satisfaction and Job Performance Physical Activity

Brief, Targeted Search on Alcohol Misuse

Given alcohol-related interventions for WFH workers was a large gap in both the rapid review and environmental scan findings, we conducted a targeted search in the practice-based literature. This approach allowed us to capture the most recent practice-based innovations vis-à-vis pandemic-related WFH adaptations, recognizing that the academic literature would be limited due to publication time lags. To minimize potential biases associated with browsing history, activity, and data storage, one researcher used the private window function on Safari to conduct a Google search between March 15-31, 2022 for alcohol misuse interventions for WFH workers in Canada and internationally. Key search terms included “work from home”, “alcohol misuse”, “virtual workplace”, and “quitting alcohol”. Snowball sampling of included content facilitated identifying other relevant content not initially captured in the Google search. We extracted information (e.g., purpose of the website’s content, interventions) from relevant content found in nine sources.²⁶⁻³⁴

Most interventions involved providing mental health supports, while others were more for management purposes. For instance, frequent use of video calls was recommended to managers to identify employees working remotely under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Other recommendations for managers included providing reminders of the organization’s substance misuse policies and disciplinary actions, as well as implementing actions that do not associate work culture (e.g., happy hour) with alcohol drinking as a work reward.

Most interventions addressed the direct causes of excessive alcohol consumption (e.g., stress and anxiety). Examples of those primary preventive interventions included providing: virtual social events for employees; extra paid hours for child and elder care responsibilities; reminders of existing services and available mental health resources; and connections for employees to employee assistance programs (EAPs). Sources recommended that companies should be proactive and reach out to each employee individually to check on their mental health. Group discussions were suggested to support access and use of the available resources. Another example was providing EAPs outside of their own programs to address confidentiality concerns and increase employees’ sense of belonging and support. Another example was fostering a recovery-friendly workplace culture to educate employees of the health risks of excessive alcohol consumption and to raise their awareness of available resources and assistance for those in need.

We used a socio-ecological model³⁵ to determine the levels of influence of the recommended actions from both targeted search and rapid review of reviews. [Table 4](#) shows examples of alcohol misuse interventions and recommendations by all socio-ecological levels of influence. At the individual level, examples were internet-based brief interventions¹⁹ and personalized alcohol consumption feedback. The interpersonal-level interventions included family activities and awareness campaigns. The organizational-level interventions involved health promotion programs on alcohol cessation.^{16,19} Examples of interventions at the community and policy levels were safe environments for sharing lived experiences and paid leave for treatment, respectively.

Table 4. Summary of findings from each source of information according to the level of influence in the socio-ecological models.^{a, b}

Socio-ecological Levels of Influence Target of Intervention	Rapid Review of Reviews ^c	Brief, Targeted Search
Individual Target: working-from-home employee(s) with problematic alcohol use.	Treatment options Internet-based brief interventions Personalized alcohol consumption feedback	Technologies or platforms providing emotional support, resources for development of health habits, remote testing, tracking of alcohol consumption, online journaling, therapy and recovery coaching Meetings with a human resource representative and medical professional to outline a recovery plan which may involve job change within the company or leave of absence for alcohol treatment
Interpersonal Target: relationships between peers and working-from-home employee(s) with problematic alcohol use.	None	Campaigns to raise awareness, reduce stigma and help workers experiencing addiction or caring for those who have an addiction Forums and discussions to foster social connections Activities with and for workers' families
Organizational Target: infrastructure and practices to support working-from-home employee(s) with problematic alcohol use.	Health promotion programs on alcohol cessation	Employee assistance programs (EAPs) EAPs provided outside their own programs to address confidentiality concerns HR practitioners guiding those in need to appropriate resources and assistance Access to digital providers for medication-assisted treatment Toolkits for employers to better understand how substance abuse affects organizations and employees Drugs and alcohol in the workplace training to ensure information on the effects, health risks, and organization consequences of inappropriate substance use are provided to employees Reminders on supports and resources provided through the organization about mental health, healthy, habits, and steps to tackle substance use
Community Target: community environment, which may involve workplace culture.	None	Promotion of workplace culture that is safe for people in substance recovery to share their stories Work culture disconnected with the idea of rewarding hard work with alcohol ('virtual happy hours') Q&A sessions with CEO and employees in recovery sharing their lived experiences Staff training so that employees act as recover counselors for their peers Regular check-ins to recognize signs of employees under the alcohol influence

Socio-ecological Levels of Influence	Rapid Review of Reviews ^c	Brief, Targeted Search
Target of Intervention		
Policy Target: formal policies and programs related to alcohol misuse.	None	Remind staff of substance misuse policies and consequences in place. Paid-leave and work flexibility Leave of absence for treatment Month-long sabbatical 100% coverage for all telebehavioural visits and mental health services

^a All workplace-led interventions or recommendations for action were presented by peer-reviewed and practice-based literature as an initiative to be provided by the workplace. The level of influence is about the target for promoting change in relation to alcohol misuse.

^b No alcohol use-related interventions were found in the environmental scan.

^c Rapid review of reviews findings were more related to recommendations for interventions.

A Call for Workplace-led Strategies to Address Alcohol Misuse

The lack of workplace-led interventions addressing alcohol misuse among WFH employees during the pandemic was an opportunity lost but remains a timely and important contemporary workplace health priority, as WFH in either full-time or hybrid models persist (particularly for white-collar industries). With the latest WHO statement that no amount of alcohol drinking is safe,^{36,37} the time to act is now.

Alcohol use is influenced by many gender-related factors, including alcohol marketing tactics, gender roles, attitudes, and expectations.⁹ Consequently, alcohol-related harms are gender-related and include stigma, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence. Workplace-led interventions cannot be “one size fits all” and must consider gender-related factors of employees to improve effectiveness and reduce unintended harms. Workplaces themselves have unique structures, culture and norms that need to be acknowledged when designing and implementing interventions to reduce alcohol-related harms.³⁸ Occupation specific design for health promotion should also be considered, knowing that employees in different occupations have differing health risks, structural enablers and barriers and stressors. A critical gap is the absence of interventions recognizing and addressing the intersection of people’s multiple social identities – and the intersections of those identities with the social determinants of health – in peoples’ lives. This myriad of intersectionalities can widen inequities and create oppression and marginalization among WFH employees living with problematic alcohol use depending on the other forces and factors in their lives. Thus, there needs to be an understanding of these various influences and tailored interventions for those workers facing multiple stressors due to their intersecting identities (e.g., single mothers working multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet). Further research, paired with co-designed approaches bringing together employees, employers, and public health practitioners, are required to create tailored interventions addressing the changing, complex factors that drive alcohol misuse.

During the pandemic, employers made considerable progress in adopting and implementing some actions to promote employees’ health beyond the realm of occupational health and safety. However, it is time for organizations to go further to better protect workers and their families from alcohol-related harms. We urge companies and public health practitioners to co-design, implement, and advocate for changing the workplace culture of punishing and shaming those who are struggling with their alcohol use or addiction. Drinking culture in workplaces has to end: virtual happy hours have the harmful effect of

connecting drinking with reward, socialization, and happiness. Instead, support at the individual, interpersonal, community, and organizational level should be available. These actions will help to support a healthy and supportive workplace culture, change the social nature of alcohol use in the workplace, and provide individual-level and tailored support for employees based upon key sociodemographic factors such as gender and occupation. We firmly believe that organizations willing to implement supportive actions will find allies in the public health sector.

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