



10% In Manhattan, New York's iconic business district, the buildings are currently empty! Less than 10% of employees worked at their desk in September.

THE ECONOMIST

IS THE OFFICE FINISHED?

Est-ce la fin du travail au bureau ?

Le télétravail était, auparavant, une exception réservée à quelques cas particuliers. Depuis le confinement, il est devenu une pratique commune dans le secteur tertiaire. Si certains se réjouissent de travailler depuis chez eux pour éviter les transports en commun, d'autres se languissent de la camaraderie entre collègues...

Around the world workers, bosses, landlords and governments are trying to work out if the office is obsolete—and are coming to radically different conclusions. Some 84% of French office workers are back at their desks, but less than 40% of British ones are.

2. Jack Dorsey, the head of Twitter, says the company's staff can work from home "forever" but Reed Hastings, the founder of Netflix, says home-working is "a pure negative".

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

3. The pandemic has revealed just how many offices were being run as relics of the 20th century. Two hundred years ago steam power brought workers to factories. As corporate giants emerged in the late 19th century, staff were needed to administer them. All this required workers to be close together and created the pattern of people commuting by car or train in order to meet in a central office.

4. This system always had glaring shortcomings, some of which have become worse over time. Most people hate the hassle and expense of commuting, which eats up over four hours a week for the average American worker. Some

dislike the noise and formality of offices, or suffer from discrimination within them. Office-bound workers find it harder to look after their children, a growing issue as more families have two working parents.

"OPTIONAL OFFICE"

5. You might think that new technologies would have shaken up this unsatisfactory status quo. Yet inertia has allowed the office to escape serious disruption. Before covid-19 struck, for example, flexible-office companies had a tiny global market share of under 5%.

6. Covid-19 has upended all this. Before the pandemic only 3% of Americans worked from home regularly; now a huge number have tried it.

7. How much of this change will stick when a vaccine arrives? The best available guide is from countries where the virus is under control. There the picture is of an "optional office",



which people attend, but less frequently. In Germany, for example, 74% of office workers now go to their place of work, but only half of them are there five days a week.

8. For governments the temptation is to turn the clock back to limit the economic damage, from the collapse of city-centre cafés to the \$16bn budget shortfall that New York's subway system faces. Britain's government has tried to cajole workers back to the office. But rather than resist technological change, it is far better to anticipate its consequences. ●

1. **landlord** propriétaire / **to work out** déterminer / **desk** bureau (meuble).

2. **head** président / **staff** personnel, employés / **founder** fondateur, créateur.

3. **to run, ran, run** gérer / **steam** vapeur / **power** ici, énergie / **to bring, brought, brought** entraîner / **factory** usine / **corporate** ici, industriel / **late** (à la) fin (de) / **to require** exiger, nécessiter / **pattern** schéma, phénomène / **to commute** faire la navette (entre domicile et lieu de travail) / **in order to** afin de.

4. **glaring** flagrant / **shortcoming** défaut / **hassle** ennuis, problèmes / **average** moyen, lambda /

within au sein de, dans / **to bind, bound, bound** attacher, lier (ici, **office-bound workers** employés obligés de travailler au bureau) / **issue** problème, difficulté.

5. **to shake, shook, shaken up** secouer, révolutionner / **to allow** permettre / **disruption** perturbation / **to strike, struck, struck** frapper, arriver / **tiny** minuscule, infime / **global** mondial / **share** part.

6. **to upend** bouleverser / **huge** considérable.

7. **to stick, stuck, stuck** coller; ici, rester, perdurer / **available** disponible, existant /

to attend ici, aller à, se rendre.

8. **to turn the clock back** revenir en arrière / **damage (inv.)** dommages / **to collapse** s'effondrer; ici, faire faillite / **bn** = billion milliard / **shortfall** déficit / **subway** métro / **to cajole** amadouer (ici, pour les faire revenir).