



ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONALS IN FAO



END-OF-2025 TELEWORKING SURVEY

ORGANIZED BY STAFF REPRESENTATIVE BODIES (SRBs)

In October 2025 the AP-in-FAO and the UGSS launched a survey on the application of the teleworking policy in FAO. The survey was open to all employees and overall 1017 respondents decided to participate on voluntary basis.

Since the current manual section and administrative circular only directly apply to staff members, the present document presents trends emerging from the responses of 725 staff (general service, international professional staff and NPOs). In particular:

- **The summary of numerical data is presented in [Annex A](#)**
- **The summary of written comments from respondents is presented in [Annex B](#)**

The overall findings from the survey indicate the following:

1. The application of the current policy emerges to be problematic both from a transparency and equitability perspective;
2. Major differences and discrepancies persist, depending on where the staff members are located and which type of teleworking is being requested;
3. Regular teleworking remains the biggest issue, whereby over 63% of respondents have reported problems in obtaining approval at divisional level (more details in Annex A).
4. Submission of teleworking requests (through TW agreements) remains to date cumbersome and paper-based, with still an urgent need for standardization and digitalization.

5. In some cases, colleagues have been discouraged to even initiate the teleworking request and decision-making by managers in some cases seems to be very arbitrary and not in line with the need to apply Organizational policies in an equitable manner.
6. In a number of cases, a clear and fair written justification for the rejection of TW requests is not being provided to staff members.
7. Certain categories of staff (example GS staff) seem to remain highly penalized by the current application of the policy, where their work is often deemed to be “not applicable for teleworking” without clear explanations.
8. The request for written justifications by staff members for different types of teleworking (excluding medical TW where medical certificates are needed) have often ignored the "Privacy First" principle, and staff have been obliged to disclose where staff do not have to disclose personal or intimate family details to non-medical managers. Justifications based on work-related reasons (such as ability to efficiently perform tasks from other locations) have often not been accepted. The resulting dataset about personal information which is stored in divisions/offices currently poses a serious challenge to staff data protection.
9. The application of the current policy has demonstrated so far to be unable to promote a much needed cultural change towards a modern, digital, flexible and fair workspace in FAO; several structural barriers still remain.

Meaningful (anonymous) quotes from respondents:

- ***“I only requested one because submitting requests is not encouraged.”***
- ***“We are conveyed that no teleworking is allowed and hence no request can be submitted.”***
- ***“0 official ones as discouraged by the supervisor.”***
- ***“I refrained from asking again when all my colleagues received rejections on a new TWA.”***
- ***“Regular TW will not be approved, I am told.”***
- ***“TW is unfortunately not allowed in AAA... only 10 days TWODS in summer.”***

Annex (A)

summary of teleworking survey data

The survey launched by the SRBs was open to all FAO employees and overall more than 1000 colleagues responded.

The present annex only includes a summary of responses provided by staff members (general service staff, international professional staff and NPOs),

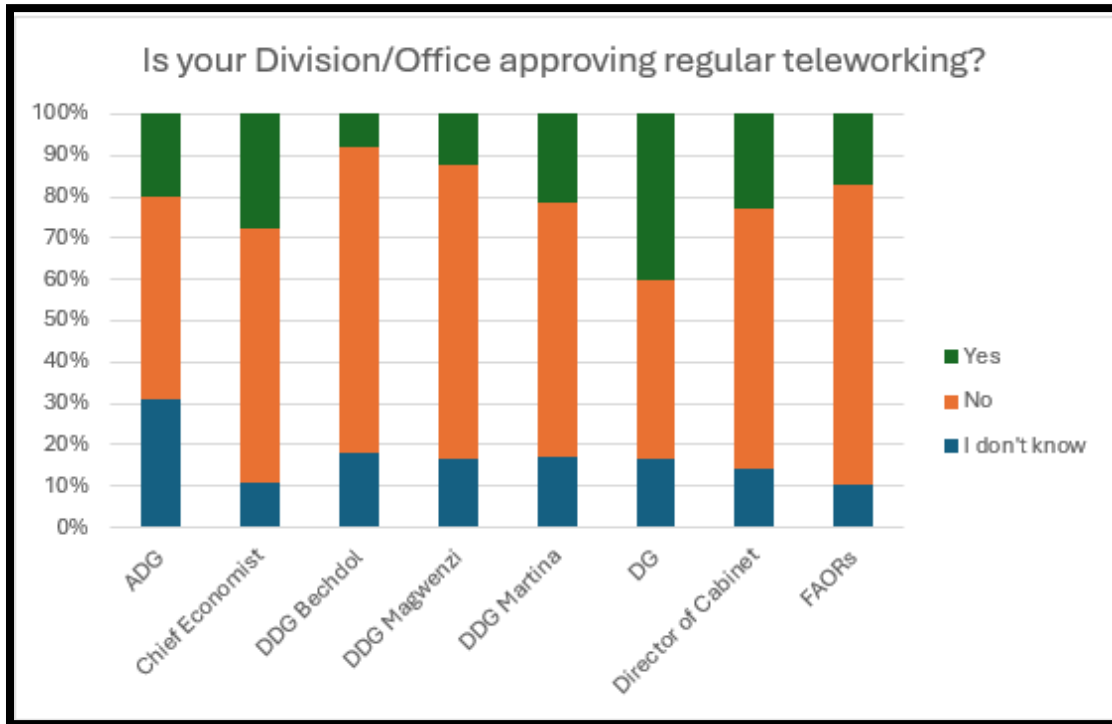
- **total respondents (staff and affiliated workforce): 1027**
- **total staff respondents: 725**

ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS OF STAFF RESPONDENTS (the first column refers to the organizational reporting line):

| Reporting line of respondents (staff only) | Count of reporting line | % of total |
|--|-------------------------|----------------|
| ADG (regional) | 110 | 15.2% |
| Chief Economist | 175 | 24.1% |
| DDG Bechdol | 101 | 13.9% |
| DDG Magwenzi | 145 | 20.0% |
| DDG Martina | 70 | 9.7% |
| DG | 30 | 4.1% |
| Director of Cabinet | 35 | 4.8% |
| FAORs | 59 | 8.1% |
| Grand Total | 725 | 100.00% |

REGULAR TELEWORKING (APPROVAL AT DIVISIONAL LEVEL):

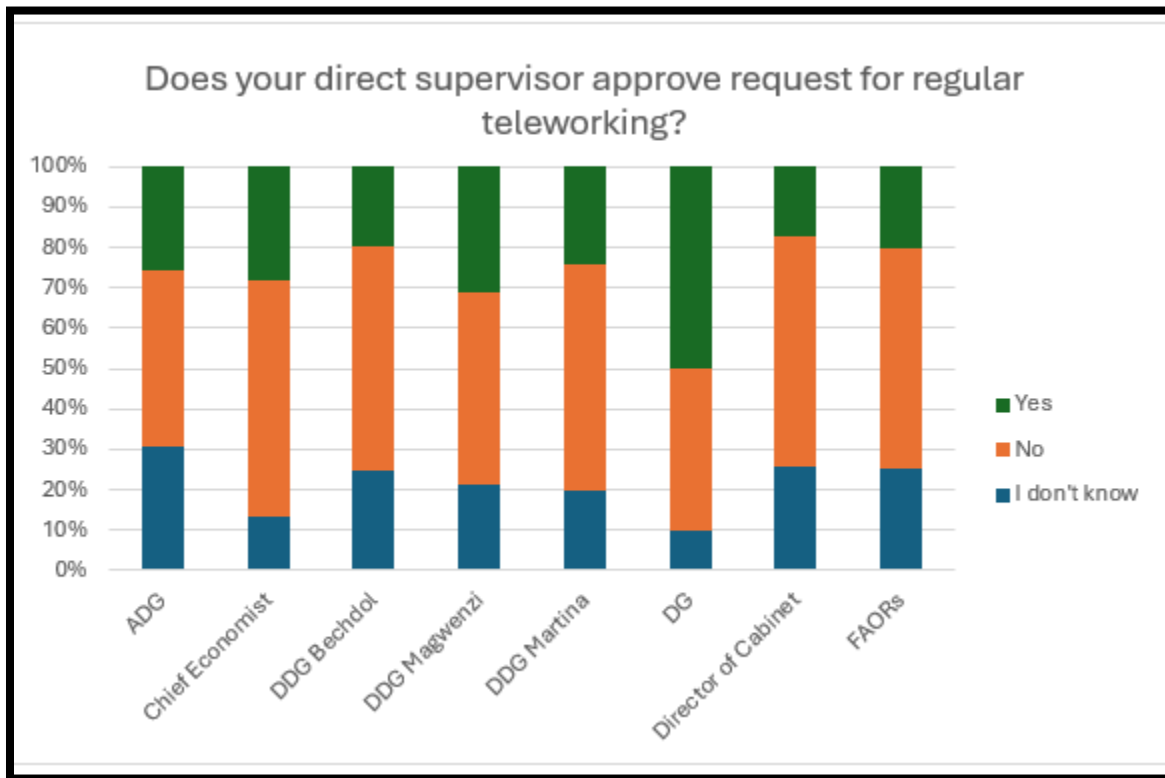
- over 63% of respondents confirmed that they are **not** receiving divisional approval for regular teleworking



| Division/Office approving regular teleworking | I don't know | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|---|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| ADG | 34 | 54 | 22 | 110 |
| Chief Economist | 19 | 108 | 48 | 175 |
| DDG Bechdol | 18 | 75 | 8 | 101 |
| DDG Magwenzi | 24 | 103 | 18 | 145 |
| DDG Martina | 12 | 43 | 15 | 70 |
| DG | 5 | 13 | 12 | 30 |
| Director of Cabinet | 5 | 22 | 8 | 35 |
| FAORs | 6 | 43 | 10 | 59 |
| Grand Total | 123 | 461 | 141 | 725 |

REGULAR TELEWORKING (APPROVAL BY SUPERVISOR):

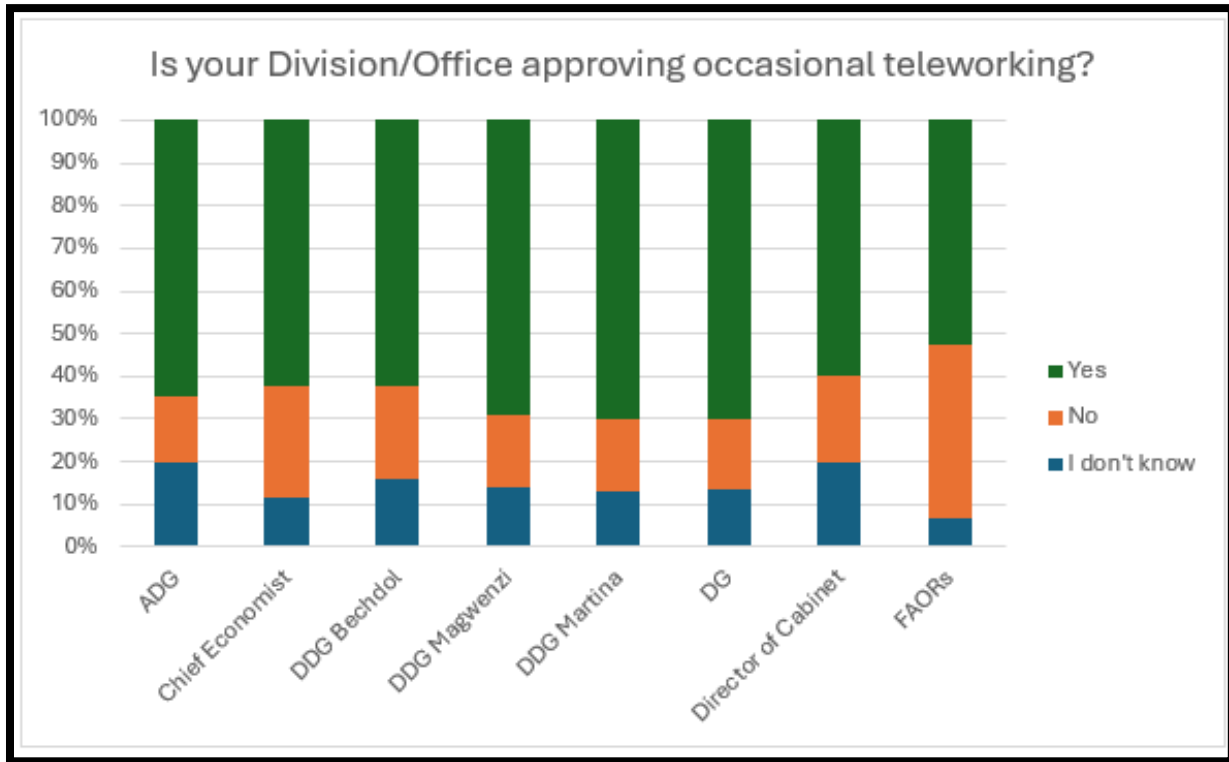
- over 52% of respondents confirmed that they are **not** receiving SUPERVISOR approval for regular teleworking



| Direct Supervisor approving regular teleworking | I don't know | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|---|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| ADG | 34 | 48 | 28 | 110 |
| Chief Economist | 23 | 103 | 49 | 175 |
| DDG Bechdol | 25 | 56 | 20 | 101 |
| DDG Magwenzi | 31 | 69 | 45 | 145 |
| DDG Martina | 14 | 39 | 17 | 70 |
| DG | 3 | 12 | 15 | 30 |
| Director of Cabinet | 9 | 20 | 6 | 35 |
| FAORs | 15 | 32 | 12 | 59 |
| Grand Total | 154 | 379 | 192 | 725 |

OCCASIONAL TELEWORKING (APPROVAL AT DIVISIONAL LEVEL):

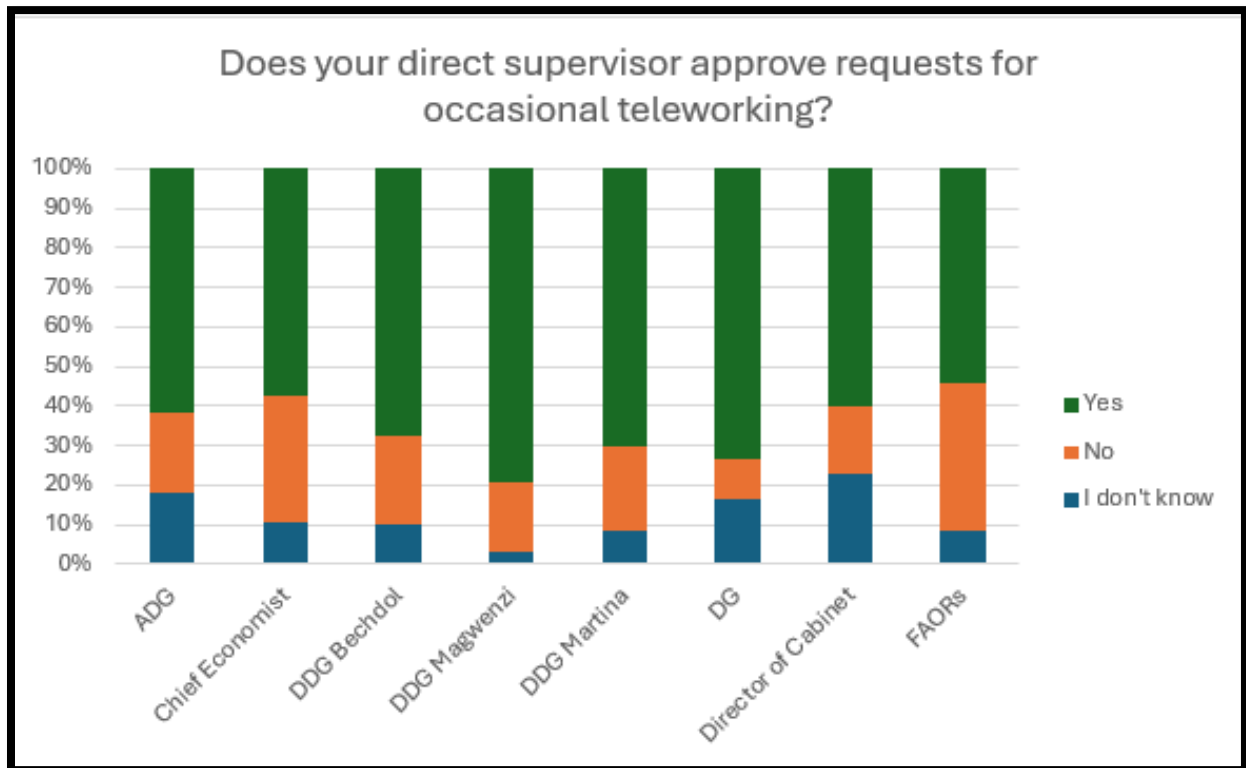
- over 21% of respondents confirmed that they are **not** receiving divisional approval for occasional teleworking



| Division/Office approving occasional teleworking | I don't know | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|--|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| ADG | 22 | 17 | 71 | 110 |
| Chief Economist | 20 | 46 | 109 | 175 |
| DDG Bechdol | 16 | 22 | 63 | 101 |
| DDG Magwenzi | 20 | 25 | 100 | 145 |
| DDG Martina | 9 | 12 | 49 | 70 |
| DG | 4 | 5 | 21 | 30 |
| Director of Cabinet | 7 | 7 | 21 | 35 |
| FAORs | 4 | 24 | 31 | 59 |
| Grand Total | 102 | 158 | 465 | 725 |

OCCASIONAL TELEWORKING (APPROVAL BY SUPERVISOR):

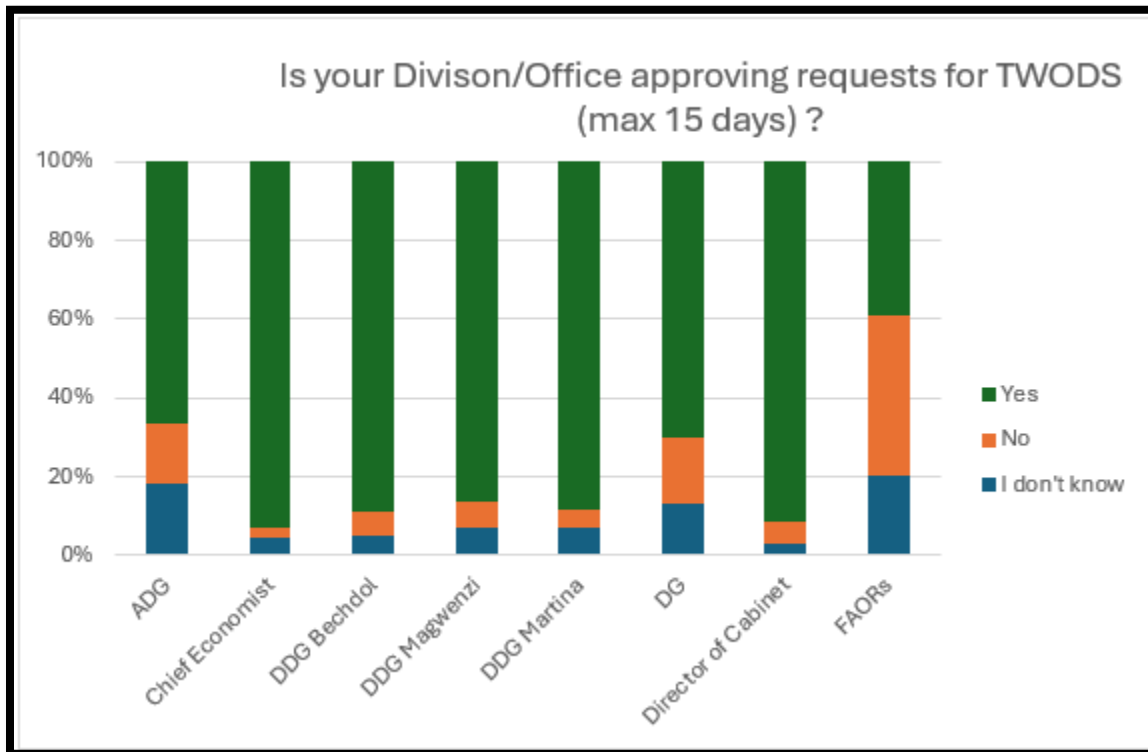
- over 23% of respondents confirmed that they are **not** receiving SUPERVISOR approval for occasional teleworking



| Direct Supervisor approving occasional teleworking | I don't know | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|--|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| ADG | 20 | 22 | 68 | 110 |
| Chief Economist | 19 | 56 | 100 | 175 |
| DDG Bechdol | 10 | 23 | 68 | 101 |
| DDG Magwenzi | 5 | 25 | 115 | 145 |
| DDG Martina | 6 | 15 | 49 | 70 |
| DG | 5 | 3 | 22 | 30 |
| Director of Cabinet | 8 | 6 | 21 | 35 |
| FAORs | 5 | 22 | 32 | 59 |
| Grand Total | 78 | 172 | 475 | 725 |

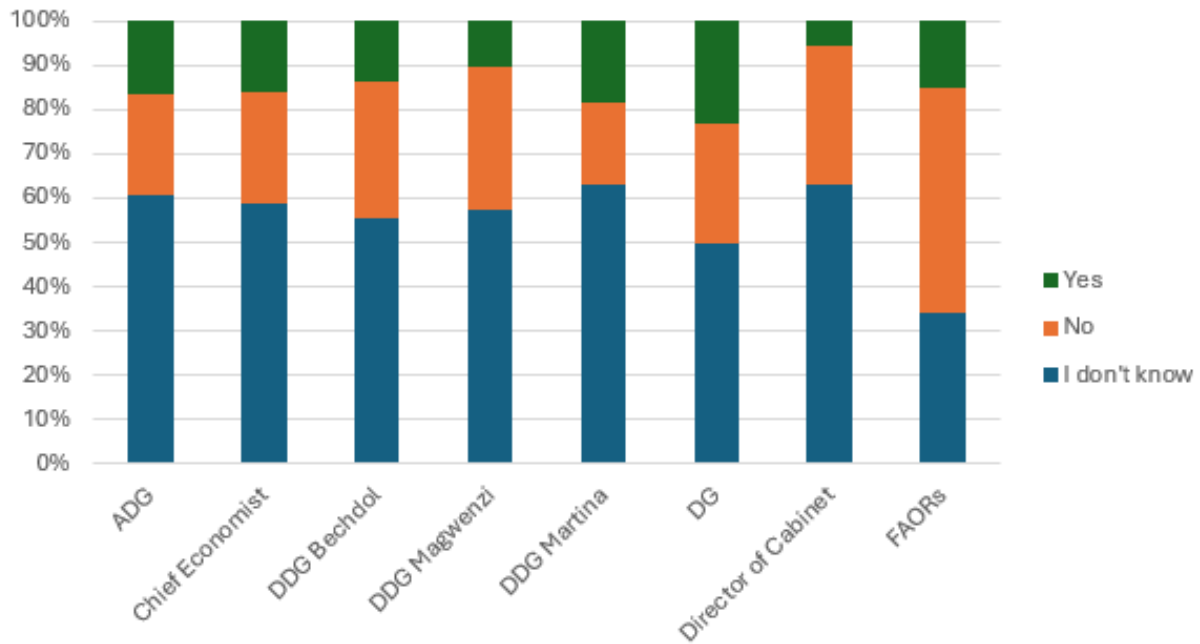
OTHER TYPES OF TELEWORKING (TWODS AND EXCEPTIONAL LONG TERM)

- Most respondents (over 80%) have been able to do TWODS (15 days)
- Most respondents (over 56%) do not have info about exceptional long term teleworking; amongst the remaining ones 209 colleagues (out of 725 respondents) have been denied this possibility.



| Division/Office approving TWODS (max 15 days) | I don't know | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|---|--------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| ADG | 20 | 17 | 73 | 110 |
| Chief Economist | 8 | 4 | 163 | 175 |
| DDG Bechdol | 5 | 6 | 90 | 101 |
| DDG Magwenzi | 10 | 10 | 125 | 145 |
| DDG Martina | 5 | 3 | 62 | 70 |
| DG | 4 | 5 | 21 | 30 |
| Director of Cabinet | 1 | 2 | 32 | 35 |
| FAORs | 12 | 24 | 23 | 59 |
| Grand Total | 65 | 71 | 589 | 725 |

Is your Division/Office approving exceptional teleworking (long term)?



| Division approving exceptional TW (long-term) | I don't know | No | Yes | Grand Total |
|---|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| ADG | 67 | 25 | 18 | 110 |
| Chief Economist | 103 | 44 | 28 | 175 |
| DDG Bechdol | 56 | 31 | 14 | 101 |
| DDG Magwenzi | 83 | 47 | 15 | 145 |
| DDG Martina | 44 | 13 | 13 | 70 |
| DG | 15 | 8 | 7 | 30 |
| Director of Cabinet | 22 | 11 | 2 | 35 |
| FAORs | 20 | 30 | 9 | 59 |
| Grand Total | 410 | 209 | 106 | 725 |

Annex (B)

summary of written feedback from respondents

| Type of Teleworking | Status According to Replies from respondents |
|-------------------------|--|
| Occasional TW | Generally "easier" but described as cumbersome or discouraged. |
| Regular TW | Described as "impossible," "out of the question," or "seen as an exception." |
| TW Outside Duty Station | Most likely to be approved, often limited to specific summer periods. |
| Medical/Family TW | The only consistent way to get approval in some divisions and offices, though, in some cases requires invasive disclosure. |

Comments from the respondents:

Many colleagues indicated in the survey that "*it is difficult, very difficult, or it is not possible*" to access teleworking.

Based on their responses, a few major barriers could be identified by the SRBs:

1. The primary barrier to teleworking is a **lack of transparency and inconsistent management**, leading to rules being applied arbitrarily across divisions and offices. While official policy may suggest teleworking is available, staff report that approvals often depend on the "mood of the approver" or belonging to a "circle of favorites." This has created a culture of distrust and hostility where supervisors actively discourage staff from even submitting requests to avoid certain rejection. For example, some employees noted that while their direct supervisors approved their requests, the Director's office would ultimately block them, leading to the advice that staff should simply take annual leave rather than try to telework.
2. The second major barrier is the **narrow and rigid interpretation of "eligible" work**, which *de facto* excludes many staff members, particularly General Service (GS) staff. Management appears to rigidly apply criteria that allow telework only for "time-bound, specific deliverables" and not for "routine work," even though that work can be done perfectly well from home.
3. The third major obstacle is the **requirement for invasive justifications** that many feel violate their right to privacy. To secure approval, staff are often forced to disclose sensitive medical or family details, as general work-life balance is not considered a valid reason. Additionally, the process is burdened by heavy micro-management, such as requiring staff to provide highly detailed task lists and specific deadlines that differ from their routine work. Another example of restrictions applies when the request for occasional telework is placed just a few weeks in advance, which is often ignored or rejected because it wasn't planned months in advance, effectively making the mechanism useless in some cases.

Overall the staff replies suggest a significant gap between official policy, which staff believe can apply to TW, and the actual practice of Management. Staff feel that the Organization is lagging behind in the application of TW, and this option is more difficult than in other UN agencies.