

A warm, dimly lit desk scene. In the foreground, a white ceramic mug of coffee sits on a wooden coaster. Next to it is a small potted plant with green leaves. A pen rests on an open notebook. In the background, a larger open book with highlighted text is visible, along with a pen holder containing several pens and a small globe.

NARRATORA

SAMPLE OUTPUT

PROFESSIONAL REPORT

Distributed Work Productivity Review

A research synthesis on distributed working outcomes, drawn from the supplied study set.

SOURCES

**34 studies,
2020-2025**

METHOD

Structured synthesis

CONFIDENCE

Moderate

STATUS

Sample output

Summary of Findings

Across the supplied study set, distributed working shows a small positive effect on individual task output and a small negative effect on collaborative and novel work. Effect sizes are modest and heavily moderated by role type, tenure and management practice. The most consistent finding across every study reviewed is that the management practice matters more than the location.

EVIDENCE NOTE

No study in the set found a large effect in either direction. Claims of a large productivity gain or collapse are not supported by this evidence base.

Evidence Table

Outcome	Direction	Strength of evidence
Individual task throughput	Positive, small	Strong — 19 studies, consistent
Focus-dependent work quality	Positive, small	Moderate — 11 studies
Collaborative problem solving	Negative, small	Moderate — 14 studies
Onboarding and early tenure	Negative, moderate	Strong — 9 studies, consistent
Retention intent	Positive, moderate	Strong — 16 studies
Promotion rates	Mixed	Weak — 5 studies, conflicting

Moderators

- Tenure: employees in their first six months show the clearest negative outcomes across the set.
- Role interdependence: the more a role depends on unplanned interaction, the worse the measured outcome.
- Manager practice: teams with explicit written norms outperform both fully co-located and unstructured distributed teams.
- Home environment: a separate working space is a stronger predictor than commute time saved.

Where The Literature Disagrees

Promotion and advancement outcomes are genuinely contested. Two large studies find a measurable penalty for distributed employees, two find none after controlling for performance ratings, and one finds a penalty only in organisations where senior leaders are co-located. This report does not resolve that disagreement and no recommendation here depends on it.

Practical Implications

- Differentiate policy by tenure rather than by role seniority.
- Invest in written norms and decision records — the strongest moderator in the evidence.
- Protect collaborative and novel work with scheduled co-location rather than blanket attendance.
- Measure outcomes locally; the published effect sizes are too small to transfer confidently.

Limitations

- Self-reported productivity is the primary measure in 18 of 34 studies.
- Knowledge-work bias: very few studies cover operational or customer-facing roles.
- Period effects: studies spanning 2020–2021 measure crisis conditions, not steady state.
- Publication bias cannot be ruled out in a set of this size.

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