

Read the article and answer the questions.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the world's largest cities had thousands of workers commuting from their homes to office towers every day. Now many large companies have decided that it is highly unlikely that all their workers will permanently return to office work. Company executives were forced by the crisis to figure out how to function effectively with workers operating from home — and realized surprisingly that it was not all bad.



“Is office work necessary?” said an executive of a large company, which has several thousand employees. “I’m thinking very seriously about it. In the future, are people going to want to crowd into offices?”. Many companies are studying jobs that would be most adaptable to working remotely and many employees could be required to turn up in the office less frequently. In fact, some major technology companies, including Twitter and Google, have extended work-from-home policies to the end of the year and beyond, raising the idea that many workers may never return to the office.

However, there are a number of factors to consider. For instance, the number of workers who actually prefer to be in an office because of the need for social interaction is an unknown factor. “The absence of face-to-face communication is not sustainable,” John Malkovich, a property developer said. “Can you pay the bills from home? Yes. But can you work as a team from home? That could be challenging.” Moreover, cities might start to die. Many cities have been built around the flow of people to and from offices, through subways, buses and rail systems and past the cafes, restaurants, bars, grocery stores and shops that depend on commuters for their survival.



On the other hand, many people feel liberated working from home. New technologies have made it unexpectedly easy. Workers are free from repetitive routines that stifled their creativity. They save the money they once spent commuting. A reader of the Financial Times commented, “Change is uncomfortable, but with change comes opportunity. We lessen the need for costly and carbon generating travel and costly commercial office space.”

In the words of a leading company's chief executive, “The world is going to be different when we come out of lockdown, and our habits will change. It really took the quarantine and self-isolation, to accelerate those trends.”

1. What are large companies thinking about?

2. Why might companies prefer people to work in the office?

3. What might happen to cities if most people work from home?

4. What do you think are the main benefits of working at home?

5. Do you think you could work at home forever? Explain.

Possible Answers

1 They are thinking about the jobs that are most adaptable to working remotely.
(or) They are thinking about the kinds of jobs that can be become work-from-home jobs.

2 Companies might worry that workers are not working as part of a team.

3 Cities might have problems because fewer people would use the transportation systems and fewer people would use cafes and restaurants etc. Cities might start to die.

4 Workers might be happier and more creative. Their lives would be more flexible. Workers and companies would save money. Workers would not need to spend money on transportation. Companies would not need to spend money on offices.

5 Answers will vary.