

Continue hybrid work model

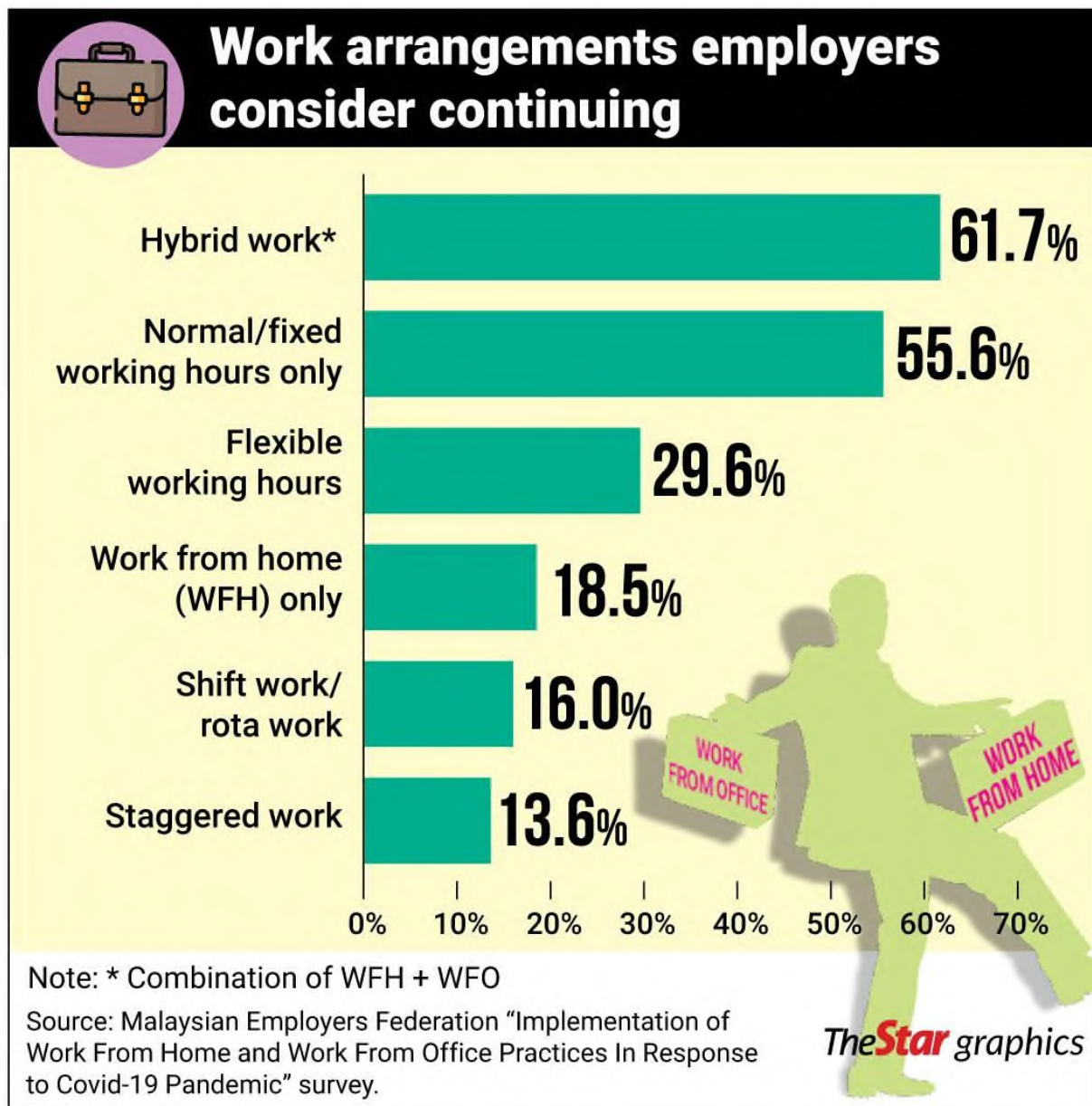
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NATION

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PETALING JAYA: A hybrid model of on-site and remote working should be continued in light of the fast-spreading Omicron variant of Covid-19, says the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

The MEF is urging employers not to rush in asking their employees to return to the workplace full-time as it may increase the risk of infection.



“However feasible it is (for them), we advise employers to implement the hybrid approach so as to reduce risks of infection.

“Working from home (WFH) should be considered as a prevention strategy to protect workers from being infected with Omicron.

“Clear instructions on, and arrangement of, WFH should be laid out by organisations in order to reduce any confusion and miscommunication,” said MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman.

As for organisations that are unable to implement WFH, he said employers should look into rearranging the workplace to allow sufficient physical distancing between workers.

Limiting employee capacity within the workplace, too, should be a policy.

Noting that it can be a challenge for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to implement WFH arrangements with their limited workforce and resources, SME Association of Malaysia national president Ding Hong Sing said they will continue to assess the situation and plan accordingly.

“It will be tough to go back to full WFH because we need the staff on-site. Some SMEs have just five or six full-time employees,” he said.

However, there are some companies that have allowed certain personnel to work from home or come into the office on alternate days to reduce possible spread of the virus, he added.

Covid-19 Omicron variant cases have increased since it was first detected in the country, and was at 62 cases as of Dec 25, 2021.

In a survey the MEF conducted to gauge how people are coping with the WFH model, it found that some of the biggest benefits the model gave employers include saving up electricity and utility costs (78.5%) and accelerating their adoption of technology at work (68.5%).

For employees, 89.4% of them said they saved up on commuting expenses and 88.6% of them said they experienced less commuting stress.

About 93.6% of the 203 respondent companies implemented a combination of WFH together with work from office arrangements in response to the pandemic.

Called the “Implementation of Work From Home and Work From Office Practices In Response to Covid-19 Pandemic”, the survey held from June 9 to Aug 6 last year also had about 61.7% of companies indicating that they would continue to implement this hybrid work arrangement, taking the benefits employers and employees have experienced into account.

Syed Hussain, however, said there are challenges that came with implementing WFH, such as losing out on the team building, interaction and discussion aspects of the job.

“Office interactions help to build a person intellectually. Therefore, organisations implementing WFH need to put in place measures to build teamwork and address mental health, especially for those who are on a regular WFH basis,” he said.

On Friday, the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned that a Covid “tsunami” is threatening to overwhelm healthcare systems, as record surges fuelled by the Omicron variant dampened New Year celebrations around the world once again.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the more transmissible Omicron, circulating at the same time as Delta, is leading to a tsunami of cases.