

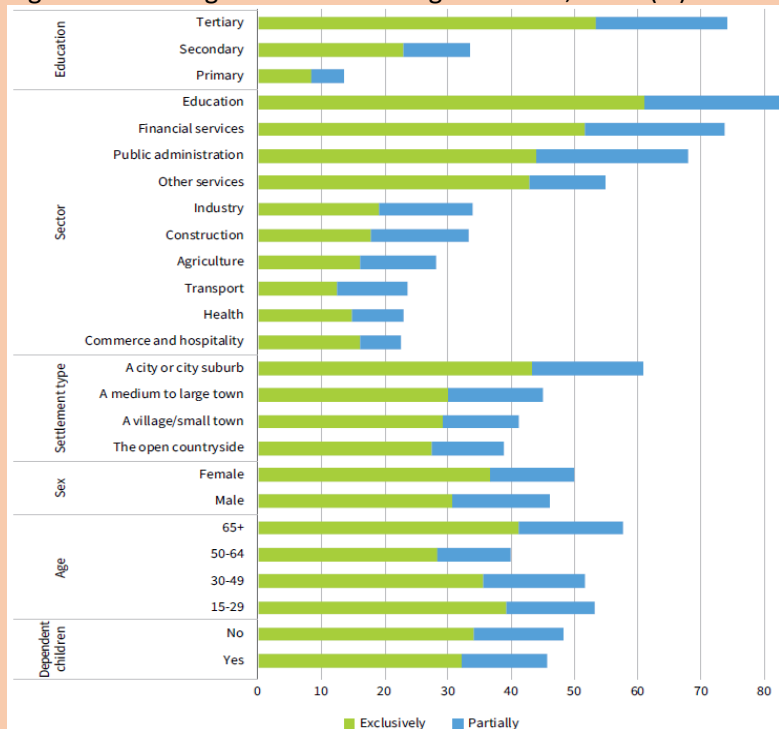


## Teleworking and Problem of Illectronism during COVID-19 pandemic, Some Good Practices from France

### Teleworking- recent developments in Europe

In Europe teleworking was slowly increasing in the 10 years before the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Eurostat, in 2019 only 5.4% of employed worked from home in the EU-27, this number was almost unchanged since 2009. Teleworking has rapidly increased in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. Public health measures, constant lockdowns highly encouraged switching working modes. Teleworking became the customary mode of working for many employees with previously limited or no experience of working in this way. According to Eurofound's 2020 survey, more than one out of three inquired employees worked only from home. The e-survey shows that in July nearly half of the respondents classified as 'employee' (48%) worked at home at least some of the time during the COVID-pandemic. Of these, over a third (34%) reported working exclusively from home. Table 1 and Figure 1 show the recent developments in Europe.

Figure 1. Working from home during COVID-19, EU 27(%)



Source: Eurofound, Living, Working and COVID 19, 2020

### Teleworking in France

France employs 2 forms of teleworking: (1) Regular teleworking makes it possible to have a regular schedule. (2) Occasional teleworking, it is possible in exceptional circumstances (Covid-19 epidemic, etc.) (service public.fr, 2020).

**Before the pandemic:** 15.7% of workers worked occasionally from their home and 7% in the usual way. Teleworkers were mostly executives (61%) and more numerous in the IT and telecommunications professions. Before the pandemic, regular teleworking was still a minority practice even among executives (3%). During the pandemic, the process has massively accelerated. Teleworking has ensured work continuity while protecting workers against the epidemic. (France attack, 2021).

**Recent Developments:** A framework agreement relating to the implementation of telework in the three public services signed on July 13, 2021 sets out the terms and conditions for the implementation of telework in the various administrative services. It is based on certain principles: volunteering (written request from the agent and written authorization from the employer), alternation between work on site and teleworking (maximum 3 days per week for a full-time agent, except in specific situations), the use of digital tools and the reversibility of teleworking by the employer or the agent concerned. The agreement aims to facilitate and improve the use of telework for all civil servants by considering this practice as one mode of organization (among others) to accomplish public service missions. The agreement allows from the 1st of September 2021, public officials, at their request and authorization of their employer, telework 3 days a week (maximum) for full time (service public.fr, 2021).

Table 1. Proportion of employees by location of paid work during COVID-19 pandemic, EU27 (%)

Location of work during COVID pandemic	% of employees	Weekly hours worked	Note
Home only	33.7	38.9	
Variou: home, employer's premises and elsewhere	14.2	41.2	(of which 19.3 hours at home)
Employer's premises or other locations outside home only	52.1	40.4	
All employees	100.0	40.0	

Note: Weekly hours are capped at 100.

Sources: Eurofound, Living, Working and COVID 19, 2020



## Problem of Illectronism in France

Teleworking put pressure on the middle aged and aged seniors (+55), who were not comfortable to work remotely. The “digital divide”, which refers to the disparities in access to information technologies, and to the Internet in particular, appeared more visible. Illectronism is creating a gulf between the people who are adapting to new digital technology-related practices and those who remain on the side-lines. People affected by illectronism are quite representative of the French population:

- Two-thirds of them are working people;
- Men and women are equally affected;
- A third of them are aged between 50 and 64 and 21% are digital natives (under 35 years old);

Nearly 30% live in major urban centres (with at least 100,000 inhabitants – outside Greater Paris) and a quarter of them live in rural municipalities (France attack, 2021).

The lack of media literacy is more often among seniors. According to the Digital Barometer 2018, 40% of people aged 70 and over do not use the internet (the figure is decreasing over time: in 2015, they were 62%). Almost half of those without a cell phone are retirees. The rate of smartphone equipment drops sharply from the 60-69 age group, and the gap with the over 70 category remains significant (pourbienvieillir, 2020). According to INSEE 2019 study, one in two people over 75 do not have Internet access from their home (53%), while only 2% of 15–29-year-olds are not equipped (Insee, 2019). However, age should not be seen as a factor that can justify a numerical exclusion. The factors are often psychological and motivational: lack of self-confidence, lack of interest/curiosity, or even distrust of digital technology. The motivation for training is low: only 11% of non-Internet users would like to take training to improve their digital skills (pourbienvieillir, 2020). According to the CSA research institute, there is a double “digital divide” among seniors. At the national level, there is the first divide in terms of equipment (21% of the elderly still do not have the internet at their home) and a second, concerning usability (only 54% know how to watch videos on the internet, only 43% use social networks) (seniors-numeriques, 2018).

The situation slightly changed during the COVID19 pandemic which increased the usability of the internet and digital technologies. The 2021 digital barometer points out that a large part of the French population regularly uses digital tools. The number of daily Internet users (83% of those questioned) illustrates this observation. The oldest age groups also increased Internet consumption for administrative issues: + 13% among 60–69-year-old and single people and + 21% among those 70 and over. Besides, participation in social media has increased, the majority of 60–69 years old are now members of social networks (Arcep, 2021).

## Good Practice from France

To deal with the impact of the pandemic, digital tools were spontaneously and massively mobilized in France. Fighting against the digital exclusion of seniors, the so-called Digital Pass (introduced in 2019) remains maintained by the state. The objective of the digital pass is to meet the digital training needs of citizens - individuals, employees, job seekers, associations. Besides, the digital pass program promotes digital inclusion by facilitating Internet access for people who encounter difficulties in digital technology (Minister of the Economy, Finance and Recovery, 2019). In the 2019-2020 years the state has mobilized 22 million euros, 2 million digital passes have been deployed, 400 000 persons were supported in developing their digital skills (Societe Numerique, 2020).

There are legislative changes in regard to digital education in France. The Senate has recently (2021) adopted the bill on the fight against illectronism and for digital inclusion. The Senate states that 14 million French people are far from digital literacy and 40% of the population would not feel comfortable doing procedures online. This illectronism deepens the social and generational divide and becomes a major handicap in an increasingly digital society and in the face of increasing dematerialization of public services. The main objective of the bill is to ensure access to digital skills and digital technologies and thus fight against digital exclusion (Senat, 2021).

The containment during the COVID19 pandemic created the emergency need for accessibility to the internet and modern technologies. In this regard, one of the cities – Créteil’ s townhall has initiated the project [Dipbike](#), a funny three-wheeled vehicle that takes on board the tools of a small nomadic digital factory (3D printer, electronic kits, vinyl cutter, digital machine, etc.) to help people discover the creative and digital educational opportunities. Besides, the town hall organizes free of charge monthly appointments with those in need of accessing the internet, downloading, printing administrative forms, etc. This service is especially useful for seniors.

Aside from public administrations, business companies seek to promote inclusion and fight against digital illiteracy. Huawei launched a project of [DigiTruck](#). It offers digital training in a container converted into a mobile classroom. The DigiTruck has 20 workstations equipped with tablets, a local Wi-Fi network, a projector, and smartphones. It familiarizes users with digital devices, projectors, and online conference tools.

Though the crisis has accelerated the existing trends and has led to the emergence of other perspectives, the level of digital skills in France nevertheless remains similar to the European average.