



What people think,
feel and do

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The surge in working from home:

The Effects on Mental Wellbeing



Key findings

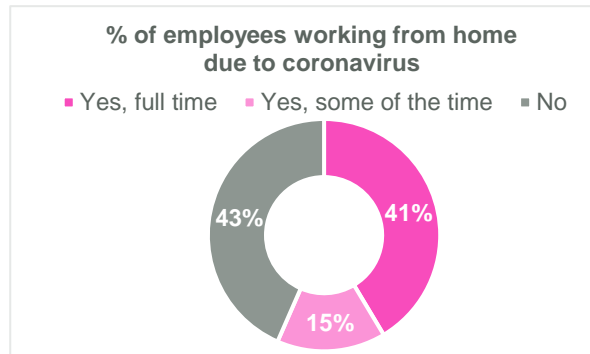
16 April 2020

Sample details: 1250 UK workers (results have been weighted to nationally representative criteria)

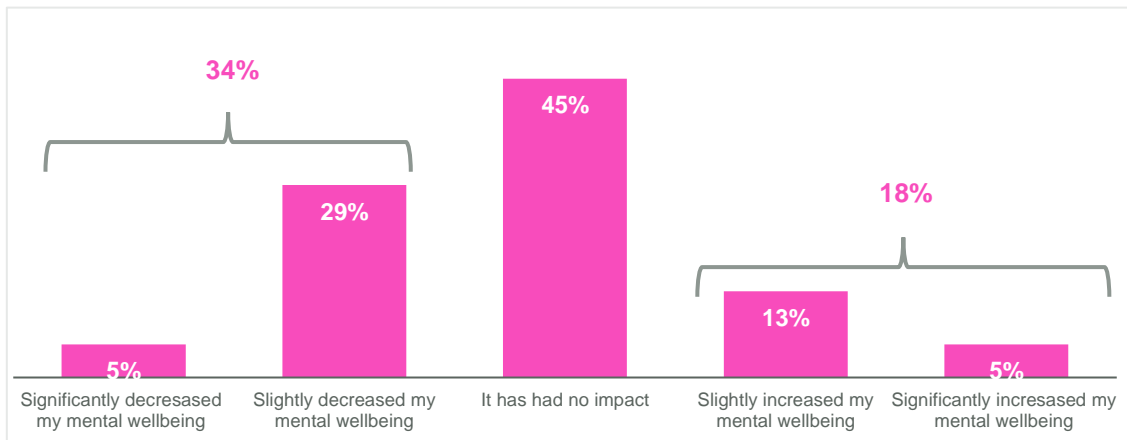
Fieldwork dates: 27th to 30th March 2020

Working from home and the impact on mental wellbeing

There has been a significant rise in the number of people working from home over the past weeks, in line with government guidelines on staying at home to stay safe. Our research found that over half (57%) of UK workers are working from home, either full time or some of the time, due to coronavirus. So what impact is this increased working from home having on employee wellbeing?



Our research found that over a third (34%) of those working from home feel that this has decreased their mental wellbeing. This decrease is even more stark amongst those who are also living alone (47%). However, almost one in five (18%) feel that working from home has improved their mental wellbeing. Almost half (45%) say working from home has not impacted their mental wellbeing.



There appear to be both advantages and disadvantages of working from home on mental health, we found that whilst half (51%) feel more relaxed now they are working from home, a similar number (46%) also feel isolated. And further to this, over a third (36%) are concerned about the long term impacts prolonged periods of working from home may have on their mental health.

“In some ways it’s both positively and negatively impacted my mental health. I feel somewhat more stressed and out of control and I worry about the long-term effects of home working on my mental health. However, for now, I’m enjoying not having to commute and having shorter working days.”

Employee, working from home full-time

Supporting employees whilst working from home

Those who are currently working from home feel more supported by their employers than those who are not working from home – 40% of those working from home feel more supported by their employer now than before the crisis began, versus just 22% of those not working from home. This support has a significant impact on mental wellbeing, with those who are working from home and feeling more supported by their employer having statistically higher mental wellbeing than those who feel less supported, as measured by the academically validated Warwick-Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale*.

Looking specifically at managers and how they are being supported in their role by employers, 34% feel fully supported by their employer, whilst 51% feel somewhat supported. However, there are still 15% of managers who feel that their employer is not supporting them. Managers are also slightly more likely to report that working from home has had a negative impact on their mental wellbeing than other employees (36% vs. 32%). A contributor to this could be working longer hours due to the merging of home and work life, as managers are more likely to find it hard to draw boundaries between work and rest when working from home (50% vs. 37%). This is certainly something for employers to be mindful of and look out for managers, as well as other employees during this time of increased working from home.

Parental pressures and working from home

Many parents who are working at home are also facing the added pressure of having their children in the house. We found that 41% of parents of under 18s feel that working from home has increased their stress levels (vs. 31% total).

To understand their experiences further, we specifically asked parents of under 18s how they were finding working from home with their children, over half (57%) reported finding it difficult to work with their children at home. The reasons for this difficulty focus around having to divide attention between work and childcare, the individual reasons are show below:

- There are more distractions now the children are at home – 41%
- It's hard to keep the children occupied during the day – 40%
- I struggle to balance work and caring responsibilities – 39%
- I am needing to home school my children as well as work – 32%
- I don't have a separate office space to work in – 30%
- My children are noisy – 26%

Despite these increased difficulties of working from home, parents of under 18s are slightly more likely to report that working from home has increased their mental wellbeing overall (22% vs. 18% total).

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If you would like to use the scale, please visit the University of Warwick website for more details:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

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