What is healthy home and hybrid working?

Considerations for employers and individuals

Jess Elmore, Hazel Klenk and Sam Avanzo Windett

December 2024

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Silver

We are a Living Wage Employer

About Learning and Work Institute

Learning and Work Institute is an independent policy and research organisation focused on lifelong learning and better work. Our vision is for a fair and prosperous society where learning and work enable everyone to realise their potential. We research what works, influence policy and develop new ideas to improve practice.

Stay informed. Be involved. Keep engaged. Sign up to become a Learning and Work Institute supporter: learningandwork.org.uk/supporters

Contents

Executive summary

Since the Covid-19 pandemic more people are working from home at least some of the time. Recent UK legislation has further increased employees' rights to apply for flexibilities including home and hybrid working. The shift towards home and hybrid working is part of a wider trend. Work is becoming more flexible, digital and automated but these changes in the labour market do not affect everyone equally.

When we consider what healthy work is, we need to build in consideration of these new trends to ensure that all workplaces are protective of health for all and ensure that underserved groups can benefit from increased flexibilities. This policy paper sets out the evidence on healthy home and hybrid workplaces, with particular consideration of the impact on underserved groups, and makes suggestions that employers and individuals can take forward so they can enjoy healthier working lives.

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) was commissioned by Health Equals to work towards policy change in the focus area of employment, income and health. This includes three research papers which summarise the evidence and make policy recommendations on three key areas.

- Paper one considers how best to support disabled people and those with health conditions to find sustainable employment.

- Paper two focuses on how local government can work with employers to support their residents to have healthier working lives.

- Paper three sets out considerations for employers and individuals for healthy home and hybrid working.

Dimensions of healthy homeworking

A healthy workplace is not just one where workers are physically safe, or one where workers' mental health is supported. The concept of healthy work cannot be separated from the concept of good work. Good work can be defined by:

- Terms of employment

- Pay and benefits

- Health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing

- Job design and the nature of work

- Social support and cohesion

- ▪ Work-life balance

- ▪ Voice and representation.

We use these dimensions, where the evidence allows, to understand what healthy homeworking is, and how it can be fostered.

However, it is important to recognise that the experience of working from home varies between individuals and between different groups. Homeworkers' experiences of aspects related to their health and wellbeing, such as job and life satisfaction, work-life balance, physical and mental health vary significantly. These health and wellbeing outcomes depend on structural factors such as someone's social class, gender, and health status as well as individual factors such as personal preferences. There is no one size fits all.

Differences for different groups

Home/hybrid working has the potential to deepen existing inequalities as well as reduce them. The negative impacts of homeworking are distributed unequally in relation to factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, new worker status and disability.

Gender: Women may be at a greater risk of negative mental and physical health outcomes. They are also more likely than men to experience greater role conflict as they manage multiple roles at once, such as employee, partner, caregiver or parent.

Age: Older homeworkers tend to have lower self-evaluated computer skills, higher levels of technostress and general stress. However, younger homeworkers are more likely to find working from home difficult compared to homeworkers as a whole.

New worker status: Working from home might deprive new workers of opportunities for informal learning and social interaction.

Socioeconomic status: Homeworkers with lower socioeconomic status are less likely to have homeworking environments that are conducive to health.

Household composition: People who live with multiple housemates are more likely to report that working from home is worse for their health and wellbeing compared to people who live with their partner or by themselves.

Disability: Disabled people and those with chronic health conditions are likely to experience benefits from working from home. However, disabled workers also identify a number of risks connected with homeworking including social isolation, lack of equipment, and more limited opportunities for career progression.

Ethnicity: There is limited evidence on how home and hybrid working intersect with ethnicity. Recent qualitative research suggests that black workers experience of hybrid working intersects with their wider experience of racial discrimination.

Home and hybrid working: survey findings

We surveyed a nationally representative sample of 2185 adults aged 18 and over. This included 1267 people in work, of which 51% reported that they worked at home all or some of the time.

People think home and hybrid working is good for their health and wellbeing – especially people who are already working from home. Over three quarters of this group (76%) said it was good for their mental health and over two thirds (69%) said it was good for their physical health.

People generally felt supported by their employer but there were significant gaps in some of the support received. Only 23% of people reported receiving an ergonomic assessment since starting to work from home.

People want to work from home; 48% of people wanted to work from home more and 45% would only consider a new job if they had the opportunity to work from home some of the time.

There are significant differences by social grade and age in how people experience home and hybrid working. Only 35 per cent of people in social grade ABC1 always work in the office while 68% of adults in social grade C2DE do the same. Only 4% of adults aged 45-54 years old found it difficult to work at home due to their living situation compared to 23% of 18–24-year-olds and 25–34-year-olds.

Recommendations

Home and hybrid working will never be right for every workplace or every individual. However, they are an important flexibility for many, and a continuing feature of modern work. If done the right way, home and hybrid working can tackle inequalities, and improve people's health and wellbeing. We set out below some suggestions to help employers and workers understand what healthy home and hybrid working looks like and the steps they can take to achieve this.

For central government

The Employment Rights Bill introduced to parliament in October 2024 is a welcome step in improving workers' rights. However, further consideration is needed within the bill to ensure that home and hybrid working are protective of health for everyone.

- Increased entitlements to the right to flexible working, must not be a substitute for other rights such as parental leave, carers leave, or adequate provision of childcare or replacement care.

- Protect workers work-life balance by following international example and implementing a right to disconnect policy.

- Protect workers' autonomy by regulating the use of the surveillance technologies so that their use is subject to worker consultation where appropriate.

More widely the Government should consider how to provide more practical support for workers and employers to create healthier home workplaces. This could include establishing public spaces as remote working hubs and increased advice and guidance for employers.

For employers

Employers are legally required to ensure homeworkers can work safely, as well as consider requests for flexible working, and provide adjustments for disabled people. However, there is much more that can be done to create healthy, inclusive, and productive workplaces for home and hybrid workers.

- Develop policies in consultation with workers and their representatives.

- Make flexible working the default if possible.

- Consider offering tailored adjustment plans as standard for all workers.

- Hybrid working can offer more benefits than fully remote working.

- Include homeworking in equality and diversity strategies.

- Give people the equipment they need to keep them safe and enable them to use it in the way that keeps them healthy.

- Ensure line management training support includes a specific focus on supporting remote workers.

- Grant control of time/autonomy wherever possible to homeworkers to support better health and wellbeing outcomes.

- Provide ways for homeworkers to maintain frequent contact with colleagues.

- Tailor health and wellbeing support to homeworkers' needs.

- Help employees to set and maintain boundaries between the work and non-work aspects of their lives.

Checklist for workers

This checklist provides a way for home and hybrid workers, including self-employed people, to assess their health and wellbeing and consider if any changes are needed.

- I keep clear boundaries between my work and home life

- I have control over my work

- I feel connected to my colleagues

- I am supported by my employer

- I feel consulted

- I look after my physical and mental health

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way that some people work. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) report that 2023 16% of the working population now only work from home and 28% are hybrid workers.[1] This compares with around 12% of working adults who reported working from home at some point in the last seven days in an ONS survey in 2019. Our separate survey conducted in June 2024 found over half (51%) of workers in GB reported that they homework some or all of the time.

The move to home and hybrid working has attracted media attention with competing narratives about the value and impact of homeworking on both employers and workers. Recent UK legislation has further increased employees' rights to apply for flexibilities including home or hybrid working.[2] The Welsh Government has also recognised a wide range of potential benefits from homeworking and set a target of 30% of the Welsh workforce working from home or in local hubs by 2026.[3] The government's new Employment Rights Bill promises further strengthening on the right to request flexible working.

The shift towards home and hybrid working due to the Covid-19 pandemic is part of a wider trend. Long-term trends in the British labour market include more flexible working, the growth of the gig economy and self-employment, and increases in automation and artificial intelligence. Work is becoming more flexible, digital and automated but these changes in the labour market do not affect everyone equally. People who face more barriers to work can also experience disproportionate adverse effects of these trends. Conversely, these changes can also widen opportunities for underserved groups. In this way disabled people are more likely to be affected by reduced job security, precariousness and pay inequality because of the growth of the gig economy and self-employment. However, with the right working conditions flexible working has the potential to enable more disabled people to find and keep good jobs.[4]

Home and hybrid working is both a continuing trend and an important flexibility for workers. However, access to home or hybrid working varies for different groups. Those in professional occupations, London residents and those with the highest educational qualifications report the highest level of home and hybrid working across the United Kingdom (UK). Younger workers are least likely to work from home or to be able to

---

[1] Office for National Statistics (2023) Characteristics of homeworkers, Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023.

[2] Gov.uk (2023) Millions to benefit from new flexible working measures.

[3] Welsh Government (2024) Remote working.

[4] Windett, S., et al. (2022) The future of work: protected characteristics in a changing workplace. Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission, L&W

work from home, but there is little difference in homeworking rates in terms of gender, disability or ethnicity.[5]

We know that homeworking can make workplaces more inclusive, particularly for disabled people or those with health conditions. However, we also know that homeworking is not always healthy. Some social groups may be more likely to experience the negative impacts of working from home, for example, women, younger people and those who are of lower socio-economic status. Yet there has been comparatively little analysis and debate about healthy homeworking particularly from an equalities' perspective.

When we consider what healthy work is, we need to build in consideration of new workplace trends to ensure that all workplaces are protective of health for all people and ensure that underserved groups can benefit from increased flexibilities.

This policy paper includes a review of the evidence on healthy home and hybrid workplaces, with particular consideration of the impact on underserved groups, and a representative survey of over 2000 working adults to capture the latest insights on home and hybrid working in the UK. It suggests recommendations that employers and individuals can take forward so they can enjoy healthier working lives.[6]

---

[5] Office for National Statistics (2023) Characteristics of homeworkers, Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023
[6] Further details about the methods are included as appendix one

Dimensions of healthy homeworking

A healthy workplace is not just one where workers are physically safe, or one where workers' mental health is supported. The concept of healthy work cannot be separated from the concept of good work. This means employment that supports health and wellbeing in the widest sense. Good work can be defined by:

- Terms of employment

- Pay and benefits

- Health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing

- Job design and the nature of work

- Social support and cohesion

- Work-life balance

- Voice and representation.[7]

We use these dimensions, where the evidence allows, to understand what healthy homeworking is, and how it can be fostered.[8]

However, it is important to recognise that experiences of working from home vary between individuals and between different groups.[9] Homeworkers' experiences of aspects related to their health and wellbeing, such as job and life satisfaction, work-life balance, physical and mental health can be very different. These health and wellbeing outcomes depend on structural factors such as someone's social class, gender, and health status. But they also depend on individual factors, such as the level of social interaction desired, and attitudes towards technology.[10] Employers should not apply a one size fits all approach to staff working from home, and instead they need to engage with staff to identify which particular areas of homeworking they might need advice and guidance with.[11] We consider how homeworking potentially impacts on different groups in section 3.

Terms of employment

Homeworking is one kind of flexible work and will never be suitable for all jobs or for all people. Employers and individuals need to make decisions about what will work

---

[7] Irvine, G., White, D. and Diffley, M., (2018). <u>Measuring good work: the final report of the measuring job quality working group.</u> Carnegie UK

[8] Voice and representation is not included as one of these dimensions as there was insufficient evidence

[9] Ipsen et al (2021) Six key advantages and disadvantages of working from home in Europe during Covid-19.

[10] Hall et al (2024) Experiences of working from home: an umbrella review

[11] Leppe. (2022) Evidence-based strategies and interventions to promote the health of workers teleworking from home: scoping review

best for them. However, it is useful to note that hybrid working has been associated with more positive wellbeing, social support and job satisfaction than either working full-time in a physical workplace or working from home full time.[12] One study found that employees teleworking approximately 40% of their working hours experienced the most favourable health and wellbeing outcomes. Spending more time working from home did not lead to any detriment in worker health or performance, but equally did not lead to any gains in worker satisfaction.[13] Hybrid working, combining the benefits of both remote and office/site-based work, and mediating the negative impacts of each, might therefore be the optimal arrangement for some employers and some individuals.

Home and hybrid working should not be seen as a replacement for other support policies such as paid sick time, parental leave or other forms of flexible working such as job share or compressed hours. Employees have been found to experience adverse health effects when homeworking is used as a mechanism to catch up on work after hours or over the weekend, or to make up for missed work due to scheduled time off.

It is also important to recognise the flexibility stigma that comes when workers request flexibilities for their own and others' care. This can impact on some groups such as women and disabled people more than others.[14] Offering flexibility as standard for all workers, where it is compatible with job roles, reduces the risk of some workers being stigmatised and creates the potential for a more equitable workplace.

Health, safety and wellbeing

Our survey results show that workers think home or hybrid working is, or would be, better for their health and wellbeing[15] with particular emphasis on benefits to mental health. Those who already homework some or all of the time agreed more strongly than those who are currently office-based or on site that their working arrangement impacts positively on their health and wellbeing. From those who are already home or hybrid workers (76%) said it is good for their mental health and over two thirds (69%) saying it is good for their physical health.

---

[12] Beckel and Fisher. (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Juchnowicz and Kinowska. (2021) Employee well-being and digital work during the Covid-19 pandemic; Wells et al (2023) 'A systematic review of the impact of remote working referenced to the concept of work-life flow on physical and psychological health'; Hall et al (2024) 'Experiences of working from home: an umbrella review'

[13] Beckel and Fisher. (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice.

[14] Chung, H., (2020) Gender, flexibility stigma and the perceived negative consequences of flexible working in the UK. Social indicators research.

[15] This includes people who do not currently work from home

Physical health

Working from home comes with an increased risk of certain physical ailments. This includes a higher incidence of musculoskeletal conditions and headaches due to prolonged periods of physical inactivity spent sitting, and throat conditions such as mild dysphonia (hoarseness), dry throat and vocal tract discomfort due to prolonged periods spent talking on video meetings.[16]

Homeworkers tend to work longer days and have more meetings.[17] Consecutive online meetings are reported to make it difficult for workers to take breaks between meetings and increase the intensity of their work. This can lead to increased musculoskeletal discomfort and other physical and mental health effects. Working with your body in awkward postures, along with sitting in one place for a long time and the repetitive movement characteristic of computer work, can also worsen musculoskeletal health.[18]

One study found that home and hybrid workers were more likely to have pain in the upper musculoskeletal system during the Covid-19 pandemic than on site workers because they spent more time in sedentary positions.[19] It is unclear whether physical activity in itself can reduce musculoskeletal pain or whether time spent sitting is the main cause.[20] This suggests that supporting homeworkers to reduce sedentary time, rather than just increasing physical activity, is important. Frequently changing position from sitting to standing and taking regular short breaks to move can reduce the risk of musculoskeletal problems.[21] Evidence shows that some positive interventions include sit stand desks and taking frequent short breaks.

Taking breaks can be more challenging for homeworkers, which can have negative health impacts. Homeworkers who reported that they seldom took breaks showed the greatest risk of developing headaches, reporting psychological fatigue, sleep problems, and a decreased likelihood of experiencing adequate rest, compared to people who took breaks more often.[22] Working from home often does not provide opportunities for natural breaks, so homeworkers need to learn to regulate their behaviour. Employers also need to provide advice and guidance on the health benefits

---

[16] Wells et al (2023) A Systematic Review of the Impact of Remote Working Referenced to the Concept of Work-Life Flow on Physical and Psychological Health; Milakovic et al (2023) Telework-related risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders.

[17] Xiao et al (2021) Impacts of working from home during Covid-19 pandemic on physical and mental wellbeing of office workstation users.

[18] Milakovic et al (2023) Telework-related risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders.

[19] Loef et al (2022) The mediating role of physical activity and sedentary behaviour in the association between working from home and musculoskeletal pain during the Covid-19 pandemic.

[20] Almarcha et al (2021) Healthy Teleworking: Towards Personalised Exercise Recommendations.

[21] Davis et al (2020) The Home Office: Ergonomic Lessons from the 'New Normal'.

[22] Cropley. (2023) Working from home during lockdown: the association between rest breaks and well-being.

of taking rest breaks.[23] It is generally preferable to take breaks based on the individual worker's subjective feeling of uneasiness or discomfort rather than on pre-programmed alarms.[24]

Presenteeism

There is some evidence that providing workers with the option to work away from the central office or site of work is associated with reduced absenteeism. However, this reduction in absence may be tied to a health trade-off for employees who continue to work from home when ill (i.e., presenteeism). Homeworkers can feel that their lack of physical presence in the office makes it more difficult for them to justify the need to take a formal sick day. Often employees choose to continue working despite feeling unwell.[25] One study suggests that employees may also feel lucky, or privileged, to work from home and choose to work through sickness in order to preserve their opportunity to work from home. Working while ill has also been found to increase the risk of homeworkers experiencing depression.

It is therefore not possible to interpret reductions in absenteeism as an indication of positive health status among homeworking employees. Employers need to be aware of the higher risk of presenteeism among homeworkers and ensure that homeworkers can take time off to rest and recover from illness more quickly. It is also recommended that managers should set examples and act as role models for healthy behaviour by not working from home while ill themselves.[26]

A sense of meaning and engagement

There is a risk that homeworkers find less meaning in their work. Some people who moved to homeworking during the Covid-19 pandemic found it more difficult to create meaning, engagement and motivation in their work when working from home, which in turn negatively affected their mental wellbeing. Remote work can be experienced as more monotonous, lacking the stimulation and input of the physical workplace. Some also felt alone in everyday decision making and received limited feedback on their work. However, this was dependent on the type of work the participants were engaged in.[27]

Workers may also need to increase their sense of meaning when life in the workplace disappears, as going to and being in the workplace provides interaction and stimulation that greatly reduces when employees work from home. It is suggested that

---

[23] Royal Society for Public Health. (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health.; Cropley. (2023) Working from home during lockdown: the association between rest breaks and well-being
[24] Almarcha et al. (2021) Healthy Teleworking: Towards Personalised Exercise Recommendations.
[25] Beckel and Fisher. (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice.
[26] Hall et al. (2024) Experiences of working from home: an umbrella review.
[27] Chafi et al. (2021) Post-Pandemic Office Work: Perceived Challenges and Opportunities for a Sustainable Work Environment.

employers should be mindful of this risk and encourage employees who work from home to engage in volunteering and mindfulness exercises.[28]

Support for health

The health needs of homeworkers are different to those who spend their time working on site. Employers should be proactive in providing employees with specific support programmes for their health and wellbeing when home or hybrid working.[29] Some approaches adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic included digital wellbeing programmes, online daily live workouts, 'Ask the Trainer' Q&A sessions, 'Workout of the Day' videos and weekly live wellbeing chats with health professionals. Raising awareness of mental health and conducting employee surveys to understand the prevalence of mental health and wellbeing issues among home and hybrid workers, are also suggested actions for employers to support their staff.

Our survey findings show that while regular support and communication from line management (42%) and training or advice on healthy home working (28%) were the most commonly cited support mechanisms received by home workers from their employers, a significant proportion (27%) said they did not know what support or facilities their employer had provided to support their health and wellbeing while homeworking. Similarly, the majority (70%) of self-employed people who at least sometimes work from home said their health and wellbeing when working from home is protected. However, a significant proportion (40%) said they didn't know where they normally go to access support. This is potentially concerning as it suggests a significant number of people, particularly the self-employed do not fully understand what healthy home working is or how it can be supported.

Social support and cohesion

Line management and leadership

Leaders and line managers have a critical role in ensuring that home workplaces are healthy workplaces. Survey results highlight this, with regular support from a line manager being the most commonly reported support provided to home workers.

Managers should be proactive in displaying their own healthy working-from-home behaviours to colleagues.[30] For example, regular catch ups with employees should be used as opportunities to make clear that managers themselves are taking regular breaks, and only working within their scheduled hours. Managers should also provide information justifying the need for this behaviour and describing its benefits, as well as

---

[28] George et al. (2021) Supporting the productivity and wellbeing of remote workers: Lessons from Covid-19.

[29] Jeske. (2022) Remote workers' experiences with electronic monitoring during Covid-19: implications and recommendations; Royal Society for Public Health (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health.

[30] Hall et al. (2024) Experiences of working from home: an umbrella review.

making employees aware of their rights to ensure they are working from home in a way that supports their health and wellbeing.

Leadership style has been found to play an important role in homeworkers' wellbeing. More authoritative or less trusting leaders are associated with higher stress levels among the workers they manage. Management should display trust in employees when they are working from home and communicate effectively with employees who they do not see face-to-face regularly. One review suggested that companies should readjust their structures to be more equitable and less hierarchical to strengthen the organisational support offered to homeworkers.[31]

Line managers should receive training in how their leadership style, performance monitoring and feedback practice can affect home and hybrid workers' health and wellbeing. Line managers should remain mindful of the fact that, even though they might not see employees every day, they still need encouragement, support and care when working from home as they would on site.[32] In one study, training for middle management on supporting employees' mental health and reducing stressors was found to be successful over four months during the Covid-19 pandemic.[33] Survey results indicate that more training is needed for line managers with under half (42%) of line managers disagreeing they had received training on how to support home workers.

Social isolation

Homeworking significantly limits the opportunities for supportive relationships in the workplace. This is a concern as workplace social support and relationships increase people's wellbeing.[34] Studies have found that homeworkers score lower on 'workplace relationships', including trust in colleagues and managers.[35] This can result in feelings of loneliness, disconnection, and negative emotions, such as feeling excluded by

---

[31] Geldart. (2022) Remote Work in a Changing World: A Nod to Personal Space, Self-Regulation and Other Health and Wellness Strategies.

[32] George et al. (2021) Supporting the productivity and wellbeing of remote workers: lessons from Covid-19.

[33] Jeske, D., (2022) Remote workers' experiences with electronic monitoring during Covid-19: implications and recommendations.

[34] Juchnowicz and Kinowska (2021) Employee well-being and digital work during the Covid-19 pandemic; Wells et al (2023) A systematic review of the impact of remote working referenced to the concept of work-life flow on physical and psychological health; Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Lyzwinski (2024) Organisational and occupational health issues with working remotely during the pandemic: a scoping review of remote work and health.

[35] Beckel and Fisher. (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Chung et al (2002) Working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown: changing preferences and the future of work; Al-Habaibeh et al. (2021) Challenges and opportunities of remotely working from home during Covid-19 pandemic; Royal Society for Public Health (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health; Hall et al. (2024) Experiences of working from home: an umbrella review.

colleagues.[36] However, survey findings indicate that the majority (70%) of workers feel connected to their colleagues and just under a quarter (22%) of hybrid and home workers said they have sufficient opportunity for social interaction.

Frequent informal contact with colleagues can increase homeworker perceptions of meaning and interest in their work, reduce stress and lead to better health.[37] Employers should be proactive in providing homeworkers with regular opportunities for social interaction with colleagues.[38] This can include opportunities for face-to-face interaction between employees, as well as access to sufficiently rich media (i.e. video calls rather than emails) for remote interactions. Informal channels such as Slack or Microsoft Teams are suggested as potentially benefitting employees who value informal and unscheduled interactions with colleagues. Other suggestions include simulating accidental communication that occurs on site (such as by walking into a colleague's office to see if they are free for a quick chat) by holding online consultation hours, where managers are available to their employees at certain times, or daily online 15-minute catch ups for teams.

Task interdependence - the extent to which employees must rely on each other to complete their work - significantly weakens the correlation between increased levels of working from home and social isolation.[39] Employers should therefore consider integrating their employees who do a lot of work from home into organisational routines and group tasks. Hybrid workers should also be supported to allocate tasks appropriately between their time at home and their time in the workplace. In this way, office time can be spent on more collaborative activities while homeworking can provide the opportunity for tasks that require greater concentration.[40]

In hybrid workplaces, there is a risk that those working from home can feel isolated from those who are on site/in an office. For example, in hybrid meetings where some employees participate on site and some call in remotely, meeting organisers should pay special attention to the inclusion of remote participants in the discussion and decision-making processes.[41] On site workers should be trained in how to facilitate the

---

[36] Hall et al. (2024) Experiences of working from home: an umbrella review; Brown and Leite. (2022) The effects of social and organisational connectedness on employee well-being and remote working experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.
[37] George et al. (2021) Supporting the productivity and wellbeing of remote workers: lessons from Covid-19.
[38] Lyzwinski. (2024) Organisational and occupational health issues with working remotely during the pandemic: a scoping review of remote work and health; Omorede et al. (2021) The experience of teleworking on health and wellbeing under Covid-19 pandemic.
[39] Kaiser, S et al. (2022) Working from home: Findings and prospects for further research.
[40] Buick et al. (2024) Adopting a Purposeful Approach to Hybrid Working integrating notions of place, space and time.
[41] Lee. (2023) Working from home as an economic and social change: A review.

involvement of colleagues working remotely as well as virtual teamwork and collaboration skills.[42]

Job design and nature of work

Ergonomics and suitable equipment

Homeworkers are more likely than office workers to use a homeworking setup that has poor ergonomics. This is associated with higher levels of reported musculoskeletal issues, such as back, neck and shoulder pain.[43] They can also have little awareness and knowledge about ergonomic and safety issues within their homes. In addition, many companies lack sufficient regulation and policies regarding the set up and ergonomic evaluation of in-home workspaces.[44]

Homeworkers often set up their own homeworking spaces and engage in risky behaviours such as working from the sofa or other uncomfortable workspaces. Without appropriate training, workers are likely to be unaware of the risk that this may present of developing chronic musculoskeletal disorders.

Home office ergonomics training has been shown to improve workers' ergonomic knowledge, attitudes, and practices.[45] Workers who receive training are also likely to experience less pain and discomfort. Employers should ensure homeworkers have their ergonomic needs met through comprehensive assessments of their home workspaces and provision of the necessary tools and equipment at home.[46] However, these assessments are not always happening. The survey findings highlight that just

---

[42] Grzegorczyk et al. (2021) Blending the physical and virtual: A hybrid model for the future of work; Como et al. (2021) An Exploration of Work-Life Wellness and Remote Work During and Beyond Covid-19

[43] Royal Society for Public Health (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health; Beckel and Fisher. (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Hall et al. (2024) Experiences of working from home: an umbrella review; Xiao et al. (2021) Impacts of working from home during Covid-19 pandemic on physical and mental wellbeing of office workstation users; Davis et al (2020) 'The Home Office: Ergonomic Lessons from the "New Normal"; Grzegorczyk et al. (2021) Blending the physical and virtual: A hybrid model for the future of work; Santos et al (2021) 'Association between musculoskeletal pain and telework in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic: an integrative review' ; Milakovic et al (2023) 'Telework-related risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders'

[44] Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Geldart (2022) Remote Work in a Changing World: A Nod to Personal Space, Self-Regulation and Other Health and Wellness Strategies.

[45] Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Geldart (2022) Remote Work in a Changing World: A Nod to Personal Space, Self-Regulation and Other Health and Wellness Strategies.

[46] Geldart (2022) Remote Work in a Changing World: A Nod to Personal Space, Self-Regulation and Other Health and Wellness Strategies; Royal Society for Public Health. (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health; Santos et al (2021) Association between musculoskeletal pain and telework in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic: an integrative review; Gualano et al (2022) Telework-related Stress, Psychological and Physical Strain of Working from Home During the Covid-19 Pandemic.

under a quarter (24%) of home workers report they have had a home working health and safety or an ergonomic assessment.

In addition to physical equipment such as a desk, chair, PC and keyboard, this should include suitable and sufficient computer technology, to prevent homeworkers experiencing stress caused by insufficient computer software and broadband capability. In the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, inadequate equipment leading to difficulties performing one's job was found to be detrimental to productivity. Studies have found strong links between self-reported productivity and mental wellbeing highlighting the importance of having the right equipment for health.[47]

Technostress

Technostress is the stress caused by work-related technology usage. The excessive use of work-related technology can lead to fatigue, restlessness, anxiety and physical discomfort.[48] Homeworking is associated with more screen time per day than on site working, and particularly more online meetings.[49] Together with the convenience of working from home, this leads to back-to-back meetings without the natural breaks in an office when moving between meeting rooms. Therefore, homeworkers can experience difficulties dealing with cognitive overload and exhaustion from back-to-back online meetings.[50]

Too many video meetings can lead to feelings of psychological depletion or exhaustion. These include video meeting load, and video meetings that take up a lot of time and energy yet are not perceived to be beneficial to the individual worker.[51] In addition, the increased connectivity and ubiquity of technology use caused by digital platforms can lead workers to feel work technology is invading their personal lives.

To prevent technostress, employers should arrange adequate training and peer-to-peer support. This should include training courses to help homeworkers use technologies they find challenging. In addition, human resource policies should be designed to discourage the use of emails and other forms of communication outside

[47] Beckel and Fisher. (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice.
Wells et al. (2023) A Systematic Review of the Impact of Remote Working Referenced to the Concept of Work-Life Flow on Physical and Psychological Health; Lee, K. (2023) Working from home as an economic and social change: A review.
[48] Singh et al. (2022) Enforced remote working: The impact of digital platform-induced stress and remote working experience on technology exhaustion and subjective wellbeing.
[49] Hall et al. (2024) Experiences of working from home: an umbrella review; Gualano et al (2022) Telework-related Stress, Psychological and Physical Strain of Working from Home During the Covid-19 Pandemic.
[50] Chafi et al. (2021) Post-Pandemic Office Work: Perceived Challenges and Opportunities for a Sustainable Work Environment.
[51] Kaiser et al. (2022) Working from home: Findings and prospects for further research.

office hours. Managers should also be trained in understanding technostress so that they can prevent and detect incidents of technostress affecting their workers.[52]

Techniques such as switching off the camera and microphone are associated with protective effects against fatigue.[53] Other suggestions in the literature include well-defined video-connection rules, such as maximum amounts of daily time spent on video calls and strict 'virtual' commuting times or micro-breaks between video meetings.[54]

Autonomy

Homeworking is directly associated with higher perceived autonomy, or control over how one completes their work. Jobs characterised as having a higher level of worker autonomy and control are associated with better worker health and wellbeing outcomes, such as better job satisfaction, less work-family conflict, and reduced worker stress, loneliness and exhaustion.[55] The survey findings confirm this, with the majority of workers (71%) saying they have control over their work whilst almost three quarters (74%) of home and hybrid workers enjoy the associated benefits of such as improved job satisfaction.

Greater autonomy may be due to the lack of constraints linked to office routine, the ability to navigate when tasks are completed during the day, and potentially less managerial oversight. These components allow employees to conduct their work tasks in line with their own preferences, reducing exhaustion and alleviating psychological strain. Homeworkers also report having more accountability than when they work in the office, suggesting that having greater control and autonomy does not diminish their perceptions of accountability. Employers should deliberately grant control of time to homeworkers to support better health and wellbeing outcomes.

Homeworkers who are proactive in self-management are better able to manage their workload, set good habits, and achieve physical and mental wellbeing. It is suggested that training should equip homeworkers with such skills in self-management, as well as other skills specific to successful homeworking, such as networking through digital technologies.

---

[52] Fernandez-Fernandez et al. (2023) The impact of teleworking technostress on satisfaction, anxiety and performance.

[53] Wells et al. (2023) A Systematic Review of the Impact of Remote Working Referenced to the Concept of Work-Life Flow on Physical and Psychological Health.

[54] Lee. (2023) Working from home as an economic and social change: A review; Grzegorczyk et al (2021) Blending the physical and virtual: A hybrid model for the future of work.

[55] George et al. (2021) Supporting the productivity and wellbeing of remote workers: lessons from Covid-19; Niebuhr et al (2022) Healthy and happy working from home? Effects of working from home on employee health and job satisfaction; Wells et al (2023) 'A systematic review of the impact of remote working referenced to the concept of work-life flow on physical and psychological health; Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice.

A job characteristic that is found to reduce perceived autonomy and compromise homeworker wellbeing is monitoring or surveillance by the employer. Employer monitoring, more prevalent among larger companies, is often carried out through the use of digital data-driven management tools to assist management in understanding performance and improving efficiency. These technologies may operate silently, leaving workers unaware of being monitored or the type and amount of data collected and for which purposes. The amplified use of surveillance and the constant feeling of being monitored have wide repercussions for job quality leading to reduced work autonomy, work intensification, increased level of stress and anxiety and reciprocal mistrust between workers and management.[56]

The extent to which homeworkers perceive that they are monitored by their employer is linked to higher levels of work-home conflict.[57] Studies carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic suggest that employee monitoring increases the tendency of presenteeism among homeworkers. Closely monitored employees often fear punitive consequences and report stress, emotional exhaustion, high tension and anxiety.[58]

To prevent these adverse effects of monitoring, any surveillance practices should be non-intrusive and transparent to the employee. Line managers should be trained in the potentially adverse impacts of methods of surveillance. Employers should consult health professionals when adopting new monitoring tools so that they can advise on the control settings and mechanisms which might inhibit the performance and wellbeing of home and hybrid workers.

Work life balance

Physical and mental wellbeing through physical and psychological detachment from work during non-working hours, is enhanced when individuals are able to maintain work life boundaries. The intrusion of work into life is a key friction for home and hybrid workers as working from home blurs boundaries between work and home life.[59] Those with weaker boundaries, and especially when non-work behaviours are interrupted by work-related responsibilities such as working after hours or on the weekends, are more likely to have increased work-family conflict. However, survey findings show that the majority of home and hybrid workers feel their work life balance has improved since working from home, and report they have clear boundaries between work and home life.

[56] European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2023) Surveillance and monitoring of remote workers: Implications for occupational safety and health.

[57] Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice.

[58] Jeske (2022) Remote workers' experiences with electronic monitoring during Covid-19: implications and recommendations,

[59] Royal Society for Public Health (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health.

Although lockdowns and the closure of schools which required parents to carry out childcare and home-schooling roles during working hours was an experience specific to the Covid-19 context, the blurring and multi-tasking of roles among homeworking parents was also identified in the research on flexible working prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The blurred boundaries between work and home is also the most common negative outcome of homeworking experienced by workers who do not have children.[60]

Homeworkers who implement strategies to establish clear boundaries between their work and home lives are at a lower risk of adverse occupational health outcomes. Setting spatial and temporal boundaries between work time and family time activities as much as possible can be beneficial for work-family balance and homeworkers' mental and physical health in general, including sleep quality.[61] In a qualitative study of 40 homeworkers physical, time-based, behavioural, and communicative strategies were identified that successful homeworkers implemented within their home.[62] These strategies included having a separate office or space to be used for work, engaging in activities which signalled the end of the working day, switching off emails or work phones after work hours, and informing friends and family of their boundary expectations regarding interruption during the work week.

A priority in supporting remote workers is helping them to set and maintain boundaries between the work and non-work aspects of their lives and support their physical and psychological detachment from work during non-working time. This could involve employers providing funds to set up a separate home office, computing equipment, and separate communications devices for work and personal lives.[63]

However, one evidence review found that work schedule flexibility for people who work from home can be counterproductive to reducing their workload. This is because working from home in the absence of fixed working hours may give the worker a greater sense of availability and surveillance by line management. This can exacerbate the blurring of the boundaries of the working day, leading to long working hours and even night and weekend work. It is advised that employers limit the parameters of flexible working to ensure that workers have adequate rest time.[64]

[60] Chung et al. (2002) Working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown: changing preferences and the future of work.

[61] Milakovic et al. (2023) Telework-related risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders; Afonso et al (2021) Evaluation of anxiety, depression and sleep quality in full-time teleworkers.

[62] Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice.

[63] Royal Society for Public Health (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health.

[64] Yeves et al. (2022) Work schedule flexibility and teleworking were not good together during Covid-19 when testing their effects on work overload and mental health.

Differences for diverse groups

Home/hybrid working has the potential to deepen existing inequalities as well as reduce them. The negative impacts of homeworking are distributed unequally in relation to factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, new worker status and disability.[65] Interventions to support homeworkers' health and wellbeing should therefore be targeted according to the needs of specific groups to ensure that homeworking increases equity rather than reduces it.

Gender

Women may experience greater psychosocial demands due to multiple household roles and may be at a greater risk of negative mental and physical health outcomes, such as feeling isolated and musculoskeletal problems, than men while working from home.[66] Women are more likely than men to experience greater role conflict as they manage multiple roles at once, such as employee, partner, caregiver or parent. Nevertheless, for both women and men, family care complicates the extent to which employees benefit from homeworking in terms of subjective wellbeing. Indeed, it is generally women and men without caring responsibilities who reported benefits from continuing to work at home post-pandemic and stressful effects from returning to the office. Our survey findings show that a key benefit of homeworking for women is that it makes caring responsibilities easier.

A significant association has also been observed between being female and reporting musculoskeletal pain while working from home.[67] Women, regardless of the presence of children in the home, reported higher levels of musculoskeletal pain and discomfort when working from home than men.[68] Survey findings show that women who at least sometimes work from home are more likely than men to work from a kitchen or dining room table (19% females vs 14% males) rather than a home office which may contribute to muscle pain

Women may also experience higher levels of technostress than men.[69] For example, one study of homeworkers during the Covid-19 pandemic found that video-based meetings were more likely to lead to fatigue for female homeworkers than male, and

---

65 Wells et al (2023) A Systematic Review of the Impact of Remote Working Referenced to the Concept of Work-Life Flow on Physical and Psychological Health.
66 Milakovic et al (2023) Telework-related risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders; Royal Society for Public Health (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health
67 Milakovic et al (2023) Telework-related risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders.
68 Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Royal Society for Public Health (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health
69 Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Gualano et al (2022) Telework-related Stress, Psychological and Physical Strain of Working from Home During the Covid-19 Pandemic.

subsequently reduce their engagement and likelihood to voice concerns in the workplace.

More research is also needed on homeworking and domestic abuse, to better understand the needs of vulnerable groups who are working from home and develop policy interventions to support them.

Age

Both prior to and during the Covid-19 pandemic, older homeworkers were found to have lower self-evaluated computer skills, and higher levels of technostress and general stress.[70] This suggests older homeworkers might find support with the use of technology required to work from home particularly beneficial.

However, younger homeworkers are more likely to find working from home difficult compared to homeworkers as a whole. Reasons for this include younger workers being more likely to have limited or shared space for working from home; more likely to work unpaid overtime at home, and more likely to face the challenges of being relatively new to their job role and employer organisation. Survey findings add to this, with younger workers most likely to work from a desk in their bedroom/other shared space or their sofa or bed, more likely than any other age group to report difficulties working from home because of who they live with and taking fewer breaks than any other age group.

Survey findings also highlight that younger people are more likely than other age groups to want to work from home but worry about it negatively impacting future career progression

New worker status

Working from home might deprive new workers (who are often young people) from valuable opportunities that they would have in the workplace, such as learning skills through observation and forging social links with colleagues.[71] One study carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic found that as the pandemic persisted, stronger social ties between colleagues seemed to endure and weaker ties seemed to atrophy.[72] This suggests that the lack of informal interactions when working from home can hit junior workers hardest when they have not yet developed strong informal relationships with colleagues. Managers should aim to provide face-to-face interactions with new homeworking employees as much as possible, to give them opportunities for healthy socialisation in the workplace.

---

[70] Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Gualano et al (2022) Telework-related Stress, Psychological and Physical Strain of Working from Home During the Covid-19 Pandemic

[71] Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice.

[72] Lee. (2023) Working from home as an economic and social change: A review.

Socioeconomic status

Homeworkers with lower socioeconomic status are less likely to have homeworking environments that are conducive to healthy homeworking.[73] Our survey findings highlight this, with workers in lower socioeconomic groups significantly more likely to work from a sofa or bed than people in higher socioeconomic groups. Research carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic found that homeworkers on lower incomes reported two or more new physical and mental issues more often than homeworkers on a higher income.[74]

It is important for homeworkers to establish clear spatial boundaries for work and home life, so that they have a designated quiet area, if not room, in which to work away from distractions of home life. And yet, homeworkers' ability to find a suitable space in which to work in their home will depend on the size of their home and the need to accommodate family members.

The implications for employers are that they may need to support homeworking employees who lack space in their home to set up a suitable space. Furthermore, homeworkers might need financial support to purchase any equipment and technology they need to work in the home which they cannot afford themselves.

Household composition

A survey carried out among UK homeworkers in February 2021 found that people who lived with multiple housemates were more likely to report that working from home was worse for their health and wellbeing compared to people who lived with their partner or by themselves.[75] The same survey found that respondents who had caring responsibilities or lived with housemates were more likely to find it difficult to work from home because of the number of people they lived with than those who lived with their partner.

Disability

Studies have shown that disabled people and people with chronic health conditions are likely to experience benefits from working from home, including higher self-reported levels of work ability, job control, flexibility and wellbeing.[76] Similarly, our survey findings found that disabled people and people with health conditions are

---

[73] Gualano et al (2022) Telework-related Stress, Psychological and Physical Strain of Working from Home During the Covid-19 Pandemic; Geldart (2022) 'Remote Work in a Changing World: A Nod to Personal Space, Self-Regulation and Other Health and Wellness Strategies.
[74] Xiao (2021) Impacts of working from home during Covid-19 pandemic on physical and mental wellbeing of office workstation users.
[75] Royal Society for Public Health (2021) Disparity begins at home: How home working is impacting the public's health.
[76] Beckel and Fisher (2022) Telework and worker health and well-being: a review and recommendations for research and practice; Lyzwinski (2024) Organisational and occupational health issues with working remotely during the pandemic: a scoping review of remote work and health.

more likely than average to agree that home and hybrid working is or would be better for their health.

A survey of disabled workers found that 80% said working from home would be essential or very important if they were looking for a new job. The importance of working from home increased for those with multiple impairments.[77] However, the same disabled workers identified a number of risks connected with homeworking including social isolation, lack of equipment, and more limited opportunities for career progression.

A qualitative study carried out with a small group of neurodivergent people (including those with ASD, ADHD, dyslexia and psychosocial disabilities such as anxiety and depression) identified adaptive work practices that made homeworking healthier for this group.[78] Although many of the challenges neurodivergent people experienced when working from home (such as setting up a home workstation, sharing space with other people in the home, and 'Zoom fatigue') were shared by neurotypical workers, these challenges had a more extreme effect on neurodivergent workers, resulting in intense distraction, inability to focus on meeting content, difficulty task switching, fatigue and stress that led to a feeling of being overwhelmed and unable to function.

The study found a range of strategies were used by neurodivergent workers to make working at home more accessible and therefore healthier for them. This included: obtaining meeting agendas and other materials in advance; having clear turn taking protocols (such as using the 'raised hand' feature) that avoid time-pressured responses during meetings; enabling multiple ways to contribute to a conversation, such as online chat, captioning and sharing meeting recordings or transcripts; and reducing extensive amounts of online notifications for team members.

The research found that people's needs were highly individual. For example, some neurodivergent workers preferred to have their camera turned off during video meetings to hide their stimming activities, while others found it necessary to watch colleagues on video to piece together nonverbal communication cues and maintain a sense of accountability to avoid zoning out. The authors suggest that employers should be aware that power dynamics and organisational hierarchies can make it difficult for employees to speak up and request such adaptations. Employers therefore need to proactively assess employee's individual needs and provide them with appropriate support to work from home. However, the ideal is that adaptations are offered to all employees rather than only being available upon request.

---

[77] Taylor et al. (2022) The changing workplace: Enabling disability-inclusive hybrid working. Work Foundation.
[78] Das (2021) Towards Accessible Remote Work: Understanding Work-from-Home Practices of Neurodivergent Professionals.

Ethnicity

There is limited evidence on how home and hybrid working intersect with ethnicity. Recent qualitative research suggests that Black workers' experience of hybrid working intersects with their wider experience of racial discrimination. Working from home was seen as potentially providing respite from racist workplaces, but the fear of flexibility stigma meant micromanagement, presenteeism, and being overlooked for promotion potentially impacted on health and wellbeing.[79]

---

[79] Chung et al. (2024) Making hybrid inclusive: Black workers experiences of hybrid working. Trade Union Congress.

Home and hybrid working – survey findings

Key findings

We surveyed a nationally representative sample of 2185 adults aged 18 and over. This included 1267 people in work, of which 51% reported that they worked at home all or some of the time.

People think home and hybrid working is good for their health and wellbeing – especially people who are already working from home. Over three quarters of this group (76%) said it was good for their mental health and over two thirds (69%) said it was good for their physical health.

People with health conditions and disabled people were more likely to report that working from home and hybrid working was good for their health and wellbeing. From those who were already working at home 83% agreed hybrid/home working was better for their mental health and 76% agreed it was better for their physical health.

People generally felt supported by their employer but there were significant gaps in some of the support received. Only 23% of people reported receiving an ergonomic assessment since starting to work from home.

Not everyone knows what healthy home working is:

- Twenty-seven per cent of employed people were not sure if they had been provided with any support or facilities from their employer to support their health and wellbeing while working from home.

- Self-employed people generally say their health and wellbeing when working from home is protected but 40% said they did not know where they normally go to access support.

People want to work from home; 48% of people wanted to work from home more and 45% would only consider a new job if they had the opportunity to work from home some of the time.

There are significant differences by social grade and age in how people experience home and hybrid working.

Only 35 per cent of people in social grade ABC1 always work in the office while 68% of adults in social grade C2DE do the same.

Only 4% of adults aged 45-54 years old found it difficult to work at home due to their living situation compared to 23% of 18–24-year-olds and 25–34-year-olds.

Working from home practices

Location of work

Just over half of working respondents said they work from home some or all of the time (51%) while just under half said they always work from an office or on-site (47%).

Figure 1 Current working arrangements
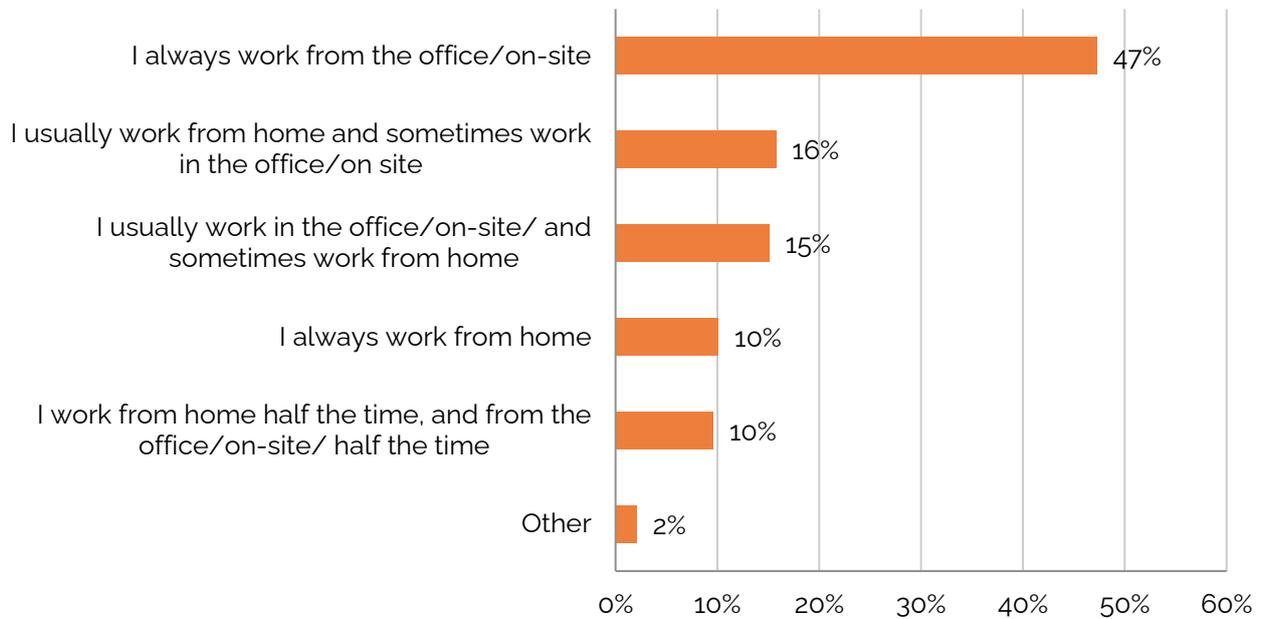
Base: 1246. Respondents who are in work

Of those who always or sometimes work in the office or on-site, a significant majority said they did so because their work requires it (70%). Almost a quarter (23%) said it was because it was good for their health and wellbeing, followed by enjoying the social interaction (22%). Sectors in which it was more common to work in the office or on-site than at home were hospital and health service, education and police or prison service.

Figure 2 Reasons for working on site/at the office some or all of the time

Reason	Percentage
My work requires it	70%
The equipment and resources I need to do my job effectively are in the office/on-site	26%
I think it's good for my overall health and wellbeing	23%
I like social interaction	22%
My work doesn't require it, but I feel like I should go in (e.g., to fit in with organisational…	11%
Challenges at home (e.g., my home is noisy or crowded, issues with internet etc.)	4%
Other	3%
Don't know/not sure	3%

Base 1,091. Respondents who are in work

Differences for diverse groups

There were differences by age, geography, and socioeconomic status in how likely people were to work from home or hybrid work. Middle aged workers (45–54-year-olds) were most likely to work from home or hybrid work (53%). Adults in London were most likely to work from home or hybrid work (66%), while workers in the West Midlands were least likely to work from home or hybrid work (44%). Londoners had the lowest proportion of workers always working at the office or on-site (33%), while workers in the southeast were most likely to always work at the office or on site (53%). There were considerable differences in the number of people who work from home or hybrid work by social grade. Just over a third (35%) of people in social grade ABC1 always work in the office, while over two thirds (68%) of adults in social grade C2DE do the same.

Where people work from home

Figure 3 Where people work from home
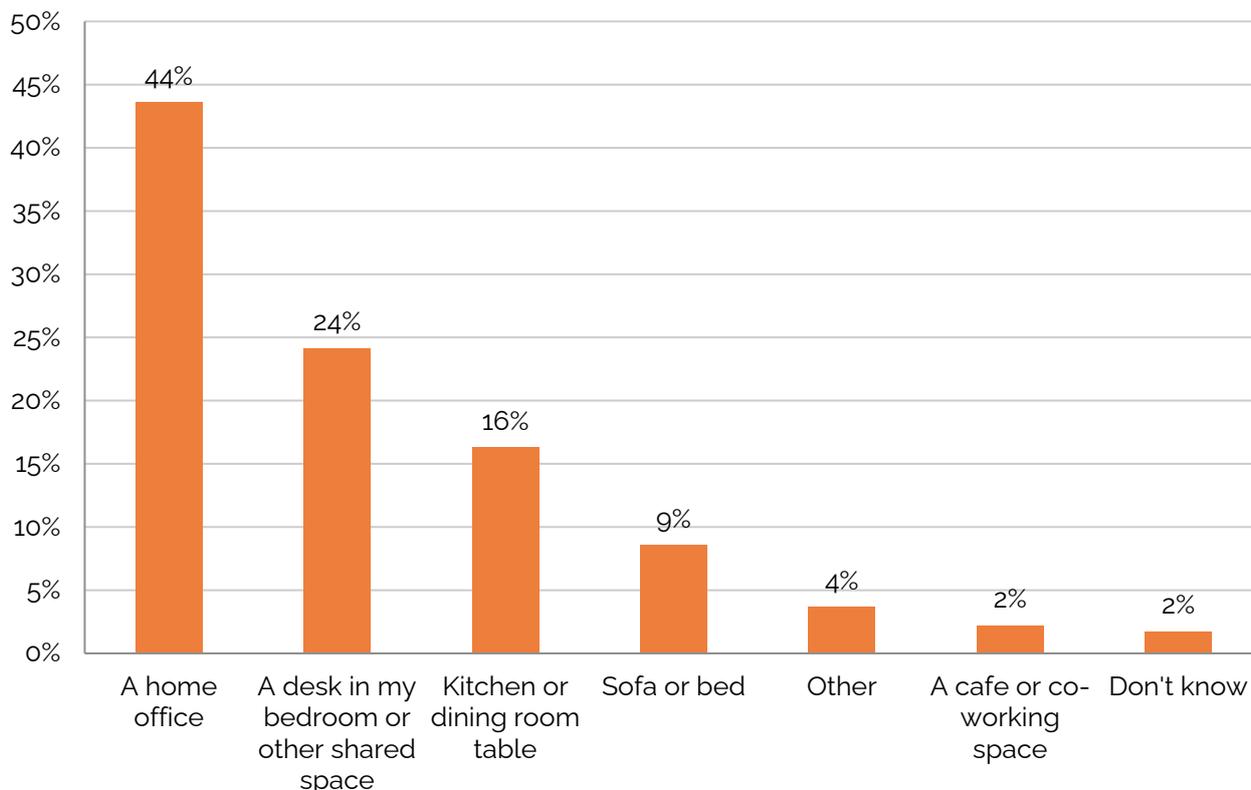
Base 643. Respondents who work from home

The majority of people who worked from home, worked from a home office (44%). Just under a quarter work from a desk in their bedroom or other room (24%), just under a fifth work from a kitchen or dining room table (16%) and 9 per cent work from a sofa or bed.

Differences for diverse groups

There were differences by socioeconomic status, gender, age and health status in where people work from home. Workers in higher social grades were significantly more likely to work from a home office than workers in lower social grades (47% and 32% respectively). Workers in higher social grades were significantly less likely to work from sofa or bed than workers in lower social grades (7% and 15% respectively). Men were more likely than women to work from a home office (48% and 39% respectively). Women were more likely than men to work from a kitchen table (19% and 14% respectively). 18–24-year-olds were the least likely age group to work from a home office (34%), and more likely to work from a desk in their bedroom (29%) or their sofa or bed (14%).

Challenges of working from home

Figure 4 Difficulty of working from home
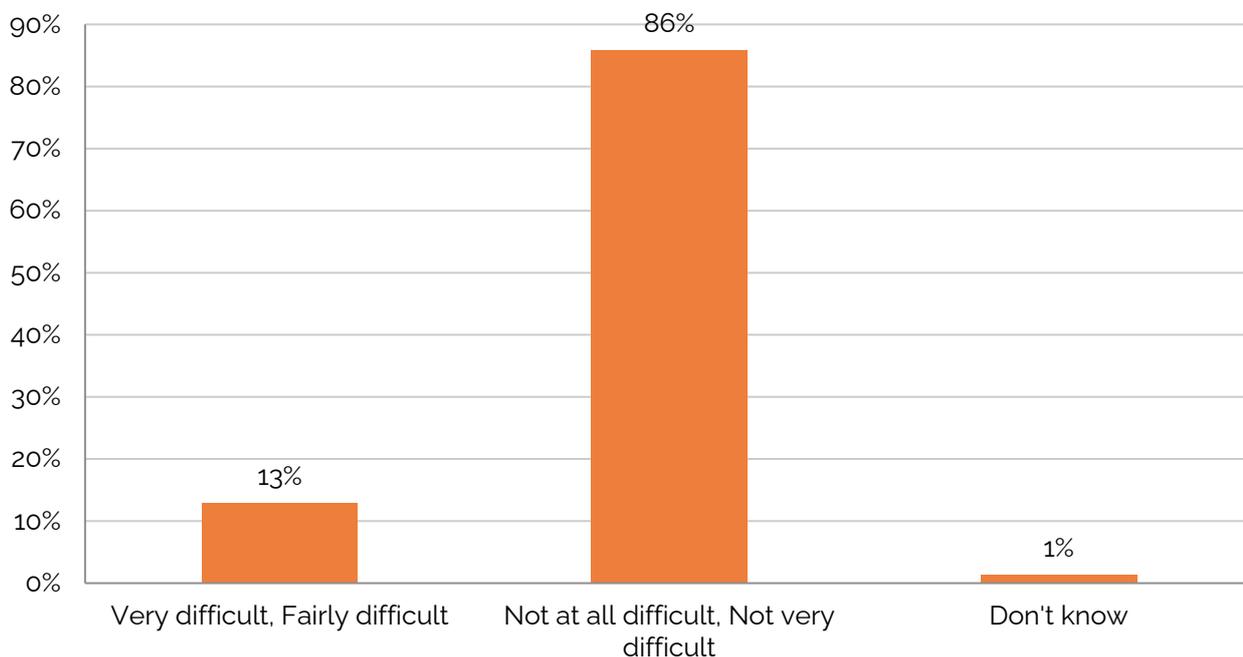
Base 525. Respondents who work from home

The majority of respondents who worked from home said they found it not difficult to work because of who they live with at 86% compared to only 13% who say they find this difficult

Differences for diverse groups

There were differences by age and people with caring responsibilities in experiencing difficulties in working from home because of who they live with.
Younger people found working home more difficult than other age groups because of who they lived with. Just under a quarter of 18–24-year-olds and 25–34-year-olds (23% each) found it difficult to work from home due to their living situation. However, this dropped significantly to only 4 per cent of adults aged 45-54 years old and 8 per cent of adults aged 55 and over, responding that they find home working difficult because of who they live with. Just over a fifth (21%) of people with caring responsibilities reported difficulties when working from home because of their living situation, compared to just over a tenth (11%) of people without caring responsibilities.

Taking breaks

Most people said they took a break 3-4 times a day when working from home (38%) with just under a quarter (22%) taking a break 5-6 times a day.

Figure 5 Frequency of taking a break when working from home
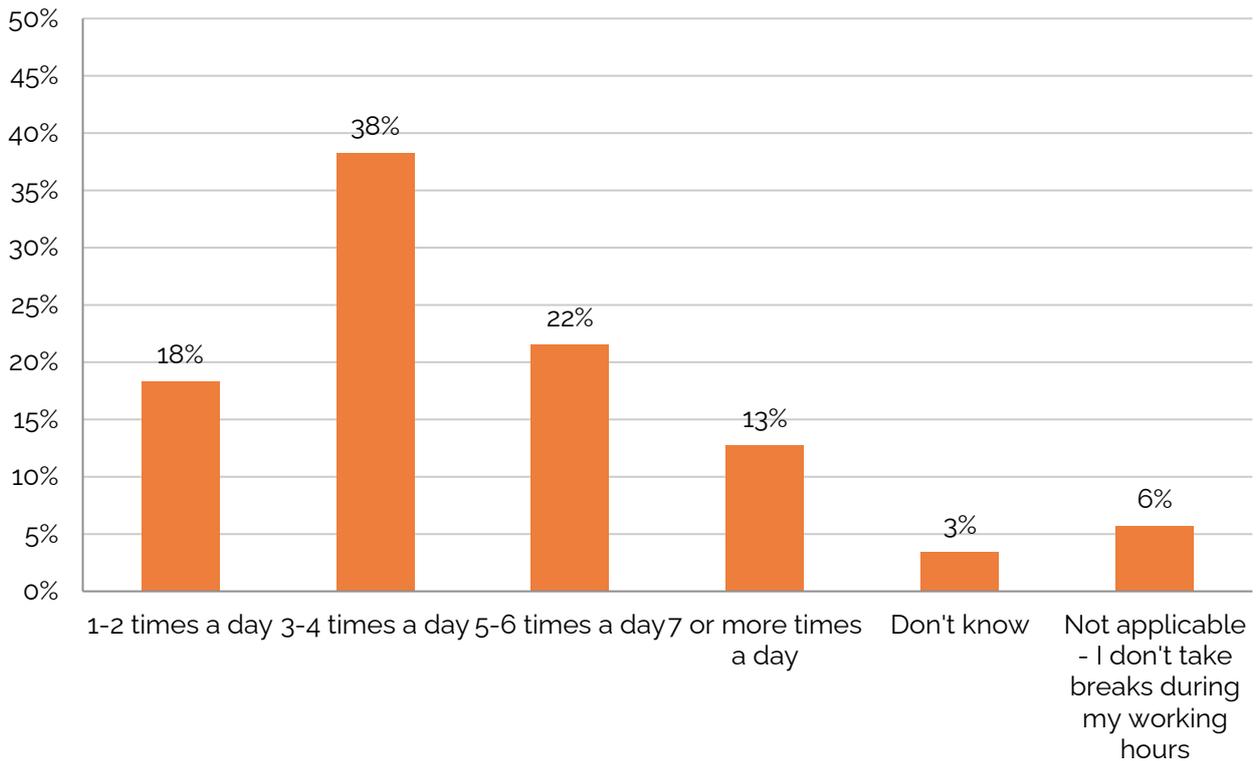
Base 643. Respondents who work from home

Differences for diverse groups
There were differences by age in the frequency people took breaks when working from home. Younger adults (18-24 years old) were most likely to not take any breaks or only take 1-2 breaks a day when working from home than any other age group. They were also less likely to take more frequent breaks than any other age group.

Employer support
Overall, employers allowed flexible working options. Three quarters (75%) of respondents agreed that their employer gives them flexibility to work from home if their role allows.

Just over two thirds of respondents who worked from home said that their employer supports and protects their health and wellbeing a lot or a fair amount (67%) while a quarter (25%) said that their employer did not support and protect their health and wellbeing very much or at all.

Figure 6 Extent to which employer supports workers' health and wellbeing
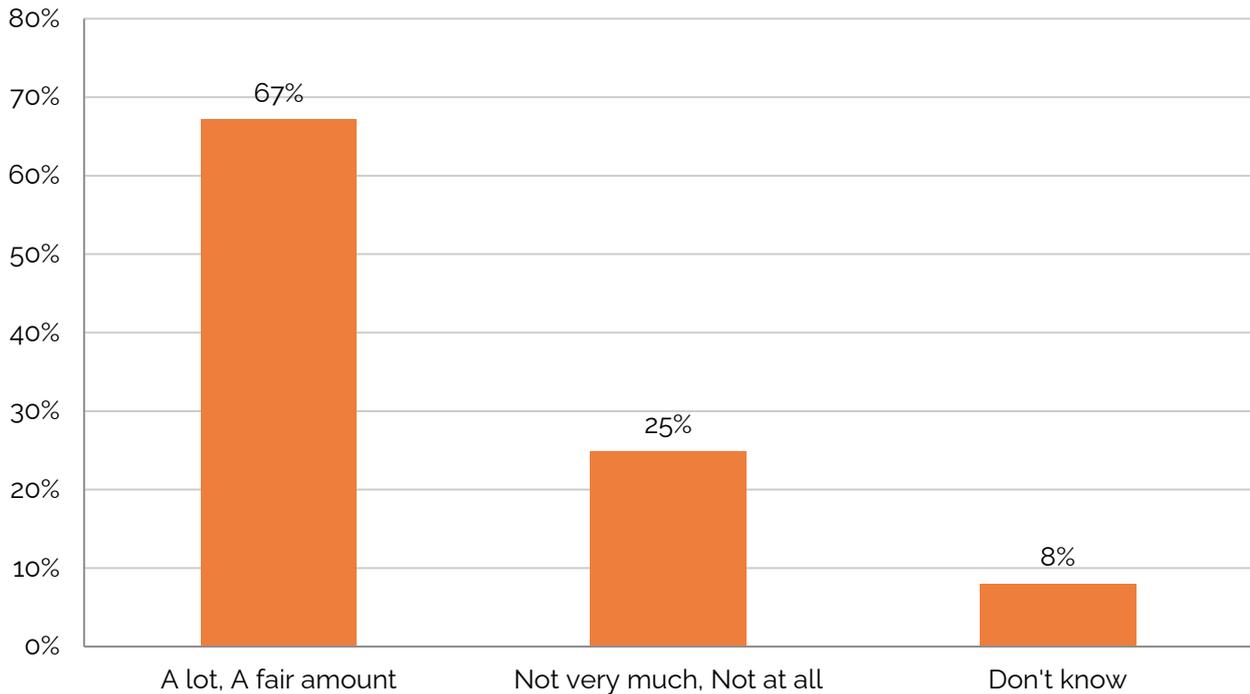
Base 643. Respondents who work from home

Overall, employers provided their workers with the facilities they need to work from home. For example, most respondents who said they needed a laptop, a mouse, a keyboard and a phone had been provided with one. However, in some cases equipment that workers need was not been provided. For example, the majority of respondents who needed a fully adjustable work chair, a desk and a screen protector were not given one.

Employers provided a range of facilities to support their workers' health and wellbeing while working from home. Regular support from their line manager was most commonly reported followed by training or advice on health homeworking. Just over a quarter of workers said they had accessed regular support for their mental health via their employer, while just under a quarter had completed an ergonomic assessment. Interestingly, just over a quarter were not sure if they had been provided with any support or facilities to support their health and wellbeing. Support for physical health was the least commonly reported.

Figure 7 Employer support for workers' health and wellbeing
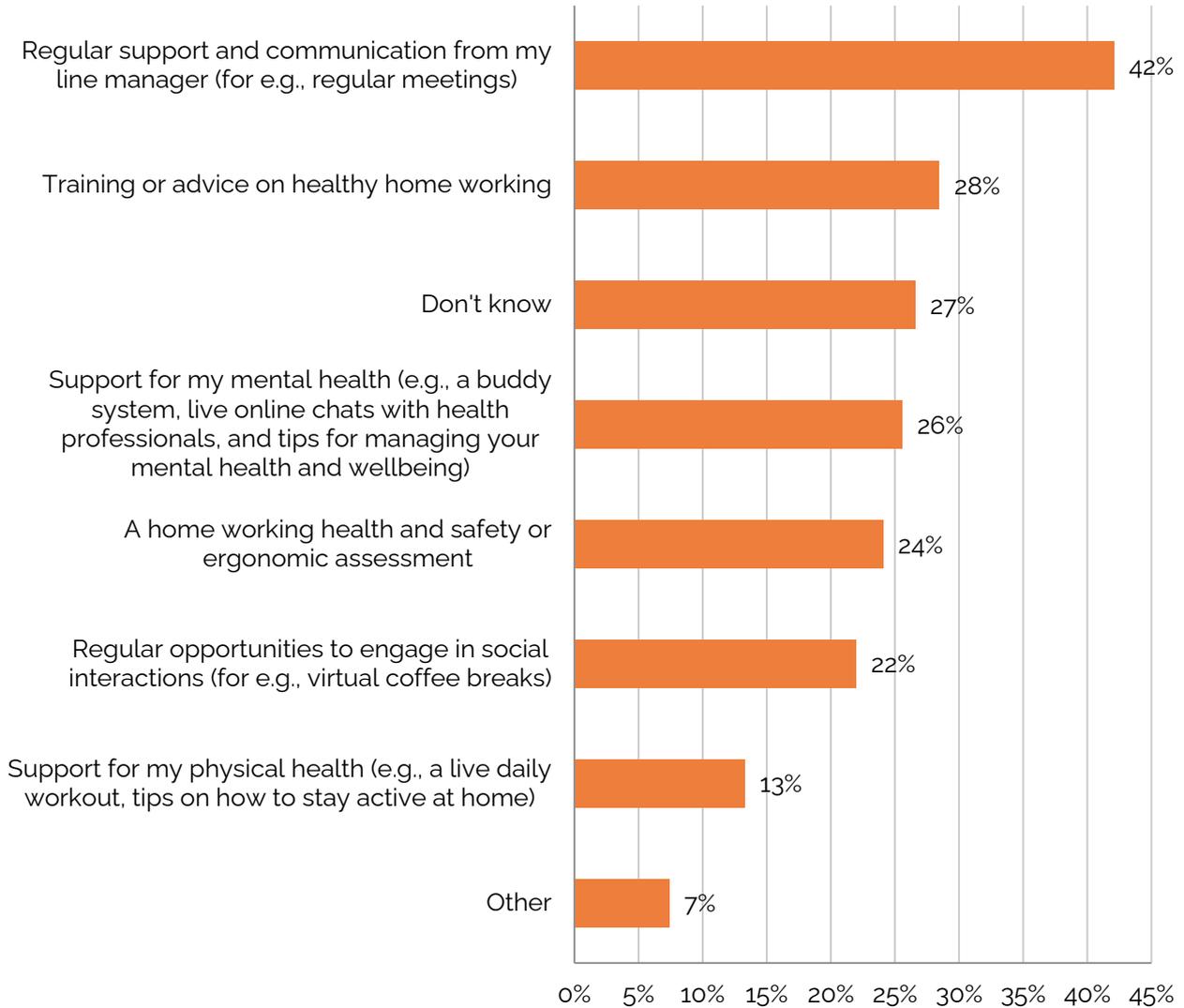
Base 643. Respondents who work from home

Line managers

Three fifths (60%) of respondents agreed that their line manager modelled healthy home and hybrid working.

The proportion of line managers who had received training on how to support home workers was fairly evenly split. Just over half (52%) of line managers agreed that they had been trained on how to support home workers, while just over two fifths (42%) said they had not.

Just under half of home workers agreed that their line manager had received sufficient training in supporting them to work from home (48%), while just under a quarter (23%) did not agree.

Self-employed home workers

Overall, self-employed home workers [80] felt that their health and wellbeing was protected, and that they could access support, but knowing where to go and actually accessing support may be more challenging.

Feeling supported

Of those who work from home, a significant majority said their health and wellbeing was very well or fairly well supported and protected (70%), while just under a fifth (19%) said it was not very well or not at well protected.

Figure 8 Extent to which self-employed home workers feel their health and wellbeing was supported
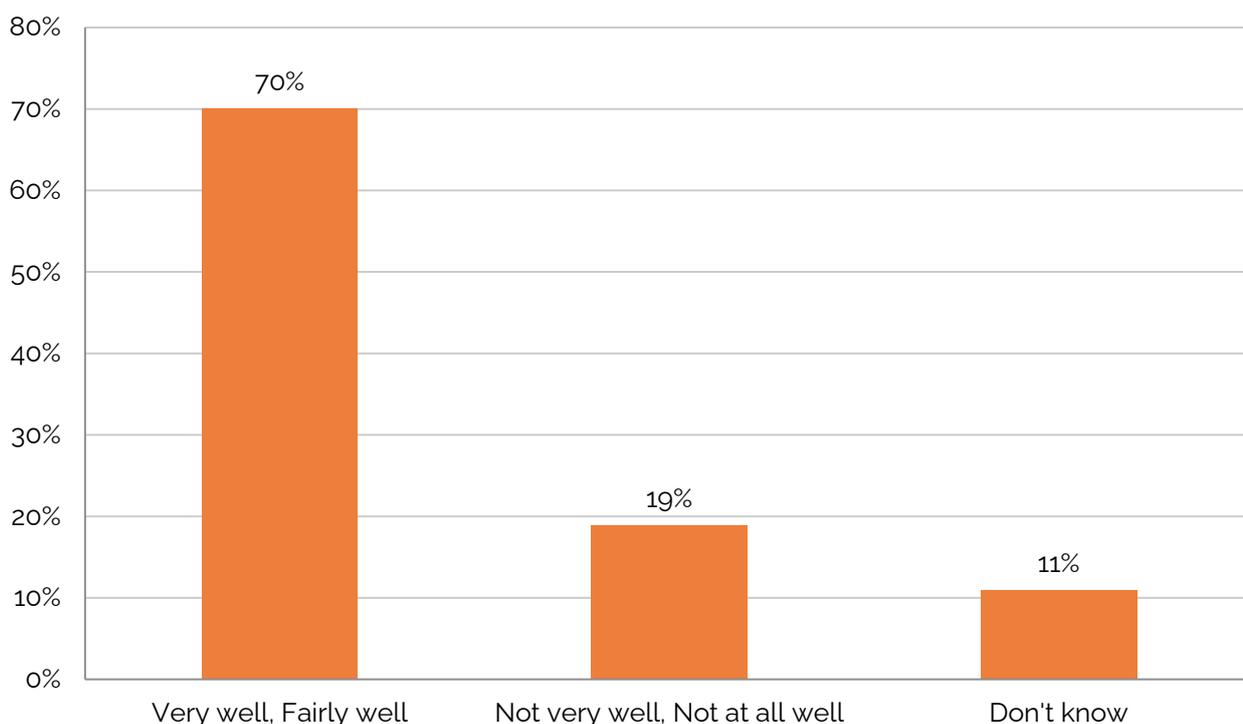
Base 144. Self-employed respondents who work from home

Accessing support

Similarly, over half (53%) of self-employed home workers said they found it easy to access support.

---

[80] 144 people reported being self-employed and home workers

However, when asked where they normally go to access support, the majority (40%) said they did not know. Just over a quarter (28%) said they normally use government websites or services and just over a fifth (21%) said they tend to access support via a co-working space. The majority reported they did not know what type of support they had accessed (38%), while over a quarter (27%) said they get support from their clients. Additionally, 41 % of self-employed home workers were not sure which facilities they had accessed to support their health and wellbeing while working from home.

Health and wellbeing

The majority of respondents agreed that home or hybrid working was, or would be, better for their health and wellbeing [81] with particular emphasis on benefits to mental health. Just under two thirds (62%) said it was or would be better for their mental health, and just over half (54%) said it was or would be better for their physical health. This trend increased for people already working at home at least some of the time, with over three quarters (76%) saying it was good for their mental health and over two thirds (69%) saying it was good for their physical health.

Figure 9 Impact of home and hybrid working on physical and mental health

Hybrid/home working is or would be better for my physical health (for example, you (would) do more exercise and have a healthier diet): 54% Strongly agree, Tend to agree; 35% Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree; 12% Don't know

Hybrid/home working is or would be better for my mental health (for example, you (would) feel less stressed or anxious): 62% Strongly agree, Tend to agree; 28% Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree; 11% Don't know

■ Strongly agree, Tend to agree ■ Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree ■ Don't know

Base 1,246. Respondents who are in work

---

[81] This includes people who don't currently work from home

Differences for diverse groups

There were differences for people with health conditions and disabled people in the extent to which they felt home and hybrid working was good for their health and wellbeing. Disabled people and people with health conditions were more likely than average to agree that home and hybrid working was or would be better for their health. From those who worked at home at least some of the time, 73% agreed hybrid/home working was better for their mental health and 65% agreed it was better for their physical health.

Overall, the majority of respondents who currently worked from home at least some of the time agreed that they practiced healthy working behaviours. They agreed that while working from home they kept clear boundaries between work and home life (70%), they had control over their work (85%), they felt connected to their colleagues (72%), they look after their health (76%), and they felt consulted and included (67%). For people who always worked from home, the proportion of people who agreed decreased slightly across all of these measures, but they remained the majority.

Figure 10 Healthy working behaviours

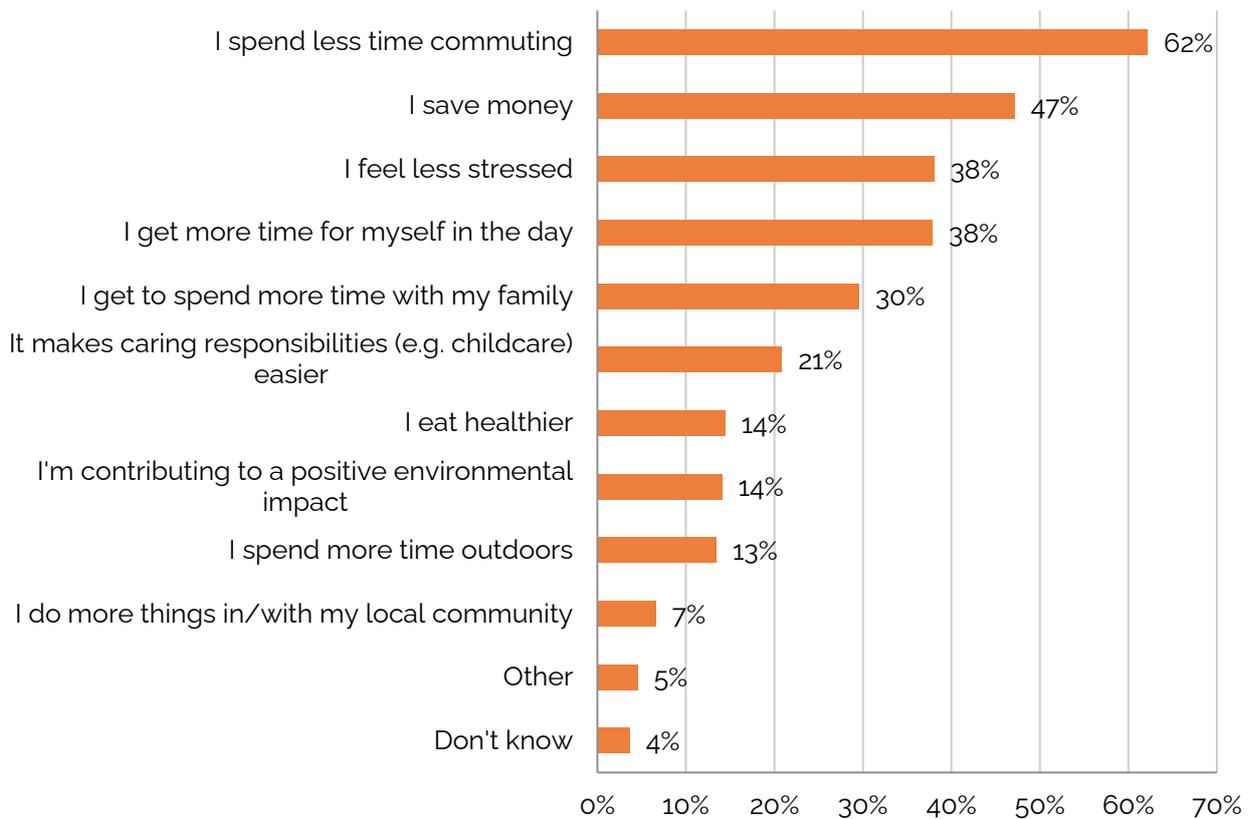|	Strongly agree, Tend to agree	Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree	Don't know
I look after my physical and mental health (for example by taking frequent short breaks during your working day, and taking time off when you are unwell)	76%	19%	5%
I feel consulted and included (for example, feeling involved in decision making and having the same opportunities as onsite colleagues or clients)	67%	21%	12%
I feel connected to my colleagues or clients (you have regular meetings with your line manager and opportunities for social contact with colleagues)	72%	19%	9%
I have control over my work (you can normally plan your own work and manage your own time and you feel trusted by your employer)	85%	11%	5%
I keep clear boundaries between my work and home life (for example, clearly marking the start and end of the day and switching off emails and work phones after work hours)	70%	25%	4%

Base 643. Respondents who work from home

Benefits of working from home and hybrid working

The most commonly reported overall benefit of home and hybrid working was spending less time commuting (62%). Saving money (47%), feeling less stressed and getting more time for themselves in the day (38% each) were also key benefits.

Figure 11 Benefits of home and hybrid working

Benefit	Percentage
I spend less time commuting	62%
I save money	47%
I feel less stressed	38%
I get more time for myself in the day	38%
I get to spend more time with my family	30%
It makes caring responsibilities (e.g. childcare) easier	21%
I eat healthier	14%
I'm contributing to a positive environmental impact	14%
I spend more time outdoors	13%
I do more things in/with my local community	7%
Other	5%
Don't know	4%

Base 643. Respondents who work from home

Differences for diverse groups

There were differences by age, people with caring responsibilities and gender in the reported benefits of home and hybrid working. 18–24-year-olds reported saving money as the top benefit of working from home compared to any other age group. Spending less time commuting became a more important benefit with age – three quarters (74%) of workers aged 55 and over chose this as a key benefit compared to just under two fifths (37%) of 18–24-year-olds. Just over a fifth (21%) of respondents said a benefit of home and hybrid working was that it made caring responsibilities easier. However, this alters slightly by gender. Over a quarter (26%) of women compared to under a fifth (17%) of men cite this benefit. For people with children, the second most important benefit was spending time with family – just under a half (43%) reported this as a benefit compared to just under a fifth (19%) of those without children.

Impacts of home and hybrid working

Overall, respondents agreed that home or hybrid working had improved their life in the following areas: improved work-life balance (80%), improved productivity (76%), improved job satisfaction (74%) and improved motivation (69%). There was very little

difference in results between workers who always worked from home and hybrid workers.

Figure 12 Impacts of home and hybrid working
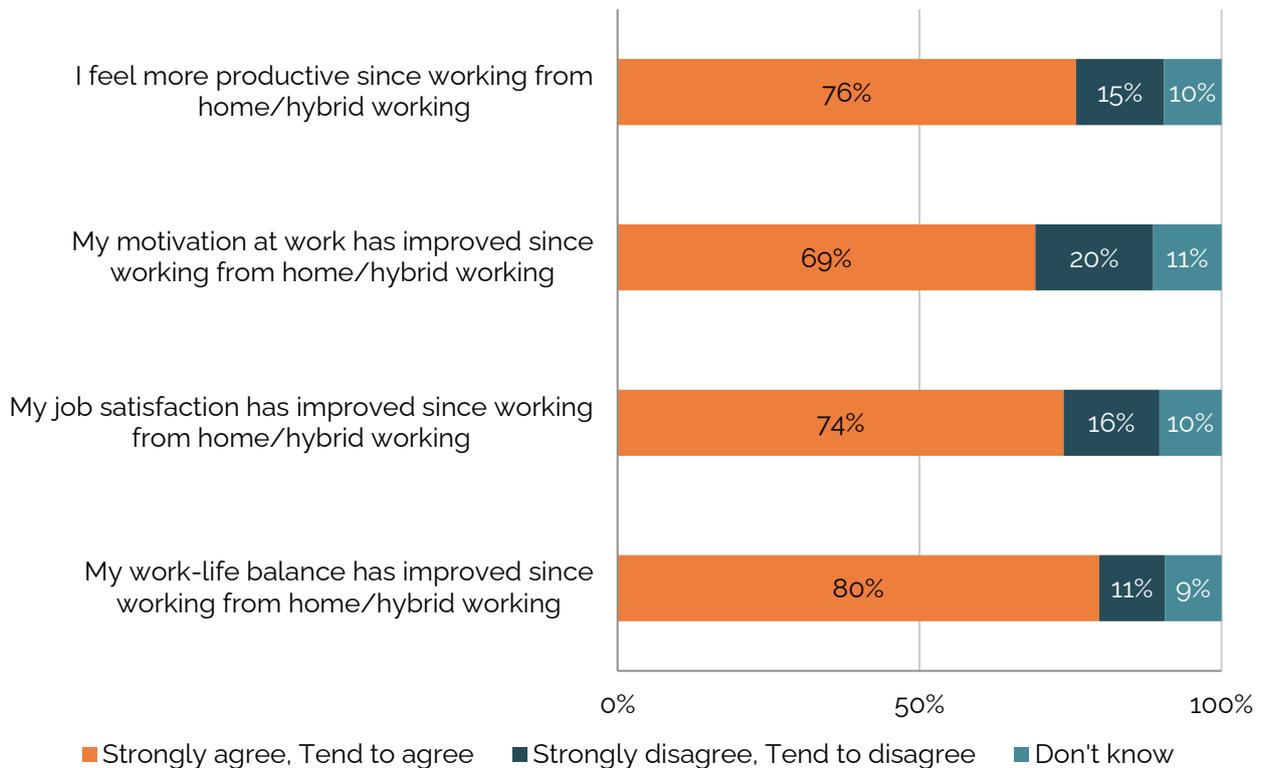
Base 643. Respondents who work from home

Future opportunities for home and hybrid working

We asked all workers, including those who did not currently work from home about future opportunities for home and hybrid working.

Overall, just under half (48%) agreed that they would like to work from home (more) but felt it was impossible given the requirements of their role or sector.

However, only just over a quarter of respondents (27%) felt that working from home more would negatively impact promotion opportunities. Similarly, just under a quarter (23%) agreed that they would like to work from home (more) but were too worried about their job security to ask their employer.

Figure 13 Future opportunities for home and hybrid working

|	Strongly agree, Tend to agree	Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree	Don't know
I would like to work from home (more) but I feel it's impossible given the requirements of the role or sector	48%	44%	8%
I would like to work from home (more) but I think I would be less likely to be promoted or it would negatively impact my career	27%	57%	15%
I would like to work from home (more) but am too worried about job security to ask my employer.	23%	63%	14%

Base 1,220. Respondents who are in work

Differences for diverse groups

There were differences by age in perspectives about how working from home would influence future work-related opportunities. Opinions about home and hybrid working affecting job security and career opportunities change significantly by age group. 18–24-year-olds were the only age group who said they would like to work from home more but were worried about the negative impacts this could have on their job security and future career. These concerns lessen with age. Workers aged 55 and over were the least likely to worry about home working impacting on their job opportunities. Younger people were also significantly more likely than average to say they would like to work from home (more) but felt it was impossible given the requirements of their role or sector (67% compared to the average of 50%).

Figure 14 Looking for another job if employer made office or on-site attendance compulsory
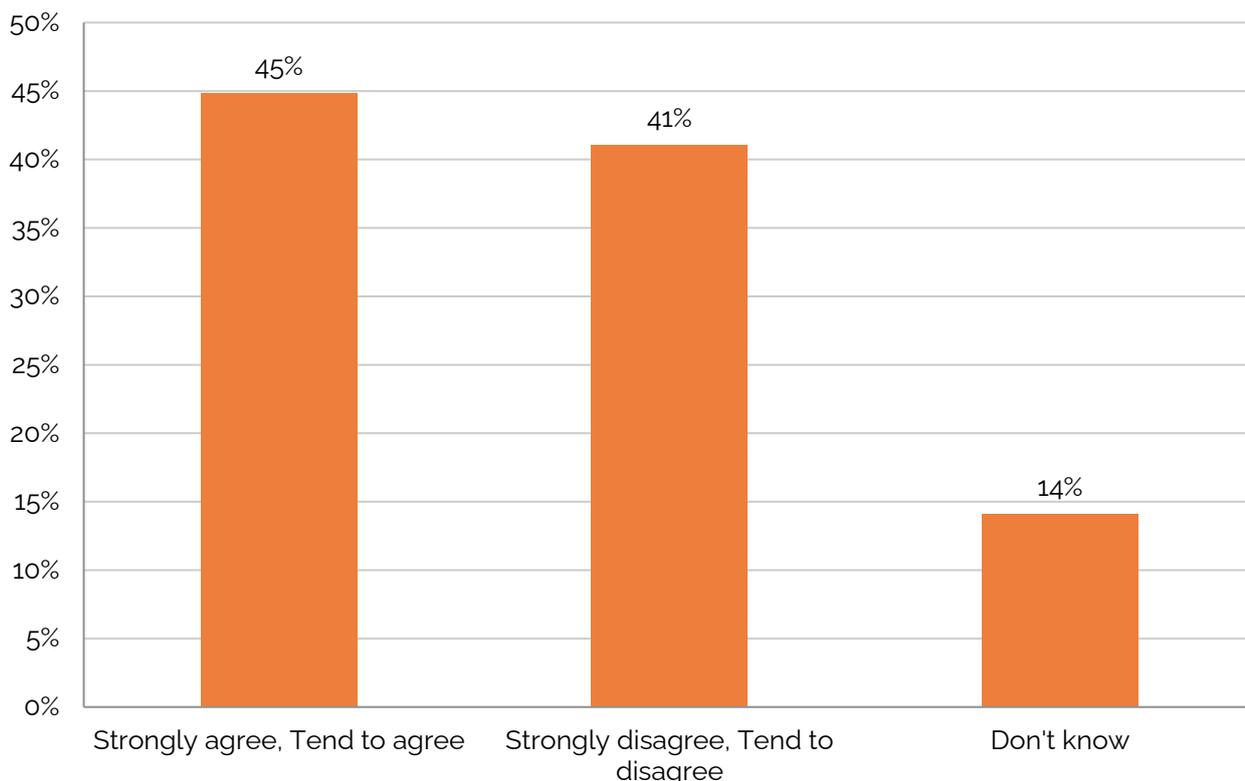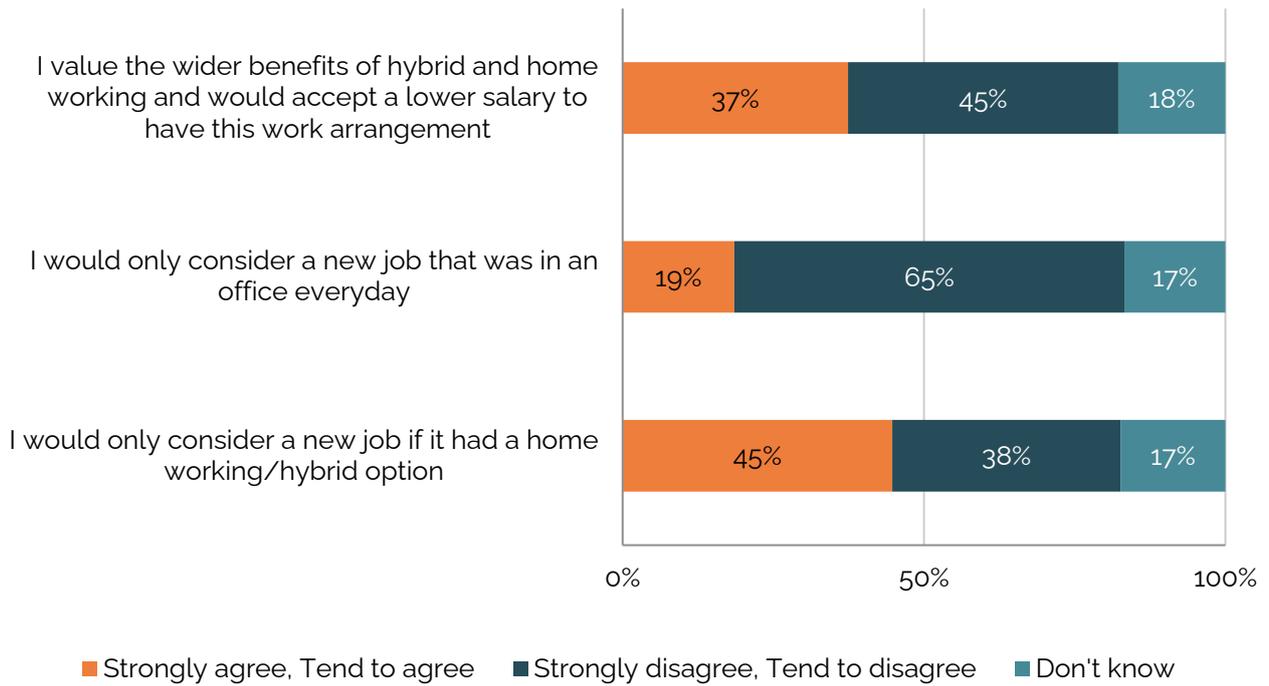

Base 481. Respondents who are in work

Overall, just under half (45%) of respondents said they would look for another job if their employer made office or on-site attendance compulsory, while just over two fifths (41%) strongly or tended to disagree.

When considering a new role, workers would favour flexible working arrangements. Figure 15 below shows that just under a fifth (20%) completely agreed that they would only consider a new role that was entirely office based, while 38% saying they wouldn't consider a new role that was solely office based. Overall, forty-five per cent of workers said they would only consider a new role if it had a home or hybrid working option.

However, the results highlighted that income was favoured over home or hybrid working options. Almost half (45%) of respondents said they would not accept a lower salary to have home or hybrid working arrangement, while just under two fifths (37%) said they would.

Figure 15 Considering future working arrangements

I value the wider benefits of hybrid and home working and would accept a lower salary to have this work arrangement: 37% Strongly agree/Tend to agree, 45% Strongly disagree/Tend to disagree, 18% Don't know

I would only consider a new job that was in an office everyday: 19% Strongly agree/Tend to agree, 65% Strongly disagree/Tend to disagree, 17% Don't know

I would only consider a new job if it had a home working/hybrid option: 45% Strongly agree/Tend to agree, 38% Strongly disagree/Tend to disagree, 17% Don't know

- Strongly agree, Tend to agree
- Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree
- Don't know

Base 2,185. All respondents

Creating the conditions for healthy home working

Home and hybrid working will not be right for every workplace or every individual. However, they are an important flexibility for many, and a continuing feature of our ways of working. If done the right way, home and hybrid working can tackle inequalities, and improve people's health and wellbeing. This includes more flexibility for parents and carers, more adaptations for disabled people and a better work-life balance for everyone. However, if not done the right way, home and hybrid working can worsen health and wellbeing outcomes for individuals and preexisting inequalities for society. This can include physical problems from unsafe working conditions, feeling isolated and overlooked for progression, experiencing anxiety if work and home boundaries are too blurred, or facing additional pressures from a dual role as carer and worker. We set out below some considerations for central government, tips to help employers and workers understand what healthy home and hybrid working looks like and the steps they can take to achieve this.

For central government

The Employment Rights Bill introduced to parliament in October is a welcome step in improving workers' rights. However, further consideration is needed within the bill to ensure that home and hybrid working are protective of health for everyone.

The right to flexible working

Access to home and hybrid working is an important flexibility for many. However, current regulations do not go far enough to ensure that flexible working from day one is the default unless there is exceptional reason for this not to happen. The right to flexible working must also not be seen as a substitute for other rights such as parental leave, carers leave, or adequate provision of childcare or replacement care.

The right to disconnect

Home working brings with it the risk of work encroaching on personal lives. The government should consider following international examples such as policies in Ireland and France that protect people's work-life balance.

The right to work autonomously

Work is more protective of health when people can work autonomously. Surveillance technologies can threaten people's autonomy and impinge on their right to privacy. The government should regulate the use of the surveillance technologies so that their use is subject to worker consultation where appropriate.

More widely, the Government should consider how to provide practical support for workers and employers to create healthier home workplaces

Not everyone who works at home has access to a healthy home workplace and not every employer has the same resources to support workers. The government should

consider how to support this, for example, through supporting the development of a network of public spaces that could be used as remote working hubs and by increasing the advice and guidance available to employers to support flexible working, reasonable adjustments and other requests.

For employers

Legal requirements for employers

Employers are legally required to ensure homeworkers can work safely, as well as consider requests for flexible working, and provide adjustments for disabled people. However, there is much more that can be done to create healthy, inclusive and productive workplaces for home and hybrid workers.

Develop home/hybrid working policies

- Develop policies in consultation with workers and their representatives including unions.

- Homeworking policies should consider basic rights such as a right to family life, a right to privacy and entitlements to adequate rest breaks, in particular a right to disconnect from communication. Home and hybrid working should not be seen as a replacement for other support policies such as paid sick time, parental leave or other forms of flexible working such as job share or compressed hours.

Normalise flexible working

- If there are jobs that can be done from home or as hybrid roles, then include this in job adverts and make it open to everyone as a right from day one. Offering flexibilities as the default, where possible, helps to create an inclusive and diverse workplace and reduces the risk of homeworkers or those who need flexibilities feeling stigmatised or isolated by their choices. Not everyone can work from home, but there is a flexible option that will work for every type of job.

Tailor support as standard

- The needs and preferences of home and hybrid workers are highly individual. Engage with individual employees to identify their needs and establish what would best support their healthy home and hybrid working.

- Consider offering tailored adjustment plans as standard for all workers. These are frequently used for disabled workers but could be used more widely to keep a living record of people's needs and preferences.

Support hybrid working where possible

- There is increasing evidence that hybrid working offers more benefits than working full time in an office or remotely.

- Put on anchor office days or socials that attract people to the office on certain days.

- Let workers manage their time and tasks, so they can make best use of their time in the office and their time at home.

Embed equality and diversity

- Carry out workforce monitoring to highlight any differences in home/hybrid workers progression, access to training, pay, and sickness absence.

- Monitor whether people from different groups, different roles, and different levels have equal access to home/hybrid working.

- Target support at younger workers as they are more likely than other age groups to face disadvantages when home/hybrid working.

Technology and equipment

- Provide homeworkers with all the equipment and support they need. This must include risk assessments and training to make sure people are healthy and safe.

- Allow people to use technology in the way that suits them. For example, while having video cameras on by default can help with social interaction, people should also be able to choose to join meetings by phone.

- Limit the amount of time spent in virtual meetings. This could be by setting maximum amounts of daily time spent on video calls and strict 'virtual' commuting times or micro-breaks between video meetings.

Line management and leadership

- Provide specific training for line managers on how to lead, support, and provide feedback to homeworking colleagues.

- Line managers should model healthy working from home behaviours and ensure colleagues are putting them into practice, such as not working from home while ill, taking lunch breaks, limiting the number of the meetings they have, and not working over-long hours.

Fostering autonomy

- People are happier, healthier and more productive when they can manage their own time. Grant control of time/autonomy to homeworkers to support better health and wellbeing outcomes.

- If any technology is being used to monitor performance or wellbeing, agree its use with workers before it is deployed and be transparent about how data will be used. Consider whether the use of technology is necessary and whether it contravenes people's right to privacy or right to disconnect.

Social interaction and support

- Provide ways for homeworkers to maintain frequent informal contact with colleagues. For example, organise casual gatherings where colleagues can meet and discuss issues that are either work or non-work related and provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction between employees (e.g. video calls rather than emails).

- Include homeworking colleagues in group tasks. For example, including remote workers in discussions during hybrid meetings.

- Ensure that homeworkers are able to attend union meetings and access support from union representatives.

Supporting health and wellbeing

- Provide homeworking employees with specific health and wellbeing support such as online daily live interactive workouts, wellbeing chats with health professionals and consider conducting employee surveys to understand the prevalence of health and wellbeing issues among home and hybrid workers.

- Limit the parameters of flexible working to make sure people have adequate rest and breaks. This could be by making sure people claim back extra hours worked and setting office hours, so people do not work late into the evening. This could include a right to disconnect policy.[82]

- Make your support offer visible and clear so that everyone can access it.

Separate home and work

- Provide funds for employees to set up a separate home office, computing equipment, and separate communications devices for work and personal lives. Employees with caring responsibilities, those on low incomes and younger employees might benefit from this support in particular. This could include finding co-working spaces for those who do not have a suitable place to work at home.

Checklist for homeworkers

This checklist provides a way for home and hybrid workers, including self-employed people, to assess their health and wellbeing and consider if any changes are needed. There is no one size fits all as everyone has different needs, but completing this list could suggest where action is required, or discussion needed with managers, colleagues, union representatives or friends and family.

Table 1 Checklist for homeworkers

---

[82] CIPD. What is the right to disconnect?

I keep clear boundaries between my work and home life
I have a separate office/space for work
I clearly mark the start and the end of the working day
I switch off emails or work phones after work hours
I generally keep the same working hours
Colleagues, friends and family know my working hours and do not interrupt me inside/ outside of these times
I have control over my work
I can normally plan my work and manage my own time
I feel trusted by my employer
I know how to use the right technologies to improve my working practices
I feel connected to my colleagues
I regularly have the opportunity for informal and social contact with colleagues
I have regular meetings with my line manager
I am supported by my employer
My employer allows all employees to work from home some of the time if their role allows
My employer carries out risk assessments and makes any needed changes
My employer has provided me with all the equipment I need to work at home (for example office chair, desk, computer, screen, and keyboard)
My employer supports my health and wellbeing through providing resources and training
My employer provides training on how to use all the equipment and technology I need
My line manager models healthy homeworking behaviours
I feel consulted and included
I feel consulted and involved in decision making
I have the same opportunities as onsite colleagues to participate in training, meetings, and consultations
I have the same opportunities for progression and promotion as onsite/office colleagues
I look after my physical and mental health
I take time off when I am unwell
I take frequent short breaks as part of my working day
I do not routinely work from places like the sofa, the kitchen table or from bed
I regularly change position, for example from sitting to standing

Appendix one

Evidence review method

The question posed for the evidence review was "What is healthy home and hybrid working?". A search of the literature was conducted using the following search terms:

"homework/ing/workers" OR "hybrid work/ing/workers" OR "remote work/ing/workers" OR "telework/ing/workers" AND

"health" OR "wellbeing" OR "occupational health" OR "musculoskeletal" OR "mental health" OR "physical health" OR "social isolation" OR "stress" OR "anxiety" OR "family" OR "inactivity"

"young people" OR "disabled people" OR "older people" OR "women" OR "carers" OR "renters" OR "renting"

The literature included academic articles, research reports, and previous evidence reviews. There was a primary focus on research published from 2020 onwards, and research carried out in the UK or other Western countries. Forty-four articles were identified from the literature search, two of which were removed for non-relevance, leaving forty-two articles for inclusion in the review. Additional articles were identified through purposive searching to address evidence gaps.

Quality of evidence

Most studies originated in the UK (n=9), Europe (n=18) and North America (n=9) and three in South America. The remaining three were reviews of international sources of evidence. A majority of studies utilised a survey approach (n=21) while other approaches included qualitative interviews (n=6) and evidence reviews (n=16).

One challenge associated with trying to understand outcomes related to homeworking only four years after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic is that much of the research published since 2020 focuses on people who were homeworking during the pandemic. It can therefore be difficult to identify specific outcomes associated with homeworking versus those associated with other factors that have co-occurred during this time, such as parents having to home-school children during lockdowns, and partners both homeworking in the same space. There is a lack of evidence on experiences of home and hybrid working and related health issues as the world has moved on from the pandemic and home and hybrid working have become more normalised as long-term practice.

Most sources of evidence were ranked as being of "moderate" quality (n=22), with 17 ranked as "low" quality, 2 as "high" quality, and 1 as "very low" quality. Reasons for ranking sources as lower in quality included small sample sizes, lack of relevance to the research question, research that was carried out among non-Western populations

with significant cultural differences to the UK, and literature reviews that included studies from before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Survey method

The survey reached over 2,000 working adults aged 18 and over. Fieldwork was conducted in June 2024 by a market research company via their UK online omnibus survey. The sample has been weighted to provide a nationally representative dataset.

The survey explored:

- People's current working practices

- Employer support for home and hybrid workers

- Support for self-employed home and hybrid workers

- The benefits of home and hybrid working

- The impact of home and hybrid working on people's health and wellbeing

- People's future opportunities for home and hybrid working