

Homeworker Wellbeing Survey

Interim results – 7 April 2020

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Background to the Survey

- The COVID-19 crisis has obliged many thousands of employees to become homeworkers, raising issues about the impact of this change on their physical & emotional wellbeing, their morale and their motivation
- In March 2020 IES launched an online survey of homeworkers to measure their wellbeing and this slide deck presents interim results from the first 500 responses

Who are the respondents so far?

- 71% working at home as a result of COVID-19
- 70% female, average age 46 years in professional, managerial and administrative roles in mainly service sector and public sector organisations
- 72% living with a partner, 30% with dependent children & 17% caring for older relatives
- 73% have mortgages or rent to pay
- 46% manage people in their jobs & are working up to 5 hours longer than they are contracted each week
- 81% have company-provided computer and 52% have Smartphone provided by company

Looking after homeworker wellbeing

- 75% say their employer has not carried out a health and safety risk assessment of their homeworking arrangements
- 73% have access to Occupational Health support and 64% have access to an EAP
- 42% share their workspace with other adults working from home
- 83% have contact with their boss up to 5 times a week

Physical Health – *‘how often have you had this condition in the last 2 weeks compared to normal’?*

- 64% lost sleep from worry
- 58% aches/pains in neck
- 56% aches/pains in shoulder
- 43% aches/pains in elbow
- 47% aches/pains in wrist or hand
- 48% aches/pains in hips
- 49% aches/pains in knees
- 55% aches/pains in back
- 55% eye strain
- 55% headaches or migraines
- 33% chest pains
- 37% leg cramps
- 39% heartburn or indigestion
- 60% fatigue

Emotional Health – ‘% saying they have felt this for less than half the time (last 2 weeks) or not at all’

- 32% not cheerful & in good spirits
- 40% not calm & relaxed
- 60% not active & vigorous
- 40% not waking up fresh & rested
- 45% not having day filled with interest
- 23% worried about family finance
- 21% worried about job security
- 41% anxious about family member health
- 20% lonely & isolated

Using the WHO5 Mental Health Measure - Mental health is poorer for:

- Younger workers (MH much better for over 60s)
- Those looking after elderly relatives (but parents are no different to non-parents)
- Those living with parents or renting
- Those new to homeworking (compared with those with long experience)
- Those working more than 10 hours longer than contracted hours per week
- Those in less frequent contact with their boss

Other Health Concerns

- 20% say alcohol consumption has increased
- 60% worry they are taking less exercise
- 33% eating less healthily in lockdown
- 48% working long & irregular hours
- 26% have continued working despite illness in last 2 weeks
- 36% feel under too much work pressure
- 43% don't have enough time to get their work done

Morale, Motivation & Homeworking

- 37% say homeworking is motivational
- 33% frequently feel isolated
- 67% enjoy the autonomy
- 75% are clear of what's expected of them
- 65% feel valued by their employer
- 62% speak highly of their employer to friends
- 77% feel trusted by their employer
- 71% say their boss is good at staying in touch
- 70% intend to stay with their employer
- 34% worry that decisions are taken without them
- 80% get feelings of accomplishment from their job
- 50% not happy with current work-life balance

Takeaway Messages

- Significant decline in musculoskeletal health in 2 weeks
- Poor sleep & increased fatigue a concern
- Alcohol, diet & exercise declining for many
- Emotional concerns over finance, isolation, energy, work-life balance & family health
- Work motivation holding up for most, especially if in regular contact with boss

Actions for Employers

- Make sure home 'office' set-up is safe and ergonomic & that employees are mobile & take exercise
- Provide mental health support via informal messaging groups, virtual coffee mornings, access to EAP's and regular contact with bosses & colleagues
- Focus on 'high risk' groups – financial concerns, eldercare, those struggling to adjust, those prone to feelings of isolation, those at risk of domestic abuse
- Rethink performance targets & monitoring, involve employees in decisions about reorganising work and reallocating tasks & priorities

What Next for the Survey?

- Survey will stay open during April
- More detailed analysis by demographic sub-groups and using WHO5
- Monitor results over time to track changes in wellbeing patterns
- Dissemination of findings to policy & corporate audiences

Further information:

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