

April 2021



KARIANBOX

Listen better,
make meaning,
inform action

New ways of working: The lasting impact and influence of the pandemic

How over 250 organisations have reacted and adapted to enforced change and employee needs, with a particular focus on parents and carers

hard-hitting stats | inside stories | insight-led actions

In partnership with

**THE GLOBAL
INSTITUTE
FOR WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP**

KING'S
College
LONDON



As organisations move from survival mode towards recovery mode, there is a critical need to make clear decisions about the future of work that do not disadvantage those who have done the most to care for others.

Amongst other hard-hitting statistics and actionable insights, this report reveals in detail the challenges faced by parents and carers during the pandemic. It highlights the financial and career costs they have endured as well as their sense of uncertainty because of the current lack of clarity on what the future will hold.

Turning adversity into opportunity is an important part of driving progress and there is a sense of optimism in many organisations about the future of work. However, there is a danger that we get distracted by buzz words such as 'hybrid working' without considering what this means in practice. Designing the future of work will require leaders to communicate effectively, to draw on the evidence and to take action in a way that is collaborative and sensitive to the broader context.

It is now time to show how we have learnt from the experiences of the last year and how we are genuinely taking action to evolve how we work for good.

Julia Gillard

Chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership



In collaboration with the Global Institute for Women's Leadership, this latest Karian and Box research focuses on the lasting impact and influence of the pandemic; shining a light on both the positive and the negative aspects of enforced change and revealing what over 250 organisations think the future of work could look like.

It poses five big questions for organisations to address as they think about what it takes to create inclusive new ways of working post-pandemic and puts a lens on how organisational support for parents and carers has evolved over the last six months.



In this report

03

Executive summary

- 04 Six months on:
Oct 2020–March 2021
- 05 The headlines at a glance
- 06 The big questions posed



Go further:

For access to an InformAction pack to help you explore the challenges posed by this research, please visit karianandbox.com/insights

07

Where we are now

- 08 The organisational impact
 - The experience of the pandemic has not been universal
 - Changing attitudes towards ways of working
- 09 The impact on parents and carers
 - The increase in financial and career costs
 - Fear of planned redundancies and restructures
 - The inconsistency of policy provision and application
- 14 The mental wellbeing challenge
 - Support planned vs. support in place
 - Prioritising resources over new ways of working

16

The future of work

- 17 View of the future
 - Optimism for lasting positive change
 - Limited consensus on the future of work
- 19 Planning for a hybrid workplace
 - Hybrid working is the future (for most)
 - Striking the balance: business vs. individual needs
 - Looking further than workplace location
- 22 The danger of cultivating accidental flex
 - Working from home does not equal flexible working
 - Flexitime is particularly vital for parents and carers

24

Turning insights into action

- 25 Insight-led actions to the questions posed
 - Hybrid working, talent management, the role of the office
 - Support and wellbeing and inclusive culture
- 27 Inside stories: Learnings and inspiration
 - Introducing 'asynchronous communication' with OANDA
 - Supporting frontline colleagues with Compass Group plc
 - Enhancing policies for parents and carers with Vodafone UK
 - Prioritising human needs with Aviva
 - Creating inclusive workplaces with The Unmistakables

33

Appendix

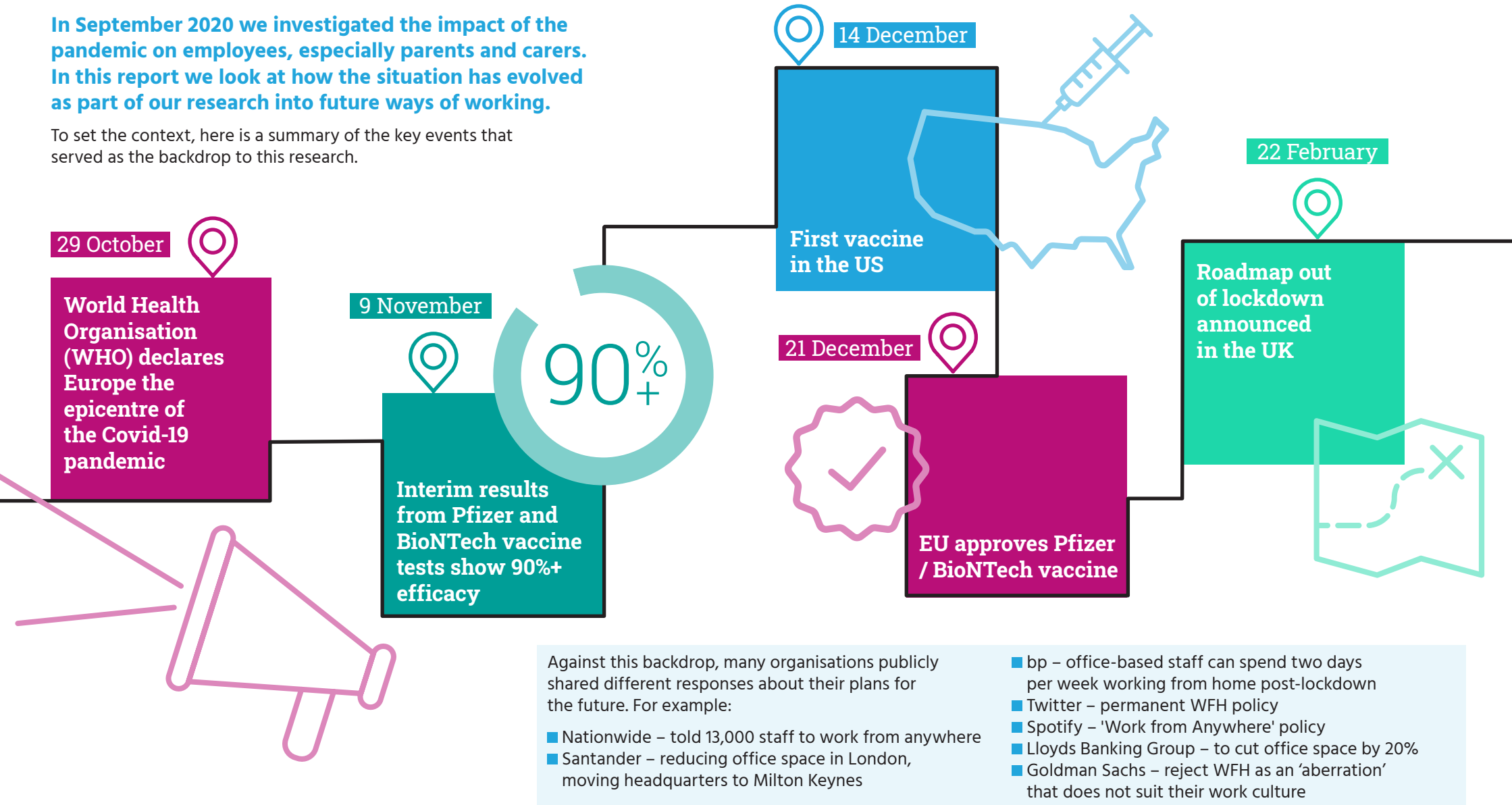
- 34 Research methodology
- 35 References
- 36 Contributors



Six months on: October 2020 – March 2021

In September 2020 we investigated the impact of the pandemic on employees, especially parents and carers. In this report we look at how the situation has evolved as part of our research into future ways of working.

To set the context, here is a summary of the key events that served as the backdrop to this research.





The headlines at a glance

Analysis of over 250 organisations highlights the following key findings which are explored in more detail in this report.

The results outline research undertaken in February and March 2021 with organisations across a number of sectors.



Differences are compared to the research in September 2020

One year on from the start of lockdown restrictions organisations are looking to the future.

There is organisational change ahead for many

78%

are adapting their future strategy as a result of the pandemic

37%

are actively planning redundancies within the next year and 47% are planning to restructure

Coupled with optimism for positive lasting change



4 in 5

anticipate positive lasting change to the way we work



90%

report an increase in support for home working and 97% are planning to adopt hybrid working

Six months on from our last research

the perceived impact on parents and carers has worsened and there is uncertainty about the future.

Parents and carers have faced financial and career costs

2 in 3

organisations have observed parents and carers using annual leave to balance responsibilities and 63% feel that the career and skills development of this group has been negatively impacted

...and are not always protected by policies

32%

of organisations have policies in place to mitigate against redundancy selection where people's performance has been affected by the pandemic

43%

have policies in place to mitigate against redundancy selection when time has been taken off work due to illness or caring responsibilities

There is a danger of 'fake-flex' where the focus is on remote working, rather than on flexible working or job redesign to evolve roles for hybrid working

36%

are planning to redesign job roles to better suit remote or hybrid working

77%  2

Increased support for flexitime / flexible working

63%  2

Increased support for parents and carers

43%  9

Increased support for part-time working

As we look to the future the need for clear direction and support is evident.



30%

say that there is clear consensus on the vision for the future which also has an impact on morale



55%

of organisations have put plans in place to support people's mental wellbeing as they return to the office



The big questions posed

The insights provided in this research will help inform the action taken by organisations to shape new ways of working and create inclusive workplaces.

Here are five key questions posed by this research.

01

HYBRID WORKING

What does **hybrid working** mean and how do you make it work in practice?

02

TALENT

How can we make the way we work part of how we **attract, retain and develop talent** – particularly those who are parents and carers?

03

ROLE OF THE OFFICE

What is the **role of the office** in the future?

04

SUPPORT & WELLBEING

How can we support our employees through the **transition** from survival mode to recovery mode over the coming months?

05

INCLUSIVE CULTURE

How can we address the **broader inclusion** challenge?




Go further:

Read inside stories that dive deeper into these themes from page 27 onwards; organisations featured include OANDA, Vodafone and Aviva.



Where we are now

- The organisational impact
- The impact for parents and carers
- The mental wellbeing challenge



We've proven that working flexibly doesn't have any impact on productivity. I think my colleagues would agree that there's no way we could have worked as hard if we were in the office, especially the single parents who have been homeschooling. But I don't really know what's going to happen next; are we going to go back to 'normal' or are we going to learn from this experience and adapt?

HR professional, Telecommunications

The experience of the pandemic has not been universal



Experiences of the pandemic have been far from universal, differing at industry, sector, and individual levels.

Larger organisations (60,001 colleagues or more) and those in accountancy, banking, and financial sectors are most likely to have been affected adversely by the pandemic.

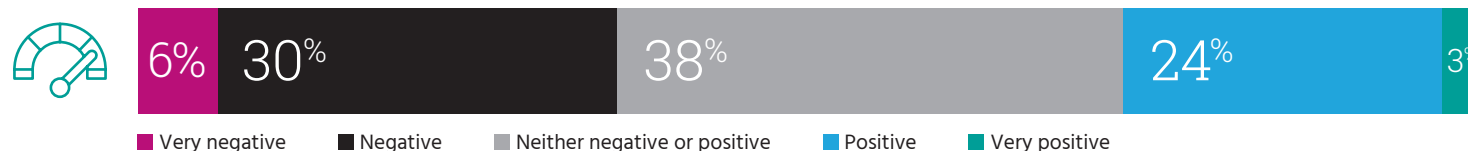
Regardless of the impact on performance there is change ahead for most as 78% are adapting their future strategy as a result of the pandemic.

A comparison of organisations with different levels of morale finds two key trends:

- Organisations who reported improved morale compared to this time six months ago are less likely to be anticipating restructure or redundancy than organisations where morale is the same or worse.
- They are also considerably more positive about the support provided, particularly for parents and carers. This suggests that offering such support can contribute towards improved morale overall.

The impact of the pandemic on organisational performance and morale is varied

What has been the overall impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the performance of your organisation?

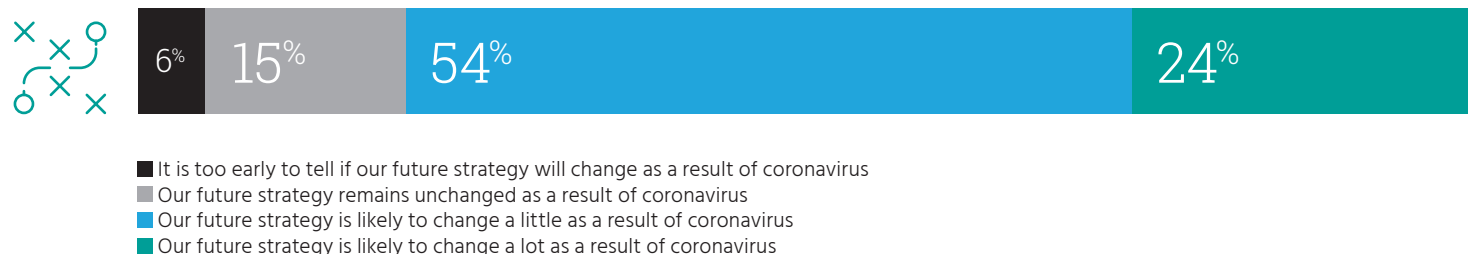


What is the overall mood of your organisation compared to this time 6 months ago?



Though the future strategy of most organisations is being affected by the pandemic

Which of the following statements about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic is most true for your organisation?



Attitudes towards ways of working continue to change



Since the pandemic triggered a global experiment in mass home working for many, there have been considerable shifts in attitudes towards ways of working.

The attitude towards home working – for those who can – has seen the greatest shift over the last year. The importance placed on location and proximity has been challenged by the experience of operating as a remote workforce for many.

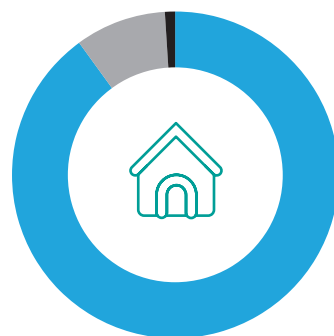
■ However, the gap between support for part-time working and flexible working compared to home working indicates that support for ways of working is focused on location, rather than a broader flexible approach.

■ Research has found that, globally, 40% of employees want more flexible working practices, including options for working from home and part-time working.¹ Providing these options will be a critical part of attracting and retaining future talent.

It is important to recognise that not all jobs have the option of hybrid working. Three quarters of jobs in the highest-paying industries can be done remotely, compared with just 3 per cent of those in the lowest paying industries.²

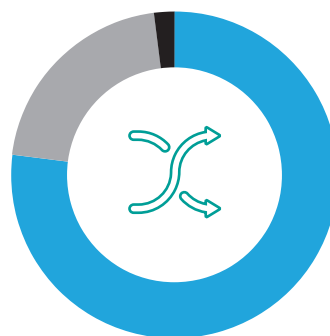
In what way has the coronavirus pandemic changed your organisation's strategy around the following:

Support for home working



Increased 90% No change 8% Decreased 1%

Support for flexitime / flexible hours



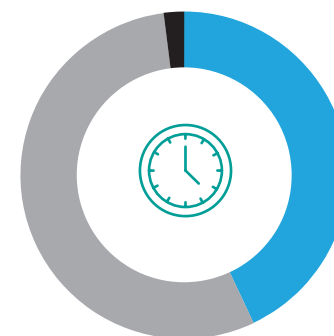
Increased 77% No change 21% Decreased 2%

Support for parents



Increased 63% No change 34% Decreased 3%

Support for part-time working



Increased 43% No change 55% Decreased 2%

“

I spoke to one of our very senior group general managers a while ago who said, if we had told him, a year ago, that he would be working from home, and that he would not be travelling around the world to board meetings, he would never have believed it.”

“

We've seen productivity levels in our frontline teams go up in this time, which is incredible. And so when we talk about smart working, the organisation will embrace it much more quickly than it would have done 12 months ago.”

“

There are still managers and leaders who "command" presence at work which means an inconsistency in how flexible work arrangements are being applied.”

The financial cost for parents and carers has increased over the last six months

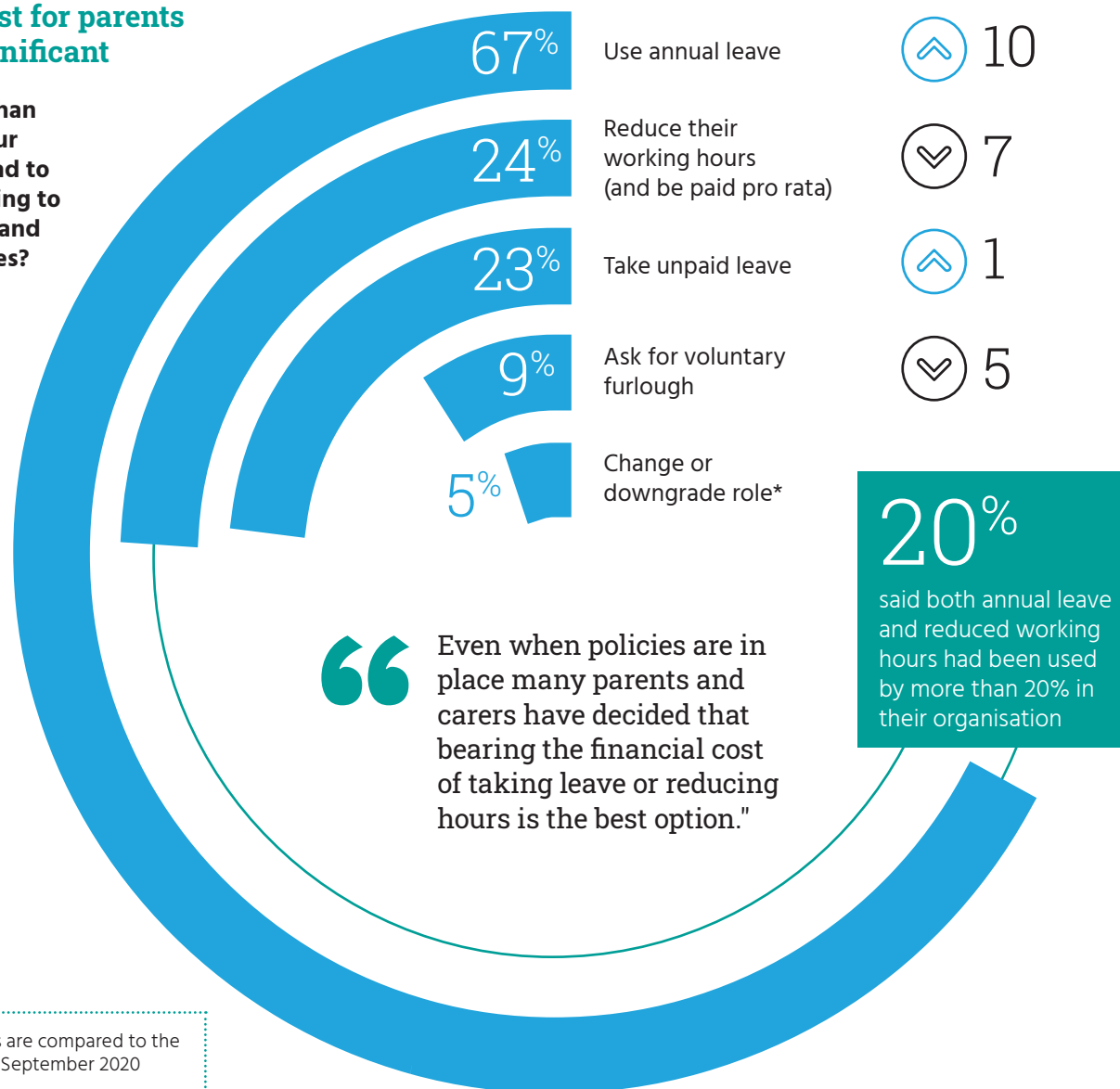


While attitudes towards ways of working have shifted over the last year, so has the financial cost of the pandemic for parents and carers.

- Using annual leave and reducing hours to work pro rata remain the most common changes employees are making to balance work and caring responsibilities.
- External research shows financial costs have not been shared evenly: 71% of working mothers who asked to be furloughed during school closures had their request denied, and one in five reduced their hours to manage childcare.³
- This research did not find that having clear policies mitigated the need to use annual leave, demonstrating a broader challenge for parents and carers when balancing work and life.

The financial cost for parents and carers is significant

Do you think more than 20% of people in your organisation have had to do any of the following to accommodate work and caring responsibilities?



The impact on parents and carers

It's not just the financial cost, the career costs are also significant

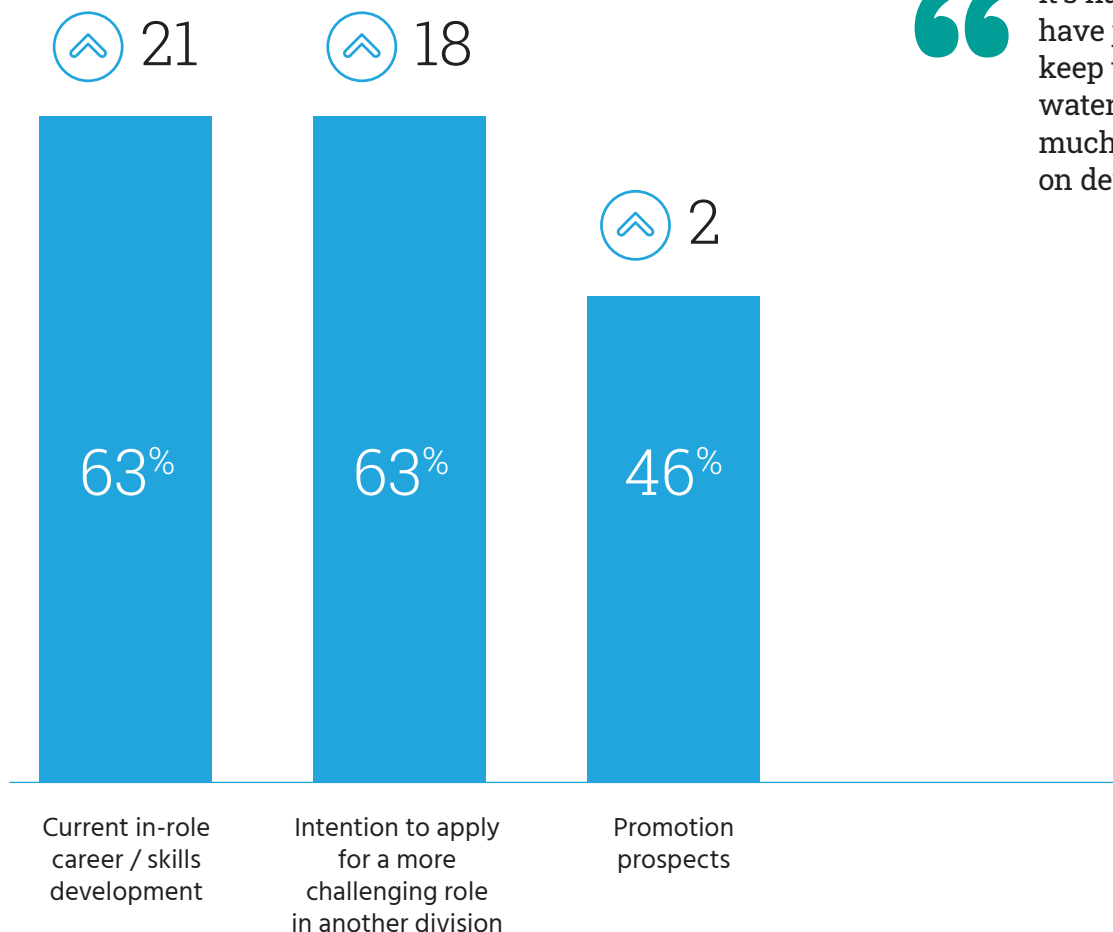


A similar picture emerges for the pandemic's impact on the careers of parents and carers.

- In-role career and skills development has taken a notable hit over the past three months for those with caring responsibilities.
- There is also a large impact on promotion prospects, with 48% of working mothers fearing childcare responsibilities will lead to negative treatment at work.⁴
- Again, external research shows the impact is felt more acutely by women.⁵ In dual-career families, women are experiencing the largest career costs with female carers far less likely to occupy management positions.⁶

The career costs for parents and carers

In general, do you think that coronavirus has impacted employees with caring responsibilities on the following:



“

It's hard as a lot of people have just been trying to keep their heads above water so there's not been much time or focus on development.”

30%
said both skills development and intention to apply for more challenging roles had been negatively impacted.



Planned redundancies and restructures leave parents and carers feeling more vulnerable



Many organisations are anticipating restructures and redundancies, but there is evidence of a lack of consistent policy provision to support those who have been most affected by the pandemic.

- Just under half have policies in place for pandemic-related absences and fewer than two in five have policies in place to protect people who have had time off for caring responsibilities.
- Research shows that women in particular feel more vulnerable to job losses. It's also not simply a case of feeling more vulnerable, women's jobs are 1.8 times more at risk than men's.⁷

“Policies are very tight on this, but the reality is that anyone is impacted by unconscious views of individuals when they're doing any form of selection – my concern is that leaders will be unconsciously impacted by the fact that some people will have been taking more time off than others.”

Redundancies and restructures are predicted for a significant proportion of organisations

37%

say leaders are currently or actively planning to make redundancies in the next year

47%

say leaders are currently or actively planning to restructure the organisation

“

I know that there are a lot of people who are very vulnerable. It's not a nice position to be in and the anxiety of uncertainty has a real impact.”

Many organisations do not have policies in place to protect parents and carers

Does your organisation have a clear policy in place to mitigate against redundancy selection where people have had time off work due to illness or caring responsibilities during the coronavirus pandemic?

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes

17%

40%

43%

⬆️ 5

Does your organisation have a clear policy in place to mitigate against redundancy selection where people's performance has been affected due to the coronavirus pandemic?

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes

25%

43%

32%

⬇️ 16



Differences are compared to the research in September 2020

The inconsistency of policy provision and application



The overall provision of policies to support parents and carers has not evolved over the last six months.

- Having policies in place is only part of the challenge. Only 35-47% of those surveyed said every manager in their organisation knows about them, suggesting there is a lot of variation when it comes to employees getting the support they need.
- While there seems to be a positive effect of having appropriate policies available, workload is a key barrier to the successful and consistent application of policies.

Does your organisation have clear policies in place...

■ Yes ■ Don't know ■ No



Differences are compared to the research in September 2020

...to support parents and carers with balancing workload with caring responsibilities at this time?



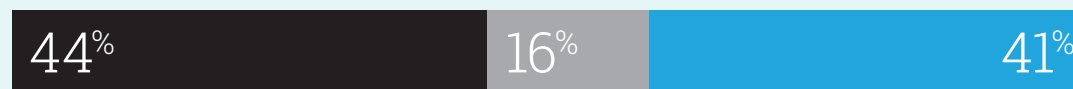
6

Of organisations with this policy in place:

35%

say every manager knows about it

...to enable managers to consistently deal with short-term flexible working requirements from parents over the coming months?

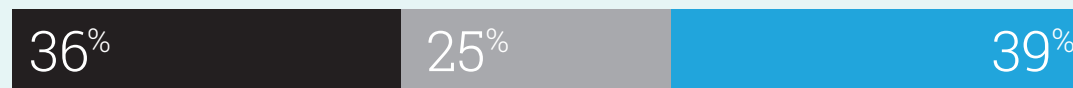


9

39%

say every manager knows about it

...so line managers know how to deal with performance conversations where an individual's ability to deliver has been impacted by the need to care for children?



2

47%

say every manager knows about it

The provision of policies impacts other metrics:

Support for parents

+39

point difference in perceived support for parents between organisations who have clear policies and those who don't

Speak-up culture

+30

point difference in ability to speak up between organisations who have clear policies and those who don't

But workload is a barrier, even when policies are in place

“Our organisation is saying the right things and creating policies but on the other hand the huge pressures of work, staff reductions and ever longer hours becoming the norm means that nobody wants to be seen to be taking advantage of what's technically on offer.”

“Policy support is great, mental health support is fantastic, tone of leader communications is right – 'do what you can, take the carers leave, etc. as you need it' – but no consideration for removing goals / workload so this feels mismatched / like a hollow gesture.”

The mental wellbeing challenge

Keeping the focus on mental wellbeing



Mental health and wellbeing is a global challenge that has been intensified by the experience of the pandemic for many.

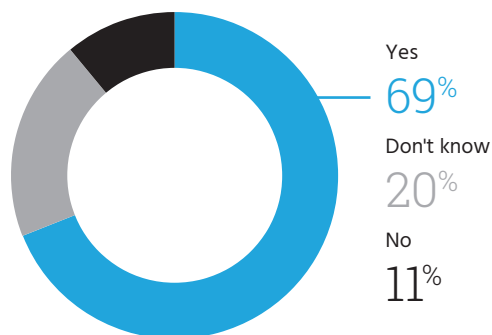
- Returning to the office is a source of anxiety for many and the mental state of employees needs to be considered, especially for parents and carers. A Trades Union Congress (TUC) survey of 52,000 working mothers published earlier this month revealed that nine in ten had experienced higher levels of anxiety and stress during this latest lockdown.⁸
- This research found that perceptions of mental health support are weaker in organisations where there has not been an increase in support for different types of working. This suggests a disproportionately negative impact on parents and carers. For example, organisations who have put plans in place to support mental health and wellbeing as part of the transition back to the office are 32 points more likely to think that the support for parents and carers has increased during the pandemic.

What organisations were planning six months ago...



2020

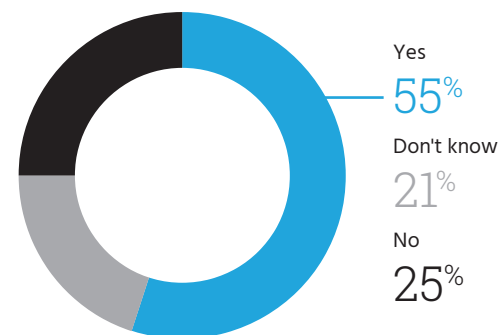
Is your organisation putting plans in place to support people's mental wellbeing as they return to an office environment from home working?



2021

What support has been put in place...

Has your organisation put plans in place to support people's mental wellbeing as they return to an office environment from home working?



Organisations who have put plans in place to support people's mental wellbeing as they return to an office environment are also more likely to report increased:



Support for parents

+32



Support for part-time working

+30



Support for flexitime

+17



Support for home working

+11

Compared to those organisations who have not put plans in place.

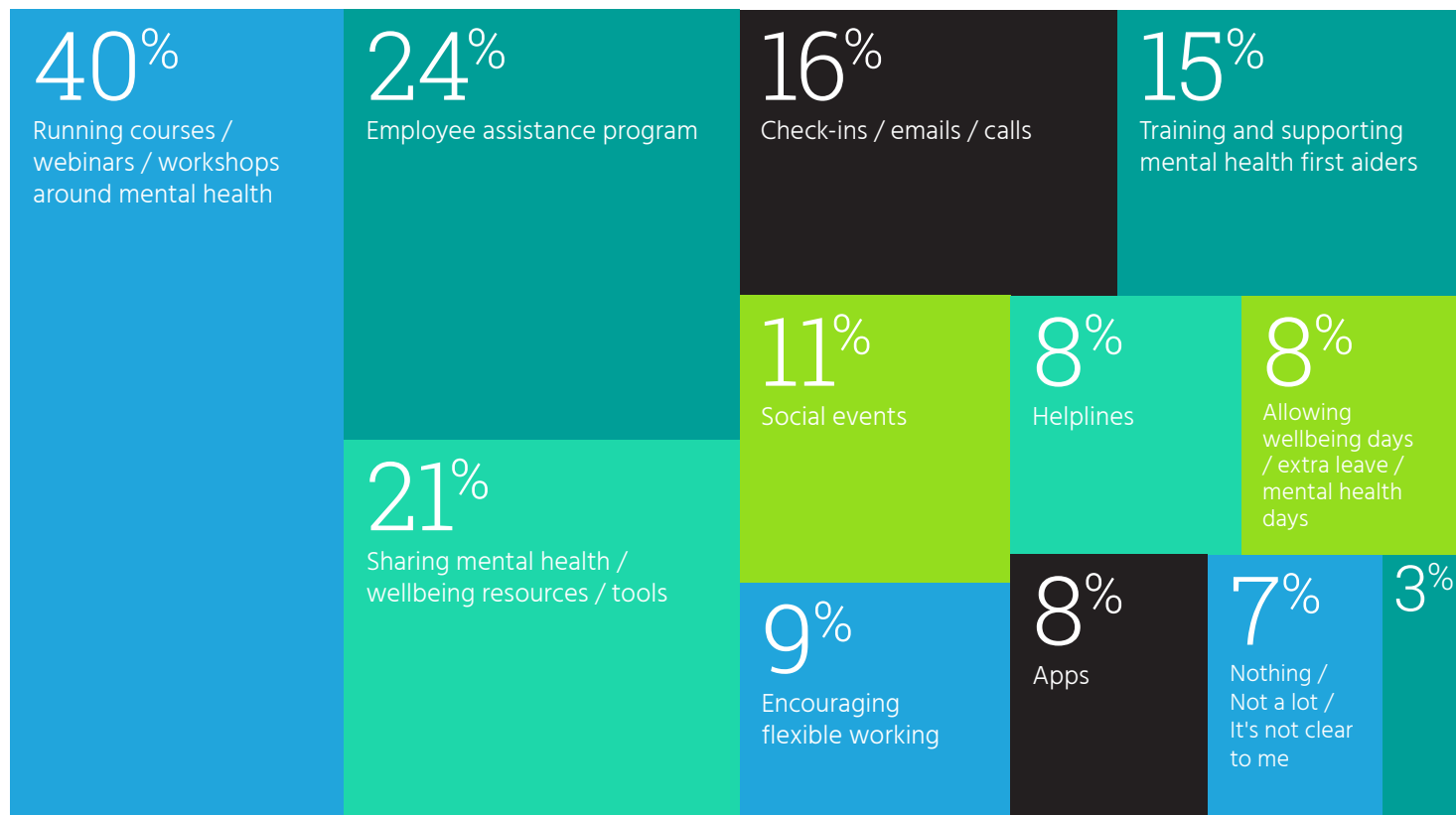
Support seems focused on resources and tools, rather than ways of working



Webinars, workshops and courses are the most commonly quoted forms of wellbeing support.

- Other common channels are employee assistance programmes and shared wellbeing resources. It is worth noting that such forms of support typically involve some interactive element where employees connect with peers and/or managers.
- Wellbeing support from leaders is vital given that external research has shown 23% of employees report feeling burnt out at work very often or always, while an additional 44% reported feeling burnt out sometimes.⁹ Burnt out employees are 63% more likely to take a sick day, suggesting individual and business-wide benefits can result from having proper wellbeing policies in place.

What is your organisation doing to support employees' mental wellbeing during this time?



“The support that has been put in place is great and there is something for everyone. Though it only works as part of a bigger picture approach to this.”

“I’ve heard of lots of examples whereby organisations are doing lunchtime yoga sessions or mindfulness, but without reducing workload so people then have to work later which seems counter-productive.”

Organisation has a programme / support in place (GENERAL)



The future of work

- View of the future
- Planning for a hybrid workplace
- The danger of cultivating accidental flex



We have to look for the positives and to learn from the experience we've gone through. That's our role as leaders, and there is so much that we can take away from a very difficult time to make work better. That said, we have to be mindful of what different people have gone through and of the impact of some of the bad habits that have cropped up such as people being 'always on'."

Communications professional, Financial Services

Optimism for lasting positive change

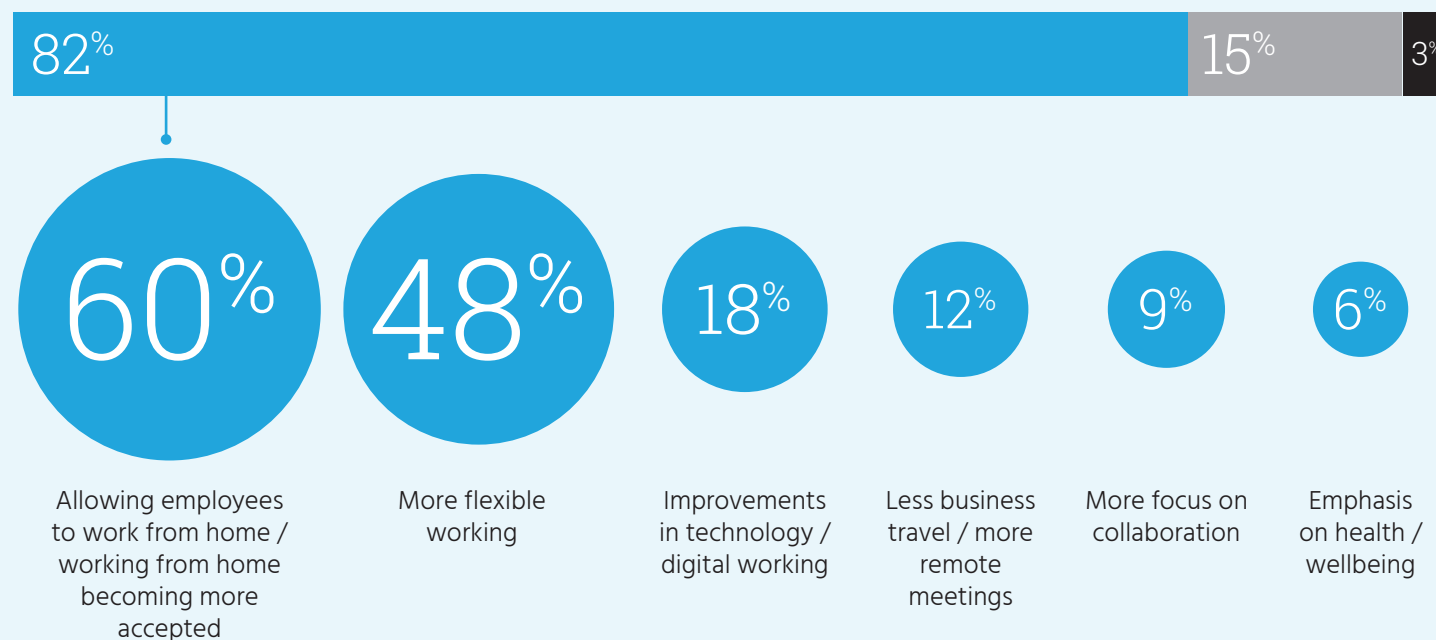


There is a shared sense of optimism about the lasting positive impact on ways of working.

- The pandemic is expected to have a lasting impact on the way we work.
- 60% of organisations think working from home will become more accepted, and just under half feel flexible working is here to stay.
- Research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) shows that seven in ten employees are satisfied with their employer's response to Covid-19. This represents an opportunity to build on changes made in recent months and make them more permanent.¹⁰

Are there any lasting positive changes to ways of working that you think your organisation will make as a result of the coronavirus pandemic?

■ Yes ■ Don't know ■ No



“Before, working from home was seen as a privilege for the trustworthy. Now it's been proven that anyone can. I think this change in mindset will be positive for many, especially those who previously had long commutes.”

“I have seen more men speaking up about the challenges they are facing with children out of school. I think it is good that the conversation around caring isn't just limited to mothers.”

“People will be more aware of including people who are working remotely and the innovation, social and collaborative needs met by the office environment.”

“We've busted the myth that contact centre staff can't work from home.”

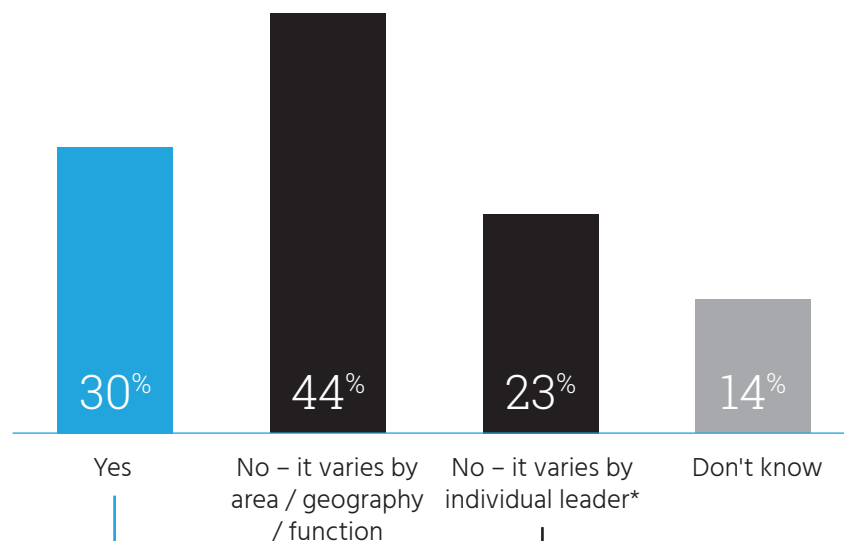
Limited consensus on the future of work



There is limited consensus about the future of work in most organisations.

- Just under one in three organisations reported that there is a clear consensus about the vision for the future. Morale is 12 points more likely to have improved since this time six months ago for this group, which suggests that providing clarity can have a morale-boosting effect.
- Almost a quarter of organisations say consensus varies by individual leader. The qualitative interviews and open text questions highlight that this type of variance is creating concern and anxiety about the future as the fear is that decisions will be made based on the personal preference of individual leaders.
- Given the additional challenges of finding one solution that accommodates different country's Covid-19 restrictions, multinational organisations face additional challenges when trying to share a clear vision of the future.

Is there consensus across your organisation about the vision for the future?



Clear vision for the future

+12

point difference in morale when there is consensus on the vision of the future

Lack of consensus impacts overall positivity

Organisations who report a lack of agreement at the top are more likely to be negative across other metrics.

- Senior leader support for policies to manage workload (-47)
- Ability to speak up (-30)
- Employee involvement in ideas (-30)
- Support for mental health and wellbeing (-22)



I think lots of people are quite anxious about what is going to be decided. Will we be expected to go back to how it was before? As a parent myself, I can't imagine going back to how we worked before and what that meant for my kids and our lives."



My concern is that future decisions will be made based on personal preferences of leaders. Some are really keen to get back to the office while others have found the way we've worked over the last year revelatory."



It's, of course, more complex for multinationals. There are different regulations and laws to consider. That's why there needs to be a clear central view and framework that can then be applied locally."

Hybrid working is the future (for most)

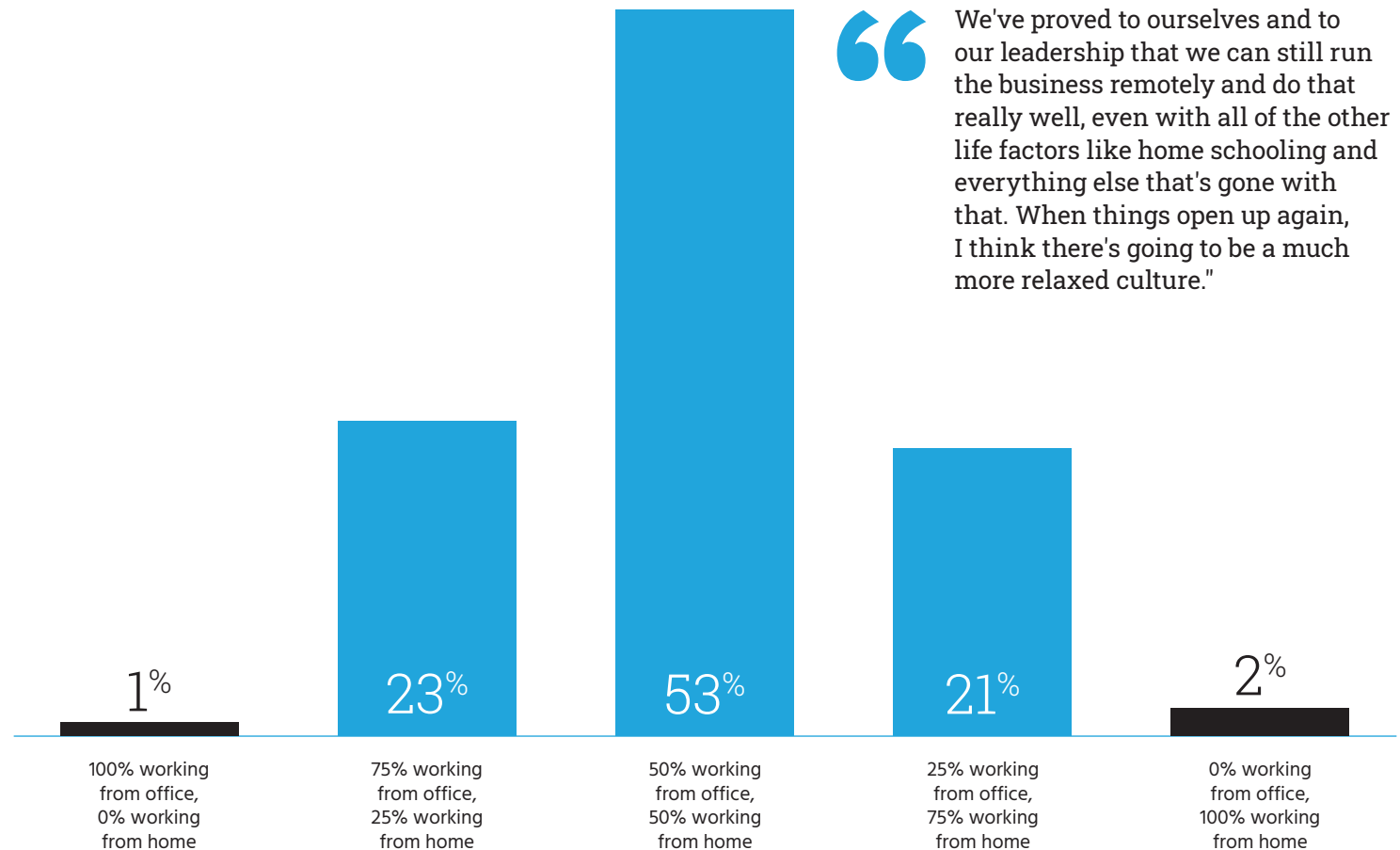


While we recognise that not all employees have the ability to work flexibly, the organisations surveyed said a significant proportion of their workforce could, and they expect hybrid working to become the norm.

- Hybrid working is a flexible working approach; employees are encouraged to work from different locations – whether that's at home, in the office or elsewhere – choosing an environment to suit their preference and the task at hand, while still fulfilling the organisation's needs.
- When thinking about how offices might be used in the future, most organisations said they expect space to be used on a rotating or flexi-working basis, with considerably reduced numbers of staff in the office on any given day.
- Given the likelihood of repeated waves of the pandemic, and that organisations enjoy lower costs when employees work from home, it seems probable that working from home will become widespread.¹¹

The vast majority are anticipating hybrid working to become the norm

In your organisation, what do you think the balance of office working / home working will be in the future (post-pandemic)?





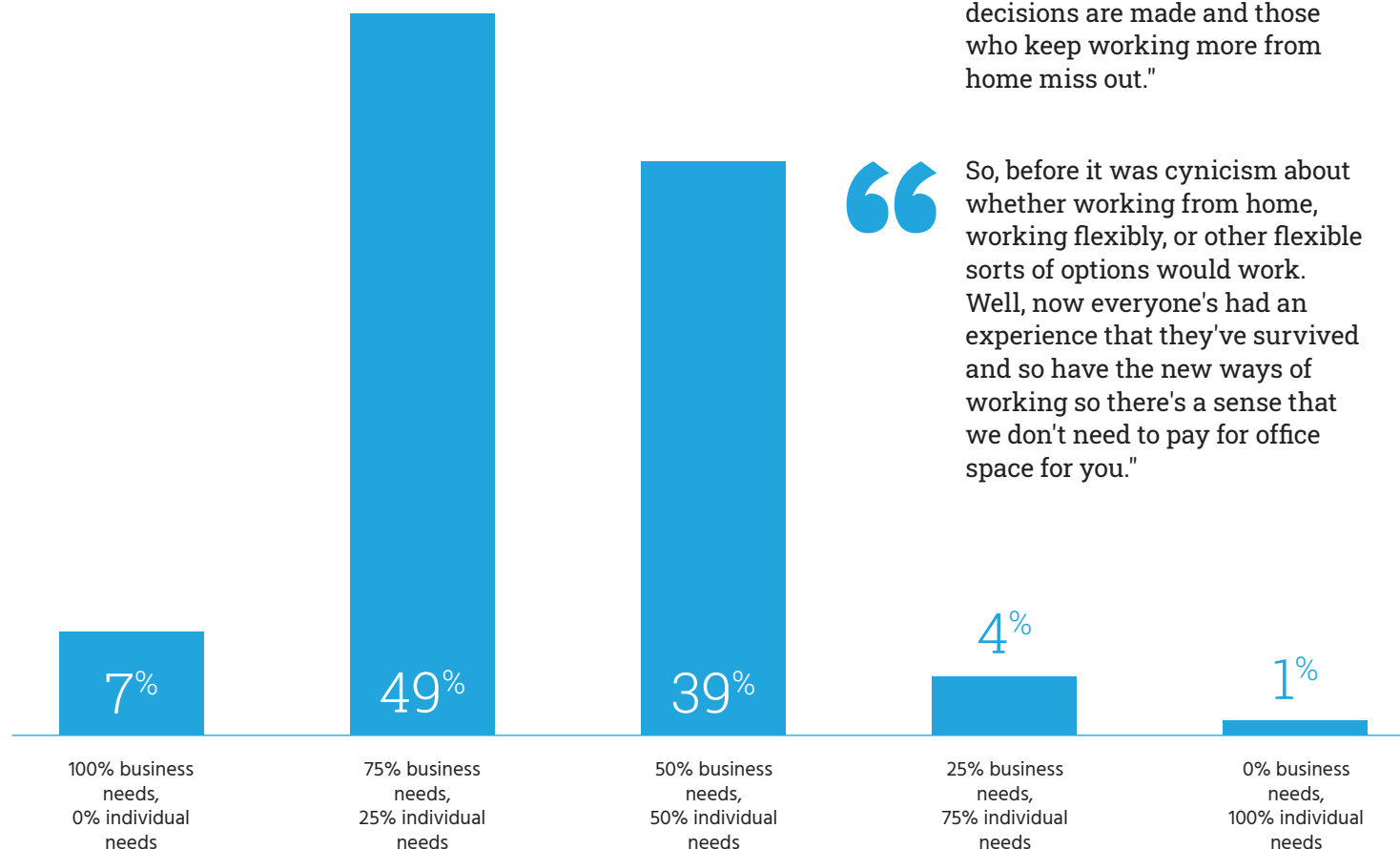
Striking the balance between the business and the individual needs



Almost all organisations are planning for a return to the office in some form, though the needs driving these decisions vary by organisation.

- Striking the balance between business and individual needs will be key to evolving the way we work in the future in a positive way.
- Research has shown the importance of organisations being open and honest to give employees specific details about what the business needs are when it comes to locationality.¹²
- As hybrid working looks to become the norm, it is important that organisations avoid a 'two-tier' workforce scenario. A two-tier workforce could result when those working from home more regularly become overlooked for e.g. recognition and promotions, compared to those working from the office – leading to issues around presenteeism being rewarded over output.
- This bias towards office-based workers is already impacting part-time workers¹³ and could disproportionately affect more women moving forward. Women are more likely than men to work part-time and would prefer to work from home more post-pandemic due to childcare responsibilities.¹⁴

In your organisation, what do you think the balance will be between business needs and individual needs when it comes to deciding where people work?



“

I worry about what happens when we go back to the office – those without caring responsibilities will be more likely to do so earlier. There is a risk that the office becomes where all important decisions are made and those who keep working more from home miss out.”

“

So, before it was cynicism about whether working from home, working flexibly, or other flexible sorts of options would work. Well, now everyone's had an experience that they've survived and so have the new ways of working so there's a sense that we don't need to pay for office space for you.”

Looking further than workplace location



Most organisations see hybrid working as the future, but comparatively few are planning to redesign job roles to better suit hybrid working.

- When organisations are thinking about the balance between home and office working, they are likely to be considering using office space on a rotating or a flexi-working approach, rather than planning for a wholesale return to the office.
- But it is flexibility, not location, that is on the minds of employees. Childcare commitments, personal wellbeing, and eldercare are at the top of their lists when thinking about the work-life integration in the future.¹⁵
- Hybrid working can be more challenging than being fully remote as the power and flow of communication usually sit with the co-located majority. Transitioning into new hybrid teams will require a lot of upskilling, planning and intention.¹⁶
- Those organisations who are redesigning job roles for remote or hybrid working are also more likely to be focusing on the overall employee experience, suggesting a more holistic approach to evolving the way they work.

97%

of organisations are planning for hybrid working of some kind

Yet only

36%

are planning to redesign job roles

Are leaders in your business / HR leaders currently or actively planning to redesign job roles for remote or hybrid working?



Yes
36%
Don't know
41%
No
23%



The focus seems to be on where we're working and that it's OK to keep working from home, rather than on how we adapt and evolve."

Those organisations who are redesigning job roles are also more likely to be focusing on the broader employee experience than those who are not

Employee involvement

+22

points more likely to have a listening programme in place and 15 points more likely to have included feedback in the planning process

Perceived support

+20

points more likely to feel that support for parents and carers has increased as a result of the pandemic

Policy provision

+20

points more likely to have policies in place to help parents and carers balance workload, which are also more supported by line managers and leaders

Supporting wellbeing

+14

point difference in organisations proactively planning to support wellbeing

Working from home does not equal flexible working



The pandemic has prompted widespread support for working from home, though support for flexible or part-time working has not increased to the same extent.

- This creates challenges for parents and carers in particular who are seeing the boundaries between work and home life dissolve – often working longer hours to accommodate their caring responsibilities.
- This has resulted in 'fake-flex' – a term used by Flex Appeal campaigner, Anna Whitehouse, where employees are working outside of core business hours, but policies have not been strategically designed or implemented.¹⁷
- There is a need to think more broadly about flexible working and the different forms it can take, including having predictable or set hours, working from home, job-sharing, compressed hours and term-time working.¹⁸



Flexitime is particularly vital for parents and carers

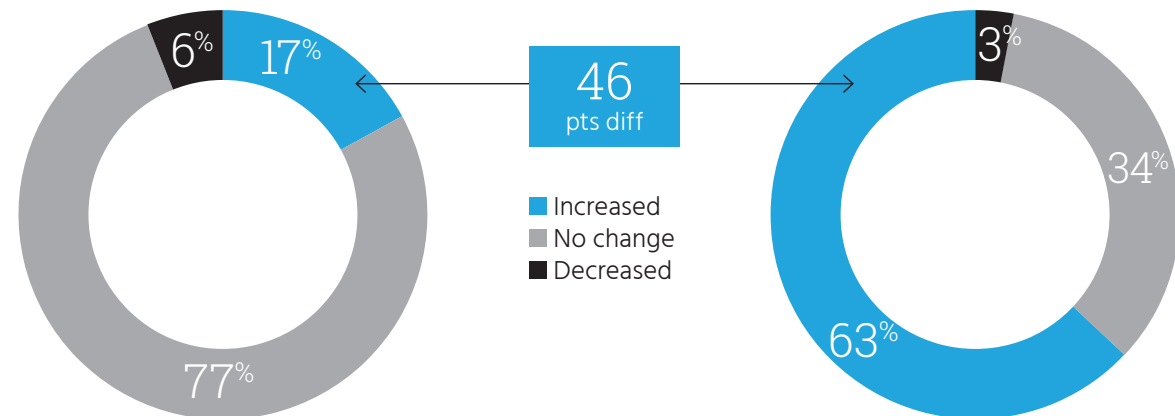


The gap between support for home working and support for flexible working poses particular challenges for parents and carers.

- Flexible working is particularly vital for parents: during the pandemic 58% say they took on additional childcare, while 53% had home-schooling responsibilities.¹⁹
- In organisations where support for flexitime has not increased as a result of the pandemic, we see considerably lower perceptions of support for parents overall.
- This research found that support for homeworking actually underlies positivity on other areas and, notably, when this support is lacking, fewer feel positive about how senior leaders and line managers are managing policies.

In organisations with increased support for home working, but no increase in support for flexible working, the perceptions of support for parents and carers is considerably lower.

In what way has the coronavirus pandemic changed your organisation's strategy around support for parents:

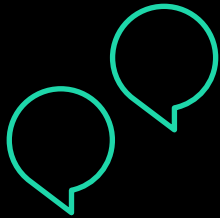


Organisations with increased support for home working, but not flexitime

All organisations in this research

Organisations in this group are also less positive about other key metrics such as:

- **34%** have observed more than 20% of people taking annual leave to balance workload (compared to 22% overall)
- **47%** think line managers support policies (compared to 68% overall)
- **21%** think senior leaders act as blockers to policies (compared to 9% overall)



I can only hope the majority of organisations will land on the hybrid model, and recognise that employee choice makes them an employer of choice. There is so much value if they really adopt this approach going forward. But it has to be more than buzz words and talk, it has to be backed up with action."

Senior leader, Property



Turning insights into action

- Insight-led action:
The big questions posed
- Inside stories: ideas in action
in other organisations

The big questions posed



Insight-led actions to address the big questions posed by this research.

01 What does **hybrid working** mean? And how do you make it work in practice?

HYBRID WORKING

At its best, hybrid working is about more than location – it involves enabling employees (who can) to work flexibly.

- **Re-design job roles** to make sure that the day-to-day role and broader responsibilities really work in a remote or flexible context.
- **Re-think employee experience** in a hybrid context to make the most of this opportunity to shift ways of working. Walk through the end-to-end experience to test and challenge opportunities for progress, and challenges to overcome.
- **Be clear on language and definitions** as part of regular and clear communication to avoid misinterpretation.
- **Invest in virtual leadership skills** to upskill leaders who will have to adapt to leading co-located and remote team members.
- **Consider any unintended consequences.** For example, if employees are able to choose how and where they work, how do you avoid creating a two-tier system, especially for those with caring responsibilities and/or who work part-time?
- **Set clear rules of engagement** to help people make the most of their different work modes and locations, to mitigate the challenge of meetings in a hybrid world and to address the challenge of flexible working hours meaning that people feel 'always on.'

02 How can we make the way we work part of how we **attract, retain and develop talent** – particularly those who are parents and carers?

TALENT

Flexible working is increasingly a hygiene factor for top talent. Organisations who make this part of their talent strategy focus on the following:

- **Creating and embedding an inclusive culture** that genuinely supports flexible ways of working, and where people feel safe and able to flex their time without fear of negative consequences.
- **Consistent leadership role-modelling** to demonstrate both the possibilities and the positive impact of working in this way and to avoid the 'say-do' gap that many employees currently perceive.
- **Clearly sign-posted commitment throughout the end-to-end employee experience.** From offering flexible working in all advertised roles, to re-booting onboarding and re-thinking performance management.
- **Clear, actionable policies** that are easily accessed, understood, supported and applied by managers, and that are evolved over time to adapt to changing workplace needs.
- **Targeted support** for particular employee groups, for example carers, to avoid the responsibility for support being solely with managers.

03 What is the **role of the office** in the future?

ROLE OF THE OFFICE

The pandemic has accelerated the evolution of the office. Many organisations are re-thinking their real estate and how they use it.

- **Start with the outcomes you want to create** for your people, your customers and business. Use this to inform how you design your office(s) space or strategy for the future – and make this clear in your communications with your people.
- **Balance business and individual needs.** Cutting costs on office space can be beneficial, as long as you invest time, effort and resource in ensuring there aren't productivity or talent losses as a consequence. Be open about the bigger-picture of decision-making in this context.
- **Take a holistic approach.** Show how the action taken by facilities management, for example, aligns with the strategy and is brought to life through communication and engagement.
- **Be creative.** Use this opportunity to trial new ideas with the office space, using employee feedback to assess what does and doesn't work.

The big questions posed



Insight-led actions to address the big questions posed by this research.

04 How can we support our employees through the **transition** from survival mode to recovery mode over the coming months?

SUPPORT & WELLBEING

The experience of the last year has not been universal. The way that organisations lead the transition ahead will be critical.

- **Be as clear as possible about the future vision** to help manage uncertainty, anxiety and speculation. Even if you are not able to share details, showing that there is consensus can have a positive impact on morale.
- **Balance positivity with empathy** to acknowledge the impact and influence of the experience of the pandemic for many so that efforts to turn adversity into opportunity do not feel tone deaf.
- **Keep listening and responding** through formal and informal channels to involve employees in problem-solving, create a sense of connection and course correct where necessary.
- **Re-think the approach to wellbeing** so that initiatives and resources are underpinned by a strategic and cultural focus on supporting employee wellbeing. Burnout, exhaustion and mental health challenges have been intensified by the pandemic and the experiences need to be well-understood and addressed.
- **Be clear and consistent with communication.** Make sure to update employees as soon and as often as possible on plans in order to minimise speculation and uncertainty.

05 How can we address the broader inclusion challenge?

INCLUSIVE CULTURE

From female leaders leaving the workforce to a disproportionate impact on minority groups, the pandemic has reversed progress for many and this context should not be downplayed.

- **Acknowledge and address the challenges**, setting the context of broader social challenges and how they impact the organisation and its employees.
- **Consider how to address this throughout the employee experience lifecycle.** For example, targeted recruitment to attract those who have left the workforce or downgraded their roles during the pandemic.
- **Ask, don't assume** how those most affected are feeling, what they are most concerned about and how they'd like to be supported.
- **Encourage and equip managers** to have these conversations. Whilst they don't need to have all the answers, they can listen and direct to where employees can find further support. There can be an 'eggshell effect' when discussing such issues, so consider the different mechanisms and channels that can be used.
- **Take the opportunity to think bigger and to adapt** to the new context for creating inclusive workplaces. Invite co-creation of solutions through the involvement or creation of networks.

Learnings and inspiration



OANDA

Remote working led global multi-asset broker OANDA to adopt an asynchronous communication approach, which is a highly flexible way of working designed to better connect people across time zones. And with company leaders now role-modelling this behaviour, the firm is committed to making this approach work in a post-pandemic world.

COMPASS GROUP

Sarah Morris, Chief People Officer (CPO) of Compass Group plc, gives her perspective on how organisations can look to develop, recruit, and retain talent in the hybrid working world – creating inclusive processes, policies, and cultures that attract parents and carers into fulfilling careers.

VODAFONE

Leading technology company Vodafone UK is continuing to support parents and carers throughout the pandemic and beyond – creating policies that support them in the workplace.

AVIVA

Insurance company Aviva's wellbeing strategy throughout the pandemic blended manager training and support resources with the roll-out of fun engagement activities to uplift employees, including PE lessons with Joe Wicks, bake-offs and kids' math lessons with their Chief Financial Officer.

THE UNMISTAKABLES

"There is now an obligation to create a future of work that is much more equal" comments Simone Marquis, Culture and Inclusion Director at The Unmistakables, as she outlines the steps leaders can take to build a more inclusive workplace.



Trusting your people and changing the way you communicate



A global leader in online multi-asset trading services, currency data and analytics, OANDA takes pride in its global workforce, which comprises 400 employees around the world. As a result of the pandemic, OANDA has placed trust in its employees at the forefront of its change strategy, introducing an asynchronous communication approach and a more flexible, hybrid way of working.



What

OANDA's new hybrid working model responds to each employee's unique needs, empowering them to optimise their working day and partner seamlessly with cross-border teams, enabling the firm to create a truly inclusive global workforce.

- **Placing trust in employees:** Employees can set their own hours and work from any convenient location, as long as their daily tasks are completed.

- **Embracing asynchronous communication:** While OANDA ensures a clear agenda for company-wide townhalls, the firm also provides access to advance reading material and pre-recorded segments that allow employees to prepare in their own time. When synchronous meetings do occur, they are purposeful and accessible to everyone, whether in person or via video conferencing.

- **Repurposing the office:** OANDA's offices have been redesigned to foster collaboration and encourage social interactions.

- **Leadership role-modelling:** Company leaders have actively and visibly adopted new asynchronous ways of working to drive change across the entire organisation.

Why

- **Productivity remained consistent and people were happy:** Following an employee survey, it became clear that productivity and employee engagement levels remained consistent despite working from home, so the firm looked for additional ways to maximise the opportunity for change.

- **Covid-19 was the perfect catalyst for change:** A global organisation, OANDA was already considering the introduction of a hybrid work model, but when the pandemic made working from home a reality, the company felt the decision to enact change had been validated.

- **Responding to business needs and culturally realigning the company:** Having opened a new office in Krakow last year, OANDA wanted to create a company-wide culture that veered away from the more hierarchical head-office down approach, ensuring employees felt valued regardless of location.

Impact

- **Better collaboration between countries:** By freeing up time through pre-recorded townhalls and being more selective over the need for synchronous meetings, OANDA has ensured the entire workforce stays informed while making the best use of overlapping time zones.

- **Cultural transformation:** This change has prompted people to rethink how they spend their time and better prioritise their work. By changing how and why teams meet, the firm has effectively changed the corporate mindset, creating a consistent culture and set of working practices that are equitable for all, no matter how or where they work.

- **Employees feel heard and understood:** After announcing the new approach, employees repeatedly expressed how pleased they were that OANDA was thinking – and talking – about the future. They also felt relieved to be given a greater sense of direction and permission to work more flexibly.

“At OANDA, we place our trust in each and every member of staff. This trust has allowed us to move towards an output- and performance-based management style instead of the more traditional method of defining hours and logging shifts, driving the success of asynchronous communication both for the business and our people. In short, it's opened up a world of opportunity in terms of improving efficiencies, driving productivity and increasing employee engagement.”

Elliot O'Brien,
Chief Information Officer

Understanding and supporting parents and carers



Vodafone UK is committed to supporting parents and carers in the workforce, which in turn supports gender equality. Their approach throughout the pandemic has been to build on the enhanced policies and equality measures they already had in place for parents and carers, working with employees to find the right balance between work and home responsibilities.



Enhanced Parental Leave policies

Any employee whose partner is having a baby, adopts a child or becomes a parent through surrogacy will have the option to take 16 weeks paid leave at any point during the first 18 months – regardless of gender, sexual orientation or length of service.

- **Why:** Creating an environment where all parents have the opportunity to spend more time with their children not only reduces concerns around the impact of parental leave on the finances and careers of new parents, but helps to challenge the idea that caring is a 'woman's job'. This in turn helps to reduce the stigma around taking time off for caring responsibilities for all employees, but will particularly help male carers who may otherwise feel unrecognised or unsupported.

'Impacted Productivity' option

When schools were closed, Vodafone UK introduced an 'impacted productivity' option in its internal system for those colleagues balancing working from home with caring for children or other family members. This allowed Vodafone UK to support carers by recognising that they may not be as readily available or able to produce the usual level of work during their normal working hours, without any impact on their remuneration.

- **Why:** To support employees with caring responsibilities to balance caring and work, which also supported the mental wellbeing of employees. Vodafone UK sought to build on its existing welcoming and supportive environment for parents and carers, backed up by policies that helped increase flexibility and reduced stress for those employees impacted.

Unexpected Care Leave policy

During the initial months of the pandemic, employees were encouraged to discuss changes to their working arrangements with their line managers. Many people adjusted their working hours and Vodafone UK also changed its policy on Unexpected Care Leave to enable employees to take their entitlement at short notice and as best suited their needs, including a few hours at a time.

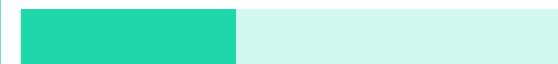
- **Why:** To support employee wellbeing and create greater flexibility to reflect the realities of the impact of the pandemic for some employees. Additionally, external polling commissioned by Vodafone (a nationally representative sample²⁰) showed that women were more likely to be carers than men. Therefore policies such as this also sought to limit the gendered impact.

New polling commissioned by Vodafone²¹ found:



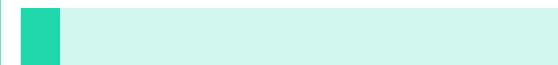
46%

of the respondents said that caring had resulted in them feeling more lonely or isolated



39%

of people who work full time saw their caring responsibilities increase due to COVID-19 in 2020



7%

of respondents indicated that caring was the main reason for leaving their last job

Supporting the wellbeing of frontline colleagues



Sarah Morris, Chief People Officer (CPO) of Compass Group plc, shares how their organisation has continued to support and retain talent during the pandemic; creating an inclusive culture with processes and policies that offer parents and carers fulfilling careers, particularly those on the frontline.



Actions taken at Compass Group plc to support employees

Showing colleagues we care:

- 9,000 welfare calls made to colleagues to check on them and their families.
- Thousands of food boxes distributed to colleagues in need.
- Launched 'You Matter'; a mental health campaign to support needs of Compass Group plc colleagues. This involved signposting support, launching manager training to spot issues and training Mental Health Ambassadors to deliver Mental Health and Wellbeing workshops.
- Developed and launched Financial Wellbeing workshops, acknowledging the financial impact of the pandemic.

Continued commitment to colleague learning:

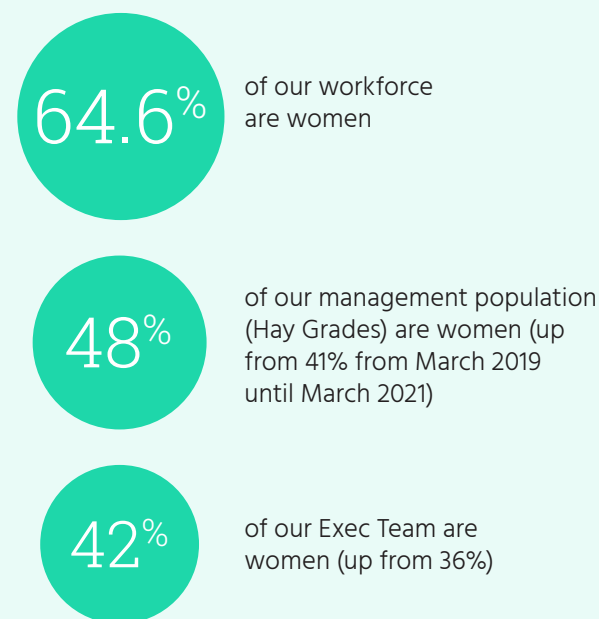
- Developed and launched new apprentice programme in partnership with well-known chefs (Marcus Waring; Tom Kitchin; Bryn Williams).
- Continued investment in programmes to support female progression.
- Continued investment in apprentice programmes.

Offered flexi working and shift patterns:

- Redeployed thousands of people into Healthcare business to support pandemic – in so doing, offered flexible shifts and work patterns, plus the opportunity to continue to work and learn new skills.

Continuing the pursuit of gender equality in the workplace during the pandemic

Whilst many organisations have seen a decline in female representation as a result of the pandemic, Compass Group UK&I have strengthened gender representation at management levels by 6%.



“At Compass Group, we believe it is critical to support all working parents. Throughout the pandemic we have taken a number of steps to support the wellbeing of our frontline colleagues including their mental, physical and financial wellbeing. Protecting jobs wherever possible and moving towards flexible working patterns in some cases.

It was important that we did this as our frontline workers did not have the same privilege of choice when it comes to working flexibility due to the nature of their roles compared to other industries.”

Sarah Morris,
Chief People Office, Compass Group plc

A human response to a human crisis



When faced with the pandemic, Aviva focused on meeting the human needs of their people by combining a solid foundation of employees' wellbeing support with a full schedule of interactive activities and sessions – bringing joy to the organisation with their 'Winter of Happiness' programme.



What

Wellbeing program formed the foundation.

- Creating a culture of psychological safety; making it clear that employees' families come first and giving people permission to look after the things that were most important to them.
- Equipping leaders with training and guides to recognise and talk about mental wellbeing issues with employees – whether dealing with mental wellbeing, isolation, loneliness, domestic abuse, and physical wellbeing.
- Remote wellbeing guidance – manager training and support tailored to new remote ways of working.

Bringing hope and joy through the 'Winter of happiness' program. Sprinkling in an activity for everyone; making sure that every week something happened in the organisation that people could connect to or dial into to connect to each other.

- Giving every employee a wellbeing day to spend how they wish.
- Gifting £100 before Christmas.
- Running a live session with Rugby heroes focused on wellbeing and mental health.
- Enlisting You Tube star Joe Wicks for a live session on all things physical and mental wellbeing. One for the whole family.
- Offering kids maths lessons, coding courses, bake-a-long with a junior bake-off star and much more.

Why

To acknowledge that Winter would be difficult:

With home schooling, longer days, a restricted Christmas and more lockdowns, Aviva supported their employees more broadly to show that Aviva understood what they were going through.

To keep employees feeling connected to Aviva and each other:

Supporting their human needs and giving people hope, routine and stability in uncertain times.

To help build mental resilience: Wanted to make people feel a 'little bit lovely and a little bit cared for'. Bringing small elements of joy – in addition to the existing wellbeing support structure – helped employees to build resilience to change and face challenges.

To support employees in a Meaningful way:

Aviva prioritised making people feel "a little bit lovely and a little bit cared for" over getting bogged down in new policies and procedures.

Impact

Employees felt valued and engaged:

The programme left people feeling seen and supported by Aviva. This was shown through survey engagement scores around wellbeing being in the high 80s and people advocating for the organisation through social media, sharing their positive experiences.

Starting a conversation within Aviva:

Employees sharing their stories through Yammer and making it okay to ask for support so they can help each other.

Spread lasting positivity across the business:

By creating positive experiences during a difficult time, Aviva has supported their employees from a wellbeing perspective and created goodwill that will be remembered. Employees will recall feeling supported and the kindness shown and remain loyal advocates of Aviva.



If you're supported to feel better in yourself, you become more resilient which enables you to cope better. This has a knock-on benefit because when you're more resilient and feel secure at work, that radiates positively across your broader family and so we're proud that Aviva's focus on wellbeing has far greater reach than our colleagues."

Debbie Bullock,
Wellbeing Lead at Aviva

Inclusion: the key to future-proofing your organisation



Simone Marquis, Culture and Inclusion Director at The Unmistakables, a strategic consultancy offering inside out inclusion, talks about the role leaders must play in creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

THE
UNMISTAKABLES[®]

Commitments around diversity are public – now what?

2020, without a doubt, was a year that cemented the importance of the diversity and inclusion (D & I) agenda. Brands and businesses rushed to show their support for the big global events that defined the pandemic – George Floyd's murder and the inequalities in society that have been sharply surfaced as a result. There isn't a leader around any boardroom table that isn't grappling with the confidence and the ability to navigate what it means to be an inclusive company and who isn't feeling confused about what they can or can't say.

So now what?

- D&I has gone beyond a nice to have – it's become a matter of business survival.
- The steps are simple – and it starts with inside out inclusion. Creating the strategy, culture and the buy-in across all teams at all levels that inclusivity is an organisational imperative.

Taking steps towards a more inclusive workplace

1. Get clear on strategy

Actions are typically reactive in panic mode - they're performative and subject to accusations of box-ticking. Leaders need to take a more measured approach to building an authentic and relevant strategy, hooking into their purpose, mission and values. Fixate on where change is needed and identify the strengths you have to lead that change.

Inclusion has to be considered equally to any other business imperative with an assessment of the today-state and clear goals, measures and accountability. Put it this way - if there was another area such as IT adoption that was troubling the company and the way work is done, there would be a considered strategy put in place. Any strategy needs a reality check that it is going to require sustained energy and focus to deliver cultural change.

2. Create the culture

Leaders have been forced to think again about the culture and environment that they're creating every day particularly when navigating what hybrid work will look like. What worked in the past is now is now being challenged and those leaders who stay stuck in old models will lose out on talent and innovation.

Creating a new culture blueprint is always possible and stems from making a simple decision just to 'be' inclusive - after all so much of what creates exclusion is made by humans. This then needs to translate into policy, decision making and practices (both the formal and crucially informal ways of doing things) with colleagues empowered to act and encouraged to keep feeding back.

Inclusion is not a destination, it's not static, it's a commitment. It's a commitment to challenge biases, a commitment to seek out and welcome different perspectives and a commitment to test, learn and adapt as we try new ways of working.

3. Focus on buy-in

Diversity and inclusion agendas have a history of being disempowered and stuck in siloes. Whilst there have been active 'sponsors', the ownership for inclusion has been unclear. To create long term and sustained organisational change, responsibilities have to be clearly defined with every leader and employee being held to account for the part they play.

It is a misnomer to think that a department can be inclusive within a wider system that is not, so organisations that are serious about this agenda need to be serious about system change.

“Inclusion is conceptual until every person feels that they belong. Organisations can only credibly say that they're inclusive when all of their people say they feel included.”

Simone Marquis, Culture and Inclusion Director, The Unmistakables



Appendix

- Research methodology
- References
- Contributors
- Get in touch

34 Appendix: Research methodology

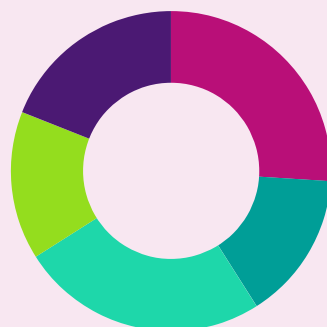


This research was led by Karian and Box, an employee research agency, in partnership with the Global Institute for Women's Leadership. The research

aimed to understand how organisations are addressing the work-related challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has created for carers.

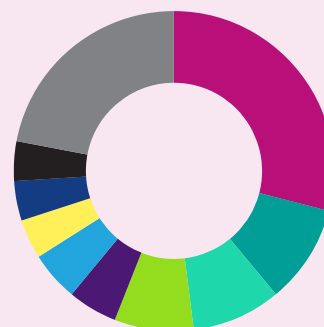
- Primary data for this research was collected using an online survey, with responses collected between 11 February to 26 February 2021. Snowball sampling via direct invite, emails and social media was used to target private sector Executives and HR and Communications professionals. A total of 254 organisations took part in the research, with responses representing a broad range of business sizes and sectors.
- Due to the targeted nature of this sampling process, responses are not generalisable to the UK average industry composition. Instead, the results provide a good indication of the current concerns and planning being undertaken by companies to deal with the economic and logistical impacts of Covid-19.
- Secondary qualitative data from 10 in-depth interviews with HR and Internal Communications leaders has been incorporated into this report.
- Each percentage in this report has been rounded to the nearest whole number. This means that when answer options for a question are added together, they may sum to 99% or 101%.

Size of organisation (headcount)



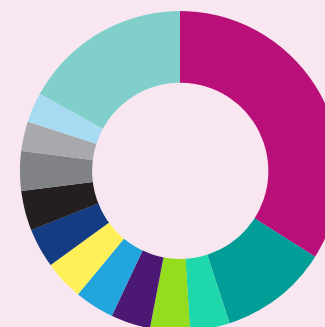
26%	Over 60,000
15%	10,001-60,000
25%	1,001-10,000
15%	101-1,000
19%	1-100

Job function / profession of individual completing survey



28%	HR
10%	Communications
9%	Finance
8%	Project management
5%	Legal
5%	Operations
4%	Corporate social responsibility
4%	Marketing
4%	Research
22%	Other

Sector



33%	Accountancy, banking and finance
11%	Business, consulting and management
4%	Charity and voluntary work
4%	Electricity, oil & gas and water supply
4%	Information technology
4%	Law
4%	Public services and administration
4%	Retail
4%	Telecomms
3%	Engineering and manufacturing
3%	Marketing, advertising and PR
3%	Recruitment and HR
3%	Teacher training and education
17%	Other

Seniority of individual completing survey



10%	Managing Director
19%	Director
17%	Head of [sector/department]
33%	Manager
22%	Team member

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This report has been authored and shaped by Karian and Box, in partnership with the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL).

Karian and Box

We help organisations listen better, make meaning and inform action through a combination of employee research, strategy and programmes.

We work in partnership with some of the biggest organisations in the world to drive data-driven solutions that help them achieve their goals. Why do we do it? Because we believe that people with a voice power performance. That's why we're passionate about providing insight to inform actionable strategies and programmes that contribute towards creating positive employee experience and inclusive workplace cultures.

Contributors

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Global Institute for Women's Leadership

The Global Institute for Women's Leadership works towards a world in which women of all backgrounds have fair and equal access to leadership.

Chaired by Julia Gillard, the only woman to have served as Prime Minister of Australia, the institute brings together rigorous research, practice and advocacy to break down the barriers to women becoming leaders, while challenging ideas of what leadership looks like.

The institute undertakes a range of activities designed to strengthen:

- **Research** – drawing together existing findings and undertaking new studies.
- **Practice** – using research to deliver evidence-based training and teaching.
- **Advocacy and engagement** – bringing together experts and stakeholders from across the world.

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