WORKPLACE FUTURE

A Research Study on the Outcomes of the COVID-19

Working From Home Experience

November 2020

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Introduction

COVID-19 ACCELERATED AN ALREADY GROWING TREND TOWARD MULTI-LOCATIONAL WORKING

In the history of modern work and workplace, there is no doubt that 2020 will rank as one of the most significant years in terms of accelerating the pace of change. Indeed, prior to 2020 it would have been inconceivable that organisations across the planet could close their offices and send their staff home to work for months at a time. Such a proposition would have seemed impossible.

The concept of working remotely from the office is not new, but 2020 has demonstrated it can be done at scale, with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing organisations to ramp up their digital operations and remote management support at a rate and within a timeframe previously unimaginable.

From the outset of the lockdowns, some organisations were well prepared, having already enabled flexible work practices. Others had to deploy new infrastructure and protocols overnight. At the time of writing this report, many are still operating in this "new normal" and yet to implement a return-to-office strategy.

As we approach the end of the year, this mass experiment in working from home (WFH), has altered perceptions on the benefits of multi-locational working and the role that workplace has in organisational performance. The questions now being asked are what impact will this collective experience have on workplace and real estate strategy once the pandemic has passed and what are the opportunities arising from it?

At the outset of the lockdowns there was much speculation in the media about "the death of the office" and of mass reductions in the demand for office space. But much of this was either speculative or aspirational. What was needed was a solid body of evidence on which such forecasts could be assessed.

In April 2020, Six Ideas by Dexus (Six Ideas) took the decision to undertake a comprehensive research study to assess the nature of the WFH experience at both staff and organisational levels, and the impact that might have on future ways of working.

The study was founded on three surveys. In total, over 7,500 staff and 150 executives from across Australia and New Zealand participated in these surveys. In addition, workshops were conducted to review the survey results with a number of the participant organisations. As a result, the quantum of data positions this study as one of the most comprehensive of its type in Australia.

This report documents the survey outcomes and the conclusions that have been drawn from these by the Six Ideas team. It also proposes hypotheses for the future of work and workplace arising from the COVID-19 experience and the challenges and opportunities these pose for organisations and their people.

Introduction

OVER 7,500 SURVEY PARTICIPANTS PROVIDES A ROBUST EVIDENCE BASE

The first survey that was conducted (the Dexus Customer Survey) was launched on the Dexus Customer Portal that is available to anyone occupying a Dexus owned or managed building. This survey included a series of questions devised by Six Ideas to address the respondents' WFH experience and the potential impact this might have on remote working post-COVID.

These questions were then included in a survey sent to fifteen invited organisations (the Six Ideas Survey). In addition to the core questions, in some applications additional customised questions were included at the discretion of each organisation.

Both these surveys indicated a majority view that personal productivity when working from home was equal to or exceeded that of in-office working and that there was strong interest in increased remote working post-COVID.

Given that these outcomes were from the perspective of staff, a third survey was launched with C-Suite executives from Dexus customer organisations to determine whether there was disparity between the views of staff and their employers. The results of this survey were broadly aligned on the outcomes of the WFH experience with those of the other two surveys, albeit with reservations expressed about the degree of change in workplace models that might result in the longer term.

The participation rate and run dates of each of the three surveys is illustrated in Figure[1].

Six Ideas Survey
Survey dates: May – July 2020

6,455
Respondents

15
Organisations

5
Industries

2883
Legal

1545
Commercial

986
Not for profit

730
Government

311
Professional Services

C-Suite Survey
Survey dates: 8 – 17 June 2020

153
Respondents

Top 3 largest Industry groups:

21%
Financial Services

19%
Professional Services

19%
Information Media & Telecommunications

Dexus Customer Survey
Survey dates: 20 April – 1 May 2020

1,039
Respondents

200+
Organisations

1. Survey Demographics

Executive summary

THERE WAS CONSISTENCY IN RESPONSES ACROSS ALL THREE SURVEYS, BUT CARE IS REQUIRED IN ASSESSING THEM

Productivity was considered to have been maintained

A clear majority of respondents reported feeling as or more productive when working from home compared to working in the office prior to the lockdowns and this was reinforced by a majority of the executives responding to the C-Suite survey.

However, productivity is a multi-facetted concept and in Six Ideas' experience when people are asked about it, they typically reference it in the context of task completion. This is *individual* productivity. Furthermore, some people equate "busyness" with productivity.

Organisational productivity, which references fewer tangible outcomes like innovation, service delivery and learning and development, is an entirely different concept, not only in terms of how it is achieved but also in how and when it can be measured.

There is both desire and expectation for WFH in the future

An equally clear majority expressed the view that in future they would like to be able to work 1-2 days a week from home. Most of these people had never or rarely worked from home previously. A majority of the executives also indicated that they expected that the ability to work from home would be available to staff post-COVID.

However, it should be noted that the strong support for WFH expressed in the survey came at a time when just about everyone was working from home. It may be an entirely different experience when people return to the office and WFH becomes a potentially "outlier" experience.

A related issue is the spectacular take-up of personal videoconferencing that has enabled interaction and collaboration to be maintained during the lockdowns. But this experience may not be as effective when people return to the office and some participants are physically present while others are not.

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Executive summary

The office is important for collaboration, innovation and personal development

While there was strong interest expressed in the ability to continue to work from home in the future, there was also considerable indication that the office is important and was missed, with the predominant reason for this being social and professional interaction. Factors also highlighted here were an unsuitable home environment for work and the difficulty in separating "work" from "home".

Furthermore, the interest in working from home was in the ability to have WFH as an acceptable and viable work mode, but few people were interested in working from home on a full time basis.

Digital trumps hardcopy

A somewhat surprising result when looking at the importance of those factors affecting WFH effectiveness. Leadership, technology and culture all scored highly. But access to hard copy information was ranked consistently by most as unimportant, even by respondents from the legal profession.

It will be interesting to see if this is preserved as people return to the office. At issue is the risk of "reversion", where the experience of working during the lockdown is lost as a return-to-business-as-usual sets in. One example of this may be the temptation for those used to paper-based information to revert to that practice post-COVID, confounding the efforts of organisations to continue the migration to digital despite how little the majority consider it important.

Executive summary

THERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITIES ARISING FROM THE COVID EXPERIENCE….. AND CHALLENGES

While for many the positive experience of working from home could not have been anticipated prior to the lockdowns, in reality it is an acceleration of a trend already in place. But the office is not "dead". First, the social and professional interaction found here is important for personal development and organisational culture. Second, the innovation and organisational productivity that are the drivers for growth, financial performance and competitive advantage are significantly enhanced by both structured and spontaneous face-to-face collaboration.

The opportunity now is to successfully merge the physical and virtual states in a seamless and mutually complementary way to create workplaces that provide an enhanced resilience and flexibility for both the organisation and the individual, an improved employee value proposition, access to global talent, and a safe and "best fit" environment that supports productive work.

However, there are challenges in leading and motivating a geographically dispersed workforce. For many organisations this requires evolved approaches to leadership, management and learning and development. At an operational level, the ability of people who are not physically collocated to connect and collaborate with each other will require both sophisticated technology and training. Also required will be a balancing of the desires of the individual with those of the team and the wider organisation.

The blended workplace will evolve to be different from the models that preceded it. "Workplace" will mean much more than just "the office". The traditional discipline of facilities management will evolve to being one of workplace experience and services.

The dominance of individual desks in the office will give way to a greater diversity of settings for interaction and collaboration, incorporating sophisticated videoconferencing facilities and a range of measures to address the noise spread and confidentiality issues that come with increased virtual interaction.

More than ever the physical workplace will manifest brand and culture. Workplace monitoring and management will be important across a broad spectrum – comfort, sustainability, health and wellbeing, and hygiene.

Presence and wayfinding will require sophisticated technology – being able to effortlessly and intuitively locate and connect with people, and to book worksettings and spaces will be fundamental to the blended workplace.

Organisations with multiple office locations will enjoy far greater connection through the new "virtuality", with the need for physical travel between them likely to significantly decrease. And the location of the office will be important with respect to ease of access (both public transport and parking) and amenity – retail, food & beverage, leisure, fitness and social will increasingly be important to the overall user experience.

Finally, the blended workplace needs to be considered as a business investment if it is to be successful. It will need dedicated leadership, resources and support and be enacted sequentially through leadership, management, technology, people and place initiatives. A checklist of the steps required to achieve this is provided on page 41 of this report.

Findings

The majority of respondents considered themselves to be as or more productive working from home than in the office.

WFH is wonderful. I've been more productive with my individual work, we've functioned more cohesively as a team than I've ever experienced in three years and I've been able to improve my communication and management skills through virtual systems. I've noticed my energy and creativity is much higher.

Government respondent
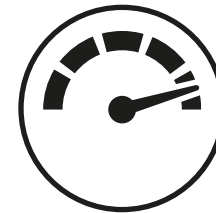
83%

considered their WFH productivity to have been the same or increased relative to pre-COVID.

Despite the disruption the experience was considered productive

83% OF RESPONDENTS FELT THEIR PRODUCTIVITY WHEN WORKING FROM HOME TO BE EQUAL OR GREATER TO THAT IN THE OFFICE

Despite the enormous disruption to daily life caused by the COVID-19 lockdowns, 83% of respondents in overall terms indicated they felt as or more productive while working at home compared to working in the office (Fig. 2). These results were remarkably consistent across the industry sectors.

This outcome is consistent with those of other global and local surveys:

- **Colliers International survey**[3] reported 72% of respondents indicated they remained steady or felt more productive

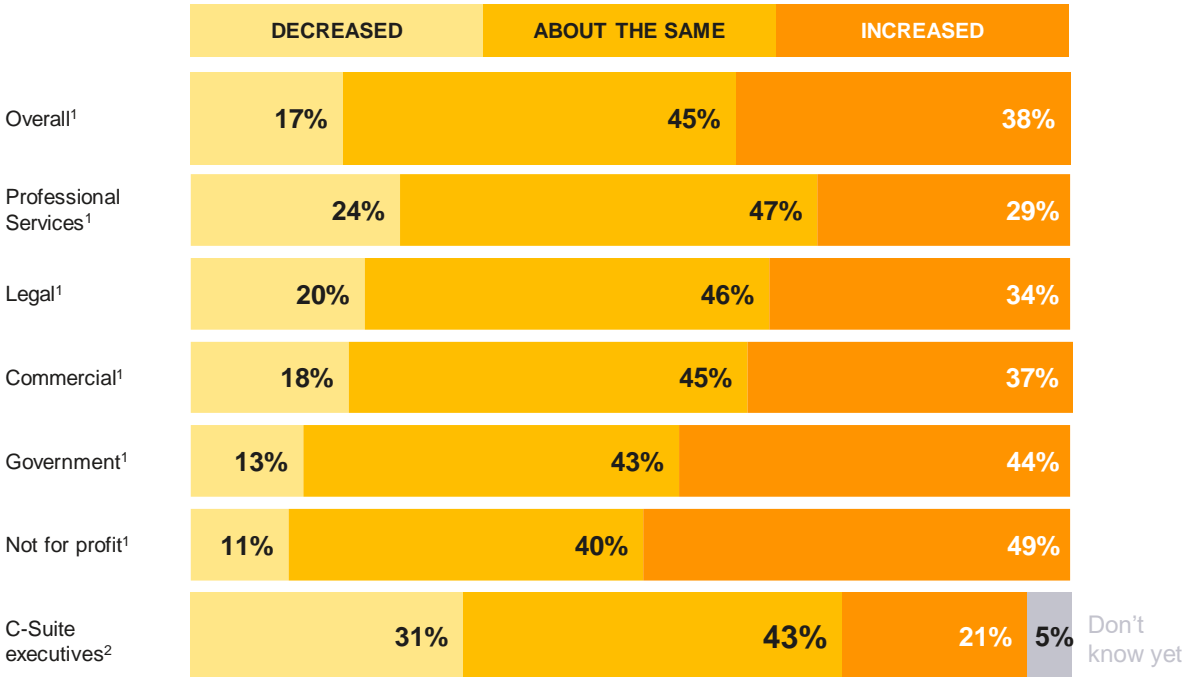- **Equiem Global Occupier survey**[4] reported 82% of occupiers to be as or more productive at home

- **Global Workplace Analytics survey**[5] reported 68% were very successful WFH, with 72% having access to everything they needed to be successful.

In addition to the responses from individuals, it is significant that organisational leaders also perceived the same or increased productivity, with respondents to the Dexus C-Suite survey indicating that they saw the same or increased productivity. These views from leadership were again reflected in global surveys, with the Global Workplace Analytics survey[5] indicated that 70% of leaders say that WFH is the same or better for their team's work performance, on average.

	DECREASED	ABOUT THE SAME	INCREASED	
Overall[1]	17%	45%	38%	
Professional Services[1]	24%	47%	29%	
Legal[1]	20%	46%	34%	
Commercial[1]	18%	45%	37%	
Government[1]	13%	43%	44%	
Not for profit[1]	11%	40%	49%	
C-Suite executives[2]	31%	43%	21%	5% Don't know yet

2. Q. How do you think working from home has impacted your productivity?

1. Six Ideas Survey 2020 (n=6455) Locations: Australia, New Zealand
2. C-Suite Survey 2020 (n=153) Locations: Australia
3. The Work-from-Home experience in Asia Pacific, Colliers International, (n=5000) Locations: Asia Pacific Region
4. 2020 Global Office Tenant Report, Equiem, (n=4500) Locations: Australia, UK, Ireland, USA.
5. Global Work-from-Home Experience Survey, 2020 Iometrics & Global Workforce Analytics, (n=2865) Locations: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, China, Europe, India, Latin & South America, Middle East, UK, Ireland, USA.

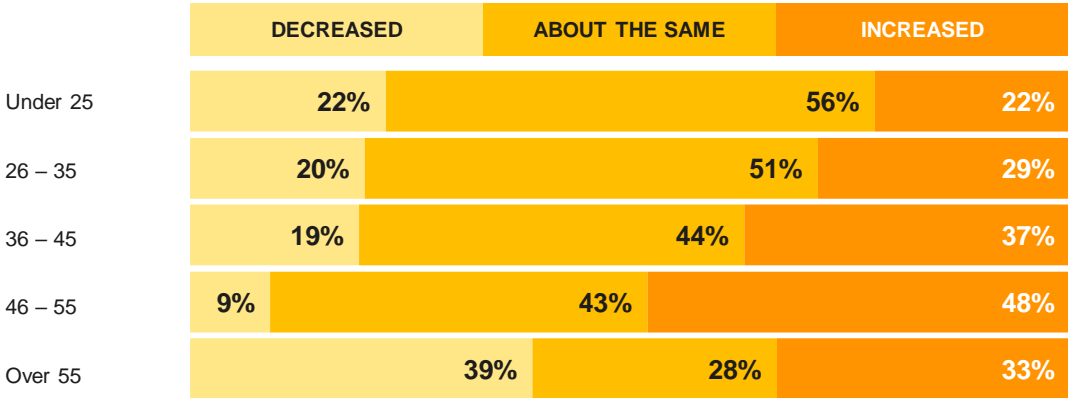# Some found working from home more productive than others

ROLE AND COMMUTE TIMES INFLUENCED THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE WFH EXPERIENCE WAS CONSIDERED TO BE PRODUCTIVE

Some age and role cohorts had more reservations about WFH productivity than others. The over-55 age demographic indicated a significantly greater than average decrease in productivity, over twice the overall average. Interestingly, the preceding age demographic, 46 – 55 reporting the highest productivity scores. Under 25 cohort indicated they experienced the least increase in productivity, with commentary here suggesting that mentorship and team learning suffered as a result of virtual rather than physical connection and collaboration.

Female respondents indicated higher productivity scores than their male counterparts with staff noting how the lack of commuting and new flexibility of work hours enabled greater integration with childcare and schooling responsibilities.

Somewhat expectedly, participants with the longest commute time, more than 60 minutes one-way, indicated the highest increase in productivity of 54% (Figure[5]).

Staff clearly enjoyed gaining back any additional hours of travel time with many noting a decrease in stress levels and greater engagement with their work. Some felt empowered around having greater control over structuring their daily work activity, while also integrating and balancing both work and family responsibilities.

	DECREASED	ABOUT THE SAME	INCREASED
Under 25	22%	56%	22%
26 – 35	20%	51%	29%
36 – 45	19%	44%	37%
46 – 55	9%	43%	48%
Over 55	39%	28%	33%

3. Productivity impact by Age (n=430)[1]

	DECREASED	ABOUT THE SAME	INCREASED
Male	22%	47%	31%
Female	11%	46%	44%

4. Productivity impact by Gender (n=2889)[1]

	DECREASED	ABOUT THE SAME	INCREASED
Less than 30 mins	22%	48%	30%
30-60 mins	13%	45%	42%
More than 60 mins	7%	39%	54%
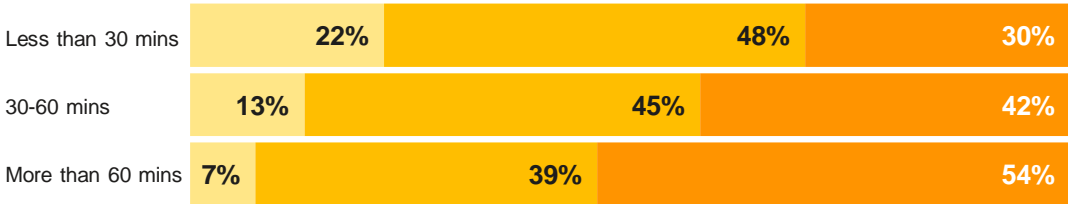
5. Productivity impact by Commute time (n=6455) [1]

1. Six Ideas Survey 2020 (n=6455)

Not all productivity outcomes are measurable

THE SURVEY RESULTS ARE TYPICALLY ABOUT INDIVIDUAL TASK COMPLETION. OTHER FORMS OF PRODUCTIVITY
ARE LESS EASILY MEASURED

While the majority of respondents noted that they considered themselves to be as or more productive when working from home as they would have been in the office, it is important not to take this at face value.

The concept of "productivity" can be interpreted in many ways, and while the question was not specifically asked, in other surveys of this type by Six Ideas where people have been asked how they would define "productivity", the response has been typically one of task completion. For people working in isolation at home, it may be assumed that a similar interpretation would apply.
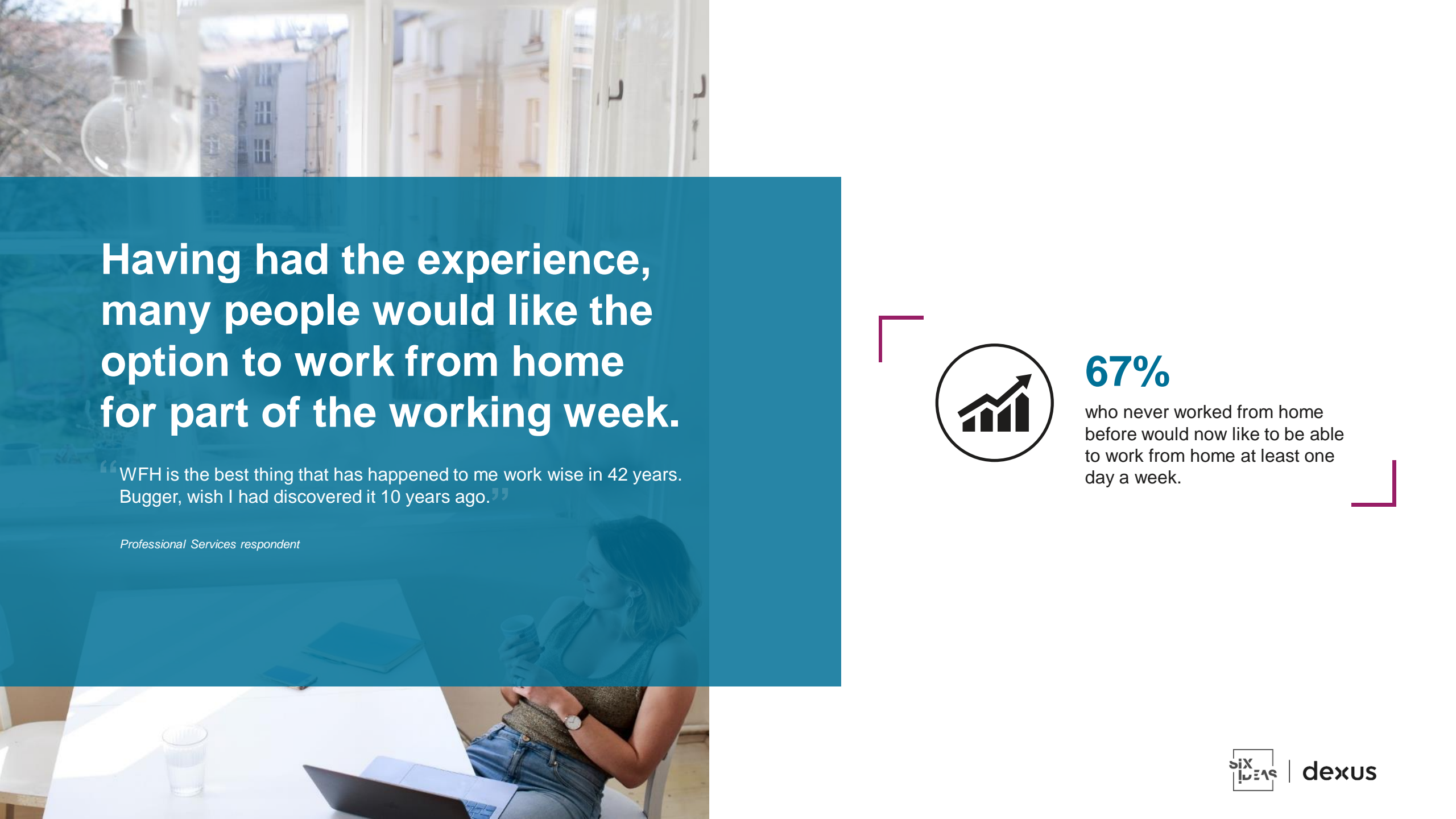
In some respects this outcome is unsurprising. Where people have an appropriate home work environment, many of the interruptions and distractions that are experienced in the office would not occur, enabling focussed work. The time lost in travel to and from the office may also be a factor in the responses. And in some of the participating organisations this task completion could be actively measured in the form of time-based fees. Those organisations that could track this reported that their billable hours had increased over the lockdown period, although they also noted that some of this related to COVID-related advisory services.

However, individual task completion is but one form of "productivity". Team or organisational productivity is another matter and, in many respects more difficult to assess except in hindsight. Such collective productivity could be classified not only as an outcome of aggregated individual tasks, but also the generation of new ideas, processes and services which typically come from collaborative working.

Another factor that should be considered is the extent to which the work being undertaken requires high levels of connectivity with others as opposed to individual task-based work. As can be seen in Figure[6], the experience of people working in Operations, Management and HR was markedly different to that of people working in Finance, Legal and IT.
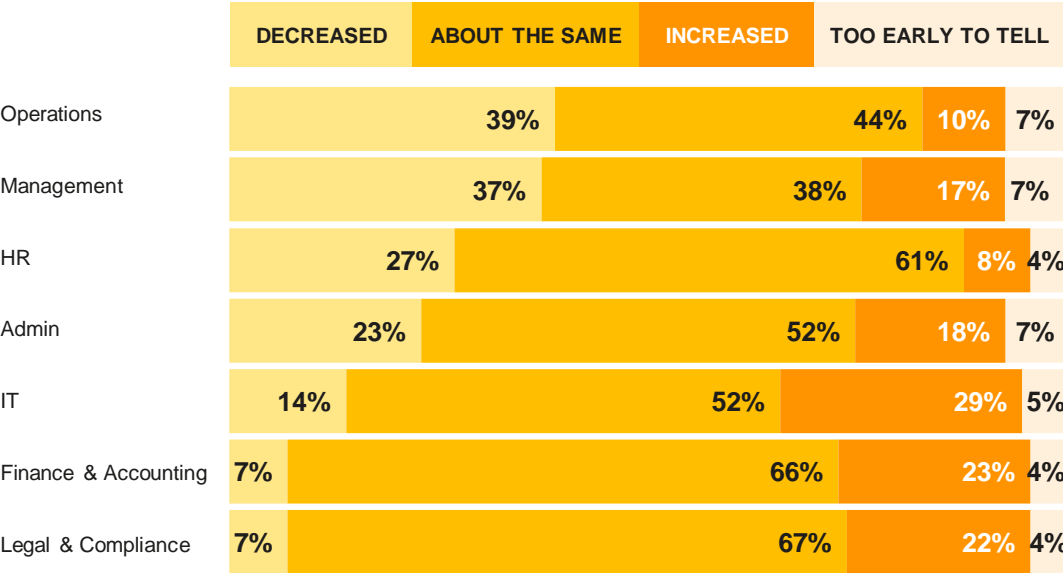
6. Q. Compared to the pre-COVID experience do you think the following roles are more or less effective working remotely? (n=153)1

Having had the experience, many people would like the option to work from home for part of the working week.

" WFH is the best thing that has happened to me work wise in 42 years. Bugger, wish I had discovered it 10 years ago. "

Professional Services respondent

67%

who never worked from home before would now like to be able to work from home at least one day a week.
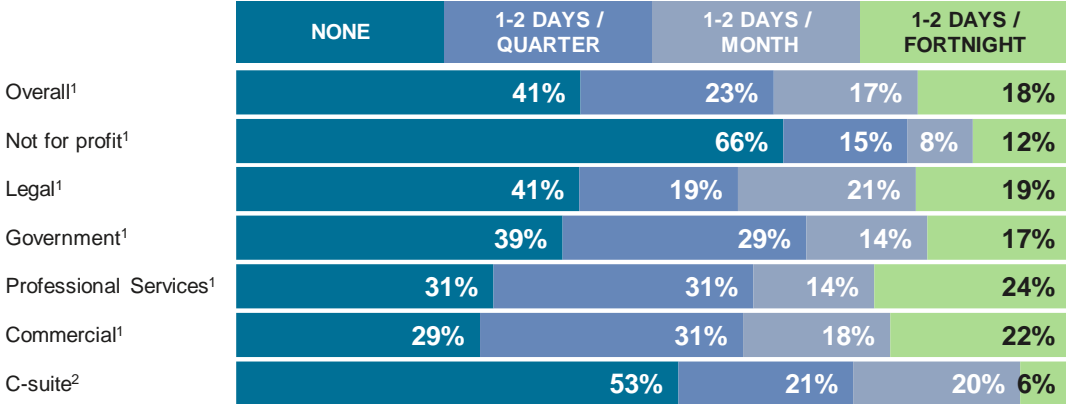
A majority would like the ability to work from home occasionally

THERE IS A CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR THE ABILITY TO WORK FROM HOME ONE TO TWO DAYS A WEEK, A RESULT THAT IS CONSISTENT ACROSS ALL SECTORS
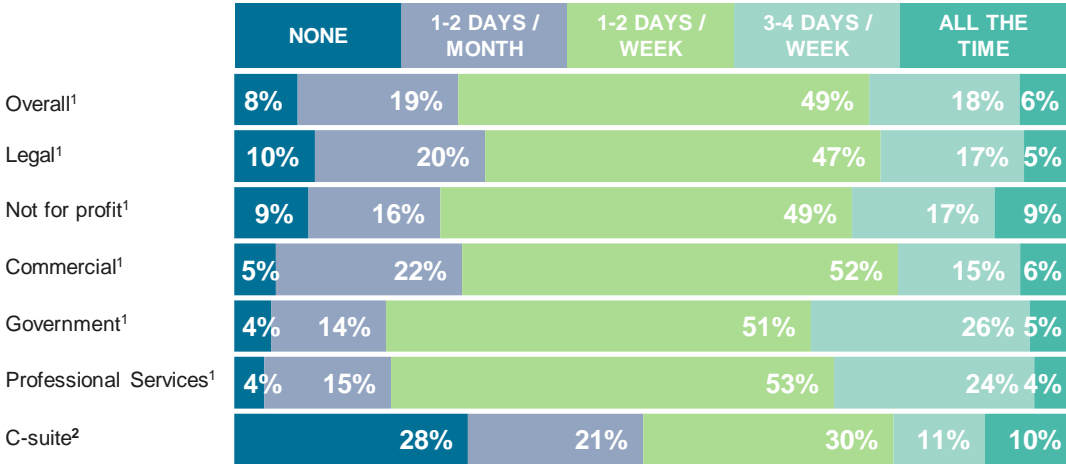
In overall terms, 41% of respondents had never worked from home prior to the COVID-19 lockdown. Despite this initial lack of experience, 67% of those who had never worked from home previously are now indicating a desire to do so at least one day a week.

There is clear majority support for having the ability to work from home in the future, overall 73% of respondents indicating they would ideally like to work at least one day a week from home. There is a consistent preference for one to two days a week working from home across all sectors. Almost all those who had previously worked from home at least one day a fortnight want to do more. Again, we see consistent findings with other global and local surveys:

- **Colliers International survey**[3] reported 84% of respondents indicated working from home 1+ days a week

- **Equiem Global Occupier survey**[4] reported 65% of occupiers expect to work from home once a week

- **Global Workplace Analytics survey**[5] reported 76% expected to work from home at least 1 day per week.

	NONE	1-2 DAYS / QUARTER	1-2 DAYS / MONTH	1-2 DAYS / FORTNIGHT
Overall[1]	41%	23%	17%	18%
Not for profit[1]	66%	15%	8%	12%
Legal[1]	41%	19%	21%	19%
Government[1]	39%	29%	14%	17%
Professional Services[1]	31%	31%	14%	24%
Commercial[1]	29%	31%	18%	22%
C-suite[2]	53%	21%	20%	6%

7. Q. Prior to COVID-19 how often did you work from home?

	NONE	1-2 DAYS / MONTH	1-2 DAYS / WEEK	3-4 DAYS / WEEK	ALL THE TIME
Overall[1]	8%	19%	49%	18%	6%
Legal[1]	10%	20%	47%	17%	5%
Not for profit[1]	9%	16%	49%	17%	9%
Commercial[1]	5%	22%	52%	15%	6%
Government[1]	4%	14%	51%	26%	5%
Professional Services[1]	4%	15%	53%	24%	4%
C-suite[2]	28%	21%	30%	11%	10%

8. Q. How much time would you ideally work from home once the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted?

73%
respondents would like to WFH at least 1 day a week[1]

but

49%
executives disagree with this WFH frequency[2]

and only

24%
respondents want to WFH more than 2 days a week[1]

1. Six Ideas Survey 2020 (n=6455)
2. C-Suite Survey 2020 (n=153)
3. The Work-from-Home experience in Asia Pacific, Colliers International, (n=5000)
4. 2020 Global Office Tenant Report, Equiem, (n=4500)
5. Global Work-from-Home Experience Survey, 2020 Iometrics & Global Workforce Analytics, (n=2865)

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But this interest is yet to be tested

THE SURVEY RESPONSES ARE BASED ON A UNIQUE AND QUITE EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE

It is important to consider that the majority of respondents to the survey did so at a time when all people were working from home. This was a unique and quite extraordinary experience. For most it was a novelty and provided that an appropriate home working environment was available, many respondents commented that they were pleasantly surprised, referencing the time saved from commuting and the ability to spend more time with family. Another revelation was the "levelling effect" of having everyone connect by videoconferencing.

That WFH experience may well be different when the lockdowns end and there are some team members working in the office and some not. The data suggests that in many organisations there will be more people in the former category than the latter. And it is clear from the surveys that people will still want to go to the office for a variety of reasons – social and professional interaction, learning and development, and the services and amenities that are available both within the office and external to it. And their enthusiasm for being able to work from home is potentially more about having the ability to do it than an expression of actual intent.

Furthermore, the employers who responded to the C-Suite survey were not as enthusiastic about people working from home, although a majority recognised that it was likely that that option would be available to staff in future to the extent it was not already.

77%
still intend to work
primarily from the office[1]

49%
Business execs think building
company culture is best done
when interacting physically[2]

1. Six Ideas Survey 2020 (n=6455)
2. C-Suite Survey 2020 (n=153)

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Working from home has been a positive experience for many, but with some reservations

"[There] can occasionally be times when it is hard to get going, or when endless video engagement is challenging, however this is more than offset by the productivity increase with no travel time, no "office dressing", no hunting for meeting rooms all day and no noise from overly full agile working spaces."

Legal respondent
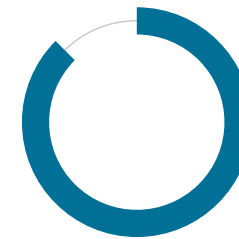
89% agreed they felt they could work from home effectively

The evidence suggests working from home can work

DESPITE THE LACK OF NOTICE AND, FOR SOME A LACK OF PREPAREDNESS, FOR MOST PEOPLE WORKING FROM HOME HAS ACTUALLY WORKED

The COVID-generated requirement for people to work from home was unprecedented in terms of lack of notice and preparedness, with some organisations struggling to put in place the necessary infrastructure and protocols to enable it.

But others were well prepared with many organisations having already implemented flexible work practices and the provision of mobility-enabling technology and protocols. Approximately a third of participants were in this category, indicating that there were no factors impacting their ability to work from home effectively.

In overall terms, 89% of respondents reported that they had been able to work from home effectively during the lockdown.

Benefits of the experience that were cited included:

- time normally spent commuting is gained back
- greater opportunities for and flexibility in spending time with family members
- improved health and wellbeing through reduced stress
- a better environment to concentrate and focus on work

89% agreed they could WFH productively

76% had an easy transition to virtual workplace
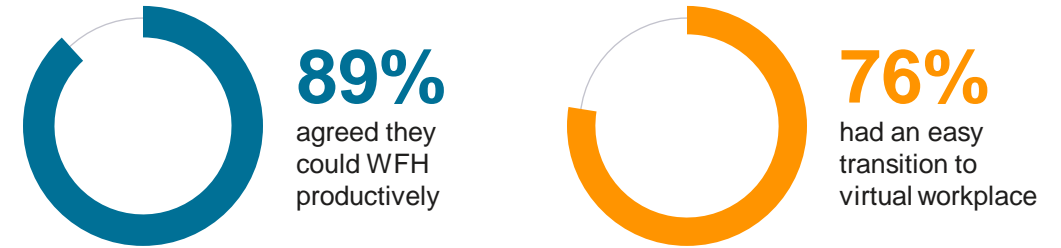
8. Q. Rate your agreement with the following statements: "I find I can work from home productively" & "My transition from physical to virtual workplace has been easy." [1]

Productive	1054
Positive experience	850
Save commute time / cost	721
Better work / life balance	690
Provides flexibility	569
Healthier – Less stress	400
Good for focus work	354
Socially isolating	287
Want balance WFH / office	236
Challenging	192
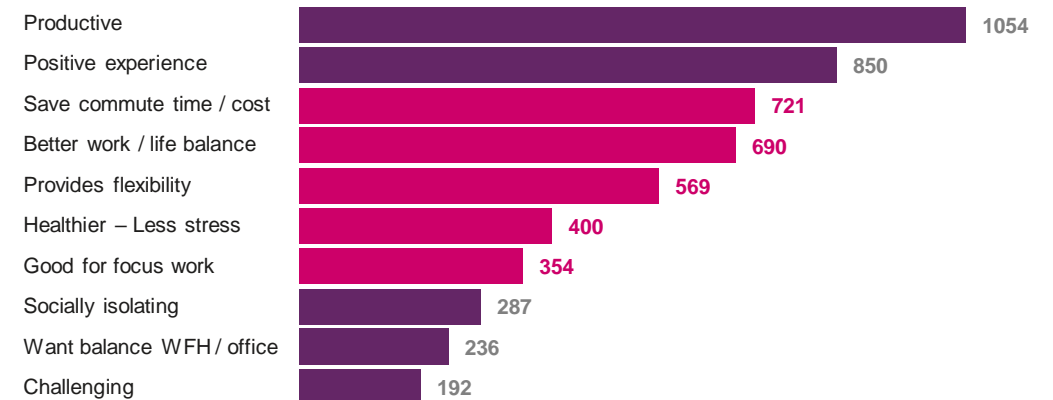
9. Q. Complete this sentence, Working From Home is..?[1] (Top ten comment topics)

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Not everyone has enjoyed it

A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS HAVE STRUGGLED DURING THE LOCKDOWNS

Over a quarter of all respondents indicated they were not enjoying the overall experience of working from home. In both the Six Ideas and Dexus Customer surveys, the hindrances to an effective experience that were consistently referenced were:

- Missing the social and collaborative contact with colleagues[1]

- Having difficulty working alongside housemates and/or spouses and having child care responsibilities, especially during the initial school and care centre closures[2]

- Not enough space for a proper work environment[3]

- Poor internet access and reliability[4]

Also noted in respondent commentary were:

- The difficulty of separating "work" from "home" and extended working hours

- Lack of movement, exercise and too much access to the kitchen (= food)

- The tedium of videoconferencing without breaks

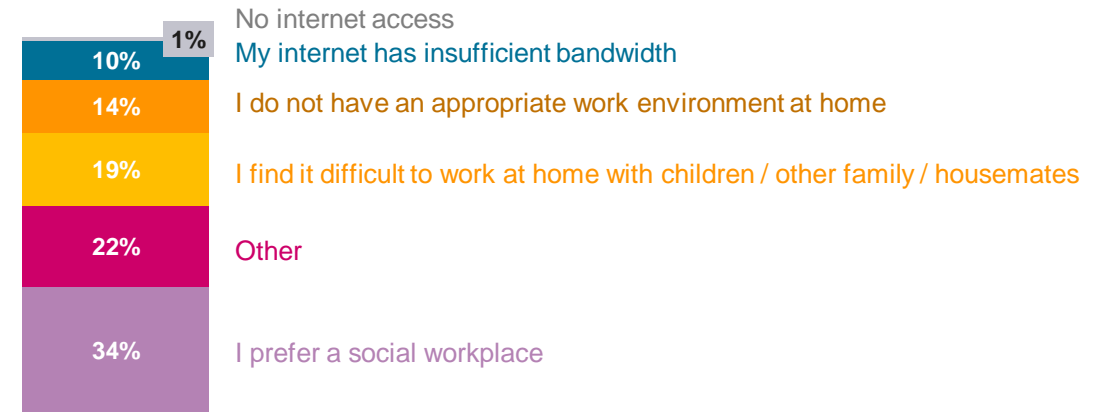- The psychological impact of working in isolation

- It is important in considering these aspects of the experience to note that they reference a time when for most respondents there was no choice but to work from home, and the opportunity to move outside that environment was very limited

10%	No internet access
1%	My internet has insufficient bandwidth
14%	I do not have an appropriate work environment at home
19%	I find it difficult to work at home with children / other family / housemates
22%	Other
34%	I prefer a social workplace

10. Q. Do any of the following factors hinder your ability to work from home effectively? (please select all that apply)[5]

29%

did not enjoy WFH

1. Six Ideas Survey: 34%, Dexus Customer Survey: 40%
2. Six Ideas Survey: 19%, Dexus Customer Survey: 24%
3. Six Ideas Survey: 14%, Dexus Customer Survey: 13%
4. Six Ideas Survey: 10%, Dexus Customer Survey: 10%
5. Six Ideas Survey 2020 (n=6455)
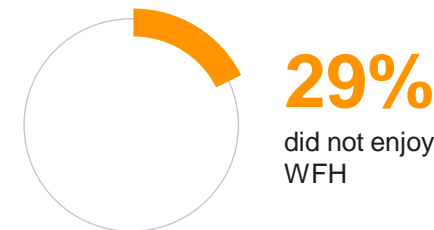
11. Q. Rate your agreement with the following statements: "I do not enjoy working from home" (Those who disagreed)[5]

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Few people want to work from home all the time

MOST PEOPLE HAVE A CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR BEING ABLE TO EXPERIENCE THE PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL INTERACTION OF THE OFFICE

Notwithstanding the positive working from home experience, the majority of respondents to all three surveys noted the importance of the office for social and professional interaction. This is consistent with survey results and research conducted by others.
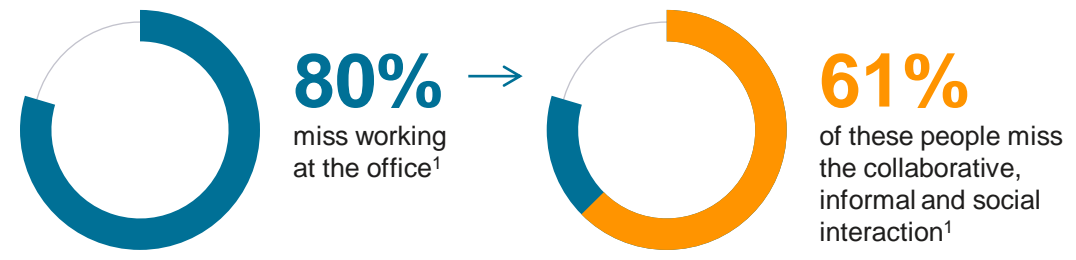
Key attributes of the office environment that were cited included team based creative work, problem solving and "brainstorming"; learning and mentoring; and the impromptu conversations and chance encounters that can be the foundation of innovation.

The innovation and organisational productivity that in many organisations are the drivers for growth, financial performance and competitive advantage are significantly enhanced by both structured and spontaneous face-to-face collaboration.

Also referenced was the importance of face-to-face interaction in building and sustaining an organisational culture, managing staff wellbeing and for new employees and junior staff to "see and be seen". The visibility and accessibility of leaders is also seen as being an important benefit of the office environment.

Hence for the majority of respondents who expressed interest in being able to work from home on an ongoing basis, the choice of location for work was not a binary case of either work in the office or work at home but a blend of the two.

80% → miss working at the office[1]

61% of these people miss the collaborative, informal and social interaction[1]

	BEST F2F	PREFER F2F / POTENTIAL ONLINE	COMBO F2F / ONLINE	BEST ONLINE
Building a company culture		51%	21%	27% 1%
Meeting clients or prospective clients		43%	34%	23%
Managing staff performance		42%	31%	27%
Business development & sales		34%	35%	28% 3%
Managing staff mental wellbeing		33%	41%	26%
Building connection to your brand	23%	29%	45%	3%
Fostering innovation	22%	20%	55%	3%
Developing & educating your staff	21%	34%	44%	1%
Collaboration between teams	21%	38%	38%	3%
Process change & improvements	16%	33%	44%	7%
Staff accessing help & advice	13%	32%	48%	7%

Fig. 12: Q. What approach do you think is most effective for each of the following business activities?[2]

1. Dexus Customer Survey 2020 (n=1095)
2. Dexus C-Suite Survey 2020 (n=153)

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Key enablers for a positive WFH experience

"Currently I work from home due to COVID-19 and I am happy with my set up, as work has provided me a screen which has been very useful and effective. I am currently really good and working efficiently and effectively. Maybe a work phone to able hot spot or phone allowance if there was a power outage but other than that I'm happy and has allowed me to have a better work-life balance and has improved my wellbeing."

Government respondent

43%
indicated 'proper home setup' as the top WFH enabling factor

Effective working from home is dependent on some key enablers

THERE ARE A NUMBER FACTORS THAT IMPACT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WORKING FROM HOME

The enablers that were identified as being a precondition for effective working from home may be summarised in two categories – technology and organisational culture. Respondents ranked the importance (important/very important) of these as follows:

1. Technology that supports individual work – spanning the spectrum of connectivity to people and information, networks and data sources.

2. Supportive team culture – staying in touch with team members with mutual support and encouragement

3. Technology that supports collaborative work – being able to work with others, be that through discussion, developing and working on ideas, solving problems or collectively producing documents and other forms of output.

4. An appropriate and safe space to physically work – referencing ergonomics, thermal comfort, acoustics, daylight and lighting.

5. Access to digital information – being able to find, access and work on documents and other forms of information.

6. Supportive organisational culture – feeling supported and appreciated whilst being remote from leaders and other team members.

7. Business leadership support for remote working – through the provision of enabling resources, support, protocols and procedures.

8. Access to hardcopy information – the documents and other forms of paper-based information that are typically taken for granted in the office.
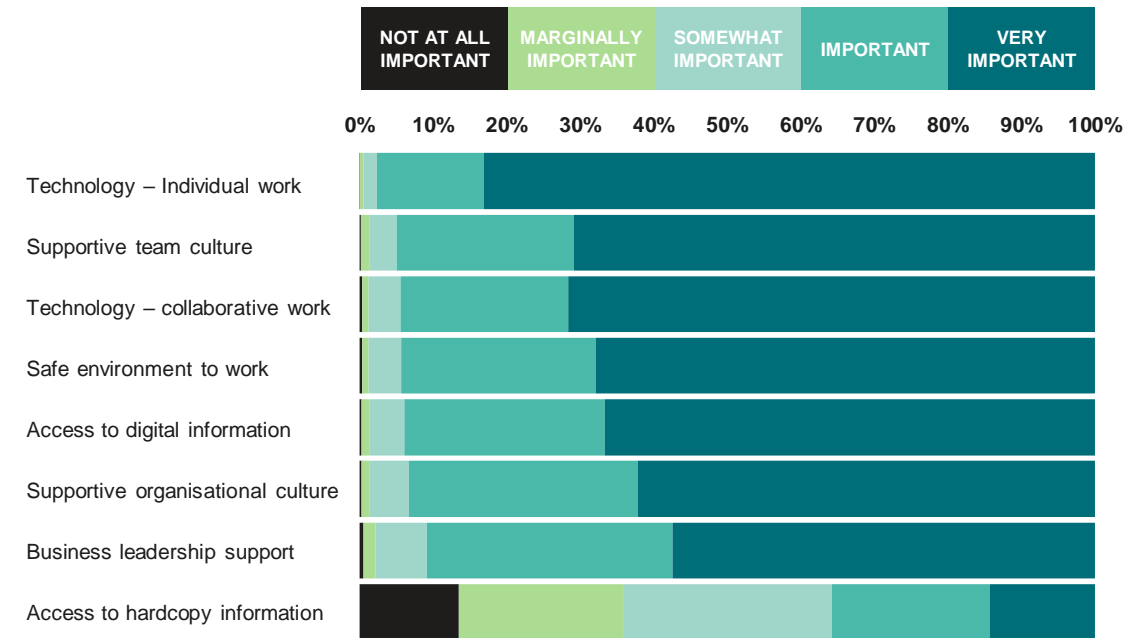
13. Q. Please rate the importance of the following enabling factors[1]

1. Dexus Customer Survey 2020 (n=1095)

There are benefits to be had, but also drawbacks to be avoided

THERE A RANGE OF CONSIDERATIONS TO SUCCESSFUL WORKING FROM HOME – PHYSICAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND HEALTH

When asked how working at home compared to working in the office, respondents indicated a range of both benefits and drawbacks.

Work-life balance was cited as a significant benefit, referencing the greater flexibility that WFH offered in terms of balancing work and family commitments, particularly for people with children. An increased sense of empowerment and autonomy was also cited.

But there were many drawbacks also referenced. Despite the benefit of such flexibility, a lot of people commented that they tended to work longer hours and in some cases there was an expectation on the part of others that they would do this.

Notwithstanding the discovery of videoconferencing as an important means of communication, spontaneous connectivity with others (the "water cooler conversation") was also considered to decrease.

Another drawback was a decrease in the quantum of exercise and breaks when working from home, with many people commenting that they didn't realise how much walking they did to, from and within the office, and the respite from work that walking provided.

"Proximity to the pantry" was another issue that was cited , with "COVID-kilos" being a problem as a result of both the reduction in exercise and an increase in snacking.

For people working from him in the long term, awareness of these drawbacks will be important, with the need for active steps to be taken to avoid them.

	% UP	% DOWN
Connectivity with others	19	53
Level of exercise	33	48
Number of breaks	23	42
Level of stress	31	27
Work life balance	58	25
Creativity	20	16
Snacking	49	14
Hours worked	48	10
Empowerment	27	10
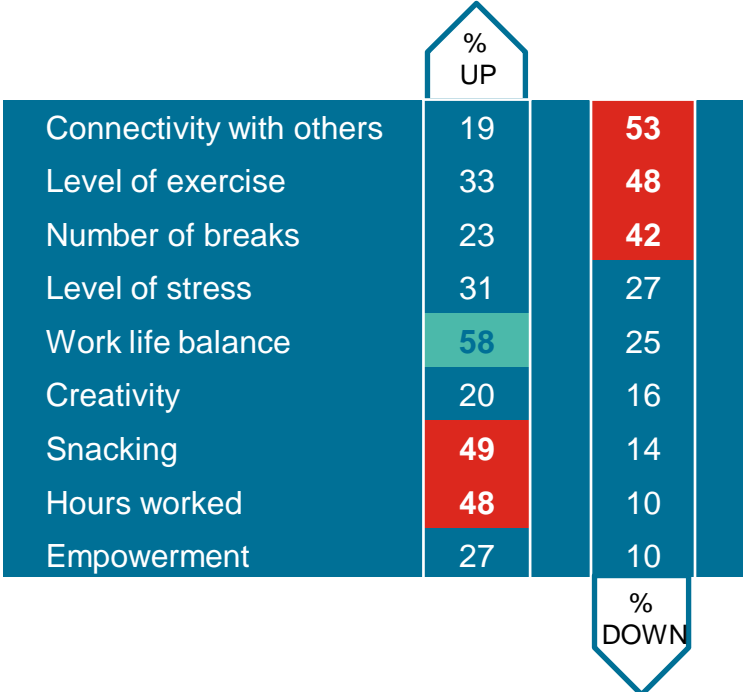
14. Q. Do you think you have seen an increase or decrease in the following areas since working from home[1]

1. Dexus Customer Survey 2020 (n=1095)

But this interest is yet to be tested

THE SURVEY RESPONSES ARE BASED ON A UNIQUE AND QUITE EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE

For organisations with geographically dispersed offices, particularly where these extend overseas, working remotely and communicating and collaborating virtually is second nature. For these organisations having people work from home is merely an extension of existing operations. Such organisations will already have the infrastructure, protocols and culture to be able to operate with their people working remotely.

But for others with localised operations, having people dispersed is a new and for some, quite challenging proposition. During the COVID lockdowns, organisations and people in this situation have had no choice but to adapt to an entirely new way of working. Some have done this well, others not so well and this is reflected in the survey responses.

Having people used to working face-to-face means that many aspects of work are taken for granted. When face-to-face is not possible, problems can arise, including:

- Individual or team direction and task delegation
- Performance monitoring and management
- Health and wellbeing oversight, including workload management
- Learning, staff development and mentoring

Often the people that struggle the most are the people leading teams, rather than the team members, and building a robust and responsive culture and leadership is fundamentally important to addressing this.

73%
business execs see physical interaction as best for managing staff performance[1]

74%
business execs see physical interaction better for managing staff wellbeing[1]

1. Dexus C-Suite Survey 2020 (n=153)

The WFH experience has delivered some surprises

"I like that we now have processes in place that have moved to electronic rather than paper formats which makes working from home much easier. I think that more digital/electronic processes moving forward enables employees to be more mobile."

Legal respondent
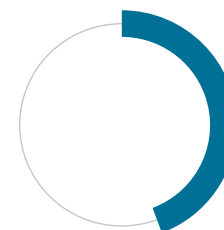
63%

indicated access to hardcopy information has not been important

For many people videoconferencing has been an entirely new experience

WELCOME TO A WORLD WHERE EVERYONE CAN CONNECT AND COLLABORATE ON AN EQUAL BASIS FROM ANYWHERE

One of the big surprises of the lockdowns has been the realisation that communicating via videoconferencing (Zoom or similar) provides an easy and effective way of connecting with others. In particular, having everyone participate on the same virtual basis is a significantly different experience to that of dialing into a physical meeting where it is easy for remote participants to be unintentionally ignored, and hard for those that are remote to be able to meaningfully participate.

Another surprise has been the extent to which people have learned more about each other as a result of WFH videoconferencing, with comments ranging from seeing what people's home environments are like to meeting children and pets, be that intentionally or otherwise. And positive references were also made to the greater visibility of and access to leaders when virtual "town hall" events are convened.

A particular benefit has been the ability of this personal type of videoconferencing to break down geographic boundaries, be that on an individual basis or in groups. Indeed many organisations who would normally convene face-to-face events have been surprised at the uplift in attendance when those events are held virtually as webinars. And leaders who responded to the C-Suite survey noted that they anticipated a significant reduction in physical travel as a result of the take-up of videoconferencing.

But drawbacks for this type of communication were referenced as well. Those whose days were dominated by videoconferences on a back-to-back basis without breaks found the experience exhausting and many commented that video conferencing could never replicate the meaningful interaction that happens on a face-to-face basis.

The demand for videoconferencing as a result of the lockdowns has created unprecedented demand for services such as Zoom, Teams, Blue Jeans, WebEx and the like and accelerated the development of their functionality.

Image: www.zoom.us

The future is looking increasingly digital

HARD COPY INFORMATION IS NOT AS ESSENTIAL TO WORK AS SOME MAY HAVE THOUGHT

When asked to rate WFH enabling factors only 36% of respondents rated 'access to hardcopy information' as important, a stark contrast to all other factors which scored consistently above 90%.

While this was not surprising, as most industry sectors have been advancing their digital information platforms and processes, the results for two of the three participating legal firms were a standout.

At issue is the traditional dependency of the legal sector on hard copy information. In discussion with those two firms it was noted that in the initial phases of the lockdown there was high activity in sending files by courier to lawyers' homes, but this was matched if not exceeded by the levels of hard copy scanning activity that was requested. As time went on many lawyers seem to have adjusted to the new digital environment.

	IMPORTANT / VERY IMPORTANT	GOOD / VERY GOOD
Legal 1	39%	49%
Legal 3	40%	32%
Professional Services 1	26%	34%
Professional Services 2	32%	14%
Not for Profit 1	50%	49%
Not for Profit 2	39%	40%
Government 1	21%	46%
Government 2	28%	25%
Government 3	35%	49%
Government 4	15%	75%
Commercial 1	36%	45%
Commercial 2	27%	25%
Commercial 3	8%	38%
Commercial 4	5%	50%

15b. Q. Please rate the importance and performance of hard copy information as enabling factor [1]

	Important/Very Important	Good/Very Good
Business leadership support	91%	85%
Supportive organisational culture	93%	84%
Supportive team culture	95%	86%
Technology – Individual work	98%	82%
Technology – Collaborative work	94%	80%
Access to digital information	94%	86%
Access to hardcopy information	36%	41%
Safe environment to work	94%	82%

15a. Q. Please rate the importance and performance of the following enabling factors. [1]

1. Six Ideas Survey 2020 (n=6455)

An extraordinary experience

THE RESEARCH RESULTS IN SUPPORT OF WORKING FROM HOME ARE COMPELLING BUT CARE NEEDS TO TAKEN IN THEIR INTERPRETATION

The working from home experience from March to July when the surveys were conducted was an extraordinary one in that nearly everyone was working from home. As such it was an artificial environment with respect to work and workplace.

When teams are split between the office and home when the lockdowns are relaxed and people start to return to the office, it is likely that the WFH experience will be quite different. For instance, there are likely to be issues with knowing where people are and their availability, ensuring that people working remotely stay connected in team discussions and decision-making, and addressing the challenges associated with people dialing into physical meetings.

Conversely, it also must be recognised that the largely positive feedback from the WFH experience has been in spite of challenges such as the need for home schooling children, issues with internet accessibility and performance, and a lack of an appropriate home working environment.

As a result of these unique circumstances, it will be some time before we will be able to fully understand future demand for working from home, what that experience will be like and the impact it will have on both individual and collaborative working. Inevitably, there will need to be a period of adjustment and indeed experimentation, and the "end state" will be an evolution.

Images: The Guardian (top), www.semiotips.com (bottom)

The productivity question

THERE ARE POLARISED OPINIONS ABOUT THE VALIDITY OF "PRODUCTIVITY" WHEN WORKING FROM HOME

Notwithstanding the results of this and other survey-based research studies, there are significant reservations being expressed by commentators in the media about the validity of the home working "productivity" as expressed in the surveys. Chief amongst these have been that the productivity benefits being cited are a reflection of "busyness" not output, and/or are being reported by staff who are fearful of losing their jobs if they report otherwise. Also referenced has been the desire to work from home must be viewed in the context of its impact on organisational culture, innovation, and "productivity".

In considering these concerns, it should be noted that it would have been inevitable that a disruption of the magnitude of the global pandemic-generated lockdown would have severely disrupted organisational activity and output. But regardless of whether people have or have not been "productive" during that period, commerce has not ceased and services have continued to be provided.

It should also be considered that working from home is a manifestation of people working remotely from each other, and organisations with national or global operations, including "innovators" such as universities and research institutes, have been successfully operating on this basis for years.

So while the outcomes of the lockdowns may be debated, it has to be acknowledged that our organisations have survived the experience, and some valuable and important new ways of working have been discovered as part of that experience.

Performance during lockdown
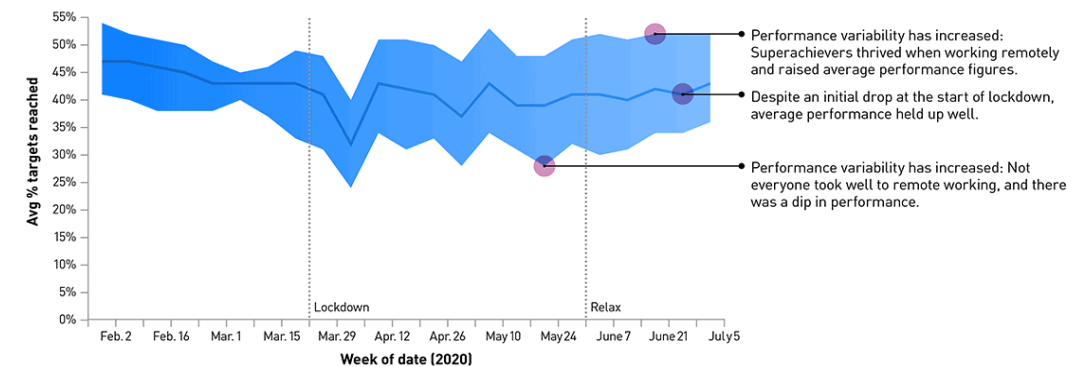
16. Impact of COVID-19 on productivity Source PwC US

Introducing the blended workplace

THE FUTURE WORKPLACE WILL BE A BLEND OF PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL WORKING

While we may not yet know the extent to which working from home will be taken up by organisations and their staff, the data shows that people are seeing benefits from it and many are keen to have the ability to do it, albeit intermittently.

Regardless of the mix, the "new normal" for workplace will be much more of a blend of physical and virtual working than has previously been the case, and for many it will be a "new, better normal" that provides a number of important benefits:

- **Resilient and sustainable workplace,** capable of responding to future "shock" events, albeit hopefully not as extreme as the one currently being experienced

- **Enhanced flexibility for change,** with the lessons learned from the transition generating legacy capability to react to new opportunities and challenges

- **Access to global talent with the ability** to recruit and work with people regardless of location

- **An improved employee value proposition** providing greater choice, autonomy and trust in where and how people work

- **The ability to enable productive work** in a "best fit" environment tailored to the specific needs, circumstances and culture of each organisation

At the office	Satellite	At home

Physical face-to-face

Virtual remote

THE BLENDED WORKPLACE
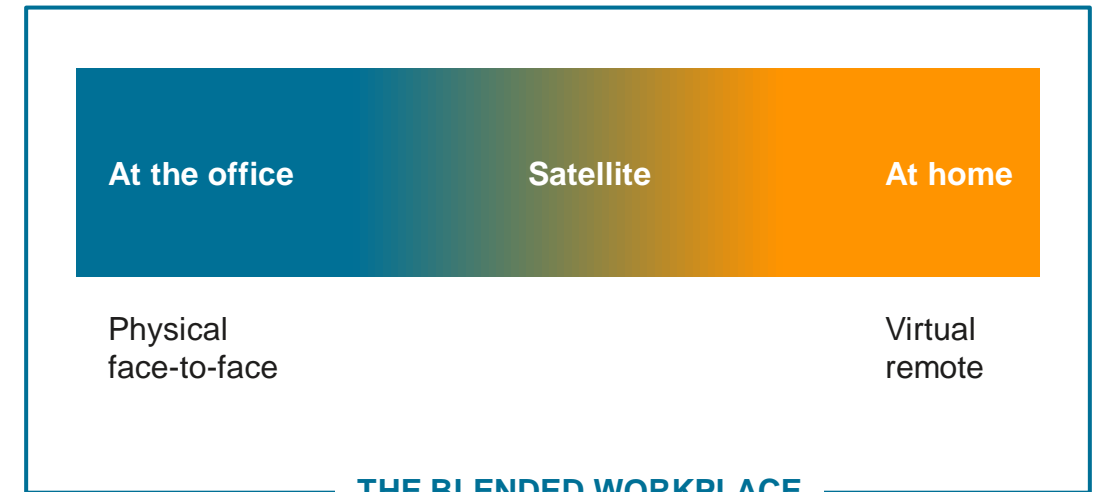
The blended workplace is another step in an existing evolution

WHILE THE "FUTURE NORMAL" MAY SEEM LIKE A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE, IT IS THE RESULT OF AN EVOLUTION SPANNING DECADES

The blended workplace is not new. It is part of an accelerating evolution, first predicted by international workplace visionaries DEGW and others in the 1980s. This evolution has been dominated by technology as both a catalyst and driver for change. This in turn has lead to new workplace models that were initially focused on cost reduction, then on workplace as a manifestation of culture and brand, and more recently on flexibility and choice at both an organisational and individual level. Importantly, the pace of this evolution is accelerating, and will continue to do so. Competitive advantage in commercial terms will come to those organisations that recognise this and embrace it.

1980s	1990s	2000s	2010	2015	2020+
Individual offices	**Open plan**	**Workplace as "brand"**	**Activity based working**	**Flexible workspace**	**Blended workspace**

- Offices seen as prestige
- Technology = mainframe

- Open plan reduced space costs
- Technology = desktop
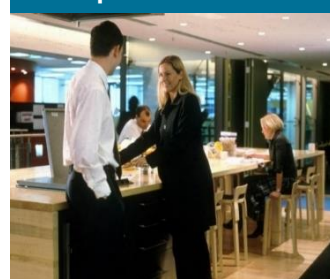
- Workplace expresses culture
- Mobile technology emerging

- Diversity of work settings
- Mobile technology enabled

- Emergence of co-working
- Plug & play technology

- Hybrid physical / virtual workplace
- 5G / Edge technology

17. Evolution of workplace models since 1980

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Two distinct phases of restoration and renewal

OUR RETURN TO THE "FUTURE NORMAL" OF BLENDED WORKPLACE WILL OCCUR IN TWO DISTINCT PHASES

It is important to recognise that while COVID-19 remains active in the community there will be widespread and legitimate concerns about health and safety, not only with respect to the office but also the means by which it is accessed, notably public transport. And at the time of writing this report, the City of Melbourne was still experiencing Stage 4 lockdown. It is understandable, therefore that discussion about the office in the short and even medium term will be dominated by minimising the risk of infection. As a result, primary drivers for the office will relate to government recommendations for a range of measures such as physical distancing and room capacities. The workplace strategies that relate to this will inevitably focus on reducing occupation density, eliminating desk sharing and controlling office circulation to minimise physical proximity. These concerns were raised by many respondents to the surveys.

But these measures will not necessarily be required once the pandemic eventually passes and so it needs to be recognised that the new blended workplace will go through two distinct phases – the COVID workplace and the post-COVID workplace.

The COVID workplace will still have a significant cohort of people working from home and many of the things that make the office attractive such as the interaction and energy will be missing.

But the post-COVID workplace will potentially be a very different proposition, because those "attractors" of interaction and energy will become more important than ever in attracting staff to attend when they potentially no longer need to. In such circumstances, the focus on physical separation will need to be replaced by spaces that actively encourage interaction and "buzz".

THE COVID WORKPLACE
Focus on hygiene and safety
>50% WFH

THE POST-COVID WORKPLACE
Exploration of the "new, better normal"
20% WFH

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Workplace strategy now has new dimensions

THE BLENDED WORKPLACE OFFERS MUCH BUT DETERMINING HOW IT WILL WORK IS COMPLICATED

Having proven through the COVID-19 lockdowns that that working from home or elsewhere can actually work and that people now see the benefits attached to that, hybrid workplaces which are a blend of in-office and remote / home working are here to stay. Indeed we predict future workplace will support four different workstyles:

- **Office** : where all work takes place in the office
- **Office flex** : where most work takes place in the office
- **Home flex** : where some work takes place in the office
- **Home** : where little or no work takes place in the office

And that will make the development of "workplace strategy" much more complicated than when the office was the default setting for all work. At issue is that there are now multiple considerations in the development of a strategy for a blended workplace:

- The desire of the **individual** to have a degree of choice in where work takes place;
- The need to balance that with the way **teams** or whole **businesses** need or want to work; and
- How those work choices fit with the overall ethos and culture of the **organisation**.

It is possible that the needs of these three cohorts will not necessarily be aligned and consultation will be required to reconcile them.

Organisation
- Shareholder value
- Brand & Culture
- Industry leadership
- Recruitment
- Technology

Business / Team
- Leadership
- Customer experience
- Business productivity
- Learning & mentoring
- Team dynamics
- Workstyles

Individual
- Employee engagement
- Well-being
- Retention
- Motivation
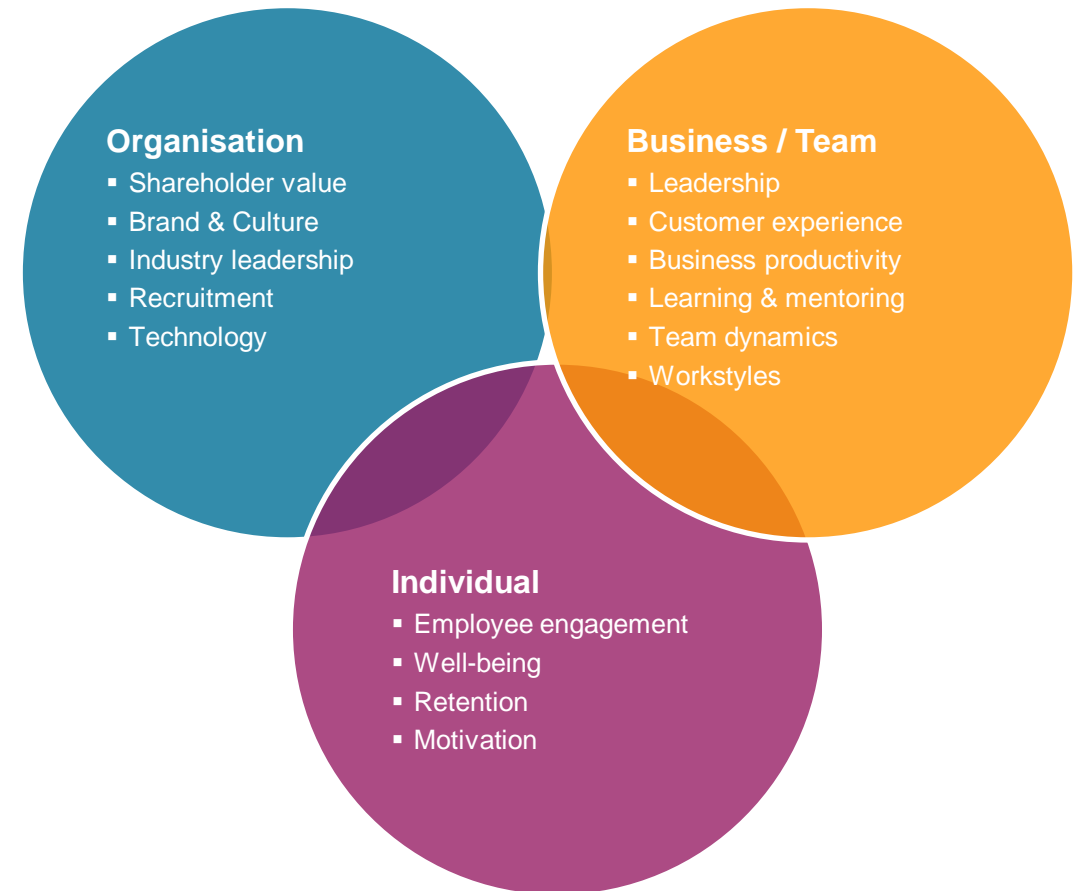
18. Drivers that the blended workplace strategy needs to balance

Activity-based work locations – a new concept

SOME WORK ACTIVITIES ARE BEST ACCOMMODATED IN THE OFFICE, OTHERS CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE

As a starting point for assessing the appropriate balance of physical and virtual in the blended workplace, it is appropriate to consider the nature of the activities to be accommodated and the importance of location in supporting them. To do this we consider two different factors – the nature of the activities and the people performing them.

"Activities" may be classified as being static (routine and planned in advance, self-determining or following a regular cycle) or dynamic (unplanned, spontaneous or ad hoc).

Static activities could be individual routine tasks or work requiring freedom from distractions or group-based coordination and information dissemination and discussion. These types of activities are not location dependent and could be performed anywhere, provided there is appropriate technology and protocols to support remote communications and collaboration. It should be noted that "anywhere" in this context could be the office, or the home, or elsewhere.

Dynamic activities are typically unplanned and ad hoc or require intense interaction. On an individual basis they can be chance encounters, "water cooler" conversations, and "osmotic" learning. On a group basis they include creative collaboration and rapid problem-solving where physical proximity enables on the spot interaction. These types of activities are facilitated by physical presence and colocation.

The key to both is to have a considered understanding of the nature and circumstances of the activities to determine the appropriate approach to supporting them.

	Individual	Collaborative	
Dynamic	Serendipitous contributions, learning opportunities, mentoring	Cross-fertilisation, creative & complex collaboration, rapid decision making	**Better enabled by physical space**
Static	Established routines, individual focus, long term objectives	Established routines, individual focus, long term objectives	**Can be performed anywhere**

19. Aligning location with the activities being supported

Resilience, sustainability and climate change

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS DEMONSTRATED THE NEED FOR RESILIENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN A WORLD UNDER THREAT

At the time of writing this report, the world's focus is on the pandemic. But there are other pressing issues such as the need to combat climate change through reducing emissions and build resilience to events such as the Australian bushfires that should be considered in assessing the opportunities and challenges of future workplace.

While the research has confirmed the importance and value of the office as a location for work, the experience of the COVID-19 lockdowns has demonstrated that alternative locations are possible, and the ability of organisations to continue to function during the lockdown has convincingly demonstrated resilience in the face of extreme circumstances.

Also demonstrated in the commentary from research participants is the benefit that working from home delivers in terms of avoiding the need to commute, thereby reducing the load on roads and public transport networks, with an inherent reduction is energy consumption and pollution as a result.

What is less clear, however, is whether home working in the longer term results in a net increase in energy consumption to achieve the same productivity outcomes, the variable being the extent to which power for lighting, IT and internet, and air conditioning is being consumed that is additional to what would have otherwise occurred. There are multiple considerations in this regard.

During the lockdowns, office power consumption has definitely reduced and the electricity grid has seen shifts in usage patterns and lower overall electricity demand due to businesses shutting down. Yet, post-COVID a net increase in consumption could well be anticipated as the combined effect of buildings ramping up to service all tenancies combines with increased home consumption due to a rise in flexible work. This could well be felt most particularly in summer, as homeowners turn on their air conditioners in increasing numbers.

Health and wellbeing – The risks and opportunities

THE BLENDED WORKPLACE OFFERS BOTH OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES WITH RESPECT TO OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The survey responses highlighted both the benefits and drawbacks of working from home in the context of health and wellbeing.

The benefits cited could be summarised in three categories: better work / life flexibility, particularly with respect to balancing work with family commitments; the ability to reassign commute time to exercise or leisure; and the ability to undertake focused work free from distraction. In the short term, the mitigation of infection risk was also referenced.

The drawbacks included extended working hours, the intensity of extensive videoconferencing, the feeling of isolation and lack of support, the inability of leaders to be aware of team members not coping, the lack of distinction between "work" and "home", unrealistic workload expectations and working hours, and inappropriate home work environments.

Notwithstanding that a majority of respondents indicated they enjoyed the experience of working from home, it is questionable whether this would be sustained in the long term to the same extent. On a post-COVID basis care will be required on the part of individuals, their teams and their organisations to ensure that the risks associated with the cited drawbacks are carefully managed. It would not be appropriate for people to work from home for extended periods without a conscious effort on the part of all three cohorts to ensure that experience is both safe and productive.

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The importance of location to the office

THE LOCATION OF THE OFFICE CAN BE AS IMPORTANT AS THE OFFICE ITSELF

A clear majority of people indicated that they missed being in the office during the lockdown period with the primary reason for this being the desire for social interaction. It could be assumed that this refers to interaction with work colleagues in the office, but that is not the only place for interaction. Indeed much social interaction happens within the vicinity of the office, not necessarily within it. The role of the precinct in which the office is located should not therefore be underestimated. Also relevant is the importance the office can play in talent attraction

In Australia, for many people office locations are central city CBDs or major urban centres. These locations typically have an abundance of services and amenities providing not only opportunities for social interaction but also retail, medical / dental, professional services, sport and leisure facilities. Convenient access, typically through public transport but also including car parking, are also typically available. These attributes of location combine to add to the "experience" of going to and being in the office.

In a post-COVID world these attributes of office location will be of increased importance. At issue is the reality that with working from home now a viable option, attendance at the office becomes as much if not more one of *wanting* to be there as *needing* to be there and organisations that want to optimise office attendance need to recognise that such ancillary amenities and services are an important part of the attraction.

Future office, future technology

THE FUTURE OFFICE AND THE TECHNOLOGY THAT SUPPORTS IT WILL NEED TO EVOLVE AS THE WORK THEY SUPPORT EVOLVES

In post COVID times as work becomes increasingly multi-locational, in order to optimise office attendance – and the importance of having a well-populated office to generate a sense of "buzz" and activity in this regard should not be underestimated – the office should be offering a range of experiences, services and amenities that are not available elsewhere.

For some time now the design of the office has been seen as being important to expressing an organisation's brand, purpose and culture. In future, this will be more important than ever. Important, too, will be the need to provide the spaces and settings that people come to the office for. With individual working well catered for at home, the pre-COVID dominance of individual workstations in the office needs to be reconsidered, with a greater provision of space for collaboration and interaction.

This in turn will need a greater emphasis on shared rather than allocated worksettings, for if the overall quantum of space required is to be sustainable both environmentally and economically, providing large numbers of workstations for people that may or may not come into the office on any given day makes little sense.

It goes without saying that a blended workplace will be heavily reliant on technology. There are a number of important considerations in this regard. The first is the need to recognise and benefit from the accelerating pace of change in available technologies. The advent of 5G WiFi and "edge" computing will make remote working increasingly reliable and accessible. The rapid take up of videoconferencing as a result of the lockdowns will generate demand for greater sophistication and ease of use of these systems. Artificial intelligence will have far-reaching impact in providing intuitive presence and wayfinding, enabling people to be able to "find' each other regardless of location. AI will also provide more sophisticated space utilisation monitoring and enhanced environmental, hygiene and security management.

With these evolved space models and technologies will come both opportunity and challenges. The development of protocols and training programs will be important to ensure that people understand how to benefit from initiatives in these areas. And change-ready mindsets will be important on the part of both leaders and their teams for ongoing performance improvement. For as our spaces and systems become more sophisticated, it will be important that people know how to use them.

Future mindsets and behaviours

WE WILL NEED TO ENSURE THAT THE MINDSETS AND BEHAVIOURS OF OUR LEADERS AND THEIR TEAMS ADJUST ACCORDINGLY

Perhaps the greatest challenge of the post-COVID era will be the need to recognise the very significant shifts in mindsets and behaviours that will be required to make the blended workplace effective and efficient. With the increased flexibility and choice in where and how work is performed and the increased geographic dispersion of teams with varying balances of office / remote that results from this, management by performance and output will be important, as will the need for people to have greater autonomy and trust that may have previously been the case.

Also important will be the recognition on the part of staff that with greater trust comes the need for greater self-discipline and responsibility, not only to the organisation but at an individual level, ensuring that personal health and wellbeing is maintained.

At an organisational level, evolved leadership and culture will be needed to navigate the complexity of geographically dispersed teams. While some organisations with distributed national or international operations will be well familiar with such requirements, for many this will be new and largely unchartered territory.

The types of issues that will need to be addressed include:

- **The extent to which teams are able to work remotely** and the basis on which this occurs – structured or informal / ad hoc

- **What constitutes a 'critical mass" of office attendance** and how this is achieved

- **The extent to which remote working arrangement** must be consistent across the organisation or, alternatively, the ability for individual teams to self-determine attendance, and in either case managing expectations in this regard, at both team leader and team member levels

- **The means by which performance, health and well-being** is monitored and managed

- **The creation and preservation of organisational culture** when large numbers of people are working remotely

- **Ensuring that onboarding new staff, and supporting the learning and development** of existing ones, continues to be effective regardless of their location

Future real estate

THE TREND TO MORE RESPONSIVE, FLEXIBLE REAL ESTATE OFFERINGS WILL ACCELERATE

As soon as the lockdowns started the question started to be asked… "is the office dead"? The research clearly indicates that it is not, albeit in the near term with patronage that is not yet back to pre-COVID levels given concerns about infection risk, particularly on public transport.

But it may be predicted that the interest in a more diverse range of real estate models that has been building for some time will accelerate as organisations seek greater flexibility in their office tenure. This diversification may be categorised in three ways:

Core Comprising space on long-term leases that accommodates the heart of the organisation and reflects its brand and identity.

Flex Which is space leased on a shorter tenure and which may carry the identity of the lessee or the lessor, and which can therefore provide flexibility for the organisation to expand or contract, undertake fixed term project work or provide space for partners and collaborators.

On demand Which is exemplified by membership-based models such as co-working.

As an overlay to these models, there is an emerging trend to an all-inclusive "workplace as service" where the office is provided not just on a passive leasehold, but as a fully-serviced offering including technology and operational and facilities management.

CORE	FLEX	ON DEMAND
Long term lease	Flexible lease	Membership
Consistent performance, connectivity and experience across modes and locations		

The blended workplace opportunity

THE OPPORTUNITY NOW IS TO LEARN AND BENEFIT FROM THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN EXPERIENCE.

The experience of the past six months has been extraordinary and the evolution of "workplace" potentially accelerated significantly as a result. Things that would not have been considered possible – the effective closure of global workplace – have been proven possible, at least in the short term. And indeed, unexpected benefits have flowed. The challenge now is to not miss the opportunity to learn from that experience.

The blended workplace has the potential to provide organisations that embrace it with a new competitive advantage.

- A workplace that is multi-locational provides significantly enhanced organisational resilience

- It also provides enhanced flexibility to respond to change by taking advantage of new real estate offerings

- The advanced virtual communication capability that powers the blended workplace also provides employers with ready access to global talent

- The choice, empowerment and autonomy that the blended workplace provides staff offers an improved employee value proposition and enables productive work in a "best fit" environment, with each application being tailored to suits the needs and context of the organisation it supports

" Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to step up and take responsibility for making it so. "

Noam Chomsky

" Let's go invent tomorrow instead of worrying about what happened yesterday. "

Steve Jobs

Adopting a blended workplace needs careful planning

ADOPTING A BLENDED WORKPLACE IS A BUSINESS INVESTMENT – IT NEEDS A BUSINESS CASE, RESOURCES AND STEWARDSHIP

The apparent success of the COVID-19 experience should not be taken as an indicator of the long-term viability of a workplace strategy that includes a significant WFH component.

Moving to a blended workplace is a major business decision. It needs a business case, resources and careful stewardship. And while there may be a perceived cost savings via reduced real estate, ensuring the business continues to thrive in a blended environment is not a given. It will incur both set-up and ongoing costs, and a planned approach to technology, systems, training, and the management of people and the workplace.

Formalising a blended workplace strategy will be unique for every organisation. This starts with organisational leadership and sequentially addresses management, technology, people and place.

1. LEADERSHIP	2. MANAGEMENT	3. TECHNOLOGY	4. PEOPLE	5. PLACE

▪ Organisation design
▪ Objectives and intended benefits
▪ Operating model
▪ Mandate
▪ Sponsorship
▪ Financial and people resources
▪ Measures of success
	▪ Application of the model
	  ▪ Universal / discretionary
	  ▪ Formal / informal
	▪ Policies and procedures
	▪ Leadership behaviours
	  ▪ Autonomy and trust
	  ▪ Performance monitoring
	▪ Culture and connectivity
	▪ Onboarding / mentoring
		▪ Connectivity and communication tools
		▪ Collaboration tools
		▪ Systems and processes
		▪ Digital environment
		▪ Wayfinding, access and presence
		▪ Building / environmental intelligence
		▪ Training and support
			▪ Communication and change management
			▪ Protocols
			▪ Engagement and performance monitoring
			▪ Health and wellbeing monitoring and counselling
			▪ Events and socialisation
			▪ Training and support
				▪ Office design: balance of collaborative / individual
				▪ Office operating model – assigned / unassigned
				▪ Home work environment
				▪ Space utilisation monitoring and management
				▪ Hygiene, health and wellbeing

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Appendix

Participant benchmarking

The Six Ideas Survey results presented in this report have been aggregated by industry sector.

A condition of the study was that the identity of the participant organisation would remain confidential. However the descriptions in the table at right will assist in providing context.

What follows are graphs for the two comment questions.

Industry	Respondents	Organisation Type	Respondent locations
Legal 1	866	Law firm	Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney
Legal 2	200	Law firm	Australia (locations unknown – survey conducted internally)
Legal 3	1817	Law firm	Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Auckland (NZ)
Not for Profit 1	874	Community services	Melbourne
Not for Profit 2	112	Home Care services	New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria
Professional Services 1	260	Engineering consultants	Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Newcastle, Perth, Sydney, Auckland, Christchurch
Professional Services 2	51	Cost consultants	Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney
Government 1	174	State Agency	Victoria
Government 2	360	Local Government	New Zealand
Government 3	137	Local Government	Tasmania
Government 4	59	State Agency	Victoria
Commercial 1	896	Real Estate	Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Newcastle, Sydney, Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton, Wellington
Commercial 2	428	Real Estate	Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney
Commercial 3	179	Business advisory	Sydney, Melbourne, Perth
Commercial 4	42	Technology	Melbourne

Overall comments

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS ABOUT WHAT FACTORS WOULD ENABLE YOUR ABILITY TO WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY FROM HOME?

Factor	Count
Proper WFH – Space / technology / ergonomics	890
Already effective	696
Printer / scanner access	291
Better online tools / systems	289
Want WFH / office balance	237
Return to school / childcare	182
Technology upgrade / support	182
Leadership support for WFH	123
Physical interaction – team, social, mentor	119
Supportive WFH Culture / acceptance	92
Fast reliable internet	84
Space	75
Better digital collaboration tools	73
Subsidy or provision – WFH additional equip / costs	65
Flexibility of work hours	56
Regular check-ins – teams, leadership	47
Improve digitalisation / digital system	38
Increased team communication	37
Less commuting – save time / money / stress	34
Access to physical documents / resources	32
Team support for WFH	29
Trust	28
Improved software	23
Replicate informal collaboration	23
Prefer office	22
On site services worker	21
Training	19
Work / life separation	18
Agile working	15
Client interaction required	15
Less distraction	15
More structure for tasks / workflow	15
Less video calls / meetings	14
Availability awareness	13
Less presence culture	13
Meet WHS obligations / guidance	13
Clear boundaries with work allocation	12
Leadership availability	12
Replicate office phone system	12
Work mobile phone	12
Increased connection / networking	11
Improved access to leadership	10

Factor	Count
Mentorship missing	10
Client OK with WFH	8
Less contact after hours	8
More video calls	8
Office services	7
Remote meetings with client	7
Engaging beyond team	6
Collaboration spaces	5
Phone coverage	5
Smarter meeting etiquette	5
Too many meetings	5
Wellbeing / health reminders	5
Work car	5
Improve remote team engagement	4
Match clients WFH / office policy	4
Onboarding difficult	4
Requires established relationships	4
Team transparency	4
Transparency for leadership	4
Clear policies	3
Safe office environment	3
Access to third space for work	2
Better for health	2
Less documenting WFH tasks	2
Less email	2
Structure around WFH schedule	2
Work boundaries	2
Clear delegation	2
Community FAQ	1
Meeting room technology	1
None	1
Only focus work	1
Outcome focus	1
Part time working	1
Planning around WFH	1
Reduced reliance on office staff	1
Technology confidence	1
Wellbeing – gym membership	1

Note: Graph is for visual purposes only and does not represent exact scaling

Overall comments

PLEASE FINISH THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE: *WORKING FROM HOME IS....*

Productive	1054
Positive experience	850
Save commute time / cost	721
Better work / life balance	690
Provides flexibility	569
Healthier – less stress	400
Good for focus work	354
Socially isolating	287
Balance WFH / office	236
Challenging	192
Progressive / the future	184
It was OK	176
Good and bad	125
Better than anticipated	119
Hard to collaborate	103
Should be BAU	102
Prefer being in office	101
Miss connection with colleagues	94
Childcare issues	81
Necessary for now	73
Technology	68
Need work / home separation	64
Self improvement opportunity	55
Ergonomics	54
Good for family	43
Not ideal	42
Longer hours	41
Dependant on manger / team support	37
Interesting experience	37
Not an option	37
F2F connection important	32
Potentially good	31
Gen-free	27
Supportive WFH culture	25
Miss team connection	23
Developing relationships with clients impacted	21
Access to physical resources required	20
Non-productive	20
Terrible experience	18
Beneficial for company	17
Impacts team learning	17

Much the same	16
Requires discipline	16
Dependant on task	14
Better than open plan office	13
Increased connections virtually	13
Only an option	13
Less distraction from co-workers	12
More WFH opportunity	12
Saves money	12
Good for environment	11
Inefficient communication	11
Internet dependant	11
Challenge to manage remote team	10
Well supported	9
No real difference	8
Empowering	7
Remote access slow	7
Supervision	7
Miss office routine	6
OK	6
Reduce office costs	6
Trust building	6
Essential for agile	5
A luxury	3
Improved client satisfaction	3
Improved team collaboration	3
WFH subsidy required	3
Challenge to manage remote	2
Less reliant on paper	2
Requires solid prior relationships	2
Unhealthy	2
Unsure	2
Works if everyone WFH	2
BAU	1
Damaging to firm	1
Expensive	1
Helps gender equality	1
Meeting frequency an issue	1
Socially responsible	1
Used to it	1
Work boundaries required	1

Note: Graph is for visual purposes only and does not represent exact scaling

About the research authors

Six Ideas by Dexus is a specialist consultancy that is an operating business of Dexus. Part of the international Six Ideas network, it provides advisory services on stakeholder engagement, workplace strategy, education strategy, master planning and change management to leading corporations, government departments and agencies, hospitals and health care providers, scientific research organisations, universities and schools in the Asia Pacific region

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