Working from Home
What is the impact on Wellbeing?

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Homeworking & Wellbeing

- Millions of workers have been WFH since the start of the ‘lockdown’ — biggest & quickest mass shift in working patterns ever
- Pre-COVID19, only around 7% of U.S. workers had the option to regularly work from home (17% in the UK)
- How have the physical & emotional health of workers been affected by WFH & what are the lessons for employers post-lockdown?
IES was established in 1969 & is a not-for-profit applied research organisation focusing on labour market policy, HRM & wellbeing

The IES Working at Home Wellbeing Survey has been tracking wellbeing since the start of the UK ‘lockdown’ in March

Used the WHO5 Index of mental wellbeing

We have data from over 850 respondents

All data here statistically significant
Who are the Respondents?
Profile of Respondents

- 70% WFH only because of COVID19
- 70% female, mean age 46
- Mainly white collar, working for larger service sector or public admin. employers
- 42% share a workspace with another working adult
- 30% have children & 17% have eldercare
- 46% manage others
- 60% working longer than contracted
- 85% have work IT
- 73% have access to OH & 64% to EAP
- 25% say employer has done a risk assessment
Physical Health
Aches, pain & strain

- Early responses showed big ‘spike’ in MSK pain (eg 50-60%) – now lower
- Still more neck pain than ‘normal’ (37%), back pain (35%) & shoulder pain (31%)
- Eye strain (32%) and headaches/migraine (26%)

- Similar increases in:
  - chest pain
  - leg cramps
  - heartburn & indigestion

- Initial increases in pain have declined, but remain a challenge for at least 1 in 4
Lifestyle, Sleep, Exercise & Diet
Lifestyle & Pressure

- Almost half (44%) report losing sleep due to worry & 42% report more fatigue than usual
- 1 in 5 say alcohol consumption is up
- 60% worry they exercise too little
- One third say they eat unhealthily
- 36% say work pressure is too much
- 43% don’t have enough time to get their work done
Mental Wellbeing
The WHO5 Index is an internationally validated measure of mental wellbeing.

In our sample, younger workers had lower scores & this group had more concerns about finance, job security, isolation etc.

The mental health of long-term homeworkers (pre-COVID19) was much better than those new to ‘lockdown’.
How is Mental Health Faring? (2)

- Better mental health among those who:
  - Are committed to/engaged with their employer
  - Derive satisfaction from work and have autonomy & control over what they do
  - Are content with work-life balance
  - Feel supported & motivated to WFH
  - Have more frequent contact with their boss
  - Have fewer physical health problems
  - Intend to stay with their employer
Work-Life Balance, Communication & Morale

Diagram showing the relationship between Work, Self, Family, and Friends in achieving Work-Life Balance.
Good Work IS Good for Wellbeing

- Being trusted to work remotely & feeling involved in decision-making (voice)
- Variety, control, feeling valued & a having a sense of accomplishment from work
- Managing the work/life boundaries
- Contact with boss & team members
What more can these data tell us?
Further Data ‘Mining’?

- Can track changes in self-reported health weekly since lockdown
- Focused analysis on wellbeing of managers – the ‘squeezed middle’
- Multivariate analysis to identify the most important drivers of mental wellbeing
- Comparisons with ‘mirror’ surveys internationally
Drivers of Mental Health in Homeworkers?

**Independent Variables**
- Organisational Commitment
- Job Satisfaction
- Positive WLB
- Positive WFH
- Physical Wellbeing

**Moderating Variables**
- Age
- Gender
- New to WFH
- Parent
- Eldercare
- Manager
- Hours
- Contact
- H&S Support

**Dependent Variable**
Mental Wellbeing (WHO5)
What are the Lessons for Managers?
Early Lessons…

- Risk assessment, duty of care & adjustments
- Clarify performance expectations but with flexibility & employee involvement
- Encourage scheduling to support WLB, sharing availability & boundary-setting within teams
- Reduce the focus on work inputs & concentrate on outputs & quality – trust & task discretion are healthy!
- Zoom is no substitute for empathy, being observant and spotting ‘weak signals’ of declining mental health
- Remember, a random act of kindness does not make a manager ‘weak’ – especially now
The Future of Work?
Post-COVID19 Challenges

- Returning to work safely – the employer ‘duty of care’ & risk exposure
- WFH & flexible working – no going back?
- Compressed hours working & 4-day week weeks?
- Precarious work & mental health:
Further information:

Complete the survey here:
https://wh1.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=158514663787

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