

**“How COVID-19 has shaped remote working” A critical  
examination of the impacts of COVID-19 on remote  
workers in the pharmaceutical industry.**

This dissertation is submitted to the National College of Ireland Business school in part  
fulfilment of the MA in Human resource management.

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Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2021

# ABSTRACT

“How COVID-19 has shaped remote working” A critical examination of the impacts of COVID-19 on remote workers in the pharmaceutical industry.

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COVID-19 has disrupted workplaces across the globe in a variety of ways. To reduce the spread of the virus, most places of work have been forced to find new, effective, and safer means of operating their businesses. To hinder the amount of social interaction between employee's and people in general, remote working has become the 'new normal'. Working from home has been an option in many companies for many years, however, what was previously circumstantial to employee's preference, is now a requisite. The result is Mandatory Work from Home (MWFH) (Kniffin, KM *et al.* 2021). This change in workplace setting provides several themes to be considered. These include, health and wellbeing, loneliness, family life and work-life balance, work productivity, privacy, technological factors, and an appropriate and adequate working space and environment.

Prior to the global pandemic, working from home was based off a voluntary nature, meaning workers chose at their own discretion whether to work remotely (Lapierre, cited in Wang *et al.* 2021). According to a survey conducted by the ESRI (2020), 14% of the Irish workforce “sometimes” worked from home. Working remotely was an amenity of the affluent (DeSilver, cited in Wang *et al.* 2021). Due to this, the research on working from home has suffered a selection bias, this study aims to explore how COVID-19 has shaped or is shaping remote working and how the mandatory nature of it has affected office employees. The question is posed; When this choice is taken away from workers, how does it affect their performance as well as their wellbeing?

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## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I wish to thank my family and friends for their unwavering support over the course of this study. It has proved a reflective process and an experience that I could not have completed, without their guidance.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Mr. Stephen Kearney. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, our supervisory meetings were all virtual, however, Stephen was always there to offer support and guidance throughout my dissertation. I am extremely grateful to have had Stephen as a supervisor.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
MWFH	Mandatory work from home
WFH	Work from home

# CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and Rationale

Unlike working from home situations prior to COVID-19, the transition from office to the home environment was not a gradual one but an overnight occurrence. The research prior to these unexpected events indicate remote working is favorable for wellbeing and performance, as well as for the company, in terms of staff retention, productivity and in business continuity in times of disruption (Green, *et al.* 2020). However, due to the unforeseen nature of the pandemic, remote working has not produced the same positive outcomes. The negative consequences are because of technological limitations, lack of organizational and managerial readiness and the possible problems associated with social isolation.

In extraordinary circumstances, when working from home is no longer a voluntary decision, but a government ordered mandate, there is a requirement to change research from understanding whether to put into effect working from home, but to getting a grasp of how to achieve the most from working from home (Wang, *et al.* 2021). This study aims to explore how the influences of increased restrictions and the impact of the pandemic have affected remote working and people's outlooks and perspectives on remote working. It will critically examine how different variables affect the productivity of those working from home, specifically within the pharmaceutical industry. This study also aims to challenge current research and literature and compare previous and new data collected over the course of this study. It is crucial to examine the differences, as forementioned, working from home pre-pandemic and how this was perceived as a luxury. Prior research has implied there is a positive link between remote working and performance, according to De Menezes, L. M. and Kelliher, C. (2017) "where an employee exercises a flexible working option, a feeling of obligation is generated toward the employer". This implies that by affording the employee the opportunity and trust to work remotely, the employee will reciprocate through high productivity and performance. Given this choice was taken away from the employer, this piece of research aims to investigate if the same is true during enforced remote working. How it correlates to productivity, work life balance and health may be helpful to provide insight in ways to highlight future best practices.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 What is remote working?

Remote working can be defined as “a flexible work arrangement whereby workers work in locations, remote from their central offices or production facilities, the worker has no personal contact with co-workers there, but is able to communicate with them using technology” (Di Martino & Wirth, 1990, p. 530 as cited in Wang, *et al.* 2021). Due to COVID-19, this dated definition outlines exactly what was required for many employees and the removal of personal contact between workers meant that colleagues must communicate using technology. Previous literature examined how the workplace is growing in an evolving world, where people’s views on relationships and priorities transformed from what they once were. Family life altered, the previous notion of having a male breadwinner and mother at home with children became a thing of the past. Families are now more diverse, interchangeable, and modern. These changes are shown with greater work opportunities. People are afforded greater flexibility with their jobs. Formerly, if an employee was being relocated, it meant “residential migration”, this is no longer the case as with growing technology and expanding trust and freedom, employees can work from home or anywhere for that matter (Hardill *et al.* 2003) and it is clear how this can be seen as a desirable life choice. The potential benefits for the employee and employer are vast, from flexibility to cost effectiveness. Other possible remote working benefits to be considered are, reducing or removing time spent commuting, reducing, or removing the cost of rent for an office space, potential improvement in work / life balance, further flexibility with family commitments and working time and finally, expanded geographical coverage (Nickson, D. and Siddons, S., 2012).

Although these hypothetical rewards paint an idyllic picture of remote working, and even recent, albeit pre-pandemic, newspaper headlines proclaim that “The office is dead! Technology is banishing old, static ways of working in favour of agile innovations” (Financial Times, 30 July 2016), remote working is not necessarily an opportunity for everyone. Prior to the global pandemic which has ravaged the world, working from home was seen as an amenity of the affluent (Desilver, 2020). As noted by (Wang *et al.* 2021), those who worked from home where that of “high-income earners, (e.g., over 75% of employees who work from home have an annual earning above \$65,000) and white-collar workers (e.g.,

over 40% of teleworkers are executives, managers, or professionals)”. Due to the preferential nature of previous remote working, when the pandemic hit, most if not almost all workers had little to no remote working experience. This meant neither they, nor their employers were prepared to support this (Wang *et al.* 2021). While early literature decrees an outlook on remote working of that of luxury and extensive advantages, recent times have shown that this is not always the case.

Since previous literature on remote working has a biased nature, this research hopes to present and explain the implications and effects that remote working have on the health and productivity of employee’s when the affluent notion of remote working becomes a government made mandate.

## **2.2 How has enforced remote working affected employees**

The global pandemic has and continues to change, shape, and evolve the ways of working. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Monitor published a report in April 2020 stating that almost 2.7 billion workers were now working in full or partial lockdown, representative of 81% of the world’s workforce (International Labour Organization, 2020). As mentioned above, because of COVID-19, many employees who had never previously been offered remote working were suddenly left with no other option but to work from home. Some organizations such as Twitter and Square are offering employees “work from home forever options” (Westfall, 2020). Recent research implies that enforced working from home can impact employees negatively (Palumbo, 2020). One of the main differences between enforced remote working and previous remote working, is that workers had the option of going into the office. Typical remote workers could work a few days on site and a few days off site (Zhang, C., Yu, M.C. and Marin, S., 2021). Secondly, many previously chose to work from home to improve work / life balance. In this case where the choice is taken away, it causes disruptions for many. As well as this, one must consider, parents juggling being at home with their children all day whilst trying to work effectively, supervise them and ensure they are monitoring at home learning (Anderson, *et al.* 2020). This literature to date has suggested that the outlook on enforced remote working greatly outweighs the outlook on traditional remote working. Former research on remote working has shown what was a choice of the white-collar worker who wanted to improve their work / life balance is now viewed in

the opposite light. The impact of COVID-19 and enforced remote working has caused disruptions in most aspects of workers lives.

This overnight occurrence caused shockwaves around the world for employers and employees alike as they transformed their working conditions. Employers had to scramble to provide equipment and the infrastructure for their employees to maintain business and productivity, while employees had to navigate and create a workspace at home as well as adapting to all family members being home together 24/7 (Anderson, D. and Kelliher, C., 2020). For those unaccustomed to remote working, it can be a hard adjustment. Green, *et al.* (2020) discusses how remote working can inadvertently encourage employees to overwork as their work is always 'right there' and so the lines can get blurred while working from home. Weekends begin to feel like a long lunch break. Even prior to the pandemic, remote workers reported feeling a sense of 'burnout'. In a study conducted by cloud infrastructure company Digital Ocean (2019), they observed that 82% of remote workers within the tech industry experienced feelings of being burnt out, 52% stated they felt they worked longer hours than their colleagues who worked on site in the office and 40% felt as though they needed to contribute more than those who worked on site (Swanner, 2019). This previous research may be helpful to current employees who are newly adjusting to remote working, as they may feel the need to prove to their managers that they can adequately work from home and may feel obliged to work longer hours (Staglin, 2020). From a survey performed by Owl Labs, they discovered that during the pandemic, remote workers were working on average, an extra 26 hours each month, almost an extra day every week (State of Remote Work, 2020). As remote working continues and employers and employees progress through this new normal, extra vigilance will have to be taken to prevent overworking and burning out. This literature suggests both companies and workers need to be more aware of it to avoid the negative aspects of it.

Given what this research has shown, it is understandable for workers to experience feelings of burnout from enforced remote working when combined with the anxiety of a global pandemic. This can undoubtedly have a negative impact on the worker and their productivity. Previous literature outlines that if there is not a dedicated private workspace, the privacy of the work being done can be jeopardized as well as blurring the lines between your work and your home where you relax and unwind (Green, *et al.* 2020). Finding space within one's home for work can be stressful, especially for those who do not live alone, as they navigate

space for themselves and others to work from. As one tries to facilitate their 'new normal', operational costs have considered also. The new office spaces bring with it increased costs such as internet, heating, and equipment. As with the stress of a global pandemic, this ultimately adds an extra level to an already long list of concerns.

### **2.3 The role of technology during the pandemic**

Technology was a key factor in previous literature and current circumstances. Previous literature notes that while technology was viewed as supporting remote working, it was also viewed as a delayer. Lack of support and training from IT and trust from managers were viewed as hindrance in remote workings growth (Baker, 2006). While these issues still pertain to the technological issues faced with mandatory work from home, there is an increased disadvantage due to the unexpected nature of this mandate. Employers and employees alike were transitioned to remote working overnight and so did not have sufficient training and support for this change. Adequate infrastructure, software and tools and training and support were considerations which faced workers with their new normal (Green, *et al.* 2020). Employees had to consider the potential issue of sharing IT equipment at home, such as laptops, printers, internet access, desks, and space for working or studying (Anderson, *et al.* 2020). Considering previous literature and current new findings, the impact of technology on remote working during COVID-19 appears to be a negative one. A particular area of interest is the effect of virtual working and technology has on standards and quality of teamwork. Prior research has shown that there is often a lack of 'communication richness' in virtual meetings in comparison with face-to-face interaction and there appears to be a quicker escalation of traditional teamwork problems, for example, conflict and coordination (Kniffin, K. M. et al. 2021).

In addition to the role of technology in the remote workplace, cybersecurity has seen an increase in attacks and instances of fraud since the beginning of the pandemic. Criminals have used the global crisis to perform social engineering attacks based around COVID-19 to spread different malware packages (Georgiadou, A., Mouzakitis, S. and Askounis, D., 2021). An example of this was when cybercriminals were using a malicious site acting as a live map of COVID-19 cases and when unsuspecting people visited the site, their personal information was obtained (browsing history, credit card information, cookies, ID/passwords,



cryptocurrency and more) (COVID-19, Info Stealer & the Map of Threats - Threat Analysis Report - Reason Cybersecurity, 2020). It was reported by the UK National Fraud & Cyber Security Centre that the amount of COVID associated reports had increased by 400% in March 2020 and cost the victims over eight hundred thousand pounds in one month (Coronavirus-related fraud reports increase by 400% in March | Action Fraud, 2020). It is not just at an individual level that these cyberattacks are occurring. Offenders are also attempting to exploit employers and organizations. As it has been discussed, the rapid transition from office to remote work meant that some companies were not totally prepared for this move, and in turn, left them more susceptible to cyber-attack. The healthcare industry has also been the victim of cyber-attacks. Given the overwhelming admissions they are experiencing due to the health crisis, healthcare workers cannot afford to be locked out of their systems and so their systems are breached by cyber criminals in the hope they will pay the offenders a ransom (Georgiadou, *et al.* 2021). This was the case as with the HSE. At the beginning of May 2021, the HSE systems were the victim of a cyber-attack. This cyber-attack caused tremendous damage to the HSE and the health services at time when they were already at crisis point. As a result, they had to shut down all systems, bringing many services to a halt for experts to come in and meticulously “go through each part of its network, step by step, find the malware, block malicious IPs and domain names, protect privileged accounts, clean, rebuild and update all infected devices, ensure antivirus is up to date on all systems, makes sure all devices are patched and ultimately restore the data” (Reynolds, 2021). The objective of this attack, like many online attacks, for a monetary gain and in this case, they were supplied with a digital invitation to dark web chat room with an understanding that they would pay a ransom in return for the data that was stolen. The data breach was allegedly committed by a group called ‘wizard spider’ and apparently it is not the first offence they’ve committed. Paul Reynolds (2021) reports that “The criminal gang has been responsible for hundreds of cyber-attacks all over the world, since 2019 it has carried out more than 300”. It is something to consider, that, when the world is at the height of a crisis, criminals see this as a window of opportunity. Cybercriminals seem to be taking advantage of individuals when they are at their most vulnerable and creating thousands of new coronavirus related websites every day to carry out phishing, spread malware or as a means of compromising Command and Control servers (Georgiadou, *et al.* 2021). Given the healthcare industry is stretched to its limit during the global crisis, one can see that they would be susceptible to a cyber-attack. This assault on the HSE and health services will hopefully act as a hard lesson to increase cyber security and invest more protecting their data.

## **2.4 The impact of enforced remote working on teamwork**

As mentioned above, while technology and home life balance are significant challenges faced with enforced remote working, another major concern is the continuous struggle to develop and maintain a sense of team environment (Brownlee, 2020). Companies may struggle to create a sense of bonding through online communication compared with in person, office communication and interaction. Managers may struggle to create a feeling of team cohesion and camaraderie (Brownlee, 2020). Roles such as writing, developers, social media are all insular roles which require less collaboration and may not be affected by remote working. There are roles and industries however, which struggle with enforced remote working, such as the creative industry which requires group thinking and collective collaboration to foster new concepts. Technology has enabled employees to work together through platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams, but it is not the same as creating that same energy in person. Teamwork and team morale is an essential ingredient in employee's mindset and efficiency. In a study conducted by Khan, S. and Mashikhi, L.S., (2017) on the "Impact of Teamwork on Employees Performance", they found that "teamwork is an effective measure to increase the performance of the employees". Their study found that teamwork increased the levels of creativity and number of ideas as well as reducing the incivility and bullying as employees are more concentrated on completing the task at hand. The research concluded that there is a significant correlation between teamwork and employee performance and the reason being that "the increase in collaboration tends to increase the number of ideas and this increases the effectiveness in tasks assigned to them" (Khan, S. and Mashikhi, L.S., 2017). Westfall (2020) observed that it is often the casual conversations in person or by the water cooler so to speak that lead to creative and productivity breakthroughs. Essentially this literature states the importance of having that in person interaction for the benefit of the creative process and thus the company. This research highlights the importance of teamwork for employees and employers alike and how big of an impact enforced remote working will have had on this. Reduced collaboration negatively impacts both workers and the organization and forced them to find new ways of accomplishing this during the pandemic.

Another factor for consideration, is for those who already feel at a disadvantage in the workplace (e.g., women, minorities, young staff, and introverts) may feel an additional challenge of being heard virtually. Enforced remote working can emphasize this already prevalent issue. Virtual meetings are beginning to confirm just how hard women feel to be

heard in the workplace (Gupta, 2020). Previous research has proved that workplace meetings are brimming with inequalities. For example, a study conducted observed that when male executives spoke more frequently, they were seen to be more competent, but when their female counterparts spoke more frequently, they received lower competence ratings (Brescoll, 2012). In the 2019 annual McKinsey 'Women in the Workplace' report, out of 68,000 employees surveyed, 50% of the women surveyed had experienced being interrupted or spoken over and 38% had experienced others taking credit for their own ideas (Huang et al. 2019). These earlier studies highlight the challenges faced by minority employees in the workplace and the possibilities of this increasing due to the nature of enforced remote working. These challenges correlate to the advantages and disadvantages of technology while remote working and emphasize how it can be an asset but also a hindrance for others and at times just not sufficient for employee and company needs.

## **2.5 The impact of enforced remote working on leadership and management**

The role of a leader within an organization is more vital than ever. They must engage and inspire their employees, motivate them from afar and ensure productivity levels are not decreasing. All the while, promoting positive wellbeing amongst their employees. The role of a leader in determining the outcomes of the organization that will have positive impacts on employees of all levels is especially clear during a global pandemic (Kniffin, *et al.* 2021). How leaders navigate their own new normal and supervise their workers from home is a huge challenge. Past research has presented that this was an issue pre-pandemic. McCann, J. and Kohntopp, T. (2019) expressed that virtual leader's need a vaster set of skills in comparison with traditional leaders. Managers working remotely need to have the ability to switch between skillsets, depending on the team members diversity and the distance between them. It requires an expanded flexibility and trust of managers (McCann, et al 2019). This appears to be an area of difficulty for current leaders as they navigate through the new working arrangements. In playing devil's advocate, many managers were thrust into this new style of leadership without any training or forewarning. They weren't afforded the luxury of training in these new required skillsets. In a study conducted by the Harvard Business Review, they surveyed more than 1200 people in 24 countries working in a variety of industries to investigate how COVID-19 is affecting both managers and employees. 40% of the 215 leaders and managers articulated low self-confidence in their ability to manage their

employees remotely. They posed the statement “I am confident I can manage a team of remote workers” and 23% of leaders and managers disagreed with this statement while a further 16% were unsure of this ability (Parker, S., Knight, C. and Keller, A., 2020). This prevalent self-doubt has translated over to workers feeling untrusted and micromanaged. The study found that many managers felt their employees worked better in the office and they were unsure if employees could remain motivated while working from home. A significant number of employees reported the feeling they were required to be constantly available, for example, to respond to “electronic/telephone messages immediately, be available at all times, and be responsive after work hours” (Parker, *et al.* 2020). To prevent feelings of mistrust in employees and self-doubt in managers, leaders need to be trained in new skills of delegation and empowerment. This will enable their subordinates to engage in better time management and work methods while remote working. This should promote greater motivation, wellbeing and productivity of both manager and employee. It needs to be a top-down practice, as often leaders who are untrusting are experiencing the same from their own managers (Parker, *et al.* 2020). This study suggests that leaders and managers are struggling to adjust during this new way of working. As the leaders feel the pressure of enforced remote working and virtual leadership, so too do the employee feel the pressures of micromanagement and mistrust. These studies can act as an aid in educating leaders on how to proceed in what appears will be a continuous work from home world. Leaders not only have to effectively lead their employees for the benefit of the organization but during pandemic times, take extra care of their employees’ health and wellbeing. As well as learning new skills in delegating they must offer support in ways they may not have prior.

## **2.6 The impact of enforced working on loneliness and social isolation**

Health and wellbeing are at the fore of this global pandemic. The paramount rationale behind working from home was to stop the spread of the virus. Remote working not only stops the spread of the virus at the workplace, between colleagues, between workers and customers, but additionally decreases the shared interaction related to commuting to and from the workplace (Dockery, 2020). While remote working prior to this was a luxury it now viewed upon as a necessity. Although workers may feel physically safer in terms of the virus, there are other health factors which are implicated. The mental factors associated with restricted remote working during a pandemic are immense and complex. They vary across a wide spectrum of influences. Green, *et al.* (2020) discusses how remote working can inadvertently

encourage employees to overwork as their work is always ‘right there’. This in turn impacts health and wellbeing negatively. In a study conducted by Oakman, *et al.* (2020), they found that female participants who worked remotely felt more higher levels of exhaustion than their colleagues who remained working in office. The physical and mental strain of ‘never leaving work’ is immeasurable. These studies show the strain remote working has mentally and physically on workers, how this will affect employees in the long term remains to be seen. Further research is required.

The mental effects of working from home range from feelings of isolation to, in contrast, feelings of invasions of privacy. Remote working results in social and professional isolation. However, this pandemic has heightened this, as people are not only isolated from their work colleagues but also friends and family (Green, *et al.* 2020). Feelings of isolation are not something to be understated. Even during pre-pandemic times, the effects of isolation on one’s health were acknowledged as being quite serious. Previous research has shown that “actual and perceived social isolation are both associated with increased risk for early mortality” (Holt-Lunstad, J. *et al.* 2015). Their study concluded that the risks related to social isolation and loneliness are similar with other significant causes of mortality, such as obesity. They found that social isolation and loneliness can be “twice as harmful to physical and mental health as obesity” (Holt-Lunstad, J. *et al.* 2015). Other previous research suggests there is strong evidence “that both social isolation and loneliness are associated with increased all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, depression and anxiety” (Williams, C. Y. K. *et al.* 2021). This research draws attention to a well-established societal issue. Feelings of isolation and loneliness have only been increased by recent lockdown measures and requirements of remote working. Additionally, it shows how mental health problems can become more serious physical issues.

Feelings of isolation can also lead to stress and anxiety which in turn affects work productivity. In a study conducted by Toscano, *et al.* (2020), they focused on the experience of social isolation, whose effects were investigated in relation to stress, productivity, and employees’ remote work satisfaction. Their results show a negative relationship between social isolation and work productivity and employee’s outlook on remote working. Additionally, Wang, *et al.* (2021) found a correlation between loneliness and work autonomy. Although people can connect online, their study found that online interactions are not sufficient in reducing a sense of loneliness. In contrast to this, the lack of privacy while

working from home due to online technology, adds to levels of stress experienced by workers. With increased feelings of isolation and loneliness, employers must be supportive of their employees during this time and the serious implications it can cause long term. The Harvard Business Review recently published an article titled “Employees Are Lonelier Than Ever. Here’s How Employers Can Help” (Noonan Hadley, 2021). Here it is discussed how increased percentages of employees experiencing loneliness over the course of the pandemic have compelled companies to take the well-being and health of their employees more seriously. It is clear from previous literature that these feelings contribute to health issues, reductions in productivity, burnout, and turnover (Noonan Hadley, 2021). This literature stresses the importance of acknowledging isolation and loneliness in the workplace. Learning from this, employers can plan for a smooth return to office transition or correctly support their staff as they continue to work from home. Noonan Hadley, (2021) suggest five critical factors that employers should consider during these times. Firstly, it is not always obvious someone is suffering, secondly, being aware of the importance of psychological safety. Thirdly, fostering empathy among employees. Fourthly, evaluate work and team structures and encourage interdependence among co-workers. Lastly, support and encourage communication and relationship building. If former research has taught us anything it is that social and professional isolation are not to be ignored. Employers should do the utmost to support their employees during enforced remote working for both the sake of the employee and the business. This prior literature has emphasized the need for best practices within organizations for employees as they prepare to return to office.

## **2.7 The impact of enforced working on mental health**

The occurrence and rapid spread of COVID-19 has intensified anxiety and stress worldwide, contributing to increased mental health problems in workers (Salari, N., *et al.* 2020).

Research has clearly shown that enforced remote working and the global crisis have caused increased feelings of social isolation and loneliness. Research also tells us that they are not the only health consequences. Employees from different industries can experience different health concerns, none less serious than the other. For example, workers on the front line, healthcare workers, employees who must continue to interact with the public are more likely to experience mental issues such as depression, anxiety, sleep interruptions and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Giorgi, *et al* 2020). A survey conducted in China studied the mental health of 1257 doctors and other healthcare professionals and found that 50.4% of

participants reported depression, 44.6% reported feelings of anxiety, 34% had insomnia and 71.5% felt distress (Lai, J., *et al.* 2020). This research is unsettling but not unsurprising. Healthcare professionals more than any other profession were experiencing overwhelming working conditions. Dealing with high volumes of admissions as cases skyrocketed, long working hours, the physical strain of wearing PPE gear, the trauma of the high numbers of deaths as well as the mental turmoil of contracting COVID-19 themselves and / or passing it onto family members. It's easy to see how healthcare workers are at a heightened danger of psychiatric morbidities given the high-pressure environments they are working in. There is also a stigma within society of those affected with COVID-19 or those who inadvertently spread the virus which can cause mental health problems (Tsamakis, K., *et al* 2020). This research highlights the importance of recognizing the mental health strains of the pandemic and offering increased ongoing support. Further research will have to be conducted to get a clearer understanding of the aftermath of COVID-19 on mental health.

The implications for healthcare workers are obvious. Other studies have been conducted on employees, such as Lloyd's Register which ran a survey of 5,500 people in their new 'Health and Safety at Work Report' (Lloyd's Register, 2021) across 11 countries to attempt to gain an understanding of the effect of the change in work environment because of COVID-19. The report titled 'Employee well-being during a pandemic', found that 69% of employees around the world felt higher rates of work-related stress while remote working because of higher levels of workloads and the newly adopted working arrangements (Smith, 2021). The report outlined that 48% felt discouraged from reporting their stress to their employer as it could have a negative impact on their career progression. Additionally, 1 in 4 said they felt unsupported by their employer in relation to mental health and wellbeing. 58% reported feeling pressure to return to the office, despite not feeling ready themselves (Lloyd's Register, 2021) (Smith, 2021). This research is concerning and something employers will have to consider going forward. Unfortunately, the mental health implications of employees and all individuals are a significant repercussion of the global crisis.

## **2.8 How has enforced remote working affected productivity**

As suggested earlier by Green, *et al.* (2020), prior to the pandemic, remote working was shown to be beneficial in terms of workplace productivity. However, Toscano, *et al.* (2020)

outlines that there is little to no research into the relationship between stress and productivity while working from home during a global pandemic. Regardless of the absence in research, literature implies that it is logical to assume there is a link between stress and a reduction in productivity while working from home during the pandemic. As discussed by Kniffin, *et al.* (2021), the increased use of videoconferencing has allowed for a virtual sense of being monitored. This can cause increased stress-levels for the employees through continuous monitoring and concerns of invasions of privacy and a look into their home setting. Raised levels of stress due to these factors affects the wellbeing of the employee's which in turn affects the work productivity. How organizations support their employees during this transition is vital to ensure positive mental wellbeing and productivity. In a recent McKinsey (2020) report, 41% of workers who took part in their consumer survey stated their productivity levels were better than that of when in the office. As the work from home mandate continues, employees have expanded on their remote working experience and with that, their confidence has developed, and they become more confident in their abilities (Lund, Madgavkar, Manyika and Smit, 2020). Further research is required to get a full understanding and scope of the effects of enforced remote working on productivity. As the research suggests, stress can play a detrimental role on employees' productivity, but other recent reports suggest employees are finding positive productivity levels while working remotely during the pandemic. Training and support on working remote play a factor and prior experience working remotely impact employee's opinion on whether they can work more efficiently at home than in the office.

As explored by Lee, H (2021), management style and decisions are essentials to encourage healthy mental health and wellbeing. They found that micromanaging and control were not well received by employees, which links to the stress encountered with being monitored as well as lack of privacy within one's own home. When tackling significant workplace changes and a worldwide crisis, the most beneficial way of showing employee care is through feedback, exchanging precise and well-timed information and hands on forms of communication to promote employee emotional wellbeing. Naturally at the onset there will be a need for control to set boundaries, but companies may support employees by exercising this control with flexibility (Lee, H 2021). Caligiuri, *et al.* (2020) suggests training to support relationship formation would be beneficial to workers at this time, regardless of location, as everyone is experiencing similar anxieties. The shared emotions of stress and worry could create a sense of bonding for the teams in a way if managed correctly and could potentially



lead to solidity within organizations. All this literature suggests training and support from employers can be the most beneficial way of guiding their employees through the crisis in terms of wellbeing and productivity.

## CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH QUESTION

### 3.1 Introduction

There is a gap in research in how COVID-19 has affected remote working and how increased restrictions impacted on what was previously viewed upon as a luxury and a form of improving work / life balance. How prepared were employees to transition to enforced remote working, and how has the nature of isolation impacted workers health mentally and how has this in turn affected productivity?

The goal of this study is to investigate how these extraordinary circumstances have changed the outlook on remote working and workers and if it in turn affects productivity. To carry out this research, a variety of hypotheses will be tested and concluded. This study will focus on remote workers in the pharmaceutical industry and how their work and personal lives were impacted. In this chapter, the potential hypotheses will be presented and elaborated on in further detail. These hypotheses, four in total; all of which developed from reviewing previous literature in Chapter Two.

### 3.2 Presentation of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** This hypothesis assumes that *previous working from home experience impacts levels of productivity positively*. Previous literature as outlined above, has indicated that working from home pre-pandemic was beneficial for the employer and the employee. Green, *et al.* (2020), stated that prior to the pandemic, remote working was shown to be beneficial in terms of workplace productivity.

Since the current global crisis is a new experience for most, as well as the shift to remote working, this study hopes to contribute to the developing studies on the effects of enforced remote working and its implications, if any, on productivity.

Hypothesis 1 is a straightforward hypothesis that centers on two variables (WFH Experience and productivity) within the hypothesis. This hypothesis will either be validated or refuted with the help of quantitative research in the form of data from a survey.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** This hypothesis assumes that *leadership support during enforced remote working impacts levels of productivity positively*. This hypothesis was formed from the previous literature including a study by Lloyds Register which found that 1 in 4 employees stated they felt unsupported by their employer in relation to mental health and wellbeing. 58% reported feeling pressure to return to the office, despite not feeling ready themselves (Lloyd's Register, 2021) (Smith, 2021). The study suggests that a lack of support and mistrust can lead to negative impacts on employees. Caligiuri, P. et al. (2020) suggests training to support relationship formation would be beneficial to workers at this time, regardless of location.

As previous literature implies, most leaders were not trained to work virtually. This study hopes to evaluate if increased support for employees' aids productivity and contribute to research on the role between leaders and employees.

This is a simple hypothesis that focuses on three variables (leadership support, remote working and productivity) within the hypothesis. This hypothesis will either be validated or refuted with the help of quantitative research in the form of data from a survey.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** This hypothesis assumes that *increased stress levels during enforced remote working negatively impact employee's productivity*. In a study conducted by Oakman, et al. (2020), they found that female participants who worked remotely felt more higher levels of exhaustion than their colleagues who remained working in office. The inability and challenges for employees to switch off from work due to remote working are causing undue stress. In a study conducted by the Harvard Business Review, they found a significant number of employees reported the feeling they were required to be constantly available, for example, to respond to "electronic/telephone messages immediately, be available at all times, and be responsive after work hours" (Parker, et al. 2020). Given the emergence of COVID-19 and enforced remote working, this leaves a gap in whether stress implicates productivity levels.

This is a simple hypothesis that focuses on three variables (stress, remote working and productivity) within the hypothesis. This hypothesis will either be validated or refuted with the help of quantitative research in the form of data from a survey.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** This hypothesis assumes that *the emergence of virtual teamwork because of enforced remote working has impacted productivity negatively*. A major concern is the continuous struggle to develop and maintain a sense of team environment throughout working remotely (Brownlee, 2020). Teamwork, team cohesion and camaraderie are essential for boosting morale and performance of employees. In a study conducted by Khan, S. and Mashikhi, L.S., (2017) on the “Impact of Teamwork on Employees Performance”, they found that “teamwork is an effective measure to increase the performance of the employees”. This earlier literature suggests it’s a vital part of the employer / employee relationship.

This proposed hypothesis assumes there is a correlation between the bonds and benefits of teamwork and productivity, and this may have been hampered because of enforced remote working. This is a simple hypothesis that focuses on three variables (teamwork, remote working and productivity) within the hypothesis. This hypothesis will either be validated or refuted with the help of quantitative research in the form of data from a survey.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has specified the hypothesis that will direct this study. There are a total of four hypotheses, and each will be confirmed or rebutted with the aid of quantitative analysis which will be elaborated on next.

## **CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The goal of this study is to investigate enforced remote working during COVID-19. A broad range of participants will be covered in this study, and the results analysed and concluded. The success of the study will be determined by selecting the appropriate research philosophy. This methodology chapter will comprise of a critical analysis of the various research philosophy styles as well as including a thorough report of the research conducted as part of this thesis.

#### ***What is research?***

“Research is, among other things, an intensive activity that is based on the work of others and generates new ideas to pursue and questions to answer” (Salkind, N.J. and Rainwater, T., 2006). Salkind (2006) states that while research should remain unpolitical, it’s fundamental objective should be the improvement and advancement of society. This is relevant to this study, as one can hope to learn from the research and use it to improve best practices in the workplace and support for employees. There are a variety of areas in which research can be conducted, and the most suitable for this research is ‘business research’. Business research refers to research relating to topics of business, management and/or have a social science orientation (Bell, E., Bryman, A. and Harley, B., 2018). Business research can be explained as being a systematic and planned effort to explore issues within the organization, which require resolution (Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R., 2016). This study hopes to explore concerns faced by employees and employers working remotely during a pandemic, and possible solutions for the future.

### **4.2 Research philosophy**

Having a clear research design is at the forefront for effective research. Deciding on a research philosophy is vital whilst performing research because it affects how the research is carried out. When researching, it is vital to incorporate the correct philosophy and present the logic behind the researcher’s view, and by doing this, validate the motive behind their strategy and method (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). It’s important to be conscious of the

philosophical commitments made as business researchers, as this has an important influence not only on what is being done but also, the understanding of what is being investigated (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2009). To select the appropriate philosophy, one could take use of the research onion (Saunders *et al.* 2006). The idea behind this is to begin with the external layer and dissect each layer to select the most fitting research strategy. The significance of selecting the correct strategy is obvious. Two core philosophies are ontology and epistemology.

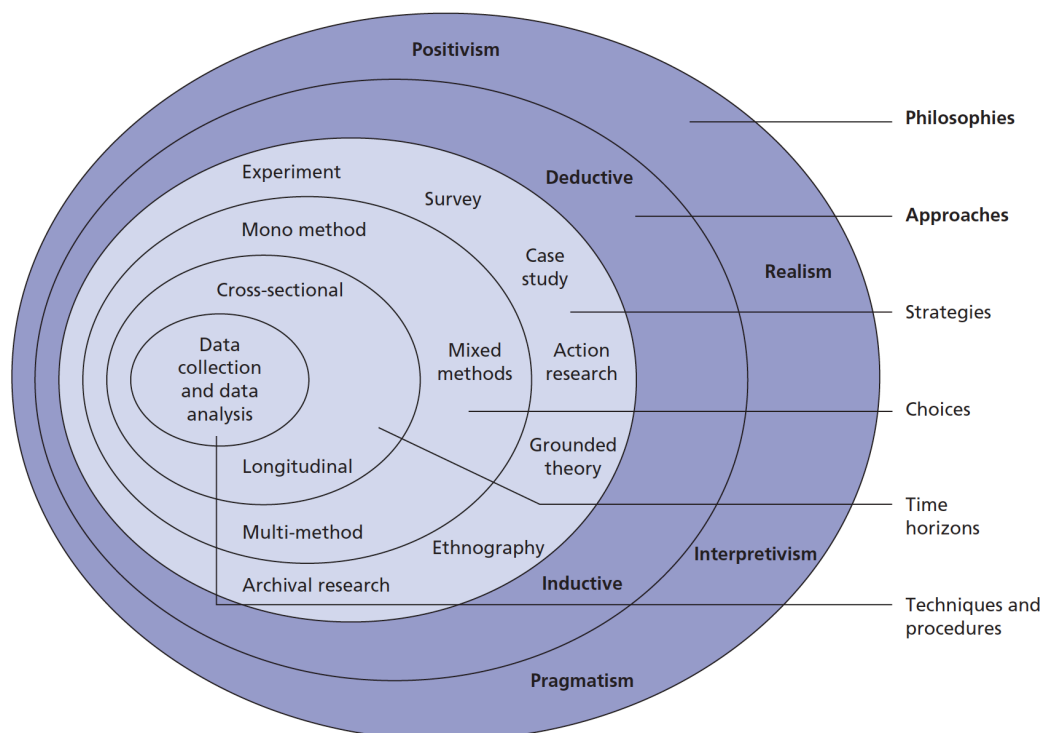


Fig 3.1 The research onion (Saunders *et al.* 2009)

### 4.3 Epistemology

“Epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge can be created, acquired and communicated, in other words what it means to know” (Scotland, J. 2012). Grüne-Yanof *et al.* (2010) describes epistemology as explaining how simulations “yield hypotheses and conclusions”. These explanations propose that epistemology uses a more clear and evident approach and is less abstract, in comparison with ontology, that adopts a more theoretical method of research. This type of research is common for business and management researchers, as it is concerned with the “social world in which we live” (Saunders, *et al.* 2003). This is relevant to this piece of research as four hypotheses have been developed in the

hope of achieving a conclusion. An epistemology approach provides a more varied approach in comparison with other academic approaches and thus is appealing for business researchers. Epistemology consists of four distinctive stances: Positivism, Realism, Interpretivism and Pragmatism.

### **Positivism**

Positivism allows people to presume that if social research is carried out in the correct manner, it will follow the model of the natural science and deliver a concise, definite path to the reasons of certain social or psychological phenomena. Some argue it can foresee social trends and even be used to control them - this is particularly relevant in this study. “The epistemological position that advocates working with an observable social reality” (Saunders *et al.* 2009). Positivists believe that they can achieve a complete interpretation based on experiment and observation. Ideas and information are found through straightforward experience, interpreted through rational deduction (Ryan, A.B., 2006). As part of a positivist approach, the researcher will likely use existing theory to develop hypotheses. These will be tested and either confirmed or refuted, which may lead to further development of the researcher’s theory (Saunders *et al.* 2009). This theory is relatable to this research as hypotheses will be tested and either confirmed or refuted.

### **Realism**

“Realism is a branch of epistemology which is like positivism in that it assumes a scientific approach to the development of knowledge. This assumption underpins the collection of data and the understanding of those data” (Saunders *et al.* 2007). This explanation, particularly in relation to realism in business and management research, is easier to understand when the two forms of realism are compared. The two forms of realism are direct realism and critical realism. The first form of realism is direct realism. This form essentially means ‘what you see is what you get’, indicating that what we experience through our senses accurately represents the world in which we live (Saunders *et al.* 2009). The second form of realism is critical realism. This form contends that our experiences are sensations, they are “images of the things in the real world, not the things directly” (Saunders *et al.* 2009). They differ to direct realists as, critical realists draw attention to the fact that at times, our senses mislead us. Critical realism can be beneficial in business research as it proposes an avenue to consider the rigor – relevance gap that exists in business research, owing to its emphasis on an extra-mental reality (Saxena, D. 2019).

## **Interpretivism**

This epistemological stance refers to the way individuals attempt to make sense of the world around them; “Interpretivism advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our role as social actors” (Saunders *et al.* 2009). This could be viewed upon as how researchers gain knowledge of the world, or how it is, that researchers interpret or understand the meanings that individuals attach to their actions or motives (O'Reilly, K. 2009). As part of the interpretivist philosophy, it is essential that the researcher assume an open and empathetic approach. This is a common approach when studying matters related to society. This is a particularly important stance when understanding emotions and behaviours of individuals as these can be rarely measured through certain data.

## **Pragmatism**

Pragmatism is the fourth and final stance of epistemology. Pragmatism is based off the understanding that research concentrates on tangible, actual issues rather than abstract or hypothetical debates on the ‘nature of truth and reality’ (Kelly, L. M. and Cordeiro, M. 2020). Pragmatism contends that the most significant factor of a research philosophy chosen is the research question. Saunders *et al.* (2009) states that this allows the researcher to adopt both positivist and interpretivist positions, applying a practical method to assist in the collecting and interpreting of data. Using pragmatism in practice, the researcher will utilize a variety of data collection methods to best answer their research questions. They will use multiple data collection sources, focus on the practical implications of their study, and will stress the significance of adopting the best research tactics to address the question at hand (Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N., 2016). This gives the researcher the best chance of understanding and answering the research question and gives the opportunity for a comprehensive conclusion.

## **4.4 Ontology**

Ontology is a branch of philosophy which is concerned with the science of ‘what is’, this refers to experiences, occurrences, materials, the structure of objects and relations in all aspects of reality. The term ‘ontology’ has been used for many years and was a name Aristotle and his students used to describe him, as he called himself “first philosophy” (Smith, B. 2012). Ontology differs from epistemology in that it is concerned with what it is we know, whereas epistemology refers to how we know. Having a clear understanding of both philosophies can assist the researcher in deciding the philosophy they will adopt. It is



argued that there are no right or wrong theories, instead the researcher should decide based on how ‘interesting’ they are to the researcher (Antwi, S.K. and Hamza, K., 2015).

## **4.5 Research Approach**

Crucial to any successful study is the research design behind it. The research design incorporates the strategy for the researcher to test their hypotheses or to answer their research questions. “A research method is the choice of a concrete manner of data collection to implement the plan” (Annette Kluge et al. 2019). There are two design approaches which can be taken, those being deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is often linked to interpretivist research. Inductive typically starts on initial examples and concludes with over-all statements or philosophies. In inductive reasoning, observations are made at the beginning and hypotheses are formed from the examination of the collected data (Williamson, K., 2002). Deductive reasoning on the other hand, is typically linked with a positivist approach to research. Deductive reasoning takes an approach of testing a hypothesis based off a theory (Williamson, K., 2002). For this research, the researcher will take a deductive approach. As Saunders *et al.* (2009) describes it, deductive reasoning involves developing hypotheses and theory and then designing the best fit research strategy to test the presented hypotheses. This research took a deductive approach, in that the researcher developed four hypotheses prior to data collection. The researcher used a variety of questions targeted towards employees in the pharmaceutical industry and how elements of remote working impacted their lives, work and specifically productivity.

The research method employed can range from qualitative to quantitative dependent on the researcher’s choice of data collection method. Researchers can also use a mixed method approach, a combination of quantitative and qualitative. Researchers argue that this method is more effective when conducting research as it is likely to form deeper research findings that may impact theory and practices regarding the question being studied in a more effective way (Lo, F.-Y., Rey-Martí, A. and Botella-Carrubi, D. 2020). However, Bryman, A. (2006) notes that these greater benefits of mixed methods approaches are built from logic rather than actual examples. According to Bryman, (2006) the “range of concrete examples of multi-strategy research is not great”.

Qualitative research can be described as inductive, and uses a variety of methods in its focus, it takes on an interpretive approach to subject matter. When using qualitative research methods, a researcher does not typically rely on numbers, but rather, the researcher requires strong communication and analytical abilities to accurately convey the full extent of the experience, outlining and describing the full details of the participants (Taylor, G.R. ed., 2005). The methods that researchers use most frequently in qualitative research are interviews and focus groups. These are commonly used in business research as they are seen as soliciting results quickly, efficiently and in a cost-effective manner (Walle, A. H. 2015).

With quantitative research, in contrast, the data is usually investigated and examined in numerical form. For a researcher, it involves an organized and experimental study of their proposed question, through figures, arithmetic, and statistics. “The process of estimating numbers in quantitative research provides the fundamental link between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relations” (Basias, N. and Pollalis, Y., 2018). There are many benefits to using quantitative research methods, it can be used to analyze large volumes of data, it can be less time consuming for the researcher and can be viewed as being objective since it is reliant on facts and figures (Rahman, M. S. 2017). It has been suggested that the difference between quantitative and qualitative research is a technical decision, in that, the choice of which method to use is really to do with their ability to answer the researcher’s question (Antwi, S.K. and Hamza, K., 2015).

## **4.6 Data Collection Method**

The target audience for this research was remote working employees in the pharmaceutical industry. It was directed to those to gain a clear and detailed understanding of their views of enforced remote working and the different ways in which their lives and work were affected or unaffected. This industry was chosen as it has been at the fore of the COVID-19 pandemic as the pharmaceutical industry raced to find a vaccine for the virus. As the core of the research was so topical, it was felt by the researcher that a relevant industry would be fitting. It was focused on remote workers rather than those who remained on site as those working from home may have experienced a more significant transition and were more greatly affected than those remaining at the office. A survey consisting of 13 questions was sent and completed by 31 participants who differed in age, gender, and previous remote working

experience. The goal of the survey was to gain an understanding of the impact of enforced remote working on individuals within the pharmaceutical industry and the impacts of the different factors on their productivity. This study took a deductive, quantitative approach and the results examined appropriately.

As a result of the pandemic, all surveys were completed virtually. A survey was sent online to employees within different departments of the pharmaceutical industry who, because of COVID-19, were forced to work from home. The objective being, to get a better grasp of how the sudden change affected their personal lives and work. The 13-question based survey consisted of several variables, including, health, teamwork, relationships with colleagues, work-life balance, and productivity.

This research used the online platform Smart Survey to put together and distribute the survey to the targeted participants. This platform gave the researcher the ability to respect participants anonymity and confidence. No personal information was requested of participants and answers remain anonymous. It also ensured complete safety of participants as it reduced in person interactions. Once the survey was created, a link to the survey was emailed to the willing participants, and they were able to complete at their own discretion. The survey took around one minute, and participants could complete the survey on any supporting device (PC/Laptop/Tablet/Phone). As forementioned, surveys are a common tool used in business research, given their flexibility, low-cost and they allow the researcher to gain results quickly and efficiently. This method also allows the participants to answer honestly without fear of judgment and gives the researcher the most honest and authentic insight to their research. Once the survey was completed, the results were returned to the researcher for review, results, and conclusion.

This study and the research included was met with the highest ethical approach and standards ensuring all collected data is cared for ethically and to preserve the highest confidentiality and protect participants it is essential to take an ethical approach (Saunders et al. 2009). Upon reviewing the NCI Ethics Policy and completing the NCI Ethics Form, this research does not put any participants at risk. At no point in the survey were participants personal names or information requested or shared and all their answers remain completely anonymous.

There remains to be limitations with all forms of research. As this research has taken place during a pandemic, it encountered certain limitations. Conducting the research in the safest manner for both the researcher and participants was of the utmost importance. Using a combination approach may have given further insight and understanding to the participants but given the safety precautions and volume, this would have been challenging to attain. A larger audience would also give the researcher a deeper understanding of the impacts of enforced remote working and so this could be a limitation. It also remains to be seen the full impact of the pandemic on employees and so future insight and further study is required to gain a full grasp of the effects.

## **CHAPTER 5 – RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a quantitative analysis of the primary research data collected. The rationale behind this was to get a deeper and clearer understanding of the research topic. The information was collected with the aid of a short survey. This short survey was emailed out and completed by 31 participants who ranged in gender, age, and previous work from home experience. The target audience was those working remotely in the pharmaceutical industry. The questions that were presented by the researcher in the survey looked at previous work from home experience, feelings of readiness to transition to WFH, feelings of support / micromanagement from leaders, work / life balance, productivity levels and mental health implications. Lastly, it was asked, going forward, what their preference in work location was, if they'd rather continue working remotely, return fully to office or have a flexible working option. The survey returned thought-provoking findings around remote working during the pandemic. As this was a rather small – scale research, and the pandemic work from mandate continues, future research is required for an even deeper understanding.

### **5.2 Results of the Survey**

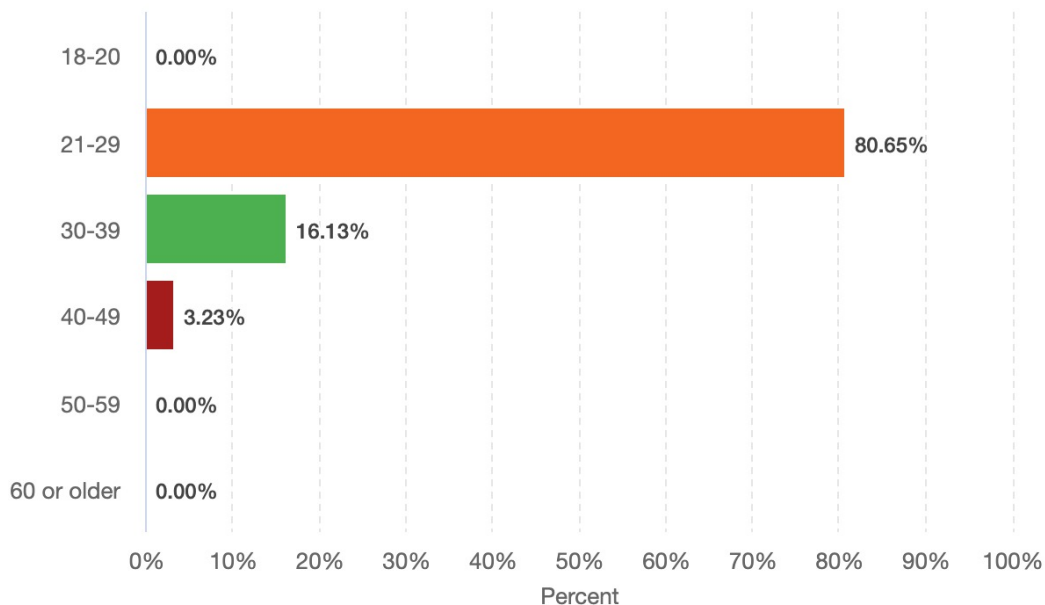
#### **Analysis of the survey**

As a result of the global pandemic and the limitations it ensued, this survey operated on a smaller scale. The information required for this research topic was attained via the virtual distribution of surveys to a target audience of remote pharmaceutical employees. The department in which they worked was not specified, only that they worked remotely and within the pharma industry. The survey (APPENDIX 1) comprised of 13 questions that centered around enforced remote working, productivity, mental health, and additional variables. All contributors varied in age, gender, previous WFH experience with over 90% of participants working on site prior to COVID-19. Most participants were female although no pre-bias was given to this. The bulk of participants were aged between 21 – 29 although there were also participants ranging from 30-49. This allowed for a wider understanding of those affected by enforced remote working and a wider opinion.

The survey was emailed out via a link and responses were returned over a 10-day period. All of those who took part answered the same questions with their own choice of answer. The responses were treated with utmost consideration and discretion. Respectively, every answer was thoroughly and meticulously analysed with observations noted.

**Figure 1: Age of participants**

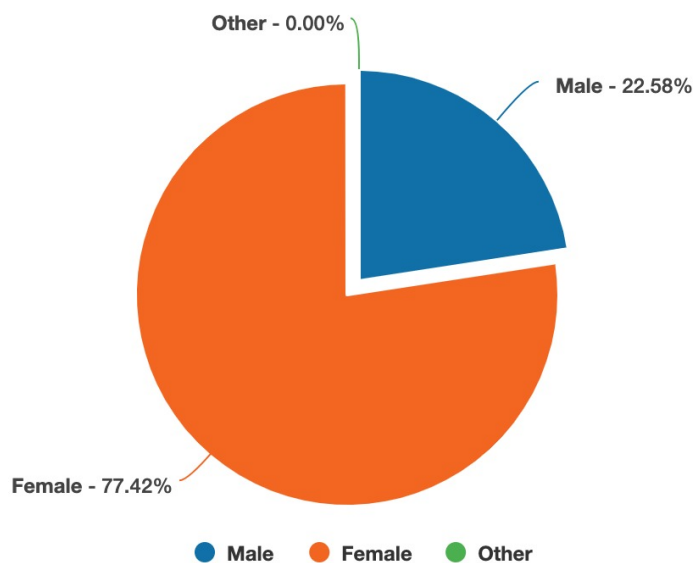
What is your age bracket?



As seen in figure 1, most participants were aged 21-29, followed by 30–39-year old's and finally the minority of respondents aged between 40-49. The bar chart illustrates that no participants were aged between 18 – 20 and none were above the age of 50 years old. This is an important element of the survey as it allows the researcher to get a clearer understanding of how remote working has affected those of a different age bracket. Employees of different ages may have opposed or similar views on the transition to remote working.

**Figure 2: Gender of participants**

What is your gender?



The pie chart displays the breakdown of the participant's gender. With 77.42% of respondents being female, this is the majority gender. 22.58% of participants being male. There was no gender bias in this survey, it was sent out to a via email, and this happened to be the responses. It was important for the researcher to analyze gender, as previous literature has shown differing views to remote working and the impact it has had on employees.

**Figure 3: Previous Work from Home Experience**

Before the Covid-19 crisis, did you:

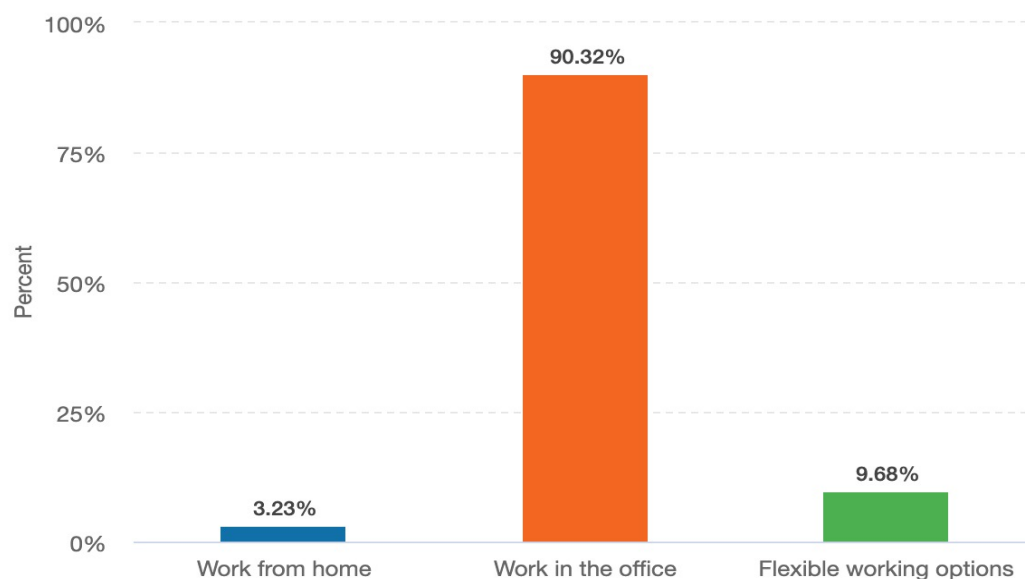


Figure 3 highlights the number of participants who had previous work from home experience. This was particularly important to the researcher as it gave an insight into how affected they would be by the transition. It was also a contributing variable for **Hypothesis 1 (H1)** and if this experience would affect productivity. As seen in the column chart, most participants had worked in the office prior to the pandemic with 90.32% stating so. Only 9.68% had flexible working options and a mere 3.23% with experience working from home. This shows the researcher that most participants were not prepared or did not have previous experience to work from home when they were asked to. As a new experience for most, this is bound to have incurred unexpected changes and feelings for those participants.

**Figure 4: Did you feel prepared to move to remote working?**

Did you feel prepared to move to remote working?

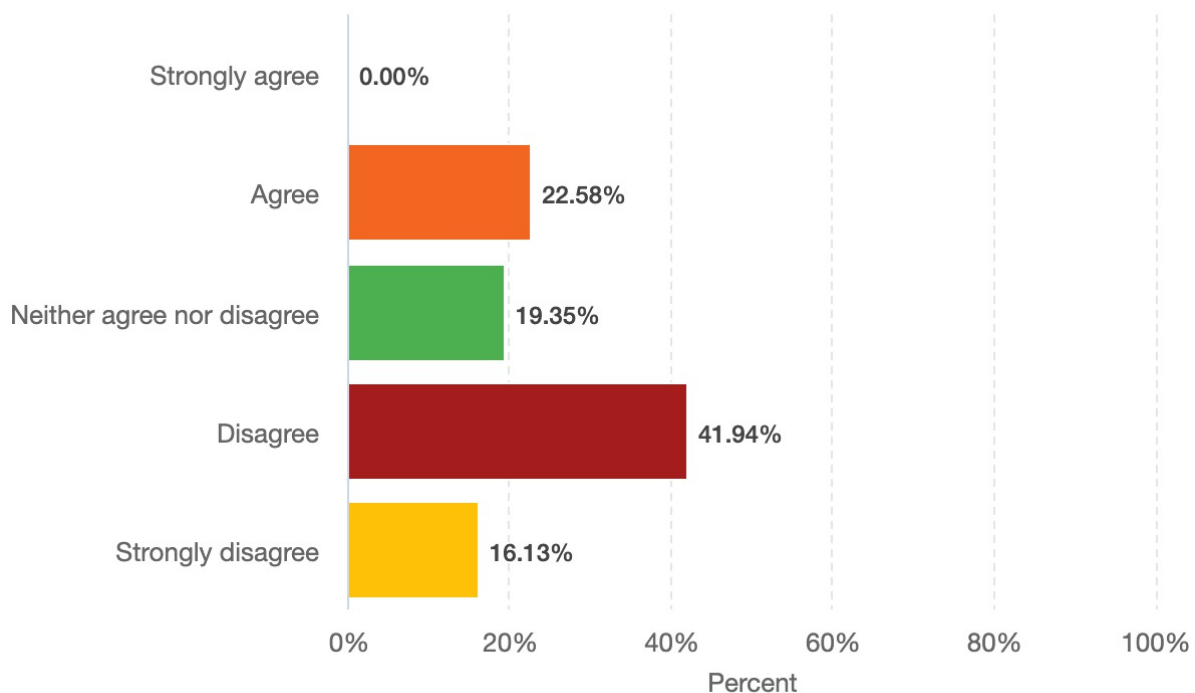


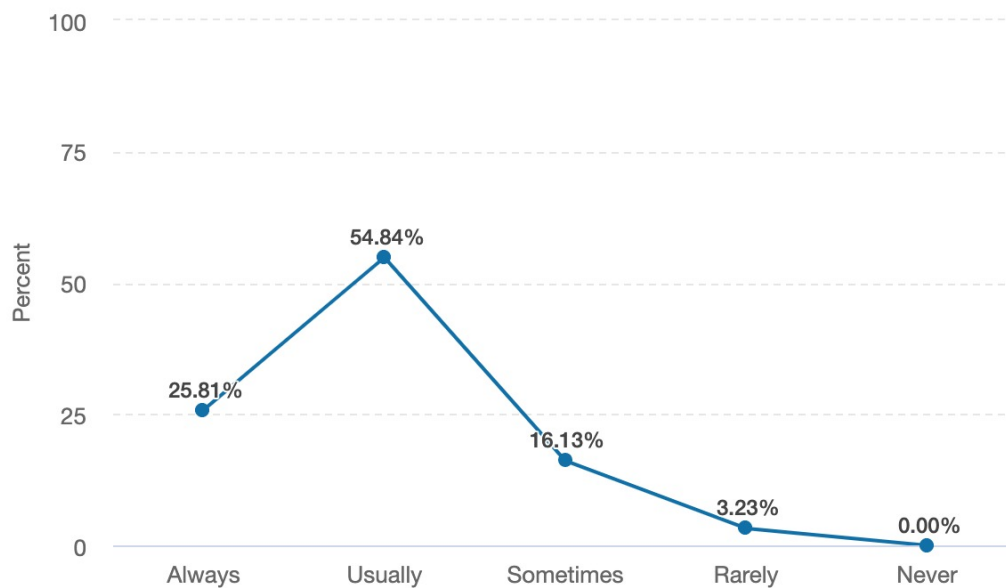
Figure 4 depicts the number of participants who felt prepared to shift to remote working. This was significant as previous literature asserts that feelings of unpreparedness can lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety for the employee as they attempt to navigate their new workstation at home. The combination of inexperience working from home and the overnight transition could lead employees to feelings of worry and pressure and may result in lower productivity levels and mental health problems. As seen above, the majority (41.94%) disagreed when asked if they felt prepared to move to remote working. A further 16.13% strongly disagreed with this meaning they felt totally unready to work from home. 19.35%



neither agree nor disagree with feeling prepared to work from home and 22.58% felt prepared to move to remote working. With the majority feeling unprepared to move to remote working, it suggests this wasn't an easy transition for most and perhaps something employers could consider for future reference. Further training is required from the top down to be ready for times of uncertainty.

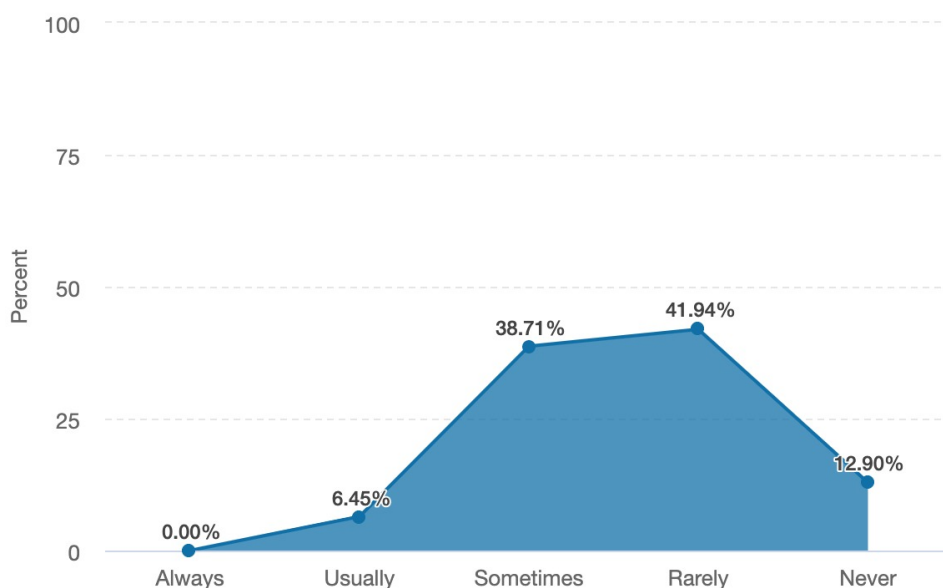
**Figure 5: Feelings of trust and support from leaders**

Do you feel supported and trusted by your team leader while working remotely?



**Figure 6: Feelings of Micromanagement**

Have you ever felt micromanaged while working from home?



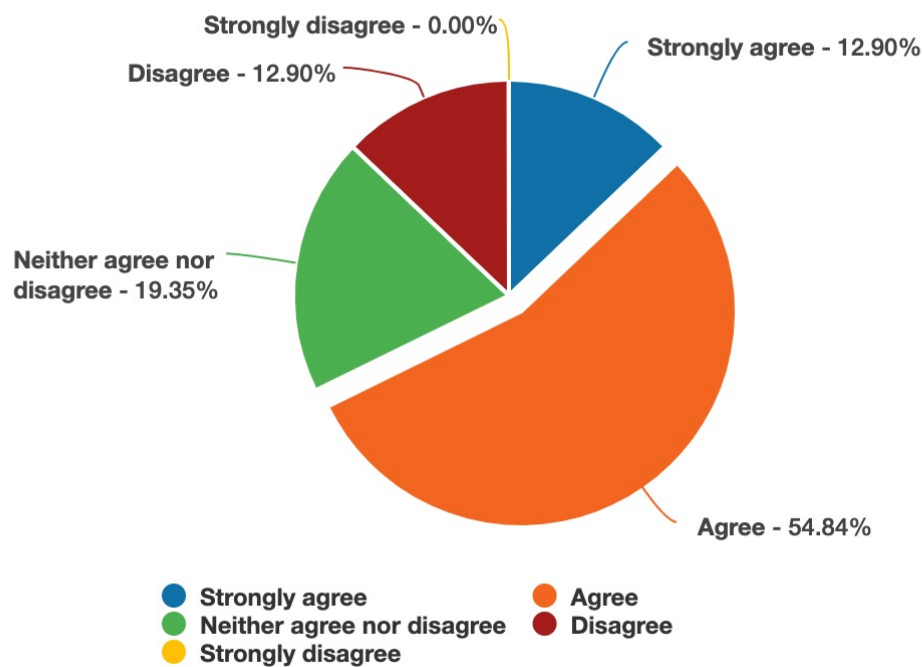
Figures 5 and 6 are related, as they represent the feelings felt from employee's leaders and superiors. Previous literature has shown the importance of offering support to employees during these times and any time of crisis as it creates a sense of bond and team as well contributing to better working relationships. Previous literature states that the best way of coping with this unexpected method of working, is to support employee's as much as possible. This includes the transition in terms of infrastructure, to ensure that staff are not overworked and to reassure that social isolation is not impacting negatively on employee's lives. This data has shown that most participants have felt supported and trusted by their employer which reflects positively for the employees/participants.

Figure 6 draws attention to the percentage of participants who felt micromanaged while working from home. This was a significant question for the researcher as previous literature recalls that employees have felt micromanaged by their superiors, felt invasions of privacy while working from home and an expectation to always be there. This leads to stress for the employee and negative connotations towards their work and work relationships. In this survey, the majority (41.94%) of respondents rarely felt micromanaged which reflects positively on their leader's trust in their employees and management style. The second weighted response answered 'sometimes' (38.71%) which tells the researcher that this is an area of potential improvement. This could be a result of the inexperience of the managers and employees in remote working but something that can be worked upon. Showing trust and support during this time will be more beneficial than a virtual sense of being monitored.

Both figures also play a role in determining the results of **Hypothesis 2 (H2)**. This hypothesis assumes that leadership support during enforced remote working plays a role in employees productivity levels. These questions were important for the researcher to delve deeper into this understanding.

**Figure 7: Teamwork**

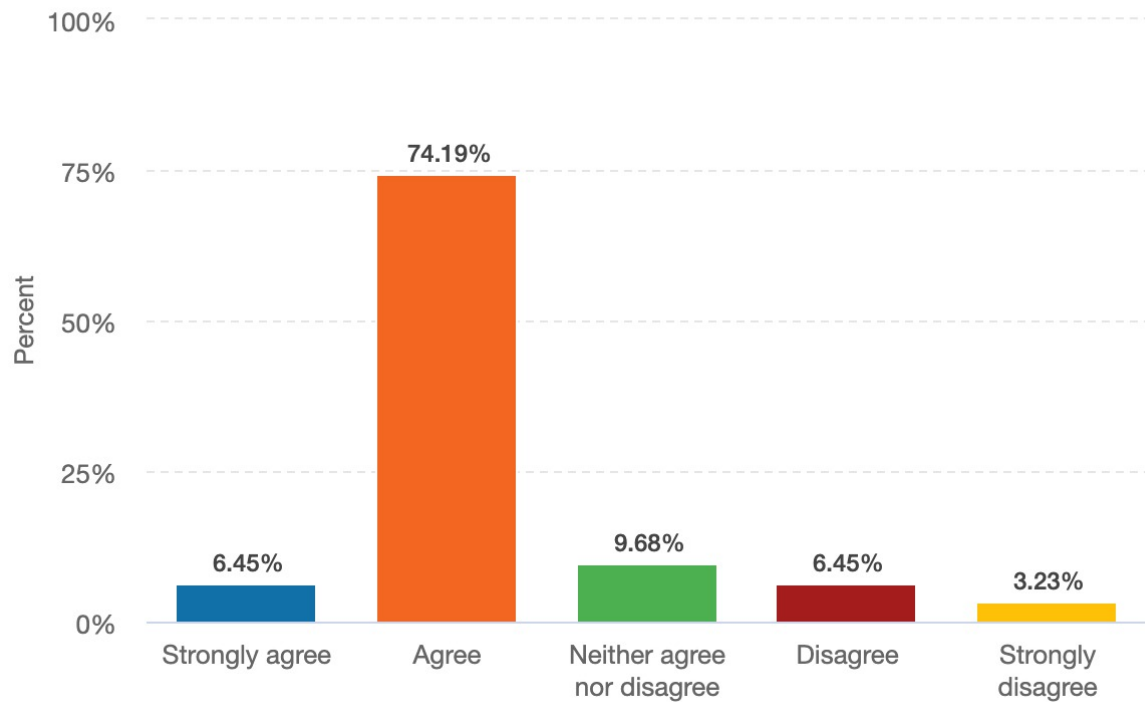
Do you feel working remotely negatively impacted teamwork?



This portion of the survey was critical as it impacts **Hypothesis 4 (H4)**. It is also important as it links back to the previous literature which outlined an impact between teamwork, virtual working, and productivity. Literature has suggested that while certain industries and jobs flourish in isolated working, it can hinder creativity and innovation in teamwork. Figure 7 shows that 54.84% of participants agree that remote working negatively impacted teamwork. A further 12.90% strongly agree it impacted teamworking negatively. These results correlate with previous literature that working in the office creates a better cohesion and sense of teamwork than can be achieved virtually. This may impact employers and employee's decision in the long-term to continue working from home, once opportunities arise for that choice, or to return on site or to adopt a flexible approach to achieve stronger team building. This is also scope for improvement for employers and employees to work on accomplishing this virtually especially when the future of remote work remains uncertain.

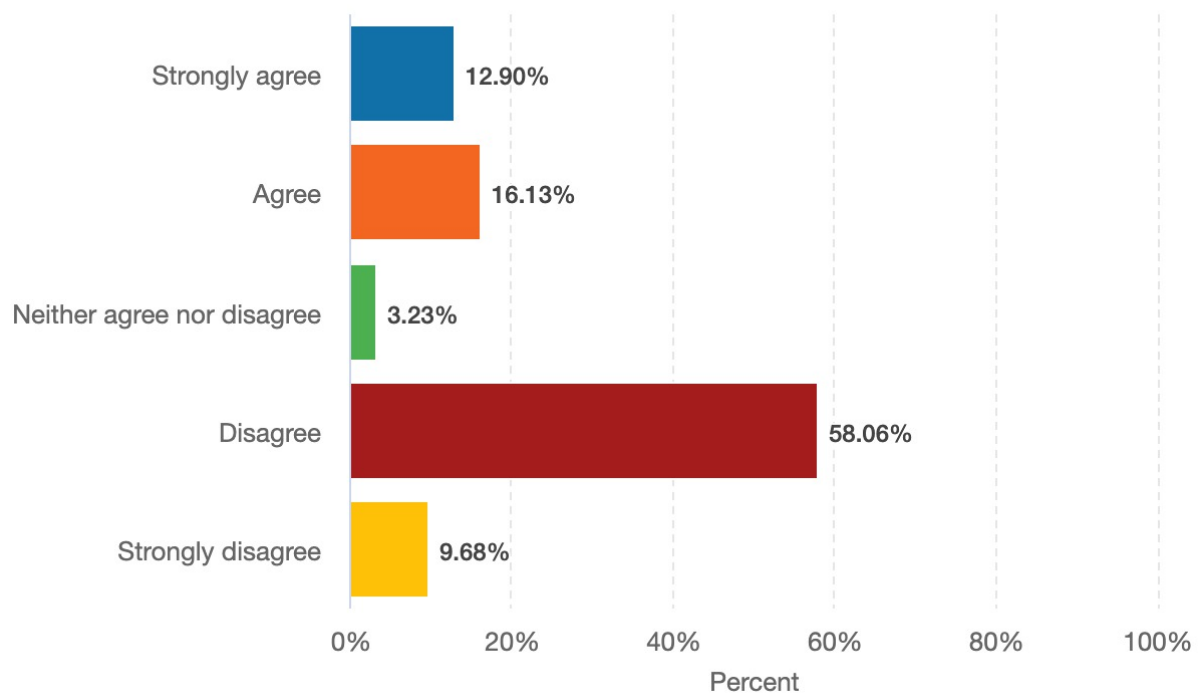
**Figure 8: Work / Life Balance**

Do you feel you have a good work-life balance?



**Figure 9: The ability to turn off “work mode” at the end of the day:**

Is it easy to “turn off work mode” at the end of the day?

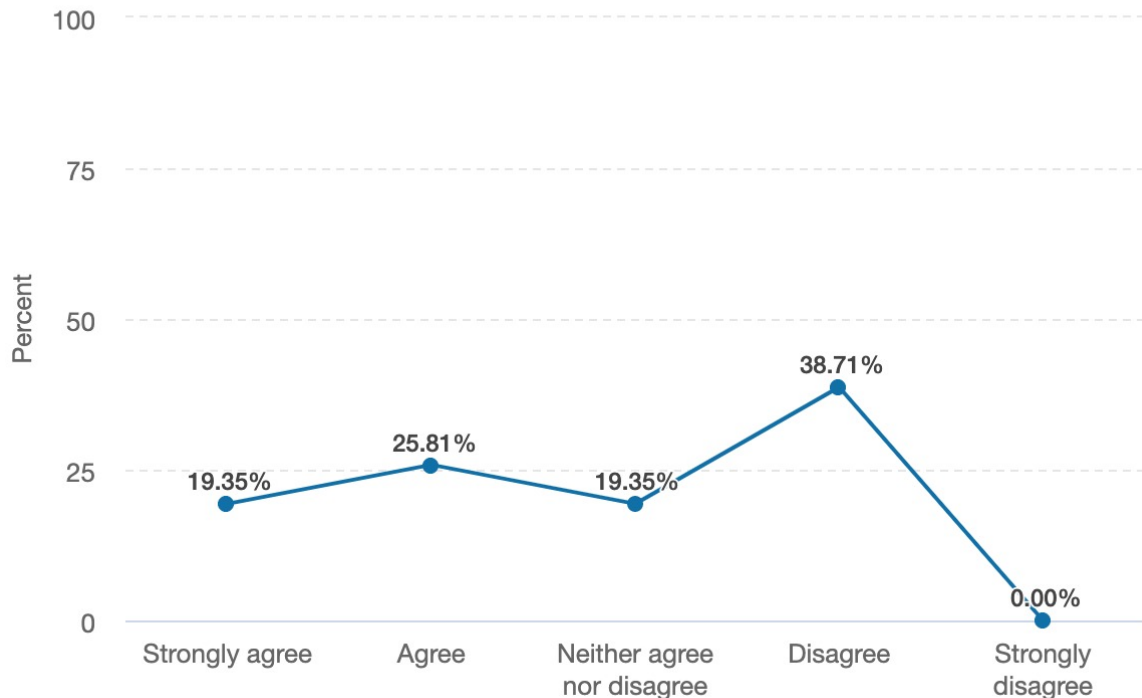


The charts above represent how participants felt regarding their work / life balance and the ability to switch off at the end of the workday. The responses made for an interesting analysis with majority (74.19%) of respondents saying they agree that they have a good work / life balance. This was interesting as previous literature has suggested this was an area for concern for remote workers during the pandemic. The previous studies on work / life balance while remote working, is conflicting. Remote working was previously regarded as an amenity of the affluent and prior literature has viewed remote working as a way of improving the employee's ability to balance work life and family life (Golden, 2006). While during the pandemic, as previously mentioned, the lines can get blurred while working from home. There is a sense of overworking since work is 'right there'. Maintaining a balanced work / life balance is crucial for employee's health, both mental and physical as well as crucial for their work, so as not to overwork and become stressed.

Linked to this, it is important to question whether participants felt the ability to switch off at the end of the workday? As just stated, previous studies have outlined how employees felt at times, overworked, as their home was now their office. This data signified in the bar chart (Figure 8) that this was an area of struggle for the respondents. 58.06% of participants answered that they believe it is not easy to switch off from work mode at the end of the day. This draws a parallel with previous literature. It is important for employees to switch off from work and enjoy down time. Enforced remote working has hindered this, as the employee's home is now shared with their place of work and the data suggests that employee wellbeing and appropriate working conditions are areas that need to be reflected upon and require further attention and focus.

**Figure 10: Productivity Levels**

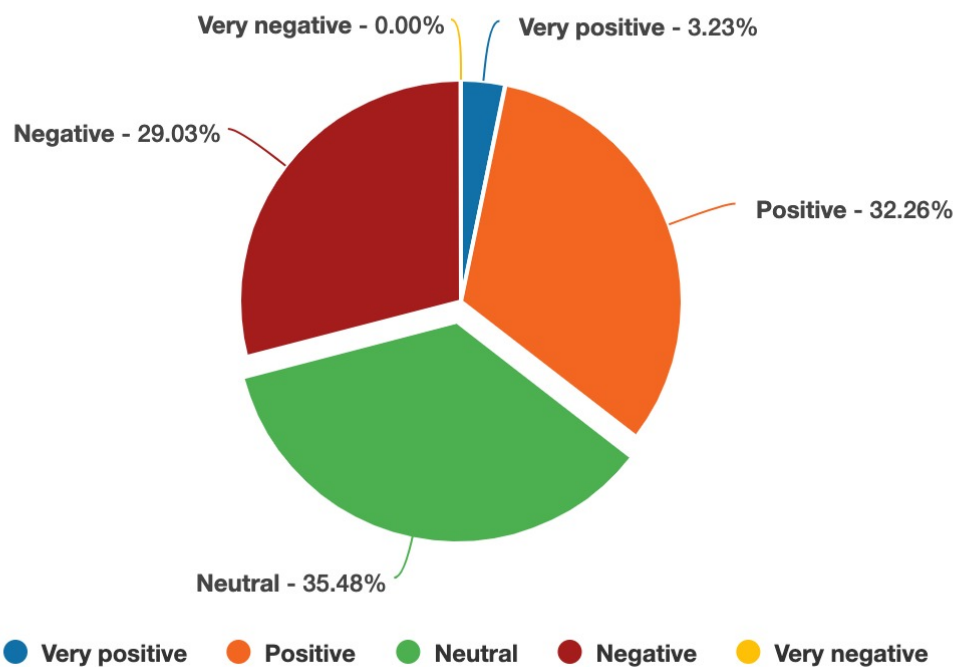
Do you feel as productive at home as you are at the office?



This question was crucial to the research. The four hypotheses were centered around this variable of productivity. Given all the unforeseen and extenuating circumstances, are employees as productive at home as they would be in the office. This line graph illustrates interesting and slightly expected responses. The majority (38.71%) of participants disagreed that they are as productive at home as in the office. Interestingly, the next most popular answer was that respondents agreed they were as productive at home as in the office. As previous literature regarding pre-pandemic remote work shows, working from home was not seen as a place of being less productive, but of being more convenient. With all the distractions and stress of a global pandemic, has this flipped the opinion. 38.71% may argue it has. As a society, can business continue as usual, working from home and maintaining productivity? More research on a larger scale would give a better insight but it appears, and this is becoming something of a repetition, to be an area in which employees and employers can improve upon.

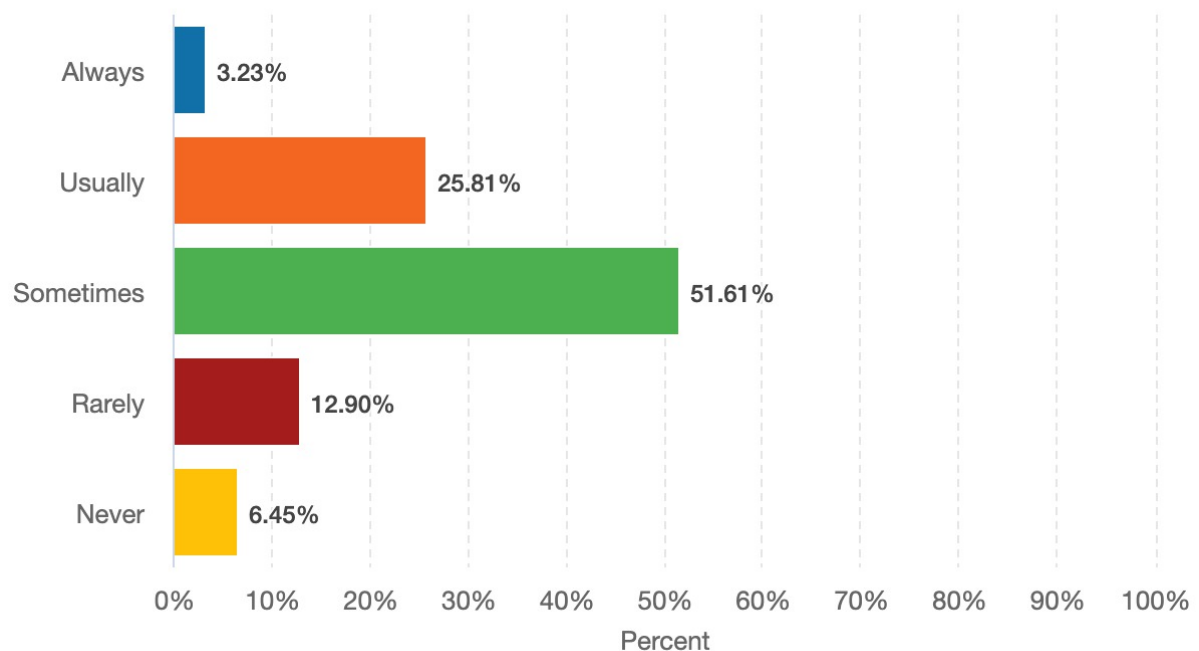
**Figure 11: How has your mental health been impacted by remote working?**

How has your mental health been impacted by remote working?



**Figure 12: Have you felt increased levels of loneliness since remote working**

Have you felt increased levels of loneliness since remote working?



Figures 11 and 12 represent extremely topical subject involving remote working and the global pandemic. Self-isolation and working from home have led to increased feelings of

loneliness, stress, and anxiety. Previous literature has discussed at length the negative impacts of professional and social isolation because of the pandemic. Wang, *et al.* (2021) found a correlation between loneliness and work autonomy. The pie chart above shows the participants responses, the results collected were quite surprising. There wasn't a huge difference in answers, the bulk response was neutral, second largest response felt positively impacted, and 29.09% felt negatively impacted. Although there aren't vast differences in the percentages it's still important and curious what the results have collected.

These were important questions for the research as they acted as variables for **Hypothesis 3 (H3)**. Mental health implications were at the fore of most research on working during the pandemic. It was important for the researcher to gage their own understanding of the topic and delve deeper into this. Further research on a greater scale would provide a better understanding. It is worth considering research over a longer period and a larger audience to get a fuller understanding of how this pandemic has implicated employees.

**Figure 13: Going forward, would you prefer.**

Going forward, would you prefer;

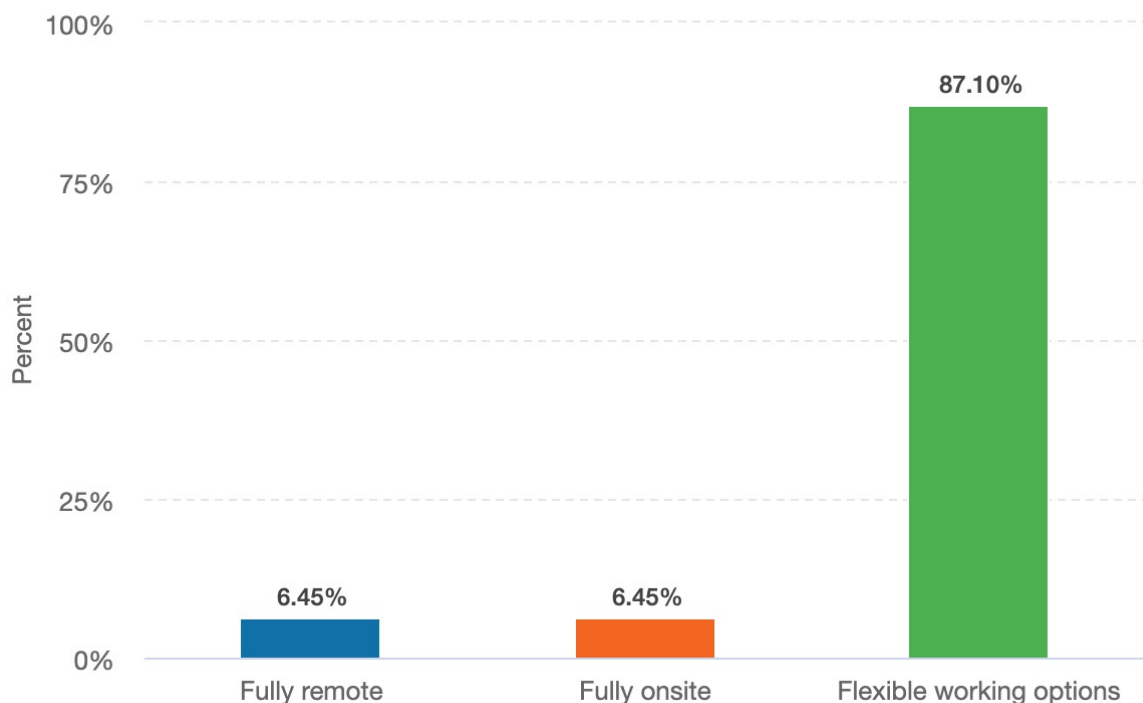


Figure 13 denotes the final question in the survey. The researcher posed the question, going forward, how participants would prefer to work. The results show that most participants want a flexible option. This is not an unexpected answer. Employees by now have adopted to



remote working but also may miss the social aspect, in relation to teamwork and bonding. However, one could assume that the days of working 5 days a week on site are behind but again, future research will show this. As the world emerges from this pandemic slowly, a flexible option seems like the most likely and safest.

## 5.3 Analysis of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** This hypothesis assumes that *previous working from home experience impacts levels of productivity positively*. Previous literature as outlined above, has indicated that working from home pre pandemic was beneficial for the employer and the employee. It was an option chosen by many to improve work / life balance. The results of the survey show only a minority had experience working from home prior to the pandemic. It also found that most respondents felt less productive working from home. Since the number of participants who had experience working from home is so narrow, this causes a limitation on this hypothesis. The researcher felt this hypothesis is left undetermined and further study should be carried out to get a further understanding and conclusion.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** This hypothesis assumes that *leadership support during enforced remote working impacts levels of productivity positively*. The data collected from the survey showed that most participants felt supported by their supervisors while working from home. It is the researchers understanding that this hypothesis is validated. This is beneficial for both employers and employees to know going forward. This can be used as a tool to improve business best practices and ensure business as usual while navigating through such unprecedented times.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** This hypothesis assumes that *increased stress levels during enforced remote working negatively impact employee's productivity*. To get a better understanding to test this hypothesis, the researcher asked the participants a variety of questions to gauge a better understanding of their stress levels and mental health while remote working. The survey asked if they found it easy to switch off from work mode, which most participants agreed they found it difficult to turn off at the end of the day. Majority experienced feelings of loneliness which feed into increased stress levels. After analyzing different responses within the survey, the researcher found this hypothesis to be validated.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** This hypothesis assumes that *the emergence of virtual teamwork because of enforced remote working has impacted productivity negatively*. Three variables were present in this hypothesis, teamwork, productivity, and remote working. The results of the survey show that teamwork suffered because of remote working and after careful analysis, this hypothesis was found to be validated. The assumption was proven to be founded, given the data collected. Participants felt remote working negatively impacted teamwork and this had an adverse effect on productivity.

## **CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to discuss in further depth the results and analysis from the information gathered and compare with previous literature. There will be more focus on the results of the survey and the learning outcomes of this research. Firstly, the experience, or lack thereof, of prior remote working familiarity. Secondly, the involvement of team leaders and the role of teamwork and lastly, the discussion of mental health within remote working during the global pandemic.

### **6.2 Outlook on Remote Working**

Given that largely participants had no prior experience of working from home, it correlates with prior discussed research and how this new way of conducting business was an overnight, unfamiliar adjustment for most. The data collected found that for the most part, none of the participants had experience working from home, nor did they feel prepared to make the adjustment. As mentioned above, DeSilver (2020) discussed how working from home was an amenity of the affluent, which could give explanation as to why so many were unaccustomed to it. This research that has been carried out has linked with that of earlier research which stated that due to the unexpected nature of the pandemic, neither the employees nor employers were prepared to support this move (Wang *et al.* 2021). The researcher found that the information and studies carried out prior to that of the pandemic were biased and saw only the positives of remote working, given this, although the previous literature gave a curious insight, it also gave its limitations. However, the research since the pandemic again has a shared value, but perhaps a different stance. Much of the previous sources have discussed how difficult employees found adjusting to remote working. For example, it was previously mentioned how employees struggled to create a workstation as well as adapting to working along side family members / housemates (Anderson *et al.* 2020), it could be assumed that employees have made the adjustment and are now more comfortable with working from home. Essentially, the previous literature, and this research included, found employees were inexperienced in remote working and did not feel prepared for it, nevertheless, it seems now to be the more favourable choice of work environment for most. This was presented in the

final question of the survey in which participants were asked going forward how they would like to work, with majority choosing flexible work options. The initial outlook may have been caused by the initial panic of the pandemic and the uncertainty of everything. Employees are adaptable and that is clear from this research.

### **6.3 Leadership and Teamwork**

The impact of remote working on teamwork was a topical subject in prior studies. Brownlee (2020) states the concern to maintain a sense of team environment, as well as feelings of cohesion and camaraderie. The survey and information gathered in this research, found similar results. Participants found teamwork was negatively impacted by the introduction of enforced remote working. Employers could consider implementing best practices to improve upon this and encourage adopting new methods of maintaining team environments while working remotely. As discussed, in a study conducted by Khan *et al.* (2017), found that employee's performance was increased in strong team environments. In this study, the researcher found that participants felt the emergence of virtual teamwork because of enforced remote working impacted productivity negatively. Even without the stress of a global pandemic, it is suggested that teams do not thrive while working virtually. The emergence of a flexible working option may be the solution to this. Employees working a combination of onsite and remote may give the opportunity to have those essential team meetings in person on certain days.

It has been acknowledged that the role of the leader is more vital now than ever. Prior to COVID-19, virtual managers were said to have required an expanded skillset (McCann, *et al.* 2019). Motivating their employee's virtually, ensuring productivity is maintained and during the pandemic, acknowledging their employee's safety and welfare. The primary and secondary research conflicted in this study. The former research found that employees felt micromanaged and lack of support and trust from their leaders. Parker *et al.* (2020) observed a significant number of employees reported feeling they had to be constantly available to respond instantly to phone or electronic messages as well as being responsive after work hours. This clashes with the primary research obtained by the survey. Most respondents felt supported and rarely felt micromanaged by their manager. It could be considered that after

more than a year of remote working, employers have adjusted and no longer feel the need to micromanage. Further research is required since this is a limited study.

## **6.4 Mental health and work-related stress**

The primary and secondary research share some comparisons on this topic and some opposing views. The data collected from the survey was generally positive in relation to employee's mental health. Most respondents felt their mental health was positively affected by remote working, with the next largest answer being neutral, stating they felt unaffected mentally by remote working. However, many respondents did feel they struggled to turn off work mode and in essence this can lead to work related stress. Prior studies, for example, Lloyd's Register (2021) reported 69% of employees around the world felt higher rates of work-related stress while remote working because of higher levels of workloads and the newly adopted working arrangements (Smith, 2021). It could be argued that mental health and stress are dependent on the job type and the person. Further research around mental health and work-related stress is required over the long term and a larger audience as this research is limited in scale.

The primary and secondary research drew a parallel in relation to feelings of loneliness. From the survey, 51.61% reported feeling at times increased feelings of loneliness. These findings were not totally unexpected and relate to a study conducted by Toscano *et al.* (2020) who discovered that there was a negative relationship between social isolation and the view on remote working. Additionally, Wang *et al.* (2021) found online interactions were not sufficient to curb feelings of loneliness. This is comparable with the results of the survey which found over 80% either always, usually, or sometimes felt increased feelings of loneliness while remote working. Given this is a continuing issue, it should be taken seriously by employers. The implications of social isolation due to remote working should be considered as a top priority by employers and employees alike. A flexible working option may be considered but there are limitations with this also with COVID-19.

## **6.5 Productivity**

The aim of this research was to collect data to understand if the productivity of employees working in the pharma industry was affected or unaffected by the variables of remote working. From the data taken from the survey, majority of participants disagreed that they

were as productive at home as in the office. However, a strong number of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed (45.16% collectively) that they were as productive at home as in the office. These results were particularly noteworthy, as the previous literature on this topic was slightly opposed. Pre-pandemic studies state that productivity is largely unaffected by remote working. However, over the course of the pandemic, literature leans on the side of productivity suffering because of the different variables faced by employees such as stress, work / life balance and micromanagement by leaders. This current piece of research has shed a light on this and shown that employees do believe themselves to be, for the most part, of the same level of productivity. It shows employees adaptability and resilience during times of a crisis and that business can continue as usual even during times of change and adjustment.

## CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMEDATIONS

### 7.1 Conclusion

This research examined a range of matters and concerns relating to enforced remote working because of COVID-19 while outlining how it was affected by or affected other areas such as employee's day to day, technology, teamwork, leadership, loneliness and mental health, and finally productivity. The results obtained by this research produced thought-provoking findings and insights into employees' views on remote working during the pandemic. Some of the results were surprising and challenged previous literature and other findings were anticipated but nonetheless made for an interesting study. The central objective behind this study and research was to critically explore how COVID-19 has shaped remote working and if the different implications had any effect on employee's productivity specifically in the pharmaceutical industry. It was important to explore this, as a great deal of former research on remote working can be viewed as one-sided.

Obtaining a deeper understanding of employee's stance on remote working during the pandemic was pivotal because, as the survey has told, almost none of participants had the opportunity prior to now. Research prior to the pandemic has stated that this was an opportunity afford to "managers, professionals and other white-collar workers" (Felstead, A. and Henseke, G. 2017). Had more employees' opportunities to work from home, it may not have been such a struggle to acclimatize to this new way of working. From the survey in this current study, a combined total of 58.07% disagreed or completely disagreed with feeling prepared to work remotely. The reasoning behind so many having no prior remote working experience can stem from a variety of causes. This may be the result of lack of trust from managers to allow remote working to lack of infrastructure to accommodate working from home to the option just never have arisen. It is easy to be critical of employers not affording everyone this opportunity and training but who could have foreseen a global crisis that forced employees into professional isolation.

As mentioned throughout this study, a large amount of the studies conducted on remote working painted an idyllic picture of it and how it was a benefit for both the employee and the employer. The advantages which are mentioned in the former studies could be brought forward to present day. Felstead, *et al.* (2017) sums up the benefits as "Employers' gains

come from a more productive workforce which uses less space and is more cost effective to house, and workers' gains stem from the prospect of a better work-life balance, thereby increasing levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment". These benefits taken from a 2017 article are just as relevant to current remote workers. The data collected from this current piece of research shows employees maintain their productivity, whether they are more productive requires further research. Current employers are using less space and potentially saving costs in that aspect. Regarding work / life balance, a large 74.19% of respondents from the survey conducted in this study, felt they had a good work / life balance. After analyzing past studies and conducting this study, one could assume that the negatives of enforced remote working stem from the initial shock and anxiety of the pandemic as well as the social isolation. Once those were adjusted to, the current outlook on remote working started to parallel with the pre-pandemic views.

The angle of this study was primarily taken from the employees' opinion; however, it is not to say the view of employers had not been considered. The emergence of remote working was not just a change for employees but also the leaders and managers. It is worth noting that they may not have been provided or had adequate training in virtually managing a workforce. Much of the pressure is put on them to support their employees in all aspects of this as well as maintaining productivity for the business. They, as employees themselves, experience all the trials and tribulations of the pandemic just like their subordinates. As previously mentioned, in a study conducted by the Harvard Business Review, 40% of the 215 leaders and managers surveyed articulated low self-confidence in their ability to manage their employees remotely (Parker, *et al.* 2020). The responsibility of maintaining and encouraging a sense of teamwork, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of staff and upholding production levels is a heavy burden to bear. Technology has aided this with the help of systems such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom but it has been argued this isn't sufficient. Studies suggest they need a vaster skillset and training to manage this effectively and further research will be required to analyse the long-term results of virtual management while remote working.

Health and wellbeing should be paramount for employers as, it can be said, employees are the greatest asset. Hence why it is of such importance to take care of them. This pandemic has also highlighted the importance of health. Studies have been conducted on healthcare workers and the troubling impacts they've experienced because of COVID-19. Lloyd's Register performed an interesting survey on employee wellbeing during a pandemic and countless



studies have emphasized the serious consequences isolation and loneliness can have on people. To combat the virus, organizations will have to continue remote working until a safer environment is available to work in. Further studies will be required over the longer term to get a greater understanding of how employees health was affected by enforced remote working. One can ask, does it encourage people to be more health conscious or to be more reclusive?

In conclusion, this study has highlighted the contrasting sides of enforced remote working. The sudden shock of the overnight transition caused employees to feel unprepared and perhaps awoke panic and stress which was attributed to remote working. The role that technology played be a progression and aid to remote working and to some as a challenge, hindrance, and invasion of privacy. The role of the manager has been a guide and supporter through this new way of conducting business, but also as a cause of stress and anxiety through micromanaging and enabling and maintaining high expectations. Remote working has been examined as a disrupter to home life and as a benefit to work / life balance. Much of these studies can be viewed as objective, depending on the employees' job description, age, marital status and family situation they may have differing opinions. Although most participants included in this study had no experience of working from home, the research suggests that, going forward, most people would prefer a flexible approach to working perhaps maintaining a combination of remote and onsite work.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

### **7.2.1 Addendum for future recommendations**

This addendum will give realistic and reasonable recommendations for change, improvement or development to current practice based on the research findings from this study. It has been touched on briefly throughout the course of this research, areas for improvement for employers and employees to be successful both professionally and personally while working remotely. To achieve the most for the business, in terms of productivity and cost efficiency and for the employee, in terms of work / life balance and job satisfaction, there are several areas for improvement. This research provided a thorough examination of remote working

during a pandemic and the different variables impacting it. Areas for improvement or development could be teamwork, leader training, productivity, and mental health awareness.

### **7.2.2 Timeline**

#### **Teamwork**

Some affected areas outlined in the primary and secondary research were teamwork. From the survey it was discovered participants felt teamwork had been negatively affected by remote working. This was supported by previous literature. To build team camaraderie and cohesion, virtual morning coffee chats should be organized for at least once a week, perhaps on a Monday and a team lunch once a week. This way employees can have casual conversations and catch up without the pressure of discussing deadlines and assignments. This should be introduced immediately. A virtual 'break room' would allow them to have the simple chats they would have previously had in office. For example, the HR department could meet on a Thursday for a virtual lunch to catch up, this would include HR, Recruitment, Payroll, ensuring everyone is involved as much as they can be. This should be encouraged by leaders and adhere a top – down approach. This recommendation should encourage ease and a sense of comfort between team members and continued virtually until returning to the office and even beyond then if flexy work options continue.

The first recommendation is for casual conversation, this second is to encourage teamwork in a professional sense. Leaders and managers should have an organized rhythm to the week. Mondays should include a team meeting which discusses what they achieved the week previously, the goals for the week ahead, how each team member can support or assist one another, and perhaps any areas for improvement. The following three days should be set aside for one-to-one conversations between manager and employee to maintain continuous communication and offer support where needed.

Finally, Friday should focus on presentations from the week, employees can present or explain their progress that week and the team should discuss areas of improvement but also encourage reflection and recognition of accomplishments. There should be a continuous stream of communication between team members in both casual and professional matters. This should be organized and scheduled to begin immediately.

## **Leader Training**

Managing and leading virtually was a new responsibility for a lot of leaders during this pandemic. As leaders juggle to cope with their own duties while supporting staff it can be a lot to handle. Previous studies have highlighted that manager's lack self-belief in this area. It is recommended that managers take workshops and training courses on virtual management to expand their skillsets and promote confidence in their abilities. This will be lifelong lessons for managers and be beneficial to them, the business, and their subordinates. These training courses and workshops should be provided in several styles to ensure innovative strategies and approaches to leadership. Examples could be e-learning courses, training videos, books and audio books, practice labs or playlists directly related to leading during uncertain times. This should provide interactive and exciting means for leaders to learn new skills and be the best managers they can. They should be implemented as soon as possible once the virtual workshops and digital hubs are available and consistently updated.

## **Productivity**

Maintaining productivity while working remotely should be a main priority of every business and may have been an area of concern for some. With the intention of maintaining and even increasing productivity while working remotely, it is recommended that employers implement strategies to achieve this. Firstly, ensuring trust in their employees. Employees should not feel that they are constantly being virtually monitored, receiving a barrage of messages throughout the day, instead, employers should give them greater work autonomy. Rather than constant check-ins throughout the day, outline the clear objectives and targets. Employers and employees can use different tools to keep track of their tasks and progress such as Gantt charts. Goal setting tools should be implemented and used so that when employees achieve targets they are recognized and potentially rewarded. The previous recommendations for teamwork and leader training should also aid with this. Organisation and communication are essential for this recommendation and employer and employees should have clear and concise schedules and tasks and employers should ensure they implement rewards and talent reviews to encourage job satisfaction and progression. This can be implemented almost immediately and should not be too time consuming. It should be considered a permanent addition to the duties of employees and employers.

## **Mental Health Awareness**

Ensuring the wellbeing of staff during these times should be as big a priority as maintaining productivity. Employees of all levels need to ensure they do not overwork since their office is ‘right there’ and make sure they do switch off at the end of the workday. This was presented as an issue in previous literature as well as the survey carried out in this research. It is recommended that support and services are provided to employees. This could be in the form of one-to-one conversations, offering resources like guided meditations on issues such as stress reduction to sleep improvement, mindfulness exercises and expert guidance to assist employees if they require it. These services could be outsourced and made available to all employees. Employees may not feel comfortable discussing personal feelings with colleagues and so offering outside support may be more beneficial. Instilling best practices to show companies care for the wellbeing of their employees should be of the utmost importance. This should be implemented immediately and be maintained long term.

### **7.2.3 Costs of Recommendations**

The costs for these recommendations shouldn’t be too high. For the virtual lunch breaks they should not have a financial cost as this is more of a time management cost. Leader training will incur financial costs as once off payments to hire experts to train people managers in virtual management. This cost will be repeated for every required updated training which should take place at least once a year. Recommendations for productivity costs will be a monthly or yearly cost depending on the plan chosen for scheduling tools and goal setting tools. There are a variety of different providers of these tools and costs should not be too high. Lastly, resources for mental wellbeing will be a yearly cost and should be renewed to best support employees.

## **7.3 Personal Learning Statement**

This portion of the study involves a personal learning statement of the researcher. It is essential for any researcher or person who wants to develop to be able to reflect, learn and grow. Roger (2001) explains that “the intent of reflection is to integrate the understanding gained into one’s experience in order to enable better choices or actions in the future as well to enhance one’s overall effectiveness”. Although there may be frustrations and difficult

encounters faced by the researcher, these will allow them to learn and improve. According to Enomoto & Warner (2013 cited in Warner, R. and Picard, M. 2019) “learning manifests through both understandings and the processes leading to these understandings within the complex learning environment”.

With this thought in mind, this personal learning statement is about this researcher’s learning experience over the course of this study, understandings, and aspirations for future research. Of course, there were challenges and limitations faced by the researcher within this study, foremost being the complex learning environment. The central topic of this study is COVID-19, and this contributed to the researcher’s complex learning environment. Working remotely and taking this and the safety of the study’s participants into account, it meant there were limitations and challenges involved in this research. It would have been preferable for the researcher to have conducted this study on a grander scale. The number of participants in this was relatively small and so gives a narrow insight into the research. To further investigate this topic, the research would have liked to reach a larger audience and expanded over a longer period. This would give greater insight into the topic and perhaps allow the research to see if the opinions change over the course of the longer term. Another aspect to reflect upon are the many variables included in this. There are so many moving parts involved with remote working, it could be expanded into several research topics. Time, scale, and scope were all challenges which confronted the researcher over the course of this study but, this observation allows the researcher to, as Roger (2001) said “enable better choices or actions in the future as well to enhance one’s overall effectiveness”.

This study has shown the researcher a passion for literature and research which without this may not have been ignited. The work allowed the researcher a deeper insight into subjects and topics of interest and those which were more challenging. A vast array of emotions was experienced, from enjoyment to frustration to stress, but these were all just the ingredients of the passion for the project. This has been an opportunity to delve further into research and highlighted to the researcher this may be an area to pursue.

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# Appendices

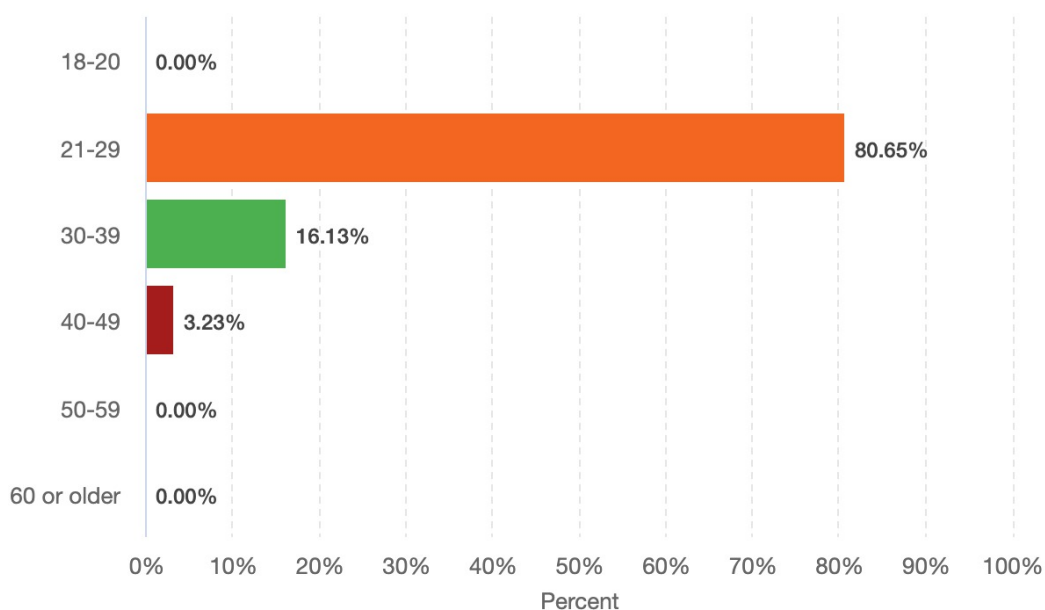
## Appendix 1 – Copy of Survey Questions

1. What is your age bracket?
2. What is your gender?
3. Before the Covid-19 crisis, did you?
4. Did you feel prepared to move to remote working?
5. Do you feel support and trusted by your team lead while remote working?
6. Have you ever felt micromanaged while working from home?
7. Do you feel working remotely negatively impacted teamwork?
8. Do you feel you have a good work – life balance?
9. Is it easy to “turn off work mode” at the end of the day?
10. Do you feel as productive at home as you are at the office?
11. How has your mental health been impacted by remote working?
12. Have you felt increased levels of loneliness since remote working?
13. Going forward, would you prefer?

## Appendix 2 – Tables from survey

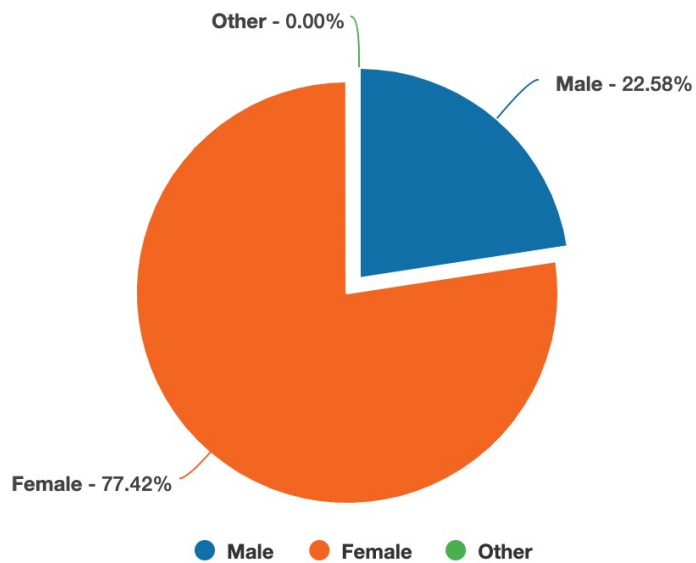
**Figure 1: Age of participants**

What is your age bracket?



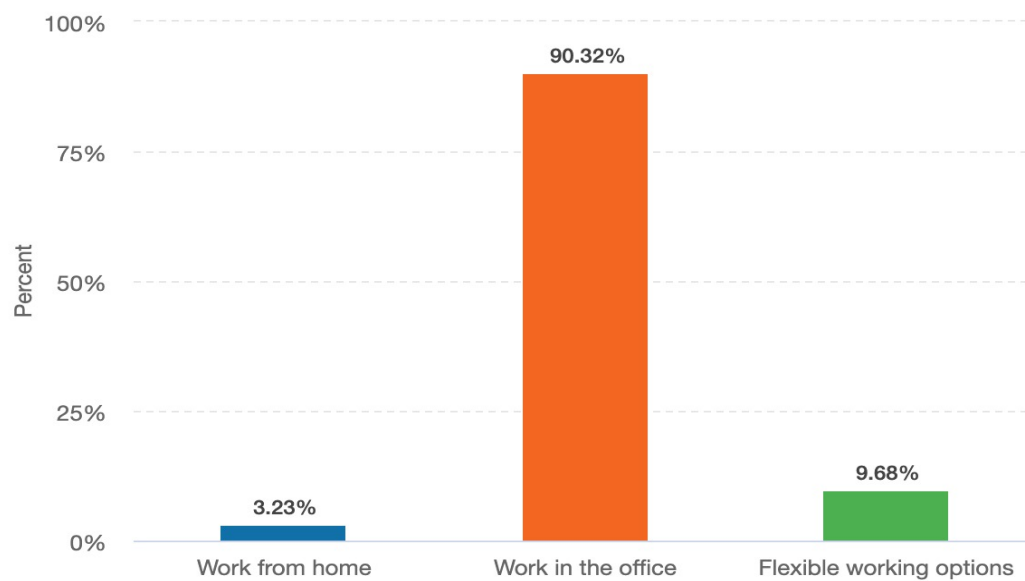
**Figure 2: Gender of participants**

What is your gender?



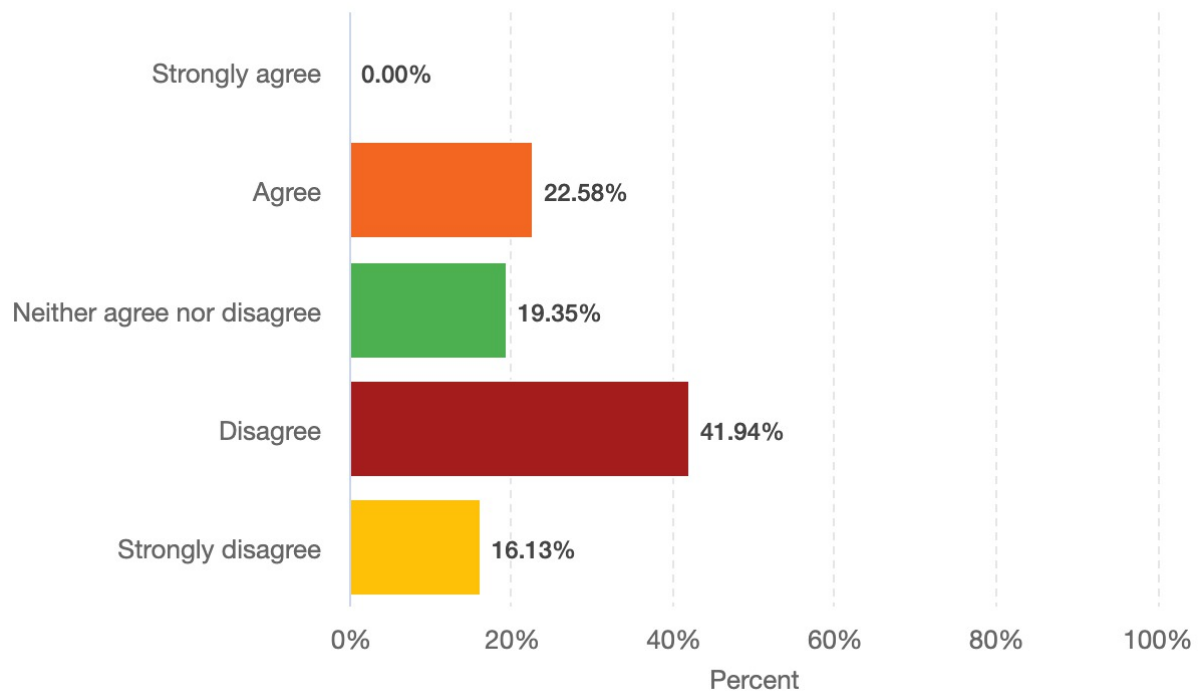
**Figure 3: Previous Work from Home Experience**

Before the Covid-19 crisis, did you:



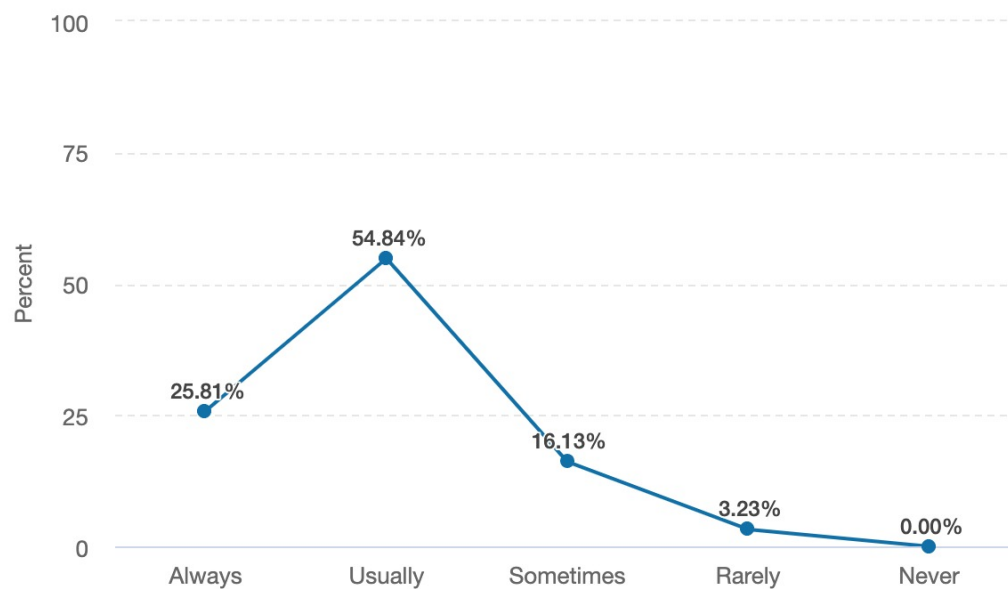
**Figure 4: Did you feel prepared to move to remote working?**

Did you feel prepared to move to remote working?



**Figure 5: Feelings of trust and support from leaders**

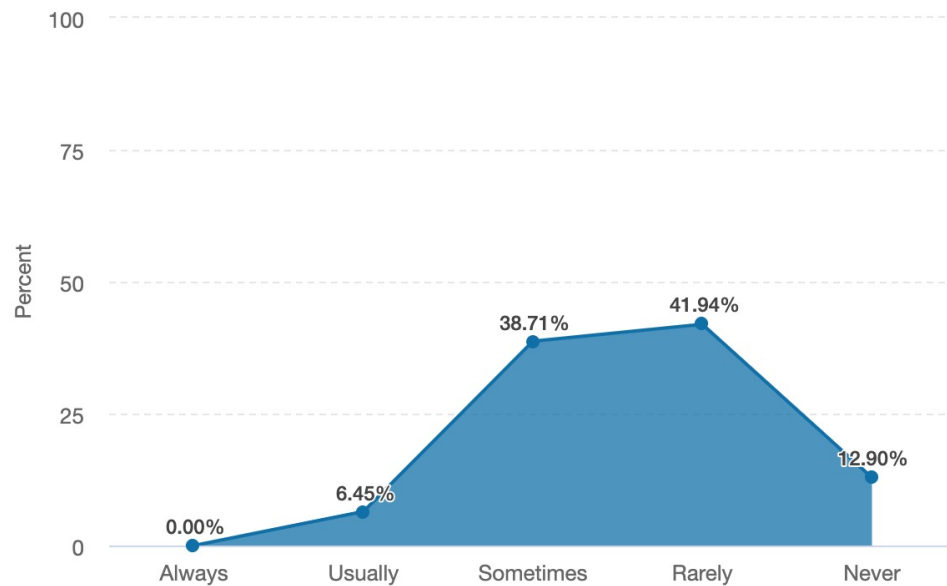
Do you feel supported and trusted by your team leader while working remotely?





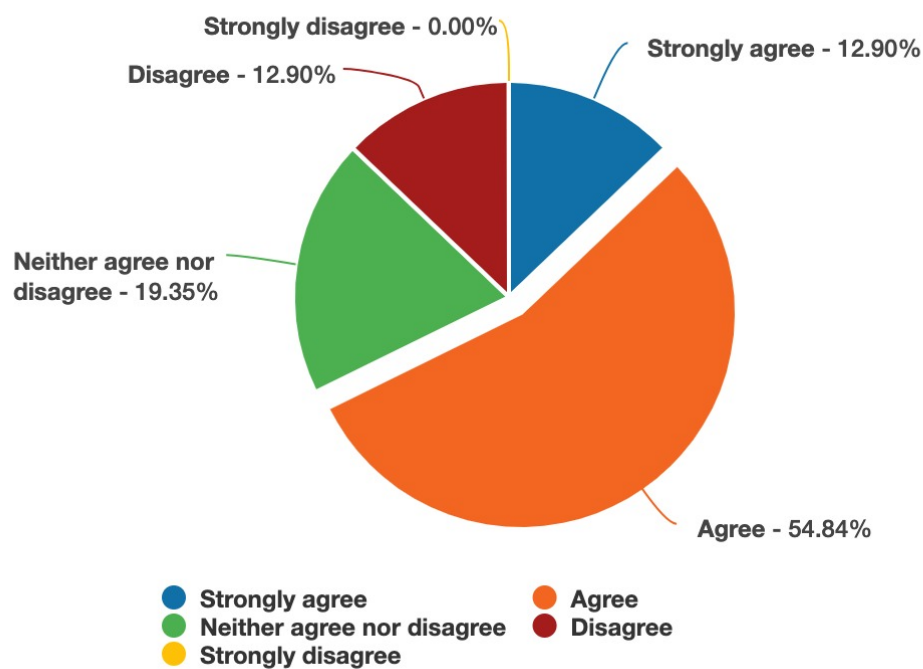
**Figure 6: Feelings of Micromanagement**

Have you ever felt micromanaged while working from home?



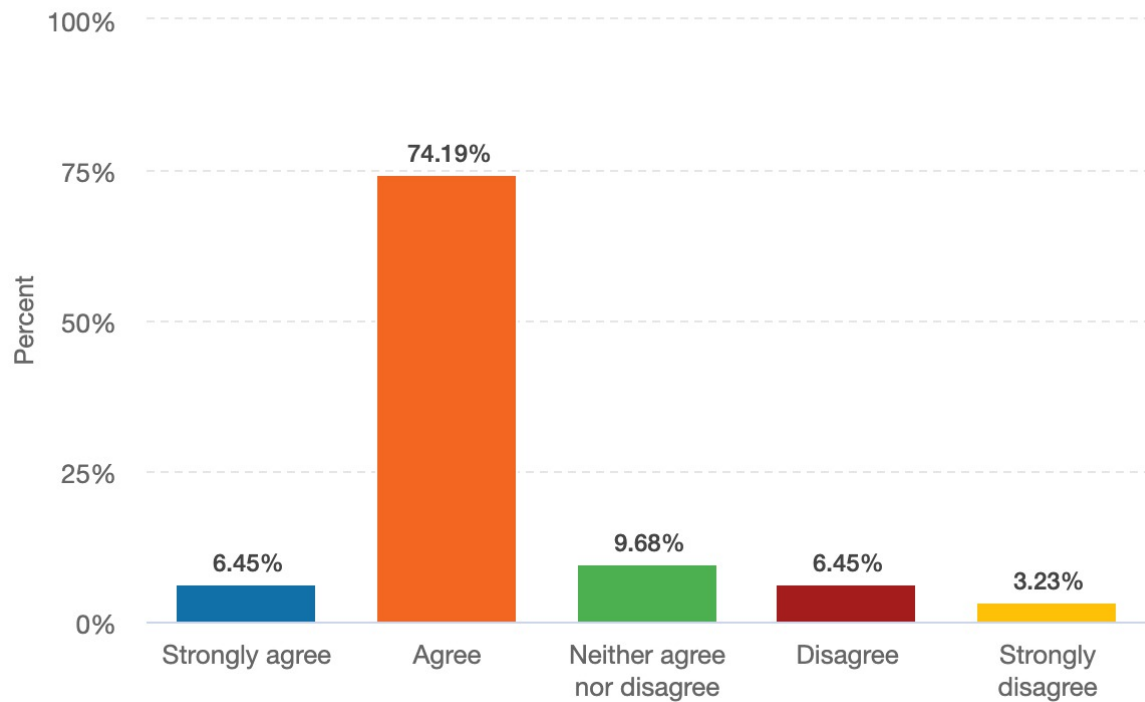
**Figure 7: Teamwork**

Do you feel working remotely negatively impacted teamwork?



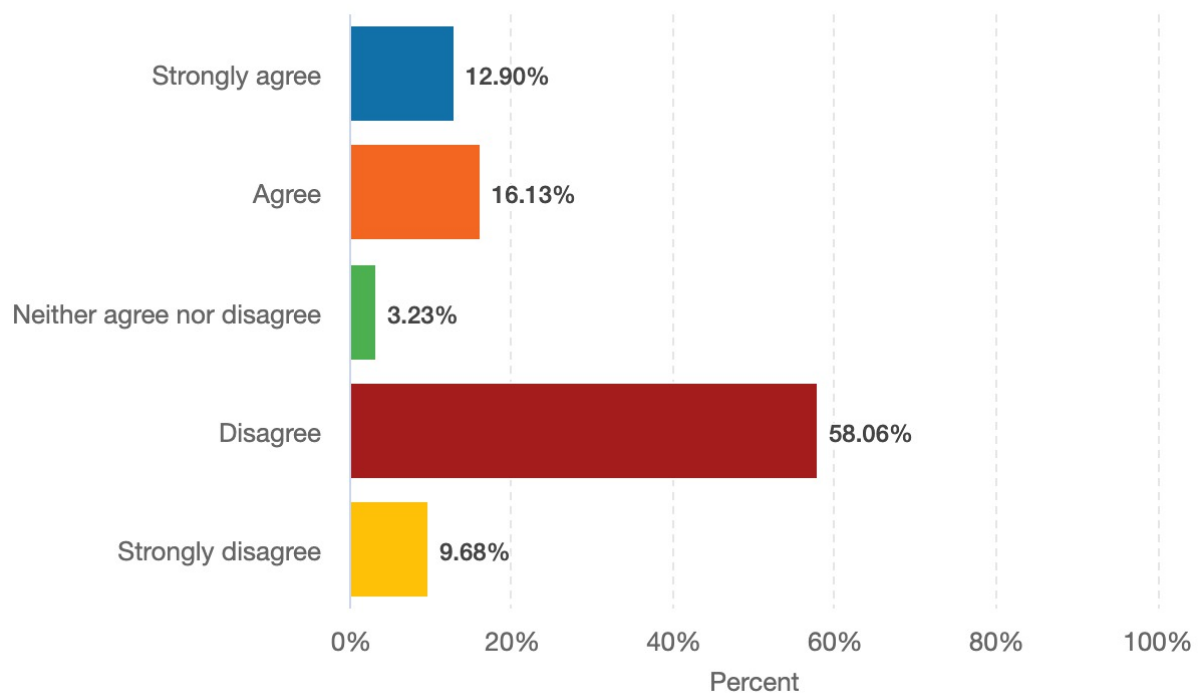
**Figure 8: Work / Life Balance**

Do you feel you have a good work-life balance?



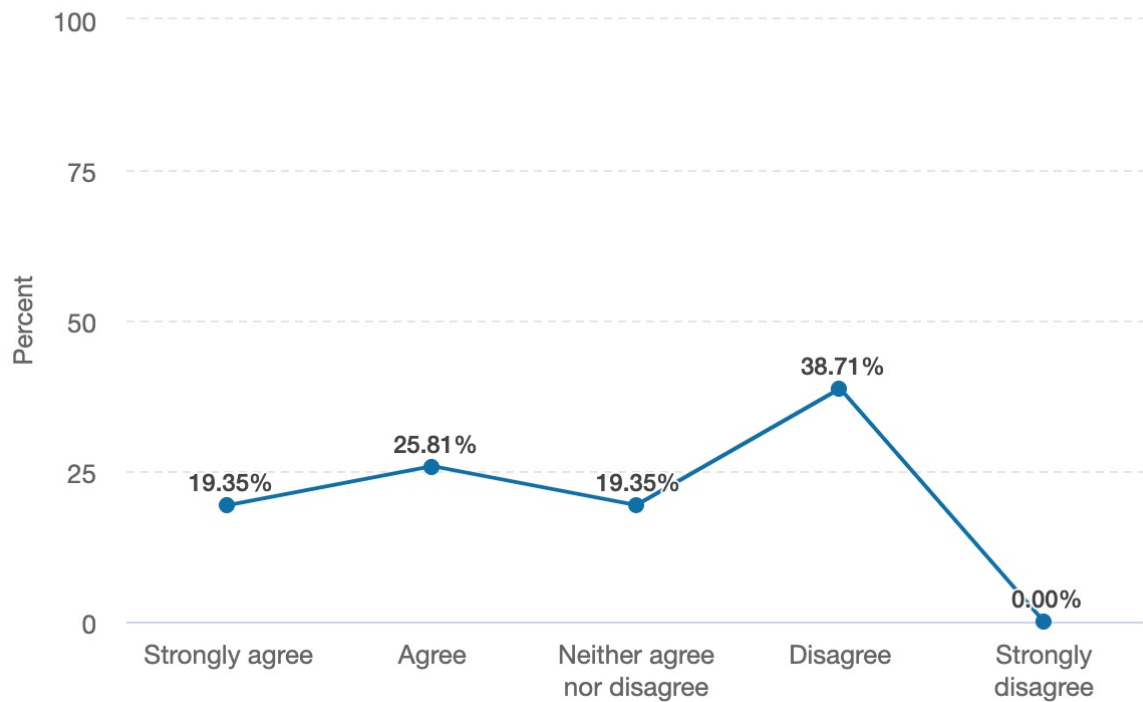
**Figure 9: The ability to turn off “work mode” at the end of the day:**

Is it easy to “turn off work mode” at the end of the day?



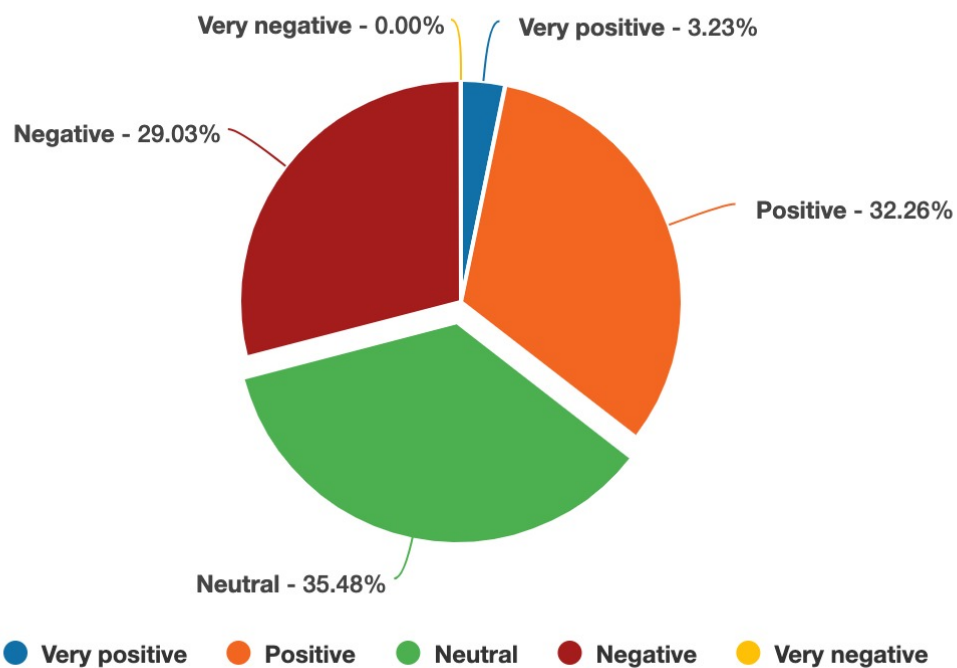
**Figure 10:**

Do you feel as productive at home as you are at the office?



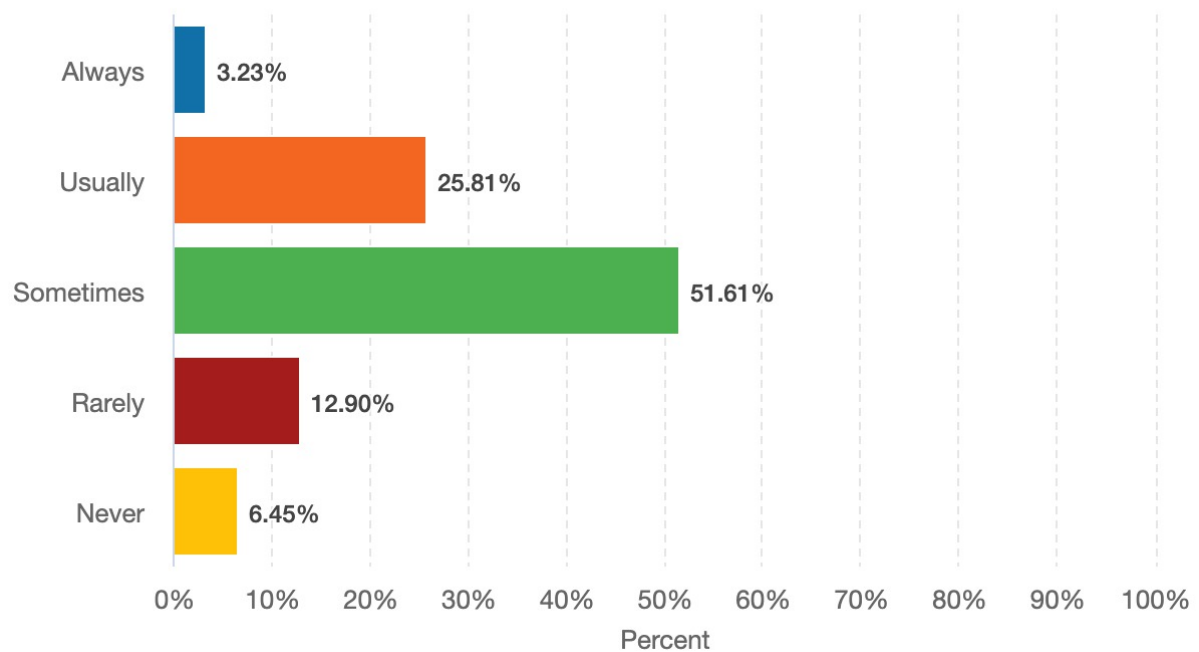
**Figure 11: How has your mental health been impacted by remote working?**

How has your mental health been impacted by remote working?



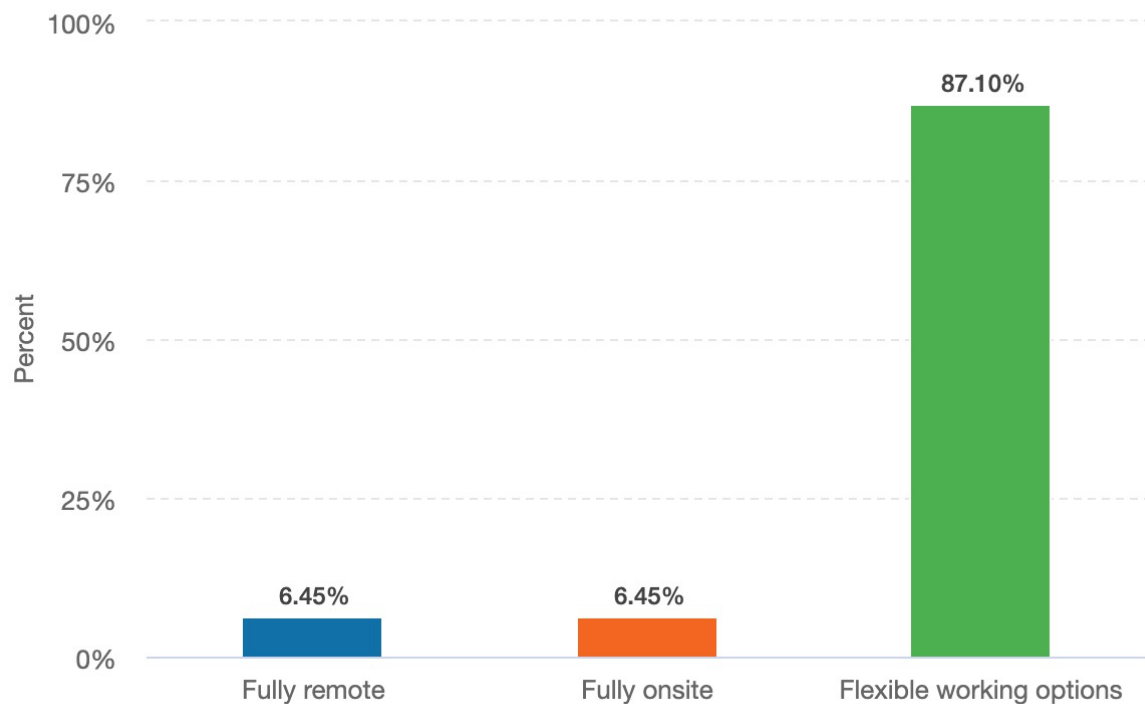
**Figure 12: Have you felt increased levels of loneliness since remote working**

Have you felt increased levels of loneliness since remote working?



**Figure 13: Going forward, would you prefer.**

Going forward, would you prefer;



## Appendix 3 – The research onion

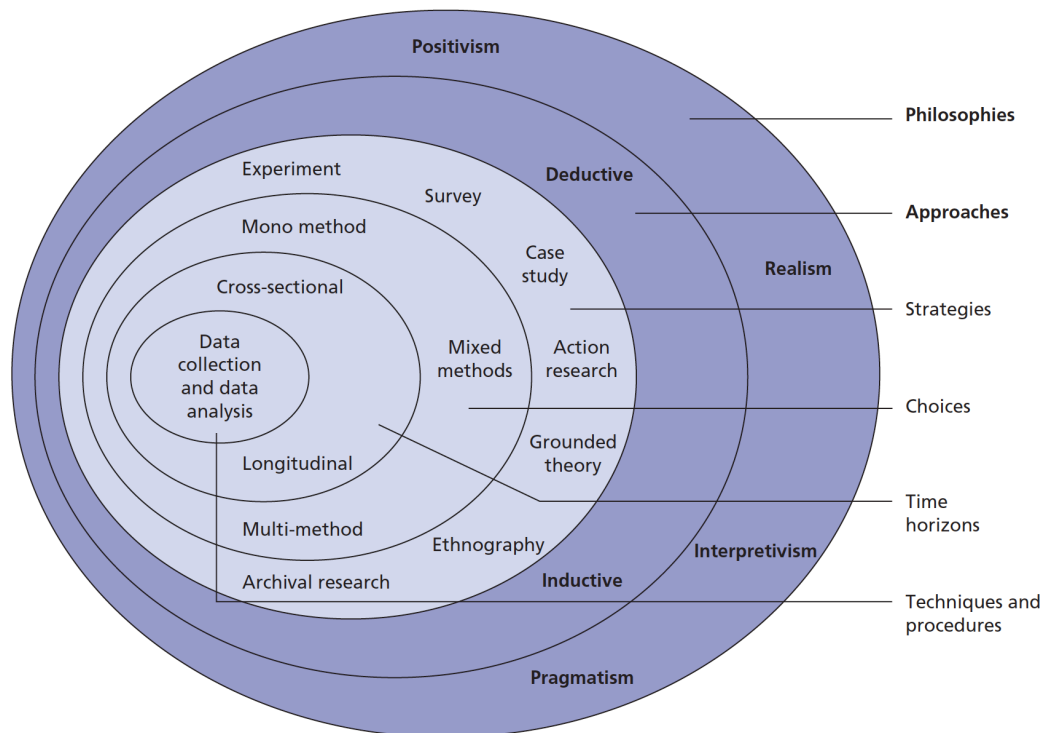


Fig 3.1 The research onion (Saunders et al. 2009)