



Travel to Work and Remote Working Survey

Summary Report



UNIVERSITY OF
SURREY

Executive summary

This reports presents the findings of the Travel to Work and Remote Working survey conducted in June 2020 at the University of Surrey. The findings draw on a sample of approx. 39% of the staff population.

The results show that Covid-19 has had a large impact on staff perceptions of and opinions on remote working.

“Seven out of ten respondents said that they had rarely or never worked remotely before Covid-19.”

Despite Covid-19, Surrey staff reported that remote working had been better than expected. The majority stated that compared to working on campus before Covid-19, they were more productive, less distracted, and managed their workload better when working remotely.



The majority of managers at Surrey thought that remote working is positive, stating that it had no or at times even a beneficial impact on their team's working performance.

In this light, it is not surprising that 85% of respondents said that the University should allow more remote working in the future.

“Eight out of ten respondents said that they would like to work remotely more frequently, even after they are allowed back to work on campus.”

As for travel to work, the survey results show that most staff commute to the University in a car alone. In most cases, only respondents living in close proximity choose active modes of travel, and only a small number of respondents use public transport. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that commuting behaviours are going to change significantly after Covid-19.

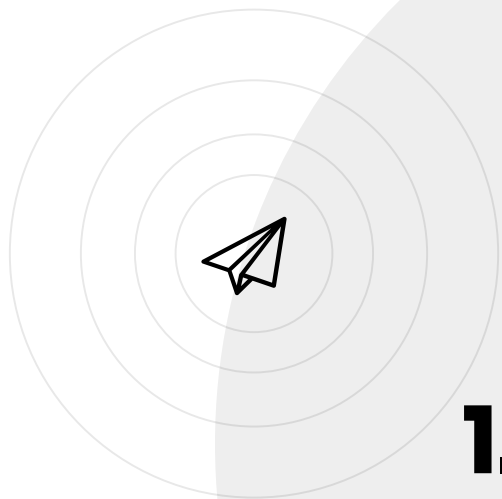
Rather than changing travel mode, it seems that most staff would like to commute generally less and work remotely more in the short and long-term future.



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1. Introduction

Guildford is among the top 30 most congested urban areas in England, with drivers having spent almost 60 hours in congestion in 2019 alone. The large in and outflow of cars has led to parking shortages and recurrent traffic congestion, causing stress to commuters and negatively impacting air quality in Guildford.

To tackle these issues, the *Surrey Living Lab* funded a project to analyse whether Covid-19 has changed University staff opinions on remote working and travel to work. The pandemic disrupted transport and working behaviours of billions of people across the globe, but apart from its negative impact, it might also have a positive legacy.

The better use of technology to enable flexible working, and the insight that being in the office might not be a prerequisite for productivity, could help to reduce the actual and perceived needs of physical travels. This in turn could unlock a range of benefits, such as improved staff well-being, cleaner air and a reduction in carbon emissions from transport.

This report is part of a collaborative project between Estates, Facilities and Commercial Services, the Sustainability and HR departments, the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, the School of Psychology, and the Centre for Environment and Sustainability. It intends to inform long-term decision-making at the University of Surrey, and to shape new working guidelines towards providing better support for remote working and travel to work.





2. Data Collection

2.1 Recruitment and Sampling

The survey was promoted between the 8th and 19th of June 2020 via University newsletters, news bulletins and the Intranet. Furthermore, an email invitation was sent out to all University of Surrey staff on the 10th of June.

A total of 1,402 responses were submitted. After removing incomplete answers, a final sample of 1,202 responses (approx. 39% of staff population) were used for analysis. The sample consists of a good mix of women and men, different age groups, as well as managers and line staff.

The response rate from professional, operational and technical staff was considerably higher than from academic, teaching and research staff, but there was a well-balanced sample across the different faculties and departments.

To put all responses in perspective, risk perceptions of Covid-19 were measured, but were not found to affect respondents' perceptions of travel to work or remote working.

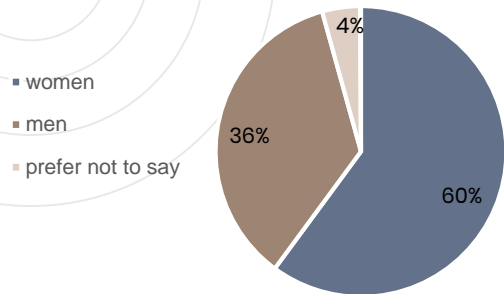




3. Demographics

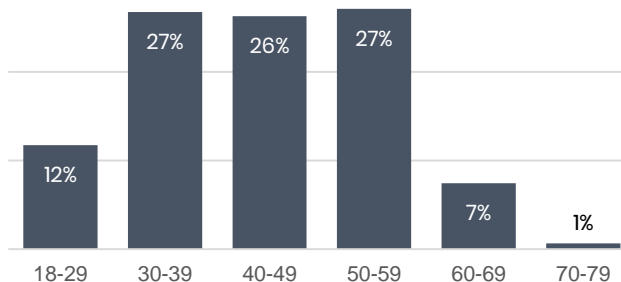
3.1 Respondent gender and age

Figure 1: Respondents by gender



Most respondents were women, and compared to overall university staff (53% women), women were slightly overrepresented in this survey.

Figure 2: Respondents by age



The majority of respondents are between 30 and 59 years old, with an almost equal split between respondents in their 30s, 40s and 50s.

Figure 1: based on 1,183 responses (compared to the overall staff population, women response rate is: 43.9% men: 29%)

Figure 2: 1,117 responses



3.2 Employee type and staff level

About 60% of respondents were professional, operational, or technical staff. Over one third were academic, teaching, or research staff, with a good balance from all three faculties.

Figure 4: Respondents by staff level

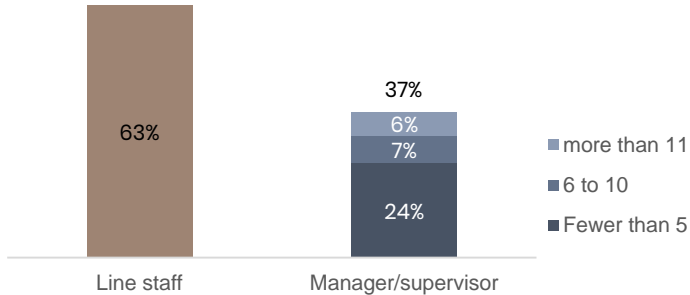
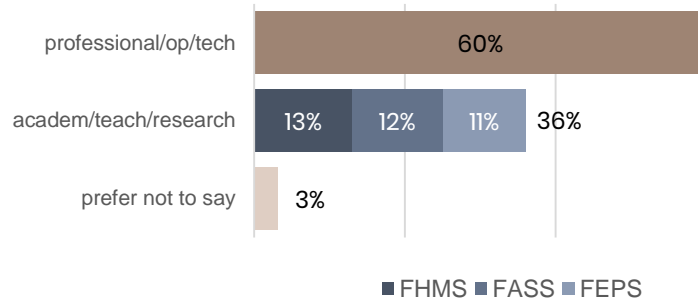


Figure 3: Respondents by employee group



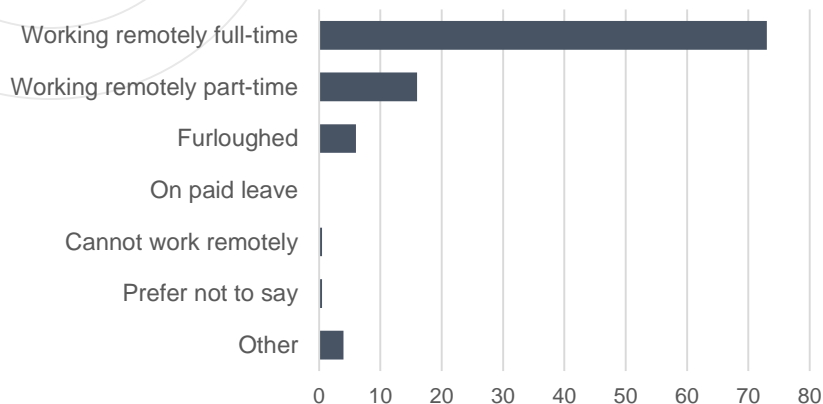
Over one third of respondents had managerial or supervisory responsibilities, most of them managing small teams of fewer than five staff.

Figure 3: 1,185 (professional staff response rate: 51.4% academic staff: 26.6%; FHMS response rate: 27.2% FASS: 26.2% FEPS: 20.4)

Figure 4: based on 1,196 responses (Line staff response rate: 31.1%; manager/supervisor: 62.5%)

3.3 Respondent work status

Figure 5: Current work status
(responses in percentage)



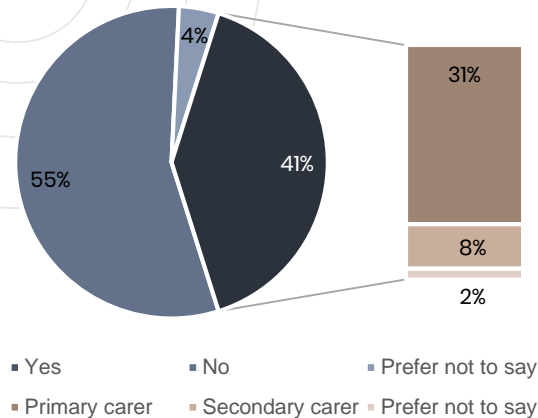
As of June 2020, over 70% of respondents were working remotely full-time, about 15% were working remotely part-time, and about 5% were on furlough.



Figure 5: 1,188 responses (full-time staff response rate: 38%; part-time: 24.5%; furloughed: 11.4%)

3.4 Caring responsibilities

Figure 6: Caring responsibilities



About 40% of respondents stated that they had caring responsibilities. The majority of those said that they were the primary carer.

Most of the respondents were caring for children, and about 10% were caring for parents. About 5% said that they were caring for their partner or spouse.

Figure 7: Who do you care for?
(responses in percentage)

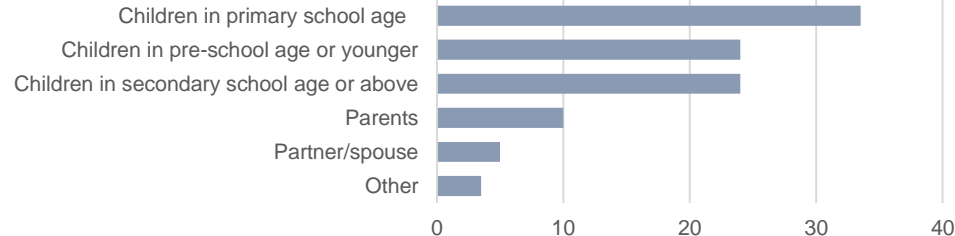


Figure 6: 1,051 responses

Figure 7: 567 responses



4. Travel to Work

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all graphs in this chapter refer to the period between October 2019 and February 2020, before Covid-19 restrictions were implemented.

4.1 Travel mode split

Over half of the respondents commuted in a car alone before the Covid-19 restrictions. Some respondents indicated that they travelled to work using more than one mode of transport, or that they used different modes of transport during an average week. However, the main form of transportation was in a car alone.

Figure 8: Main mode of transportation to and from work
(responses in percentage)

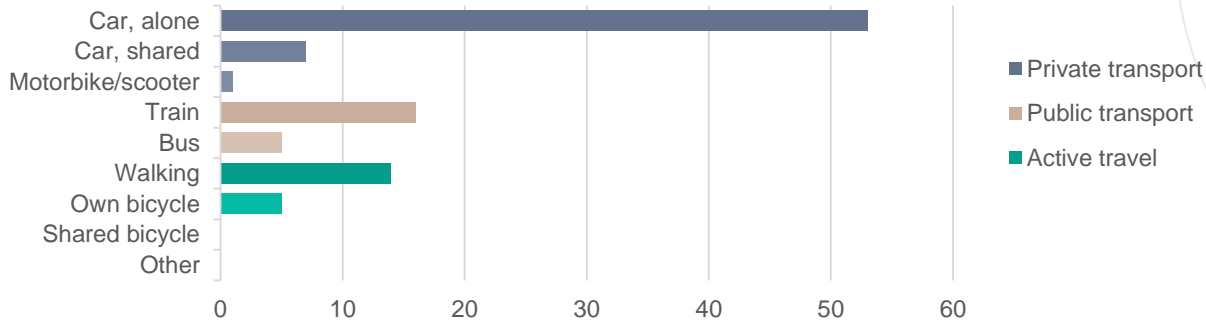
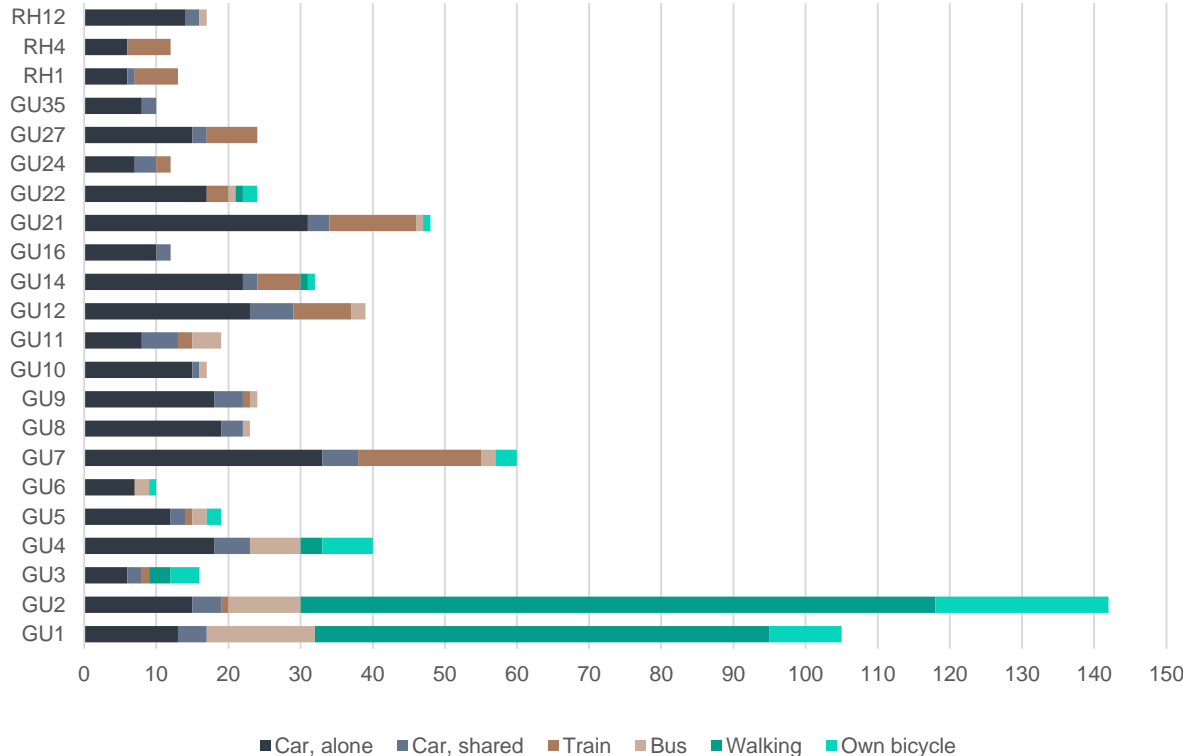


Figure 8: based on 1,144 responses



Figure 9: Main travel mode by post code

(responses in staff numbers, only postcodes with a minimum of 12 respondents)



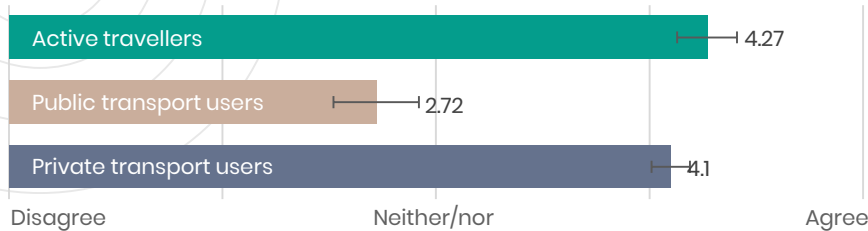
About 75% of respondents living in close proximity of the University (GU1 and GU2) walked or cycled to work, and only about 15% commuted by car.

For post code areas further away, most respondents stated that they commuted by car.

A few post code areas such as GU7, GU12, GU21, RH1 and RH4 had a larger proportion of respondents using public transport.

4.2 Travel mode satisfaction

Figure 10: Travelling to work was pleasant/good
(mean with 95% confidence interval)



Most active travellers and private transport users felt that travelling to work was positive and easy.

Figure 11: Travelling to work was easy
(mean with 95% confidence interval)

On the other hand, public transport users felt that travelling to work less positive and more difficult.

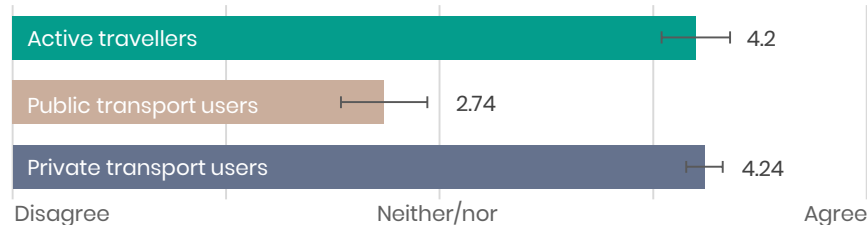


Figure 10: 892 responses (active travellers: 195; public transport users: 172; private transport users: 525)

Figure 11: 988 responses (active travellers: 206; public transport users: 189; private transport users: 593)



4.3 Travel mode and social norms

There was a large difference between private transport and public transport users/active travellers when asked about whether their colleagues chose the same mode of transport.

This difference was still present but less stark when asked whether they thought their colleagues approved of their transport mode of choice.

Figure 12: Most people in my school/department travelled to work by... (mean and 95% confidence intervals)

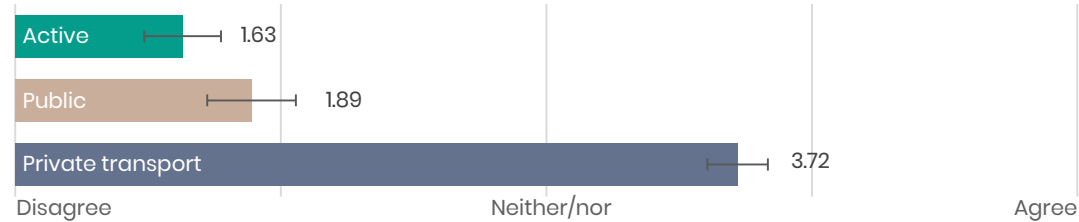


Figure 13: Most people in my school/department felt that it was okay to travel to work by... (mean and 95% confidence interval)

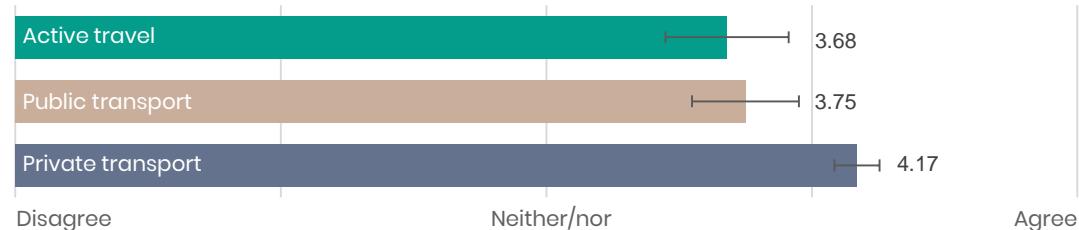


Figure 12: 801 responses (active travellers: 168; public transport users: 161; private transport users: 472)
Figure 13: 810 responses (active travellers: 159; public transport users: 163; private transport users: 488)

4.4 Parking on campus

While the majority of car users agreed that there was not enough parking space on campus, they also found it easy to find an available parking space, and they generally thought that other drivers used the parking space fairly. About half of the respondents felt frustrated with the lack of parking, but only about 15% had to park elsewhere in Guildford due to a lack of parking space.

Figure 14: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

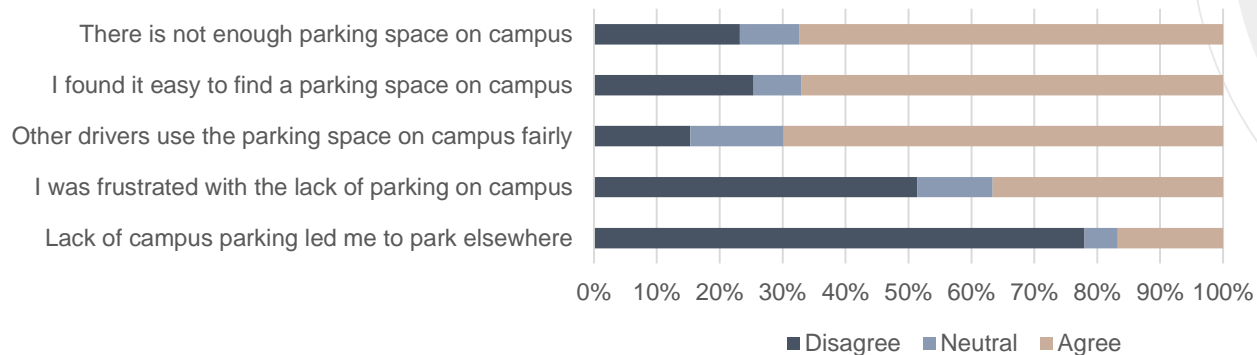


Figure 14: 563 responses



4.5 Travel to work after Covid-19

While the majority of respondents said that they do not intend to change travel mode once they are allowed back to work on campus, there might be a small decrease in public transport use and a small increase in car and bicycle use.

Figure 15: Main travel mode before and after Covid-19
(responses in percentage)

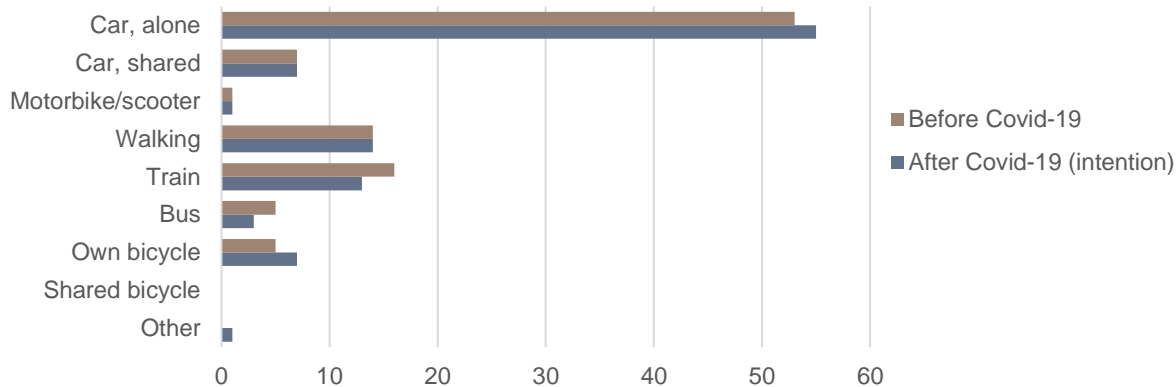


Figure 15: 1,114 (before) and 999 (after) responses



4.6 Car pooling before and after Covid-19

Out of the 77 respondents who said that they travelled to and from work with others between Oct. 2019 and Feb. 2020, the majority shared the journey with family members. About 20% said they carpooled with friends or colleagues.

Figure 16: Who did you carpool with?

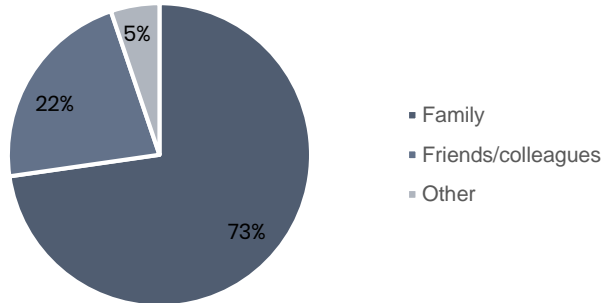
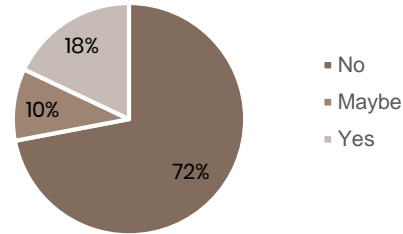


Figure 16: 77 responses
Figure 17: 584 responses

Figure 17: Would you carpool with a colleague in the next six month?



Out of 584 respondents travelling in a car alone, the majority is not willing to carpool with friends or colleagues in the next six months.

When asked whether they would consider carpooling after the threat of Covid-19 had completely passed, the majority still answered negative.



5. Remote Working before Covid-19

All graphs in this chapter represent respondents' reflections on remote working between October 2019 and February 2020.

5.1 Remote working before Covid-19 (A)

Figure 18: How often did you work remotely?
(responses in percentage)

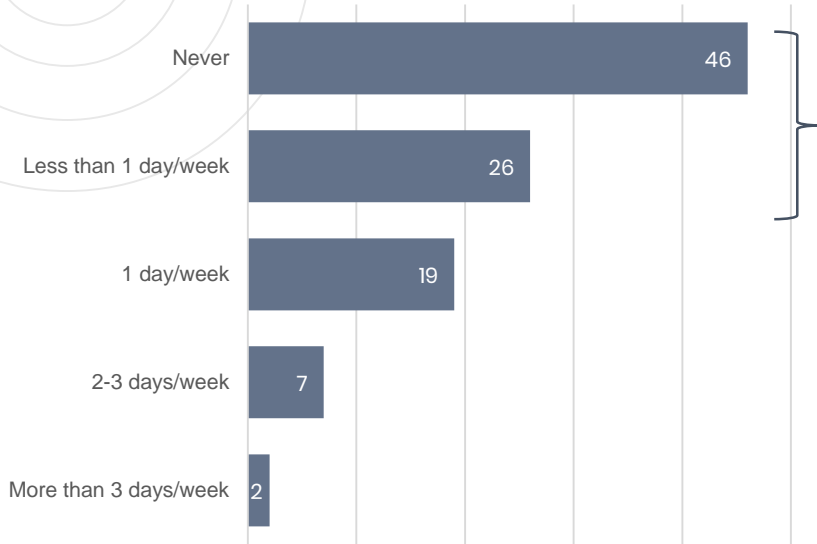
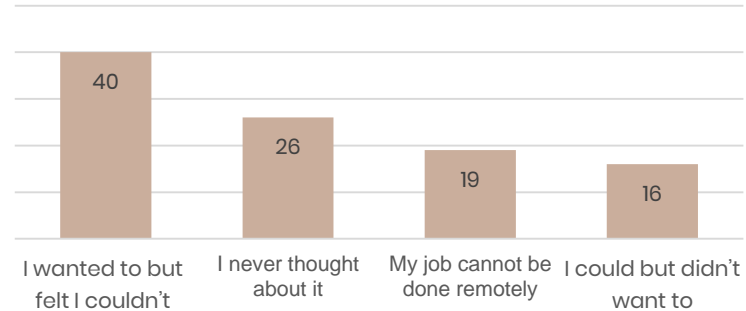


Figure 18: 1,196 responses
Figure 19: 846 responses

Figure 19: Why did you not work remotely?
(responses in percentage)



Over 70% of respondents said that they had worked remotely rarely or never before the Covid-19 induced restrictions.

Of those, 40% said that they wanted to work remotely but felt that they couldn't, and about a quarter said that they had just never thought about it.

5.1 Remote working before Covid-19 (B)

Figure 18: How often did you work remotely?
(responses in percentage)

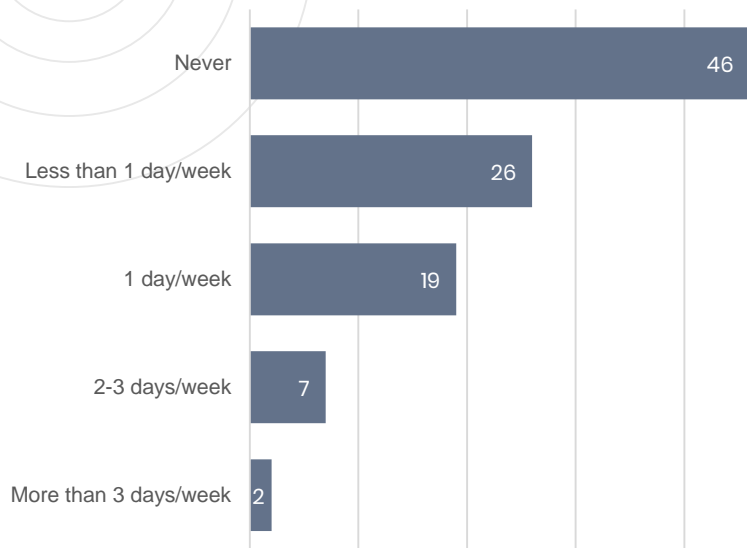
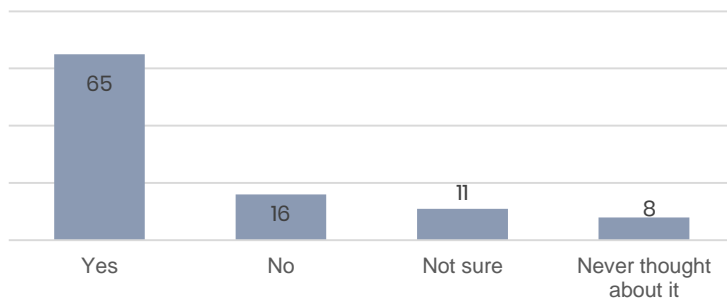


Figure 18 1,196 responses
Figure 20: 332 responses

About 10% of respondents worked remotely two to three days or more, and almost 20% said that they worked remotely one day per week. Of those, about 65% said that they would have liked to work remotely more.

Figure 20: Would you have liked to work remotely more?
(responses in percentage)



5.2 Opinions on remote working

All respondents were invited to share their opinion on remote working (458 comments were submitted).

Most of the respondents who felt that they couldn't work remotely (n=330) said that this was because they thought that remote working was against department culture or policy. They felt that it was important to be seen in the office, or that remote working was not encouraged by their manager. For a smaller number, it was due to their job role or other circumstances, e.g. dropping off family members on their way to work.

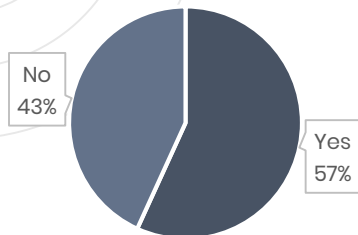
Some of the respondents who stated that they didn't want to work remotely before Covid-19 (n=128) said that they only worked a few days per week. Others preferred working in their office, liked the campus environment, and the in-person contact with their colleagues and students.

However, about a quarter of respondents also said that they didn't want to work remotely before Covid-19 because there was no support or social norm, but that they would like to work remotely more often in the future.



5.3 The manager perspective

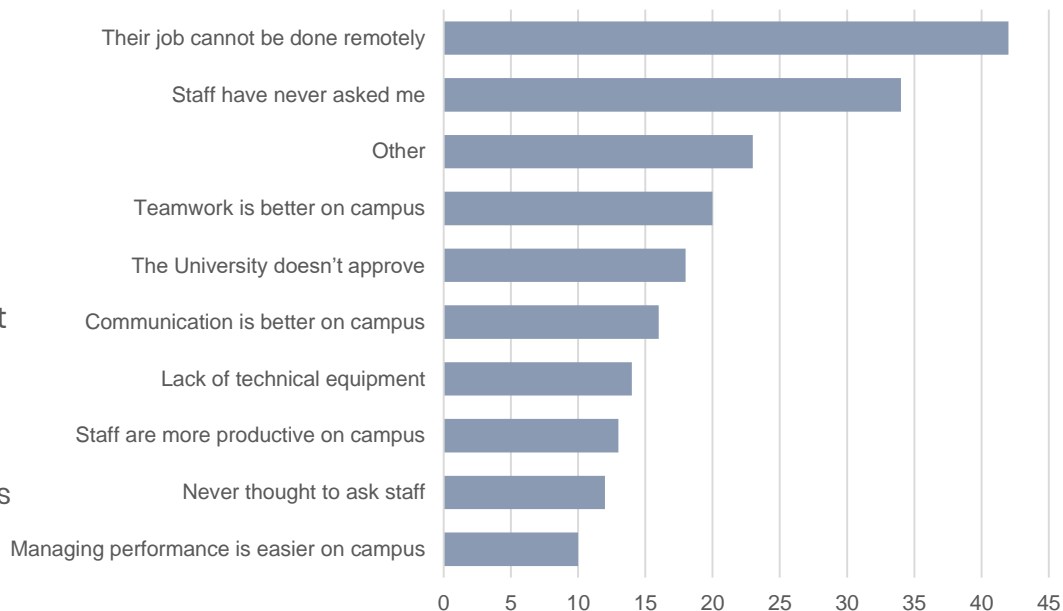
Figure 21: Did one or more of your staff work remotely?



Over 40% of line managers said that none of their staff worked remotely. The main reasons were that they thought that their staff's job could not be done remotely, that they were never asked, or because it was against department policy.

Figure 21: 443 responses
Figure 22: 186 responses

Figure 22: Why did none of your staff work remotely?
(responses in percentage)

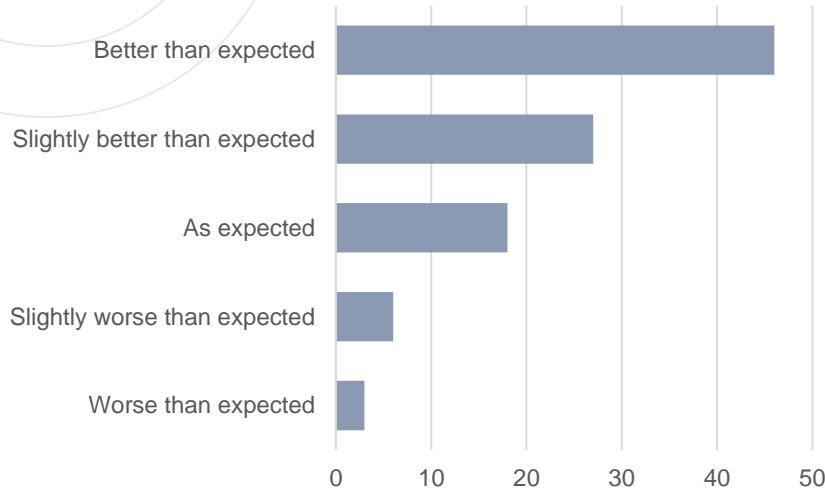




6. Remote Working during Covid-19

6.1 Remote working experiences

Figure 23: Remote working under Covid-19 restrictions so far has been:
(responses in percentage)



Over 70% of respondents thought that remote working under Covid-19 was better or slightly better than expected, and about 10% said that that their remote working experience was worse or slightly worse than expected.



6.2 Working on campus vs remote working

Over 65% of respondents said that when working remotely under Covid-19, they were more productive, dealt better with distractions, and managed their workload more efficiently. The majority also thought they were better at thinking in creative ways when working remotely. Contacting others was about the same remotely and on campus, but almost 60% stated that collaborating with others was better on campus.

Figure 24: Comparison between working on campus before Covid-19 and working remotely under Covid-19

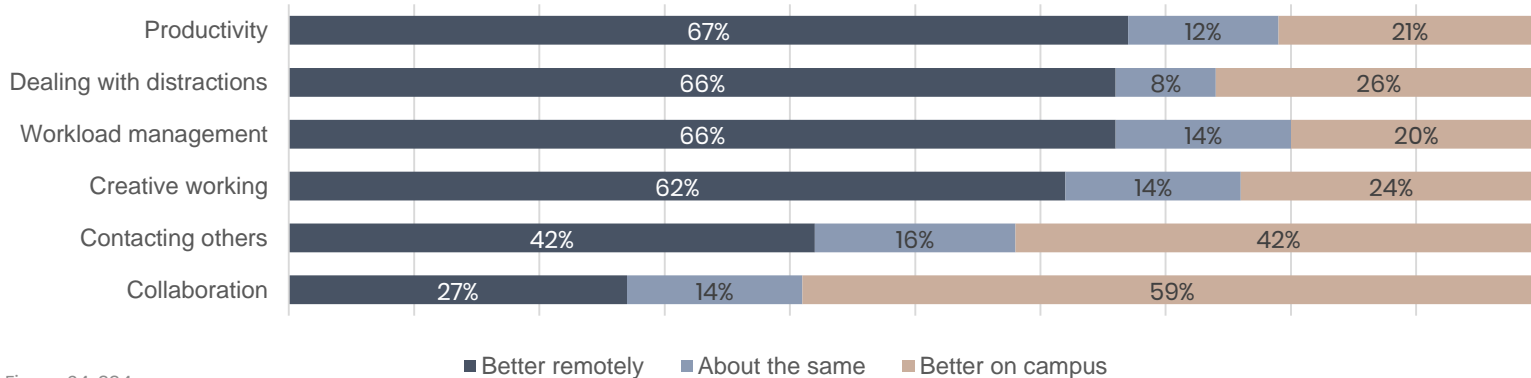
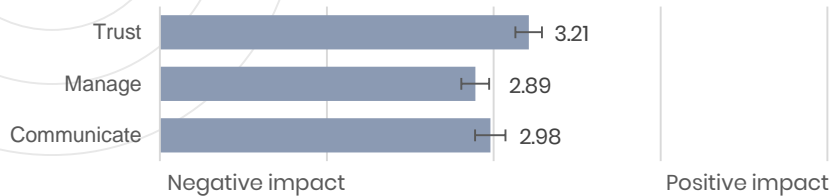


Figure 24: 994 responses

6.3 Managing remote workers

Figure 25: Working remotely under Covid-19 has had an impact on my ability to...
(mean with 95% confidence interval)



The majority of managers indicated that working remotely under Covid-19 had no positive or negative impact on their ability to trust, manage, or communicate with their team.

Similarly, the majority stated that remote working had little impact, or a minor positive impact on their team, particularly in terms of trust and independent working.

Figure 26: Working remotely has had an impact on those I manage in terms of... (mean with 95% confidence interval)

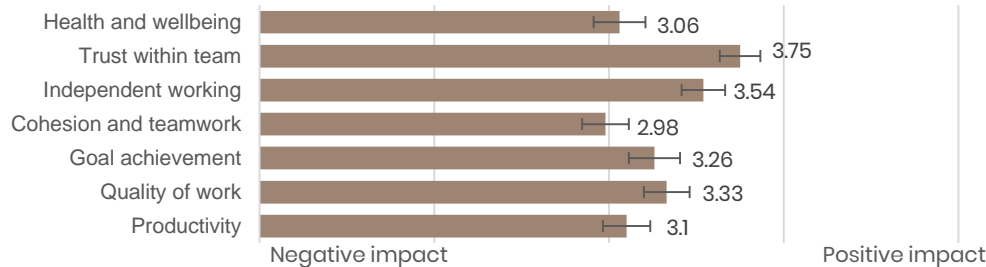


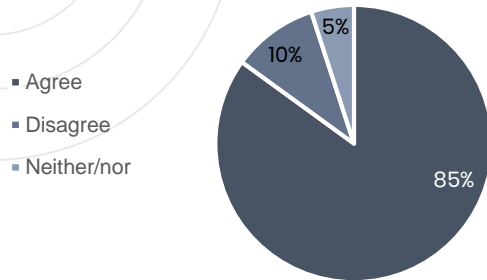
Figure 25: 380 responses
Figure 26: 267 responses



7. Remote Working after Covid-19

7.1 Remote working after Covid-19

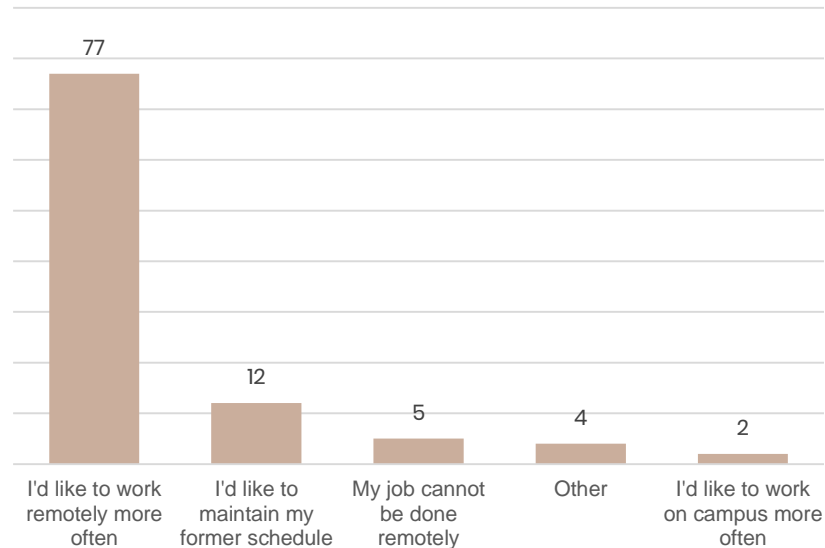
Figure 27: The University should allow more remote working after Covid-19



About 85% of respondents said that the University should allow more remote working even after staff is allowed back to work on campus, and almost 80% said that they would like to work remotely more often than they did before the Covid-19 restrictions.

Figure 27: 1,179 responses
Figure 28: 1,196 responses

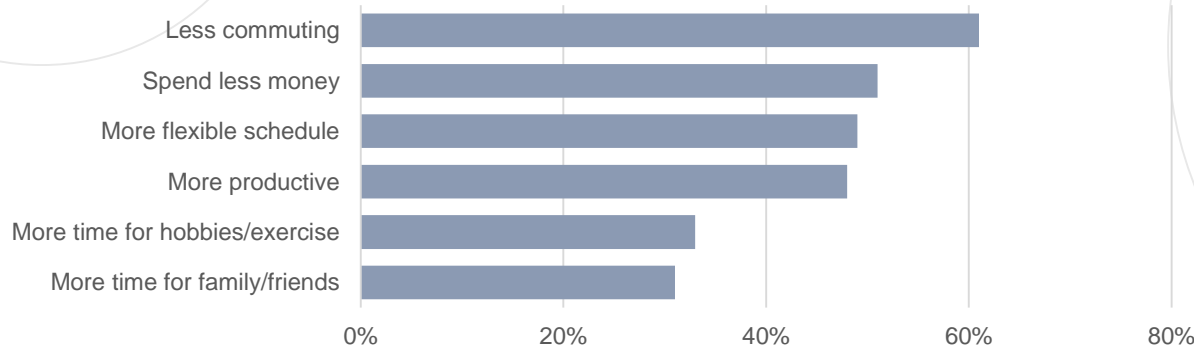
Figure 28: Would you like to change your schedule compared to before Covid-19?
(responses in percentage)



7.2 Perceived benefits of remote working

Over 60% of respondents said that they wanted to work remotely more often because they would have to commute less. About half of respondents also stated that remote working saves them money, gives them more flexibility and makes them more productive.

Figure 29: Why would you like to work remotely more often?



Of those who would like to work on campus more often (2% of respondents), most said that it would be easier to contact and collaborate with others.



7.3 The manager opinion

The majority of line managers agree that having staff who work remotely more frequently is good, pleasant, and easy. Similarly, the majority think that other managers they know feel the same, and that they will let their staff work remotely more frequently even after they are allowed back to work on campus.

Figure 30: Manager opinion on staff working remotely more frequently after campus reopening

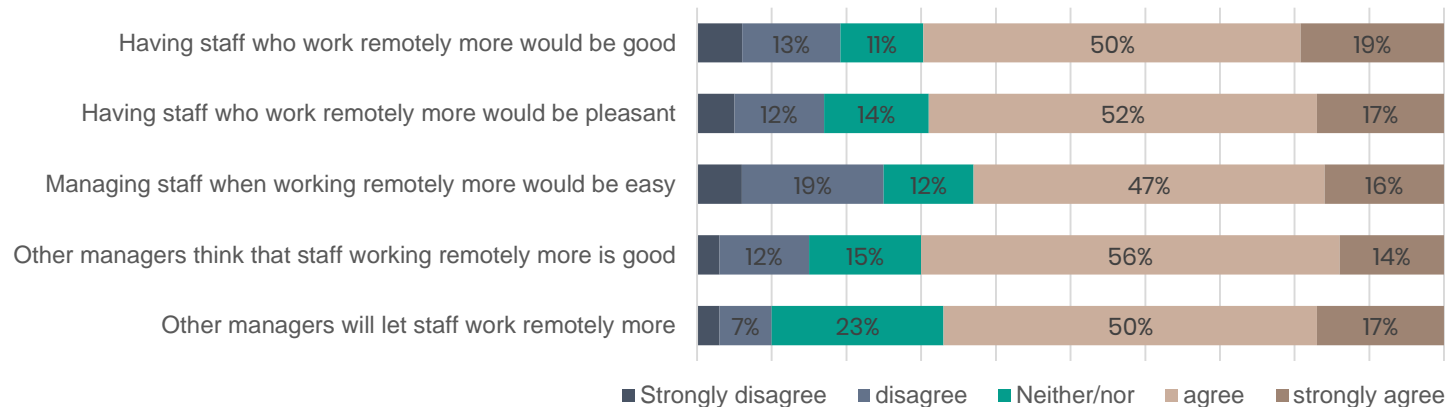


Figure 30: 305 responses



8. Conclusions

8.1 Survey summary

- **Who took the survey?**

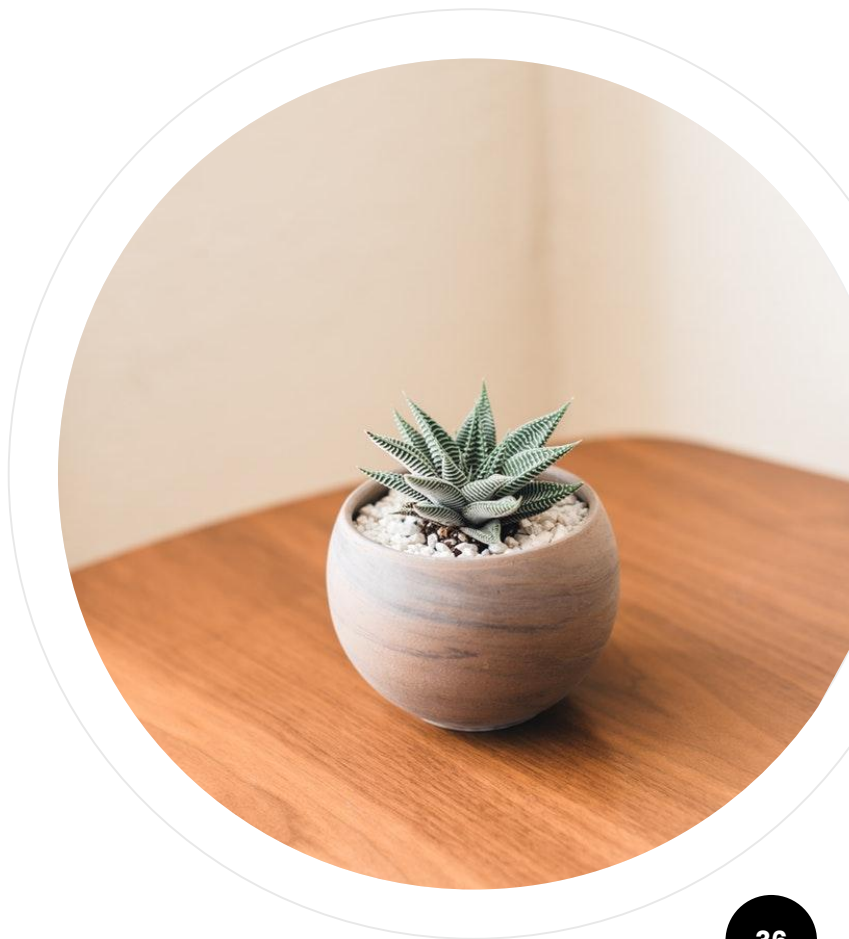
With 1,202 responses, representing 39% of University staff, the survey achieved a robust sample. Female staff is slightly overrepresented and the sample also represents more operational than academic staff. The sample draws on responses across all faculties and departments.

- **How do staff travel to work?**

The majority of respondents commute to the University alone by car, exception being respondents living around the University.

- **Is commuting behaviour going to change?**

According to the data, commuting behaviour is not likely to change in a significant way after staff are allowed back to work on campus.



- **How many staff worked remotely before Covid-19**

Over 70% of respondents stated that they rarely or never had worked remotely before Covid-19. Of those, about 40% felt that they couldn't work remotely since their presences was either implicitly or in some cases explicitly requested in the office.

- **How do staff find working remotely?**

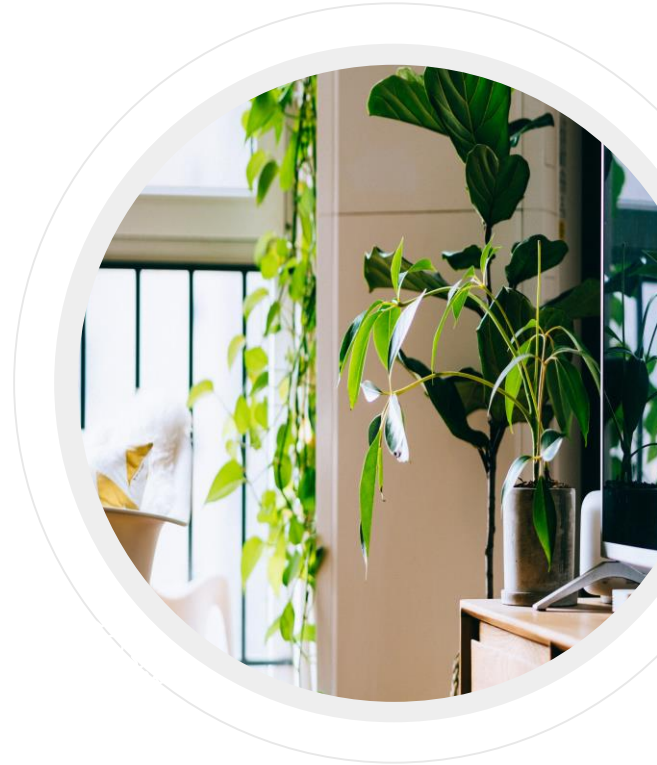
The majority of respondents found remote working under Covid-19 better than expected, and over 65% said that they had been more productive and less distracted when working remotely, as compared to working on campus before Covid-19.

- **Do staff want to work remotely more frequently in the future?**

Over 75% of respondents would like to work remotely more frequently, and 85% said that the University should allow more remote working in the future.

- **What do the managers think about remote working?**

The majority of managers stated the remote working under Covid-19 had no negative and in some aspects a small positive impact on them and their teams. Similarly, most managers think that having more staff working remotely would be positive.



8.2 Concluding remarks

While interpreting the data presented above is beyond the scope of this report, it is worth pointing out a few key elements of the survey results and relating them to broader trends.

1. Covid-19 has impacted perceptions of what work can and cannot be done remotely. Reflecting on their work before Covid-19, about 13% of respondents said that their job couldn't be done remotely. However, only 5% of respondents answered the same way when thinking about working after Covid-19.
2. Remote working during Covid-19 has brought many challenges, particularly for staff with caring responsibilities. Considering this, it is interesting that overall, the majority of respondents stated that they were more productive and less distracted when working remotely.
3. Most of the results in this report echo a broader trend documented in a series of recent surveys analysing staff experiences of and opinions towards remote working.

Looking forward, the University of Surrey is in a unique position to take the best of the current situation to enhance the positive and mitigate the negative aspects of remote working.





Any questions?

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