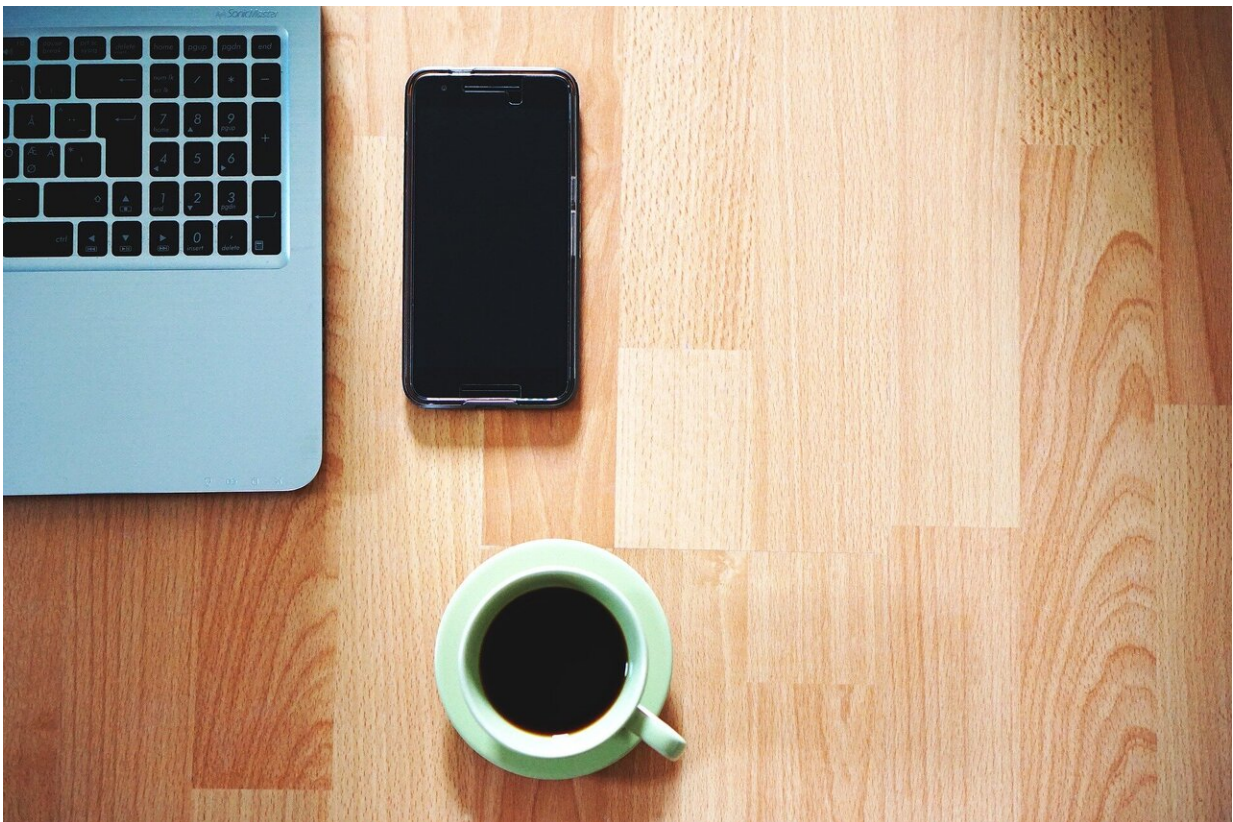


# Productivity could be improved by a permanent shift towards remote working, research shows

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Nine out of ten employees who have worked at home during lockdown would like to continue doing so in some capacity, research suggests.

The report, by academics at Cardiff University and the University of Southampton, presents the first analysis of [employee](#) survey data focusing on homeworking, which was gathered for the Understanding Society COVID-19 Study.

Homeworking has rocketed since the start of [lockdown](#)—rising from 6% of employees before the pandemic to 43% in April this year. The results also indicate productivity among the majority of those working from home during lockdown remained stable or even improved, compared to six months before.

Professor Alan Felstead, based at Cardiff University and the Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD), said: "For many years, homeworking has been growing slowly, but since the onset of the pandemic, it is now commonplace. Our analysis suggests there will be a major shift away from the traditional workplace, even when social distancing is no longer a requirement."

Findings for the report are based on three online surveys of workers carried out towards the end of April, May and June 2020. Each survey questioned a representative sample of 6,000-7,000 workers who had worked at least one hour in the week before interview and provided information on where they worked either side of the lockdown.

The results of the June 2020 survey suggest that 88% of employees who worked at home during lockdown would like to continue working at home in some capacity, with around one in two (47%) employees wanting to work at home often or all of the time.

Two-fifths (41%) of those surveyed said they were able to get as much work done while working at home in June 2020 compared to six months earlier when most, but not all of them, were working outside of the home. More than a quarter (29%) said that they got more done at home,

while 30% said that their productivity had fallen.

The impact on productivity varies according to the frequency that employees used the home as their place of work. Those using the home sometimes or often reported a downward shift in their productivity when they did so, whereas employees who did all of their paid work at home reported an increase in productivity. Of those employees who reported that their productivity had fallen, three out of ten of them (29%) said that they had less work to do and around a similar proportion (27%) said that their output per hour was limited by the need to provide care for family members and/or home schooling their children.

The [survey data](#) also suggest that homeworking in the future is likely to boost rather than reduce [productivity](#); employees who felt more productive while working at home in lockdown were among the keenest to work at home when social distancing rules no longer apply. This 'selection effect' is likely to be advantageous to employers keen to bounce back strongly from the impact of COVID-19.

Professor Felstead added: "What is particularly striking is that many of those who have worked at [home](#) during lockdown would like to continue to work in this way, even when social distancing rules do not require them to. These people are among the most productive, so preventing them from choosing how they work in the future does not make economic sense. Giving employees flexibility on where they work could be extremely beneficial for companies as they attempt to recover from the impact of COVID-19."

Dr. Darja Reuschke, of the University of Southampton, who co-authored the report said: "City center high streets have been hard hit by the pandemic and are likely to remain quiet for some time to come as fewer people return to traditional places of work. However, this also provides an opportunity for us to radically rethink our city centers as multi-use

places that accommodate different kinds of economic uses and are not built around fast roads that connect workplaces with residences."

**More information:** Homeworking in the UK: Before and During the 2020 Lockdown: [wiserd.ac.uk/publications/home ...  
during-2020-lockdown](https://wiserd.ac.uk/publications/home...during-2020-lockdown)

Provided by Cardiff University

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