

Disabled workers' access to flexible working as a reasonable adjustment

A TUC Report

Executive summary

The last 18 months have been dominated by discussions about flexible working, in particular home-based working. However, the experiences of disabled workers have largely been absent from these debates. Genuine flexible work has significant benefits for working people. It is invaluable in helping people achieve a balance between work and home life and is also [associated with improved wellbeing](#). This is particularly true for disabled workers, where flexible working could be a reasonable adjustment and, both in terms of hours and location, can remove barriers they experience in getting and keeping jobs.

Before the pandemic the TUC received widespread anecdotal evidence of disabled workers being denied flexible working including home based working as a reasonable adjustment. This is despite the fact that all employers have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to proactively make reasonable adjustments to remove, reduce or prevent any disadvantages that disabled workers face. Flexible working, in all its forms, can be a reasonable adjustment. Given the way that the pandemic has shifted the landscape of flexible working in the UK, in particular the significant increase in working from home, we wanted to understand the specific experiences of disabled workers.

Our polling found that the disabled workers we surveyed were more likely than others to spend most of their time working from home, both before (13 per cent) and during (53 per cent) the pandemic. This compares to [ONS analysis based on the Annual Population Survey](#) which shows that 36 per cent of those in employment did some work at home in 2020 , an increase from just five per cent before the pandemic.

Disabled workers' experiences of working from home were mixed. Around two in three disabled workers (63 per cent) said that it had given them greater control of their working hours, such as the ability to take breaks when needed and almost half (47 per cent) had been able to change their work routines. Home working had reduced the fatigue and tiredness of two in five respondents (40 per cent).

However, too often disabled workers reported lacking the basic equipment to allow them to do their jobs at home. Over a third (34 per cent) lacked proper office equipment such as a desk, chair or computer. A prominent feature of remote working, both during the period of enforced home working and currently, is reliance on videoconferencing platforms such as Zoom to communicate and collaborate. One in 11 disabled workers (9 per cent) who worked from home experienced difficulties in taking part in online meetings because of their disability, impairment, or health condition. One in 14 respondents (7 per cent) told us they lacked the specialist software such as speech to text or computer programmes they needed to do their job.

In addition to this, three in five disabled workers (60 per cent) reported missing social interactions with colleagues when working from home during the pandemic, with three in 10 (30 per cent) saying their mental health has worsened overall as a result of working from home. This compares to over a quarter (26 per cent) of respondents who said their mental health had improved as a result of working from home.

Influence of reasonable adjustments and positive line management

However further analysis revealed that the provision of reasonable adjustments, basic equipment and positive management practices were influential in shaping disabled workers' experiences of working from home.

Workers whose mental health had worsened as a result of working from home were:

- Twice as likely to say they lacked proper office equipment compared to those whose mental health had improved (50 per cent vs 25 per cent)
- Three times as likely to report lacking the software or computer programmes needed to do their job (e.g. software such as speech to text) (12 per cent vs four per cent)
- More than twice as likely to have experienced difficulties in taking part in online meetings because of their disability, impairment, or health condition (17 per cent vs 7 per cent)

Workers whose mental health had worsened as a result of working from home also had less control over their working day. Only 37 per cent of these workers said they had been able to change their work routines, compared to 61 per cent of those whose mental health had improved and half (50 per cent) said working from home had resulted in greater control of working hours, compared to more than four in five (82 per cent) of those whose mental health had improved as a result of working from home.

This group were also less likely to have received the reasonable adjustments they asked for during the pandemic. (45 per cent of those whose mental health had worsened vs 55 per cent of all the disabled workers who responded). They were also more likely to be subject to more scrutiny by their manager (11 per cent vs seven per cent).

The future of flexible working for disabled workers

Overwhelming demand for flexible working

There is a significant demand among disabled workers for flexible working.

In terms of location, despite the challenges that some workers experienced during the pandemic, nearly all disabled workers (90 per cent) who had worked from home during the pandemic wanted to continue doing so in some form, either completely remotely or a hybrid working arrangement after the pandemic. Across all disabled workers who can work from home, including those who had not done so during the pandemic, this figure is 75 per cent.

In addition, over two thirds of disabled workers (68 per cent) wanted some form of hours-based flexibility such as flexi-time, compressed hours or part-time working.

In order to deliver on this

As we have made clear in our recent reports, [The future of flexible work](#) and [Denied and discriminated against: The reality of flexible working for working mums](#), the current right to

request flexible working is a weak and fundamentally flawed approach and the government's reform proposals do little to change this. However, disabled workers do not have to rely on a right to request to access flexible working.

Flexible working may be a reasonable adjustment for disabled workers if it removes a barrier they face to being able to do their job. All employers have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) to proactively make reasonable adjustments to remove, reduce or prevent any disadvantages that disabled workers face. We know that many disabled workers do not currently receive the reasonable adjustments they need. Action is needed from employers and the EHRC to ensure that disabled workers are able to access their rights in this area and that the barriers they face are proactively removed.

Making flexible working the default

As highlighted in the government's own appraisal of the impact of flexible working legislation, there is a significant stigma attached to flexible working.

Working from home, or in a hybrid way, is not the only sort of flexibility disabled workers need. For many disabled workers, flexibility in terms of hours will help to remove barriers in the workplace and, as highlighted during the pandemic, only just over half of workers we surveyed were able to carry out their jobs from home. However, fears have been raised that after the pandemic has ended those who continue to work from home, likely to be disproportionately disabled people and women, will be subject to discrimination and disadvantage as a result of their work location.

One important way of addressing this risk is to make flexible working truly the default, unlocking the flexible working available in all job roles and making it the norm in all workplaces.

Recommendations

Government

Government should:

Act to ensure that disabled workers who worked from home during the pandemic can continue to do so.

Ensure disabled workers are not penalised for accessing flexible working as a reasonable adjustment, by making flexible working the default. Government should strengthen all workers' rights to access genuine flexible working including predictable hours by introducing:

- a legal duty on employers to consider which flexible working arrangements are available in a role and publish these in job advertisements, with the new postholder having a day one right to take up the flexible working arrangements that have been advertised. If an employer does not think that any flexible working arrangements are possible, they should be required to set out the exceptional circumstances that justify this decision.
- a day one right to request flexible working for all workers, with the criteria for rejection mirroring the exceptional circumstances set out above. Workers should have a right to appeal and no restrictions on the number of flexible working requests made.

Take steps to ensure that flexible workers do not experience worse terms and conditions or negative impacts on their health and wellbeing through:

- introducing greater access to workplaces, including to home workers, for trade unions and strengthening collective bargaining rights. The best way to ensure fair flexibility for workers is through collective action.
- ratifying the [International Labour Organisation's Home Work Convention](#)
- introducing a statutory right for employees and workers to disconnect from their work so as to create "communication free" time in their lives.

Disability pay gap reporting and action plans: In order to promote transparency and ensure workforce monitoring is used consistently across employers the government must introduce mandatory disability pay gap reporting

The legislation must be accompanied by a duty on employers to produce targeted action plans in consultation with recognised trade unions identifying the steps they will take to address any gaps identified, including ensuring disabled workers feel confident in completing workplace equality monitoring.

The social model of disability: The government should move away from the medical approach to disability as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and adopt the social model of disability. One way of bringing the social model of disability into the heart of UK law would be to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (UNCRPD) enforceable within UK law.

Fully incorporating the Convention would bring the added benefit of addressing one of the outstanding recommendations the UNCRPD to the UK on how to improve and make further progress against the Convention's aims.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Guidance for employers: The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) should update their statutory Code of Practice on employment, so it includes more examples of what timely implementation of reasonable adjustments looks like.

The updated examples should include working from home as a reasonable adjustment, including the provision of appropriate equipment and software, and changes to working patterns, including flexible working options as reasonable adjustments.

We believe a practical and timely way of improving employer practice in this area, and thereby ensuring workers' reasonable adjustments are implemented in a more quickly, is by providing more detailed practical examples of timely implementation within the Equality and Human Rights Commission's statutory Code of Practice on employment.

The main purpose of the code is to provide a detailed explanation of the Equality Act 2010. The explanation in turn assists courts and tribunals when interpreting the law and helps lawyers, advisers, trade union representatives, human resources departments and others who need to apply the law and understand its technical detail.

Additional guidance in the code will therefore inform these groups' interpretation of the law and therefore their practice.

Targeted enforcement: The EHRC should receive additional ring-fenced resources to conduct targeted enforcement of workers' right to reasonable adjustments.

Guidance for employers on the use of positive action: the EHRC should develop practical guidance for, and with, employers to increase their understanding and confidence in using the positive action provisions permitted in the Equality Act 2010 to address under-representation of disabled people.

Employers

Review existing policies: Workplace policies should be reviewed in light of this report, in consultation with relevant trade unions and disabled workers to ensure that they appropriately address disabled workers' issues.

Adopt flexibility by default: Employers should consider what flexibility is available in different roles and ensure this is included in all job adverts going forward. The advert should set out the types of flexibility available rather than include a generalised statement. Current employees should have the opportunity to access the same flexibility as well. Flexibility could also include predictable hours and greater notice of hours.

Review existing flexible work policies: Following consultation, employers should review existing provision for flexible working and publish new or amend flexible work policies. This should be done with recognised trade unions.

Introduce disability pay gap reporting: Employers should not wait for the government to bring in mandatory disability pay gap reporting and should take immediate steps to identify and address any gaps they have.

Make use of positive action provisions: Where an employer has identified underrepresentation of disabled people, they should strongly consider using positive action as a way of addressing this, for example within training and/or recruitment.

Reasonable adjustments: Employers must take all steps they can to ensure they comply with their proactive duty to implement reasonable adjustments including working from home and flexible work patterns as soon as is possible.

One way of doing this is by adopting the [TUC's Reasonable Adjustments Disability Passport](#) which, in addition to putting in place a system for putting and keeping in place reasonable adjustments for workers, also sets out an employer's obligation to respond to a request for a reasonable adjustment within an agreed timeframe with written reasons where a request has been turned down.

Trade Unions

Trade unions should:

- work with employers to review reasonable adjustments policies and practices specifically to see their effectiveness when it comes to implementing request for flexible working. They should negotiate for increased access to reasonable adjustments that grant flexible working including hybrid and home working. This should include the equipment needed to eliminate any workplace barriers a disabled worker might encounter when working from home. Trade unions are best placed to ensure the needs of employers and preferences of staff are reconciled through constructive dialogue and negotiation.
- train reps in negotiating for reasonable adjustments policies that supporting members with changes to hours and location. Unions should train reps in organising hybrid workforces, where members may be spread across different locations and working different hours.
- monitor the impact of reasonable adjustments policies and negotiate for any necessary changes in the future.

The definition of disability in equality law

Disabled people are protected by [the Equality Act 2010](#) from discrimination in employment and a range of other areas including education, provision of services and transport.

The Equality Act defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment...[that] has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [their] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

[Government guidance](#) makes clear that 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial and 'long-term' means 12 months or more. The guidance also highlights the importance of considering the cumulative impact of multiple impairments that a person might have and states that even if individual impairments might not have a substantial impact if considered in isolation “account should be taken of whether the impairments together have a substantial effect overall on the person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

Definition of flexible working

Flexible working is any type of work arrangement that gives flexibility in how long, where and when people work. It includes flexi-time, remote and home working, mutually agreed predictable hours and compressed hours.

[Most definitions of flexible work](#), including that of the Labour Force Survey, include arrangements such as flexitime, job-shares, and compressed hours but also zero hours contracts and on-call working. The TUC’s support for flexible working does not include one-sided flexibility, available only on the employer’s terms. The flexible working arrangements that we are seeking to normalise are those which reflect genuine, two-way flexibility, helping workers balance work and their life outside the workplace.

Social model of disability

The TUC has adopted the social model of disability. The social model of disability focuses on the ways in which society is organised, and the social and institutional barriers which restrict disabled people’s opportunities. The social model sees the person first and argues that the barriers they face, in combination with their impairments, are what disables them. Barriers can make it impossible or very difficult to access jobs, buildings or services, but the biggest barrier of all is the problem of people’s attitude to disability – for instance, [recent TUC research](#) found that one in eight disabled workers did not feel able to tell their employer about their disability, health condition or impairment. Almost one in four of these (24 per cent) said that they did not tell their employer they were disabled because they thought that, as a direct consequence, they would be treated unfairly. And over a third (38 per cent) did not tell their employer because they were worried that if their employer knew they were a disabled worker they would think that they could not do their job. Removing the barriers is the best way to include millions of disabled people in our society.

Reasonable adjustments duty

All employers have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) to proactively make reasonable adjustments to remove, reduce or prevent any disadvantages that disabled workers face.

The law recognises that to secure equality for disabled people, work may need to be structured differently, support given, and barriers removed. It means that in certain circumstances disabled people can be treated more favourably than non-disabled people to ensure equality, but one disabled person cannot be treated more favourably than another disabled person.

An employer who fails to meet their legal duty under the Act to make reasonable adjustments is in breach of the law and could be taken to an employment tribunal.

Public sector employers have an additional legal duty to consciously consider how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Act with the aim of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. Complying with this public sector equality duty will involve public authorities considering how their policies, including those relating to flexible working, affect disabled employees and taking steps to mitigate any adverse impact.

Flexible working as a reasonable adjustment

[Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance on flexible working](#) makes it clear that it may be a reasonable adjustment for employers to allow disabled workers to work flexibly if this removes a barrier they face to being able to do their job.

The employer must make the change from the first point at which the duty to make reasonable adjustments arises. So either when the disabled worker start working for them or (if they are already working for them) when the worker became disabled.

It does not matter whether or not the employer would allow a non-disabled person to work flexibly in the particular job, as:

- the employer is under a duty to make reasonable adjustments, and
- the employer is allowed, under the Equality Act 2010, to treat a disabled person better than a non-disabled person.

An employer must also avoid treating disabled workers unfavourably when making a decision about their working hours or when considering their request to work flexibly if:

- this is because of something connected to their disability, and
- the employer cannot show that what they are doing is objectively justified, and
- the employer knows or could reasonably be expected to know that the worker is disabled.

Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has shone a stark light on the deep and persistent structural inequalities that cut across the UK. Working-class families have been hit hardest by Covid -19, facing the greatest health risks and are on the frontline of rising job losses.

It is clear that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on disabled people with six in 10 of all deaths involving Covid-19 being disabled people. The impact of the virus on disabled people has resulted in a massive loss of life that cannot be understated or explained away. It has also had a profound effect on the private, social and work lives of disabled people.

Disabled people are already under-represented in the labour market, with the disability employment gap (the difference between the employment rates of disabled and nondisabled people) standing at 29.8 percentage points on average.¹ They face additional discrimination on top of this: not only are they less likely to have a paid job, but when they do, disabled people earn substantially less than their non-disabled peers with the [disability pay gap measuring 20 per cent](#).

[TUC research, released in June 2021](#), identified other issues impacting on disabled workers during the pandemic. It found that:

- nearly one in three (30 per cent) disabled workers reported being treated unfairly at work during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- one in 13 (eight per cent) disabled workers saying they were subjected to bullying and/or harassment, being ignored or excluded, singled out for criticism or being monitored excessively at work
- one in eight (12 per cent) saying they were concerned their disability had affected their chances of a promotion in the future
- one in eight (13 per cent) saying they were concerned their disability had affected how their performance would be assessed by their manager.

The research highlighted that before the pandemic disabled workers faced huge barriers getting into and staying in work, including significant difficulties in accessing reasonable adjustments. And that pre-existing workplace barriers have been accentuated by the pandemic.

The research also confirmed what we know about reasonable adjustments; that putting in place reasonable adjustments for disabled workers is one of the best ways to remove the barriers they face at work and ensure they are able to reach their full potential.

Another is to embed the social model of disability into UK law which would focus on the ways in which society is organised, and the social and institutional barriers that restrict disabled people's opportunities.

¹ Between Q3 2019 and Q2 of 2020

All employers have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to proactively make reasonable adjustments to remove, reduce or prevent any disadvantages that disabled workers face. It was, however, clear that before the pandemic disabled workers had difficulties getting and keeping in place reasonable adjustments. The June 2021 TUC research found disabled workers continued to encounter difficulties in getting and keeping reasonable adjustments during the pandemic with almost half (46 per cent) of those who requested reasonable adjustments failing to get all or some of the different/additional reasonable adjustments they needed to work effectively.

One reasonable adjustment that our members told us they often request and have turned down is working from home. The pandemic turned that dynamic on its head with many of those disabled workers being required to work from home as a result of government guidance. This has been a revolution for many disabled workers who've found the experience positive.

The revolution was not, however, based on the principled argument that home working would allow disabled workers to do their job better, with less pain, less fatigue and allow them to better manage their time, health condition or impairment. It was purely a necessary response to the pandemic.

To deepen our understanding of disabled workers' experiences we commissioned research to look at both the positive and negative experiences disabled workers encountered while working from home during the pandemic. We also examined what disabled workers' ideal working location and working pattern would be once the pandemic has ended.

Findings

Working location before and during the pandemic

We asked the disabled workers who responded to our survey where they worked most of the time before the pandemic²,

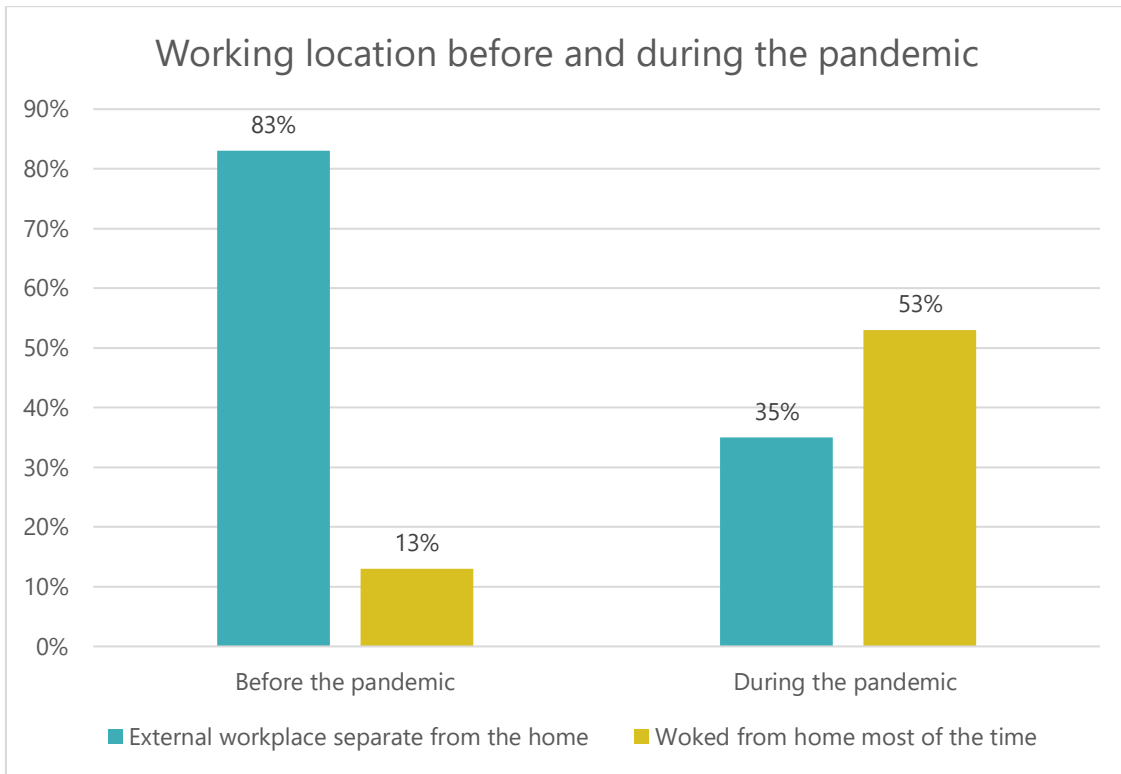
Before the pandemic over eight in 10 (83 per cent) disabled workers worked at an external workplace separate from their home, just under one in eight (13 per cent) said they had worked from home most of the time and four per cent said neither of these.

To understand how the pandemic had impacted on the main working location for disabled workers we asked respondents to tell us where they had worked most of the time since the pandemic started.³

Since the start of the pandemic over a third (35 per cent) of disabled workers worked at an external workplace separate from their home, over half (53 per cent) said they had worked from home most of the time and two per cent said other. Additionally, one in 12 (eight per cent) said the question was not applicable as they'd been furloughed most of the time and one per cent said the question was not applicable as they had been unemployed most of the time.

² Before March 2020

³ After March 2020



Our research highlights an increase of 40 per cent in the number of disabled workers home working during the pandemic with a 48 per cent drop in the number of disabled workers working at an external workplace.

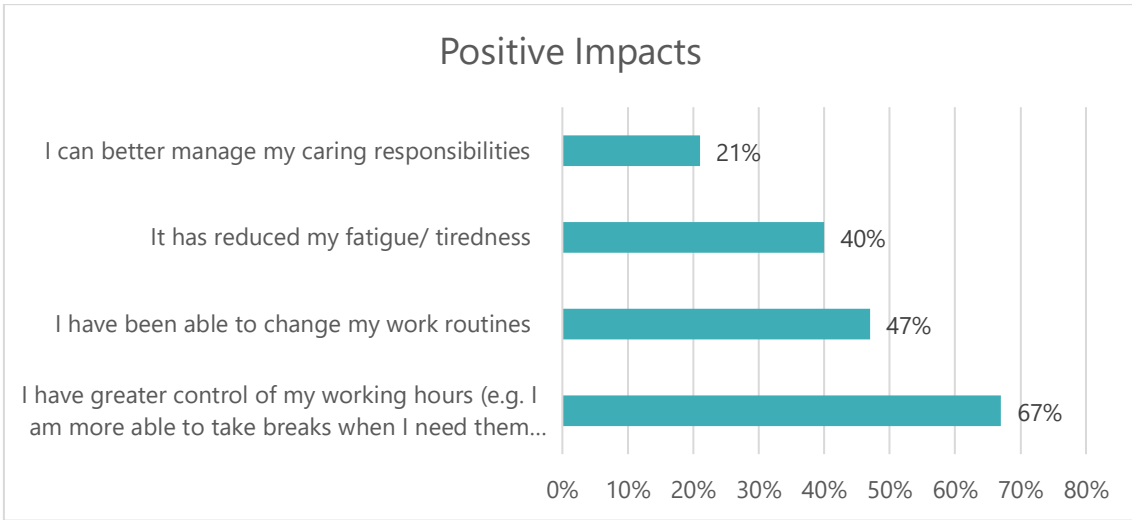
Impact of working from home during the pandemic

We were interested in understanding the impact, both positive and negative, home working had during the pandemic. We therefore asked disabled workers who had worked from home most or all of the time during the pandemic about their experiences.

Positive Impacts

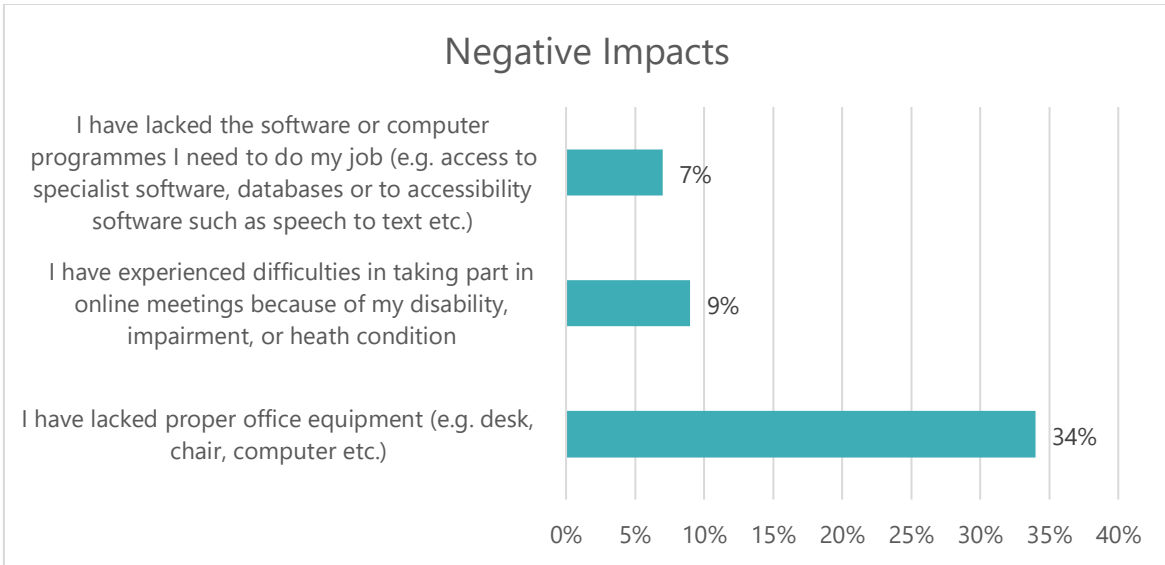
Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of disabled workers said that home working had enabled them to have greater control over their working hours, with almost half (47 per cent) saying that it had enabled them to change their work routines.

Two in five respondents (40 per cent) said that being able to work from home had reduced the tiredness and fatigue they experienced. Over a quarter (26 per cent) said their mental health had improved overall as a result of working from home. More than one in five (21 per cent) said that working from home had helped them better manage their caring responsibilities.



Negative Impacts

Lack of appropriate equipment/reasonable adjustments



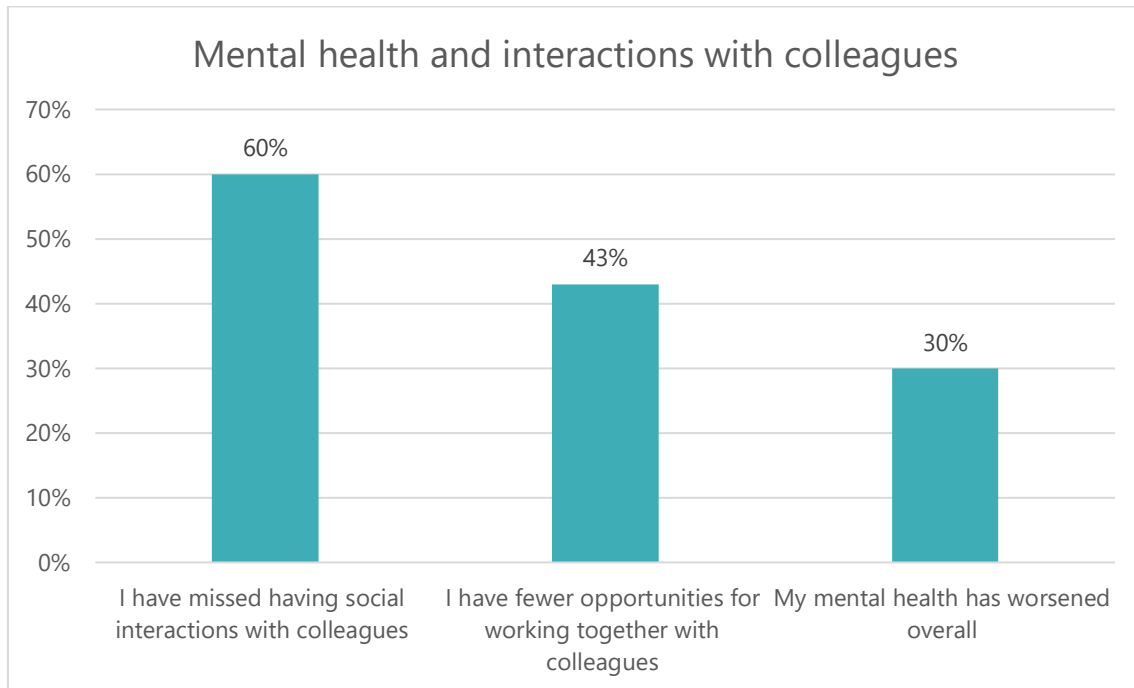
Around one third of disabled workers (34 per cent) said that they lacked proper office equipment such as a desk, chair or computer. One in 11 (9 per cent) experienced difficulties taking part in online meetings because of their disability, impairment, or health condition and one in 14 (7 per cent) lacked the software e.g. speech to text or computer programmes they needed to do their job.

Mental health and interactions with colleagues

Three in ten (30 per cent) disabled workers reported their mental health had worsened overall as a result of working from home.

Working from home during the pandemic affected disabled workers' interaction with their colleagues with more than two in five (43 per cent) saying that they had experienced fewer

opportunities for working with colleagues as a result of working from home and three in five (60 per cent) missing having social interactions with their colleagues as a result of working from home.



Changes in scrutiny by manager

Just under one in four (23 per cent) disabled workers who worked from home during the pandemic told us they had been subject to less scrutiny by their manager overall. However, one in 12 (8 per cent) told us they had been subject to more scrutiny by their manager.

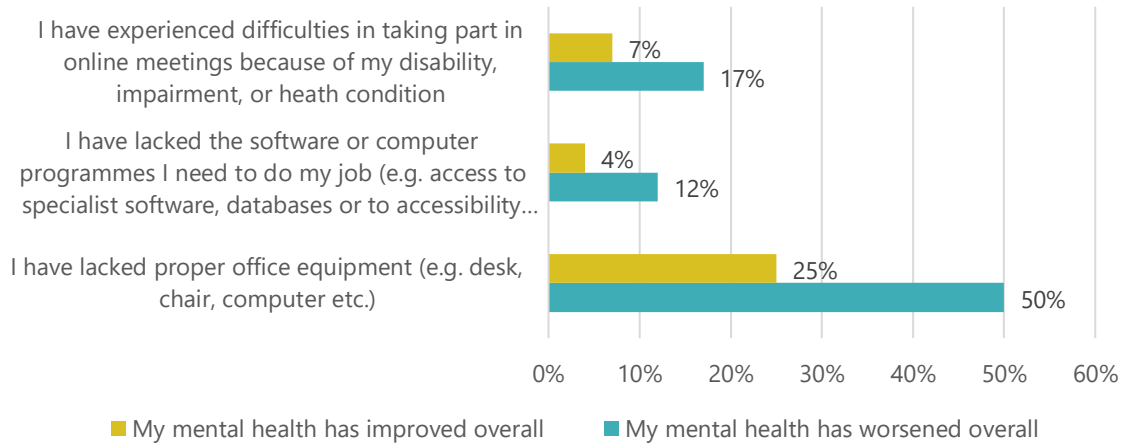
Differences in experiences between those whose mental health had worsened or improved

It is clear that a variety of factors affect workers mental health, however, one key difference between the respondents who said that their mental health had improved while working from home and those that said that their mental health had worsened, was their experience getting the reasonable adjustments they needed to work from home including equipment and changes to working hours.

The workers whose mental health had improved, were more likely to say they have had greater control of their working hours and been able to take breaks when they needed them and that they could change their work routines and better manage their caring responsibilities.

Where workers have had a negative experience, they were more likely to tell us they lacked proper office equipment, software or computer programmes they need to do their job or experienced difficulties in taking part in online meetings because of their disability, impairment or health condition.

Mental health: lack of equipment, software and difficulties taking part in online meetings

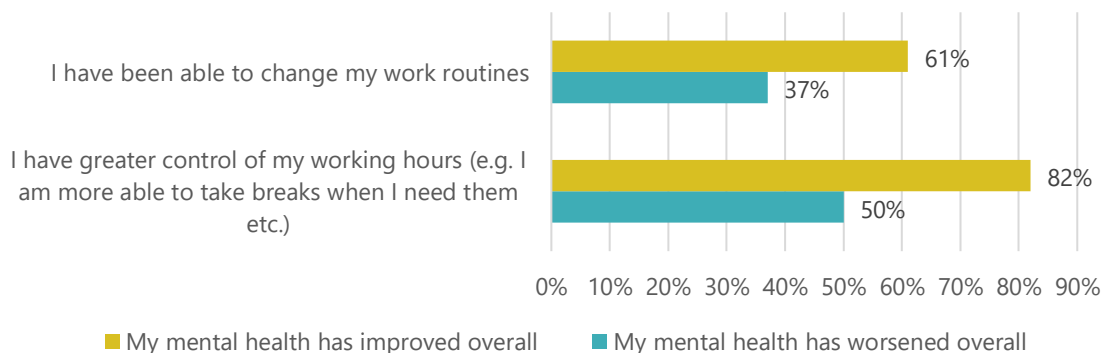


These issues were apparent in our research despite the fact that all employers have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to proactively make reasonable adjustments such as the provision of equipment, including software programmes, for disabled workers and adjustments made to online meetings, to remove, reduce or prevent any disadvantages that disabled workers face.

Workers whose mental health had worsened as a result of working from home also had less control over their working day.

Only 37 per cent of these workers said they had been able to change their work routines, compared to 61 per cent of those whose mental health had improved and half (50 per cent) said working from home had resulted in greater control of working hours, compared to more than four in five (82 per cent) of those whose mental health had improved as a result of working from home.

Mental Health: Working hours and routines



This group were also less likely to have received the reasonable adjustments they asked for during the pandemic. (45 per cent of those whose mental health had worsened vs 55 per cent of all the disabled workers who responded). They were also more likely to be subject to more scrutiny by their manager (11 per cent vs seven per cent).

An employer who fails to meet their legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments is in breach of the law and could be taken to an employment tribunal.

The issues disabled workers identified in getting the right equipment and accessing meetings are also likely to have exacerbated difficulties socialising and working with colleagues remotely which in turn could have created a working environment that did not support positive mental health.

What types of flexible working do disabled workers want?

An ongoing issue disabled workers have raised with the TUC is that their requests for flexible working, including home working, were often denied. Although disabled workers' ability to access flexible work has been an issue frequently raised with the TUC and its affiliated unions there was a lack of quantitative evidence which pointed to the scale of the issue or the number of disabled workers who would like to have some form of flexible working arrangements.

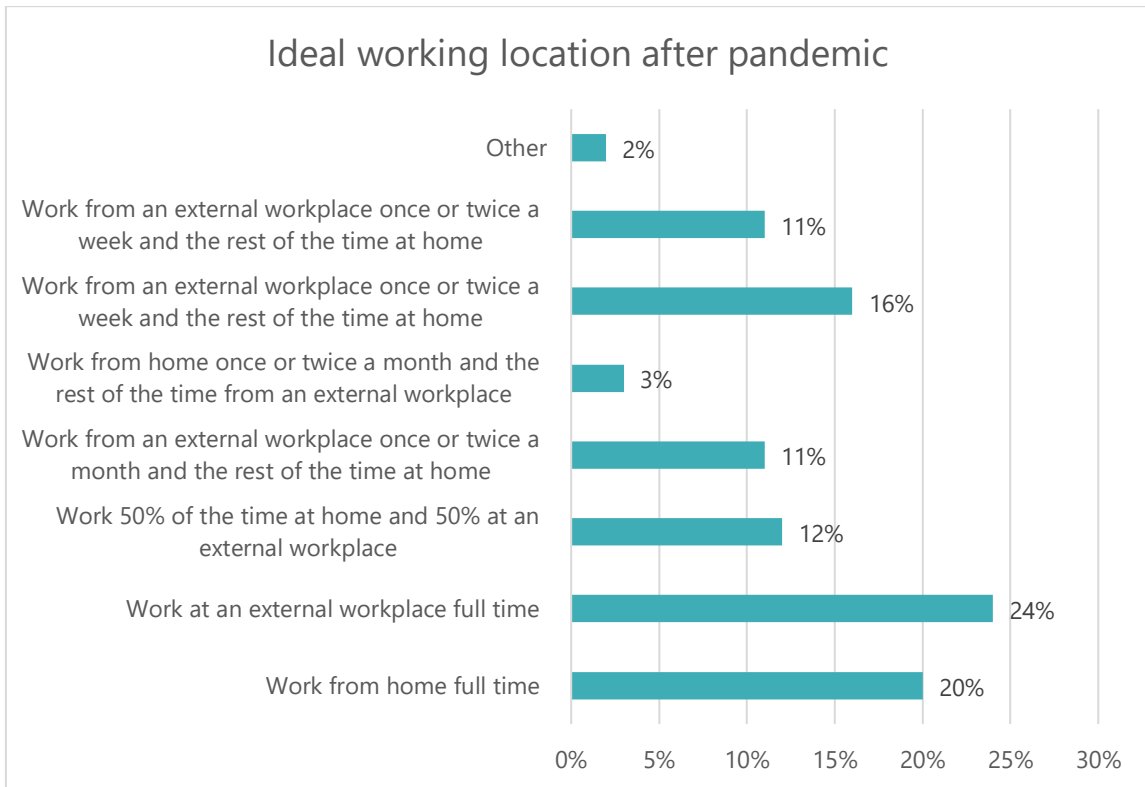
As highlighted above the research found just under one in eight (13 per cent) respondents had worked from home before the pandemic with just over half (53 per cent) having worked from home most of the time during the pandemic.

Therefore, for many disabled workers, the pandemic was the first time that they had been able to work from home. For others the ability to work flexibly may have reduced during the pandemic. During the past 18 months, flexible work in general and home working in particular have been the subject of considerable public debate and government has recently launched a consultation aimed at delivering on their manifesto commitment to make flexible working the default. In order to understand the extent to which disabled workers wanted to work flexibly after the pandemic we asked them what type of flexibility both in terms of location and working hours they would ideally want in the future.

Ideal working location after pandemic

Of those who responded just under one in four (24 per cent) said they wanted to work at an external workplace full time.

The remaining three in four (75 per cent) respondents who could work from home said that they would ideally want some form of home working, with one in five (20 per cent) saying they wanted to work from home full time.



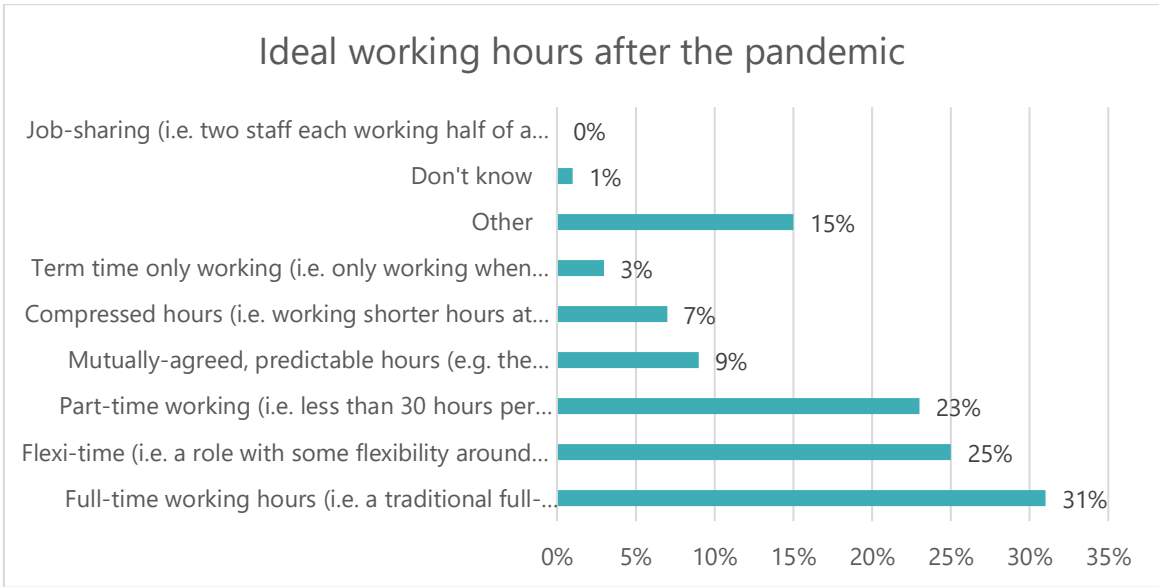
The proportion of disabled workers who wanted some form of home working, either full time or a hybrid working arrangement, increased when looking at those who had worked from home during the pandemic. Nearly all of these workers (90 per cent) said they wanted to continue working from home to some extent. Only 6 per cent said they would like to return to working at an external workplace full time. The high number of disabled workers indicating they would like to continue some form of home based working is interesting given the negative impacts that a significant minority described. Of those workers who worked outside the home during the pandemic, two in five (40 per cent) would also ideally like some form of home working.

Ideal working hours after the pandemic

We also asked about disabled workers ideal working pattern wanted to work after the pandemic came to an end.

Of those who responded just under a third (31 per cent) said they wanted to work full-time working hours of 30 hours or more while just under seven in 10 (68 per cent) said they wanted some form of flexible working linked to the hours they workers.

A quarter (25 per cent) said they wanted flexi-time i.e. in a role with some flexibility around start and end times with no reduction in pay and just under a quarter (23 per cent) said they wanted part-time working (less than 30 hours a week). One in 11 (9 per cent) wanted mutually agreed predictable hour hours (e.g. the same hours or shifts each week etc) and one in 14 (7 per cent) wanted compressed hours (i.e. working shorter hours at a higher intensity but paid the same.)



Gender

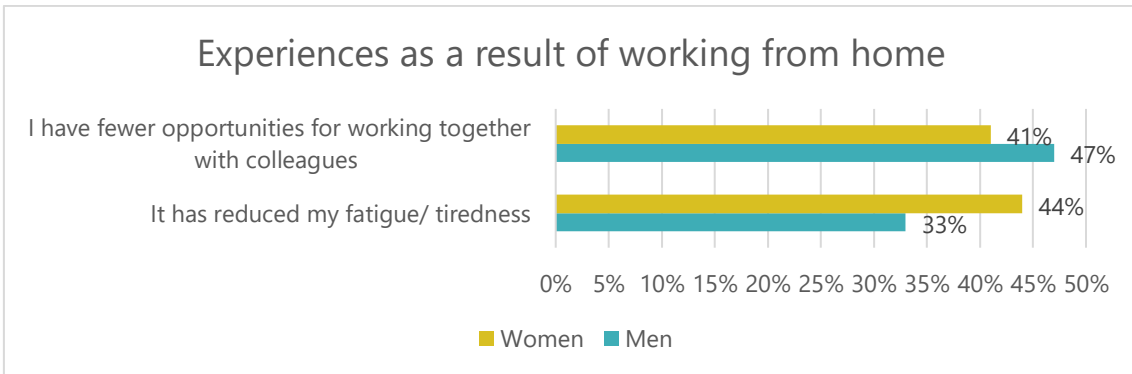
We also wanted to understand the differences in experience between disabled men and disabled women, both in terms of working from home during the pandemic and differences in ideal working patterns post pandemic.

Differences in experiences working from home during the pandemic between disabled men and disabled women

Disabled women were more likely, at just over four in 10 (44 per cent), to say that working from home had reduced their fatigue/tiredness when compared to a third (33 per cent) of disabled men.

While disabled men were more likely, at just under half (47 per cent) to say they had fewer opportunities for working together with colleagues when compared to just over four in 10 (41 per cent) of disabled women.

There was minimal difference, between 0 per cent and 4 per cent, in all other question options.



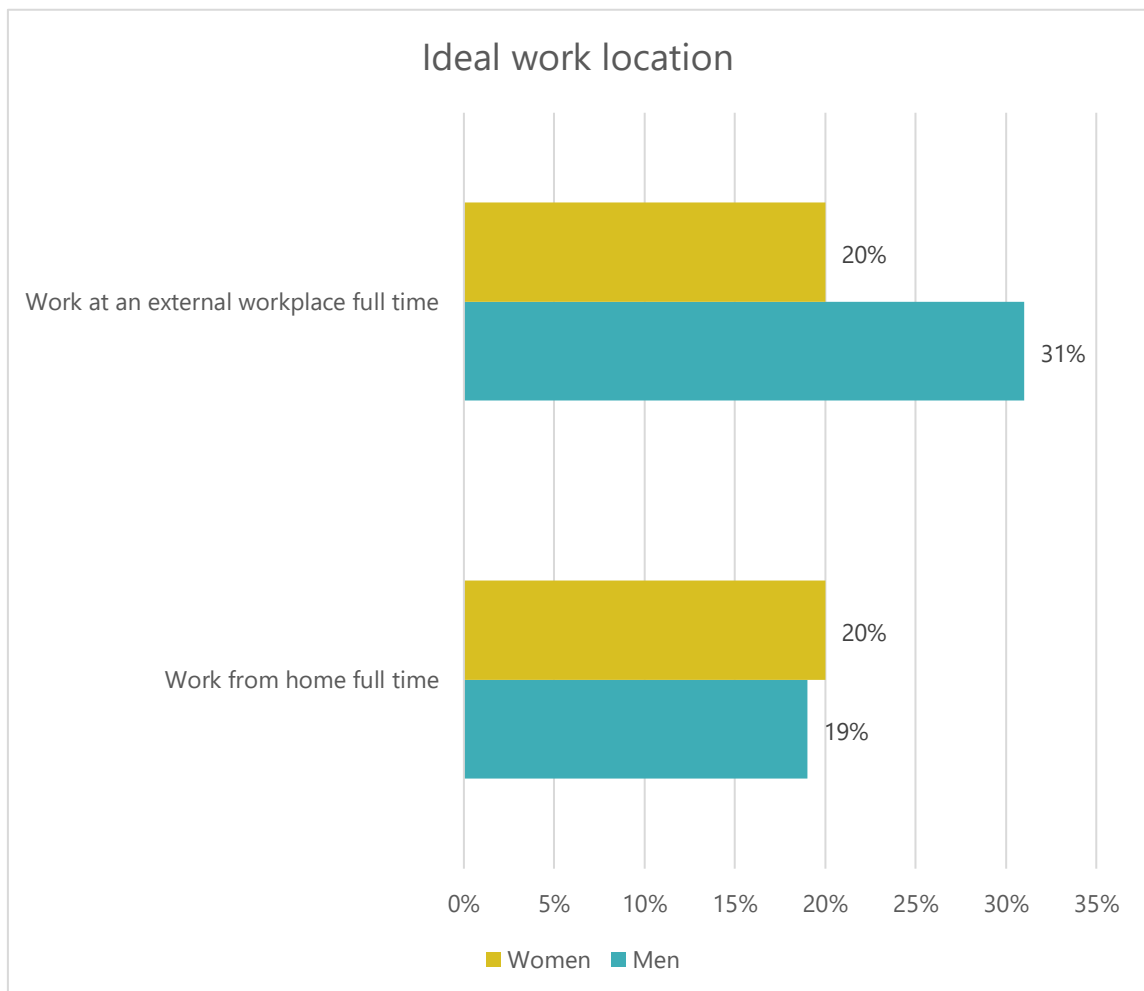
Differences in ideal working patterns post pandemic between disabled men and disabled women

Ideal working location post pandemic

Disabled men and disabled women were equally as likely, at approximately one in five (19 per cent and 20 per cent respectively), to say they wanted to work from home full time post pandemic.

However disabled men were more likely, just under a third (31 per cent), to say they wanted to work outside the home full time compared to one in five (20 per cent) disabled women.

There was minimal difference, between 1 per cent and 4 per cent, in all other question options.



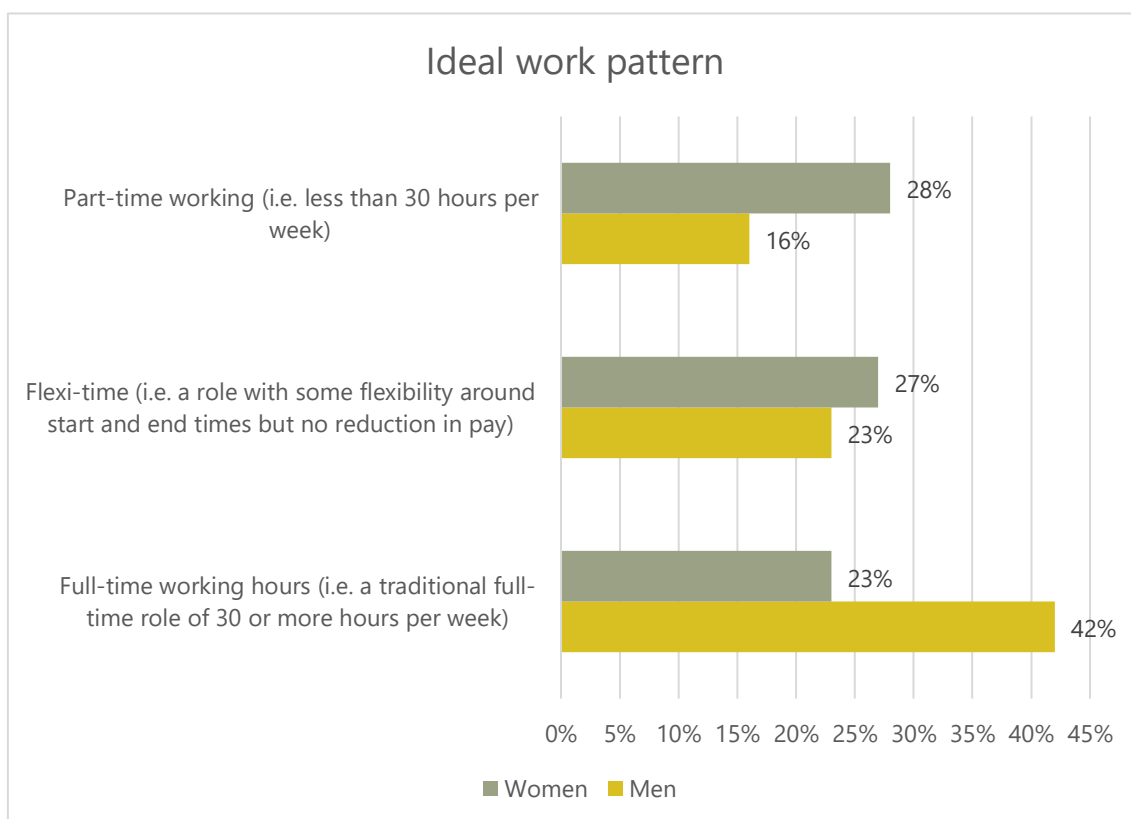
Ideal working hours post pandemic

Disabled men and disabled women were equally as likely, at approximately one in four (23 per cent and 27 per cent respectively), to say they wanted to work flexi-time hours (i.e. a role with some flexibility around start and end times but no reduction in pay).

However, disabled men were:

- more likely to say they wanted to work full-time working hours (i.e. a traditional full-time role of 30 or more hours per week), just over four in 10 (42 per cent), compared to just over one in five (23 per cent) disabled women.
- less likely to say they wanted part-time working (i.e. less than 30 hours per week), one in six (16 per cent) compared to just under three in 10 (28 per cent) disabled women.

There was minimal difference, between 0 per cent and 4 per cent, in all other question options.



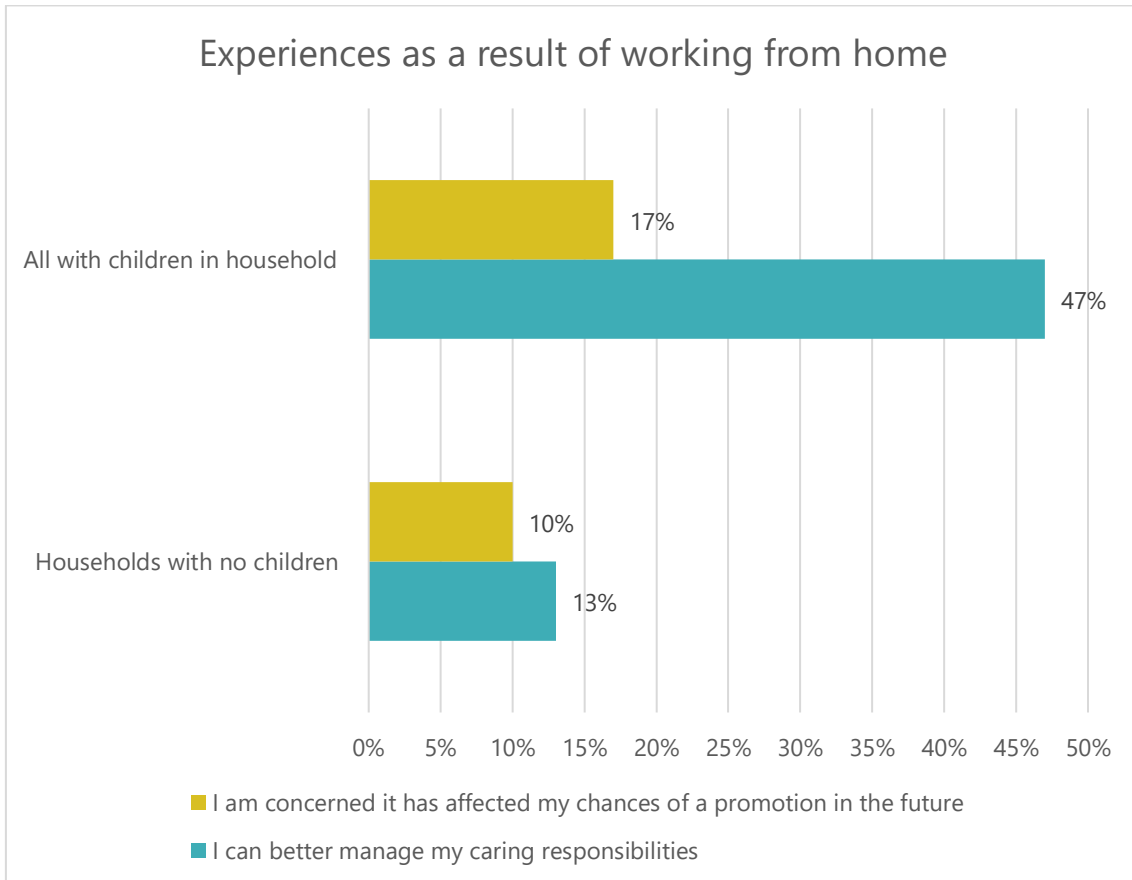
Disabled workers who are parents

We wanted to understand the impact the home working during pandemic had on disabled workers who had children and how it impacted on their ideal future working location

Disabled workers with children were over three times more likely to say home working enabled them to better manage their caring responsibilities with just under half (47 per cent) saying this compared with just over one in seven (13 per cent) of disabled workers with no children.

Disabled workers with children were also more likely to say they thought home working during the pandemic had affected their chances of a promotion in the future, almost one in six (17 per cent) when compared to disabled workers without children, one in 10 (10 per cent).

These workers were also nine times more likely to say their ideal working pattern was term time only working (i.e. only working when children are at school) with one in 11 (9 per cent) selecting that option compared with one per cent of disabled workers with no children.



Sectoral difference

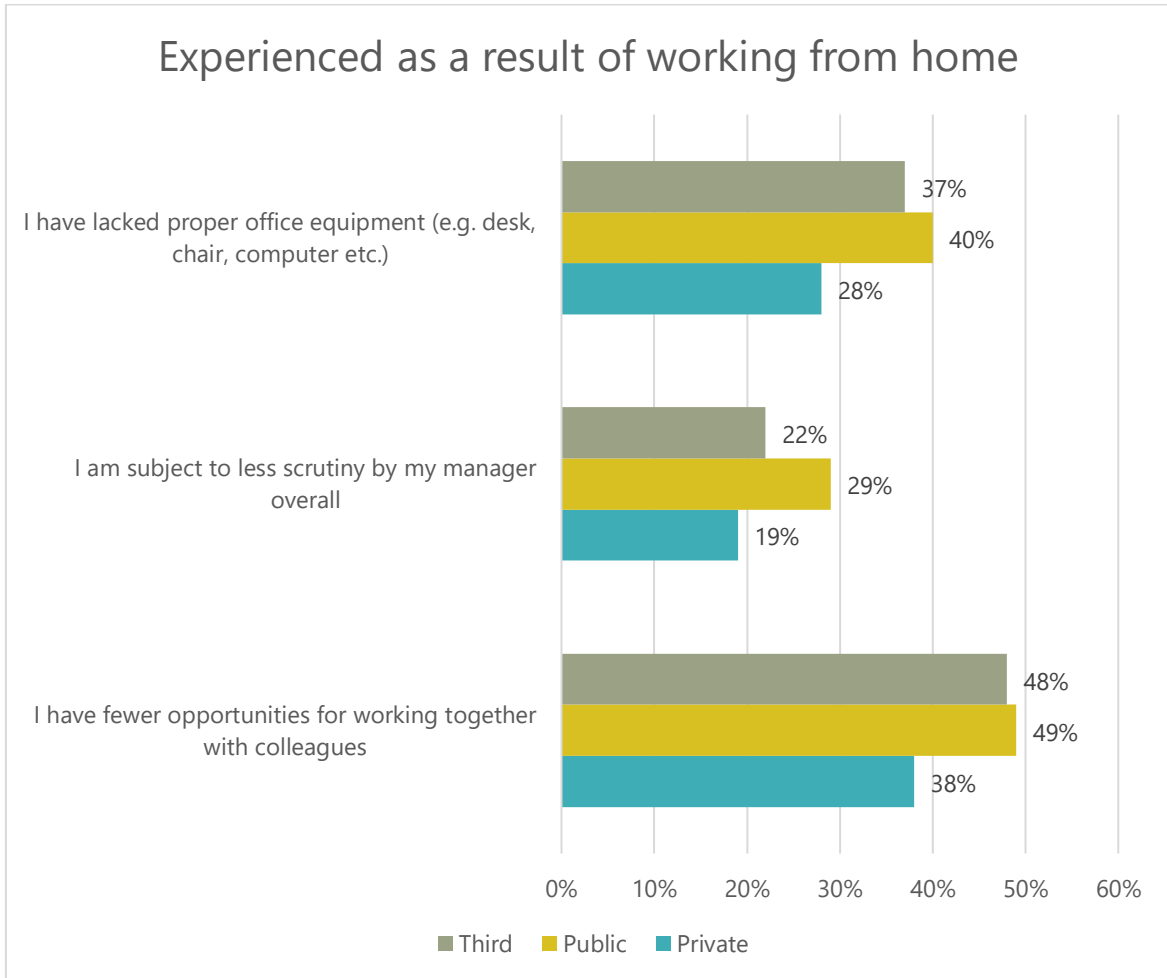
We wanted to understand the impact that home working during pandemic had on disabled workers within the private, public and third sectors and whether which sector they worked in affected respondents ideal future working location.

Experiences working from home during the pandemic: Sectoral differences

Just under half of disabled workers in the public sector (49 per cent) and third sector (48 per cent) were more likely to say they had fewer opportunities for working together with colleagues than those within the private sector at just above a third (38 per cent.)

Disabled workers in public sector and third sector were more likely to say they lacked proper office equipment for example a desk, chair, computer etc (public sector 40 per cent, third sector 37 per cent) then the private sector (28 per cent).

However, disabled workers in public sector and third sector were also more likely to say they were less subject to scrutiny by their manager (public sector 29 per cent, third sector 22 percent) than the private sector (19 per cent)

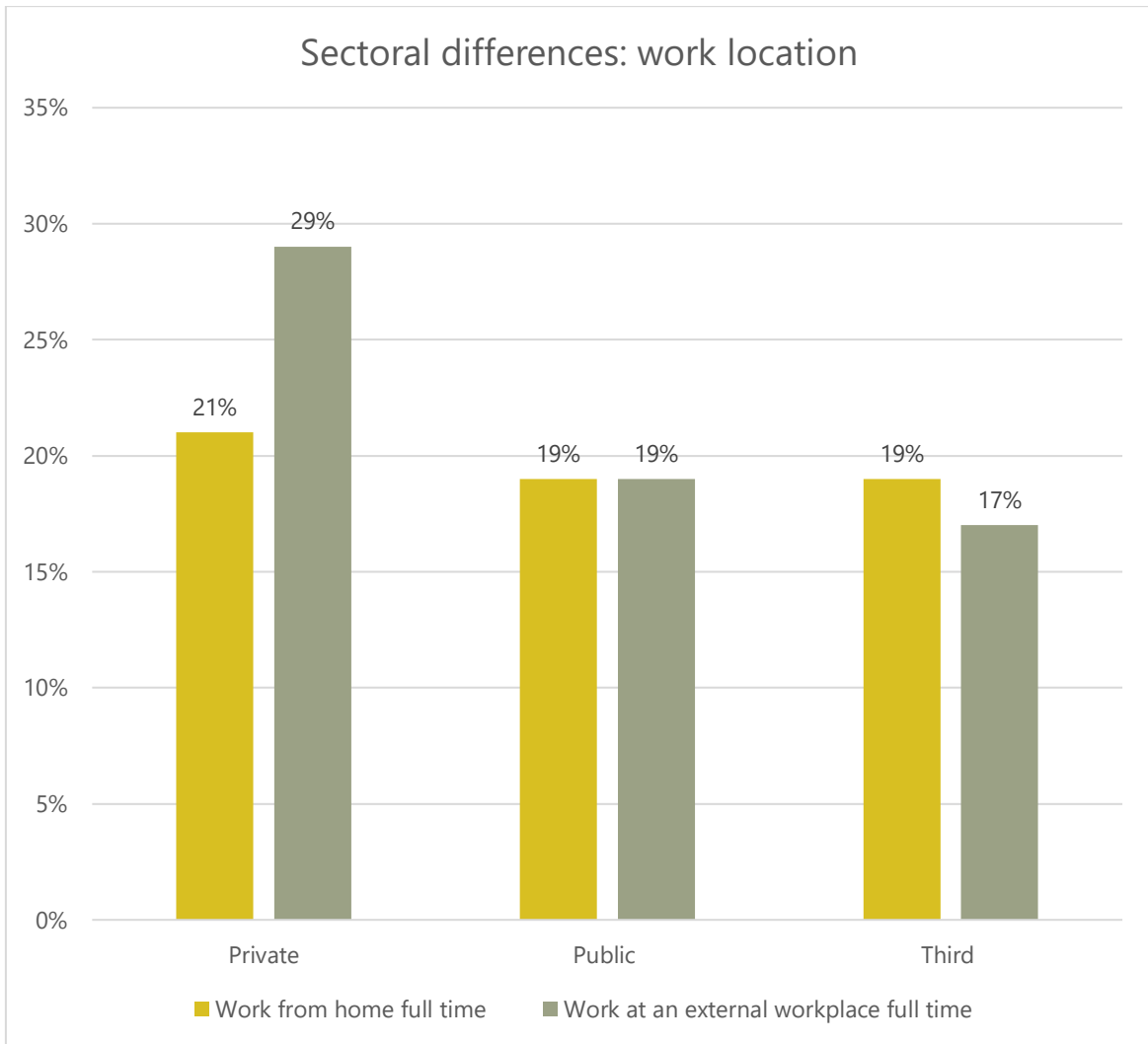


Differences in ideal working patterns post pandemic between sectors

Ideal working location post pandemic

Disabled workers within the public sector, private sector and third sector expressed similar preferences regarding working from home full time once the pandemic came to an end (between 21 per cent and 19 per cent).

However disabled workers within the private sector were more likely (29 per cent), to say they wanted to work at an external workplace full time when compared to the public sector (19 per cent) and third sector (17 per cent).

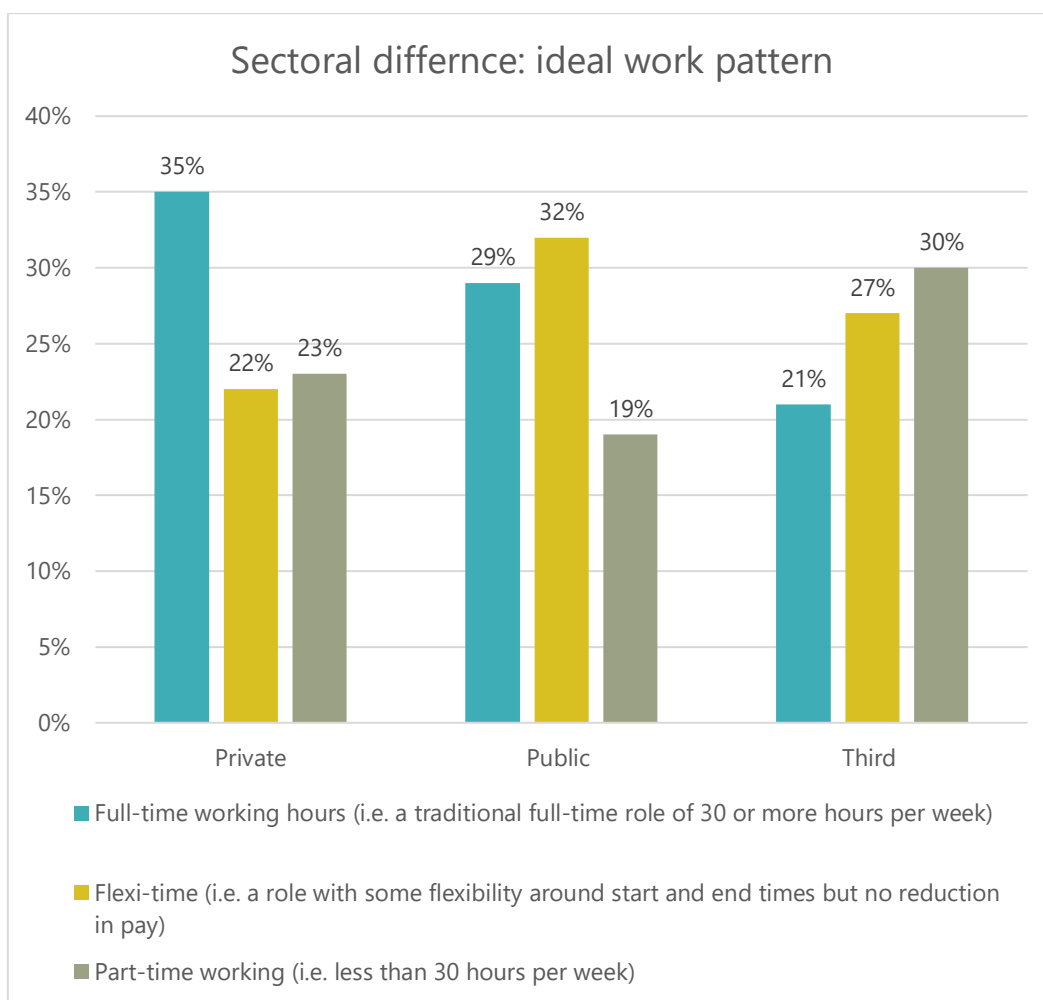


Ideal working pattern

Disabled workers in the private sector were the most likely to say their ideal working pattern was to work full-time at just over a third (35 per cent) compared to those in the public sector at just under three in ten (29 per cent) and the third sector at just over one in five (21 per cent).

Disabled workers in the private sector were also the least likely to say they would ideally like flexi-time, with just over one in five (22 per cent) saying that was their preference compared to just under a third of disabled workers (32 per cent) within the public sector and just under three in 10 (27 per cent) disabled workers within the third sector.

Disabled workers within the third sector were the most likely to say their ideal working pattern was part time working with three in 10 (30 per cent) indicating that was their preference compared to just under a fifth (19 per cent) of disabled workers within the public sector and over a fifth (23 per cent) of disabled workers within the private sector.



Methodology

In order to better understand disabled people’s experiences in work over the pandemic, the TUC commissioned in-depth research. In February 2021 we surveyed 2,003 disabled workers, or workers who have a health condition or impairment, or were shielding and who were in work at the start of the pandemic (March 2020).⁴

This report examines the research findings linked to:

- the change in primary working location before and during the pandemic
- the impact of homeworking during the pandemic
- experiences of working from home during the pandemic compared to the experiences of disabled workers who did not
- ideal work location and pattern after the pandemic has ended

⁴ Throughout the report we describe respondents to our survey as disabled workers.