

FUTURE WORLD
OF WORK

Business (not) as usual

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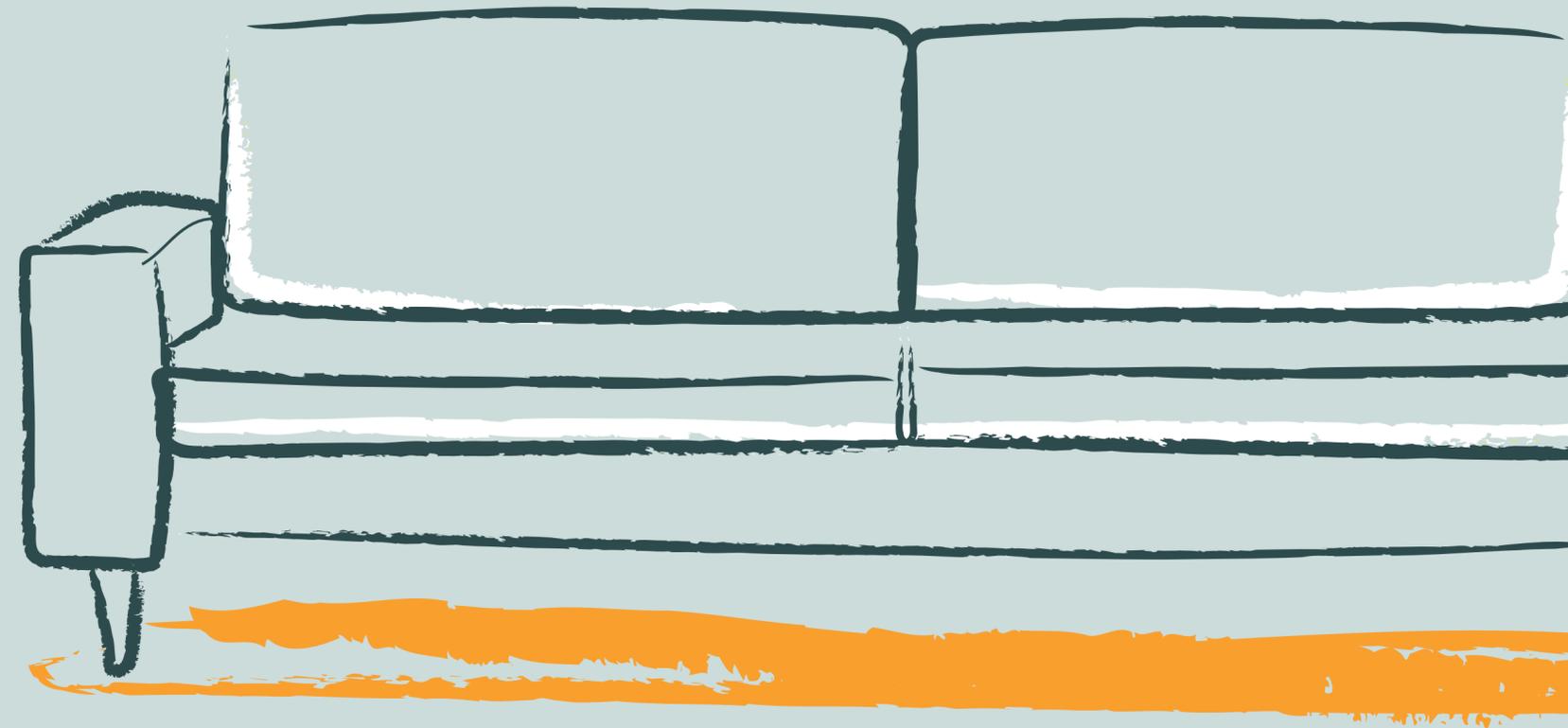

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Business (not) as usual

The sudden arrival of Covid-19 has brought sweeping changes to the way we work. And while the pandemic has effectively kicked over the established structures of working life and forced us all to adapt rapidly to new patterns of working, one thing's certain: after Covid, we won't be going back to work in quite the same way.

Currently, we're investigating how Covid-19 is affecting businesses across all sectors: how their people have had to adapt to working away from their familiar workplaces, and how they foresee a return to work once the crisis has subsided.

Welcome to the future world of work.



Our survey

We partnered with Leeds University Business School and asked them to carry out a quantitative and qualitative survey covering a range of issues relating to home working and the return to work. Primarily we set out to understand how our own people are dealing with current situation. However the survey results extend across a wide range of companies and other sectors.



Industry	Response
Accommodation or food services	9
Admin, support, waste management or remediation services	11
Arts, entertainment or recreation	24
Construction	65
Educational services	68
Finance or insurance	52
Forestry, fishing, hunting or agriculture support	3
Healthcare or social assistance	20
Information	42
Management of companies or enterprises	9
Manufacturing	16
Mining	2
Other	65
Professional, scientific or technical services	302
Real estate or rental and leasing	4
Retail trade	19
Transportation or warehousing	12
Utilities	11
Wholesale trade	6
Total	740

What we
learned

Going it alone

For many, the sudden removal from the office environment, while unexpected, wasn't entirely unwelcome. Staff quickly got used to, and even started to enjoy a new sense of autonomy in their work – a factor that produced a positive influence on both performance and wellbeing.



“My supervisor is great. He just assigns me a task and lets me complete it, and only comes to me for doubts or problems.”

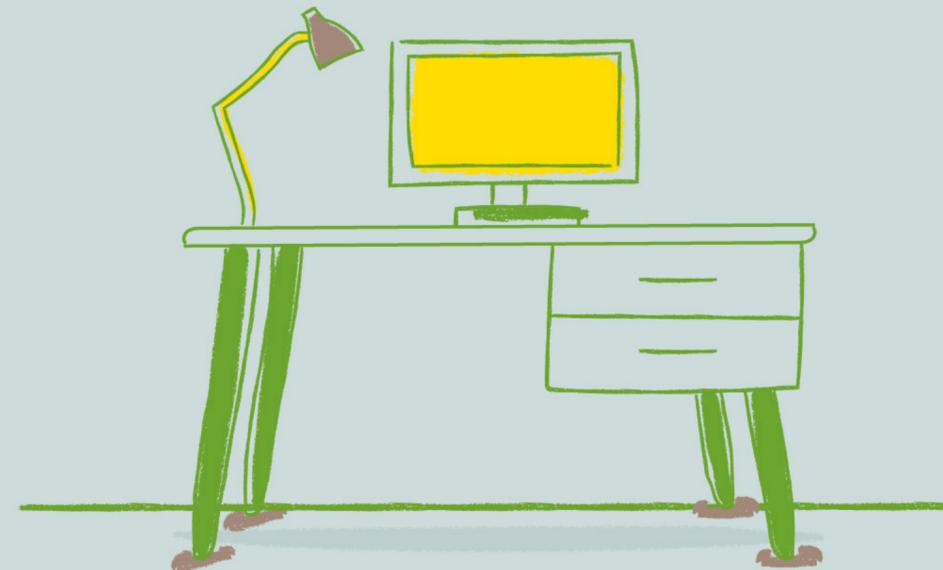
Male, 25-29

Technostress

The process of adapting to remote working and in particular, getting to grips with the technology it needs to run smoothly wasn't always a seamless transition. Frustrations over sluggish broadband, communications software and a rising tide of e-mail traffic all contributed to increasing 'technostress' with a consequent negative impact on performance and wellbeing.

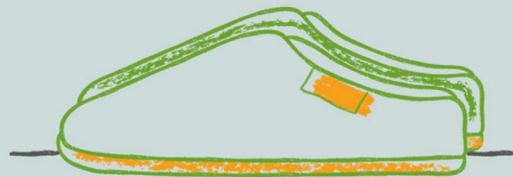
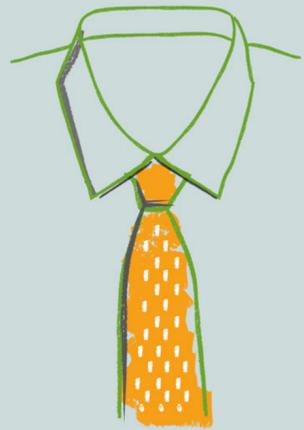
“Kids using the Wi-Fi connection means it's difficult for me to get the bandwidth for video calls.”

Male, 40-44



Work/life unbalanced

As the realities of working from home became apparent over the first weeks of lockdown, many respondents reported difficulties separating their working lives from their home lives. This blurring of the boundaries meant that many ended up working longer hours and found it hard to switch off at the end of the working day.



“The greatest challenge is that my place of work and my home are now the same and that makes it harder to detach at the end of the day.”

Male, 25-29

The family factor

Around a third of respondents had children and for them, the family home wasn't always the most conducive environment for productive working. Balancing the day to day distractions of family life and childcare with the demands of work proved to be a source of conflict, adding to stress levels and diminishing performance and wellbeing.

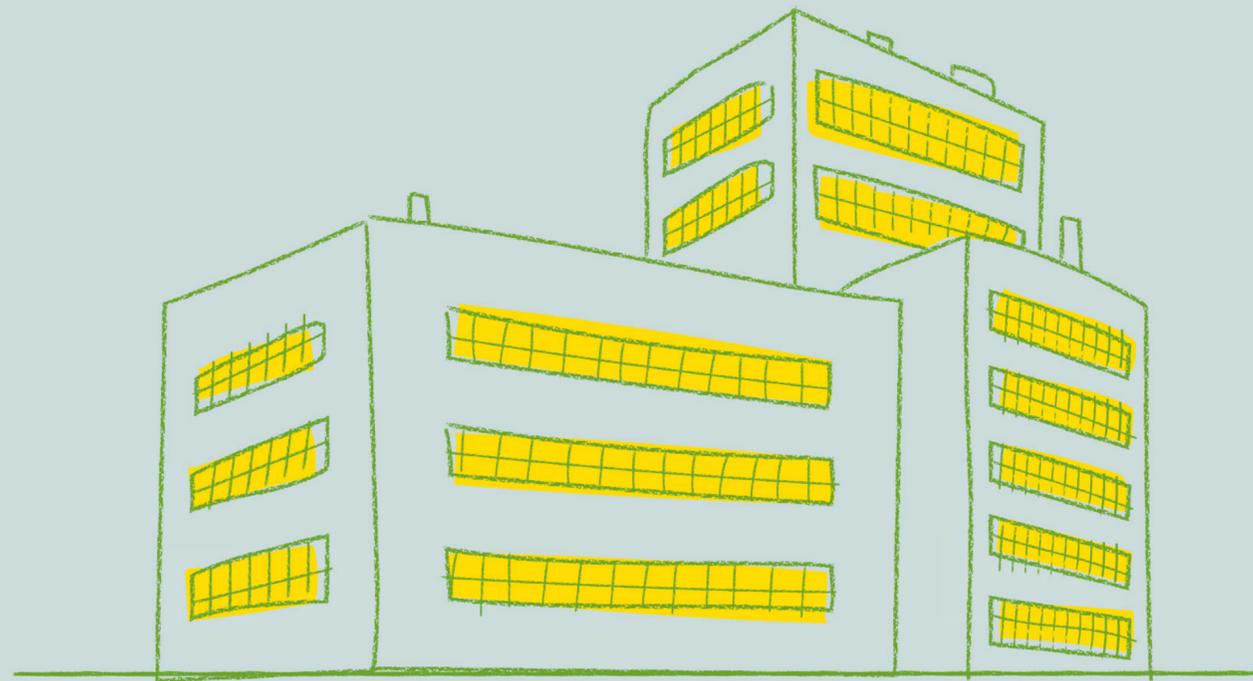
“Juggling childcare commitments with too much work – there just aren't enough hours in the day.”

Female, 40-44



Remember the office?

Questioned on what they missed from time at the office, respondents highlighted a number of key points. Many missed the structure and routine provided by a day at the office (although few missed the commute to work). Others felt that home working placed barriers to collaboration, effectively ruling out spontaneous conversations and the rapid-fire exchange of ideas with colleagues. On top of that, the simple pleasure of interacting with workmates face to face was felt to be good for everyone's mental health and wellbeing.



“Phoning and emailing seems more invasive than leaning over the desk for a quick and simple answer.”

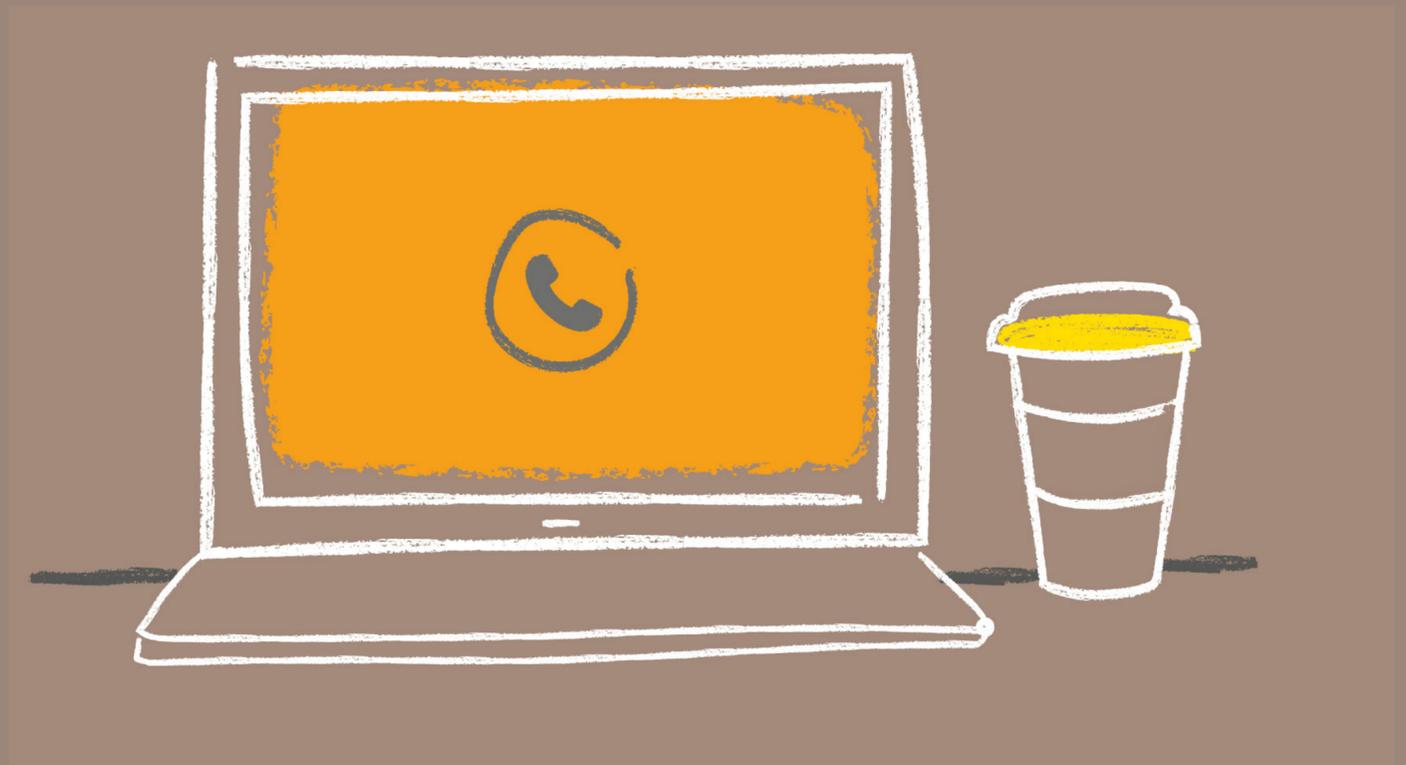
Female, 40-44

Positively at home

Despite the challenges of the home working experience, the survey also revealed some positive benefits. A significant number of respondents felt they had more flexibility in the way they organised their working day and were actually more productive working at home. Others enjoyed the freedom to spend more time with partners, spouses and children, and to exercise. Almost universally, respondents commented on the positives of time gained by not having to travel to work.

“I’m not as tired now I don’t have to get up early and commute into the office. I seem to get more work done.”

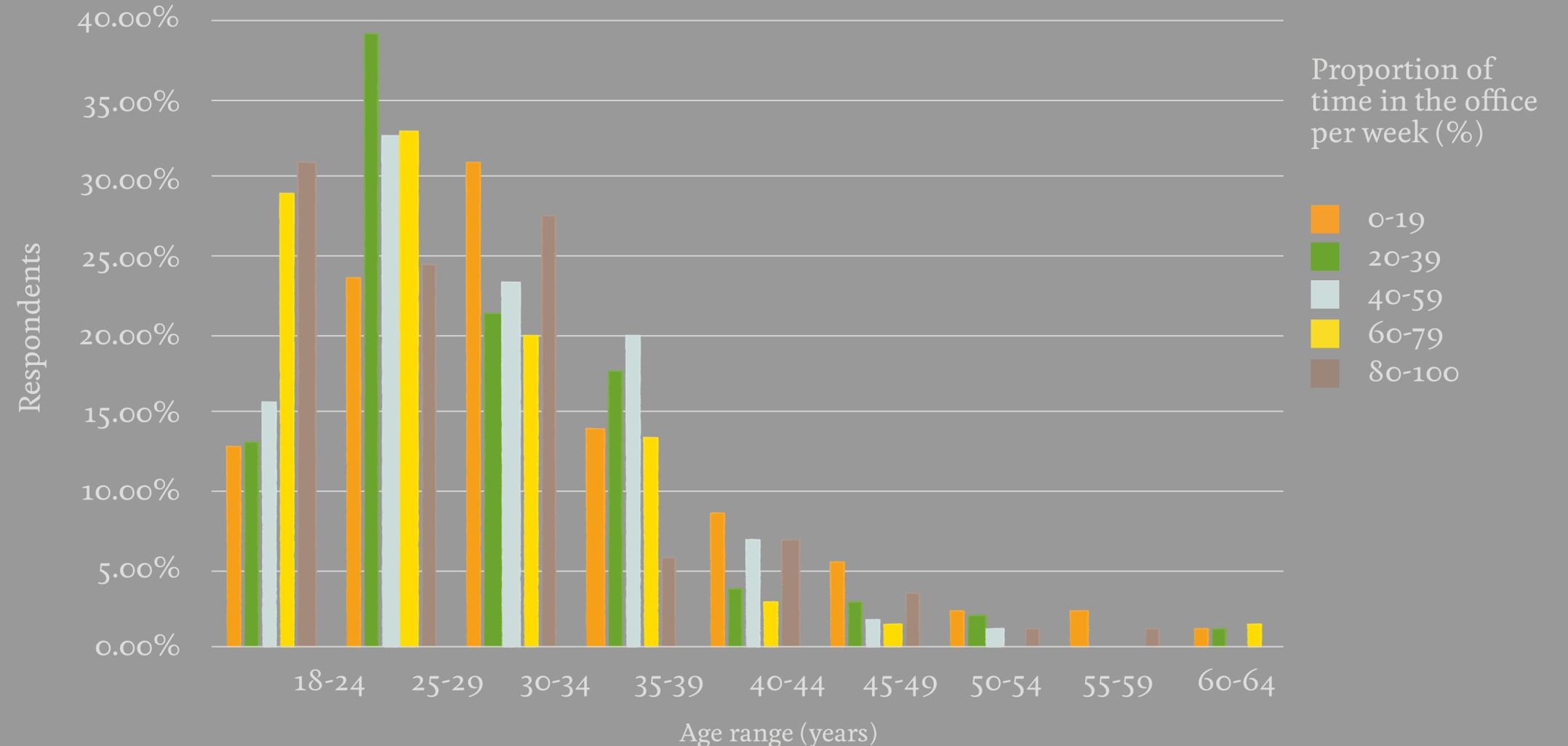
Male, 30-34



The return to work

Asking people about the return to work and the amount of time they expected to spend at the office in future, revealed an interesting distribution of responses. Viewed through the lens of employees' ages, the numbers show a significant variation.

A cross-industry representation of a preference to work from the office in the future by age



Among younger workers, those aged between
18-24 31% wanted to spend more than

80%

of their time at the office – for social reasons
as well as maximising opportunities for
training and development.

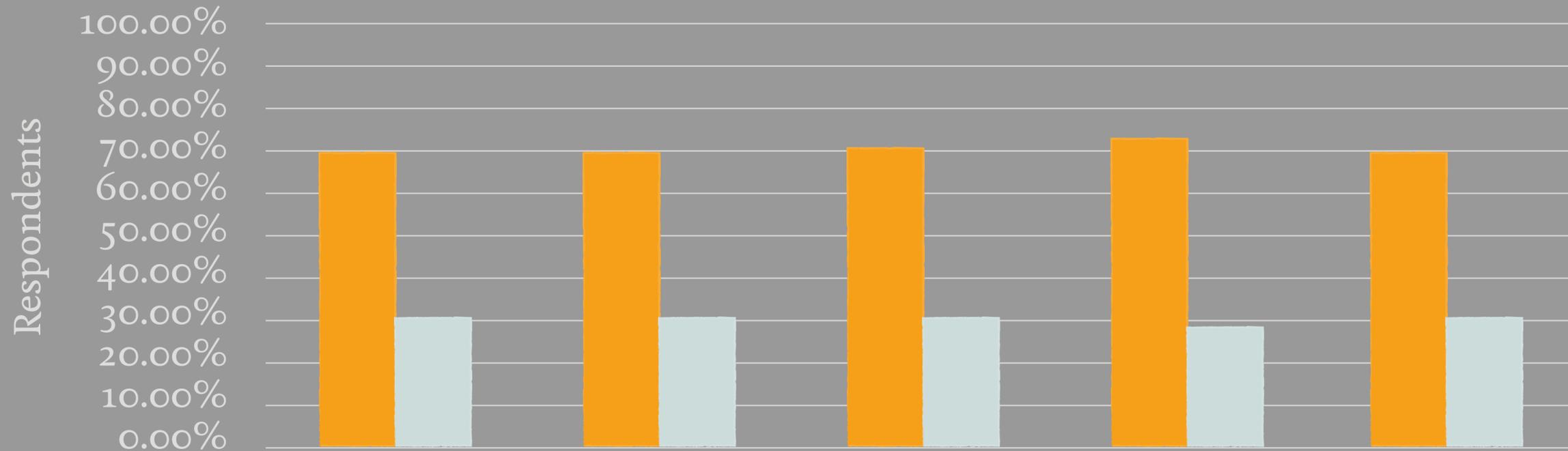
31% of those aged between 30-34
wanted to spend less than

18%

of their time at the office. With this group
however, family considerations are likely to be
an important influencing factor.

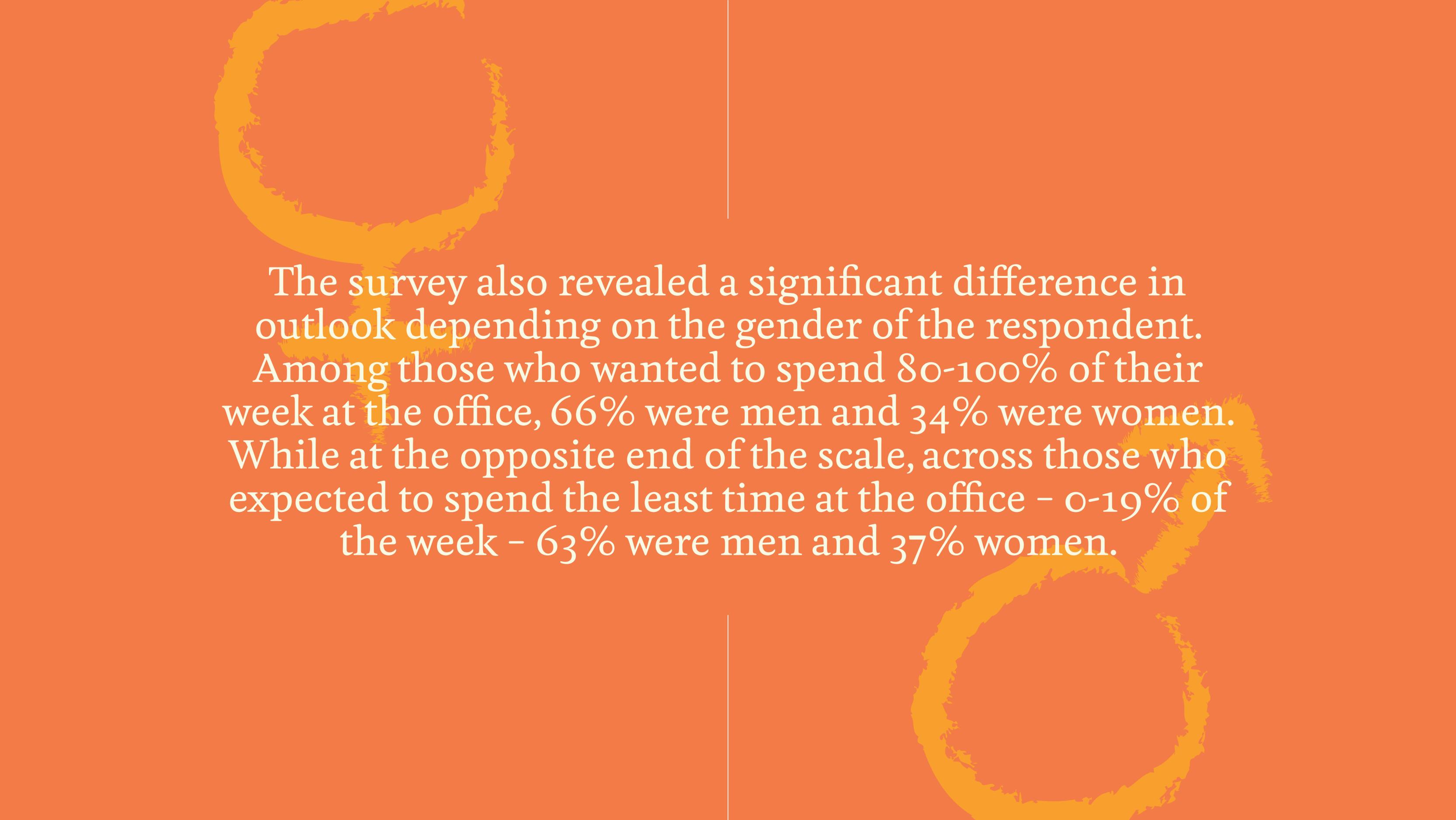
The return to work

There is strong a cross-industry preference across all age groups that people without children want to spend a greater proportion of time in the office than those with.

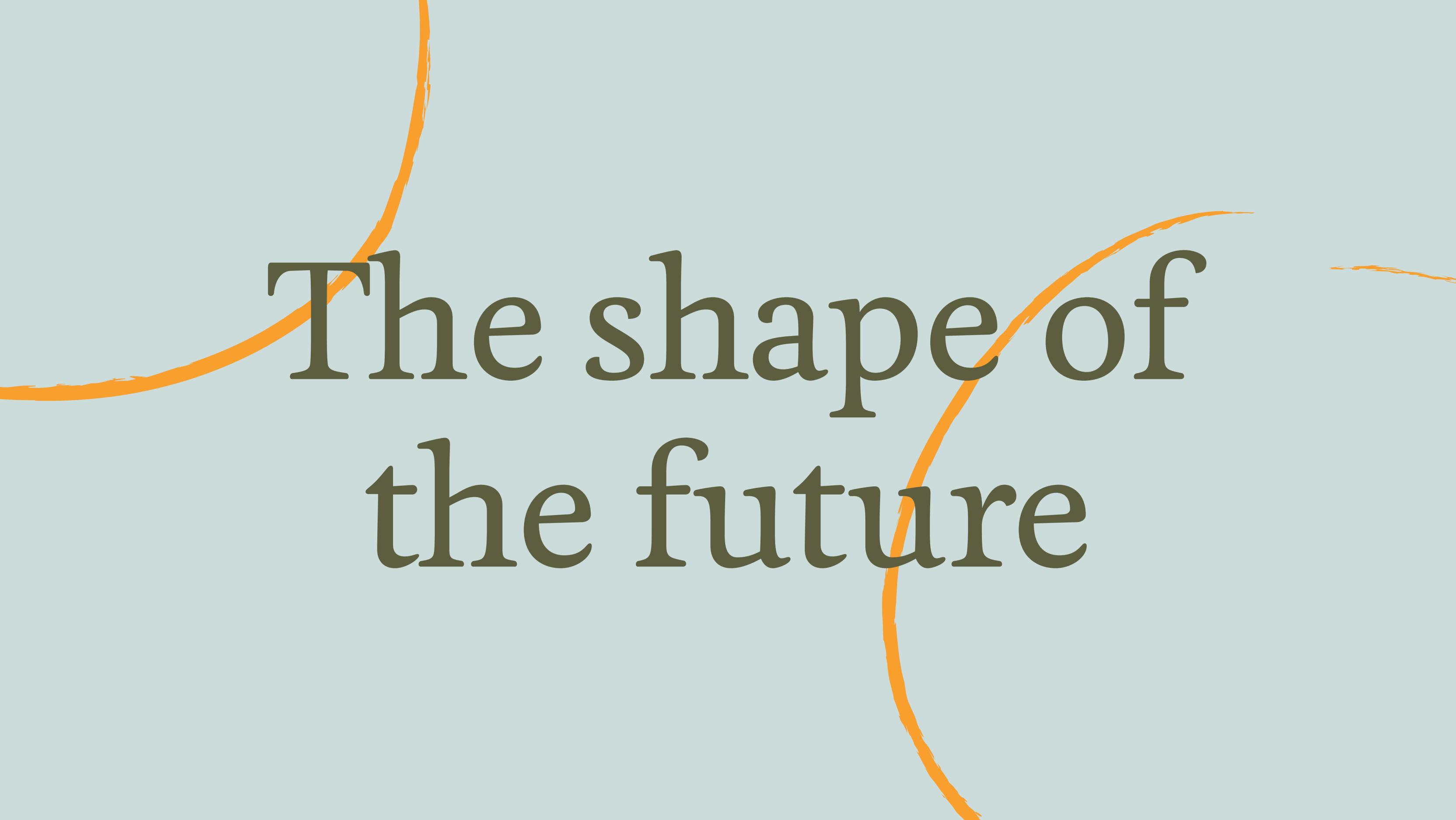


	0-19	20-39	40-59	60-79	80-100
No	69.10%	69.40%	70.10%	72.40%	69.20%
Yes	30.90%	30.60%	29.90%	27.60%	30.80%

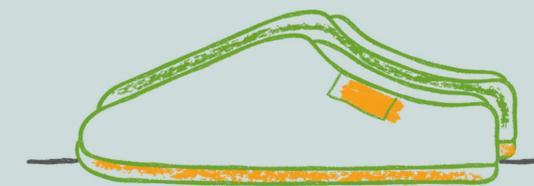
Proportion of time preferred to work in the office (%)



The survey also revealed a significant difference in outlook depending on the gender of the respondent. Among those who wanted to spend 80-100% of their week at the office, 66% were men and 34% were women. While at the opposite end of the scale, across those who expected to spend the least time at the office - 0-19% of the week - 63% were men and 37% women.



The shape of
the future



Clearly, the findings of the survey indicate a shift in attitude towards the workplace and the amount of time we expect to spend there when we finally return to work. It also highlights the wide range of personal challenges employees face when working from home. In future, it's likely that businesses will need to manage these issues as much as they'll need to decide how best to make use of the workplace.

The survey also raises a series of questions that we'll be working through with our clients over the coming months. Perhaps some of these resonate with your business.



1

Will long-term home working reduce the need for space at the place of work? And what does that mean for existing leases? Could businesses who own larger properties let out some of their space for other uses?

2

Across the property sector, how will demand for space change? Will occupiers now seek smaller, more flexible workspaces, designed for hot-desking or occasional use?

3

Does reduced travel mean company car schemes no longer make sense? There are implications for the companies that offer them, and potentially an even greater impact among car leasing companies.

4

For HR departments, there will be a growing need to understand the demands of different demographics and respond accordingly. Given the working preferences expressed by different groups, this may need to feed through to recruitment policy.

5

Managers may need to put more rigid processes and feedback loops in place, as industries and departments are forced to adopt more formalised project management methodologies.

6

HR and managers may need to provide more remote training support, as well as greater mental health provision for those who spend more time working in isolation.

7

New support policies may need to be put in place to help employees draw the line between their home and work lives. For example, setting designated 'offline' times, when internal messaging systems shut down for an agreed period.

8

How will the long-term trend for home working influence the design and location of our homes? Will we, for example require dedicated workspace at home? And what will be the implications for planning and construction of new homes?

9

With employees potentially working across two locations, office and home, employers will need to ensure that their people can navigate seamlessly between the two. That may mean re-thinking the technology they'll require, as well as taking a more flexible approach to managing their time.



These and other questions we'll be addressing in upcoming articles and webinars dedicated to the Future World of Work. Sign up for updates today to make sure you don't miss out.

Alternatively, call your relationship manager if you'd like to talk about any of the issues raised by this report. We're here, for your future.

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