

The Tasmania Project

Share your experience during COVID-19.

Photo: Tourism Tasmania and Chris Crerar.

How Tasmanians are experiencing work during the pandemic.

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The Tasmania Project has found that Tasmanian workers are generally adapting well to the new way of living (68.6%). However, while most (51.5%) are finding the new way of life easier the longer the pandemic lasts, more than a quarter (27.6%) are finding it more difficult. Nearly two thirds (65.3%) report enjoying a slower pace of life.

While the workers reported they were generally well supported by their employers, how Tasmanians are experiencing work during the pandemic differs for men and women and also by whether or not they are working from home or remain at their workplace.

The experience of work during the pandemic has been both positive and negative for many Tasmanian workers. There are those who are tired and those who are enjoying the change, many are concerned about productivity and losing their jobs while many have also been more creative and done more sport and exercise. Most interesting is that of all the pandemic crisis response requirements, over third (35.8%) of people working from home want the work from home requirement lifted first.

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Key findings

For those Tasmanian workers who responded to the Tasmania Project Survey

- Prior the pandemic, one in five had more than one job
- Since the pandemic, for most, their work situation has not changed (69.8%). One in ten (10.8%) are employed on JobKeeper payments and 7.1% are employed with fewer hours.
- Compared with prior to the pandemic, one in five (19.7%) have done more paid work.
- Over half (56.6%) do not believe they are an essential worker while a third (32.3%) do, and one in ten (11.1%) are not sure if they are an essential worker or not.
- Over half (52.0%) of those employed are now working from home due the pandemic, while a third (32.6%) continue to work at their respective workplaces. The remainder are combining working from home and at their workplace.
- For almost half of those working from home, it is more difficult to do their work (44.7%), while it is easier for one in five (20.7%).
- Compared with non-working people, employed respondents felt *more* overwhelmed, angry, tired and frustrated and *less* content, lonely, strong, rested, and trusting.
- One in five (20.1%) reported having more alcohol, tobacco and/or other drugs.

Working from home



That only around half of the Tasmanian workers who responded to the Tasmania Project survey reported they were working from home, reflects the nature of work and employment in Tasmania. Tasmania's largest employing sectors; health care and social assistance, tourism (including retail and accommodation and food services), education and training and construction, are industries which are less likely to have jobs that can be undertaken at home.

The work experience differs for men and women and whether they were working from home. Women were more likely to work from home than men (54.3% compared with 46.2%). More women found it difficult to work from home compared to men (46.5% compared with 40.2%), whereas more men indicated doing work from home was about the same (42.6% compared with 31.6% of women).

Three quarters of people working from home reported a high level of support from their employer (76.4%) whereas only 57.9% of those who continued to work from their workplace reported being well supported by their employer.

Those who were working from home reported a high level of concern about their productivity levels compared with those at the workplace (45.7% and 31.5% respectively). However, two in five workers from home also reported no concerns regarding their productivity.

These findings are likely to be partly explained by the presence of dependent children and the learning from home requirement. Two in five workers had dependent children and nearly three quarters (73.0%) of those reported that learning from home was difficult. In addition, over a third (34.5%) of women reported they were taking the lead in supporting their children learning from home, while 1.7% of employed women reported that their partner was taking the lead.

Employed people working from home were more tired than those working at their workplace (45.3% compared with 36.0%).

Of the existing regulations and restrictions put in place during the pandemic, over a third (35.8%) of employed people working from home want the work from home requirement lifted first.

Concerns

Almost half (47.0%) of employed people are concerned about losing their job or family income, particularly those couples with children (47.0%) and single parents (62.2%).

Almost half (46.7%) of essential workers report feeling tired often or most of the time in the past week, compared with around a third (36.3%) of non-essential workers.

Many workers reported in interviews that working from home hasn't changed much 'as predominately computer based', there is a good level of trust, support and flexibility and is quite enjoyable, noting that they were 'enjoying isolation because of not having to commute' and the extra hours in the day 'gives me more time to take the dog for walks... starting the day more relaxed; more time to do [other] things...'. Others reported feeling 'pressured and unsupported', 'ostracised by the workplace' or that they need to 'self-monitor to be productive'. Many miss the social aspect of the workplace, the incidental conversations and collaborative input; '[I] miss all these like kind of incidental conversations that you would just have in passing even at work and everything now has to be like pre planned'. Others report increasing their contact with colleagues in different ways which has created more collaborative new types of networks and 'although digital, there is more a sense of community; people are more willing to share information and help out... [it's] changed the workplace positively...people become more reciprocal; a lot of background noise at work is gone".

Where next?

As Tasmania moves into the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions start to be eased how and where Tasmanians work will need much consideration. For many, there are benefits of working from home, including greater flexibility and reducing commute times, for others the workplace provides the means for collaboration and greater productivity as well as social networks.

The Tasmania Project – approach, method and limitations

The Tasmania Project includes a range of approaches and methods to understand how Tasmanians are experiencing and adapting to life during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

See a more detailed explanation of the Project's approach and method [here](#).