Supporting a future of
Flexible Working

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This year COVID-19 has changed the landscape of life as we know it. Early on this prompted the YAC to consider the impact on the lives and wellbeing of the under-35 age group we represent in Cambridge.

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Back in April 2020 we launched our first survey to capture the impact of COVID-19 on the priorities of the under 35s. As the situation locally, nationally and globally kept evolving we launched two follow up surveys, one in August and the most recent one in October.

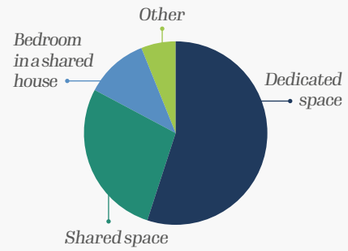
In the August survey it was noticeable that 67% of respondents had never worked from home prior to the pandemic. For this group, the need to adjust to being fully home working was a drastic change but one which many now want to be part of an agile approach to work moving forward.

Our October survey sought to explore this in further depth. We had 205 respondents who represented a balanced demographic mix: 46% male and 54% female, also equally spread in age from 21 through to 35. These respondents are young professionals working in Cambridge Ahead member organisations and we are acutely aware that they do not represent all under 35s in our city. However, they are the most immediately relevant group for the business community.

A resounding 92% answered the survey that they were able to work from home, highlighting that remote working was and is a feasible option. One major consideration for employers has been what the impact of working from home has been on productivity. In our results a majority claimed that productivity had either not changed or had actually improved during the pandemic. We were also keen to identify specifically whether the work set up at home had an impact on productivity. Despite the availability of dedicated space, as shown in the graph below, 29% felt that their work set up at home was impacting negatively on their productivity levels. Conversely 35% said that their work set up had made a positive impact.

Survey respondents said:

Where do you work from home?



There have been both positive and negative points to draw from remote working. The survey confirmed that 62% of our respondents found that less connectivity and collaboration was the worst part of remote working. The opportunity to bounce ideas off one another and build relationships – something particularly necessary for young workers – far outweighs the independent, technology connected life that we have become accustomed to in this period of the pandemic. There are of course positives that can be drawn from remote working though. The flexibility of working from home and time gained from not making the everyday commute contributed to almost 70% of the votes on the positive outcomes of working from home.

The pandemic has caused a seismic shift in the day–to-day priorities of those represented by our survey - **88% of respondents now want to work remotely 2-3 days a week.** They want to work with their employers to establish new agile working arrangements that provide greater flexibility and reduce the need for the daily commute but maintain connectivity and collaboration, which they value from an office environment and regard as important for creativity, also helping with mental wellbeing.

It was encouraging to see our audience closely in tune with the desires of younger workers for a more flexible style of working. We hope that these shared desires will help shape the workplace over the next few years.

Survey respondents said:

The best part of working from home?

38% Flexibility

31% No Commute

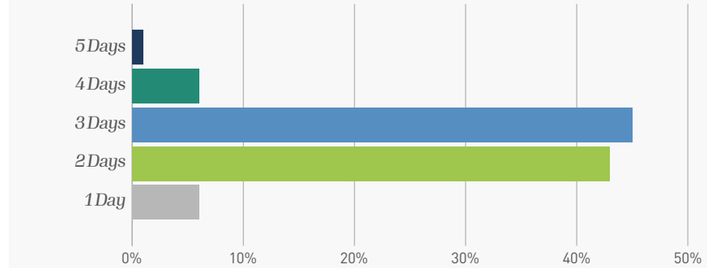
The worst part of working from home?

62% Less connectivity & collaboration

14% Home office set-up

Survey respondents said:

How many weekdays would you like to work remotely?



Breakout session on the future of flexible working – key points

- We need to find a way to take consideration of the desire for more agile working but still support collaboration and connectivity, create organisational culture and support new starters through an onboarding process and ongoing development.
- Office space need has been, and will continue to change, including more collaborative areas and a desire for green space within or around offices.
- We must not forget in this conversation those that can't work from home, which broadly fall into two groups (a) those who value coming into the office because of their home working configurations (often those on the lowest salaries) and (b) because they are customer facing / their role requires it.
- Moving forward it was felt that it would be useful to capture the voices of others in the city by collecting data which reflected other demographics and communities.

Attendees of the November event said:

How many days a week do you think people want to work remotely going forward?

6 PEOPLE SAID 0-1 DAYS

43 PEOPLE SAID 2-3 DAYS

5 PEOPLE SAID 4-5 DAYS