



MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW RESEARCH: TWO-THIRDS OF AUSTRALIANS ARE WORKING FROM HOME

Despite relaxed COVID restrictions in most parts of the country, more Australians are taking up the option to work from home, according to a new report from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS).

The *Families in Australia Survey: Towards COVID Normal* found that among the employed survey respondents, 67% were sometimes or always working from home, compared to 42% pre-COVID.

While many were enjoying the increased flexibility, 49% of parents surveyed who were working from home reported finding it difficult to combine work and care responsibilities, compared to 40% of those who never worked from home.

Lead researcher, Dr Jennifer Baxter, said there could be both benefits and drawbacks to working from home.

“Working from home is not a one-size fits all approach. Some are enjoying the added flexibility, while others miss the vibrancy of the office and those face-to-face conversations. Often, it can be about striking a balance between the two,” Dr Baxter said.

Among parents surveyed who were working from home, 22% were always or often actively caring for children while working, while 15% of parents were passively doing so. This was especially true for mothers, of whom 23% were often actively caring for children while working compared to 15% of fathers.

“When parents, especially mothers, work from home, they are sometimes expected to perform two jobs at once — their paid work and caregiving for their children. This doesn’t always mean productivity is sacrificed, however, as some jobs that involve working from home can readily be managed around care responsibilities,” Dr Baxter said.

The research found that when it came to couples adjusting work arrangements to care for children, mothers were the most likely to make changes. In November - December 2020, 57% of mothers worked part time to accommodate childcare responsibilities, compared to 9% of fathers. Flexible working hours (58%) and working from home (52%) were also common adjustments made by mothers, and for fathers also (38% using flexible working hours and 36% working from home to help care for children).

Overall, 12% of employed mothers did not use any particular work arrangements to help care for children, compared to 38% of fathers. The comments by survey participants indicate that COVID provided new opportunities for mothers and fathers to take up flexible work options, particularly working at home, but some still experienced barriers to fathers being able to access flexible hours.

“For some parents, a silver lining of COVID has been the greater acceptance of fathers working from home, and it will be interesting to see if this trend continues as we move further towards ‘COVID normal’, and to see whether this also results in changes in mothers and fathers’ use of other types of flexible working arrangements,” Dr Baxter said.

The report *Towards COVID Normal: Employment and work-family balance in 2020* is available here: <insert link>.

Towards COVID Normal was the second survey in the *Families in Australia Survey* (AIFS' flagship survey series). It ran from 19 November to 23 December 2020, when restrictions had been eased in most states.

For the first Families in Australia Survey, there were 7,306 respondents to the survey, of which 6,435 completed all survey questions. In the second Families In Australia Survey, 4,866 participants responded, of which 3,627 completed all survey questions.

Media contact: Lauren Everett (m) 0481 755 355 or Emma Schwarer (m) 0466 492 520.

AIFS conducts original research to increase understanding of Australian families and the issues that affect them, see aifs.gov.au