

Publication on Covid-19
Western Cape Government Working from Home Survey
June 2020



ACRONYMS

CD: SMI	Chief Directorate: Strategic Management Information
COVID-19	Corona Virus 2019
DoCS	Department of Community Safety
DG	Director-General
DHS	Department of Human Settlements
DLG	Department of Local Government
DOTP	Department of the Premier
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DTPW	Department of Transport and Public Works
EHWP	Employee Health and Wellness Programmes
MS	Microsoft
NCCC	National Corona Virus Command Council
OD	Organisational Development
PC	Personal Computer
PDO	Provincial Data Office
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
WCG	Western Cape Government
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive Summary

This publication contains the headline findings from an online survey conducted by the Department of the Premier on Western Cape Government (WCG) staff working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data was collected from staff across all departments between April 29 and May 15th, 2020. A total of 1791 valid responses were received. The sample was representative by gender, age, departmental spread, years of service, and salary levels. Incorporating a variety of household sizes, types and composition. This is a summary of the high-level findings.

The key findings across the main themes are as follows.

Work and Environment:

- 75% of respondents indicated that they were using a WCG laptop or PC while they were working from home;
- 93% can connect to the internet at home;
- 89% indicated that their data provision for working from home was adequate/reasonable; and
- 2/3rd or 65% of respondents rated their work space at home as excellent or good.

Communication with manager:

- Over 96% of respondents indicated that during the work from home period they had regular contact with their manager;
- 78% stated that the level of communication with their manager was adequate;
- The main three (3) first choice methods for communication were E-mail (54%), MS Teams (17%) and WhatsApp (17%). Most respondents are utilising a combination of methods; and
- Under half (42%) of the respondents indicated that they sent monitoring reports of their work to their manager daily.

General Experience:

- 75% of respondents feeling valued, trusted and motivated;
- 88% love the flexibility of working from home;
- 89% of respondents felt they had a clear understanding of what to do when working from home;
- 86% stated that they had access to required resources needed to do their job;
- Disadvantages stated were having to work longer hours than when office bound (62%); and
- 65% have children living with them; of which 73% are school going and 90% of these received some form of educational support from their school, during lockdown.

Behavioural Change:

- Overall compliance with regulations including social distancing and personal sanitation was strongly accepted with almost full compliance and agreement in the responses.

Impact on Lifestyle:

- Most respondents (87%) visited the shops themselves to purchase essential items;
- 70% of respondents participated in exercise while working from home with 30% exercising daily; and
- The top family activity was 78% and comprised of watching TV/streaming service.

Mental Health and Wellbeing:

- One (1) in five (5) of respondents felt feelings of isolation when working from home;
- 80% of respondents **are hopeful for the future**;
- 62%, comprising of almost 2/3rd of all respondents indicated that **they are coping at this time**; and
- 39% of respondents feel optimistic about returning to the office.

Employee Health and Wellness Programmes (EHWP):

- 84% of respondents are aware of the services offered by WCG EHWP; during this period, 9% of the sample have accessed these services.

Perceptions of Governments dealing with Covid-19 (National and Provincial):

- 28% of respondents believe government have the spread of Covid-19 under control;
- 61% indicated that they felt that Government were dealing with Covid-19 in the correct manner; and
- 30% of respondents indicated that they did not think government was prepared to deal with a significant increase in the Covid-19 infection rate.

Official WCG Communications:

- 99% of all respondents indicated that they read all or some of the official WCG Covid-19 information; and
- Of these, 69% indicated that they found the information very valuable.

Working from Home in the Future:

- 70% of respondents indicated that after lockdown they would prefer to continue to work from home; with 8.4% stating that they definitely would not like to do so. The remainder were undecided.

Table of Contents

ACRONYMS	2
Executive Summary.....	3
1. Introduction and Background.....	6
2. Survey Methodology and Responses.....	7
3. Operational Challenges when Working from Home:	14
3.1 Working from Home and environment, Work Space and Equipment.....	15
3.2 Communication with Manager / Contact and Meetings / Communication Methods and Reporting	17
4. Personal Challenges when Working from Home	20
4.1 General perceptions and experiences working from home	21
4.2 Behavioural Change:.....	22
4.3 Impact on Lifestyle	23
4.4 Mental Health and Wellbeing (Coping):	25
4.5 Employee Health and Wellness Support Services:.....	28
5. Perceptions on government in dealing with Covid-19:.....	29
5.1 Confidence in Government	29
5.2 Preparedness of Government	31
5.3 Official WCG Communications.....	31
6. Working from home in the future:	32
7. Conclusion	33
8. References.....	35

1. Introduction and Background

The Covid-19 pandemic catapulted hundreds of thousands of employees and their employers into a work pattern, and routine at home was vastly different to their normal daily working experience. The radical change happened suddenly; and for the vast majority, the change effectively occurred overnight, with little time to plan, negotiate and set up remote working arrangements in conjunction with their employer and manager. The Western Cape Government (WCG) was no exception. Following the President's announcement of a lockdown on the 23rd March 2020 which led to a further extension, the WCG took measures to ensure the safety of their office bound staff; and the continuity of business and service delivery by activating a work from home directive. The Organisational Development (OD) component within the Department of the Premier contributed by developing two (2) guidelines for managers to assist them during this unprecedented time; one (1) on Employee Health and Wellness¹ and the other a guideline on employee Mental Health.

Many surveys have been undertaken around the world by employers to gauge the experiences of employees when working from home during Covid-19. Typically, these surveys examined key themes including the suitability of the home working space, equipment and connectivity². Communication, management and sustaining productivity were also often highlighted³. Others focused on the adoption of behavioural change, mental health and coping mechanisms; and the success and challenges of the tools and strategies that were put in place to boost collaboration and work satisfaction;⁴ and to ultimately ensure that the job is done.

In April 2020, the Department of the Premier undertook a survey to gather data on how WCG staff are managing working from home during these unprecedented times. This was to be the first survey polling WCG staff's views on working from home. What makes the WCG's survey unique in many ways, was the fact that it was internally conducted and specifically targeted public servants who were previously office based.

The purpose of the survey was to seek answers for some of the pertinent challenges facing employees in these circumstances; and the questions were selected based on previous surveys recently conducted on the topic internationally. The evidence based responses from the survey could be useful

¹ Ways to manage and engage your employees during Covid-19 Workplace disruptions (2020) WCG.

² Mc Carthy, A., et al (2020) Remote Working During Covid-19, Ireland's National Survey Initial Report. Galway, Ireland, NUI Galway Whitaker Institute and Western Commission.

³ Morikawa, M, (2020) COVID-19, teleworking, and productivity. Tokyo, Japan RIETI <https://voxeu.org/article/covid-19-teleworking-and-productivity>.. Accessed on 28/05/20

⁴ Slack (2020), Remote work in the age of Covid-19. A nationwide survey of knowledge workers reveals how companies and employees are responding to a remote work surge. USA. <https://slackhq.com/report-remote-work-during-coronavirus> Accessed on 28/05/20

⁵ Bevan S, Mason B, Bajorek Z (2020) Working from Home Wellbeing Survey Brighton, UK. Institute for Employment Studies (IES) <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/ies-working-home-wellbeing-survey>. Accessed on 28/05/20

to support the thinking around how WCG, as an organization, will look post Covid -19 and remote working as a sustainable option. This survey can also be utilised as a benchmark for future similar surveys.

The Provincial Data Office (PDO), through the Chief Director (CD) of Strategic Management Information (SMI) within its capacity as leading on evaluation and research evidence, took the initiative for the study as part of a set of broader evidence based studies on Covid-19. The survey was conducted in house and Inputs on the questions were also received from other WCG stakeholders, including the CD of Organizational Development (OD)

The questions in the survey were organized around the following thematic areas:

- Operational challenges such as the working from home environment, equipment, connectivity, communication with manager and methods used.
- Personal challenges, general experience/perceptions of working from home, behavioural change, impact on lifestyle, mental health and wellbeing (coping) and employee wellness support.
- Perceptions of Government's dealing with Covid-19 and official communication.
- Working from home in the future.

A profile of respondents was also generated including information on home composition and schooling children from home.

2. Survey Methodology and Responses

The survey, utilising the online Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) platform, incorporated a mix of quantitative and likert-scale questions with limited open-ended questions. It was piloted within the Branch Strategic Programmes in DotP, where-after the questions were validated and refined. It was administered through a Corporate Communications email to WCG staff which featured a direct link in the email to the survey, which could only be accessed once per staff member. The survey targeted WCG office based staff only; and those who were frontline service delivery workers were filtered out as ineligible at the beginning of the survey⁶.

⁶ A survey targeting this population is currently being conceptualized by OD

LET'S STOP THE SPREAD

Share your Working from Home Experience

Dear Colleagues,

The lockdown has required those of us who can, to work from home to assist in flattening the curve of the Covid-19 pandemic and protect one another from the virus. This survey has been developed to understand how this extraordinary period in our history is affecting the Western Cape Government staff, and what are their experiences of working from home during the lockdown.

Please complete the survey via the link below, it should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes of your time. Your responses are completely confidential and all data will be analysed anonymously and the findings will be shared.

The survey can be accessed through the following link:
<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/working-home-survey>

Leveraging Data and Evidence for Covid-19

Western Cape Government

If you have flu-like symptoms, including cough and fever, please call the **Coronavirus Provincial Hotline** on **021 928 4102**

Response Rate and Limitations:

A total of 26000 emails were sent to WCG staff who have official email accounts. There were 2227 responses received between April 29th and May 15th, 2020. A number of responses (436) were removed, as they were completed by respondents who were ineligible as they were not working from home, or respondents who dropped out midway through answering. A total of 1791 responses were usable. The response rate for the survey was 6.8%, which is considered low for an internal survey where average response rates tend to be in the region of 30%-40%⁷. Possible reasons for the low rate of response could be the fact that not all WCG staff have internet access at home; therefore, the survey reach is biased towards those who have devices and connectivity. WCG staff in salary levels 10,11 and 12 were well represented in the sample at almost 34% as were levels 8 and 9 (34%), while higher SMS levels made up 6.4% of responses. These proportions must also be kept in mind when interpreting the findings, considering that higher SMS are likely the salary level grouping with the best home connectivity. The response rate is also a limitation for the findings, as general inferences about the entire WCG staff population cannot be made from the data herein.

Profile of the Respondents



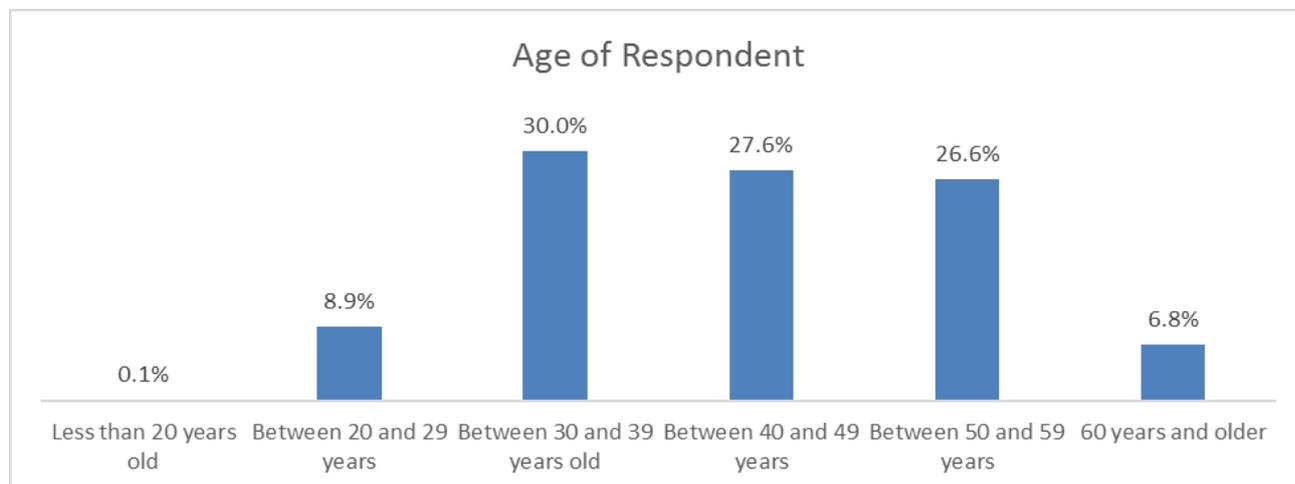
The following section provides a profile of the respondents. Of the total valid respondents (n=1791), 1568 (87.6%) indicated that they were currently working from home full time, and the remaining 223

⁷ <https://www.surveygizmo.com/resources/blog/category/survey-tips/>, accessed 28/05/20

(12.4%) indicated that they worked from home sometimes. 1053 (59%) of the respondents were female and 728 (41%) were male⁸. As the gender divide was uneven, this is important to note when interpreting responses.

Age:

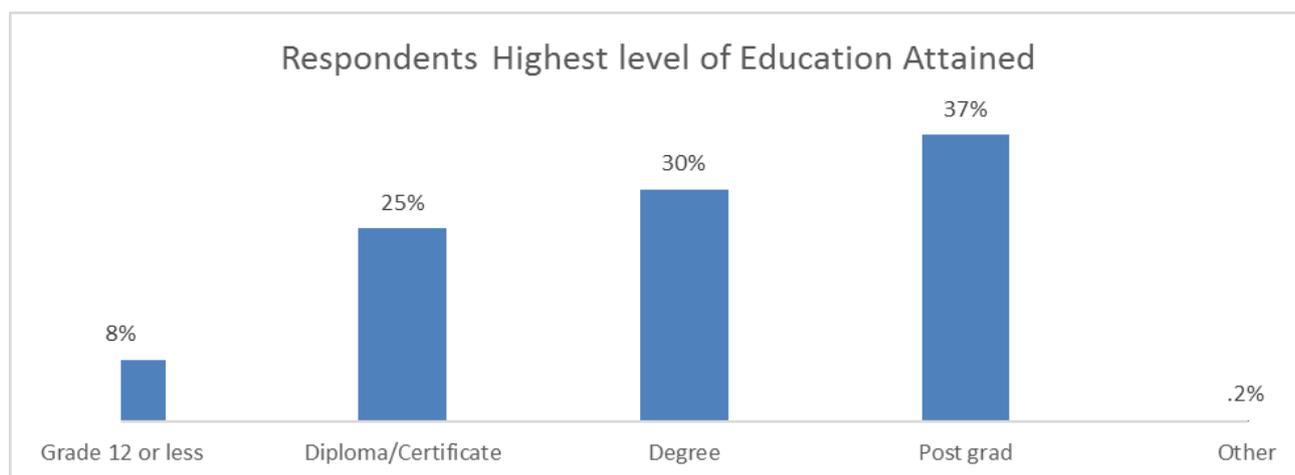
Figure 1: Age of Respondents



More than half of the sample 1032 (57.6%) were between the ages of 30 and 49 years old. With 162 (9%) of the sample under 30 years, and one third (33.4%) of the sample or 597 respondents, who were 50 years and older.

Highest Qualification Attained:

Figure 2: Highest Qualification Attained

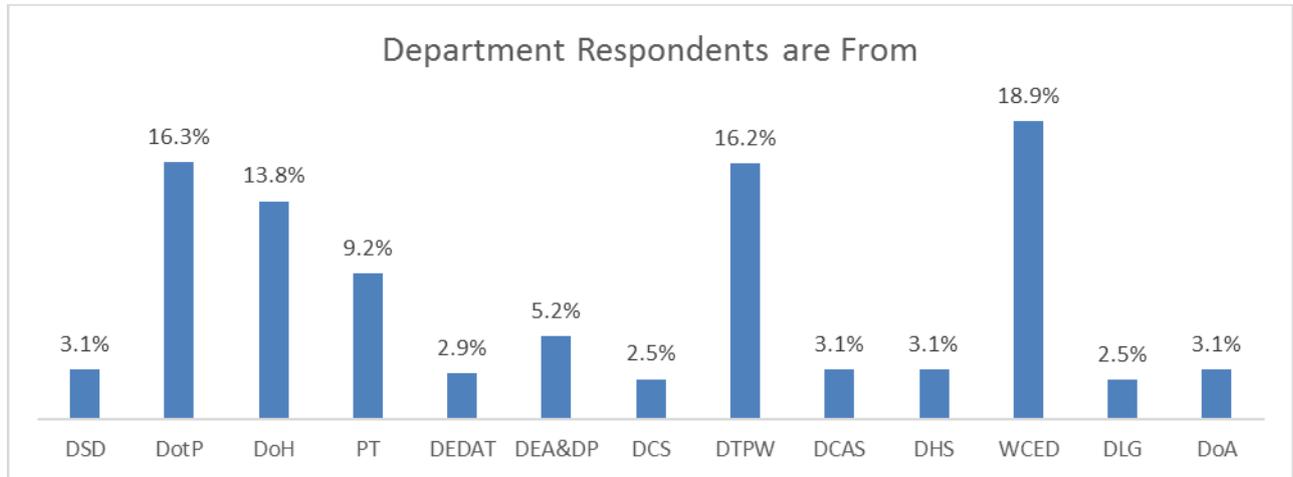


67% of respondents held either a degree (544) or postgraduate degree (643); with 153 (8.5%) of respondents holding a grade 12 education or less.

⁸ 10 respondents indicated that they would prefer not to provide their gender

Departmental Response

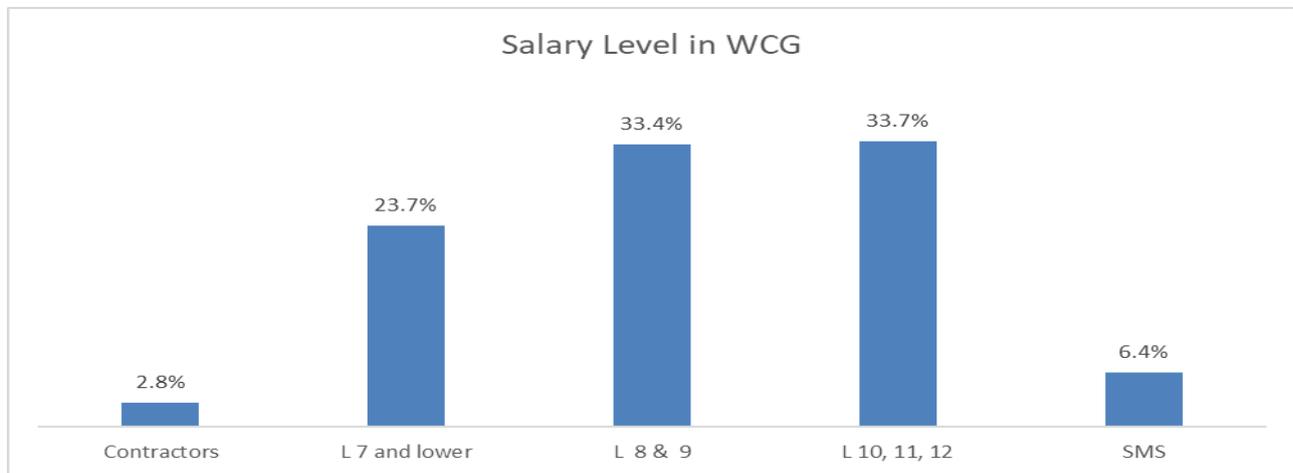
Figure 3: Departments Respondents are from:



The survey received responses from all 13 WCG departments. These responses can be viewed in the context of the size of the department; with the highest number of respondents from the WCED 338(18.9%), DotP 292 (16.3%) and DTPW 290 (16.2%); and a lower number of responses received from smaller departments such as DLG and DCS⁹.

Salary Level:

Figure 4: Salary level in WCG

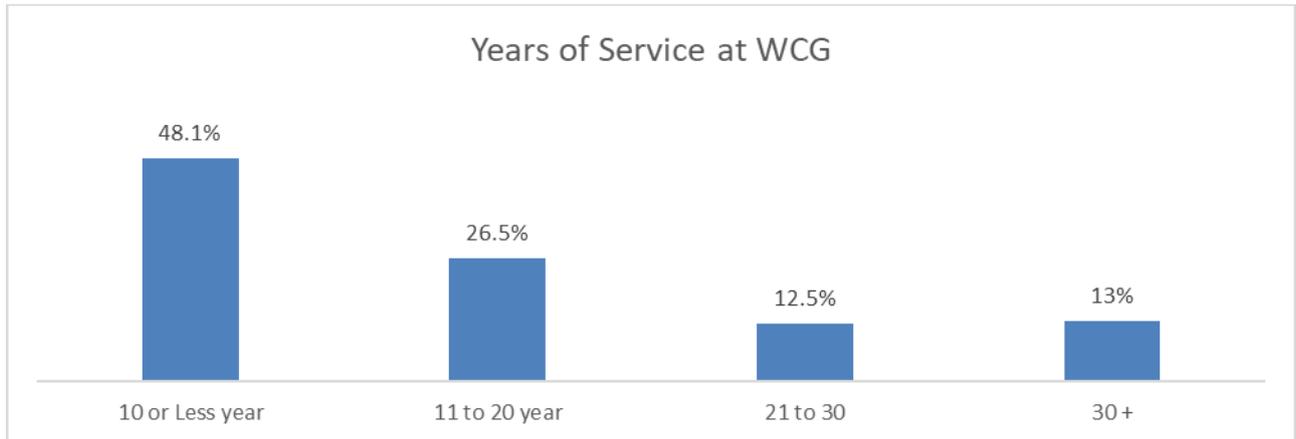


Respondents were representative of all salary levels and also included some WCG contract workers. Over 593 (33.4%) of all respondents were from salary levels 8 and 9, with just under a third, 604, (33.7%) from salary levels 10, 11 and 12. 425 (23.7%) of the sample were level 7 or lower. Senior management grades represented 114 (6.4%) of the sample; and 50 (2.8%) of the sample was made up of contract workers.

⁹ Data was requested on the number of mailboxes that the survey was sent to per department to demonstrate the responses per department proportionally, however this information was not available.

Years of Service at WCG:

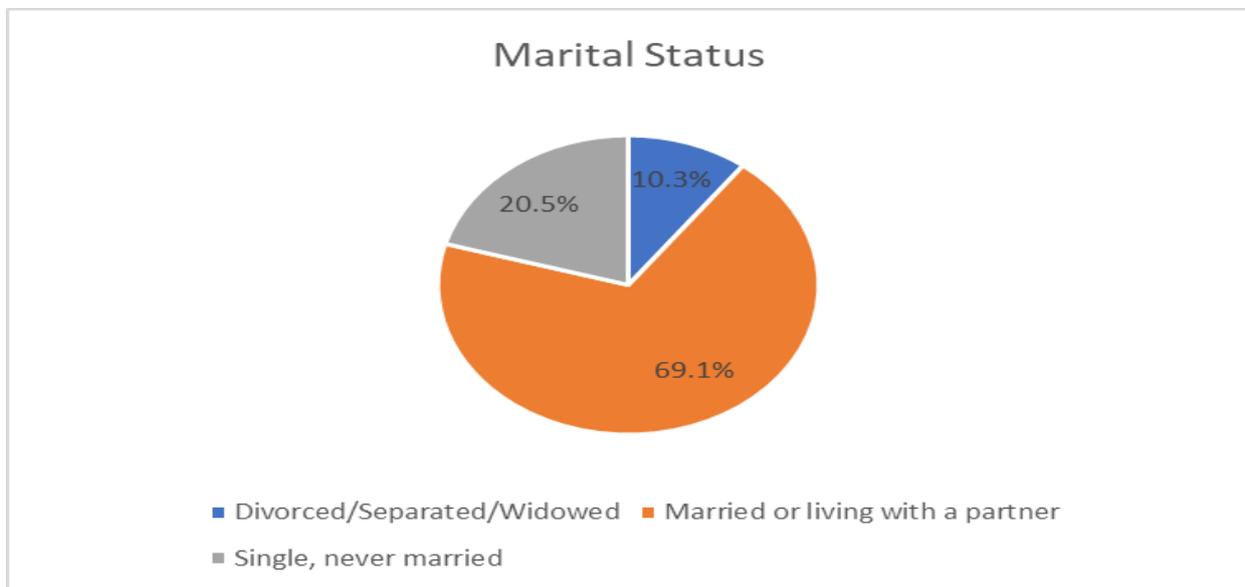
Figure 5: Years of Service at WCG



Almost half (48%) of the sample consisting of 860 respondents have less than ten years of service to WCG, with the majority of these (388) having between six (6) and ten years of service. Over a quarter of the sample 457 (25.5%), have more than 20 years of service, with 232 (13%) having over 30 years of service.

Marital Status:

Figure 6: Marital Status of Respondents



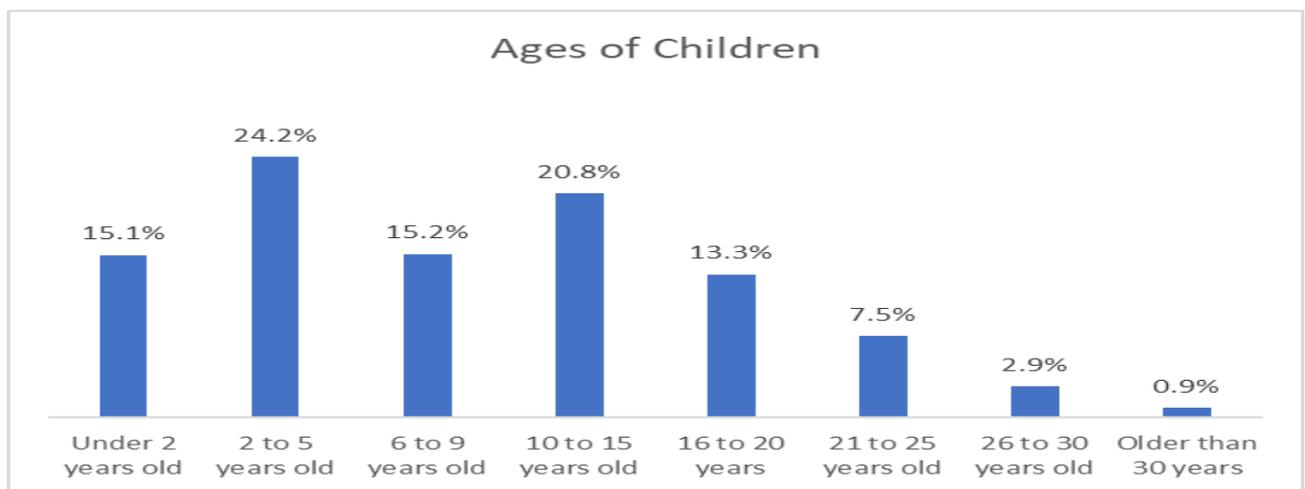
Almost 70% of respondents or 1238, were married or living with their partner, 368 (20.5%) were single and 184 (10.3%) were divorced/separated or widowed.

Children and Household Composition:



Over 65% of all respondents (n=1169) had children living with them in their home.

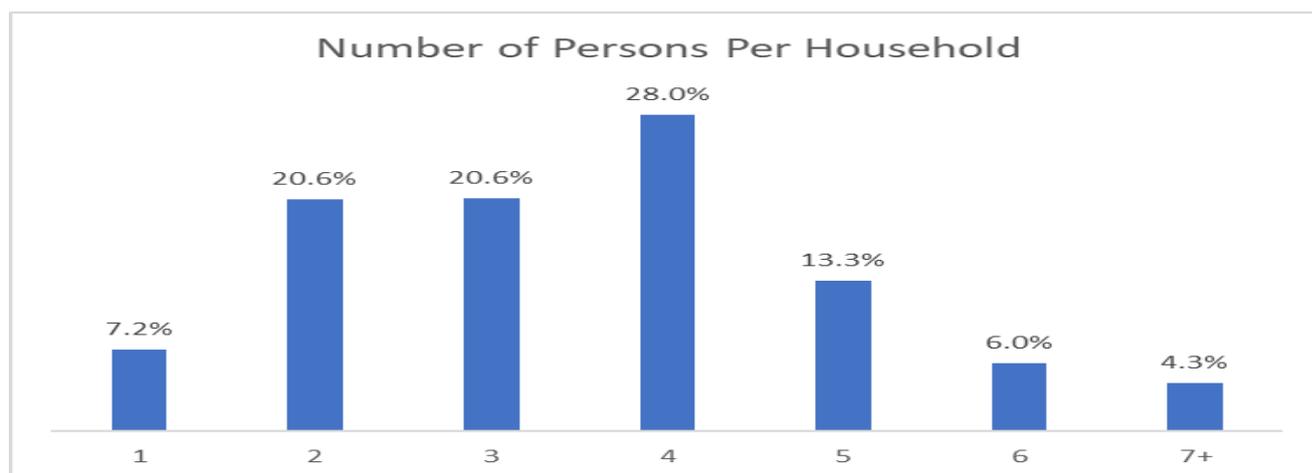
Figure 7: Ages of Children living in the Home



(n=1169)

Furthermore, over half or 635 (54.5%) of these respondents, have children under the age of 10 years living with them. 398 (34.1%) have children between the ages of 10 and 20 years old. With 133, (11.3%) have children older than 21 years. Most of the respondents in this sample have younger children.

Figure 8: Number of Persons per Household:



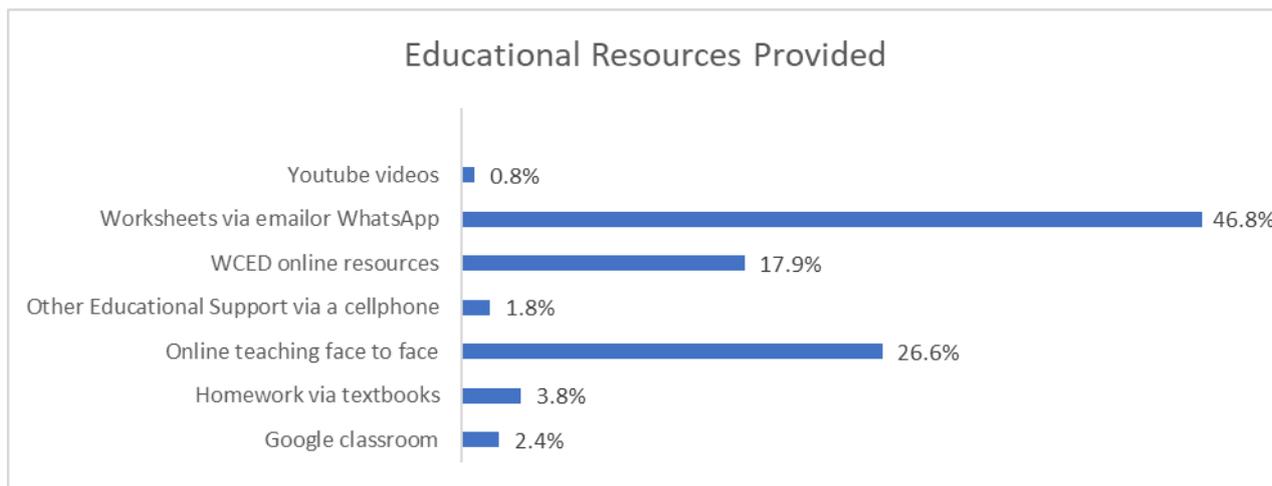
The median household size was four (4) people 499 (28%), with approximately 183 (10.3%) of respondent's having six (6) or more people per household. In addition, 328 (18%) respondents have an elderly person/s living with them;¹⁰ and 104 (6%) have a disabled/mentally challenged or incapacitated person living with them¹¹.

Educational Support to children:

It was deemed necessary to close the schools during the first phase of lockdown in order to prevent the spread of the virus. Many parents throughout the world were tasked with having to provide educational support to their children while working from home. This meant that many parents were forced to become teachers, while also maintaining their careers. Of the 1165 (65% of the entire sample) respondents with children, 856 (73%) of these indicated that they have school going children. Schools were tasked with providing educational support to learners, and the type of support received assumed many different formats. Of the 854 respondents who answered this question, 90% (771) stated that their child or children were receiving some sort of educational support from their school during lockdown.

¹⁰ This was not defined in the survey by age cut off point

Figure 9: Educational Resources Provided: N=720



The most common types of support received were worksheets that were emailed or sent via WhatsApp, 337 (46.8%). The second most common method was online teaching utilising various platforms including Zoom and MS Teams, 191 (26.6%). WCED online resources were provided to 129 (17.9%). Less than 4%, or 27 learners utilised traditional textbooks for homework, with the vast majority utilising online resources. It is important to note that in this sample, almost all homes have internet connectivity. It is also worthy to note that respondents indicated that many learners were provided with and utilised a combination of resources from the list above.

3. Operational Challenges when Working from Home:

Many office-based staff members worldwide do not have dedicated home offices. The Covid-19 pandemic forced people to set up functioning home work spaces within a very limited space of time, and with what was readily available to them as lockdown loomed; taking into consideration unique and diverse living facilities and family composition. WCG staff were no exception. Creating a suitable work environment with furniture, equipment and connectivity proved challenging for some. Other such operational challenges included establishing a communication protocol with managers in order to ensure productivity and continuity of business. Developing effective ways to communicate while observing social distancing, meant utilising technology in new ways that many had never experienced before. Equipment (device), internet connection and data were for most absolute prerequisites¹².

¹² it is important to note that those who responded to this survey had on the whole, access to all three prerequisites as this survey was administered electronically.

3.1 Working from Home and environment, Work Space and Equipment



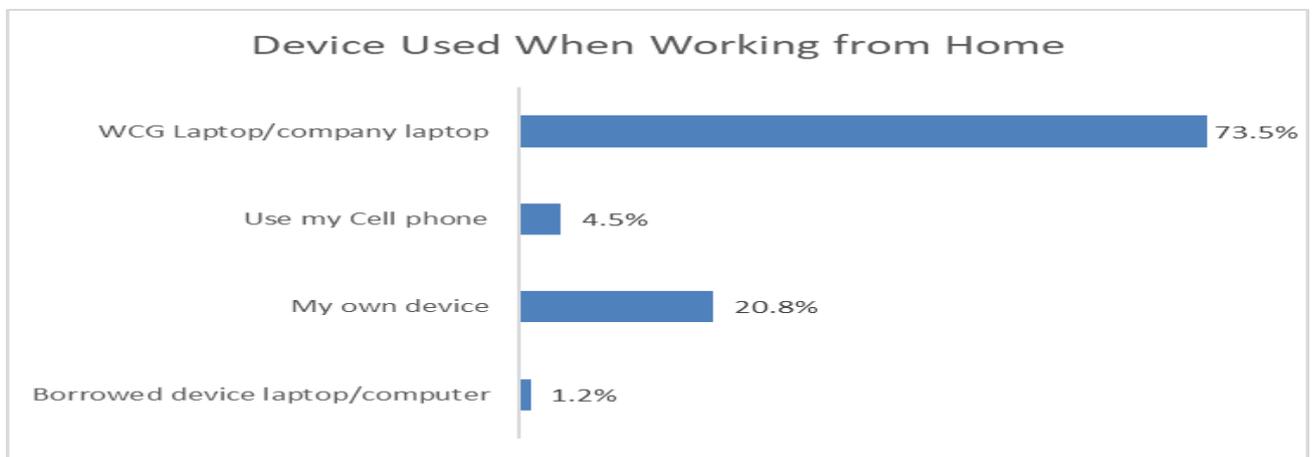
used a WCG laptop or PC while they were working from home



93% could connect to the internet at home

Device Use:

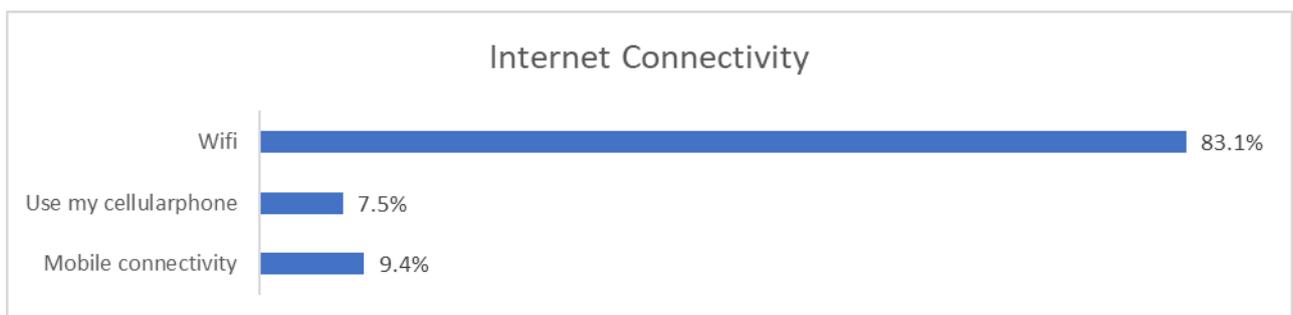
Figure 10: Device used when working from home



Almost three (3) quarter or 1317 (73.5%) respondents indicated that they were using a WCG/Company laptop while they were working from home. A further 372 (20.8%) stated that they were using their personal laptop/PC; while 102 (5.7%) stated that they were using their cell phone or a borrowed device for work related matters.

Connectivity/data provision:

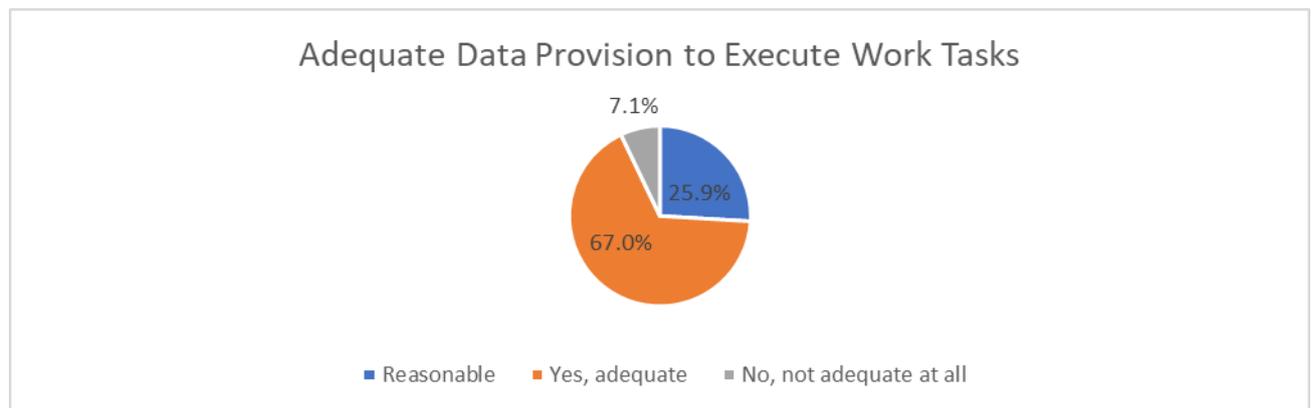
Figure 11: Internet Connectivity



As previously mentioned, for office based staff to effectively work from home, connectivity is essential. 1668 (93.1%) of the respondents indicated that they can connect to the internet at home. Of the entire sample, 1489 (83.1%) connect via WIFI, with a further 302 (17%) connecting via their cell phone; either as a modem or accessing internet directly on the device.

All areas of the country do not have good internet connectivity or internet speed and infrastructure often does not perform efficiently; even with fibre connections, lagging is common. In South Africa the cost of data is one of the highest rates in the world¹³. In this regard Fibre connections being relatively recent tend to be more expensive.

Figure 12: Adequate Data Provision to execute work tasks

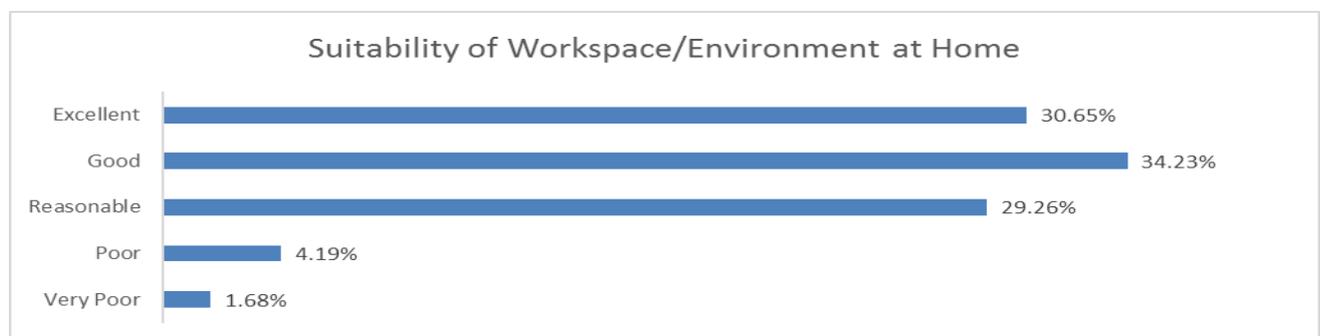


N=1665

Respondents were asked if they had adequate data provision while working from home to execute work tasks, including connecting to necessary platforms. Of the 1665 responses received, almost 1115 (77%) indicated that their data provision was adequate. A further 432 (26%) indicated it was reasonable, with just over 118 (7%) stating that their data provision was inadequate.

Suitability of Workspace/Environment at home:

Figure 13: Suitability of Workspace/Environment at Home



¹³ <https://www.businessinsider.co.za/sa-fibre-data-costs-the-most-expensive-in-the-world-2019-12> Accessed 29/05/20

When asked to rate the suitability of their workspace at home (n=1791), almost 2/3rd or 1162 (64.9%) of the respondents rated their workspace/ environment at home excellent (549) or good (613); with 524 (29.2%) rating their workspace reasonable, and less than 105 (6%) rating their environment poor or very poor.

3.2 Communication with Manager / Contact and Meetings / Communication Methods and Reporting



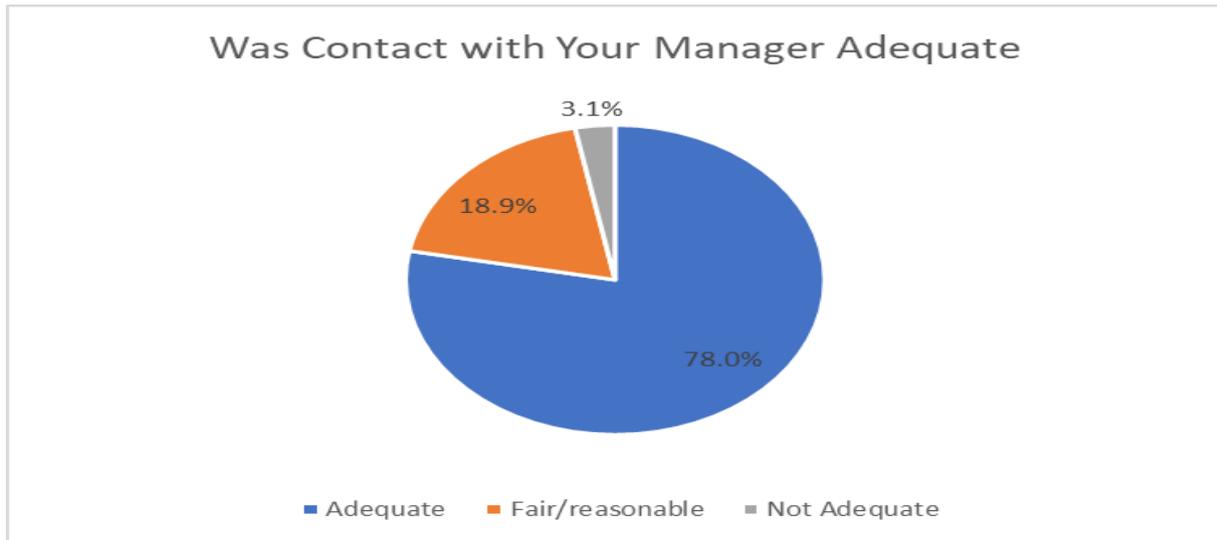
Communication is one of the key success factors when it comes to remote working. Finding the best ways to communicate with your team is imperative when you're not working face-to-face, because you're missing most—if not all—of the context of each person's situation¹⁴. Working from home can be isolating; and communication is key to ensuring that team members and managers are kept connected to each other at a difficult time. The other obvious benefits are clarification of tasks and progress reporting. The approach taken to communication is as critical as the methods used. In large organisations such as the WCG, more standardised approaches may be favoured; and due to the rapid onset of the lockdown for phase 5, communication protocols were not necessarily standardised and put in place.

Contact and Meetings:

Almost all, 1723 (96.2%) of the respondents indicated that during the work from home period (up until the survey cut-off date), they had regular contact with their manager.

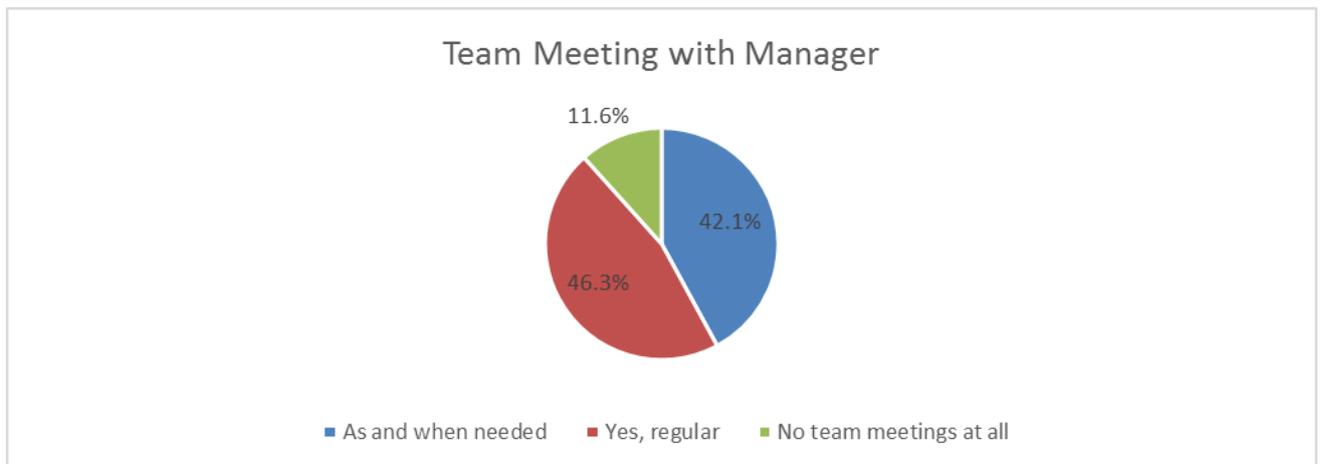
¹⁴ <https://zapier.com/learn/remote-work/remote-team-communication/> accessed 29/05/20

Figure 14: Was Contact with you Manager Adequate



When asked if they felt that the contact they had was adequate, 1397 (78%) stated that they felt that this contact was adequate, almost 339 (19%) indicated that it was fair or reasonable; with only 55 (3%) indicating that the contact they had with their manager while working from home was not adequate.

Figure 15: Team Meetings with Manager



All respondents were asked if they had team meetings with their manager while working from home. 1583 (88.4%) indicated that they did have team meetings with their manager. For 208 (11.6%) respondents, no team meetings took place. Of those who had team meetings the majority, 829 (46.3%) noted that the meetings took place regularly; while 754 (42.1%) stated that meetings took place as and when needed.

Communication methods and reporting:

Top 3 methods of communication:

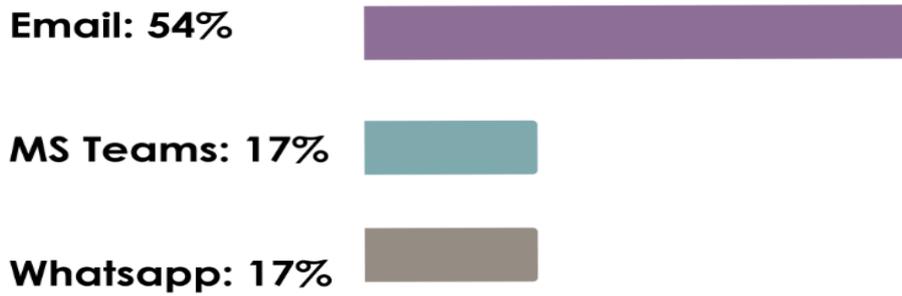
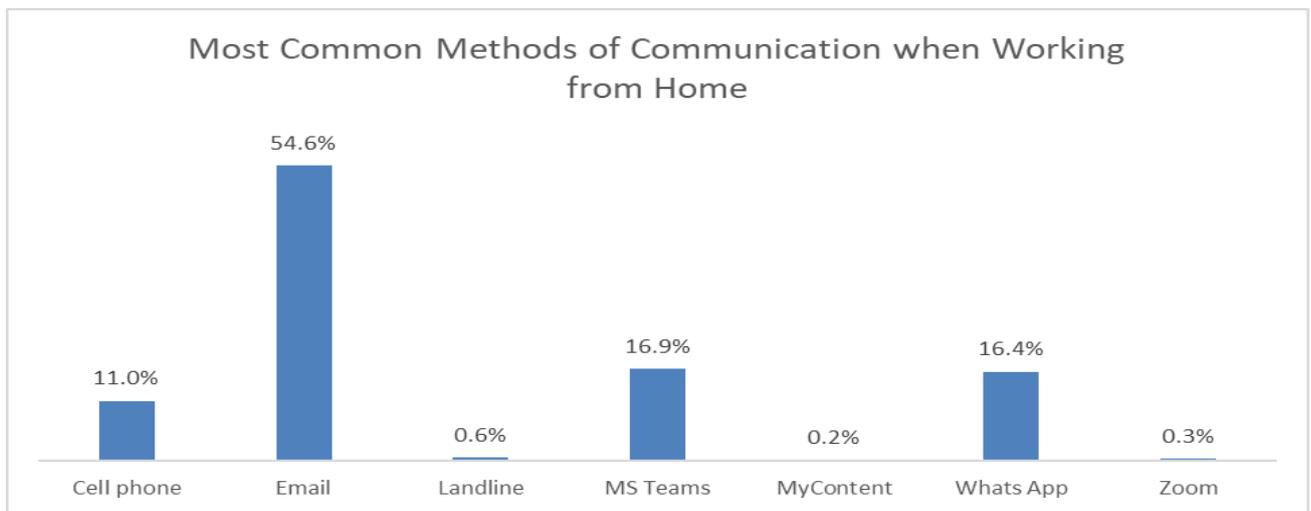
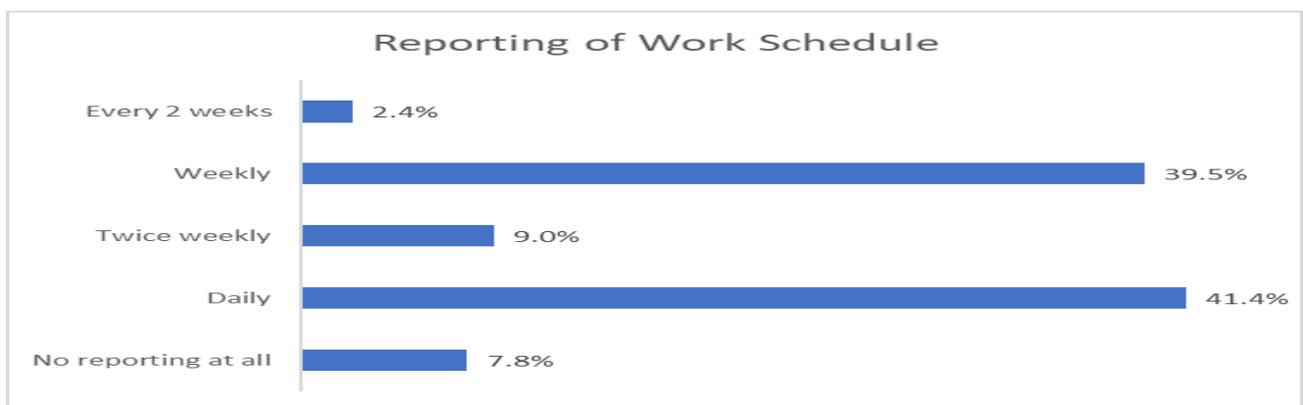


Figure 16: Most Common methods of communication when working from home



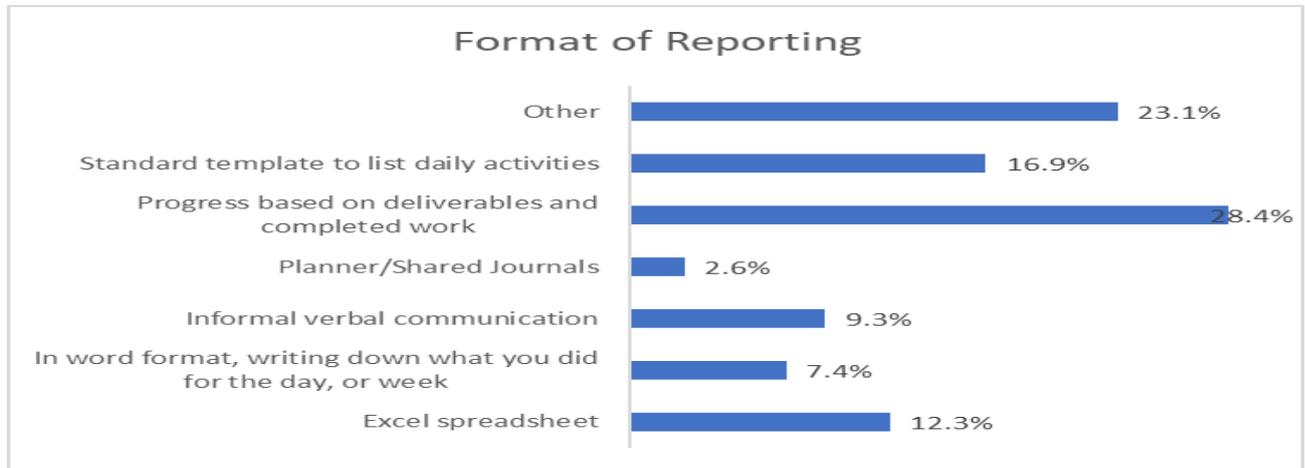
Multiple types of communication methods were utilised by staff to stay in touch with their managers and colleagues when working from home, the main three (3) first choice methods being E-mail: 987 (54%), MS Teams: 303 (17%) and WhatsApp: 294(17%). Other methods used were cell phone calls: 198 (11%), landline: 10 (0.6%), Zoom: 6 (0.3%) and My Content: 3 (0.2%). Most respondents utilised a combination of methods to communicate.

Figure 17: Reporting of Work Schedule



741 (42%) respondents indicated that they send monitoring reports of their work to their manager daily, a further 161 (9%) twice weekly and almost 707 (40%) weekly (total, 91%). 43 (2.4%) sent reports of work once every two (2) weeks; and 139 (7.8%) did no reporting of any kind.

Figure 18: Format of Reporting



The top three (3) ways of communicating progress were progress based on deliverables completed; this was true for 508 (28%) respondents, 302 (17%) completed a standard daily template and 212 (12%) completed an excel spreadsheet (total 57%). 414 (23.1%) indicated they used other unspecified methods. Some respondents indicated that they communicated progress in a combination of ways.

4. Personal Challenges when Working from Home

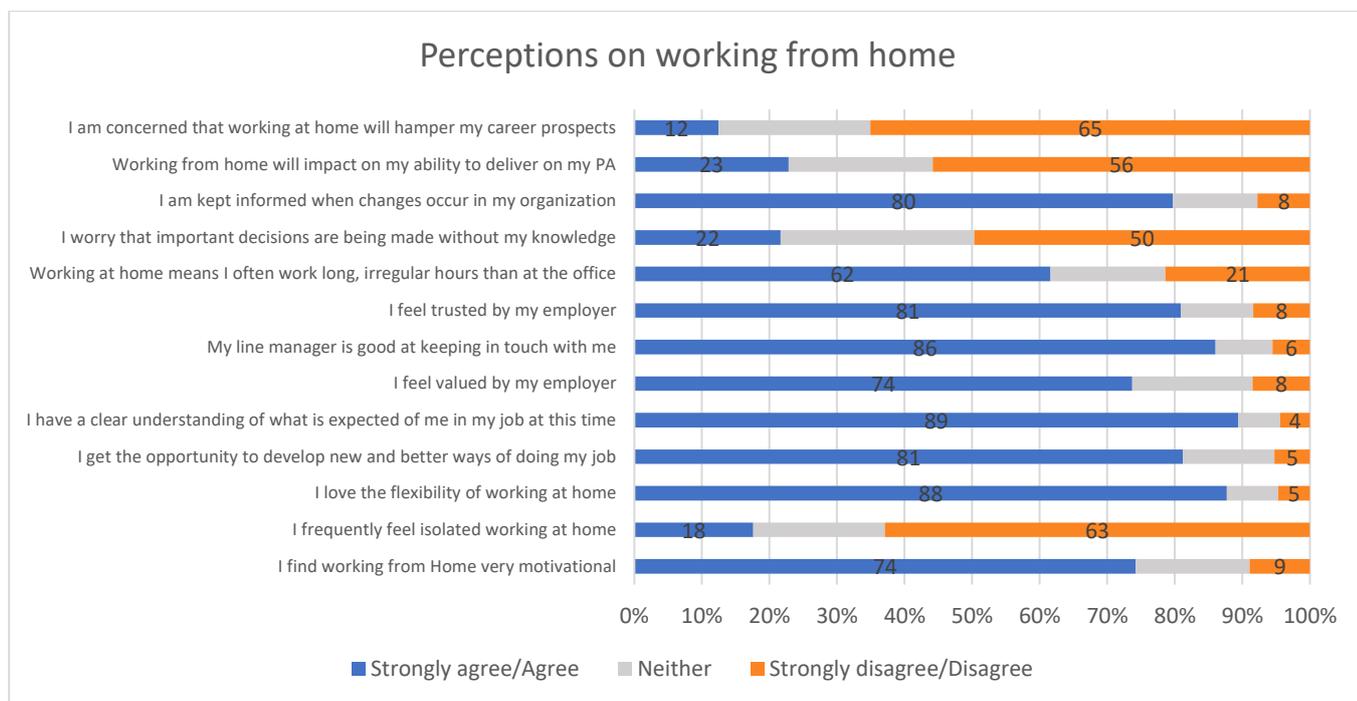


Almost all businesses, government organisations and non-profit organisations; even those with no remote work culture, had to effectively manage their employees working from home in an attempt to slow down the spread of Covid -19 virus. Research shows how the workforce is experiencing the shift, and what employees need to stay productive and engaged. The future of work after the COVID-19 pandemic will definitely not be the same.

In government particularly, it is the first time that a work from home strategy had to be implemented in a short space of time. Employers had very little time to prepare IT infrastructure and other operational requirements. Similarly, employees had to adjust and adapt their physical spaces in their home; and create a conducive working environment. This in turn can have a huge impact on social, mental and emotional well-being for many amidst the health concerns around Covid-19.

4.1 General perceptions and experiences working from home

Figure 19: General perceptions and experience working from home



Overall, the experience in working from home has been overwhelmingly positive; with the majority (more than 75%) of people feeling valued, trusted and motivated; whilst at the same time, 88% love the flexibility of working from home.

Managing deliverables and expectations from employees during this time needs to be clearly communicated and managed. Establishing rules of engagement early on for remote work from home to be effective and more efficient. In this context, 89% of respondents indicated they have a clear understanding of what is expected from them in doing their job; and 86% stated that their line manager is good at keeping in touch. Yet, 1 in 4 people (23%) are concerned that working from home will impact on their ability to deliver on their performance agreement. This could be skewed to senior management staff, and working remotely impacts on their ability deliver effectively on all outputs. This ties in with about 22% of respondents indicating they worry that important decisions are being made without their knowledge.

Feeling isolated and the lack of social interaction are common concerns expressed in a remote working environment. About 18% (almost 1 in 5 people) expressed feelings of isolation when working

from home. This can easily be addressed through some basic social interaction, for example leaving some time at the beginning of a team meeting to have a social check in (e.g. "How was your weekend?"). Other options include virtual pizza parties (in which pizza is delivered to all team members at the time of a videoconference). While these types of events may sound artificial or forced, experienced managers of remote workers report that virtual events help reduce feelings of isolation and promote a sense of belonging.

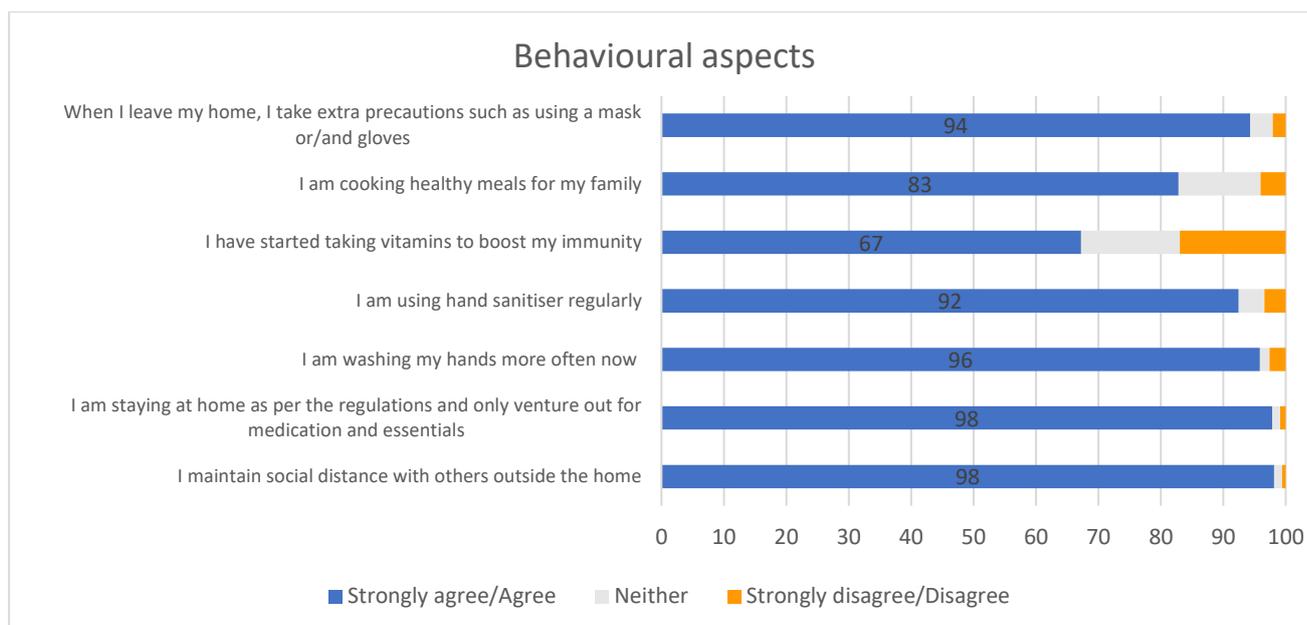
Almost two thirds (62%) of respondents indicate working from home means they often work long and irregular hours. This in turn has an impact on maintaining work-life balance, setting boundaries and having a routine in place for effective working from home.

4.2 Behavioural Change:



A critical element in reducing transmission of the Covid-19 virus is rapid and widespread behavioural change. Behavioural science and the broad sweep of history suggests that COVID-19 will transform our daily lives in the long run. From ongoing research, it is evident that the coronavirus had already created significant shifts in people's behaviour. At this point, some of these behavioural changes are perhaps driven by fear; and it would be interesting to see post Covid-19, for how long some of these behavioural changes will be around. It is predicted that regular hand washing, social distancing and hoarding will scale back considerably.

Figure 20: Behaviour changes



Overall, the survey indicates good compliance with social distancing regulations and adhering to level 5 lock down regulations. Good hygiene practices such as hand washing, using hand sanitizers and the wearing of Personal Protective equipment (PPE)¹⁵ when leaving the home, received high positive ratings.

Overall compliance with regulations, practicing social distancing (98%) and more frequent hand washing (96%)

Behavioural change is often impacted by numerous factors such as norms, culture, social networks, inequalities, economic position, trust, leadership, current events, news, communication and social media. During a pandemic of this nature, these influences become critical in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus, with authorities and health officials often needing to persuade the larger population to make a number of behaviour changes, and follow health policies and regulations aimed at containment.

4.3 Impact on Lifestyle

Shopping for Essentials:



87% visited the shops themselves for essential items

¹⁵ Which includes masks, face shields and/or gloves

The vast majority (87%) of respondents either visited the shops themselves to purchase essential items; whilst a further 21% also utilised a shopping delivery service either online or through an Application (App). 15% of respondents also made use of a family member, friend or a neighbour to support for their shopping requirements. Generally, a combination of shopping methods was used. This is interesting since this was sometimes the only contact people had with other people outside their immediate core family during lockdown level 5.

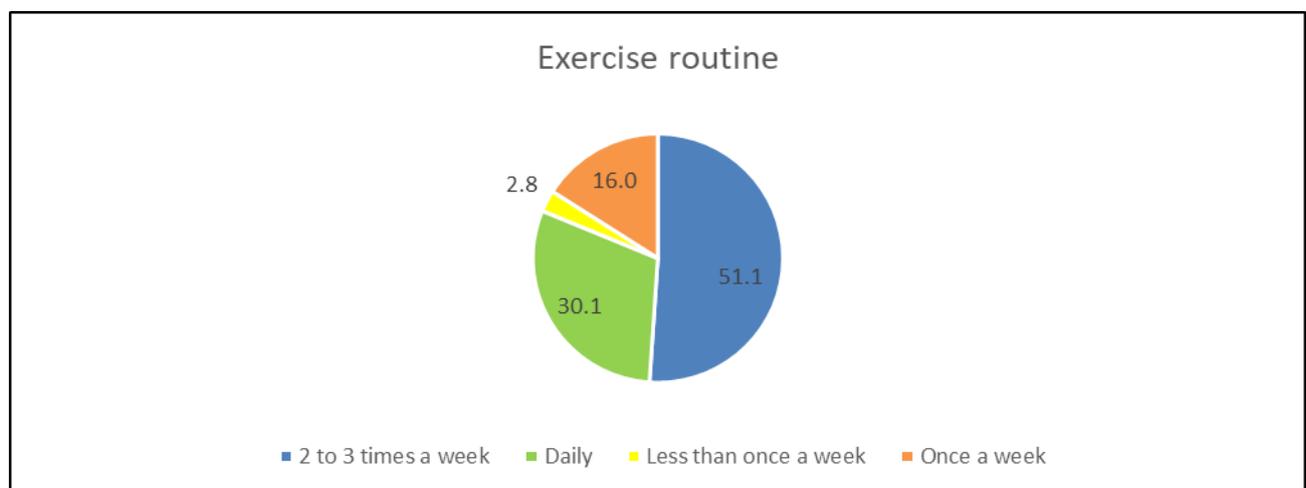
Exercise Routine:

70% of respondents participated in exercise while working from home, of these **30%** exercise daily



The benefits of physical activity have been well documented over time. Evidence shows that regular physical activity contributes to the primary and secondary prevention of several chronic diseases; as well as improving mental health, lessening symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress. Being on full lockdown at home is challenging. While lockdown is an opportunity to spend quality time with family, many of us experience stress and anxiety associated with being confined to our homes and having to deal with many uncertainties. One way to deal with this stress is to exercise. It is interesting to note that 70% of respondents (n=1252) participated in some form of exercise while working from home during this period of lockdown. This is clearly above the norm, noting the sample are employed people with internet access at home. During this period of Covid-19, level 4 and 5 lockdown periods there has been lots of debates around when people can exercise, where people can exercise and how people should exercise.

Figure 21: Frequency of exercise



70% of respondents (n=1252) participated in some form of exercise while working from home. Of these, about half (51.1%) exercised two (2) to three (3) times a week; these figures are quite high and could be skewed to the unusual circumstances we found ourselves with not much to do. 30% indicated exercising daily and 16% exercised at least once a week. The most popular types of exercises in order of highest mentioned were: walking or running on a treadmill or around the home/plot, followed by online aerobics or exercise classes, skipping, yoga/Pilates and weight lifting. Some respondents indicated multiple forms of exercise.

Family Leisure Time:

Life under lockdown can be tough and challenging especially if one's physical home space is limited; or if you do not have sufficient entertainment, adequate internet access and data provision. During this time, people may find it difficult to find their "own space" while isolating at home with family. This may be because they share a bedroom, do not have access to any outdoor space or feel that they cannot find a quiet part of the house where they can be by themselves. Family interaction and social cohesion is especially important during this time, and can have a huge impact on emotional and mental well-being.

Respondents were asked which type of activities they participated in for social interaction with their families; and the results indicated the top mentioned activities were: watching TV or a streaming service (78%), followed by cooking or baking (74%), de-cluttering the home (47%), gardening (36%), board games (33%) and arts and crafts at 28%.

4.4 Mental Health and Wellbeing (Coping):

One Quarter (26.5%) are feeling anxious about their health

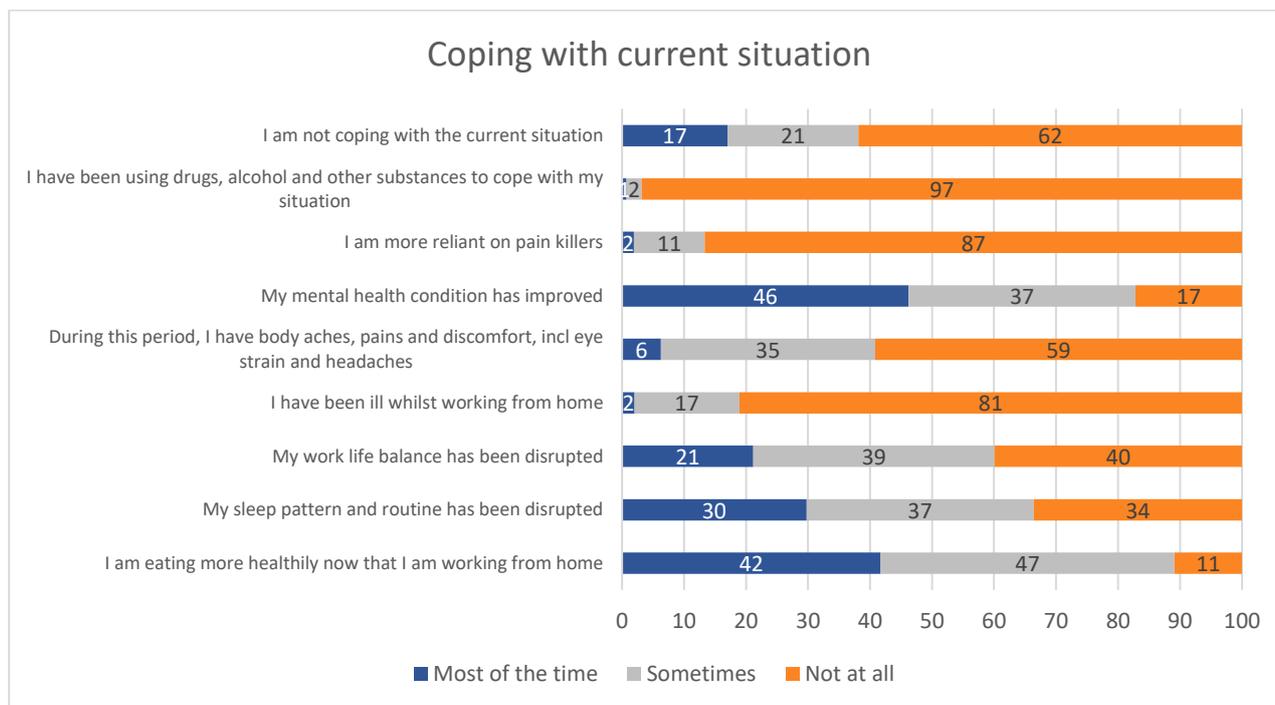
1 in 5 have lost sleep worrying about things

The spread of Covid-19 may be stressful for many people, fear and anxiety about the disease can be overwhelming and can have huge impact mental health and wellness. Stress during an outbreak of such a disease can have an impact on sleep and eating patterns, concentration, worry about your health and that of your loved ones, job security or loss of income, worsening of chronic health problems, worsening of mental health conditions, increased use of alcohol, tobacco and painkillers. People all respond differently to stressful situations depending on their social, religious, cultural and economic background, including the community they live in.

Taking care of yourself, friends and your family can help you cope with stress. There are many ways of coping with such a pandemic: Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories,

including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and can add to one's stress. Take care of your body, try to eat healthy well-balanced meals, exercise regularly and get plenty of sleep, avoid drugs and alcohol. Make time to unwind and try to do other activities that you love and enjoy. Stay in touch and connect with friends and family, talk to people whom you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Figure 22: Coping with the current situation



Overall, indications are that the survey respondents are coping (62%) under the current situation; for most of the time their mental health condition has improved (46%) and they are not using drugs, alcohol and other substances (97%) and pain killers (87%) during the covid-19 lockdown period. The results must be interpreted with caution based on the sample selection being employed government officials with access to internet at home.

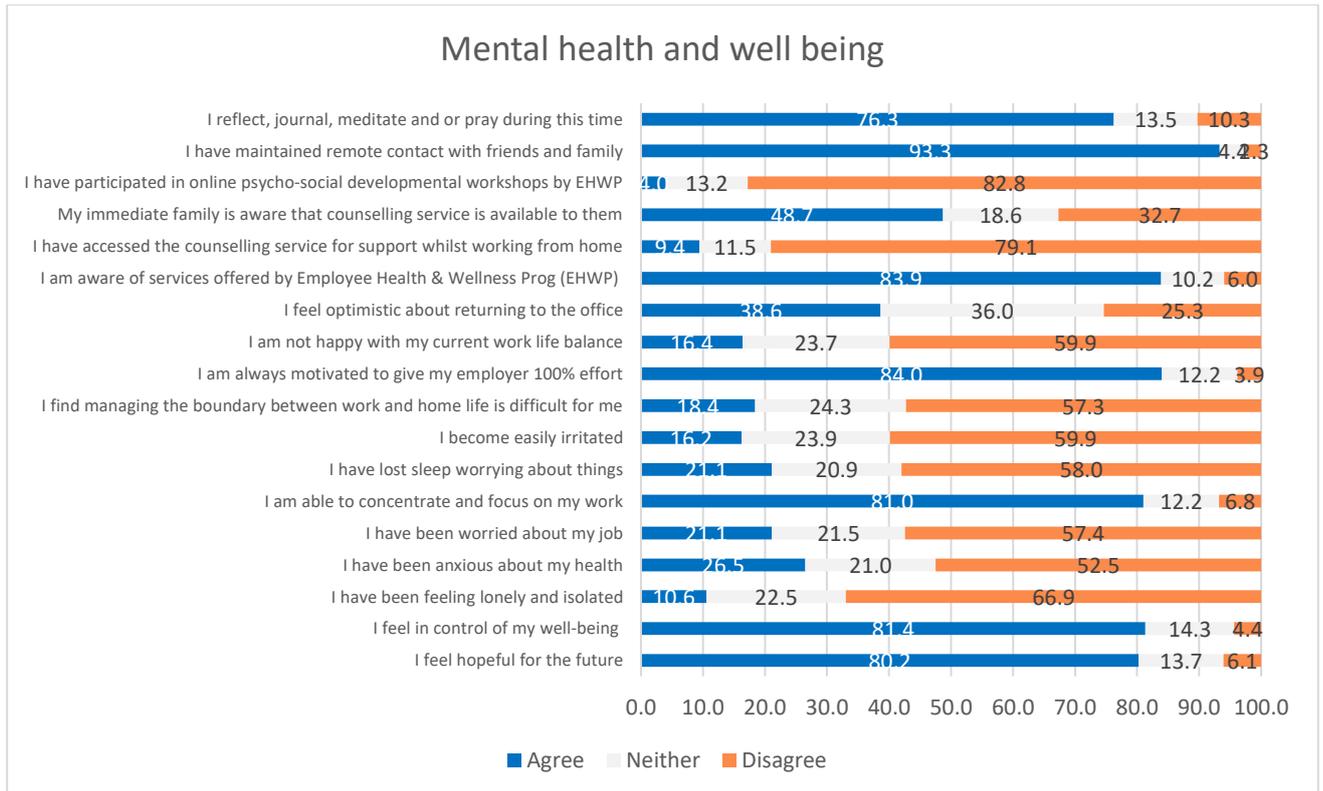
It is however evident from the survey that some respondents are finding this period challenging; with 38% saying they are most of time or sometimes not coping with the current situation. Further analysis reveal that it appears to be more females (two out of three); than males (one out of three) that are not coping with the current situation. A further 60% of respondents indicate that their work life balance has been disrupted for most of the time or sometimes. A further two thirds (67%) indicate that for most of the time or sometimes their sleep pattern and routine has been disrupted; this is also significantly skewed towards females.

60% of respondents says their work life balance has been disrupted



2 out of 3 (67%) indicate that their sleeping pattern and routine has been disrupted

Figure 23: Aspects of mental health and well being



Respondents were asked to rate their mental health and well-being during the Covid-19 level 5 lockdown period.

Overall the responses have been positive, with the majority (80%) of people feeling in control, hopeful about the future, are able to concentrate and focus on work, feel motivated to give their employer their best effort and have not experienced any illness since working from home during this period of lockdown. 93% of respondents have maintained remote contact with family and friends. About three quarters indicate that they reflect, journal, meditate and or pray during this time.



1 in 5 felt feelings of isolation when working from home

In contrast, some survey respondents are anxious and fearful about the future; with only 39% of respondents (two (2) in every five (5)) feeling optimistic about returning to the office. Just over one quarter (26.5%) are feeling anxious about their health, 21% are feeling worried about their job and one (1) out five (5) people have lost sleep worrying about things during the Covid-19 lockdown period.

While working from home over this period, survey respondents express concern around the current work-life balance (16%); and some experienced difficulty (18%) in managing the boundary between work and home life.

It's interesting to note and for benchmarking purposes, in a global Covid-19 poll conducted in sixteen major countries, between 7 and 10 May 2020 by the Institute of Public Opinion Survey Sector (Ipsos) amongst 16000 people, including South Africa as part of the survey; some key findings: about 30% of people say they are feeling more anxious particularly around their health, 25% have insomnia, 20% have depression, 10% have migraines, 29% are over eating, 8% claims increased smoking and only 3% indicated increased use of alcohol.

Some of the WCG Working from home survey results correlate well, however the survey findings have to be contextualised in terms of the Ipsos survey respondents being the general South African population, in comparison to the Working from home survey amongst WCG employees with internet access.

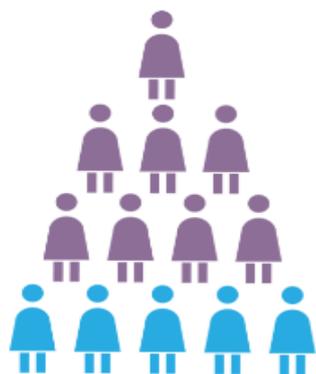
4.5 Employee Health and Wellness Support Services:



Metropolitan Health are the designated service providers for employee health and wellness support at WCG. Their services were much publicised around the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, in order to ensure that staff were aware that counselling and support was available to them and their families. 1502 (84%) respondents are aware of the services offered by the WCG Employee Health and Wellness Support Services. Just under half of the respondents, 872 (49%) indicate that their immediate family is aware that the Employee health and wellness counselling services are also available to them.

During this period, 169 respondents (9%), have accessed these services; and 72 (4%) respondents have participated in the team online psycho-social developmental workshops or discussions offered by the Employee Health and Wellness Support Programme.

5. Perceptions on government in dealing with Covid-19:



61% indicated that they believe that Government is dealing with Covid-19 in the correct manner

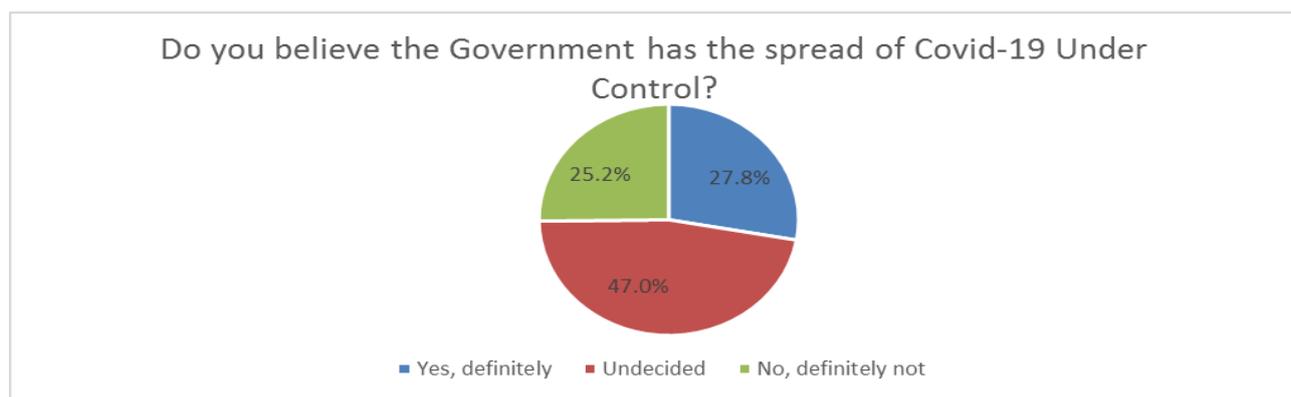
5.1 Confidence in Government

Governments around the world have been tasked with developing a response to confront COVID-19, keep citizens safe and help detect and slow the spread of the virus¹⁶. The South African government has received wide spread criticism as well as appraisal for the manner in which they have dealt with the Covid-19 crisis. The World Health Organisation (WHO) on 23 April commended the South African government for its innovation and the strategy adopted thus far to bring the virus under control. The government adopted a strategy of preparation, primary prevention, lockdown and enhanced surveillance. At this point the government built 67 mobile lab units, trained 28000 community health workers to conduct screening and testing and completed 120000 tests with a 2.7% positivity rate this is viewed as incredible performance for a developing country. National government also created a National Command Centre (NCC) for Covid-19, and communicated to the nation through this structure.

The provinces guided by the NCC were tasked with providing their direct response. The WCG established an information dashboard and a provincial hotline; and launched an information campaign entitled 'Let's Stop the Spread'. The Director General (DG) communicated directly with staff at regular intervals via email with respect to the latest information, directives and guidance. Respondents were asked to provide their perceptions on how they feel that both National and Provincial Government are dealing with Covid-19. They were also asked to provide some feedback on the official communications received.

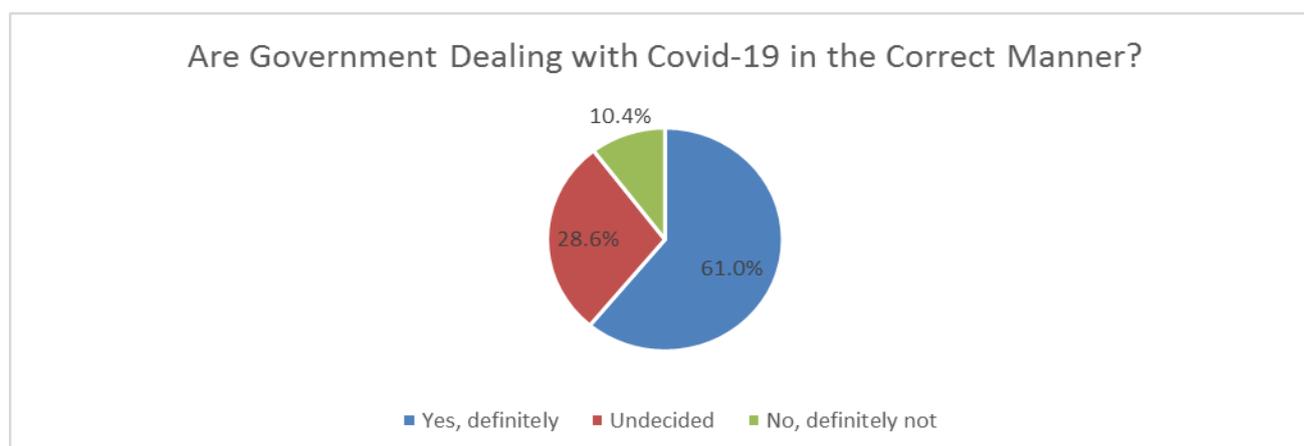
¹⁶ <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2020/03/17/perception-government-handling-covid-19> accessed on 31/05/20

Figure 24: Perception on whether government has the spread of Covid-19 under control



Just under half or 824(47%) respondents were undecided about whether government has the spread of the virus under control; a further 498 (28%) said 'definitely yes' and one quarter said, 'definitely not'. It should be noted that the survey was administered during level 4 and 5 lockdown regulations, when the number of Covid-19 positive cases were still very low (5647, 1 May, Situation WHO Report), and many people felt it was still early days in the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic to make a judgement on how government is dealing with the virus.

Figure 25: Are Government Dealing with Covid-19 in the correct manner

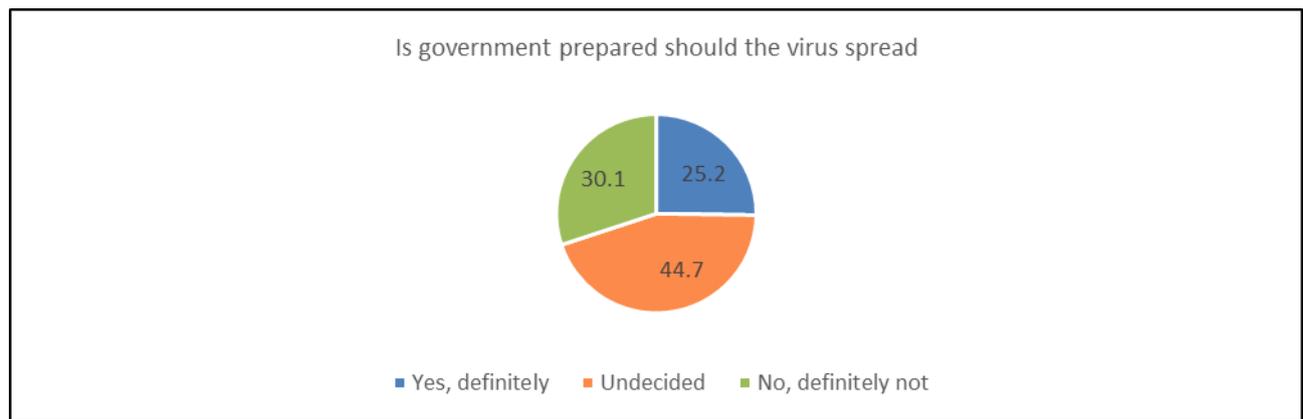


It is however noted that (1091) 61% of respondents indicated that they believe that Government is dealing with Covid-19 in the correct manner. 512 (28.6%) remained undecided; and 186 (10.4%) felt that they were 'definitely' not. Of those, 101 (54.3%) were male and 84 (45.7%) female.

In comparison to the United States, the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe, South Africa went into lockdown level 5 relatively early in the Covid-19 pandemic; and this was done to delay the spread of the virus, and to prepare the government response and health system to cope with the pandemic. Level 5 regulations refers to high virus spread, with low level of health preparedness. It allows only essential services to operate; and have strict transport and movement regulations.

5.2 Preparedness of Government

Figure 26: Is government ready and prepared should the virus spread



Asked if they felt that government was prepared to deal with a spike increase in Covid-19 cases, 30% of respondents (539) indicated that they did not think government was prepared to deal with a significant increase in infection rate; whilst a further 45% were undecided (800), and only one quarter (452) of respondents believed that government were prepared to deal with this. It is interesting to note that the undecided and the definitely not, is in the majority (75%). It would be interesting to administer the survey now; and the responses may be completely different.

The response to these questions needs to be interpreted within the context that the survey respondents are all government employees; and may be more informed than the average citizen, may receive more information on government initiatives and interventions and may receive more communication on the spread of the virus and how to contain the spread of Covid-19.

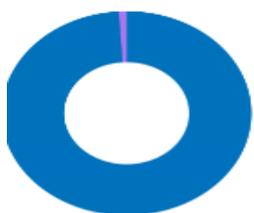
Reporting bias:

The predominant response to two (2) of the three (3) questions was 'undecided'. This is a major finding as the undecided category in attitudinal questions like these would typically be added to the negative category. Within this context and therefore, respondents felt negative about government having the Covid -19 pandemic under control and preparedness for a future spike in cases.

5.3 Official WCG Communications

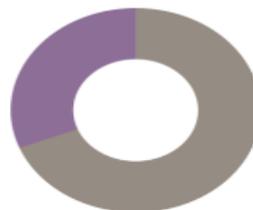


Throughout the lockdown period, several information emails regarding Covid-19 were distributed via Corporate Communications to WCG staff. Respondents were asked if they read the emails and 99% of all respondents (1783) indicated that they read all or some of the information. When asked if they found the information valuable, 1238 (69%) indicated that they found it very valuable; while 539 (30%) indicated that they found it somewhat valuable.



99% of all respondents indicated that they read all or some of the official WCG Covid-19 information

69% found the information very valuable



6. Working from home in the future:

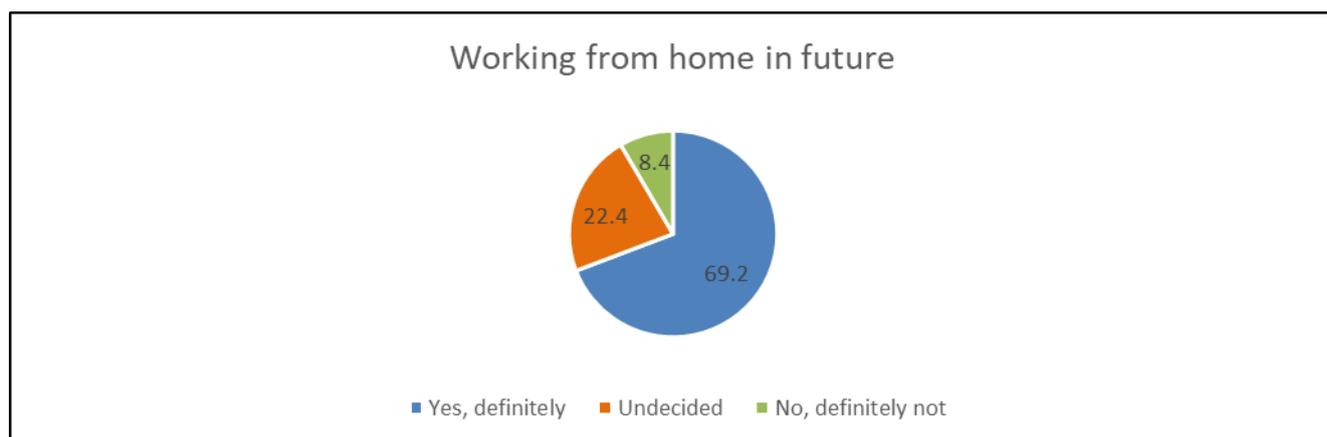
The Covid-19 outbreak has led to a worldwide experiment in remote working as employees in non-essential services across the world are forced to self-isolate and practise physical distancing. But will workers return to the office once the disruption caused by the pandemic ends? Or will working from home become the new normal?



would prefer to continue to work from home

Remote working, has been on the rise for decades, due to the availability of digital communication and collaboration tools that enable staff to do their jobs outside of the physical office. The trend has accelerated in recent years, aided by a new breed of business-focused group chat apps like “Slack” and more reliable, user-friendly videoconferencing tools (MS Teams, Zoom), that make it easier to connect with colleagues and be productive without sitting in the same office, or even within the same country. Despite all these technological advances remote workers was still in the minority for the past decade. As we now move forward to the new normal, respondents were asked to provide their opinion and preference on working from home in the future in general, apart from Covid-19.

Figure 27: Opinion on Working from home in future



The majority, 1239 (70%) of survey respondents indicated that apart from Covid-19 and in general, they would prefer to work from home in future. Approximately 402 respondents, (22%) were still undecided. This data was further disaggregated and cross-tabulated with gender, age, salary level, whether the respondent had dependents and their personal rating of their home workspace.

Of those who would prefer to continue working from home: 56% are female, 54% are over 40 years of age, 67% have child dependents and 60% are on levels 9, 10, 11 and/or 12 respectively. Almost three quarter of those who would prefer to continue working from home have rated their workspace environment as excellent or good.

7. Conclusion

The majority of office based WCG government staff were working from home for the past two (2) months since the president announced the level 4 and 5 lockdown regulations. The majority of voices in this survey are from staff in salary levels 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12

This survey findings indicated that there are advantages and challenges in working from home, with the majority of the findings being more positive than negative. The main advantage cited by respondents is the obvious flexibility of working from home. Disadvantages cited typically relate to working having to work longer hours than when office bound, which for some, clearly impacted on work/life balance. Feelings of isolation were also mentioned, but not for the majority of respondents who coped well during the period. From the operational side, connectivity and adequate data provision were deemed critical for successful working from home, as were good communication practices with managers and teams, which appeared in most cases, to be in place. Considering these findings and based on the fact that nearly 70% of respondents would like to work from home in the future, the remote working model should be considered post Covid-19.

The coronavirus outbreak has changed our working situation dramatically; and has rapidly accelerated the existing trend, as businesses and governments rush to adopt remote working on a wider scale than ever seen before. Once remote working practices are put in place, the introduction

of this could be hard to reverse. Not all employees are able to carry out their job away from their place of work; but for those who can, remote working offers a variety of benefits, both for staff and employers. These includes greater flexibility, reduced commuting, higher staff retention and in many cases increased productivity. An organisation can also enjoy financial savings of already stretched resources. A sustainable model for working from home can create a supportive and productive working relationship, and a deeper alignment of purpose across the WCG, and for the majority of traditionally office based workers, this can lead to improved mental and physical health and wellbeing and decreased cultural entropy scores in the organisation.

8. References

- Bevan S, Mason B, Bajorek Z (2020) Working from Home Wellbeing Survey Brighton, UK. Institute for Employment Studies (IES) <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/ies-working-home-wellbeing-survey>. Accessed on 28/05/20
- Bloom, N, J Liang, J Roberts, and Z Jenny Ying (2015), "Does Working from Home Work? Evidence from a Chinese Experiment", Quarterly Journal of Economics 130(1): 165-218.
- Battiston, D, J Blanes I Vidal, and T Kirchmaier (2017), "Is Distance Dead? Face-to-Face Communication and Productivity in Teams." CEPR Discussion Paper No. 11924.
- Dutcher, E G (2012), "The Effects of Telecommuting on Productivity: An Experimental Examination. The Role of Dull and Creative Tasks.", Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization 84(1): 55-363.
- IPSOS (2020) Coronavirus Wave Pool International. <https://www.ipsos.com/en/public-opinion-covid-19-outbreak> Accessed 28/05/20
- Mc Carthy, A., et al (2020) Remote Working During Covid-19, Ireland's National Survey Initial Report. Galway, Ireland, NUI Galway Whitaker Institute and Western Commission.
- Morikawa, M (2018). "Long Commuting Time and the Benefits of Telecommuting." RIETI Discussion Paper, 18-E-025.
- Morikawa, M, (2020) COVID-19, teleworking, and productivity. Tokyo, Japan RIETI <https://voxeu.org/article/covid-19-teleworking-and-productivity>.. Accessed on 28/05/20
- Organisational Development (2020) Ways to manage and engage your employees during Covid-19 Workplace disruptions WCG.
- Slack (2020), Remote work in the age of Covid-19. A nationwide survey of knowledge workers reveals how companies and employees are responding to a remote work surge. USA. <https://slackhq.com/report-remote-work-during-coronavirus> Accessed on 28/05/20

Title of Document: Publication on Covid-19 Western Cape Government Working from Home Survey

Chief Director: Zeenat Ishmail

Chief Directorate: Strategic Management Information/Provincial Data Office

Department of the Premier

PO Box 659

Cape Town

8000

Contact Person:

Zeenat Ishmail

Tel: +27 21 483 8709

Fax: +27 21 483 5447

Email: Zeenat.Ishmail@westerncape.gov.za



**Western Cape
Government**

BETTER TOGETHER.