

# Research shows that home working is associated with a higher risk of voice problems

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Credit: Trinity College Dublin

In June of this year, during the 'first' lockdown in Ireland, Dr. Ciarán Kenny, Assistant Professor in Clinical Speech and Language Studies at Trinity conducted a research study to ascertain how our voices were affected by the switch to working from home for employees.

Research shows that people such as call-center workers are very prone to voice problems because of how they speak; not just because of how often they are using their voice, but also because of how intensely they are using it compared to face-to-face communication. Most often, the issue is that people raise and tense their voice when they are not face-to-face. Reports at the time of the first lockdown were that some people working from [home](#) during this pandemic had started to report similar problems with symptoms like hoarseness, or a dry, tight or lump-in-the-throat feeling.

The findings of Dr. Kenny's study have now been published in the *Journal of Voice*.

A survey was issued to the [general public](#) to ask those working from home whether they noticed problems with their voice or throat. The study was the first to conclusively investigate whether using services like Zoom and Skype instead of working face-to-face could cause voice problems.

The main findings of the newly published research show:

- One third of people working from home have a hoarse voice and that in 85% of those cases, it started when they began working from home.
- Hoarse [voice](#) was not the only complaint. Almost 70% of people developed discomfort in their throat, most commonly a persistent dry throat. This also started when people began working from home.

- Long-lasting hoarseness and throat problems can cause difficulties for people. It can affect the ability to communicate, which has an impact on social and occupational life.
- The research concluded that those working from home should be given training and support by their workplaces to maintain their vocal health. In fact, companies have a [legal obligation](#) to ensure the safety and welfare of their employees when working from home.

**More information:** Ciarán Kenny. Dysphonia and Vocal Tract Discomfort While Working From Home During COVID-19, *Journal of Voice* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jvoice.2020.10.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2020.10.010)

Provided by Trinity College Dublin

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