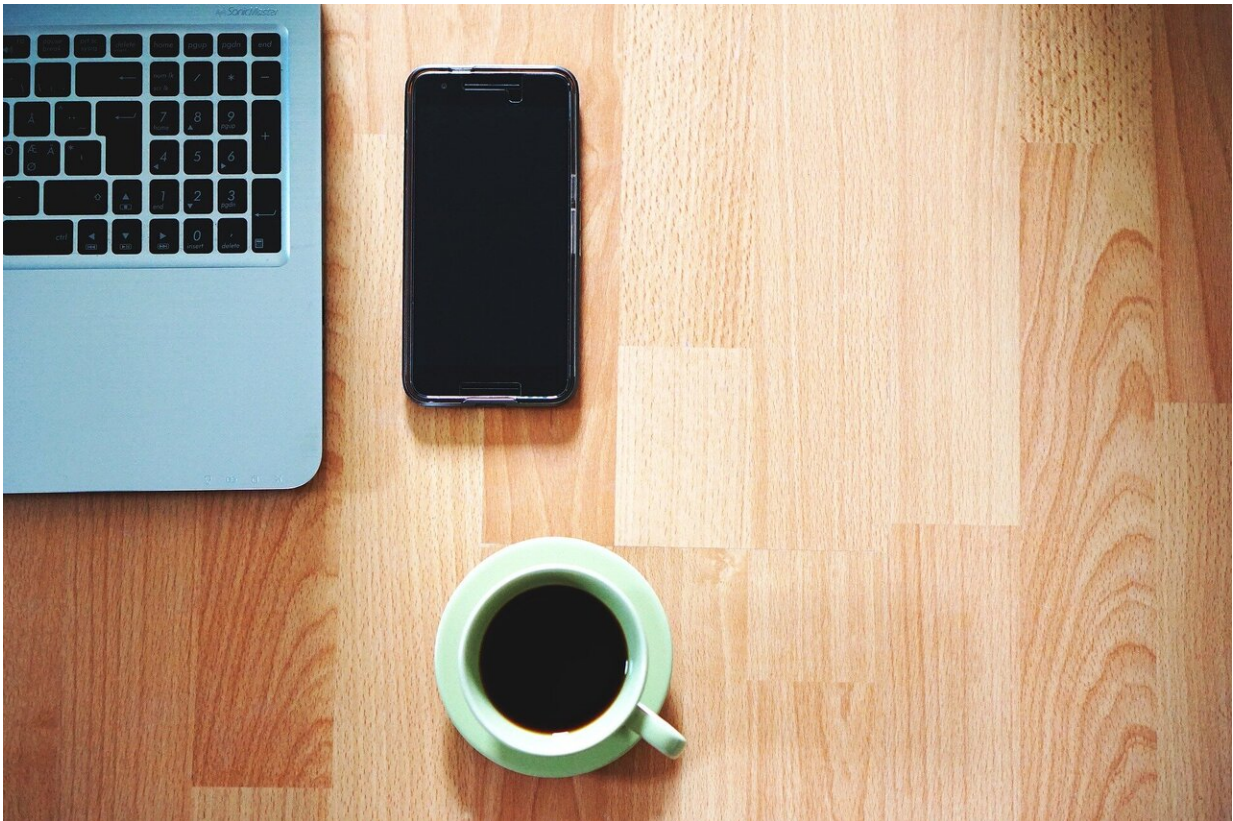


Study finds over 64% of people reported new health issues during 'work from home'

December 3 2020



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What impact has working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic had on our health? In a new study, researchers from USC have found that working from home has negatively impacted our physical

health and mental health, increased work expectations and distractions, reduced our communications with co-workers and ultimately lessened our productivity. The study finds that time spent at the workstation increased by approximately 1.5 hours, while most workers are likely to have less job satisfaction and increased neck pain when working from home. It also illustrates the differential impact of working from home for women, parents, and those with higher income.

Nearly 1,000 respondents participated in the survey regarding the impact of working from home on physical and mental well-being. Authored by Ph.D student Yijing Xiao, Burcin Becerik-Gerber, Dean's Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Gale Lucas, a research Assistant Professor at the USC Institute for Creative Technologies and Shawn Roll, Associate Professor of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, the study was published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Becerik-Gerber and Lucas are co-directors of The Center for Intelligent Environments at USC.

The survey was conducted during the early days of the pandemic. Responses regarding lifestyles, home office environments, and physical and mental well-being revealed the following about that first phase of the pandemic's "work from home" period:

- Over 64 percent of respondents claimed to have one or more new [physical health](#) issues
- Nearly 75 percent of those surveyed experienced one new mental [health](#) issue
- Female workers with annual salary less than 100k were more likely than male workers or workers with higher income to report two or more new physical and mental health issues
- Female workers had higher incidence of depression
- Parents with infants tended to have better mental well-being but also a higher chance of reporting a new mental health issue

- Having toddlers was affiliated with physical well-being but was also associated with more physical and mental health issues
- Living with at least one teenager lowered the risk of new health issues
- Nearly 3/4 of workers adjusted their work hours and more than 1/3 reported scheduling their work hours around others
- Workers who adjusted their work hours or schedule work around others were more likely to report new physical or [mental health issues](#)
- Pets did not appear to have impact on physical or [mental health](#)
- Workers decreased overall [physical activity](#) and physical exercise, combined with increased overall food intake
- Decreased physical and mental well-being was correlated with increased food or junk food intake
- Only one-third had a dedicated room for their work at home; at least 47.6 percent shared their workspace with others

The authors suggest that having a dedicated work from home space would mitigate a number of negative impacts.

Becerik-Gerber, the study's corresponding author said, "The quality of your [home](#) workspace is important; having a dedicated workspace signals to others that you are busy, and minimizes the chances of being distracted and interrupted. Increased satisfaction with the environmental quality factors in your workspace, such as lighting, temperature, is associated with a lower chance of having new health issues. In addition, knowing how to adjust your workspace helps with physical health."

Provided by University of Southern California

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