

# Government encourages all businesses to bring staff back, but what if this is counterproductive for a recovering economy?

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## Business Insights

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Rapid testing allows workers back into the office, but long term adaptation to a digital age is needed

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- Over a quarter (26%) of workers at small businesses feel they have been successful during covid-19
- 19% of UK workers at small businesses have won previously inaccessible, large clients over covid and consequently grown as a business

Chris Biggs, Partner at accounting and consultancy disruptor Theta Global Advisors, discusses why flexibility is no longer an option, but essential for productivity, mental health, and economic recovery.

Statistics revealed that over one third of British workers worked exclusively from home in lockdown, as more companies successfully adapted to the new landscape and introduced remote working as a primary approach.

Despite this monumental shift in work environments and culture to provide for Covid-19 restrictions and our increasingly digital age, many businesses are now planning to shift back to pre-Covid norms with giants such as Goldman Sachs denouncing the idea of long-term working from home. With the government recently announcing free rapid testing to be provided to all businesses in the UK, there is likely to be increased support for this approach. However, this comes as over half of the working population (57%), reported that rather than working from home, they would like to be able to choose where they work in order to be the most productive and safeguard their mental health. With 66% of Brits saying their trust in small businesses has increased over lockdown and 19% of workers at small businesses having won previously inaccessible, large clients thus growing their business – Attempting to shift back to pre-covid norms cut and dry could bring this growth trajectory of small businesses to a firm end:

- 57% of workers want to choose where to work to be the most productive
- Over a quarter (26%) of workers at small businesses feel that they have been successful during Covid-19
- 19% of UK workers at small businesses have won previously inaccessible, large clients over covid thus growing as a business
- 28% of parents say that having to take care of their child during the COVID period has set them back more than a year in their career
- Two thirds (66%) of Brits say their trust in small businesses has grown over Covid-19

(nationally representative research carried out across a body of 2100 respondents, in full compliance with British Polling Council guidelines)

Chris Biggs, Partner at [Theta Global Advisors](#) - an accounting and consultancy disruptor - comments on the need for flexible working to provide parents and over-encumbered workers with the conditions to improve productivity while simultaneously safeguarding their mental wellbeing:

“To ensure people are at their happiest and most productive, flexibility is needed in both where and when they work. Freedom from the office must also mean freedom to go to the office to avoid unfairly burdening those that are struggling in the current conditions.

With companies adopting new policies and a substantial number of the workforce not wanting to return, as well as the Government’s expansion of the Covid testing regime, it seems it will be a while until offices look like they did in 2019.

To many people, this is great news, however to others, not having access to an office is a substantial burden and adds difficulties and stresses to other areas of their lives. Having a lack of personal space, effective equipment, or internet, or having caring duties, are issues predominately felt by some far more than others, and this shows that offices are vital for some people, even if many others enjoy working from home.

In our haste to praise the new conditions, we must not forget those who benefit from or need the office; it provides a vital function in our economy and society. What we need is for businesses, organisations, and companies to cater to everyone – by providing an office space, and the structured flexibility to allow people to use it if they need or want it.”