

UK's productivity surged during Covid-19

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By LLB Editor

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After a year in lockdown, the Office for National Statistics has revealed data showing that productivity per worker during the pandemic has increased by 0.4%. Businesses have adapted to digital, and flexi-working and the benefits it entails has now solidified itself in our working culture norms. Across the UK, we have seen dialogues change as employers from the Civil Service to PwC have announced official structures for flexible working in the long-term, cutting office space by around 40% to reflect this.

However, many businesses including some giants such as Goldman Sachs continue to denounce the idea of flexi-working in the long term, going against the grain of what employees are calling for. As restrictions are eased, employees are now being called back to the office, triggering calls for increased flexibility in order to maintain the increased flexibility they have seen during the pandemic.

This is supported by landmark research by Theta Global Advisors showing that a lack of flexibility from businesses has resulted in negative impacts on productivity, mental health and working cultures. Workers want to choose how and where to work going forward in order to be more productive, safeguard their mental health, and achieve a better work/life balance:

- More than half (51%) workers feel that the decision makers in their place of work are out of touch with the process required to ensure their teams work efficiently and productively

- 57% of workers want to choose where to work to be the most productive
- 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
- 43% say that flexible hours at work are the most important thing to them when looking for a new job
- A quarter (25%) of employees say that their commutes mean they are exhausted before they even start working
- Over a quarter (26%) of parents say that their mental health was significantly impacted by having to home-school while working
- Over a third (34%) of UK workers have seen their workplace's headcount decrease and their workload increase in the last 12 months

(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 – a consultancy and accounting disruptor – comments on how employers need to respond to employee calls for flexibility post-pandemic in order to maintain increased productivity:

“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 account for different experiences, priorities, and conditions.

“With companies adopting new policies and substantial differentiations in experience of working during Covid-19, it seems working environments will never return to what they were in 2019 due to the impact we have seen with flexi-working.

“In our adaptation to flexi-working, we have shown that we can work remotely, but this has also highlighted the positives for many of going to the office and the vital function the office plays in our economy and society. Some people will require access to an office for personal space, effective equipment, or internet, but others may not have these issues, and might have familial commitments or simply enjoy working from home more.”

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