

Women working from home say their careers are harmed, while men say they have benefitted

4 years ago



Women working from home regularly are less positive about their career prospects than men are, new research shows.

They are also less optimistic about getting recognition for good work and being included in important consultations when compared to men who often work from home, the study found.

The research, presented at the British Sociological Association's online annual conference today [Wednesday, 20 April 2022], comes at a time when employers and staff are deciding how much they will work from home as pandemic restrictions are removed.

Agnieszka Kasperska analysed data on 23,000 people in the UK and other European countries to see how people working from home feel about their jobs.

The data show that 39% of men who never worked from home thought they had good job prospects, rising to 52% of men who worked from home often – at least twice a week. The figures for women were 34% for those who never worked from home, and 41% for those who often did.

Ms Kasperska then adjusted the data to control for factors including occupation, age, education level, and type of employment so that the effect of working from home could be studied in isolation.

She told the conference that women who worked from home often were 10% less likely to feel they had good career prospects than men who did so.

Women who often worked from home were 10% less likely than men who did so to feel they received the recognition they deserved for their work, and 10% less likely to feel they were consulted before work objectives were set than men.

She also found that mothers who often worked from home were 5% less likely than those who did not work from home to feel they received the recognition they deserved for their work than fathers who did so. Mothers who often worked from home were 10% less likely than fathers to feel they were consulted before work objectives were set.

Ms Kasperska, who carried out the research for her PhD at the University of Warsaw, said: "For women especially, remote work can be a sign of prioritising personal and family concerns above work, regardless of the employee's actual motives

"This means that women who engage in remote work risk being at odds with the image of an 'ideal worker', a person who is fully devoted to their job, always available to take on more responsibility and free from other obligations. This can then lead to substantial career development penalties.

"Physical visibility at work is one of the most obvious ways of signalling engagement, commitment as well as quality and quantity of work. Home-based workers risk being less visible at work due to their diminished physical presence in the workplace.

"Although the survey was carried out before the pandemic began, its lessons are important to bear in mind as some people go back to their offices and factories and others continue to work from home."

- Ms. Kasperska analysed survey data on 23,753 employees in the UK and Switzerland and 27 EU countries, carried out by Eurofound (the European Working Conditions survey) in 2015. She compared their responses to questions on how they felt about their work with the amount of time spent working from home, dividing them into: those who did not work from home, those who did so occasionally (less than two days a week), and those who worked more than two days a week or all the time at home.