



Government  
Property  
Agency

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# Home working and the UK Civil Service

Key findings of the impact of home  
working on employee experience



### About the study

The Government Property Agency asked Leesman to assess the Home Working experience of Civil Service employees from a group of departments and agencies that had volunteered to participate in the study. The assessment technique used a standardised evaluation to measure the ability of the respondents' home environment to support them in their roles. The results were benchmarked internally within the study and to Leesman's global database.

# 25,290

Civil Service respondents

# 98%

Working from home

# 34

Departments/agencies

## Foreword

Tim Oldman, Founder & CEO, Leesman

**Leesman has spent the last 10 years independently measuring how employees experience the workplaces provided for them and the resultant impact those spaces have on key organisational performance indicators. With more than 800,000 responses to the standardised Leesman Office survey, it is the largest data set amassed of its kind and our research has successfully unlocked a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between people and place for leading organisations around the globe.**

However, in March 2020 the relationship between employer and the workplaces they provide for their employees was turned on its head. COVID-19 forced the world into a distributed workplace experiment of a magnitude none foresaw, with millions of global knowledge workers dispatched to work from home, many for the first time. Leesman's Insights & Research team, led by Dr Peggie Rothe, quickly developed a new research tool which saw immediate adoption by organisations around the world. The data gathered since is now the largest global study of home-based workers' remote workplace experience.

The results reveal the stunning effectiveness of the technologies that allow us to work remotely, but equally point to challenges around connection, collective endeavour and purpose. They tell us we must pay particular attention to employee wellness and work-life balance. They also shine a glaring light on some of the shortcomings of the corporate workplaces employees left behind, but perhaps in so doing, offer those developing post-pandemic workplace strategies a blueprint for a better future for where and how work happens.

The data will also rightfully concentrate executive attention on issues of productivity. It shows us that home-based employees' sense of personal productivity is generally upbeat, but equally highlights particular role types, job families and functions that are struggling. It also shows how an employee's demography can in some instances impact

The global data will also rightfully concentrate executive attention on issues of productivity. It shows us that home-based employees' sense of personal productivity is generally upbeat, but equally highlights particular role types, job families and functions that are struggling.

these outcomes, but domestic settings are by far the strongest indicator of how effectively they can work remotely. We believe that this will refocus previous debate around blunt efficiency targets to rounder values and objectives of effectiveness.

Critically, organisations in both private and public sectors must learn from this comprehensive, albeit relatively short, experiment. They must get to grips with the fine detail. They must acknowledge that employees have a new benchmark for workplace experience—their own homes—and that these homes support some work activities better than offices.

It is therefore fair to assume from the data that for many organisations, homes could offer a significant and valuable future contribution to supporting organisational performance. But close observation will need to be established and maintained to understand if the longer-term impact of colleagues working apart will weaken the social fabric of organisations and inhibit the fundamental sense of collective purpose.

The following analysis of the data collected in July 2020 from 25,290 UK Civil Service employees provides a detailed report on how employees are managing with working remotely, but in so doing, also provides a solid foundation for any review of the role workplace will play in the future of the Civil Service.

**Tim Oldman**  
**Founder and CEO**  
**Leesman**

The Leesman Index is the world's largest benchmark repository of employee workplace experience data, providing an unparalleled reference point for all involved in workplace management, design and delivery. And with no consultancy or advisory services, Leesman's benchmarking and research insights are trusted by leading corporate and public sector organisations across the world to inform their workplace futures.

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The global pandemic has forced the world into a test of distributed working of an unimaginable scale. Millions of knowledge workers across the private and public sector have been dispatched to work from home, perhaps for the first time. This offers employers a one-time opportunity to thoroughly appraise whether, or how well, work can be supported away from the traditional office setting.

## Executive summary

Dr Peggie Rothe, Dr Madalina Hanc

**In July 2020, 25,290 UK Civil Service employees completed the standardised Leesman Home Working survey, and in doing so shared how they experience working from their own homes. On behalf of the Government Property Agency (GPA), a team of analysts led by Dr Peggie Rothe and Dr Madalina Hanc conducted an in-depth review of this data to explore how well home working is working for the Civil Service and to understand what factors may be driving their positive or negative experiences.**

On average, the overall home working experience of the Civil Service employees who replied was positive. This is shown by an average H-Lmi score of 73.5, where the H-Lmi is a linear 0-100 score of home working experience, and a result of 70.0 or above indicates an excellent experience. However, whilst home working works well on average across the entire sample, nearly a quarter of the Civil Service respondents reported a poor experience. The results also showed that when working from home, individual work activities and formal conversations are well supported, whilst learning from others, more informal interaction and a sense of connection both to the organisation and to colleagues is a challenge.

This report presents the findings across five key themes, which investigate the factors that are driving the home working experience:

### 1. Impact on organisation

Whilst the respondents' individual work is generally well supported at home, the biggest differences between those with an outstanding experience and those with a poor experience is found in the support for social and collaborative activities. This is important because the data also shows that the respondents' sense of how well their homes enable them to work productively is closely related to how well both individual work and collaboration are supported. However, it is important to note that whilst support for collaborative activities is strongly linked to an employee's sense of connection and their productivity, this is not the case for all collaboration. More formal meetings /

conversations appear to play little or no role in influencing either connection or sense of productivity.

### 2. Role complexity

Role complexity refers to the number of different activities that an employee's role entails. It is measured by the number of activities that the respondent indicates as important to them in their role (out of a maximum of 21 listed in the survey). The data revealed that the Civil Service employees have higher role complexity than we typically see: on average, the respondents select three more activities as important to them in their work compared to private sector workers surveyed by Leesman globally.

This is interesting because the more activities an employee has in their role, the more challenging it is for the work environment to support those varied needs. As a result, we consistently observe that respondents working in more complex roles have poorer home working experience than those in less complex roles, which is also true for the Civil Service. This finding is particularly visible when comparing the results between different Civil Service departments / agencies.

### 3. Home work settings

The nature of the setting that an employee has available to use at home was found to be the principal driver of positive or negative home working experience. Respondents with a dedicated working space in a separate room consistently report the highest scores across all lines of enquiry, whilst respondents coping with non-work specific settings, such as a dining or dressing table, report the lowest scores.

The respondents who work from these non-work specific locations are more likely to report lower support for all types of activities as well as lower scores on productivity, work-life balance, connection and ability to share ideas / knowledge. 39% of the Civil Servants report working from a dedicated room, 25% work from a dedicated space (which is not a separate room) and 35% work from a non-work specific space.

### 4. Demographic effects

When comparing overall home working experiences based on demographics such as gender, tenure or ethnicity, no major differences were found that could be explained purely based on the respondent's demographic profile. However, respondents from the London region, with lower pay grades, from younger age bands or from the Black or Black British ethnic groups are more likely to be working from a non-work specific setting at home and are therefore more likely to have the least favourable experience.

This suggests that these demographic variables may indirectly impact on the home working experience, as they increase the likelihood of working from a non-work specific setting at home.

The extent to which these demographic groupings cluster around particular city locations / offices warrants further investigation.

### 5. Post-pandemic preference

Across the whole sample, just 27% of respondents indicated a preference to return to the office for the majority of the working week once COVID-19 restrictions are removed. There was also a clear finding that those with a lower home working experience score were the most likely to want to return to the office.

These preferences were found to be strongly associated with the home work setting available to respondents. Those without a dedicated setting at home are more likely to want to return to the office for the majority of the working week. Respondents who worked in non-work specific home locations are also the most likely to have changed their perception of remote working in a negative way and are the least likely to express an interest in working from home in the future.

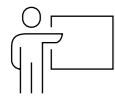
**Dr Peggie Rothe**  
Chief Insights & Research Officer  
Leesman

**Dr Madalina Hanc**  
Research Lead  
Leesman



## Home Working survey structure

The Leesman Home working experience assessment technique is based on the tried and tested methodology designed to pinpoint which activities are important to employees in their roles, how well these are supported, and how this impacts their sense of productivity, connection, etc. The methodology also assesses the importance and effectiveness of various features.



### Work activities x 21

Which activities are important and how well each is supported when working from home

+



### Home working impact x 10

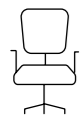
How working from home impacts overall sense of productivity, feeling connected, etc.

=



### Leesman H-Lmi

0 – 100 Home working experience score



### Features

Which features are important and how satisfied employees are with them



### Demographics

Questions that allow the data to be analysed by demography

## Glossary of terms

Activities	The things that employees do in their roles
Impact	The critical measures of success
Features	The component elements that an employee needs to complete their role
Activity / role complexity	The number of activities an employee selects as important to them in their role
Lmi	Leesman's 0-100 score or rating of employee office experience
H-Lmi	Leesman's 0-100 score or rating of employee home working experience

## About the report

### The Home Working Experience Survey

In July 2020, Leesman measured the home working experience of nearly 26,000 UK Civil Service employees from the 19 Government departments / agencies who chose to participate in the study. Civil Service employees were invited to reply to a standardised online Home Working experience survey developed at the start of the pandemic by Leesman. The survey has been adopted by numerous organisations world-wide and therefore also offers the opportunity for participating organisations to benchmark and validate their results against thousands of others.

The structure of the Home Working survey is based on the framework developed by Leesman in 2010 to measure office workers' workplace experience. Both assessment techniques focus on the activities people do in their work and how well these are supported, what features are important to them and how satisfied employees are with them, and how employees generally perceive that the environment impacts critical outcomes like perceived personal productivity and sense of connection. With both assessment tools following the same structure, we are able to offer those organisations who adopt both an unrivalled opportunity to directly compare their employees' office workplace experience to their home-based experience.

The survey was sent out to nearly 89,000 Civil Service Employees across the 19 participating departments / agencies. 25,828 responses were received, equalling a response rate of 29%. 25,290 employees (98%) indicated that they were working from home at least some proportion of their work time at the time of the study. The survey findings were first presented in a report for the GPA, titled "GPA Home Working Experience Survey Results Report," delivered on 17 August 2020. This report focuses on the 25,290 respondents who indicated that they were working from home at least some proportion of their work time at the time of the study.

### Analysis

The focus of this analysis was to identify the key factors—and combination of factors—that significantly affect the home working experience for the Civil Service departments and agencies who participated, either positively or negatively. Our investigation was guided by five lines of enquiry revealed as central by the initial Report and results of statistical testing.

The methodology adopted for this research included a combination of graphical and descriptive methods, and statistical analysis. Where applicable, the report also includes data to show how the Civil Service employees' results compare to Leesman's database on home working experience in the private sector (over 81,000 other respondents as at 14.08.2020). Where possible, we also offer comparison to the Leesman Office data (n=749,737 as at 30.06.2020).

To ensure appropriate group representation within the analysis of the Civil Service data, departments or agencies with fewer than 100 respondents<sup>1</sup> were excluded from the detailed comparison.

# 34.8%

Employees do not have a space at home they can designate for work

# 86.4%

Have access to the software applications they need

<sup>1</sup> These are: Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland (n=71), Attorney General's Office (LOD) (n=34) and Office of the Secretary of State for Wales (n=22).

# Is home working *working* for UK Civil Servants?

On average, the overall home working experience of the Civil Service employees who responded was positive. This is shown by an average H-Lmi score of 73.5, where the H-Lmi is a linear 0-100 score of home working experience, and a result of 70.0 or above indicates an excellent experience. This was strikingly close to the average Leesman H-Lmi for the private sector<sup>2</sup> of 74.4. Both rank higher than the average score across the office workplaces that were surveyed using the Leesman Office survey before COVID-19<sup>3</sup> (Lmi 63.1) (Figure 1). This data suggests that in general, homes are on average supporting employees better than the average office.

However, whilst on average home working would appear to work well for the respondents, that is not true for everyone. Over a third (37%) of respondents (9,414 employees) reported a sub-optimal experience when working from home (H-Lmi <70.0); this includes 23% (5,860 employees) who had a poor experience (H-Lmi <60.0).

We also saw home working experience vary greatly by department, with an overall interdepartmental H-Lmi range of 12.1 points - OFQUAL reported the highest H-Lmi score of 80.7, and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the lowest at 68.6. Table 1 further highlights that home working experience is not uniform across departments and agencies.

Overall, the data shows that Civil Service employees perceive that they have access to the software applications (86.4% agree) and the information (82.1% agree) they need to work from home. A slightly smaller proportion (79.9%) agree that their home environment enables them to work productively, that being slightly lower than the private sector, where 82.9% say their home environment enables productive work.

The results also showed that when working from home, individual work activities and formal conversations are generally well supported: 'Planned meetings', 'Individual routine tasks', and 'Telephone conversations' were supported for over 92% of the respondents.

The results also disclose challenges. Only 66.7% of Civil Service employees feel connected to their colleagues and 69.3% feel connected to the organisation when working from home, suggesting that the social dimensions of work life are not consistently supported at home. This is further reinforced by the fact that amongst the activities important to at least half of respondents, the least supported are the more social activities like 'Learning from others' (63.3%) and 'Informal social interaction' (61.2%).

Employee wellbeing can also be at risk, with 72.7% of Civil Service employees stating that they are able to maintain a healthy work-life balance when working from home, leaving more than one in four (27.3%) struggling.

**79.9%**  
Agreed that their personal productivity is supported at home

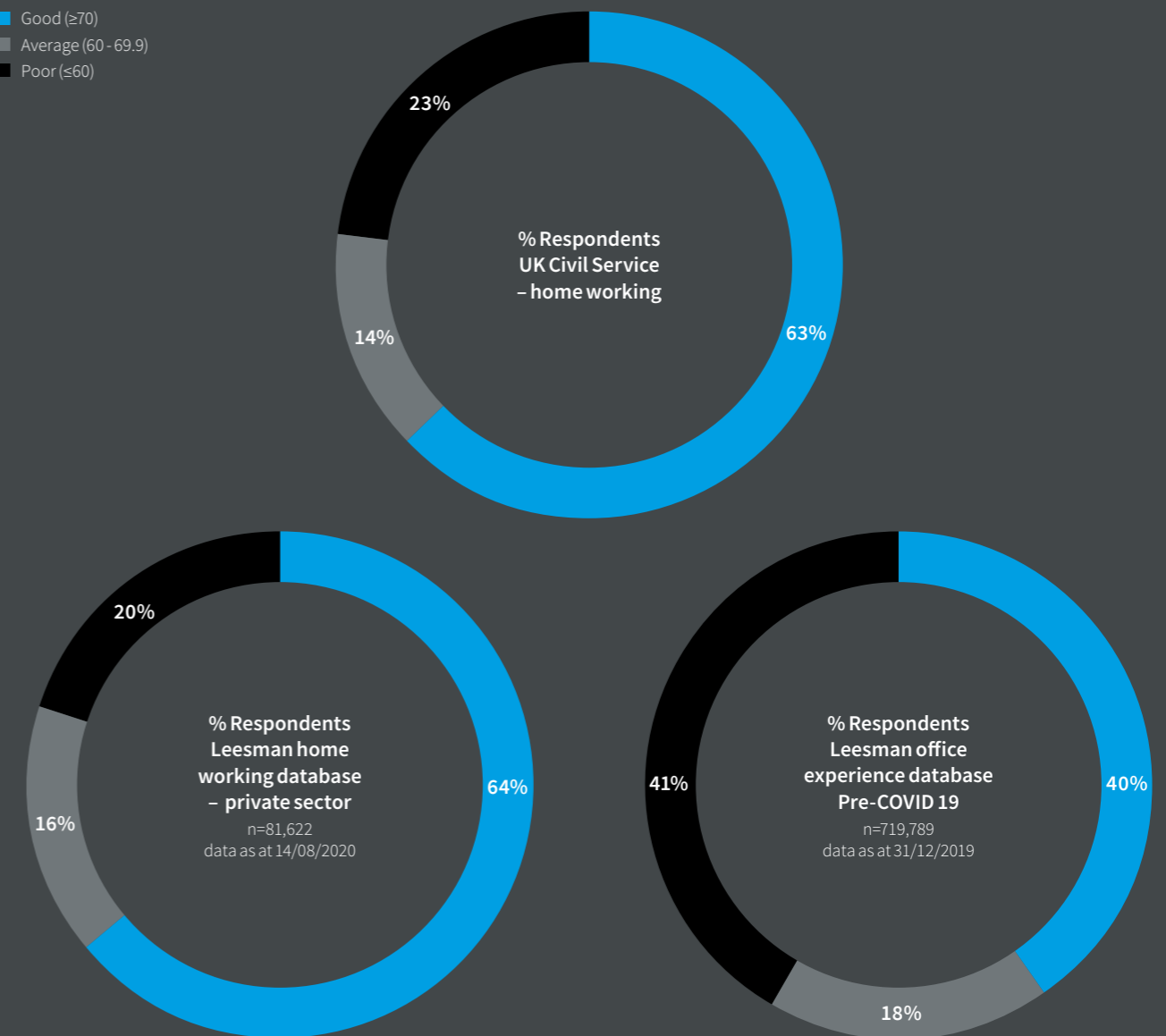
**69.3%**  
Feel connected to their organisation

<sup>2</sup> Leesman Home Working database extract, n=81,622 respondents with home working experience as at 14.08.2020.  
<sup>3</sup> Leesman Office database extract, n=719,789 from 4,771 workplaces across 96 countries, as at 31.12.2019.

Figure 1  
Home working or workplace experience: UK Civil Service, private sector homeworkers, Leesman office data

Home working or workplace experience (H-Lmi or Lmi score)

Good (≥70)  
Average (60 - 69.9)  
Poor (≤60)



# 1. Organisational impact

**In order to understand the main challenges for those Civil Service employees who report a poor experience from home, we explored the differences between the respondents with the highest and lowest H-Lmi score. This was done by comparing the upper quarter (UQ) respondents (n=6,294), who scored an H-Lmi above 88.6, and the lower quarter (LQ) respondents (n=6,268), who scored an H-Lmi below 61.1.**

The findings confirmed that whilst the individual dimensions are generally supported at home, support of the social aspects are challenged the most, with implications on connectivity and work-life balance. Feelings of 'Connection to colleagues', 'Connection to the organisation' and 'Work-life balance' make up the biggest differences between respondents in the upper and lower quarter, with gaps of 82.4%, 79.6% and 64.3%, respectively.

With regards to activities, the greatest differences between the two groups were related to how well different collaborative activities were supported. There was, for example, an 82.3% gap in 'Learning from others', a 76.9% gap in 'Informal social interaction' and a 55.5% gap in 'Informal, un-planned meetings', which are all significant compared to the mere 19.5% gap in 'Planned meetings'.

The fact that the gap was small for 'Planned meetings', despite the significant difference in the sense of connection to both colleagues and organisation, warranted further exploration into how different activity types drive different dimensions of the home working experience.

The analysis revealed significant<sup>4</sup> associations between five Impact questions and support for the five different activity types (Figure 2). It showed that sharing ideas and feeling connected to colleagues and the organisation is strongly associated with how collaborative activities (including collaborating on creative and focused work, informal meetings and social interaction) are supported, whilst the support for more formal meetings (including planned meetings, video and audio conferences) and conversations (private and business confidential conversations) appears to play little or no role in supporting these social aspects of the experience.

Productivity is significantly associated with how well both individual and collaborative activities are supported, whilst similarly, support for formal meetings and conversations does not appear to drive higher productivity agreement. Lastly, a strong correlation was also found between being able to maintain a healthy work-life balance and how well other activity types are supported, which is mainly driven by the support of 'Relaxing / taking a break'. This emphasises how vital it is to increase awareness among employees of the importance of taking breaks, even when working from home, in order to minimize the negative impact that working from home can have on employee wellbeing.

**82.1%**  
Have access to all the information needed for the work they do

**80.3%**  
Able to share ideas and knowledge amongst colleagues

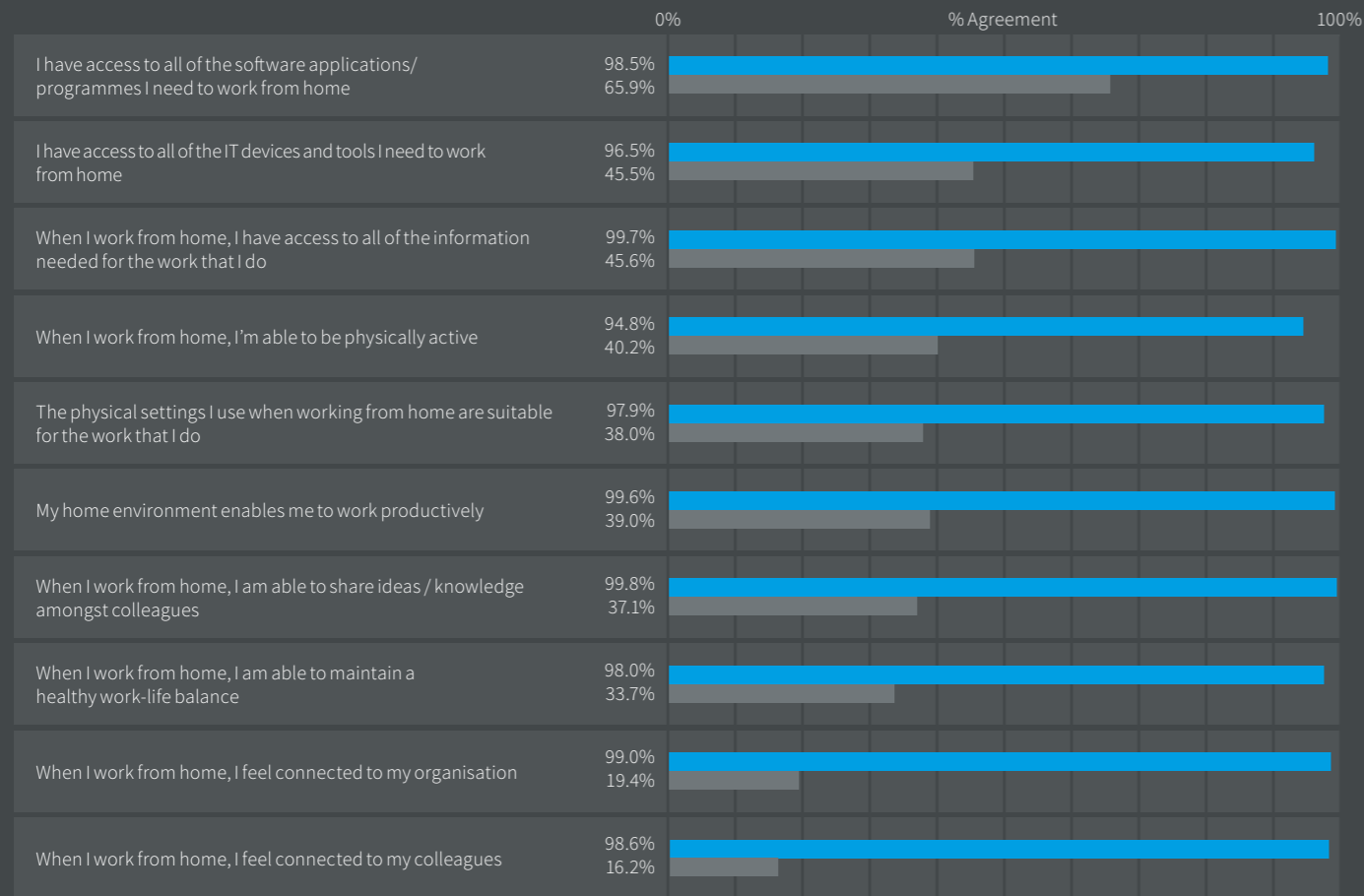
## Key findings:

- Whilst individual work is generally well supported at home, support for the social and collaborative aspects make up the biggest differences between those with the best and worst home working experience.
- Feeling connected both to colleagues and the organisation are correlated to how well collaboration is supported, whilst support for more formal meetings and conversations appears to play little or no role in supporting these social aspects of the experience.
- Productivity scores are correlated with how well both individual work and collaboration are supported, whilst support for formal meetings and conversations does not appear to drive higher productivity agreement.

<sup>4</sup> Of the 25 relationships under investigation, 12 were revealed to be statistically significant. For these 12 cases, Pearson's 'r' correlation coefficient values ranged from 0.689 to 0.504 at a 99% level of statistical significance (p < .001)

**Figure 2**  
Home working impact for upper and lower quarter

■ Upper quarter n=6,249, H-Lmi 95.3  
■ Lower quarter n=6,268, H-Lmi 46.2

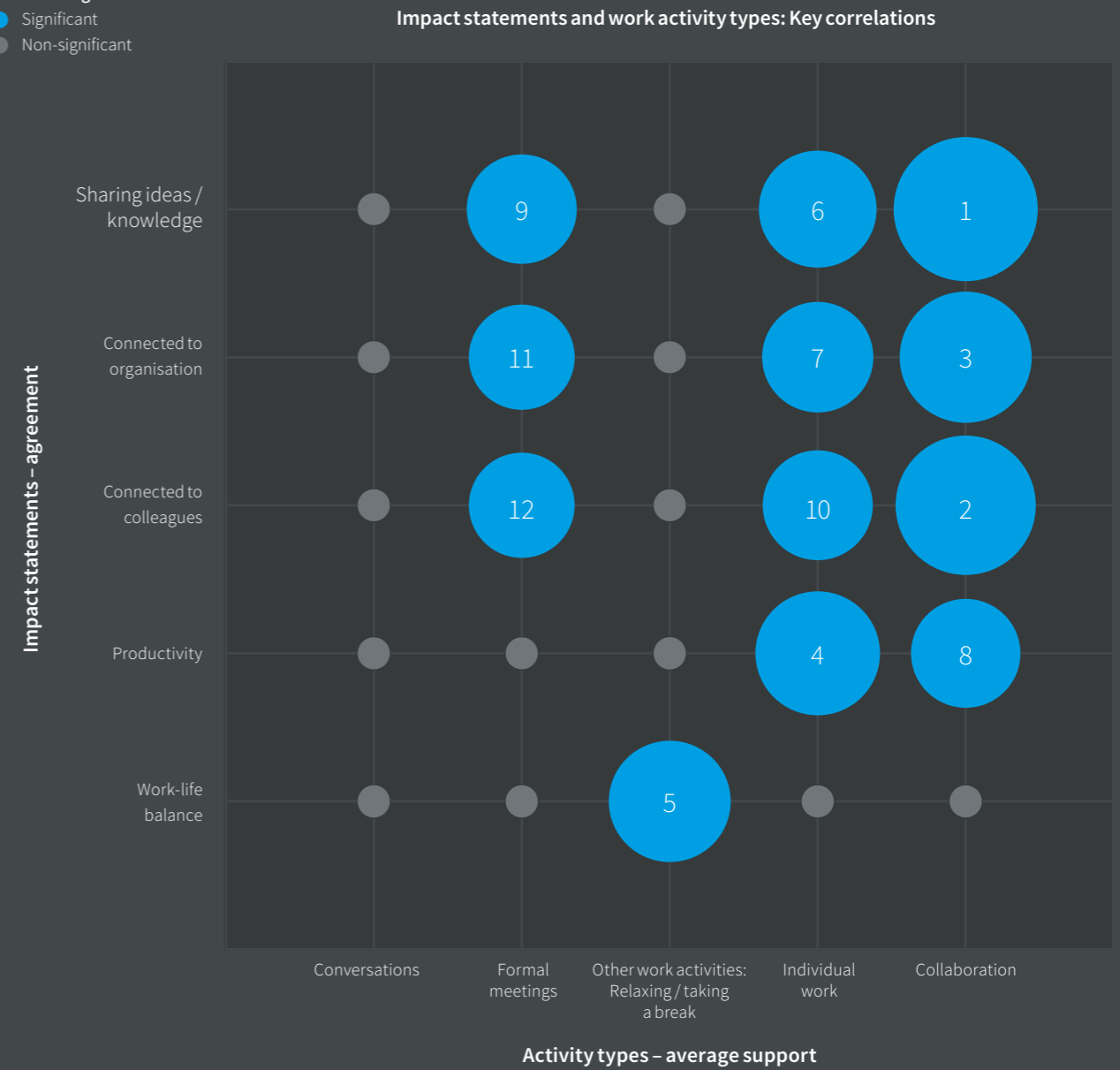


**How to read the chart:**

The chart shows agreement with the impact statements amongst respondents with the best and worst experience of working from home (upper and lower quarter). The impact statement is ranked in ascending order by gap.

**Figure 3**  
Correlations between key impact statements and different activity types<sup>5</sup>

**Statistical significance**  
● Significant  
● Non-significant



**How to read the chart:**

The chart shows which activity types – when supported – are the most likely to lead to strong agreement with the five impact statements.

**Key findings:**

- The three strongest correlations implicate 'Collaboration'. This means that employees who stated their Collaboration activities were supported were the most likely to report being able to share ideas / knowledge, and feel connected to their colleagues and the organisation.

- Employees whose Individual Work activities were supported were the most likely to agree that their environment enables them to work productively.
- Employees who were able to relax / take a break while working from home reported the highest work-life balance scores.
- Productivity is also determined by how well Collaboration activities are supported.

<sup>5</sup> Figure 3 shows the correlations between the five selected Impact statements and Activity types. The size of the bubble represents Pearson's 'r' correlation coefficient values, and the labels indicate the rank of each relationship's strength (1 being the strongest and 12 being the weakest correlation).



## 2. Role complexity – How an employee’s role dictates their needs

**Role complexity means the variety of different types of activities that an employee’s role entails, and it is measured by the number of activities the respondent indicates as important in their role (out of the 21 activities listed in the survey). The data revealed that the UK Civil Service employees have higher complexity to their roles than we typically see: on average, the Civil Service employees select three more activities as important to them in their work compared to private sector workers surveyed by Leesman globally. For the Civil Servants we surveyed, the average activity complexity is 10.1, compared to 7.2 for private sector employees (Figure 4).**

Compared to the private sector home workers, Civil Servants’ activity patterns:

- Rely more heavily on ‘Reading’ (59.3% importance, compared to 40.0%), and ‘Individual routine tasks’ (11.1 percentage points gap).
- Emphasize collaboration and the social dimensions of work, especially ‘Informal social interaction’ (15.9) and ‘Informal, un-planned meetings’ (12.1)
- Reflect more complex roles, and we see ‘Relaxing / taking a break’ has higher priority (13.5), which contributes to work-life balance as shown earlier.

This is interesting because role complexity is a key predictor of home working experience. The more variety in the type of activities that an employee does, the more challenging it is for the environment to support those different needs. As a result, in the public and private sector alike, employees with higher activity complexity report lower home working experience scores.

This finding is particularly visible when comparing the results between different Civil Service departments / agencies and across functions. Our analysis of sixteen Civil Service departments and agencies<sup>6</sup> revealed that this negative relationship may partially explain the H-Lmi gaps by department / agency and function (Figure 5): Higher activity complexity departments such as Defra have some of the lowest H-Lmi scores in the dataset, whilst lower activity complexity departments like Land Registry have some of the highest.

The same pattern is also found across functions: respondents working in Regulation or Policy functions have the highest activity complexity in the sample<sup>7</sup> (11.3, and 11.0), and the lowest average H-Lmi scores (70.3, and 70.4), whilst those working in lower activity complexity functions such as Finance or Property (both 9.3) have some of the highest (76.2, and 77.2).

However, H-Lmi can still vary across departments / agencies and functions of similar activity complexity, which indicates that role complexity alone does not necessarily lead to a good (or poor) home working experience. As individual work activities and formal conversations tend to be better supported at home compared to collaborative activities, employees whose roles are predominantly made up of these types of activities are more likely to have a better experience compared to those whose roles have a stronger emphasis on collaborative activities, even if the level of role complexity is the same. Further, the infrastructure available to an employee plays a significant role, which we will explore in the next section.

**10.1**  
Average number of work activities important to employees

**94.4%**  
Agree that home supports their individual focused work

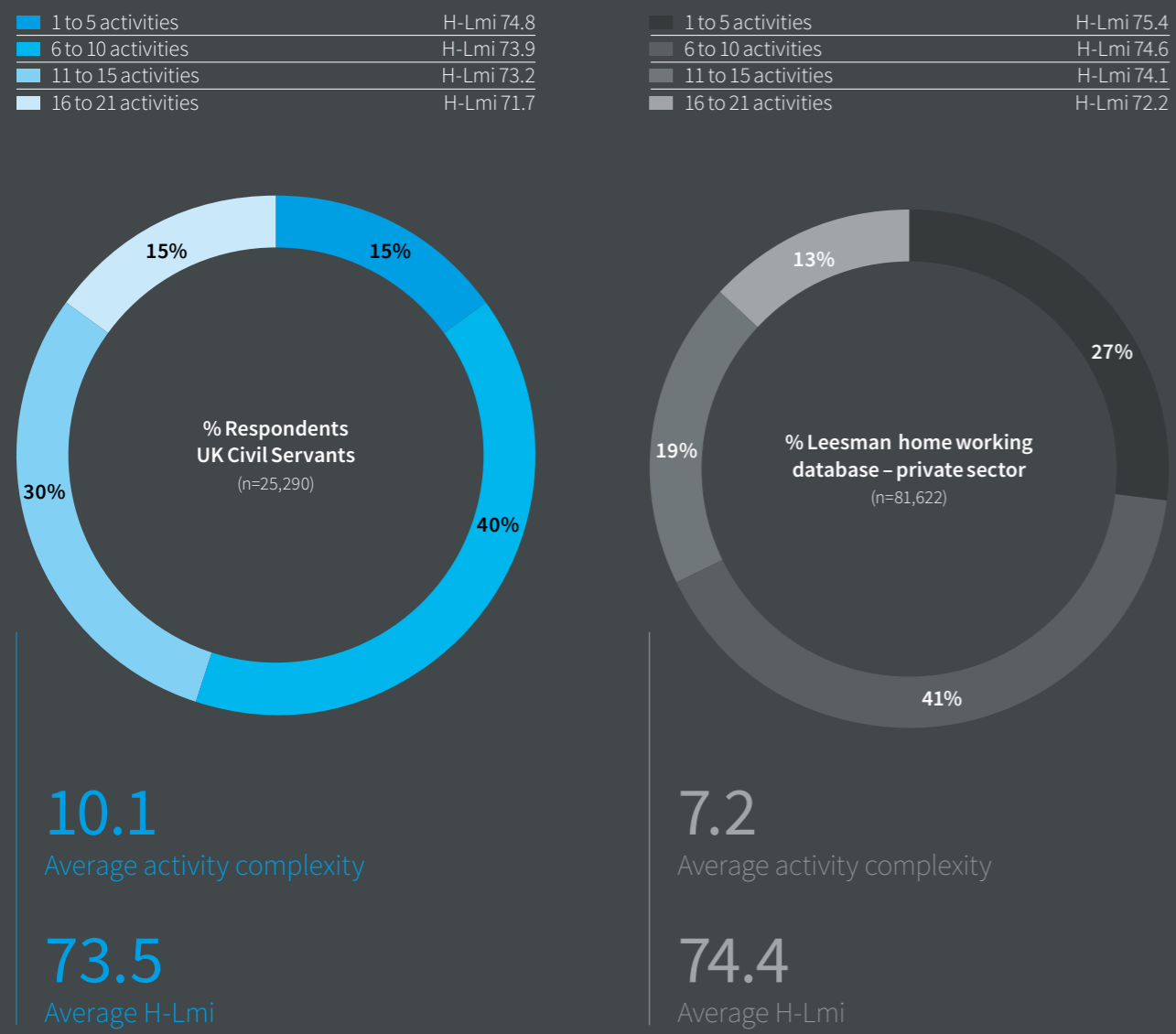
<sup>6</sup> To ensure that the findings are representative for the wider Civil Servant population, interdepartmental comparisons excluded respondents that had selected ‘Other’ in the department field and those from the three departments with fewer than 100 respondents: Attorney General’s Office, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales, Office for the Secretary of State for Scotland. In total, 599 responses have been excluded, resulting in a sample of 24,691 respondents across the remaining sixteen departments.

<sup>7</sup> Responses were excluded from functions that represented less than 2% of the sample: Security, Grants, Counter Fraud, Internal Audit, Debt, and Other, totalling 4,036 responses.

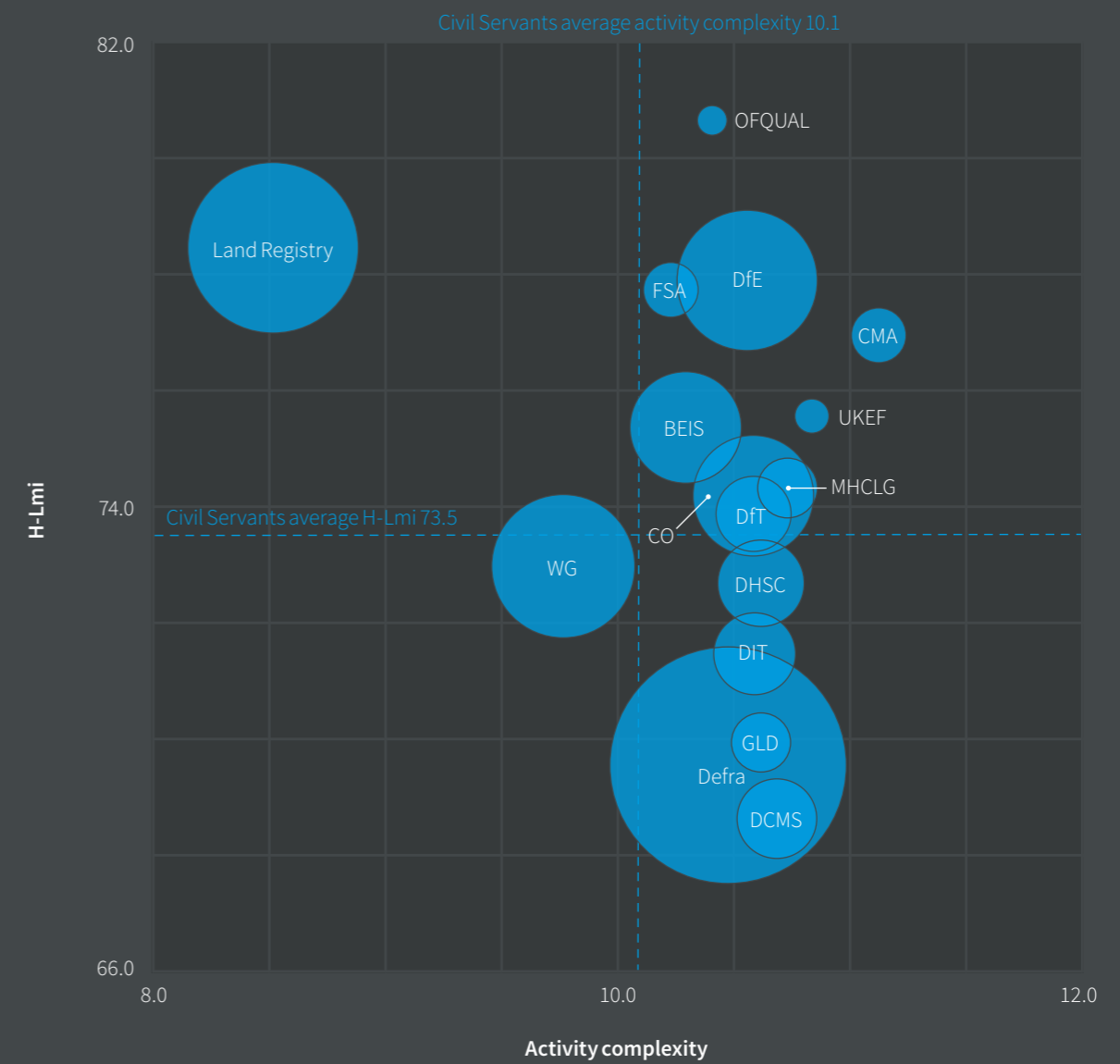
### Key findings:

- Role complexity is a key predictor of home working experience. The more variety in the type of activities that an employee does, the more challenging it is for the environment to support all of those different needs. Thus, role complexity has a negative association with home working experience: respondents with complex roles have a poorer experience than those in less complex roles.
- Civil Servants work in higher complexity roles: the work-related requirements of an average Civil Servant include three additional activities compared to private sector workers surveyed by Leesman globally.
- This partially explains why some departments / agencies and functions have had better experiences than others.

**Figure 4**  
Activity complexity and H-Lmi:  
UK Civil Service and private sector



**Figure 5**  
Activity complexity and H-Lmi  
by department / agency





### 3. The role of home work settings

The respondents were also asked what type of setting they have available to use at home, and the analysis identified this as a key predictor of their overall experience. In fact, when looking at all background variables individually, we found the greatest range in H-Lmi scores by comparing the work settings that employees use when working from home. The 39% of respondents who stated they worked from 'A dedicated work room or office' reported the best home working experience (H-Lmi = 78.6), whilst the 35% who used 'A non-work specific area (such as a dining table)' reported the worst (11.1 points lower, at 67.5) (Figure 6).

This pattern was repeated across all questions in the Leesman Home Working survey; those who work from a dedicated work room or office consistently reported the highest scores, whilst those using a non-work specific home location scored the lowest. The greatest gap in Impact agreement scores between those who used dedicated work rooms and non-work specific areas is, quite expectedly, found in the suitability of physical settings for work (91.8% agreement compared to 56.7%, resulting in a 35.1 percentage points gap) (Figure 7). More interestingly, the second largest difference was related to productivity (a 24.3 percentage point gap), and the third was related to work-life balance (a 17.5 percentage point gap). The next largest gaps were noted in agreement with statements regarding the social nature of work: feeling connected to the organisation (17 percentage points), connected to colleagues (16.5), and the ability to share ideas / knowledge (14.9).

Amongst the activities of high importance for Civil Service employees<sup>8</sup>, the following are supported by at least 10 percentage points better in a dedicated work room, compared to non-work specific areas (Table 1):

- Three high-importance collaborative activities: 'Learning from others' (16.4 percentage points gap, the greatest gap), 'Informal social interaction' and 'Informal, un-planned meetings'
- Two high-importance individual work activities: 'Individual focused work, desk based' and 'Reading'
- Across other types of activities: 'Relaxing/taking a break'

This suggests that the acoustic privacy required when engaging in spontaneous collaboration and interaction may be harder to achieve when using areas accessed by other people in the household. Also, individual work activities may be more challenging in a space with non-work related distractions. Finally, working in areas used for non-work purposes, such as dining tables, may impede employees' ability to take regular breaks during the day and to truly switch off from work at the end of the day.

Respondents working in dedicated work rooms and non-work specific settings also reported very different levels of satisfaction with the features present in the environment. The greatest gaps relate to ergonomics: average satisfaction with 'Desk or table' and 'Chair', respectively, are better by 42.7 and 32.2 percentage points in dedicated work room or area compared to non-work specific settings (Figure 8).

These findings suggest that employees who do not have a room at home they can dedicate for working are more likely to experience challenges in doing both individual and collaborative work, maintaining a healthy work-life balance and ensuring appropriate ergonomics.

It is worth noting that the gaps between those working in a dedicated work room and a dedicated work area (but not a separate room) respectively were smaller (Figures 7 and 8). This suggests that having a dedicated work area—even if it is not enclosed—may still provide a better home working experience than working from a dining table.

## 35%

Do not have a space at home they can designate for work

## 66.4%

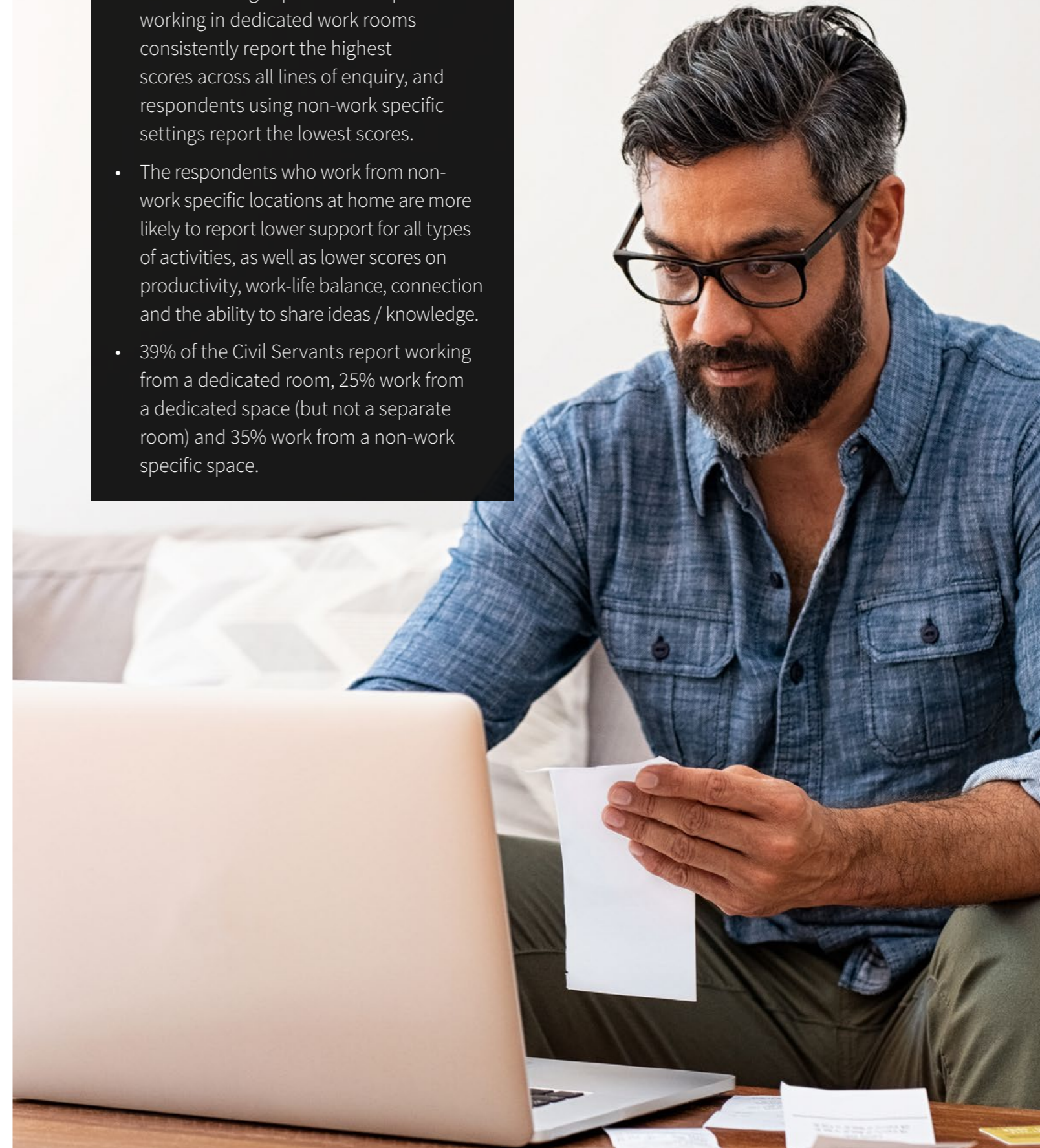
Satisfaction with desk or table available to them at home

However, due to the lack of a suitable space, it may not always be possible to support the 35% of Civil Service employees who currently work from a non-work specific location in creating a better physical environment at home.

The previous section of this report showed how role complexity drives home working experience: employees with more complex roles are likely to have a poorer experience working from home. When combining these two variables—the complexity of an employee's role and the setting they have available to them—the effects are amplified further. The difference between the 'best' and 'worst' case scenarios, i.e. Civil Service employees with less complex roles who have access to a dedicated work room or office, and Civil Service employees with high role complexity and who work in a non-work specific home location, is 16.0 points on the H-Lmi scale, one of the largest gaps observed in this report. This essentially means that even though a dedicated work room at home is likely to improve the home working experience for any employee, having one available is most crucial for those employees who work in high complexity roles.

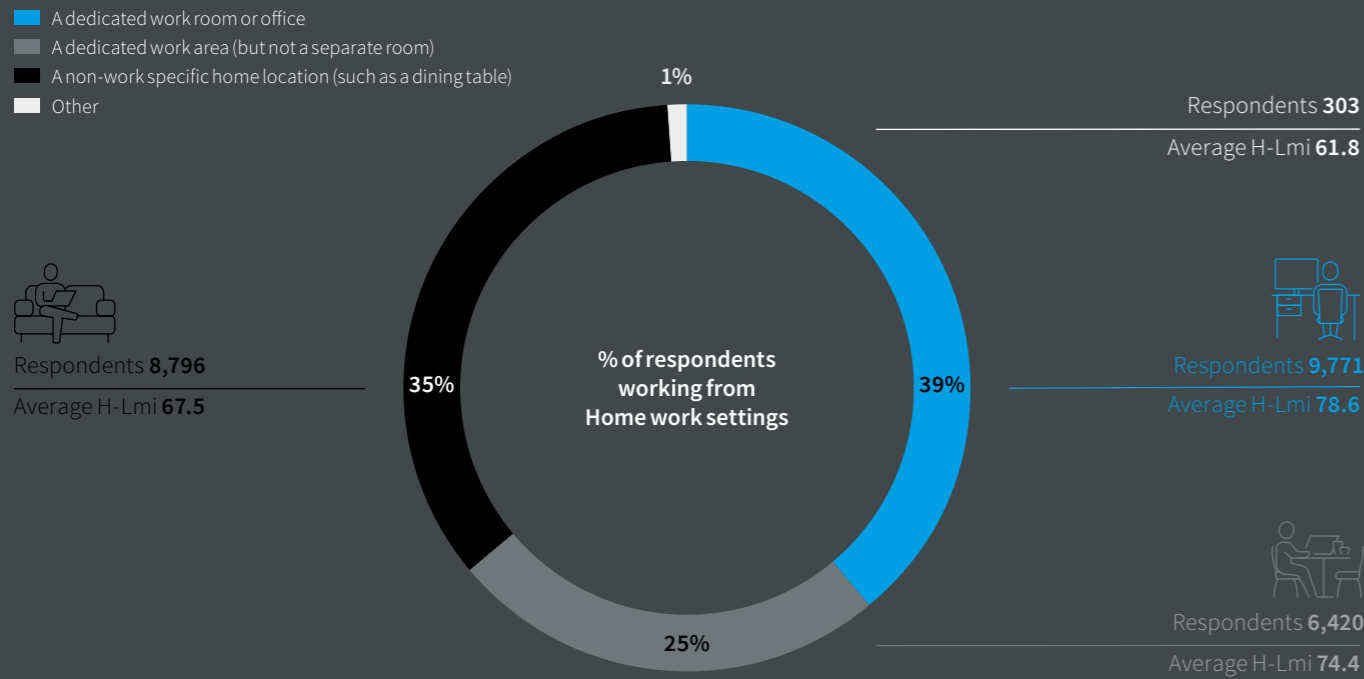
#### Key findings:

- Home work settings are key drivers of home working experience. Respondents working in dedicated work rooms consistently report the highest scores across all lines of enquiry, and respondents using non-work specific settings report the lowest scores.
- The respondents who work from non-work specific locations at home are more likely to report lower support for all types of activities, as well as lower scores on productivity, work-life balance, connection and the ability to share ideas / knowledge.
- 39% of the Civil Servants report working from a dedicated room, 25% work from a dedicated space (but not a separate room) and 35% work from a non-work specific space.

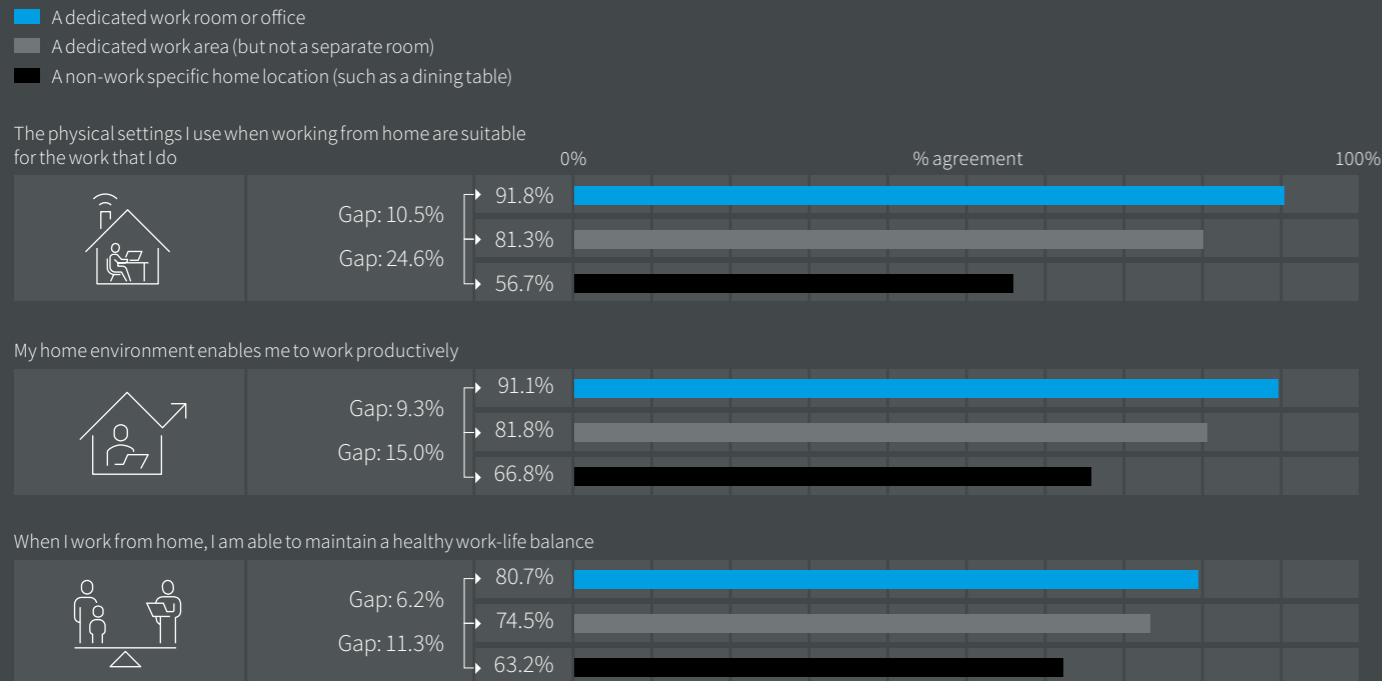




**Figure 6**  
Home work settings across the Civil Service



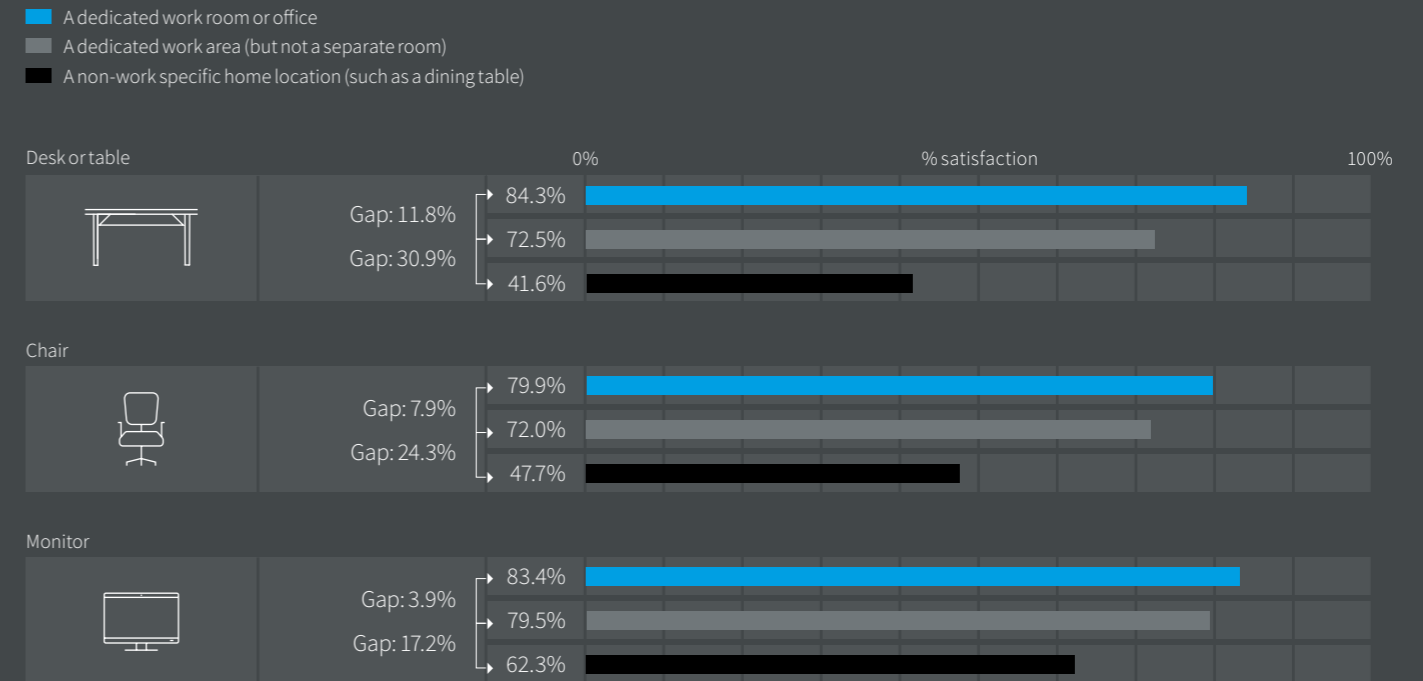
**Figure 7**  
Impact agreement in home work settings: Top 3 gaps



**Table 1**  
Activity support in different home work settings

		A dedicated work room or office	A dedicated work area (but not a separate room)	A non-work specific home location (such as a dining table)	Support gap between extremes	Gap rank
<b>Collaboration</b>	Collaborating on focused work	88.4%	85.2%	78.3%	10.1%	7
	Informal social interaction	67.2%	61.1%	55.3%	11.9%	2
	Informal, un-planned meetings	85.6%	80.0%	74.3%	11.3%	3
	Learning from others	70.7%	64.7%	54.3%	16.4%	1
<b>Conversations</b>	Telephone conversations	95.5%	93.9%	88.9%	6.6%	8
	Planned meetings	96.0%	95.1%	92.8%	3.2%	10
<b>Formal meetings</b>	Video conferences	88.5%	87.7%	86.5%	2.0%	11
	Individual focused work, desk based	96.5%	94.2%	85.7%	10.8%	4
<b>Individual Work</b>	Individual routine tasks	96.5%	95.2%	90.3%	6.2%	9
	Reading	92.4%	89.0%	82.0%	10.4%	6
	Relaxing/taking a break	82.7%	79.9%	72.2%	10.5%	5

**Figure 8**  
Features\* satisfaction in home work settings: Top 3 gaps



\*Features selected as important by at least 50% of respondents.



## 4. Demography – Dispelling the myths

**When comparing the respondents home working experiences based on demographics such as gender, tenure, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation and health condition, no major differences were found that could be explained purely based on those factors: the H-Lmi gaps were of 2 points or less in each case. However, as home work settings were found to be key drivers of experience, the analysis continued with assessing who amongst the Civil Service employees are the most likely to have access to the work settings conducive to the best—and worst—experience, and if these demographic differences are significant<sup>9</sup>. Here we present the demographics where significant differences were found.**

### Regions

Across the different regions, clear differences were found in the proportion of Civil Service employees who have access to different work settings (Figure 9). In Northern Ireland, 61% of respondents work in a dedicated work room or office, which was the highest proportion across all regions. The region also had the lowest proportion, only 18%, using a non-work specific home location. However, it is worth noting that this is based on a small sample (n=48).

Conversely, in London only 31% have access to a dedicated work room or office, which was the lowest proportion across all regions. Along with Wales, London also had the highest proportion of Civil Service employees working at a non-work specific home location; 40% of the respondents reported that they work from this type of setting.

### Grade / pay band / responsibility level

A significant relationship was observed between respondents' pay band and home work settings: the higher the grade, the greater the proportion of respondents

with a dedicated work room or office. Civil Service employees working in SCS and Grades 6 / 7 were the most likely to have a dedicated work room or office; 51% and 45%, respectively, reported having a dedicated work room at home. Employees in grades EO and AO / AA were the least likely to have a dedicated work room; 34% in these grades had access to a dedicated room.

### Age group

A significant relationship was also noted when exploring the distribution of home work settings by age group: the older the age group, the greater the proportion of respondents with a dedicated work room of office<sup>10</sup>.

The younger age groups (under 25 and 25-34) were the least likely to have access to a dedicated work room or office, with only 24% and 31%, respectively, working from a dedicated work room. Conversely, 43% of those of age 45-54 and 45% of those of age 55-64 stated that they have access to this setting.

### Ethnic group

Effects were also noted when exploring the ethnic groups that were most or least likely to have access to a dedicated work room or office in their homes. Amongst ethnic groups with higher respondent count, two effects were noted as shown in Figure 10. First, White ethnic groups are all situated within the top half of the chart, indicating the biggest proportions of respondents with a dedicated work room or office. Second, Black or Black British all cluster in the lower part of the chart, indicating the lowest proportions of respondents with a dedicated work room or office.

However, this may be the result of small sample sizes<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, despite being the least likely to have access to dedicated work room or areas, respondents in all Black or Black British ethnic groups (n=462)

## 61%

In Northern Ireland 61% of respondents work in a dedicated work room or office

## 31%

In London only 31% of respondents have access to a dedicated work room or office

reported the highest home working experience scores (average 76.1, higher by 2.3 points than the 'White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British group'). This shows that home work settings alone are not a guarantee of good or bad experience.

### Comments on demography

It is clear that there are a series of factors just beyond the typical demographic segments that produce significant effects on home working experience. Some of these are to be expected: respondents who are in the younger age groups are less likely to have a domestic setting with a dedicated work room. This is especially true for respondents based in regions such as London. But this also creates clusters which we would strongly suggest are analysed in greater depth, for example the concentration of Black or Black British respondents who were also London region based.

<sup>9</sup> The analysis used Pearson's Chi-square tests of independence to verify if any of the demographic subgroups of interest were over- or under- represented in the Civil Service sample. The tests reveal both direction of the association (positive or negative), and significance (significant or not).

<sup>10</sup> This was true for all age groups aside from the 65 or over age group, possibly due to the small sample size of that group (less than 1% of the Civil Service sample).

<sup>11</sup> In absolute terms, the 'Arab' ethnic group had the highest proportion of respondents with a dedicated work room or office (41%); however this group, along with 'White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller' and 'Black or Black British – Any other Black/African/Caribbean background' included some of the smallest numbers of respondents (n=79 in total).

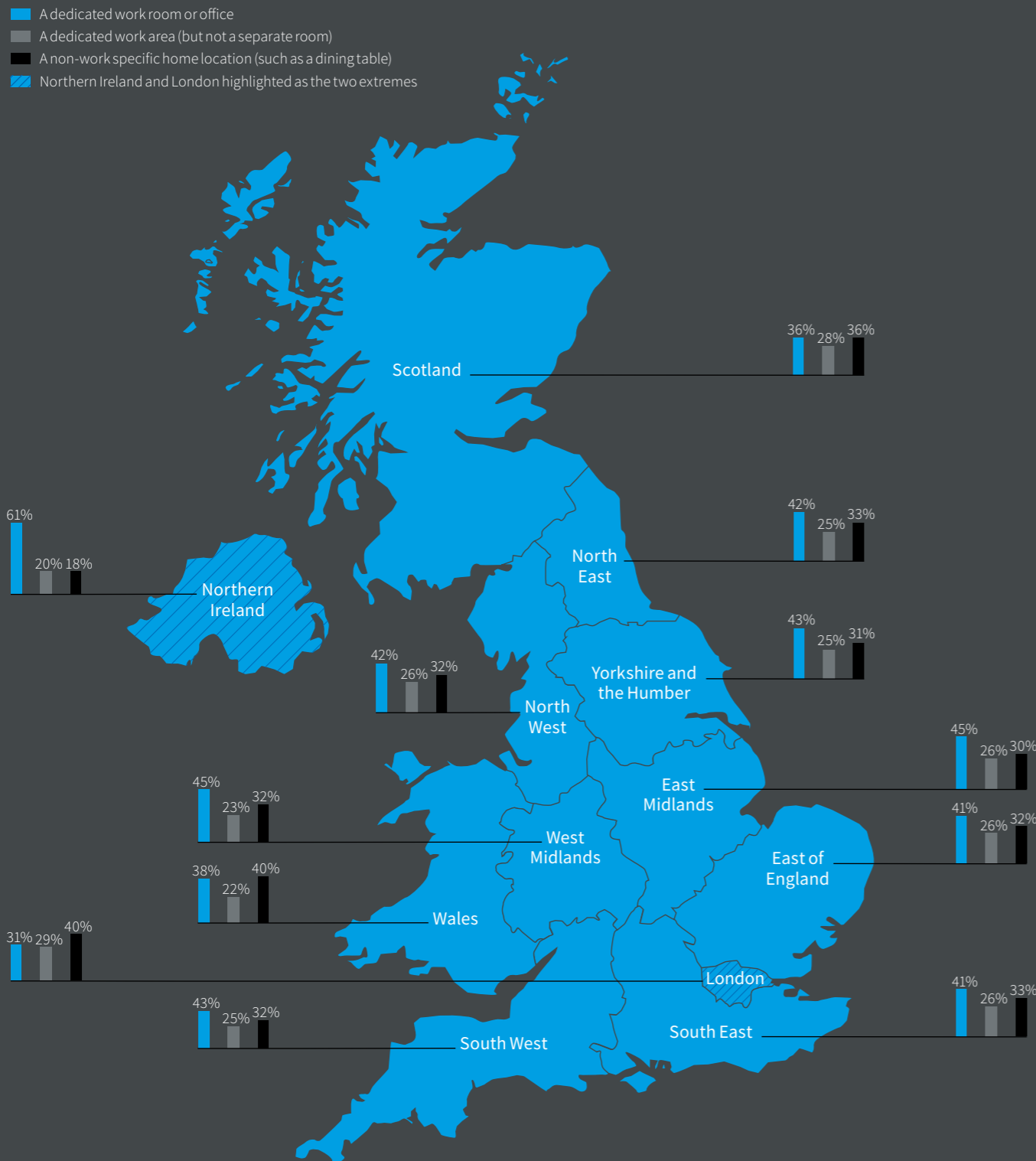
### Key findings:

- No major demographic effects were found for Civil Servants' home working experience.
- However, respondents from the London region, with lower pay grades, from younger age bands or from the Black or Black British ethnic groups are more likely to be working from a non-work specific setting at home and are therefore more likely to have the least favourable experience.

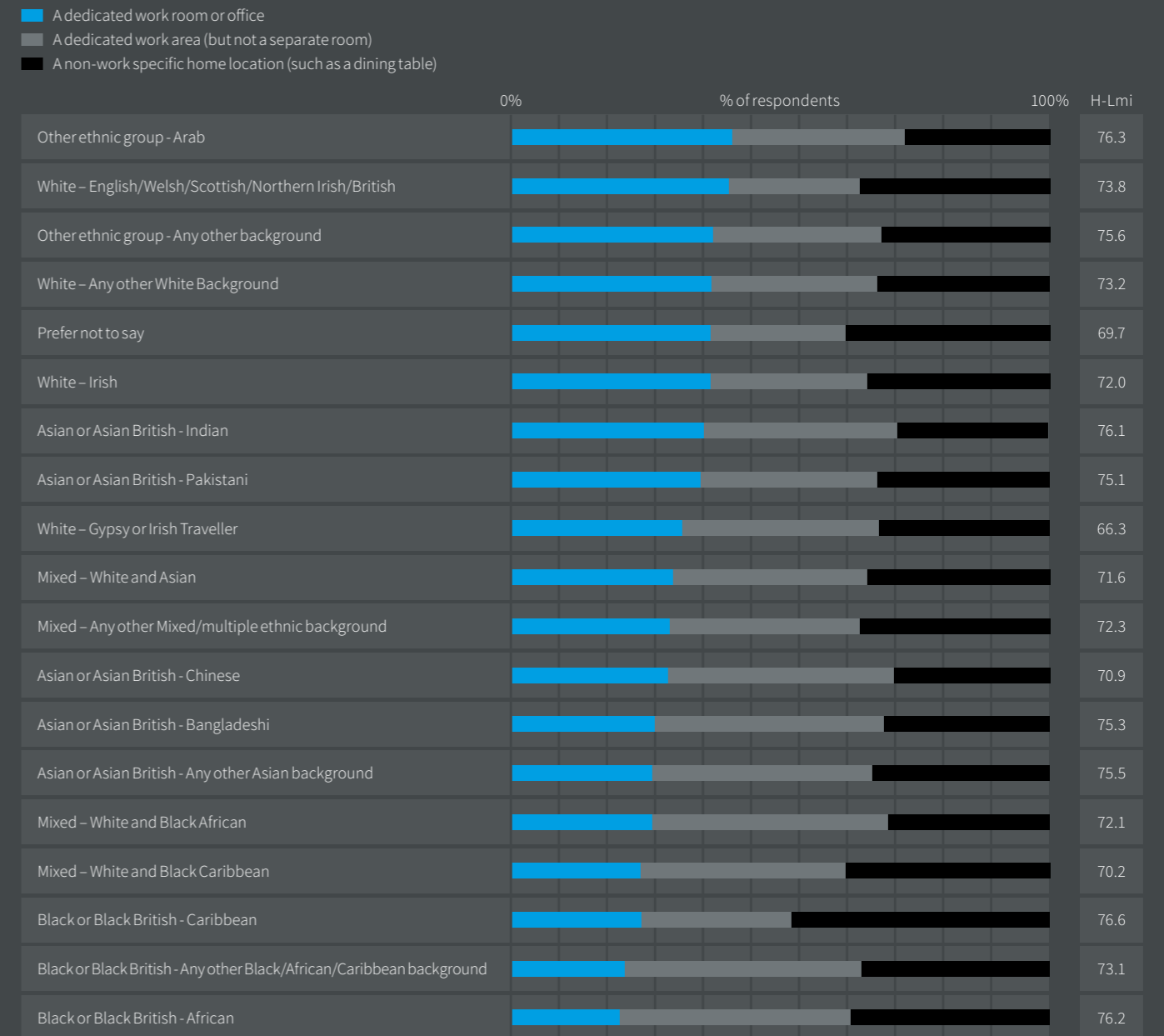




**Figure 9**  
Distribution of home work settings by region



**Figure 10**  
Distribution of home work settings by ethnic group



It is important to acknowledge the finding that those from Black ethnic groups are the least likely to have either a dedicated work room, or a designated work space at home. However, it must also be acknowledged that they report higher home Leesman H-Lmi experience scores than many of the other ethnic groups.



## 5. Post-pandemic preference

**This report has investigated the ingredients of positive — and negative — home working experience. However, it should be noted that for many Civil Service employees, the requirement to work exclusively from home was a sudden and drastic change which may have required the forging of new work patterns. This section examines how attitudes towards remote working have changed and if there is any relationship with respondents' home work settings.**

### Change in perception

The vast majority, 70% of Civil Service employees, report their perception of remote or home working has become more positive since the COVID-19 outbreak, whilst 22% say it hasn't changed and 8% say it is now more negative.

The data shows these perceptions are associated with respondents' home work settings. Employees whose perception of remote working is now more negative are likely to work from a non-work specific home location: 55% of those with a negative perception work from a non-work setting, whilst only 23% of them have a dedicated work room or office available to them.

Amongst respondents whose perception hasn't changed or has improved, there are similar proportions of respondents with dedicated work rooms or offices (39% and 41%) and dedicated work areas (24% and 27%) (Figure 11). This supports the finding that the views of respondents using a dedicated work area (but not a separate room) are more similar to those with a dedicated work room or office than they are with the views of those using non-work specific home locations.

### Working from home post-COVID

The data shows that once the COVID-19 restrictions have been removed, the Civil Service employees in general would like to work remotely more often than they did before the outbreak. For example, whilst 42% did not work remotely at all before COVID-19, only 3% would like to go back to the office full-time once restrictions have been removed. The most common response to the question about how many days per week one would prefer to work remotely is 3 days/week, selected by 30% of the respondents. Across the whole sample, 27% of respondents indicated a preference to return to the office for the majority of the working week once COVID-19 restrictions were removed.

These preferences were found to be strongly associated with the home work setting available to respondents (Figure 12). Those who do not want to spend any time working remotely are most likely to be working at a non-work specific home location (60%), whilst only few (20%) have a dedicated work room or office.

Conversely, those who want to spend 5 days a week working remotely are likely to be doing so in a dedicated work room or office (49%), although it is worth noting that a further 25% of those selecting a preference for being wholly home-based would in fact be working at a non-work specific home location. Their motivation to remain remote warrants further investigation and may well be more closely linked to the experience they had in their office.

This data also points to the Civil Service needing to undertake a major review of occupancy planning. Those respondents electing to be office based for the majority but not the entire week will almost certainly gravitate towards the middle of the week. This risks leaving offices approaching peak occupation on a Wednesday but grossly under-utilised on Mondays and Fridays.

## 70%

For 70% of Civil Servants, perceptions of home working have become more positive since COVID-19

## 73%

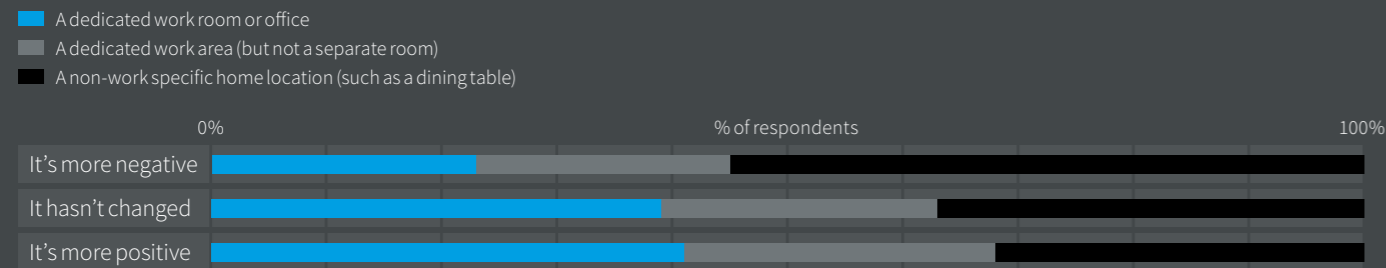
73% of Civil Servants would prefer to work remotely for 3 or more days per week

### Key findings:

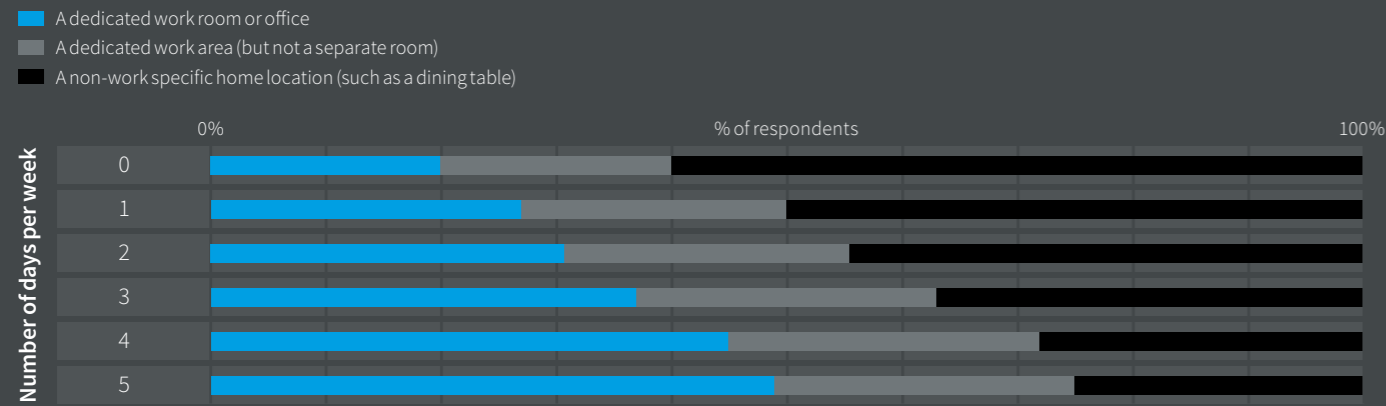
- The vast majority, 70% of Civil Servants, report that their perception of remote or home working has become more positive since the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Across the whole sample, 27% of respondents indicated a preference to return to the office for the majority of the working week once COVID-19 restrictions were removed.
- Home work settings are associated with changes in perception of remote working and intention to work from home post-COVID. Respondents who worked in non-work specific areas are the most likely to have changed their perception of remote working in a negative way and are the least likely to intend to continue working from home post-COVID.



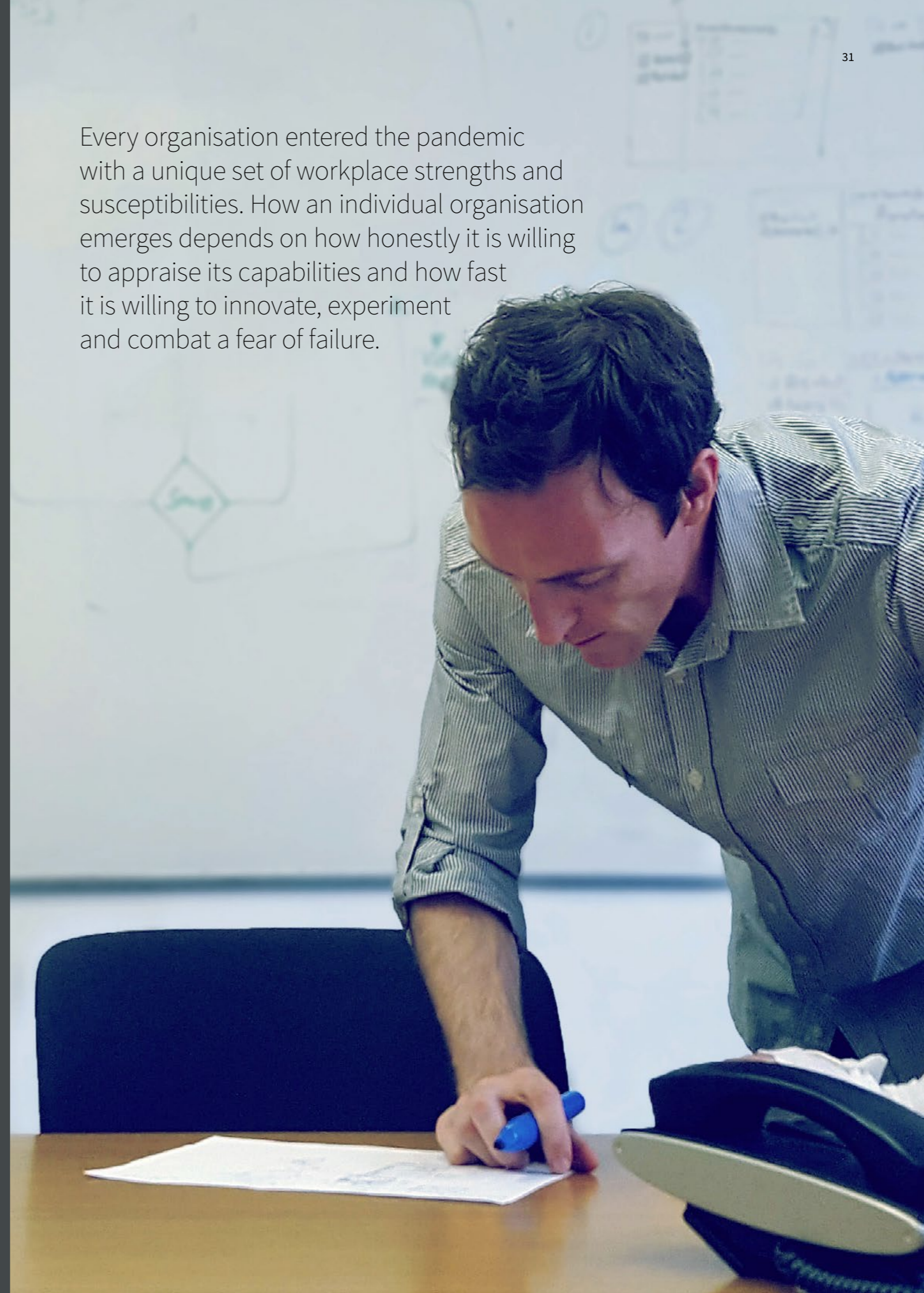
**Figure 11**  
Perceptions of remote or working from home since the COVID-19 outbreak by home work settings



**Figure 12**  
Preferred number of days working remotely per week post-COVID



Every organisation entered the pandemic with a unique set of workplace strengths and susceptibilities. How an individual organisation emerges depends on how honestly it is willing to appraise its capabilities and how fast it is willing to innovate, experiment and combat a fear of failure.



# Strengths and susceptibilities

The results of this survey raise a number of issues, clearly identify some recurrent broad themes and signpost a host of critical next moves. It has presented the Government Property Agency with empirical data that reveals how 25,290 Civil Servants' homes are working as workplaces. It shows which roles are supported well at home and which will struggle, and it exposes how some Government departments and agencies fare considerably better than others (Figure 13).

As an audit, it confirms that 63% of those surveyed have an excellent experience working remotely, and the Civil Service crisis management response was as good if not better than many corporate organisations. But it also shows that 37% of respondents sat across 12 departments / agencies have an average, or even poor, home working experience. Why it is that various departments and agencies differ can to some extent be seen in fairly simple analysis of employee

satisfaction of the infrastructure available to them at home. Figures 14 and 15 illustrate graphically the dramatic difference in importance and then satisfaction with key features across the five largest respondent groups, where for example the Land Registry respondents have reported significantly higher satisfaction with seating (chair), monitors and desktop computer equipment.

Figure 13 H-Lmi performance overview by department / agency

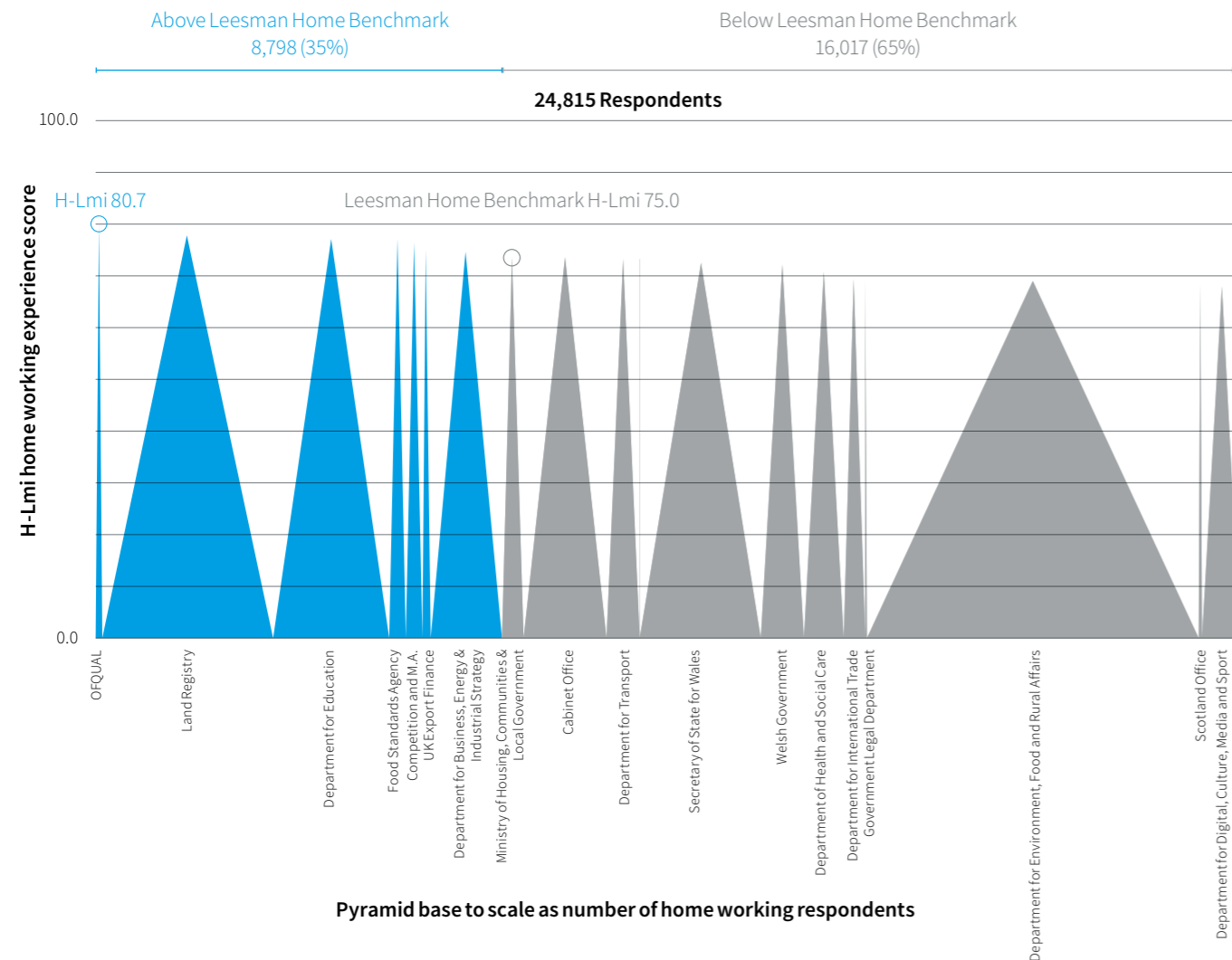


Figure 14 Features – internal comparison: Importance

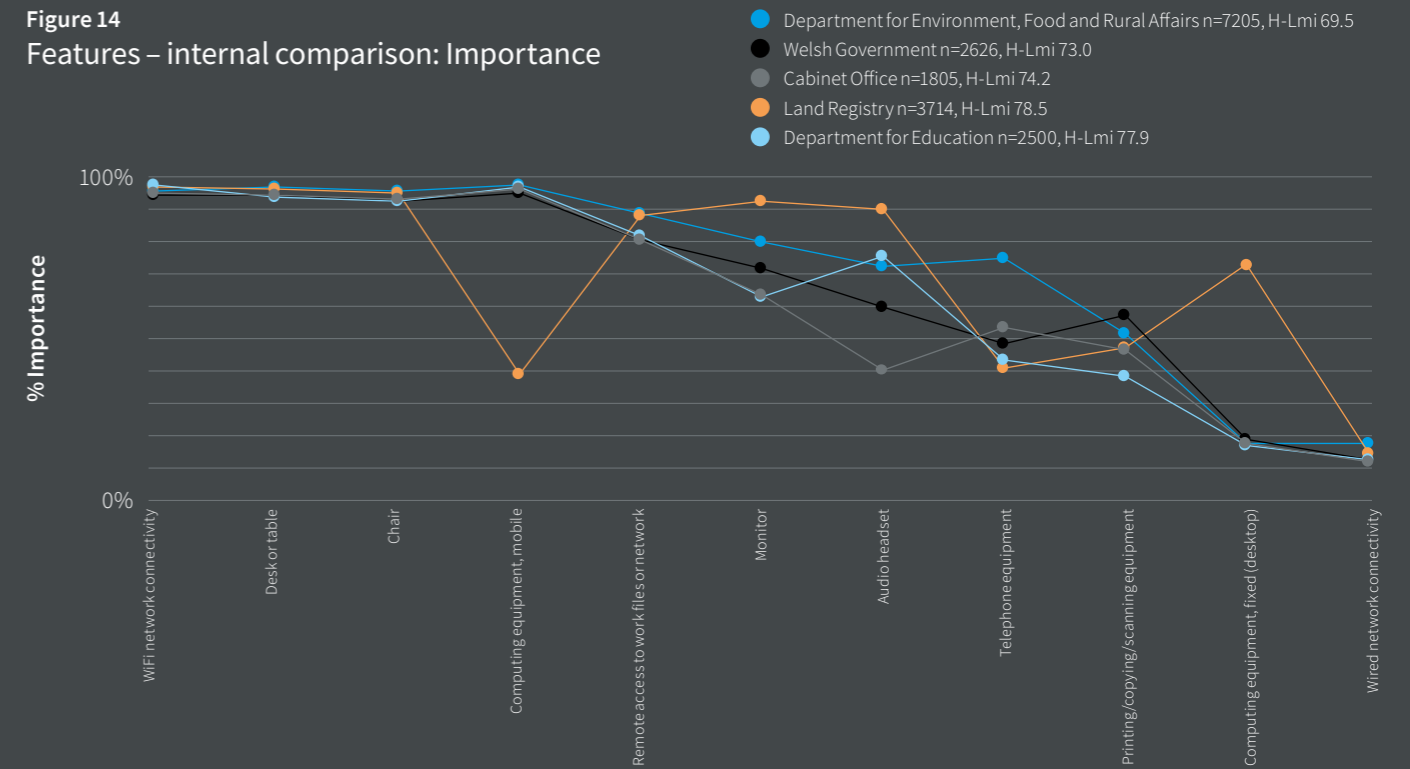
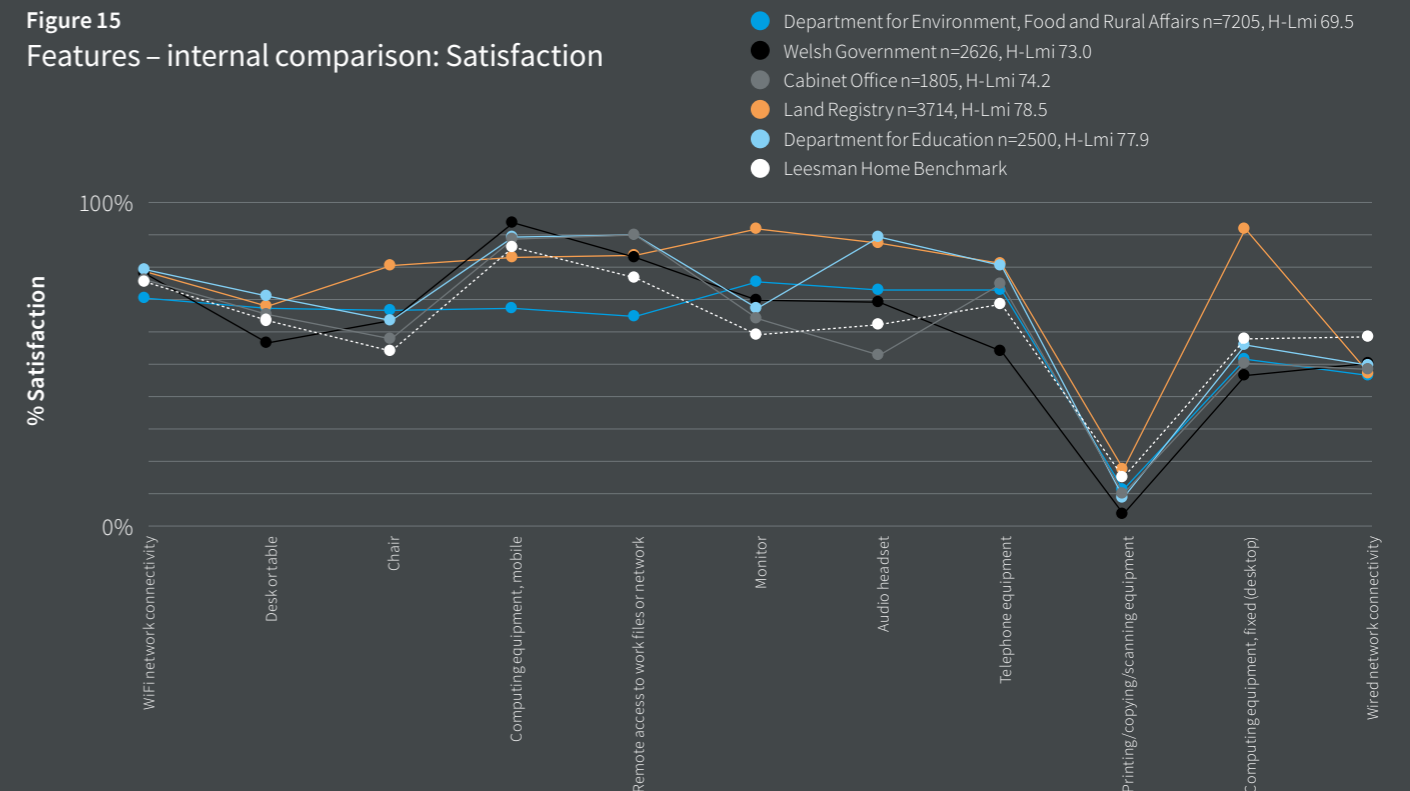


Figure 15 Features – internal comparison: Satisfaction





These individual differences are where there may also be considerable opportunity for cross-departmental learning. A commendable 92.0% of respondents from OFQUAL reported that they had access to all the information they needed when working remotely, compared to 69.7% of the Attorney General's Office respondents.

Of significant concern is that just a matter of months into the home working experiment, the performance indicators featuring at the bottom of most departmental analysis are those statements associated with connection to organisation and colleagues, staying physically active and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. To an extent, this is to be expected — in an office environment, employees move between different settings, meeting rooms, refreshment points, bathrooms or perhaps pop out for lunch. This clearly doesn't happen at home when all work is screen-based and suddenly all work has become sedentary. So, whilst the pandemic will certainly move remote working from being a privilege to an accepted norm, those who are home-based for extended periods may well be at risk of starting to feel as though they are living at work, rather than working from home. The data also suggests that employees will need to be reminded of the importance of taking structured breaks and monitoring their work-life balance.

However, the current data is missing an important further dimension: with the exception of the Competition and Markets Authority, who undertook a Leesman Office survey shortly before the pandemic, we have no data to tell us what experience Civil Service employees had in the workplaces they left behind. Those employees will now be benchmarking those offices against their personal and individual home working experience, and any strategic plan for the future Civil Service workplace must consider this gap in comparative data before formulating its next steps.

That data will almost certainly show that those work activities that benefit from acoustic privacy are better supported at home than they are in the majority of offices. But it will also show the critical value of corporate workplaces in supporting fundamentally important factors like 'Informal social interaction', 'Learning from others', 'Collaborating on creative work' and 'Informal un-planned meetings'. For many parts of the Civil Service, where social purpose is intrinsic, this potential breakdown in collective endeavour could present substantial risk.

These strategic plans should also appreciate that outstanding employee workplace experience is not the reserve of the global technology mega-brands. Numerous examples show how public sector bodies can deliver outstanding experience for their employees. The CMA's new London Cabot Square office received a Leesman Office workplace experience score of Lmi 73.9, positioning it amongst the top 20% of global workplaces. It is merely a case of delivering an ecosystem that is accurately tuned to the specific differing needs of the employee groups using those spaces.

Understanding this dimension—that different roles and different teams need different workplace systems to support them—is the starting point for delivering higher satisfaction for the employee and therefore higher key performance outcomes for the Civil Service that in turn will support the aspiration for delivering brilliant public services. This puts 'experience' as a critical performance measure of property and when analysed against operating costs, gives a true measure of the 'effectiveness' of the civil estate.

Performance measuring by effectiveness does however, in some instances, run at odds with blunter objectives around efficiency. Targets based purely around efficiency too often deliver tightly packed

buildings run within financial constraints that result in workplace experiences for employees that obstruct and hamper the very tasks they are trying to accommodate. These are false economies.

Many organisations are therefore moving from evaluating property efficiency based purely on delivery cost per sq m or per FTE to cost per employee experience point. Where the measure of experience includes critical business objectives like productivity, knowledge transfer and employee pride, this gives a much more accurate picture of the costs associated with delivering environments that allow employees to perform at their best and give employers maximum return on employee investment.

Our wider research has clearly identified the factors that drive outstanding workplace experience and in so doing, also identified those areas where compromise and restraint can be exercised with limited impact on employee sentiment (Figure 16). We have researched in depth what that means for organisations trying to get the best of their real estate and their employees. One study, across a sample of 401,362 employees, mapped the complex web of factors that impact, shape and ultimately drive employee sentiment.

The results showed how employee experience is shaped through the support of three distinct experience clusters: Doing (the values around productivity and 'getting things done'), Seeing (image and sustainability) and Feeling (the more internalised emotional aspects of brand and culture). An outstanding workplace experience delivers on all three, and failure on one will almost certainly limit or undermine overall sentiment. Furthermore, there are a series of core employee work activities and features that are critical success drivers across all three of these areas. Supporting these should be seen as mission-critical in delivering a high-performance workplace.

**Figure 16**  
**Employee experience journey**

We have identified these mission critical factors as 'sentiment super drivers'. This figure shows how these distribute across work activities, physical features and service features. Factors that cross all three lines are these workplace super drivers. It is also worth noting that many workplace factors do not feature on the sentiment driver list. These are elements that may be important to the safe and efficient operation of a workplace but do not statistically sway an employee's sense of experience.



# Next steps

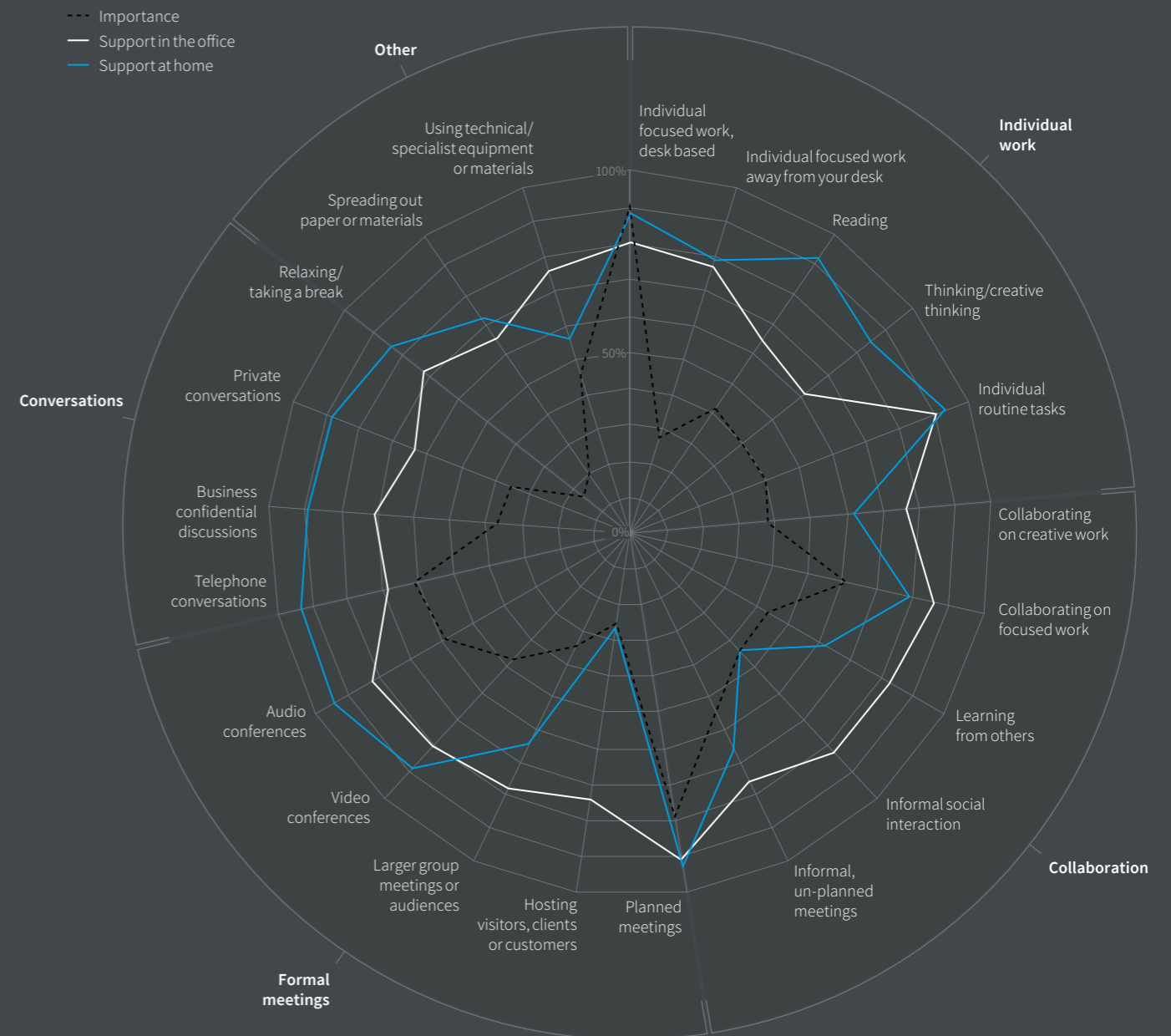
The data the GPA now has on employee home working experience forms a baseline from which they can accurately start to visualise what the future modernised Civil Service workplace estate could look and feel like, and how it could support innovation, enhance cross-departmental collaboration and promote learning. It gives a clear picture of which work activities can be well supported if undertaken at home and which activities are best experienced in a corporate office setting.

It is important to recognise that the data reported on here only represents half of the picture. For a thorough appraisal of the potential for the Civil Service workplace landscape, an equally deep understanding of the experience colleagues typically had in their offices would prove invaluable. The resultant analysis would clearly test how and whether a new wider blended workplace landscape could better support economic growth, job creation, skills development, lifelong learning, equity and inclusion.

1. Establish a cross-departmental workplace experience knowledge transfer group that can evaluate and promote the best examples of solutions / features / technologies that, based on the data collected, support outstanding remote employee experience.
2. Seek to better understand the relationship between employee and the workplaces they left behind, and consider moving from focusing on cost of occupancy and pure efficiency targets to cost of experience and outcome effectiveness targets
3. Build an evidence platform that can accurately promote user-centric, evidence (data) driven design strategies for the post-pandemic corporate workplace solution, not just from an architectural or interior design perspective, but also in terms of service design.
4. Ensure managers are aware of the typical profile of those for whom home working probably isn't working so well — i.e. likely to be younger or from lower pay grades, in roles with higher work complexity, from the London region etc. and that these employees are most likely to want to return to the office sooner and for more of the working week.
5. If employees are to be given greater freedom to choose their preferred work location, then training and guidance will need to be offered around which activities are best suited to each location, and robust occupancy planning tools will be needed to manage the tidal flow of different user groups on different days.
6. However, the risk is that organisations and individuals start to think of the home as the best place for some activities and the office best for others. This binary categorisation jeopardises many of the less easily quantifiable benefits of co-location, like knowledge transfer, sense of community, pride and collective endeavour.
7. Ensure communication plans exist to support wellbeing and work-life balance, to help employees spending long periods home-based recognise the importance of maintaining their social connection to the organisation and their colleagues and to be acutely self-aware of their physical well-being and ergonomics as their work becomes increasingly more sedentary.
8. Conduct further analysis to establish the relationship for Civil Servants between a sense of 'connection' and productivity and the particular role that activities like relaxing / taking a break, social interaction, informal meetings and learning from others has and whether remote working risks undermining these outcomes.

**Figure 17**  
Activity types supported at home / in the office:

Recent Leesman database extract (n=22,132 from 22 organisations who deployed the Leesman Office survey and Home Working module as at 30.09.2020)





# Home working data contributors

Data as at 14.08.2020

Arrow Global  
 BNP Paribas  
 Camelot Group  
 Discovery Communications  
 EDGE Technologies  
 Erasmus MC  
 Ericsson  
 European Central Bank (ECB)  
 Fellesforbundeta  
 G4S  
 Gemeente Groningen  
 UK Civil Service  
 UK Civil Service departments  
 Attorney General's Office (LOD)  
 Cabinet Office (CO)  
 Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)  
 Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)  
 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)  
 Department for Education (DfE)  
 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)  
 Department for International Trade (DIT)  
 Department for Transport (DfT)  
 Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)  
 Food Standards Agency (FSA)  
 Government Legal Department (GLD)  
 Land Registry  
 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)  
 Office of the Secretary of State for Wales (WO) Welsh Government (WG)  
 OFQUAL  
 Scotland Office  
 UK Export Finance (UKEF)

Highlands and Islands Enterprise  
 Haworth  
 Herman Miller  
 IAG  
 Itoki  
 London Metropolitan University  
 National Air Traffic Services (NATS)  
 NBCUniversal  
 PDR Corp  
 PwC  
 Rapid7  
 RISE Research Institutes of Sweden  
 SimCorp  
 Sodexo  
 Standard Chartered Bank  
 Stars Group  
 Sundbybergs stad  
 Telenor  
 Tenant & Partner  
 TOG  
 TSK Group  
 Walter P Moore  
 Ware Malcomb  
 Workplace Solutions



Our mission is to make workplaces better. Since 2010 we have equipped organisations globally with the data and insights necessary to build environments that deliver outstanding employee experience. The data behind that work powers our curiosity and allows us to publish independent, cutting-edge research that fuels debate and lateral thinking.