



How Covid-19 has changed the way we work



This report discusses the way that Covid-19 has changed the way we work in the market research industry and in the world of work in general.



The first part of the report summarises the findings of the most recent wave of the Prevision One Minute Survey (OMS), which was conducted in October 2023 and focused on the increase in homeworking and hybrid home / office working in the market research industry.

In the second part of the report, the OMS findings have been put in the context of the wider business environment through desk research on home and hybrid working in the overall UK business sector.



The report has been compiled by B2B fieldwork specialist **Prevision Research** and B2B research consultancy **Purple Market Research**.

November 2023



Changes in the way we work in the market research industry

Headlines: the way we work in the market research industry



Changes in the way we work:

- Before the pandemic, just over half of market researchers (52%) worked from home some or all of the time.
- After the pandemic that number increased to 92%.
- Two thirds have adopted hybrid working, double the pre-pandemic level.
- Before the pandemic, researchers worked from home an average 1.8 days a week.
- After the pandemic that number doubled to 3.5 days a week.
- Just over half believe that researchers are more productive when working from home, with only 19% believing that they are less productive.

The future way of working:

- Almost all researchers believe that hybrid working (some time from home and some in the office) is here to stay in the market research industry.

Working from home before and after the pandemic

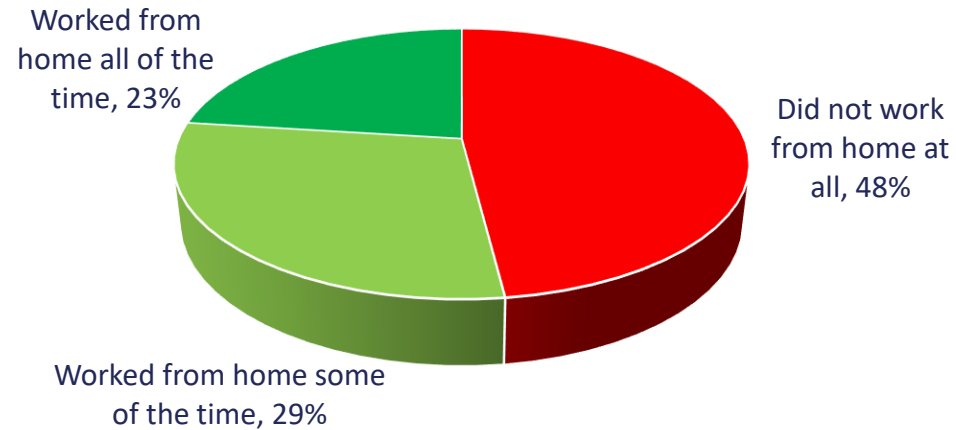
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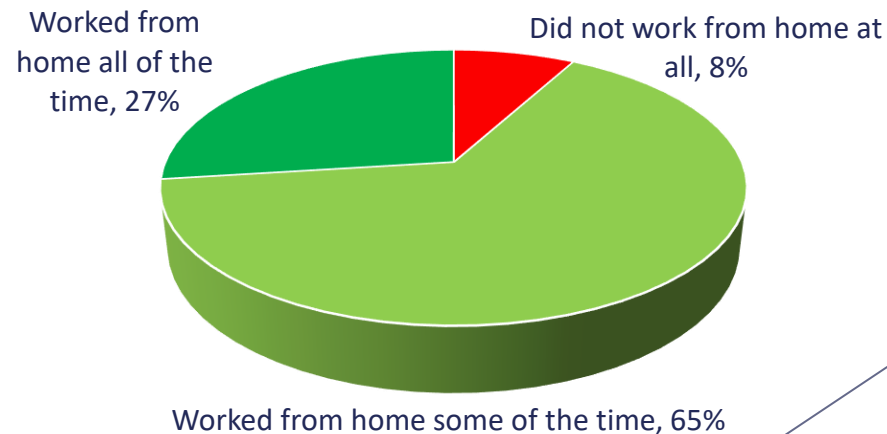
Two thirds have adopted hybrid working, double the pre-pandemic level.

Those working independently or in small companies are particularly likely to have worked from home, both before and after the pandemic (although caution should be shown with this finding due to the small sample sizes).

Before the pandemic...



Now, after the pandemic...



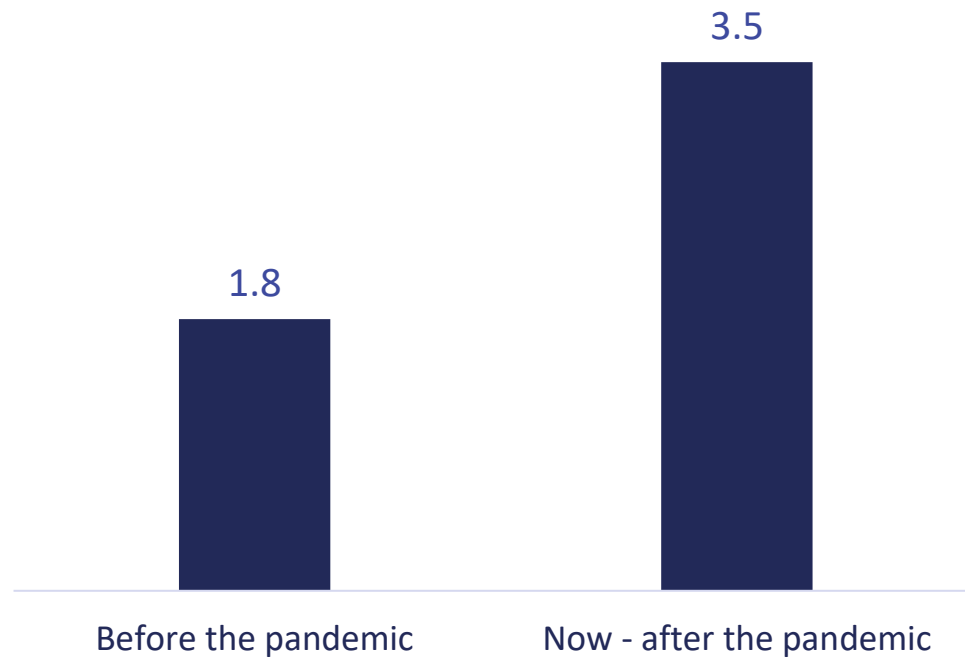
Source: Prevision One Minute Survey among researchers wave 5 (n = 48 interviews)

Working from home before and after the pandemic

Average number of days working from home

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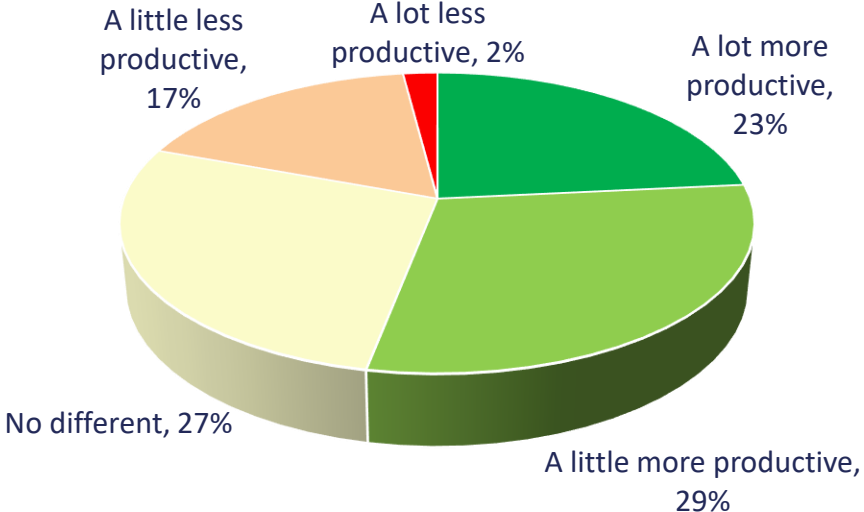
Source: Prevision One Minute Survey among researchers wave 5 (n = 48 interviews)

How productive are researchers thought to be when working from home?

Just over half believe that researchers are more productive when working from home.

Only 19% believe that they are less productive.

Are researchers more or less productive working from home?

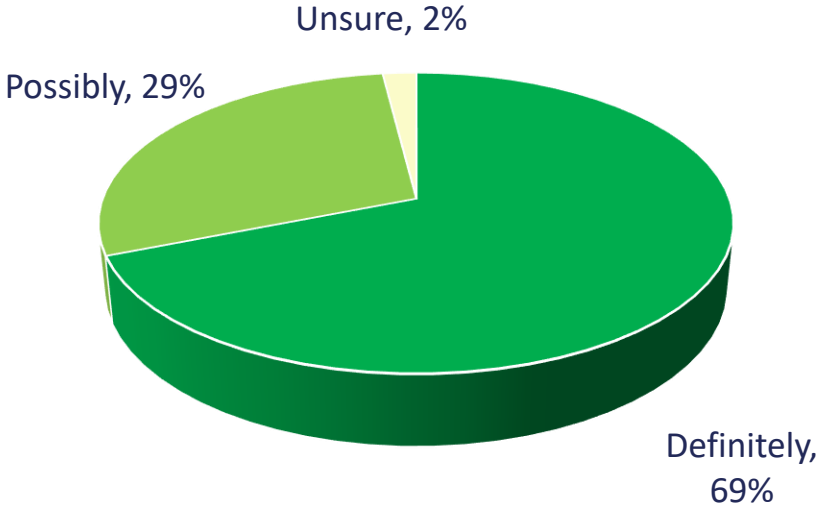


Source: Prevision One Minute Survey among researchers wave 5 (n = 48 interviews)

Is hybrid working here to stay in the market research industry?

Almost all researchers believe that hybrid working (some time from home and some in the office) is here to stay in the market research industry.

Is hybrid working here to stay?



Source: Prevision One Minute Survey among researchers wave 5 (n = 48 interviews)



Context – the way business works in general

Context – the wider business community



In this section, we explore information on the way we work in business in general – this provides a context for the findings of the One Minute Survey.

The following charts are taken from the last wave of our ongoing series of reports on the UK business environment, the *Prevision / Purple Business Tracker*.

This section focuses on current thinking relating to the way we work, in particular on trends relating to working from home and hybrid working.

The information presented in the following charts has been mined from a range of sources available in the public domain – all sources are referenced in the report.

This desk research was conducted by Purple Market Research in July 2023.

Background desk research: the way business works in general



Changes in the way we work:

- Pre-COVID-19, around 12% of the working population worked from home at least one day a week.
- Post-pandemic, homeworking has settled at over three times the level recorded pre-COVID-19.
- Middle-aged workers and those in senior roles with higher incomes are particularly likely to work from home, whereas younger workers and those on lower incomes are less likely to do so.

The pros and cons of homeworking:

- For employers, key benefits include less space being needed and a resulting reduction in the cost of workplace premises, and also a healthier and more productive workforce.
- Employees are better able to maintain a good work / life balance, a benefit particularly cited by women.
- However, there are concerns about the effect that reduced office presence might have on productivity and potential costs in the long term due to lower levels of collaborative creativity and on-the-job learning, particularly for younger workers.
- Also, not all employees are able to work from home.

The future way of working:

- Hybrid working appears to be here to stay.
- The key is to manage the mix of homeworking and working in offices and other work premises so that the benefits of both are maximised.

Homeworking has settled at over three times the pre-Covid level

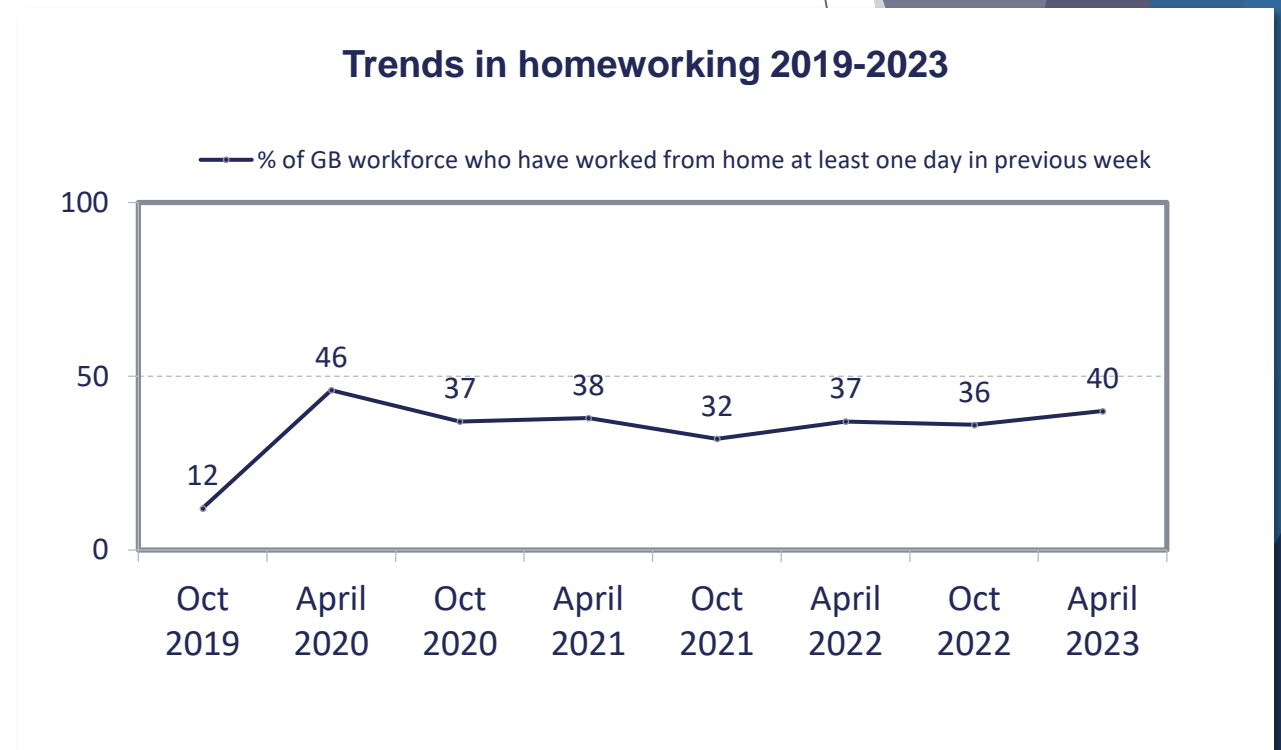
The ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) indicates that, *before* the COVID-19 pandemic, around 12% of working adults reported working from home at some point in the week before they were interviewed.

The level of working from home peaked during the pandemic, with almost half of working adults reporting in April 2020 that they had worked from home at some point in the previous week.

Two years later (in April 2022), when guidance to work from home was lifted in Great Britain, around 37% of working adults reported having worked from home.

In the most recent period (April 2023), 40% of working adults reported having worked from home at some point in the previous seven days.

There is no indication that the level of homeworking is likely to return to the level recorded before the pandemic.



Source: [Characteristics of homeworkers, Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

The way we work has changed

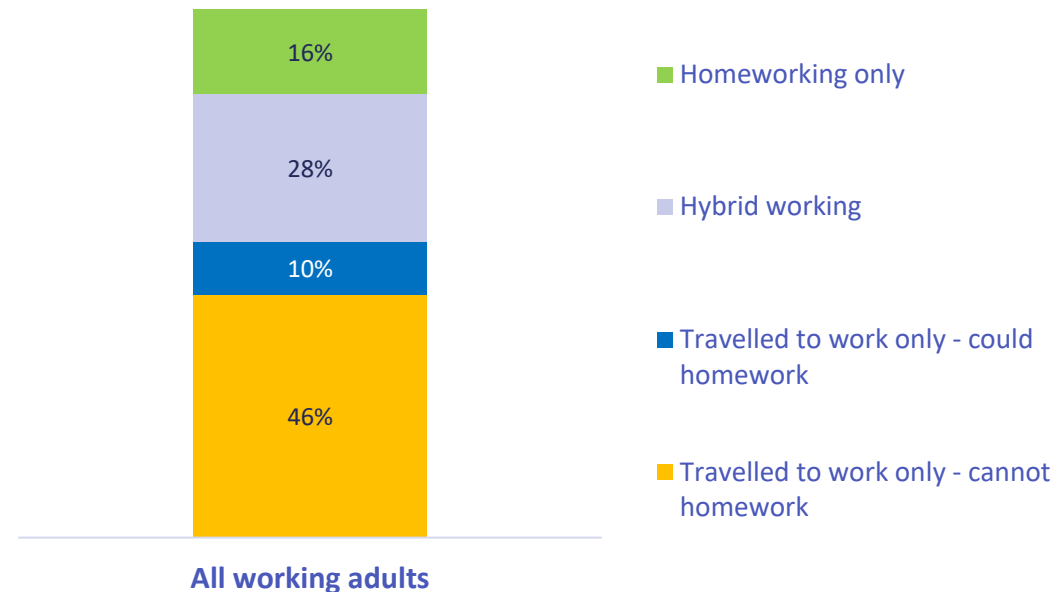
The lockdowns instigated as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic triggered a mass experiment in the way that large parts of the economy functioned, with many people switching to home-working.

Many workers (those in manufacturing, transport, retail and other service industries) could not work from home.

Of those who could work from home, some returned to the office post-pandemic, and the number working from home has fallen from the peak level during the lockdowns, but only slightly.

As of February 2023, 16% of working adults worked full-time from home and a further 28% worked partly from home, giving a total of 44% who worked at least some of the time from home.

Percentage of working-age people travelling to work & working from home
Base: GB working population Feb 2023



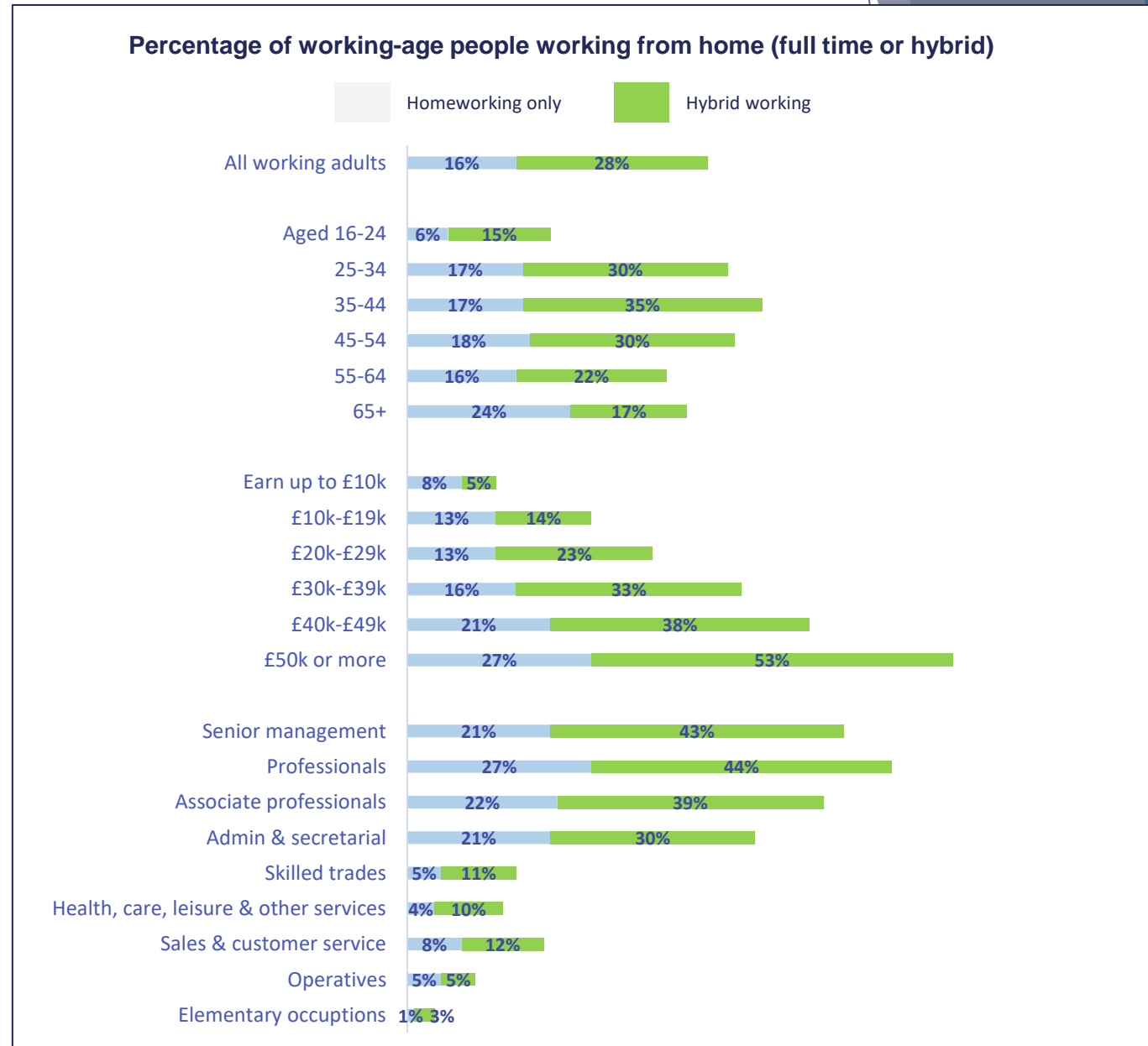
Who is working from home?

Workers aged 35-44 were particularly likely to work from home, whereas those aged 16-24 were least likely to do so.

The greater the income, the more likely workers are to work from home, particularly when earning £40k or more.

That is reflected in the fact that over two-thirds of those in managerial or professional occupations worked from home.

For some workers, it is impossible or at least difficult to work from home. Those in skilled trades, health and care sectors and service industries, sales and customer services, operatives and elementary occupations tend not to do so.



Pros and cons of working from home

There are many benefits of homeworking and hybrid working to both employers and employees.

For employees, key benefits include less space being needed and a resulting reduction in the cost of workplace premises, and also a healthier and more productive workforce.

Of London workers working at least one day at home, 79% said working from home has had a positive impact on their life – with avoiding the commute listed as the top benefit.

An overwhelming majority of women (88%) believe that the flexibility offered by hybrid working serves as an equaliser in the workplace

Although homeworkers are estimated to be more effective when working from home at present, there are concerns about **longer-term productivity** - the effect that reduced office collaboration might have on productivity and potential costs in the long term due to lower levels of collaborative creativity and on-the-job learning, particularly for younger workers.

Also, not all employees are able to work from home.

	From the EMPLOYER perspective	From the EMPLOYEE perspective
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less space needed for workers Reduced cost of workplace premises A healthier workforce Greater productivity Improved environmental performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced time and cost of commuting Positive impact on work / life balance Less tangible factors e.g. a greater feeling of control and of being connected to things that really matter to them
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervising / managing a dispersed workforce Collaboration more difficult Potential negative impact on creativity & productivity Data protection / security issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of support / guidance, particularly for more junior personnel. Not all employees are able to work from home due to lack of space, presence of children and other members of the household.



The way forward

The way forward



Hybrid working, that is a mix of working at home and at work premises, appears to be here to stay, both in the market research industry and in the business community in general.

The key is to manage the mix of homeworking and working in offices and other work premises so that the benefits of both are maximised.

More experienced and senior personnel are more likely to be able to work alone, but it is important that they are present in the office to manage, guide and train more junior staff.

Having said that, younger personnel are generally comfortable communicating, learning and working online.

Firms need to create their hybrid policies with care, use appropriate technologies and systems, and monitor how well the model is working.

More on the research team

Prevision Research



- The One Minute Survey has been conducted by Prevision Research.
- Prevision Research is a specialist B2B fieldwork company, offering telephone interviews, online surveys and integrated online / telephone interviews, plus qualitative recruitment.
- Our 20 seat CATI centre in Bletchley, Milton Keynes has been interviewing B2B and other hard to reach audiences for 20+ years. Our more experienced interviewers can work remotely.
- We have recently launched Prevision's Trade Tracker, a panel of UK tradespeople with regular omnibus surveys.
- For more information on Prevision Research and its services, contact Managing Director Stephen Bairfelt on Stephen@previsionresearch.co.uk or Operations Director Richi Turner on Richi@previsionresearch.co.uk.





- Purple Market Research is responsible for the One Minute Survey design and reporting and for the desk research.
- Purple was founded in 2002 by Trevor Wilkinson (ex AGB, BMRB and ORC) and Stephen Bairfelt (ex-Research International and Shell) and offers research-based consultancy, in particular focusing on B2B markets.
- Secondary (desk) research is one of our key specialisms, both stand-alone and integrated with primary research - we have conducted 100+ market, sector & competitor profiles for over 50 clients.
- Purple Market Research works closely with its fieldwork partner, Prevision Research, and Purple directors Trevor and Stephen are also directors of Prevision Research.
- For more information on Purple Market Research, contact Trevor Wilkinson on info@purplemr.co.uk.

