



Mental and Physical impacts of working at home

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A rapid review of mental and physical health effects of working at home: How do we optimise well-being?

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The issue

- COVID-19 pandemic changed the working environment of millions employees, many people now working at home
- Mental and physical health effects of mandatory working at home are unclear
- No clear guidelines for employers about how to optimise health of employees working at home, particularly when it is mandatory



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BMC Public Health

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

A rapid review of mental and physical health effects of working at home: how do we optimise health?



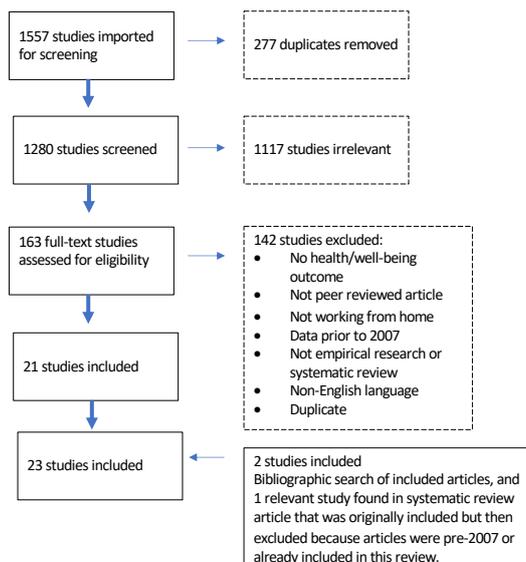
Jodi Oakman, Natasha Kinsman, Rwth Stuckey, Melissa Graham and Victoria Weale

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PRISMA DIAGRAM – study selection



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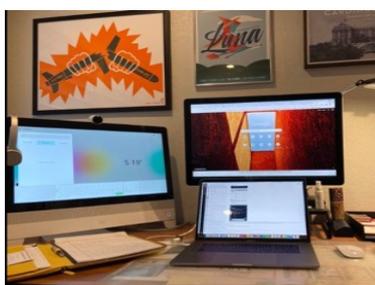
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Implications

Organisational support – regular communication, role & performance measure clarity, appropriate workloads, technical support (IT equipment etc)

Co-worker support – regular online face-face contact opportunities to replace a day in the office)



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Implications

Boundary setting – formal WAH policies that define hours of work and expectations, education of manager & employees about formalising work/family boundaries.

Supporting women – develop WAH support strategies that adapt to needs of employees & remove negative career consequences.



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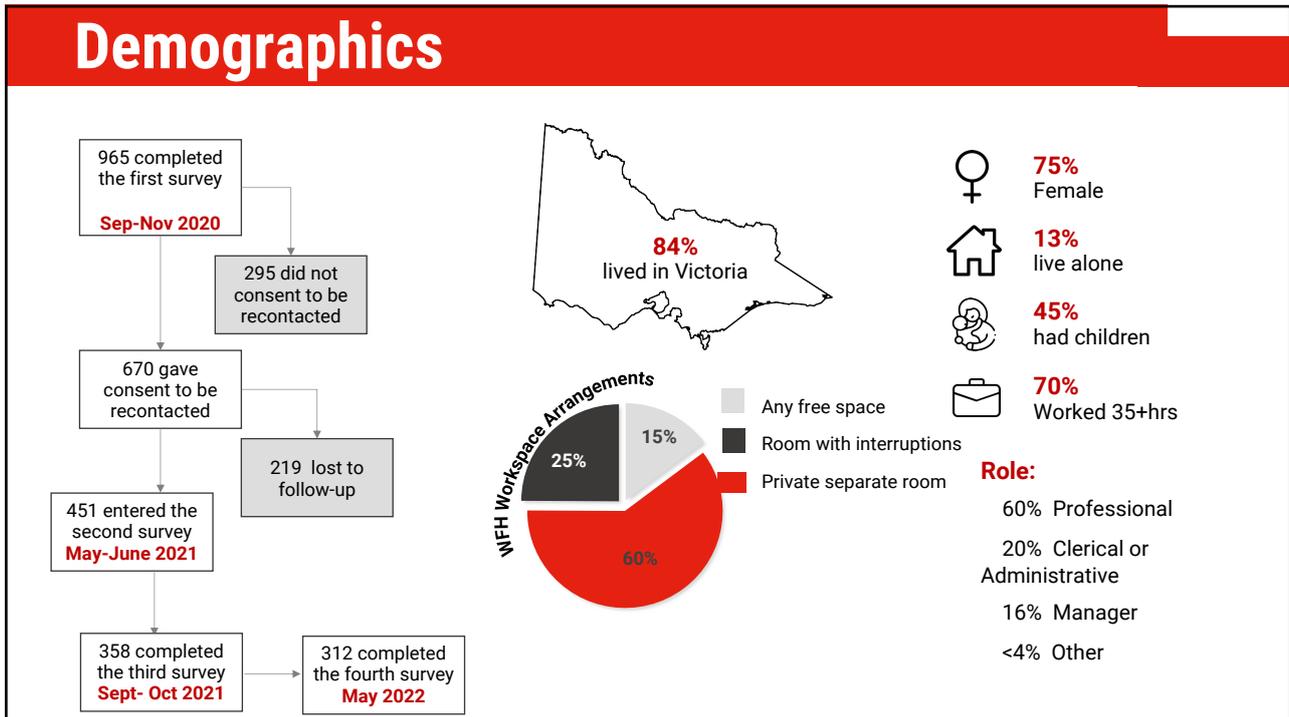
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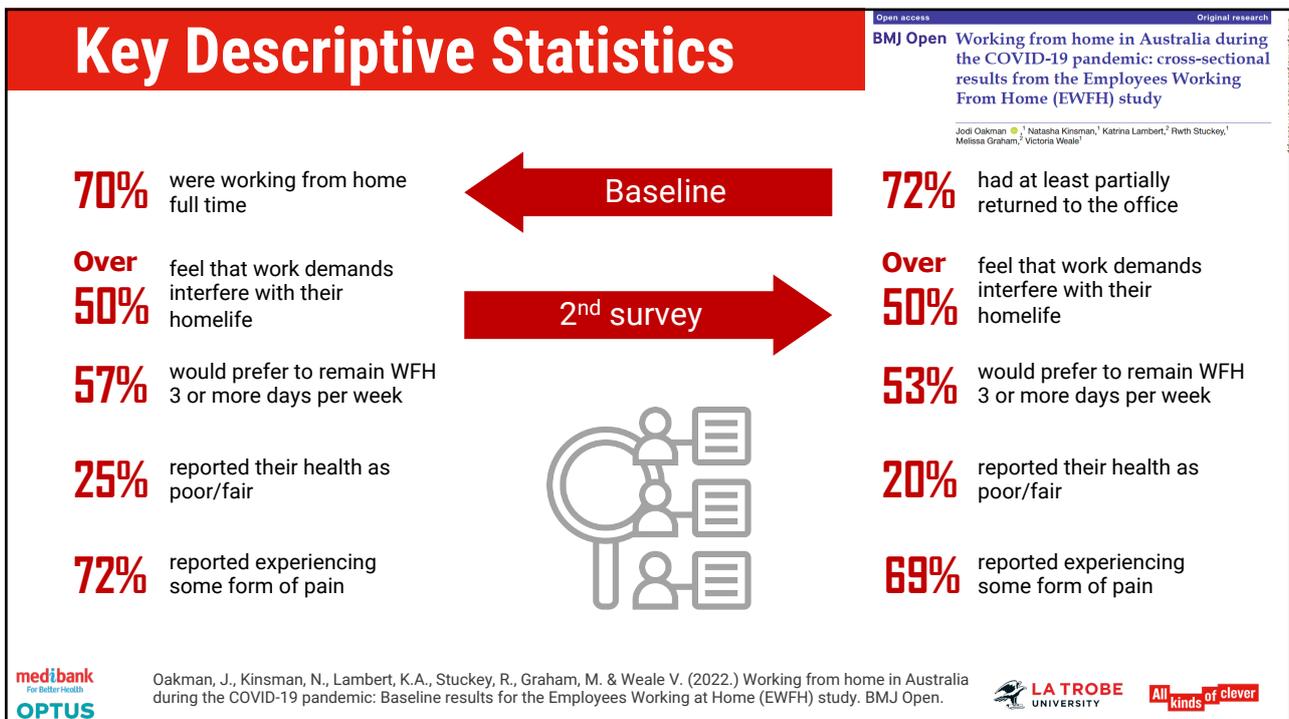
Next steps

- The current situation with mandatory WAH across the globe for many white-collar professionals is unprecedented.
- Further research, which utilises a systems approach that takes into account the the complexity of WAH, to understand the long-term consequences of mandatory WAH on individuals health
- Evidence based guidelines are needed to assist employers and employees in developing work systems to optimise health and well being
- Successful funding from Medibank/Optus to undertake mixed methods study of employees WAH to develop guidelines to optimise physical and mental health effects.





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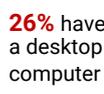


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Working from home: The workspace

Workspace and Technology

- 
76% use adjustable chairs
- 
93% have a laptop computer
- 
26% have a desktop computer

- With laptops, **67%** use a separate screen
- 
70% have a separate keyboard and mouse
- 
12% do not have a separate mouse

Effects on stress and pain

WFH subjectively less comfortable than the office

- 
Stress
 B: 0.12 (0.01, 0.24)
- 
Pain
 OR: 2.46 (1.22, 4.99)





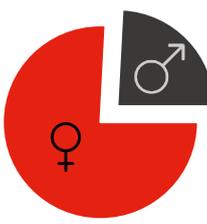
No significant effects

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Gender and Children latrobe.edu.au



n=658
living in Victoria





Male with Children (n=64)	Male without Children (n=95)	Female with Children (n=155)	Female without Children (n=344)
			

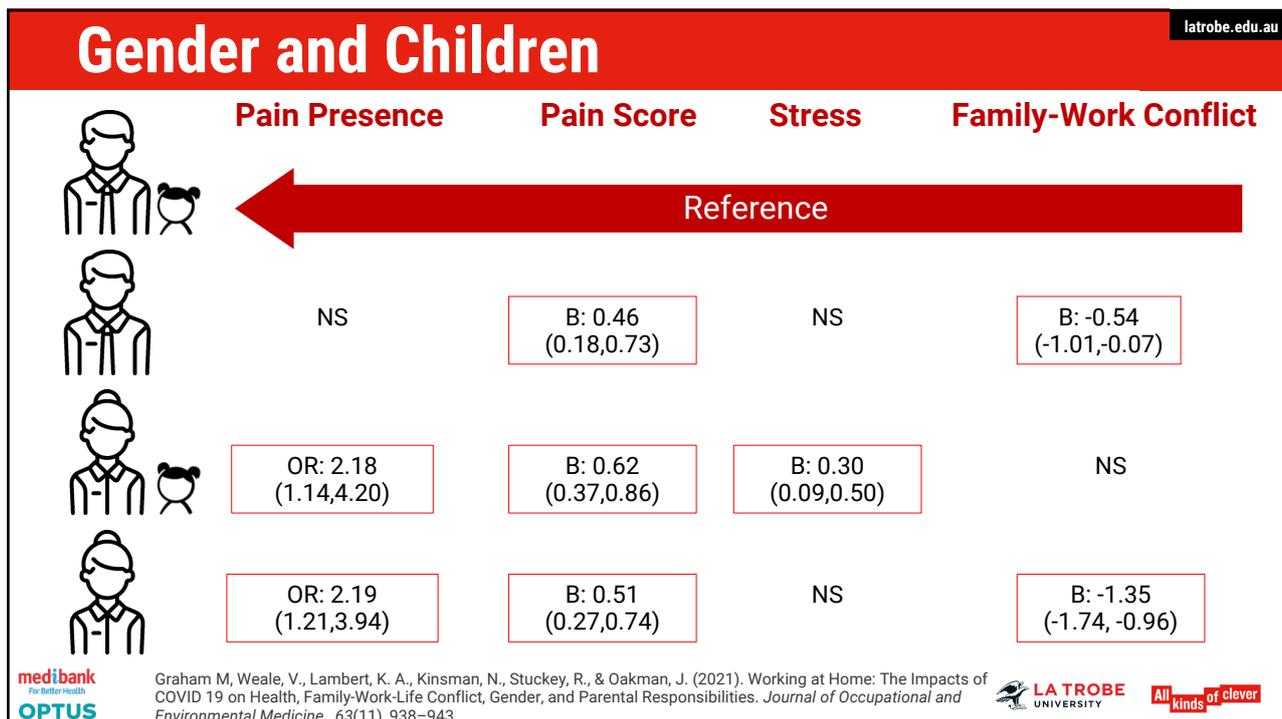


Graham, M., Weale, V., Lambert, K. A., Kinsman, N., Stuckey, R., & Oakman, J. (2021). Working at Home: The Impacts of COVID 19 on Health, Family-Work-Life Conflict, Gender, and Parental Responsibilities. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.*, 63(11), 938–943.





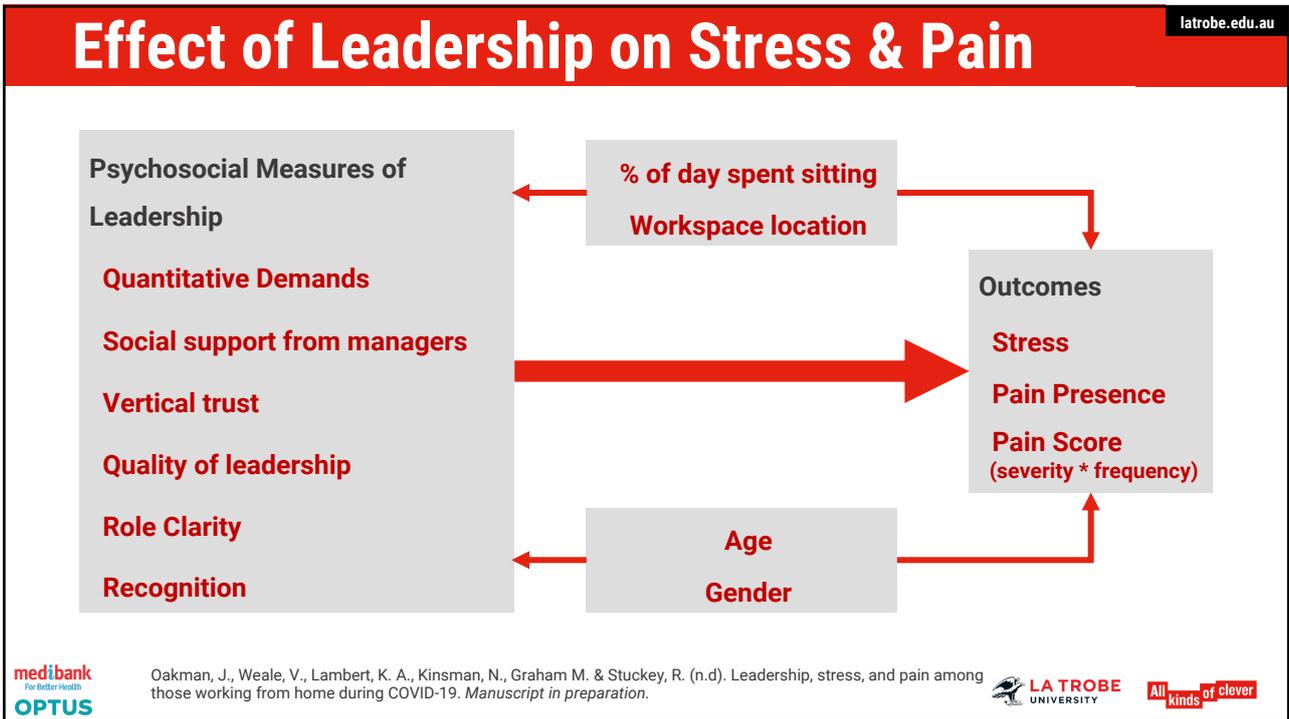
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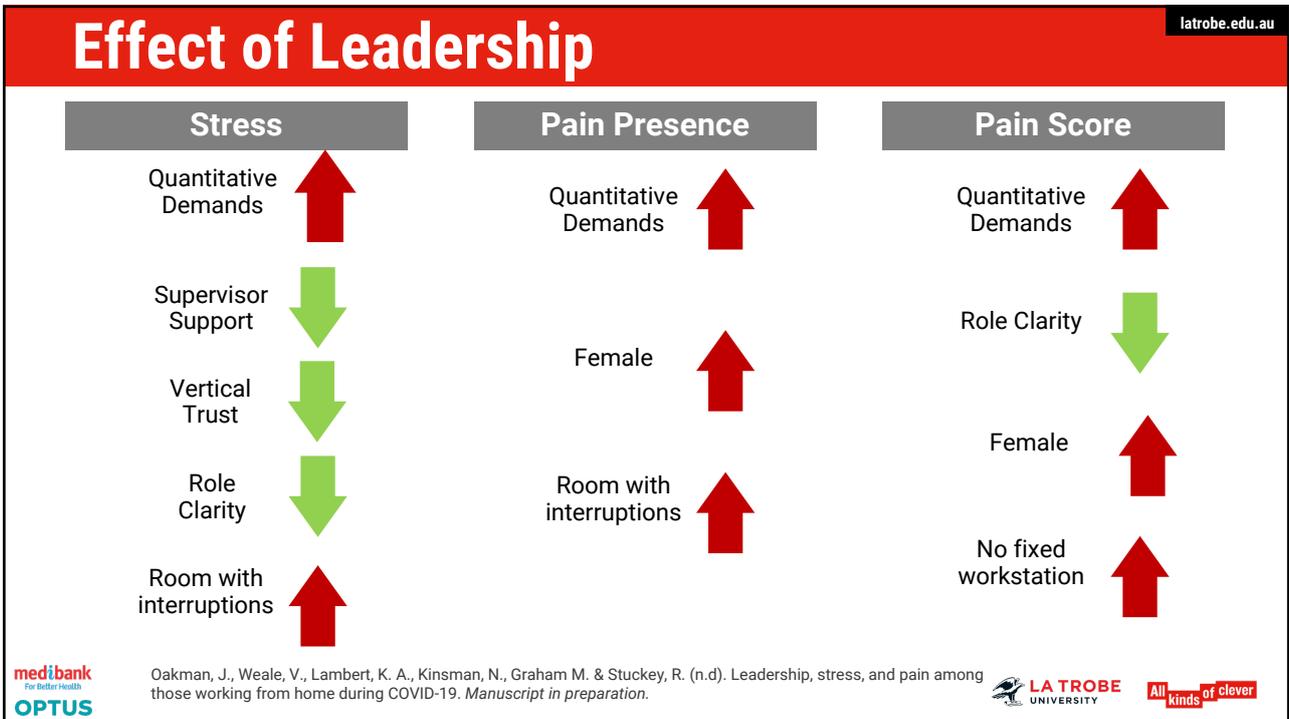
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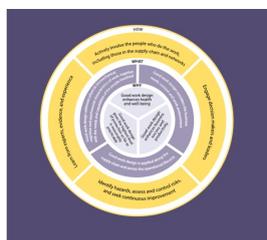
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Job Design

- Need for a systems thinking approach to job design
- Guidelines/Polices which take a comprehensive approach to employee health
- Physical and Mental health should not be managed separately, substantial overlap between workplace hazards that cause these outcomes
- Leadership absolutely critical, it was critical before COVID, even more so now
- Leaders must be clear about their influential role and also be provided the skills in how to support their employees in hybrid working models and take account of preferences (next slide)



<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1707/eood-work-design-handbook.pdf>

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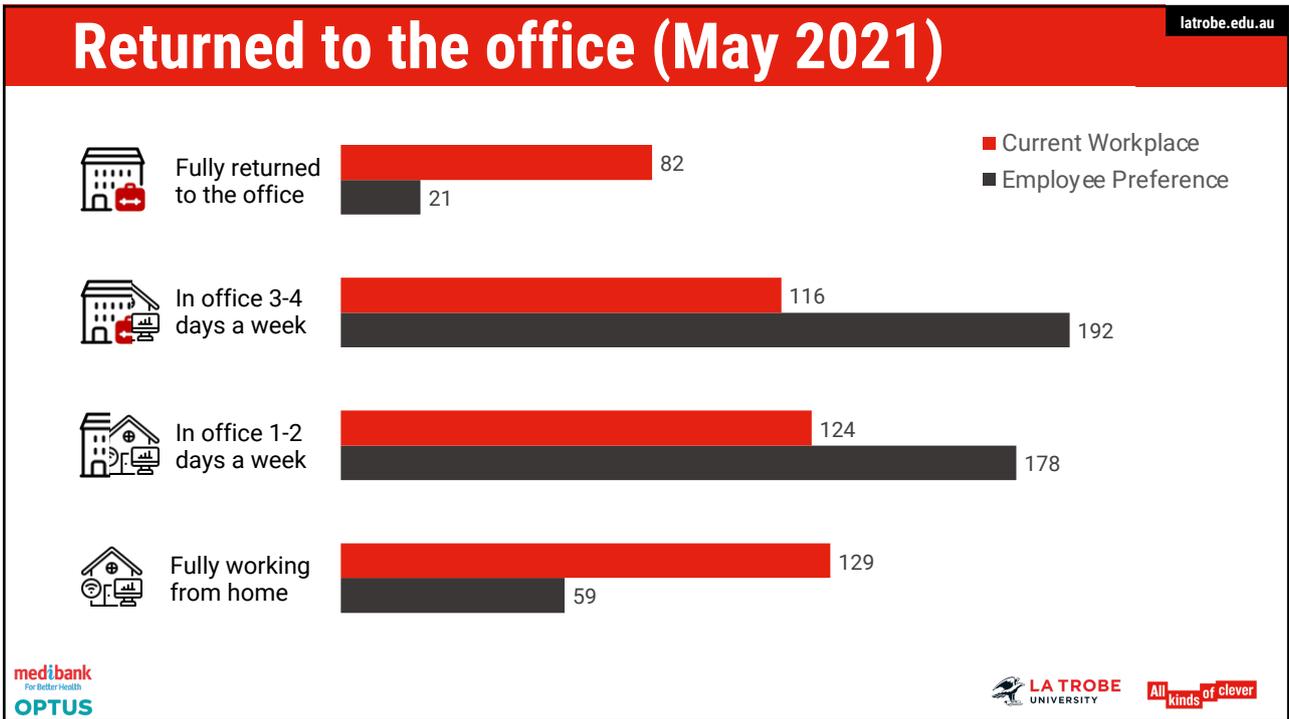
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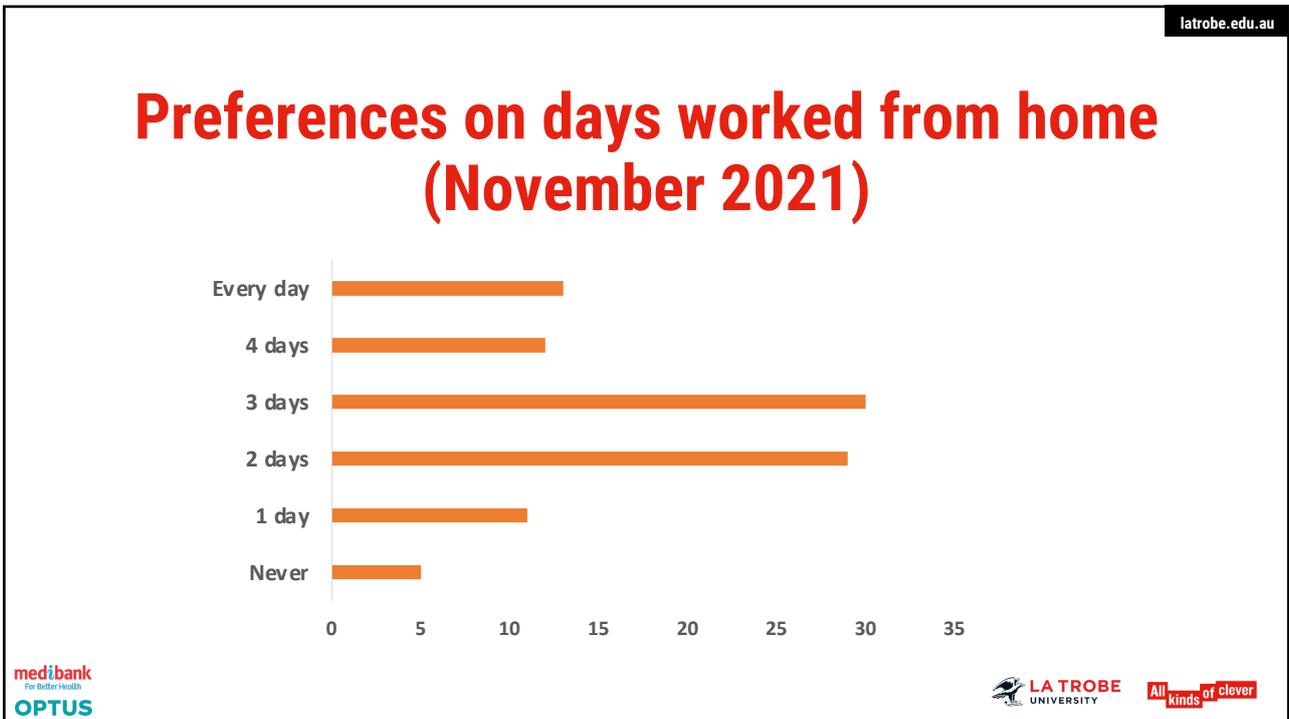
Return to 'normal':

Office vs WFH

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Returned to the office

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	Change from baseline		Effect on psychosocial measures		
	Pain Score	Stress	Demands	Influence	Role Clarity
	0.75 ± 11.02	-0.10 ± 0.75	← Reference		
	-1.00 ± 10.54	-0.18 ± 0.71			
	-1.30 ± 10.24	-0.24 ± 0.56	-0.19 (-0.38, 0.01)	0.18 (-0.04, 0.40)	-0.02 (-0.24, 0.21)
	-3.07 ± 7.99	-0.22 ± 0.58	-0.33 (-0.53, -0.14)	0.11 (-0.12, 0.33)	0.04 (-0.19, 0.26)
	<i>p</i> =0.091	<i>p</i> =0.221			

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Future Research

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Fourth Wave

The fourth wave of the survey was launched has just completed. This wave will catch a range of working patterns during the 'return to normalcy' period.

Guideline development

Evidence informed guidelines needed to support organisations in managing hybrid working model

Changes need to traditional working at home assessments to a more comprehensive approach

Evaluation

Evaluation of changes to working patterns

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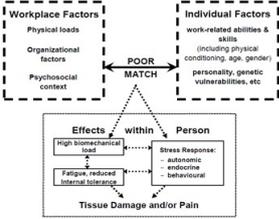
- Evidence based, developed in Australia, only one of its kind
- Manages risk from physical and psychosocial workplace hazards
- Participative approach involves workers and other key stakeholders including supervisors and key managers
- Provides support through a full risk management cycle
- Provides benchmark data to measure ongoing improvements

<https://www.aphirm.org.au/>






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Macdonald and Oakman BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders (2015) 16:293
DOI:10.1186/s12913-015-0703-9

DEBATE Open Access

Requirements for more effective prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders

Wendy Macdonald¹ and Jodi Oakman²

TECHNICAL ADVANCE Open Access

The APHIRM toolkit: an evidence-based system for workplace MSD risk management

Jodi Oakman^{1,2} and Wendy Macdonald¹






Interested in training: APHIRM Workshops

Brisbane: Monday 18th July

Melbourne: Thursday 28th July

New Zealand: Tuesday 15th November

See www.aphirm.org.au for full details

Further study

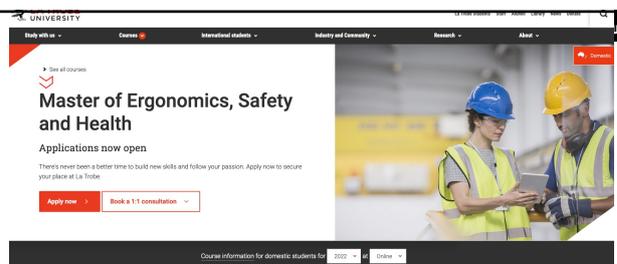
Masters of Ergonomics, Safety and Health

Or,

if you want to start a bit smaller why not try the

Graduate Certificate in Ergonomics, Safety and Health (1 year part time)

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/courses/master-of-ergonomics-safety-and-health>



Summary

- Uncertain times
- Need for adaptive policy on WFH
- Complex space to navigate to manage employee and employer relationships
- Use the lessons learned from the past 26 months to inform the future, what worked and what did not
- Quality of supervision important, big focus needed on supporting leaders to effectively supervise their staff in new methods of working
- Many knowledge gaps that would benefit from further research



Thank you

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