

# Home working a ‘stress factor’, but going to campus is worse

Staff serving on campus during lockdown are 50 per cent more likely than their housebound peers to be at ‘high risk’ for health problems

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Five out of six university staff want to continue working from home at least part time after pandemic restrictions have been lifted, Australian research suggests. Yet the intrusion of work into home life is among their biggest fears, with many stressed out by the need to keep the two separated.

A [Monash University](#) survey has produced contradictory findings with implications for the post-Covid world. Project leader Melinda McCabe said that while academics were wary about mixing up their jobs and personal lives, working from home had understandable attractions.

“Quite a few staff are appreciating not having to travel back and forth,” she said. “For many, once you get that infrastructure for working from home established, life becomes a bit easier.”

Her team quizzed almost 2,300 staff about the pandemic’s impacts on their careers and mental and physical well-being in an online survey rolled out in September. At the time, Melbourne residents without “essential” jobs were allowed out of home for

only an hour a day between 5am and 8pm, and constrained from travelling more than 5km.

The analysis found acute risks to the well-being of 25 per cent of staff stuck at home, compared with 38 per cent of those working “on location”.

Ms McCabe cautioned against reading too much into a comparison based on small numbers, as only 3 per cent of respondents had been working away from home. But she said the nature of the lockdown could have contributed to campus-based staff’s stress.

“We were in stage four restrictions, so leaving the house was quite a big deal. You had to have a permit and you could have been stopped and asked where you were going,” she said.

Fewer than half of respondents reported normal or high levels of happiness and vitality, with about a quarter at risk of depression and another third recording low scores for well-being.

Thirty-one per cent said their ability to recall information was worse than before the lockdown, and 46 per cent said they had lost focus. But less than 1 per cent felt the pandemic was disrupting their sleep.

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