

York University

**IMPACTS OF COVID-19
ON THE WORKING
ARRANGEMENTS OF
FACULTY AND STAFF:
WAVE 2, APRIL 2022**

Short Report – Highlights

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This report is based on findings from a survey conducted at York University in April/May 2022. This survey is a follow-up to a survey conducted in August/September 2020 on the impacts of COVID-19 on the working arrangements of university faculty and staff. The original survey was designed and led by Professor Emeritus David Peetz and Professor Emeritus Glenda Strachan at Griffith University in Australia, then adapted slightly for the Canadian context, and administered at universities in Australia and Canada. The local research at York was led by Assistant Professor Kelly Pike, School of Human Resource Management, on behalf of the Global Labour Research Centre. Quantitative data analysis is being led by Assistant Professor James Chowhan, School of Human Resource Management. This research has received ethics review and approval by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University’s Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines.

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This report represents the views of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of York University. More information about the “COVID-19 Home-working by university staff survey” is available on the [project home page](#).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents descriptive findings based on data that were collected as part of the COVID Homeworking for University Staff Survey (CHUSS) project. The CHUSS is an international research collaboration (including researchers in Australia and Canada) looking into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the working arrangements of faculty and staff at universities. This report focuses mainly on cross-sectional survey data collected at York University (n=1,322) in April and May of 2022. The survey was sent to all York faculty and staff using email distribution lists. Participation in the survey was voluntary, which implies the potential for non-response bias with the implication that caution would be required when interpreting the results.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic emerging in 2020, workplaces in Canada and around the world closed facilities in response to emergency government requirements, and as such workers began to engage in homeworking activities. As conditions have evolved, workers have experienced many transitions in policies and work practices. This study seeks to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic two years after its initial emergence on work factors of interest (i.e., preferred arrangement of work; how work arrangements changed; personal experiences and satisfaction; and work expectations, work space, and work environment) across individual characteristics (including job role, gender, age, Indigenous, visible minority, immigrant status, activity limitation, and care responsibilities) for faculty and other staff (i.e., librarian or archivist; administrative, professional, technical and general staff; and senior university management) at York University.

The findings for York University indicate that most respondents reported increases in working from home (83.0%) compared to before the pandemic (6.0%) and for many the new arrangement was a preferred working arrangement post-pandemic (58.5%). Working at home seemed to create some challenges as 36.3% reported an increase in work interfering with personal life, while 20.8% reported an increase in personal life interfering with work. These challenges may have been mitigated in that 62.5% agreed that their workload was manageable, and 69.5% agreed that the university provided adequate support to enable work at home. Nonetheless, 50.6% reported an increase in stress, and 36.24% a decrease in job satisfaction (with 49% reporting an increase in worry, and 34.2% a decrease in happiness). Concerns with career progress, quality of work and productivity were also reported (in particular for faculty and especially in the domain of research).

It is important to note that while the cross-tabulations in this report enable rich comparisons across many characteristics of interest, more nuanced and enriching analyses were generally not possible because of sample size and confidentiality concerns. Further, future analyses will explore in a multivariate framework the role of individual characteristics on some of the work factors of interest. Finally, the results in this report are based on a survey that used voluntary participation, and as such non-sampling errors (e.g., coverage and nonresponse) may impact the quality of the results; especially if different sub-groups of the population are systematically underrepresented in the sample.

INTRODUCTION

The data presented in this report were collected as part of the COVID-19 Homeworking for University Staff Survey (CHUSS) project. CHUSS is an international research collaboration looking into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the working arrangements of faculty and staff at universities in Canada and Australia.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, workplaces in Canada and around the world have needed to adopt and adjust work practices in response to emergency government requirements and policy mandates, and as such workers have often moved to working at home as opposed to on location. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the working arrangements of academic and administrative/professional staff at several universities in Canada, including York University. This report makes a substantive contribution to knowledge by capturing the state of working arrangements during a period following the height of the pandemic, and while people have had substantial time to adjust to their homeworking arrangements. This report focuses on the survey data collected at York University (n=1,322).

METHODS

This report is based on a cross-sectional survey of faculty and staff at York University as part of a larger project ongoing across Australian and Canadian universities. The survey entitled “Impact of COVID-19 work at home on York University staff” was collected in April and May of 2022. The survey was sent to all York University faculty and staff through email distribution lists (i.e., the ALL-FACULTY and ALL-STAFF listservs); thus, all academic and other staff at York University received notifications via email regarding the survey. A follow-up email reminding faculty and staff of the survey was sent approximately two weeks after the first invitation. Faculty and staff were asked to complete the survey online, approximating 10-15 minutes to complete it. The initial email invitation included potential risks and discomforts (e.g., trauma or anxiety) that could be associated with participation in the survey. The invitation also identified benefits of the research as well as the potential benefits to the participants (e.g., the findings can aid York University in identifying and addressing issues surrounding COVID-19 working arrangements within the University).

Survey participation was voluntary, and participants were able to withdraw from the survey at any point. In total, n=1,322 faculty and staff participated in the survey. Based on available data at the York University Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis (OIPA) webpage, there is a total faculty and staff count of approximately N=6,671, implying a 20% response rate (i.e., $1,322/6,671=0.198$). In addition to the confidentiality protocol taken during data collection (e.g., secure management of data and anonymization of all data records), care has been taken throughout this report to ensure that individual information and responses are not identifiable through the reported findings.

For this report, cross-tabulations are the main analyses used to develop estimates that enable a comparison of outcomes across individual characteristics and work factors.

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

There are several individual characteristics that were collected from the participants. The focus of this short report is on job role and gender. The individual characteristics of age, Indigenous, visible minority, immigrant status, activity limitation, and care responsibilities are available in the full report. The overall sample descriptive statistics for these variables are presented below in Table 1. For job role, participants were asked: “What is your job role at the university?” They could identify four main categories: faculty; librarian or archivist; administrative, professional, technical, and general staff (including trades, caretaking and hospitality); and senior university management (Dean or AVP and above). For this report, a job role binary variable was created with 1=faculty and 0=otherwise. For gender, the question, “what is your gender?” was asked, and three categories were collected (Woman, Man, and Trans/Non-binary/Fluid/Other: please specify). All three of these categories were used in the report.

WORK FACTORS

The work factor characteristics of interest for this report can be grouped in to four main categories: (1) preferred arrangement of work, (2) how work arrangements changed, (3) personal experiences/satisfaction, and (4) work expectations, work space, and work environment. For brevity, in this short report, a selection of work factor characteristics are presented to provide an essence of the results that are available in the full report. Details on questions and coding are available in the full report.

REPORT TABLES

For this short report, descriptive statistics are the main results that are presented. Compared to the main report, abridged tables for some concepts of interest have been included. Table 1 presents univariate frequency estimates for the individual characteristics that the full report focuses on: job role, gender, age, Indigenous, visible minority, immigrant status, activity limitation, and care responsibilities. Tables 2 to 5 present the bi-variate cross-tabulations for the work factor variables by each of the individual characteristics. Thus, these tables enable comparisons of work factors across the individual characteristics, such that any differences in outcomes for the work factors across individual characteristics can be assessed.

Regarding the precision of the results reported in the tables below, some points should be considered. Sampling error and sampling variance can impact the precision and reliability of the estimates included in this report. For example, when sample sizes are lower in bivariate analyses this implies relatively lower precision. The estimates based on small sample sizes should be interpreted with caution.

TABLE 1: SAMPLE STATISTICS OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1: Sample descriptive statistics (n=1,322)

Individual Characteristics	Percent
Job Role	
Other Staff	76.3
Faculty	23.7
Gender	
Woman	70.8
Man	25.7
Trans/Non-binary/Fluid/Other	3.5
Age group	
Aged 52 plus	33.1
Aged 51 and less	66.9
Indigenous/Non-indigenous	
Non-Indigenous	98.9
Indigenous	1.1
Visible minority	
Non-Visible Minority	90.2
Visible Minority	9.8
Place of birth	
Born in Canada	62.2
Born Elsewhere	37.8
Activity Restrictions	
No Activity Restrictions	81.4
Activity Restrictions	18.6
Caring responsibilities (children or others)	
No Care Responsibilities	44.6
Care Responsibilities	55.4

TABLE 2: PREFERRED ARRANGEMENT OF WORK

Table 2: Work Arrangements Before, During, and After COVID-19

Work from home arrangements	Job Role		Gender		
	Other Staff	Faculty	Woman	Man	Trans/ Non-binary/ Fluid/Other
Work from home BEFORE COVID 19					
Never work from home	92.2	48.4	83.8	77.0	70.6
About half and half	3.7	39.5	10.7	16.2	11.8
Always work from home	4.1	12.1	5.5	6.8	17.7
Total (n)	979	306	931	339	17
Work from home PRESENT (April-May 2022)					
Never work from home	20.4	6.2	15.2	22.1	16.7
About half and half	30.7	11.1	27.6	22.7	5.6
Always work from home	49.0	82.7	57.2	55.2	77.8
Total (n)	982	306	933	339	18
Preferred arrangement IN THE FUTURE					
Never work from home	8.1	18.4	7.7	17.8	22.2
About half and half	27.4	42.6	29.4	34.9	33.3
Always work from home	64.5	39.0	62.9	47.3	44.4
Total (n)	983	305	934	338	18

TABLE 3: HOW WORK ARRANGEMENTS CHANGED

Table 3: Do you consider that the following things associated with your work at York University have increased, decreased or remained the same now, compared to what they were like under Pre-Covid working arrangements? (Column percent and n sample size)

Work arrangements:	Job Role		Gender		
	Other Staff	Faculty	Woman	Man	Trans/ Non-binary/ Fluid/Other
Hours actually spent on work					
Decreased	2.9	6.7	3.0	5.9	11.1
Stayed the same	37.0	17.6	30.5	34.2	66.7
Increased	60.0	75.7	66.5	59.9	22.2
Total (n)	548	193	531	202	9
The clarity of what was expected of you					
Decreased	16.4	49.2	24.8	24.6	25.0
Stayed the same	61.7	39.0	55.1	57.4	62.5
Increased	21.9	11.8	20.1	18.0	12.5
Total (n)	543	187	528	195	8
Personal daily productivity					
Decreased	5.3	43.3	12.2	23.3	11.1
Stayed the same	20.3	29.9	22.0	23.8	44.4
Increased	74.4	26.8	65.7	53.0	44.4
Total (n)	547	194	531	202	9
Quality of your work					
Decreased	3.3	32.0	8.7	16.3	11.1
Stayed the same	36.0	49.0	40.0	37.1	44.4
Increased	60.8	19.1	51.3	46.5	44.4
Total (n)	548	194	532	202	9

TABLE 4: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND SATISFACTION

Table 4: Do you consider that the following things associated with your personal feelings or well-being increased, decreased or remained the same now, compared to what they were like under pre-Covid working arrangements? (Column percent and n sample size)

Work arrangements:	Job Role		Gender		
	Other Staff	Faculty	Woman	Man	Trans/ Non-binary/ Fluid/Other
Your job satisfaction					
Decreased	24.5	69.4	34.3	42.0	22.2
Stayed the same	33.2	21.4	31.5	26.8	22.2
Increased	42.3	9.2	34.3	31.2	55.6
Total (n)	548	196	531	205	9
The stress you experience					
Decreased	38.8	7.1	31.3	28.1	37.5
Stayed the same	22.6	8.7	18.9	18.7	25.0
Increased	38.6	84.2	49.8	53.2	37.5
Total (n)	544	196	530	203	8
How much work interferes with your personal life					
Decreased	35.3	4.6	27.0	26.4	42.9
Stayed the same	39.6	29.1	36.8	36.8	28.6
Increased	25.1	66.3	36.2	36.8	28.6
Total (n)	530	196	519	201	7
How much your personal life interferes with your work					
Decreased	24.8	3.1	19.5	16.9	28.6
Stayed the same	65.0	47.9	61.5	57.7	42.9
Increased	10.2	49.0	18.9	25.4	28.6
Total (n)	520	194	507	201	7

TABLE 5: WORK EXPECTATIONS, WORK SPACE, AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

Table 5: Please indicate the extent to which each of the following statements about your working arrangement applies to you. (Column percent and n sample size)

Work arrangements:	Job Role		Gender		
	Other Staff	Faculty	Woman	Man	Trans/ Non-binary/ Fluid/Other
The university provided adequate support to enable me to work at home					
Disagree	11.7	45.8	18.9	21.2	50.0
Neither agree or disagree	7.8	19.4	8.9	15.8	0.0
Agree	80.5	34.8	72.2	63.0	50.0
Total (n)	872	273	834	297	16
My workload is manageable					
Disagree	16.8	40.4	22.1	23.6	11.8
Neither agree or disagree	13.7	19.9	14.9	16.4	5.9
Agree	69.5	39.7	63.0	60.0	82.4
Total (n)	886	272	838	305	17
I am satisfied that my workload is fair					
Disagree	25.7	48.9	31.6	30.4	18.8
Neither agree or disagree	19.9	21.0	19.1	23.8	6.3
Agree	54.5	30.2	49.4	45.9	75.0
Total (n)	885	272	840	303	16
During my non-work hours, I do not think about work at all					
Disagree	57.2	89.4	64.5	65.4	68.8
Neither agree or disagree	9.8	2.9	8.1	8.8	0.0
Agree	33.0	7.7	27.4	25.8	31.3
Total (n)	885	274	839	306	16

CONCLUSION

The findings of York University's portion of the CHUSS project demonstrate that university workers experienced various outcomes associated with having to adapt to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent conditions. Specifically, this study was centered on how work factors of interest (i.e., preferred working arrangements; how work arrangements changed; personal experiences and satisfaction; and work expectations, work space, and work environment) varied across individual characteristics, including: job role, gender, age, Indigenous, visible minority, immigrant status, activity limitation, and care responsibilities (as discussed in more detail in the long-report). This short report has focused more specifically on variation in outcomes by job role and gender.

In summary, the majority of respondents from both the university faculty and other staff (i.e., administrative; librarian or archivist; professional, technical, and general staff; and senior university management) reported increases in working from home (83.0%) compared to before the pandemic (6.0%) and, for many, the new arrangement was a preferred working arrangement post-pandemic (58.5%). Over half indicated an increase in their actual time spent working (64.2%). In comparison with other staff, faculty reported relatively higher concerns with university support and manageable workload. These patterns were also seen for job satisfaction, with faculty generally reporting lower satisfaction levels. Further, work-life balance and work strain levels were generally higher for faculty compared to other staff. Finally, these concerns with satisfaction and stress seem to have had an impact on work productivity and quality, with relatively higher levels of decreases being reported by faculty compared to other staff.

It is important to note that while these patterns exist for job role, they are also present to varying degrees across other individual characteristics such as: gender, age, Indigenous, visible minority, immigrant status, activity limitation, and care responsibilities (see the long-report). The cross-tabulations used as the main analyses in the full report provide an opportunity for these types of rich comparisons. However, it should be noted that only multi-variate analyses can separate out the significant role of individual characteristics with regard to outcomes of interest. Future research will use multivariate modelling to explore the role of individual characteristics on some of the work factors of interest, such as preferred arrangement of work, how work arrangements changed, personal experiences and satisfaction, and work environment.

Overall, these tables suggest that individual characteristics could be linked to differential outcomes, whereby some workers may be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and post-pandemic work conditions. As work arrangements under post-COVID19 conditions persist, these disruptions in work and life can become more acute, and as such it will be important for university administrators to maintain an active dialogue to enable an understanding with regard to how these concerns are progressing and whether issues are being effectively addressed.