COVID-19 Impact –
School of Engineering Staff Questionnaire

May 2020
Compiled by S McCormack

Presentation of data & Likert scale

Bar charts of female and male responses are presented.
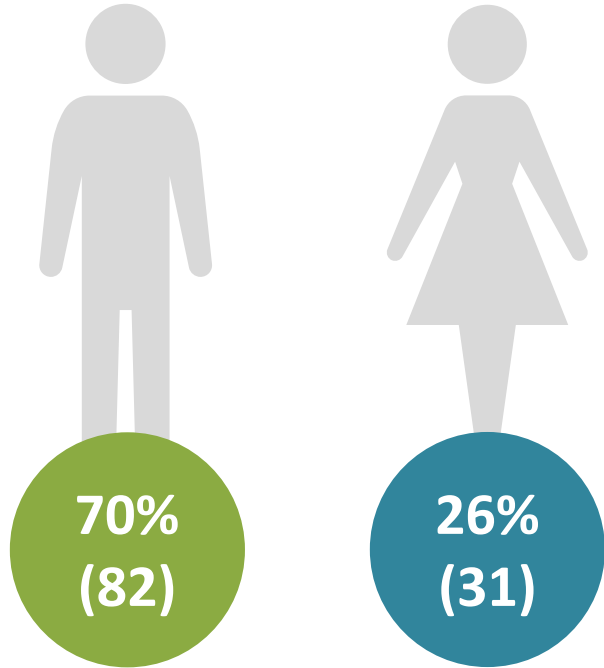Data is also presented as percentages

A series of questions were asked using a Likert scale where the responses were either

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither agree or Disagree, Agree, Strongly Disagree

Data is collated as positive (Agree and Strongly Agree combined) and negative responses (Disagree & Strongly Disagree combined).
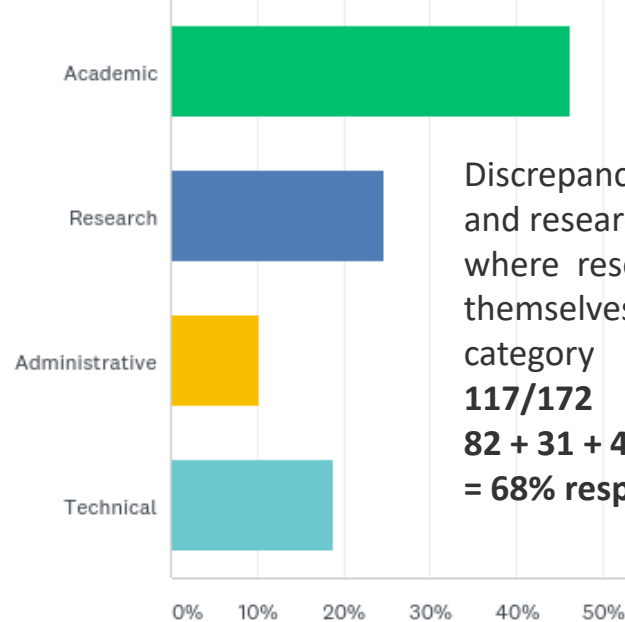
Comments are indicated as follows

Female staff comments

Comments by both Female and Male staff

Male staff comments

Q1: Do you identify as?

Job Category	No. Female	% F	No. Male	% M	Total
Academic	13	18%	58	82%	71
Research	16	27%	44	73%	60
Professional (Administrative)	15	75%	5	25%	20
Professional (Technical)	1	6%	17	94%	18
Professional (Attendant)	0	0%	3	100%	3
Total Staff	45	26%	127	74%	172
Undergraduate Students	265	27%	709	73%	974
Postgraduate Taught	33	20%	134	80%	167
Postgraduate Research	3	60%	2	40%	5
PhD Students	35	30%	83	70%	118
Total Students	336	27%	928	73%	1,264

70% (82)

26% (31)

Gender breakdown of the School of Engineering
74% Male (127)   26% Female (45)

Discrepancies in the technical and research staff categories, where researchers put themselves into the technical category
117/172
82 + 31 + 4 (other)
= 68% response rate

Academic

Research

Administrative

Technical

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

Q3: In your current role, did you work from home prior to COVID-19?

No gender difference in the responses – similar reasons for working from home before COVID-19
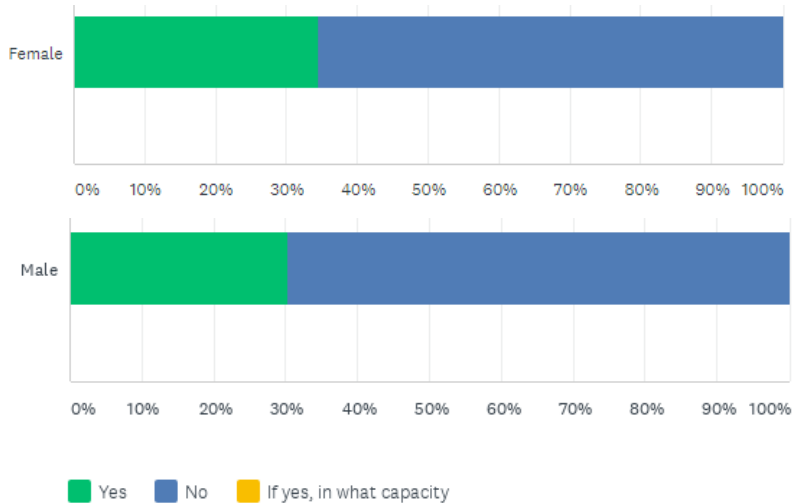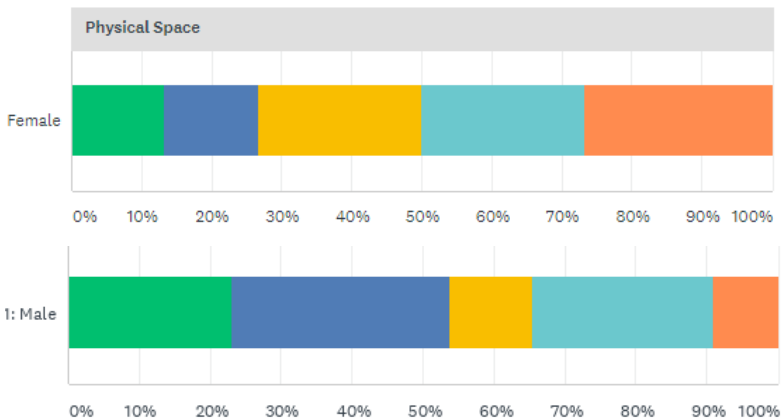
Yes   30%   Male staff
       35%   Female staff

Grant writing

1 – 2 days per week

Marking

Answering emails

Writing reports/papers

Skype meetings

Q5: I have had challenges in relation to working from home in following areas.

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Physical space:
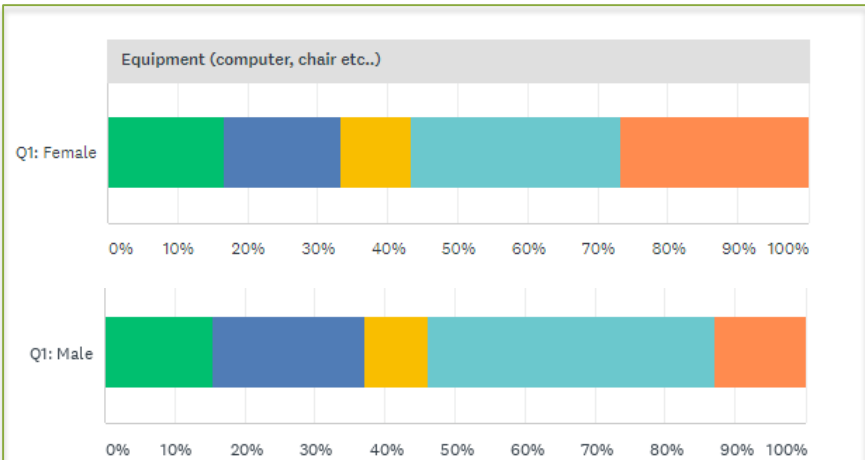| Female | **50%** | Positive | (27% Negative) |
| Male | 36% | Positive | (**54%** Negative) |
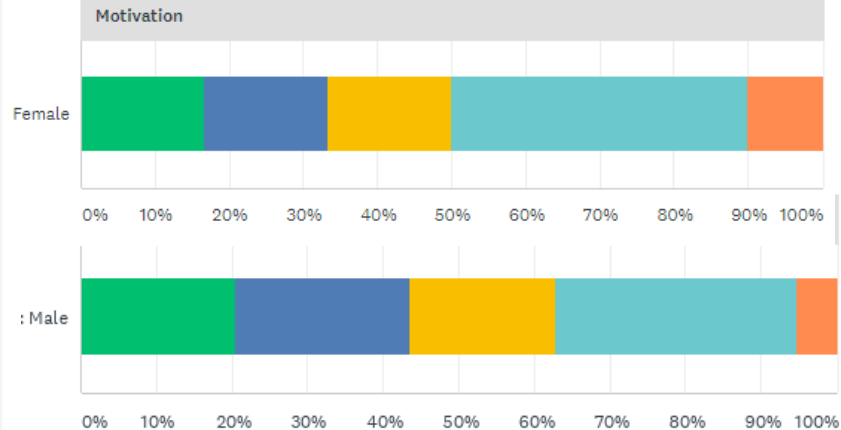
Motivation:
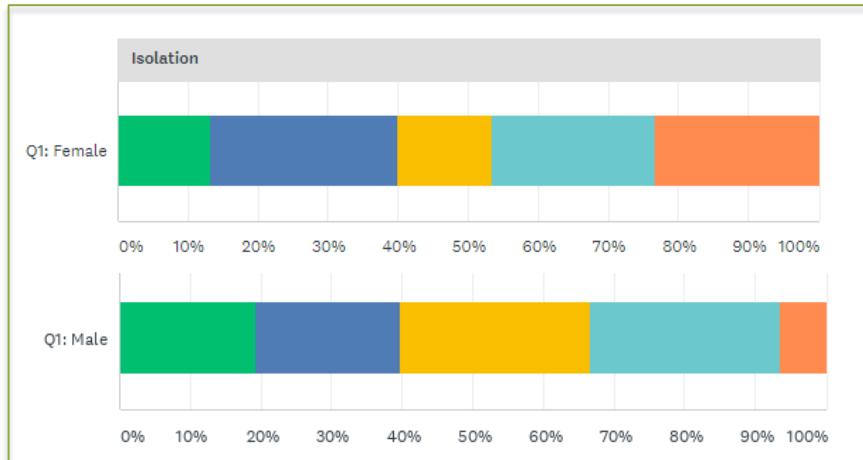| Female | **50%** | Positive | (33% Negative) |
| Male | 37% | Positive | (44% Negative) |

Q5: I have had challenges in relation to working from home in following areas.

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Equipment (computer, chair etc..)

Equipment
Female **57%** Positive (33% Negative)
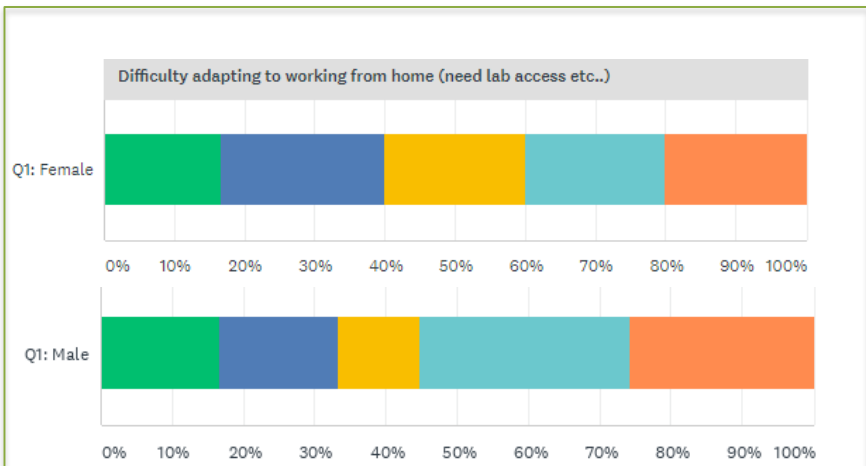Male **54%** Positive (37% Negative)

Isolation

Isolation
Female 47% Positive (40% Negative)
Male 33% Positive (30% Negative)

Q5: I have had challenges in relation to working from home in following areas.

Legend: 🟩 Strongly Disagree 🟦 Disagree 🟨 Neither Agree nor Disagree 🟦 Agree 🟧 Strongly Agree

Difficulty adapting to working from home (need lab access etc..)

Difficulty adapting

Female	40%	Positive	(40% Negative)
Male	**55%**	Positive	(33% Negative)
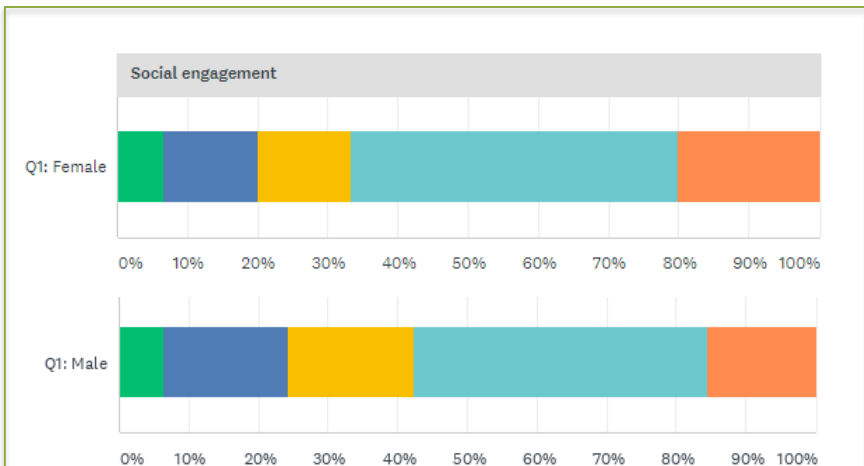
Social engagement

Social engagement

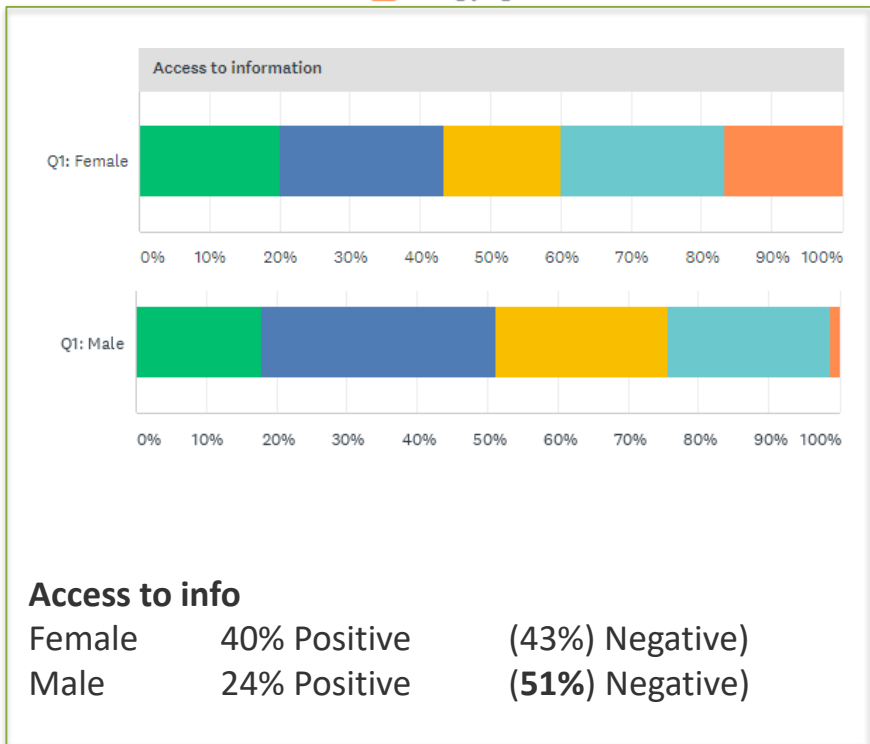|			
Female	**67%**	Positive	(20% Negative)
Male	**58%**	Positive	(24% Negative)

Q5: I have had challenges in relation to working from home in following areas.

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Access to info

Female	40% Positive	(43%) Negative
Male	24% Positive	(**51%**) Negative

Noise/ distractions

|		
Female	**50%** Positive	(24%) Negative
Male	45% Positive	(43%) Negative

Q5: I have had challenges in relation to working from home in following areas.

**Legend:** ● Strongly Disagree ● Disagree ● Neither Agree nor Disagree ● Agree ● Strongly Agree

Internet access/ speed

Internet access
Female	40% Positive	(46% Negative)
Male	28% Positive	**(54% Negative)**

Extra physical strain (voice, eyes, back, wrists etc..)

Extra strain
Female	**74%** Positive	(10% Negative)
Male	40% Positive	(46% Negative)

Q5: I have had challenges in relation to working from home in following areas.

Childcare or other caring needs

Female	40% Positive	(24% Negative)
Male	43% Positive	(46% Negative)
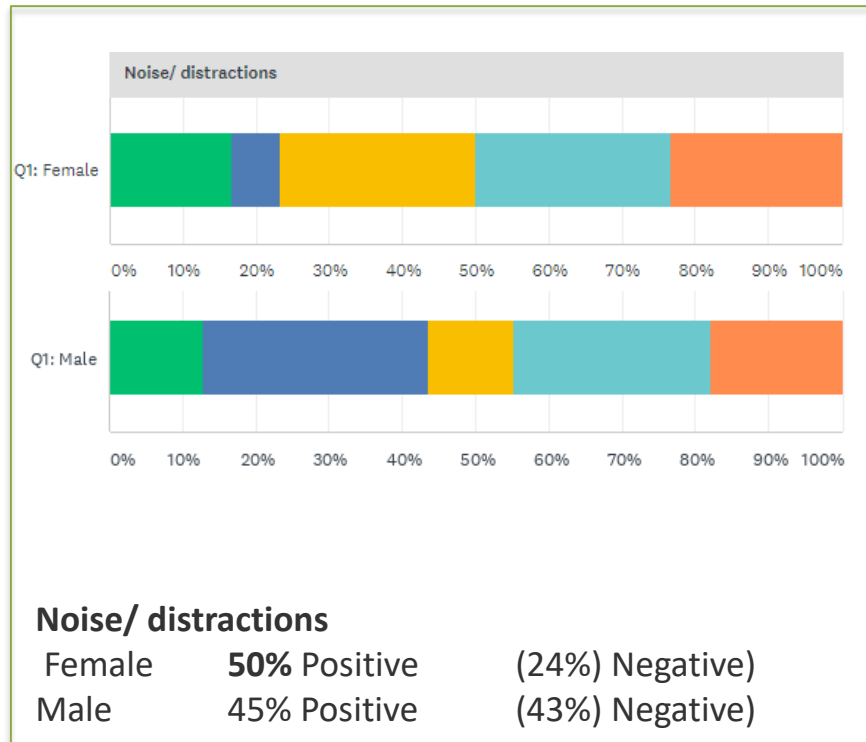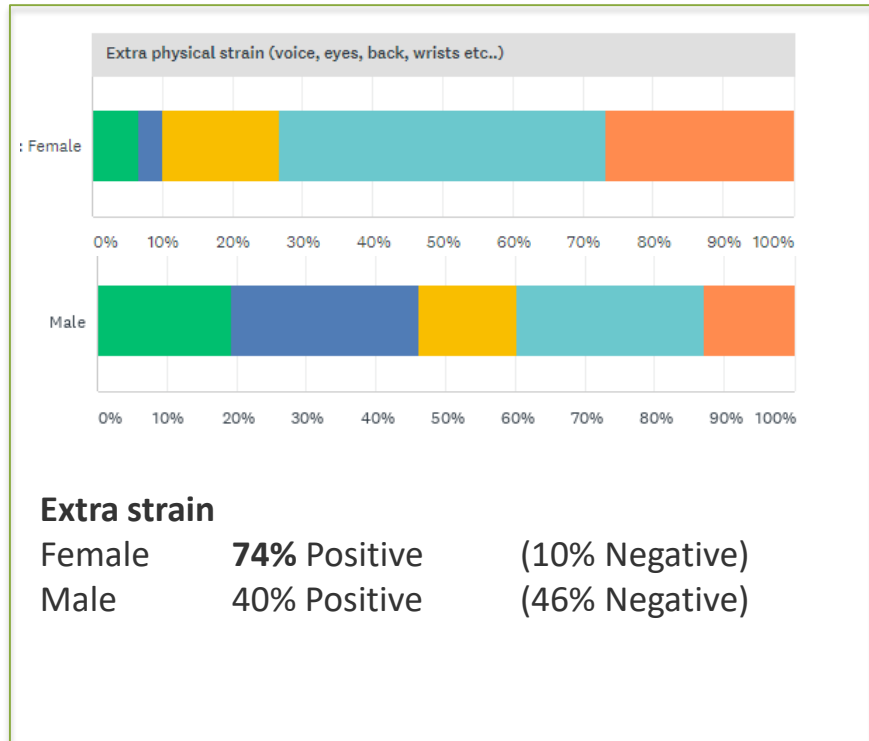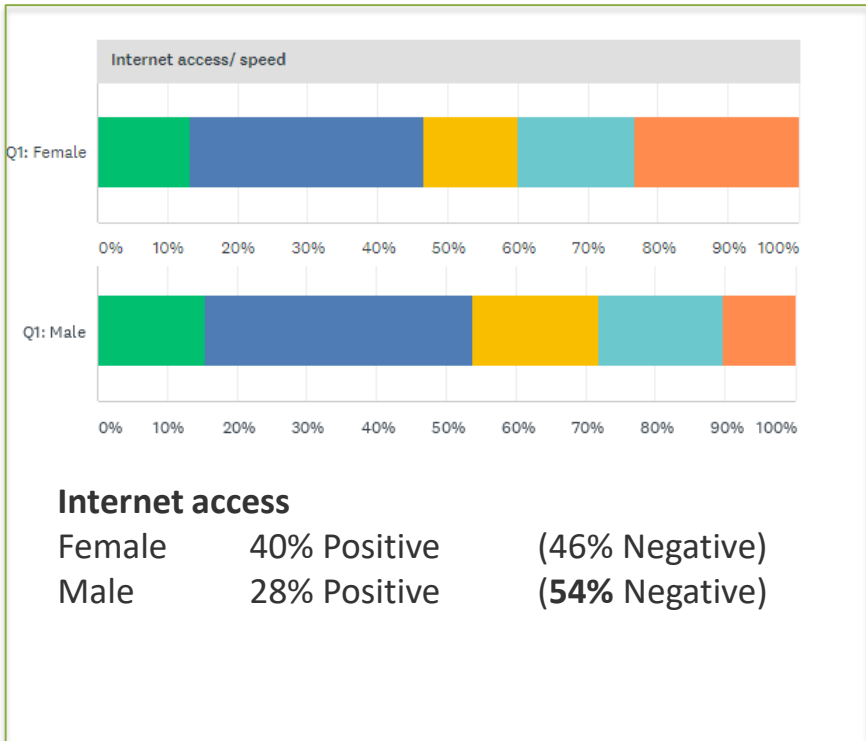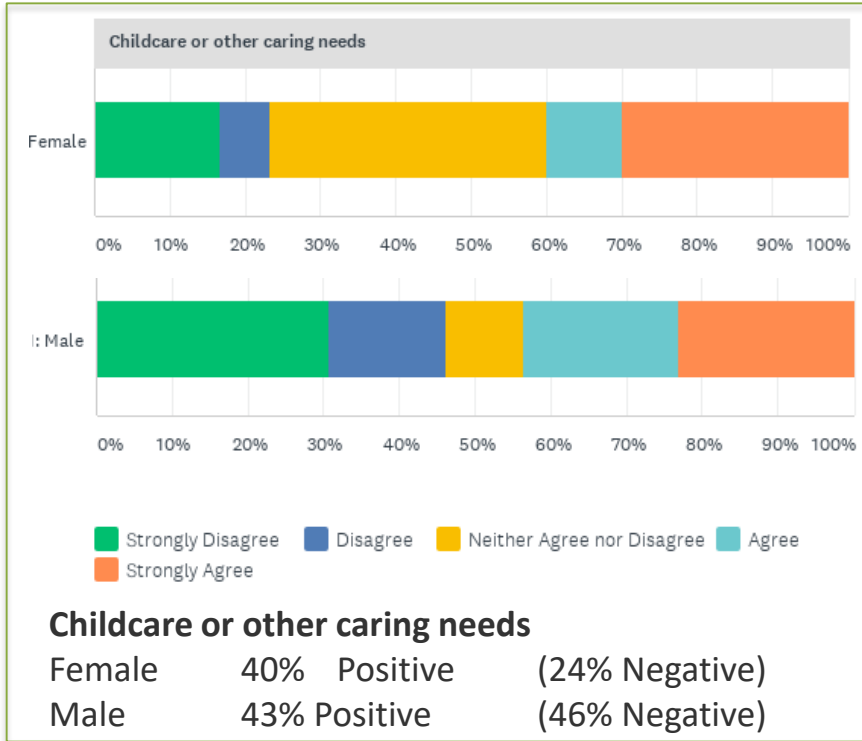
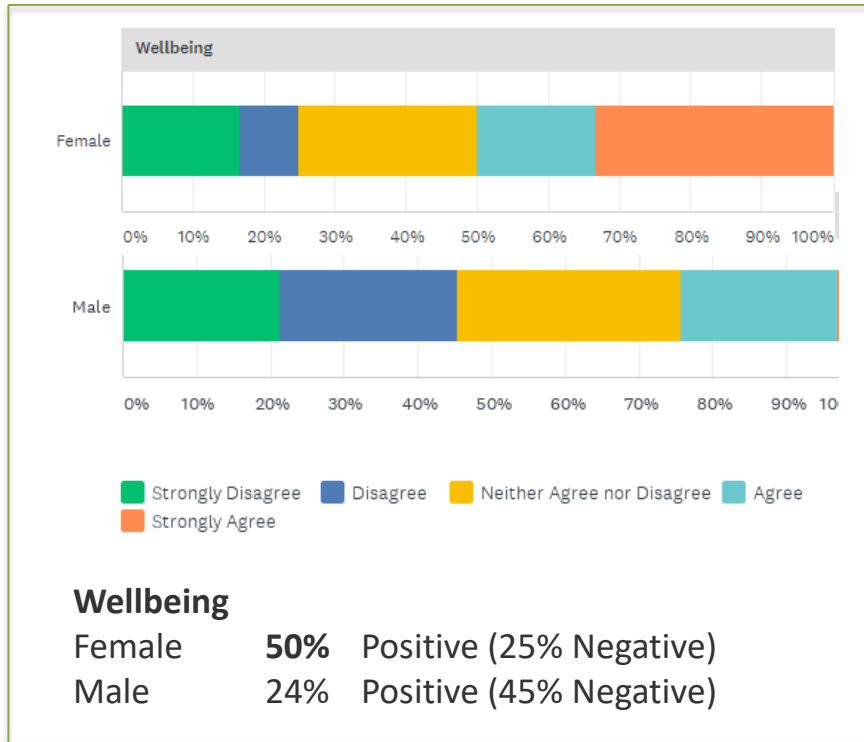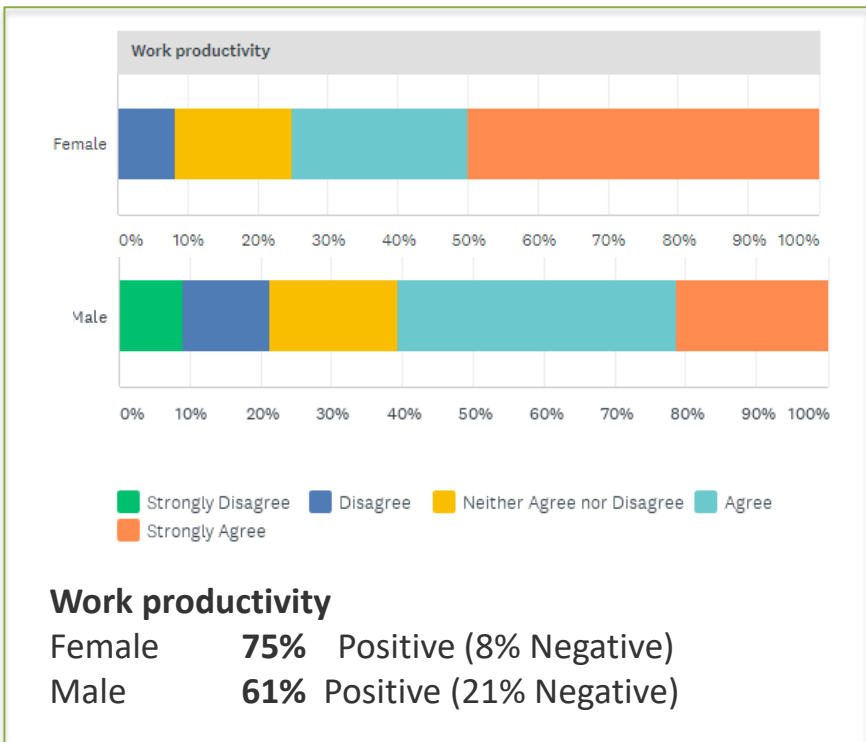# Q6: Have you extra caring responsibilities since COVID-19?

Yes, 50% Female, 46% Men

Q7: Are your extra caring responsibilities with regard to
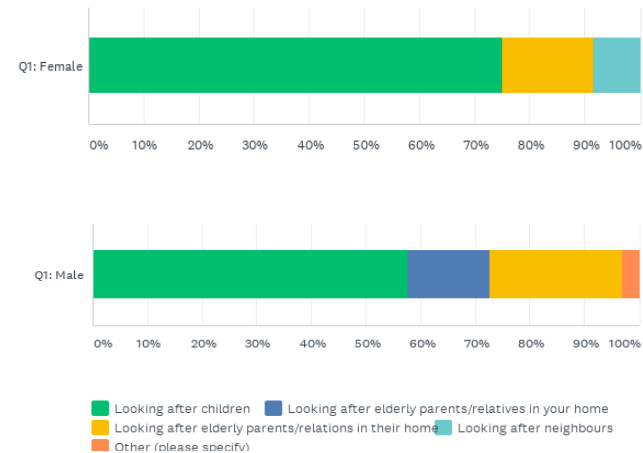
Children – 75% Female, 58% Male

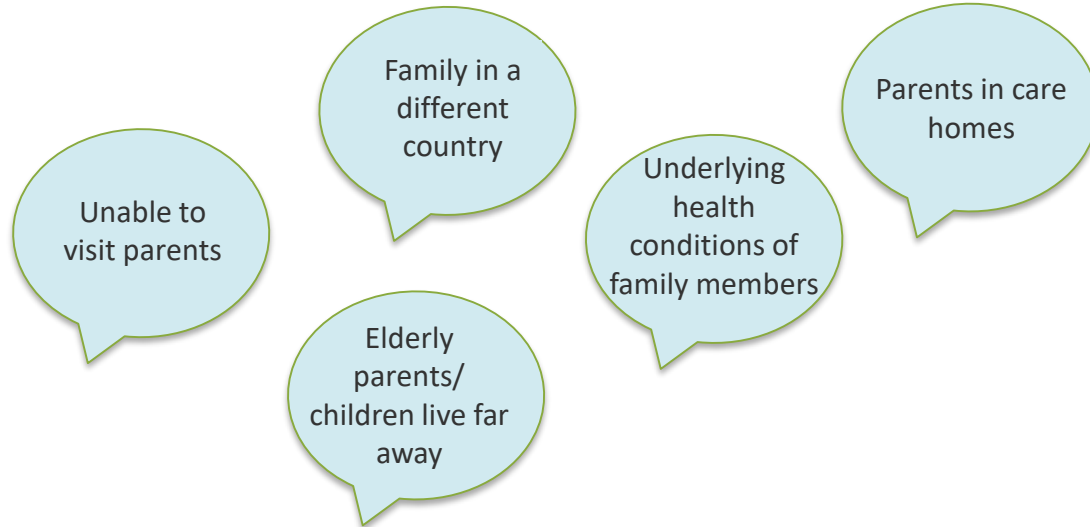Parents – 17% Female, 40% Male

Neighbours 8% Female

Q8: Extra caring responsibilities due to COVID-19 have had a negative impact on my

Work productivity

Female	**75%**	Positive (8% Negative)
Male	**61%**	Positive (21% Negative)

Wellbeing

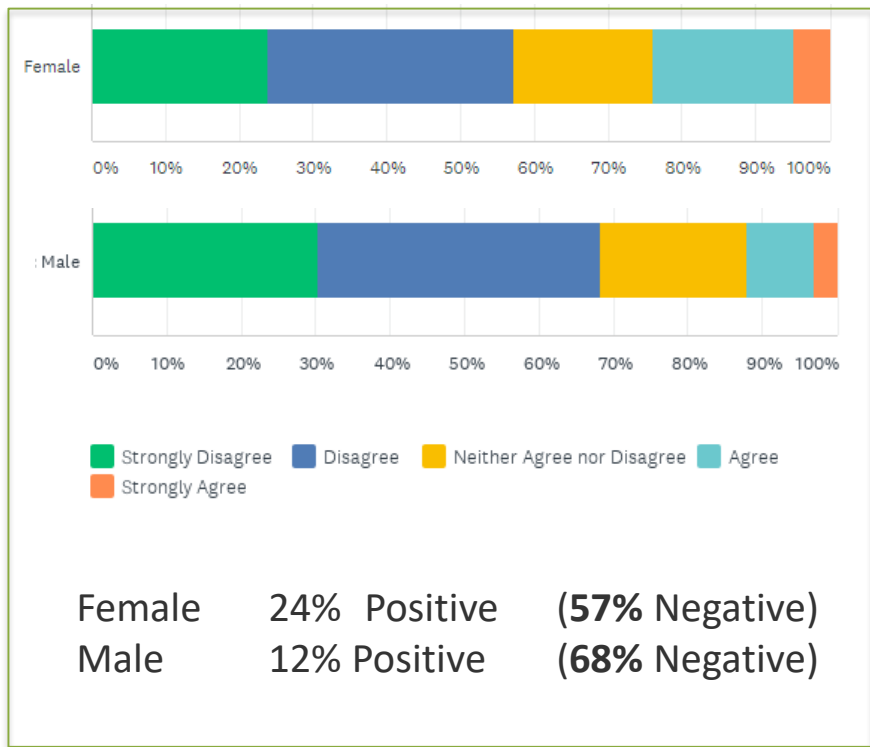|		
Female	**50%**	Positive (25% Negative)
Male	24%	Positive (45% Negative)

Q9: Are you more concerned than usual about parents/relations/close friends that you cannot care for or be with during this pandemic?

80% of both genders said Yes

No gender difference in the comments

Unable to visit parents

Family in a different country

Elderly parents/ children live far away

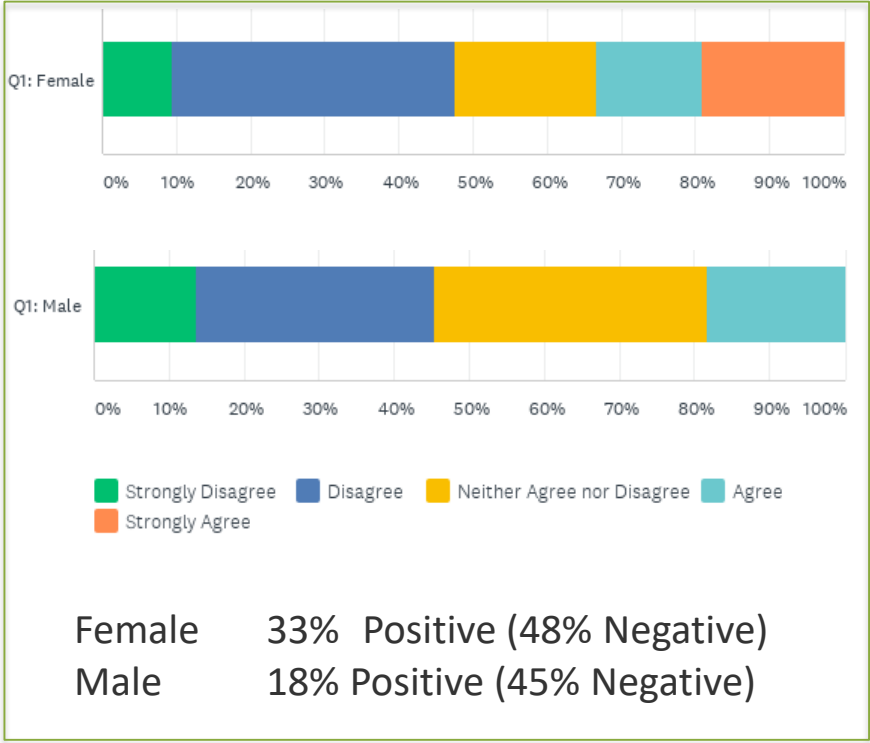Underlying health conditions of family members

Parents in care homes

Q10: I have experienced difficulty learning and applying new skills in adapting to working from home during this period (e.g. online meeting fora, Teams, Panopto, Blackboard Collaborate)

No gender difference in the comments

Forced to upskill but valuable and intuitive

Getting time to learn mostly on weekends and evenings it has been difficult

Used platforms/tools before

Enjoyed learning new software skills

Speed of the learning was the issue but not the learning itself

Impressed College had these already in place

Female   24% Positive   (**57%** Negative)
Male   12% Positive   (**68%** Negative)

Q11: I have found online meetings more effective in comparison to face-to-face meetings.

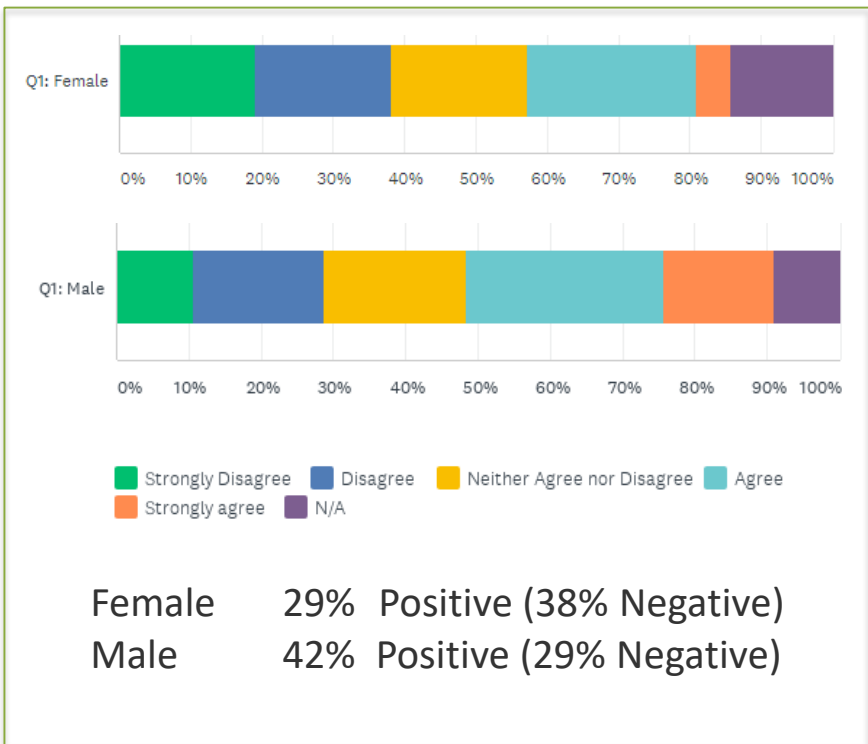Female   33% Positive (48% Negative)
Male   18% Positive (45% Negative)

Q11: I have found online meetings more effective in comparison to face-to-face meetings.

Hopefully online meetings can be continued to be used in Dept and School meetings and committees, allowing more flexible working modes while still being able to attend and take part in influential and decision making School Committees

Q12: In terms of my research, I feel I have continued to be productive

Q13: In terms of my academic duties, I feel I have continued to be productive
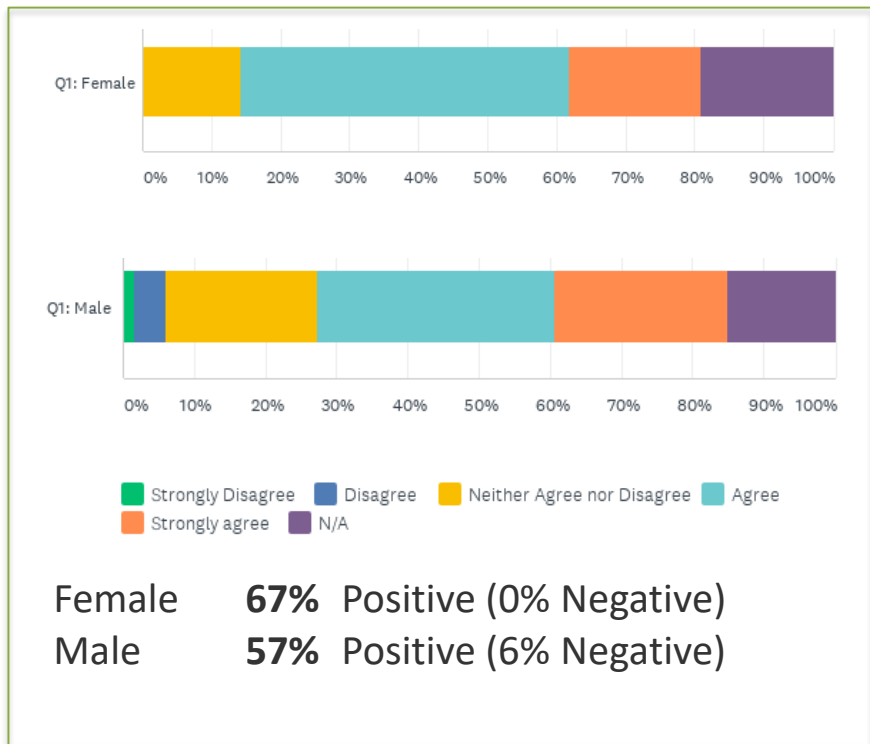
Female **67%** Positive (0% Negative)
Male **57%** Positive (6% Negative)

Q14: In terms of my administrative duties, I feel I have continued to be productive

Female 100% scale chart showing Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, N/A categories

Male chart showing Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, N/A categories

Legend:
- ■ Strongly Disagree
- ■ Disagree
- ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ■ Agree
- ■ Strongly agree
- ■ N/A

Female **90%** Positive (5% Negative)
Male **73%** Positive (6% Negative)
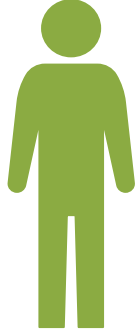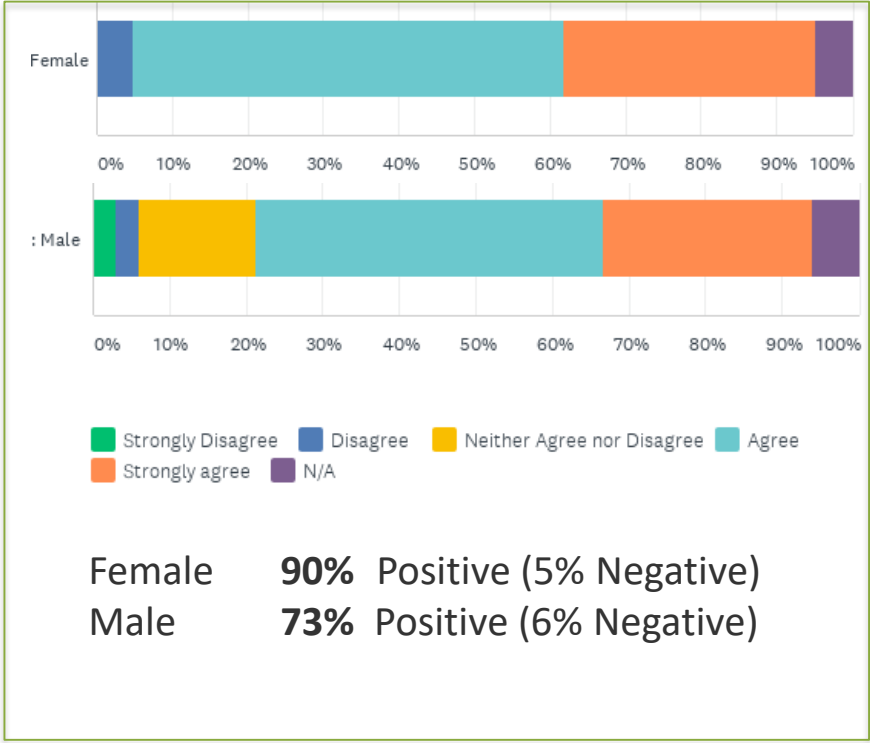
Speech bubbles:
- I have no VPN access so am restricted
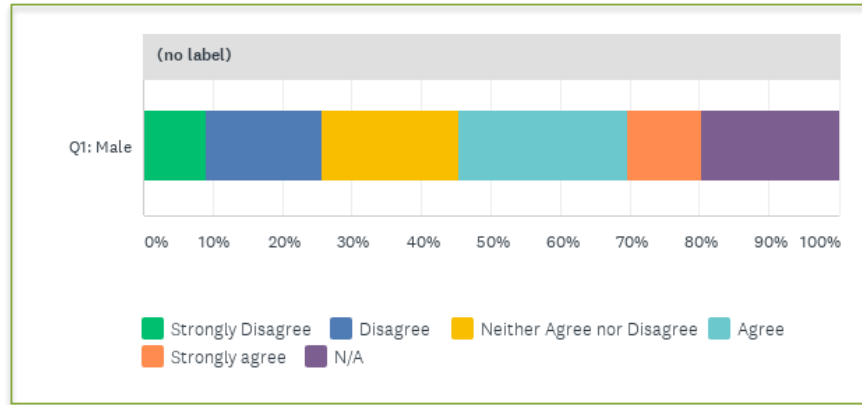- Working remotely with no distractions has allowed me to be more productive
- I've continued to take part in all committees
- Increased planning load due to COVID
- There's too much admin now
- I use the time I would usually spend commuting on this

Q15: In terms of my technical duties, I feel I have continued to be productive

Q16: Since Covid-19, I have been feeling

More anxious

Female	**71%**	Positive (19% Negative)
Male	**53%**	Positive (14% Negative)

Busier

Female	**76%**	Positive (9% Negative)
Male	**51%**	Positive (20% Negative)

Q16: Since Covid-19, I have been feeling

More relaxed

Female	19% Positive	(**67%** Negative)
Male	18% Positive	(**58%** Negative)

More stressed

Female	**57%** Positive	(24% Negative)
Male	**50%** Positive	(16% Negative)

Q16: Since Covid-19, I have been feeling

More exhausted

| | Q1: Female | Q1: Male |

Legend: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No more than normal, Agree, Strongly Agree

More exhausted
Female **52%** Positive (14% Negative)
Male 42% Positive (26% Negative)
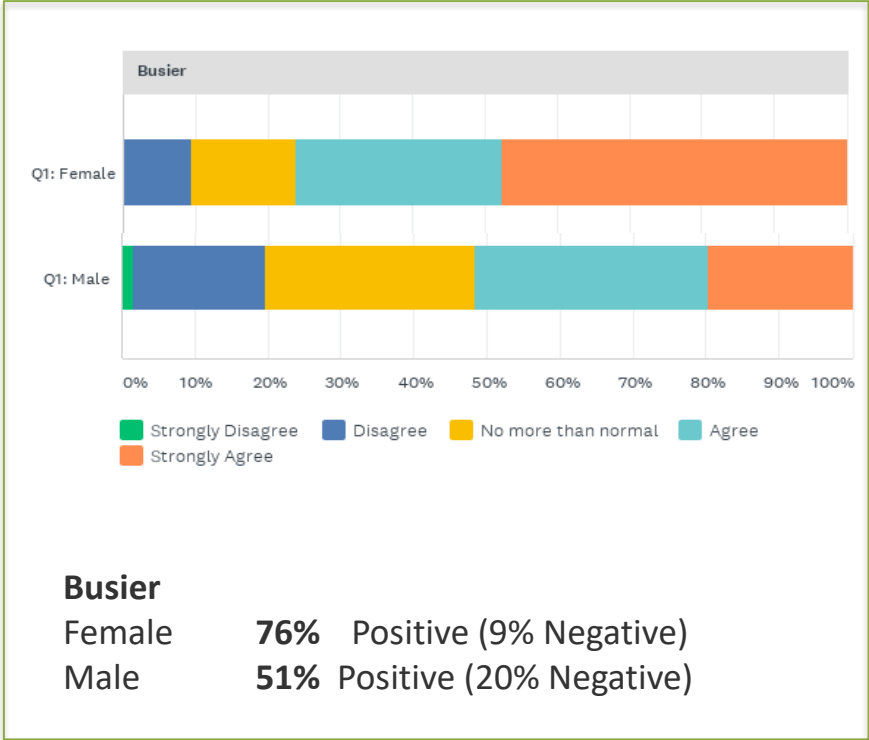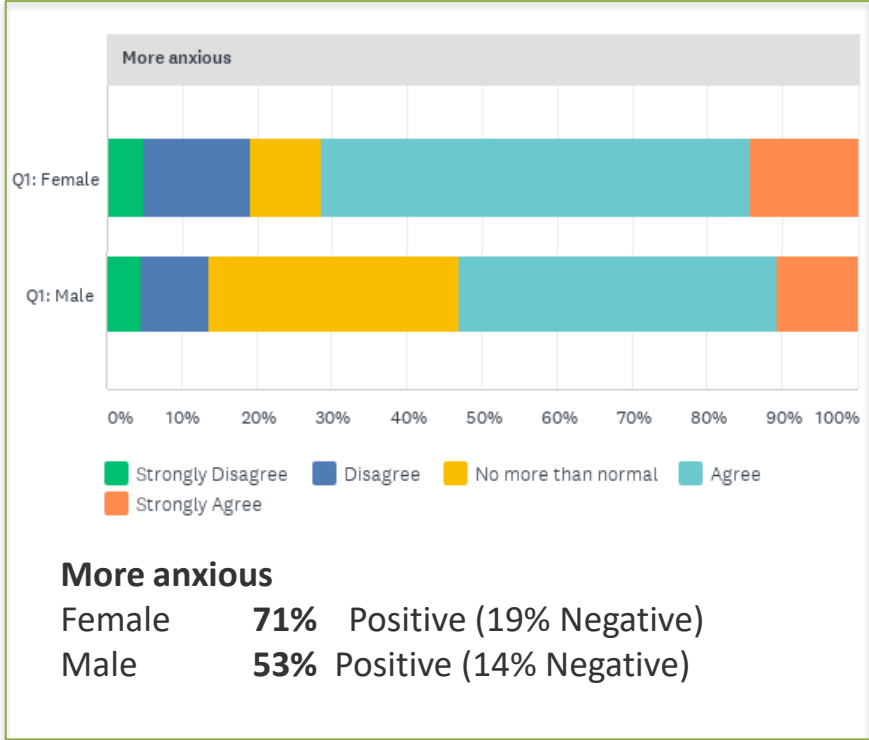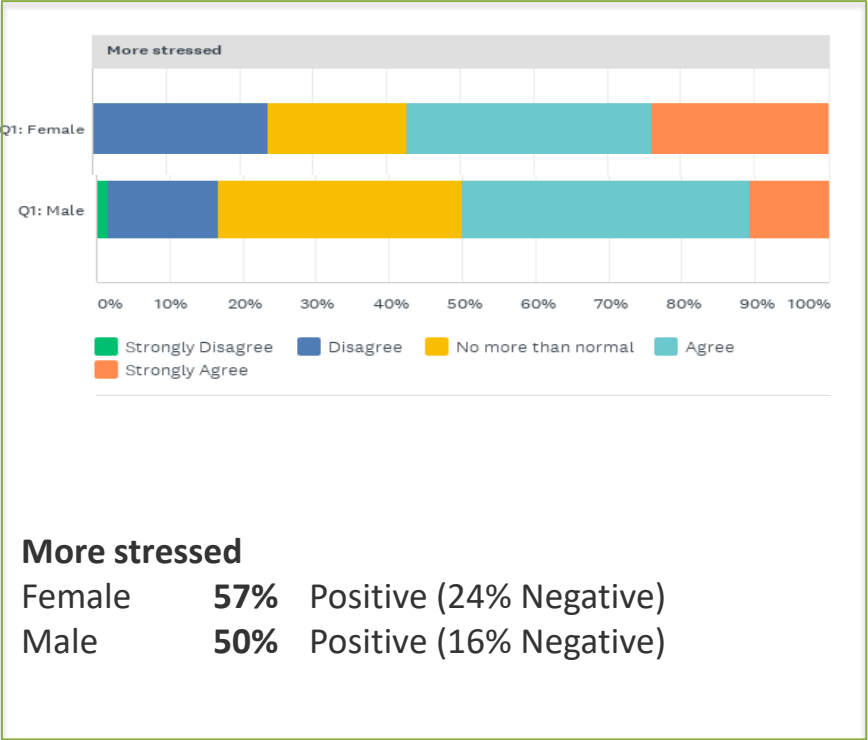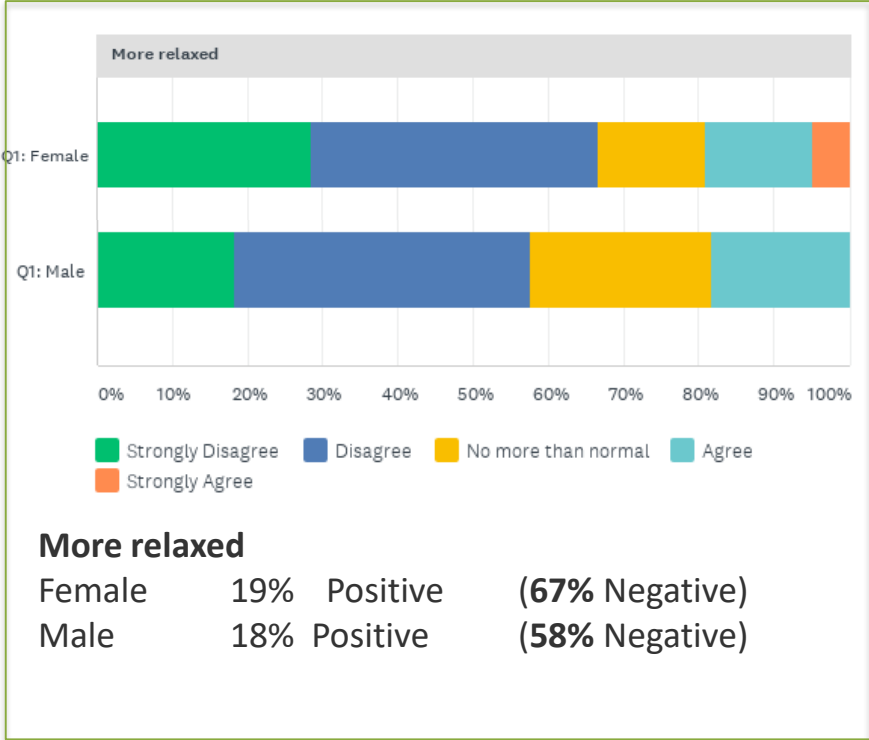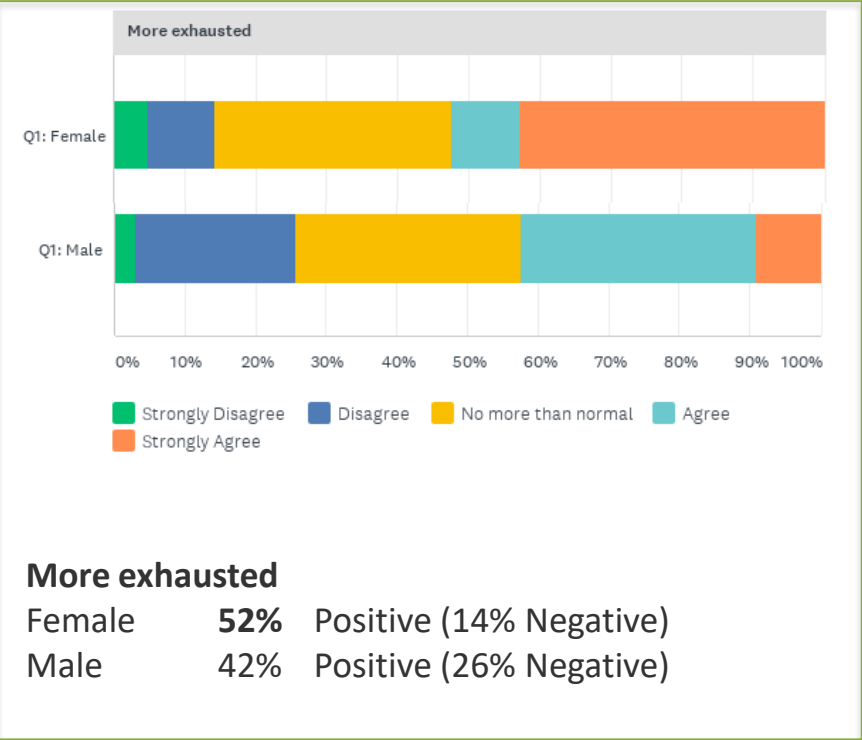
Q16: Since Covid-19, I have been feeling - comments

It is a difficult time with such a mix of emotions

Without commuting I feel I have more time to be with my children enjoying the environment around me.

I'm struggling to work full time and look after my kids.

Working late nights and early mornings - the work day is never ending!

With a partner who has more rigid and non negotiable meeting times - the flexibility I have means I am often working late at night after mornings of homeschooling & constant preparation of meals for insatiably hungry kids!

It has been difficult to separate work from home life - it is now intertwined and so it can be hard to switch off and disconnect.

Extremely busy at times, not so at others. Not as much balance as 'normal' work..

More bored.

Anxiety from the lack of normal human contact.

With everything being online, tasks seemed to take that little bit longer ! Especially marking and administrative work

Find online meetings stressful and very tiring,

Initially more stressed as a rapid response was required for online teaching and then exams. However, that eventually passed and time is now on our side to plan for 2020/21.

Anxiety from having underlying conditions.

I have had some long periods of uninterrupted time to do the kind of research I enjoy the most.

Overly self conscious of appearance of self and surroundings

Both more relaxed and more anxious/stressed at the same time, but both have been the case at different times.

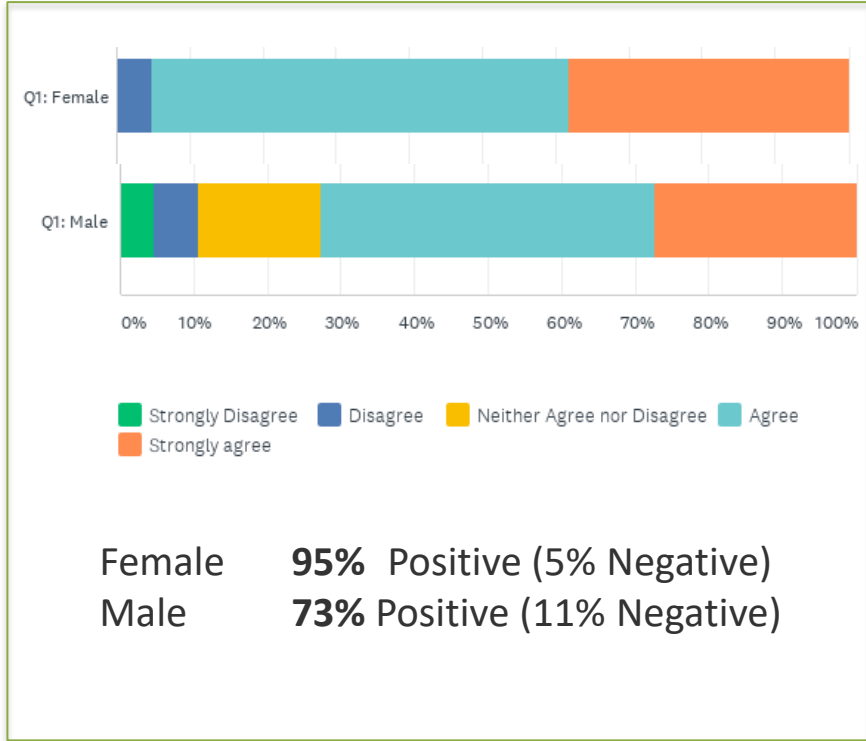Would probably be easier and less stressful if we didn't have a newborn baby!

Q17: I have received adequate information updates from my line manager / Head of Department / Head of School during this period.

Female   **95%** Positive (5% Negative)
Male   **73%** Positive (11% Negative)

Q18: I have received adequate information updates from College during this period.

Female **86%** Positive (9% Negative)
Male **61%** Positive (21% Negative)
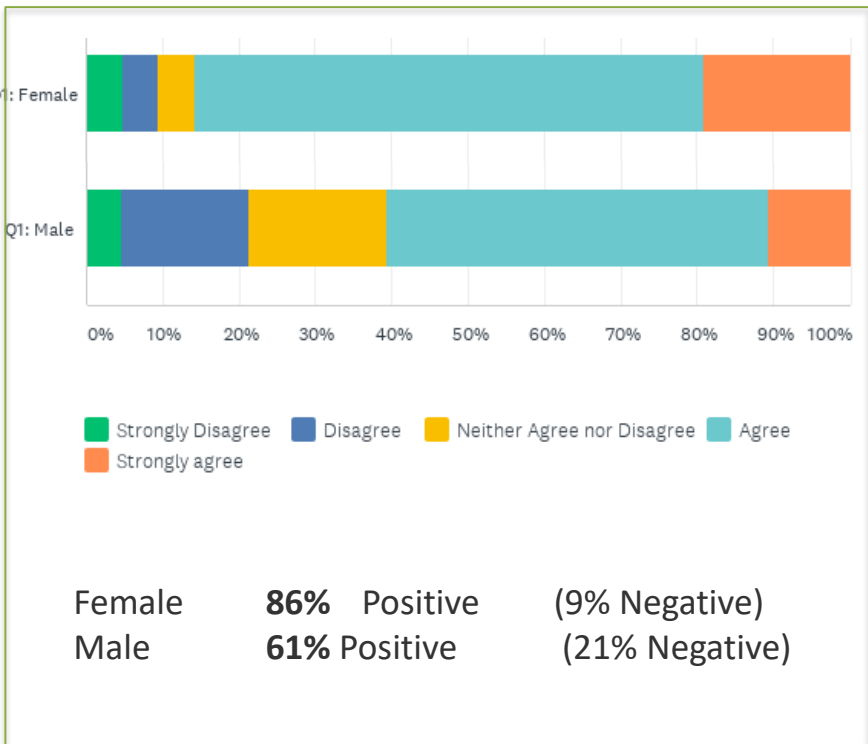
See updates on Social Media but not an internal email

Quick to close but need to be clear on process of opening again

College has not been good at communicating

Perhaps too many at the start

College has undermined staff throughout this – Announcements made but we have to figure out the detail

Would have liked to see College proactive on setting a timeline rather than pushing it back to us

Nothing about how to prepare for next semester

Q19: I feel I have been given adequate pastoral (emotional) support by my line manager during this period.

Female   **56%**   Positive   (9% Negative)
Male   46% Positive   (14% Negative)
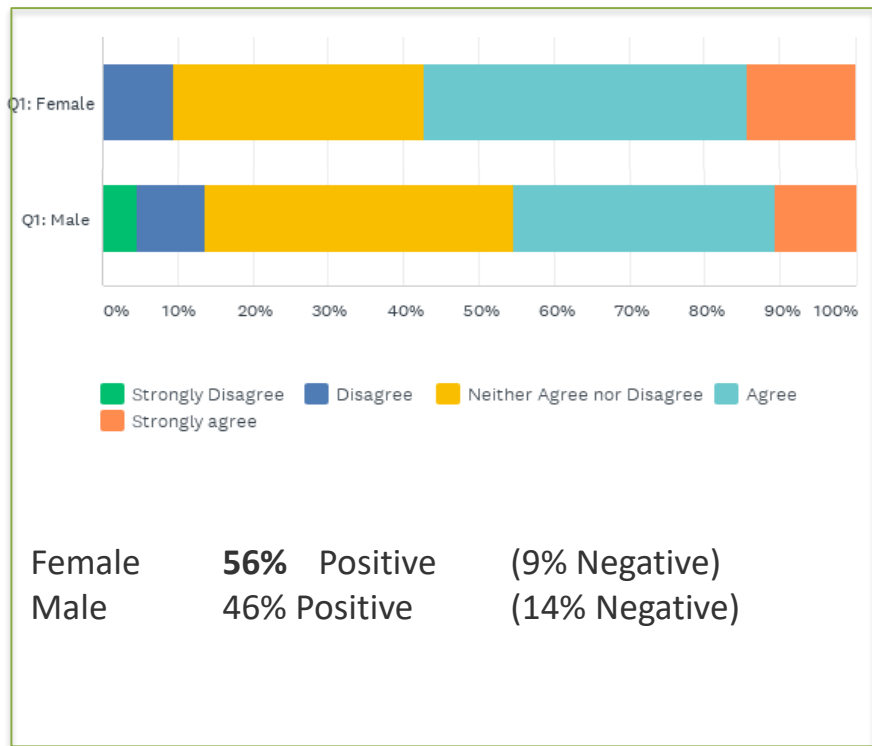
> I think our HoD, despite his own challenges and commitments, has been excellent at reaching out to staff.

> I don't feel it's the responsibility of line managers to provide this type of support

Q20: Have you attended any of TCDs Virtual Café webinar series on issues of wellbeing and resilience or availed of any of Healthy Trinity's sessions/supports?
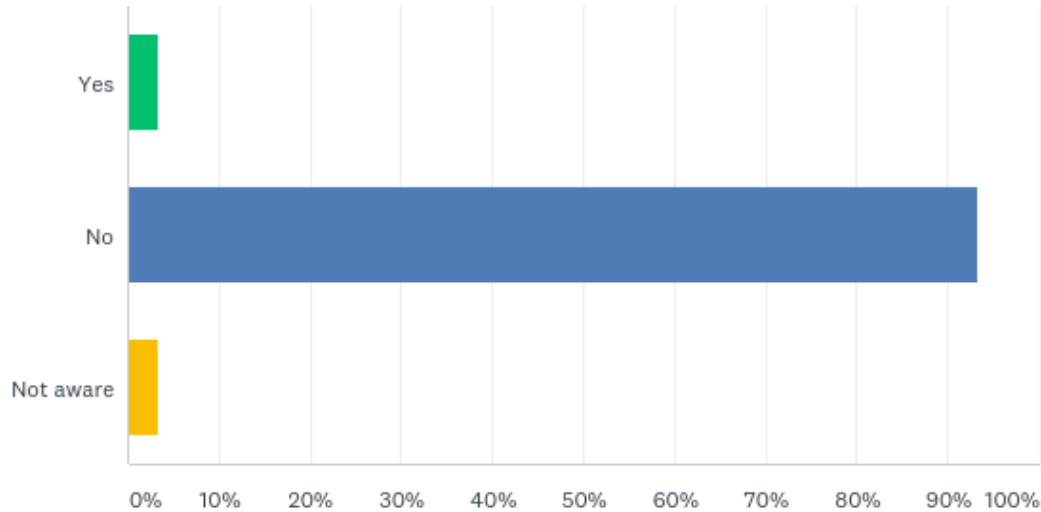
No gender difference

Q21: There are elements of my current working practices that I would like to continue post-COVID-19.

Female   **67%**   Positive (19% Negative)

Male   **74%**   Positive (9% Negative)
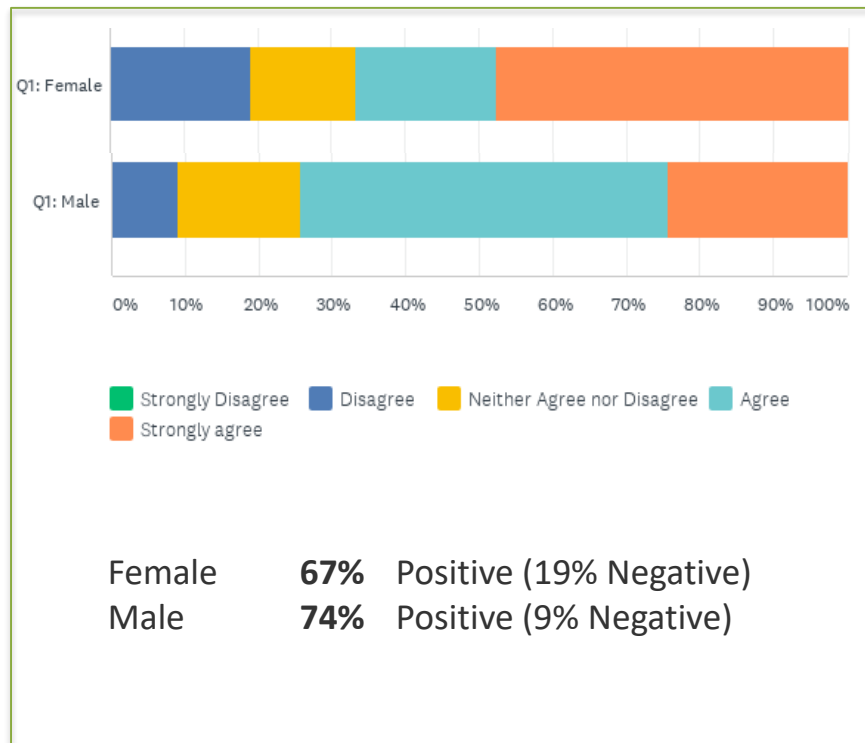
Q21: There are elements of my current working practices that I would like to continue post-COVID-19.

The flexibility to work from home is great - without the commute I 'save' 2 hours per day - obviously this is when schools/childcare are back.

Reduced international travel for work & research

Flexibility around working from home. 1-2-3 days per week

Online assessment is the way forward.

Some admin tasks are easier without interruptions in College

Utilising TEAMS for student support and meetings

Also continuing with the facility to attend Dept/ School & College committee meetings online if not able to be physically present.

Working from home should not be used to distance themselves from helping students and staff

More frequent but short staff meetings

Work from home more – giving a better work life balance

More online meetings

Online seminars and conferences

Recording lectures is a good idea and hope to do it for all my lectures in future

Q.22 What supports would make working from home easier? (64 responses M)

Common responses

Better IT equipment PC/ printer/ stylus technology

A culture change on the part of staff and students is required. Better communication needed

Ordering and delivery of work materials to home

Coffee mornings virtually with colleagues – just socially

Proper workspace

To know I am not losing my job

Confining email exchanges to Mon – Fri 9-5

Allow researchers to bring small tools/equipment home

Home software access

Easier library access

Better internet

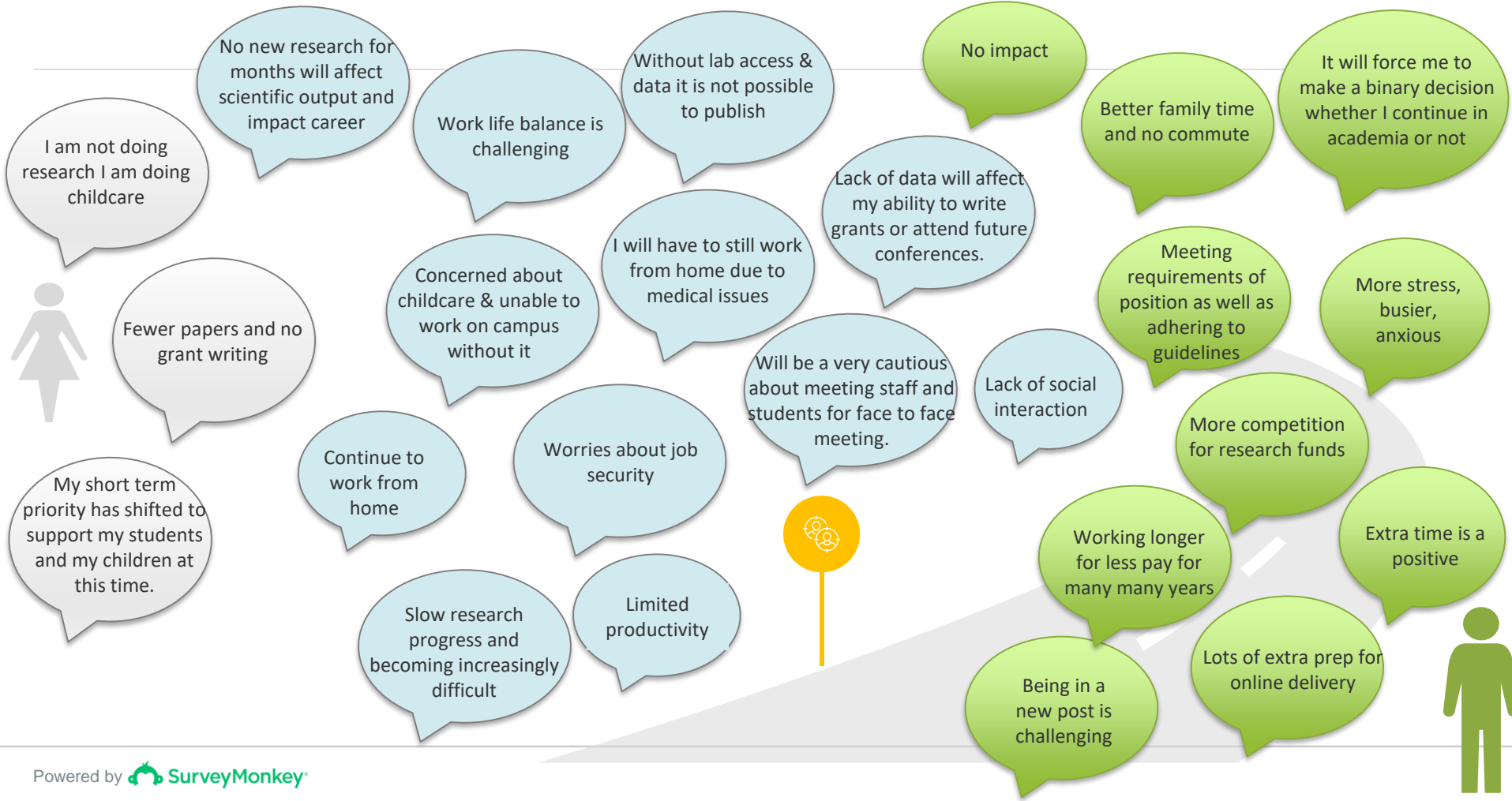Access to childcare

Subsidy for internet/ office equipment

Shorter work week

How do you think this pandemic will affect your working life in the **short-term future, medium-term future** and **long-term future?**

Q.23 How do you think this pandemic will affect your working life in the short-term future?

Q.23 How do you think this pandemic will affect your working life in the medium-term future?

I am concerned about my research contract, I will not be able to produce what is required which will be difficult to support in a CV or job interview. I am not able to produce papers at the moment and so my CV will have a large gap. Obviously if I have to reduce my hours due to lack of childcare then this will lead to further disadvantages in the future.

No impact

Will seek early retirement

Lack of data production will affect my ability to write grants or attend future conferences.

Focusing on paper and grant writing so should not have a big impact

May make some tasks more streamlined by being online

Reduced output now will reduce quality of my cv for future jobs

Continued flexible working & less commuting

I will have to still work from home due to medical issues

Better work life balance in working from home

Impact on student numbers and teaching

Without lab access & fieldwork will cause research difficulties

I will be asked to do a lot of things in a new way without guidance or recognition

Worried about not being able to deliver as good a service / experience as I would previously

Serious worries about job security

No networking opportunities

Slow research progress or reduced opportunities for research

There will be no let up for about a year I think and at the end of this I have to choose whether I continue in this job.

Post pandemic will be full of engineering opportunities

Q.23 How do you think this pandemic will affect your working life in the medium-term future?

As the number and quality of peer reviewed papers a researcher publishes are factors in awarding research funding and academic promotion, a reduction in the quality or quantity of my publications is likely to harm my job and funding prospects now and for years to come. I have missed funding application deadlines, and had to postpone journal papers

How do you think this pandemic will affect your working life in the long-term future?
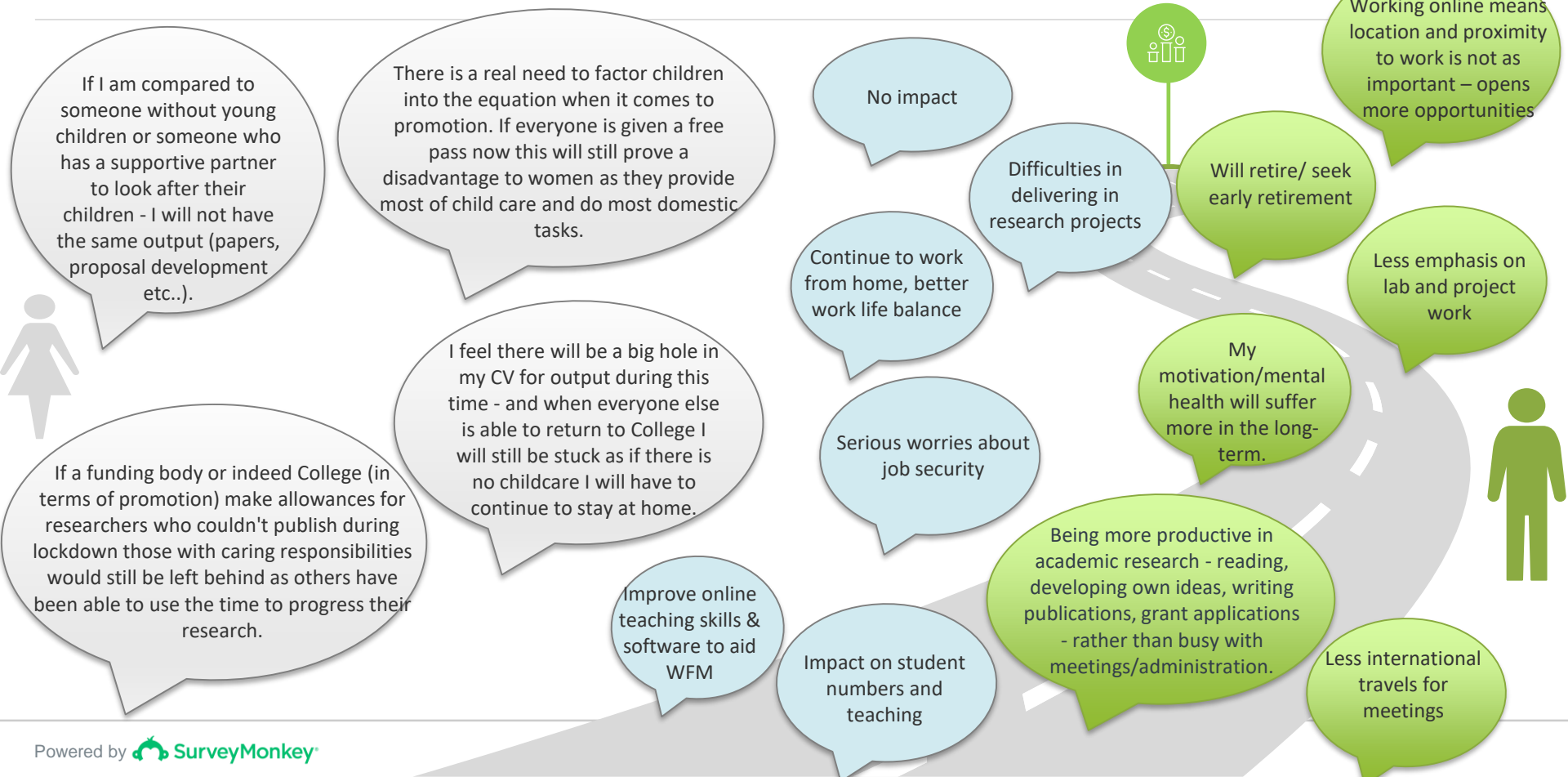
If I am compared to someone without young children or someone who has a supportive partner to look after their children - I will not have the same output (papers, proposal development etc..).

There is a real need to factor children into the equation when it comes to promotion. If everyone is given a free pass now this will still prove a disadvantage to women as they provide most of child care and do most domestic tasks.

No impact

Difficulties in delivering in research projects

Working online means location and proximity to work is not as important – opens more opportunities

Will retire/ seek early retirement

Less emphasis on lab and project work

Continue to work from home, better work life balance

I feel there will be a big hole in my CV for output during this time - and when everyone else is able to return to College I will still be stuck as if there is no childcare I will have to continue to stay at home.

Serious worries about job security

My motivation/mental health will suffer more in the long-term.

If a funding body or indeed College (in terms of promotion) make allowances for researchers who couldn't publish during lockdown those with caring responsibilities would still be left behind as others have been able to use the time to progress their research.

Improve online teaching skills & software to aid WFM

Impact on student numbers and teaching

Being more productive in academic research - reading, developing own ideas, writing publications, grant applications - rather than busy with meetings/administration.

Less international travels for meetings

How do you think this pandemic will affect your working life in the long-term future?

I am worried that this will lead me out of a research/ academic career which I was hoping for. Without a permanent contract means that my job is less valuable in my family when compared to my husband, so if childcare is needed, I will end up reducing my hours or if not possible I will have to give up my position in order to provide childcare for my children. Especially if there are staggered times for school children attending school - this will make it near impossible for me to work full time and manage this also

Q26: The COVID-19 pandemic affects working conditions differently depending on gender.
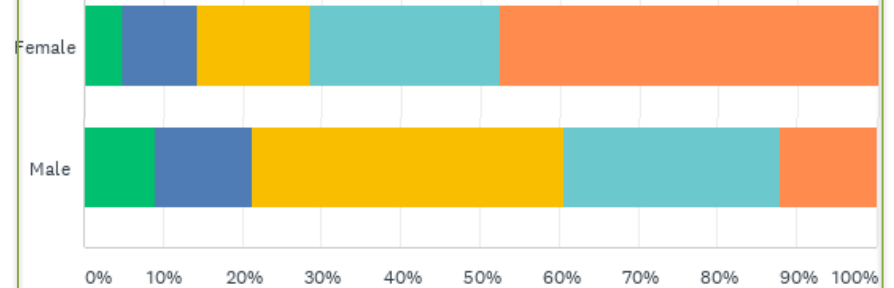
Female   **72%**   Positive   (14% Negative)
Male   39% Positive   (21% Negative)

Any child care needs are provided by me and so this means I end up working all day. There is no down time. I try to answer emails and work during the day but my kids need me. So then I continue to work in the evenings when they are in bed to make up the time and end up working late into the night. There is no break - even weekends are spent trying to catch up on research.

Anyone with a young family will be disadvantaged and most likely women will be even more disadvantaged as generally women take on more of the caring roles and most of the domestic duties in the home. In a way this is not something new that has been brought about by COVID-19. This juggling of childcare and hidden work of domestic tasks has always been part of many and particularly women's home lives. Maybe after this there will be a better understanding in College. Now it is in particularly sharp focus as now women are actually expected to do it all - continue with their full time job and look after (full time) children, at literally, the same time. The School and College needs to understand that there are limits and reduce expectations

The onus of childminding & caring / catering for family tends to fall in the majority as the role of female staff. Men in general seem to have the ability to compartmentalise tasks & life events and thus can dismiss domestic chaos to focus on their work practices.

Also I have had to give greater proportion of time to pastoral care to my students in these stressful times.

As the School opens up, it would be helpful if there were options for early morning and evening options in terms of lab/office access - this would help in the childcare juggle.

Most caring is provided for by women and most domestic chores are carried out by women - of course there are great men out there! - but in the main it is women. So we will be clearly disadvantaged later in terms of measuring output and comparing cvs. Women with kids vs men with kids
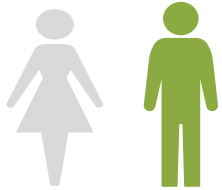
This will depend on the commitments of the staff member, if they are in a relationship, if both partners work and if they have caring responsibilities.

There is a silent expectation that women will take on more caring responsibilities- for the good of the family. I think they make disproportionate sacrifices - this can affect their future In terms of work & finances

Have seen many parents, especially mothers, struggle to balance working from home with childcare and home schooling.

My wife has really looked after our kids and home I have been able to work uninterrupted thankfully. Her job is less secure and will probably leave it if childcare outside the home is not possible

Trying to work and take increased duties now isn't possible - it accentuates an already problematic issue.

The greatest differences are between mothers and single people.

If there are other issues/positives arising from COVID-19 relating to gender that you would like to discuss.

Given the compounding effect of career breaks and gender based discrimination on career progression, it is reasonable to assume this pandemic will have more long term negative impacts for women than men. These effects on women are likely to long outlast the actual pandemic.

This period has shown that everyone can work from home and so there should be no barriers to continuing to do so in future

Also as College starts to make funding cuts Athena Swan support is likely to disappear which will set the EDI agenda back hugely, in Engineering AS was only starting out and has a long way to go to gain buy in. This is manageable with support - without it AS becomes a burden on a small group of staff which will already be overburdened due to increased demands or converting course content to online and blended delivery

In general, the problems have always been there - care work is hugely undervalued & women have to carry out most of it - but now they have been exposed by this pandemic.

More flexibility in future should allow more work life balance

There are many more initiatives to benefit women

Sadly it looks like it is going back to 1960's Ireland for women with small kids and temporary contracts - in research and academia there are few options and will mean like many others, I will have to leave to provide childcare in the home

Timing for access currently being developed - needs to be flexible. It may suit couples with kids to come in earlier/ work later now there are no childcare options.

Continue to ensure that gender is not an issue for exclusion and that viewpoints and different approaches to students/ courses/ discussion are included and welcomed - continue to develop a culture of inclusion