LIVING AND WORKING IN LOCKDOWN: WHAT'S GENDER GOT TO DO WITH IT?

RESEARCH REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the findings of recent research: *Living and Working in Lockdown: What's gender got to do with it?* The findings of an online survey conducted among Birmingham City University (BCU) staff in June/July 2020 provide a snapshot of experiences of working from home during lockdown: including impact on working practices, household arrangements, well-being and career progression. Overall, the findings reflect an asymmetric impact of lockdown, well-documented in national literature. The data indicate a disproportionately negative impact of working from home during lockdown on all BCU female staff with a particular burden on female academic staff. Female staff were:

- more likely to take primary or sole responsibility for homeschooling
- less likely to have access to dedicated working space at home
- more likely to experience challenges in working comfortably and having appropriate technical equipment
- more likely to report problems experienced from noise levels/interruptions while working from home
- more likely to find balancing homeschooling, household and work-related tasks very difficult or impossible
- more likely to report challenges in managing work/life/home boundaries
- more likely to report a positive impact of lockdown on receiving appropriate support from their line manager

In addition, female academic staff were:
- more likely to report a negative impact on their capacity to conduct research and write for publication. This is particularly acute for female academics with children.

Against what continues to be a backdrop of deep uncertainty for the sector and the wider economy, this report identifies the key issues and implications arising from the findings. It recommends an intersectional equalities perspective is at the heart of the university's future actions to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff.

I. THE PROJECT

This report summarises the findings of survey research conducted at Birmingham City University in June/July 2020. The project, *Living and Working in Lockdown: What's gender got to do with it?* investigated the experiences of BCU staff living and working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (March-July 2020). The findings provide a snapshot of staff experiences of working from home during lockdown: exploring the impact in terms of working practices, household arrangements, well-being and career progression. Against a backdrop of deeply uncertain times for the higher education sector and the wider economy, this report identifies key issues and implications for gender equality in the short and longer-term.

Ethical approval for the research was successfully obtained via standard university procedures and the project followed institutional guidelines for consent, data collection, storage, coding and dissemination. Faculty and Service Leads facilitated invitations to participate via internal *All Staff* emails. Invitations were also circulated via key stakeholders and groups within the university and via *Tiger Talk* (7/8 July 2020).

The Researcher

Dr Kate Carruthers Thomas is a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Social Sciences. She specialises in research into higher education, gender and equalities. Kate is also the BCU Project Manager for the Athena SWAN Charter, the flagship accreditation framework for gender equality in UK higher education and research.

This institutional research project, conducted in the unique set of circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, combines both aspects of Kate's dual role. It investigates the interaction of higher education and gender and identifies practical steps to mitigate work-related gender inequalities.

Research Rationale

The coronavirus pandemic wrought sudden and profound shifts in working practices, not least the need to work from home during the first UK lockdown imposed on 23 March 2020. Shortly after lockdown began, evidence began to emerge that the COVID-19 pandemic was exposing and exacerbating inequalities in societies at large (Ascher 2020; Connolly *et al.* 2020; Ferguson 2020 *inter alia*). The pressures of working from home, home schooling children, increased care responsibilities and restrictive measures such as shielding and self-isolation, were judged to particularly disadvantage working women. Concerns were expressed that the pandemic is 'having a devastating effect on gender equality and could set women back decades' (Donegan 2020).

In the higher education (HE) sector as a whole and for academic staff in particular, there were suggestions that 'the coronavirus is skewing a playing field that wasn't ever level in the first place' (Kitchener 2020). This referred primarily but not exclusively to the area of research productivity. As long as research remains the most important currency in the prestige economy of HE, it will also remain an indicator for promotion and a pathway to academic seniority (Morley 2015). Meanwhile despite the efforts of institutional and sector-wide initiatives such as the Athena SWAN Charter (Advance HE 2020) to address longstanding gender inequalities in the higher education workforce, female academics remain under-represented in senior leadership roles in HE (Jarboe 2018) and over-represented in the academic precariat (O'Keefe and Courtois 2019). These inequalities are societal and sector-wide. While this research prioritises gender, it should be stressed that gender inequality is exacerbated by intersections with other factors and characteristics including ethnic group, age and disability and class.

This research reflects BCU's commitment to address these inequalities via the Athena SWAN Charter and its institutional EDI Strategy. It was conducted in the relatively early stages of what it transpired would be a longer-term and rapidly changing environment. The survey went live in June 2020 when the country was still in lockdown. Data was analysed during the summer when the country was urged to Eat Out To Help Out and students went back to school and university. This report was written during a second lockdown (November-December 2020) and during the discovery of the first potential vaccine against COVID-19. It therefore offers a snapshot of a complex, continuing and unpredictable situation.

This report addresses two over-arching questions:

1. **What role does gender play in the experience of lockdown for university staff working from home and how does gender interact with ethnic group, age and role type?**

2. **What key issues and implications do the findings raise for gender equality - for individuals and for the university?**
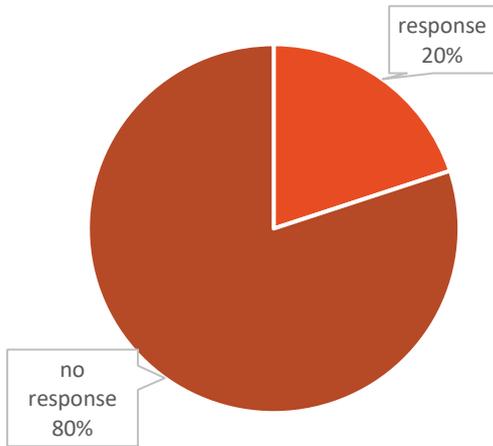
Research Method

- Data was collected via an online survey (using Qualtrics Survey Software).

- The survey was open to all academic and professional services staff at BCU.

- The survey went live on 10 June 2020 and closed on 10 July 2020.

- 52 questions (45 multiple choice, 3 Likert scale, 4 free text) covered:

  > - respondents' **demographic** data (gender, ethnicity, age)
  > - **employment** role, focus and contract type
  > - **living with COVID-19** (shielding, self-isolation, illness)
  > - **household** arrangements (accommodation type, children/elderly relatives in household, homeschooling and care responsibilities)
  > - **working environment** (workspace, equipment, technology)
  > - **challenges, feasibility and impact** on working tasks, work/life balance, professional development and well-being

- 543 completed responses were received (a further 40 responses were incomplete).

- Standard data analysis reports were carried out through Qualtrics Survey Software.

- Additional statistical analysis was carried out to establish whether lockdown experiences vary with gender or other demographic characteristics (including ethnic group, age, role type and caring responsibilities). Effects that are statistically significant are reported here[1].

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[1] In order to establish whether lockdown experiences vary with gender or other demographic characteristics (including age, BCU role, academic role and caring responsibilities) statistical analyses are reported. In most cases these comprise chi-square contingency tests, which test for an association between two categorical variables (for example gender and responses to a particular question). In a minority of cases where responses were on a ranked scale (from very positive to very negative), this was tested using Mann-Whitney U tests which test whether ranked responses differ between two independent groups (for example, male and female). In all cases, contrasts are only reported as significant if they do not exceed an alpha level of .05.

II. SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Figure 1: Total Survey Responses   ***Figure 2: Survey Responses by Gender***
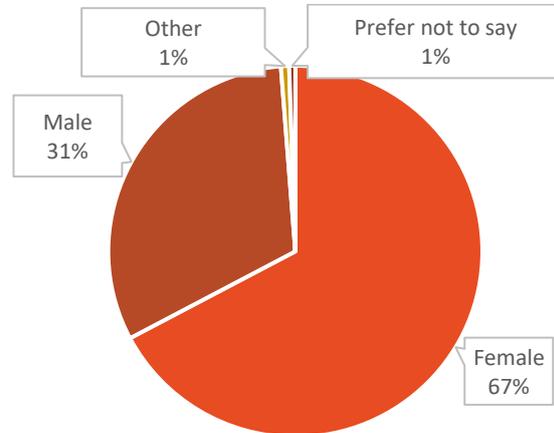
The total survey response (n=543) represents **20%** of BCU staff (n=2725).[2]

67% of the sample identified as female, 31% as male (compared to current BCU workforce data: 55% female, 45% male) and female respondents predominate in all age groups. The survey gender profile may be due to a tendency to misperceive the word 'gender' as relating to women' or 'female disadvantage' or 'not for or about me'. Alternatively, or in addition, it may imply that female staff saw the opportunity to make their voices heard about a situation which is widely understood to have disadvantaged women more than men.

Figure 3: Survey Response by Age Group
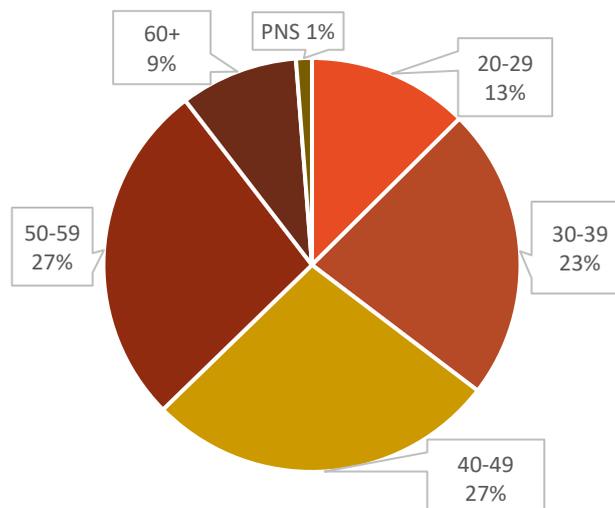
2 BCU workforce data, July 2020

Respondents were asked to indicate their ethnic group according to the 21 categories used in the 2011 Census[3]) or to select Prefer Not To Say (PNS). Figure 4 displays survey responses categorized into five consolidated groups (and PNS).

- Asian
- Black
- Mixed
- Other
- White

Figure 4: Survey Response by Ethnic Group (consolidated)
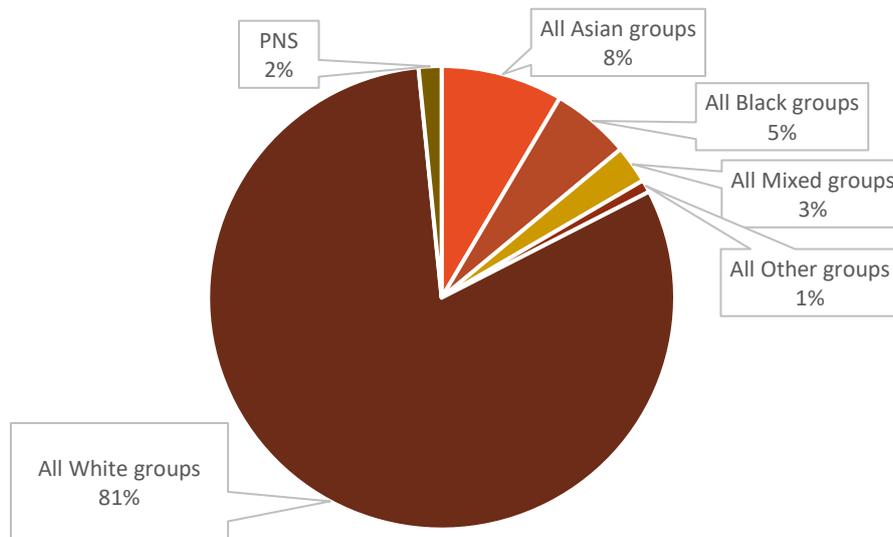
Table 1 compares survey response by ethnic group to the ethnic composition of the BCU workforce at the time of the survey [4]. As the data show, White ethnic groups are over-represented; Black, Asian and Other ethnic groups are under-represented but to differing degrees.

Table 1: Comparison of Survey Responses by Ethnic Group with BCU Workforce Data

ETHNIC GROUP	BCU WORKFORCE DATA	SURVEY RESPONDENTS
White & Mixed	70%	84%
Black	6%	5%
Asian	13%	8%
Other	10%	1%

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[3] https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups#list-of-ethnic-groups
[4] BCU EDI data 2020. Note that BCU data combines White and Mixed ethnic groups.

Figure 5: Survey Responses by Role Type

Other
4%

Management
9%

Academic
46%

Professional
Services
41%
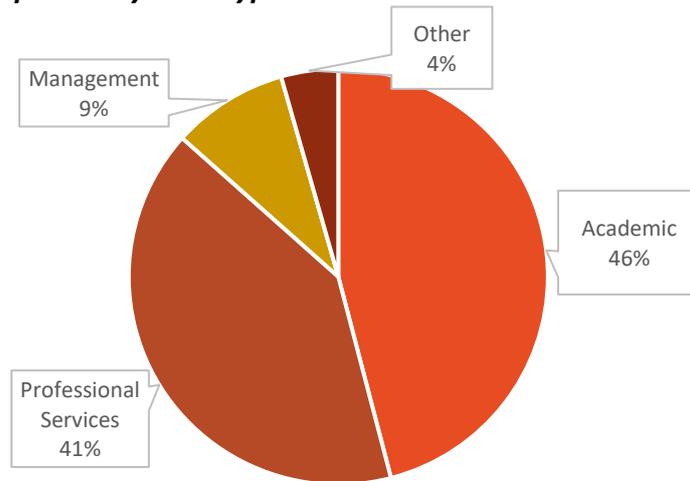
Figure 6: Survey Responses by Role Focus

Other
3%

Teaching &
Research
16%

Administration
18%

Research
6%

Management
11%

Teaching
24%

Specialist
Service
Provision
22%
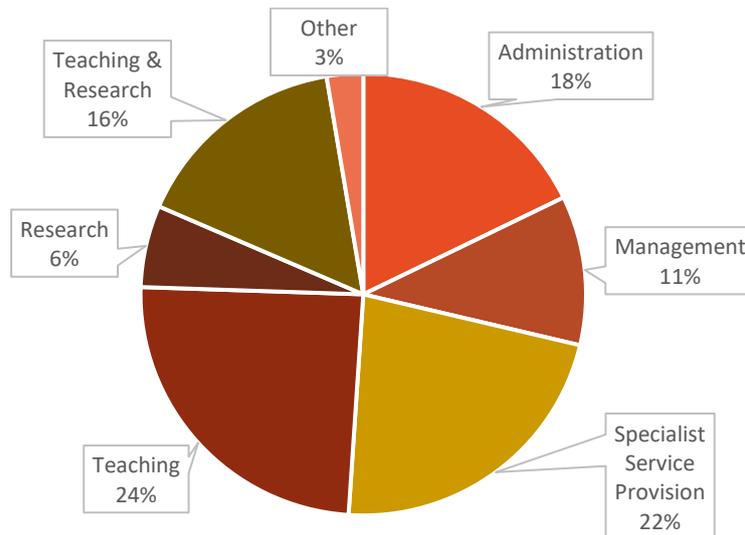
Figure 7: Survey Responses by Work Mode

Part-Time
18%

Full-Time
82%
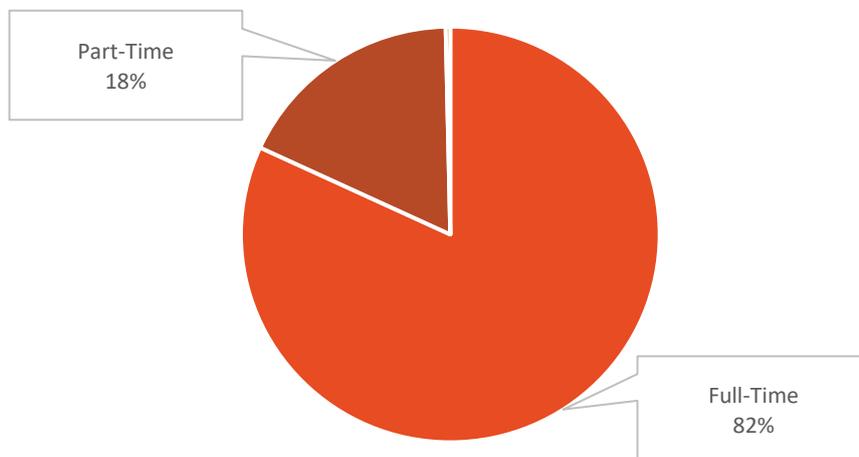
Fig 8: Survey Responses by Contract Type
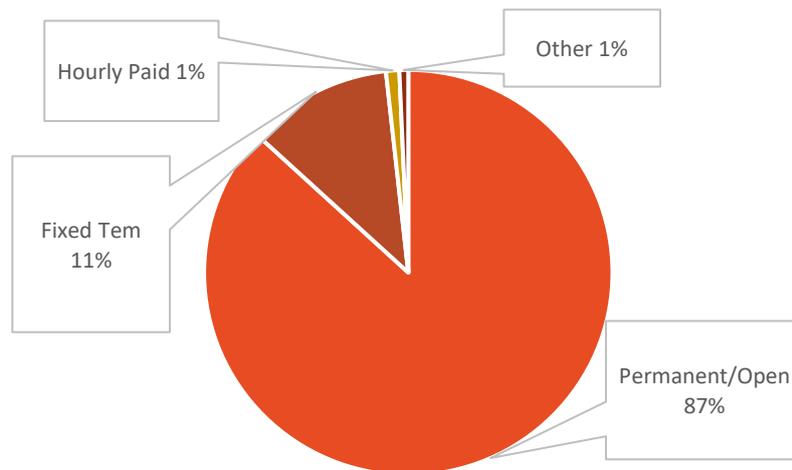
49 (9%) respondents said there had been changes to their current or future contractual arrangements since lockdown. Of these 34 (69%) were on permanent/open-ended contracts; 32 (65%) were female and 26 (53%) were in professional services roles. Details of changes to working arrangements were not requested as part of the survey.

INTERSECTIONALITY: ROLE/GENDER/ETHNICITY

of 261 **academic** respondents:

- Female: 67% (n=176)
- White: 85% (n=221); Asian: 6% (n=15); Black: 4% (n=11); Mixed/Other: 4% (n=11)

of 231 **professional services** respondents:

- Female: 69% (n=159)
- White: 77% (n=179); Asian: 11% (n=26); Black: 9% (n=20) Mixed/Other: 1% (n=2)

III. FINDINGS: LIVING AND WORKING IN LOCKDOWN

Immediate Impact of COVID-19

Q17-19 – During lockdown, is anyone in your household (including yourself) shielding/self-isolating/unwell or hospitalised?

These data provide a snapshot of the extent to which BCU staff were experiencing restrictions/ill-health on top of the sudden imposition of lockdown. Shielding, self-isolating and illness will have inevitably impacted on staff members' capacity to sustain workload and meet commitments.

Table 2. Shielding/self-isolating/unwell or hospitalised.

		respondents	% total
shielding	YES	92	16
self-isolating	YES	124	22
unwell/hospitalised	YES	110	19

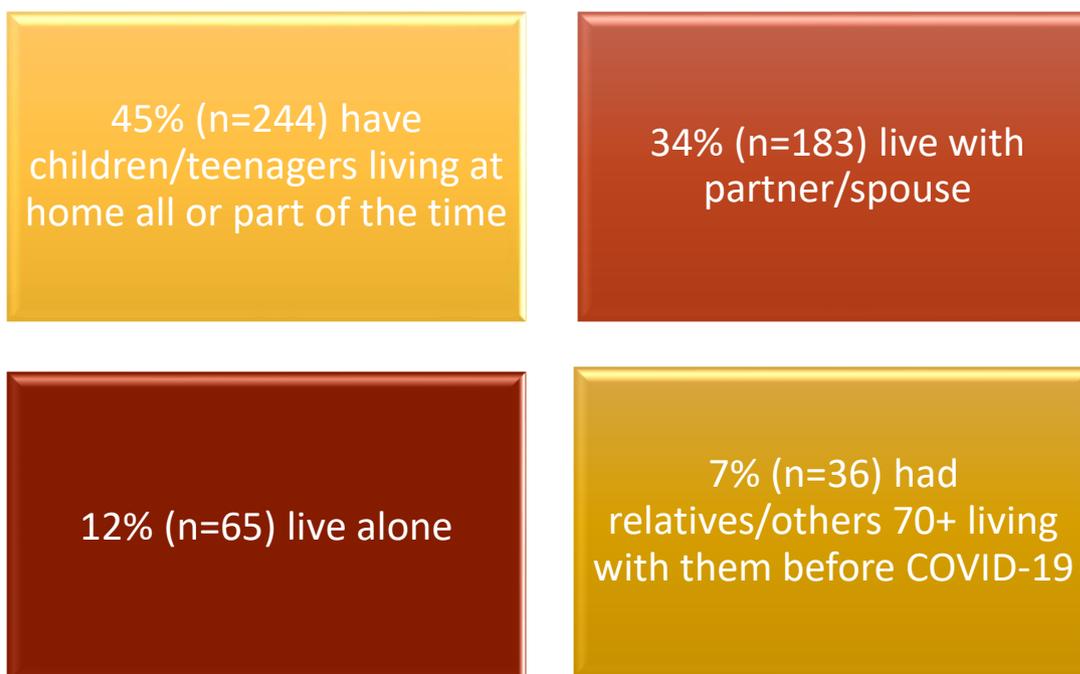Although not a question topic within the survey itself, several free text responses also mention the experience of bereavement, not necessarily as a result of COVID-19, but nevertheless occurring in highly stressful circumstances.

in their own words ...

Sadly my other uncle, the elder brother of the uncle staying with me was taken ill and passed away in May (not COVID-related) which has been very difficult.

Household

Figure 9: Living Arrangements

45% (n=244) have children/teenagers living at home all or part of the time

34% (n=183) live with partner/spouse

12% (n=65) live alone

7% (n=36) had relatives/others 70+ living with them before COVID-19

Figure 10: Care Responsibilities

16% (n=88) had a caring role for a person or people of any age before COVID-19

of which 69% (n=61) female

23% (n=127) had taken on new responsibility for care of another person (any age) in/outside their of household since lockdown began

of which 72% (n=91) female
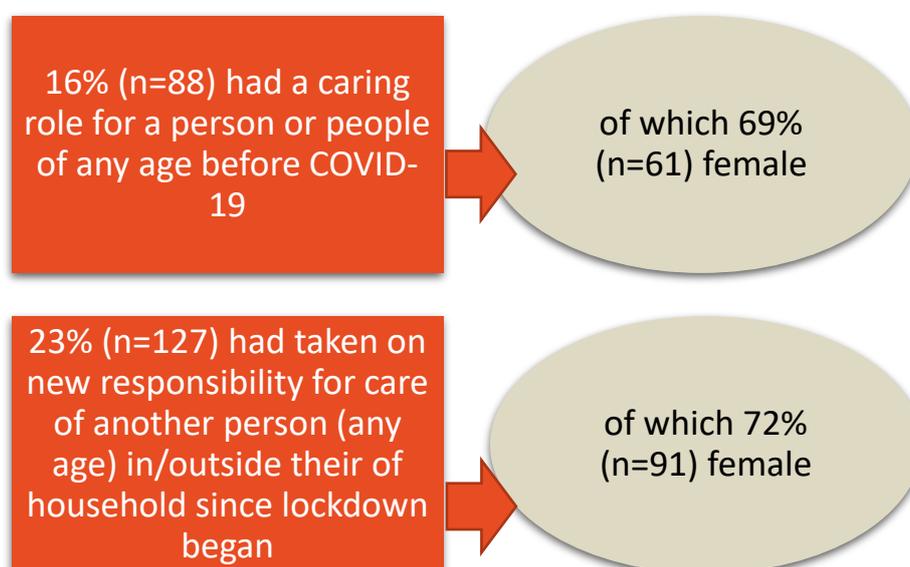
There is no statistical evidence that female members of staff *in this sample* were more likely to take on new caring roles, to be caring for people over 70 years old or to have children at home. However, because caring responsibilities were not gendered *in this sample*, does not mean that gender does not have an impact – as the report shows elsewhere.

INTERSECTIONALITY: ROLE/GENDER/PARENTAL/CARE

of 261 **academic** female respondents:

- 46% (n=120) had children living at home
- 16% (n-41) were caring for over-70s prior to lockdown
  - *of which 61% (n=25) are female*
- 22% (n=57) took on new caring roles since lockdown began
  - *of which 72% (n=41) are female*

of 231 **professional services** female respondents:

- 39% (n=90) have children living at home
- 15% (n=36) were caring for over-70s prior to lockdown
  - *of which 80% (n=29) are female*
- 22% (n=52) took on new caring roles since lockdown began
  - *of which 69% (n=36) are female*

in their own words …

I have full responsibility to care for parents over the age of 70. It is mentally, emotionally and physically draining.

It's taking extra time to double or triple shop for two sets of parents over 70, delivery of shopping, facilitation of obtaining medication, doctors' appointments, helping with bill paying, and more recently, mental health checks.

I'm in the process of moving my elderly disabled mother into my own home due to her ill health.

Homeschooling and Workload

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in schools closing from 20 March 2020, a fortnight before the Easter break. Children classed as vulnerable and children of keyworkers were able to continue attending school throughout the lockdown. Some schools opened to some year groups in June 2020, but this was patchy across the country.

Respondents who indicated they had school age children living in their household all or part of the time were asked:

- to describe their degree of involvement in homeschooling
- how many hours they were spending on homeschooling per day

Q26 If children in your household are being 'homeschooled' how would you describe your degree of involvement in this?

Table 3. Responsibility for Homeschooling

degree of responsibility	#	%
solely responsible	31	14
primarily responsible	59	27
shared responsibility	79	36
someone else takes primary responsibility	15	7
not involved at all	37	17

There was a significant association between gender and perception of homeschool responsibility. Female respondents were more likely to say they were solely or primarily responsible for homeschooling children in their household and male respondents were more likely to report no involvement. The majority of respondents with children in the household indicated they were spending between 1-4 hours per day on homeschooling.

54 % agreed

'It has been **very challenging** to balance homeschooling and other tasks in my home with my workload during lockdown

21% agreed

'It has been **impossible** to balance homeschooling and other tasks in my home with my workload during lockdown

When analysis is limited just to female/male binary, there is no significant association between gender and the challenge of combining homeschooling, tasks in the home and workload.

I generally work in the evenings when the children have gone to bed to minimise disruption as my wife teaches online during the day, this results in me taking on home schooling and care of our 2 year old. I can attend meetings on line during the day after some diary consultation around my wife's workload.

Majority of additional stress centred upon difficulty of juggling work/home balance, especially where accommodating needs of children (including one on autistic spectrum) whilst adjusting to new teaching focus and method.

Homeschooling within the working day means a very long working day for the parents even when shared responsibilities. Early start before they start their day, break mid-morning from academic duties to swap to homeschool tasks at primary and secondary levels, return to work and complete working hours. Over a long period my 0.8FT contract is spread across full week and into weekend to complete all duties.

My child does not work at his school work without my being there to support him so I am subject to constant interruptions and have done virtually no research.

Working Environment

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown forced a sudden shift to working from home, creating unanticipated demands on domestic space, equipment, access to technology and data. It also heralded a rapid and significant shift in working practices including online teaching and course design, virtual communications and managing geographically distributed teams and projects.

Some respondents noted benefits of working from home including time and money saved from commuting; more consistent family contact and in some cases, increased productivity.

in their own words ...

It was quite challenging at first while we set up new systems and learnt how to use them, and get Teams group set up, but once up and running it's mainly been fine. I've found it more productive working from home, even with partner and child at home. Not travelling to work means I've saved money and can get more sleep as don't have to get up so early.

Whilst working from home with increased caring responsibilities has been challenging and stressful at times, I have found that some tasks can be more productively completed at home. I am also feeling more positive, rested and creative.

Others however, noted the physical discomfort of working without standard equipment.

in their own words ...

Working solely with a laptop has been very challenging and uncomfortable causing pains over the shoulder and neck. Request for a second screen has not been actioned and there has not been any investigation into the working environment and whether it meets the desired H&S requirements.

My laptop is old and crashes. My home PC is also creaking under the strain of meeting used as an alternative. I've bought ergonomic equipment for my home to help with back issues.

I would typically work from home one day/week, but the lack of a monitor and good desk chair has been a struggle during lockdown.

Q26 If you are working from home during lockdown, which of the following best describes your working space?

Figure 11: Nature of Workspace
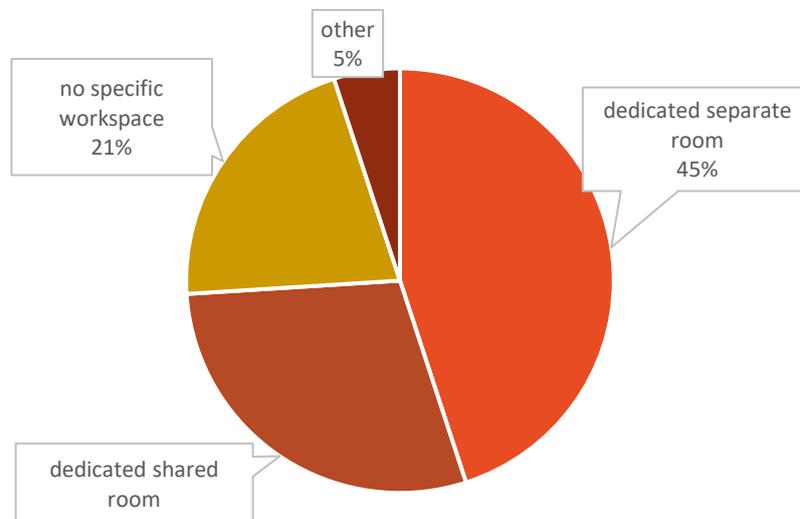
The distribution of responses to this question was compared with gender (female/male). There was a significant association between gender and reported workspace. 54% of male respondents reported having a dedicated/separate workspace compared to 41% of female respondents.

All respondents selecting 'Other' to best describe their workspace were female. When asked to specify 'Other', they provided the following free text responses:

in their own words …

- *I am using the dining room table so I can supervise my young children inside/in the garden*

- *Sofa in spare room but no desk*

- *Working in bedroom in current house*

- *The corner of the dining table in the kitchen.*

- *The dining room table is a shared working space with my partner. We do not have a dedicated office workspace in our home.*

Key Challenges

The final section of the survey asked respondents to rate sets of work tasks and work-related activities for feasibility, levels of challenge and perceived impact, using a Likert Scale. Figures 12-14 report the tasks/activities rated highest at each scale point.

Q39 How feasible have you found it to carry out the following work-related tasks from home?

teaching preparation	delivering student support	project development
delivering teaching	course admin/management	line managing staff
marking student work	conducting research	providing professional services
personal/pastoral tutoring	writing for publication	hosting/attending meetings
doctoral supervision	making funding applications	business/management tasks

Figure 12: Feasibility ratings

extremely challenging:
research
writing for publication
delivering teaching

quite challenging:
hosting/attending meetings
delivering teaching
 business/managment tasks

no more challenging than usual
marking student work
hosting/attending meetings
business/managment tasks

Research – constant push to meet urgent deadlines imposed at short notice within the Faculty has made it impossible to carry out research.

Unable to do any research-related activities and working on a manuscript for publication. As academics we usually carry out these activities by working overtime, as teaching/course-related activities take up most of our normal working hours. I have a preschooler at home, therefore I am too physically and mentally tired to work overtime.

observations:

- There was a significant association with **role type** (academic/professional services). With the exception of *course administration* and *line management*, professional services staff were **less likely** to report impacts or challenges than Academic staff.

- Using all 5 **age categories** (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60+) there were no significant associations between age group and responses to any of the feasibility questions.

- Using the five consolidated **ethnic group** categories (Asian, Black, Mixed, Other, White) there were no significant associations between ethnic group and responses to any of the feasibility questions.

- There was a significant association between respondent **gender** (female/male) and responses to the question of the feasibility of **writing for publication** during lockdown. Female respondents were more likely to indicate they found this extremely or quite challenging. There were no associations with gender and responses to the question on challenges to conducting research in general.

- When data were limited to **female academics** only, there were significant differences between those **with and without children** on the feasibility of **writing for publication**. 80% of female academics with children reported writing for publication to be extremely challenging or quite challenging compared to 56% of female academics without children. There were no significant differences for male academics with and without children (although the sample size was smaller here, n = 62).

- There was a significant association between **academic role** (teaching, n = 130; research, n = 23; teaching and research, n = 83) and the feasibility of **conducting research**. Staff who identified themselves as having a teaching and research role were much more likely to identify conducting research as extremely challenging.

- Staff **with children** (regardless of gender) are significantly more likely to report **hosting/attending meetings** as more challenging. 32% of staff without children report this to be quite or extremely challenging compared to 50% of staff with children.

Q42 To what extent have the following presented challenges to you while working from home?

working comfortably	communicating w/students	changing deadlines
technical equipment	collaborating w/colleagues	keeping regular work hours
WiFi connectivity	noise levels/interruptions	maintaining motivation
changing workloads	privacy/safeguarding	managing stress levels
communicating with colleagues	accessing organisational data	managing work/home boundaries

Figure 13: Challenge ratings

very problematic:
managing work/life/home boundaries
maintaining regular work hours
changing workloads

occasionally problematic:
technical equipment
working comfortably
WiFi connectivity

no problems experienced
meeting financial costs of working from home
privacy/safeguarding
collaborating with colleagues

in their own words …

Home/work boundaries are very hard to maintain. I feel pressured that I need to continue working to finish tasks and find myself working until 10/11 at night, or checking emails when I go into the kitchen to make a cup of tea at night because my work is there.

I have tried to use annual leave to balance childcare but as my workload responsibilities haven't been adjusted, this hasn't worked.

Workloads have increased due to the need to transfer teaching online. Students have required much more support which has taken up a great deal of time.

observations:

- There was a significant association with **role type** (academic/professional services). With the exception of *technical equipment, accessing organisational data* and *meeting financial costs of living at home*, **professional services** staff were less likely to report some or extreme challenges than academic staff.

- Respondents who were **caring for those over 70** prior to lockdown reported significantly more challenges in **conducting research** and **writing for publication**.

- Participants who took on **new caring roles** during lockdown reported significantly more challenges in **conducting research.**

- Rating of the following four areas are influenced by **gender** with female respondents more likely than males to rate these as occasionally or very problematic:

  - **working comfortably**
  - **technical equipment**
  - **noise levels/interruptions**
  - **managing work/life home boundaries.**

Q44 - What impact has working from home during lockdown had on the following?

plans for/prospects for promotion	student support
writing for publication	engaging in training
conducting research	mentoring (as mentor or mentee)
developing funding applications	line management
doctoral/professional study	project development
receiving appropriate support and guidance from line manager	

Figure 14: Impact ratings

very negative:
conducting research
writing for publication
project development

quite negative:
writing for publication
conducting research
receiving appropriate support/guidance from line manager

quite positive:
receiving appropriate support/guidance from line manager
student support
engaging in training

very positive:
receiving appropriate support/guidance from line manager
engaging in training
engaging mentoring (either role)

in their own words ...

My line manager changed during lockdown and the new one communicates less with the team.

My line manager is very busy and not easily contacted.

I think without the excellent guidance from my line manager, I would have lost motivation a while ago.

My line manager has provided exceptional support during this period.

- Responses to only one item**: receiving appropriate support/guidance from line manager** was significantly influenced by **gender**. Female staff were more likely to rate support from line managers positively.

- Respondents **caring for people over 70** are significantly more likely to rate **support from line managers** positively.

- The impact on **plans/prospects for promotion** was rated significantly more negatively for **those without children** than for those with children. Female academics with children are significantly more likely to be in older age categories than those without children. It can be assumed therefore that there are more early career researchers without children with active plans for promotion that have been negatively affected. This may have more to with the university pausing the promotion round this academic year than with workload issues that have affected research-related activities

IV. SO, WHAT'S GENDER GOT TO DO WITH IT?

1. **What role does gender play in the experience of lockdown for university staff working from home and how does gender interact with ethnic group, age and role type?**

Survey findings indicate a disproportionately negative impact of working from home during lockdown on all BCU female staff and a particular burden on female academic staff.

This report includes only those effects of living and working in lockdown that are statistically significant. In that context, not all elements of the survey data vary with gender. However, this highlights the importance of those effects that are gendered and/or affected by other characteristics such as caring responsibilities.

Overall however, the survey data reflect an asymmetric impact of lockdown on women as widely reported in recent national literature.

During lockdown female staff at BCU were:

- more likely to take primary or sole responsibility for homeschooling

- less likely to have access to dedicated working space at home

- more likely to experience challenges in working comfortably and having appropriate technical equipment

- more likely to report problems experienced from noise levels/interruptions while working from home

- more likely to find balancing homeschooling, household and work-related tasks very difficult or impossible

- more likely to report challenges in managing work/life/home boundaries

- more likely to report a positive impact of lockdown on receiving appropriate support from their line manager

In addition, female academic staff were:

- more likely to report a negative impact on their capacity to conduct research and write for publication. This is particularly acute for female academics with children.

2. What key issues and implications do the findings raise for gender equality - for individuals and for the university?

Working from home (or living at work?)

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown exposed and exacerbated longstanding gender inequalities in society as a whole and in the workplace. Paid labour moved into the household, shifting boundaries between work and home. Caring responsibilities have been heightened and extended in challenging circumstances. The situation has been further intensified for those with school age children to undertake homeschooling for varying periods of time since March 2020. In the university context, this has also coincided with the need to adapt rapidly to changing working practices and new technologies; moving teaching and student support online and taking on increased workloads. The blurred boundaries between work and home resulted in new versions of the long hours culture. The day-to-day impact on female academic staff in particular, has been disproportionate. At the start of the March-July lockdown, the university swiftly recognised the problems it posed for digitally-disadvantaged students and moved to mitigate them. However, the sudden shift to remote working, online teaching and student support was tacitly reliant on staff members having a suitable home workspace, appropriate equipment and a permanent and affordable WiFi connection. As this report has demonstrated, this was not universally the case in the sample surveyed.

The 'pandemic shift'?

In 1989, Hochschild and Machung published the theory of the 'second shift' – the double burden experienced by late-20th century employed mothers performing unpaid labour at home as well as paid work in the formal sector. In 2020, Ashcraft coined the term 'the pandemic shift' to describe the enhanced burden of homeschooling, additional care and precarity during COVID-19. Gender inequalities exposed by the March-July 2020 lockdown

have not gone away; women continue to carry the burden of a highly fluid and uncertain situation. Since the first lockdown ended, there have been a series of variable restrictions; limited and unpredictable nursery and school openings and closures and varying levels of infection, illness and hospitalization, culminating in a second lockdown (5 November – 2 December 2020). The ending of the 2019-2020 academic year and the beginning of 2020-2021 involved further adjustments to curriculum, teaching practices and student support in the context of a limited, managed return to working on campus.   The longevity of the pandemic, social restrictions and uncertainty are likely to take their toll on personal wellbeing, physical and mental health.

Invisible damage?

Whatever the future course of the pandemic, the impact of working from home and the burden of care are likely to have already interacted to affect and potentially damage career progression beyond 2020. The disruption caused by the pandemic is likely to have impacted on the feasibility of staff achieving stated performance goals. The university paused the 2020 promotion round in order to focus its attention and resources on managing the current crisis. As this report has shown, female staff have carried a disproportionate burden during this period. For female academics, the circumstances have presented particular challenges to conducting research and writing for publication. While it has been agreed that these are unlikely to materially impact the university's REF2021 submission, there is the potential for longer-term damage to academic careers. Given the value placed on research 'productivity' by the Research Excellence Framework, there are worrying implications for the onward progression of research careers. Some groups will experience greater disadvantage than others.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **University planning to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on working practices and staff well-being should be underpinned by an intersectional equalities perspective which facilitates consideration of multiple and complex intersections of gender, ethnicity, age and role and as well as parenthood, care commitments and working environment. This will prevent the imposition of universal 'solutions' which may have unintended consequences for specific groups.**

2. **Future Individual Performance Review (IPR) and promotion criteria will need to account for the inevitable impact on staff performance goals of the past year and include a transparent non-punitive process of accounting for 'damage done' by the COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions.**

3. **The potential for longer-term damage to academic careers, particularly for female academics, should be acknowledged in future research strategy development and preparations for the next REF.**

4. **Any move towards future agile working strategies should conduct robust equality impact assessments, prioritise safe, comfortable and sustainable working environments for all staff and articulate the university's role in putting these in place.**

5. **Consideration should be given to how the university equips and supports line managers to manage staff equitably and effectively in the 'new normal' which may require a greater degree of flexibility than before.**

VI. NEXT STEPS

- Survey findings have already been shared in a number of university fora including University and Faculty Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committees and the REF Strategy Group. They will continue to be shared with key groups and stakeholders across BCU.

- Minor revisions have already been made to the university's Code of Practice for REF2021, to acknowledge the potential impact of Covid-19 in terms of delaying or halting research activity.

- Given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities across the UK (Haque *et al*, 2020), further, in-depth qualitative research is planned to investigate the experiences of BCU's BAME staff. This research will be co-designed with the university's BAME Steering Group.

- Further research is also planned to investigate the experiences of BCU's Disabled staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research will be co-designed with the university's Disabled Staff Steering Group.

- Survey findings and subsequent research will inform the university's Athena SWAN activities including Award applications and Action Plans.

- The researcher has secured external funding from the Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE) to undertake in-depth qualitative research into the experiences of female academics during lockdown and beyond (beginning March 2021).

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