WfH & Wellbeing

Data from Lockdown in the UK

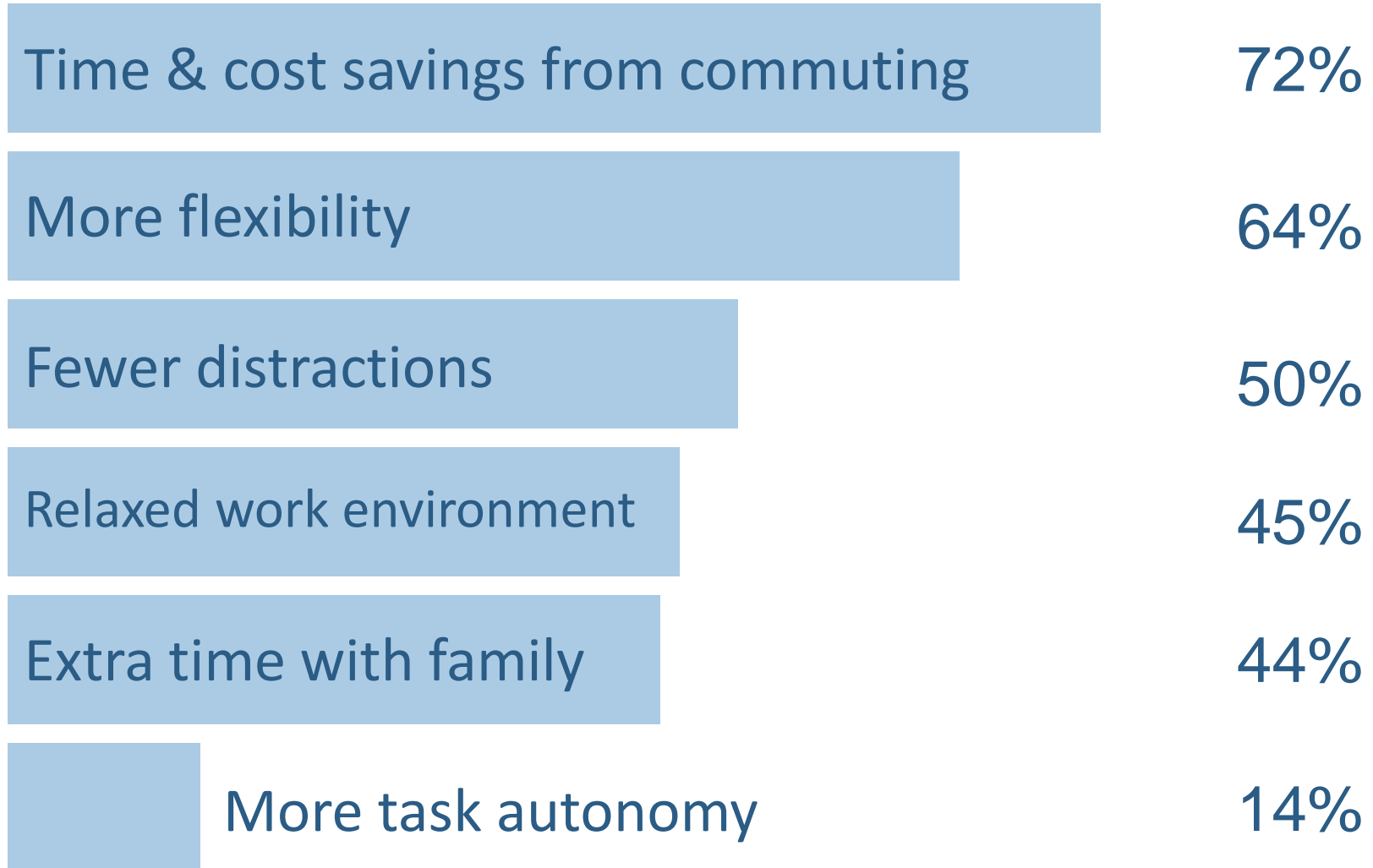Stephen Bevan, Institute for Employment Studies

WfH & Wellbeing – The Context

- Multiple factors at work – isolation, anxiety, financial distress, insecurity, inequality, WfH, techno-stress, lack of control…

- Front-line workers – burnout & 'moral injury'

- Young people badly affected

- Some anxiety about returning to workplaces

- Data from among the relatively privileged folk who have worked from home

WfH Practicalities

- WfH since COVID19 only – 87%

- Prior to COVID19 6% always worked from home – 80% since COVID19

- Supplied with IT to WfH – 97%

- Adequate home Wifi/broadband – 77%

- Home workspace suitable for WfH – 69%

- Sharing WfH workspace with others – 31%

- Health & Safety assessment conducted – 40%

- Access to Occupational Health Service – 87%; Access to Employee Assistance Programme – 36% (59% didn't know)

Best features of WfH

Time & cost savings from commuting	72%
More flexibility	64%
Fewer distractions	50%
Relaxed work environment	45%
Extra time with family	44%
More task autonomy	14%

Worst features of WfH

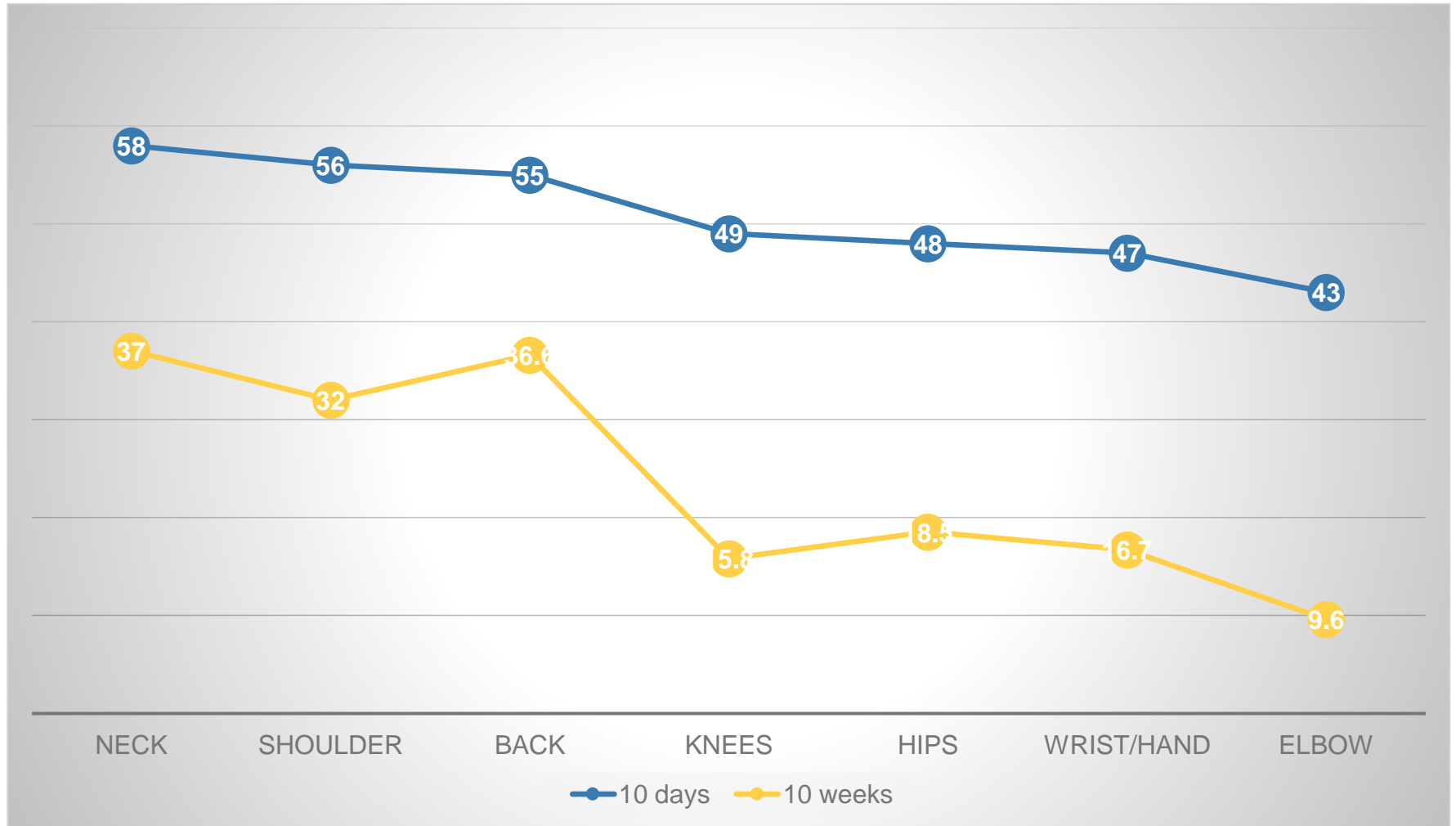|	
Less informal contact with colleagues	82%
IT Issues	52%
Less communication	41%
Less WLB	35%
Home distractions	34%
Poor workspace	30%

WfH – How Does it Feel?

Autonomy, control & discretion high:

- *I am allowed to make my own decisions about how to schedule my work – 82%*

- *I am allowed to decide on the order in which things are done on the job – 83%*

- *I am allowed to plan how I do my work – 89%*

- *I am given the chance to use my personal initiative or judgement in carrying out the work – 86%*

- *I am allowed to make a lot of decisions on my own – 73%*

A minority (33%) had used 'Lockdown' to engage in extra training or learning to enhance their skills
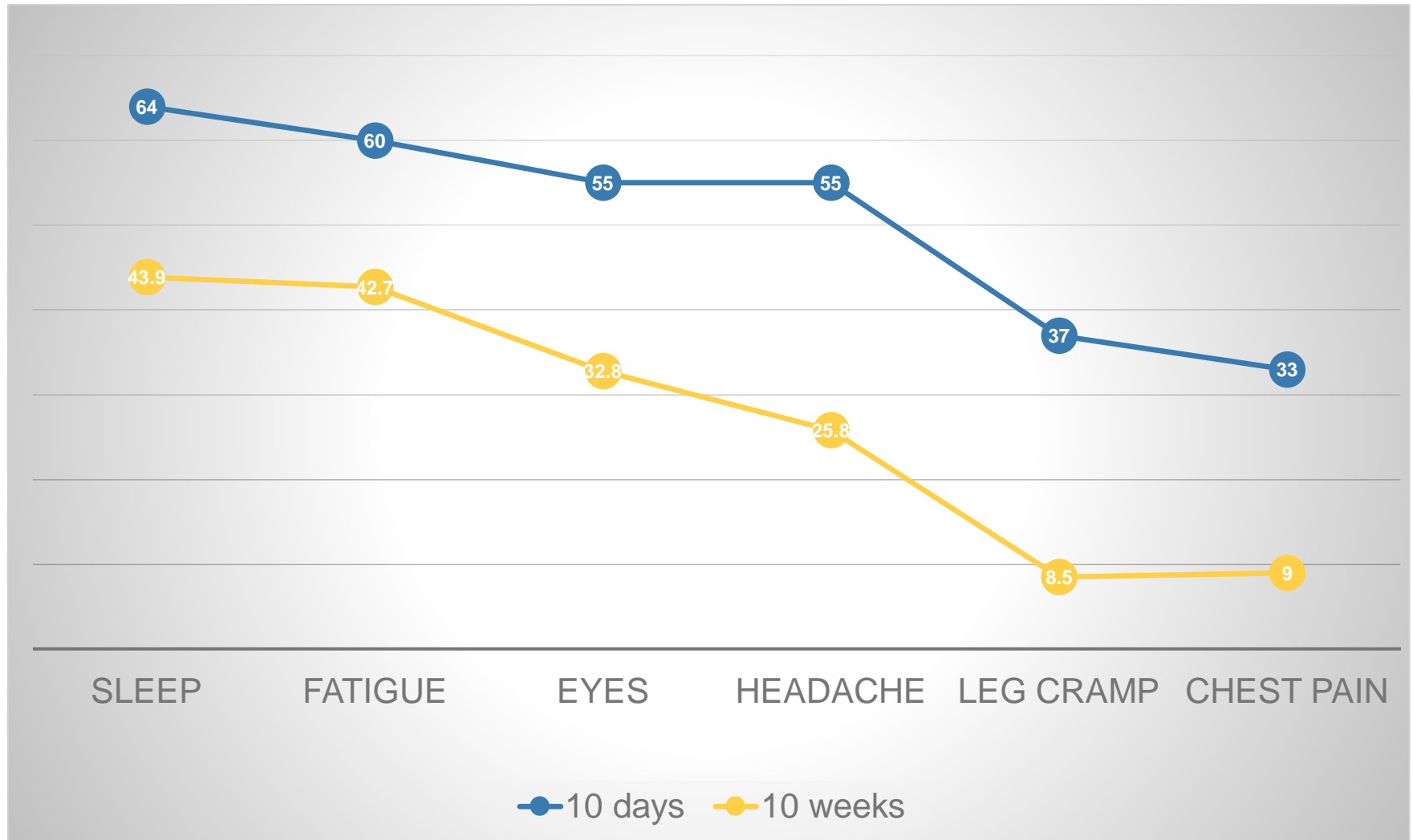
Self-reported MSK Pain While WfH by Site

% Reporting 'Rather more/Much more' Pain Compared with Last 2 Weeks at 10 Days & 10 Weeks After March 2020 'Lockdown'

	NECK	SHOULDER	BACK	KNEES	HIPS	WRIST/HAND	ELBOW
10 days	58	56	55	49	48	47	43
10 weeks	37	32	36.6	5.8	8.4	6.7	9.6

● 10 days ● 10 weeks

N=844

Other Self-reported Symptoms While WfH

% Reporting 'Rather more/Much more' Problems Compared with Last 2 Weeks at 10 Days & 10 Weeks After March 2020 'Lockdown'

Legend: 10 days, 10 weeks

Data points:

	SLEEP	FATIGUE	EYES	HEADACHE	LEG CRAMP	CHEST PAIN
10 days	64	60	55	55	37	33
10 weeks	43.9	42.7	32.8	25.8	8.5	9

N=844

Emotional Wellbeing

Mental wellbeing (WHO5) was generally low

Those with _better_ mental health included:

- Those working contracted hours
- Those with frequent contact with manager
- Those with higher levels of Org Commitment, Satisfaction with WfH, Satisfaction with WLB and Job satisfaction
- Those with few physical health problems
- Those self-identifying as extroverts

Productivity & WfH

Self-reported productivity (as measured by work done per hour worked) compared with pre-COVID19 is generally high:

- Get much more done – 32%

- Get a little more done – 22%

- Get about the same done – 35%

- Get a little less done – 9%

- Get much less done – 2.5%

Drivers of Productive Working?

We asked about some of the components of productive working (% saying these statements are 'moderately' or 'exactly' true):

- *I can concentrate on one activity for a long time, if necessary* – 91%

- *I can control my thoughts from distracting me from the task at hand* – 85%

- *After an interruption, I don't have any problem resuming my concentrated style of working* – 83%

- *I'm comfortable using the freedom I have to re-order the tasks in my job* – 94%

Each of these 'drivers' is positively correlated with self-reported productivity per hour worked

Work After Lockdown?

Preferred working patterns post-lockdown (multiple response):

- Prefer to WfH all of the time – 36%

- Prefer to WfH some of the time to perform specific tasks – 73%

Concerns about returning to workplaces:

- Fear of COVID19 exposure – 76%

- Changes to working practices – 51%

- Childcare - 16%

- Travelling by own transport – 15%

Observations & Themes

- Critical role of line managers

- Outputs vs Inputs?

- No strong appetite for a full return to the office – support for 'hybrid' working – but also a strong 'social deficit' and yearning for 'micro-interactions' – (innovation deficit?)

- Control, autonomy, trust, 'voice' and task discretion all important – the 'social gradient' in health is just as relevant at work

- Job demands & job resources model still very relevant to 'job quality' and thriving at work

Further information:

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