



COVID-19 THROUGH THE GENDER LENS

Women and the Pandemic



ABSTRACT

Covid has changed our lives, creating externalities mostly negative, causing widespread loss, both to life, work, and well-being, and yet there exists some positive changes.

In this specific survey exercise, OI embarks on the gargantuan task of understanding the effects of the pandemic on women- how has their work-life balance changed, what does the pandemic mean for them in terms of multi-tasking, interms of having less or more time for themselves and the changes it has caused for them and their families.

The impact it has had on their aspirations and expectations as a student, as members of a family, as professionals and as homemakers.



Conducted By - Abhinav Sardesai; Mehak Khatter; Ritika Chadda

FOREWORD

The last 16 months have altered our everyday life. When we ask someone how they are doing, we are no more sure of the response the question will elicit, and yet somehow, empathy has found its rightful place in our vocabularies.

In our second survey, Outline India asks questions that I as a woman, think are imperative; questions other women around us are asking. Questions we ask our friends, teachers, help, and family each time we speak to them over a call, or on video chat-when do they see the offices and schools opening, how do they see their future education plans, what do they think about their financial situation and mental health keeping the pandemic in mind.



As part of our endeavor to better understand what females/women are thinking, feeling, and acting on, our team of researchers, driven by our group of enterprising interns worked with over 400 people to explore questions on vaccination, mental health, et al.

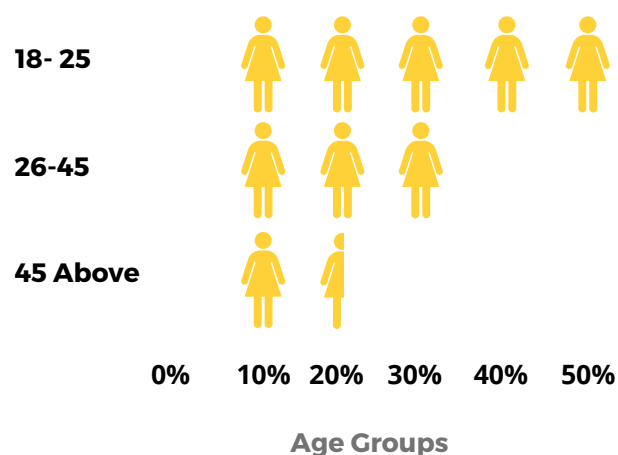
I do hope this brief will shed some light on your quandaries surrounding, 'what are the others thinking' and realise that perhaps you are not the only one thinking a certain way, and not knowing what comes next.

Prerna, Anoushka, Anupam send their best to -Summer cohort Batch II, 2021 to whom we wish all the luck in the world as they navigate through unprecedented times.

They are a unique batch for they know, at the very onset of their youth, how to best fight uncertainty and draw strength from it.

INTRODUCTION

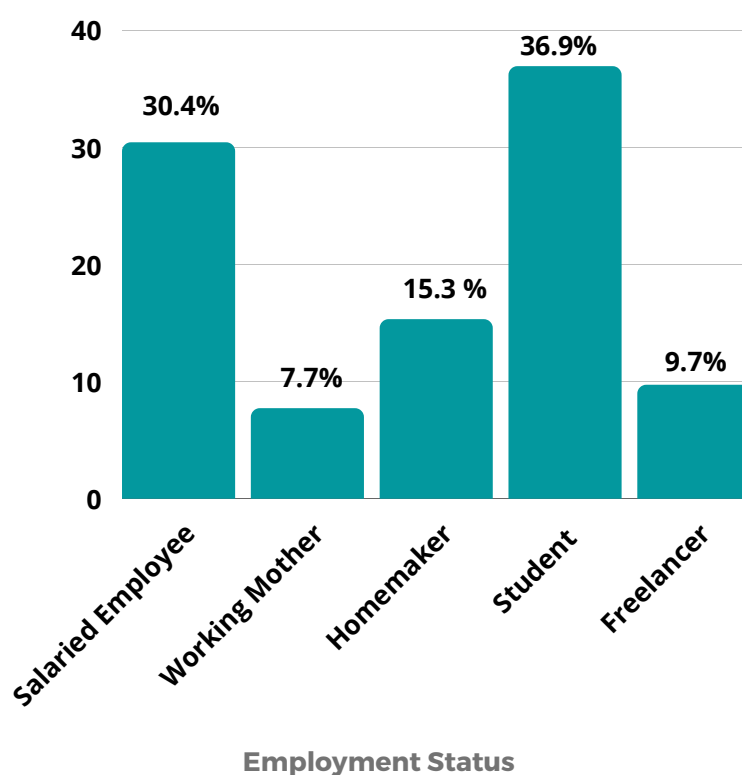
India has been impacted by Covid 19 outbreak in an unprecedented manner. But everyone in the country is not affected in the same way. Considering the evidence from India, women and girls have been affected in particular ways and in some areas, face more negative impacts than men during the infectious disease outbreak similar to Covid 19.



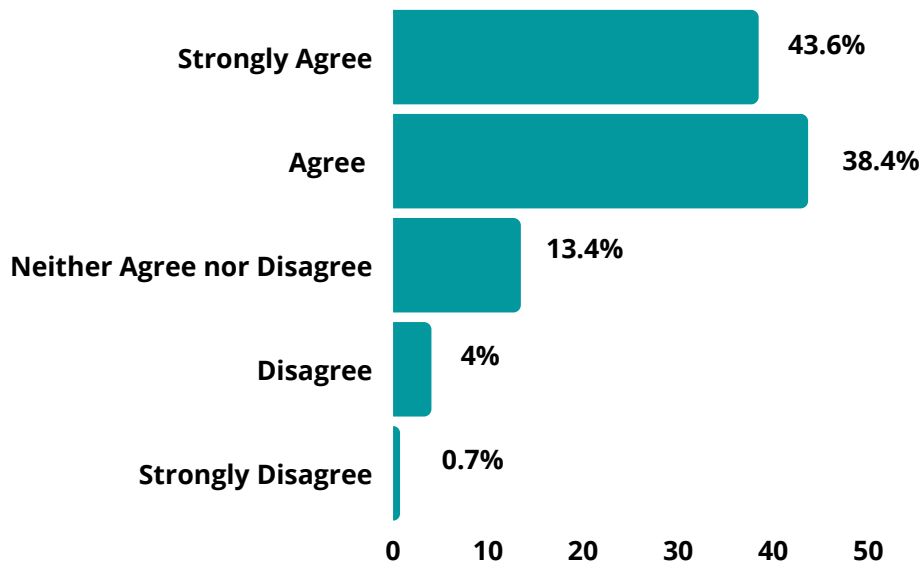
In order to know how the outbreak affected women, in particular, we conducted a survey where participating criteria for a candidate was to be a female and secondly, being above 18 years of age. The survey was conducted by employing the **snowball method of sampling**, a technique in which existing subjects provide referrals to recruit samples required for the active research study.

According to the **age groups**, around 51.2% of women belonged to the group of 18-25 years, 33.4% of women belonged to the group of 26-45 years and 15.3% belonged to the group of age 45 years and above.

The sample space was predominated by students (37%) and salaried employees (30.4%). The survey began with gaining a general perspective of the impact of Covid-19 on women followed by specific sections containing relevant prompts for the respondent according to their employment status.



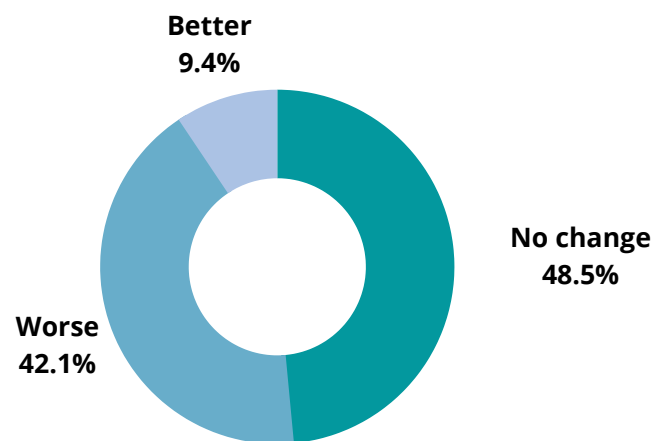
IMPACT OF COVID-19



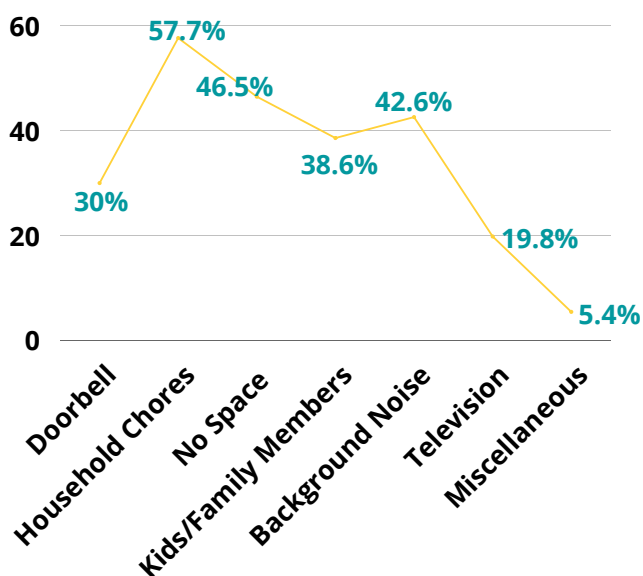
Increase in responsibilities due to Pandemic

Of the given sample size, 43.6% of women strongly agree that their household responsibilities have increased while only 0.7% strongly disagree about the proposition. 13.4% of women are indifferent about the increase in household responsibility for them.

Around 42.1% of women feel the pandemic worsened their financial stability compared to only 9.4% who felt the pandemic improved their financial situation.



Financial Stability due to Pandemic

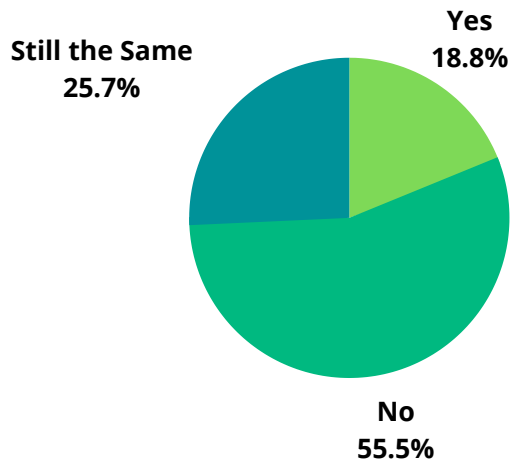


Distractions faced at home due to Pandemic

Women experience distractions in the form of doorbell (30%), household chores (57.7%), have no space to work (46.5%), distractions due to kids and family members (38.6%), background noise (42.6%), television (19.8%) and others (5.4%)

*As this was an open-ended question the respondents were leaning towards multiple options.

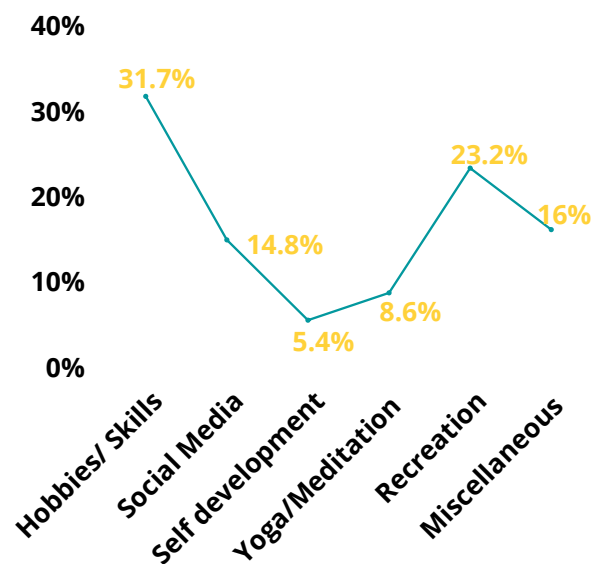
IMPACT OF COVID-19



Around 55.5% of women feel that their mental health has not seen betterment in comparison to the last 1.5 years, while 18.8% feel their mental health is better and 25.7% account for their mental health to still be the same.

Is your mental health better than what it was during the last 1.5 years?

Given the extra toll on women's mental health in such consuming times, it is extremely essential to look for ways that keep them sane and improve their well-being amid stressful conditions. In such a state, women resorted to different ways to improve their mental health such as pursuing a hobby (31.7%), learning a new skill (37.1%), talking to people around (39.6%), exercise and meditation (50.7%), taking up recreational activities (23.3%), and other miscellaneous ways (4.8%)



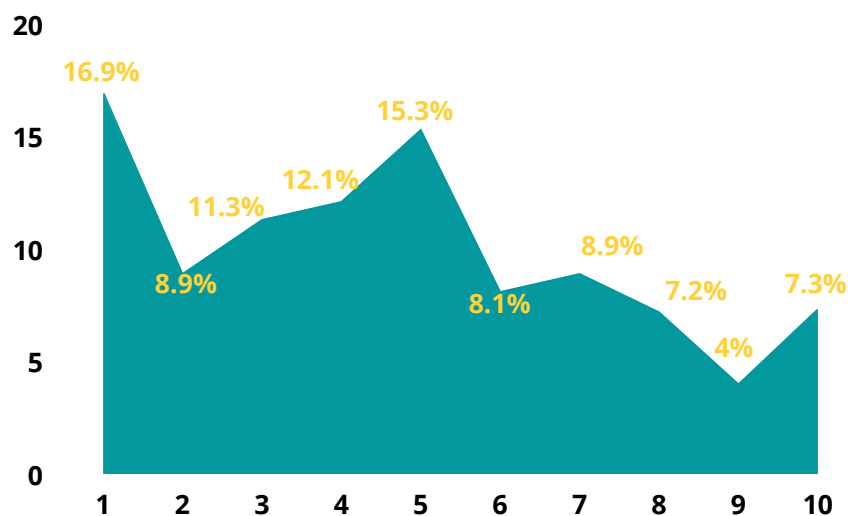
Ways adopted to keep oneself calm during the pandemic



Experience of domestic violence during the lockdown

Around 4% of women agree that they experienced domestic violence in some form or the other compared to 96% who did not experience any form of violence.

EMPLOYED WOMEN



Feel safe travelling to office during the pandemic

The spread of Covid-19 was restricted to no particular domain, the case of traveling was no different. Only 7.3% feel completely safe traveling to the office by indicating a 10 on the rating scale compared to the highest 16.9% that feel completely unsafe to travel by indicating a 1 and 15.3% who are indifferent.

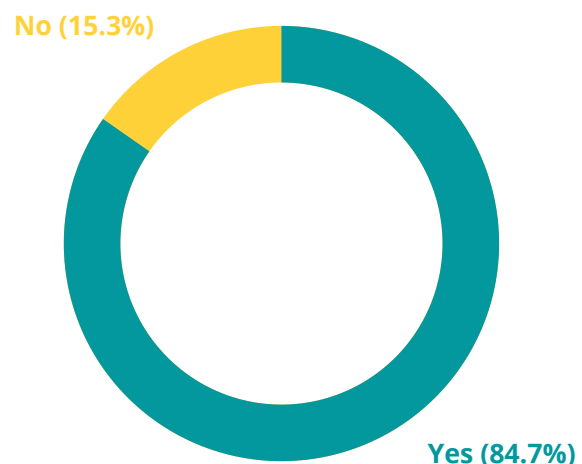
A vast chunk of females has been forced to either leave their jobs or have faced a significant reduction in their pay.

Around 17.7% of females reported that they were not paid a full salary during the lockdown compared to 82.3% who affirmed they were paid a full salary.



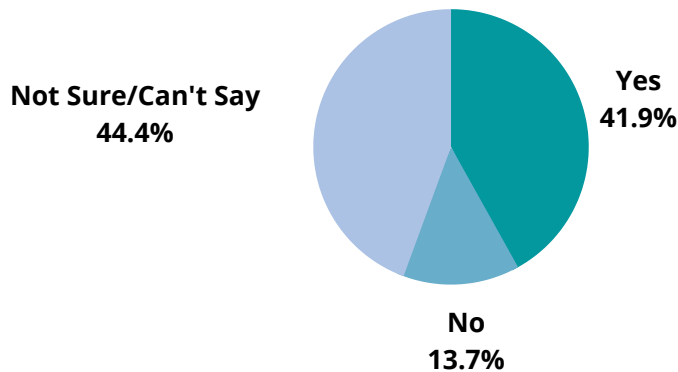
Paid full by employer during the pandemic

While everyone is facing unprecedented challenges, women are bearing the brunt of the economic and social fallout of COVID-19. As in the survey, 84.7% of women stated they have been putting more hours into work during the pandemic compared to 15.3% of women who do not feel that they are facing a need to put more hours into work.



Working more hours during the pandemic

EMPLOYED WOMEN



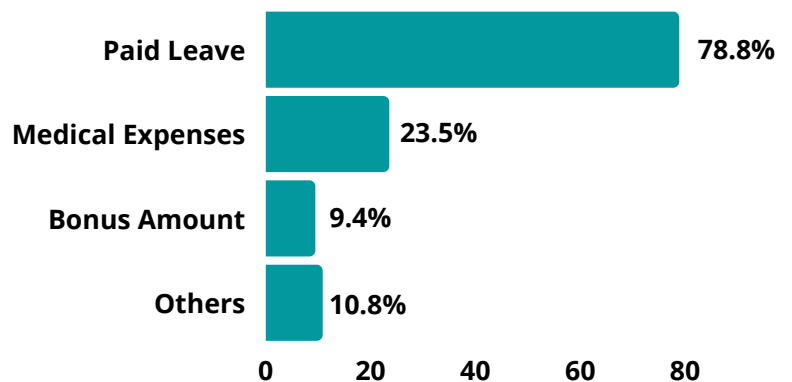
Employer consideration & generosity during COVID-19 Infection

41.9% of women reported that their employer was generous in case their family contracted Covid, 13.7% felt their employer was not considerate while 44.4% are indifferent.

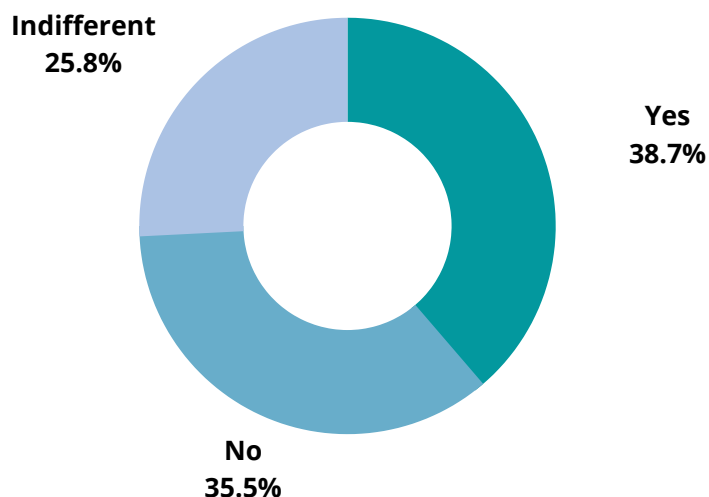
As for the women who reported positively about their employer being generous around their family contracting the infection, they listed the ways in which the employer was helpful.

Around 67% of women received a paid leave, 20% reported their employer bore medical expenses, 8% received a bonus and 5% were aided in miscellaneous ways.

*As this was an open-ended question the respondents were leaning towards multiple options.



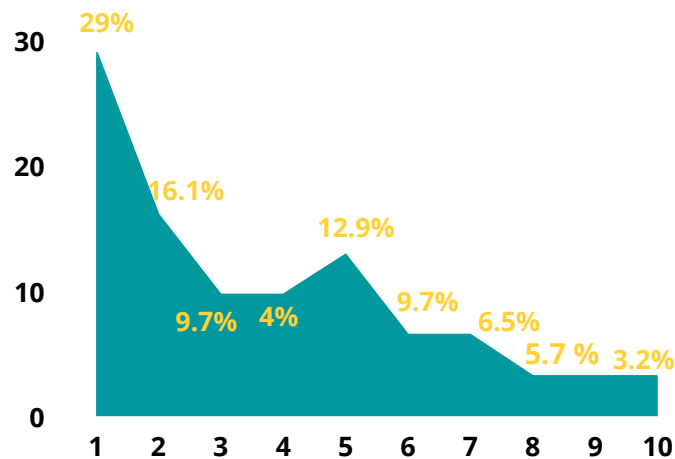
Forms of Employer consideration and generosity



Looking forward to office physical re-opening

38.7% of women are looking forward to office reopening while 35.5% of women still prefer working from home. The rest 25.8% are indifferent about their office reopening.

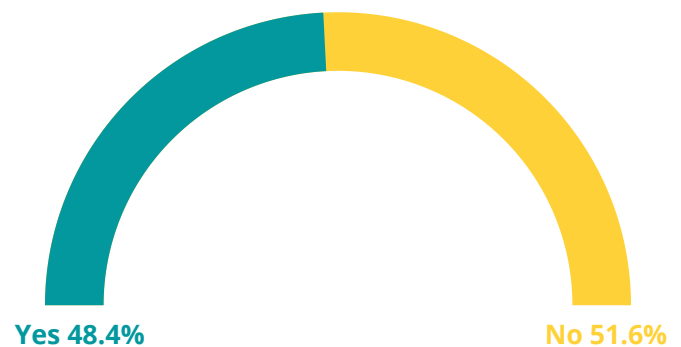
WORKING MOTHERS



Feel safe travelling to office during the pandemic

Only 3.2% of women feel completely safe to travel during the pandemic, while 29% feel completely unsafe to travel. 12.9% of women are indifferent about the same.

48.4% of women asserted that they were not paid fully during the pandemic in comparison to 51.6% of women who were fully paid.



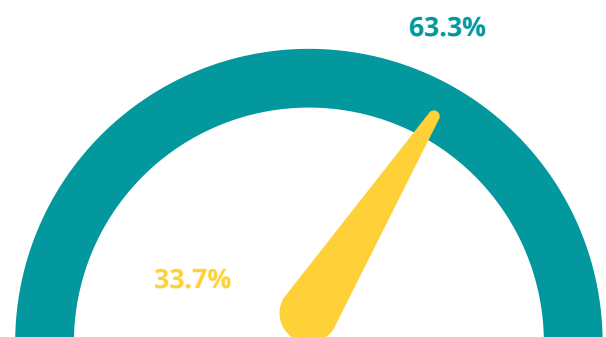
Paid full by employer during the pandemic



Working more hours during the pandemic

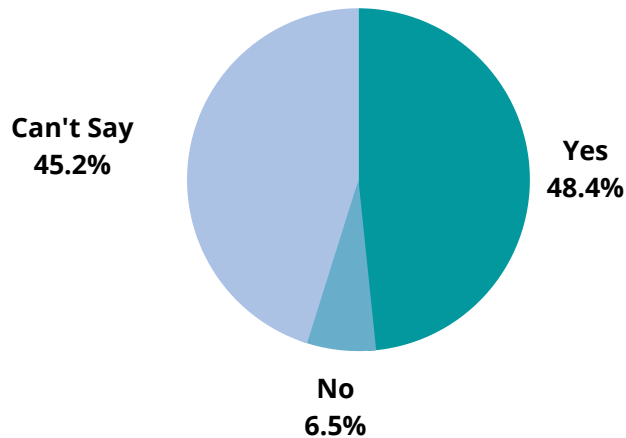
Despite having a flexible working schedule in the form of work-from-home, 65.5% of working mothers reported investing more time into work at odd hours to meet their deadlines compared to only 34.5% of mothers who did not work for extra hours.

33.7% of women did not receive help from their partners or family members in managing work at home while 66.3% of women agreed that they were helped by sharing of childcare responsibilities and other tasks at home.



Partner/ Household members started to contribute to household chores

WORKING MOTHERS

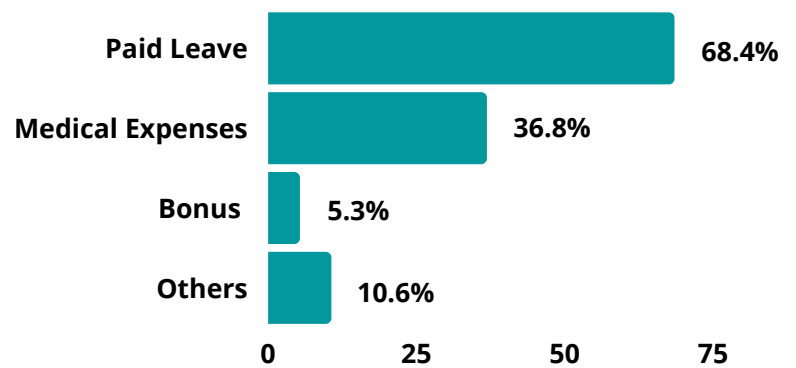


Employer consideration & generosity during COVID-19 Infection

According to the survey, in the case of contracting covid by themselves or contracted covid by any of their family members, 48.8% of working mothers responded that their employers were generous and 6.5% refused for the same. While 45.2% were indifferent.

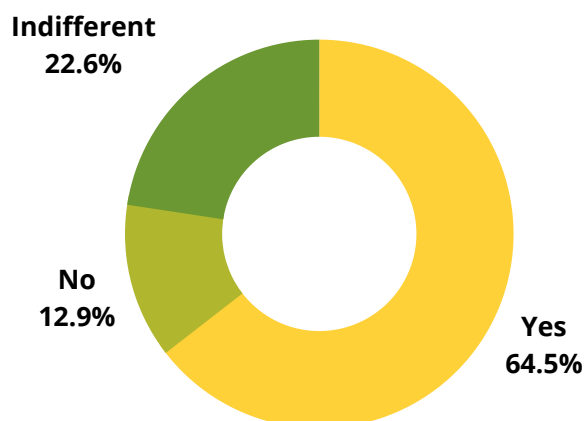
*As this was an open-ended question the respondents were leaning towards multiple options.

Out of those 48.8% working mothers, 64.8% received paid leaves, 36.8% said that their employers provided help in bearing medical expenses. While 5.3% received a bonus. The rest 10.6% received aid in miscellaneous ways.



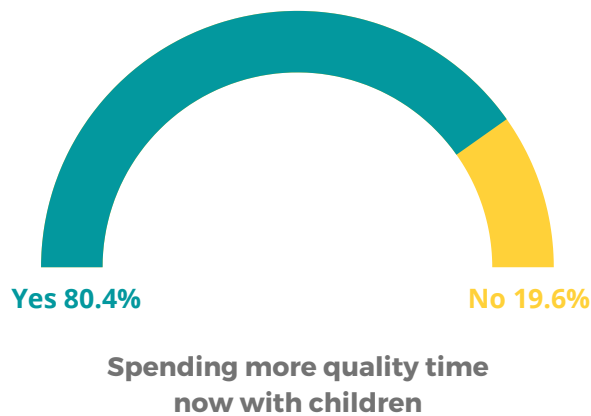
Forms of Employer consideration & generosity

As per the survey, 64.5% of working mothers are looking forward to office re-opening while 12.3% are preferring to work from home.



Looking forward to office physically re-opening

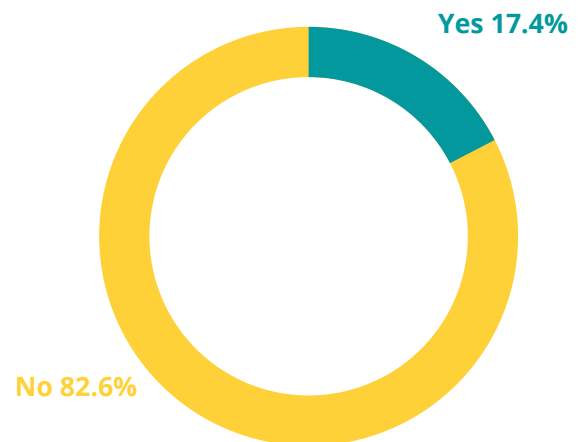
WORKING MOTHERS



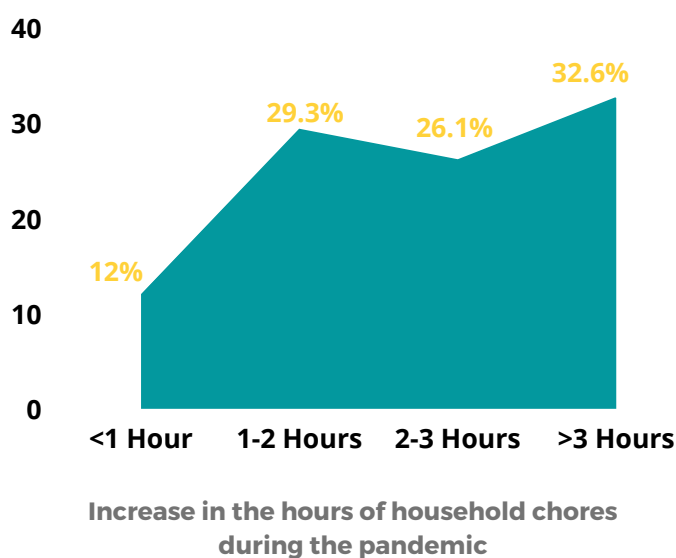
For working mothers who otherwise could not get as much quality time to spend with their children and family, the pandemic led to them have the opportunity to spend more time with their children.

80.4% of working mothers believe they got to spend more quality time with the children and family members as compared to only 19.6% of mothers who denied getting to spend time with family.

A Lack of resourceful knowledge, inability to ensure a balanced schedule among others are common reasons why 82.6% of working mothers feel that the shift of education from offline to online has made it difficult for them to teach their children. in comparison to 17.4% of mothers who feel that online mode has improved the quality of education.

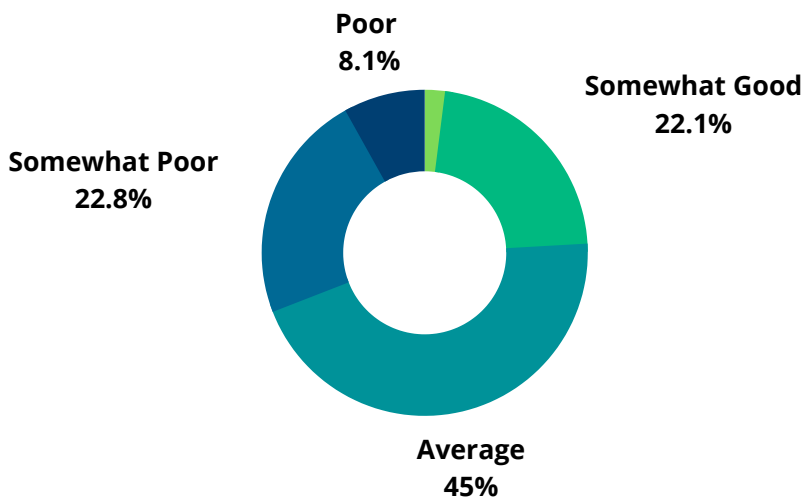


Opinion that online shift has improved the quality of Education of their children



Around 32.6% of women experienced an increase of more than 3 hours in working which reflects the increase in workload experienced by working mothers during the pandemic compared to only 12% women who experienced an increase of less than 1 hour in their working routine.

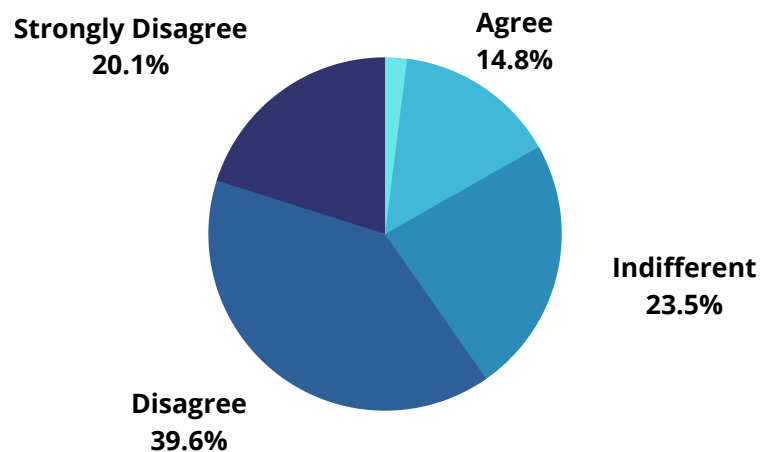
STUDENTS



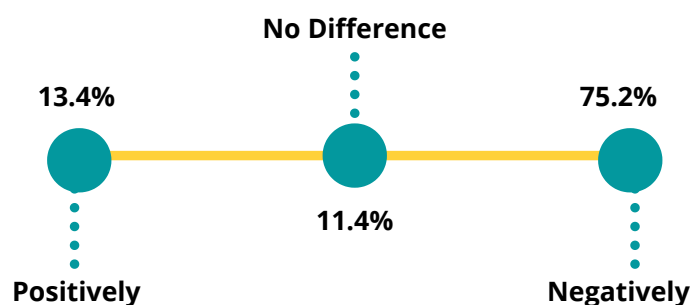
State of physical/mental health working from home

As per the survey, 45% feel that their mental health has remained average by studying at home, for 30.9% it has been poor, and for the rest 23.1%, it's above average.

59.7% of female students disagree on the fact that the shift from offline to online education gave them exposure while 16.8% agree with that fact and the rest 23.5% neither agree nor disagree on the same.



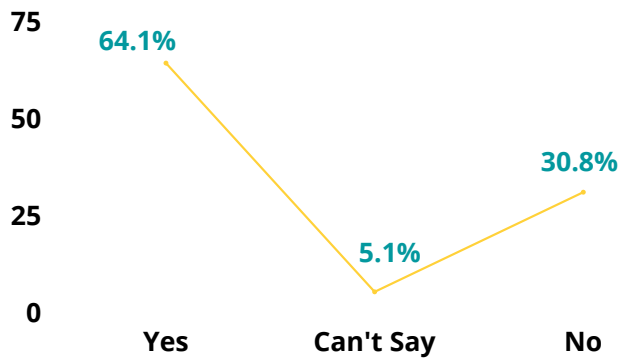
Shift from offline to online studies has given one more exposure



Do you see the pandemic affecting your future plans in education/employment?

As per the survey, 75.2% of female students feel the pandemic has affected their future plans in education and employment negatively, while 13.4% of female students feel their future plans are affected positively and for the rest 11.4%, there is no change.

FREELANCERS/ SELF EMPLOYED

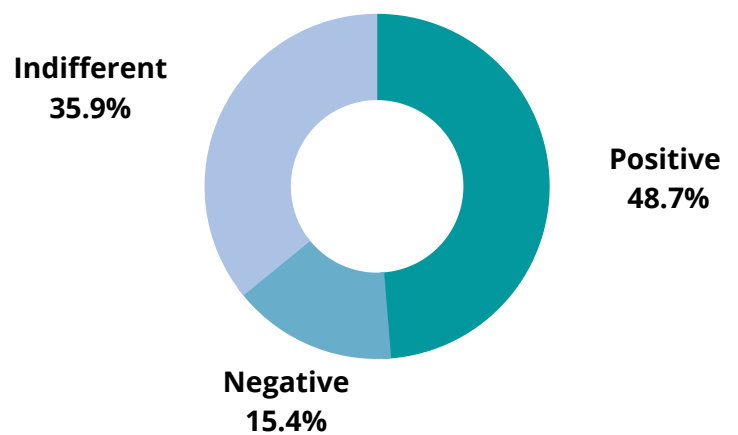


Has there been a shift in your career due to the pandemic?

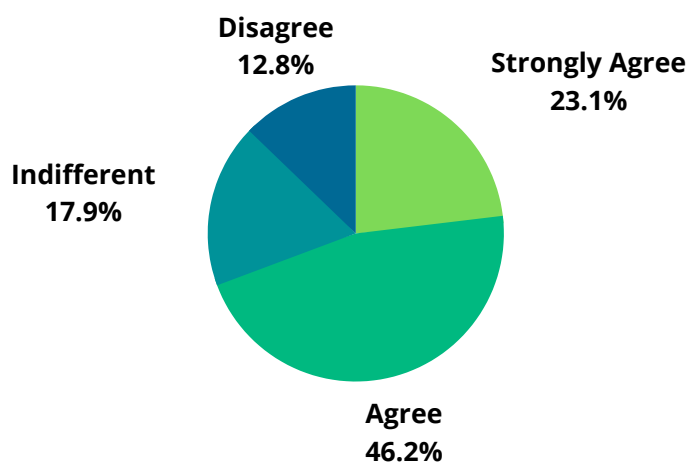
According to the survey, 64.1% of freelancers (or self-employed) females had experienced their shift in career due to pandemic, while 5.1% disagree that they experienced a shift and the rest 30.8% aren't sure about the same.

The Covid-19 outbreak in India and the resultant lockdowns transformed the landscape of the country's employment sector.

As a result, a significant share began freelancing for the first time. Around 48.7% of women hold a positive opinion about the work-from-home culture while only 15.4% feel negatively about the same. 35.9% of women are indifferent about working from home.



What is your opinion on the Work-from-Culture?



Do you think freelancing/self employed as a career has become popular due to pandemic?

Around 69.3% of women agree with the assertion that freelancing became a popular choice during the pandemic in contrast to only 12.8% who disagree with the same.

CONCLUSION

This study has been able to give key insights on the burning issues of work-life balance, financial stability, roles, and responsibilities of Women during the pandemic. From the study, we understand that over 82% of the women feel that their responsibilities towards home have increased by a major margin than before.

The unavoidable circumstances have scarred many people not just physically and financially but also emotionally. A majority of women agree that their mental health has deteriorated during the course of last year.

Employed women have been burdened with the extra hours that they have to put in at odd hours but a major chunk feels that their respective employers have been supportive through paid leaves and bonuses. An observation through our study is that working mothers are more inclined towards working from the office physically than employed women.

45% of the female students feel that their mental health has remained average by studying at home, for 30.9% it has been poor, and for the rest, it's above average. 75.2% feel the pandemic has affected their future plans in education and employment negatively which shows that the global higher education is currently facing unprecedented challenges due to the crisis.

There is growing evidence that the pandemic is affecting working women to a greater degree than working men. As a result, women self-select into independent work roles where greater autonomy defines the work and allows for greater freedom.





Website: www.outlineindia.com

Email: contact@outlineindia.com

Contact No: +91 9810062717