Covid-19 and graduate careers

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Acknowledgements

In March 2021 we published findings from what we term 'Stage 5' of the Futuretrack study, an investigation of graduate outcomes and career paths for a cohort of graduates, all of whom commenced their undergraduate studies in 2005. This stage of the study covered the graduates' careers from 2012 to late 2019. Given that the global Covid-19 pandemic struck early in 2020, this provided an opportunity to conduct what might be termed a 'before and after' study, giving a detailed account of how the pandemic and associated restrictions' have impacted upon the jobs and career prospects of this cohort. In realising this opportunity, we would like to express our appreciation both for the encouragement we have had from the Nuffield Foundation, particularly from Cheryl Lloyd and Christopher Milton, and for the additional funds provided by the Nuffield Foundation that made this important stage of the Futuretrack study possible.

As with the Stage 5 study we have been assisted by our Advisory Board. To them we extend our thanks for their guidance. Our thanks go most of all to the thousands of Futuretrack graduates who took the time to tell us about their experiences, their motivations, and their aspirations during this difficult period.

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Summary of the findings and their implications

For almost two decades we have followed the progress of a large group of young people as they made their way through higher education and into the labour market. This study, known as *Futuretrack*, provides insights into the changing nature of work and its interaction with graduate careers. Driven by technology, rising consumer wealth, and global trade, the job prospects now available for those who are educated to a high level have developed from a narrow set of privileged opportunities for an educated elite to a wide set of occupations now employing almost half the labour force. What is loosely termed the 'graduate labour market' is now a diverse and complex range of employment that spreads across all aspects of economic activity from scientific advancement and high-level management to include areas like media, sports, recreation, the arts, crafts, and the environment.

By following this cohort of graduates who gained their first degrees in 2009/10 we have shown the remarkable extent of this transformation of the 'knowledge economy' and the role that graduates have played in this. In the second half of 2019 we re-contacted over 6,000 cohort members, questioning them by survey and through in-depth interviews to find out about their progress, their motivations, and their ambitions for the future. Even though this cohort had joined the labour market immediately after one of the deepest depressions seen in the UK since the 1930s, their progress, with few exceptions, showed how valuable their higher education had been in equipping the majority to establish themselves in strong economic positions. They were engaged in jobs across all sectors of the economy, using the skills and knowledge gained from their undergraduate studies and, for many, from further high-level education and training. For significant numbers, their working arrangements were not typical of a '9 to 5' routine 5 days a week. Instead, we found them often holding more than one job on a part-time basis, some self-employed and others working successfully or not so successfully in and around what we now term the 'gig economy'. The majority were established in the labour market, albeit often in ways which differed from the situation prevailing decades earlier. The range of their earnings was wide, but most were relatively well-paid, and many were settling down and starting families. Even as our last interview was conducted in January 2020 no one had any idea quite how significant a challenge they would now be facing.

By returning to this cohort late in 2020, we have been able to explore the ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted upon their lives, not just by looking back over the past year at the immediate effects of the restrictions imposed because of the pandemic, but also looking forward. How has the experience affected their hopes and their ambitions and what does this mean for the future of the knowledge economy? With these questions in mind, we went back to all who had given us permission to recontact them, planning to conduct a short 'follow-up' survey and a small number of in depth interviews. Our online survey was short, designed to be completed in less that 20 minutes, but including options for respondents to provide free text responses to questions. What happened was surprising. Rather than just a few respondents availing themselves of the free text options, we received long and detailed accounts from thousands of respondents of the many problems and issues they had faced, their changing work/life balance, their mental health issues, as well as some of the positive aspects of the impact of Covid restrictions on their lives.

Impacts on work, employment, and earnings

The immediate impacts of Covid-related restrictions on the situation of these graduates, most of them in their early thirties, were fairly predictable, though we were surprised by their extent and in some cases, their severity. The chapters of this report give a very detailed account of these experiences. We have tried, wherever possible, to let the respondents speak for themselves as well as capturing the general picture via statistical analyses. Among the many findings are the following:

- Many found themselves working longer hours as they adjusted to new work routines, especially the challenge of shifting to working from home. While familiarity with technology made this transition straightforward for many, some found this new work situation to be taxing. Combined with problems of shared space and with the added complications of school closures, this was potentially a stressful experience, particularly for those with children.

- Those who could not work from home were mainly 'front-line workers' providing essential goods and services. Often in client-facing roles, these graduates were always in danger of contracting the virus. In some sectors, personal protective equipment provided a modicum of security from infection, but this was not always the case and the strain of working whilst possibly being exposed to the virus created fear. Nowhere did we hear about this more than from teachers.

- The earnings of most graduates were not greatly affected by the pandemic, with well over a third reporting increased earnings between March and December 2020, but the 16 per cent who reported that they had seen their personal incomes decline tended to be among the lower paid graduates, those with gross annual incomes less than £21,000, the self-employed, and those holding jobs in the hardest hit sectors, transport and tourism, hotels and catering and construction.

- Graduates who had studied creative arts and design were disproportionately represented among those reporting a decline in their personal incomes. Conversely, those who had first degrees in maths and computing were much less likely to have experienced any decline in their incomes.

- Those who had been self-employed for less than three years and were consequently ineligible for government support in the face of Covid were vulnerable to income reduction and insecurity. Only a third of self-employed respondents had been able to rely on government compensation for lost income.

- Many of those who were self-employed reflected that they felt increasingly vulnerable, while others who had considered or had the option of self-employment reported feeling less inclined to make this move than in the past.

We have argued strongly in previous reports on the progress of this cohort, that there is no such simple entity as 'graduate labour'. As higher education has expanded, so has the diversity of its intake and types of degree level courses now on offer. Graduates with knowledge and skills that are sought by employers had largely entered successfully to appropriate occupations, and tended to have been able to weather the 2020 pandemic year. Those who had been less able to realise benefits such as higher incomes and greater job security found themselves in more vulnerable situations. When demand is reduced, either via recession, or in this case by Covid restrictions, those without job security are liable to experience redundancy, job loss and a fall income. As our research has shown, there is

always a precarious margin that is difficult to anticipate. We illustrate in this report how the Covid restrictions hit hardest many of those who had opted for self-employment, either because of fall in demand or because this is the way work is structured in their field.

Impacts on general well-being

We found the impact of the changed working practices on mental health to be a major topic raised during interviews and written about in the open-ended survey questionnaires.

- For some, the move to working from home and reduction in commuting and workplace stresses had led to improved mental health, better sleep patterns and healthier lifestyles; for others, it reportedly caused extreme stress, anxiety, loneliness, isolation and depression.

- Periods of sick leave and suicide attempts were reported as responses to changes in work arrangements and patterns, both due to the pressures and worries of front-line working and to the difficulties caused by having to learn new skills in inadequate circumstances with restricted workspace and resources.

- For those who had been furloughed or were anxious about the sustainability of their jobs, careers and earning potential, isolation and anxiety sometimes segued into depression.

- Many reported that the impact on their mental health was causing them to re-evaluate their career aspirations and future plans: to move out of jobs that, they realised, had caused them undue stress prior to the pandemic and they now recognised had had a detrimental effect on their well-being.

- Others were experiencing pressures to move from insecure jobs that they loved where their insecurity had been exacerbated by the restrictions and they saw no way out of continued mental-health threatening crises, to more sustainable work.

Compared with their situation a year earlier, many had become less confident about their future careers. Those most likely to remain optimistic about their long-term career prospects had the following characteristics:

- They were male, had been under 21 when they embarked on their undergraduate studies, came from managerial and professional backgrounds, had studied Medicine & Dentistry or Maths & Computing.

- They were more likely than others to have professional qualifications, to have been working in jobs with many other graduates at their workplace and employed in Manufacturing or in Other Public Services.

- Conversely, those who had been over 26 at the start of their undergraduate degree, had studied Art& Design, Languages or Historical Studies, were working in a job with low graduate density, those who had experienced unemployment, and those who were caring for adults, reported low levels of optimism about their future career prospects.

The wider implications of this research

Our findings may be dismissed by some because of our focus on what might be termed the 'top-end' of the labour market. We might be criticised for what some would regard as unnecessary research on an area of the labour market covering high paid, potentially secure, and relatively advantaged workers. But such criticism would fail to recognise that the ways in which highly qualified labour will be created and deployed in the future are critical to economic prosperity and wellbeing. The pandemic has had and will continue to have far-reaching consequences for the ways in which we organise work in society, for patterns of consumption, for the manner in which we participate in leisure activities and, most of all, for the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. The changes that it has brought are now underway. They will be shaped by graduates and will shape graduate career paths in modes that we do not yet fully realise. New opportunities will arise, and these are likely to favour the most educated and highly skilled in society. Highly skilled knowledge workers will continue to provide the crucial core elements of innovation and progress in all sectors, but as now, not all the most essential workers required in the future will be graduates and not all graduates will reach, or wish to reach, jobs where they have the responsibility to innovate rather than process or communicate knowledge.

Higher education will change as a result but continue to play a vital part in providing the potential to capitalise on the changing labour market, as will progressive employers, many of whom have learnt much from the pandemic and will embed new ways of working as the norm. The skills required during the pandemic in certain occupations and organisations have changed, sometimes subtly, sometimes more radically. Some of these changes will be redundant once the restrictions required to minimise the impact of Covid-19 are no longer necessary. Other developments in the practice, uses and development of technology, and in and divisions of labour among occupations and in organisations, are likely to persist and be refined as the circumstances change. The ratio of precarious work in relation to secure and sustainable employment is unlikely to decrease in the short-to-medium term at least. We can only hope that such developments do not end up jeopardising progress towards greater equality in the labour market made by women in recent years, and in employment opportunities and the quality of work more broadly.

Chapter 1 An overview of this report

In March 2021 we published findings1 from what we term 'Stage 5' of the Futuretrack study, an investigation of graduate outcomes and career paths for a cohort of graduates who had embarked on undergraduate courses in 2006 and mainly completed their undergraduate studies in 2009 or 2010. This stage of the study covered the period from 2012 to late in 2019. The general picture presented was of successful integration into the graduate labour market and early career development. However, we also identified a minority of respondents who had been less successful in their transition from higher education to employment and in progressing from early to mid-career. We found that a significant number of graduates remained in, or had opted for, precarious or potentially precarious employment: self-employment, fixed-term contract employment and other forms of less secure employment.

As we were analysing the information collected at Stage 5, the Covid-19 pandemic struck. We became aware that members of this latter group, and an increasing proportion of those who had previously been on what they regarded as secure career trajectories, might be facing substantial challenges both during the pandemic lockdown period and in a Covid-induced recession.

The decline in output attributed to the Covid-related restrictions on activity is inducing a recession that results in job losses, rising unemployment, and increased economic inactivity. Such recessions have typically tended to manifest their worst effects on the lowest paid (Pacitti and Smith, 2019). However, the current 'bumpiness' in economic activity is likely to be different to other previous recessions in a variety of ways. The sharp impact of lockdown restrictions on certain sectors and occupations is the clearest difference, putting it in contrast to more normal recessions where there is a continuous and general slow-down of economic activity and steady business closures and job losses. The existence of the government furlough scheme and the rise of homeworking as a response to restrictions also mark this as different from any previous economic downturn. Suppressed consumer demand may stimulate the economy in 2022, but prospects remain unpredictable.

This raises questions about how these changes in the economy will impact on graduates. The higher and often more transferable skills of graduates have tended to shield graduates from the worst effects of labour market shocks and ensuing economic downturns, but will this prove to have been the case during the pandemic and in its aftermath? Will the lowest paid graduates, and particularly those in non-graduate jobs, experience similar difficulties to the non-graduate population and find themselves falling further behind their better paid and more secure peers, or will being a graduate seem to offer them some degree of protection? Will we see new fractures developing in the graduate labour market and in the careers of graduates as new vulnerabilities emerge and graduates respond to changing economic and social realities?

With these questions in mind, we conducted a further enquiry into the situation of the cohort of Futuretrack graduates, some six to nine months after the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions. This report is based upon the findings from this further enquiry. The questions posed above weave through this report as we assess what has changed because of the Covid pandemic, enabling us to reflect upon how lasting the impacts of this shock might be on the labour market and on the careers of the Futuretrack cohort of graduates.

The investigation proceeded in the following manner. An initial exploratory survey was sent to all who had responded to the Stage 5 enquiry in 2019 and had given us permission to recontact them. This stage was designed primarily to help us with the design of a subsequent survey and with the selection of potential interviewees. A more detailed online

[1] Elias, P. *et al.* (2021).

questionnaire was administered between December 2020-January 2021 (referred to as the Stage 6 survey), and interviews carried out between November 2020 and January 2021 with a small number of respondents selected to exemplify categories of labour market experience. In both the initial exploratory survey and the Stage 6 survey, the questions were mainly factual and attitudinal tick-box responses, designed to be easy to complete, but as is customary in exercises of this kind, we included a few open-ended questions where respondents were invited to provide further information about their experiences since the onset of the pandemic. We received an unprecedented volume of write-in responses and analyses of these data form a substantial component of the report that follows.

Chapters 2 to 8 of this report address respondents' economic activity, their work patterns, and experiences of working during the pandemic. These experiences have been varied. Many have worked from home and for some, their work remained largely unchanged. Some have been frontline workers, dealing daily with the face-to-face realities of Covid. For some there has been an increase in their working hours as extra demands have been placed on them. Others have seen their working hours reduced or they have been furloughed, sometimes with worrying implications. A small minority had lost their jobs altogether. The mental health problems faced by a significant number are reported. All this has been happening as many were moving into or had started family formation.

We begin by summarising in Chapter 2 what has changed in terms of the economic activity of respondents and go on to examine how their working hours and earnings have changed, particularly since the onset of the pandemic restrictions. Following this, we look at the graduates' experiences of working during a pandemic, both in their workplace and, for the majority, from home, and how employers have facilitated their capacity to work effectively. In addressing these issues, we ask who has been vulnerable to the worst economic impacts of the pandemic? Are they the people who we might have anticipated would be the most vulnerable, based on their previous experience, personal characteristics and what we know of the differential impact of previous recessions or have new forms of vulnerability and resilience emerged that may shape their future careers and the structure and function of the labour market? We highlight in chapters 3 to 6 the experiences of people who were self-employed or engaged in other forms of precarious employment, looking at the relationship between job security and Covid labour market restrictions, patterns of working and the implications of working from home. Chapter 7 provides an interesting contrast between two occupational groups in terms of the ways in which the pandemic and the associated restrictions have impacted upon them. Chapter 8 is particularly important in that it examines the effect of the Covid-19 restrictions on work/life balance and well-being of this cohort of graduates in their mid-career stage.

Having discussed the impacts of the pandemic-linked restrictions, Chapter 9 looks to the future. We pull together findings from the Wave 5 survey conducted in 2019 and the Wave 6 survey conducted at the end of 2020 to look at the extent to which the pandemic has affected respondents' subjective views about their career development, as well as how their attitudes, values and expectations for the future have evolved considering their employment and wider experiences during the pandemic. We also discuss respondents' perceptions of how graduating into a previous recession affects how they approach the currently developing one. Have their experiences in the previous recession had any impact? Has it left them economically or psychologically more vulnerable, or can they draw upon their experiences of successfully navigating a previous recession to develop a resilient pathway through the current one?

Finally, in Chapter 10 we draw out conclusions from our findings and consider the implications for the future of graduate employment in the UK. How much has changed and how will the employment changes and experiences of the past year persist into 'the new normal'? What lessons that can be learned for future higher education and employment stakeholders and policymakers?

Chapter 2 Changes in economic activity and earning during the restrictions

The period since we last contacted Futuretrack graduates at Stage 5 of the study up to the time of the current enquiry (Stage 6) can be characterised as pre-pandemic, where no significant restrictions on economic activity were in place, followed by a period when restrictions were introduced. The former period lasted from the time of the Stage 5 survey, which for most respondents was April 2019, until March 2020, when 'lockdown 1.0' commenced. Various restrictions on economic and social activities were imposed from March 2020 to the time of the most recent contact in December 2020.

2.1 Changes in economic activity

We know the economic activity status of respondents at the time of the Stage 5 survey, and we monitored this subsequently between March 2020 and December 2020 (the 'pandemic period' of this study). Table 2.1 shows the net effect of changes during the two periods by gender. For males we note the fall in full time employment, particularly from March 2020 to the time of the Stage 6 survey, with corresponding marginal increases in part-time employment and self-employment. For females' similar changes are evidenced but appear on a more significant scale.

Table 2.1 Economic activity of Futuretrack Stage 6 respondents, pre-pandemic restrictions and post-pandemic restrictions, by gender

	Males (%)			Females (%)		
	Apr-19	Mar-20	Dec-20	Apr-19	Mar-20	Dec-20
FT employee	84.5	84.0	81.4	71.9	69.9	65.1
PT employee	4.1	4.7	6.9	14.5	16.8	20.4
Self-employed	7.2	7.0	7.5	6.9	6.5	7.2
Voluntary work	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2
Study/training	1.2	1.2	0.8	1.8	1.8	1.6
Unemployed	1.5	1.3	1.2	0.7	1.1	1.5
Inactive	1.1	1.4	1.9	3.9	3.6	4.0

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 dataset linked to Stage 5.
(n = 4,110)

While there is some indication of changes in economic activity among Futuretrack respondents between March and December 2020, care must be taken before attributing any change to the impact of the restrictions imposed in this period. For example, in the 11 months prior to lockdown, part-time employment among female graduate rose by just over two percentage points. The subsequent increase in their part-time working of more than three percentage points in the following 9-month period should not, therefore, be attributed solely to the impact of the pandemic[2].

[2] Further evidence of the movement of female graduates in this age cohort into part-time employment can be gained via examination of the Labour Force Survey 5-quarter longitudinal dataset. For the dataset covering the period from October 2018 to December 2019 and restricting observations to graduates aged 30 – 34 years (the closest approximation to Futuretrack Stage 5 respondents), we note that of 36 female graduates in full-time employment in October 2018, 8 had moved into part-time employment by December 2019. While these numbers are not sufficient for statistical reliability, they do indicate that, well before the Covid restrictions, movement from full-time to part-time working is a major feature of economic activity changes for female graduates in this family formation age range.

Further information on the dynamics of these changes is available through a series of questions in the survey about the nature of the changes that took place post March 2020. Table 2.2 confirms that the main changes that took place during this period were between full-time and part-time employment, particularly for women. Although most were in the direction of full-time to part-time employment, about half as many moves again were in the opposite direction. For self-employment, although Table 2.1 shows that over 7 per cent of the sample were self-employed as their main economic activity status, movements into and out of self-employment were limited.

Table 2.2 Changes in economic activity March 2020 – December 2020, by gender and changes in personal income

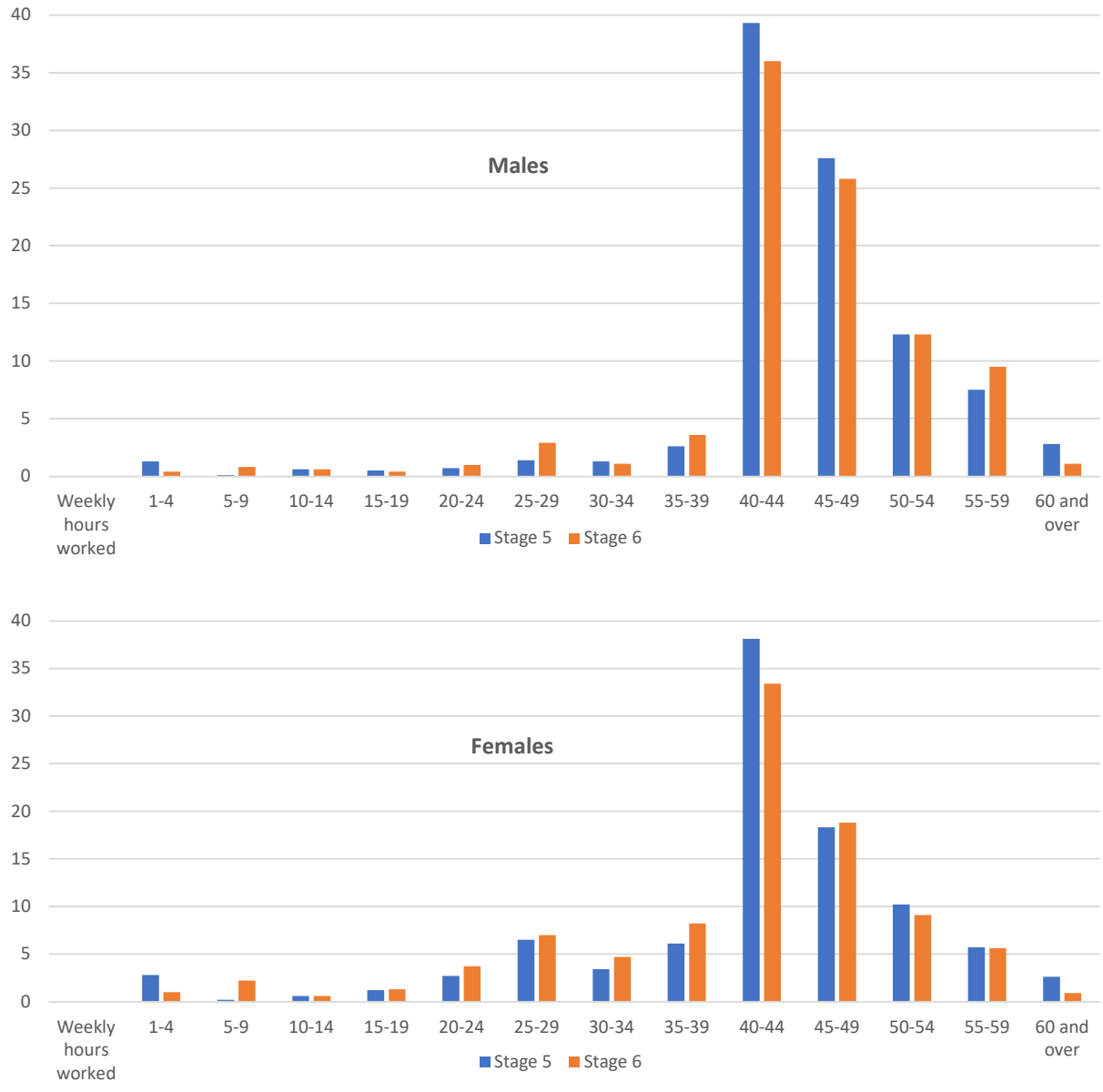
	All respondents (column %)	Gender (row %)		Change in personal income (row %)			
		Male	Female	Not stated	Increased significantly	Stayed same or little change	Decreased significantly
No change	84.8	41.1	58.9	4.5%	5.6%	85.7%	4.1%
Full time employee to part time employee	5.8	22.8	77.2	1.3%	2.5%	79.3%	16.9%
Part time employee to full time employee	2.1	20.5	79.5		22.7%	71.6%	5.7%
Full time employee to self employed	.9	54.1	45.9	2.7%	10.8%	54.1%	32.4%
Self-employed to full time employee	.6	52.2	47.8		21.7%	60.9%	17.4%
Part time employee to self employed	.7	14.3	85.7			67.9%	32.1%
Self-employed to part time employee	.3	*	*	*	*	*	*
Full time employee to not working	1.6	33.3	66.7				
Not working to full time employee	1.7	36.8	63.2	1.5%	38.2%	57.4%	2.9%
Part time employee to not working	.8	12.5	87.5		*	*	*
Not working to part time employee	.2	*	*	*	*	*	*
Self-employed to not working	.3	*	*	*	*	*	4.1%
Not working to self employed	.2	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	100.0	39.0	61.0				

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 dataset linked to Stage 5.
Note: * indicates that the proportions too small for reliable statistical estimates to be produced.
(n = 4,110)

2.2 Changes in weekly hours worked

Figure 2.1 shows the changing distributions of weekly hours worked for men and for women, contrasting the situation prevailing in April 2019 with December 2020. For male graduates we observe a reduction in the proportion working between 40 and 49 hours a week, with a small increase in longer hours working (55-59 hours) and increases in shorter hours, notably 35 to 39 hours but also in what would be classed as part-time working (25 to 29 hours). For female graduates, full-time working declines somewhat and is replaced by much shorter weekly hours worked, reflecting the growth in part-time working evidenced in Table 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Changing distribution of hours worked, Stage 5 (April 2019) to Stage 6 (December 2020) by gender – all in employment at both stages



Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 dataset linked to Stage 5.
(n = 1,499 males, 2,244 females)

Respondents to the Stage 6 survey were asked to give the reasons for the changes in their working hours. Of those working longer hours, the most frequent response from both men and women was that their employer had increased their hours, and this was primarily a result of increased demand for the products/services provided by their employing organisation, though many stated that this was just 'normal variation'. However, about 20 per cent of those

reporting increased hours stated that another reason was that 'It takes me longer to do my job working remotely'.

For the larger group with changed weekly hours – those who were working shorter hours in December 2020 than they had been working in April 2019 – the range of reasons given was wide. Most obviously the response was given that their employer had cut their hours or, for the self-employed, that trading was not possible due to the restrictions. Equally though were reasons such as 'being furloughed', 'caring for children' (10 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women), 'taking up a new job with shorter hours' and 'working from home'.

To explore further the perceptions of change experienced by survey respondents, we presented them with a long list of potential changes (see Table 2.3), asking them to choose as many from this list as they felt were relevant to them. 'Working from home' is, not surprisingly, the most frequent indication of the changed situation that these graduates reported, followed by the reporting of 'working more hours', a finding which appears to be at odds with the reported distribution of weekly hours worked[3].

Table 2.3 Reasons situation changed following introduction of restrictions, by gender

	Male (%)	Female (%)
I have a different job with my employer	6.3	7.2
I have changed my employer	9.7	8.4
I work from home some or all the time	62.6	52.3
I have taken an additional job	2.6	2.7
I have been working more hours	24.9	22.9
I have been working less hours	8.9	8.5
I have had to give up one or more of my additional jobs	1.4	1.6
I have ceased to be self employed	1.6	1.2
I have become self employed	1.3	1.2
I have been or I am furloughed	7.0	7.5
I am not working for pay or profit at present but am looking for work	1.6	2.2
I have family responsibilities that prevent me from working	0.2	1.2
I am studying	3.9	5.1
I am engaged in voluntary activities	4.4	4.3
I am caring for elderly relatives/others	1.7	2.6
I am retired	0.2	0.2
I am waiting to start a new job	0.3	0.3
I am taking maternity/paternity/adoption leave	2.2	8.8
No change / none of the above apply to me	20.7	22.8
Total responses	2,595	4,047
No. of respondents	1,601	2,509

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020.
Note: these responses were shown as separate choices to respondents, who could choose as many as they considered relevant.

[3] This apparent discrepancy could arise for two reasons – shorter hours working within the banded categories shown in Figure 2.1 and the fact that Figure 2.1 relates to changes from Stage 5 to Stage 6, whereas Table 2.3 relates to the period in which Covid-related restrictions were in force.

2.3 Impact of the pandemic on graduate earnings

In our Stage 5 report we presented information about the earnings of Futuretrack graduates in April 2019, some nine to ten years after gaining their undergraduate degrees. On average, those responding at Stage 5 who were working full-time had median gross annual salaries of £42,500 for men and £34,500 for women. However, these median values mask the underlying distributions of earnings, which show significant variation by several factors, the most important of which include the subject of undergraduate degree, employment status (self-employed, full-time, part-time), sector of employment, and ethnicity.

In this section we investigate how their earnings may have been affected by the Covid restrictions. This raises an important question: 'By how much would we have expected their earnings to have changed in this period if there had been no restrictions?' Measuring actual earnings against this counterfactual value would give a useful indication of the impact of the pandemic, but the broad earnings bands[4] used thus far in the study are not sufficiently detailed to reveal the extent of changes over this relatively short period. Instead, we rely upon the following question and its precoded responses:

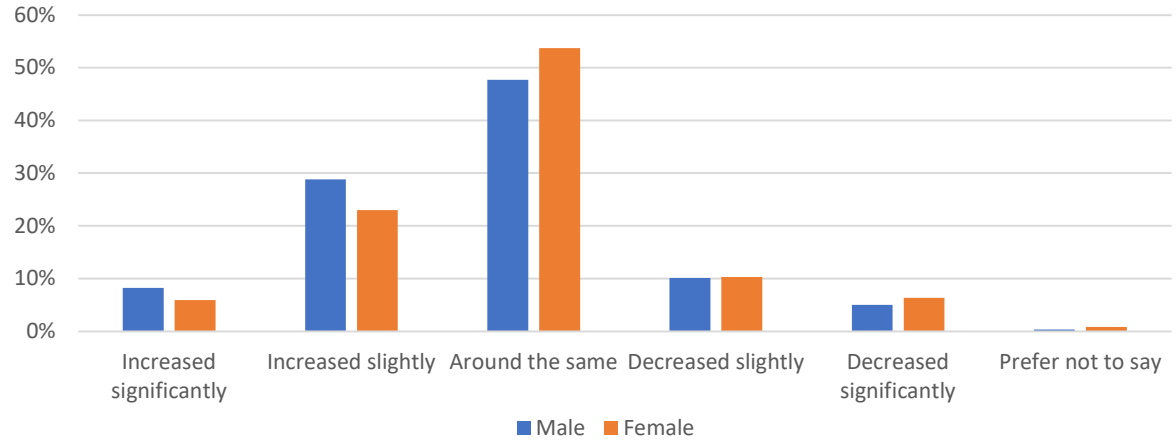
> *Since the start of the pandemic, to what extent has your personal income[5] changed?*
>
> - *It has increased significantly*
> - *It has increased slightly*
> - *It is around the same*
> - *It has decreased slightly*
> - *It has decreased significantly*
> - *Prefer not to say*

The interpretation of what constitutes a slight as opposed to a significant change is left to the respondent. In the absence of the pandemic and based upon the average rate of growth of earnings observed between Stages 4 and 5 of the study, we would expect to have seen the earnings of these graduates to have grown by about seven per cent in nominal terms over the nine months from the start of the first lockdown to the date of the survey. Figure 2.2 shows, separately for men and women, the distribution of responses to this question. It is no surprise therefore to note that, on average, a good proportion of graduates, 37 per cent of men and 29 per cent of women, are reporting increases in their personal incomes in line with continued strong growth in their earnings. What is surprising is the reporting of decreases, 16 per cent for men and women, the reasons for which require investigation

[4] Throughout the Futuretrack study we avoided collecting very detailed information on earnings, relying instead upon reporting within banded categories, with band widths ranging between £3,000 and £5,000 for the reporting of gross annual earnings.

[5] Note the use of the term 'personal income' instead of 'gross annual earnings', thereby allowing for the inclusion of government transfers as well as earnings in this period.

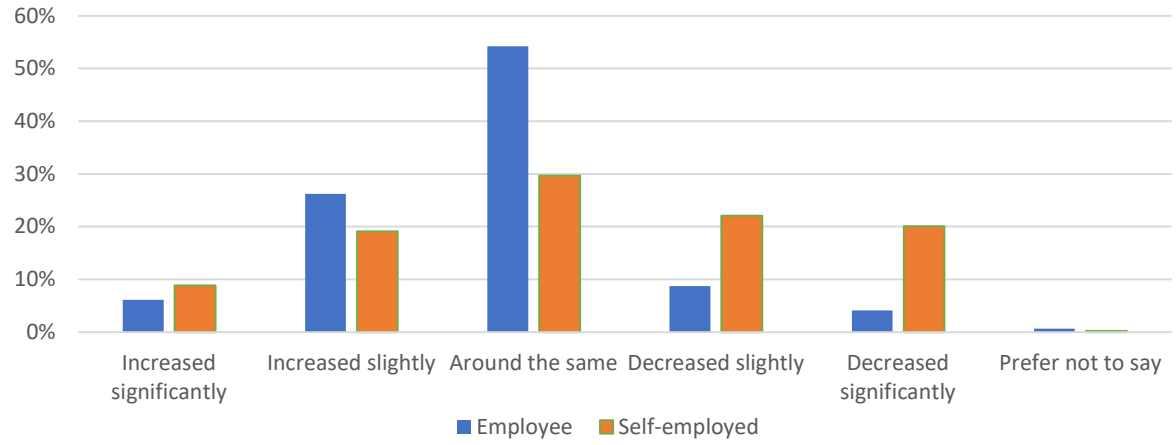
Figure 2.2 Change in personal income since the start of the pandemic, by gender



Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 linked survey (n = 3,859)

In terms of what is known already about the general impact of the pandemic on jobs and the labour market[6], we can anticipate where these decreases in personal incomes may be located. Figure 2.3 shows the responses by employment status immediately prior to the pandemic. This reveals the marked difference between the experiences reported by those who are employees as opposed to the self-employed, with over 40 per cent of those who were self-employed immediately before the pandemic reporting a subsequent decline in their personal incomes. Referring to Table 2.1 we also note that for those who moved into self-employment in this period, although a small proportion of all respondents, nearly one third reported a significant decline in their incomes.

Figure 2.3 Change in personal income since start of pandemic, by employment status

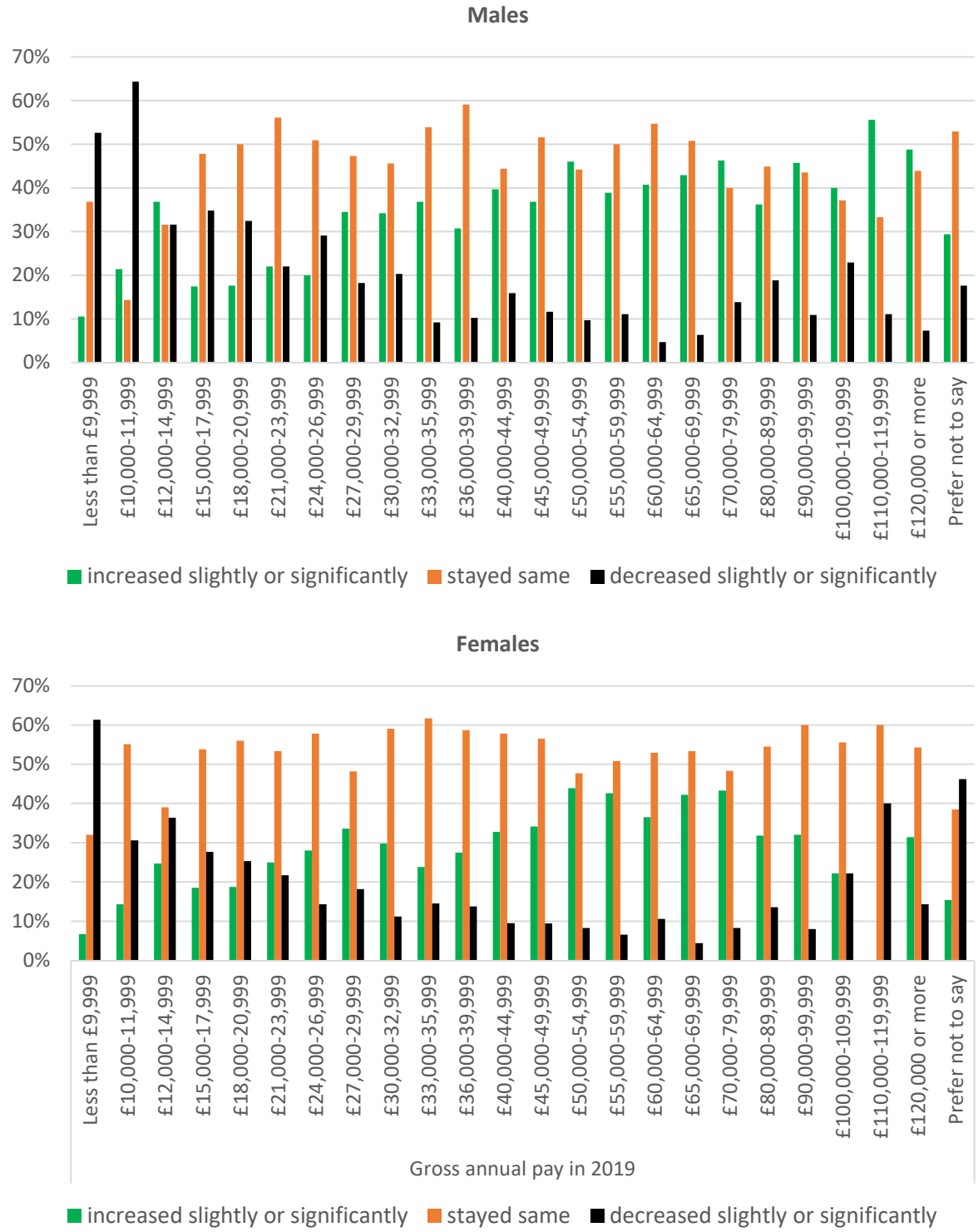


Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 linked survey (n = 3,859)

But how have these changes manifested themselves across the earnings distribution? Is it the case that those with lower annual earnings have experienced more significant changes in a downward direction than for those in the upper part of the distribution? Figure 2.4 shows, separately for men and women, the responses to this question by their reported gross annual earnings at Stage 5.

[6] See, for example: Allas *et al.* (2020) and Blundell, *et al.* (2021).

Figure 2.4 Change in personal income since the start of the pandemic by gender



Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 linked survey (n = 3,837)

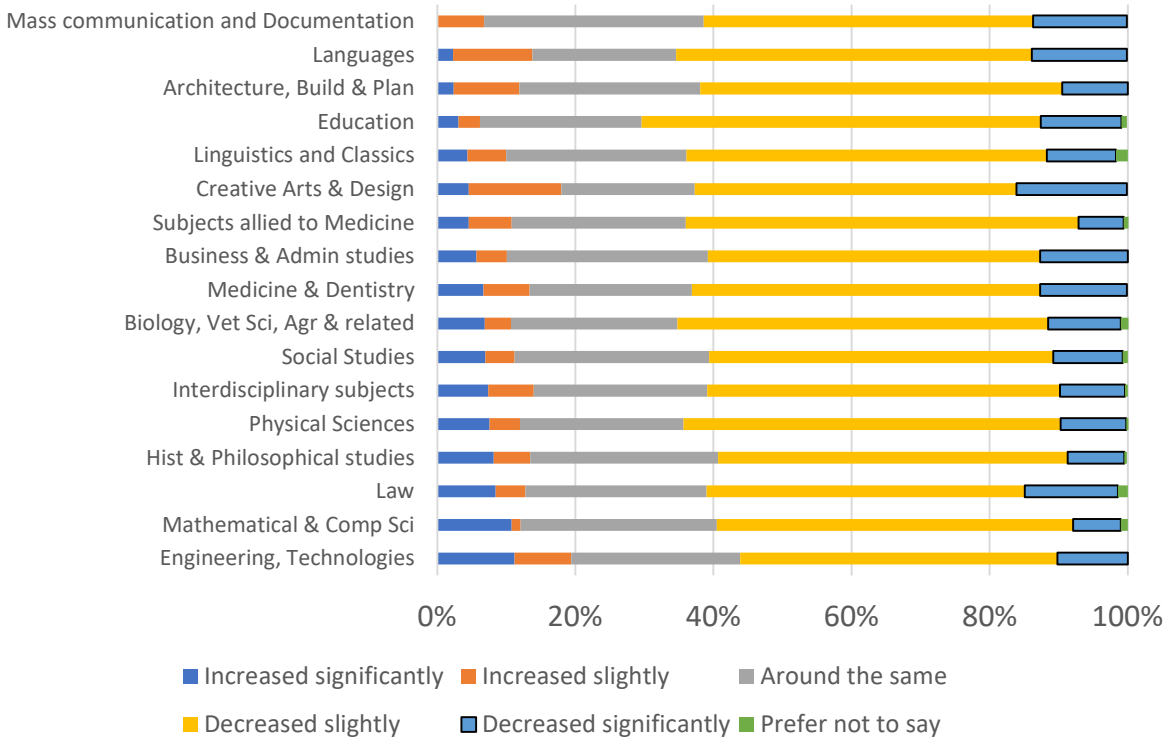
For both male and female graduates we note the relatively high proportions within each of the lower bands of their annual gross earnings in 2019 who were reporting that they had experienced a decline in personal incomes during the pandemic. For women, this is also apparent at the upper end of the earnings distribution.

Futuretrack is a study of the long-term impacts of higher education. As such, it is of interest to enquire whether the subject studied at the undergraduate level is associated with how graduate incomes for these mid-career graduates have fared during the pandemic. This is

contrasted with the potential impact of the sector in which they were working in 2019. Does the subject studied have a long-term impact in terms of the variability in future earnings, especially the variations recorded during this period of Covid restrictions, or should we pay more attention to the sector in which they were working?

Figure 2.5 shows the responses to the question about the change in personal incomes by the broad subject classification of their undergraduate degree. This should be compared with Figure 2.6, which shows the distribution of responses according to the sector in which the graduate was working in 2019.

Figure 2.5 Change in personal income since the start of the pandemic, by subject of undergraduate degree

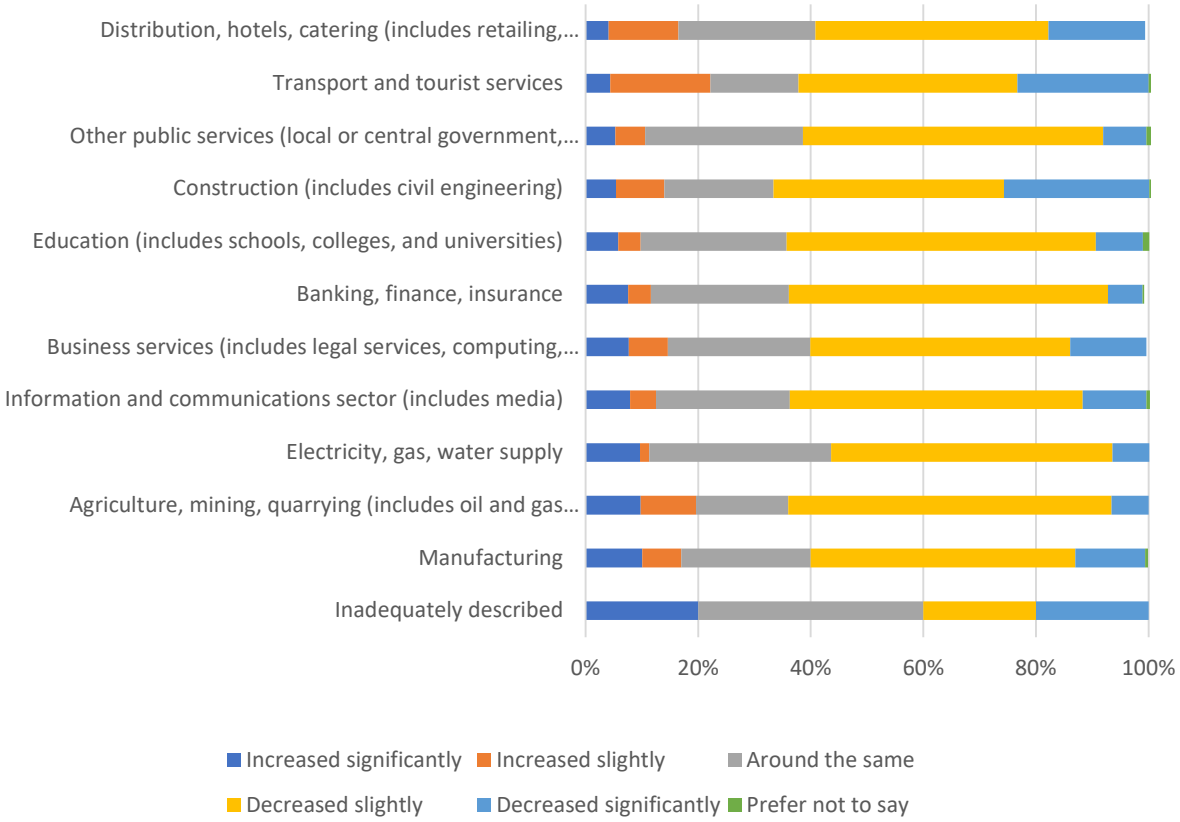


Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 linked survey (n = 3,837)

Some subjects studied at the undergraduate level appear to be associated with changes in personal incomes during the pandemic. Those who studied for first degrees in Creative Arts and Design appear to show significant decreases (16 per cent). Surprisingly, those with undergraduate degree in Law also show a substantial proportion (14 per cent) reporting a significant decline in their incomes.

Figure 2.6 presents this same information, but by sector in which the respondent was working in 2019. Two sectors stand out - Transport and tourist services and Construction.

Figure 2.6 Change in personal income since the start of the pandemic, by sector of employment in April 2019



Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 linked survey (n = 3,837)

Figures 2.2 to 2.6 indicate that there is a range of influences on whether a Futuretrack respondent experienced a significant decrease in their personal income since the start of the pandemic. To gauge their relative importance we use multivariate methods, examining an extensive set of factors to determine which of these have strong and independent associations with the changes in personal incomes during the pandemic. The factors considered are gender, age, ethnicity, hours worked, social background, type of HEI attended, subjects studied, class of degree obtained, occupation [SOC(HE)2020} at Stage 5, sector, graduate density in the workplace, size of organisation, region where worked, type of postgraduate qualifications, work history prior to 2019, and whether the respondent has children and/or caring responsibilities other than children at Stage 5.

Table 2.4 shows that out of all these factors, there is only a small number that show a significant association with the change in personal income during the pandemic, but these are quite strong results and are mostly as expected. Two factors are especially dominant in this respect – being self-employed prior to the pandemic (strongly associated with reporting a significant decrease in personal income since the start of the pandemic) and having a maths/computer science undergraduate degree (strongly associated with not having experienced a decline in personal income). This analysis reveals that other subjects studied at the undergraduate level have no association with the impact of the pandemic on the personal incomes of these graduates.

Table 2.4 Factors associated with significant changes in personal income since the start of the pandemic

Factor	More likely to have experienced a decrease in income	Less likely to experience a decrease in income
Age 26 and over at time of application to HE	Strong effect	
Subject studied at undergraduate level:		
Maths and computing science		Very strong effect
Employment at Stage 5:		
Self employed	Very strong effect	
Information and communications sector (includes media)		Very strong effect
Working in small organisation (<50 employees)	Moderate effect	
Public sector employee		Very strong effect

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 linked survey (n = 3,837)

Chapter 3 Job insecurity during the pandemic

As numerous commentators have noted, a key feature of the Covid-19 pandemic has been how unanticipated it was and how long the uncertainties associated with it have persisted (Bell *et al*, 2020). It has been a disruption to many things that people have taken for granted, their sense of how things work, what can be expected, what is normal. In this, it is very different to other challenges faced by the Futuretrack cohort, such as graduating into a recession or building their careers in an economy emerging from recession. Although the initial difficulties they faced in entering the labour market were not what they had anticipated, most had been able to make an assessment of their personal situation and the adjustments they would need to make to their career strategies and expectations in light of the labour market they were graduating into. In contrast, when looking at the experiences of the Futuretrack cohort in the Covid-19 pandemic, new and unexpected challenges have presented themselves, and new fractures have appeared in the graduate labour market as some of those who previously had considered themselves to be secure in their careers and settled into their working lives now find that in this 'new normal', these certainties no longer hold. However, there are questions about how predictable these new fractures were prior to the pandemic, at what point in the pandemic they became predictable, and how the evolution of the pandemic has been related to how secure graduates are in their work and how secure they feel.

This chapter looks at which of the graduates were most directly affected in terms of job security, and whether its impacts are as unanticipated as they may at first have seemed. Not unexpectedly, the Futuretrack cohort proved to be more resilient to the labour market shocks induced by the pandemic than many other groups. They are relatively established in their careers. They possess various technical and other knowledge and skills that have allowed them to adapt their jobs to, for example, working from home. They are less likely than non-graduates to be working in the sectors that have been most affected by shutdowns and business closures, and if they do work in these sectors, they tend to be employed in the kind of higher level roles that businesses have needed to retain. If, at the outset, we had predicted who would emerge relatively unscathed from the pandemic in terms of their ability to retain their position in the labour market, the graduates of the Futuretrack cohort would be amongst those best placed. However, this has not been true of all of them.

The first part of this chapter looks at furloughing and impact it has had on participants over the course of the pandemic. Following this, the second part looks at job losses and the threat of redundancy to assess the current extent and impact of employment uncertainty among the Futuretrack cohort.

3.1 Who has been furloughed?

At the time of the stage 6 survey in December 2020/January 2021, approximately 16 per cent of the workforce was currently on furlough through the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) (ONS estimate, 2020) and around 30 per cent had been on furlough at some point. For the Futuretrack cohort, furloughing rates were much lower. Overall, 7 per cent of participants were currently or had been furloughed at some point during the pandemic. This largely reflects the greater likelihood that graduates are in jobs that can be done from home, as well as their lower concentration in sectors of the economy where there have been high levels of furloughing (Joyce and Xu, 2020). Prior to the pandemic, just seven per cent of Futuretrack graduates who responded to the Covid-19 enquiry were employed in the sectors that would be hardest hit – distribution, hotels and catering and transport and tourist services. Employment in arts and entertainment is somewhat more prevalent among Futuretrack graduates, and, as is shown in Chapter 7, this group have experienced much higher levels of furloughing and job uncertainty than other groups. As Table 3.1 shows, the Futuretrack participants most likely to have been furloughed were those in Transport and tourist services,

where over a third had been furloughed, and in Arts, entertainment, and recreation, where a fifth (20 per cent) had been furloughed.

Table 3.1 Percentage of Futuretrack participants furloughed by sector of employment

Industry	Percentage furloughed at some point during the pandemic
Transport and tourist services	34
Arts, entertainment and recreation (cultural activities, sports)	20
Distribution, hotels, catering (includes retailing, supermarkets, wholesale or retail distribution)	18
Manufacturing (includes engineering)	13
Construction (includes civil engineering)	12
Business services (includes legal services, computing, advertising, public relations, R&D)	8
Information and communications sector (includes media)	8
Electricity, gas, water supply	6
Agriculture, mining, quarrying (includes oil and gas extraction)	5
Education (includes schools, colleges, and universities)	5
Banking, finance, insurance	3
Other public services (local or central government, health services, police, social services)	3
Other, including charities	12

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020, all employed and self-employed with known industry (n = 3859, furloughed =300)

Furlough levels were also relatively high in distribution, hotels and catering, including retail (18 per cent) but graduates working in this sector were furloughed at a lower rate than their non-graduate colleagues. Low levels of furloughing were seen amongst participants working in education (five per cent), banking, finance and insurance (3 per cent) and other public services, including local or central government, health services, police, social services (three per cent).

Prior to the pandemic and continuing now, a higher proportion of Futuretrack graduates (and graduates generally) were employed in the public sector compared to the population as a whole. Public sector employers were not expected to use the furlough scheme and take-up levels have been much lower in the public sector than in the private and not-for-profit sectors. This pattern is reflected in the furloughing rates of Futuretrack graduates, as 13 per cent of participants working in the private sector and 11 per cent of those working in the not-for-profit sector had been furloughed at some point, compared with 2 per cent of those working in the public sector.

While it was not possible to predict that the Covid-19 pandemic would occur, the greater susceptibility of customer-facing sectors and industries to pandemics and other health-related crises had been established through analysis of labour market changes during, for example, the SARS pandemic in 2003 and the influenza pandemic in 2009-10 (Lee and Warner, 2005). Consequently, while Futuretrack graduates working in these sectors and industries could not prepare themselves for a pandemic, once it occurred, their relative vulnerability to its economic effects quickly became clear.

The likelihood of being furloughed was greatest amongst Futuretrack participants in SOC major groups 4 to 9. On average, seven percent of participants in managerial, professional or associate professional jobs (SOC major groups 1 to 3) had been furloughed at some point

up until December 2020/January 2021, compared with 16 per cent employed in jobs in SOC major groups 4 to 9. Those who had been employed in non-graduate jobs prior to the pandemic were also slightly more likely to have been furloughed during the pandemic, with 15 per cent having been furloughed, compared with 6 per cent of those in graduate jobs. As is discussed in Chapter 6, this reflects their greater ability to conduct their jobs from home and means, as Table 3.2 shows, that participants working in jobs that involved higher degrees of communication skills were more likely than those in other types of job to be furloughed rather than being able to continue their work at home.

Table 3.2 Percentage of Futuretrack participants furloughed by SOC(HE) group

SOC(HE) 2020 group	Percentage furloughed at some point during the pandemic
Expert	5
Orchestrator	7
Communicator	9
Non-graduate	15

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020, all employed and self-employed (n=4,110)

Somewhat unexpectedly, female participants were no more likely to have been furloughed than male participants. As is discussed in Chapter 8, there is evidence that women have taken greater responsibility for things like home schooling children and have taken up initiatives like flexible furlough to enable them to do this, but this does not seem to be the case with the Futuretrack cohort. As Table 3.3 shows, the relationship between having spent time on furlough and other characteristics is more predictable, based on our existing knowledge of the operation of the graduate labour market (Elias *et al.*, 2021). Participants from a routine and manual background, who were less likely to work in graduate jobs and in managerial roles were the most likely to have been furloughed with the proportion of this group amongst the furloughed population being five per cent higher than their representation in the Futuretrack cohort as a whole. At the opposite end of the spectrum, participants from a managerial or professional background were under-represented amongst the furloughed group, also by five per cent. Similarly, participants who graduated from a highest tariff HEI were under-represented by 11 per cent in the furloughed group, while those who graduated from a medium tariff HEI were over-represented by 8 per cent. The proportion of graduates from lower tariff HEIs who had been furloughed was in line with what would be expected based on the proportion of the Futuretrack cohort they make up, but the numbers in this group are low. As would be expected, given the sectors that have been hardest hit by the pandemic, graduates with degrees in creative arts and design subjects were the most likely to have been furloughed at some point, while graduates in medicine and related subjects, who have largely been essential workers during the pandemic were the least likely (along with graduates from the small linguistics and classics group).

Table 3.3 Characteristics associated with having been furloughed

	More likely to have been furloughed	Less likely to have been furloughed
Social class	Routine and manual background (+5%)	Managerial and professional background (-5%)
HEI type	Medium tariff (+8%)	Highest tariff (-11%)
Subject group	Creative Arts and Design (+7%)	Medicine and Dentistry (-3%) Subjects allied to medicine (-3%) Linguistics and Classics (-3%)

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 linked survey (n = 3,837)

3.2 The impact of furlough on participants' financial situation

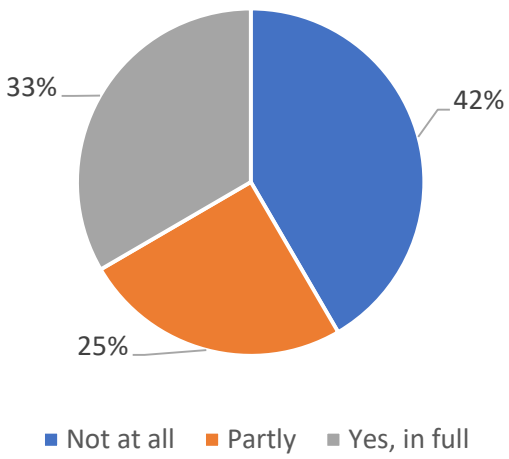
A key issue in successfully navigating unexpected events relates to financial resilience and the ability of an individual to have a financial buffer in place to draw upon in the event of job loss or salary reductions. As has been noted in Chapter 2, the Futuretrack cohort are relatively well-paid compared to their non-graduate peers and most had been able to sustain their income to a large extent during the pandemic. However, some participants who had been furloughed faced challenges due to a pre-existing deficit in financial resilience.

> *Being on four of five months of less than full pay was not something that I could maintain. Other people in the company maybe had more savings or more wealth and they could support the company and help them through. Whereas for me … coming to university and going through university and still I don't have a lot of money. So, I hope even though I've got the career and a good job and a good salary I don't have that money to allow me to be on low pay for more than a couple of months.* (Procurement Expert, Male)

This echoes the findings from the Understanding Society Covid-19 survey, which found that furloughed workers were twice as likely to report financial insecurity than those who had not been furloughed (11 per cent of those who had not been furloughed, compared with 22 per cent of those who had been furloughed). These impacts had arisen in two ways. Firstly, some participants did not have their wages topped up by their employer while they were on furlough, meaning that they were receiving a maximum of 80 per cent of their usual pay. Secondly, the Futuretrack cohort are relatively high earners, which means that they were hit by the maximum payment cap, which was set at £2,500 per month.

As Figure 3.1 shows, a third of participants (33 per cent) who had been furloughed at some point had their pay topped up in full by their employer but 42 per cent did not have their pay topped up at all. A quarter had their pay partially topped up by their employer. Given the small numbers, it is not possible to draw firm conclusion by sector or industry, but indicative analysis suggests that employers in the public sector and the not-for-profit sector were much more likely to top up pay in full than employers in the private sector. Half of the participants employed in the private sector did not have their pay topped up at all. The proportion of Futuretrack participants who had their pay topped up at least partly by their employer is higher than that estimated for the population as a whole, which was around 42 per cent (ONS 2020).

Figure 3.1 Whether participants on furlough had their pay topped up by their employers



Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020, all participants who had been furloughed at some point (n=300)

As a result of reductions in pay levels due to no or partial topping up and the top-up ceiling, nine per cent of participants who had been furloughed had needed to seek financial support from their family.

> *When the original furlough scheme was applied, I was originally furloughed but then I was brought back. But I was the only person in my company who was brought back. So, everybody else who I've been working with was furloughed from April to June, and so there was a bit of jealousy there. But also, one of the disadvantages is that my wage is not topped up, so I have effectively taken a pay cut at the moment*. (Customer Relationship Management Specialist, Male)

> *Because the furlough scheme was 80% or £2,500. So, my salary was £5,000 something. So, when you turn £2,500 into a percentage of what my salary was it's 38%* [...] *So, when people think about this 80% obviously that applied to somebody who maybe is earning… If you earn £2,400 you might get paid, I don't know, £2,100. So, you've gone and lost £300 a month. I was losing £2,500 a month. When you've factored in rent and the lifestyle that you led before it was a major impact on me*. (Procurement Manager, Male)

> *We went from having a not bad income to having… I was on furlough for a while to start with, because obviously, we didn't know that it was going to last as long as it did. We went from two salaries to one salary with a bit of maternity leave, to furlough with a bit of maternity pay. Then the maternity pay ran out and I got made redundant.* (Architect, Male)

It is not possible in the survey data to specifically identify participants who had been on flexible furlough or who had been furloughed on and off, but the qualitative data suggests that this was also an issue for some participants whose incomes fluctuated throughout the pandemic as a result.

> *I wasn't flying November; I won't fly this month and I won't fly January either. That's a furloughed arrangement. When it comes to February, because I believe furlough is extended until April now, I think we'll likely be furloughed until then. It'll go back to that flexible 50% half-furlough, half-on and off*. (Airline Pilot, Male)

Despite these financial difficulties, participants who had been furloughed often expressed relief that the furlough scheme had been introduced and they had not been made redundant instead.

3.3 The impact of furlough on careers and career planning

The likelihood of people who were furloughed losing their jobs once furlough ended has been noted by numerous commentators. It has been estimated that when ending the furlough scheme was mooted in October 2020, 13 per cent of workers who had been on furlough were made redundant and the Office for Budgetary Responsibility suggests that the unemployment rate will peak in the fourth quarter of 2021, when the current furlough scheme is expected to end.

The possibility of furlough being a precursor to redundancy was clearly a concern for some participants, as Table 3.4 shows.

Table 3.4 Whether participants believed they were likely to experience a loss of employment or work as a result of the pandemic by whether they had been furloughed

	Yes	No	Don't know
Furloughed	20	47	33
Not furloughed	7	81	12

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020, all employed and self-employed (n=4110)

Furloughing was seen by some as holding off the inevitable, as employers continued to need to pay non-wage expenses and were continuing to lose money as the pandemic continued. A head of programme commented 'It's quite terrifying when my industry has made 80% of staff redundant.' and an airline pilot wrote 'I think the worry then turns to the downsizing problem. The company may well survive but with how many people left in it?'

The impact of the pandemic continuing and of being on extended furlough was felt by many participants. Early in the pandemic, being on furlough had been seen as simply a process of waiting for a reasonably limited amount of time before restrictions were lifted and they could return to work. However, as furloughing continued or people were furloughed on and off on multiple occasions, being away from work started to take a greater toll on participants' well-being and sense of themselves and their personal identity and value, as the following quotes illustrate.

> *So, work/life balance, I'd like a bit more work please really. It sounds odd but yes, for all the time at home and enjoying the time at home and actually getting back to a normal sleeping pattern, yes but I'd still like to contribute to society a bit, I'd still like to be productive. I have a difficult, technical job that I enjoy doing and without being able to do it, you feel a little bit underused*. (Airline Pilot, Male)

> *It could be easy to just go well, I'm getting paid 80% to sit around and just do nothing but it's why I ended up choosing to go into retail. I actually, as much as I'm introverted, I actually like being people* […] *I really enjoy my job and I really enjoy working. I get bored very quickly so being on furlough has been a nightmare for me*. (Deputy Manager in retail, Female)

As well as presenting immediate concerns about the viability of their current job, participants also noted concerns about the impact having been on extended furlough had on their career progression and possibility of finding other work if they were to lose their job. Some participants noted that they had expected to be promoted during the period covered by the pandemic, but this had been put on hold as they were on furlough or their employer had decided to suspend promotions and other career development opportunities due to the uncertainty of the pandemic and their inability to assess people's skills and readiness for progression when they were not seeing them face-to-face. For the people on furlough, human capital depreciation was also a concern. This was seen to occur because people on furlough were not using or developing their skills and they had lost many of the habits and motivations associated with working, such as timekeeping and managing their time, similar to the depreciation seen amongst the long-term unemployed.

> *Spending 8 months on furlough has robbed me of any routine or schedule in daily life, now that I have been made redundant and am having to look for work, it is very hard to reinstate a strict job-hunting mindset. My particular field is also less likely to be recruiting as commercial advertising will be significantly reduced for some time to come*. (Chartered Accountant, Female)

This raises important questions about the extent to which we expect being a graduate to offer protection from labour market shocks, such as a pandemic, and why. On the one hand, possession of a degree in itself can be seen to bring benefits and to protect graduates through a simple signalling effect. Having a degree signals that graduates possess certain skills and have a certain level of intelligence and commitment that makes them attractive and valuable employees, and this will hold during and after the pandemic, meaning that graduates should not suffer a decline in their position. This can be seen in the ways in which graduates have been relatively less affected by the negative employment consequences of the pandemic. On the other hand, graduates can be seen not just to enter the labour market with a certain level of human capital, but also with the capabilities to develop this further. Graduates who have been on extended periods of furlough have missed an opportunity to continue this development and may even have seen some of their human capital decline through lack of use. The relationship between signalling and human capital development, and which is more important in the graduate labour market is complicated, and how participants who have experienced an extended period of furlough subsequently fare in their careers will provide important evidence about this relationship in the future (Cominetti, *et al.,* 2021).

Taken together, this means that periods of furlough had significantly dented the confidence of some participants, whether or not they perceived their current job to be currently under threat. Participants who had been furloughed were less likely than those who had not been furloughed to say that they had a clear idea about the occupation they hoped to have in five years' time (15 per cent compared with 22 per cent) and more likely to say that they had no idea about the occupation they hoped to have (14 per cent compared with 7 per cent). They were also more likely to say that the Covid-19 situation had made them think differently about what is important to them in their career (67 per cent compared with 54 per cent) and to think that they were not in a good situation in terms of their long-term career prospects.

3.4 Voluntary and involuntary job changes

The previous section has highlighted the possibility that furloughing has, for many employers, simply delayed the inevitable: that they will have to lay off staff, that their businesses will close. This is not to say that furloughing has not been beneficial for individuals who might otherwise have lost their jobs in the middle of a pandemic. Furloughing has been seen, for example, to reduce mental distress for all workers (ONS, 2021) and while being under threat of redundancy or being worried that you might lose your job in the future inevitably affected participants' wellbeing, job satisfaction and feeling of security, the immediate practical implications and participants' ability to plan for this eventuality were improved by the buffer provided by furloughing or the possibility that they could be furloughed if necessary. It gave participants the option of taking a more strategic approach to managing their future employment and financial situation, it gave them time (Bourquin *et al*, 2020). However, it is recognised that furlough could be a precursor of redundancy and a sign that there may be worse to come for many workers during the pandemic, including some participants in the Futuretrack cohort.

3.5 Who has changed jobs and why?

Among Futuretrack respondents, levels of formal redundancy have been relatively low, with a very small number having been made formally redundant. A larger proportion had changed employers, either voluntary or involuntarily during the course of the pandemic, although graduates have changed jobs at a lower rate than other groups in the population. As has been discussed above, this is not entirely unexpected, as the Futuretrack cohort enjoys certain advantages due to their experience and age, job role and type of work, and the assumed benefits of having a degree.

A far larger proportion were worried that they might lose their job as a result of the pandemic. At the time of the initial Covid-19 enquiry, 13 per cent of Futuretrack participants were working in organisations that had reduced their workforce. Futuretrack participants in these organisations had largely survived this initial reduction in workforce numbers, possibly reflecting the type of role they held in these organisations and the nature of their work, as they were less likely to be working in the lowest paid and most vulnerable roles in these organisations and more likely to have managerial or other senior roles and work that could be done from home. Despite this, as in the case of furloughing, businesses shedding jobs was seen by participants as potentially being a precursor to the loss of their own job because it was a clear sign that a business was in trouble, particularly as support like bounce-back loans becomes exhausted.

> *So, I was furloughed in May, with the intention being we'll be closed for three months, May, June, July and we'd come back in August. And then actually, not long after I'd started my furlough period, about a couple of weeks in May, they said we've run the numbers again. Even with all the furloughs and the pay cuts, it's just not enough.* […] *So, even with all those measures, it's not sufficient and we need to make some permanent cuts.* (Advertising Account Manager, Female)

> *My company furloughed and then made redundant half of my team, I'm now doing the work of my direct reports as well as my own work. This is a similar experience to other staff at my level* (Site Supervisor, Female)

Overall, 13 per cent of those who had changed jobs had been furloughed at some point, although for some furloughing occurred in their new job and was not a precursor to leaving their previous job.

It must be noted that not all job moves will have occurred as a result of the pandemic. Looking across all sectors, while it can be seen that those who have changed jobs were slightly more likely to not have a permanent job prior to their job change, it is also the case that movers were more likely to have been in SOC major group 1 (Managers, directors and senior officials). As has been noted, this group appear to have experienced the least negative employment effects from the pandemic, so it may be anticipated that participants in this group moved primarily to obtain a job with commensurate or better pay and conditions, and that this coincidentally occurred during the pandemic.

> *It gave me time to find, apply, and interview for my current job. Also, the time to research and further my knowledge in the area of my role. Online working opened up training opportunities that were inaccessible before as not based in London.* (Councillor, previously a Teaching Assistant, Female)

This type of move was not without its difficulties during the pandemic, as the quote above illustrates. While the participant had moved jobs voluntarily, they had experienced difficulties in starting a new job while under pandemic-related restrictions, finding it difficult to integrate into their new organisation.

Unlike in the case of furloughing, there are no clear patterns when looking at the relationship between personal and other characteristics and the likelihood that someone will have changed jobs, which again points to there being different motivations and other factors underlying these job changes. In contrast to furloughing, gender is the only characteristics showing some relationship with job change, with women being more likely to change jobs than would be anticipated, with a four percent difference in their representation in the job change group compared to the Futuretrack cohort as a whole. This highlights the extent to which furloughing has so far protected employees in some of the most vulnerable sectors, such as the arts and entertainment, limiting job losses in these sectors, but, as has been

noted, there remains a big question about what will happen to these workers when the furloughing scheme ends.

3.6 Occupational mobility and skills mismatches

Graduates have a tendency and the ability to be more mobile, both occupationally and geographically, than less highly qualified members of the population. This gives them more potential to move out of organisations that are struggling by finding different employment, limiting some of the most negative effects of economic downturns, but it can also have negative consequences in terms of skills-mismatch, productivity and job satisfaction, particularly in cases where these moves are not seen by participants as being entirely voluntary.

It has been anticipated that the pandemic will result in significant reallocation of workers as individuals move out of the hardest hit sectors and occupations and into those that offer more secure work (ONS, 2021). To date, the exact nature and extent of this reallocation is not fully known, and it appears that it has not happened at the level some commentators have predicted. There is little evidence that graduates specifically have been moving jobs at a higher rate than normal during the pandemic (ONS, 2021; Brewer *et al*, 2020). This is true of the Futuretrack participants. When comparing the employment activity of these participants prior to the pandemic and their activity in December 2020/January 2021, there is little evidence of movement out of the hardest hit sectors. Broadly, if a participant has moved jobs, they have remained in the same employment sector and the overall sectoral profile of the jobs held by graduates who changed jobs during the pandemic is very similar to the overall profile of the cohort. A notable feature of the job moves by the Futuretrack participants is how quickly they were able to find new employment, often by drawing on industry networks they had developed during the course of their previous employment, as the quote below demonstrates:

> *I became redundant on the Friday and started the new job on the Monday. I count myself exceedingly lucky for that to have happened. I did not expect it. It was a total fluke, but sometimes these things happened. Is it the best job going? Not really. Is it where I necessarily see myself in five years' time? Not necessarily, but we'll see what happens in the intervening time. Also, I took a pay-cut as well, but it does put food on the table.* (Architect, Male)

This is in contrast to patterns in the labour market as a whole, where rises in unemployment have been driven by lower vacancy levels and delays in unemployed people being able to find new jobs (Bell, 2020). The quote also demonstrates another aspect related to occupational downgrading by graduates – that in many cases this is likely to be temporary. Due to their skills and experience, graduates in the Futuretrack cohort have the ability to 'bump down' temporarily, taking jobs below the skill or pay level they want as a stopgap measure to remain in employment. However, while this may have mixed consequences for the graduates themselves, these kinds of moves can cause significant problems in the labour market as a whole as lower skilled and qualified workers are displaced and lose opportunities to increase their employment experience and human capital development in a way that has been seen to affect them throughout their working lives.

There appears to have been some limited movement out of the transport and tourism and construction (including civil engineering), primarily into jobs in other public services, and from the manufacturing sector into a range of allied sectors, including the information and communications sector and business services. However, in all cases the numbers are very low. One respondent explicitly wrote '*Worked in travel so was motivated to move to a more secure industry*' (Business Analytics Manager, previously a Senior Marketing Manager).

There is also little evidence of participants moving into the public sector from the private sector, despite the greater level of insecurity perceived by participants working in the private sector. However, we did find evidence of movement out of the not-for-profit sector into both the public and private sectors. Less than half of the participants (40%) who had been working in the not-for-profit sector and who had changed jobs during the pandemic remained employed in the not-for-profit sector. A third had moved into employment in the public sector and just over a quarter into employment in the private sector. The not-for-profit sector has been particularly hard-hit by the pandemic due to decreases in funding and difficulties in continuing existing activities, but movement of graduates out of the not-for-profit sector is a trend that can be seen in pre-pandemic times, suggesting the pandemic may have accelerated this phenomenon rather than creating new divisions in the labour market.

While participants have generally remained in the same sector of employment, there is some evidence of downgrading of pay and conditions, as well as a small amount of evidence of skills mismatch occurring as a result of job moves into lower level roles and into jobs that do not use the skills participants had developed in previous roles. For example, the Futuretrack participants who had moved jobs were more likely to have found work that was in some way temporary (almost 40 per cent).

> *I feel quite fortunate that I was able to find a role, but that wasn't a permanent role, that was a temporary three month rolling contract role.* […] *They just wanted me to be an extra just to help with certain projects while they were going on. So, I wasn't a permanent employee. So, I've been carrying on with that and fortunately, there's more contracts that have come in in the last month, so I'm able to carry on for another three months until the end of March.* (Aerospace Engineer, Male)

> *I was made redundant in August after being on furlough since April. I have temporary work now in a field that benefits my career so I'm very happy and content despite the salary being a lot lower given reduced hours. This pandemic has made me appreciate the importance of employment in terms of stability and how fortunate I now am to have that and within my career ambitions during this disastrous time*. (Communications Officer, previously a Business Development Manager, Male)

In the labour market generally, there is little evidence of graduates experiencing a higher degree of skill-mismatching during the pandemic, in fact there is evidence that the degree of skill-mismatch for graduates has actually decreased (ONS, 2021), although whether this is due to movement out of jobs in hard-hit-sectors like hospitality and tourism where jobs are less likely to be graduate jobs, meaning that graduates who experienced the highest rate of skills-mismatching prior to the pandemic were also the ones who were more likely to change jobs during the pandemic, is unclear. The qualitative data shows that some degree of skills-mismatching had occurred for some participants. These participants had largely been forced to change jobs as a result of redundancy and had taken work that was in a different area and often below the role level they had previously had. One wrote '*I've had to change career, and am now starting from scratch in a new area*' (Trainee Teacher, previously a Skills Developer in Education), a second '*It had taken me 10 years to finally start getting somewhere on the career ladder and covid has put me right back to the bottom rung'* (One-to-one Learning Assistant, previous occupation unknown)*'* and a third '*I was made redundant and took a role that may not lead back to my chosen career as I needed to secure my finances'* (Account Director, previous Product Manager in the Pharmaceutical industry).

When considering whether these patterns were predictable prior to the pandemic, broadly speaking many of them were. Graduates have generally been more resilient and less likely to lose their jobs in a jobs recession (Clarke, 2019; Pacitti and Smith, 2019), and will be particularly unlikely to do so in the anticipated K-shaped recession recovery where the sectors that are anticipated to be slowest to recover are not those with a high proportion of

graduate employment, so the low levels of redundancy and job change seen to date are expected.

Where there is evidence of involuntary job changes, these have largely occurred in sectors such as the arts and entertainment and travel and transport which have generally tended to be more precarious and, being more demand driven, more susceptible to fluctuations in the strength of the economy and consumer spending. Similarly, public sector jobs have tended to be more recession-proof and while the public sector had faced cuts in the years prior to the pandemic, by the time the pandemic hit the public and private sectors were experiencing similar levels of growth which, it has been suggested (see, for example, IFS, 2019), was indicative of a nascent public sector job recovery. The movement of people out of the not-for profit sector, while it may have been accelerated by the pandemic has also been a feature of the graduate labour market and has been seen when looking at job moves of Futuretrack participants in non-pandemic times. These jobs have tended to be more unstable, often come with short-term funding, and pay levels tend to be lower than for similar roles in the public and private sectors. It is notable that people who stated that they valued job security and who took their job at Wave 5 because it offered them job security were less likely to have moved jobs during the pandemic. These jobs did not require them to do it and they were not disposed to make changes themselves in such uncertain times. The movement of some of the most vulnerable Futuretrack participants into jobs that do not make full use of their skills is also somewhat predicable. Consistently in the Futuretrack surveys, we can identify participants who have been employed in non-graduate roles that they do not believe make use of their skills, so it is expected that we would still see participants in these roles during the pandemic. Their regression into these roles from formally higher level roles is something that may be related to the pandemic, but these participants tended to be working in more unstable jobs prior to the pandemic, and their position in the graduate labour market was already precarious (as is discussed further in Chapter 4 and Chapter 9).

Chapter 4 Self-employment and employment precarity

One of the factors that led us to conclude that it would be important to follow up the graduates we had surveyed and interviewed in 2019 to investigate the impact of the Covid-19 was our awareness of the potential vulnerability of those who were self-employed or freelance: a small but growing proportion of the sample. At the time of the Stage 5 survey in 2019, 7 per cent reported that their main economic activity was self-employment. Well over double that proportion had been self-employed at some time since graduation, were partly self-employed or, according to some of the interview accounts, had recently begun to develop their own businesses or were planning to do so in the future. At the time of the Stage 6 survey in October 2021, the proportion of the economically active respondents giving their main activity as self-employment remained 7 per cent, with minor movement in and out of that category, as is shown in Table 2.2. A further 12 per cent were in fixed-term or more precarious employment[7]. How had they fared since the onset of the pandemic?

4.1 Contractual status

It is important to consider the different profiles of economic activity categories according to their gender composition. Self-employed respondents in the Stage 6 survey were slightly more likely than employees to be female and to come from professional and managerial backgrounds. In line with their representation in the sample, 8 per cent of the self-employed came from a minority ethnic background. In the 2019 Futuretrack survey we found a bimodal distribution of earnings clearly related to their occupations and the sectors in which they worked, and according to gender, with males more often represented at the higher end of the earnings spectrum. We also found a greater propensity than among employees to work for shorter hours. Consequently, the discussion below compares those in both full and part-time employment with those classifying themselves as self-employed.

Table 4.1 compares the distributions of workers' contractual status in the different broad sectors of economic activity. Education, Marketed Services and Other Public Services stand out as sectors with higher proportions of workers likely to be self-employed or in relatively precarious employment.

Table 4.1 Contractual status by broad sector*

% of Sector	Permanent or open-ended contract	Self-employed	Fixed term and less secure employment
Primary sector and utilities	82%	10%	8%
Manufacturing and construction	94%	4%	3%
Marketed services	72%	19%	10%
Business and other services	86%	9%	5%
Education	74%	4%	23%
Other public services	79%	4%	17%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020, employed and self-employed only (n = 3091, 496 and 268 respectively). * See Appendix A2 for the definition of these broad sectors.

As with employees, a small number of the self-employed worked in the Primary sector and Manufacturing, but the majority were concentrated in Marketed Services (trade, accommodation, transport, arts and entertainment) and in Business & Financial Services). Similar proportions of male and female graduates in self-employment worked in Marketed

[7] This category includes those on fixed-term and probationary contracts, temporary work through an agency and other temporary or casual work.

Services but somewhat higher proportions of males than females worked in Business & Financial Services (33 per cent of self-employed males compared to 29 per cent of the females) and a higher proportion of the self-employed women than men worked in Other Public Services (22 per cent compared to 15 per cent). The 'relatively less secure' high proportion of fixed-term employees in Education almost certainly reflects the incidence of patterns of term-time working in schools, further and higher education which, in the first two of these, has tended to be fairly secure and renewable in the past, although less so in higher education, where they are mainly junior research posts and less established teaching posts; previously early career stages leading to more secure posts which have been in increasingly short supply in recent years. Graduates in Creative Arts were three times more likely than others to be self-employed (21 per cent), whereas those with STEM degrees or with cross-disciplinary degrees were somewhat less likely than average to be. Occupations such as Dentistry and some other medical specialisms, accountancy and finance, journalism and jobs associated with media and performance arts, have traditionally been held by those who are self-employed.

Table 4.2 reveals distinctively different patterns of employment security and experiences of working during the pandemic according to contractual status. Those in fixed-term and other less secure employment reported a very substantially higher incidence of having experienced changes of employer since the onset of the pandemic, many likely to have been in arrangements with employers where they may not have been entitled to income support and, if in employment with the organisation for less than four years, more vulnerable to dismissal than those with permanent contracts[8], though it is interesting that a similar proportion to those with permanent contracts had been furloughed. (e.g., in Education, where some, such as renewable term-time contracts, may be relatively secure).

Table 4.2 Key impacts on work according to contractual status

Experience of work	Proportion recording stated experience		
	Permanent or open-ended contract	Fixed term and less secure employment	Self-employed
Changed employer since March 2020	7%	28%	0.4%
Are or have been furloughed	8%	9%	0.4%
I have been working more hours	26%	25%	20%
I have been working less hours	6%	13%	38%
The current working situation has put a strain on work relationships	31%	30%	27%
The current working situation has made my job more difficult	49%	59%	52%
My job tasks take longer due to Covid-secure working	35%	45%	37%
Worried about contracting Covid at work	47%	46%	29%
Worried about travelling to work	25%	26%	19%
Likely to experience loss of employment because of the coronavirus pandemic	4%	15%	46%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020, employed and self-employed (n = 3,091, 496 and 268 respectively).

It is clear from Table 4.2 that there is considerable diversity in the experiences of members of all three categories but that in general, the self-employed, although encompassing people with very different educational and professional experiences, have been more restricted in their capacity to work and to earn during the pandemic. Those in employment were more likely to be concerned about exposure to Covid-19 and interestingly, those in fixed-term or other less secure employment, significantly more likely to report that Covid had made their

[8] See https://www.compactlaw.co.uk/free-legal-articles/fixed-term-employees-regs-2002.html

job more difficult and that their job tasks take longer. Some of the most secure self-employed professionals were clear about the direct effects on their job of the pandemic.

> *I am a GP. Lots of remote consultations. Huge increase in personal risk in making "pragmatic decisions" with less information. I can accept this as essential and appropriate in challenging times. Not sure the government even understands this, or cares. less income, more hours. It's like being Captain Blackadder, but not as funny to watch.* (NHS Doctor, Male)

Table 4.3 Working from home according to contractual status

Working from home	Permanent or open-ended contract	Fixed term and less secure employment	Self-employed
I work from home some or all the time	61%	60%	50%
Of those who work from home some or all the time:			
I have found working from home difficult due to technological issues	18%	21%	23%
I have found working at home difficult due to lack of dedicated workspace	37%	47%	40%
I have found working from home difficult due to interruptions or distractions	34%	44%	42%
My job takes longer due to online working	24%	28%	22%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020. Employed and self-employed respondents working from home. n = 1,883, 135 and 295 permanent, self-employed, and other less secure employment respectively.

It may not be surprising that Table 4.3 shows that self-employed workers were significantly less likely than employees to work at home for some or all the time, but on other aspects of home-working the differences are more varied. This almost certainly reveals the bimodal distribution of them, as was found in the Futuretrack Stage 5 analyses (Elias *et al.,* 2021) as the interview and qualitative evidence cited below illustrates. The self-employed sample ranged through well-paid and secure professionals in highly paid occupations like doctors in general practice, legal professionals and financial and ICT specialist contractors, self-employed educational tutors and specialists, to freelance media and arts workers and those currently in low-paid agency and other temporary jobs for which their degrees had not been required. Those in fixed-term and other less secure employment, reported greater likelihood of experiencing difficulties due problems in their home-working space, which almost certainly reflects greater likelihood of lacking resources and financial security.

4.2 Financial challenges and support

Of the respondents for whom self-employment has been their main economic activity, exactly a third had obtained some form of government economic support at some stage, although this varied among the three stages for which we have data from the survey, as Table 4.4 shows.

Table 4.4 Proportions of self-employed respondents who reported obtaining financial support under the relevant Government schemes

Government support for self-employed received	% of those currently self-employed
Self-employment Income Support Scheme (1st round up to 14th July)	30%
Self-employment Income Support Scheme (2nd round from 14 July to 31st October)	27%
Self-employment Income Support Scheme (3rd round from 1st November)	14%
Business Loan Interruption Scheme	4%
Coronavirus Future Fund	0%
None of the above	63%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020 (n=268)

Some of those who did not qualify for the support to the self-employed were highly critical of the system and one described the distress the lack of income had caused:

> *I disagree strongly with the government's refusal to furlough limited companies - I am the sole director of my own company - with myself as the only employee - I received only a negligible amount of financial aid in comparison to my teenage daughter and her friends (!) and my colleagues who are self-employed outside of a Ltd Company. I resent that I was penalised for taking the financial advice of my accountant! This has caused a great deal of anxiety within our household especially during lockdown at the time before we had any idea of when restrictions on dental practices would be lifted.* (Dental Therapist and Hygienist, Female)

Only one of the three self-employed interviewees had been entitled to government support:

> *I've qualified for the self-employed income support scheme, which caps at 80% of your average income over the past three years. I'm very grateful for that.* [One] *orchestra I'm a member of has given a small top-up, for cancelled work, basically. This is a modest amount of money but every little helps, and actually, speaking to colleagues with dependents in the ballet, they point out how big a difference actually those philanthropic top-ups, basically, on the part of the company have made. The other orchestra I'm a member of hasn't given any support apart from I think in the initial week of lockdown or something like that where nobody knew that there was going to be a furlough scheme or a self-employed scheme, and so I think they tried to cover 40% or 50% of the fees for a week's work that was cancelled or something like that. But by and large, it's been government support or charitable support for a lot of colleagues.* (Orchestral musician, Male)

Other freelance workers professionals in the creative performance industries did not share these entitlements. The experience of the second freelance interviewee who had been building a successful career in theatre and for television productions prior to the onset of the pandemic said

> *I didn't qualify for any financial help from the government other than Universal Credit which doesn't even cover my mortgage, let alone anything else. So, I could have been in an absolutely terrible financial situation, but luckily my dad has been able to loan me money and that's the only way that I've been able to survive. If I hadn't been in that position, then I probably would have had to sell my flat*. (Costume Designer, Female)

Several musicians and those working in the performance arts commented in the questionnaires on their financial difficulties, most less fortunate than this respondent, as is discussed in Chapter 7.

The final freelance interviewee exemplified a very different experience of self-employment. As a specialist financial accountancy consultant with a degree in Maths from a highest tariff University and subsequent professional qualifications and experience with a leading global accountancy firm, contracts tend to be long-term ones lasting for years or months. Since the start of the pandemic, his income had increased and, as an independent contractor accustomed to remote working, online working and virtual team relationships, working on projects with multiple stakeholders, he had found it easy to adapt to working under the restrictions. He has missed the social contacts and being able to travel, and conceded that:

> *Being a contractor is a bit of a risk for me. However, given the increase in remote working it may work to my advantage and to the contractors' advantage. I bought a place in Leicester when I started working in Germany for most of the time, knowing that I would have to commute, especially if I built up clients in London, but the pandemic means that this is unlikely to be a problem in the future.* (Financial Specialist, Male)

This kind of self-employment exemplified the complexity of organisational resourcing and the blurred and potentially unstable boundaries between employment and work and between employment security and precarity (*c.f.* Labour Market Directorate 2015). His current main client is one that he has worked with for more than five years and he talked about "*in our organisation*…" meaning them, not him. His client organisations had made employees and other contractors redundant, but he reflected that in the current situation, financial projects had scarcely been affected and although usually contractors are the first to be 'let go' in a recession, that had not been the case for him because he's an accountant and financial control continues to be a major and possible increasingly important consideration.

Another example of someone in a similar position shows the importance of established relationships and networks, and the benefits of working in a high-profit sector where employers can afford to be generous to their staff during a slowdown:

> *I am very fortunate because the person in charge of my contract (I am an external contractor to a single organisation) decided to continue paying me. My original job became irrelevant during the crisis, but he found me another role. I believe it is a charitable gesture on his part, as I am not contributing that much to the company any more to justify the amount he is paying me. I feel simultaneously extremely grateful to him, but also acknowledge that this situation could be taken away at any moment".* (Business Consultant, Female).

This respondent nevertheless recognised his potential vulnerability, and his acknowledgement that "I am lucky" was one of the most frequent phrases used by respondents we interviewed and those who wrote comments in response to the open-ended questions. Well-established professionals in highly paid occupations tended to be luckier, or certainly more insulated from the economic impact of Covid, than most of the self-employed workers, as examples from the legal professions show.

> *I am self-employed as a barrister and also hold a 0.33FTE academic post. My academic post is salaried and so that income did not change. My self-employed income dropped dramatically but I qualified for the Govt SEISS. Therefore, the overall financial effect on me has been minimal. I have been very lucky!* (Criminal Barrister, Female)

> *Whilst my income has been lower, I work within the justice system, and I envisage my income will increase as the judiciary gets back to normality, with a view to*

being no worse off by the end of the financial year as I would have been otherwise. (Barrister, Female)

The following example, although probably reliably integrated to his chosen career and equipped to survive into 'the new normal, illustrates the experience of those who had recently moved to self-employment and were somewhat derailed by the onset of the pandemic, even in normally resilient occupations:

As a self-employed individual, I was not eligible for any support. I fell outside of the eligibility criteria because I was employed for 3 months in 2018 (the year I became self-employed). Despite barely earning above the personal tax allowance, because 50% of earnings came from those 3 months I was ineligible. There was no way to appeal this decision and it left me without income for 2.5 months and this will potentially continue into the future. (Solicitor, Female)

Self-employed graduates in the normally lucrative specialist recruitment services were also badly hit:

As the future became less certain decisions with many projects put on hold. Far more work has become necessary for reduced levels of income though hopefully this will change by the end of the year. (Headhunter, Male)

One respondent who worked in Advertising and had been made redundant gave us an account that illustrated this from the perspective of the employees seeking to be matched with employers:

Within advertising, you tend to get recruiters who recruit creators, or recruit account handlers. A lot of my recruiters were just a one off, an individual person or in quite a small firm. So, I probably had about 20 recruiters over the time that I spoke to, a few that were the lead ones that I spoke to the most. […] *a lot of them had furloughed themselves, or there's a partnership of two people and one is furloughed, and one is just keeping the lights on. And I think their market just disappeared for a long time. And then, quite rightly they said there's going to be a lot of freelance work because a lot of people are making cuts now. I heard of one agency that lost 300 people. So, when the work does start to pick up, they're going to need people* [….] *there will be a lot of short notice for able bodies, get the work done*. (Accounts Manager, Female)

This latter group may well ultimately be beneficiaries of the changes in recruiting and workforce resourcing, and we did identify self-employed graduates who had already benefited from changed organisational needs and patterns of consumption, exemplified by the two examples from the ICT sector that follow. A web developer reported *I run a website. Income and website users were up over 300% during the harshest restrictions, although have reduced now but still higher than the same time last year*, and a freelance Animator told us:

Despite one large job being cancelled, I have actually seen an increase in demand due to Covid-19 so far. This is most likely because I can work remotely, and several clients wanted to create Covid-related content or virtual content to replace a cancelled physical event. I am concerned about the possibility of a prolonged economic downturn which would reduce my clients' budgets and could lead to less work for me next year. (Freelance Animator, Male)

The different experiences and budgets of different sectors, and different specialisms within one sector, is well illustrated by two final examples in ICT: a self-employed software designer and a journalist.

I run two businesses, one IT based, and one art based. The IT business accounts for almost all of my income. Nothing in the IT based job changed. I was not able to continue with the art business until recently so the loss of income was from that but has been minimal. (Software designer running her own company, Female)

Both the adults in our household are self-employed but neither of us qualified for any SEISS money so we have been living off savings as work stopped almost completely for both of us during lockdown. Our living standards haven't reduced but our savings have. ….some of my clients have ceased commissioning work or reduced their rates. (Freelance Journalist, Female)

As the examples cited above indicate, self-employed workers across the full occupational range reported short and medium-term challenges. Other examples included graduates working in tourism, hospitality, physiotherapy, ophthalmology and other health-related specialisms and education. Apart from in a few sectors such as some areas of media and other industries where online working and provision of services were the norm such as ICT, few had escaped negative impacts on their capacity to work in their chosen sector and mode of working. Even among those who had been able to continue and even achieved increased incomes, there was concern about the sustainability of their businesses and future career development.

4.3 Perceptions of the future

Table 4.5 shows that those in self-employment were only slightly less likely to feel optimistic about their long-term career prospects than those in permanent employment, whereas those in fixed-term employment were least likely to be. Perhaps the most worrying finding from this table is that less than half of all contractual categories felt optimistic about their long-term career prospects and under 60 per cent expressed confidence that they have the skills employers are likely to be looking for in recruiting for the jobs they might seek.

Table 4.5 Looking to the future: positive views of potential career development by contractual status

Future career and satisfaction	Permanent or open-ended contract	Fixed term and less secure employment	Self-employed
I am optimistic about my long-term career prospects	50%	44%	46%
I have the skills employers are likely to be looking for when recruiting for the kind of jobs I want	60%	62%	55%
Satisfied with job	45%	50%	50%
Satisfied with life	48%	42%	46%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020. Employed and self-employed respondents. Ns = 3,091, 496, 268

Chapter 5 How the restrictions affected work patterns and modes of work

This chapter and the next focus on the different ways of working that emerged in the wake of the Covid-19 restrictions. After outlining the different labour market characteristics and experiences of the Futuretrack sample in 5.1, the remainder of this chapter examines the reported experiences of those who continued to work on-site throughout the pandemic as 'key workers' and others whose work required or enabled them to work in their workplaces or away from home some or all of the time. Chapter 6 focuses on the experiences of Futuretrack graduates working from home and concludes with the experience of return to the workplaces when rules and regulations allowed.

5.1 The range of labour market situations and experiences of the graduates

As has been discussed throughout the Futuretrack survey analyses and has been apparent in the outcomes reported in the early chapters of this report and our previous findings, the graduate labour market is extremely diverse and the opportunities and choices that students and graduates make affects the occupational routes and earnings to which they have access. Table 5.1 illustrates this diversity well. While showing the relative security and labour market integration of the majority, bold highlighting shows how some categories of graduates appear to have been more vulnerable to the work-related and financial impacts of the pandemic than others.

Table 5.1 A comparison of key characteristics and responses according to 6-category subject group*

	STEM	LEM Law Economics Management	Academic discipline focussed	Vocation focussed	Cross disciplinary combinations	Creative arts
% with permanent or open-ended contract	84%	86%	79%	78%	81%	**67%**
% self-employed	4%	7%	8%	7%	5%	**20%**
% in other insecure employment	11%	7%	13%	15%	14%	13%
% working from home some or all of the time	66%	73%	66%	40%	64%	64%
% worried about contracting Covid at work	40%	39%	46%	**56%**	40%	48%
% working more hours	23%	29%	28%	26%	23%	21%
% working less hours	7%	10%	11%	8%	7%	**21%**
'current working situation has my job more difficult'	47%	36%	50%	**62%**	46%	**53%**
'likely to experience loss of employment/work'	6%	7%	**11%**	6%	6%	**25%**
'personal income decreased significantly'	4%	5%	6%	6%	6%	**13%**
Discipline/subject (n)	1260	273	875	849	303	238

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020, all employed and self-employed with known subject studied
*See Appendix A2, Table A.2 for the subjects included in each of these categories.

A similar exploration in Table 5.2 by industry sector shows these differences even more clearly.

Table 5.2 A comparison of key characteristics and responses according to 6-category industry sector*

	Primary & utilities	Manufacturing & construction	Marketed services	Business services	Education	Other public services
% with permanent or open-ended contract	82%	93%	**72%**	86%	**74%**	79%
% self-employed	10%	4%	**19%**	9%	4%	4%
% in other insecure employment	8%	3%	10%	5%	**22%**	**17%**
% working from home some or all of the time	62%	69%	**56%**	77%	**52%**	**51%**
% worried about contracting Covid at work	25%	31%	**46%**	32%	**61%**	**52%**
% working more hours	24%	25%	21%	27%	26%	25%
% working less hours	4%	7%	**24%**	10%	7%	7%
'current working situation has made doing my job more difficult'	33%	39%	**53%**	33%	**67%**	56%
'likely to experience loss of employment or work because of the coronavirus epidemic'	3%	5%	**27%**	8%	7%	3%
'personal income decreased significantly since the start of the pandemic'	5%	5%	**17%**	5%	4%	4%
Number in sector	115	331	424	945	840	1186

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020, all employed and self-employed with known industry
*See Appendix A2, Table A.1 for the industries included in each of these categories.

From the distributional differences above, it is clear where the key workers and those less able to 'ply their trades' are concentrated. In Chapter 7 two of the most substantially affected groups of workers from the two most affected sectors: marketed Services and Education (affected very differently) will be discussed in detail, but it will be clear from the evidence that follows in the remainder of this chapter and the next that the majority of those in employment, whether working from home or working on-site, experienced change in the nature of their work.

5.2 Going to work: key workers and others

The majority of the Futuretrack graduates who continued to go to work in their normal workplaces after the start of the pandemic were those classified as 'key workers', such as

doctors, pharmacists, teachers, and those providing essential products and services in both the public and private sectors. Others started to return to their workplaces from summer 2020, as lockdown periods ended.

In the Futuretrack Stage 6 December survey we asked people about the risks related to going to work and found that just under half (46 per cent) of all economically active respondents said that they worried about contracting Covid-19 at work and a quarter (24 per cent) said that they worried about travelling to work. The experience of 'going to work' varied a great deal, depending on the geographical location of their workplaces and their homes, the industry they worked in and their employers' approaches to 'Covid-secure' working practices.

The following parts of this chapter draw primarily on qualitative data and focus on two themes: how participants and employers dealt with the risk of contracting Covid-19 at work and how the content and intensity of work changed for those who continued to go to work.

5.3 Dealing with the risk of contracting Covid-19 at work

5.3.1 Risks at work

Key workers had to adopt 'Covid-secure' working practices immediately at the start of the pandemic. A nurse working in the Accidents and Emergency (A&E) department of a large NHS trust told us that initially she had found working in the pandemic very stressful but with time she became accustomed to the new ways of working and felt more relaxed due to the effective safety measures:

> *At the start of the pandemic, I think it was just scary because it was a new disease, we didn't really know what we were doing.* […] *Also, there was a bit of an upheaval at work* […] *you would often be going into work and not really knowing what you were going to do for that day.* […] *They were saying, "This PPE will protect you", but nobody really knew for sure. … But as time went on, I think we just got a bit more used to it. And as time went on and we didn't become ill, luckily for us, I think people got a bit less scared.* (Nursing Sister, Female)

Another health care worker, a paramedic, told us that his organisation made the necessary changes to ensure the safety of staff. However, the public did not always behave responsibly, which was a source of stress:

> *There's frustration from a lot of different sources, obviously we're all having to be extra careful and vigilant all the time for Covid as a risk. And it's not a great feeling. Say you're in a patient's house for 20 minutes and they're complaining about a sore leg or whatever and that it turns out they've got the full bingo sheet of all the Covid symptoms. And they just had chosen, for whatever reason, not to mention that on the phone or when you came in*. (Paramedic, Male)

A junior hospital administrator complained:

> *My employer is very slow at providing home working opportunities. Whilst I am very grateful to still be in employment, the ability to work from home would have reduced some of the risk in coming into contact with those with Covid.* (Hospital Administrator, Female)

Like those in healthcare, those in school-teaching were particularly vulnerable to being required to expose themselves to potential infection and to modify their work patterns and modes of work radically to take account of Covid restrictions. Their case is examined in detail in chapter 7.

Participants who were not classified as key workers had to adopt new working practices when their workplaces reopened after the first lockdown. Organisations introduced a range of practices, such as reducing the number of people who were in the building and an office at any given time; administering temperature checks and later regular Covid-19 tests for staff who entered the premises; making it compulsory for staff to wear masks; and introducing enhanced 'cleaning protocols'.

Respondents working in other public-facing sectors and occupations considered that national level rules**,** such as the tier system introduced in England October 2020 had put them at risk of contracting Covid-19 in the workplace. An interviewee working in retail told us that the number of customers in her shop suddenly increased when lockdown was introduced in the local areas surrounding their city:

> *I was like, okay, you've turned us into a target because everybody around us is in lockdown so of course they're going to come to us. So that was the only time I didn't feel 100% comfortable but that wasn't because the company. That was because of the high volume of customers coming in.* (Deputy manager, Female)

This participant was working for an organisation that was very conscious of the danger to employees and customers where she was confident that the 'Covid-secure' practices it had introduced were generally effective:

> *The company took measures. First, we were wearing visors because they preferred the idea of customers could see our face. But when* [it became known that] *they weren't as good as masks,* […] *even before it became mandatory, our company was like "No, we want all of you masking". We've had hand sanitisers stations all around the store.* […] *and they were very much like "Wash your hands every 30 minutes if you can. If you can't, just sanitise your hands as soon as possible". So, the measures that were put in place, I felt very safe.* …[The company managers] *have gone above and beyond to keep us as safe as they possibly can through the whole crisis, and I don't think you can put a price on that.* (Deputy manager, Female).

However, even this participant drew on the discourse of choosing between the risk of contracting Covid-19 and that of losing her job:

> *It sounds like they just didn't care, and they wanted to make money but I saw it very much as no, they wanted to keep the store running because they're thinking of the bottom line in the end. And that's if we don't have these stores open, we're not making money, it's putting us at risk. So, I was like, "No, as long as I'm safe and you're okay, I'll go where you need me to go".* (Deputy Manager, Female)

Some organisations had found innovative ways of coping with the restrictions, including holding face-to-face meetings outdoors. One of the interviewees, an architect, reported that he had a successful job interview that was conducted outdoors.

Other participants who went back to their workplace after the first lockdown reported a variety of poor organisational responses to Covid-19, ranging from 'not taking it seriously' to actively breaking the rules. Unsurprisingly, these participants felt unsafe at work, and they were highly critical of their organisations:

> *The staff are under pressure … from constant nonsensical and inconsistent management changes such as working in separate teams during the week but then being scheduled to work with staff members* [from] *the different teams at the weekends.* (Veterinary Surgeon, Female)

[I was] *initially laid-off (ineligible for furlough), then brought back to work for illegally long hours with limited PPE and close contact with hundreds of people as restrictions eased.* [I was] *unable to say no due to financial pressures.* (First Aid Instructor, Male)

[I'm] *not entirely sure my workplace takes it seriously,* [I] *was back in the office the moment the government allowed it (before it recommended it).* (Ticket Office Manager, Male)

Even when the organisation followed the rules, several respondents reported concern about going to work because they felt that it would put their families and friends at risk:

I have had to go back to the office full time despite being able to work from home and with difficulties around childcare as well as anxieties around catching the virus and passing it to my pregnant wife. It has been very difficult. (Strategic Planning Manager, Male)

All the interviewees and survey respondents who were in customer or client facing roles or required to mix with colleagues during the lock-down periods expressed concern about dangers to themselves and the subsequent need to isolate from family and friends, especially those who were elderly or vulnerable in other ways. For example, the secondary school teacher interviewed stated that she felt let down by her management and trade union in being required to work in what she regarded as this unsafe environment, and felt that she could teach online as effectively as face-to-face:

I haven't seen my family since October because we've had so many cases in my school. I am too scared to go and see my dad who's diabetic, to see nan who's got a heart condition, to see my aunt who's recently had a stroke.

I go into a classroom with 30 kids and those 30 kids don't have masks on. They're sitting side by side. When they have a lunchtime, they're running around amongst each other. They're hugging each other. Their hitting each other there, they're not socially distancing and you get the kids to wear their masks before they go out into the corridor, but as soon as they get out into the corridor, they pull it down to their chin so they can talk to each other […] *so I feel so vulnerable, and I feel so unsupported.* (Secondary School Teacher, Female)

5.3.2 Risks while travelling to work

The risk of contracting Covid-19 while travelling to work was also an important consideration for some participants. Having access to transport that they considered safe, such as using their own car or being able to walk to work made the experience of going to work safer for them, as the following quote illustrates:

I did have some days of still going into work, but this was helped by a parking permit from the local authority where I worked - I feel I would not have been able to otherwise. (Lead Nurse, Male)

To reduce the risk of contracting Covid-19, some participants avoided going to work by reducing their working hours, asking to be furloughed or working from home, as the following quotes demonstrate:

They wanted me to travel through the month of lockdown. They wanted me to go to places where I would have gone into a country and been in lockdown and still had to be working. … So, they wanted me to go to the Netherlands to work, and they were

really bad at the time. They were like, "Well, you either travel or you go on furlough"! (Service Engineer, Male)

Not all participants who were concerned about the risk of contracting Covid-19 at work were able to find alternatives to going to work or were comfortable about the choices they were faced with. A participant who was 'exempt' from having to go to work because they were classified as 'clinically vulnerable' was anxiously looking forward to the change in the rules but felt that she had to choose between her job and her safety:

Now shielding is paused, I have a lot of anxiety about leaving the house and worry I may lose my job when I'm unable to return to the office when requested. (Actuary, Female)

Indeed, comments quoted earlier in this chapter revealed that some participants continued to go to work even when they did not feel safe at work because they were under financial pressure. Some of these participants, for example a veterinary surgeon also was looking for alternative employment:

Any criticism of management results in that staff member being singled out as being 'difficult' or 'negative' resulting in staff feeling unheard and unsupported, as a consequence several members are looking for alternative employment. (Veterinary Surgeon, Female)

5.4 The impact on workloads

Many participants, regardless of their key worker status, who continued to go to work reported that their workload had increased. Often, work intensification was the result of the reduction in staff numbers, as many employers had placed some of their staff on furlough or made them redundant in the first phase of the pandemic. Working overtime was often unpaid, as the following quote demonstrates:

During lockdown the whole team except for veterinary surgeons were furloughed resulting in increased hours and demands on the remaining staff. We have not been remunerated in pay or time or recognised for the additional hours we are working. I'm currently working longer hours with fewer breaks; in addition we have had to provide greater emergency cover including night work. (Veterinary Surgeon, Female)

The engineer quoted below was paid for working overtime, but he could not take any holidays because there was too much work to do:

My job role is very varied … But it kind of is due to COVID, I ended up like this.[…] *originally* [*my job*] *was meant to have been purely just to support new engineers only, that was my only job. And then due to the redundancies, one of the people that left was one of our project managers and also, we lost a few engineers.* […] *It left some big gaps where we've now become very busy.* […] *I'm now filling in for the jobs. For the three people that left, I'm now filling in three different jobs from three different areas.* (Service Engineer, Male)

Other key workers also reported that having to adapt to fast changing rules and regulations increased their workload and made their work more stressful and tiring:

I've had to get used to adapting many times, very quickly, to new tasks, new regulations, new ways of working. There have been changes every week and lots more challenges and responsibilities on top of the normal day job. It has been exhausting. […] *Constant change has also meant it is impossible to relax into a routine, so it's*

mentally very tiring, dealing with something new every few days. (Cardiology Data Manager, Female)

Teachers were particularly strongly affected by work intensification in the first national lockdown in England, when most children were at home and followed classes online, but the children of key workers and vulnerable children were supervised in the schools:

On whatever day I volunteered, I still have to prepare something for my lessons for that day, for the kids that are at home. But then, I have to go into school, and I just sit there in a computer room watching the other kids do their lessons. […] *I couldn't believe it and I was like, they didn't ask us if that's what we wanted.* (Secondary School Teacher, Female)

A similar account, given by the primary school teacher we interviewed, is cited in Chapter 7. When the schools fully reopened in September 2020, the same secondary school teacher told us that the safety measures had led to an increase in her workload and she felt more 'rushed' than before:

We no longer have breaktime, lunchtime or a tutor time. Within the day I have to find time to eat. […] *I think before this whole virus, I actually had a lot more* […] *I didn't feel as rushed. I think I feel a lot more rushed now.*

These findings support the argument that by autumn-winter 2020 key workers faced *'frontline fatigue'*, with schoolteachers and NHS staff finding it particularly difficult to maintain their mental health (Jooshandeh, 2020). The evidence from teachers in Chapter 6 reinforce these findings, along with examples cited by 'key worker' respondents in the other sector where employees had been required to continue to work in their workplaces and engage with the public: such as local and central government services:

*While my sister was off for three months on furlough, I worked 10-11 hour-days, had my annual leave cancelled and expectations became much higher. I am exhausted, the burden of work has become so unequal in this country now with those on furlough or unemployed being bored, scared for their jobs etc and those who continued to work doing more than share. I am exhausted. (*Director of Housing, Female*)*

In contrast, some medical specialists told us that their workload had decreased due to the suspension of some services during the first lockdown and because of social distancing rules in hospitals:

The joys of the NHS, as a radiographer I have not stopped working. That said, as I am specialist in Maxfacs [maxillofacial] *imaging, the number of patients currently on clinics is dramatically reduced.* (Lead Radiographer, Male)

5.5 Redeployment

It was not just the amount of work that changed but for many participants also the nature of work tasks. Many healthcare workers reported that they had been 'redeployed' in the first stage of the pandemic to support those services that were struggling with the workload. For some participants, redeployment was a positive experience in a variety of ways:

I was redeployed within the NHS in March working in a related field but which required learning new skills and working at a different trust. […] *I have been working in both my original and redeployed role during August and am now returning to just my actual job from September. Redeployment meant working antisocial hours so while my pay was protected, I have earned some additional money from weekend working*. (Senior Paediatric Audiologist, Female)

With redeployment, new career development opportunities opened up for trainees and experienced staff both in healthcare and in other industries:

> *I was in my final year of my midwifery training during the Covid pandemic. As a result, I had the option to join the NHS as a paid student midwife to support with the workload at this time. This meant my income increased (as a student all my placements were unpaid until the emergency Covid measures were brought in).* (Midwife, Female)

> *I have been providing local authority pandemic response and have gained lots of experience in health and safety, COVID secure.* […] *I have also advised the Council around the safe reopening of council buildings and dealt with questions and queries from staff. I have also led on the safe reopening of the town centre and sector specific reopening of businesses.* (Senior Environmental Health Officer, Male)

Other participants told us that the shock the pandemic caused to the healthcare system meant that training and personal development opportunities disappeared, at least temporarily, and this had a potential negative effect on their career development:

> *I am a junior doctor whose responsibilities have now changed within the NHS. The service we provide has very turned into 'service provision'. Therefore, the training element has very much disappeared. I am not developing knowledge and skills in the area I wish to pursue and am instead having to manage patients simply at ward level. Elective surgery has been vastly reduced; therefore, training opportunities have significantly been reduced*. (Junior Doctor, Male)

Chapter 6 Working from home

Of Futuretrack graduates who were economically active at the time of the Stage 6 December survey, 60 per cent said that they had started to work from home some or all the time during the pandemic. Relative to the rest of the working population, this 60 per cent almost certainly excludes a high proportion of key workers whose work could not be done from home. This would explain some of the difference from the UK average as estimated from findings in the *Understanding Society Covid-19 Study*[9], which suggested that in April 2020, 43 per cent worked from home, and after a drop in the summer, the rate rose again to 40 per cent in early 2021 (Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2020). This finding indicates the greater scope that graduates and their employers have for home working arrangements.

Focusing on different groups of Futuretrack graduates, 64 per cent of full-time employees, 47 per cent of part time employees and 50 per cent of self-employed participants said they had been working from home some or all the time since the start of the pandemic, and this was a change compared to their previous routine. There was a substantial difference by gender, with 65 per cent of men and 56 per cent of women participants reporting that they worked at home some or all the time during the pandemic. There were only small differences among participants according to their socio-economic background.

6.1 Who was working from home?

The industry where participants worked is clearly linked to the possibility of working from home, as was shown in Table 5.2: 77 per cent of those in Business Services worked from home, in contrast to those working in Education and Other Public Services (52 and 51 per cent respectively). Somewhat surprisingly, 70 per cent of Futuretrack graduates working in Manufacturing and Construction said they had started to work from home.

Given that the subject of undergraduate study is often linked with a specific career pathway in terms of the occupations and sectors within which graduates work, it is not surprising to note the variations in home working during the pandemic by subjects studied. We saw the difference among broad subject groups in Table 5.1, ranging from almost three quarters of those who had a degree in Law, Economics or Management to only 40 per cent of those with 'vocation focussed' degrees working from home some or all the time.

As these differences indicate, area of work and occupation have a significant impact on whether it is possible, and how far it is feasible, to work from home. While just over a fifth of participants in Caring, Leisure and Other Service occupations reported such working arrangements and only 40 per cent of those in Sales and Customer Service occupations did so, those in managerial, professional, and administrative jobs were considerably more likely to have worked from home (Table 6.1), depending on their sectoral situation.

[9] The survey of the Understanding Society Covid-19 Study (USCS) was carried out eight times between April 2020 and March 2021. Around 6,500 workers took part in each survey. They were asked how often they worked at home in the four weeks before completing the online survey.

Table 6.1 Participants working from home some or all the time by SOC 2020 major group

SOC 2020 major group	Started to work from home some or all the time since the introduction of Covid restrictions
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	67%
Professional Occupations	60%
Associate Professional Occupations	67%
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	67%
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	40%
Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	22%
Other	33%
Total	**60%**

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 dataset linked to Stage 5 (n = 3,860)

Three quarters (77 per cent) of participants employed in the charity sector shifted to working from home, in contrast to 68 per cent of those employed in the private and 46 per cent of those in the public sector, reflecting the greater likelihood of the last of these to be engaged in the provision of essential services in healthcare, education and public administration.

Respondents who said that they had started to work from home some or all the time since the start of the Covid restrictions were asked to indicate the extent of their prior and Covid-restricted homeworking. The data shown in Table 6.2 demonstrates a major 'shift' towards working from home within this group.

Table 6.2 Frequency of participants working from home

Frequency	Prior to the onset of restrictions	December 2020
All or most of the time	3%	76%
More than half of my time	4%	9%
1 or 2 days per week	18%	8%
Occasionally	25%	6%
Never or hardly ever	50%	1%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6, December survey (N=2,315)

6.2 The experience of working from home

At the time of the Futuretrack Stage 6 December survey, 82 per cent of those working at home some or all the time said they had been asked by their employers to work from home and only 24 per cent said they were working from home because this was their preferred mode of working.

While the majority has 'shifted' to working from home without any problems, a sizeable minority found working from home difficult for a variety of reasons: a fifth (19 per cent) found working from home difficult due to technological issues; 39 per cent due to the lack of dedicated workspace; and 36 per cent due to interruptions or distractions. A quarter (24 per cent) reported that their job took longer due to online working.

Whether someone was able to work from home or not depended on several factors, including the type of work they did, the quality of the office and the home environment, the length, and the quality of their commute, and whether they had children and could access childcare, among others. Participants have described the experience of working from home as complex/multifaceted. The following two quotes illustrate two very different evaluations of the experience of working from as reported by Futuretrack participants:

> *Working from home has allowed me to work more productively with less distractions and interruptions. It has also allowed me to work more comfortably, in a nicer setting with easier opportunities to truly have a break from work in my lunch hour.* […] *It has given me more time and cost savings now I don't have to do the 45 min commute each way in traffic daily.* (Faculty Assistant, Female)

> *I miss the office. My working day being 'fall out of bed and walk six paces to my computer chair, then stay there until midnight' is... dispiriting.* (Managing Partner, Male)

Other respondents had found working at home particularly difficult and were concerned about its impact on their career prospects, acknowledging that their individual characteristics as well as their work and home circumstances had shaped their experience of working from home, as the next two examples illustrate. An Investigator of financial complaints said '*I struggle to remain motivated and focused when working at home, which may endanger my career'* and a `projects and communications officer reflected '*I don't work productively from home, so previous job searches that I was doing (prior to Covid) have now been put on hold indefinitely, limiting my career progression opportunities'.* A User experience designer was more positive about the experience, commenting '*I prefer the home working environment, where I can focus. Compared to being in an office environment, I do tend to prefer the current working situation, where I feel much more productive and able to contact people as and when I need.*

Others who had previously been unable to work from home saw distinct advantages in the experience. An Executive officer in the Civil Service wrote: '*I was too junior to be able to work from home before Covid. Now I've discovered that I am more productive and produce better-quality work when I am able to do it outside the office',* and a Senior Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner participant who lives with a disability and finds assistive technology that is not available in the office commented:

> *Working from home has enabled me to use the assistive technology* […] *to work more comfortably and effectively*. […] *I am dreading returning to the office as my employer does not support my assistive tech and has declined to make reasonable adjustments*. (Senior Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner, Female).

6.3 Online working

Working remotely from home mainly meant computer-based and online working. Organisations adopted technological solutions, such as using a virtual private network for communications, encryption devices and enhanced password protection, which made it possible for employees to work effectively whilst complying with data security regulations. Some companies found the shift to remote working relatively easy, because they already had systems in place, for example, because they were committed to employing people with disabilities or encouraged to 'sustainable' ways of working, which included avoiding unnecessary travel. One participant working in Advertising, where much of the work involved computer-based and online working, described how quickly her organisation adapted to the changes from the start:

> *Some people were doing a regular day a week from home, but what we'd never done is try everybody working from home*. […] *It was agreed that Monday the 17th of March*

> *would be the day to test* [*if*] *the IT system could support everybody being at home and dialling in*. […] *It was smooth, actually, the transition* […] *and the management held a meeting at the end of the day to say "Yes, this is now the way of working for the future".* (Senior Account Director, Female)

Some employers were very supportive to their staff when work moved online: participants reported that their organisations introduced the use of Microsoft Teams or other collaborative software and provided equipment in addition to providing a work laptop, such as keyboards, printers, and monitors, either by encouraging people to take their equipment home from the office or reimbursing the price of new equipment. Some companies conducted health and safety assessments for home workers and had different 'offers' of IT equipment and office furniture to staff, depending on how much space they had at home. An examinations and assessment manager working in the higher education sector told us that their employer also covered the cost of cancelling existing broadband contracts if the service was not adequate for working from home. Equipment provided by organisations was not always of great quality and some participants told us that they preferred to use their own equipment, which they paid for themselves:

> *I already had a computer, so I would always use that for planning at home, and that was already linked into the school's server, so luckily that was already set up. But I know from other colleagues who perhaps had a school laptop, they are quite old, they take a long time to load, if you do anything, you have to save it like crazy in case it dies, it was quite a battle for some of my colleagues. And some of them even went out and bought their own or ordered their own laptops and new technology just so they could do work at home.* (Primary School Teacher, Female)

Other workplaces were unable to provide equipment and it meant the loss of employment for a precariously employed participant:

> *At the start of the pandemic I was working as a temp in academia. There was no WFH laptop available, and the project had to be paused so that job ended due to the pandemic.* (Business Intelligence Developer, Female)

Collaboration tools, such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom were viewed as an improvement over exchanging emails. A partnership manager said '*It means that you can just ping a message across or have a quick video call with someone so you can actually discuss and idea rather than sending 15 emails back and forth*' and another reflected that the volume of work had decreased due to online working, because colleagues were less likely to call an *ad hoc* meeting, *'just to look busy in the office'* and it was not possible for others to come to his desk and ask a favour. However, some participants noted that they spent a lot of time in online meetings, because colleagues could not have a quick, informal chat to 'bounce off' ideas as they did while working in the same space, and they tended to arrange online meetings instead. Various solutions were suggested to this problem, such as organising regular short 'catch-ups' for work teams and arranging meeting-free times to allow people to work without interruptions.

Many participants felt that the lack of face-to-face team working had a negative impact on their performance, as the following quote from an architect illustrates:

> *You can design on your own, but I would say it doesn't give you the kind of level of rigour that you need in a creative industry. If you've not got somebody to sound off with or to bounce stuff off against, then you do end up working in a vacuum. And that is never a particularly good idea, in my opinion.* (Architect, Male)

Some participants with managerial responsibilities felt that while working online they could not support their team as well as they would have liked, especially as they had no guidance or support in doing so, as the following quote shows:

> *I was given a laptop, but not much support in managing a team remotely. I had to google some tips, and support my team as they were also working from home for the first time.* (Stock Planning Manager, Male)

Others were given more support: a teacher told us that her school had hired a new member of staff to provide support with teaching and learning technology and general IT issues and this meant that she found online teaching much easier to do:

> *He just supports everything tech-wise. We started using Google Classroom and YouTube a lot more, and he knows how to programme everything. He can help with any laptop issues as well. He's a full package for us*. (Primary School Teacher, Female)

6.4 The impact on working time

Many participants reported that they saved time by not having to commute and they had better 'work-life balance', that is, they were able to spend more time with their family and do more errands compared to the time when they worked in an office. Some argued that this time flexibility increased their productivity. A lawyer said '*If I'm really being unproductive, I just stop and go and do something else for half an hour and clear my mind and come back.* […] *In the office environment you can't always do that'*. Another participant explained that he had adapted his working hours to his 'body clock' and worked in the morning and in the evening, with a break, or even a nap in the afternoon. Combined with the fact that he did not have to get up early to travel for work, this participant reported sleeping better and feeling more rested than before the pandemic.

As negative outcomes of this flexibility, many participants told us that they found it difficult to separate 'work' and 'life' and as a result, they started to work longer hours. Some blamed this on their 'bad habits' or 'mindset' of staying at their computers to carry on working late in the evening. Others linked the temporal and special aspects of flexibility, recognising that it was the blurring of personal and professional space that led to their working longer hours. This is consistent with Clark's (2000) 'border theory' findings that achieving work-life-balance is more difficult where the borders between home and work are intrinsically blurred, as is the case for remote workers. It is difficult to avoid work pressures encroaching non-work time, as reflected in reports of the inability to 'switch off' and difficulties in unwinding at the end of the workday. Indeed, some participants commented that they missed their commute, which had created a clear division between home and work and gave them time to 'transition' from one mindset to the other.

> *When it gets to 17:30, I'm still working because, I think, I'm at home. When I was in the office, when it'd come to 17:30 I would just go home because I didn't want to be in the office anymore.* […] *But because I'm at home, I feel like it's more, I guess, I feel a little bit of a sense of working. Because I feel if I take a break at home, it doesn't feel like an actual break.* (Customer Relationship Manager, Male)

Another participant suggested that they worked longer hours because there was nothing else for them to do:

> *As a professional currently living on my own, work has been unaffected as I am able to work from home. However, without other outlets for my time my working has steadily increased throughout this period.* (Senior Product Manager, Female)

Others argued that that there was more work to do, partly because they were responsible for their organisation adapting to the changes caused by the pandemic. One participant reported working longer hours because there was increased demand for the services of the mental health team that she led and this was exacerbated by the often-changing Covid-19 restrictions and regulations, which she had to keep track of and implement for her team who continued to work face-to-face with clients in the NHS. This is consistent with findings from other surveys, such as the *Working from Home* survey commissioned by the Scottish Trade Union Congress, which found that 30-40 per cent experienced increases in volumes and intensity of work as well as pressure of work (Taylor *et al.,* 2021).

Some participants said they worked overtime without pay to compensate for the shorter working hours of their colleagues who had other responsibilities, such as looking after children or other family members. In addition, 'presenteeism' did not cease to exist while working at home: a senior mental health practitioner who started a new job during the pandemic and was unable to work in the office with her team due to a health condition, felt she had to 'prove herself' and work very hard from home, saying '*I have to prove my worth in some way and then shielding makes it seem less work.* […] *It's probably why* […] *I do a lot more work in the evening.*

Online meetings also made it possible for people to join a meeting on their day off when they would not normally be in the office. As the following quote demonstrates, one participant did not view joining a meeting as work:

> […] *sometimes people booking important meetings when I'm off, so I feel an obligation to join the meeting. And I guess that's technically working, even though I'm not, I'm just sitting in the meeting.* (Customer Relationship Manager, Male)

6.5 The importance of workspace and resources

The experiences of working from home varied a great deal across different groups, depending on how easy or difficult it was for them to create a dedicated workspace at home. Those who did not have enough space at home experienced the loss of personal space and felt that their homes had been transformed into what one participant referred to as 'professional space'. At their current stage of life and career, many of them did not have enough space to work comfortably from home, illustrated by the researcher who wrote '*Not owning a home/ having a salary to rent a decent flat has meant that working from home has not been an enjoyable experience'.*

One participant, who lived in a small flat with her husband and mother-in-law told us how difficult it was to negotiate the space she needed to work from home:

> *My living conditions were at my mother-in-law's flat, which is a council flat. My desk we'd managed to squeeze in, in the corner of the living room. Imagine when we needed to do Zoom calls or conferencing via video call. It was really tricky* […] *with mother-in-law in the background. Especially when things in lockdown calmed down and we were allowed to have people back in* […] *a couple of times I had to go into the bedroom instead, or I'd have to close the door and say, "Sorry, you can't come in the living room, I've got to have this meeting".* (Primary School Teacher, Female)

The impact of household context, particularly in the cases of those responsible for children and those living alone, is discussed in Chapter 8. One participant moved out of shared accommodation and rented a flat by himself to be able to work from home without interruptions, even though his new accommodation was more expensive. However, there was a fine balance between having enough space to work without interruptions and becoming completely isolated, which affected participants mental health and general wellbeing, as discussed in Chapter 8.

For those living in expensive cities, such as London, working from home made many painfully aware of their financial situation:

> *Working from home - we are a family of four living in a 65 sqm, 2-bedroomed flat - has been difficult, highlighted how little we have - two employed 'middle class' earners - compared to others who have enjoyed the opportunity of working from home.* (Architect, Male)

In addition to workspace, participants needed non-essential equipment, such as an office chair, a desk, and a lamp to make the home working environment more comfortable. Some participants lacked these items, as the following quote from an interview conducted in December 2020 demonstrates:

> *I've pretty much been working in my bed, from bed since March. And it's not doing my back a lot of, a great number of favours. But I thought this was only going to be three weeks, but it's turned into nearly a year. And, yes, the only thing I can say is that when I do move out and get, move into my new place, I will be getting a new desk, probably a standing desk, just to help things out.* (Customer Relationship Manager, Male)

Some participants told us that they were encouraged to take equipment and resources like their ergonomic chairs home from the office, while other employers covered the cost of buying office furniture. In addition, many participants used their own money to turn spare bedrooms and garden sheds into office spaces. A partnership manager reported that their organisations also paid a small monthly allowance to contribute to the increased utility bills while working from home.

6.6 The return to the workplace and hybrid working

The lack of adequate workspace and the difficulties of separating personal and professional space and time while working from home meant that many participants welcomed the opportunity to return to the office when the rules allowed this, particularly those who were parents, as is discussed below in Chapter 8. Those who could not work at home in a meaningful way because of the nature of their work, found the return to the workplace particularly important and a very positive experience, as the following quote from an engineer demonstrates:

> *During the lockdown I was working fewer hours due to the limited amount work possible without access to our workshop and lab.* […] *I am now working back in the office on the same hours as pre-lockdown*. (Controls Engineer, Male)

For some, returning to the office was an important element of improving their mental health and they felt grateful when their employer made it possible:

> *I've been living in London in shared housing, and the potential longer-term home-working impact has had a negative effect on my productivity and mental health. However, my employer is very supportive and facilitated a part-time return to the office for me to protect my wellbeing.* (Projects and Communications Officer, Female)

However, for those who missed the creative spark of face-to-face team working, the experience of going back to the office was not as positive as they had expected due to the continuing impact of Covid restrictions. One participant who had changed jobs during the pandemic and was looking forward to going into the office decided to continue to work from home most of the time after only two days in the office, because with only a very small number of colleagues present, the opportunities for collaboration were rather limited.

Others highlighted how the difficulties of online working discussed earlier continued to affect them when they adopted 'hybrid' work arrangements and spent some of the time in the office and some of the time working from home:

> *I was WFH for 6 weeks and after that have been 3 days at my workplace (a lab) and 2 days home office.* […] *There's also been a number of communication difficulties with having the team split and all communication becoming online (and more formal) rather than casual quick questions in passing.* (Post-doctoral researcher, Female)

In addition to the substantial difficulties presented by changed working arrangements, restrictions, and protocols under the continuing Covid health and safety regimes reported by healthcare staff and teachers, others commented how the current regulations under which people are able to work together presents new challenges. This has been apparent from socially distanced media reporting and both live and filmed performance and sports activities, but the classical musician described its subtle impact on his capacity to work at the standard he aspired to:

> *I've realised that as we've returned to work, obviously when we play, whatever size group, we still have to be quite spread out* […] a*nd that's a frustration because actually, it's very hard to make the high-level adjustments that we're used to when you're basically not in enough proximity, because you struggle orally and visually to make all these fine calculations and adjustments that you do. There have certainly been realisations about how we work and how we actually value actual physical proximity.* (Classical musician, Male)

Presumably most of the Covid-related challenges and modifications to working practices since March 2020 will become redundant once the pandemic is under control and effective vaccines generally available, but of the many modifications that have been engendered since then, it is becoming clear that some changes will persist. The increased and more widespread incidence of working from home is likely be one of them and our evidence suggests that many of respondents aspire to a hybrid pattern of working in the future, as will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Chapter 7 A closer focus on graduates working in two occupational areas

We saw in Chapter 5, Table 5.2 that two broad industry sector categories affected in different ways were Education and Marketed Services. In this chapter we focus on specific occupational groups within these sectors: schoolteachers and those working in performance arts, entertainment and recreation occupations. For both groups, their survey responses showed that their capacity to work and working modes have been significantly affected, in very different ways, by the pandemic restrictions.

Table 7.1 shows a degree of polarisation between the two groups, illustrating the 'key worker' aspect of the job for most teachers, requiring them to attend their workplaces for a high proportion of the time, and greater job insecurity and inability of workers in the performance arts and related sectors to continue normal work patterns. It is important to note a key difference between these two occupational groups: 84 per cent of teachers had permanent employment contracts and 13 per cent fixed-term or more precarious employment, with only 3 per cent were self-employed, whereas in the arts group, only 56 per cent had permanent employment contracts, 12 per cent fixed-term or precarious, with 33 per cent were self-employed. It also needs to be borne in mind that the range of occupations in the teachers' group is more homogeneous that that of the arts, entertainment and recreation group, as will be shown by the accounts cited below.

7.1 The impacts of Covid on patterns and modes of work

Table 7.1 illustrates the impacts on the experience of work of these varying contractual arrangements, both at the time of the survey and prior to the onset of the pandemic.

Table 7.1 Key characteristics and responses comparing teachers with those working in arts, entertainment and recreation

Experience of work	Teachers	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	All employees and self-employed
Changed employer since March 2020	7%	4%	10%
Are or have been furloughed	4%	20%	8%
I work at home some or all the time	25%	67%	60%
Of those working at home:			
Working at home more than half of their time prior to the pandemic	5%	18%	7%
Working at home more than half of their time currently	40%	86%	85%
Worried about contracting Covid at work	78%	43%	46%
Worried about travelling to work	11%	31%	24%
N	309	192	3,860

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 December survey, all in employment.

Those working in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation occupations were significantly more likely to have been furloughed. A low proportion of teachers and higher proportion of workers in arts, entertainment and recreation reported having worked for more than half of their working hours at home before Covid and after the onset of the pandemic. Not surprisingly, teachers were more worried about contracting Covid at work. Two teachers who were interviewed vividly expressed their concerns. A primary school teacher had been one of the

last of her colleagues to be required to teach vulnerable children and the children of key workers in school, in recognition of the fact that she suffers from asthma.

> *They were trying to protect me as much as they could. I was actually really worried about not going in to start with, and …anxious about going in when I needed to go in… mixing with children who were then going home, with parents as nurses and care workers of people who are in direct contact with the virus. And that was really scary for me, obviously seeing everything on the news, how vulnerable people were shielding, and people.* (Primary School Teacher, Female)

She described how in September there was a return to normal working, with all the teachers back in school for shorter hours, but still having responsibility to provide lessons and support to pupils not in school. Echoing the secondary teacher cited in 5.3, she commented:

> *They don't social distance at all. They will come right up to me, they will talk right in my face, they will cough, sneeze - it's not safe at all.* [….] *The only change* [the management team] *made was the children to be in rows. And then the only PPE we had is, you can wear your own mask, or you can use masks that were provided or you can wear a visor, and if you want to wear that all the time, you can. And the other thing I actually did myself was measure a 2m distance from where I would teach to the first row of children, and I would try as much as possible to remind the children that they needed to stay that distance away*. (Primary School Teacher, Female)

When schools reopened to all children in September 2020, individual teachers tried to protect themselves:

> *If there is a kid that needs me to look at their work or they have a particular question for me, I will put my mask on and I will go over to them and I will help them out. But the kids aren't wearing masks, so I try my best not to circulate, as much as I can*. (Secondary School Teacher, Female)

These comments spell out points that time and time again, were made by teachers and other public-facing workers in open-ended responses to the survey.

Conversely, adopting new working practices was much easier for a participant working in the news media, who was classified as a key worker during the first lockdown:

> *The company did really well to move us to a much larger office, which helped us be socially distanced, allowing some people to work from home, and the other departments all continued to work from home, so there was hardly anyone in the office, so I felt safe going to work during lockdown.* (Live Unit Sub-titler, Female)

Table 7.2 reinforces the finding that those working in the arts and related occupations have had substantially less opportunity to work and believed that they had greater likelihood of losing employment and indeed, those who were interviewed graphically described the extent to which they had lost work:

> *At the beginning of the pandemic and the lockdown that ensued* […] *there was just a period of extensive and far-reaching cancellation of live performances. It first of all started week by week, and then month by month, and then on a season-by-season basis until the diary was basically bleached and everything was taken from it, because obviously live performance as we know it, audiences coming together in a theatre or concert hall or opera house, whatever, just wasn't a possibility*. (Orchestral musician, Male)

The varying experiences of these two occupational groups are clearly demonstrated in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Comparison of differences in experiences of work among teachers and those working in arts, entertainment and recreation

Experience of work	Teachers	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	All employees and self-employed
I have been working more hours	27%	17%	25%
I have been working less hours	7%	31%	9%
The current working situation has put a strain on my work relationships	48%	25%	30%
The current working situation has made my job more difficult	89%	55%	51%
My job tasks take longer due to Covid-secure working	73%	36.5%	36%
Likely to experience loss of employment because of the coronavirus pandemic	5%	34%	8%
N	309	192	3,860

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6, December survey, all in employment.

The accounts by the teachers described how for many, the Covid restrictions and regulatory imperatives had led to intensified workloads and the requirement to do 'double shift' working.

> *After Easter, summer two term*, [ ] *I was back in full time teaching keyworker children, but I was still expected to keep up online learning for any other children that were at home and juggling the two things became quite unhealthy. We didn't really get any time out. It was the lifestyle of doing a normal day at school, teaching, and then coming home perhaps a little bit earlier than normal but then responding to parents' emails, phoning parents, keeping up with the online platform and checking learning that children had done online, and then getting up the next day to do normal teaching again.* (Primary School Teacher, Female)

Several teachers reported being demoralised by the relative lack of recognition of how their work had been intensified and their exposure to Covid infection. The impact of these appeared to be undervalued by the public and government compared to the well-lauded response to the challenges of healthcare workers – and indeed, our accounts from teachers and from essential workers in the NHS *do* suggest that the former were more likely to have worked for longer hours and quickly had to learn a new range of skills and modes of working. One teacher commented:

> *Society appears to think we stopped working altogether and were getting paid to do nothing. I am very thankful to have a steady job with a protected income, but people do not realise that we have worked very hard to earn our wage during Covid*. (Primary School Teacher, Female)

In teaching, the impact on workloads and responsibilities varied by level of seniority and contractual basis, as with other sectors, but almost all reported increased challenges in their capacity to achieve their work objectives. A teacher who was also an Assistant Principal said:

> *My role in leading and directing staff did not change. However, the way I did this and the tasks I was expected to do, did. I had to work a lot harder with shorter time constraints due to the constantly changing benchmarks and decisions by the situation and governmental advice.* (Assistant Principal, Male)

Some teachers, including the primary and secondary school interviewees, commented as other survey respondents did, that during the lockdown they had spent a lot of their time supporting parents as much as children. Both interviewees reported 'double-shifting' at some stages and going beyond the call of duty to ensure that their more vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils could have access to the resources they needed where possible. For example, a primary school teacher said:

> *We made sure that we were doing everything we possibly could, right down to home visits, dropping off resources, or if they couldn't get on the laptop because of another sibling or mum needed it for work or they just didn't have the availability of it, we brought in workbooks, or we'd print off resources and drop them around there or leave them in the office and say come down and get this.* (Primary School Teacher, Female)

The secondary school where another teacher interviewee worked at was a school with an existing policy to prevail in terms of technology in education. They had already set the pupils up on Microsoft Teams and started to give them work via Teams. She said:

> *The only thing that has changed during lockdown is that we then were doing our live lessons via Teams … It took us a couple of months, one to two months actually, to distribute laptops and dongles because some people didn't have Wi-Fi and stuff like that, to get as many kids as we could to engage.*
>
> *We managed to get to quite a lot of kids and distribute out laptops and find resources that they're willing to share. We got a few refurbished laptops that we also sent out to kids. All the tutors were ringing up home and checking that they had everything they needed and then we did the same again in September. We had a day where the kids didn't come in and each tutor rang up the homes for each kid and check. Once we came back in September, we were teaching our lessons in the classroom. But, if there were any kids that were isolating, we were able to put work onto Teams that they could share that way and keep up to date with everything that was going on. We were able to do parents evening via Teams as well.* (Secondary School Teacher, Female)

The experience of the primary school teacher had been very different, and she described graphically how she had had to learn new skills, particularly related to using technology in her work in ways that she had never done before, to communicate with pupils and their parents and to attend zoom meetings. She was required to produce online teaching materials and, for example, to produce a topic-focussed video to be uploaded online in time for classes on Monday morning, drawing on YouTube materials and having to learn completely new skills, like how to compress files, with virtually no guidance provided to staff initially. The school has subsequently appointed a technician, which has made things easier.

This need to learn new skills and change modes of work and sometimes, the actual nature of their work, to cope with the lockdown challenges was echoed by many respondents as was discussed earlier and is also well-illustrated by one of the Arts-related interviewees. The musician described how initially, he and his orchestral colleagues tried to keep going, with individual musicians recording themselves in isolation, with limited success.

> *It's limited by technology, because actually recording oneself is very difficult. It requires high-tech instruments and also really a specific space. That's something that nobody was really set up for and certainly didn't have the knowhow.* (Musician, Male)

7.2 The impact on earnings

Table 7.3 shows that those in Arts, Entertainment & Recreation occupations were significantly more likely to experience reductions in income than teachers. Apart from those

who were self-employed or freelance, teachers rarely lost income. As in all sectors, those who reported increased income almost certainly had been promoted and allocated more responsibilities.

Table 7.3 Comparison of the impact on earnings of teachers and those working in arts, entertainment and recreation impact

Financial impact	Teachers	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	All employees and self-employed
Income increased significantly	5%	3%	7%
Income increased slightly	28%	20%	25%
Income stayed around the same	53%	41%	51%
Income decreased slightly	10%	17%	10%
Income decreased significantly	3%	19%	6%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey, all employed and self-employed in selected occupational groups (n = 309, 192 and 3860)

Self-employed and freelance professionals in the selected arts and related occupations were particularly vulnerable to loss of work and income, as was discussed above. As the example of the musician interviewee shows, those who had already established their careers and developed professional networks, as many of these 2009/10 graduates had, made them relatively resilient:

> *I'm in a strong position in that I have the membership of orchestras, so I'll have the guaranteed offer of work and that I'm at a point in my career where I'm established enough to know that invitations will come elsewhere. I recognise that my ability to weather this storm* [is] *actually to do with my solvency* [He has a high-earning partner] *and the fact that living standards have been maintained and not fearful about my finances or about a return to work as and when conditions permit.* [...] *and I'm aware of colleagues who have retrained, are retraining, have taken temporary work elsewhere out of financial necessity or just out of a need to get out of the house*. (Musician, Male)

This was reinforced by many accounts provided in the survey:

> *All of my work in the UK ceased immediately, and extremely little of it has returned up to this point. There is also no guarantee of it coming back in the coming months. I am a self-employed freelance opera singer, and once my SEISS grant runs out, my UK income will be reduced to almost nothing if theatres are still not permitted to open. The level at which I operate within the industry is also a factor. The majority of my income comes from working as extra chorus within major UK opera companies. These companies are under enormous financial and will not be in a position to employ freelance choristers for many months, if not years to come. I may be forced to leave the industry altogether if things do not improve in the New Year*. (Opera singer currently working as a personal assistant/support worker, Female).

A less well-established opera singer reported:

> *My overall income has thus far not reduced, because I worked for 3 months in a supermarket and am now teaching online. However, my income from singing completely and very suddenly nose-dived to zero. I have changed "jobs"/how I earn my living multiple times in the last six months, but I don't consider myself to have changed "careers" - I am still a singer, but there is currently almost no music/theatre industry to work for*. (Opera Singer, Female)

Similar accounts from a range of freelance performance and wider production specialists in music and theatre careers gave similarly bleak accounts, some less optimistic about the future than others, as the examples that follow show.

> *I work in theatre* [and] *my industry is dying. I don't have a job, projects keep getting rumoured, but until theatres can reopen nothing actually gets programmed. The gate posts keep moving and with every week the future looks bleaker. I'm not sure I'll have a job at the end of all this. My job is my life, and without it I don't see how I'll be able to stay in London. Everything about my life has been negatively impacted by Covid and thrown my future into doubt*. (Associate Theatre Designer, Female)

> *The unreliable nature of being self-employed has made me question getting a job that would offer more stability, in the longer term.* (Deputy Stage manager, Female)

> *Feel uneasy about being self-employed now - no financial security* (Music Teacher, Female)

The minority of self-employed and freelance teachers reported similarly dramatic impacts.

> *My income dropped overnight when the government cancelled the 2019 exams; 75% of my students were exam students who stopped tuition immediately. Furthermore, my marking contract was made obsolete. I had not ever considered that this could happen, and it made me reassess the benefits of a safe school income versus self-employed tuition* (Mathematics tutor, Female).

Self-employment is common in performance industries and those opting to work in them are sanguine about its competitiveness, fluctuating workloads and the need to do 'fill-in jobs' between contracts, but most of the respondents were relatively successful professionals more than ten years in, and most experienced unprecedented setbacks.

> *I had a full year of mid-scale work contracted for 2020 for the first time, i.e., 2020 represented exciting progress, which has now been postponed indefinitely. While my work has been provisionally rescheduled for 2021, and the theatre shutdown has encouraged me to branch out successfully to audiodrama and film, my theatre work remains unconfirmed. At best, I've lost momentum*'. (Freelance Theatre Director, Female)

> *I was on an upward trajectory with my acting career before lockdown and was hoping to secure some more TV acting jobs, but now that the industry has shut down (and is only reopening slightly) my sparse TV acting credits will not be worth as much as they were before, and I won't be able to get any auditions until the industry can fully re-open*. (Creative Producer, Female)

Those who had film or recording experience had been more likely to be able to maintain some work opportunities:

> *The entire theatre industry disappeared overnight, so my supplementary income from acting on stage and writing plays has disappeared for the foreseeable future. I'm lucky that I can focus on getting more voiceover work I can do from home, but most of my peers are not as fortunate.* […] *It's also a worry that the only people able to weather this storm will be affluent middleclass-or-higher people and we will lose a diverse range of voices to financial hardship*. (Voiceover Artist and Actor, Female).

A freelance film and theatre interviewee, who perhaps exemplifies this last tendency, had become accustomed to having a high, though erratic income that enabled her to save enough to tide her over breaks between films and broadcast productions and had not applied for the government support for self-employed workers. She said:

> *I never even applied for any because their maximum earnings to qualify was £50,000 and under, and I was over that*. […] *I've been very fortunate in that I haven't struggled with employment, and so actually money is something that I haven't had to worry about for a very, very long time. This was infinitely worse because I was just completely unprepared for it.* […] *we just could not have predicted what was about to happen.* […]. *Because the film and TV industry is a very wealthy industry and often doesn't suffer when other industries do I, I had just never imagined that it was possible for the industry to just disappear overnight, essentially*! (Costume Designer, Female)

Those with permanent jobs in the film and television reported relatively few problems.

> *My employer has maintained a very proactive and supportive approach to the Covid-19 situation, and I am fortunate to work in an industry and position where prolonged working from home has very little impact on my day-to-day work tasks. I feel very lucky compared to many, many others*! (Junior producer, Female)

> *I'm in a very privileged position where my income and job have not been affected at all by Covid (beyond the obvious home office), and while I'd say my mental health has been affected negatively, not being able to go out with friends to restaurants or for drinks has actually been a huge positive for my financial situation to the point where I now have savings for the first time*. (Localisation Producer, Female)

7.3 Other forms of support

Table 7.4 indicates that the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation workers, already shown to have been more likely to have experienced income reduction and most likely to have been unable to work, were also more likely that other graduates to have relied on financial support from families, income support grants and other government benefits.

Table 7.4 Comparison of the extent to teachers and those working in arts, entertainment and recreation found it necessary to obtain financial and other support, March 2020-January 2021

Extent to which members of these groups relied on support to supplement earnings or enable them to work	Teachers	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	All employees and self-employed
Financial support from family	6%	9%	4%
Financial support from friends, neighbours or community organisations	1%	1%	0%
Practical support from family (e.g., with childcare or transport)	14%	12%	12%
Practical support from friends, neighbours or community organisations	6%	5%	5%
Income support grants	2%	16%	4%
Other government benefits	4%	12%	3%
Bank loans or overdrafts	3%	4%	2%
Other financial help	3%	4%	2%
Other non-financial help	1%	3%	1%
None of the above	72%	57%	75%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6 survey 2020. All employed and self-employed in the selected occupational groups (n = 309, 192 and 3860).

As with workers in other occupational groups, the most significant variable that affected differences in reported reliance on practical support was the household in which they lived and whether they had children. The additional challenges facing those with children are discussed in 8.1.

7.4 Covid restrictions and the type of work performed – drawing conclusions from comparisons

This chapter has provided contextualised detail about two occupational areas that have been particularly affected by the experience of working and living through the pandemic. It reinforces the findings reported throughout this report so far that sector of employment and within that, contractual status, and the supply of and demand for the knowledge and skills that graduates have and the type of work they do, affected their resilience and vulnerability to recession. Also, the impact of the pandemic introduced new challenges – and the challenges in different sectors and occupations varied considerably. We have focused on the differences rather than the similarities of these two groups of workers, and overall, they are relatively stark in terms of their employment security, continuity of earnings and perceived access to the kinds of jobs aspired to, although both substantially affected by the Covid-19 restrictions and the recession. However, an interesting finding for these groups is that there was no significant difference in the extent to which they were satisfied with their jobs (43 per cent of teachers in comparison with 45 per cent of those working in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, compared to 46 per cent of all those in employment or self-employment). This doubtless reflects both the high aspirations and relative resilience of the sample, but also brings us back to the importance of the diversity of values and aspirations among graduates, as will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Chapter 8 The impact on work-life balance and well-being

The earlier chapters have examined the economic and practical impacts of the pandemic on the Futuretrack graduates' work and labour market situations. That was our brief in conducting the research. However, it was apparent throughout that careers are developed in the context of other aspects of life and, as we had explored in relation to the 2019 survey findings, wider values, and the interests of partners, families and other considerations affect career-related decisions. One of the unexpected outcomes of this Covid-19 follow-up has been the unprecedented volume of responses to our standard final invitation at the end of the survey: "Is *there anything else you would like to tell us about the impact of the pandemic on your work and career prospects*?" and the extent to which respondents had ticked 'Other' at the end of multiple choice questions where we had provided the opportunity to give details.

We now turn to consideration of how these other aspects of their lives and experiences have affected and been affected by their work since March 2020 and their well-being, values, and aspirations.

8.1 Balancing work and childcare

In autumn 2019 at the time of the Stage 5 survey, a quarter of respondents already had one or more children and over 60 per cent of them cited 'being or becoming a parent' as a very important value to them. Most were living with a partner with whom they discussed career-related decisions and made these in the light of joint or family interests rather than maximising their individual earnings or career advantage. In a significant number of the 2019 follow-up interviews, respondents reported having recently had a child, being pregnant or having a pregnant partner, or that they were planning to embark on family-building soon and considering how this might affect their careers. A small number of respondents, mainly women, had withdrawn from paid work to give priority to family-building, but most intended to maintain their careers throughout their family-building phase, as equal opportunities legislation encourages them to do.

It is consequently not surprising that a significant theme in the interviews and revealed by the survey findings was the additional challenges presented by the Covid restrictions to those balancing family responsibilities and work. Many gave graphic examples of these, as is discussed below, and in addition, several female survey respondents and interviewees commented on the extent to which the experience of the pandemic was impacting on their family-building plans, whether they already had children. For example:

> *It's been hard because I have a young child, and because I was going to try for another child, but I am worried about the pandemic and pregnancy.* (European Sales Director, Female)

> *I think in terms of family, this isn't the time to be thinking of having kids* […] *I've seen people that have had kids during this time and how their whole maternity is not being how they wanted it and trying to have a kid and work from home is really hard for a lot of them. I think that will hold things up a little bit as well.* (Secondary School Teacher, Female)

In this chapter we consider the effect of changed patterns and modes of working on parents' ability to continue to balance work and childcare responsibilities, access to parenting support and how they managed the boundaries between work and family responsibilities.

8.1.1 The importance of access to support

Becoming a parent is fundamentally about creating a new relationship but it is also taking on a job. Most of the parents had already developed ways of managing the additional job that parenthood added to their working lives based on family, community, and paid childcare, but many of these arrangements were impossible to maintain when organisations like nurseries and schools closed or reduced facilities and interaction between households was restricted. Schools and childcare institutions had been closed for some of the time since the start of the pandemic, and although at the time of the Stage 6 survey, they were allowed to operate again, 8 per cent of respondents gave a reason for working at home as not having childcare available to them.

Reduced working hours were an option for those who had savings or could rely on their partner's income, but caused difficulties for others:

> *I voluntarily reduced my work hours in order to better manage childcare. I was fortunate that financially I was able to do this due to my husband's work and accommodation security.* (Manager of Outreach and Engagement, Female)

> *Not having family to provide childcare has added a significant burden to both myself and my husband. He had to go part time to care for the kids as our childminder was shielding and family were not allowed to come and help.* (Trainee GP, Female)

Unfortunately, reduction of hours and having to balance childcare with work sometimes had a negative impact on working relationships and career development. Several parents commented that having to add childcare to their workload meant they were no longer seen as reliable employees[10], with some parents experiencing pressure to continue working as if nothing had happened or experiencing visible disapprobation, as the following accounts show:

> *My husband is our primary carer for the children. He has found increased bullying and harassment from his workplace due to his caring responsibilities. He has found the balance more difficult and has not had the flexibility that I have been offered (despite him being a civil servant also).* (Senior Executive Officer, Female)

> *Having to work without childcare, I have been side-lined for major projects and my career advancement has stalled.* (Client Operations Director, Female).

When childcare institutions closed, many of the participants with children relied on grandparents:

> *Myself and my husband are both key workers. I work for the* […] *police and my husband for* [supermarket chain]. […] *Our nursery closed due to not enough key workers children attending.* […] *My two-year-old daughter was not too badly affected as we bubbled with my parents as my dad is retired* […] *so he provided the childcare.* (Exhibit Handling Officer, Female)

Parents were entitled to request being placed on the job retention scheme if they could not manage childcare, but a survey conducted by the TUC found that most requests made by working mothers were rejected (TUC, 2021). Some employers granted furlough requests, but others did not and were not open to other flexible arrangements.

[10] It is well documented that part-time working has generally been negatively related to promotion and access to other career development opportunities (see for example, Lyonette, 2015).

I started working part time (3 days a week) as an employee in May 2019. I then asked for voluntary furlough for childcare reasons in May 2020. Upon discussing my return to work in September, I wanted a staggered start but was refused and lost my job. I have been unemployed since 20th October. (Trainer, Female)

Others were able take paid leave because their organisations supported this arrangement, with one progressive organisation in the charity sector introducing a 'budget code for childcare' that employees could use when they completed their time sheets. Some were offered modified arrangements to enable them to continue to go to work. For example, a health care worker told us:

As I am front line NHS - I now work longer days. This has enabled a better work life balance for me. However, childcare was a big issue as my son's creche closed. The health trust kindly provided free emergency childcare in April. (Occupational therapist, Female)

Uncertainty around the availability of formal childcare and having little time to adapt to the closure of schools and childcare services announced at the last minute added to the stress parents experienced. One participant tried to prepare for closures by 'working ahead' while the nursery was open:

Even once lockdown was over and nursery reopened, it has still been a source of anxiety that they could close at a moment's notice - this has happened twice. I work long hours to get ahead in case this happens so I can still keep up with my teaching responsibilities. (Lecturer, Female)

Those who had become parents recently or during the pandemic experienced particular difficulties. An environmental consultant who had arranged a nursery place reported that her daughter had been unable to start because they had closed the baby room due to Covid restrictions. She and her husband had managed to continue working with the help of grandparents, but she had found it necessary to reduce her working hours to three days per week. Lack of formal childcare for very young babies had led other Futuretrack participants to extend their maternity leave, leading to a reduction in their earnings and uncertainty about when they renew normal work:

I started maternity leave just before Covid-19 [and] *I have had to take longer leave due to lack of nursery/childcare. It is also difficult to make childcare plans as nurseries still don't know when they will reopen, so I can't commit to anything concrete at the moment.* (Journalist, Female)

Some parents who lost their jobs or were placed on furlough could look after their children, enabling their partner to continue to work:

I have been on JSA from April 2020. Covid-19 has had the singular benefit of giving me the experience of being a 'stay at home parent'. I have had the main childcare duties looking after my two-and-a-half-year-old son whilst my wife has worked full time [...] *I have really enjoyed spending time bonding with my son, and I feel we are a lot closer as a result. That being said it has been a very negative experience also. There has been a lot of stress and anxiety especially around finances in our household. We are only just covering expenses on my wife's wage (fortunately) but it is not sustainable.* (Senior Commercial Manager, Male)

8.1.2 Managing the work/parenthood balance

As the above evidence indicates, to compensate for the lack of formal childcare, parents adopted various strategies: they worked flexibly and shared childcare with each other;

involved family members in childcare, when rules (support bubbles) and circumstances allowed; took paid leave, extended their maternity leave or went on 'childcare furlough'; and finally, some of them reduced their working hours.

The flexible work of parents was helped by an emerging, often tacit understanding between organisations and employees and within work teams that parents could not continue to work as if nothing had happened while schools and childcare services were closed. One participant explained that if 'everyone' at their organisation was working from home, it was not necessary to formally request flexible working, and thus employees could balance childcare and other responsibilities around work rather than working during standard hours.

Several participants said that the best thing about working from home was that it enabled them to 'be together as a family' much more than ever before, as the following quote from a father of two illustrates:

> *I'm working from home at 100% now, which means from a family life perspective I'm around a lot more.* […] *I was able to take my son to nursery, pick him up. I wasn't getting up too early and missing morning routine because I had to be at work.* (Lawyer, Male)

However, the flexibility of combining working from home and childcare came at a high cost for many parents and led to overwork, stress, and exhaustion. A participant who worked, studied towards a professional qualification, and looked after a toddler and her partner who contracted Covid-19 found the experience extremely stressful and tiring:

> *I was just existing. And I don't think that there was very much space for me as a person because all of my other roles had to take to the foreground.* […] *And looking back now, I don't know how I did it.* (Facilities Manager, Female)

Those who worked from home while looking after children, including home-schooling often described the negative effects this had on their mental health:

> *I've found 'burning the candle at both ends' the only way to balance childcare with work; this often involved very late nights and little sleep. I felt a huge pressure to keep up at work, especially in the early days of lockdown, with very little support. I feel hugely apprehensive about returning to work and feel my mental state is very fragile at the moment.* (Secondary school teacher, Female)

> *Due to childcare constraints, I have had to work hours throughout the day and night.* […] *I am constantly working or worrying about working but getting less done.* (Accountant, Female)

While some participants quoted earlier felt that they could focus better when working from home, many of those who were looking after young children while working from home said they could not focus and this contributed to their working longer hours:

> *Having childcare responsibilities on top of the day job, as well as juggling these responsibilities with my partner is leading to a more stressful home environment and a breakdown of work/life balance as we both end up working much more than a 9-5 day to fit in everything we would have done before.* (Solutions Engineer, Male)

Some of those who worked from home and were 'locked down' with their partner or family complained about a sense of 'cabin fever'. One participant told us that by winter 2020-21 he felt increasingly frustrated, despite finding several positive aspects of the pandemic, such as being able to spend more time with his family and not having to travel for work beneficial:

There are days when it does get a little bit frustrating. […] *I find every now and then if I have a little dip it can take me a little while to get out of it.* […] *It's only on the occasion if work is busy, family life can prove stressful and things like that, then you do feel like in some ways the pandemic does actually weigh on you quite a bit. Because the outlets that you'd normally do, be it go to the gym, or go for a long drive somewhere, go out for a meal, things like that, obviously you can't do those anymore.* (Lawyer, Male)

Working from home with a baby in the house is incredibly draining when you can hear them crying, screaming! Being back in the office now has been a relief from that point of view. (Software Engineer, Male)

Many of the issues raised by respondents generally were amplified by the presence of children in the household. Those who worked from home while looking after children were particularly aware of the importance of workspace. One participant who had two small children explained that although initially it was difficult to work from home, things improved when they turned a garden shed into his office. Other parents found it difficult to isolate themselves, despite having enough space:

It was me up here, isolated alone and everyone else downstairs, Mum, son, husband, that's horrible. I felt quite cabin fever-y up here. Because my son was having such separation anxiety. […] *Every trip downstairs to try and get a cup of tea turned into half an hour, 40 minutes of tears and emotional drama that didn't do anyone any good.* (Partnership Manager, Female)

Given such experiences, it is not surprising that many parents were relieved when access to care facilities was possible again. An architect commented that after spending most of the previous twelve months at home with a baby, both he and his wife were *'extremely happy'* to have some time apart when his wife went back to work and the child started to go to nursery.

Non-employed respondents living with partners and children in lockdown also commented on the difficulties caused by lockdowns and having an employed co-parent working at home:

I wasn't working as I had decided to stop working temporarily until at least one of my children is in school. When Covid struck, I was extremely grateful we had made this decision - with my husband working full time from home, I'm not sure I could have managed with all of us at home. It was a difficult enough time without me trying to fit work in as well! (Non-employed, looking after family, Female)

8.1.3 Changing gender divisions of labour?

Throughout the longitudinal survey, we have found significant gender differences in subject and occupational choices and outcomes, satisfaction with jobs and careers and a persistent and growing gender pay gap. Several investigations of employment experiences since the start of the pandemic have found that women have continued to experience disproportionate disadvantages and, during lockdowns, women in employment have spent more time on housework, caring and home-schooling than their male partners (see, for example Andrew *et al.,* 2020; Adams-Prassl *et al*., 2020; Chung, 2020 and Hupkau and Petrongolo, 2020). Our focus has had to be confined to the direct impact of Covid-19 restrictions on work and careers rather than wider circumstances. Participants were not asked about household divisions of labour, but it is clear from their open-ended comments about their experiences and from the interview accounts that where respondents were parents, both mothers and fathers working from home spent significant amounts of time balancing childcare and paid work, and interestingly, grandfathers as well as grandmothers were cited as contributing to respondents' ability to manage work and family responsibilities. However, women *were* somewhat more likely than men to have reduced their working hours to take account of the

need to balance childcare and employment, and there were several impassioned comments by female respondents, the most explicit and detailed of which was given by a very successful senior manager in Business Services:

> *Basically, I'm exhausted. What I've learned working through Covid is that basically, despite being the breadwinner and earning six figures, I am not in an equal partnership and as a woman I am still expected to do the lion's share of emotional labour and childcare outside of work hours. I have to know what everyone is eating and when and keep track of clothes/bowel movements/etc, what to clean next, what's in the fridge.*
>
> *This means I am still putting in a 'second shift' and often called to help with things with my child during the workday or have to have meetings when she is calling out for her mummy which is really tough. I feel I work more than full time: she wakes up at 7am, and I look after her for an hour, then work from 8am with one eye on her watching TV - often in meetings until 6pm, then two hours of childcare, then two hours of work, then bed. On the weekends it's me looking after our child unless I can rope in a grandparent. I don't mind this because I love her so much but it's hard.*
>
> *When I was in my 20s, I was very feminist but thought women were essentially equal. Then I had a child and realised we aren't. My husband* [...] *seriously believes he makes an equal contribution* [...] *and is not great at this stuff, but every single woman I speak to has a similar problem with their partner* […] *the pandemic experience has convinced me women have a long way to go!*

Her conclusion is reminiscent of our earlier findings among successful female graduates who had found maintaining their career momentum particularly difficult at the same ten-years-on stage of their careers (Purcell *et al.* 2006). At every stage of the Futuretrack research we have observed gender differences in career development, and it is hoped to develop a significantly more detailed analysis of the cumulative implications of this and the variables that facilitate and obstruct access to equal opportunities.

8.2 The impact of changed working patterns on mental health

Analysis of the survey and interview data has revealed that the mental health effects of the pandemic were mentioned by a high proportion of the Futuretrack graduates. Research by Mind (2020) showed that more than half of adults (60 per cent) in the UK reported their mental health had become worse during lockdown. Banks *et al.* (2020) argued that the mental health effects of the pandemic reported so far may be just the first 'wave' of consequences: some mental health effects of the pandemic, related to the potential negative economic consequences and recession and inadequate mental health support are only just beginning to emerge, and these may have greater long-term consequences.

8.2.1 Workers providing front-line essential services

There is evidence that healthcare workers have suffered greater mental health problems than other groups of workers (ONS, 2020). It was clear from the interview accounts and many of the written comments in the survey that additional pressures in workplaces, particularly for those engaged in delivery of essential services in health, education, public services and other customer and client-facing jobs, caused respondents anxiety about their vulnerability.

Many front-line workers across the occupational spectrum, like the teachers cited in chapter 7, commented on the negative effect on their mental health of having to isolate from family and friends. Those working in healthcare reported that it was exhausting and stressful to adopt new working practices and keep track of the often-changing rules of 'Covid-secure'

working and they did not always feel safe at work. Other healthcare workers told us that they were exhausted because they had to provide 'a good example' to the public, although they did not always feel appreciated by the public or their employers:

> *It's been very difficult and isolating.* [*I*] *found it difficult with the added stress of work and then having to be trapped in one place and not being able to socialise.* […] *I lost all routine and then had a life dominated by the stress of the virus. I was aware I was meant to be strong and meant to keep calm and carry on but it felt tough. The country wanted flexibility from the NHS, and I worked very hard to give this. Anxiety was a major cause of this. Particularly around PPE and its availability and that the guidance changed, it seemed, to support the supplies and not the staff. With hindsight I was lucky to have a job and to be paid throughout this period.* (Physiotherapist, Female)

> *The Covid restrictions on normal life are now taking a toll. The added responsibility to always try to set a good example and demonstrate good practices in reducing social contacts with ever changing and volleying rules/guidance creates pressure and anxiety*. (Senior Radiographer, Female)

> *As a keyworker during the pandemic when job pressure increased significantly, I now feel very undervalued as there was little appreciation from the public or my employer. This combined with the lockdown restrictions (meaning I was cut off from my usual support network) lead to a notable decline in my mental health*. (Pharmacy Technician Female)

For many, legitimate worries led to destructive physical and mental health symptoms.

> *I have been on long term sick leave since May with long term health problems that have been brought to a head by Covid and the stress it has caused.* (Staff Nurse, responding in September 2020, Female)

Other mental health comments ranged from raised awareness that their work/life balance had deteriorated or improved because of changed patterns of working to reports of serious mental health illnesses and vulnerabilities, caused or exacerbated by the situations that respondents now found themselves in. Others said that that their mental health suffered because of the content of their work, such as the following Live Subtitler working in the news media:

> *COVID-19 had a pretty big impact on my mental health. As part of my job, I have to subtitle the news, so there was no escape from the seriousness and facts surrounding it. Everyone in my company had their own wobbles about the impact of it, and the inescapability of the situation.* (Live Unit Subtitler, Female)

8.3 The impact of work intensification

Many reported working longer and more irregular hours whether they worked from home or on-site, partly due to the high expectations of their employers:

> *Expectations to be available 24/7 is making work and expectations higher than ever, creating untold stress, anxiety, and sickness.* […] *Messaging that 'we should be thankful we have a job' is creating tension on those who cannot cope with the current work and want to change.* (Head of Strategy and Implementation, Female)

> *I'm working from home, but my day/hours have significantly increased and although the lack of commute was initially an improvement in my quality of life as the pandemic has continued, I feel the balance has tipped to now negatively impacting on my mental*

wellbeing. I'm concerned about the expectation from my employer regarding productivity moving forward and that getting back to the office comes with an expectation to work harder again. (Government Affairs Manager, Female)

However, some reported that continuing to work through the pandemic without disruption to their work had a positive effect on their mental health by structuring their time:

My mental health has deteriorated with not being able to see friends and family for some months. While work for me has been stable, I recognise that I am one of the lucky ones. Continuing to work through lockdown helped me to keep a routine. (Lead Nurse, Male)

8.4 The impact of home-based working and restricted social interaction

Working from home led to increased levels of stress for some respondents, dependent on their domestic situations and how far their work lent itself to remote working, as discussed in Chapter 6. Those who worked from home described how the breakdown of the temporal and spatial boundaries between work and 'life' had a negative impact on their mental health. By the time of the December 2020 survey, many told us how stressful the reduction in support and interaction was to them, how they missed face-to-face interaction at work. *'It's made me realise I need variation in my working week, whether that's out meeting people or attending meetings'* wrote a Fundraising manager, and a Translator and proof-reader commented 'I am increasingly aware of the impact of isolation on my mental health', which echoed many of the short comments made from respondents from across the occupational and sectoral spectrums. Several mentioned being signed off for depression and anxiety due to lack of support from colleagues and managers and a Senior Software Engineer was representative of many in writing '*Lack of social contact, and workaholic tendencies are not good for mental health. Stress and restlessness are common, adjusting to working from home is hard'*. A Monitoring Evaluation Learning Manager commented:

The current situation has made me realise how much of my job satisfaction came from being in the same office environment as my colleagues. The loss of that has made me realise how dissatisfied I am when my work is reduced to its basic components, without the social context. (Monitoring Evaluation Learning Manager, Female)

As the restrictions continued, the frustration with them increased and there were more comments on this aspect of experience in the December responses than had been the case in the initial September enquiry, as the novelty of the new working arrangements wore off and their longer-term impacts became apparent:

Initially I loved working from home […] *however, 6 months in, I have faced severe stress and took time off work - likely because I was never taking breaks, no holidays and limited time outside*. (Senior International Payroll Manager, Female)

The ongoing lockdowns, restrictions of movement and rules about social distancing led to the loss or restriction of fulfilling activities. Research shows that adults living alone in the UK experienced more/more serious depressive symptoms than those living with others, hypothesised to be caused by higher levels of loneliness among those living alone, caused by social restrictions (Bu et al., 2020), and our findings reinforce this. Some participants experienced serious mental ill health:

Before the […] *restrictions were lifted, I was spending 16-18 hours a day in one room, with no company, no friends and very little social contact. Stress, depression, lethargy, lack of sleep, worry, culture shock, procrastination, laziness, hopelessness, and loneliness have all featured very prominently in the last 6 months. Problems with addiction have reared their head and put me even further at risk of spiralling during this*

period. This is all on top of concerns about my own personal risk of catching COVID-19. Whilst 'the new normal' has become a bit more easy over time - more so since being allowed to household bubble, I am still working from home and living with most of the above on a day-to-day basis. (Data Protection Officer, Male)

Being someone who lives alone I ended up back at home with family, not for financial reasons, but for mental health reasons. (Impact Manager, Female)

A manager for a national non-essential retail organisation who we interviewed was very satisfied with her job and employer but described graphically how difficult she had found the social isolation of lockdown, living on her own.

Going for a walk every day has very much helped me. Because at first I was just sitting. My sleep schedule fully got out of whack straightaway which has annoyed the hell of out me […] *So, I go out, have that walk, and while I'm doing it, I'll have a listen to a book. It just gives me a chance to decompress. Which is weird because it used to be coming home was my decompression, whereas now I feel like home is becoming like a prison to me.* […] *And I am feeling a little bit lonely because I haven't got people to talk to*. [which] *is weird because. I would count myself as an introvert but I'm actually struggling with this more than you would think. So it just shows that even if you're introverted, you still need some human interaction.* (Manager, Female)

8.5 The impact on mental health of furlough, redundancy, and job insecurity

Income and job loss and concerns about employment and financial security were significant worries for many. Not surprisingly, being on furlough and being made redundant, and concerns about its possibility, had a negative impact on mental health. Others had found that employees who had been furloughed reported a decline in their wellbeing compared to others (Mind, 2020). Those who lost their jobs and their income experienced sharp deteriorations in mental health. Banks and Xu (2020) found that workers in sectors that were particularly strongly affected by the restrictions, such as the creative industries, hospitality, and retail experienced larger impacts even if their jobs were not directly affected, and we found that there was significant over-representation of respondents in these sectors, along with key workers in public services, citing negative mental health impacts.

I'm very concerned by long term employment prospects as I work in the arts and cultural industries, which have been badly affected by COVID and are still not expected to open until April at the earliest. […] *There has not been anywhere near enough support for people furloughed and their mental health. The feelings of uselessness, guilt for not doing anything, loneliness really impacted my mental health for a long period*. (Fundraising and Development Manager, Male)

[Being furloughed] definitely impacted my mental health negatively. I felt that, without a job, I had lost my sense of purpose. (Careers Advisor, Female)

Many participants reported fears about job security and financial concerns, both in the short and the long term.

My partner has been furloughed since March, and this has taken a toll on our household finances. I feel this has had an impact on my mental health and attitude to my job, we simply cannot afford for me to lose my job right now and there isn't an end in sight or solution at the moment. (Senior producer reporting in September 2020, Female)

One participant told us that her anxiety about job security was heightened by the unsupportive attitude of her employer:

> *My anxiety levels have drastically increased. As a result of the lockdown causing financial uncertainty for our customers, my job role has become more stressful (I'm responsible for ensuring that we have work coming in). We're not eating as healthily, we're so tired. The washing up sits there longer and longer and we can't face moving it. I haven't really had a break since Christmas, I'm taking two weeks off now because I can't go any further, but my boss still questioned whether the timing was good (it's very close to the start of semester).* (Senior Product Manager, Female).

8.6 What exacerbates vulnerability to mental health problems?

At the extreme, three respondents talked about having felt suicidal at some points. Many of the issues raised by both those who explicitly mentioned suffering from mental illness since the outset of the pandemic and those who complained about overwork, stress and anxiety are encapsulated in the response from which follows, from lecturer in a higher education:

> *During the last 6 months, I have experienced anxiety and depression for the first time in my life and have had to take sick leave as a result. By far the main cause of this has been work-related stress which have arisen due to feelings of uncertainty about my job security, working excessive hours, not managing a good work-life balance, and feeling ignored and that my contributions at work are being undervalued.* […] *After experiencing a mental health crisis brought on by the attitude of my employer to its employees, and becoming suicidal, I have come to realise that my employer (and my whole sector) may not be right for me.* [and] *have been thinking carefully about my options.* (University lecturer, Male)

The other two respondents who mentioned suicide were both in insecure situations; one a supply teacher who described feeling very depressed questioning her worth and a currently unemployed graduate who reported feeling particularly isolated when all the clubs he had been attending closed in lockdown.

There was a substantial number of cases where respondents told us that they had been on sick leave. Those who previously had experienced mental illness were particularly vulnerable to the pressures of work intensification and social isolation, although in some cases it enabled them to recognise and cope with the issues they were faced with. One of the very successful managers interviewed told us that she had always had to be aware of her mental health since she had suffered, on and off throughout her life from insomnia and depression since suffering family traumas as a teenager. She had had a particularly stressful experience during the pandemic when her husband became seriously ill with Covid, had to call emergency services three times, and thought that he was going to die. She felt that

> *I have better tools now, as an adult, to be aware of the potential impact on myself and my family, and to try and take steps that will help me, and hopefully help* [*my child*] *in particular, so that we come out of the other side of it* […] *in my personal life and in my work life I've been very open with people about how hard I found it, and some people, because of that, have been very open with me. Kind of said, "I'm glad that you've said this because I feel like I'm drowning!". And it's helped them that I've been open*. (Senior Manager, Female)

Many participants told us that they felt anxious about the health of family and friends and some reported suffering bereavements. Others talked about the greater difficulties that managing others, especially those suffering stress and related illnesses, had presented, and the impact on interpersonal working relations of distance-working:

Isolation appears to have had an impact on the empathy and awareness of many people which means messages are not always coming across the ways intended and much of this appears quite harmful in the workplace. […] *I think we will have to adapt much of our working life and accept the changes, but I am not sure how much of my job I still want to do when faced with these changes. It is particularly difficult working through these thoughts without the usual sounding boards around me and with so much uncertainty, and I wonder how many other people are struggling through these issues*. (Solicitor Advocate, Female)

Those with pre-existing mental health conditions were particularly affected by the pandemic (Mind, 2020). Some Futuretrack participants also talked about their previous experience of mental ill health and the ways in which it had prepared them for the stresses of the pandemic as they emerged, but had still found it difficult to cope:

I've been suffering with depression and anxiety since I was about 18. I've always been able to self-manage very easily, I have certain coping mechanisms that I use. This year I have to do every coping mechanism I have and I have really struggled. It has been a really tough year. It's easier now. Myself and my partner […] *We're in our bubble together, so have more interaction in that way. I am now in* […] *the office once a week where I wasn't over the summer period. But, yes, the isolation has been crippling.* (Health and Safety Coordinator, Female)

Some told us that after a particularly difficult time their mental health was improving because they took positive steps:

My resilience - ability to adapt to change and empathy have increased but also increased mood swings and I now feel a greater prioritisation of my wellbeing over other people's agendas. (Full-time student, Female)

Lockdown had quite positive effects for me and my mental health (eventually) - I am poorer and unable to leave my job as I was planning to, but it has caused me to review my priorities in life and live more slowly. I am under less stress than in February. I have been working 15h pw for months, and not sure I want to work more than 30h ever again, if I can afford it. (Sales Coordinator, Female)

The narratives of some participants highlighted how physical and mental health were interrelated:

Extra childcare while schools closed on top of working from home has exacerbated my disability, so my health is suffering and my performance at work is suffering so I'm worried about longer term viability of my ability to do my role. (Administrative Officer, Female)

I worked in a government emergency cell for three months while living in a studio apartment. … I then was able to complete a house purchase and now have my own office and a mortgage smaller than my previous rent and am back working my day job. It has definitely affected my mental and physical health (I've developed chronic migraines), but I am now in a significantly better situation than I had been earlier in the pandemic. (Principal Research Officer, Female)

8.7 Mental health and future plans

Many participants reflected on how the experience of living and working through the pandemic made them more aware of the effect work had on their mental health and some said that this new awareness had shaped their plans for their future careers and working lives in a variety of ways, such as the actor who commented 'It has made me look at the

ways I work and use my time', the Event's organiser who said 'I have spent more time evaluating what my time is worth, and how I can live with less anxiety around work' and the teacher who reported '*I have realised that work isn't as important and don't stress about work-related tasks as much or when things go wrong'*. A project support officer wrote '*Isolation has made me lose confidence and want to work closer to home and prioritise personal life above career'*.

Like many, a manager in Publishing was considering a future change of work, and a university lecturer concluded that he needed to change the balance of his work and other aspects of his life.

> *Certain elements of my job are more stressful than I am able to easily cope with; although this was brought to my attention by a sharp increase in stressfulness due to Covid, it will likely remain the case in the future albeit to a lesser degree.* (Manager in publishing, Male)

> *The restrictions on normal life introduced in this period have obviously been a contributing factor in deepening and extending this period of illness, but it has caused me to re-evaluate my life and how I approach things, and I believe that I now have a healthier attitude towards my job and the things I most value.* […] *I want greater balance between my work and my home life.* (Assistant Professor, Male)

> *It has made me consider how much I value time with family, how relaxed I felt and how stressful the jobs I have are and the impact they have on my mental health. Whilst a lot of people struggled with mental health during the pandemic I've struggled more since returning to work, and prior to the pandemic than I did during lockdown and furlough*. (Children's University Manager, Female)

This was a common theme among a very high proportion of the respondents and will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Chapter 9 Resilience and vulnerability: looking to the future

Our objective in conducting this follow-up study to the Futuretrack Stage 5 investigation was to assess the impact of the pandemic, the employment and work restrictions that it generated, and the socio-economic impact of these on the labour market situation and careers of this well-documented sample of graduates. The Futuretrack graduates had made the transition from undergraduate study to the next stage of their careers, to further study or training or into the labour market, in the wake of the great recession of 2008-9. Now, mainly established in successful graduate careers well beyond first destinations, with many embarking on family-building, they were faced with unprecedented challenges. All were affected to some extent by the need to modify their modes of working and adapt to the restrictions and some found themselves considerably more vulnerable in terms of job security and income than they had anticipated when they participated in the 2019 survey. Did the fact that they had, in many cases, experienced a challenging start to their graduate careers make them more resilient, or more vulnerable to, the emerging recession that they now were finding themselves in? We had concluded in the Stage 5 analyses (*c.f.* Elias *et al.* 2021: 148) that among the respondents there was no evidence that they had experienced significant long-term disadvantages because of this start, but the response had been skewed towards the relatively highly qualified and successful end of the graduate spectrum and even so, many reported encountering substantial obstacles at the start of their careers. In the Stage 6 survey, respondents were invited to reflect on how they anticipated their career prospects had been affected by graduating into that earlier recession, the current economic impact and their experience of the pandemic more broadly.

The Covid impact has been twofold, having a direct impact on capacity to continue working effectively and following that, direct and indirect financial and labour market implications. In section 9.1, we report on the graduates' confidence about demand for their knowledge and skills, and their views of how their career prospects had been affected by the economic impact of Covid-19 and the extent to which their previous experience of graduating into a recessionary labour market in 2009/10 has affected their resilience. In 9.2, we discuss the effect of living and working through the pandemic on their values and attitudes in relation to their future careers. Finally, in 9.3, we assess how far the graduates' views about their career prospects have changed between 2019 and 2020, exploring further the factors associated with resilience and vulnerability.

9.1 The impact of recession: anticipated and cumulative

How resilient did they feel? We asked whether they considered that they had the skills employers were likely to be looking for when recruiting for the kinds of jobs that they aspired to. We analysed responses according to the undergraduate discipline or subject that they had studied. This was merely the foundation for future career development in many cases, of course, and many had gone on to do further study or professional training which in a small proportion of cases represented a radical change of direction, but in most cases their undergraduate knowledge and skills had enabled access to their postgraduate opportunities. Their response to the question relates to their perceptions of demand for their current skills and knowledge, more than ten years on. On a scale of 1-7 where 1 reflected very high confidence and 7 very little confidence, we found that that those who had studied Medicine, Dentistry, Subjects allied to medicine, Education, Law and Engineering Technologies were most confident about demand for their expertise, with more than two-thirds rating their situation 1 or 2, with a wider range of responses for most of the others and those who had studied Creative Art and Design, Linguistics and Classics, Interdisciplinary subjects and Biological Sciences more likely to have rated demand for their skills at the lowest end of the scale. Nevertheless, over two-thirds of all respondents scored their prospects at 3 or below, which is a very positive finding.

These evaluations are reinforced by examination of their perceptions of the anticipated impact of the developing recession on their careers in Table 9.1 by grouped subjects, with those who had studied STEM, LEM and other vocationally-focused subjects considerably less likely than those whose degree subjects had been other academically rather than vocationally focussed subjects and, as we had found at earlier stages of the Futuretrack survey, those who had studied Creative Arts subjects more likely to be aware of their market vulnerability.

Table 9.1 Anticipated cumulative effect on career prospects of post-2008 and forthcoming recessions by grouped subject area

	Positively	Negatively	Both positively and negatively	It will not affect my prospects	I don't know
STEM	5%	14%	16%	43%	22%
LEM Law Economics Management	6%	13.%	22%	43%	16%
Academic discipline focussed	4%	22%	22%	34%	19%
Vocation focussed	4%	15%	18%	44%	19%
Cross disciplinary combinations	3%	21%	16%	41%	20%
Creative arts	3%	**28%**	22%	21%	26%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6, December survey, all employed and self-employed with known subject studied (n=3,738).

An interesting finding that is echoed throughout the responses to questions in this section of the survey, is the overall high proportion of respondents who felt unable to predict what might be in store, ranging from 16 per cent in the most confident Law, Economics and Management group to over a quarter of those who had studied Creative Arts. This reflects the uncertainty currently facing employees in the wake as the Covid restrictions continue and the longer-term economic implications are amplified but is particularly apparent in evidence emerging from investigations into the perspectives of younger people (O'Connor 2021).

A similar range of diversity is shown in Table 9.2 in relation to responses to this question by broad industry sector: similar levels of uncertainty across the board, but with substantially greater anticipation of negative outcomes by those employed in Marketed Services and less extreme but also significantly higher than those in the other sectors, by those in Education. Those in Marketed Services were significantly less likely to anticipate no effect.

Table 9.2 Anticipated cumulative effect on career prospects of post-2008 and forthcoming recessions by broad industry sector

	Positively	Negatively	Both positively and negatively	It will not affect my prospects	I don't know
Primary & utilities	6.%	11%	21%	38%	24%
Manufacturing & construction	6%	11%	18%	41%	24%
Marketed services	4%	**31%**	22%	25%	19%
Business services	6%	15%	20%	41%	19%
Education	3%	20%	16%	41%	21%
Other public services	3%	15%	18%	43%	21%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6, December survey, all employed and self-employed with known industry (n=3,783).

Participants were invited to reflect on how their experience of graduating into a recession in 2009/10 might affect their ability to maintain their careers in a future recession. The analysis of these responses revealed several themes, such as resilience and cumulative disadvantage, which also emerged from the qualitative interviews. These themes are analytically distinct, but as the following quotes demonstrate, they are often intertwined in participants' accounts of their experiences and feelings.

Many participants said that starting their careers during the 2008/09 recession had made them resilient and more confident about their ability to weather another recession. A Communications Manager summed up a point made by several in saying 'The *knowledge that I've done this before and have got through the other side gives me more hope'*, and that point was made by others. An interviewee said:

> *I think that the impact for me probably has made me a bit more resilient, because it was so tough getting a job immediately out of university [*…] *and I was living in London and I had, I think, something like £30 a week after paying my rent and travel for food, and it was really tough.* […] *And I think that has had an impact because I know that I can do tough things, and I can survive.* (Senior Manager, Female)

> *I know from experience that I am resilient and that sometimes you have to just let time pass for something good to come along. I am also now more confident in my skillset and industry and know which niches are more likely to stay relevant or needed.* (Senior Content Creator, Female)

Resilience was described as multifaceted. It included knowing what to expect in a recession (e.g., low salaries, intense competition for jobs), knowing what to do in this situation (e.g., try to make yourself 'indispensable' to your employer) and having the confidence and stamina to persist in the face of obstacles (*e.g.,* not giving up easily and patience). A trade marketing manager wrote '*It made me think flexibly. I knew I couldn't afford to have a fixed idea of what I wanted to do. I need to make sure I keep this in mind going into this recession'*. The following quotes illustrate what participants meant when they said they had become more resilient at the start of their careers. A Senior National Account Manager reflected *'My career trajectory started more slowly than it may have done otherwise. I have developed the patience needed to stick at something for longer than may ordinarily be expected',* but others interpreted resilience in a more negative way:

I lived through a recession (probably the greatest there has ever been in 2007-2009). It scared me and taught me to build up my savings. It also taught me to work hard for my job and to expect the worst. (Solicitor, Male)

I feel I am resilient, but I also feel I am used to being treated as disposable by employers that I sometimes accept adverse working conditions/cultures just because I'm not used to being treated better. I have become increasingly more robust at asking for more pay and pushing back on unrealistic demands. (Picture Researcher, Female)

Some participants reported that they felt tired of what seemed to be an endless series of challenges in their working lives. A Bioinformatician commented 'I am getting a little worn down by the repeated uncertainty of the situations that arise'.

When considering the impact of the 2008/09 recession, participants also compared the skills, abilities, and work experience of their current and younger selves, with some (but not all) pointing out that they are now in a stronger position than they were at the time they graduated, when lack of workplace experience and established 'real world' competence, the lack of which had been a major obstacle. Many participants pointed out the techniques they used to survive the recession they had graduated into would not be sufficient in a post-Covid recession, for example, because they have now a family to support and a mortgage to pay:

Definitely I've been in worse situations than I've been through COVID. […] *It takes quite a lot to stress me out or unnerve me at all. But I do worry more financially* […] *because of bills and things and I'm the only income in this house, so that does put more pressure on.* (Health & Safety Coordinator, Female)

When I graduated, I took a minimum wage job to just be working and lived with my parents. Doing the same thing now would mean my house was repossessed. (Senior Analyst, Female)

Participants described complex and ambiguous personal responses to the Great Recession and the ways in which these have shaped their attitudes to their working lives and the forthcoming recession. A Public Relations consultant described the combination of complex emotions: *'*Self-confidence and fear - been through the recruitment mill before when there are too many people applying for too few jobs'. Another participant felt that graduating into the 2008/09 recession had a complex effect on her attitudes to career building by making her more resilient, but she was far from being the only respondent who also commented that the experience had made her more risk averse:

I've experienced periods of unemployment before, so hopefully I have some resilience to that scenario. However, I think it's made me risk averse in terms of jobs e.g., moving to new opportunities. (Senior Manager, Male)

Many respondents had not personally experienced difficulties on graduation. In all the interviewed cases where this had been the case, the graduates concerned commented that they felt fortunate, citing friends who had experienced harder transitions. A Senior Consultant felt that that also gave him a current advantage:

I was fortunate enough to get a good job straight out of university - due to the recession many of my peers (and therefore competitors for job roles) have struggled and as such have less experience than I do, reducing overall competition. As my skillset is in demand (AI and machine learning), my job security is quite high, helping me get through this recession too. (Senior Consultant, Male)

9.2 The impact of the pandemic on attitudes and values in relation to careers and life more generally

In earlier chapters of this report, we have discussed the impact of the pandemic on participants' working lives, both in their workplaces and working from home. We have seen how their occupational and industry sector, along with their professional knowledge and skills, have led to modifications in what they did, how they did it and where they were able to work. We have seen how those providing essential services had to develop new ways of working and often, develop new areas of knowledge and skills and apply their existing knowledge and skills in different contexts. The financial impact of the restrictions and the growing recession affected graduates in different sectors very differently, with those in 'non-essential' Marketed Services and those who were self-employed more vulnerable to income loss and fall in demand for their products and services.

We did not expect to find that perhaps the most significant change, for most respondents, has been to their perceptions about what is important to them in their careers and in their lives. Just over half of males (52 per cent) and 57 per cent of women answered 'yes' to the question '*Has the Covid situation made you think differently about what is important to you in your career prospects'*, with no significant differences according to socio-economic background or ethnicity, but some variation related to sector of employment and subject studied, as shown in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3 Proportions of respondents who indicated that the Covid situation made them think differently about what is important to them in their career

Industry at Stage 6*:		Subject studied**:	
Primary & utilities	46%	STEM (Science, technology, Engineering, Maths)	51%
Manufacturing & construction	52%	LEM (Law Economics Management)	59%
Marketed services	64%	Academic discipline focussed	60%
Business services	56%	Vocation focussed	52%
Education	55%	Cross disciplinary combinations	53%
Other public services	53%	Creative arts	69%

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6, December survey, all employed and self-employed (ns =3,840* and 3,797**)

The Futuretrack graduates were then invited to explain how the Covid-19 pandemic had made them think differently about what was important to them in their careers and their lives. We read and reread their responses to this open-ended question until we were able to identify several themes. Of those who responded to the open-ended follow-up question, more than one in ten (13 per cent) said that their experiences over the pandemic period had led them to think and to reach a clearer understanding of their motivations and preferences around work. In the next two sections, we discuss the most common themes of these responses: the value of job security and importance of having a supportive employer, and how (for many) working from home had clarified their understanding of the place of work in their lives during the pandemic and in the future.

9.2.1 The value of job security and having a supportive employer

A common theme was that of job and financial security, with seven per cent of all participants explicitly writing in the open-ended final question that job security had become more important to them. Participants explained that they were less inclined to make decisions that may benefit their career but also carry risks, as the following quote illustrates:

> *I was offered an amazing opportunity, but it was only on a short-term contract so I had to turn it down because I was not confident of finding another role afterwards in this climate. Last year I would not have been worried about securing something else.* (Senior Marketing Manager, Female)

Another participant who was considering a career change explained very clearly how the pandemic made him postpone his plans for develop his career by moving to a new industry:

> *The pandemic has caused to reassess my priorities - from wanting to be made redundant and transition into a new industry to holding on and stay job secure in the short term - I feel there's a lot of uncertainty in the wider economy for the future and concerned of where I would land next if I were to leave my current job.* (Customer Relationship Manager, Male)

Some participants stated that in the wake of the pandemic they started to appreciate their current jobs more, to the extent that they were 'grateful' for having a job, while others contrasted their need for higher earnings or financial security with the need for job satisfaction and having a 'meaningful' job.

> *The uncertainty has made me more grateful for the work I do have, and more appreciative or work generally. It has also refocussed me to plan a change in career over the next few years*. (Senior Debt Adviser, Male)

> *I realised we need a higher salary overall either myself or my husband, as we are struggling to buy our own home due to Covid affecting mortgage applications*. (Exhibit Handling Officer, Female)

> *I've realised how important it is to have a reliable income - sounds obvious, but easy to forget when trying to figure out the right job, or most meaningful job - I've realised the importance of being grateful for any kind of income!* (PhD Student, Female)

Considerations about job security and the risk of contracting Covid-19 have motivated front line workers to reassess their career plans in different ways, with some preferring the security of a teaching or health care job in the long term and others planning to leave these 'high risk' jobs. A secondary school English Teacher, not the only teacher to be considering changing her job, as Chapter 7 showed, confessed that she had been considering leaving teaching but was now considering whether it was 'Covid-sensible', reflecting 'I don't think that is smart in these current circumstances*'.* Conversely, an Anaesthetic Doctor commented

> [The pandemic] *has reminded me that anything can happen, life is short and* […] *it has also reminded me that healthcare is very hard work and I need to make plans to retire early, especially as pandemics are likely to become more common.* (Anaesthetic Doctor, Female)

The findings discussed earlier in the report showed how some employers had been more able and more willing to change practices and support employees than others. Closely related to the theme of prioritising job security, some participants told us that working through the pandemic had made them appreciate a supportive employer, and (in the case of some who had been self-employed or freelancing) the value of belonging to an organisation, and this had shaped their preferences for their future working lives. A Software Engineer wrote '*I appreciate stability and job security more than I did previously. I also appreciate working for a company that tries to do the right thing for their employees'*. *It has put me off the idea of contracting'*, a Product Manager stated '*Flexibility and compassion of employer is more important to me – I am much less likely to work for a larger company now'* and a Client

Services Manager commented '*The company I work for were very supportive and this became very important to me – I now would look for a supportive company, good work/life balance and regular working from home/flexible working'*.

9.2.2 Views about working from home in the future

Drawing on their experience of working from home during the pandemic, five per cent of all respondents commented in response to this question that in future they would want jobs that allowed them to work flexibly, including working from home some or all the time and working reduced hours. Some said that they would never want to return to the office. A Pipeline Department Supervisor in Utilities wrote '*Working remotely full time is now a priority. I do not wish to return to commuting*', and a Timetable Officer was emphatic:

> *I would never like to return to the office or workplace full time.* […] *it is clearly not necessary to be in the office to do my job effectively. I see no reason to ever return to the workplace full time and should my employer insist on this then I will seek to change my employer.* (Timetable Officer, Male)

Some advocated for a 'hybrid' or blended approach to working, arguing that not having to commute was a major benefit of working from home, while being able to collaborate with colleagues was the key benefit of working on-site:

> *Working from home and being very busy is fine. It makes it a lot easier to do things.* […] *But I do look forward to when the office opens again, because I would like to, for a couple of days, go in.* […] *Maybe working two days from an office and three days from home. But just missing that ability to work with people on stuff and collaborate face-to-face.* (Head of Operations, Male)

Some hoped that in the future they would be able to consider a wider range of job opportunities, working remotely:

> *I think there is a silver lining to COVID-19 in terms of increased workplace flexibility for the future, and the opportunities as a future candidate when looking for a new role - as I may be able to consider roles located further away from home, due to the reduced necessity to be in the office regularly.* (Legal Counsel, Female)

A working mother who was looking after small children told us that the shift to working from home during the pandemic had enabled her to find a part-time Civil Service job that was compatible with childcare and she now felt more optimistic about her future career prospects than earlier, writing '*Before March 2020 I did not have any career prospects and had no drive to get a better job. The pandemic made home working possible and now I have a good job working from home*'.

However, there were various concerns about permanent shift to working from home. Some were concerned that the shift to working from home was primarily motivated by organisations' trying to reduce costs and more radical steps would follow:

> *My company has decided to cut costs by getting rid of their offices asking everyone to work from home as much as possible and say will look to get new offices once this is over. While I am ok with this as working from home suits me, others are not able to work from home easily, and it feels like the company is just doing anything it can to reduce costs. The worry is that more job losses are next, and the uncertainty is terrifying.* (Senior Software Engineer, Male)

The lack of opportunities for innovation and learning and development were also mentioned as potential negative effects of working from home:

> *I am particularly concerned about the impact on innovation and creativity in generating and developing new ideas (which I personally am finding more difficult) and on the experiences of younger and more junior staff, who won't have the same learning experiences. I do not think we have yet come up with long-term solutions to these problems.* […] *I think we will have to adapt much of our working life and accept the changes.* (Solicitor advocate, Female)

Due to their roles in their organisation, some Futuretrack graduates looked at the issue of working from home from both the perspective of an employee and an employer. One participant predicted that she was likely to be working from home when the pandemic ends and added that although she felt isolated when working from home, most of her colleagues preferred working from home:

> *They've just done a survey and only 1 per cent of our colleagues* […] *There's about 20,000 of us in the UK and only 1 per cent of those want to go back fulltime. There will be far more flexible working for us after this.* […] *There'll be a lot more personal decisions rather than job-based decisions.* (Health and Safety Coordinator, Female)

One interviewee was leading on a project entitled 'Future of Work' – her organisation was looking into ways in which work will be transformed after the pandemic.

> *But the real problem I think we have as a business that we're trying to look at in this future of work project is that some people just don't have space in their houses for this* […] *We have some people who are still living at home with their parents. Maybe saving up to try and rent their own place or buy their own place, and they just don't have space*. (Facilities Manager, Female)

9.3 Factors associated with resilience and vulnerability

We developed the proposal for this research in May 2020, while analysing the 2019 survey and interview data, because of our growing awareness of the potential vulnerability of a significant proportion of respondents in the face of the Covid-19 restrictions and the likely longer-term impacts. Our aim was to determine how higher education had given some the ability to pass through the impending recession relatively unscathed, whereas for others this might not be the case. Who would be resilient and who most vulnerable? We anticipated that this would depend upon the kind of work they did, the sector in which they worked, their employment status and their personal and family circumstances, and the analyses so far have borne this out. We have found that, by and large, most respondents remain relatively securely on track to survive the most serious impacts of the past year, although few have been wholly unscathed by the experience. Only a small minority had suffered from unemployment or redundancy, although a considerably higher number had found themselves to be more vulnerable than they might have anticipated, and many had re-evaluated their career priorities. We asked the same question in the Stage 5 and 6 surveys, examining respondents' optimism about their long-term career prospects. Table 9.4 shows the responses of those who answered at both stages.

Table 9.4 Change between 2019 and 2020 in the proportions of respondents agreeing with the statement 'I am optimistic about my long-term career prospects'

I am optimistic about my long-term career prospects	1=Strongly agree		7=Strongly disagree	
	1 or 2	3	4 or 5	6 or 7
Stage 5 survey	58%	20%	15%	6%
Stage 6 survey	49%	21%	22%	7%
Change (Stage 5 to Stage 6)	-9	+1	+7	+1

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6, December survey, all employed or self-employed at Stage 6 who were also employed or self- employed at Stage 5 (Stage 5 n=3,742, Stage 6 n=3,735).

There is little change in the proportion who were very pessimistic about their long-term career prospects but a significant reduction in those strongly agreed with that statement and an increase overall in the shift towards the more pessimistic responses.

Using multivariate analysis techniques, we further explored the interactive association of factors with the likelihood of having responded positively[11]. Table 9.5 shows the factors associated with the strongest positive and negative effects[12].

Table 9.5 Factors associated with the statement 'I am optimistic about my long-term career prospects'

Factor	Most likely to agree with the statement	Most likely not sure or not agreeing with the statement
Gender	Male	
Age	Being under 21 at outset of undergraduate studies	Being over 26 at outset of undergraduate studies
Social background	Managerial and professional	
Subject studied	Medicine & Dentistry	Art &Design
	Maths & Computing	Languages
		Historical Studies
Educational qualifications	Professional qualification or diploma	
Employment	Working in a job where all or most are graduates	Working in a job with low graduate density
		Non-graduate job
		Not-for-profit sector
Sector/Industry	Manufacturing	
	Other public services	
Other factors		Having experienced unemployment*
		Caring for adults

Source: Futuretrack Stage 6, December survey,
* The longer the cumulative experience of unemployment since graduating, the stronger the effect.

[11] Logistic regression, where the dependent variable takes the value 1 for scale responses 1, 2 and 3 ('Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Somewhat agree'), zero otherwise (scale responses 4 'Not sure', 5 'Somewhat disagree', 6 'Disagree' and 6 'Strongly disagree'). Information on the results from the full specification of the model, which includes socio-economic status, HE entry qualifications, type of higher education institution attended, degree results, are available from the authors on request.

[12] A similar analysis of the responses to a slightly different question 'Thinking about the longer-term impact of Covid, I am in a good situation in terms of my career prospects' revealed virtually identical results

None of these findings are surprising in the light of the evidence from the survey and interview findings and reinforce the findings cited in 9.1 to 9.3 above. They reveal that, by and large, having a degree that has enabled graduates to get a graduate job leads to greater confidence and likelihood of having accessed a sustainable employment and career opportunities.

The comments in the box below illustrate the significantly lower confidence in those with less traditional graduate jobs and, particularly, those in jobs unlikely to require or use their higher education knowledge and skills.

It took me a very long time (8 years) to be able to get a job in the field that I earned my degree so despite graduating 11 years ago I haven't been able to build up the experience that would guarantee my current job or secure a similar position if I was terminated. (Art Studio Coordinator, Female)

The original recession meant I didn't get a graduate job and so I now work in a career that doesn't need a degree. On the plus side, this means my skill set is more generic and so if I do lose my job, I'll potentially find it easier to get a new one as there are more roles available in admin, but my salary is considerably lower. (Programme Administrator, Female)

It took a long time to even start establishing a career after graduating into a recession. It's taken a long time to get my career to where it is now, and with another recession, work opportunities will reduce and being able to change careers will be a big challenge. (Drama Facilitator, Female)

I was already behind because of the recession when I graduated. It took longer to find a full-time graduate job then. This future recession will continue to hamper me. There is now no way to catch up. (Assistant manager, Female)

Due to the last recession I never managed to find or establish a career. Another recession will further push me back from ever being able to do this. (Data and Learning Officer, Female)

The opportunities were less when I first graduated, and I became less likely to have opportunities as each year went on not working in the sector I studied. I changed career and now there is another recession I worry my job is at risk and if made redundant I do not have as much experience as others. (Business Support Officer, Female)

Chapter 10 Looking back and looking forward

10.1 How much had the graduates' circumstances changed in an extraordinary year?

In this report we have examined the work, career and financial impact of the Covid-19 restrictions and their economic effects on the Futuretrack cohort, a good ten years after most had graduated in 2009 or 2010. We find, as when we surveyed them in 2019, that although their experiences covered a wide range, the majority remained securely integrated within the labour market, mainly in graduate jobs. That is, most were in jobs for which a degree had been explicitly required or is normally required, with earnings that reflected that: albeit earnings covering a very wide spectrum that reflected the different sectoral and occupational labour markets which the respondents had accessed.

The earnings of most graduates were not greatly affected by the pandemic, but a significant minority (16 per cent) reported that they had seen their personal incomes decline between March 2020 and December 2020. This decline was not experienced in a random fashion. The groups that saw their incomes fall tended to be among the lower paid graduates, those with gross annual incomes less than £21,000, the self-employed, and those holding jobs in the hardest hit sectors, transport and tourism, hotels and catering and construction. In terms of their undergraduate degrees, those who had studied creative arts and design were disproportionately represented among those reporting a decline in their personal incomes. Conversely, those who had first degrees in maths and computing were much less likely to have experienced any decline in their incomes. Some of the highest paid graduates reported declines in their income, specifically those who had law degrees, possibly reflecting a decline in their ability to carry high caseloads during the pandemic.

There was a small amount of movement out of and into self-employment, but the proportion in self-employment overall remained stable at around 7 per cent, disproportionately concentrated in Marketed Services (mainly Arts, Entertainment and Recreational activities) and Business Services. Those in the former were mainly working freelance in areas of activity severely affected by lockdown restrictions, and like self-employed professionals in other areas, had been vulnerable to a reduction in demand for their services and loss of work and income, whereas those in Business Services mainly provided ICT, legal or financial services and had generally been able to go on working from home throughout the pandemic. Those who had been self-employed for less than three years and were consequently ineligible for government support in the face of Covid were vulnerable to income reduction and insecurity and in fact, only a third of self-employed respondents had been able to rely on government compensation for lost income. It is perhaps not surprising that one of the main themes mentioned in the open-ended responses, as discussed in Chapter 4, was increased concern about employment and income security. Many of those who were self-employed reflected that they felt increasingly vulnerable, while others who had considered or had the option of self-employment reported feeling less inclined to make this move than in the past.

There were few examples of unemployment and redundancy. Although a significant minority had experienced furlough, few had lost their jobs. Where they had, most had obtained alternative employment, some with increased earnings. At the time of the exploratory enquiry in September 2020, two per cent of economically active respondents had been made redundant and 21 per cent were worried about their longer-term job security. When we followed up some of those in December, we found that their fears had not been realised. Most worked in organisations which had reduced staff numbers radically, and having survived these culls, felt more confident about the future. In one case, the hospitality company a respondent had worked for had been taken over by a competitor, and his job was lost in the merger where many colleagues were made redundant, but he was invited to re-apply and immediately transferred to a similar post with the new employer. In another, the

administrator working for a utilities company had been trained in and acquired increasingly specialist skills and been promoted to a post that was unequivocally a management post with a salary increase and managerial fringe benefits.

However, as was discussed in Chapter 3, those who had experienced furlough and those who worked in organisations where they had felt vulnerable to loss of employment had become less confident and optimistic about the future and were more likely to be rethinking their longer-term career options. This was particularly the case where respondents and their colleagues had experienced involuntary job change, in the sectors identified throughout the report as most vulnerable to the economic impact of the pandemic, mainly in the private and not-for-profit sectors and among those in precarious employment. Those in the public sector were less likely to have been furloughed and were generally grateful to have secure employment, although not always happy about how the pandemic was being handled by their managers.

10.2 How had their work changed?

Many experienced an intensification of work and a change in their work. Work intensification was caused by the increased volume of work; having to adapt to the risk of catching Covid-19; having to adopt new, 'Covid-secure' working practices; and having to keep up with the often-changing rules and regulations around these practices. In addition, many Futuretrack participants who continued to work on-site had to adapt to a change in the content of their work during periods of redeployment, especially in the health service. Those in 'frontline' public roles faced health risks and the distress of being unable to spend time with vulnerable family and friends: a frequently mentioned complaint by members of this cohort whose age meant that they were likely to have grandparents (and sometimes children, or pregnant friends), who they felt unable to expose to the risk of meeting with even when restrictions were modified. All of this has been widely reported for those employed in the provision of essential services, but also affected those in customer or client-facing roles during periods when their organisations were able to operate.

Those working from home for most or all the time largely avoided the health risk challenges. Some jobs lent themselves more easily to remote working than others and the limitations and advantages of virtual working impacted differently according to their roles, the degree of autonomy they had over their working days, their familiarity with online working and their ICT competence. The experience of working from home ranged from some Futuretrack graduates reporting improved work focus and work-life balance at one end of the spectrum and others reporting isolation and mental health problems at the other end. Some had experienced both at different points since the start of the pandemic, as the novelty of the changed circumstances wore off and anxieties and unpredictability continued.

When talking about their experiences of working from home, many participants attributed their difficulties with it or preference for it to individual habits or personality traits that made them 'suited' to remote working. However, it was clear that their experiences were shaped by multiple environmental factors, such as the quality of working space and resources available to them, whether they shared accommodation with others, and the length and the quality of their normal commute.

Those with limited space or who shared space faced greater difficulties than others; those with children faced challenges during lockdowns when their normal childcare support was not feasible. Those who were accustomed to remote working and virtual teamworking, whose jobs included substantial online working, were less likely to have been furloughed and to be able to continue working effectively from home, and less likely to report experiencing stress. In some cases, such as the relatively junior Civil Servant and disabled Psychological Wellbeing practitioner cited in Chapter 6, employees not previously permitted to work from home had found that it had improved their ability to do their job effectively. Although most

were surprised how much they enjoyed having more time with partners and family and valued the greater opportunity to balance work and life without the need to spend time on commute or travel, most parents had found the additional work involved in childcare and work simultaneously stressful. Working remotely required many respondents to adapt to online working to a greater extent than they had previously experienced.

The combined effect of these changes was that many participants working on-site reported 'frontline fatigue' while those working remotely often reported exhaustion caused by the breakdown of boundaries between work and non-work time and space, and the difficulties of managing these boundaries (Allen *et al.* 2020). In addition, some Futuretrack graduates reported loss of anticipated training and development and promotion opportunities, although a small number reported that new opportunities for career development had opened to them, whether they worked from home or continued to work on-site work.

10.3 The importance of employers

The perceived support of employers was an important factor shaping the experience of Futuretrack graduates: good communication and support led to increased commitment while the lack of communication and support led to a loss of trust in employers and trade unions, with some participants reporting that they were planning to change jobs or even careers. Those in teaching jobs stood out as having been subject to particularly tough challenges, mostly involving hybrid working, with the requirement to participate in classroom teaching and to develop innovative teaching methods for online and distance-managed delivery using what for many involved learning new skills. Our findings were echoed in a recent national report on the teaching labour market in England (Worth and Faulkner-Ellis 2021). At the other extreme, those accustomed to working in multinational and multi-divisional organisations with partners, colleagues, and clients around the world, were accustomed to virtual working as part of virtual teams, online meetings and using ICT for a substantial part of their working day. For them, customary national and international travel had been curtailed, which was a source of regret for some but relief for others, and the move to more home-based working was largely seen as timesaving and facilitating for their 24-hour management of global time differences.

Some organisations and employers found it easier to adapt to the changes than others, reflecting their previous experiences of distance working, their management styles and the prior flexibility and working modes of their employees. The capacity to adapt to the changing circumstances in which the different phases of lockdown, tiered restrictions and gradual loosening of restrictions evolved between March 2020 and January 2021 was a common challenge, but some organisations and sectors found it more difficult than others. 'Agile' employers (Aghina et al. 2018) including global but also small companies, were clearly more flexible in adjusting, introducing organisational restructuring, and adapting to changes. Their organisations tended to be better-equipped and more able to take account of the changed circumstances in which they were required to operate. Hitherto prosperous companies built on an existing fluid approach to work, already routinely holding online meetings with clients in a range of locations, already encouraging working from home or some of the time, found it easier to cope from the outset and to take account of the new situation. Similarly, some companies have been better at 'managing distance working' than others, as was discussed in Chapter 6. Most of the organisations that that did not routinely operate online and had to substantially modify their practices and policies, found it challenging to manage repeated changes in restrictions, availability of resources and market circumstances.

In short, experiences and the challenges faced by respondents varied substantially according to sector and occupation, but the key finding that was common to all was the importance of having confidence in their employer's competence. The effect on their motivation and commitment to meet new challenges was the degree to which they felt their

interests were being taken into consideration and their work was valued. Not surprisingly, those in jobs where it had not been possible to work continuously and had been subject to furlough or worked in precarious sectors were most concerned about the sustainability of their jobs. In Chapter 7 we focused particularly on the two groups of respondents who appeared, in very different ways, to have been substantially affected by the Covid-19 restrictions, requirements and their economic effects: schoolteachers and those working in (mainly performance) arts, entertainment and recreational employment. For both groups, the short-term impacts have been traumatic and difficult to handle.

10.4 Futuretrack – a cohort study of graduates at a key stage

Most of the findings discussed above could apply to any current sample of labour market participants. There has been an enormous volume of press, policy and online research publications on the impact of the pandemic on work and particularly, the impact of homeworking, on employees and organisations, much of it based on rather small samples (e.g., Allen et al. *op cit.*) or larger but widely diverse samples. (e.g., Ipsen et al. 2021). We have cited some of this in the course of the report. The strength of the Futuretrack research, though, is that it has provided the opportunity to follow up a reasonably substantial sample of graduates, mainly in their early-mid-30s, who are ten years on from graduation and for whom we have well-documented evidence of their educational and labour market trajectories.

10.5 Hidden injuries and unseen benefits of the pandemic?

This latest stage of the Futuretrack study reveals the impact of living through the last extraordinary year on a sample of young mid-career adults at what has traditionally been, and for many has clearly become, their career consolidation and family-building stage of life. We did not ask questions at this stage about partnerships, children or households, and few direct questions about work-life balance, but in the interviews and in the open-ended responses provided by survey respondents it was apparent that the impact of their experiences on their wider lives and values, as well as on their work and careers, was significant, and intimately related to their experience and management of their work and their views about future career aspirations. In Chapter 8, we considered our findings relating to the impact of the pandemic on their work-life balance and well-being and discuss how having and caring for children changes the dynamics of the work-life balance. In addition to providing more time for family relationships for some, it has also added new work which, during the pandemic, it has been difficult to share with others in the traditional dual-career way. We also touched on the extent to which gender divisions of labour appeared to have been changing among these generally well-paid young people with equally highly developed human capital. We found plenty of evidence of male participation in and responsibility for parenting and childcare, but as with other studies, more evidence of modification of hours and working patterns, including withdrawal from employment, by women.

We also found the impact of the changed working practices on mental health to be a major topic raised during interviews and written about in the open-ended survey questionnaires. This ranged from comments about how the move to working from home and reduction in commuting and workplace stresses had led to improved mental health, better sleep patterns and healthier lifestyles, to reports about extreme stress, anxiety, loneliness and isolation, depression, periods of sick leave and suicide attempts, both due to the pressures and worries of front-line working and to the difficulties caused by having to learn new skills in inadequate circumstances with restricted work space and resources. For those who had been furloughed or were anxious about the sustainability of their jobs, careers and earning potential, isolation and anxiety sometimes segued into depression. For those living in shared accommodation, especially those sharing childcare responsibilities, the requirement to negotiate about use of space and time sometimes led to stress. Where respondents lived alone, the social isolation had proved very challenging and caused some to re-evaluate the

extent to which work had previously dominated their lives to the exclusion of other activities and friendships. Many reported that the impact on their mental health was causing them to re-evaluate their career aspirations and future plans: to move out of jobs that, they realised, had caused them undue stress prior to the pandemic and they now recognised had had a detrimental effect on their well-being, or to move from insecure jobs that they loved where their insecurity had been exacerbated by the restrictions and they saw no way out of continued mental-health threatening crises but to change to more sustainable work.

10.6 Who were more resilient and who more vulnerable?

Despite their graduation in the wake of the 2008 recession, our Stage 5 findings depicted a generally well-integrated, successful, early mid-career graduate cohort, with a small proportion of less secure respondents. At the end of the December 2020 survey, we reminded respondents about graduating into the earlier recessionary graduate labour market and asked them if they thought that experience had led them to be able to cope better or less well with the forthcoming one that was generally predicted. We found the same degrees of confidence and anxiety according to the subject they had studied and according to their contractual status and employment security, as identified throughout the Futuretrack post-graduation stages as likely to be associated with successful career development and less successful labour market integration. Those who had studied Creative Arts, non-STEM Academic-discipline-focussed subjects and Cross-disciplinary combinations were most likely to anticipate negative effects, with those in non-graduate jobs significantly less likely to feel confident of coping well, and those without permanent contracts of employment more likely than those with them to face the future with trepidation. Those in non-graduate jobs reported feeling vulnerable. None of this was unexpected.

What was somewhat different to investigations was the extent to which higher proportions of those working in Marketed Services were substantially likely to anticipate negative effects, followed some way behind (but still significantly higher than for those in other sectors) by those working in Education: two of the sectors identified within this report as having been affected most profoundly by the changes in working practices and potential.

The most surprising finding was the extent to which a substantial proportion of the respondents indicated their career plans, values and aspirations had been affected by their experiences during the pandemic, both of workplace and home-working changes and their ramifications and their experience of the Covid situation had made them think differently about what is important to them in their career. This was reported by more than half who had first degrees in certain subject areas, particularly those who had studied Creative Arts, non-STEM academically focussed subjects and, more surprisingly, LEM subjects. This also applied according to broad industry sectors, particularly those in Marketed Services, with those in Primary and Utilities being the only broad industry sector where less than half were thinking differently about what is important in their careers.

10.7 Were the Futuretrack respondents less optimistic about their longer-term career prospects in 2020 than they had been in 2019?

The answer is yes. Those most likely to be optimistic about their long-term career prospects had the following characteristics: they were male, had been under 21 when they embarked on their undergraduate studies, came from managerial and professional backgrounds, had studied Medicine & Dentistry or Maths & Computing. They were more likely than others to have professional qualifications, to be working in jobs with high graduate density, and employed in Manufacturing or in Other Public Services. Conversely, those who had been over 26 at the start of their undergraduate degree, had studied Art& Design, Languages or Historical Studies who were working in a job with low graduate density where less likely to

be optimistic, those who had experienced unemployment, and were caring for adults, also reported low levels of optimism.

But our main findings remain positive. Although the 78 per cent who had scored themselves three or higher[13] when asked to how far they agreed with the statement 'I am optimistic about my long-term career' had fallen to 70 per cent, that remains a positive finding. At the other extreme of the scale, there was negligible change, with six per cent rating their response six or seven in 2019 and 7 per cent in 2020.

10.8 What does it all mean for graduates and their employers?

The period since the onset of Covid-19 has been characterised by remarkable changes in work modes and lifestyle changes among the Futuretrack participants. For some this has been positive, some negative and some had mixed effects, but it has shaken up the graduate labour market in a way that would have been unimaginable pre-pandemic. In the preceding analyses, we have identified where the impacts have been greatest and which graduates have been subject to the most significant changes and challenges. It is difficult to predict longer-term outcomes, but we argue that the four factors with the most profound implications for the future of the graduate labour market have been (i) the role employers during the pandemic, (ii) the extent to which technology and its use have changed jobs and the skills and knowledge required to do them, (iii) the extent to which the need for employees in professional, technical and administrative jobs to work from home has affected both employers' and employees' perceptions of how far this has facilitated or restricted organisational effectiveness and productivity, and related to both the last two points (iv) changing attitudes towards work, careers, commuting and flexibility.

It is clear from the findings of this research that some employers reacted very proactively, positively, and reassuringly to preserve their highly qualified labour, while others simply made use of furlough money and waited for things to get better, with little planning for the post pandemic period. The levels of dissatisfaction and the accounts and comments provided by those working in education sector, reinforced by other findings that we have cited, suggest that employers in that sector were among the worst offenders, expecting teacher workloads to double almost overnight with management too often able to provide little or no support. By way of contrast, well-resourced employers and managers in progressive technically sophisticated organisations in the private sector moved quickly to extend virtual working practices already in place, but we also report highly motivated employees in considerably more financially-constrained not-for-profit organisations and other less lucrative sectors who reported confidence in their employers' management of the constraints.

The potential vulnerability of self-employment is well documented in our report, but among the self-employed graduates we found polarisation according to the sustainability of the demand for their knowledge and skills. Those operating in sectors traditionally characterised by erratic work opportunities and high competition for them had become more insecure and vulnerable during the pandemic, but those in traditional graduate professions and those using and developing new technology mainly reported continued, secure, and even increasing demand for their expertise. We were told by interviewees of employers 'buying in' specialist expertise rather than advertising permanent posts as demand for their services grew as restrictions were reduced and markets reopened. They predicted that that this use of contract labour would increase in the light of employers' experience of the pandemic and the unpredictability of the fluctuating economic situation.

Much of the change in modes of work is related to the increasing use of technology across the organisational and occupational spectrum. While a far wider range of occupational

[13] On a scale on 1-7 where 1 = agree completely and 7= completely disagree.

groups have been forced to get to grips with online working and the use of ICT in their work, many finding it necessary to develop new skills, we also found evidence of increasing specialisation within management (for example, in relation to health and safety) and professions: for example, in organisations like schools (where we were told of specialist technical staff appointed to assist teaching staff in the use and development of new teaching methods and resources). Recent research (c.f. Brown 2020) has argued that increasing polarisation in 'knowledge work' between decision-makers, innovators and highly specialised professionals and those who maintain and use the knowledge generated by the former has profound implications for future demand for graduates and policies relating to higher education in the future. The majority of the current Futuretrack respondents who have proved most resilient to the pandemic crisis, whether employed, self-employed or freelance, were already integrated to the sustainable high-end knowledge worker stratum, according to this perspective, with those who were more vulnerable in less sustainable occupations.

The in-depth data on the experience of working from home and working on-site during the pandemic provides valuable insights. Such data are particularly valuable at a time when many UK employers are planning to introduce a 'hybrid' model of working (see, for example, CIPD 2020). Their evidence, and the evidence that was cited by Futuretrack respondents in Chapter 6, suggests that since finding it necessary and expedient for employees to work from home, many employers are planning to offer more extensive working from home on a regular basis. According to the CIPD evidence (CIPD, 2020), before the crisis nearly two-thirds of employers did not offer the opportunity to work regularly from home and where they did, it applied to less than 10 per cent of their workforces. Anticipating what will happen after the crisis, around 40 per cent of employers said they expect more than half their workforce to work regularly from home.

10.9 What are the implications for future working opportunities and patterns for graduates?

Home working was reported to have had benefits for many of our respondents, enabling them to continue to work effectively while saving travel time, improving their ability to manage work and family responsibilities and achieve a healthier work-life balance. A wider range of employees than hitherto had been enabled to work from home. It had enabled them and their employers to liaise internally and organise online meetings with remote colleagues, clients, and partners more efficiently and cheaply than previously. It facilitated the exchange of information respondents cited examples of where online working had enabled problems to be solved and decisions reached more quickly than during 'normal' practice. Employers previously resistant to staff working from home had learned that productivity was often improved rather than reduced when they were obliged to trust their employees to work remotely and were reported to be already planning reductions in office space and recognising the extent to which previous work-related travel had often been unnecessary. There was some concern among respondents, however, that employers' main motivations relating to future planning were cost reduction rather than staff welfare or environmentally friendly considerations. Would more jobs be lost, and the opportunities for career development reduced?

The graduates' responses also made it clear that not all work lent itself to distance working. Some types of work that required on-site technology and resources, face-to-face interaction with colleagues and others, working in specific locations, or could simply not been done from home, and much graduate-level 'knowledge work' fell into this category. To the extent that it was possible to continue exercising their knowledge and skills in restricted ways, graduates working in scientific and creative professions and those requiring advanced interpersonal and communication expertise reported that without face-to-face and collaborative working, it was not possible to deliver work of the previous quality. Creative workers spark off one another when working together; researchers share ideas and, often in informal argument, experience breakthroughs in understanding; medical professionals can diagnose and

prescribe appropriate solutions more confidently when they can examine patients. Substituting face-to-face meetings between colleagues with online meetings and conferences may reduce travel costs and save time, but some respondents reported less opportunity to engage with and really get to know and debate issues with colleagues and to feeling impoverished by lack of informal work-related communication.

Recent press coverage (e.g., Renshaw, 2021), has reported that many employers suspended their 2020 graduate programmes because they felt unable to offer sufficient training remotely. The effect is that graduates from both 2020 and 2021 are competing for this year's graduate entry level roles, and they may also be applying alongside those who have been in work for a few years, after being made redundant. The same author reported increased applications for Teach First and higher postgraduate degree applications this year so far than had been the case at this time a year ago). For the 2019 survey, we had interviewed members of the Futuretrack cohort about facing a similarly tight and competitive labour market who described how lucky they had felt, and how hard they felt they had to justify their success when being recruited by traditional 'Blue chip' graduate recruiters or applying successfully for graduate jobs in 2009 or 2010 when many of their peers were failing to get suitable jobs. We interviewed graduates who had had difficulties in obtaining the kinds of jobs they had aspired to and had taken several years to feel that they were in appropriate employment for people with their skills and abilities, many of whom had postponed job-search immediately after graduation, to work or travel overseas, or had gone on to postgraduate study or teacher-training, or postponed job-search immediately after graduation, to work or travel overseas, in the face of the shortfall in graduate labour market opportunities. In 2020, we interviewed graduates who fell into these latter categories for this project, and in two cases, of graduates who had spent several years in what were clearly non-graduate jobs, they had subsequently found their niches and were well established in managerial roles with salaries that matched their levels of responsibility, but we also interviewed graduates whose career progress, after overcoming a difficult start, had been set back during the pandemic year.

Many of our interviewees, talking about redundancies in their organisations or younger colleagues and acquaintances in their industries and organisations, discussed how fortunate they felt to have reached the stage that they had built up experience and networks and were able to feel reasonably confident that they would be able to survive job change of extended periods of lockdown and probably survive into 'the new normal'. It was apparent from the interviews that cumulative work experience and professional networking were important elements in access to information about career development and potential job moves, across virtually the full range of industries and occupations at the career stage that these graduates had reached, but this was particularly the case in the creative industries and among those in jobs concerned with research and innovation. If the already-emerging trend of leading arts and performance organisations to produce online performances, accelerated by the pandemic restrictions, continues to develop, the likelihood is that cultural production will become increasingly polarised between larger, often international organisations and small poorly resourced local and regional ones, with reduction in employment opportunities for arts professionals. If travel and collaborative working among research and development professionals continues to be restricted once the pandemic crisis is over, innovation will proceed more slowly and the labour market for the graduates working in the relevant fields will be diminished. Whatever happens, large parts of the graduate labour market will look different in the future, but the majority of the Futuretrack respondents, already professionally established, are unlikely to be seriously threatened by future changes. Those less established, and especially those from recent cohorts of graduates, are likely to face challenges in the short-to-medium term.

10.10 Policy Implications

The findings from this follow-up to Stage 5 of the Futuretrack study conducted in 2019 prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic reinforce and amplify those drawn from that study, but the new research has added insights to the hidden structural and organisational weaknesses of the labour market and the relative vulnerabilities of different professional and organisational workers. These findings provide pointers, indicating the need for new or revised policies designed to address not just the problems we have identified but the probable future labour market issues that graduates will face. At this stage of our research, 10-12 years after graduates completed their undergraduate degrees, the findings provide useful insights for students, graduates and higher education professionals and organisations, but the main implications are for policymakers and employers.

We have identified five priorities areas for which we make recommendations: (i) *addressing the gender pay gap*, (ii) *facilitating flexible working arrangements*, (iii) *dealing with the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions and requirements on employee welfare,* (iv) *the need for more comprehensive and timely information about higher education outcomes,* and (v) *taking account of increasing fragmentation of jobs and employment precarity*.

(i) The gender pay gap

One of the most powerful findings from our study is that the gender pay gap in earnings for graduates in their early thirties remains almost unchanged since 2002. Employers, professional associations, and governmental policymakers need to undertake further concerted actions and implement procedures designed to tackle this issue. For example, annual gender pay gap reporting is currently required of all organisations with more than 250 employees. Such reporting puts a public spotlight on organisations with large gender pay gaps, especially those that employ significant numbers of graduates. This, in turn, can cause employers to think more about the reasons underlying gender pay differences and act to remedy the situation. It is important that such information is made publicly available to potential employees.

Related to this issue, we note that there is evidence that while most employers are committed to equal opportunities and non-discriminatory policies, many appear to promote and encourage formal and informal practices that discriminate against parents and those who choose to reduce hours of work to accommodate caring responsibilities. These mainly discriminate against women. During the pandemic restrictions, the impact became more apparent.

- *We recommend that prompt gender pay gap reporting should be extended to organisations with 25 or more employees and should be presented in a manner that identifies the gender pay gap within the highly qualified workforce.*

(ii) Facilitating flexible working arrangements

While the pandemic has brought about a huge upheaval in the labour market, our study shows that working from home was the single biggest change that graduates had experienced. While some reported the negative impacts of this, many employers are now more likely to respond to requests for home working from their employees. Some may require such changes, having identified the cost savings involved and the potential home working has to reduce the organisation's carbon footprint. But the introduction of this element of flexibility into the location of employment is not necessarily a 'win-win' situation for employers and employees. Face-to-face working facilitates informal consultation and greater non-verbal communication in ways that a computer screen cannot. This is important for recognition of efforts and for promotion. To the extent that certain groups may find

themselves more likely to be working remotely than others, then the potential for discrimination will exist.

- *Employers will need to develop monitoring processes and put in place rigorous procedures that will ensure fair access to promotion for all employees regardless of their working arrangements.*

(iii) Managing employee welfare beyond Covid-19

Three of our strongest findings were the impact on respondents of the changes in work modes, whether relating to workplace practices and changes, or the requirement to modify ways of working to facilitate working from home, on (i) their capacity to do their jobs effectively, (ii) the extent to which their workloads changed, and (iii) the impact of these variables on their mental health. Some employers had been well-prepared for the crisis, had policies and practices in place to adapt to the changed circumstances, including well-established flexible organisational structures and internal communication systems that facilitated efficiency. Others were unable to cope with uncertainties and did not make it easy for their staff to take account of the new constraints and requirements. As was the case for individuals, the kinds of products, markets, and levels of technological sophistication of organisations, as well as their size and complexity, varied substantially, and the potential impact of the pandemic was dependent on these variables. Different organisations will learn different lessons from their management of the pandemic experience. Analysis of the range of reported good and less successful management of the challenges faced by respondents' organisations nevertheless reveal two clear implications relevant to all employers, to enable them to move on from this current crisis and be well-prepared in the event of another challenge of similar dimensions:

- *Organisations aspiring to retain and motivate their employees need to take stock of the impact of the events of the past year on the welfare of existing staff and ensure that their career progress and employment security is suitably recognised and acknowledged – not necessarily financially.*

- *Lessons on the impact of working conditions and changing working practices on mental health need to be learned and where necessary, counselling, or shared systems of mutual support and mentoring should be established.*

(iv) The value of higher education: need for *more comprehensive and timely statistical information*

Graduate earnings have long been one of the key outcome measures used by policy makers to evaluate not just the apparent success of actions to expand higher education, but now form part of the outcome measures to evaluate individual higher education institutions. These include the availability of new and large-scale continuous sources of information, brought together in datasets such as the *Longitudinal Educational Outcome*s. We have demonstrated the importance of including information on hours worked and location in these data and we support further calls to this effect[14]. More importantly though, while we recognise the value of monitoring and evaluating individual financial rates of return, we advocate the *development of an effective means of recognising and monitoring the wider benefits of graduate study to individuals, communities, and society*[15]. Recent calls to make

[14] For example, in the Department for Education (2021) Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF).

[15] See, for example Brennan, J., N. Durazzi and T. Séné (2013) *Things we know and don't know about the wider benefits of higher education: a review of the recent literature*. BIS Research Paper, URN BIS/13/1244. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, London, UK. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55427/

progress on this issue have been made by Universities UK[16] and within the Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework[17].

Detailed and up-to-date analysis of earnings differences by subject of degree and the knowledge and skills acquired can provide useful indicators on the emergence of skills shortages or over supply of graduate labour. For example, aggregations of subjects such as STEM are justifiable, useful, and revealing, but disaggregation within them, and within heterogeneous subjects such as Interdisciplinary and the Biological Sciences, would provide better labour market information about the knowledge and skills sought by employers and used in graduate recruitment. This is an area where further statistical cooperation between the Department for Education, the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs, and the Office for National Statistics could lead to significant improvements in the identification of over or under supply of specific graduate skills and knowledge. Making such detailed information available in a timely manner could help potential students with their subject choices, assist institutions with curriculum planning and provide employers with vital data for planning recruitment and pay strategies.

- *We strongly support these calls to develop indicators of the wider benefits of higher education and propose that the Office for Students should spearhead this work.*

- *Related to this, we recommend the continuation of long-term longitudinal studies of graduates and the creation of new such studies to enable further cross cohort comparisons of graduates' careers and opportunities.*

(v) The increasing fragmentation of jobs and employment precarity

Our findings illustrated the changing structure of the labour market, showing that employment precarity is not confined to low-skilled, low-paid jobs, but that it covers a significant proportion of members of the highly qualified population. The pandemic revealed the extent of their employment vulnerability and income insecurity. We cite a range of research studies that suggests that these trends will continue. The experience of the pandemic, in highlighting national and global vulnerability to unforeseeable crises, has shown how important the establishment of such safeguards is.

- *It is imperative for policymakers to develop mechanisms for protecting standards of employment and fostering income security.*

[16] Snelling, C. and R. Fisher (2020) Protecting the value of UK degrees: reviewing progress one year on from the statement of intent. UK Standing Committee on Quality Assessment. Universities UK.

[17] Department for Education, *op. cit.* (footnote 22)

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Appendix A: Methodology

Futuretrack is a multi-stage survey of applicants who made an application for a full-time place in a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) at the undergraduate level in 2006.

For details about the first five stages of the Futuretrack study please see Appendix A in the Futuretrack Stage 5 report.

A.1 Futuretrack Stage 6

Surveys
We carried out two online surveys as part of Futuretrack stage 6 via the Qualtrics survey software. The first was a short 3-question enquiry (referred to as the September enquiry) which we sent out in early September 2020 to respondents from the stage 5 survey who were willing to be recontacted. 5,751 people were invited to complete this enquiry and we received 4,242 responses before we closed it at the end of October 2020, giving a response rate of 74%. This initial enquiry was designed to establish the issues that had been raised by the Covid-19 pandemic and that would require further investigation in a subsequent survey.

Based on the responses to the September enquiry we then designed the Stage 6 survey (referred to as the December Survey). This was a longer survey expected to take around 15 minutes to complete. There was a mixture of closed and open questions with sections covering respondents' current labour market situation, self-employment support, working hours, working from home, furlough, income, and future career prospects. The December survey invitation was sent out to all respondents from the Stage 5 survey who were willing to be recontacted except for a small number of people who opted out following receipt of the September enquiry; in total 5,730 people were invited to complete the December survey. The survey was distributed on the 9th December 2020 and ran until the middle of January 2021. We received 4,110 responses to the December survey resulting in another good response rate of 72%. 86% of those completing the survey had also completed the September enquiry.

The responses to the December survey were linked to responses to the September enquiry and to all previous waves of the Futuretrack study.

Interviews
We carried out 20 interviews to provide a set of case studies on the impact of Covid-19 on graduate careers. We selected the 20 cases based on their responses to the September enquiry, having taken the decision to focus on cases exemplifying situations where graduates had been significantly affected by the restrictions and socio-economic impact of the pandemic. The interviewees were selected to cover graduates who were economically active prior to the onset of the Covid-19 restrictions, in employment, self-employment and precarious forms of employment, who had experienced unemployment or redundancy, or had changed jobs since 2019. We also included representatives of those in essential services, in sectors already badly hit by the Covid restrictions and in sectors potentially vulnerable to the recession. We also selected graduates working in sectors that had been affected positively by changing demand for products and services. The interviews focussed on the impact of recent changes on respondents' work, careers and attitudes related to these and to future career and wider aspirations.

A.2 Classifications used

Table A.1 Industries included within each 6-category industry sector

Industry sector	Industries included
Primary & utilities	Agriculture, mining, quarrying (includes oil and gas extraction)
	Electricity, gas, water supply
Manufacturing & construction	Manufacturing (includes engineering)
	Construction (includes civil engineering)
Marketed services	Distribution, hotels, catering (includes retailing, supermarkets, wholesale or retail distribution)
	Transport and tourist services
	Arts, entertainment and recreation (cultural activities, sports)
Business services	Information and communications sector (includes media)
	Banking, finance, insurance
	Business services (includes legal services, computing, advertising, public relations, R&D)
Education	Education (includes schools, colleges, and universities)
Other public services	Other public services (local or central government, health services, police, social services)

Table A.2 Subjects included within each subject group

Subject group	Subject studied (JACS code)
STEM	Biology (C1)
	Botany (C2)
	Zoology (C3)
	Genetics (C4)
	Microbiology (C5)
	Molecular Biology, Biophysics and Biochemistry (C7)
	Psychology (C8)
	Others in Biological Sciences (C9)
	Chemistry (F1)
	Materials Science (F2)
	Physics (F3)
	Forensic and Archaeological Science (F4)
	Astronomy (F5)
	Geology (F6)
	Ocean Sciences (F7)
	Physical and Terrestrial Geographical and Environmental Sciences (F8)
	Others in Physical Sciences (F9)
	Mathematics (G1)
	Operational Research (G2)
	Statistics (G3)
	Computer Science (G4)

	Information Systems (G5)
	Software Engineering (G6)
	Artificial Intelligence (G7)
	Others in Mathematical and Computing Sciences (G9)
	General Engineering (H1)
	Civil Engineering (H2)
	Mechanical Engineering (H3)
	Aerospace Engineering (H4)
	Naval Architecture (H5)
	Electronic and Electrical Engineering (H6)
	Production and Manufacturing Engineering (H7)
	Chemical, Process and Energy Engineering (H8)
	Others in Engineering (H9)
	Minerals Technology (J1)
	Metallurgy (J2)
	Ceramics and Glasses (J3)
	Polymers and Textiles (J4)
	Materials Technology not otherwise specified (J5)
	Maritime Technology (J6)
	Industrial Biotechnology (J7)
	Others in Technology (J9)
	Biological Sciences: any area of study (C0)
	Physical Sciences: any area of study (F0)
	Mathematical & Comp Sci: any area (G0)
	Engineering: any area of study (H0)
	Combinations within Subjects allied to Medicine (BB)
	Combinations within Biological Sciences (CC)
	Combinations within Physical Sciences (FF)
	Combinations within Mathematical & Computer Sciences (GG)
	Combinations within Engineering (HH)
	Combinations within Technology (JJ)
	Combs of phys/math sciences (Y8)
	Combs of sciences with engineering/technology (Y11)
	Combs of med/bio/agric sciences (Y14)
	Combs of med/bio/agric sciences with phys/math (Y15)
	Combs of engineering/technology (Y16)
	Combs of engin/tech/building studies (Y17)
LEM Law Economics Management	Economics (L1)
	Law by area (M1)
	Law by Topic (M2)
	Other in Law (M9)
	Business studies (N1)
	Management studies (N2)
	Finance (N3)
	Combinations within Law (MM)
	Politics (L2)

Academic discipline focussed	Sociology (L3)
	Anthropology (L6)
	Human and Social Geography (L7)
	Others in Social studies (L9)
	Linguistics (Q1)
	Comparative Literary studies (Q2)
	English studies (Q3)
	Ancient Language studies (Q4)
	Celtic studies (Q5)
	Latin studies (Q6)
	Classical Greek studies (Q7)
	Classical studies (Q8)
	Others in Linguistics, Classics and related subjects (Q9)
	French studies (R1)
	German studies (R2)
	Italian studies (R3)
	Spanish studies (R4)
	Portuguese studies (R5)
	Scandinavian studies (R6)
	Russian and East European studies (R7)
	Others in European Languages, Literature and related (R9)
	Chinese studies (T1)
	Japanese studies (T2)
	South Asian studies (T3)
	Other Asian studies (T4)
	African studies (T5)
	Modern Middle Eastern studies (T6)
	American studies (T7)
	Australasian studies (T8)
	Others in non-European Languages, Literature and related (T9)
	History by period (V1)
	History by area (V2)
	History by topic (V3)
	Archaeology (V4)
	Philosophy (V5)
	Theology and Religious studies (V6)
	Others in Historical and Philosophical studies (V9)
	Social Studies: any area of study (L0)
	European Langs, Lit & related: any area (R0)
	Hist & Philosophical studies: any area (V0)
	Combinations within Social Studies (LL)
	Combinations within Linguistics, Classics & related (QQ)
	Combinations within European Langs, Lit and related (RR)
	Combinations within non-European Langs & related (TT)
	Combinations within Hist & Philosophical studies (VV)
	Combs of arts/humanities (Y1)

	Combs of languages (Y2)
	Combs of languages with arts/humanities (Y3)
Vocation focussed	Pre-clinical Medicine (A1)
	Pre-clinical Dentistry (A2)
	Clinical Medicine (A3)
	Clinical Dentistry (A4)
	Others in Medicine and Dentistry (A9)
	Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology (B1)
	Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy (B2)
	Complementary Medicine (B3)
	Nutrition (B4)
	Ophthalmics (B5)
	Aural and Oral Sciences (B6)
	Nursing (B7)
	Medical Technology (B8)
	Others in Subjects allied to Medicine (B9)
	Sports Science (C6)
	Pre-clinical Veterinary Medicine (D1)
	Clinical Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry (D2)
	Animal Science (D3)
	Agriculture (D4)
	Forestry (D5)
	Food and Beverage studies (D6)
	Agricultural Sciences (D7)
	Others in Vet Sciences, Agriculture and related (D9)
	Architecture (K1)
	Building (K2)
	Landscape Design (K3)
	Planning (Urban, Rural and Regional) (K4)
	Others in Architecture, Building and Planning (K9)
	Social Policy (L4)
	Social Work (L5)
	Accounting (N4)
	Marketing (N5)
	Human Resource Management (N6)
	Office skills (N7)
	Tourism, Transport and Travel (N8)
	Others in Business and Administrative studies (N9)
	Information Services (P1)
	Publicity studies (P2)
	Media studies (P3)
	Publishing (P4)
	Journalism (P5)
	Others in Mass Communications and Documentation (P9)
	Training Teachers (X1)
	Research and Study Skills in Education (X2)

	Academic studies in Education (X3)
	Others in Education (X9)
	Architecture, Build & Plan: any area (K0)
	Business & Admin studies: any area (N0)
	Combinations within Vet Sci, Agr & related subjects (DD)
	Combinations within Architecture, Building & Planning (KK)
	Combinations within Business & Admin Studies (NN)
	Combinations within Mass Comms & Documentation (PP)
	Combinations within Education (XX)
Cross disciplinary combinations	Combs of soc studies/law (Y4)
	Combs of soc studies/law with business (Y5)
	Combs of social studies/bus/law with arts/humanities (Y6)
	Combs of social studies/bus/law with languages (Y7)
	Combs of phys/math science with arts/humanities (Y9)
	Combs of phys/math sci with social studies/bus/law (Y10)
	Combs of science/engineering with arts/humanities (Y12)
	Combs of science/eng with social studies/bus/law (Y13)
	Combs of 3 subjects, or other general courses (Z)
Creative arts	Fine Art (W1)
	Design studies (W2)
	Music (W3)
	Drama (W4)
	Dance (W5)
	Cinematics and Photography (W6)
	Crafts (W7)
	Imaginative Writing (W8)
	Others in Creative Arts and Design (W9)
	Creative Arts & Design: any area (W0)
	Combinations within Creative Arts and Design (WW)

A.3 Results from the multivariate analysis

Table A.3 Analysis of factors affecting positive response to question about career prospects

	Coefficient	Exp(coefficient)	Sig.
Constant	0.458	1.58	0.000
Age on application to HE:			
18 and under	0.58	1.787	0.000
19 to 20	0.328	1.388	0.007
Subject studied:			
Medicine & Dentistry	1.651	5.212	0.001
Mathematical & Comp Sci	0.56	1.751	0.001
Linguistics and Classics	-0.58	0.56	0.000
Hist & Philosophical studies	-0.283	0.754	0.049
Creative Arts & Design	-0.585	0.557	0.000
Type of HEI attended:			
High tariff HEI	-0.171	0.843	0.041
Type of job at Stage 5:			
Non-graduate	-0.31	0.733	0.003
Sector of job at Stage 5:			
Manufacturing	0.55	1.733	0.003
Transport and tourist services	-0.564	0.569	0.010
Information and communications sector (includes media)	0.355	1.426	0.019
Banking, finance, insurance	0.599	1.82	0.000
Other public services (local or central government, health services, police, social services)	0.477	1.611	0.000
My type of work (Stage 5) is done:			
Only by graduates?	0.632	1.881	0.000
Mainly by graduates?	0.34	1.406	0.001
Type of organisation at Stage 5:			
Not-for-profit sector	-0.47	0.625	0.000
Size of organisation where working at Stage 5:			
1	-0.424	0.654	0.018
Experience of unemployment since graduation:			
Less than three months	-0.287	0.75	0.002
Three to six months	-0.588	0.555	0.000
More than six months but less than a year	-0.697	0.498	0.000
More than a year	-1.057	0.348	0.000
Place of work at Stage 5:			

Outside UK and Republic of Ireland	0.302	1.353	0.027
Northern Ireland	-0.662	0.516	0.035
Further qualifications since first degree:			
Apprenticeship	2.257	9.551	0.036
Postgraduate Teaching Certificate	0.669	1.952	0.001

The dependent variable in this analysis was the question 'Thinking about the longer-term impact of Covid, I am in a good situation in terms of my career prospects' and respondents selected from a 5 point-scale ranging from 1 'Agree Strongly' to 5 'Disagree Strongly'. Those selecting either 1 or 2 (Agree Strongly or Agree) were included in this multivariate analysis as a positive response.