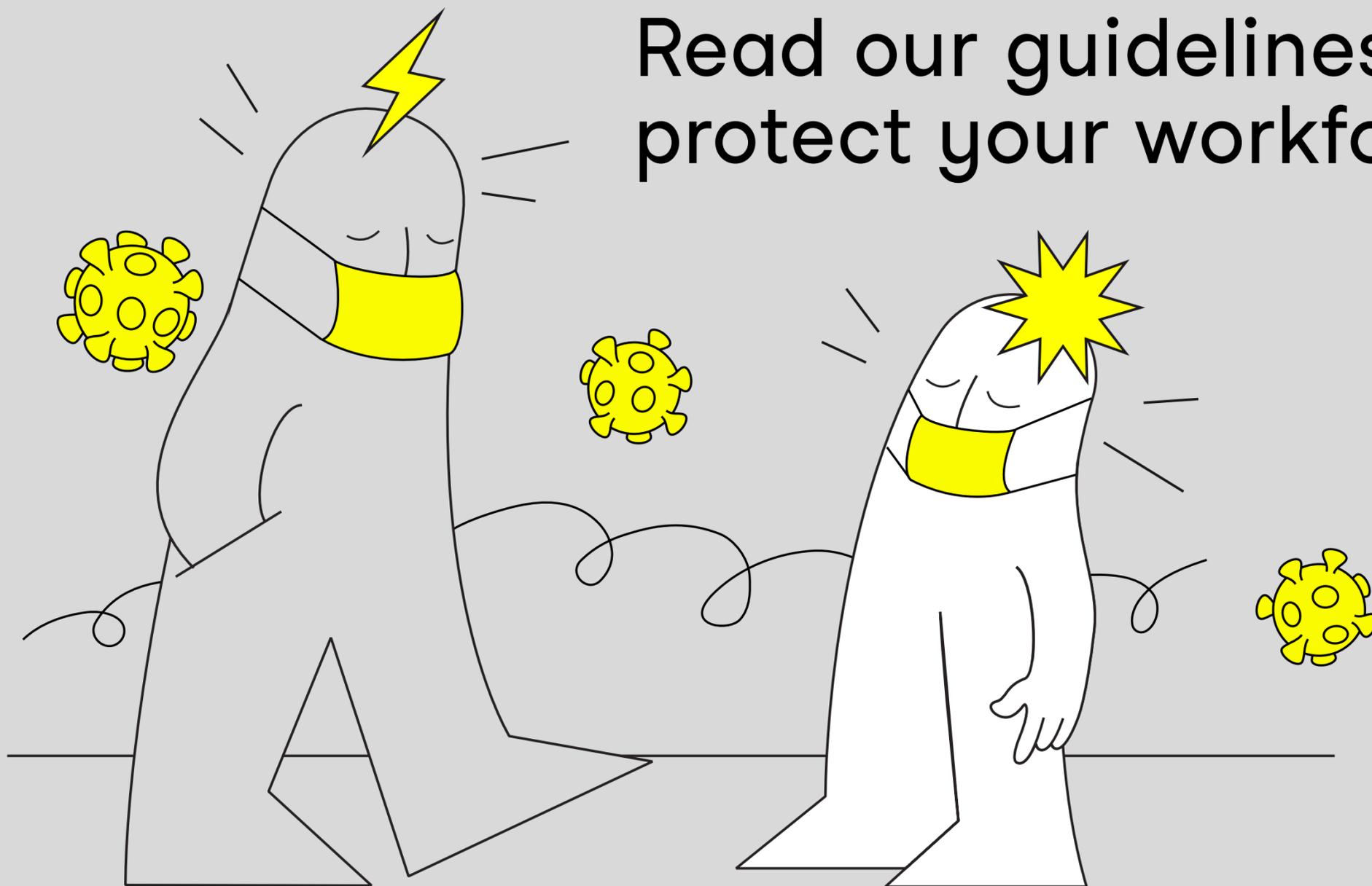
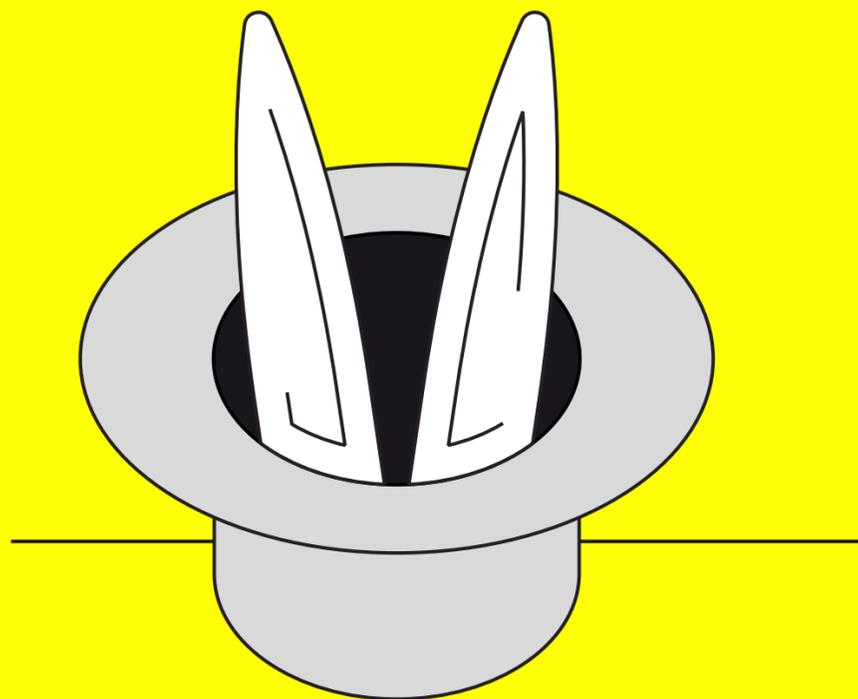


How Did Covid-19 Affect Our Workforce

Read our guidelines and
protect your workforce.



A few insights



- Many workers' mental health has been affected during the coronavirus pandemic; depression, anxiety, insomnia and even symptoms of PTSD are on the rise worldwide.
- According to research, younger people and people who didn't have work were more likely to feel anxious and depressed during the pandemic.
- Socio-economic status, the quality of (work and personal) relationships, and the ability to adapt were among the factors that influenced the lockdown experience.
- Different workplace strategies could support workers amid an epidemic; for example, encouraging physical activity and implementing different workplace measures to increase safety and productivity and reduce stress.

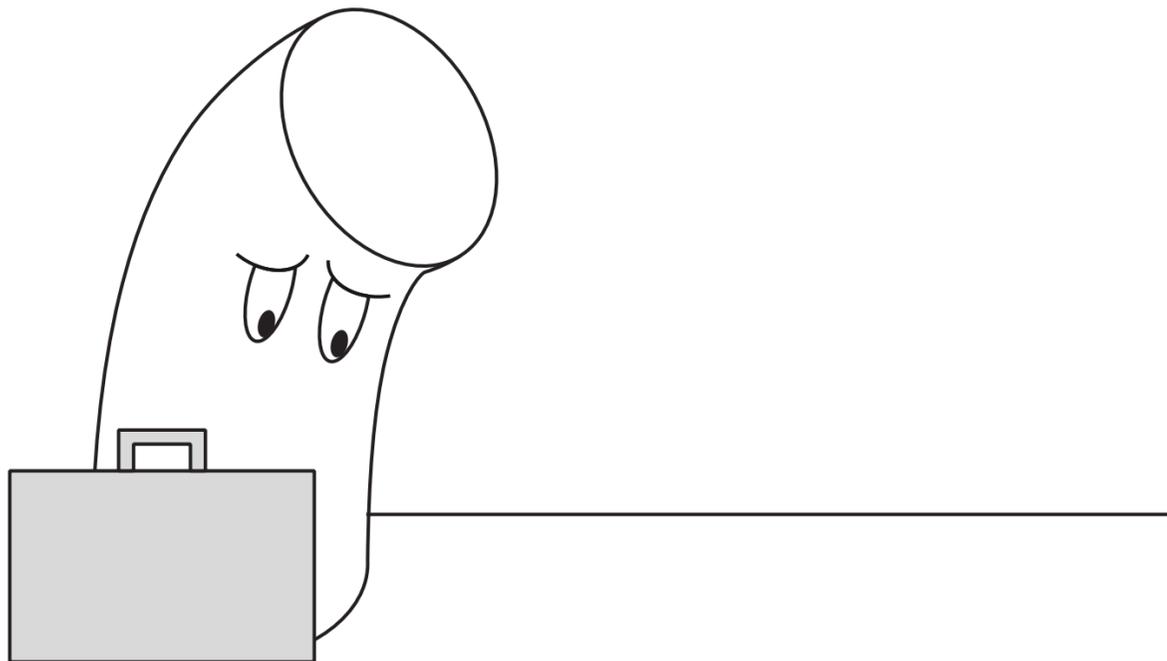
Sudden changes to our work routine

Most of the government strategies aimed at flattening the coronavirus curve have affected the way we work. Our work routines and workplaces have been altered due to measures such as:

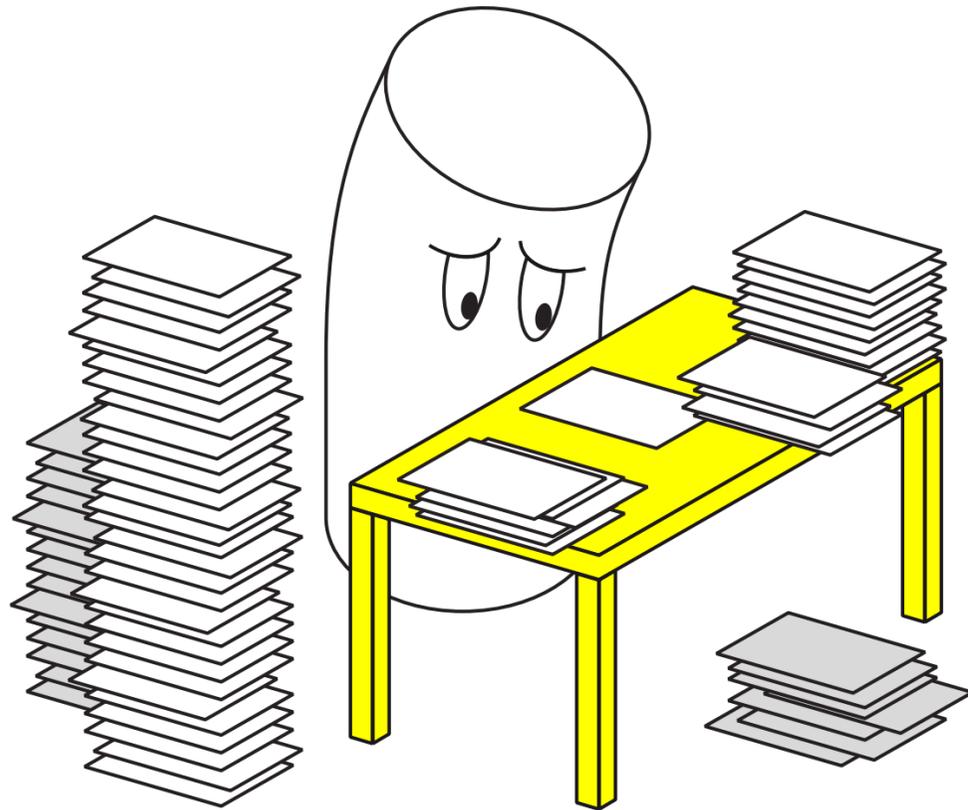
- physical distancing,
- stay-at-home orders,
- travel restrictions,
- wearing masks and protective equipment (PPE)
- closure of all non-essential business.

We know that many economies have been hit hard during the pandemic.

What about the workers? How do they feel in the new work landscape?



Worker's mental health



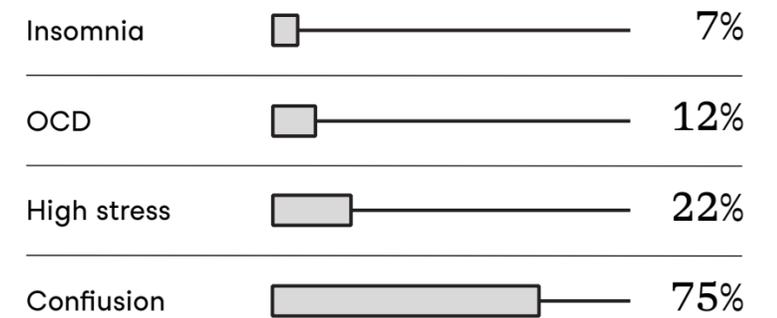
Although the health authorities focused predominantly on physical health, many people have reported greater fear, worry, and psychological stress since the start of the COVID-19 epidemic.

In addition to the general atmosphere of uncertainty and danger, some workers had to negotiate different work challenges, too. For example, not everyone does a job that can be done remotely and not all workers have been eligible for paid time off. The negative effects of the lockdown on people's mental health have been observed worldwide, from China and Japan to Austria and Spain.

According to some of the published studies (more data is coming in every day), younger adults (<35 years), women and those who didn't have work were more likely to feel depressed and anxious during the COVID-19 outbreak.¹ Some studies likened the experience to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For instance, in Italy, a study that included over 18,000 people found that almost 40% were exhibiting PTSD symptoms.² Similar results were recorded in other countries, too.

Symptoms related to PTSD:

Symptoms



Data is taken from different studies published in peer-reviewed journals.

And let's not forget the feelings of loneliness and boredom that were also common during the lockdown.

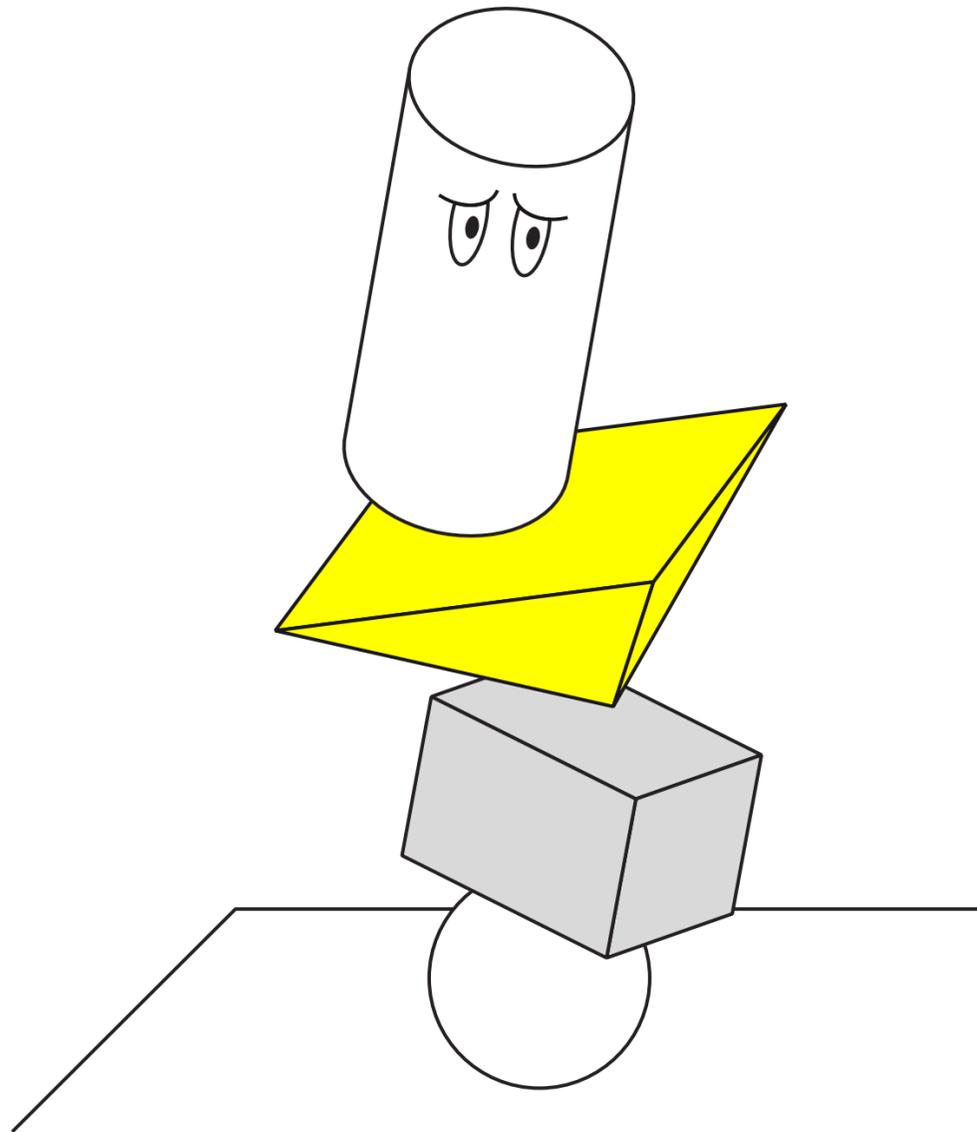
Just a brief look at the list makes it clear that many workers might have struggled during the pandemic; physically, mentally, socially, financially. It's not surprising, therefore, that people's work performance had been affected too as suggested by a group of Japanese researchers who studied workplace responses to COVID-19.³

1. Pieh, C., Budimir, S., & Probst, T. (2020). The effect of age, gender, income, work, and physical activity on mental health during coronavirus disease (COVID-19) lockdown in Austria. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 136, 110186.

2. Rossi, R. et al. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures impact on mental health among the general population in Italy. An N=18147 web-based survey. *Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.09.20057802>

3. Sasaki, N., Kawakami, N., Kuroda, R., & Tsuno, K. (2020). Workplace responses to COVID-19 associated with mental health and work performance of employees in Japan. *Journal of Occupational Health*, 62(1), e12134.

Older workers and COVID-19



Did the experience differ between different generations of workers; for example, younger people vs people approaching retirement? Most likely.

While the younger generation of workers often had additional responsibilities, such as childcare, schooling and family coordination, seniors had fewer pressures in that respect. However, the experiences were very diverse among all groups.

Let me briefly summarise a small study⁴ we carried out in Slovenia that explored the experiences of older workers pre- and post-corona. The preliminary findings suggest that the silver workforce's perception of the corona crisis varied depending on:

- type of work and job security,
- socio-economic status,
- personal and work relationships and
- person's ability to adapt.

For those who were able to work from home in a satisfactory way and enjoyed their home environment and activities around the house (e.g. gardening, more time with a spouse), the period was viewed almost positively. "This was the first time

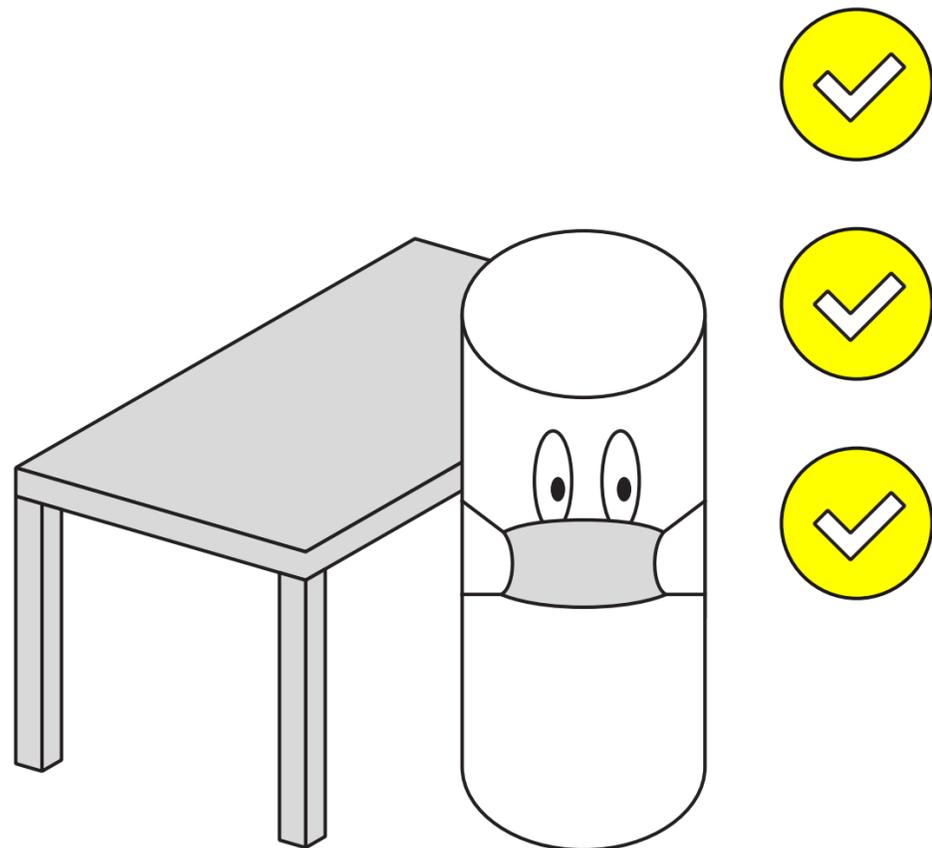
in 40 years that I really saw spring," a few told us. One participant, in his late 60s, used the time of social isolation to learn how to make online videos, adding a new skill to his portfolio. For the older generation of workers, this could be an opportunity to get closer to technology and recognise its potentials as well as drawbacks.

On the other hand, some workers we interviewed had a less positive experience. While most knowledge workers (aka white-collar workers) were able to work remotely, blue-collar older workers had fewer options and felt more insecure during this time. Especially those working in the private sector sometimes feared for their jobs. When they returned to their workplace, some were met with remarks, such as: "Isn't it time for you to retire yet?", making them feel unwelcomed and anxious.

Some of our participants, who already fulfilled the retirement criteria but had been planning to work for a few more years, are considering to retire sooner now or are experiencing reduced motivation to work in the same workplace.

4. Unpublished empirical material from a bigger study that is a part of the author's PhD dissertation.

Best practices for mental health and work performance



What can employers do for their workers? A Japanese study led by Prof. Norito Kawakami of the University of Tokyo showed that:

The number of workplace measures was negatively associated with employees' psychological distress and positively with their performance.

In other words, workers who worked in companies that implemented COVID-19 measures were less likely to feel tired, depressed, anxious and irritable and maintained their work performance. Why? Probably because employers who provided a safe environment allowed their workers to concentrate on the job.

Measures that were described as most beneficial to workers were:

- Preventive measures taken by individuals (e.g., hand washing, masks, cough etiquette).
- Information about accommodating high-risk people (e.g., older workers, pregnant women, etc.).
- Criteria and procedures for waiting at home (e.g., staying at home if you came from abroad).

- Preventive measures to reduce the risk of infection in the workplace (e.g., telework, postponing events, disinfection of offices).
- Introduction of reliable information resources.
- Information on the duration of special measures.

Another interesting finding comes from Portugal. A study by Dr. Pedro Silva Moreira of the University of Minho, and his colleagues showed that physical activity and frequency of exercise could have a positive effect during the pandemic.⁵ Those who exercised, felt better.

In a corporate environment, this measure could be implemented in a form of worksite wellness. For example, companies could encourage and accommodate their employees' physical activity by:

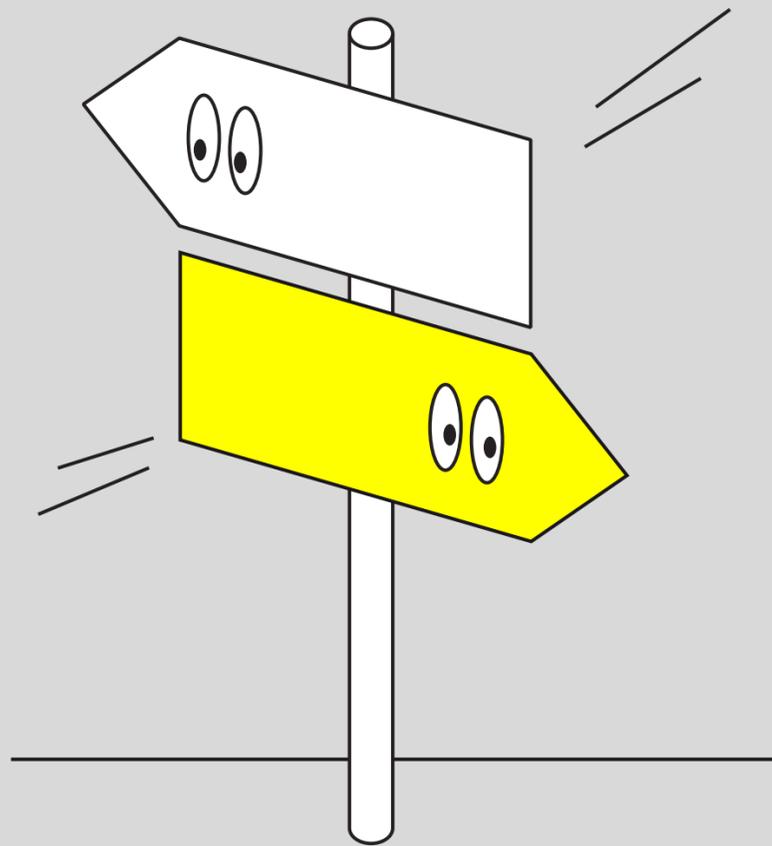
- providing onsite gym facilities
- offering online exercise classes
- subsidising activities outside of work.

After all, who wouldn't want to work for a company where they value your health and wellbeing, every day?

5. Moreira, P.S. et al. (2020). Protective Elements of Mental Health Status during the COVID-19 Outbreak in the Portuguese Population. *Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology*, <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.28.20080671>

Help your employees

At CAMAC Space are ready to upgrade your work environment in a post-covid-19 world, helping you identify risks and provide ideas for your unique needs.





Camac Group Ltd.
160 Kemp House, City Road, London
EC1V 2NX

Contact
hello@camacspace.com
+44(0)-7497769333



© All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced in any form without the prior permission of the owner. Designed by Studio Kruh.