

# Poll shows resilience at risk among UK workforce

Submitted by: Institute for the Future of Work

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- Polling reveals fear of change in the workforce is driving down optimism
- Job security and income are clearly linked to resilience: people fear insecurity
- 1 in 3 workers are looking for a new job
- People more readily accept change when they are included in decision-making
- Findings demonstrate urgent need to prepare workers for change (for instance through training)
- Transformation works better when there is investment in people as well as technology
- Institute says that a strong and dynamic recovery needs a healthy and resilient workforce

A new poll conducted by Opinium (<https://www.opinium.co.uk/>) for the Institute for the Future of Work (<https://www.ifow.org/>) has demonstrated the importance of supporting workers to boost resilience in the face of transformation to the world of work.

The poll is published ahead of the launch of CogX

(<https://www.ifow.org/news/2020/6/3/join-the-economy-and-future-of-work-stage-curated-by-the-institute-for-the-future-of-work>)

Europe's largest technology festival where the Institute for the Future of Work is co-curating the Economy and Future of Work Stage

(<https://www.ifow.org/news/2020/6/3/join-the-economy-and-future-of-work-stage-curated-by-the-institute-for-the-future-of-work>)

discussing how to build a better working future.

The survey on work, technology, and Covid-19 was conducted by Opinium between 22 May and 26 May 2020. It surveyed 2001 UK adults; 1251 are currently in employment.

Key findings in relation to Covid-19:

- Optimism follows a clear income gradient. The more you earn, the more optimistic you are about your future.
- Full time employees were by far the most optimistic group, with zero hours workers by far the least optimistic.
- In workplace attitudes, homeworkers are the most optimistic, possibly reflecting the fact that this group is likely to be slightly higher paid than others.
- Of people who are employed, furloughed workers are the least optimistic about the job prospects in their own industry but 7 out of 10 say they are at least as optimistic or more optimistic than they were a year ago.
- In analysis by sector, construction and property workers, who anticipate the least change in their profession, are the most optimistic.
- Workers in hospitality and entertainment are significantly less optimistic about their future. The retail sector was the second least optimistic.
- 1 in 3 workers (people currently employed) are looking for a new job. of these jobseekers are motivated by COVID-19. 60% are looking for work in a new industry.

Key findings in relation to new technology:

- Workers are not prepared for the changes ahead. 77% do not think their jobs will change much over the next 5 years. But only 1 in 6 (16%) thinks there will be no change.
- 2 in 5 workers (42%) report that their job has changed as a result of new digital technology within the past year.
- A similar proportion (41%) expect that their job will be affected by digital technology in the next few years.
- Most workers (61%) think employee consultation before introducing a new technology will make it more effective. Only 1 in 3 workers (36%) report that their employer has actually done this. (A similar proportion actively report that their employer does not consult workers.)
- More workers reported that employers provided training on the new technology (45%)
- Workers are positive about technology. About half (47%) actively support new technology in the workplace even if it affects them, compared to only one in ten (11%) who doesn't. The extent of support depends on the degree of information and consultation provided by employers

Commenting on the findings, Anna Thomas, director of the Institute for the Future of Work said:

“This research reveals the extent of social and economic insecurity and future fears for those in low income and insecure jobs. If we want to create a strong and dynamic economy, we have to address these insecurities and create conditions of work which will build resilience and allow people to flourish. We can do that by concentrating on good jobs, better work and well-being. To help people thrive, we must put them first.

“Furloughed people may be less optimistic about their future compared to those working from home or still going to work. But 7 out of 10 say they are at least as optimistic or even more optimistic than they were a year ago. This may reflect the support they are getting from the government through their employers.

“The pandemic has demonstrated we need to think of the state not just as a safety net - what keeps you going when it all goes wrong - but as tool for supporting and empowering people during periods of personal or national transition. This poll suggests that when government and employers offer people support and training their optimism and sense of security increases. This has profound implications for their health and well-being – and their ability to adapt to gradual change and sudden shocks in the future.”

The poll provides useful data for policy-makers. It supports findings revealed by a series of Spotlight reports (<https://www.ifow.org/publications>) from the institute that highlighted the uncertainty, inequality, and anxiety experienced by people in different sectors during the lockdown. The reports reveal the unheard voices of working people.

Notes to editors:

1. This poll on work, technology, and Covid-19 was conducted by Opinium between 22 May and 26 May 2020. It surveyed 2001 UK adults, of whom, 1251 are currently in employment.

2. For more information and details of the poll or to arrange an interview, please contact John Davidson:

john@ifow.org or 0780 373 0085.

3. The Institute for the Future of Work (<https://www.ifow.org/>) (IFOW) develops practical ways to improve the value, shape and experience of work. The institute advances understanding of the transformation of work and our working lives by technology. It brings together people with different perspectives and experiences to enrich understanding and ideas. And through this collaborative approach, IFOW aims to meet challenges with innovative, practical and inclusive solutions. It aims to shape policy and decision-making in government and business to share and implement approaches that put people first and help them thrive.