

SOURCE: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/2025/03/26/this-constant-working-from-home-is-very-bad-for-our-mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

Work from home: 'I am in the office twice a month, I find it very isolating and bad for my mental health'

Work Q&A: Most of those working from home tend to see the positives, but the scenario is wearing a bit thin for some



Jack White

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working from home 90 per cent of

We don't get to know new work colleagues, therefore no new relationships are being formed and old relationships are also suffering.

When you are working from home there can be less incentive to exercise and you can be constantly nibbling on not-so-healthy foods.

I think our current work situation is very bad for our mental health and wellbeing.

Managers believe productivity is better when people are working from home but, in the long run, this may lead to loneliness, isolation and poor mental health. Our work is very busy, very pressured, and tea breaks are now spent emptying the dishwasher or loading the washing machine. There is little or no interaction with work colleagues, apart from the odd text.

[My workplace grievance was rejected and I've been out sick with stress for more than a year]

The divide between work and home life has been eroded and there is

no off switch any more. Is there anything I can I do to improve my circumstances?

While the majority of those working from home tend to see the positives outweighing the negatives, a shift is emerging whereby it is “wearing a little bit thin” for some.

This is largely felt by those missing out on needed social interaction usually found at the workplace, according to **Niamh Delmar**, a counselling psychologist who provides workshops on workplace psychological support to organisations.

Being in the office for just two days per month is a rarity, with most workers attending two or three days a week, though a minority is still remote or, like the reader, almost fully remote.

“The difficulty with it is the lack of socialising. If people have a big social network at home and in their area, that’s great, but a lot depend on work for that, and they’re not getting that,” she says.

Those spending a significant time at home can feel disconnected from colleagues while also juggling a “blurred work-life boundary”, as alluded to by the reader.

This is largely due to the absence of daily pre-Covid rituals such as the commute home or even changing out of work clothes, which once switched workers off.

“Ensuring a physical boundary of the workplace at home is closed off once finished is important, such as removing work equipment so that it’s not visible,” Delmar advises.

She also suggests approaching other colleagues and gauging how they feel about working arrangements before approaching a manager, to see whether they agree they might benefit from more time in the office.

Noting the perception that productivity is higher at home, Delmar warns this viewpoint could lead to burnout down the line.

“I think people are trying to prove to their employers that they’re

working, but I think there has to be that balance, because, long-term, there's no point having half your workforce off sick or burnt out," she says.

While workers seek help from Ciara **Spillane** for various reasons surrounding hybrid working, the list spans those who "absolutely hate it" to those who want a "totally remote" role.

[Your work questions answered: 'My work is all-consuming. I am finding myself reaching burnout. What can I do?']

"I can understand how this is tough for companies, because it's so unique to different people's needs," says Spillane, a career coach and trainer of Positive Prospects, who supports employees in developing skills for future working.

Those who find themselves in the "hate it" category complain of loneliness, boredom, and "falling into bad habits". Workers who find themselves dissatisfied with their remote working arrangements must now take the initiative, she says.

Make a point of getting dressed each day, even if you're not leaving the house. This can help create a sense of structure and boost your mood

— Ciara Spillane, career coach

"You have to make the time now and put effort into having those chats that you used to have in the office while walking past someone," she says.

The reader could, for example, spearhead a daily 15-minute virtual coffee break for their team, she says.

"Emphasise that it's a space for casual conversation, not work talk. This can be a great way to catch up and build relationships," Spillane says.

Virtual book clubs or even online lunchtime games sessions can also help build a sense of community and connection, while colleagues living nearby could perhaps be enticed to a weekly meet-up for lunch.

Spillane also recommends building daily healthy rituals, including replacing a commute with exercise, scheduling regular breaks throughout the day away from the workstation, and prioritising healthy eating by planning meals and snacks in advance.

“Make a point of getting dressed each day, even if you’re not leaving the house. This can help create a sense of structure and boost your mood,” she adds.

1. Identify two main challenges the worker in the article experiences while working from home.

2. Explain how blurred work–life boundaries can affect employee motivation and wellbeing. Give an example from the article.

3. Describe one way technology could help solve the social-isolation issue raised, and one way it might make it worse.

4. From a leadership perspective, what responsibility do managers have to address these issues?

5. Personal reflection: Would you prefer a hybrid, fully remote, or office-based job? Explain your choice using ideas from the article.

Teacher Sheet

1. Identify two main challenges the worker in the article experiences while working from home.

Suggested answers / prompts:

- The worker describes **feeling isolated and disconnected** from colleagues, not forming new relationships or maintaining existing ones.
- They also highlight **negative impacts on physical and mental health**, such as eating poorly, exercising less, and experiencing loneliness.
- A third possible challenge is the **lack of separation between work and home life**, where tea breaks and downtime become house chores.

2. Explain how blurred work–life boundaries can affect employee motivation and wellbeing. Give an example from the article.

Suggested answers / prompts:

- When work and home life overlap, **employees struggle to “switch off”**, leading to stress, fatigue, and lower job satisfaction.
- Over time this can reduce motivation and productivity because employees feel constantly “on.”
- In the article, the worker says “there is no off switch anymore,” showing how work spills into personal time.
- Psychologist Niamh Delmar warns this can lead to **burnout** and long-term health problems.

3. Describe one way technology could help solve the social-isolation issue raised, and one way it might make it worse.

Suggested answers / prompts:

- **Help:** Technology can support connection through virtual coffee breaks, video calls, or online chat groups to rebuild social interaction.
 - Example from the article: a “daily 10-minute virtual coffee break” was suggested to maintain informal contact.
- **Make it worse:** Over-reliance on digital communication can lead to **screen fatigue** or shallow interactions, making people feel even less connected than in-person chats.

4. From a leadership perspective, what responsibility do managers have to address these issues?

Suggested answers / prompts:

- Leaders should **recognise mental-health and isolation risks** in remote teams and take active steps to prevent burnout.
- They must **communicate clearly**, encourage healthy routines, and promote work–life balance (e.g., set expectations for availability).
- Managers could also **organise in-person or virtual team-building activities** and lead by example by respecting boundaries (not sending emails late at night).
- Links to **corporate wellness leadership (LO 15)** — showing care, setting tone, and allocating time/resources to staff wellbeing.

5. Personal reflection: Would you prefer a hybrid, fully remote, or office-based job? Explain your choice using ideas from the article.

Student response.