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# UNIVERSITY WOMEN REMOTE WORK CHALLENGES

**A Survey of USP Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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## List of abbreviations

AUSPS	Association of University of the South Pacific Staff
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
I&J	Intermediate and Junior (staff)
PaCE-SD	Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development
SAFE	School of Accounting, Finance and Economics
SAGEONS	School of Agriculture, Geography, Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences
SBM	School of Business and Management
SOLASS	School of Law and Social Sciences
SPACE	School of Performance, Arts, Culture and Education
STEMP	School of Information Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Physics
TAFE	(Pacific) Technical and Further Education
USP	University of the South Pacific
WFH	Work/working from home



## Executive summary

This report describes a survey which was carried out in 2022 to investigate the experiences of University of the South Pacific (USP) women staff during the Work from Home (WFH) periods in the COVID-19 pandemic. The aims were to advise the university on the challenges faced by women staff of USP and provide recommendations on the findings of the survey, in order to address the challenges they identified.

## Background

Of the 14 USP campuses in 12 Pacific countries, only two avoided any COVID-19 closures from early 2020 to the third quarter of 2022. The shortest closure was for two days in Tokelau, and the longest was the second closure in the three Fiji campuses (Labasa, Laucala and Lautoka), which lasted for 161 days.

## Findings

An internet survey was sent to all staff at USP (approximately 1,570), inviting women staff to respond. A total of 267 respondents took part in the survey, although most questions had around 100 responses. This represents a total response rate of 35 percent, with a question response rate of approximately 13 percent. Respondents comprised 46.4 percent Intermediate or Junior staff, 28.9 percent academic staff, and 24.7 percent professional staff.

The overall finding was that there was a wide range of experiences by women during the Work from Home period: while some women enjoyed the flexibility of working at home, for others it was an extremely stressful time. Most respondents were generally satisfied with the level of support provided by the university.

There were five main areas of focus which had been suggested from a review of the literature:

### 1 Work activities

The work experiences reported by respondents varied enormously, according to their roles at the university and their family circumstances. Although respondents appreciated spending less time in travel to work, they reported increases in home-related and family-related activities and expectations, including looking after children and other family members. For some respondents there were some challenges with accessing the internet for work-related activities. The need for flexibility from managers was identified.

### 2 Physical health

Around 30 percent of respondents reported having developed COVID-19 during the Work from Home period. Some respondents noted that they found the costs of testing and medication during COVID-19 a burden, and others struggled with getting back into their work after their recovery. Nearly a quarter of respondents reported having received support from



the university for illness, disability, or accident during the Work from Home period. A need for clarification around leave entitlements was identified.

### **3 Mental health**

A high proportion of women had struggled with mental health issues. Around half reported that their mental health had been affected by working from home, half reported that their mental health had been affected by COVID-19, and over 40 percent reported experiencing that their feelings had piled up so high that they could not overcome them at least sometimes. The need for counselling and support was highlighted.

### **4 Bereavement**

Fifty-seven percent of respondents had lost a family member or close friend during the Work from Home periods. This was an added mental health burden, but respondents were generally supported by friends and family. Counselling and chaplaincy were identified as further supports.

### **5 Personal safety**

This survey found some evidence of the 'shadow pandemic' of violence towards women during the Work from Home period. Although the reported levels of abuse and violence were low, it is likely that the real incidence is much higher, and there is a need for appropriate strategies to be put in place to protect university staff.

## **Recommendations**

*The findings from this study suggest that:*

### **1 Work activities**

- a) University procedures should provide for flexibility of working hours to allow for:
  - i) family commitments, especially for women with young children;
  - ii) access to the internet when this is unreliable.
- b) Internet or phone costs required for university work should be covered.
- c) Computer software and hardware required for university work should be provided.
- d) Provision should be made for ergonomically suitable office furniture at home.
- e) Training should be provided for team leaders in managing staff during times of stress:
  - i) running meetings and communication with staff;
  - ii) appropriate ways of supporting staff who are ill or bereaved;
  - iii) identifying where specialist help is required and resourcing them with information for referrals.
- f) Policies for managers/team leaders managing staff working from home should be developed to cover:



- i) appropriate ways of monitoring workloads during times of stress;
- ii) contact of staff during periods of leave.
- g) Appropriate supports be developed in consultation with women in the different sections: both academic and non-academic staff.

## **2 Physical health**

- a) The university should cover relevant medical costs such as vaccinations and COVID-19 medicine if required.
- b) The university should develop online health resources such as:
  - i. information about health matters especially targeted to women;
  - ii. social forums/chat rooms for women's health support.
- c) Consideration should be given to widening the coverage of medical insurance for dependants of university staff.
- d) The university should develop or expand medical services available to staff on campus.
- e) Staff health and well-being representatives for women staff be established to liaise with university senior management.
- f) Policies for sick leave (including recovery times) should be clarified.

## **3 Mental health**

- a) University counselling services targeted to women should be expanded and made available free of charge.
- b) Online information be developed and promoted to university staff.
- c) Consideration be given to providing 'mental health' leave entitlements.
- d) Online support groups be developed and facilitated.
- e) Training for team leaders in dealing with staff mental health issues.
- f) Training for senior management in communicating with staff in times of extreme stress.

## **4 Bereavement**

- a) The university consider expanding chaplaincy services to all university campuses.
- b) Training for team leaders be provided to support bereaved staff, and to cope with their own bereavement.
- c) Consideration given to developing culturally relevant support for bereaved staff, such as visits or financial contributions.
- d) Online or in-person support forums should be established for bereaved women.



## **5 Personal safety**

- a) The university develop or expand helplines and counselling targeted at women in situations of domestic abuse/violence.
- b) Consideration be given to appropriate provision of emergency 'safe spaces' for women suffering domestic abuse/violence (as well as their children), with emergency support such as financial help or legal advice.
- c) Training be provided to all staff, including team leaders and senior management, in detecting and supporting women in situations of domestic abuse/violence.
- d) Support networks for women in situations of domestic abuse be established and strengthened, both online and in person.

# 1 Introduction

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 most Pacific Island countries closed their borders and remained free of the virus (Bell et al., 2022). However, by 2021 some variants had escaped into the communities of some Pacific countries, requiring measures such as national lockdowns to contain the illness and prevent the health systems from being overwhelmed.

## 1.1 Background to the study

The University of the South Pacific (USP) operates across 14 campuses in 12 countries, with a total of 1,570 staff in 2021 (University of the South Pacific, 2022). Each of these campuses was differentially affected by COVID-19 according to the situation in the country where it is located.

### 1.1.1 COVID-19 in Pacific countries

The number of cases in the first two years of the COVID-19 outbreak was very low in all of the USP countries. Table 1 shows the cases in yearly quarters from 2020 to the third quarter of 2022. By the end of 2020 there were only cases in Fiji (49) and Solomon Islands (17). However, during 2021 the numbers began increasing in Fiji, and by the end of the year the number of cases had reached 53,871, while Solomon Islands remained at 20. In 2022 the pattern changed again; while Tokelau remained free of cases at the end of the third quarter, Tuvalu had 20 and Niue had 80 cases and the other countries had increased into the thousands. The largest number of cases was in Fiji, where the cumulative total was 68,242.

*Table 1 COVID-19 cases in USP countries Jan 2020-Oct 2022 (Quarterly)*

	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	2020 Q4	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3
Cook Is	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,986	5,774	6,389
Fiji	5	18	32	49	67	4,418	51,023	53,871	64,409	65,713	68,242
Kiribati	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,066	3,236	3,430
Marshall Is	0	0	0	4	4	4	4	4	4	15	15,305
Nauru	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,394	4,610
Niue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	15	80
Samoa	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1,883	14,964	15,941
Solomon Is	0	0	0	17	19	20	20	24	11,470	21,544	21,544
Tokelau	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tonga	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6,546	12,346	16,182
Tuvalu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	20
Vanuatu	0	0	0	1	3	3	3	7	3,717	11,273	11,928

Source: (Pacific Community (SPC), 2022)

The number of deaths caused by COVID-19 is shown in Table 2. By the third quarter of 2022 the highest number has been in Fiji with 878, followed by Solomon Islands at 153. Although these numbers are numerically small, they have occurred in countries with low populations and close-knit networks, so that the effects may be disproportionately greater than other countries with different demographic profiles.

*Table 2 COVID-19 deaths in USP countries Jan 2020-Oct 2022 (Quarterly)*

	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	2020 Q4	2021Q 1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3
Cook Is	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Fiji	0	0	2	2	2	21	624	698	834	865	878
Kiribati	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	13	13
Marshall Is	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Nauru	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Niue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Samoa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	29	29
Solomon Is	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	133	153	153
Tokelau	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tonga	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	12	12
Tuvalu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vanuatu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	14	14

Source: (Pacific Community (SPC), 2022)

### *1.1.2 USP Work from Home periods*

In response to government announcements of national lockdowns in 2020 to 2022, USP implemented Work from Home periods as shown in the example in Appendix 2.

USP's structured response to COVID-19 in 2020 was the basis for a submission to the Crisis Management category for the World Universities Real Impact Rankings, where it was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the Top 50 Area Ranking (University of the South Pacific, 2022).

The closure periods at the USP campuses are shown in Table 3: there were no closures in Niue or Marshall Islands, two closures in each of the three Fiji campuses (Labasa, Laucala, and Lautoka), the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu; three closures in Tonga; and four in Samoa. The number of days campuses were closed ranged from two days in Tokelau (April 2022), to 166 in the three Fijian campuses (April to October 2021).



*Table 3 Work from Home during COVID-19 at USP campuses*

Campus	Work from Home	Number of days (includes weekend days)
Labasa	20 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 - 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	31
	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2021 - 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2021	166
Laucala	20 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 - 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	31
	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2021 - 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2021	166
Lautoka	20 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 - 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	31
	19 <sup>th</sup> April 2021 - 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2021	166
Niue	No campus closure	0
Cook Islands	3 weeks in April 2020	22
Solomon Islands	19 <sup>th</sup> January 2022 - 31 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2022	13
	20 <sup>th</sup> April 2022 - 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2022	40
Vanuatu	7 <sup>th</sup> March 2022-25 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	50
Samoa	26 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 - 5 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	11
	22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2022 - 11 <sup>th</sup> February 2022	21
		19
	18 <sup>th</sup> March 2022 - 5 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	29
	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2022 - 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2022	
Tokelau	12 <sup>th</sup> April 2022 - 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	2
Tonga	26 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 - 5 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	11
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb 2022 - 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2022	27
	20 <sup>th</sup> March 2022 - 9 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	21
Marshall Islands	No campus closure	0
Kiribati	24 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 - 30 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	7
Tuvalu	26 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 - 5 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	11
	20 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 - 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2022	10
Nauru	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2022 - 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	28

Source: Women's Wing, Association of University Staff

## 1.2 Research aims

The overall goal of this research was to investigate the experiences of University of the South Pacific women staff in the Work from Home periods during the campus closures of COVID-19 between 2020 and 2022. The aims of the project were to advise the university on the challenges faced by women staff of USP and provide recommendations to the university on the findings of the survey to address the challenges faced by women staff as identified in the report.

Therefore, the research questions were:

- 1) What were the experiences of USP women during the COVID-19 Work from Home period?
- 2) What issues were faced by USP women working from home?





- 3) What recommendations can be made to USP senior management to develop policies addressing these issues?
- 4) How can these policies be monitored and evaluated by the university?

The Terms of Reference for the project are attached as Appendix 1.

### 1.3 Researchers

This study was carried out by Dr Hilary Smith, Director of Systemetrics Research Associates Ltd, Palmerston North, Aotearoa New Zealand; Honorary Affiliate of the College of Arts and Social Sciences at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia; and Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Humanities, Massey University, Palmerston North, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Research activities were carried out in consultation with Rosalia Fatiaki, Chairperson of the Women's Wing of the Association of University of the South Pacific Staff, Suva, Fiji, together with the other committee members of the Women's Wing: Dilpreet Kaur, Maelin Pickering-Bhagwan, Arti Pratap, Alanieta Lesuma-Fatiaki, and Sangeeta Sharma.



## 2 Literature review

Literature for this survey focused on the issues relevant to women working from home during the COVID-19 lockdowns. A number of themes emerged, which became the framework for the survey.

### 2.1 Work activities

The effects of COVID-19 restrictions, variously referred to as 'lockdowns', 'quarantines', 'confinement period' or 'work from home', have been the subject of a number of international studies identifying the impacts on higher education, reviewed by Khan (2021). He summarised the effects in five key themes: digital learning, e-learning challenges, digital transition to emergency virtual assessment (EVA), psychological impact of COVID-19, and creating collaborative cultures. He noted that almost no research had been published in relation to developing countries.

There is also a growing body of research relating to the pandemic effects on women academics. Issues identified have included the effects of parenting on scholarly productivity in countries such as the United States (Bender et al., 2022; Deryugina et al., 2021), the United Kingdom (Gabster et al., 2020), Turkey (Parlak et al., 2021), and Norway (Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). Specific issues related to differential expectations of gender roles including childcare, housework, the home office environment and home schooling (Gabster et al., 2020; Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021).. A study of academics in several countries of Europe and the United States focusing on childcare, housework and the home-office environment found disproportionate effects of lockdowns on women compared with men (Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). Again, there appears to be a lack of studies from less developed countries, although Deryugina, Shurchkov and Stearns (2021) investigated the gender gap in academic via a global survey, which included respondents who were actively publishing in international journals. They again found that female academics with children reported more reduction in research time than male academics or women without children.

A United States study investigated the support of partners for academic women during quarantine, finding that although some women appreciated the chance to spend more time with their partners, others identified challenges in maintaining their relationships in a shared work environment (Brown et al., 2021).

The challenges of university staff 'pivoting' to remote and online teaching were examined in a study at a New Zealand university (Erlam et al., 2021). A number of challenges in resources and support for information technology in switching to an online teaching mode were identified, as well as specific challenges in working from home. Major challenges included too much screen time, managing work hours, and balancing work with other life demands.

There appears to be little in the academic literature focusing on the particular work issues for non-academic staff in university settings, which is a contribution the current study can make.

A collaborative autoethnographic study of two academics in Aotearoa New Zealand concludes that their approach 'during exceptional circumstances, such as natural disasters, pandemics, and other disruptive situations, provides an opportunity for professional self-observation and self-reflective



practice that is mutually beneficial, and empowering' (Godber & Atkins, 2021, p. 1). With this in mind, the current study was developed to encourage women staff of USP to have such an experience through completing a survey which aims to have impacts on the policy of their university.

## 2.2 Physical health

A study of students and employees at a Swiss university focused on lifestyle habits such as physical activity, sitting time, nutritional habits, alcohol consumption habits, and sleeping behaviour during a two month confinement and social distancing period of the pandemic (Taeymans et al., 2021). The authors found differences in healthy habits between the different divisions of the university, to conclude that there is a need for group-specific health promotion materials.

An Australian study analysed how universities have supported remote work and caring during remote work, comparing publicly available information on COVID-19 leave policies (for their own illness or that of a family member) with those of internationally top-ranked universities. They found that the international universities had more transparent and flexible leave provisions, concluding that in Australia 'COVID-19 provides another context in which universities have evaded their responsibility to ensure women's full participation in the labour force' (Nash & Churchill, 2020, p. 833). This also offers a clear focus for the findings in the current study.

## 2.3 Mental health

In an analysis of the psychiatric literature, Mazza et al. graphically explain the effects of COVID-19 lockdowns (2020, p. 2):

*During the COVID-19 outbreak people have encountered an invisible and dark enemy and the risk of a sudden and depersonalized death, which leaves unarmed and forces to lose individuality and become a mass number. Time seems suspended in a dimension that deprives of personal freedom.*

A survey of the effects in six countries found that young people were more likely to report being negatively affected both economically and psychologically, experiencing boredom, loneliness, trouble sleeping, general anxiety and stress, and increased conflicts with friends/family/neighbours (Belot et al., 2021). Similarly, a university study in Hungary found that students were more likely to be affected than teaching staff (Sipeki et al., 2022).

In contrast with negative mental health effects was a study focusing on the Pacific context, which found that COVID-19 resulted in an increase in 'communal capital' (Ratuva, 2021, p. 194), defined as:

*the array of social and cultural norms, institutions, innovations and resources, which are embedded in and mobilized by communities to satisfy their basic needs, sustain social solidarity and develop resilience.*

This included falling back on kinship networks and strengthened global virtual networks in areas such as food exchange or bartering, as well as psychosocial support. The importance of spiritual well-being



as a contributor to resilience against COVID-19 in the Pacific context also been highlighted in some research (Scheyvens et al., 2021).

An American study of experiences by women academics of partnerships during quarantine had mixed findings, and stressed the importance of good communication about time, space and professional needs (Brown et al., 2021).

A South African university study is one of the few which included non-academic staff in their investigation of mental health during the pandemic (van Niekerk & van Gent, 2021). A survey of staff just after the lockdowns found that female staff members, staff members with comorbidities and workers in the administration and service sections were significantly more likely to report psychological distress than other staff.

Given the diverse results of previous research, it was important in the current study to explore both positive and negative mental health issues in the specific Pacific contexts for USP women, both for themselves and in terms of their roles as support for students or other staff.

## 2.4 Bereavement

Harrop et al. (2021, p. 1985) describe COVID-19 as 'a mass bereavement event which has profoundly disrupted grief experiences'. Their United Kingdom research found that people bereaved in the pandemic had high needs for emotional support but had difficulty accessing either formal support such as professional counselling, or informal support from friends or family. The researchers suggest increased support for bereavement services, strategies to improve awareness of bereavement support, and more help with addressing social isolation.

The specific effects of bereavement during the pandemic has been termed 'prolonged grief disorder' by United States researchers Eisma and Boelen (2021) in their review of international studies identifying the elevated grief felt by people who lost family and friends either from COVID-19 or other causes. The hypothesised reasons are 'unexpected deaths, preceded by intensive care admission, the experience of a variety of secondary stressors (including multiple losses or other concurrent losses), a lack of opportunities to say goodbye and shape death rituals, and the reduced accessibility of social support and social isolation' as well as 'disenfranchised grief' through a lack of public acknowledgement of COVID-19 losses (Eisma & Boelen, 2021, p. 2).

The effects of bereavement in lockdown does not seem to have been a focus of previous university studies relating to the pandemic, but is particularly relevant to the current study given the tight-knit networks of Pacific Islands communities noted above.

## 2.5 Personal safety

The rise of violence against women during stay at home and work from home policies has been reported in situations as diverse as Peru (Agüero, 2021), Egypt (Abdel Rahman, 2021), the United Kingdom (Anderberg et al., 2021) and the United States (Toccalino et al., 2022). A review of international studies of domestic violence identified risk factors of domestic violence as depression,



spending more time in close contact, job losses, financial insecurity, lockdowns, addiction (alcohol or drugs), control of wealth in the family, technology, and quarantine (Wake & Kandula, 2022).

The United Nations has called the increase of violence against women the 'shadow pandemic'. They have collected data on violence against women, mostly using indirect questions to track experiences of women (United Nations Women, 2021), finding that women believe that violence has increased during COVID-19. Many reports have focused on identifying and quantifying these problems, but United Nations Women has mounted a multi-faceted response to address ways to support the capacity of front-line service-providers such as helplines, as well as focusing on prevention such as promoting 'positive masculinities and equitable sharing of household responsibilities' (United Nations Women, 2021, p. 3).

The effects of the 'shadow pandemic' have been identified as particularly affecting women and girls in the 'global south', or developing countries (Guidorzi, 2020). Factors identified by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Tata et al., 2021) include increased exposure to perpetrators through more time at home during lockdowns; school closures and child marriage; increased care work; and more time online. Triggers for perpetrators include the added stress of the pandemic; increased alcohol consumption. There is reduced access to support, security and legal services because emergency services have been preoccupied with the pandemic; and the stigma of reporting violence could have lasting effects. The authors state that it is likely that low reporting rates mean that 'drastically undercounting' the true incidence of violence against women (Tata et al., 2021, p. 6).

Gendered impacts have been identified in the Pacific (Pacific Women, 2021, p. 3):

*For women and girls, the impact of national and international COVID-19 response measures has been severe: the incidence of violence has dramatically risen during lockdowns, women have lost their livelihoods and women's child caring responsibilities have hugely increased with the closure of schools and the movement of people from urban to rural areas.*

In Fiji the surge of violence against women in the pandemic has been labelled 'a crisis within a crisis' (Chanel, 2021).

The investigation of the 'shadow pandemic' for USP women is therefore an essential focus of the current research project, and identifying potential strategies to mitigate the effects of violence against women is an important goal.



### 3 Methodology

This survey was an internet-based questionnaire emailed to all staff at the University of the South Pacific, requesting women to respond.

#### 3.1 Principles

The principles underpinning this survey were to provide the women staff of USP with an opportunity to voice their experiences of the Work from Home period of COVID-19. As far as possible under the constraints of travel and distance, this research has been carried out through a participatory approach by the researcher and commissioning committee (AUSPS Women's Wing).

#### 3.2 Survey development

The survey was developed after a review of the relevant literature relating to the lockdown period of COVID-19. A mixture of closed and open-ended questions was designed in order to provide a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

Initial questions were drafted and discussed by the committee of the AUSPS Women's Wing, in order to ensure that they captured the context of USP and Pacific culture. Table 4 shows the specific sources of the initial questions which were adapted for this study.

*Table 4 Sources of initial questions for COVID-19 Work from Home*

Topic	Question source
Hours spent on daily activities before and during COVID-19 lockdowns	Deryugina et al. (2021)
Research resources for research productivity	Deryugina et al. (2021)
Workspace at home	Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya (2021)
Benefits and challenges of working at home	Erlam et al. (2021)
Mental health while working from home	United Nations Women (2021) Kessler (2010)
Bereavement during COVID-19	Harrop et al. (2021)
Personal safety and gender-based violence/abuse	United Nations Women (2021)

Questions were then entered into Qualtrics, a web-based survey platform<sup>1</sup>, and trialled by the Women's Wing committee in an iterative feedback process. A copy of the survey is provided as Appendix 3.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.qualtrics.com>



### 3.3 Ethics

Since the survey covered topics such as violence or abuse which could potentially cause distress to respondents, the survey settings were set so that all responses were completely anonymous and could not be identified by any researchers. In addition, information was provided as part of the survey about follow-up to address any distress caused.

Ethics approval was granted by the USP School of Law and Social Sciences (SOLASS) Research Committee.

### 3.4 Survey implementation

The survey was sent out to all USP staff, a total of approximately 1,570 staff (University of the South Pacific, 2022) by the Division of marketing and Communication at USP, with a subject line clearly stating that it was a survey for women. There is a. It was circulated on the All Staff email distribution fourteen times between June and July 2022.

### 3.5 Data analysis

Numerical data sets were downloaded from the Qualtrics survey platform and converted to Excel, from which charts were designed to present the descriptive statistics. Text-based data was converted to Word files so that comments could be easily extracted.

### 3.6 Limitations

The main limitations of this survey were:

- 1) it could not be field tested in all the different campuses where the survey was to be distributed;
- 2) a full survey frame of women-staff was not available, so accurate response rates could not be calculated.



## 4 Survey respondents

This section describes the respondents who answered the survey questionnaire as they described themselves; their work context followed by their demographic background. Although there were 267 respondents recorded for the whole survey, most questions had around 100 replies. Since there was a total of 766 women staff as at July 2022<sup>2</sup>, this represents a total response rate of 35 percent, with a question response rate of approximately 13 percent.

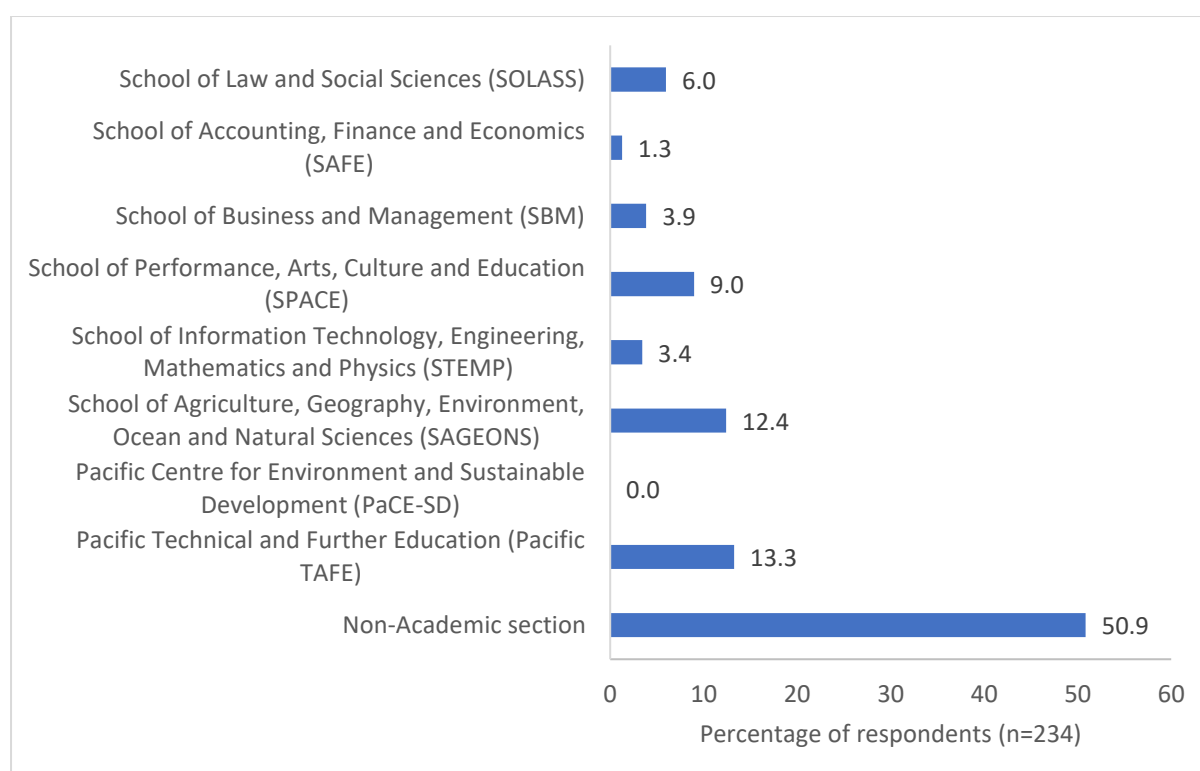
### 4.1 Work context

Questions about the work context of respondents were asked in the initial section of the survey.

#### 4.1.1 School or section

Respondents' school or section is shown in Figure 1. Around half of the respondents were from the Non-Academic section (50.9%). The next biggest sections were The Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) (13.3%), followed by the School of Agriculture, Geography, Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences (SAGEONS) (12.4%).

Figure 1 School or section



<sup>2</sup> As at July 2022 (Source: USP Human Resources)

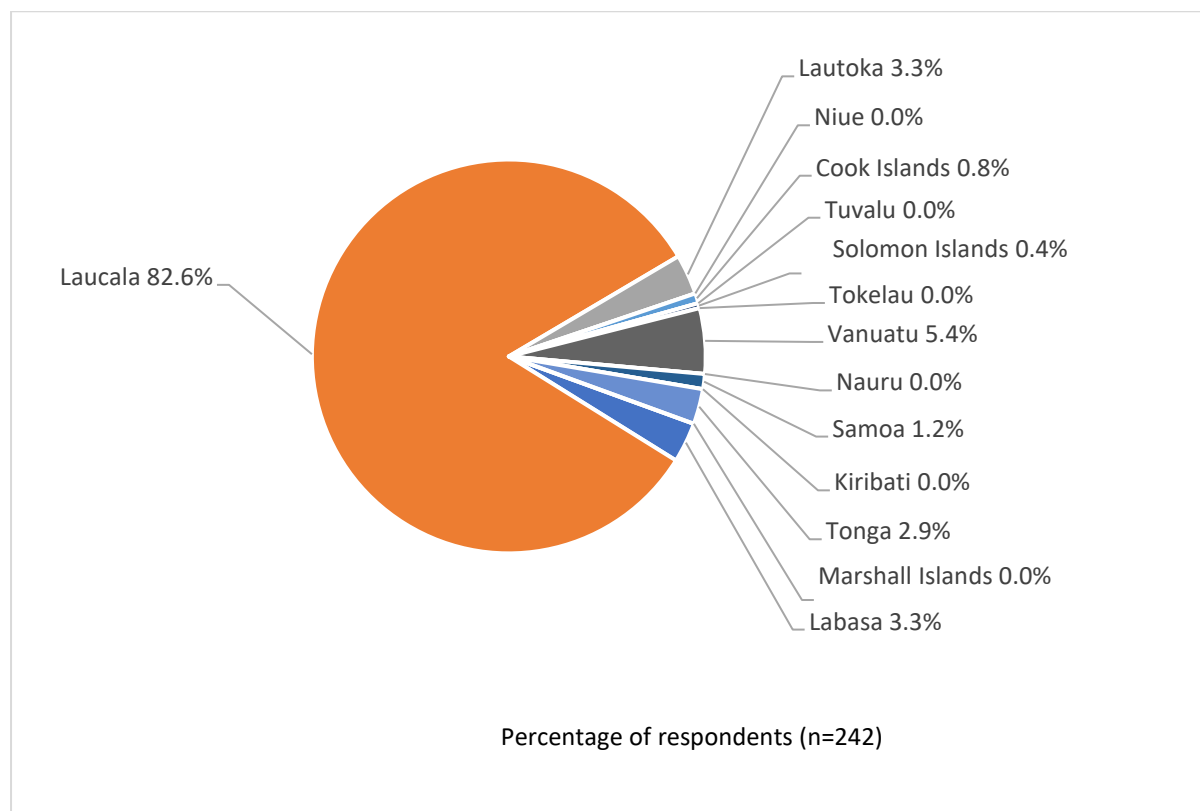




### 4.1.2 Campus

Figure 2 shows the campus where each respondent was based. The largest percentage was from Laucala (82.6%), reflecting the proportion of staff located in the main campus in Fiji.

Figure 2 Campus

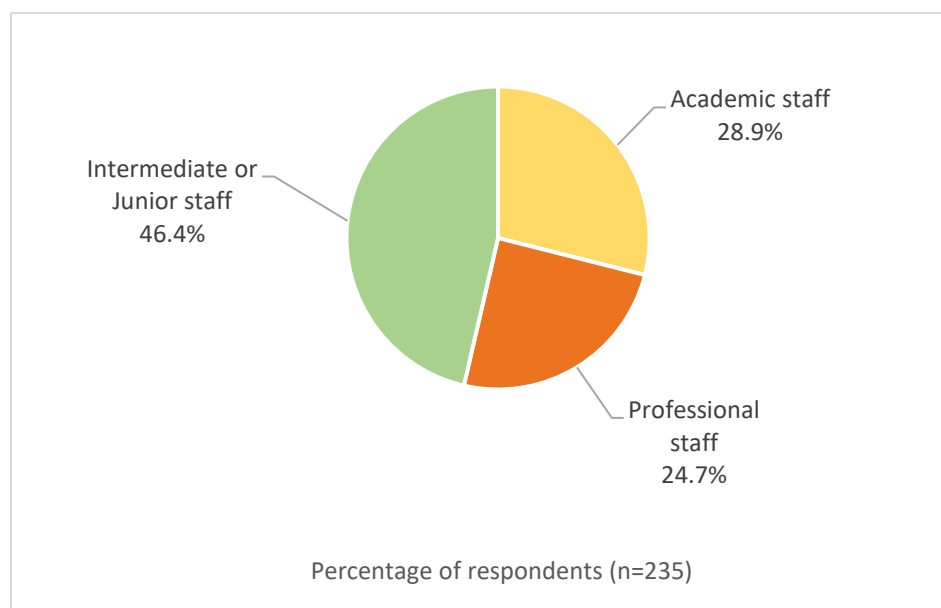


### 4.1.3 Category of staff

Staff categories of respondents are shown in Figure 3. Nearly half of the respondents were Intermediate or Junior (I&J) staff (46.4%), which includes roles such as administration support, cleaners, gardeners, etc. This was followed by Academic staff (28.9%), and by Professional staff (24.7%) which includes roles such as senior administration. This has a higher representation of academic and professional women from the total population of women at USP, which has most administration and support (61.7%), followed by academic (22.5%), and professional staff (15.7%)<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> As at July 2022 (Source: USP Human Resources).

Figure 3 Category of staff



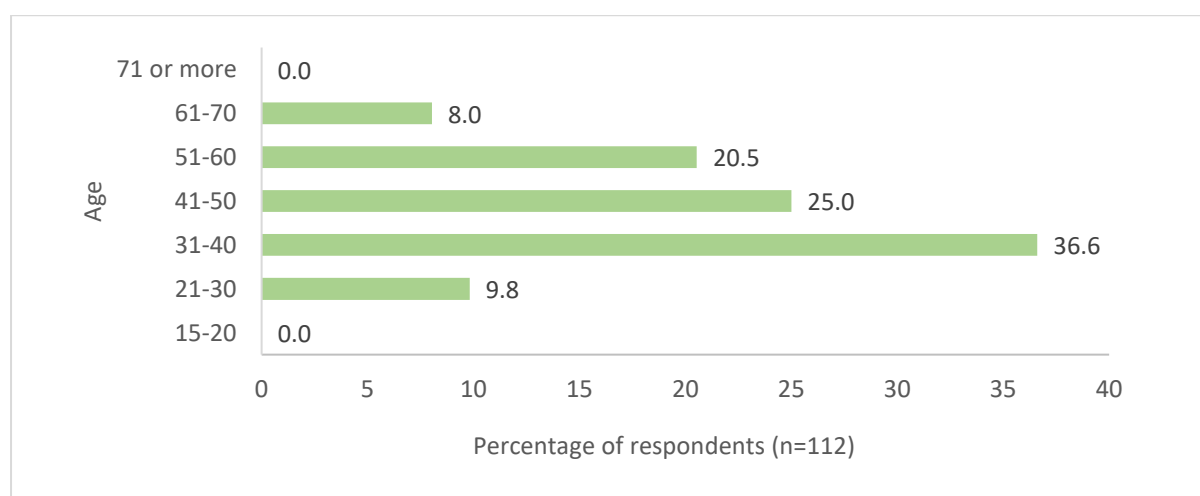
## 4.2 Demographic background

Questions about the demographic background of respondents were asked in the last section of the survey.

### 4.2.1 Age

The ages of the respondents can be seen in Figure 4. This shows that the largest proportion of respondents was aged 31-40 (36.6%), followed by 41-50 (25.0%) and 51-60 (20.5%). Smaller proportions were aged 21-30 (9.8%) and 61-70 (8.0%).

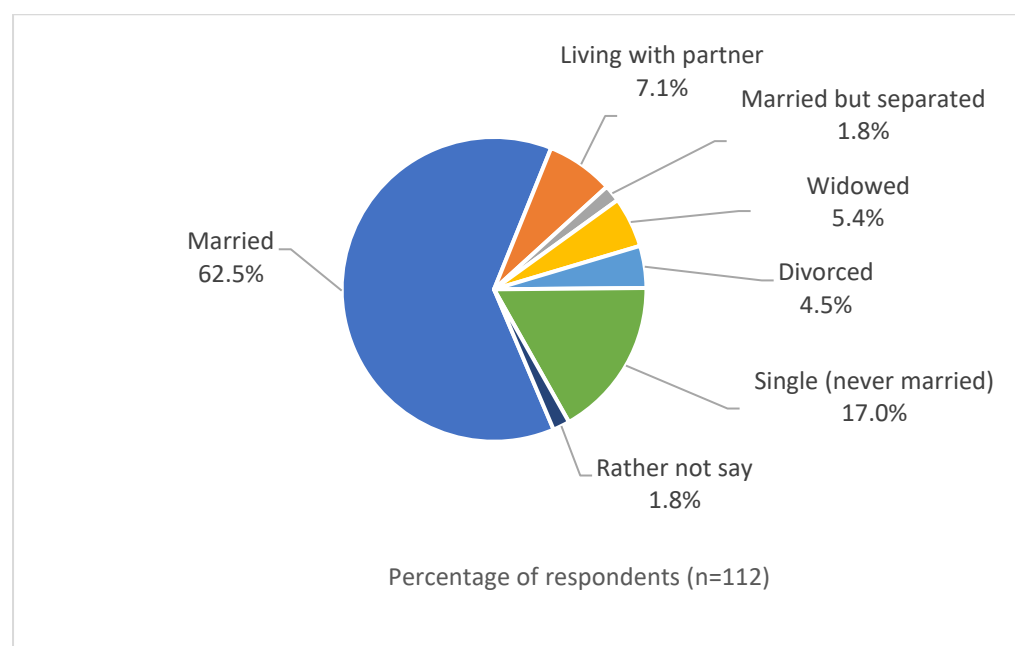
Figure 4 Age of respondents



## 4.2.2 Marital status

Approximately a third of respondents were either married (62.5%) or married but separated (1.8%), as shown in Figure 5. The next largest proportion was of single (never married) respondents (17.0%).

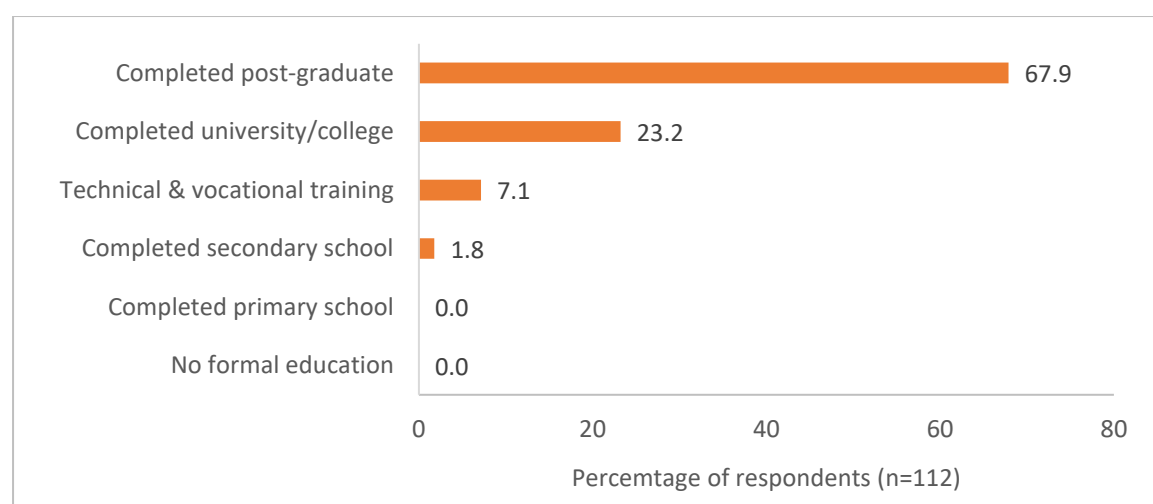
Figure 5 Marital status of respondents



## 4.2.3 Level of education

Figure 6 shows the highest level of education completed by respondents. The highest level reported by the largest group was post-graduate education (67.9%). Around a quarter of respondents reported that their highest qualification was university or college (23.2%).

Figure 6 Level of education

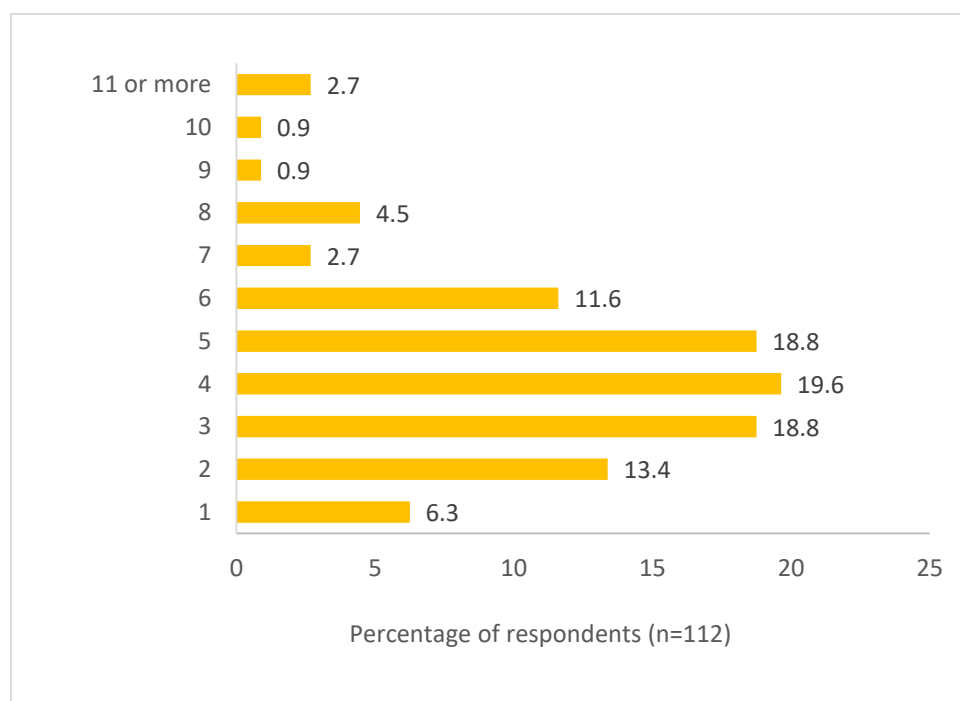




#### 4.2.4 Number of people in household

Figure 7 shows the number of people in the respondents' households, including themselves. Three household sizes had nearly 20 percent of respondents each: three (18.8%), four (19.6%) or five (18.8%) people. Larger households of six (11.6%), seven (2.7%), or eight people (4.5%) were also reported, with 11 or more reported by 2.7 percent of respondents. Single-person households were reported by 6.3 percent and two-people households by 13.4 percent of respondents.

Figure 7 Number of people in household

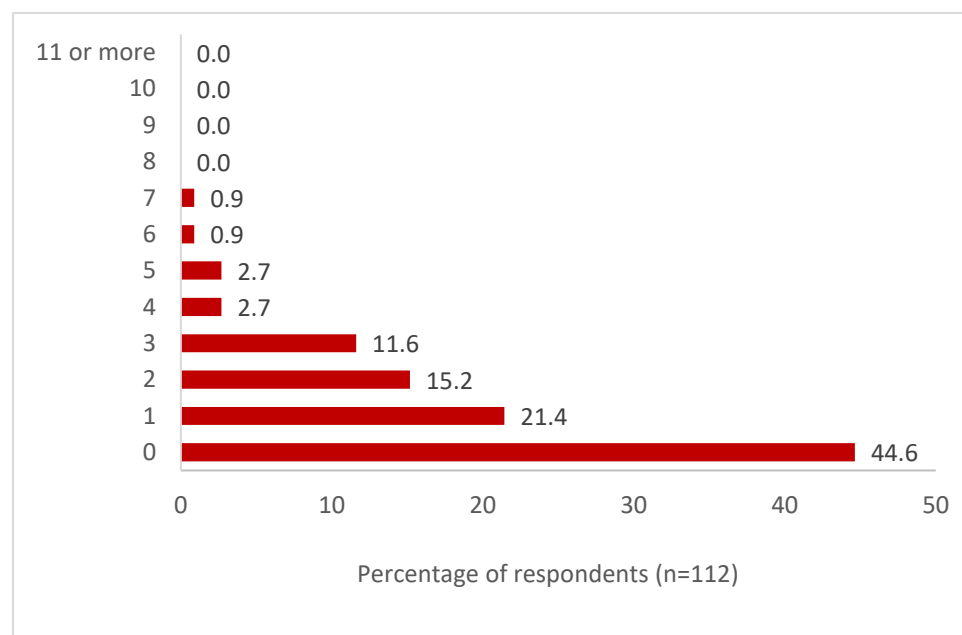


#### 4.2.5 Number of children in household

The number of children in respondents' households is shown in Figure 8. This shows that 44.5 percent of respondents had no children in their household, followed by 21.4 percent with one child, 15.2 percent with two children, 2.7 percent with each of four or five children, and just under 1 percent with each of six or seven children.



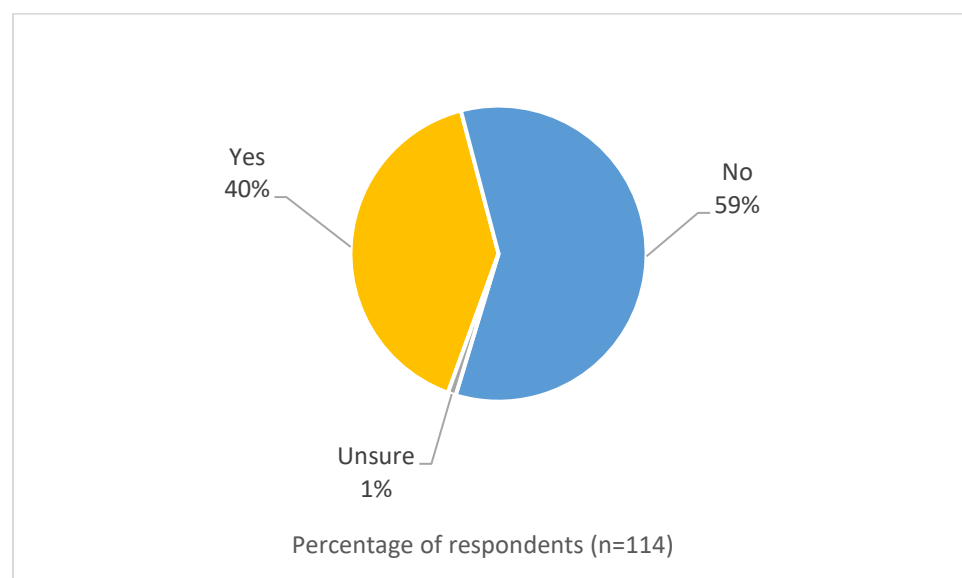
Figure 8 Number of children in household



#### 4.2.6 Loss of job or income during COVID

Figure 9 shows that 40 percent of respondents reported that any of the other adults in their household had lost either their job or a lot of income during COVID-19.

Figure 9 Loss of job or income in household during COVID



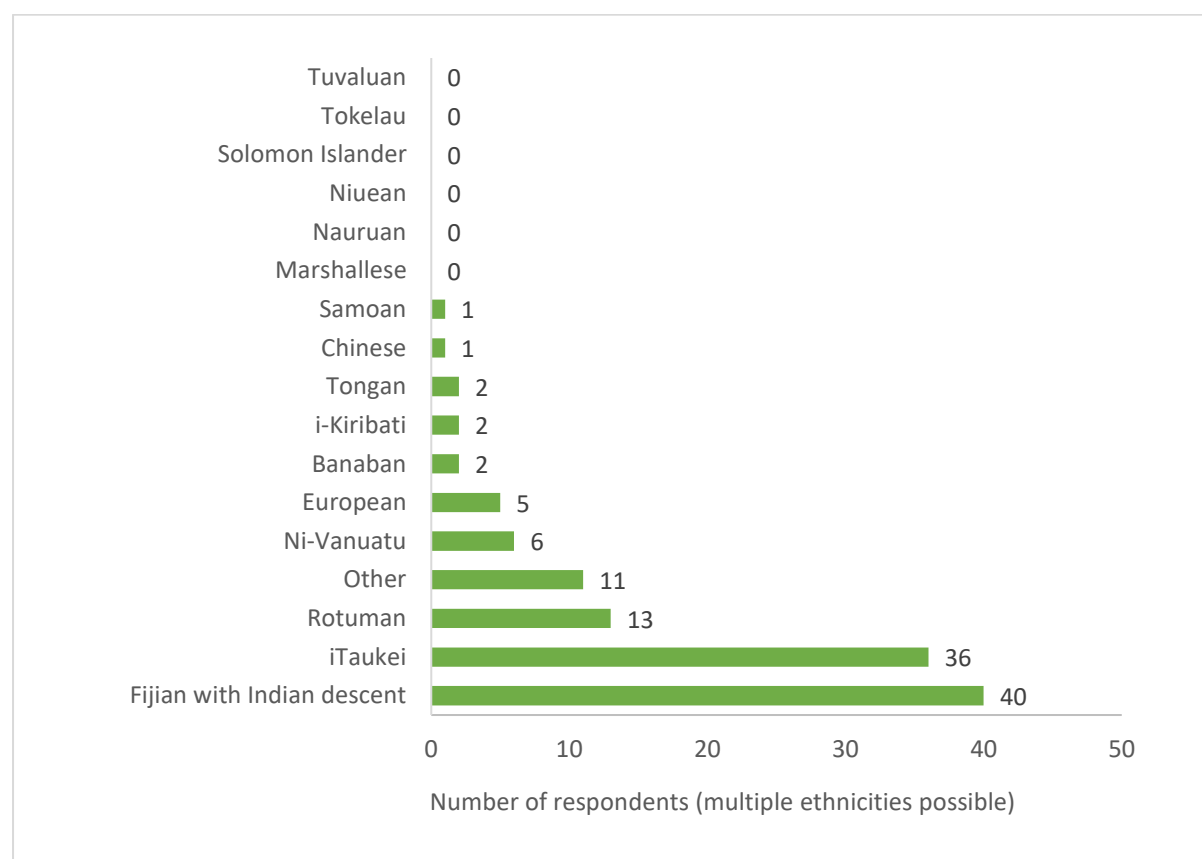


#### 4.2.7 Ethnic background

The final demographic question asked respondents about their ethnic background, with more than one category possible. Figure 10 shows that the largest groups of respondents were Fijian with Indian descent (40) and iTaukei (36). There were 13 Rotuman respondents, 6 ni-Vanuatu, and 5 Europeans. There were 2 each of Banaban, i-Kiribati, and Tongan respondents, and 1 each Samoan and Chinese respondents.

Seven respondents described their mixed ethnic backgrounds in the 'other' category.

Figure 10 Ethnic background





## 5 Results

The results of the survey questions about the Work from Home period are described in five main sections: work activities, physical health, mental health, death of family or friends, and personal safety.

Quantitative data is presented in chart form, followed by comments which have been unedited in order to preserve the 'voice' of the research participants. Any potentially identifying information has been removed from answers.

### 5.1 Work activities during the Work from Home period

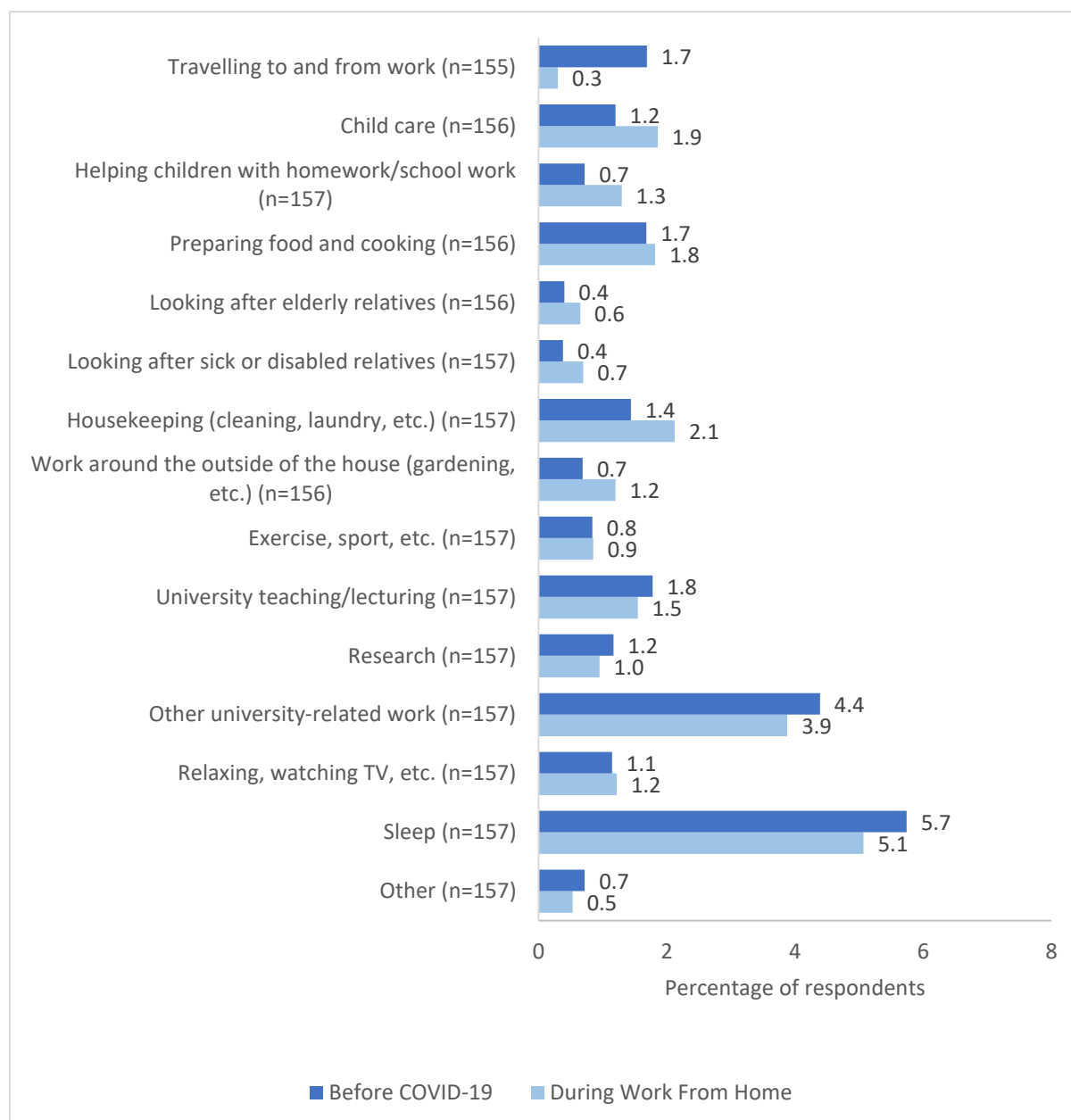
The first set of questions focused on work activities during the Work from Home period.

#### *5.1.1 Activities before COVID-19 and during Work from Home*

Respondents were asked about the hours they spent on daily activities for the 24 hours of a typical working day, both before COVID-19 and during the Work from Home period.

shows that the highest average number of hours was spent in sleep, followed by 'other university-related activities', both before COVID-19 and during the Work from Home period. As would be expected, the biggest drop was in travelling to and from work, from an average of 1.7 to 0.3 hours. Average hours spent on university teaching and lecturing, research, other university-related work and sleep also dropped. Hours spent on all other activities increased during the Work from Home period. The largest increases were in childcare (1.2 to 1.9), housekeeping (1.4 to 2.1), helping children with homework/school work (0.7 to 1.3).

Figure 11 Average number of hours spent on activities



Respondents were then asked if they had any comments about the differences in the number of hours spent on their activities on working days before and during the Work from Home period. There were 85 comments, identifying issues and themes which were also picked up in answers to later questions.

The difference in travel time was frequently mentioned:

*With work from home, I saved the number of hours I spend in traffic and travel and dedicated that to work. Tea time and lunch hour commute etc was used for either work/meetings or de-stress activities*

*WFH with children is difficult as you have to juggle their needs with your work. While this was at times stressful, overall I found that not having to commute really aided in*





*me being able to spend more time working productively and I was also able to sleep longer as I didn't have to get up early to prepare myself and children for school/work.*

Several comments mentioned an expectation of availability:

*during Work from home, it felt like the expectation was for us to work 24/7 or be available to do work at any time of the day or night. there was added work on top of the usual workload as management was uncertain if people were working. this resulted in us working 3 times the usual workload.*

*Working from home (WFH) has been the best working experience. However, there were challenges including the expectation to be available for business even during off business hours. This is something that would have required better management including Policies if considered for longer periods. WFH increased productivity. It was much more convenient to get chores done more efficiently. Major challenge for Supervisors would be to have teams actively responding as per standards set for WFH. It would be good if an online monitor tracks productive hours for WFH arrangement to reduce the stress on Supervisors. Unnecessary productive time can be lost in just getting teams to be responsive.*

*Working from home was the most stressful period of my life doing both domestic duties to care for family members at home and being expected to cover the work hours by being online for support work.*

The need to juggle roles was identified, both as a positive and a negative change:

*Working from home is really hectic as a mother because I have to attend to other housework apart from doing my work, whilst at work, concentration is on work only.*

*Working from home allows me as a women to actually balance household chores while also meeting the workload or meeting work deadline or required tasks. I believe more time is spent in the preparation to travel to work.*

*working from home during covid was a challenge because i had to look after my kids and my elderly parents and another elderly lady at home as well as feeding them and doing their laundry*

Some respondents stressed the advantages of spending time with their young children:

*Their is huge different with the hours i spent before and during covid period, before covid i use less time with my family and leisure activities since i spent alot of time at work. During the covid period it gave a huge change in my working life as i spent more time with my families and give me a bonding time with my daughter.*

Although the ratings for time spent on sleep had reduced overall, several respondents commented that they had slept more during the Work for Home period:

*The traveling time was reduced hence was able to sleep an additional 2 hours.*

*WFH having to cook our own meals and eating freshly cooked lunches. Body is more relaxed as we get to spent 9 hours of sleep.*

Others noted they had to work when the internet was available:

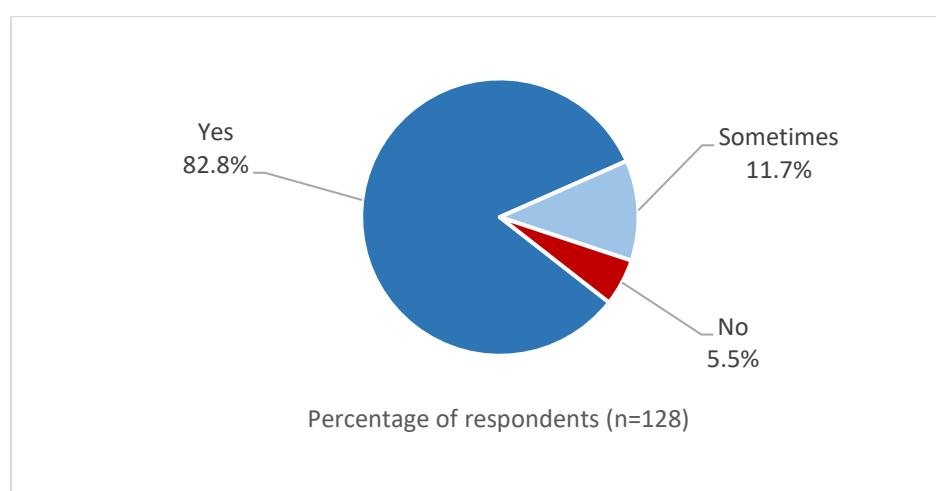
*before COVID I managed to finish most of the office related work but during wfh I spent more hours doing office related work s internet was very slow. I had to sit and wait or work at night*

*I have challenges in working from home due to intermittent internet connection, power cut. I have to budget for my data cost and telephone expenses. the home working environment is totally different from normal working environment.*

### 5.1.2 University activities during Work from Home

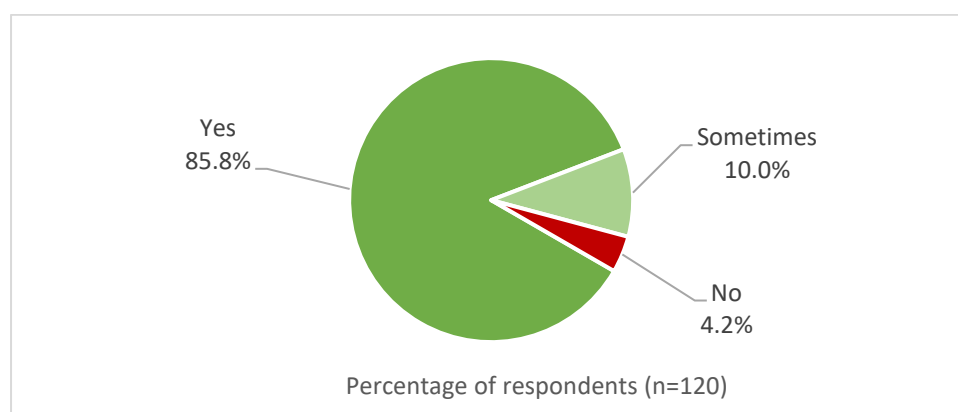
Figure 12 shows the percentage of respondents who reported being required to work on university activities during the Work from Home period.

Figure 12 Required to work during Work from Home



Those respondents who answered that they were required to carry out university activities during the work from home period ('yes' or 'sometimes') were further asked if that work was required to be done at their home. Answers shown in Figure 13 show that a large majority (86%) was required to work at home, and others (10%) some of the time.

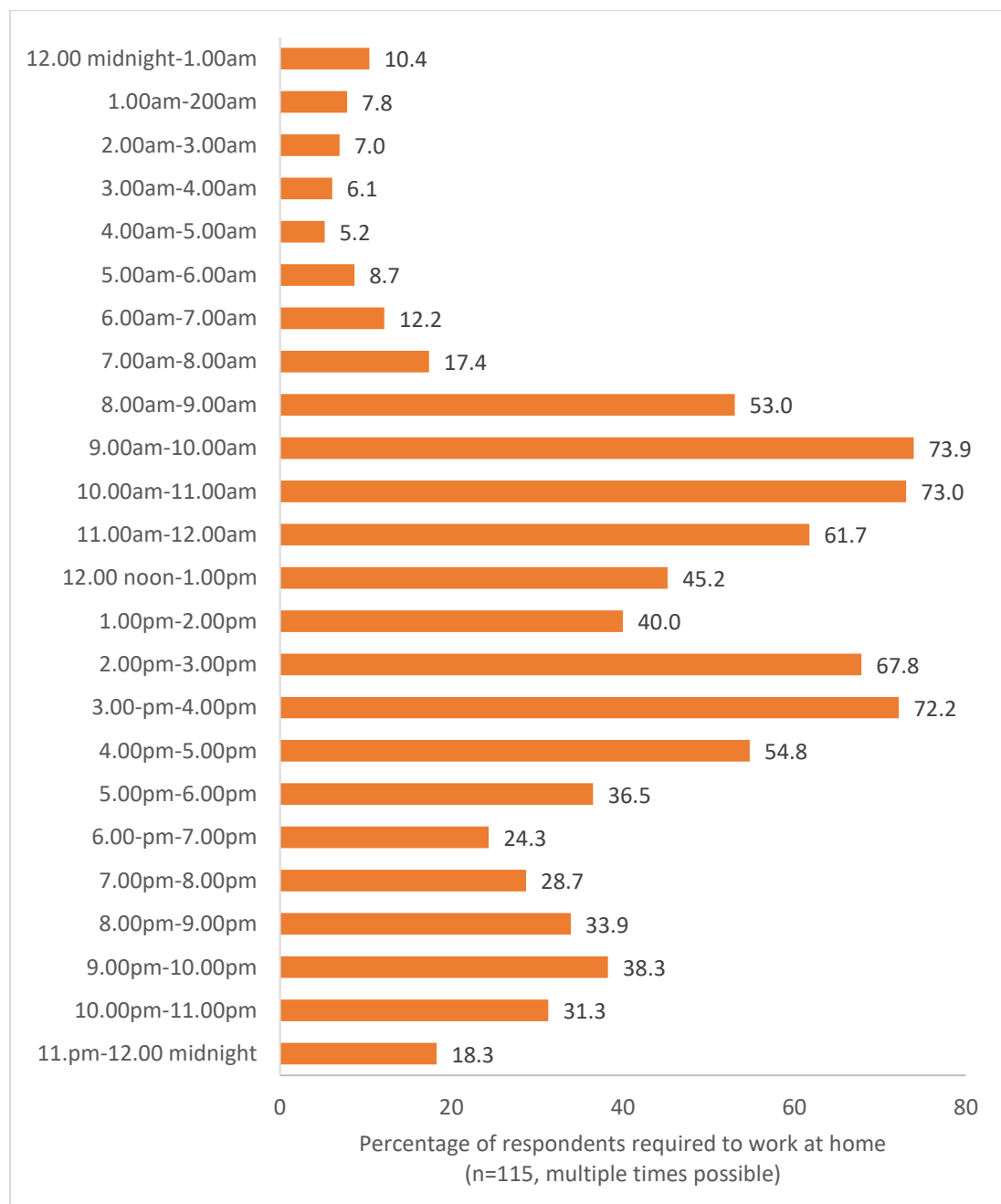
Figure 13 Required to work at home during Work from Home





Respondents who were required to work at home were further asked about what time of day they usually worked on university activities, as shown in Figure 14. The most frequent times were in the mornings from 9.00am-10.00am (73.9%) and 10.00am-11.00a (73.0%), followed by 2.00pm-3.00pm (67.8%) and 3.00-4.00pm (72.2%) in the afternoons. All time periods were identified by some respondents, including those after midnight, for example 10.4 percent stating they usually worked during the time of midnight to 1.00am.

*Figure 14 Time of day on university work activities during Work from Home*





These respondents were further asked if they had any comments about the differences in times of day they spent on university activities before and during the Work from Home period. There were 75 comments.

Some had continued with the same working hours, or as far as possible:

*Work from home was no different from a normal working day as I am still conducting lectures and tutorials, attend meetings, and communicate with students on a daily basis. Work doesn't seem to have an exit time because it is there at home.*

*I used to stick to the normal work hours unless there were urgent issues that came up, such as looking after sick family members.*

*I actually tried to keep to normal working hours but would check emails early in the mornings and late at night to ensure I did not miss a thing. It was important that I kept as closely as possible to normal working hours as my grandchildren would be quiet attending to their school work. So it worked out for everyone.*

*I am [...] and I was required to go to work at the Campus despite the lockdown since [...] was categorized as being an essential service.*

The flexibility was reported to have both positive and negative aspects:

*I was able to work more productively from home without being disturbed much and without compromising much on my health. If I did not feel motivated on a particular day, I would do some other work for eg cleaning my compound or gardening and then after sometime, I would return to do the university work where I am able to focus and give my 100% without being distracted or half into my work.*

*With our increased workload, we had to work beyond midnight.*

*Because I had to look after my toddler during the day, I could work and focus better when she was asleep... this usually meant after 9 pm. I'd also do 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon while my husband would look after her (we took 2 hour turns each). Even though the number of hours worked was roughly the same, the fact that it was spread out throughout the day and I had so many interruptions made it more challenging. I also felt that I could not properly separate work from personal life anymore and take the time to relax, I would think about work first thing in the morning and last thing at night and whenever I had 10 minutes of quiet I would use them to reply to work emails...*

Specific comments could be grouped into several themes:

- Work hours to better suit the climate

*At home, I worked in the early morning when it was still cool, till lunchtime, then did work around the house and garden in the afternoon then did some work in the evening till late. In the office, I work during normal working hours (from around 8am-5pm).*



- Scheduling time on the internet

*During work from home period, all members of the family were home so we had to schedule times for children to do their school work online (zoom classes) and we would then take turns to use computer resources for work.*

- Managing expectations from university supervisors

*Working times became uncontrolled. Some staff were offline due to connectivity. Hence, increasing the work of Supervisors of having to follow through beyond normal hours as staff also adjusted their working times. Also, as WFH was quite a new concept in Fiji, there were expectations that staff had more privileges when working from home. Hence, the expectation to be responsive even beyond normal working hours which could have led to work -life balance issues in the longer run.*

- The particular difficulties of online teaching

*I had to work late nights specially to finish lecture and lab recordings to avoid background noise and to have them uploaded in timely/weekly manner. Also it was time consuming to convert the recordings to <60MB video size weekly so ended up working in the weekends too.*

*More time on computers with virtual tutorials, online support for students, etc. And make-up classes when we experience technical difficulty during our online scheduled times.*

- Responsibilities towards students in the pandemic

*To cater for my students in the region; those who were working; those who could only reach out on social media platforms like messenger etc. Being accessible to my students throughout the WFH period was very important for their welfare. Many reached out very early in the morning or late at night - even though it cuts into my private time, I would drop everything to attend to a student in crisis.*

- Challenges for Intermediate or Junior staff

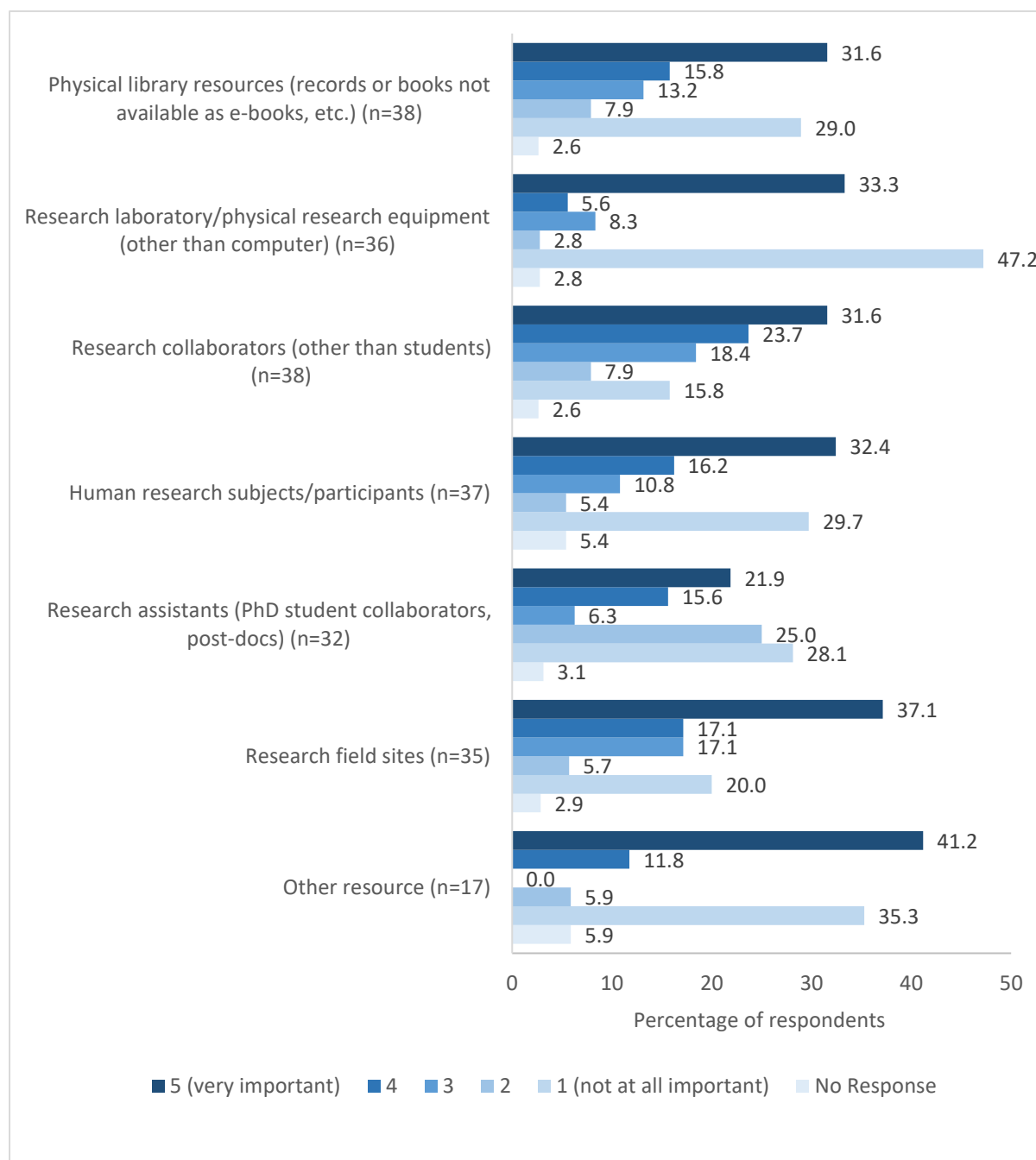
*While working from home I did my housework, fed kids then sat and completed the assigned task before time and the good thing was that when at home I was able to continue with the work I was doing on PC compared to been at work where I have to stop at tea and lunch time since I am a I& J staff so our tea and lunch times are monitored as well. Also I have to rush to pick kids from school and come back to work to sign out (sometimes its already 4pm) only even if I don't have labs running on certain days. We don't have any space for our kids to sit at work either so have to drop them at home most of the days but I bring them to work for the days I have my labs but there is sitting problem as one of the senior male staff says this is not the place for kids (you should make arrangements or stay home).*

### 5.1.3 Resources for research

Academic staff were asked to rate the importance of a series of resources for their research on a five-point scale from 'not at all important' to 'very important', as shown in Figure 15.



Figure 15 Resources for research



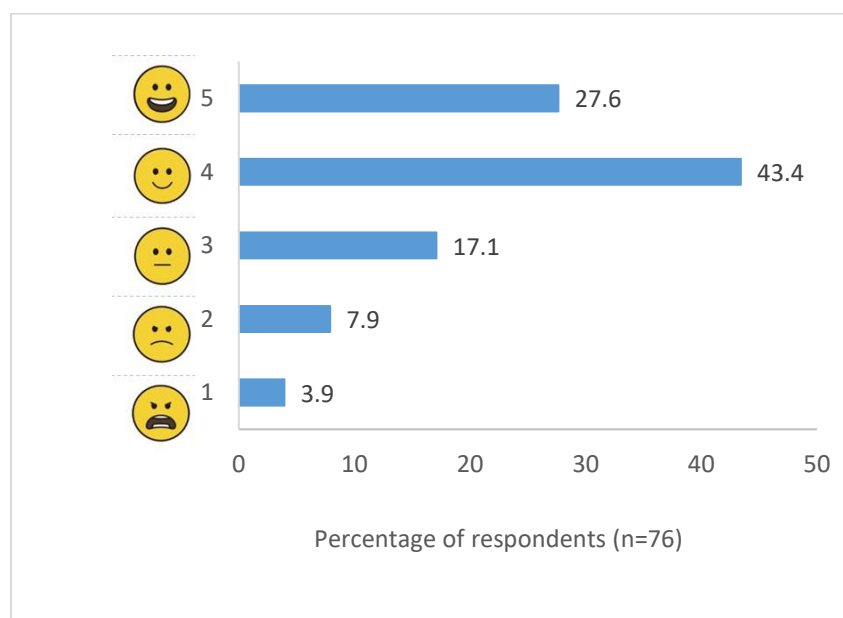
No details of other resources were provided.

### 5.1.4 Home work space

Respondents who were required to work at home were asked to rate their workspaces using a 'smiley face' slide.

Figure 1 shows that responses were largely positive, with the highest number of respondents having chosen the second 'happiest' rating (43.4%) and over two-thirds of respondents having given positive ratings (71%).

Figure 16 Rating of home workspace



Respondents who were required to work at home were then asked to write any comments about their work space. There were 88 responses to this question.

The kitchen or dining table were the most commonly mentioned work spaces:

*I do not have a proper workspace at home. I work on the kitchen table. However, I am most comfortable at home, relaxed knowing that my children are happy to have me around, so I was more productive with my work required from the office.*

*I am very happy with my workspace at home as it is very comfortable. I have a desk and chair with wifi connection. An additional bonus is being able to walk to the kitchen to fix myself something to eat whenever I am hungry.*

*Workspace was ok at home, usually my husband and I used our dining room. It got challenging at times when we had visitors at home when visiting was allowed as lockdown rules eased.*

Some respondents worked in their bedroom:

*i had my desk with my work computer set up on one side of my bedroom with enough space to swing my chair comfortably without hitting my bed or wardrobe.*

*Work space at home was slightly accommodating. My room had space for a table to be situated next to my bed. However table was not big enough to hold 2 large computer screens, CPU unit, UPS and piles of working papers and desk stationaries thus had to improvise through creation of supporting wood stools. In addition there was no*





*provision of privacy, there were continuous disturbances from family, screaming undone house chores and nephew.*

Others reporting moving around the house:

*I was able to work in different spaces at home, like in the living room, dinning table, outside on the porch or even the workspace I set up in my room.*

*It was adequate. I had to move around a lot in the house due to connectivity issues*

One mentioned her outside space:

*I like to work outdoors so I can be found in our patio, which has a wide green landscape as view and cool breeze. It is nice and quiet, has good internet coverage etc. I have a dedicated work study at home as well which I use for meetings etc*

A range of challenges around home work spaces was mentioned:

- Shared work spaces

*Co sharing work space with my husband who was also working from home on the dinning table was challenging*

*Two of my kids had also started Uni, so we had a special table and two chairs for them to study in their allocated space (away from me) and I had a dedicated table and a comfortable office chair (which I bought from office), hence I was very pleased with my workspace. Use of personal internet was a bit problematic as there was no compensation for it, despite us using it for almost 8 hrs a day for work. Not having access to printing was a little problematic at times.*

- Lack of office furniture

*My home workspace is fine but I could do with an ergonomic chair and table!*

*Workspace at home was primarily a corner of our living room. I had a good table, but no good chair. I bought myself a \$200 office chair to offer me good support. Also, the space was not confined so my work always was open to loud noise, neighbors discussions and children running over it. I, also shared the table with the kids at time and used my own phone data for internet connections.*

*My flat is not designed to be a work place but our section was permitted to take our work computer, desk and chair home so we can work with ease. Lighting wasn't ideal especially for meetings on Zoom, so I had to purchase a ring light online to remedy this situation.*

- Computer hardware

*I have no work space at home, and I don't have a Laptop I only use my cell phone.*

*I was lucky that I have a good personal laptop and good internet connection at home. However, at some point during the pandemic, my laptop died and while the university provided me with a university laptop quickly, it was much less efficient for work purposes.*





- Internet connectivity

*well ventilated room, good light, quite. Problem with WIFI on days when it rained due to wiring.*

*Had to apply to install internet connection with Telecom because my data on the phone was not enough( my own expenses and probably the majority of staff did the same); office laptop needed constant upgrading, slow - many times I had to use my phone to run lectures and tutorials; neighbours with kids at home - very distracting*

- Noise

*Working at home was good but sometimes the internet connectivity was poor. Also the neighbour's barking dogs and the roadworks close to our home were not ideal when conducting classes or recordings.*

*Workspace at home was great, but the noise from the neighbours is sometimes annoying*

- Heat

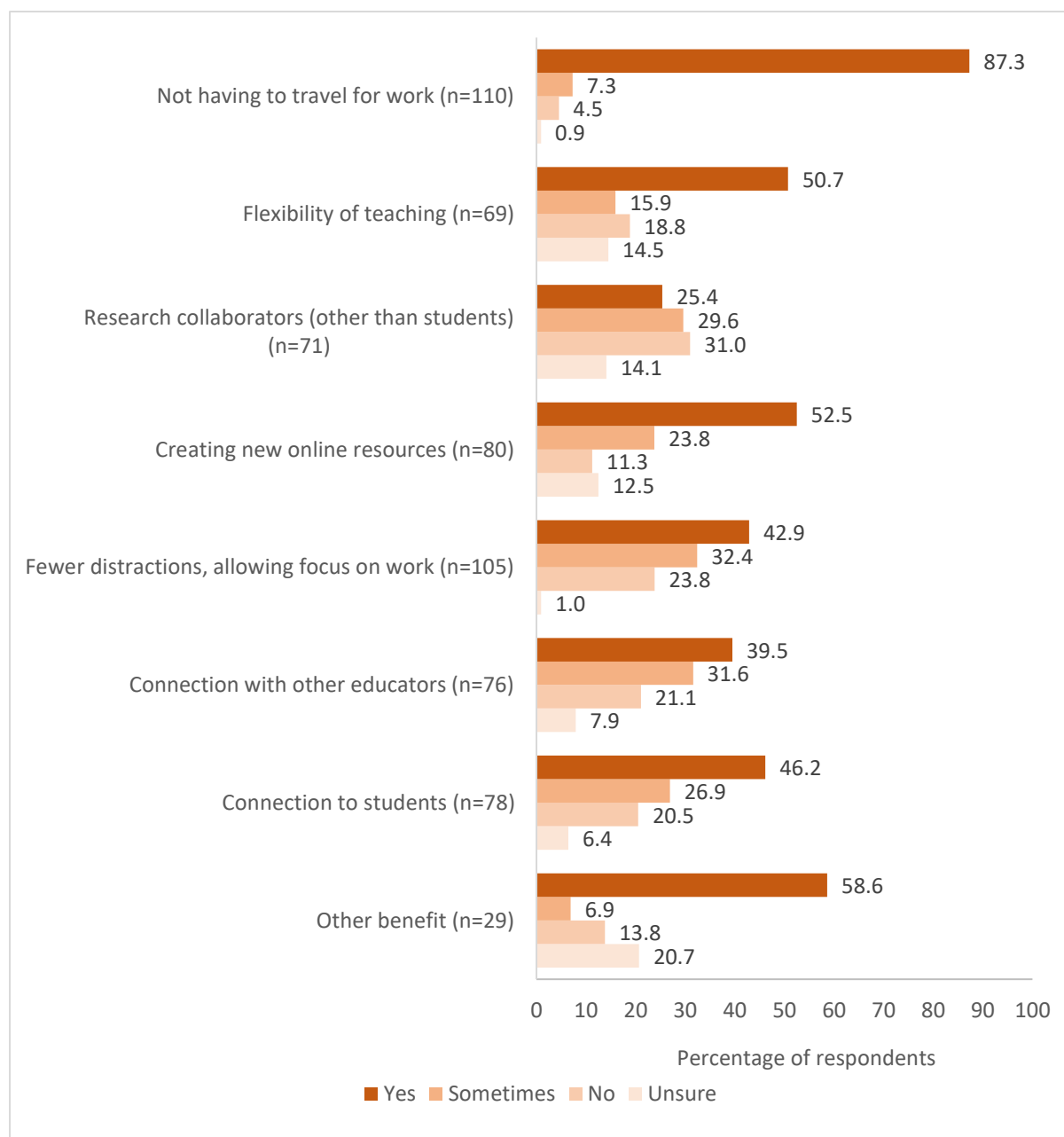
*i have to create a work space from home. sometimes i felt the heat from the PC, not helping when we have a very hot day. children distracts me every now and then.*

*Not work conducive, with no aircon and lots of noises from the neighbors.*

### ***5.1.5 Benefits of working at home***

Respondents who had been required to work at home during the Work from Home period were further asked about any benefits. Figure 17 shows that the most common benefit was reduced travel times (87.3%). Around half of respondents saw benefits for creating new online resources (52.5%) and the flexibility of teaching (50.7%), and the connection to students (46.2%).

Figure 17 Benefits of working at home



There were no other specific benefits identified for this question.

There were 77 responses to a follow-up question asking respondents if they had any comments on the benefits of working from home. Many of the ideas are summarised in this comment:

*1) spent more quality with family*

*2) Work at our own comfort e.g can work long hours into the night in pajamas right next to the bed - just takes 1 min to leap onto bed rather than work long hours at work then tirelessly seek transportation to get home, shower, cook meal and then prep for bed.*



3) *All communications was done via emails which was easier to attend to one at a time. Usually during pre-covid at work, I could be attending to emails, phone calls and student queries in person on top of a days work. During covid all communications were through email and I had a 3 day turn-around period to respond to each.*

4) *Flexible working hours.*

The value of flexibility was a common theme; allowing women to tailor their preferred hours to a more healthy lifestyle, particularly exercise and the preparation of fresh food, as well as time for family:

*Time flexibility, it's not just the specific time as normal working hours however can still work like midnight when internet connection is very stable and so quiet, early morning when mind is still fresh with sharp ideas to help with work and so many other things such as attire and so forth.*

*Can combine household chores with work easily during work week, which means more family time over the weekends. Cook healthy meals at home. Time spent in driving to work in the morning was used in cooking lunch/dinner in the morning. That left time free in the afternoon/evening for playing with pets/gardening/exercising/relaxing.*

*I did not have to drive to work and back. That can be very stressful with the crazy drivers on our roads. I also reverted back to my graduate nocturnality with my best working hours happening at night. I got to spend more time with my children, helping them with their school work. But the greatest benefit was the amount of time I spent in my garden, which was a healthy escape and provided fresh fruit and vegetables.*

*Not traveling and saving the time of traveling and getting all dressed up for work. I worked in the comfort of my home clothes except when I had meetings. Working from home also made it easier for me to take care of my parents which was something difficult to do when you are working. I was also able to look after my own health as well and have fresh and healthier food for consumption.*

*More productive work done as no tension of kids or going home on time to prepare dinner etc.*

However, one respondent imposed her own working day structure:

*Although I have a small household (son and cat), I religiously kept to the work hours while working from home. We were not affected at all by COVID-19. This period was an opportunity to connect with my son and learn/teach resilience in a pandemic.*

There was a range of specific benefits:

- Fewer distractions

*Working from home allowed me to actually live a life instead of living for work. Even though we were not allowed to socialize/go anywhere, I was able to get more quality work done than quantity which was important for me. It was good for my mental health, and I found it easier to focus on my work tasks as compared to working in a small office space shared with three other people, which can be distracting.*

*No distractions. I work at home a lot of the time anyway for this reason, so lockdown made little difference to my life. But there were also fewer inane admin tasks to be completed by "COB today" because the people who usually send those requests were*



*also busy with new things. Same amount of university work to do but more about helping students access resources etc. Not so much regular admin and planning etc. so things stayed in limbo for a while because we were busy dealing with teaching.*

- Saving on travel time and costs

*No early morning rush, Did not have to pay to housemaid though helped her. Could exercise without rush, Saved fuel as no one traveled to work. Happy to work Flexi hours. Managed to plan work schedule and balance office and housework.*

Although most comments did emphasise the benefits, several respondents did not see many benefits:

*Not many benefits unless you are a female with a heavy menstrual cycle, in my opinion. Too many distractions that you can't control- noisy neighbours (children, parties because alcohol was cheap and govt distributed 'unemployed' funds in 2 batches); delayed responses from sections within the University/colleagues/students due to connectivity issues, time differences etc; without internet banking – couldn't top up phone, not internet connection, can't make calls etc; Forced me to apply for internet connection with a provider.*

*The only benefit to some extent was that some of my work time was more focused due to less unscheduled interruptions from colleagues. HOWEVER, there is downside to this as well--the informal and unscheduled conversations in the office have been and continue to allow for innovations, strategizing and collaboration for both teaching and research and this was definitely missing during the pandemic and the lack of this was overall a negative experience.*

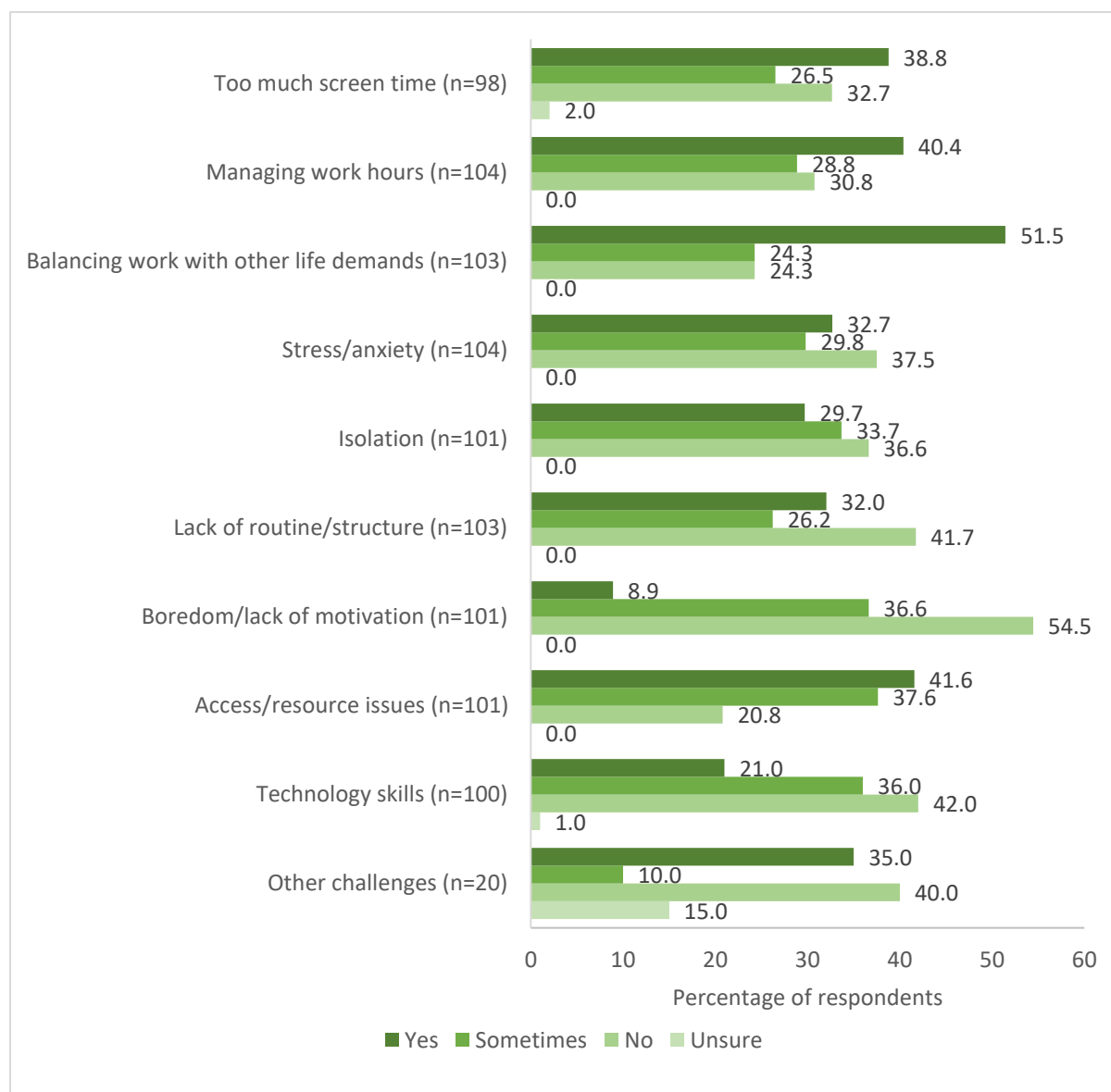
### 5.1.6 Challenges of working at home

The next question asked respondents who were required to work at home about its challenges. shows that balancing work with other life demands had the strongest agreement (51.5%), followed by managing work hours (40.4%) and too much screen time (38.8%).

The strongest disagreement was for boredom or lack of motivation (54.5%), technology skills (40.2) and lack of routine or structure (41.7%).



Figure 18 Challenges of working at home



No other specific challenges were identified for this question.

There were 58 responses to a follow-up question asking for comments about the challenges of working from home. The comments followed several main themes:

- Computers and internet (including costs) was the most frequently mentioned

*Used personal laptop that was slow and aged. I used more than my monthly quota on internet usage. Not been able to get good connectivity during rainy days. Not been able to take work equipment home.*

*The main Issue with working from Home is Internet connectivity and data. for staff handling enrollment this was a challenge because when uploading applications to mana drive we had to make sure our phones or wifi were topped up and at times the server*



*would drop. Follow-ups with SAS staff on applications for banner updating were delayed and we could only catch up with other admin colleagues were either before midday or late in the evening.*

*Having to provide for my internet. Zoom sessions were not efficiently organised by IT*

*No computers/data provided by USP and other resources*

*The main challenge for me was the connectivity issue, I made a sacrifice and moved on campus by September of 2021 to ensure I was online and able to assist the office better*

- Managing family expectations

*The only challenge I faced with working from home was when my children wanted/needed my attention during a virtual meeting.*

*network issues husband demand kids demands*

*My main challenge was providing support for my children for their home learning.*

*Being in an environment where working from home is new to family. Being an itaukei, we are accustomed to big families and sharing of responsibilities is a norm. Thus although you are working, you also have to help out with house chores if you are at home.*

*It was a challenge sharing my workspace with my family. We all had internet demands during the morning hours and that meant I sometimes had to sacrifice internet connectivity to allow them access to ZOOM school classes. In addition, I felt like I was chained to my laptop, as I was on it so many more hours of the day. I put on weight as a result of not being active enough.*

- Transitioning to an online environment

*very limited access to resources that were kept or filed in the office new method of work compared to old method. eg. before covid-19, i work on hard copies but have to access these documents through internet and work from these soft copies*

*One of the main challenges that I encountered as a supervisor with staff operating in different environments at their homes was to ensure that staff were focused and delivering on their work but also felt supported and motivated at the same time*

- Transitioning work duties

*My work involves ~60% of practical work and since I am I&J staff so we had to complete 7.5 hours/day which was hard to achieve at times but we were given extra work other than our usual work to makeup for the hours.*

- Lack of face-to-face contact with colleagues and students

*I missed the collegiality and I missed the students. Nothing like face to face human contact in teaching*

*Internet connectivity and lack of real time with colleagues and students.*

*Sometimes when stuck in something it was difficult to communicate as well in an office there is always someone to assist.*



*Sometimes, discussions on work related issues are more convenient discussing in person. There were issues with connectivity and getting access to systems. Distractions from neighbors*

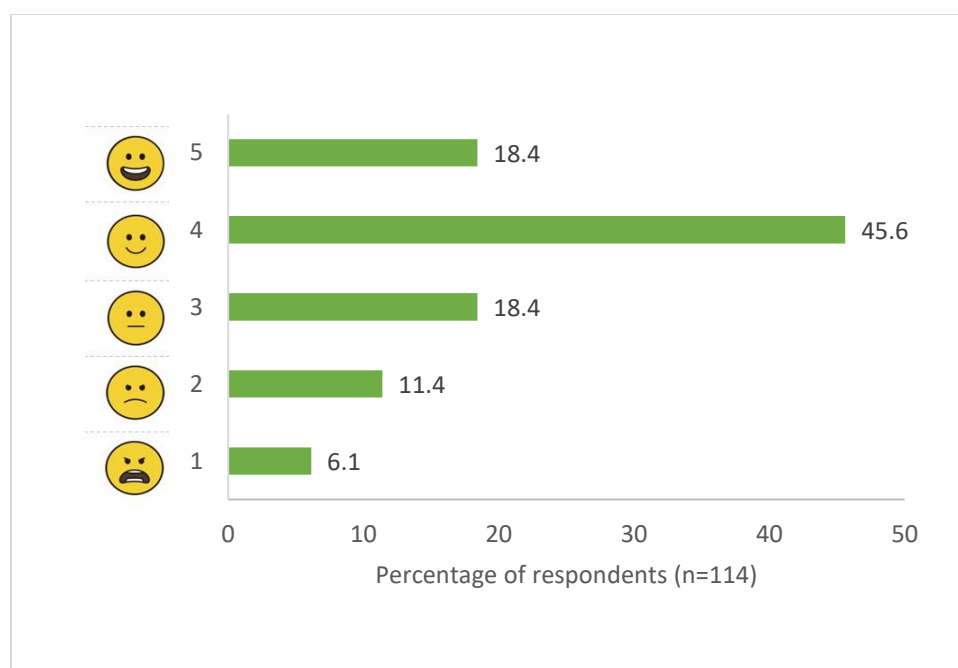
However, one comment highlighted ways of coping with the challenges:

*Apart from isolation and anxiety, boredom was not an issue at all as we had other life skills to fall back on. Also, we were involved in charity work which was a good distraction.*

### 5.1.7 University support as an employee

Figure 19 shows that 60.0 percent of respondents were either happy (45.6%) or very happy (18.4%) with the support they had received as an employee.

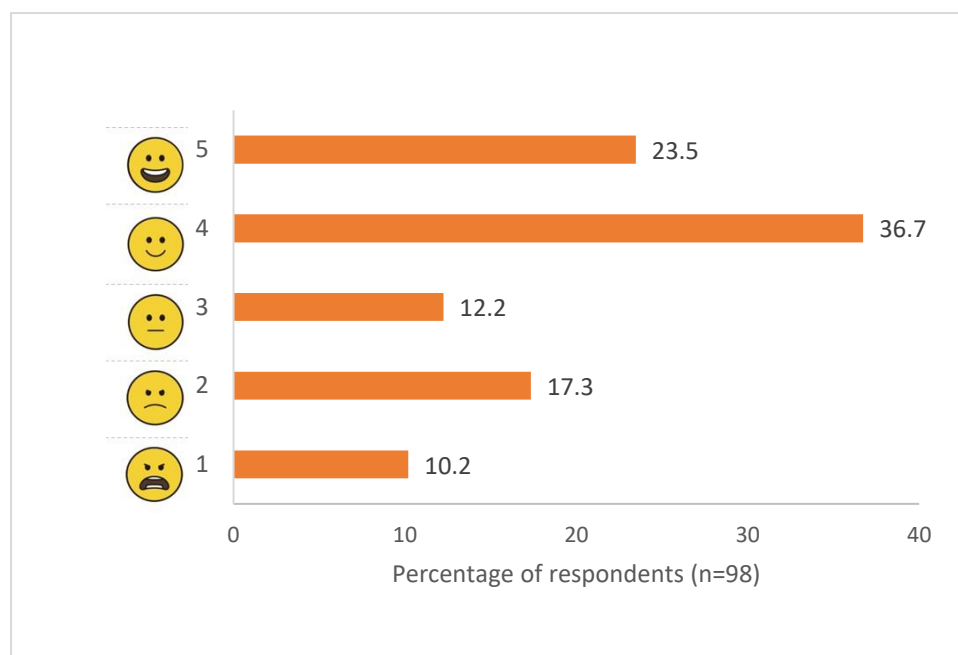
Figure 19 Support as an employee



### 5.1.8 University support as a woman

The ratings for the support they had received as a woman was very similar (Figure 20), with 60.2 percent of women either happy (36.7%) or very happy (23.5%), with more at the positive end than in the ratings for support as an employee.

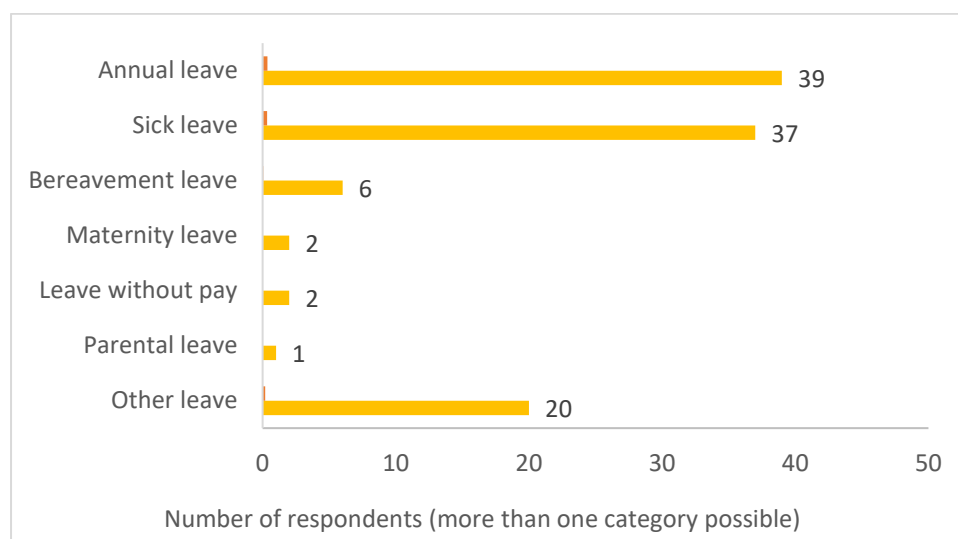
Figure 20 Support as a woman



### 5.1.9 Leave taken

Figure 21 shows the types of leave taken by respondents during the Work from Home period. This was largely annual leave (39 respondents) and sick leave (37), with a small amount of bereavement leave (6).

Figure 21 Leave taken



Of the 20 respondents who indicated 'other leave', 14 reported taking no leave, although this was not always the option they had wanted:





*At one point, although I requested to work from home for reasons related to Covid I was forced onto leave without pay for 2 months.*

*Family care*

*No leave was taken - as the workload was high*

*No leave was applied and I lost leave days*

*We were told to take leave to cover for the hours of work done from home (some weeks hours were not enough)*

*Sick leave due to reaction to vaccination*

### **5.1.10 Suggestions for university support to women on leave**

The first of three open-ended questions about how the university could give more support for the working lives of staff working from home asked about support for women on leave. There were 55 comments in response.

Some suggestions showed the problems of taking leave during a Work from Home period:

*If we are on leave then supervisors shouldn't request work things to be done on that day.*

*Treat leave as leave and not request things to be done on her leave day as it happens sometimes*

*I am not sure I understand the question--if a woman is on leave, the assumption should be that she is not expected to work from home. Any expectation otherwise is problematic. If the question is asking how can the university support women working from home (when they are not on leave), then it would be good for the university to make sure that flexibility in working times are ensured by supervisors, that the staff is provided with appropriate devices and funds for good internet connection and there is an effort by Supervisors to ask their staff what does the staff need. This would be true for both women and men staff.*

Several respondents suggested introducing new types of flexible working days:

*Very good question !!! Ladies @ USP should be allowed to work on flexible hours as they manage both home (children and family) and office,*

*Sometimes technology allows our workplace accessibility into our personal time. I think the university can support women on leave by respecting personal time, remembering there are different time zones across campuses and raising matters that need to be urgently addressed in advance (rather than being asked at the last minute). I think allowing women to wfh or to work flexible hours, eg. have afternoons off to allow time for school pick-ups, homework with children, time to exercise etc and then picking up the remaining working hours from home at a time that fits best, would be amazing, allowing for more work life balance and potentially having staff that actually have time to take care of their mental and physical wellbeing.*

*Permitting use of work technology like laptops; acknowledging early morning work (4am-6am) or late evening schedules (8am-10pm).*



*Give Flexi hours so that women can do their shopping or other official work at night*

One suggested a new type of leave:

*Maternal leave - to compensate for motherly roles in the house?*

One respondent answered this question with comments expressing frustration at the level of support from the university during this period:

*In general, USP's support for staff was abysmal. We barely heard from our HOS or DHOS during the period, and we therefore had no information passed down from higher ups. No all-staff emails from VC etc. When we finally met in person after the first lockdown, the VC greeted us by saying he hoped we'd enjoyed "doing lots of research while we were at home with nothing to do" and he hoped we appreciated that they hadn't deducted any leave during this period. He also said we would be expected to offer our students flexi schools to make up for any challenges during the semester. Appalling lack of compassion and not a single "how are you?" from any senior staff.*

Another suggested activities for women on leave:

*Institutions and leaders to create an environment of support for women on leave. Of course, we all want to feel supported – both in our personal and professional lives. Employers and leaders must create an environment where women feel psychologically safe, valued, and engaged, organizations should offer this support in any way they can. Leaders must constantly connect, engage and show genuine interest and responsibility of care for their female workers. Consider implementing weekly networking session for women - reading club, social outings for women on leave like hi teas, wine & cheese, dine and quiz etc...*

### **5.1.11 Suggestions for university support to women's teaching or research from home**

There 43 comments in response to the next question, asking those respondents who were academic staff for suggestions about how the university could give more support to women's teaching or research from home. There were several main themes in the suggestions:

- Tools needed for teaching and research

*Headsets, webcams etc. to make it easier to hold zoom meetings and attending conferences from home.*

*Greater and easier access to search engines and published academic articles when they are not available online.*

- Training for online teaching

*The university should provide a online training for teaching while working from home so teachers have more clear understanding on how to manage and teach online while working from home.*



- Support for younger/new researchers

*Research groups, research mentors for younger staffs*

*Seasoned academics to partner with staff more rather than with other academics on the same level.*

*Connect them to active and experienced teachers/researchers in same or similar areas and give start-up research funds.*

*Research forums to kickstart research thematic area .*

- Support for families with young children

*- For women with young families, consideration in meetings and teachings timetable; - On-site day care that is open beyond the normal working hours and during vacation periods; - Subsidized child care; - Allowing unlimited work-at-home period to care for ill dependents. - Allowing work-at-home for staff when childcare is unavailable. This has to be regulated closely to avoid abuse. - Compensating the costs of internet when working from home. - Ensuring a pool of equipment is available for use for online work. eg. laptops, headphones, chairs, etc.*

*Establish a nursery /day care centre for mother's to use while at work for a small fee*

### 5.1.12 Suggestions for general support to women's university work from home

The third question asked all respondents for suggestions about how the university could give more general support to women's university work from home. There were 36 responses with suggestions. These covered similar themes as in the previous questions:

- Flexibility for both academic and non-academic staff

*I feel women have proved that work from home is possible. I believe the university should give women (who can work remotely) the opportunity to decide whether they want to or not. Most organisations have realised the significant amount of money they can save by having employees work remotely. With the rising cost of living, working from home could also help some women save a significant amount of money.*

*Women who have children in daycare, primary school, or have to leave with someone university can look into it and give them time off or not be penalized for late arrivals or absenteeism, or sick leave. some times women are stressed out and need a break.*

*Flexible hours would be a great advantage. The idea of sitting at your desk our behind a screen from 8am to 5pm to be deemed productive is very archaic. I have done some of my best work outside the normal scope of working hours because I am not distracted by emails and meetings. Mothers, wives and daughters have certain fixed commitments that they must attend to they should be trusted and empowered to create their work schedule around these demands for a stress free work environment without the pressure and guilt of adhering to a fixed work routine shared by 1k other employees of the organisation. Ofcourse, these hours need to be discussed with the supervisor first so as not affect divisional output*



- Particular issues for non-academic staff

*Please if women in I&J category can be looked into as we have fixed working hours from 8-4.30pm and our work required us to be at work since its 60% practical(Laboratory work) and 40% computer based but for the days and times we don't have practical classes if we can go home after picking our kids from school and work from home for the rest of 2 hours because after dropping kids at home and returning back to work wastes our time in travelling and traffic.(My current boss understood this but other people want to create issues).Also if we can come late in the morning and cover our lost hours(2) for the morning in the afternoon at home.*

- Support from managers

*Team leaders should be aware of the nature of work I was doing and provided the support i need. I was able to produce the work on time by working extra hours and was not supported until todote*

*More understanding, general communication about the challenges experienced by other people and the fact that it's ok to not achieve every day (dealing with guilt issues), less expectations, less micromanaging*

- Provision of resources

*Provide resources to cater for electricity bills and internet costs which was incurred .*

*Provide Laptops due that some staffs salaries can't pay for Laptops.*

- Well-being support

*During the 1st wave of Covid 19 I was in Australia studying and my university latched out so much support that been away from home, from my kids in a pandemic was not quite a difficult thought. It would be encouraging to have the university give shopping vouchers, or just use its counsellors to call women and ask of their well being, organize virtual meet-ups for a Talanoa, coffee over the cyber space and just have a fall back of an amazing , string network of people whom the women can rely on. Women zoom sessions on exercise, gardening, cooking or so just to keep an eye out for one another.*

In addition, several respondents highlighted the need for planning for the future:

*Better planning by supervisors and others in the university is key here. It is hard when working from home and juggling multiple responsibilities to be able to meet unscheduled and unexpected deadlines in less than a few day's notice. Lack of planning at the higher level seems to remain a major issue that has major negative impacts on staff lower down....*

*Arrange a forum and hear whet issues women have - not all have the same issues*



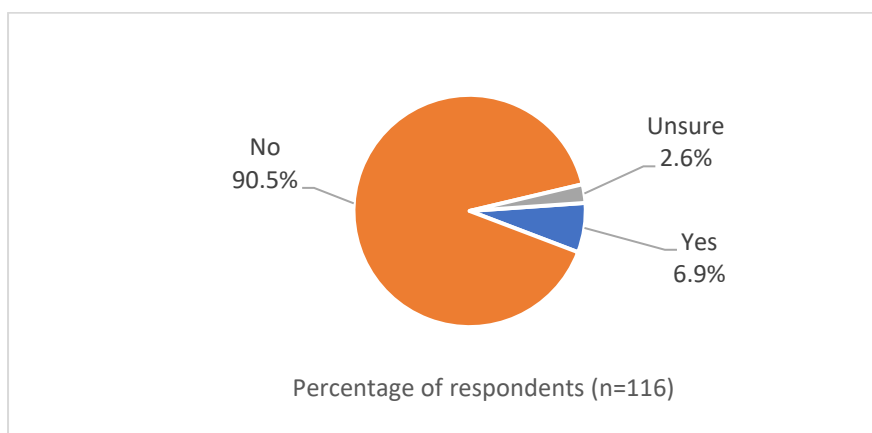
## 5.2 Physical health during the Work from Home period

This section enquired about the physical health of respondents and their families.

### 5.2.1 Sickness or disability before COVID-19

Respondents were asked if they had any long-term physical sickness or disability before the Work from Home period. Figure 22 shows that 6.9 percent of respondents reported having such long-term health issues.

*Figure 22 Long-term sickness or disability*

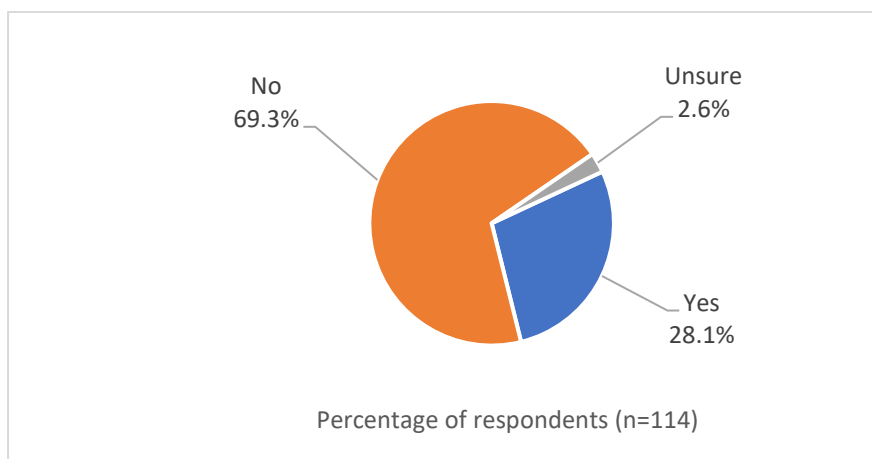


### 5.2.2 COVID-19 during Work from Home

Respondent were then asked if they had developed COVID-19 during the Work from Home period.

Figure 23 shows that 28.1 percent of respondents did develop COVID-19 during this time.

*Figure 23 Developed COVID-19 during Work from Home*

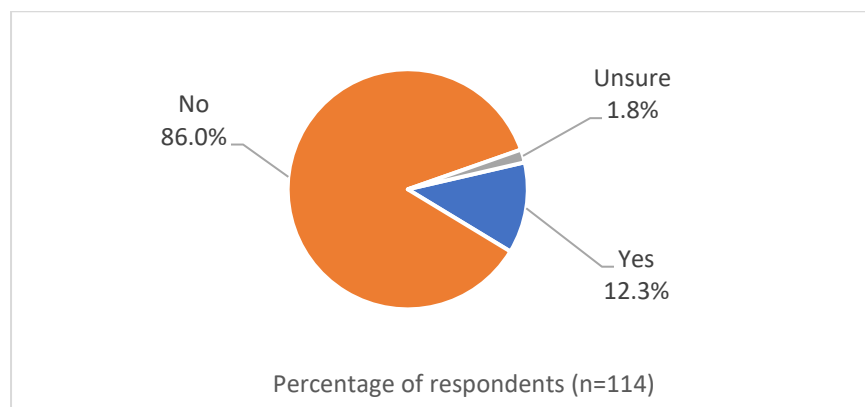




### 5.2.3 Other sickness, disability, or illness

Figure 24 shows that a further 12.3 percent of respondents reported developing another illness, disability or had an accident during the Work from Home period.

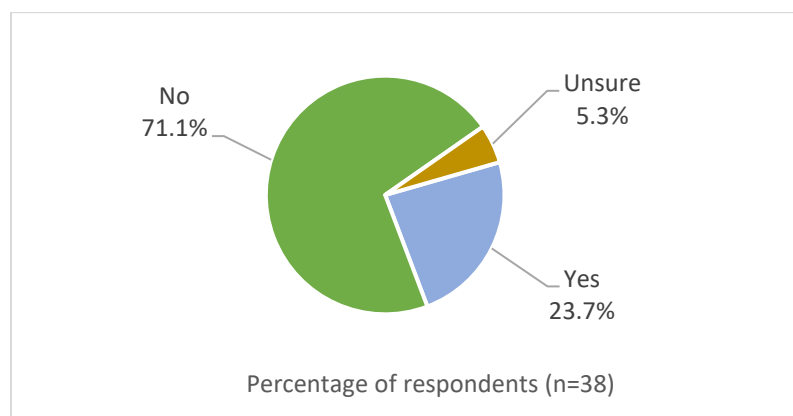
*Figure 24 Other sickness, disability, or illness during Work from Home*



### 5.2.4 University support for illness, disability, or accident

Those who had developed COVID-19 or had any other sickness, disability or accident during the Work from Home period were asked if they had received any support from the university for the illness, disability or accident. Figure 25 shows that of the 38 people who this question applied to, 23.7 percent responded that they had received support from the university, but 5.3% were unsure.

*Figure 25 Support from the university for illness, disability, or accident*





### 5.2.5 *Suggestions for university support for women with illness, disability, or accident*

All respondents were asked if they had any suggestions for how the university could give more support for women with illness, disability, or accidents while working from home. There were 35 responses to this question.

- Widening medical insurance cover

*Well our current medical insurance cover helps but if the coverage could include our parents to. - that will be appreciated. I am a single woman - and wish to have my mother included under my medical care. Why do only husband and children get included and not our parents?*

*Women bear children. Our bodies experience the physical wear and tear of childbirth and breastfeeding. We are more prone to develop physical ailments related to childbirth and childrearing. Support can be provided by ensuring that there is gender-nuanced healthcare supported by the university's medical insurance supplier.*

- Practical suggestions for support of staff, including financial support and social support

*Can the University consider the financial challenges women encounter especially when the Medical cover does not include instances such as pandemic etc. As such, University staffs have had to purchase a lot of medications during COVID-19 period. There was no financial assistances or consideration by the University during this time. So, I would suggest that the University provide medical care to assist its staffs during the pandemic.*

*More breaks during work. Work stress is big contributory factor in sickness.*

*organized home visits, transport provisions, shopping vouchers would be great and counselling also.*

*Cover for Covid testing and have regular social/health sessions online.*

- Allowing enough recovery time

*While I had covid, and my children had covid, I still had to work from home. I did not feel supported by my employer while I was in isolation with covid, working from home and home schooling my children, in fact I felt there was a lot of burden on me and I was really not able to take care of myself during my illness. After coming out of isolation I suffered from exhaustion for weeks but there was continued pressure put on me to perform. Because of my experience my suggestion is: let your staff actually take time off to properly recuperate so they can come back to work fit enough to be productive.*

- University medical facilities

*I think staff should have access to medical services and doctor on campus. Their direct families too.*

There was one positive comment for the support the respondent had received from the university:

*During the lockdown period I sustained a fracture [...] which required [...] surgery. It has been 4 weeks since my [...] surgery so the University allowed for my office PC and*





*accessories to be brought to my home last week to enable me to continue to work remotely.*

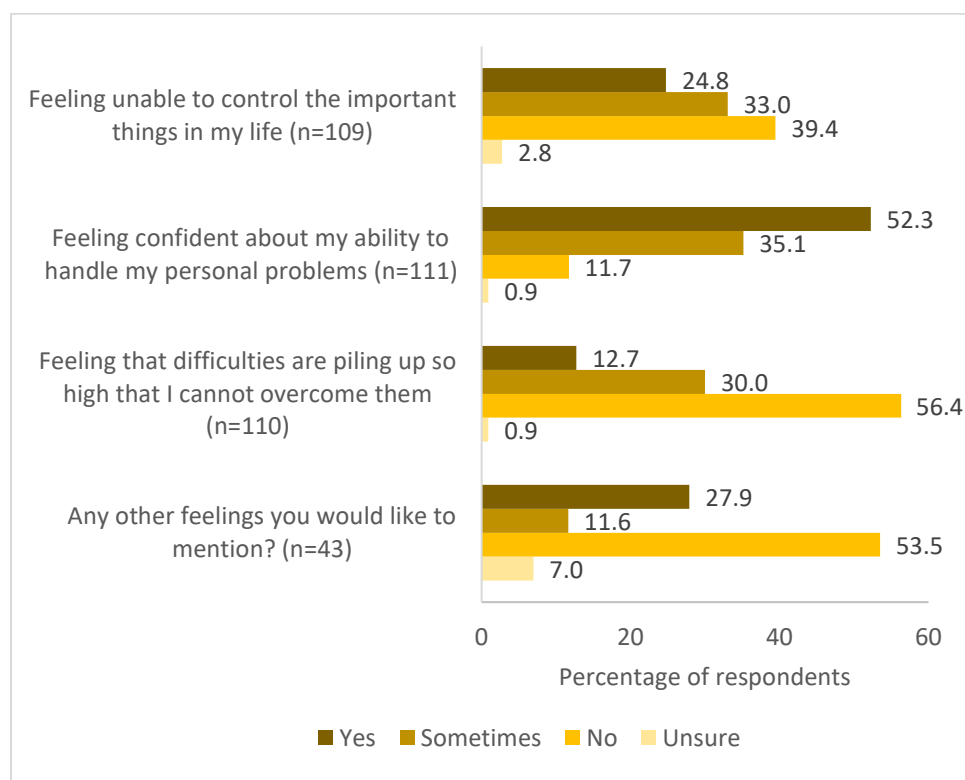
### 5.3 Mental health during the Work from Home period

This section focused on the mental health of respondents while working from home.

#### 5.3.1 Feelings experienced

The first question asked if respondents had experienced any of four thoughts and feelings provided in a list. Figure 26 shows that around half of respondents agreed that they were feeling confident about their ability to handle their personal problems (52.3%). Around a quarter of respondents felt unable to control important things in their life (24.8%), and 12.7 percent reported that their feelings were piling up so high they could not overcome them.

Figure 26 Feelings experienced



Other feelings reported were:

*Confused about the future of job availability*

*Anxiety Stress*

*Stress put on me to have my COVID vaccine*

*at ease and more time to move away from the screen.*



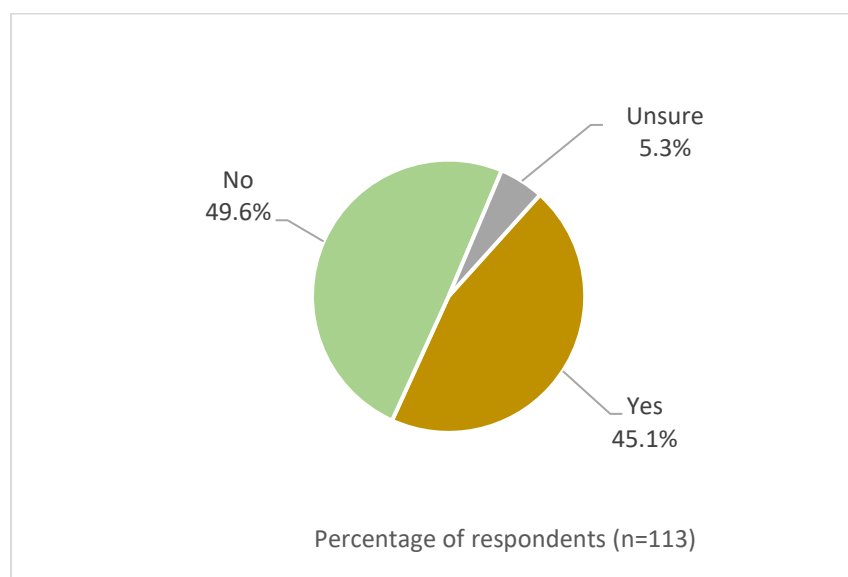


*Difficulty in finding balance with work and other life matters while at home*  
*anxiety and constant worry because media portrayed worse days ahead for during and after covid daily.*  
*sadness for what was happening in the country and women dying and leaving small children motherless*

### 5.3.2 Mental health affected by COVID-19

Respondents were asked whether they thought their mental health (stress, anxiety, confidence) had been affected as a result of the pandemic. Figure 27 shows although 50 percent of respondents reported that it had not been affected, 45.1 percent reported that it had.

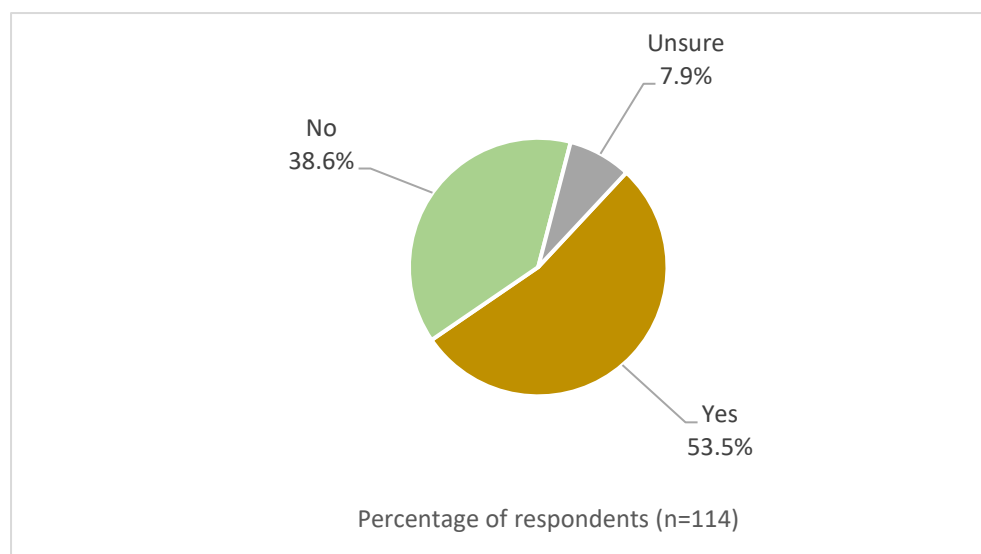
Figure 27 Mental health affected by COVID-19



### 5.3.3 Mental health affected by working from home

A further question asked whether their mental health had been affected by working from home. Figure 28 shows a similar pattern to the effects of COVID-19, but 53.5 percent of respondents reported that working from home had affected their mental health; slightly more than 49.6 percent of those who reported that COVID-19 had affected them.

Figure 28 Mental health affected by working from home



### 5.3.4 Suggestions for university support for women's mental health

An open-ended question asked respondents for any suggestions about how the university could give more support for women's mental or emotional wellbeing while working from home. There were 48 responses.

The most popular suggestion was counselling:

*Honestly, I think it should be made mandatory to have at least once a month counseling sessions. Introduce a health club.*

*Toll Free Line to talk to Counsellors or someone. Toll free line for all USP staffs to stay in touch with each other during pandemic.*

*Have counselling sessions after researching on how women have been affected working from home. Based on research findings, prepare u tube videos to help.*

Other suggestions included:

- Online support groups

*create on line support chat room for women to talk about their mental & emotional well being.*

- Extra leave:

*Staff need to be able to take a 'self-care' day off in the week while working from home because it is mentally draining especially when there are certain things beyond your control -like connectivity; teaching forum has some technical issues etc; Some women may be in abusive relationships and therefore is trapped at home with her abuser; having to juggle childcare, chores, work at one -not good for her metal health. Coming to work, allows her the space to 'breathe'.*



- Rewards for extra time

*Have some sort of monitoring and reward system in place to compensate for extra hours we have to work when teaching online. Have dedicated persons that take care of staff health and well being (together with students). Half of my stress was due to dealing with students stress and sickness as they were not getting enough assistance from the university.*

- Maintaining leave entitlements

*Not cutting down our leave balance by 10 days would have been a good start! (In 2020, USP reduced leave by 10 days as a Covid-19 financial measure...in 2021 it went back to the original amount, but we never got those 10 days back; as a woman with young kids, I found this very disappointing and unfair - perhaps even illegal! - and it meant that I already started 2021 with a fatigue handicap). Again regular communication about expected challenges and work outputs would help - the university does have a free online counselling service, which I admit I have never used myself, but I heard it was overbooked as there are only 2 counsellors and anyway during that work from home period I did not have extra time for a 1 hour session... so short messages with simple tips about how to keep your life in balance would have helped, together with personal communication from the Senior Management Team acknowledging the extremely difficult and usual times we were facing. I'm sure having more women on the Senior Management Team would bring more balance.*

- Understanding managers

*By simply being more understanding with timeframes, deadlines, work expectations, and by providing counselling services for working mothers. Support groups on ZOOM could have been set up. Online ZOOM exercise classes, offered every day several times a day would have provided teaching staff the flexibility of working around hectic online teaching work schedules. Don't force women to report to work although they are staying on campus. Show some compassion and realise that Covid-19 also poses as a risk to the ones staying on campus as there are hundreds of students coming in and out of campus including the staff. Managers have to be fair with all staff and treat them the same.*

One respondent reported that she had read up on how to handle staff, and implemented a successful new approach at the start of meetings:

*It would have been great if direct supervisors were in constant touch with staff members to see how they were. Or find out from experts the best way to handle staff during such a period. I read up and found that showing direct and genuine concern for the well being of staff was critical during such a time. when i began to use this approach at the start of meetings, I found that staff warmed to each other as they shared how they were feeling then and how they were managing under such conditions.*

One respondent noted that her mental health improved by not having to work at the office.



## 5.4 Bereavement during the Work from Home period

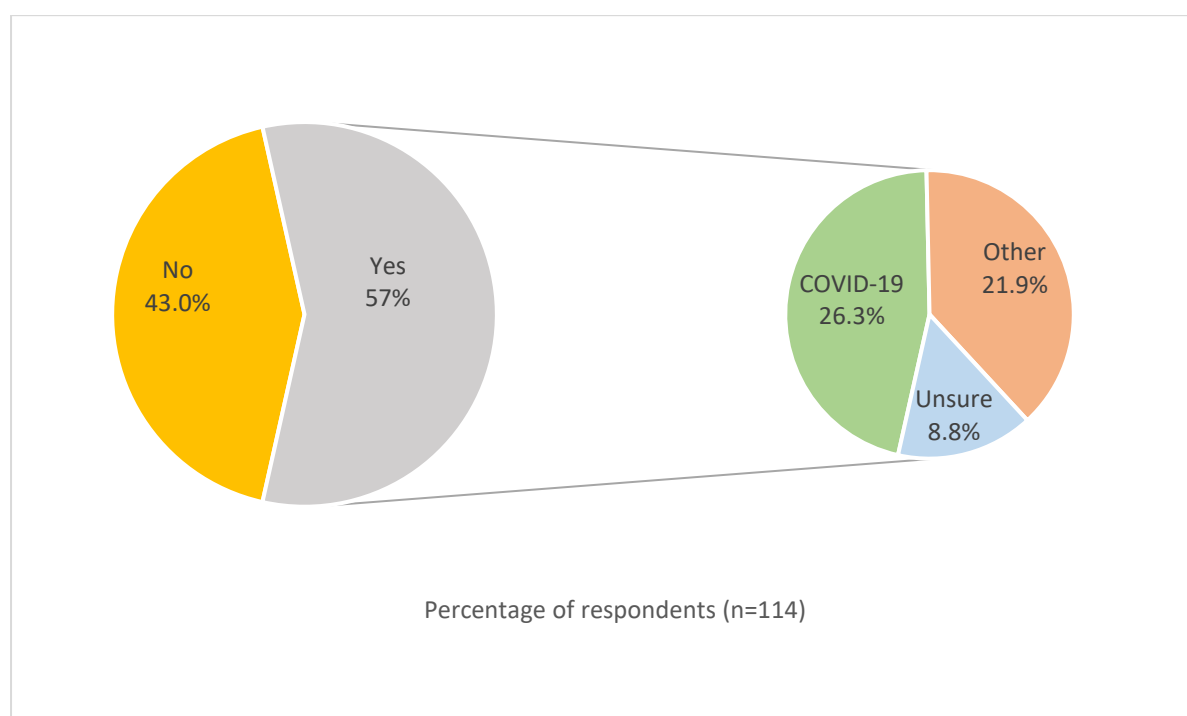
This section addressed the context of deaths from COVID-19 or other causes during the Work from Home period.

### 5.4.1 Loss of family or close friends

The first question asked if respondents had lost one or more family members or close friends during the Work from Home period. As shown in Figure 29, 57 percent of those who responded to this question had lost someone during the period.

A further question to those who reported having lost someone asked whether they had passed away from COVID-19; 26.3 percent reported that it was from COVID-19, 21.9 percent reported that it was not from COVID-19, and 8.8 percent were unsure.

Figure 29 Loss of family or close friends

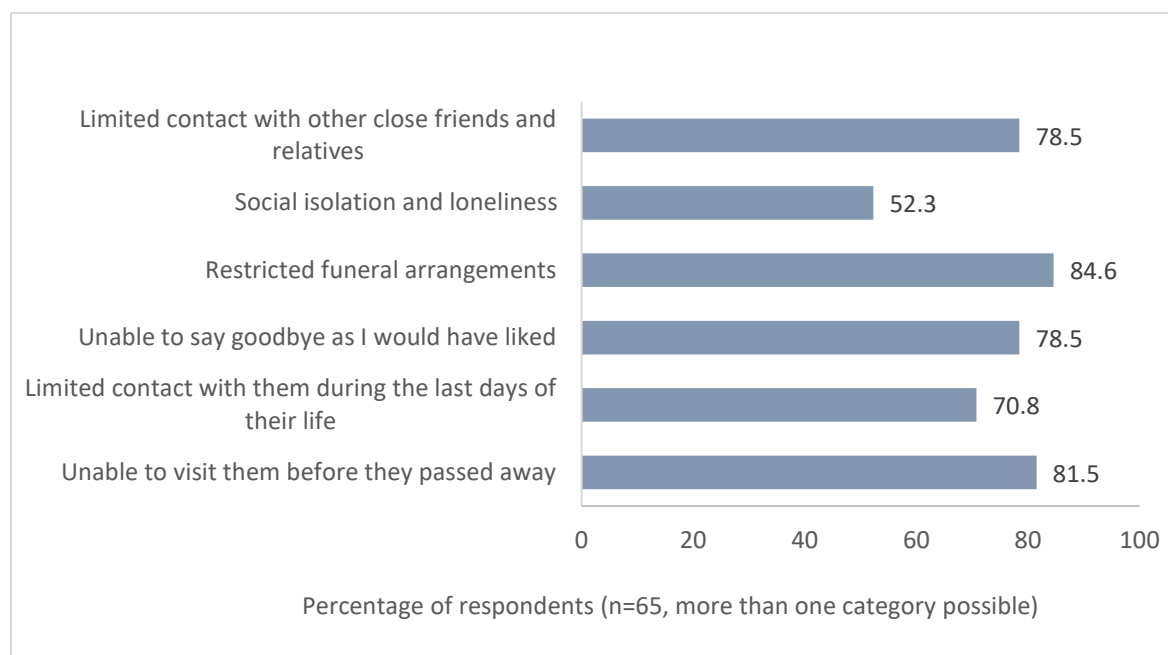


### 5.4.2 Experiences after the loss

Those respondents who had lost someone were asked about their experiences after losing a family member or close friend, as shown in Figure 30. The highest percentage indicated that they had experienced restricted funeral arrangements (84.6%), followed by those who had not been able to visit before they passed away (81.5%). Around half of these respondents reported experiencing social isolation or loneliness (52.3%).



Figure 30 Experiences after losing family or close friends



Respondents were then asked if they had any other experiences. Of the twenty comments, two were positive:

*It was ok to deal with it via zoom. I don't like funerals anyway. Too sad*

*I was able to be there more for my family when compared to situation arising if I had worked from office.*

However, the majority of comments highlighted the distress of not being able to attend funerals in person:

*It was just too sad and been alone , far from relatives made it more overwhelming. I, lost a brother.*

*Family resentments due to inability to attend funerals, church services. Loneliness. Deterioration in overall health condition.*

*It was particularly difficult as there was not collective grieving that normally happens. However, we held online prayer meetings on frequent basis and this helped in coping with the loss of a loved one.*

One respondent reported on ways in which she supported others:

*I could not visit my staff who had lost loved ones, I could not visit friends who had lost loved ones. But i wrote to staff and encouraged members to be in touch with each other.*

Another comment noted the ongoing cultural impact of not being able to attend funerals:

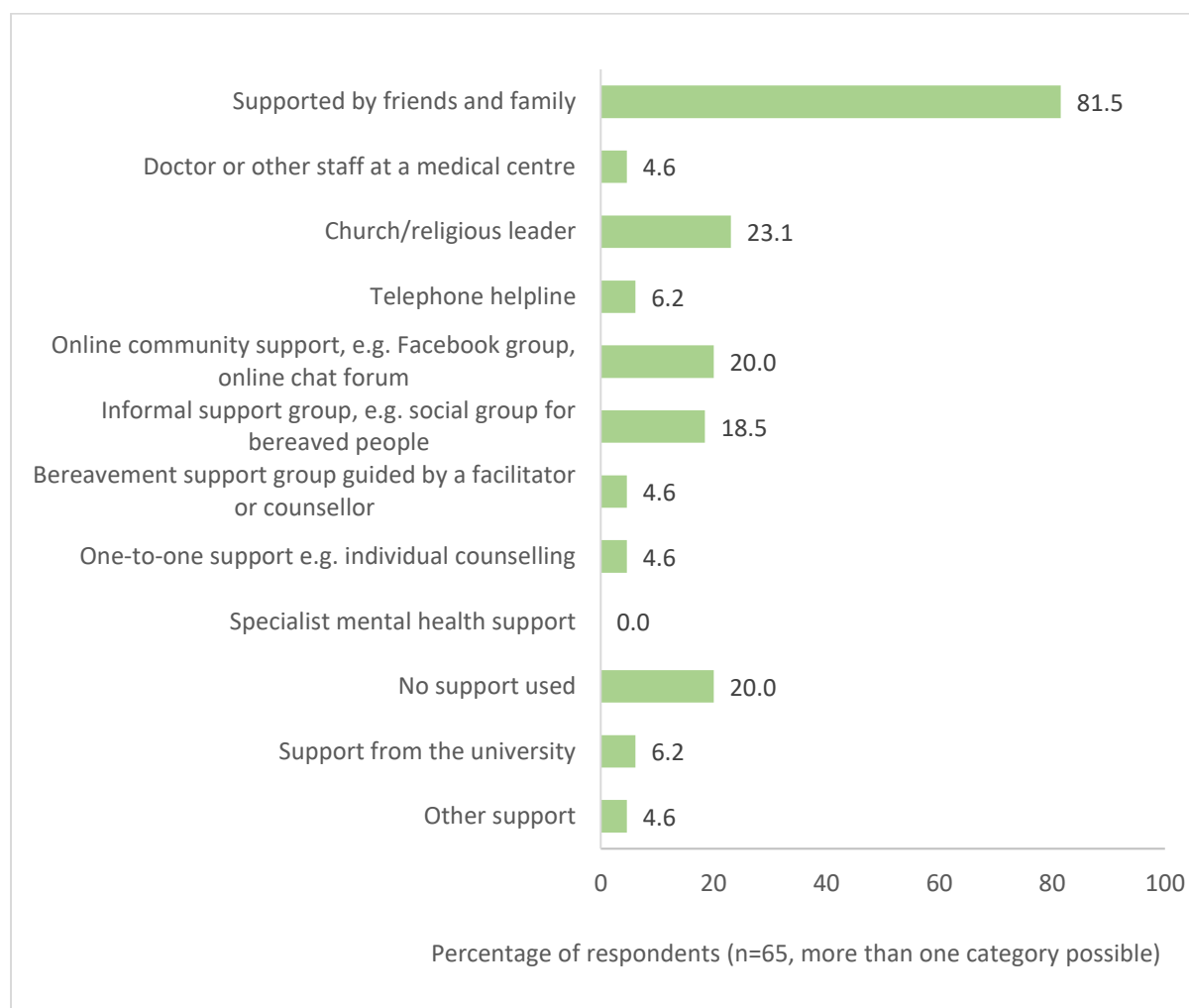
*During this pandemic when my relative was loss I really feel sorry because I have no chance to go over and share my last respect to him. Also this pandemic really have impact to our livelihood in terms of traditions where their is no more respect for the lost of our relatives.*



### 5.4.3 Support received

Those who had lost family or friends were asked about the types of support they received. As shown in Figure 31, the most common type was support by friends or family (81.5%). Nearly a quarter reported having support from a church or religious leader (23.1%). Online community support was received by 20 percent, and a further 20 percent reported using no support.

Figure 31 Types of support received after loss



Two more types of support noted as 'other' were support from work colleagues, and spiritual support from family.

### 5.4.4 Support from the university

If respondents had noted that they had had support from the university, they were asked for an explanation. There were two responses for this question: one responded that they were assisted by colleagues with some of their work, and the other noted equipment for online learning.



#### 5.4.5 Suggestions for university support for women who have lost family or friends

All respondents were asked to suggest how the university could give more support to women who have lost friends or family members, and there were 32 responses.

Counselling was again frequently mentioned:

*Counselling and help a friend helpline  
provide motivational counseling online when needed*

Other specific suggestions:

- Chaplaincy

*Counselling sessions for grieved USP staff and family. The University Laucala campus has a Chaplain, here in Vanuatu, we do not have a Chaplain. I would like to suggest that the University provides Chaplain services for the Regional centres as well so we can have someone to talk to when needed.*

- Financial assistance

*It would be nice if the university share their condolences messages to the family member by giving small contribution to help the family during the family mourning period.*

- Support programmes

*- allow them to break and visit them - should run a program to support women encouraging them that death is natural but they have to take care of themselves and family. Provide a list of things they should do and don't. - help women not to take stressed while at home. support each other.*

- University procedures

*If university could give at least 1 day bereavement to grieve for a friend and 3-5 days for family members and supervisors don't hassle a lot in asking us to produce death certificate since it is difficult to ask for someone's death certificate if we attending one day for funeral.*

- General support

*Understanding that after a loss the internal motivations to work will affect the output during the period and not let it affect the assessment of how well the staff is doing.*

*The University could have been more alert to the immediate losses experienced by staff members through the HR section. I organised a memorial service in honor of all family members lost by staff during the COVID lockdown. I did this as a way of providing closure for the staff members esp those who had lost relatives.*

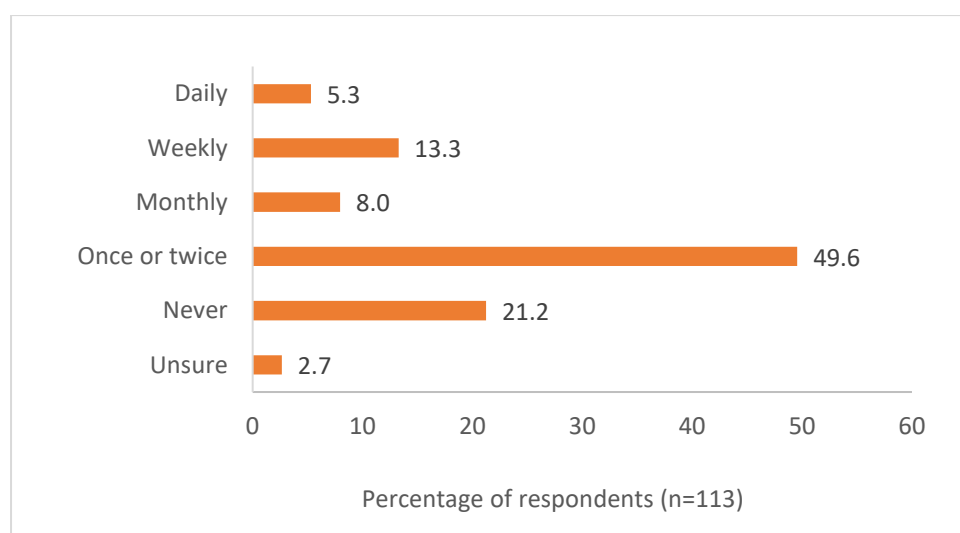
## 5.5 Personal safety during the Work from Home period

The final series of questions about Work from Home related to the 'shadow pandemic' of violence against women during COVID-19 (United Nations Women, 2021).

### 5.5.1 Frequency of arguments or conflict

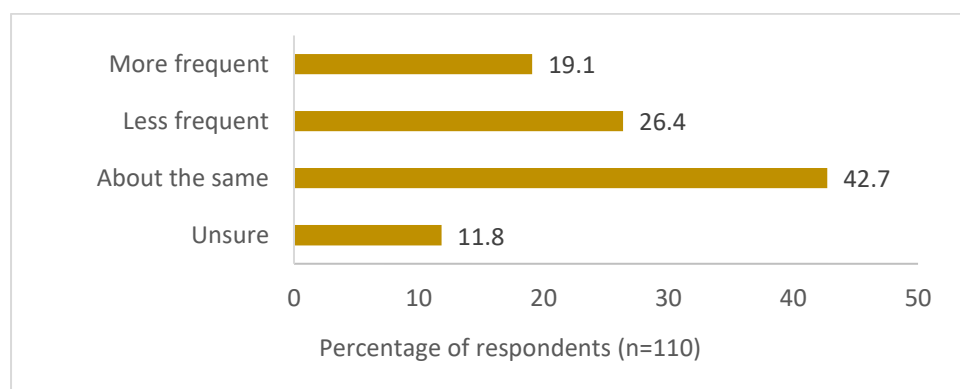
Respondents were asked how often in the last six months adults in the respondent's household have argued or have had some sort of conflict among themselves. Figure 32 shows that half of respondents (49.6%) reported having had arguments 'once or twice', and 21.2 percent reported 'never'. However, 5.3 percent reported daily conflicts or arguments.

Figure 32 Frequency of arguments or conflict



A follow-up question asked whether COVID-19 had affected the frequency of conflict between adults in the respondent's household. Figure 33 shows that 42.7 percent reported that conflicts in the household had remained the same, whereas 26.4 percent reported that they were less frequent. However, 19.1 percent reported that COVID-19 had made conflict more frequent.

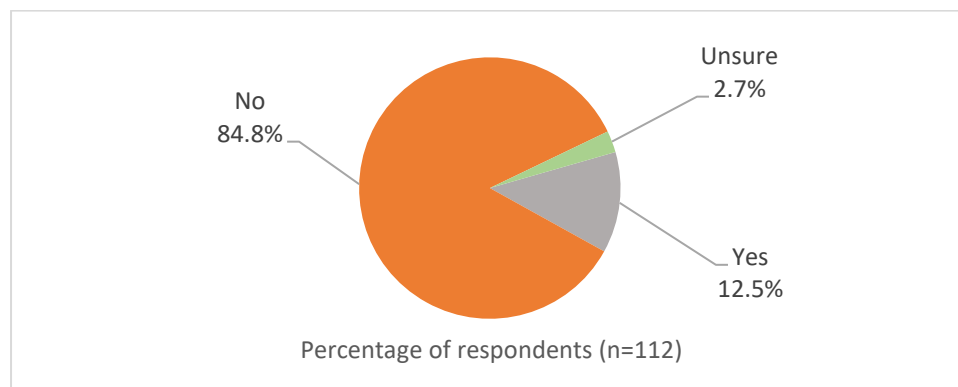
Figure 33 Frequency of conflicts since COVID-19





The next question asked whether respondents had ever felt unsafe in their home in the last six months. Figure 34 shows that 12.5 percent of respondents, or 14 women, reported that they had felt unsafe during that time.

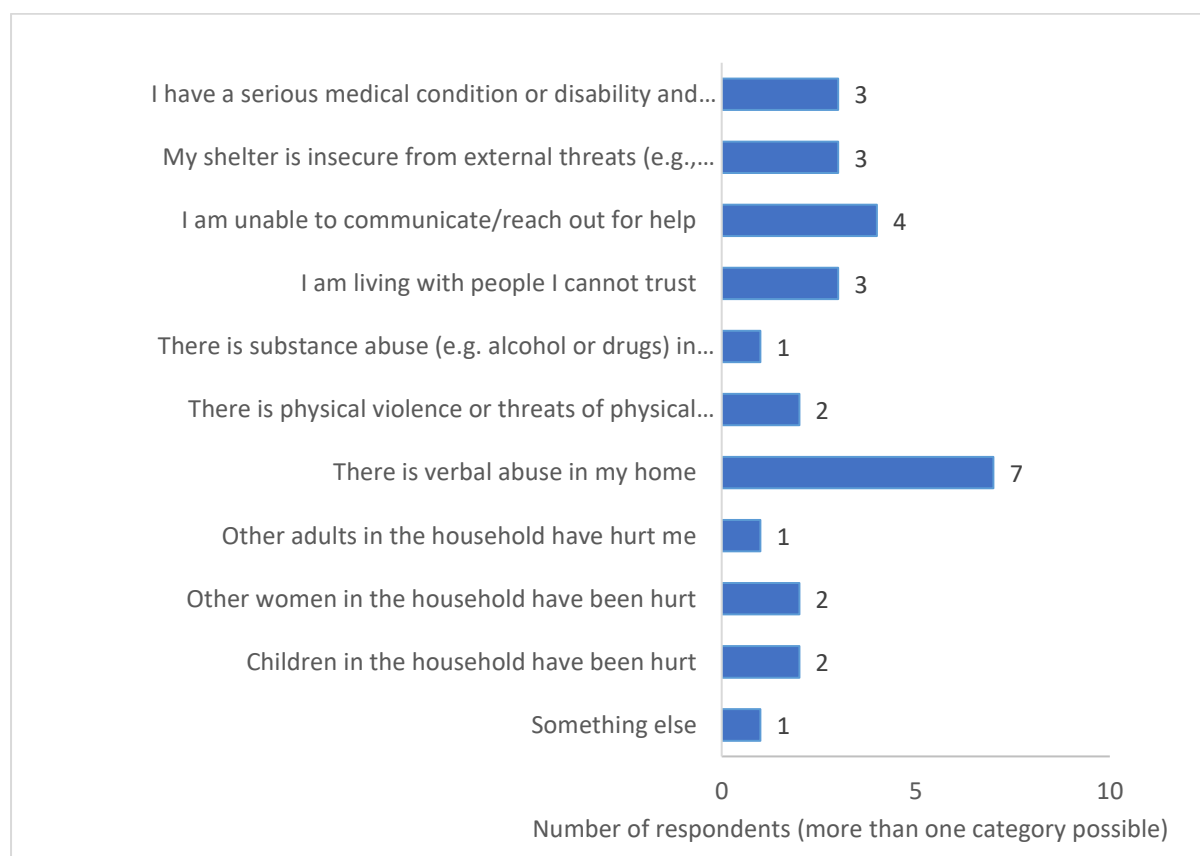
Figure 34 Feeling unsafe at home



A further question to those 14 respondents asked about the reasons they had felt unsafe.

Figure 35 shows that the highest number of responses was for verbal abuse, by half of the respondents (7).

Figure 35 Reasons for feeling unsafe at home





One other reason for feeling unsafe was given:

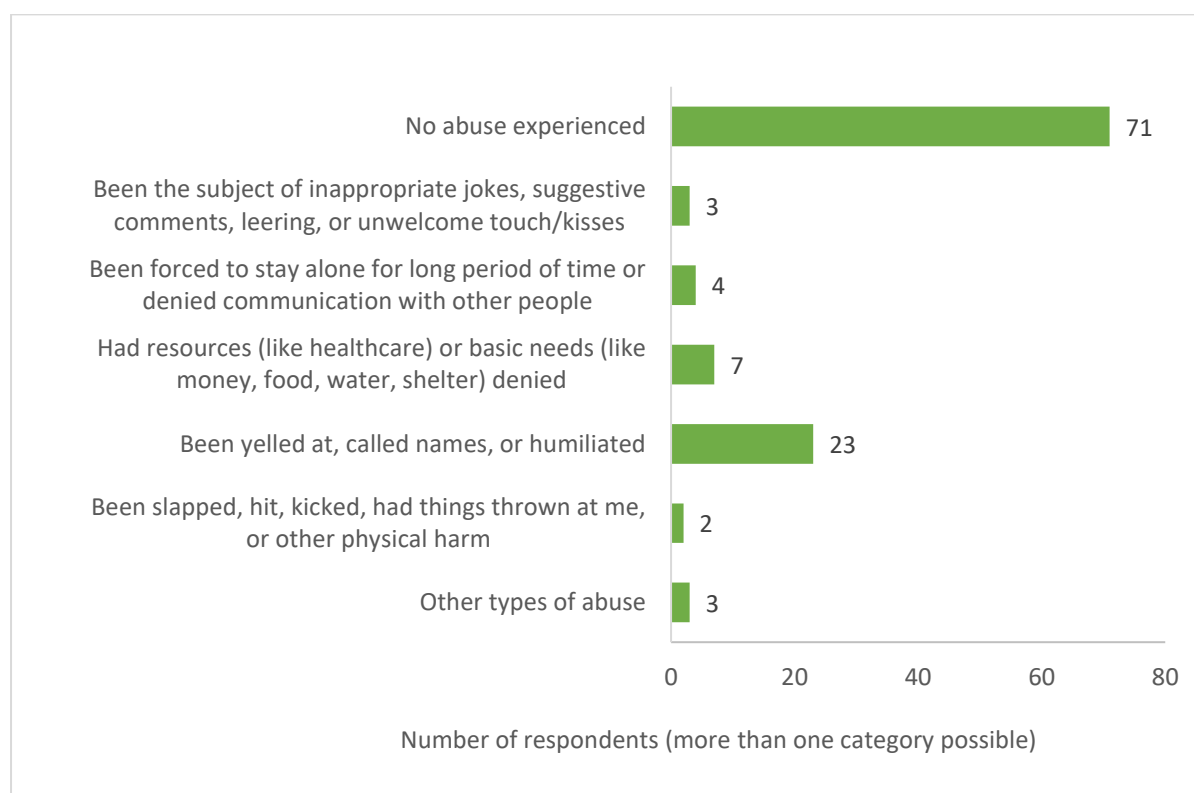
*There is no one i trust to look after the house while we at work.*

### 5.5.2 Abuse experienced since COVID-19

A question asked all respondents whether they had experienced any from a list of situations since the start of COVID-19.

Figure 36 shows the number of responses for each situation. The highest category was 'no abuse' (70 respondents). However, 23 respondents reported having been yelled at, called names, or humiliated, and a further 7 had resources (like healthcare) or basic needs (like money, food, water, shelter) denied.

Figure 36 Abuse experienced



'Other types of abuse' related to isolation and lack of communication during lockdown:

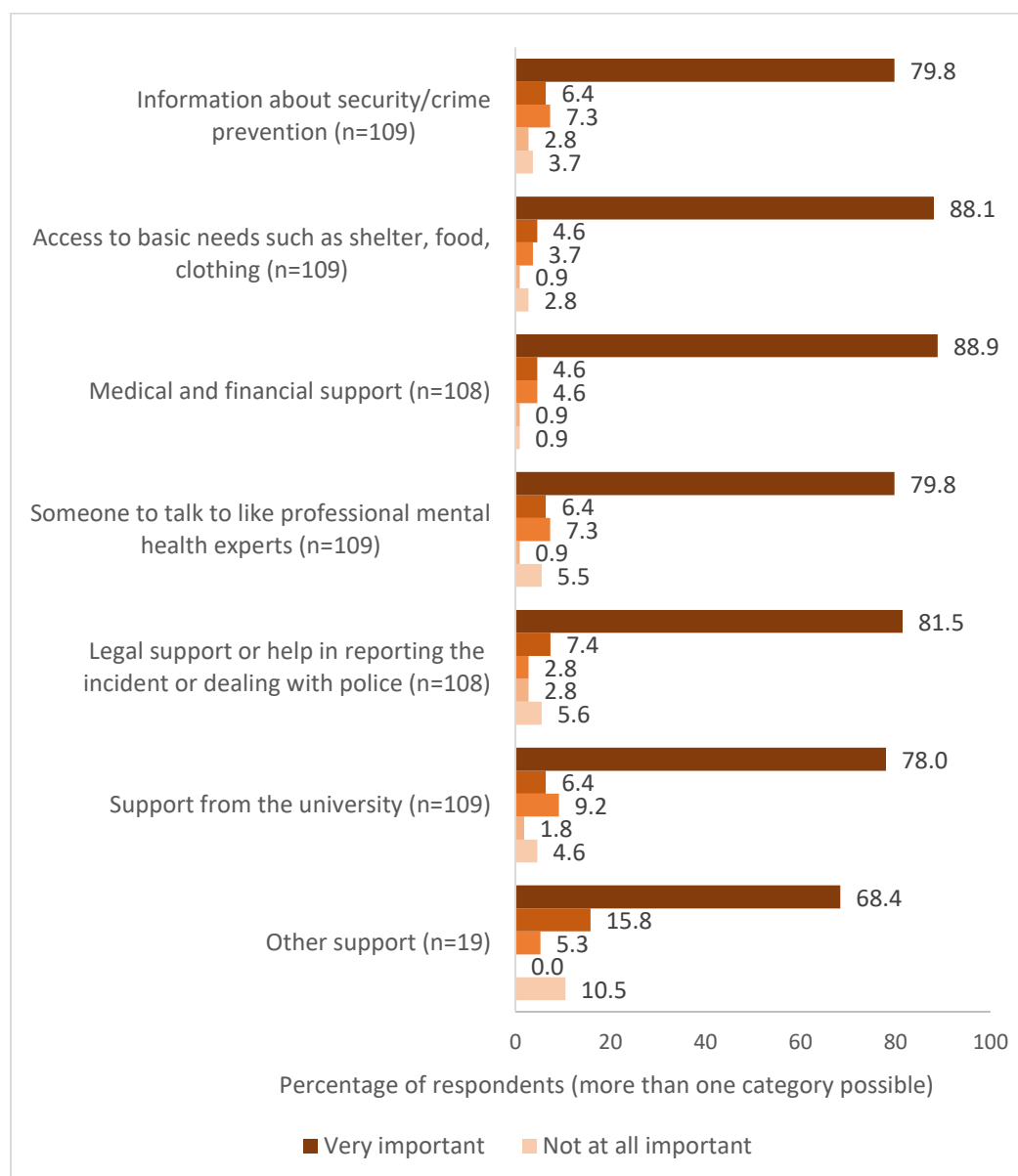
*No access to doctor and chemist during lockdown as not available in Lami.*

*The response time in responding to emails when my whole family was down with COVID. Other Regional campuses could't not understand that.*

### 5.5.3 Support for women suffering from violence

Figure 37 shows the ratings given by respondents to a range of different types of support which could be given to women suffering from violence during the pandemic. These were all given high ratings, but the highest 'very important' rating was given to medical and financial support (88.9%) and access to basic needs such as shelter, food and clothing (88.1%).

Figure 37 Importance of types of support



'Other support' suggested included family and friends, child support, safe home, or designated work colleague:

*Someone in immediate work environment they can confide in. That is where discipline based health and well bring rep comes in.*



#### 5.5.4 Suggestions for university support for women who have suffered from violence

Finally, all respondents were asked if they had any suggestions for how the university could give more support to women who have suffered from violence during the pandemic.

The importance of the issue for USP staff was highlighted in one comment:

*This was a common issue not only for USP women but everyone. I think there should be more online counselling or someone authoritative that they could speak to. I think the 6 months became too long for a family to stay together thus frustration and anger built up leading to violence during the pandemic. USP should have done random followup with their women workers if they were ok while working from home and if anyone had suffered violence they could have assisted.*

Counselling and education were again frequently mentioned:

*There needs to be a space where women can freely express and share their stories.*

*Counselling and meditation sessions free of charge.*

Other suggestions:

- Appropriate emergency support

*The University could give a toll free number to the staff and maybe a code that only the staff suffering and the person listening can make out what the emergency is without any suspicion by the person committing the crime.*

- The provision for a 'safe house' or 'safe space' on campus

*If there is no proper or close monitoring, they cannot identify issue and help. There is a NEED to have effective monitoring mechanisms in first place before they decide what they want to do help. Once that is done, we can identify how university can best help e.g. assisting staff in question in move to safe flat etc.*

- Addressing the stigma of gender-based violence

*Women who are affected by violence will not voice their opinion in public- private personal life is often separate. Perhaps the introduction of social groups for support*

*In the counselling sessions give bonus credit for attending classes and Do not victim-blame.*

- A helpline

*The University can have a facility on campus that is open 24hours a day to women suffering from violence during the pandemic. The toll free line mentioned earlier can be used as a safety net especially when going through such challenges. The mental health or well being of staffs should be paramount to ensure that their work productivity level is not disturbed or affected. Therefore, the University must explore possible avenues that could reduce the likelihood of harm or violence taking place.*



## 6 Discussion and recommendations

This section discusses the findings from the online survey and makes recommendations for university policy.

The overall finding in this survey was that there was a wide range of experiences by women during the Work from Home period: while some women enjoyed the flexibility of working at home, for others it was an extremely stressful time.

### 6.1 Work activities

The work experiences reported by respondents varied enormously, according to their roles at the university and their family circumstances. Many respondents reported enjoying the flexibility of working from home.

Although respondents no longer had to travel to work, hours spent on university related activities also dropped. However, it was clear that respondents did not use this as a time to reduce their workload; in fact the opposite was the case for many respondents. Although many identified issues with resources, these tended not to be highlighted in comments, except when they prevented work from being completed, such as internet access. Some staff reported having to wait until late in the night to get adequate internet speeds. Others reported issues with extra costs relating to internet or telephone access. There were also challenges (and costs) for some respondents in setting up an adequate work environment at home.

In line with previous international research on women working from home, for example Yildirim and Eslan-Ziya (2021), respondents reported increases in home-related and family-related activities and expectations, including looking after children. While this was stressful for some respondents, some enjoyed spending extra time with their families. Other respondents reported spending increased time looking after elderly, sick or disabled relatives. This is an aspect which has not been emphasised in previous literature and may reflect the number of multigenerational Pacific households in the Pacific.

These challenges for junior non-academic staff were exacerbated when they had less flexibility of time, and in some cases were expected to continue with campus-based work, while juggling childcare commitments. This adds a different dimension to the 'work from home' challenges for university women.

There was some confusion about entitlements to leave, which is added to the stress of respondents who needed to work while taking annual leave. However, responses were generally positive about the support respondents had received as an employee and as a woman.

The role of management was frequently identified, both by those women who relied on the understanding and support of their supervisors, and those who were supervisors themselves. The Work from Home period required new skills of support from managers, who themselves were facing the challenges of Working from Home. However, these skills will be increasingly important in the university. As noted by Bender et al. (2022, p. 64), '(t)he acknowledgment of the potential gendered



impact of the ongoing pandemic is important to understanding the likely long-term landscape of the academy.'

## Recommendations

*The findings from this study suggest that:*

- a) University procedures should provide for flexibility of working hours to allow for:
  - i) family commitments, especially for women with young children;
  - ii) access to the internet when this is unreliable.
- b) Internet or phone costs required for university work should be covered.
- c) Computer software and hardware required for university work should be provided.
- d) Provision should be made for ergonomically suitable office furniture at home.
- e) Training should be provided for team leaders in managing staff during times of stress:
  - i) running meetings and communication with staff;
  - ii) appropriate ways of supporting staff who are ill or bereaved;
  - iii) identifying where specialist help is required and resourcing them with information for referrals.
- f) Policies for managers/team leaders managing staff working from home should be developed to cover:
  - i) appropriate ways of monitoring workloads during times of stress;
  - ii) contact of staff during periods of leave.
- g) Appropriate supports be developed in consultation with women in the different sections: both academic and non-academic staff.

## 6.2 Physical health

The issue of health is obviously paramount in a pandemic, both for individual themselves and for their families. Around 30 percent of respondents reported having developed COVID-19 during the Work from Home period. Some respondents noted that they found the costs of testing and medication during COVID-19 a burden, and others struggled with getting back into their work after their recovery.

Nearly a quarter of respondents who had developed COVID-19 or any other sickness or accident reported having received support from the university during the Work from Home period. While this was not identified as an issue by large numbers of respondents, and some identified high levels of support from their managers, some views indicated a lack of clear guidelines about sick leave. Taking this proactive approach would be in line with research which shows that top-ranking universities are more flexible about leave provisions (Nash & Churchill, 2020).



Other suggestions identified an opportunities for health and well-being advice for staff, particularly health advice targeted at women.

## Recommendations

*The findings from this study suggest that:*

- a) The university should cover relevant medical costs such as vaccinations and COVID-19 medicine if required.
- b) The university should develop online health resources such as:
  - i) information about health matters especially targeted to women;
  - ii) social forums/chat rooms for women's health support.
- c) Consideration should be given to widening the coverage of medical insurance for dependants of university staff.
- d) The university should develop or expand medical services available to staff on campus.
- e) Staff health and well-being representatives for women staff be established to liaise with university senior management.
- f) Policies for sick leave (including recovery times) should be clarified.

## 6.3 Mental health

The responses to this survey showed that high proportion of women had struggled with mental health issues. Around half reported that their mental health had been affected by working from home, half reported that their mental health had been affected by COVID-19, and over 40 percent reported experiencing that their feelings had piled up so high that they cannot overcome them at least sometimes. This reflected previous research findings about high levels of stress for university women as a result of COVID-19 (van Niekerk & van Gent, 2021).

Interestingly, the spiritual dimension reported in other COVID-related research in the Pacific (Scheyvens et al., 2021) was not evident in this section. This was possibly because the focus was seen to be on the secular support the university could provide and suggestions tended to more 'Western' models of counselling and support.

The importance of skills for supervisors and senior managers in being able to support and communicate effectively and appropriately with staff was again highlighted, and the reported effects of different levels of abilities showed opportunities for the upskilling of staff in this area.



## Recommendations

*The findings from this study suggest that:*

- a) University counselling services targeted to women should be expanded and made available free of charge.
- b) Online information be developed and promoted to university staff.
- c) Consideration be given to providing 'mental health' leave entitlements.
- d) Online support groups be developed and facilitated.
- e) Training for team leaders in dealing with staff mental health issues.
- f) Training for senior management in communicating with staff in times of extreme stress.

## 6.4 Bereavement

The respondents in this survey reported that 57 percent had lost a family member or close friend during the Work from Home period. Although this was an added mental health burden, this also meant there were practical challenges such as organising or attending funerals under lockdown restrictions.

Friends and family were identified as the type of support received after the loss of 81.5 percent of respondents. This aligns with the 'communal capital' of strong kinship ties identified by Ratuva (2021) as important for COVID-19 resilience in Pacific communities. It contrasts with the United Kingdom findings by Harrop et al. (2021), which identified difficulties in getting support from family and friends for COVID-19 bereavements.

The response the next highest type of support identified by respondents was church or religious leader, at 23.1 percent. Although this is markedly lower in ranking, it provides some indication of the importance of the spiritual well-being found by Scheyvens et al. (2021) as important in Pacific community responses to COVID-19. This was further identified in a number of comments which emphasised the importance of chaplaincies, as well as a comment which noted the spiritual support from family members, and another which pointed out the value of a memorial service for staff who had lost relatives.

## Recommendations

*The findings from this study suggest that:*

- a) The university consider expanding chaplaincy services to all university campuses.
- b) Training for team leaders be provided to support bereaved staff, and to cope with their own bereavement.
- c) Consideration given to developing culturally relevant support for bereaved staff, such as visits or financial contributions.
- d) Online or in-person support forums should be established for bereaved women.





## 6.5 Personal safety

Although there were other issues affecting personal safety of respondents during the Work from Home period, such as access to medical help, this survey found evidence of the 'shadow pandemic' of violence towards women during the Work from Home period, as had been expected from previous studies (United Nations Women, 2021).

The reported levels of indicators of different types of family violence were low in the study. For example, around half of respondents reported conflicts or arguments 'once or twice' and five percent of respondents reported that these were daily. However, 23 women reported having been yelled at, called names, or humiliated, during COVID-19, with a further seven women had resources (such as healthcare) or basic needs (such as money, food, water, shelter) denied. Any amount of violence or abuse is concerning, and it is very likely that the stigma of family violence contributed to lower levels of reporting in this survey than that which actually occurred, as has been found internationally; the United Nations estimates that less than 40 percent of women who experience violence seek any help or report the crime (United Nations, 2020).

Suggestions for support for women suffering from violence during the pandemic all had high ratings by respondents, with extra suggestions for the university such as designated representatives, helplines and counselling. This indicates that there is an important role for the university in addressing the 'shadow pandemic' and preventing further development of the problem. Given its sensitive nature, it is important to find solutions that are relevant and effective for the various cultures of the Pacific countries in which USP works.

### Recommendations

*The findings from this study suggest that:*

- 1 The university develop or expand helplines and counselling targeted at women in situations of domestic abuse/violence.
- 2 Consideration be given to appropriate provision of emergency 'safe spaces' for women suffering domestic abuse/violence (as well as their children), with emergency support such as financial help or legal advice.
- 3 Training be provided to all staff, including team leaders and senior management, in detecting and supporting women in situations of domestic abuse/violence.
- 4 Support networks for women in situations of domestic abuse be established and strengthened, both online and in person.



## 7 Conclusions

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has now moved into a new phase in the Pacific region (Asia Pacific Security College, 2022) and further lockdowns in countries where USP has campuses now seem unlikely, experiences in the Work from Home period continue to have consequences for staff and their families. Effects are particularly strong for women, as many of the respondents in this research have stressed.

The issues outlined in this report – and the recommendations for policies to address them – will have benefits for the university preparations not only for future pandemics, but also for other national or regional crises which may disrupt the working life of university women.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Terms of Reference



#### Association of the University of the South Pacific Staff

P.O. Box U49, USP, Suva. [Email: ausps@usp.ac.fj](mailto:ausps@usp.ac.fj)

**President:** Ms. Elizabeth Fong

**General Secretary:** Ms. Rosalia Fatiaki

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE - SHORT TERM CONSULTANCY

#### UNIVERSITY WOMEN REMOTE WORK CHALLENGES - A SURVEY ON USP WOMEN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

<b>Reports to</b>	<b>AUSPS Women's Wing</b>
<b>Location</b>	Fiji
<b>Duration</b>	October – November 2021

#### AUSPS WOMEN'S WING

The Association of the University of the South Pacific Staff (AUSPS) established the Women's Wing in line with Part 2 Section 7.2 of the AUSPS Constitution.

The Terms of Reference for the AUSPS Women's Wing is outlined below:

- 1.1 To promote the participation and integration of women into decision making levels within AUSPS.
- 1.2 To organize USP women workers.
- 1.3 To plan, implement and monitor an action plan of activities for AUSPS women.
- 1.4 To review and promote revision of relevant university policies and initiate enactment of new policies as considered in the best interest of women.
- 1.5 To promote the elimination of all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, political belief, marital or parental status and/or any form of persons with special needs.
- 1.6 To liaise with and participate in AUSPS activities.

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of the consultancy is to conduct a survey on women working at USP Fiji campuses during the COVID-19 pandemic (2021). The consultant will work closely with the AUSPS Women's Wing to design and conduct a high quality research survey and produce a report of the findings.

The survey will provide a snapshot of the status of working women at USP, specifically during the COVID-19 work from home period. The results of this survey will be shared with the AUSPS membership and presented to the USP senior management to highlight issues faced by women working from home and to formulate a policy that will incorporate the recommendations highlighted in the report.



The survey aims to:

- investigate the issues faced by USP women during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- advise the university on the challenges faced by women staff of USP;
- provide recommendations to the university on the findings of the survey; and
- introduce a university policy to address the challenges identified in the report.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Consultant will undertake the following:

#### **I. Literature Review & Methodology**

Undertake a desk review of relevant literature and practices undertaken by universities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The methodology that will be used is an online survey. The survey will target all women working at the three USP Fiji campuses.

#### **II. Conduct the study**

- a. Lead the study at USP
- b. Develop the questions in collaboration with the AUSPS Women's Wing

#### **III. Review findings**

Conduct a short workshop with AUSPS Women's Wing following the completion of the survey and share the findings of the survey.

#### **IV. Report**

Produce a report of findings which includes the following:

- **Analysis** of the issues identified in the survey;
- **Recommendations** to be presented to the university senior management; and
- Suggested **monitoring and evaluation** indicators for the recommendations.





## Appendix 2: Example of COVID-19 campus closure notice

<https://www.usp.ac.fj/covid-19-pandemic/samoa-covid-19-campus-closure/>



### Samoa - COVID 19 - Campus Closure

Following the **Samoa Government's announcement of an Alert Level 2 at 12am 18<sup>th</sup> March, and a move to Alert Level 3 at 12am 19<sup>th</sup> March until 12am 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022, USP Samoa campus will be closed for the period stated. Orientation has also been postponed until further notice.**

For the USP Samoa Campus;


- Staff and students except for campus security personnel are to work /learn from home during this period and or seek clarification on leave and work from home arrangements from their supervisors
- Staff and students are to comply with all COVID 19 protection advisories issued by the government and health authorities for their communities
- USP DISMAC in liaison with Campus Director Campus Samoa will provide updates on any evolving issues or developments during this lockdown period
- For Semester 1 admission, enrolment and orientation related enquiries, students can call or email:
  - a. For ALL Enrolment, Registration and Student Administrative Services queries, contact – SAS Coordinator – Ms. Samuelu: [seulgee.samuelu@usp.ac.fj](mailto:seulgee.samuelu@usp.ac.fj)
  - b. For ALL PacTAFE queries, contact – SAS Coordinator or SWO – Ms. Ronna Lee: [ronna.lee@usp.ac.fj](mailto:ronna.lee@usp.ac.fj)
  - c. For ALL Student online services (SOLs) and Moodle access issues contact – IT Manager – Le Mamea Sia Matalavea: [sia.matalavea@usp.ac.fj](mailto:sia.matalavea@usp.ac.fj)
  - d. For ALL Student Learning Support queries, contact – SLS – Ms. Niseta Buatava: [niseta.buatava@usp.ac.fj](mailto:niseta.buatava@usp.ac.fj)
  - e. For ALL Library queries, contact – Senior Librarian – Ms. Shirley Devi: [shirley.devi@usp.ac.fj](mailto:shirley.devi@usp.ac.fj)
  - f. For ALL Finance queries, contact – Consultant Accountant – Ms. Tina Saili: [tina.saili@usp.ac.fj](mailto:tina.saili@usp.ac.fj)

Keep safe, remain calm, and do your part in preventing the further spread of COVID-19 in your communities.

Campus Director  
Samoa Campus



## Appendix 3: Survey questions



**Block 1**

**Experiences of USP women during the COVID-19 work from home period**

Warm Pacific Greetings!

This survey is being sent to all women staff of The University of the South Pacific at campuses who have had staff working from home during COVID-19. I am an independent researcher carrying out a project for the Women's Wing of the Association of USP Staff. The purpose of the survey is to find out about your experiences during the working from home period. The results will be used to make recommendations to the university.

All answers will be anonymous - we cannot find out who has answered the survey. It should take around 15 minutes to answer.

The survey is totally voluntary. If you do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions, you can choose not to answer them. Completing the survey shows that you consent to taking part. This survey has received ethics clearance from the USP Research Office.

If you would like any more information about this survey, please contact Rosalia Fatiaki on email: [rosalia.fatiaki@usp.ac.fj](mailto:rosalia.fatiaki@usp.ac.fj)

You may find some of the questions challenging, so we suggest you find a private place to answer.

Thank you for your help!

Dr Hilary Smith  
Systemetrics Research Associates  
Palmerston North  
Aotearoa New Zealand

☐ Academic staff  
☐ Professional staff  
☐ Intermediate or Junior staff

**Block 2**

Now we would like to know about your daily activities on a **typical working day**.

Please estimate how many hours you usually spent on each activity each **typical working day** - both before COVID-19 and during the work from home period.  
(Please write numbers in each column to add up to **24 hours total**, and use numbers not letters.)

	Before COVID-19	During the work from home period
Travelling to and from work	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Child care	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Helping children with homework/school work	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Preparing food and cooking	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Looking after elderly relatives	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Looking after sick or disabled relatives	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Housekeeping (cleaning, laundry, etc.)	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Work around the outside of the house (gardening, etc.)	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Exercise, sport, etc.	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>

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**Default Question Block**

In this first section, we would like to know about your **role** at the university.

Which USP **campus** do you work from?  
(Please choose one from the list)

Labasa

Laukala

Lautoka

Niue

Cook Islands

Solomon Islands

Vanuatu

Samoa

Tokelau

Tonga

Which **school or section** do you work in?  
(Please choose one from the list)

School of Law and Social Sciences (SOLASS)

School of Accounting, Finance and Economics (SAFE)

School of Business and Management (SBM)

School of Performance, Arts, Culture and Education (SPACE)

School of Information Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Physics (STEMP)

School of Agriculture, Geography, Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences (SAGEONS)

Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD)

Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE)

Non-Academic section

Which **category** of staff do you belong to?  
(Please choose one from the list)

	Before COVID-19	During the work from home period
University teaching/lecturing	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Research	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Other university-related work	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Relaxing, watching TV, etc.	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Sleep	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Other	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
# Conjoint, Total#	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>

If you have any comments about the **differences in the number of hours spent** on your activities on **working days** before and during the work from home period, please write them here:

Were you **required to work on university activities** during the work from home period?

☐ Yes  
☐ Sometimes  
☐ No

Were you required to do this work at your home?

☐ Yes  
☐ Sometimes



☐ No

What time of day did you usually work on **university work activities** during the work from home period?  
(Please tick all of those which apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> 12.00 midnight-1.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 12.00 noon-1.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 1.00-2.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 1.00pm-2.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 2.00-3.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 2.00pm-3.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 3.00-4.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 3.00-pm-4.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 4.00-5.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 4.00pm-5.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 5.00-6.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 5.00pm-6.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 6.00-7.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 6.00-pm-7.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 7.00-8.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 7.00pm-8.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 8.00-9.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 8.00pm-9.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 9.00-10.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 9.00pm-10.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 10.00-11.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 10.00pm-11.00pm
<input type="checkbox"/> 11.00-12.00am	<input type="checkbox"/> 11pm-12.00 midnight

Please write any comments about the **differences in times of day** you spent on university activities on **working days** before and during the work from home period:

**Block 3**

In this next section we have some questions about your **university work**.

How important are the following **resources for your research**?  
For each one, please choose a number of stars from 1 = **not at all important** to 5 = **very important**.

Physical library resources (records or books not available as e-books, etc.)	<div></div>
Research laboratory/physical research equipment (other than computer)	<div></div>
Research collaborators (other than students)	<div></div>
Human research subjects/participants	<div></div>
Research assistants (PhD student collaborators, post-docs)	<div></div>
Research field sites	<div></div>
Other resource (please state):	<div></div>

How would you rate your **workspace** at home?

☐

Please write any comments about your **workspace** at home:

Did you experience any of these **benefits** of working from home?

	Benefits?			
	Yes	Sometimes	No	Unsure
Not having to travel for work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexibility of teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research collaborators (other than students)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating new online resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fewer distractions, allowing focus on work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connection with other educators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connection to students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other benefit (please state):	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please write any comments about the **benefits** of working from home:

Did you experience any of these **challenges** of working from home?

	Challenges?			
	Yes	Sometimes	No	Unsure
Too much screen time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing work hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Balancing work with other life demands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stress/anxiety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Isolation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of routine/structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boredom/lack of motivation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access/resource issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other challenges (please state):	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please write any comments about the **challenges** of working from home:

How would you rate the university support for you **as an employee** during the work from home period?



How would you rate the university support for you **as a woman (mother, wife, etc.)** during the work from home period?

Did you take any of the following types of **leave** from the university during the work from home period?  
(Please choose as many as apply)

☐ Annual leave

☐ Sick leave

☐ Maternity leave

☐ Parental leave

☐ Bereavement leave

☐ Leave without pay

☐ Other leave (please specify):

If you have any suggestions about how the university could give more **support to women on leave** while working from home, please write them here:

**Block 5**

We now have some questions about your **thoughts and feelings** during the work from home period.

If you have any suggestions about how the university could give more **support to women's teaching or research from home**, please write them here:

If you have any suggestions about how the university could give more **general support to women's university work from home**, please write them here:

**Block 4**

This section asks about your **physical health** before and during the work from home period.

Before the work from home period, did you have any **long-term physical sickness or disability**?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Unsure

During the work from home period, did you **develop COVID-19**?

☐ Yes

Did you experience any of these **feelings** when you were working from home?

	Feelings?			
	Yes	Sometimes	No	Unsure
Feeling unable to control the important things in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling confident about my ability to handle my personal problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling that difficulties are piling up so high that I cannot overcome them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any other feelings you would like to mention?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Overall, would you say your own **mental health** (e.g. stress, anxiety, confidence) has been affected as a result of **the COVID-19 pandemic**?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Unsure

Would you say your own **mental health** (e.g. stress, anxiety, confidence) has been affected as a result of **working from home**?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Unsure

If you have any suggestions about how the university could give more **support** for women's **mental or emotional wellbeing** while working from home, please write them here:



<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p><b>Block 6</b></p> <p>Sadly, some people passed away during the lockdown, from COVID-19 and other illnesses. We now have some questions about <b>losing friends or family</b> while you were working from home.</p> <p>Did you lose one or more <b>family members or close friends</b> during the working from home period?</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes  <input type="radio"/> No     </p> <p>Did they pass away from <b>COVID-19</b>?</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes  <input type="radio"/> No  <input type="radio"/> Unsure     </p> <p>When they passed away, did you <b>experience</b> any of the following? (Please choose all that apply)</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to visit them before they passed away  <input type="checkbox"/> Limited contact with them during the last days of their life  <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to say goodbye as I would have liked  <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted funeral arrangements  <input type="checkbox"/> Social isolation and loneliness  <input type="checkbox"/> Limited contact with other close friends and relatives     </p>	<p>If you have any <b>suggestions</b> for how the university could give more <b>support to women who have lost friends or family members</b>, please write them here:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p><b>Block 7</b></p> <p>The next questions are about <b>your safety</b> during the work from home period.</p> <p>When people live together in the same household, they usually share both good and bad moments - it is normal for people who live together to have arguments. How often <b>in the last six months</b> would you say that adults in your household have <b>argued</b> or have had <b>some sort of conflict</b> among themselves?</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Daily  <input type="radio"/> Weekly  <input type="radio"/> Monthly  <input type="radio"/> Once or twice  <input type="radio"/> Never  <input type="radio"/> Unsure     </p> <p>Would you say that COVID-19 has made <b>conflict between adults in your household</b> more frequent, less frequent, or about the same?</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> More frequent  <input type="radio"/> Less frequent  <input type="radio"/> About the same  <input type="radio"/> Unsure     </p>
<p>If you have any <b>other experiences</b> you would like to share about your loss (or losses), please write them here:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p>What type of <b>support</b> did you receive after your loss? (Please choose all that apply)</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Supported by friends and family  <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor or other staff at a medical centre  <input type="checkbox"/> Church/religious leader  <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone helpline  <input type="checkbox"/> Online community support, e.g. Facebook group, online chat forum  <input type="checkbox"/> Informal support group, e.g. social group for bereaved people  <input type="checkbox"/> Bereavement support group guided by a facilitator or counsellor  <input type="checkbox"/> One-to-one support e.g. individual counselling  <input type="checkbox"/> Specialist mental health support  <input type="checkbox"/> No support used  <input type="checkbox"/> Support from the university  <input type="checkbox"/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 100px; height: 1.2em; vertical-align: middle;"></div> Other support (please state):     </p> <p>What was the <b>support from the university</b>?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	<p>In the <b>last six months</b>, have you ever felt <b>unsafe in your home</b>?</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes  <input type="radio"/> No  <input type="radio"/> Unsure     </p> <p><b>Why</b> have you felt <b>unsafe in your home</b>? (Please choose as many as apply)</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> I have a serious medical condition or disability and feel vulnerable  <input type="checkbox"/> My shelter is insecure from external threats (e.g., there are no locks on my front door)  <input type="checkbox"/> I am unable to communicate/reach out for help  <input type="checkbox"/> I am living with people I cannot trust  <input type="checkbox"/> There is substance abuse (e.g. alcohol or drugs) in the household  <input type="checkbox"/> There is physical violence or threats of physical violence in my home  <input type="checkbox"/> There is verbal abuse in my home  <input type="checkbox"/> Other adults in the household have hurt me  <input type="checkbox"/> Other women in the household have been hurt  <input type="checkbox"/> Children in the household have been hurt  <input type="checkbox"/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 100px; height: 1.2em; vertical-align: middle;"></div> Something else (please explain):     </p> <p>Have you experienced any of the following situations <b>since the start of COVID-19</b>? (Please choose as many as apply)</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Been slapped, hit, kicked, had things thrown at me, or other physical harm  <input type="checkbox"/> Been yelled at, called names, or humiliated  <input type="checkbox"/> Had resources (like healthcare) or basic needs (like money, food, water, shelter) denied  <input type="checkbox"/> Been forced to stay alone for long period of time or denied communication with other people  <input type="checkbox"/> Been the subject of inappropriate jokes, suggestive comments, leering, or unwelcome touch/kisses     </p>



<p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="text"/> Other types of abuse (please explain):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No abuse experienced</p> <p>How important do you think each of the following is to support USP women <b>suffering from violence during the pandemic</b>?</p> <p>For each one, please choose a number of stars from 1 = <i>not at all important</i> to 5 = <i>very important</i></p> <table> <tr> <td>Information about security/crime prevention</td> <td><input type="text"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Access to basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing</td> <td><input type="text"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medical and financial support</td> <td><input type="text"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Someone to talk to like professional mental health experts</td> <td><input type="text"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal support or help in reporting the incident or dealing with police</td> <td><input type="text"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Support from the university</td> <td><input type="text"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other support (please state):</td> <td><input type="text"/></td> </tr> </table> <p>If you have any suggestions for how the <b>university could give more support</b> to women who have <b>suffered from violence during the pandemic</b>, please write them here:</p>	Information about security/crime prevention	<input type="text"/>	Access to basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing	<input type="text"/>	Medical and financial support	<input type="text"/>	Someone to talk to like professional mental health experts	<input type="text"/>	Legal support or help in reporting the incident or dealing with police	<input type="text"/>	Support from the university	<input type="text"/>	Other support (please state):	<input type="text"/>	<p>Married Living with partner Married but separated Widowed Divorced Single (never married) Rather not say</p> <p>What is the <b>highest level of education</b> you have completed? (Please choose one from the list)</p> <p>No formal education Completed Primary School Completed Secondary School Technical &amp; Vocational Training Completed University/College Completed Post Graduate</p> <p>How many people, <b>including yourself</b>, live in your household?</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>
Information about security/crime prevention	<input type="text"/>														
Access to basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing	<input type="text"/>														
Medical and financial support	<input type="text"/>														
Someone to talk to like professional mental health experts	<input type="text"/>														
Legal support or help in reporting the incident or dealing with police	<input type="text"/>														
Support from the university	<input type="text"/>														
Other support (please state):	<input type="text"/>														
<p><input type="text"/></p> <p><b>Block 8</b></p> <p>Finally, we would like to know about your <b>background</b>. Please remember, this survey is completely anonymous and we cannot find out who answered it.</p> <p>How old are you, <b>in years</b>? (Please choose one from the list)</p> <p>15-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 71 or more</p> <p>What is your <b>marital status</b>? (Please choose one from the list)</p>	<p>How many people living in your household are <b>aged 0-17</b>?</p> <p>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</p> <p>Have any of the other adults in your household <b>lost their job, or a lot of income</b>, during COVID-19?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Unsure</p> <p>What is your <b>ethnic background</b>? (Please choose as many as apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Banaban <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> European <input type="checkbox"/> Fijian with Indian descent <input type="checkbox"/> i-Kiribati <input type="checkbox"/> iTaukei <input type="checkbox"/> Marshallese <input type="checkbox"/> Nauruan <input type="checkbox"/> Niuean <input type="checkbox"/> Ni-Vanuatu <input type="checkbox"/> Rotuman</p>														



- ☐ Samoan
- ☐ Solomon Islander
- ☐ Tokelau
- ☐ Tongan
- ☐ Tuvaluan
- ☐  Other (please state):

## Block 9

This is the **end of our survey questions**.

If there is **anything else** you would like to tell us about how COVID-19 work from home affected your work and life, please write it here:

If this survey has raised any issues for you, please contact the **USP Counselling Centre**:  
Phone: 32 32613  
Email: [counselling@usp.ac.fj](mailto:counselling@usp.ac.fj) or [joleen.hazelman@usp.ac.fj](mailto:joleen.hazelman@usp.ac.fj)  
Skype: uspcounsellingcentre  
Emergency phone: +679 9499757 (after hours)

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