

# In the aftermath of the pandemic: Towards more family-friendly working conditions?

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# Aim & Roadmap

## Aim

Addressing the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on family-friendliness and gender equity at the workplace.

## Roadmap

- Starting point and previous research
- Questions, hypotheses, objectives
- Design
- First results
- What's next



**Starting point and previous research**

## Previous research project (2021)

### Aim of the previous research (2021)

- Tracing initial findings on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on family-friendliness and equality in the workplace.
- Discussion opportunities, risks and learnings for companies and organizations.

### Sample: Companies by sector and number of employees (n=31)

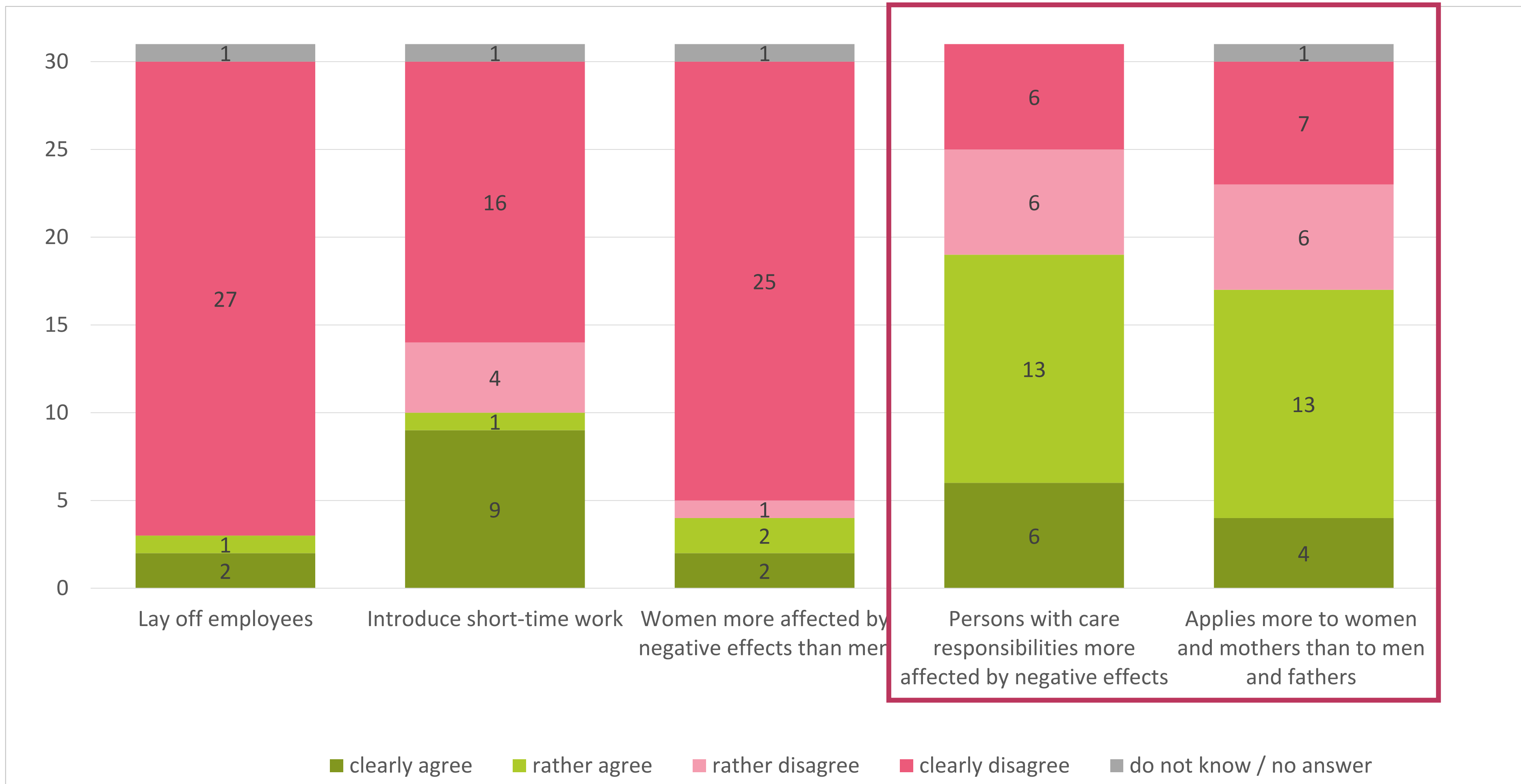
Sector	Company size		
	Small: 10-49 persons employed	Medium: 50-249 persons employed	Large: 250 and more persons employed
Manufacturing, production of goods		1	1
Trade, maintenance and repair			1
Transport and logistics		1	
Hospitality / accommodation and gastronomy		1	
Provision of financial and insurance services			1
Provision of professional, scientific and technical services	2		
Public administration, defense, social security, education	1	5	5
Healthcare and social services	1	7	
Other Services	1	2	1

## **Hypothesis 1: Women with care obligations were particularly affected by Covid**

- Perpetuation of gender specific inequalities due to the pandemic (Alon et al. 2020; Manzo/Minello, 2020)
- A representative study from Switzerland: Women with care responsibilities & single parents & family caregivers were particularly affected by the Covid-Pandemic (Fuchs/Lanfranconi 2021)

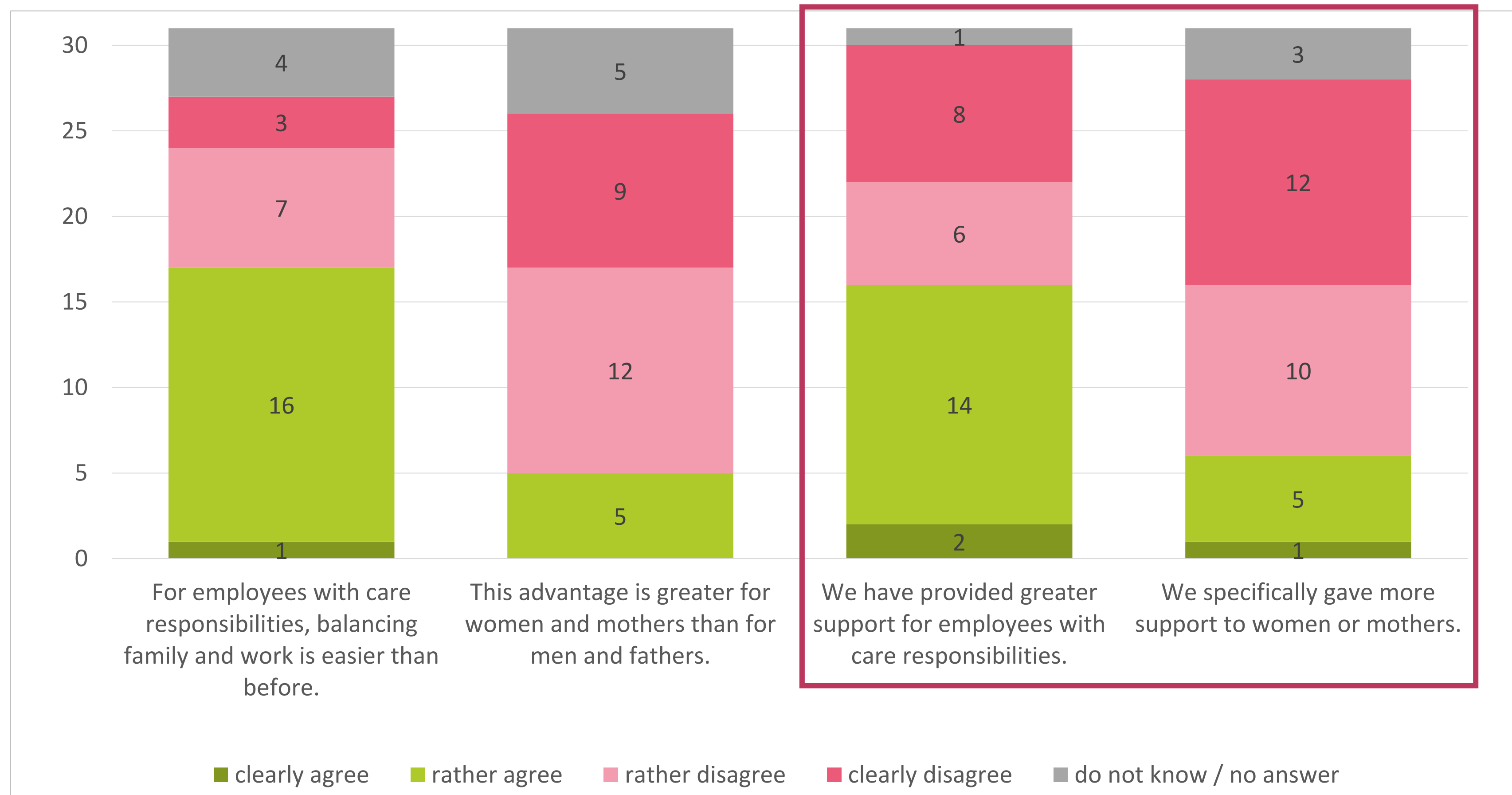
## Previous research project (2021)

### Challenges in the company due to the covid pandemic (n=31)



## Previous research project (2021)

### Opportunities for employees with care responsibilities due to the covid pandemic (n=31)



## Hypothesis 2:

### **New Work is not always gender- & family friendly and can risk to produce new inequalities between frontline workers and others**

- During the Covid-crisis, companies have increasingly relied on new technologies (Riz et al. 2020; Weber 2020) and introduced increasingly flexible forms of work (place/time; Köss and Schäfer 2020; Kaczynska and Kümmerling 2021).
- During the crisis, companies introduced measures that would benefit their employees, but hardly any measures that would benefit employees' family members: Children want: Reducing stress from parents and refraining from business phone calls and e-mails in the evenings and on weekends (Krstić and Sladojević Matić 2020).
- Flexible work opportunities can help mothers stay in the workforce and in well-paying jobs with career opportunities. However, there are negative side effects; when companies simultaneously rely on traditional labor standards and ideas of employees who are available at all times (Chung et al. 2021).



## Previous research project (2021)

### Offers, work forms or measures in the company with regard to family friendliness and equality (n=31)

Offers, work forms or measures with regard to family friendliness and equality	Already present before the pandemic	Extended due to the pandemic	Introduced due to the pandemic
Compliance / review of equal pay	<b>29</b>		
Flexible working time	<b>27</b>	1	
Family-friendly corporate culture	<b>24</b>	1	
Equality-friendly recruitment and promotion	<b>24</b>		
Job sharing, part-time and reduced workload in the event of parenthood	<b>23</b>	1	1
Home office	<b>21</b>	9	7
Corporate health management	17	1	1
Maternity leave – longer than 14 weeks	11		
More than three days of paid time off in case of illness of a relative person	10		1
Contribution to childcare	6		
Paternity leave – longer than two weeks	5		1

## What insights do you draw from the experience gained so far for the time after the Covid-19 pandemic?

We are much more flexible ... Trust in home office has grown

Broader introduction/continuation of home office **for almost all workers groups.** (...) We are in the process of making the working models more flexible for all employees - women and men: e.g., job sharing also in management positions.

... confidence in flexibility in working hours and location-independent working has increased

Working from home leads to a strong flexibilization of working hours and location. This development is probably family-friendly. **However, working from home should not be confused with childcare.**

The more flexible and family-friendly working hours due to home office promote stress-free work and the motivation of the employees. Many employees work more concentrated and more than the agreed working hours. **Therefore, however, care must be taken to ensure that the employees also have their breaks and free time.**



**Current research (2023): New Work – effects on wellbeing of employees and their families?**

## Current research (2023): Questions, hypotheses, objectives

**What novel approaches to work organization yield positive impacts on both employees' well-being and their families'?**

- Identify innovative forms of work and organization with regard to family-friendly working conditions and diversity.
- Identify and comprehensively examine the positive and negative consequences of new forms of work from the perspectives of employers, employees, and their family members.
- Identify enabling factors and obstacles for a successful implementation.
- Develop evidence-based recommendations for best practices.

## Current research (2023): Design

### **Mixed-method study with a qualitative focus for this ongoing research.**

Case study in a public administration in Switzerland:

- Individual interviews with HR and line managers
- Focus groups with a diverse group of employees (see next slide)
- Individual interviews with employees' family members

## Current research (2023): Focus group – sample

- Perform care duties in a private context (towards children or adult relatives)
- Have worked for the administration for at least 3 years (i.e., have experienced pandemic-related changes).

	Frontline-workers	Non-frontline-workers
Female-dominated professional field	e.g. social work, social services	e.g. HR
Male-dominated professional field	e.g. waste disposal, gardening, firefighting	e.g. finance, tax, IT

### Further differentiation according to:

- Age
- Academic / non-academic training
- Seniority
- Care responsibilities towards children / towards adults

## Current research (2023): First results

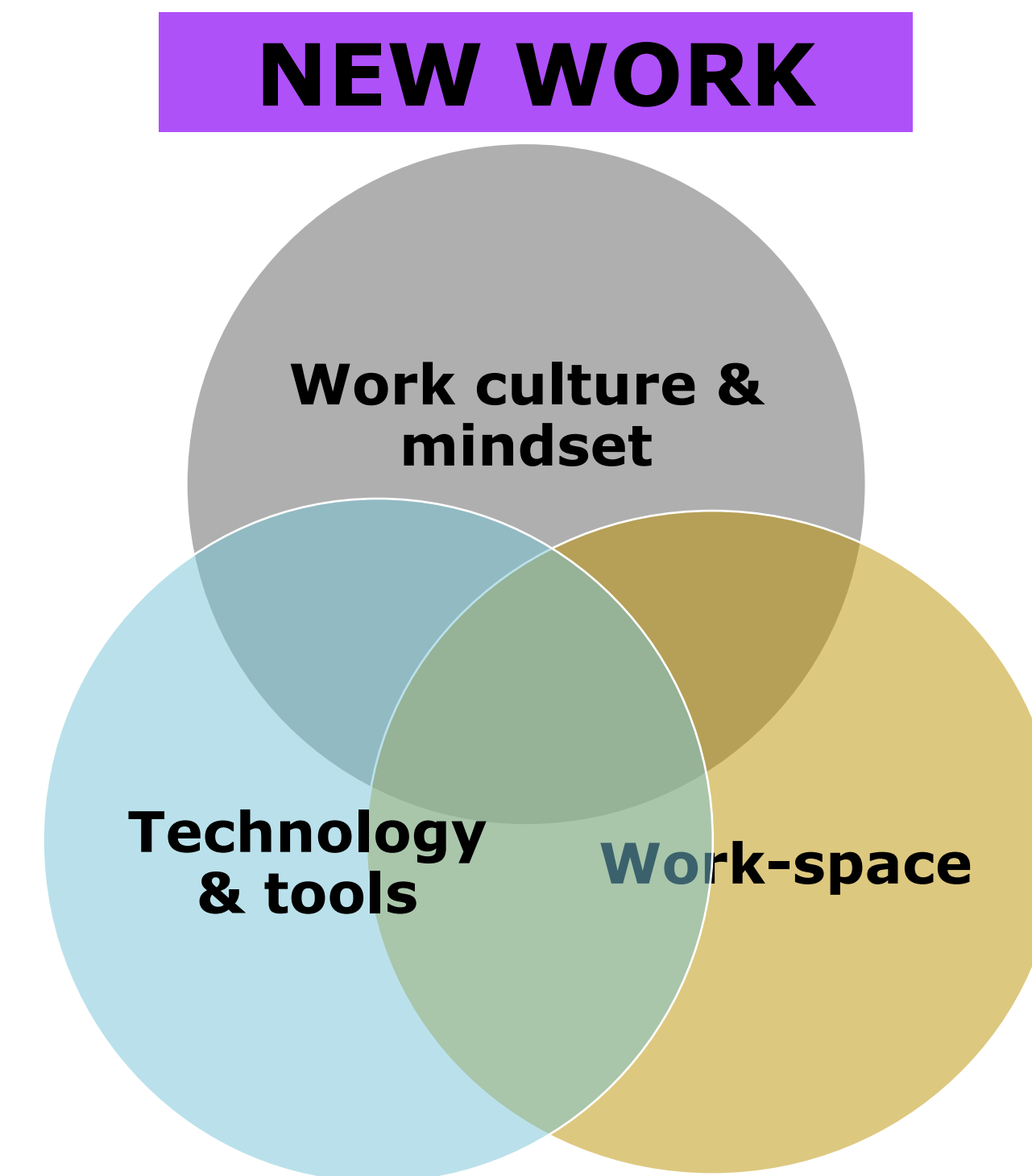
### HOW:

The need for a threefold transformation:

- Work culture/mindset
- Work space (infrastructure/workplace)
- Technology/tools

How to deal with differing needs for new work?

- Need to work remotely vs. at the office: “The different needs must be able to coexist without devaluing each other.”



## Current research (2023): First results

**WHO:** Attitudes (and possibilities!) towards new work seem to differ along intersections of

- Gender
- Age and seniority
- Frontline vs. Non-frontline workers
- Occupations/departments

**WHAT:** Meaning of «new work» among HR and line managers

- They use the broad notion of «flexibel and mobile work» («mobil-flexibles Arbeiten»)
- The dominant conception of new work revolves primarily around the concept of "remote work" (e.g. Home office)

**→ what about the 1/3 of frontline and so-called essential workers for whom «remote work» is not an option?**

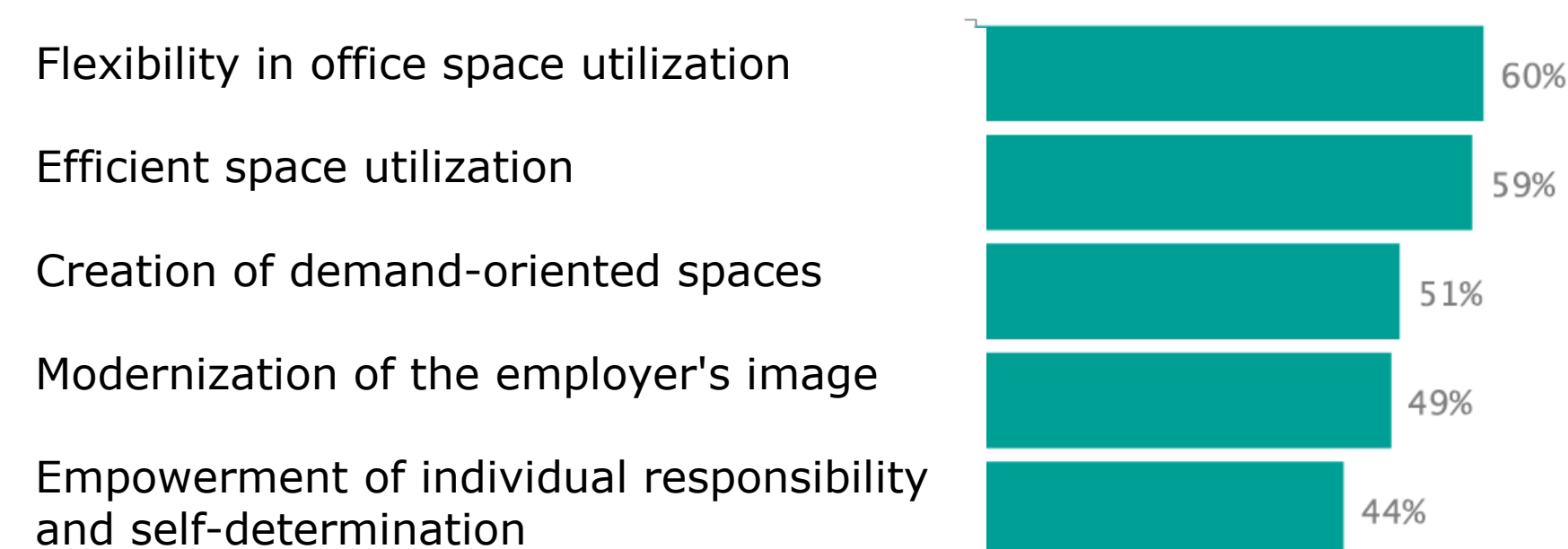


## Current research (2023): First results

### WHY

- «By enabling independent work design, including location and time-independent work, we enhance the engagement and motivation of our employees.»
- «With flexible work arrangements, we, as the employer, become more attractive. We facilitate the balance between professional commitments and responsibilities in other areas of life, thereby enhancing diversity within the city of X.»

**«In shaping the future of work, we create added value for employees  
and the population»**



## Next steps

In order to contrast the perspective of the employers with the one of employees & family members, we will conduct:

- Focus groups with employees
- Interviews with family members of the employees

