

Arbeitswelt-Monitor „Working in the Corona Crisis“



# Covid-19 and Work Life in Germany.



Occupational Inequalities in Work Experiences during the Pandemic



Results of the first wave of the Monitor (April and May 2020)



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Osnabrück, November 2020

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## Foreword

The Arbeitswelt-Monitor "Working in the Corona Crisis" is a joint project of the University of Osnabrück and the cooperation centers universities and trade unions in Lower Saxony and Bremen. The aim of the monitor is to make visible the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic on the different segments of the working society. To this end, persons from all fields of work have been surveyed at different points in time in online surveys and qualitative interviews. The results aim to inform the organizations of work-life and politics as well as to contribute to the scientific discussions on the effects and dynamics of the pandemic.

This report focuses on inequalities in the work experience during the early phase of the Corona pandemic in April and May 2020. 11,083 employed individuals participated in the online survey. In addition, 27 qualitative interviews were conducted.

We want to thank everyone who took the time to participate in the surveys and shared their experiences and perspective with us. Without your participation, it would not have been possible to paint a realistic picture of the uneven impact of the pandemic.

We would also like to thank all those who supported the project and promoted the survey.

Osnabrück, November 2020

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## Very short summary

- The report presents the **findings of the first wave of the German Arbeitswelt-Monitor "Working in the Corona Crisis"**. Between the end of April and the end of May 2020, 11,083 employed persons participated in the online survey. In addition, 27 qualitative interviews were conducted with wage earners and self-employed from various fields of work.
- The Covid-19 pandemic and the political measures to contain the spread of the virus set the entire world of work in motion: only very few participants did not feel any impact on their work situation; in addition, hardly any aspect of work and employment was not affected. However, the **corona effects on work showed strong inequalities**. An individual's position in the employment structure had a major influence on the work experience during the pandemic.
- The report utilizes a **class analytical approach** (Daniel Oesch) **to map the distribution of the pandemic's work-life burdens in the employment structure**. The scheme combines the classical axis of vertical stratification with a horizontal axis of differentiation along four work logics (interpersonal, administrative, technical, independent).
- The implications of Covid-19 on work and employment in Germany were rather heterogeneous: **three different worlds of experience** can be distinguished, each of which had its focus in different horizontal segments of the employment structure: corona as an economic crisis (self-employed and technical occupations), corona as a health hazard (interpersonal service occupations) and corona as a driver of mobile working (administrative occupations). The three worlds of experience are each associated with different problems and challenges for labor.
- **In Germany, strong vertical inequalities exist in the distribution of corona-related burdens and risks**, transverse to the horizontal differences in the corona experience. In each of the three worlds of experience, the non-academic occupations of the lower classes (skilled and unskilled labor) were significantly more affected by infection worries, insufficient protective measures, loss of earnings and job uncertainty, while at the same time the academic occupations of the upper classes had more frequent access to the home office.
- The interplay of horizontal differentiation (the distinct worlds of experience) and vertical stratification (the inequalities between upper and lower rank occupations) resulted in specific vulnerabilities in the lower segments of the labor society: **Particularly affected by the negative effects of the pandemic were - among the independent classes - solo self-employed and small business owners, and -among wage earners- production workers and service workers**. For many self-employed, the pandemic posed a severe threat to their economic survival. Among wage earners, production workers suffered most from the economic turbulences of the pandemic and report more often than the other classes insufficient protective measures. Non-academic service workers – particularly among health, social and educational professions – showed the highest infection worries and frequently criticized the protective measures of their employers. Office occupations with an academic background were least affected by Corona-related burdens and risks.

- Linked to the strong occupational inequalities are **gender inequalities in the experience of the Corona pandemic**: in our sample, women are highly overrepresented in interpersonal service occupations that are associated with the health risks related to Covid-19; in contrast, men are significantly more likely to be found in technical occupations that were more affected by the economic burdens of the pandemic in its early stages.
- Due to the closure of schools and daycare centers in spring, **conflicts between childcare and employment were widespread in Germany**. Women were significantly more affected by conflicts between childcare and employment and, additionally, reduced their working hours more frequently to compensate for the closure of childcare facilities. Thus, the pandemic threatens to reinforce gender asymmetries in the social distribution of care work.
- **Co-determination had a positive effect on economic burdens and the spread of mobile working in the early phase of the pandemic**. Workers from companies with works or staff councils were less likely to suffer a drop in earnings and less likely to report that their professional future had become more uncertain as a result of Corona. In addition, employers with co-determination more often paid a premium to the public benefits of short-time work (Kurzarbeit). In addition, employees from co-determined companies more often resorted to mobile work home as a protective measure. Equally positive effects of co-determination were not found for infection concerns or the adequacy of protective measures.
- The results of the first wave of the Arbeitswelt-Monitor “Working in the Corona Crisis” show that **the pandemic, at least in its early stages, reinforces existing social inequalities in the German employment structure**. The economic burdens (loss of earnings and job uncertainty) and health risks (infection worries and inadequate workplace protections) associated with Covid-19 are disproportionately imposed on social classes at the lower end of the employment structure which, because of their weak position in the labor market, command comparably few resources (income, job security, esteem) to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic. In the long run, increasing social inequalities endanger social cohesion and solidarity within society - and also ultimately undermine the possibilities of successfully coping with the pandemic.
- The **simultaneity of different corona worlds of experience** (corona as an economic crisis, as a health hazard and as a driver of mobile working) poses a challenge for society and for interest groups. The respective worlds of experience associated with different problem situations should not be played off against each other either in companies or in public discourse. The risks of infection and stress in the service professions must be taken just as seriously as the concerns about the economic existence and future of many self-employed and production workers, as well as the experience of the dissolution of boundaries and control in many administrative and office professions. The challenge for interest groups is to formulate approaches that address the specific problems of different groups of employees, but at the same time mediate the different, sometimes conflicting perspectives. Otherwise, the pandemic might reinforce feelings of alienation among the classes hit hardest by the pandemic.

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## Detailed summary

1. The **Arbeitswelt-Monitor "Working in the Corona Crisis"** is a joint project of the University of Osnabrück and the cooperation centers "universities and trade unions" in Lower Saxony and Bremen. The aim of the monitor is to make visible the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic on the world of work from the perspective of labor. The report is based on the first wave of the Arbeitswelt-Monitor. The online survey and the qualitative interviews were conducted between late April and late May 2020. A total of 11,083 employed persons from all industries and types of work participated in the survey. In addition, 27 qualitative interviews were conducted with self-employed and dependent employees. The questionnaire included 90 items plus extensive socio-demographics. Questions were asked about the impact of the pandemic on work and employment, the employer's handling of the pandemic, the protective measures taken by the employer/contractor, the organization of child care and the perception of policy. The high response rate shows that the survey struck a chord with many people.
2. The report presents the weighted results of the survey to correct for minor asymmetries in the sample. Weights were applied according to class, gender, age and education on the basis of the ALLBUS (Gesis). Further information on weighting is provided in the detailed report. The goal of the report is to identify and analyze social inequalities in Corona employment. Representativeness for the working population is not aimed at.
3. The results of the surveys show that the pandemic in its early phase has in fact set the entire world of work in motion. **Hardly any of the participants felt no impact on their work and employment situation during the first months of the pandemic.** Only one in 14 respondents said that Covid-19 had no impact on their own work. For two-thirds of the participants, the pandemic brought about strong implications in the world of work. Even though there were industry and occupational differences: In the first months, the pandemic left its mark on the work of almost the entire workforce.
4. Even though the public debates in April and May 2020 focused mainly on the risks of infection at work and the economic consequences of the pandemic: **Hardly any aspect of employment and work was left untouched.** In addition to infection risks, economic losses and increasing uncertainty, participants reported negative effects on the quality of work: for more than 60 percent of all respondents, workloads changed, almost 40 percent increasingly worked from home, a third experienced a strong digitalization push, for 60 percent the pandemic influenced the work-life balance and for as many as a third of those in employment, the influence of the pandemic even extended into the very content of work. In short, the impact of Covid-19 not only reached almost all workers, the pandemic also basically influenced all aspects of gainful employment.
5. While Covid-19 shook up nearly the entire labor market and the effects of the pandemic were felt in multiple aspects of work and employment, **the corona effects on labor exhibited strong inequalities.** Multiple inequalities in the distribution of corona-related work-life burdens existed along classic inequality markers (sector, income, gender,

East-West). The strong inequalities pose challenges for scientific diagnosis as well as for the political responses to the pandemic.

6. In order to map the multiple corona-related inequalities and to analyze them against the background of pre-existing inequalities in income, employment security and societal recognition, the report draws on **Daniel Oesch's class analytic approach**. Its strength lies in the combination of the classical vertical inequality axis (upper and lower rank occupations by skill rank) and the horizontal differentiation between different work logics (technical, administrative, interpersonal and self-employed occupations). In the four horizontal segments, the upper classes consist of academic and semi-academic occupations: technical experts (technical), management (administrative), socio-cultural experts (interpersonal) and employers (self-employed). The lower classes include non-academic apprenticeships and semi-skilled jobs: production workers (technical), office workers (administrative), service workers (interpersonal) and small business owners (self-employed).
7. Already before the pandemic, **considerable inequalities existed**. Firstly, the class structure exhibits the gendered division of labor in contemporary societies of the global North. Among the interpersonal professions, women are strongly overrepresented, both in the lower class of service workers (e.g., child care workers, hairdressers, salespersons) and in the upper class of socio-cultural experts (e.g., doctors, teachers, social workers). In the technical professions - production workers (e.g. fitters, craftsmen, logistics workers) and technical experts (e.g. electrical engineers, master craftsmen, data processing experts) - are traditionally dominated by men. Women also dominate in the lower administrative class of office workers (e.g. clerks, secretaries, office clerks)- The upper administrative class of management (e.g. HR managers, finance and insurance managers, senior executives) is mixed by a gender perspective. Secondly, multiple social inequalities characterized the vertical division between upper and lower employment classes prior to the pandemic: Among the members of the lower classes, income is lower, employment insecurity is higher and opportunities for advancement are lower. But inequalities are also found between the horizontal segments of the upper and lower labor force classes: For example, the low-wage share is significantly higher among female-dominated service workers than among heavily male-dominated production workers. These pre-pandemic inequalities in the labor force interact with the new inequalities brought about by Covid-19.
8. Mapping corona-related inequalities with Oesch's class analytical approach uncovers **systematic differences in the impact of the Corona pandemic in the labor force**. (1) Firstly, **horizontal inequalities** (i.e., between the four work logics) emerged that they are transverse to classical vertical inequalities: The self-employed classes (employers and small business owners) and also the male-dominated technical classes (technical experts and production workers) were more strongly affected by economic problems, and the female-dominated interpersonal occupations (socio-cultural experts and service workers) were most likely to be exposed to infection risks because of the nature of their work. Homeoffice and the digitalization of work, on the other hand, had their focal points in the administrative classes (management and clerical workers). (2) Secondly,

despite the horizontal differences, pronounced **vertical inequalities** were observed in the experience of the Corona pandemic at work (i.e., between top and bottom). Within the four horizontal segments, the lower-class non-academic occupations (production workers, clerical workers, service workers and small business workers), which were also underprivileged before the crisis, were each more affected by subjective infection risks and by the economic burdens, while the upper classes (technical experts, management, socio-cultural experts and employers) resorted more often to mobile working and experienced more often a digitalization push. (3) Thirdly, **service workers and production workers were exposed to the highest corona-related burdens and risks in the early phase of the pandemic**. For them, infection risks and negative economic effects overlapped, while at the same time they did not have access to mobile working and did not experience a digitization push at work.

9. The sharp differences in the work experience during the corona pandemic pose significant challenges for the general public, policy makers and interest groups. The results of the first wave of the Arbeitswelt-Monitor reveal **three very distinct forms of corona experience**, which have their focal points in different horizontal segments of the employment structure and interact in specific ways with the segment-specific dynamics: Corona as a health hazard (in the sense of subjective infection risks and stress associated with the pandemic), Corona as an economic crisis (loss of earnings and professional uncertainty about the future) and Corona as a driver of mobile working (remote work and digitalization). Each of the three forms of experience must be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately in society. Interest groups are confronted with the task of formulating approaches that on the one hand address the specific problem situations of different occupational and employee groups, but on the other hand also integrate the different worlds of experience and pursue common interests. As combating the pandemic depends on societal acceptance of the containment measures, politics and society cannot afford to ignore the concerns and needs of relevant sections of the working population in the medium and long term. Growing inequalities and experiences of alienation are capable of jeopardizing the success of society's management of the pandemic.
10. Thus, **the effects of the pandemic reinforce the inequality dynamics in the German employment structure noticeable for years**. (1) Firstly, along the classic **vertical inequality axis between upper and lower rank occupations**: In all dimensions, the lower classes (non-academic skilled and semi-skilled jobs) were hit harder by the work-life burdens of the pandemic than the upper social classes (academic and semi-academic occupations). Among wage earners, this effect was particularly pronounced. Service workers (non-academic service occupations) were significantly more affected by subjective infection risks than the academic occupations of the socio-cultural professions. The economic consequences of the pandemic were in a similar way unequally distributed: significantly more workers in the lower classes suffered a loss of earnings than those in the upper classes. Thus, in the first few months, the pandemic reinforced the social inequalities that had been growing prior to the pandemic. Follow-up studies must show whether this inequality effect is permanent or merely temporary. In the short term, however, the lower occupational classes, -small business owners, production workers and service workers are significantly more affected by the economic burdens and health

risks of the pandemic. In addition, these occupational groups are, due to their weaker position in the labor market, equipped with fewer resources (income, employment security reputation) to cope with the pandemic. (2) Secondly, the effects of the pandemic also revealed the tensions within the working class that have been discussed for more than two decades. As a reminder, the horizontal axis was introduced into class analysis by Daniel Oesch to capture the increasingly politically influential divisions between blue and white collar workers since the 1970s and the effects of the tertiarization of labor society. The results of the first wave of the Arbeitswelt-Monitor show that work experience of the pandemic differs significantly between the horizontal segments of the working class and the lower middle class (in the class schema: the lower classes). **To put simply, production workers are more likely to experience Corona as an economic crisis, service workers as a health hazard, and the work experience of office workers is dominated by mobile working.** In many workforces, these different worlds of experience collide directly. Translating these different forms of experience into coherent interest representation approaches is a challenging but necessary task for trade unions given the force with which the pandemic is hitting all areas of the world of work.

11. **Childcare responsibilities** were associated with a **high level of stress** in the early phase of the pandemic. More than 50 percent of all participants with children reported (very) frequent conflicts between child care and employment. The fact that women were significantly more affected by very frequent reconciliation conflicts is hardly surprising, given the gender asymmetries in the social distribution of care work: One in three women even reported very frequent difficulties. With regard to the organization of childcare in times of closures of schools and day care facilities, occupational inequalities stood out: The upper classes of the academic professions got by significantly more often without support from others and without adjusting their own working hours and those of their partner. In contrast, production workers and service providers had to resort more often to practices that were risky to their health and economically burdensome in the context of the pandemic: On the one hand, they used the support of their social network significantly more often (meaning additional contacts and thus infection risks), and on the other hand, they had to adjust their working time significantly more often (synonymous with a loss of income and thus economic risks).
12. Even though multivariate analyses of the distribution of economic burdens and health risks do not show independent gender effects: **In our sample, women and men were affected by work-related effects in different ways**, due to the social division of labor in paid and reproductive work. (1) Firstly, in their role as mothers, women were significantly more likely than fathers to be affected by conflicts between childcare and paid work. Moreover, women were significantly more likely to reduce their volume of gainful employment to compensate for the closure of childcare facilities. (2) Secondly, women are overrepresented in service occupations (service workers and socio-cultural experts\*) - and thus in those occupations where infection risks are high. In contrast, men in our sample were more often affected by earnings losses. This effect is also due to the gendered division of labor: men are more likely to be found in technical occupations (production workers and technical experts), which have been hit hard by the global economic turbulence in many industrial sectors.

13. **Co-determination** had a noticeable impact on the economic effects of the pandemic and on the diffusion of mobile working. Employees from companies with works councils or staff councils were less likely to suffer from a loss of earnings and an increase in job uncertainty. In addition, employers with works councils were significantly more likely to increase short-time benefits. Our data suggest that works and staff councils also acted as drivers of digitization and mobile working: Employees from companies with works or staff councils were more likely to experience a surge in digitization of their own work and were significantly more likely to switch to remote work in the first months of the pandemic. In contrast, the existence of a works or staff council had hardly any statistically robust effects on the extent of infection concerns, the adequacy of protective measures and the impact of the pandemic on the quality of work (workloads, work content, working hours). Obviously, works councils and staff councils do not have much influence in the sectors particularly affected by deficient protective measures (education & teaching, construction, transport & logistics, trade).
14. **Satisfaction among dependent employees** with employers' handling of Corona was comparatively high - especially in light of the pandemic's far-reaching impact on their work experience. Two-thirds of employees expressed satisfaction, and only 15 percent were explicitly dissatisfied. The analysis of the explanatory factors for satisfaction with the employer's actions during the pandemic reveals a fairly high level of understanding among employees across all sectors and all occupational groups. Apparently, neither a temporary loss of earnings nor an impairment in the quality of work automatically had a negative effect on an employees' assessment of the employer. Many employees seem to be willing to accept temporary deteriorations if they are able to participate in the handling of the Corona pandemic. By far the strongest influence on satisfaction with the employer's handling of the pandemic had **an open information policy on the part of the employer**; followed by the **adequacy of protective measures** and the **direct influence on corona-related decisions in the organization**. In other words, employees want to be fully informed by the employer, involved in company decisions concerning the pandemic and adequately protected from infection at work.
15. An important element of employers' handling of the pandemic is the **measures taken to protect against corona infection at work**. Only two-thirds of dependent employees described their employer's protective measures as sufficient. Construction as well as education & teaching displayed the largest shares of deficient protective measures (over 40 percent). Equally striking is the fact that employees from different occupational fields had different priorities when it came to protective measures. Of generally high importance were ensuring high hygiene standards by the employer and increasing the physical distance to colleagues. In addition, a number of more occupation-specific protection needs were visible: For production workers and service workers - the non-academic occupations of technical and interpersonal work logic - the provision of sufficient protective equipment by the employer played a major role, while at the same time the digitalization of contact with colleagues hardly played a role. In the administrative professions, on the other hand, protective equipment did not play a prominent role, but digitization proved to be an effective protective measure in the eyes of the employees.

16. Satisfaction with politics was somewhat lower than satisfaction with employers' handling of the pandemic. Just under six out of ten employees were satisfied with how politics dealt with the pandemic; a good fifth were explicitly dissatisfied. There were above-average proportions of dissatisfied workers in construction, culture, the metal and electrical industries and the hospitality industry. This is reflected in the relatively high proportions of dissatisfied people among the self-employed (employers and small businesses) and production workers. Dissatisfaction with politics manifests itself primarily in the following assessments: Three-quarters of the dissatisfied respondents considered the containment measures to be excessive, said that they endangered democracy and demanded them being withdrawn as quickly as possible. Widespread participation deficits were also striking: half of the participants agreed with the statement that in the current pandemic, "people like me have no influence on what policymakers do." Participation deficits were strongest in the lower classes: six in ten among production workers and service workers, five in ten among office workers. The widespread deficits may cause problems for the future containment of the pandemic as social distancing and other measures are dependent on a high degree of acceptance among the population.

# 1. Introduction

The corona pandemic has a firm grip on social life in Germany. Hardly an area of life is not affected by Covid-19 and the political containment measures. Far-reaching effects also occur in the world of work: infection risks are omnipresent in nursing homes, hospitals, schools and daycare centers; in many sectors, the pandemic has led to economic turbulence; mobile working has become the new normal for many employees, at least temporarily; and balancing paid work and childcare has turned into a severe challenge due to the temporary closures of childcare facilities.

The Arbeitswelt-Monitor "Working in the Corona Crisis" was launched by the University of Osnabrück and the cooperation centers "universities and trade unions" in Lower Saxony and Bremen. The project's objective is to investigate the impact of Covid-19 on work-life from the perspective of labor, focusing on the inequalities created by the pandemic. **How does labor experience the pandemic? And how do the effects of the pandemic interact with the work-related inequalities existing prior to corona?** It is the aim of the analyses to paint a realistic picture of the impact of the pandemic, the distribution of work-related burdens and risks associated with Covid-19 and the expectations of labor towards employers and politics. Persistent asymmetries in the impacts of the pandemic and the reinforcement of existing social inequalities might create social tensions and feelings of alienation that carry the potential to undermine social cohesion and solidarity – and therewith the ability of the political system and society in general to address the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This report presents the key findings of the first survey which took place between end of April and end of May 2020, and thus during the first corona wave in Germany and the first lockdown, which was characterized by far-reaching restrictions on social life (closure of schools and daycare centers, further parts of retail and catering as well as parts of industry, contact bans and distance bans). The effects of the Corona pandemic on the work experience were investigated in an online survey (n= 11,083) and on the basis of qualitative interviews (n=27). Both the survey and the qualitative interviews are based on central topics of the sociology of work and inequality research. It covered topics ranging from the pandemic's effects on various dimensions of work and employment, employers' handling of the pandemic, infection risks at work, protective measures at the workplace, conflicts between paid and care work, the organization of child care, perceptions of politics to labor's future expectations.

## **State of research: the impact of the pandemic on the world of work**

The impact of Covid-19 on the world of work has been studied in a number of studies in numerous countries in the early phase of the pandemic. Unemployment increased significantly in many countries, particularly in the USA and parts of southern Europe. In Germany, unemployment has so far been concentrated in a few sectors such as restaurants, retail, culture and industry (Weber et al. 2020). In addition to rising unemployment, the pandemic has other effects on working life. In general, job insecurity and financial insecurity are increasing in many countries (Eurofund 2020, Adams-Prassl et al. 2020). In Germany, low-wage, self-employment and non-standard employment are generally associated with higher probabilities of pandemic-related income loss and economic worries (Bünning et al. 2020; Hövermann 2020). The pandemic also has gender effects. Several studies have shown that childcare responsibilities due to the closure

## 2. The research approach: Social class and occupational inequalities

The project draws on the class analytic approach formulated by Daniel Oesch (2006a, 2006b) to map the occupational inequalities in the work-experience during the pandemic, i.e. the impact of Covid-19 on, in particular, work and employment, the distribution of infection risks, the quality of protective measures at the workplace, the satisfaction with employers in the pandemic as well as satisfaction with politics. Oesch's approach combines adds to the classic vertical axis of stratification between lower and higher rank occupations with a horizontal axis of differentiation along the work logic underlying an occupation. Fig. 1 summarizes Oesch's 8-class scheme with three typical occupations in each case.

Fig. 1. Oesch's 8-class scheme

	Dependent employees			Independent
Working logic	<i>Interpersonal</i>	<i>Technical</i>	<i>Administrative</i>	<i>Independent</i>
Academic and semi-academic professions	<b>Socio-cultural professions</b> doctors, teachers, social workers	<b>Technical Experts</b> Mechanical and electrical engineers, data processing experts	<b>Management</b> Business economists, HR executives, lower management	<b>Employers</b> Entrepreneurs, lawyers, restaurants
Apprenticeships and Semi-skilled jobs	<b>Serving</b> Nursing assistants, cooks, Saleswomen	<b>Production-working</b> Car mechanics, logisticians, assembly workers	<b>Office workers</b> Secretaries, call center agents, bank clerks	<b>Small business owners</b> (<9 employees) Craftsmen, farmers, janitor service

The vertical class location of an occupation is determined by the qualifications required for the job. The scale ranges from academic and semi-academic occupations in the upper social classes to skilled occupations and unskilled jobs in the lower classes. While vertical stratification is well established in sociological research in general and in class analysis in particular (Wright 2015). However, the inclusion of horizontal differentiation in class analysis is a distinctive feature of the Oesch approach. In order to capture the tertiarization and feminization of the employment structure since the 1970s as well as the much discussed growing cleavages within the working class between blue- and white-collar workers, the dominant work logic is introduced as a horizontal differentiator. Four work logics are distinguished: technical, administrative, interpersonal and self-employed. Central differences result from the organization of the work process (technical through machines, administrative through bureaucratic rules, interpersonal through human interaction and self-employed in the case of the self-employed??). The interac-

tion of the two axes results in eight social classes, namely two technical classes (technical experts at the top and production workers at the bottom), two administrative classes (management and office workers), two interpersonal classes (socio-cultural professions and service workers) and two self-employed classes (employers and small business owners).

The class structure is characterized – independently of the Corona pandemic – by multiple inequality dynamics. Firstly, a clear income differential exists between the academic occupations of the upper employment classes and the non-academic occupations of the lower employment classes. Research in inequality reveal that the influence of the vertical axis goes beyond income differences. The lower classes are underprivileged in a variety of ways: Employment security, occupational status, promotion prospects, job quality, life satisfaction, health and access to the political system (Groh-Samberg 2009; Lipps and Oesch 2018; Therborn 2013; Wright 2015; Hochschild 2016; Oesch 2006a). Secondly, inequalities also exist along the horizontal axis that are transverse to the vertical class structure. In the non-academic interpersonal service occupations (service workers), which have grown rapidly in recent decades, the shares of low-wage employment and part-time work are significantly larger than in the lower class of technical occupations (production workers). While women are heavily overrepresented in service occupations, the share of men is significantly higher in the technical occupations. The lower pay of women compared to men, the so-called gender pay gap, is also rooted in the gendered division of labor in the field of gainful employment, which is reflected in the gender distribution within the class structure.

### 3. Sample and method

The first survey wave of the Arbeitswelt-Monitor "Working in the Corona Crisis" was based on an online survey and qualitative interviews. Both were conducted between April 22 and May 31, 2020. The survey and the interviews thus cover the far-ranging lockdown in the early phase of the pandemic – and thus a **unique time span in Germany's postwar history**. From mid-March to the end of May, schools and daycare centers, restaurants and retail outlets, the cultural sector and numerous industrial enterprises were closed, and the leisure activities of the population were severely restricted. Since public life did not reopen before June the survey took place entirely within the lockdown.

#### Online survey

A total of **9,775 employed persons fully completed the** online survey. Even though the sample is not based on a random sample and representative statements about the German labor force are not possible, the dataset has a high scientific quality and considerable potential for research on the work-life consequences of the pandemic – especially on the inequalities between different groups. Contributing factors are (1) the historically unique survey period with stable political conditions, (2) the questionnaire that is firmly anchored in sociological labor and inequality research and (3) the extraordinarily high participation in the survey.

The **questionnaire of the online survey** comprised a content section of 90 questions that depicted central topics of the sociology of work and inequality research: The impact of the pandemic on work and employment (income changes, job uncertainty, workload, work content, digitalization), the employer's handling of the pandemic (information, responsiveness, participation, distribution of burdens), the measures taken by employers and clients to protect against infection at work (quality of measures, portfolio of protective measures), work-life balance and organization of childcare (conflicts, compensation for closure of childcare facilities), politics' handling the pandemic (information, assessments, participation, burden sharing), future expectations (individual future, future of the health sector). In addition, the questionnaire contained a socio-demographic section that comprehensively mapped employment situation and occupation, in addition to the usual characteristics used in social research, such as age, gender or education. The coding of the occupation (ISCO) forms the basis for the class assignment of the participants.

In order to reduce asymmetries in the sampling of the online survey and to represent as broad a section of the working population as possible, the survey was advertised via three channels: a) networks of the cooperation centers university and trade unions, b) a Facebook campaign, and c) networks of the universities in Lower Saxony. For an online survey, the **sample structure** shows a more than satisfactory match with the social structure of the workforce in ALLBUS (see Table 1 and in the appendix the complete socio-demographics of the sample): While the composition by age, region or economic sector is quite close to the actual distribution of the German labor force, women and academics show up overrepresented, while production workers and employers are underrepresented. To compensate for these asymmetries, the results in this

report are weighted for labor force (in terms of class, gender, age and qualification (according to ALLBUS 2018). Only the data on industries were not weighted, as smaller industries could be sensitive to weighting due to the small number of cases.

**Tab. 1 Core socio-demographics of the sample of the online survey**

		Employed persons (N = 9,775)		ALLBUS
		Cases	Share	Share
Gender	Men	3.589	41,0%	54,5%
	Women	5.132	58,6%	45,5%
Age	Under 30 years	1.102	12,5%	14,8%
	30 to 50 years	4.011	45,4%	44,3%
	50 years and older	3.722	42,1%	40,8%
Professional degree	None	235	2,7%	7,9%
	Vocational training	4.514	52,0%	60,9%
	Study	3.927	45,3%	31,2%
Region	West Germany	7.348	83,4%	82,0%
	East Germany	1.158	13,2%	14,8%
	Berlin	300	3,4%	3,2%
Social class	Socio-cultural professionals	1.691	19,5%	12,4%
	Service workers	1.545	17,8%	16,8%
	Technical experts	1.184	13,6%	11,6%
	Production workers	738	8,5%	18,9%
	Management	1.679	19,4%	19,6%
	Office workers	1.393	16,1%	10,0%
	Employers	144	1,7%	3,9%
	Small business owners	301	3,5%	6,9%
Staff/works council	Yes	7.161	78,8%	n.a.
	No	1.930	21,2%	n.a.

### Qualitative interviews

Parallel to the online survey, 27 qualitative interviews were conducted with employees and self-employed from various sectors and different forms of employment. The interviews covered the topics of the questionnaire, but were also open to topics and relevance settings of the interviewees. They also aimed to identify mechanisms underlying the inequality patterns and dynamics identified from the quantitative data. Overall, the invitation to interview at the end of the questionnaire met with a remarkable and broad response from different occupational groups and class locations. Although there is a certain overrepresentation of social and nursing professions and women in the interviews, it was also possible to conduct interviews with industrial workers and the self-employed. A more detailed analysis of the interview material and explanations of the methodological procedure can be found elsewhere (Holst et al. 2020).

#### 4. Intro – Extent of change and satisfaction with employer

*Our management reacted very wisely and very quickly. We started very early to divide all the people who work in critical areas into two groups. One group goes into home office and the other stays on site. In case there is an infection in one of groups, we still have a second group. [...] Later, the management sent the entire company into home office. To my knowledge, there is not a single sick person in our company so far.*

IT specialist, data processing

*I have the impression that there is some work being done and that those who are developing the concepts have an interest in protecting our health. Although the information policy could have been better in the initial phase, it is now working much better together with the works council. However, some employee groups are hardly reached at all.*

Letter sorters, postal and logistics companies

*It's stupid that you simply can't ask any questions and don't get a precise explanation on why something was done [...] That is a burden. You ask yourself why it was done, but you don't really find out anything. For example, the station that had to be closed because of the Corona. The only problem is that the staff and the patients had to leave the ward within three hours and didn't get any information why that was.*

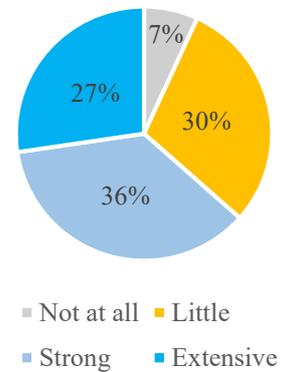
Educator, child and adolescent psychiatry

### 4.1 Extent of change

**Fig. 2 Pandemic-related change in work**

In its early stages, the pandemic had a **far-reaching impact on the world of work**: there was hardly a working person who was not affected, hardly an aspect of paid work that was not influenced. Only 7 percent of the participants reported that their work changed little or not at all as a result of Covid-19; for two-thirds, work actually changed a great deal (fig.2). Despite generally high levels of change, a number of **inequalities are striking**: More women than men experienced strong changes and East German workers reported lower levels of change than their West German colleagues. The gender differences are to a large extent due to sectoral differences:

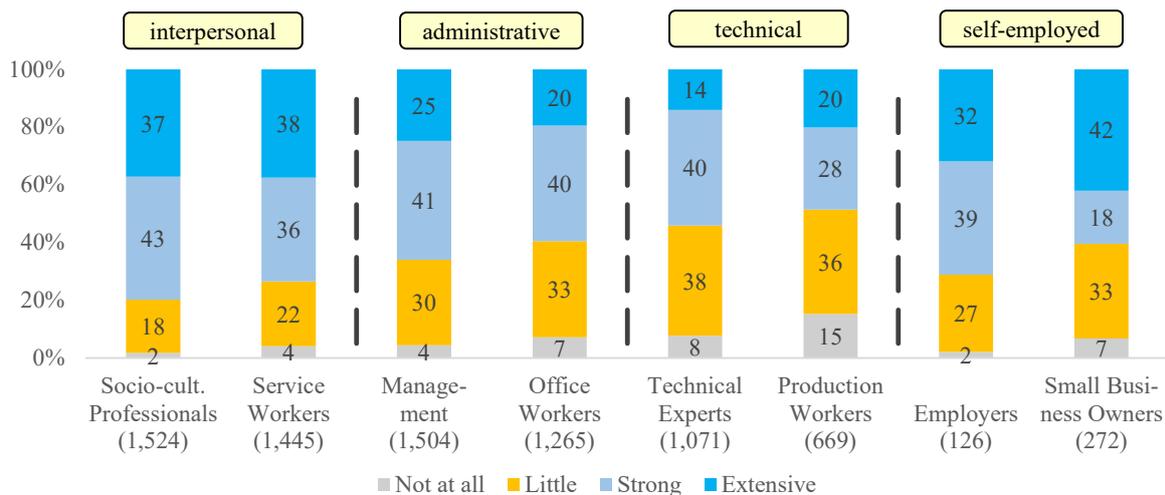
Employed persons (N=8,730)



Industries with high shares of women such as education and teaching, hospitality, culture and social work have higher shares of women; construction with a primarily male workforce had the smallest proportion of employees with strong changes.

The sectoral differences are accompanied by **inequalities at the occupational level** (Fig. 3): production workers (this class includes skilled and unskilled workers in industrial production, craftsmen, logistics workers and agricultural workers) show the highest proportion of individuals reporting that their work has not changed due to the pandemic; among socio-cultural professions (e.g. teachers, doctors, scientists) and service providers (e.g. non-academic education and nursing professions, cleaners, parcel delivery workers), there are the highest shares of strong change. As will become apparent in the further course, however, the pandemic caused very different changes in the various sectors of the labor force.

**Fig. 3 Pandemic-related change in work (Social class)**

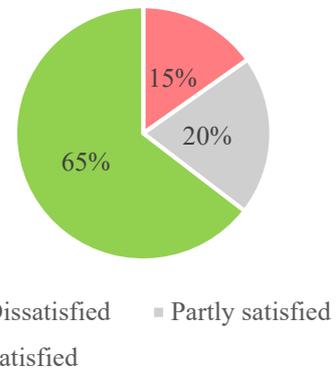


### 4.2 Satisfaction with the employer

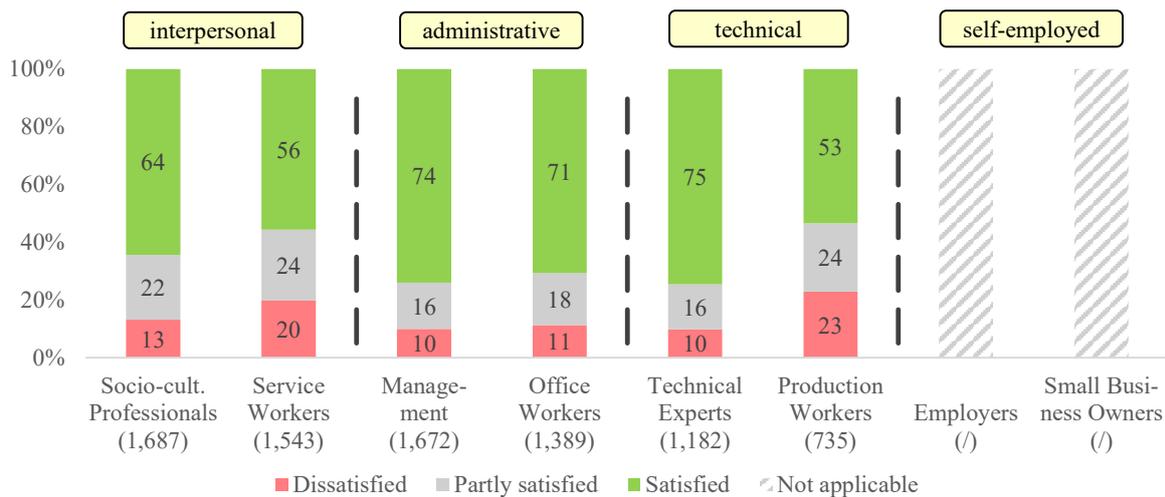
**Fig. 4 Satisfaction with the employer**

In view of the far-reaching and often severe effects of the pandemic on work-life, employees were **relatively satisfied with their employers' handling of the pandemic**. Two-thirds of the participants were explicitly satisfied with their employer's handling of the pandemic; only 15 percent were explicitly dissatisfied (Fig. 4). The **largest proportions of dissatisfied workers** were found in construction, hospitality and retail (over 20 percent each). While hospitality and retail were mainly closed at the time of the survey, construction stood out as having low levels of protective measures. On the occupational level, production workers and service workers showed the highest dissatisfaction with employers (23 and 20 percent). Both classes were most affected by the negative economic effects among wage earners (Fig. 5).

Wage earners (N=9,214)

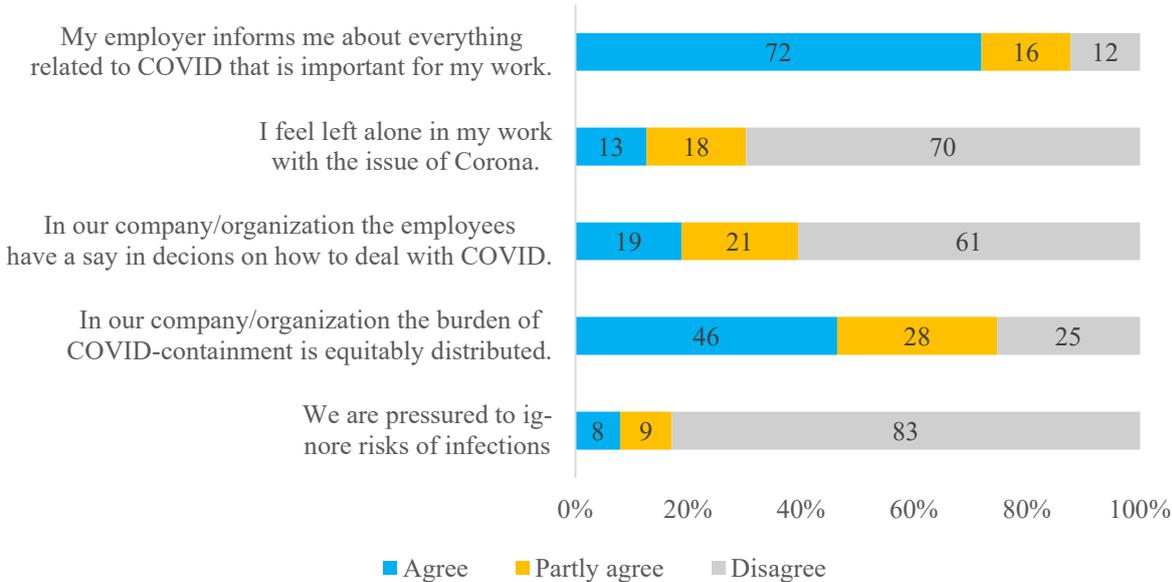


**Fig. 5 Satisfaction with the employer (Social class)**



**How do employees view employers' handling of the pandemic?** Fig. 6 shows that the flow of information was rated positively by three quarters of employees. Only one in eight employees gave their employer a bad mark in this respect. While information as the lowest level of participation functioned relatively well, employees' influence on Corona-related decisions remained low. Less than one fifth of the employees stated that they had some influence on their employer's decisions. Just under half of the participants rated the internal distribution of burdens between different employee groups as fair. On the societal level, this value was significantly lower: Here, only 12 percent assessed the distribution of Corona-related burdens in society as fair.

**Fig. 6 Employer's handling of the pandemic**



*Wage earners (N=9,214)*

**From the perspective of labor, what factors were important for satisfaction with employers' handling of the pandemic?** A regression analysis (see Detailed Results Report) shows that workers in the early stages of the pandemic had a great deal of sympathy for the difficult situation faced by many employers. Reductions in earnings and deteriorations in the quality of work did not automatically affect employees' assessment of their employers. Rather, employees assigned the highest priority to an open information policy, followed by a fair distribution of the Corona-related burdens within the company and a say in how the pandemic was handled within the company. In short, employees want to be fully informed, involved in decision-making and adequately protected from infection in the workplace. These aspects should also be taken into account in the second lockdown and the subsequent Corona waves.

## 5. Impact on work and employment – Income, insecurity, stresses and digitalization

*We had long phases where there were only two of us in the store, which is physically unbearable. The next day you have the feeling that you haven't slept, for weeks. Yes. It's very exhausting and very stressful. And that happens again and again.*

Customer consultant, retail trade

*We have an encompassing care obligation. We admit people who are acutely ill. [...] During the pandemic we have only received difficult patients [...] while the staff density is actually just as bad as before. The only difference is that now there are a lot of people working on the ward who don't have any experience about the standard processes in the ward.*

Educator, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

*The pandemic undermines my economic life. [...] I am a freelancer. I get paid if I do my work; if I can't do my work, I don't get any money. [...] When Corona started, the regularly employed musicians were all put on short-time work while the freelancers were not allowed to work anymore.*

Music teacher, freelance

*We had to reduce shifts and sent the shop floor workers into short-time work. For some people, money gets tight. To put it this way: 'At the end of the money there is still some month left'. Among the production workers, financial worries are growing. We already have the first cases that have go to debt counseling.*

Works Council, Metal and Electrical Industry

*Our work has become more digital and some is outsourced to platforms. In fact, a lot of things were done via WhatsApp, violating data protection regulations. We had to prepare for exams and did not have a suitable platform. We streamed. We really used everything that the digital world offered.*

Teacher, vocational school

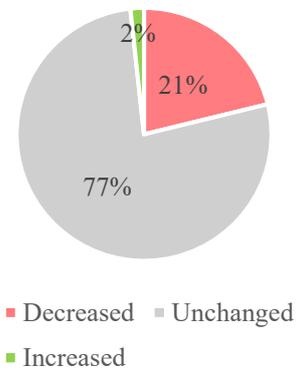
### 5.1 Income

A good fifth of the employed persons in our sample were confronted with the **negative economic effects** of the pandemic in April and May 2020 (fig. 7). Twenty-one percent of respondents suffered a loss of income. Negative economic effects were particularly evident in industries most affected by the pandemic’s economic turbulence: hospitality, culture, metal and electrical industry. Men were slightly more affected by income losses than women.

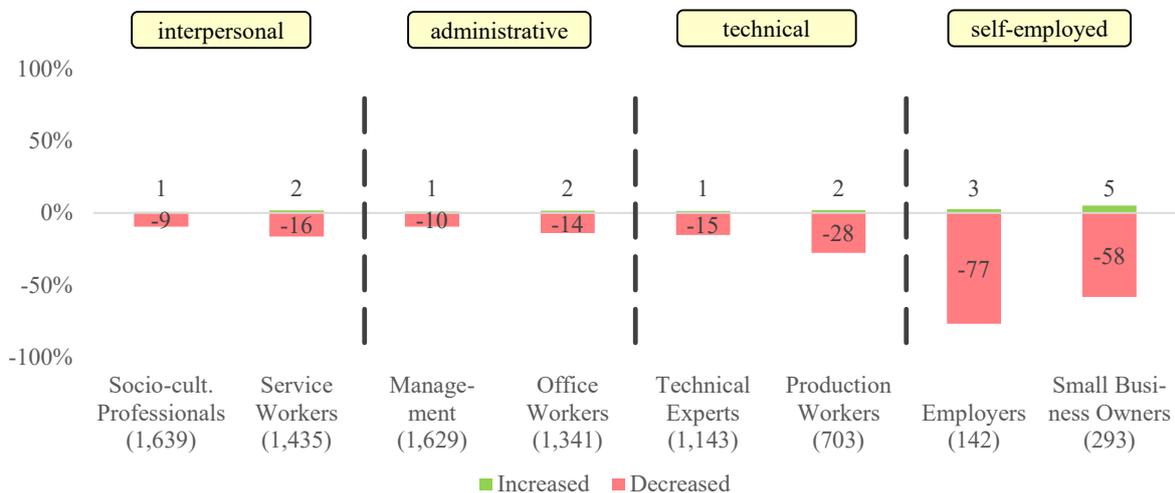
However, regression analyses show that there is no independent gender effect. Rather, the greater extent to which men are affected by earnings losses and job insecurity is due to the overrepresentation of men in occupations particularly affected by the economic crisis (Fig. 8). Self-employed occupations were most frequently affected by earnings losses. Almost 60 percent of small business owners stated that they had suffered a drop in earnings in the first weeks of the pandemic; among employers, this figure was even slightly higher. Also striking is the high proportion of those who rated the loss of earnings as threatening to their existence: Roughly 60 percent of small business owners who were confronted with earnings losses experienced the pandemic as a threat to their livelihood. Among dependent employees, production workers were particularly affected: 3 in 10 reported earnings losses.

**Fig. 7 Changes in income**

Employed persons (N=9,351)



**Fig. 8 Changes in income (Social class)**

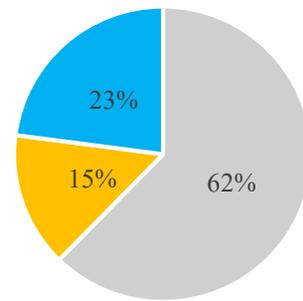


### 5.2 Job uncertainty

**Fig. 9 Growing job uncertainty due to Corona**

The negative economic effects of the pandemic were reflected not only in a drop in earnings, but also in **uncertainty about their professional future** (Fig. 9). Almost a quarter of the participants in the first survey in April and May 2020 explicitly stated that Corona had made their job future more uncertain. At the sector level, the picture was similar to that of the loss of earnings: labor from the hospitality industry, culture and the metal and electrical industries were affected most often.

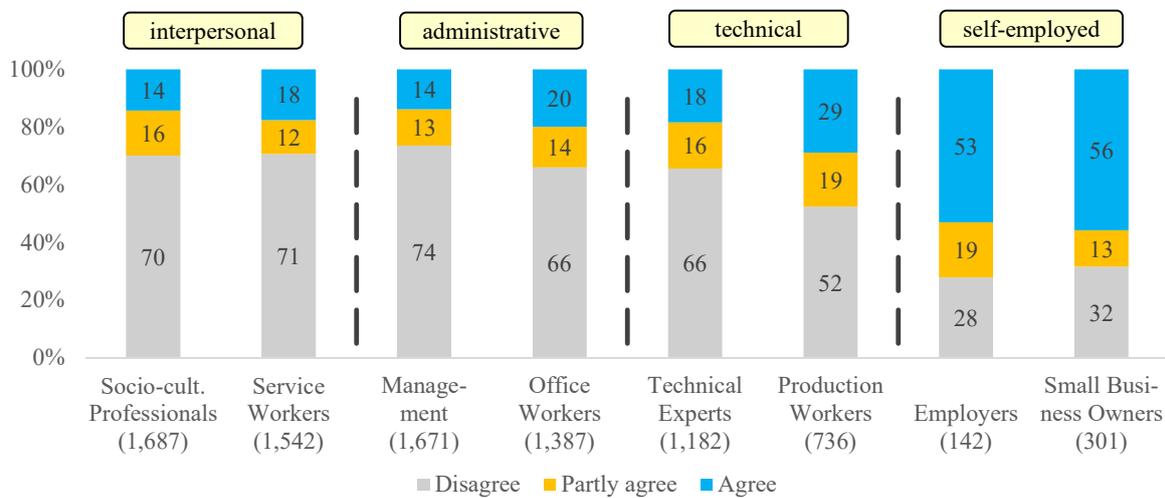
Employed persons (N=9,743)



■ Disagree ■ Partly agree ■ Agree

However, **occupational inequalities** were even more pronounced (Fig. 10). On the one hand, there are clear vertical inequalities: The academic occupations of the upper classes, which were privileged prior to the Corona pandemic, were generally less likely to be affected by rising insecurity than the lower classes. On the other hand, there were also clear horizontal differences. Again, the self-employed were particularly strongly affected: More than half indicated that the Corona pandemic made their job future more uncertain. Among dependent employees, production workers showed significantly higher levels of growing job uncertainty.

**Fig. 10 Growing job uncertainty due to COVID (Social class)**



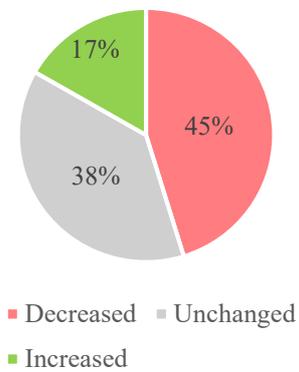
### 5.3 Work pressure

**Increased work pressure** was widespread in the first months of the pandemic (Fig. 11). Almost half of the participants stated that the work pressure increased in the early phase of the pandemic; for only 17 percent, work pressure decreased. Women were more affected by increasing work pressure than men, in large part due to the industries in which women dominate: Workers in the health care, trade and education and teaching sectors reported an above-average number of increased work pressure.

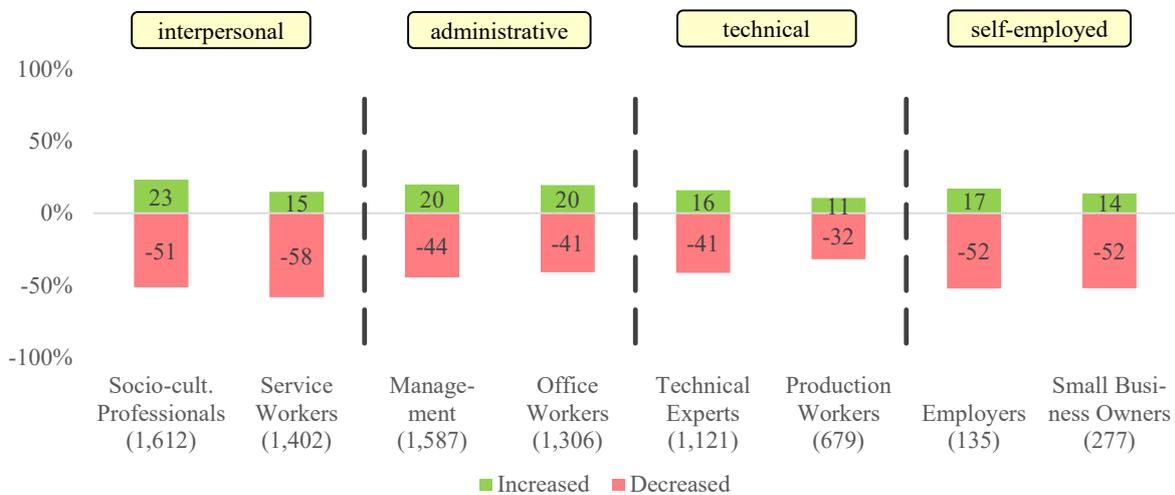
There were also some inequalities in the development of work pressure at the occupational level (Fig. 12). Small business owners and employers were affected most often by rising work pressure, as well as service workers. The proportion of those reporting rising work pressure was the smallest among production workers. It is important to note that rising work pressure was not fueled by the same factors across the different occupational groups: Different developments drove rising work pressure in the various occupational fields.

**Fig. 11 Change in work pressure**

Employed persons (N=9,103)



**Fig. 12 Changes in work pressure (Social class)**



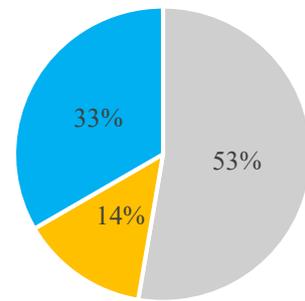
### 5.4 Digitization of work

**Fig. 13 Digitization of work through Corona**

One of the work-life effects of the pandemic intensively discussed in the media is the **digitization of work** (Fig. 13). One third of the respondents said that their work had become significantly more digital during the pandemic. The impact of digitization is, however, highly uneven. A digitization surge was most noticeable in the education & teaching, finance & insurance, and freelance professions sectors.

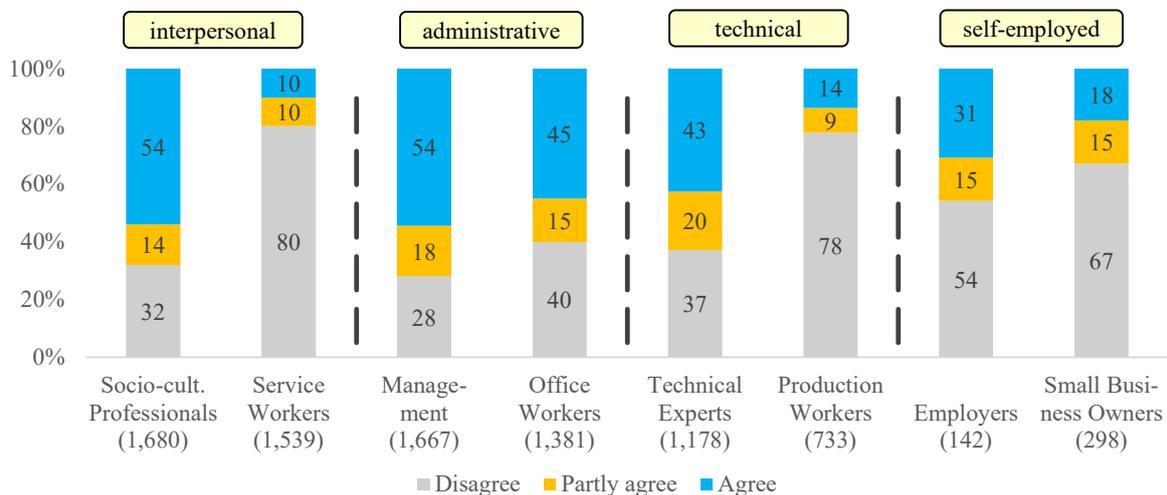
Digitization – parallel to mobile working – is primarily a phenomenon of academic professions in the upper employment classes (Fig. 14). The only exceptions are the non-academic office workers (e.g., secretaries, clerks, office helpers), whose work has also been digitized to an above-average extent – albeit at a lower level than the occupations belonging to the management class (e.g. HR managers, daycare center managers, executives). Digitization, thus, exhibits a striking element of horizontal differentiation among the lower classes: While production workers and service workers hardly experienced any digitization of work, the workplaces of office workers were characterized by a digitization of customer contact and of communication within the company. In many workforces – as is also evident in the interviews – the two worlds of experience collide and reinforce existing dividing lines between production, service and office workers in the lower occupational ranks.

Employed persons (N=9,713)



■ Disagree ■ Partly agree ■ Agree

**Fig. 14 Digitization of work due to COVID (Social class)**



## 6. Infection Risks – Infection Worries and Protective Measures

*Of course we have protection concepts. However, they cannot be implemented in the normal day-to-day life of a daycare center. I can't tell the children that we have to keep distance. Of course, we try to do that as much as possible. For example, if a child falls down, I can't throw a plaster on it from a distance and say, "Don't make such a fuss." [...]. Basically, anyone who works with people is at risk. [...] But many people don't care what happens to us, they just want to have their old life back. [...] We are now more than cannon fodder. So our [risk of infection] doesn't seem to interest anyone at all.*

Educator, day care center

*We have a much higher risk compared to those who can do home office, of course. We work very close to the customer. Also compared to other stores where the minimum distance can be maintained or where acrylic glass panels or similar can be installed. For our work, that doesn't work, that doesn't make sense.*

Customer consultant, optical company

*People who have to be in a certain place at a certain time really have a real problem. [...] The more dependent someone is in a company, the greater the risk. One can twist and turn things how you want: In the end you have to go to the locker room. You can do something by hygiene measures, etc. The employer has no interest that his workforce ends up in the hospital. The employer does everything in his power to keep people healthy. But the risk for workers who have to work on site is naturally greater than for others. No question about it.*

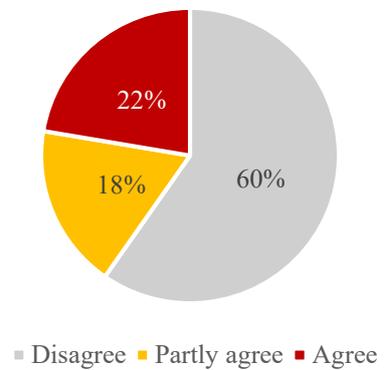
Works Council, Chemistry

### 6.1 Infection Worries

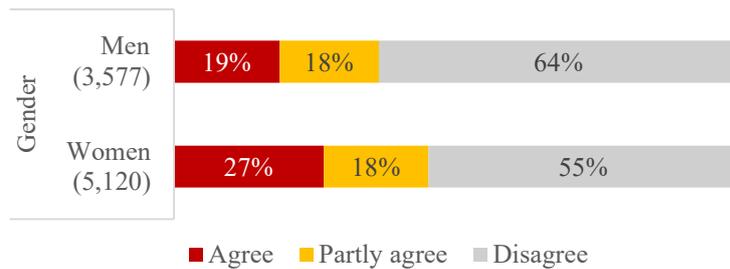
**Fig. 15 Worries about a Corona infection at work**

Nearly one-quarter of the employed expressed explicit worries about contracting Corona at work; 60 percent were not concerned (Fig. 15). However, **infection concerns were not equally distributed among the participants of the survey.** As expected, industries that involve co-presence or close contact with other humans were significantly more concerned. The highest levels were found in health care, education & teaching and retail; above-average infection worries were also found in social work and hospitality. Women articulated more often infection worries than men (Fig. 16). However, regression analyses show that, as with economic burdens, there is no independent gender effect on infection worries. Rather, the higher level of infection worries among women reflect the gendered division of labor: Women work more often in service occupations, where infection worries are particularly pronounced.

Employed persons (N=9,747)

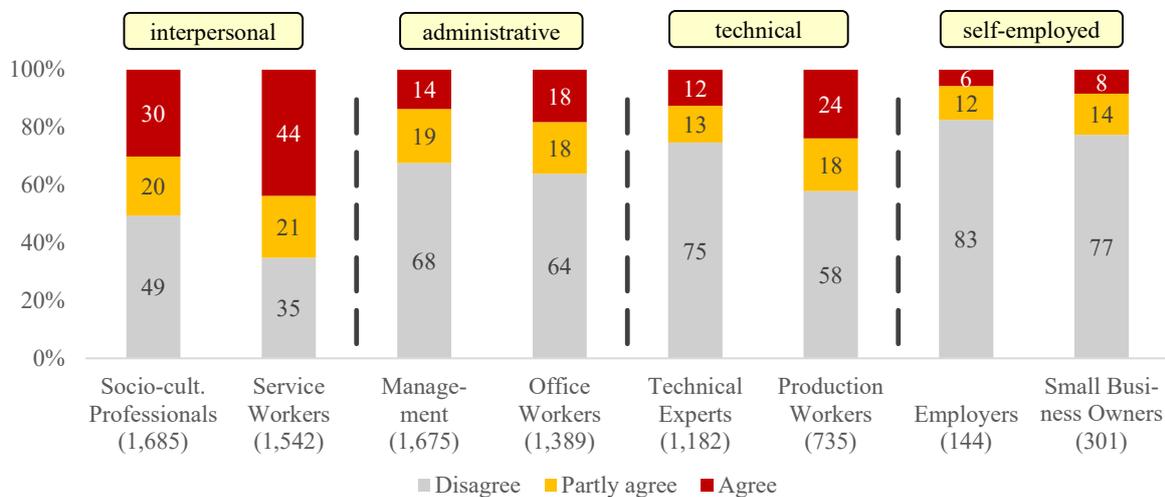


**Fig. 16 Worries about an infection at work (Gender)**



The inequalities are particularly clear at the **occupational level** (Fig. 17): Service occupations in which work is done with and on people expressed higher levels of infection worries, with non-academic service workers (especially in health and education) significantly more affected

**Fig. 17 Worries about an infection at work (Social class)**



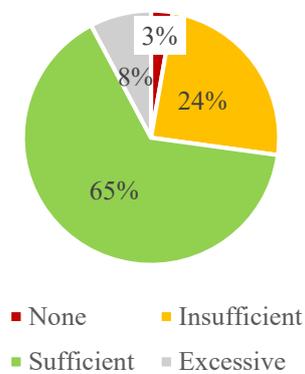
than the academic occupations of socio-cultural professions (especially academic health, education and social occupations). Of the non-academic service workers, 44 percent were concerned about infection in the workplace. Interestingly, of the other occupational classes, only production workers stood out in terms of infection risks. Compared to the upper technical class (technical experts) and to the administrative classes, production workers are physically tied to working in a factory, workshop or on a construction site. The possibilities to maintain physical distance to colleagues are limited in many work settings.

### 6.2 Protective measures

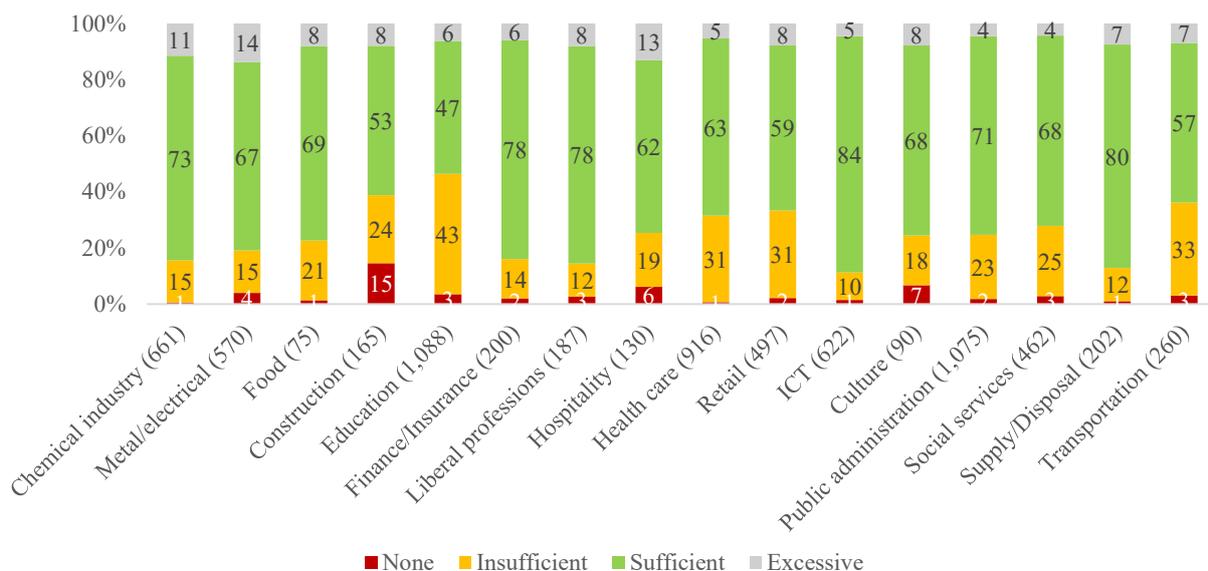
**Fig. 18 Assessment of the protective measures**

A similar picture emerged with regard to protective measures (Fig. 18): **two-thirds of those in employment described the measures taken by employers and clients to protect against infections at work as sufficient**, while a good quarter described them as insufficient (none or too few). At the sectoral level, construction, education, logistics and retail displayed high shares of insufficient measures (Fig. 19). At the occupational level, the assessment of protective measures reflects infection worries. Among service and production workers, only one in two rated their employer's protective measures as sufficient.

Wage earners (N=8,825)



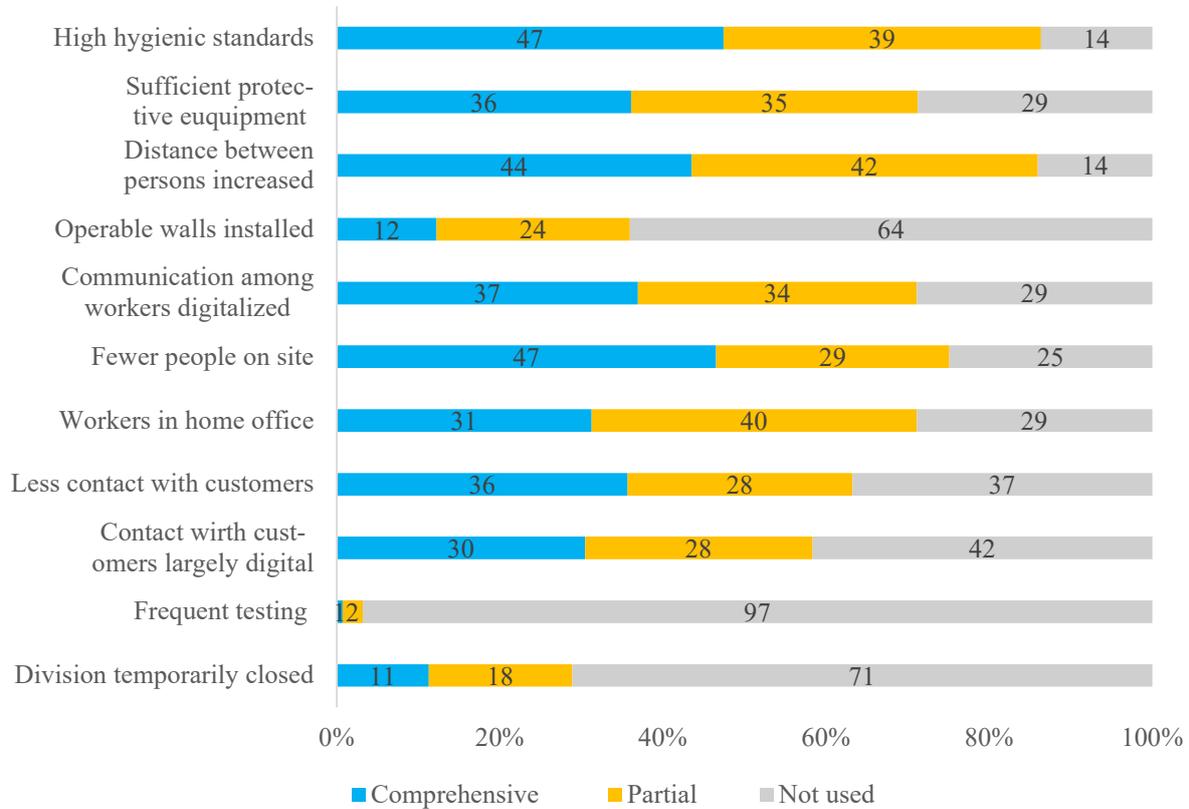
**Fig. 19 Assessment of protective measures (Industry)**



How widespread were certain protective measures in the early phase of the pandemic and which measures were considered important by workers? Fig. 20 shows the **use of various protective measures** in April and May 2020. The most widespread were thinning out shifts, ensuring hy-

giene standards and increasing the distance between workers. Strikingly, there were larger differences between occupational groups, particularly for thinning shifts: Employers used this tool significantly less frequently in areas populated by production workers and service workers.

**Fig. 20 Distribution of protective measures**



*Wage earners (N=8.769)*

On the **relevance of protective measures** for employees: Across all occupational fields, compliance with hygiene standards by the employer was very important to employees. Production workers, service providers and socio-cultural experts also considered the provision of protective equipment to be highly important for the safety at work, while in office-based jobs, the digitalization of contact with both colleagues and customers was considered to be an important measure to prevent infections with the coronavirus at work.

## 7. Mobile working – Access and satisfaction

*I'm in the lucky position of having a large apartment and a separate room for work. I can do that, but I know from colleagues that they have to work at the kitchen table or at the dining table. Not everyone has the same opportunity as I do.*

Works council, railroad company

*Because I no longer have to commute and I also have reduced my hours to 70%, I actually have a lot more free time. So I usually work from 7.00 to 12.30 now. Before, I was out of the house for, ten and a half hours, and now it's exactly five and a half. Because right now I go to my computer and then I leave again. Of course, this has given me much, much more free time.*

IT specialist, data processing company

*One experience people have is that my back hurts after a week of home office because my apartment isn't set up for it at all. Or when someone calls me at half past ten at night and says: I've been trying to reach you for three hours. Where are you? The position in the hierarchy plays a very important role here. Can people really freely dispose of their own work time and availability? Not everyone can say: I'm not available now.*

Works Council, Chemistry

*I've been interested in doing home office for a while because my commute is almost one hour. Until now, there was little support from management, they didn't want it. [...] But now the management is totally open-minded. They have noticed that it works and feel that they can't go back. There will definitely be more opportunities for home office after Corona.*

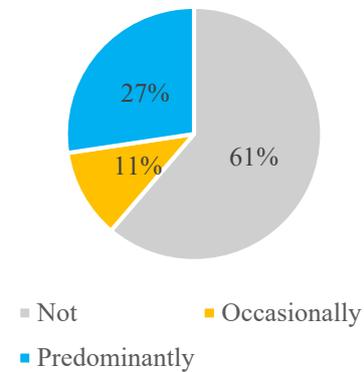
Administrative employee, development aid

### 7.1 Access to mobile working

**Fig. 21 Employees working more often from home during the pandemic**

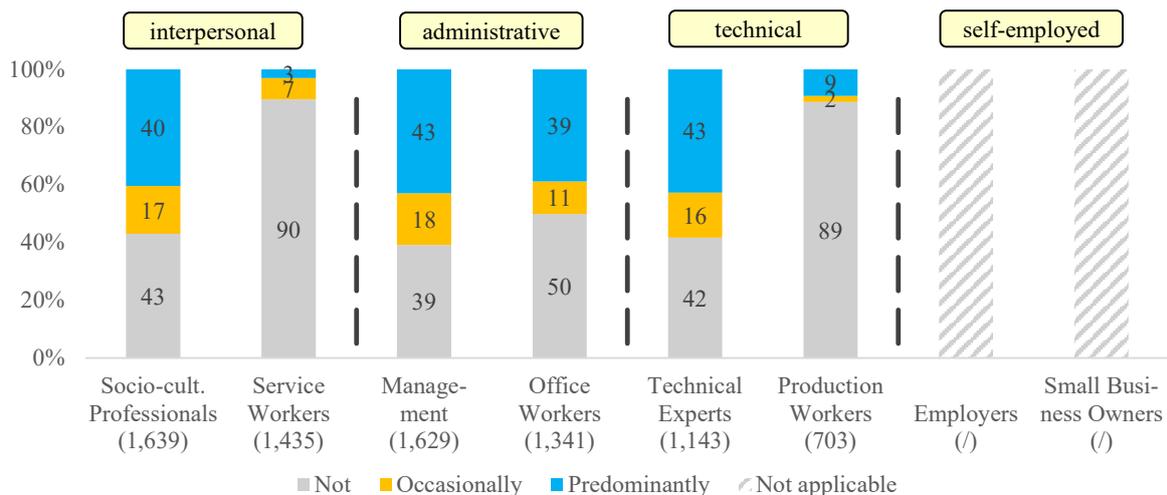
Home office or mobile working was one of the most heavily promoted protective measures at work by the federal government in the early stages of the pandemic. The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) and the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (BMAS) recommended that, for reasons of infection control, employers should give as many employees as possible the opportunity to work from home. This trend was also evident in our survey (Fig. 21): **Almost 40 percent of participants worked from home more in April and May 2020 than before the pandemic**, and 27 percent did so mainly or exclusively.

Wage earners (N=8,828)



**However, access to mobile working showed considerable disparities.** At the industry level, the proportion of people working from home was particularly high in information and communications, while the prevalence was also above average in the independent professions (e.g. doctors, lawyers, accountants), education and training, and finance and insurance. Even more pronounced than the industry differences, however, were the **occupational inequalities** (Fig. 22). To put it bluntly: It was mainly the academic professions in the upper employment classes that were able to switch to the home office (management professions and technical experts to the greatest extent, sociocultural professions to a somewhat lesser extent); among the skilled and unskilled jobs in the lower employment classes, only office and administrative workers were given the opportunity to work more from home to a greater extent. Production workers and service providers in particular had almost no such opportunity.

**Fig. 22 Working more often from home (Social class)**

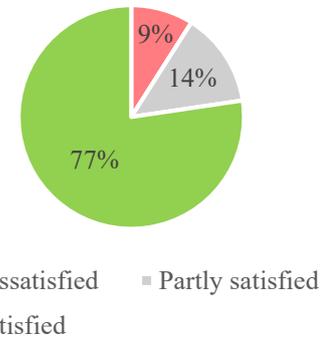


### 7.2 Satisfaction with home office

**Fig. 23 Satisfaction with the employer's home office arrangements**

The **high level of satisfaction with the implementation of home office** was striking: three-quarters of those who increasingly worked from home during the pandemic explicitly expressed satisfaction with their employer's home office arrangements, and only 9 percent were not satisfied (Fig. 23). At the industry level, the only noticeable decrease in satisfaction was in education. In many cases, the closure of schools and childcare facilities led to a kind of "involuntary" home office that was hardly prepared by employers.

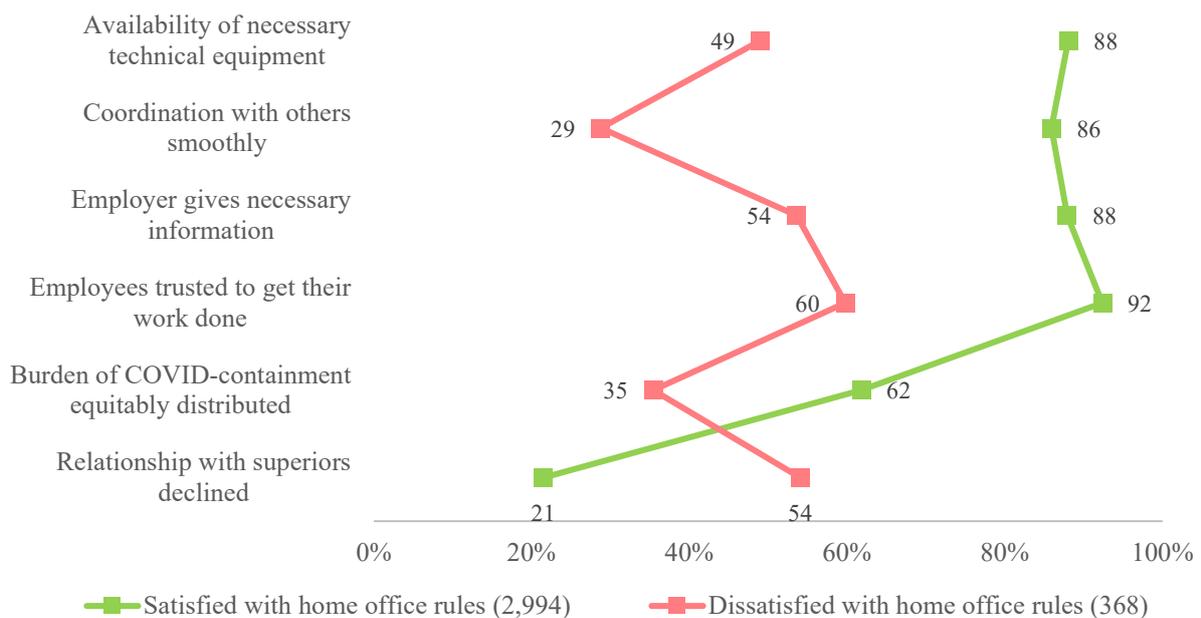
Wage earners working from home (N=3,975)



### 7.3 Success factors of mobile working

From the perspective of the employees, integration into the company and communication with other units as well as, to a lesser extent, the technical requirements proved to be the Achilles' heels of the "new" home office (Fig. 24). Although the proportion of dissatisfied employees was relatively small overall, their dissatisfaction was often fed by the disrupted cooperation with other people or units in the company. Interestingly, fears of control did not play a major role for employees at the early stage of the pandemic. Although it is to be expected that as the pandemic progressed, other topics of workplace design became more important including ergonomics, autonomy in working hours, and the exercise of control by supervisors. Yet, the functional and social integration of employees working from home remains an important question in the design and practice of mobile working.

**Fig. 24 Success factors of mobile working by satisfaction with home office**



*Wage earners by satisfaction with employer's home office rules, Agreement in percent*

## 8. Short-time work (Kurzarbeit) – Prevalence and financial consequences

*Very early, our sales force - we have a very large sales force that supplies hotels, restaurants, kindergartens, hospitals and so on - was put on short-time working. They were no longer allowed to drive to the customers. Our sales representatives were very happy that they were covered by the collective wage agreement. So, due to short-time work, our field staff was not thrown back to subsistence levels. They got up to 90 percent of their regular payment.*

Works council, food industry

*We must prepare our workforce for the fact that this issue of short-time working will not be the only possible measure for the future in order to preserve jobs. I'm going to put it bluntly right now. Knowing our Board of Management as I do, we will most likely soon discuss more severe measures to preserve jobs in our region including pay cuts and so on.*

Works Council, Metal and Electrical Industry

*Suddenly, all the orders fell away. [...] Our customers were shut down. There were a lot of returns. Within a short period of time, the situation escalated to short-time work. [...] One of the first big conflicts we had with the management because of Corona was about the design of short-time work, because we didn't want to do it the way our management did. However, legally short-time work is not possible without the consent of the works council. So the works council has to agree, and that's why the management couldn't just ignore us like in other cases. The Corona crisis has clearly taken the old conflict of whether management wants co-determination or not to an extreme.*

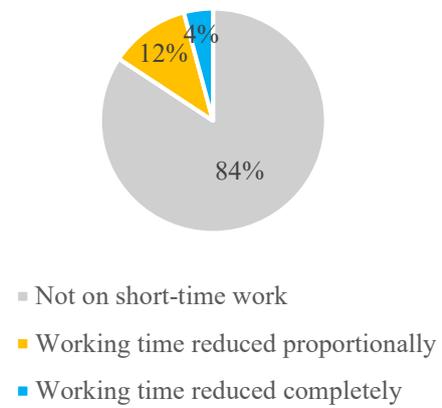
Works council, chemical industry

### 8.1 Prevalence of short-time work

**Fig. 25 Proportion of employees on short-time work schemes**

16 percent of the wage earners in our sample stated that they had reduced their working hours through short-time work at the time of the survey, either completely or proportionately (Fig. 25). However, short-time work was primarily a **phenomenon of certain industries during the first months of the pandemic**: Hotels and restaurants, metal and electrical, and culture had the highest shares of employees on short-time work. The retail sector also had a noticeably higher share.

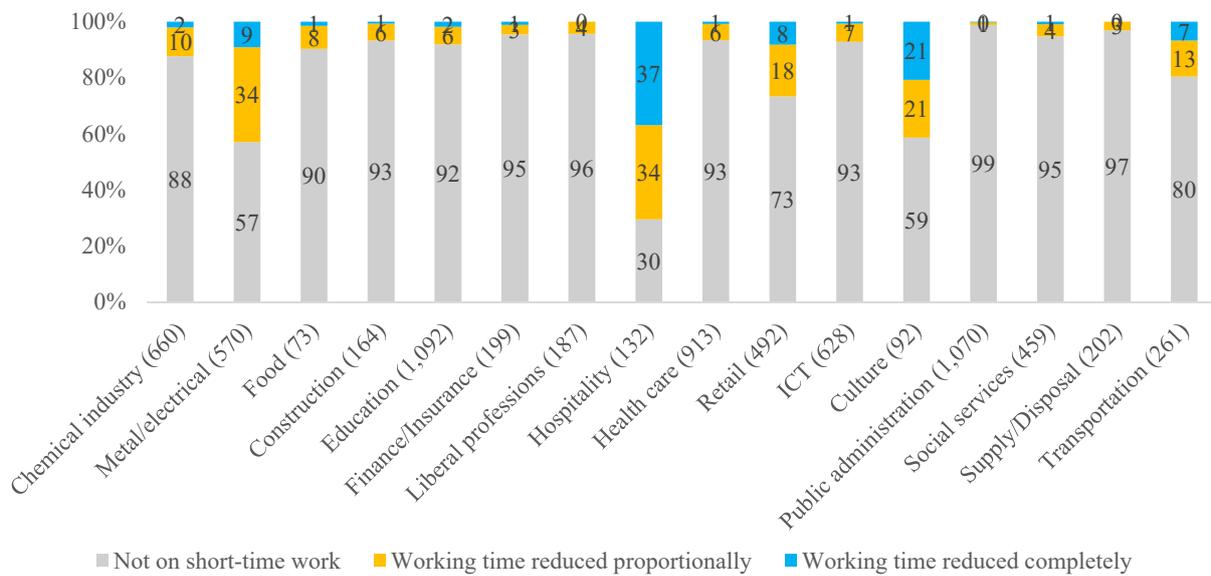
Wage earners (N=8,828)



At the **occupational level** (Fig. 26), production workers stand out with above-average shares of short-time work.

Among service workers, the picture is more mixed: Some occupations (e.g. salespersons, day-care teachers) were also strongly affected, while others were hardly affected at all (e.g. health and social professions). Unlike in many other topics of this report, class does not play a major role in the experience of short-time work; the sectors are more important here.

**Fig. 26 Proportion of employees on short-time work schemes (Industry)**

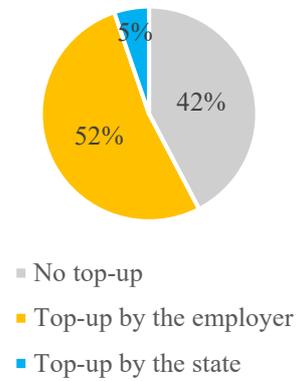


### 8.2 Benefit top-up of short-time allowance

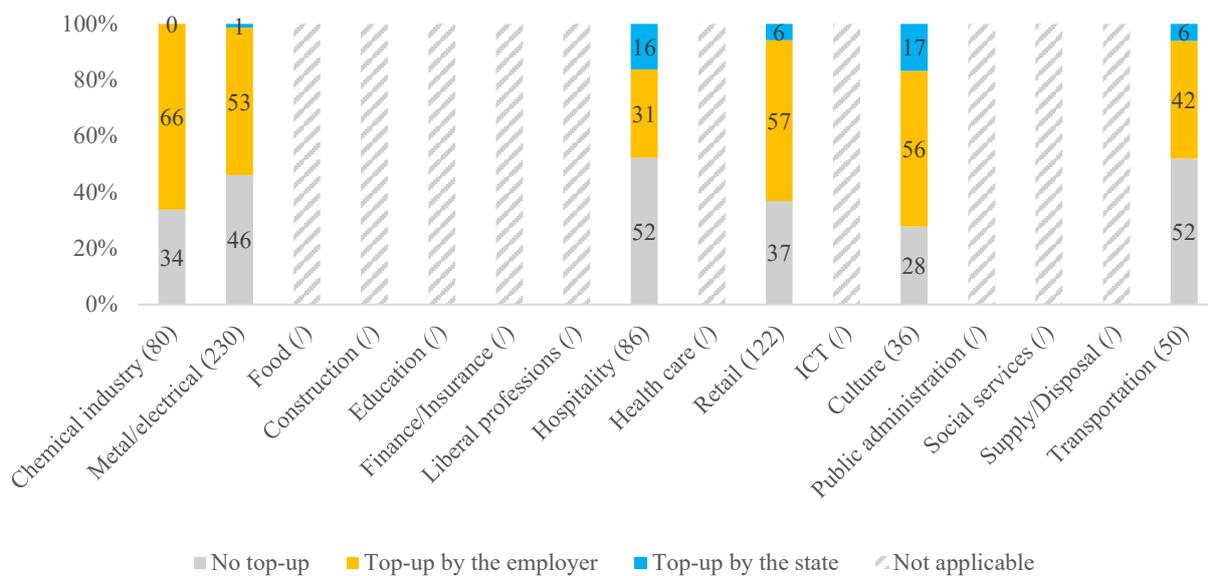
**Fig. 27 Proportion of employees with a benefit top-up**

In the early phase of the pandemic, many employers topped up their employees' **short-time allowances** (Fig. 27). In addition to short-time allowances, some employees also received supplementary state benefits (Hartz IV). The proportions were particularly high in the hospitality and cultural sectors (Fig. 28). These are sectors in which traditionally low wages are relatively widespread.

Wage earners on short-time work (N=1.155)



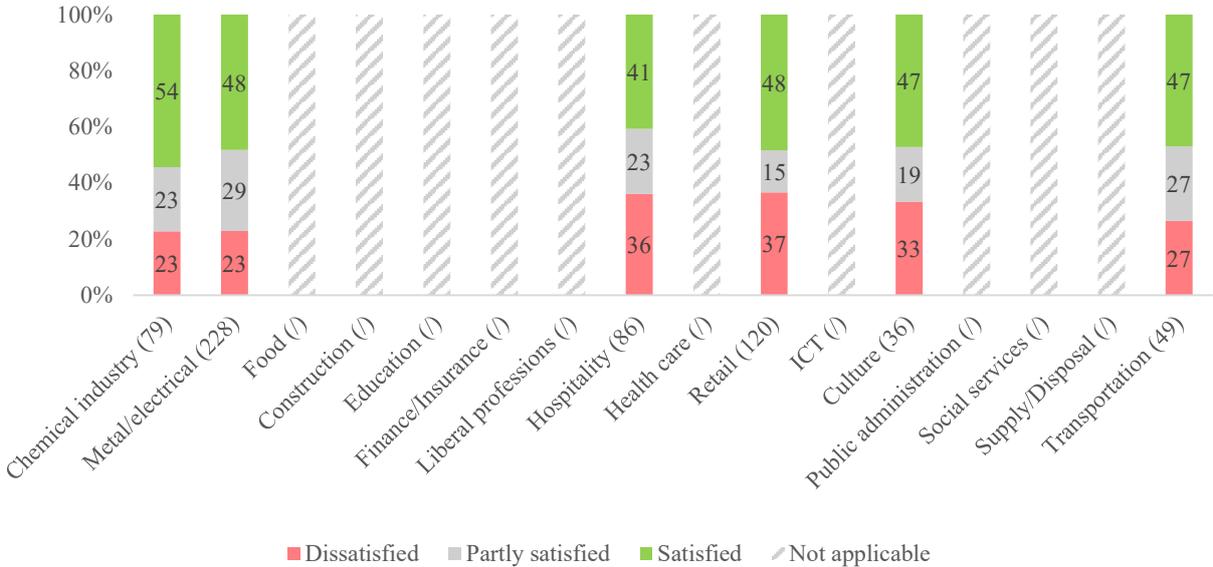
**Fig. 28 Proportion of employees with a benefit top-up (Industry)**



### 8.3 Satisfaction with the employer's short-time work arrangements

Employees' satisfaction with the implementation of short-time work in their company was at a moderately high level. Just under half of workers on short-time work schemes were satisfied, about a third were dissatisfied (Fig. 29). There were no noticeable differences neither at the sectoral nor the occupational level.

**Fig. 48 Satisfaction with employer's short-time work arrangements (Industry)**



## 9. Balance between Paid Work and Childcare – Conflicts and organization of childcare

*Yes - the problem - is that the administration, of course, can actually stay at home more easily, and so those who have family responsibilities have more opportunities to organize their lives. A production worker has to be in a company at a certain time and has a real problem. There have been people in our country who have said, "What am I going to do with my children? They can't go to school, they can't go to kindergarten. I have to come to work. How am I supposed to do that, what am I supposed to do?"*

Works council, chemical industry

*I was offered a position on the crisis team of the City [...]. I turned it down because of the meetings after 8 pm. There is no permanent woman on the crisis team. [...] How can you do your job AND teach the children? With the kids, I went back to what's important to me. Reconciling family and work: it's also difficult for fathers who want to be fathers. Employers think: Mothers are not available like that. In Germany, it is typical that you have to work 60 hours a week for a qualified position and be "always available".*

Spokesperson, Rescue Service

*The nervous tension is clearly noticeable. The time is very exhausting and stressful for women. Children around the clock. If you work part-time, they are harnessed for the children. Those who want to cope are spinning their wheels. Responsibility is still very classically distributed. We have a lot of feedback from women, "I can't even think right now." Corona exposes the structures as if under a burning glass. Family work is imposed on women.*

Director, Women's Vocational Counseling Center

9.1 Conflicts between paid work and childcare

Fig. 30 Conflicts between childcare and paid work

Childcare obligations developed into a strong stress factor in the early phase of the pandemic (Fig. 30). More than 50 percent of all participants with children reported frequent or very frequent conflicts between childcare and paid work. Women were significantly more affected than men (Fig. 31): they were twice as likely as men to report very frequent conflicts (33 vs. 20 percent). Due to their role as mothers, working women were thus significantly more affected by conflicts between paid work and childcare than men. Given the persistent asymmetries in the social distribution of care work in the societies of the Global North, this result is not surprising.

Employed persons with childcare (N=2,601)

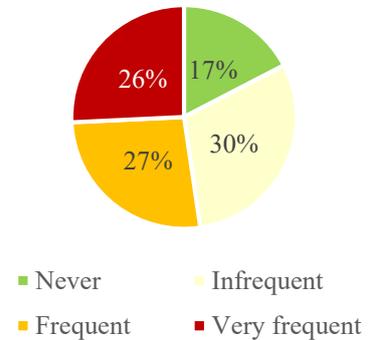
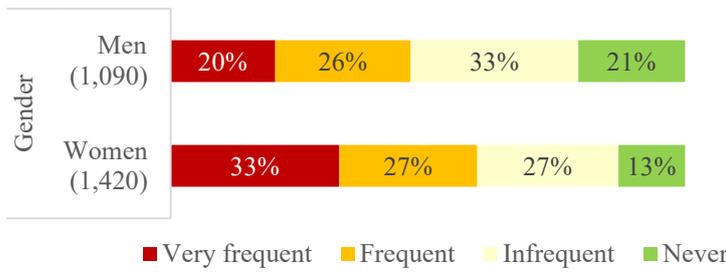


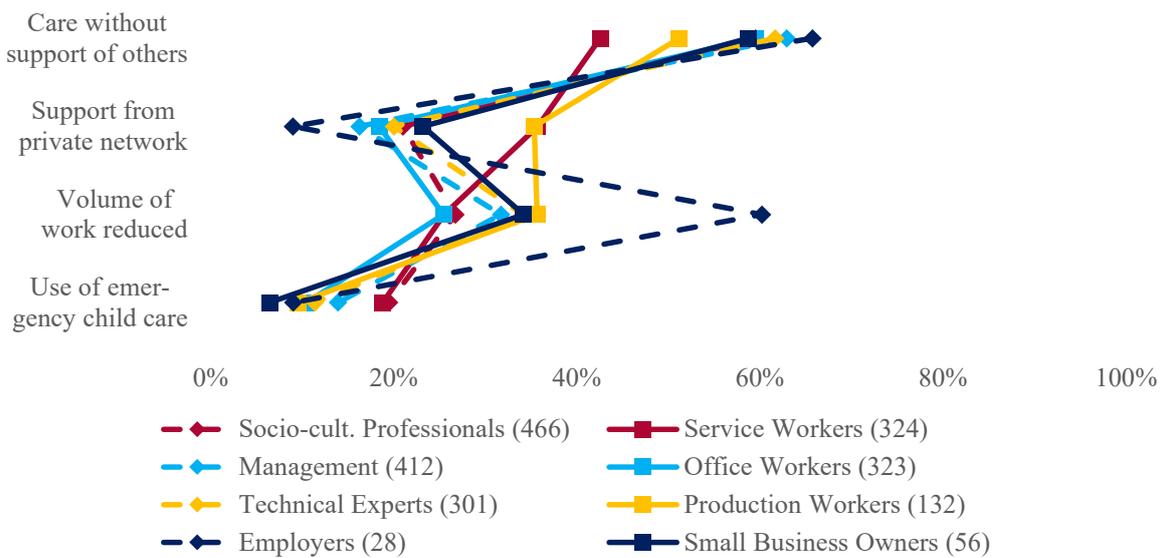
Fig. 31 Conflicts between childcare and paid work (Gender)



### 9.2 Organization of childcare in times of closure of schools and daycare centers

A look at the **organization of childcare in the phase of closure** of childcare facilities shows clear inequalities between the working classes (Fig. 32): Production workers and service workers had to resort to "risky" practices significantly more often than members of the upper working classes: On the one hand they needed support from the social network significantly more often (synonymous with additional infection risks due to more social contacts), on the other hand they were forced to reduce their own working hours or those of their partner more often (synonymous with a loss of income) in order to reconcile care tasks with gainful employment.

**Fig. 32 Organization of childcare (Social class)**



*Employed persons with childcare by social class, Agreement in percent*

## 10. Politics – Satisfaction, burden sharing, participation

*I can well understand the protests. I almost ran with them, but I mentally rowed back again. There are too many conspiracy theorists. And I don't want to join these circles. Even if I see many things really very critically. Because we simply can't verify it. We can't know whether what we're being told is true. [...] I would like to believe a virologist. But if one virologist says one thing and another says something else, then it becomes critical. Of course, on the other hand, it is also critical if you let one of 100 talk and forbid the other 99 to speak, that is not possible either. Many things simply have 1,000 question marks.*

Music teacher, freelance

*One should always have hope. But I honestly don't believe that anything will improve. When I consider that the money is relatively loose for the support of the automotive industry or other industries, but still no regulation has been found for the workers in the clinics, then I don't believe that anything will change. [...] Actually, I would wish that [in the nursing sector], where people are always working at the limit anyway, that there would be more staff. We are already under pressure because there is too little staff and now, with Corona, we have an additional extraordinary burden. This could all have been cushioned somewhat with more people. That's why I would actually like to see politicians thinking about how things actually are with the personnel in these areas. That would be my wish. I don't want more money, I don't care about that, the working conditions are a bigger issue.*

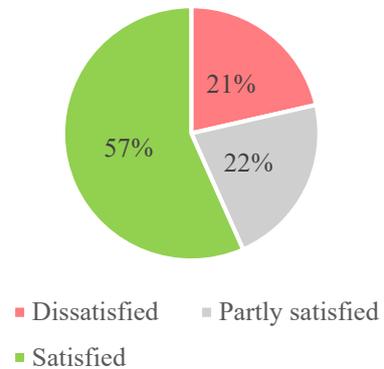
Educator, child and adolescent psychiatry

### 10.1 Satisfaction with politics

**Fig. 33 Satisfaction with how politics handle the pandemic**

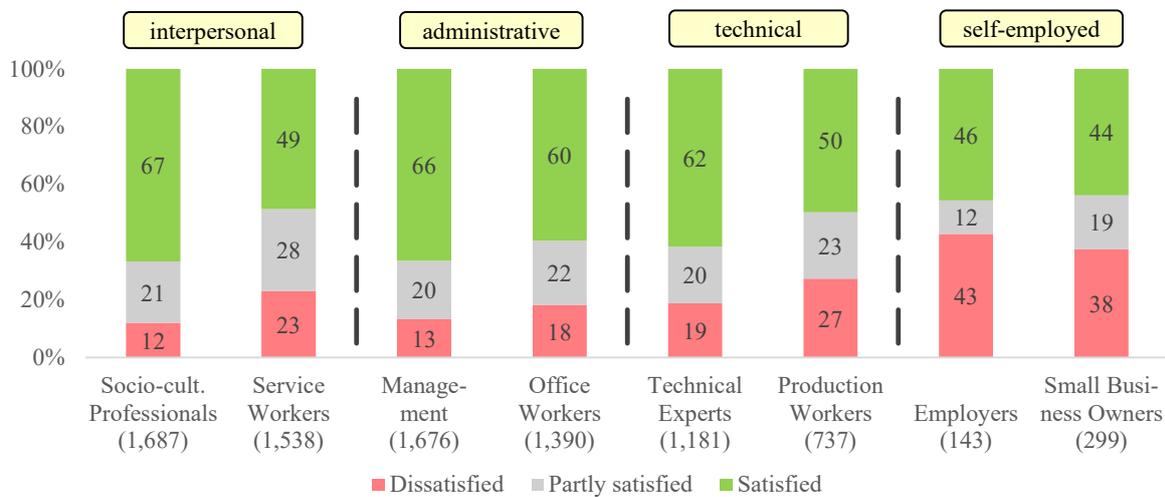
Overall, **satisfaction with politics in the early phase of the pandemic was relatively high** (Fig. 33): Only a good fifth of the participants expressed dissatisfaction. In Eastern Germany, the proportion of those dissatisfied was significantly higher than in Western Germany (26 to 17 percent). The dissatisfaction is particularly striking in construction, culture, metal and electrical industries, retail and hospitality sectors – which are particularly affected by the negative effects of pandemic (economic consequences, insufficient protective measures).

Employed persons (N=9,745)



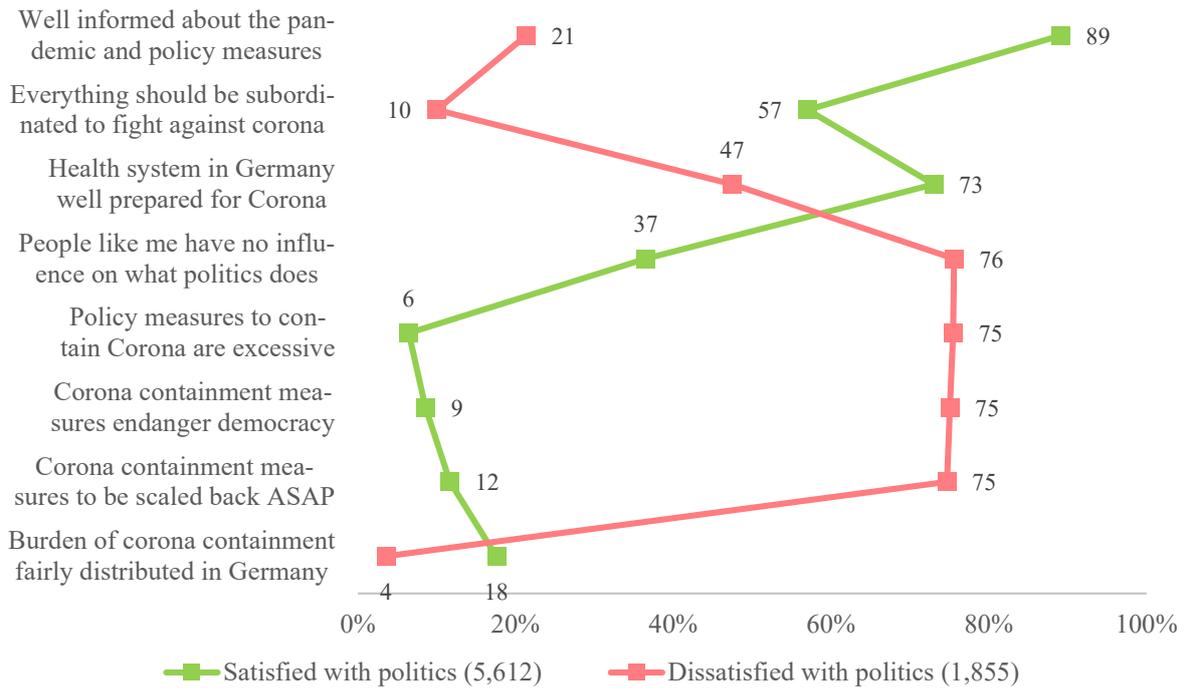
Inequalities are also apparent at the occupational level (Fig. 34). In addition to the self-employed, who were hit hard economically, production workers (e.g., mechatronics technicians, craftsmen, logisticians) and service workers (e.g., care professions, salespersons, catering workers) also showed lower satisfaction with the policy – and thus those social classes that were most affected by the negative effects of the pandemic among dependent employees.

**Fig. 34 Satisfaction with how politics handle the pandemic (Social class)**



A closer look at the dissatisfied respondents' **assessments of the political handling of the pandemic** (Fig. 35) shows that although the dissatisfied are a minority (about a fifth of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with politics), their dissatisfaction was far-reaching: three-quarters of the dissatisfied considered the containment measures to be excessive, saw them as a threat to democracy and called for them to be withdrawn as quickly as possible. It is also striking that the dissatisfied felt significantly less well informed about the pandemic and its political handling than those who were satisfied with the political response to the pandemic.

**Abb. 35 Views on the political handling of the pandemic**

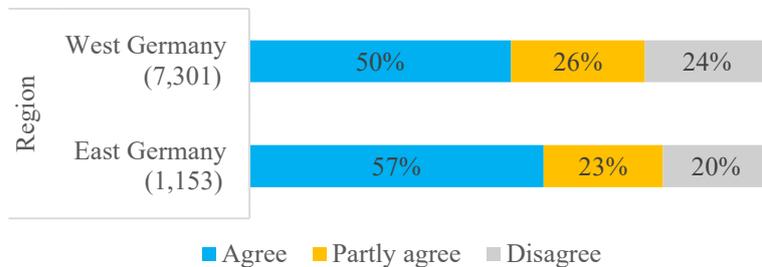


*Employed persons by satisfaction with politic's handling of the pandemic, Agreement in percent*

**10.2 Participation in politics (responsiveness)**

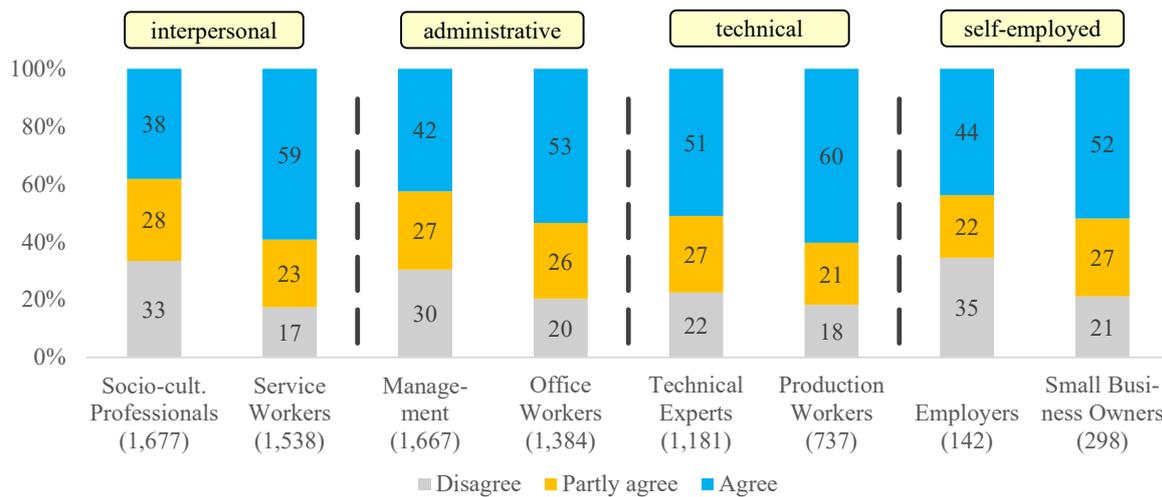
Equally striking is the **low level of participation in politics in the eyes of the employed** (Fig. 36). Around half of the respondents agreed with the statement that "people like us have no influence on politics." In Eastern Germany, the subjective participation deficits were even more widespread than in western Germany.

**Fig. 36 Participation deficits (Region)**



There were also striking disparities on the **occupational level** (Fig. 37): The non-academic occupations of production workers and service workers, both most affected by the negative effects of the pandemic, diagnosed participation deficits significantly more often than the upper classes. Participation deficits were lowest among employers and management occupations. The heavier economic and health burdens, especially among the lower service and production workers, were exacerbated by the asymmetries in subjective participation opportunities.

**Fig. 37 Participation deficits (Social class)**

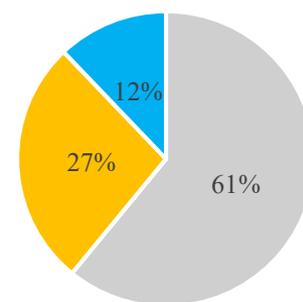


### 10.3 Fairness of the distribution of the pandemic’s burdens

**Fig. 38 Equitable distribution of the burden of the pandemic**

Six out of ten employed persons **considered the distribution of the pandemic’s burdens in society to be unfair** (Fig. 38). Compared with most other topics in this report, the differences in fairness assessments were rather small. No major differences were found either at the industry level or among the labor force classes. Apparently, there was a relatively high degree of agreement among the labor force about the unfairness of burden sharing in the pandemic.

Employed persons (N=9,662)



■ Disagree ■ Partly agree ■ Agree

## 11. Influence of co-determination – Economic consequences and mobile working

*The works councils and the trade union have to be present in the everyday lives of the employees. It will certainly not be enough to say: “We are in favor of these and the occupational safety regulations, we are in favor of these and the safety concepts, and if you have any questions, you can come to us.” It's not enough for them to just offer help. Works councils and the union have to be more proactive and also address the problems that are circulating among the employees about the Corona crisis. They also have to stand up to that, they have to be more proactive than they have been up to now.*

Letter sorter, postal company

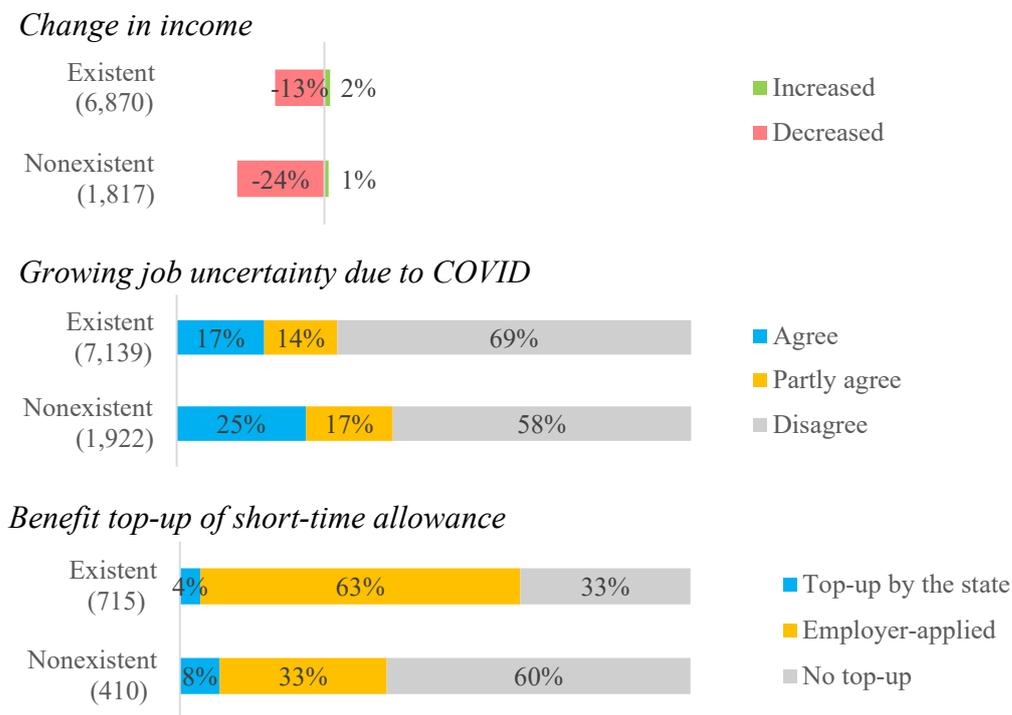
*No. We tried to establish a works council some time ago. But the initiative was shut down. Instead a so called trust team was set up. People who have problems can go there. But you never talk about problems with the boss at eye level. So it doesn't really help us. [...] In the end, the level of participation depends on who is running the store. There are people who are not very interested in how the employees are doing or that people in positions of responsibility comply with regulations.*

Customer consultant, retail

### 11.1 Economic effects of co-determination

In the early phase, co-determination (Fig. 39) had a clear influence on the **economic consequences** of the pandemic and the **range of mobile working**. However, co-determination had no significant effects on the pandemic’s effects on the quality of work, on infection worries and the assessment of the firm’s protective measures. Employees from co-determined companies with a works council or staff council were significantly less likely to suffer a loss of earnings, were also significantly less likely to feel insecure about their professional future and were significantly more likely to receive a benefit top-up to the public short-time allowance from their employer.

**Abb. 39 Economic effects by codetermination**

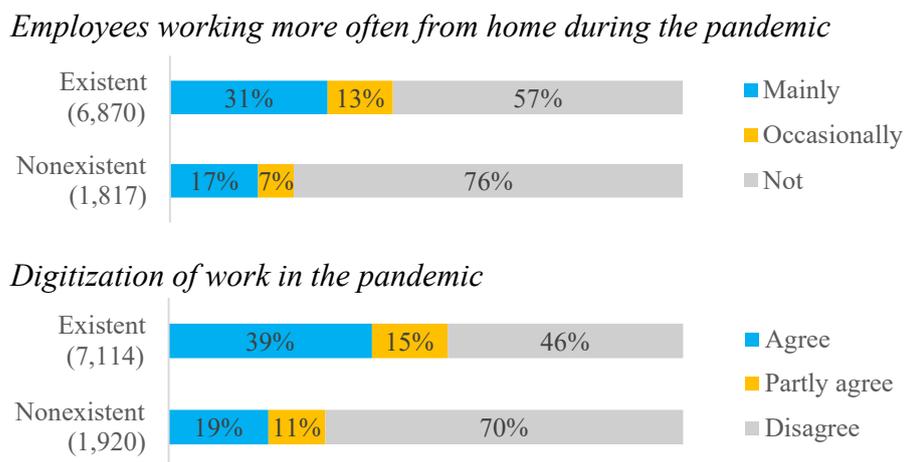


In contrast, the co-determination factor did not play a significant role in the assessment of **infection risks and the assessment of protective measures**: employees from companies with and without employee representation viewed infection risks in a similar way. Given the importance of occupational health and safety for many works and staff councils, this is a surprising finding.

## 11.2 Co-determination and mobile working

Works and staff councils also acted as **promoters of mobile working** in the early phase of the pandemic (Fig. 40). In establishments with works councils or staff councils, the proportion of employees who were able to switch to home office was significantly higher than in non-co-determined companies. The same applies to digitalization. Employees from co-determined establishments were significantly more likely to experience a digitization surge in their work.

**Abb. 40 Mobile working and digitization by co-determination**



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## Appendix 1: Detailed sample representation

	Case num- bers	Shares
Accesses to survey	14.253	
Not started	2.173	
Non-employed	997	
Incomplete interviews	1.308	
<b>Completes Interviews</b>	<b>9.775</b>	
<i>Gender</i>		
Man	3.589	41,0%
Women	5.132	58,6%
Diverse	38	0,4%
<i>Age</i>		
Under 30 years	1.102	12,5%
30 to 50 years	4.011	45,4%
50 years and older	3.722	42,1%
<i>Childcare obligations</i>		
No	6.394	71,1%
Yes	2.601	28,9%
<i>Professional degree</i>		
None	235	2,7%
Vocational training	4.514	52,0%
Study	3.927	45,3%
<i>Monthly net income</i>		
Under 1.500€	1.663	20,0%
1.500-3.000€	4.790	57,7%
Over 3.000€	1.845	22,2%
<i>State</i>		
Baden-Württemberg	1.161	13,2%
Bavaria	1.080	12,3%
Berlin	300	3,4%
Brandenburg	148	1,7%
Bremen	193	2,2%
Hamburg	295	3,3%
Hesse	839	9,5%
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	161	1,8%
Lower Saxony	2.103	23,9%
North Rhine-Westphalia	1.006	11,4%
Rhineland-Palatinate	220	2,5%
Saarland	53	0,6%
Saxony	372	4,2%
Saxony-Anhalt	158	1,8%
Schleswig-Holstein	398	4,5%
Thuringia	319	3,6%
<i>Migration background</i>		
No	7.563	86,1%
Yes	1.223	13,9%

	Case num- bers	Shares
<i>Employment status</i>		
Dependent employees, permanent	6.646	75,4%
Dependent employees, temporary	769	8,7%
Dependent employees, marginal	214	2,4%
Officials	652	7,4%
Self-employed/freelancers without employees	383	4,3%
Self-employed/freelancers with employees	151	1,7%
<i>Working time</i>		
Full-time	5.938	71,9%
Part-time	2.319	28,1%
<i>Social class</i>		
Socio-cultural professions	1.691	19,5%
Service workers	1.545	17,8%
Technical experts	1.184	13,6%
Production workers	738	8,5%
Management	1.679	19,4%
Office workers	1.393	16,1%
Employers	144	1,7%
Small business owners	301	3,5%
<i>Industries</i>		
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	43	0,5%
Mining and quarrying	11	0,1%
Chemistry	693	7,3%
Metal/electrical industry	622	6,6%
Production of food/feed	89	0,9%
Other manufacturing	197	2,1%
Supply and disposal	213	2,3%
Construction	190	2,0%
Retail	548	5,8%
Transport and storage	277	2,9%
Hospitality	164	1,7%
Information and communication	680	7,2%
Provision of financial/insurance services	211	2,2%
Liberal professions/scientific and technical services	254	2,7%
Culture, entertainment and recreation	150	1,6%
Public administration, defense, social security	1.106	11,7%
Education and teaching	1.188	12,6%
Healthcare	1.044	11,1%
Social Services	493	5,2%
Other services	1.265	13,4%
<i>Existence of staff/works council</i>		
No	1.930	21,2%
Yes	7.161	78,8%

