

# Changing Relationships at Work

the work foundation



In association with



## Contents

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Executive Summary	4
About this report	11
A. Introduction	13
B. Social capital, job satisfaction and workplaces	16
C. Impact of technologies on ways of working	22
D. Organisational culture, new technologies and working relationships	28
E. Communication tools and confidence	30
F. Work, friendship and romance	35
G. Attitudes to technology	37
H. Conclusions	40
Annex A. Overview of survey respondents	42

## List of Figures and Boxes

Figure 1: Factors affecting the changing world of work	13
Figure 2: Location of respondents' work	19
Figure 3: Location of colleagues	20
Figure 4: Access to technologies in the workplace	22
Figure 5: Access to different types of technology at home	24
Figure 6: Respondents who spend more than three hours using that technology on an average day at work	26
Figure 7: Respondents with access to, and who use, new technologies for at least one hour a day by sector	27
Figure 8: Organisation type respondents would prefer	29
Figure 9: How people contact colleagues using new technologies	30
Figure 10: How people contact clients and socialise using new technologies	31
Figure 11: Tasks for which people use new technologies	32
Figure 12: Communicating effectively in face to face and non face to face meetings	33
Figure 13: Personal relationships at work	35
Figure 14: Access to this technology would help me do my job better	38
Figure 15: Reasons that organisations do not provide access to technologies such as instant messaging and professional networks	39
Figure 16: Age of respondents	42
Figure 17: Regional breakdown of respondents	43
Figure 18: Qualifications of respondents	44
Figure 19: Sectors in which respondents work	46
Figure 20: Earnings of respondents	46
Box 1: Overview of respondents	15
Box 2: Defining social capital	16
Box 3: Defining job satisfaction	17
Box 4: Defining trust	18
Box 5: Defining 'old' and 'new' technologies	23
Box 6: Organisational culture	28
Box 7: Defining 'Liking technology'	37

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is not just human capital that matters to successful organisations but also social capital: building and sustaining strong personal and professional networks. This report demonstrates the importance of workplace relationships to job satisfaction and highlights the role that technologies can play in creating and maintaining these links. Our findings also demonstrate that social media is playing a real and surprising role in complementing traditional methods of communication to help people develop and retain their contacts at work.

### **Relationships matter to job satisfaction – but good relationships do not require working in the same physical location**

- **Relationships at work matter to job satisfaction.** When social capital is high, job satisfaction is high too: in other words, being satisfied with your relationships at work<sup>1</sup> makes it much more likely that you will also be satisfied with your job<sup>2</sup>.
- **Most people do still work in one company premises with their colleagues:** three quarters of respondents continue to work in one office location and 63 per cent of respondents work in the same company premises as their colleagues. But this leaves over a third – 37 per cent – saying they do not work in the same premises as colleagues, with nearly one in five respondents – 19 per cent – saying their colleagues mainly worked in multiple locations.
- **But friendships are not reliant on working in the same physical place as colleagues:** nearly two thirds of respondents disagreed with the statement that 'most of their friends work in the same physical place as them'.
- **You do not need to work in the same physical location as your colleagues to feel confident about communicating, to form strong professional relationships or to be satisfied with your work.**

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<sup>1</sup> As measured by answers to questions about being treated fairly by others at work, work colleagues taking a personal interest in me and my supervisor always considering my best interests when making decisions that concern me

<sup>2</sup> Measured by satisfaction with pay, job security, the actual work itself, the sense of achievement gained and the hours worked

### Technologies are widespread in the workplace – but most people started using new technologies at home first

- **The vast majority of people have access to ‘older’ technologies such as email, desktop computers, the internet and company intranets.** Email is used by 91 per cent of respondents, desktops by 89 per cent, the internet by 88 per cent and internal intranets by 88 per cent. Yet 8 per cent of respondents continue not to have any access to, or use of, ‘older’ technologies at work.
- **Nearly half of respondents (45 per cent) have access to and use one or more forms of new technology a day at work,** where ‘new technologies’ include instant messaging, wikis, professional networking, social networking, the virtual world, blogs and integrated voicemail/email (‘unified communications’).
- **Some of these ‘newer’ technologies are less widespread however.** The least widespread technologies at work are Virtual World Technologies (used by 3 per cent of respondents), Miniblogs (4 per cent), Social Networking (13 per cent), Blogs (13 per cent) and Wikis (18 per cent).
- **Most people started using technologies at home before they used them at work.** The majority of respondents have been using desktops, laptops, mobiles, email, the internet, instant messaging, wikis, social networks, virtual world technologies and blogs for longer at home than at work.
- **The only technologies that people have been using more at work than at home are video conferencing, teleconferencing, PDAs, professional networks and unified communications.** This may be because these applications have a clearer use at work than at home.

### New technologies are providing additional ways to communicate

- **Technologies have not supplanted face to face contact:** 52 per cent of respondents spend more than three hours each day talking face to face.

- **But new technologies are being used:** of those who have access to instant messaging, 9 per cent say they use it for more than three hours each day. 7 per cent of those with access to professional networks and 6 per cent who have access to social networks also spend more than three hours using them on an average working day.
- **Those who access and use one or more new technologies a day at work are more likely to trust their immediate colleagues to do their job properly than those who cannot access or do not use new technologies.** This suggests that new technologies may support closer working relationships and facilitate trust in the workplace.

### Working relationships are the most important aspect of organisational culture

- **Most people say their organisation is rule-bound – but most people would rather not work in a rule-bound organisation:** 85 per cent of respondents characterise their organisation's culture as being based on formal rules and policies designed to maintain smooth running of their organisation, but only 6 per cent of respondents would prefer to work in this type of organisation.
- **When people are asked to describe the organisational culture they prefer, they emphasise the importance of good working relationships.** 60 per cent of respondents said they would prefer an organisation characterised by a culture of loyalty and mutual trust. Although organisations seem to structure themselves with formal processes to ensure smooth running of the organisation, it is working relationships that really keep people going.

### New technologies make people more likely to describe their organisation as having good working relationships

- **People who have access to newer technologies are more likely to characterise their organisation as having a culture that is loyal with mutual trust, that is committed to innovation and development or is focused on achievement – and not rule bound.** In other words, access to new technologies such as instant messaging, wikis, professional networking, social networking, the virtual world, blogs and integrated voicemail/email ('unified communications') makes it more likely that people will not say their organisation's culture is rule bound. This suggests that new technologies may provide ways for people to develop working relationships that create a different and more flexible culture – and that this may be what people prefer in their workplace.

### Employees use different communication tools for different relationships and tasks

- **New technologies are clearly being used to support personal relationships:** 52 per cent of those with access to social networking, 20 per cent with access to blogs and 20 per cent with access to instant messaging use it to keep in touch with personal and social contacts not connected to work. This may mirror their use of new technologies in their personal lives.
- **New technologies are also being used to interact with clients.** 12 per cent of those with access to instant messaging use it to contact clients.
- **People are also selecting which types of communication to use for different relationships.** For example, over two thirds (69 per cent) of those with access to instant messaging use it to contact their immediate colleagues, but only 19 per cent would use instant messaging to contact senior managers.
- **People also select different technologies for different tasks.** Six in ten (61 per cent) use instant messaging to share information internally but only 15 per cent use it to manage others and 11 per cent use it to manage conflict.

### Use of new technologies to build and sustain relationships is all about confidence

- **Regardless of access to new technologies, everyone is more confident that they can interpret what people are thinking and feeling in face to face meetings rather than meetings that are not face to face.** 56 per cent of respondents agree that they know what people are thinking and feeling in face to face meetings, compared to 17 per cent in meetings that are not face to face. Managers are likely to be more confident in interpreting what people are thinking and feeling in face to face meetings than non-managers, although there is no difference between managers and non-managers in meetings that are not face to face.
- **But use of new technologies is associated with confidence in general.** People who use new technologies are much more likely to be confident at interpreting what people are thinking and feeling in face to face meetings. Those who do not like technologies are less likely to be confident in face to face meetings. This suggests that people who are

more confident in communication in general may be more adventurous about using new technologies and those who are not may stick to the ways they know best.

### The boundaries between work and personal life are blurring

- **Work is a place for friendship.** 27 per cent of respondents say they frequently socialise with work colleagues outside work hours and 16 per cent say that most of their friends are also their work colleagues. One in ten respondents has been on holiday with work colleagues and one in ten respondents say they play sport with work colleagues.
- **Work is also a place where people form romantic as well as professional relationships – especially if you have management responsibilities.** Nearly one in five (18 per cent) of respondents have been romantically involved with a colleague and 16 per cent of respondents are married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner who is a current or former work colleague.
- **Managers are more likely to have been romantically involved with a colleague than non-managers:** 21 per cent of managers have been romantically involved with a colleague, compared to 15 per cent of non-managers.

### Attitudes to technology at work are mostly positive

- **Attitudes to technology at work are mostly positive:** 74 per cent of respondents agreed that technologies on the whole makes it easier to their job well.
- **Managers are more likely to access and use new technologies than non-managers at work.** This could be for a range of reasons: a hierarchy of access to technology, managers being more confident at using technologies, or the fact that managers may be more involved in selecting or testing new technologies and therefore be more engaged in their use at the outset.
- **The older you are, the more likely you are to dislike technology** – but it does not affect whether you actually use technology or not. In other words, technology is used by all, but older people are more likely to feel uncomfortable or wary about using technology than those who are younger.

Those without access to new technologies said this was mainly about their organisation fearing misuse (54 per cent), thinking they would not be useful (52 per cent) and having concerns about security (40 per cent).

## Conclusions

- **Working relationships matter.** The stronger people's social relationships and the more they feel trusted and trust others, the higher their job satisfaction is likely to be.
- **New technologies are having an impact on the workplace: not by supplanting traditional forms of communications but by creating new ways to interact with people.** People still talk face to face but it is clear from our work that people do not need to work in the same place in order to develop workplace friendships. Access to new technologies provides new ways to communicate with people, ways often familiar to people from using social media in their personal lives. And people are responding to having access to new technologies by making choices about what form of technology to use for different types of interaction: instant messenger is not seen as appropriate to contact senior managers, for example, but it is seen as appropriate for contacting immediate colleagues.
- **Organisations need to recognise that people prefer to work for places characterised by strong working relationships and a focus on outputs rather than processes.** In the current economic climate there is likely to be a temptation to focus on formal rules and processes. But focusing on outputs, supporting strong working relationships and creating a climate of trust and autonomy is likely to pay dividends by helping people forge closer relationships with colleague and customers and to be happier at work. This does not mean rules should disappear: a culture of loyalty and a focus on outputs can and should still be supported by processes such as performance management. But it does mean that organisations should be thinking much more about supporting strong working relationships to help deliver innovation, ideas and a happier workforce.
- **New technologies affect how people view their organisational culture.** People with access to new technologies are more likely to characterise their organisations as having a culture of mutual trust and loyalty, and more likely to trust their colleagues. This suggests that new technologies may be one way of enabling people to form strong working relationships and to keep in touch with one another day to day.

- **Organisations need to think about how they can make best use of different forms of communication and different types of technology, old and new.** This calls for managers to think innovatively about what tools to use to develop and sustain different relationships and to manage different situations, from dealing with conflict to having a chat. Old and new technologies can complement one another in helping organisations create the kind of culture that people prefer and the relationships that can help to sustain innovation and prosperity in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

## About this report

BT Global Services commissioned The Work Foundation to undertake independent research on how people work together in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace and what role technologies play in enabling more agile ways of working. This work involved publication of two reports and conducting a survey.

### Interim Report

The first report presented interim findings, drawing on an extensive literature review, interviews with leading thinkers, academics and senior managers in the world of work, as well as on analysis of The Work Foundation's own data that looks at how work is changing for individuals.

The paper reviewed how the world of work is changing, looked at the interactions between the changing economy, changing labour market and changing technologies and the impact each is having upon relationships between people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. It set out what we know so far about changing relationships at work and the impact of technology on agile working, and highlighted some of the key questions that need to be answered if we are to understand more about how people work together and what role technologies may play in these relationships. In particular, the report showed that too little is known about how relationships at work are changing.

### Survey

To fill some of the gaps in knowledge about changing relationships at work, BT supported The Work Foundation to conduct a survey, working with YouGov, of 1,243 employees in businesses employing more than 500 people. The survey was designed based on the literature review and interviews and aimed to investigate in more detail how personal and professional relationships at work are changing, the effect of technologies on relationships at work, and the overall impact of changing relationships and technologies on organisations' cultures.

### **Final Report**

This report sets out the findings of the survey, putting them in the context of our work on how the wider world of work is changing. The report is structured as follows:

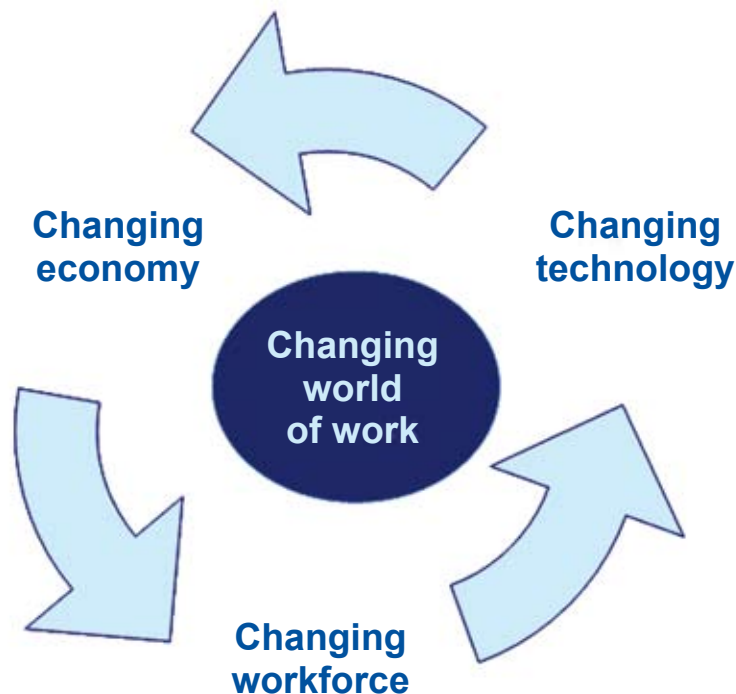
- A. Introduction
- B. Social capital, job satisfaction and workplaces
- C. Impact of technologies on ways of working and workplace relationships
- D. Organisational cultures
- E. Communication tools and confidence
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More detail about the survey respondents is available in the appendices.

## A. Introduction

1. Over the past thirty years, the world of work has undergone profound changes (illustrated in Figure 1). **The economy has changed dramatically**, with the UK economy evolving from one dominated by basic manufacturing to becoming what is often called a 'knowledge economy'. Companies that have prospered in all sectors have done so by using new information and communication technologies to become highly innovative and fast at creating tailored products which can meet increasingly sophisticated customers' needs. Globalisation has both accelerated the sophistication of customer demands and increased the speed at which businesses need to respond<sup>3</sup>.

**Figure 1: Factors affecting the changing world of work**



2. **The workforce has changed too**, with the UK labour market now more female, older and more ethnically diverse than it has ever been. Individuals increasingly expect to be able to combine paid work with other responsibilities and interests, and more flexible working patterns have offered opportunities for individuals to work in different ways and in different places. Whilst most people still work in one place, more people are working in multiple locations, travelling more and do not necessarily sit in the same office as their colleagues.

<sup>3</sup> Brinkley, I. (2006) *Defining the Knowledge Economy*: The Work Foundation: London

At the same time, with people working long hours in the UK, work has become an important place to meet friends and romantic partners, to socialise and to form strong personal and professional relationships – and there are questions about how working in different places have affected relationships at work.

3. Underpinning economic and workforce changes are **technological advances**. Technology has revolutionised the world of business, with use of computers and communications devices in a work context spreading and changing business models, relationships at work and relationships with customers. Business investment in ‘intangible’ assets such as people and software tripled between 1970 and 2004<sup>4</sup>. Workers increasingly have access to desktop and laptop computers, mobile phones, PDAs, and to new communication technologies, from video conferencing to teleconferencing. And new technologies are used not just to communicate with colleagues and friends, but also to share information.
4. More detailed information about these changes is available in the interim report supported by BT Global Services, *The Changing World of Work*. The interim report also highlighted that these wider changes have altered people’s personal and professional relationships at work, as well as the culture of the workplace. Issues such as **social capital** are becoming more important, where social capital is about the networks of relationships between people and the trust, mutual understanding and shared values and behaviours that bind those networks together<sup>5</sup>. Analysis of a Work Foundation survey<sup>6</sup> found a strong link between social capital and job satisfaction. This was an issue that BT and The Work Foundation wanted to investigate in more detail.
5. This final report seeks to answer some of these questions, drawing on a survey of 1,243 people supported by BT. The sample aimed to draw on a broad spread of the working population, as highlighted in Box 1 below (more details about the sample are available in Annex A).

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<sup>4</sup> Marano, M. and Haskle, J. (2006). *How much does the UK invest in intangible assets?* Working Paper 578, Department of Economics, QMUL

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, D. and Prusak, L. (2001) In *Good Company. How social capital makes organizations work*, Boston, Ma.: Harvard Business School Press. p. 4

<sup>6</sup> The survey used three indicators as definitions of social capital: feeling treated fairly at work, co-workers taking a personal interest in one another and believing that supervisors consider the best interests of an individual when making decisions that concern that individual

**Box 1: Overview of respondents**

Respondents are from all UK regions and are of all ages, although the majority (59 per cent) are aged between 25 and 44. Most respondents (65 per cent) are male, with only 34 per cent female<sup>7</sup> and two thirds of all respondents (67 per cent) are married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner. The sample is highly qualified: nearly half are qualified to degree level or above and just under half (46 per cent) identify themselves as having management responsibilities. Nearly nine in ten respondents (88 per cent) work full time and most (56 per cent) have worked for their organisation for five years or more. Sectors represented include the public sector, IT, retail, utilities, construction, financial services, telecommunications, transport/ logistics, media and leisure.

6. The survey aimed to investigate the following core question:

**How are people using technology at work and what impact is this having on personal and professional relationships at work and on the culture of organisations?**

7. The remainder of this report sets out our findings and their implications for organisations, managers and individuals seeking to navigate their way in the changing world of work.

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<sup>7</sup> Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number, meaning that on occasion the total numbers in the report will not add up to 100 per cent

## B. Social capital, job satisfaction and workplaces

*'Organisations need to find new ways to recreate personal and social time – this is important for innovation, for example social activities after work.'*

Interviewee for BT project

8. In an economy in which 'human capital' is identified as an organisation's most valuable asset and in which ideas and innovation matter to the success of businesses, it would seem self evident that relationships between these individuals – 'social capital' – should also be important.

### Box 2: Defining social capital

Social capital is about the networks of relationships between people and the trust, mutual understanding and shared values and behaviours that bind those networks together<sup>8</sup>.

Our survey measured social capital by creating a scale based on responses to three questions:

- I feel treated fairly by others at work;
- Work colleagues take a personal interest in me;
- My supervisor always considers my best interests when making decisions that concern me.

9. Evidence supports the argument that social networks matter, with research suggesting that social networks contribute to companies' profits through supporting knowledge sharing, innovation and high productivity<sup>9</sup>. Having strong social networks with colleagues and customers also makes it more likely that individuals will understand and be able to respond effectively to customer needs, hence helping an organisation sustain comparative advantage. In addition, individuals with access to rich social networks are more likely to experience shorter spells of unemployment, are more likely to make progress in their careers and much less likely to suffer the ill effects of low status or a lack of control or autonomy<sup>10</sup>. This suggests that workplaces should be seeking to build and develop social capital in order to respond better to customers and support the health and prosperity of individuals.

<sup>8</sup> Cohen, D. and Prusak, L. *ibid*, p. 4

<sup>9</sup> Cohen, D. and Prusak, L. (2001) *In Good Company. How social capital makes organizations work*, Boston, Ma.: Harvard Business School Press

<sup>10</sup> Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling Alone*, Touchstone, cited in Coats, D. with Lekhi, R. *'Good Work': Job Quality in a Changing Economy*: The Work Foundation: London

10. As the workplace is a place where people build trusting relationships based on mutual assistance, it could be assumed that the workplace should automatically generate social capital without any need for organisations to support this. Yet in a world of work where people are working at different times and in different places, making use of different forms of technology to communicate, can building social networks be taken for granted?
11. In addition, Robert Putnam's work differentiates between different types of social capital and suggests that what individuals and workplaces need is both bonding social capital (good relationships between colleagues) and bridging social capital (effective relationships between the employees and their employer)<sup>11</sup>. To what extent do 21<sup>st</sup> century workplaces enable this to happen? And, if these social networks do not exist, what is the impact? Our survey reviewed how much social capital mattered to respondents by reviewing its links with job satisfaction.

### Social capital is strongly associated with job satisfaction

12. Our survey found very clearly that **relationships at work matter to job satisfaction**. When social capital is high, job satisfaction is high too: in other words, being satisfied with your relationships at work makes it much more likely that you will also be satisfied with your job (although this is not cause and effect, ie having social capital does not then lead to high job satisfaction, or vice versa).

#### Box 3: Defining job satisfaction

Our survey measured job satisfaction by creating a scale based on satisfaction ratings for five questions:

- Pay;
- Job security;
- The actual work itself;
- The sense of achievement you get from your job;
- Hours worked.

<sup>11</sup> Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling Alone*, Touchstone, cited in Coats, D. with Lekhi, R. 'Good Work': *Job Quality in a Changing Economy*. The Work Foundation: London.

13. Job satisfaction matters to organisations not just because it is strongly linked with retention but because some studies suggest it is associated with higher organisational performance<sup>12</sup>.
14. **Feeling trusted at work also matters to job satisfaction.** When you are trusted by your line manager and you trust your colleagues, you are more likely to have high social capital and high job satisfaction. This is again about having strong relationships at work.

### Box 4: Defining trust

Our survey measured trust by creating two scales.

The first scale is about how much respondents **trust colleagues** and is based on how much they agreed or disagreed with three statements:

- I trust my immediate colleagues to 'pull their weight' at work;
- I trust my immediate colleagues to do their work to a high standard;
- I trust my immediate colleagues to do things when they say they will do them.

The second scale is about how much respondents **are trusted by line managers** and is based on how much they agreed or disagreed with three statements:

- My line manager trusts me to work independently (unsupervised);
- My line manager trusts me to do my work to a high standard;
- My line manager trusts me to do things when I say I will do them.

15. It is interesting to note that **managers tend to be more satisfied than non-managers.** Managers have significantly higher social capital and significantly higher job satisfaction than non-managers. People with management responsibilities are also much more likely to feel trusted by their own line manager. This may be because managers have greater autonomy and control over their time and perhaps more opportunities to have wider networks across an organisation.

### Social capital does not require people to work in the same office or to work long hours

16. In a 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation employing more than 500 people, our interviewees suggested two hypotheses. First, that employees would be less likely to work in the same room as their colleagues than had been the case ten years ago: *'with all the new technologies you*

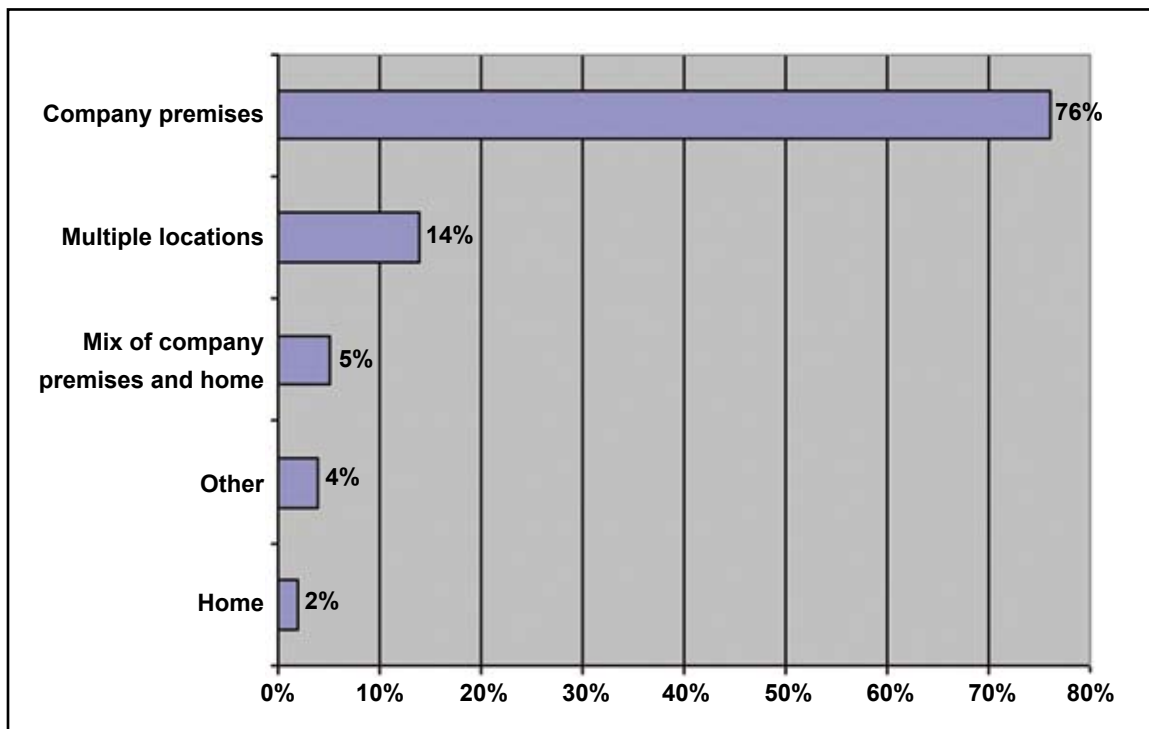
<sup>12</sup> For example see Guest, D. (1997) 'Human resource management and performance: a review and research agenda', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 8:3: 263-275 and Cully, M., Woodland, S., O'Reilly, A. and Dix, G. (1999) *Britain at Work: as depicted by the 1998 Employment Relations Survey*: London: Routledge

*can work anywhere you like...certainly in professional roles, people can be working on the move, possibly not having a base, just operating from particular areas at particular times<sup>13</sup>.* Second, there was a sense that despite technology facilitating communication across time zones and between different places, working in different places makes it more difficult for organisations to develop social capital.

17. In practice we found that neither hypothesis was true. In terms of location of work, we found that most people continue to work in one company premises: over three quarters (76 per cent) of our respondents mainly work on one company premises. However, that leaves just under a quarter working differently, with 14 per cent mainly work in multiple locations, 5 per cent at a mix of company premises and home and 2 per cent mainly at home.

**Figure 2: Location of respondents' work**

Base: All respondents

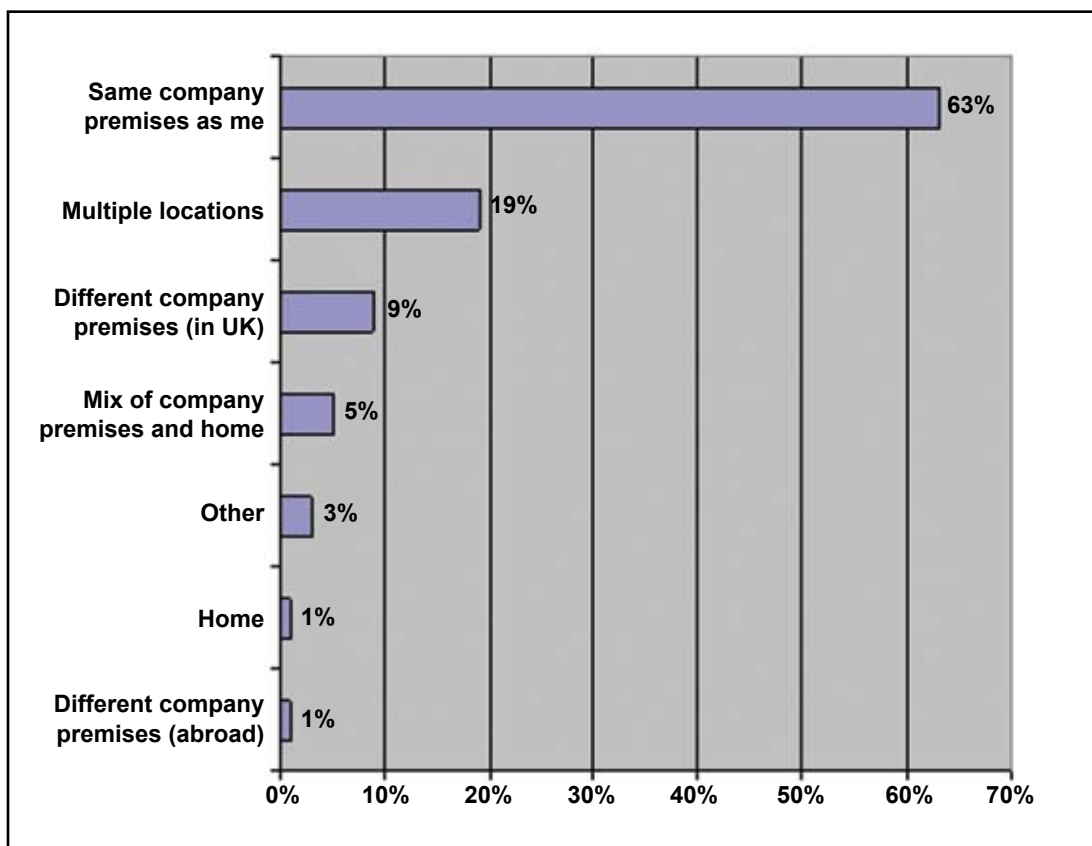


<sup>13</sup> Interviewee for BT project

18. When we asked about where people's immediate colleagues work, we found that nearly two thirds of people (63 per cent) worked in the same company premises as their immediate colleagues. However, a significant minority – nearly two in ten (19 per cent) – of people's colleagues work in multiple locations, nearly one in ten (9 per cent) of respondents' colleagues work in a different company premises in the UK and 5 per cent of people's colleagues work in a mix of company premises and home.

**Figure 3: Location of colleagues**

Base: All respondents



19. These findings reflect wider UK trends<sup>14</sup>, which suggest that there has been an increase in mobile working but not in people mainly working at home.

<sup>14</sup> See Alexandra Jones et al, (2007) *Transforming work: reviewing the case for change and new ways of working*: Equal Opportunities Commission

20. Having discovered where people work in relation to their colleagues, we also wanted to find out if this made any difference to social capital. What we found is that **social capital is not reliant on working in company premises or working in the same place as colleagues**. Whether you work in company premises or elsewhere, and whether you work in the same place as colleagues or elsewhere makes no difference to your levels of social capital, whether you trust colleagues, whether you trust your line manager or your job satisfaction. In other words, working in the same place is not required for individuals to form strong professional relationships or to be satisfied with their work. Social capital does not rely on physical proximity: other factors are at play.
21. **Friendships at work do not rely on working in the same physical place either**. Nearly two thirds of respondents (64 per cent) disagreed with the statement 'Most of my friends at work are people who work in the same physical place as me'.
22. In addition, **the hours you work make no difference to social capital**. In other words, it is not the quantity of time that you spend working that makes a difference to social capital, but instead the quality of time and of the relationships that you develop. This is an important finding for organisations considering how they might enable the development of social capital.

## C. Impact of technologies on ways of working

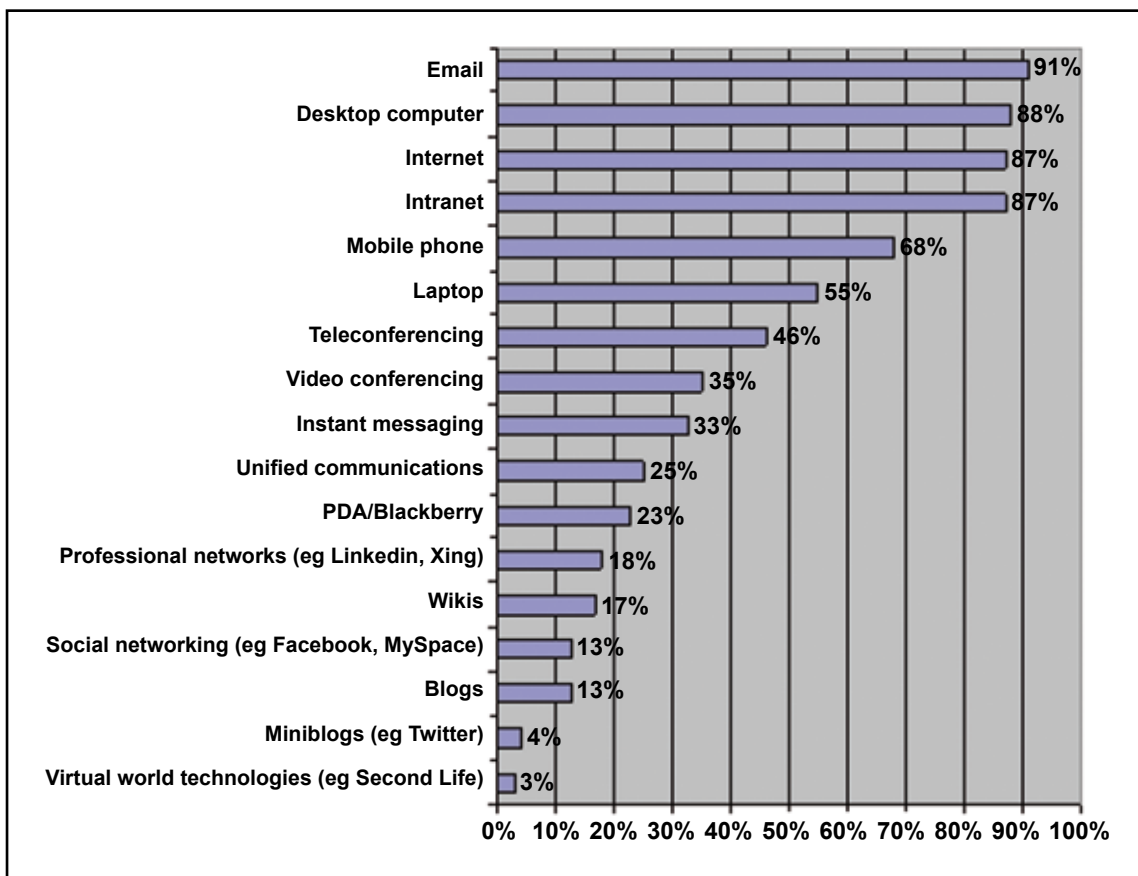
23. One of the key themes in our review of how the workplace has changed was the impact of technological advances in ways of working, and this was one of the main issues investigated by the survey. Our findings demonstrate that technologies are widespread in the workplace, but that 'newer' technologies are taking some time to spread, with different groups more or less likely to adopt some of the newer technologies.

### There is widespread access to some technology, but access varies for different types of technologies

24. It was unsurprising to find that the most widespread technologies at work are email, which is used by 91 per cent, desktop computers (89 per cent), the internet (88 per cent) and intranets (88 per cent). This is illustrated in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Access to technologies in the workplace**

Base: All respondents



25. It is important to note however that just because a device is commonly available does not mean it is universally available: 8 per cent of respondents continue not to have any access to email, internet, intranet and teleconferencing.
26. Many of the 'newer' technologies are less likely to be available in the workplace: the least widespread technologies at work are virtual world technologies (3 per cent of respondents use them), miniblogs (4 per cent), social networking (13 per cent), blogs (13 per cent) and wikis (18 per cent).

**Box 5: Defining 'old' and 'new' technologies**

The survey investigated use of a wide range of technologies but for ease of analysis, these have been clustered into two groups.

The first group, '**old technologies**' are identified as communication tools that have been used by organisations for some time: we included access to email, the internet, the intranet and teleconferencing in this group.

The second group, '**new technologies**' are not all 'new' communication technologies but are technologies that have been relatively less common in organisations until recent years. We included instant messaging, wikis, professional networking, social networking, the virtual world, blogs and integrated voicemail/email ('unified communications') in this group.

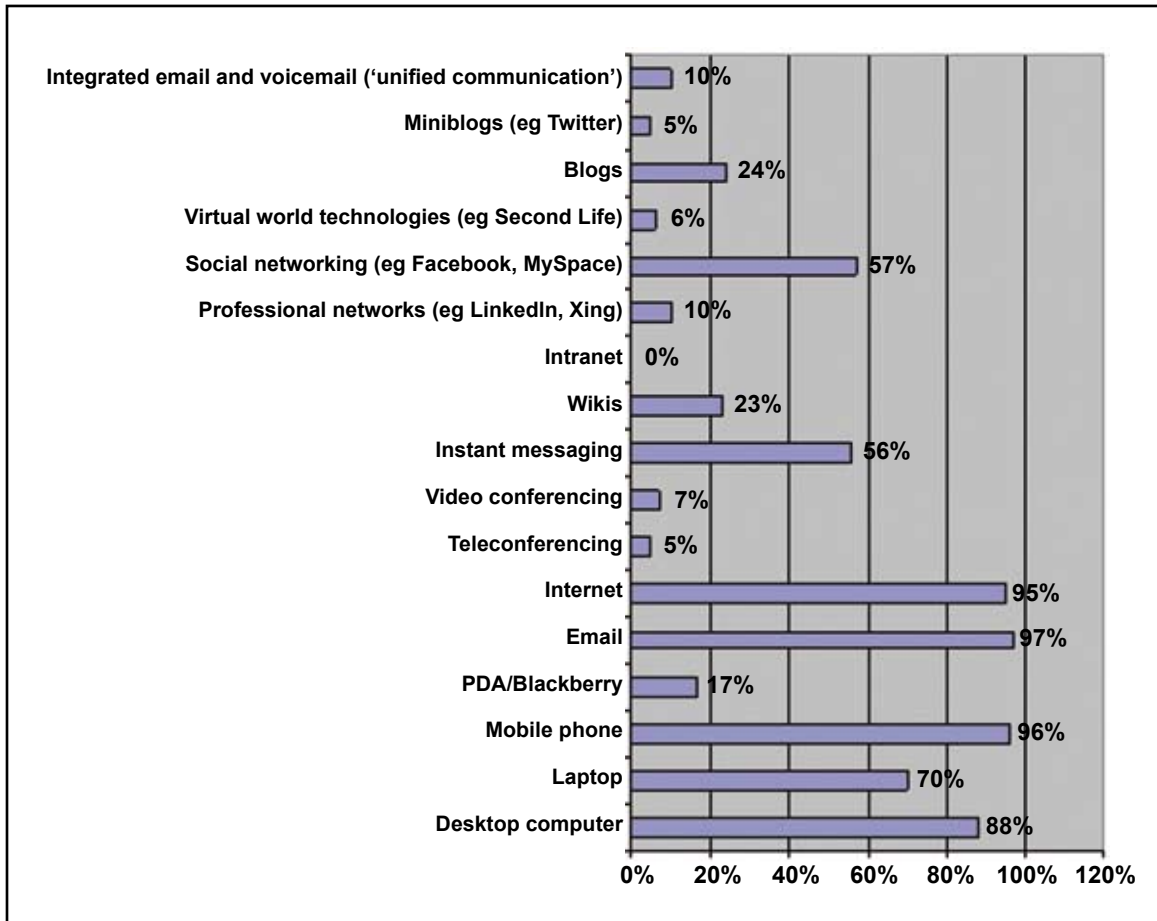
27. When we combined 'new' technologies into a group (as defined in Box 5 above), however, we found that nearly half of respondents (45 per cent) have access to and use one or more forms of new technology a day at work. In other words, organisations may not be introducing all of the new technologies but they are introducing some new technologies. This still leaves 55 per cent of respondents without access to new technologies.

**Organisations tend to be slower to pick up on new technologies than people**

28. **Most people also have access to technologies at home**, as Figure 5 illustrates. The most widespread technologies at home are email (97 per cent use it), mobile phones (96 per cent) and the internet (95 per cent). The least widespread are teleconferencing (only 5 per cent use it), miniblogs (5 per cent) virtual world technologies (6 per cent) and integrated email and voicemail (10 per cent use it).

**Figure 5: Access to different types of technology at home**

Base: All respondents



29. Of the 11 per cent who do not use a desktop at work, more than three quarters (78 per cent) of people do use a desktop at home. And of the 12 per cent of people who do not use a desktop at home, 80 per cent do use a desktop computer at work. In other words, organisations concerned about introducing technology into the workplace can be reassured that, for most people, it is technology they have been familiar with in either their work and personal lives at some point.

30. Indeed, it is interesting to note that **most people started using technologies at home before they used them at work**. The majority of respondents have been using desktops,

laptops, mobiles, email, the internet, instant messaging, wikis, social networks, virtual world technologies and blogs for longer at home than at work. The only technologies that people have been using more at work than at home are video conferencing, teleconferencing, PDAs, professional networks and unified communications. This may be because these applications have a clearer use at work than at home.

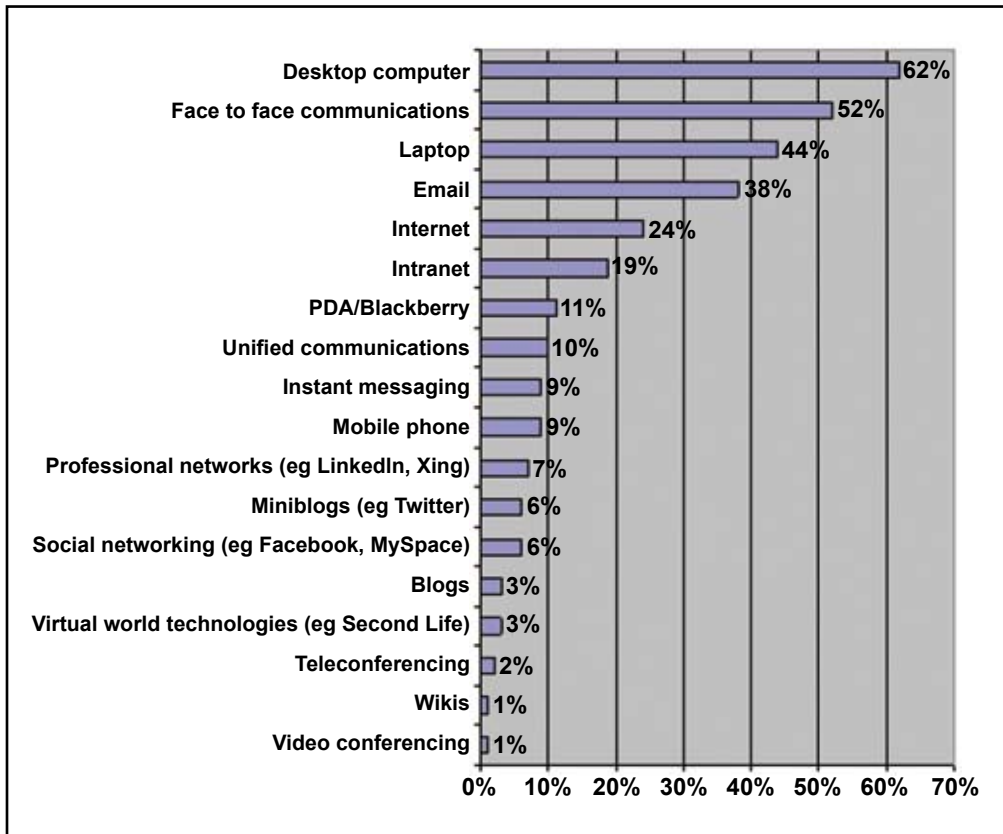
31. The fact that people are using technologies sooner at home than at work speaks to the concern of one of our interviewees that there is a level of dissonance between people's personal lives and their work lives. He commented, '*when we get home we do all this stuff with technology which is quite interesting and collaborate and share and play and explore laterally and when we get to school or work we don't.*' Organisations may be missing an opportunity to capitalise upon these skills in the workplace.

### Technologies are providing additional ways to communicate but are not replacing face to face interaction

32. **Our findings suggest that technologies are not replacing traditional methods of communication but instead augmenting and complementing them.** Figure 6 highlights the technologies that respondents spend more than three hours using each day (where they have access to these technologies).
33. The fact that 52 per cent of respondents spend more than three hours each day talking face to face highlights that **communication in person remains a significant component of people's time** on an average working day.
34. **But new technologies are being used:** of those who have access to instant messaging, 9 per cent say they use it for more than 3 hours each day. 7 per cent of those with access to professional networks and 6 per cent who have access to social networks also spend more than three hours using them on an average working day.
35. **Access to technologies also varies by sector**, with IT, Telecomms and media and leisure most likely to offer access to the majority of its workers, and for those workers to use new technologies for more than one hour a day (See Figure 7 for details).

**Figure 6: Respondents who spend more than three hours using that technology on an average day at work**

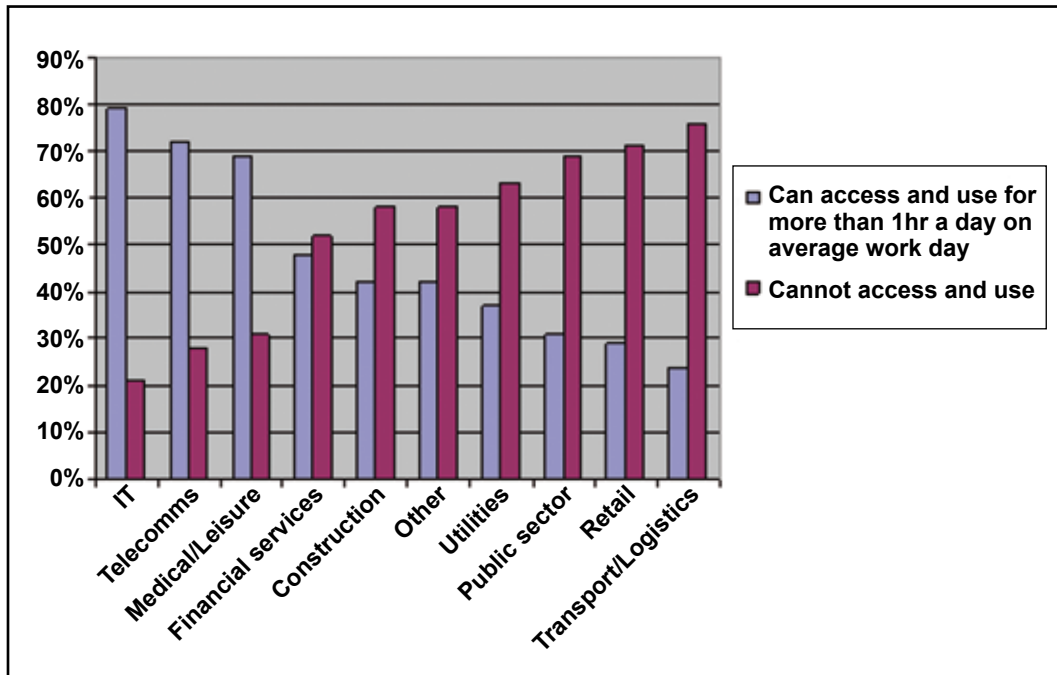
Base: All respondents with access to that technology



36. Transport and logistics, retail and the public sector are least likely to offer access to new technologies for all respondents.

**Figure 7: Respondents with access to, and who use, new technologies for at least one hour a day by sector'**

Base: All respondents with access to that technology



## D. Organisational culture, new technologies and working relationships

### Working relationships are the most important aspect of organisational culture

37. Our survey also wanted to investigate how organisational cultures are changing, and the types of organisation most people wish to work in.

#### Box 6: Organisational culture

The survey assessed organisational culture based on four conceptions of organisational culture that have been rigorously tested over a series of surveys<sup>15</sup>. On this basis the survey asked respondents whether the organisation they work for is characterised by:

- Loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this organisation runs high;
- Commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge;
- An emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment. Aggressiveness and winning are common themes;
- Formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organisation is important.

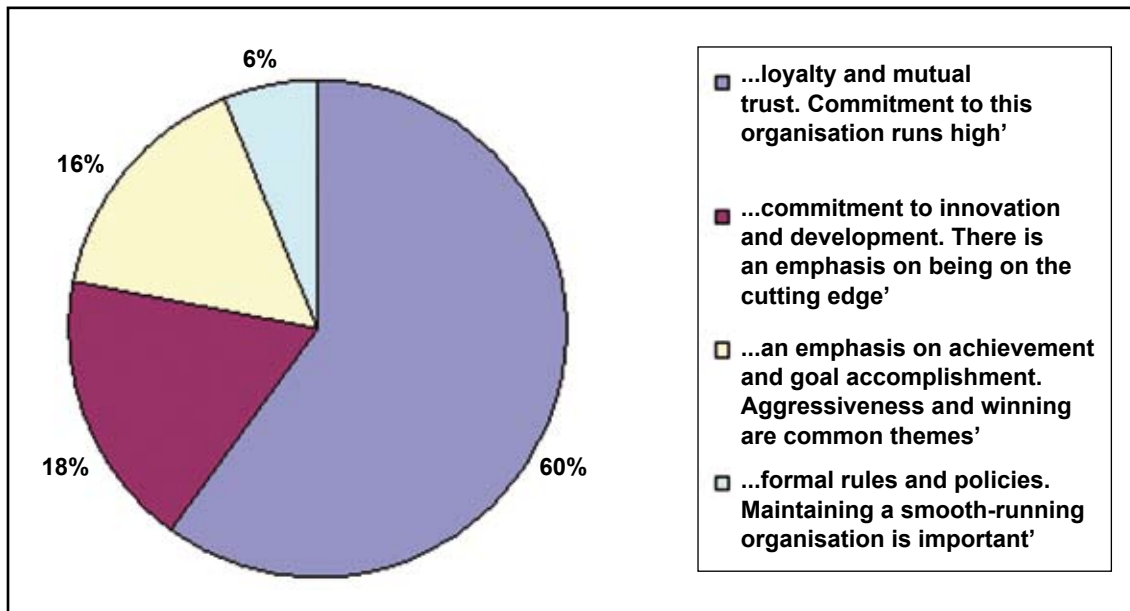
Respondents were then asked which type of organisation people would prefer to work in the most.

38. Our finding was that **most people say their organisation is rule-bound**: 85 per cent of respondents characterise their organisation's culture as being based on formal rules and policies in order to maintain smooth running of their organisation. 60 per cent of respondents work in organisations characterised by loyalty and mutual trust, commitment to innovation and development and with an emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment.
39. Yet **when people are asked to describe the organisational culture they prefer, most people do not want to work in a rule-bound organisation**: only 6 per cent of respondents would prefer to work in an organisation with a culture based on formal rules and policies. Instead, the **preference is for good working relationships**. 60 per cent of respondents said they would prefer an organisation characterised by a culture of loyalty and mutual trust, 18 per cent would rather an organisation characterised by a commitment to innovation and development, and 16 per cent would prefer an organisation focused on achievement and goal development. Figure 8 illustrates this in more detail.

<sup>15</sup> Measure was adapted from that used in Fauth, B., Mahdon, M., McVerry, A., Brinkley, I., Theodoropoulou, S., (forthcoming) *Knowledge Workers Survey*. London: The Work Foundation. Adapted originally from Cameron, K.S., & Quinn, R.E. (1999). *Diagnosing and changing organizational culture*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

**Figure 8: Organisation type respondents would prefer**

Base: All respondents



40. The emphasis on loyalty and mutual trust suggests that whilst organisations structure themselves with formal processes in order to ensure smooth running of the organisation, it's the working relationships that really keep organisations going.
41. **Access to newer technologies makes people more likely to characterise their organisation as having a culture that is loyal with mutual trust, that is committed to innovation and development or is focused on achievement – and not rule bound.** In other words, access to new technologies makes it more likely that people will not say their organisation's culture is rule bound. This suggests that those people who have access to or use newer technologies may be able to develop working relationships that create a sense of loyalty, a commitment to innovation or a focus on innovation more easily than those without access to these technologies. This may be because new technologies provide ways for people to develop working relationships that create a different and more flexible culture.
42. **In addition, those who access and use one or more new technologies a day at work are more likely to trust their immediate colleagues to do their job properly than those who cannot access or do not use new technologies.** This suggests that new technologies may support closer working relationships and facilitate trust in the workplace.

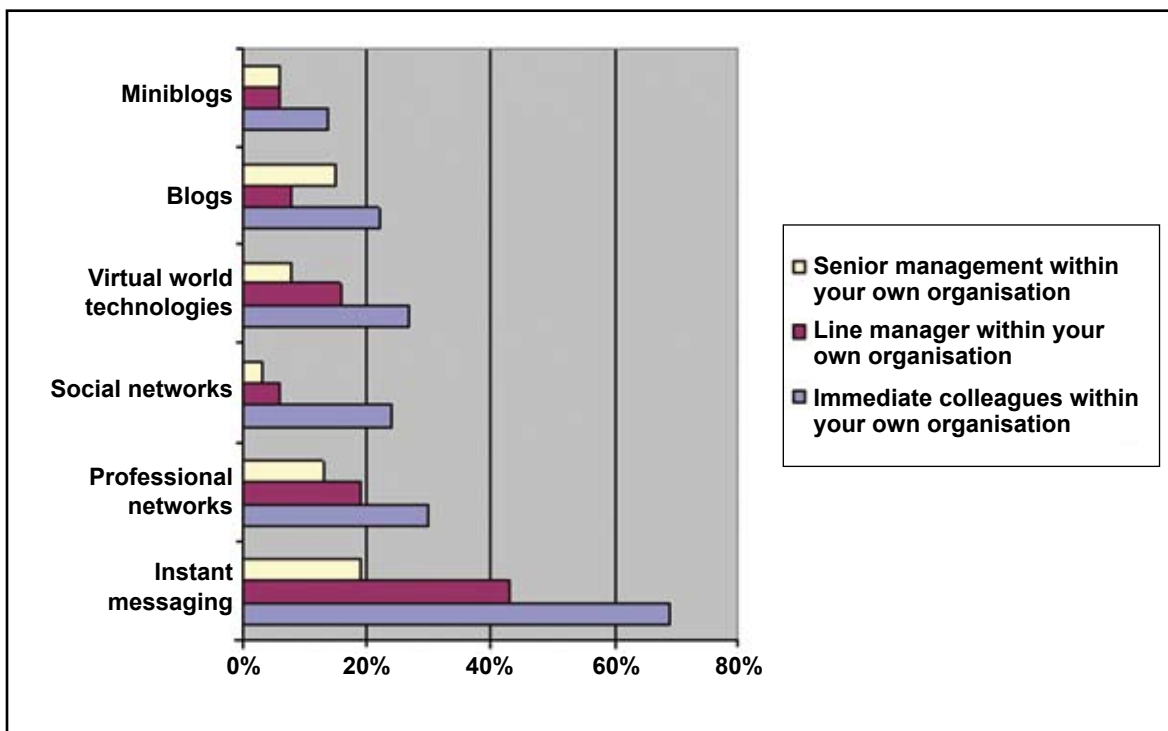
## E. Communication tools and confidence

### People are selecting which types of communication to use in different situations

43. What emerges from our survey too is that people are recognising that they now have more ways in which they can communicate, and so they are selecting different types of communication for different relationships. For example, whilst 69 per cent of those with access to instant messaging would use it to contact immediate colleagues within their own organisation, usage of the technology reduces with seniority. Only 43 per cent would use it to contact their line manager and only 19 per cent would use instant messaging to contact a senior manager (see Figure 9 below).

**Figure 9: How people contact colleagues using new technologies**

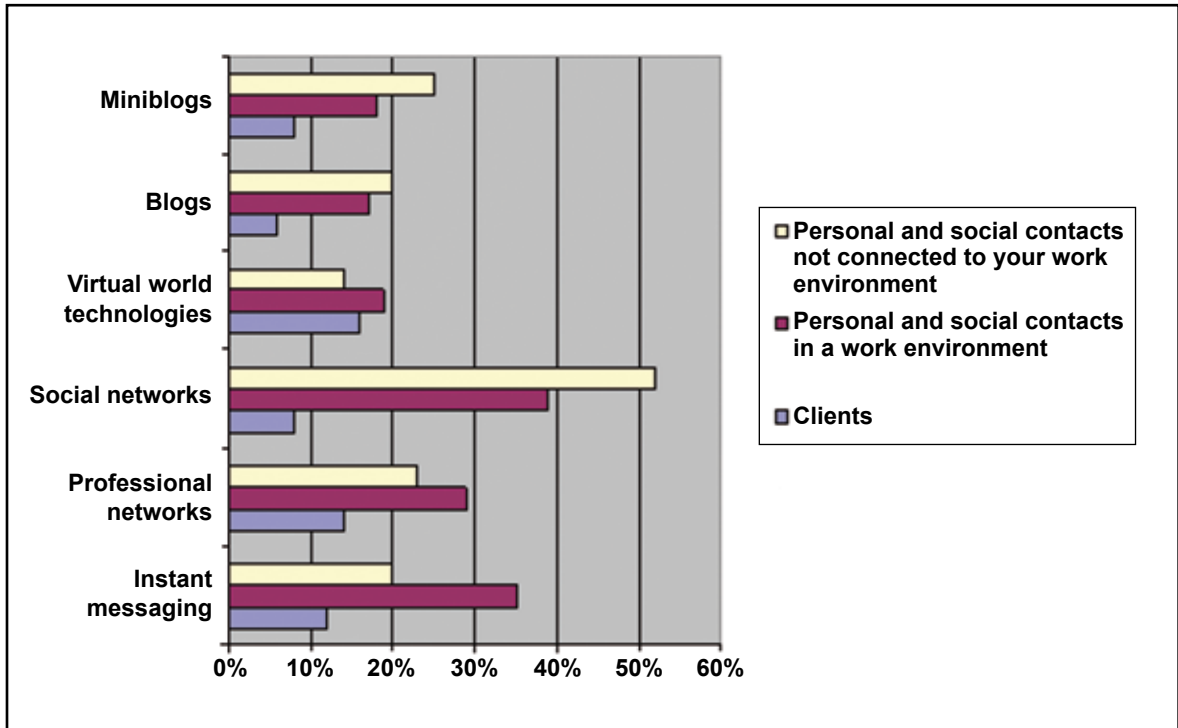
Base: All respondents with access to that technology



44. **Changes in the way people manage relationships are evident in responses about how people use technologies to interact with clients.** Over a third (35 per cent) of those with access to instant messaging use it to contact clients. Blogs and social networks are least likely to be used to contact clients by those who have access to them (see Figure 10 below).

**Figure 10: How people contact clients and socialise using new technologies**

Base: All respondents with access to that technology

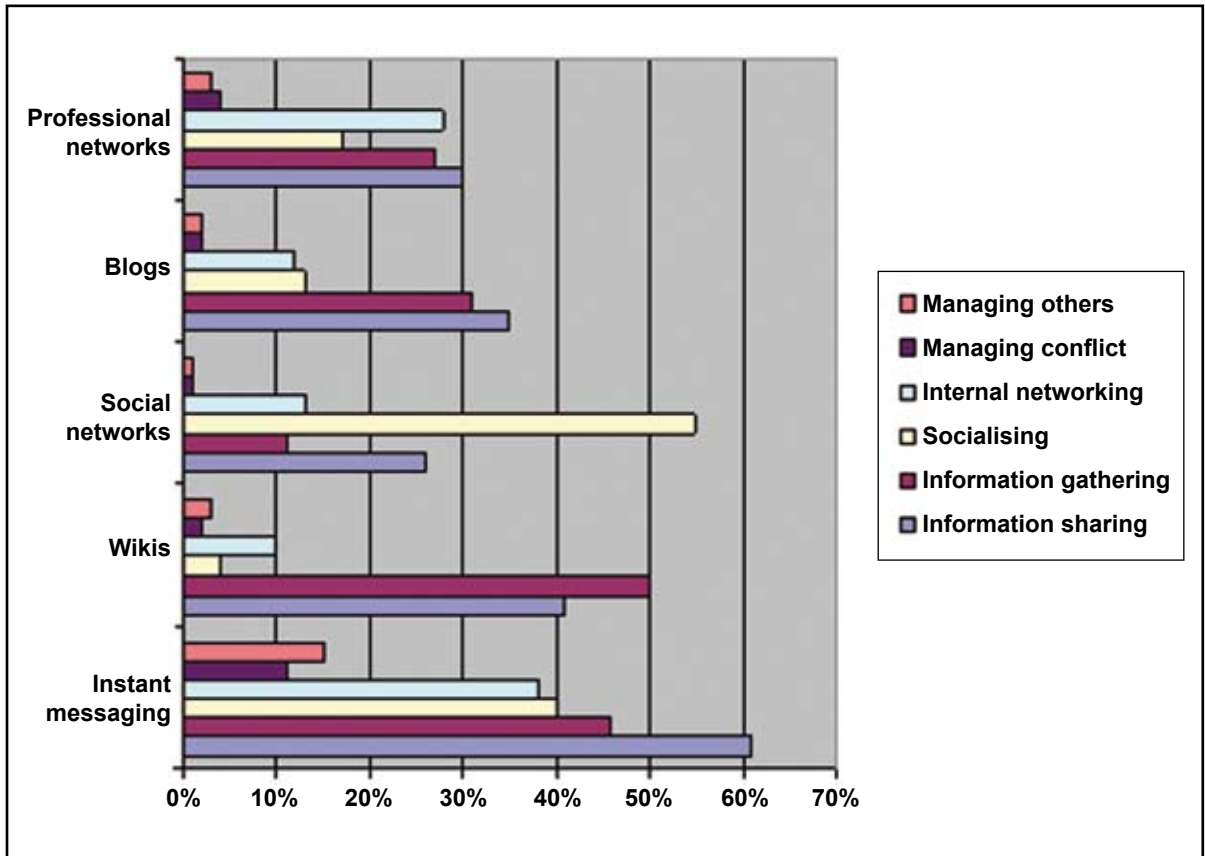


45. **It is also clear that people are using new technologies to socialise:** 52 per cent of those with access to social networking, 20 per cent with access to blogs and 20 per cent of people with access to instant messaging used them to keep in touch with personal and social contacts not connected to their work. Again, it is evident that the type of technology selected varies according to the relationship and the desired objective of that communication. Interestingly, using new technologies does not make any difference to how frequently you socialise with colleagues outside work.

46. In addition **people are being selective about the tasks for which they use new technologies.** For example, for those with access to wikis, half would use them to gather information, two-fifths would use them to share information but only 3 per cent would use them to manage others and only 2 per cent would use them to manage conflict. It is evident that people are selecting different tools for different situations, making the most of a wider range of tools being available. Figure 11 shows how people are using new technologies to manage information, manage others and to socialise.

**Figure 11: Tasks for which people use new technologies**

Base: All respondents with access to that technology



**Use of new technologies is all about confidence**

47. This finding that people tend to select technologies that are most appropriate for different relationships and different situations suggests a level of confidence in dealing with greater complexity. People who are making use of these technologies seem to be skillfully making decisions about when to use, and when not to use, different types of technology at their disposal. Our survey also enabled us to test whether this was the case by assessing people’s confidence in conveying themselves and interpreting the thoughts and feelings of others in face to face meetings and meetings that are not face to face.

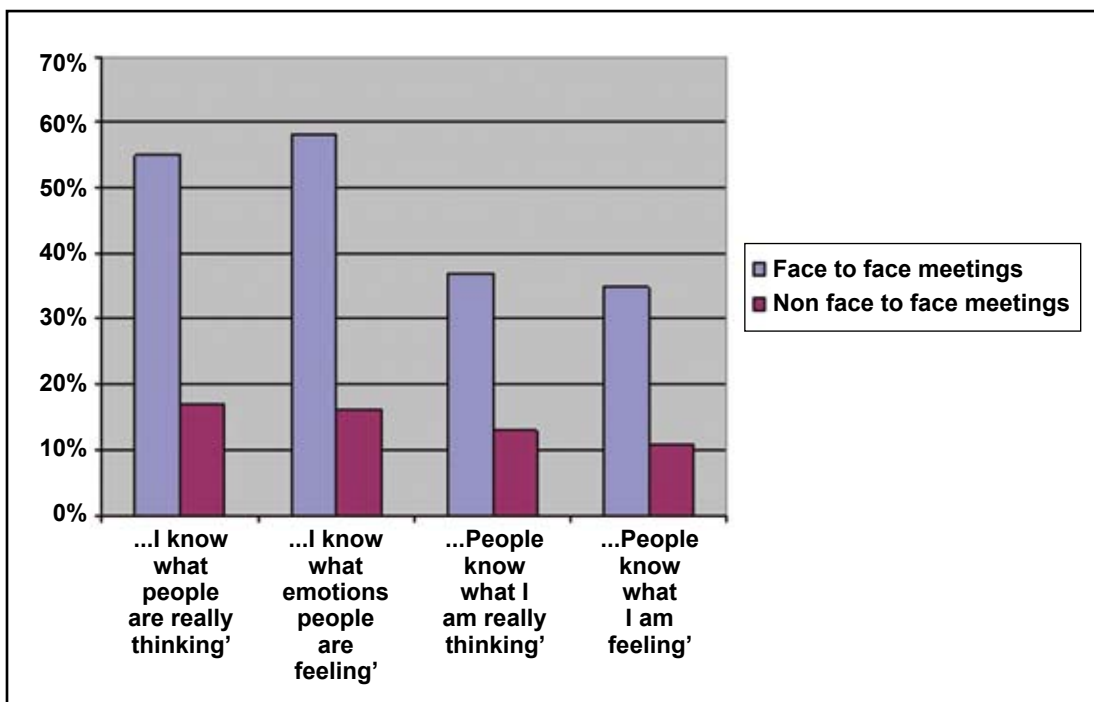
48. We found, unsurprisingly, **that everyone is more confident that they can interpret what people are thinking and feeling in face to face meetings rather than meetings that are not face to face**. 56 per cent of respondents agree that they know what people are thinking and feeling in face to face meetings, compared to 17 per cent in meetings that are not face to face.

49. Whilst people are less confident that others understand what they are thinking and feeling, again there is a difference between face to face meetings and meetings that are not face to face. 36 per cent of respondents agree that others know what they are thinking and feeling in face to face meetings, compared to 12 per cent in meetings that are not face to face.

Figure 12 illustrates this in more detail.

**Figure 12: Communicating effectively in face to face and non face to face meetings**

Base: All respondents



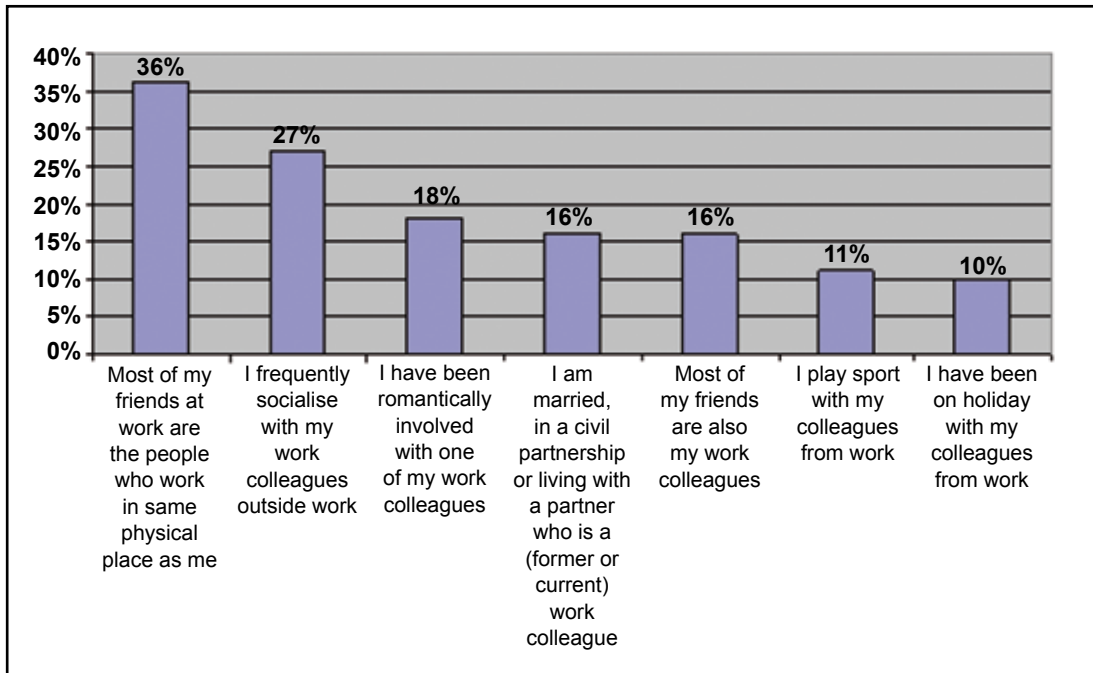
50. If you are **more confident in face to face meetings then you tend to be more confident in meetings that are not face to face** – in other words, confidence in both types of meeting is associated with confidence in general. It is also interesting to note that managers are likely to be more confident in interpreting what people are thinking and feeling in face to face meetings than non-managers, although there is no difference between managers and non-managers in meetings that are not face to face.
51. There is a positive correlation between liking technology and being confident in face to face communications, with **the more you like technology, the more confident you are face to face**. Conversely, those who dislike technology are less likely to be confident in face to face meetings, but it makes no difference to non face to face meetings.
52. In addition, those who **access and use one or more new technologies per day at work have significantly more confidence in interpreting people's thoughts and emotions in face to face meetings** than those who do not use new technologies. Yet there is no difference between those who use new technologies and those who do not when it comes to confidence in interpreting people's thoughts and feelings in meetings that are not face to face.
53. Overall the findings of this section suggest that those **people who are more confident in communication in general may be more adventurous about using new technologies** and those who are not may stick to the ways they know best. This is a significant finding for organisations to bear in mind if they are to make the most of their investments in new technologies: they also need to invest in people's skills and general confidence when it comes to communication.

## F. Work, friendship and romance

54. Despite more people working in different places, the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace is still a place where people's relationships at work spill over into their personal lives – perhaps more than in the past as so many people spend much of their waking hours in work.

**Figure 13: Personal relationships at work**

Base: All respondents



55. We found that **work is a place where people form romantic as well as professional relationships**. Nearly one in five (18 per cent) of respondents have been romantically involved with a colleague and 16 per cent of respondents are married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner who is a current or former work colleague.

56. **Romantic relationships are more likely if you have management responsibilities**. 21 per cent of managers have been romantically involved with a colleague, compared to 15 per cent of non-managers.

**57. Time spent at work with colleagues also leads to friendship.** Over a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) say they frequently socialise with work colleagues outside work hours. Some respondents go further, with 16 per cent saying that most of their friends are also their work colleagues. In addition, one in ten respondents has been on holiday with work colleagues or play sport with work colleagues.

## G. Attitudes to technology

### Technology is generally seen to make life easier at work

58. **Technology is generally seen to make life easier at work:** 74 per cent of respondents agreed that technologies on the whole make it easier to do your job well, although 13 per cent of respondents felt that technologies make their working life more complicated.
59. **Managers are more likely to access and use new technologies than non-managers at work.** This could be for a range of reasons: a hierarchy of access to technology, managers being more confident at using technologies, or the fact that managers may be more involved in selecting or testing new technologies, and therefore be more engaged in their use at the outset.
60. **However, the older you are, the more likely you are to dislike technology – even though it does not affect whether you use technology or not.** In other words, technology is used by all, but older people are more likely to feel uncomfortable or wary about using technology than those who are younger. This may be an issue of which some organisations are unaware and need to manage, particularly when introducing newer technologies and aiming to ensure they are used effectively.

#### Box 7: Defining 'Liking technology'

The survey measured whether people 'like' technology by their levels of agreement with the following statements:

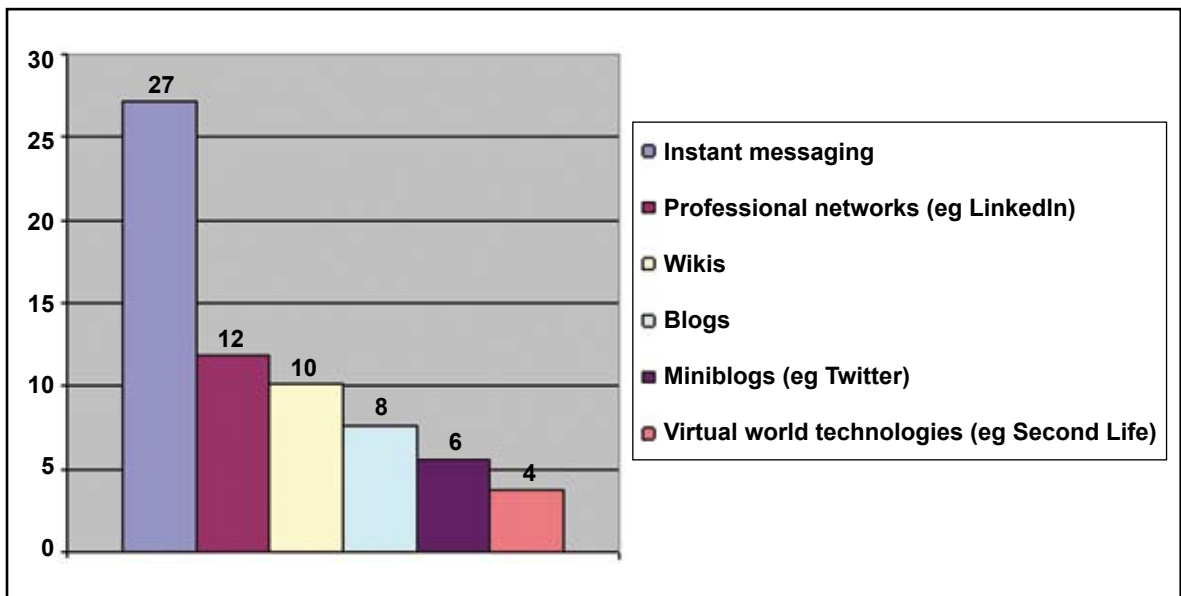
- Technologies on the whole make my working life more complicated;
- Technologies on the whole do not make it easier to do my job well;
- I often feel overwhelmed by the number of technologies I need to use at work;
- I often find it difficult to decide which technology to use when I communicate with people at work;
- I often feel left out at work because I find it difficult to use technologies.

61. We found that those working for more than five years in their current job are more likely to feel uncomfortable with technology.
62. In addition, the older you are, the less likely you are to like using technologies (although being older does not mean you will not like technologies; it's not cause and effect). Age does not change whether you are likely to use technologies however; it just changes comfort levels.

- 63. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who access and use one or more new technologies per day at work are more likely to like technology than those who do not have access.
- 64. When those without access to new technologies were asked if they thought that access to new technologies would help them do their job better, the most popular technology was instant messaging (27 per cent identified this as helpful) and the least popular was virtual world technologies.

**Figure 14: Access to this technology would help me do my job better**

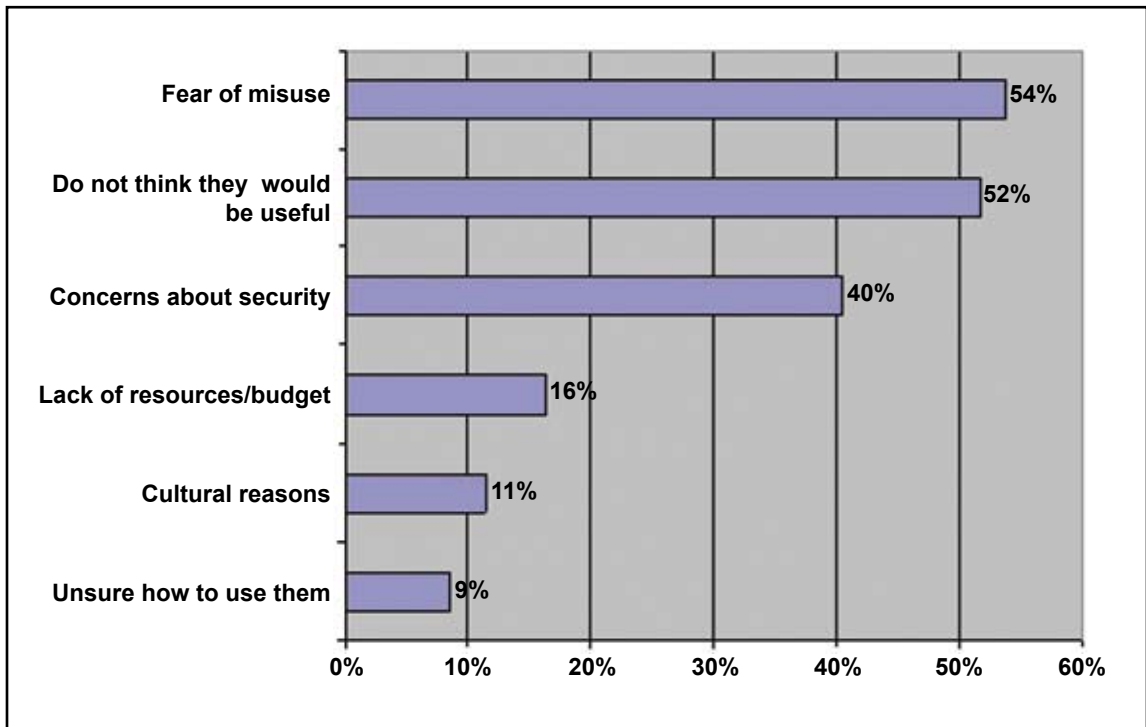
Base: 611 respondents without access to named technologies



- 65. When asked about why their organisation did not provide access to technologies such as instant messaging and social networks, the top three reasons cited were fear of misuse (54 per cent), not thinking they would be useful (52 per cent) and concerns about security (40 per cent). Figure 15 illustrates the responses in more detail.

**Figure 15: Reasons that organisations do not provide access to technologies such as instant messaging and professional networks**

Base: 611 respondents without access to named technologies



66. As many technologies can be made secure and have been shown to be useful elsewhere, there are questions about whether some organisations know about technologies and have decided that the risk of misuse is too high or that they would not be useful, or if there is a lack of awareness. Lack of budget was also much lower down the list than might be expected during the current economic climate.

## H. Conclusions

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67. The overwhelming finding of this survey and the work supported by BT is that working relationships matter, and that technologies have an impact on how people develop and sustain these working relationships over time.
68. It is evident from the research that the stronger people's social relationships and the more they feel trusted and trust others, the higher their job satisfaction is likely to be. Organisations need to recognise that people prefer to work for places characterised by strong working relationships and a focus on outputs rather than processes. In the current economic climate there is likely to be a temptation to focus on formal rules and processes. But focusing on outputs, supporting strong working relationships and creating a climate of trust and autonomy is likely to pay dividends by helping people forge closer relationships with customers and to be happier at work.
69. This does not mean rules should disappear: a culture of loyalty and a focus on outputs can and should still be supported by processes such as performance management. But it does mean that organisations should be thinking much more about supporting strong working relationships to help deliver innovation, ideas and a happier workforce.
70. The research also clearly demonstrates that new technologies are having a real impact on the workplace: not by supplanting traditional forms of communication but by creating new ways to interact with people. People still talk face to face, but it is clear from our work that people do not need to work in the same place in order to develop workplace friendships. Access to new technologies provides new ways to communicate with people, ways often familiar to people from using social media in their personal lives. And people are responding to having access to new technologies by making choices about what form of technology to use for different types of interaction: instant messenger is not seen as appropriate to contact senior managers, for example, but it is seen as appropriate for contacting immediate colleagues.
71. Access to new technologies also affects how people characterise their organisations. People with access to new technologies are more likely to characterise their organisations as having a culture of mutual trust and loyalty, and more likely to trust their colleagues. This suggests that new technologies may be one way of enabling people to form strong working relationships and to keep in touch with one another day to day.

72. New ways of working and new technologies are offering individuals and organisations the opportunity to communicate more frequently, but are also posing a challenge around selecting the right method of communication for different situations. Our survey highlights the importance of quality of relationships over factors such as location or working hours.
  
73. Organisations need to think about how they can make best use of different forms of communication and different types of technology, old and new. This means managers thinking innovatively about what tools to use to develop and sustain different relationships and to manage different situations, from dealing with conflict to having a chat. Old and new technologies can complement one another in helping organisations create the kind of culture that people prefer and the relationships that can help to sustain innovation and prosperity in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

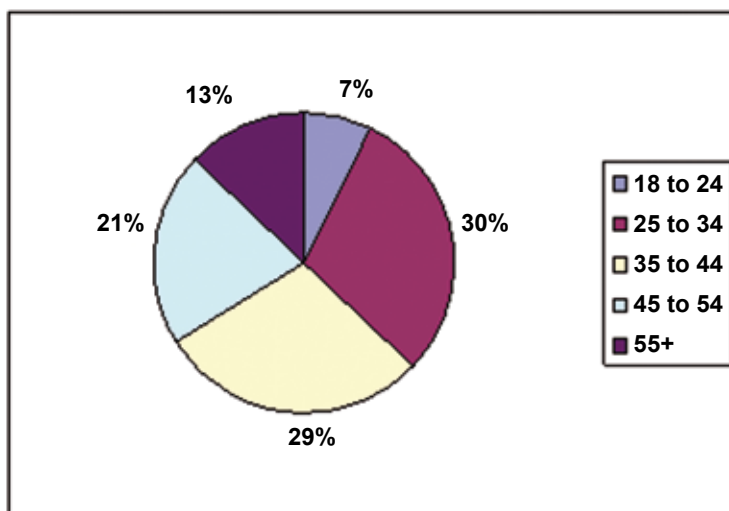
## Annex A. Overview of survey respondents

### Personal details

74. **Gender:** Nearly two thirds of respondents (65 per cent) are male, and 34 per cent are female.
75. **Age:** Nearly six in ten respondents are aged between 25 and 44, with a fifth aged 45 – 54, more than one in ten (13 per cent) aged 55 plus and 7 per cent aged 18 to 24 (see Figure 16 below).

**Figure 16: Age of respondents**

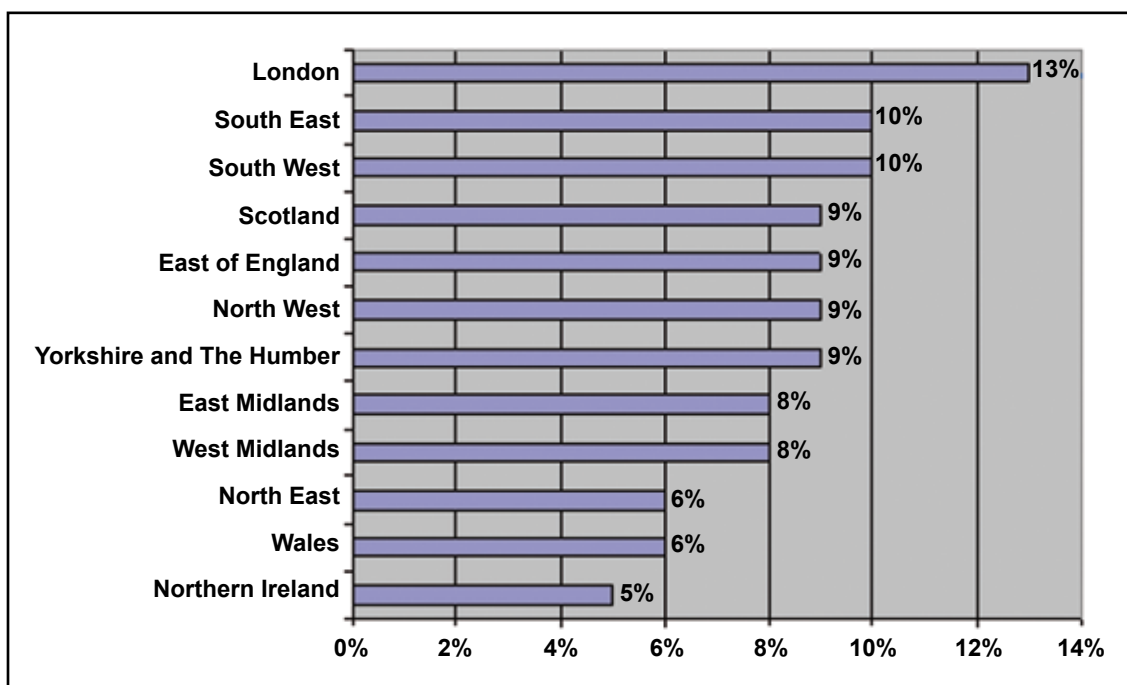
Base: All respondents



76. **Marital status:** Over two thirds of respondents are married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner (67 per cent). Three in ten are single, divorced, separated or widowed.
77. **Ethnicity:** 89 per cent of respondents identified themselves as white British, 5 per cent as any other white background, and 7 per cent as being from other ethnic backgrounds.
78. **Region:** Respondents are from all UK regions. The region with most respondents was London, where 13 per cent of respondents live, and the region with fewest respondents was Northern Ireland, where 5 per cent of the sample live – see Figure 17 on the following page.

**Figure 17: Regional breakdown of respondents**

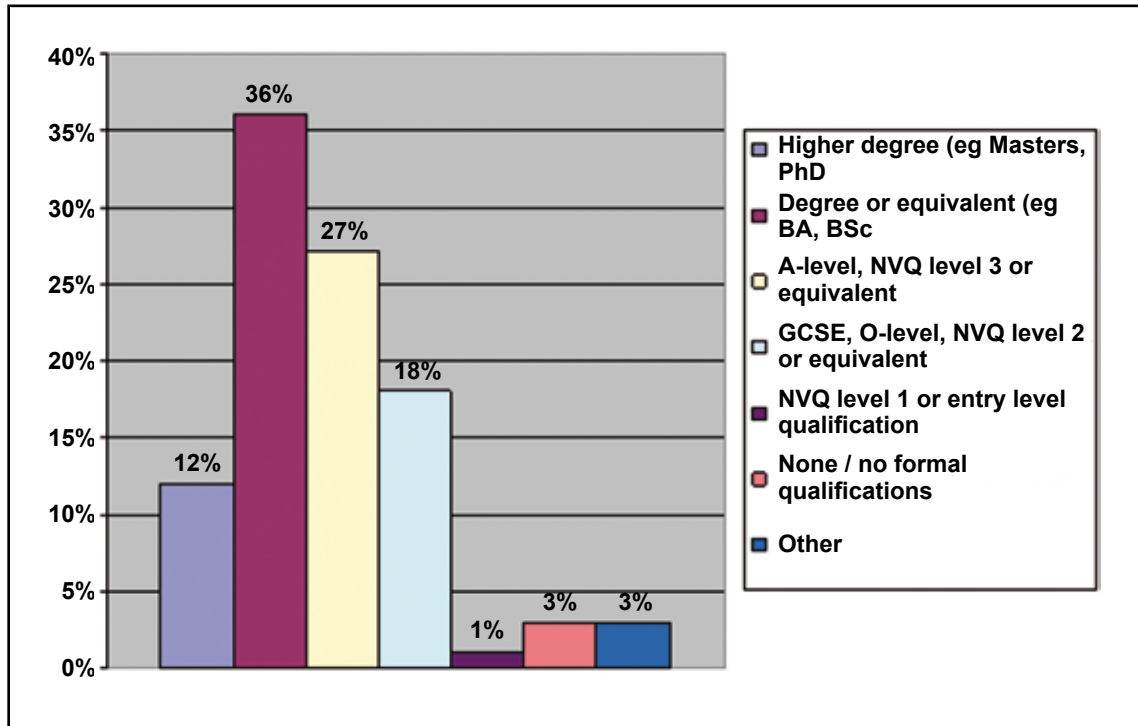
Base: All respondents



79. **Qualifications:** Nearly half of the sample (48 per cent) are qualified to degree level or above. A quarter of those with high qualifications – 12 per cent of the total sample – have a higher degree (eg Masters or PhD). Only 4 per cent of the sample say they have no or low qualifications.

**Figure 18: Qualifications of respondents**

Base: All respondents



80. The online survey was conducted for BT and The Work Foundation by YouGov between 5 and 10 November 2008. The survey focused on individuals working in organisations employing over 500 people. There are 1,243 respondents to the survey in total<sup>16</sup>.

### Employment information

81. **Organisation size:** 10 per cent of respondents work in organisations employing between 500 and 999 people, and the remainder work in organisations employing 1,000 people or more.

82. **Contract:** 97 per cent of respondents are on a permanent contract, 2 per cent are on a temporary contract and 2 per cent are on another contract or do not have a contract.

<sup>16</sup> Please note that throughout the reporting of findings, percentages rounded to nearest whole number, meaning on occasion figures add to slightly more/less than 100. More detailed statistics are available on request

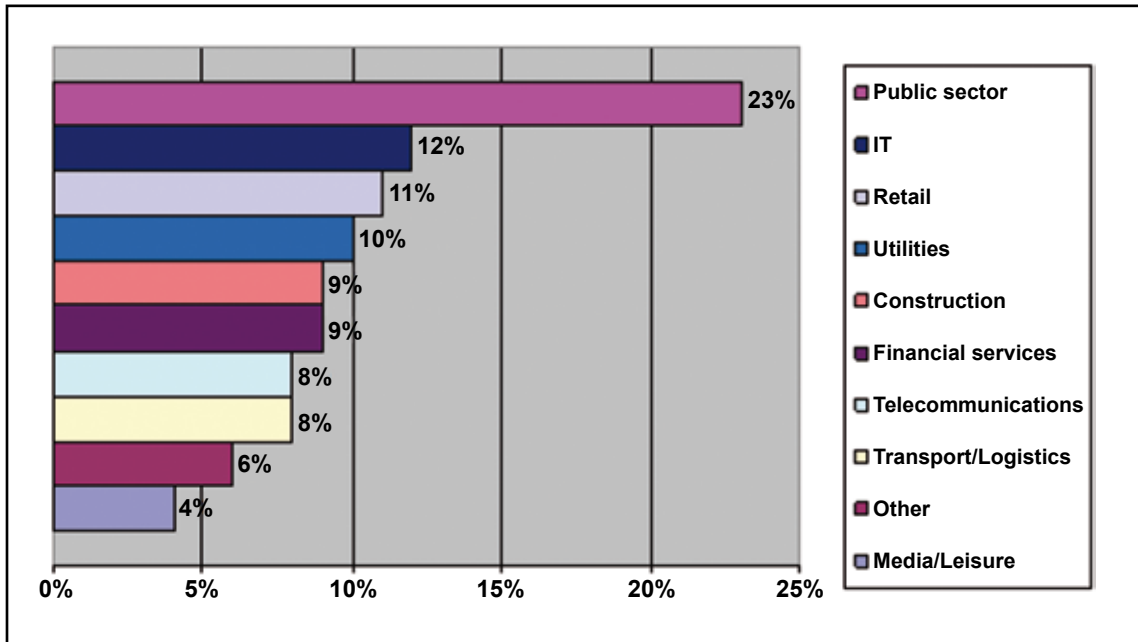
83. **Number of jobs:** 94 per cent of respondents have only one job but 6 per cent have more than one job.
84. **Length of service:** Most people – 56 per cent – have worked for their organisation for five years or more. Just over a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) have been employed for between two and five years, 12 per cent have been employed for between one and two years, and 5 per cent have been employed in their current organisation for less than a year.
85. **Working hours:** Nearly nine in ten respondents (88 per cent) work full time, with the remaining 12 per cent working less than 35 hours a week. When asked in detail about working hours, a third admitted working 41 hours a week or more. The majority (57 per cent) worked between 31 and 40 hours a week, with one in ten working 30 hours or less.
86. **Management responsibilities:** 46 per cent of respondents had junior, middle or senior management responsibilities, whilst 51 per cent identify themselves as not having management responsibilities.
87. **Sector:** Respondents are from a range of sectors, with the public sector most strongly represented – 23 per cent of respondents are from the public sector – and media and leisure the least strongly represented, with 4 per cent of respondents – see Figure 19 on the following page.
88. **Earnings:** Three in ten of the respondents earn less than £30K per annum and just over three in ten earn between £30K and £50K. Nearly two in ten (18 per cent) earn between £50 and 75K and more than one in ten (12 per cent) earn £75K or over. One in ten refused to say what they earned or were unsure – see Figure 20 on the following page.

### Job satisfaction

89. The survey also asked some questions about general measures of satisfaction at work.
90. **Pay:** We found that 45 per cent of respondents are satisfied with their pay, compared to 34 per cent who are dissatisfied.

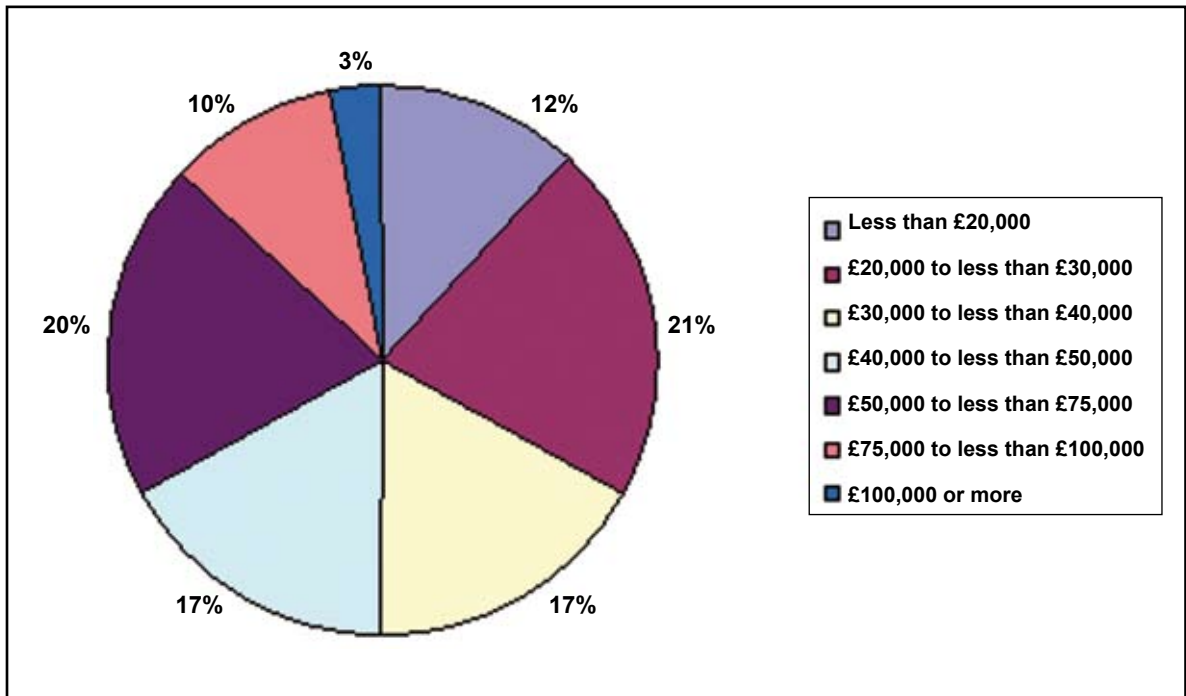
**Figure 19: Sectors in which respondents work**

Base: All respondents



**Figure 20: Earnings of respondents**

Base: All respondents



91. **Job Security:** Despite the challenging economic climate (this survey was conducted between 5 and 10 November 2008), three fifths of people (61 per cent) are satisfied with their job security and only 18 per cent are dissatisfied. However, 21 per cent are unsure.
92. **The content of their work:** More than three fifths (62 per cent) of respondents are satisfied with their work, compared to 16 per cent who are dissatisfied.
93. **Sense of Achievement:** Just over half (53 per cent) are satisfied with their sense of achievement at work, compared to a quarter who are dissatisfied.
94. **Hours:** 63 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the hours they work, compared to 17 per cent who are dissatisfied.

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