

branch tech bites

IS WORKING FROM HOME WORKING FOR YOU?

01



Hello, I'm Matt,

MD of Branch Tech.

2020? THE TERRIBLE YEAR

You don't need me to tell you 2020 was a strange year (but it was). Lockdowns, Eat Out To Help Out, social distancing - all new terms we use every day.

We've had to work differently, too. At least, differently to what the majority of us, myself included, are used to. Having a chat with a colleague over your screen was replaced by firing up Zoom, Slack or Teams. Zoom users peaked at 1.7 million in December 2020*.

It was just shy of 40k eleven months prior to this.

Crazy.

*<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1118860/zoom-daily-active-users-uk/>

**Survey results from a sample of 48 people from our database of developers, marketers and programmers, with results collected on 18th December 2020.

TECH TO THE RESCUE

But, thanks to these platforms, we kept on working, albeit from our homes. Having placed techies such as devs, programmers and solutions architects during my career, working from home/remotely was a bonus.

So, we decided to ask people how much WFH has impacted their lives, has it changed their perspectives of how to work and, ultimately, do they now feel it should be a given (once we get out of this mess).

And the results** are surprising. See for yourself and if you didn't throw in your ten pence, get in touch on the details at the end.

02

1.0 Life/Work Before Lockdown

"Back in my day, we had to sit in an office to do any work".

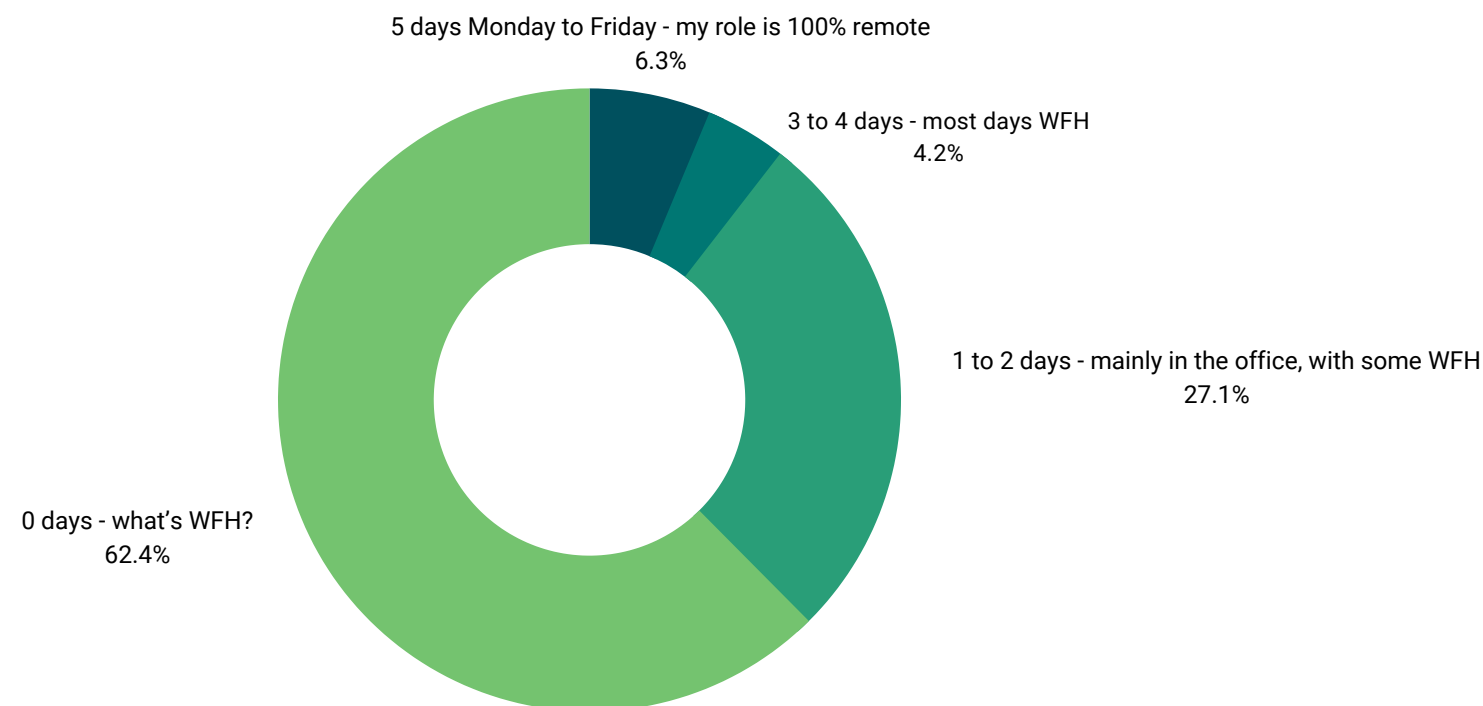
Those halcyon days of commutes, team lunches and huddles certainly seem like a long time ago (in a galaxy far far away too). Things happened pretty quickly with the first lockdown in March 2020.

And more to the point, our sample wasn't used to WFH either. **62.5% did 0 days away from the office** and only three people were 100% remote. Our sample consists of developers, marketers, software engineers, designers. People who, you could argue, CAN work remotely with no hassle. So, what did that mean for them when they went to 100% remote working?

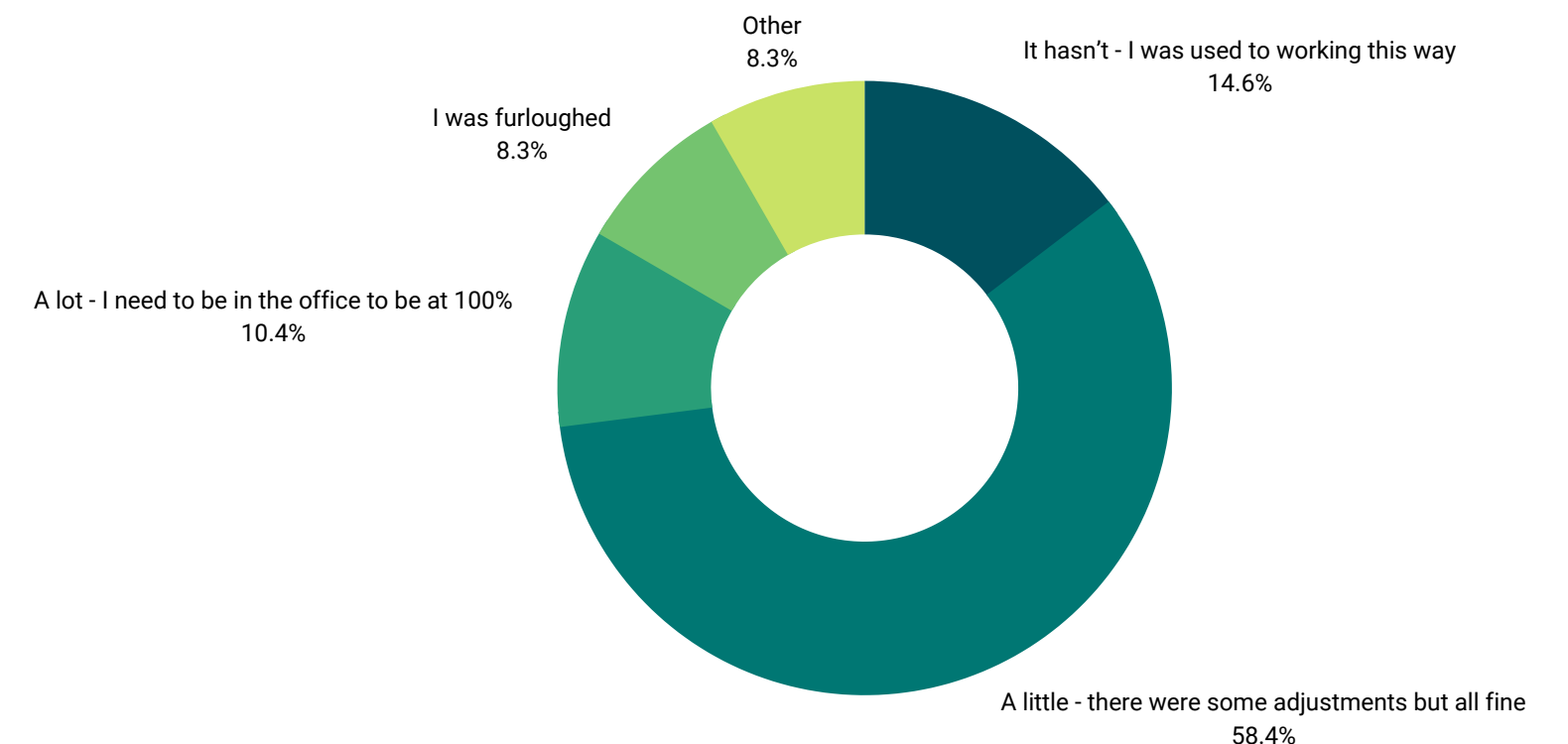
Not as much as you'd think (we're resilient creatures). 73% of the respondents in this group said they felt either no impact or very little to how they worked. That doesn't mean this new world of work wasn't without its challenges. Childcare was brought up on more than one occasion. IT issues were also put forward. But, they were manageable. In conclusion, those who were asked did quite well at coping with their new way of working.

Which raises the question: Why has it taken a pandemic to show employers that remote working works? Who knows (perhaps another survey will be needed).

Before 2020, how many days did you work from home per week?



How has remote working affected your role in 2020?



2.0 Back To The Future...

04

... WORLD OF WORK

The world still turns, with many business owners stating, "we'll be WFH until at least Q2 2021".

The choice on whether you work from home or not isn't ours to make at the moment. If it were, how likely is it that they'll want to continue operating this way when "things get back to normality"?

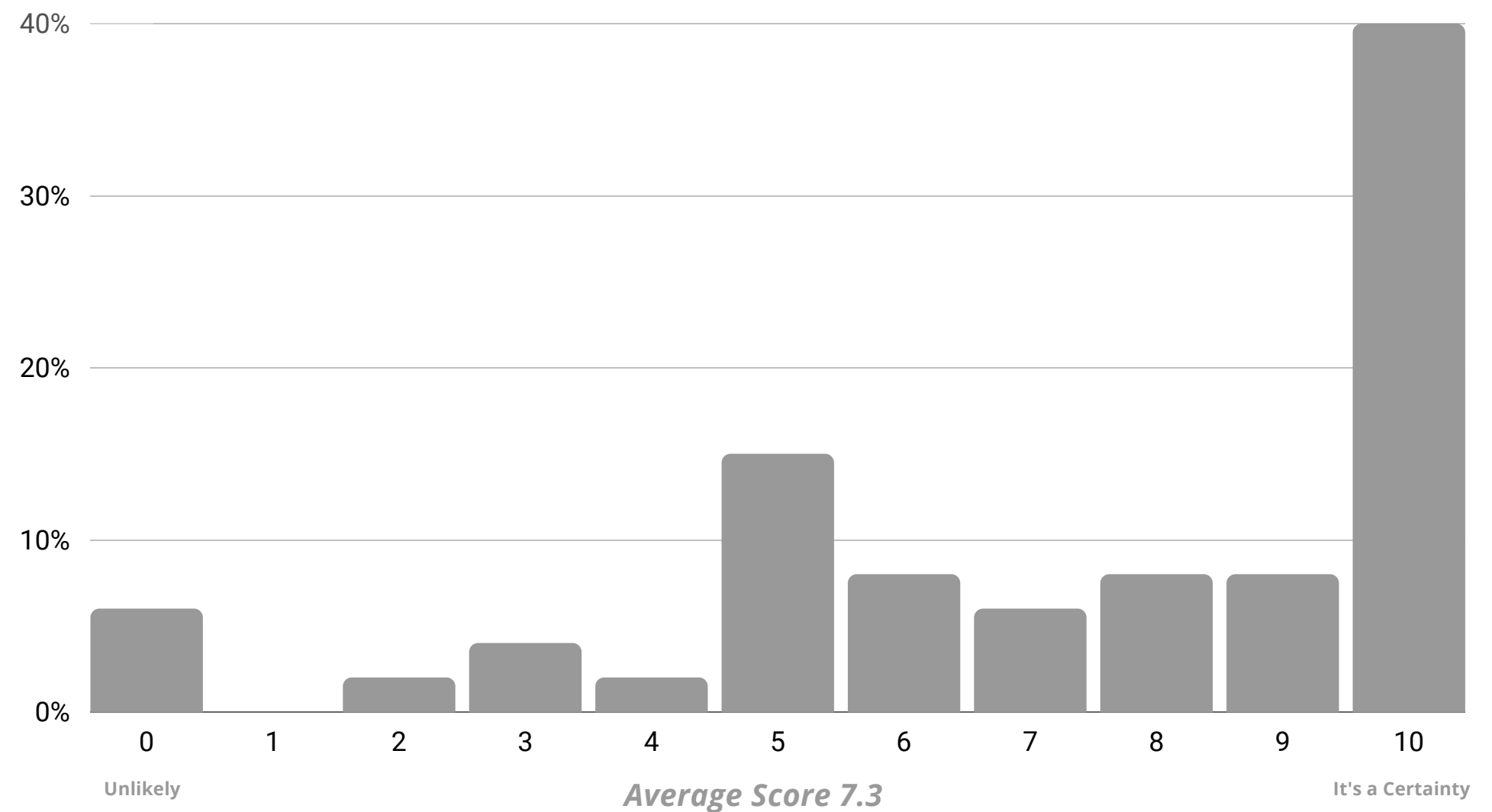
It turns out there's more in the sample that wants to carry it on, in some guise or other. With an average score of 7.3 in favour, you could argue WFH is HTS (here to stay).

As most will guess, the reasons are to reduce commuting time and spending whilst at work. One respondent went so far as to say that they've decided to sell their car and all associated costs, saving them £500 a month (quite a pay rise).

One of the responses highlighted they'd saved close to £1,000 in the first few months of Lockdown 2 due to not commuting, not eating takeaway lunches every day and ditching those morning lattes that cost £4.99.

Scary when you think about A. the money you spend on "stuff" and B. how much the retailers have missed it.

How likely is it you'll want to continue working this way when "things get back to normality"?



3.0 The New Commute

31%

would consider travelling nationally if it meant only visiting the office once a month.

There appears to have been a slight change in attitude towards the C-word. Commuting, for many, is a pain. It's costly both in terms of time and expense. And there's been almost 12 months of reduced/zero commuting for many. But has there been a change in perspective about the commute with the introduction of remote working? It seems the answer is yes.

Couple this the above with this. When asked "would you have considered the same commute in 2019?" - **nearly 65% of people said no.**

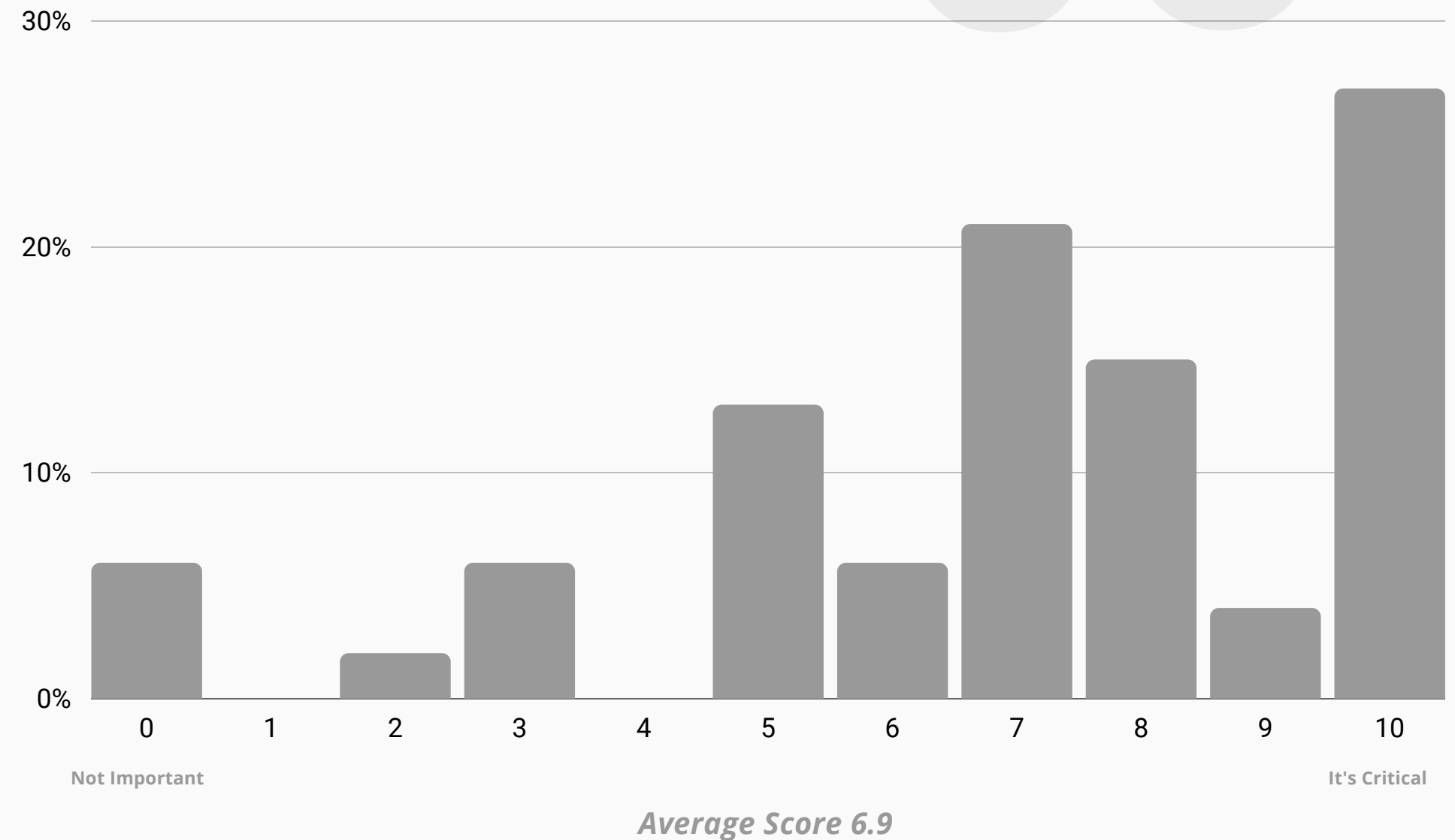
That's what remote working can do, pandemic or no pandemic. It can make the country (or the world) that bit bigger when it comes to a talent pool.

05

3.0 Continued...

06

How much will remote working factor into any future employment search?



With an average score of 6.9 (1 being not important, 10 being critical), the ability to work remotely is considered as vital to some. It's incredible to think just 24 months ago, WFH wasn't seen as a viable demand from candidates. They'd either commute or look local. The next few years are going to be interesting when it comes to the "Employee Package".

4.0 WFH Beyond Lockdown

Speaking to businesses over the last 9 to 12 months, the eventual return to normality is on everyone's wish list. How people return to work though, is another topic. Some are counting down the hours until the office doors can swing open. Others are now "remote only".

From a candidate perspective, the data throws back exciting feedback. Remote working should be embraced and Employers offering WFH are more attractive are neck and neck with the agreed statements.

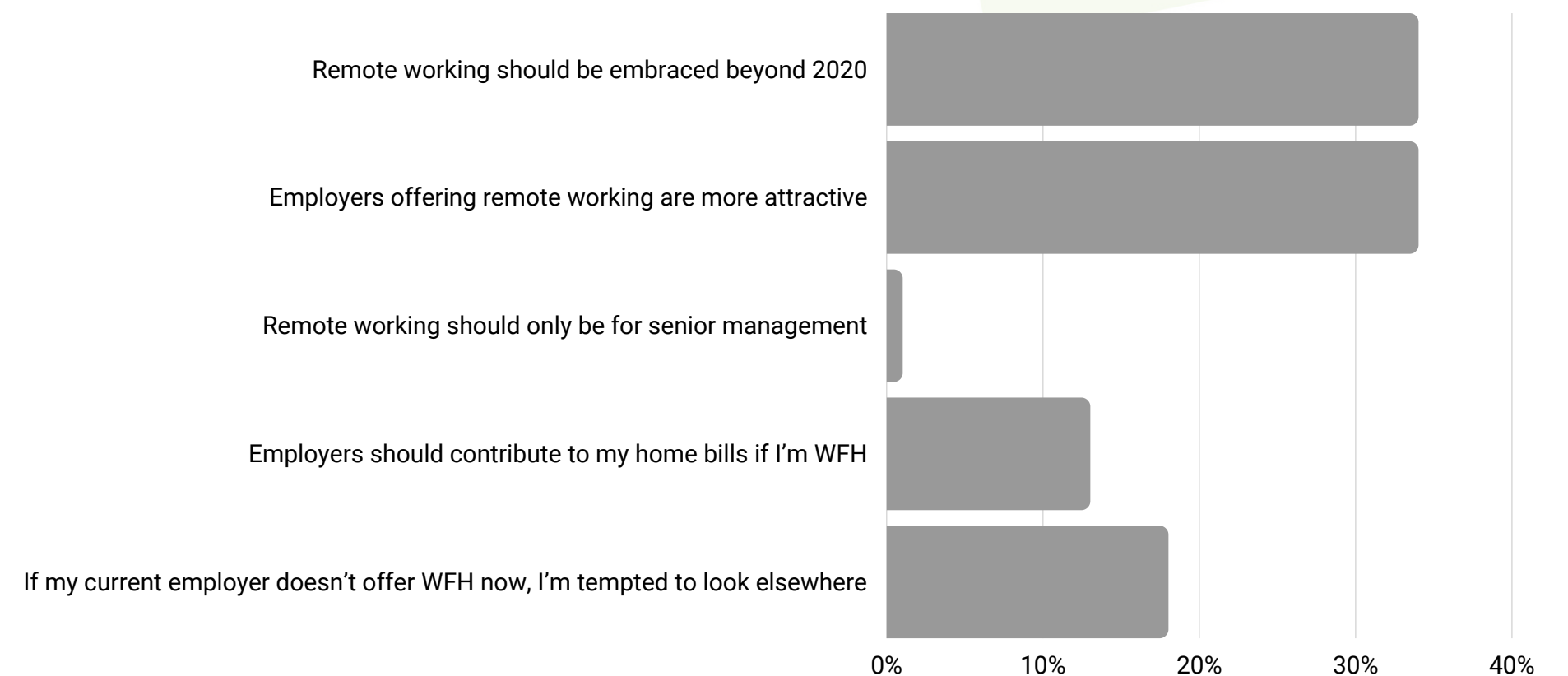
For candidates - if it's something you feel should be offered, and you now have tangible evidence to say you can WFH, then there's a great case to put forward if it's a necessity. Not all employers will offer fully remote working, but the case for providing to you gets a lot easier when you can showcase success.

For end-hirers - if you're offering remote working as standard, treat it as an added extra. Some candidates need to see that your operation provides this, and when compared to another opportunity, WFH could swing the decision in your favour. Likewise, if WFH isn't a policy, you want to embrace it. You could argue that offering more money, annual leave, and incentives is a way to coax people back into the office.

One number caught the eye in the feedback - 17.5% of respondents would be "tempted" to look elsewhere if WFH is off the cards. As pointed out in Section 2, some people have saved money due to zero commuting costs.

Even if it's £200 per month, it's the equivalent of a £4,000 per year pay rise. That's hard to let go when you can accomplish work anywhere. Food for thought when it comes to your team.

Which statements do you agree with?



5.0 "In Your Own Words"

08

... DO YOU VIEW REMOTE WORKING AS A POSITIVE FOR YOUR INDUSTRY?

"Remote working is convenient and flexible, it allows more freedom which makes me feel more productive especially as I don't have to spend time sitting in traffic/getting ready for the office etc. Any additional hours can be given back to the company (i.e. working an extra half hour or hour as there's no rush hour to beat) or taken for personal time so you get a better work life balance which leads to better productivity and staff morale".

"Remote working is a huge positive and although it already had traction in my industry, the circumstances in 2020 forced employers to understand the office environment is not right for everyone. On the other hand, mental health is a concern and must receive sufficient attention".

"Working in government infrastructure (energy) this has been a completely new way of working for all government sectors. Trusting each person and holding to account is key for it to work. I believe this is a positive step forward for working but also for how the country will operate. Less travelling, lesser need for large offices, better balance of work to life ratio, the list is endless of positives".

"I think it is good to have a balance between the two, but everyone is different. I currently do 4 days in the office/appointments and 1 day from home. I find that the 1 day WFH is a nice break from commuting, but I do think some people work better in an office environment. I think most employers should consider a split between the two".

"Mostly positive for universities and its professional staff, although nothing can replace face-to-face learning and experiences. A lot of my colleagues have made a successful transition to WFH in 2020, though I've found the most enthusiasm saved for part-office, part-home working for those who want to get away from their families or who live alone and want some company"

6.0 Final Thoughts

There'll likely be a return to the office for both employees and employers. For the former, if your finances are looking healthier than ever, get ready for a drop in disposable income.

If you can squeeze a promotion or agree to WFH full time, there's a good argument for that. Employers need to understand their own staff's feelings too. Survey your teams, ask them their thoughts on the eventual return and bear in mind that they might be different from when they left the office. Asking for flexibility at short notice, varying working hours and an increase in salary to cover commuting are likely to be talking points.

From a talent pool perspective, if people are willing to consider opportunities outside of their area, it opens up enormous opportunities for both candidates and end-hirers.

After all, who wants to be stuck in traffic, packed in on the tube or listening to the dreaded BING BONG 'the 7:26, train, to, MANCHESTER, is delayed'?

If you're going to offer remote working, there's an opportunity to package it up as an incentive. It also means your talent/opportunity pool is national or even global. Also, getting your WFH policies in place should be something you look to implement if they already haven't.

I do foresee added competition for both candidates and employers, roles and people. The North/South divide is also a point to consider. Companies in London can in theory stand a better chance of recruiting nationally if WFH is part and parcel. Candidates, if you're willing to travel down to the capital once a week/month, you can potentially add 20 to 30% onto your take-home pay.

Suppose you've been lucky enough to carry on working throughout 2020 into 21, hats off to you. If your profit margins, output and morale are also healthy, even better news. What shouldn't be lost is the importance of human interaction. Not seeing your colleagues in the same room for almost 12 months is something that both myself and the Branch team miss. But we've changed, there's no doubt about that.

Whatever happens next, the world of work has also moved on, probably for the better.

Matthew Lewis, Managing Director, Branch Tech

Thanks For Reading

09



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