

Headline Findings from IFOW & Opinium Poll on Work, Technology and COVID-19

These findings represent the results of a poll of 2001 UK adults, of which 1251 are currently in employment, conducted between 22nd May and 26th May 2020.

The questionnaire was jointly designed by IFOW and Opinium. Results were prepared by Opinium. All analysis and tables in this document were prepared by IFOW.

Sub-group results are only reported where $n > 50$, unless otherwise stated.

The following is divided into two sections

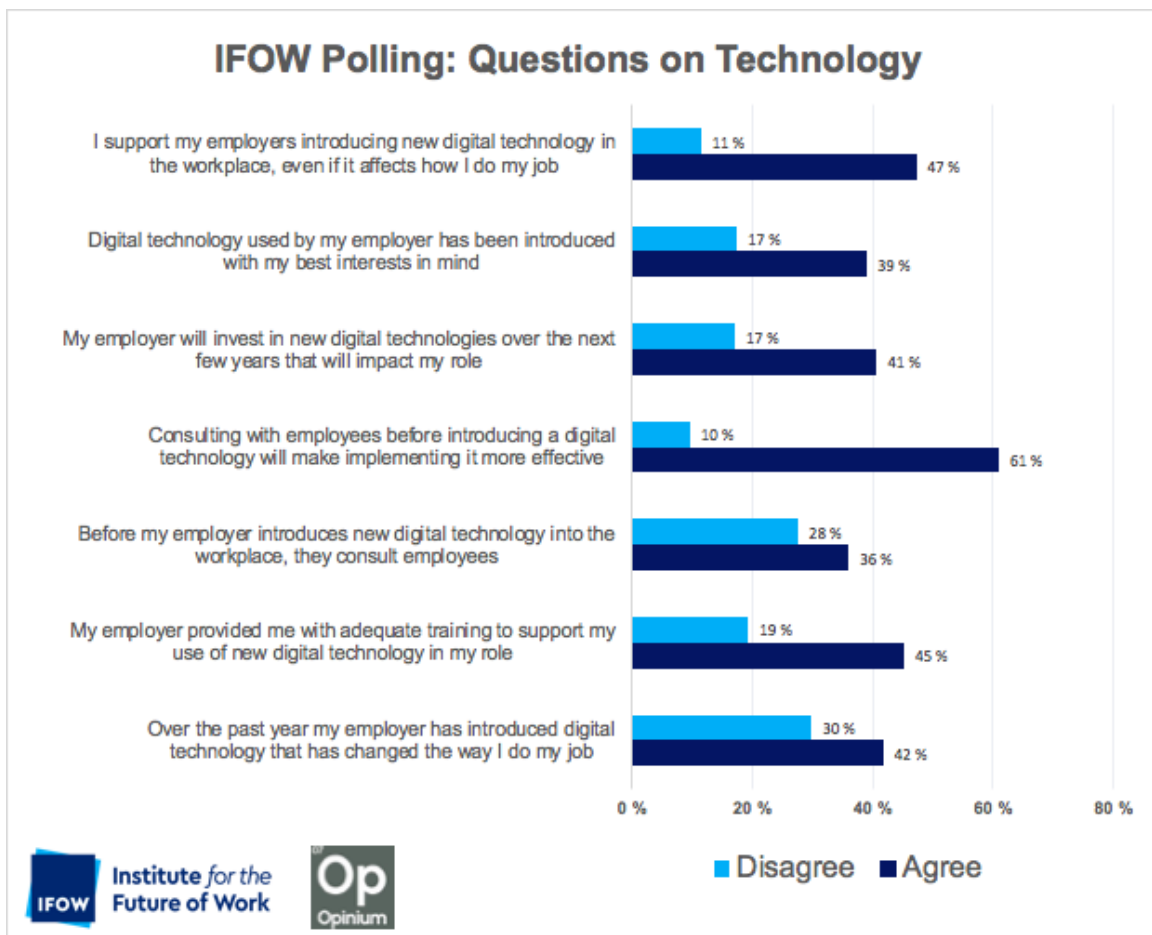
Section 1 - Technology and Changing Workplaces

Section 2 - COVID, Optimism and Worker Transition

Technology and Changing Workplaces

The poll asked respondents about how technology is being used in their workplace, and whether they see their job changing in the future. A summary of answers is presented in the table below. Some headlines are:

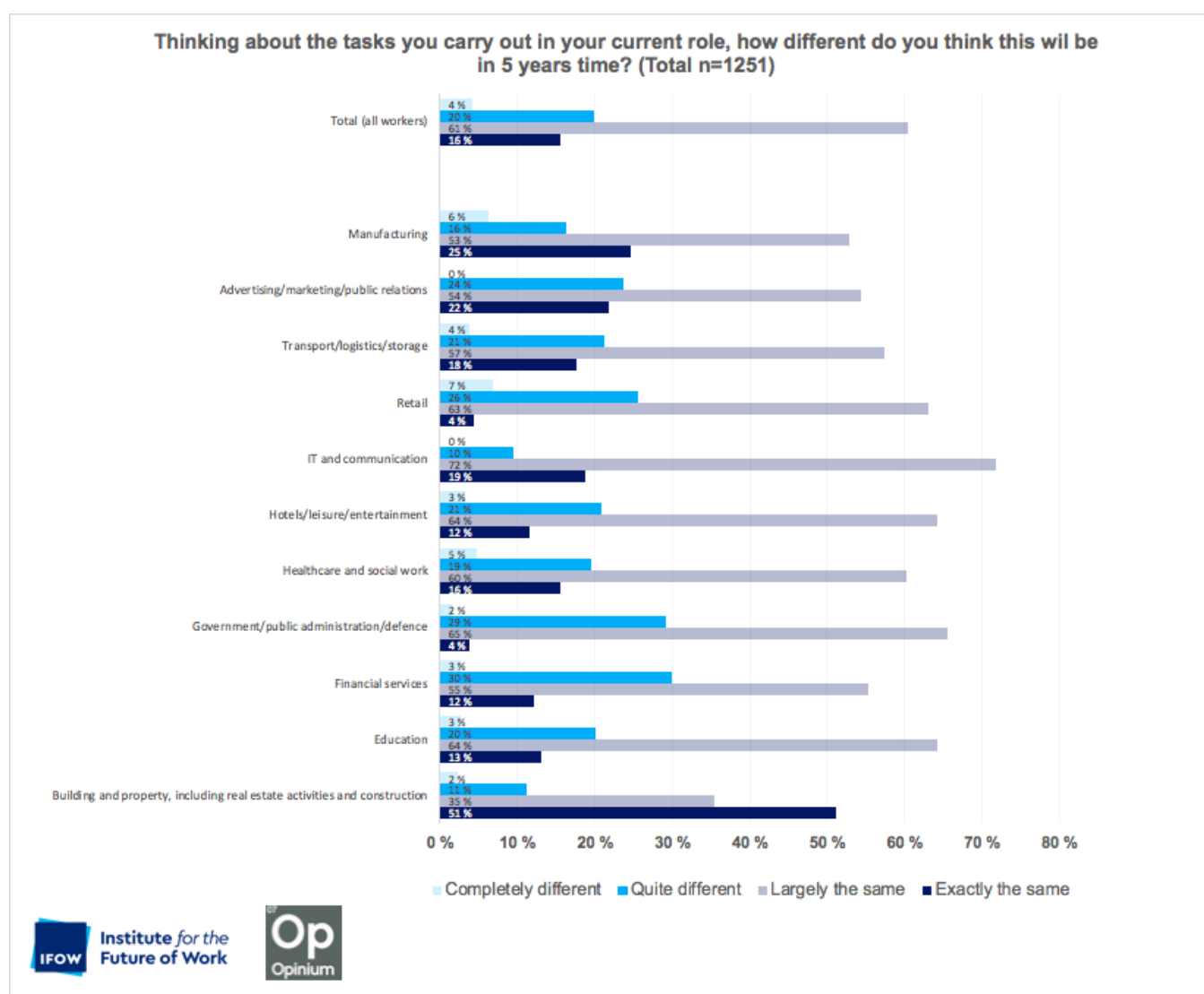
- 2 in 5 workers (42%) report that their job has changed as a result of a new digital technology within the past year.
- A similar proportion (41%) expect that their job will be impacted by digital technology in the next few years.
- There is a 'consultation gap' - most workers (61%) think that consulting with employees before introducing a new technology will make it more effective, but only 1 in 3 workers (36%) report that their employer has actually done this. (A similar proportion actively report that their employer doesn't consult workers.)
- More workers reported that employers provided training on the new technology (45%), than reported that they had been consulted (36%).
- Despite relatively widespread experience and understanding of the way technology changes work, workers remain positive about technology. About half (47%) actively support new technology in the workplace even if it affects them, compared to only one in ten (11%) that don't.



On the whole workers don't anticipate that their job will change all that much over the next five years, 77% said that they think the tasks they carry out in their role will be 'largely the same' or 'exactly the same'. However, it is notable that only a small minority, about 1 in 6 (16%) think that their job will be exactly the same in five years' time.

These results were fairly consistent across industries, with some notable exceptions. Retail workers were the most likely of all groups to think that their job was likely to be very different in 5 years' time, possibly reflecting the technological change and other pressures facing the sector.

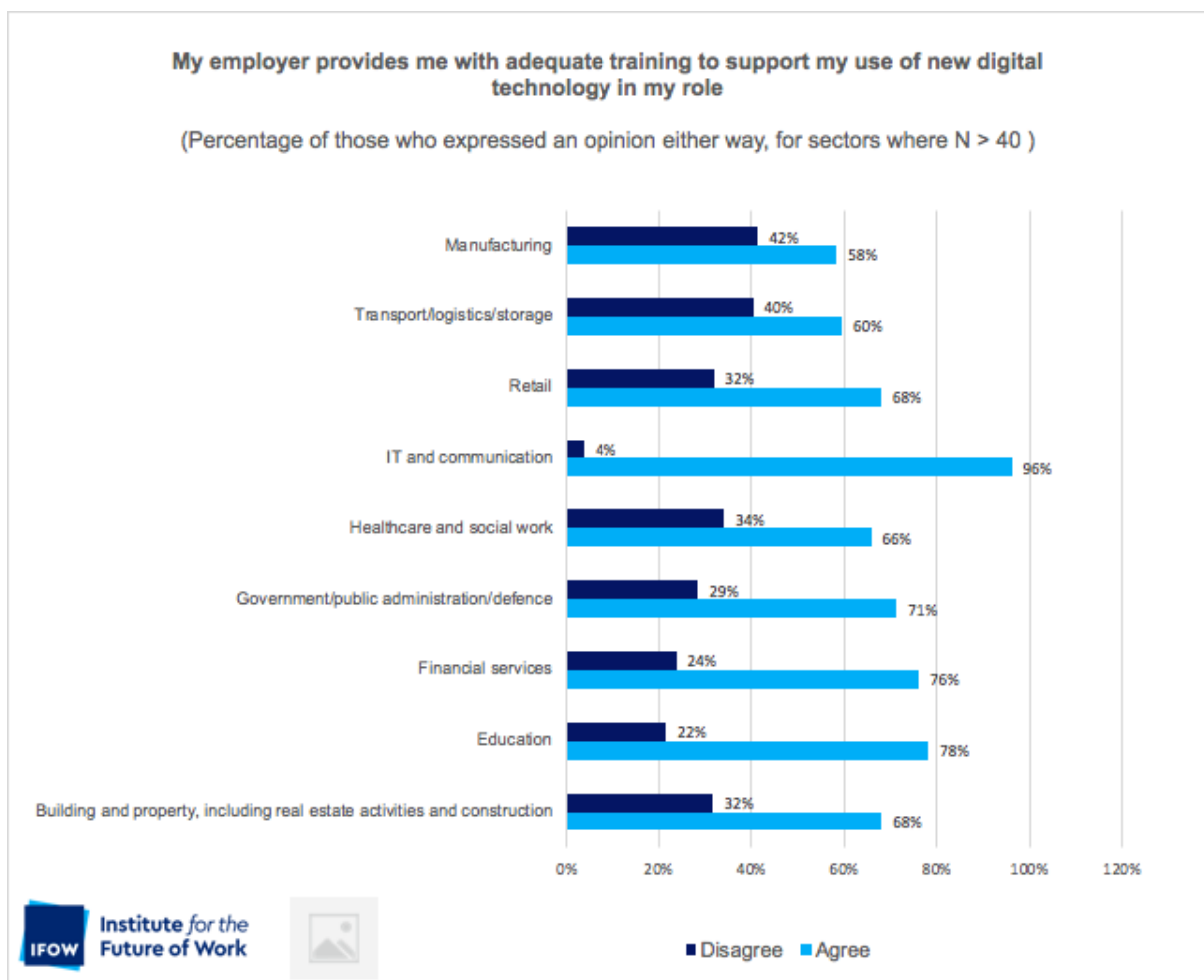
Only 1 in 25 retail workers (4%) polled think that their job will be exactly the same in 5 years' time. A feeling of change was also more common among government and public administration employees, although among those anticipating change in this sector, the feeling was this would be slight, as only one in fifty (2%) thought that their job would be completely different.



A big factor in ensuring that workers are able to adapt to the use of technology and other changes in the workplace is whether the employer provides adequate training support.

A way to do this using the polling data is to look at just those people who expressed an opinion either way about whether training was adequate, and examine the proportion of those more opinionated people that are positive or negative about the training they have received.

On this analysis, the IT sector stands as a stark but predictable outlier for training purposes. The overwhelming majority of respondents responded that adequate training was provided - 96%. The response was more muted among respondents from the transportation and logistics sector, and the manufacturing sector, where about 2 in 5 disagreed that they had received adequate training.

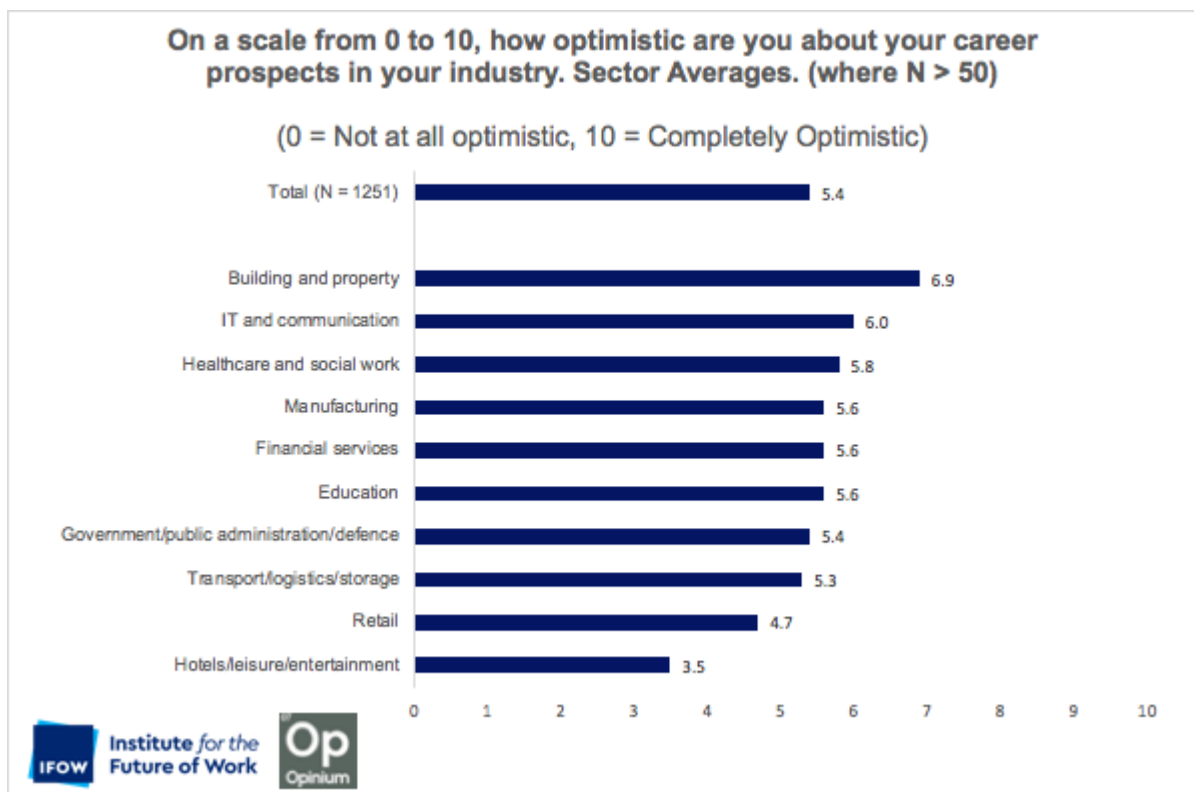


COVID-19, Optimism and Worker Transition

The Inequality of Optimism

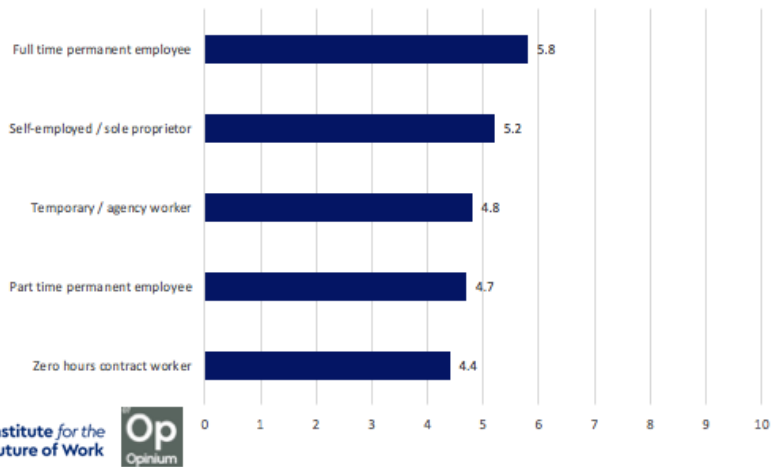
The IFOW / Opinium poll asked a series of questions about how optimistic workers are about their future, revealing some stark differences.

- Looking at these results by sector, it is notable that workers in the hospitality and entertainment are significantly less optimistic about their future, which is likely related to the specific impacts of COVID-19 on their sector. The retail sector was the second least optimistic
- Construction and property workers are the most optimistic, which is interesting as these are the group of workers who anticipate the least change in their profession in the upcoming years.
- There seems to be a relationship between optimism and job security. Full time employees were by far the most optimistic group, with zero hours workers by far the least optimistic.
- Optimism also follows a clear income gradient. The more people earn, the more optimistic they are about the future.
- Homeworkers are the most optimistic, possibly reflecting the fact that this group is likely to be slightly higher paid than others. Furloughed workers are the least optimistic. It is unclear the extent to which this is due to them working in sectors that are less optimistic, or because they have been furloughed.



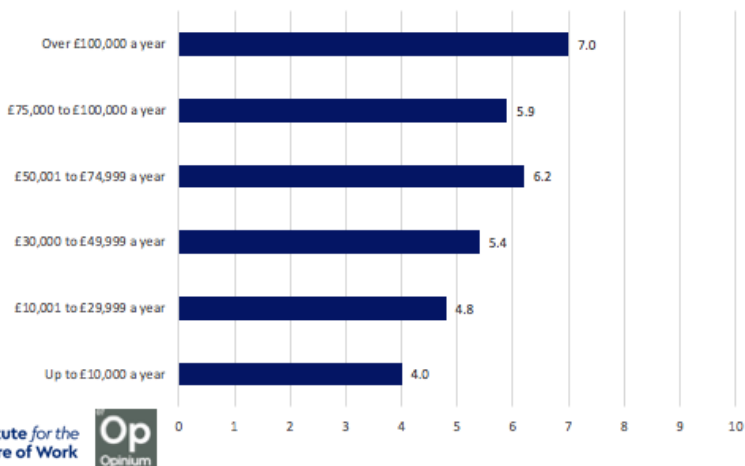
Average optimism about future career prospects in worker's industry, by employee type

(0 = Not at all Optimistic, 10 = Completely Optimistic)



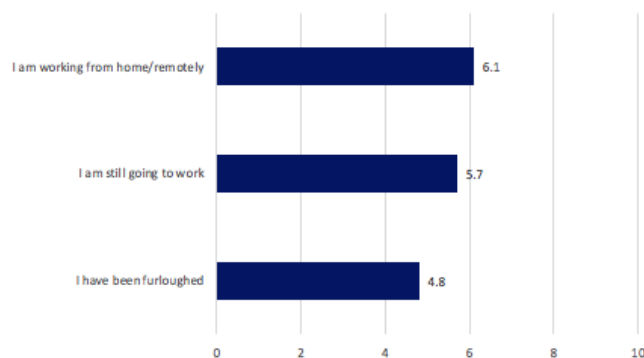
Average optimism about future career prospects in worker's industry, by salary level

(0 = Not at all Optimistic, 10 = Completely Optimistic)



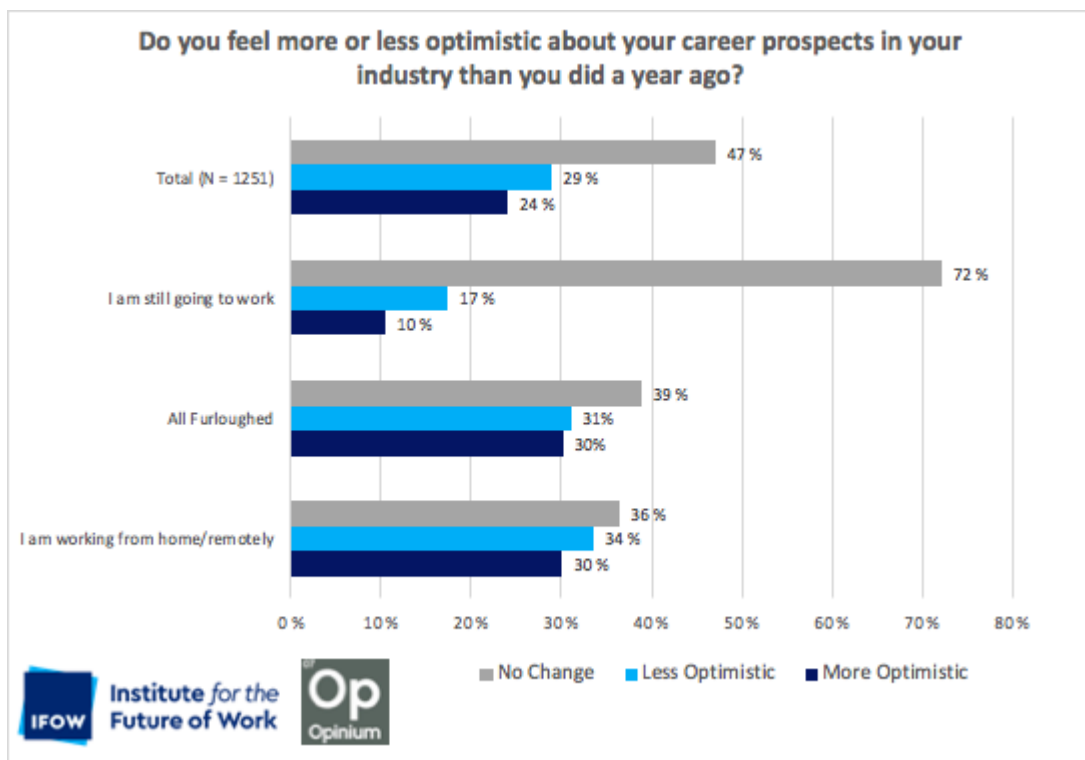
Average optimism about future career prospects in worker's industry, by current work status

(0 = Not at all Optimistic, 10 = Completely Optimistic)



How has optimism changed because of COVID?

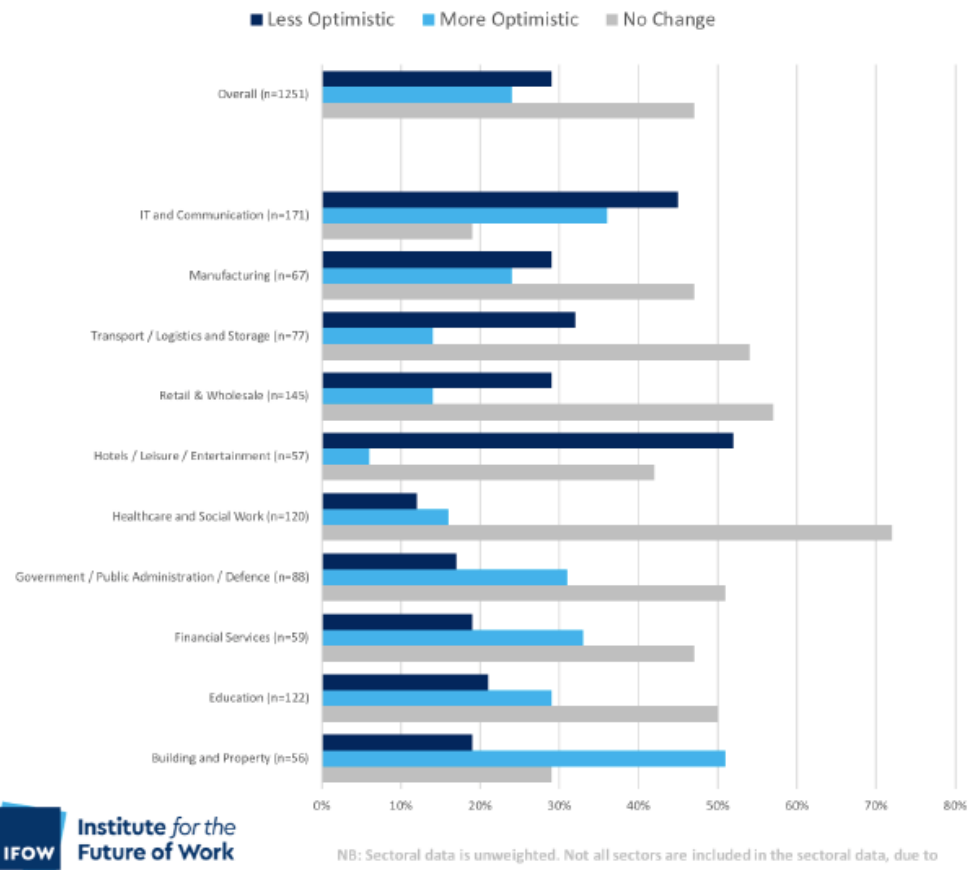
- Roughly the same proportion of people are less optimistic (29%) as are more optimistic (24%) about their career prospects in their industry as compared to last year.
- At first look, there really isn't much difference between the changes to optimism in furloughed workers as compared to remote workers.
- Those still going to work are much less likely to have reported any change in their optimism levels.



- However, if you dig a bit deeper you find that the strength of optimism is much higher among home workers than furloughed people. Among home workers that reported being more optimistic, the majority (56%) are “much more optimistic”, than this time last year. For furloughed people, this figure was just 27%.
- This might suggest that there are sub-groups of homeworkers for whom home working has proved a very positive lifestyle change.
- But overall, it is important to note that COVID isn't being universally perceived as negative for people's careers by any stretch! It depends on the person
- For example, for both groups of people, those who are more optimistic than last year, and those who are less optimistic than last year, COVID was cited by most to be the reason why.

- 68% of those who are more optimistic than last year cited COVID as the reason, and 85% who are less optimistic cited COVID as the reason.
- Greater optimism seems to be particularly prevalent in the IT and Construction sectors, and low in the hospitality, retail and transport sectors.

Do you feel more or less optimistic about your career prospects in your industry than you did a year ago?



- The polling suggests that about 1 in 3 workers (people currently employed) are looking for a new job at the moment. ⅓ of these jobseekers are motivated to move jobs because of COVID.
- Of the COVID job seekers specifically, 60% are looking to transition into a new industry.

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