



---

The

# State

OF THE Deskless  
Workforce

---

UK Report



## Index

---

### Introduction

### Survey Overview

#### **1. Scheduling and Sick Leave**

- 1.1 General Findings
- 1.2 Impact of COVID-19

#### **2. Industry Retention**

- 2.1 General Findings
- 2.2 Impact of COVID-19

#### **3. Communication**

- 3.1 General Findings
- 3.2 Impact of COVID-19

#### **4. Mental Health**

- 4.1 Impact of COVID-19
- 



## Introduction

---

### Benchmarking the Deskless Workforce

Each year, there are thousands of surveys conducted on the workplace, assessing how workers in office environments socialise, commute and maintain their health and happiness.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said for the deskless workforce – the 2.7 billion workers worldwide who keep us healthy, make sure the shelves of our grocery stores are stocked and are critical to the day-to-day functions of our global society.

#### It's time to change the conversation.

At Quinyx, we are taking the lead by introducing the first edition of the **State of the Deskless Workforce**, an annual report that will grow over time into an index that gauges how this section of the workforce is evolving in light of new regulations, technologies and global challenges.

#### This annual report reviews key areas that impact deskless workers.

##### Salaries

How satisfied are deskless workers with their current salaries?

##### Career Progression

How do workers value benefits versus career progression when deciding whether to stay in a job?

##### Workforce Communication

How effective are employers at providing information and hearing their workforce's concerns?

##### Schedule Flexibility

How do flexible working hours improve employees' ability to maintain balance between work and personal lives?



# Survey Overview

**To launch the report, we asked deskless workers what businesses can do to support them, keep them happy and stay in their jobs longer.**

In March 2020 we polled 1,200 UK workers, identifying themselves as a deskless worker, on topics related to scheduling, sick time, wages and communication. With businesses now managing four or more generations in the workplace, we analysed how results differed between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers\*. Moreover, we took a look at how results varied across industries including retail, hotel and food services, healthcare, transportation and logistics.

**Then, the world faced a global pandemic, which universally altered our way of life.**

## 70%

go to work when they are sick



## 53%

think switching shifts would be perceived negatively by their employer



To understand how the pandemic has changed the deskless workforce, we polled the same target audience in late April 2020. What we found was that their concerns and challenges haven't really changed. Results show that there is widespread demand among deskless workers for employers to prioritise their needs related to scheduling, communication and employee recognition.

Typically overshadowed by the needs of the corporate workforce, COVID-19 has given deskless workers - many of whom are essential workers\* - an opportunity to take a stand and verbalise their concerns.

Topline results show how deskless employees today are forced to choose between their job and their own wellbeing:

## 20%

of workers still went into work sick during COVID-19



## 48%

of those who worked whilst sick during COVID-19 did so because they couldn't afford to lose pay



\*Essential workers are public or private sector employees considered to provide an essential service, and therefore needed at work during the COVID-19 situation. They include health and social care, education, emergency services, transport, utilities and food industry workers.  
Generations split: Gen Z (18-24), Millennials (25-44), Gen X (45-54), Baby Boomers (55+).

# 1. The Deskless Workforce, Scheduling & Sick Leave

Millions of deskless workers in the UK have little or no paid sick leave, and can't afford to stay at home if they are feeling poorly. Most of these deskless workers aren't able to work from home and therefore have to go to their place of work if they want to get paid, even if they are sick.

## *Being sick is not an option for deskless workers*



**of deskless workers say they have gone into work sick**

68% of Gen Z

73% of Millennials

70% of Gen X

61% of Baby Boomers

**Number of workers – split per generation – who have worked while being sick.**

## Lack of flexibility in schedules is a problem

Prior to COVID-19, deskless workers admitted they were stressed out about schedules and the lack of flexibility they had. So much so that 32% would choose a flexible work schedule over making more money.

30%



left a job because their employer didn't provide schedules in advance

37%



have called out of work because they could not find a coworker to cover their shift

46%



say system restrictions prevented them from switching shifts with a co-worker

53%



believe switching a shift would be perceived negatively by their employer



## 1.1 General Findings

**Inflexible schedules create work-life imbalance. When asked, 63% of deskless workers said that they have missed a social event or holiday, and 36% have missed a major milestone due to their inflexible schedule. Rigid schedules have also caused 59% to miss out on sleep, meals and personal time, while 26% have missed out on educational activities.**

63% Social events or holiday celebrations

59% Personal time

36% Major family/friend milestones

26% Educational activities

### ***Inflexible schedules could be causing Gen Z and Millennial burnout***

Results show that compared to other age groups of the UK workforce, Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to prioritise work over health and personal time.

Missed major milestone moments	Missed social events or holidays	Missed educational activities	Forfeited personal time	
32%	68%	28%	67%	Gen Z
39%	68%	29%	64%	Millennials
35%	52%	21%	50%	Gen X
27%	45%	14%	37%	Baby Boomers

## 1.2 Impact of COVID-19

**7 in 10**

deskless workers went into work sick before COVID-19

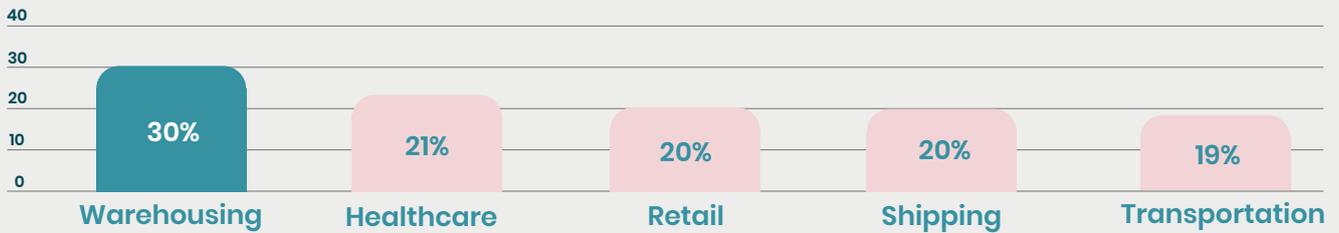


**1 in 5**

still went into work sick during COVID-19

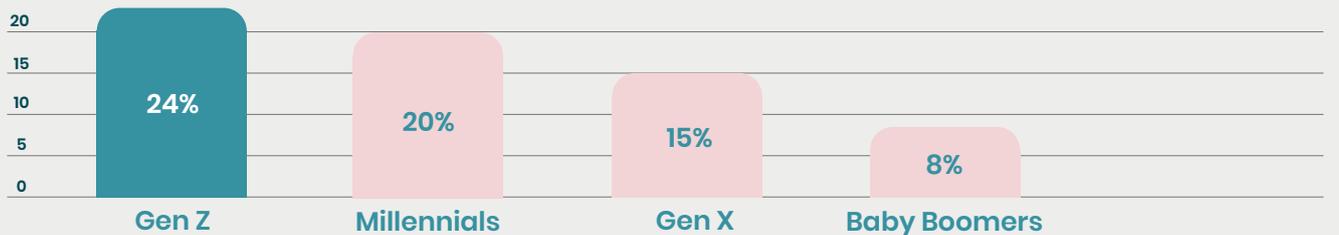


### Sector deep dive



Out of the 20%, warehousing workers led the way in going to work sick during COVID-19.

### Generation deep dive



Out of the 20%, Gen Z led the way in going to work sick during COVID-19.

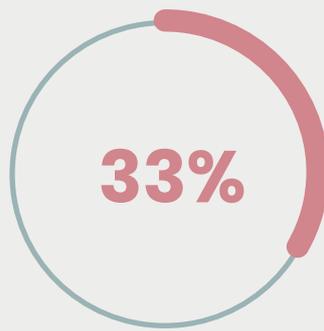
## 1.2 Impact of COVID-19

### *Why would deskless workers risk their health and come to work sick during the pandemic?*

During the pandemic, 20% of deskless workers still went to work due to financial worries. Not going to work could mean not being able to put food on the table or pay rent.



said they needed the money for household expenses

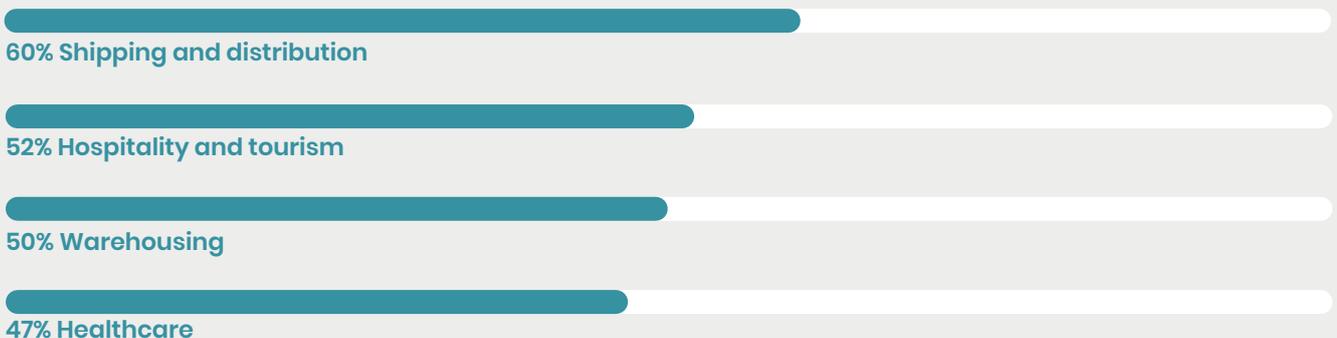


said there was no one to cover their shift



said they worried they would lose their job if they missed work

The need to keep earning money was the top reason for deskless workers who came into work while sick:



## 1.2 Impact of COVID-19

While many can work from home during COVID-19, this is often not possible for deskless workers. So how did their employers approach flexible working during the pandemic?



Say their employer offered greater flexible working opportunities



Say their employer offered some flexible working but it did not go far enough

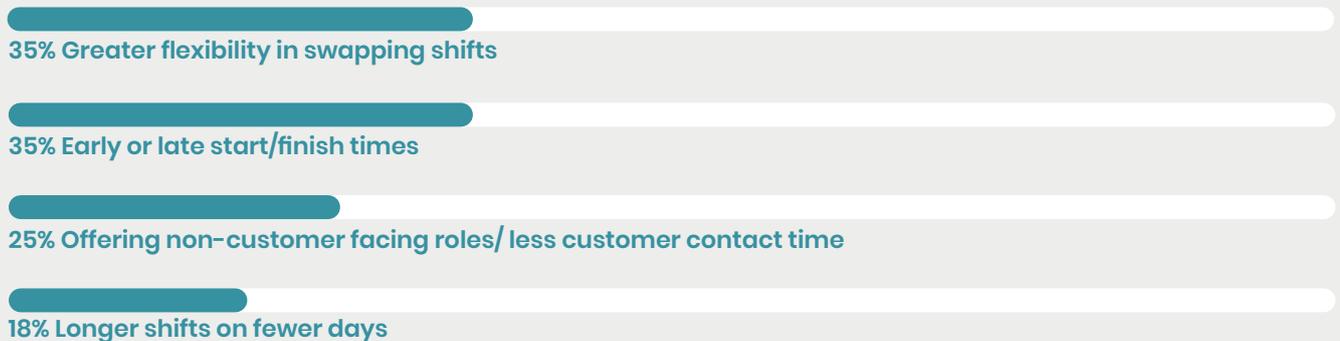


Say their employer did not offer greater flexible working opportunities and that they should have done more to offer flexible working



Say their employer reduced flexible working opportunities

According to the workers polled, what were the most important flexible working measures that were put in place during COVID-19?



### GEN Z

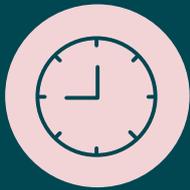
Said reducing customer contact time was most important

### Millennials

Said greater flexibility selecting and swapping shifts was most important

## 2. The Deskless Workforce & Industry Retention

Contrary to general perception and mainly due to the low retention rate in certain industries, deskless workers want long-term jobs. When asked if they planned to stay in their current job long-term (3 years +), this is what they said:



60%

plan to stay in their current job for more than 3 years



25%

see their job as temporary until they start their career



6%

see their job as seasonal for extra income

*However, some don't feel their employer values their work:*



Believe their employer views them as a disposable or temporary worker



Have considered quitting their job because they're unhappy with their work environment

*And many are so unhappy that they have considered leaving their job:*

When it comes to leaving their jobs, Gen Z are a flight risk. While two-thirds of baby boomers plan to stay in their current job for at least three years, 53% of Gen Z workers are considering their next move.

## 2.1 General Findings

Across industries, workers don't want a job, they want a career. This is particularly true for the transportation and healthcare sectors, where specialised training is often required. This chart shows the percentage of workers who plan to stay in their current job for three years or more:



### *Deskless workers don't "feel loved" by their employers*

Many deskless workers, especially in industries such as logistics and retail, don't feel valued by their employer. Broken down by sector, the following statistics show what percentage of workers do not feel valued.

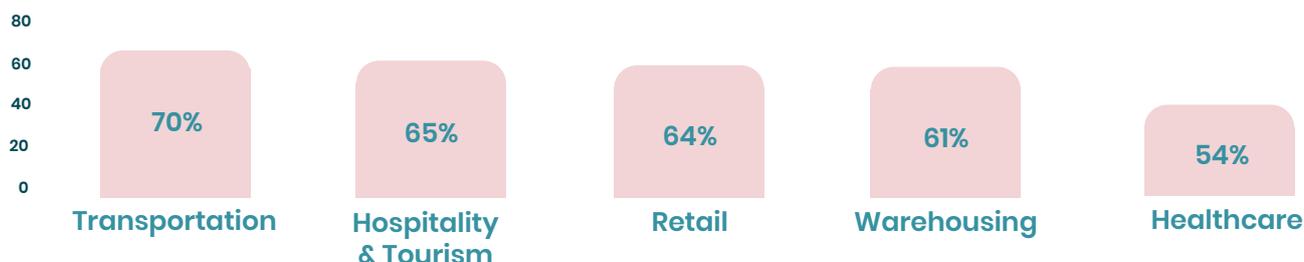


Negative work environments impact industries' ability to retain employees. Results show that the majority of workers have considered leaving their job because of this.



## 2.1 General Findings

**Many UK deskless workers don't feel as though their employers are helping them progress in their careers.**



Percentage of workers who believe their employers did not share specific goals to help them earn a promotion

**Healthcare workers receive the most additional training and educational resources from their employers (66%)**

54%

**Millennials (54%)** are more likely to receive additional training and educational resources than **Baby Boomers (44%)**

39%

**Gen Z** are the most likely to receive a workplace mentor: **39%** do, compared to just **19%** of **Baby Boomers**

41%

**Retail workers** are the least likely to receive additional training and educational resources from their employer (41%)

55%

**Warehousing workers (55%)** are more likely to receive additional training and educational resources than **Hospitality and Tourism workers (43%)**

22%

**Transportation workers** are the least likely to have a workplace mentor (only 22%)

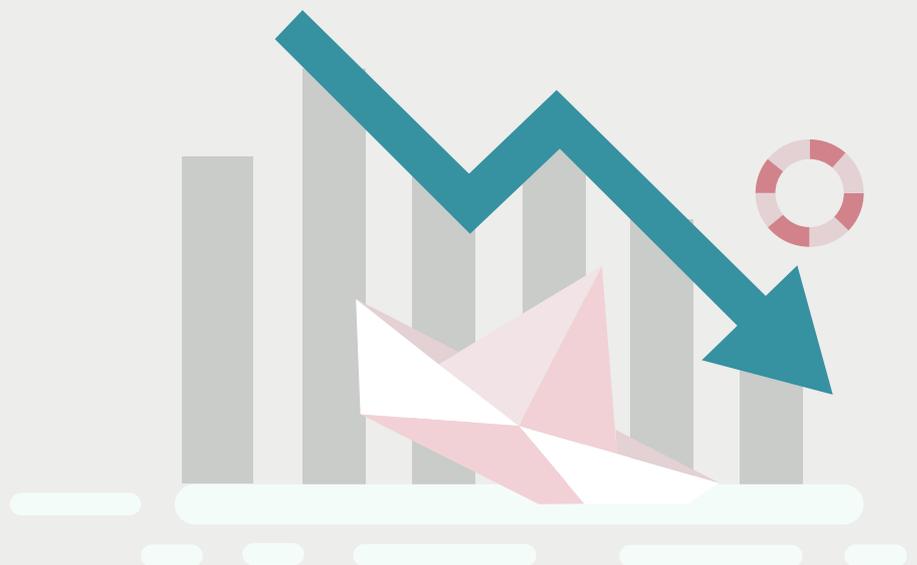
41%

**Healthcare workers** are the most likely to have a workplace mentor (41%)

## 2.2 Impact of COVID-19

For many UK deskless workers, COVID-19 has meant changes to their working situation. The furlough scheme means that only 2% of deskless workers polled have lost their job so far during COVID-19. However, many have lost hours, or been placed on furlough, particularly in certain industries like hospitality and tourism.

Lost their job	Furloughed	Lost hours	Worked over 40 hours	Not impacted	
2%	18%	35%	14%	23%	Retail
4%	42%	34%	6%	8%	Hospitality and Tourism
2%	12%	38%	12%	24%	Shipping and Distribution
2%	4%	26%	26%	38%	Healthcare
2%	8%	40%	15%	30%	Transportation
2%	9%	47%	23%	19%	Warehousing



## 2.2 Impact of COVID-19

When asked if they thought their employer valued the work they do, even more workers felt seen as a temporary or disposable resource by their employer during the pandemic than they did beforehand.

54%

Before COVID-19

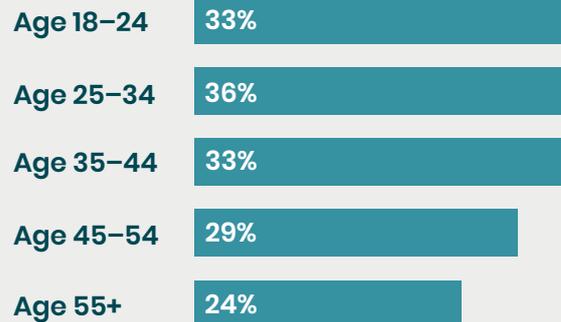
65%

During COVID-19

### COVID-19 also created worker demand for better job benefits



who had a job during COVID-19, plan to leave for better benefits or job security.



# 3. The Deskless Workforce & Communication

There is a major communication gap between deskless workers and their employers. Deskless workers are expected to be “on-call” for employer updates and needs. However, companies often do not equip deskless workers with the means to separate personal communication and work communication, with only 7% of deskless workers saying that they are contacted through a company mobile workforce app.



**Meanwhile, many deskless workers are uncomfortable talking to their employers about their health, compensation or personal situation.**

**46%**

don't feel comfortable talking to their employer about pay raises/disparities

**37%**

don't feel comfortable talking to their employer about their working conditions and the impact on their health

**30%**

wouldn't talk to their employer about scheduling issues affecting their personal life

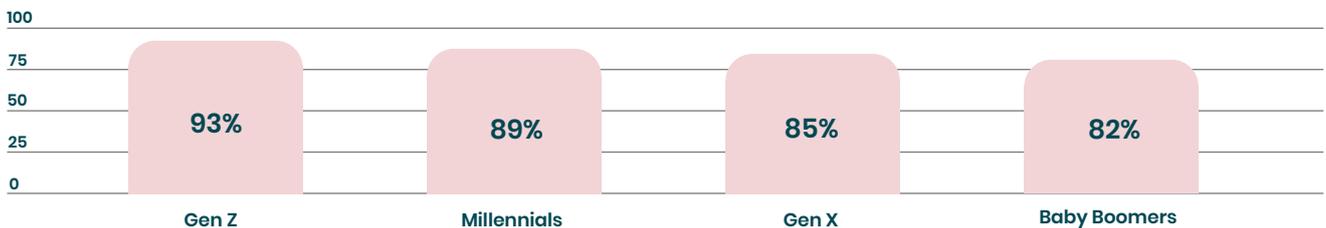
**29%**

wouldn't talk to their employer about a loss or increase in work hours

## 3.1 General Findings

As a “mobile-first” generation, Gen Z workers are receiving more “out of hours” contact than any other age group.

**93%** of Gen Z are contacted by their employers when they’re “off” compared to 82% of Baby Boomers

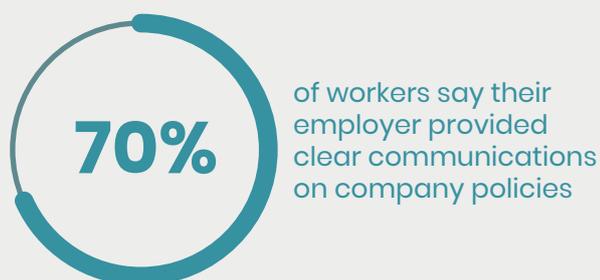


### Inside the report - split by demographics and sector

- ➔ **Baby Boomers (61%)** are more comfortable than **Gen Z (35%)** talking to their employer about getting a raise or pay disparity
- ➔ **Baby Boomers (63%)** are also more likely than **Gen Z (48%)** to tell their employer about unproductive or inefficient workers
- ➔ Above all other sectors, **Transportation workers (70%)** feel the most comfortable discussing scheduling issues affecting their personal life
- ➔ **Transportation workers (62%)** are most comfortable talking about working conditions and impact on their personal health
- ➔ **Shipping and Distribution workers (60%)** are the most comfortable when it comes to discussing pay
- ➔ **Hospitality and Tourism workers (67%)** speak up most about a loss or increase in work hours

## 3.2 Impact of COVID-19

During the pandemic, 91% of workers were contacted during off-hours. Most felt that their employer provided clear communication around company policies related to COVID-19. However, a percentage of essential workers felt unprepared, or that they were not provided with sufficient training or direction to work safely during the pandemic.



**But many were still uncomfortable communicating with their employer in relation to the pandemic:**



**19%**

of deskless workers didn't know what to do if they felt sick or thought they may have contracted COVID-19

**21%**

of deskless workers didn't know what to do if a loved one had contracted COVID-19



**27%**

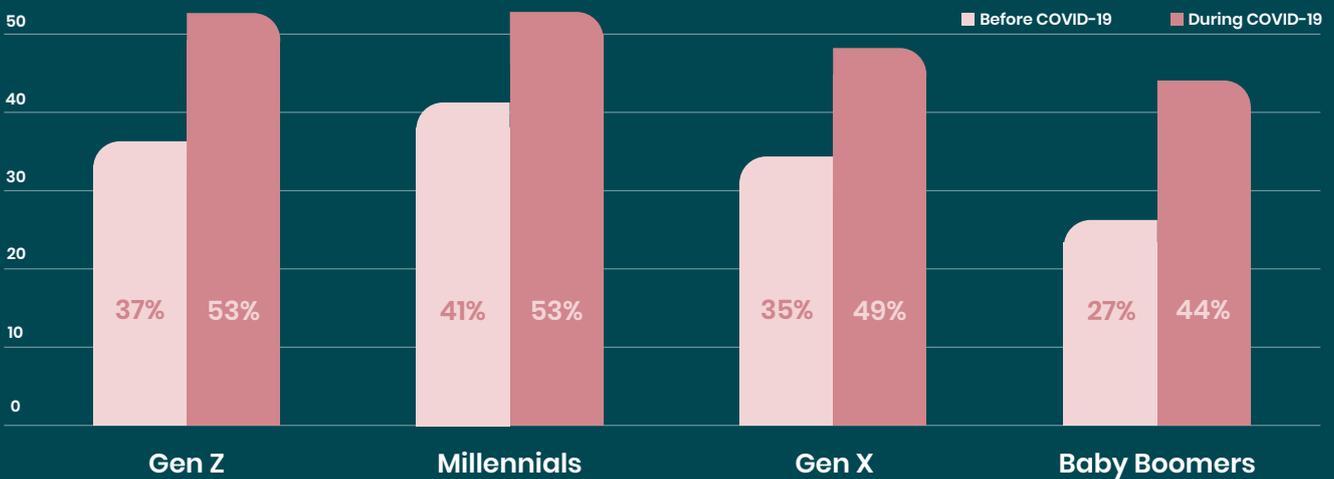
of deskless workers had concerns about compensation or job security during the pandemic

**38%**

of deskless workers didn't know if they would still receive a bonus or performance raise based on their 2019 work

# 4. The Deskless Workforce & Mental Health

Mental health is a huge concern for the UK deskless workforce. Prior to COVID-19, 37% said their job had negatively impacted their mental health within the past 12 months. During the crisis, this number increased to 52%.



of women



of men



of women and men  
in transportation



of women in retail



of women in shipping  
and distribution

## 4.1 Impact of COVID-19

Essential deskless workers and non-essential deskless workers have experienced roughly the same decline in mental health as a result of their job. The following numbers of workers say that COVID-19 has impacted their mental health in relation to their job very or somewhat negatively.



*But the factors potentially contributing to this decline vary.*



**For essential workers, long hours are likely to be a factor.** Essential deskless workers are over **three and a half times more likely** to be working in excess of 40 hours per week than non-essential deskless workers.



**For non-essential workers, pay cuts are likely to be a factor.** During COVID-19, **76% of non-essential deskless workers** have reported cuts to pay and hours or have been furloughed.



**For non-essential workers, job security could also be playing a part.** Only **50% of non-essential workers** plan to stay in their job for the long term versus **65% of essential workers.**





For more information about this  
survey and Quinyx, please visit

[www.quinyx.com](http://www.quinyx.com)