

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: Thermal comfort and clothing when working at home

I am conducting a study into how people dress and stay thermally comfortable, particularly when working at home. If you have worked at home at some point during the last two winters, I would like to invite you to participate. This sheet provides information about the study and what participation will involve. Please read it carefully and consider whether or not you would like to take part. If you have any further queries please feel free to contact:

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What is the research about?

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of people working regularly from home has increased. Research is ongoing into the impact of this on patterns of energy demand, and what it might mean if working from home or hybrid working (part-home/part-office) becomes even more common in future. One aspect of this, which is not well understood, is what people wear when working at home, particularly over winter periods, and how this is balanced with other ways of keeping warm, such as central heating. In the context of rising energy prices, alternative ways of keeping warm are receiving renewed public attention. This research aims to explore existing practices of keeping comfortable when working at home over winter and what the cost-of-energy crisis might imply this winter.

I would like to speak to people, who are resident in the UK, over 18 years of age, and who worked at home at least some of the time over the last two winters (2020/21 and 2021/22). It does not matter if you have now returned to working mostly or entirely in an office or other place of work, nor if you worked from home prior to the pandemic and continued to do so.

What will it involve?

The study involves an interview, which is an informal discussion with the researcher. This will take place online on Microsoft Teams. If you have not used Microsoft Teams before, I will provide guidance. Once connected, I will ask you some questions about what working at home during the pandemic has meant for you, and how you've managed it, with a focus on what you wear and how you keep warm during winter. This will most likely take about an hour, but in some cases may take a little longer. Please do let me know if you'd like to limit our conversation to an hour. The interview will be recorded as this helps me to better understand and analyse the information you provide.

Before the interview, I will ask you to think about what you would typically wear whilst working at home on a cold, winter day. If you are not already wearing them, please have this set of clothes with you during the interview so that we can talk about the individual items of clothing.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation in this study is **entirely voluntary**. You should feel free to ask for clarification or information throughout. You may also withdraw at any point prior to, during the interview and up to three weeks afterwards. You need not give a reason. Any information collected from you will then be destroyed. If you would prefer not to answer any of the questions asked during the interview, please say: you do not have to answer all the questions and need not give a reason why.

Will my data be identifiable?

I will treat any information you provide carefully. After the interview, only I, the researcher, will have direct access to the recording and any personal information about you. I will keep any personal information (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is, I will not share it with others. A transcript (a written record) of your contribution, will be generated from which I will remove any personal information. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this study.

How will the information I provide be used?

Anonymised information provided by you may be used in publications, presentations at academic conferences and public talks, and for teaching purposes. This may include quotations from what you say in the interview. Although I may use your exact words, all reasonable steps will be taken to protect your anonymity. Anonymised transcripts may also be shared with project partners at University College London and the University of Sussex as part of producing collaborative publications. This project is funded by UK Research and Innovation who require research data to be archived for future use by other researchers. Archived transcripts will exclude all personal data, and as far as possible, will not be personally identifiable. They will be placed in research database and made available for other researchers and, potentially, members of the public to access and use.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

There is a small risk that those who know you personally may be able to guess your identity from anonymised accounts. If so, the impact on you is likely to be negligible as the research does not aim to explore any particularly sensitive topics. In addition, taking part will require you to invest an hour or so of your time. Although I hope the experience of taking part will be interesting and enjoyable, there may be no immediate benefits from participation. The research that your participation makes possible will help to inform the academic research community and policy makers about the ongoing implications of working from home for energy and climate policy.

How will my personal data be stored?

Your personal data (e.g. your name and other information that can identify you), including the original recording of our conversation, will be stored on an encrypted, password-protected computer and also within Microsoft cloud and supporting services, with whom Lancaster University has a data sharing agreement that protects the privacy and security of this data. I will store any hard copies (e.g. paper records) of any personal data securely in locked cabinets in my office. As far as possible, I will keep data that can identify you (e.g. your name and contact details) separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). The only other person who may have access to the original recordings is a professional transcriber who will listen to the recordings and produce a written record of what you have said. If so, the transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement.

For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and your data rights please visit our webpage: www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection

Who is conducting this research?

Dr Janine Morley of Lancaster University is conducting this research, as part of the Centre for Research into Energy Demand Solutions (CREDS), which is hosted by Oxford University and funded by UK Research and Innovation. The study is part of a larger [project](#) which is investigating the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on heating use and social equity, together with partners at University College London and the University of Sussex.

What if I have a question or concern?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee. If you have any questions about the project or about what participation will involve, please contact the researcher, Janine Morley (details at the top of this document). In case you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is conducted or if you have any concerns regarding your participation, you may separately contact (anonymously if you so choose):

Prof. Michaela Benson, Research Director, Department of Sociology
sociologyresearch@lancaster.ac.uk (01524 594095 c/o Fran Stephenson)

Thank you for considering participation in this project