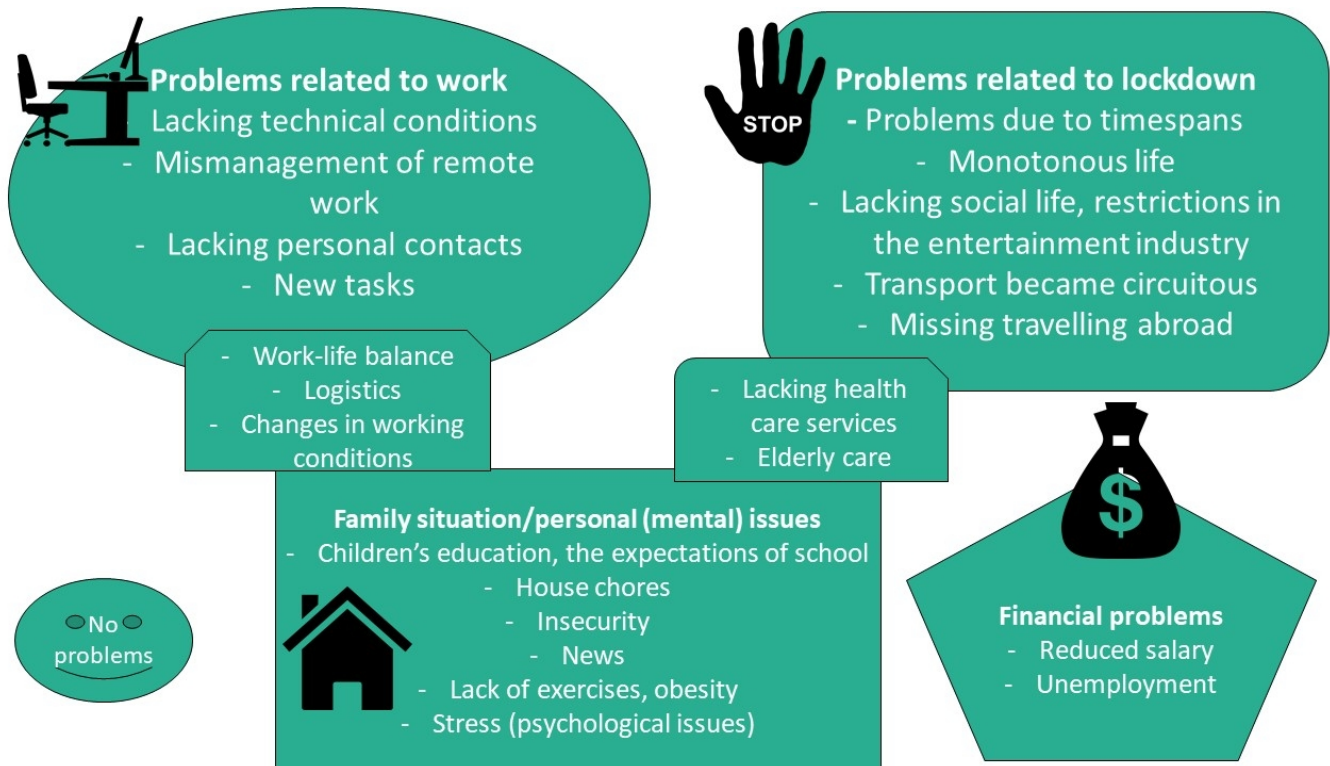


By [Antal Gertheis](#) / Updated: 25 Nov 2020

[Difficulties and advantages of the lockdown - as seen by the employees](#)

Submitted by [Antal Gertheis](#) on 24 Nov 2020

Picture:



Region:

Europe-wide

Country:

Hungary

Topic:

COVID-19

Mobility management

Link:

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Body:

Companies in Szeged reacted quickly to the challenges imposed by the pandemic situation - and subsequent lockdown. In a previous [article](#), the [SASMOB project](#) reported on the introduction of working from home from the employers' point of view.

Now we focus on the personal experiences of the employees. The research was carried out in two phases: first, we conducted focus groups with heterogenous groups, and then based on the feedback received, we created and sent out a survey to each partner employer which was filled in by 10% of their employees. The results are based on both phases.

The lockdown period was full of challenges and each of us reacted to it differently.

Difficulties and challenges covered a wide spectrum and can be categorised into four groups;

1. problems related to work,
2. problems related to lockdown,
3. difficulties due to the family situation, and,
4. personal wellbeing and financial issues.

The study team also found that there were overlaps in the categories; between work-related problems and family (such as work-life balance); and when lockdown-related problems were mixed with personal issues. There were also some people according to whom there were no difficulties. An example of the lack of work-life balance from someone who lives with her partner (with no children) who stated: "I am working the whole day and I am not working the whole day: I deal with other things." There were some whose days also became fuzzy but were not bothered by this mess because their life is always like this anyway. Those who prefer to separate work from family and private life suffered because there was not enough space for them, but the house chores and the children also played a big role in their frustration. A father said, "the householding tasks distracted me from my work" meaning that he helped (or had to help) his wife. However, this was not always the case. The gender roles differed a lot. An example from another father with older children emphasised that the moment his wife started working from home, he started going to the office because "The goal was not to be at home at the same time. Many memes were about 'how good, we are together, we can talk more' but I rather decreased this amount of time".

These findings help to demonstrate the **duality of being quarantined: some looked at it as an opportunity while for some others it was a burden.** And some simply missed their daily routine. The conflicting roles (work versus householding/babysitting) were emphasised throughout the focus groups. On the other hand, there were advantages of these critical times as well. Fewer advantages were mentioned by participants but similarly, there were four main categories:

1. transport,
2. family/home,
3. financial aspects and
4. the change in lifestyle.

The most frequently mentioned advantage was the time that was freed by not having to commute. This covers several aspects, such as reduced traffic, more free time, slowing down (not having to rush in the mornings), and even reduced costs (due to not using the car for work). These are some of the benefits the SASMob project aims to achieve by promoting telework.

However, as a result of not having the morning preparatory time, some participants complained: "There was no rush, no morning traffic but our life became fuzzy" stated one. The free time was not only related to one's own "me-time", but some fathers were happy to spend more time with their kids by having to take care of them more often. One called it "family get-together". To cope with the difficulties and challenges, most people tried to develop some strategies which helped them go through this period. The coping strategies can be grouped into four categories: doing exercises, meditation, getting a new hobby, and creating a new daily routine or sticking to the previous one even more. Exercises could be doing yoga but biking or walking were also often mentioned (which was a given for many instead of using public transport). Meditation referred to any activities which helped one to relax (having more "me-time"). Among the new hobbies, we could find cooking, gardening, and other activities related to the house. Daily routine refers to imitating the office atmosphere, preparing a weekly schedule, spending more time with the dog as a form of relaxation,

etc.

Both the perception of being quarantined and the coping strategies were various, but it is clear that (increasing the amount of) telework - under normal circumstances - can be beneficial not only to the environment but to the individuals as well.

Within the SASMOB project, Mobilissimus and the Faculty of Economics at the University of Szeged conduct research.

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