Type and the always-on culture

A research study from The Myers-Briggs Company

Contents

Executive summary

Purpose of the research

Technology has brought about a revolution in how we communicate with each other and how we manage our work and life. Services and information are available 24/7 and we can connect with each other anytime, anywhere in the world. However, when our smartphones are always within reach and switched on, we can find it difficult to "switch off". This is the "always-on culture".

The aim of this research was to understand the role of personality in managing the always-on culture, in order to help people of all personality types thrive in the workplace.

Summary of findings

Over 1,000 people completed a survey about the always-on culture. Key findings were:

- People who were able to access work emails/calls outside of work were more engaged in their jobs, but also more stressed.

- Those who found it difficult to switch off suffered a range of negative issues including stress, interference with home life and being unable to focus on one thing at a time.

- People mentioned the disadvantages of the always-on culture more than the advantages.

- The top three disadvantages of being always-on were as follows:

  - 28% said they couldn't switch off mentally

  - 26% experienced interference with family or personal life

  - 20% reported mental exhaustion

- The top three advantages were:

  - 17% of people mentioned keeping in the loop with what's going on

  - 16% liked quick responses

  - 13% liked flexibility of when and where they work

- People who worked in an organizational culture that allowed people to mentally switch off from work were less stressed.

- Personality also played a role: those who were more practical and structured (Sensing and Judging, in MBTI terms) had a greater desire to keep home and work separate and experienced more stress in relation to being always-on, as compared to those whose who were more big-picture focussed and flexible (Intuition and Perceiving).

- Strategies for managing the always-on culture fell into five broad categories:

  - Avoid technology use (e.g. turn off phones, turn off notifications)

  - Separate work and home (e.g. set aside time for work and time for family)

  - Manage communications with others (e.g. let others know when you will and will not be available, set boundaries with others)

  - Engage in activities to take your mind off work (e.g. looking after children, exercise, gardening, going on holiday)

  - Practise "choiceful" technology use (e.g. reflecting on whether a message really does need to be sent or can wait until later)

- The kinds of strategies that were effective were different for different personality types.

Conclusions

The findings above are interesting, insightful and concerning. Firstly, being always-on seems to be a double-edged sword, acting as both an enabler and a stressor, with some potentially serious consequences for individual well-being. Recognising the "sweet spot" may help people maximize the advantages and minimize feeling like a "slave" to technology.

Secondly, both personality and organizational culture were important in predicting stress levels. Furthermore, these two aspects are likely to interact with each other. For example, organizational expectations may cause a leader to send emails late at night. In turn this reinforces the organizational culture. Given this relationship, it is evident that managing the always-on culture must be addressed from both an individual and organizational perspective.

Thirdly, different strategies seemed to be effective for different personality types. This suggests that whilst there may be some broad guidelines for organizations and individuals, knowing your personality will help you understand how to adapt these to fit your own style.

Guidelines for individuals and organizations

Our research highlights three key principles for managing the always-on culture, from both an individual and organizational perspective: Switch off, set boundaries, and consider and communicate with others.

For individuals	Key principles	For organizations
Find ways to mentally switch off from work, emails, social media and technology on a regular basis	1. Switch off	Cultivate a workplace culture that allows people to switch off from work in their free time
Set boundaries on technology use with yourself to avoid unhelpful habits	2. Set boundaries	Set out clear expectations about technology use inside and outside of work
Set boundaries with others and communicate your availability	3. Consider and communicate with others	Ensure leaders role-model the behaviour expected of employees to embed a "sometimes-off" culture

Figure 1: Three key principles for managing the always-on culture

Overall, the research and guidelines presented in this report contribute to the conversation about being always-on and help people maintain their well-being and performance in a world that is developing rapidly.

Introduction and methodology

Introduction

What is the always-on culture and why is it important?

Technology has brought about a revolution in how we communicate with each other and how we manage our work and life. Services and information are available 24/7 and we can connect with each other anytime, anywhere in the world. However, when our smartphones are always within reach and switched on, we can find it difficult to "switch off". This pattern has become known as the "always-on culture".

How does this affect the ability of an individual and an organization to thrive in the workplace? Research suggests that the always-on culture can affect our well-being – for example, by increasing work-home interference (Derks, Duin, Tims & Bakker, 2015). Sending and receiving emails on holiday, in the evening, late at night or first thing in the morning has also been shown to contribute significantly to how stressed people are (Hackston & Dost, 2016).

Research has also shown that technology and internet use can have both positive and negative outcomes. For example, Quinones, Griffiths & Kakabadse (2016) found that compulsive internet use is linked to workaholism. Workaholism is associated with people being engaged and productive, but it can also interfere with other aspects of life and cause tension.

Jarvenpaa and Lang (2005) allude to the "empowerment/ enslavement" paradox. They suggest that technology has the potential to empower people and act as an enabler, but people can also feel like "slaves" to technology. This is where the tables may turn and people begin to feel that technology controls them, rather than the other way around. Despite increased flexibility and information, employees can find that technology tethers them to work, even when at home.

The rise in the always-on culture has increased the need for us to understand the individual impact of being always-on. There is currently very little research exploring links between personality and the always-on culture, and an understanding of this may help give practical advice to individuals on how to manage their use of technology (Schlachter, McDowall, Cropley & Inceoglu, 2017). This study aimed to fill that gap.

Purpose of this research

The aim of this research was to find out how to help people of all personality types thrive at work, given this new culture. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk & Hammer, 1998) is widely used by organizations, to increase an understanding of individual differences, and was therefore deemed appropriate as the model of personality for this research.

This research was exploratory but aimed to address the following research questions:

- What is the impact of always being connected on work productivity and engagement? Does this differ between personality types?
- What strategies do people use to minimize the downsides of always being connected? Do they differ based on personality type?
- Which strategies are most effective? Can they inform guidelines for different personality types?

Methodology

A self-report questionnaire was made available online between June and September 2018, for individuals who knew their MBTI type.

The MBTI assessment measures four aspects of personality:

- Extraversion/Introversion – Where do you get your energy from?
- Sensing/Intuition – What kind of information do you prefer to use?
- Thinking/Feeling – What process do you use to make decisions?
- Judging/Perceiving – How do you deal with the world around you?

More information about the MBTI model is given in Appendix A.

Participants also answered questions about:

- Demographics and their work (age, gender, country they principally worked in, industry, employment status, job level, number of people in the organization).
- Whether they owned a personal smartphone, work smartphone, work laptop or had access to work calls and emails outside of work.
- Behaviour associated with the always-on culture, such as compulsive checking of mobile phones, ability to switch off from work, being easily distracted.
- Job satisfaction, job stress and work engagement.
- Work-family conflict (based on the questionnaire by Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996).
- Preferences for separating work and home life (based on the questionnaire by Kreiner, 2006).
- Organizational norms about being available for contact outside work hours (based on the questionnaire by Kreiner, 2006).
- Perceived advantages and disadvantages of always being connected.
- Strategies that people used to limit the disadvantages of always being connected.

Results

The sample

1,116 respondents completed the survey. 74% were female, 26% male and 1% preferred not to disclose. Age ranged from 14 to 88 years, with a mean age of 49. Participants mostly worked in the UK (58%) but there were also participants from other European countries, USA, Canada and other countries (Figure 2). Participants also worked in a range of different industries, the three most common industries being "professional services", "health and social care" and "educational services" (Figure 3).
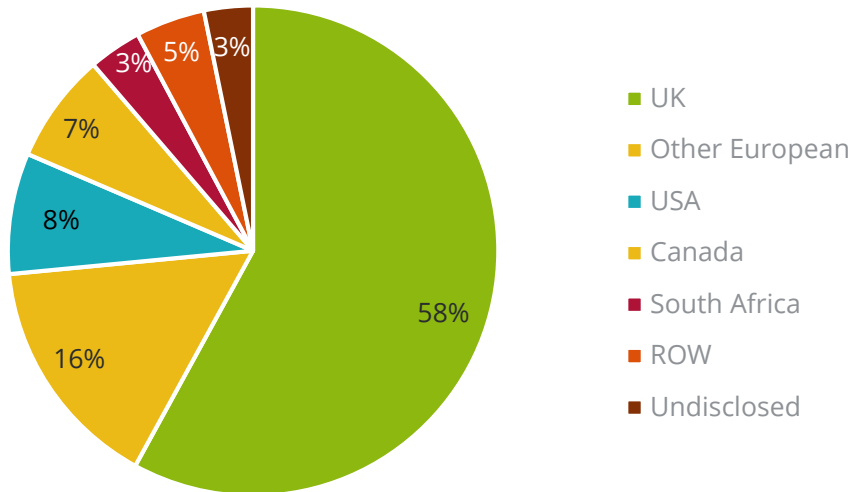
Figure 2: Country in which respondents principally work
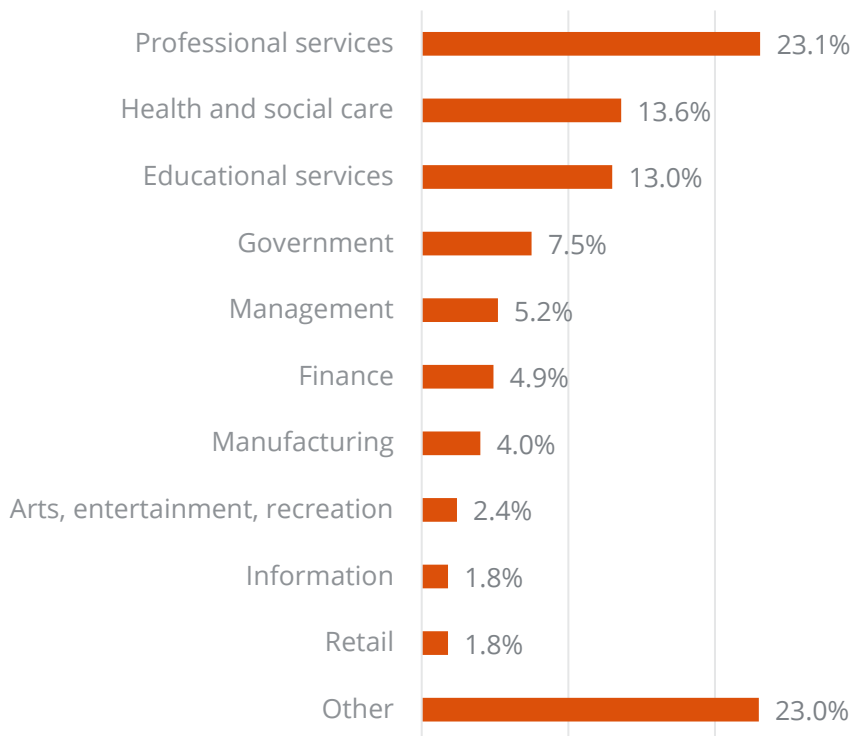
Figure 3: Industries in which participants work

88% of participants said they were able to access work emails or phone calls outside the workplace. 86% of respondents owned a personal smartphone whilst 45% of respondents had a work smartphone. 78% had a work laptop (Figure 4).

Although this sample was not representative of the working population as a whole, the sample was fairly large and there were enough people in each group to make meaningful distinctions.

Figure 4: Ownership of devices

Type distribution

1,100 individuals knew their best-fit type. A type table for this group is shown below (Figure 5):

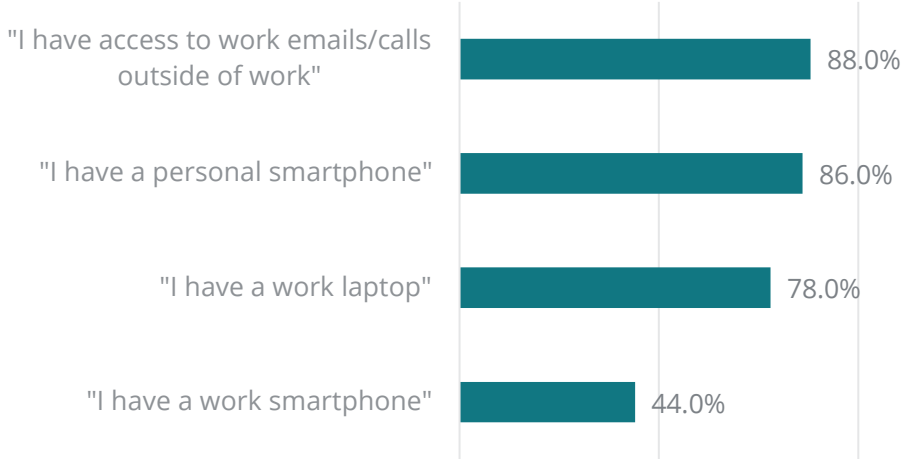| ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ		Type	N	%
N=85	N=55	N=68	N=101		E	564	51.3%
7.7%	5.0%	6.2%	9.2%				
SSR=0.56	SSR=0.39	SSR=3.65	SSR=6.57		I	536	48.7%
ISTP	**ISFP**	**INFP**	**INTP**				
N=20	N=11	N=110	N=86		S	326	29.6%
1.8%	1.0%	10.0%	7.8%		N	774	70.4%
SSR=0.28	SSR=0.16	SSR=3.13	SSR=3.25		T	556	50.5%
ESTP	**ESFP**	**ENFP**	**ENTP**		F	544	46.5%
N=17	N=21	N=156	N=113				
1.5%	1.9%	14.2%	10.3%		J	566	51.5%
SSR=0.26	SSR=0.22	SSR=2.25	SSR=3.68		P	534	48.5%
ESTJ	**ESFJ**	**ENFJ**	**ENTJ**				
N=70	N=47	N=76	N=64				
6.4%	4.3%	6.9%	5.8%				
SSR=0.62	SSR=0.34	SSR=2.46	SSR=2.00				

Figure 5: Type table of respondents who knew their best-fit type

The SSR (Self-Selection Ratio) compares the sample to the UK general population. Types with an SSR greater than 1 are over-represented in this group compared with the general population. All Intuition types are therefore over-represented. This is not uncommon in a group of people interested in type. Despite this, there are enough numbers of each type in the sample to carry out meaningful analyses.

What we measured

Based on the previous research referenced above, nine short scales relevant to the always-on culture were derived from the data:

Difficulty switching off – the extent to which respondents find it difficult to mentally switch off from work and relax. Higher scores indicate more difficulty switching off.

Compulsive checking – the extent to which respondents check their phone for messages. Higher scores indicate more frequent and habitual checking of phones.

Distraction – the extent to which respondents are distracted easily. Higher scores indicate respondents are distracted more easily and may find it hard to focus their attention on just one thing at a time.

Job satisfaction – higher scores indicate the respondent has a higher level of satisfaction with their job.

Job stress – higher scores indicate that the respondent feels more stressed by their job.

Work engagement – the extent to which respondents are engaged and interested in their work. Higher scores indicate the respondent finds their work meaningful, interesting, motivating and absorbing.

Private life/ family conflict – the extent to which the respondent feels that work interferes with their home life. Higher scores indicate that work demands make it difficult to fulfil their responsibilities and do what they want to outside of work time.

Individual preferences for separating home and work – higher scores indicate the individual prefers to keep home and work separate.

Workplace culture for separating home and work – the extent to which respondents said that their workplace allows them to forget about work when they are at home. Higher scores indicate the individuals feel they are allowed to mentally switch off from work at home.

All the scales had good internal consistency reliability (see Table 1). An alpha coefficient of 0.7–0.8 is considered "acceptable", 0.8–0.9 "good" and 0.9 and above "excellent". For a list of the items included in each short scale, see Appendix B.

Scale name	Alpha coefficient	Mean score (1-5 scale)	No. items
Difficulty switching off	.81	2.8	4
Compulsive checking	.85	3.7	4
Distraction	.76	3.0	4
Job satisfaction	.81	3.8	3
Job stress	.81	2.8	5
Work engagement	.86	4.0	5
Private life/Family conflict	.84	2.9	4
Individual preferences for separating home and work	.92	3.6	4
Workplace culture for separating home and work	.92	3.0	4

Table 1: Reliability of scales.

The mean scores for each scale indicate that respondents were, in general, engaged at work and satisfied with their jobs, even though many were prone to checking their phone frequently when they had a spare moment, or out of habit (Compulsive checking).

Impact of being always connected

Those who were able to access work emails or phone calls outside of work reported having more difficulty switching off, more compulsive checking of their phone, more distraction and more work-home conflict than those without access. However, they also reported higher levels of work engagement and job satisfaction.[1]

Those who reported having difficulty switching off also had higher job stress and work-life interference. In addition, those who were easily distracted or struggled to focus were more likely to check technology compulsively.[2]

These results are consistent with previous research into the area which has found that use of technology can be a double-edged sword (Quinones et al., 2016; Jarvenpaa & Lang, 2005). This is important as it means individuals might need to learn to recognize the "sweet spot" between being always-on and never-on.

[1] Based on independent samples t-tests, all statistically significant results.

[2] Based on correlations, all significant at the 1% level.

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Advantages and disadvantages of the always-on culture

Advantages

Respondents were asked open-ended questions about the advantages and disadvantages of being always-on, in their experience. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify categories and overarching themes in the written responses. The analysis indicated various advantages, which fell into 6 broad themes, as shown in Figure 6 below.
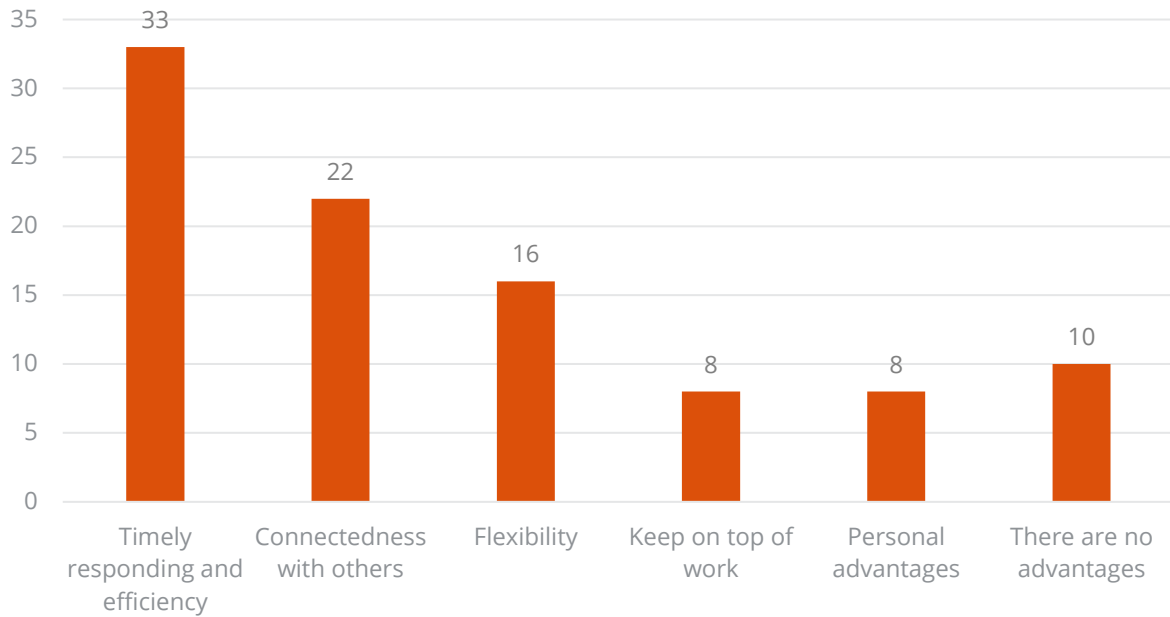
Figure 6: Percentage of respondents stating advantages within each theme

Table 2 shows the specific advantages that fall into each category. Further descriptions can be found in Appendix C.

Broad themes	Specific advantage
Timely responding and efficiency	Can respond quickly, easily and efficiently
	Keep in the loop/up-to-date with what's going on at work
Flexibility	Work at a time or place that suits me
	Allows me to do creative work or be productive working from home
Keep on top of work	Enables me to keep on top of work
Connectedness with others	Increases connection between colleagues
	Enhances productivity
	Enables working across time zones
	Accessible to others if they need me
	Keep in touch with family/friends
	Appear committed at work
Personal advantages	Keeps me engaged, motivated
	Gives peace of mind
	Keep up-to-date with trends/news in the field
	Access information easily
There are no advantages	There are no advantages

Table 2: Advantages of the always-on culture
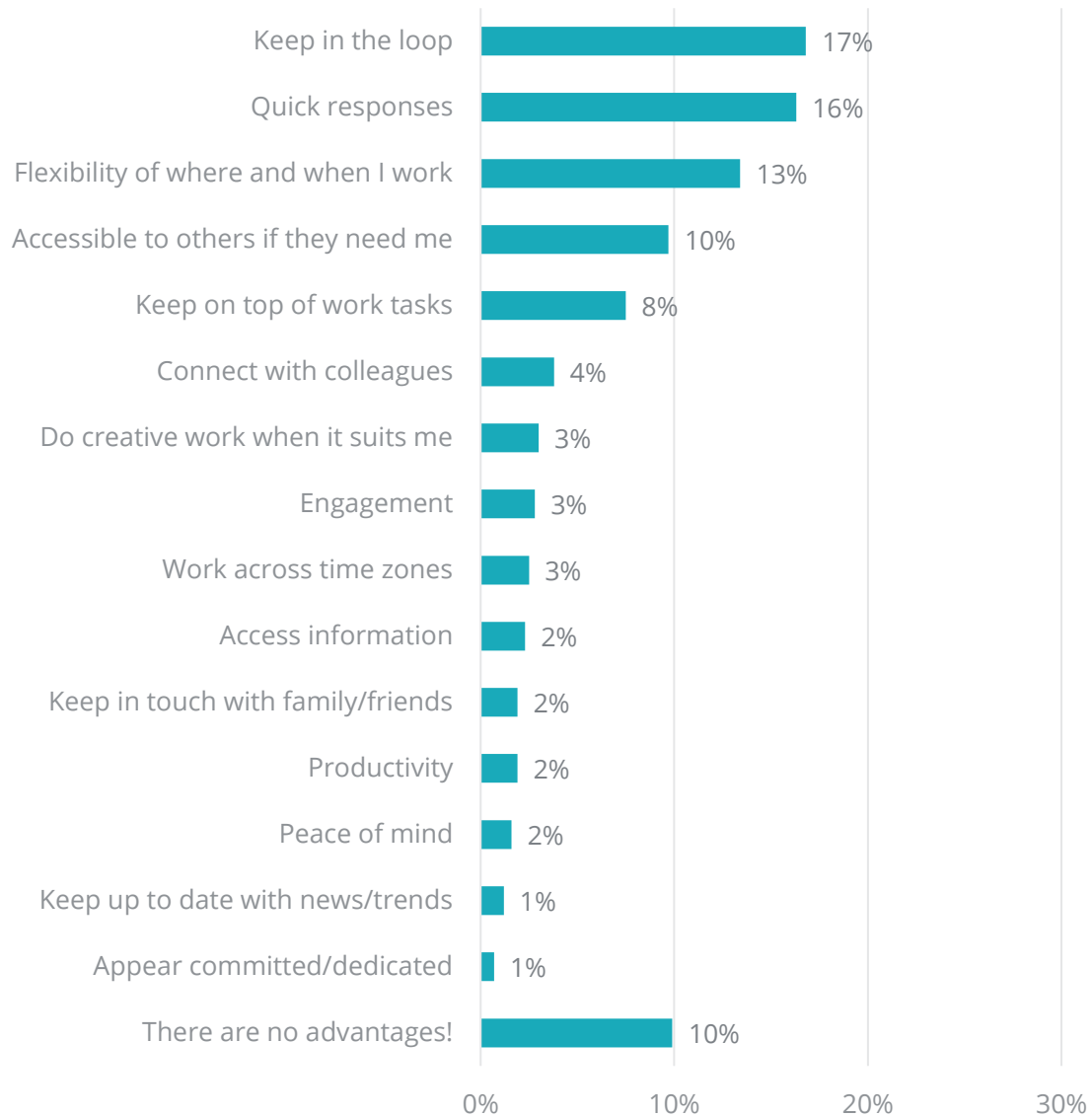
Figure 7: Percentage of survey respondents who stated each advantage

Figure 7 shows the percentage of people who mentioned each advantage. In addition, 10% of people said there were no advantages. The top three advantages mentioned in the survey are:

1. **Staying in the loop (mentioned by 17% of respondents)**
   Keeping up-to-date with what is happening at work and not missing out on opportunities, as well as being able to act quickly with any issues so they do not escalate.

2. **Quick responses (mentioned by 16% of respondents)**
   The ability to provide and receive quick responses and give people the flexibility to work outside of traditional work hours (e.g. on the commute) or work from home.

3. **Flexibility of where and when I work (mentioned by 13% of respondents)**
   The ability to work remotely, which meant they were more productive or had better work-life balance. Being able to use their commute or other dead time to check emails was also deemed useful.

Disadvantages

The stated disadvantages fell into five broad themes, as shown in Figure 8 below:

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents stating disadvantages within each broad theme

The full set of disadvantages are shown in Table 3, with further details in Appendix D. Figure 9 shows the percentage of people that mentioned each disadvantage. Only 2% of respondents said there were no disadvantages to the always-on culture. The most commonly stated disadvantages of being always-on were:

1. **Can't switch off (mentioned by 28% of respondents)**
   Difficulty switching off mentally. Thinking about work when at home, always being aware of the work that needs to be done.

2. **Interference with personal/family life (mentioned by 26% of respondents)**
   Broadly, not being able to effectively balance priorities. Work taking over life, rather than being just one part of life. Day to day, respondents talked about being interrupted during family time, not being fully present with children and disruption to relationships, including partners and children.

3. **Mental exhaustion (mentioned by 20% of respondents)**
   Tiredness, stress, mood changes, being irritable and being less creative.

In general, more people stated disadvantages than advantages. For example, almost a third of the sample said they couldn't switch off mentally, a quarter talked about interference with personal life, and a fifth mentioned mental exhaustion. These figures do seem extremely large, especially when compared to the top advantage, which was mentioned by only 17%. In addition, only 2% said there were no disadvantages of the always-on culture, whilst 10% said there were no advantages.

It is interesting to note that respondents did not like the fact they were expected to always be available and respond quickly. However, one of the most common advantages mentioned was "quick responding" from others and being able to work when not in the office. This suggests a potential disconnect in what individuals experience themselves and what they expect from others. It also draws attention to the fact that our own behaviour may drive others' expectations and behaviour, which in turn drives our own behaviour. Therefore, both expectations and counterproductive behaviour may create a vicious cycle if nothing is done to consciously change this pattern.

Broad theme	Disadvantage
Psychological impact	Mental exhaustion, tiredness
	Health problems e.g. insomnia, burnout, anxiety
	Can't switch off mentally
	Distracted easily
	Addiction to/dependence on technology
	No dead time for brain to rest
Expectations of others	Expected to be always available
	Expected to respond quickly
	Expected to do more work than reasonable, e.g. extra unpaid hours at home
Work-life balance	Interference with personal life/relationships
Organizational impact	Loss of engagement of staff
	Other organizational impact, e.g. absences, decreased productivity
There are no disadvantages	There are no disadvantages

Table 3: Disadvantages of the always-on culture

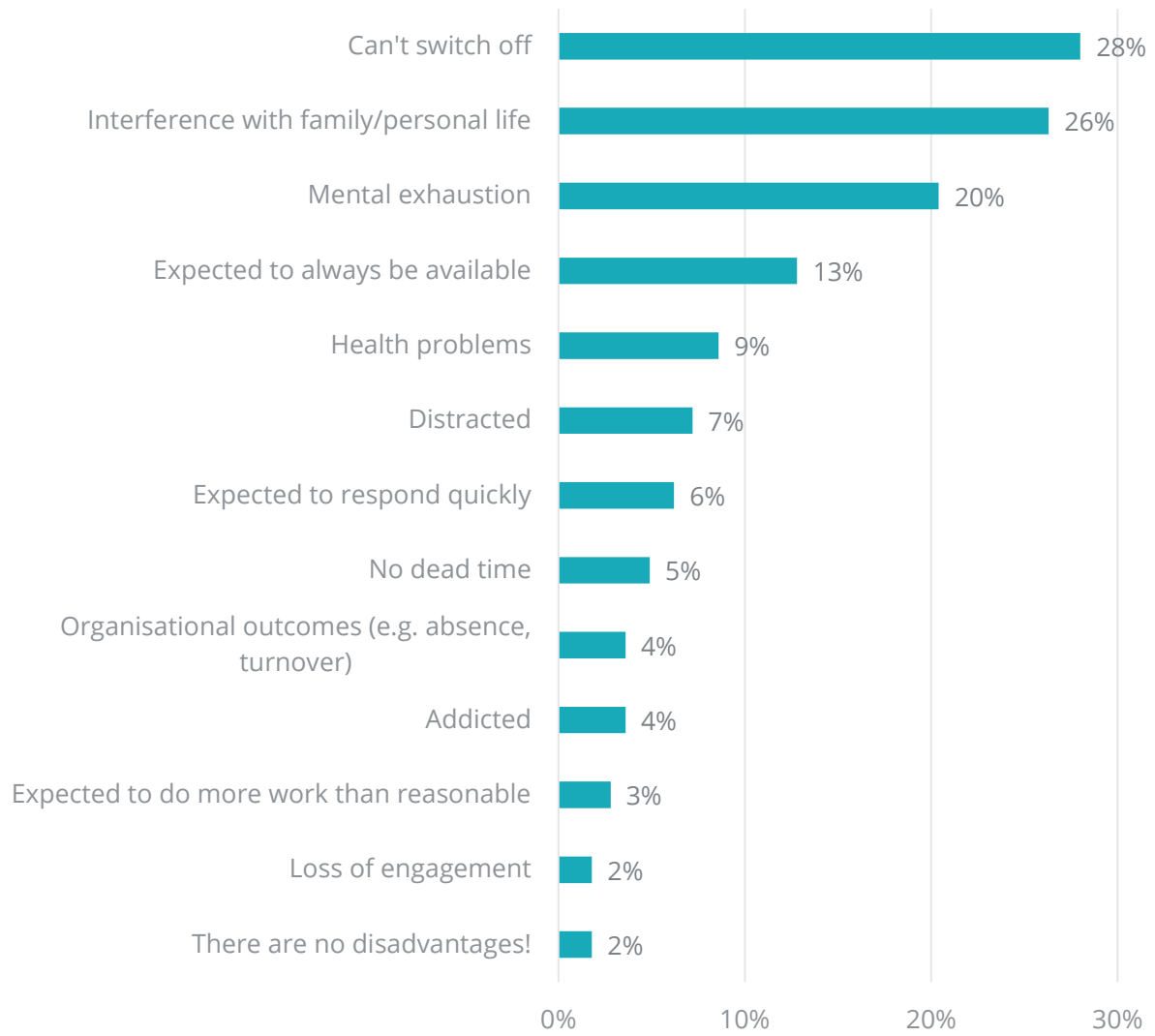| Disadvantage	Percentage
Can't switch off	28%
Interference with family/personal life	26%
Mental exhaustion	20%
Expected to always be available	13%
Health problems	9%
Distracted	7%
Expected to respond quickly	6%
No dead time	5%
Organisational outcomes (e.g. absence, turnover)	4%
Addicted	4%
Expected to do more work than reasonable	3%
Loss of engagement	2%
There are no disadvantages!	2%

Figure 9: Percentage of survey respondents stating each disadvantage

Personality differences

Several relationships with personality type were shown.[3] Firstly, people with a preference for Extraversion were more likely to have a work smartphone or laptop than those with a preference for Introversion. Those with an Introversion preference had a greater desire to keep home and work separate than those with an Extraversion preference and had lower levels of job satisfaction.

Secondly, those with a preference for Sensing, as opposed to Intuition, had a greater preference for keeping home and work separate, experienced more stress in relation to being always-on, and had lower job satisfaction.

Lastly, those with a Judging preference, as opposed to Perceiving, were more likely to prefer keeping home and work separate and to own a work smartphone. They were also more likely to be stressed.

It is important to note that not all respondents would have felt as though they were always-on. Although they were not explicitly asked about this, a total of 9 survey respondents mentioned they did not feel as though they were always-on. 8 of these had personality preferences of both Intuition and Perceiving (N and P). This is understandable and could be related to the differences discussed above: if those with Intuition and Perceiving preference are less likely to need to separate home and work and find it easier to switch off, perhaps they do not feel as though they are always-on or they are less bothered by it than others.

Gender differences

One area of interest was whether there were any gender differences in approach to the always-on culture. Results showed that men spent significantly more time working on weekends and during "non-work" hours. Women showed higher levels of stress in relation to being always-on, greater work-home interference and a greater desire to keep home and work separate. It is worth noting that in general women do tend to report being more stressed than men and this is a typical finding of many research studies. However, the results still reflect real differences in men's and women's experiences.

When asked about the disadvantages of being always switched on, men were more likely to say they found it hard to focus on just one thing at a time. Women were more likely to say they didn't like the fact they were expected to always be available, and to mention work-home interference.

So, in summary, men spend more time doing work outside work hours and tend to be more distracted. However, women tend to show higher levels of stress, have a greater preference for separating work and home, and find that work interferes more with home life. These findings do seem to be in line with typical gender roles typically found in society, with men traditionally working and providing for the family and women traditionally looking after children and the house. It is interesting to consider how these roles still seem to remain in society, even if they are demonstrated in different ways, and what this means for workplaces that encourage being always-on. Such an environment could contribute to women feeling under pressure at work, or others perceiving women as less committed, for example.

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[3] Based on t-tests and chi-squared tests, all statistically significant

Job-related stress

In addition to personality preferences, as described above, many different factors were related to job stress:[4]

- Higher work/home conflict
- Difficulty switching off
- Lower job satisfaction
- Lower work engagement
- Higher levels of compulsive phone checking
- Higher levels of distraction
- Being younger (age)
- An organizational culture that does not allow employees to keep home and work separate
- Gender: Women reported higher stress levels than men
- Job level: Of those working in organizations, the higher the job level, the higher the stress level
- Employment type: People who worked full time had the highest stress levels, followed by people who were self-employed, whilst those working part-time had the lowest stress levels of the three
- Number of people in the organization: There were significant differences in stress depending on the number of people, with stress levels increasing with numbers up to 20 people, then levelling off

Predicting stress levels

Given the number of different factors associated with job stress, a logistic regression analysis was done to determine key predictors of stress. A combined "stress" variable was created, which was the average of three scales: job stress, difficulty switching off and private life/family conflict. The participants were then divided into a "higher" and "lower" stress group based on their results.

The resulting model was statistically significant. Significant predictors of job stress were, in order of importance, organizational culture, employment type, age, Sensing-Intuition, job level and number of people in the organization[5]. (To understand the direction of these relationships, see the list above). The following variables were not significant predictors: preference for separating work and home, Extraversion–Introversion, Thinking–Feeling, Judging–Perceiving and gender. This suggests they are not as important as the other variables in predicting job stress. Results showed that people with a Sensing preference were 1.6 times as likely as those with an Intuition preference to fall into the "high stress" group, whilst having a workplace culture that allowed

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[4] Based on correlation analyses, t-tests or one-way ANOVA analyses, statistically significant at the 1% level

[5] Level of importance was based on p-values of the Wald chi-squared tests and represents likelihood of statistical significance.

people to switch off from work during free time was associated with a reduction in the likelihood of being in the "high stress" group.

Strategies

Respondents were asked whether they had any strategies for managing the always-on culture and what these were. A thematic analysis of these open-ended responses was carried out. Strategies fell into the following overarching themes:

- Avoid technology use
- Separate home and work life
- Communications with others
- Activities
- Be aware/choiceful about technology use

A full description of the categories included within each theme is shown in Table 4, with further details in Appendix E. Figure 10 shows the percentage of people who used each kind of strategy. The size of the area is proportional to how many people talked about the strategy.

Broad theme	Strategy
Avoid technology use	Switch off devices
	Don't check emails
	Leave device somewhere else
	Don't have a work smartphone or decline one if offered
Separate home and work life	Have separate phones for work and home
	Set boundaries with self about when to use technology
	Time boxing (have set times for home and work)
	Choose who you work for
Communications with others	Only respond to important issues
	Only send emails during business hours
	Communicate availability to others and set boundaries
Activities	Do absorbing activities to take mind off work, e.g. gardening, exercise, looking after children
	Have holidays
	Self-care e.g. mindfulness, yoga, sleep
Be aware/choiceful of technology use	Be aware/choiceful of technology use

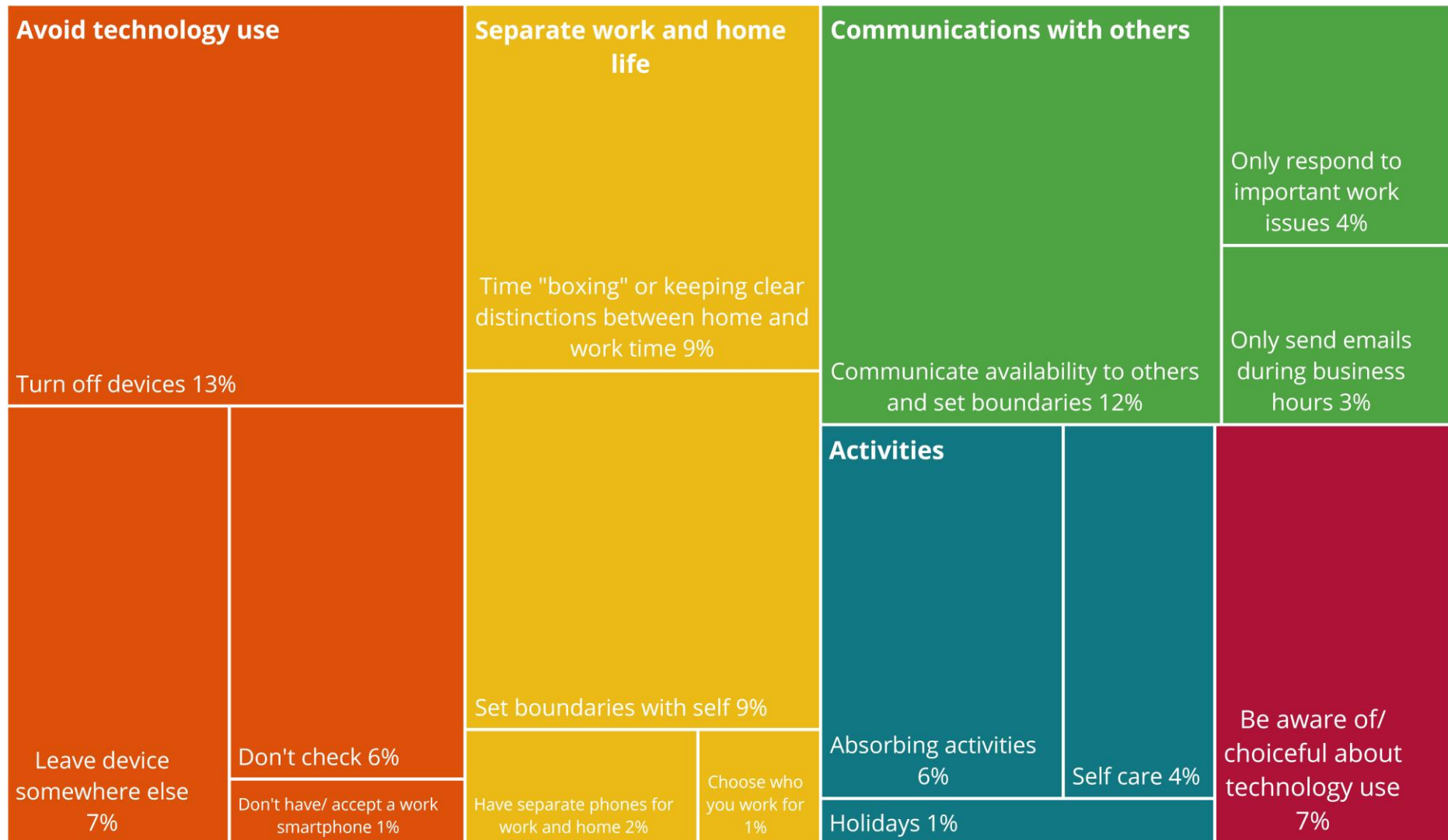*Table 4: Strategies for managing the always-on culture*

Figure 10: Percentage of people who said they used each individual strategy, categorized by colour to represent each broad theme.

Effectiveness of strategies

The strategies above are those used by individuals to manage the always-on culture. However, this does not necessarily mean these strategies are effective. To give an indication of which of these strategies were effective, we did a comparison. We compared the stress levels, ability to switch off and levels of work-home interference of those who reported using each strategy with those who did not. Statistically significant results are as follows[6]:

- **Ability to switch off:** People who said they turned off devices, did not check their phone or set boundaries with themselves about technology use found it easier to switch off than those who did not.

- **Work-family interference***:* People who reported not checking their phones reported less work-family conflict.

- **Job stress:** People who set boundaries with themselves about when to use technology, only responded to work emails if important and set boundaries with others reported lower levels of job stress.

- **Work engagement:** People who used "time boxing" and practised choiceful technology use showed higher work engagement than those who did not. Those who used "time boxing" also had higher job satisfaction.

These findings indicate which strategies may be most effective for people who want to reduce the negative effects of being always-on. Also, whether a strategy is effective or not may depend on the outcome individuals would like to achieve.

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[6] Based on t-tests

Personality and strategies used

The results showed differences in strategies that were used by different personality types.[7]

Extraversion–Introversion differences

Compared to people with a preference for Introversion, those with a preference for Extraversion were significantly more likely to say they turned to absorbing activities, such as gardening, looking after children and exercise, to switch off from work (9% of people with a preference for Extraversion mentioned this strategy, compared to only 4% of those with a preference for Introversion).

Sensing–Intuition differences

Compared to people with a Sensing preference, those with an Intuition preference were more likely to say they set boundaries with others (15% of those preferring Intuition mentioned this strategy, compared to only 6% of people preferring Sensing). The same was true for turning off mobile phones and other devices (14% of people preferring Intuition mentioned this strategy, compared to only 10% of those preferring Sensing).

Thinking–Feeling differences

Compared to those with a Feeling preference, those with a Thinking preference were more likely to only send emails during business hours (4% of people with a preference for Thinking mentioned this strategy, compared to only 2% of those with a Feeling preference).

Judging–Perceiving differences

There were no differences for the Judging–Perceiving preference pair.

Personality and effectiveness of different strategies

The above findings indicate how people of different personality types manage the always-on culture. However, it does not tell us whether those strategies are necessarily effective for each type.

To look into this, we compared the stress levels and job satisfaction levels of those who did and did not use each strategy and analyzed whether this pattern was different for people with opposite personality preferences.[8]

Extraversion–Introversion and Leaving device somewhere else

There was a marginally significant interaction between Extraversion–Introversion and the strategy of leaving a device somewhere else. Those with a preference for Extraversion who used the strategy of leaving their device somewhere else had lower stress levels than those with a preference for Extraversion who did not use this strategy. However, for those with a preference for Introversion, there was no significant different in stress levels between those who did and did

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[7] Based on chi-squared tests

[8] Based on 2x2 ANOVA analyses. The dependent variable was the combined stress variable (average of job stress, work-home interference and difficulty switching off). The independent variables in each ANOVA were personality preference (2 levels: e.g. Extraversion and Introversion) and use of a strategy (2 levels: e.g. whether the individual did or did not mention "turning devices off").

not use this strategy. This could be evidence that this strategy may be effective for those with an Extraversion preference, but not for those with an Introversion preference.

Sensing–Intuition and Turning off devices

There was a statistically significant interaction effect between Sensing–Intuition and the strategy of turning off devices. For those with a Sensing preference, people who used this strategy were significantly less stressed than those who did not. However, for those with an Intuition preference, there was no difference in stress levels between those who did and did not use this strategy. This provides evidence that turning off devices may be effective for those with a Sensing preference but not Intuition. This is intriguing, given that people who mentioned using this strategy were more likely to have an Intuition preference.

Sensing–Intuition and Setting boundaries with self about technology use

There was a statistically significant interaction between Sensing–Intuition and setting boundaries with self. People with a Sensing preference who said they used this strategy demonstrated lower stress levels than those with a Sensing preference who did not. This pattern was also the case for people with a preference for Intuition, but the difference was much smaller. This suggests this strategy may be effective for both preferences but more so for those with a Sensing preference.

Judging–Perceiving and Not checking devices

There was a significant interaction effect between Judging–Perceiving and the strategy of not checking devices. People with a Judging preference who did this had significantly lower stress levels than those with a Judging preference who did not use this strategy. However, there was no difference in stress between strategy users and non-users for those with a Perceiving preference.

Thinking–Feeling and Time boxing

There was a significant interaction between Thinking–Feeling and Time boxing. Those with a Feeling preference who used this strategy were significantly more satisfied with their job than those with a Feeling preference who did not. However, there was no such difference for those with a Thinking preference.

Thinking–Feeling and Only responding if important

There was a marginally significant interaction between this strategy and Thinking–Feeling. People with a preference for Feeling who only responded to emails if important demonstrated higher job satisfaction than those with a Feeling preference who did not. Again, there was no such difference for those with a Thinking preference. This was a marginally statistically significant effect.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore the impact of always being connected, to understand which strategies may help individuals manage the always-on culture, and to see how this relates to personality.

Impact of being always connected

Results showed that those who were able to access work emails or phone calls outside of work reported having more difficulty switching off, and more work-home conflict. However, they also reported higher levels of job satisfaction and stress. This paints a picture of the always-on culture as one which has both advantages and disadvantages.

The most common advantages experienced by individuals were being able to stay in the loop with what's going on, quick responses and flexibility. The most common disadvantages were finding it difficult to switch off, interference with personal/family life and feeling mentally exhausted. More people reported disadvantages than advantages. Whilst this may be due to the human bias towards the negative, it nevertheless reflects people's experience of this culture, which can affect not just our own well-being but that of those around us as well. It may be valuable for individuals to reflect on the impact this culture has on their own lives, both the positive and the negative. This may help people move away from compulsive and automatic use of technology, to using it with deliberation and feeling more in control.

Personality differences

A key difference between personality types was in regard to keeping home and work separate. Those with a preference for Introversion, Sensing or Judging had a greater desire to keep home and work separate, than those with the opposite preferences. In addition, those with a Sensing or Judging preference experienced more job stress. Some people said they did not feel they were always-on and most of these had preferences for Intuition and Perceiving. This shows a clear distinction between the experiences of those with SJ and NP preferences. Those with NP preferences tend not to desire as much segmentation of work and home and this is likely to be related to them being less bothered and less stressed by the flexibility that the always-on culture brings. It is typical to find SJs over-represented in organizations and NPs under-represented. This highlights the importance of having some degree of work-home separation, for much of the workforce.

Stress in relation to being always-on

Whilst many different factors were related to job stress, there were specific factors that predicted stress in relation to being always-on. Workplace culture and Sensing–Intuition were key predictors of stress, along with age, employment status, job level and number of people in the organization. This clearly indicates that in order to reduce the stress created by the always-on culture, both workplace culture and individual aspects need to be addressed.

Strategies

Strategies for managing the always-on culture fell into five broad themes: avoiding technology use, separating work and home life, communications with others, doing other activities, and being aware of/choiceful about technology. In general, the results indicated that the following strategies may be more effective than others: turning off devices, not checking phones, setting

boundaries with themselves and others about technology use, separating time for work and home, and using technology mindfully or "choicefully". There were also strategies that seemed more effective for certain personality types and not others. These findings are useful in helping individuals of all personality types manage the always-on culture themselves and be aware of others' preferences.

Conclusions

The findings give insight into how the always-on culture impacts individuals, the link to job-related stress and personality differences in attitudes to technology. A finding that stands out is that those who were able to access work emails or phone calls outside of work had difficulty switching off. They checked their phone compulsively and had more work-family interference, whilst also being more engaged and satisfied with their job. Organizations might explore how to help individuals recognize the "sweet spot" between using technology to increase engagement and freedom, and having technology take over.

The research has implications for well-being at work. Individuals' behaviour and mindset and organizational culture predicted stress levels, suggesting that both need to be aligned in their approach to technology for it to have an impact on workplace stress.

MBTI type differences were observed, which helps explain why some thrive in the 'always-on' culture, and others experience a negative effect on their work and personal lives. An interesting question was raised about whether our expectations of others is consistent with our own boundaries. For example, it is possible that individuals need to compromise on the benefits of receiving quick responses from others, if they want to be able to switch off from technology themselves.

The results were used to develop guidelines to help individuals in all walks of life raise self-awareness about their own technology and its impact, and to enable them to make more conscious, informed choices. The guidelines will also help organizations meet the needs of different individuals in the workplace and develop a more sustainable use of technology.

Tips for individuals and organizations

Three key principles for managing the always-on culture

The findings from this research project were used to create guidelines for individuals and organizations in managing the always-on culture.

It is clear that both individuals and organizations must play a part in managing the relationship with technology, in order to ensure a successful outcome. This is because both individual characteristics and organizational culture were important predictors of stress in relation to being always-on. Furthermore, organizational culture will impact on individuals' use of technology, and vice versa. Therefore, both must be aligned in order to have a lasting impact.

There were three key aspects that stood out as important from both an individual and an organizational level and these are laid out in Figure 11.

For individuals	Key principles	For organizations
Find ways to mentally switch off from work, emails, social media and technology on a regular basis	1. Switch off	Cultivate a workplace culture that allows people to switch off from work in their free time
Set boundaries on technology use for yourself to avoid unhelpful habits	2. Set boundaries	Set out clear expectations about technology use inside and outside of work.
Set boundaries with others and communicate your availability	3. Consider and communicate with others	Ensure leaders role-model the behaviour expected of employees to embed a "sometimes-off" culture

Figure 11: Three key principles for managing the always-on culture

Guidelines for organizations

The following tips for individuals are based on the three key areas above.

1. Switch off: Cultivate a workplace culture that allows people to switch off from work in their free time

Why is it important?

- 66% of people in our survey agreed or strongly agreed that "I like to be able to leave work behind when I go home", yet only 30% agreed that "Where I work, people can mentally leave work behind when they go home."

- Those who said their organization did not allow them to switch off reported more job stress.

- 1 in 5 respondents said they were mentally exhausted by the always-on culture, with nearly 1 in 10 reporting more serious health issues, such as anxiety, burnout, depression and insomnia. Not only does this affect the individual's well-being, but also has knock-on effects for organizations e.g. absences, turnover, productivity and the bottom line. There is a body of research showing that people need to mentally detach and need to rest and recover from the tasks they do in their day-to-day jobs in order to maintain well-being and performance. This includes reading and writing emails, which prevents people from mentally detaching from work. This is especially important in high-stress jobs. Being unable to detach from work can enhance stress, whilst being able to detach from work on weekends can act as a buffer against job stress (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015).

- People who preferred separating home and work were more likely to be female and have personality preferences for Sensing and Judging. Not only is it important to provide a workplace that does not favour certain individuals over the other, but 50% and 70% of the global workforce report having a preference for Sensing and Judging respectively (MBTI Step I European Data Supplement, 2016). Therefore, separating home and work is likely to be important for individuals' well-being and to get the most out of employees in terms of productivity.

Guidelines

- Set out clear expectations about technology use, as listed below.

- Don't regularly reward people for simply working over and above their allocated hours.

- Educate employees and managers about the importance of switching off after work.

- If individuals must be contactable, ask them the best way to do this – to give them some control.

2.   **Set boundaries: Set out clear expectations around technology use inside and outside of work**

Why is it important?

Many companies give out company phones and laptops to employees. However, our research showed that simply having access to work emails and calls outside of work was related to greater difficulty mentally switching off, more compulsive checking of their phone, more distraction, and more work-home interference. Interestingly, this was also linked to work engagement and job satisfaction. Therefore, it's about recognizing the benefits and downsides and finding the "sweet spot" in order to maintain a healthy and productive workforce.

Guidelines

- Consider whether every employee really needs a laptop and mobile phone. If they do, be clear about the purpose for having these.
- Create a company policy for using email, phones and working outside of standard hours.
- Be aware that employees may be having to use personal time to finish their work. Keep track of work done outside work hours in order to maintain a realistic picture of true resource requirements.

3.   **Consider and communicate to others: Ensure leaders role-model the behaviour expected of employees to embed a "sometimes-off" culture**

Why is it important?

- Despite company policy, employees may feel they should respond to emails out of hours to show dedication and enthusiasm, and to keep projects going when they are not in the office. This is especially likely if it is a manager who emails out of hours.
- Research shows that others' expectations impact on our own technology use. Individuals whose manager expected them to use their smartphone during the evenings experienced more disruption to their home life (Derks and colleagues, 2015). Therefore, leaders' behaviour is likely to be important in embedding an organizational culture.

Guidelines

- Encourage managers and company leaders to role-model the behaviour expected of employees e.g. only responding to emails out of hours if important, avoiding answering emails when on holiday.
- Ask members of the senior leadership team to be advocates of the "sometimes-off" culture. Their role would be to consistently apply some of the guidelines set out for individuals on the following pages of this report and raise company awareness.
- Ask leaders to have open and honest conversations with their direct reports about what they might do to reduce stress of feeling always-on and increase their job satisfaction.

Tips for individuals

1. **Switch off: Find ways to mentally switch off from work emails, social media and technology on a regular basis**

   - Avoid using technology sometimes
     - Avoid using technology at certain times of the day. For example, don't check your work emails after 6.30pm or during your lunch break.
     - Have technology-free areas of the house. For example, make the bedroom a technology-free zone and use a regular alarm clock instead; charge phones downstairs; don't take phones to the dinner table.
     - Leave your phone somewhere you will not be distracted by it. For example, at work, leave your phone in your bag; at home, leave it in a drawer.
     - Turn off notifications on your phone to avoid getting distracted or interrupted.
     - If you have a piece of work that requires concentration, try disconnecting from incoming emails during that time period by clicking "work offline".

   - Engage in other activities
     - Take part in absorbing activities, such as gardening, cooking, exercising or looking after children to take your mind off work and messages and bring you back into the present moment.
     - Reconnect with your hobbies. Think about which activities absorb you the most, whether you'd like to try something new, and what excites or motivates you. The most satisfying hobbies are those that meet at least two of the following three criteria: active, social, gives a sense of achievement.
     - Consider taking technology "holidays". For example, set aside half a day where you do something that doesn't involve your phone, TV or tablet. Notice how you feel afterwards: do you feel rested, relaxed or calmer? Do you feel bored or restless? If you find it's the latter, look at the tips for personality types to get further ideas on activities that may suit your personality type.

   - Consider your own personality and the best ways to give your mind a rest. The following resources could be helpful for yourself or your clients:
     - Tips on personality and managing the always-on culture appear later in this document.
     - Understanding your personality type: https://eu.themyersbriggs.com/en/tools/MBTI/MBTI-personality-Types
     - Introduction to Type booklet
     - Quick guide to everyday stress (add link)

2. **Set boundaries: Stick to your own rules to avoid unhelpful habits and stay in control**

  - Reflect on and notice your own habits over the next few days.
    - Are there any habits you have picked up without realizing?
    - What is the impact of your habits on yourself and others, such as family and friends?
    - It's important to identify how your use of technology affects your own life or other people. Only then can you work out your own boundaries. For example, if you notice you end up checking emails in bed and this ends up cutting into sleep time, it may be important for you to leave your phone elsewhere at night. If you realize that not looking at your work emails all weekend means that work is on your mind more, you could intend to look at these just once a day. Alternatively, you might make an effort not to answer messages while spending time with the children. Every person will have a slightly different way of managing their "on" time.

  - Consider separating work and home life if you find it helps you. For example, you might decide that when you leave the office, you leave work behind. Alternatively, you could separate your time. For example, set aside an hour on Sunday mornings to check emails and keep the rest of the day free.

  - Practise "choiceful" technology use and act with deliberation rather than re-acting or acting out of habit. For example, instead of immediately reacting to a message, pause and reflect on whether it needs to be done right away. It may take practice but is likely to improve your flexibility in dealing with technology and keep you in control, rather than feeling like a slave to technology.

  - Whichever ways you decide to use technology as part of your life, respect your own boundaries. This means sticking to any rules you set yourself, even if your rule is simply to "be aware and mindful of my actions". Having said this, sometimes it is necessary to bend the rules. If you do bend the rules, know your purpose for doing so. This makes it a deliberate action and reduces the likelihood of slipping into unhelpful habits.

3. **Consider and communicate with others: Set boundaries with others and communicate your availability**

  - Now you know your own boundaries, ensure that others know about them and respect them. For example, if you have agreed not to answer calls after 6.30pm, stick to this and ensure your colleagues know why this is important to you.

  - Consider putting on an out-of-office message in the evenings to manage others' expectations of when you are available.

  - If you have your out-of-office message on or are on holiday, avoid answering emails unless absolutely necessary. This will give more clarity to your colleagues about when they should and should not get in touch. It will also role-model to others what you expect of them, i.e. that they don't need to answer emails on holiday either! This way, the culture of an organization or team can change.

Understanding your personality to navigate the always-on culture

There were several differences in approach and attitude to the always-on culture according to personality type. However, it is worth considering our whole type as this can give us a broad view of how we might prefer to approach the always-on culture.

This section is divided according to the four MBTI preference pairs. Each preference pair relates to a different aspect of the always-on culture. Whilst the above sections give guidance on *what* individuals might do to manage the always-on culture, the below sections inform individuals *how* they might do this, depending on their type.

Extraversion–Introversion

This preference pair tells us where we focus our energy and where we get our energy from (the outer or inner world).

Tip: Create time and space to mentally switch off from work/technology

Reflect on the following: How do you recharge your batteries?

If you have a preference for Extraversion, you might prefer doing something active, with others or might have a breadth of interests. Therefore, you might find that you are better able to take your mind off work by spending time with others. For example, you might enjoy sports in a group or engaging in discussion at a book club. You can also indulge yourself by trying new and different hobbies, to keep you interested.

If you have a preference for Introversion, you might prefer doing something that allows you to reflect or concentrate, without interruptions, and you might have a depth of interests. Therefore, you might find the most effective way to switch off is to really absorb yourself in one of your favourite hobbies. For example, you might enjoy sports done individually or getting stuck into a good book. It might be an idea to have an activity on the go to help you switch off quickly.

Sensing–Intuition

This preference pair tells us how we like to gather information and what kind of information we trust.

Advice: Beware of information overload!

Reflect on the following: In what kinds of situations do you feel overwhelmed? Are there times you are more likely to feel like you are always-on? How do you feel in these situations and what helps you get back into balance?

If you have a preference for Sensing, you may at times overdo your own preference and become too caught up in the details of what's going on, reacting to new information that comes in. At these times, it can be helpful to take a step back and look at the big picture. This will help you focus your attention on what is most important.

If you have a preference for Intuition, you may overdo your own preference by getting caught up in researching and discussing new possibilities and options. At times like these, you may find it helpful to step back and ground yourself in the present moment and focus on doing one thing at a time.

Thinking–Feeling

This preference pair tells us how we make decisions and evaluate information.

Advice: Form boundaries with yourself and others by considering the task at hand and the people involved.

Reflect on the following: How often do you find yourself spending time answering emails or calls without consciously deciding to do so?

If you have a Thinking preference, remember to consider, not only whether being "on" will aid productivity and the task, but also the impact on others. One tip is to only send emails during

business hours, unless urgent, even if this means writing the email and delaying sending it. This will reduce the pressure others can feel to respond straight away.

If you have a Feeling preference, ask yourself whether your response is important for the task at hand and whether it really is a priority. By looking at things in a logical way you may be able to find a balance, being supportive of others whilst ensuring you have space to rest and take time out at home. Remember, you can't pour from an empty cup!

Judging–Perceiving

This preference pair tells us about whether we prefer a more structured or flexible approach in life.

Advice: Find a form of work-life balance that works for you.

Reflect on the following: Are there times you find that work interferes with home life and vice versa?

If you have a Judging preference, you are likely to prefer some degree of separation between your work and home lives, in order to get the most out of the time you have at work and home. Consider setting boundaries with yourself about when you will and will not use technology to allow yourself to fully switch off from work when at home. You could leave your phone somewhere that will not distract you or turn off notifications to help you do this. If work does not allow this completely, try to compromise. For example, let your colleagues know you will check your emails on a Sunday morning but not otherwise, and ensure you are available for phonecalls if the matter is truly urgent.

If you have a Perceiving preference, you may really value the freedom and flexibility that the always-on culture brings and you may not feel as though you are always-on. Enjoy being able to work from home or when the inspiration takes you, but don't expect others to do the same. Respect others' boundaries and if you do need a quick response on an urgent matter outside of work hours, agree on a way to let them know this (e.g. give them a call) so you are on the same page. Also, whilst you might like being responsive, remember to make time for other activities you enjoy, especially ones that give you something you don't get from work. These other activities also make up an important part of your life.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Psychological type and the MBTI® assessment

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) assessment is probably the most widely used personality questionnaire in the world. It does not measure our ability or skill, or how much of a particular personality trait we have; it looks at whether we have an in-built preference to do things in one way or in another way. It looks at four pairs of preferences:

Opposite ways to direct and receive energy	
Extraversion (E)	**Introversion (I)**
Gets energy from the outer world of people and experiences	Gets energy from the inner world of reflections and thoughts
Focuses energy and attention outwards in action	Focuses energy and attention inwards in reflection

Opposite ways to take in information	
Sensing (S)	**Intuition (N)**
Prefers real information coming from five senses	Prefers information coming from associations
Focuses on what is real	Focuses on possibilities and what might be

Opposite ways to decide and come to conclusions	
Thinking (T)	**Feeling (F)**
Steps out of situations to analyze them dispassionately	Steps into situations to weigh human values and motives
Prefers to make decisions on the basis of objective logic	Prefers to make decisions on the basis of values

Opposite ways to approach the outside world	
Judging (J)	**Perceiving (P)**
Prefers to live life in a planned and organized manner	Prefers to live life in a spontaneous and adaptable way
Enjoys coming to closure and making a decision	Enjoys keeping options open

For convenience, these pairs of preferences, or pairs of opposites, are often called type preference pairs. So, we might talk about the E–I preference pair, the S–N preference pair, the T–F preference pair or the J–P preference pair.

In each pair, we will have a preference for one type. So, for example, we might prefer E rather than I, and spend much more of our time and energy doing things typical of Extraverts, and little of our time or attention on activities and ways of doing things typical of Introverts. Or we might prefer I rather than E. Whatever our preference, however, we will spend some time and carry out some activities associated with the other side. The same applies to S–N, T–F and J–P – in each

case we will have a preference, but we will visit the other side from time to time. We will use all eight modes at least some of the time.

The MBTI assessment is a method for helping individuals to work out what their type preferences are, so you may hear people say things like "I'm an ESTJ" or "I've got preferences for INFP" or "I'm definitely a Perceiving type". They can then use this knowledge in all sorts of ways to help them with their development as human beings. The four letters can be combined to give 16 different types, but this four-letter type formula should not be used to "put people in a box"; the MBTI instrument is used to open up possibilities, not to limit individuals.

The 16 types are often illustrated using a *type table*, as shown here.

Each of these 16 types has a particular characteristic taking the lead in directing their personality – what's often called their favourite process.

So, for ISTJ and ISFJ for example, Introverted Sensing (S^i) leads. Central to their personality is the importance of lived experience and drawing on their rich store of memories.

For ESTP and ESFP, it is Extraverted Sensing (S^e) – experiencing the moment and the here and now with all their senses – that leads, and so on for all 16 types. See the table below.
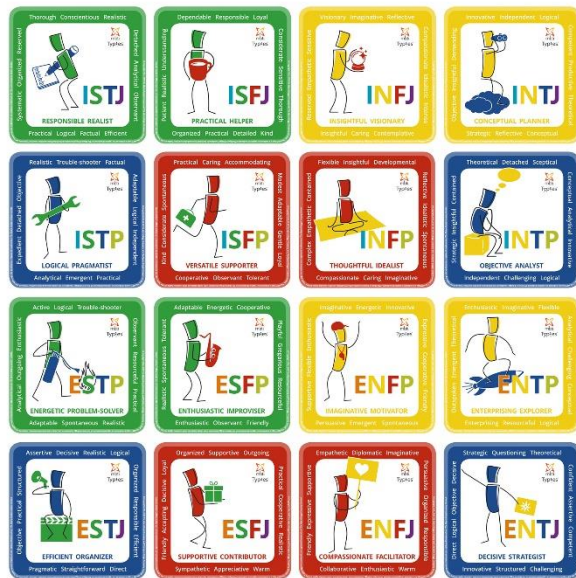
Types	Favourite process
ISTJ, ISFJ	Introverted Sensing (S^i)
ESTP, ESFP	Extraverted Sensing (S^e)
INFJ, INTJ	Introverted Intuition (N^i)
ENTP, ENFP	Extraverted Intuition (N^e)
ISTP, INTP	Introverted Thinking (T^i)
ESTJ, ENTJ	Extraverted Thinking (T^e)
ISFP, INFP	Introverted Feeling (F^i)
ESFJ, ENFJ	Extraverted Feeling (F^e)

Appendix B: Survey items in each short scale

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with the statements on a 5-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The score for each scale was calculated as the mean of the items in that scale.

Scale name	Items
Difficulty switching off	I feel like I am "always on". I don't feel that I can ever switch off from work. I can never really relax. I find it easy to mentally switch off from work. (reversed)
Compulsive checking	When I have a spare minute, I check my phone. I check my phone for messages regularly. I often check my phone without thinking about it. I check my phone out of habit.
Distraction	I get distracted easily by my phone. I get distracted easily. I find it hard to focus on just one thing at a time. It's easy for me to focus my attention on work without getting distracted. (reversed)
Job satisfaction	I am very satisfied with my job. I rarely think of quitting my job. I am very satisfied with the kind of work I do in my job.
Job stress	I feel stressed by work at the moment. I often find work stressful. I sometimes find work overwhelming. I don't often feel stressed by my job. (reversed) Generally I think that I am in control of most aspects of my working life. (reversed)
Work engagement	I get pleasantly absorbed in what I am doing at work. I get to do work that interests me. My work is meaningful and worthwhile. I am inspired by what I do at work. Most of the time I feel motivated by what I achieve at work.
Private life/Family conflict	The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfil my home responsibilities. Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me. My job causes me stress that impacts on my home life. Due to work-related duties, I sometimes have to make changes to my plans for home activities. The demands of my work do not interfere with my home and personal life. (reversed)

Individual preferences for separating home and work	I don't like to have to think about work while I'm at home.
	I prefer to keep work life at work.
	I don't like work issues creeping into my home life.
	I like to be able to leave work behind when I go home.
Workplace culture for separating home and work	My workplace lets people forget about work when they're at home.
	Where I work, people can keep work matters at work.
	At my workplace, people are able to prevent work issues from creeping into their home life.
	Where I work, people can mentally leave work behind when they go home.

Appendix C: Advantages of the always-on culture

Broad theme	Specific advantage	Description
Timely responding and efficiency	Responding quickly, easily and efficiently	People felt they could "react" to emergencies Prevents issues escalating They liked quick responses from others
	Keeping up-to-date with what's going on	Always aware of what's going on at work enabling people to respond to emergencies, not miss out on opportunities and avoid nasty surprises on going back to the workplace Some people also felt more in control, knowing what was happening
Flexibility	Work at a time or place that suits me	Gives more freedom and work life balance Can make use of dead-time e.g. responding to emails during the commute
	Allows me to do creative work/be productive	Can work when inspiration strikes Conceptual or reflective work is easier to do at home
Keep on top of work	Keep on top of work	Avoids tasks accumulating so you feel in control Can clear small tasks outside of work in order to be more relaxed and focused at work
Connectedness with others	Connection between colleagues	Enables colleagues to connect more with each other and maintains project momentum
	Productivity	Improves communication and therefore productivity
	Work across time zones	Helps work globally or with remote workers
	Accessible to others	Can be accessible to clients, colleagues, direct reports etc. if they need you Being available helps retain and gain clients so is good for business
	Keep in touch with family/friends	Easy to keep in touch with family/friends, family in other countries or teenagers who like to use apps
	Appear committed	Likely to appear dedicated/ committed to their work
Personal advantages	Keeps me engaged, motivated	People said they felt more engaged and it was less of an effort to get back into the work mindset again
	Peace of mind	People felt more in control of their workload People could relax better knowing they could be contacted in an emergency
	Keep up-to-date with trends/news	It's good to keep up-to-date with what's going on in their line of work
	Access information	Information accessible at fingertips
No advantages	No advantages	Some people said they felt there were no advantages

Appendix D: Disadvantages of the always-on culture

Broad theme	Specific disadvantage	Description
Psychological impact	**Mental exhaustion**	Tiredness, stress, mood changes, being irritable, being less creative
	Health problems	Insomnia, anxiety, depression, burnout, rise in blood pressure
	Can't switch off	Can't switch mind off or relax fully Always aware of all the work there is to do
	Distracted	Easily distracted and lack of focus on tasks Hard to focus on the present, including paying attention to others
	Addiction	Being addicted/dependent on technology e.g. sat nav
	No dead time	There is no time to just let the brain rest No space for people to be creative or imaginative
Expectations	**Expected to always be available**	People experienced receiving more emails out of hours and on holiday than they used to Expectations came from colleagues, clients, managers and the culture of the organization
	Expected to respond quickly	Time pressure adds to stressful nature of being always-on
	Expected to do more work than reasonable	Lack of clear expectations about when to work. This can result in having to work at home to complete their work, which is essentially unpaid overtime
Work-life balance	**Interference with family life/ relationships**	Not giving full attention to family or friends e.g. not being fully present in conversations Not being able to relax with family Contact via messaging interferes with building deep, meaningful relationships and face-to-face contact
	Interference with personal life in general	Not able to set boundaries between work and home Lack of perspective about what is important in life- work becomes life rather than a part of life Interruptions during home activities
Organizational impact	**Loss of engagement**	Low engagement, resentment towards organization
	Other organizational impact	Loss of productivity, higher absences due to stress
There are no disadvantages	**There are no disadvantages**	Some people said they felt there were no disadvantages to the always-on culture These people talked about the fact that being always-on is a choice: You can choose to step away if you want to

Appendix E: Strategies used by individuals to manage the always-on culture

Broad theme	Specific strategy	Description
Avoid technology use	Switch off devices	E.g. switch off phone in the evening and do not turn on until the morning
	Don't check emails	Avoid checking emails so you are not distracted
	Leave device somewhere else	E.g. charge phone downstairs at night, leave phone in the car, put phone in a drawer at home
	Do not have/accept a work smartphone	If work offers you a smartphone, do not accept it
Separate home and work life	Have separate phones for work and home	Have separate phones In addition, do not make work emails accessible on your home phone
	Set boundaries with self about when to use technology	Be clear with yourself about your own work/ home boundaries (e.g. only answer emails if important) and be disciplined about sticking to them
	Time boxing	This is similar to the above but more specific – box off time to do work and time to do other activities
	Choose who you work for	Some individuals said that if a company expects them to be always-on they would leave the company
Communications with others	Only respond to important issues	In personal or "non-work" time, check emails but only respond if important
	Only send emails during business hours	Even if an email is written out of hours, delay sending it until business hours to avoid out-of-hours responses from others, and to minimize expectations that others should be always-on
	Communicate availability to others and set boundaries	Let others know when you will and will not be available and act accordingly, e.g. if your out-of-office message is on, avoid replying to emails
Activities	Absorbing activities	Do something absorbing to take your mind off work, e.g. gardening, exercise, looking after children
	Have holidays	Holidays give time to completely switch off and relax, reducing stress
	Self-care	E.g. mindfulness, yoga and getting enough sleep, to manage stress
Be aware/ choiceful of technology use		This refers to not necessarily having strict rules about technology that must always be adhered to, but being aware and mindful of own technology use e.g. reduce the number of times you check your phone, reflect before reacting to a message. Does this really need doing now?

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