



OFFICE

re-connect

EMBRACING A CHANGING WORKPLACE

Workplace reinvention survey insights, September 2020



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EMBRACING A CHANGING WORKPLACE

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many office workers and their employers have learned that working from home generally works. This led us to ask:

What is the purpose of the office now? And in the future?

To answer these questions, we surveyed nearly 400 people from various industries and across different generations. We analyzed the data and the many thoughtful write-in responses and discovered four distinct themes. People look to physical offices for:

IMMERSIVE LEARNING AND INFORMATION SHARING

IMPROMPTU IDEATION AND INSPIRATION

ACCESS TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES

INCLUSION AND SHARING A COMMON EXPERIENCE

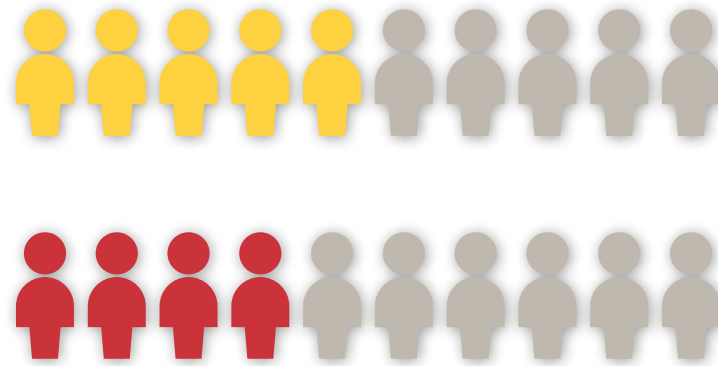
Our research taught us that even though our work lives have been profoundly altered by the pandemic, the physical workplace still serves an important role in our professional success. In this report, we delve into these insights and the survey responses that informed them. We also share our ideas for future workplace design based on our findings.

IMMERSIVE LEARNING AND INFORMATION SHARING

We asked people to pick their top three draws for returning to the office if given the freedom to work from home on any given day. In addition to gathering with colleagues, spontaneous information exchange and professional development rose to the top:

5/10

selected **spontaneous information exchange** with colleagues as a top factor that would draw them back to the office



4/10

said **face-to-face professional development** opportunities like mentorship and coaching would draw them back to the office

COMPLETE SURVEY RESULTS:

Convenience	3 / 10
Getting Together with Colleagues	7 / 10
Focused Work	2 / 10
Overall Office Experience	1 / 10
Professional Development	4 / 10
Perception of Productivity	1 / 10
Routine	2 / 10
My Desk Space	2 / 10
Spontaneous Information Exchange	5 / 10
Convenience of Errands & Work	1 / 10
Other	1 / 10

“Nothing can replace the real-time productivity of people working physically close together and reacting to the immediacy of problem solving. That’s the purpose. Eye-contact, body language, humanity. Plugging in and working from home is perfunctory, but not highest quality.”

“ I feel like I’m learning a lot less from others while working remotely”



FURTHER INSIGHTS

LEARNING THE UNKNOWN

How do you learn when you don’t know what to ask?

The physical office facilitates learning through casual information exchange. Observing, overhearing, and working alongside others promotes active learning and accelerates on-the-job training.

SHARING CULTURE

How does a new employee fully understand a company’s culture while working remotely?

Culture is learned through interaction, observation, and negotiation. People and experiences shape the culture. The office provides a critical context for new employees to learn about the culture of an organization.

THE WHOLE IS GREATER

Can we remain connected to our company’s mission, vision, and values while working from home long term?

Smaller teams build intimacy, trust, and unfortunately, siloes for remote workers. Working together in the office with our colleagues reinforces our connection to the company’s common purpose. Attention must be given to create both small and large community connectors.

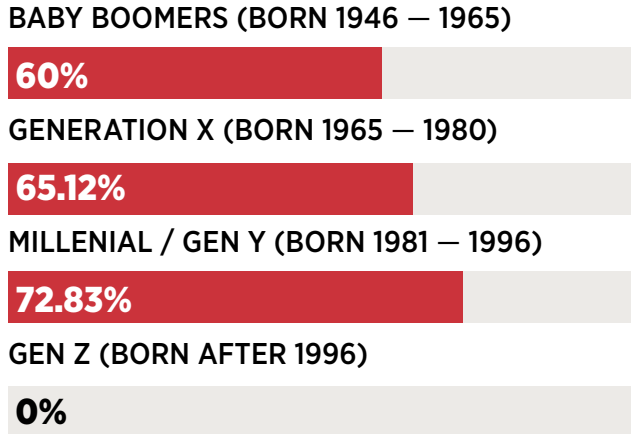
IMPROMPTU IDEATION AND INSPIRATION

6/10



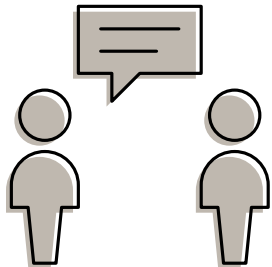
We asked people to pick the top two things they missed most about being physically present with their colleagues. In addition to socializing and bonding with colleagues, **impromptu collaboration** rose to the top

WHO IS MISSING IMPROMPTU COLLABORATION?



“Getting out of your home, which is a comfort zone, will occasionally help you make unexpected (work related) connections and insights. I think there is benefit to moving through the city and experiencing things and people.”

“[The office] allows for in person creative collaboration, which is crucial...creativity cannot function as well when it is confined to each individual’s home office.”



FURTHER INSIGHTS

POWER IN NEW PERSPECTIVE

Will innovation stagnate in siloed spaces?

Offices with several amenities and workspaces types let employees change their background to create fresh perspectives. Each environment brings opportunities for connection, engagement, and inspiration—fuel for innovation.

CULTURALLY RICH EXPERIENCE

Can a culturally rich experience be found working from home?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly 80% of Americans live and work in metropolitan areas. Cities expose people to diverse groups, beliefs, and experiences, opening up inspiration around every corner—via public transportation, food and drink, street musicians, public art. Working in culturally rich centers brings variety.

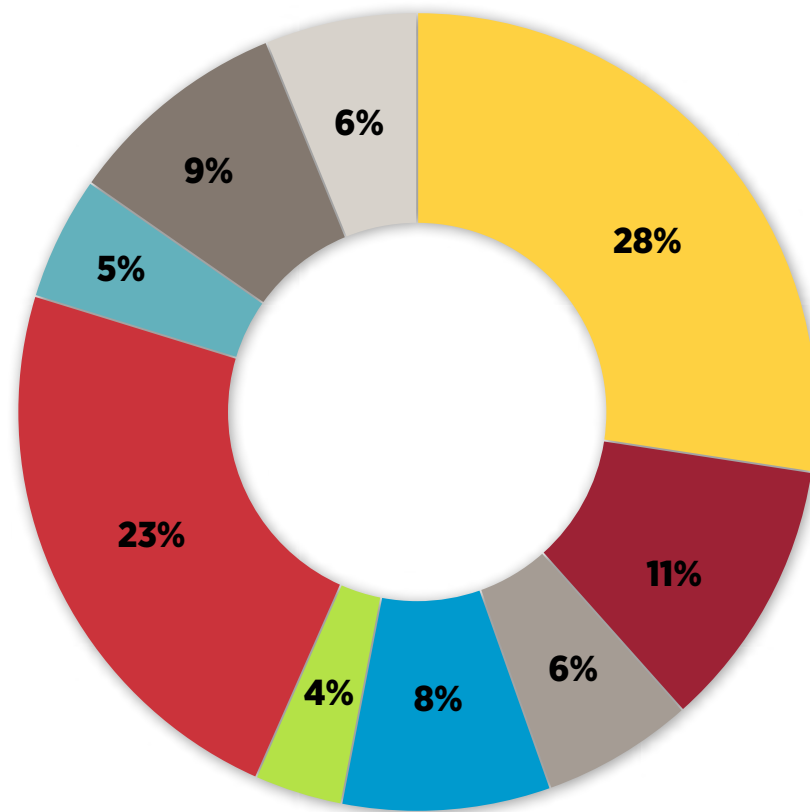
HUMAN CONNECTION

Is virtual communication as timely, effective, and productive as face-to-face communication?

Sharing space with coworkers lets us collaborate, uncover other perspectives, and improve outcomes. Working with others supports belonging and social support, so companies should invest in tools that integrate people who work virtually.

ACCESS TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- Access to workplace facilities, technology, or office supplies
- Space to do focused work
- Access to workplace amenities
- Better informed with what's happening with the company
- Better connection to company's mission, values, & culture
- Work / home separation
- Dedicated workspace (if applicable)
- I don't miss anything about the physical workplace
- Something else (please specify)



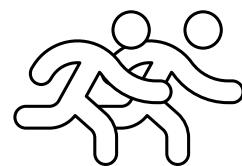
28%

of survey respondents said access to workplace facilities (technology, resources, supplies, etc.) is a top thing they miss about the office

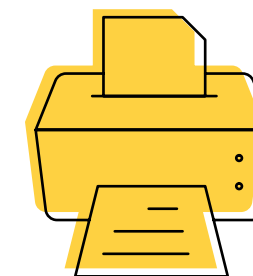
"[I miss] office furniture and equipment that is ergonomically suitable for hours of work."



"The physical office will be a center point for company culture, meetings, and a space to conduct specialized activities that couldn't be done at home. It would be a tangible structure for everyone."



"...to use the resources within the office like printing and access to materials, while allowing for collaboration and client meetings."



FURTHER INSIGHTS

BASIC NECESSITIES

Can remote work offer the same resources as a physical office?

Although many have adapted to remote work, people still need the tools, technology, and resources typically found in offices. Organizations should give remote workers equal access to tools, services, and technologies they need.

CLIENT INTERACTIONS

How do customers' perceptions of brand change in a digital environment? How can a hybrid workplace provide exceptional client experiences?

Offices are essential for hosting clients and showcasing talent, culture, and brand. Hybrid workplaces must adapt to effectively engage with clients.

WORK / HOME SEPARATION

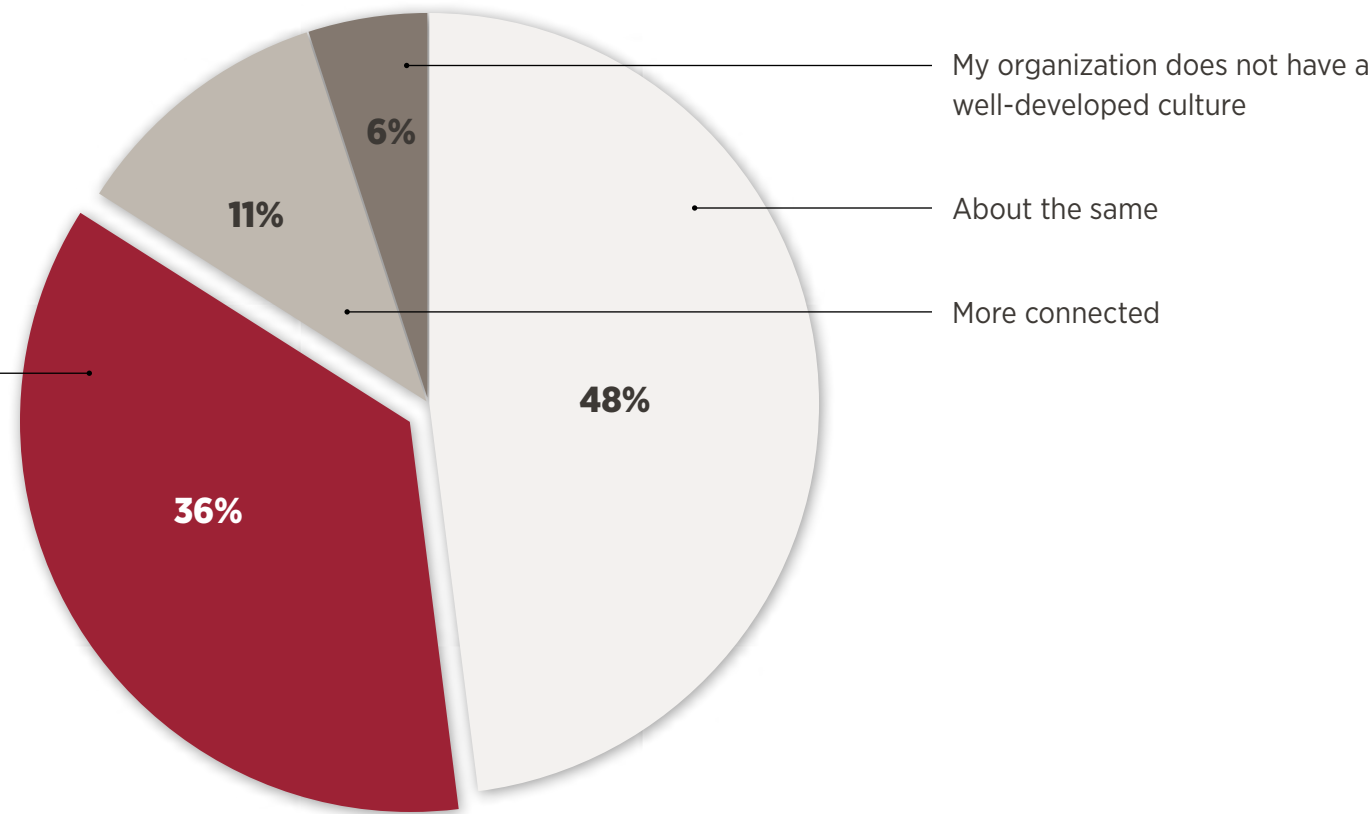
Post-pandemic, will people's desire to work from home subside?

While 3/4 of respondents are replacing former commute time with self-care, family time, and hobbies, nearly 1/4 are working additional hours. That, along with lost social connections and varied home environments, means some are excited to return to the office and a separate work-home life.

INCLUSION AND SHARING A COMMON EXPERIENCE

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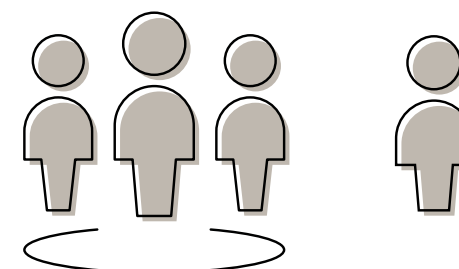
of survey respondents are feeling **less connected to their organization's culture, mission, and values during the pandemic**



42% are concerned with **decreased flexibility** to work from home when we return to the office (or when the office “reopens”)

“The physical office is a space to focus with dedicated workspace and resources I don't have at home. My “office” is shared by many people in the house, so dedicated space [from which] to work is appreciated.”

“The potential implications of having half the office working from home and half in the office, and how those with no physical presence might lose their role.”



FURTHER INSIGHTS

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Can a hybrid work environment give equal experiences for both remote and on-site staff?

Offices support shared experiences and culture; this is hard to replicate virtually. Hybrid models should support platforms that build trust, reinforce values, and uphold the company's mission.

ENVIRONMENTS VARY

How can employers support workers whose home life is not conducive to remote work?

Insufficient workspaces, weak technology infrastructures, or busy households may prevent some people from doing their best work at home. Employers considering fully remote work should weigh lifestyle and housing factors that may not be ideal for their staff.

OUT OF SIGHT / NEVER OUT OF MIND

As workplaces reopen, will remote employees feel as valued as their peers?

Employees who work from home want to connect, belong, and feel valued—they don't want to be marginalized. Understanding people's risks, lives, and preferences will preserve cohesion and elevate everyone's performance.



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