

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT WORK IN 2020?

More surveying on remote work was done in 2020 than the entirety of history preceding it. This work also spans organizations with very different lens on work practices; synthesizing and spanning this work can provide a more neutral and accurate picture of the future. For this brief we reviewed more than 40 different studies on the topic, conducted between March and November of 2020, to prepare a condensed meta-analysis. In total, these studies surveyed 175,000 people (with varying sampling procedures).

What have we learned so far?

WORKING REMOTELY CAN WORK

The most consistent finding is that shifting to remote work did not coincide with a hit to productivity. In fact, many studies found overall net increases in self-reported productivity, and *none* found net decreases to productivity across those surveyed. But the degree of productivity reported varied by respondent, particularly by age (with younger workers struggling more).

Key Findings:

- Remote productivity has been equal to or higher than on-site productivity: 95% (Flexjobs), 76% (Colliers), 75% (OWL Labs), 60% (CNBC). No identified studies reported a net decrease in overall reported productivity.
- Older generations have reported higher perceptions of success, with 73% of Boomers and 72% of Gen X feeling successful compared to 59% of Millennials and only 44% of Gen Z (GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics).
- Many converted saved commute time into work time: One study found an average of 26 extra hours worked per month (OWL Labs), in another 35% of respondents reported working 10 or more additional hours per week (Oracle).
- 97% reported at least one benefit from working from home (Slack/GlobalWebIndex), and average personal savings were found to be around \$480/month (OWL Labs).

2020 WAS NOT IDEAL FOR WORK ANYWHERE

While the dramatic shift to remote work did not coincide with a collapse of productivity, pandemic circumstances do not provide optimal work conditions. Additional work demands and productivity put stress on workers, while many navigate ongoing challenges around dependent care, space, loneliness, or workplace safety concerns.

Key Findings:

- Extra work time has led to increased burnout (73% reporting burnout according to Blind; 68% report more burnout than they experienced working at the office). 68% of those who transitioned to remote work this year routinely work during the weekend (Robert Half).
- Recurring challenges with interruptions (62%, per OWL Labs), poor home office equipment (41% per GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics), and loneliness (42% per GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics). Overall, only 56% reported they had everything they needed to be productive at home as of July (Wrike/Surveymonkey)
- Loneliness (20% reporting) and collaboration (20%) are the most common remote work issues, both compounded by pandemic conditions.
- Not the same experience for everyone: some are thriving (16%), some are hopeful (25%), others are discouraged (27%) or trapped (32%) (Martec Group).

THE OFFICE WILL RETURN

It's no surprise that people miss their colleagues. The social interactions, ease of collaboration, and shared experiences are even more noticeably absent in the face of pandemic limitations. The appeal of office space for collaboration and camaraderie remains strong, particularly among executives.

Notable findings:

- 49% miss their colleagues and 63% miss something about the office (Flexjobs); 38% miss random interactions with colleagues and 33% miss in-person meetings (CBRE/Hana); 47% want to go back to the office in some capacity due to the interactions and normalcy of the workplace (YouGov). 58% of workers feel they collaborate better at the office (Colliers International);
- Only 30% of executives surveyed foresaw office needs being reduced after the pandemic (PwC).

THE FUTURE WILL BE ABOUT FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Despite lots of attention-grabbing headlines, the body of research provides evidence that both remote work and office work have clear benefits. So it's not surprising that a recurrent finding was that employees are expecting a better balance between the two post-pandemic. Part-time remote work (3 or fewer days per week) is very popular, and respondents indicate they put a high value on the flexibility and quality of life improvements afforded by remote work.

Notable findings:

- Being able to work remotely 1+ days per week post-pandemic was consistently popular among professionals: 80% (Colliers), 75% (IBM), 72% (Slack/GlobalWebIndex), 72% (Kittelson), 65% (Gallup), 62% (YouGov), 56% (CBRE/Hana). Adding the option to work remotely occasionally (such as a few times a month) and the number may climb as high as 98% (Buffer).
- 25% of professionals said they would take a pay cut of 10% or more to continue WFH (OWL Labs); this was even higher (60%) among tech sector workers (Indeed).
- Average preferences for remote work frequency ranged from 1-2 days per week (Colliers) to 2-3 (GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics).

SOURCES

Source	Title	Sample Size	Survey Dates	Link
Blind	Silicon Valley's workforce is feeling more burned out than before the pandemic, with nearly 70% reporting work-from-home exhaustion	3023	May	Link
Boston Consulting Group	What 12,000 Employees Have to Say About the Future of Remote Work	12662	May and June	Link
Buffer	2020 State of Remote Work	3500	End of 2019	Link
CBRE/Hana	Untitled	1000	April (13-15)	Link
CNBC	States of Play	5787	April 17-18	Link
Colliers International	Global Workplace Survey	3000	March and April	Link
Digital.com/ YouGov	70% of Employees Working From Home Want to go Back to Their Workplace	3903	May	Link
Flexjobs	FlexJobs Survey: Productivity, Work-Life Balance Improves During Pandemic	4000	September	Link
Gallup	COVID-19 and Remote Work: An Update	2730	Sept 14-27	Link
Global Workplace Analytics	The Future of Home Office Cost Sharing	83	September	Link
Global Workplace Analytics / iOMETRICS	Global Work-from-Home Experience Survey	2865	April	Link
IBM Institute for Business Value	COVID-19 Is Significantly Altering U.S. Consumer Behavior and Plans Post-Crisis	25000	May	Link
IBM Institute for Business Value	COVID-19 Consumer Survey	13000	September	Link
IBM Institute for Business Value	Trending Insights: COVID-19 and the future of business	3450	April - August	Link
Indeed	Report: How Tech Workers See the Future of Remote Work	616	October	Link
Kittelson & Associates	Will COVID-19 Permanently Alter Teleworking and Commuting Patterns? Here's What 1,000 Commuters Told Us.	1000	May, June, July	Link

Martec Group	Working Remotely During COVID-19	1214	April	Link
Metropolitan Washington COG	Commuter Connections Employer Telework Survey	180	May, June	Link
Oliver Wyman	Glimpses of Recovery: Traveler sentiment survey Edition1	4600	April, May	Link
Oracle	As Uncertainty Remains, Anxiety and Stress Reach a Tipping Point at Work	12347	July and August	Link
OWL Labs / Global Workplace Analytics	State of Remote Work: 2020	2025	June and July	Link
PwC	When everyone can work from home, what's the office for?	1200	May and June	Link
Qualtrics/ theBoardist	Not in the Same Boat: Career Progression in the Pandemic	1051	July (9 - 13)	Link
Robert Half	Untitled	2800	July to August	Link
Slack	Remote Employee Experience Index	4700	June, July, August	Link
Slack/ GlobalWebIndex	The evolution of remote work in 2020	9000	June, July, August	Link
Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research	How working from home works out	2500	May	Link
Stanford News	The productivity pitfalls of working from home in the age of COVID-19	NA		Link
Stantec	Stantec survey: How will commuting patterns change due to COVID-19?	3552	April 6 - May 8	Link
The Conference Board	COVID-19 Coronavirus Implications for Business	1100	September	Link
Upwork	Economist Report: Remote Workers on the Move	20940	October	Link
VOXEU/CEPR	60 million fewer commuting hours per day: How Americans use time saved by working from home	10000	May, July, August	Link
Wrike/ SurveyMonkey	Remote Work Survey Index Results: The Future of Remote Work	1000	July	Link