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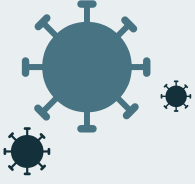
Adapting to a Post-Pandemic Workplace

# Norms for a New Normal



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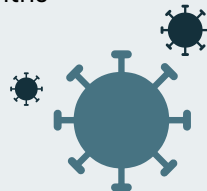
**As COVID-19 spread across the globe**, the workplace radically changed for virtually everyone. In a matter of weeks, companies adopted new technologies and policies to support employees and maintain business operations during the pandemic. A year later, companies have established a rhythm to working during the pandemic.

The pandemic has been stressful and challenging, and still we've managed to learn—and unlearn—a lot from it. Now, it's on us to apply those lessons to shape how we will work, communicate, and connect in the new normal.

## **Methodology**

In collaboration with [TRUE Global Intelligence](#), Vyond conducted a nationally-representative survey in February 2021 of 1,000 adults in the United States. Participants were employed full-time at large organizations (500+ employees) and included remote and non-remote workers across industries with varying levels of seniority.

We reference the surveys of the same nature that we conducted in [February 2020](#) (pre-pandemic) and [July 2020](#) (four months after initial lockdown orders were put into place).



# Key Findings

1) Employees are reporting **higher work-life balance** than they were before the pandemic.



2) Women experienced a **sharper decrease in work-life balance** four months into the pandemic than men did, widening the workplace gender gap.



3) Just over half of employees think their company is committed to its employees' **mental health needs**.



4) Remote workers report **better communication and transparency** at their organizations than non-remote workers do.



5) **Over half of employees and nearly two-thirds of millennials prefer to watch company communications on their own time instead of attending live sessions.** A similar number find video messages more engaging than text-based messages. Adopting video communication for internal communications ensures better engagement and retention.

## Top challenges reported for working remotely included:

- Feeling disconnected from colleagues
- Social isolation from not leaving home
- An inability to separate work and life

## Top benefits reported for working remotely included:

- Money and time saved by not commuting
- Increased comfort working at home
- More time spent with family and roommates
- Reduced investment in professional wardrobes
- Increased flexibility in working hours

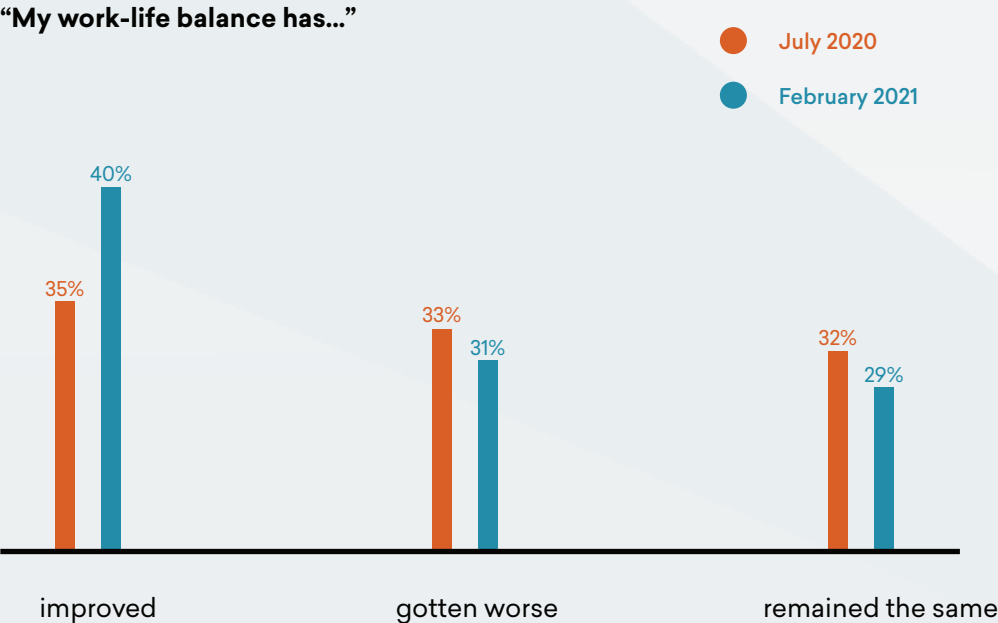


One

# Encourage work-life balance



**Despite a drop in work-life balance in July 2020 compared to February 2020, employees are now reporting higher work-life balance than they were before the pandemic. 40% of survey respondents reported that their work-life balance has improved during the past year.**



**To be clear, the data does not indicate that people have a higher quality of life.** While the tragedy and strife of the pandemic cannot be erased, the majority of Americans have experienced at least one silver lining. One of these silver linings, according to our data, is increased work-life balance.

Without commutes, travel, gathering, and events, employees recovered a significant amount of time that they could rededicate to the oft-neglected personal sphere. The additional flexibility of remote work empowered workers to rediscover how they care for themselves and their families. Work could be prioritized according to value; not just the timecard. As our lives grew more blurred and fragmented, employees found new opportunities to make choices related to work-life balance that weren't previously made available to them.

## Create a culture that supports work-life balance.

**Businesses should continue to focus on improving or maintaining their employees' work-life balance.** Asking each employee to manage work-life balance independently isn't enough. Embrace work-life balance as something to be designed for in your organizational culture. Work proactively to build psychological safety, so that it's easy for employees to draw boundaries where they need them. Empower teams to co-create their own working norms instead of relying on a stiff handbook of policies. Respect those norms by not scheduling "optional" meetings outside of standard work hours.





Two

# Mind the Gender Gap



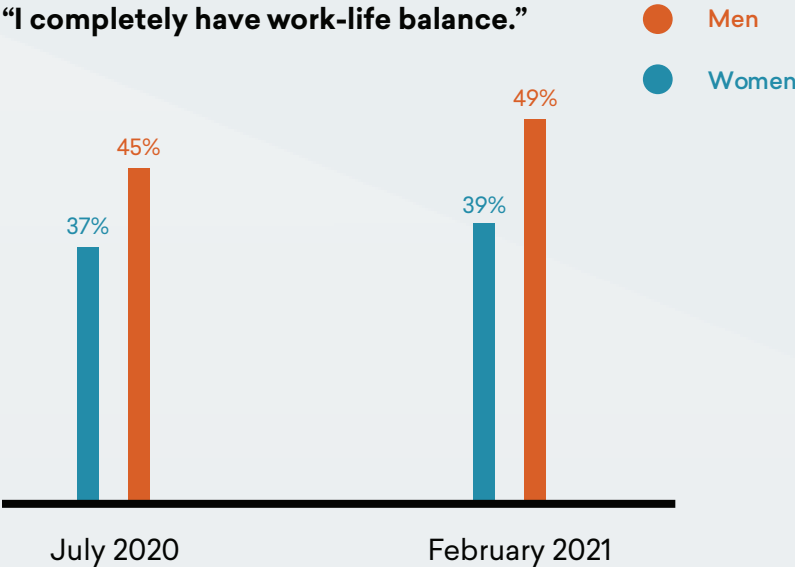
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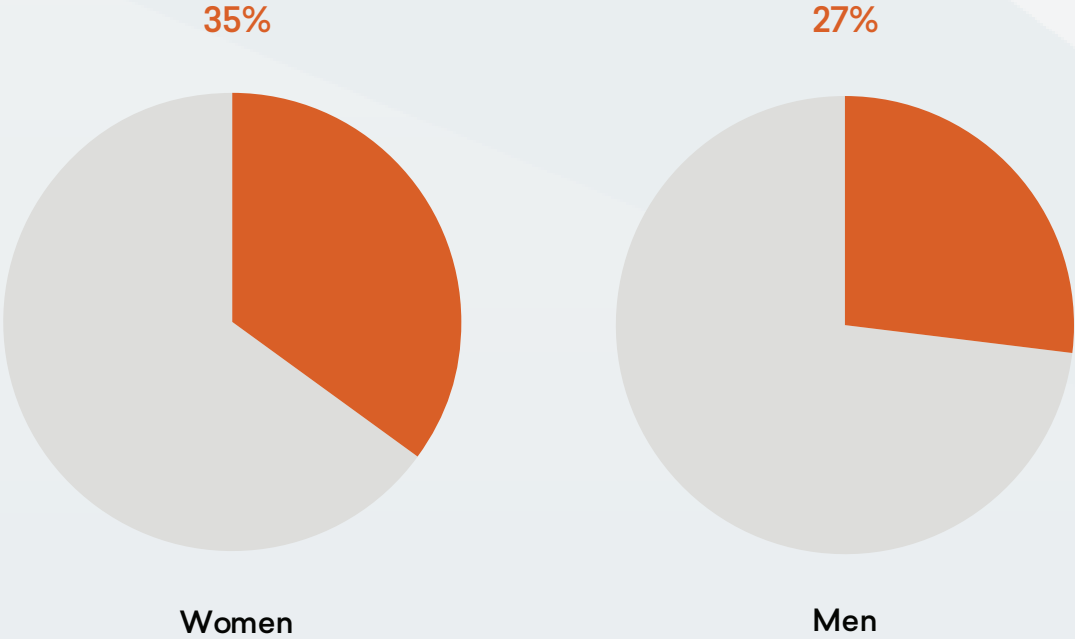
## The pandemic amplified the gender gap.

While both men and women experienced a drop in work-life balance four months into the pandemic, the drop was starker for women. **Twenty-eight percent fewer women reported having a very healthy work-life compared to 18% fewer men.**



Similarly, a year into the pandemic, **35% of women reported that their work-life balance had diminished during the past year**, compared to 27% of men.

“My work-life balance has diminished.”



Women are still more frequently seen as caretakers and homemakers. With the additional responsibilities of caretaking brought on by COVID-19, women (particularly mothers) took on the brunt of the burden. According to Lean In’s Women in the Workplace 2020 report, mothers are **“1.5 times more likely than fathers to be spending an extra three or more hours a day on housework and childcare—equivalent to 20 hours a week, or half a full-time job.”**

**The tendency of women to be overburdened with childcare and housework responsibilities compared to men also points to the value of flexible remote work policies for women.**

Fifty percent more women than men reported that they were already working remotely before the pandemic started, pointing to the fact that remote work enables women to stay employed while managing family responsibilities. However, according to [Thomas Lyttelton](#), a Ph.D. candidate in Yale's Sociology department, this "leads them to do a disproportionate amount of housework and child care compared to fathers."



This disproportionate impact across the praxis of gender serves as a dark reminder that often-invisible issues plague the most vulnerable employees. Our findings only represent those who self-identified as men or women, as those were the only segments statistically significant enough to report given our sample. Nevertheless, [gender is a spectrum](#) encompassing underrepresented identities that do indeed exist. If women continue to suffer acutely from inequity in the pandemic-era workplace, we can assume [other groups might too](#).

## Invest in family support policies.

Gender diversity, particularly in leadership roles, contributes to higher profitability. Companies can maintain a diverse pool of talent by offering flexible remote work options, which will be particularly beneficial for keeping mothers employed.

Employers can also ease the burden on women by fleshing out family support policies. On-site offices can include daycares, and remote companies can reimburse for daycare, a babysitter, or other professional caretaker services. Reduce chore load by paying for laundry services and cleaning services. Make it easier for families to have nutritious meals by reimbursing for CSA boxes for consistent, low-effort access to fresh local produce or meal boxes. Most importantly, give flexibility and benefits for caregiving to everybody, so that men can be empowered and expected to contribute equally at home.





Three

# An effective mental health program is good for business



# Just over half of employees think their company is committed to its employees' mental health needs.

Just over half of employees think their company is committed to its employees' mental health needs. It's great that companies are starting to prioritize mental health, but with nearly one in two employees believing that their companies aren't committed to mental health, there is room for improvement. **A comprehensive mental health program will help companies retain talent, reduce attrition, and foster diversity. (Plus, it's the right thing to do.)**

**"My company is committed to its employee's mental health needs."**



Employees that work despite feeling mentally or physically unwell are more costly than those that take time to recover. Millennials and Gen Z-ers are more likely to leave roles for mental health reasons, indicating that mental health is an increasing priority for the fastest-growing segments of our workforce. Mental health programs support diversity, too. Marginalized groups face additional stress at work, making them disproportionately and inequitably vulnerable when it comes to mental health.

## Invest in employee mental health.

Start by running a wellness survey to take stock of employee attitudes about your current mental wellness program. By determining employee values and perceived gaps in your wellness program, you can prioritize actions that will make the biggest impact.

The stigma around mental health prevents employees from talking about and caring for their mental health at work. Companies need to proactively shift the culture to promote mental wellness. Leadership can create that shift by talking about their own mental health and normalizing taking mental health days.

**Managers can use 1:1s as an opportunity to check in about mental health.** By asking about workload and stress, managers can proactively offer support and avoid employee burnout.





Four

# What remote work taught us about communication





## Communication is crucial for any company, but remote workers report better communication and transparency in their organizations than non-remote workers.

As our work lives have become increasingly fragmented, so have our channels of communication. Email and over-the-cubicle conversations are no longer the best way to exchange information (joining the long-dead faxed memo). Even companies working in or returning to an office can learn from the world of remote work to create accessible, connected, multi-media channels of communication that take advantage of all those sophisticated tools the digital age has to offer.

**“I prefer to watch a company announcement or communication on my own time.”**

56%

of employees

66%

of millennials

Our survey reveals that 56% of employees (and nearly two-thirds of millennials) prefer to watch a company announcement or communication on their own time as opposed to attending a live session and that a similar number find video messages more engaging than text-based messages.

Synchronous communication isn't a suitable default for our fragmented, distraction-rich world. By allowing individuals to engage with information on their own time, you're increasing the odds that they'll engage and remember.

## Adopt video communication for internal communications.

**Video is more engaging, and dynamic media is easier to remember.** Employees will be able to reference it later, and if they weren't able to attend, they'll be able to get up to speed quickly on anything they missed. With pre-recorded videos, you can take a multimedia approach by sharing visuals that support your message. By combining elements, you address multiple learning styles, ensuring more accessible communication for every ability learning style.





Five

# Embrace remote work



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Even if you're a die-hard believer in co-located collaboration, you can acknowledge and embrace the benefits of remote work. Remote workers feel more comfortable working at home, creating an environment that allows them to do their best work. They can spend more time with family and roommates, and less time spending money on their workplace wardrobe. The increased flexibility in working hours gives them the agency to organize their work in the most effective way possible. And the biggest benefit reported by employees? **Time saved from not commuting.**

Remote work benefits employers by activating an empowered (and happy) workforce. By not having an office, companies save on the rent and management costs of maintaining a physical office. Talent is no longer limited to geography, so you can find the best person for the job. What's more, employees who work remotely are more productive, take less time off, and have lower attrition rates than those working in an office.

These benefits however don't solve all the challenges that come with distributed teams. Remote workers feel disconnected from their colleagues. Work and life seem to merge without boundaries, and there are more distractions at home. By helping employees solve for these problems, employers can make remote work sustainable for their team.

## Top benefits of working from home



**Time saved from not commuting.**



**More time with family and roommates.**



**Increased flexibility in working hours.**

# Change policies and culture to support remote employees

As we enter the new normal of work, employees are going to want more flexibility. Some employees will crave the work-life separation, heading back into the office. Others will appreciate the flexibility of working remotely—some or all of the time—for the increased comfort, the flexibility to manage home life, and the benefits of not commuting. We're likely to see companies go fully remote or adopt hybrid workplaces. In hybrid models, use communication channels consistently across in-person and remote work to protect your team's cohesion.

**Support your remote employees by creating opportunities for social interaction, supporting work-life balance, and establishing a culture that can ease distractions.**

Foster connection through interest-based Slack channels, book clubs, and Zoom events for co-workers to bond over—such as a yoga or cooking class. Enable connection through virtual coffee chats.

**Support work-life balance by encouraging employees to implement time boundaries.** Recommend that employees set working hours in their calendar, put on “do not disturb” mode after work, and discourage after-hours messaging. Offer flexible schedules that grant employees the agency to work as effectively as possible.



## As the force majeure of pandemic lifts, we'll be left to choose for ourselves how we want to work.

We will be less guided by coronavirus safety precautions and more by the choices companies and their employees make about their working environment.

The post-COVID workplace supports work-life balance. It supports gender diversity through family support policies, and values mental wellness. Effective, engaging communication is put at the center of workplace interactions.

The new normal will feel far from normal, but that shouldn't keep us from crafting the new norms that will help employees thrive.

**If we embrace these changes now, we can apply the lessons we've learned in this pandemic to create workplaces that are better for employees and better for business.**

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## The new normal needs new norms.

As the rest of the world transforms, so should the way we communicate. Give your team the power of better communication with animated videos they create in [Vyond Studio](#).

