Harvard Business School Online

Most Professionals Excelled While Working from Home

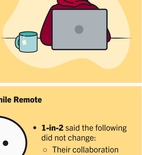
Employees want to stay remote—at least some of the time—ushering in a new era for businesses

Despite the hardships and heartbreaks of COVID-19, there were many personal and professional wins—and some good and bad habits developed. According to a survey of 1,500 professionals who worked remotely in the past year:

Advanced Their Careers

Excelled at Work

- **98%** kept their jobs while working at home
- **1-in-3** felt both their overall performance and quality of work was better than the year prior
- **1-in-3** were actually able to better focus on work from home

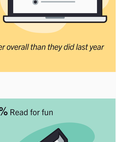


Gelled with Co-Workers—Even While Remote

- **1-in-2** said the following did not change:
  - Their collaboration with co-workers
  - Support from co-workers
  - Trust in leadership

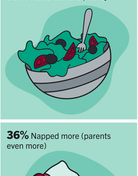
Found Time for Career Development

- **35%** read more for professional growth
  - *Men more than women*
- **29%** continued their education
- **34%** took online courses for career development
  - *Those under the age of 45 were more likely to take online courses*
  - *Those who took online courses felt better overall than they did last year*



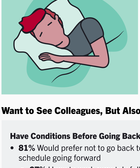
Developed Healthy Habits

59% Made health a priority

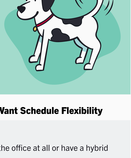


50% Read for fun

36% Napped more (parents even more)



16% Got a dog or pet



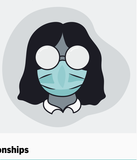
Want to See Colleagues, But Also Want Schedule Flexibility

Have Conditions Before Going Back

- **81%** Would prefer not to go back to the office at all or have a hybrid schedule going forward
  - **27%** Hope to work remotely full-time
  - **61%** Would like to work 2-3 days a week from home
  - **18%** Want to go back to the office full-time
    - *Parents with kids at home want to go back full-time more than those without children*
    - *Married people also want to go back full-time more than singles*
    - *On the other hand, people from the Northeast are more likely to want to stay remote*

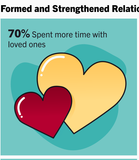
Conditions Before They Go Back

- **51%** Uncomfortable going back to the office until they're fully vaccinated
  - **71%** Hesitant to go back until everyone is fully vaccinated
- **54%** Expect social distancing—everyone is seated at least 6 feet apart and required to wear masks



Formed and Strengthened Relationships

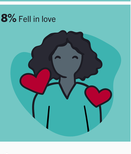
70% Spent more time with loved ones



50% Spent more time with friends, mostly online

10% Started a romantic relationship

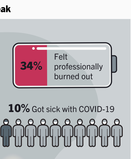
8% Fell in love



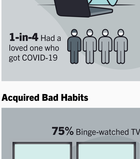
Experienced Hardships & Heartbreak

2% Lost their job

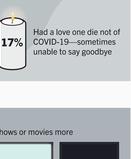
34% Felt professionally burned out



69% Worried about the world

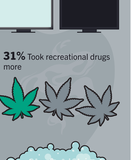


10% Got sick with COVID-19



1-in-4 Had a loved one who got COVID-19

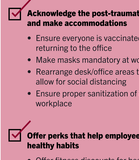
17% Had a love one die not of COVID-19—sometimes unable to say goodbye



Acquired Bad Habits

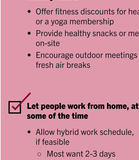
75% Binge-watched TV shows or movies more

1-in-3 Drank more



31% Took recreational drugs more

1-in-3 Gained weight (10+ lbs.)



14% Bathed less

Tips to Help Business Leaders Support New Lifestyles

- **Develop your emotional intelligence, also known as soft skills**
- **Acknowledge the post-traumatic stress your teams have endured and make accommodations**
  - Ensure everyone is vaccinated before returning to the office
  - Make masks mandatory at work
  - Rearrange desk/office areas to allow for social distancing
  - Ensure proper sanitization of the workplace

- **Offer perks that help employees maintain healthy habits**
  - Offer fitness discounts for health clubs or a yoga membership
  - Provide healthy snacks or meals on-site
  - Encourage outdoor meetings and fresh air breaks

- **Let people work from home, at least some of the time**
  - Allow hybrid work schedule, if feasible
    - Most want 2-3 days remote—and they've proven it works

Based on a March 2021 Harvard Business School Online and Ellis Square Associates survey of 1,500 professionals who worked remotely at least part of the time (March 2020–March 2021)