

Working from Home

Lessons Learned over the Last Nine Months

Housekeeping

- ✓ Everyone will be muted
- ✓ Please enter questions in the Chat box
- ✓ The webinar will be recorded and shared with all registrants
- ✓ The webinar will be placed on the kingcounty.gov/worksmart website
- ✓ Please fill out the evaluation survey at the end of the webinar

What is WorkSmart?

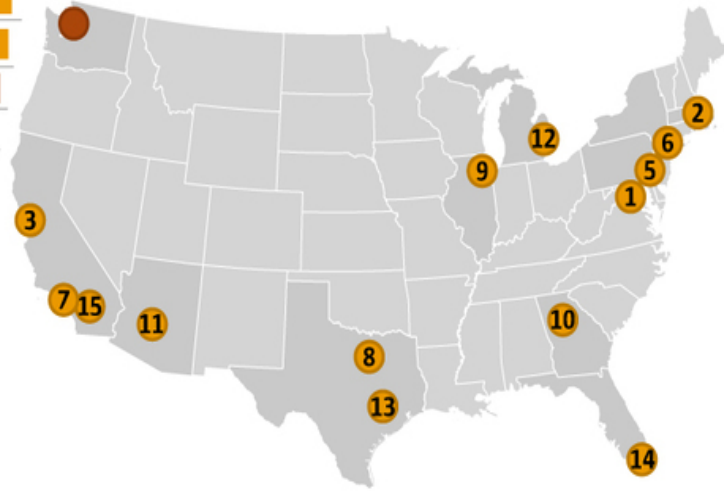
- ✓ WorkSmart, is a FREE service offered by King County Metro to receive consulting services that can retail for over \$10K, you can help reduce traffic congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and real estate costs for your business. Teleworking is a proven way to increase employee productivity, morale, and work-life balance.
- ✓ WorkSmart has worked with over a hundred employers in the King County region since 2009. WorkSmart provides free one-on-one consulting to employers that want to implement, expand, or improve teleworking and alternative work hour programs.
- ✓ Elham Shirazi is the lead consultant for WorkSmart.
- ✓ Our team has extensive experience in developing customized telework and alternative work arrangement programs. We have developed resource materials, conducted training workshops, and evaluated the impacts of telework and flexible scheduling on employers, employees, and Commute Trip Reduction requirements.

Where is Seattle among Teleworking Regions?

Seattle among top metros for telework

In nearly half of Seattle households, at least one person has substituted their typical in-person work for telework because of the coronavirus pandemic.

	METRO AREA	PERCENT
1.	Washington, D.C.	56.3
2.	Boston	53.9
3.	San Francisco	52.5
4.	Seattle	48.7
5.	Philadelphia	45.4
6.	New York	45.2
7.	Los Angeles	43.3
8.	Dallas	43.2
9.	Chicago	43.0
10.	Atlanta	42.1
11.	Phoenix	39.7
12.	Detroit	37.7
13.	Houston	36.5
14.	Miami	34.4
15.	Riverside-San Bernardino	27.6



Source: U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey

Data analysis by GENE BALK,
Graphic by MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

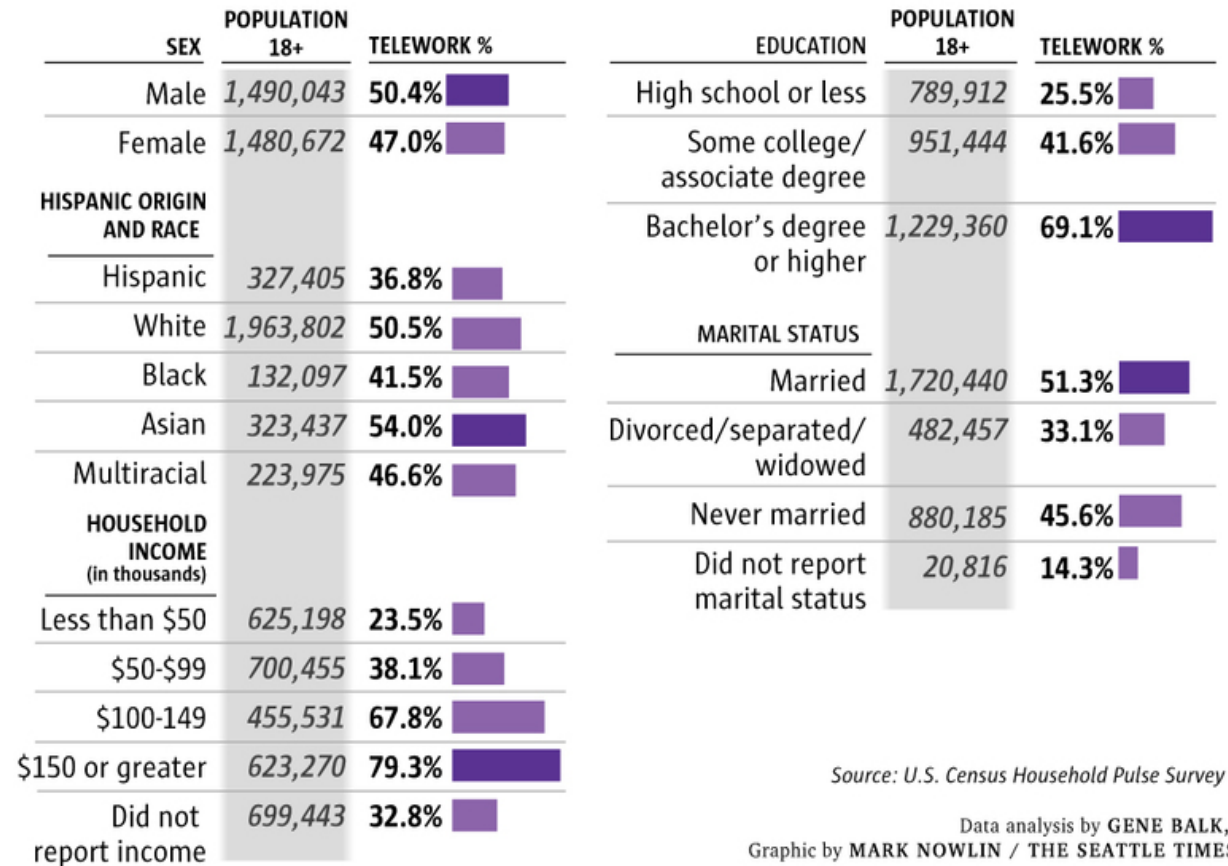
- Seattle is near the top among the nation's largest metro areas for the switch to remote work since the pandemic.
- In the Seattle metro area, which includes King, Pierce and Snohomish counties, nearly half (48.7%) of all adults have switched to teleworking because of the pandemic.
- This data comes from the new Household Pulse Survey, which was conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau from August 19-31, 2020.

Who is Teleworking in Seattle?

- In the Seattle area, the data shows that those who have switched to telework since the virus hit tend to be college-educated with high incomes.
- Among area residents with a four-year college degree, 69% are now teleworking, compared with about 26% of those with only a high school degree or less.
- Among those with a household income of \$150,000 or higher, 79% are now teleworking, compared with less than a quarter of those making below \$50,000.

Who's switched to telework in Seattle?

Seattle-area residents who are college graduates and have a higher household income are most likely to have switched to telework because of the pandemic.



Source: U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey

Data analysis by GENE BALK,
Graphic by MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

July Is the New January: More Companies Delay Return to the Office

- From Ford to Microsoft, white-collar companies are increasingly extending working from home through next summer.
- Google was one of the first to announce that July 2021 was its return-to-office date.
- Uber, Slack and Airbnb soon jumped on the bandwagon.
- Microsoft, Target, Ford Motor and The New York Times said they, too, had postponed the return of in-person work to next summer and acknowledged the inevitable: The pandemic isn't going away anytime soon.
- ***"I hope this will offer the flexibility you need to balance work with taking care of yourselves and your loved ones over the next 12 months," Google's chief executive, Sundar Pichai, wrote in an email to employees about the July 2021 date.***

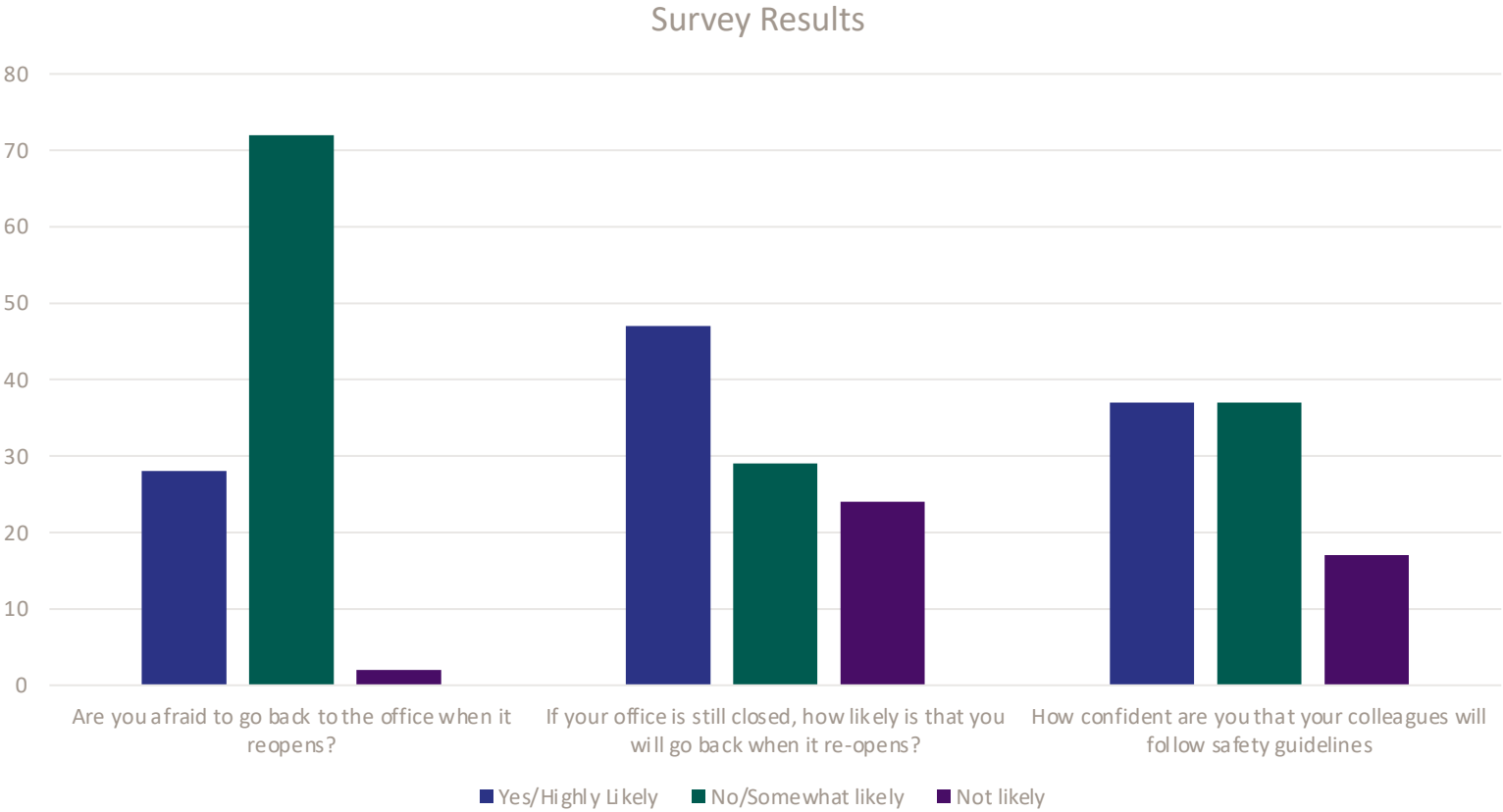
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/13/technology/offices-reopening-delay-coronavirus.html>

Microsoft Blog: Embracing a flexible workplace

Microsoft provided the following guidance:

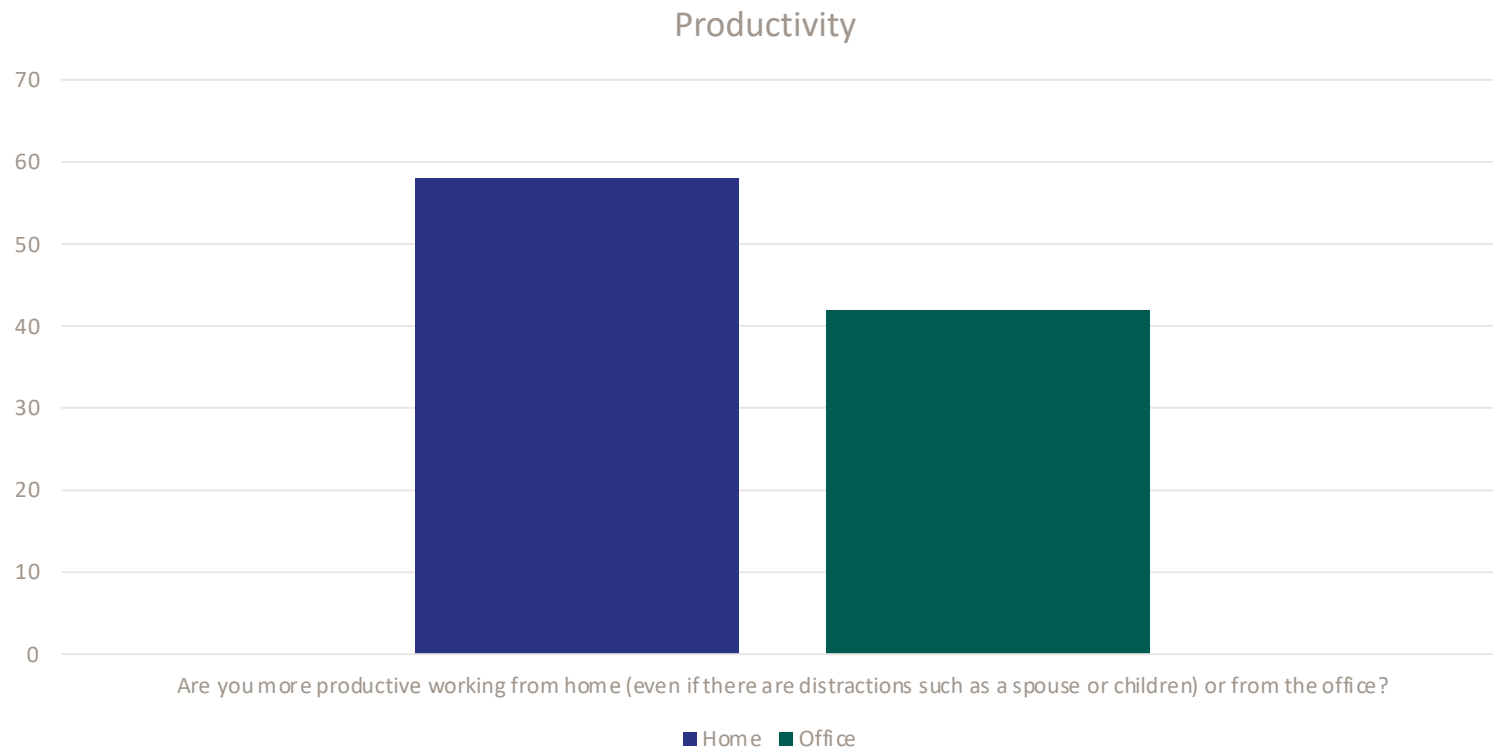
- **Work site (the physical space where you work, e.g., office, center, home, mobile)**
- **Work hours (the hours and days when employees work, e.g., workday start and end times, full- or part-time):** Work schedule flexibility is now considered standard for most roles. While part-time continues to be subject to manager approval, the guidance is meant to facilitate an open conversation between a manager and employee regarding considerations.
- **Work location (the geographic location where you work, e.g., city and country):** Similarly, the guidance is there for managers and employees to discuss and address considerations such as role requirements, personal tax, salary, expenses, etc.

Attitudes Regarding Returning to the Office



<https://www.kornferry.com/about-us/press/back-to-the-office> The Korn Ferry survey of 1,329 professionals took place in late September 2020.

Productivity



<https://www.kornferry.com/about-us/press/back-to-the-office> The Korn Ferry survey of 1,329 professionals took place in late September 2020.

Cisco Systems

- Nearly 9 of 10 workers say they want more flexibility and autonomy over where and when they work, according to new research from technology company Cisco Systems. Cisco Vice President Gordon Thomson told Reuters that companies must reconfigure how they operate to help meet the new demands of workers, prioritizing effective communication and collaboration.

Key Findings from Cisco's October 2020 Report

- Working from Home the New Normal
 - 58% will work 8 or more days each month from home (Post-COVID)
 - 98% of meetings will include participants joining from home (post-COVID)
 - 98% share frustrations with video meetings when working from home
- Employees Uncomfortable Returning to the Office
 - 97% of employees want changes to make them feel safer at work
 - 99% of companies are planning sweeping changes to the workplace as a result of COVID-19
 - 94% of companies say technology would benefit them by providing a safer work environment
- Hybrid Work Environment
 - 77% of larger organizations will increase work flexibility while 53% will shrink office sizes
 - 89% of employees cite frustrations with in-office experiences
 - 96% indicate they need intelligent workplace technology to improve work environments

THE RISE OF THE HYBRID WORKPLACE A Global Survey of Executives, Employee Experience Experts, and Knowledge Workers
<https://www.cisco.com/c/dam/en/us/products/collateral/collaboration-endpoints/global-workforce-survey.pdf?ccid=cc001191&oid=anrco023191>

FlexJobs Survey, September 2020

- **51% of survey respondents indicate that they have been more productive working from home during COVID-19**, and 95% of respondents say productivity has been higher or the same while working remotely. Although there are many reasons why performance has improved (in spite of the stresses of the pandemic), some of the **top reasons respondents gave for their increased productivity include:**
 - Fewer interruptions (68%)
 - More focused time (63%)
 - Quieter work environment (68%)
 - More comfortable workplace (66%)
 - Avoiding office politics (55%)
- This improved productivity may help explain why **61% of workers review remote work more positively** and why 50% also say their employer views remote work favorably now.

<https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/survey-productivity-balance-improve-during-pandemic-remote-work/>

FlexJobs Survey, September 2020

- Many respondents also said that their personal lives have improved while working at home. A majority of respondents cited the lack of commuting (79%) as a reason why their lives were better, with another 72% enjoying the lack of commuting costs.
- Given that **36% of respondents reported round trip commutes of two or more hours**, it's not surprising that the "found time" has made workers happier, more productive employees.
- Another 73% said that they had a better work-life balance thanks to working at home. The additional balance gave them:
 - More time with their family/children (46%)
 - More time with their partner (42%)
 - The ability to take care of their pet(s) (37%)

<https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/survey-productivity-balance-improve-during-pandemic-remote-work/>

FlexJobs Survey

- **65% of respondents want to become full-time remote employees post-pandemic, while 31% would prefer a hybrid work arrangement**, with some of the days at home and some of the days in the office.
- Thirty percent of respondents aren't waiting for the pandemic to end to make the switch. They've already requested to continue their remote work arrangement post-pandemic—and have been approved!
- Another 27% of workers said that the ability to work at home as much as they want is so important to them that they are willing to take a 10% to 20% pay cut to have that benefit.

<https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/survey-productivity-balance-improve-during-pandemic-remote-work/>

FlexJobs Survey, September 2020

- There are people who miss the office. Specifically, 49% of those surveyed said they miss seeing their colleagues, with 14% saying they miss water cooler chats, and 11% reporting they were lonely.
- Another 7% cited “distracted” as a reason for missing the office, while 12% worried about the impact remote work would have on their career. Finally, 20% of workers say they find it difficult to “unplug” when they work from home.
- However, **37% of respondents said that they miss “nothing” about the office, and only 4% would prefer to return to the traditional office full-time.**

<https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/survey-productivity-balance-improve-during-pandemic-remote-work/>

Seasonal Affective Disorder and Teleworking

- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) impacts about 5% of adults in the United States, according to the American Psychiatric Association. It's most prevalent in the fall and winter months; shorter days, less sunshine, and cold weather forcing people indoors is what typically leads to symptoms of SAD.
- The Mayo Clinic says, "If you're like most people with SAD, your symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody."

<https://cnycentral.com/station/experts-worried-about-what-a-covid-19-winter-means-for-mental-health>

Teleworking and SAD

- Working remotely may allow flexibility with your schedule.
- You can also avoid the temptation to eat unhealthy office snacks by filling your home with nutritious foods that can improve your mood.
- You can add a lightbox to your home office to reduce SAD symptoms and increase your energy without distracting anyone else.
- While working from home this winter can help make you more productive, it's only effective if you stick to a consistent routine.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnhall/2020/02/23/winter-productivity-may-be-one-of-the-best-arguments-for-working-from-home/#5acd8113cefa>

Tips on Coping with SAD

“Instead of approaching this winter season with fear and trepidation and dread, we just need to prepare ourselves as much as possible,” says Jeff Gardere, board-certified clinical psychologist and associate professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine in New York City.

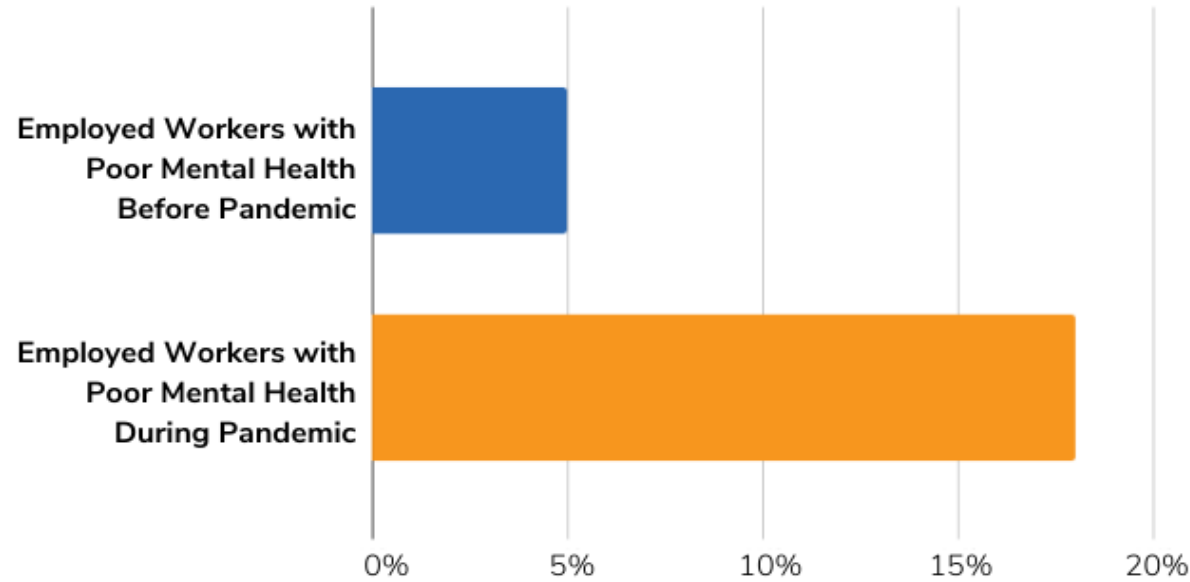
- **Wake up at a normal time**
- **Get some light** - Turn on your lights first thing in the morning because light exposure will signal to your brain that it’s time to wake up, Gardere says. Plus, the lack of natural light in colder months is one of the main contributors to seasonal affective disorder (or “SAD”), a type of depression that typically occurs each year during fall and winter. And exposure to artificial light from lamps can be just as beneficial to the brain as natural sunlight
- **Find a way to be comfortable outdoors** - Outdoor activities are safer than ones held indoors, because there’s more air flow and space to maintain social distance. For those who live in parts of the U.S. where it gets cold in the winter, make sure you have the supplies you need to comfortably gather outdoors, such as cold-weather clothing, Gardere says. “Get excited about your winter gear,” he says. If you have access to outdoor space, consider an outdoor heater or blankets.
- **Plus, prep your indoors** - Since you’re going to be inside more than usual, it’s important that you “refashion your environment” to better suit your needs,
- **Exercise — no, really** - Gardere says he uses an indoor cycling bike every morning because it gets neurotransmitters flowing that help your mood and focus, such as endorphins, dopamine and serotonin.
- **Find a hobby**- Winter might be a good time to pick up a hobby, or an activity that you know can keep you entertained, Gardere says. Whether it’s baking or completing crossword puzzles, studies suggest that when people have hobbies, they tend to be less stressed, more focused and less likely to experience burnout.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/01/how-to-stay-happier-this-winter-during-covid-19-pandemic-.html>

FlexJobs and Mental Health America Survey

- FlexJobs partnered with Mental Health America (MHA) to conduct a **survey of more than 1,500 respondents to check in on how people are faring mentally at work** during these unprecedented times.

FlexJobs and Mental Health America Survey



Employed workers are more than 3x as likely to report poor mental health now versus before the pandemic



FlexJobs and Mental Health America Survey

Mental health as a whole is suffering since the start of the pandemic, but stress is of particular concern to workers. Of employed workers, 42% say their stress levels are currently high or very high, while 47% of those who are unemployed report high stress levels. The top stressors for respondents include:

- COVID-19
- Personal finances
- Current events
- Concern over their family's health
- Economy
- Job responsibilities

FlexJobs and Mental Health America Survey

While only 51% of workers say they have the emotional support they need at work to help manage their stress, they do believe there are ways employers can help staff navigate workplace stress and support mental health.

- For 56% of respondents, **having flexibility in their workday was overwhelmingly before and listed as the top way their workplace could better support them.**
- Encouraging time off and offering mental health days were tied for second and third at 43%.
- 28% felt that increased PTO and better health insurance were the next best ways to provide support.

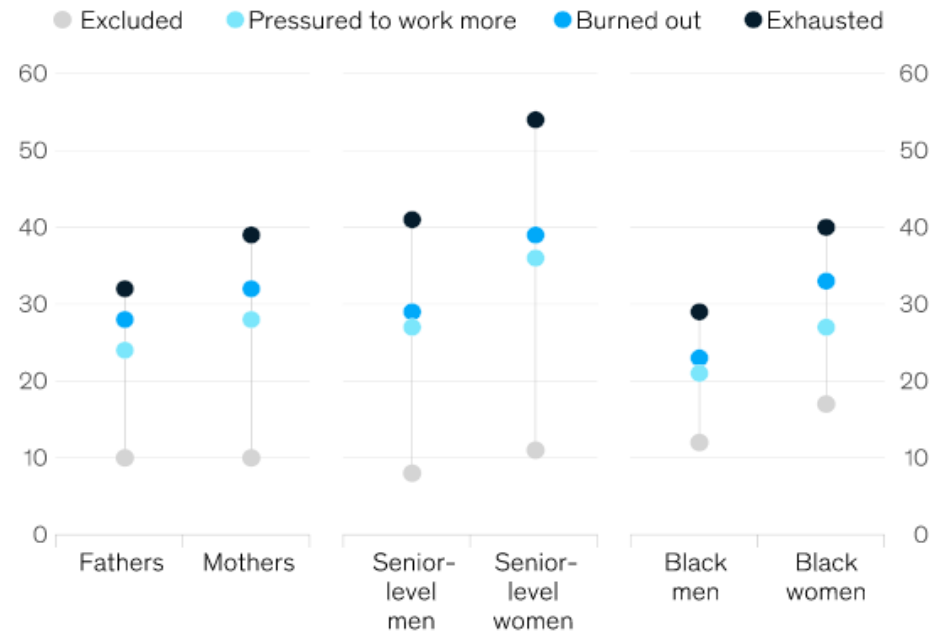
McKinsey & Company Data: Women

The effects of the COVID-19 crisis have exacerbated gender disparities and their implications for women at work, especially for mothers, female senior leaders, and Black women across America.

In addition to being laid off and furloughed at higher rates than their male counterparts during the pandemic, women are—*notably*, for the first time their research on the topic—considering downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce altogether at staggering rates.

Many companies need to do more to address challenges employees are facing during COVID-19.

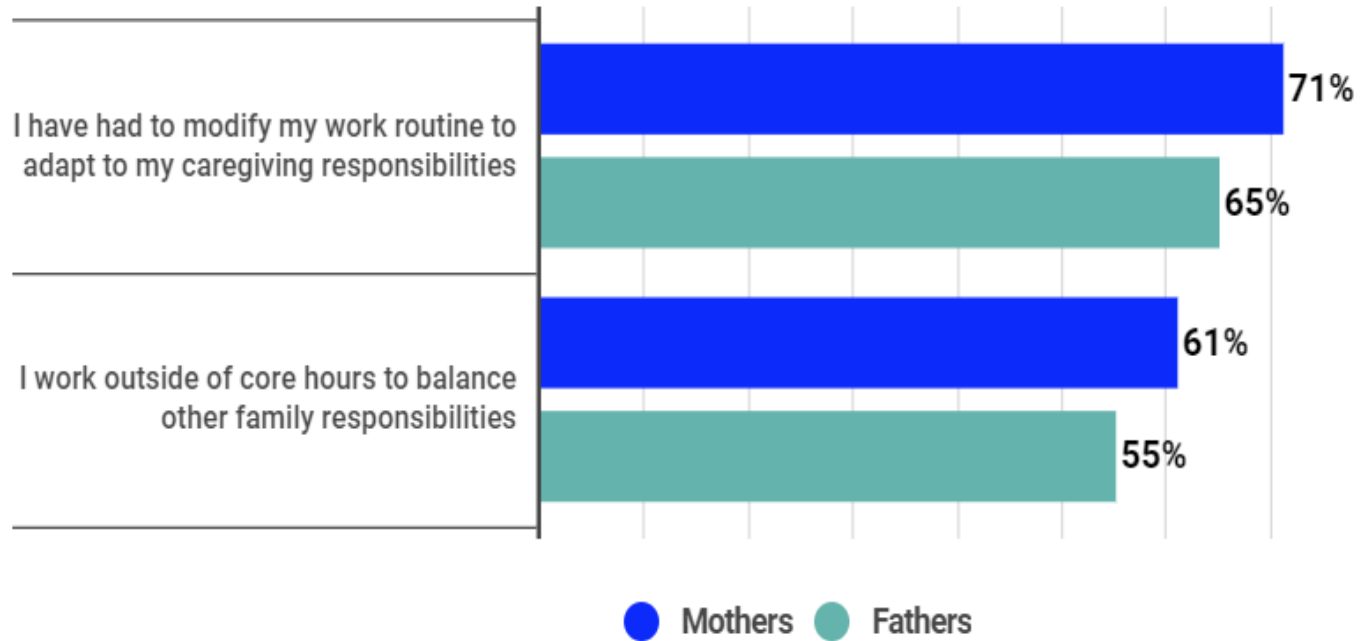
Consistent feelings at work in past few months, % of employees¹



¹Question: In the last few months, which of the following have you consistently felt at work?
Source: *Women in the Workplace 2020*, LeanIn.Org and McKinsey, 2020

Parents' Role

Impact of Covid-19 on parents' work routine



While all parents are under enormous strain, generally speaking, mothers are bearing a greater burden than fathers, as they are disproportionately expected to fulfill household and caregiving responsibilities during the workweek. Moreover, 41% of mothers say they must hide their caregiving struggles from their colleagues.

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/impact-covid-working-parents/>

Remote Work Stipends

A **remote work stipend** is a sum of money given to employees for them to use to access perks.

A remote work stipend can be used in one or both ways:

1. To purchase office equipment, a coworking pass, coffee, and anything else that makes their remote work locations comfortable, productive, or successful. It can be a one-time equipment stipend, or an on-going one.
2. To purchase general perks that an on-site team has access to such as food, health and wellness, learning and developments perks.

<https://www.compt.io/remote-work-stipends-perks>

Remote Work Stipends

Further details on what they are:

- Stipends can be given out on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis.
- It is comprised of taxable and non-taxable items. Taxes can be grossed up by the employer or employees can cover the taxes.

When setting up a remote work stipend, there are two approaches:

1. You can set up a stipend to help them build their remote work environment, or
2. You can set up a general perk stipend that gives your team access to personalized perks. If you're a hybrid company, you can craft this type of stipend so that your support your remote people and o-site people equally.

<https://www.compt.io/remote-work-stipends-perks>

Example One - Webflow: 70% Remote Team Globally

Webflow provides three stipends for their team:

- \$250/month for remote workers
- \$200/month (for everyone) health & wellness stipend
- \$1,000/year (for everyone) continuous learning stipend

<https://www.compt.io/remote-work-stipends-perks>

Example Two - Basecamp: An Almost-Fully Remote Company

Basecamp offers:

- \$100/month coworking space stipend
- \$100/month fitness allowance
- \$100/month massage allowance
- \$1,000/year continuing education allowance
- \$1,000/year matching charitable gifts stipend

<https://www.compt.io/remote-work-stipends-perks>

Example Three - Buffer: A Fully-Remote Company

Buffer offers:

- \$200/month for "Working Smarter" stipend for coffee shop working purchases
- \$500/teammate for home office set-up
- \$200/year for tech/office needs
- Internet reimbursement stipend
- \$850/year continuous learning stipend

<https://www.compt.io/remote-work-stipends-perks>

Seattle's Big Tech Suffering from Burnout

- The pandemic and remote work are wearing on the tech workforce, with 68% of respondents to a new survey saying they are more burned out than when they worked in an office.
- The data comes from a survey by Blind, the anonymous workplace community app. More than 3,000 workers from 40 companies were surveyed, including Seattle-area tech giants such as Amazon, Microsoft, T-Mobile and Expedia Group
- Amazon workers surveyed are 74% more burned out working from home and 76% of Microsoft workers feel that way. The number jumps to 83% at Bellevue, Wash.-based wireless carrier T-Mobile.
- Workers who are able to avoid the previous strain of a long commute are instead spending more time in front of screens at home, doing more video meetings, juggling parenting and remote school and more.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/tech-workers-burnout-higher-than-before-coronavirus-pandemic-2020-10?op=1&scrolla=5eb6d68b7fedc32c19ef33b4>

Red Flag Warnings for WFH Fatigue



<https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurelfarrer/2020/05/29/the-dangerous-reality-of-wfh-burnout-and-how-to-treat-it/#21ce53bd2487>

What can Employers, Managers, and Coworkers do to help one another cope?



Maintain physical and social boundaries



Maintain temporal boundaries as much as possible



Focus on your most important work

<https://hbr.org/2020/04/3-tips-to-avoid-wfh-burnout>

Burnout Busters

- **Set Office Hours** -Implement office hours by silencing notifications and activating an out-of-office response outside of certain time blocks. This way, no matter if you're on the road or on the couch, your brain (and your clients or coworkers) knows that it's time for you to relax.
- **Take Time Off** -A little counteraction goes a long way. Refresh your clarity and enthusiasm for work by stepping away from it for a little while. Whether you decide to travel or just enjoy some time at home, make sure that you completely unplug. Turn off all notifications (or even your entire device – gasp!), forward your inbox and tasks to a co-worker or virtual assistant while you're away, and make a rule to not talk or think about work at all. After a few days, you'll feel recharged and ready for action.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurelfarmer/2020/05/29/the-dangerous-reality-of-wfh-burnout-and-how-to-treat-it/#21ce53bd2487>

Burnout Busters

- **Have a Hobby** Intense work needs to be balanced with intense play. If work is the only thing that you feel passionate about, it's time to discover other parts of your personality.
- **Update Your Job Description** If you're feeling stuck in a rut, steer yourself out of it. Schedule a meeting with your supervisor or mentor to discuss what you do and don't like about your current role, and brainstorm ways that it could be updated to better cater to your strengths and interests.
- **Tell Your Team** Hiding your concerns will only make them worse. If you're feeling burned out, tell your boss and coworkers as early as possible.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurelfarret/2020/05/29/the-dangerous-reality-of-wfh-burnout-and-how-to-treat-it/#21ee53bd2487>

Zoom Fatigue is Real

If you're finding that you're more exhausted at the end of your workday than you used to be, you're not alone. Over the past few weeks, mentions of "Zoom fatigue" have popped up more and more on social media, and Google searches for the same phrase have steadily increased since early March.

Zoom fatigue is sneaky and can be triggered in people just like you who spend copious amounts of time on virtual meetings, trying to compensate for the loss of face-to-face interaction.

<https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-to-combat-zoom-fatigue>

Why are Video Calls so Draining?



In part, it's because they force us to focus more intently on conversations in order to absorb information.



The problem isn't helped by the fact that video calls make it easier than ever to lose focus.



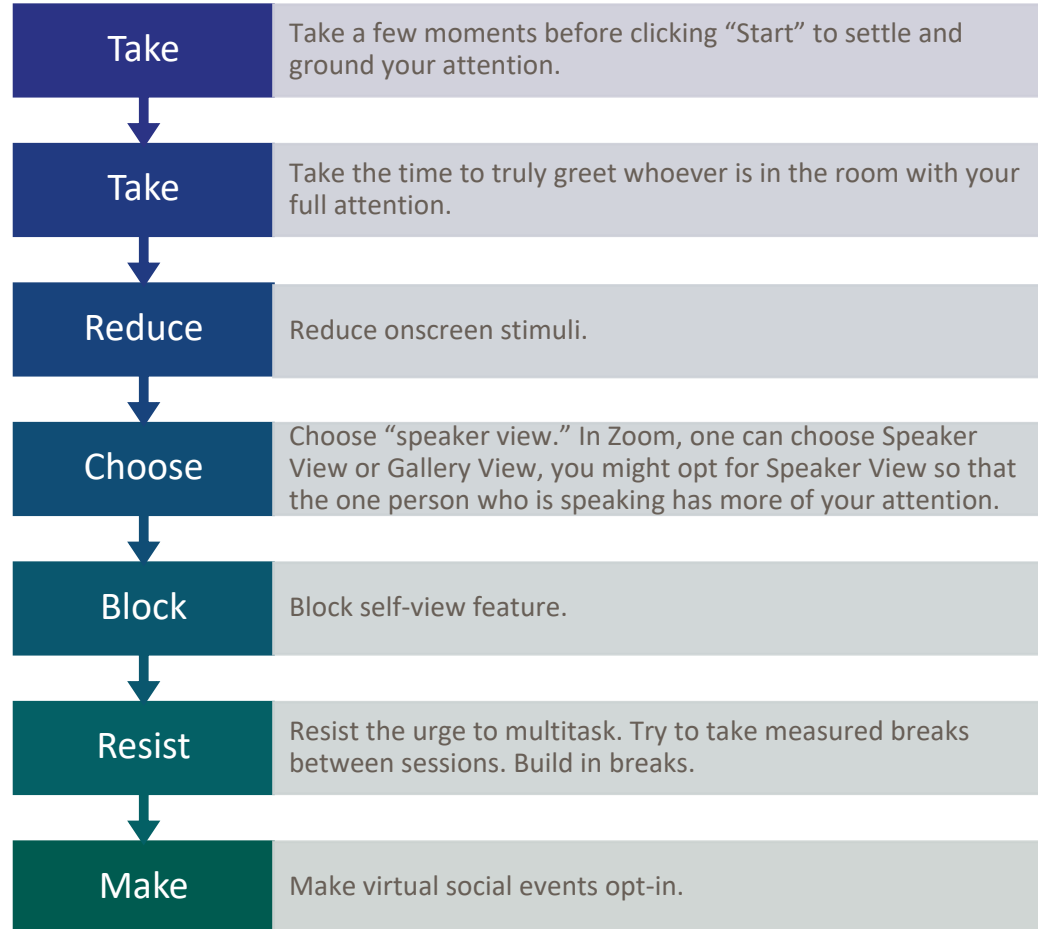
“Zoom fatigue” stems from how we process information over video. On a video call the only way to show we're paying attention is to look at the camera.



If we are with several people online at the same time, we are simultaneously processing visual cues from all of those people in a way we never have to do around a conference table.

<https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-to-combat-zoom-fatigue>

Techniques to Combat Zoom Fatigue

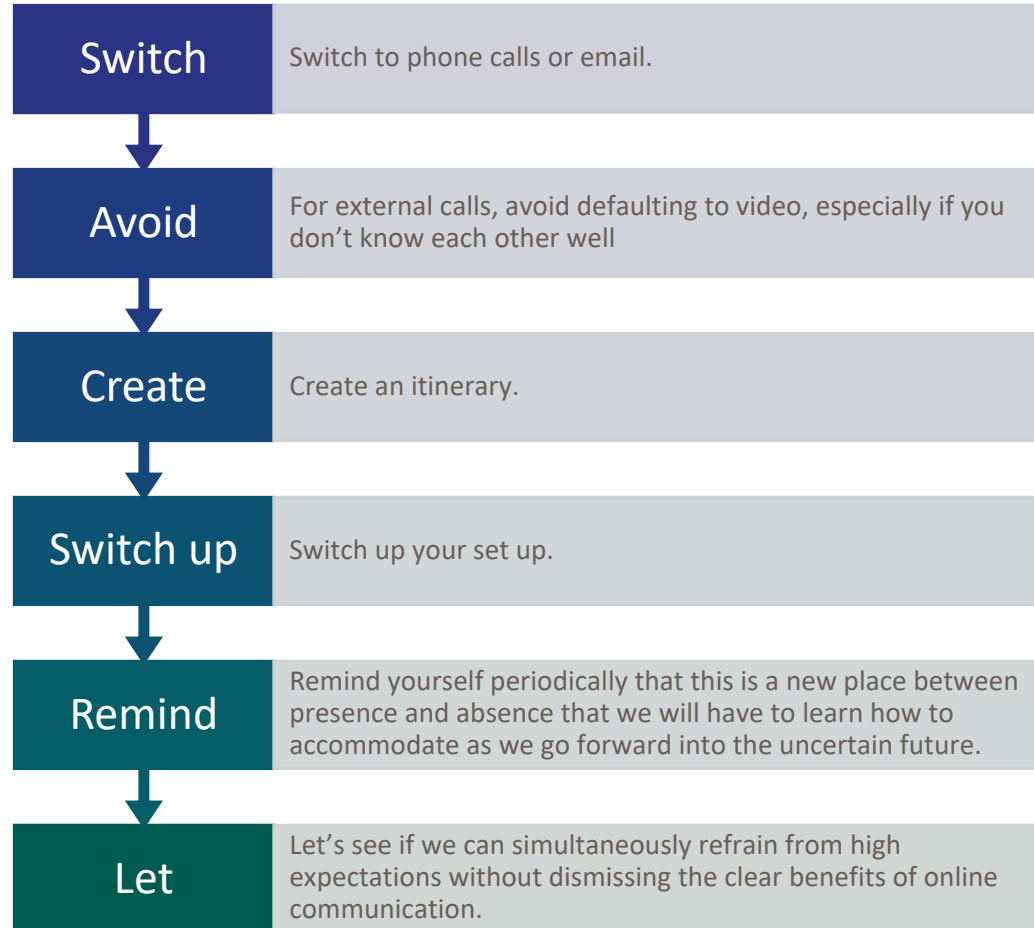


<https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-to-combat-zoom-fatigue>

<https://www.mindful.org/zoom-exhaustion-is-real-here-are-six-ways-to-find-balance-and-stay-connected/>

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/351091#:~:text=To%20combat%20the%20Zoom%20fatigue,smoothly%20as%20the%20last%20one.>

Techniques to Combat Zoom Fatigue (cont.)



<https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-to-combat-zoom-fatigue>

<https://www.mindful.org/zoom-exhaustion-is-real-here-are-six-ways-to-find-balance-and-stay-connected/>

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/351091#:~:text=To%20combat%20the%20Zoom%20fatigue,s,moothly%20as%20the%20last%20one.>

Ideas for to Boost Morale and Collaboration

- Birthday celebrations
- Water cooler get togethers
- Virtual ice-breakers
- Virtual Town Hall, detailing same and having a Q and A
- Weekly small group chats, communication weekly with company personnel
- Managers check in, happy hours, pet days, and more virtually
- T-shirts, Incentive PTO, remote worker games, remote happy hours, weekly leadership team meetings, regular employee communications, saying thank you very often and being visible

* Survey of over 150 executives, in-house attorneys, and HR professionals from clients of the law firm Blank Rome. The responses came from C-Suite executives, in-house attorneys, and human resources professionals from a diverse array of businesses across various industries and geographies conducted from April 18 to April 24, 2020.

The Next Thoughtful Steps

- Develop formal standards for teleworking post pandemic
- Develop return to the workplace guidelines
- Remember that the future is hybrid in location, hours and geography
- Consider a stipends program for the acquisition of ergonomic tools for the home office
- Remember that not all employees will want to be remote all the time
- A one size fits all will not accommodate work in the future
- Consider hoteling if it makes sense
- Think about a sustainable future in the sense of office productivity and an environmental perspective

WorkSmart Free Services – One on One Consultation

- Lead you through every step to put a program into place
- Assess potential and necessary steps for customized program delivery
- Assist with overcoming concerns
- Develop custom presentations and marketing materials
- Consult on technology needs
- Develop policies, procedures and agreements
- Train managers and employees
- Provide evaluation guidelines and strategies
- Help meet CTR goals

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