

STATE OF REMOTEWORK



How employees across the U.S. feel about working remotely in a post-COVID-19 world, their new workplace expectations and what employers need to know to recruit and retain top talent.



2020 is the year the world went remote.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced organizations around the world to quickly adapt to a new remote reality, in some cases for the first time, in the largest work-from-home shift ever. We've officially fast-tracked to the future of work.

Meetings suddenly became Zoom meetings, with video calls happening 50% more than before COVID-19. Not only did people embrace remote work, they have now grown to expect it. After six months of working from home full-time, we learned that one in two U.S workers won't return to a job that doesn't offer remote work as an option.

For Owl Labs' 4th annual State of Remote Work report, we partnered with the leading remote analytics firm, Global Workplace Analytics, to learn more about the current state of remote work in 2020 and what lies ahead. We wanted to uncover remote work statistics and gather the current work from home trends to provide you with a comprehensive remote work benchmark report during COVID-19.

In this report, you'll learn:

- How people are adapting to remote work
- How companies are handling the COVID-19 guidelines for telework
- Current remote work statistics and trends
- How the new work-from-anywhere movement affects lifestyle decisions
- What leaders and companies should know to support today's employees' needs
- How key findings from 2020 compare to the [Owl Labs State of Remote Work Report from 2019](#)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

In this survey, we learned that **almost 70% of full time workers in the United States are working from home during COVID-19**. While working remotely, individuals are facing a more difficult balance between home life and work, adapting to new technology by leveraging video meetings, and staying productive in their home offices (or closets for 15% of survey respondents.) During COVID-19, there have been unexpected benefits and challenges — **people are saving almost \$500 per month on additional expenses, however, one in five reports working more hours per week during the pandemic.**

Despite difficult circumstances for working remotely, 77% of respondents agree that after COVID-19, **having the option to work from home would make them happier.**

Leaders and managers: 80% of full-time workers expect to work from home at least three times per week after COVID-19 guidelines are lifted and companies and [workspaces are able to re-open.](#)

Remote Work Statistics and Trends During COVID-19

- 1 70% of full-time workers in the U.S are working from home during COVID-19
- 2 1 in 2 people won't return to jobs that don't offer remote work after COVID-19
- 3 77% of respondents agree that after COVID-19, being able to work from home (WFH) would make them happier
- 4 75% of people are the same or more productive during COVID-19 while working from home
- 5 In 2020, people are using video meetings 50% more than pre-COVID-19
- 6 1 in 2 people would move if they were able to WFH all or most of the time
- 7 Working remotely saves 40 minutes daily on commute
- 8 In 2020 after COVID-19, 80% expect to work from home at least 3x/week
- 9 1 in 5 people report working more during COVID-19
- 10 Only 20-25% of companies pay or share the cost of home office equipment, furniture, cable, chair
- 11 80% agree that there should be one day a week with no meetings at all
- 12 81% of respondents think their employer will support remote work after COVID-19
- 13 23% of full-time employees are willing to take a pay cut of over 10% in order to work from home at least some of the time
- 14 44% did not find it necessary to get dressed up (think: clothing, hair, makeup) for a video meeting
- 15 During COVID-19, on average, people are saving \$479.20 per month

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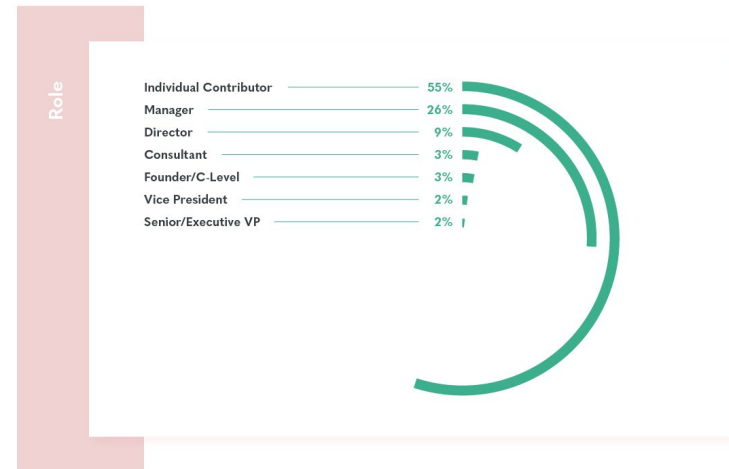
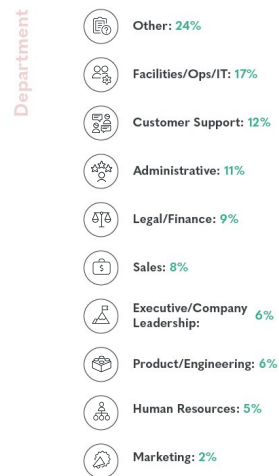
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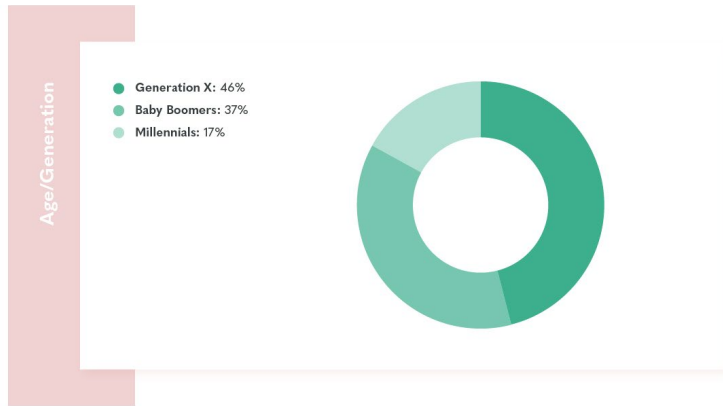
SECTION 1

State of Remote Work 2020: Who They Are - Background and Demographics

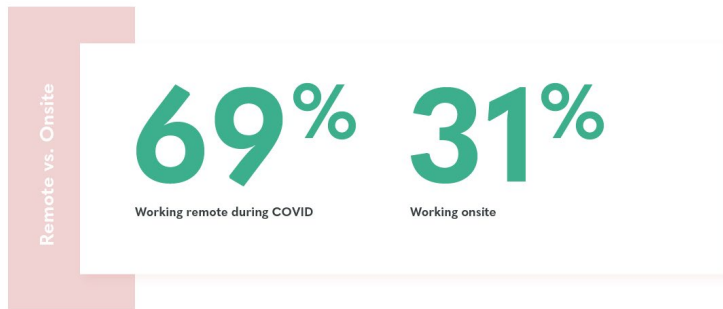
Owl Labs in collaboration with Global Workplace Analytics (GWA) surveyed 2,025 full-time workers in the United States between the ages 21 to 65 at companies with 10 or more employees. This survey data was collected in June-July of 2020.



SECTION 1: Demographics



How many people are working from home during COVID-19?



SECTION 2

Remote Work is the New Norm

If there was ever a question if your company should allow for remote work and embrace hybrid teams, the time is now. During COVID-19, most industries were forced into a work-from-home or work-from-anywhere approach, and it stuck; those working from home during the pandemic want to do so permanently 123% more after COVID-19. Motivations behind working remotely have changed a bit since 2019, with a fear of getting sick newly topping the list and avoiding the commute staying steady year over year.

In 2019, we learned that [42% of remote workers](#) planned to work remotely more frequently than they currently were, and that more than half of on-site workers wanted to start working remotely. Now, almost 70% of people are working from home, and those who have made the switch don't want to return to the office. These remote work trends aren't going anywhere and it's up to individual organizations and teams to get up to speed on employee needs and expectations.



Working from Home is Now Essential to Happiness + Job Satisfaction

Employers and HR teams, take note: If working from home was no longer an option after COVID-19, almost 70% of respondents would be less happy and almost half would look for another role that allowed remote work.

SECTION 2: Remote Work is the New Norm


Key Findings:

Returning Workers

1 in 2

people won't return to jobs that don't offer remote work.

Happiness



77% of respondents agree that after COVID-19, being able to WFH would make them happier.

Why People Want to Work Remotely

2020

Afraid of getting COVID-19	79%	●●●●●●●●○
Avoid the commute	79%	●●●●●●●●○
Reduce stress	74%	●●●●●●●○
More time with family/ better work-life balance	72%	●●●●●●○
Increased productivity/better focus	70%	●●●●●○

2019

Better work-life balance	91%	●●●●●●●●●●○
Increased productivity/better focus	79%	●●●●●●●●○
Less stress	78%	●●●●●●●○
Avoiding a commute	78%	●●●●●●●○
Save money/financial reasons	76%	●●●●●●○

Salary

Made over \$100K in 2019	8%	26%
	Non-WFH	WFH
Made over \$100K in 2020	27%	43%

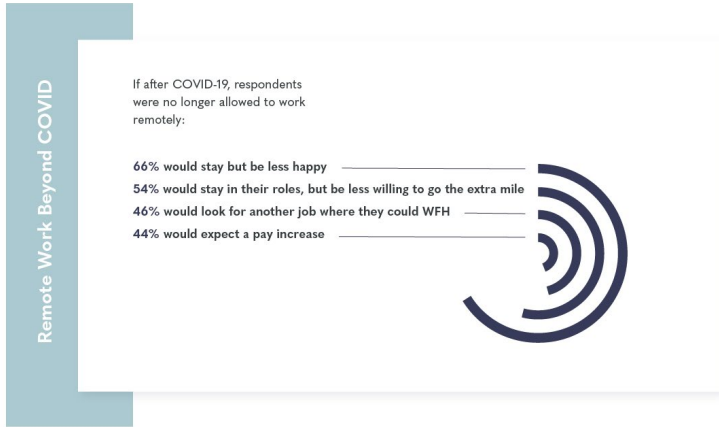
More high-paying positions are working remotely.

People making high wages are working from home and making it work.

This represents a 65% increase in remote workers making over \$100K.



SECTION 2: Remote Work is the New Norm



SECTION 3

Communication Reinvented (due to COVID-19) + Deeper Connections via Video Conferencing

COVID-19 has taught us that working from the office doesn't equal productivity. With the right tools and support, people can work from anywhere. [Video conferencing technology](#) has become the standard form of communication with 60% of respondents using video more than before COVID-19, bringing new considerations for remote employees.

Almost half of survey takers are using email more or much more than they were before, suggesting in-person conversations have become emails and video calls. With even more blurred lines between work life and home life as people adjust to [flexible schedules](#), employees are asking for more structure in this newly defined era of communication.



Meeting Free Days are Coming

Eight out of ten full-time workers want one day a week without any meetings, and 70% agree that there should be a day each week without video meetings. People are looking for a break from having to clear out the space behind their home workstation or plan around family schedules to avoid kids in the background of team meetings. Even in 2019, [remote workers were twice as likely than in-office workers to want schedule flexibility](#), hinting at the desire for core hours when working from home.

Key Findings:

Myths Busted


Myth: WFH is not productive.

Busted:

75%

of people are the same or more productive during COVID-19 while working from home.

Video Meetings



In 2020, people are using video meetings 50% more than pre-COVID-19.

Video Meeting Usage

During COVID-19:

94%

Respondents using video conferencing the same or more than they had been

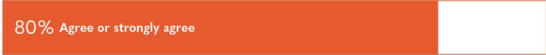
60%

Respondents using video more or much more

Meeting Free Days

80% agree or strongly agree with the following statement:


“I think there should be one day a week with no meetings at all.”



Core Hours

74% agree or strongly agree with this statement:

“I think we should have core hours, for example, four hours a day where we're available to colleagues and work on our own schedule the rest of the time.”



Video Conferencing

79%

think video conferencing is at the same level or more productive than in-person meetings.

34%

think video conferencing calls are more enjoyable than teleconferencing.

30%

think video conferencing calls are more enjoyable than in-person.

SECTION 4

COVID-19 Cautions

While COVID-19 has changed the way that people work, it has also contributed to overworking and brought new considerations to light for both remote workers and managers. Newly remote managers are now tasked with supporting remote team members and promoting a healthy work-life balance, all over Zoom (or your favorite video conference software).

Telecommuters Want Comprehensive Health Insurance as a Top Benefit



COVID-19 has introduced a new set of priorities for today's employee when job seeking, #1 being healthcare benefits. Employers will need to offer comprehensive healthcare plans, flexible working hours, and competitive pay to retain employees and keep up job satisfaction. Employees' top concerns for returning to the office are getting sick and wearing a mask, suggesting leaders should promote flexible remote work policies, and surprisingly lower concerns are using the elevator, sharing keyboards or work stations, and using public transit.

For those new to working from home, check out [The Comprehensive Guide to Remote Work.](#)

SECTION 4: COVID-19 Cautions

Let's explore the challenges that COVID-19 has presented, and how employees are transitioning to the new normal.


Key Findings:

More Work

1 in 5

people report working more during COVID-19.

Extra Hours




On average, remote employees worked an extra 26 hours each month during COVID (nearly an extra day every week).



* Owl Labs Tip:

Learn to pause and wait after speaking on video calls. Utilize chat features when you want to make a point and use hand signals to indicate you'd like to speak. Consider a [meeting facilitator](#) to ensure all parties are heard throughout video meetings.

Extra Hours



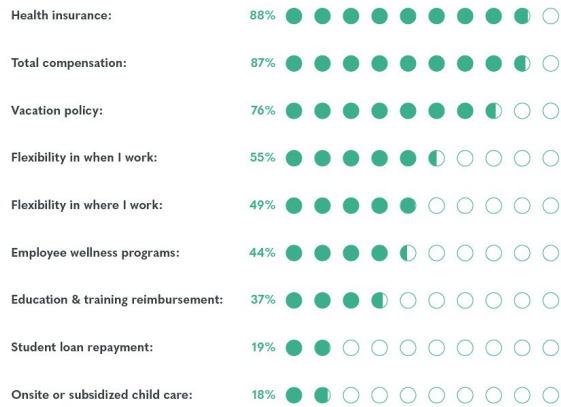
Health insurance is a deciding factor in employment decisions. When asked to rank benefits and perks in order of personal importance when considering new employers, 88% consider health insurance critically important.

SECTION 4: COVID-19 Cautions

Benefits & Perks

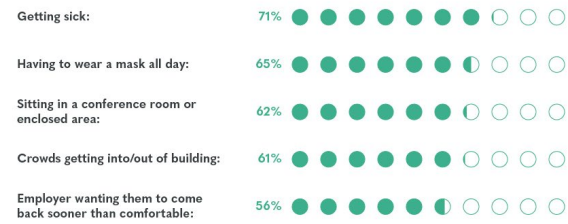
The top 3 company benefits and perks respondents ranked as most important across all age groups were health insurance, total compensation, and vacation policy.

Benefits and perks in order of personal importance:



Top Concerns

Top concerns for returning to the office:



* Owl Labs Tip:

Offer remote work so your employees can feel safe and have the option to WFH.

SECTION 5

A New Era of Professionalism

Remote work has leveled the playing field when it comes to professionalism and removed the paneled C-suite offices of the past. Video conferencing during COVID-19 has broken down the barriers between CEOs and interns and NBA stars and fans alike, offering a direct connection and a removal of “closed doors.”

Managers have new concerns for employee professional development in the remote landscape. Almost 60% of managers feel they are missing out on opportunities for informal leadership development and grooming of their direct reports, and other top concerns include reduced team cohesiveness, employee engagement, and a lack of engagement with coworkers.

While working remotely, employees are reporting new distractions and challenges to staying productive, which are important for managers and leaders to be aware of. There are also benefits like improved trust between management and employees, contributing to employee job satisfaction.

Some of the biggest difficulties reported by survey respondents during COVID-19 were:



Children at home: 28%

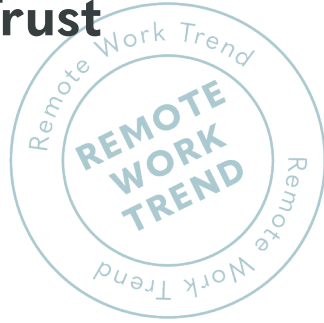
More meetings than usual: 26%

Not having worked remotely or worked from home before: 26%

* Owl Labs Tip:

Set up a specific remote work location within your home and schedule your time with those in your household to avoid interruptions or distractions during meetings. Talk to your team about setting core hours and share your schedule with your teammates so they know when you’re “online.”

Working from Home Builds Trust



In 2019, 82% of survey respondents agreed with the statement that working remotely would make them feel more trusted at work. When we followed up and asked respondents in 2020 if they did indeed feel more trusted at work while working remotely during COVID-19, more than three quarters of respondents said yes.



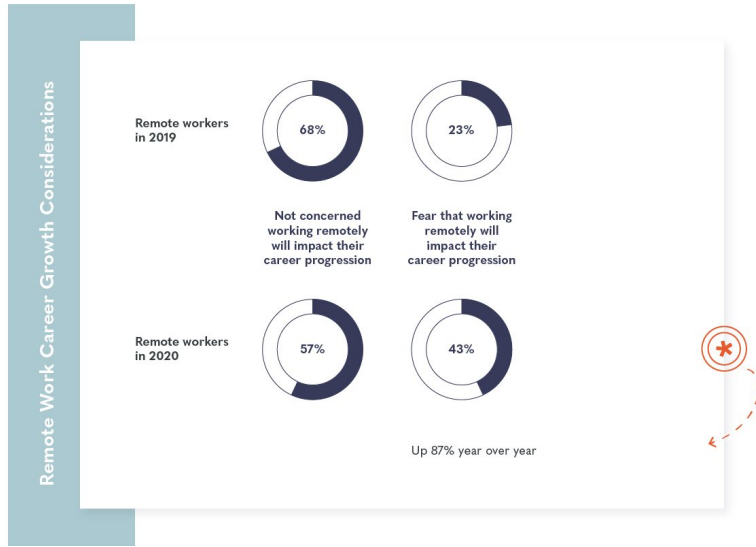
* Owl Labs Tip:

Remote work gives people the autonomy they want from their role, knowing their manager trusts that they can be productive at their own pace and on their own schedule. Create goal-based performance tracking so it's not about the hours in the day but the results.

Leaders need to take special care to check in and offer [remote teambuilding exercises](#) and one-on-one development opportunities with those growing in their careers.

Remote work also allows employees to have more autonomy and feel more trusted by leadership. On the flipside, more remote employees are nervous about career progression than they were in 2019. Managers — read on to learn how you can support remote employees by having intentional, scheduled career conversations.

Key Findings:



* Owl Labs Tip:

This year, there are more people new to working from home, so this suggests more are concerned about their newly remote career and its impact on growth and development. Managers, have intentional conversations with your team about professional development goals and continually check in. Check out our [remote leadership guide](#) for more advice on career conversations for remote teams.

Appearance



We won't go as far as to say professional appearance and background is no longer important but we found that 44% did not find it necessary to get dressed up (think: clothing, hair, makeup) for a video meeting.

Working Location

During COVID-19, which locations have you most often worked from?



Home office: 67%



Dining room: 49%



Couch: 49%



Bedroom: 42%



Closet: 15%
(Yes, we mean a closet)

SECTION 6

Next Stop: Suburbia

Early data is showing that [one in five Americans has relocated due to COVID-19](#). What does that mean for remote work? Many companies have recently gone on record with a [newly-adopted work-from-anywhere or hybrid teams approach](#) including Twitter, Google, Facebook, Zillow, Slack, Microsoft, Capital One (and the list continues...). With this shift and a lack of physical location on the horizon for many employees in 2020 (at least), many are leaving high rent prices behind and upsizing their city apartments to three bedroom houses in suburbia.



People Want to Ditch the Commute

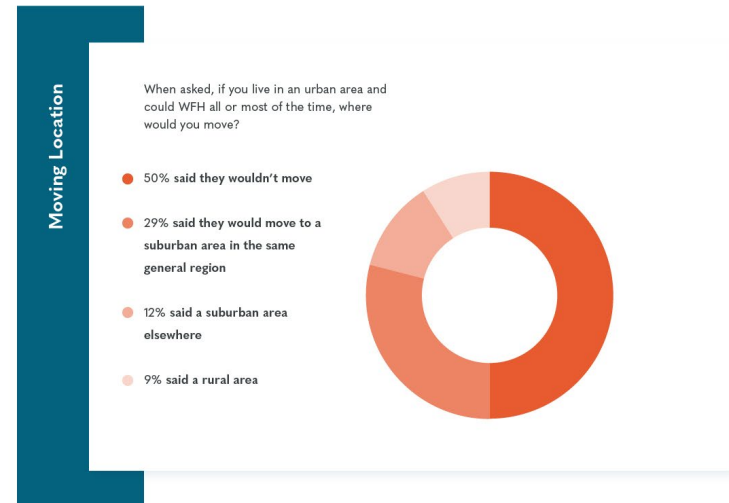
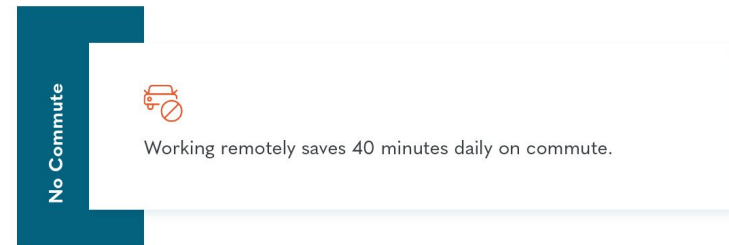
Why are people motivated to work from home? A top response from almost 80% of respondents—the commute. People save, on average, 40 minutes a day that they can spend enjoying a cup of joe, reading the morning headlines, doing a quick yoga flow, or taking the dog for a morning walk.

When asked to consider if they were no longer allowed to work from home, 44% of respondents would expect a pay increase to make up for the additional costs associated with working from the office. Additionally, when it comes to home office setups, only 20-25% of companies pay or share the cost of home office equipment and furniture.

Companies seeking to recruit top candidates and retain top performers will need to start to offer home office setups or consider factoring the costs of working from an office into their compensation packages.

Here's how remote work during COVID-19 has affected lifestyle preferences of full-time workers in the U.S.

Key Findings:



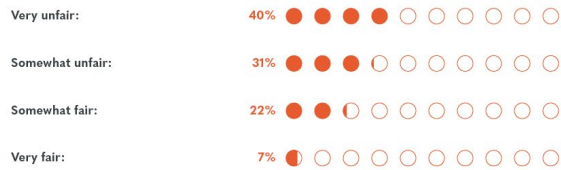
SECTION 6: Next Stop: Suburbia

Cost of Living Adjustments

When it comes to \$\$, we asked: How fair do you think it is for your employer to make a cost of living adjustment (reduction in salary) if you moved to a less expensive area and worked solely at home?

71% of respondents said it would be unfair to adjust their salaries.

Here's the breakdown:



Probably not surprisingly, when you break down by individual contributors vs. managers, individual contributors find a cost reduction 79% unfair vs 67% for managers. Our takeaway: CEOs, team leaders, and managers that are responsible for business decisions see both sides, and understand the benefits (or the need) in lowering salaries.

Take a CoLA



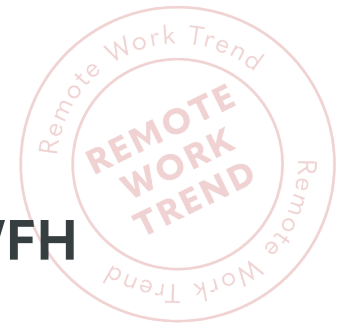
44% would still move or consider it even if they had to take a cost of living salary adjustment or reduction.

SECTION 7

Remote Work is the Preferred Way to Work

Remote work has been a preferable choice by many when offered by their companies prior to COVID-19. When it was an option versus a necessity, many remote workers reported feeling happier, more productive and more trusted by their managers. Now that working from home became an overnight reality for most, people are realizing they do prefer this way of working. So much that 1 in 4 said they would take a pay cut of over 10% to stay working from home (WFH).

The Option to WFH Reduces Stress

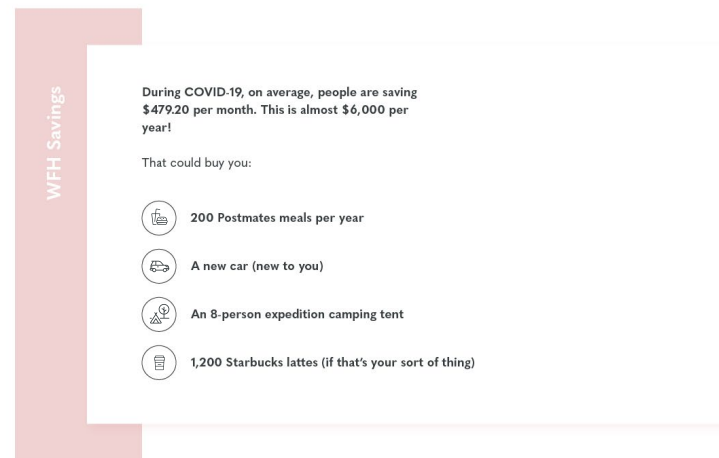


Remote work has mental health and work-life balance benefits, too. 72% of all survey respondents agreed that the ability to work remotely would make them less stressed and 77% report that working remotely would make them better able to manage work-life balance.

Read more on employee expectations when it comes to the future of work, aka hybrid companies.

SECTION 7: Remote Work Preferred

Key Findings:



SECTION 8

Remote Work Benefits: Employer Edition

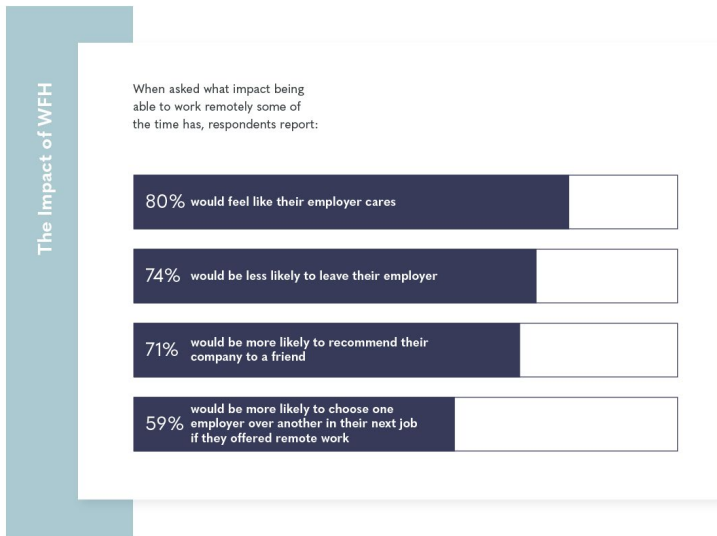
Leaders, take note. Requiring all employees to be in an office or onsite is now a policy of the past. Employees now expect the flexibility to work where they want, and the top talent you are looking to attract is no different. What we've learned is that remote work can make or break a company's ability to recruit and retain employees.

For the 2020 job seeker, remote work should be table stakes and contributes to improving happiness, reducing stress, recommending their company to a friend, and better managing work-life conflicts.



Working From Home Improves Employee/ Employer Relations

Key Findings:



Owl Labs Tip:

During COVID-19, workers are navigating the transition from the office to the home, all while discovering the benefits and challenges of remote work. Companies and managers need to provide their teams with the tools and resources to be productive and successful in their home environment, and carry the lessons learned from remote work during COVID-19 into the business plan moving forward.

CLOSING

Conclusion

Whether you were ready for it or not, the future of work is here. Also, something we like to call the Work From Anywhere movement. Our lives will be forever changed due to COVID-19 and its implications, and what we've learned in our annual report is the time is now to embrace remote work and hybrid teams.

We now know the deep connection video can provide. We know that employee expectations have shifted. And we know that employers need to pay attention in order to maintain employee productivity, and to continue to retain and recruit top talent.

Your business now has a remote workforce with different needs, and it's time to embrace and benefit from it. It's time to rethink the way you work, and understand remote work and hybrid teams can be as productive, and is most likely here to stay.

Thanks for taking the time to read our report, we hope you found it insightful and useful.

Reach out to kristin@owllabs.com with any press inquiries and questions.

Owl Labs is a collaborative technology company dedicated to creating a better workplace and learning experience for today's hybrid workforce and virtual classroom. The company's flagship product, the award-winning [Meeting Owl Pro](#), features a wifi-enabled, portable 360° camera, mic, and speaker with proprietary AI technology that automatically focuses on who is speaking using audio and visual cues. Learn more and join the Work and Learn From Anywhere Movement at www.owllabs.com.

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