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## Is the Office Dying? Of Those Who Quit During the Pandemic, One in Four Did So for the Flexibility to Work from Anywhere

**New York, December 2, 2021...**As many companies wonder why their workplaces remain ghost towns, a new survey reveals that COVID concerns are not what's discouraging staff from coming into the office. In fact, they are working from home because of the greater work-life balance it purportedly offers. Indeed, workers place such a premium on this balance, that a quarter of workers who changed jobs did so for the ability to work from anywhere. What's more, Baby Boomers who left their jobs for this flexibility did so at twice the rate of Millennials.

The survey findings also reveal that workplace flexibility goes a long way in supporting workers' mental health. 70 percent of workers say that flexible hours and work location are the top policies businesses can enact to support their mental health.

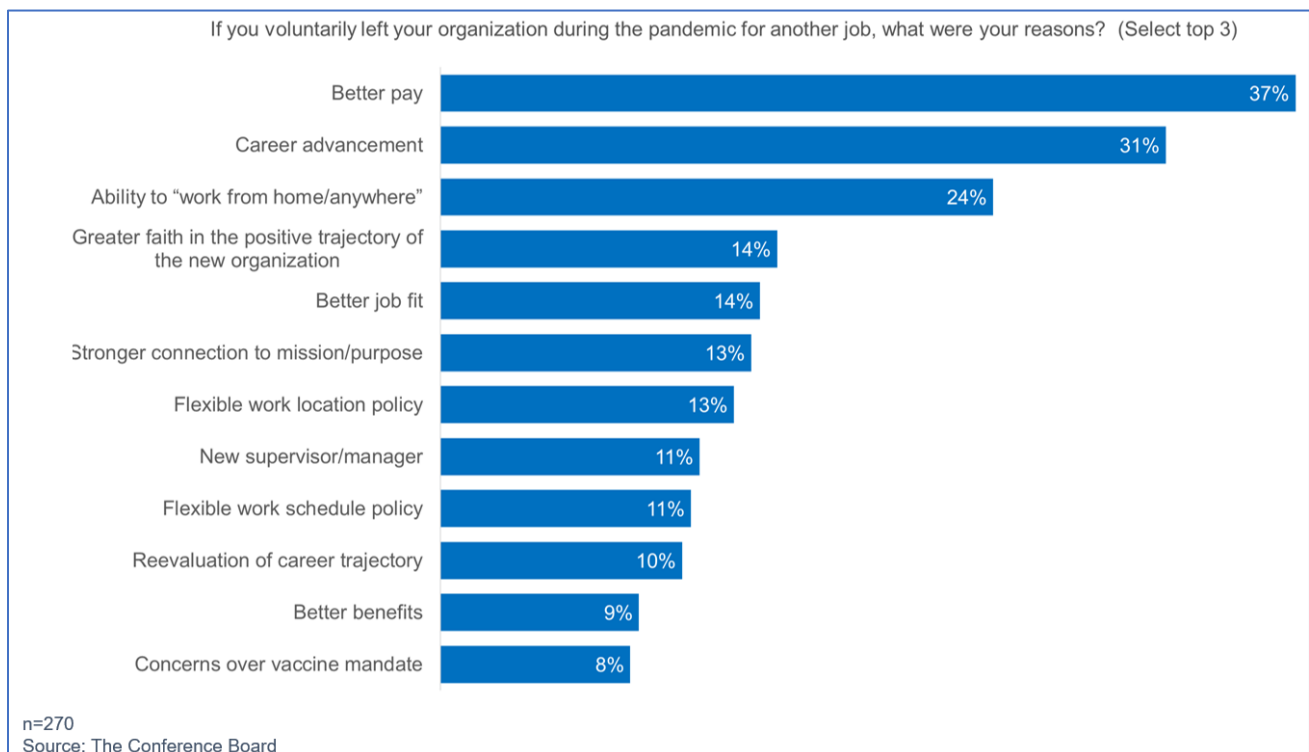
Conducted by The Conference Board, its latest workforce survey captured the thoughts of more than 1,200 US workers. Respondents weighed in on topics including career plans, factors driving them to pursue new job opportunities, opinions about remote work, mental health, and more.

Additional key findings include:

### Among workers who quit during the pandemic, a quarter did so for the ability to work from anywhere.

*If you voluntarily left your organization during the pandemic for another job, what were your reasons?*

- Among workers who recently changed jobs, nearly one in four (24 percent) did so for the *ability to work from home/anywhere*.
- *Better pay* and *career advancement* remain the top reasons for changing jobs, according to 37 percent and 31 percent of respondents, respectively.
- Only 8 percent found a new job because of *concerns over vaccine mandates*.



## Despite decades in the office, Baby Boomers are quitting for the option to work from anywhere—and at nearly twice the rate of their younger colleagues.

*If you voluntarily left your organization during the pandemic for another job, what were your reasons?*

- Baby Boomers quit for the ability to *work from anywhere* at nearly twice the rate of Gen Xers and Millennials:
  - **Baby Boomers:** 17 percent
  - **Gen X:** 9 percent
  - **Millennials:** 9 percent
- For Millennials, *greater faith in the trajectory of the new organization* (10 percent) was as great a reason to change jobs as the *ability to work anywhere* (9 percent).

## Men left their jobs for a flexible work location at more than twice the rate of women.

*If you voluntarily left your organization during the pandemic for another job, what were your reasons?*

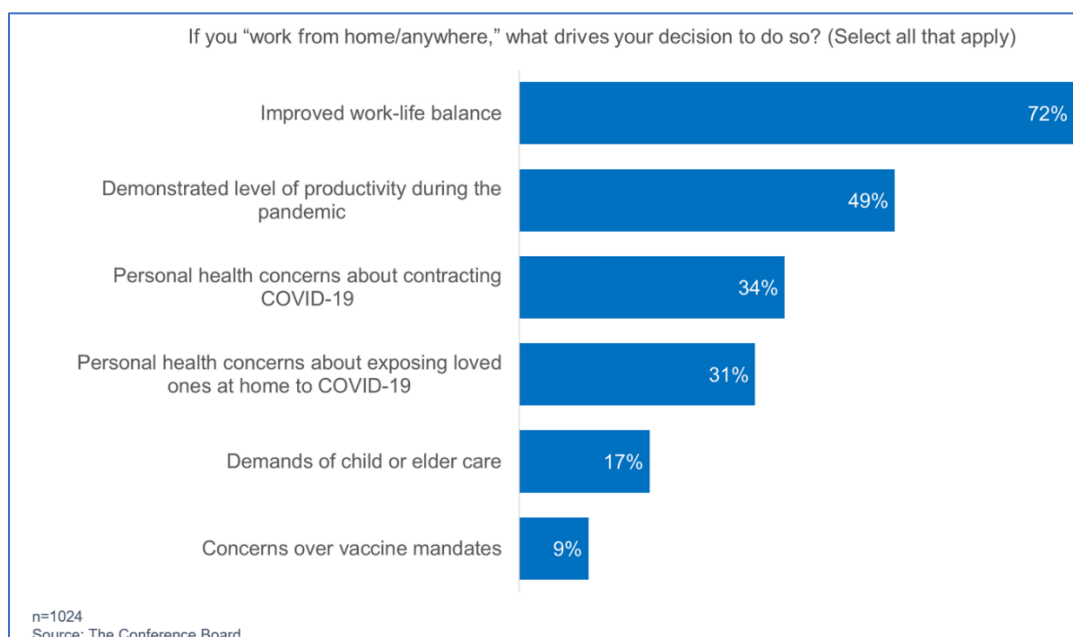
- For women, *career advancement* was a greater driver; for men, *better pay*, *better job fit*, and *flexible work location policy* were significantly greater.
  - Flexible work location policy:
    - **Women:** 9 percent
    - **Men:** 21 percent
  - Career advancement:
    - **Women:** 35 percent
    - **Men:** 29 percent

“Story after story has covered the premium younger generations place on flexibility in the workplace,” said Rebecca Ray, Executive Vice President of Human Capital at The Conference Board. “But as these survey results demonstrate, that desire is not unique to Millennials. Indeed, at more than twice the rate of their younger counterparts, Baby Boomers left their jobs for the ability to work from anywhere—whether they are working from the comfort of home...or from an RV in Yellowstone.”

## Debunked: COVID concerns are not the reason offices are empty.

*If you “work from home/anywhere,” what drives your decision to do so?*

- 72 percent cited work-life balance as the reason they work remotely.
- Productivity and safety were also factors, albeit much less so.



## 50 percent of women are working remotely, compared to only 37 percent of men.

*If employed, what type of working schedule best reflects yours?*

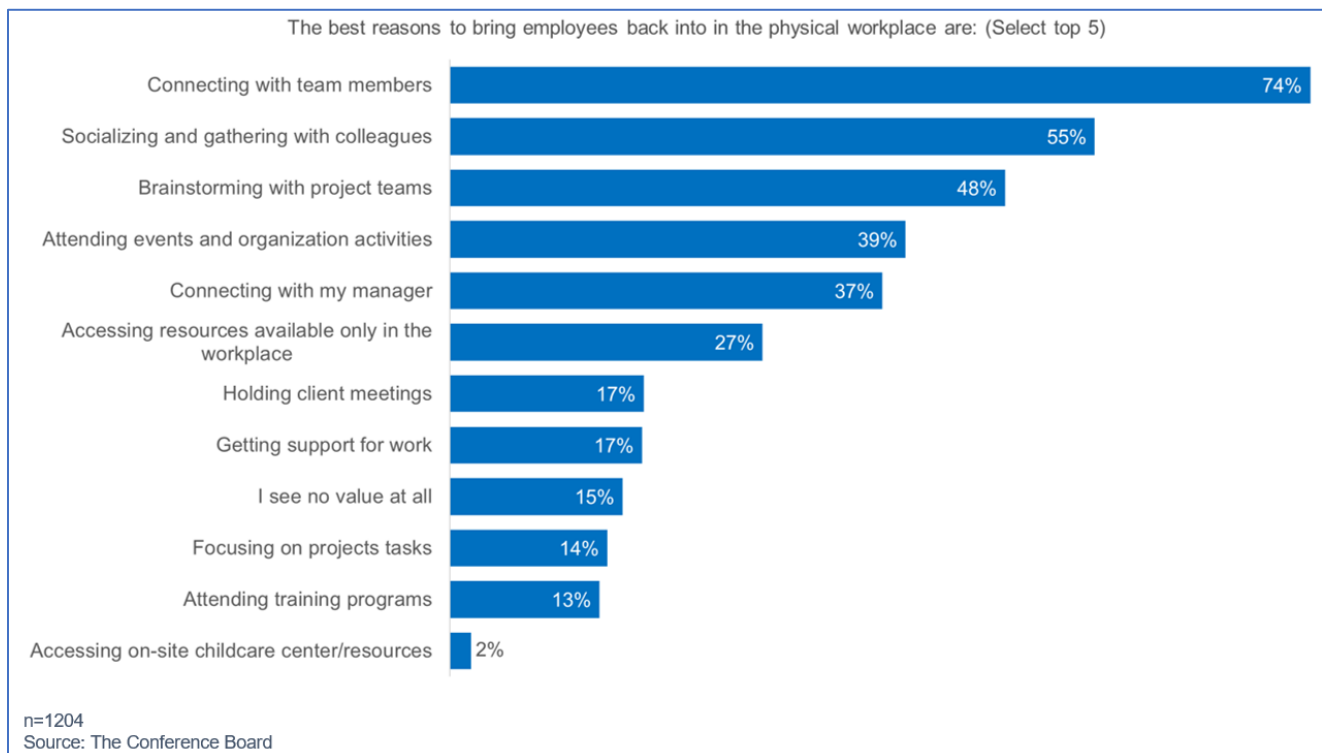
- Significantly more women are working completely remotely; more men are working a hybrid schedule or are completely on-site.
  - Remote:
    - **Women:** 50 percent
    - **Men:** 37 percent
  - Hybrid:
    - **Women:** 39 percent
    - **Men:** 47 percent
  - On-site:
    - **Women:** 10 percent
    - **Men:** 14 percent

“Businesses must ensure that remote workers—many of whom are women—receive the same developmental and promotional opportunities as those who are on-site,” said Amy Lui Abel, Vice President of Human Capital Research at The Conference Board. “Companies should be mindful of this potential pitfall, creating a level playing field for all workers as they develop their talent strategies in a world where less work is conducted in the office.”

## Why return to the office? It’s all about personal connection.

*The best reasons to bring employees back into in the physical workplace are:*

- The top reasons to return to the physical workplace were:
  - **Connecting with team members:** 74 percent
  - **Socializing and gathering with colleagues:** 55 percent
  - **Brainstorming with teams:** 48 percent
  - **Attending events and organizational activities:** 39 percent
  - **Connecting with manager:** 37 percent
- More than 1 in 6 (15 percent) see no value at all in returning to the physical workplace.



## Half the workforce is suffering from deteriorating mental health—even as the pandemic subsides.

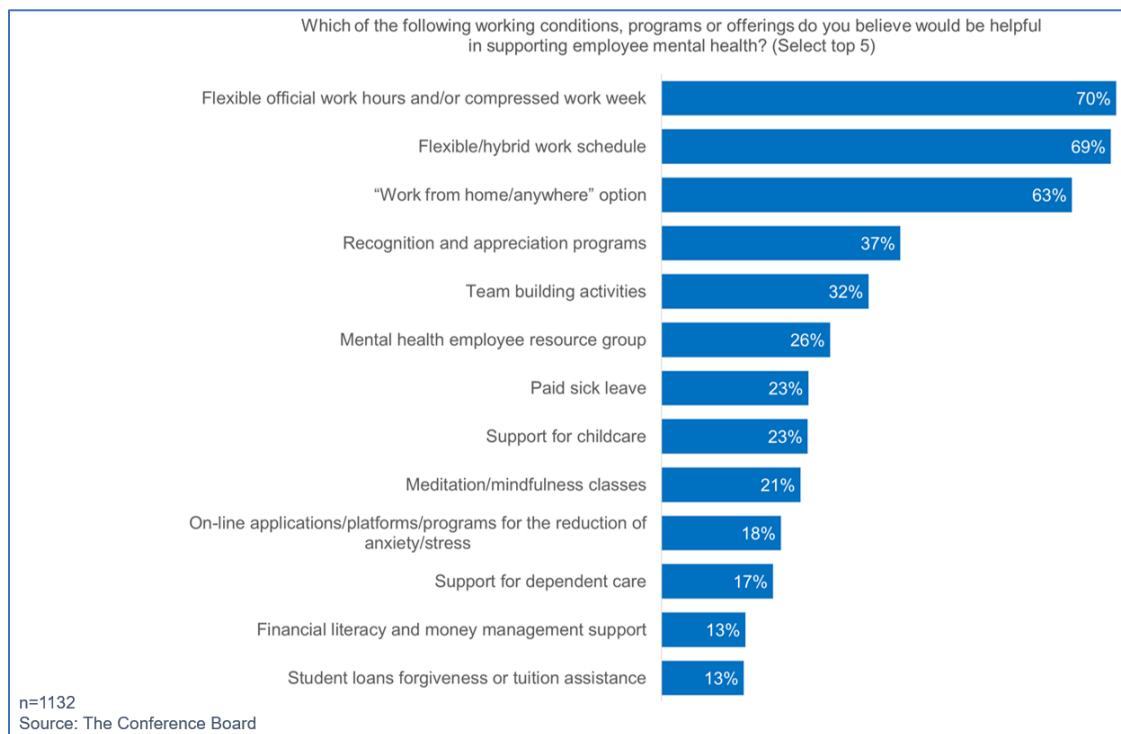
*Compared to before the pandemic, my mental health has \_\_\_\_.*

- More than half (51 percent) indicated a deterioration of their mental health since the onset of the pandemic.
- More women than men have seen a deterioration of their mental health since the onset of the pandemic.
  - **Women:** 54 percent
  - **Men:** 46 percent

## Flexibility is the most effective way to support workers' mental health.

*Which of the following working conditions, programs, or offerings do you believe would be helpful in supporting employee mental health?*

- **Flexible official work hours and/or compressed work week:** 70 percent
- **Flexible/hybrid work schedule:** 69 percent
- **Work from home/anywhere:** 63 percent



## New and different offerings can also support workers' mental health.

*I would like my organization to offer...*

- **Programs on how to thrive and flourish versus simply building resilience:** 77 percent
- **Apps to address mental health challenges of workers:** 55 percent
- **Virtual reality (VR) solutions to address mental health challenges of workers:** 29 percent
  - VR solutions were requested equally by all generational cohorts.

## Drawing a line: Workers want organizations that set boundaries and leaders who respect those boundaries.

*Which of the following strategies would be most effective in setting work/life boundaries for you?*

- 66 percent of respondents want their organizations to encourage employees to disconnect at the end of normal working hours.
- 60 percent want to be able to take "no-work" vacation days without guilt.



"The survey also reveals that almost half of workers believe that their managers adequately address mental health concerns—but one in five do not," said Dr. Srin Pillay, co-founder and Chief Medical Officer at Reulay, Inc. and former head of the Outpatient Anxiety Disorders Program at Harvard Medical School's McLean Hospital. "An overwhelming majority agree, however, that organizations should offer training to managers so that they can better address the sensitive mental health issues of workers."

Tune into the podcast [Mental Health and the American Worker: What Workers Want](#). Dr. Srin Pillay will join Rebecca Ray, PhD, Executive Vice President of Human Capital at The Conference Board, to discuss the findings of this latest survey.

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