

# Is remote work sustainable?

Why building a "connected culture" is the secret



# Summary

In the aftermath of the outbreak of COVID-19 and the abrupt shift to working remotely, many observers were frankly surprised at how productively a wholly remote workforce could operate. But can this boost in productivity last forever?

Recent reports suggest it'll be challenging. While many companies have endured the pandemic admirably, the nerves of the collective global workforce have begun to fray. The enthusiasm for new ways of working has given way to video fatigue. The work-from-home concept has turned into the stress of everything-from-home. Behind it all, the continuing global health crisis looms large as the year draws to a close.

But the news isn't all bad. New research from RingCentral shows that amid all this uncertainty, some businesses—and individuals—are actually thriving.

Their success, however, hasn't come by accident, but rather from what the study reveals is a “connected culture.” This type of environment includes not only the technology to help teams stay connected but also a deep commitment on the part of companies to support the work-life balance of their employees and develop opportunities for teams to engage with each other.

The highlights below capture some of the key findings from the global study, which was conducted in July 2020 and looked at 4,000 office workers in a COVID-19 remote-work environment.



## SUMMARY:

**Building a connected culture improves employee wellness and productivity**

# HIGHLIGHTS

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**HIGHLIGHT 1** When employers actively build a "connected culture" for remote employees—which includes not just technology but a dedication to building interactivity—those employees report higher levels of productivity and well-being.

**HIGHLIGHT 2** When segmented by gender, the data indicates that challenges for women in the workplace have continued in the virtual environment.

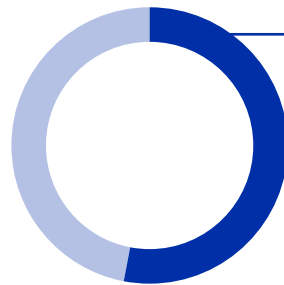
**HIGHLIGHT 3** In a remote-work environment, employees struggle most with group work (or team-based work), especially women. Collaboration technology can play an important role in resolving this issue.

**HIGHLIGHT 4** While many employees have struggled to adjust to working from home, some are thriving. These "remote champions" maintain high levels of productivity, as well as a healthy work-life balance.

**HIGHLIGHT 5** Surprisingly, caretakers report much higher levels of productivity working remotely, perhaps because of increased flexibility in their schedules.

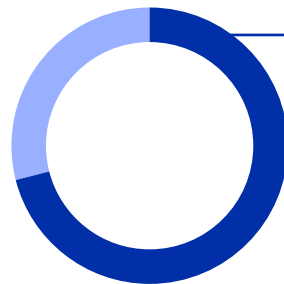
# Embracing a “connected culture” leads to significant gains in employee productivity and well-being

Employers can take several specific steps to help employees feel more connected to their peers, which has a range of benefits.



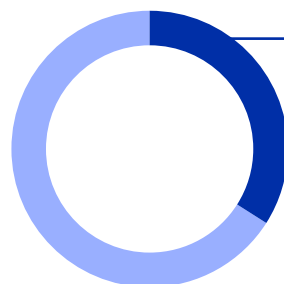
**55%**

Employees at companies that promote a connected culture cite better emotional well-being (55%) than employees of companies that do not promote a connected culture (48%).



**71%**

Employees who feel more connected are more productive. Of those employees who self-reported as more productive, 71% reported feeling more connected to their colleagues than before the pandemic, compared to 22% who reported feeling the same or less connected to their colleagues.



**34%**

Of those who reported working at companies that foster a connected culture, 34% say they're **more productive working from home**. Of those working at companies that don't foster a connected culture, only 15% said they were more productive.

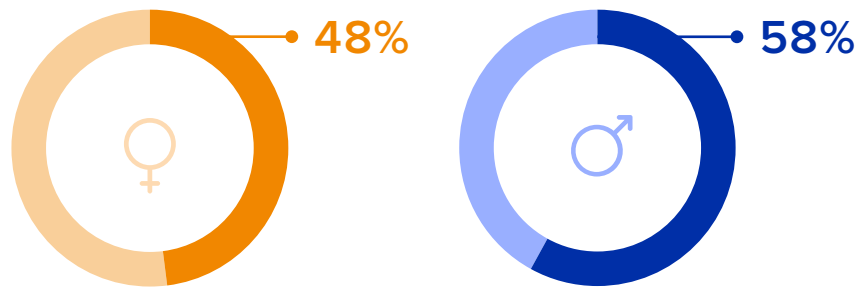
## Takeaway

Employees are telling their employers that “connection” is about much more than just technology. Company initiatives that helped employees feel more connected included frequent employee communication (50%), enhanced collaboration tools (26%), virtual happy hours (24%), peer chats (22%), and group video games (15%).

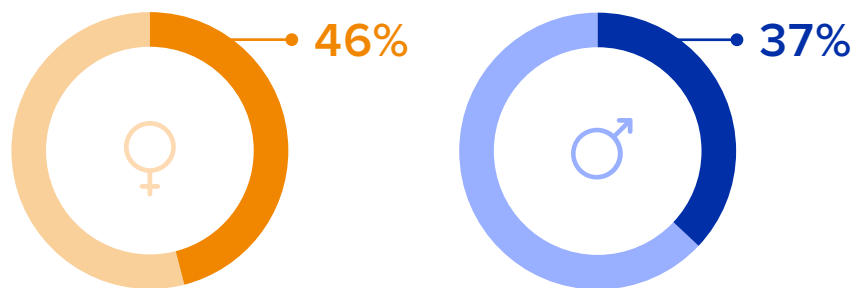
# Unfortunately, the shift to working from home hasn't leveled the playing field for women

Differences among men and women in the workplace carried over to remote working during the pandemic, with men reportedly handling remote work better than women.

Women reported lower levels of happiness and emotional well-being than men during this time, with 48% of women and 58% of men reporting good or better mental health.



Group work (defined as any tasks performed among teams) was the least productive task for women, with 46% saying they struggle with it vs. 37% of men.



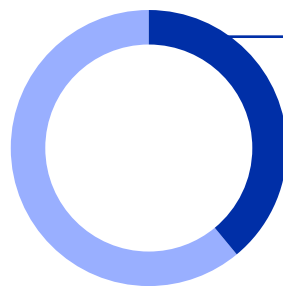
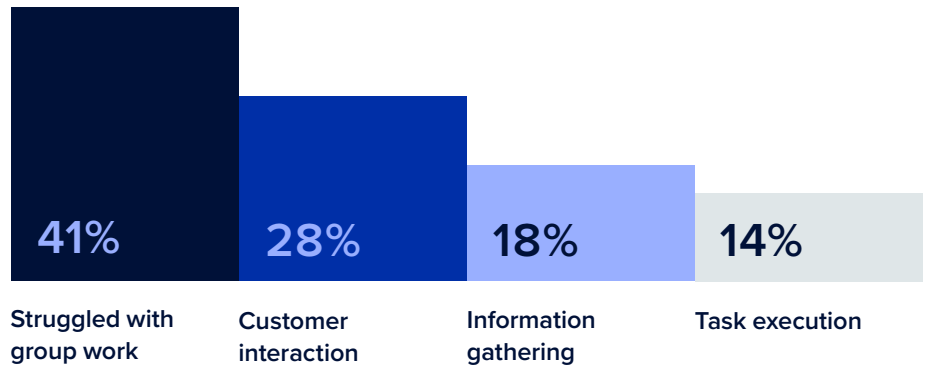
## Takeaway

Knowing the challenges women continue to face in work environments, companies should be particularly keen to address women specifically with initiatives that promote health and wellness, as well as improving collaboration solutions for all employees.

# Nearly half of employees struggle with group work during the pandemic

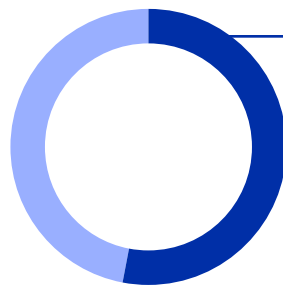
**Group work was the least productive task overall for all surveyed employees.**

Nearly half of all employees (41%) struggled more with group work versus other types of work, including customer interaction (28%), information gathering (18%), and task execution (14%).



**39%**

Just over a third (39%) of employees said that their companies attempted to help them feel connected so they could complete work, including group-based work.



**53%**

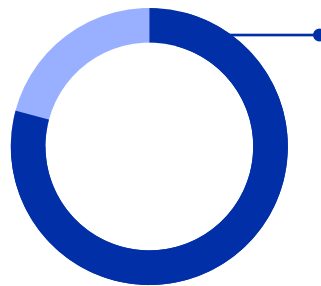
Roughly half (53%) of employees reported that their companies did not make significant attempts to help them collaborate remotely, which made collaboration more difficult than in a physical office.

## Takeaway

Collaboration technology is critical to improving group work and overall productivity and well-being. Those who struggled most with group work were women, non-caretakers, those less connected to colleagues, those whose companies aren't trying to make connections, and those who didn't work from home pre-pandemic.

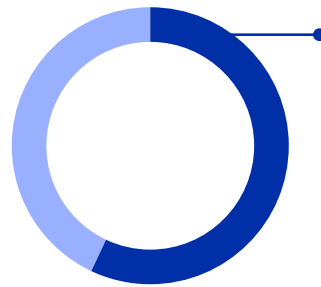
# Global remote work has established a new segment of “remote champions” who thrive amid the chaos

“Remote champions” are happier, physically healthier, more connected to colleagues, and therefore more productive than others. Our research suggests nearly one in 10 workers fit this criteria.



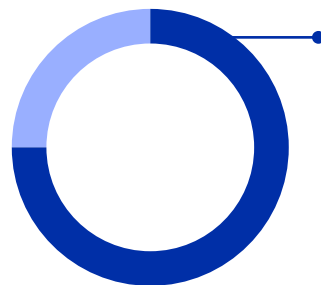
**80%**

of employees reporting high levels of emotional well-being say they are the same or more productive working from home.



**58%**

of employees who say their companies are making an attempt to help them connect say they feel physically healthy.



**75%**

of employees reporting high levels of emotional well-being say they feel more connected to their colleagues.

## Takeaway

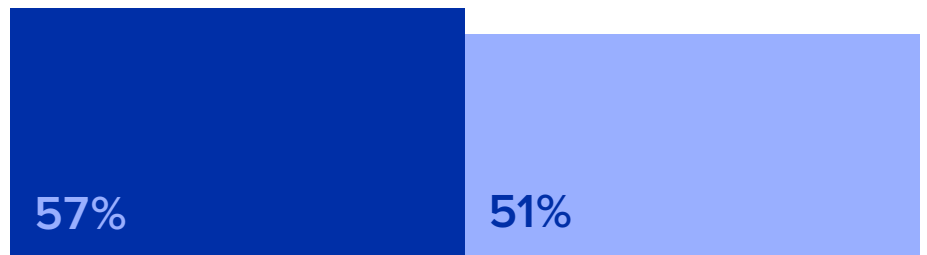
The concept of the remote champion could stem from multiple traits. Among several that have emerged post-pandemic are clear communicators; structured routine-followers; open-minded, tech-savvy collaborators; and introverts.

## HIGHLIGHT 5

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# Purpose matters: Caretakers are much more likely to be more productive in their work than non-caretakers

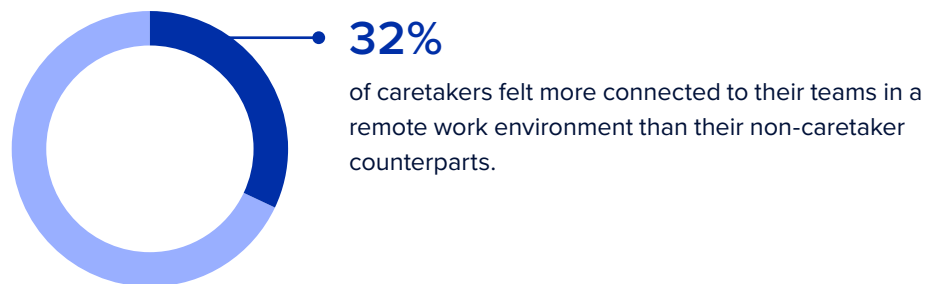
Surprisingly, caretakers are happier and more productive, despite having more household interruptions.



57% of caretakers reported higher levels of well-being vs. 51% of non-caretakers.



Caretakers report higher levels of productivity, with 35% citing higher productivity levels compared to 24% of non-caretakers.



### Takeaway

It's possible that caretakers—who may have struggled with balancing time when going to an office—now feel greater balance (and happiness) working from home. Caretakers also tend to be more structured, an important trait for successful remote workers.



# METHODOLOGY

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- CITE Research, working with Kaleido Insights, conducted an online survey among knowledge workers in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia.
- A total of 4,000 surveys were completed among knowledge workers (N=1,000 per country).
- The research was conducted between July 15 and July 23, 2020.
- Screening criteria included employees who:
  - Work on a laptop or computer always
  - Collaborate with others constantly or sometimes
  - Work at a company with at least two employees
  - Are ages 18+, although 35–44 was the most common response group
  - Mostly (53%) are in a detached single-family home

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