
Pain Points Emerge, But Professionals Reel in Working from Home

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- Only one in 10 respondents said they preferred their previous working practices because they felt they were more productive or more efficient.
- Over half (54 percent) of all respondents, including 69 percent of UK respondents, preferred their previous work environment for in-person professional and social interaction. Yet 69 percent of respondents said they want to maintain at least some aspects of their changed working practices once “stay-at-home” orders expire.
- While the majority (83 percent) have experienced at least one technological issue, 73 percent said they are satisfied with the technology available to do their jobs. That said, 28 percent noted they have had to use too many different technology tools to communicate or collaborate with others, while 16 percent felt overwhelmed with the amount of technology they were being asked to use.

Prior to this spring, the prospect of telecommuting was a significant perk for office professionals. The notion of working from home in leisure wear, a laptop propped up on a comfortable couch, with breakfast on the table, seemed like the ultimate work-life balance.

But as the COVID-19 pandemic descended and businesses around the globe scurried to transition their employees to work-from-home models, the realities of remote working came sharply into focus, presenting several challenges to the workforce at large. While virtual meeting platforms became the heroes of quarantine, acting as impromptu hubs of virtual congregation, the novelty of ironic backdrops, colleagues trying to talk while on mute, and the jumbled collection of shared online documents began to lose luster.

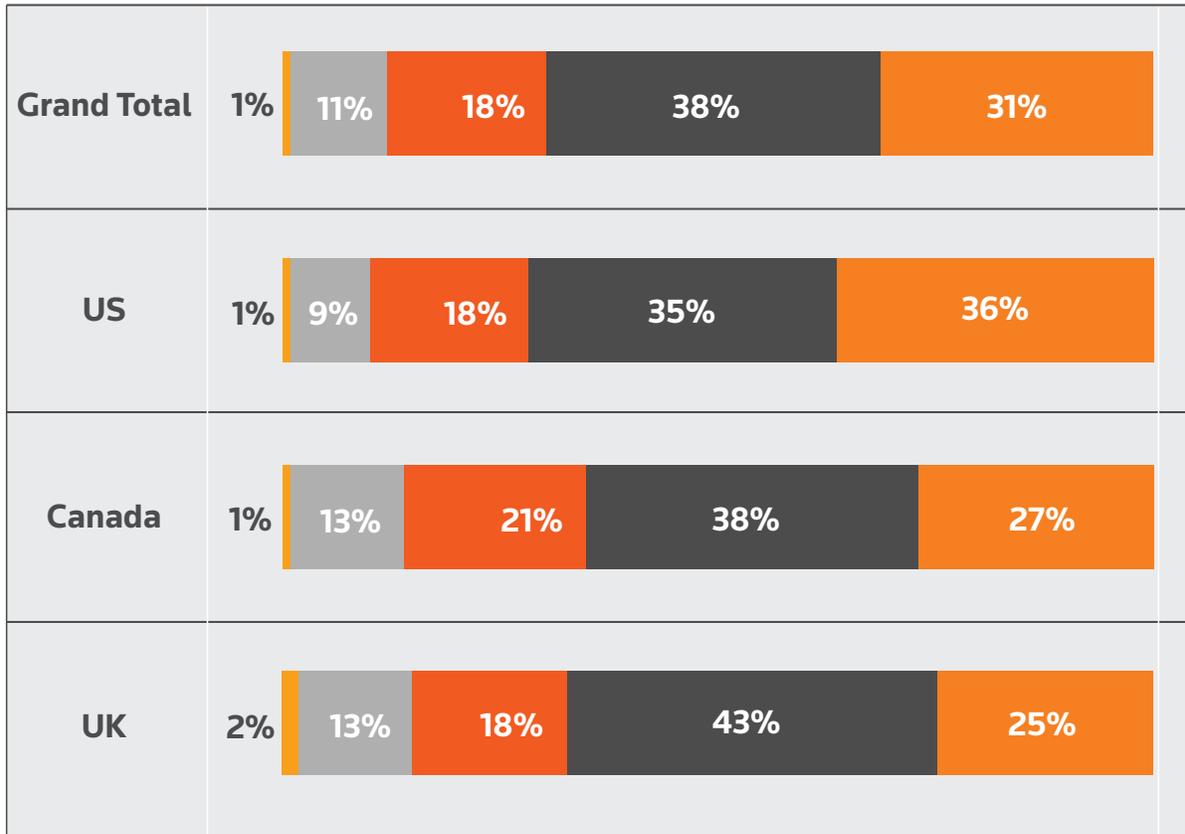
Even as this trial by fire has made it possible for large swaths of professionals to work throughout the pandemic, definitive pain points emerged. It's clear some issues need to be addressed before the ideal of work-from-anywhere freedom can truly be realized. As the months of working remotely blend into a year, one significant example has been the many school districts relying on remote or hybrid learning models for their students, and with their attention already split, putting an even greater onus on professionals with children.

Flexibility Gained

While some aspects of the work day have undoubtedly become difficult to manage, respondents generally reported a positive impact on their personal wellbeing.

Overall, 69 percent said working from home has had a positive impact on their personal wellbeing, including 72 percent in the U.S. Only 12 percent said it had negatively impacted their personal wellbeing.

Overall impact of working remotely on personal wellbeing



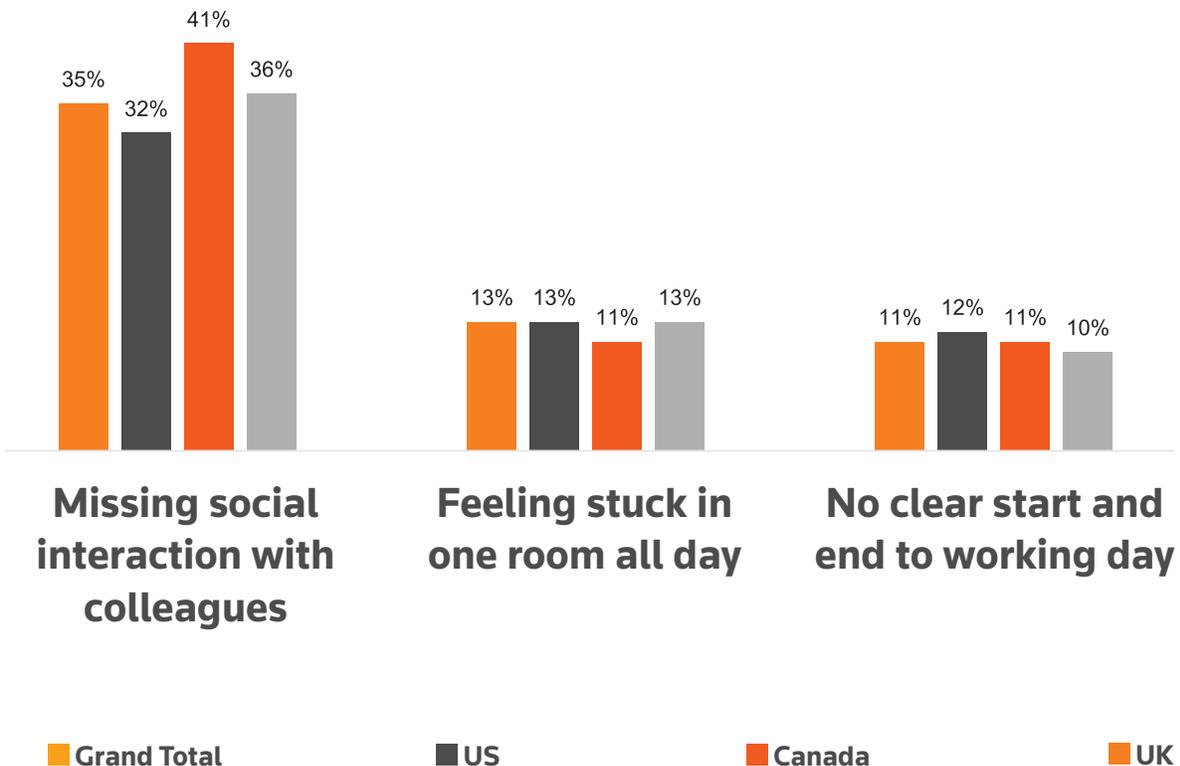
■ Strongly Negative
 ■ Slightly Negative
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Slightly positive
 ■ Slightly positive

Respondents attributed the boost to their personal life to spending less time commuting (26 percent), spending more time with their partner and/or family (23 percent) and more time for exercise/hobbies (8 percent). Unsurprisingly, 69 percent of respondents said they wanted to maintain at least some aspects of their changed working practices once “stay-at-home” orders have expired.

Mostly Smooth Sailing

In spite of what has been viewed by many as a honeymoon phase of working from home, professionals have experienced some pain points. Roughly one-third (35 percent) said they missed social interaction with their colleagues, which included 41 percent of Canadian respondents.

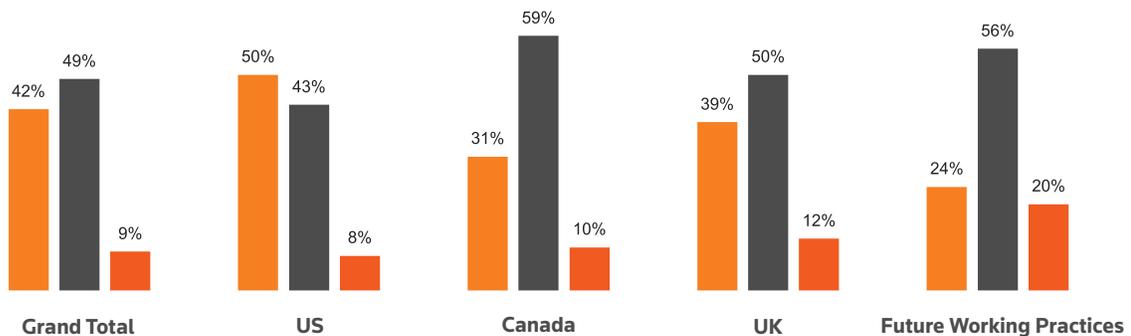
Reduced social interaction with colleagues, feeling confined to one room all day and the lack of clear boundaries to the start and end of the workday were the most impactful of the reported drawbacks of remote working.



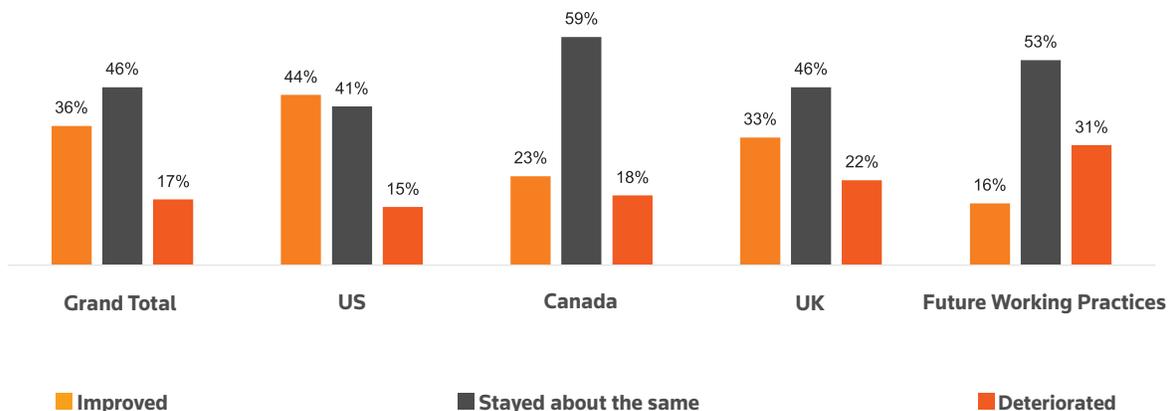
The vast majority of U.S. workers found their ability to collaborate either improved (50%) or stayed the same (43%) and found it manageable to collaborate and manage teams on virtual platforms. That said, 10 percent of those who would like to go back to working as before said they were more productive and had fewer distractions at the office than at home. When it came to collaboration with teams, more respondents said deterioration occurred between teams (17 percent) than within (8 percent).

Over the past six months, the quality of collaboration within and between teams generally stayed the same or improved. However, deterioration was more likely to have occurred between teams than within.

Collaboration Within Teams



Collaboration Between Teams



While a minority, some workers found it hard to distinguish between what constituted the work day and what did not. Thirty-six percent said that the lack of a clear start and end to the work day was a drawback of working from home, and 40 percent lamented feeling stuck in one room all day. As remote models become more entrenched, and permanent in select situations, these wrinkles in the process could be alleviated by employers drawing clear boundaries or helping their workers make investments in new workspaces, which may help win over the small portion that have yet to be enchanted by working from home.

Technological Overload?

While 68 percent of all respondents agreed the technology needed to do their job has worked well, 31 percent reported challenges with technology.

Notable among these challenges has been an overload in technological platforms. One in 4 (24 percent) said they had been told by their organization that a new platform or technology would help them become more efficient, but respondents said it ultimately did not deliver on that promise. Sixteen percent said they had to use too many technology tools to accomplish their work.

	Grand Total	US	Canada	UK
Been interrupted during a virtual meeting by a distraction in your home (pet, child, family member, home delivery, etc.)	43%	43%	39%	47%
Gone 'paperless' or significantly reduced the number of documents you printed	42%	39%	40%	48%
Had to use too many different technology tools to communicate or collaborate with others	28%	31%	24%	25%
Been late to a virtual meeting because you needed to download or update the meeting software	27%	29%	20%	31%
Been told by your company that a new platform or technology would help you be more efficient, but it did not	24%	26%	21%	21%
Been asked by your company to download a platform or technology solution that you did not end up using	21%	23%	15%	24%
Felt overwhelmed with the amount of technology you're being asked to use for your work	16%	17%	15%	16%
Don't have enough time to learn the capabilities of the different technology tools that are available to me	9%	9%	9%	10%
None of these	17%	16%	21%	16%

What's more, the lack of centralization of one technology source has at least somewhat impacted productivity. Twenty-one percent of respondents said they have been asked to download a platform or technological solution that they did not end up using. More than a quarter (27 percent) have been late to a meeting because they needed to download or update the meeting software.

Even with these glitches, it seems that professionals have largely adapted to the new environment relatively seamlessly: a remarkable feat for a conversion done so hastily. As the world readies itself to pivot on a moment's notice, organizations can take solace that they have the agility to thrive in the most difficult times. And those that can build on this new experience by investing in solutions that minimize or eliminate these minor nuisances stand to benefit from an even happier, more productive workforce.

Methodology

To conduct this survey, Thomson Reuters surveyed 996 business professionals from a mix of industries and roles in companies with an annual revenue of at least \$100M USD in the U.S. (500), Canada (246), UK (250).

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