

Torn between want and reality: Hybrid work and work-life balance



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What awaits is not a “new normal”....

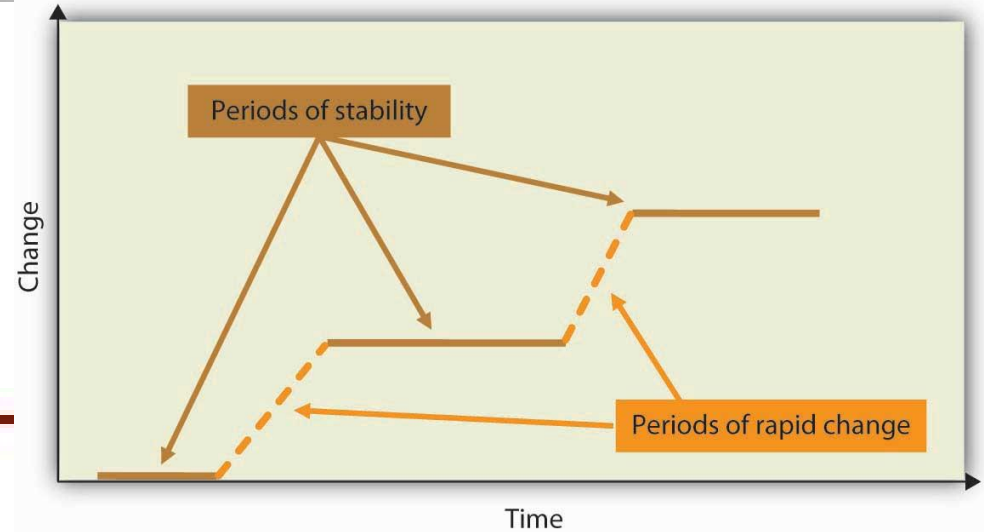
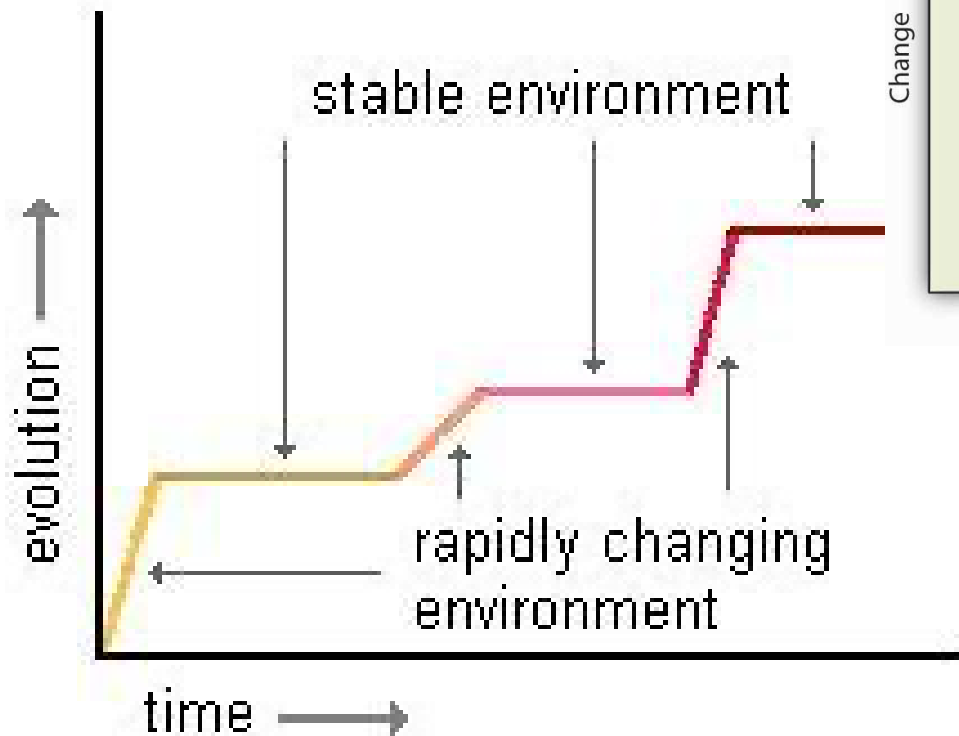




When the economy recovers

- Things will NOT return to “normal” and a different mode of leadership will be required
- **Why** – because what we are seeing now (high levels of uncertainty, high levels of disruption and urgency) will continue even when COVID-19 ends as we face a sequence of significant and serious disruptions moving forward

What is disruptive change?





Disruptors

- **COVID-19**

- Impact on workplaces and lives on the same scale as great depression and World-War II

- **Demographic changes**

- Declining birth rates, shifts in dependency ratios

- **Generational changes**

- 4 generations in the workplace right now –different attitudes and values
- COVID-19 a watershed moment as it is exacerbating many of the generational differences we are already aware of



Disruptors

- **Technology driven change**
 - Covid-19 has sped up what people see as possible
- **Climate change**
 - Change has been needed for decades but still the sense or urgency is not there
- **“The Haves and the Have Nots”**
 - Rising economic inequality, DEI, jobs without people, people without jobs
- **Political instability/unrest around the world**



To thrive moving forward

- It is not about going back to the way it was before
 - Cannot put the genie back in the Bottle
- The situation quite different now
 - “this is a once in a generation opportunity to rethink the future of work, the workplace and the workforce” McKinsey 2022



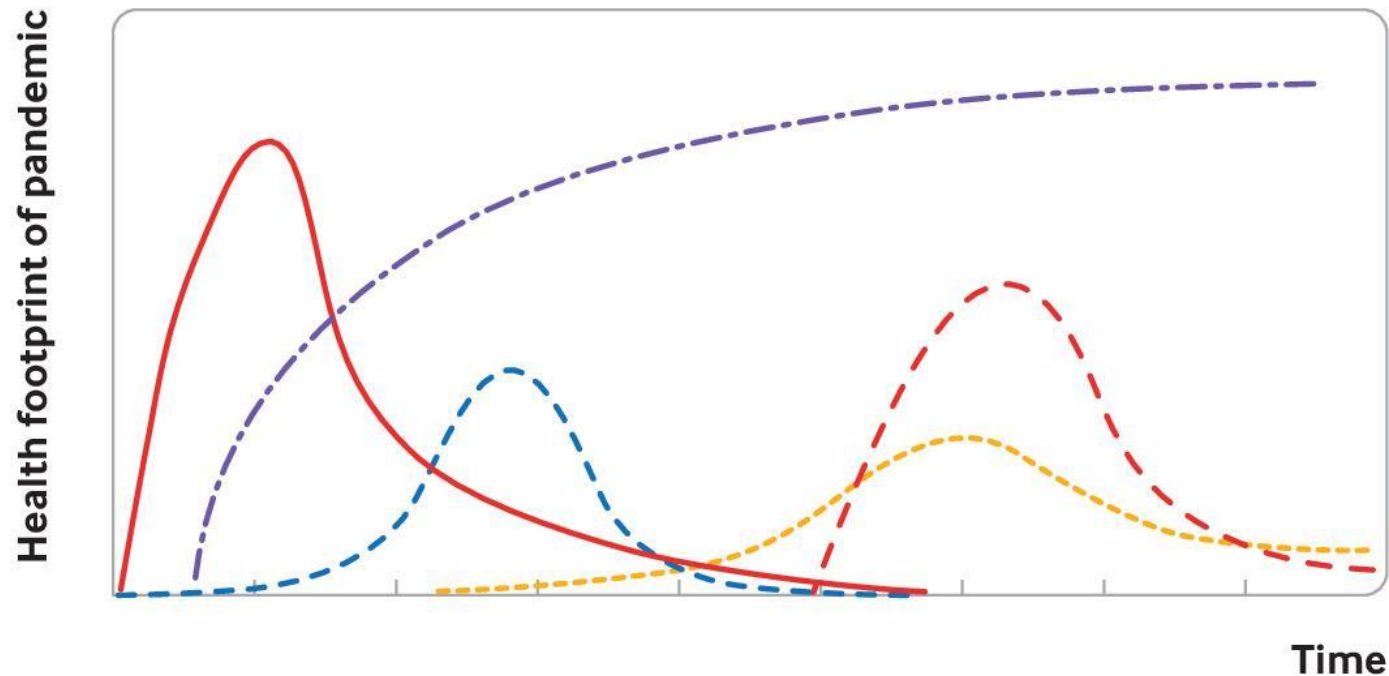
To thrive moving forward

- Moving forward organizations:
 - cannot use what happened as “proof of concept” that remote arrangements work
 - need to deal with the aftermath of the pandemic
 - employee wellbeing, work-life balance, workload and issues associated with the organizational culture must be addressed

Now is time to develop a plan to manage the collateral damage caused by COVID

Victor Tseng

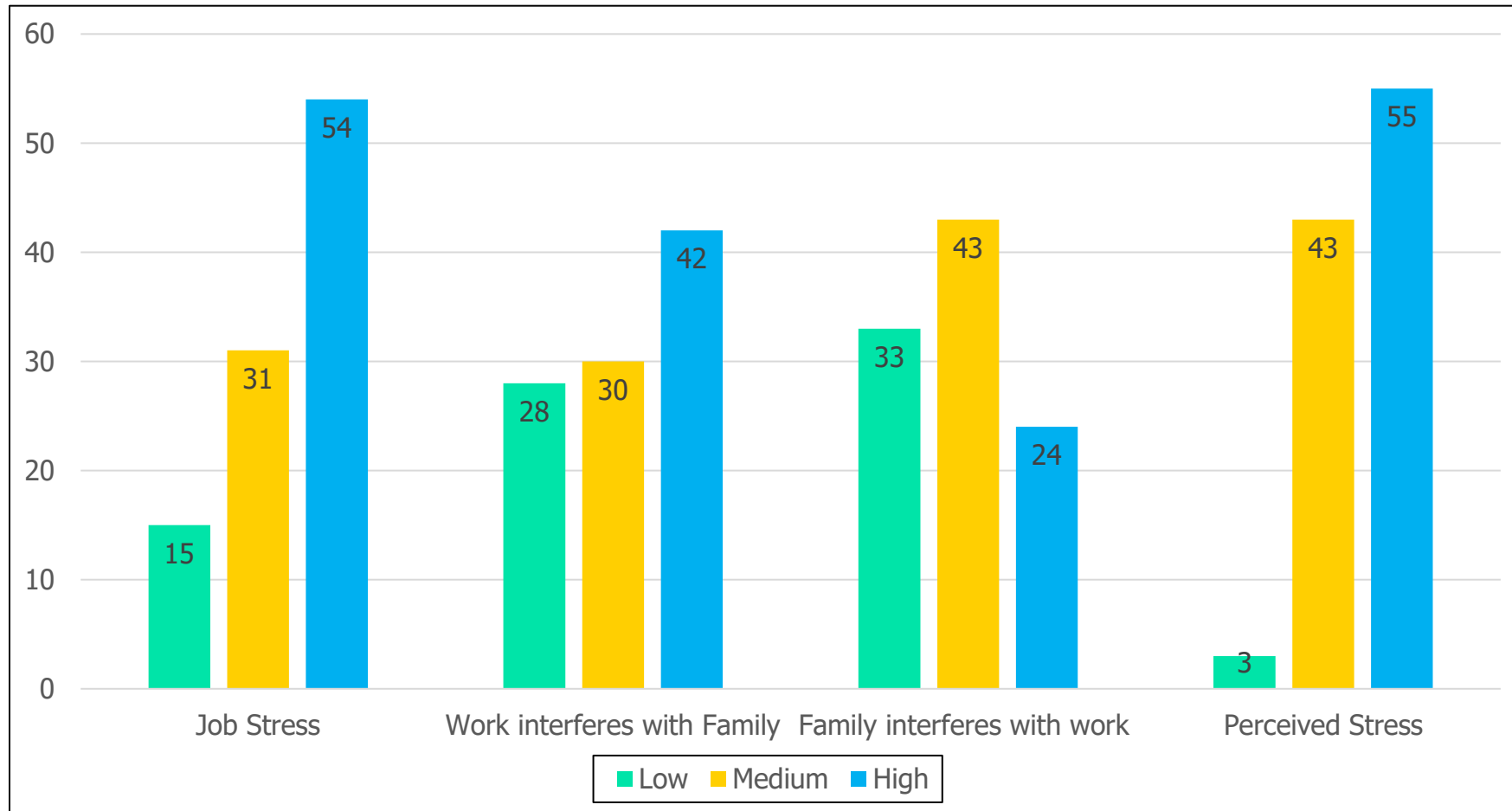
- Immediate mortality and morbidity of covid-19
- - - Effect of resource restriction on urgent non-covid conditions
- . - . Effect of interrupted care on chronic conditions
- - - Long term effects, including psychic trauma, mental illness, economic injury, burnout, post-covid rehabilitation
- - - Re-emergence of covid-19 morbidity and mortality



Key findings on Employee Wellbeing

"Employee Wellbeing In Times of COVID" survey

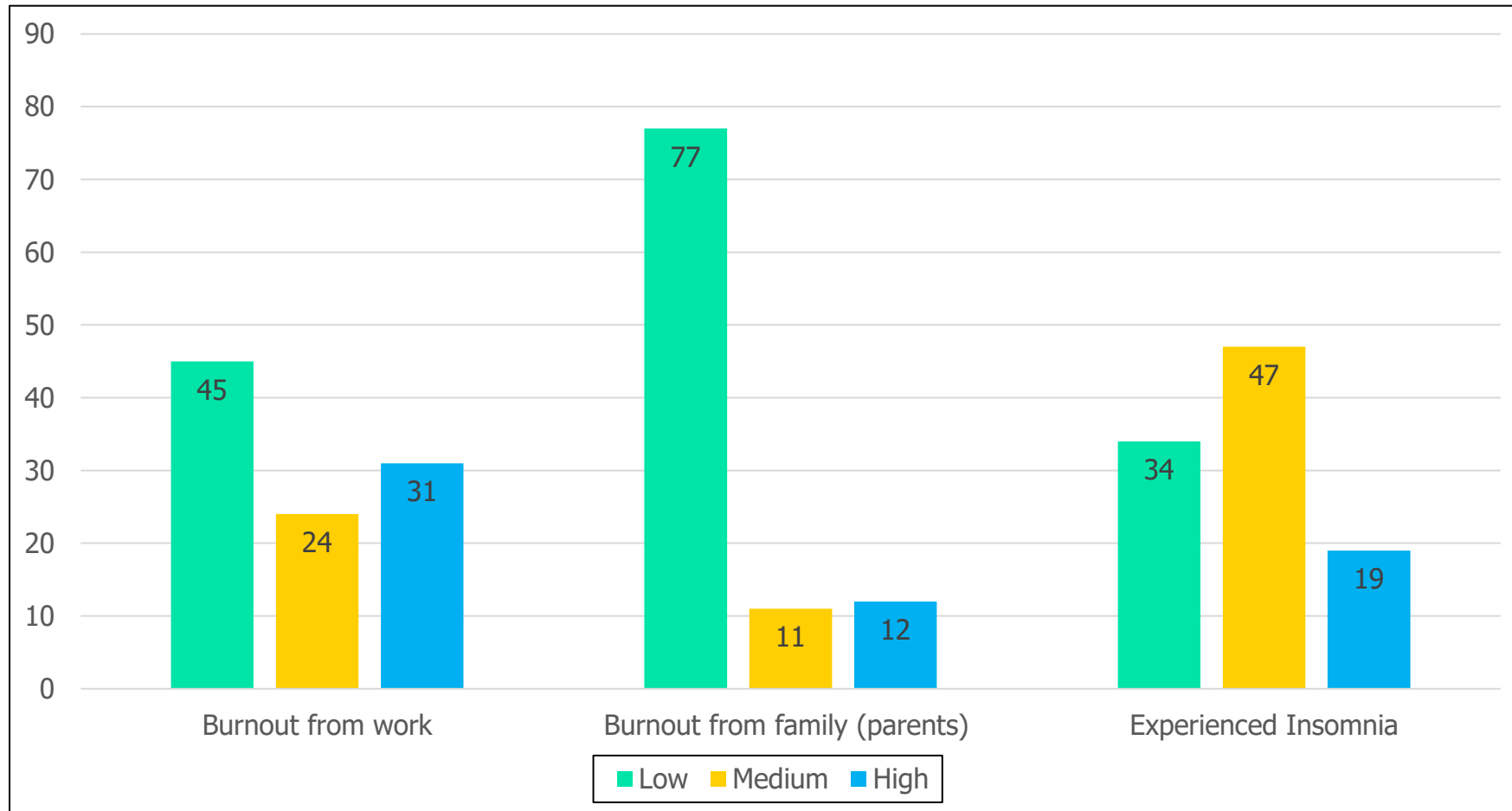
(n = 26,000+)



Key findings on Employee Wellbeing

"Employee Wellbeing In Times of COVID" survey

(n = 26,000+)





Health and wellbeing

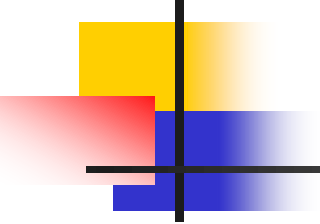
Key issue regardless of where people are doing their work

- Will be huge going forward
- Need to:
 - consider things like wellness programs
 - offer benefits that support physical wellness, mental health, flexible work schedules, childcare, eldercare paid time off etc.
- Employees must invest in employee wellbeing initiatives moving forward
 - Do not let over focus on hybrid arrangements blind you to what should be your number 1 priority



Why has employee wellbeing deteriorated over time

- Myriad of causes
 - Enforced work from home
 - Workloads
 - For many people workloads have increased during the pandemic for a myriad of reasons
 - Preferences re: Balance
 - Segmentors versus integrators
 - Many people are NOT coping well
 - Organizational culture may be making things worse

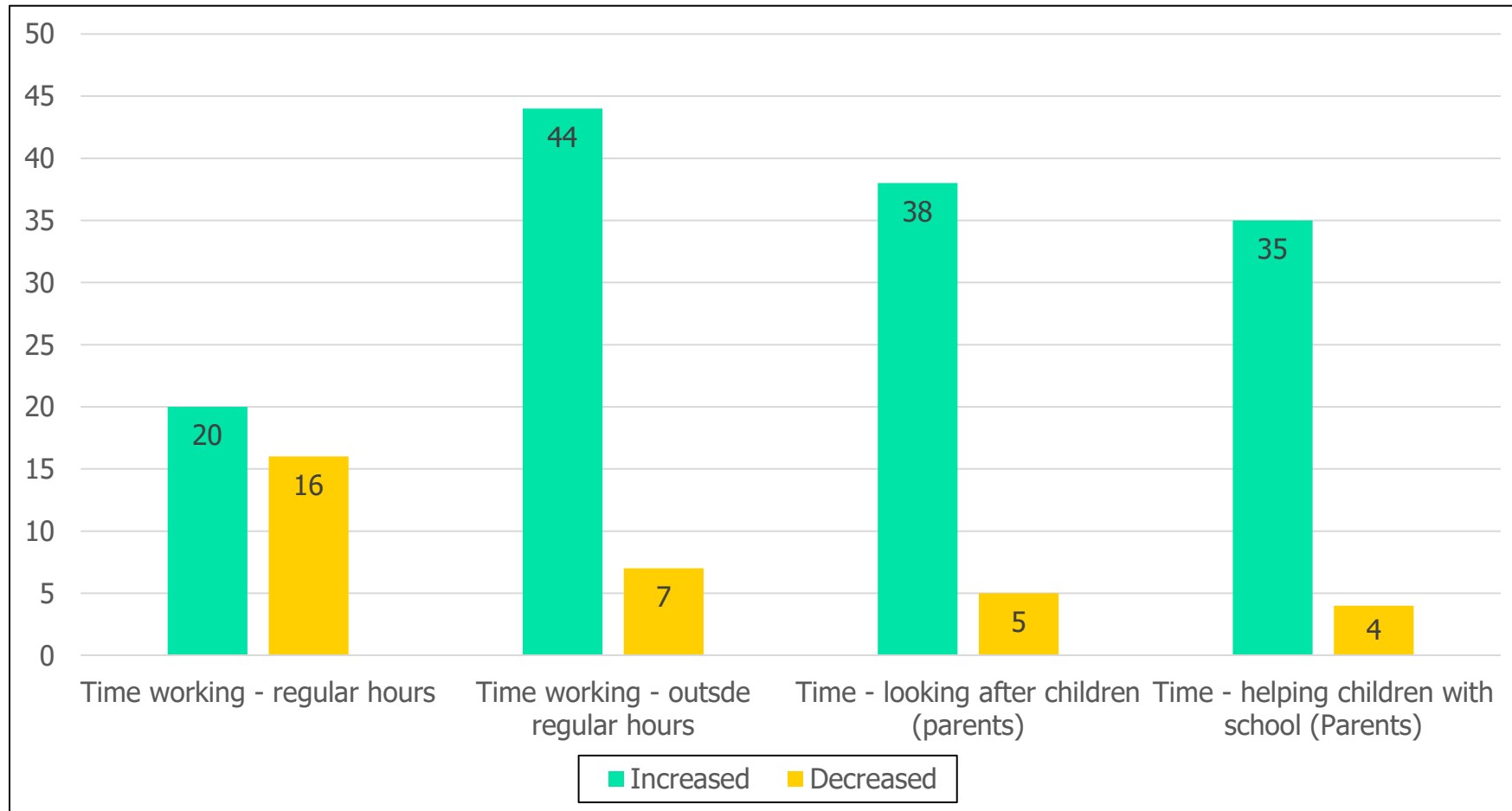


Enforced work from home has negatively impacted employee wellbeing – Why???

- Because enforced remote work differs in many important ways from the ideal (i.e., a well-designed remote work arrangement)
 - For many remote work has increased the amount of time they are spending in work and decreasing their ability to balance work and family

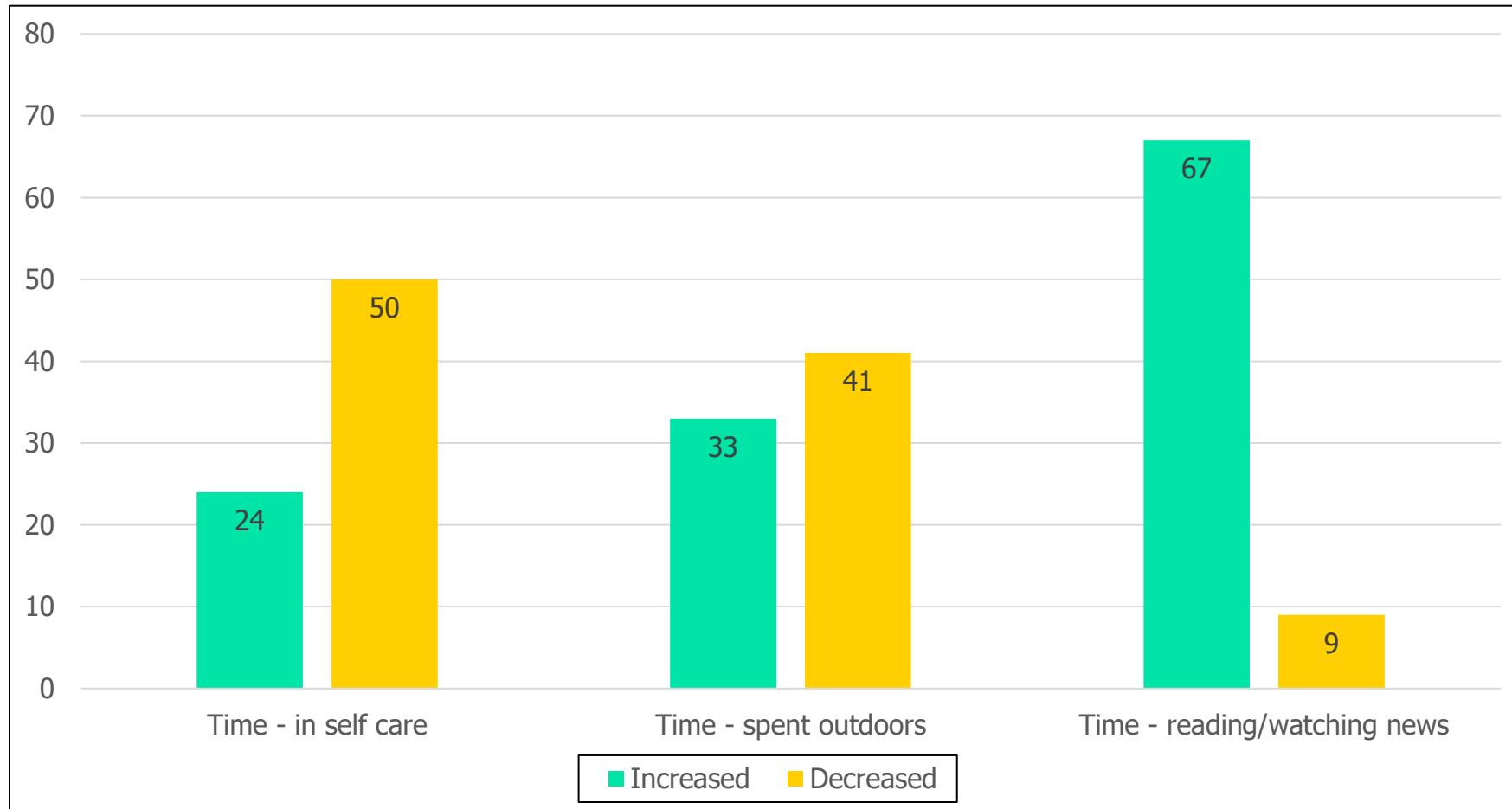
Key findings: How COVID has impacted how employees spend their time

"Employee Wellbeing In Times of COVID" survey (n = 26,000+)



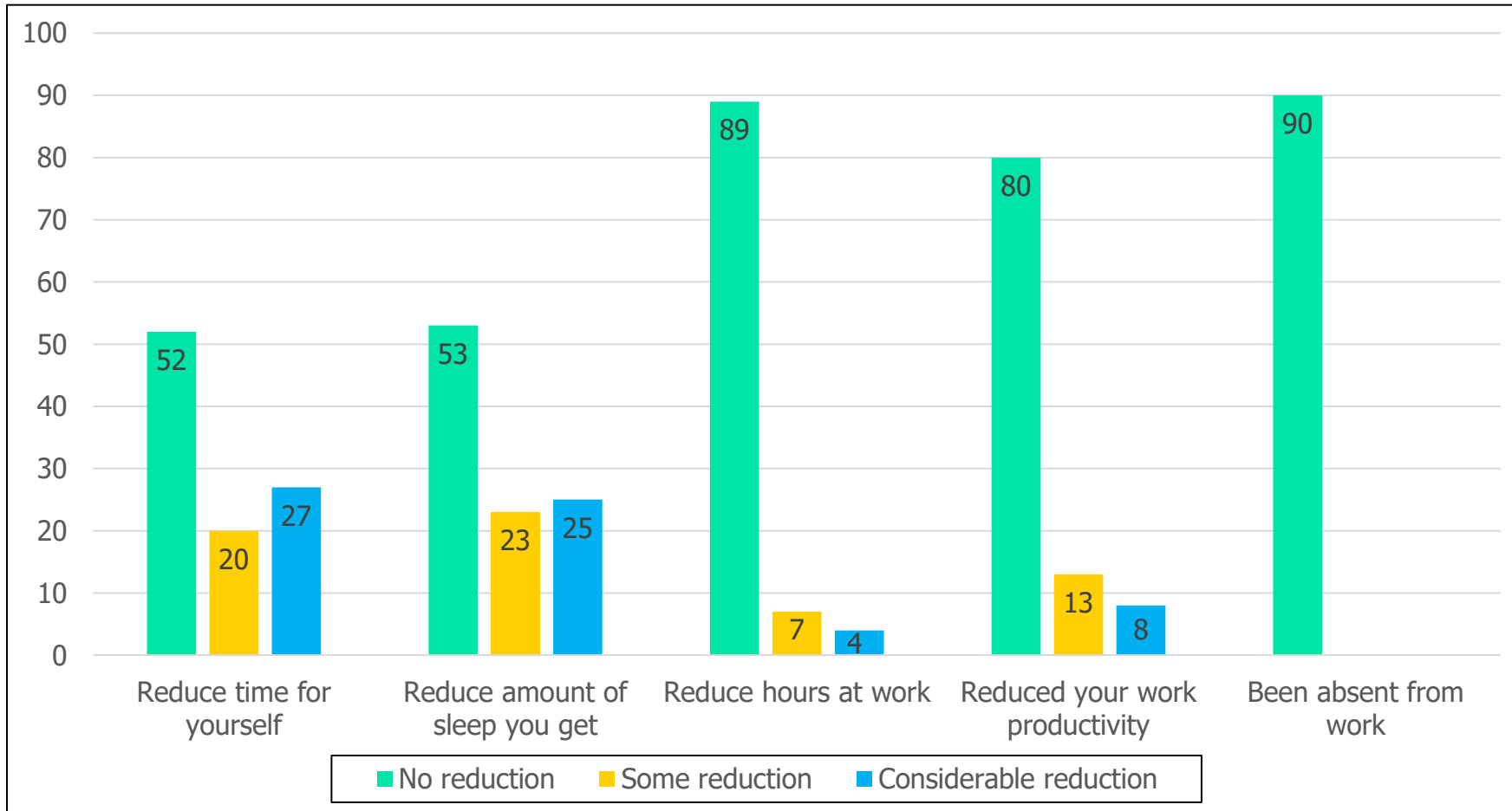
Key findings: How COVID has impacted how employees spend their time

"Employee Wellbeing In Times of COVID" survey (n = 26,000+)



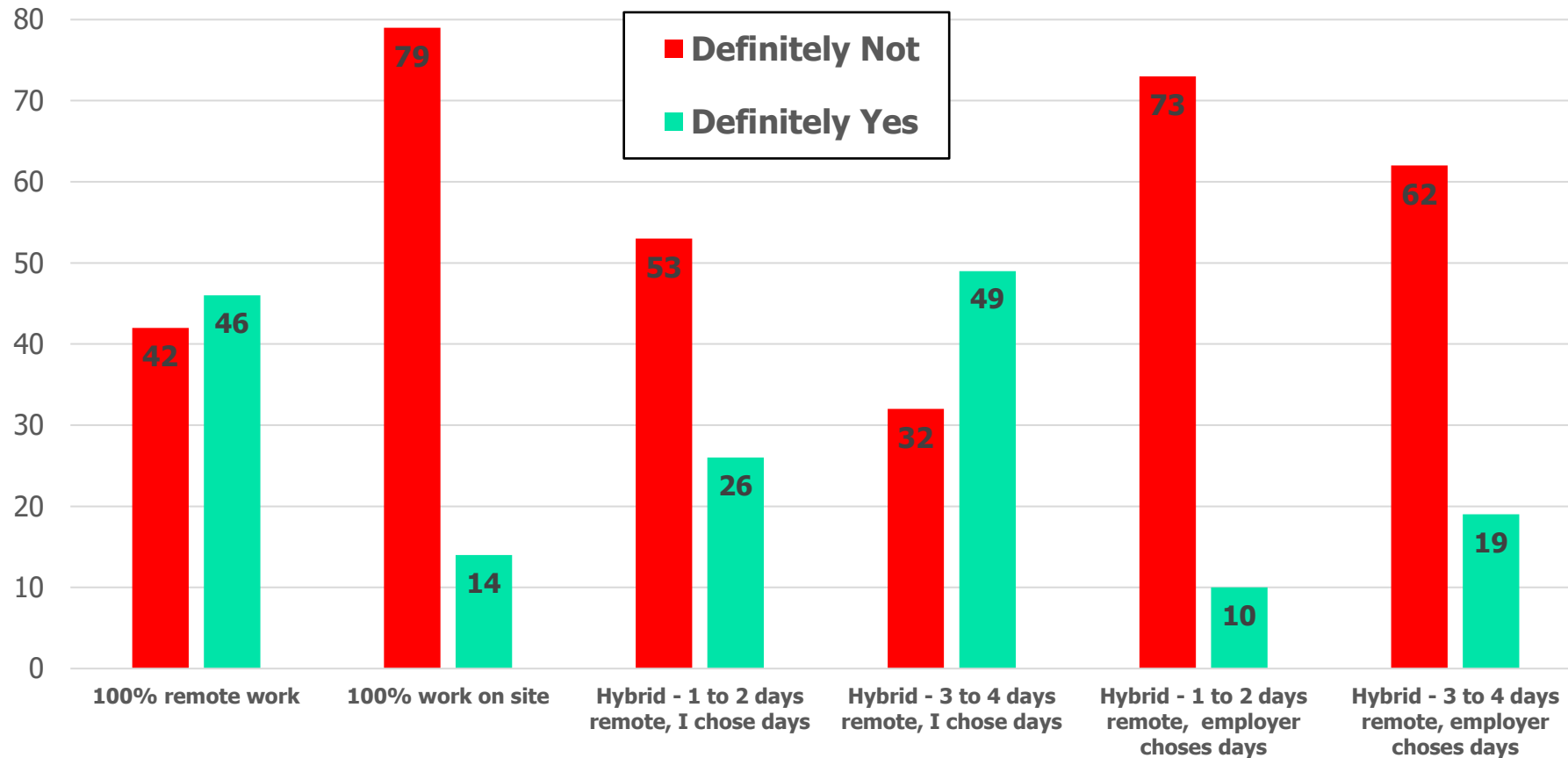
Looking back – since COVID-19 pandemic began, to what extent have challenges with respect to balance work and family caused you to:

“Employee Wellbeing In Times of COVID” survey (n = 26,000+)



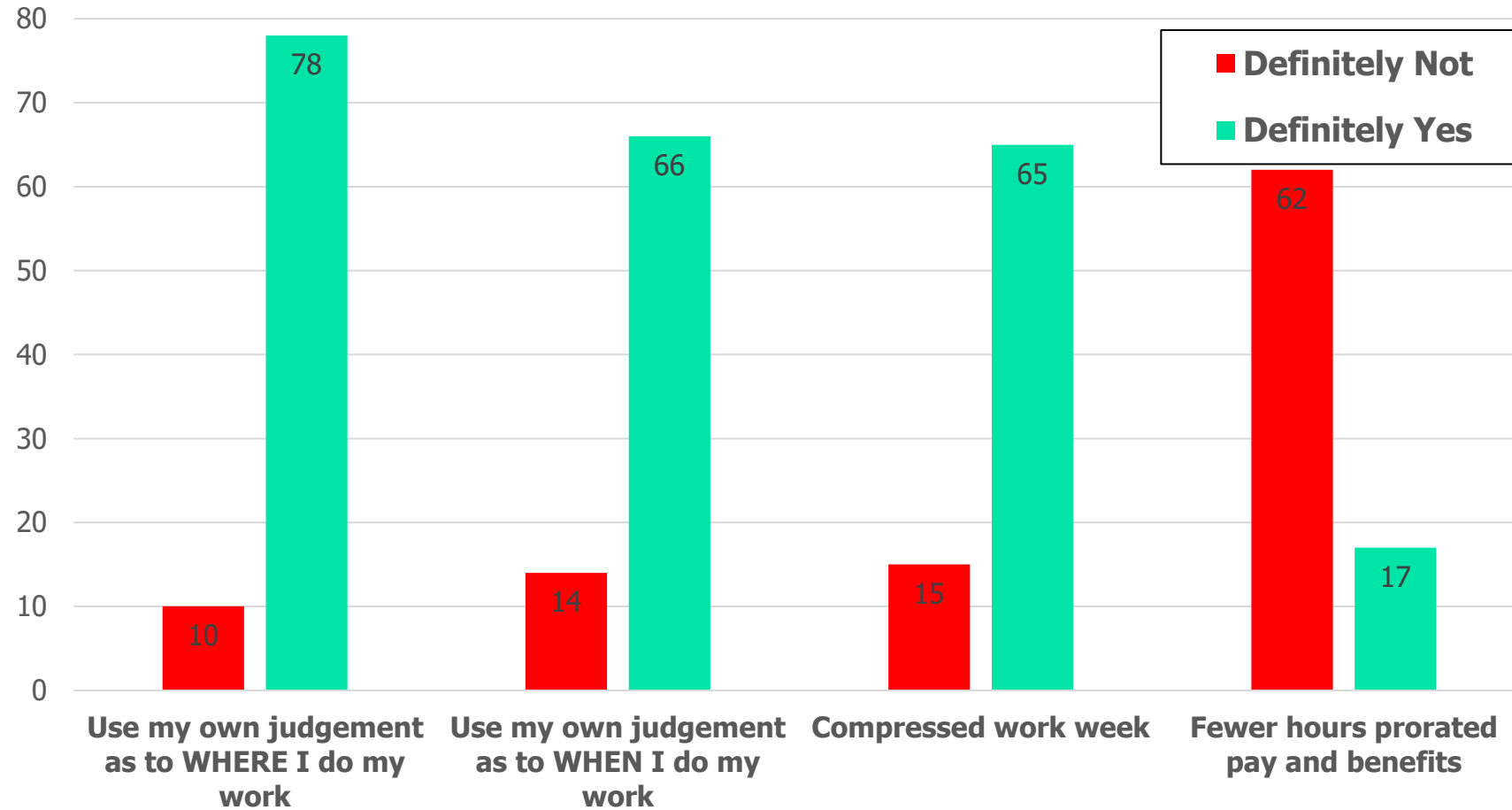
BUT people do not want to return to the way it was

Likelihood that employee will want their work structured this way: n = 3800 collected April 2022



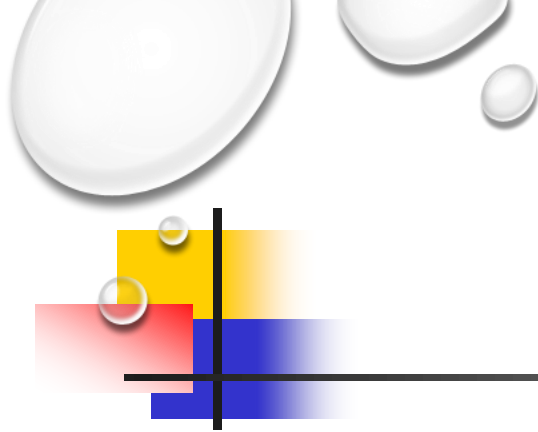
Likelihood employee will want their work structured this way

n = 3800 collected April 2022

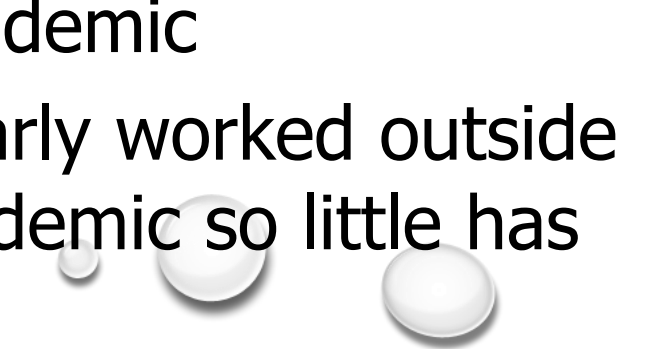


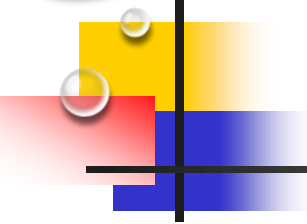
Why do employees want to work from home?

- Reasons we have heard given for why employees want to work from home post-pandemic:
 - To avoid long or inconvenient commute to work
 - Superior ability to focus at home
 - Open office is noisy – I cannot concentrate
 - I prefer my office set up at home (coffee, food, privacy)
 - It is more convenient for me to manage my personal routines at home (ability to fit in workouts mentioned)
 - It is now a habit (*"I am comfortable working from home and enjoy the extra family time"*)
 - Makes no sense to come into the office when my schedule is filled with on-line meetings

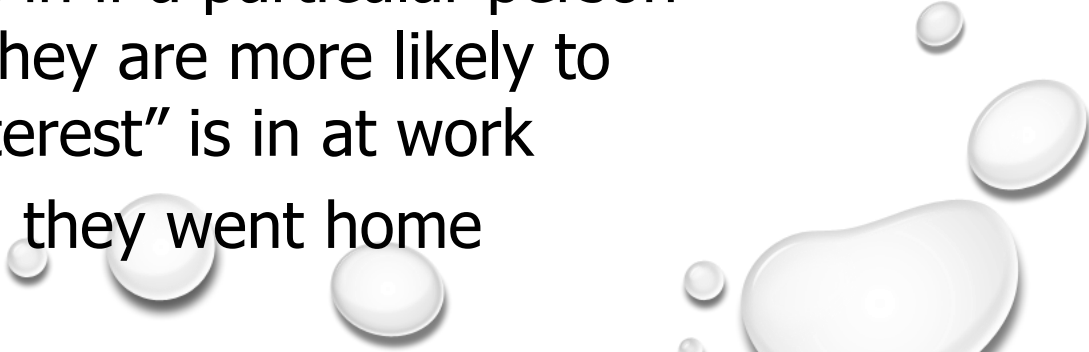


AND... Many employees truly feel they are more productive at home – WHY?

- They no longer have to travel to and from work – this savings in travel time is highly valued by employees
 - They do not have to move from meeting room to meeting room – a main source of friction for many people
 - Many of our workplaces were just not all that productive before the pandemic
 - Many employees regularly worked outside of office hours pre-Pandemic so little has changed
- 



What would motivate employees to come into the office

- Employees more likely to say that they would come in if it offered them:
 - The opportunity to see colleagues and grow their personal network
 - The ability to interact with valued colleagues at work
 - People want to know who else will be in at work when they come in
 - Some say they will not come in if a particular person is at work; others say that they are more likely to come in if a “colleague of interest” is in at work
 - The ability to refuse work when they went home
- 

Why Return to the Office: The Proximity Principal

- Research shows that people tend to form interpersonal relationships with those nearby
 - We become friends with people we encounter regularly - this is a source of joy in our lives
- These friendships matter
 - Gallup has found that people who have a friend or friends at work are seven times more likely to be engaged with their job and identify with their company
- BUT during pandemic we had reduced access to this social network
 - lock downs, physical distancing, masks

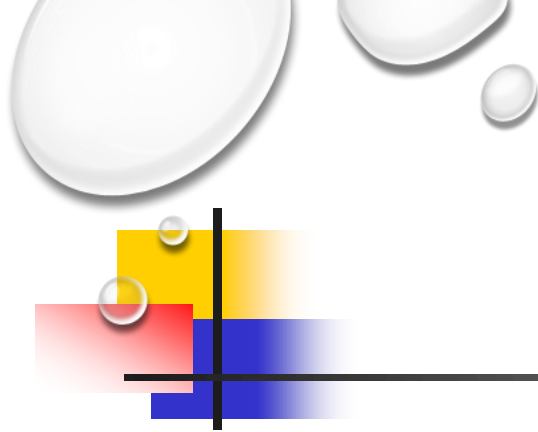


The Proximity Principal

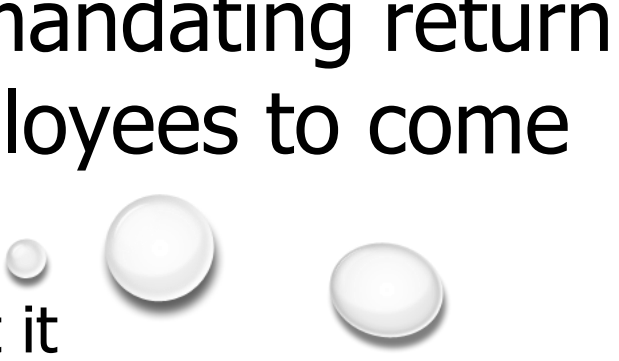
- Prior to the pandemic companies and employees benefited from the proximity principle
 - During pandemic only essential workers who had to work on-site received this benefit
 - Research shows employees emotional and social needs were not met when they were working remotely
- Research also shows that many people feel isolated and lonely when working from home
 - BUT our data shows that 80% do not want to give up the flexibility they get from not having to come in every day – even though they feel disconnected from their colleagues

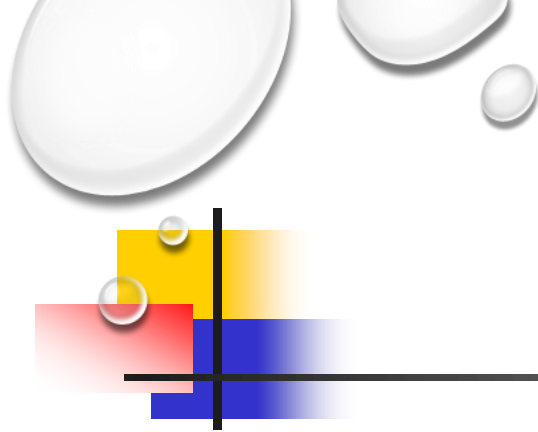
Implications of The Proximity Principal for Return to Work

- Back to office needs to provide employees with more opportunities for shared moments
- Implications
 - Everyone on team needs to come in on the same day
 - Shared moments do not happen when:
 - people come into workplace and it is empty
 - shared office structures mean that they cannot locate their friends
 - work demands are so onerous no one has time to socialize




The question then is – how to balance flexibility and proximity?

- How do we balance
 - Employees need for autonomy and flexibility while fostering togetherness
 - Need for social interaction with efficiency
 - How do we give employees the dopamine hit that they get from interacting with co-workers in office without mandating return to work and requiring employees to come in on certain days
 - Zoom happy hours do not cut it
- 



Employers need to change their thinking and how they communicate with employees

- *"offices are not about making people more productive but rather about bringing them together"*
 - *"COVID has shifted the office away from a productivity space to something else – both a learning space and a space to solve complex problems."*
- 



Discussions on Return to Work: Emotions are running high

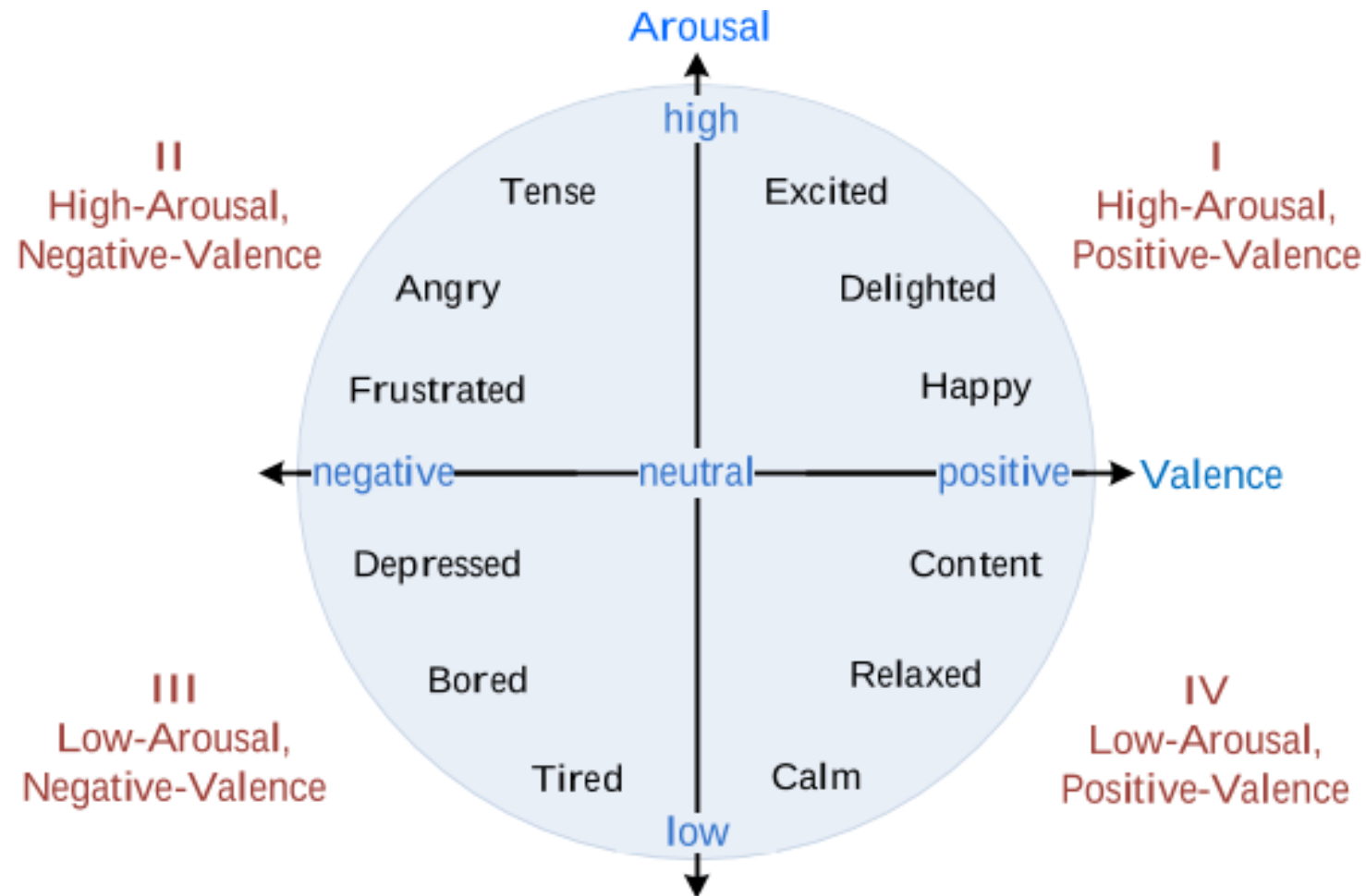


Angry
Sad Afraid Happy
Worried Hopeful resigned
Frustration
Anxious Lonely Depressed
numb Tired Stressed
Grateful

Circumplex model of emotions

From: Research Gate

Valence – is pleasure/displeasure continuum



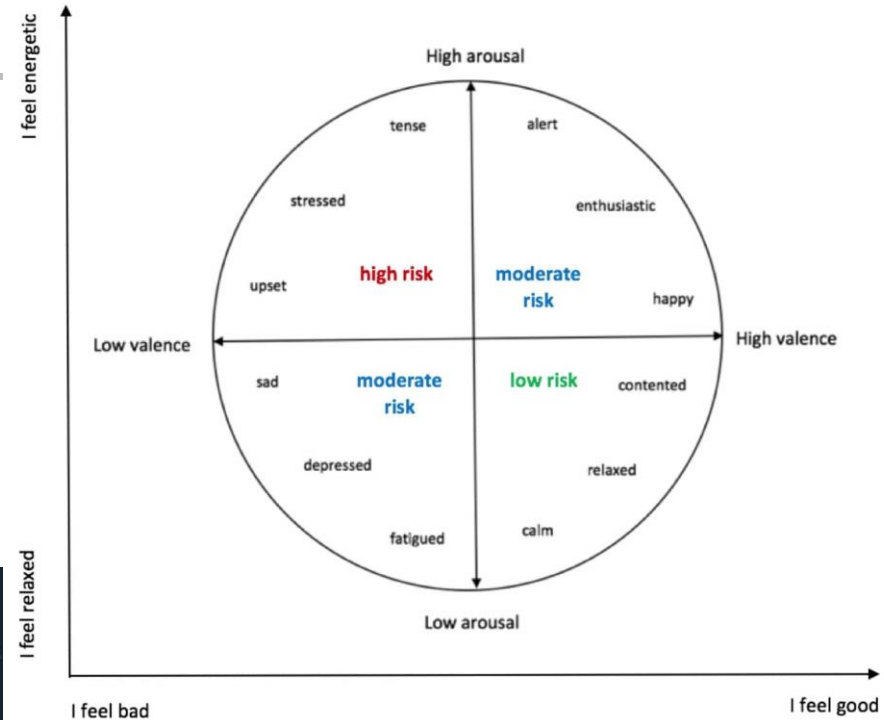
Role of emotions versus logic in decision making process

“Don't Make A Permanent Decision For Your Temporary Emotion.”

The Fresh Quotes

Of course our feelings matter. But emotional decisions are usually not the best ones. On the other hand, your emotions can affect your decisions whether you like it or not because the effects can occur on the unconscious level.

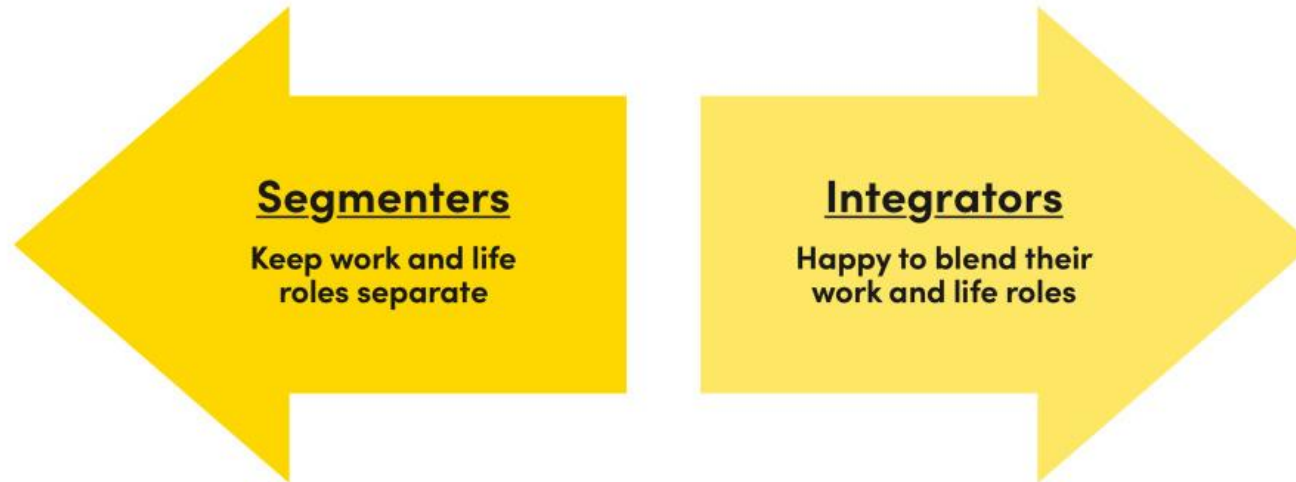
~ Leonard Mlodinow





Many employees not able to adopt their work-life preferences

Segmenters vs. Integrators



Are you an Integrator or a Segmenter? A quick test



Space



Schedule



Lunch

Integrators:

Don't mind working from bed or couch and later relaxing in the same space.

Don't need a strict schedule. Comfortable juggling work and personal time, without a hard start or stop.

Feel comfortable with eating while working on the desk or attending a work call.

Segmenters:

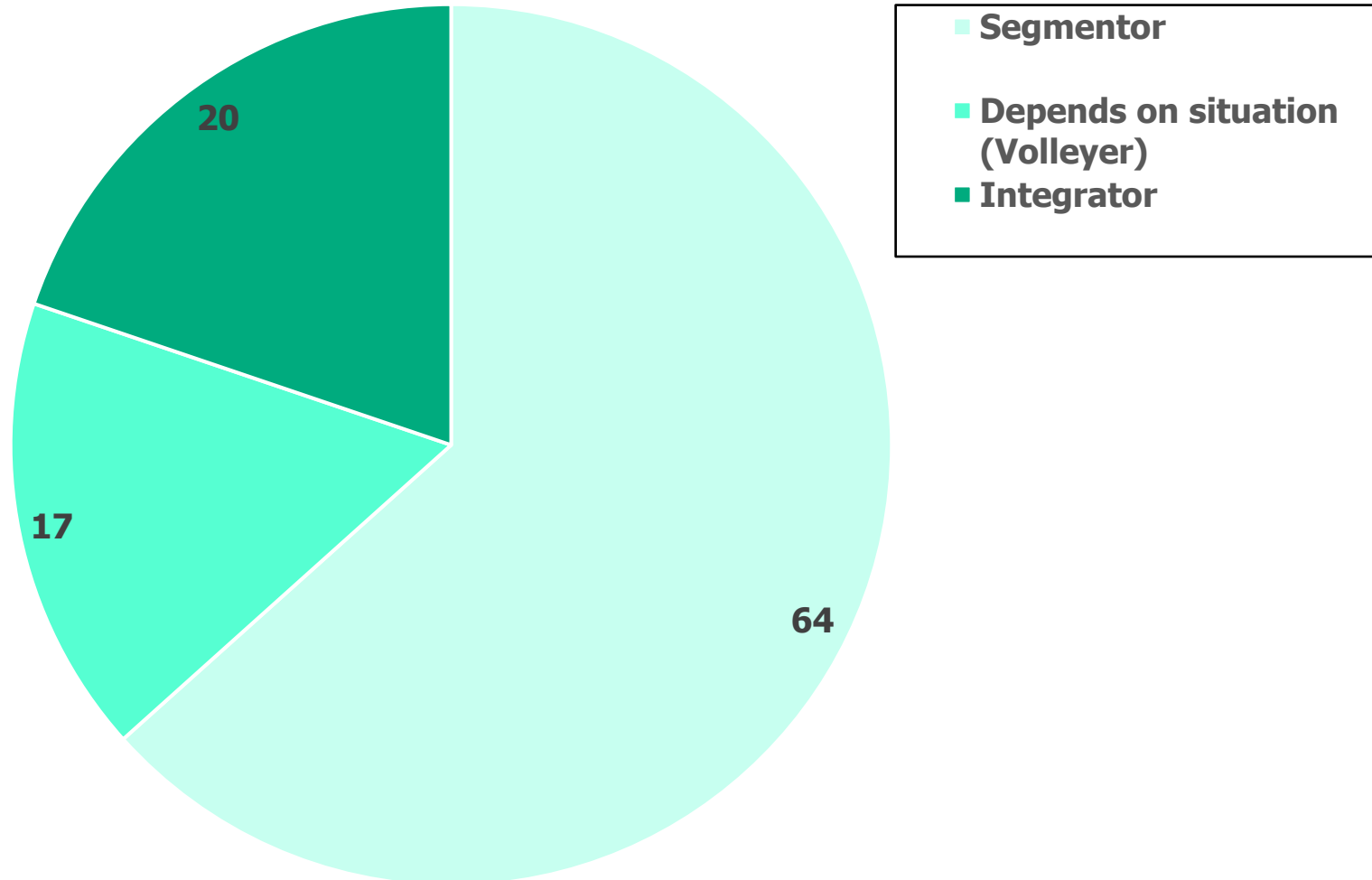
Set up a dedicated working space at home, usually in a separate room or isolated corner of the house.

Need an office-like schedule with a clear start and end time for work, and established personal time.

Prefer to take lunch time away as a break and not comfortable with eating on the desk.

Preference: Segmentation versus Integration Pre-COVID

Managers 2X more likely to say they were integrators
n = 3500 Data collected April 2022

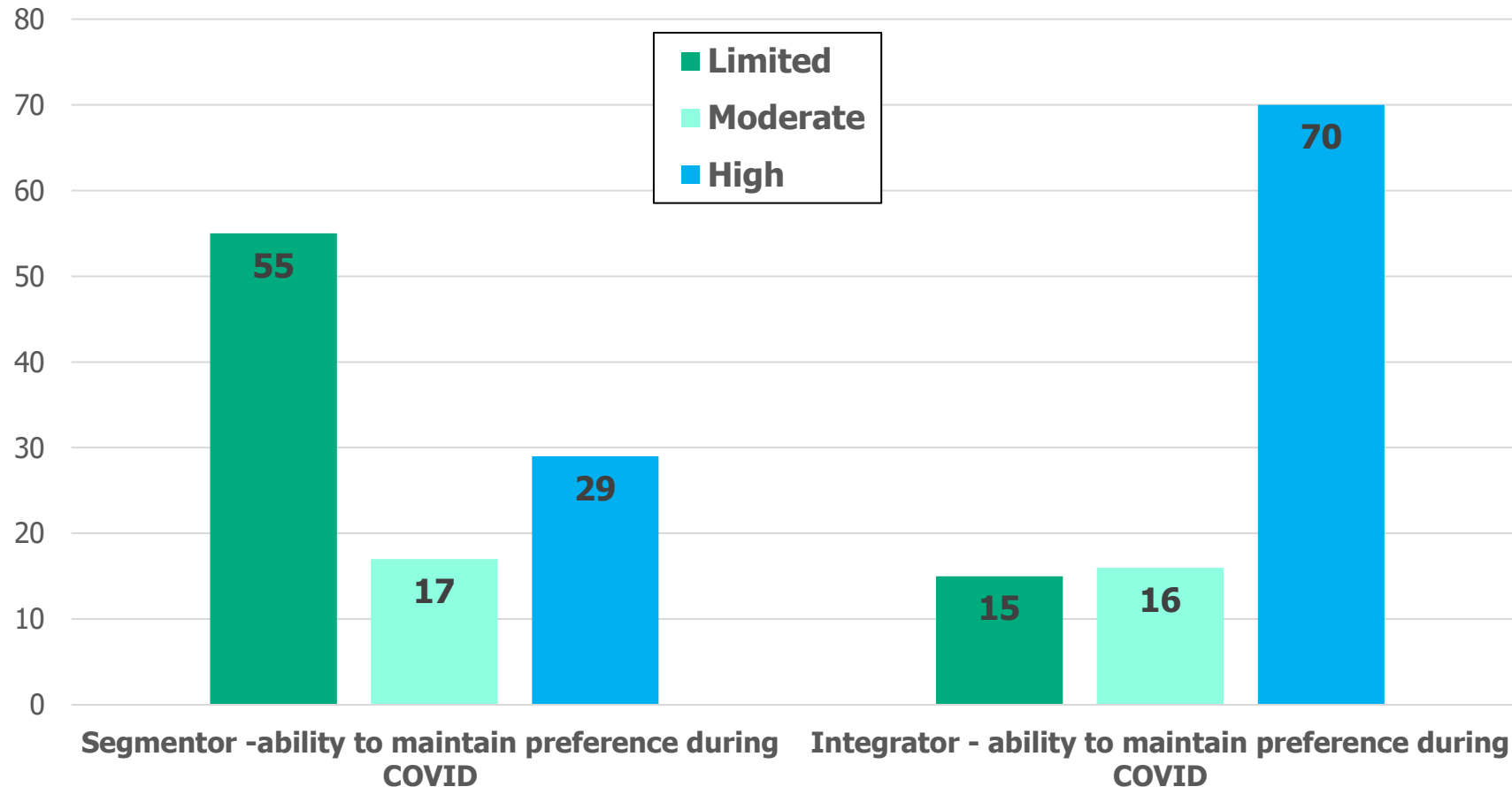




Implications for how people structure their work

- Who is better off working remotely?

How able were you to maintain your preference for segmentation/integration during the pandemic?





Segmentor/Integrator

- During the course of the pandemic
 - One in four have shifted from a preference for integration to a preference for segmentation
 - One in five have shifted from a preference segmentation to a preference for integration
 - One in three of these shifters are supervisors



Segmented Work & Family Roles

Integrated Work & Family Roles

Implications: Structuring Work Moving Forward

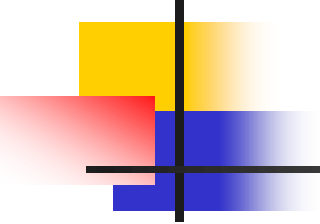
Segmentors' strong desire to keep work and family lives separate is almost impossible to satisfy while working from home

- Result: major increase in stress

They are happier and more productive working flextime arrangements which allow them to manage their time in way that preserves a clear distinction between work and family

Integrators typically do not feel the need to separate work and home and found it easier to adjust to remote work arrangements during COVID-19.

But... Some Integrators found the "sudden and fully immersive blurring of work and home boundaries" difficult and now find themselves working 24/7



No matter where people are doing their work – employer needs to deal with workloads

- Workloads were a problem prior to the pandemic
 - Why? Understaffing and over committing
- Quiet quitting
 - Term a misnomer
- Pandemic has changed priorities for many employees who now place a higher value on “life”



In many organizations -- culture change needed to address issues workload and wellbeing

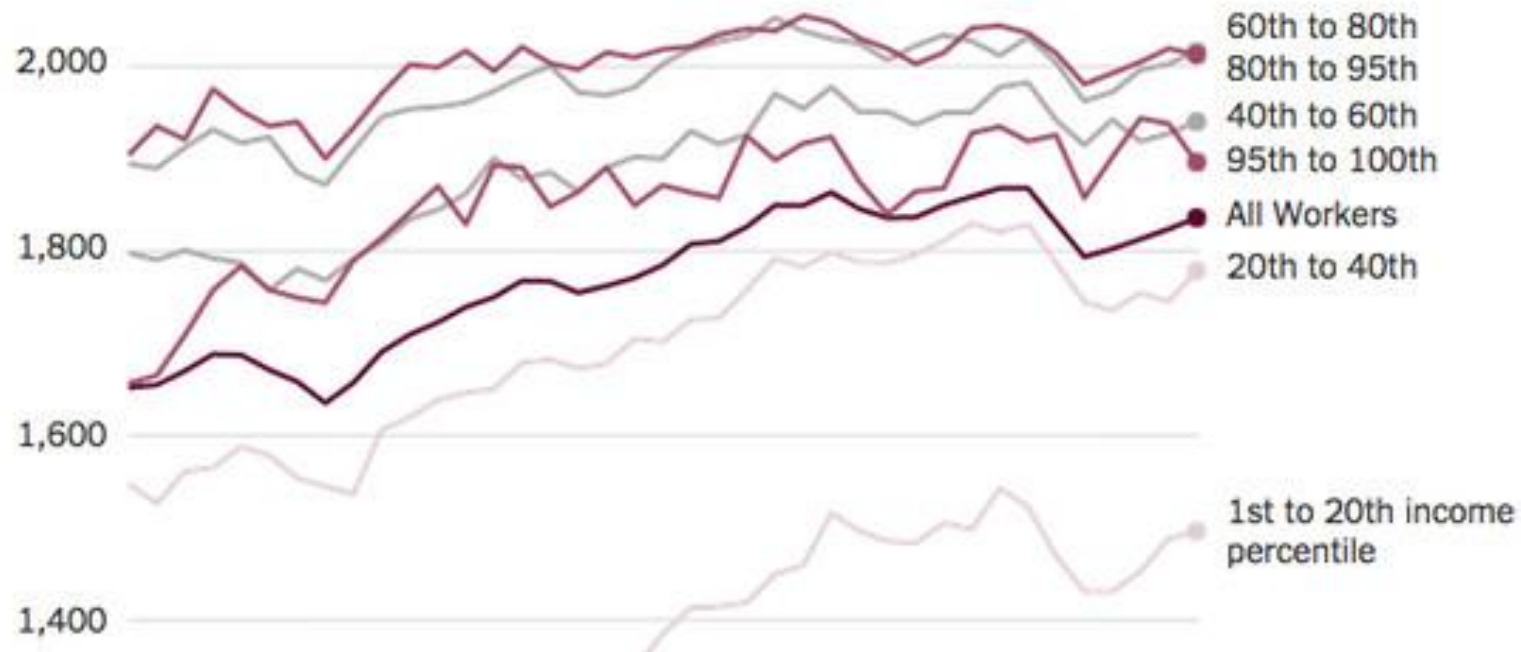
- Many organizations have deeply ingrained “cultures of face time” in which
 - hours at work are used as indicators of productivity and commitment
- Also have a culture that favours the boiled frog
- If these cultures are in place it will be challenging to address issues associated with employee wellbeing

Hours spent working have increased over the past four decades : Pay has not kept pace

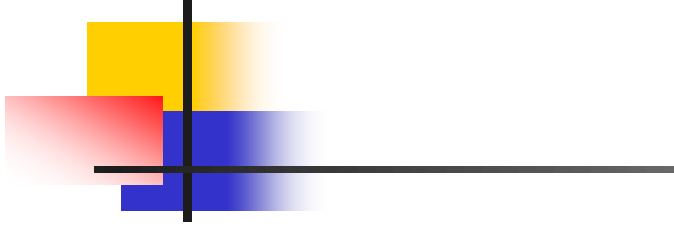
The Rise in American Work Hours

The hours we work vary by business cycle and income, but they have increased for all workers over the last four decades.

Average annual hours worked by paid workers age 18 to 64, by income percentile



Quiet Quitting

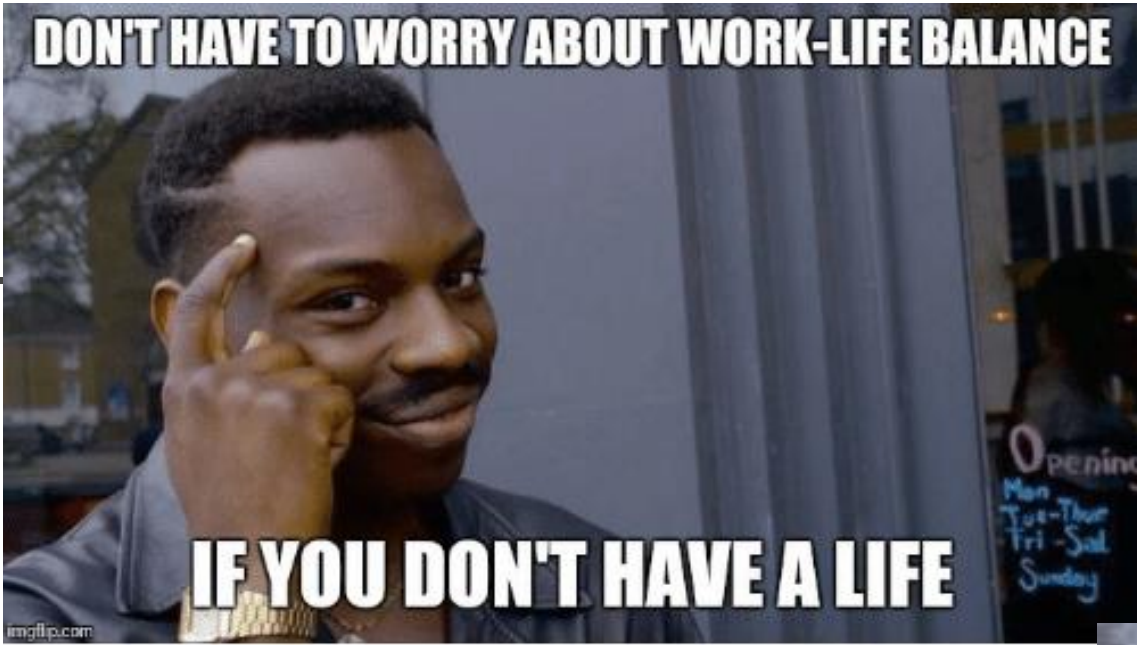


**"QUIET
QUITTING"**

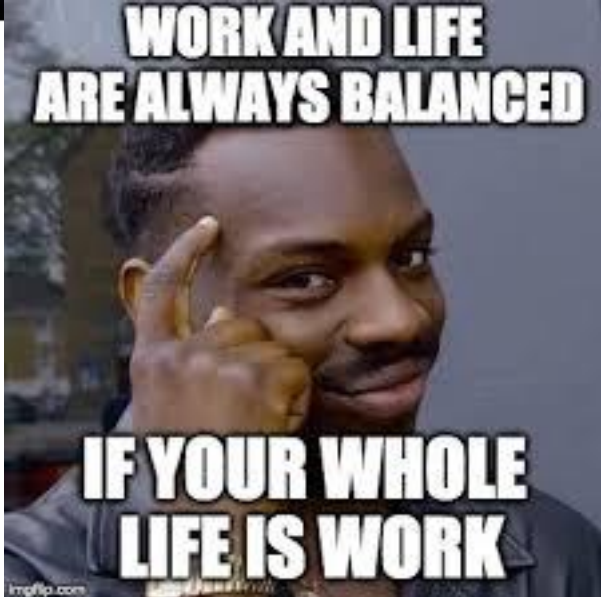


**"ACTING
YOUR WAGE"**





Many also have 24/7 cultures where boiled frog is honoured



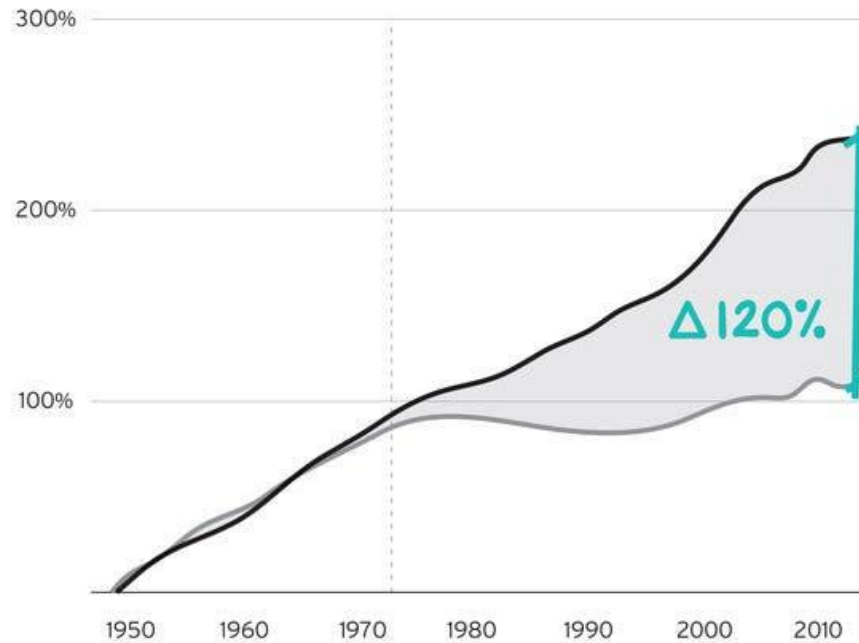
Pay has not kept pace

New York Times, Sept. 27th, 2022

Productivity Relative to Hourly Compensation

Indexed to 1948

— Productivity — Hourly compensation



Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economic Policy Institute.

Note: Productivity equals net output for U.S. goods and services minus depreciation, per hour worked. Hourly compensation is inflation-adjusted and accounts for U.S. non-management workers.



Ignore organizational culture at your own risk

- Companies that do not factor the need to change the culture into their planning exercises risk having two organizational cultures emerge:
 - the culture of face time/24-7 availability, and
 - the culture of the disenfranchised who are working remotely.
- The culture of face time is likely to dominate as those who work on site will continue to benefit from the positive elements of co-location and in-person collaboration.



Moving away from a 24/7 culture - organizations need to

- Challenge the existing culture by answering the following questions:
 - How long should people take for lunch (or should they take a lunch)?
 - When should people be at their desk working?
 - Do all people need to be working at some specified time?
 - How available should someone be outside of standard work hours?
 - What is the “end of a typical workday?”



Leading Through a Crisis OR Managing a Response

- All crisis have a beginning, a middle and an end
 - ***What Was-*** relative stability and predictability
 - ***What Is*** – disruption which if managed poorly leads to chaos
 - ***What Will Be*** – a different state or extinction
- Actions of managers and leaders in the midst of this disruption will help determine final end state



Analogy:

Person has serious heart attack

- EMTs rush person to hospital where expert team executes established procedures because there is little time to be creative or improvise
- Once the emergency passes a set of less urgent but still high-stake challenges remain
 - How does patient prevent another attack?
 - How does patient adapt to the new realities in order to thrive?
- Crisis is over but the underlying issues that contributed to the crisis at the beginning remain
 - Serious change is needed



Crisis Leadership/Management has Two Stages

- Stage One: Emergency Phase
 - Task is to stabilize situation and buy time
 - Also key here is to show empathy for those around you and be flexible
- Stage Two: Adaptive Phase
 - Tackle the underlying causes of the crisis and build capacity to thrive in changed environment
- Which of these two stages more “treacherous” for a leader?



Stage Two: The Adaptive Phase

- Why is this stage so challenging?
 - People are still very anxious and often exhausted – they want you to provide them with some measure of certainty of what is going to happen
 - People want direction
- Risk? No one has a crystal ball and overselling solutions at this point can result in a loss of trust later down the line
 - BUT you still need to lead/act



What should you not do?

- Try and solve the problem with short-term fixes (tightened controls, cuts, restructuring)
- Focus on “same ole, same ole” - it is not business as usual
- Assume if you survive the crisis that all will be well
 - Significant change is still needed (only 20% of heart attack victims change their behaviour – the rest die!)
 - But the reduction in urgency often blinds leaders to the need to adapt and change
- What **should** you do? Seize the moment



Key conclusions:

“the future of work is not going to be a choice between in-person, remote, or hybrid. You need to be fabulous in all of them and learn how to connect with people and work well with people in order to achieve your goals” Neeley, 2022,

HBR, Reprint number: HO6TLB



Final words of wisdom



- Look after yourself
 - Put yourself first sometimes
- Take the death bed test

Remember – keep things in perspective





And remember to laugh

**US: WE CANT SHUT
EVERYTHING DOWN BECAUSE
OF CLIMATE CHANGE!**

**MOTHER NATURE: OH
REALLY? HERES A VIRUS.
HAVE A LITTLE PRACTICE!!**