

# Mobile Mental Health and the Workplace - Landscape Study

## Abstract

The market for Mobile Health (mHealth) apps is currently at \$53.6 billion and will be \$166.2 billion by 2028. Before the Covid-19 Pandemic there was growing research and awareness of mental health issues within the workplace. The pandemic created a unique natural experiment to force new capabilities for telehealth and mHealth apps to be used on a global scale. There was also a significant uptick in reported mental health impacts during that time. Now as we rise out of the pandemic, there is a new focus on personal balance of work and mental health. There is also more openness of employees to report these impacts. All of these things will drive the next major surge of investment and innovation in this space, making mental health more accessible than ever before at lower costs and with easier access.

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## Introduction

In the years leading up to 2020, there was a clear increase of focus and action toward addressing mental health in developed economies. Even in the workplace, surveys were beginning to show steady increases in employees self-reporting mental health issues. mHealth (mobile health) applications began to appear specifically focused on mental health concerns. During the Covid-19 pandemic blurred boundaries between work and home life for remote workers brought focus for both the impacts of mental health on work life as well as an acute need for mHealth solutions to allow for personalized remote services and support. As the economy recovers, workers are reevaluating the jobs and industries in which they work. Knowledge workers are pointing their home offices to new employers' virtual workplaces at a dramatic rate, leaving stressful situations for a fresh start. Mental health plays a key role in all of this, and mHealth applications will play a key role in this new landscape.

# MIND THE WORKPLACE 2021

Mental Health America's (MHA) *Mind the Workplace 2021 Report* provides an opportunity to better understand the mental health challenges that employees across company size and industry are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

MHA's Work Health Survey findings show that that pandemic has amplified preexisting issues for employees, including, increased risk for workplace stress and burnout, degradation of employee mental health and well-being, and inadequate access to affordable healthcare.

## WORKPLACE STRESS

**9 IN 10**

EMPLOYEES REPORT THAT THEIR WORKPLACE STRESS AFFECTS THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

**3 IN 5**

EMPLOYEES ARE NOT RECEIVING ADEQUATE SUPPORT FROM SUPERVISORS TO HELP MANAGE STRESS.

## EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

**4 IN 5**

EMPLOYEES FEEL EMOTIONALLY DRAINED FROM THEIR WORK, AN EARLY SIGN OF BURNOUT.

**56%** OF EMPLOYEES SPEND TIME LOOKING FOR A NEW POSITION, COMPARED TO

**40%** OF EMPLOYEES IN 2018.

## WORK ENVIRONMENT

**65%** OF EMPLOYEES FIND IT DIFFICULT TO CONCENTRATE BECAUSE OF THEIR WORK ENVIRONMENT, COMPARED TO

**46%** OF EMPLOYEES IN 2018.

**ONLY 5%**

OF EMPLOYEES STRONGLY AGREED THAT THEIR EMPLOYER PROVIDES A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR EMPLOYEES WHO LIVE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS.

## FINANCIAL INSECURITY

**OVER 60%**

OF EMPLOYEES ARE NOT PAID ENOUGH TO SAVE FOR AN EMERGENCY.

**1 IN 3**

EMPLOYEES CANNOT AFFORD THEIR HEALTHCARE COSTS.

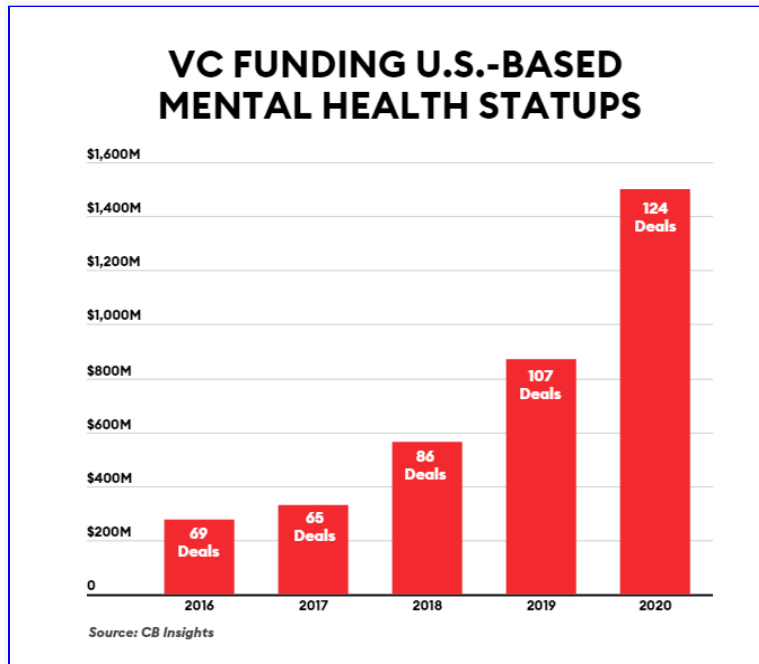
To learn more about the current national state of workplace mental health, download the full *Mind the Workplace 2021 Report* at [mhanational.org/2021mindtheworkplace](https://mhanational.org/2021mindtheworkplace).



## Mental Health Market Trend

Mobile Health (mHealth) market size is \$53.6 billion in 2021 globally, growing to \$166.2 billion by 2028.

The psychological toll of pandemic has vastly expanded the need for mental health and sparked a surge in businesses that provide them. The graph below shows the explosion in VC funding for mental health startups.

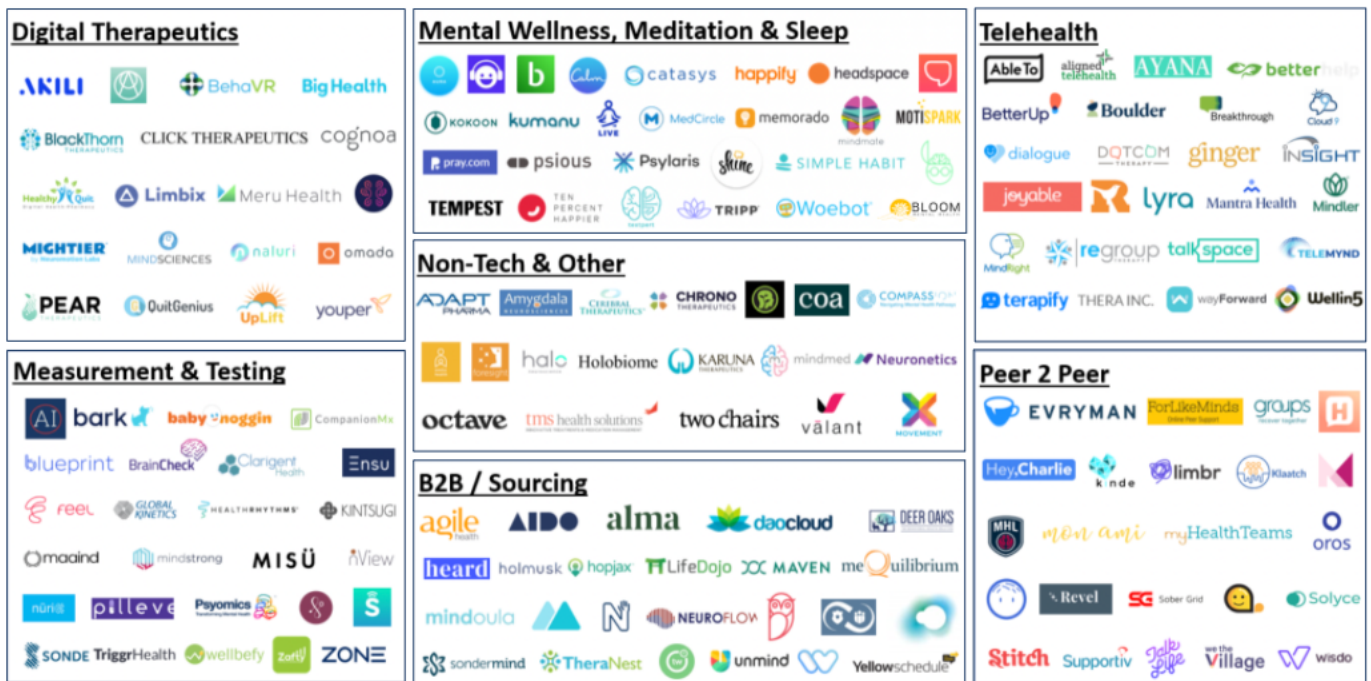


Mental health startup funding reached a record \$1.9B already by May, 2021 alone, more than the record \$1.8B amount raised in all of 2020. It accounted for 19% of all digital health funding in Q1 2021.

Primary reasons for this were:

1. Soaring customer demand driven by Pandemic, not just among adults, but also for kids and teens
2. Greater acceptance of telehealth, partially enable by improved video chat technologies
3. Last year's Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act makes it harder for insurance company to deny care
4. Valuation momentum for VC backed companies like Lyra Health (now worth \$4.6B)

## Market Segments



**Mental Wellness Applications (172 startups)** — Apps for sleep, meditation, and better mental health.

- **Headspace:** Meditation app
- **Happify:** science-based activities and games can help you overcome negative thoughts, stress, and life's challenges.
- **SuperBetter:** build resilience, achieve goals, and tackle challenges including anxiety, depression, stress, chronic pain, concussion recovery and more
- **Calm** offers a global health and wellness brand application designed to help its users meditate and relax.

**B2B Tools and Sourcing (134 startups)** — B2B/corporate mental health programs and services.

- **Spring Health** provides employers with a comprehensive and effective solution for employee mental well-being.

**Measurement and Testing (119 startups)** — Tools for real-time measurement and tracking of mental health data.

- **Mindstrong** is committed to reshaping mental health through improvements in data measurement, data science, and virtual care models.

**Telehealth (114 startups)** — Remote and on-demand access to mental health services.

- **Lyra** helps companies improve access to effective mental health care for their employees.
- **BetterUp** is a mobile-based leadership development platform used by Fortune 500 companies.
- **Talkspace** is an online therapy startup that offers confidential therapy with a network of licensed therapists.
- **Modern Health** is a mental well-being platform for innovative companies offering therapy, coaching, and self-guided courses all in one app.
- **Ginger** is an on-demand mental health company providing around-the-clock access to emotional support via coaching, therapy, and psychiatry.

**Non-Tech and Other (68 startups)** — Medications, Brick and mortar treatment centers and clinics.

- **Karuna Therapeutics** is a Massachusetts-based developer of drugs for the treatment of schizophrenia.

**Digital Therapeutics (62 startups)** — Digital services for tracking and identification of mental health issues.

- **Youper**: AI chat-bot app designed to help users identify, track, and process their thoughts and feelings
- **Omada Health**, A digital behavioral medicine company dedicated to inspiring and empowering people everywhere to live free of chronic illness.

**Peer to Peer (48 startups)** — Apps and services that connect people to each other and provide community.

- **TalkLife** The Social Network That Saves Lives
- **Evryman** is a global community of men who come together to challenge and support one another.
- **Klaatch** is a Holistic analytic platform that provides insights about social connection and programs to combat loneliness among older adults

## U.S.-Based Mental Health Unicorns

Over 700+ startups have been funded leading to some of the highly valued unicorns in the Services category below.

Company	Valuation	Year Founded	Funding Received
Genoa	\$2.5 Billion	2000	\$44.5M
Lyra Health	\$2.3 Billion	2015	\$675.1M
Spring Health	\$2 Billion	2016	\$295.5M
Calm	\$2 Billion	2012	\$218M
BetterUp	\$1.7 Billion	2013	\$570M
Talkspace	\$1.4 Billion	2012	\$414M
Modern Health	\$1.2 Billion	2017	\$167M
Ginger	\$1.1 Billion	2011	\$221M



## Mental Health and the Workplace

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the need for employee mental health over the tipping point, but promoting employee mental health has long been the topic of research institutes, despite the stigma of this topic makes it a taboo in many workplaces, even today in a socially isolated pandemic world.

### Workplace Mental Health Before the COVID-19 Pandemic

In 2019, a study published in the American Journal of Health Promotion compared the common mental health disorders and behavioral problems among adults in the US, Canada, Australia, and Europe (Table 3.1,). The paper further linked workplace mental health to the nature of work, and social or work friends support. At some leading employers in the US, Canada and Europe, senior leadership recognized and got involved in developing workplace mental health as part of their corporate civic duty by financially contributing to mental health organizations, or implementing mental health as part of their employee assistance programs (EAP) as far back as 2007.

	United States	Canada	Australia	Europe/ UK	Global Avg.
<b>Mental Disorders Clinical Status</b>					
Neurotic – Anxiety	5.7%	4.8%	7.0%	5.9%	7.1%
Mood – Depression	7.4%	5.2%	6.2%	3.3%	5.3%
Substance – Alcohol Abuse	6.4%	NA	5.1%	8.7%	5.4%
Substance – Illicit Drugs*	3.0%	2.0%	2.4%	8.0%	2.0%
<i>Any Clinical Disorder Above</i>	<i>20.3%</i>	<i>20.0%</i>	<i>20.0%</i>	<i>17.0%</i>	<i>18.5%</i>
<b>Other Problems</b>					
Marijuana Use	9.6%	12.3%	10.4%	11.3%	4.0%
Misuse of Prescription Drugs	6.0%	1.5%	4.8%	11.7%	NA
Binge Alcohol Use	24.5%	24.4%	25.5%	NA	18.4%

\*Marijuana use excluded

Table 3.1 Prevalence Rates Per Year, Common Mental Health Disorders and Behavioral Problems in Global Adult Populations ([source](#))

Historically, senior-leader-driven mental health approaches were reactively driven by staff events or triggers, not proactive or preventive. In UK firms, “often actions were taken after a highly personal or emotional case for change, rather than an objective, data-driven view of the impacts of workplace wellbeing on business performance.” (Table 3.2)





Table 3.2 An Organization’s Approaches to Workplace Mental Health ([source](#))

## After the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 viral pneumonia started in Wuhan, China in late December 2019, and became a global pandemic in February 2020. At the time of writing, November 2021, the pandemic has not been fully contained.

The pandemic has led four times more people in the U.S. to get services from Mental Health America (MHA), one of the nation’s oldest mental health providers. Narrowing down to the workplace, there is a 29% increase of U.S. full-time employees reporting at least one symptom of a mental health condition in 2021 (79%), compared to 2019 (59%). Most notably, “burnout” emerged as a new symptom reported by 56% of all employees polled (Table 3.3). 36% of symptoms cumulatively lasted five months to an entire year, while 80% lasted one month or longer. The top three symptoms were: burnout, depression, and anxiety.



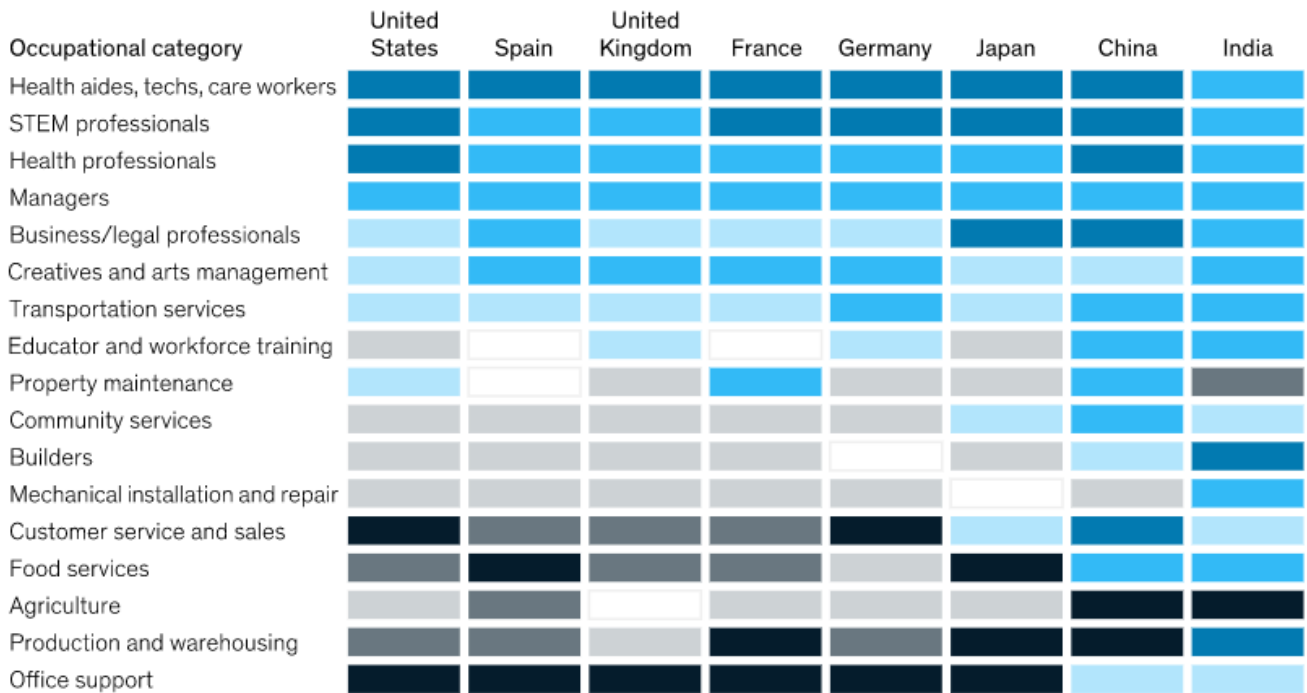
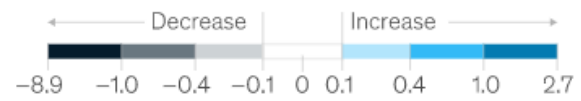
Table 3.3 The Effect of the COVID Pandemic on Workplace Mental Health, 2021 vs 2019 ([source](#))

As a result of the increased mental health challenges, employees are leaving their jobs for their mental health. Younger workers and underrepresented communities are disproportionately impacted. 50% of full-time U.S. workers have left a previous role due to, at least partially, mental health reasons.

On average, workers reported performing at 72% of their full capability in the past year (2020 to 2021) while absenteeism is on the rise.

## The mix of occupations may shift by 2030 in the post-COVID-19 scenario.

Estimated change in share of total employment, post-COVID-19 scenario, 2018 to 2030,<sup>1</sup> percentage points



<sup>1</sup>The pre-COVID-19 scenario includes the effects of eight trends: automation, rising incomes, aging populations, increased technology use, climate change, infrastructure investment, rising education levels, and marketization of unpaid work. The post-COVID-19 scenario includes all pre-COVID-19 trends as well as accelerated automation, accelerated e-commerce, increased remote work, and reduced business travel.  
Source: McKinsey Global Institute analysis

## The Inflection Point

The impact of COVID on the workforce drove welcoming changes in employers in terms of company culture and investment. Culture efforts are on the rise: mental health is becoming an organizational priority supported by managers and leadership. Companies are investing into workplace mental health by offering From the employee’s perspective, the greatest growth in mental health accommodations used by employees are more focused on day-to-day support: extended breaks (+550%), flexible schedules and communications (+333%), and **time for therapy during workday (+300%, Table 3.4).**

**Companies are investing more into workplace mental health—sort of.**

Mental health resources *offered* by companies grew:

<i>Paid time off</i>	<i>Mental health days</i>	<i>Mental health training</i>
<b>+55%</b>	<b>+41%</b>	<b>+33%</b>

But the greatest growth in accommodations *used* by employees focused on day-to-day support:

<i>Extended or more frequent breaks</i>	<i>Adjustments to communications with others</i>	<i>Time for therapy during the workday</i>
<b>+550%</b>	<b>+333%</b>	<b>+300%</b>

Table 3.4 An Organization’s Approaches to Workplace Mental Health ([source](#))

The COVID pandemic also drove governments to ease the regulations on mobile health (mHealth) tools such as apps and devices. In April 2020, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued new guidance in the wake of the COVID-19 emergency that relaxes pre-market certification on certain Class 2 prescription-only connected health tools, such as apps and devices, that are designed to treat depression, anxiety, insomnia and other conditions. The guidance also clarifies the agency’s rules on low-risk devices aimed at health and wellness ([source](#)).

The impact of the pandemic accelerated two sectors:

1. Increased demand in employee-initiated day-to-day mental therapy.
2. mHealth apps and devices approved by the FDA to supplement psychiatric in-person or telehealth care.

These two sectors can be converged into a new opportunity: mobile mental health.

## The Role of the Employer

### Growing Awareness in the workplace

In the United States, 76% of full time workers reported experiencing mental health conditions within the past year according to Mind Share Partners’ 2021 Mental Health at Work Report. These included burnout (56% of respondents), depression (46%), and anxiety (40%), all increased from 2019.

## Retention

As we begin to move out of the Covid-19 Pandemic we have entered a period dubbed “The Great Resignation.” As workplaces and businesses open and jobs have become abundant, millions of people are quitting their jobs and mental health is at the core of it. As many as 41% of the global workforce may be considering resignation.([source](#)) Some are looking for the peace of mind of a job with benefits or more stable pay, but many are taking stock of how their work is impacting their life. In 2020 as many as 81% of GenZ workers left their job for mental health reasons. Companies that are not working to create a workplace that values employee’s mental health will see employee leave for other options. ([source](#))

## Productivity

Events from racially charged violence and more visibility for LGBTQ+ communities during the pandemic also come into play. According to a 2020 HBR Survey, 54% of surveyed workers saw mental health is a DEI issue. In addition are companies’ work from home or in-office requirements. While many people want to get back into their offices to get focus and in-person collaboration, many others have found major benefits to remote work. Flexibility in the timing of their work, removing long commute times and expense and for some people in under-represented groups, an equalizing effect. Policies such as mental health days (or weeks in some cases) have been employed to force some additional space into the pandemic work life balance. As we move out of this unique inflection point, employers will need to continue to make changes to how they are valuing employees and their overall mental health. ([source](#))

## Engagement

As companies will be under increased competition to retain talent, benefits and access to mental health services will continue to be an important part of how to foster a sense of belonging and engagement at work. Mhealth apps for their workforce will evolve to play an important role in that equation. They will have the opportunity to encourage better balance and perspective, while also providing important metrics on how well employers are supporting their employees’ mental health. Data from these applications will complement engagement and employee satisfaction data that is already being collected for engagement purposes. ([source](#))

## Government role in the future of mHealth Applications

The role of governments in the growth of the mHealth market and success of applications varies dramatically by country. In developing nations, the lack of health care infrastructure and prevalence of mobile phones, and more rural population make mHealth a powerful tool. There are proposals in 2021 for standards in Botswana, for example to link mhealth applications to electronic health record systems to further improve efficiency and effectiveness of these services.([source](#))

In the developed economies such as the United States, where healthcare is decentralized, the role of the government has been to ensure standards for healthcare requirements do not prevent patients from receiving the care that would otherwise be possible. During Covid-19 telehealth requirements were relaxed to allow remote patient calls, for example. With mobile devices, this became a near-universal means to get doctor guidance without having to visit a hospital or doctor's office. In countries with centralized healthcare like the UK, government healthcare agencies have made massive investments to reduce the overall cost on their systems. The UK alone accounted for 37% of the \$5.9 Billion global investment in mHealth applications. ([source](#))

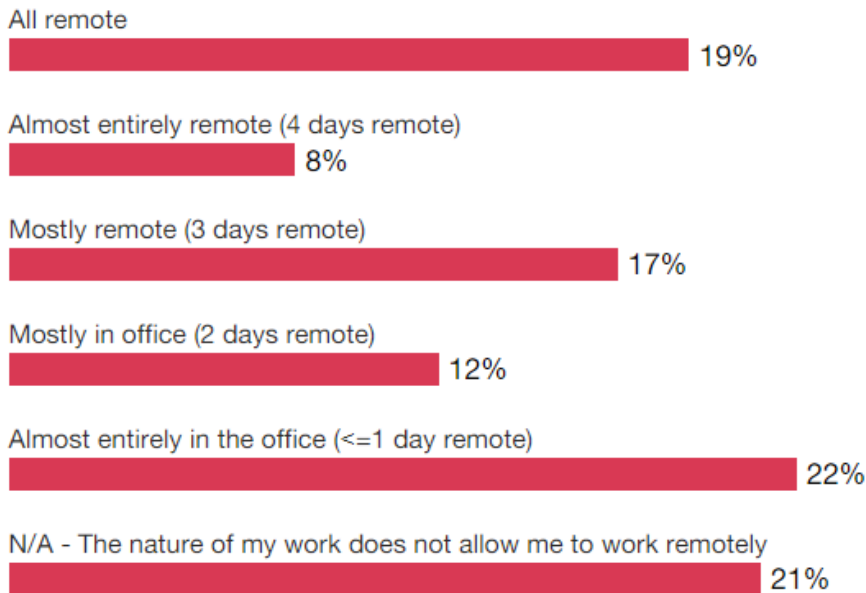
## The Future of Work and Impact

### Trends of future work

- Increase in remote working

A recent Gartner poll showed that 48% of employees will likely work remotely at least part of the time after COVID-19 versus 30% before the pandemic. As organizations shift to more remote work operations, explore the critical competencies employees will need to collaborate digitally, and be prepared to adjust employee experience strategies. Consider whether and how to shift performance goal-setting and employee evaluations for a remote context.

## Employee preferences for hybrid work are all over the map



Employee Q: If your employer allowed you to choose when you worked remotely, how often would you want to work remotely after COVID-19 is no longer a concern?  
Source: PwC US Pulse Survey, August 19, 2021: base of 1,007 full-time and part-time employees

### ➤ Expanded data collection

Analysis shows that 16% of employers are using technologies more frequently to monitor their employees through methods such as virtual clocking in and out, tracking work computer usage, and monitoring employee emails or internal communications/chat. While some companies track productivity, others monitor employee engagement and well-being to better understand employee experience.

### ➤ Contingent worker expansion

The economic uncertainty of the pandemic has caused many workers to lose their jobs and exposed others for the first time to nonstandard work models. Many organizations responded to the pandemic's economic impact by reducing their contractor budgets, but there has since been a shift.

Analysis shows that organizations will continue to expand their use of contingent workers to maintain more flexibility in workforce management post-COVID-19, and will consider introducing other job models they have seen during the pandemic, such as talent sharing and 80% pay for 80% work.

### ➤ Expanded employer role as social safety net

The pandemic has increased the trend of employers playing an expanded role in their employees' financial, physical and mental well-being. Support includes enhanced sick leave, financial assistance,



adjusted hours of operation and child care provisions. The current economic crisis has also pushed the bounds of how employers view the employee experience.

- Separation of critical skills and roles

Before COVID-19, critical roles were viewed as roles with critical skills, or the capabilities an organization needed to meet its strategic goals. Now, employers are realizing that there is another category of critical roles — roles that are critical to the success of essential workflows.

- (De-)Humanization of employees

While some organizations have recognized the humanitarian crisis of the pandemic and prioritized the well-being of employees as people over employees as workers, others have pushed employees to work in conditions that are high risk with little support — treating them as workers first and people second.

- Emergence of new top-tier employers

Prior to COVID-19, organizations were already facing increased employee demands for transparency. Employees and prospective candidates will judge organizations by the way in which they treated employees during the pandemic. Balance the decisions made today to resolve immediate concerns during the pandemic with the long-term impact on the employment brand.

- Transition from designing for efficiency to designing for resilience

A 2019 Gartner organization design survey found that 55% of organizational redesigns were focused on streamlining roles, supply chains and workflows to increase efficiency. While this approach captured efficiencies, it also created fragilities, as systems have no flexibility to respond to disruptions. Resilient organizations were better able to respond — correct course quickly with change.

- Increase in organization complexity

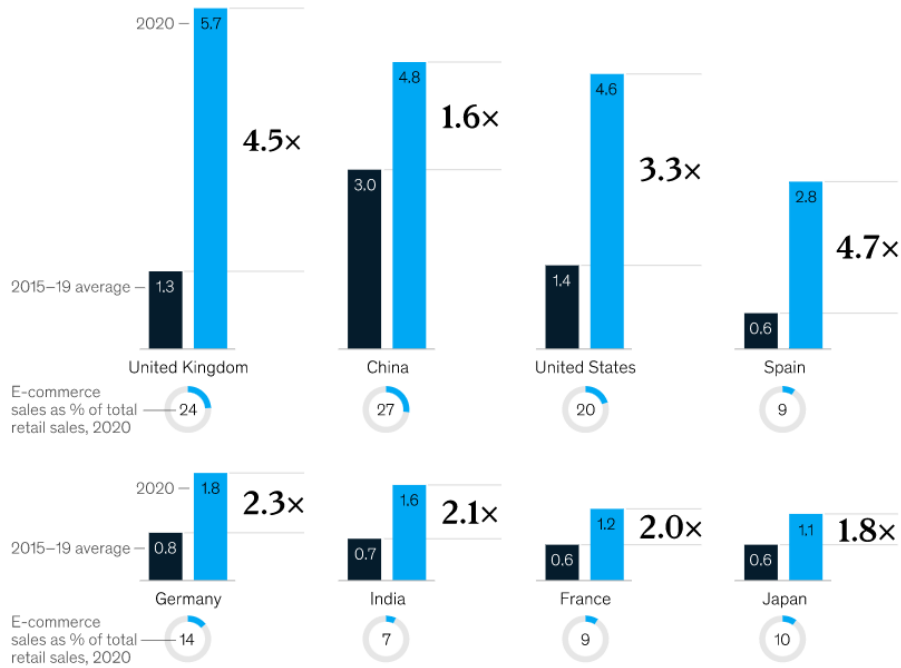
After the global financial crisis, global M&A activity accelerated, and many companies were nationalized to avoid failure. As the pandemic subsides, there will be a similar acceleration of M&A and nationalization of companies. Companies will focus on expanding their geographic diversification and investment in secondary markets to mitigate and manage risk in times of disruption. This rise in complexity of size and organizational management will create challenges for leaders as operating models evolve.

### **Remote work and virtual meetings are likely to continue, albeit less intensely than at the pandemic's peak**

Many consumers discovered the convenience of e-commerce and other online activities during the pandemic. In 2020, the share of e-commerce grew at two to five times the rate before COVID-19 (Exhibit 2). And also, US executives planning new investment to support hybrid working:

**E-commerce has grown two to five times faster than before the pandemic.**

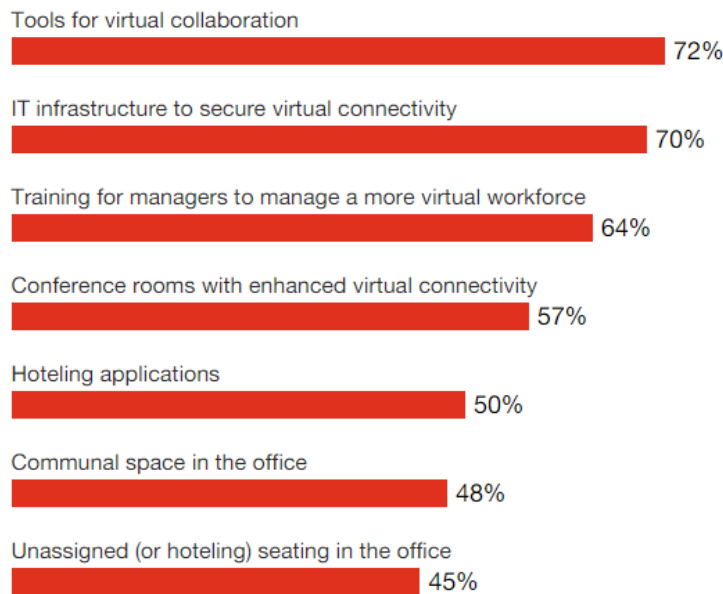
Year-over-year growth of e-commerce as share of total retail sales, percentage points



Source: Retailing by Euromonitor International, 2021; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

**US executives planning new investment to support hybrid working**

■ % planning increased investment



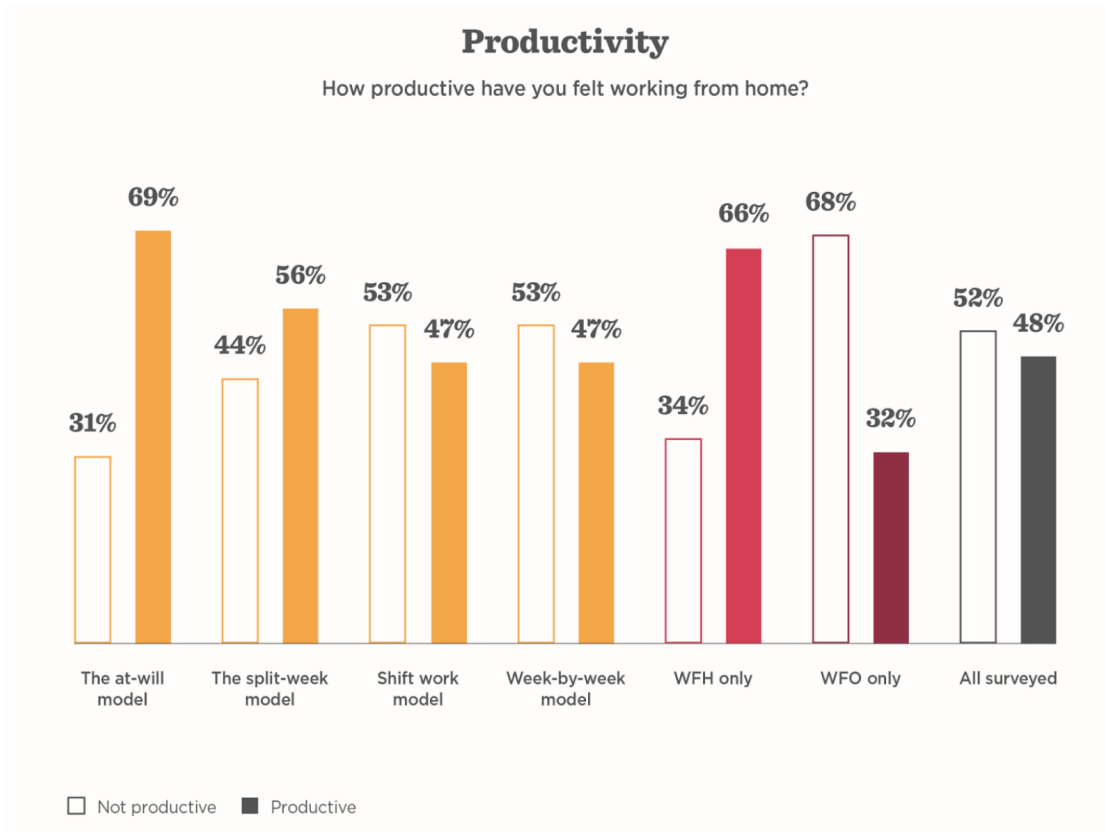
**Impact**

Companies that adopt a hybrid workplace stand to save an estimated \$11,000 on each employee who works remotely half of the time.

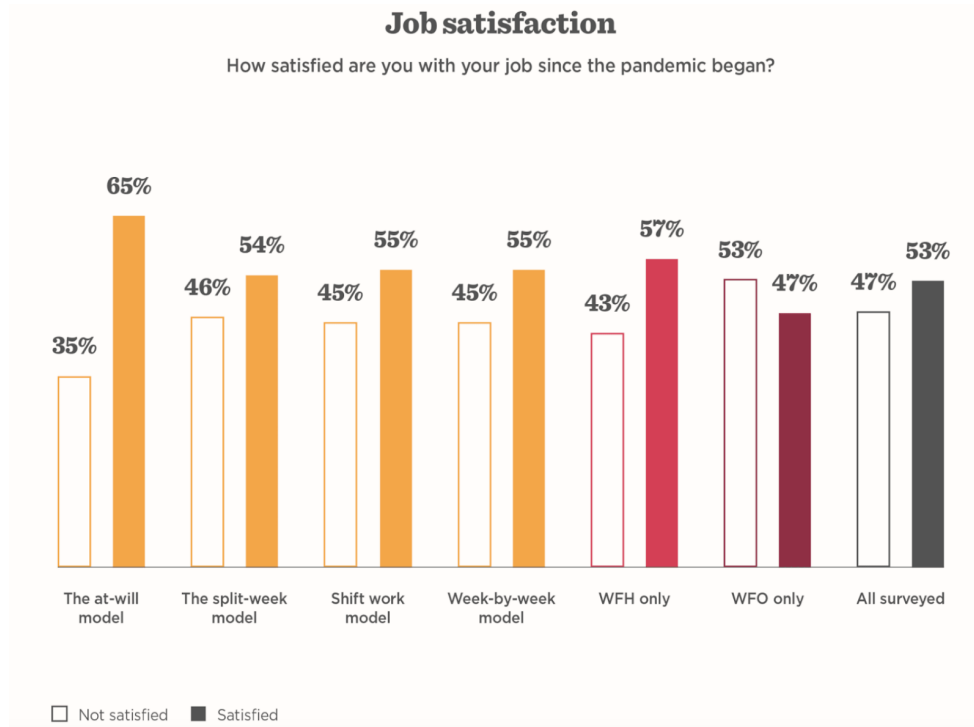
➤ **Benefits of hybrid work**

Introducing hybrid working arrangements, and ensuring they work for all parties, is a lot easier said than done. There are potentially significant benefits to employees with hybrid model, such as:

- Higher employee morale with increase in productivity



- Lower staff turnover due to job satisfaction



- Reduced costs
- A wider pool of talent to recruit from
- Healthier company culture

➤ **Potential downsides of hybrid work**

It's important for business owners to recognize both the potential pros and cons of hybrid workplace models, as the latter will need to be addressed in order to make such arrangements work.

- Remote workers might feel excluded
- Less social activity
- Collaboration can be challenging
- Communication takes work
- Office workers may receive favorable treatment

➤ **Types of Businesses Stand to Benefit From a Hybrid Workplace?**

Researchers and analysts have studied their outcomes and determined that continuing to work remotely at least two days a week could benefit following groups:

- Office Architects and Designers
- Technology Companies
- Home Improvement Companies and Contractors
- Real Estate Agents

- Office Furniture Suppliers

➤ Types of Businesses May Suffer From a Permanent Shift to Hybrid Work?

Blue-collar workers may be particularly affected because of the impact of hybrid work on businesses like the ones below.

- Office Cleaning and Maintenance Services
- Public Transit
- Food Service Workers
- Downtown Neighborhoods

### Bottom Line

Companies may attempt to commit to a certain model—be it all office, all remote, or hybrid—but find themselves adjusting as they learn more about what works and what doesn't. It's too soon to tell whether hybrid work will be a fleeting idea or become the new normal, as companies and employees still trying to discover the best ways of working during the pandemic. We may all have to adapt and become more comfortable with uncertainty as these experiments play out.

## Conclusions:

- Mobile Health (mHealth) market size is \$53.6 billion in 2021 globally, **growing to \$166.2 billion by 2028.**
- mHealth apps will continue to become **more effective, common.**
- **Mental health awareness** is growing dramatically within the workplace.
- Employers will increasingly see mHealth apps as an **effective, low cost way** to build a healthier and more stable workplace.
- Employees will gradually use these tools more for convenience and **improved health at home and at work.**
- Health care professionals will increasingly use these tools to meet with and do basic treatment and diagnosis even after the pandemic is a memory **due to lower costs, access to care.**

## Recommendations:

- **Investors** into mHealth should look for business models which empower employers. The new workplace will be the source of maximum growth for adoptions of mhealth apps for mental health.
- **Employees** should seek out companies with demonstrated commitments to some mental health support including access to mHealth applications. This is already available in some progressive companies, and should be part of expected benefits.
- **Employers** should look for mHealth applications that can demonstrate effectiveness through data and commit to results. Employers must prioritize mental health mhealth application access as part of their benefits going forward. Younger generations of workers coming up through the ranks and entering the workforce place a very high importance on mental health as a part of the workplace experience and they are willing to move to a new job at another company to fulfill those values.
- **Governments** should do what they can to ensure that mHealth benefits are made available for all of their citizens.



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