

Survey finds new lifestyle preferences drive new era for workplace

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As the COVID-19 pandemic sent millions of Americans home this time last year, many professionals struggled to navigate work and household responsibilities. But a recent survey from Harvard Business School

Online shows that working online did work. In fact, many professionals even experienced advancement and growth—both on the job and at home—this year. "The past year has been difficult for everyone, but what's surprising is how well people feel they've performed at work, while at home," said Patrick Mullane, HBS Online's executive director. "Now, as we're preparing to get back to 'business as usual,' it seems professionals don't want 'business as usual.' Instead, they want flexibility from their employers to allow them to maintain the new work/home balance and productivity they have come to enjoy."

HBS Online retained Cambridge, Mass.-based market research firm City Square Associates to survey nearly 1,500 [professionals](#) who worked remotely during the COVID-19 shutdown from March 2020 to March 2021. Respondents were asked to compare this past year to the prior one.

Professional growth despite personal struggles

Despite the widespread hardships and heartbreaks of COVID-19, there is positive news. The HBS Online survey revealed that [respondents](#) experienced professional and personal wins, along with embracing many healthy—and even some unhealthy—habits.

"Many of us have Zoom fatigue," said Simeen Mohsen, HBS Online's managing director of product management. "Yet, despite not being in the office, many professionals still performed well and were even able to grow in their careers. They somehow rose to the occasion and gave it their all, both as individuals and as teams."

Want to go back to office, but with more flexibility and certain conditions

The survey showed that many professionals miss their colleagues and

other aspects of being in the office, and some want to go back. But since they proved they were able to perform, and even excel, during the pandemic, they want more [flexibility](#).

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