

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a large, circular plaza paved with light-colored square tiles. Numerous people are scattered throughout the plaza, some standing in small groups, others walking. The perspective is from directly above, looking down on the scene. The plaza is bordered by a low wall or railing at the top edge of the frame.

Colleague Engagement Survey Report

icf **nex+**

Contents

ICF next+

FOREWORD.....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
DEMOGRAPHICS OVERVIEW.....	5
CHANGES AT WORK DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS	6
CHANGES TO ORGANIZATION CULTURE.....	9
BELIEVED CHANGES.....	13
HOPED FOR CHANGES.....	16
LEARNING AND INSIGHTS.....	20
ABOUT ICF NEXT	22

Foreword

The purpose of this survey was to explore the difference between employees' hopes for future change vs what they believe their organization will implement. We found a notable difference among respondents in their perceived beliefs and hopes about organizational changes resulting from COVID-19. The overarching theme for what they believe is, changes that occur will be operational in nature. Contrasted with respondents' hopes, we found them to be thematically focused on pastoral care and employee welfare.

We are currently at a crossroads. Many organizations are saying that positive transformation will happen because of COVID-19, but often, employees do not believe them. And now a gap is forming. This is something organizations will need to fill if they are to move forward. For example, employees have spent the second quarter of 2020 working from home and they have the perception that once this has passed, they will lose that ability. When we look to the real world, recoveries are starting to happen, but many organizations are designing for operational recovery only. Which suggests that employee beliefs are not too far off.

Often the priority is, returning to pre-COVID-19 operations with only slight differences. The product might have changed a little and we'll have to do things differently, but the ultimate goal is to go back to a similar thing. And therefore, this raises the question: have employees changed harder and faster and in a more dramatic way than their organizations.



Explore the
difference.

Executive summary

1 Survey respondents are primarily from the UK and work in the private sector. An extended analysis of job titles suggests that the largest single business area of respondents represented in the survey are in marketing, with individuals holding more managerial/ leadership positions within their companies.

4 More than half of the survey respondents have received (in advance) communication from their employer about changes to the work environment when office-based work resumes. Further examination of the open-ended responses using text analysis reveals that 'staggered' working schedules and changes to office layouts are expected to come into effect once office-based work restarts.

2 All but one of the survey participants are now working from home as a response to COVID-19, with 63% of respondents stating they have experienced little to no difficulties with this change.

5 There are notable differences among respondents in their perceived beliefs and hopes about organizational changes resulting from COVID-19. In questions posed to respondents about their belief in organizational change due to COVID-19 restrictions, the overarching theme is that the changes that occur will be operational in nature. This contrasts with responses about respondents' hopes concerning organizational change, which thematically focuses on pastoral care and employee welfare.

3 While few participants experienced extreme difficulty due to the imposed changes, almost half (46%) had feelings of isolation as a result of working remotely and expressed a want and need for more communication from those in leadership positions.

Demographics Overview



SECTORS



There were 72 respondents in the survey, located across 9 countries. The UK is the most represented location with 49 (68%) respondents, followed by the USA with 11 (15%). The majority of respondents (56, or 77%) work in the private sector, with the public sector the second most represented in the survey (13, or 18%).

Changes At Work Due To COVID-19 Restrictions



WORKING FROM HOME

Of the 72 respondents in the survey, 71 are now working from home (5 were already working from home before the restrictions came into effect). The only respondent who does not work from home is based in the USA and works in the healthcare industry.

66 of the respondents provided a reason for working from home: the majority (50, or 76%) are working from home due to instructions or restrictions imposed by their national government. 16 respondents (24%) are working from home due to employers instituting a work from home policy.



LONGER TERM CHANGES TO THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

34 of the 66 respondents (52%) who are working from home have received communication from their employer indicating that new ways of working will come into effect when office-based work restarts. This includes measures such as social distancing to be put in place.

In free text format, 30 of the respondents explained the measures that will be implemented by their employer beyond the social distancing examples listed in the survey question.

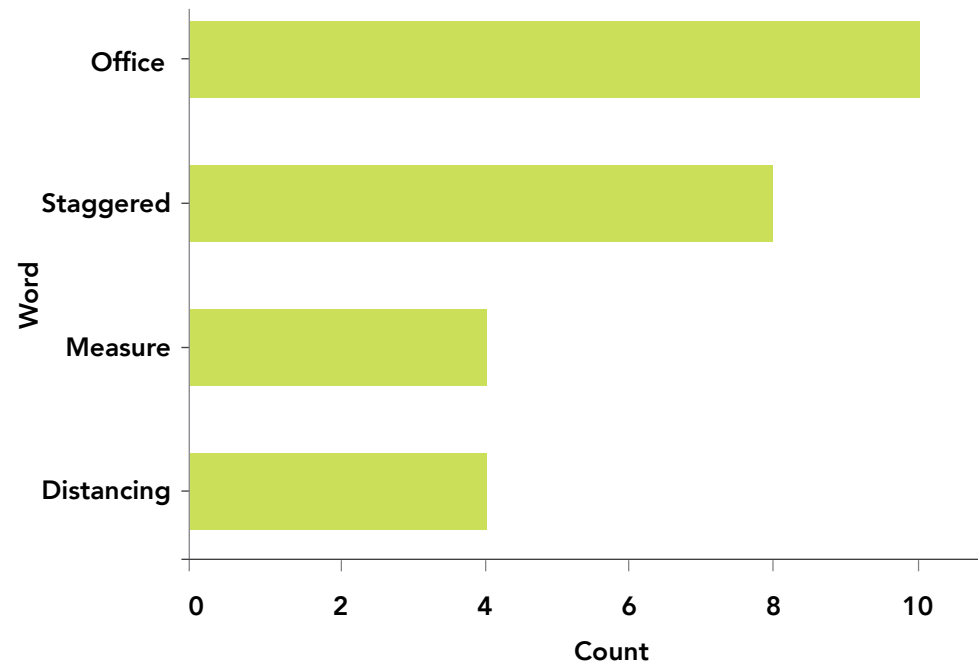
To uncover these trends, text analysis methods were implemented on these responses. Using a bag-of-words method, which extracts features from text by disregarding grammar and word order but keeps multiplicity, the comments have been combined so that the frequency of each word across all comments can be determined. As illustrated below, the top two words are 'office' and 'staggered'.¹

¹This is after text pre-processing where words such as 'the' are removed due to their high frequency in all text irrespective of subject matter.

The comments were also split into bigrams, which divides text into sequences of two adjacent elements so that the word order from the text is maintained. The word pairs with more than one occurrence were 'office' with 'staggered' and 'staggered' with 'seating'. Given that 'staggered' appears in both the high frequency words and the most popular bigrams, comments containing the word have been isolated.

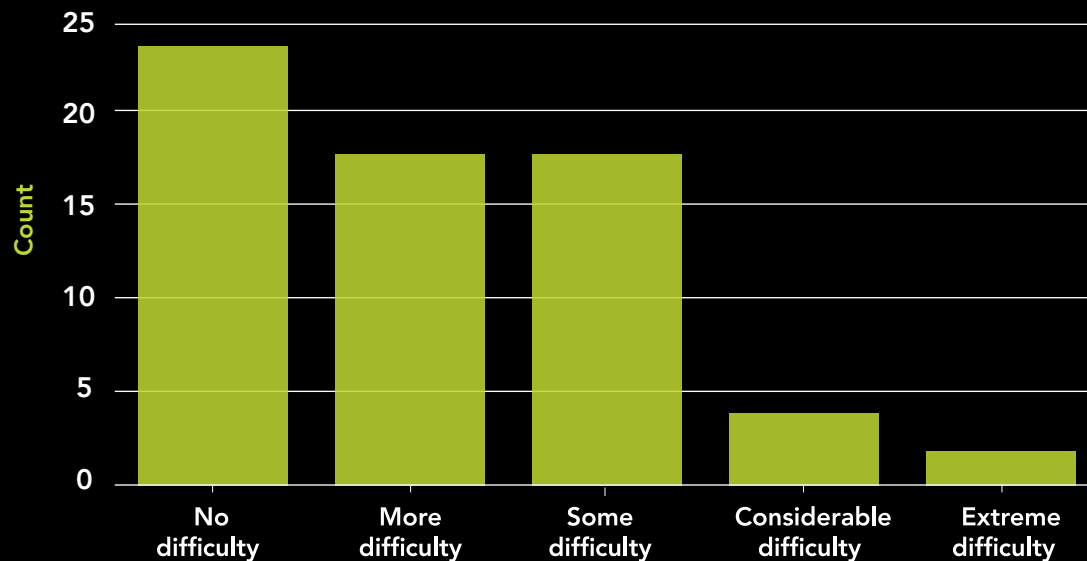
As demonstrated by these comments, 'staggered' has been used principally in two ways: around creating greater physical distance between employees and in relation to reducing office volume through schedule changes. This snapshot of communicated changes indicate how the office working environment may change as a result of COVID-19 in the medium to long-term.

- Staggered seating. Closing of cafeteria. Decrease of occupation volume of office.
- Staggered schedules to have fewer people in the office at once, rotating telework and in-person work staggered going into the office.
- Staggered returns, limited offices numbers
- Social distancing PPE use. Staggered time. No canteen.
- Staggered work schedules.
- Staggered reintroduction into the office for returning staff and rotations for staff working from home/in office for staggered seating.



Working experience since the restrictions

EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTY WITH WAYS OF WORKING DUE TO COVID19 RESTRICTIONS



66 of the survey participants provided a response to the question about the difficulties they have experienced as a result of working from home imposed by COVID-19 restrictions. Most of the respondents indicated they have experienced limited difficulty, with 24 (36%) experiencing no difficulty, 18 (27%) experiencing some minor difficulty, and an equal number experiencing some difficulty.

Changes to organization culture

In response to the question about encountered cultural change in their organization, respondents were given the option to tick all statements which applied to their experience. Statement 5 received the most selections (52, or 74%):

"The senior leadership team has been in touch more regularly with updates around the pandemic and new ways of working."

Statements 6 and 7 refer to feelings of inclusion and isolation with 24 (33%) feeling more isolated in their workplace and only 9 (12.5%) feeling more included. The respondents who selected that they felt more included also selected statement 3 (all except one):

"My manager has ensured that everybody is being kept informed and feels included by introducing additional virtual catch-ups which would happen more naturally in an office environment."

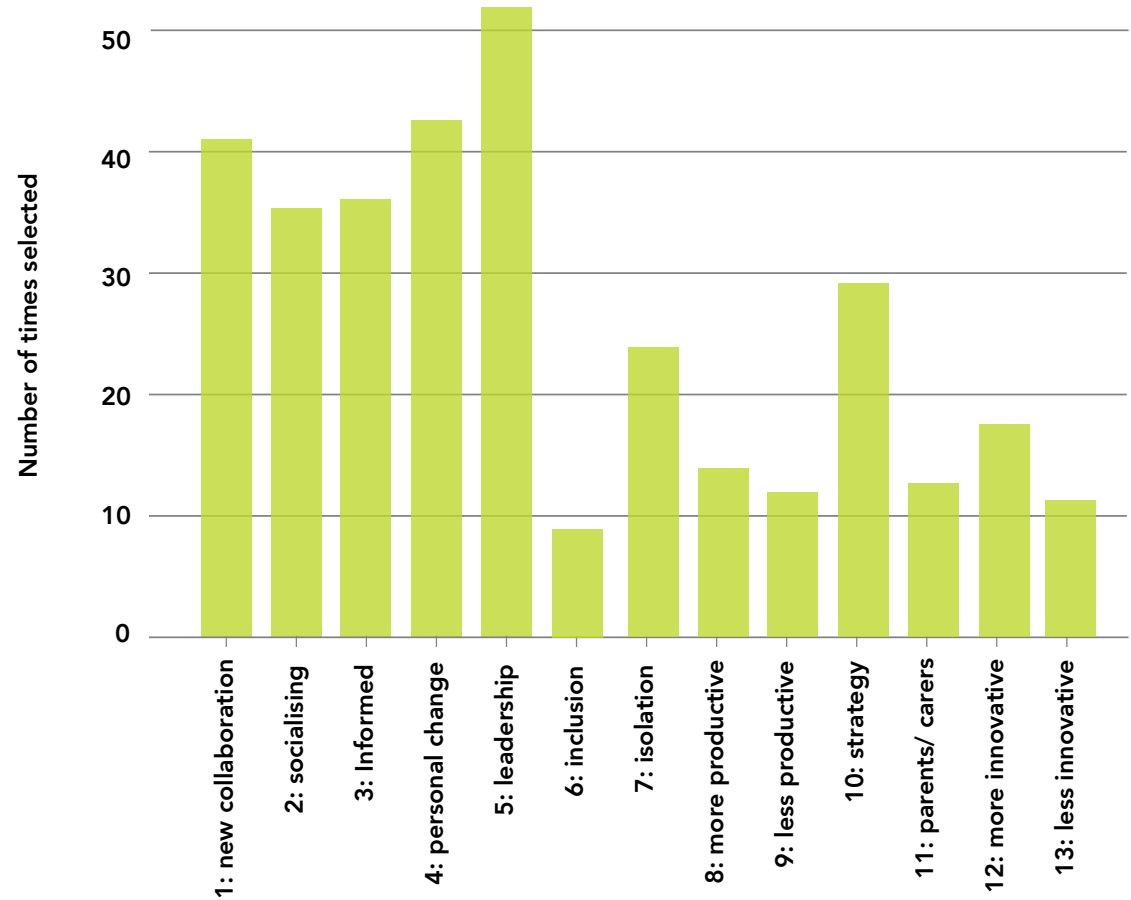
Of those that selected that they feel more isolated, only 46% also selected this statement, suggesting that effective manager

communication may impact how respondents feel in their workplace when working remotely.

Statements 8 and 9 refer to organizational productivity levels. 14 (19%) respondents feel the organization is now more productive than it was pre-COVID-19, and 12 (17%) respondents feel the organization is less productive than it was. Interestingly, when analyzing these responses by how difficult respondents have found the new ways of working due to COVID-19 restrictions, there are clear distinctions. The mean experienced difficulty level of the respondents who believe organizational productivity has decreased is higher (1.58) than for those who believe it has increased (0.92) suggesting that one's own experience of working since the onset of restrictions may color their perception of the organization they work for.

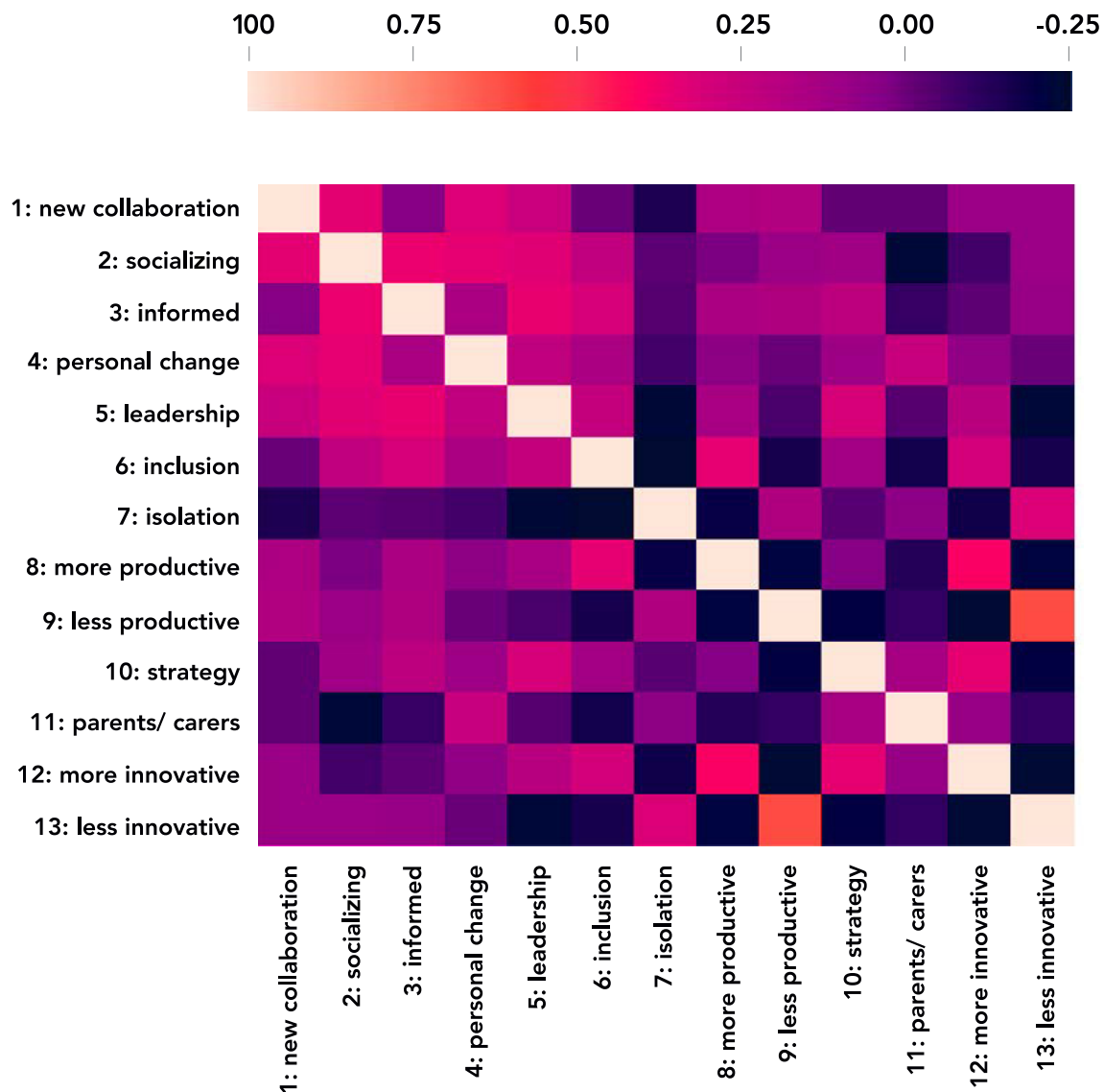
In order to see the degree to which selections of one statement about cultural change are associated – either positively or negatively – with selections of another statement about cultural change, a correlation heatmap was created:

QUESTIONS RELATING TO CULTURE CHANGES IN THE WORKPLACE



This correlation heat-map shows how closely correlated selections are to each other. The highest possible positive correlation is 1, which indicates a perfect positive relationship between selections. The highest possible negative correlation is -1, which indicates the selections are perfectly negatively associated with each other. The strength of each correlation is shown by shade (dark is negative and the lighter the shade the more positive the correlation). In this heat-map, the darkest color only reaches -0.25, therefore there are no strong negative correlations between the selections of two statements. Statement 9 and 13 have the strongest positive correlation of all the combinations (0.6):

I feel as an organization we are less productive.



I feel we are less innovative and creative at work

As statement 13 relates to creativity and the most prominent business area, discerned by job role, is marketing, we split the data into 'creative' and 'non-creative' job roles to uncover more nuanced insights. Creative roles are those which include reference to marketing, creative, brand, design, events, communications. Amongst creatively lead respondents (n=19), the above effect was no longer present and instead there was a fairly strong correlation (0.6) between statements 10 and 12:

I feel the senior leadership has set a clear strategic direction of how to deal with the pandemic and come out of it as successfully as possible.

I feel we are more innovative and creative at work.

For non-creatively lead respondents (n=53) the correlation between productivity (statement 9) and innovation/creativity (statement 13) is marginally higher (0.61). Thus, it may be reasonable to infer that respondents in more creatively led business areas believe they have been able to use the COVID-19 restrictions as an opportunity for greater creativity, while the non-creatively lead respondents see it as more of an impediment.

The correlation between statements 10 and 12 is at its highest when analyzed by sector, with the correlation at 0.64 for the public sector and 0.67 for the private sector.

Believed Changes

One aspect related to cultural change in organizations is the perceived change respondents believe will happen as a result of COVID-19 and its subsequent effects in the workplace. In response to the question about how respondents believed organizations will change, respondents were given the option to tick all statements which applied to them. As can be seen below, the first statement was the most popular, with 61 (85%) holding this belief:

Once restrictions are lifted, remote working will still be more common than before they were put in place.

Following this, 54 (75%) respondents believe the following:

The layout and rules of the workplace will change to allow for social distancing.

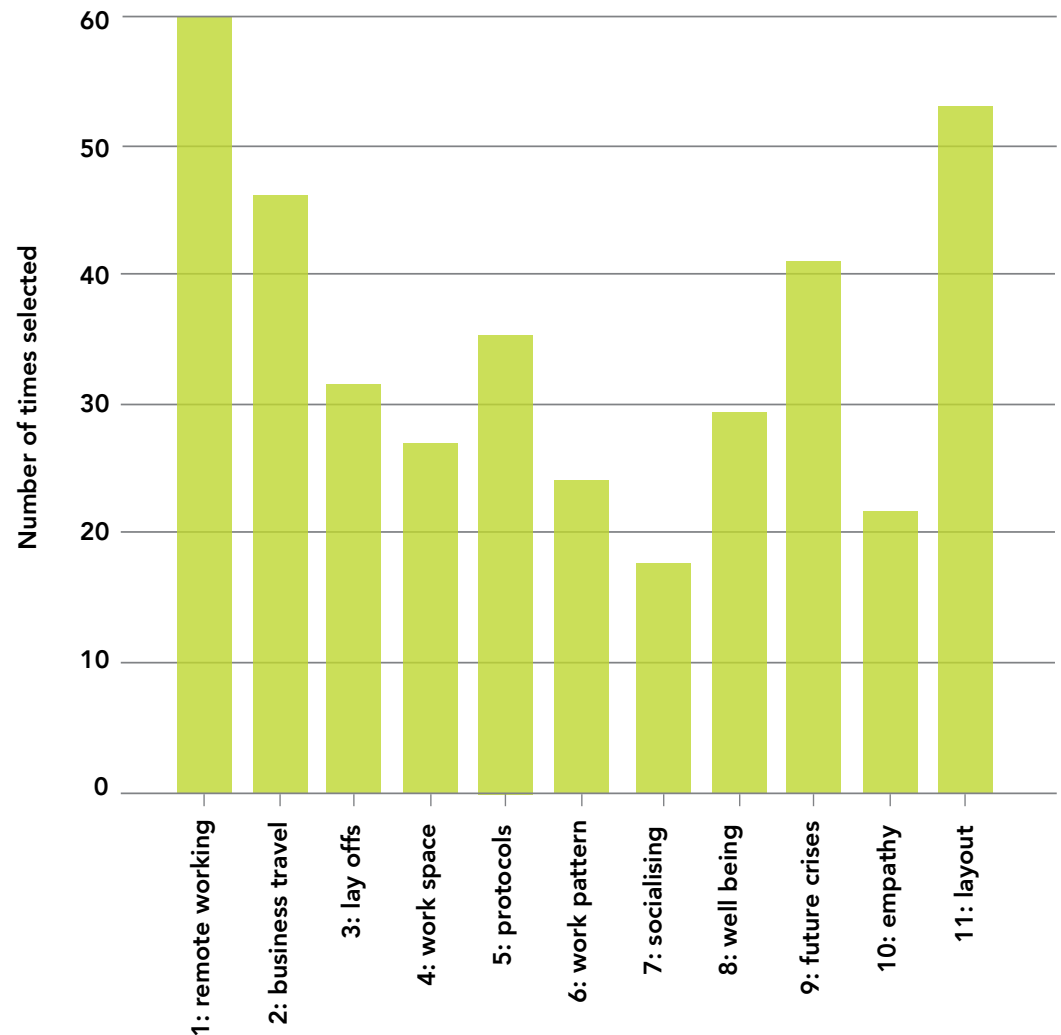
The two statements with the lowest selections relate to pastoral care and activities (7 and 10), indicating that respondents do not believe that these will improve as a result of the restrictions from COVID-19:

Some of the more informal work initiatives, such as team quizzes and Friday virtual drinks, will continue in the 'real' world. The leadership team in my company will focus more on employee well-being and communicate with more empathy, care, and consideration.

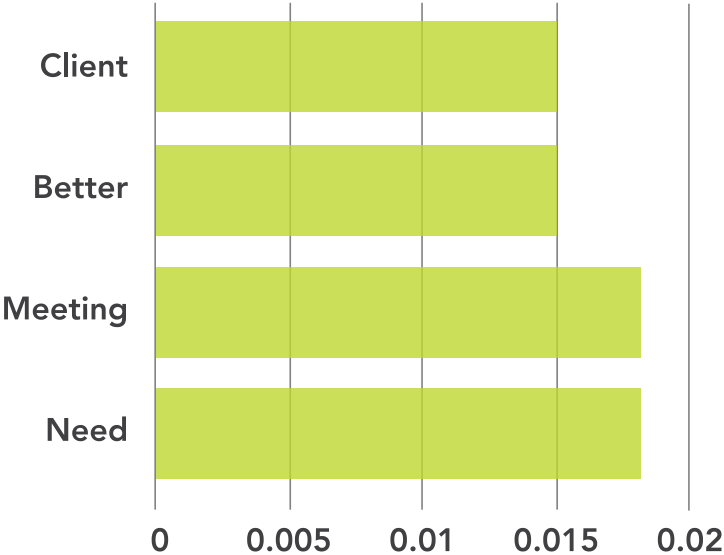
In addition to the statement selections, 22 respondents also provided free text responses to cover any other ways they believe their organization will change. The comments are varied, and as the human eye often cannot discern underlying topical patterns in textual data, LDA topic modeling was employed. This method is an unsupervised machine learning approach which groups commonly co-occurring words. Each topic, formed based on a group of words, is an abstract concept requiring interpretation.

There are two topics that reveal themselves using this method, and they can be interpreted as organizational or operationally led. The first topic relates to change in client-facing activity, while the second topic relates to internal workings both within teams and at organization level. These topics suggest that respondent belief in organizational change is focused on how business operates.

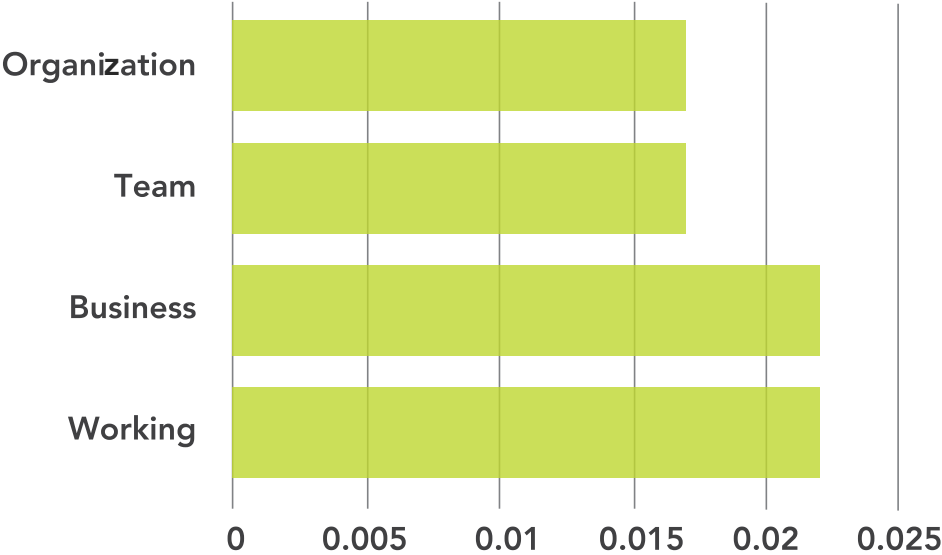
QUESTIONS RELATING TO BELIEVED CHANGES THAT WILL OCCUR IN THE WORKPLACE



TOPIC 1:
CLIENT-FACING
ACTIVITY



TOPIC 2:
INTERNAL
WORKINGS



Hoped for changes

Respondents were also given the opportunity to express the changes they hope to see as a result of workplace adjustments due to COVID-19.

In response to the question about how respondents hoped organizations will change, respondents were given the option to tick all statements which applied to them. Several of the statements are similar to those in the believed changes question, which allows for comparison.

In line with the most believed statement that remote working will be more common, it is also the most hoped for statement (69%). The second most hoped for statement is:

My company will be better equipped to deal with other crises in the future (67%)

Statements 6, 7 and 9 relate to pastoral care, with statements 6 and 9 the same as statements 7 and 10 in the belief section. Interestingly, these statements score substantially higher in hoped-for changes than in believed changes

Some of the more informal work initiatives, such as team quizzes and Friday virtual drinks, will continue in the 'real' world

Believe will change: 25%

Hope will change: 44%

The leadership team in my company will focus more on employee well-being and communicate with more empathy, care and consideration

Believe will change: 31%

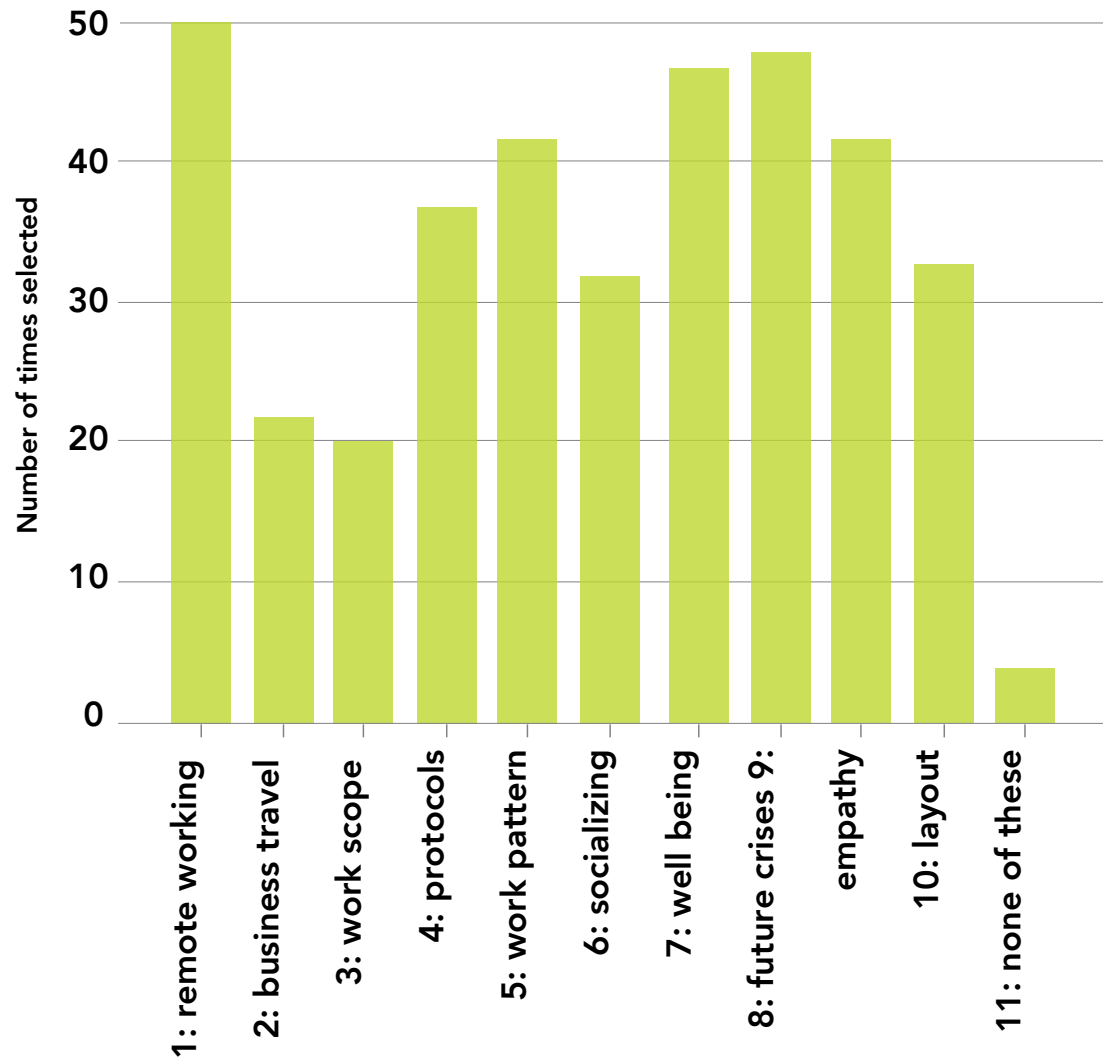
Hope will change: 59%

Statement 7 is the third highest in the selection (65%), indicating that the theme of pastoral care is a high priority for the respondents:

My company will support me more in terms of looking after my physical and mental well-being

In addition to the statement selections, 23 respondents also provided free text response to discuss any other ways they hoped their organization will change. The word 'hope' is the most used across comments, which is to be expected as respondents mirrored the language of the question. The second most frequently used word is 'better', indicating that respondents are looking for improvements. Comments which contain the word 'better' have been extracted and are shown below highlighting a wide breadth of personal interest.

QUESTIONS RELATING TO HOPED CHANGES IN THE WORKPLACE



More dynamic and innovative – harnessing the current mind set. Better, faster decision making.

Better contract flexibility to cater for the obvious diversities that exist in employees lives.

I hope my organization is open to allowing working from home to continue beyond the current crisis. Working from home allows a better work/life balance as commute times are gone and it's easier to somewhat own your own working pattern (i.e. starting work earlier in the morning in order to take a break in the afternoon to get some exercise in).

Strike a better balance of 'worthy' commercial productions to give a stronger financial outlook.

Better performance management.

It would be good if cubicle workers areas could be spaced better.

THE COMMENTS WERE ALSO SPLIT INTO BIGRAMS AND BELOW ARE THOSE WHICH APPEARED MORE THAN ONCE:

'WORKING' AND 'HOME'

'WORK' AND 'HOUR'

'GREATER' AND 'UNDERSTANDING'

'EMPLOYEE' AND 'ENGAGEMENT'

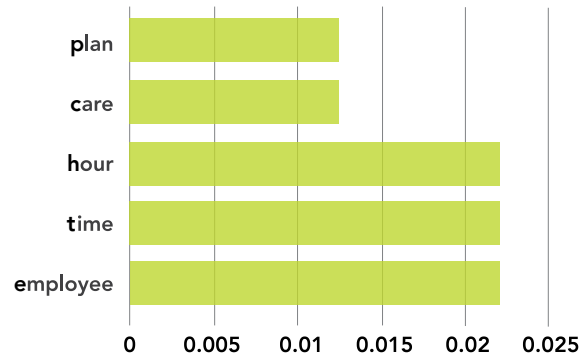
In order to extract themes in the text, an LDA topic model was applied like before. There are three topics that emerge, and these can be interpreted as follows: Topic 1 concerns employee care, topic 2 concerns work/life balance, and topic 3 concerns attention to work culture. Each of these topics fall under the overarching theme of pastoral care, which is line with the most hoped for changes in the check box responses.

Comparing the responses around believed change with those of hoped for change, there is a clear distinction between the operational and

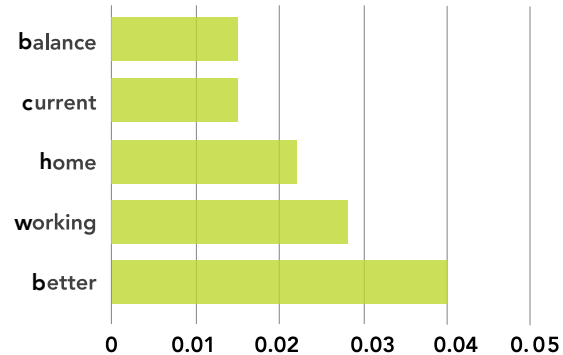
the pastoral. It would suggest respondents believe that, due to the experience of imposed COVID-19 restrictions, organizations will change

operational aspects of how they conduct business, but their hopes are more personal, and welfare focused.

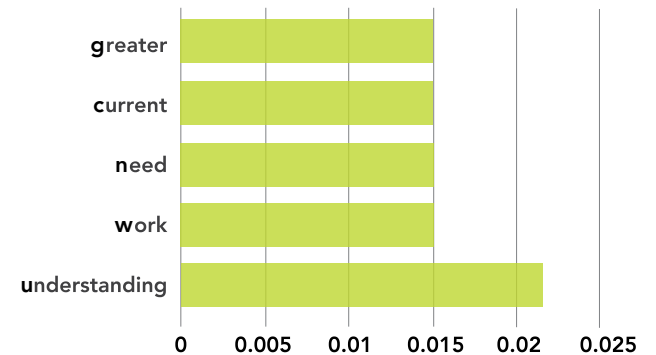
TOPIC 1: EMPLOYEE CARE



TOPIC 2: WORK/LIFE BALANCE



TOPIC 3: WORK CULTURE



Learning and insights

THIS REPORT OFFERS TWO KEY INSIGHTS ABOUT EMPLOYEE AND ORGANIZATIONAL AWAKENINGS.

First, is about how employees seem to have changed harder and faster than organizations. The second is about how organizations can respond by rethinking their recovery design.

COVID-19 has led to a new awakening with new expectations. The expectations that employees have built up thanks to COVID-19 (e.g. how they want to work, their new work environments, how they work smarter, and how they have enjoyed their new environment), will be put on organizations. Employees will not want to return to 'normal', and they will want to know whether an organization can adapt to whatever change they've been through.

On the one hand, organizations have had their own awakening and will look at the changes operationally (do we need the same number of people, should we really be offering all of these products etc.), whereas colleagues will look at it in a bigger way. Which means that organizations need to ensure the separate awakenings match up. This is not impossible; one important change demonstrates how it can be done. Out of COVID-19 there has been an acceleration of I.T.

Many organizations have had to arrange laptops, subscribe to tools like Teams and Zoom, etc. to facilitate remote work, in an extremely short span of time. The I.T. pipeline that was due to be spent in the next two to-three years had to therefore be spent in months. This happened out of necessity. So, when it comes to align with employee expectations, the key is to ask how these facilitate a way of working that we can take forward?

For organizations to respond properly, they need to rethink their recovery design. Organizations should consider what they are designing around. What is the new experience they are creating? What we have learned through COVID-19 and the reactions to the Black Lives Matter protests, is that historically, organizations have created policies and cultures that are relatively one size fits all. Policies that have been designed by an HR person or team to work for the masses.

This creates a problem, when you approach a group of individuals as a single entity you create a one size fits no one approach. Organizations need to understand that they have an employee base full of individuals, and those individuals will have very different preferences and needs. Their reactions to COVID-19 will be totally different, i.e. some people will have fully embraced working from home, while others will have rejected it. What this shows is organizations must implement policies and experiences that facilitate a positive environment for everyone, whoever everyone happens to be. It's this idea of organizations taking people as they are and amplifying it.

This survey sets out the challenge of, can you as an organization, create a world that gives everyone the opportunity to thrive? Does your organization know its blind spots and is it committed to closing those blind spots?



About ICF Next

We're an integrated marketing, engagement and experience agency on a mission to drive meaningful change at scale among customers, colleagues and citizens.

Our clients rely on our unique blend of consultancy and creative to embed new strategies, increase customer loyalty, activate cultural change and grow their brand.



A WORLD OF EXPERIENCE

We deliver more than 1,000 projects every year, with a global team producing connected experiences online and across the world.

Whatever your challenge, wherever your audience is, we can work round the clock and across time zones, with dedicated teams to match your schedule and a global network of sustainable suppliers.



Accelerated change. Beautifully delivered.

ICF
NEXT

Contact

MATT EDE
Partner

matt.ede@icfnext.com
+44 (0) 8448 470 230

Riverscape, 3rd Floor 10
Queens Street Place
London
EC4R 1BE

Pickering Street, Leeds,
LS12 2QG

Confidentiality

This document contains confidential information and intellectual property intended for review by the client.

Consequently, this material may not be copied, distributed or shared with third parties without the express written consent of ICF.

This confidentiality should also be respected throughout any subsequent concept development stages to ensure that no potential competitive edge is lost when entering into any discussion and negotiation with other third parties.

Copyright

This material is copyright by ICF.

Accordingly, ICF retains full ownership of this material until the client appoints ICF upon terms and conditions to be jointly agreed. Upon such an agreement, ICF shall transfer usage rights to this material subject to final contract detail.

Upon such an agreement, ICF shall transfer usage rights to this material subject to final contract detail.