

Workplace Research

The Case for a Thriving Workplace

A Forecast of the Post-Covid
Workspace and Planning Approaches

Knoll

Covid, A Moment of Pause, A Search for Answers

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The Covid-19 pandemic upended work and brought unprecedented changes to the world when, seemingly at a moment's notice, daily life went into lockdown and workers across the globe were sent home to work.

At the time, no one knew what lay ahead. However, some individuals and organizations started to question the role of the office, and still others wondered if this “was the end of the office as we know it,” as workers reported higher-than-expected levels of productivity while working remotely.

Today, much of the gloom and doom talk has passed. Companies are starting to move past theory and into planning and implementing their returns to the office. Now is the time to rethink and reimagine how—and where—we work and do business. Despite the many publications that broadly describe how work will change, there are few specific insights about how the post-Covid workspace will actually be implemented.

To deliver some of these answers, in December 2020, Knoll conducted a survey with workplace leaders across North America.

This report, along with its companion, *The Thriving Workplace* white paper, is the culmination of this research initiative and our opportunity to share the insights we gained on new ways of workplace planning and highlight the opportunities for organizations to redefine, reshape and improve how we work, where we work and build truly flexible, hybrid office environments.



Executive Summary

To identify how organizations are planning future workplace strategies, we surveyed 81 workplace executives across a diverse range of industries in North America. We asked them about their workplace practices pre-and post-Covid (next 18 to 24 months) to gain a deeper understanding about how they intend to support work and plan space in the future.

This study presents compelling evidence that workforce performance and well-being considerations are largely driving the form and use of the future workplace and emphasize the need to support business continuity strategies through flexibility. This will be matched with a shift in the design of office space to a more casual look and feel. Related to supporting workforce needs and flexibility, we found that remote work is here to stay. When employees do use the future office, the primary intent is for creative group interactions rather than rote meetings or focus work. On the other hand, work from home is clearly not the answer to everything since it does not support creative brainstorming or nurturing important social networks. Thus, in the future office, we expect a significant reduction in the proportion of individual to group spaces within the office, especially with larger companies.

The next two years will see an acceleration of an existing trend away from individual workspaces and a reallocation to meeting spaces, social spaces and outdoor spaces—even for the most “heads-down” organizational culture. Further supporting flexibility, the average percentage of unassigned workspaces will more than double—and the percentage of assigned spaces will drop by a third. Coworking and space-as-a-service will continue to grow as an option—especially for larger business organizations—as the overall managed footprint shrinks and the need for flexibility grows.

The use of satellite offices as part of a “hub-and-spoke” strategy will remain stable overall. Technology is critical to supporting a workforce that is highly mobile and increasingly using unassigned space. Most companies are already using reservation and sensing technology, and the remainder are moving quickly to catch up.



People-focused business drivers dominate the direction of future workplace strategy.

Participants were asked to select the two most important business drivers of their post-Covid workplace strategy; 60% chose issues related to “people” considerations.

Workforce performance and engagement (26%); well-being and stress reduction (17%); organizational culture and brand (11%) and employee social cohesion and knowledge networks (6%). One respondent said, “Increasing our health and safety program offerings will be key. We foresee that there will be a demand for more quiet spaces so that folks can take a break while on-site to decompress and have space to refresh. Psychological safety will be an important element at play. We’re considering how to design space that provides solutions for unknown levels of psychological safety.” Another commented, “[We] envision more amenities to support wellness.” Another expressed the need to reinforce culture in the future workplace. “Keep the culture experience: build spaces to align, re-energize and focus on our mission.” Another declared that employee interaction is a critical factor, “We see collaboration being the biggest driver for coming back to the office.”

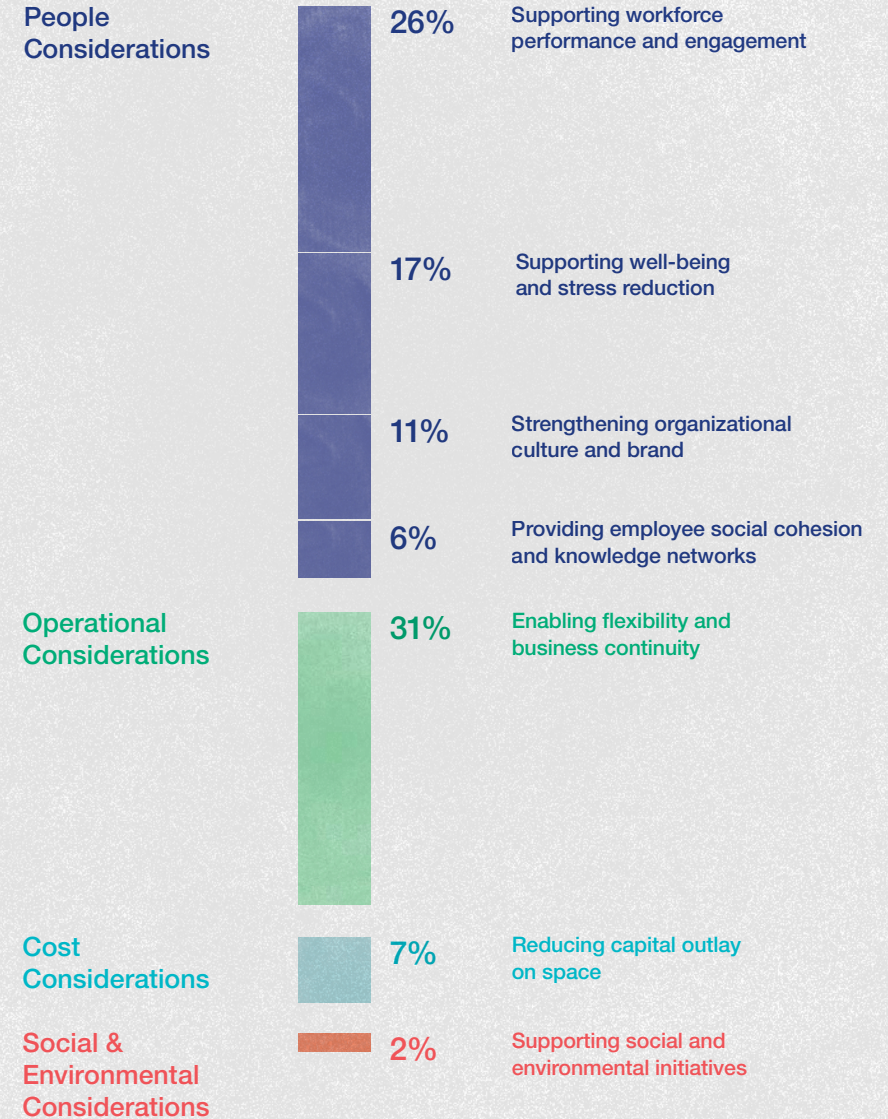
Not surprisingly, a strategy highlighting flexibility and business continuity represented almost one-third of selections (31%). In fact, several respondents noted the need for “higher levels of spatial flexibility (versatility, adaptability, and hackability) and providing the right mix of spaces that are flexible, appealing and engaging.”

Notably, reducing capital outlay was a key driver in only 7% of the selections, showing that cost considerations are not significantly driving future planning. Social and environmental issues are also on the radar for future workplace strategy, comprising 2% of the total issues selected. One respondent mentioned “accelerating innovation” as a driver of post-Covid workplace strategy.

Overall, these responses show a quickening of the evolution of commercial real estate away from an exclusive focus on space toward people considerations.

60% of organizations chose business drivers related to “people” considerations, while one-third selected flexibility and business continuity.

Top Post-Covid Workplace Strategy Business Drivers



Key Findings

Remote work is here to stay, but comes with draw backs.

Respondents are optimistic about “return to office” plans over the next two years, but clearly, remote work will be a permanent part of the workplace ecosystem. Less than one-third feel their post-Covid workplace will be the same as it was before the pandemic, with all employees fully on-site. In comparison, roughly one-third predict that employees will work one or two days a week remotely; about one-quarter feel that their workforce will work three or four days a week remotely; and 14% report their workforce is going totally remote (FIGURE 1). Related to supporting a more flexible work strategy, one respondent noted, “[We are focused on] organizational changes required to support new ways of working, delivering an equitable digital collaborative experience (remote vs. in person) and maintaining high utilization levels five days per week.”

Most—but not all—organizations provide support for working from home. More than 80% of our respondents said that some sort of formal or informal support is provided for employees working from home, whereas 12% report no support. Our respondents report offering financial support, such as a stipend

for furnishings (20%) or technology (19%) and training on technology (37%). The remaining 12% noted a variety of other resources being offered, ranging from existing programs such as “Health and wellness resources and programs facilitated through our HR Department,” or informal approaches, such as “Borrow furniture and screens from [the] office” (FIGURE 2).

The home office is a great place to concentrate, just don’t try to brainstorm or socialize there. We asked participants to rate the current success of their workers’ personal home office in supporting a range of individual work to various types of collaborative and social interactions (FIGURE 3, see next page). By far, participants rated the ability to “Concentrate” (heads-down focus work) as the single most successful work-from-home activity (76% rated it as “highly to moderately successful”). The ability to “Share/Mentor,” which is a short-term casual exchange of ideas, was the second highest rated (51% rated “highly to moderately successful”), but this was offset by almost one-quarter (22%) of respondents rating its success as “limited to not at all successful.” The ability to “Create/Collaborate” (deep,

creative teamwork) and “Meet/Learn” (formal group work or training) at home locations were rated nearly equally. Both rated almost identically by respondents who reported nearly identical proportions of “highly to moderately successful” (41% and 42%, respectively) and corresponding “limited to not at all successful” ratings (28% and 33%, respectively).

“Brainstorming/Scrum” (highly interactive work, idea generation) and “Socialize” (supporting social connection and community) had the lowest high-to medium success ratings, 27% and 11%, respectively. A sizable 46% rated brainstorming as being “limited to not successful,” and a whopping 62% offered the same negative ratings for socializing and community. Although overall these results are not surprising, they provide factual evidence for what many employees, organizations and leaders suspect—the home office is a satisfactory place for efficient solo work, but it falls far short for building community, professional networks and social interactions.

FIGURE 1
The Post-Pandemic Workforce

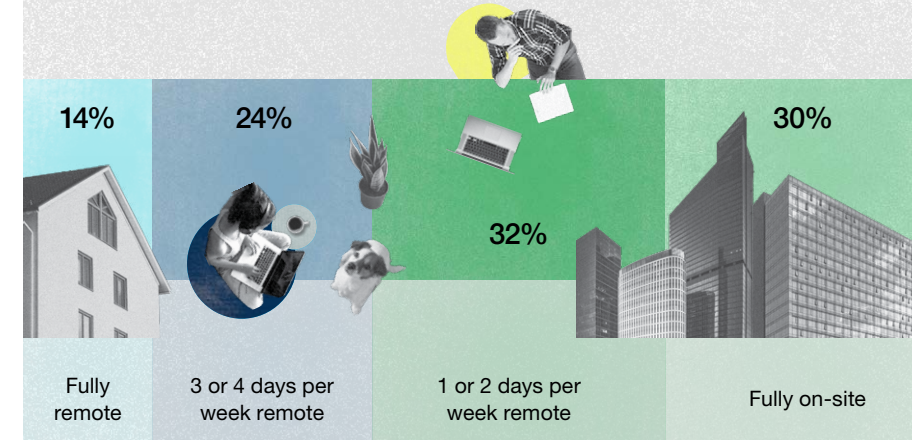


FIGURE 2
Work from Home Support Provided by Organizations

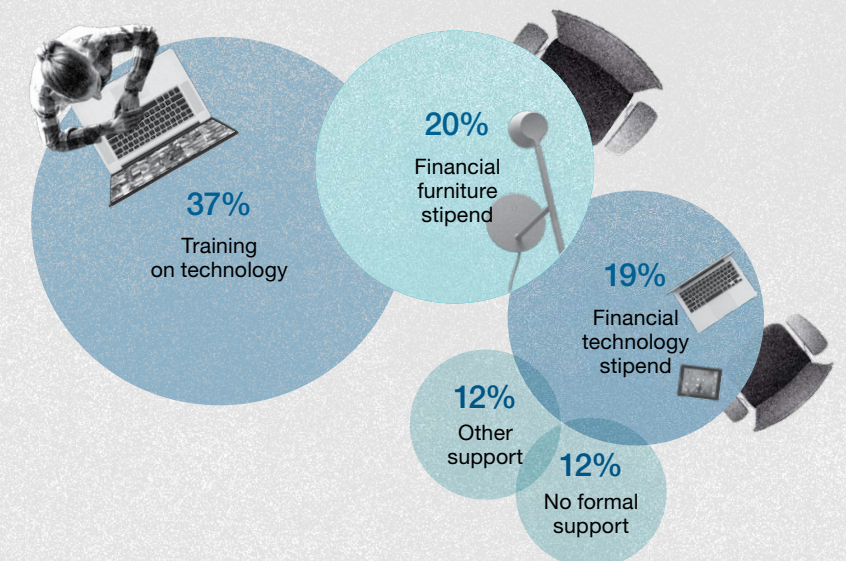
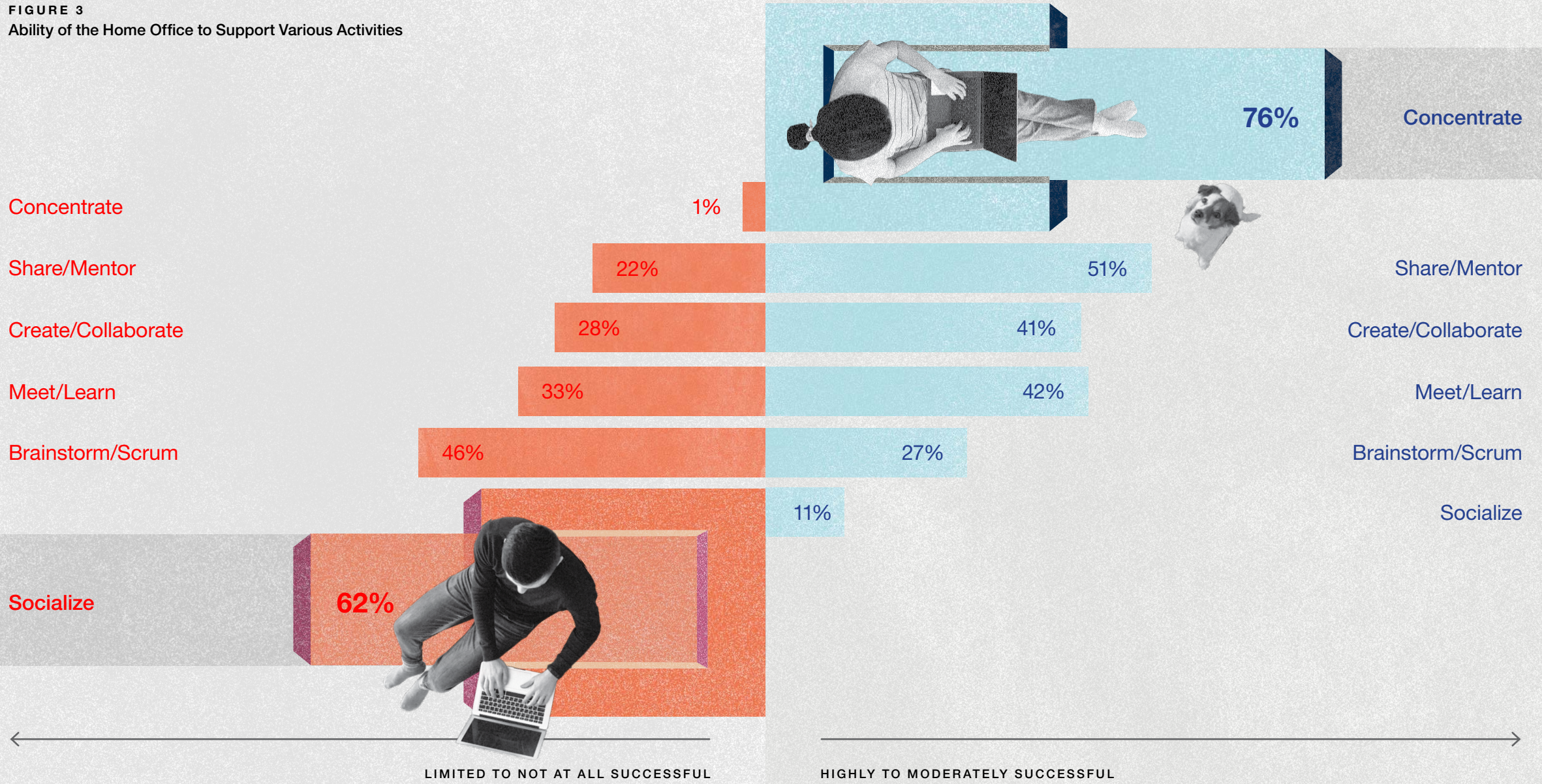


FIGURE 3
Ability of the Home Office to Support Various Activities



Workplace allocation shifts away from individual areas to group spaces.

Over the next two years, as the amount of remote focus work continues to grow post-Covid, expect a drastic reduction in the proportion of individual to group spaces within the office. On average, respondents report a current split of two-thirds individual to one-third group spaces within their managed facilities. However, our respondents feel that over the next two years these proportions will drastically shift to a “half and half” strategy of 52% individual spaces and 48% group spaces. Thus, in the average organization, we forecast a 22% decrease in the proportion of individual workspaces. This clearly reflects a consensus of change in the fundamental purpose of office space to supporting various types of group interaction.

Larger companies will be the most aggressive in reducing their proportion of individual spaces. FIGURE 4, on the next page, shows how differently sized organizations currently allocate individual and group space and their future projections. Companies with more than 150,000 people currently report

a relatively more equal allocation between the two space types (59% individual, 41% group) compared to their smaller company counterparts.

However, looking to the future, companies with more than 150,000 people along with companies of 50,000 to 149,999 people plan the largest decreases in individual space, an almost one-third reduction by each. In addition, they will have the highest proportion of group spaces (59% and 54%), with companies of more than 150,000 people literally flip-flopping their allocations, pre- and post- Covid.

Within the next 18–24 months, organizations are planning on decreasing their proportion of individual workspaces by 22% while projecting a 45% increase in the proportion of group spaces.



Proportion of Individual and Group Spaces Projections

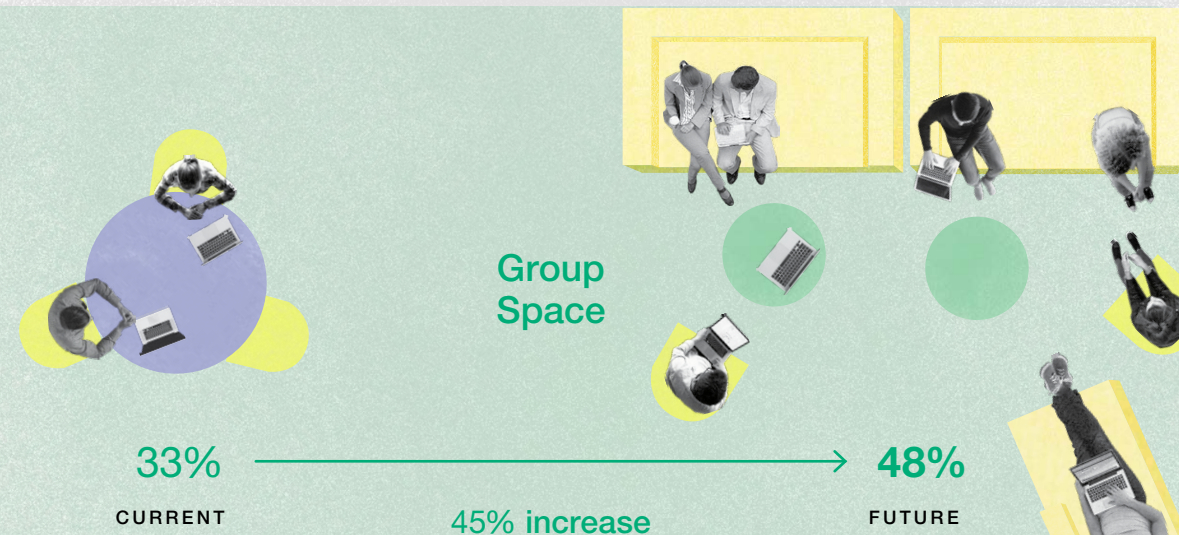
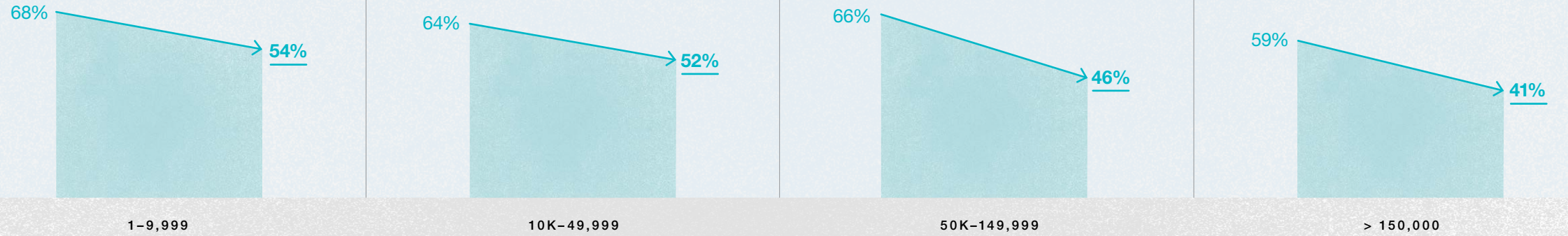
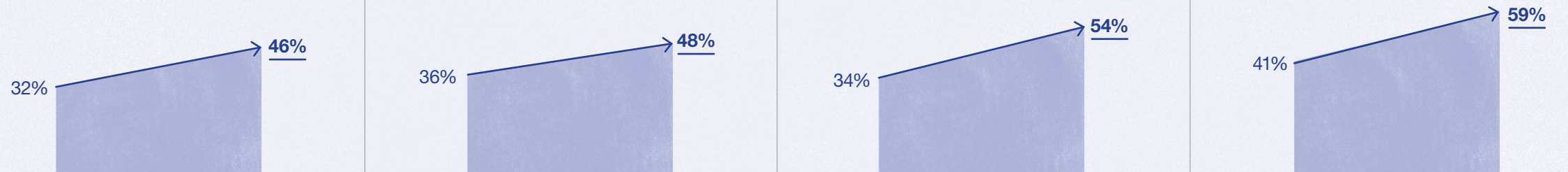


FIGURE 4
Proportion of Individual and Group Spaces Projections By Company Size

Individual Space



Group Space



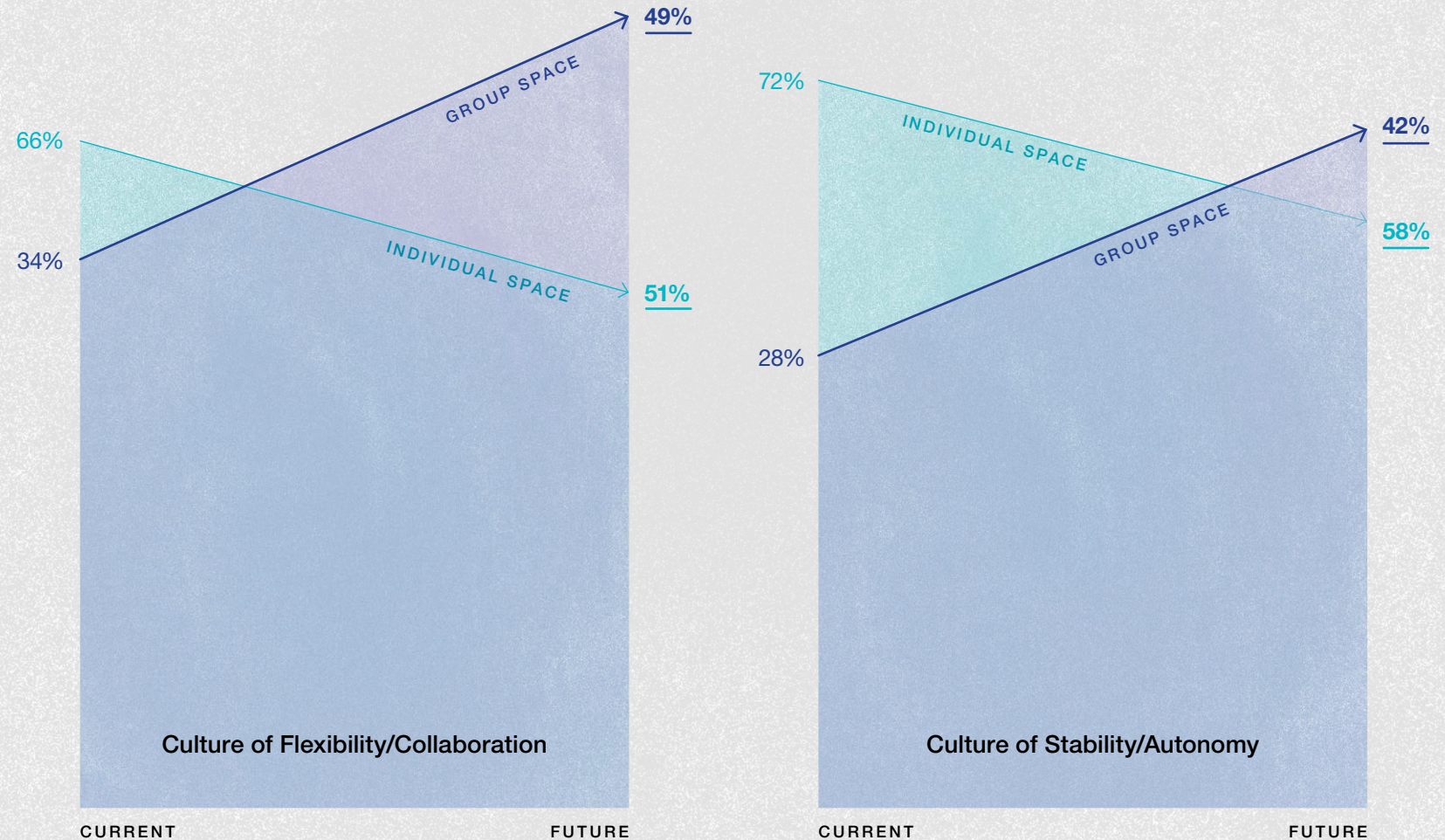
The trend away from individual space appears to be an overarching business phenomenon rather than a characteristic of specific types of organizations. Using the “integrated culture framework¹,” we found that cultures emphasizing stability and autonomy currently allocate an average of about three-fourths of their spaces to individual workspace. Flexible/collaborative cultures only allocate about two-thirds to individual workspace. In the future, companies with stable/autonomous cultures will reduce the proportion of individual space to 58%—almost a 22% reduction.

Companies with flexible/collaborative cultures predict they will also reduce the proportion of individual space to 51% from the current 66%, a 26% reduction.

The post-Covid workplace will be much more team oriented, regardless of organizational culture.

Therefore, while in the past culture may have been a significant driver of the proportion of individual to group spaces, the post-Covid workplace will offer a roughly equal balance of individual and collaborative workspaces regardless of organizational culture. This underscores the increasing importance of collaboration as the fundamental purpose of the future office.

Impact of Organizational Culture on the Proportion of Individual and Group Spaces



Meeting, social and outdoor spaces grow in importance.

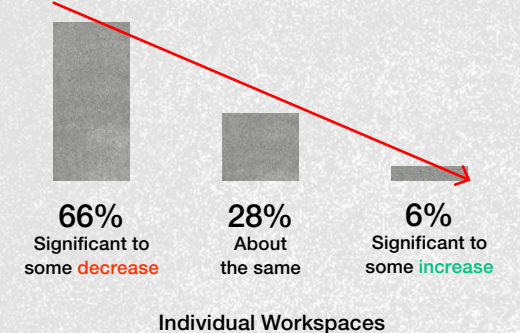
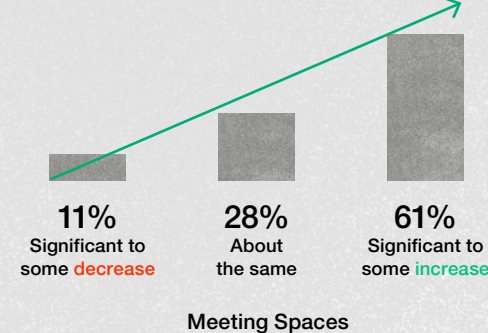
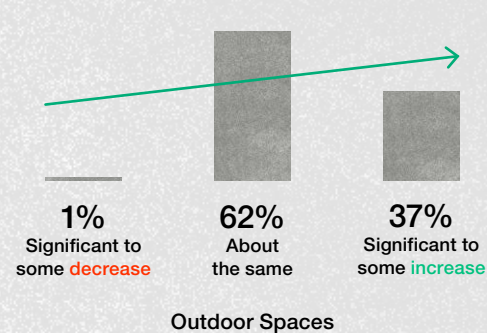
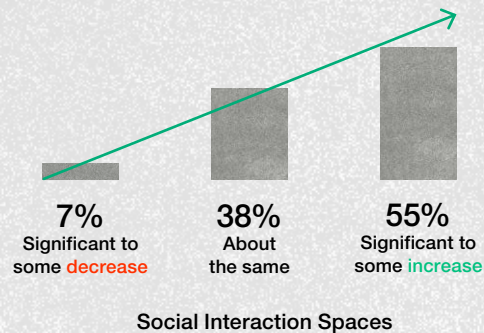
The next two years will see an acceleration toward more meeting, social and outdoor spaces. We asked participants to assess anticipated changes in four different types of workspaces over the next 18–24 months. Two-thirds foresee “some to significant decrease” in the number of individual workspaces, while only about one-third feel the number of these workspaces will not change or see some increase. Noting this change, a participant wrote, “Smaller enclosed offices will free up space for more meeting and collaborative spaces when we’re designing spaces.”

At the same time, as organizations look to create hubs for collaborative work, more than 60% of respondents predict an increase in the number of meeting spaces, and more than 50% foresee an increase in the number of social interaction spaces. Several respondents echoed the importance of team/group spaces, with one noting, “We’re planning on a major investment in hospitality services [and] a greater emphasis on social/community space.” Another said their organization is focused on “more open spaces, more multi-use spaces and more collaboration spaces.” A third respondent said their organization is creating “more informal collaboration space [and] more individual spaces that accommodate video calls.”

More than 60% of respondents predict an increase in the number of meeting spaces, while more than 50% foresee an increase in social interaction spaces and nearly 40% predict an increase in outdoor spaces.

Nearly 40% of respondents predict an increase in the number of outdoor spaces, while more than 60% predict the number will stay the same. Reinforcing this finding, a respondent wrote, “We are looking for offices with adjacency to outdoor amenities like patios and balconies; anticipate emerging more green spaces, and areas promoting health and wellness.”

Anticipated Space Allocation Changes



Key Findings

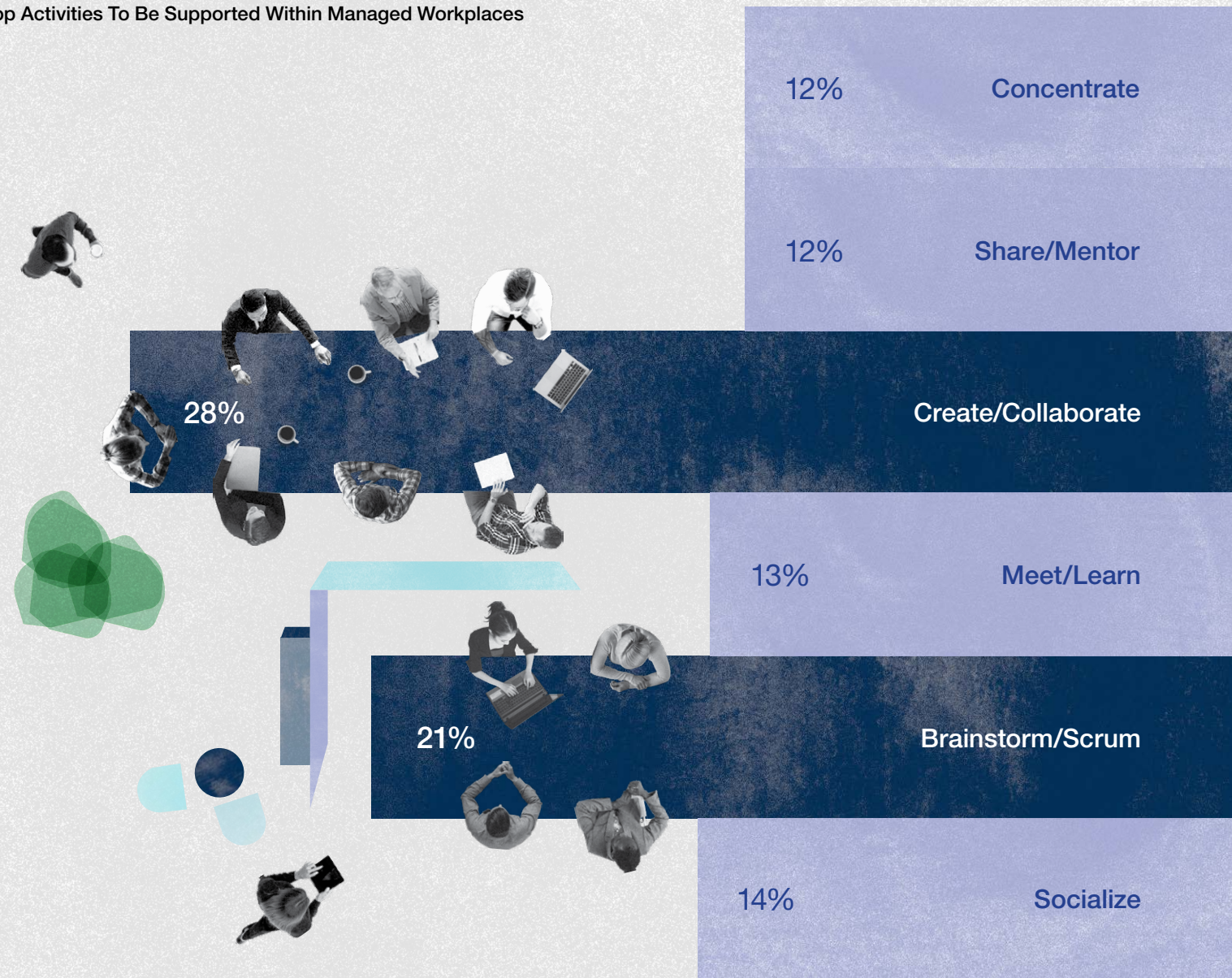
Supporting creative and collaborative group interactions will largely drive workplace planning.

Within the managed workspace, the greatest emphasis is on supporting creative group interactions.² A majority (almost half) of participants report that their primary emphasis will be to support interactive collaborative work (small teams creating ideas, scrum events and brainstorming); only 12% identified heads-down focus work as a priority. Spaces for mentoring and more traditional formal meetings are also significantly less important, as are socializing activities.

Supporting this finding, one participant had this to say about their future workplace strategy: “[We have a] major focus on fostering a sense of community and supporting collaboration at the office. We want to make the office a destination, not a requirement. Hospitality will be at the heart of the experience. We’re aiming for energy and buzz five days a week.” Another respondent reported similar workplace aspirations: “We are looking at how to create collaborative neighborhoods.”

Almost half of participants report that their primary emphasis is on supporting interactive collaborative work, while less than one-eighth identified heads-down focus work as a priority.

Top Activities To Be Supported Within Managed Workplaces



The trend toward use of unassigned space continues.

Within the next 18–24 months, the average percentage of unassigned workspaces will more than double—and the percentage of assigned spaces will drop by a third. The post-Covid workplace will see a significant shift to unassigned workspaces. While this is part of an existing trend, the scale of the post-Covid shift to unassigned spaces is remarkable. Pre-Covid, our participants report an average split of about 80% assigned to 20% unassigned workspaces. Over the next two years, they predict a change to an average of about 55% assigned to 45% unassigned.

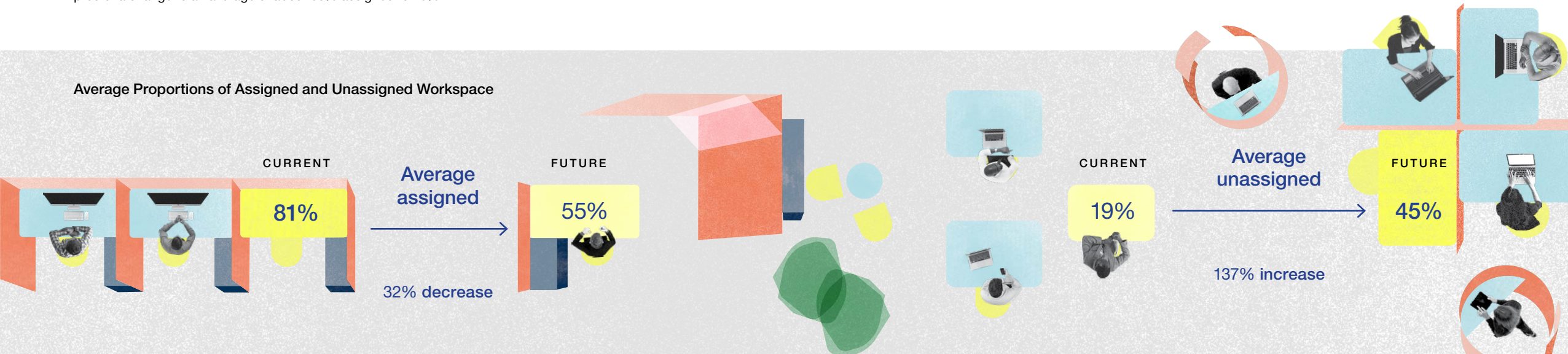
unassigned. This is about a one-third decrease in the percentage of assigned spaces.

Unassigned workspace is an important “larger company” tool. Our analysis shows that workforce size is a reliable predictor of both current and future proportions of unassigned workspace. We found that, as size of an organization’s workforce increases, both the current (pre-Covid) and planned future proportion of unassigned workspace increases. Put another way, larger

Over the next two years, the average percentage of unassigned workspaces will more than double, and the percentage of assigned spaces will drop by a third.

organizations (size of workforce) are significantly more likely to increase their use of unassigned spaces in the post-Covid world than smaller firms.

Average Proportions of Assigned and Unassigned Workspace



Sharing ratios of people to individual workspaces will rise.

In concert with the trend toward the increased use of unassigned spaces, over the next 18–24 months, participants anticipate an average sharing ratio of 1:3.1 (spaces: people) for individual workspaces (workstations, desks, individual refuge rooms.) For historical perspective, this is a 26% increase from 10 years ago, when we found an average 1:2.3 sharing ratio³. More recent sources⁴ suggest a 1:4 ratio, which is close to what we found with the present research. However, each organization will have a different business model and work needs, so there is no one “correct” sharing ratio, especially given uncertain long-term workplace health concerns.

Business drivers influence desk-sharing ratios in unexpected ways. We analyzed participants’ future workplace business drivers alongside their anticipated individual workspace sharing ratio (FIGURE 5, see next page). Those organizations that highly value people-centric social cohesion and knowledge networks predicted by far the highest sharing ratio at 1:5.3. They may be planning on adding more group and social spaces because they value the esprit de corps of their employees and thus feel comfortable with more people per

desk. They may be more supportive of work from home for individual work. Organizations prioritizing flexibility and business continuity predict about a 26% lower (1:3.9) sharing ratio. Companies that prioritize “people-focused” post-Covid business drivers (organizational culture and brand; workforce performance and engagement; well-being and stress reduction) predict a future average 1:3.0 sharing ratio. This is a 45% higher ratio than companies that prioritize reduced capital outlay on space (1:2.1)—although these two priorities can go hand in hand.

It seems surprising that organizations prioritizing cost did not have the highest sharing ratios. It appears that organizational issues related to knowledge networks are a bigger driver of desk sharing than costs. In general, but especially for companies that value social cohesion and networks, these results probably reflect an evolving belief that the fundamental purpose of the office is changing. More office activities will occur in group and social spaces, and

Business drivers influence desk-sharing ratios in unexpected ways.

we anticipate that employees will probably use unassigned individual spaces for short-term tasks, such as meeting preparation. This reinforces our finding of the significant (-22%) reduction in the proportion of individual to group workspaces forecast over the next two years.

Finally, the companies in our sample that prioritize social and environmental issues predict an average 1:1.1 sharing ratio.

The lower ratios in this section may simply reflect no change in the current planning model but rather a reduction in the overall square footage of managed space to reduce costs, or a move to the emerging “hub-and-spoke” or satellite office model, which can include the use of coworking spaces. Such a model provides a great deal of choice for employees in selecting a work location, which would include home, headquarters or the satellite office. Related to the type of dilemma addressed by the hub-and-spoke model, a respondent noted, “[We are getting] pushed from the C-suite to reduce our SF without knowing how much people will want to continue to work from home. This reactionary move might put us in a space crisis if most of our staff want to come back to the office.”

Employees per Individual Workspace

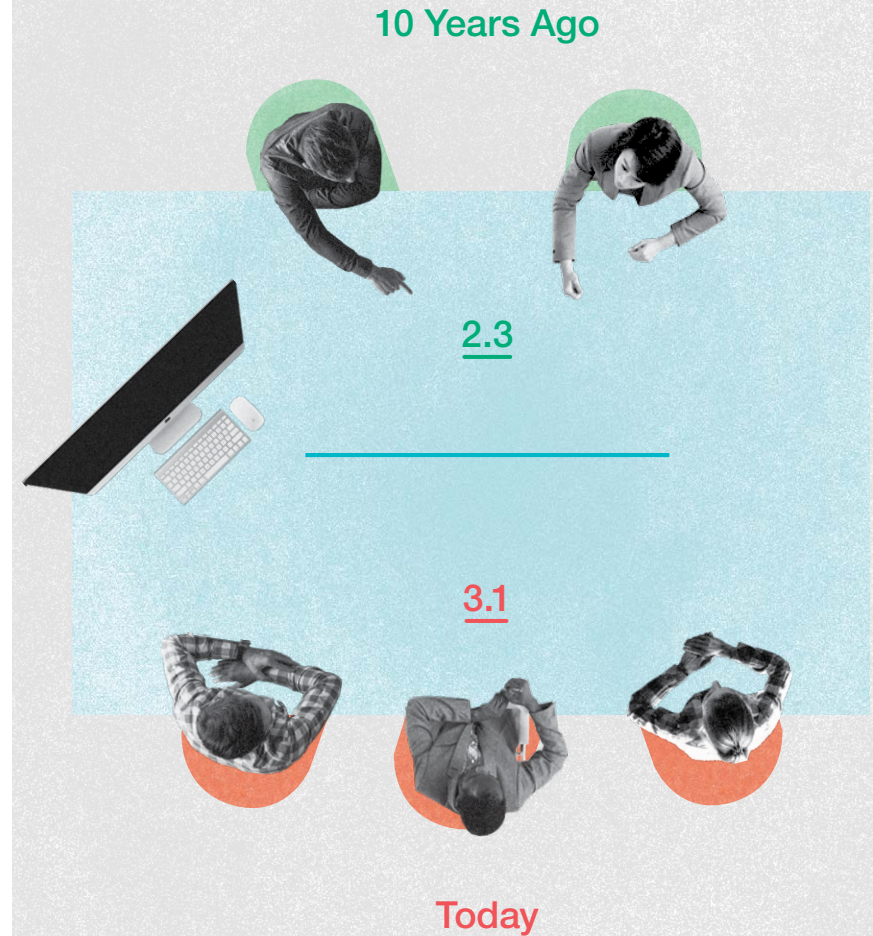


FIGURE 5
Business Drivers Influence Desk-Sharing Ratios

“Before everyone was sent home [in March 2020], less than 3% of our associates worked remotely, and nearly everyone had a dedicated desk.

We’re currently rethinking our approach to be more flexible. So, with the exception of a few groups, when people return almost all of them will have some sort of desk sharing or unassigned seating.”

Real Estate Leader

**These three people-focused post-Covid business drivers were grouped together; participants that selected these business drivers anticipated similar sharing ratios.*



Most organizations plan to recalibrate their managed workspace.

The majority of organizations hope to lower their managed workspace footprint. Yet, some floor plate space may be re-allocated rather than eliminated. Related to the growth in the remote work trend, nearly two-thirds of our participants also predict “some to significant decrease” in the square footage of their managed workspace portfolio post-Covid (FIGURE 6). However, we found significant correlations between the way individual and various types of group spaces are forecasted to change within the next two years. Our analysis shows that group spaces (meeting, social and outdoor) will grow in lockstep as they are implemented in the future—and there is a strong tendency for this to happen as the number of planned individual spaces declines. Although this may not seem surprising, the fact that there is a consistent negative correlation between forecasted changes in the number of individual spaces and group spaces suggests that this shift may be more of a reallocation of the floor plate as opposed

to an overall reduction in floor plate square footage.

Participants are roughly equally divided over how they see density in the post-Covid office, providing no strong consensus of how it will change within the next two years. Although more than 40% of organizations indicated they will decrease the population density of office space, roughly one-third said their population density would see “some to significant increase.” About one-third report that office density will “stay the same.” One respondent said, “Most of our office spaces are leased for eight or more years more so reducing our footprint will be a challenge. Getting buy-in from decision makers to reduce space once the pandemic is over will be a challenge. Being conservative in nature, they will be prone to want to go back to business as usual” (FIGURE 7).

There is little agreement on whether the future work environment will be more “open” or more “enclosed” in

the post-Covid world. While a majority (about 40%) anticipate no change, one-quarter said their workplaces will be more enclosed, and more than one-third predicted their workspaces will be more open (FIGURE 8).

Within the next 18–24 months, nearly half of the survey respondents feel there will be a shift in the design of their managed office space toward a more casual look and feel (FIGURE 9). This echoes the trend of a casual office design vibe offered in “non-managed” spaces, such as satellite offices (and coworking spaces) that are used by many of our respondents’ organizations. However, an almost equal proportion (47%) of survey respondents anticipate no change in the “look and feel” of their managed workspace portfolio. Only 4% of participants anticipate their workplace having a “more formal” look and feel.

FIGURE 6
Square Footage Projections

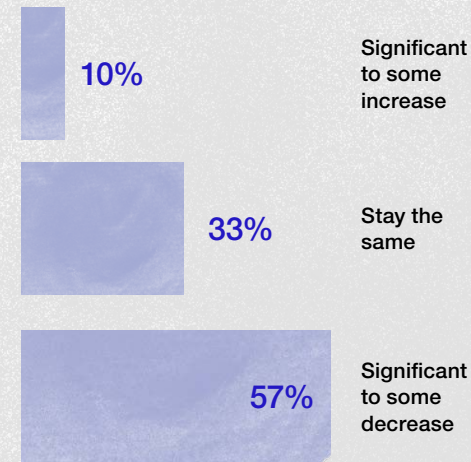


FIGURE 7
Population Density Projections

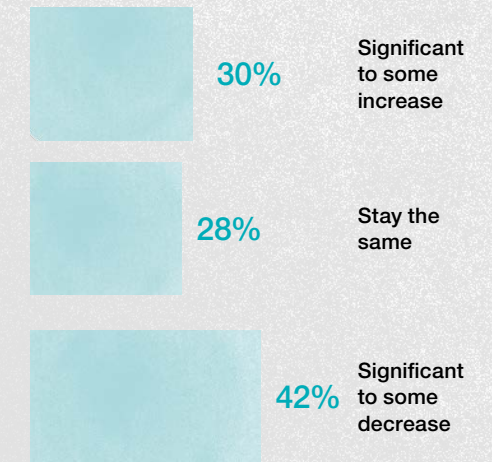


FIGURE 8
Open vs. Enclosed Projections

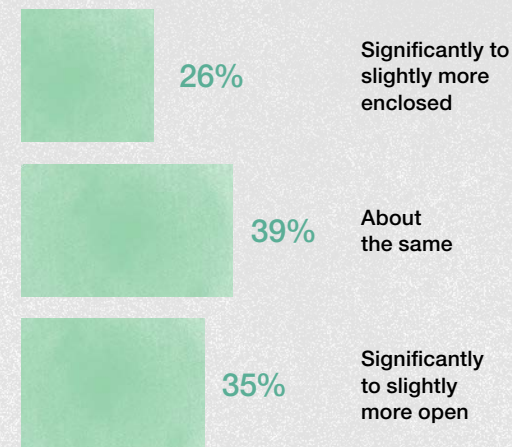
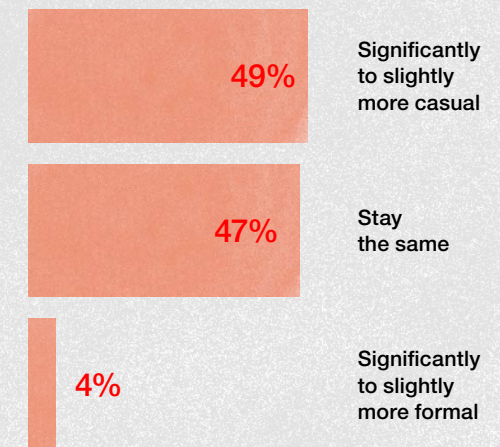


FIGURE 9
Look and Feel Projections



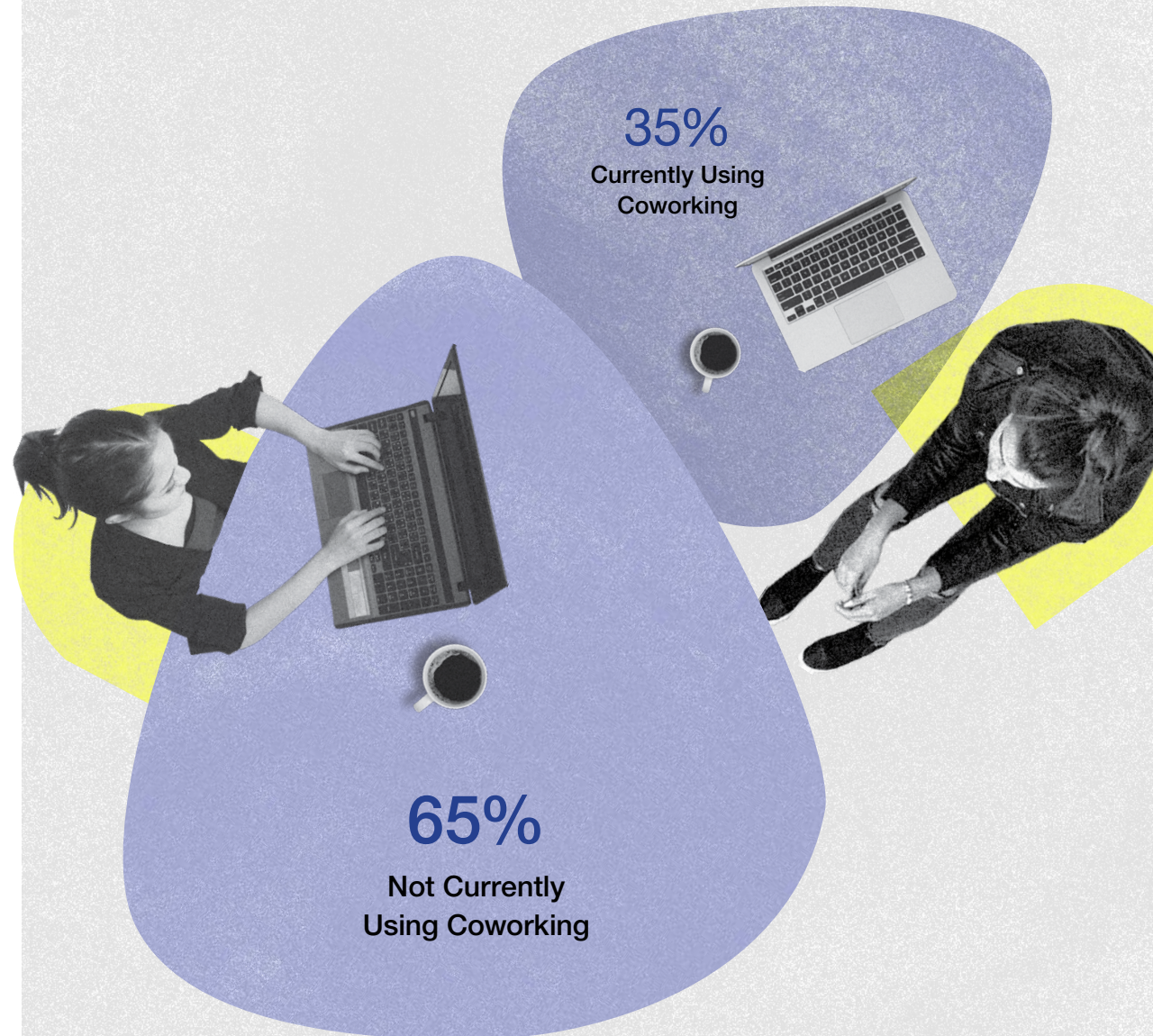
A steady, yet growing adoption of alternative workplace models.

Coworking and space-as-a-service will continue to grow as an option for business organizations in the post-Covid world as the overall managed footprint shrinks. More than one-third of our survey participants are currently using coworking or other space-as-a-service workplaces, and more than one-third of current users predict they will increase their use of this type of space within the next two years. In addition, more than half of respondents not currently using coworking spaces are considering using them within the next two years.

The use of satellite offices will remain stable overall. Working from home, which became a necessity during the pandemic, will remain a part of the average work experience, at least to some extent. Post-Covid, employing other flexible portfolio strategies, such as the hub-and-spoke model using conveniently located satellite offices, will continue. Businesses in highly competitive talent markets are using or considering satellite offices as a perk to attract top talent, sparing key employees time-consuming and costly commutes.

These satellite offices (which can also be fulfilled with coworking space) are being designed with a less formal feel than traditional office space—echoing the pandemic era trend in extreme casual dress. Most of our study participants (58%) are already using satellite offices (FIGURE 16, see next page). Of those, only about 13% predict they will discontinue their use going forward. Overall, about 41% of our respondents do not currently use satellite offices. However, about 17% of those not using satellite offices say they plan to start using them within the next 18 months to two years (FIGURE 10, see next page). Thus, between current users who plan on stopping their use and non-users who plan on starting, the use of satellite office space will maintain a steady rate.

Use of Coworking and Space-as-a-Service



Use of Satellite Offices is stable and consistent regardless of company size.

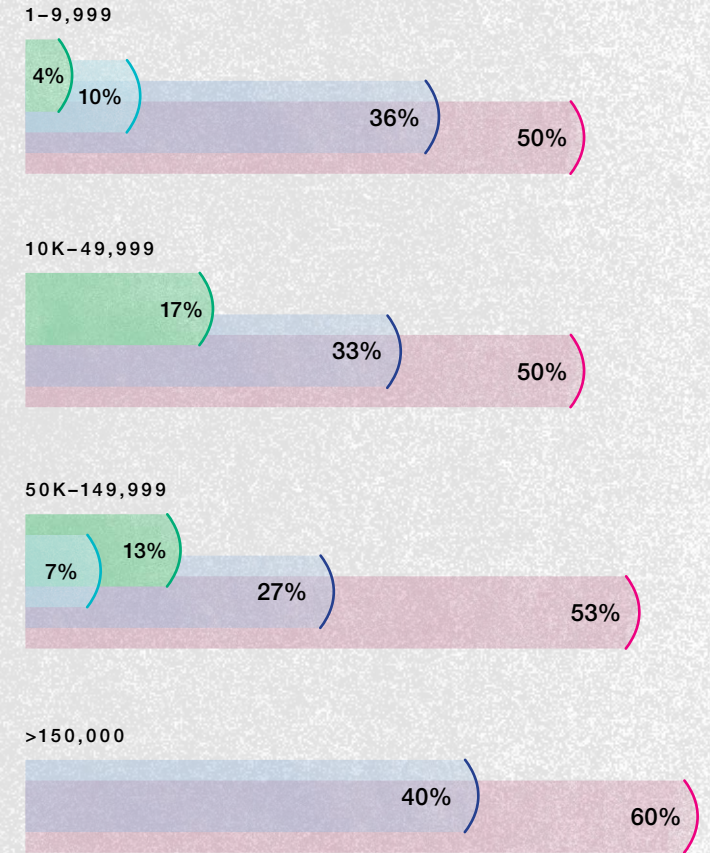
The current and continued use of satellite offices as a strategy is reported by 50 to 60% of respondents, regardless of company size. However, all but the largest company categories have a proportion of members (ranging from 4 to 17%) who are planning to discontinue the use of satellite offices. This discontinuation of satellite offices is exactly offset in two company size groups that are planning on adopting the use of satellite space for the first time.

Like the proportions of current and continuing satellite office users across all company size categories, the proportions of non-users who do not intend to use these offices in the future is robust and consistent, about one-third of the companies in each size category. This suggests either that about one-third of all companies already have diverse and optional locations convenient to their population, their headquarters may already be in the suburbs or they are more broadly implementing work from home or some other flexible work strategy. Although our findings suggest that the use of satellite offices is not growing rapidly as some suggest, it appears to be holding its own across a broad spectrum of organizations.

FIGURE 10
Use of Satellite Offices



Use of Satellite Offices by Company Size



Current user, plans to continue
Not current user, no plans to start
Current user, plans to stop
Not current user, plans to start

Key Findings

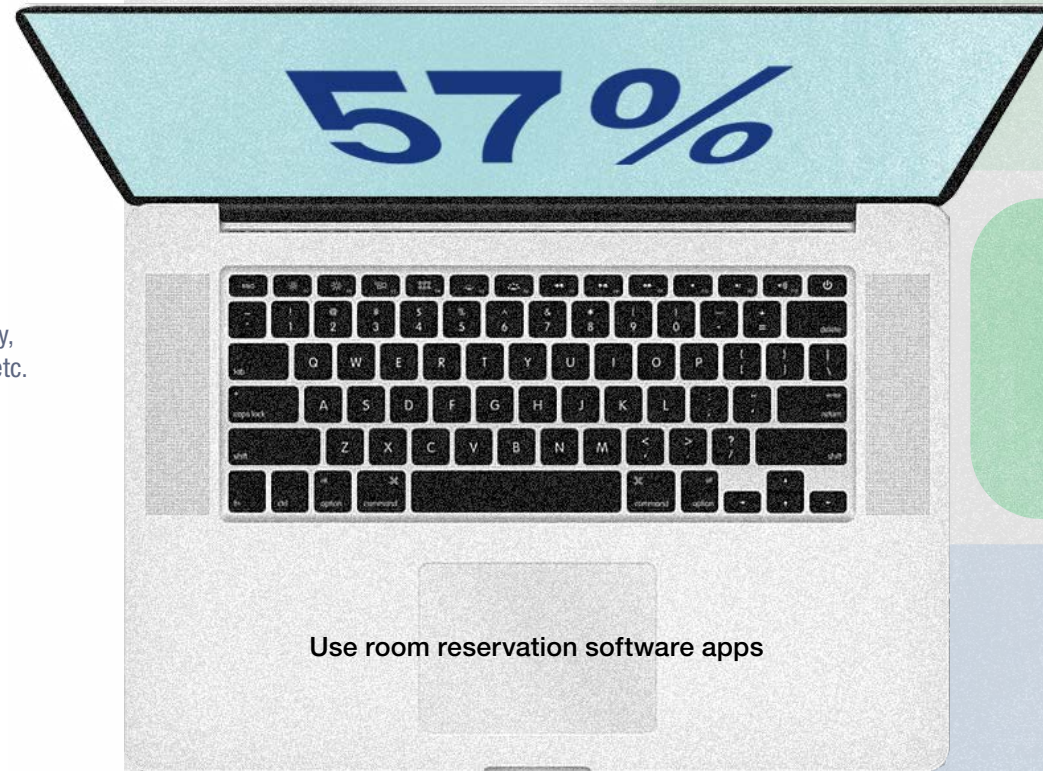
Technology is an important tool to manage occupancy, security and hybrid meetings.

Technology is critical to supporting a workforce that is highly mobile and increasingly using unassigned space. Most companies are already using reservation and sensing technology, and the remainder are moving fast to catch up. A small minority (12%) are not using any technology, while more than 50% are using room reservation apps, and almost 25% are using room occupancy hardware and room sensors to manage utilization of unassigned spaces and meeting rooms. Of the few not currently using technology, 70% are considering implementing technology to support employees' ability to select and reserve spaces within the next two years. Notes one respondent, "We [plan to] leverage emerging technology for better A/V, security, occupancy sensors, etc. to improve the workplace experience." Says another, "We are looking at how to create collaborative neighborhoods into our new reservations app."

"We plan to leverage emerging technology for better A/V security, occupancy sensors, etc. to improve the workplace experience."

Workplace Executive

Use of Reservation and Occupancy Management Technology



12%

Use room sensors

12%

Not using technology

11%

Use room occupancy hardware

8%

Use other technology

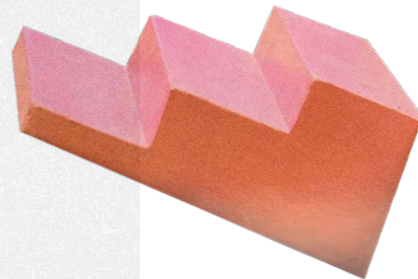
Conclusion

Covid-19 didn't end the office as we know it, but it has forever transformed it. We're returning to a different place.

Now is the time for organizations to reimagine, recalibrate and reinvent the way they work and do business. When overlaid with other trends observed, the findings of our study represent the realignment of the future strategy of the office. Creating a more collaborative, flexible environment that powers the larger ecosystem of work—one where the physical and remote workplaces co-exist—offers the best of both worlds. Organizations are looking to create Thriving Workplaces that improve daily experiences through meaningful and thoughtful engagement.

The post-Covid workplace promises to be more alive and resilient than ever.

To help workers thrive in a post-pandemic workplace, consider these six strategies.



1 Embrace a workplace strategy that supports people's ability to work from anywhere. Working from home, a coworking space and even a third space is here for the long-term. Yet, for all the advantages distributed work creates—the freedom to live anywhere and the flexibility for better work/life balance—it also brings new challenges and opportunities. The future office will give people a meaningful place to come together and connect, offering a sense of purpose, freedom and fulfillment. However, leaders and managers will need to manage and communicate differently. This will help workers make informed decisions about the right work location, technology and even work schedule needed for high-performance.

2 Deliver a cultural hub that offers collaborative connections and makes the office a destination of choice. If one thing was clear about our survey, it is this: the next generation of workplace will be about bringing people together—for brainstorming, problem-solving, idea exchange, learning and knowledge-sharing. People will be returning to an office that is a brand and culture. Employees want a workplace that provides connection to the organization. The future workplace will also need to consistently convey the company culture through management practices, technology, design and furnishings, regardless of work location.

3 Leverage unassigned and shared spaces to maximize space efficiency and support long-term flexibility. More than ever, the office needs to be agile and resilient and able to adapt over time—not just over the next twelve months but over the next two years, five years, ten years. In the future workplace, the use of unassigned spaces will grow, allowing organizations to be nimble—expanding, contracting or otherwise changing at a moment's notice.

In addition, workspaces will need inherent flexibility, allowing workers to create their own work experience and seamlessly transition from group work to individual and smaller team activities—all within the same dynamic setting.

Furniture can act as architecture and the underlying dynamic component, offering adaptable space planning solutions and organizational flexibility.

4 Utilize coworking and satellite offices as a supplement and not a replacement for a headquarters experience. Organizations recognize that the office is the heart of the organization—the physical embodiment of its culture—and the place where workers come together to connect with one another and with clients. It serves as the engagement center and innovation hub. Yet, the inclusion of smaller satellite locations, coworking spaces and other space-as-service options can reduce operational costs while allowing the hybrid workforce the flexibility it demands, with an office that is closer to where they live, saving them commuting time. It is key to strike a balance in the way these supplemental spaces are used, and to make sure the headquarters is a desirable destination and the primary connector of people.

5 Offer a wide range of settings and styles to provide workers a variety of choice. Companies need to draw workers in and create a free flow of space that gives employees latitude. This could include providing a landscape of workpoints along with the freedom to select the best space and the ability to reconfigure the space. It also involves empowering employees to recharge or set boundaries while enabling fulfilling work by driving employee engagement through a sense of belonging and pride that the company is having a positive impact on the world.

Organizations can rethink the large, open environments of the past decade for smaller, more humanistic spaces that use space delineation, rich materials and textures and a range of acoustic solutions and allow people to select the space and atmosphere that is right for them.

6 Use technology to help users manage and improve their workplace experience and to assist organizations in optimizing space utilization. As the mobile reality of work unfolds, there will be an increased need for real-time data to improve the quality of decision-making in space management. Technology will also allow a focus on people-centered capabilities that offer a workplace where everyone can work confidently and thrive.

In the user experience (UX) of collaborative work, the digital is almost everywhere, with technology that provides seamless connectivity, convenient power access and simple and reliable devices to share content. It also comprises digital work tools, such as collaborative white boards, sticky-notes walls, virtual water coolers and maybe even avatars and assisted reality and virtual reality platforms that encourage productive and engaging remote collaboration. A “phygital” space provides technologically advanced tools that facilitate connection and collaboration and makes room for analog experiences for all attendees—remote and in person.

Appendix

Research Methods

This survey of 81 organizations was conducted online through an anonymous survey in November and December of 2020.

Participating Organizations by Industry

The 81 participants represent 17 industries, including:

Financial: 15
Technology: 15
Professional Services: 13
Manufacturing/Industrial: 5
Consumer/Retail: 4
Healthcare: 4
Education: 3
Pharma/Biotech: 3
Aerospace/Automotive: 2
Communication: 2
Utilities: 2
Other: 13

The “Other” category consisted of Research and Development, Ride Sharing, Paramilitary, Government, and Philanthropic.

Size of Participating Organizations

Most of the participating organizations (48%) report having 1 to 9,999 employees, followed by 50,000 to 149,999 employees (19%), 10,000 to 49,999 employees (11%) and greater than 150,000 employees (6%).

Additional Reading

[The Thriving Workplace White Paper](#)
Crafting a New Narrative

[Meeting Spaces to Support Hybrid Work](#)
A Guide for Creating Effective “Phygital” Collaborative Spaces

¹ Boris Groysberg, Jeremiah Lee, Jesse Price, and J. Yo-Jud Cheng, 2018. “The Leader’s Guide to Corporate Culture: How to manage the eight critical elements of organizational life,” *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 2018.

² We define “managed workplace” as facilities that are directly operated by the organization (as opposed to home offices or coworking spaces).

³ *The Metrics of Distributed Work: Financial and Performance Benefits of an Emerging Work Model*, Knoll White Paper, New York, 2011.

⁴ *Condeco website: Accessed December 2020.* <https://www.condecosoftware.com/faq/desk-booking/what-desk-person-ratio-is-recommended/>.

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