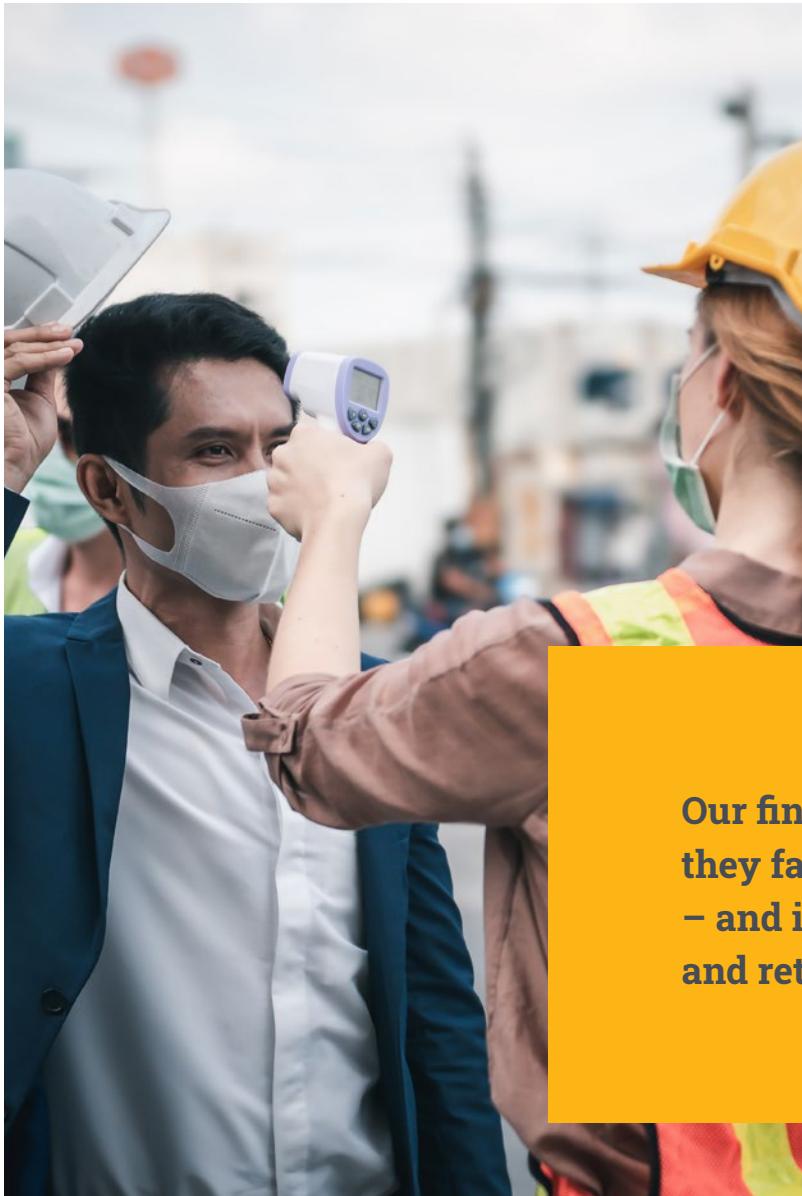




# One Year Into COVID

THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON HOW WE WORK

workhuman®



Over the past year, the workplace has undergone unprecedented change. More employees are working remotely, and those working on-site are coping with pandemic-related restrictions and guidelines. Schedules and workflows have been continually disrupted and rearranged. To better understand how employees are responding to these challenges and gain insights into the ways employers can best respond, Workhuman® conducted a survey of more than 1,000 U.S. workers, aged 18-75+, across a broad range of industries, departments, and titles (entry-level to CEO).

**Our findings can help HR and senior leaders be proactive as they face workplace culture shifts brought on by the pandemic – and improve business outcomes such as productivity and retention.**

The data shows that the pandemic disruption is taking a toll on workers' mental health; most are feeling less human connection since the pandemic started. But we also discovered insights that illuminate the path forward. For instance, survey results demonstrate that creating a more human workplace begins with nurturing a sense of gratitude and positivity. Even a simple gesture – such as saying "thank you" – can have a big impact.

Through the power of social recognition, you can create a more connected workplace culture – one that's able to adapt to the realities of today and the challenges of tomorrow.



More than half report that they have seen a shift in company culture since the start of the pandemic.

# 1 in 3

Nearly one-third (29%) fear their manager or colleagues will take credit for their work while working remotely.



More than one quarter say they are concerned that the in-person office dynamic will never be the same.

# 1 in 4

26% feel work/life flexibility will be reduced.

# Employees are feeling the strain.

The disruption of the past year has forced employees to adapt. Our survey results indicate that adapting has been easier for some than others.

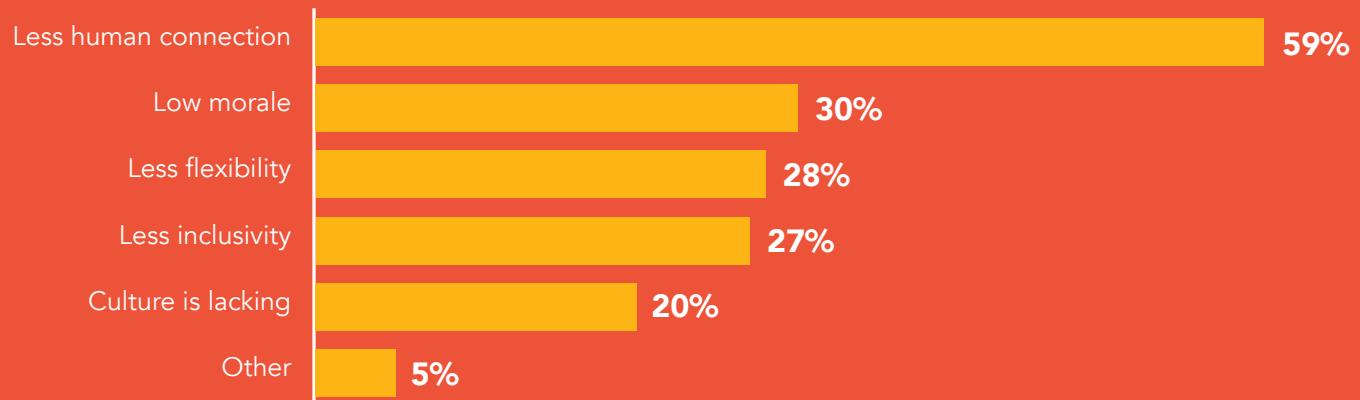
**Workers reported feeling anxious, isolated, overwhelmed, and less motivated.**



*Q: If the pandemic has had an impact on your mental health, specify how. Select all that apply.*

## WHAT'S CAUSING THE STRAIN?

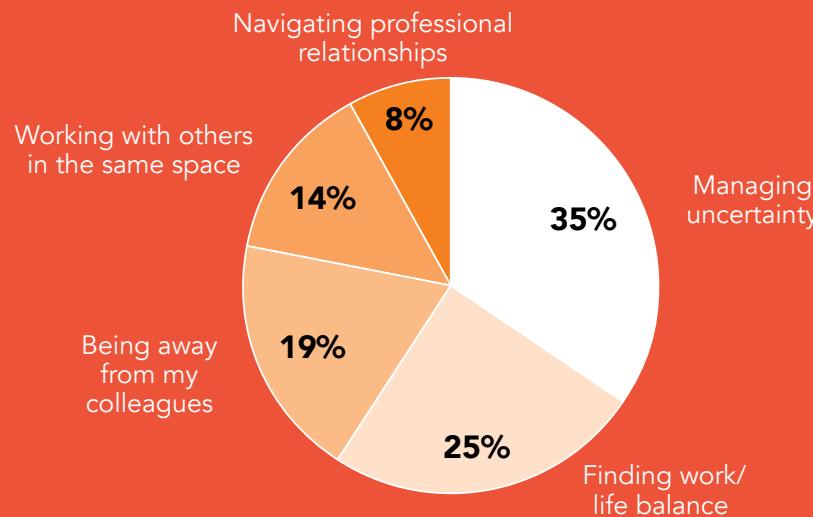
**59% said there's been less human connection since the start of the pandemic. A large portion of respondents indicated low morale (30%), less flexibility (28%), and less inclusivity (27%).**



*Q. In what ways has your culture shifted since the start of the pandemic? Select all that apply.*

## HOW ARE EMPLOYEES ADJUSTING TO A NEW WAY OF WORKING?

**35% identified managing uncertainty as the biggest adjustment they've had to make.**



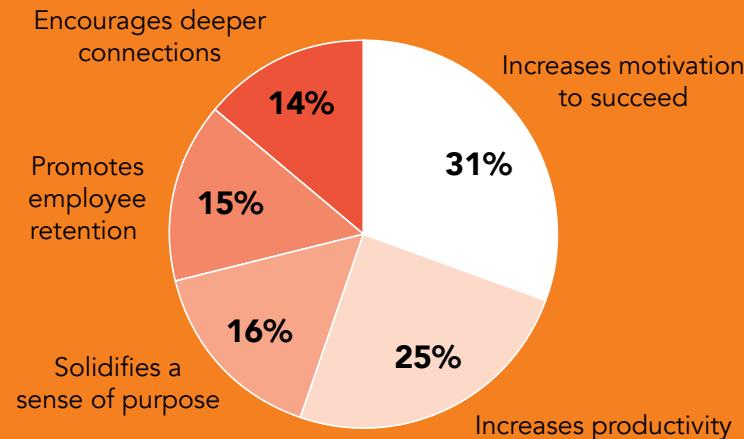
*Q: What has been the most difficult adjustment you've had to make since the start of the pandemic?*

Looking at these results, it's no surprise that more than one out of four workers we polled (27%) said it has been very difficult or difficult to adjust to a new way of working. Exploring further, we also asked specifically about which adjustment has been the most difficult to make. The most common response? Managing uncertainty. That was followed by finding work/life balance, being away from colleagues, working with others in the same space, and navigating professional relationships.

# Human connections directly impact retention and productivity.

Employees can't flourish and do their best work when they are feeling mentally strained or coping with too much uncertainty. If the workplace lacks human connection, positivity, and gratitude, then decreasing retention and productivity is a significant risk. For insights into how the pandemic is affecting these types of performance indicators, we asked survey respondents how they think gratitude impacts the workplace. Our results show that appreciation from a peer and/or manager can drive positive performance. We also found that recognition leads to higher retention rates.

**31% of the workers we polled said gratitude increases their motivation to succeed.  
25% reported it increases productivity.**

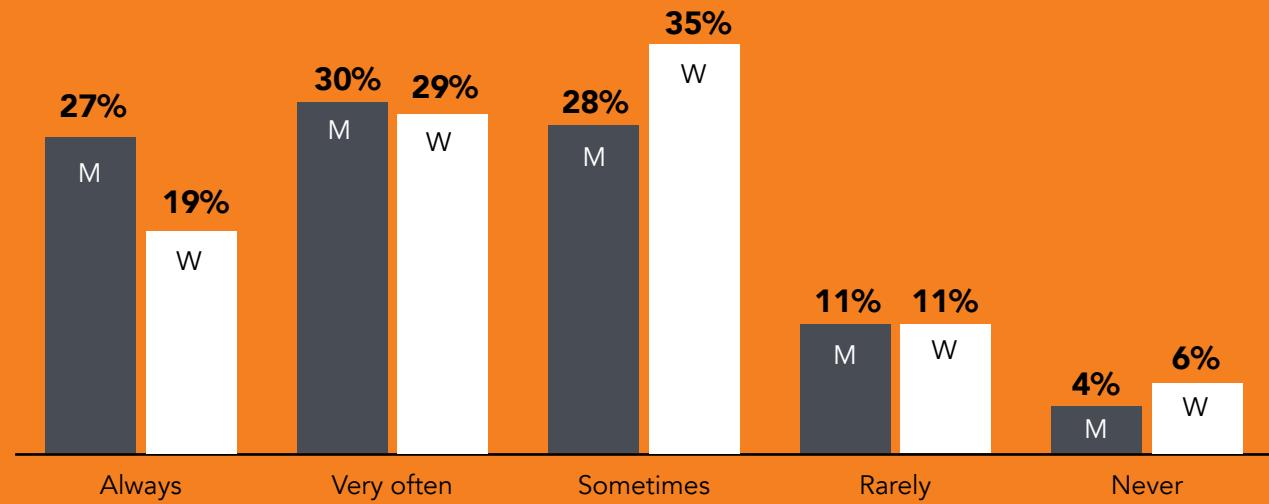


*Q: How do you think gratitude impacts the workplace?*

## GENDER DIFFERENCES

The data we collected also revealed that 27% of the men said they always received a “thank you” from their employer and/or colleague, while only 19% of women said the same. Discrepancies like this can have consequences. For instance, Workhuman research also found turnover rates were higher among women than men during the pandemic.

**27% of the men surveyed said they always received a “thank you” from their employer and/or colleagues, while only 19% of women said the same.**



*Q: How often do you receive a “thank you” from your employer and/or colleagues?*

# How employers can create a more human workplace

We asked survey respondents about the specific tactics employers can use to create a more human workplace. One of our primary findings is that a little thanks can go a long way. And more than half (54%) said a simple “thank you” would ease pressure in the workplace.

**60% said humanity in the workplace involves offering “thanks” and gratitude.**



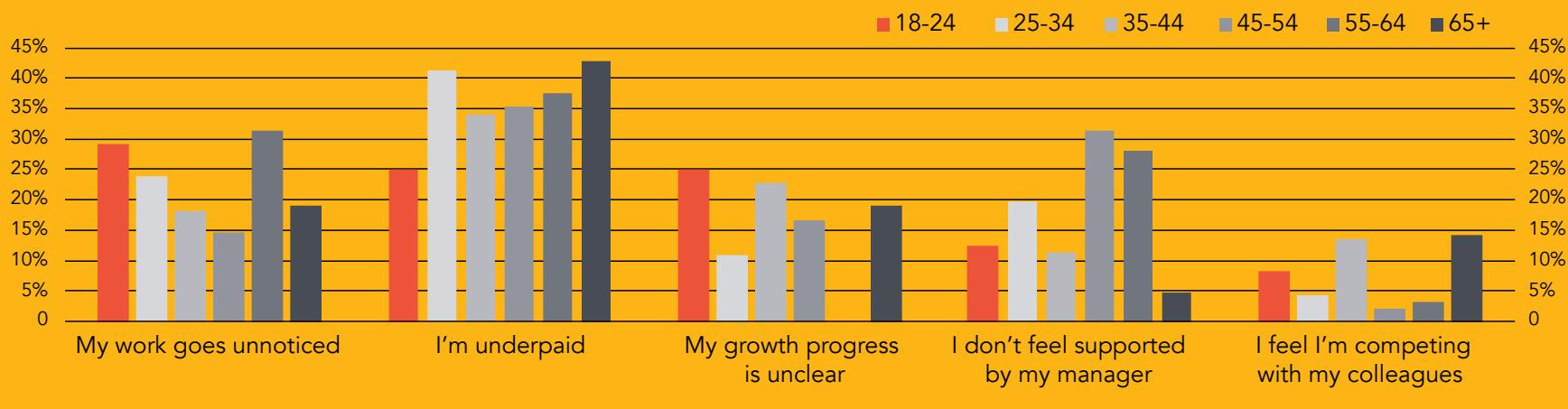
*Q: What does humanity in the workplace look like to you? Select all that apply.*

**53% said recognition for hard work would be a desirable way for employers to incorporate more human moments in the workplace.**

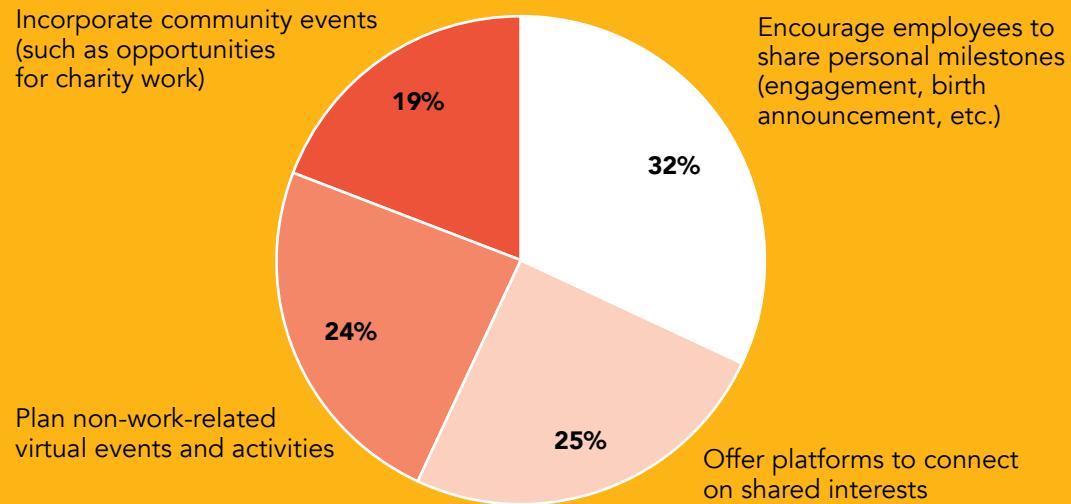
## MAKE RECOGNITION TOP OF MIND.

Our survey results also show that, beyond expressing gratitude, workers are eager for their employers to adopt other approaches as well. This was particularly important for Generation Z respondents (18-24 years old), who indicated that the primary reason they felt unappreciated was because their work went unnoticed.

**29% of Gen Z respondents said their work going unnoticed was the primary reason they felt unappreciated.**



**32% said they would like their employer to encourage employees to share personal milestones.**



*Q: How would you like to see your employer foster human connection in the workplace?*

## CELEBRATION LEADS TO CONNECTION.

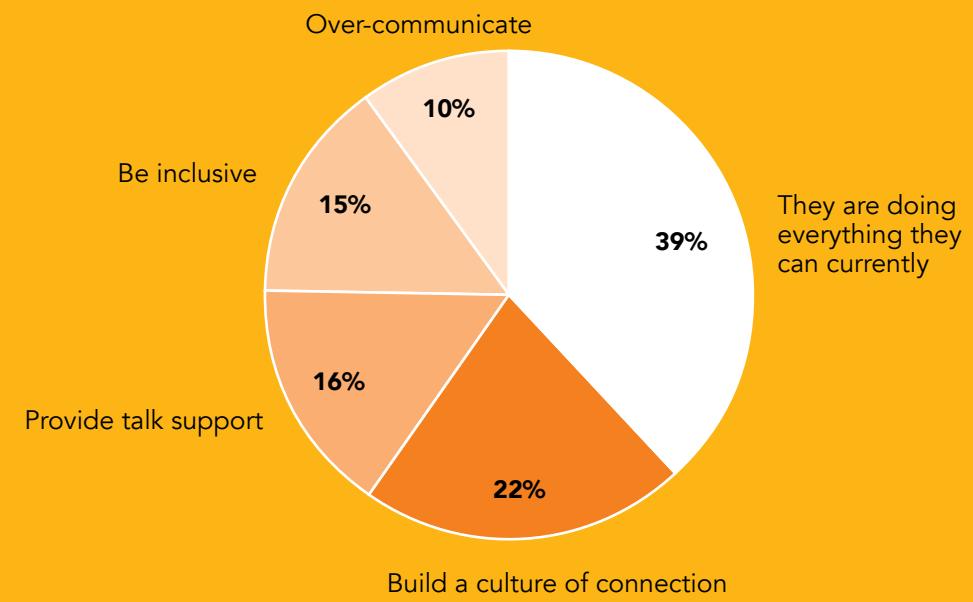
Celebrating life events is another important way to create a more human workplace. About one-third of survey respondents (32%) said they would like their employer to encourage employees to share personal milestones. One out of three said doing so helps them feel more connected to their colleagues; others said it helps them better get to know their team.

## HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH?

We asked survey respondents about specific ways their employers could support their mental health. The results tell us employers could do a better job supporting their employees by: building a culture of connection (22%), providing talk support (16%), being inclusive (15%), and over-communicating (10%).

Workers also indicated they would like their employers to provide more flexibility, be completely transparent, and encourage positive coping.

**61% said employers could do more to support their mental health.**



*Q: How can your employer best support your mental health?*



# The future of work is **still** human.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the workplace forever, and employees are feeling the strain. That puts key performance indicators – like retention and productivity – at risk. Today, more than ever before, it is imperative for employers to create a human-centric organization – one where work practices are grounded in gratitude, connection, and positivity.

Our new research shows that employees are eager for their employers to adopt strategies and tactics that bolster the foundation of a human workplace. They want a wide range of approaches, which could include anything from a simple “thank you” to a more comprehensive social recognition program. Whatever the approach, they all center around nurturing a sense of belonging, achievement, and happiness.

Thriving in the future of work means making appreciation and organization-wide recognition a core value of your business culture. After all, disruptions are inevitable, and the business environment will always be dynamic. By combining the power of human connection with the capabilities of social recognition technology, you can create a just and resilient culture that can adjust to changes and continue to drive your organization toward success.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This survey was directed by Workhuman from February 2-4, 2021. The respondent sampling of the survey was conducted by independent market research firm Propeller Insights. The final sample of the survey was composed of 1,009 randomly selected fully employed persons in the U.S. (age 18 or older). The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points at a 95% level of confidence.

## ABOUT WORKHUMAN

As the world's fastest-growing Social Recognition and Continuous Performance Management platform, we are unapologetic in our mission to make work more human. Through provocative workplace data and human insights that align and inspire the organization around a shared purpose, the Workhuman Cloud® gives companies what they need to achieve immediate and long-term tangible ROI by motivating and connecting every employee to perform the best work of their lives. Founded in 1999 and co-headquartered in Dublin, Ireland and Framingham, Massachusetts, Workhuman is used by more than 5 million humans in 170 countries.

Reach out today to request a demo or get started with the [Workhuman Cloud](#).

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