

## Social benefits of the office in a WFH era



At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global workforce underwent a massive shift to working-from-home where possible. While this was a big change initially, work-from-home proved to have many benefits for workers and is now a common part of many people's work schedule. While work-from-home is here to stay - with 60% of employed Australians saying their preference is a mix of work-from-home and the office - it's important that leaders don't forget the important role gathering in the workplace can play in the wellbeing of employees.

### **Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on Australians' social and mental health**

[Work-from-home has many benefits including time and money savings, but it can also pose challenges](#) for employees including social isolation and the blurring of work and home boundaries. Additionally, COVID-19 had a negative impact on Australians in the following

ways: less interaction with friends and family (66%) increased fear, worry and anxiety (50%), increased financial stress (44%) mental health concerns (44%) and a reduction in sleep quality (21%).

## **The workplace is the main point of social connection and community**

While more workers will work-from-home in the future, the workplace still plays an important role in contributing to meaningful social interaction. Despite one in two Australians spending more time with their families (52%) and experiencing meaningful and regular social connection in their households (54%), Australian workers are more likely to experience meaningful and regular social connection in their workplace (70%).

70%

of Australian workers say they experience meaningful and regular social connection in their workplace.

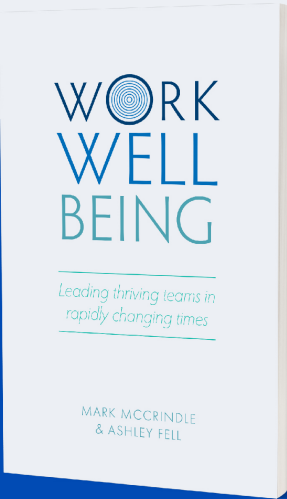
Furthermore, Australian workers are more appreciative of their workplace and the connections they experience than they were two years ago. Compared to 2019, Australian workers are more likely to consider their colleagues as trusted friends (78% cf. 72% 2019) and experience meaningful interactions with their colleagues (88% cf. 80% 2019).

## **Younger generations have the strongest desire for connection in the workplace**


[Generation Z](#) has largely been shaped by the rise of digitisation and now, the pandemic. Despite their familiarity with, and comfort using technology, Gen Z have a strong desire for human interaction in the workplace. Previous research conducted by Mainstreet Insights found that Gen Zs not only believe that a weekly check-in is optimal, but more than one in two (58%) want check-ins to be entirely in person. Considering their desire for face-to-face interaction and the shift to remote or hybrid working, it comes as no surprise that Gen Z workers have felt the biggest negative impact of the pandemic to be on their mental health (65% cf. 55% Gen Y, 40% Gen X, 33% Baby Boomers).

## The importance of prioritising wellbeing in the workplace

In the past year, Australian workers have shown that increased flexibility has resulted in an increase in productivity and achieving goals, while also increasing time spent with their family and reducing their stress levels. These are fantastic benefits to the work-from-era society is moving towards, but let's not forget the benefits that come to employees' wellbeing from gathering in the workplace together, including the ability to communicate vision and purpose, collaborate and facilitate social interaction. As workers continue to find their ideal way of working, the importance of [work wellbeing](#), flexibility and social connection are more important than ever for leaders to consider and prioritise if they want to retain top talent and ensure that work is a place of human flourishing.



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\*The above insights have been provided by [Mainstreet Insights](#) (a combined initiative of McCrindle and Reventure). [Find out more here](#).

## Contact

Ashley Fell : [info@mccrindle.com.au](mailto:info@mccrindle.com.au)