

2020 Trends in Global Virtual Work

METAMORPHOSIS OF THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE



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INTRODUCTION: METAMORPHOSIS OF WORK

During the first months of 2020, dramatic changes occurred as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic that had a transformational impact on the way we work. Suddenly, virtual and remote work became the only way for many organizations to continue to operate, and for vast numbers of employees, it meant abrupt and mandatory changes in the very definition of work. Not surprisingly, this year's survey reflects many of those stunning changes.

In May 2020, RW3 CultureWizard invited members of major organizations around the world to participate in the fifth biennial global virtual survey. The survey attracted nearly 2,700 respondents from 106 countries, which indicates the continuing high level of interest in the subject and is particularly relevant in light of the COVID-19 virus and its impact on work.

Over the past 10 years, we have seen virtual teams grow in consequence and relevance in keeping with the greater global integration of the workforce, coupled with the growing importance of workplace/work life flexibility. The 2020 survey points out that this trend has been catapulted, and based on our findings, remote work will continue to grow. Despite that, while improving, many of the key challenges remain the same as in previous years (2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018). However, as a result of the metamorphosis taking place in the way we work – with greater dependence on virtual work – it becomes ever more critical to become aware of these needs and institute programs to remedy these shortcomings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (ANALYSIS)

This year's survey expanded the focus as participants documented dramatic changes in how we work. RW3 CultureWizard has been tracing the evolution of virtual work since 2010, when we issued *Challenges of Working in Virtual Teams*, the first in our series of biennial reports. The focus of the early reports was predominantly global – tracing concerns about cultural differences and the potential barriers they present to collaboration. Over the years, the subject expanded to embrace the challenges of achieving inclusion and engagement among members of a diverse workforce.

The *Trends in Global Virtual Work – 2020 Report* reflects both the new reality and the continuing challenges people face when they interact with colleagues from different cultures, diverse backgrounds, styles, and perspectives – predominantly remotely.

As we analyze the meaning of virtual work in mid-2020, it is impossible to ignore the magnitude of the societal changes that are upon us. These include the need to find ways to lead, manage, collaborate, and create inclusive environments using the virtual tools at our disposal.

ADJUSTING TO A REDEFINED WORKPLACE

As we return to a “new normal” work routine, survey data and anecdotal information reveal that more of us will be working virtually. Nearly 70% of respondents want to continue working from home *at least half of the time*! And,

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when you include those respondents who want to work from home at least 25% of the time, the number jumps to 94% – underscoring the pressing need to develop virtual leadership and collaboration skills.

Verbatim comments provide deeper insight into the desire to work from home. On the plus-side, people point to greater productivity, a better work-life balance, and a reduction in commute times. The comments also point out the challenges of working at home – including the lack of camaraderie and opportunities to collaborate easily, inability to separate work from personal lives, lack of space for a home office, and lack of bandwidth.

THE COLLABORATION CHALLENGE

Technology makes collaboration possible, but personal skills make it successful. Even though collaboration technologies have been available for a long time, the survey demonstrates that people still face challenges using those tools effectively. The highest barrier involves creating collaborative, inclusive virtual environments. For example, 54% of respondents said they need to alter their communication style to compensate for the lack of face-to-face interaction. Webcams are used at least part of the time by about three-quarters of the respondents to remedy the lack of face-to-face contact, but a significant percentage of respondents cited complications such as ambient noise and interruptions by family members, feeling pressure to look attentive, having to dress up for webcam sessions, having insufficient bandwidth for good-quality video and audio, and having difficulty operating the software.

Adding to the difficulty of building collaborative relationships are a number of other challenges. For example, over one-third of respondents indicated that building relationships (37%) and managing conflict (33%) were challenging in virtual environments. Understanding diverse accents (25%) and lack of responsiveness (20%) posed additional challenges when face-to-face communication was lacking.

Finally, differences based on culture and standards of living in different parts of the world, receptivity to diversity, and the divergent perspectives of younger and older workers add layers of complexity to remote-work collaboration. Younger workers, for example, were more comfortable with flexible schedules. Older workers, however, interpreted schedule flexibility as a lack of commitment to the job. They expressed concerns about the priorities of these young workers, assuming that younger workers were more interested in trying to fit work into their personal schedules rather than the reverse. Both older and younger workers sometimes had difficulty understanding the colloquial phrases used by people outside of their own age groups. Moreover, younger workers noted that older workers adopted and achieved proficiency with new technologies much more slowly. On the other hand, older workers claimed that younger workers sometimes had an unjustified know-it-all attitude and were unwilling to accept and benefit from criticism.

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

The role and expectations of leadership seem to be changing. Team leaders still must accomplish their business mission and goals, but in the new work environment they need to develop additional skills to maintain high levels of engagement and full collaboration. The almost complete elimination of face-to-face contact may impair inclusion, intercultural cooperation, and good teamwork. These new challenges cannot be overstated – both for team leaders and colleagues.

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It is clear that leaders will face new challenges based on hundreds of survey respondents who expressed the heightened risk of cultural misunderstandings. For example, they cited concerns about micro-management, embarrassment about asking co-workers to repeat statements, reluctance to express themselves directly, and confusion about the multiple meanings of the word yes as acknowledgement that something will be accomplished.

In addition, leaders had to become technology *troubleshooters*. Other comments made it clear that good leadership now included encouraging the use of webcams, providing on-the-spot guidance in the use of virtual-meeting platforms, and creating and sharing meeting agendas and summaries in a timely manner.

THE CHALLENGE OF TRUST

But what about *trust*? As we've learned from previous surveys and decades of work on diverse intercultural teams, gaining trust is critical for teamwork and collaboration. But establishing trust across cultures that have different expectations about workplace behaviors, responsiveness, and respect is extremely challenging. And it is made all-the-more difficult when trust must be established virtually.

Establishing trust requires team members to be responsive, reliable, open to sharing information, and willing to give recognition to others. It's easy to see how diverse teams, working remotely and meeting virtually, can easily encounter difficulty building the trust necessary for effective collaboration. It takes enlightened leadership to appreciate these unique challenges and a readiness to learn what leadership means in this "new normal" work environment.

VIRTUAL TEAMWORK REMAINS CRITICAL

An overwhelming majority of respondents (89%) reported that virtual teamwork is extremely or somewhat critical to their productivity. With virtual teams incorporating larger numbers of cultures, the potential impact of cultural barriers rises correspondingly. And the technologies used to keep team members in touch simply cannot alleviate the consequences of misunderstandings and other culture-based obstacles – frequently over simple matters such as agreement on schedules and task assignments.

Being engaged and collaborative is part of being a good virtual teammate to 92% of respondents, but different cultures interpret the term *collaborative* differently. So, it's not surprising that people can misunderstand behaviors as *not* being collaborative when, in fact, their colleagues are working hard to support the team. Good communication skills are at the heart of this issue and are cited by 89% of respondents – as is providing useful feedback (62%).

Years ago, we observed that the inability to see each other and to create a personal connection takes a disproportionate toll on team members, crippling those that come from high-relationship cultures. As we move into a new era of virtual work, it behooves us to remember that what worked in a traditional workplace will need to be modified in order to maintain a similar level of productivity. The findings in this survey give all of us some insight into the new skills we'll need and the learning challenges ahead. This means that every one of us will need to: (1) identify the new skills we need; (2) assess our own current skills against the new skills, and (3) build competencies that enable excellence in the new environment.

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KEY FINDINGS

- 59% of respondents worked full time in offices before the pandemic.
- 94% of respondents wish to work from home at least part of the time.
- 69% wish to work from home at least half of the time.
- 65% report that virtual communication is more difficult than in-person communication.
- 54% adjust their communication due to the lack of visual contact on virtual teams.
- 39% rate their virtual team leaders as very effective; 23% rate themselves very effective as global leaders.
- 89% of respondents say their virtual teamwork is somewhat or extremely critical to productivity, but only 26% trained to increase their productivity on these teams.
- 65% of respondents meet virtually with the entire team at least twice per week (26% meet daily).
- 41% believe that all of their team members perceive the value of diversity.
- 74% detect subtle or unconscious bias at least occasionally.
- 66% report that their companies offer training to capitalize on the diversity of their global teams.
- 52% use webcam video technology for at least 50% of their virtual meetings.

The following issues were raised in the open-ended remarks:

- *Personal* concerns about working from home include technical problems, stress, the responsibility of having children present, and non-private workspaces.
- Respondents cited the following challenging aspects of the transition to virtual teams: lack of casual interaction, slow access to data, inferior office equipment, distracting surroundings, lack of motivation.
- Some respondents believe they are more efficient working at home; others claim they work too many hours and not as efficiently; some claim to work fewer hours.
- Respondents cited less-acknowledged kinds of diversity such as parenthood status, thought and work orientation, legacy organization identity, being a contractors, health, power, and hierarchy.
- Generational differences included such things as terminology, inability to adopt new technologies, lack of experience, lack of flexibility, and impatience for quick promotions.
- Respondents not only cited cultural differences, but the impact of notably different physical conditions and living circumstances around the world.
- Respondents varied in their appreciation of diversity as a goal – some willingly accepting its value, but others pointing out the need for merit-based standards of performance.
- When using webcams, respondents are concerned about pressure to look attentive, being unable to multitask on other things during meetings, and ambient sounds from nearby family life.

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BACKGROUND

ABOUT RW³ CULTUREWIZARD

Today's workforce faces a complex world where people work across distances with people that have different cultural values, styles, and behaviors – often remotely. RW3 CultureWizard prepares them to excel in that world. Since 2001, we have helped our clients to create inclusive work environments and to prepare their people to be productive, effective, and engaged no matter where they are.

Drawing upon real-world scenarios, we customize immediately actionable tactical business applications. At the same time, we provide the most comprehensive digital library of global skill-building tools, integrated on-demand courses, assessments, and learning games guided by instructors both virtually and in-person.

SURVEY PURPOSE

In 2010, we pioneered a 17-question survey to gauge the importance of global virtual teams and identify the challenge faced by team members. Biannually, we enriched our exploration – expanding our survey to 41 questions this year to incorporate the following additional concerns:

- Changes in virtual work situations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Challenges and opportunities perceived by workers who never worked remotely before
- More detailed treatment of definitions and challenges related to diversity, cultural values, and biases
- Communication challenges related to work in virtual settings versus face-to-face settings
- Detailed questions about leadership, training, and best practices related to virtual teams and technologies

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RESPONDENT PROFILE

LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS

The nearly 2,700 survey respondents were based in 106 countries. Over 52% of the respondents were executives or held senior to middle-management positions (most of those answering “other” were managers, consultants, and senior executives). In the left-hand column of the following table, we have listed the percentage of survey respondents from the locations identified on the right-hand side of the table, which are listed alphabetically within each percentage range to make them easier to locate.

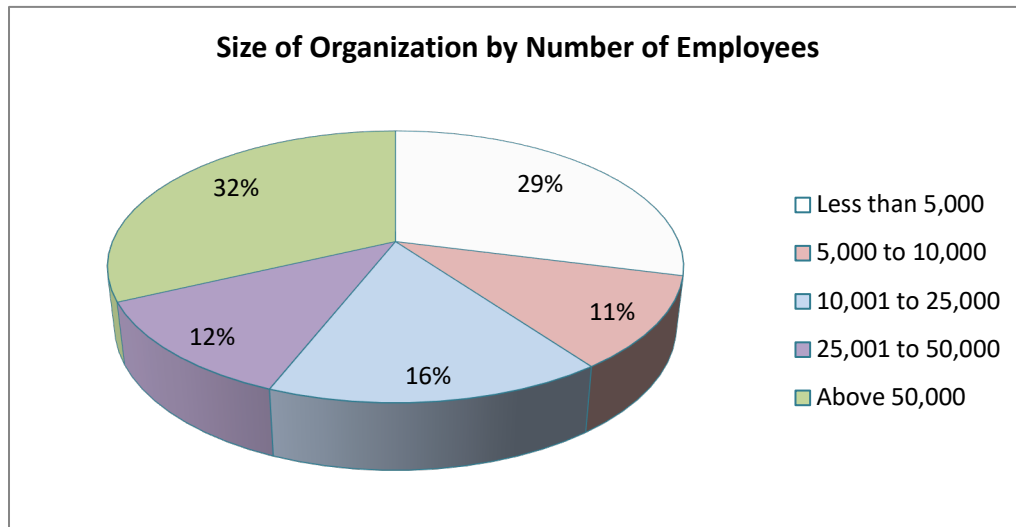
Percent	Nationality (2018 percentages shown in parentheses)
35%	United States (34%)*
7%	India (7%), United Kingdom (8%)
4%	Mexico (2%)
3%	Germany (4%), South Africa (1%)
2%	Brazil (3%), Canada (2%), France (1%), Italy (4%), Japan (2%), China (2%)
1%	Australia (2%), Bangladesh (n/a), Colombia (1%), Finland (1%), Hungary (<1%), Indonesia (<1%), Ireland (1%), Malaysia (1%), Netherlands (1%), New Zealand (1%), Nigeria (1%), Philippines (2%), Poland (1%), Portugal (1%), Romania (1%), Singapore (2%), Spain (1%), Sweden (1%), Switzerland (1%), Taiwan (2%), Turkey (<1%)
Other countries represented (<1%)**	<p>Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burma, Cambodia, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hong Kong, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malawi, Micronesia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, South Korea, Sudan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe</p> <p>* The figures in parentheses indicate percentages from the 2018 survey. **For countries with current survey-participation levels below 1%, no percentages showing previous participation rates are displayed in parentheses.</p>

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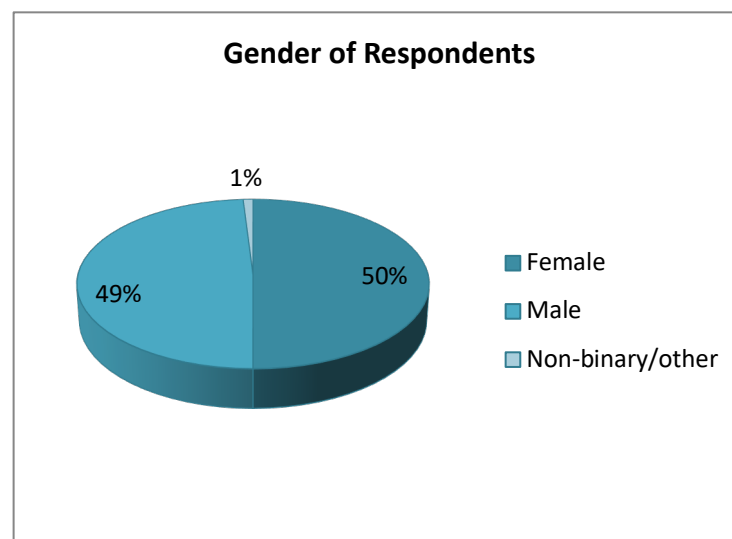
SIZE OF RESPONDING ORGANIZATIONS

The largest group of respondents (32%) represented organizations with more than 50,000 employees. The next largest group (29%) was from organizations with less than 5,000 employees. In the 2018 survey, the second-largest group of respondents represented organizations with 25,001 to 50,000 employees.



GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

This year, 50% of respondents were female; 49% were male (the same as in 2018).

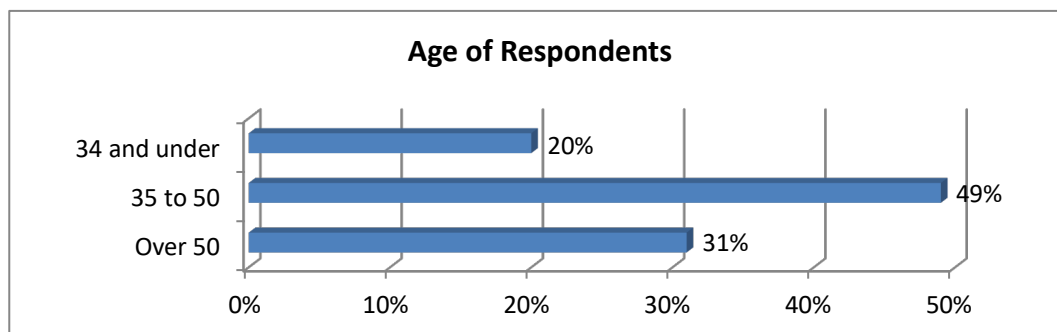


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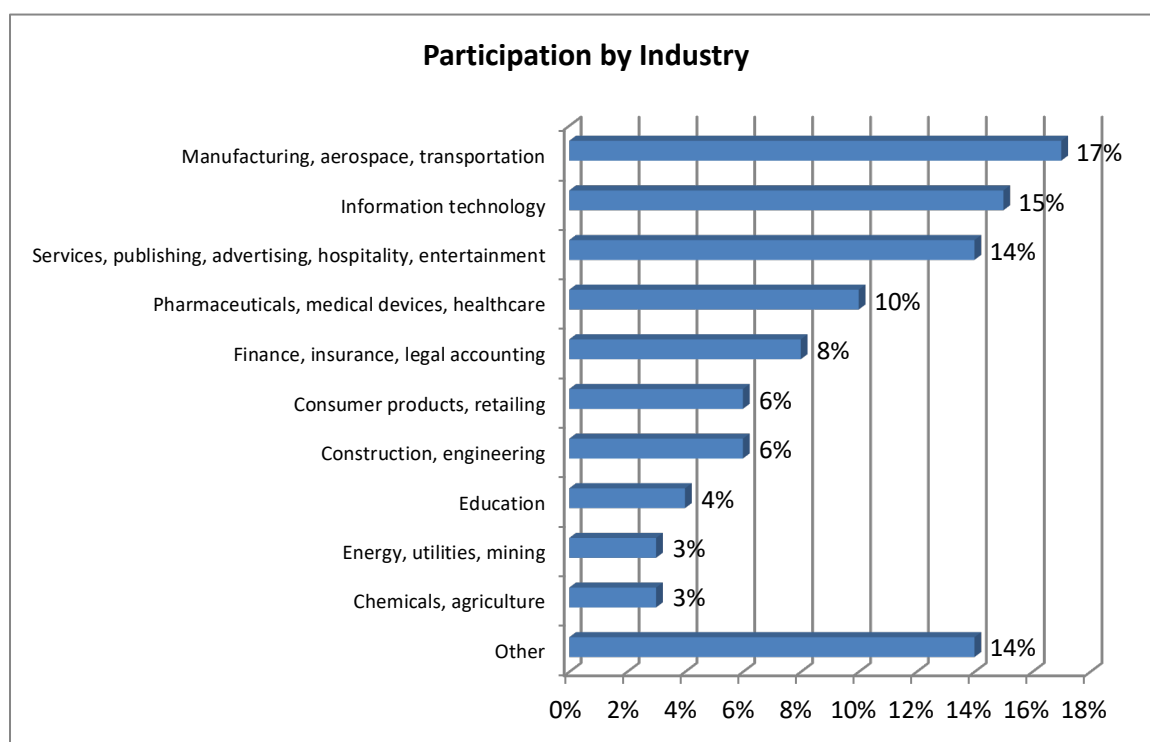
AGE OF RESPONDENTS

The largest group of respondents was 35 to 50 years old (49%), followed by those over 50 years old (31%) and those 34 and under (20%). As in 2018, survey respondents are primarily in mid-career (Generation X). Baby Boomers still outnumber Millennials, whose participation dropped slightly in this year's survey.



SURVEY PARTICIPATION BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

The largest groups of survey participants were from the manufacturing, aerospace, and transportation sector (17%), the information technology sector (15%), and from the services, publishing, advertising, hospitality, and entertainment sector (14%). They were followed by participants from the pharmaceuticals, medical device, and healthcare sector (10%) and from the finance, insurance, legal, and accounting sector (8%).



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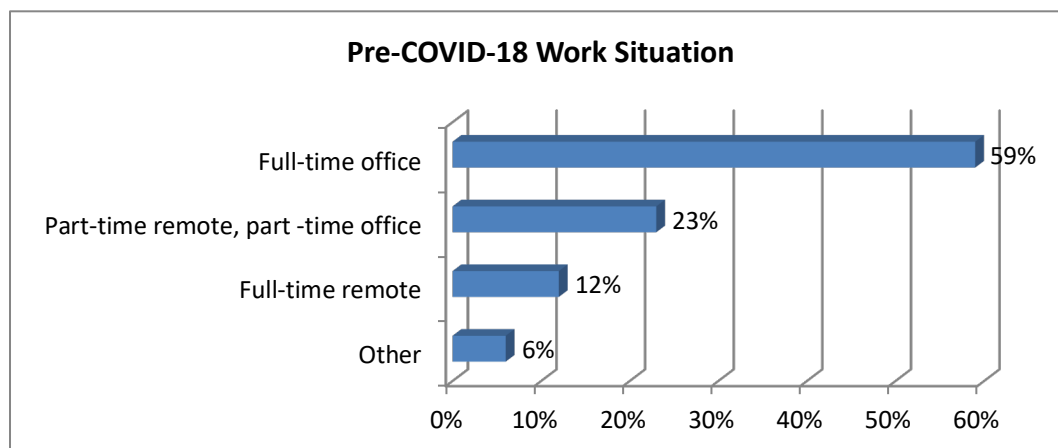


SURVEY RESPONSE DATA

IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

PRE-COVID-19 VIRTUAL-WORK STATUS

We asked respondents to describe their virtual-work situation *before* the COVID-19 outbreak. Most (59%) reported that they were full-time office workers, 23% that they were part-time virtual (remote) and part-time-office workers, and 12% that they were full-time remote virtual (remote) workers. Only 6% reported “other” as their working situation (see Open-Ended Comments).



Open-Ended Comments

*Outside pharmaceutical sales... In sales, in field... Remote worker when on missions...
Worked in my home office or at client sites... Contractor travelling to multiple sites...
Full time office with flexible work from home as needed...
Office and onsite construction supervision...
Part-time remote and part-time consultant on-site...
Full-Time office worker who traveled extensively to support a global cross-national team and
did a lot of virtual sessions as well...
Remote event worker and virtual...
I worked from home, traveled. and, at times, worked from an office...*

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MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF COVID-19 TRANSITION TO A VIRTUAL TEAM

Some survey respondents had never worked remotely before the COVID-19 crisis. When we asked them to describe the most challenging aspect of the transition to work as a member of a virtual team, they provided the following comments.

Open-Ended Comments

Lack of casual interaction with colleagues...

Reading non-verbal communication. Taking the extra time to be very explicit with email or chat. Normally a conversation takes less time...

I had to motivate myself... Time management and distractions...

Very slow access to data stored on internal network via VPN...

I needed to bring home docking stations and large screens to be productive...

Having one screen instead of two. Router placement. Small room...

Bad office ergonomics. Trying to figure out proper lighting for video...

My schedule can be much more malleable now... Loss of having immediate help when needed...

Setting workplace at home devoid of distractions and noise...

The company must have very good technical support, not understand[ing] one word because of their accent...

Putting boundaries around work hours from not extending too much into non-work personal/family time...

Some people in the team are not tech-savvy...

I find this working remotely is more productive...

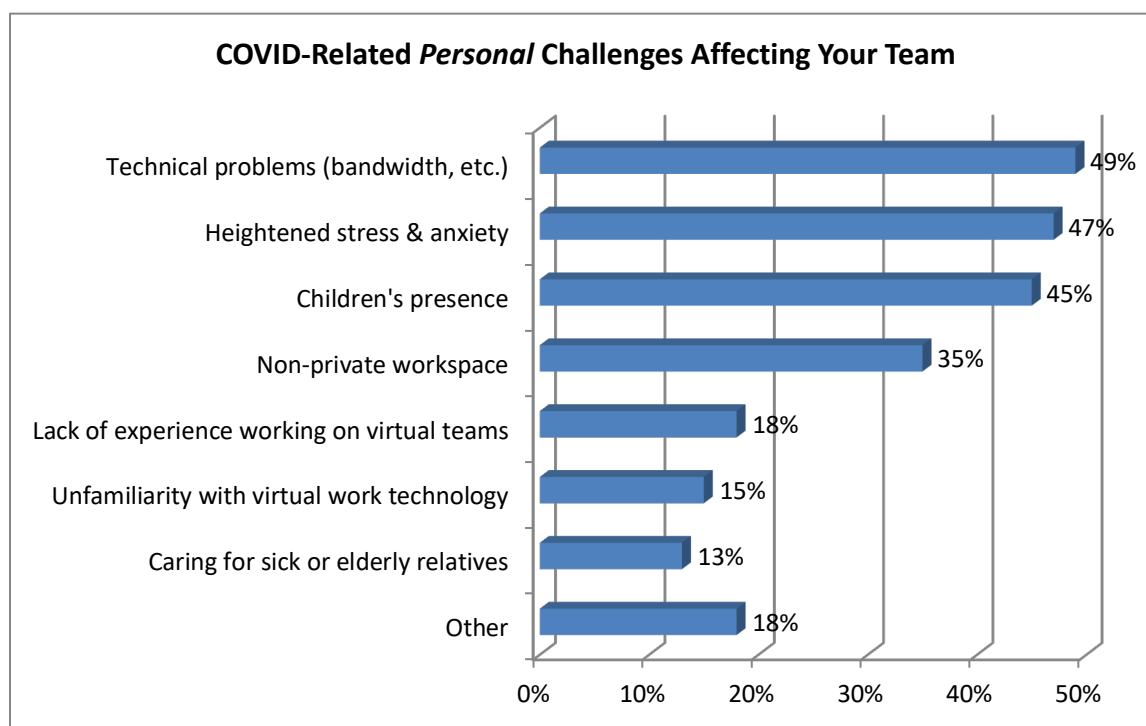
As a parent with young kids who needs lots of attention, it's more challenging to work remotely...

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COVID-19-BASED PERSONAL CHALLENGES AFFECTING VIRTUAL TEAMS

We asked respondents to identify COVID-19-related *personal* challenges that affect their teams (multiple responses permitted). Almost half of the respondents (49%) identified technical problems such as limited bandwidth or lack of a secure virtual private network (VPN) for transmitting sensitive information. Nearly as many reported heightened stress and anxiety (47%) and the presence of children (45%). About one-third (35%) were concerned about the lack of privacy in their workspace, 18% a lack of experience working on virtual teams, 15% a lack of familiarity with virtual work technology, and 13% cited caring for sick or elderly relatives. Another 18% reported “other” personal challenges (see Open-Ended Comments).



Open-Ended Comments

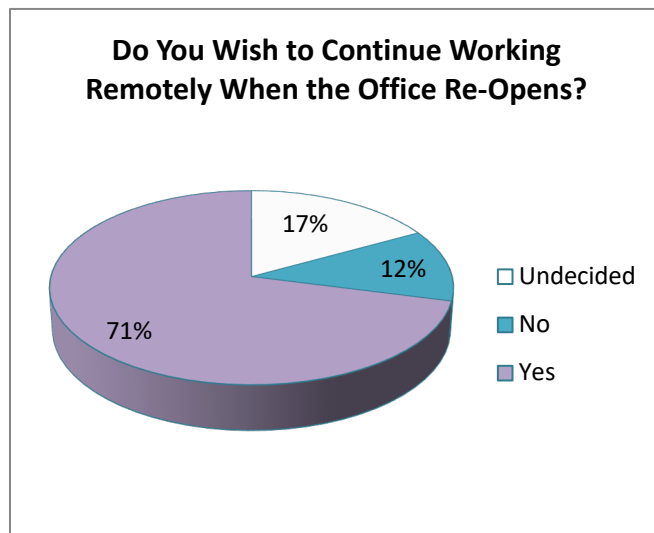
*Extending working hours too much... Lack of communication... You [are] always reachable...
Staying focused... Unable to see the team members face... Fear of the unknown...
Longer working hours due to lack of the clear boundary between work and life...
Some really need the interaction of coworkers... Reduction in pay...
I miss the immediacy of going to someone's desk for a quick question...
Isolation for those on their own, leading to apprehension to join calls...
I am less likely to get up for breaks (IE: stuck in my chair) as I'll be viewed as "slacking" off if
someone "pings" me and I don't respond immediately...
The unending nature of the lockdown, ongoing uncertainty...
Eating more when I get stuck on something... It gets boring after weeks...*

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DESIRE TO CONTINUE WORKING REMOTELY WHEN OFFICE RE-OPENS

When we asked if they wished to continue working remotely once their offices became accessible, 71% of respondents answered “yes,” 12% “no,” and 17% “undecided” (see Open-Ended Comments). At first we were puzzled by the discrepancy between this question and the next one (Desired Work-From-Home Frequency), where 94% of respondents indicated that they wish to work from home at least 25% of the time. Then we realized that the current question was not as nuanced. It confronted respondents with an either/or choice: Do you wish to continue working remotely all the time or return to working at the office all the time when it re-opens.



Open-Ended Comments

PREFER OFFICE

Working from home a few days a month is far different than doing it every day. I miss the camaraderie and face-to-face interaction...

More productive in the office (more and better tools, project material). Better interaction with colleagues...

Faster access to data [in office] due to limited bandwidth at home...

Collaboration is critical and a space where the team and others outside my team are present is key...

No room for a designated office area [at home]...

PREFER TO WORK AT HOME

It is easy to balance your life, saving a lot of time in travelling to and from, instead using that quality time on other things such as learning new skills. Less stress, more productive and focused. Saving time from unnecessary office chats...

Most of my team is globally dispersed and in different time zones. Working remote allows me to better align my working hours with the rest of the team...

Given that a second wave of COVID-19 is due in the fall, even though working at the office has been better for my sense of time management, I'm apprehensive towards returning to office work...

It will also help lessen my carbon footprint...

High-risk family member in the household and don't wish to potentially infect them...

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BOTH HOME AND OFFICE HAVE A ROLE

Save huge office-rental costs...

I like working from home on occasions only (when I need to); I find communicating with colleagues in person more rewarding than when working remotely...

As a software developer working remotely or in an office doesn't make much difference, but working remotely [is] more casual...

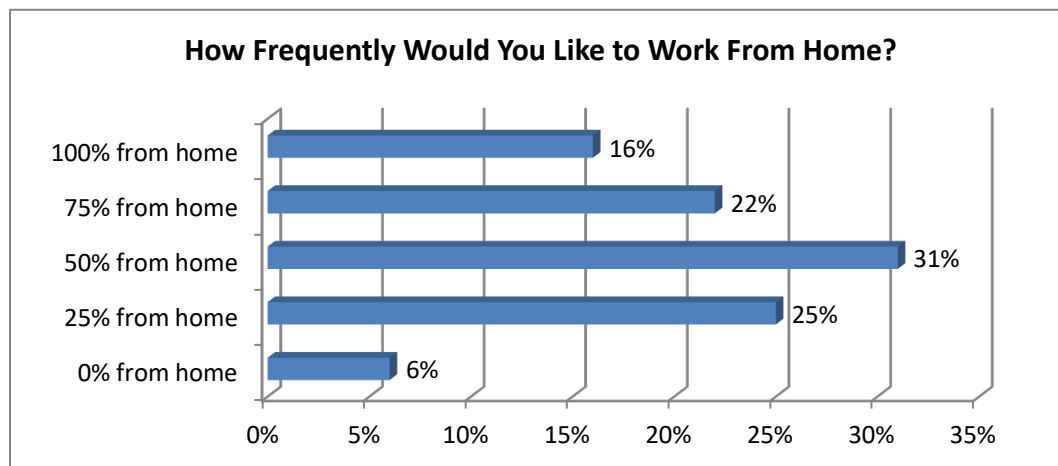
Flexible work management...

I don't want to do it 100% of the time, but doing it more often would be good...

Although I prefer a geographic separation of work and private time, home office has some advantages if it can be kept at a certain level...

DESIRED WORK-FROM-HOME FREQUENCY

When asked how frequently they would like to work from home in the future, 69% of respondents indicated that they wanted to work from home at least half of the time; 94% would like to work from home at least some of the time.

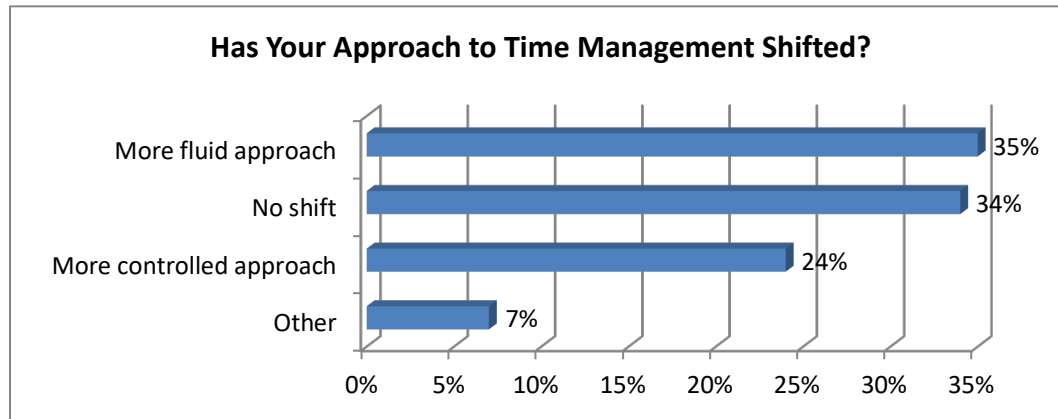


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IMPACT OF VIRTUAL WORK ON TIME MANAGEMENT

When asked if their approach to time management has shifted as a result of working virtually more frequently, 35% of respondents indicated that their approach to time management has become more fluid. Another 34% reported that it has not shifted, and 24% said that their approach has become more controlled. Respondents that indicated “other” provided explanations (Open-Ended Comments).



Open-Ended Comments

MORE EFFICIENT

Core working hour is set, but [I] can multi task and accomplishing more...

More flexibility as a result of more planning of days and less disruptions typically present in the office...

My time management, balance between life and work is better. I have had to create boundaries...

I would work an adjusted schedule anyway due to customer time-zone difference and many meetings with team members overseas, but I do find it a little easier to be more flexible...

When I feel stressed out or overwhelmed, I can stop and do something to handle the anxiety.

Taking frequent breaks has increased my productivity. My working time is stretched out over a longer part of the day, and is more manageable...

WORK TOO MUCH

I tend to work more hours working from home and get more things done. It's harder to stop working some days as our pace of work and stress level has not gone down at all...

Time management has been difficult, I have ended up working late at night and on the weekends...

Starting a little later but working much longer – unsustainable...

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LESS EFFICIENT & WORK LESS

Let's be honest: 'working from home' is not working as much as at work...

Now everyone wants to meet in WebEx vs reaching out in your office to resolve a situation.

This has created more meetings and less worktime...

Largely the same, but I end up spending more time on admin such as printing and procuring my own supplies...

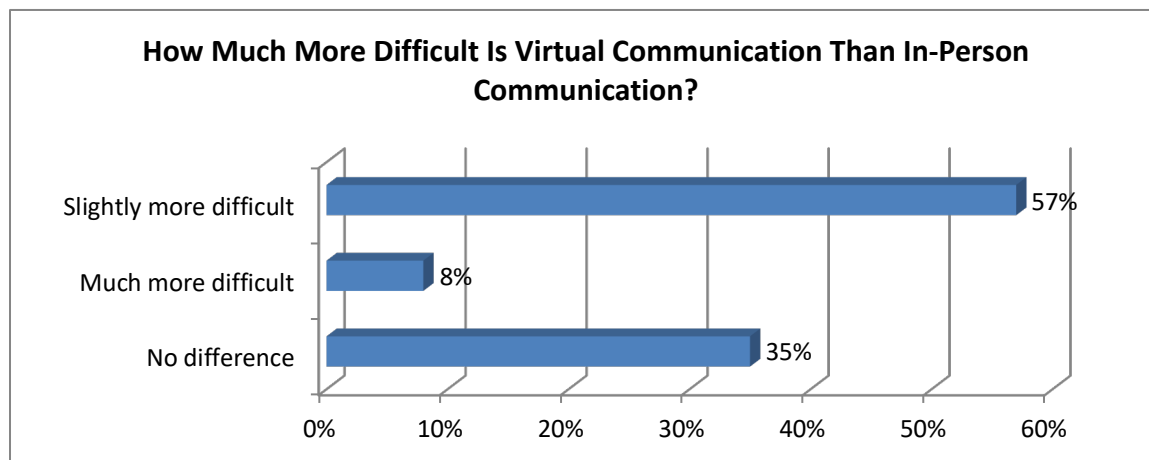
Time management has collapsed...

I increasingly struggle with time boundaries...

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES & TEAM MEMBER CHARACTERISTICS

DIFFICULTY OF VIRTUAL-TEAM VS. IN-PERSON COMMUNICATION

When we asked respondents how much more difficult it is to communicate in a global virtual team than in person, most respondents reported some difficulty – with 57% reporting that it was slightly more difficult and 8% that it was much more difficult. Thirty-five percent (35%) reported no difference. These results were surprising because in 2018, 28% reported that it was much more difficult, and only 16% reported no difference. Are team members becoming better at communication or just less sensitive about the difficulty? The physical presence of other team members with immediate feedback and visual cues of gestures are advantages of in-person communication that are often lacking in virtual communication.

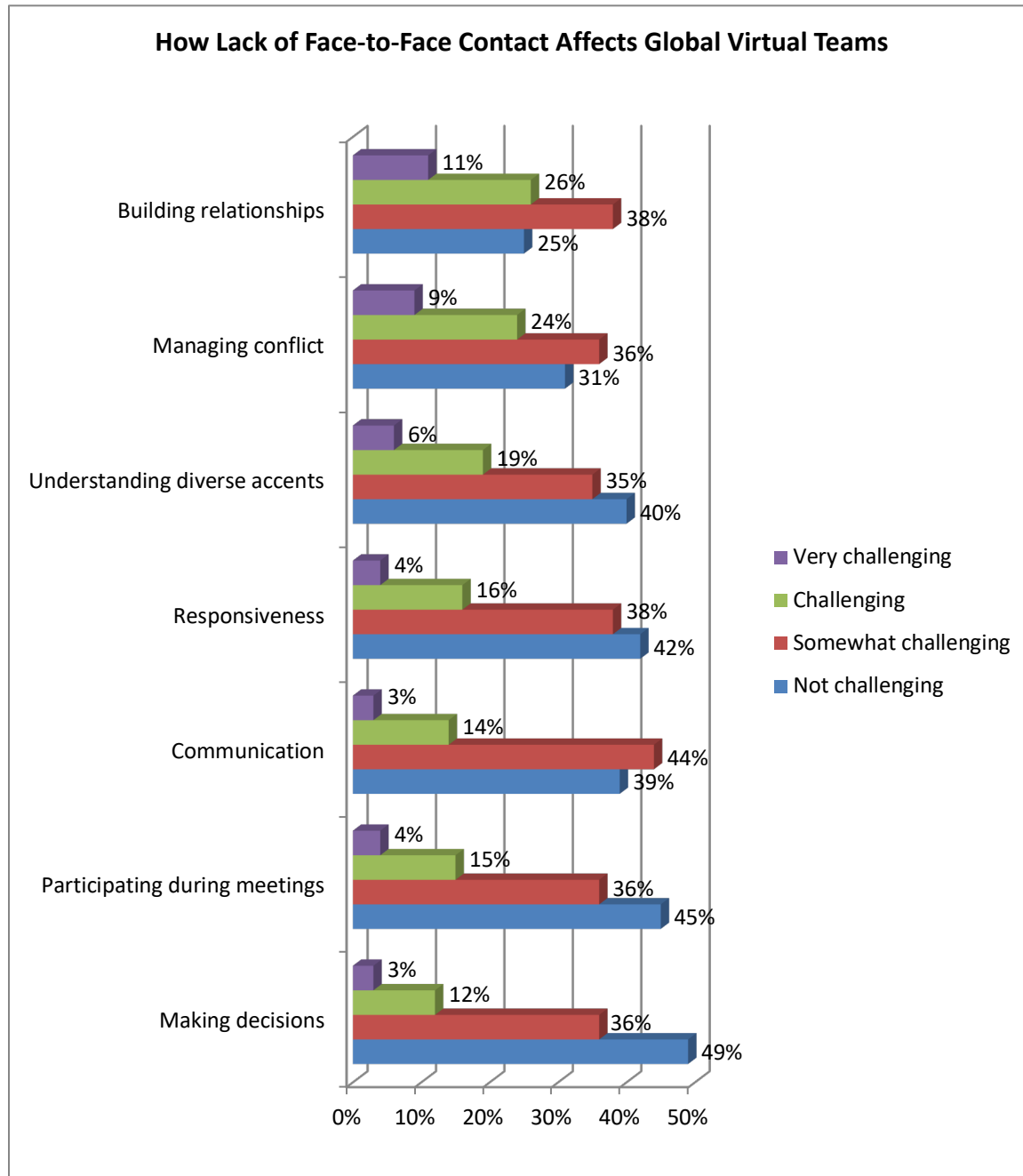


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HOW LACK OF FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT AFFECTS GLOBAL VIRTUAL TEAMS

When asked how the lack of face-to-face contact affects global virtual teams, respondents indicated that the most severe challenges were building relationships (37%), managing conflict (33%), understanding diverse accents (25%), and responsiveness (20%). We added questions this year, so the ranking is slightly different than in the past; nonetheless, building relationships and managing conflict have been the top concerns for the past two surveys.

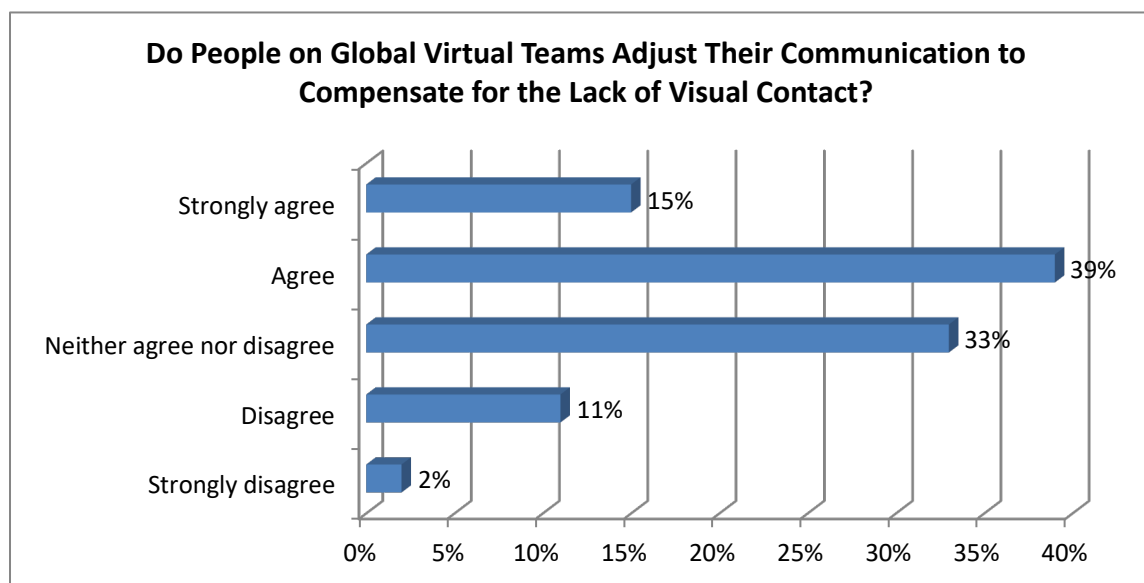


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ADJUSTING COMMUNICATION TO COMPENSATE FOR LACK OF VISUAL CONTACT

When asked if people on virtual teams adjust their communication to compensate for the lack of visual contact, 54% strongly agree or agree; only 13% disagree or strongly disagree. This resembles the results of the 2018 survey.



Open-Ended Comments

People are being more articulate and specific with their words. In our virtual meetings now, people tend to also speak more slowly and louder...

Say their names before speaking in the call...

Much more measured in their responses, and wait to speak until they know no one else is going to talk...

Send emails with reports, have agendas, and ask for questions...

They try to be more structured, I guess, having bullet points...

You have to schedule a time to discuss things you would ordinarily be able walk over to the person and discuss in person...

Much more frequent phone conversations to replace the person to person interactions....

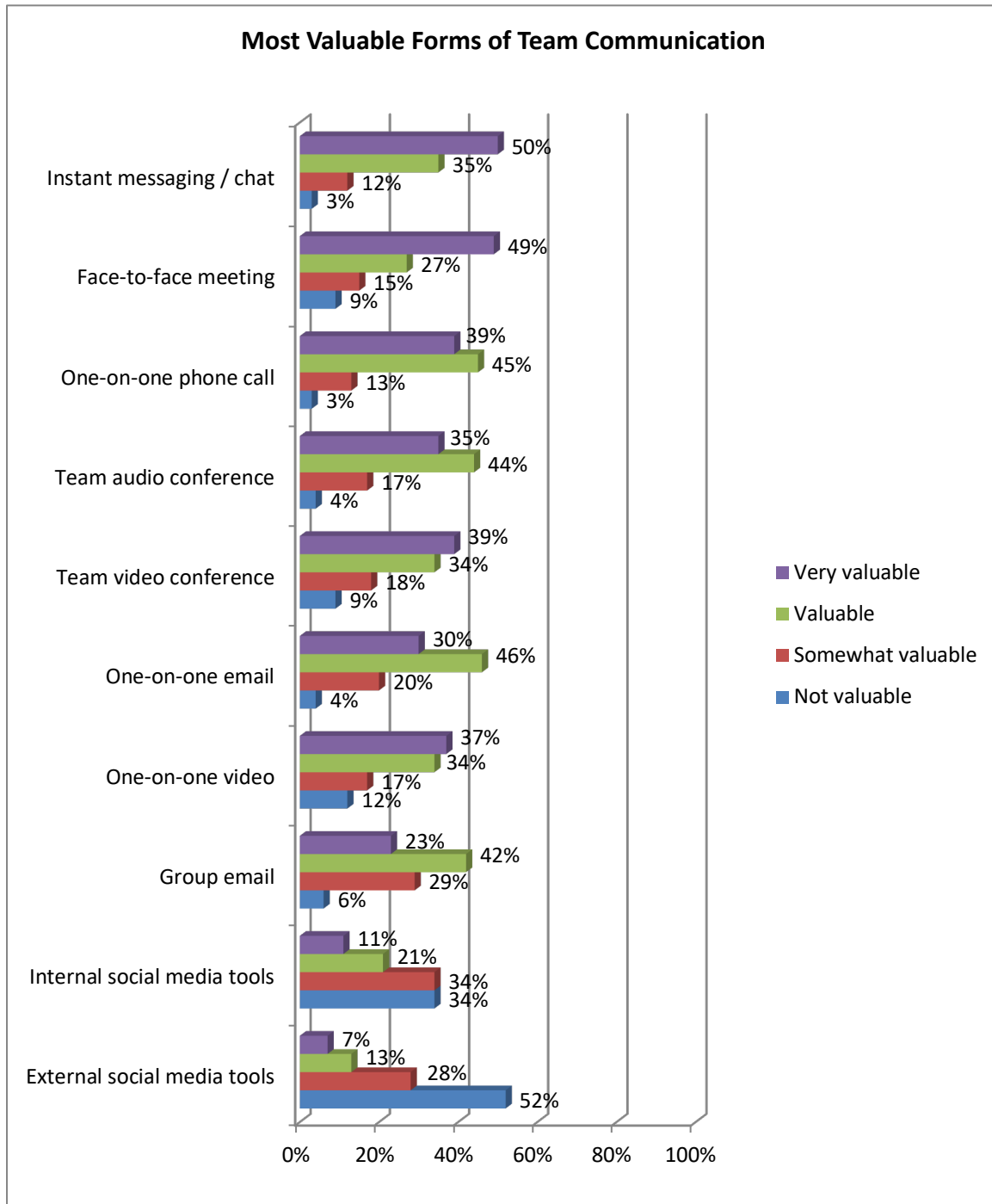
Meetings are scheduled to accommodate time zones...

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MOST VALUABLE FORMS OF TEAM COMMUNICATION

When we asked which forms of team communication were most valuable, respondents reported that instant messaging, face-to-face meetings, and one-on-one phone calls were most valuable. These were followed by team audio conferences, team video conferences, one-on-one emails, and one-on-one videos. We added new options this year, but the sequence for the older options remained as it was in 2018.

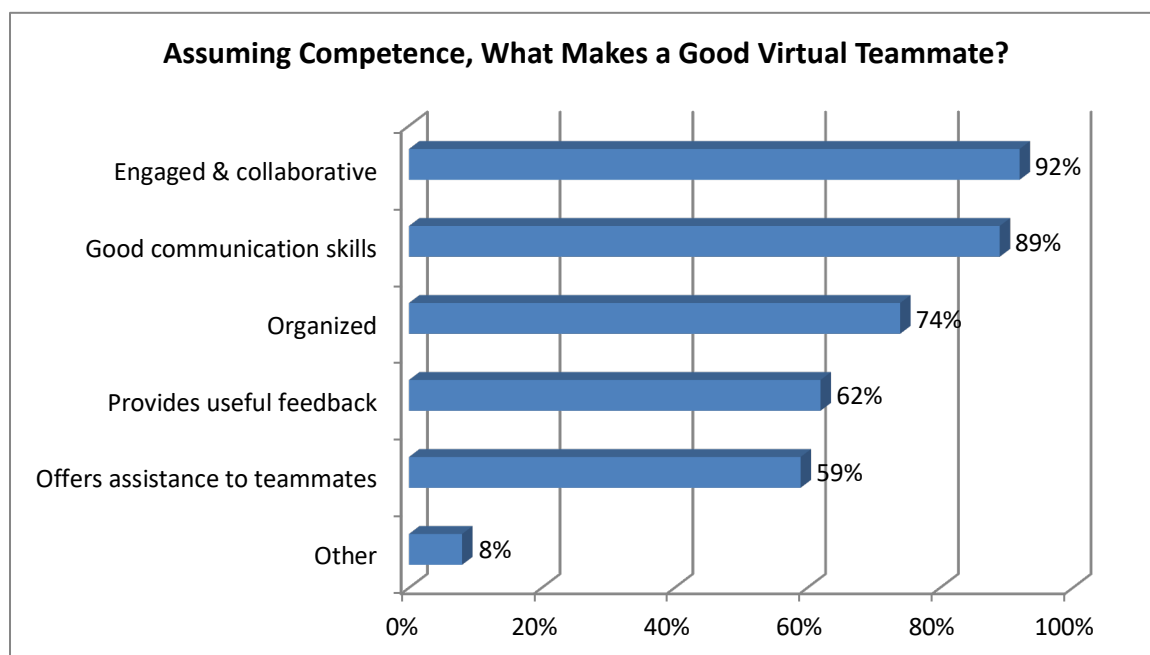


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CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD VIRTUAL TEAMMATE

We acknowledge that there are indeed communication challenges facing virtual teams. But are there personal characteristics that can help overcome these challenges – at least in part? We asked respondents to identify four key characteristics that made good virtual teammates (multiple responses permitted). They indicated that the most important characteristics (ranked) are being engaged and collaborative (92%), having good communication skills (89%), being organized (74%), providing useful feedback (62%), and offering assistance to teammates (59%). Those who indicated “other” explained their choice in the Open-Ended Comments.



Open-Ended Comments

*Self-directed... On time... Can see things holistically, not just a silo view... Motivated...
Good follow through on actions from meetings... Respectful of others' time...
Provides pre-reads, agenda, and meeting expectations (feedback, decision, information, etc.)...
Able to respond quickly to messaging and stay productive... Well prepared...
Sticks to meeting schedule and agenda... Knows the technology well...
Asks for feedback from the team, pauses so that others can communicate... Pays attention!...
Good video conference habits (uses a headset and camera, mutes appropriately, has a
dedicated work space)...
No distractions from eating or background noises...
Language is precise and unambiguous – direct... Accessible... Open-minded...*

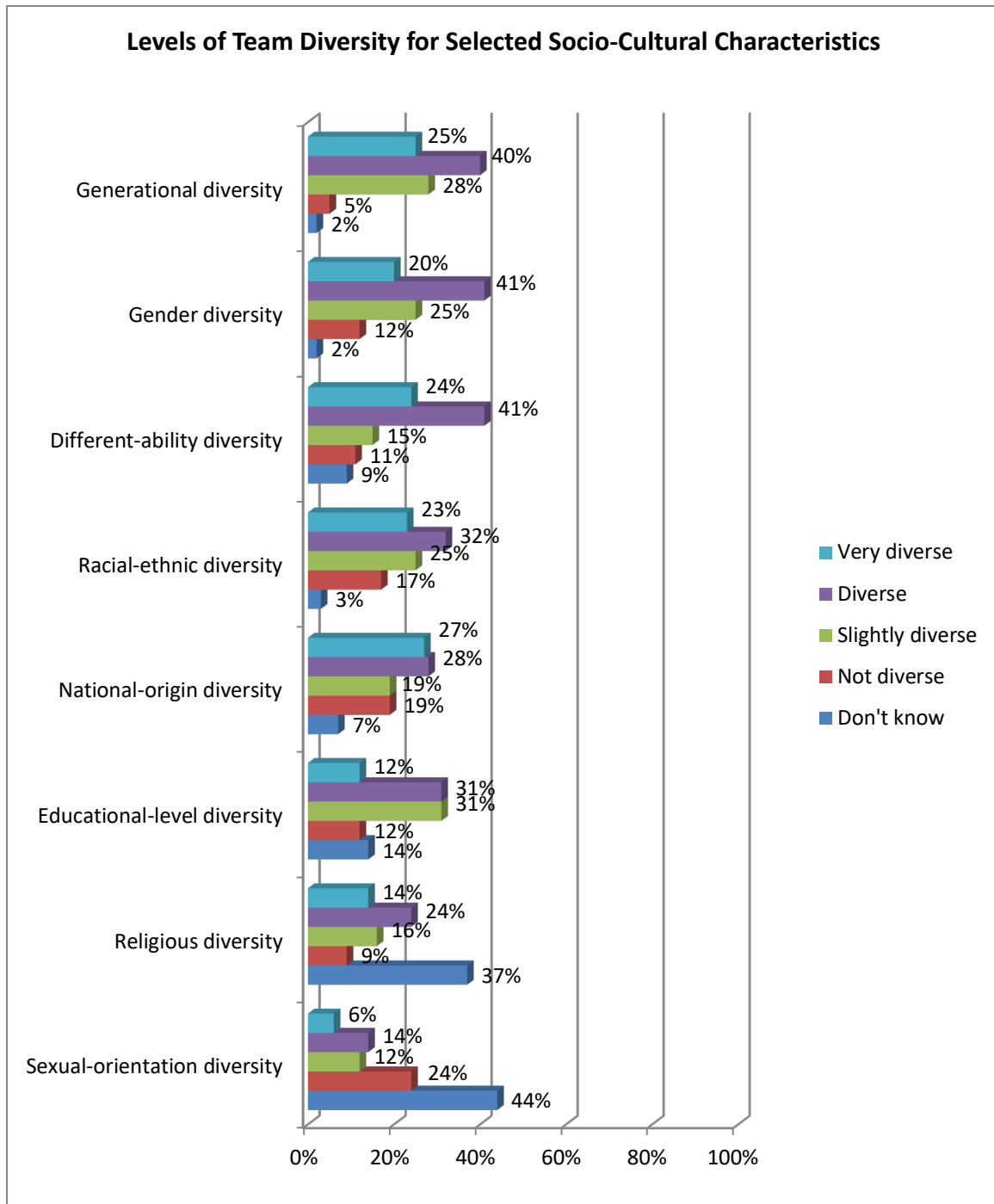
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IMPACT OF CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

MEASURING THE LEVEL OF TEAM DIVERSITY

For the first time, we asked respondents to gauge the level of team diversity for a number of socio-cultural characteristics. Respondents reported the highest levels of diversity within the following diversity categories: generational, gender, different ability, race-ethnicity, and national-origin.



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Respondents identified other types of diversity and commented on the value of diversity or, in some cases, its lack of value or applicability.

Open-Ended Comments

Power-distance relationship, the concept of time (sequential or parallel)...

Extreme geographic diversity requiring time zone management...

Parenthood diversity...

Strong diversity of thought and work orientation...

Language...

Legacy organizations (just went thru mega-merger)...

Cultural upbringing diversity - Some come from big-city environment, small farms, poverty, wealth, etc...

We're a mix of employees and contractors...

We have hierarchical diversity; higher level attendees tend to just listen in on mute while others participate more fully...

At this time I have no way of telling, nor do I care about the diversity. I like to work with people who know what they are doing, do their work, and are prepared...

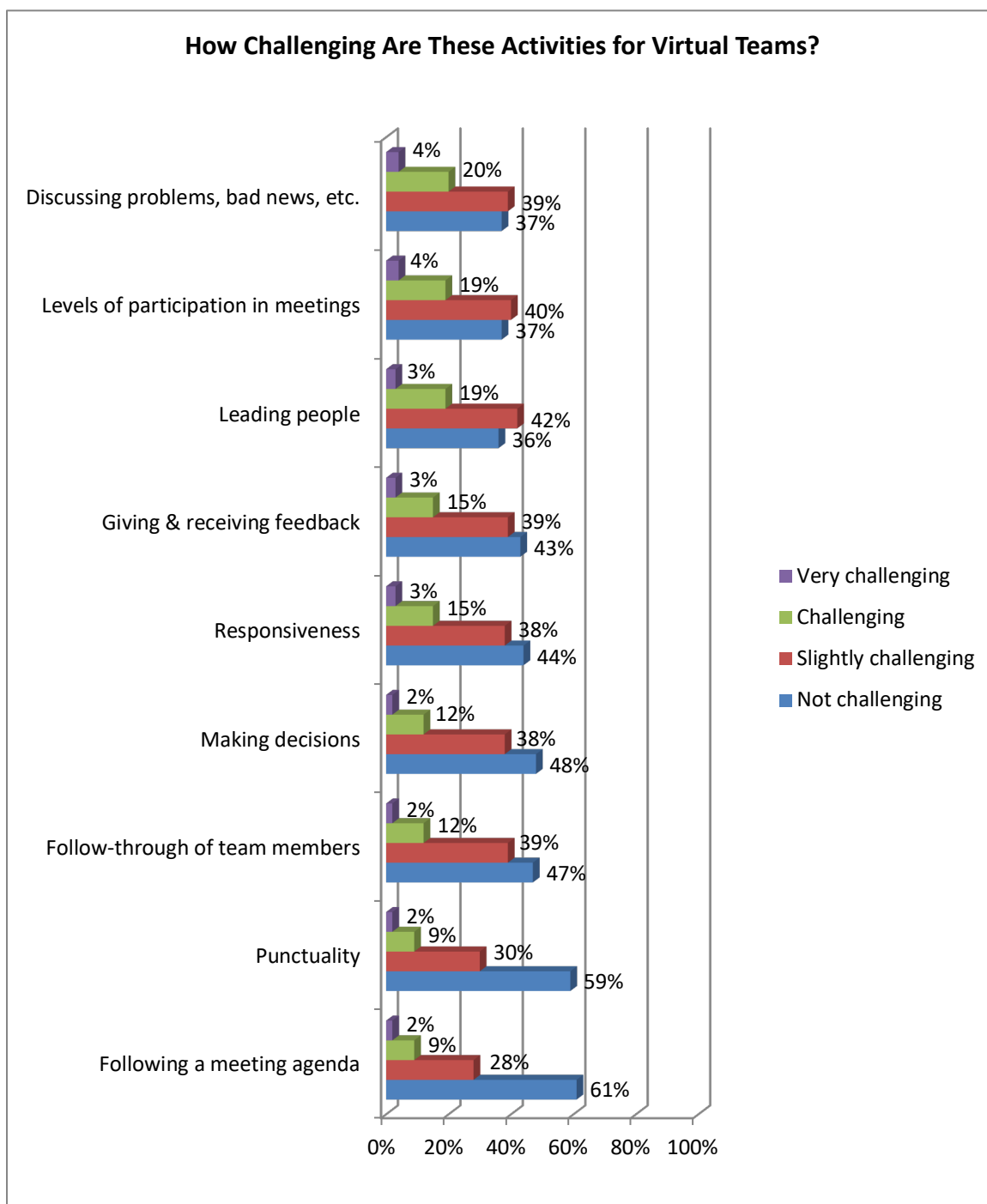
Thinking styles and approaches, health...

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CHALLENGING ACTIVITIES FOR VIRTUAL TEAMS WITH DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL VALUES

In a revised question, we asked respondents to rate the severity of challenges related to activities normally conducted within virtual teams that are affected by cultural differences. Respondents identified the following as the top five most challenging activities: discussing problems and bad news, levels of participation during meetings, leading people, giving and receiving feedback, and responsiveness.



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Respondents identified additional challenges such as the time-consuming nature of meetings, domination of meetings by certain people, the need to share data, time-zone issues, and clarity of communication (Open-Ended Comments).

Open-Ended Comments

Brevity: some team members can talk extensively rather than reaching the point quickly...
Participants that dominate the meeting. Lack of clarity when speaking...
These are not unique to a virtual/global team meeting...
Build trust and psychological safety; if you have the wrong leader, who is not trusting the people, who is putting a lot of pressure on the team, is doing micro-management, has an authoritarian leadership style, then the team might fail...
Sharing presentations, data, and reports is difficult virtually...
[Understanding due to] language barriers, use of "local" expressions...
Responsiveness to change; challenging generationally...
Workshops are less interactive...
[Lack of attention] easier for people to multitask, as we were requested to not use video for meetings...
Different time zones make some contact a bit more challenging...
Hearing-impaired co-workers...
[Understanding] It needs to be okay to ask someone to repeat something because you didn't understand (heavier accent). Some people do this in a way that sounds rude, others have more courtesy, and still others (the worst) pretend they understood...

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MISUNDERSTANDINGS BASED ON GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

When asked to describe virtual-team misunderstandings that were based on generational differences, respondents cited issues related to technological aptitude, linguistic expressions, perceptions about working at home, the concept of flexible hours, adaptability to change, professional experience, and willingness to learn – with criticisms running in both directions on most issues.

Open-Ended Comments

I'm the youngest on my team, and sometimes I get confused by terminology, but my team members are happy to explain if I ask...

Terminology and language evolve. Some of the older participants don't keep up...

Younger generations seem to lack a sense of urgency...

Adaptability to fluid hours. If I am working from home, it is easier for my limited internet connection if I work slightly different hours than normal and this is seen as lazy by older generations...

Younger members want to try new technologies, older members struggle with this concept. Won't try new things...

We have a young team member who feels they should be promoted with much more frequency than happens with the company; they were promoted and expected another promotion 6 months later...

The youngsters who've flooded the team in the last 5 years believe they know it all, and those of us who are experienced engineers are irrelevant dinosaurs; hence they frequently make mistakes or waste time reinventing the wheel...

The Boomer generation feels the collaboration approach is waste of the time...

Pointed out a mistake to co-worker who looked at it as criticism from an older more experienced co-worker, rather than the opportunity to learn...

The younger generations found it very interesting and loved learning about it; the older generations seemed to not see value in it and didn't want to take the time away from their normal work...

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MISUNDERSTANDINGS BASED ON DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL VALUES

When asked to describe misunderstandings that were based on differences in cultural values, respondents cited two kinds of misunderstandings: those which are traceable directly to cultural differences and those traceable to language-based differences (terminology and clarity) and unrecognized standard-of-living-based differences.

Open-Ended Comments

CULTURAL VALUE DIFFERENCES

A situation where someone in a culture that values promptness and bounds of time does not understand why someone else is 2 minutes late and keeps a grudge on this...

People think it's better to say "yes" and try to do something (and fail), even when they don't really understand, and we prefer them to ask for clarification or say they don't think they can do it...

When trying to give feedback, I can be perceived as not following the proper process if I don't follow the hierarchy...

I have an Argentinian partner and she used to express herself "directly," But here in Mexico we try to hide a little the truth and the words we are going to use to express opinions and ideas...

Some eastern cultures have issue with females; side bar conversations male to male helped alleviate the open disrespect on group calls...

In some cultures, "yes" means less than yes in the USA context...

My Chinese colleague will often agree with me privately about concerns but will not speak out, rock the boat, or offer alternative view...

Verbal agreement seems to be only thing our Spanish colleagues need as a summary of the decision taken by virtual team. I prefer written note as conclusion...

TERMINOLOGY, CLARITY, AND STANDARD-OF-LIVING MISUNDERSTANDINGS

We have a couple people who speak a different language on our team. Sometimes they speak to each other during our meetings (in their mutual language) and it comes across more like an inside joke that only they want to share amongst themselves, in front of the team...

I find Europeans and Americans complain more about the accents of Asians and Indians than vis a versa; although I would imagine understanding some accents would be hard for all of us...

Reference to "third country nationals" is deemed as racist in some countries while it is a frequently used and acceptable term in other countries...

Stakeholder uses the word rude when the person was attempting to gain information from him through questions...

US team members wanted to push for something to happen, even in overtime. Brazilian members value free time and are paid less, which US coworkers might not understand, so they were not as enthusiastic about giving up their free time for this...

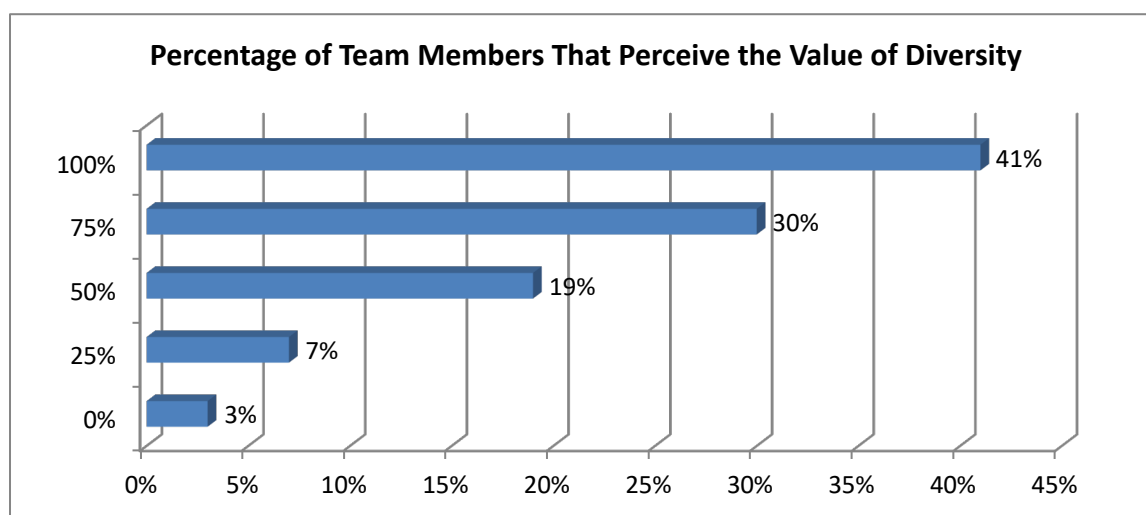
More a wealth problem. People with big houses need to understand that people in tiny apartments are more challenged working from home....

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PERCENTAGE OF TEAM MEMBERS THAT VALUE DIVERSITY

We revised our question about the value of diversity to team members. To gain a more detailed understanding, we asked participants to cite *the percentage of team members* that perceive the value of diversity. As a result, we can see that most team members do indeed value diversity. For example, 41% reported that all team members perceived its value. Less than one-third (30%) reported that 75% of team members perceived its value, and 19% reported that half of their team members perceived its value. We asked respondents to elaborate on their responses (see Open-Ended Comments).



Open-Ended Comments

Management looks to hire diverse candidates...

I think most of my team members of the same national origin as myself see mainly the negative side of the other cultures that we work with...

Some still have resistance to have expats working with them, and do not change the language to English when the expats are around...

I've never seen anyone not value it openly...

People don't generally think about it...

I think people say they value diversity and want more, but when are confronted with it they are unable to follow through on these values. We tend to hire people who are like-minded...

We hire the best person for the job, whether a 24-year-old male or a 45-year-old female (two hires on our team in the last year). Religion and sexual orientation are irrelevant to the hiring process. I don't know their ethnicity...

Our team isn't trained to see disagreement or differences in viewpoints as a potential strength, but rather as a bad thing....

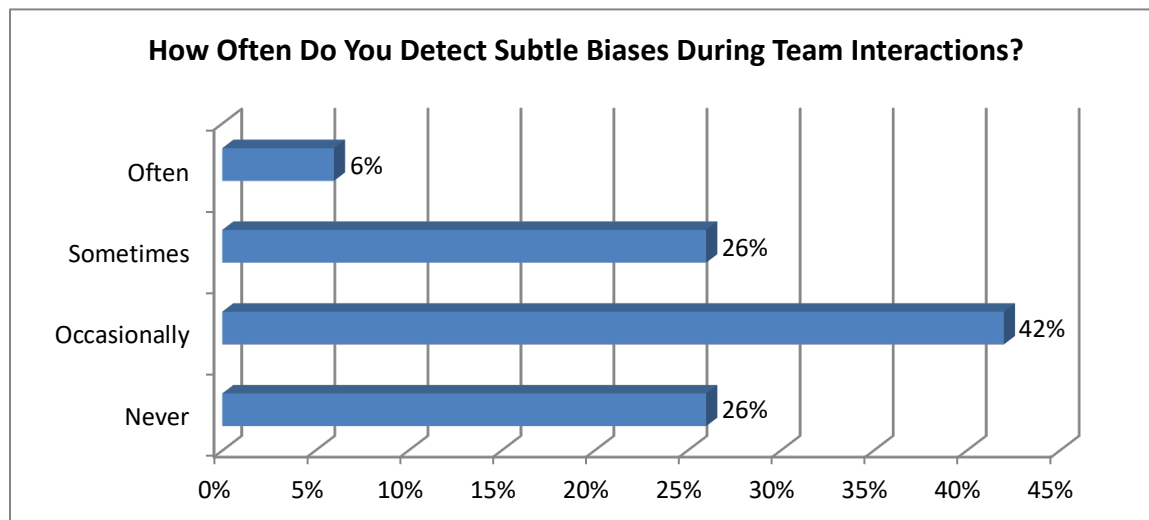
The younger generations seem to value diversity a bit more than the older generations...

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AWARENESS OF SUBTLE, UNCONSCIOUS BIASES

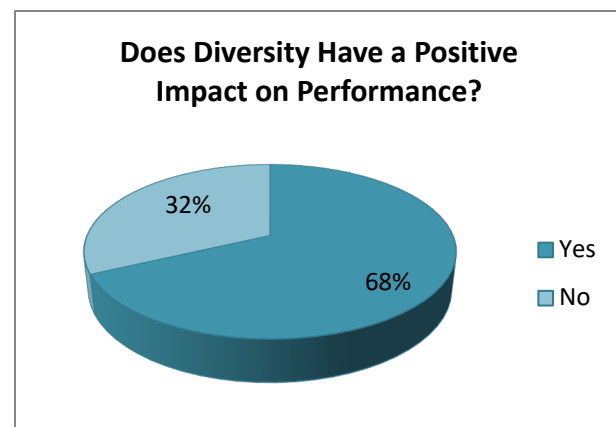
This year we refined our question and asked respondents how often they are aware of subtle or unconscious biases during virtual and global team interactions. A majority (74%) of respondents detect subtle or unconscious biases at least occasionally. Only 6% of respondents detect them frequently, 68% sometimes or occasionally, and 26% never.



POSITIVE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY ON VIRTUAL TEAM PERFORMANCE

When we asked respondents if they believe that the diversity of their global virtual team has a positive impact on performance, 68% agreed (compared to 72% in 2018). Nonetheless, the presence of unrecognized biases can have a negative impact upon or otherwise undermine the benefits of diversity.

We asked a follow-up question to enable respondents to elaborate on their observations (Open-Ended Comments).



Open-Ended Comments

NO EFFECT OR MIXED EFFECT

We are all technical people. So, it doesn't affect much...

My answer is Yes and No. Yes in the long run, because it means that the company has a much bigger pool of talent to pull from. However in the shorter term, it can add additional layers of complexity to an already complex project and business...

I'm indifferent to most of the diversity that seems to be the focus in the current dialogue. The diversity that truly impacts the team positively and helps us be better is the diversity that drives new approaches and innovative solutions...

POSITIVE EFFECT

With the diversity, we can assign the activities according to the professional's characteristic, which reflects on the overall productivity of the team...

We are a global company with people working on my team in all the regions. We need this to understand our customers globally...

The diversity helps to understand an issue from different angles and come up the solution that could address different needs...

We have people on our team that speak multiple languages which helps us communicate with clients and create better localized content...

We do a lot of work for accessibility. We have one team member who utilizes a wheelchair and another who is hard of hearing. Their experiences help us to provide better work...

Our customers are very diverse so it is important that our team reflect that...

NEGATIVE EFFECT

Occasionally, lack of speak[ing] up [due to the] culture in some areas can be a limiting factor...

Diversity also negatively affects performance, as we misunderstand one another...

This diversity issue seems to be a fixation in the US and nowhere else. Do you really think China, Japan, Italy, Mexico care about being a melting pot? I highly doubt it. We are going the wrong direction...

But the distance, the lack of personal connections, and the time differences somewhat affect the team negatively as well...

I think we should not blindly follow a "we must have a diverse culture" as this weakens some cultural strength – for instance punctuality in central Europe or long-term relationship of employee and employer (vs hire-and-fire principle). We have to be more careful where and when diversity makes sense and where not...

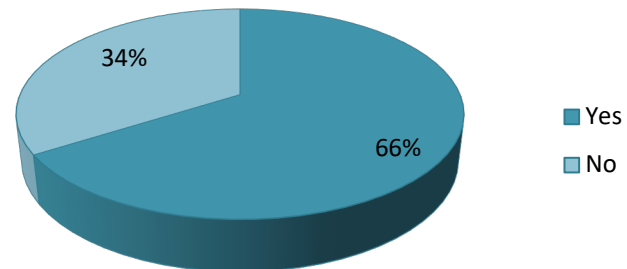


TRAINING TO CAPITALIZE ON TEAM DIVERSITY

When we asked respondents if their companies offered learning experiences to capitalize on the diversity of their global virtual teams, 66% reported that they do offer these experiences.

We asked a follow-up question to enable respondents to elaborate on their observations (Open-Ended Comments).

Training to Capitalize on the Diversity of Global Virtual Teams



Open-Ended Comments

We have access to MyAcademy... RW3 CultureWizard... Employee resource groups... We offer online and live training offerings around leading, training and communicating virtually... Global inclusion initiative with mandatory training... Online training with "Best Practice" learnings helps... Courses on DLearn and offered by the D&I team... Marlink Training Academy... LinkedInLearning... We have Emergenetics and I know they have tools for this... I believe the SuccessFactors Learning website and the Culture Champions websites offer guidance and/or training... The company has shared many articles, CBTs, etc., to help navigate working virtually that provide how-to's for technology, keeping organized, etc.... We have many learning tracts in our corporate university and PLE tools... Culture Works... Mandatory Unconscious Bias Training... Team Accelerator, Insights, Discovery, and my team has the advantage of having a Team Accelerator master facilitator so we are able to delve in to the deeper areas of ourselves as individuals and how that impacts team performance...

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WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO IMPROVE COLLABORATION VIRTUALLY ACROSS CULTURES?

When we asked respondents what they would do to improve their own ability to collaborate virtually across cultures, they provided a variety of responses (Open-Ended Comments).

Open-Ended Comments

More agreement and ownership, less tracking and chasing...
Work on my own bias...
Spend a little time to know other team members...
Set agendas for each meeting to achieve desired results...
Eventually) travel to some of our locations. On-site experience...
Investing in team building and building relationships...
To improve audio connection, we considered installing landline, but we are moving towards voice over internet...
Bandwidth is an issue...
More video calls with US colleagues, most are limited to Europe...
Develop a protocol that applies to all participants in the organization...
Focus on my speech / accent to ensure colleagues can fully understand me...
Training to get awareness, mindfulness and sensitivity... Develop a team charter and discuss best practices within team meetings...
Ask more questions and give time for people to answer, be comfortable with silent pauses...
Get more disciplined in my pre-work so that I can join a meeting with specific questions...
Informally survey colleagues...
Creation of groups with a member from each country [to...] talk a little about the history of the country and remarkable facts as well as the cuisine, art, music and local habits...
Flex my work schedule to find mutually amenable times for meetings across time zones...
Solicit feedback from my team and take courses to learn more effective ways to collaborate virtually...
The biggest issue that I have is language barriers. Expression and terminology often come into play, and it's important to listen carefully, ask for clarification when necessary, and clarify your own statements as well...

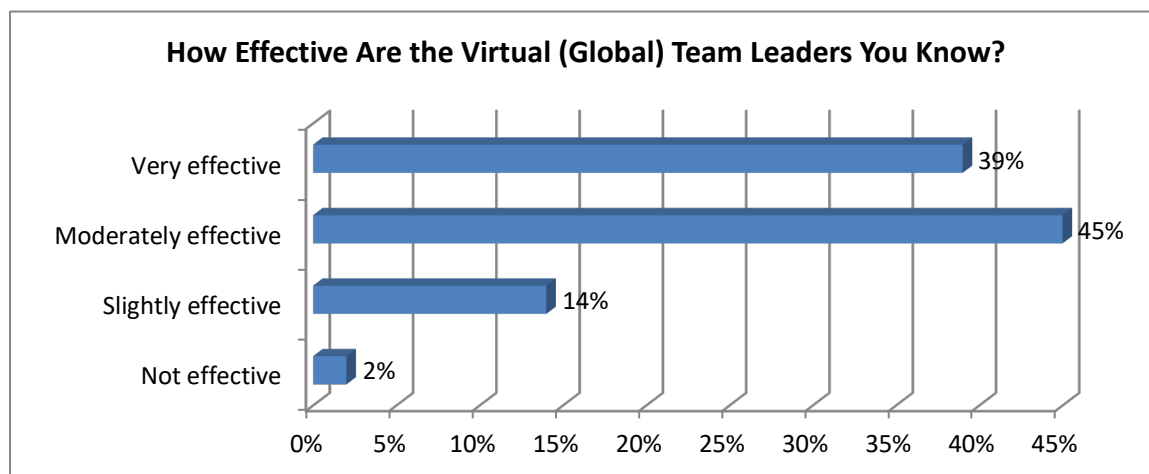
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TEAM LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING

EFFECTIVENESS OF TEAM LEADERS IN MANAGING GLOBAL VIRTUAL TEAMS

When we asked participants how effective their virtual (global) team leaders are, 39% rated their leaders as very effective (24% in 2018). If we add those deemed moderately effective (45%), this “effective” score rose to 84%.



WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL AND GLOBAL TEAM LEADER?

As a follow-up question on the effectiveness of virtual team leaders, we asked respondents to identify qualities that make a global virtual-team leader effective (Open-Ended Comments).

Open-Ended Comments

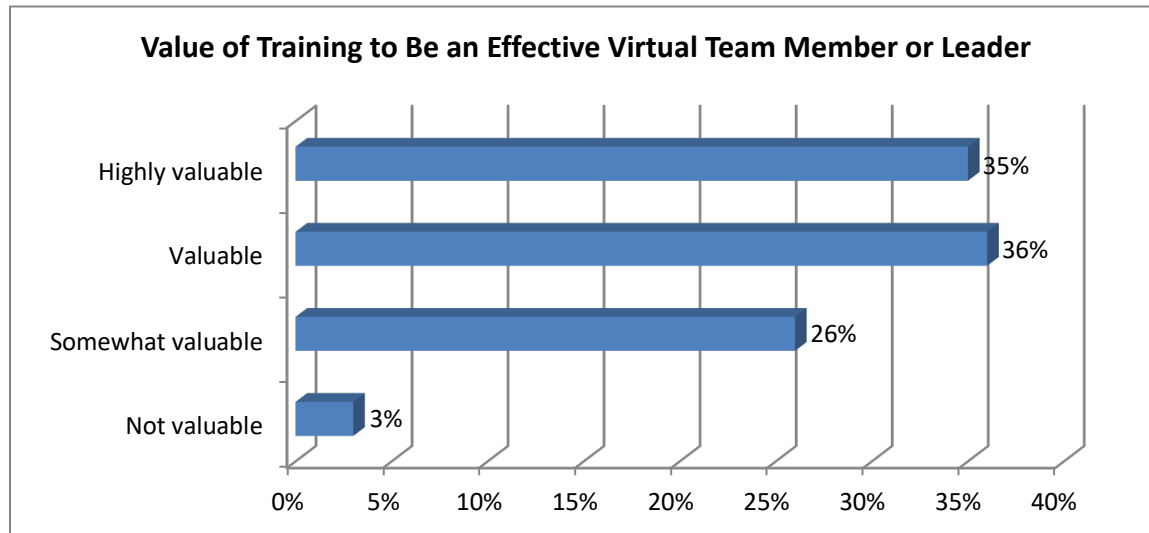
*Sharing and communicative, organized and structured... Very proactive... Decisive...
Trust, compassion, empathy, readily available to teams, putting efforts in team building...
Servant Leadership model. High level vision and support the teams, but don't micromanage every aspect of work/teams. Give teams the problem and let them resolve it rather than lots of directives coming from top down...
Clearly defining expectations. There is no room for assumptions on fast paced virtual teams...
Makes sure everybody get a chance to talk, that the discussion is not drifting away...
I think you need the F2F meeting, it helps to gel the partnership...
Versed in technology and good etiquette and adherence to established protocols...
Someone that utilizes meetings only when necessary, has an agenda and desired outcome, and guides the group through to a decision... A good listener and referee...
Staying in touch, follow up... Keep things transparent to everyone... Flexibility...
Ability to craft articulate, succinct emails and conduct efficient meetings...
Someone who has had global experience in multiple countries, who has led a virtual team, who has a diverse work group for shared experiences, who has an open mind and global mindset...*

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VALUE OF TRAINING ON HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL TEAM MEMBER OR LEADER

When we asked how valuable training on how to be an effective virtual team member or leader would be, 71% of respondents indicated that such training would be highly valuable or valuable. Although 26% indicated that such training would only be somewhat valuable, only 3% reported that it would not be valuable.

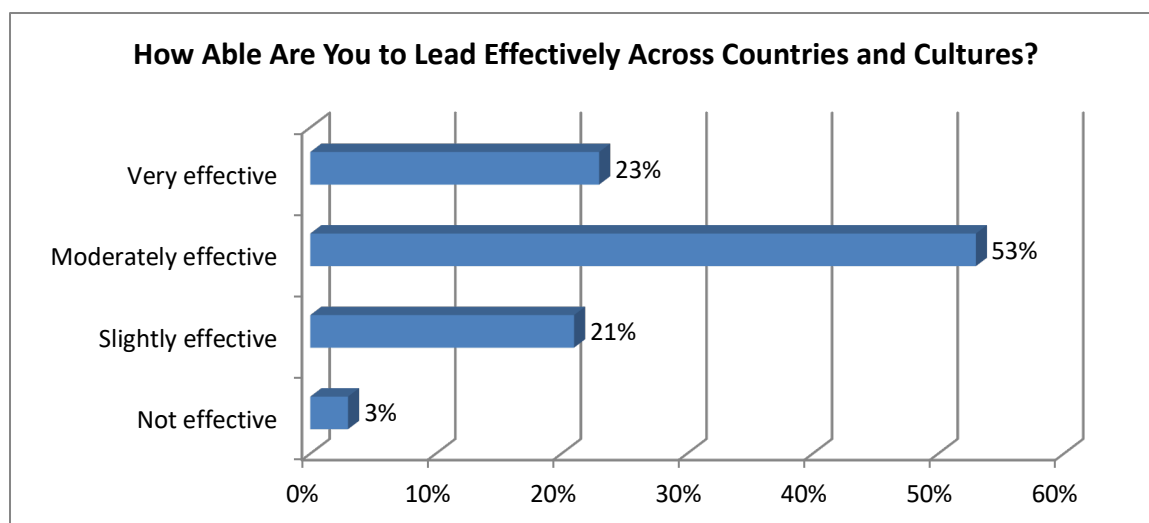


SELF-RATED ABILITY TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY AROSS COUNTRIES AND CULTURES

When we asked respondents to rate their own ability to lead effectively across countries and cultures, 23% rated themselves as very effective and 53% as moderately effective (compared to 15% and 53% in 2018). Since global leaders need to harness the wisdom and skill on their teams (which derive from differing cultural styles among the team members), there is an ever-growing need for this critical skill, and the bar has been set very high. For professionals who undertake these mission-critical leadership roles, only formal training can prepare them adequately for the challenges they face.

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TOP TWO CHALLENGES FACING LEADERS OF VIRTUAL AND GLOBAL TEAMS

When we asked respondents to identify the top two challenges that face leaders of global virtual teams, they cited a variety of challenges, some of which they could address and some that were beyond their control (Open-Ended Comments).

Open-Ended Comments

Lack of social interaction, informal discussions...
Time zone differences...
Effective communication and group participation...
Cheerleading, celebrating accomplishments...
It's easy to disengage from virtual meetings, even without meaning to. We have alerts, popups flashing tabs etc. all with distractions...
Responsiveness, availability...
Ensuring people understand messages in the same way and eliciting honest feedback...
Technology/connection problems...
Language and accents...
Time and Learning. We are behind in every direction. The second challenge is the requirement to constantly learn new things about our products, the industry and how to use the latest tools...
Motivating individuals who can procrastinate. It's harder to observe how hard they are actually working...
No respect for normal working hours. Other teams can ignore emails, calls etc. if you cannot walk to their office if they do so...
Misunderstanding from poor communication.

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PRACTICES ADOPTED TO CULTIVATE HIGH LEVELS OF COLLABORATION

When we asked respondents to identify practices they have adopted to cultivate high levels of collaboration between virtual and global team members, they provided responses ranging from the adoption of new technology-based approaches to managerial initiatives (Open-Ended Comments).

Open-Ended Comments

Job rotation between teams...

Calling rather than sending an email...

Frequent team meetings with agendas and opportunities for participation...

Use of video cameras for all calls, listening, soliciting feedback, gaining consensus so the entire team feels engaged, acknowledging team members...

Using a template for meeting invites so it's clear what the meeting is about, what the expectations are, what the desired outcomes are so we can stay on track...

More follow-up notes...

Share screen function and virtual backgrounds increase engagement...

Ask for input constantly; call on team members for their thoughts; give people, especially non-Western and non-native English speakers, enough time to reflect and answer...

Adjust my standard working hours in US to allow availability in evenings for work with teams across the globe...

Slack channels, shared online and interactive documentation (Office, Gsuite, smartsheet, etc.)...

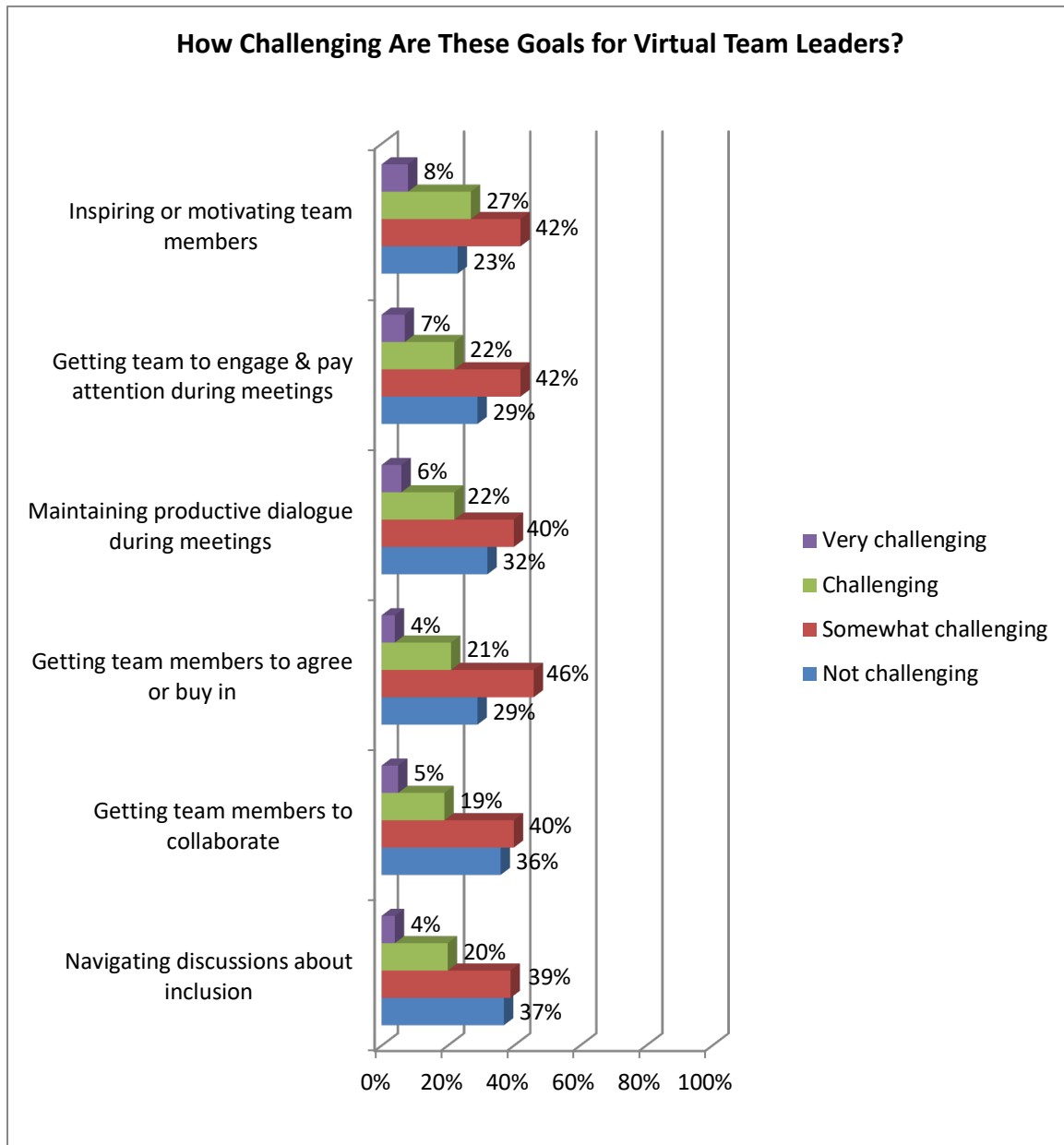
Accountability for each task is assigned. Checking shared Project progress report is shared by all members regularly.

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CHALLENGING GOALS FOR VIRTUAL TEAM LEADERS

In a new question, we asked respondents how challenging were a number of goals for leaders of virtual teams. The top three challenges were inspiring or motivating team members (35%), getting team members to engage and pay attention during meetings (29%), and maintaining productive dialogue during meetings (28%).



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FORMAL GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Only 24% of respondents reported that they had formal *global* leadership training (compared to 19% in 2018 and 34% in 2016) instead of simply *leadership* training. Why aren't training programs keeping up with the increasing number of global virtual teams that are being formed? When you consider the additional challenges presented by the multicultural makeup of these teams and their operation in a virtual environment distributed across geographical distances, the comparatively small percentages of trained leaders is cautionary to say the least.

When we asked respondents to describe the nature of their global leadership training, they cited a variety of programs, but some of these responses did not specifically address global leadership challenges (Open-Ended Comments).



Open-Ended Comments

International business classes... DDI courses... Internal training... RW3 Culture Wizard... FCL... Middle management program... Fusion... Self-training... Mentoring... Culture-related workshops... Classes at university and as certificate courses on leadership... Multiple video classes on management styles and leadership skills... Scrum methodologies... Intuitive leadership training, inclusive leadership, delegation, feedback, coaching essentials... Accelerating women into leadership... Coaching, intercultural training certifications, etc... 7 Keys of Cultural Awareness... MLM, IMD Mobilizing People... Nothing beats on the ground, face to face training... Colgate Leadership Challenge, Women Unlimited Leadership program... LEAD programs... Percipio... Situational Leadership... Foundations of Leadership... Emergenetics personality assessment and training on communicating to the different personality types... Dale Carnegie leadership... X-Culture program through graduate school... MBA degree... Cultural training and leadership provided by HR... Berlitz formal training at my home university... MEP... OTD... CISV Leader... Team Accelerate... Army... Global Mindset, Global Leadership... Lead 100 training. Lean Sigma... Udemy... CALP (Colgate Asian Leadership Program)...

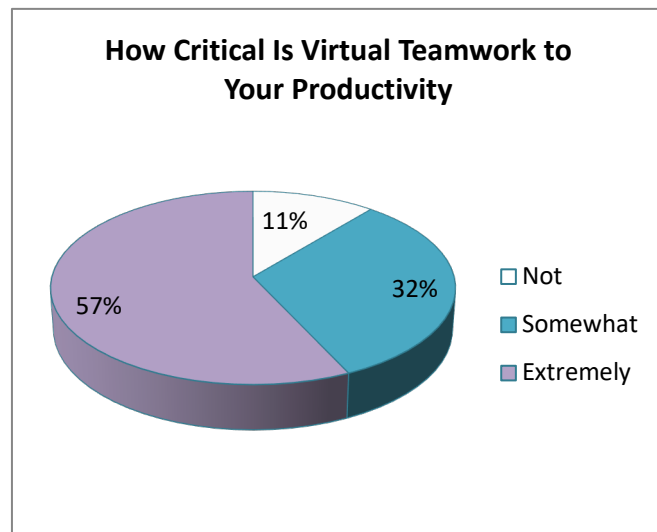
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THE ROLE OF VIRTUAL TEAMS

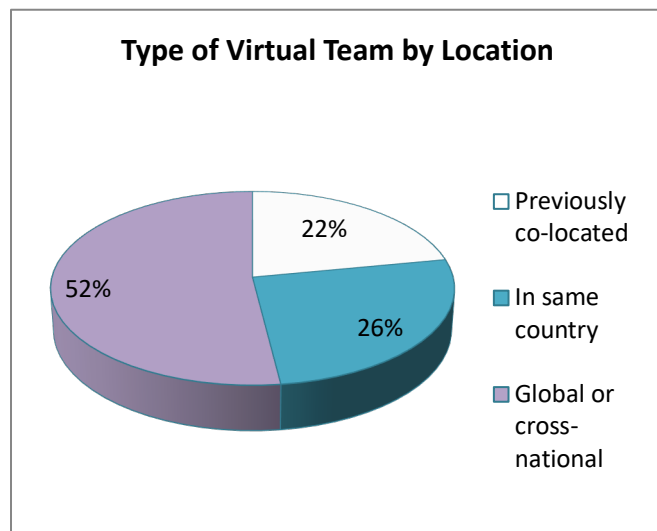
PRODUCTIVE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL TEAMS

When asked how critical virtual teamwork is to their productivity, 57% of respondents reported that it is extremely critical. The percentages were similar to those reported in 2018.



TYPE OF VIRTUAL TEAM BY LOCATION

We asked respondents about the location of their virtual team members. More than half (52%) reported that the team was global or cross-national. Only 26% are part of teams with members located in the same country, and 22% are part of teams that were previously co-located. This was a new question.

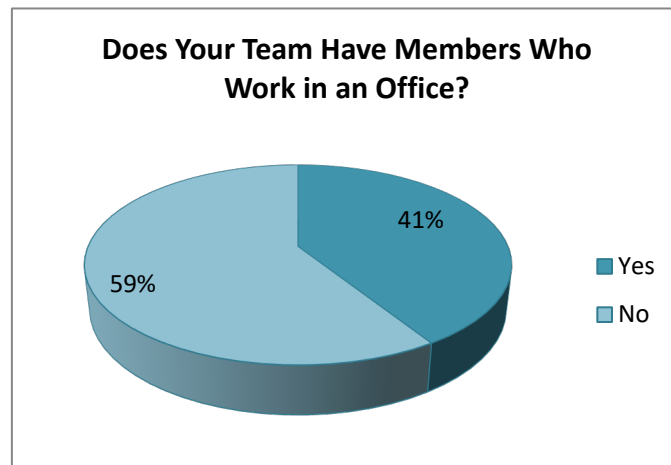


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OFFICE-BASED TEAM MEMBERS

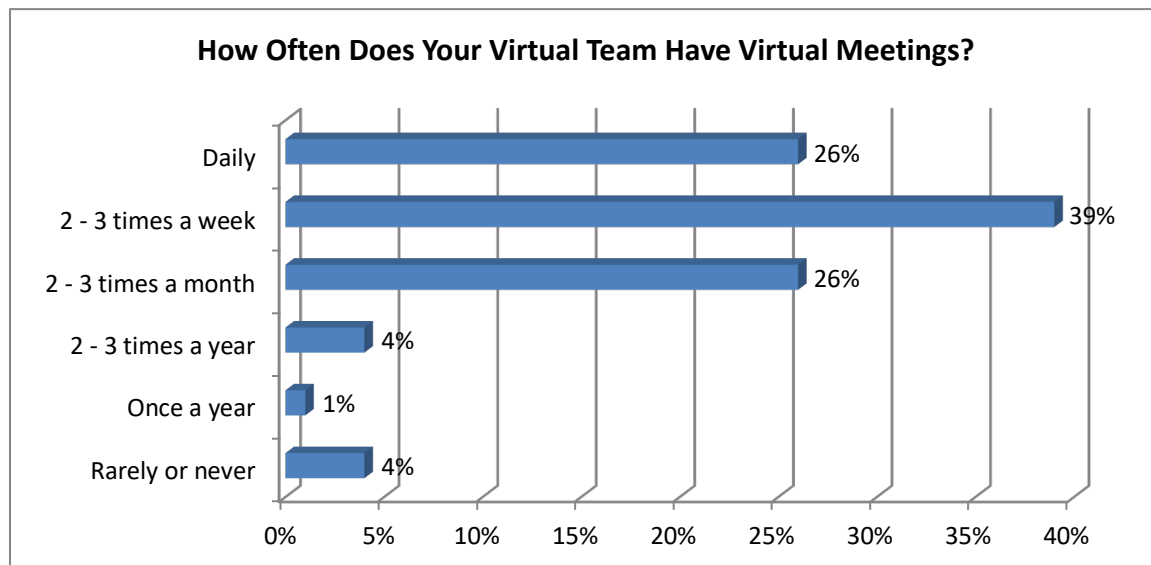
In another new question, we asked if respondents were on any teams that currently had members who worked in an office. Only 41% replied “yes.” It is possible that the “yes” response is currently lower than it would have been because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but if that is not the case, work-at-home arrangements are becoming more common.



FREQUENCY OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS

We used to ask respondents how often they met in person, but since half of them no longer met in person (by 2018), we asked how often virtual and global teams met together as a full team. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65%) meet daily (26%) or two to three times per week (39%), but 26% meet two to three times a month.

Although face-to-face contact is valuable and enhances the productivity of global teams, such meetings are becoming rarer – especially as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Consequently, we recommend the frequent use of webcams when possible. This practice cannot replace face-to-face contact, but it enhances our ability to identify with each other, build trust, and create stronger relationships. Opportunities for team members to chat before or after webcam meetings can increase the trust-building value of these encounters.



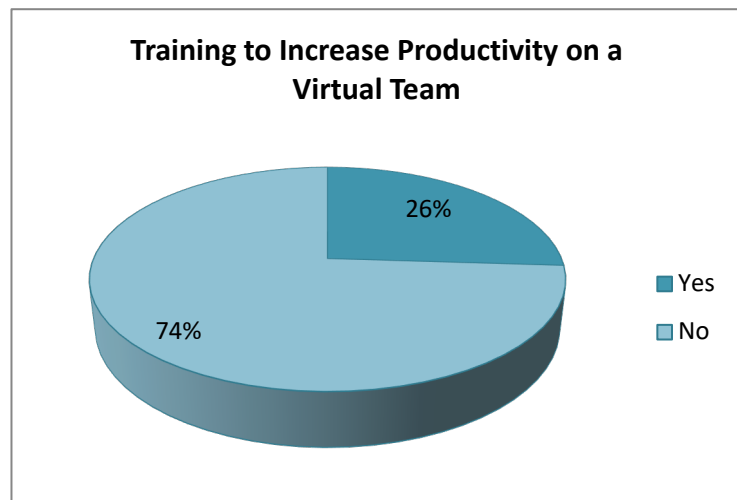
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TRAINING TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY ON VIRTUAL TEAMS

When we asked participants if they had received training to increase their productivity on virtual teams, only 26% reported that they had such training. This marks an increase over 2018 and 2016 (22%) and continues the trend toward steadily increased training that goes back to 2014 (21%) and 2012 (16%).

We asked a follow-up question so that respondents could describe the training they received (Open-Ended Comments).



Open-Ended Comments

Webinar - ways to prepare more efficient communication and how to engage team members...
Certificate in Online Training: Jabber, Teams, and WebEx...
Self-guided e-learning and group sessions...
In-person...
We had a series of animated videos about working remotely, working from home, and meeting facilitation tools...
Hangouts on virtual engagement...
Materials from the internet...
Company "university" and LinkedIn...
Best practices recommended by the company, Udemy... Podcasts...
We invited a speaker... Microsoft Teams... CultureWizard...

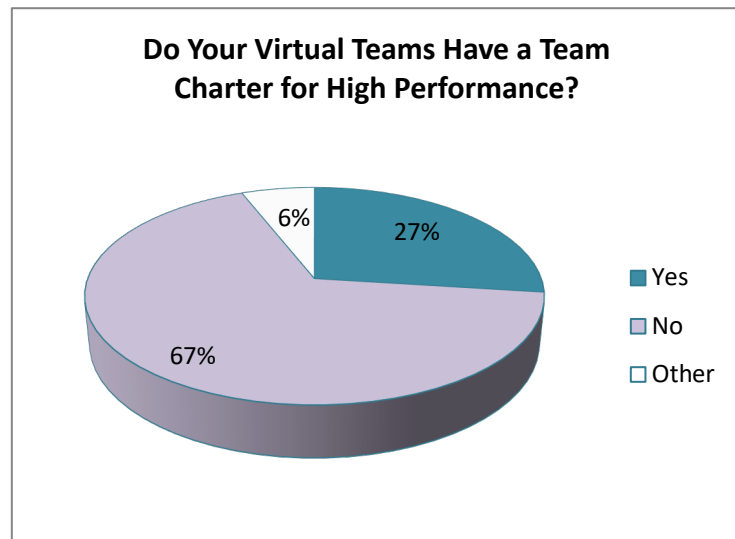
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TEAM CHARTERS AND GUIDELINES TO DEFINE HIGH PERFORMANCE

To determine whether companies are helping to define expectations to boost the productivity of global virtual teams, we asked respondents if their virtual teams have any sort of “team charter” or used guidelines for high performance. Only 27% of respondents had such guidelines (compared to 24% in 2018 and 28% in 2016). We urge companies to establish such guidelines; they will enable measurable productivity improvements for virtual teams.

A follow-up question asked respondents to identify additional practices designed to boost productivity.



Open-Ended Comments

Our normal corporate policies and performance expectations...
Team defines ways-of-working agreements...
It is an objective to complete in the upcoming quarter...
Each of the global teams I work on have a plan with goals & objectives...
We created our own vision statements and Agile values and Principles...
The company offers guidelines, but it is up to teams whether or not to adopt them...
Once a month we have Bluejeans calls, and we switch data and editorial information daily...
We have certain KPIs [key performance indicators] revolved around CFR...
Dashboard with objectives and a set agenda for our team meetings...
Individual performance goals linked to the group goals...
I manage a number of teams, one of which we've defined mission, vision, etc....
For certain sub-teams we have a Best Practice Guide...
Performance on contracts...
Clear guidelines and tasks to complete every day...
Yes, and the rankings a[re] clear for the yearly appraisal process...

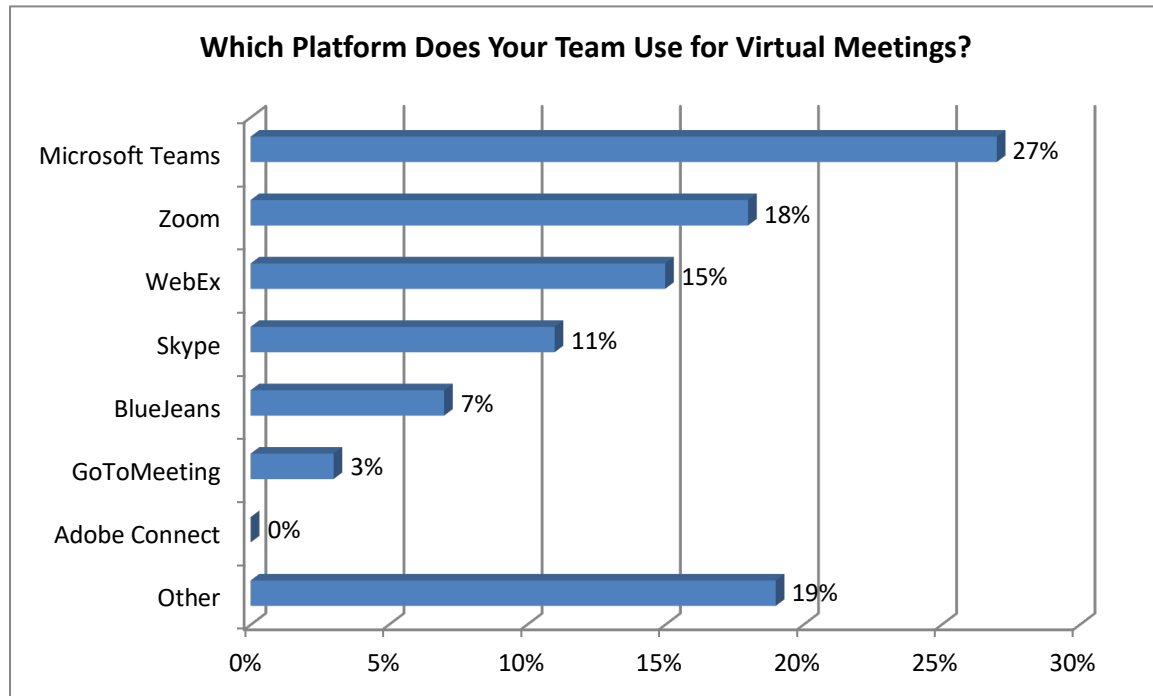
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TECHNOLOGY AND ITS USABILITY

TOP TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS

When we asked respondents to identify the platform used by their team for virtual meetings, the top choices were Microsoft Teams (27%), Zoom (18%), WebEx (15%), and Skype (11%). Adobe Connect had only one user, rounding down to zero. Those who indicated “other” explained their choices in the Open-Ended Comments, but many of the comments merely repeated choices displayed in the graph and consequently are not shown.



Open-Ended Comments

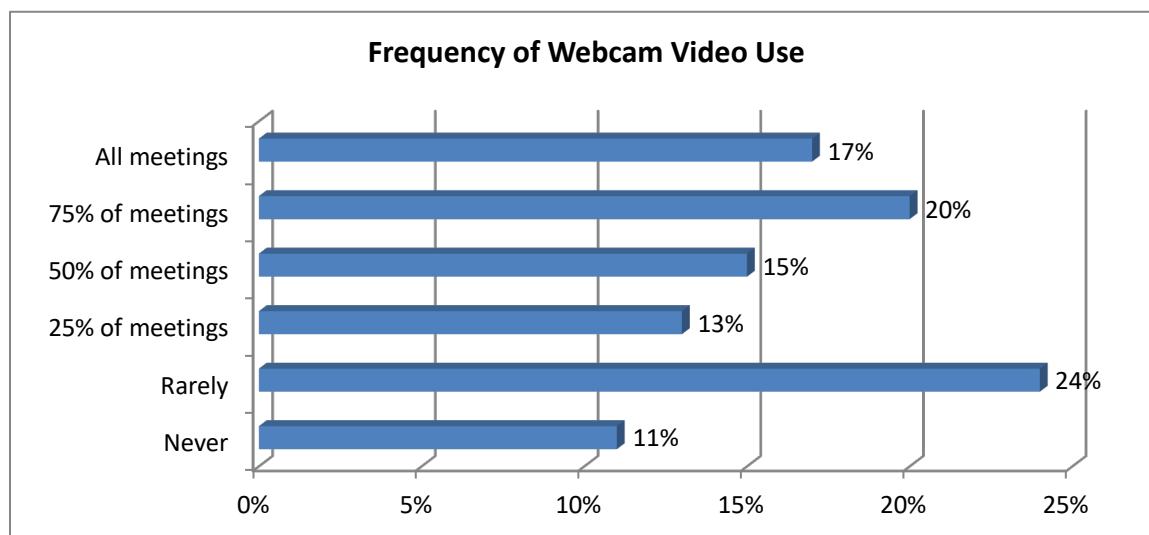
*Google Hangouts... FastMaster... Google Chats and Google Meet... WeChat...
WhatsApp, email... Blackboard Collaborate... Facetime... Slack...
8x8 or Jitsi Meetings... Conference call... In-house platform designed by the company...
LoopUp and LifeSize...*

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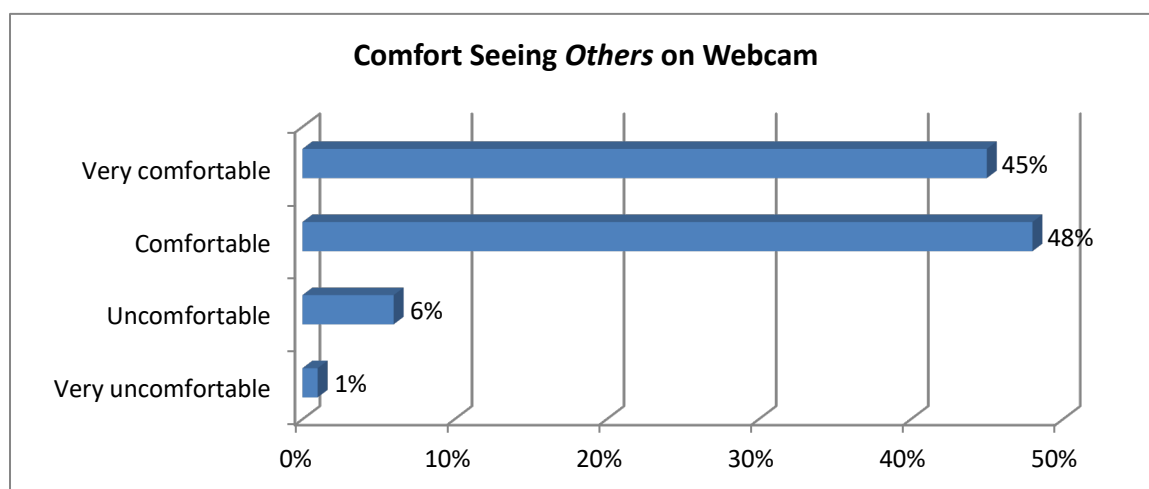
FREQUENCY OF WEBCAM VIDEO USE

Although there is increasing acceptance of webcam video technology, its use is not universal as a “default” practice. When we asked respondents how frequently they used webcam video technology for virtual meetings, only 17% reported using it during all meetings (compared to 15% in 2018). Another 20% use it 75% of the time, and 15% use it for half of their meetings. Meanwhile, 24% use it only rarely (compared to 61% in 2018), and 11% never use it. We recommend the adoption of webcam technology whenever possible as a best practice.



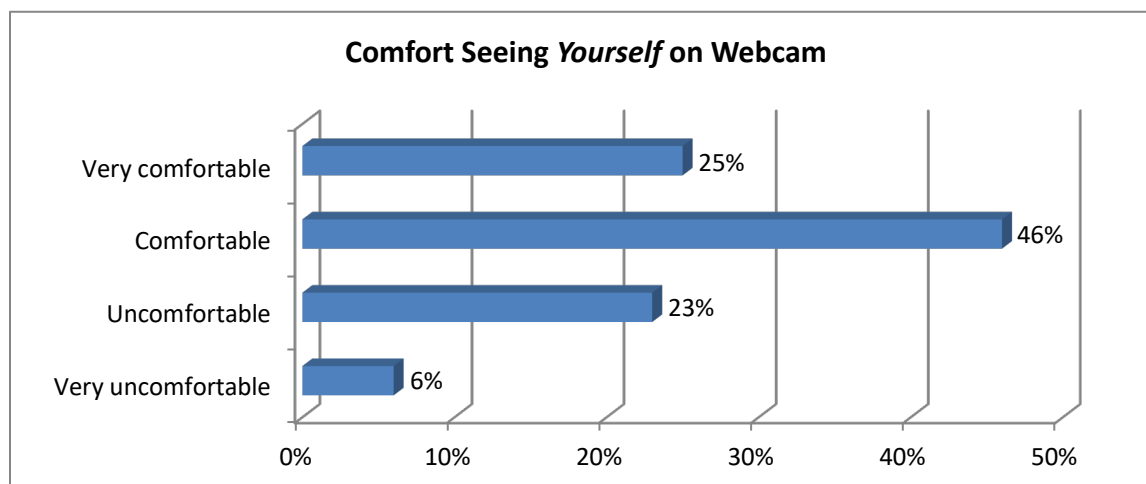
COMFORT SEEING *OTHERS* ON WEBCAM

For the first time, we asked how comfortable respondents are with seeing *others* via webcam. Nearly all respondents (93%) are either comfortable or very comfortable seeing others on webcam.



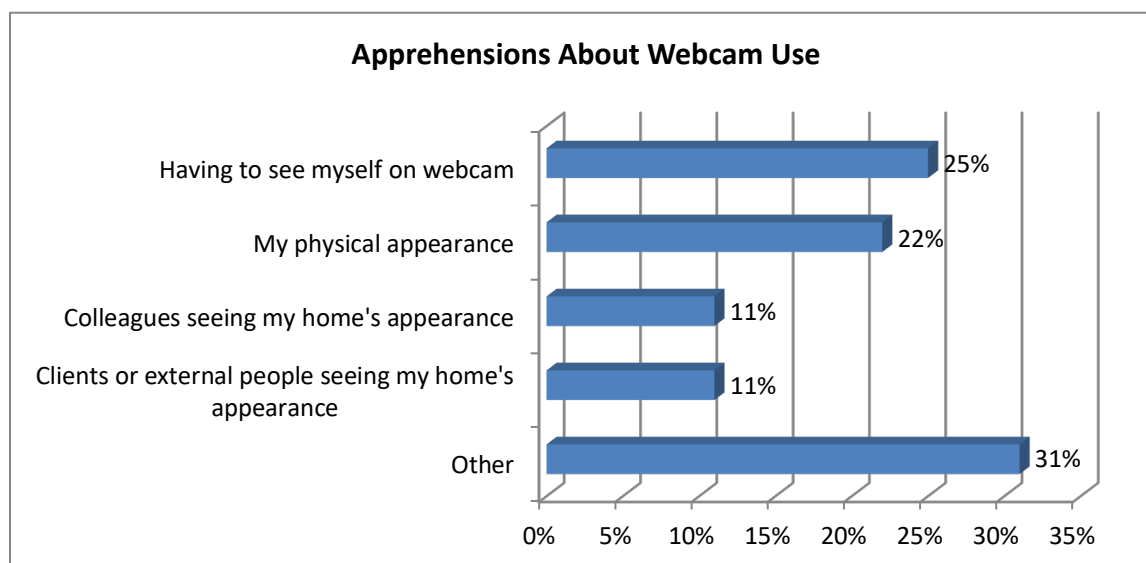
COMFORT SEEING *YOURSELF* ON WEBCAM

For the first time, we asked how comfortable respondents are with seeing *themselves* via webcam. The level of comfort and discomfort are remarkably different from the levels reported for seeing *other* people. Only 25% of respondents feel very comfortable seeing themselves (compared to 45% seeing others). Moreover, 29% of respondents feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable seeing themselves on webcam compared to only 7% when it comes to seeing others.



APPREHENSIONS ABOUT WEBCAM USE

When we asked a new question about what makes respondents apprehensive about using a webcam, 25% were uncomfortable seeing themselves on webcam, and 22% were concerned about their physical appearance. The appearance of the home was less of a concern. The Open-Ended comment indicated other concerns – most of them dealing with use of the technology and having to appear attentive when they aren't.



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Open-Ended Comments

Noise that may be going on in my house from other family members...
Feeling pressured to look attentive. Not being able to make faces or look away...
Looking after a toddler who could join the call at any time!...
Need to improve skills to maximize its use...
Due to limited bandwidth, it interferes with the audio communication...
Not being able to multitask to get other work done simultaneously...
Having to dress up... Having my family members passing by while using webcam...
Possibility of losing control through hackers or cyberattacks...
People may see I stand up and move around...

STRANGEST OCCURRENCE DURING A VIDEO CALL

We asked a new open-ended question: "What is the strangest thing that happened to you or others during a video call?" We received a huge volume of responses, and we selected the most representative ones to display in the Open-Ended Comments – many of them amusing.

Open-Ended Comments

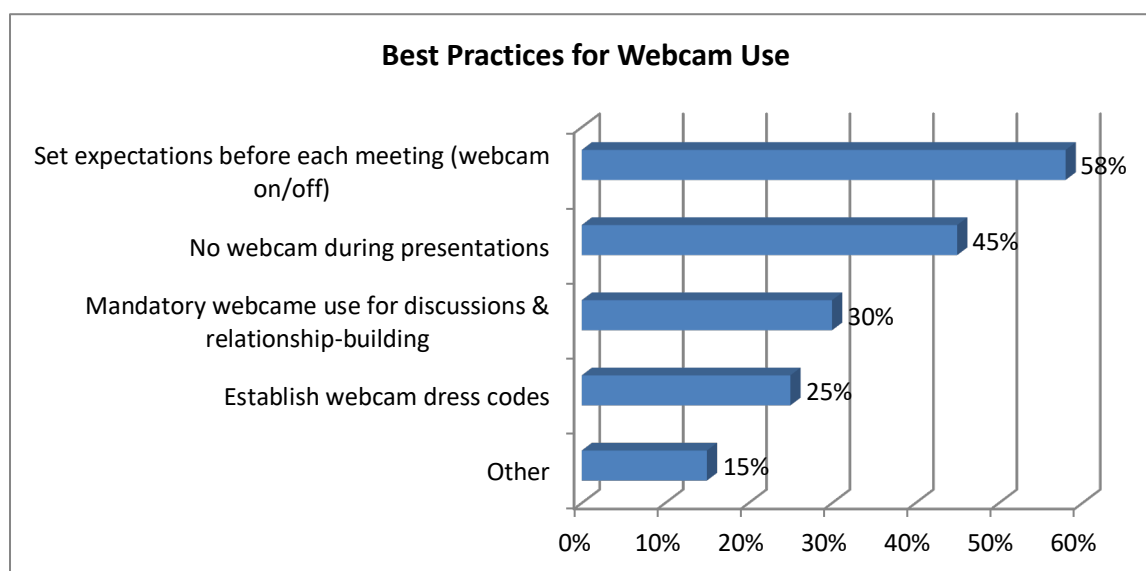
Team member helping to potty-train his son...
Kids screaming (my kids) while meeting with senior leaders...
People making funny faces not seeing that video is on...
People falling out of chairs, my dog running across the room and jumping on me...
Someone's neighbor was knocking on their window trying to get their attention in the line of sight of the webcam...
People talking, not realizing they are not on mute...
Naked people passing behind coworkers... Getting a grocery delivery...
Someone used the bathroom with their camera on...
Large pet parrot came onto shoulder and started talking and answering people...
Some people have strange virtual backgrounds...
Earthquake...
Had a client show up to a session completely nude and his webcam was on...
The building fire alarm started sounding; [we] had to evacuate...
Power outage...

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BEST PRACTICES FOR WEBCAM USE

In a new question, we asked about best practices for webcam usage (multiple responses permitted). A majority of respondents (58%) report that setting expectations before each meeting about the webcam on/off setting is a best practice. This was followed by turning webcasts off during presentations to keep attention focused on the presentation materials (45%), mandatory use of webcams during discussions and relationship-building conferences (30%), and to establish a webcam dress code (25%). The Open-Ended Comments describe the best practices cited by respondents who selected “other.”



Open-Ended Comments

People know basics of technology...
Video calls should be discouraged in middle of the day, when all time zones are active...
Each teammate has an option of whether or not to use camera...
For presentations, I feel it's best to start with webcams on (during introductions) then turn them off...
No webcams for large meetings (due to bandwidth)...
Make sure surroundings are clear of distractions...
Use webcams sparingly...
Encourage the use of "mute" when not speaking...
Expect speakers to use a webcam, enhances understanding of the material presented...
Make sure that your housemates/children are aware that you are on webcam enabled call...

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