

## Understanding Pandemic Impacts on Practice

MAF Women in Architecture Grant 2021

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear from multiple articles and studies that the impacts of the disruption were deep. Stories emerged of revealed and worsened disparities across demographic 'differences that make a difference.'

*"Women in the U.S. – across all income groups, races and ethnicities – carry a greater share of caregiving and household responsibilities. With children now needing to be schooled from home and elderly loved ones at increased health risk, women in architecture face unprecedented challenges in integrating work and life responsibilities."*

*- 'Keeping Equity a Priority During the COVID-19 Crisis,' AIA MN (2020)*

The impact of the pandemic on issues of equity was recognized locally in the architecture community, emphasized in this quote from AIA MN and observed anecdotally in the stories of our peers in architecture and experienced first hand at Precipitate. When the Women in Architecture grant called for proposals for projects, we saw value in collecting data about the impacts of the pandemic on the profession of architecture in Minnesota, with a particular study of the question of whether COVID-19 will have more effects on certain demographic identifiers, which we identified as 'differences that make a difference'.

Main takeaways from our survey are highlighted here, and you can find the complete report in the link at right.

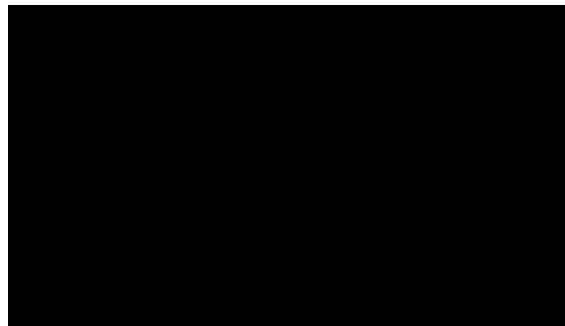
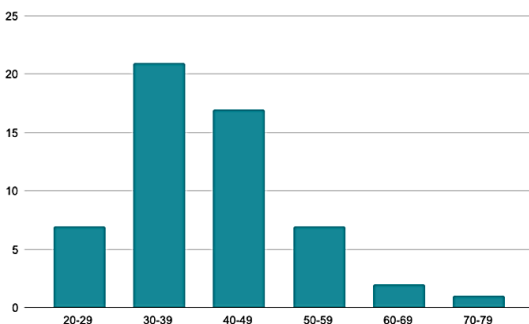
### Resources

- [Final report with speaker notes](#)
- [America's Mothers Are in Crisis](#). Jessica Grose. The New York Times. February 4, 2021.
- [2020 workplace well-being research summary](#). Rich Thompson et al. The Meyers-Briggs Company.
- [Women in the Workplace](#). The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). August 2020.
- [Diversity Task Force Report](#). AIA Minnesota. October 2015.
- [Fact Sheet](#). Jasmine Tucker. National Women's Law Center. October 2021.

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### background

Although there was some variety in age and location of respondents, the majority were ages 30-39, located in Hennepin county, and identified as female and white. These demographics match the demographics of the three Precipitate employees that designed and promoted the survey.

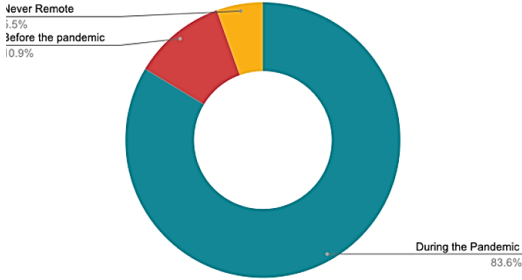


We were unable to capture a diverse pool of survey respondents, preventing us from finding results that were statistically significant in terms of gender or race/ethnicity.

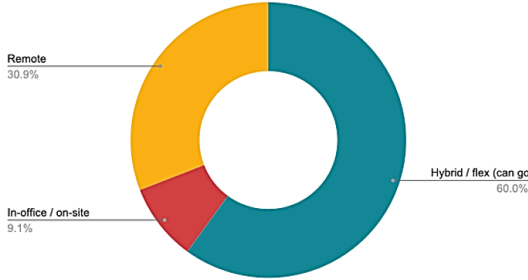
**workplace impact**

The shift to the ability to work remotely was clearly influenced by the pandemic, with only two respondents indicating that they had worked remotely prior to the pandemic. It is interesting to consider how dramatically the profession pivoted to stay in operation when the pandemic limited the ability to work in-office. What other shifts in firm culture and practice might be possible if they were suddenly made critical to operations?

**When Respondents Started Remote Work**

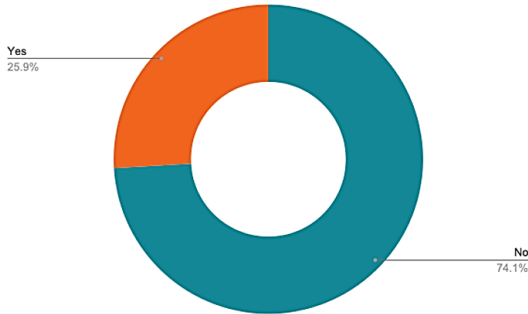


**Current Work Environment**



**support systems**

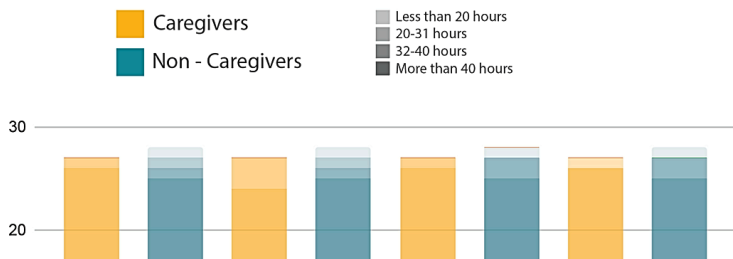
When asked if they had a support person, just 25.9% of respondents said yes, and of those respondents, 100% of that support was from a partner. This makes sense considering social distancing and bubbles that kept people isolated during the pandemic. Over 70% of respondents had no support person.

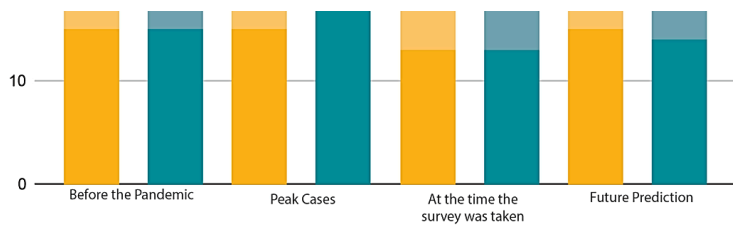


**caregiving**

There was almost an even split between respondents who have not been caregivers before or during the pandemic and those who have been caregivers before and during the pandemic, with one respondent who was not a caregiver before the pandemic but became one during. This is interesting when considering that four out of five male respondents were not caregivers before or during the pandemic alongside a majority of our female respondents who also did not identify as caregivers throughout the pandemic. This data challenges the notion that most women are caregivers.

Curious about the impact that the caregiver v. non-caregiver identity, we looked at how hours worked throughout the pandemic shifted.





Notably, there was minimal difference in hours worked between caregivers and non-caregivers until peak cases and future predictions. During peak cases, the number of caregivers working more than 40 hours a week dropped significantly compared to non-caregivers. This may be due to caregiving needs intensifying during peak cases as caregiving resources diminished. Future predictions look a little different, with non-caregivers anticipating working slightly less than caregivers.

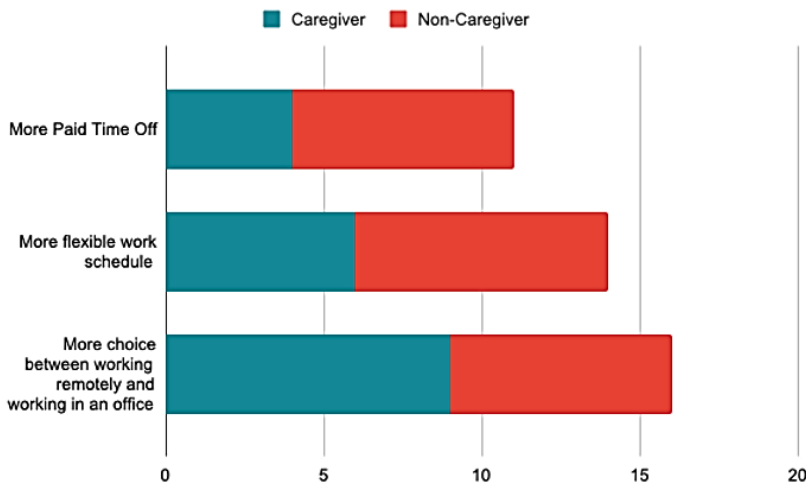
### takeaways

When asked to share about their individual pandemic experiences, respondents reported a wide variety of impacts which can be viewed in the full report. This range of experience indicates there is no one pandemic experience and may indicate that disruptions impact folks differently. Perhaps firms could approach future disruptions with more options so employees can choose the support that best meets the needs of their specific situation.

Specifically, many respondents spoke to the ways existing equity issues were exacerbated by the pandemic, including the concurrent raised awareness of the racism pandemic during this time. Minnesota architecture firms may consider using the experience of employees during the pandemic to further explore the ways that equity could be more broadly addressed and supported, particularly as this survey showed that assumptions about gender and caregiving are not necessarily correct.

Looking to the future, respondents indicated what kinds of support they would want to see from their employers. Their responses are broken down by caregiver v. non-caregiver status. Free response 'other' options were also an option for the previous question, shown here. There are a wide variety of opportunities for future support which firms and the profession may look to provide to aide employees in the future, with or without disruptions.

Future professional support broken down by caregivers and non-caregivers



Free responses

- Continue providing the same flexibility

- *More information! we nevvvvvv had staff meetings! We didn't know what was going on unless supervision said something to one person who then passed it to another person.*
- *More communication!! My section doesn't have staff meetings so I feel really out of the loop.*
- *More support of connection with co-workers*
- *Better work life balance.*
- *Nothing, my employer has been very supportive.*
- *More office equipment for a work from home setting*
- *Focus on job security vs unsustainable growth*
- *Getting people to understand the value of an architect. More projects are going to in-house facilities groups or contractors who have drafters*
- *More transparency between professionals about our lives and responsibilities to normalize "accommodations" so that it's not othering, but instead humanizing.*
- *Results based work schedule (measure & pay by deliverables, not time)*
- *Paid family and medical leave*

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## connect

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