



2020 wellbeing roundup

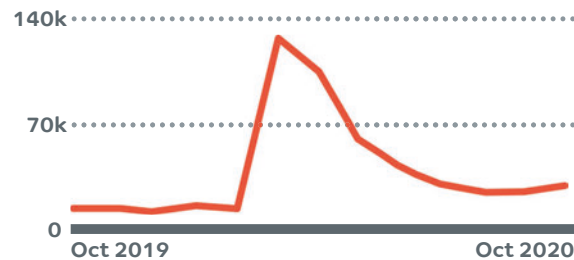
Exploring the year's health and wellbeing hot topics
and search trends, in the workplace and beyond

An unprecedented year for wellbeing

As 2020 comes to an end, we reflect on a turbulent year of global change. Using Google search data, survey feedback and social media trends, we explore a year of health and wellbeing in UK homes and workplaces.

COVID-19 has dominated the 2020 wellbeing agenda. Some of this year's highest-scoring search terms – including lockdown, furlough and social distancing – rarely entered our vocabulary in the pre-pandemic world. All across the internet, people have been searching for answers and reaching out to support those around them.

'Unprecedented' – Google search term



'Unprecedented' was just one term that saw a boom this year. As the UK entered lockdown on 23rd March, it became clear that 2020 would be a year like no other.

In this short report we explore some of 2020's key wellbeing topics:

- The employee wellbeing experience
- Workplace support in uncertain times
- The whole-body health revolution
- The business of wellbeing



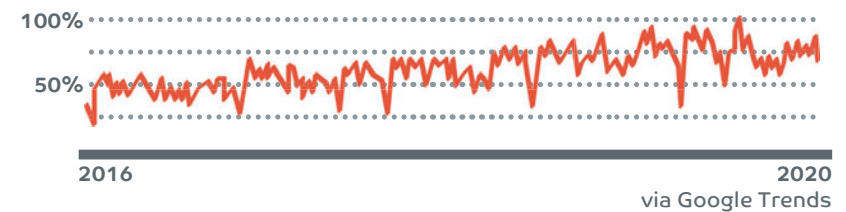


The term COVID-19 was coined by the World Health Organization in February 2020



Twitter conversations about wellbeing and self-care are up 225% since 2016

'Wellbeing' – interest over time



While COVID-19 has highlighted health and wellbeing issues like never before, searches for these terms have been increasing year on year.

Interest in these terms has almost doubled since 2016, and as online conversations about mental health, whole-body wellness and workplace support continue to rise, the data suggest a shift in priorities which is more than a passing phase.

2020 has seen our home lives and workplaces transformed, but the lasting effects are yet to be seen. So how can we ensure the new year brings positive change that sticks?

This report examines the year in wellbeing using data from:

- [The Westfield Health Divided Together report](#)
- [Google Trends and search data](#)
- [Twitter's marketing insights](#)
- [Oxford University's Word of the Year 2020 report](#)
- [The Office for National Statistics](#)

The employee wellbeing experience

Workplace wellbeing has shot up the corporate agenda, and search trends suggest that employees are still seeking practical solutions and wellbeing support. According to the Divided Together report, 28% of people wanted extra wellbeing support from their employer. So where do their concerns lie?



Employees are seeking clarity on COVID-secure workplaces



Searches for help using Zoom are still up 2393% on the end of last year

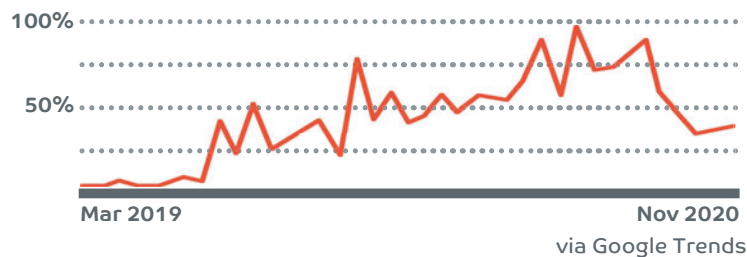


84% of employers made workplace changes to allow social distancing



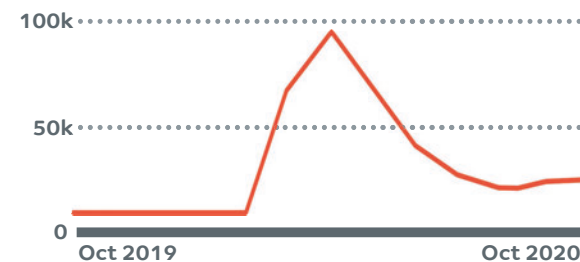
By May, 56% of HR teams had adapted their homeworking policies

'COVID-safe' – interest over time



While most employers have dedicated time and resources to making their workplace COVID-safe (also known as COVID-secure), search volume for these terms remains high, implying a level of anxiety amongst those going into work throughout the pandemic.

'How to use Zoom' – Google search term



The videocall service zoomed up the search rankings as our work and social lives went remote. With 60% of HR teams predicting more homeworking in the future, 'WFH' looks set to be a permanent fixture in some sectors.



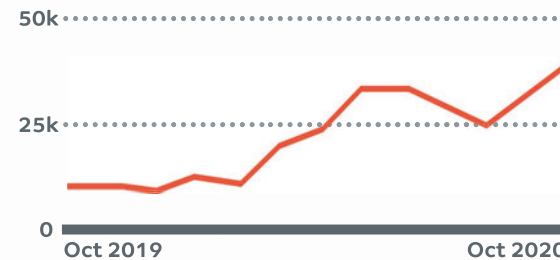


Searches for 'ergonomic chair' are at an all time high, suggesting comfort is a priority for home offices



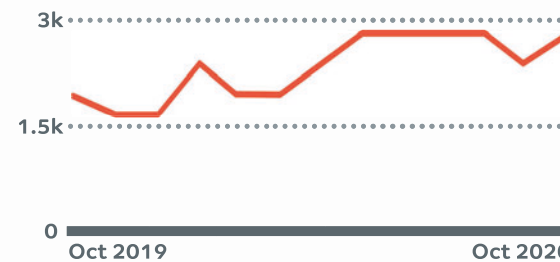
42% of people feel that video calls reveal that their colleagues have better home-working spaces

'Ergonomic chair' – Google search term



While many remote workers set up their home offices in the spring, searches for ergonomic chairs are still rising. As homeworking continues, employers should take an active role in workspace set-up to help reduce absences due to back and neck pain.

'Home renovation' – Google search term



Home renovation searches continue to rise, suggesting that people expect to spend more time at home in the year ahead. And they would be right – 60% of HR leaders think there will be more working from home in the future.

Workplace support in uncertain times

As the world hopes for a return to normality, proactive business leaders are planning for a future where HR teams are key decision makers. Data from this year's searches proves that workplace morale, mental health support and people management are key to success in the post-COVID workplace.



Back in May, 96% of HR leaders thought things would return to normal by the end of the year

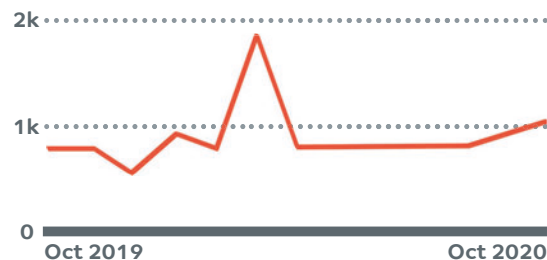


There were almost 2000 searches for 'supporting employees' in March 2020, but employees are still worried about the future



84% of HR leaders had to adapt their policies during the first lockdown

'Supporting employees' – Google search term



HR teams searched for ways to support employees in the first lockdown, but this trend has now returned to its base level. However, in September 72% of employees said they were still worried about the future. Even as the world recovers from COVID, employers will need a robust strategy to meet rising expectations around workplace support and help their employees adapt.



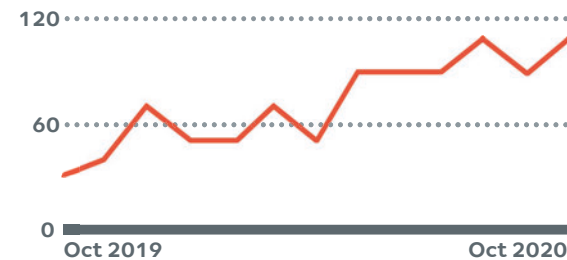


Searches for 'ways to motivate staff' increased by 267% in 2020 and still continue to rise



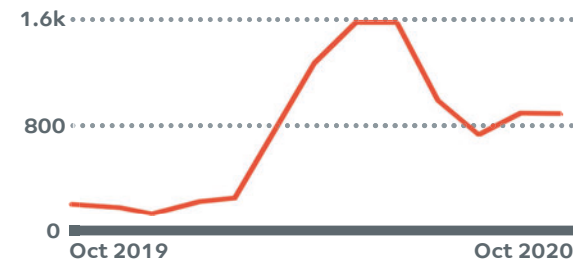
39% of HR leaders think there will be a higher expectation of safeguarding at work

'Ways to motivate staff' – Google search term



Many employees have spent the year working in less than ideal conditions, and it's no surprise that motivation might be waning. The upward trend suggests this dilemma will continue into 2021.

'Mental Health First Aid online course'



Interest in Mental Health First Aid courses increased by over 800% in the summer and still remains far higher than pre-pandemic levels. According to a study by [Mind](#), over one in five adults with no previous history of mental health difficulties now report that their mental health is poor or very poor. Yet only 41% feel comfortable bringing this up with their manager, so employers are likely to see mental health awareness stay high on the corporate agenda in the future.

The whole-body health revolution

For many of us, 2020 has seen a monumental shift in our normal way of life. It's been a year of altered routines, changing priorities and new habits. With our lives looking so different both in and outside of work, what changes might stick with us in the new year?



Twitter conversations about whole-body wellness are up 390% since 2016

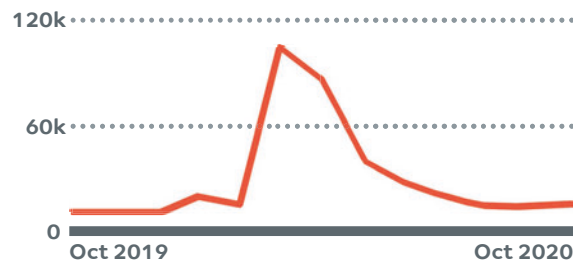


Discussion of dieting, detoxes and sleeping pills is down 50% since 2016



In March 2020 there were 110,000 searches for 'home workout' and 246,000 searches for 'parks near me'

'Home workout' – Google search term

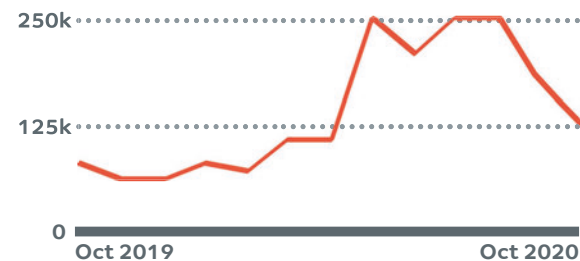


Searches for home workouts peaked in the first lockdown, as people looked for new ways to keep fit and healthy at home. May's [Divided Together report](#) found that 23% of employees wanted more physical wellbeing support from their employer. This trend tapered off as the summer wore on, suggesting that people may need encouragement to get their exercise elsewhere, including [workplace gyms](#).

Fad diets are out, whole-body wellness is in

Recent Twitter trends also point towards new priorities. Conversations now focus more on whole-body wellness, rather than fad diets, detoxing and sleeping pills. Awareness of overall wellbeing is prompting permanent lifestyle changes both at home and at work, with proactive employers offering more health and fitness perks to their team.

'Parks near me' – Google search term



The great outdoors has seen a surge in popularity this year, thanks to restrictions on indoor meetings. While searches unsurprisingly peaked in the summer, volume is still up 82% on last year, indicating a potential culture change as people continue to discover new walks, parks and beauty spots.

The business of wellbeing

While many will be glad to see the back of this difficult year, the economic and emotional impacts of 2020 will continue to permeate our working lives. For leadership teams, the new year brings with it an opportunity to inspire lasting positive change.



There were 2.74 million searches for 'furlough' in April 2020 alone, up from just 6600 in October 2019

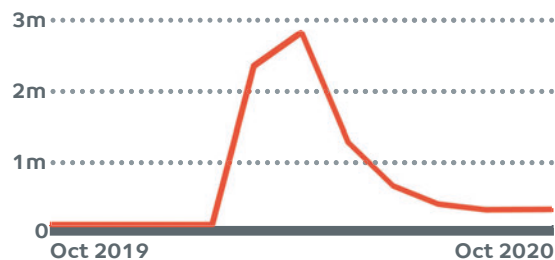


Almost 6 in 10 HR professionals anticipate a recession which will negatively impact their business



34% of HR leaders would like to offer more wellbeing support, with financial resources being their biggest barrier to implementing change (42%)

'Furlough' – Google search term

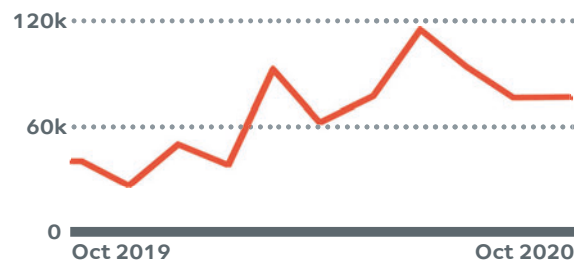


For many people, furlough is a new term for this year. The Government announced its job retention scheme in March and a total of 9.6 million jobs have been placed on furlough throughout the year. While searches are still up on last year, optimists might hope that furlough will be an experience unique to 2020.





'Redundancy' – Google search term



Searches for 'redundancy' shot up in the spring and are still almost double their pre-COVID level. This search trend reflects redundancies reaching a record high of 314,000 in the three months to September 2020.

Even back in May, almost 6 in 10 HR leaders anticipated a recession which would negatively impact their organisation, and economic uncertainty looks set to exacerbate this concern well into 2021. According to the government's economic watchdog, UK unemployment is likely to reach 2.6 million by the middle of the year.



There were 110,000 searches for 'redundancy' in June 2020



35% of parents are hoping to make long-term changes to how they work

A generation of career changers

When faced with such a turbulent year, it's unsurprising that some people have begun to reconsider their priorities. The Divided Together report found that parents are the mostly likely group to be reflecting on what they want from their job. They're the most likely to prioritise work-life balance in future roles and are keen to try something new.

The report found that 35% were hoping to make long-term changes to the way they work. With flexible workplaces setting themselves apart from the competition, we could see a generation of employees who put their wellbeing before the rat run.

A lasting wellbeing legacy

As the economic shockwaves continue to be felt, wellbeing support must be made a priority. To keep people at their best, HR teams need financial and strategic buy-in from business leaders to deliver the effective wellbeing support that employees have come to expect.



A third of companies increased their wellbeing spend during the first lockdown



Almost a quarter of employees would like more mental health and wellbeing support from their employer



62% of HR leaders think employees will prioritise wellbeing over salary

It would have been impossible to predict all the twists and turns of 2020, not least how much it fundamentally changed where and how we work. HR teams saw carefully laid plans put aside in a race to relocate teams, make workplaces COVID secure and understand the furlough scheme.

This year's top search terms and conversation topics confirm that people are now more than ever looking for answers and support both in and outside the workplace.

Almost a quarter of respondents in our [Divided Together](#) research said they'd like more general wellbeing and mental health support from their employer, with 19% saying they're also looking for physical wellbeing support.

With 2020 shining the spotlight on wellbeing, it seems that times have changed, and so have expectations. If employers that can meet these expectations, invest in wellbeing and help their people grow, they will see their businesses recover and thrive in the new year.



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