

PROJECT

Research |
2020 It's The World We Live In |
'Stay Home'

2020, Covid-19 pandemic, what a year ...



Hit the elevator buttons with my knuckles. Like seriously, how is that going to solve anything?

Well, he wasn't alone in this quest; this was probably *the* question niggling at most of us during the pandemic. There seemed to be nothing that we could do to alter the situation (hmm, vaccination?). So why not just observe, think, and feel outside the box a bit, which we can't afford to do during 'normal' day-to-day lives? Like *watching your pets investigate the robot vacuum for months, wondering why and how something you googled pops up in your feed out of nowhere, and realising that taking off bedsheets each morning and putting them back is tedious yet inexplicably rewarding.*

This project was exactly born out of collecting these somewhat random questions and thoughts. As you probably know, we're a bunch of individuals who are weary of the ordinary; digging into the most private, weirdest, and deepest minds is what we do.

So we thought, let's design a survey and host an open, intimate exhibit where people can share basically anything with us amid all the pandemic restrictions—forget about social distancing! We wanted everyone to feel a bit more energised and, perhaps more vitally, (re)connected with the neighbourhood, community, and even the world.

We then curated a space in a *tong lau* apartment on Sun Street in Wan Chai, inviting every member of the audience to join us in these continuous conversations.

What's the survey about?

The team was curious about how confined life had changed people's experiences and feelings. And a survey, along with some in-depth interviews, would be a great way to solve the puzzle. 🧩

We had endless, heated discussions about what we wanted to know *most* and ended up bringing the survey to 60+ questions, with a mix of closed- and open-ended formats, so as to capture a plurality of voices and perspectives.

It's structured around six key themes: 1) Experience and Attitude Towards Opportunities, 2) Observations on the World, 3) The Future of Work and Skills, 4) Life and Preferences, 5) Feelings at the Moment and Mental Wellness, and 6) Great Life Moments.

A big thanks to these people!

Within a month or so, 101 responses were collected from 25 countries and territories, from where we're based—Hong Kong (16%), of course—to the Philippines (33%), and the United States (8%). Respondents range in age from 16 to 50, with slightly over one-third (38%) being students at the time.

Figure 1

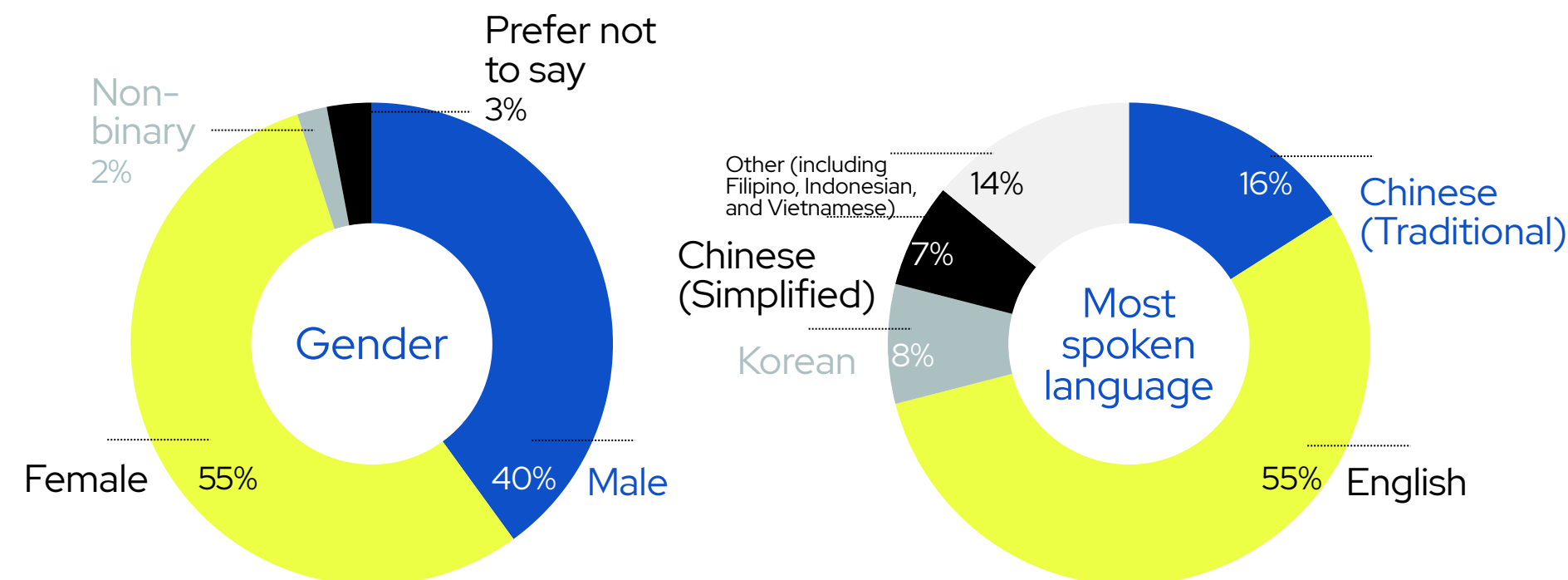


Figure 1 (continued)

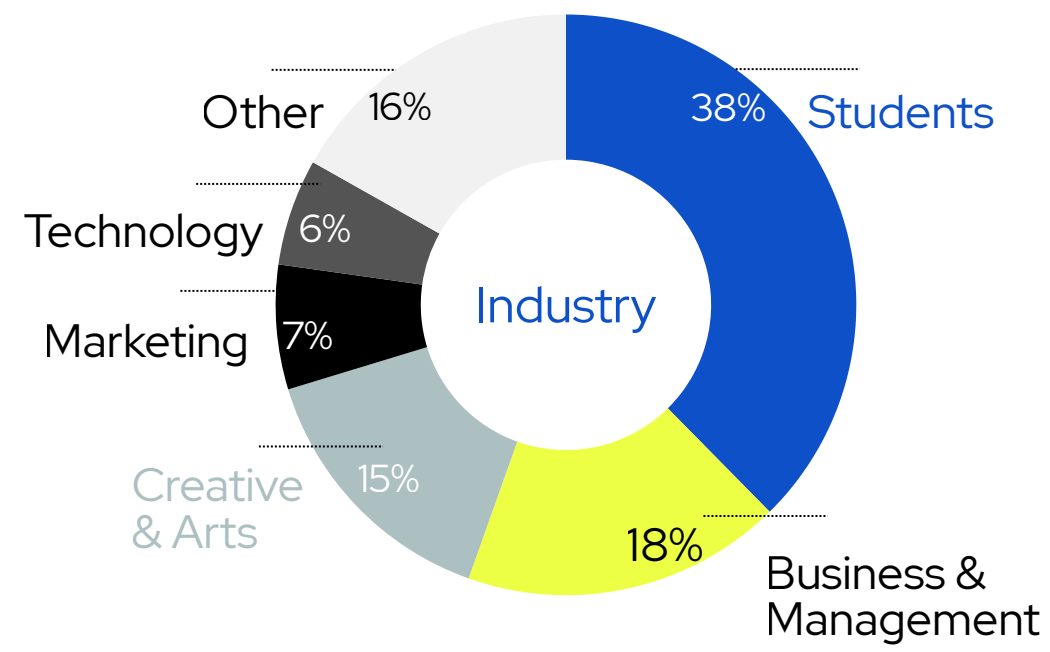
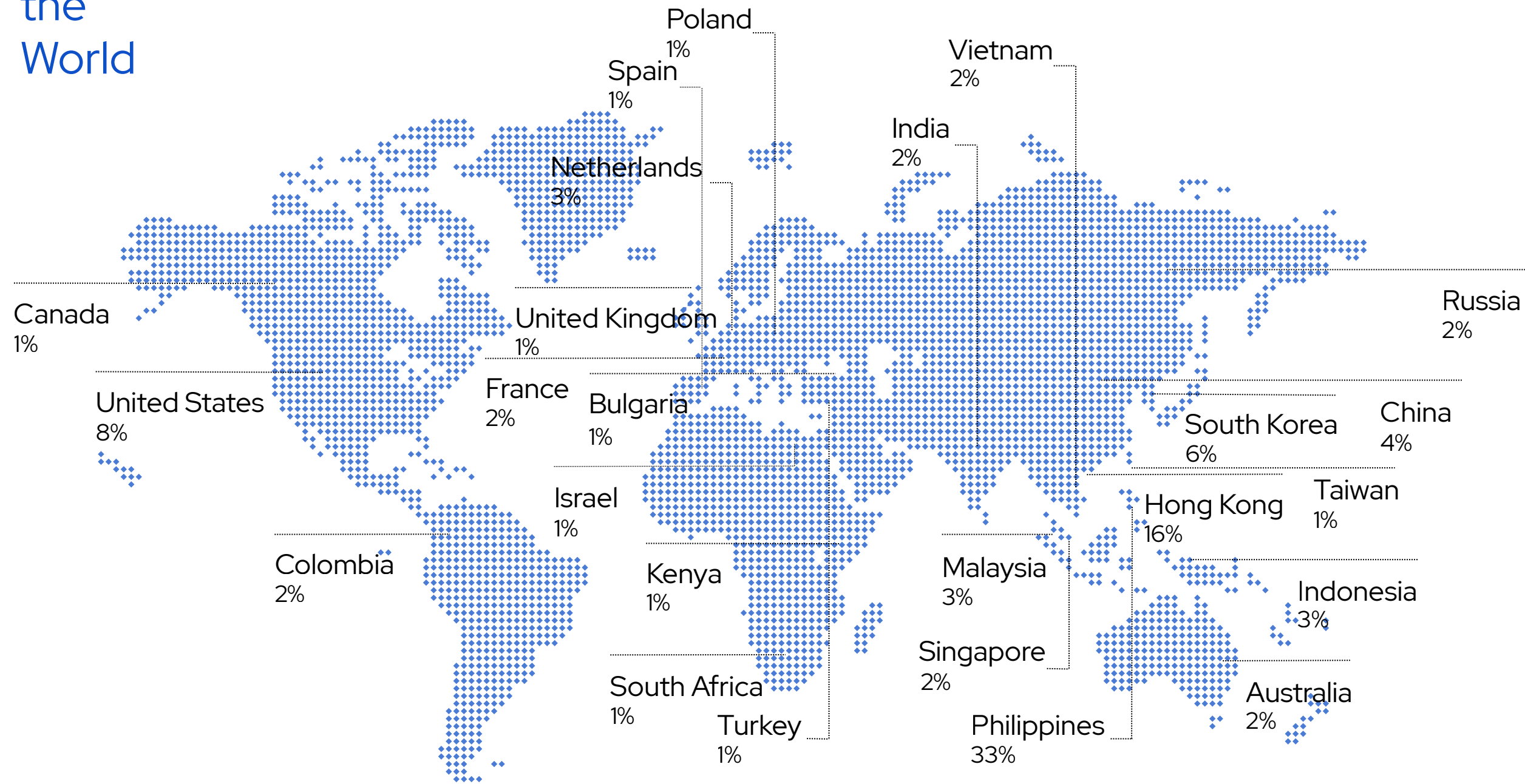


Figure 2

All over the World



And now let's embark on a little investigative journey with this core question in mind: what did people experience and feel during these turbulent times?

- **Lockdowns restricted physical movement and social contact but by no means self-exploration and discovery** through new hobbies, skills, and ventures. People also did all kinds of 'quirky' things back then, from learning how to pick locks to creating a karaoke room and improving on typing speed. Some immersed themselves in books, while others in the digital world—making TikTok videos, gaming, and conversing in different accents.

Figure 3



8 in 10

respondents picked up new skills during the pandemic.

(making sourdough, playing the piano, running, and so many more.)

“

The pandemic is a period when there is less stimulation to see constantly, so exploring your community or your own city has become the new norm.

Figure 4



5 in 10

respondents pursued a side gig or business when the pandemic hit.

(with about one-third in business development and entrepreneurship such as marketing consulting; a close second is e-commerce and consumer goods like mask production)

Figure 5

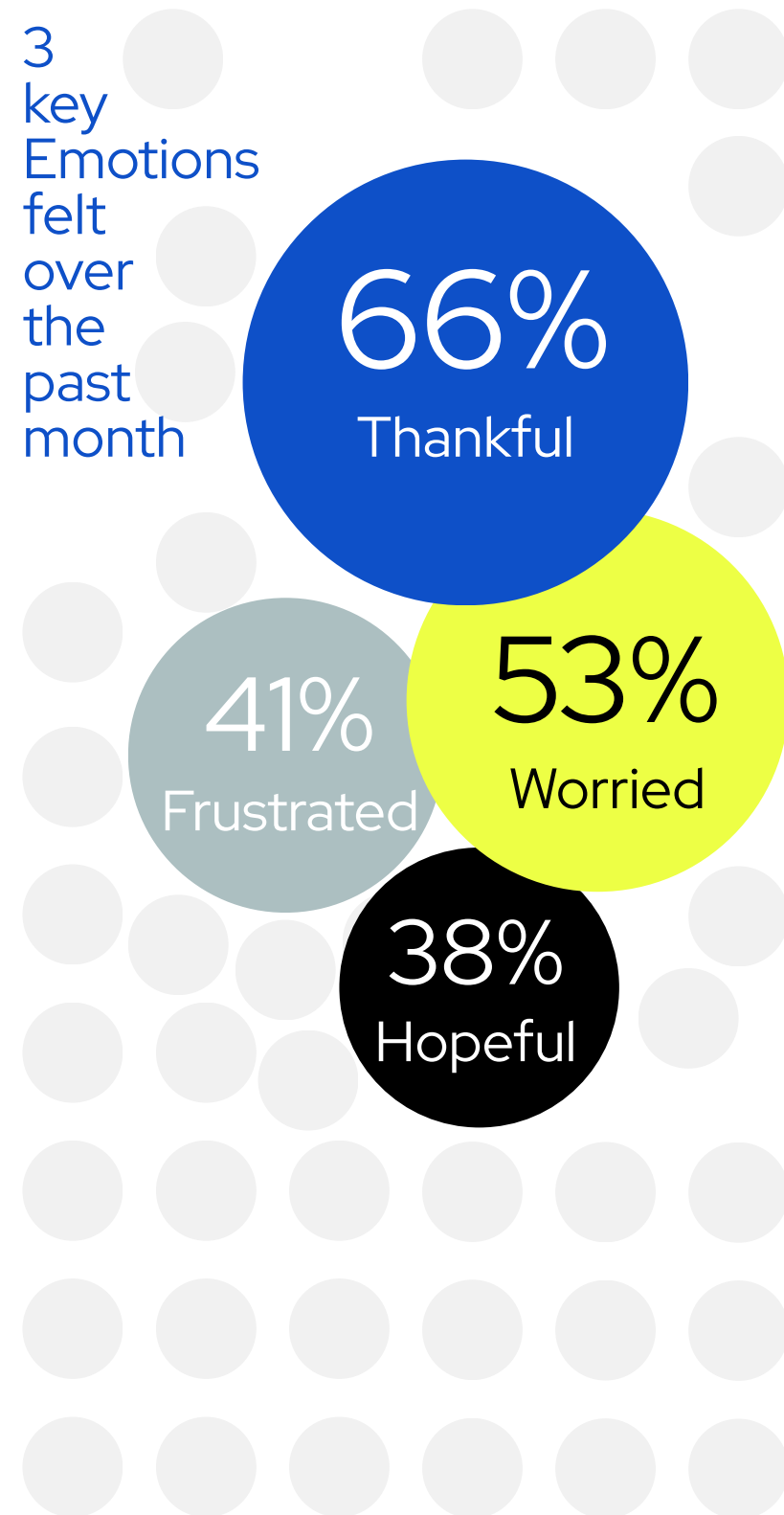


- **But mixed feelings about life and the world’s trajectory were widespread:** thankful for being alive, frustrated with the seemingly never-ending pandemic, and worried about losing a job all at once. People weren’t wildly optimistic about the future. After all, tens of millions worldwide lost their lives. Job loss and mental distress were common. Many foresaw the impending challenges of adapting to the ‘new normal,’ compounded by worries like xenophobia.

63%

of respondents believe that the world is staying the same or getting worse.

Figure 6



“

I think one challenge would be getting used to the new normal. The economy will also be greatly affected. A lot of things have already changed and will continue to change post-Covid.

“

I think Covid has helped those of us who were lucky enough to make time for personal goals and needs, but the new normal will always challenge that balance.

- **The good news: a growing focus on well-being, both physical and mental.** People spent more (quality) time with family and friends, picked up old hobbies like reading, and developed new ones such as yoga and journaling. When asked what the best thing they had done during the pandemic was, some said:

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I love spending more time with my family, so I think the lockdown can be an opportunity for us to further strengthen our bonds.

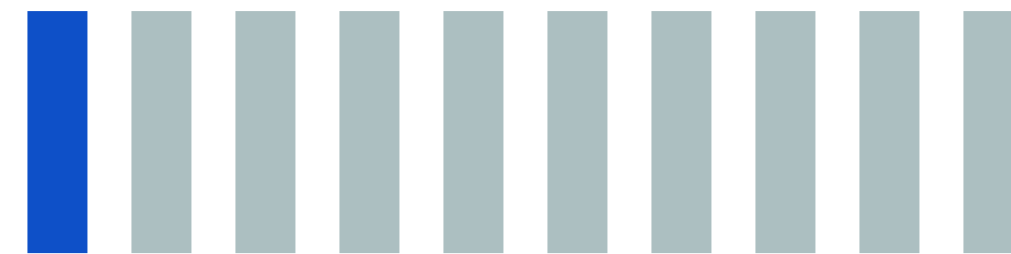
“

I used to hate exercising, but since quarantine started I challenged myself to do workout programs. It really changed me physically and mentally.

95%

of respondents believe purposely doing things to take care of mental health is somewhat to highly essential.

Figure 7



Only 1 in 10

respondents reportedly didn't take time out.

98%

of respondents believe companies somewhat or should keep track of employees' mental health.

- **The relationship between technology and mental health is far from straightforward.** Opinions on whether technology use has aggravated or alleviated depression are divided: proponents stated reasons such as easy access to information and entertainment, whereas opponents suggested that increased technology use leads to social comparison and a lack of physical interaction.



Technology enabled more access to entertainment and sources for self-care.



Technology brings us closer to others with just a text but also separates us more than ever with just a text.

No matter what, the pandemic gave many of us (those lucky to survive) pause for thought: what's truly important to ourselves? There's no universal answer, and you have to carve out your own path.

What's next?

Our curiosity has never dimmed. We have loads of energy to explore new ideas –and the next iteration has already started!