



NEW **HOMETRENDS**
INSTITUTE

September TRENDS REPORT

WORK-FROM-HOME, PART 1

*Featuring survey results from
1,242 homeowners working from home*



Executive Summary

Work-from-Home Opportunity Takeaways:

New home demand is shifting to more-distant areas where homes are cheaper.

13 million owned, mid- to high-income households (26%) will likely work from home once the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

- **9M** will work from home more than one full day a week. We estimate this will be almost double the pre-COVID-19 amount.

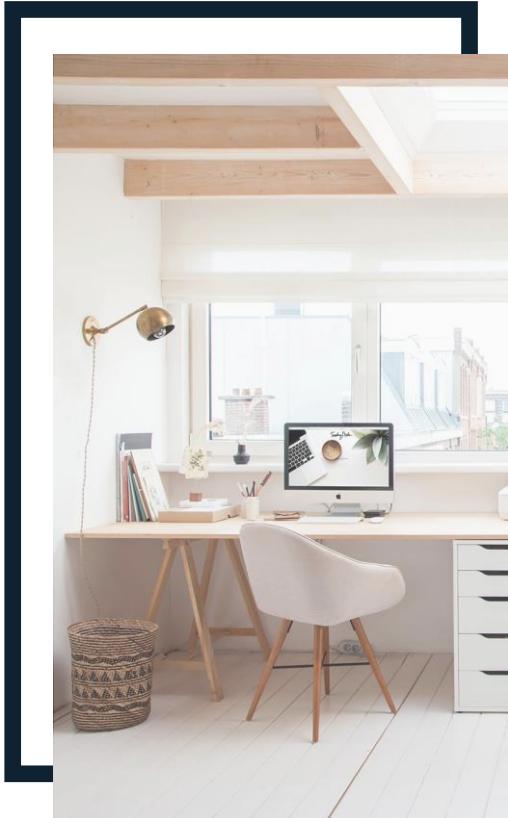
Remodeling demand will far exceed mover demand, but minor improvements will suffice for most.

- **400K** will move specifically due to work-from-home needs.
 - Typically, 3M owned, mid- to high-income households move each year.
 - Families with young children will dominate the movers.
- **2.4M** will remodel, creating a lift in remodeling over the next few years.
 - Homeowners typically account for 8M large remodels and 40M small remodels each year.
 - Families with older children will dominate the remodeling spend.
- **5M** will make minor improvements, driving growth in decor and products used to update an existing space into something great.



Work-from-Home Opportunity Takeaways:

The following opportunities for improvements will drive consumers to change their homes:



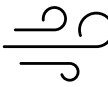
Better lighting. Current spaces need more natural light, better window placement, and/or improved artificial lighting.



Privacy and noise solutions. Consumers need a private workspace. If they have young kids, sometimes even a door is not enough.



Creative storage. Office clutter needs to be contained.



Air treatment. Comfort needs to be optimized with balanced temperature and healthy air.



Enhanced connection. Remote workers need more wired internet locations and better Wi-Fi throughout the home.



More options. Homes need flexible secondary workspaces throughout.

Work-from-Home Opportunity Takeaways:

Marketing messages and designs will differ by life stage.



Young Singles and Couples work in multiple locations throughout the house. They love the coziness and flexibility of working from home but struggle with poor lighting, spotty wireless connection, and not having a defined space.



Young Families are getting creative, finding any private space available. They appreciate the family time and slower-paced mornings but struggle with organization and privacy, sometimes even when their workspace has a door.



Mature Families are more likely to have semi-private spaces to use, like the dining room, living room, attic/basement, or loft. When done right, they enjoy that working from home is peaceful and productive. Without the right space, it is frustrating and contributes to stress.



Mature Singles and Couples are the most likely to have a formal office or guest bedroom to use and are often sharing it with their pet. Togetherness and personalization drive them to work from home, but a lack of storage and space for equipment can ruin the experience.

A woman with brown hair tied in a bun is wearing a black headset with a microphone. She is sitting at a light-colored wooden desk, looking down at a laptop. On the desk, there is a spiral notebook, a pair of glasses, and a white mug. In the background, a man in a grey shirt is standing and looking at his phone. The room has large windows and a modern, minimalist aesthetic with a grey pendant light hanging from the ceiling.

Introduction

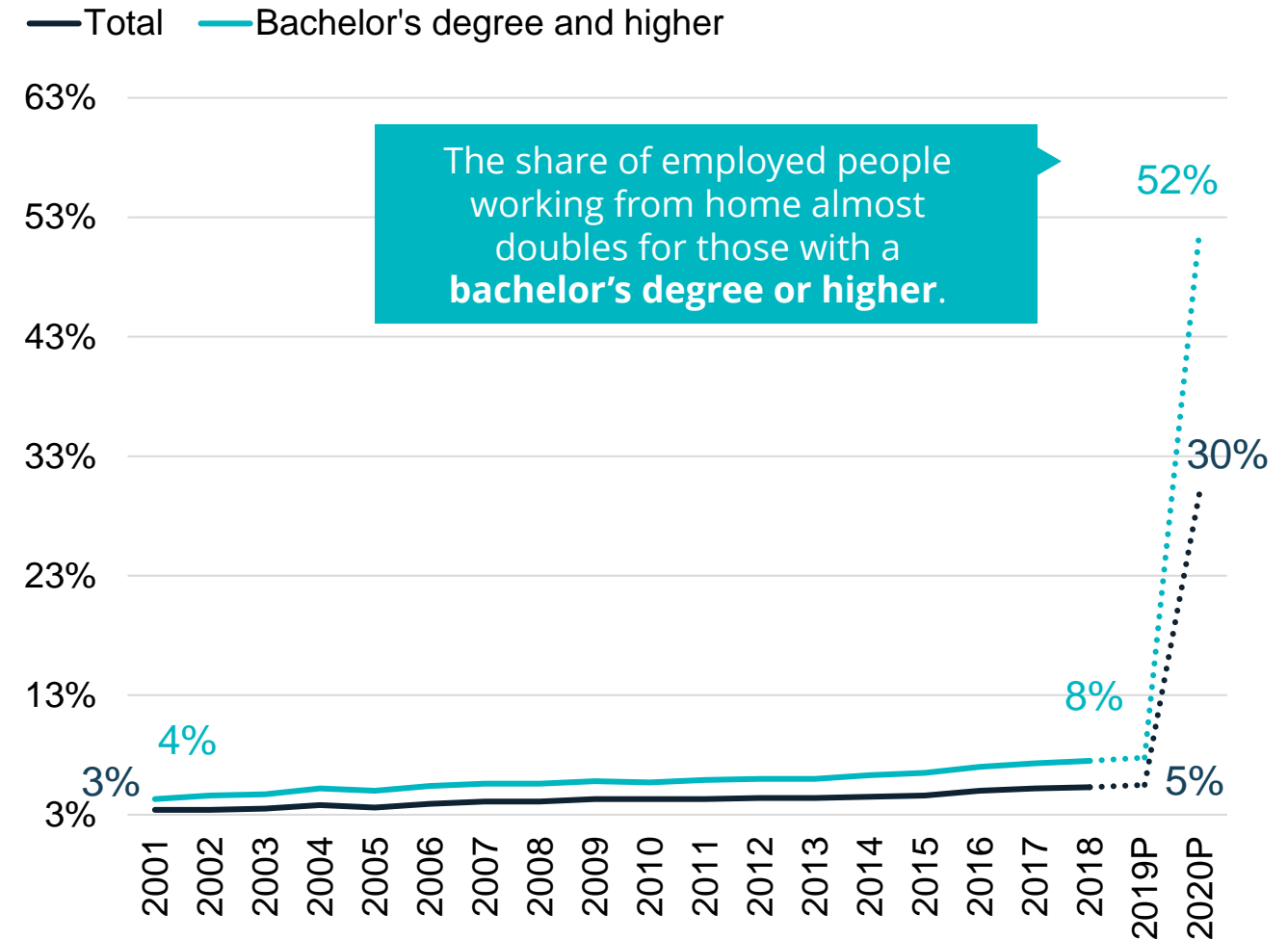
COVID-19 took a rising trend and **accelerated** it.

Pre-COVID-19, working from home was steadily on the rise, roughly doubling over the past 20 years. Coming into 2020, **5%** of employed people (almost 9M workers) worked primarily from home. Then COVID-19 hit. As of August, **30%** of employed people were working from home, a 5x jump to 44M workers.

Why does the underlying (pre-COVID-19) shift matter?

It signals that this will be a *lasting* trend. As COVID-19 eventually fades into memory, so too will many of its behavioral impacts. A good test to build confidence in what will continue to grow is determining whether there was already an underlying shift that supports the continuation of the trend.

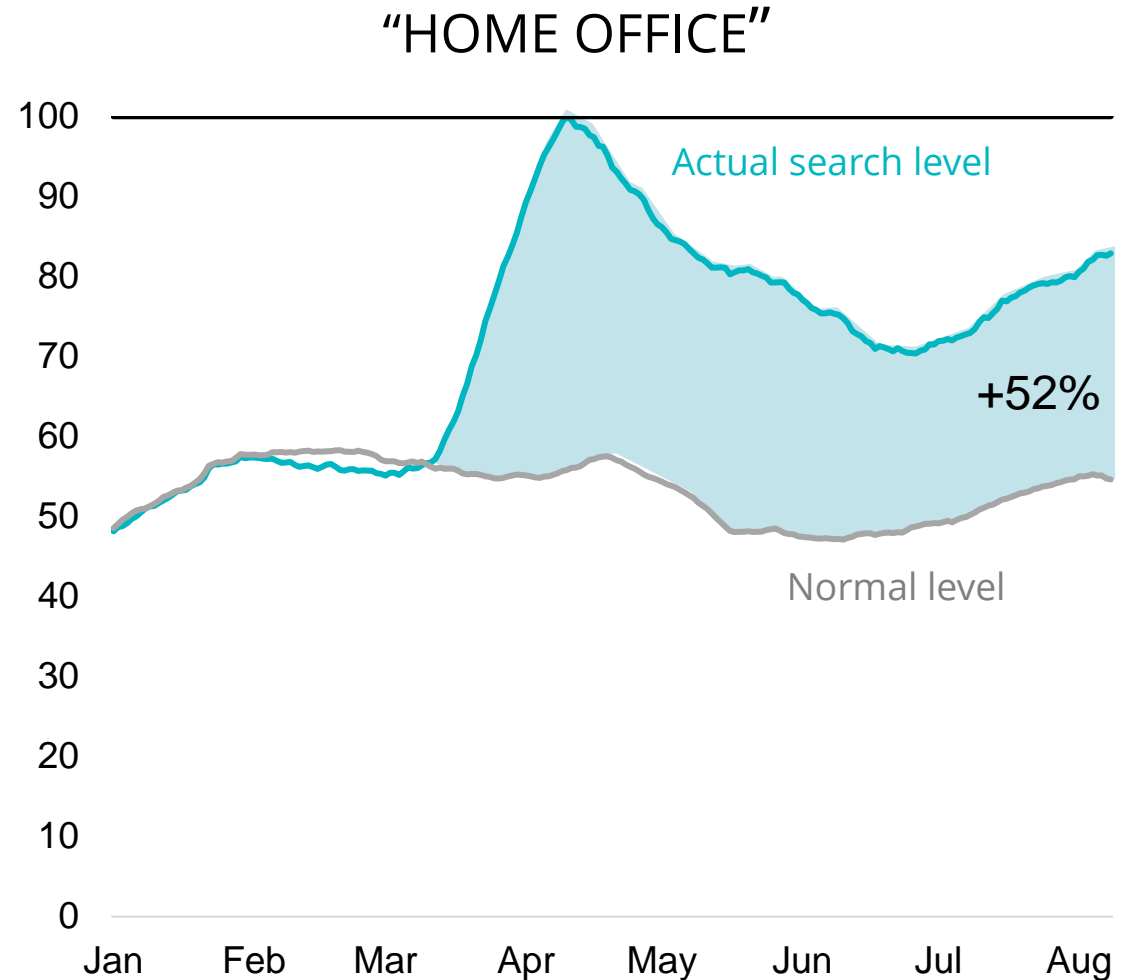
Percentage of Employed Persons Aged 16+ Who Worked from Home More Than Half the Time or Worked from Home Because of COVID-19



Sources: John Burns Real Estate Consulting, LLC, calculations of 2018 American Community Survey via IPUMS-USA and Bureau of Labor Statistics data

This prolonged “trial period” in working from home will impact our industry in three key ways:

- 1. Design.** More people working from home clearly increases the importance of a functional home workspace. Demonstrating this trend, Google search data reveals that searches for “*home office*” remain elevated 52% above their normal level.
- 2. Location.** Spending fewer days at the office will unlock more-affordable locations, further from job centers. Zillow research found that 50% of those able to work from home would be open to a commute that was up to 45 minutes or longer. Pre-COVID-19, the maximum distance for the overwhelming majority was 30 minutes.
- 3. Labor force participation.** Increased adoption of work-from-home technologies and a lack of commute could remove barriers to labor force participation for some people with disabilities or those that want to continue working later in life.



Notes: Data are 4-week moving avgs. Normal levels represent historical norm from 2015–2019.
Source: John Burns Real Estate Consulting, LLC, calculations of Google search data

Where is the opportunity?

Opportunity exists to solve pain points across life all stages, but how big is the opportunity and where are the largest pockets?

To answer these questions, this report leverages our network of local consultants and survey results of middle- to high-income homeowners who worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The remainder of the report is divided into two sections:

1. **How big is the opportunity and in which segments is it the largest?**
2. **What opportunities has working from home created?**

Survey Methodology

In August, we surveyed 1,242 respondents matching the following characteristics. Responses were weighted nationally by region and life stage group.



Homeowners



Attached or detached



Household income \$50K+



Worked from home during COVID-19 pandemic (part time or full time)

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light blue striped button-down shirt over a teal top, is sitting on a bright yellow sofa. She is looking at a silver laptop on her lap. To her left, a young child with dark, curly hair, wearing a green t-shirt, is sitting on the same sofa, looking towards the woman. The background is a bright, modern interior with a white brick wall and a white shelf with books. The overall scene is warm and domestic.

How big is the **opportunity** and in
which segments is it the largest?

Affordability is driving far more moves than needing a better workspace is.

The need for a better workspace is driving fewer moves than many think. While a great workspace is a growing *consideration* for those already planning to move nationwide, widespread anecdotes of waves of people purchasing new homes to improve their workspace have been overstated.



SOUTHEAST

Builders in the Southeast are not changing their product, just changing their marketing message. Some apartment developers are considering putting for-rent workspaces like executive suites in the clubhouse of the community.

Lesley Deutch

ldeutch@realestateconsulting.com

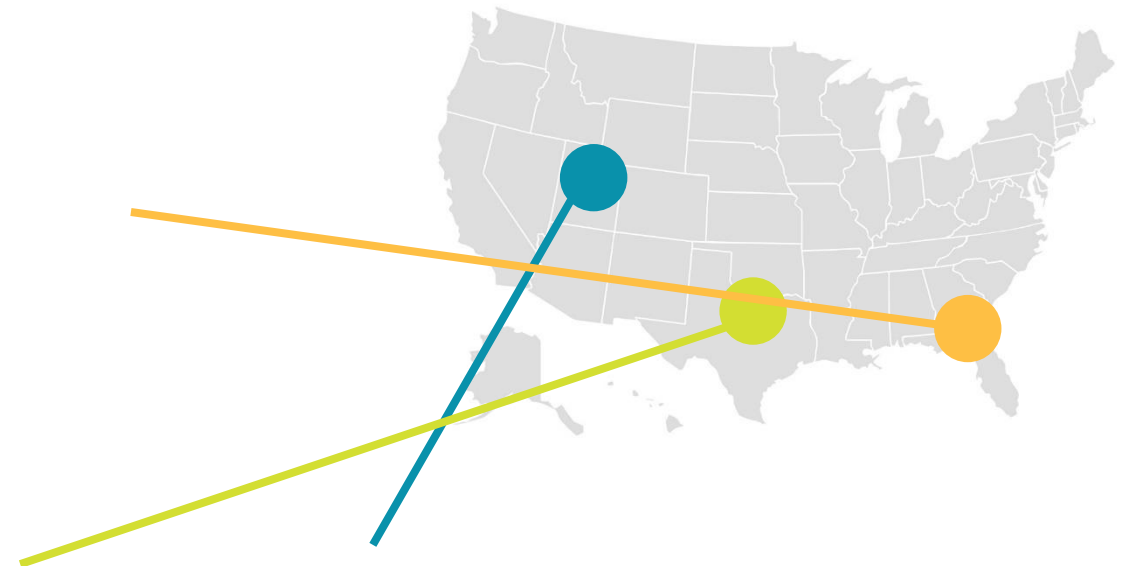
TEXAS

WFH does not seem to be a driving force of purchasing. However, it is a growing consideration when purchasing, which includes:

- Looking at flex spaces differently (e.g., a downstairs bedroom that could be used as a home office then transformed back into a bedroom when their needs change)
- A reversal of preferences: preferring locations away from living areas vs. the recent trend toward living areas
- Secondary workspaces that are separated and can easily launch a video meeting

David Jarvis

djarvis@realestateconsulting.com



SALT LAKE CITY

SLC had more relaxed stay-at-home orders than other major metros, meaning most residents could resume heading back into work. Although work from home offices are more prevalent, **home school spaces and options are the bigger deal here.**

Kristin Matthews

kmatthews@realestateconsulting.com

While **workspace needs** are not driving sales, working from home is indirectly impacting sales in some markets by allowing working professionals to flee expensive markets. Affordability is the driver, but in these markets a great work-from-home space can be a key differentiator between competitors.

NORTHEAST

Work-from-home flexibility has opened up possibilities for telecommuting from less expensive and less congested cities in the Northeast corridor. We've seen increased demand for homes in locations within a 1.5 to 2 hour commute of major metros like NYC and DC. Many working professionals expect that they will be able to work from home (at least part time) after the pandemic, bearing the longer commute times in exchange for a less expensive home and more space.

Jeff Kottmeier

jkottmeier@realestateconsulting.com

WESTERN US

Work-from-home spaces are clearly becoming more important in purchasing decisions. I think you can see it in the migration to some of the more attainably priced markets (Inland Empire, Phoenix, Las Vegas) where buyers are seeking more space.

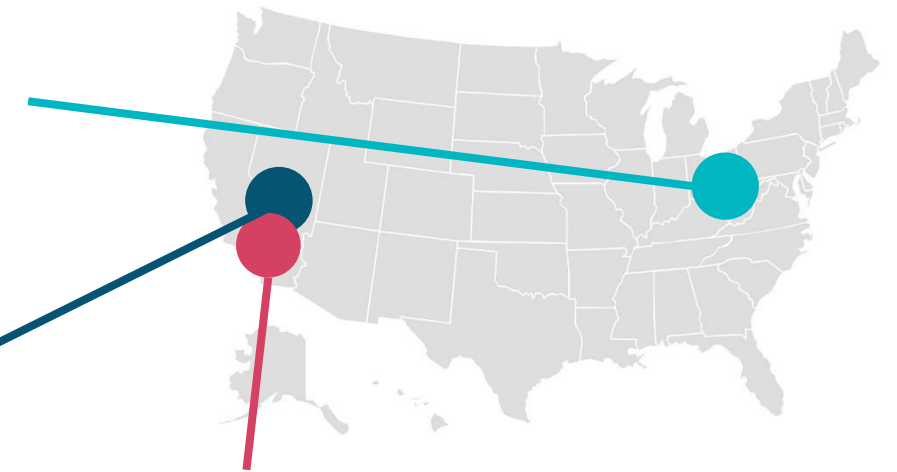
Ken Perlman

kperlman@realestateconsulting.com

Builders are repurposing their home designs to meet the new needs of their buyers: dens and 4th bedrooms are being redesigned as home offices, lofts and basements are being presented as children's home school/homework centers, and backyards are designed with practical extensions of the home for home buyers to walk into and explore.

Jeff Brazel

jbrazel@realestateconsulting.com



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Builders in high-priced coastal markets are trying to shoehorn workspaces into whatever square footage they can find in their existing product. Adding built-in desks under stairs and in hallways is a solution we often see displayed in models and highlighted in marketing materials. In more affordable submarkets where larger homes are more common, some home buyers are envisioning lock-off suites that were designed for multigenerational living as the perfect home offices with private entrances, full bathrooms, and kitchenettes. We're also starting to see rental product designed with larger bedrooms that can accommodate a private workspace.

Scott Wild

swild@realestateconsulting.com

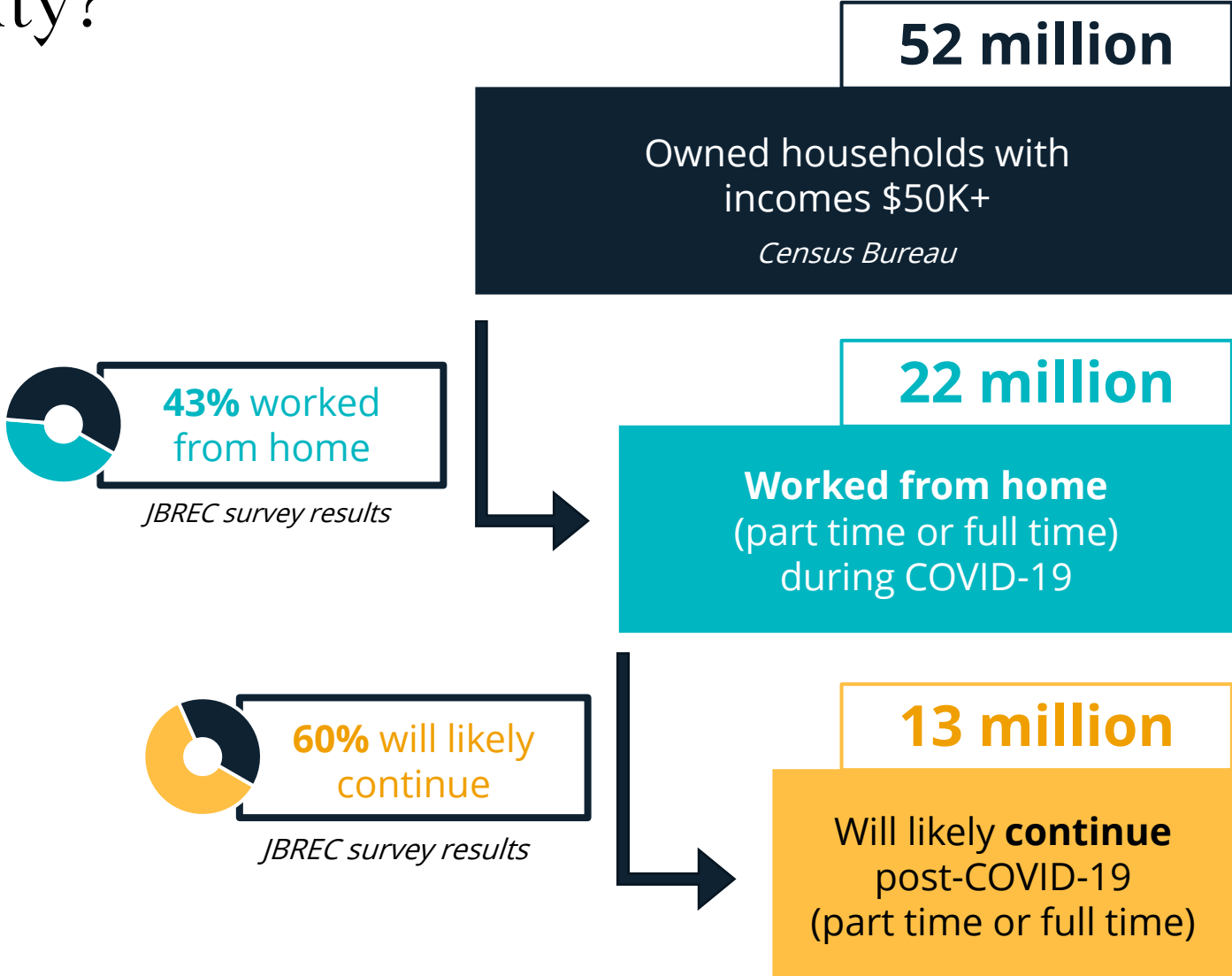


What is the future opportunity?

To anticipate demand opportunities from increased working from home, we must understand the likelihood that people will continue to work from home post-COVID-19 **and** the share that will need to make some adjustments to their current workspace.

How many households are likely to continue to work from home?

Household counts are the starting point. The Census Bureau estimates 52M owned, mid- to high-income households. We then marry the Census data with our proprietary survey data. By applying the share of our survey respondents who worked from home during COVID-19 and the share that are likely to continue after the pandemic ends, we estimate that 13M of these households will continue to work from home post-COVID-19.



Sources: John Burns Real Estate Consulting, LLC, August 2020 survey of 1,242 respondents and calculations of Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey data via IPUMS-USA

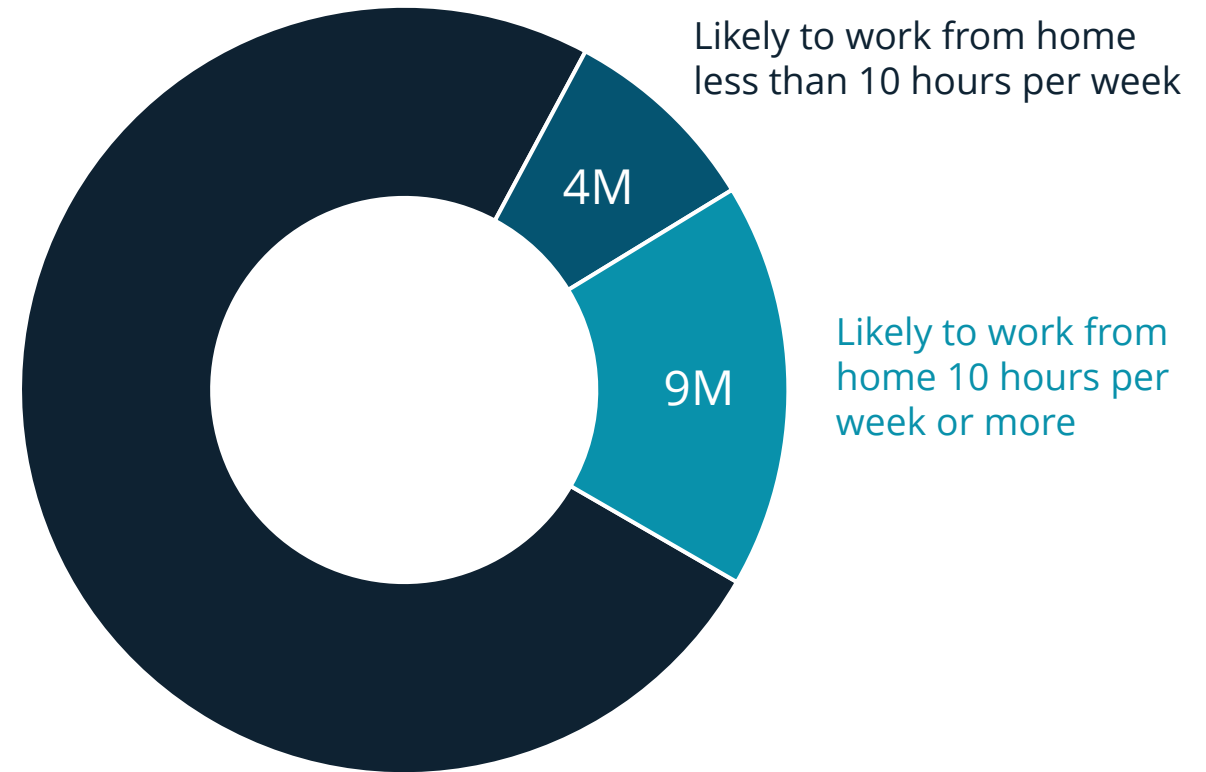
Of these 13M households that will continue to work from home post-COVID-19, there will be a mix of those who only work from home **occasionally** (less than 10 hours per week) and those that do it more **regularly** (10 hours per week or more).

How do these numbers compare to pre-COVID-19 levels?

Coming into the COVID-19 pandemic, Census Bureau estimates show that about **5M** owned, mid- to high-income households primarily worked from home. Our survey results show that **22M** of these households currently are. Once the pandemic ends, we estimate **9M** will work at least 10 hours per week from home, roughly doubling the pre-COVID-19 level.



Mid- to High-Income Owned Households by Likelihood to Work from Home Post-COVID-19



Sources: John Burns Real Estate Consulting, LLC, August 2020 survey of 1,242 respondents and calculations of Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey data via IPUMS-USA

How many households will need to adjust their workspace?

Remote work will grow, but expectations of future **moves** and **remodels** driven by the need for a better work-from-home space should be tempered. While many need improvements to their space, a simple rearranging or some new equipment will suffice for most. Opportunities abound for suites of products used to update an existing space into something great.

Our survey data indicates that remodeling will prove a bigger opportunity than moving, with **2.4M remodels** and **400K moves** anticipated from those likely to continue working from home. The rest have either made the necessary changes, are happy with their space, or will simply rearrange their current space or move to a different space in the same house.



**13M Households
Working from Home**

400K Moves

*(typically 3M moves
per year)*

2.4M Remodels

*(typically 8M big and 40M
small remodels per year)*

**5M
Minor changes**

**5M
No changes**

Sources: John Burns Real Estate Consulting, LLC, August 2020 survey of 1,242 respondents and calculations of Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey data via IPUMS-USA

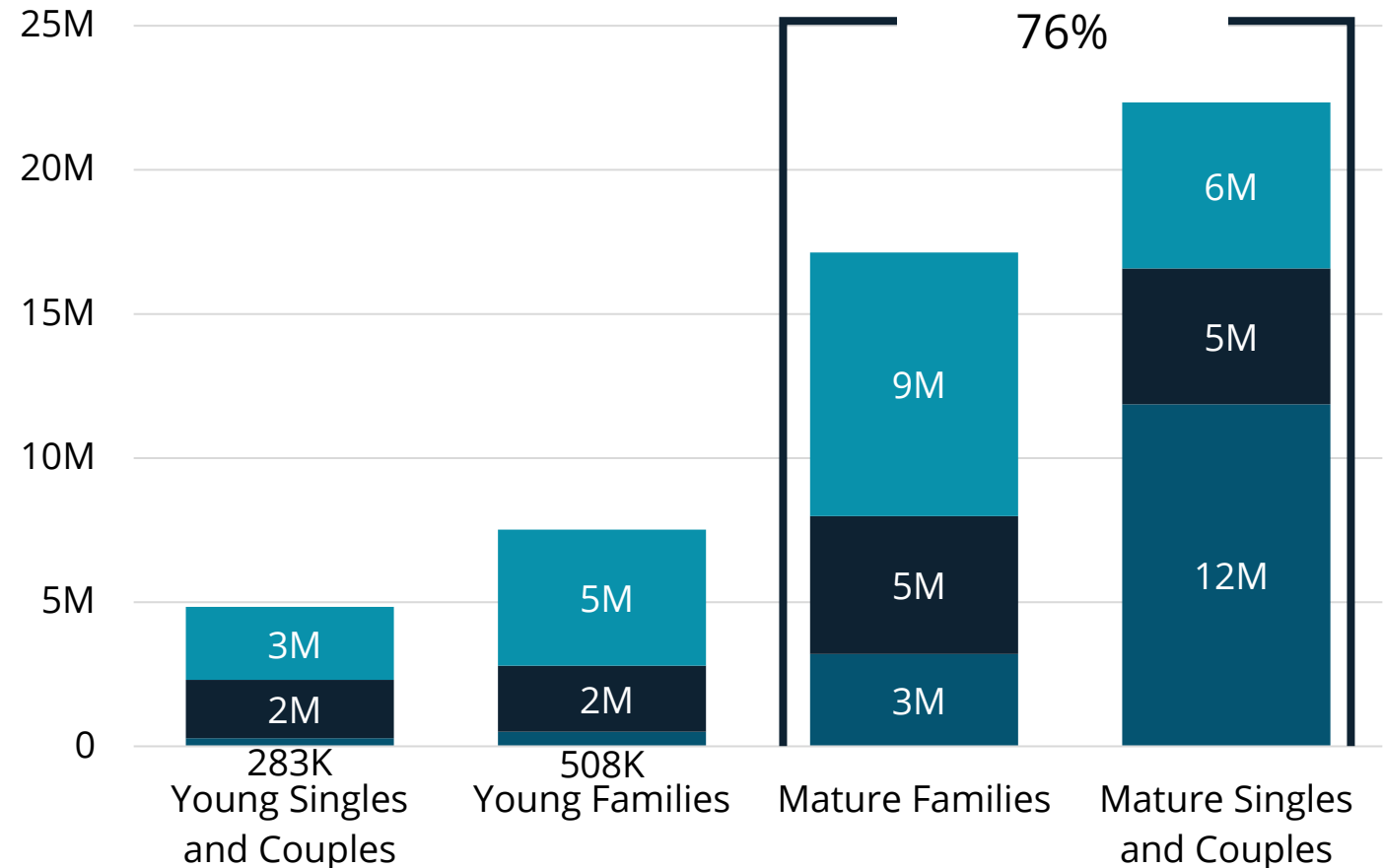
In which life stage segment is the opportunity the largest?

To determine which life stage segment will hold the largest future demand, we must start by looking at the base volume of households.

Mature households make up 76% of owned, mid- to high-income households. However, they are also more likely to be retired. Layering in the share that worked from home at some point during the pandemic, we see that Mature Families make up the largest group of households who worked from home, at 9 million.

Owned Households Earning \$50K+

■ Worked from home ■ Exclusively worked outside the home ■ Did not work



Sources: John Burns Real Estate Consulting, LLC, August 2020 survey of 1,242 respondents and calculations of Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey data via IPUMS-USA

Mature cohorts are also more likely to continue to work from home.

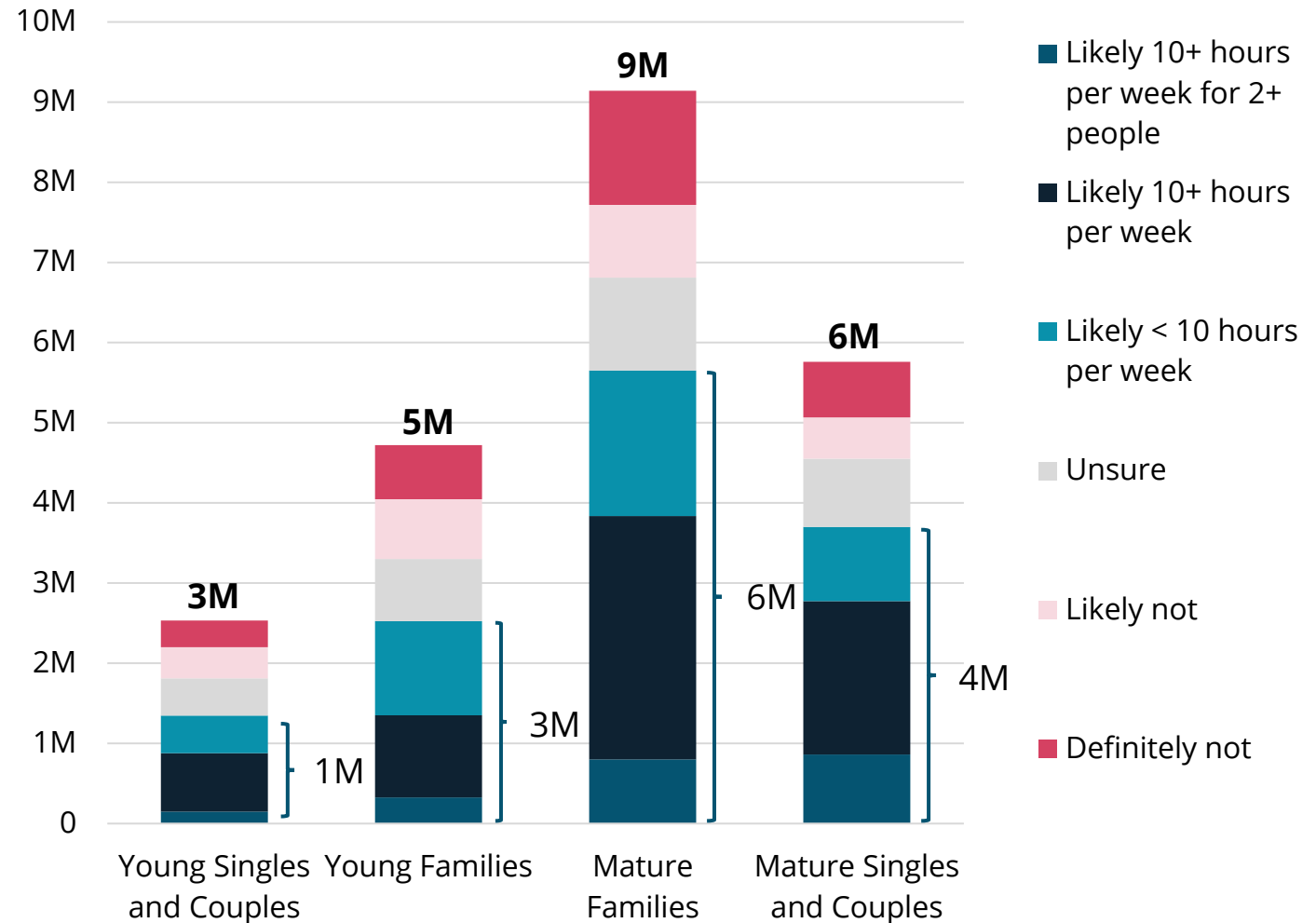
Stereotypes abound about tech-savvy young adults who are more inclined to work from home, yet it is actually the Mature life stage groups who are more likely to expect to work from home post-COVID-19 (62%–64%).

Combining their larger volume with their outsized likelihood to plan to work from home after COVID, Mature Families emerge as the largest cohort to work from home (6M households), followed by Mature Singles and Couples at 4M. Also interesting to note: Mature Singles and Couples are the most likely to have two members of the household working from home.

What is holding back those who responded, “Definitely not”?

For most, it is their employer or job. **Mature Families** are the exception, primarily held back by personal preference or other circumstances.

Owned Households Earning \$50K+ Who Worked from Home during COVID-19 by Likelihood to Continue

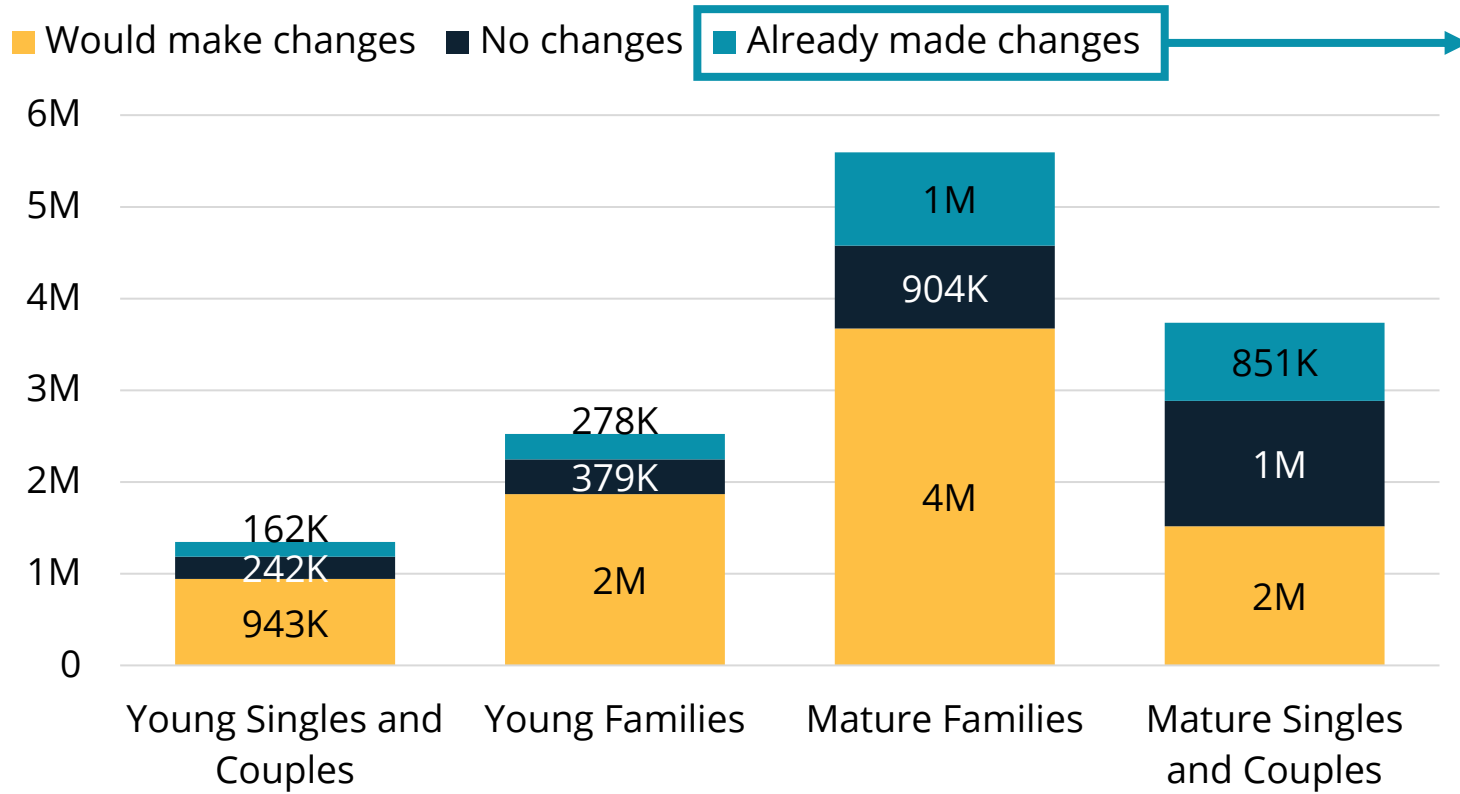


Sources: John Burns Real Estate Consulting, LLC, August 2020 survey of 1,242 respondents and calculations of Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey data via IPUMS-USA

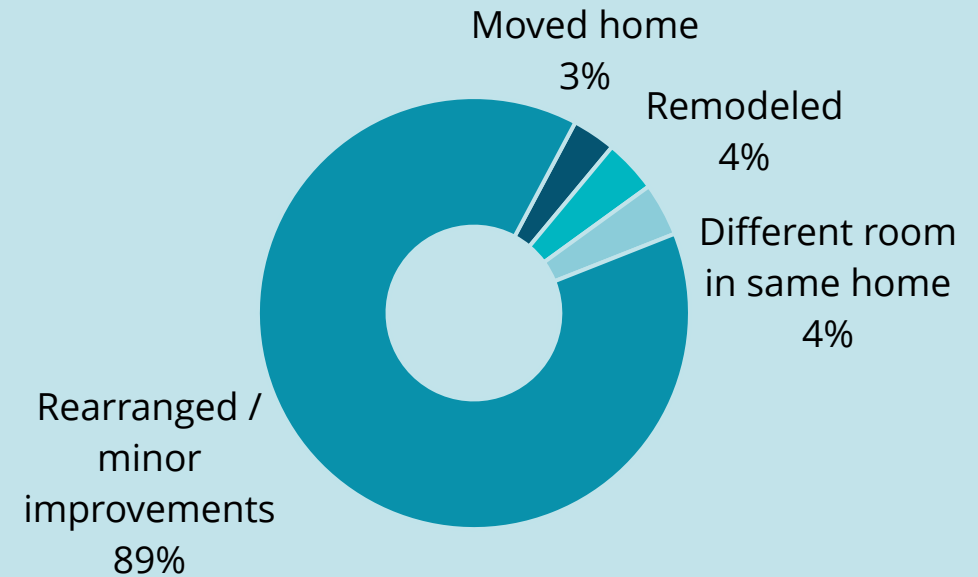
If continuing to work from home, families have the most to fix.

Excluding Mature Singles and Couples, the large majority of people who will likely work from home after COVID-19 will have to make some improvements to their space. Mature Families remain the clear leader in size, with almost 4M households planning to make changes. The relative contentment amongst Mature Singles and Couples (less than half need to adjust their space) makes Young Families a slightly larger cohort to target, despite their smaller household count overall.

Share Planning to Make Changes to Their Workspace if Continuing to Work from Home after the COVID-19 Pandemic Ends



For those who already made changes, most just made small improvements. Only 7% moved or remodeled. The changes made are distributed as follows:



Sources: John Burns Real Estate Consulting, LLC, August 2020 survey of 1,242 respondents and calculations of Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey data via IPUMS-USA

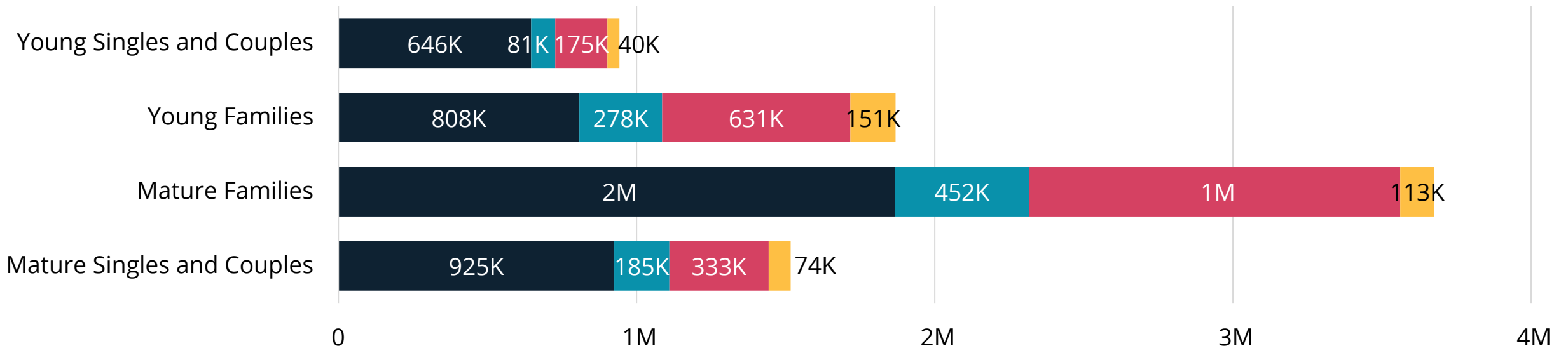
Young Families will be the top movers; Mature Families the top remodelers.

If continuing to work from home, most households plan to make only small improvements to their existing space. Larger-scale adjustments break down as follows: the largest “move” opportunity is Young Families (150K plan to move to improve their workspace) and the largest “remodel” opportunity is Mature Families (1.2M plan to remodel their workspace).

Other than life stage, there are two other variables at play: space and income. Urban respondents and upper-middle-class respondents (\$100K–\$125K income range) are more likely to plan to move and remodel.

Planned Workspace Changes if Continuing to Work from Home

■ Rearrange current space
 ■ Move to a different room in same home
 ■ Remodel current home
 ■ Move to a new home



Sources: John Burns Real Estate Consulting, LLC, August 2020 survey of 1,242 respondents and calculations of Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey data via IPUMS-USA



What **opportunities** has working from home created?

Understanding the Opportunities by Life Stage

Work-from-home experiences differed wildly by life stage. For this reason, we break apart our analysis by life stage cohort (see right) and examine:

Where they worked from home and their overall satisfaction—to understand their **current situation**

The top **benefits** reported by those who were happy with their space—to understand what we should keep doing and what marketing messages will resonate

Their top **pain points**—to understand the problems that they need solved and what key things they will be hunting for

LIFE STAGES



Young Singles and Couples

Young single or couple (under age 45) with no children in the household



Young Families

Family with children in the household, all under age 12



Mature Families

Family with children in the household, some (or all) older than age 12 (including adult children)



Mature Singles and Couples

Mature single or couple (age 45+) with no children in the household

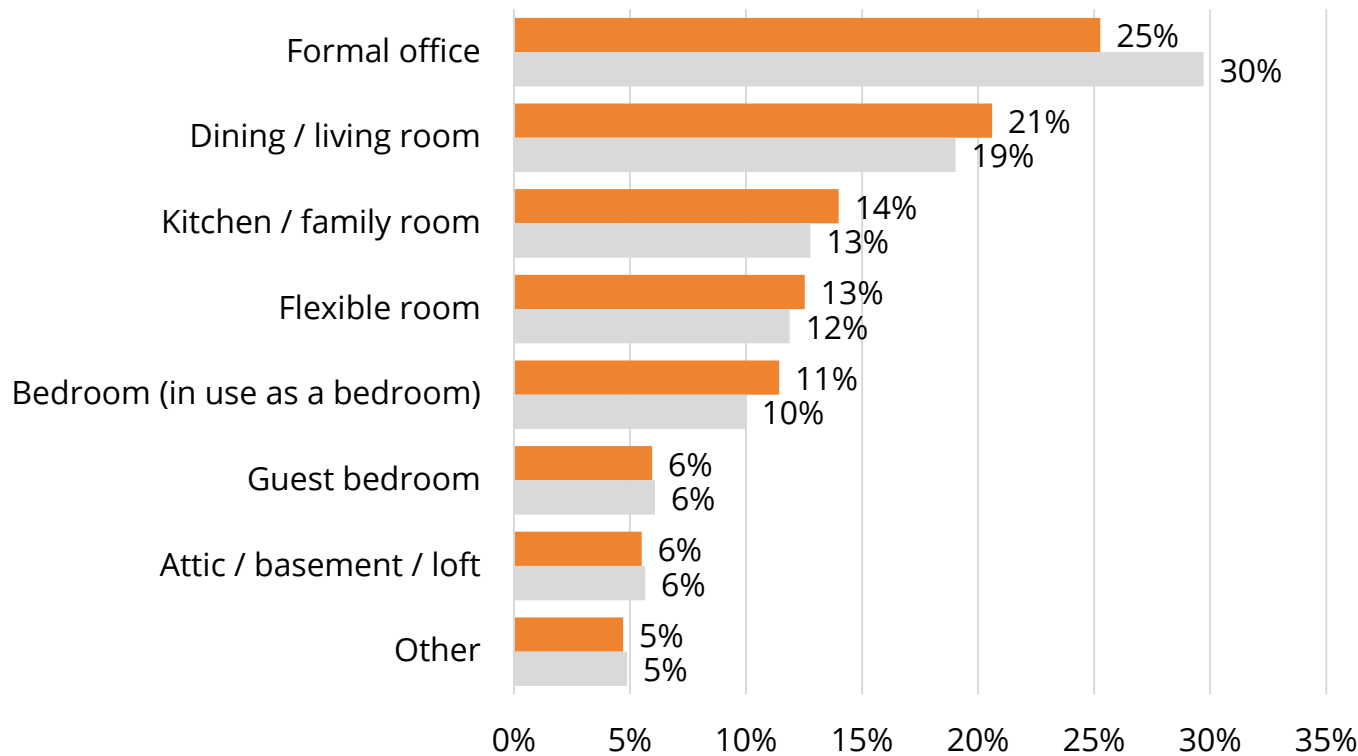


Young Singles and Couples

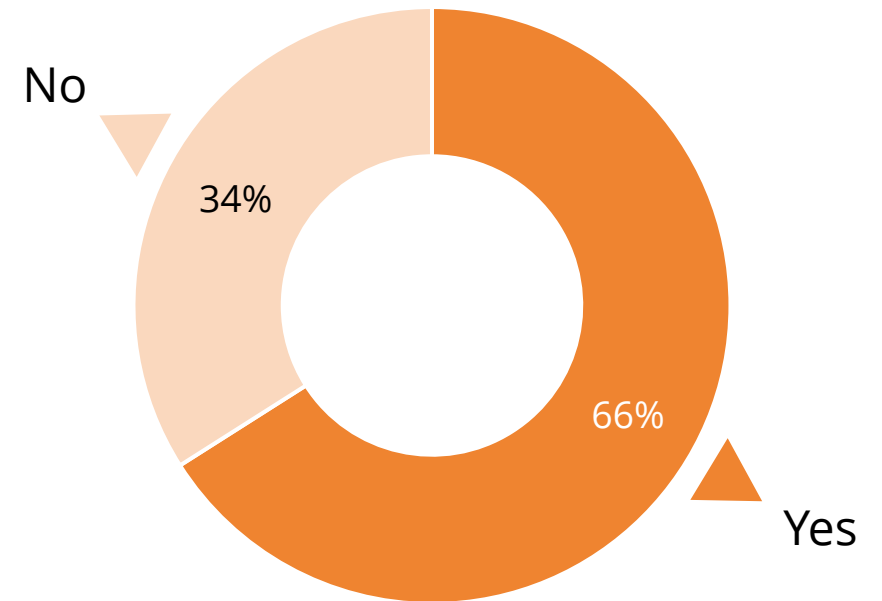
Young Singles and Couples

Young Singles and Couples are less likely than the national average to be working in a formal office and more likely to be using a common space or a room that is also used for another purpose. While more satisfied than family groups, two-thirds of this cohort would like to improve something about their work-from-home space.

In which location did you most regularly work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic?



Is there anything you would like to improve about your work-from-home space?



Benefits of Working from Home

YOUNG SINGLES AND COUPLES

Young Singles and Couples particularly enjoyed the coziness and comfort of working from home—including working in pajamas. Being more likely to have a cubicle at the office, they also enjoyed the ability to socialize on their own terms, busting the myth that young adults always want to work collaboratively. Being away from the office also provided them more freedom in scheduling, dress code, and work location.

What is their **favorite** thing about working from home?

1

Cozy comfort

“Small and cozy corner”

“It's in a nook—in a part of my bedroom, but in a corner tucked away.”

“Cozy and easy to work from as well as relax in. I love that it's near my kitchen and bath!”

2

Socialization on their terms

“Nobody bugged me.”

“No desk drive-bys”

“Separate room to close the door and be away from my partner who is also working from home”

3

Flexibility / freedom

“The flexibility and freedom of creating my own schedule”

“The ability to pick different areas of the house [to work]”

“Taking a walking meeting outdoors”

Benefits of Working from Home

YOUNG SINGLES AND COUPLES

Cozy + Options

If space does not permit, no need to force a large office for this group. Instead, tuck multiple smaller spaces around the home, allowing them to “spot hop.” Merchandise and market them with *coziness* in mind.

Beyond the 9 to 5

Flexible schedules were a key benefit for this group, signaling that they are not working a classic 9 to 5. Erratic schedules mean that lighting must be good day or night, and spaces must be adequately separated from bedrooms to avoid disturbing sleeping partners.

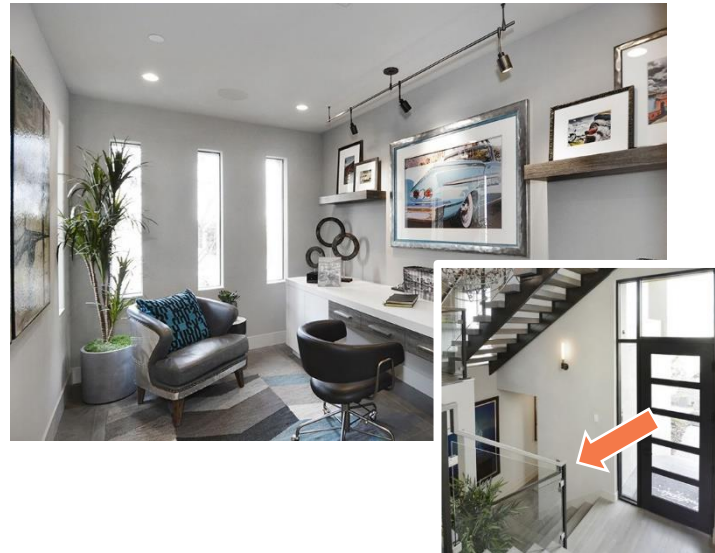
SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Flex area included in the hallway on the way to the main bedroom

In this project, Brookfield turned a hallway connecting the great room to the main bedroom into a quasi-retreat that holds a formalized workspace. Tucking the space down a hallway makes it feel cozier, and leaving the “retreat” outside the bedroom minimizes disturbances.

Camden at Playa Vista by Brookfield Residential
Stacked Flat in Playa Vista, CA



Office on ground floor below main living areas

Vu at McDonald Highlands exemplifies the ultimate private workspace. Christopher Homes creates separation without the closed-off feeling of a door by placing the office below the main living spaces. The space is open to the stairwell but exists on its own floor with only a guest suite. Windows open to the main road give light, while strategic choice of shape creates aesthetic interest and privacy.

Vu at McDonald Highlands by Christopher Homes
3-4 Story Duplexes in Henderson, NV

Pain Points for Separated Spaces

YOUNG SINGLES AND COUPLES

Young Singles and Couples who worked in a separated space (a space with a door—e.g., a formal office or a bedroom) were primarily frustrated by lighting issues and spotty internet connection.

Notable **complaints** about working from home:

1

Lighting / windows

“Lighting for Zoom meetings”

“Lack of windows”

“Poor lighting. The overhead light casts an orb above my head during calls.”

2

Connection issues

“Dedicated internet in the space would be great, instead of the same Wi-Fi for the entire house.”

“Need an additional outlet and will need additional ethernet port outlets.”

“I need to improve the Wi-Fi signal where the office is.”

Pain Points for Separated Spaces

YOUNG SINGLES AND COUPLES

Lighting

Young Singles and Couples are particularly conscious of their Zoom presence. Strategically placed windows (e.g., *in front* of the desk, not behind it) are the best option, but when they are not possible, suitable artificial light should be included and marketed.

Connection

Dead spots are unacceptable. Given this was a widespread pain point, buyers moving forward will be especially vigilant in making sure their home is well connected. Having enough ports/outlets in *all* the spaces they may work will be crucial as well.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Mini-office off main living area on second floor, with optional door

Volume over the entry is great, but when space is at a premium, a small workspace (about the size of a walk-in closet) works even better. Knowing their target buyer, Trumark created this plan to be a flexible solution for young professionals with in-laws that make extended visits. A ground-floor bedroom works as a primary formal office when there are no guests, but this mini-office can sub in when people do come to visit.

Boardwalk at Glass Bay by Trumark Homes
3-Story High-Density Detached Home in Newark, CA



Wi-Fi CERTIFIED™ homes

Lennar has begun rolling out homes with certification that they are free from dead spots. The Connected Home by Lennar boasts high-speed coverage with a commercial-grade network and full integration with Amazon Alexa included in the home. The program is managed by the Wi-Fi Alliance, a non-profit organization that certifies Wi-Fi products.

Pain Points for Common Spaces

YOUNG SINGLES AND COUPLES

While Young Singles and Couples were not dealing with distracting children, those working in common spaces still found the proximity of their partners to be distracting. They also struggled when they did not have a spot dedicated to work.

Notable **complaints** about working from home:

1

Not having a designated workspace

"It's really just a sofa and TV tray."

"No set office space, would like to have designated office where I can leave my documents."

"Was working at our kitchen table, so we could no longer really utilize the table for what it was made for: to have meals,"

2

Shared space

"My husband and I work in the same room, so when we are both on a call at the same time it is very noisy and hard to hear."

"I'd like to have an area that I can close off to limit sound so as not to be overheard when making calls."

"My wife uses the office, so [our] next house needs extra rooms."

Pain Points for Common Spaces

YOUNG SINGLES AND COUPLES

Well-Defined Spaces

Even if a home is too small for a separated office, it is still worth the cost and effort of properly defining the workspace. A niche used only for work allows them to get into the office mindset and provides a space for them to store work materials.

Secondary Spaces

While shared spaces worked okay for certain tasks, this group will be searching for a secondary space where they can retreat for calls.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Niche off the kitchen

Even with no formal office, Lofts at Haven includes a well-defined workspace with a built-in desk and window. Mattamy Homes reduces auditory distractions by placing the space off the kitchen, separating it from the great room/TV room with the staircase.

Lofts at Haven by Mattamy Homes

3-Story, High-Density Detached Home, in Chandler, AZ



Second-story informal office at the top of the stairs

Trellis at Escencia went for bed count over a formal office but still provided a functional workspace. This “tech deck,” with a built-in desk and view, sits on an oversized landing. While it is open to the bedrooms and stairwell, it is well separated from the main living areas downstairs. By using wraparound stairs that are tucked far down a hallway from the main living areas, Warmington Residential was able to muffle sound and block sight from below.

Trellis at Escencia by Warmington Residential

2-3-Story Detached Home in Rancho Mission Viejo, CA

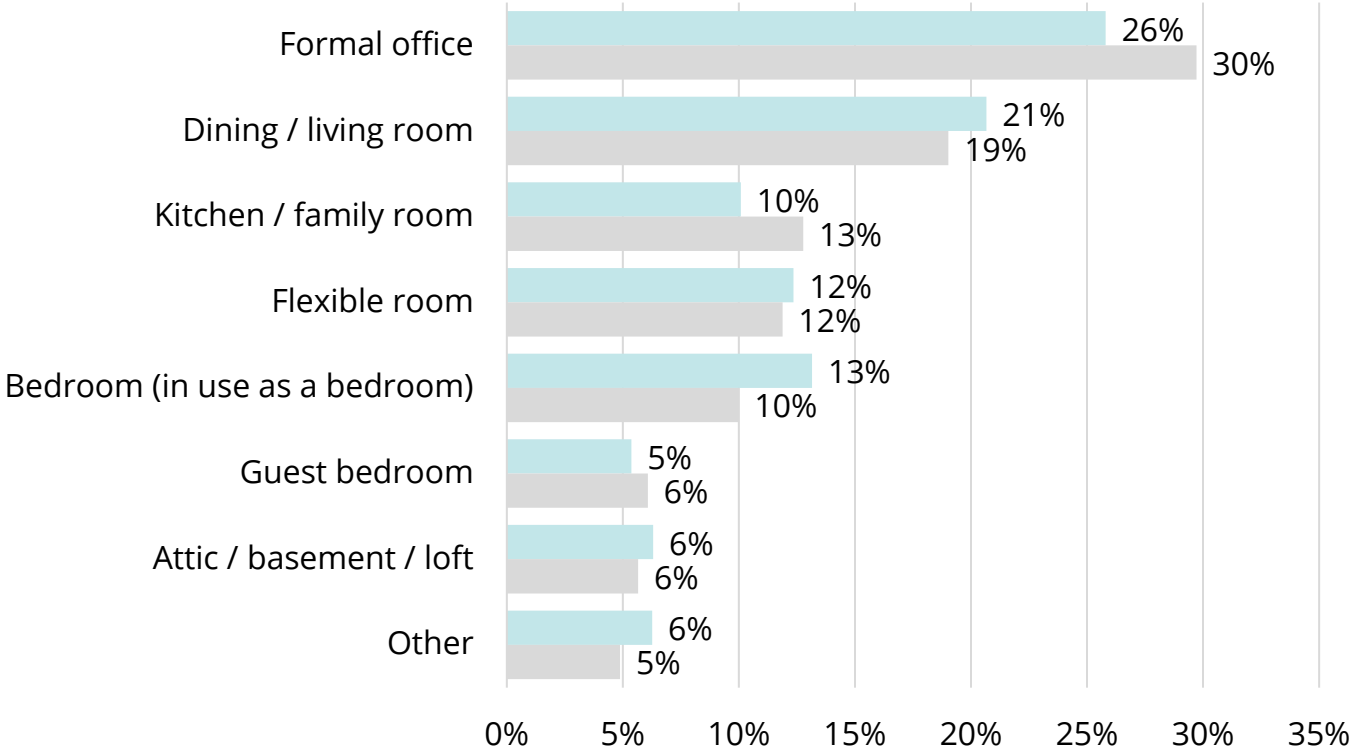


Young Families

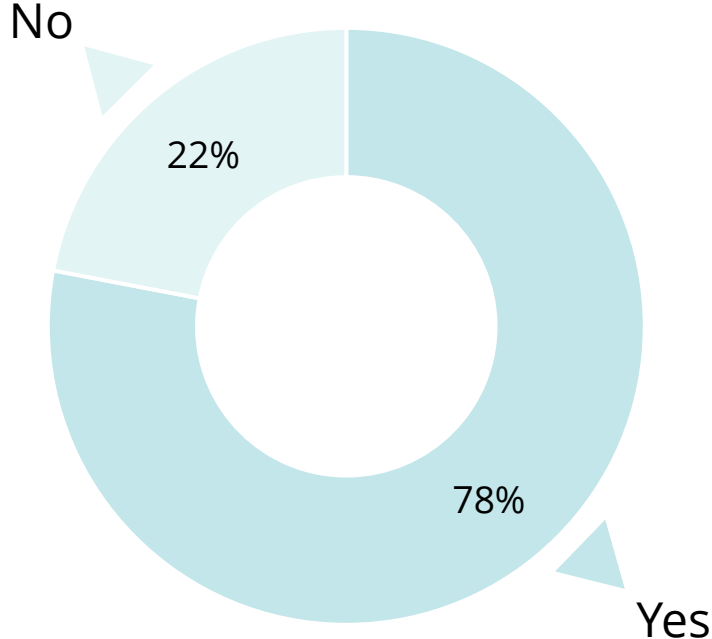
Young Families

Like the Young Singles and Couples, Young Families are less likely to have a formal home office. However, the kitchen/family room is a less viable option for them because of the kids, so they are hiding out anywhere: going to the bedrooms, attic/basement/loft, or some other place. Because of the lack of formal offices and inability to just plop down in the great room, 78% want to improve their WFH space, the largest share of all the life stage cohorts.

In which location did you most regularly work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic?



Is there anything you would like to improve about your work-from-home space?



Benefits of Working from Home

YOUNG FAMILIES

The kids are distracting, but they are also the best thing about working from home for Young Families. This group enjoys being tucked away when they need to focus, but also having the option to check in on the family and even get some chores done. Working from home also enables Young Families to enjoy slower-paced mornings, without the need to rush off to school, daycare, or work.

What is their **favorite** thing about working from home?

1

Spending more time with family

"I am able to get housework done and watch my toddler."

"My family was close by. If I had some down time, we could engage for a time, and I could go back to work when I needed to."

2

Being tucked away

"Tucked away from the noise in an upstairs room which is my office and occasionally my craft room. Ample space to not feel cramped and a window for good natural light"

"It's secluded and quiet with plenty of room and desk space."

3

Slower-paced mornings

"Not having to rush to get ready in the morning"

"Watching the news and drinking coffee "

Benefits of Working from Home

YOUNG FAMILIES

Options, Near and Far

Young Families report that proximity to their family is a key benefit of working from home. If able to include multiple workspaces, consider positioning one (especially if soundproofed) off a main living area that flexes between private and open (e.g., barn door or glass). If working on a task that allows it, this enables them to work while keeping an eye on family.

Coffee Nook

While they don't want the coffee bar retreat (they are costly and young kids don't wait for you to have coffee in your bedroom), Young Families are getting a taste for slower mornings with their families. Consider a charming breakfast nook where they can sip coffee in comfort while engaging with their family.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Optional glass-walled study off foyer

Aside from being stunning to look at, the glass-walled study gives young parents the ability to maintain visual contact with family members while working. This solution works well for those who crave the brightness and connection of working in a common space but need to shut out the noise. Facing a wall with large windows, the office also provides great views to the yard.

Luxe at Stapleton by Infinity Home Collection
2-Story Single-Family Detached Home in Denver, CO



Breakfast nook

Despite lacking formality, the breakfast nook at Waverly occupies enough square footage to have a sense of place. By including a cushioned bench, Brookfield Residential makes the space look comfortable and inviting for a morning cup of coffee while snuggling your children. The space is also open to the great room, allowing parents to keep a watchful eye on the family.

Waverly at New Haven by Brookfield Residential
Clustered Single-Family Detached Home in Ontario Ranch, CA

Pain Points for Separated Spaces

YOUNG FAMILIES

When full concentration is required, a door is often not enough for Young Families. Their workspace must also be physically removed from common areas and not easily accessible. Young Families will also be sensitive to making sure their workstation has sufficient space, as it was a pain point during this period.

Notable **complaints** about working from home:

1

Too close to kid spaces

"It is close to where my daughter sleeps and is dark."

"I want to renovate it and make it less accessible to my kids."

"It's too close to the kitchen, so it was always noisy."

2

More space

"More space and more amenities usually found in an office"

"I wish my home office was bigger. I have a lot of computer equipment, so it is currently crowded."

"I need a larger room."

Pain Points for Separated Spaces

YOUNG FAMILIES

Distance

While *options* for togetherness are fantastic, there must be a workspace physically removed from common areas or children's rooms. Solutions could include separating the office on a different level from main living spaces, placing the office within another room to create two layers of separation (e.g., master retreat), or tucking the space down a less trafficked hallway.

Soundproofing

If physical proximity is a must, soundproofing is most crucial to this group.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Main bedroom retreat with barn doors

Harlow's main bedroom retreat maximizes separation from common space with two layers of doors: the main bedroom door and a set of barn doors on the retreat itself. This layering of privacy creates more soundproofing and an additional barrier from children entering the space unwelcomed.

Harlow by Edward Andrews Homes
3-Story Townhomes in Alpharetta, GA

Ground-floor media room off the foyer

Harlow features another inspiring workspace in a separate plan. Here, Edward Andrew Homes included a media room, merchandised as an office. Sufficient separation is achieved by placing the space on the ground floor, with main living spaces above on the second floor. Since the saying "out of sight, out of mind" is especially applicable when it comes to young children, an attached bathroom ensures that minimal trips outside the office area are needed.

Harlow by Edward Andrews Homes
3-Story Townhomes in Alpharetta, GA

Pain Points for Common Spaces

YOUNG FAMILIES

Unsurprisingly, Young Families working in common spaces desire more separation from the kids. But a formal office isn't always an option, either because of cost or the need to keep an eye on children, so a workspace in a common area needs to be strategically defined. Storage is also key, as they do not want to leave their "work stuff" out for their children to access.

Notable **complaints** about working from home:

1

Noise during calls

"I work the most often in our living room/dining room so that I can multi-task. Sometimes the background noise interrupts my video calls."

"I always need to go to another room for calls/conferences and such."

2

Organization

"There isn't a dedicated place for me to store everything."

"Have to clean up 'stuff' daily."

"Cluttered and too open"

"I wish I had space for an office where my kids couldn't touch my things."

Pain Points for Common Spaces

YOUNG FAMILIES

Hidden Spots

When there is no door to create privacy, strategic layouts can help. Workspaces tucked behind partial walls or around the corner from main spaces can balance the connection needed (or desired) with a little more privacy.

Cabinetry

A large downside to working in common spaces is the chore of packing up and organizing work items. This issue is compounded when items left out run the risk of being tampered with by young children. Sufficient cabinetry located next to the workspace can help mitigate this problem.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Informal dining space

While a ground-level office is the private option, buyers at Lighthouse who would prefer to get work done in the informal dining space can leverage the plentiful storage that runs along the side of the room to keep their work materials organized and within reach. The space also offers a view of the deck, which can be seen on the right-hand side of the image.

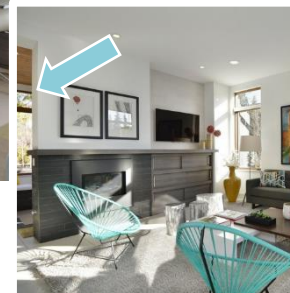
Lighthouse by Taylor Morrison
3-Story Single-Family Detached Home in Costa Mesa, CA



Study tucked behind the family room

One smart way to create door-less privacy in a way that feels fun and unique is to tuck the room behind a partial wall. Add to the intrigue by placing their study behind a partial wall that includes a dual-sided fireplace. Aside from the excitement of finding a full room behind what looks to be the outer boundary of the family room, the hidden nature of the room creates added privacy without feeling closed off.

Evoke at Issaquah Highlands by Quadrant Homes
2-Story Single-Family Detached Home in Issaquah, WA



Pain Points for Common Spaces

YOUNG FAMILIES

Much like sliding glass doors give us seamless connection to the outdoors when desired, we wondered if pocket doors could provide an elegant solution to the tradeoff between open layouts and privacy when needed. We spoke to our architect and builder clients and found that this underutilized feature is held back by one thing: they are bad from a warranty standpoint.

Because they are more complicated, with greater potential for breaking, pocket doors are typically only considered in small floor plans with tight spaces. Moving forward, we wonder if there is opportunity to build a more warranty-proof version that could be leveraged to make common spaces seamlessly flex between open and private.

ARE POCKET DOORS A SOLUTION?



In their Z.E.N Collection, Thrive Home Builders separated their study with glass-panel pocket doors. While this is a more traditional application, we wonder if there is opportunity to similarly section off a hallway or common space too.

Z.E.N. Collection at Stapleton by Thrive Home Builders
Single-Family Detached Home in Denver, CO



At Stonewalk Collection at Stepping Stone, a game room—merchandised as a kid's study space—flexes between open and private with optional glass barn doors. While not a pocket door, this solution embraces the same look and feel as a retractable sliding glass door used to open a great room to the yard.

Stonewalk Collection at Stepping Stone by Shea Homes
1-2-Story Single-Family Detached Luxury Home in Parker, CO

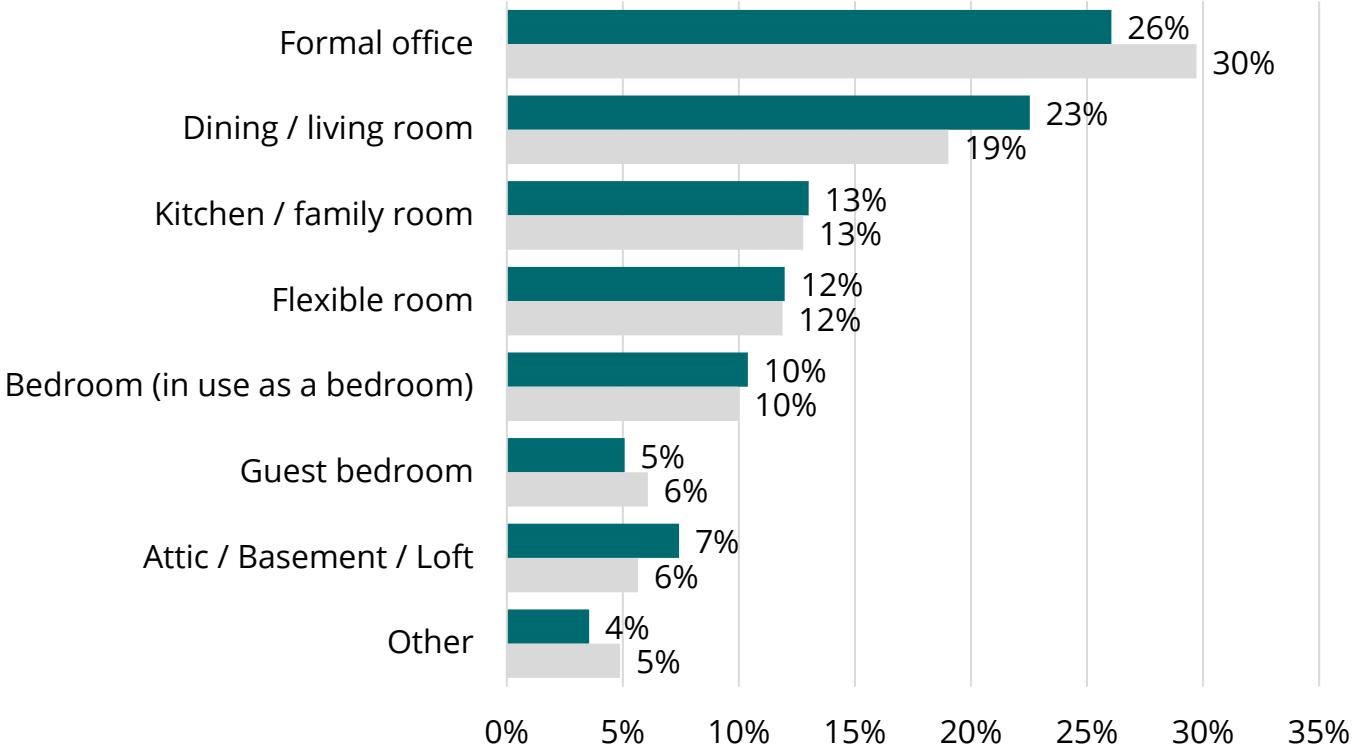


Mature Families

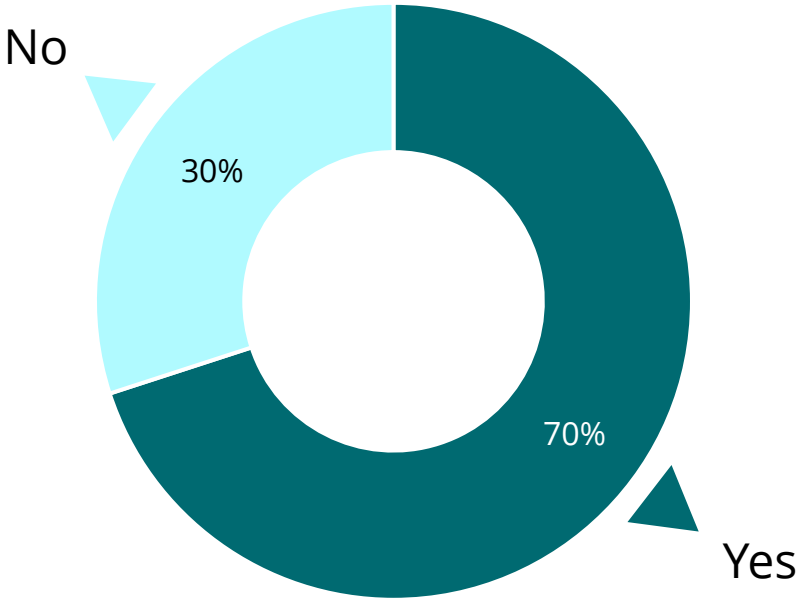
Mature Families

With older kids, Mature Families are better able to work in semi-open spaces like the dining room or living room. They are also more likely to be making use of an attic, basement, or loft. 70% want to improve their space, fewer than the Young Families but more than Young Singles and Couples.

In which location did you most regularly work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic?



Is there anything you would like to improve about your work-from-home space?



Benefits of Working from Home

MATURE FAMILIES

For the Mature Families, working from home at its best is a more-productive, less-stressful, alternative to the office. Peace and comfort were top benefits, as was uninterrupted worktime.

What is their **favorite** thing about working from home?

1

Peaceful

"I have a big open window where I can look out to my backyard and see the trees all day long. It is very peaceful, and it relaxes me."

"No set work schedule; more shared family time; less stress"

"I can look out the windows and see trees and it is quiet."

2

Productive

"Heads-down time to get things done without interruptions"

"I have a TV, radio, and refrigerator in here, so I don't have to leave very often."

3

Comfort of "home"

"My own surroundings and being able to see my family more"

"It is quiet and personal."

Benefits of Working from Home

MATURE FAMILIES

Nature

Mature Families want their office space to help them remain relaxed and peaceful. Large windows with views, or even direct access to a yard or balcony, give the office a uniquely luxurious feel and allow them to recharge.

Self-Sufficient Spaces

Less interested in “spot hopping,” Mature Families tend to hunker down in their designated workspace. Thus, this group enjoys having a more self-sufficient space with everything they need (e.g., refreshments or a bathroom) close by.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Formal office off the entry, connected to a central courtyard

When designing large luxury homes, the decision to include an office is simple. However, The Estates at Del Sur elevates the office by connecting it to an interior courtyard with a slider, providing ample light and a pleasant connection to nature. The courtyard also stands between the office and the main living areas, maximizing privacy.

The Estates at Del Sur by Standard Pacific Homes
2-Story Single-Family Detached Luxury Home in San Diego



Formal office off the hallway to the main bedroom

By opting an attached powder room and wet bar, Pardee Homes creates the ultimate self-sufficient office. Strategic placement also creates great privacy. The uniquely H-shaped house—split by a courtyard—allows the den to be in a separate wing of the house from the main living areas. Only those traveling to the main bedroom would encounter the space.

Beacon at Sundance by Pardee Homes
1-2-Story Single-Family Detached Home in Beaumont, CA

Pain Points for Separated Spaces

MATURE FAMILIES

Mature families working in separated spaces report that they want to be able to enjoy the space they are in, with updated decor and access to nature. Those working in a space not solely dedicated for work found it hard to achieve good work/life balance without being appropriately separated from non-workspaces.

Notable **complaints** about working from home:

1

Needs to be more enjoyable to be in

"Wanted more immediate access to outdoors areas"

"It needs to look happier."

"I want to renovate it because it is not presently up to my taste."

"I want to remove carpet and add wood floors."

2

Work/life balance

"I would like my office room to be totally for my office purpose only. It would be nice to remove my work from my relaxation space."

"Unable to separate work from home, so I would like a space that is predominately for work purpose."

"Better organization and a stress-free environment/feng shui"

Pain Points for Separated Spaces

MATURE FAMILIES

Enjoyable

Thinking beyond just space and privacy, Mature Families want their workspace to be somewhere they *enjoy* being. Look matters more to this group, so expect them to pay attention to the finishing touches and decor.

Segregated

When Mature Families sign off for the day, they want to leave their work behind them. Properly segregating workspaces from relaxation spaces will be high on their priority list.

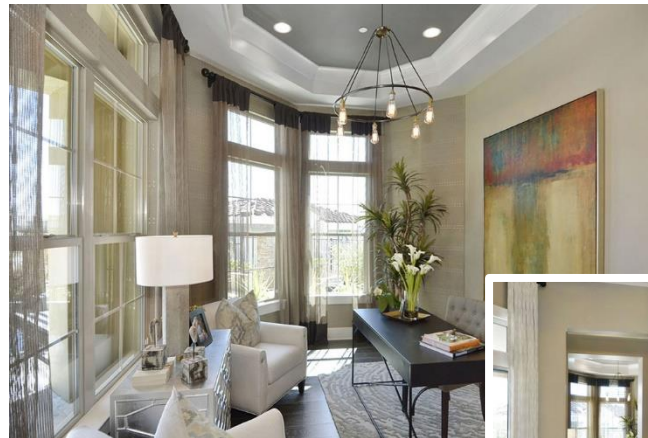
SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Retreat workspace in main bedroom

Workspaces within main retreats are often too open to the bedroom, making it more difficult to fully disconnect. At The Grove, Granite Bay, the retreat is set up as a niche, located off the main bedroom through an archway (versus completely inside it). Direct connection to the covered outdoor room and yard enhances enjoyability.

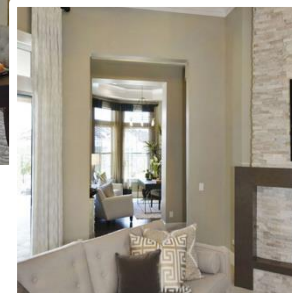
The Grove, Granite Bay by New Home Company
1-2-Story Single-Family Detached Home in Granite Bay, CA



Flex space connected to the great room by a vestibule

While not technically separated by a door, the short vestibule leading to the flex space relieves a core pain point for Mature Families: it creates a transition space for them to move between the “work” or “home” headspace. To enter the main suite next door, one would travel through a secondary rounded vestibule, lengthening the transition space further.

Bellissima by Monterey Homes
1-Story Single-Family Luxury Detached Home in Cave Creek, AZ



Pain Points for Common Spaces

MATURE FAMILIES

Their kids may be older, but Mature Families who worked in common spaces still struggle with a need for more separation. Much like younger families, they also need enough room in their workspace to spread out.

Notable **complaints** about working from home:

1

Separation

"I feel that I have to share the space too much with others. I wish to have my own space."

"I need more privacy and to be away from household members."

"Sitting at the kitchen/dining room table and having the kids all around during the day"

2

Cramped

"I would like to have a bigger space to work more effectively."

"The room is not big enough and needs lots of shelves."

"I don't have enough space on my desk."

"It's quite small so I wasn't able to move around a lot."

Pain Points for Common Spaces

MATURE FAMILIES

Thoughtful Definition

Mature Families working in common spaces still want enough definition to feel like they are in their own workspace. Consider how defining features (e.g. a niche or pony wall) can turn unused space in the great room into an informal secondary workspace.

Counter Continuation

The Mature Family's plea for more space does not refer to empty office space. They specifically need room to put stuff. Consider continuing counter space so they can have ample space for all their work materials.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Open niche off the great room

While open to the great room, David Weekley gives a sense of place to their alcove by including a partial wall. While the home contains a formal study for when full privacy is desired, the alcove is thoughtfully buffered from the main living areas by a breakfast nook. Through the partial wall, built-in desk, and seating, the space balances great connection to the home with subtle definition.

Liberty Branch at The Woodlands by David Weekley Homes
1-2-Story Single-Family Detached Luxury in Woodlands, TX



Secondary office niche off the main bedroom hallway

The "mail center" at Mainhouse is a case study in storage. Counterspace and cabinetry run the perimeter of the space, providing abundant opportunities to spread out. The plan's creative horseshoe-shaped layout also gives the mail center additional privacy. Rather than being located off a common space, the mail center is located up the U of the home toward the main bedroom.

Mainhouse by Insignia by CityVentures
1-Story Single-Family Detached Luxury Home in Encinitas, CA

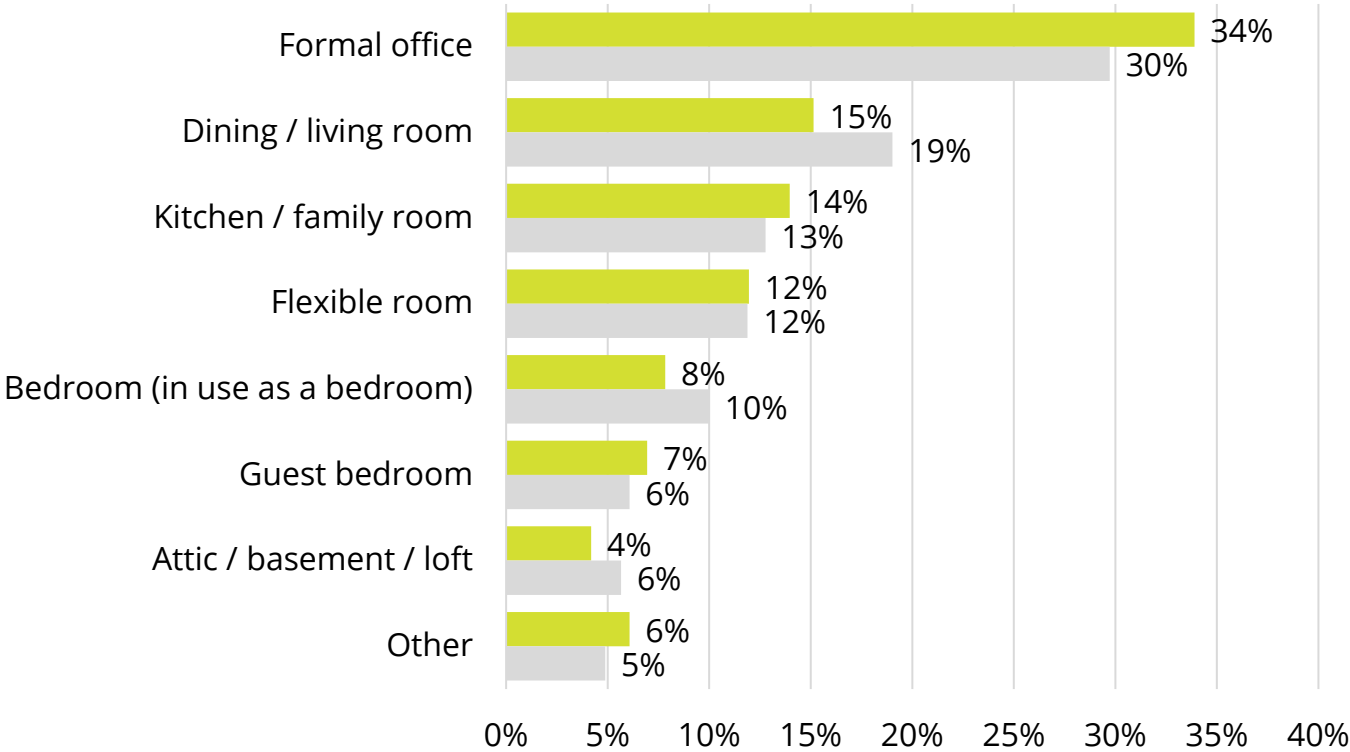


Mature Singles and Couples

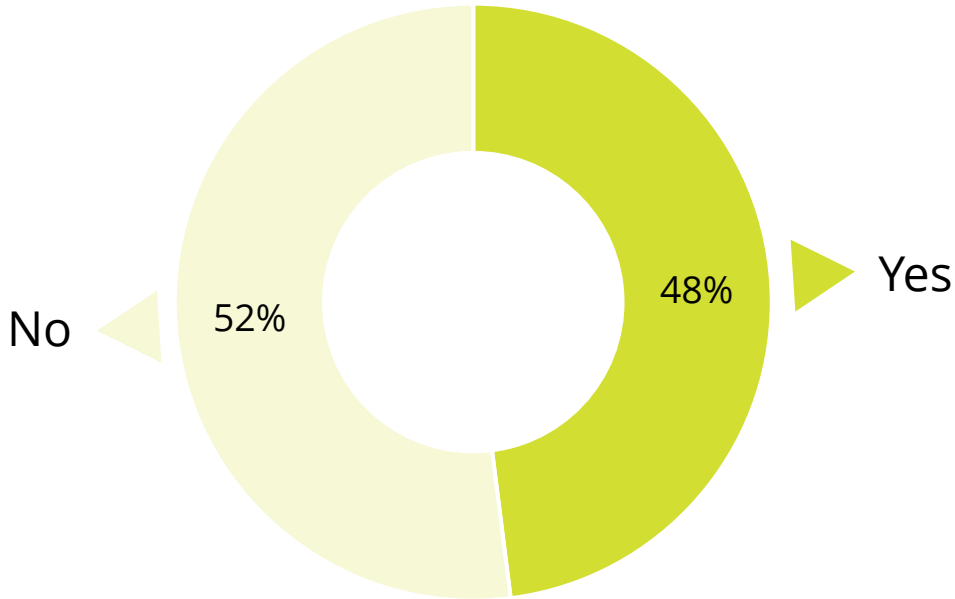
Mature Singles and Couples

The most likely to have a formal office (34% worked in one) or a guest bedroom to work in, it is no surprise that this cohort is the only one that is predominately happy with their current space. With no kids at home to worry about, they are also more able to work in the kitchen/family room if they choose. Not even half have improvements to make.

In which location did you most regularly work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic?



Is there anything you would like to improve about your work-from-home space?



Benefits of Working from Home

MATURE SINGLES AND COUPLES

Mature Singles and Couples who did not need to improve their work-from-home space primarily enjoyed three things: being around their pets and/or partners, having a personalized space that fits their exact wants and needs, and having a great connection to light and nature.

What is their **favorite** thing about working from home?

1

Togetherness

"My dog appreciated the company."

"Being home with my wife, allowing for more bonding time together."

"[I was] close to my husband and got to share space with my dog."

2

Personalized

"I enjoyed hooking my computer up to the 55" HD TV. It made face-to-face calls so much nicer. And I could show text in a much larger font, which was surprisingly useful a number of times."

"The comfort of working in my own home surrounded by 'me stuff.'"

"It's set up with my choice of items in background."

3

Connection to light and nature

"It gives me a beautiful view of the outside, so I don't feel closed in."

"My phone, computer, and desk face the window where I can see my driveway, my flower garden, and the road with vehicles passing by. It is a nice view, sunshine or rain."

"My work-from-home space is set up next to a window so that I can get natural light and look out the window once in a while."

Benefits of Working from Home

MATURE SINGLES AND COUPLES

Pet Spaces

Mature Singles and Couples immensely enjoyed the opportunity to be with their pets while working, highlighting an opportunity to design and merchandise spaces with pets in mind.

Customization

A moderate level of personalization will resonate with this group, as they enjoy being able to customize their workspace to meet their exact needs. Merchandising the space with more personal items (e.g., family photos or handmade artwork) will remind them that this is a space where they can be surrounded by the things they love.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Oversized laundry room

Located next to the den, this oversized laundry room with an intriguing L-shaped layout creates a great secondary workspace. A large window over the desk turns the space from a laundry dungeon to an enjoyable space, and an adjacent powder room boosts convenience. By converting some of the lower cabinets to a dog bed area and food bowl drawer, Shea Homes appeals to these shoppers who enjoyed working from home with their pet.

Creekside Collection, Trilogy Lake Norman by Shea Homes
1-2-Story Single-Family Detached Age-Qualified in Denver, NC



Separate office on lower level

While not designed for mature buyers, this office includes a key desire of the Mature Singles and Couples group: it's dog friendly by opening directly to a ground-floor outdoor area. Not only does this provide fantastic light coming toward the desk, it allows the owner to work with their furry friend, letting them in and out of the yard area without having to trek across the house.

Heights at Promontory by New Home Company
2-3-Story Cluster Townhomes in San Diego

Pain Points for Separated Spaces

MATURE SINGLES AND COUPLES

Mature Singles and Couples who worked in separated spaces typically had the basics, with enough space and enough privacy. What they are seeking now is more built-in options for storage and hiding cords/clutter and the “extras” that make a workspace truly comfortable, like separate temperature regulation and a television.

Notable **complaints** about working from home:

1

Storage

“Just need a creative way I can neatly organize cords and digital tools.”

“I need to add shelving and space to set up printers and scanners. It needs to be better organized.”

“A lack of storage space. I want to reduce the clutter.”

“Technology setup has too many wires everywhere making it hard to keep clean.”

2

Uncomfortable

“Temperature is hard to control and the ventilation is not great.”

“Better air conditioning”

“Would prefer a mini fridge and a working TV.”

“I need to have a television in my office.”

Pain Points for Separated Spaces

MATURE SINGLES AND COUPLES

Storage

Storage was a major pain point for this group, and simple cabinetry will not solve it. Mature Singles and Couples need options to help control cord clutter and ample space for their documents and equipment.

Comfort Additions

Mature Singles and Couples require their space to be comfortable. Additions like separate temperature control will be well received. Televisions were also a popular request from this group, highlighting an opportunity to merchandise one.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION

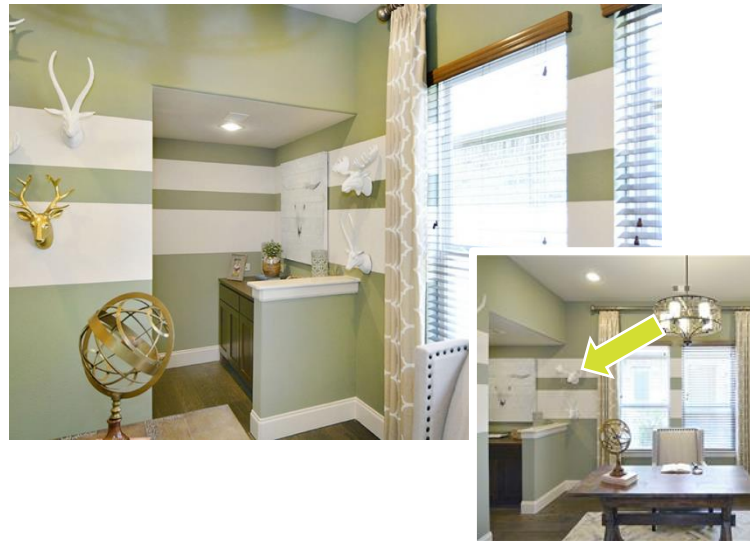


Second-floor office inside a casita

It does not get much more private than this. Located on the second floor in a casita only accessible from an exterior staircase or a balcony attached to a recreational room, this casita merchandised as an office takes its occupant into a completely different realm. With views off the back of the house, an optional wet bar, and an attached bathroom, the casita contains everything one could need or want.

Banyon Collection, Isles of Collier Preserve by Minto Communities

1-2-Story Single-Family Detached Home in Naples, FL



Optional study off the foyer

At Vivace, Shea's optional study includes a unique niche that Shea Homes calls the "Resource Center." This niche gives the study much-needed additional storage opportunities. The hidden nature of the niche also prevents the storage from creating visual clutter. With storage top of mind, this thoughtful addition will indicate to buyers that Shea takes storage spaces seriously.

Vivace 60' Series by Shea Homes

1-2 Story Single-Family Detached Home in Spring, TX

Pain Points for Common Spaces

MATURE SINGLES AND COUPLES

While not to the extent of the other life stage cohorts, distraction is still an issue among Mature Singles and Couples. Working adjacent to main traffic patterns in the home does not work well, and some level of privacy is still valued. Desk space is also incredibly important to this group, particularly space for equipment like printers.

Notable **complaints** about working from home:

1

Distractions

“Both my husband and I work from home now, so we share an office. We also have a really bad, noisy neighbor. We could greatly benefit from soundproofing.”

“I have a small corner of the family room that is not very quiet or private, which makes concentrating at times very difficult.”

“In an open area where another family member often watches TV”

2

Space for equipment

“I need a better desk and more space for both the desk and my equipment. I would also like to have more space for office supplies that I use throughout the day.”

“I need more room for my printer.”

Pain Points for Common Spaces

MATURE SINGLES AND COUPLES

Open but Distant

While they enjoyed togetherness, Mature Singles and Couples still found themselves getting distracted when too close in proximity. Semi-private spaces with slats or interior windows can aid in privacy. Placing the workspace far from the TV room will help as well.

Equipment

Much like the kitchen needs thoughtful appliance spaces, the home office should carefully house our office equipment. Mature Singles and Couples were especially sensitive to a lack of space for their printers.

SOLUTIONS & INSPIRATION



Den off the foyer

At Vista Dorado, Shea uses large cutouts to open the den to the foyer. Through this, the den accomplishes two commonly-cited benefits of working in common spaces: openness and brightness. By locating the den far away from main living areas, the openness of the den does necessitate distractions.

Vista Dorado by Shea Homes
1-2-Story Single-Family Detached Luxury Home in Brentwood, CA



Secondary space tucked into stairs off the owner's entry

In addition to a separate den, Miller & Smith made use of the space under the stairs by tucking in a small informal workspace. While not sufficiently large to be a primary space, we can find inspiration in the way that the stairs form a barrier between the space and the TV room to boost auditory privacy.

Birchwood Courtyard Homes by Miller & Smith
1-2-Story Attached, Age Qualified in Brambleton, VA

Contact



Mikaela Sharp

Manager, Trends and Innovation

msharp@realestateconsulting.com

(949) 870-1203



Jenni Lantz

Senior Manager, DesignLens

jlantz@realestateconsulting.com

(720) 328-1530



Anja Seng

Research Analyst

aseng@realestateconsulting.com

(949) 870-1200

Stay tuned for our next report, which will cover survey results on the work-from-home **features** and **layouts** that homeowners desire most.