



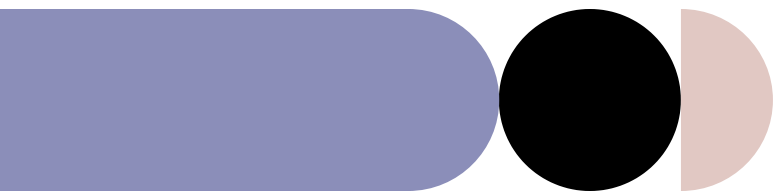
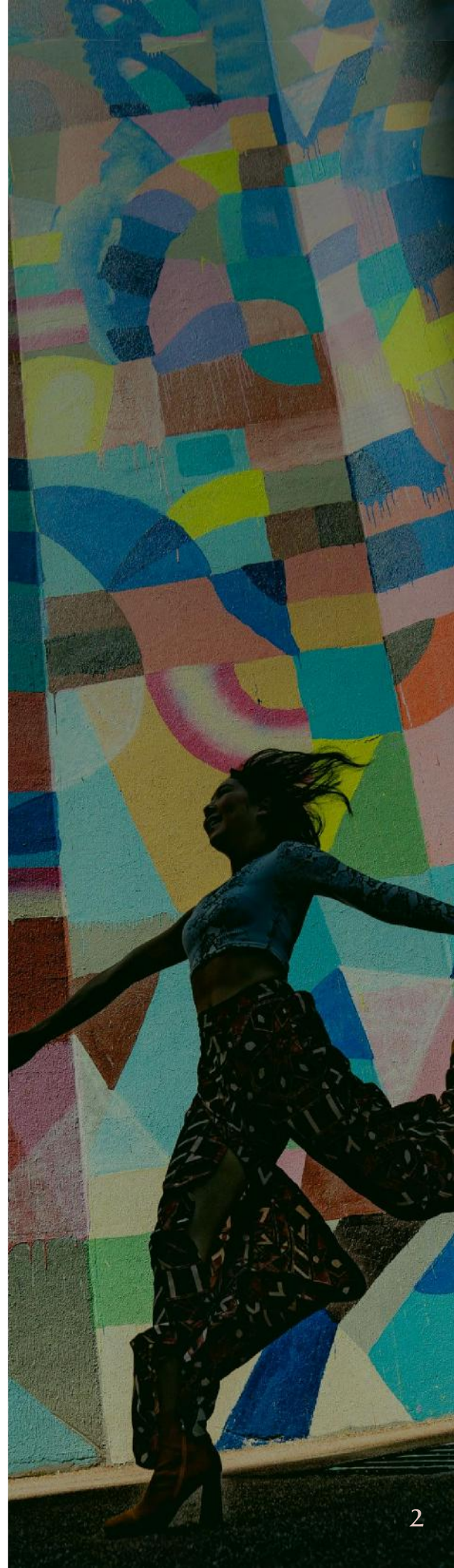
Rapport 2023

Uncovering the Hidden Struggles: Examining Remote Work Challenges and Burnout Risk for Women in the Modern Workplace

Report: 1/2
Beatburnout.eu
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Table of Contents

- 03 About the study
- 04 Why women?
- 06 Key findings at glance
- 08 The Five Dimensions & the 15 challenges
- 10 Regional Disparities Revealed by Survey Responses
- 11 The Social Dimension
- 19 The Personal Dimension
- 28 The Cultural Dimension
- 36 The Planning Dimension
- 44 The Practical Dimension
- 50 Further development
- 53 Creators of the BeatBurnout project
- 54 References



About the study

In this comprehensive study, we delve into the experiences of 283 women from eight different European countries, including Austria, Sweden, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Greece, Poland, and Czech Republic, uncovering 15 critical aspects that influence mental health and well-being at work.

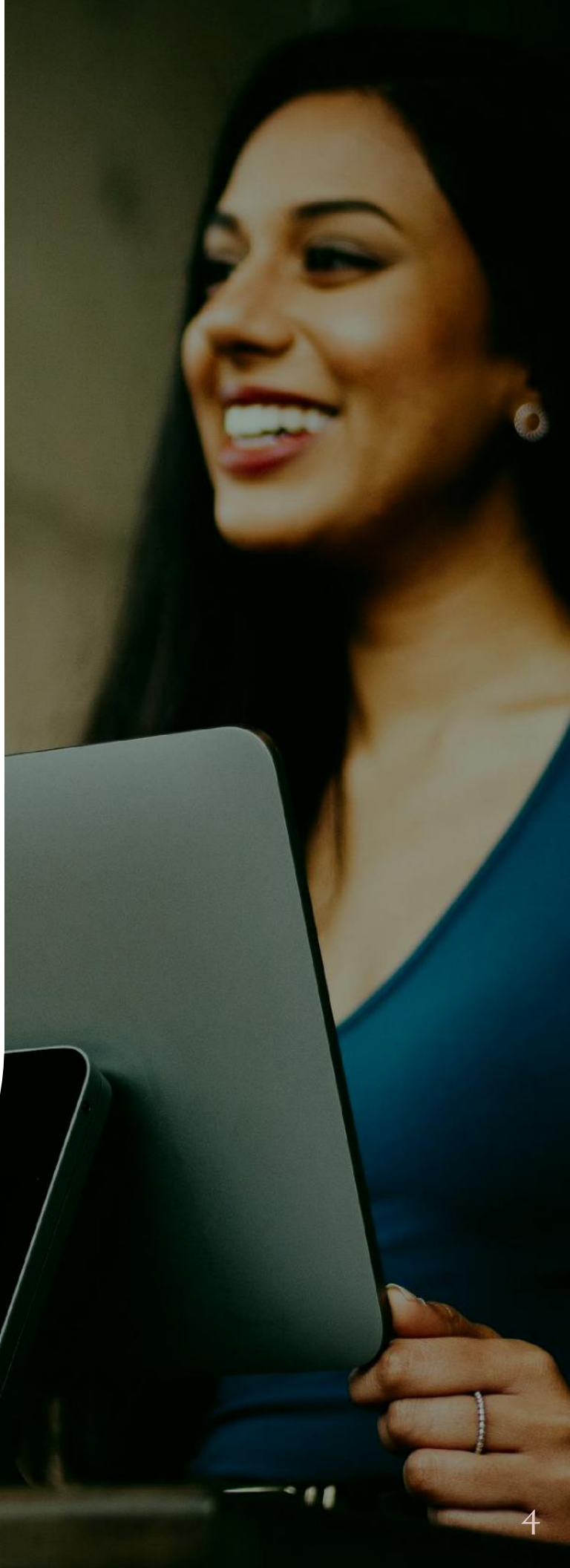
Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, we offer a comprehensive view of the remote work landscape, emphasizing the need for proactive solutions that cater to the diverse needs of women working remotely. As part of the two-year BeatBurnout project (Project nr: KA220-ADU-7DB7CEBF) a project with the aim to prevent burnout. This is one of two reports in the project that explore the challenges women experience while working remotely, providing a unique insight from their point of view.. As a reader and an employer, a possibility to gain insight from your employees' perspectives..

More info: www.beatburnout.eu

Why women?

Although women are more susceptible to burnout, many organizations lack the necessary knowledge, expertise, and resources to effectively mitigate the risk of burnout, particularly in the modern world where remote/hybrid work is becoming the new norm. In 2019, the World Health Organization brought some attention to the issue and highlighted employers' responsibility by defining burnout as a syndrome associated with chronic stress at work that goes unmanaged.

The remote work revolution has brought about a rapid transformation of work environments, presenting numerous opportunities while also exposing unique challenges faced by women in the workplace, particularly those working remotely.



<i>Avocado Toast</i>	<i>\$5.50</i>
<i>Coffee</i>	<i>\$2.50</i>
<i>Tax</i>	<i>\$0.76</i>



We've gathered insights from women with diverse professional backgrounds, including roles such as technicians, self-employed professionals, administrative staff, directors, consultants, educators, artists, financial analysts, communications officers, HR partners, developers, CEOs, marketers, teachers, coordinators, managers, and researchers, all working at least two days a week remote.

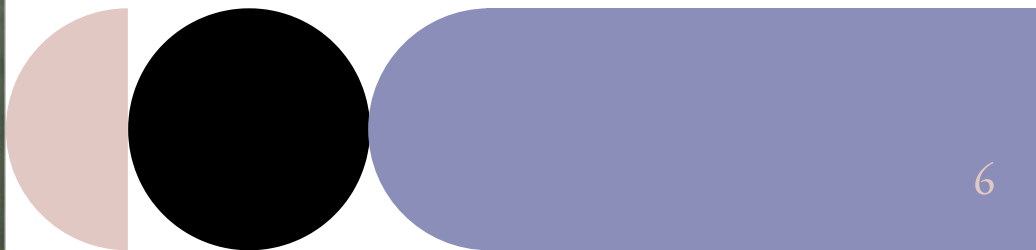
The majority of the respondents work in the private sector (63,1%), 13,3% in the public sector and the rest in a non profit. This diverse representation of job titles and industries provides a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges faced by women working remotely across different fields and sectors. The age distribution of the respondents is as follows: 30.5% are between 20-30 years old, 31% are between 31-40 years, 26.1% are between 41-50 years, 12,3 % are above 50 years.



Key findings at glance

Our findings reveal that 63% of the respondents work at a company that either does not have or they are unaware if their company has a mental health/well-being policy in place. Furthermore, 44.4% of the respondents believe that their employer does not care about their mental health.

Our data reveals that 49.3% of respondents frequently experience stress during work hours, and notably, 50.2% do not prioritize their mental well-being. Furthermore, a substantial 28.1% of women respondents are not satisfied with their job, which could be attributed to various reasons. These findings emphasize the pressing need for organizations to prioritize well-being.



37⁰/₀

Work for an employer with a mental health policy in place while 63% don't know if they have one or don't.

36,5%

Of the women in the survey said that their employer has great knowledge about mental health.

49,3⁰/₀

Of respondents frequently experience stress during work hours.

47,2%

Almost half of the women in our study frequently worked overtime and 65.5% said that they are available to answer work-related questions during their time off.

32,8%

Of respondents would ask for help when needed at work even though 80,5% of the respondents feel that they have colleagues they can rely on. Most of these individuals were between 20-30 years old, and 73% of them worked fully remotely.

The Five Dimensions

The study has uncovered 15 critical aspects in relation to well-being at work for women working remote, clustered in five dimensions. These five dimensions and fiffiteen critical aspects are:

The Social Dimension

1

Social Interactions, Reaffirmation & Appreciation
Pressure from Company Culture/Manager
Collaboration, Expression & Development

The Personal Dimension

2

Self-Awareness and Self-Care
Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivational Factors
Loneliness and Isolation

The Cultural Dimension

3

Communication within the Team and Organization
Relationships, Trust & Work Culture
Gender Biases

The Planning Dimension

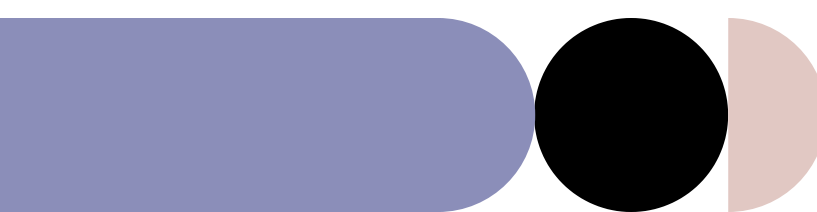
4

Managing Multiple Tasks
Work-life Balance
Multitasking & Time Management
Remote Workday Structure

The Practical Dimension

5

Balancing Workload with Sick Leave and Caregiving
Adequate Technical Ergonomic Equipment & Space at Home



These fifteen aspects have been analyzed through four different lenses to create a deeper understanding of each perspective: Perception & Feeling; Structure & Processes; Leadership & Self-leadership; Culture & Norms.

Perception & Feeling

The aim with the study was not only to collect factual data but also to gain a deeper understanding of the emotions, experiences, and perceptions on mental well-being while working remotely. We want to tell women's stories and include personal perception, asking ourselves questions like: How do we include and consider different personalities and needs? How do we make sure that we understand different women's situation?

Structure & Processes

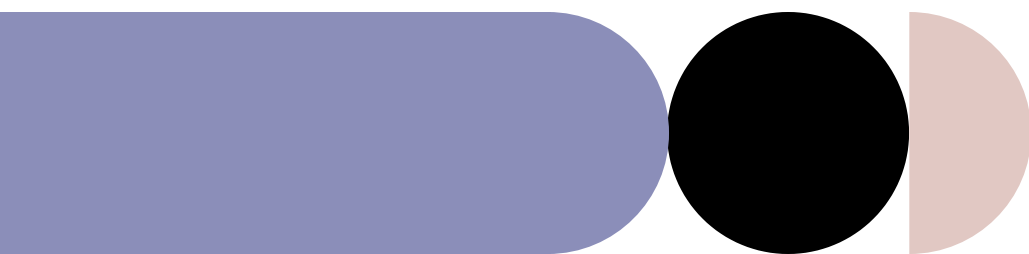
In our study, we delved into the crucial role of structure and processes in shaping the remote work experience for employees. We explored the nuances of navigating organizational systems and procedures, emphasizing the unique challenges and opportunities that arise in remote work settings through the lens of women's experiences. How do we challenge our existing processes and structures? Where are organizations biased and how does organizations create processes that doesn't become obsolete? When should they adapt and change and when should they not?

Leadership & Self-leadership

We delved into the complex challenges related to leadership and self-leadership faced by women in remote work environments. We aimed to explore the obstacles encountered when traditional leadership strategies fail to adapt to the virtual work context, as well as the difficulties employees experience in developing self-leadership skills. Through the lens of women's experiences, our study highlights the pressing need to address the limitations and shortcomings in leadership approaches and self-leadership development. What kind of leadership does organizations encourage and what kind of leadership do they want? How can organizations support employees to develop self-knowledge and encourage self-leadership within the organization?

Culture & Norms

We investigated the difficulties that employees face within remote work environments. We aimed to explore how established organizational cultures and norms may fail to adapt to or support the unique challenges faced by women working remotely. By examining the impact of these cultural and normative challenges on individual experiences and overall organizational performance, we sought to uncover the potential consequences of neglecting to address these critical aspects in remote work settings. What does it mean to take actions based on values? How does something become a norm? How can an organization take control of the culture it has created, or can it even?





Regional Disparities Revealed by Survey responses

There were variations among the countries surveyed but we want to note that we got too few answers from some of the countries involved to be able to make conclusions about regional differences, however these are the findings we found relevant. In Spain, the majority of respondents worked for a maximum of eight hours per day. In Italy, most women reported facing equipment-related challenges while working remotely. Poland reported the highest rate of women working at a company with a mental health policy in place, while Italy and Greece reported the lowest number. Women in Austria were more likely to report inadequate workplace support, while women in Sweden reported fewer career advancement opportunities for women than men than those in other countries. Fewer women in the Czech Republic reported maintaining a fairly healthy diet, while fewer women in Poland and Greece reported having an active lifestyle. Finally, in Ireland, women reported to a higher extent that their employers had limited understanding and knowledge of mental health challenges.

The Social Dimension

This section emphasizes the significance of social interactions, sense of belonging, and emotional expression in the workplace, as individuals but also as a team in a remote working environment. The way we communicate changes working remotely while our needs as humans stay the same. We also discuss pressure from company culture and managers that sometimes are implicit.



Social Interactions, Reaffirmation &
Appreciation



Pressure from Company
Culture/Manager



Collaboration, Expression &
Development

Social Interactions, Reaffirmation & Appreciation

Social interaction and a sense of belonging is important for our well-being. As we are social creatures, we have a fundamental need for connection with others, also at work. The quality of the social environment at work is related to the mental health of employees (Repetti, R. L, 1987) where low level of social support has been linked to increased stress activity (Ozbay, F. et al. 2007).

Most of the respondents in our study feel a sense of belonging at work (70%) but 30% of the respondents reported that they don't feel included or a sense of belonging (no distinction between full-time remote and hybrid remote workers) so there is definitely room for improvement.

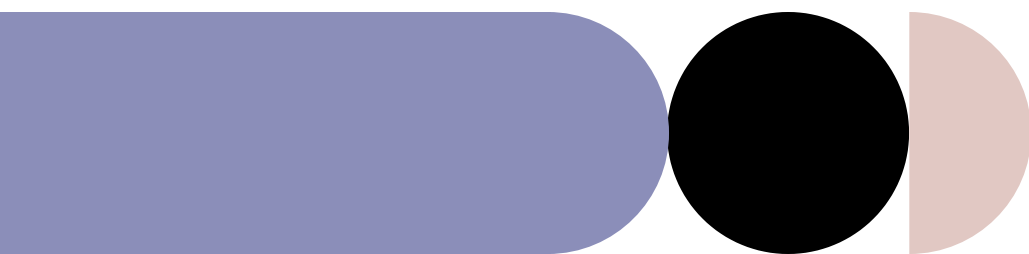
When experiencing positive social interactions at work, we feel valued and respected, which can boost our self-esteem, confidence, and even foster resilience against stress (Ozbay, F. et al. 2007). While remote work will not provide the same level of connection as in-person interactions, virtual communication can still fulfill our need for social interaction and help us feel more connected to others, but it might require new tools, ways, and behaviors.

In our survey, only 32.8% of respondents would ask for help when needed at work even though 80,5% of the respondents feel that they have colleagues they can rely on. Most of these individuals were between 20-30 years old, and 73% of them worked fully remotely. This suggests that seeking assistance may be more challenging for those in a fully remote work environment and for younger employees, who might feel less secure.

While it is harder to create strong social connections via screen and therefore hard for those who work fully remote, we want to note that remote work is here to stay, and companies need to adapt and develop their way of working. One major difference depending on remote, or hybrid is the level of nonverbal communication that is possible. In-person interactions allow for the exchange of nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, which can play a key role in building trust and rapport with others. In contrast, remote interactions via screen may be limited in terms of the amount of nonverbal communication that is possible, which can make it more difficult to build strong social connections.

People have a hard time resonating and read I say through a screen.

- Woman, Sweden



In my position it's easier to read the room physically, it requires deeper relationships with employees working digitally.

- *Woman, Manager in Sweden*

Some respondents expressed a relief working remotely because they felt they could focus better while others felt the opposite due to their kids or partner being at home, not the right setup or space. Another difference is the level of distraction, when attending meetings digitally compared to physical ones, it might be easier to become distracted by other notifications, emails, or tasks popping up or just lose focus. Additionally, remote interactions may lack the same level of spontaneity and natural flow that can be present in in-person interactions. This can make it more difficult to build a sense of camaraderie and shared experience with others.

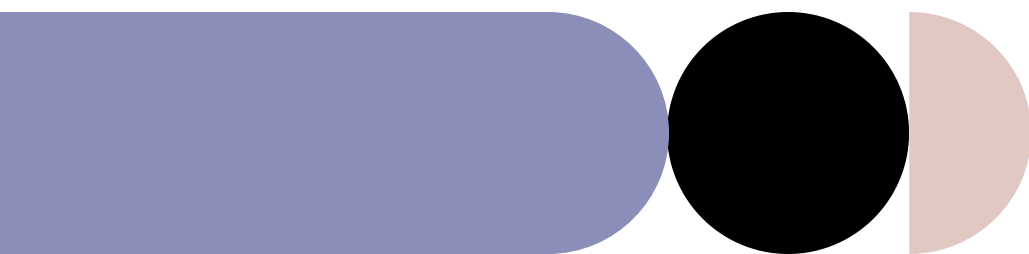
It's important to note though that the potential lack of social connection and affirmation at work can also be a problem for employees working in physical office spaces. However, remote work does create new challenges in terms of building trust and social connections since remote workers may not have the same opportunities for casual interactions and informal conversations with colleagues. By addressing these challenges, employers can help remote workers build strong social connections and thrive in their roles.

Perception & Feeling

Employees who lack social connections and do not receive adequate feedback or recognition may feel isolated, undervalued, and unmotivated, leading to decreased job satisfaction and increased stress. Remote work can exacerbate these feelings, as virtual communication may not provide the same level of social interaction and nonverbal cues as in-person interactions. This can create a sense of disconnection and difficulty in building trust and rapport with colleagues, which can have negative consequences on mental health and overall well-being.

Structure & Processes

In a physical world it's easier to understand and interpret social connections, we affirm each other naturally, while working remotely there is a need for another structure for that to happen. The spontaneous chat, the smile you give to a colleague passing by, the "great job" comment from your manager might not happen as naturally via digital communication channels. The absence of structure, processes and opportunities for social interaction, regular breaks during the day, informal conversations and team building activities can also increase feelings of isolation, negatively impacting mental health.

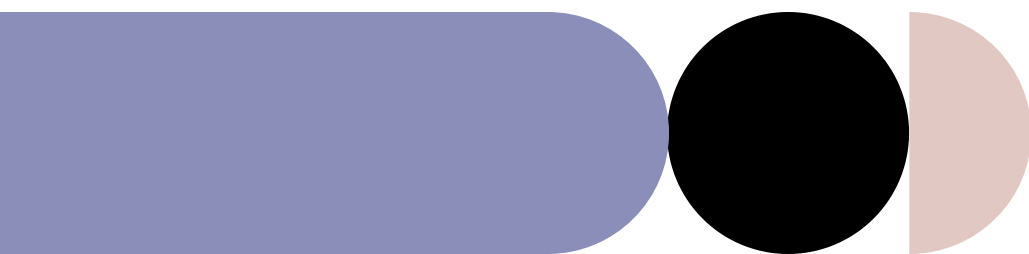


Leadership & Self-leadership

The affirmation and the support you get from your manager can be crucial for your well-being, with that said employees are different and are in need of different support during different stages. For example, you're usually in need of more support when you're new at a company or when you're facing challenging tasks. Lack of feedback or recognition from your manager can contribute to the feeling of isolation and undervaluation, as noted before working remotely will require new structures for that to happen. But it also puts more responsibility on leaders who have to understand and know how to build trust, how to sense when an employee needs support and how to build individual connections remotely. Self-leadership is another dimension, where there is also a responsibility from the employees' side to ask for support and feedback when needed.

Culture & Norms

Culture and norms can contribute to the problem by not valuing social interactions, confirmation, and reaffirmation, studies have also shown that women may face additional challenges and biases in remote work situations. Lack of celebrations or recognition for achievements can contribute to the feeling of undervaluation, another example that a few of our respondents noted during interviews and that was later confirmed from our survey was that many of our respondents felt that it was hard to ask for help working remote which could be an indication of poor social connections between employees/manager. Physical social gatherings every now and then to build bonds and align the company may be an important part even if a company has chosen to adapt a fully remote work culture.



Pressure from Company Culture/Manager

More experienced people fail to understand that it takes time to learn, there is no empathy.

- Woman, Italy

Only 36,5% of the women in the survey said that their employer has great knowledge about mental health. This leaves a lot to chance and there is a risk that companies by not knowing implement cultures and structures that can work against mental well-being, short term gains for long term costs.

This aspect is about women in our study experiencing pressure from company cultures, managers and colleagues and lack of control. For example pressure to always be available, feeling of not being in control of time or tasks, the feeling of always being on top of things and being encouraged to feel a sense of urgency which could lead to unhealthy stress. 13,4% of the participants in our study feel that they can't influence their work situation, and lack of control is one triggering factor leading to burnout. Experienced pressure is often hard to explain and sometimes grasp since many factors play a part, when working remotely it might be even more obvious that we're still struggling with gender roles when work and private life barriers blur. For example, women may be expected to be constantly available and responsive despite and at the same time feeling the pressure of responsibilities at home.

Perception & Feeling

Employees may feel like they cannot disconnect from work and are constantly on-call, leading to feelings of anxiety and pressure to always be "online". Other employees may genuinely enjoy their work and desire to spend more time engaged with it. Either way employees should be encouraged to have a work-life balance for the sake of the individual as well as for the company long term. As also mentioned before, working requires self awareness, knowing your needs and boundaries and being able to express them.

Structure & Processes

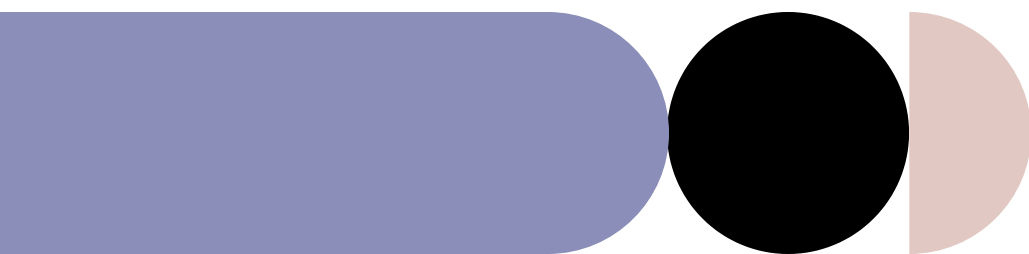
Organizational structures can be shaped by the behaviors and habits a company encourages, even when these actions are subtle or ambiguous. When a company praises working overtime, expects immediate responses, or subtly hints that being in the office is better than working remotely, it can create a structure or culture with unforeseen consequences. From a gender perspective, a company culture that stresses constant availability and urgency might disproportionately affect women, who often shoulder greater caregiving responsibilities. For instance, if immediate responses to emails or messages are expected, this can lead to an incessant need to check and respond to communications, even outside normal working hours. That could be one factor to why 65,5% of respondents in our study are available to answer work related questions when being off work. As a result, women may struggle to balance work and personal life, potentially exacerbating gender inequalities both within the company and in society at large. Establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life is crucial to fostering a more equitable and supportive work environment.

Leadership & Self-leadership

A company culture marked by lack of control and high pressure will negatively impact employees' mental well-being. Effective leadership and self-leadership practices are essential to counter these effects, fostering a supportive and balanced work environment that promotes employee well-being. A high-pressure company culture can undermine what affects it could have on mental health and self-leadership, making it difficult for employees to prioritize self-care and maintain a healthy work-life balance. In the long run, this can result in increased stress, decreased productivity, and a higher risk of burnout. Empowering individuals to take control of their work lives, set boundaries, and prioritize mental well-being can be a low cost for any company.

Culture & Norms

A culture of always being available and feeling a sense of urgency can become normalized within an organization. This can be particularly challenging to change if it has been ingrained in the culture for a long time. It is important for companies to actively promote a culture of work-life balance and respect for employees' time and well-being. From a company perspective employees who are working remotely should be encouraged to reflect on their own motivations for seeking perfection and to identify ways to manage this pressure in a healthy way.



Collaboration, Opinions & Development

My boss actually felt that something was wrong with me, that I wasn't ok anymore, that I may be burned-out, so he approached me and we talked about it. But he did not offer any real solutions, it was only just for show. So, I ended up leaving the company.

- Woman, The Czech Republic

There have been a lot of debates and recent studies showing that women are more prone than ever to leave their jobs, when faced with a situation you can't do anything about or when not getting the support, leaving could feel like the only option. We asked about if the respondents in our study felt that the company culture they worked for encouraged and supported that they expressed their needs and feelings, the answer was pretty shocking: less than half of the women (47,8%) felt that they worked at a company that did support them.

11,3% said that the company they work for doesn't support their individual growth, while 10,9% felt that they couldn't develop their skills at their current employer. You could argue that it might just be a bad match between employee and employer or that you have a responsibility as an individual to move on, but there is also a responsibility on the employer, making sure employees feel safe to express opinions.

Over the years, multiple studies have shown that feeling rules are applied differently to men and women. Women's emotions, such as anger, sadness, and frustration, are generally judged more harshly than men's. For example, women who cry at work may be seen as weak or unprofessional, while men are assumed to be dealing with external factors. Similarly, angry men may be perceived as capable and effective, while women displaying the same emotion can be viewed as unskilled or incompetent (Weber, 2005).

Research has shown that organizations which cultivate a culture where various emotions can be freely expressed experience numerous benefits. These include enhanced creativity, improved relationships with colleagues, reliability and productivity (Michael Parke & Rob Morris, 2017.)

Perception & Feeling

To not freely be able to express opinions, needs or feelings could lead to frustration, anxiety and stress. Not being able to be authentic and who you are. From a woman's perspective there are boundaries to consider on how, when and why to express needs, but the question remains. Is it women who should adapt according to the rules or is it time to adapt our working cultures so that we can embrace and respect differences so that we can use potential in all employees, no matter gender.

Structure & Processes

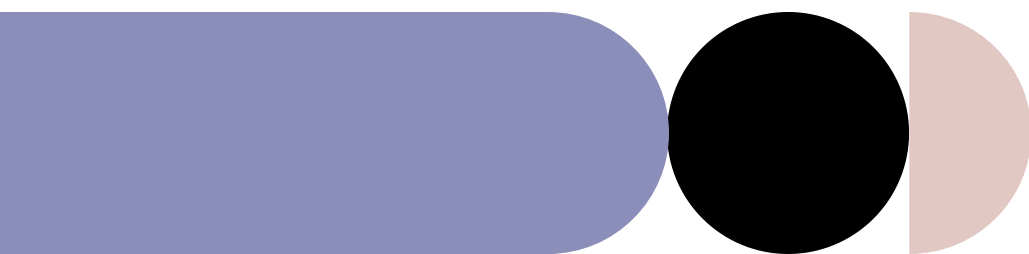
Organizational structures and processes may inadvertently create barriers for certain groups of employees, such as women or minorities, limiting their access to growth and development opportunities. Organizations may lack adequate systems for providing and receiving feedback on performance, processes, or other aspects of the work environment. A focus on short-term objectives at the expense of long-term growth and sustainability can create an environment where employees feel pressured to prioritize immediate results over their own well-being and development. A strict hierarchical structure can limit open communication, hinder collaboration, and make it difficult for employees to share ideas or concerns with higher-ups. This can result in employees feeling disempowered and unsupported.

Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders are one of the main driving forces creating a healthy working culture where emotions are aloud (Parke and Morris, 2017). Some leaders may have an autocratic or overly controlling approach, which can stifle creativity, collaboration, and employee engagement. On the other hand, overly permissive or hands-off leadership can lead to a lack of direction and accountability. Leaders who fail to articulate a clear vision and strategic direction for the organization can leave employees feeling uncertain about their roles, responsibilities, and the overall purpose of their work. Overall managers and leaders within a company have a responsibility to develop and support employees, that includes understanding differences and creating trust so that employees can express their needs.

Culture & Norms

An environment where employees feel unable to express their ideas or opinions can hinder creativity, stifle innovation, and limit the organization's ability to adapt and grow. A culture that discourages open expression can create an atmosphere of frustration and dissatisfaction, negatively impacting employee morale, engagement, and retention. When employees feel unable to express concerns or address conflicts openly, unresolved issues can fester, further damaging relationships, trust, and overall team dynamics.

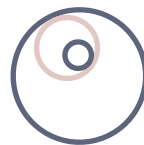


The Personal Dimension

The Personal Dimension focuses on individual differences, experiences, needs, responsibilities and self-care for mental well-being while also highlighting the employer's crucial role in supporting employees to recognize and prioritize their mental health and encourage self-leadership.



Self-Awareness & Self-care



Intrinsic & Extrinsic
motivation factors



Isolation & Loneliness

Self-Awareness & Self-care

It's hard to talk about mental well being without talking about the individual responsibility, we all have to take care of our basic needs and get to know ourselves. We all are different, we react differently and most importantly we have different needs. Despite individual differences in emotional reactions, needs and feelings, employers have a crucial role in supporting employees to recognize and respect their boundaries, and prioritize their mental health. This is not only beneficial for the employees but also contributes to a resilient work culture, with potential for cost savings. It is becoming more and more critical for employees to have self-leadership skills to adapt to businesses' competitive and rapidly changing conditions (Teloren et al. 2021).

In our study we found that as much as 32,5% of the respondents don't get enough quality sleep (7-8 hours) every day, 45% have an active lifestyle (at least 2,5-5 hours of moderate-intensity physical activity/workout per week) and 66,5% eat fairly healthy. The majority of the respondents do not prioritize their well-being (50,2%) and around 20% don't know how they react when experiencing stress. 56% of those who didn't prioritize their well-being reported frequent feelings of stress, while 42% didn't get enough restful sleep. However, it's difficult to determine causality since all factors are interrelated and can affect one another.

While it is impossible to discuss the reasons behind each individual's behavior and reactions, it is important to note that in a remote work environment, the boundaries between private life and work life blur. Therefore, it becomes the employer's responsibility to take care of their employees' mental health at work which in a remote world is at home, by creating sustainable working cultures that do not encourage stress without recovery and normalize "sense of urgency", most importantly that encourage employees to understand their own needs and supports self-leadership.

I have arrived at a point, after many years of experience, where I can place my own boundaries when it comes to work.

- Woman, Greece

Self-care in a work environment means taking care of oneself physically, emotionally, and mentally in order to maintain a healthy work-life balance. It involves recognizing and responding to the body's signals and needs, such as taking breaks when needed, getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, and eating well. Self-care also includes setting boundaries, being assertive in communicating one's needs, and prioritizing activities outside of work that promote relaxation and stress relief. One of the interviewees provided a valuable insight, stating *"I have arrived at a point, after many years of experience, where I can place my own boundaries when it comes to work."* This emphasizes that boundary-setting is a skill that can be developed over time with proper support from the work environment.

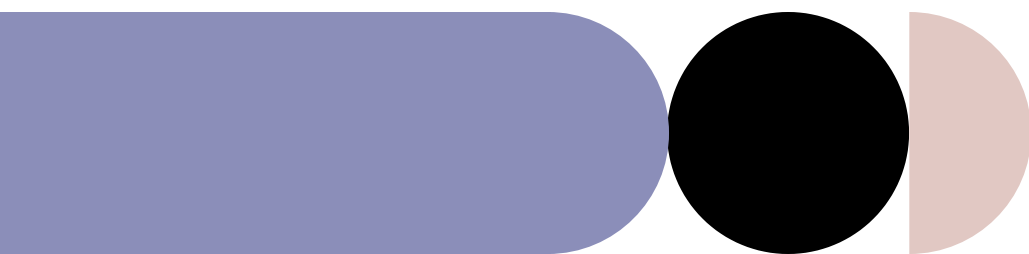
Perception & Feeling

Self-awareness and self-care are crucial for all employees, particularly for those working remotely. It is noteworthy though that 50.2% of our respondents do not prioritize their mental well-being. The individual reasons for not prioritizing mental well-being may vary and are influenced by circumstances, such as expectations to always be available, inability to set boundaries or pressure to work overtime due to tight deadlines. Not to say that there are women who choose to work overtime, women who prioritize self-awareness and self-care may feel more in control of their work and better equipped to manage these challenges.

Structure & Processes

Lack of structure, processes and knowledge around self-care at the workplace can make it difficult for women to prioritize and practice it, it can also lead to unhealthy work cultures. Working for extended hours over a prolonged period can result in burnout, leading to adverse effects on physical and mental health. This may manifest as sleep disturbances, irritability, and lack of focus. Chronic stress and burnout have been associated with lasting physical conditions such as migraines, depression, anxiety, and decreased work productivity (University of Phoenix, 2023.)

Remote work blurs the lines between work and personal life also contributing to making it challenging to set boundaries. According to a McKinsey report, "Women in the Workplace 2022," women who work remotely, even if only partially, report feeling a greater sense of psychological safety compared to those who work in traditional office settings indicating that it is also more important than ever to have policies and processes for noticing biases and how to act upon them. Remote and hybrid work can offer a reprieve from bias, but it's not a substitute for systemic change which is problematic and important to understand, consider and take action on as an employer.

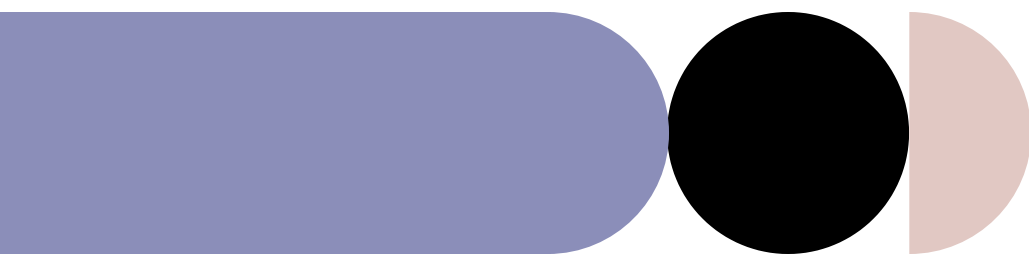


Leadership & Self-leadership

Leadership and self-leadership play a critical role in promoting and supporting self-awareness and self-care. Leaders should model healthy work habits and prioritize the well-being of their employees while employees for their own sake also should take ownership of their own self-care and set boundaries that support their well-being. In the office environment, there are external factors that are closely monitored such as arrival time, office hours, and work behavior, in a remote environment it can be challenging for employees to control these elements. As a result, managers should encourage their employees to adopt internal control methods rather than relying on external factors. This can be achieved by promoting a culture of self-leadership within the organization (Telore et al. 2021).

Culture & Norms

The culture and norms of a company can either support or hinder self-knowledge and self-care. Companies that prioritize productivity and overwork may discourage employees from taking breaks or prioritizing self-care. It is concerning that a significant portion of the respondents do not prioritize their well-being and are not aware of their stress reactions. This highlights the importance of promoting awareness and education around mental health and well-being in the workplace. The statistics also emphasize the need for employers to take a more active role in creating a healthy work environment that supports their employees' mental and physical health.



Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation factors

27,1% in our study are satisfied with their job while 44,8% are satisfied most of the time, even though the number of employees that are satisfied are pretty high, the potential is huge. What would happen if everybody felt satisfied at work and is that something that we should strive for?

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors refer to the various internal and external factors that impact a person's motivation to work. Extrinsic motivation refers to factors that are outside of the person, such as bonuses, social recognition and praise while intrinsic motivation is a type of motivation that occurs within the individual. For example, personal gratification, a sense of belonging or a feeling of accomplishment.

In our study, many women faced the challenge of either overworking or struggling to maintain motivation and focus while working remotely. While these may seem like opposite issues, they can stem from similar underlying factors or lack of, such as working too much due to being a “high performer” or being in a flow (intrinsic) or due to tight deadlines, praise from manager and a bonus that kicks in (extrinsic). Even though we react differently to intrinsic factors as individuals, knowing what motivates us and how that can be applied in our work might benefit both employees and employers. Same goes with extrinsic factors, we have to understand what kind of behavior we are rewarding and which ones we don't as employers in order to fully grasp how employees are influenced.

Tricky because I feel that my job is fun most of the time but sometimes it consumes my energy to the point that I have none left for my private life.

- Woman, Sweden

This happens to all of us and one time every now and then won't make a difference but several days every week, it would. From an employer's perspective most would see this example as a short time gain but long term this really can cause stress and potentially lead to burnout. Not to say that it is *only* the employers responsibility, many employers are not aware of the risks of misuse of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors, and further complicated by the fact that it varies from individual to individual. A high achiever who works long hours and always wants to achieve perfection might be in need of getting praise when trying and failing to underline the fact that mistakes are important, or getting praise when leaving early or when not answering emails directly. While someone who has a hard time keeping motivation might need check-ins more often, praise when delivering or a bonus.

In our study we found that 20,7% have experienced lack of recognition when making an effort at work, an explanation could be the mismatch of expectations, different needs of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors that haven't been met between employee and employer. The result doesn't imply that there are differences between fully remote or hybrid workers, it is apparent that remote work as a whole poses unique challenges for employers in terms of employee motivation.

The chain of command can be quite frustrating. It seems like the further up the chain you go, the less they care, the more diluted it becomes. Sometimes it makes you wonder. If they care so little, why should I care so much?

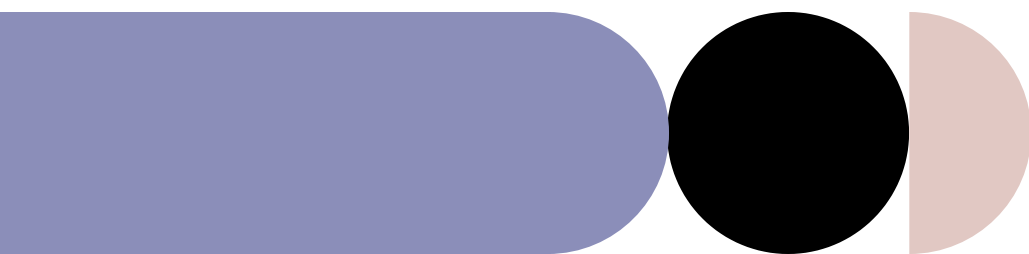
- Woman, Ireland

Perception & Feeling

Intrinsic and extrinsic factors have a significant impact on how we perceive our work and motivation to work. If we are not motivated or fulfilled at work, we may experience low job satisfaction and sense of belonging, negative feelings such as stress or anxiety. The individual differences are important to both understand and take into consideration when working with motivation factors. The case above exemplifies a situation where an employee questions their own level of engagement due to a perceived lack of care from managers. It would be impossible to know the reasons why without further questions, could be poor management, could be the lack of communication, could be lack of knowledge around how different individuals are motivated differently but there is a clear need from an employees perspective that poor intrinsic and extrinsic factors can lead to stress and potentially burnout (Brandsätter et al. 2016).

Structure & Processes

Structures and processes of remote work will also influence motivation factors. Example, lack of clear goals or expectations to name a few. But there's something else to remember, a mismatch of expectations in either direction is risky: Employees may experience burnout if they have either too much or too little control, depending on their individual needs (Brandsätter et al. 2016). So while it might be good for employers to oversee structures and processes from a motivation factor perspective, employers have to consider the facts that their employees have different needs.

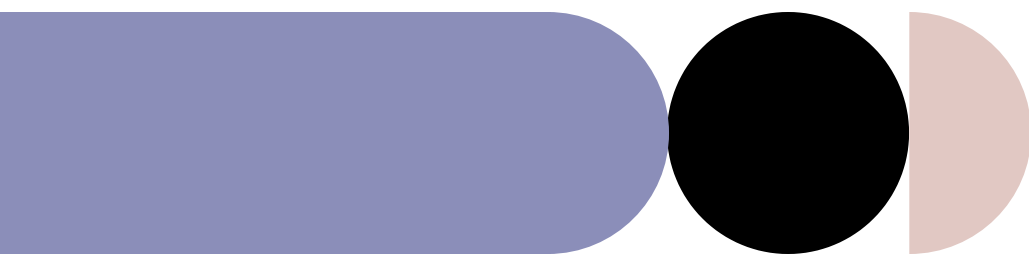


Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders play an essential role in fostering and care of how employees are influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors. Leaders who are supportive, empowering, empathetic and intuitive and who have the ability to understand that employees are different with different needs can help to boost employee's motivation and engagement. On the other hand, leaders who are dismissive or critical can undermine employee's motivation and lead to feelings of disengagement and even burnout. Self-leadership also plays a crucial role, if you're aware of what kind of needs you have to feel motivated and to belong you'll become better at requiring what you need. Women who are able to set clear goals, prioritize their time, and maintain a positive mindset can help to boost their own motivation and engagement.

Culture & Norms

There is no universal solution that works for everyone but determining what an employee's intrinsic or extrinsic motivation factors is, is helpful for organizations to see what is more of a drive in their performance. Workplace culture and practices play a vital role in employee motivation and engagement. For instance, if a company culture emphasizes competition rather than collaboration, it may be difficult for employees to feel motivated to work together as a team. The motivation and engagement of employees also depend on what the company does, the overall goals and operating procedures of the company. For example literature states that those within lower level positions of an organization are more prone to extrinsic motivation factors, than higher level positions (Bård, 2006). Similarly, if the company norms prioritize long hours and work over self-care and work-life balance, employees may find it challenging to maintain their motivation and engagement.



Isolation & Loneliness

Sometimes I miss the social side of being at work, it can feel a bit lonely at times

- Women, Ireland

40% of the respondents perceived lack of social contact as the main challenge working remote, less interaction and less informal discussions with colleagues. 18% of the respondents felt that they sometimes felt excluded, lonely or insecure about their role in the team. Loneliness was the most common risk identified by the respondents from all the countries involved in this study.

The shift towards remote and hybrid work has highlighted the importance of social interaction and the potential risks of isolation and loneliness. Feeling lonely at work can lead to a range of negative consequences, including decreased job satisfaction, lower productivity, decreased motivation, and increased stress.

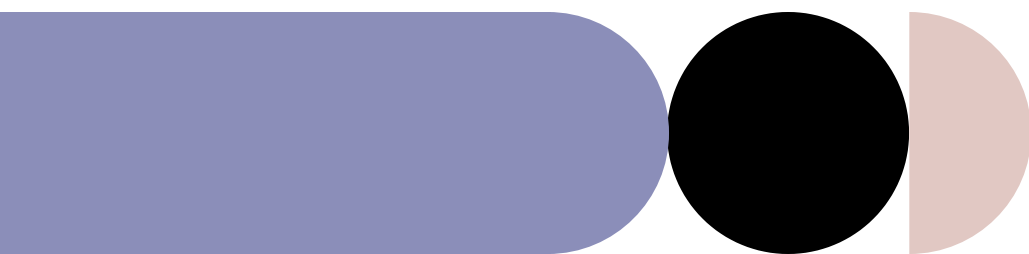
Emotional and social concerns are often viewed by organizations as personal difficulties that do not directly impact their operations but research indicates that they shouldn't. Perceived loneliness at the workplace supports direct effects on outputs such as performance, motivation (Ertosun.Ö & Erdil.O, 2012).

Biggest challenges working remote:

Isolation, lack of personal relationships

- Woman, Poland

Work is an important part of our social needs. Since employees spend a significant portion of their day working, it is not surprising that they may perceive the working environment to be more isolated when a lot of the social interactions are removed in remote work. This is despite the fact that 84.8% of the respondents in our study have access to a partner, family, and friends with whom they can talk to and rely on. This highlights the need for a social context at the workplace even though employees have a social context outside of work.



Perception & Feeling

The majority of our respondents referred to loneliness and isolation as a feeling of being alone with problems as one of the biggest impacts on mental wellbeing at work, working remote. Loneliness can have a significant impact on an individual's perception and feelings towards their work environment. The feeling of being alone and disconnected from colleagues can lead to a lack of motivation and engagement with work but also feelings such as sadness, self-doubting, and frustration that might be hard to notice for anyone else if working remotely. You can perceive and feel isolated and lonely in a social context as well as when you're alone, noting that it has to do with a feeling of connection to others rather than only being around others.

Structure & Processes

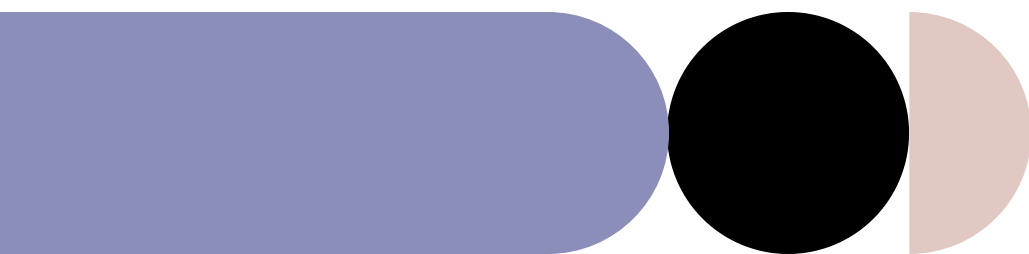
Structure and processes around how to connect with others in a remote or hybrid work environment are even more important since the chat next to the coffee machine and the spontaneous dialogues will not naturally happen. Limited opportunities for social interaction and team-building activities might lead to employees feeling more isolated. Conversely, if there are regular virtual meetings and communication channels in place, it can help to alleviate feelings of loneliness.

Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders have a responsibility to ensure that employees feel connected and supported, but sensing that someone feels lonely or tends to isolate requires skills as a leader to notice in a remote work environment. And in relation to mental well being at work, regular check-ins, promoting team-building activities, encouraging open communication. However, it is also important for individuals to take responsibility and seek out support when needed.

Culture & Norms

What's socially accepted and not in a working environment is a part of the culture, loneliness can be a sensitive topic for someone to bring up but also for a colleague and/or manager to act upon. Creating a working culture that encourages sharing between employees can have significant benefits. It can help employees realize that they are not alone and create a comfortable environment, leading to positive outcomes. In our study we found that the majority of the respondents have felt alone and isolated with their problems working remotely and just talking about that can open up and create new ways, even digitally, that allows employees to express and alleviate their feelings. It's about finding platforms for employees to be human and being able to express feelings, emotions and mental state with other colleagues as well as with managers.



The Cultural Dimension

The Cultural Dimension refers to the influence of organizational culture on employee well-being. The culture of the organization as well as the culture of the team and the individual, if bias exists and if so what it can lead to. How trust is an important ingredient in a workplace and how communication changes in a remote world.



Communication within the
Team & Organization



Relationships, Trust &
Work Culture



Gender Biases

Communication within the Team & Organization

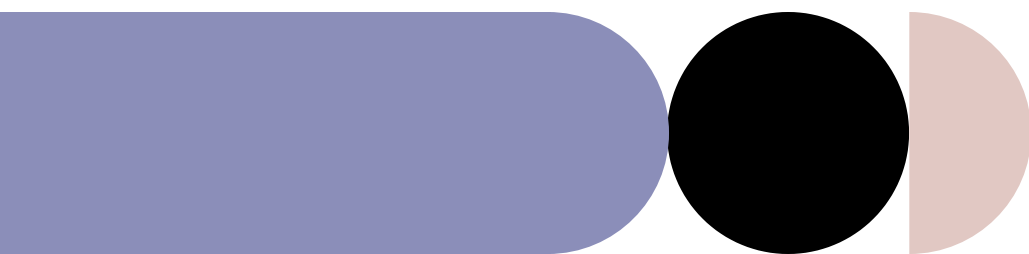
4The need for clear communication and information were identified as challenges that could lead to stress and burnout in a remote working culture by our respondents. Culture plays a crucial role as it is double influencing including the culture of the remote work itself as well as the culture of the employees. For example, our own backgrounds and cultures have a huge impact on how we approach issues and how we communicate. Also, communities with increased diversities such as migrants and minorities, bringing different culture attitudes and different work styles. Working remotely puts additional pressure on communication as it is primarily limited to digital tools. Respondents expressed reduced efficiency due to less direct interaction with colleagues, lack of team communication and the risk of missing information, which could affect career growth, risk for misinterpretation and flow of information and communication. All of these effects are driving factors for stress and depression in work which significantly affect wellbeing. For example, another aspect of communication is that you need to follow up and walk the talk, if you're not the message becomes irrelevant and can cause a lot of distrust. Two different woman from the interviews;

Our management talks a lot about wellbeing at workplace but in reality, nothing really happens. Empty promises.

- Woman, The Czech Republic

This is the irony of it, we are getting many company e-mails about well-being, how to relax, how to handle work-life balance, but at the same time we are buried under so much work that I have zero time to even read it. So, everything with an e-mail subject wellbeing goes directly into trash.

- Woman, The Czech Republic



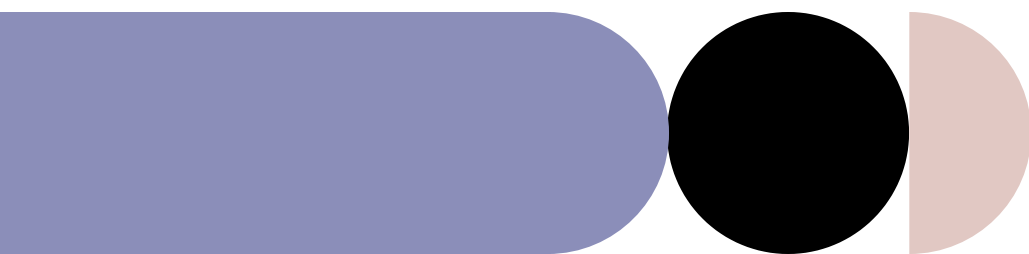
Highlighting the importance of communication skills is not enough if it's not backed up with actions. As remote work becomes more common, there is a growing need for effective communication practices and tools to keep everyone connected and informed. It is evident that communication is key and affects employees' work abilities (Prayogi et al. 2021) but sometimes it is hard to grasp what good communication is since it depends on the context, situation and the employees involved. Research has found that inadequate communication can even cause decreased employee performance (Prayogi et al. 2021) and can lead to confusion and misunderstandings, which can result in errors and delays. Secondly, it can lead employees to feel frustrated, anxious, and stressed, as they struggle to get the information and support they need to do their jobs effectively as many of our respondents expressed concerns about. Poor communication can also lead to lack of confidence in abilities and feelings of being undervalued or unsupported and especially so when the topic is challenging. Therefore, establishing and preserving a commonly agreed on culture of communication is essential, including the tools and methods of communication, in order to overcome communication silos and division between the team.

Perceptions and Feelings

The way information is communicated individually, internal and external can greatly impact how employees feel about their work and the company in general. Effective communication is crucial in helping employees develop a sense of clarity about their role within the organization, fostering a sense of connection with their work. On the other hand, poor communication or unclear expectations can lead to feelings of frustration and confusion. It's important for companies to ensure that information is communicated effectively and in a timely manner, and to provide opportunities for employees to ask questions and provide feedback since the interpretation of information also is subjective.

Structure & Processes

Clear processes can help companies as well as employees understand what to communicate when, how and why. For remote work as well as for office work, it's important to establish clear guidelines for communication, how to use different channels, why and when but also to make sure that digital meetings have room for discussions so that teams not only end up reporting rather than discussing, asking, questioning and listening key elements for connection.



Constant and good communication, clear definition of tasks and goals, and sufficient training are key factors to minimize burnout.

- *Woman, Greece*

Leadership & Self-management

Leadership and self-management play a critical role in shaping the communication culture of an organization. Effective leaders should model clear and transparent communication, encourage feedback and dialogue, and provide opportunities for employees to ask questions and express concerns. The leadership and management settings should be clearly set up and clearly communicated and also continuously updated to fit changing patterns in the work world.

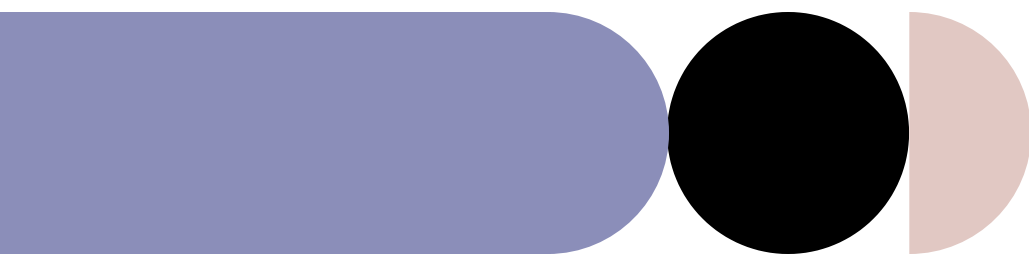
A year ago I had a panic attack and my employer never removed tasks or continued to check in with me even though he knew.

- *Woman, Sweden*

The woman in this situation experienced a panic attack a year ago, but her manager did not remove tasks or follow up with her, despite being aware of the situation. This highlights the importance of good communication, structures, and leadership in addressing mental health concerns in the workplace. Poor communication can erode trust between employees and management, leading to disengagement and decreased motivation. In a remote work environment, knowledge about mental health and well-being, as well as effective communication strategies, are particularly important.

Culture & Norms

The culture of an organization can be influenced by its overall communication. For example, if an organization values open communication and transparency, this can lead to a more effective communication culture. On the other hand, if there is a culture of secrecy or fear of speaking up, communication can suffer and employees might feel that you get punished for speaking up. Both corporate culture and corporate communication are mutually reinforcing and they aid and affect each other in a positive correlation.



Relationships, Trust & Work Culture

I think it is difficult to talk about burnout, people who suffer from it are not taken seriously, it is like others think that burnout sufferers do not want to work, as if they were looking for an excuse.

- *Woman, Italy*

Many individuals feel that burnout is stigmatized and not taken seriously, partly due to a lack of understanding and differences in personal needs. A prevalent issue in our multi-country research is that there is no common definition about burnout and what can be considered as burnout. The lack of European common standards and definitions affect the working situations from a country to another disproportionately depending on the internal culture of the specific corporation. While the majority of respondents in our study feel they work in a supportive working culture, 28% feel that they are not supported by their manager, a high number. Managers actually have just as much of an impact on people's mental health as a spouse and even more of an impact than an employee's therapist according to a new report done by UKG (2023).

I believe there is a stigma around burnout due to lack of knowledge and that we are all different persons with different needs.

- *Woman, Sweden*

Stigmatization results in increased inequality which is another factor that hinders trust and relationships at work and could affect work productivity and consequently work/related wellbeing. Unfortunately, cultural and structural forms of stigma such as racism, sexism, ageism and other forms of discrimination still linger in the world of work and their impact on the individual wellbeing has been profoundly reflected in work results. Microaggressions can be a very subtle thing and slip under the radar and also be a reason why employees want to work remote (The Adecco Group, 2022). 11.8% of respondents in our study have experienced harassment or microaggressions at work. However, this is not to argue that "escaping" the office is the solution, rather that it can be a cause of why some individuals prefer to work remote and even more importantly something that might be hard to notice in a remote working culture.

Therefore, addressing inequalities and discriminatory behaviors at work helps to create a more inclusive and healthy work environment where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed and a healthy environment to flourish. In contrast, toxic work cultures can exacerbate societal issues and lead to decreased overall well-being.

Perception & Feeling

Building relationships and trust with colleagues and managers is essential for employees to feel valued, supported, and motivated at work. Individuals perceive the work environment differently depending on who they are, what they have experienced before and what their needs are, which can impact their ability to discuss their experiences openly. Some may feel unsupported by their managers, while others may experience discrimination and microaggressions. Addressing these perceptions and feelings is crucial to create a healthy and supportive workplace.

Structure & Processes

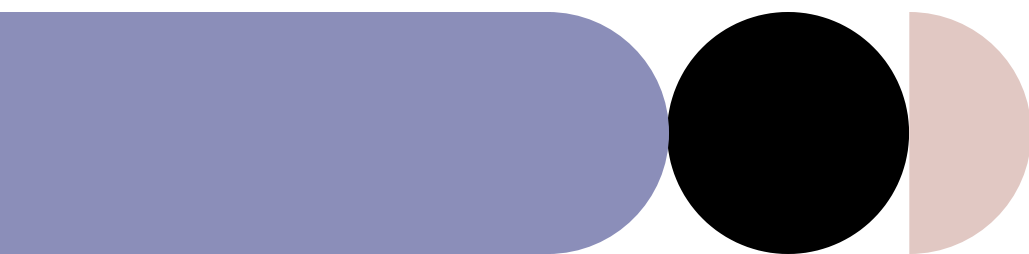
Organizational structures and processes play a significant role in fostering trust and relationships in the workplace. Companies need to implement policies and procedures that address harassment, microaggressions, and discrimination. Additionally, they should provide resources and opportunities for employees to openly discuss their experiences and seek support when needed.

Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders play a crucial role in creating a positive work culture that prioritizes employee well-being, trust, and relationships. Supportive managers can have a significant impact on an employee's mental health, making it essential for them to be empathetic and understanding. Employees should also be encouraged to develop self-leadership skills to manage their mental health and navigate workplace challenges effectively, especially in a full time remote working environment.

Culture & Norms

Addressing toxic norms and promoting positive behaviors can contribute to improved mental health and job satisfaction for employees. By creating a work environment that encourages open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect, organizations can foster a culture that nurtures trust, inclusivity, and strong relationships among employees.



Gender biases

Women have fought so hard for equal rights in the workplace, so it's almost like we keep pushing through all the signals that tell us to slow down, in fear of being seen as weak or inadequate

- *Woman, Ireland*

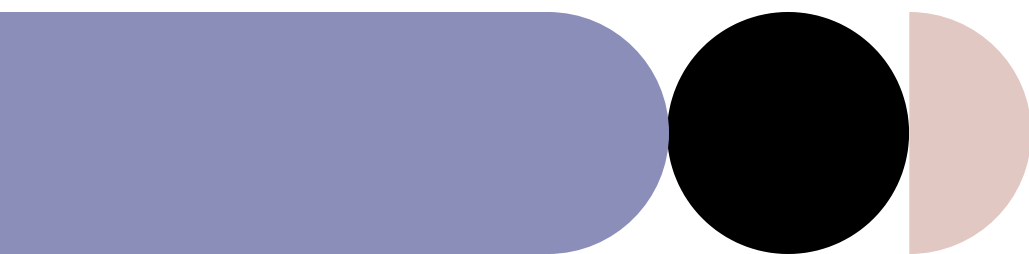
74,4% of the respondents in our study believe that there is a mutual respect, a sense of security and openness to diversity within the company they work for. Biases towards women in the workplace are deeply rooted in societal norms and beliefs. It is important for society as a whole to challenge these norms and promote gender equality, especially in the workplace.

Across the EU, women make up around a quarter of non-executive directors (26.4%), 7.5% of board chairs and 7.7% of chief executives, according to a 2019 study by the European Commission. But the main concern is that the progression of achieving gender equality has slowed down. There are some important directives implemented by the EU like the gender balance directive to achieve gender balance on company boards. This new EU legislation aims to shatter the glass ceiling in the boards of publicly traded companies, providing numerous qualified women with genuine opportunities to secure top-level positions. (Annual gender report, European Commission, 2023).

Women affected by intersectional discrimination are at an even higher risk of gender-based violence. This is discrimination based on a combination of sex and other grounds of discrimination, such as racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. For example, women with disabilities are two to five times more likely to face violence than other women.

15,3% of our respondents experience that men and women don't have the same possibilities within the company they work for.

Overall, expectations and biases towards women in the workplace can have a significant impact on well-being. It is important for organizations to work towards creating an inclusive and supportive environment that celebrates diversity and promotes gender equality, if not from a human perspective from an economic perspective. Gender equality can contribute to a company's economic success by driving higher productivity, profitability, market reach, and employee satisfaction, all while reducing turnover costs and improving risk management.



Perception & Feeling

It is important to remember that biases against women both have short and long term consequences, overall biases can have a significant impact on how women perceive themselves and their abilities. It can create feelings of self-doubt, imposter syndrome, and pressure to prove themselves, which can ultimately lead to burnout. For example, if a woman feels that she is not being taken seriously or her ideas are not being heard because of her gender, it can create a negative perception of her abilities and reduce her motivation.

Structure & Processes

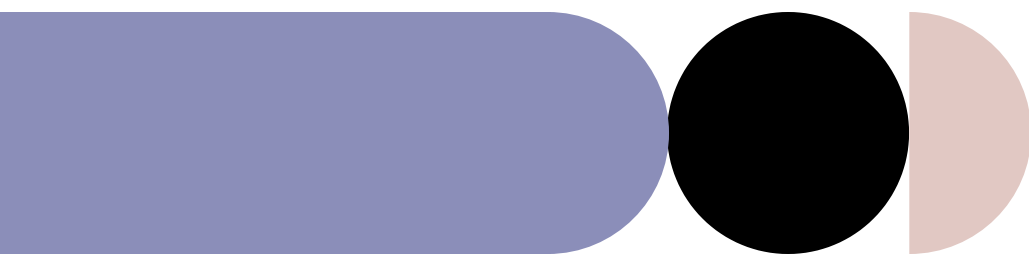
If there are no clear policies or guidelines on how to address biases and discrimination, it's hard to notice discrimination, it can also create an unsafe environment for women to speak up and challenge biases. Stereotypes and biases may be influenced by the way that work is structured and organized. For example, if there is a lack of diversity in leadership positions, it can create a culture where women are not seen as capable of leading or making important decisions, if not consciously, unconsciously. Additionally, organizations that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion may have policies and practices in place to mitigate the impact of stereotypes and biases on employees, such as bias training, inclusive language and how to create awareness. Additionally, having clear policies in place for things like promotion, compensation and within recruitment can help prevent the negative impact of stereotypes and biases on employees' careers.

Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders have a responsibility to ensure that there are no biases or discriminatory practices within their organizations. Leaders may unconsciously exhibit favoritism or bias towards certain employees, which can create an unhealthy work environment and limit opportunities for growth and development for other team members. They should be leading by example and actively working towards creating a culture of inclusivity and diversity. As individuals, women can also practice self-leadership by setting boundaries and speaking up when they feel that they are being treated unfairly but it is very important to highlight that the equality work is not a responsibility on women only. All leaders have a responsibility within an organization to work for equality.

Culture & Norms

The culture and norms within a workplace can perpetuate biases and discriminatory practices. It's quite a complex topic since most companies want to work for a more inclusive work environment but might not be aware of the biases that exist within the company. Since bias is something we all have, companies need to actively work to understand and notice when discrimination happens and especially create a culture where employees are encouraged to express their concerns and speak up.



The Planning Dimension

In this section we discuss and highlight managing multiple obligations, work-life balance, time management, and remote workday structure, some of the challenges faced by women in our study. While remote work offers flexibility and saves time, it can also lead to an unequal division of labor at home, making it harder for women to achieve a healthy work-life balance.



Managing Multiple Tasks



Work-life balance



Multitasking & Time
management



Remote Workday
Structure

Managing Multiple Tasks

I don't waste time in traffic; I eat better and cheaper; I can do other house chores; I don't have to interact with people if I don't want to; I can work from different places

- Woman, Poland

78.3% in our study are in a relationship/partnership, and about half of the women answering the survey have kids (52.2%). Of those, 26.4% answered that they partially received the support they needed from their partner at home. Extra flexibility that remote work provides is a blessing and a burden for women. It makes family life easier but it can also default into a far more regressive division of labor. There is plenty of research made on the unpaid job women do at home, one of them conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2020) discovered that, in 2020, 61.5% of mothers with children under the age of 12 reported bearing the majority or the entirety of additional caregiving responsibilities, in contrast to 22.4% of fathers. Additionally, the study revealed that even when the father was unemployed and the mother employed, mothers still took on a greater share of the unpaid caregiving duties.

Some participants in our study, enhanced focus and concentration were considered among the major benefits of remote work. However, other respondents expressed contrasting views, stating that maintaining focus and concentration while working remotely posed significant challenges. There were many reasons why, some stated children at home as a distraction, not having the right equipment, being distracted due to chores to do at home and others.

People don't understand how I don't have time to do household chores since I am at home all day! They don't regard work from home as actual work.

- Woman, Greece

Women are expected to take on a greater responsibility for household chores and partly due to that a reason why women to a much higher degree want to be able to work remotely. 13,8% of the respondents in our study feel that they don't have the support they need at home. It seems like in a remote world expectations on women could increase if not being addressed. With that said, remote work is just a symptom of a problem, the root cause being unequal division of responsibility at home.

Perception & Feeling

Remote workers may experience increased difficulty in separating their work and personal lives. This blurred boundary can cause feelings of guilt when attending to personal matters during work hours, or conversely, working during personal time. The constant interplay between work and personal responsibilities can lead to heightened stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction.

Structure & Processes

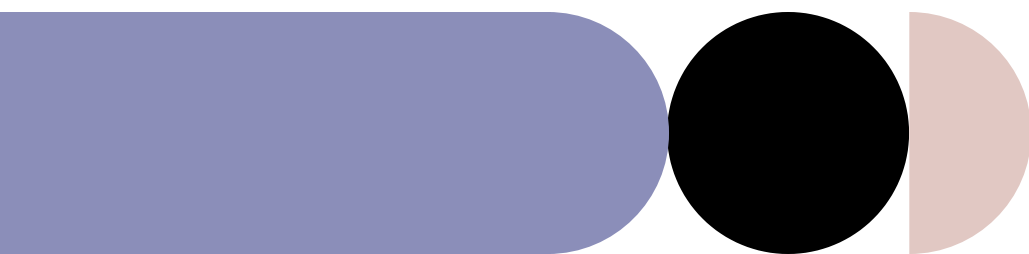
In a remote context you don't have the physical separation that you get when going to work, making it harder to establish clear boundaries. Implementing structures and processes, such as designated work hours, setting up a dedicated workspace, and scheduling regular breaks, can help remote workers maintain a healthy work-life balance. Employers should also encourage employees to establish boundaries and support them in maintaining a balance between work and personal obligations.

Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders play a critical role in helping remote workers navigate the challenges of juggling work and personal obligations. By fostering open communication, setting realistic expectations, and being understanding of employees' personal circumstances and inequalities between gender, leaders can support a healthier work-life balance. On the other hand, remote workers need to develop self-leadership skills, such as setting personal boundaries, managing their time efficiently, and seeking support when needed.

Culture & Norms

The organizational culture and societal norms can significantly impact how remote workers balance their work and personal lives. A supportive work culture that values and respects employees' personal time can lead to a healthier work-life balance. Employers should promote a culture that encourages employees to take breaks, set boundaries, and seek support when faced with challenges in juggling work and personal obligations. Additionally, as remote work becomes more widespread and accepted, societal norms will likely evolve to better accommodate the unique challenges faced by remote workers.



Work-life balance

Almost half (47.2%) of the women in our study frequently worked overtime and 65.5% said that they are available to answer work-related questions during their time off.

There is this stereotype of being a super mom and a super worker at the same time. As a woman you gotta do home chores, cook, take care of a child and the same expectation is from your employer, you should work extra hard since you have the benefit of being home.

- *Woman, The Czech Republic*

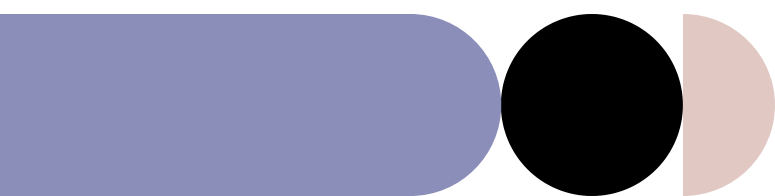
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Approximately 30% of respondents struggled to separate work and personal life when working remotely, feeling they should always be available. 42.8% of the respondents in our study could mentally disconnect from work when being off duty.

Work-life balance is important for society as a whole, as it allows individuals to lead fulfilling lives outside of work and contributes to overall well-being. However, societal norms and expectations around work can make it difficult to achieve a healthy work-life balance especially for women. For example, in some industries, working long hours may be seen as a badge of honor, while in others, taking time off may be stigmatized.

Perception & Feeling

Work-life balance is important for an individual's well-being and sense of fulfillment. When we work too much and start to neglect our personal life, we may start to feel stressed and unhappy and eventually this could lead to lack of motivation, decreased productivity, stress and strained relationships with family and friends and even burnout. Additionally, without a work-life balance, we may start to feel like work is consuming our entire life, leaving us with no time or energy for other important aspects of our lives.



Structure & Processes

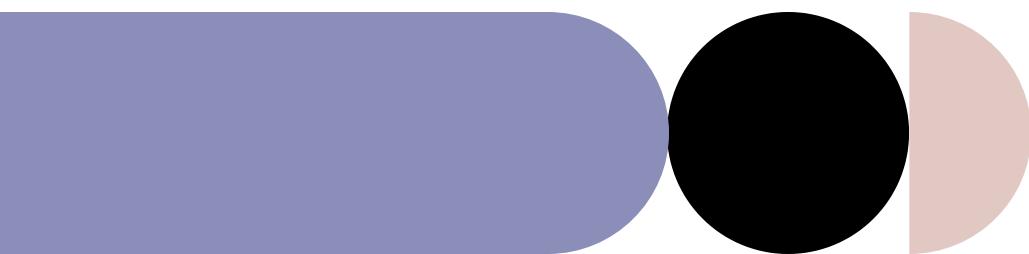
Creating a work-life balance requires structure and processes that support it. This includes setting boundaries around work hours, prioritizing tasks, and delegating responsibilities when necessary. A lack of structure or processes can make it difficult to manage work and personal life, leading to an imbalance.

Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders have a responsibility to promote work-life balance for their employees by encouraging and supporting it. They should lead by example, prioritize their own work-life balance, and create a work culture that values it. Self-leadership is also important, as individuals in the end have the primary responsibility for their own work-life balance.

Culture & Norms

The culture and norms of a workplace can influence the work-life balance of employees. If the culture prioritizes long work hours and a "work at all costs" mentality, employees may feel pressure to prioritize work over their personal life. In contrast, a culture that values work-life balance can create an environment that supports employee well-being and productivity. Employees who tend to work a lot of overtime can be seen as something positive while it should be a warning signal for poor work-life balance and future costs for companies (International Trade Union Confederation, 2007).



Multitasking & Time management

63.1% of respondents in our study feel in control of their time during work hours, research has shown that lack of control can lead to burnout (University of Minnesota Extension, 2021).

EU survey reveals that workplace stress is on the rise in Europe since COVID-19. More than four out of ten workers (44% of 27.000 employees interviewed) stated that their work stress has increased, severe time pressure or work overload being two factors (EU-OSHA, 2021). In our study being only women an alarmingly high number of 49,3% often feel stressed during work hours.

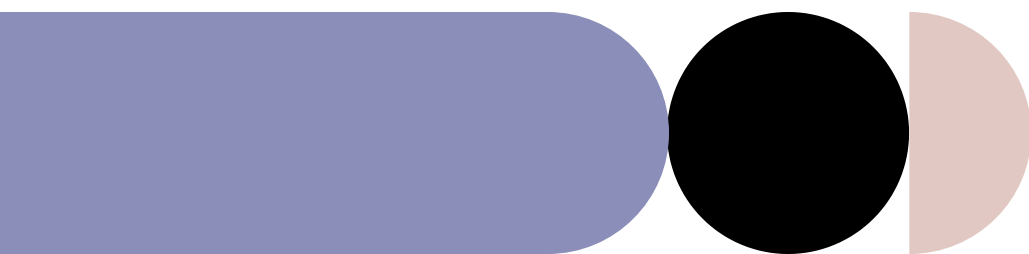
Remote workers often face challenges related to multitasking and time management, as they juggle various digital communication channels, work tasks, and home responsibilities. Although working remotely can save time by eliminating the need to commute, it may lead to an increased risk of multitasking, which can be counterproductive and potentially harmful if not managed effectively.

Multitasking has become an expectation in today's fast-paced world, but studies have shown that it can decrease productivity and increase stress. Encouraging a culture that values focus and prioritization can help mitigate the need for multitasking, leading to better overall productivity. Factors such as the increasing pace of work and the blending of work and personal life may contribute to the prevalence of multitasking. Women working remotely might be more inclined to multitask to balance caregiving and work responsibilities or compensate for the absence of support systems typically found in a physical workplace.

A woman that we interviewed in Sweden being a mom and juggling multiple job titles phrased it;

We just need to be more present in what we do. When I'm working I'm 100% focused on what I do, when I'm with my daughter I'm 100% focused on being present with her. Of course it requires that I plan my time, but focus and variation are not opposites.

- Woman, Sweden



Perception & Feeling

Multitasking can create a feeling of being overwhelmed and stressed, as it requires juggling multiple tasks at the same time. Time management, on the other hand, can help individuals feel more in control of their workload and reduce stress by prioritizing tasks and allocating time efficiently.

Multitasking may be seen as a necessary skill for managing a heavy workload, but it's not helping rather decrease productivity. Women who are working remotely may feel that they need to multitask in order to keep up with their work responsibilities, even if it could lead to increased stress and burnout.

Structure & Processes

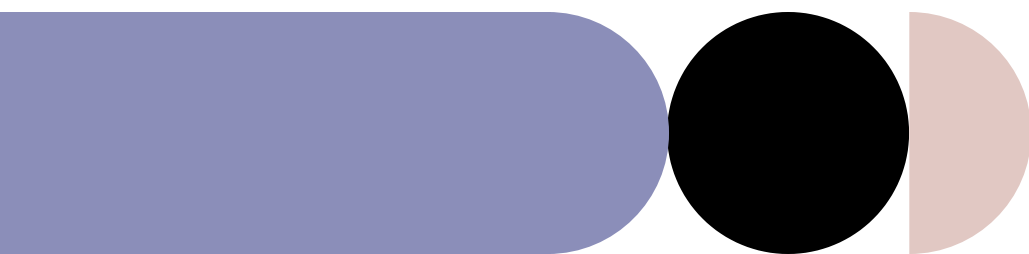
Unclear processes and expectations can lead to multitasking and poor time management, as employees may not know what tasks to prioritize or how much time to allocate to each task. A clear and structured approach to work can help individuals manage their workload more effectively and reduce the need for multitasking. Organizations that have clear priorities and well-defined tasks may make it easier for employees to focus on one task at a time, rather than feeling the need to multitask. Additionally, having adequate resources and support systems in place can help employees manage their workload and prevent the need for multitasking.

Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders and individuals alike can benefit from time management strategies such as prioritizing tasks, delegating responsibilities, and setting realistic goals and project plans. Self-leadership involves taking ownership of one's workload and being proactive in managing time and tasks to avoid multitasking. Leaders who model healthy work habits and prioritize effective time management can help reduce the need for multitasking. Similarly, individual employees can take steps to manage their workload and prioritize tasks, such as setting clear priorities, avoiding distractions, and delegating tasks when appropriate.

Culture & Norms

In some workplaces, multitasking may be seen as a positive trait, and employees may feel pressure to constantly be juggling multiple tasks. Organizations that prioritize productivity and a "busy" culture may create an environment in which employees feel the need to multitask in order to demonstrate their value. This can lead to decreased productivity and risk for burnout. A culture that prioritizes effective time management and encourages employees to prioritize tasks can help reduce the need for multitasking.



Remote Workday Structure

If I don't eat properly, I always end up stressed, yet when I get stressed and too busy, I lose my appetite, it is a bitter circle

- Woman, Ireland

37% of our respondents work at an organization with a mental health/well-being policy in place while 63% don't or don't know if they have one. It is crucial to understand that a culture of overwork and insufficient breaks can be detrimental to individuals, organizations and society. Implementing policies and regulations can help guarantee employees have a structured workday with adequate breaks and rest.

Perception & Feeling

Employees might experience feelings of stress, anxiety, and being overwhelmed if their workday lacks structure, breaks, or contains continuous meetings. This can contribute to burnout and negatively affect mental and physical health.

Structure & Processes

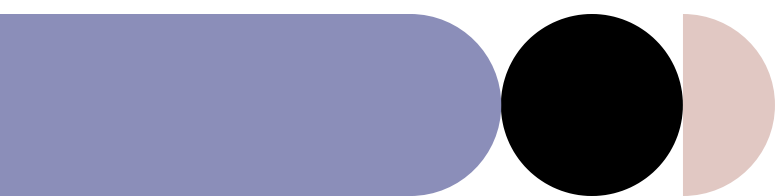
Employers are responsible for providing a structured workday that allows for breaks, rest, and recovery. A lack of breaks or non-stop meetings can hinder productivity, creativity, and innovation. Implementing policies and guidelines for work hours, breaks, and meeting scheduling is essential for promoting a healthy work-life balance.

Leadership & Self-leadership

Effective leadership plays a crucial role in mitigating the risk of burnout among remote employees. Leaders should promote a culture of work-life balance by demonstrating the value of taking breaks, efficiently scheduling meetings, and prioritizing rest and recovery. They should also communicate their expectations clearly, offer support, and provide resources to help employees manage their well-being. Employees, in turn, need to practice self-leadership by setting boundaries, taking breaks when necessary, and openly communicating their needs to avoid burnout.

Culture & Norms

Workplace culture has a significant impact on employees' well-being and risk of burnout. Establishing a culture that values work-life balance, prioritizes rest and recovery, and supports employee well-being is essential for maintaining a healthy remote work environment. Policies around scheduling meetings, taking breaks, and encouraging open communication about mental health should be established to promote healthy work habits. In a supportive culture, employees are more likely to feel comfortable discussing their struggles, leading to proactive solutions that reduce burnout risk.



The Practical Dimension

In this section we discuss and highlight the practical part of remote work that is critical for ensuring that employees have the necessary support and resources to work efficiently and safely from home. Adequate technical equipment and workspace are essential for preventing injury and discomfort, and it is the employer's responsibility to provide the necessary tools to their remote employees. In addition, there is a need to promote work-life balance and create structures to allow flexibility in caregiving responsibilities, especially for women who often take on a more significant responsibility outside of work.



Balancing Workload with
Sick Leave & Caregiving



Adequate Technical Ergonomic
Equipment & Space at Home

Balancing Workload with Sick Leave & Caregiving

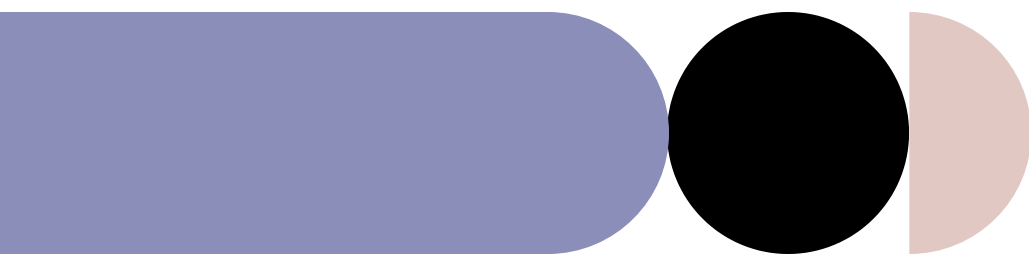
There is a need to promote and prioritize work-life balance, create structures as well as changing behavior to create more flexibility. But there are other aspects from a gender perspective, women tend to take the bigger responsibility outside of work, care for adults with disabilities or children was the primary reason for women working part-time, compared to men according to the annual Gender report by the European Commission in 2023. The gender gap in part-time employment was twice as high in 2021 as the gap in total employment (European Commission, 2023).

Taking a proper pause to recover from sickness is recommended for several reasons and even though there are several studies showing results of negative consequences working ill there might be a lot of unforeseen consequences we don't know about yet. Studies have shown that working while sick leads to worse job performance, and not taking sick days is linked to an increased risk of depression (Conway et al. 2014) and even burnout. Encouraging employees to take sick days is in the company's best interest in the long run, as although working sick may result in short-term productivity gains, it could lead to long-term losses.

There is also another dimension which is all of those employees and in this study women who have children and sometimes have to be off due to the children being sick. About half of the women answering our survey have kids (52,2%) of those 26,4% answered that they partially got the support they needed from their partner, 5,7% said that they didn't. Even though it is not an employer's responsibility, we want to note that there are different circumstances and there has to be room for a single parent to be taking care of his/her children without sensing stress having to work while being off. When comparing women with and without children, there was no noticeable difference in their perceived levels of perceived work-related stress.

There's different legislation in different countries around sick leave but the overall trend and something that our study also supports is that remote work has made it easier than ever to work ill from bed and prioritize presenteeism over taking sick days. You'll still take a meeting and answer emails when you can, because you know that the pile of tasks is just growing and waiting for you to come back.

In our study we also found that 30,5% of the respondents feel that their workload is not reasonable compared to the amount of hours they work, indicating that even before getting sick or taking care of sick children there might not be any room for being sick/be of due to careleave.



Perception & Feeling

Employees who are sick or taking care of sick children may feel guilty or stressed about taking time off work, especially if they feel that their workload will just pile up and become overwhelming in their absence. This can be even more challenging for remote workers who may feel like they are expected to be always available and may struggle to disconnect from work even when they are sick. As women predominantly take on the responsibility of caring for children, and are more likely to take on caregiving responsibilities when their partner is also working, achieving equality becomes even more crucial for women who work remotely. The pressure and stress of balancing work and caregiving can have negative consequences, making it imperative to address gender inequality in the workplace. Another aspect of mental illness is that it sometimes can be hard to grasp yourself since it may not be as obvious as having a cold or a broken leg, and therefore also hard to know when to take a sick day. One of the women we interviewed in Greece said:

I tried to signal when I was on the verge of burnout. But it's difficult, when I realized, it might have been too late. I had a lot to live up to, it was difficult to be strong. I forgot things, couldn't sleep, and my stomach crashed.

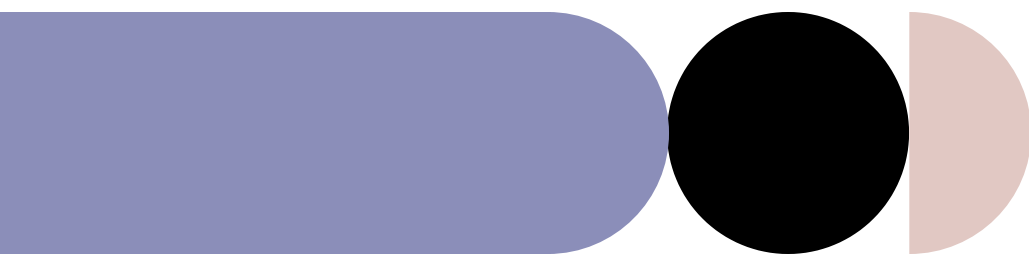
- Woman, Greece

Structure & Processes

Companies may not have clear policies or processes in place for handling workload when employees are out sick or taking care of sick children, which can make it difficult for colleagues or managers to take over tasks or delegate them to others. Remote work can also blur the boundaries between work and personal life, making it harder for employees to take time off and disconnect when they are sick, especially women who have children since they often take the bigger responsibility at home.

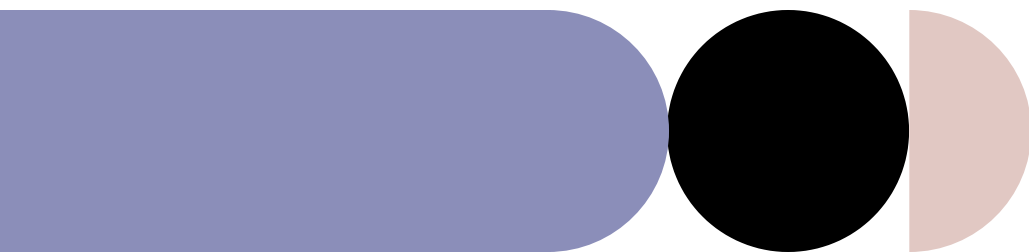
Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders have a responsibility to set clear expectations and communicate the importance of taking time off when employees are sick or need to take care of sick children. They can also provide support by setting up systems for delegation as well as modeling good self-care practices. Leaders who model healthy work-life balance and prioritize employee well-being, particularly women leaders who have experienced similar challenges, can serve as role models and mentors for employees who may be struggling to balance their work and caregiving responsibilities. For employees, it is important to prioritize health and communicate with their manager or colleagues about their workload and any support they may need when they are sick/care leave.



Culture & Norms

The culture of a company can influence how employees perceive sick leave and workload. If there is a culture of presenteeism or a lack of support for taking time off when sick, employees may feel pressure to work even when they are not feeling well. Remote work can also create a culture of always being available and online, which can make it harder for employees to take time off and prioritize their health. Workers need to feel comfortable deciding to take time off, and feel comfortable articulating those boundaries. It's not always the case that both of these conditions are met, and can be especially hard when having the option to work remotely.



Adequate Technical Ergonomic Equipment & Space at Home

I don't have as good ergonomic tools as I would imagine an office to have.

- Woman, Sweden

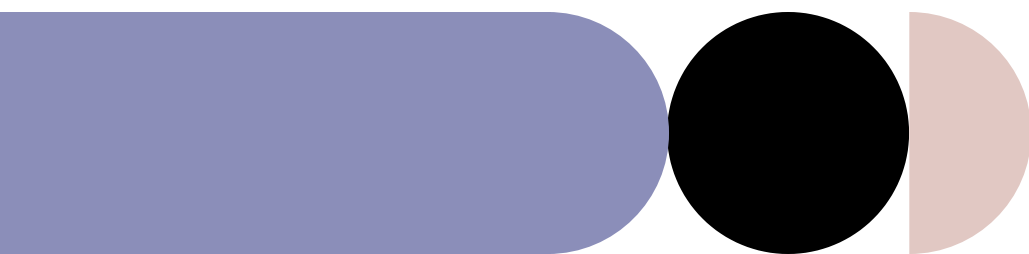
62% of the respondents felt that the company they work for had provided them with the equipment they need working remotely. However, this implies that 38% may not have the proper ergonomic tools or workspaces required to work efficiently and comfortably in a remote setting. Having an adequate workspace and technical equipment is essential for remote workers to maintain productivity, avoid discomfort or injury, and minimize stress. Employees might not be aware of the potential health issues caused by inadequately designed equipment and sedentary habits. They may also not know that musculoskeletal disorders develop slowly and can be challenging to remedy if left unaddressed for a long period. Those who frequently use computers need to pay close attention to their home office ergonomics. Organizations should share best practices for intensive computer and paperwork tasks, enabling workers to assess if they are upholding ergonomic standards at home (Geldart, 2022).

Perception & Feeling

Working remotely without proper ergonomic equipment and/or with the right digital tools can lead to feelings of discomfort, frustration, and potentially resentment towards the employer. These negative feelings can impact motivation, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Employees who are not provided with the appropriate tools may also feel unsupported and undervalued by their employers.

Structure & Processes

Organizations should establish guidelines and processes to ensure that remote employees are provided with the necessary ergonomic equipment, hardware, software and the support they might need. This may include how and what you as an employee are allowed to purchase but also providing recommendations for setting up a comfortable and efficient workspace, offering resources for remote employees to learn about ergonomics, smart digital tools and best practices.

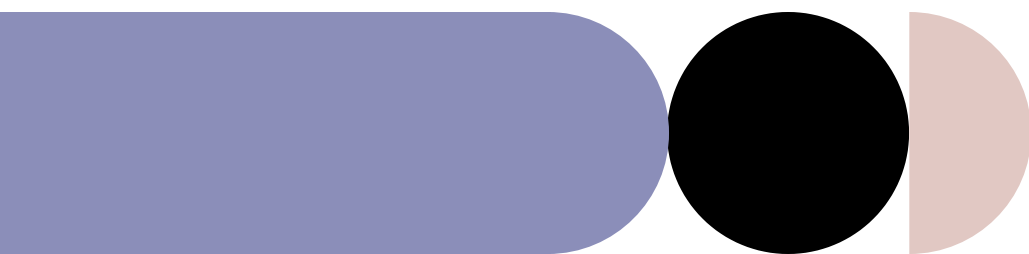


Leadership & Self-leadership

Leaders should be proactive in addressing the needs of remote employees when it comes to ergonomic equipment, updating hardware, software and other digital tools. By ensuring that employees have the necessary resources, leaders can help create a positive remote work environment and prevent potential health issues. Employees, on the other hand, have a responsibility to communicate their needs to their employers and take initiative in setting up a proper workspace provided by the employer.

Culture & Norms

Society's expectations and norms around remote work can also impact the provision of technical and ergonomic equipment at home. For example, if remote work is viewed as a perk rather than a necessity, there may be less pressure on employers to provide the necessary equipment and support. On the other hand, if remote work becomes more widespread and normalized, there may be greater pressure on employers to provide adequate support and resources for remote workers. Creating a culture that values the health and well-being of remote employees can help ensure that appropriate ergonomic equipment and workspaces are provided and prioritized.





Further development

We have covered a wide range of factors that can contribute to burnout among women working remotely. However, there are a few areas that could be explored further, such as:

Comparing different legal frameworks

The legal responsibilities and regulations for employers to prevent burnout and promote mental well-being vary significantly across different countries. In some countries, such as Sweden and Ireland, there are strong legal frameworks in place to protect employee mental health and well-being, and employers have a legal obligation to take reasonable steps to prevent workplace stress and burnout.

In other countries, such as Greece and the Czech Republic, there may be less legal protection for employees in this area. Employers may have more discretion in how they manage mental health issues and may not be required to provide specific support or accommodations.

It is important to note, however, that legal frameworks are only one aspect of the broader societal and cultural context in which employers and employees operate. In some countries with weaker legal protections, there may be stronger social and cultural expectations around employers providing support for employee well-being. Conversely, in some countries with strong legal protections, there may still be stigma or biases around mental health that make it difficult for employees to seek help or for employers to provide effective support.

International comparisons are tricky, because definitions of burnout vary and not all countries recognize the diagnosis. Some countries for example like Sweden were early to formulate a medical diagnosis for the condition burnout, this has helped break down taboos, encouraging more people to come forward and making employers more aware of and accepting of the problem. The eight countries involved in this study possess distinct legal frameworks that warrant further examination. In future research, it would be intriguing to explore how these diverse legal contexts influence both the individual employee and the organization as a whole.

Childcare system

Overall, while all of the countries included in the study have some form of childcare support available, there are concerns about the quality and availability of services in many of the countries. This can place a significant burden on women who are often expected to take on a larger share of childcare responsibilities. There is also a variation of how long paid parental leave you have that also affects women's abilities to make career development.

Diversity

Although biases and stereotypes were touched upon and a gender perspective is present throughout the study, organizations could benefit from listening to other minority groups that face discrimination in the workplace. We recognize that discrimination exists, and to truly understand these issues, we must actively engage with the voices of those affected.





Next Steps in the BeatBurnout project

In the next part of the BeatBurnout project, we will explore the perspectives of managers and HR managers. We will examine the challenges they face in supporting remote work teams and determine whether they perceive differences in their behavior towards employees based on gender. We will also investigate whether they experience differences in the needs and requests of women and men in the workplace.

For more info follow the project:
www.beatburnout.eu

Creators of the BeatBurnout project

First, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to each of the 283 incredible women who took part in this study. Your time and dedication have been invaluable, and we are genuinely appreciative of the insights you've shared with us on this crucial subject.

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For more info visit www.beatburnout.eu



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