



LIVE. PLAY. WORK.



THE GREAT
*American
Shakeup*



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Somewhere over the course of the past year and a half – holed up and locked down – Americans reprioritized. Consumers took a hard look at what was important and not so important to them.

Health, wellness, and particularly mental health came to the fore. The trappings of work-first daily life were called into question. And as the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel comes into view, companies are realizing that the pre-COVID playbook for doing business suddenly no longer applies.

So through an original survey of about 1,000 American consumers and conversations with commercial real estate, consumer brand, and workplace thought leaders, we've put together a guide for charting the path of life after the pandemic: a look at consumer behavior and the future of brands through the lens of real estate and development. A playbook for the next normal.

WHY REAL ESTATE?

As we worked to help both our consumer brand and commercial real estate clients adapt and innovate post pandemic, we realized that the world of real estate might hold all the answers. After all, who better to divine the future of what life will look like in the “After Times” than real estate developers who plan years in advance by studying and anticipating how people live?

So we went straight to the source, interviewing commercial real estate leaders in addition to consumers and brand experts on how they expect Americans to live their lives and interact with the spaces around them.



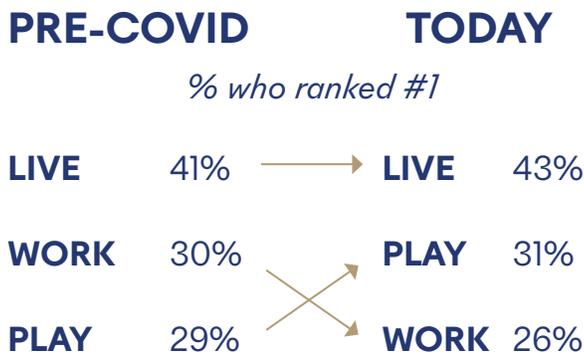
LIVE, PLAY, WORK

Live, Work, Play went from all-inclusive residence advertisement to shorthand for American priorities.

But after a year in isolation, endless Zoom calls for former “office” workers, and work life inevitably bleeding into home life, Americans have flipped the script.

According to our survey, the balance is no longer Live, Work, Play.

It's Live, Play, Work.



“We’re seeing colossal shifts in how people use space. But real change takes time — and real estate will be ground zero. Developers need to think in phases: in the short term, it’s about addressing the immediate wants and needs of tenants and consumers, and working to meet them where they are. In the long term, it’s about imagining where knowledge work can happen and what needs come with that in your portfolio.”

BARBARA MARTIN

Cofounder and co-CEO of The Brand Guild



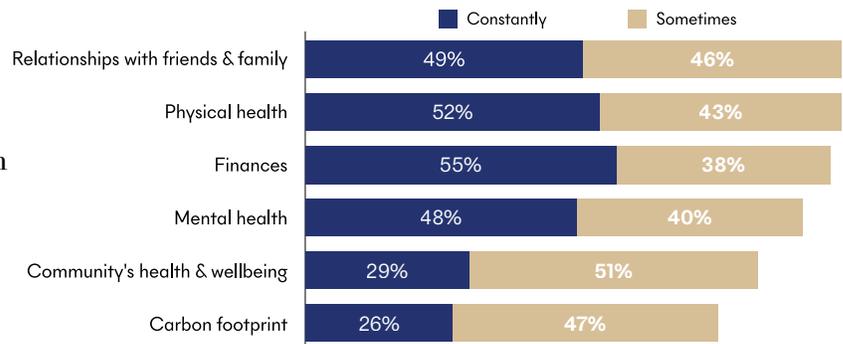
LIVE

There's no place like home — or is there?
A pandemic year had Americans reexamining how and where they lived in unprecedented ways.

Looking Inward

Americans have spent the past year refocusing on themselves and doubling down on financial and physical health, time with loved ones, and their impacts on the world after a tumultuous 2020.

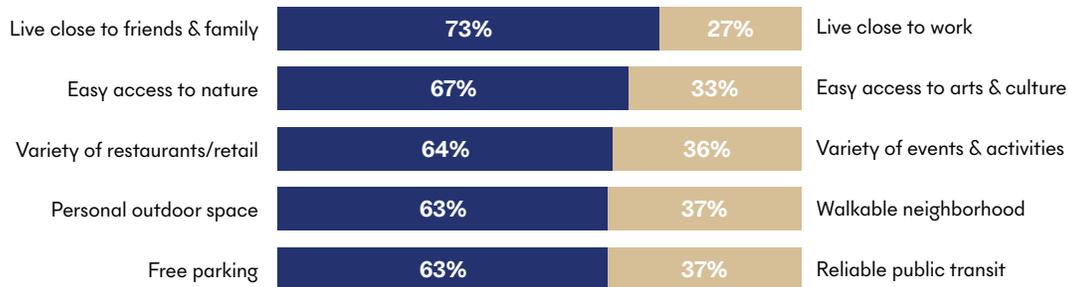
How much Americans have focused on improving aspects of their lives in the past year



The Full-Service Home

While many Americans relocated during the pandemic, further pushing trends towards the suburbs and away from big cities, it at least got many thinking about what's important to them in their next home.

Which would you rather have?

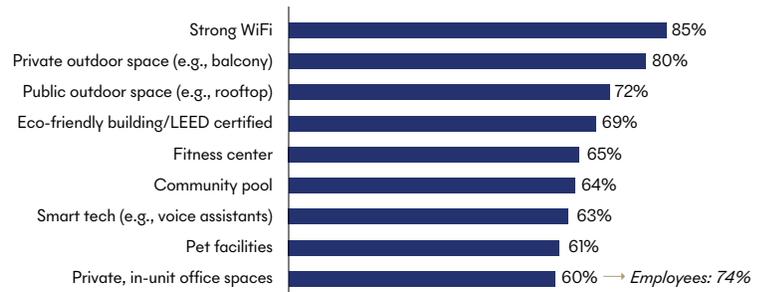


Prime Time for Renters

Americans are increasingly turning to rentals, driving demand for luxury amenities & services that go beyond the community pool.

Importance of amenities when looking for new apartment/condo among those who currently live in apartments

(Very/somewhat important)



LIVE

THE BRAND GUILD EXPERT INSIGHTS

“

[The] expectation is beyond [the] traditional ‘career, retire, die’ model of the past. Today, the market doesn’t just want condos, apartments, and office – the market wants better lifestyle. So our developments take a holistic approach of optimizing everyone’s time, engaging an accretive community, and enhancing the quality of life.”

MONTY HOFFMAN

Chairman & Founder, Hoffman & Associates

“

The pandemic has definitely been a time for people to re-think what they want most from their homes and communities – a trend we call the Great Reshuffling. The ability to work remotely for many has opened up a host of new possibilities for where they can live and work, beyond what was a comfortable commute in the past. Additional time spent at home has also inspired countless renovations and remodels to maximize peoples’ current living space – and potentially bump up the home’s value.”

MATT KREAMER

Data PR Manager, Zillow

PLAY

As it officially overtakes Work as priority No. 2, Play has also received a pandemic facelift.

Can conscientiousness conquer convenience?

Shopping has quickly become a more conscientious experience, especially as shoppers try to patronize minority-owned businesses in the face of racial injustice and offset negative impacts felt by the rise in ecommerce during the pandemic

Many Americans have embraced more conscientious spending habits over the past year, including:

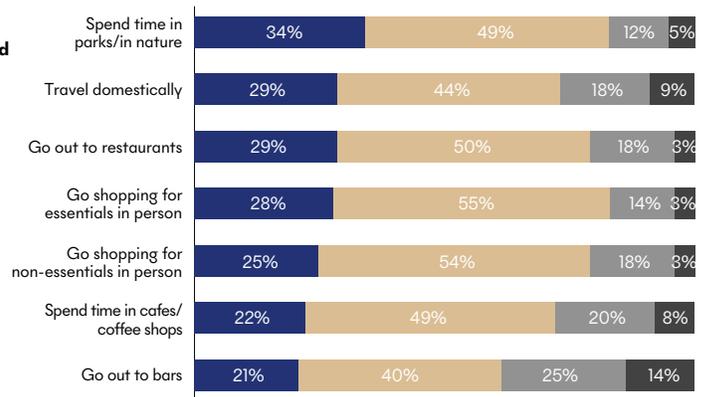
- 34%** Paying more attention to the ingredients in foods/personal care products
- 31%** Being more conscious of the environmental impact of products purchased
- 30%** Supporting local businesses more often
- 28%** Being more conscious of the political figures/policies supported by the companies they purchase from

The new third place

With renewed emphasis on gathering outside the home, third places – spaces outside the home or office – are quickly reestablishing their importance in 2021 and beyond. At the top of this list are shops, restaurants, and greenspaces.

Expected frequency of Play activities compared to prepandemic life

- More frequently
- Same amount as before
- Less frequently
- Unsure



The hospitality reawakening

COVID-19 thrashed the hospitality industry. But that strife also spawned some of the most visible innovation the industry has known in years, between expanded delivery offerings, ghost kitchens, and year-round outdoor dining. Our research suggests those innovations are here to stay.

86% hope outdoor dining remains as popular post-pandemic as it is now

Alongside outdoor dining, in the post-COVID restaurant, Americans most want:

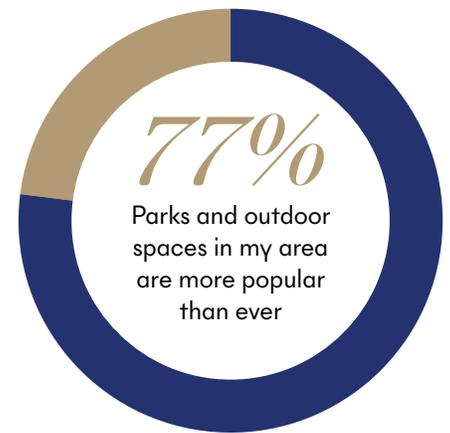
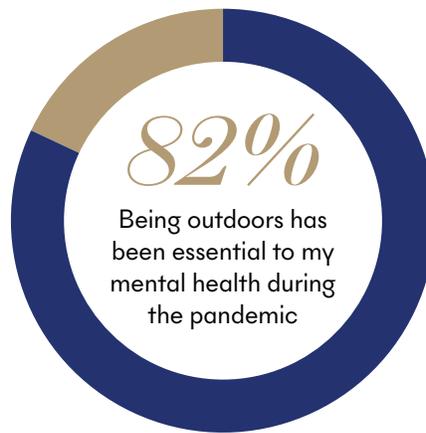
- Less crowded dining areas
- Walk-up windows for takeout
- Contactless service

PLAY

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The Great Outdoors Comeback

Nature has also become an essential part of Americans' health and relationships. Nearly everyone sees the value of the outdoors beyond the pandemic: 86% agree we need more investment in public outdoor spaces.



62% are concerned about the environmental impact of traveling

65% say the pandemic has inspired them to explore the US more, rather than going to other countries

Should Business Travel Come Back?

Following a year of shutdowns and restrictions, travel has seen a sharp uptick in 2021. But growing concern around the environmental impact of travel and cost savings enjoyed by businesses over the past year have many questioning the future of business travel, while consumers turn to new destinations and modes of transit in the wake of COVID-19.



PLAY

THE BRAND GUILD EXPERT INSIGHTS

“

Against the backdrop of this last year, brand silence is deafening. Now more than ever, we want to know the products we are using, and investing in, align with our values. But it's not just about having a distinct POV or putting out a press release. We're entering an era of accountability. If you say you believe in something as a brand that needs to be backed up with action, impact, and dollars. Did your brand post a black square last summer? One year later, what have you committed to as a company in the ongoing fight for racial justice?”

NAOMI HIRABAYASHI

Cofounder & CEO, Shine

“

Fashion and our overall physical presentation can make a huge difference in how we feel mentally. During COVID, fashion has been a way for us to ‘fake it till we make it’ in terms of going back to feeling ‘normal,’ alive, and worry-free in the way we did prior. It has also been a way to say ‘You may not be able to see me behind this mask, but you can see how I feel through my fashion.’”

MELISSA MASH

Founder & CEO, Dagne Dover

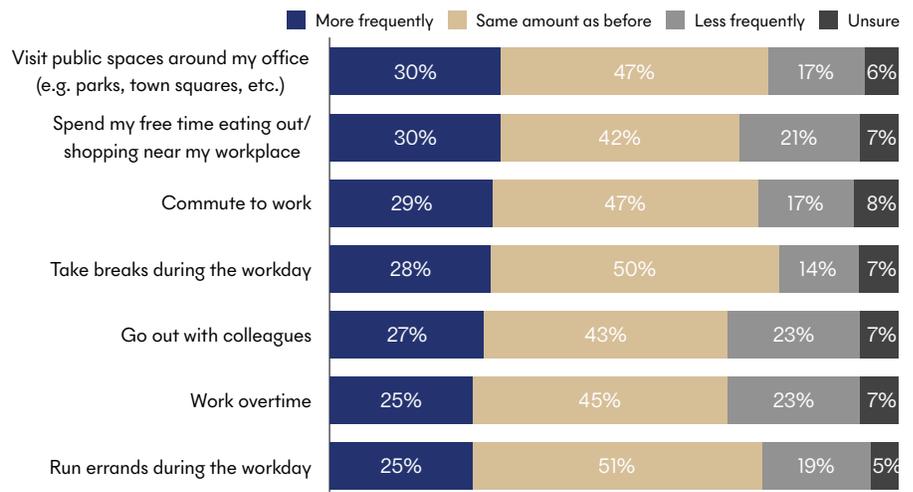
WORK

Work hasn't just fallen in rank behind play. We predict that COVID-19 has reshaped the ways Americans think about how work fits into their lives forever.

Work as Life

Rather than fitting their lives around work, Americans now expect work to fit into their lives. And employers are expected to accommodate – though many still trail behind, and are running out of time to adjust as the “Great Resignation” looms.

Expected frequency of work activities compared to pre-pandemic life*

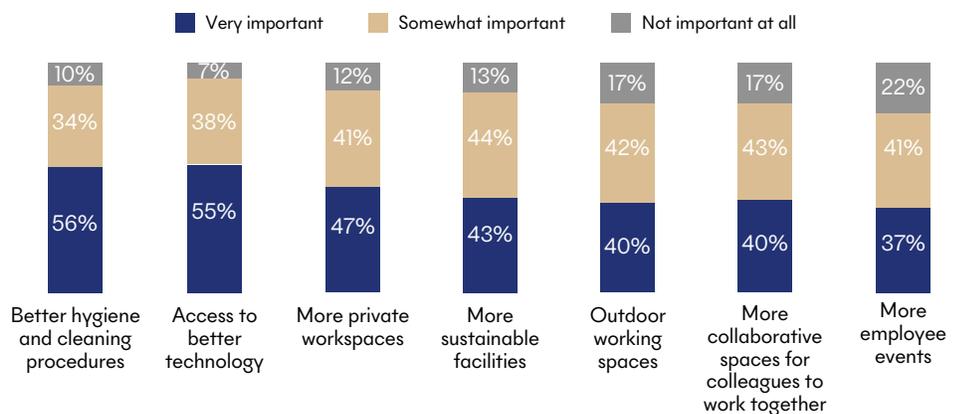


*Excludes “not applicable” responses; numbers may not add to exactly 100% due to rounding

The Office Reset Button

Regardless of size or location, as hybrid schedules abound, the office will need to serve a new, more collaborative purpose and meet rising expectations among employees when it comes to safety, privacy, and sustainability.

Importance of workplace changes postpandemic



The Spaces in Between

Changes in the working world aren't self-contained. They have broader impacts on the communities surrounding them, particularly business development districts. It remains to be seen how much surrounding businesses will feel the impact of a hybrid workforce.

56% of employees still want to work in a bustling, downtown area

WORK

THE BRAND GUILD EXPERT INSIGHTS

“

HR departments will become a more critical component of the functional office and sustaining collaborative culture. If you don't offer more than a walled cubicle, you better have magical coffee in the kitchen to seduce your employees back to the office.”

PHILIPPE LANIER

Principal, EastBanc

“

The truth is most tenants are very unsure of what they want from offices in the ‘post-Covid’ world, but they are trying to manage people’s expectations, concerns, and fears. We have seen a number of tenants reconfigure their spaces to be more collaborative, welcoming, and in some cases ‘fun.’ Sitting at a desk and wearing noise-canceling headphones to do work is less logical today when it could be done from home. What cannot happen at home or over Zoom is real connection, collaboration, or socialization. Those are necessary ingredients for innovation, productivity, and building office culture – that is why the office exists.”

ROBERT WARD

President and CEO of Skanska USA Commercial Development

GENERATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

There are stark differences when it comes to how younger and older generations are approaching life post-COVID.

While Boomers are clear drivers of the new restructuring to Live, Play, Work, younger generations are more evenly split among the different aspects of life – perhaps signaling greater emphasis on balance across all three.

Ranked #1	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
LIVE	37%	36%	46%	51%
PLAY	24%	32%	27%	36%
WORK	38%	33%	27%	13%

Bold indicates statistically significant difference from the U.S. average

Gen Z & Millennials still want to be connected to cities, despite nationwide trends towards the suburbs:

- Boomers (56%) are less likely than younger generations (Gen Z: 71%, Millennials: 80%, Gen X: 73%) to find proximity to a city center important when considering a new place to live.
- Younger generations (Gen Z: 50%, Millennials: 40%) are more likely than older generations (Gen X: 26%, Boomers: 23%) to choose easy access to arts & culture over easy access to nature.

Many Gen Z and Millennials still haven't put down roots, and may continue to forego homeownership long-term:

- Younger generations (Gen Z: 69%, Millennials: 67%, Gen X: 50%) were more likely than Boomers (22%) to have considered moving to a new area during COVID.
- And younger generations (Gen Z: 61%, Millennials: 63%, Gen X: 44%) are more likely than Boomers (23%) to prefer renting a luxury apartment with great amenities over owning a standard home with no amenities.

Younger generations lead the charge in conscious consumerism:

- Boomers (61%) are less likely than younger generations (Gen Z: 80%, Millennials: 76%, Gen X: 77%) to have focused on improving their carbon footprint over the past year.
- That said, younger generations (Gen Z: 71%, Millennials: 80%) are more likely than older generations (Gen X: 67%, Boomers: 55%) to admit that the convenience of online shopping sometimes stops them from supporting local businesses.

Most employees are eager to connect with their coworkers again – but Boomers are starting to check out:

- Boomer employees are less likely than younger generations to view more employee events (Boomers: 46% vs. Gen Z: 92%, Millennials: 86%, Gen X: 72%) or collaborative work spaces (Boomers: 61% vs. Gen Z: 85%, Millennials: 88%, Gen X: 83%) as important in their post-pandemic workplace.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

The old notions of work-life balance are myths – and companies must adapt to keep up with talent.

The new work-life “imbalance” is a good one, with live and play coming to the fore. But employees now expect space – literally and figuratively – for life to happen within the bounds of work. Striking the right balance will be an essential part of winning the talent war and keeping the threat of 2021’s Great Resignation at bay.

Spaces are the front lines for change.

The spaces that surround us will continue to blend Work into Life and Play in ways it didn’t before COVID, from homes built with the fluidity of work and life in mind to new developments with an eye for ample green space and better hygiene.

The conscious consumer will soon be the norm.

Americans are becoming more mindful of their impact, with a renewed focus on the environment and conscientious spending driven by impact-minded Gen Z and Millennials. With over half the U.S. population consisting of Millennials or younger, and Gen Z rapidly growing into their purchasing power, we can expect conscious consumers to become just consumers as their influence grows even larger in the coming years.



THE NEW LANGUAGE OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE: DYNAMISM.

In this new work-life balance, there’s no perfect catch-all ratio. Instead, developers, employers, and brands should familiarize themselves with a new label: dynamism. Employees, consumers, renters, and homeowners are emerging from the pandemic with new priorities and an expectation to be able to move back and forth between those priorities quickly – and clear communication with everyone involved will be key.

KEY U.S. MARKETS TO WATCH

To better understand how Americans are planning to live their lives post-COVID, we honed in on four of the top cities paving the way in real estate innovation.



NYC

Despite the supposed pandemic “exodus” of New Yorkers, many simply relocated from Manhattan to another borough. Brooklyn saw a record number of home sales in October 2020.¹ And though office vacancies are still at record highs, growth in other sectors like industrial spaces is promising.² Though not quite back to 2019 levels, this global hub for real estate innovation³ is bouncing back.



WASHINGTON, D.C.

Aside from being the birthplace of The Brand Guild, the D.C. area is enjoying major real estate growth and stronger economic indicators⁴ than much of the rest of the country, especially as the government adds tens of thousands of new jobs filling up offices.⁵

¹ Street Easy (November 18, 2020): “October 2020 Market Reports: NYC Home Sales Reach Pre-Pandemic Levels”

² CBRE (October 12, 2020): “E-Commerce Continues to Drive Industrial Leasing in NYC”

³ Mapping Innovation Geographies

⁴ Millionacres (May 1, 2021): 2021 Washington, D.C., Real Estate Market Investing Forecast



MIAMI

South Florida was an especially popular destination for pandemic moves, even if Miami did see a net decrease in population. Among New Yorkers alone, around 19,000 relocated to Miami, at least temporarily.⁶ COVID has also made Miami’s real estate scene increasingly domestic: During past real estate booms, up to 80% of buyers were foreign. Today, 70% are domestic.⁷



HOUSTON

Houston is not only among the many markets seeing record home sales in 2021 – commercial properties also saw increases nearly across the board.⁸

⁵ CCIM Institute (2021): “Investors Flock to Washington, D.C.; Commercial Real Estate Markets

⁶ Bloomberg CityLab (April 26, 2021): “More Americans Are Leaving Cities, But Don’t Call It an Urban Exodus”

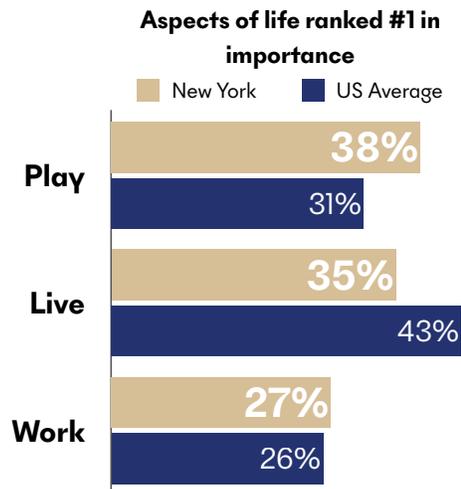
⁷ Forbes (February 19, 2021): “South Florida’s Real Estate Market is Now Officially in Super-Boom Mode”

⁸ Bisnow (June 22, 2021): Commercial Property Values Still Rose In Houston During The Pandemic

NEW YORK CITY

NYC still hasn't lost its reputation as the city that never sleeps – but now that may be even more so thanks to New Yorkers' penchant for going out rather than long hours spent at the office.

The city that never sleeps may finally be getting burned out from long hours at their desks: New Yorkers have put Work to the side in favor of Play and Live.



1

New Yorkers expect to blend their work lives with their personal lives. They are more likely to expect to spend more time going out with colleagues than they did pre-pandemic, so get ready for plenty of happy hours.

2

Even after COVID, New Yorkers still want to be in the thick of it. They are more interested in and eager to experience arts & culture, and the vast majority aren't very willing to compromise on being close to a city center when it comes time to move.

3

Meet New Yorkers where they are: in the park. The vast majority (89%) report that their city's outdoor spaces are more popular than ever, even more so than the 77% of Americans who reported they were visiting public spaces more post pandemic.

4

With rent prices hitting a new low, expect higher demands for amenities. Though NYC rent prices are slowly recovering¹, New Yorkers may place increased demands on amenities that became accessible to many for the first time during the pandemic – for example, many want to keep their rediscovered love of nature close by: 90% say access to outdoor space is important when considering their next home.

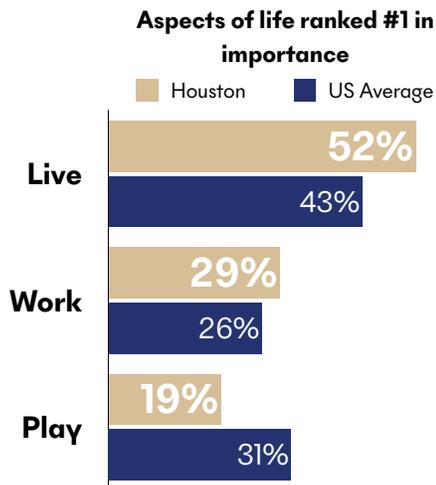
¹Streeteasy (May 19, 2021): "NYC's Rental Market Is On The Mend"



HOUSTON

Houston is unique in its doubling-down on general quality of life over work and play – perhaps because Houstonians can more easily put down roots thanks to its relative affordability compared to other big cities

Though Houstonians still place Work over Play, their emphasis on general quality of life hints at a demand for strong work-life balance.



1 Houstonians prize a high quality of life, perhaps in part because they are more likely to be settled in their own homes than other DMAs surveyed. Houston's homeownership rates are high at 59%¹, compared to 43% in D.C.² and less than one-third in NYC and Miami.³

2 Houston is less hesitant about return-to-office, which could bode well for downtown. By the end of June, almost half of Houston employees have returned to office in some capacity, and nearly one-third expect to spend more time visiting restaurants/shops around their office than they did pre-pandemic.⁴

3 That said, most Houston employees will stick to a hybrid schedule, though some employers are holding out. About one-third (31%) of local employers surveyed by the Greater Houston Partnership⁵ plan on having employees fully back in the office – high compared to other barometers⁶ of return to work schedules among employers nationally.

4 Restaurants will benefit from Houstonians' eagerness to eat out. Though Houston isn't as focused on Play, they won't be taking restaurants for granted: 42% expect to visit restaurants more frequently than pre-pandemic, significantly higher than the US average.

¹ Understanding Houston: Homeownership and Renting in Houston

² FRED (March 9, 2021): Homeownership Rate for the District of Columbia

³ Porch (2021): Is Homeownership Dying?

⁴ Kastle Systems (June 28, 2021): Getting America Back to Work.

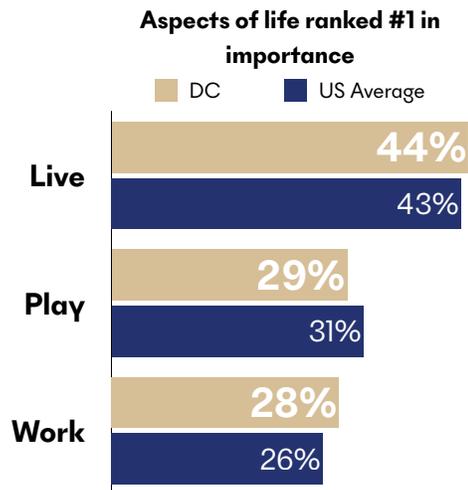
⁵ Houston Public Media (June 11, 2021): "Houston Area Employers Will Encourage Vaccinations and Flexible Work Schedules, According to New Study"

⁶ SHRM (May 19, 2021): "Employers Launch Hybrid Work Plans, Identify Early Obstacles"

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Among the four DMAs surveyed, D.C. is arguably the most driven metro area, with stronger ties to city life and a career-oriented population.

Unlike our national average, D.C. isn't quite willing to put Play over Work just yet, but many are still embracing the new work-life balance by leaning into hybrid work schedules.



1 D.C. locals embrace city living, even when it means less space. D.C. enjoys the trappings of city life: They are more likely to say that big cities are better than the suburbs, as well as to choose a rental with luxury amenities over owning a home with none.

2 Despite its city focus, D.C. loves trees. A greater share of D.C. locals feel strongly about protecting green spaces: Over half (54%) think it's very important for their community to invest in green space, and they are more likely than the U.S. average to want more car-free streets converted to outdoor community space.

3 D.C. will be a city of hybrid workers, but that doesn't mean they'll be abandoning downtown entirely. Major employers in the area (e.g., Capital One¹) are announcing hybrid work schedules, but around half of D.C. residents still say they want to work in a bustling, downtown area.

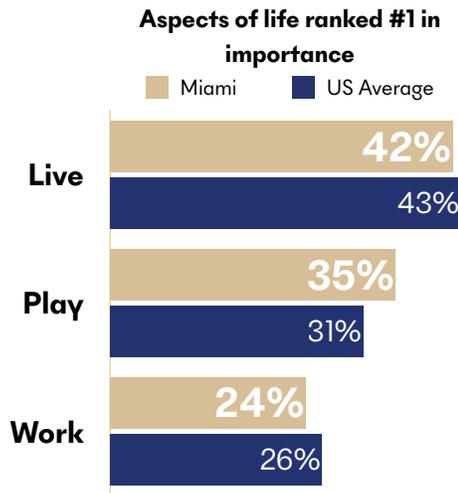
4 When they do have time to play, D.C. turns to arts & culture. The vast majority of D.C. locals intend to go to a museum this year (82% vs. 71% U.S. average), and one-third (34%) list bookstores as among the types of retail they can't wait to revisit post-pandemic.

¹Capital One (June 29, 2021). "Capital One Declares Future as a Hybrid Work Company" Company.

MIAMI

Though Miami's priorities are in line with the U.S. average, the city has a distinct enthusiasm for going out and enjoying their city's social scene.

Miami embraces its reputation as a party city, emphasizing time spent with loved ones – but not necessarily at the expense of their health or their wallets.



1

Miami is eagerly embracing crowds again, craving in-person events. Miami is more likely to be excited for, rather than dreading, crowded bars and restaurants post-COVID (62% vs. 52% U.S. average). To get them back to brick-and-mortar shopping, in-store events are also more popular among Miamians.

2

And new third places are in high demand, especially as many lost their go-tos during the pandemic. Miamians are overwhelmingly supportive of blocking off more streets to provide outdoor space for communities (84% vs. 75% U.S. average), perhaps in part because close to half lost one of their go-to restaurants/bars during COVID.

3

But South Florida isn't just a destination for play: though work is lower priority now, an influx of major businesses may change that. Behemoths like Goldman Sachs and Citadel are transplanting thousands of workers to the area, potentially signalling the growth of a more career-driven cohort.¹

4

At the end of the day, Miamians are focused on living a well-balanced life. They've put the work in over the past year to improve their physical and mental health, as well as their finances. But they're also more likely to take time to pamper themselves than the average American.²

¹Bloomberg (December 6, 2020): "Goldman Plots Florida Base for Asset Management in a Blow to New York"

²Global Web Index (2021)



METHODOLOGY

In partnership with market research firm Lucid, The Brand Guild conducted a 15-minute, online survey of a nationally representative sample of n=996 general population Americans, weighted to align with census data. Additional oversamples separate from the general population were conducted among four key DMAs: New York City (n=108), Washington, D.C. (n=104), Miami (n=105), and Houston (n=106). At the 95% confidence level, the margin of error for the general population sample is +/- 3.1 percentage points, while the margin of error for each of the four DMAs range from +/- 9.6 to 9.8 percentage points. The survey was conducted between May 11 - May 18, 2021.

ABOUT TBG

The Brand Guild is a fully integrated agency that builds and grows the most powerful brands in consumer lifestyle, food & beverage, and real estate. Our holistic approach to brand creation, strategy and storytelling creates critical momentum for our client-partners through a comprehensive suite of services that includes public relations, marketing, content, design, experiential and branding

GET IN TOUCH

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