

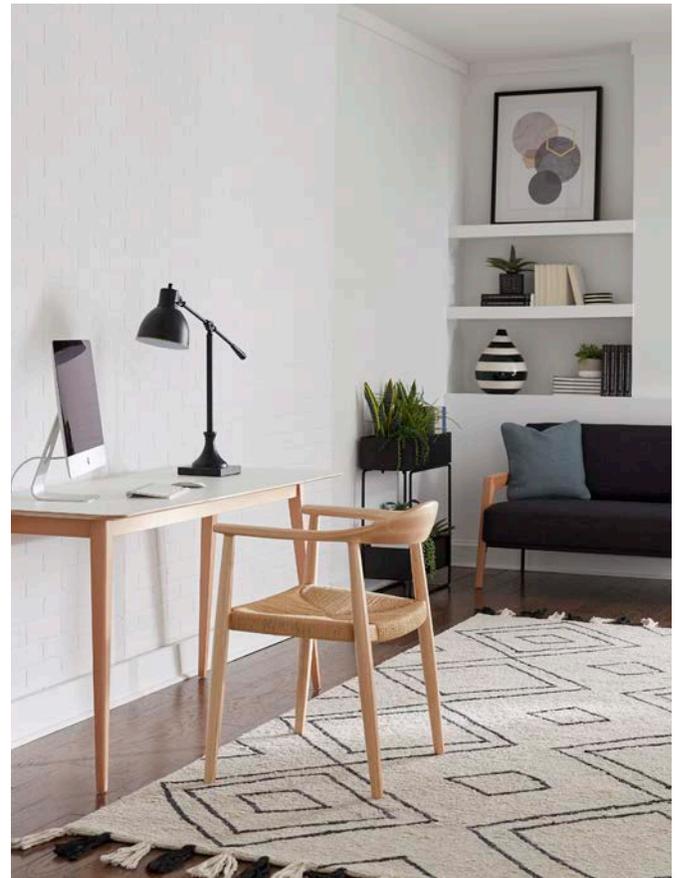
OUT OF OFFICE:

WORK BETTER FROM HOME

Across the United States and beyond, coronavirus shutdowns and health concerns have created a new gap in the market for stylish, adaptable home office furniture as more and more people see working from home as a permanent situation. Since March, millions of people have begun to work from home or increased preexisting work from home hours as businesses respond to safety concerns from commutes, inter-office contact, and other outlying factors that could contribute to health risks. Many companies have offered to allow employees to work from home at least until

a vaccine is widely available; some have even decided to permit remote work indefinitely. As a result, many find themselves in the market to create or upgrade an optimal working setup in their spaces. Kuchar has amassed research from multiple sources to assess the needs of the average market consumer for Etc. products.

This research was conducted three months after the cultural shift in the United States into coronavirus-related telecommuting, which allowed participants to speak from a stronger sense of their individual wants and needs after settling into their updated work routines. We compiled data using social media outreach, focus groups, and interviews with past residential clients. Few participants said they felt ready for the quick transition or well-prepared within their own homes.



“There has been a noticeable difference between typical in-office ergonomic chairs and my dining room table chair. The ergonomics really make a difference, and after 3 months, I see the benefit”



Our research found that 92% of those surveyed are working from home at least part of the week. Most see this as a long-term or permanent solution for their organization; as major companies like Twitter and Google move to this arrangement, many others have followed suit. Overall people feel positive about this change; they like being able to break up their work week (for those doing an office/remote split) and being able to save money on food and transport. 78% said they are working from an office setup at least half the day, with 38% of those responding that they are doing so 100% of their work day.

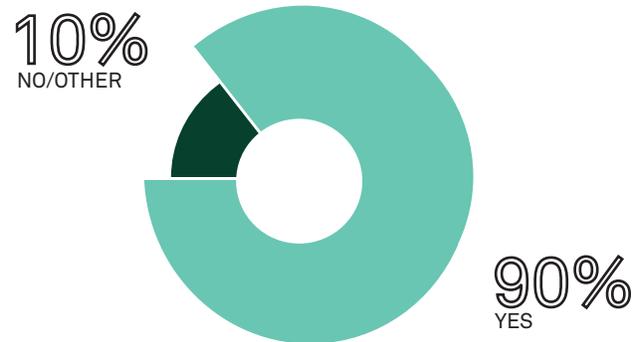
While 76% stated that they do have a home office setup, 69% of responders replied that their home office setup is in the same space as a guest room, living room, or other function within their home. Most often those responders are using their coffee table or dining room table as a desk, working in a temporary setup until they find the right pieces that fit their functional needs and aesthetic preferences. Only 27% of those surveyed stated that they have a dedicated room to use solely as a home office. About half stated that another member of their household was also working from home.

Participant Reactions

People feel positive about the flexibility that comes with working from home. Gaining back commute time means more time for family, hobbies, fitness, and relaxing. Participants also stated that they enjoyed being in their own environments: “...One thing

I love about my temporary office space (living room) is the daylighting and indoor plants around me.” Another responder stated: “I love working from home, and hope to continue to do so in the future. Now that this is a goal, I’ll probably spend more money on an office setup than I otherwise would have done.”

Being able to define a personal space for work that fit their needs and tastes was a common desire among participants expressed across multiple forms of data collection. We found that participants were excited about this opportunity to update their spaces to make the most of their new situations.



Most survey participants have recently considered buying new furniture or accessories for working from home.

This new work setup does lead to a few challenges, however. Such an abrupt shift to a new working environment meant that many did not have an opportunity to adjust their homes effectively to maximize function. Those surveyed are frustrated by distractions, uncomfortable furniture not meant for working full days, and not having a clear separation from their work space and home space:

“The biggest challenge is staying focused without a dedicated space - I need to create an environment that I don’t also use for dining or relaxing. I haven’t purchased any office furniture mostly because I care (too much) about how it looks, and I don’t want something boring and clunky in my home clashing with the rest of my interior.”

In addition, participants who have other household members working from home or children remote learning expressed dissatisfaction with their ability to focus in their home during work hours. While most surveyed do have the ability to carve out some private space for work, for most that area is a space within a space, such as a corner of a living or dining room. 61% said that they rearranged their home’s current layout to make room for a dedicated home office setup. A number of participants expressed frustration at not being able to focus due to environmental factors like children, pets, or other household members also working from home. Based on these varied scenarios, we concluded that most people fit into one of these four scenarios: a dedicated room with traditional desk, a separate workstation set up in a multi-use area of a home, a highly adaptable mobile solution that can be used in multiple areas of the home, and a dual-user setup for homes with multiple remote workers.

Wants and Needs

When asked about purchases or updates to their work setup, the most sought-after item was a good desk chair. After months of working from lounge furniture or a sub par chair, participants were most interested in finding a quality chair that fit their home's aesthetic and helped with burgeoning back problems. As one participant noted: "Cool style is most important. No boring office looking stuff". Several noted new or worsening back pain since the switch to remote work:

"A comfortable chair makes it better to focus on my work and back pain has been my biggest challenge."

"My biggest issues [have] been neck and upper back pain."

"A new chair with back support would make me more comfortable."

A recurring note was the desire for opportunity to move around during the day, whether that is through a sit-stand desk or a mobile setup that can be taken to multiple areas of the home. As time progresses, people are realizing just how much they miss movement within the office - getting up to get a cup of coffee or go to a meeting. Now that we are moving less during the work day, it is important to consider physical health changes as a result of working from home. Together, these wants speak to a distinct longing for the ergonomic support provided by traditional office furniture. Because our responders had largely been working from home for a few months by the date of their responses, they had enough time to develop informed opinions and reactions to their daily environment. We feel this data reflects a new level of appreciation for the reasons behind basic office design, including not only ergonomic factors but the importance of good lighting and adequate storage.



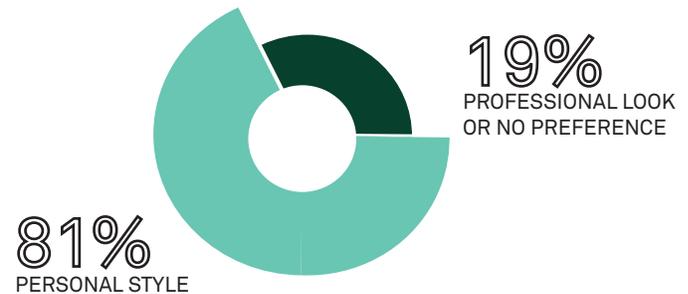
“It would be nice if someone would make affordable ergonomic chairs that are stylish. I don’t want my house to look like an office. I couldn’t find a chair for my home office that was ergonomically good for sitting and working all day that didn’t look like it was supposed to be in a [cubicle].”

Another common desire expressed was being able to shift positions and move to different areas of the home depending on the day: “I would ideally like to have a set up in my home that is easy to move into any room. The biggest challenges have been trying to integrate it with existing furniture.”

Mix It Up

As we spend more time working from home, it is important for physical and mental health to be able to switch positions and locations throughout the day, particularly as lockdown lingers in many parts of the United States. 76% of survey respondents said it is ‘somewhat to very’ important that new home office furniture or accessories be flexible and dual purpose to be used in multiple areas of the home. Other major considerations for a healthy setup include clutter management and tech accessories to make work more seamless (like an external keyboard). One response to the influencer’s poll results stated:

“My husband and I both worked from home, even before [COVID]... and usually office designs are really out of touch with reality. We can’t have a floating desk in the middle of the room - with all the cables to connect the computer, dock station, monitors, etc.”



More survey participants want new furniture to match their personal style over having a professional look.



Consumer Research

When looking for inspiration for their own home office people were most likely to start looking for inspiration through online retailers or searches on Google, Pinterest, or Instagram. Participants stated that they were most likely to purchase from online retailers, although many expressed reservations about buying a chair before being able to sit in it first. 7 out of the top 10 retailers chosen were digital; most were online components to existing brick-and-mortar stores. 38% said that they anticipated spending \$200-\$500 on upgrades for their home office including furniture, storage, and accessories. A proper ergonomic chair, storage accessories, and a height-adjustable desk or work table were the top three items cited as first purchases to improve setup. Many comments anticipated increased focus and productivity would result directly from improving one's remote work area:

“Working from home has been challenging. I believe if I make my space attractive and organized, my performance will improve!”

Adapting to the New Normal

Based on this research, Kuchar proposes several solutions for optimizing a work from home setup. The longer employees are working from home, the more they are missing the comforts of the office. Making thoughtful updates can improve employee comfort and almost everyone can benefit from making these changes or improvements to their space.

Reduce Visual Clutter

Have a desk surface covered with, well, everything? That seems to be the norm. Taking the few minutes to reorganize a work surface can improve your focus and reduce distractions from the surrounding environment. As a first pass, only keep essential supplies on the work surface. Start the week by having everything concealed in storage drawers or cabinets. If an item is taken out during the week, then it confirms that item is needed on a daily basis. If not already available, a small storage unit near or under the work surface is a good investment. Use the storage immediately near the work surface for items that are used daily. It is okay to keep supplies in a different area: when thinking about the typical office space, usually an employee needs to move from the desk to get copies or to throw something away. A larger storage unit could be purchased to house printers or other large items. One way to keep moving throughout the day is by having your supplies in a nearby closet. Stylish desktop accessories like a pencil holder and

folder for papers are a great way to organize while adding personality to the space. Now could be the time to scan old papers and recycle the physical copies.

Embrace Technology

The new reality of working from home is that we are relying on and integrating technology into our lives more than ever. Video calls are a daily occurrence, screen time is up, and our laptops are working overtime. Having technological accessories at hand can make the work from home setup more efficient. At the work surface, it is helpful to have a wireless charger and power module for ease of charging devices. Wire management is another great way to reduce clutter and conceal unsightly cords and cables. Clips and ties for cords are an inexpensive item that go a long way to improve the look of an office setup. An external mouse and keyboard should also be used; they allow for more efficiency while also providing physical comfort.

Keep Ergonomics in Mind

Most home office setups account for the baseline office needs, but they often are designed for those working for one or two hours at a time. Now that employees are working up to eight or more hours per day from home, it is important to make updates that consider ergonomics. Many people make the common mistake of sitting too close to their screen and craning their necks downward to see the content. Monitors or laptops should be positioned an arm's length away, and the top one-third of a screen should be at eye level. In some cases, this may mean that a monitor rise or laptop riser is required, an easy solution to improve the setup. A desk chair that is designed to provide all day comfort is the most important investment one can make to improve ergonomics. Dining or lounge chairs were not designed to be used all day and can leave you feeling aches and pains if overused. A good desk chair will, at a minimum, provide height adjustability, back support, and the ability to moderately recline. Though the ergonomic chair does provide improved comfort, it is also imperative to move throughout the day. Taking breaks at least once an hour to stand up and move will help reduce the stress sitting causes on the body. Adding a sit-to-stand component to the office setup is another great way to give the body a much needed change in position.

In addition to these considerations, Kuchar has suggestions for four typical layouts shown below.

SETUP A: Dedicated Home Office

For those who have a separate room.



- Large desk (24"W x 60"L minimum)
- Desktop sit-to-stand component
- Storage cabinet or file for under the desk
- Ergonomic desk chair
- Desk lamp
- Large storage unit for supplies or a printer
- Accessories for paper & pencil storage

SETUP B: Multifunction Space

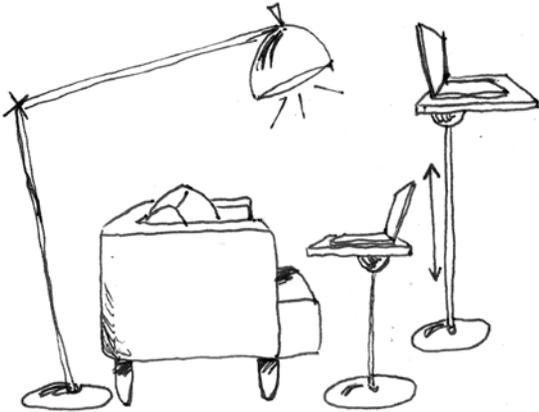
For those who have cleared space within a room.



- Small Desk (24"W x 36"L minimum)
- Storage unit on wheels
- Multifunction bookcase or cabinet
- Small desk lamp
- Minimal desk accessories
- Desk chair that matches the room style
- Mobile standing height table

SETUP C: Movable or Adaptable

For those who work from their dining or coffee tables



- Monitor riser
- Height-adjustable laptop side table
- Mobile cart or storage unit
- Floor lamp
- Power bank
- Mobile standing height table
- Desk chair that matches the room style

SETUP D: Multi-user

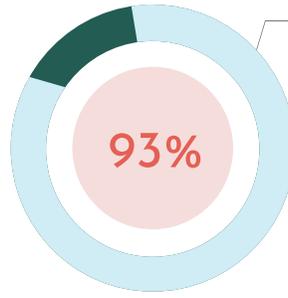
For those who share a space



- Large Desk (24"W x 96"D minimum)
- (2) Storage cabinets or files for under desk
- Center divider between the two desks with storage
- (2) Ergonomic desk chairs
- Large storage unit to house supplies or a printer
- Minimal desk accessories

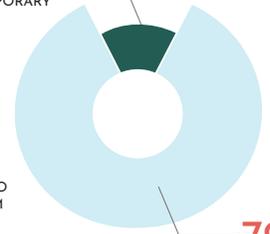
OUT OF OFFICE:

WORK BETTER FROM HOME



PEOPLE SURVEYED WHO ARE WORKING FROM HOME

21% TEMPORARY



79% PERMANENT

BREAKDOWN OF PEOPLE WHO CONSIDER THEIR WORK FROM HOME ENVIRONMENT AS PERMANENT OR TEMPORARY

CHALLENGES



DISTRACTIONS



COMMUNICATION



ERGONOMICS



WORK-HOME SEPARATION



LESS MOBILITY THROUGHOUT THE DAY



NO SOCIALIZING

BENEFITS



FAMILY



TIME



RELAXING



FLEXIBILITY



FITNESS



HOBBIES

90%

SAID THEY'VE CONSIDERED MAKING IMPROVEMENTS TO THEIR HOME OFFICE SETUP

73%

HAVE A SHARED SPACE

27%

HAVE A PRIVATE HOME OFFICE

HAVE vs NEED

MOST HAVE A WORKSURFACE, BUT WOULD LIKE A HEIGHT ADJUSTABLE DESK, COMFORTABLE CHAIR FOR ALL DAY SITTING, LIGHTING, AND STORAGE.



TOP CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PURCHASING FURNITURE:

PRICE/VALUE



ERGONOMICS/COMFORT



VERSATILITY/FUNCTION



AESTHETIC



OUR RESEARCH SHOWS

WHILE WORKING FROM HOME, **MOST** DESIRE A **POSTURE CHANGE** THROUGHOUT THE DAY