**RESEARCH BRIEF**

1. ***How did individuals' and family’s life priorities change over the course of the pandemic?***
2. ***What impact did remote / flexible work arrangements, home schooling, and a concomitant increase in the use of online tools and technologies and the associated perceptual and cognitive demands have on familial relationships and well-being?***

A recent article (Carey, 2020) from USA Today identifies that the emotional priorities of Americans are realigned. A survey conducted by the company, The Family Room’ about which priorities are currently in front of an individual’s mind identified dramatic shifts in emotional priorities amongst four age groups that were studied. They include, parents, young adults, gen Z and the children. The company allocates “Passion Points” to people for emotional priorities that have suddenly become much more prominent in people’s decision-making than the year before.

For parents, priorities have shifted from children, like “ensuring my child feels heard” and “teaching my child to solve problems” to “devoting time to making and keeping good friends” (up 19% over last year) “making my life simpler and less complicated” (up 14%) and “loving myself as I am” (up 13%). The article explains that with children at home, people are getting less breaks for self-care and are often exhausted and overwhelmed.

Young adults, or millennials as we say have gone through a different transition. This, amongst adults aged 22 to 35 who do not have children, we’ve seen less of a focus on their own careers and futures, and more concern about the nation. “Doing my part for our country” and “the future of our country” are among the top Passion Points, seeing big jumps of more than 50% from last year. This shift is explained due to the severity of the pandemic and without the added burden of children to take care of this age group has directed their focus towards the greater good.

For Gen Z, individuals aged 13-22, their priorities changed from rebellion, self-expression, and a desire to explore the world to being recognized and worrying about being left behind. This means their focus shifted from “showing who I am and what I care about” (down by 15%) to being famous on social media (up by more than 30%), and “making sure my family keeps up with the latest in cool technology” (up by nearly 50%). A common term used for such a situation is the feeling of FOMO, the ‘fear of missing out’.

For children aged 6-12, priorities drastically shifted from escaping from pressure and stress (down by 28%) to global warming and climate change, “rebelling against authority”, and “the future of our country”.

The article also marks these changes as long-term and beyond political lines within the US, that is regardless of being in a red state or blue state.

The Refinery29 conducted a survey of 13 women and non-binary people in UK about how the pandemic shifted their priorities, the steps they took to make (big or small) changes and how they see these changes fitting into a post-lockdown world. I coded these 13 interviews to identify common priority shifts (O'Sullivan, 2021). The findings include,

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| Sr. No. | Priority Shift | No. of mentions |
| 1 | Changes in financial management (spending vs. **saving and investing**) | 5 |
| 2 | Self-organization (unplanned vs. **scheduling activities for the day**) | 2 |
| 3 | Focus on personal life (Focus on career vs. **focus on family, friends, and mental health**) | 5 |
| 4 | Self-care (being lazy vs. **exercising, yoga**) | 4 |
| 5 | Working on a hobby (being busy/lazy vs. **investing time on a hobby**) | 3 |
| 6 | Relocation | 2 |
| 7 | Career Shift (job vs. **entrepreneurship**) | 3 |
| 8 | Comfort of work/study space (office vs. **home**) | 2 |

\*the bold markers indicate the priority

An article by Jason Sabo, Ph.D., site supervisor at Lee Health’s Pediatric Behavioral Health Practice talks about positive family impacts of the pandemic (Sabo, n.d.). It talks about (a) Family resilience being built by finding flexibility to react to changing circumstances, leading to cooperation and closer family bonds, (b) children having more control of their time, allowing them to manage more of their day, (c) children in the work of the family helps them develop a sense of self-regard and responsibility, overall, increasing self-esteem and (d) children having more time to rest without travel to school, work and after-school activities.

Regarding the impact of work from home scenario during the pandemic and its impact on familial relationships, the study (Dunatchik, Gerson, Glass, Jacobs, & Stritzel, 2021) focuses on how the shift to remote work and simultaneous childcare and in-person schooling affected the division of domestic work among partnered couples as well as single parents in United States. The paper finds out that the fathers did increase their contributions to housework and childcare when both partners worked from home, but this did not change the gender division of domestic work because mothers also increased their involvement. In contrast, the gender gap increased when mothers worked from home, but their partner did not. And in couples where neither parent worked from home or where mothers alone worked from home, mothers became the substitute who absorbed most of the additional caring and schooling of children. Overall, the paper identified that gender remained a powerful force in organizing domestic work despite the greater flexibility that remote work allows.

Further, the study by South Dakota State University focused on studying the impact of the pandemic on work-life balance of older employees in South Dakota. The results indicated that remote work hosts a set of advantages for older employees include (a) flexible schedule, (b) fewer commuting stresses, (c) cost saving and (d) more time with family, all of which serve to strike a better work-life balance (Kayaalp, 2021).

Another study (Sandoval, Idrovo, & Duque, 2021)focused on examining the relationship between remote work, work stress, and work–life developed during the pandemic in a Latin America context. The study found out that the remote work in pandemic times increased perceived stress, reduced work-life balance, and work satisfaction. The remote work increased productivity and engagement. Another interesting insight offered by the study is regarding the relationship between perceived stress and gender wherein when working remotely, perceived stress affects men’s productivity more acutely than women.

The paper also hints that organizations should provide psychological support to their employees in remote work conditions through telemedicine and informal support groups. With the personal and professional transitions following the pandemic, governments and businesses should develop policies that safeguard physical and mental well-being of the workers.

# Bibliography

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