

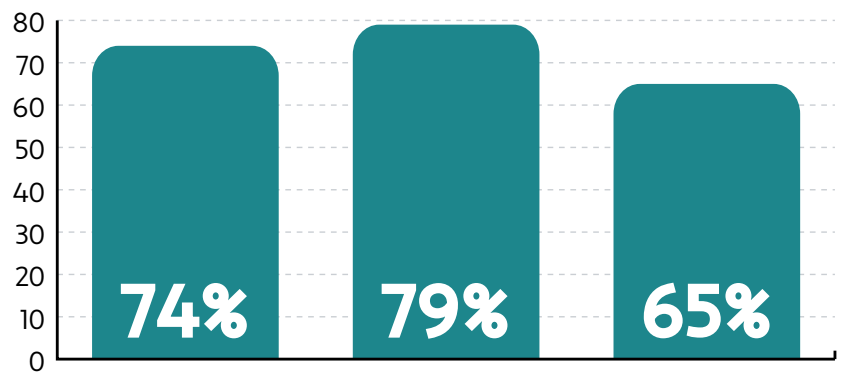
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# EXECUTIVE PRODUCTIVITY REPORT | 2021

## Summary

In August 2021 we surveyed 600 executives to find out how they approach productivity and compared their responses to our 2019 and 2020 surveys. The result tells a story of dramatically improved productivity working remotely in 2021, but executives overwhelming said they want to return to the office. Why? Working from home, they are overwhelmed with administrative tasks and getting a lot less sleep.



74% of executives said they are more productive working from home (vs 40% in 2019).

79% said they want to return to the office.

65% said they are most productive in the office (vs. 66% in 2019).

While executives were more productive from home, most still see the office as the place where they can do their best work. To understand this paradox, we need to investigate some more numbers.

Executives said their Task Management tools jumped 13%.

Administrative Tasks jumped past Strategic Projects as where executives said they most need help.

They are getting a lot less sleep—just 44% reported getting 6-9 sleep hours (vs. 71% in 2019).

We launched the Prialto Executive Productivity Report in 2019 as a survey to let executives share how they approach productivity. There is no shortage of productivity tips and hacks available online, but there is a dearth of intimate peer-to-peer knowledge sharing among executives on what they actually do each day to maintain productivity.

At the end of 2019, Covid threw us a curveball, and every aspect of business and executive life was disrupted. To get a better picture of the current state, we went back to our respondents for an update in 2020. The final report was the Prialto 2020 Executive Productivity Report.



This year we surveyed 600 high-earning (minimum \$100K annual salary), high-ranking (director level, and above) from across the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and Canada to get a fresh look at executive time management strategies, tools, and other productivity habits. This data, with the backdrop of the 2019 and 2020 surveys, marks another milestone in the evolution of executive work pre-pandemic, mid-pandemic, and now as we emerge from the pandemic and executives eye returning (or not) to the office. Because the questions asked in 2020 were different than those in 2019, some of this year's answers are compared to 2019 answers, and others are compared to 2020 responses.

Eric Taussig, Founder and CEO of Prialto

# Executive Productivity

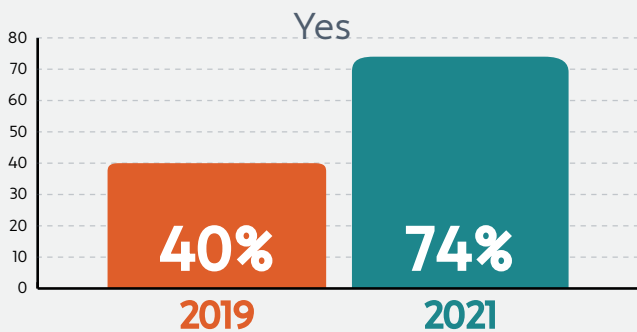
## Pro-duc-tiv-i-ty (noun)

The efficiency of productive effort toward one's personal and business objectives. The ability to organize your actions and time to get better results with the same amount of time and energy.

## 2021 Snapshot:

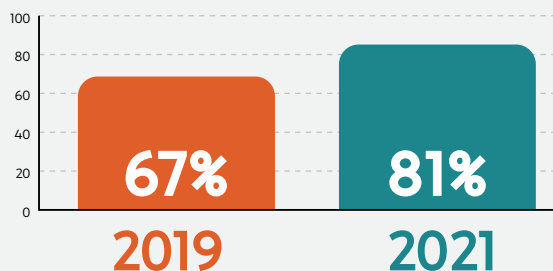
### Executives Said Their Productivity Increased Sharply Working from Home

Did your productivity improve while working remotely?

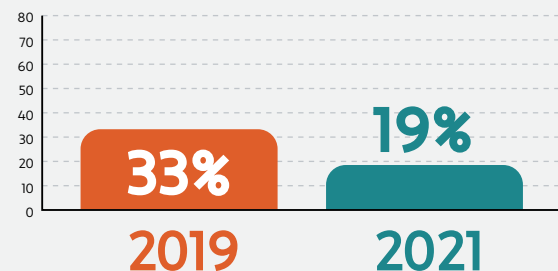


## What kind of work is the best use of your time?

Independent projects and strategy



Meetings with reports and third-parties





**74%** of executives said they are more productive working from home - **34%** more than in 2019.

**The importance of “deep work” increased 14%.**

After the initial disruption of lockdowns and quarantines, working from home turned out to be a boost to productivity. 74% of executives said they were more productive working remotely, up from 40% in 2019 at the pandemic's onset.

As you'll see below, 2020 marked a sharp spike in the search for new productivity tools, and the adoption of time management strategies.

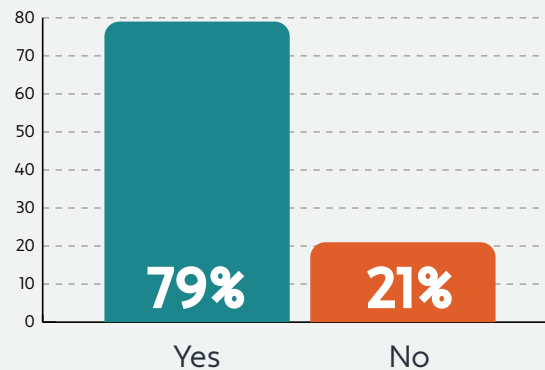
14% more executives said “deep work” – independent projects and strategic planning – is the best use of their time. The value they place on meetings with direct reports and third parties declined by the same 14% as meetings become less frequent.



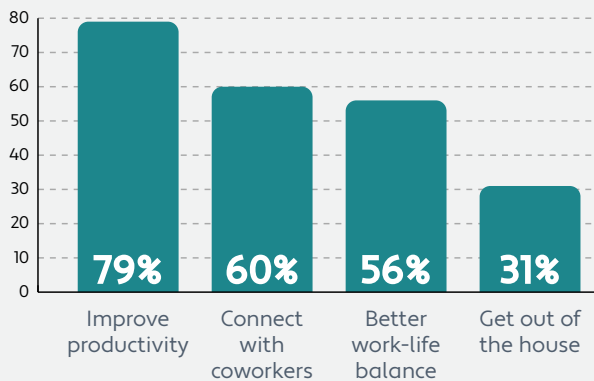
# Executives Overwhelmingly Said They Want to Get Back to the Office

2021

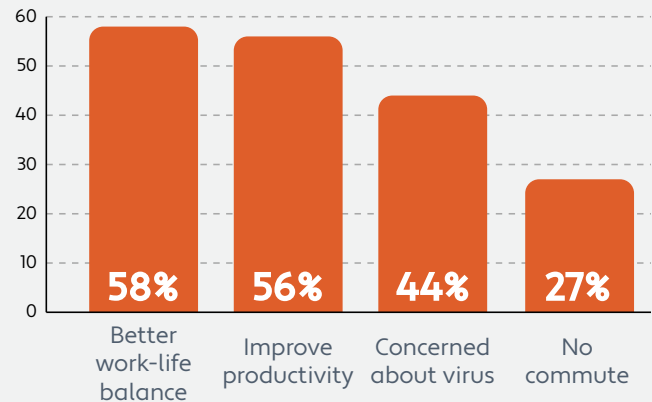
## Do you want to return to the office?



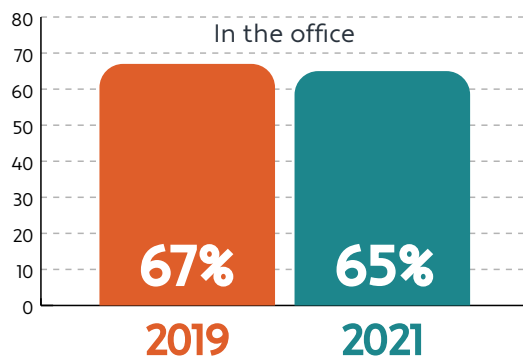
## Why do you want to return to the office?\*



## Why do you want to continue to work remotely?\*



## Where are you most productive?



While executives were more productive from home, most said the office is the place where they are most productive. A striking 79% of those that want to return to the office said it is to further improve productivity.

# Executives Report More Admin Work, Less Sleep

What tasks do you most need help with?

2019

Administrative  
Tasks

49%

2021

Administrative  
Tasks

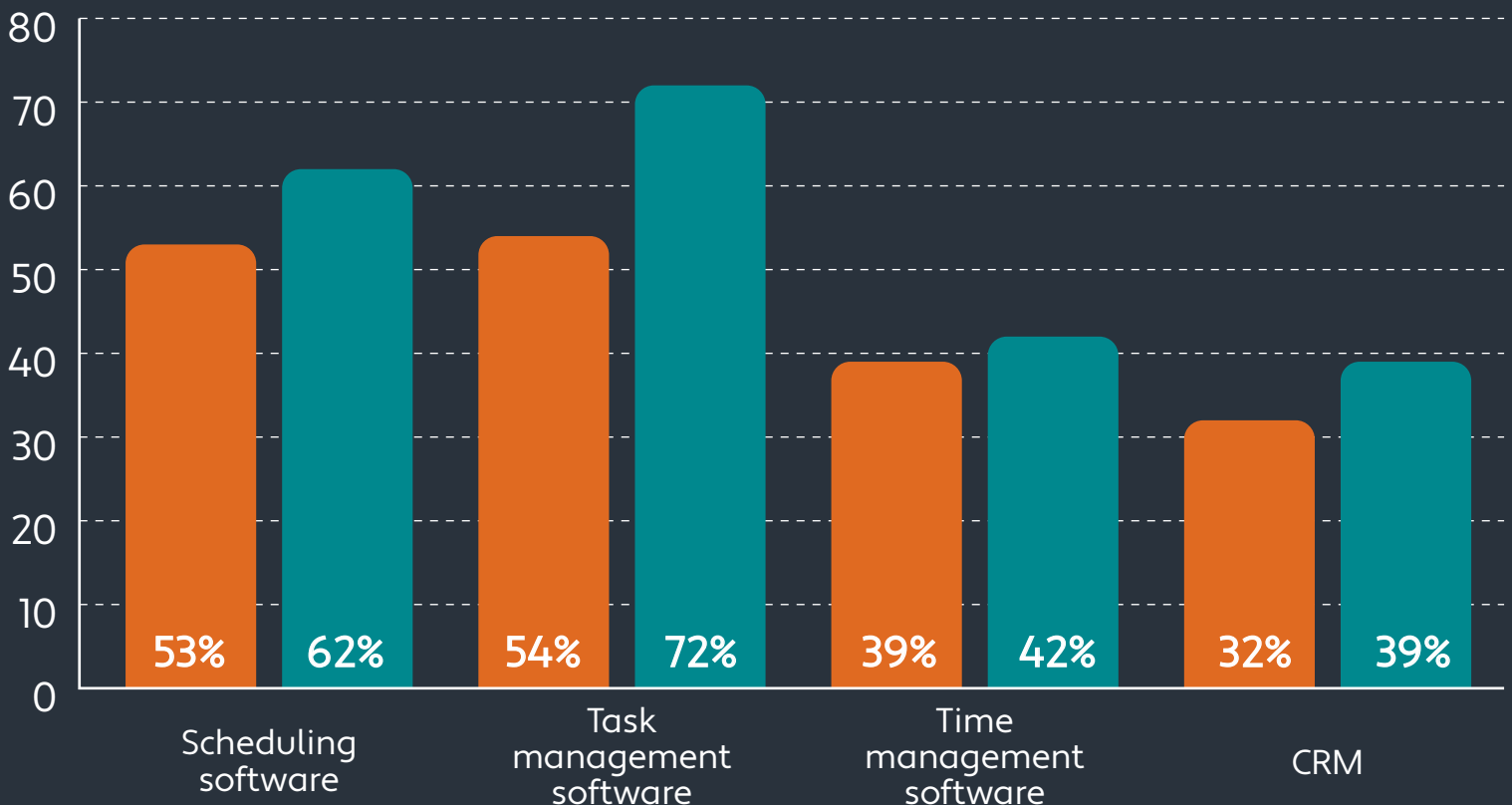
62%



What tools do you use to stay productive?\*

2019

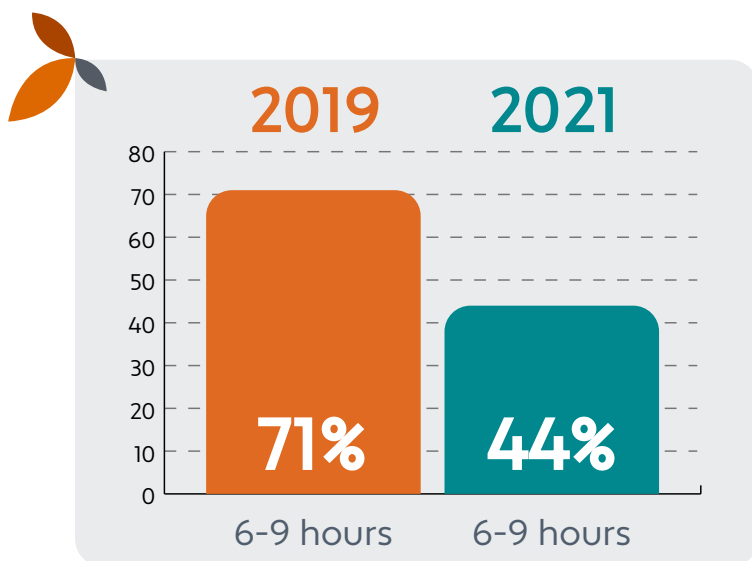
2021



14% more executives said Administrative Tasks is what they need the most help with, and they spent 18% more time on task management than in 2019. Executives said that they had to do more of their own admin tasks. They got more done but they had to do more for themselves—not necessarily work they welcomed. Lack of admin resources may be one reason they might see the office as more conducive to productivity.

Also, executives said their task management software use rose 23%, another indicator that they are spending more of their time on day-to-day tasks than on deep work.

## Which of the following best describes your sleep habits?



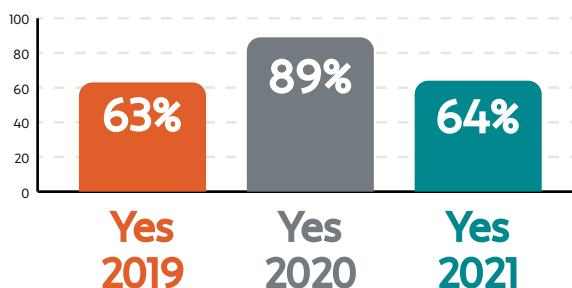
Executives are getting less sleep—a lot less—with a 27% drop in the number that report getting the recommended 6-9 hours per night. Did the productivity gains of 2021 come at the expense of sleep? Note that 56% of those wanting to return to the office cited work-life balance as the reason. Also, the added responsibilities for children and school contributed to parents' workloads, adding to sleep deprivation.



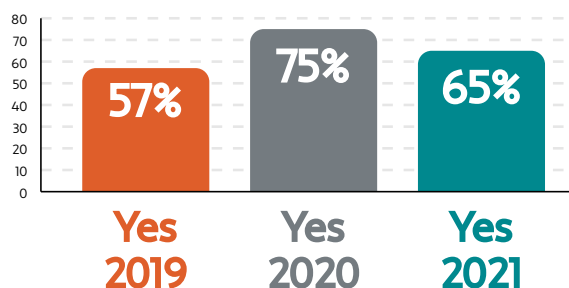


# Executives Got Their Productivity Groove Back

Do you seek out new productivity tools and apps?



Do you adhere to a productivity system like GTD, Franklin Covey, or the Pomodoro Method?



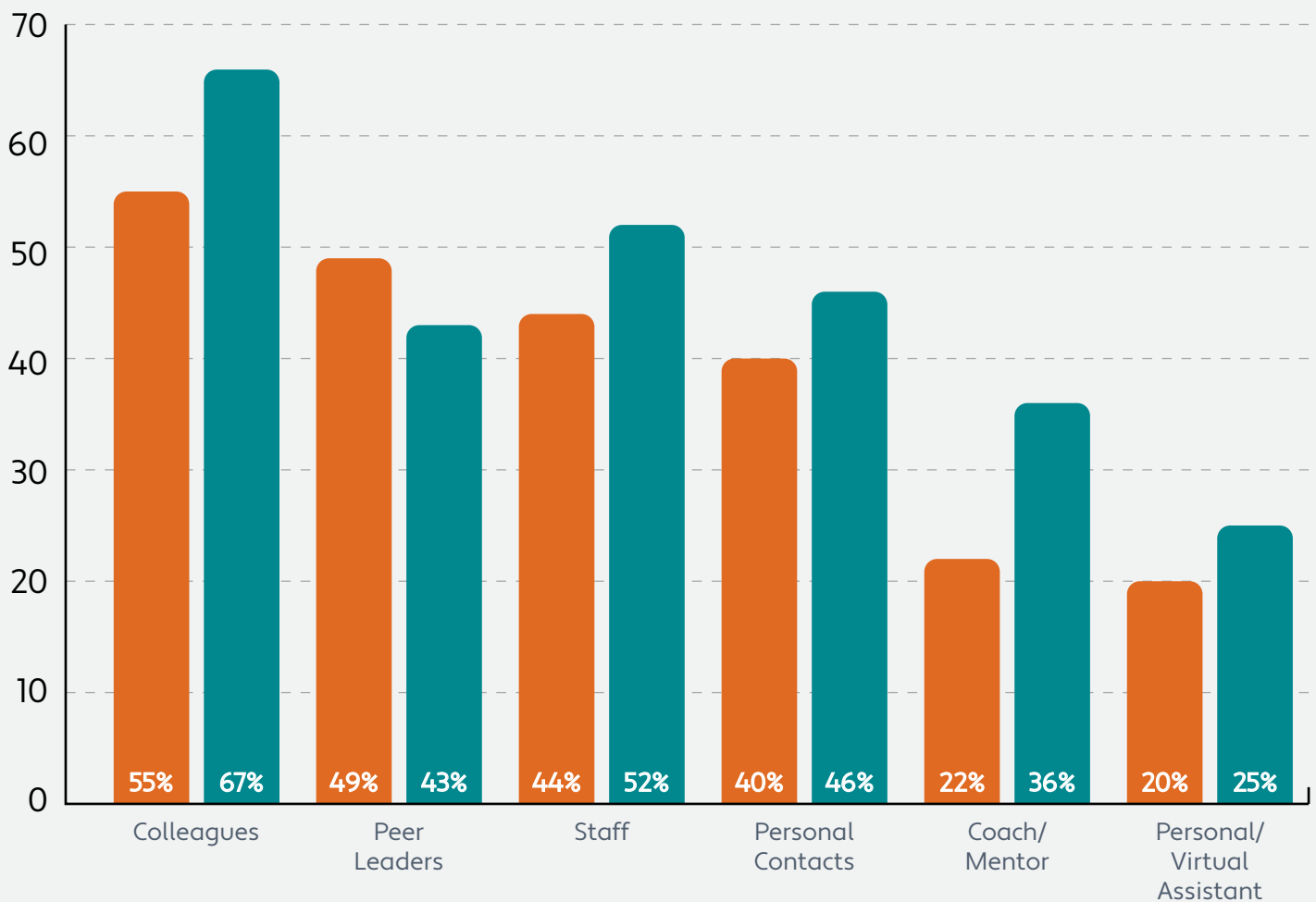
In 2020, executives reported a significant increase in the search for new productivity tools and apps and the use of productivity systems. It makes sense. The initial shift to home offices caused everyone to develop new ways of working. In 2021, the search for new ways to be productive returned to near 2019 levels.

Executives got their productivity dialed in during the pandemic, but clearly believe it will be easier to maintain this efficiency in an office environment, where coworkers are nearby to handle their admin work, and they can walk away at the end of the day for better sleep and work-life balance.

# More Executives Sought Help from Every Source

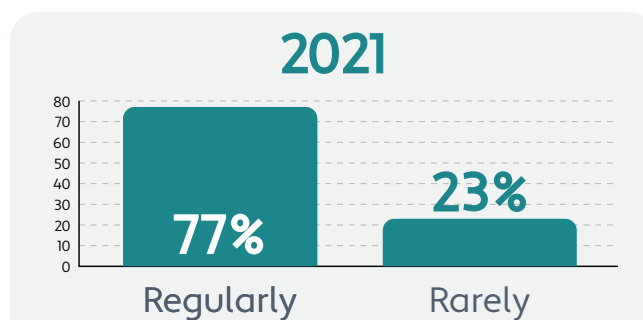
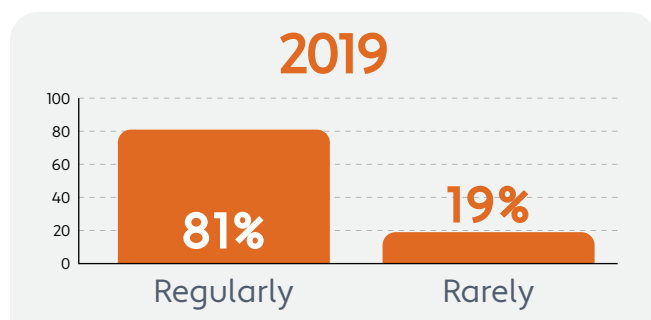
Who do you rely on to help you be productive?\*

2019 2021



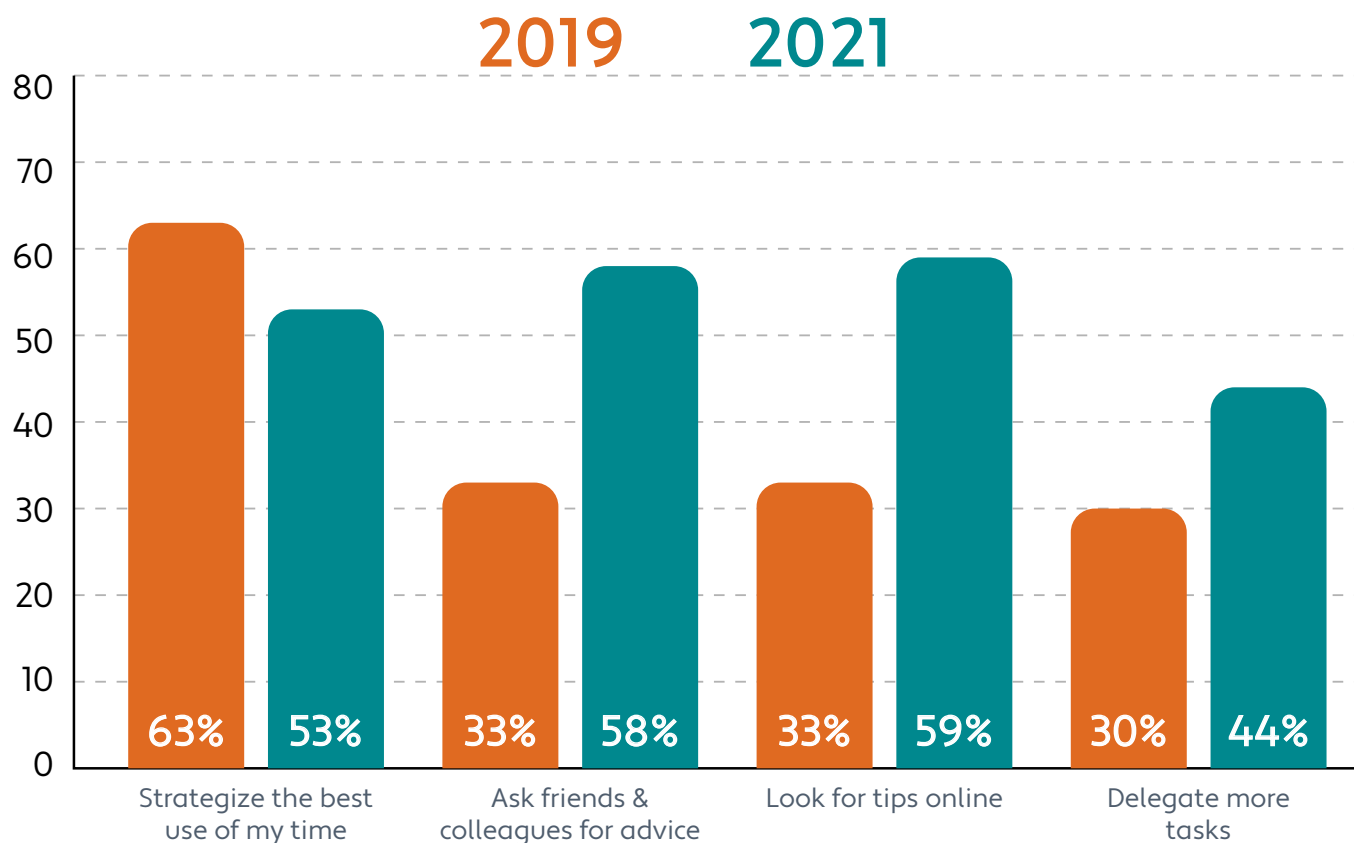
Executives reported asking for more help from every category of human help except for industry peers. Executives turned to colleagues, staff, friends and family, coaches, and personal assistants at higher levels than in 2019. Interaction with peer leaders likely declined because so many events were canceled – prime networking opportunities—and in-person meetings were nearly impossible. It may also be that the personal and professional stress caused by the events of 2020 broke down barriers to asking for help from sources they didn't tap before.

## How often do you enlist help with tasks?



While the people executives turned to for help changed dramatically, the frequency of requests did not change much.

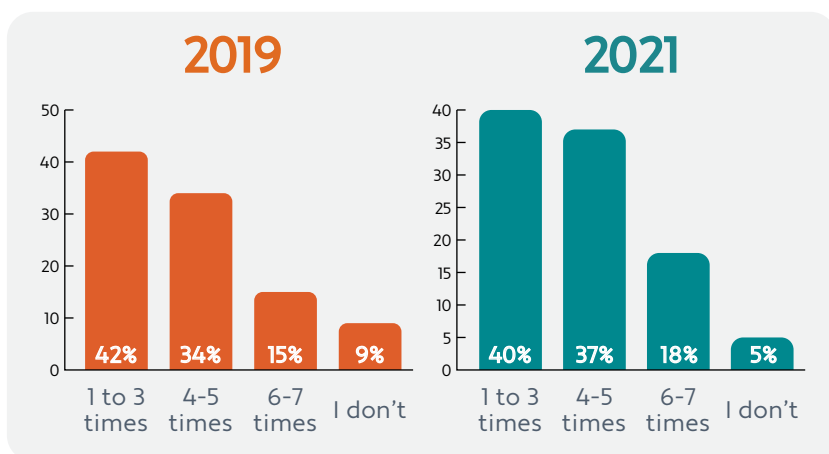
## What actions do you take to become more productive?\*



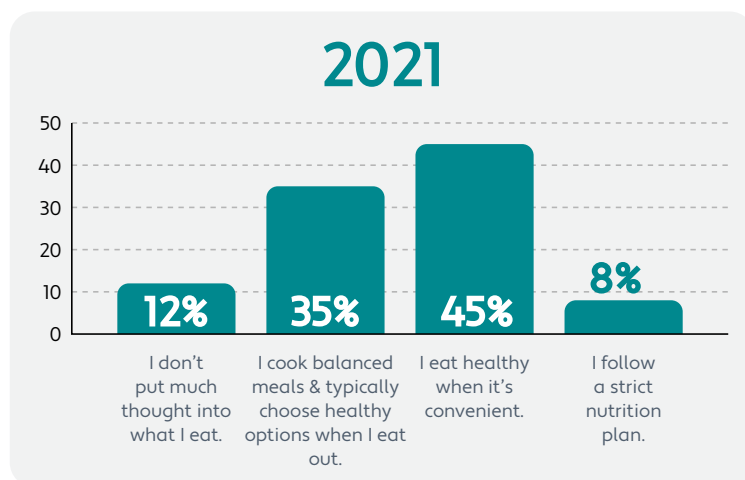
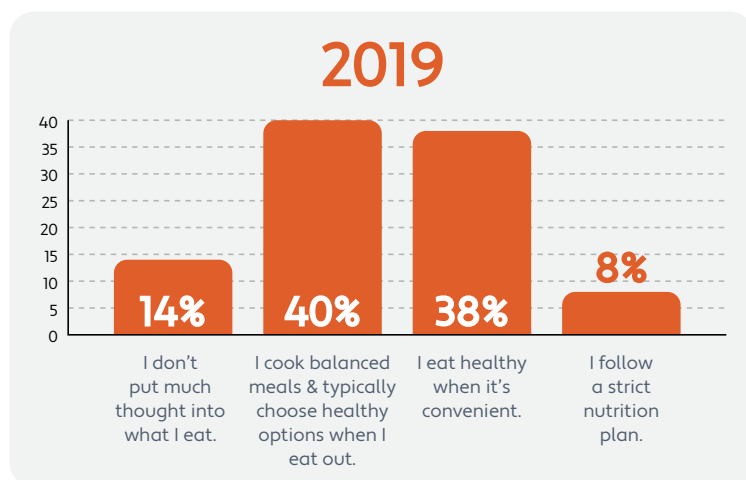
As with the people executives turn to for help with productivity, executives said that every method used to enhance productivity also increased. Not surprisingly, executives went online when they needed help to be more productive. There was also a sharp increase in delegation because the tasks they had to handle alone increased. Strategizing time use suffered the only decline as a productivity method.

# Exercise and Diet Stayed About the Same

How often do you exercise per week?



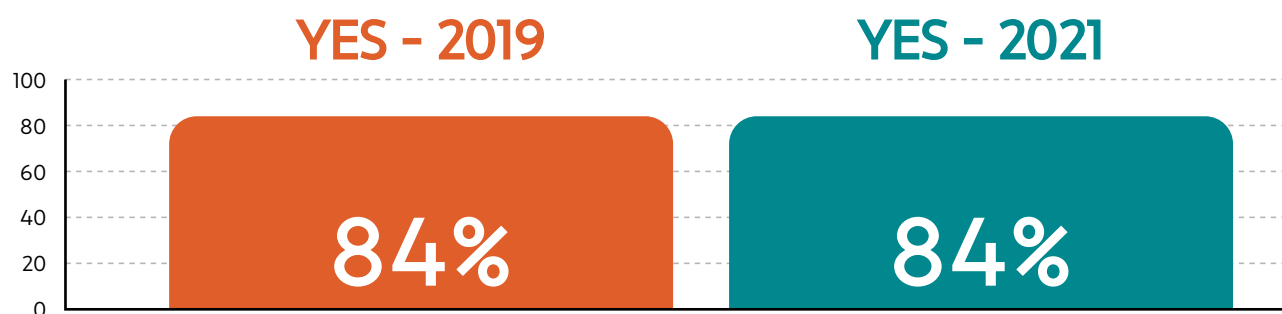
Which of the following best describes your diet?



Executives said that their health regimens did not materially change from 2019 to 2021. Nearly twice as many said they “don’t” exercise at all, and 5 said they eat less intentionally than in 2019. Access to food and exercise were both compromised in 2020 and early 2021 with shortages of some foods, and restaurant and gym shutdowns.



## Are you satisfied with your current level of productivity?



Executives worked hard on their productivity in 2020. They invested in more tools and systems and asked for more help from more sources. And it paid off. They are just as satisfied with their productivity now as they were in 2019, and 34 percent more found improved productivity at home. This could be a sign that what everyone wants, a return to a normal work environment, is within reach.

Executives embraced new productivity strategies in 2020 and look to keep the change in 2021 and beyond. They believe that deep work is the best use of their time, and they ask for more help from sources, and delegate more.

As noted in our introduction, even with that 34% rise in productivity, 79% of executives want to return to the office where they believe they do their best work. They are ready to take their newfound efficiency with them, as 79% said they want to go back to the office to increase productivity. While they are satisfied with their productivity while working remotely they are not satisfied with remote work as a long-term option for themselves and their teams. As 2021 comes to an end, the future of work remains in flux with "hybrid" remote/office-based models widely discussed. It will be interesting to see how executive productivity evolves in 2022 as businesses find a new-normal hybrid work baseline.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Gender



Male: **55%**



Female: **45%**

## AGE



**22%**  
25-34



**51%**  
35-44



**18%**  
45-54



**9%**  
54+

## COUNTRY



USA

**72%**



UK

**11%**



Australia

**10%**



Canada

**7%**

## ANNUAL INCOME



Minimum **100K USD** or  
Equivalent

## ROLE

Owner or Partner **29%**

Senior Management: **27%**

C-level **21%**

Director **10%**

HR Manager **10%**

Business Administrator **3%**

## COMPANY SIZE

5000+ ----- **10%**

1,000-5,000 ----- **19%**

500-1000 ----- **25%**

100-500 ----- **20%**

25-100 ----- **16%**

<25 ----- **10%**

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## ABOUT PRIALTO

Prialto provides virtual administrative assistants to executives, entrepreneurs, and businesses. Our virtual executive assistant services are curated and managed from our headquarters in Portland, Oregon, with creative insights from our global staff in Asia and Central America. Our global telecommuting enables talented people in peripheral parts of the world economy to do cool work with dynamic business professionals in amazing places like San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Austin, and Los Angeles.



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