



COVID-19 Effects on Organizational Culture

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Why is this important?

The COVID-19 Pandemic has **changed the way we work**, perhaps forever. That shift has created sudden and sometimes dramatic changes in organizational culture. These changes must be acknowledged and **we must adapt** as we seek to continuously improve organizational culture and performance excellence in government and industry.

The Challenge

1. Your workforce is in **distress**, and has been for a year.
2. The success of your organization depends on their **ability to cope** with the distress caused by COVID-19.
3. Management's willingness and ability to help the workforce cope with the distress caused by COVID-19 is **impacting the culture and success of your organization.**

Health, Stress and Coping

STRESS

Stress originated in the disciplines of physics and engineering. Selye [1956] defined three stages of stress: alarm reaction, stage of resistance, and stage of exhaustion. He described the alarm stage as a generalized call to arms of the defensive forces in the organism. Following this was a stage of biological adaptation of the organs to the stress. After prolonged exposure, the adaptation was eventually lost and the animal entered the stage of exhaustion. At the end of a life under stress, there was a premature aging due to wear and tear.

DISTRESS VS. EUSTRESS

Selye [1975] later divided stress into distress and eustress. Eustress is positive adaptation to stress and is typified by activities such as exercise to build strength and cardiovascular capacity. Distress results in negative functioning and may lead to anxiety, depression and/or physical ailment.

COPING

Lazarus [1966] incorporated the concepts of stress appraisal and coping. The primary appraisal includes the perception of how stressful the stimulus is and the secondary appraisal estimates whether one has adequate resources to deal with the problem. He defined coping as the strategies one employs for dealing with stress when the individual discovers that "my life, health, wealth, or cherished social relationships are in danger."

STRESS & COPING

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping [Glanz, et al. 2008] describes processes of coping with stressful events. The theory identifies two processes - cognitive appraisal and coping strategies as critical mediators of stressful person-environment relationships. Their immediate and long-term outcomes including emotional well-being, functional status, and health behaviors. Stress affects people differently and the ability to cope influences decisions about seeking medical care and social support and whether one believes the advice of professionals.

Selye H. 1956. *The Stress of Life* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Lazarus RS. 1966. *Psychological stress and the coping process* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.

Selye H. 1975. Confusion and controversy in the stress field. *Journal of Human Stress* 1: 37-44.

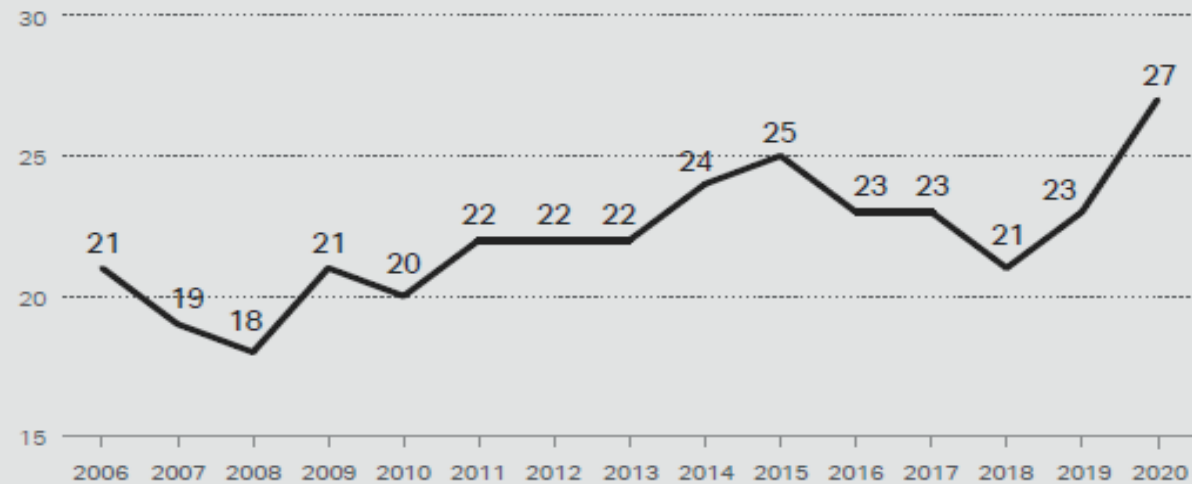
Glanz K, Rimer BK, Viswanath K, editors. 2008. *Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Evidence of Distress

Rising Sadness in the U.S.

Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about sadness?

— % Yes



GALLUP WORLD POLL

Source: Global Emotions Report (Gallup 2020)

Evidence of Distress

Between 18 March and 18 April 2020, as the rates of COVID-19 positive cases and deaths increased substantially across the U.S., **COVID-19-related acute stress and depressive symptoms increased over time.**

- Individuals with **pre-existing mental and physical health diagnoses** were more likely to exhibit both acute stress and depressive symptoms
- **Job and/or wage loss and shortages of necessities** were strong predictors of both acute stress and depressive symptoms
- **Exposure to pandemic-related media coverage** was associated with greater pandemic-specific acute stress and depressive symptoms. Daily hours of pandemic-related media exposure, increases in daily media use, and exposure to conflicting information in the news media all predicted acute stress and depressive symptoms.

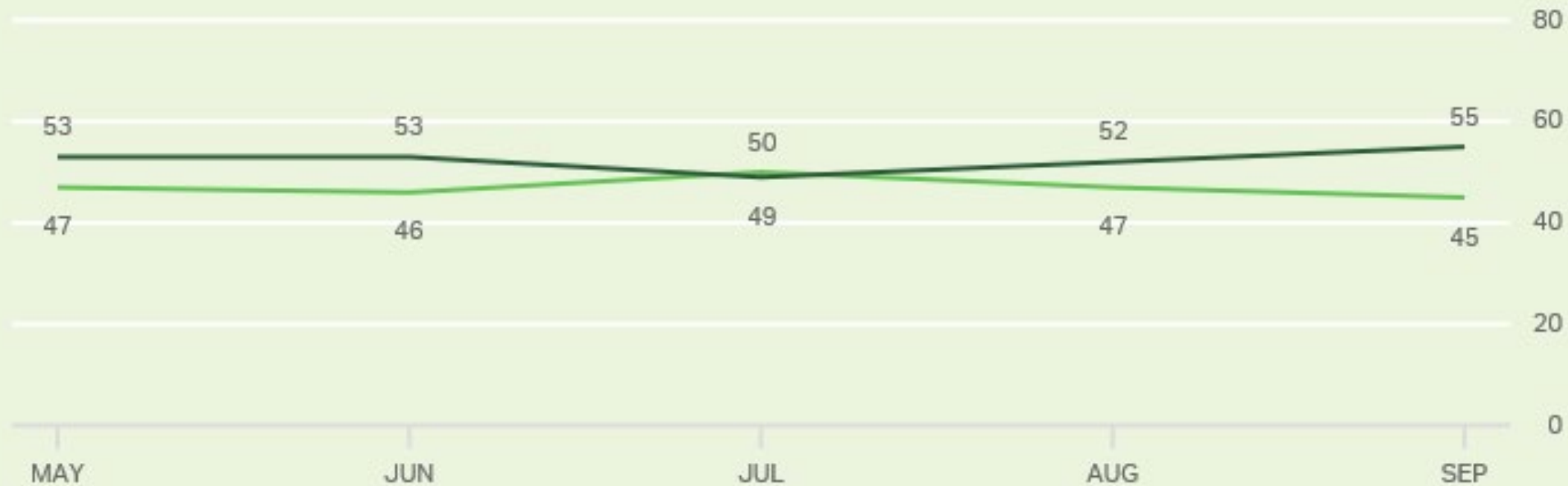
E. Alison Holman, Rebecca R. Thompson, Dana Rose Garfin, Roxane Cohen Silver. **The unfolding COVID-19 pandemic: A probability-based, nationally representative study of mental health in the U.S.** *Science Advances*, 2020; eabd5390 DOI: [10.1126/sciadv.abd5390](https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abd5390)

Evidence of Distress

U.S. Workers' Concern About COVID-19 Exposure at Work

How concerned are you about being exposed to coronavirus at your place of work?

Very/Moderately concerned Not too/Not at all concerned



GALLUP, 2020

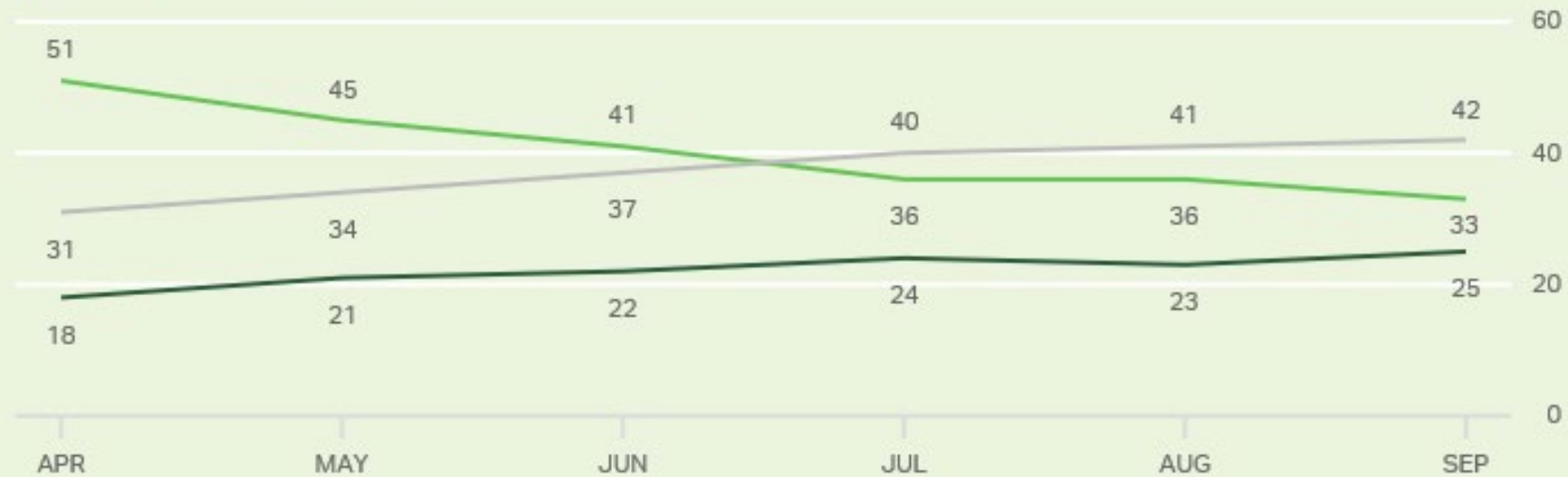
Source: COVID-19 and Remote Work: An Update (Gallup, Oct. 13, 2021)

Coping with Distress

U.S. Workers' Frequency of Remote Work in Response to COVID-19

To what extent are you working remotely to avoid catching or spreading the coronavirus?

Always Sometimes Never



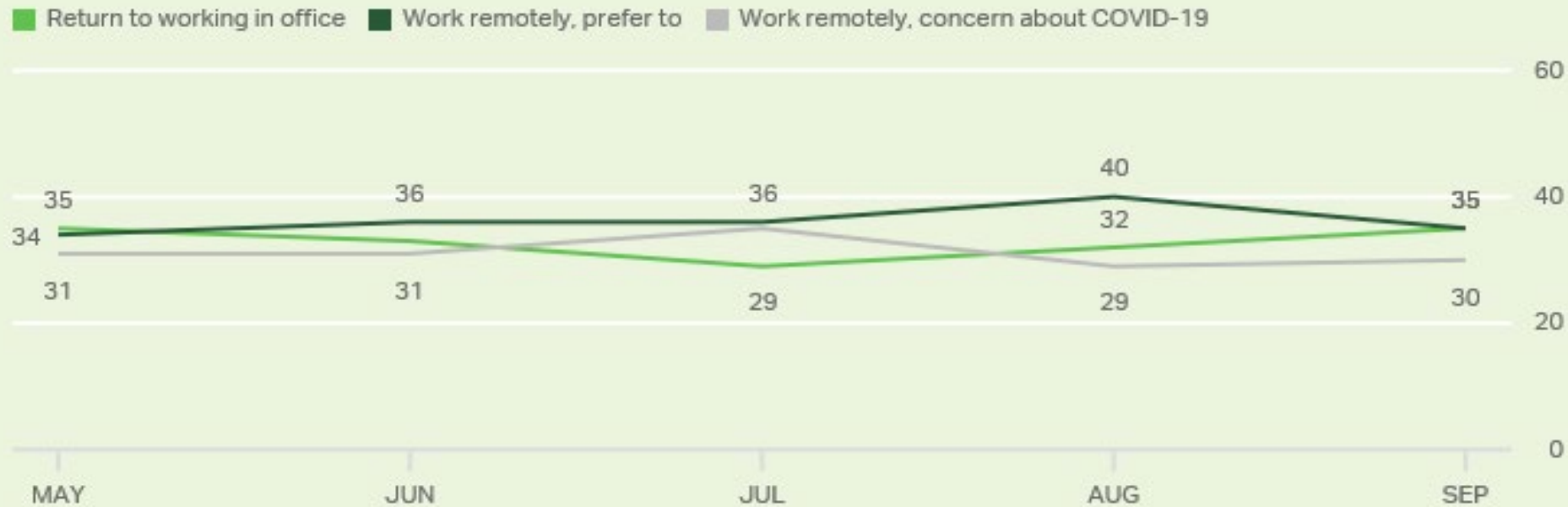
GALLUP, 2020

Source: COVID-19 and Remote Work: An Update (Gallup, Oct. 13, 2021)

Coping with Distress

Remote Workers' Preference for Work Post-COVID-19

Once restrictions on businesses and school closures are lifted, if your employer left it up to you, would you prefer to return to working at your office or workplace as much as you previously did or work remotely as much as possible? IF WORK REMOTELY: Which of the following is the main reason you would prefer to work remotely -- you prefer working from home or you are concerned about the coronavirus?



GALLUP, 2020

Source: COVID-19 and Remote Work: An Update (Gallup, Oct. 13, 2021)

Coping with Distress – Fatigue

Employees

- Use a buddy system while you're at work. Check in with each other to ensure everyone is coping with work hours and demands.
- Do not work if your fatigue threatens the safety of yourself or others. Report to a manager when you feel too tired to work safely.
- Watch yourself and your coworkers for signs of fatigue — like yawning, difficulty keeping your eyes open, and difficulty concentrating. When you see something, say something to your coworkers so you can prevent workplace injuries and errors.
- Report any fatigue-related events or close-calls to a manager to help prevent injuries and errors.

Managers

- Provide information for workers on the consequences of sleep deprivation and resources to assist workers manage fatigue.
- The [Epworth Sleepiness Scale](#) is a short survey that can be posted in a common area for workers to quickly rate their fatigue.
- Create a procedure that does not punish workers for reporting when they, or their coworkers, are too fatigued to work safely. Build it into team comradery as an example of how management and staff can support each other.
- Provide alternative transportation to and from work and mandatory paid rest time prior to driving commutes after work, when possible.

CDC: What Workers and Employers Can Do to Manage Workplace Fatigue during COVID-19 May 19, 2020

Summary

- We must **continuously adapt** to the changing conditions
- Mental illness, depression and fatigue is the **silent epidemic** resulting from COVID-related distress
- **Management must have the will** to address COVID-related distress and Total Worker Health
- How well management addresses this issue will **shape your culture** for years to come