



# The Path to Recovery: The Risks of Pandemic Fatigue and the Resilience Imperative

# The Peril of 2021



C-Suite  
Focus



# meQuilibrium Study of Pandemic Fatigue

2020 delivered a perfect storm of adversity and destabilizing events. In the past 12 months the world has endured an unprecedented level of disruption and technological transformation, much of it driven by the global pandemic and the economic instability it has caused, along with widespread social unrest and climate events.

It is increasingly evident that a key byproduct of pandemic turmoil is, as the World Health Organization terms it, “pandemic fatigue.” Brought about by an extended period of emotional exhaustion and chronic disappointment, pandemic fatigue represents a real threat to both the physical and mental health of our workforce and, ultimately, to the economy.

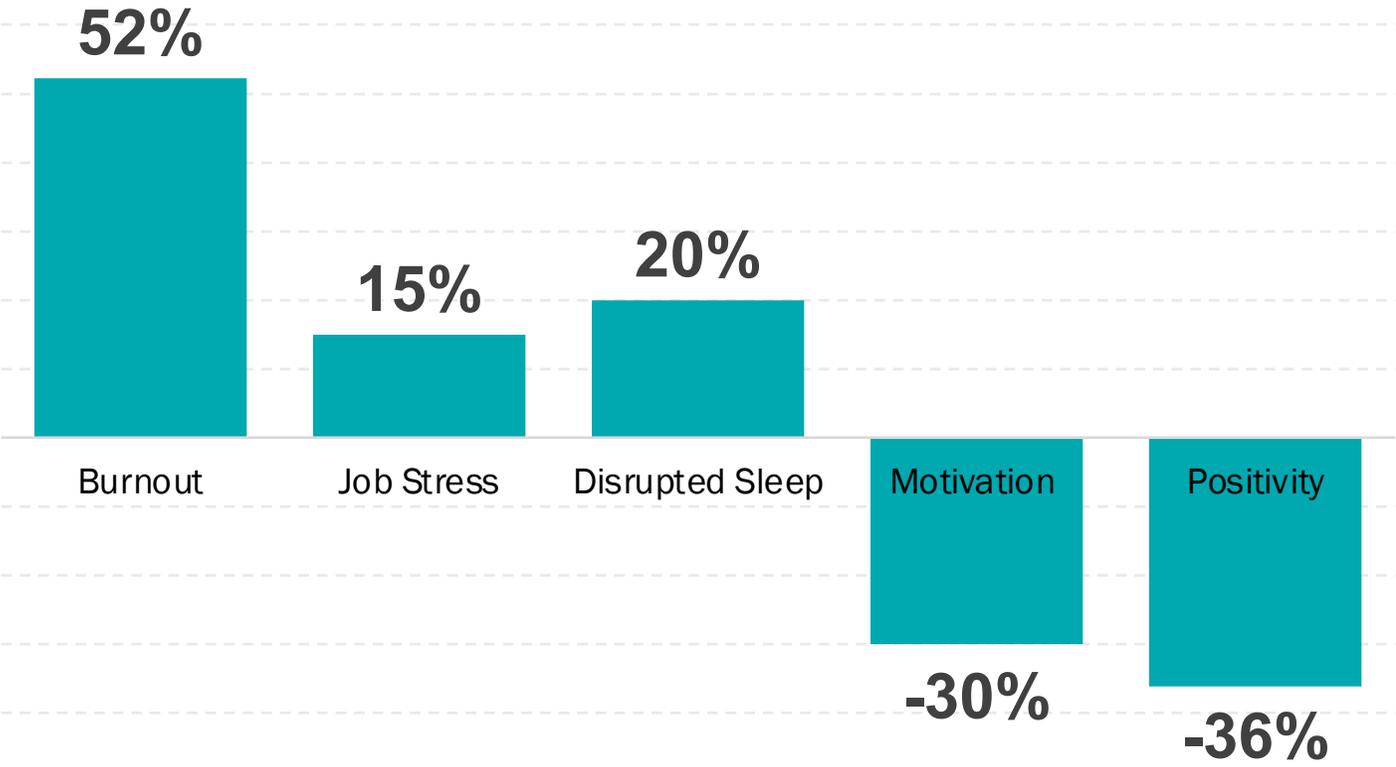
In order to better understand the mental and physical impacts of the pandemic on meQuilibrium’s member base, and the implications for organizational resilience, we initiated a COVID-19 specific self-check of 7,000 members in June and 7,500 participated again in December of 2020.

We discovered that there were serious threats to wellbeing overall due to the pandemic. In addition, almost 20% of our members took on caregiving roles and 25% of members took on additional work, both delivering strong negative impacts on wellbeing. For some members, pandemic fatigue resulted in less adherence to public health protocols and lowered their compliance with mask wearing, social distancing and travel.

We also learned that those members who are overall high in resilience and specifically the ability to control their emotions, felt energized by their lives, remained engaged and had the best outcomes.

# Wellbeing Continues to Trend Downward

Outcome Change: June 2020 to December 2020



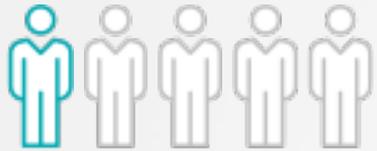
Source: meQuilibrium COVID Self-Check surveys, June 2020 and December 2020

Compared to June 2020:

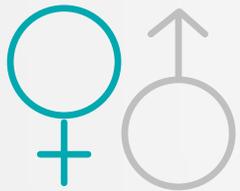
- Burnout, job stress and disrupted sleep are all up substantially
- Motivation and positivity have slid 30% or more

# Burdens Pile on the Pressure

Growing Demands For Caregiving:



1 in 5 employees have added new caregiving role



Disproportionately **women (24%)** vs men (17%)

## 30-50

Highest in **30-50** age demographic

## THE IMPACT TO EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

# +16%

greater increase in **burnout**

# 6X

greater increase in **health worries**

# 2X

greater increase in **job stress**

# 11%

greater decline in **positivity**

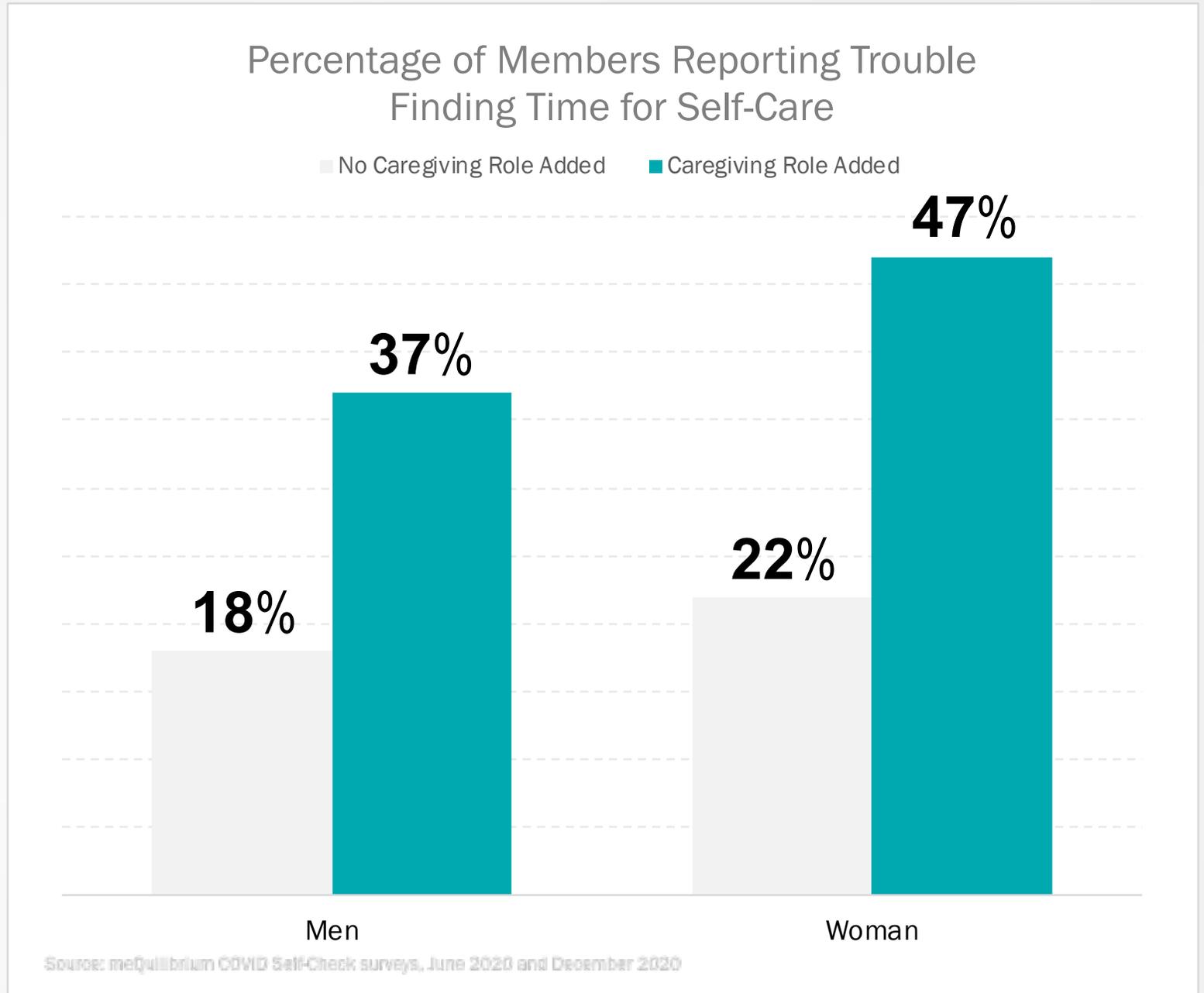
# 1.9X

greater decrease in **motivation**

Source: meQuilibrium COVID Self-Check surveys, June 2020 and December 2020

# New Caregiving Responsibilities Have Driven Negative Outcomes

Becoming a caregiver due to COVID-19 more than doubles the likelihood that an employee reports having trouble finding time for self-care.



# Members Who Have Trouble Finding Time for Self-Care Have Starkly Worse Outcomes Across the Board

**1.9X**

greater increase in **somatic symptoms of stress**

**19.5X**

greater increase in **job stress**

**3.1X**

greater increase in **sleep difficulties**

**27%**

are seriously considering **quitting**

**1.9X**

greater decrease in **positivity**

**2.8X**

greater decrease in **motivation**

**17X**

greater increase in **feelings of burnout**

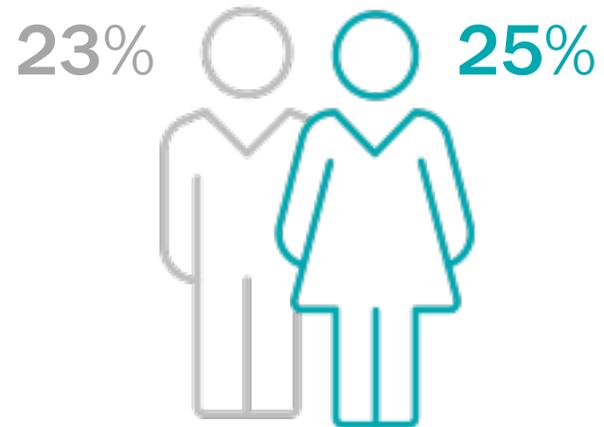
**25%**

increase in **health stress vs. 10% decrease**

Source: meQuilibrium COVID Self-Check surveys, June 2020 and December 2020

# 1 in 4 Employees Take on a New Responsibility at Work due to Pandemic

Equally likely among men (23%) and women (25%)



**Disproportionally on:**

- Young workers:
  - 34%** in 18-29
  - 24%** in older
- Managers
  - 30%** vs **22%**

Source: meQuilibrium COVID Self-Check surveys, June 2020 and December 2020

# Taking on new duties at work due to COVID-19 has magnified the pandemic's negative impacts and increased the risk of burnout, somatic symptoms and demotivation for those employees

**39%**  
larger increase **somatic symptoms of stress**

**2.3X**  
greater increase in **burnout**



**28%**  
greater decline in **sleep quality**

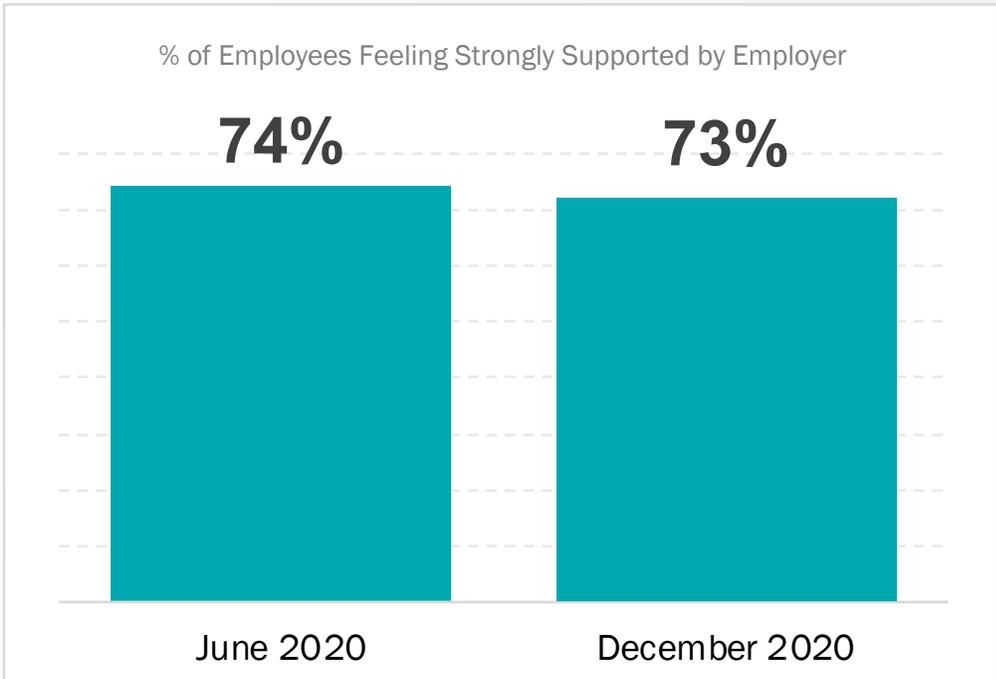
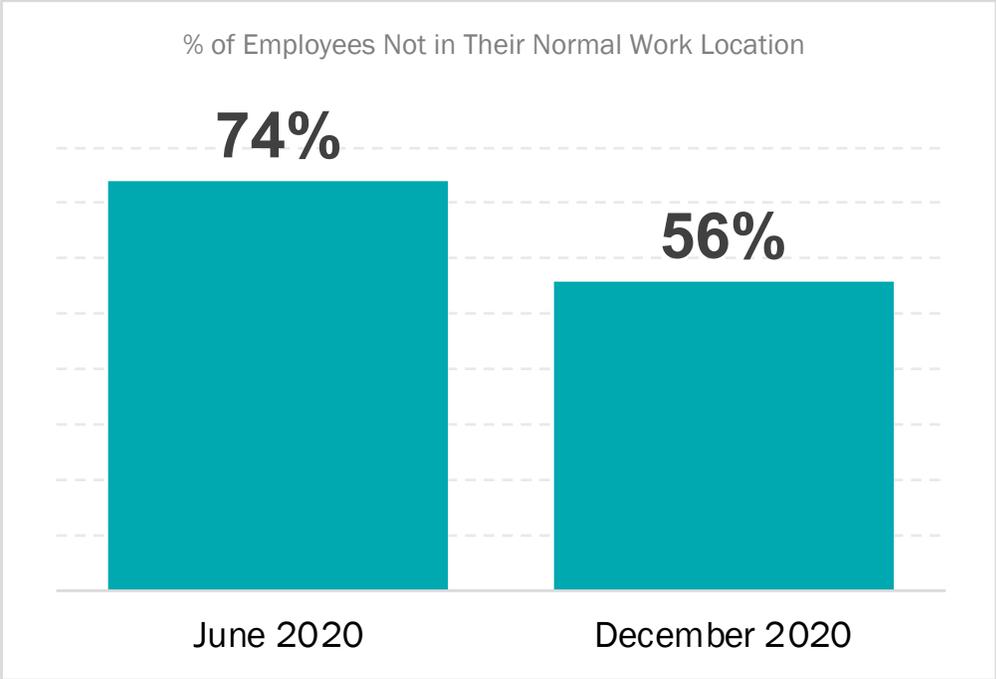
**4.5X**  
greater decrease in **motivation**

Source: meQuilibrium COVID Self-Check surveys, June 2020 and December 2020

# As Employees Return to the Workplace, Trust in Employers Remains High

Beginning to return - 18% fewer people report being away from their in-office work locations.

Employees still perceive strong support from their employers even 9+ months into the pandemic.



Source: meQuilibrium COVID Self-Check surveys, June 2020 and December 2020



World Health  
Organization

# Pandemic Fatigue

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Demotivation to follow recommended protective behaviors, emerging gradually over time and affected by a number of emotions, experiences and perceptions.

# Pandemic Fatigue Threatens to Directly Impact Business

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Worrisome behaviors are more prevalent:



More likely to travel outside their city (**11%**) or state (**25%**) for social or recreation



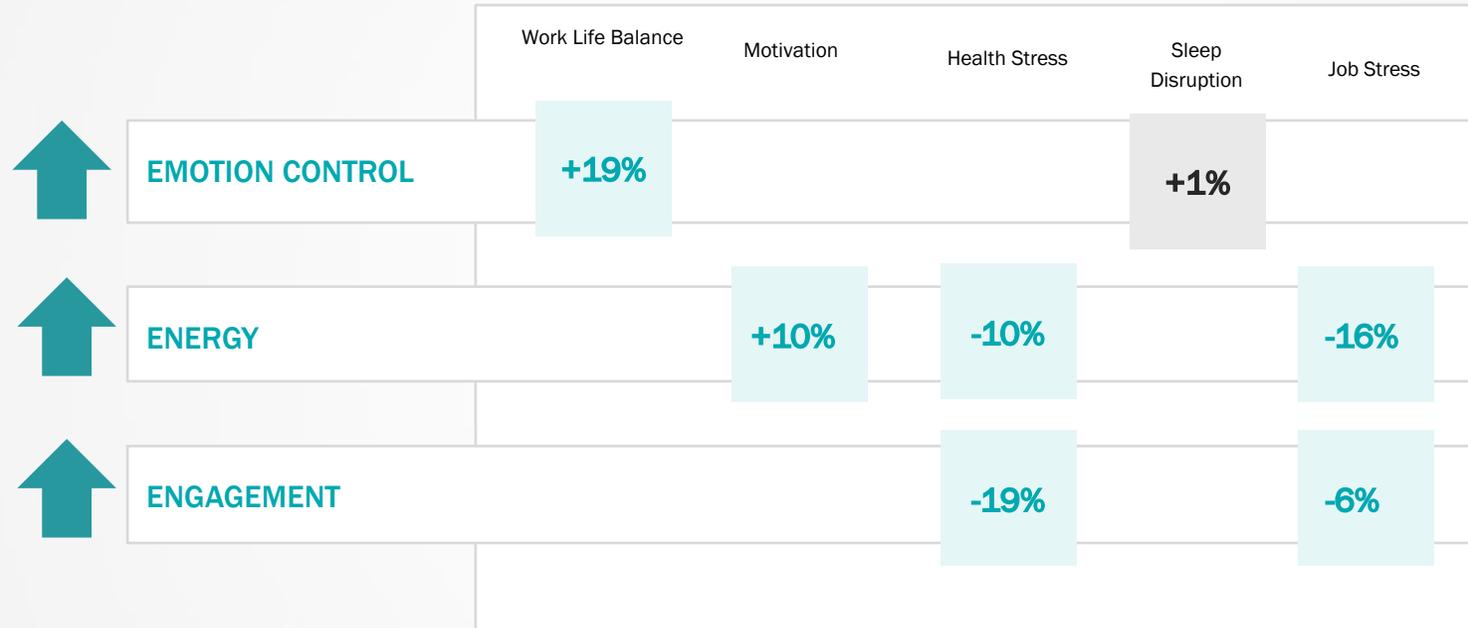
**40%** less likely to be keeping up with pandemic developments



**28%** more likely to be avoiding COVID-19 news

# The 3 E's of Resilience are the Most Protective against Pandemic Fatigue

Members who showed the greatest improvements from baseline to reassessment in the three key resilience factors: Emotion Control, Energy and Engagement had broadly better outcomes than others who improved less.



Source: meQuilibrium COVID Self-Check surveys, June 2020 and December 2020

# The Path to Recovery: Conclusion

Taking on new caregiving and additional work responsibilities comes with a significant cost to worker wellbeing and motivation. HR executives must continue to develop strategies and programs to protect and support their workforces through this crisis. The pandemic remains a danger to workforce wellbeing and productivity and HR leaders must take even stronger actions to repair the damage to their organizations and the wellbeing of their workforces before it's too late.

*Methodology: Approximately 7,000 workers participated in meQuilibrium's COVID-19 check-in during June and 7,500 participated again in December 2020. The check-in examined worker wellbeing and the impact of additional work and caregiving responsibilities on employee mental health.*