

Until now, little research has been done on the impact of Covid-19 on the tech workforce. We know¹ the pandemic has disproportionately harmed women, especially Black and Latinx women the most and Black and Latinx² people, and, we wanted to understand who the shift to remote online workplaces has harmed, how it has harmed, and to recommend meaningful solutions to addressing the harm that has been done.

Through surveys and interviews, we categorized three areas of increased harm: harassment and hostility, work pressures, and mental health. Using a [data equity](#)³ approach and [intersectional](#)⁴ lens, our research centered on the people experiencing the greatest workplace harm.

Our research shows harassment and hostility have moved from physical and in-person actions to online and technology-based form; they range from public bullying attacks on group video calls to berating 1:1 over email to racist and sexist link-sharing in chat and more. The most people experienced increases in age, gender, and race/ethnicity harassment and hostility. We found consistently that Asian, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people, and women and nonbinary people, and especially people with intersections of these identities, transgender people, and people older than 50 disproportionately faced increases in harassment and hostility at work.

One important learning is that everyone is suffering: General anxiety has increased since Covid-19 for 85% of employees at all levels, from CEOs to executives to new hires.

At the same time, companies have created higher work expectations for their employees, and employees are experiencing it in different forms. Workers⁵ face a variety of pressures, such as a lack of clear company policies, increased mental anxiety and stress, poor working conditions, and the absence of in-person communication. Nearly 2 out of 3 survey respondents (64%) said their work hours have increased since Covid-19, and interviewees experienced a culture of work and tool overload.⁶

We urge CEOs and leaders to treat these cultural and process transformations, especially around belonging and mental health, as you would any other business imperative: Measure, fund, staff, and experiment.

An expert described the stress of a pandemic as causing brain fog, which has us working slower and needing time to recover.

The pandemic-driven shift to remote workplaces has exacerbated longstanding, systemic problems and amplified workplace biases. Bad management and communications got worse, as did anxiety and work-life balance, especially for people from marginalized communities. We call attention to a need and opportunity for a bold overhaul. It takes hard work to acknowledge the systemic nature of the problem and to redesign processes and hierarchies. We have no easy playbook for addressing racism, sexism, ageism, and other structural biases in tech, and each leader should tailor solutions to their specific company and its culture. Every day you wait to prioritize structural solutions increases the huge, compounding harm and cost to your workers and to your company.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Read Literature Review for more data on disproportionate impacts.
- ² Our use of “Latinx people” includes Latinx people, Latina women, Latino men, and nonbinary, genderqueer people.
- ³ We All Count.” Datassist Inc. 2017. <https://weallcount.com/>.
- ⁴ “Resources on Intersectionality.” Office for Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement. George Washington University. <https://diversity.gwu.edu/resources-intersectionality>.
- ⁵ We surveyed and interviewed workers, who included full-time or part-time employees, and independent contractors for themselves or a contracting company, and freelancers.
- ⁶ Tool overload is “an overload of tools that, rather than making our jobs easier, consume our valuable time and create frustration.” Ian Lunn. “Tools Overload and Exhaustion.” Product Focus. <https://www.productfocus.com/tools-overload-and-exhaustion/>.