



# America in presenter mode

Thousands of U.S. workers reveal how they feel about  
presenting and participating in meetings

2022

 Mentimeter

# As many companies call employees back into the office, workers are bringing heightened anxiety about presenting and participating in in-person meetings back with them

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Fear of presenting is extremely common among U.S. adults, and it's only gotten worse.

Through a recent study, we found that workers have experienced greater anxiety over both leading and attending meetings since the start of the pandemic. In fact, we are just as nervous about presenting as we are about a lifelong commitment like marriage. Additionally, the data also shows that the worry is not only based on a fear of presenting, but also on participating!

Through our study, we set out to explore this phenomenon more deeply through the following questions: Just how deeply rooted is this fear? Does this anxiety affect some more than others? What kind of scenarios do people dread the most? What are they so afraid of?



You might think the time we have spent with Zoom, Teams, and Hang-out would have at least made us comfortable with leading virtual meetings. Our results show a different reality. Our anxiety about presenting is high, whether we are in a business suit at the office or in our sweat pants at home.

How did we end up here? And, more importantly, what can companies do about it?

TREND 1

# Social Anxiety Gone Wild

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TREND 2

# Meetings Are a Diversity & Inclusion Issue

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TREND 3

# Sharing Is Scaring

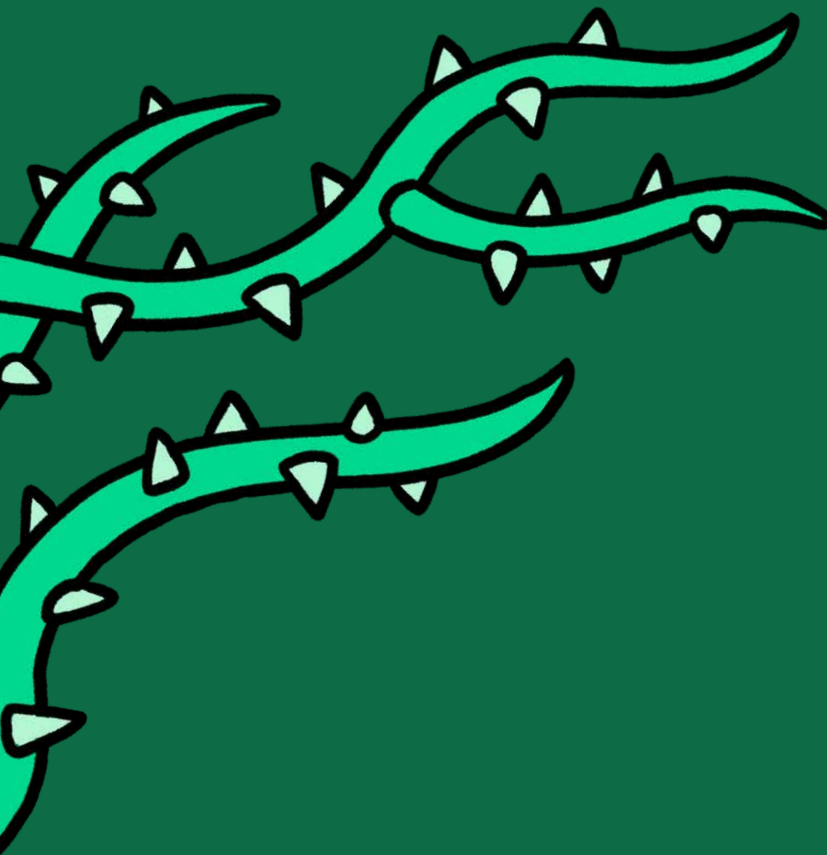
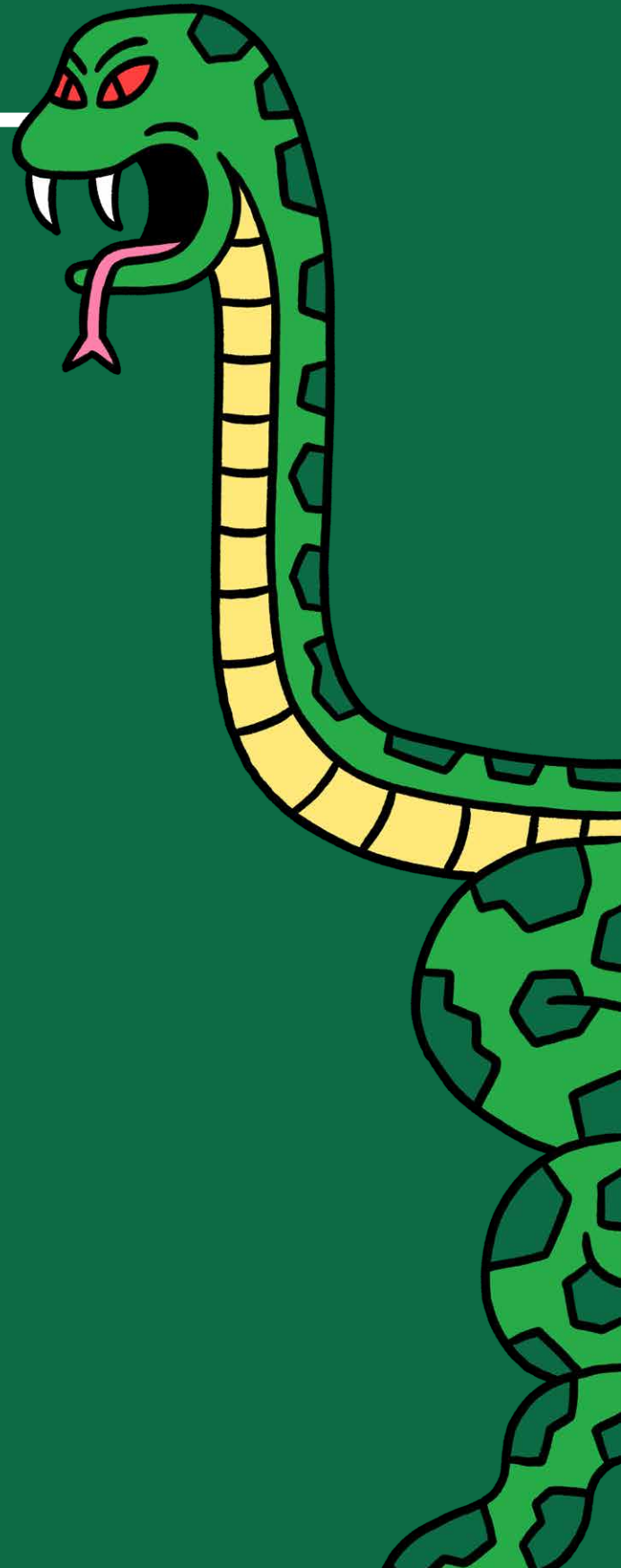
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TREND 1

# Social Anxiety Gone Wild

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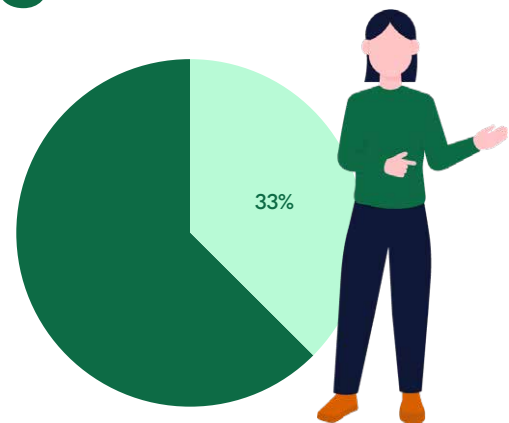
Anxiety over presenting in-person  
has increased since the pandemic



# The pandemic has left its mark: Workers have become more anxious to both lead and attend in-person meetings

Two out of five workers state that they are anxious about presenting in-person. Leading meetings induces nearly as much anxiety as discussing one's salary with an employer or getting married. Thirty seven percent have become anxious about leading in-person meetings at their workplace since the pandemic hit. About a third attribute their anxiety to presenting in-person to the fact that they are less accustomed to social interactions now than before the pandemic. A third of the respondents also feel more anxious about attending in-person meetings now than before the pandemic.

The survey found that workers experience anxiety about giving presentations regardless of whether the meeting is on-site or virtual. Respondents reported feeling anxious over not being listened to during a meeting at a rate of 65% for on-site and 60% for virtual. Other worries include being interrupted and not being able to get their point across clearly. Overall, almost a third experience anxiety over not having a meaningful meeting at all, whether they are presenting in-person or virtually.



Respondents stating that they feel more anxious about attending in-person presentations and meetings now than before the pandemic

## But is cyberspace our happy place? Probably not.

We may be inclined to believe that after two years of endless Zoom meetings we have become comfortable with presenting virtually. However, our results show that over a third of workers feel anxious about presenting virtually. In fact, about a quarter of workers state they are likely to come up with an excuse to avoid presenting virtually in a post-pandemic world, with 40% of those admitting to calling in sick to avoid presenting, 20% lying about having COVID-19, and 27% saying they had to take care of a sick family member.

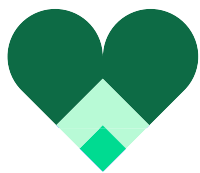
# What this means for you

Anxiety caused by a fear of presenting has been a trend for a long time, but this has been super-charged by the pandemic. Here is what you can do to combat it.



## Lower the pressure

Many people feel anxiety over presenting because of the intense pressure of having to prepare and deliver a presentation on their own. Try lowering the pressure on yourself and your team by making it a more collaborative activity. Encourage engagement and audience input over talking.



## Focus on generational inclusivity

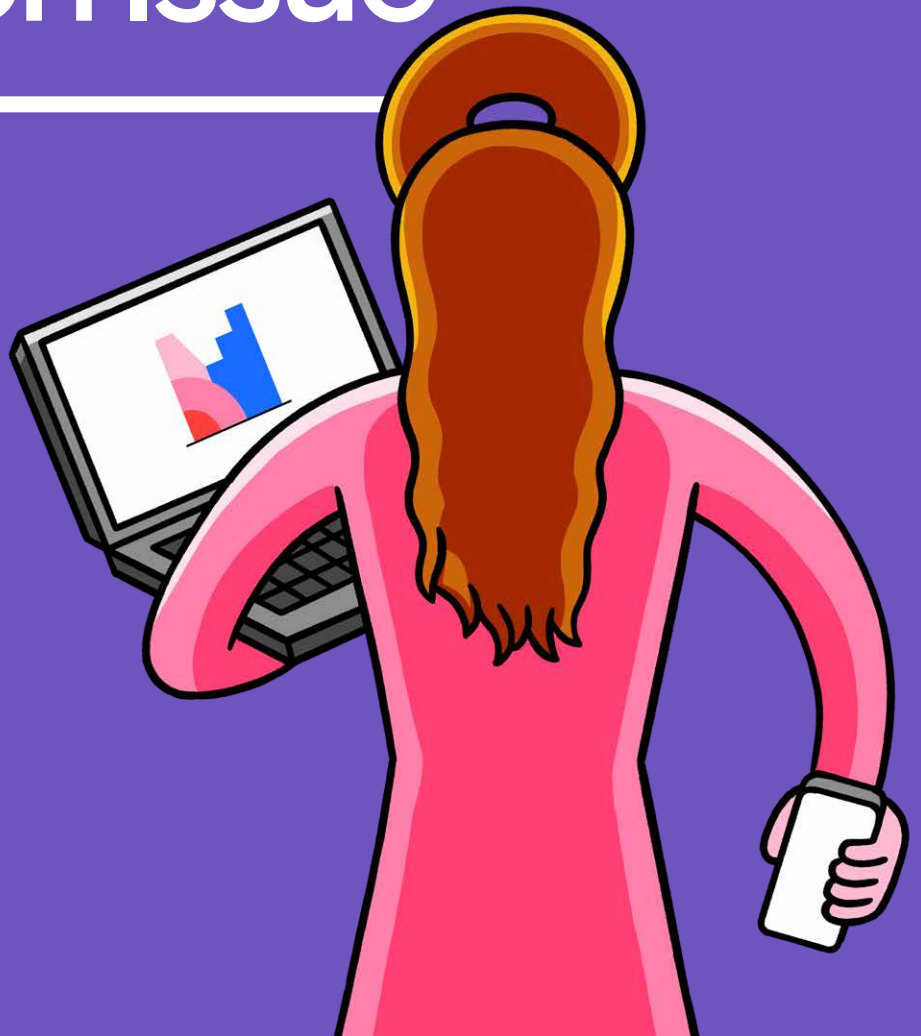
People have great ideas and can make important contributions no matter how old they are. But too often our workplaces are geared towards ways of working that favor older employees. Give younger colleagues alternative channels to share ideas: like chats, virtual Q&As, and anonymous channels. That way everyone can get their voice heard.

TREND 2

# Meetings Are a Diversity & Inclusion Issue

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Rising anxiety levels impact women and diverse groups most



# Women experience more anxiety in meetings – both as presenters and participants

# 38%

Women experience anxiety before giving in-person presentations

## Women feel more anxious about leading presentations

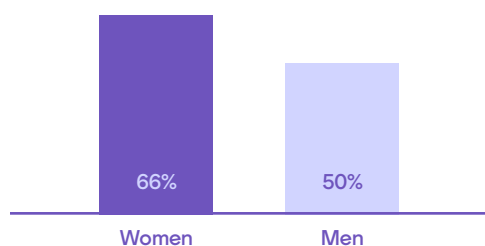
Both women and men have become more anxious about in-person meetings since the pandemic, with 38% women and 35% men worried about this. However, women generally feel more anxious about presenting, both in-person and virtually. Almost 50% of women state that they feel anxious about presenting in-person, compared to 35% of men.

# 68%

Women stating that they sometimes, often or always experience anxiety about not being listened to

## Women feel more anxious about not being listened to when presenting

Women experience greater anxiety about not being listened to, with approximately 68% of women stating that they sometimes, often, or always experience anxiety about this, compared to 61% of men. Around 66% of women are also more worried about not being able to engage their audience in meetings, while around 60% of men experience the same worry.



Respondents concerned about not having meaningful meetings

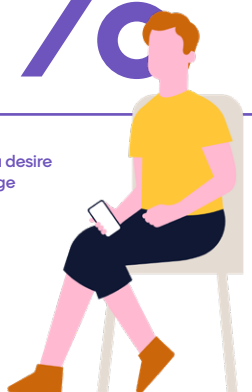
## Women are more anxious than men in virtual and in-person meetings

Women are generally more concerned about not having meaningful meetings than men, whether in-person or virtual. Two thirds of women experience this anxiety, compared to just over half of men.



# 71%

Participants who expressed a desire for anonymous ways to engage

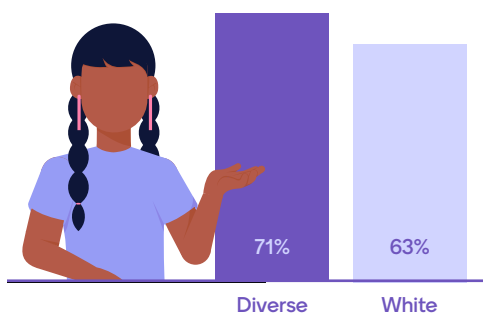


## Women also worry about not being listened to as participants

Women are more worried about not being listened to when attending meetings, with almost 66% reporting this anxiety for in-person meetings, versus 54% of men. Around 62% of workers worry about not being able to engage in a conversation at least some of the time, with this concern affecting 56% of men and 68% of women. Over 71% of participants expressed a desire for anonymous ways to engage.

## Diverse groups are even more anxious to present in-person than others since the start of the pandemic

Diverse presenters experience more anxiety before presenting in-person than virtually, with 60% stating they sometimes, often, or always feel anxious before presenting virtually, while 70% feel the same anxiety before presenting in-person. For white presenters, 66% feel anxiety before presenting in-person and 60% before presenting virtually.

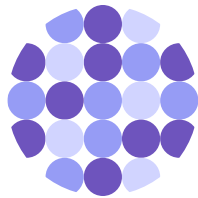


Presenters being worried about not being listened to at work at least sometimes

Workers from diverse backgrounds are also more likely to be concerned about not being listened to or being interrupted during a meeting than others. 71% of diverse presenters report being worried about not being listened to at work at least sometimes, compared to 63% of white presenters. Diverse workers are also concerned about being interrupted at a rate of 65% compared to just 58% of white presenters.

# What this means for you

Many workplaces and ways of working are designed for a different time and a different workforce. The pandemic gives us an opportunity to reshape the future of work into a model that works for everyone.



## The only constant is change

The demographics of the U.S. workforce have been shifting for a long time, but only since the pandemic have we tried and tested the tools that allow for seamless remote/hybrid work. Childcare – still – is often the responsibility of mothers<sup>1</sup>. We should be designing work to accommodate them, rather than reverting to the old, male-centric, models.



## Be an active ally

Our data shows that people experience the demands of the workplace in different ways. As a leader, it is your responsibility to tailor your leadership style and your expectations to the needs of your team. Foster confidence and presentation skills in colleagues from diverse groups and consider how much talking male colleagues are doing. Actively encouraging diverse voices is the way to draw on a richer set of experiences and perspectives.

TREND 3

# Sharing Is Scaring

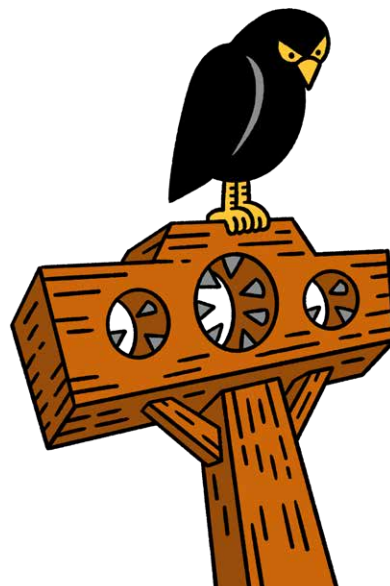
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Bridging the engagement gap has become increasingly challenging



# Meeting participants and presenters are afraid they won't engage their audience

One third of workers experience anxiety over not being able to engage their audience while presenting. Creating an engaging environment and conversation is a challenge regardless of whether the meeting is held on-site or virtually.



## Trying to engage as an audience member makes people just as anxious as presenting

# 27%

Almost a third of audience members are anxious over not being able to engage others in the meeting

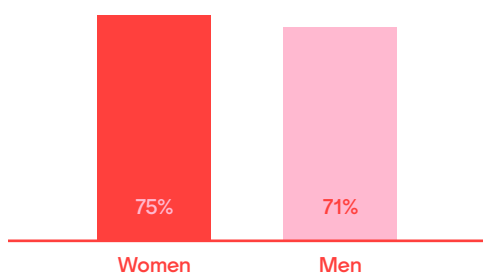
Even as audience members, almost a third of workers are anxious over not being able to engage others in a meeting. Workers are also just as anxious over not being listened to when presenting as when attending, regardless of attending as a meeting participant on-site or virtually.

# Having great tools makes a difference

Three quarters of respondents state the importance of having great tools that let them engage with the presenter when they want to feel heard in both virtual and in-person meetings, with 80% emphasizing the importance of having multiple tools for engagement.



## Being able to contribute anonymously is listed as an important factor in feeling heard

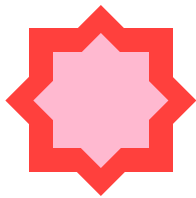


Importance of sharing anonymous thoughts in in-person meetings

Regardless of in-person or virtual meetings, participants want to be able to offer their thoughts in an anonymous way. The majority of respondents state this as an important part of a meeting when wanting to be heard. 75% of women and 71% of men state the importance of sharing anonymous thoughts during in-person meetings.

# What this means for you

Worries about keeping your audience engaged and being listened to are very common problems for workers. But you don't have to feel like you're spending your life on mute. Gaining more confidence is easier than you think.



## Flip the script

Worried about your ability to hold people's attention or worried that people aren't listening to you? Try turning the tables and placing the emphasis on audience contribution. Instead of a lecture from you, shift your mindset to think of meetings more like workshops. People are a lot more likely to listen when they also want to be heard.



## Give anonymity a try

One reason why people are concerned about not being heard is that they worry how their contributions will be perceived by the people around them. The solution? Anonymity. Allowing anonymous input allows ideas to be free of any bias – conscious or unconscious.



## Maximize the tools available to you

Give yourself the confidence you need by using the right tools. Putting together an elegant, interactive, and shareable presentation is easier than ever with an array of free interactive tools to suit any situation. There is a world beyond PowerPoint, go explore it!

# The content of the report

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23.03.2022  
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05.04.2022

This project was commissioned by Mentimeter and administered by SynoAnswers, a division of the global data company Syno International.



1995

1995 interviews were conducted between the period of March 23, 2022 and April 5, 2022. The survey was conducted as an online research project using panels of opted-in participants that have agreed to be contacted to share their opinion and which are managed in accordance with the ISO quality standards and Esomar ethical guidelines.



18–64-year old  
men and women  
with a job

The participating respondents are selected to match the national distribution regarding age, gender and region to provide a balanced representation of the views of the total population. The target group consists of men and women in the United States between the ages of 18 and 64.



National representative  
sampling on age, gender  
and regions

The figures in the report are based on the sum of respondents who answered “sometimes”, “often” and “always” to the questions. For some questions, this corresponds to the sum of “agree” and “strongly agree” and the sum of respondents who answered “4” and “5” on a five-point scale between “1 – not anxious at all” and “5 – very anxious”.



Online survey  
using panels

To view the whole database, please contact [hello@mentimeter.com](mailto:hello@mentimeter.com)





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into engaging conversations?

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