After a year when consumers did everything differently, what changes will stick?
Consumer behavior has changed: it’s a truism of COVID-19 analysis. What’s missing is a sense of what behaviors have changed for good and what are likely to revert to prepandemic norms. A new report from the McKinsey Global Institute offers a view: e-grocery shopping is here to stay, while remote learning for primary grades could be headed for the dustbin of history. We devised a “stickiness” index (or, if we’re being academic, a gauge of behavior plasticity) to assess all the big shifts of 2020 (exhibit).

This week, we spoke with two prominent executives about what’s stuck with them from their pandemic experience. Chris Kempczinski, CEO of McDonald’s, spoke with senior partner Greg Kelly about how the company has worked hard to stay relevant. For a restaurant chain in the crisis, that means excelling at delivery; McDonald’s expanded the number of its locations offering delivery to more than 30,000. Leena Nair, chief human-resources officer of Unilever, shared her strategies for caring about 150,000 employees with senior partner Mary Meaney and executive editor Astrid Sandoval. For those in the workforce wondering when 2020’s pace of work might relent, here’s one encouraging sign: Nair says, “This speed is unsustainable.”

Also this week, our industry researchers examined the potential for Vietnam to rebuild tourism, the ecosystem opportunity for mobility companies, and the pleasant surprises B2B companies have discovered as they adapted to online sales.

Exhibit

What behaviors will stick and what will not differ by sector and geography, but overall we find e-grocery is the most sticky and remote education the least.

Average and variance of post-COVID-19 stickiness score by sector

Source: McKinsey Global Institute analysis
Finally, in the pandemic, many of us have spent more time with our children than we used to, and we’ve learned from them. In our new edition of McKinsey for Kids, we attempt to return the favor by taking a look at the food distribution system and food waste. Please share it with your young people, and let us know what they think.

Business leaders crave new perspectives. Check out our series of Author Talks, which features the writers of the best new business books. This week’s additions to the series include Gregory B. Fairchild on the next frontier in racial equality and Nicolai Tillisch on how to frame ambition (and not let it frame you). For more perspectives, please see the full collection of our coronavirus-related content, visual insights from our “chart of the day,” a curated collection of our first 100 articles relating to the coronavirus, our suite of tools to help leaders respond to the pandemic, and how our editors choose images that help readers visualize the impact of an invisible threat.