Navigating Hybrid Work Strategies in the Evolving Workplaces

Cisco Global Hybrid Work Study 2025

Contents

Executive summary

More than five years after COVID-19 induced a shift to working from home, organizations globally are still actively refining their hybrid work and return-to-office strategies. This ongoing evolution requires organizations to carefully balance employee satisfaction and retention with critical business priorities such as productivity, operational efficiency, and profitability.

This report, which is based on a global survey of employers and employees from industries ranging from financial services to healthcare and manufacturing across 21 markets, highlights the complexities of the current workplace landscape.

At a time when many organizational leaders are encouraging or mandating their teams to spend more time in the office, the findings reveal significant disconnects between employer expectations and employee preferences, the vital relationship between workplace flexibility and overall wellbeing, and the necessity for transparent communication around the growing number of return-to-office policies.

Our survey, which follows Cisco's inaugural global hybrid work study in 2022, *Employees are ready for the future of hybrid work, are you?*, reveals a clear, global trend toward increased in-office work, with the percentage of respondents with hybrid work arrangements decreasing from 62% in 2022 to 45% in 2025. Nearly three quarters (72%) of respondents' organizations have mandates for working in the office. Nearly half (46%) say their organization's current hybrid work policy requires more time in the office than the policy it superseded, while 32% say it has less flexibility. At the same time, 54% say their latest policies provide greater flexibility.

Notably, respondents report positive impacts from these changes, especially in the areas of productivity, innovation, culture, and employee engagement. Nearly three-quarters of all respondents (73%) report higher productivity under their new working arrangements, with an average self-reported increase of 19%. This translates to a substantial gain of 7.6 hours per week or almost one full day for workers with a standard 40-hour week.

In comparison to our 2022 study we also see that current work from office arrangements are making significant improvements to wellbeing—in particular social and emotional wellbeing—suggesting that over time employers have become more adept at tailoring hybrid arrangements to better support employees' needs.

However, as the pendulum swings toward more time in the office, leaders also face critical challenges with communicating changes and the need to manage and balance the various expectation gaps that exists. Our findings show leaders need to more actively involve employees in the decision-making process regarding hybrid working arrangements, clearly communicate changes when they occur, and justifying the business case.

Our study also shows that hybrid working arrangements continue to remain an effective tool in the war for talent acquisition and retention. For deeper analysis, survey respondents are segmented based on the level of their promotions and pay rises into three groups—high performers, average performers, and low performers.

The findings show that half (50%) of high performers work for organizations requiring less than three days in the office per week. This group clearly values the freedom to choose, preferring remote work while appreciating the benefits of collaborative office spaces. Notably, 63% of all respondents would even accept a pay cut for the option to work remotely more often.

Hybrid work arrangements are a cornerstone of the modern workplace, with both employers and employees recognizing collaboration technology as crucial for enabling engagement and flexibility. As a result, investments in this area are increasing. However, a significant opportunity remains to improve employee Experience. Currently, less than half (49%) of employees believe their organization supports them with consistent tools and processes to work effectively from any location.

Amid the increasingly complex working environment, we hope leaders from organizations of all sizes and across every industry will find this report useful in planning future hybrid working arrangements, policies, and mandates.
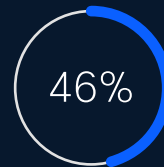
46%
say their organization's current hybrid work policy requires more time in the office

73%
report higher productivity under their new working arrangement

50%
of high performers work for organizations requiring less than three days in the office per week
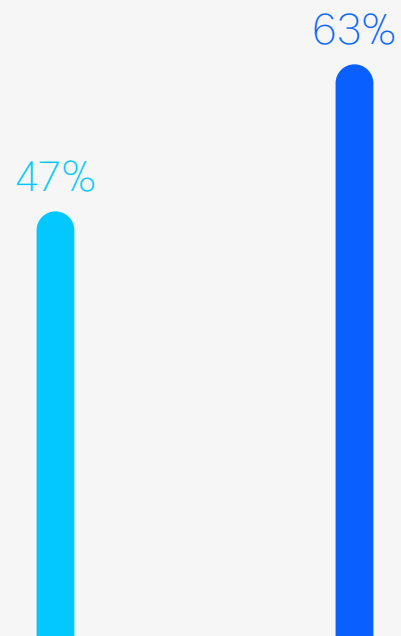
63%
of all respondents would even accept a pay cut for the option to work remotely more often

Hybrid workers 2022 vs 2025
Hybrid workers as a percentage of total respondents

● 2025   ● 2022

63%

47%

Research overview

This report is based on a double-blind survey of 21,513 employers and employees in full-time roles across 21 markets globally undertaken in April 2025.

1,000 respondents per market
200 employers (Director level and above)
800 employees

Three company sizes
Small (10–499 employees); medium (500–1,000 employees) and large (1,000+ employees).

12 industries
Business services; construction; education; finance and insurance; government and public administration; healthcare; hospitality and food services; manufacturing; media and entertainment; retail and wholesale trade; technology services; transportation and logistics.

Four generations

● Boomers ● Gen X ● Gen Y ● Gen Z

	9%
	28%
	44%
	17%
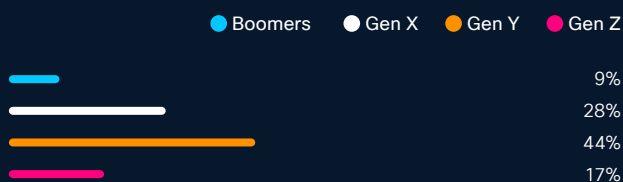
Three performance segments

● Employers ● Employees

High performers: Significantly higher promotions or pay raises compared to colleagues in similar roles.

	44%
	17%

Average performers: Slightly higher or in-line with colleagues in similar roles.

	50%
	67%

Low performers: Promotions or pay raises that are lower than their colleagues in similar roles.

	6%
	16%

Average length of time in current career   13.15 years

Advice for leadership

1 **Navigate varying views of your workforce:** This report highlights key gaps, divergences, and misunderstandings between employers and employees. With multigenerational workforces and varying performance levels nfluencing expectations, return-to-office mandates must account for different needs.

2 **Flexibility is non-negotiable and drives performance:** While employees acknowledge the importance of office presence for career advancement, their preference for flexibility is undeniable. Many are even willing to take pay cuts or consider leaving their company if it is threatened. Flexibility has been shown to positively impact productivity, retention, culture, and innovation. Consequently, most employees are navigating a balance between the value of in-office time for career progression and the appeal of flexible work arrangements.

3 **Trust must be built to optimize productivity:** There is a clear disconnect between employers and employees regarding the drivers of return-to-office policies, particularly around trust. 77% of employees and 81% of employers acknowledge that return-to-office mandates stem partly from a lack of trust in remote productivity. This highlights a misalignment between how productivity is measured by employers and how it is experienced by employees.

4 **Clear communication is key:** Employers overestimate the effectiveness of their hybrid working policy and mandate communications, while employees cite a lack of justification, clarity, and engagement around policy changes. Employers must ensure any policy and mandate changes are communicated clearly and consistently across their organizations on multiple channels, with a well-reasoned business case.

5 **Encourage a balance of flexibility and office presence:** Despite the perceived mental wellbeing benefits of flexible work, our findings highlight the office's crucial role in fulfilling social and emotional needs. This creates a tension between the sought-after flexibility and the recognized benefits of office presence for career advancement and their own wellbeing.

6 **Future-proof workplace technology offerings:** Collaboration tools are recognized as crucial by the vast majority of employers (93%) and employees (90%), and investment in AI is widespread. However, the current reality is that only 49% of employees feel workflows are seamless across all work locations. This underscores the need for better technology devices and capabilities to provide a superior seamless employee experience.

7 **Design policies for today and the future:** Generational differences, particularly the growing influence of Gen Z in the workplace, is an important factor to consider in future workforce planning. Our study reveals that Gen Z employees prefer flexible working and rely greatly on collaboration technology. As more Gen Zs rise to leadership roles, their impact on workplace culture and policies will grow. In any case, as the needs of all employees will continue to evolve, leaders must constantly plan for the future to stay ahead in attracting and keeping the best talent—what your people need today may look totally different in five years.

Hybrid working arrangements continue to evolve, with a trend toward more time in the office

While hybrid work includes many benefits, getting it right is critical to optimize workforce productivity and build a strong company culture. Organizations also need to factor in employees' expectations and the value derived from flexible working arrangements.

Companies are responding and many are continuing to recalibrate their hybrid working policies and mandates. Our research finds that 62% of respondents' organizations have changed their work-from-office policies within the past three years, with one in five (22%) changing them within the past 12 months.

Nearly three quarters (72%) of all respondents' (employers and employees) organizations have elected to mandate working from the office—either on set days of the week (37%), with Monday to Wednesday being the most popular, or a set number of days (35%).

When organizations most recently changed their hybrid working policies

Last 12 months

22%

13–24 months ago

24%

2-3 years

16%

3-5 years

11%

More than 5 years

27%

Organizations' current policy for working from the office

It is mandated to work set days of the week in the office

37%

It is mandated to work a set number of days a week from the office, but there is flexibility to choose which days

35%

It is encouraged but not mandated to work from the office full time

16%

It is encouraged but not mandated to work from the office part time

4%

Our organization has a fully flexible work policy

8%
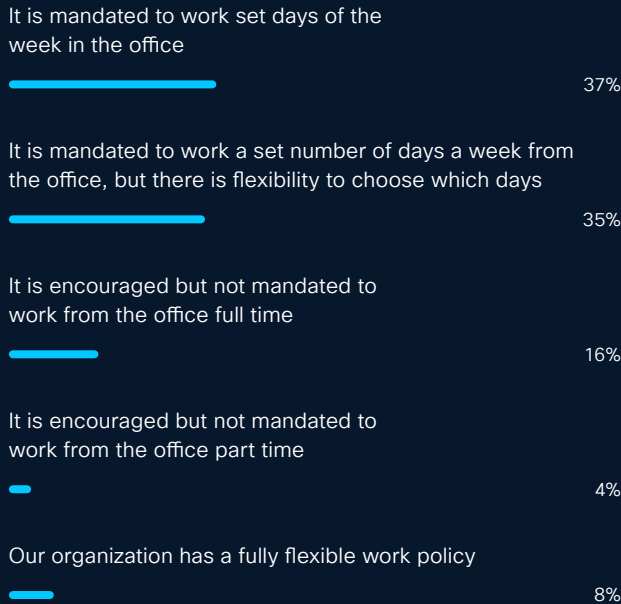
How organizations' current working from the office policy differs to their previous one

My organization's new policy requires more time to be spent in the office

46%

My organization's new policy requires less time to be spent in the office

32%

Unsure / this was never clearly announced

22%

It provides greater flexibility for employees in terms of where, when, and how they work

54%

It provides less flexibility for employees in terms of where, when, and how they work

30%

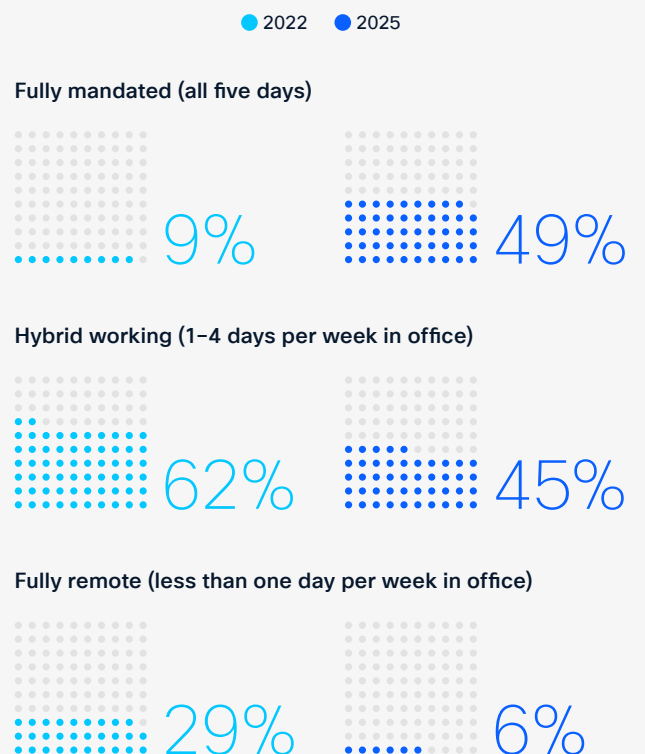Unsure / this was never clearly announced

17%

Nearly half (46%) of all respondents say their organization's current work-from-office policy requires more time in the office compared with the previous policy, while 32% say it requires less. Just over half (54%) also indicate that their policies provide employees with greater flexibility in terms of where, when, and how they work.
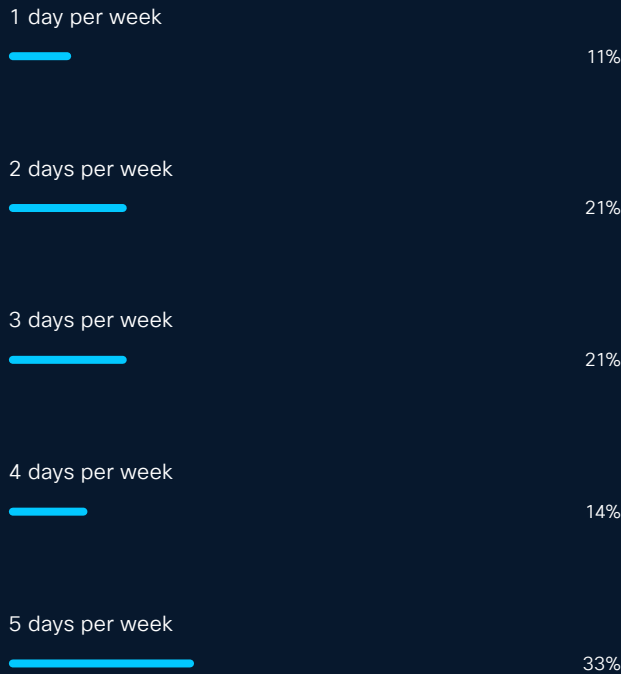
The net result of these evolving policy trends is that hybrid work arrangements remain in a state of flux. Overall, hybrid workers now account for nearly half 47%, down from 63% immediately post-pandemic, according to Cisco's Global Hybrid Work Study in 2022. Currently, employees average 3.74 days per week in the office.

By market, hybrid work arrangements appear to be most prevalent in the Netherlands (60%), followed by China (57%), Switzerland (55%), Australia (54%), and Germany (53%). The greatest portion of hybrid workers by industry are technology services (55%), business services (53%), and finance and insurance (53%).

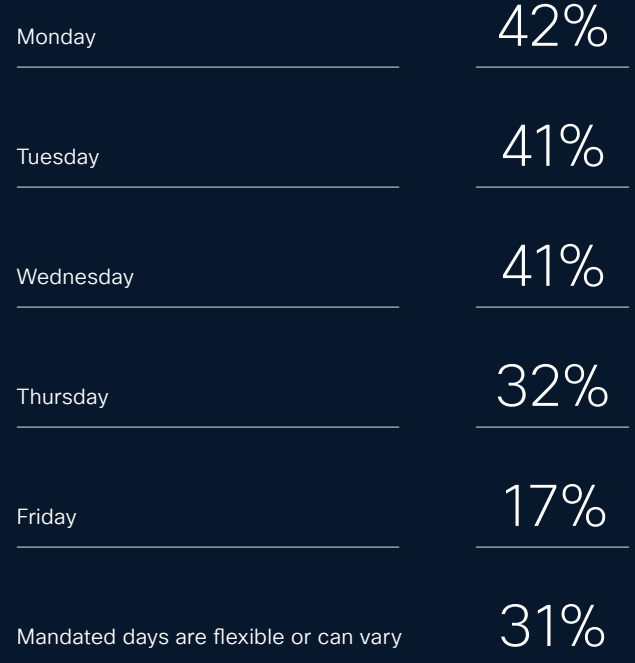## 2022 vs 2025 work arrangements for all respondents

● 2022   ● 2025

Fully mandated (all five days)

9%   49%

Hybrid working (1–4 days per week in office)

62%   45%

Fully remote (less than one day per week in office)

29%   6%

How many days per week are employees mandated to work from the office

1 day per week

11%

2 days per week

21%

3 days per week

21%

4 days per week

14%

5 days per week

33%

Which days per week are employees most likely working from the office

Monday	42%
Tuesday	41%
Wednesday	41%
Thursday	32%
Friday	17%
Mandated days are flexible or can vary	31%

2025 hybrid arrangement by market

	Hybrid working (1–4 days per week in office)
Global average	**44%**
Netherlands	60%
China	57%
Switzerland	55%
Australia	54%
Germany	53%
France	49%
United Kingdom	49%
Canada	48%
Sweden	47%
India	46%
Poland	46%
Brazil	45%
Italy	43%
Indonesia	42%
Singapore	42%
Thailand	41%
Mexico	37%
United Arab Emirates	36%
United States of America	33%
South Korea	26%
Japan	24%

2025 hybrid arrangement by industry

	Hybrid working (1–4 days per week in office)
Global average	**44%**
Technology Services	55%
Business Services	53%
Finance and Insurance	53%
Manufacturing	45%
Media and Entertainment	43%
Transportation and Logistics	42%
Construction	41%
Government and Public Administration	41%
Healthcare	41%
Retail and Wholesale Trade	39%
Education	38%
Hospitality and Food Services	38%

Positive employee sentiment about different hybrid work policies

Respondents working for organizations with fully flexible hybrid work policies report the highest positive sentiment among co-workers, with 74% indicating approval. This is closely followed by those at organizations mandating a set number of in-office days, at 71%. Among these, respondents whose organizations require no more than one day per week in the office are the most likely to note positive co-worker sentiment toward the policy. This trend holds true across both employers and employees.

These same organizations offering greater flexibility are also attracting better talent, with half (50%) of high performers working for organizations with mandates of no more than two days per week in the office, compared with 29% of average performers, and 19% of low performers.

Proportion of respondents positively receiving different hybrid work policies

74%
Fully flexible work policy

71%
Mandated set number of days in the office

66%
Mandated set days in the office

56%
Fully mandated
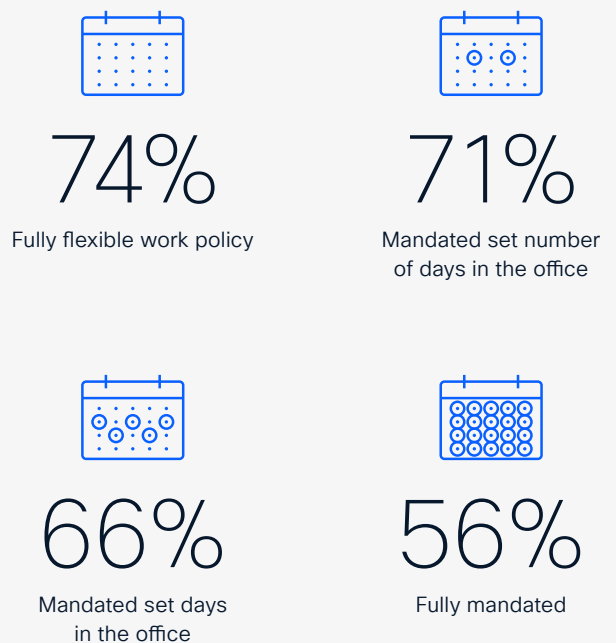
Preferred working arrangements of employers and high and low performing employees

	% All respondents	% Employers	% Employees	% High performers	% Low performers
Prefer working from home	26%	37%	23%	44%	23%
Prefer working from the office	41%	36%	42%	34%	37%
Hybrid, depending on the task	28%	25%	28%	19%	32%
No specific preference	6%	3%	6%	4%	8%

Most likely as a result of the greater choice they have as desired candidates, high performers (50%) are also more than twice as likely to be very satisfied as compared with average performers (27%), and low performers (19%) with their working arrangements.

Different types of mandates also appear to be delivering distinct perceived benefits and outcomes. Looking at the various workplace models from fully flexible, to mandated set days and fully mandated (five-day office attendance), we can see the differing perceptions that employers have of the advantages derived from each model.

Employers indicate:
• Having mandated set days is believed to deliver greater productivity, profitability and superior innovation.
• A fully flexible model is believed to deliver superior connectivity through technology, the highest employee wellbeing and superior employee retention.
• A fully mandated (five days in office) approach is thought to be the best way to generate employee collaboration, however this approach performs the worst or equal worst against 10 of the other 12 workplace metrics measured.

It is important therefore that employers are clear in the intent and objectives that they are seeking to achieve through return-to-office policies and mandates.

When assessing different workplace models, we can see that different models are also perceived to have different benefits. For employees, a fully flexible model is generally perceived to be the most beneficial across most measures, but especially in terms of productivity, providing a better workspace, and enhancing personal wellbeing. It's important to note that 'fully flexible' is not the same as 'fully remote', but rather enables the employee maximum flexibility to determine when they attend the office, if at all.

The largest share of workers, state that working from the office is preferred (41%), followed by hybrid work– depending on the task (28%), and working from home (26%), with the remaining 6% having no preference.

Overall, across all respondents, high performers buck the trend by being significantly more likely to prefer working from home (44%), followed by working from the office (34%), and hybrid (19%).

Proportion of employers reporting very positive impact on different performance measures as a result of current work from office policies

Outcome	Fully flexible	Mandated set days	Fully mandated (5 days)	Mandated set number of days	Full-time office – encouraged	Part-time office – encouraged
Workplace productivity	50%	58%	49%	45%	35%	35%
Operational costs / profitability	42%	47%	38%	41%	34%	35%
Better technology connectivity	48%	42%	43%	41%	35%	28%
Employee wellbeing	49%	44%	42%	38%	36%	37%
Better utilization office space	42%	45%	41%	39%	33%	37%
Executive support	43%	42%	42%	40%	37%	31%
Workplace collaboration	42%	42%	45%	39%	32%	41%
Workplace innovation	40%	44%	39%	37%	35%	31%
Workplace equity / fairness	41%	43%	40%	36%	32%	34%
Workplace team connectivity	43%	40%	41%	36%	31%	33%
Stimulating the local economy	37%	39%	34%	34%	30%	29%
Shareholder / owner support	40%	37%	37%	33%	31%	26%
Employee retention	42%	36%	35%	33%	28%	29%

Proportion of employees reporting very positive impact on different performance measures as a result of current work from office policies

Outcome	Fully flexible	Mandated set days	Fully mandated (5 days)	Mandated set number of days	Full-time office – encouraged	Part-time office – encouraged
Productivity	44%	39%	34%	36%	31%	31%
Better space for me to work from	41%	35%	32%	34%	30%	32%
Personal wellbeing	41%	32%	28%	34%	30%	33%
Collaboration with colleagues	37%	36%	36%	35%	34%	28%
Feeling of fairness and equal opportunities	36%	33%	30%	32%	28%	27%
Ability to innovate	32%	31%	27%	33%	28%	24%
Personal living costs	34%	28%	24%	33%	28%	27%
Better connectivity through technology in the office	36%	33%	32%	34%	29%	26%
Feel included in and connected with my team and the company culture	33%	34%	32%	34%	30%	26%
Improving my likelihood to stay with the company longer	35%	31%	28%	33%	29%	30%

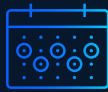# Average employee productivity gain by working mode

28%
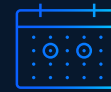Fully flexible work policy
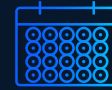
26%
Fully mandated

21%
Mandated set days
in the office

16%
Mandated set number
of days in the office

When asked to quantify the impact of changes to their working policies on personal productivity, 73% of employees report an increase in productivity, 24% report a decrease, and 3% say there has been no impact when compared to their organizations previous hybrid work policy. The mean reported change in productivity is 19%.

Our analysis of productivity outcomes across different workplace models reveals that fully flexible arrangements have yielded the highest gains following policy changes, with a 28% increase in employee productivity. Surprisingly, organizations requiring five days in the office have achieved nearly comparable results, showing a 26% productivity improvement. Companies mandating attendance on specific days report a somewhat lower, but still significant, 21% productivity increase.
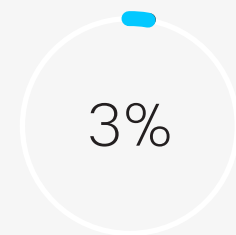
Impact on employee productivity of current work from office policy
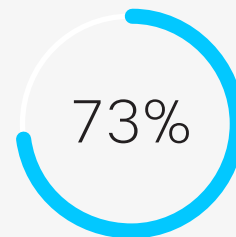
73%
of employees report an increase in productivity

24%
report a decrease

3%
say there has been no impact

19%
is the mean reported change in productivity

Expectation gaps between employers and employees center on trust and motivations

Leadership teams setting return-to-office policies have many different interests and expectations to try to balance—often across diverse and geographically dispersed workforces. Complicating this is that employers and employees bring different perspectives to hybrid working arrangements and views around what's working and what's not.

Differing sentiments around policies and impacts

Our findings show that more than three-quarters (78%) of employers believe their organization's current policy for working from the office has been positively received, while only 64% of employees feel the same way.

At a personal level, while 90% of employers and 81% of employees are satisfied with their current working from the office policies, only 44% of employers are "very satisfied" and less than a third (28%) of employees say the same.

Proportion of employers and employees positively receiving different hybrid work policies

	% Employers	% Employees	Gap
Global average	**78%**	**64%**	14 p.p
Australia	83%	71%	12 p.p
Brazil	80%	63%	17 p.p
Canada	73%	61%	12 p.p
China	84%	65%	19 p.p
France	79%	60%	19 p.p
Germany	79%	60%	19 p.p
India	84%	79%	5 p.p
Indonesia	92%	79%	13 p.p
Italy	64%	53%	11 p.p
Japan	64%	47%	17 p.p
Mexico	80%	65%	15 p.p
Netherlands	74%	60%	14 p.p
Poland	74%	56%	18 p.p
Singapore	85%	72%	13 p.p
South Korea	72%	54%	18 p.p
Sweden	74%	60%	14 p.p
Switzerland	88%	70%	18 p.p
Thailand	80%	66%	14 p.p
United Arab Emirates	80%	69%	11 p.p
United Kingdom	77%	61%	16 p.p
United States of America	80%	63%	17 p.p

Aligned with this, significant gaps are seen between how positive employers are around the impacts of their organization's policies and those of employees—with the largest gaps among those in each group who are very positive in Workplace Productivity (11p.p) and Operation Costs (12p.p). And while employers at organizations with mandates show the highest positivity levels in six out of ten outcomes assessed, for employees the highest positivity comes from those with fully flexible arrangements in nine out of ten categories.

Employers and employees have different reasons for wanting to be in the office

The findings further reveal that employers and employees have differing perspectives on the reasons for and benefits of returning to the office. Employers cite strategic, operational, and cultural factors as influencing their decision to increase or decrease time spent in the office. Employers feel the most important factors shaping their organizations policies for working from the office are increasing productivity, increasing workplace collaboration, culture, and connection.

Top factors influencing employers to increase time spent in the office

Productivity	62%
Team communication	61%
Workplace culture	54%
Pressure from leadership	54%
Improved operations	53%
Industry trends & norms	50%
Profitability/cost savings	50%
Pressure from shareholders	49%
Pressure from government and regulators	48%
Employee wellbeing	47%
Pressure from employees	45%
Reduction in our real estate footprint since the COVID-19 pandemic	45%

Employer and employee views on how different work-from-home policies' have impacted organizational performance

Outcome	Very positive – Employers	Very positive – Employees	Gap	Best model – Employers	Best model – Employees	Gap
Workplace productivity	48%	37%	11 p.p	58%	44%	14 p.p
Operational costs / profitability	42%	30%	12 p.p	47%	34%	13 p.p
Better technology connectivity	41%	33%	8 p.p	48%	36%	12 p.p
Employee wellbeing	41%	33%	8 p.p	49%	41%	8 p.p
Better utilization office space	40%	34%	6 p.p	45%	41%	4 p.p
Workplace collaboration	39%	35%	4 p.p	42%	37%	5 p.p
Workplace innovation	39%	31%	8 p.p	44%	32%	12 p.p
Workplace equity / fairness	38%	32%	6 p.p	43%	36%	7 p.p
Workplace team connectivity	37%	33%	4 p.p	43%	34%	9 p.p
Employee retention	34%	31%	3 p.p	42%	35%	7 p.p

Employees agree about the importance of collaboration. Nine out of 10 (92%) rank collaboration and community as very important aspects of office culture. This is the highest of any attribute. Developing a sense of belonging and collaborating with team members are the top drivers for employees to want to spend more time in the office.

Our findings show a general level of skepticism among employees about the reasons driving return-to-office policies. As many as 77% of employees believe that organizations are mandating working from the office because they don't trust all employees to be productive at home—and with 81% of employers agreeing with this, their assessment is proven right.

Lack of alignment around financial impacts

Gaps also exist in the financial impacts of different hybrid working policies on employees and employers. In this area the practical aspects are evident—with commuting expenses far and away the greatest concern for employees and office leasing and real estate costs for employers.

Half (50%) of all respondents say their organization has reduced its real estate footprint in the past five years due to socio-economic factors.

Perception gaps around hybrid working experiences

A majority of employers believe that they are on the right track when it comes to employee experience in relation to hybrid working. More than half (59%) of employers believe their organization ensures a seamless experience for employees in remote, physical, and in-between office environments, compared to just 46% of employees—a 13 percentage point gap.

This gap highlights the need for improvement in the implementation and support of return-to-office policies, as well as the differing perspectives between employers and employees on their effectiveness.

Some employees remain unconvinced that current workplace arrangements are meeting their needs as effectively as possible. For example, while 53% of employers believe their organization's collaboration tools significantly enhance productivity and efficiency, only 42% of employees agree. This sentiment is even more pronounced among older workers, with just 37% of Boomer employees rating these tools as highly effective. Nearly one in four employers (24%) believe their organization's collaboration platforms seamlessly integrate with various tools and systems, compared to just one in six employees (18%).

In addition to differing perceptions of collaboration tool effectiveness, attitudes also play a role in shaping experience. Across all respondents, high performers are significantly more likely to report a seamless experience across all settings (67% vs. 43% of others) and tend to have a more positive outlook overall.
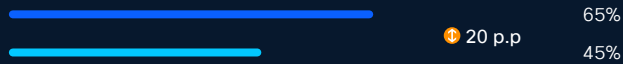
Proportion of employers and employees in each market who believe their organization ensures a seamless experience for employees in all settings
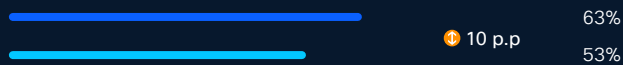
● Employers   ● Employees   ↕ Gap (p.p)
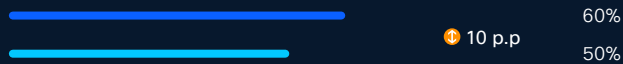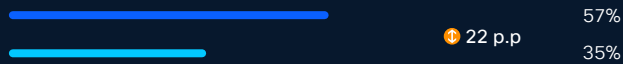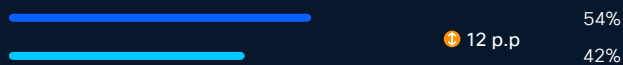
Global average
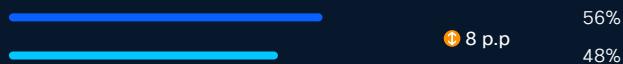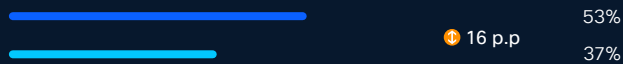
↕ 13 p.p   59%
   46%

Mexico

↕ 5 p.p   54%
   49%

Australia

↕ 20 p.p   65%
   45%

Netherlands

↕ 4 p.p   53%
   49%

Brazil

↕ 10 p.p   63%
   53%

Poland

↕ 28 p.p   55%
   43%

Canada

↕ 10 p.p   60%
   50%

Singapore

↕ 22 p.p   60%
   38%

China

↕ 22 p.p   57%
   35%

South Korea

↕ 12 p.p   44%
   32%

France

↕ 12 p.p   54%
   42%

Sweden

↕ 1 p.p   37%
   38%

Germany

↕ 8 p.p   56%
   48%

Switzerland

↕ 19 p.p   73%
   54%

India

↕ 12 p.p   71%
   59%

Thailand

↕ 12 p.p   68%
   40%

Indonesia

↕ 6 p.p   69%
   63%

United Arab Emirates

↕ 18 p.p   67%
   49%

Italy

↕ 16 p.p   53%
   37%

United Kingdom

↕ 14 p.p   71%
   57%

Japan

↕ 12 p.p   32%
   20%

United States of America

↕ 15 p.p   77%
   62%
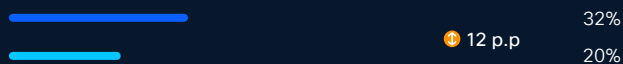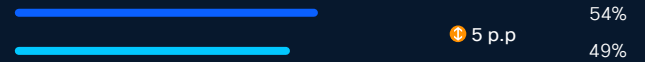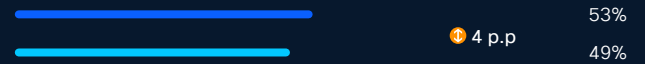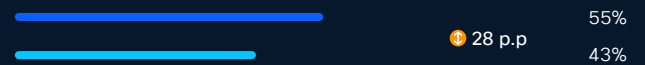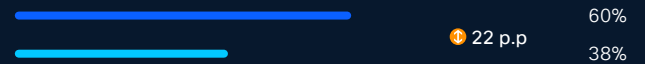
Employee satisfaction with hybrid work policies correlates to the quality of an organization's communication

Hybrid working policies potentially have a large bearing on people's daily lives. They can mean the difference between a three-hour round commute and, on at least some days, no commute at all. The new norm of hybrid working represents a significant societal shift with implications far beyond the home and workplace, including childcare, schooling, and wellbeing.

Such important decisions that have this level of impact, require careful and considered communication, as well as a high level of empathy.

Communication efforts are a key area identified by this study for potential improvement. Our findings indicate that many aspects of the communications process have not been optimized or properly leveraged. Less than half of employers (47%) and employees (36%) believe that return-to-office policies have been communicated well.

Proportion of employers and employees who believe their organization has communicated their return to office policy very well

Employers

Employees

47%
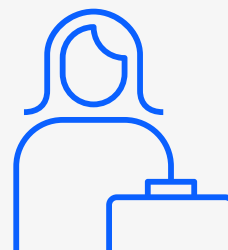
36%

However, the 11-percentage-point gap between employers and employees suggests there is also a disconnect between what good communications look like.

Part of the reason for this may be employees' feelings of disengagement. Only one in five (21%) employees say there was a high level of consultation in return-to-office planning. However, only 35% of employers recognize this, with 46% of employers feeling that sufficient consultation took place.
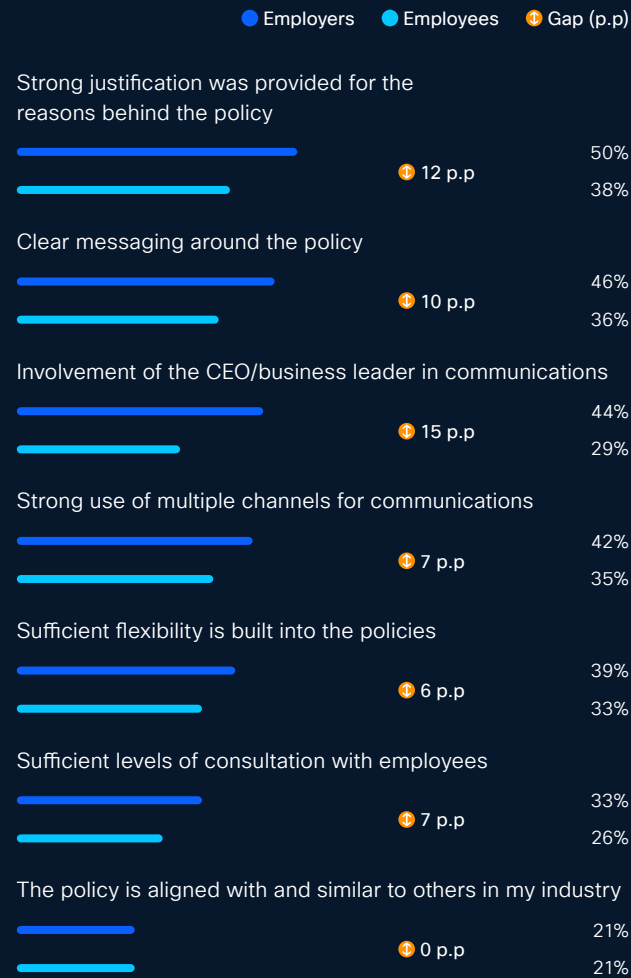
There is a significant gap between employers and employees for nearly every aspect of how return-to-office policies have been communicated. The biggest gaps appear between employers and employees around the involvement of business leaders in communications (15 percentage points), justification of policies (12 percentage points), and clear messaging of policies (10 percentage points).

When ranking these aspects, having strong justification for any policy ranks as the most important, followed by clear messaging, and utilizing multiple channels for communication. For hybrid working policies to be successful, they require significant buy-in. Staff should understand the basis of the decision-making and what particular policies—or changes in policy—are designed to achieve. What's being communicated is crucial, but how it's being communicated also matters a lot.
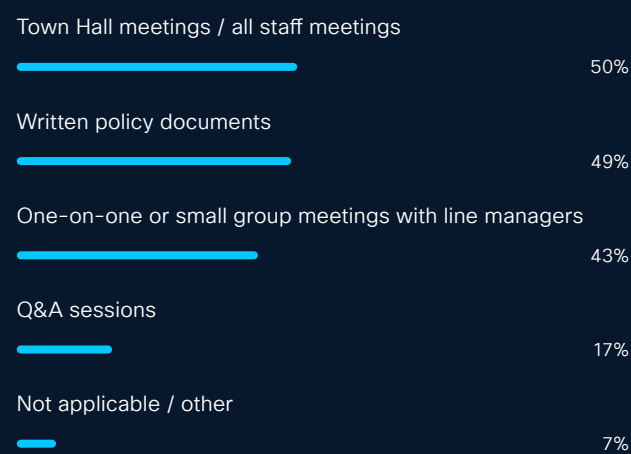
While more than 40% of all respondents say town halls, written policies, and meetings with managers were used to communicate policies, only 17% say Q&A sessions were a part of their rollout. The executive team (24%) and CEO (22%) are named most frequently as the key parties responsible for communications, suggesting a deep need for clearer communication from the top.

As a result of communication missteps, 58% believe that their organization hasn't shown enough empathy in its policies around working from the office, with younger workers more likely to feel this—as well as high performers (68% vs 53% and 60% for average and low performers respectively).

Proportion of employers and employees who believe different aspects of their organizations' RTO communications have been successfully applied

● Employers ● Employees ⬤ Gap (p.p)

Strong justification was provided for the reasons behind the policy

⬤ 12 p.p
50%
38%

Clear messaging around the policy

⬤ 10 p.p
46%
36%

Involvement of the CEO/business leader in communications

⬤ 15 p.p
44%
29%

Strong use of multiple channels for communications

⬤ 7 p.p
42%
35%

Sufficient flexibility is built into the policies

⬤ 6 p.p
39%
33%

Sufficient levels of consultation with employees

⬤ 7 p.p
33%
26%

The policy is aligned with and similar to others in my industry

⬤ 0 p.p
21%
21%

Methods used to communicate in-office working arrangements

Town Hall meetings / all staff meetings
50%

Written policy documents
49%

One-on-one or small group meetings with line managers
43%

Q&A sessions
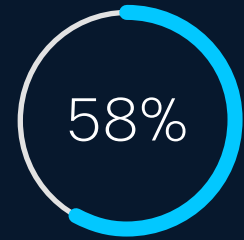17%

Not applicable / other
7%

Proportion of employees who agree with different statements about hybrid work
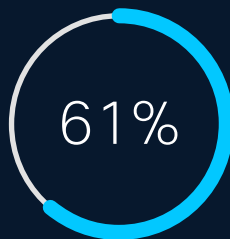
68%
I feel that criticism my organization's leadership has faced around its working from the office policies is fair
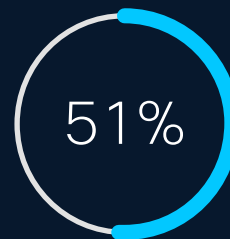
57%
I feel my organization's leadership has faced unfair criticism from employees over working from the office policies

58%
My organization hasn't shown enough empathy in its policies around working from the office

61%
I feel that complaints about working from the office policies mostly come from low performing or unproductive employees

51%
I have felt pressured to join other employees in complaining against my organization's policy around working from the office

Addressing communications issues around return-to-office policies can help to ensure that these mandates don't generate wider push back and uncertainty on the part of employees. Disgruntlement with being back in the office would stand in the way of many of the productivity, culture, and collaboration gains that are sought by insisting on more time being spent there. Clear communication, built on the trust of consultation, is key to avoiding such blockages.

Are communication missteps contributing to a push back culture?

Whatever decisions are made around returning to the office, and however such policies communicated, it's a nearly impossible task to please everyone all of the time. There will inevitably be some resistance and concern expressed, which companies find themselves having to manage as they go through the process of implementing policy and mandate changes.

Complaints can quickly become widespread if not handled carefully. Over half (51%) of respondents say they have felt pressured to join with other employees in complaining about their organization's policy for working from the office.

Some of those complaints are deemed to reflect performance, with 61% feeling such complaints have mostly come from low performing or unproductive employees. But leaders should not take this issue lightly, since more than two thirds (68%) do feel that the criticism their organization's leadership has faced around its working from the office policies is fair.

Retention and wellbeing are intertwined with time in the office

Employee retention is a hugely important metric for most firms, and hybrid and flexible working appears to be a fundamental factor in levels of employee loyalty. This highlights the extent of the impact that return-to-office policies can have, and bolsters the case for keeping them under regular review.

The approaches being deployed by many firms are positively impacting retention, signaling that the balances being struck are having wide enough appeal to be effective. Our survey finds that two-thirds of employers (69%) have seen retention rates increase as a result of their current policies, with the average increase across this group being 34%. Employers working for organizations with mandated set days achieved the highest retention rates—with one day a week mandates (41%) in the office the highest, which still demonstrates the preference for significant flexibility.

Extent by which employers claim that retention rates have increased as a result of current office policies, by market

	Employers
Global average	**69%**
India	81%
Italy	79%
Switzerland	77%
United States of America	76%
Mexico	75%
United Kingdom	75%
Germany	74%
United Arab Emirates	73%
Australia	72%
Canada	72%
Indonesia	72%
Netherlands	72%
Thailand	69%
Poland	66%
Singapore	66%
Brazil	64%
France	59%
Japan	59%
South Korea	57%
China	56%
Sweden	55%

Proportion of employers recognizing that the ability to work remotely is important for retention, by market

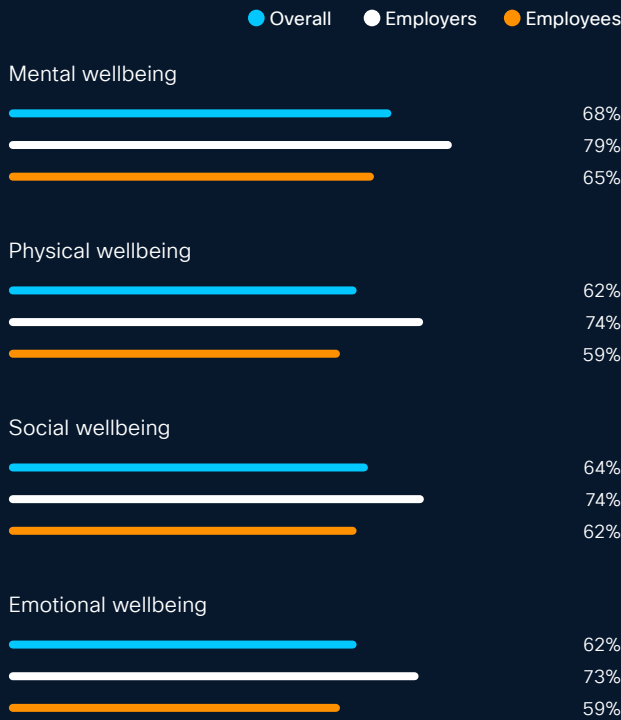| Market	Percentage
Global average	**80%**
Indonesia	93%
India	88%
Switzerland	86%
United Arab Emirates	86%
Canada	84%
Thailand	84%
United Kingdom	84%
United States of America	83%
Netherlands	81%
Australia	80%
France	79%
Mexico	79%
Italy	78%
Germany	76%
Poland	76%
Sweden	76%
Brazil	75%
South Korea	75%
China	74%
Singapore	70%
Japan	68%
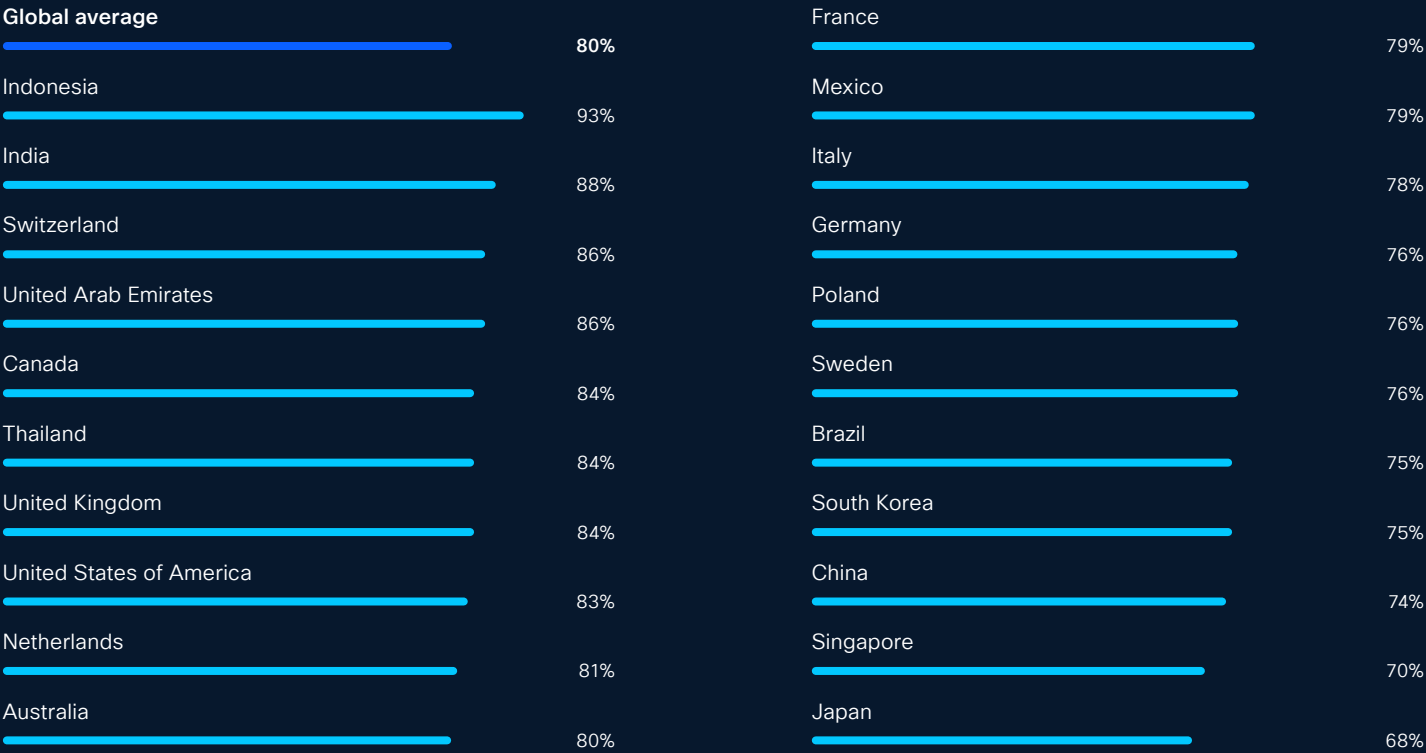
More than eight in ten (83%) employers recognize that the ability to work remotely is important for retention.

Overall, nearly three quarters (73%) believe their current policy has made their organization a more attractive place to work–with positivity again highest for fully flexibility working arrangements followed by mandates for a set number of days.

57% of respondents say their organization's working policy had a significant influence on their decision to take their current position, indicating these policies are a crucial factor in job selection. This has particular influence over the decision of Gen Z respondents (66%), whereas this was only a key factor for 40% of boomers.

Employers believe there is a direct relationship between frequent and consistent attendance in the office, and a healthy and inclusive culture (86%), and innovation (81%). Additionally, 82% of employees agree that presence in the office benefits organizational productivity, innovation, and culture for employees to regularly attend the office, not just to come in for specific collaboration.

Positive impacts on wellbeing resulting from work from office policies

● Overall ● Employers ● Employees

Mental wellbeing

Overall	68%
Employers	79%
Employees	65%

Physical wellbeing

Overall	62%
Employers	74%
Employees	59%

Social wellbeing

Overall	64%
Employers	74%
Employees	62%

Emotional wellbeing

Overall	62%
Employers	73%
Employees	59%

Respondents who have experienced a positive impact on their wellbeing resulting from hybrid work policies

● 2022 ● 2025

Mental wellbeing

2022	68%
2025	68%

Physical wellbeing

2022	62%
2025	62%

Social wellbeing

2022	43%
2025	64%

Emotional wellbeing

2022	57%
2025	62%
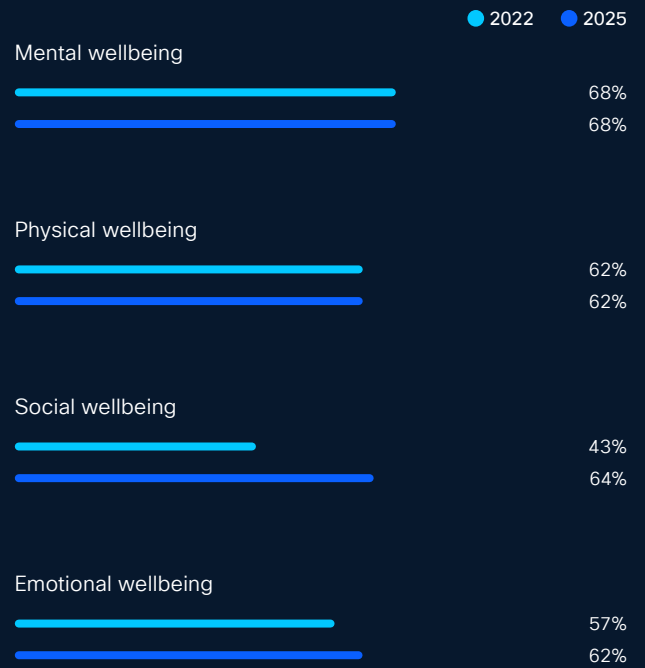
Improved wellbeing is crucial for workers to feel positive about their workplace and is more likely to result in them sticking around for longer.

61% of those with set days at the office have experienced improved social wellbeing and 57% have seen improved physical wellbeing, compared to only 52% and 46% for those with fully mandated in-office policies.

Overall, employees returning to the office are most likely to report improvements in their mental wellbeing, as well as other areas.

Looking at the impact of different return-to-office policies on employee wellbeing, we can see that fully flexible arrangements deliver the most beneficial impacts on mental, physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

In comparison with the results of our 2022 study we also see that current work from office arrangements are making similar levels of improvements to employees' mental and physical wellbeing, and significant improvements to social and emotional wellbeing, suggesting that over time employers have become more adept at tailoring hybrid arrangements to better support employees' needs.

Accounting for the different working styles and abilities of different people is also important, including those who are neurodiverse. In fact, this could be highly strategic for companies with high performing respondents significantly more likely to be diagnosed or identify as neurodivergent at 40%, compared with 20% of average performers, and 17% of low performers.

Gen Z shows the strongest preference for flexible work

Despite the successes achieved with different hybrid working models and the opportunity to refine these, 76% of employers say they are still struggling to get the balance right with hybrid working, and 83% say managing multiple generations in the workforce adds significant and increasing challenges. Respondent organizations where employees work either fully flexibly or full-time in the office are considerably less likely to be facing challenges with balance—at 65% and 68% respectively.

Many variables are likely to influence the particular balance that individual companies strike, from the nature of their industry or business, their scale, and the maturity level of the firm, especially in relation to how well established the corporate culture already is.

Employer challenges in relation to managing hybrid working preferences

76%
of employers struggle with finding the balance with hybrid working

83%
of employers say managing multiple generations adds challenges
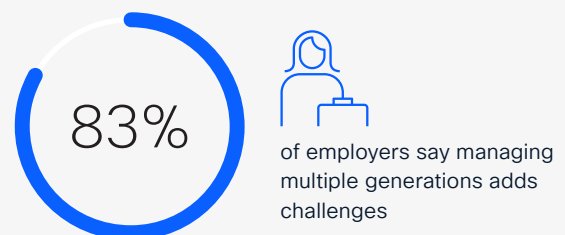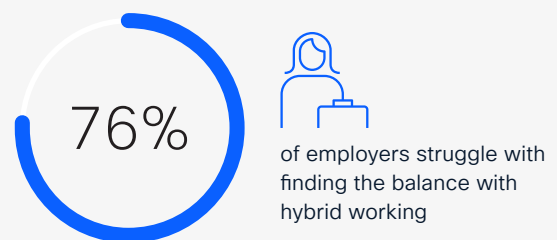
Amongst employees operating under a fully flexible arrangement, Gen X are the least likely to be very satisfied (40%) compared with other generations (46–47% very satisfied), though this is still Gen X's preferred model.

Amongst employees operating under a 'mandated set days per week model' Gen X are again the least likely to be very satisfied (33% very satisfied compared with 36–37% very satisfied for other generations).

Amongst employees working in organizations where they are required to work from the office full-time, there is a positive correlation between satisfaction and age, with Boomers being significantly more likely to be very satisfied with this arrangement (38% very satisfied), compared with Gen X (27% very satisfied), Gen Y (26%) and Gen Z (22%).

It also matters who is in a position to develop the policies and mandates. Generational differences are perceived to play a role in decision-making on hybrid-working practices. 83% of both employers and employees believe managers from older generations are more likely to want to mandate working from the office, and that younger generations are more likely to want to work remotely.

The complex nature of many workforces within firms only adds to the challenge of defining and implementing mandates that can applied company-wide and be received positively at different levels of seniority and performance, as well as by different generations.

The clash between career advancement and flexibility for employees

Turning up—and being seen—continues to be viewed as a critical part of success in many organizations. Despite employees' desire and preferences for flexibility and the ability to work remotely, as employees consider how best to advance their careers in the new world of hybrid working, there is enduring recognition that they need to have a presence in the office.

Our survey finds that more than eight out of 10 employers (81%) believe there is a direct relationship between frequent and consistent attendance in the office and career advancement. Additionally, 86% of employees believe it is very important for long-term career progression to regularly work in the office, with 82% saying it increases the effectiveness of mentoring and their chances of being promoted.

That confidence doesn't just apply to their future prospects, it is built on a strong sense that being in the office has helped with their own career advancement

76% say being in the office has helped them advance their own careers faster, including:

85%
of high
performers

75%
of average
performers

66%
of low
performers
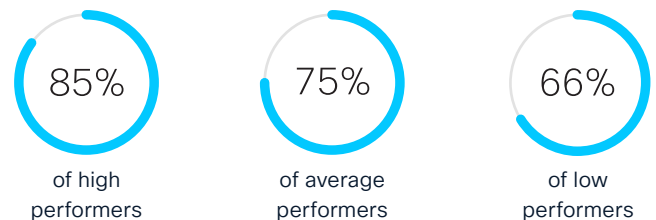
previously. Indeed 76% of all workers say being in the office has helped them advance their own careers faster—including 85% of high performers, 75% of average performers, and 66% of low performers. High performers' strong preference to work from home suggests they are adept at using their time in the office strategically.

More than three quarters of respondents also say coming into the office fosters a greater affinity for employees with their organization (79%), improves their ability to focus (79%), and improves job satisfaction (77%).

Proportion of all respondents willing to take a pay cut for less time in office

Global average	63%	Italy	63%
India	79%	Netherlands	62%
China	75%	United Arab Emirates	62%
Thailand	73%	Canada	61%
Indonesia	72%	France	60%
Switzerland	70%	Japan	58%
Australia	68%	United States of America	58%
Mexico	65%	Brazil	57%
Singapore	65%	Germany	56%
South Korea	64%	Sweden	52%
Poland	63%	United Kingdom	48%
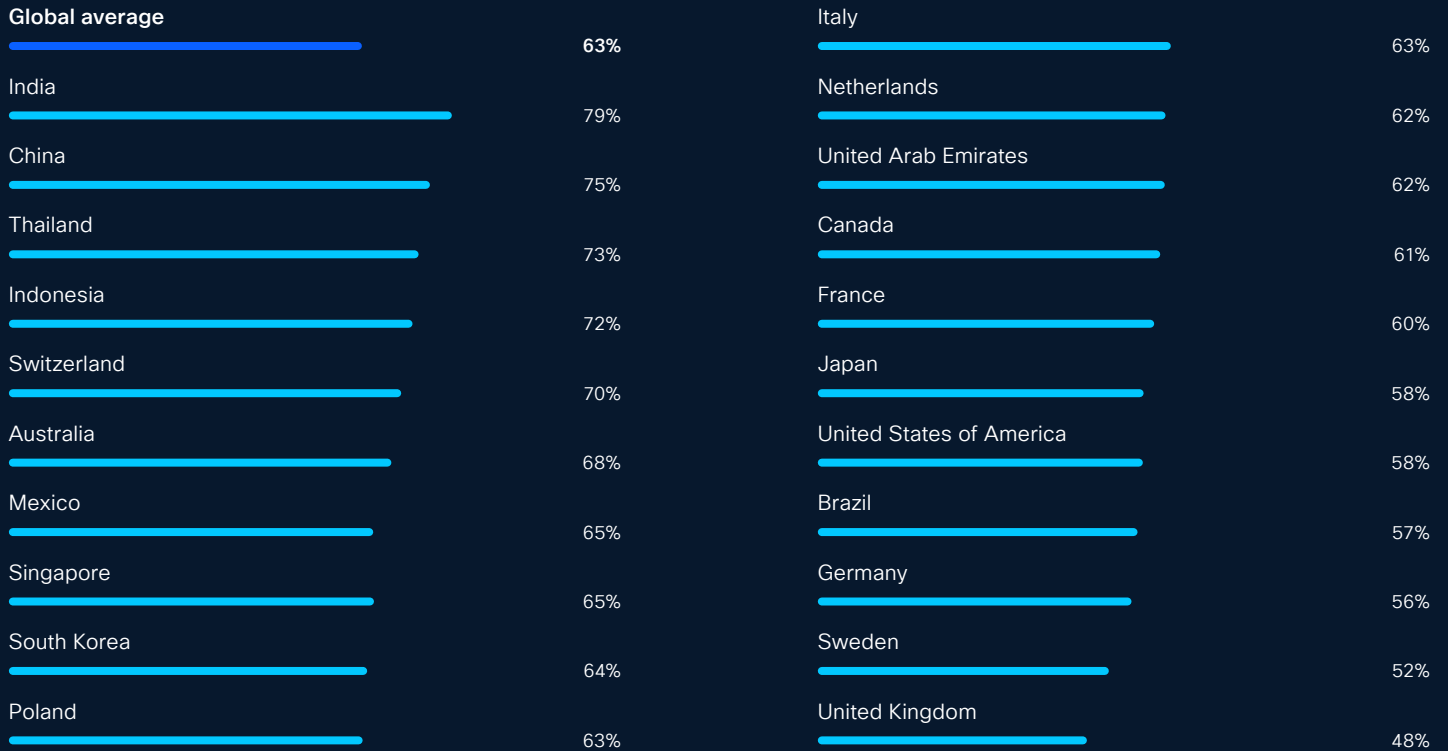
As workers perceive a wide range of benefits to office attendance, they have clear motivations to spend time in the office. However, on the flipside, as many as 65% of all respondents say they have considered a career change due to current policies, and 63% would take a pay cut if they weren't required to be in the office as much. Those mandated to work on set days in the office are the most likely to consider a career change (70% vs 58% for fully flexible and 54% for fully mandated).

It is particularly noteworthy that 78% of high performers have considered a career change due to their current work from office policies, compared with 61% overall.

Four in five of this high performing group (80%) currently have mandated set days in the office or work in the office on a mandated set number of days. This is unsurprising given their preference to work from home and the correlations they see between flexible working and their career success.

Staying on top of shifting expectations for hybrid working among talent, especially top talent, is likely to be an increasing focus for firms in the coming few years. Retention and satisfaction successes that they have enjoyed to date are not automatically guaranteed in the short to mid-term. A process of fine tuning and recalibration may well continue for a considerable time to come.

The strategic role of the office: a hub for connection and growth

The office plays a crucial role in supporting various aspects of workplace success—including collaboration, safety, productivity, and work-life balance. Employees are motivated to work from the office more frequently by informal social opportunities like coffee catchups and breaks, as well as the opportunity for in-person interaction with leadership.

This indicates broad agreement on some key benefits derived from regular attendance in the office and the opportunities that it brings to work together more closely with colleagues as well as aspects of life beyond the home.

Success does not just stem from being in the office, but increasingly from being in an office that is set up in ways to help deliver it.

Proportion of office attendees agreeing that different factors are important in driving attendance

Factor	Percentage
Coffee catch ups/informal breaks	54%
In-person interaction with leadership	51%
Team lunches	46%
Enjoying the commute	34%
Gym at the office	26%
Proximity to restaurants	20%
Proximity to retail	11%

Proportion of respondents who rate the office as important in driving the success of different aspects of work performance

	% All respondents	% Employers	% Employees
To collaborate	92%	93%	92%
Innovation	87%	89%	87%
Productivity	86%	85%	86%
Access to resources	85%	85%	85%
Client meetings	82%	84%	81%
Learning and development	84%	85%	84%
Knowledge transfer	86%	85%	86%
Maintaining work-life balance	85%	85%	85%
Networking and rebuilding relationships	85%	86%	84%
Workplace culture	86%	87%	86%
Safety and security	87%	86%	87%
Regulatory compliance	87%	87%	87%

The question then is not just about returning to the office and how often. It also refers to the nature of the office itself and what that space makes possible: in terms of collaboration, productivity, personal development, and social interactions.

As firms continue to wrestle with the shape that hybrid working should take, they are increasingly turning to technology to help the entire system function more smoothly and build trust among employees. With more time spent in the office, leaders are encountering not only redesigned workspaces, but also new ways of working.

Both employers and employees rank collaboration as the primary reason for utilizing office spaces. In all areas, employers are more likely to rate the office as highly important in supporting success. Among all workers, high performers recognize these benefits more than average and low performers, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a well-functioning office environment.

Technology is an enabler but not meeting expectations

Technology is enabling various return-to-office policies. Regardless of their working situation, all respondents say that, on average, 40% of interactions in the office have at least one person joining remotely. Employers are listening and making collaboration-focused investments in new tools.

The top collaboration tools that leaders plan to institute include digital whiteboards and interactive displays (55%) and meeting rooms capable of hybrid sessions (50%).

While a significant portion of organizations find their collaboration platforms moderately to highly interoperable, a notable 38% face occasional integration challenges, and 8% struggle significantly. This spotlights the need for improved interoperability to enhance seamless collaboration and efficiency.

Top collaboration tools

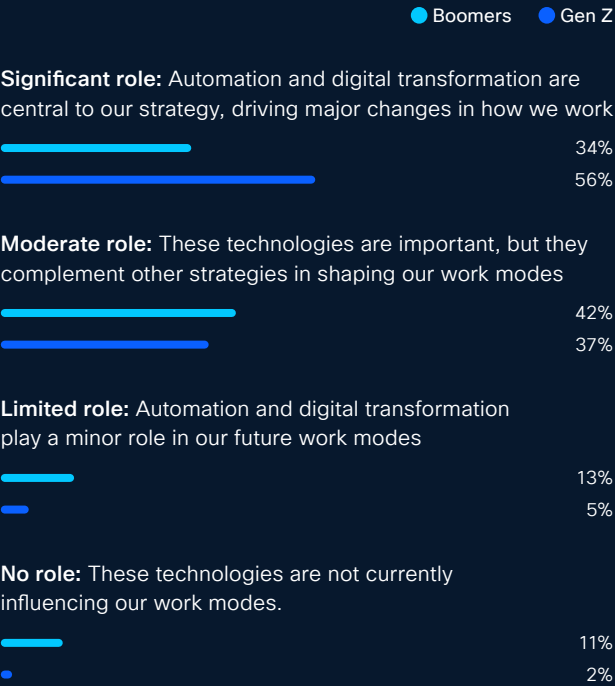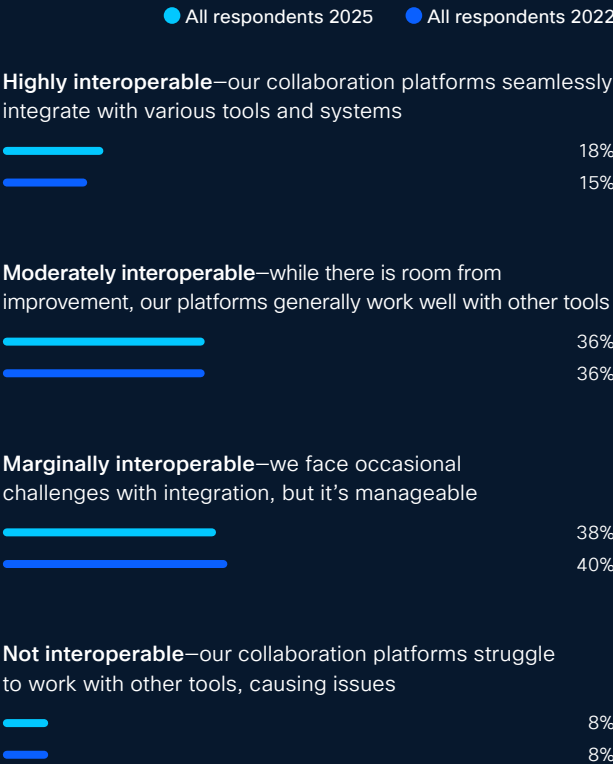|	
Instant messaging and team chat	55%
Video conferencing platforms	49%
Virtual meeting rooms with interactive features	42%
Cloud-based document sharing and editing tools	45%
Project management and collaboration	42%
Office footprint monitoring platforms	25%
Smart meeting room assistant	23%
No collaboration technology, just company laptops	9%

These performance issues must be addressed by organizations. Almost half (49%) of employers say that automation and digital transformation are playing a significant role in shaping future ways of working. Additionally, 40% say these technologies play a moderate role, as they complement other strategies in shaping work modes. Just over one in 10 employers say automation and digital transformation play either a limited role or no role at all.

Gen Z is also more optimistic about the potential impact of technology compared to their older peers. More than half (56%) of Gen Z employers say automation and digital transformation will have a significant role in the future of the workplace, compared to just 34% of Boomers.
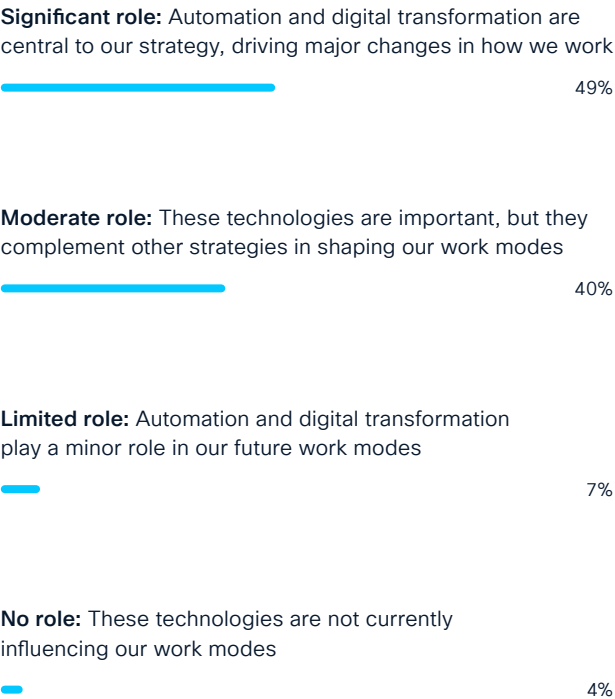
Employer perceptions of the importance of automation and digital transformation in shaping future ways of working
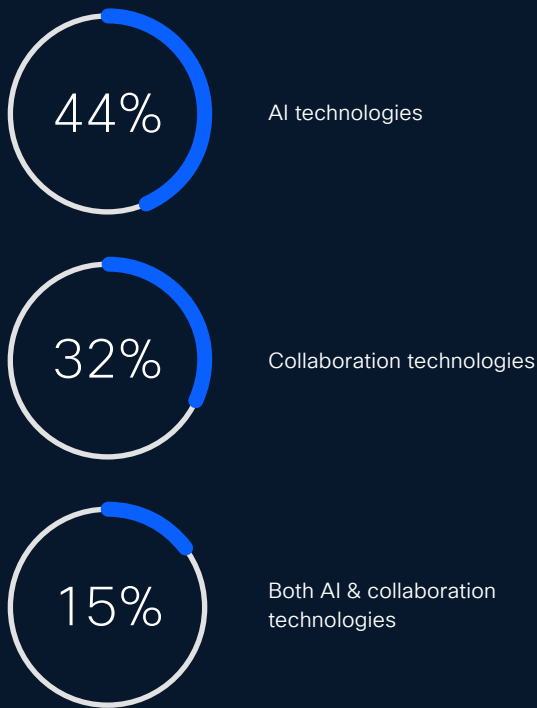
● Boomers ● Gen Z

Significant role: Automation and digital transformation are central to our strategy, driving major changes in how we work

34%
56%

Moderate role: These technologies are important, but they complement other strategies in shaping our work modes

42%
37%

Limited role: Automation and digital transformation play a minor role in our future work modes

13%
5%

No role: These technologies are not currently influencing our work modes.

11%
2%

Perceived interoperability of organizations' collaboration platforms

● All respondents 2025 ● All respondents 2022

Highly interoperable—our collaboration platforms seamlessly integrate with various tools and systems

18%
15%

Moderately interoperable—while there is room from improvement, our platforms generally work well with other tools

36%
36%

Marginally interoperable—we face occasional challenges with integration, but it's manageable

38%
40%

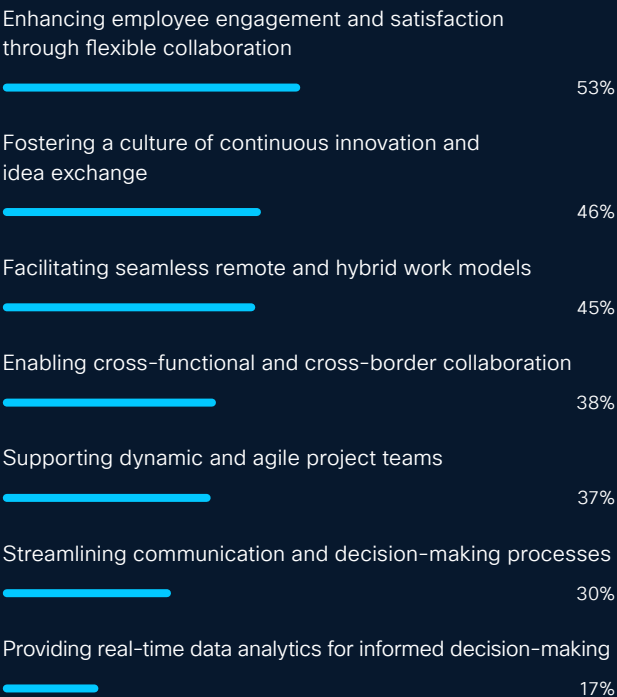**Not interoperable**—our collaboration platforms struggle to work with other tools, causing issues

8%
8%

Employer perceptions of the importance of automation and digital transformation in shaping future ways of working

Significant role: Automation and digital transformation are central to our strategy, driving major changes in how we work

49%

Moderate role: These technologies are important, but they complement other strategies in shaping our work modes

40%

Limited role: Automation and digital transformation play a minor role in our future work modes

7%

No role: These technologies are not currently influencing our work modes

4%

Where organizations are investing to enhance hybrid work

44% AI technologies

32% Collaboration technologies

15% Both AI & collaboration technologies

Top perceived benefits of collaboration technologies

Enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction through flexible collaboration
53%

Fostering a culture of continuous innovation and idea exchange
46%

Facilitating seamless remote and hybrid work models
45%

Enabling cross-functional and cross-border collaboration
38%

Supporting dynamic and agile project teams
37%

Streamlining communication and decision-making processes
30%

Providing real-time data analytics for informed decision-making
17%

As technology is playing an increasingly central role as an enabler to hybrid work, more investment in technology to support hybrid workforces is planned, with a focus on increasing the availability and integration of collaboration technologies. At least nine in 10 employers say their company is strategically investing in AI and collaboration technologies to enhance hybrid work. Collaboration tools are also noted as the most effective technologies for supporting various hybrid work models and return-to-office for both employers (93%) and employees (90%).

As for the role of collaboration technology in shaping the future of the workplace, respondents see it as a key driver for enhancing employee engagement, fostering innovation, and supporting flexible work models.

One size doesn't fit all industries

When looking across industries, significant differences exist. Not surprisingly, employees in the hospitality (58%), education (56%) and retail (55%) sectors are the most likely to work from the office five days per week, with those in technology services (39%) and business services (38%) being the least likely.

Employees in the media and entertainment (12%) and technology services (10%) sectors are most likely to work in organizations with fully flexible work arrangements, compared with 7% or 8% of employees in all other sectors. One third of employees (33%) have fully mandated work arrangements—this is highest in healthcare (46%) and education (45%) sectors and lowest in business services (17%), technology services (17%) and finance and insurance (21%) sectors. The model to have set mandated workdays in the office is most common in the education (44%), healthcare (42%), retail (42%) and government and public administration (42%) sectors, and least common in the technology services sector (28%).

Engaging talent

While among all organizations, average employee retention rates have increased by 15% as a result of their current work from office policies, this is highest among those working in the technology services (19%) and finance and insurance (18%) sectors. Retention improvements are lowest in the healthcare (12%) and media and entertainment (10%) sectors.

Employers from the manufacturing (85% agree) and finance and insurance (85% agree) sectors are the most likely to recognize that the ability to work remotely is important for retention. Conversely, employers in government and public administration (78% agree) are the least likely to recognize this.

As noted, improved wellbeing is crucial for employees to feel positive about their workplace and is more likely to result in them sticking around for longer. Employers believe there is a direct relationship between frequent and consistent attendance in the office, and a healthy and inclusive culture (86%)—this is especially the case in

Top 5 industries most likely to agree that the ability to work remotely is important for retention

85%
Manufacturing

85%
Finance and insurance

84%
Technology services

84%
Business services

84%
Hospitality and food services

manufacturing (87%), business services (86%) and media an entertainment (86%) sectors, and the least likely in government and public administration (78%).

Three in four (76%) employers say that their organizations are still struggling to get the balance right with hybrid working—this is particularly the case for those in the media and entertainment sector (87%) and for those in the manufacturing (80%) and hospitality and food services (80%) sectors. Employers in healthcare (71%) and finance and insurance (72%) are most on top of this issue.

Overall, employees returning to the office are most likely to report improvements in their mental well-being. In terms of impacts by industry, those employed in the business services sector have been particularly well served by their organizations' working from the office policies with 75% claiming their mental wellbeing had improved as a result. On the other hand, only 53% of those working in government and public administration said their mental wellbeing had significantly improved, and one in seven (14%) say their mental wellbeing has actually worsened as a result of their organizations' working from the office policies, almost twice the average (8%).

Productivity

A range of factors continue to drive return-to-office mandates, with the most influential being productivity (62%), collaboration (61%), team communication (61%), and workplace culture (54%).

Productivity is the key factor nominated by employers for generating pressure to return to the office. This is especially the case for those working in the business services (69%), manufacturing (67%) and finance and insurance (67%) sectors.

The drive for productivity brings with it issues of trust. 78% of employees believe that organizations are mandating working from the office because they don't trust all employees to be productive at home. Those working in business services (82%), technology services (80%) and manufacturing (80%) are most likely to believe this to be the case, while those working in healthcare (74%) are the least likely.

While, overall, the impacts of spending more time in the office are perceived positively, significant gaps exist between employers and employees on the issue of productivity.

Of the 88% of employers who believe there is a strong direct relationship between workplace productivity and frequent, consistent attendance in the office, this sentiment is strongest in the manufacturing (92%) and hospitality (92%) sectors and weakest in the government and public administration (80%) and healthcare (79%) sectors.

Those industries reaping the greatest productivity increase include technology services (22%), media and entertainment (20%) and hospitality (19%). The sectors showing the lowest productivity gains are business services (12%), manufacturing (12%) and, in particular, finance and insurance (10%).

In terms of cost-related factors influencing hybrid working models, half (50%) of all respondents say their organization has reduced its real estate footprint in the past five years due to socio-economic factors. Business services (61%) and finance and insurance (58%) are the most likely sectors, and government and public administration organizations the least likely (35%) to have made reductions in their real estate footprint.