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Remote Staff Hours Fall, but Productivity Steady (For Now)



BY CHRISTOS MAKRIDIS

As remote work and hybrid work became mainstream in the wake of the pandemic, many leaders have asked these questions: Are remote workers really working? What does that mean for productivity?

The answer is nuanced. Remote workers are spending less time working, but the relationship between remote work and productivity is more complex.

Remote Employees Are Working Less

A [recent study](#) based on data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) from 2019 to 2023 found that full-time employees in remote-capable jobs are spending less time on work and more on personal activities.

By 2022, people in heavily remote roles were working about an hour less per day than in 2019, on average. Of that time, they were redirecting 30 to 60 minutes to leisure, a trend consistent with broader remote work productivity statistics. This decrease goes beyond reduced commute time, with the drop in commuting time accounting for only a small fraction of the reduction in work hours.

Some groups reported working even less. In jobs open to telework, men, unmarried adults, and those without children showed the steepest declines in hours worked and the greatest gains in leisure time. For example, single men over 45 who work remotely clocked over two hours less per day on work activities in 2022 than in 2019. Women saw even larger declines in hours worked, although that is driven largely by those without a college degree.

These findings align with more recent [Gallup studies](#) on hours worked and emerging remote work trends in the broader workforce. In 2019, U.S. employees reported working an average of 44.1 hours. In 2024, they averaged 42.9 hours per week.

Productivity Benefit of Remote Work: Increased Talent Pool

Perhaps the greatest concern in boardrooms about reduced work hours is the potential hit to productivity. If employees are working 10% fewer hours, will output or innovation fall by 10%?

Not necessarily.

After adjusting a model where employees choose jobs based on their capabilities and preferences, the study finds a slight increase in output per worker in the economy. This growth did not result from employees in more remote-intensive jobs working more productively. Instead, people were better able to sort into roles that were better suited for them, and employment shifted toward sectors with higher output per worker.

Organizations that broke free from geographic constraints and hired the best-fit talent for each role — regardless of location — experience a boost in remote work productivity. While the ATUS does not capture information on the quality of managers, prior Gallup data show that managers play a vital role in how technological change affects employees. That is, increases in technology tend to have positive effects on workers, but those effects are greater when managers build trust in the workplace. The bar for managerial quality is likely even higher for those leading remote employees. Knowing how to manage a remote team is now a core leadership competency. It affects how clearly organizations set expectations, manage performance and build trust.

Although the model addresses sector-level and overall productivity, the benefits for individual organizations are more complex. They depend not only on the types of tasks being done and how suitable they are for remote work, but also on the makeup of the talent pool. Growing evidence shows that being near coworkers can have positive spillovers for productivity, and the effect of working in the same location on communication depends on the type of work and whether the interaction is between employees or between employees and managers.

These factors are especially important for younger or newer employees who may not yet have established routines or communication patterns within the organization. For them, working in the same location as their coworkers could provide more benefits.

Remote Work Increases Job Satisfaction — If the Boss Is Bad

Even if the productivity benefits of remote work are mixed, employers might offer remote flexibility as a perk to attract and retain quality employees. Gallup data on hybrid work suggest as much: 76% of hybrid workers say “improved work-life balance” is one of the “greatest benefits” of hybrid work. For many, the ability to work from home offers greater autonomy and flexibility. That is consistent with several randomized experiments assessing the effects on retention, including those by Nicholas Bloom and coauthors. But companies need to recognize how fully remote strategies can go awry by attracting people who are less likely to put in discretionary effort.

Company culture, however, has a stronger influence on employees' feelings about their workplace than location. Another recent study found that workplace factors — such as feeling appreciated and receiving clear communication, among other workplace practices — explain most of the differences in job satisfaction and intent to leave.

Meanwhile, remote work is linked to job satisfaction in the raw data. But that link disappears when accounting for the previously mentioned workplace factors, except for one group: employees who "sometimes work from home." In other words, workers value some flexibility, but culture and management matter more.

The study also shows that the benefits of remote work are not the same for everyone — they vary based on the type of work and the quality of the manager. This suggests that remote work can feel like a benefit when management falls short, but it does not raise performance on its own.

In these cases, fully remote work arrangements may help individuals make the best of a bad situation, but that is a workaround, not an organizational strategy.

The Best Hybrid Work Model Focuses on Culture and Fit

The future of hybrid work and remote work is already here. What matters now is how much flexibility to allow, how it works in practice and how organizations manage the risks. These choices rest with managers and organizational leadership.

1. **Build a strong workplace culture first.** Most variation in job satisfaction and intent to leave comes from how employees view their workplace practices, not from compensation. Hybrid work can support engagement, but it cannot replace sound management. High-quality management remains a competitive advantage.
2. **Assess your workforce and how work gets done.** Remote work fits some tasks better than others. Organizations need to understand the factors that influence successful client outcomes and how these are evolving with the economy and technology. Use both remote work and on-site collaboration in ways that elevate performance.

3. Use remote work to expand your talent options and improve role fit.

Productivity increases when people are doing work that suits their talents and strengths. Remote and hybrid work arrangements create more ways to match employees to the right tasks under a clear talent strategy.

Bottom Line

Less time spent working does not automatically mean lower output. If anything, the shift to hybrid and remote models has helped many organizations make better use of each employee's talents. But the declining trend in time allocated to work, particularly among remote-capable employees, and the deteriorating employee engagement trend Gallup has documented for years indicate a broader risk. With this risk in mind, leaders need to ensure remote work flexibility strengthens — not erodes — long-term engagement and performance.

Build a remote strategy that works for people and performance.

- Track the latest trends in remote and hybrid work.
- Get proven strategies to lead remote teams with clarity, trust and accountability.
- Learn why great management, not location, improves employee wellbeing.

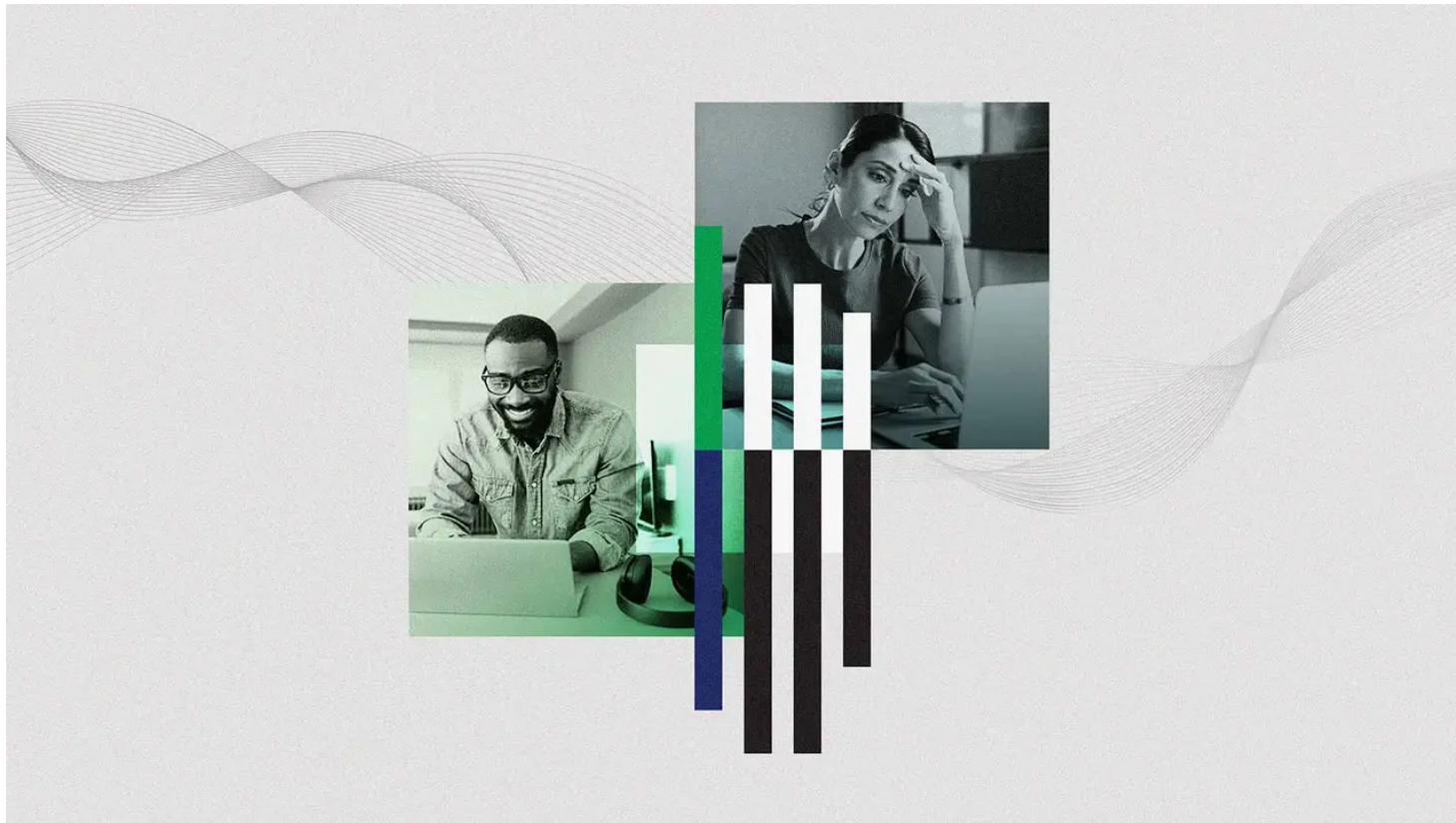
AUTHOR(S)

Christos Makridis, Ph.D., is a Content Senior Researcher at Gallup.

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The Remote Work Paradox: Higher Engagement, Lower Wellbeing

A new global workplace finding unpacks the complexity of leading remote teams.



BY RYAN PENDELL

Globally, fully remote workers are the most likely to be engaged at work (31%), compared with hybrid (23%), on-site remote-capable (23%) and on-site non-remote-capable (19%). That's according to the latest *[State of the Global Workplace](#)* report, which tracks how employees worldwide are doing in their work and lives.

Employee engagement measures the enthusiasm workers feel for their work and their attachment to their team and organization, and it directly affects team performance and business outcomes. Remote workers may be more engaged because they have more autonomy in their work. This freedom allows them to play to their strengths, reach a flow state more easily and use their time more efficiently.

Remote Workers Are More Distressed

Although fully remote workers report higher engagement, they are less likely to be thriving in their lives overall (36%) than hybrid workers (42%) and on-site remote-capable workers (42%). Still, fully remote workers are more likely to be thriving than their fully on-site non-remote-capable counterparts (30%).

Fully remote employees are also more likely to report experiencing anger, sadness and loneliness than hybrid and on-site workers. They are more likely to report experiencing a lot of stress the previous day (45%) than on-site workers (39% for remote-capable, 38% for non-remote-capable), while having about the same stress level as hybrid workers (46%). These differences hold true even when accounting for income.

Remote Workers Are More Engaged, Less Likely to Be Thriving

A closer look at engagement and life evaluations by employee work location.

	Exclusively remote	Hybrid	On-site remote-capable
On-site non-remote-capable	31	23	23
	19		

% Engaged

31
23
23
19

% Thriving

36
42
42
30

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These findings suggest that being a fully remote worker is often more mentally and emotionally taxing than working on-site or working in a hybrid arrangement. Several factors may explain this pattern:

- **Physical distance can create mental distance.** For some employees, remote work may feel like “just work,” without the friendships, team lunches, storytelling and camaraderie that on-site and hybrid work can provide. Isolation can increase loneliness and, in the absence of social support, contribute to sadness and anger. Spending time with others plays a key role in positive life evaluations. For example, sharing meals with others is as strong an indicator of wellbeing as income. This could help explain why fully remote workers are less likely to be thriving than their remote-capable on-site peers.
- **Autonomy can be stressful.** Many employees want more autonomy in their work. While it can boost engagement by giving employees more control over their time, too much autonomy can create stress. Managing time independently and coordinating work with others can become difficult without clear boundaries. The fact that both remote and hybrid workers report higher stress may indicate that flexibility comes with a cognitive burden.
- **Technology can frustrate.** Past Gallup research shows that remote work requiring high levels of coordination is harder than remote work that can be done independently. Collaboration through digital technology isn’t always smooth, and frustration varies by task. Remote employees may also have less access to certain resources and equipment available to on-site workers.

Why Remote Worker Wellbeing Matters for Business

Employee engagement and wellbeing together support sustainable, long-term performance and job commitment. For example:

- Globally, 57% of fully remote workers are actively looking or passively watching for new job opportunities.
- Among engaged fully remote workers, that number drops to 47%.
- When fully remote workers are both engaged and thriving, only 38% say they are looking for new job opportunities.

By supporting both engagement and wellbeing, employers can protect their remote workforce. Leaders should embrace the advantages of remote work, such as flexible workflows, while also addressing the psychological effects of working alone by encouraging social interactions.

Build an engaged, thriving and committed workforce.

- Download Gallup's [State of the Global Workplace](#) report to learn how employees experience work and how leaders can invigorate their workplaces.
- Discover Gallup's framework for [improving employee engagement](#).
- Understand [the cost of poor wellbeing](#) and how to help employees thrive.

Remote Employees More Likely to Experience Negative Emotions

Exclusively remote Hybrid On-site remote-capable On-site non-remote-capable

% Stress

45
46
39
38

% Anger

25
17
21
21

% Sadness

30
21
23
22

% Loneliness

27
23
20
21

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AUTHOR(S)

Ryan Pendell is a Senior Workplace Science Editor at Gallup.

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Fully Remote Work Least Popular With Gen Z

Gen Z prefers hybrid work and is more likely to want employees in the office more often



BY RYAN PENDELL AND SANGEETA AGRAWAL

Gen Z workers in the U.S. are the least likely generation to prefer exclusively remote work, according to Gallup's latest May 2025 findings. Only 23% of remote-capable Gen Z employees say they would prefer fully remote work, compared with 35% among each older generation. Fully on-site work remains the least popular option across all age groups.

When Gallup asked hybrid workers how they want others in their organization to work — more remote, less remote or the status quo — a plurality of hybrid workers in each generation say the current balance is right. Still, Gen Z is the most likely to say they

wish employees in their organization worked remotely less often. In contrast, millennials are the most likely to say they want other employees to work remotely more often.

Preferred Work Location by Generation

% Selected

	Exclusively Remote	Hybrid	On-site
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	35	54	10
Gen X (1965-1979)	35	56	9
Millennials (1980-1996)	35	60	4
Gen Z (1997 or after)	23	71	6

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Hybrid Millennials Have the Strongest Attachment to Remote Work

Among hybrid workers, millennials have a stronger personal attachment to remote work flexibility than other generations. When asked how likely they would be to look for another job if remote options were partly or entirely taken away at their workplace, 41% of remote-capable millennials say they would be extremely likely to look for another job, significantly higher than other generations.

Hybrid Employee Preferences for Other Employees' Remote Time

Do you wish employees at your organization spent more time or less time working remotely?

	% Want Less Remote	% Want More Remote	Net Preference for Remote (pct. pts.)
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	19	16	-3
Gen X (1965-1979)	15	25	10
Millennials (1980-1996)	13	33	20
Gen Z (1997 or after)	24	25	1

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Millennials also stand apart when it comes to where they believe they do their best work. About half of millennials (49%) say they are most productive at home or off-site, higher than all other age groups. Only 19% of millennials say they are most productive on-site or in the office.

In contrast, though a plurality of Gen Z workers says they do their best work remotely (37%), they are nearly as likely to say they are most productive on-site (32%) or that their location doesn't matter (31%).

Understanding Gen Z's Remote and Hybrid Work Preferences

Parenting plays a role in shaping views on remote work. Very few Gen Z workers are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18. Employed Gen Z and young millennial parents (born in 1989 or later) are more likely (39%) than non-parents in this age group (29%) to prefer exclusively remote work. However, for older millennials born 1980 to 1988, there is no difference between parents and non-parents (36% for each) in preference for remote work.

Differences in parenting status may help explain why Gen Z and millennials prefer different work setups, but why is Gen Z more likely to want less remote work time *for other employees*?

Two factors may help explain this:

1. **Gen Z is the loneliest generation.** Gen Z employees have the lowest life evaluations of any generation at work. They are also the most lonely. Gen Z is almost twice as likely as Gen X, and nearly three times as likely as baby boomers, to say they experienced loneliness a lot of the day yesterday.

Extremely Likely to Look for Another Job if Remote Work Is No Longer Offered

If your employer decides not to offer opportunities for you to work remote some or all of the time long term, how likely would you be to look for opportunities for employment with other organizations?

% Selected

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	26
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Gen X (1965-1979)	28
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Millennials (1980-1996)	41
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Gen Z (1997 or after)	32
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2. Hybrid Gen Z employees may not see their coworkers as often on-site.

Hybrid workers among the three older generations Gallup studies are fairly mixed in their reports of on-site working requirements and flexibility. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Gen Z hybrid workers (66%) say they are required to work a certain number of days on-site each week, but they can choose which days. Gen Z is also twice as likely as other generations to say they are encouraged — but

not required — to come in each week. This could mean they are showing up when coworkers are not in the office, reducing the potential for meaningful, in-person interactions.

Remote-Capable Full-Time Employees Who Felt Lonely "A Lot of the Day Yesterday"

% Felt lonely a lot of the day yesterday

Baby Boomers (1946-1964) 10

Gen X (1965-1979) 15

Millennials (1980-1996) 21

Gen Z (1997 or after) 27

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What Leaders Can Do

Gen Z prefers hybrid work the most, but they may miss out on its in-person benefits if they show up to an empty office. One fix is to change hybrid policies so that younger employees are more likely to interact with others. An even better option is for leaders to discuss with their team how each person works best and coordinate in-person time at the team level.

Explore the Future of Work

- Track how hybrid work is shaping the future of employee wellbeing with Gallup's [Hybrid Work indicators](#).
- Uncover what Gen Z wants from work and life with Gallup's latest [generational insights](#).

- Read Gallup's [research on the remote work paradox](#) to see how flexibility affects engagement and wellbeing.

On-site Work Expectations Among Hybrid Full-Time Employees

Which of the following hybrid arrangements best describes the policies for your work schedule currently?

I am required to work a certain number of days on-site each week, but it is entirely up to me which specific days I choose each week.

I am required to work on-site a few specific days each week (e.g., Tuesdays), but other days it is my choice whether or not to work on-site.

I am encouraged (but not required) to work a certain number of days on-site each week, but it is entirely up to me which specific days I choose each week.

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	28
	23
	5

Gen X (1965-1979)	25
	27
	7

Millennials (1980-1996)	27
	32
	8

Gen Z (1997 or after)	66
	6
	17

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Employee Wellbeing Hinges on Management, Not Work Mode



BY ANDY KEMP

As organizations have moved toward offering more flexible work arrangements, employees across industries have hoped these shifts to hybrid and remote work would increase flexibility in how and where they spend their time. This enthusiasm continues today. As of May 2024, 93% of all employees in remote-capable jobs prefer to work remotely at least some of their work week.

However, research from Gallup and Workhuman finds that simply adjusting workplace policies does not always unlock the benefits of remote work for employee wellbeing benefits. Instead, implementing practices that put people first is the key to elevating employee wellbeing. Leaders and managers can cultivate a thriving workforce by aligning their support for employees with their remote work strategies.

The Complex Realities of Remote Work and Work-Life Balance

According to Gallup research, 76% of full-time hybrid workers in the U.S. most often cite improved work-life balance as a top advantage of hybrid work. This sentiment is even clearer among exclusively remote workers, with 85% saying that improved work-life balance is among the greatest benefits of remote work.

For many workers without flexible work arrangements, working from home at least some of the time has a strong appeal. A Gallup survey of 21,543 U.S. employees conducted May 11-25, 2024, found that a majority (61%) of on-site workers working a full-time job with remote capability would prefer a hybrid work arrangement and an additional 28% would prefer to be fully remote.

Hybrid and remote work appeal to many workers as a direct solution to achieving a healthy work-life balance. However, the data on daily experiences across work locations tell a more complex story. Fully remote workers are most likely (33%) to strongly agree that they are able to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal commitments, but hybrid (27%) and on-site (25%) workers report experiences with work-life balance that are not significantly different from each other. Similarly, employees across all three work arrangements experience frequent burnout at statistically similar rates.

Despite some clear advantages for exclusively remote workers, employees across all work locations have room for improvement in these vital aspects of their wellbeing.

Strategies That Enhance Wellbeing and Work-Life Balance Across Locations

Undoubtedly, work location plays a fundamental role in an employee's work experience. Beyond employees' wellbeing, fully remote (37%) and hybrid workers (36%) are significantly more engaged than their on-site peers (30%). However, key outcomes related to employee experience are much more strongly influenced by good managers and business practices.

Research from Gallup and Workhuman confirms that focusing on the human element of workplace culture results in meaningful differences in employee wellbeing, regardless of where work is done.

In a survey of 4,439 U.S. employees conducted April 16-30, 2024, Gallup and Workhuman identified several strategies that organizations can use to improve aspects of wellbeing for all employees, regardless of whether they are working in an on-site, hybrid or exclusively remote work environment.

Establish Clear Expectations

Over the past five years, Gallup research has shown a decline in clarity of expectations at work across the U.S. workforce, with remote and hybrid employees experiencing this decline at twice the rate. Consistent ambiguity at work generates stress, hinders productivity and burdens workers trying to balance the responsibilities of work and life.

Creating role clarity and helping employees know what is expected of them at work each day is increasingly important when employees' schedules and work locations are less defined and structured. Gallup and Workhuman find that employees who strongly agree that they know what is expected of them at work are 47% less likely to experience frequent burnout and 23% less likely to say they struggle with work-life balance a few times a week or more.

Effective managers build clarity by explicitly sharing their expectations and collaborating with employees to prioritize projects and tasks. They make themselves easily available, virtually or in person, and approachable to answer questions. They are ready to partner with employees to reprioritize as demands change.

Set Realistic Performance Goals Together

Collaborative goal setting, where managers involve employees in conversations about setting performance goals, is crucial for helping employees set reasonable targets that align with a healthy work-life balance.

Even highly talented employees can burn out when expected to achieve the unachievable. Without clear boundaries or goals, employees with high achievement drives may feel compelled to work more at the expense of their wellbeing and productivity.

Managers who facilitate frequent check-ins with their employees to discuss progress on their goals create a dynamic system of accountability. They ensure each employee aligns with team goals while establishing reasonable objectives.

Uplift Employees and Communicate Values Through Recognition

Recognition goes beyond a simple “feel good” exchange among employees. When done right, it enhances wellbeing by allowing employees to feel seen and valued for reasons beyond their workplace contributions. Employees who strongly agree that recognition is an important part of their organization’s culture are 4.2 times as likely to strongly agree that their organization cares about their wellbeing.

Recognition is also a powerful tool that leaders and managers can use to communicate organizational values and expectations. Through positive reinforcement, recognition signals to employees the behaviors their managers and team members want to see more often.

To support employee wellbeing and work-life balance, organizations should focus recognition on the *behaviors* that align with their values. For example, if an employee is only recognized for staying late at the office or working overtime to complete a project, it may create an expectation that such efforts are necessary for success, leading to burnout.

Managers and leaders can promote wellbeing by recognizing achievements and actions outside of work. This acknowledges employees as people with lives outside of work and can include recognition for life events, volunteering or community service, and other personal milestones. Gallup and Workhuman find doing so is an effective but underutilized resource. Slightly more than one in

three employees (37%) say they receive recognition for non-work-related things, but those who do are twice as likely to say their organization cares about their wellbeing.

Elevate Wellbeing for All Employees

The relationship between remote work and wellbeing is not always straightforward. Life's responsibilities do not disappear when an employee moves to a more remote work arrangement. While increased workplace flexibility provides a small boost in healthy work-life balance for exclusively remote workers, human-centric business practices consistently drive meaningful improvements in the employee experience across work locations. Gallup and Workhuman find that all leaders and managers can support their employees' wellbeing by setting clear expectations, working collaboratively to set goals, and providing strategic recognition.

Prioritize employee wellbeing, regardless of their location.

- Track the percentages of exclusively remote, hybrid and on-site employees and explore their work experiences.
- Explore all of Gallup and Workhuman's research on recognition and wellbeing in the workplace.
- Discover more about employee wellbeing and why it's so important.

AUTHOR(S)

Emily Lorenz and Rachael Yi contributed to this article.

SURVEY METHODS



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CONTACT: Gallup World Headquarters, 901 F Street, Washington, D.C., 20001, U.S.A
+1 202.715.3030

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