

The Current Landscape of Hybrid and Remote Work Across U.S. Workers

A Research Brief

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Dorothy A. Johnson Center
FOR PHILANTHROPY



Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy

The Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University was established in 1992 with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Our mission is to be a global leader in helping individuals and organizations understand, strengthen, and advance philanthropy, resulting in a smart, adaptive sector that helps create strong, inclusive communities.

We put research to work with and for professionals across the country and the world. Through professional education offerings; research, evaluation, and consulting services; and bold thinking to advance the field, we support a philanthropic ecosystem defined by effective philanthropy, strong nonprofits, and informed community change.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
A “Temporary” Solution	4
Where are We Now	4
A Small Subset of the Workforce	5
The Nonprofit and Philanthropic Workforce.....	5
Prevalence of Hybrid Work	5
Employer View	5
Employee View.....	6
Variation by Industry	6
Effects on Office Occupancy	7
Remote and Hybrid Workplaces: Strengths.....	9
Greater Workplace Flexibility.....	9
Strong Support from Employees	10
Neutral or Increased Productivity.....	10
Improved Employee Health and Morale	11
Remote and Hybrid Workplaces: Challenges.....	12
Complexity of the Hybrid Model Itself.....	12
Loss of the Benefits of Proximity to Colleagues	12
Lack of Mentoring, Especially for Younger and Newer Employees.....	12
Hybrid Reinforces a Meeting-Heavy Culture.....	13
Hybrid and Remote Meetings Create Lack of Connection, Loneliness, and Burnout	13
Remote and Hybrid Workplaces: Future Workplace Insights.....	16
References	18

Introduction

For most nonprofits, “nimble” is the name of the game. Organizations of all kinds face challenges and calls for change periodically, and it is those groups most able to think creatively and act in new ways that have proven sustainable in the long run. Nonprofits and nonprofit practitioners have arguably never needed to exercise more nimbleness and adaptability than they have in the past five years. But they are not alone. Across every sector, organizational agility and engagement — whether in finding new ways to [attract and retain talent](#), or rethinking [organizational models](#) — has been tested since 2020.

A “Temporary” Solution

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared an international public health emergency and, eight weeks later, classified the outbreak of coronavirus as a pandemic. Over [7 million people](#) lost their lives, and hundreds of thousands [lost their jobs](#). Health concerns forced every organization to adapt rapidly, and remote work became part of a new normal for millions of workers.

Out of this shift has emerged the widespread adoption of the hybrid work model, a way of working that makes use of in-person and remote work time. While [disability advocates have long sought avenues for remote work](#), over the past few years, organizations have needed to undertake a review of their policies, procedures, and practices on flexible working arrangements and embrace changes for how all staff conduct their work. What began as a temporary solution to an unexpected problem has evolved into a long-term strategy for many organizations. As a result, this new normal is reshaping how employees collaborate, manage their time, and engage with their roles.

Too often, however, debates about the efficacy — and even the extent — of hybrid work have only been supported by anecdotes and comparisons to what individual employers or employees remember as “normal” workplace habits in the “before times.” As a data-driven observer of philanthropy, the Johnson Center recently completed a project that required us to conduct a research-informed review of hybrid work in four dimensions:

1. What is the **current status** of in-person work?
2. How **prevalent** is hybrid work, and how has that changed over time since the pandemic?
3. What does early research show as the **strengths** and **challenges** of hybrid work from both an employer and employee perspective?
4. **Where do we go** from here?

This brief is extracted from the project, a larger research initiative conducted by the Johnson Center through summer 2025, and we share it here broadly to help inform the sector as the nonprofit workspace and operating environment continue to evolve.

Where are we now?

One of the best sources of office occupancy information is anonymized datasets drawn from access card data — swipe cards or proximity cards used with an electronic reader instead of physical keys to access office spaces, especially in larger or newer buildings. Kastle is one large provider of access card systems, and the company has made public de-identified access card usage data from ten major metro areas since 2020.

As of one week ago — August 2025 — Kastle’s data show that average weekly office occupancy rates currently average 52% across ten major metro areas. (See Figure 2 for more information.) Compare that to office occupancy of 90% or greater prior to the pandemic. After gradually rising since 2021, occupancy began to plateau in 2024 across most metro areas, suggesting employers and employees have reached a new “steady state” for in-office expectations.

A Small Subset of the Workforce

A careful review of that last sentence reveals a key nuance: the Gallup survey represents the attitudes of workers who were able to be remote at all. A fuller view of the picture, across all workplaces and industries, shows that remote work, let alone hybrid work, is not the experience for most workers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024), 77% of all private sector workers work only on-site. Roughly equal shares work either fully remote (11%) or in a hybrid arrangement, combining some on-site and some remote time (12%).

In other words, four in every five American private sector workers only work on-site; only one in ten works either wholly or partly remote. Importantly, those figures are relatively consistent with data from 2022 and 2023, meaning that, once society began to restabilize after the deepest pandemic years of 2020 and 2021, most workers went fully back to the office, the jobsite, etc. (Demsas, 2024).

The Nonprofit and Philanthropic Workforce

We are not aware of any data that systematically tracks the distribution of onsite, hybrid, or remote work environments within the philanthropic sector. We have every reason to believe, however, that our sector follows the same general trends as the workforce at-large.

After all, our sector contains multitudes: we employ direct service healthcare workers, investment analysts, museum curators, marketing professionals, community organizers, and countless others. Some of this work can be done remotely, but much of it cannot.

The key takeaway, then, is this: defaulting to an expectation — in our sector or outside of it — that most workers are conducting some or all of their business remotely would be untrue. Five years out from the onset of a global pandemic, the vast majority of American workers have returned to fully onsite work.

Prevalence of Hybrid Work

Employer View

Viewed from the perspective of employers across the U.S. workforce landscape, the shift towards hybrid work has been rapid. Since 2023, companies with hybrid policies doubled from 20% to 43%, according to a Flex Index 2024 Q4 report on workforce flexibility. Among Fortune 500 organizations, 82% offered remote work opportunities, with only 8% of Flex Index-tracked companies offering fully remote work (Cutter, 2024; Flex Index, n.d.). (See Table 1.) Open any general business publication from the last year, and you will find multiple articles arguing — passionately — for or against hybrid and remote policies (Horowitch, 2024; Cutter, 2024; Aratani, 2024; The Economist, 2023).

By 2024, roughly one-third of all U.S. companies mandated that all workers be on site full time, according to Scoop Technologies and Flex Index¹ — down from 49% one year prior (Cutter, 2024; Fuhrmans & Ellis, 2023). Recent Flex Index data² as of January 2025, tracking the policies of more than 13,000 companies, is broken down in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Number and Percent of Companies by Worksite Requirement Policies

Worksite Requirement	Number of Companies	Share of Companies
Fully remote	1,058	8%
Employee's choice	3,418	26%
Minimum days a week	4,738	36%
Specific days a week	511	4%
Minimum number of days and specific days each week	152	1%
Minimum percentage of time each week	383	3%
Full-time in office	2,976	22%
Total	13,236	100%

Note: Adapted from Flex Index Explore, January 10, 2025, <https://www.flexindex.com/explore>.

From the organizational policy perspective, the war over work location is over with the percent of companies requiring full-time on-office work at only 22%. However, examining the proportions of workers' experiencing each worksite requirement policy paints a very different picture.

Employee View

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024), 77% of all private sector workers worked only on-site. Roughly equal shares worked either fully remote (11%) or in some on-site and remote hybrid (12%). In other words, four in every five American private sector workers only work on-site; only one in ten work either wholly or partly remote. Importantly, those figures are relatively consistent with 2022 and 2023, both of which were lower than the peak of remote work during the pandemic years 2020 and 2021 (Demsas, 2024).

Remote work, let alone hybrid work, is not the experience for most workers.

Variation by Industry

Reconciling these two views is important, and the key lies in differences by industry. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the American Community Survey showed a dramatic increase in the percent of remote workers across all industries from 2019 to 2021, followed by a decrease in remote work for each industry from 2021 to 2022 (the most recent available year) (Wulff Pablonia & Janocha Redmond, 2024). (See Figure 1.) What is most evident from the visualization of this data is the dramatic difference in the percent of

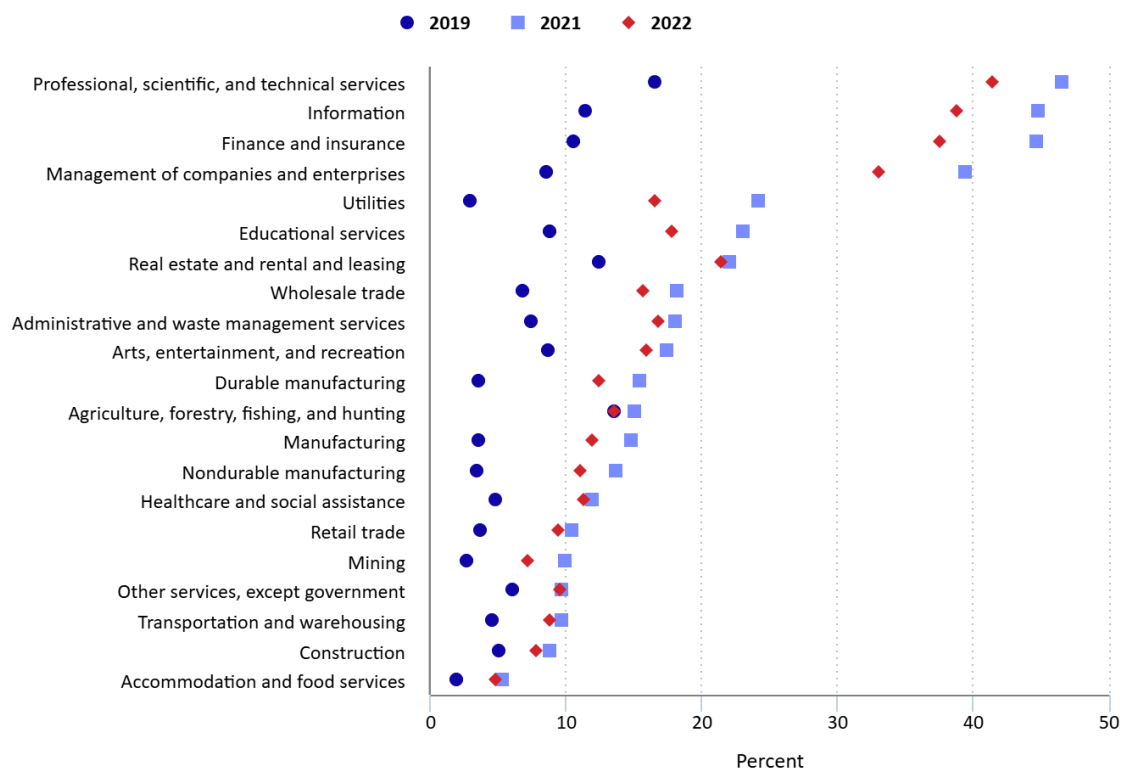
¹ Both of these sources are technology-based organizations that keep tabs on the worker location and remote work policies of more than 4,000 companies.

² Data from <https://www.flexindex.com/explore> as of January 10, 2025.

remote workers in professional, scientific, and technical services compared to many other categories. Remote and hybrid policies are widespread in professional, white-collar settings (Horowitch, 2024).

Little systematically collected data is available specifically for the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. However, one of the few comes from the National Council of Nonprofits, which posted a study using data from nonprofit jobs posted to Idealist to analyze work location expectations of nonprofit employers (Hashimoto, 2023). This 2023 analysis found that roughly half of nonprofit openings were for fully remote or hybrid work (19% and 38%, respectively). The study also found that remote job openings received nine times more applicants than entirely on-site postings.

FIGURE 1. Percent of Remote Workers by Major Industry Group, Ranked by Largest to Smallest in 2021, 2019-2022

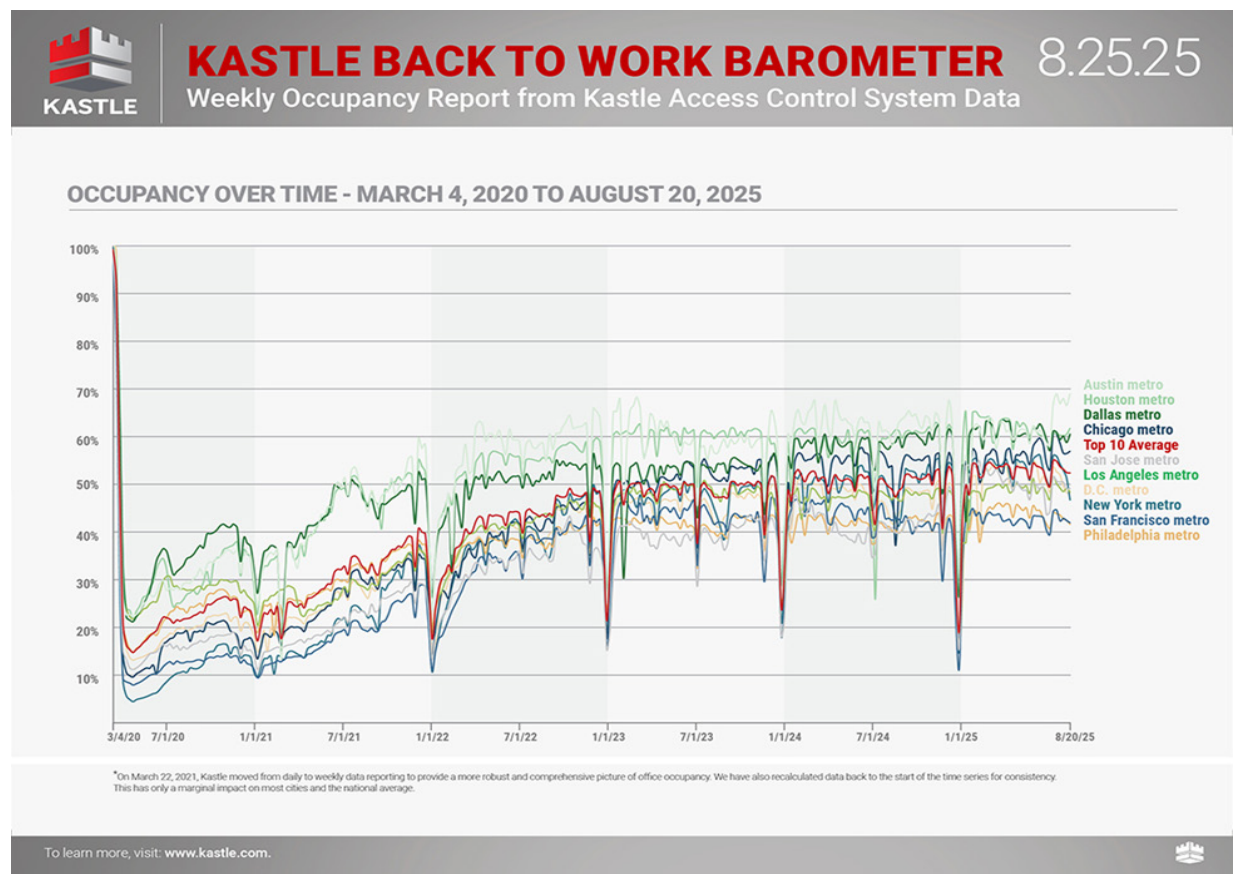


Note: Reprinted from “The rise in remote work since the pandemic and its impact on productivity,” Beyond the Numbers, by S.W. Pabilonia & J.J. Redmond, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 (<https://www.bls.gov/opub/btn/volume-13/remote-work-productivity.htm>).

Effects on Office Occupancy

Regardless of whether the discussion centers on the employer or employee, the share of remote and hybrid work arrangements is higher after the pandemic than before. The effect on office occupancy has been dramatic; average office occupancy throughout 2023, 2024, and 2025 has hovered around 50% (Cutter, 2024; Kastle Systems, 2024). (See Figure 2.) This occupancy trend line is roughly comparable, even across metro areas; the variations are meaningful to businesses in those areas, but the overall trend holds across regions.

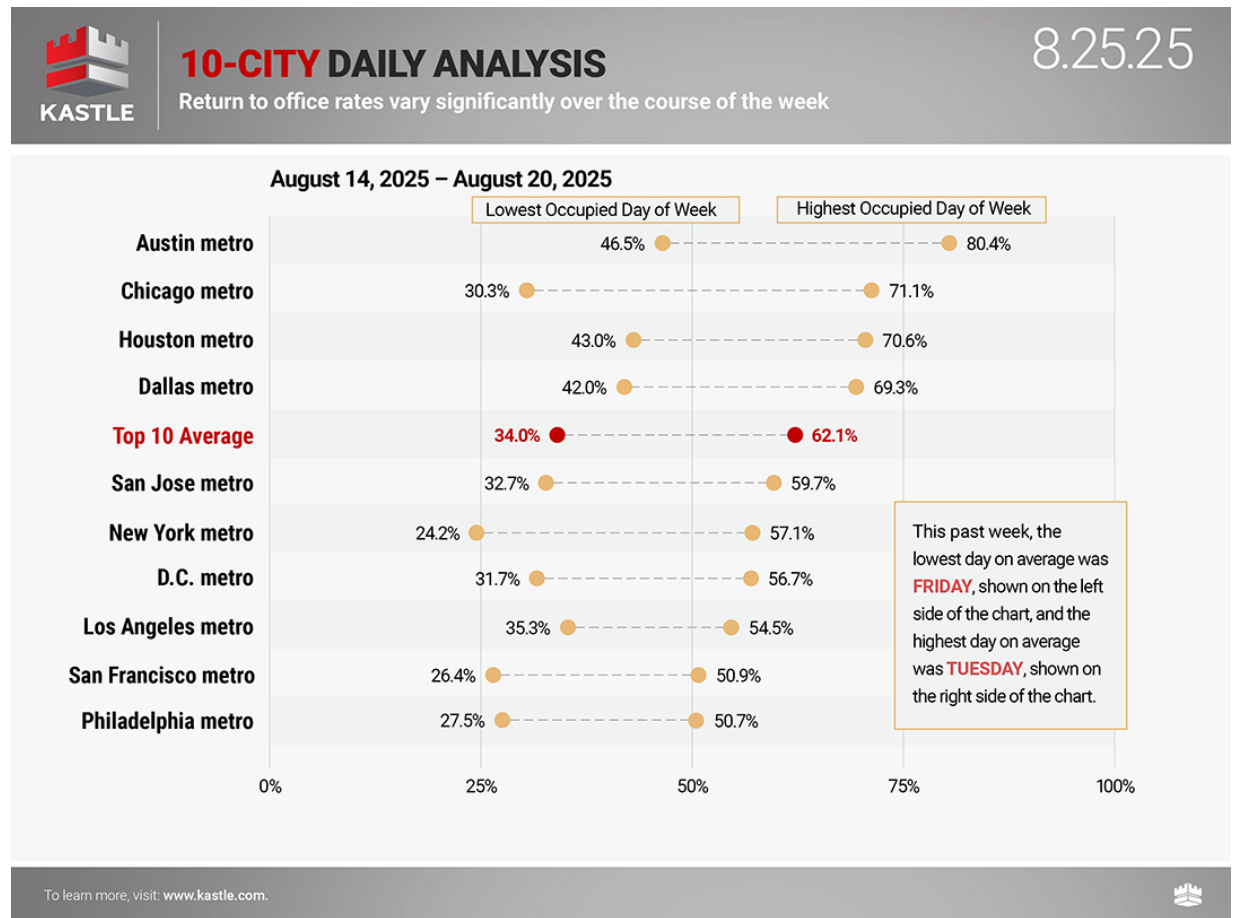
FIGURE 2. Weekly Office Occupancy Rates of Ten U.S. Cities^a Over Time, March 2020 to August 2025.



^aKastle Systems published occupancy rates for ten selected cities using card swipe administrative data in commercial office buildings with over 300,000 Kastle system users.

Note: Reprinted from "Getting America Back to Work," by Kastle Systems, August 25, 2025,
<https://www.kastle.com/safety-wellness/getting-america-back-to-work/>

FIGURE 3. Weekly Office Occupancy Rates of Ten U.S. Cities by Kastle, August 2025.



Note: Reprinted from "Getting America Back to Work," by Kastle Systems, August 25, 2025, <https://www.kastle.com/safety-wellness/getting-america-back-to-work/>.

Remote and Hybrid Workplaces: Strengths

- Strategically, flexible arrangements and hybrid models offer several notable advantages, including:
- greater workforce flexibility;
- strong support from employees;
- in most cases, a "worst case" result of a neutral effect on productivity and a "best case" result of improved productivity; and
- improved employee health and morale.

Greater Workplace Flexibility

The flexibility of hybrid models allows employees to tailor their schedules and locations to fit their needs and preferences. This creates an environment where employees can work productively wherever they are,

including physically present when it's purposeful. As noted in *The Economist* (2023), greater flexibility includes less commuting time, the ability to manage personal responsibilities, and the chance for improved work-life balance, contributing to higher happiness and job satisfaction. Furthermore, tasks that require uninterrupted concentration — often associated with knowledge workers — can often be done more effectively at home, leading many workers to prefer remote options.

While approaches to hybrid work range in flexibility, autonomy, and rigidity, Bradt (2023) encouraged employers to “stop trying to find the right remote work policy. Instead, adopt principle-based remote work guidelines that reinforce your purpose and culture” (p. 1).

Strong Support from Employees

Hybrid work balances employee preferences for in-office and remote options. A Gallup 2024 poll found that 60% of employees favored a hybrid arrangement, 33% preferred being fully remote, and only seven percent wanted to work entirely in person. Kemp (2024) reported that 93% of remote-capable employees preferred at least some remote work each week, while Camp et al. (2023) found in their *Women in the Workplace 2023* report that flexible work options is one of the most important benefits for attracting diverse talent (regardless of gender), while 38% of working mothers with young children said they would have to quit or reduce their hours without workforce flexibility.

Neutral or Increased Productivity

Perspectives continue to evolve on how in-office, hybrid, and remote work affect productivity, especially across fields (Barrero et al., 2023). Brucks & Levav (2022) described negative effects of videoconferencing on creativity in business ideation (though none on effectiveness), while Künn et al. (2022) questioned the effect of virtual work on performing cognitive tasks in chess. However, overall, recent research challenges the notion that hybrid work diminishes productivity. Instead, studies show that hybrid arrangements perform just as well as working in person (neutral productivity), with some evidence indicating productivity gains (Barrero et al., 2021; Choudhury et al., 2022; Adam, 2024; Bloom et al., 2024; Camp et al., 2024).

Bloom et al. (2024) studied the effects of hybrid working from home and found that hybrid working improved job satisfaction and retention without reducing productivity. They found that employees (n=1,612) in a hybrid working arrangement randomly assigned to three days in the office³ or fully in-office five days a week achieved equivalent productivity, performance grades, and promotions. (See Text Box 1.) In fact, Camp et al. (2024) at McKinsey & Company declared that a fully remote organization can use purposeful organizational culture to demonstrate a level of organizational health that exceeds that of its entirely in-person counterparts.

As hybrid work becomes more standard, emerging evidence suggests it does not harm organizational value. Notably, Flynn et al. (2024) found that by studying the return to office policies of 839 Russell 3000 firms, there were no significant stock market reactions to the announcement of their hybrid policies, indicating a neutral effect on organizational productivity.

Despite ongoing praises and criticisms of working from home — whether entirely remote or distributed hybrid — Barrero et al. (2023) pointed out that worker productivity is influenced by types of tasks, managerial

³ The study noted that while findings might not apply to all other hybrid work arrangements, the authors believed that they could extend to other hybrid settings with a similar number of days in the office, such as two or four days a week. However, they were unsure if the results would extend to more remote settings such as one day a week (or less) in the office, due to potential challenges in training and culture in fully remote settings.

styles, and workplace expectations and must be measured against larger organizational progress. They caution that “there is no sound reason to expect the productivity effects of remote work to be uniform across jobs, workers, managers, and organizations” (p.39).

Improved Employee Health and Morale

Hybrid work enhances work-life balance, with benefits for workplace physical and mental health (Office of the Surgeon General, 2022). Wang et al. (2024) found that greater job flexibility is strongly associated with improved employee well-being. Their JAMA study used 2021 cross-sectional data from the National Health Institute Survey of employed adults 18 years and older (n=18,144)⁴. The research linked job flexibility and security to better mental health, reduced absenteeism, and the use of mental healthcare. Specifically, flexibility was tied to improved psychological well-being, while schedule stability lowered distress and absenteeism.

As Horowitch (2024) observed,

More than a year since the World Health Organization declared the end of the pandemic public-health emergency, you might expect the remote-work wars to have reached a peace settlement. Plenty of academic research suggests that hybrid policies, which white-collar professionals favor overwhelmingly, pan out well for companies and their employees” (para. 1)

TEXT BOX 1. Conflicting Stories of Remote Worker Productivity or Just Better Data?

One of the most well-known studies of remote work was conducted by researchers at Stanford University using a (then-unnamed) Chinese online travel agency with 16,000 workers. The original work, published in 2015, found that employees improved their performance by 13% while working remotely over nine months (Bloom et al., 2015). However, in 2022, the research team paid a second visit to the same company. With the benefit of elapsed time, researchers were able to see that nearly two-thirds of the increased performance came from remote employees working longer hours (not natively increased productivity). Indeed, the company ended remote work because remote employees were not promoted at the same rate as on-site employees (Bloom et al., 2024; The Economist, 2023).

Another well-known study suffered a similar fate. Two Harvard doctoral students published a working paper in 2020 that identified an 8% increase in productivity at an online retailer that had switched to a completely remote workforce (Emanuel & Harrington, 2021). However, this paper was revised in 2024, when the researchers could get access to detailed work schedules of those same workers. Using the updated data, the eight percent productivity boost became a four percent decline with lower customer service and satisfaction measures (Emanuel & Harrington, 2024).

Therefore, assertions that remote work inherently increases productivity should be approached cautiously. Similarly, assertions that remote work, by definition, decreases productivity should also be approached warily. The strongest answer from these two well-documented and peer-reviewed studies, especially considering the 2024 study by Bloom et al., is that remote work causes minimal change to core productivity, all else equal.

⁴ Of the available data, 62% of respondents were white, 18% Hispanic, 11% Black, 6% Asian, and 3% Other/Multiracial.

Remote and Hybrid Workplaces: Challenges

However, despite the apparent advantages, hybrid work is not without complications.

Complexity of the Hybrid Model Itself

Paul Knopp, chair and CEO at KPMG US (2024), stated that hybrid work environments are inherently more complicated than fully remote or fully in-office models. Managing hybrid setups relies on technological support to work flexibly across location and schedule but also requires ongoing effort to improve coordination and collaboration within and across teams. This can lead to logistical problems called the “coordination tax” (Mensik, 2024). Mensik (2024) pointed to studies that showed that the typical worker devotes over a third of their time to attending or coordinating meetings, and workers can lose up to two hours every day clarifying details needed to accomplish their jobs. In an article for *WorkLife* (2024), CEO of Axios HQ, Roy Schwartz, explained that the coordination tax ultimately comes from misalignment: “It’s really hard to get alignment, and so you need really good communication to get people aligned and make sure that you’re not wasting time on the wrong things and mis-prioritizing initiatives” (Mensik, para. 12).

Companies continue to grapple with optimizing these setups to ensure they benefit both employees and employers. Challenges arising from this complexity include:

- loss of benefits of proximity to colleagues;
- lack of mentoring;
- reinforced meeting-heavy cultures; and
- lack of connection, loneliness, and burnout.

Loss of the Benefits of Proximity to Colleagues

Hybrid models enable location flexibility, but their distributed nature reduces the benefits of in-person interaction compared to traditional in-office models. Physical proximity can enhance team interactions, such as quicker response time and sharing new information face-to-face when collaborating (Battiston et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022) or sharing enhanced feedback from mentors (Emanuel et al., 2023).

While proximity can strengthen team bonds, it is not the only factor for success in key workplace activities, such as broader cross-team collaboration or knowledge exchange (Hasan & Koning, 2019). Without appropriate support, such as office layouts and social events, employees tend to interact with the same colleagues and teams when given the opportunity due to familiarity, indicting the importance of intentionality in using physical proximity.

Lack of Mentoring, Especially for Younger and Newer Employees

Research indicates that remote working is associated with reduced feedback and mentoring, which are essential for skill development for those in the early stages of their career or new to an organization (Demsas, 2024; The Economist, 2023). A 2023 Qualtrics report, *Employee Experience Trends*, revealed lower engagement and retention among new hires in remote settings.

While in-office work fosters valuable informal mentoring and network building, studies suggest these benefits don't require full-time office presence.⁵ Notably, workplace analytics indicate that one to two days in office may provide similar connection benefits as full-time attendance, suggesting diminishing returns for excessive in-person time (Chen, 2024).

Hybrid Reinforces a Meeting-Heavy Culture

While the technology enabling hybrid work is central to its efficacy, its efficiencies can inadvertently increase meeting volume. Since 2020, workers nationwide have tripled their time in meetings (Chen, 2024). These time demands have left less space for the casual interactions that foster well-being and happiness at work. Tolliver and Sass (2024) used data from 40 million virtual and hybrid meetings from 11 organizations in Q1 2022 and Q1 2023 to run statistics based on the metadata from Zoom, Teams, WebEx, etc. They found a rise in meetings amid the transition to increased virtual collaboration, finding it was “no surprise that the sudden switch to virtual collaboration exacerbated the problem” (para. 2).

Hybrid and Remote Meetings Create Lack of Connection, Loneliness, and Burnout

Evidence suggests that remote workers and hybrid workers are more likely to be lonely than fully in-office workers (Pendell, 2024; Fitzpatrick, 2024). Largely attributable to social isolation,⁶ this lack of workplace connection undermines trust building, conflict resolution, and generative (rather than transactional) coworker exchanges (Fuhrmans & Ellis, 2023; Mensik, 2024). In an article in *The Wall Street Journal* (Ellis, 2023), Moshe Cohen, a negotiation coach who teaches conflict resolution at Boston University's Questrom School of Business, said that distance has weakened ties and heightened conflict among co-workers: “[t]he idea of slowing down, taking the time, being genuine, trying to actually establish some sort of connection with the other person — that's really missing” (Fuhrmans & Ellis, para. 10).

“Seeing people in person matters. Information pours off them: not just what they say but how they say it and whether they listen. Relationships form more naturally. It's much harder to look a person straight in the pixels.” (The Economist, 2024, para. 1).

These findings impact employee groups differently, especially those who are already at heightened risk of social isolation or burnout. For example, McKinsey & Company's *Women in the Workplace* 2023 report, the largest study on the state of women in corporate America, analyzed that many women who work hybrid or remotely feel less fatigued and burned out, having more focused time to complete work when they work remotely. However, a 2023 poll by Bright Horizons, the largest child-care provider of employer-sponsored healthcare in the country, found while working parents appreciated the flexibility, more than 40% of those who worked fully remotely felt isolated, reporting that they go days without leaving the house or talking to others outside their household.

⁵ Being in-office can help increase engagement typically associated with mentoring, including network connections, visibility, and opportunities to learn from others, especially for early career professionals and new staff (Atkin et. al, 2023; Emanuel et. al, 2023; Mensik, 2024c). Emanuel et. al (2023) also noted several studies have found that working with colleagues that hold higher wages or more education is correlated with higher subsequent wage growth. (Yet it is unclear whether physical proximity or proximity by being in the same company or field is necessary to receive these benefits.)

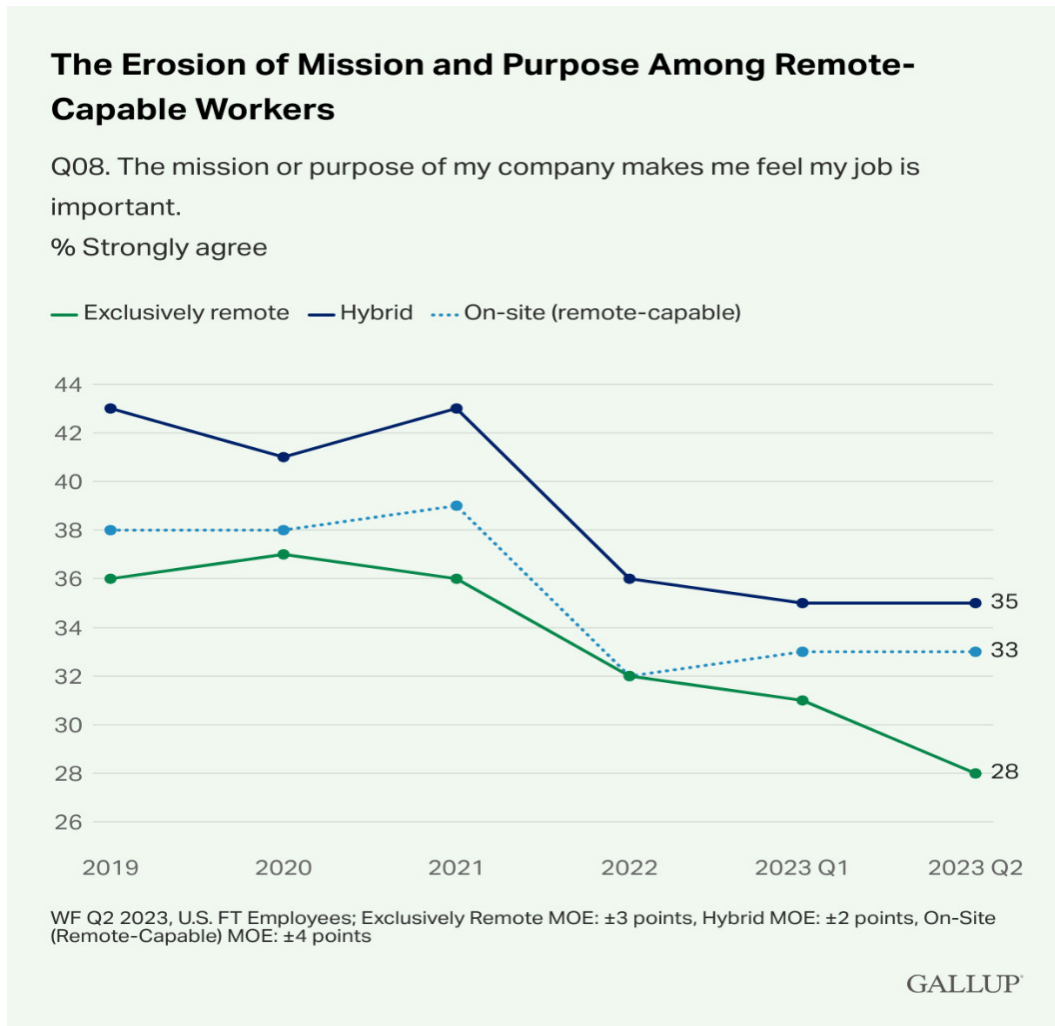
⁶ The Office of the U.S. Surgeon General (2023) defined social isolation as “objectively having few social relationships, social roles, group membership, and infrequent social interaction” (p.7).

The connections between social isolation and burnout in the workplace are part of three larger and related collective well-being trends across the country: increasing detachment by employees from employers, general unhappiness at work, and widening loneliness.

(1) Detachment from employers:

Evidence of what Gallup refers to as the “Great Detachment” suggests that employees are increasingly detached from their employers (Wigert & Tatel, 2024, para. 4). They attributed this to rapid organizational change, as well as “hybrid and remote growing pains,” (para. 9) noting that the more disruption employees experience, the more likely they feel burned out. Feeling less connected to organizational purpose can then create emotional distance that exacerbates detachment. The 2023 Q2 Gallup survey showed that while hybrid workers reported the highest sense of connection to their organizational mission and purpose (35%), remote workers felt the least connected (28%), the lowest record in over a decade (Harter, 2023). (See Figure 4.)

FIGURE 4. Percent of Employees who Strongly Agree Their Company’s Mission Makes their Job Important, 2019-2023

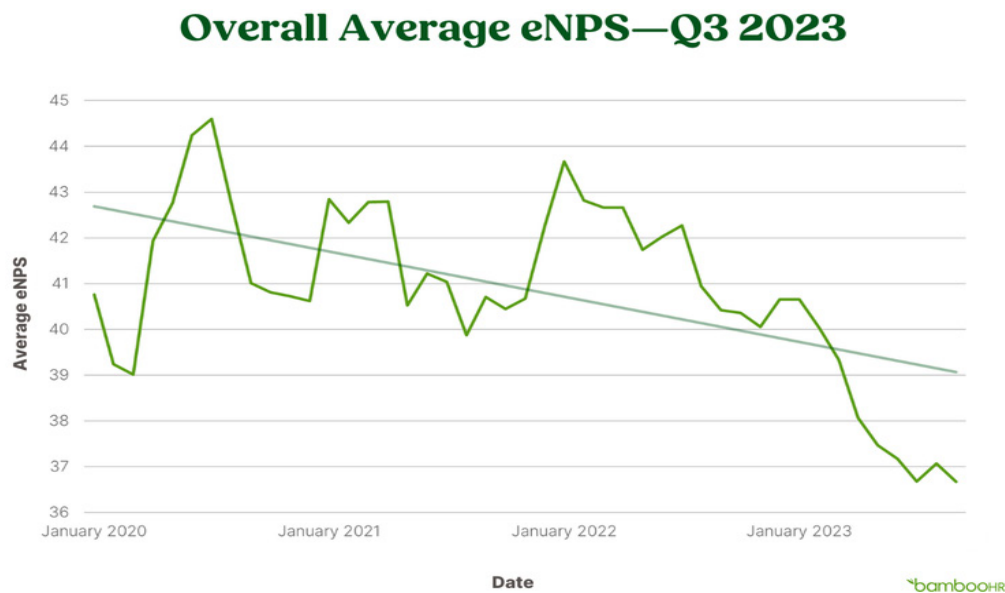


Note: Reprinted from “Are Remote Workers and Organizations Drifting Apart?” by J. Harter, August 24, 2023, Gallup, <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/509759/remote-workers-organizations-drifting-apart.aspx>

(2) Widening unhappiness at work:

In the workplace, unhappiness remains a persistent challenge, with Gallup's 2024 workplace report finding the lowest rate of thriving U.S. workers since 2009 (Wigert & Pendell). Similarly, BambooHR, a provider of HR software services, found the lowest rate of job satisfaction since early 2020 through their 2023 analysis of data from more than 57,000 workers.⁷ (See Figure 5.) Key drivers of discontent range from pay raises that do not keep up with costs of living, to the shifting nature of the average workday. Workplace practices and environment, such as micromanagement in-office, isolating experiences of virtual work, and organizational culture that does not prioritize work-life balance, also contribute (Fuhrmans & Ellis, 2023; Case, 2024).

FIGURE 5. Employee Satisfaction Measured by Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), Q3 2023



Note: Reprinted from “Employee Happiness Erodes in Q3 as The Great Gloom Continues” by BambooHR, n.d., <https://www.bamboohr.com/resources/data-at-work/employee-happiness-index/q3-2023-employee-happiness-erodes>

(3) Loneliness epidemic:

Nationally, Americans have grown less socially connected, with approximately half of U.S. adults feeling lonely. This epidemic of loneliness is marked by historically low trust in one another and major institutions (Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, 2023). For example, in 1972, 45% of Americans reported they felt they could reliably trust other Americans, but this proportion dropped to 30% in 2016. Hadley & Wright (2024) urged measuring and dispelling myths about loneliness in the workplace. An advisory issued by the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General encouraged workplaces to combat social isolation and loneliness, and specifically to consider how flexible work arrangements impact employees' ability to nurture relationships within and outside work.

⁷ See also The BambooHR Employee Happiness Index, which “examines eNPS (employee Net Promoter Scores®) from more than 1.6 billion self-reported scores.”

Remote and Hybrid Workplaces: Future Workplace Insights

Looking forward, the future of work remains uncertain as workplace dynamics remain in flux. While hybrid and remote arrangements are in place for nearly half of all professional, scientific, and technical staff (see U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024 data in Figure 2), a late 2024 survey of more than 400 large company CEO's in the United States revealed that 79% anticipated a return to full-time, on site workplaces within three years — more than twice as many as earlier in the year (KPMG, 2024). Further, 86% of CEO's report that they will “reward employees who make an effort to come into the office with favorable assignments, raises, or promotions” (KPMG, 2024).

This perception is reinforced by recent news as of January 2025:

- Andy Jassy (2024), CEO of Amazon, rationalized the company's return-to-office mandate in January 2025, to strengthen culture and teams.
- JPMorgan Chase is expected to follow closely behind (Saeedy, 2025).
- Goldman Sachs, PwC, UPS, Stellantis, and General Motors made similar return-to-office pronouncements during 2024 as well (The Economist, 2024; Cutter, 2024).
- Significantly, as of January 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to “terminate remote work arrangements and require [federal] employees to return to work in-person at their respective duty stations on a full-time basis,” with exemptions to be determined by department leaders (The White House, 2025, para. 1). If this is fully implemented, this will be a large change to the federal workforce across the nation — especially in the greater Washington, D.C., area, for businesses and nonprofits that serve federal workers or perform federal contracts. Importantly, however, data as of August 2025 shows that only 46% of federal workers are back “on-site” in their offices; nearly equal shares remain hybrid (28%) or fully remote (26%) even with the executive order. Therefore, the federal workforce mirrors the overall 10-city average from Kastle Systems data presented above at roughly 50% occupancy. (Source: [Trump's return to office order worked](#))

These expectations contrast sharply with worker sentiments, which, as noted above, increasingly favor flexible arrangements.

Even the understanding of what constitutes “hybrid” may be fluid. For example, employees in the information technology field and large companies were spending large portions of their days in virtual meetings with far-flung colleagues before the pandemic. According to ADP, “nearly a third of workers at large firms last year didn’t work in the same metro area as their managers” (Cutter, 2024). Forcing employees to return to a physical office, just to spend even more time in virtual Teams meetings, is a fool’s errand.

On the other hand, many in-person meetings at in-person workplaces now include a Teams or Zoom link by default, enabling remote employee participation and encouraging in-person employees to approach their workday with an eye to a more flexible work location. We need to talk more about hybrid *workplaces* and less about hybrid *people*. People are not hybrid. They are either in-person or remote (typically day by day). In contrast, many workplaces are hybrid every day; the work at the employer is being conducted simultaneously in both the physical and virtual world.

Much like employers who are beginning to divide into camps of permitting remote work versus requiring on-site work, workers may begin to divide into two camps as well: those that can be ‘forced’ back to the office

based on proximity to the physical office (or those that choose to commute in regardless of distance) become the new ‘permanently’ on-site workforce, and those that cannot be ‘forced’ to return (or that choose to be permanently remote, regardless of distance to the physical office) become the new permanently remote workforce — even if the two types of workers are within the same company.

Further, the hybrid nature of professional, scientific, and technical workplaces means that the physical spaces will continue to adapt. Offices need to have quiet spaces for individual work, multitudes of small conference rooms for small group meetings, multitudes of small private spaces for Teams video calls with small groups, large meeting spaces for entire teams, and plenty of nooks and areas for spontaneous gatherings. (See Figure 6.) Few large office buildings with rows of cubicles fit this description, and the proliferation of video calls means many office locations have far too few conference rooms.

FIGURE 6. Examples of New Spaces for Quiet Work or Small Groups



Note: Reprinted from Mensik, 2024, by TPG Architecture, n.d., <https://www.tpgarchitecture.com>

Hybrid work has moved from a reactive response to an intentional organizational choice, redefining productivity, employee satisfaction, and the very nature of the modern workplace. As hybrid work continues to be a standard practice with varying approaches to flexibility, nonprofits continue to balance their organizational needs with evolving workforce expectations.

Moving forward, nonprofits must grapple with the potential challenges of hybrid working, such as sustaining a cohesive culture, while embracing the benefits, such as improved recruitment and well-being. Ultimately, success depends on acknowledging trade-offs, clear communication across staff, and evaluating how different workplace configurations align with an organization’s mission, culture, and needs.

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