National Research Group
A STAGWELL COMPANY

Home vs. Office:
How can technology improve people's working needs?

2023: Understanding the new world of work

Welcome to the new world of work

Remote working isn’t a novelty anymore.

More than two years on from the start of the pandemic, flexibility has now become a **baseline expectation** for many employees. And that means that it’s more important than ever for employers to understand the **benefits and pain points of remote work.**

This report explores how workers around the world have been navigating and adapting to this new reality—and what that means for businesses who want to **make a flexible world work** for them, their users and their staff.

AGENDA ITEMS

1

A flexible working culture is here to stay.

Flexibility in both schedule and location is one of the top priorities for the modern worker. Over the past two years, employees have come to greatly appreciate the role that a more flexible working culture can play in helping them balance their personal, financial, and professional lives.

For businesses to thrive in this new environment, they will need to embrace—not fight against—this trend.

2

Employers are still trying to solve the challenges of remote work.

The early days of the pandemic threw a spotlight on the technical and cultural downsides of remote working. These issues have proved stubbornly persistent; in fact, some have even become *more* common since 2020.

You can't assume that, just because you've been doing it for so long, you know how to get the most out of a remote workforce. Making flexibility work requires ongoing and constant innovation.

3

Work from home. Socialize at work.

In a flexible world, businesses need to better delineate the tasks that are best performed at work vs. remotely. And that means reimagining the role of the office.

Increasingly, employees see their companies' offices not as a workplace, but as a kind of social hub for the business; a place that can play a vital role in building a sense of culture and community among teammates.

4

A new generation of tech can help people thrive.

Technology has played a crucial role in the adjustment to flexible working, helping facilitate access to information as well as collaboration and communication between teammates.

Now, we're anticipating the emergence of a new wave of remote working solutions, as businesses start to explore the benefits that can be unlocked by next generation technologies such as AI and Extended Reality.

5

Remote working tech needs to be more than just a novelty.

Investing in new solutions doesn't mean very much if your employees aren't willing to actually use them.

For remote working tech to see widespread adoption, it needs to solve genuine problems—and not just be innovation for innovation's sake. Tools need to be easy to use, streamlined, and situated within an open ecosystem, allowing people to work seamlessly across the devices and platforms they're already comfortable with.

OUR APPROACH

Methodology

15-minute mobile-friendly online survey with workers across four markets.

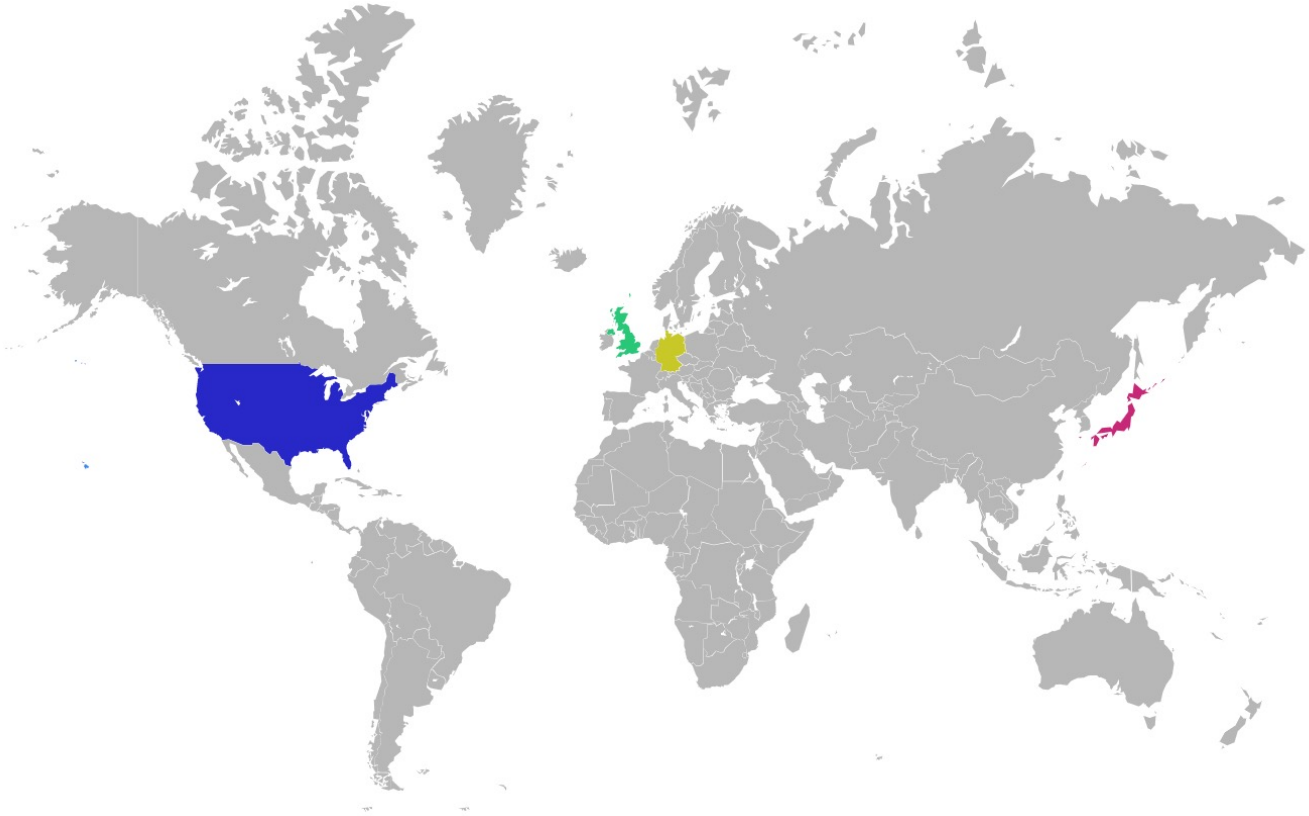
4,116 participants aged 18-54 in the US, UK, Germany, and Japan.

All respondents must have a full-time or part-time job.

Must have worked from home or currently work from home.

2022 Fieldwork dates: September

2020 Fieldwork dates: April

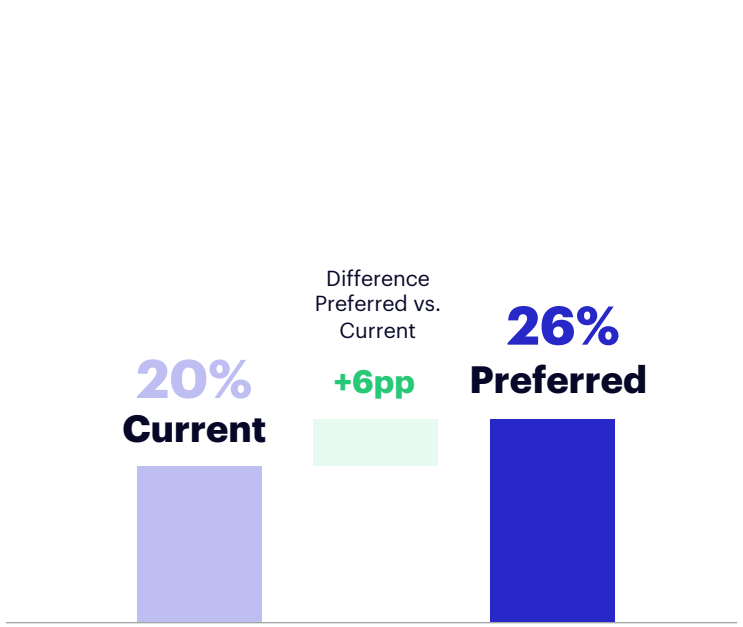


Total	1,000	1,045	1,032	1,039

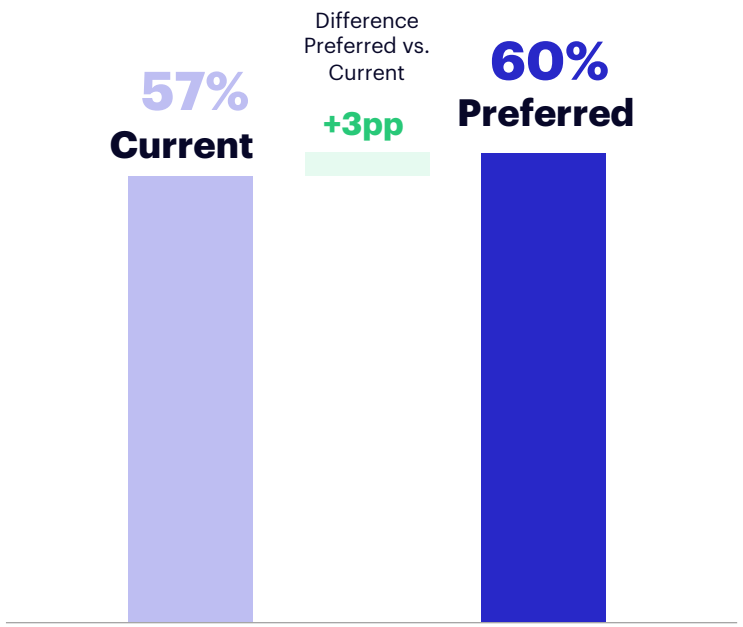
THE FUTURE IS FLEXIBLE

The majority of workers have a flexible working policy which generally aligns with their preferences

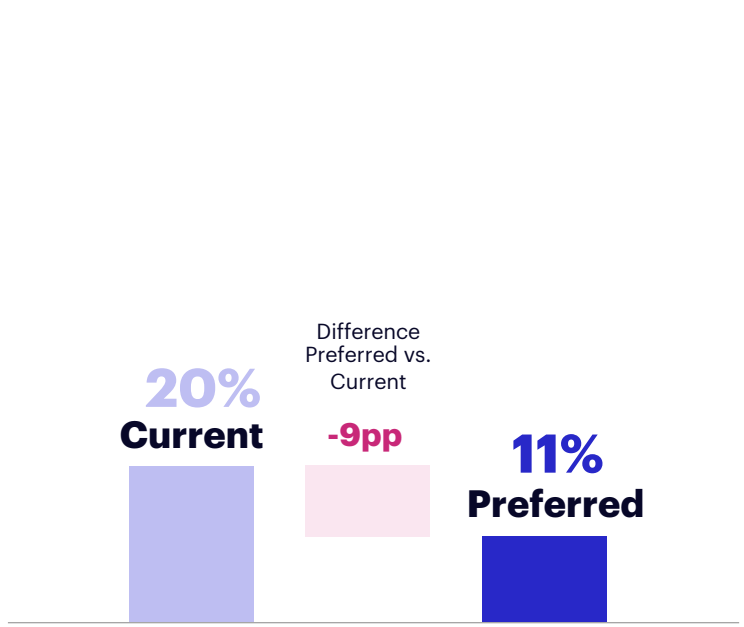
Fully remote (no offices)



Flexible



Full-time in the office



QWFH_POLICY: What is your business' current policy on work? And which do you prefer? Base: Total US

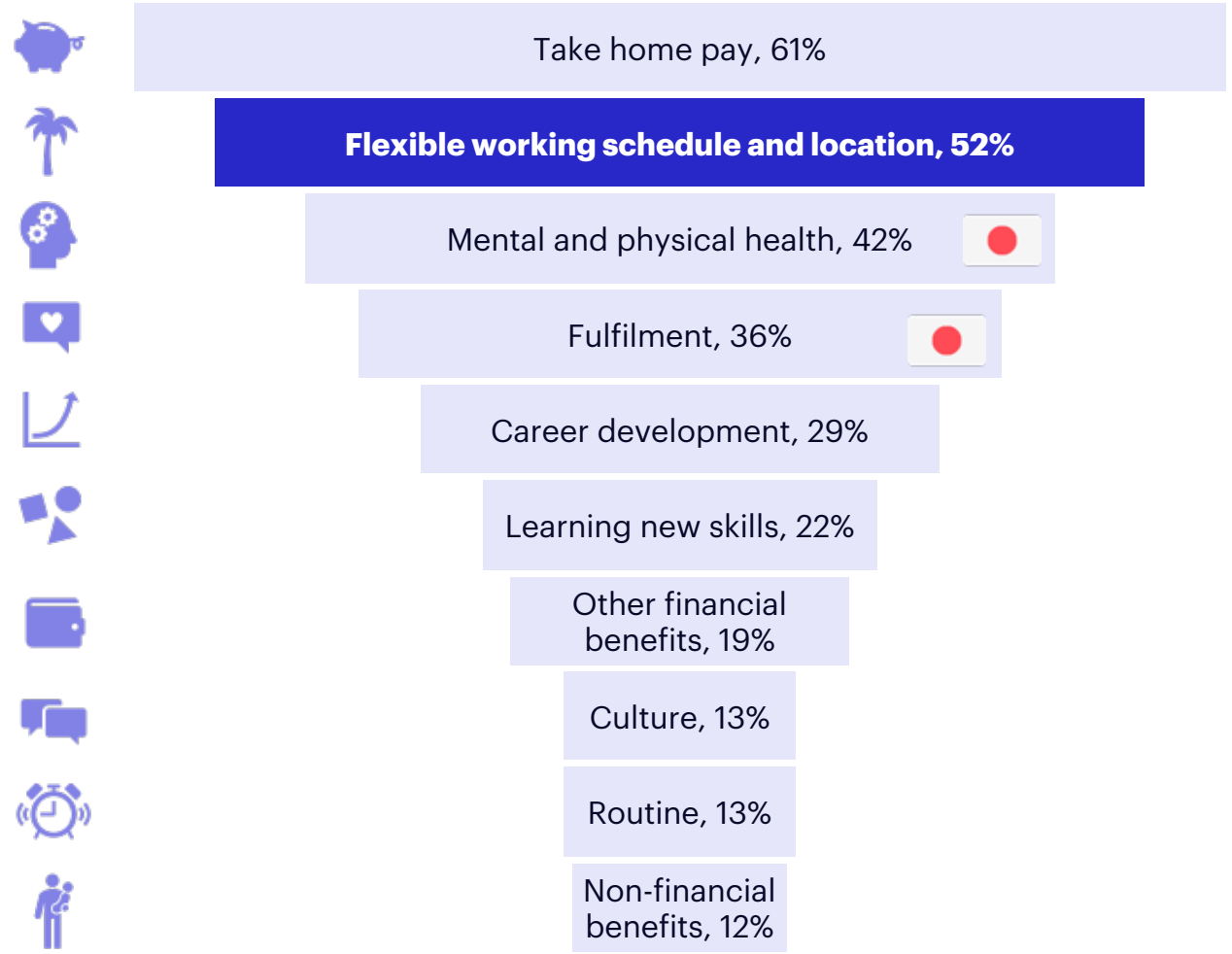
After take home pay, flexibility is the most important priority for employees

The priority is similar across the UK and Germany but **workers in Japan value mental and physical health and job fulfilment over a flexible working policy** (ranking 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively).

With a more traditional, regimented work culture and *ikigai* philosophy (loose translation: *happiness in living*), these priorities are more important than when and where they work.

Most Important Priorities in Working Life

Ranked 1-3 'Most important'



QPRIORITIES: Please rank the following in order of importance to you in your working life, where 1 = most important to you, and 5 = least important to you. Base: Total US

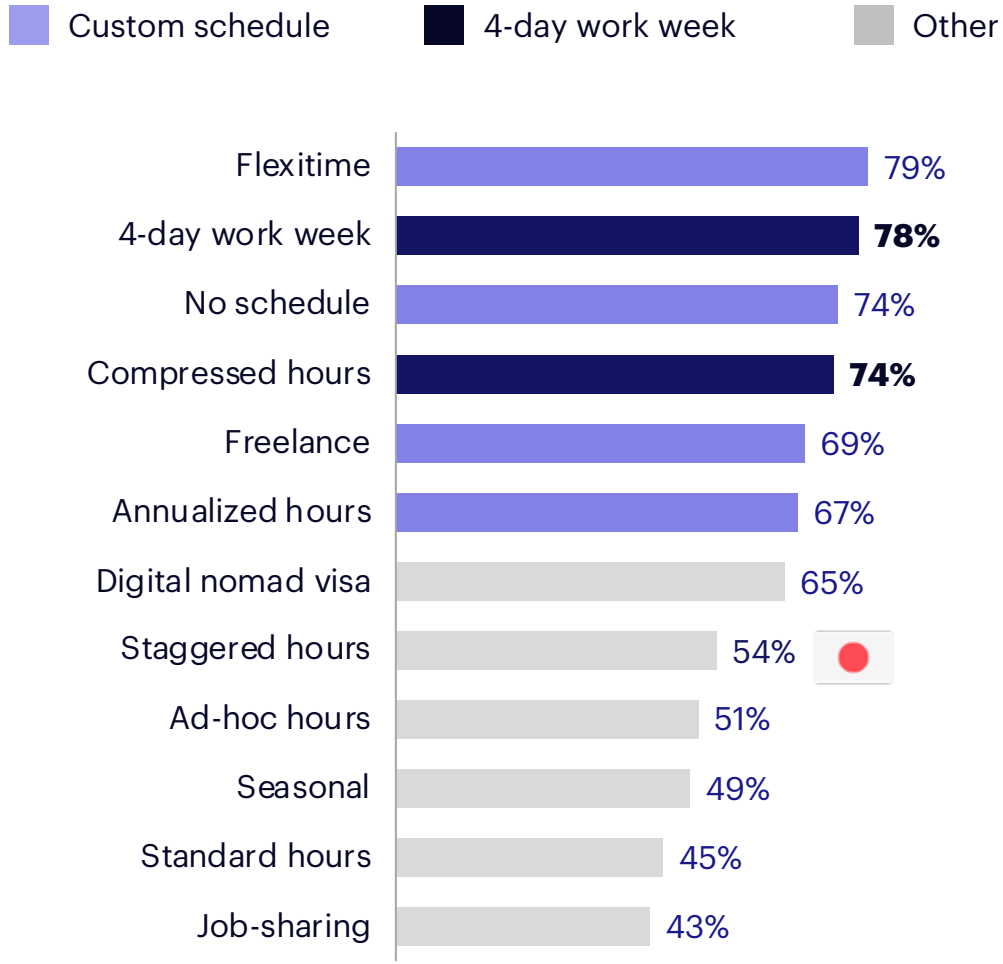
US workers are most interested in control over their working hours, including 4-day work weeks

Flexibility is prioritized in a different way in Japan.

Staggered hours, i.e. different starting, break and finishing times for employees in the same workplace, **are more desirable than compressed hours** (ranking 4th in Japan vs. 8th-10th elsewhere).

Most Appealing Working Patterns

Ranked by 'Very/Somewhat interested'



QWORK_PATTERN: How interested are you in the following working patterns?
Base: Total US

A flexible work schedule and more PTO are the most effective policies businesses can implement to improve work/life balance

Workers in Japan are more likely than other markets to want better boundaries (no work-related communication outside of core working hours) **and better tools and services** such as project management systems, over flexibility and shorter work weeks (ranking 4th and 5th respectively vs. 7th-9th elsewhere).

Top 10 Ways Businesses Can Improve Work/Life Balance

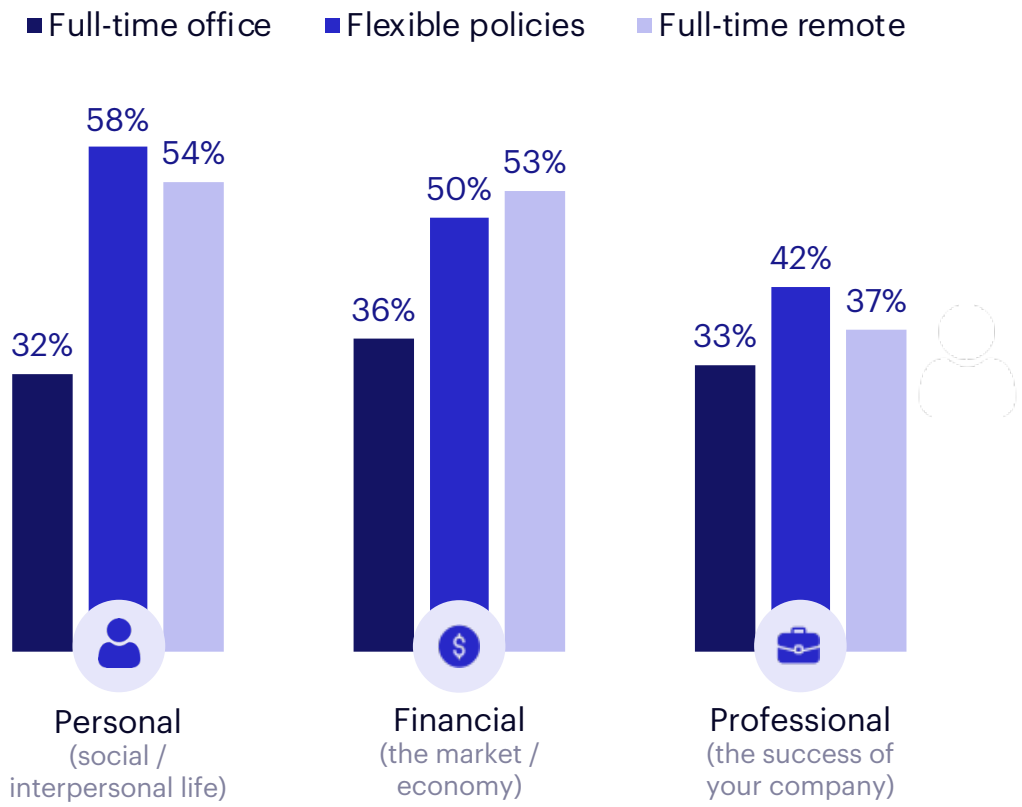
Ranked by Total US

QBALANCE: Which of the following, if any, do you think businesses can do to improve your work/life balance? Base: Total US

Flexible schedules are here to stay; they've made workers' personal, financial and corporate lives significantly easier

Impact Current Work Policy Has Made on People's Lives

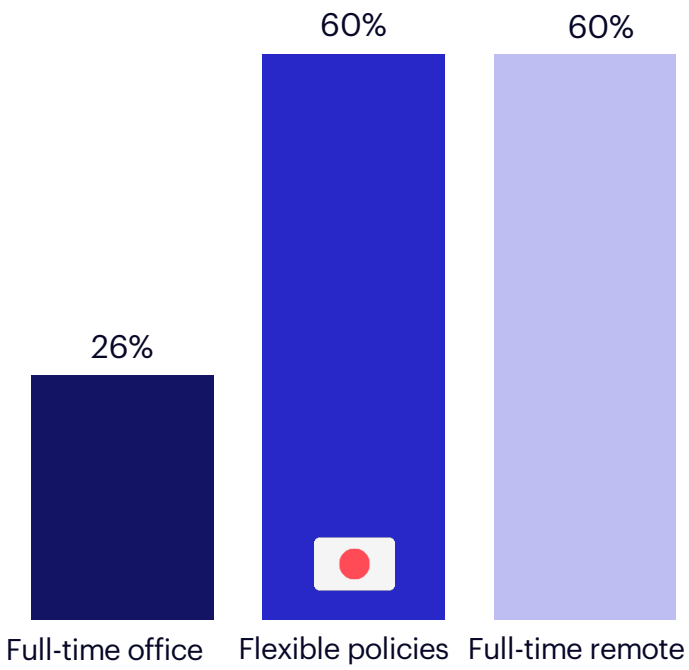
'Made it much easier/easier'



QIMPACT_EASE: What impact has your current work policy made on the following areas? Base: Those within each policy in the US

People in flexible or remote roles are twice as likely to say their work policy has had a positive impact on their mental and physical health

Impact Current Work Policy Has Made on Health
'Made it much easier/easier'

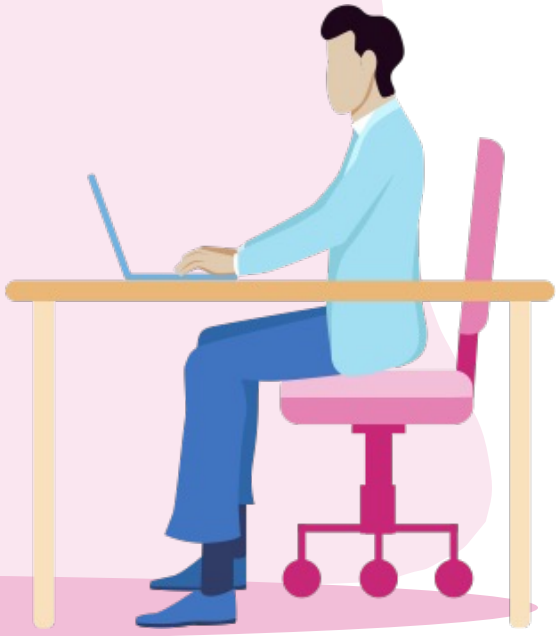


The difference is most apparent in Japan, where workers are

3x more likely

to say that **flexible or remote work settings have made managing their mental and physical health easier** than full-time office ones.

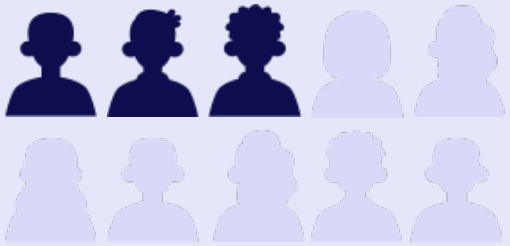
(30% of those in flexible policies, 27% of those in full-time remote positions vs. 9% of those in full-time office roles).



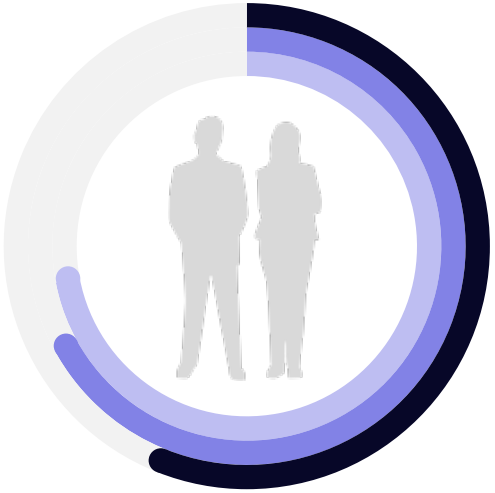
QIMPACT_EASE: What impact has your current work policy made on the following areas? Base: Total US

FLEXIBILITY CAN COME AT A COST

3 in 10 workers don't 'have everything they need at home to work remotely'



The issue is more prominent in Japan, where **5 in 10 workers say they don't 'have everything they need at home to work remotely',**



Gen X and Millennials in the US, UK, and Germany are **more likely** to have what they need to work remotely vs. Gen Z.

Across markets, **71% of Gen X, 71% of Millennials,** and **65% of Gen Z** have everything they need to work remotely.

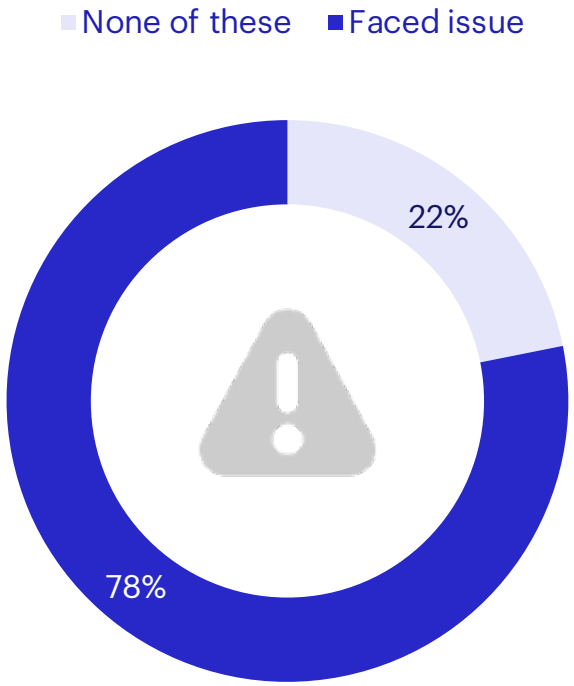
Whereas, in Japan **Gen X and Millennials** are **less likely** to have what they need vs. Gen Z.

58% of Gen Z report having everything they need vs. 52% of Millennials and 49% of Gen X.

QBIPOLARS: How much do you agree with the following statements? Base: Total US; Total JP.

Nearly 4 in 5 workers experience at least one issue when trying to work from home / remotely

Issues Faced when Trying to Work from Home / Remotely
Total US



60% have experienced an **engagement** issue*

50% have experienced a **technical** issue*

21% have experienced a **physical set-up** issue*

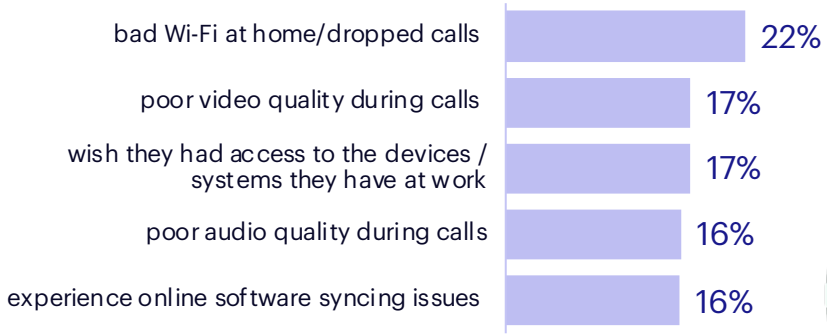
QPAINPOINTS: Which of the following issue(s), if any, do you face when trying to work from home / remotely? Base: Total US
*See Appendix for full list of issues by category.

There is an ongoing opportunity to help workers be more productive virtually and more comfortable in their physical spaces...

Issues Faced

50% have experienced a **technical** issue

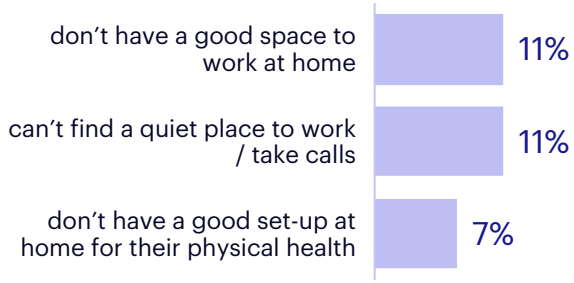
Technical issues center on communication and access.



Technical issues are more common in UK (53%) and Germany (59%).

21% have experienced a **physical set-up** issue

Physical set-up problems revolve around ambiance and health.

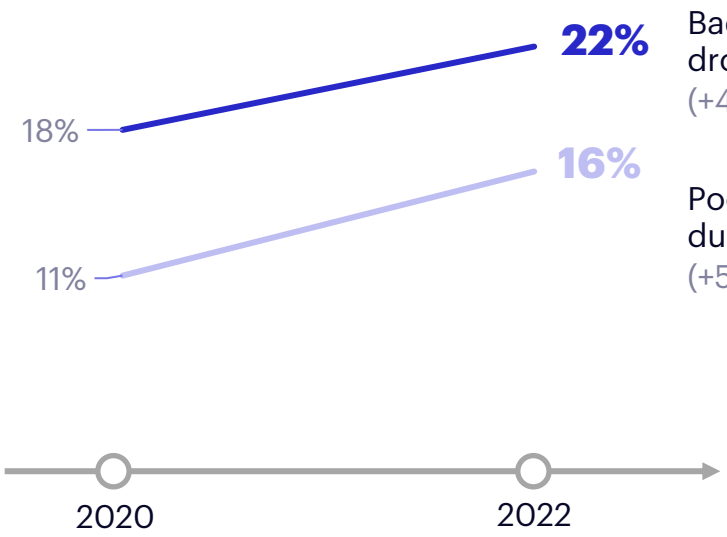


Physical set-up issues are more common in UK (27%).

QPAINPOINTS: Which of the following issue(s), if any, do you face when trying to work from home / remotely? Base: Total US

...especially as more workers are now experiencing technical issues

Issues Faced
2022 vs. 2020



Bad Wi-Fi at home / dropped calls
(+4pp vs. 2020)

Poor audio quality during calls
(+5pp vs. 2020)

Q: Which of the following issue(s), if any, do you face when trying to work from home / remotely? Base: Total US

Many are not fully satisfied with access to business information, collaboration and communication tools...

Satisfaction of Tools Used When Working from Home / Remotely
Ranked by 'Not extremely satisfied'

Information

Extremely satisfied / Not extremely satisfied

Company intranet
30% 70%

Remote access and control
36% 64%

Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)
42% 58%

Collaboration

Extremely satisfied / Not extremely satisfied

Online whiteboard
35% 65%

File sharing platforms
41% 59%

Collaborative editing
45% 55%

Communication

Extremely satisfied / Not extremely satisfied

Video conferencing
42% 58%

Instant messaging
45% 55%

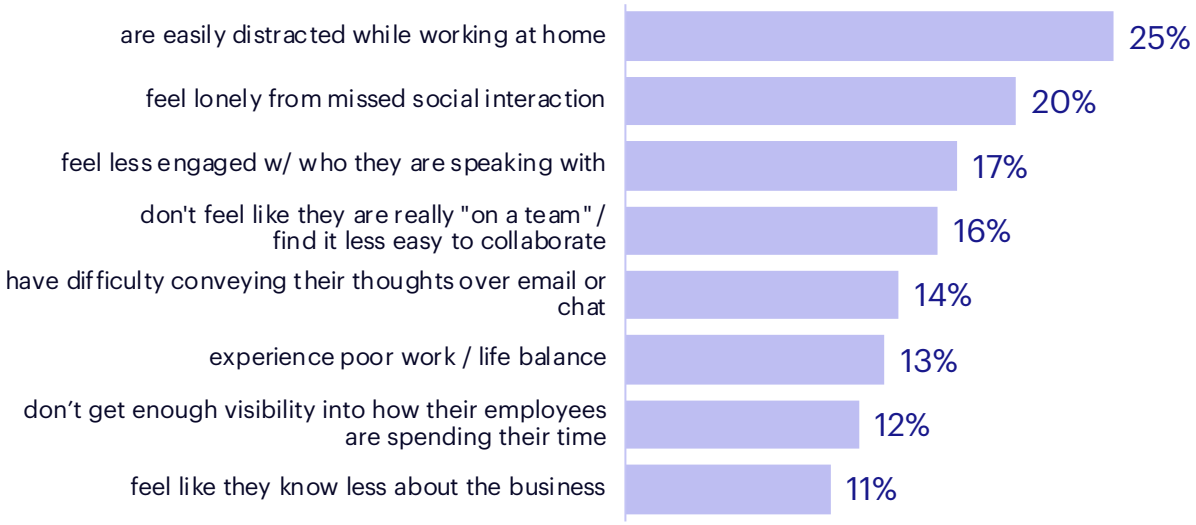
Project management tools
38% 62%

QTOOLS_SAT: Thinking about all of the tools you use when working from home / remotely, how satisfied are you with the experience? Base: Those who use the tool in US

...which can contribute to engagement issues while working away from the office

Issues Faced

Engagement



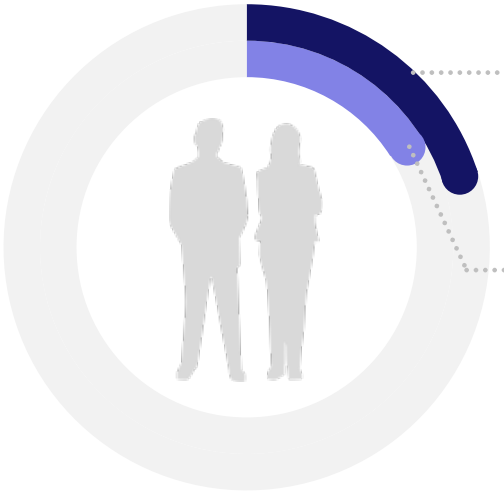
QPAINPOINTS: Which of the following issue(s), if any, do you face when trying to work from home / remotely? Base: Total US

Businesses also need to support employees' mental health by helping them to feel included and collaborate better with their teams

Mental and physical health are the third most important priority in modern workers' lives.

Responding to these psychological pain points is as important as providing the tools and equipment to allow them to thrive while working.

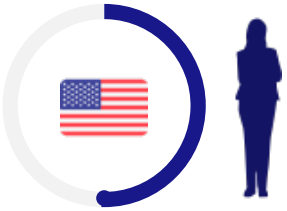
Issues Faced



20%
Loneliness from missed social interaction*

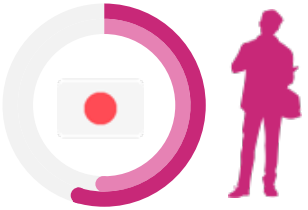
16%
Don't feel like I'm really "on a team" / not easy to collaborate

** The profile of these people varies between markets:*



skew **female**
(54%)

skew **female**
(57%)
be a **parent**
(55%)



skew **male**
(55%)
are more likely to be **younger**
(50% are 18-34)

QPAINPOINTS: Which of the following issue(s), if any, do you face when trying to work from home / remotely? Base: Total US; Those who experience loneliness in US, JP, UK.

THE FUTURE IS:
SOCIALIZE AT WORK,
WORK FROM HOME

SOCIALIZE AT WORK

The office is still seen as a major social hub in the era of all-things-remote and flexible

Two thirds of workers say that **company socials are better in person**

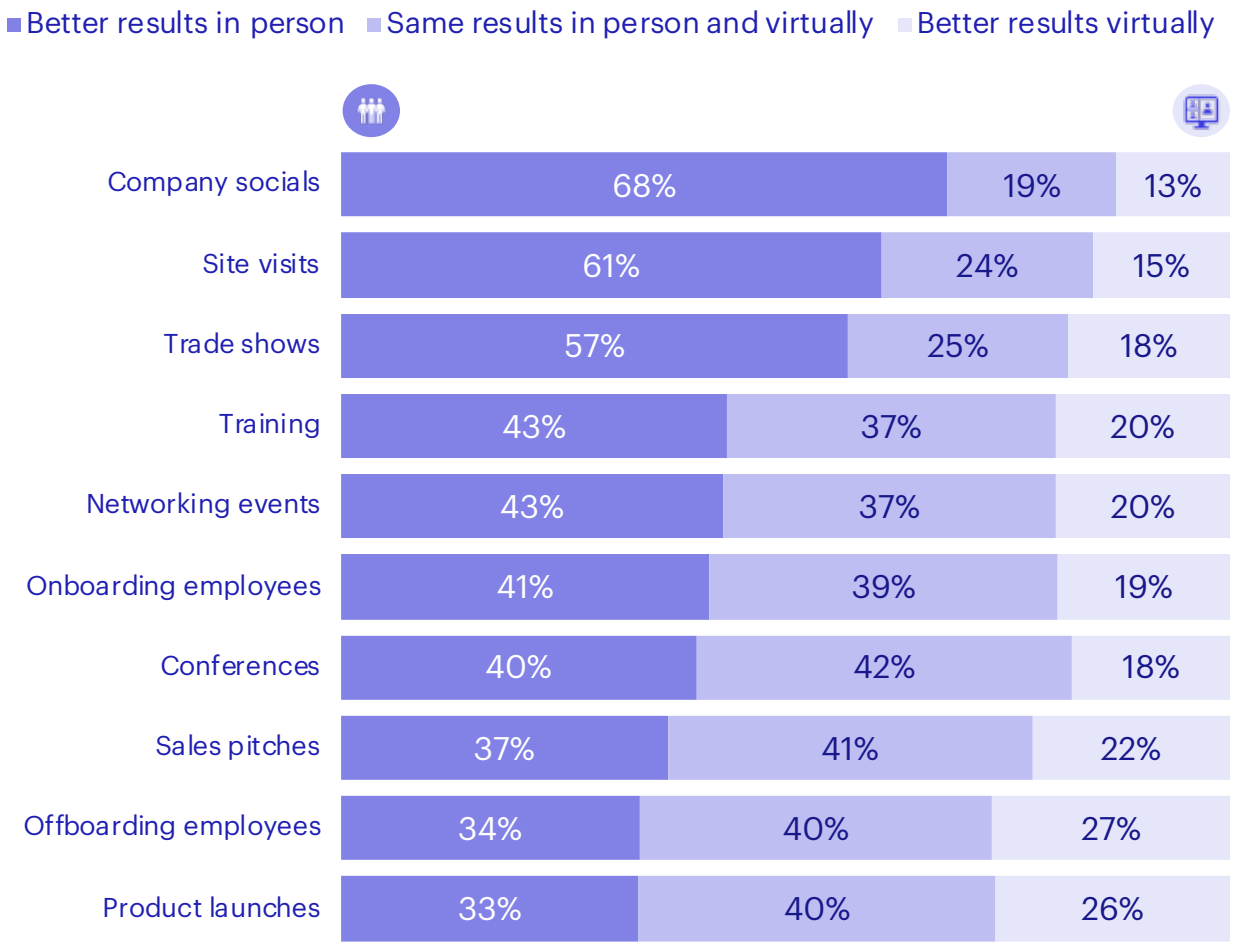
51% say they will be **more likely to go to the office for organized socials**

49% say they will be **more likely to go to the office if they know their colleagues will be in**

QBENEFITS_IMPACT: What impact does the following have on you going into the office/on-site? Base: Total US

Perceived Effectiveness: In-person vs. Virtual

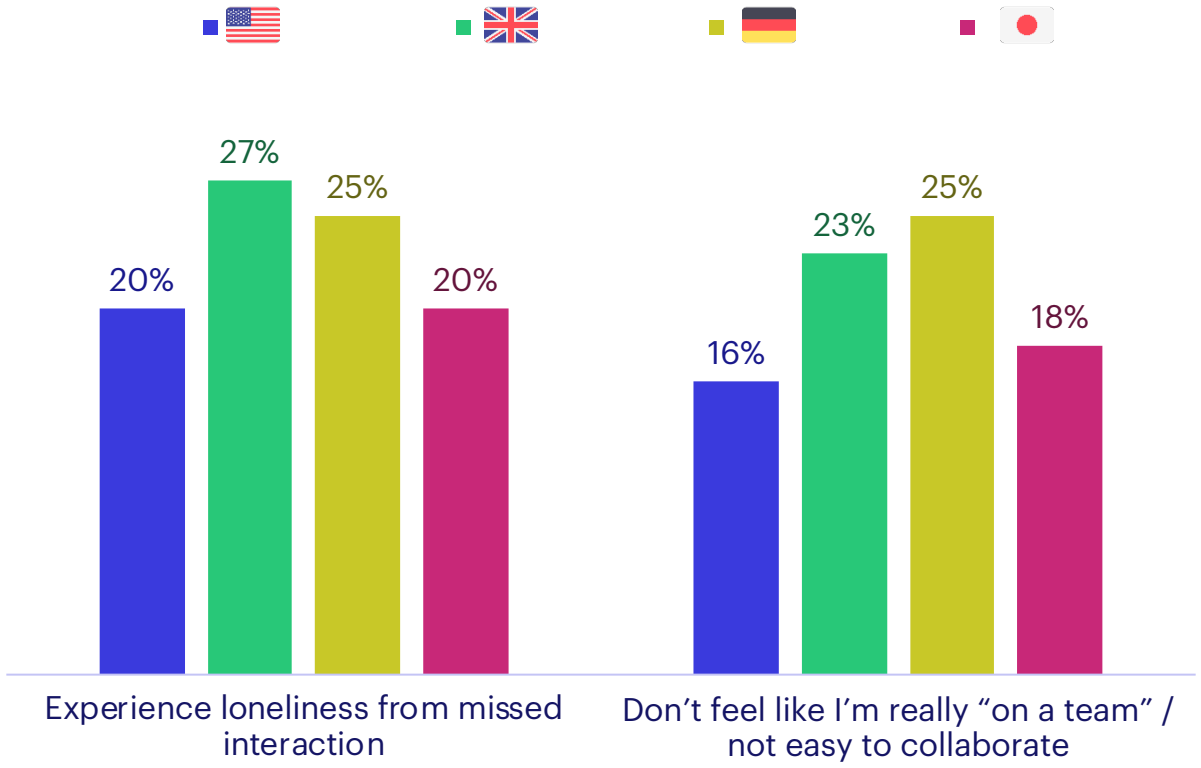
Ranked by in-person, descending (Top 10)



Q: In your opinion, is there a difference in effectiveness for in person vs. virtual settings for each of the following scenarios? Base: Those attending each events in US

Workers in the UK and Germany struggle with inclusion the most; they are more likely to value the social benefits of being in the office

Issues Faced



Attitudinal Statements

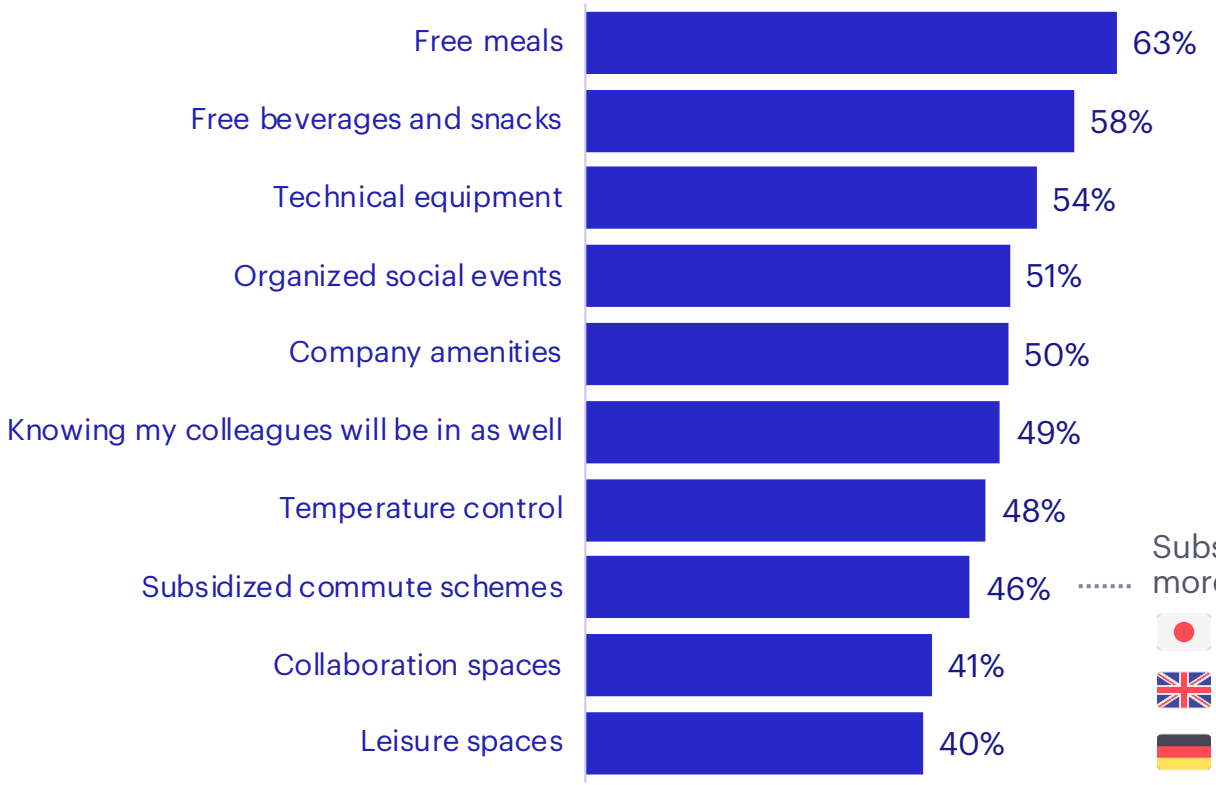
- **63%** and **57%** are more likely to **go into the office knowing colleagues will be in** (vs. 49% in US and 44% in JP)
- **51%** and **51%** like to come into the office because they **enjoy being social with their colleagues** (vs. 42% in US and 31% in JP)
- **35%** and **36%** believe **company socials are better in-person** (vs. 24% in US and 19% in JP)

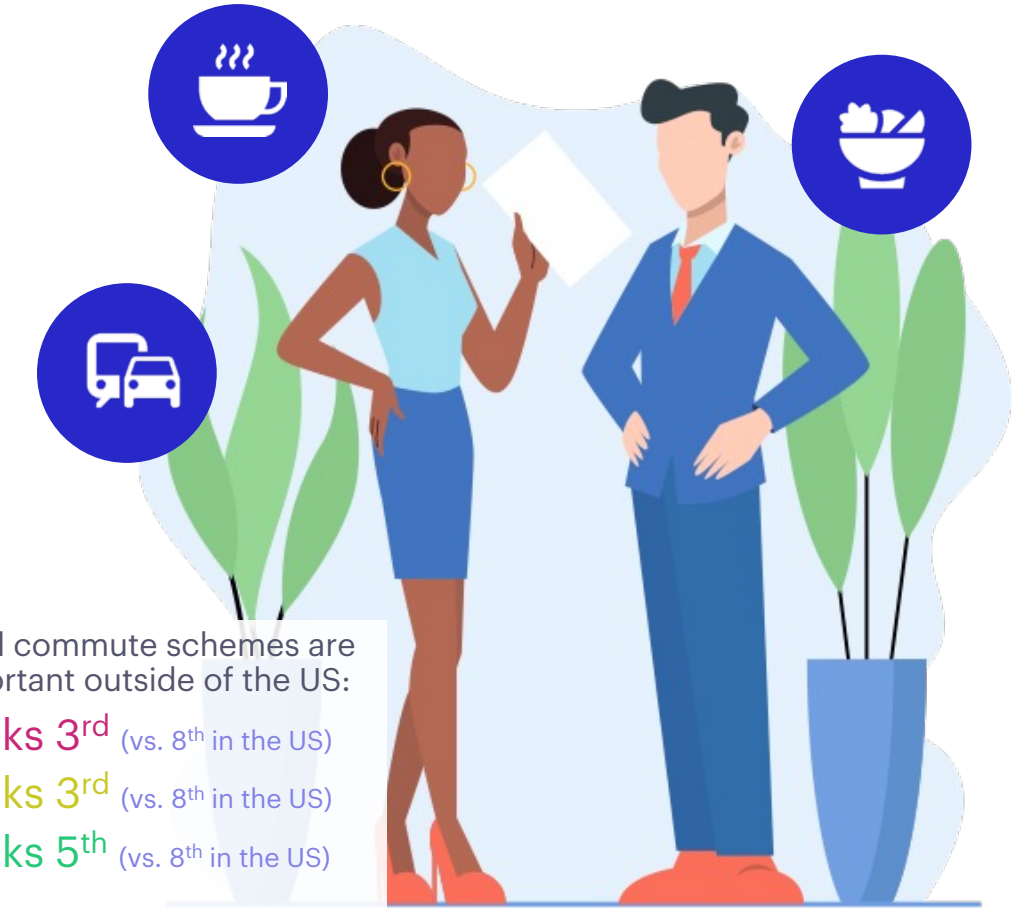
QPAINPOINTS: Which of the following issue(s), if any, do you face when trying to work from home / remotely? QBENEFITS_IMPACT: What impact does the following have on you going into the office/on-site? QBIPOLARS: How much do you agree with the following statements? QMEETING_EFFECT: In your opinion, is there a difference in effectiveness for in person vs. virtual settings for each of the following scenarios? Base: Total per market / Those attending each event

And with the cost of living increasing, other office perks are likely to attract workers looking to cut back on their expenses

Impact of Benefits on Office Attendance

'More likely to go into the office/on-site' (Top 10)





Subsidized commute schemes are more important outside of the US:

- ranks 3rd (vs. 8th in the US)
- ranks 3rd (vs. 8th in the US)
- ranks 5th (vs. 8th in the US)

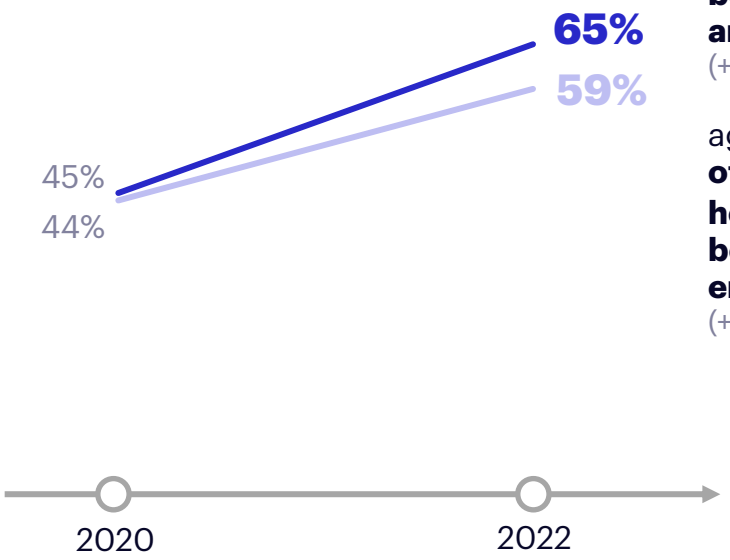
QBENEFITS_IMPACT: What impact does the following have on you going into the office/on-site? Base: Total US

WORK FROM HOME

Since 2020, more workers recognize the personal benefits to working from home/remotely now that this has become the new normal

Attitudinal Statements

Personal values



agree **'if I worked remotely, I would enjoy the freedom of being able to work anywhere'** (+20pp vs. 2020)

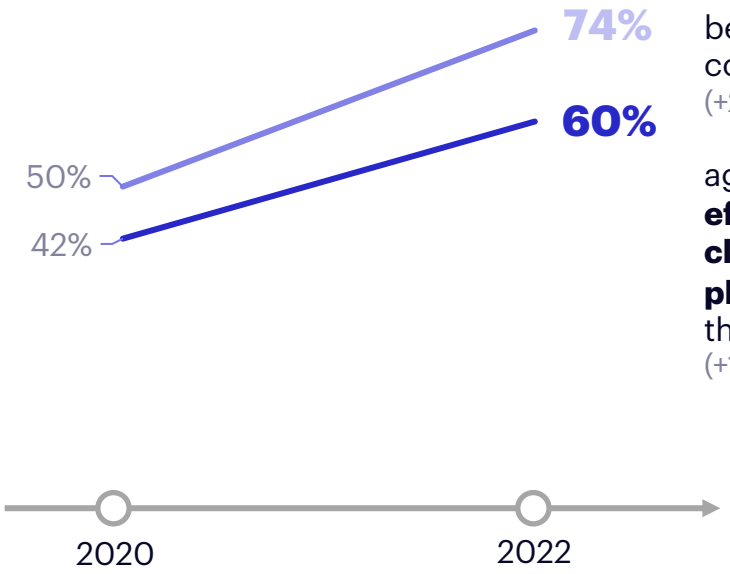
agree **'I like the idea of working from home because it's better for the environment'** (+15pp vs. 2020)

QBIPOLARS: How much do you agree with the following statements? Base: Total US

There's also more appreciation for the financial benefits of less commuting and traveling for meetings

Attitudinal Statements

Financial



agree 'it would **save me money** to work from home because I wouldn't have to commute'
(+24pp vs. 2020)

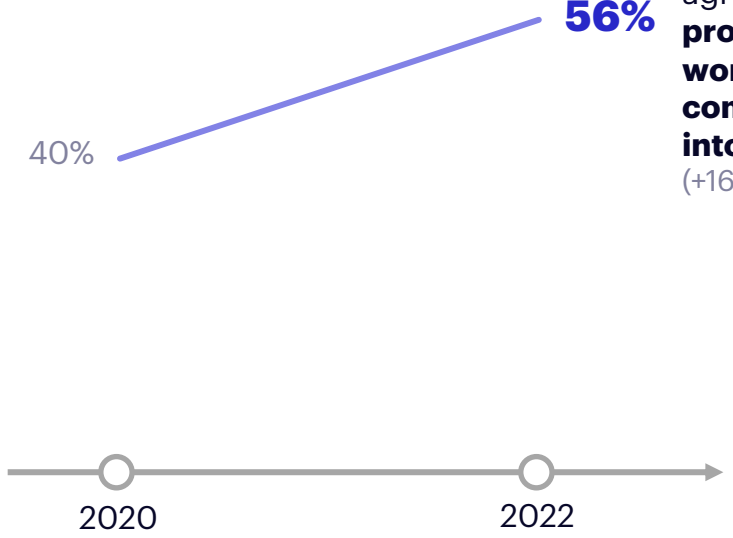
agree 'it's **more cost effective to meet with clients and coworkers over phone or video calls** rather than traveling'
(+18pp vs. 2020)

QBIPOLARS: How much do you agree with the following statements? Base: Total US

An increasing number of workers feel more productive at home than they do in the office

Attitudinal Statements

Professional



agree **'I am more productive when I work from home compared to coming into the office '**
(+16pp vs. 2020)

QBIPOLARS: How much do you agree with the following statements? Base: Total US

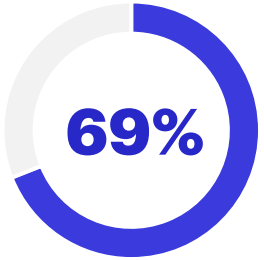
The next generation of tech can help people to thrive even more

AI and AR-driven tech can help workers gain access to information, wherever they are, on any device

Usefulness of Features for Working From Home

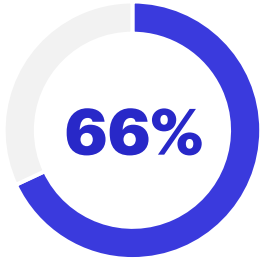
Ranked by 'Very/Somewhat useful'

Information



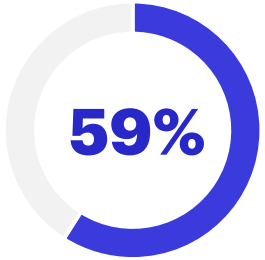
Hands-free screens on the go

work from anywhere from multiple screens, enabling simultaneous collaboration; watch anything, anywhere at the size you want



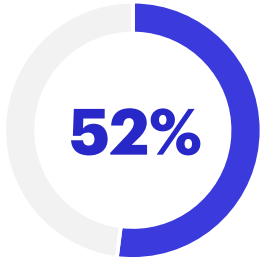
Interactive learning/ skill development

touch, get hands-on and interact with 3D subject matter spatially, learn by "doing" rather than "seeing" with AR tutorials



Virtual assistant

manage all your needs at home and on-the-go through lifelike interaction with a virtual assistant, from scheduling to shopping and more



3D object identification and training

manage/improve workflow processes across automation, industrial, and retail industries by engaging with 3D objects virtually in real-time

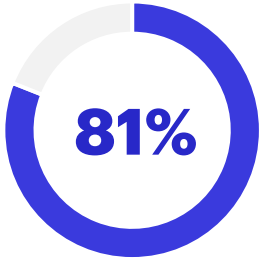
QUSECASES: How useful are the following features for working from home? Base: Total US

Cloud products and AR tools can also help workers share media and collaborate better as a team in real-time and real-space

Usefulness of Features for Working From Home

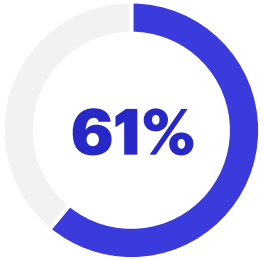
Ranked by 'Very/Somewhat useful'

Collaboration



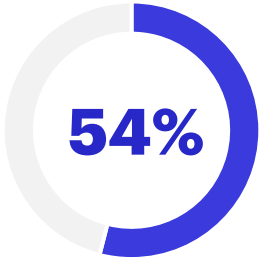
Shared documents for seamless real-time updates

leverage web-based software to create, edit and present wherever you are– from spreadsheets to slideshows



Document/ record memories:

capture photos/videos of what you're experiencing, and share with friends/collaborators to see from your perspective in VR at any given moment



3D collaboration tools

extend your computer or phone by using AR and VR to use the space around you and freely collaborate; share documents, draw on a virtual whiteboard, and fill a room full of ideas

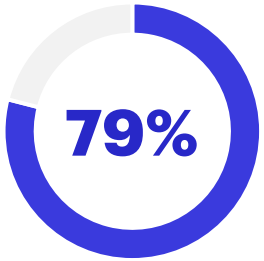
QUSECASES: How useful are the following features for working from home? Base: Total US

Translation and VR tools can help to improve communication by making people feel closer together and included

Usefulness of Features for Working From Home

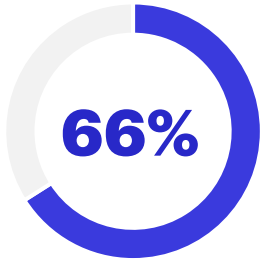
Ranked by 'Very/Somewhat useful'

Communication



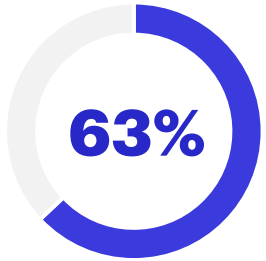
Reliable communication with multiple colleagues

utilize modern enterprise video communications with easy, reliable platforms for video and audio conferencing, chats and webinars



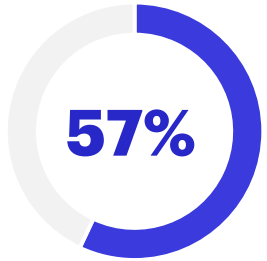
Virtual events

participate in industry forums through remote conferences/forums, meeting new people or entertaining clients digitally with engaging alternatives to in-person meet-ups



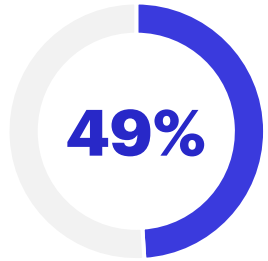
Remove language barriers

instant translation allows you to communicate with anyone, anywhere for immediate understanding



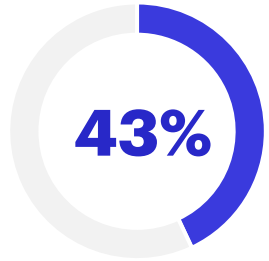
Travel anywhere/ VR teleportation

visit remote offices, sites/spaces without needing to travel; beam into spaces anywhere in the world as if you were really there



Social VR

meet friends or collaborators in a VR social hub where you can play, create your own avatars, worlds or interact with other as characters



Holographic communication

communicate with a 3D hologram in real-time to get close to real, social exchange

QUSECASES: How useful are the following features for working from home? Base: Total US

For remote working technology to add value, it will need to be fully embraced by employees. This means it needs to be:

Easy to use

Provide user friendly interfaces

Fast

Automate processes where possible

Resolve issues quickly (e.g., via customer support)

Integrated

Create one interface for all products

Enable an open ecosystem / seamless integration of tools working with one another and across devices

Secure

Make tools more effective against cyber attacks

Affordable

Consider cheaper or lite alternatives, especially for smaller businesses

QTOOLS_SAT_OE: What, if anything, can online tools and technology do to improve your level of satisfaction? Base: Total US, UK, DE, JP

In their own words:

Easy to use

Keep tools, software, programs, platforms **user friendly**. I **don't have time to learn something new all the time**. I prefer a "set it and forget it" method of work."
US

They can be more user friendly so that people can pick them up and use them straight away without having to read lots of instructions. They need to **work well for people of all the levels of technological understanding**."
UK

"It should be as simple as possible, **allowing older employees to be able to use it with ease.**" Japan

Fast

More AI implemented to help **automate tasks**."
UK

Both **customer support and documentation could be much better**. Especially when it comes to working into new (or updated) systems, a lack of or incomprehensible documentation is an unreasonable time waster. If there are still problems (rights/licenses/error messages), **support should switch from automation to person-based help as early as possible**."
Germany

Integrated

Integrate well with other tools and platforms, allow for easy communication and collaboration, go above and beyond to **respect and protect customers data privacy** and create secure platforms."
US

Offer **more integration and better collaborative tools**. A better ability to control alerts."
US

A lot of the tools have a uniform interface, so making sure that **familiarity is upheld across products helps**, when you can find the correct items you need easily."
UK

Better **integrate desktop apps into mobile apps**. You can also work with your cell phone."
Germany

Secure

I would make sure the security and privacy of these tools are the best they can be, with bu**ilt-in VPN and data protection of the highest standard**."
UK

A security system that guarantees **stress-free communication speed and safety**."
Japan

Affordable

Make it **more affordable to bundle software** types."
US

It would be nice if there were **cost-effective companies that offered everything in one place**."
US

QTOOLS_SAT_OE: What, if anything, can online tools and technology do to improve your level of satisfaction? Base: Total US, UK, DE, JP

So, how do you make remote work *work*?

The world has changed a great deal in the past two and a half years—but it's clear that more still needs to be done to make sure that employers and employees can get maximum value out of flexible working arrangements.

Businesses need to commit themselves to a process of **continuous innovation**, taking advantage of new technologies like AI, VR and AR to create incremental improvements to their employees' work set-ups.

At the same time, they also need to make a **major mindset shift** in how they think about their physical infrastructure and real estate. For employees, work is the new place to socialize; and that means that companies need to reimagine the role of the office. Instead of a workplace, it can become the beating heart of a business's culture and community.

APPENDIX

AGENDA ITEMS - INTERNATIONAL

Workers in Japan are more likely to desire tools to improve their work/life balance.

Compared to other markets, employees in Japan are more likely to want better-defined work/life boundaries and better tools over flexibility and shorter work weeks.

Business can help them with their work life balance by building tools to reduce work-related communication outside of core working hours and project management systems to manage their workload.

Workers in the UK and Germany are more likely to struggle with psychological pain points when working from home / remotely.

In the UK and Germany, employees highly value the social benefits of being in an office—and are more likely to say they're missing out on feeling like part of a community when working from home.

Businesses can help them feel more connected with communication tools and interactive features.

Issues Faced

Engagement

Difficult to convey my thoughts over email or chat

Bad work/life balance while working at home

Feel less engaged with who I'm speaking with

Don't feel like I'm really "on a team" / not as easy to collaborate

Loneliness from missed social interaction

Not enough visibility into how my employees are spending their time

Feel like I know less about the business

Easily distracted while working at home

Technical

Bad Wi-Fi at home/dropped calls

Poor audio quality during calls

Wish I had access to the devices/systems I have at work

Poor video quality during calls

Online software syncing

Physical set-up

Don't have a good space to work at home

Don't have a good set-up at home for my physical health

Can't find a quiet place to work/take calls

QPAINPOINTS: Which of the following issue(s), if any, do you face when trying to work from home / remotely? Base: Total US

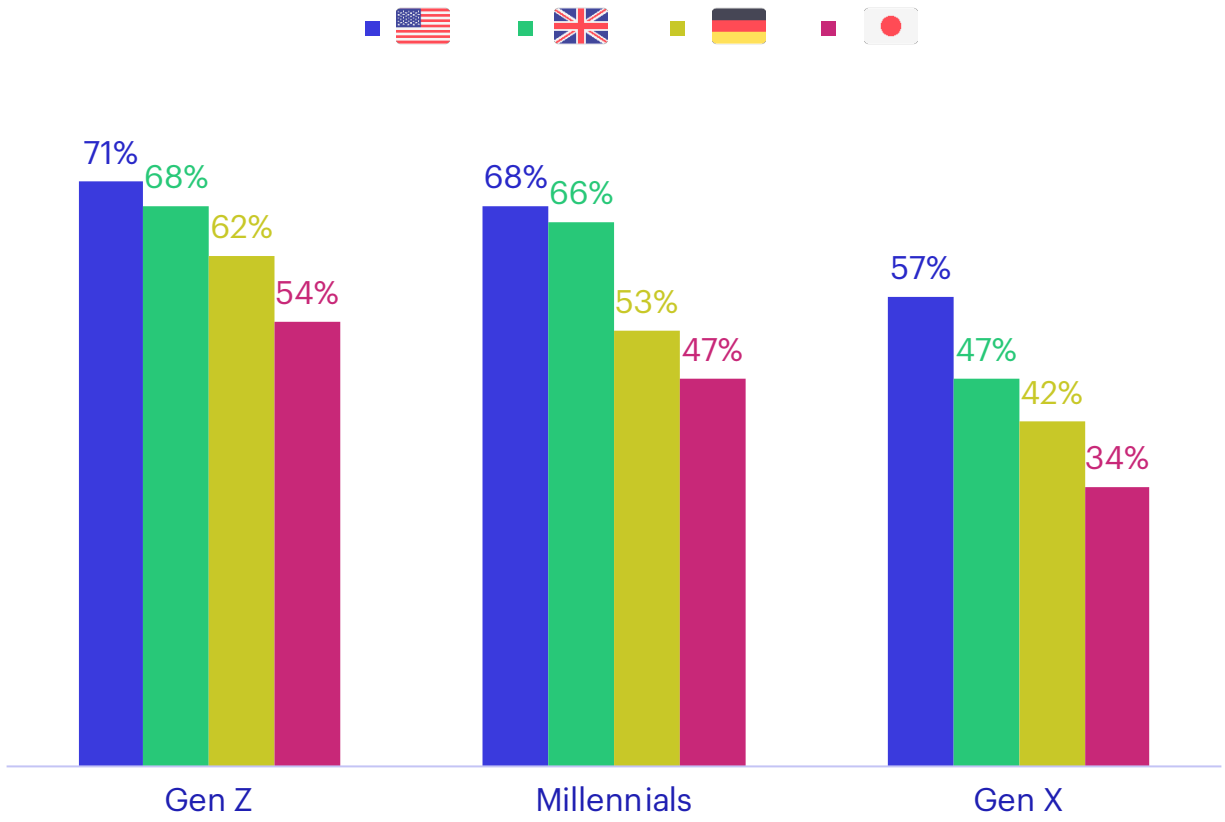
Younger workers, are more likely to be interested in a digital nomad visas than Gen X

As digital-first generations, Gen Z and Millennials across all markets are much more likely than Gen X to want digital nomad visas from their place of work.

For this audience, businesses will need to adapt tools to work across markets and time zones.

Appealing Working Patterns – Digital Nomad Visas

'Very/somewhat interested'



QWORK_PATTERN: How interested are you in the following working patterns?
Base: Total US, UK, DE, JP