

# Remote Work: The Complete Guide

Definitions, tips, and suggestions on how to overcome the intricacies of remote work and fully leverage the benefits of the working model for the new normal.





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# Remote Work: The Complete Guide

Remote work is hardly a new phenomenon. The term “telecommuting” has been around since the '70s, and the practice as we know it today rose to mainstream consideration during the '90s. Yet, even when some industries and companies embraced remote work as one of their engagement models back then, the vast majority of businesses looked at it in disbelief.

Remote work didn't feel like “regular work.” Companies didn't want it because they thought people were going to drop their productivity if they worked at home. Besides, adopting this work model meant investing heavily in infrastructure to secure communications and the normal flow of operations. And some employees didn't even want it!

It took a long time for that feeling to change. In fact, it took a massive global disruption to do so. Remote-first advocates like BairesDev had been pushing for remote work for years but it wasn't until the COVID-19 pandemic struck that companies turned to remote work. Naturally, it wasn't out of conviction but rather because of need.

As the crisis affected countries across the planet, governments issued stay-at-home orders and severely restricted circulation. In that context, the only way for a lot of companies to keep doing business was to use remote work. At first, the rushed adoption of this work model brought more issues than solutions. But once companies started getting the gist of it, things began to smoothen out.

*Now that the pandemic is in our rearview mirror, we can **take a look at the results of this colossal experiment** surrounding remote work.*

The bottom line? Working remotely proved to be highly beneficial for everyone involved. It didn't just help businesses go through the pandemic, but also showed how it can positively impact productivity and performance, provide a better work-life balance, induce savings, and even help the environment.

With that list of benefits, it's only natural that companies want to keep remote work around, even if they aren't forced by the circumstances anymore. However, truly adopting remote work beyond the “emergency mode” implies a deep understanding of what the model can offer—and what it can't. Failing to do so will surely lead to a faulty implementation and the easy way out of a redundant assessment: “Remote work doesn't work.”

Remote work does work. You just need to know how to adopt it. That's what this guide is for—to help companies navigate the intricacies of this work model. The guide is filled with suggestions and tips that come from BairesDev's own experience with remote work for more than a decade. Hopefully, they can help you truly embrace this work model and leverage it to the maximum.



# What Is Remote Work?

Remote work is a model in which employees don't have to travel to a central office or space to do their job. Instead, they can do their work from anywhere they want, which is why remote work is also called by many other names that highlight that flexibility, including working from home (WFH), work from anywhere (WFA), and flexible workplace.

Such a broad definition of remote work implies that many things can be covered by it. Members of the same team that work from different countries, employees from different branches collaborating with one another, people working from home on their laptops or mobile phones— all of them can be seen as remote workers.

All of them can engage in this work model thanks to the huge advancements in technology during the last 2 decades. The widespread use of broadband internet, the rise of mobile devices, and the popularization of software such as messengers, video conferencing applications, and project management tools all helped cement the way for remote work to become the standard it is today. In fact, remote work as we know it today wouldn't exist without these critical components of the modern business infrastructure.





# Types of Remote Work

While the definition we used above would have you think that it only takes for someone to work from a distance to be considered as remote work, the reality is that you can use different models to engage with it. Depending on how you structure your remote team, you can end up with 1 of 3 main types of remote work.



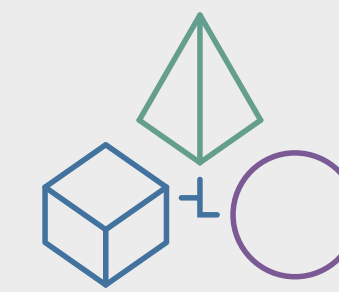
## FULLY REMOTE COMPANY

This type occurs when the company doesn't have any offices and the entire team works remotely. Thus, the company exists mostly online, both for customers and employees who leverage cloud-based platforms to collaborate with one another without having to meet face-to-face.



## DISTRIBUTED OFFICE HUBS

This type has the company setting up offices across different cities, countries, and even regions. Each office has a localized team that responds to it, even when employees aren't working in-house. These offices all depend on a central office that assigns the tasks to each distributed team.



## HYBRID MODEL

This is the type of remote work we use at BairesDev. There are 2 options here. Either your team works a couple of days in-house and the remaining from their homes or you hire an in-house team and a remote team. Hence the hybrid name—it uses both the in-person and remote approaches at the same time.



# Remote-First, Fully Remote, and Remote-Friendly

A lot of people mistake the remote-first approach with the fully remote company type and say they are the same thing. They aren't. A fully remote company is a remote work type in which there are no offices to work in. A remote-first approach is when a company favors remote work in any of its types to the point where remote work is standard practice. Both of them differ from the remote-friendly approach, which indicates that companies offer remote work as a perk but that most of the work is done in-house.





# Benefits of Remote Work

No one can argue that the disruption brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic pushed companies toward remote work. Since then, a lot has been said and written about how beneficial this model can be for diverse businesses across many sectors.

Yet, there are companies that still only think of remote work as an emergency model that can't replace in-house work in any form or way. In fact, the debate about how beneficial remote work actually is still rages on. That's why it's important to review all of what's been said about remote work to identify the model's benefits.

According to the most recent research, many surveys, and BairesDev's own experience, these are the main benefits of remote work.



# Benefits of Remote Work

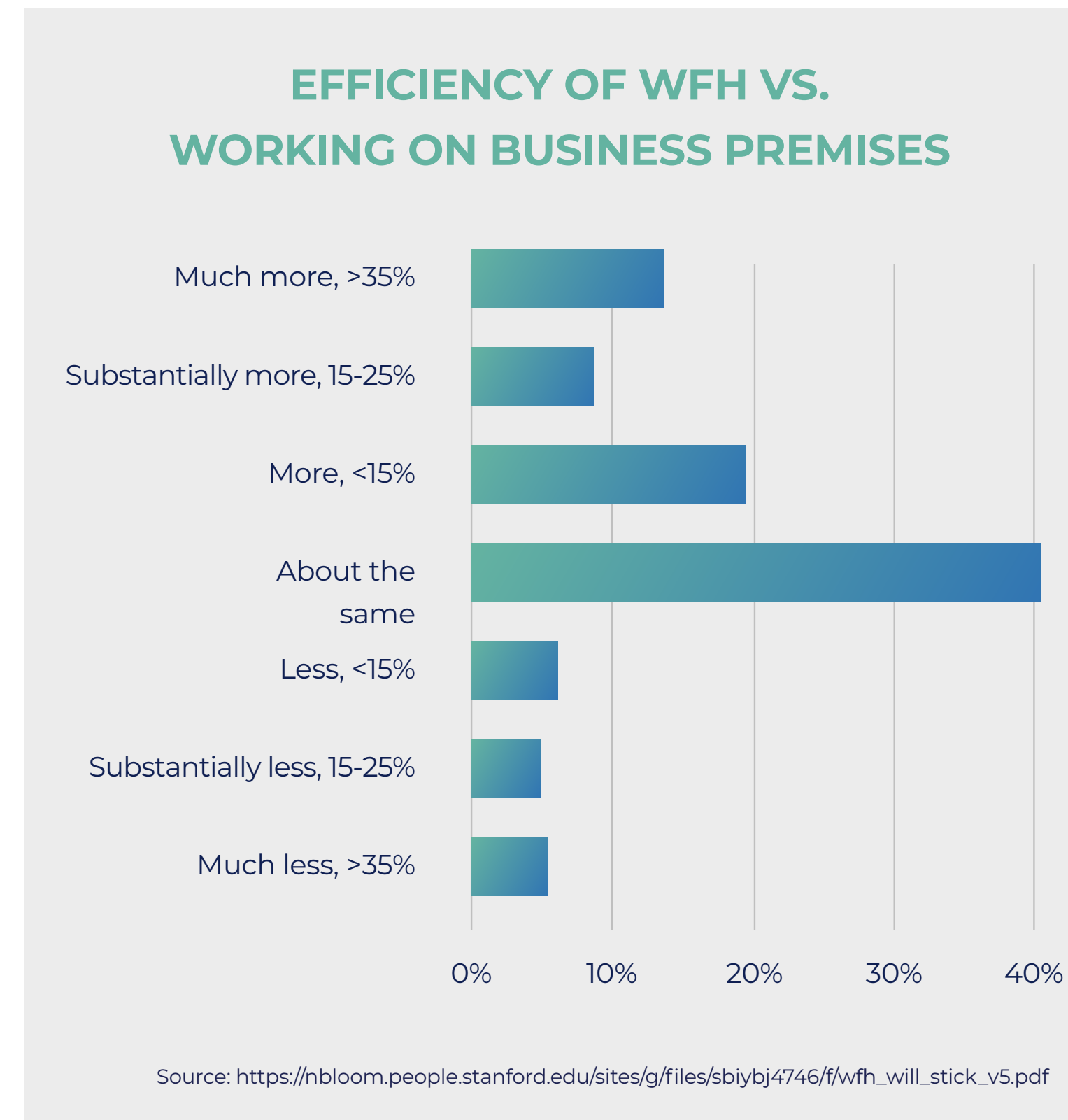
## 1. INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

The question about whether remote work hinders productivity or not might be the biggest reason why companies still have doubts about this model. It's easy to see why—if employees are working from their homes, how can managers know if they are truly working?

While that's an understandable concern, the reality is that such a question reveals more about the companies than the model itself. That's because remote work has proven to be a productivity booster for businesses and organizations of all sizes and industries. Think about it: without the distractions of the office and the long commute there, employees can focus on working. Of course, this only works if the company actually trusts that its employees will be focusing on their jobs.

A study about remote work productivity from Stanford University found that people working remotely showed a productivity boost comparable to a full day's work. Additionally, remote workers reported fewer sick days. And recent surveys show that almost 40% of people feel they are more efficient when working from home.

That comes to show that remote workers do work when they are out of their managers' sight—and that companies should ask themselves if they are avoiding remote work because of their own trust issues.

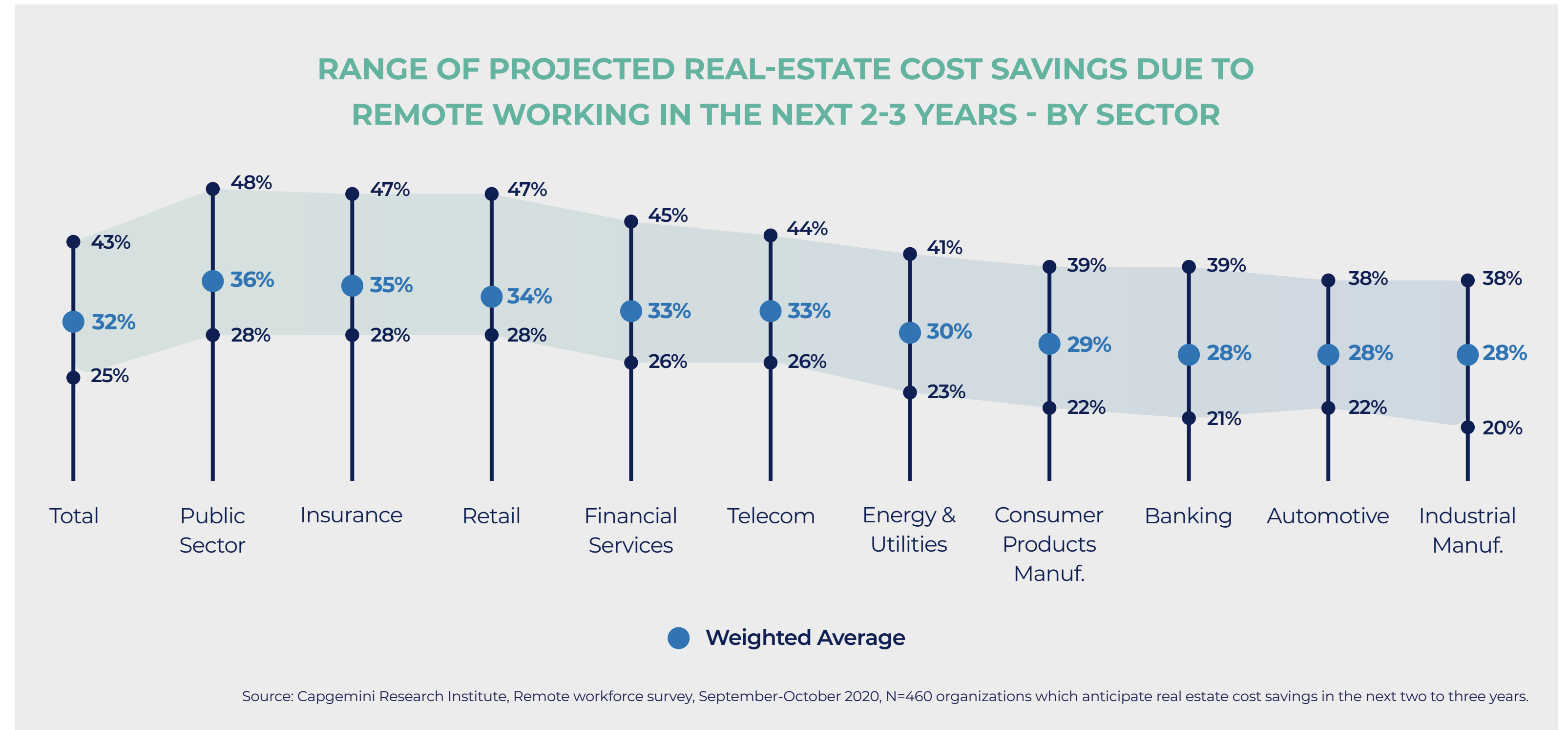




# Benefits of Remote Work

## 2. MORE COST SAVINGS

The same Stanford study found that remote workers saved the company approximately \$2,000 per employee, mainly from costs associated with renting office space. And that's without considering other costs that come from the traditional way of working. Fewer people in the office means that the company can rent less space, use it more efficiently, and even reduce the costs associated with mounting and maintaining the entire office infrastructure.



The cost savings are also there for the workers themselves. Since they don't have to go to an office for work, they can live anywhere they want. This allows them to move away from pricey cities and states and establish themselves in more affordable options. Additionally, it lets them save all the costs associated with commuting to and from work, be it in their own vehicles or in public transportation.

There's a thorny aspect of cost savings, though. Some companies that adopt remote work see it as an opportunity to stop paying for the services the office needs to run (such as electricity and the internet). While that's true, expecting the employees to shoulder those costs isn't a good move. Companies should provide the necessary tools for their team members to carry out their tasks or compensate those employees accordingly if they aren't able to do so.

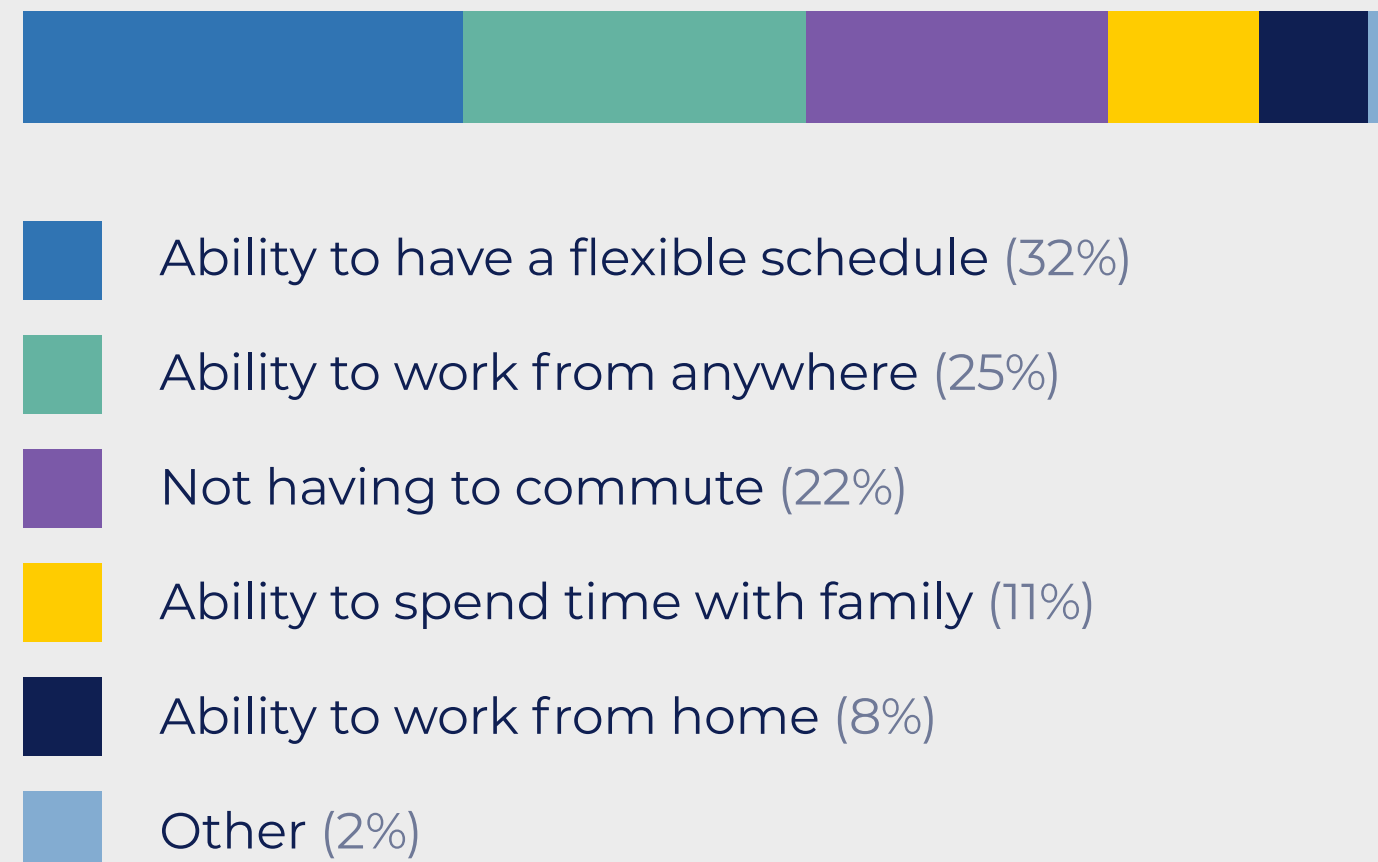


# Benefits of Remote Work

## 3. BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE

One of the biggest benefits employees report when discussing remote work is a better work-life balance. A recent Buffer survey found that 32% of employees see the ability to have a flexible schedule as the biggest benefit of the remote work model. Other benefits include flexibility to work from anywhere (25%), not having to commute (22%), and the ability to spend time with their family (11%).

### WHAT'S THE BIGGEST BENEFIT YOU SEE TO WORKING REMOTELY?



Source: 2021 State of Remote Work | [buffer.com/2021-state-of-remote-work](https://buffer.com/2021-state-of-remote-work)

All of these point to a clear reason why employees want to keep working remotely—they can better manage their time and spend just the necessary time for work without sacrificing their own personal time. The fact that employees don't have to commute to work already provides them with several hours back into their weeks.

As a recent McKinsey survey found out, the employees' biggest hope for the future of work is having a better work-life balance. Funnily enough, their biggest fear is having a worse balance. Needless to say, this matter will be crucial for companies moving forward—and remote work can certainly help.



# Benefits of Remote Work

## 4. STRONGER ENGAGEMENT

All companies strive for an engaged workforce, mainly because engaged employees have a stronger performance. That's a fact backed up by years of research: Gallup states that businesses with highly engaged employees see 41% lower absenteeism, 40% fewer quality defects, and 21% higher profitability. Fortunately, that's another thing with which remote work can help.

Gallup also studied the employees' engagement levels and discovered that they soared when people worked remotely. Here's the thing, though: The optimal engagement boost happens when employees work partially off-site. The research showed that employees performed at their peak when working 60% to 80% of their time remotely. That means that employees are more engaged when they work remotely 3 to 4 days out of a 5-day workweek.

### ENGAGEMENT HIGHEST AMONG WORKERS WHO SPEND THREE TO FOUR DAYS WORKING REMOTELY

% Time spent working remotely	% Engaged	% Not Engaged	% Actively disengaged
None of the time	30	55	15
1% to 20%	36	53	11
20% to 40%	37	52	11
40% to 60%	37	50	13
60% to 80%	41	48	11
80% to 100%	32	51	17
All of the time	32	54	16

Source: State of the American Workplace - GALLUP

That data is interesting because it shows that, even when people want to work remotely, face-to-face encounters with colleagues still feel essential for them. At the very least, that study poses a strong case for hybrid teams that all companies should explore and consider in the short term.



# Benefits of Remote Work

## 5. INCREASED COMPETITIVENESS

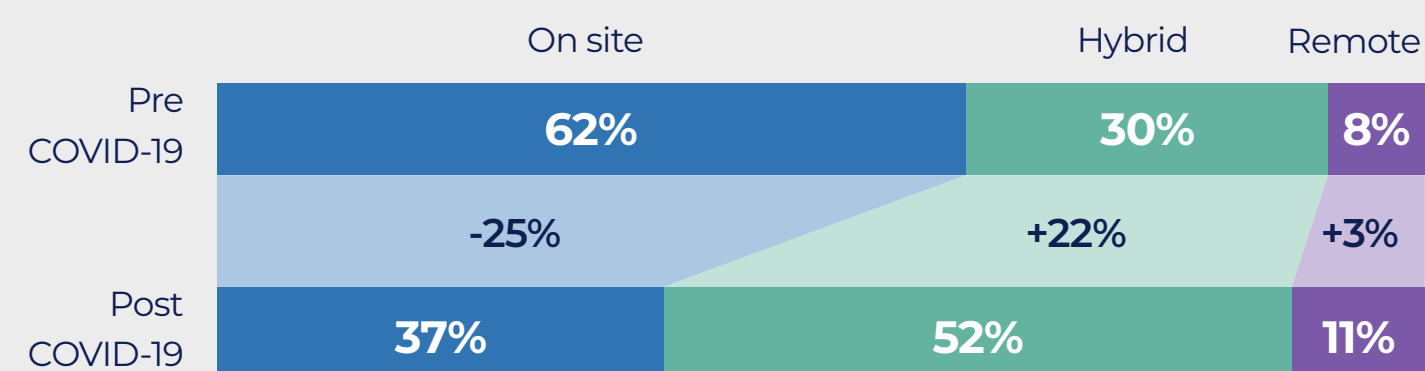
The same McKinsey survey mentioned in point 3 found that approximately 30% of employees working remotely because of the pandemic would switch their jobs if forced to go back to the office full time. In the same vein, more than 50% report that they would like to work remotely for 3 or more days in the foreseeable future. This means that companies will need to embrace remote work in some way or risk losing people.

This isn't something to scoff at. Companies that think they could do without remote work will have trouble attracting and retaining top talent because of this sentiment. And since the best people are the ones responsible for driving innovation and efficiency in any company, it becomes evident that remote work is something those businesses need to implement in some way.

The benefit of embracing remote work (be it through any of the existing models) can make a world of difference for talented professionals looking for a new job. Thus, you can hire the most talented people around and make your company more competitive. And before you think about it, no, this doesn't mean you should sell remote work as a perk. Remote work should be embedded in your company culture, so you should treat it as a work approach rather than a benefit you provide to employees.

### MOST EMPLOYEES WOULD PREFER A MORE FLEXIBLE WORKING MODEL AFTER THE PANDEMIC IS OVER.

Working models pre-COVID-19 and desired working models post-COVID-19, % survey participants



**52%** of workers would prefer a more flexible working model postpandemic

Source: Work: Employee Survey Dec 2020-Jan-2021, n=5,043 full-time employees who work in corporate or government settings) - McKinsey & Company





# Benefits of Remote Work

## 6. ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY

An unexpected benefit of remote work is how it helps the environment. Taking work online and allowing people to work from anywhere relieves them from having to commute to an office. This, for one, can help reduce the number of emissions that commute entails.

According to research by Global Workplace Analytics, if employees who can work remotely (50% of the workforce) did it half the time, the reduction in emissions would be comparable to taking 600,000 cars off the road for a year. That would roughly translate into a reduction of 54 million tons of emissions per year.

### NATIONWIDE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF REMOTE WORK IN THE U.S.

Reduce greenhouse gases by **54 million tons** = almost 10 million cars off the road for a year

Reduce wear and tear on highways by over **119 billion miles** a year

Save over **640 million barrels of oil** valued at over \$64 billion

Source: <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/cut-oil>

There are other environmental benefits of adopting remote work. First, the reduced commute would mean using fewer vehicles, and thus, relying less on fossil fuels. This, in turn, would mean that the air quality would improve significantly. Finally, adopting remote work means using cloud-based platforms almost exclusively, which eventually leads to paperless processes. This would translate into less garbage and less need for office supplies.



# Drawbacks of Remote Work

While remote work can be immensely beneficial for companies of all sizes across multiple industries, the reality is that it isn't without its downsides. Some people might argue that most of these cons can be overcome somewhat easily through proper processes and technology use; however, it's a little trickier than that. In fact, our experience shows us that there are some tradeoffs you'll need to make when adopting a fully remote approach.





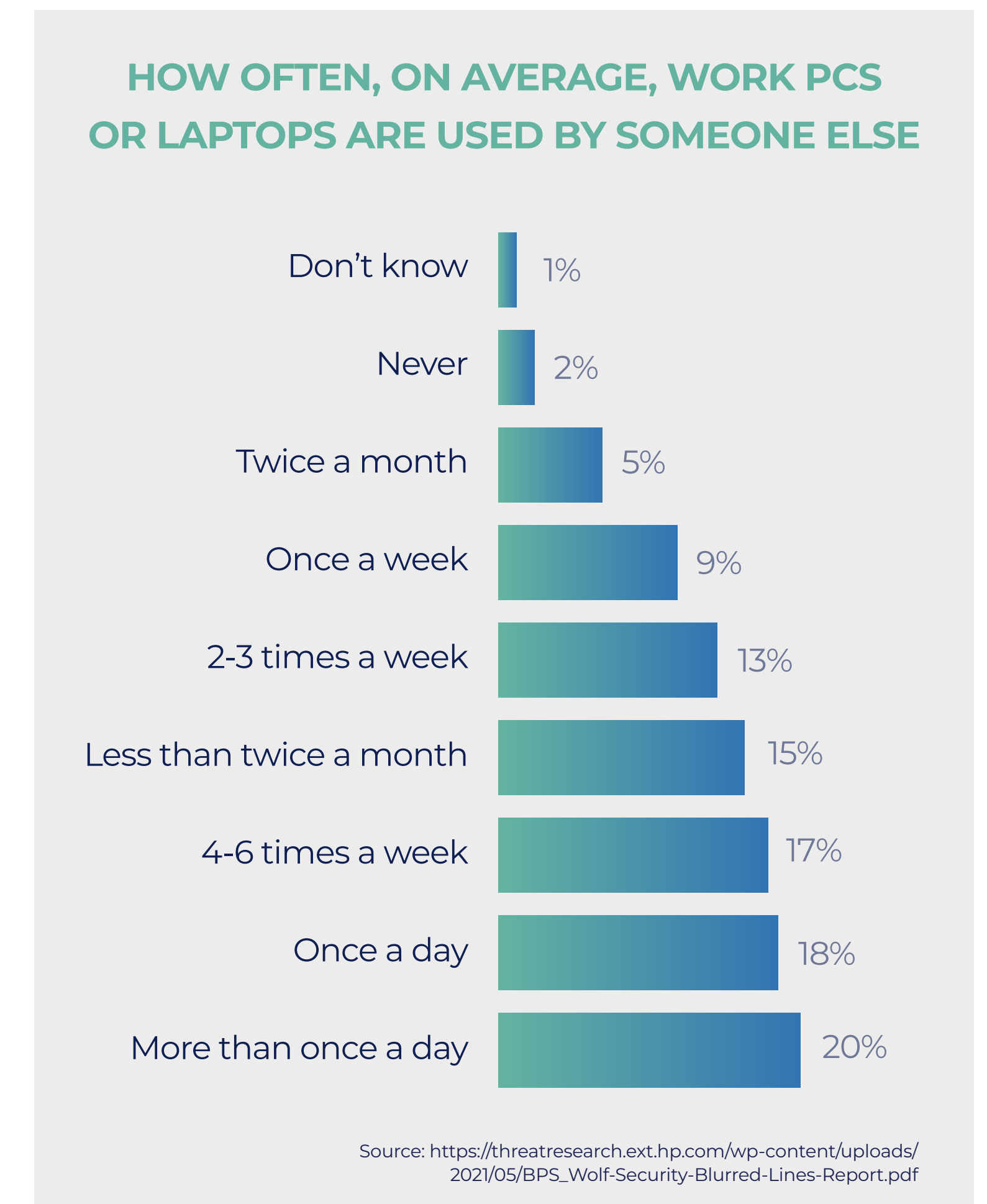
# Drawbacks of Remote Work

## 1. INCREASED SECURITY RISKS

Probably the biggest issue that comes with remote work is the increased security risks. It's easy to see why: As more people start working online through more and more devices, the available surface for attacks grows exponentially. That provides more opportunities for attackers to breach a corporate system and get ahold of private data or create any kind of disruptions.

The mere proliferation of users and devices isn't the only security-related challenge when it comes to remote work. There's the bigger problem of the human side of it all, which can open up new vulnerabilities even in the most secure of systems. From employees new to online work lacking the preparation to properly identify phishing attempts to people using work devices for tasks that aren't work-related, the risks are numerous.

There are plenty of numbers backing this up. According to a recent security report by HP, half of office workers say they now see their work devices as personal devices. The report also found that 27% of office workers surveyed say they share their work devices with other people. Forcepoint also reports that 55% of younger respondents to their latest security survey say they are so burned out that they make more basic mistakes when working from home.



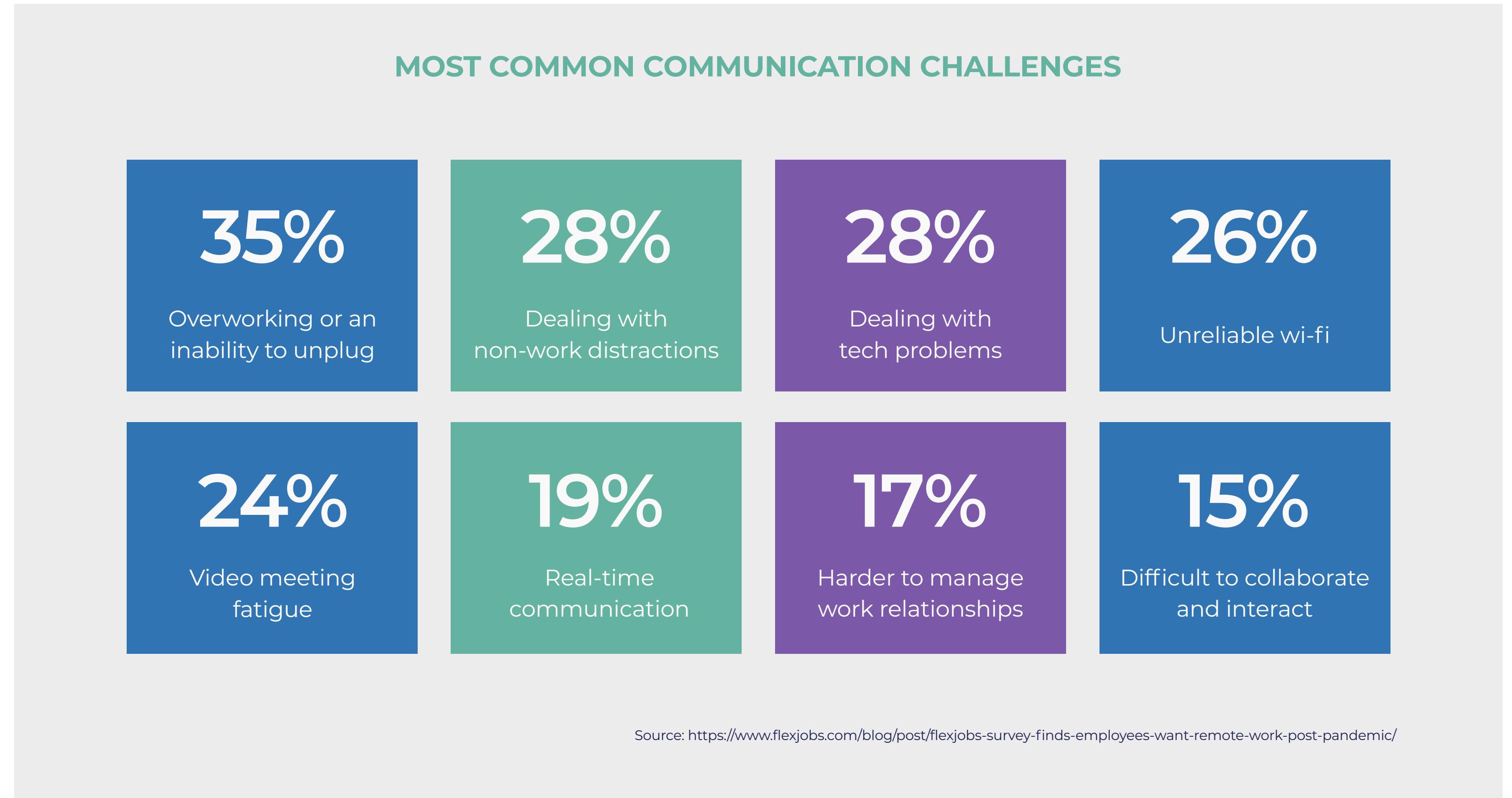


# Drawbacks of Remote Work

## 2. COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

You might be wondering how communication can be an issue for remote workers given the huge amount of communication tools and platforms available. Yet, research shows that employees working remotely (especially those who aren't accustomed to it) are experiencing all sorts of communication-related problems.

A recent FlexJobs survey found that people working remotely are struggling with all sorts of communication issues. These include difficulty to collaborate and interact with other team members given the inability to communicate in real time at all times, experiencing meeting fatigue (especially involving video meetings), and having trouble managing work relationships through online communication.



That's not all. There are communication challenges involving technology directly. Thus, 28% of respondents say that one of the biggest challenges of remote work is dealing with technology problems that disrupt their normal communications. Also, 26% of them say they struggle with their internet connection's reliability.

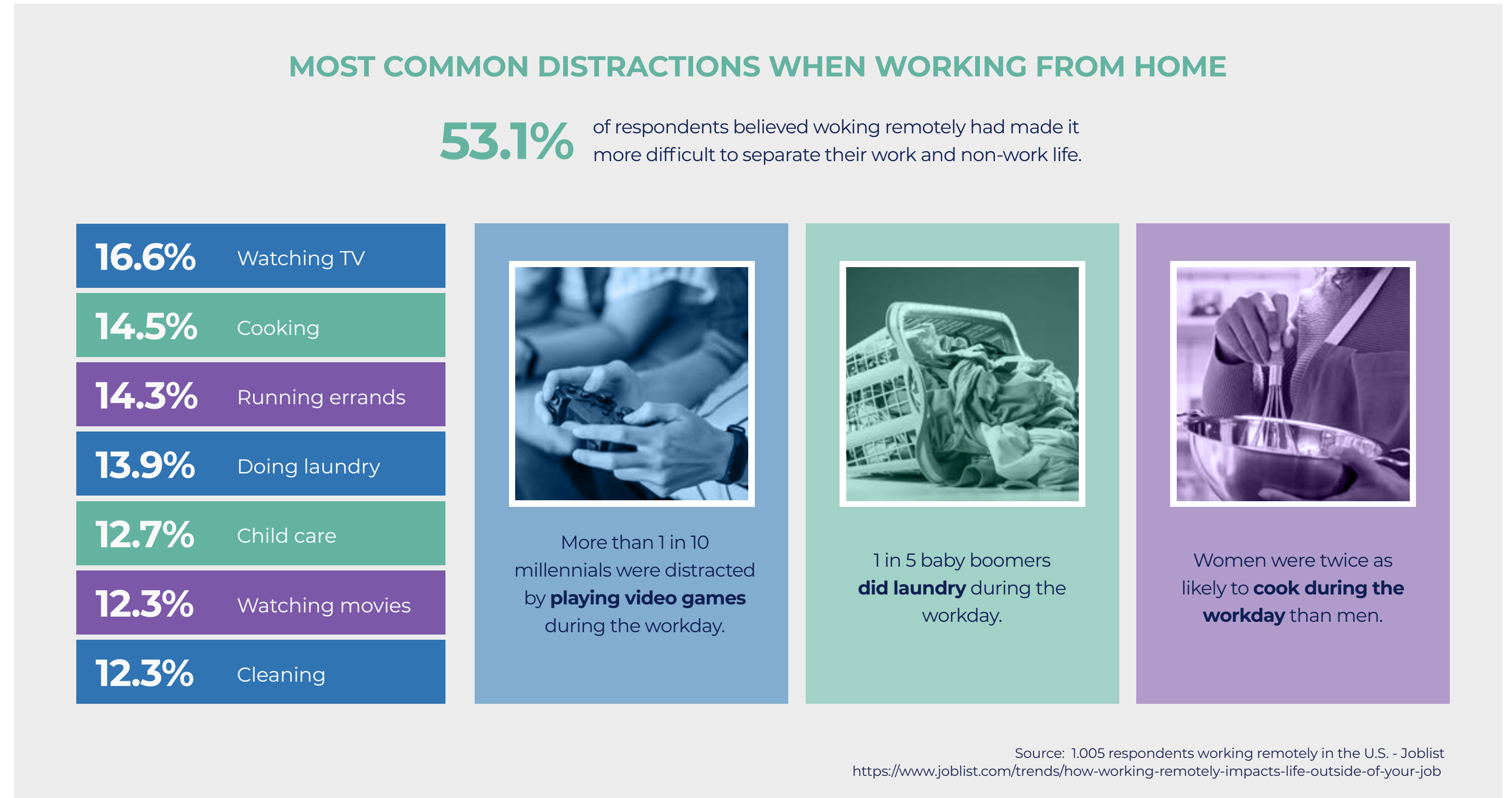


# Drawbacks of Remote Work

## 3. DISTRACTIONS AT HOME

With a model that's also called "work from home," you can surely anticipate that there will be issues related to being at home while trying to work. Even if you live alone and can rule out the interruptions coming from other people in your household, there are other potential distractions all around you, from chores to entertainment.

According to a recent survey by Joblist, more than 1 in 10 millennials admitted to playing video games during work time while 1 in 5 boomers did laundry while on the clock. Other distractions mentioned in the survey include watching television, cooking, dealing with children, cleaning, and running errands.



The problem for companies is that they are faced with an impossible choice when it comes to distractions. They either adopt technology solutions to monitor their employees nonstop (with all the consequences such an aggressive micromanagement technique could bring) or accept that their team members will be distracted at some point or the other during workdays.

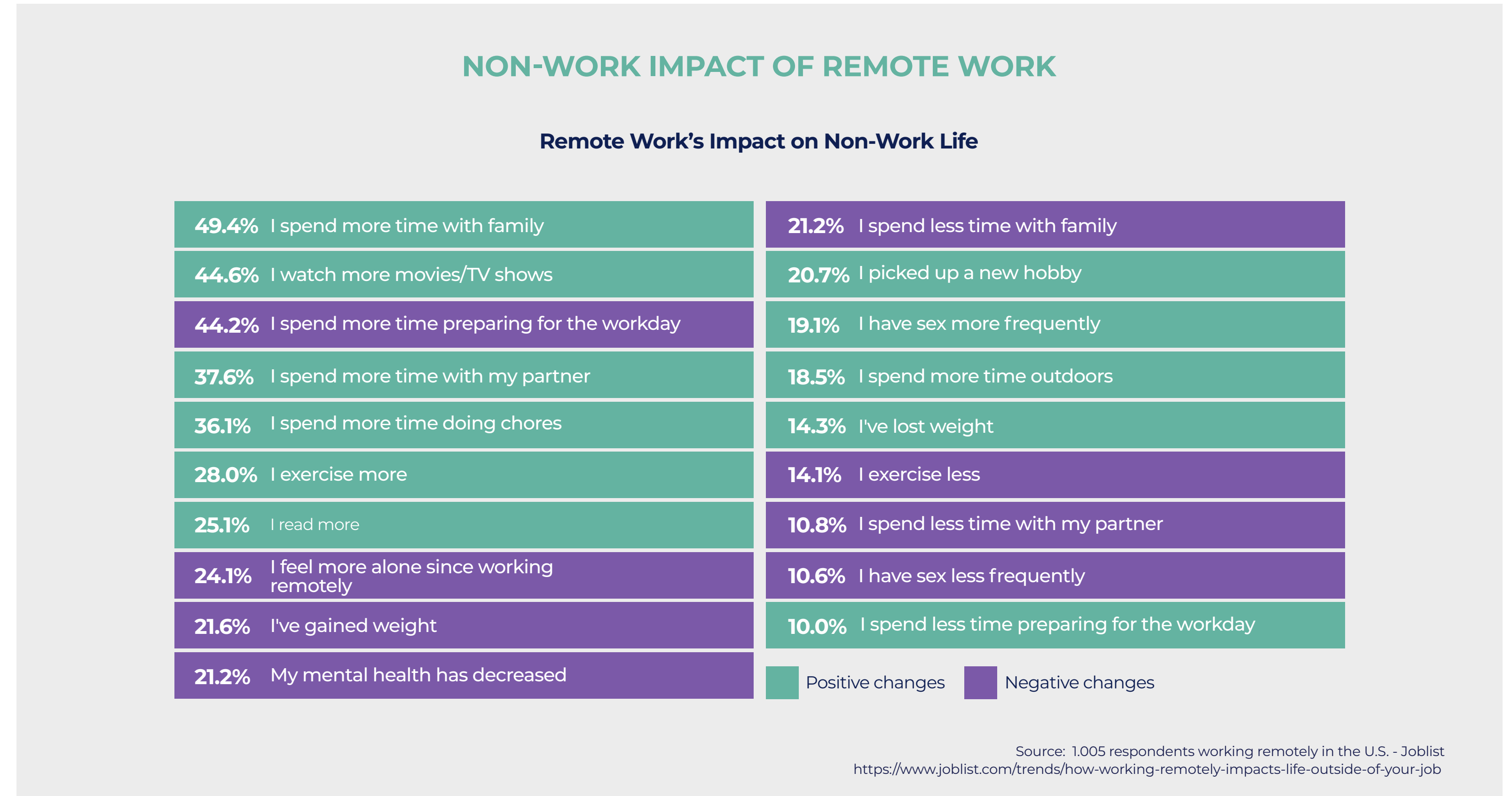


# Drawbacks of Remote Work

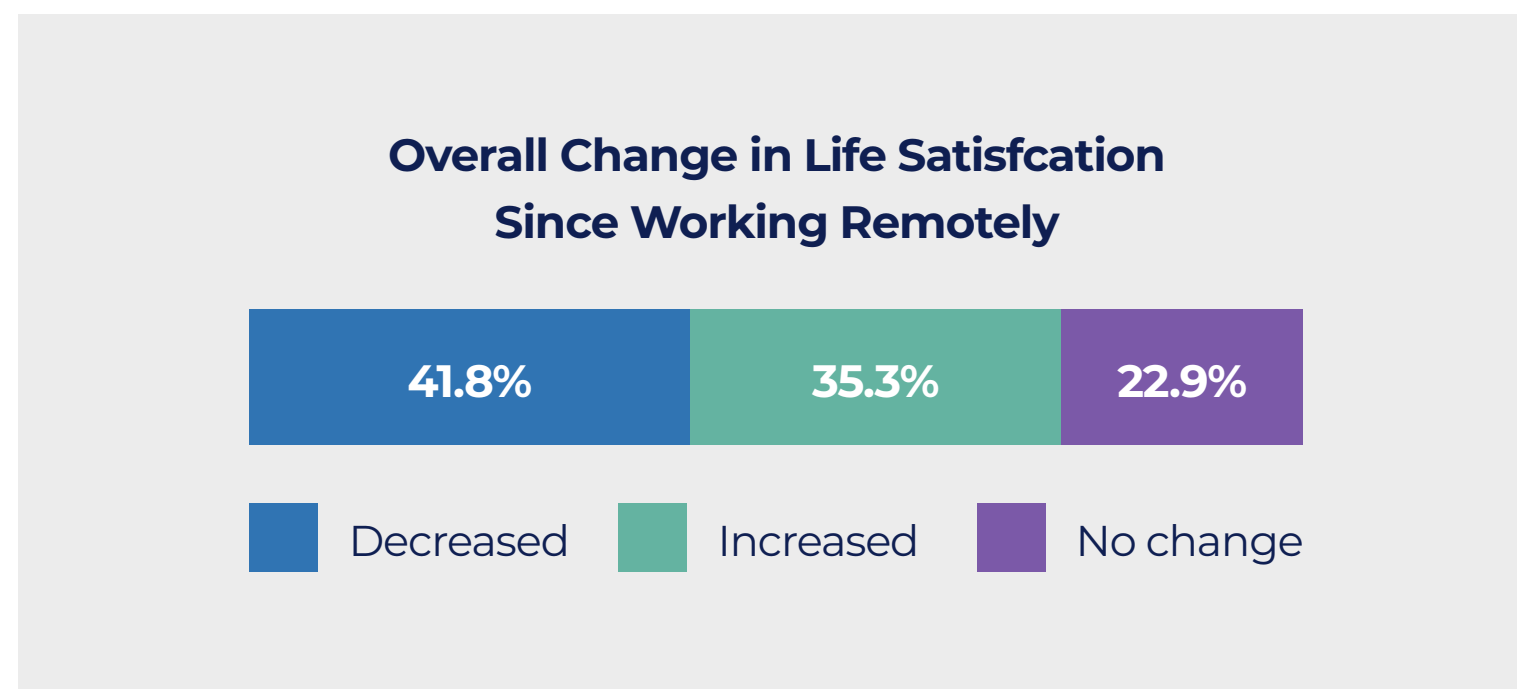
## 4. INCREASED ISOLATION

If you've ever worked from your home, you know how lonely it can get. You prepare a secluded room in your house to avoid distractions and unwanted interruptions and you focus entirely on the work. The only interactions you have while you're in there are the ones you engage in through online platforms. But most of the time it's only you and the device you're working on.

Such a picture speaks for itself: Isolation can be a dire problem for remote workers. The same Joblist survey cited above found that 24.1% of respondents feel more alone when working from home. It makes sense—being at home isn't the same as being in an office full of people, where random chitchat and serendipitous encounters provide a more social factor to work.



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# Drawbacks of Remote Work

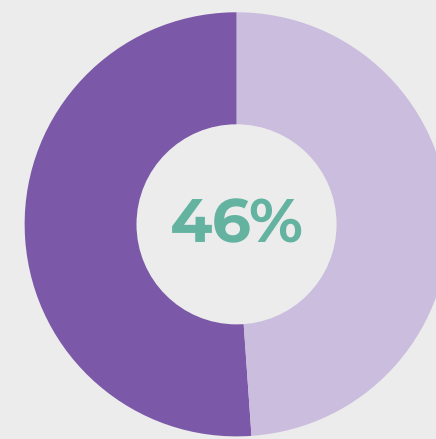
## 5. LOSS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Given that we included better work-life balance as a benefit, you might be thrown off by this item listed in the drawbacks of remote work. It's not a mistake nor an inconsistency—remote work can affect work-life balance negatively as well. The key to understanding that is peppered across the other cons in this list.

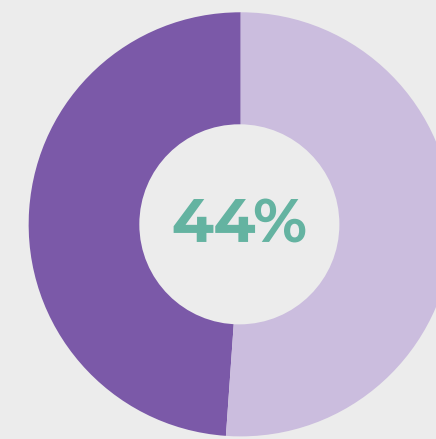
Think about it. If remote workers struggle with faulty connections, get distracted, and are detached and overfocused on their work, it's only natural that their personal lives may suffer. Isolated team members can easily get absorbed by what they are doing and forget they are doing overtime.

Those flexible schedules that might be so beneficial for certain employees can be harder to handle for other workers, which can lead to extended hours even when they aren't consecutive. And that's not all. Given the ultra-connected times we're living in, it's easy for people to use their phones or laptops when they are off the clock for a quick check on a work-related thing (like an email or a mention in a management platform). A worse work-life balance ranks among the top fears for employees moving along, according to McKinsey.

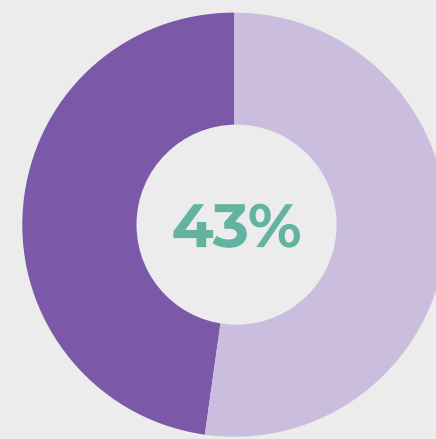
### FEARS REGARDING REMOTE WORK



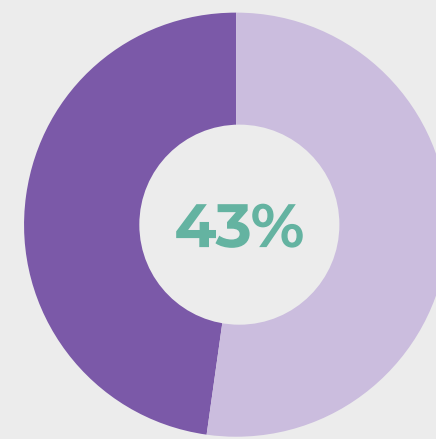
Worse work-life balance



Loss of community and connection to colleagues



Reduced collaboration for individuals and teams



Decreased focus on employee well-being

Source: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/05/employers-pandemic-covid-19-mental-health/>

Do these drawbacks mean that remote work isn't as appealing as people make it out to be? Not necessarily. These downsides are a reminder that no working model is perfect and that you should pay attention to the inherent issues to keep them at bay. With due diligence and the proper technologies and processes by your side, you can certainly mitigate the impact of all these problems. You won't be able to eliminate them altogether, but you can certainly lessen their impact.



# Most Common Misconceptions About Remote Work

Remote work has its pros and cons, but even with all the research around it throughout the years, there's a lot of misinformation about it. That has built a series of misconceptions that often drive companies away from embracing remote work. That's why it's very important to review the most common ones and check how accurate these misconceptions actually are.

## 1. REMOTE WORKERS AREN'T PRODUCTIVE

Probably the most common misconception is that remote workers aren't as productive as in-house employees. The reasoning behind this is simple—without on-site supervision, workers get easily distracted and lose focus. That, of course, isn't true, as discussed in the benefits section. But that's not all: Remote work doesn't mean unsupervised work, mainly because there are many tools and platforms to manage remote teams.



*Productivity doesn't equal hours worked; rather, it's all about achieving goals.*

## 2. IT'S HARD TO FIND QUALIFIED REMOTE WORKERS

Many companies don't like remote work because they think that hiring remote workers will be harder than hiring them on-site. How can they know for sure if the candidates they are analyzing are right for the job if they aren't able to interview them in an office? That might feel like an impossible task to some, but the reality is that there are countless technologies and practices to make hiring easier. In fact, we'd argue that hiring remotely opens up a larger talent pool that gets you closer to qualified candidates.



*If you don't worry about location, you can definitely find more experts in any sector with the help of job platforms, staffing companies, and sites like LinkedIn.*

## 3. MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS IS NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE

Supervising what every member of the team is doing at any given time has always been tricky, but some managers think it's even harder when working remotely. That's because they can't stay on top of their employees at all times (especially when working with a team distributed across countries and time zones). We won't lie to you and say it's easy, but managing remote teams isn't as difficult as some people think. With the help of management platforms like Jira or Trello, a seasoned manager can keep track of all work both on an individual and team level.



*Technology is as good as the people using it. Aside from implementing management platforms, managers need to develop a new way of handling their remote workers.*



# Most Common Misconceptions About Remote Work

## 4. COMPANY CULTURE CAN'T COME FROM REMOTE WORK

There's a firm belief that company culture only stems from a group of people spending time together in the same space and sharing certain goals and values. Following that thought, remote work wouldn't be capable of creating a strong culture. While there is some truth to that perspective, the reality is that company culture is a result of attitudes, values, missions, and processes shared by a group of people regardless of how they interact. Sure, the culture of a remote-first company is very different from a traditional business, but they both have their own idiosyncrasies defined by how they work.



*Corporate culture isn't something you set, it's a dynamic creation you build with the values you embrace and the contributions your team brings to the table.*

## 5. REMOTE WORK ONLY APPLIES TO SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

This isn't necessarily a misconception, but rather an outdated view of what remote work is and can be. Some time ago, the only ones who worked remotely were software developers (and some selected technical positions). But that's not the case anymore. Today, people can work remotely in many positions, from sales and marketing to product development, accounting, and customer service.



*Not all jobs can be done remotely but there are plenty that can, so make sure that you study your options before hiring a new team member.*



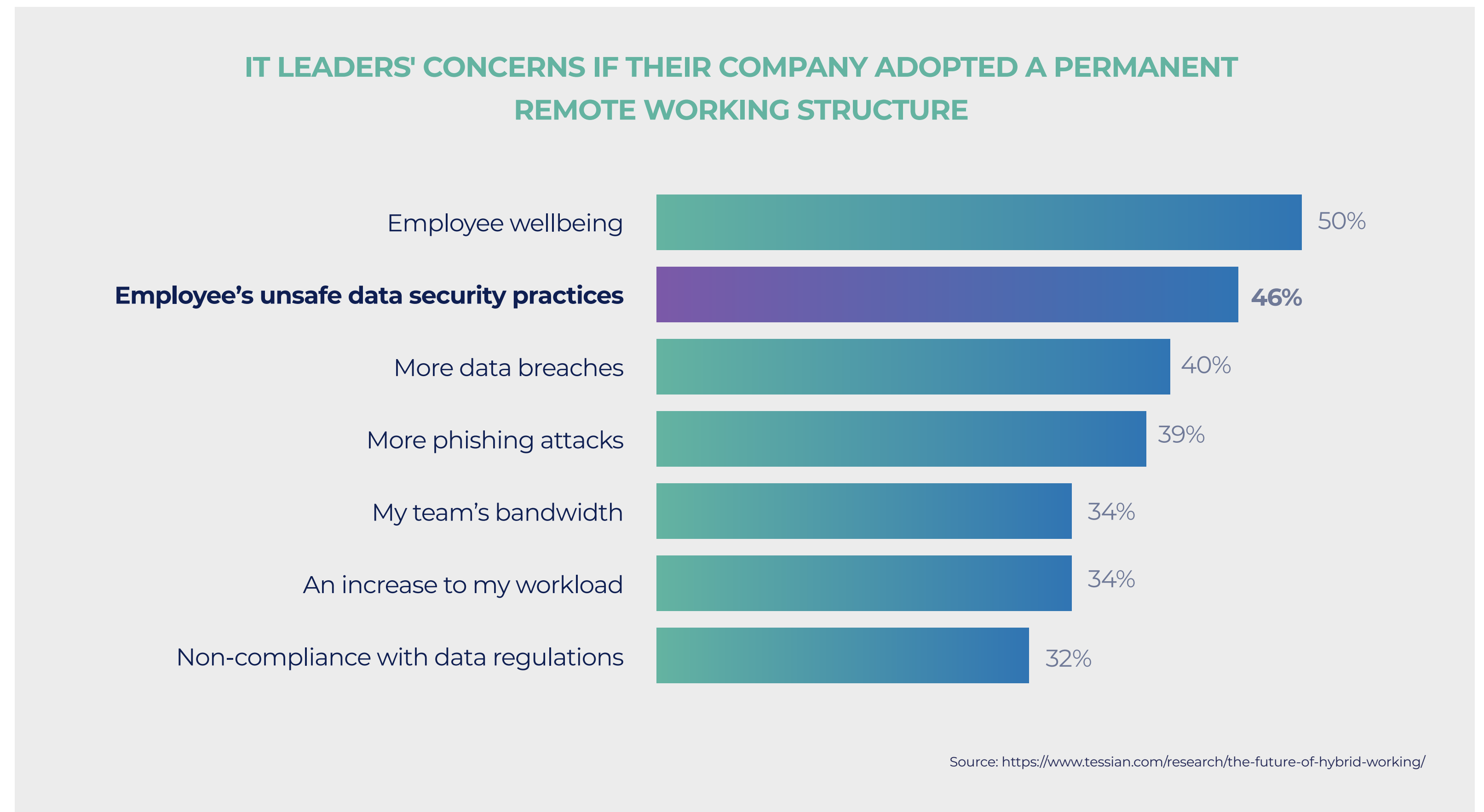


# Remote Work and Cybersecurity

The sudden explosion in popularity for remote work wasn't precisely a simultaneous and calculated move by millions of companies. It was just a response to the huge disruption brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, we can't talk about a strategic adoption by many businesses but should see it as a rushed attempt to adapt to new demands.

Of course, that's hardly the best way to deploy a new way of working. Startled by the pandemic and its disruptions, businesses didn't have the time to plan out the best way to implement new technologies, prepare their processes for the new remote landscape, or properly train their employees. In that hurried adoption, one of the first things to be sacrificed was cybersecurity.

Security company Tessian recently conducted a survey among IT professionals to learn how they see cybersecurity in a remote work environment. Half of them are worried about their companies adopting remote work as a permanent solution, mainly because of security concerns. A whopping 46% are concerned about how employees' unsafe practices when working remotely can lead to more data breaches and phishing attacks.



Their impression feels appropriate. That's because the survey also found that 39% of employees admitted that their security practices are less strict when working remotely, mainly because they feel less scrutinized by IT departments than when working in the office. That goes to show that security should be among the top priorities for business—because employees will use insecure devices and networks and will be careless in a remote environment.



# Remote Work and Cybersecurity

## What things should your IT team address when considering cybersecurity in a remote setting?

There are several aspects, including the following:

### DYNAMIC SECURITY

Companies have grown accustomed to using static, network-based security measures to prevent attacks. However, remote work has imploded the relatively closed quarters of the office. Today's work is fragmented across each interconnected user, asset, and resource, which means that the office is at its most dynamic point ever. In other words, there's no "digital fence" able to protect such a flexible network.

That means that any modern security strategy needs to take into account new technologies and approaches, including adopting the Zero Trust model, establishing multifactor authentication based on biometrics, using artificial intelligence to protect endpoints in real time, and enhancing network security through micro-segmentation.

### CLOUD-BASED INFRASTRUCTURE

Remote work implies using cloud-based tools and platforms virtually for every possible task. It's only natural—working from home requires greater agility and flexibility that only cloud computing can provide. But as more and more workers connect from different networks using a myriad of devices, the vulnerabilities start to multiply to the extent that typical security approaches fail to provide the proper defenses.

The solution? Using a multi-cloud environment to your advantage. Adopting virtual desktops and desktop-as-a-service platforms, you can restrict localized data storage and completely transform your infrastructure. Additionally, you can use cloud-based services to control access and critical points across your infrastructure.

### CLOUD-BASED INFRASTRUCTURE

It's often said that the weakest link in any security strategy is the people (some research confirms that, even claiming that 95% of cybersecurity breaches are due to human error). That means that any successful security strategy needs to implement measures to mitigate vulnerabilities stemming from insecure practices.

To do so, you should establish explicit policies for safe remote workplaces, which should include how, when, and by whom company assets should be used. That's not all: You should also institute training programs to keep employees up to date on the latest security threats and what they can do to protect themselves. Finally, it's important to have a team of security experts ready to help with any doubt or issue the team members might have.





# Remote Work and Cybersecurity

## AUTOMATION AND OPTIMIZED WORKFLOWS

Remote work doesn't just mean that people won't be working at the office. It also means that there'll be many changes to how your company does business, from internal to client-facing processes. Many security problems might arise in the rush to adapt those processes to remote work. That's why it's important to analyze how you do things and optimize whenever you can.

One of the most important aspects of doing that involves automation. By implementing new technologies and AI algorithms to automate certain tasks, you'll be doing 2 things. First, you'll be relieving an employee from doing them, which greatly reduces the risk of human error. And second, you'll be streamlining your workflow, which will result in a more manageable and controllable environment. Finally, you should also consider adhering to DevSecOps principles, which can help you scale your operations with a strong focus on security.





# Remote Work and Corporate Culture

If you take a look around and talk to different people across the business landscape, you'll quickly notice something: There's the general understanding that, even with all the pandemic-related disruptions, the companies are the same at their core. Sure, most of them will acknowledge they adopted new technologies, changed their processes, and implemented remote work. But many of them still see themselves as virtually the same companies, mainly because they adhere to the same mission and values.

That's the same as saying that those companies think their corporate culture hasn't changed, even with all the disruptions they've gone through since 2020. However, remote work does have an impact on corporate culture—and a significant one at that. To truly understand this, it's important to clarify what we mean when we talk about corporate culture.

“Corporate culture refers to the beliefs and behaviors that determine how a company's employees and management interact and handle outside business transactions. Often, corporate culture is implied, not expressly defined, and develops organically over time from the cumulative traits of the people the company

hires. A company's culture will be reflected in its dress code, business hours, office setup, employee benefits, turnover, hiring decisions, treatment of clients, client satisfaction, and every other aspect of operations.”

If corporate culture is about expectations and conduct related to the interactions between the company and its employees, then it's impossible to think that remote work doesn't have an impact on a particular business culture. That becomes clearer when you review the changes introduced by this new work model:

- Lack of in-person contact
- Less informal chatter and bonding instances
- Redefinition of job perks
- New expectations about processes and tasks
- New hires without experience in in-office dynamics

With such a list, the effect of remote work in corporate culture is easy to imagine. If corporate culture is reflected in “dress code, business hours, office setup, employee benefits, turnover, hiring decisions, treat-

ment of clients, client satisfaction, and every other aspect of operations,” then it'll definitely be something different with remote work.

“Like it or not, the pandemic has forever changed how we see work and how we carry it out. It also impacted people in countless ways, from their expectations to their priorities. If you fail to understand that or believe that you can get away with doing the things that you did before COVID-19, you're in for a surprise. Thus, making the necessary adjustments to your corporate culture appears as a must-do when moving forward.”



**Nacho De Marco**  
BairesDev CEO



# Remote Work and Corporate Culture

So, if the pandemic had an undeniable effect on corporate culture, you might be asking yourself why you should care, especially if such culture “develops organically over time from the cumulative traits of the people the company hires.” Can’t you just let the culture evolve on its own? Well, you certainly can, but your absence will create a leadership vacuum that your employees will fill as they see fit. Culture will evolve with their input—in fact, chances are it’s already done so and employees are mostly loving it.

The only viable path is to supervise a modernization process in which you lay out the way you imagine your culture moving forward. Granted, you won’t be able to completely control where your culture ends up, but you can certainly nudge it toward a specific direction. For that to happen, you should follow these 3 steps:

## 1. ANALYZE THE OPERATIONAL CHANGES YOU’VE ALREADY MADE AND HOW THEY IMPACT YOUR CULTURE

Remote work implies adopting new technologies, digitizing entire processes, adding new members from remote locations, and training staff to deal with it all. If you’ve done some of these things (and you surely have), then it’s time to understand how these things have modified the expectations and the behaviors that shape your culture. For example, you might have gone from tight business hours to flexible hours due to remote work. This changes what you expect from employees—and how they behave at work.

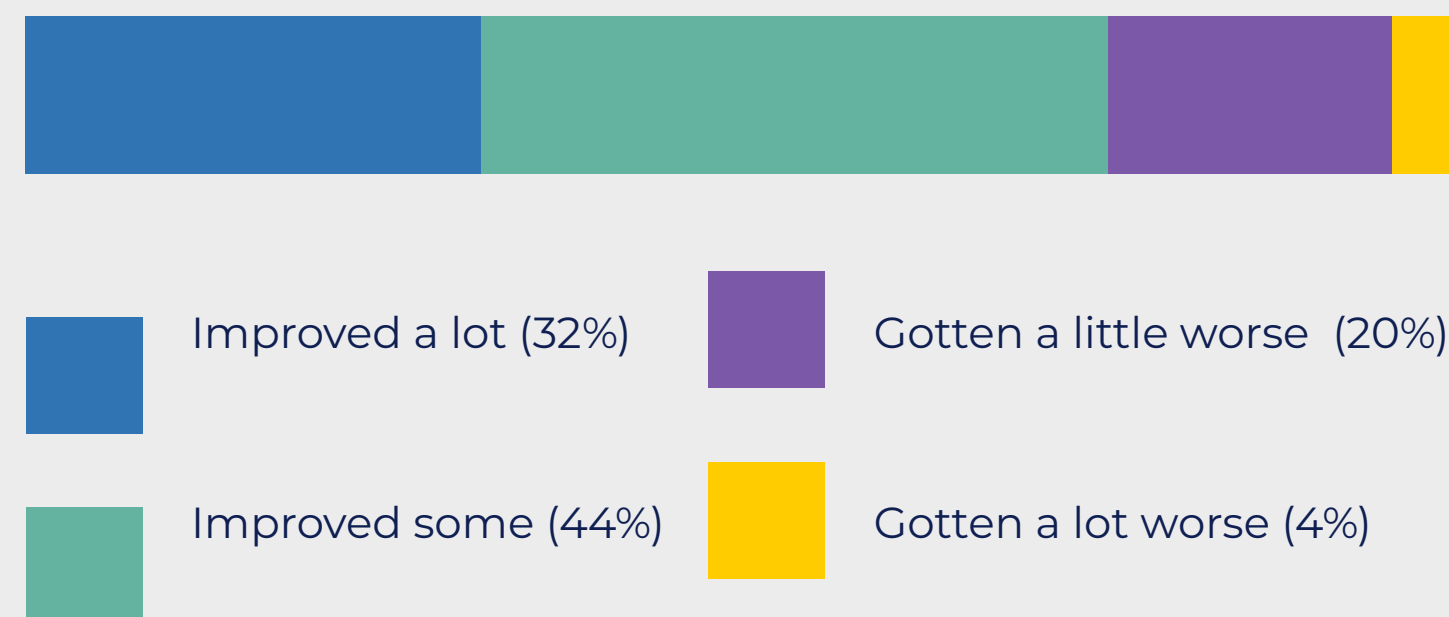
## 2. REALIGN PEOPLE BEHIND THE NEWLY DEFINED EXPECTATIONS

Once you understand the changes your culture is already going through, it’s time to help your team align with what you expect from them moving forward. Since remote work implies redefining processes, adopting new technologies, and even reevaluating roles, it’s natural for certain people to feel lost. It’ll be your responsibility to explain how those people fit into the new way of doing things, something you will only be able to do if you clarify what you are trying to do with your new corporate culture.

## 3. SUPPORT YOUR VALUES BUT EMBRACE THE ONES YOUR TEAM CAN BRING

The fact that your corporate culture might have gone through changes doesn’t mean your values have changed. For instance, you might still champion diversity and inclusion. But it’s likely that the way in which you express or act on those values has changed. You’ll need to adapt to that new way of seeing those values, but it can’t just be informed by your own perspective. You also need to integrate your team’s views to make them feel a part of the new corporate culture.

### CULTURE CHANGE WITH SHIFT TO REMOTE WORK IS MOSTLY POSITIVE



Source: [gartner.com/SmarterWithGartner](https://gartner.com/SmarterWithGartner)



# Leading a Remote Team

Management is yet another aspect of work that changes significantly when you adopt remote work as your main model. It's pretty clear why—traditional management methods are often tailored to in-house teams. The move to remote work is obviously demanding, as many of those methods don't apply to remote environments. And if you add to that the fact that many managers don't have experience in managing remotely, then you can understand why leading remote teams is so difficult.

Among the many issues managers might find when managing remote teams, the most important include:

**LACK OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION** > Managers are used to supervising in-house teams, which means they can quickly oversee what everyone is doing at all times. That's not possible in a remote setting (unless you want to integrate highly invasive software to track your employees' activities). Additionally, employees might struggle with reduced access to managers or feel like their supervisors aren't completely aware of their needs. This can easily lead to demotivation and a drop in productivity.

**LACK OF INFORMATION OR ACCESS TO RESOURCES** > This hits newly remote workers particularly hard, as they aren't familiar with the best ways to request information, locate resources, or share knowledge with others. Thus, managers have to pay special attention to keep everyone informed and in the loop about what everyone is doing and what resources are available to them.

**DISTRACTIONS AT HOME** > Another drawback that's worth mentioning here is distractions, which can hinder optimal performance. Suboptimal workplaces, unexpected parenting responsibilities, and temporary disruptions in essential services are but some of the distractions that people working remotely have to deal with. That forces managers to review their approach to management, as they have to embrace flexibility and come up with new ways to compensate for the time lost from those distractions.

**SOCIAL ISOLATION** > We already mentioned this as one of the drawbacks of remote work, but isolation's impact extends beyond the issue it poses for remote workers. It also takes a toll on managers, as employees who start feeling isolated can quickly see themselves as not belonging to their respective companies. This can have negative effects on the company as well because people who feel disconnected might start considering leaving the company to look for a business where they feel more connected. It's the managers' job to make sure that remote workers don't feel alone or disconnected from their organizations.



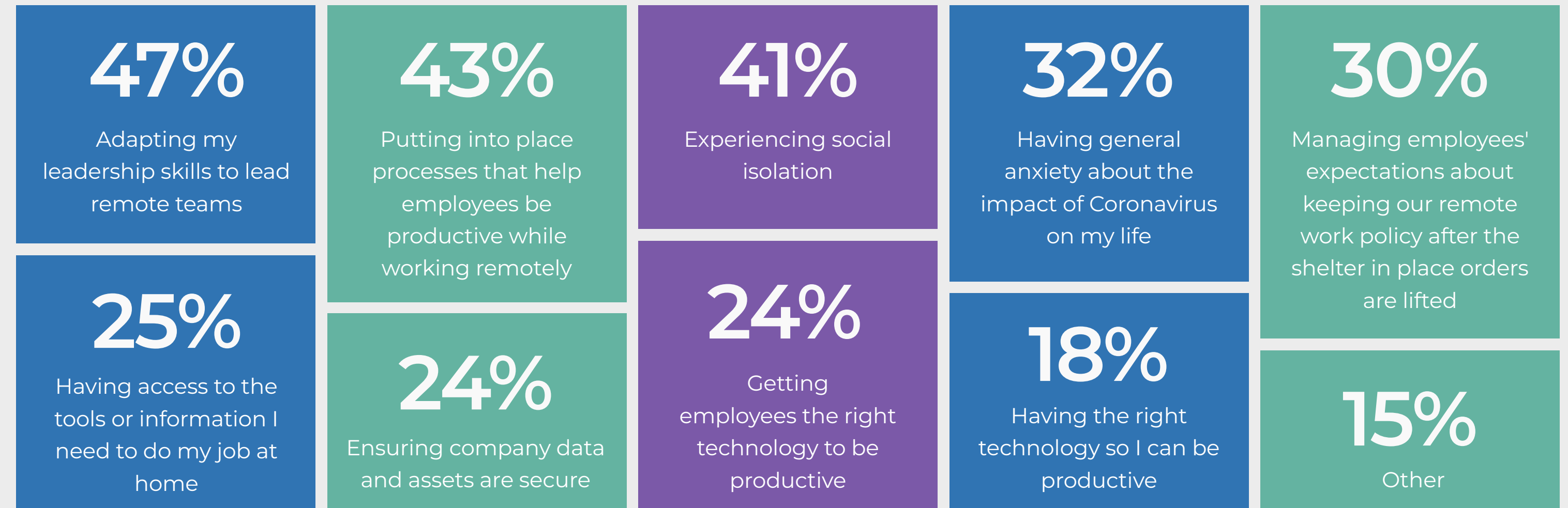
# Leading a Remote Team

There are more issues managers are reporting when working remotely. According to a recent Bluescape survey, some of the most common ones include adapting leadership skills to the new landscape, putting remote processes into place, and experiencing social distancing themselves.



*There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution for managing remote teams. Each team needs its own resources, expectations, and processes, so your best bet is to analyze where your team is standing in terms of remote infrastructure and processes and only proceed with the following steps when you know how they can fit in.*

## MANAGEMENT VIEW ON CHALLENGES



Source: <https://www.bluescape.com/blog/5-charts-revealing-management-views-on-working-from-home/>

All these issues combine with other circumstances to make up a more complex scenario for managers to do their jobs. Naturally, there are several things they can do to mitigate the impact of these problems. Here are 5 of them:



# Leading a Remote Team

## 1. FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION

One of the biggest problems in any team is communication, an issue that gets multiplied in a remote setting. If you don't have a proper communication plan (including procedures and tools), then you'll definitely end up with a disconnected team that doesn't know everything they need to do their jobs.

That's why you need 2 things. First, define how and when you'll communicate. At BairesDev, we found that the most effective way to keep everyone on the same page is by establishing a series of recurring meetings:

- **Daily check-ins.** Brief meetings to address roadblocks, share information, and establish goals for the day.
- **Weekly wrap-ups.** Meetings usually conducted at the end of the week to discuss the progress made during the past week and set expectations for next week.
- **Monthly deep dive.** Longer encounters to introduce new projects, brainstorm, and work on long-term issues.

Naturally, meetings aren't the only way to boost communication in a team. There are also other channels you should be using as well, such as emails and collaborative platforms like Slack. This brings us to the second thing you'll need to enhance your communication: the right tools. We won't get into too much detail here (we have a whole section devoted to essential tools for remote work), but it's important to mention that a remote team needs diverse tools to work and communicate efficiently.





# Leading a Remote Team

## 2. BE ON TOP OF EXPECTATIONS

Remote work has completely changed the expectations people have about their jobs. From what kind of tasks they need to do and what tools they should use to how they approach the work itself, there are plenty of things that might be different today when compared to pre-pandemic times. That means that managers have to be sure that everyone knows what the company expects from them.

This isn't a one-time thing. Tasks evolve, projects progress, workflows get refined, processes are redefined. All those things can completely change what the company expects from its team members. That's why managers have to constantly remind employees about individual and group objectives, project goals, and overall strategies. That's the only way to be sure that everyone knows how to work. Just be sure to avoid micromanagement and focus on the outcomes!

## 3. MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS THE NECESSARY RESOURCES

If lack of access to resources is one of the primary issues when managing remote teams, then you'd better make sure to increase availability throughout the team. That can mean several things. For instance, you might need to provide infrastructure resources, such as hardware, office furniture, and supplies, for team members to do their jobs. It can also imply you have to provide software for diverse tasks.

But resources also cover other, less tangible things. For example, managers should make sure that all employees have access to the data they need to carry out their jobs. Also, employees should have access to IT support for any technical issues and even to assistance programs focused on mental health, childcare, and financial advice. All those things are crucial for remote workers to actually do their jobs without disruptions.





# Leading a Remote Team

## 4. REFINE YOUR MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

The way in which you manage in-house teams won't be enough to monitor and lead remote workers. There simply are too many differences between the 2 work models to expect a seamless transition without a major process refinement. In other words, you'll need to review all your management processes and redefine your strategy around them. That implies revising everything from role responsibilities and tools you use to proper protocols.

This can mean many things. For one, you'll need to take on a new approach to how you measure productivity. In other words, it's time to forget about hours put in and focus solely on results. Aside from that, you'll have to identify potential opportunities for improvement in your processes. If you look closer, you'll surely find several parts of those processes that will benefit from automation technology, management platforms, and other digital solutions.

## 5. ALLOW SOME TIME FOR FUN

One of the biggest criticisms people have of remote work is how little space it provides to socialize and decompress. In the office, there are watercooler conversations, serendipitous encounters at desks, friendly banter before or after meetings, and so on. But when working remotely, people don't have those opportunities—hence the isolation and potential mental issues.

While there's no proper substitute for that in the world of remote working, managers can reserve some space for socializing and having fun. For instance, you can set aside 5 minutes in meetings to talk about hobbies, TV shows, movies, games, or other things. You can also arrange events exclusively for socializing, such as after-office meetings over Zoom. If possible, organize physical get-togethers once in a while to further the bonding between team members.





# Hiring Remote Workers

Going all-in with remote work will completely change how you tackle many processes, including one you might not have thought about: recruiting. You might think that you can still conduct your hiring process in person even if you're looking for remote workers. But doing so completely defeats the purpose. Sure, you can still search for local candidates, but why be limited to it when one of the most noticeable benefits of remote working is having the ability to hire people from anywhere?

A truly remote recruiting process will have you conducting it online in its entirety. This will provide you with greater flexibility and the opportunity to hire from a larger talent pool (one that isn't limited to local talent). As you can imagine, though, moving to a completely remote recruitment process has its own set of challenges. On one hand, you'll have to redefine your selection process. On the other hand, you'll have to consider the expectations of a workforce that has grown accustomed to remote work and may be expecting it from you.

So, how can you accommodate the world of remote work with your hiring efforts? Here are some key ways.





# Hiring Remote Workers

## 1. LOOK FOR TALENT EVERYWHERE

Since remote work doesn't impact productivity, you can certainly free yourself from the limitations of hiring locally. Looking beyond your city limits, you can find a larger talent pool, which, in turn, means you'll have more qualified candidates to pick from. Just be sure that you understand the other aspects that come into play when you hire people from other states, countries, or regions (time zone, language, and cultural differences).

## 2. DEVELOP REMOTE INTERVIEWS

The process of interviewing people remotely might look similar to interviewing in person, but it does have its own characteristics. That's why you have to build a specific process for remote recruitment. You'll have to pick the proper channels to conduct the interviews, create communication materials to guide applicants, implement evaluation platforms, and learn how to read cues when interviewing through a video call.

## 3. OFFER FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

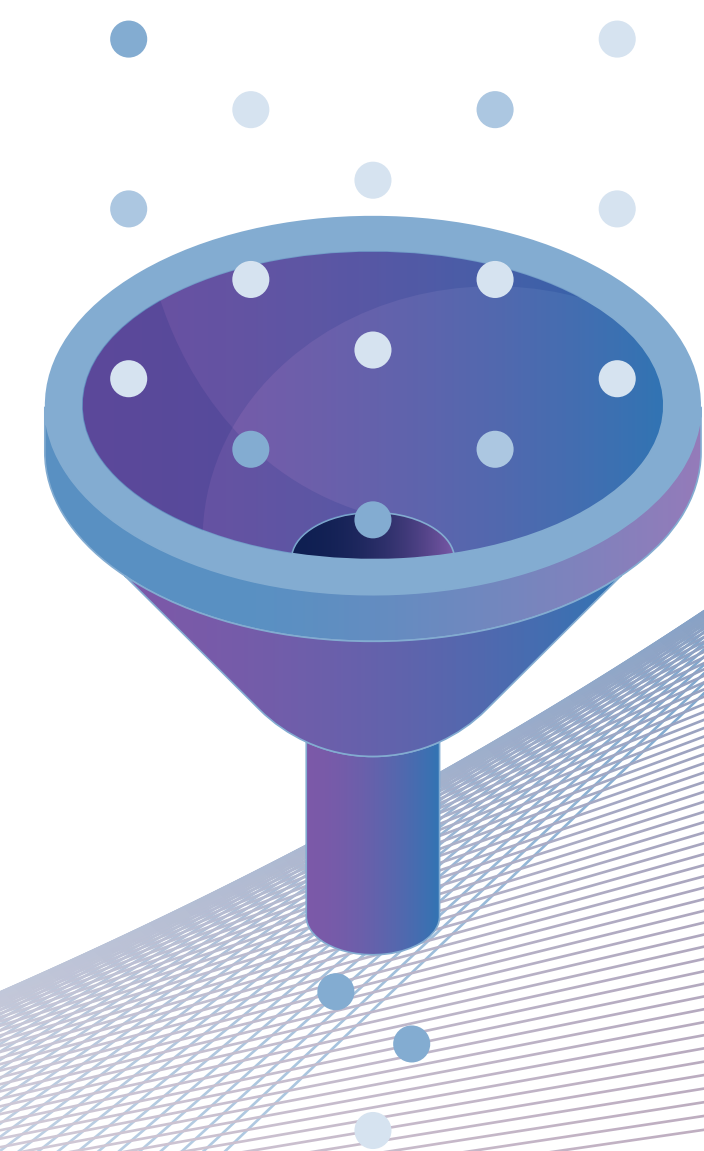
We mentioned it above: People are now expecting some flexibility from companies, especially when it comes to remote work. This includes flexible business hours, results measured by objectives rather than by hours worked, and even compressed workweeks. This applies even if you aren't offering a remote position—people will expect some sort of flexibility even if it's an in-house position, so you should consider offering hybrid models for work or flexible business hours as well.

## 4. FOCUS ON SKILLS RATHER THAN TITLES

A recent hiring trend suggests that hiring managers should focus less on specific job titles (i.e., marketing executive) and more on the skills the company needs to move forward. Thus, instead of focusing on a specific role with a bullet list of traits, think about the traits themselves. It's better to hire someone that shows critical thinking and problem-solving abilities over someone who only has titles to show for themselves.

## 5. CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE STAFFING

There's another trend rising along with remote work: talent on demand. Slowly but steadily, more and more people are available for temporary positions or per-project arrangements. In fact, many people aren't too fond of the idea of working full-time for a single company. That's why you should consider hiring temporary or contract workers according to your needs. Doing so will relieve you from having to hire staff that you only need for a specific project while also being a fantastic option to fill talent gaps that are proving difficult to fill.





# Essential Tools for Remote Work

The irruption of remote work has forever changed the office. In fact, the office as we knew it won't come back. Companies are already thinking about reducing their physical presence. The reasoning behind this is fairly simple: Who needs big offices in expensive cities now that a lot of people are working from home?

That doesn't mean that the office, per se, is set to disappear. Companies might be scaling down their physical locations and reimagining the remaining offices following all the lessons learned from the pandemic. But those locations need to be complemented with a new, virtual office, where workers have everything they need for their jobs. A cloud-based office, if you will.

In other words, remote workers need to use diverse digital tools and platforms to get their jobs done. You could see this digital environment as an office of sorts because remote workers will spend their time moving from one platform to the next.

Now, as it happens with every office, this virtual environment can be composed of many different things.

Some will be essential for work, while others will be nice-to-haves. While it's always great to have as many tools at your remote team's disposal, the reality is that only some types of applications are critical for remote workers. They include the following:

**COMMUNICATION APPS >** We mentioned this before, but it bears repeating: communication is key for the success of any remote team. That's why you absolutely need to pick the best communication tools to keep in touch with your team members. You should implement chat applications and videoconferencing solutions or even go for a more complete solution like Slack.



**CLOUD STORAGE >** Since most of the work you and your team will do will be conducted online, having a cloud storage solution for all your materials is essential. You don't need the most advanced cloud storage alternative out there, mind you. As long as you have enough storage space with sharing capabilities, you'll be ready to go.





# Essential Tools for Remote Work

**ONLINE OFFICE SUITES >** Installed office suites are now a thing of the past. While some of them are still available (and pretty useful), the reality is that most people got used to working online. That's why you need to provide your team with a complete online office suite that includes the most widely used applications: word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation.

G Suite

Office 365



**PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE >** While there are teams that can do without them, the reality is that online work often gets so complex that you need to stay on top of multiple things at once. That's why project management software is so essential—because it can let you monitor different tasks across multiple projects in an easy and straightforward way. These platforms allow you to adjust timelines, view blockers, and assign priorities, among other things.

Jira Software

Trello



**ENCRYPTION TOOLS >** Given the rising importance of security in the remote work era, it's critical to have the proper tools in place to defend your systems and data against attacks. One of the key elements of that defense? Encryption tools. With them, you can encrypt entire disks or specific files or folders to make it harder for attackers to access or read those materials.

Windows 10  
BitLocker



FileVault

AxCrypt

**BACKUP TOOLS >** With ransomware getting more popular with each passing week, you need to protect your files and data in every way possible. While encryption tools are a great first step, you also need backup tools. These will come to your rescue should an attacker lock you out of your systems or a virus corrupts your systems. With a backup tool in place, you'll rest assured that you'll always have the latest files and data. You can use a dedicated tool (online or offline) or you can set up your different tools to back up your files according to a different set of criteria.





# Essential Tools for Remote Work

**PASSWORD MANAGER** > With so many services and tools needing them, remote workers are prone to struggle with passwords. Unfortunately, their solution to that struggle often includes using easily guessable credentials or even using the same password for different logins. Since that's a major security issue, you should instruct your remote team to use password managers, which can generate robust passwords and remember them so your people don't have to.

LastPass

1Password

CommonKey



**VPN** > Another issue of remote work is that a lot of people working from anywhere use insecure networks to connect to corporate networks. That opens the door for hackers to access your company's systems and puts you at risk. The best way to avoid that is to use a virtual private network (VPN). These services create encrypted tunnels to send and receive data, protecting your sensitive information and placing yet another hurdle for attackers to overcome.



IPVANISH

**AUTOMATION TOOLS** > Some people might argue that automation isn't essential for remote workers. But given the huge productivity boost automation tools can provide, it's hard to not think of them as critical. That's because automation can relieve your staff from dealing with repetitive or small tasks and help them focus on more important matters. Besides, you can automate a lot of things, from email marketing campaigns and text corrections to customer service.



Comindware

**REMOTE DESKTOP SOFTWARE** > While many remote workers won't even think about remote desktop software, the reality is that companies with remote teams definitely have to consider them. That's because these applications can connect to a remote computer and let the user work on it as if they were sitting right in front of it. This is a great way for IT professionals to support remote teams struggling with IT issues.



Microsoft Remote Desktop



Apple Remote Desktop





# Complementary Tools

Like we said above, there are a lot of tools out there, so it's logical to find that some of them aren't precisely essential. But even when any remote work could do great without them, there are certain solutions that can certainly help in a lot of ways and that you should consider for your remote workers.

**FOCUS APPS**> One of the biggest drawbacks of remote work is how many potential distractions surround workers. To help them from suffering from the ones coming from the internet, you could suggest they use focus apps to block specific websites or limit the amount of time they can spend on them. There are also other apps that provide background sounds, adjust the screen brightness, and block pop-ups, all of which are great to avoid digital distractions.

## **SCREEN-SHARING/RECORDING TOOLS** >

There will be plenty of times when you or someone on your team will have to teach other people how to do a process or present them with a demonstration. That's what screen-sharing and recording tools are for. However, as great as they are, communication platforms often include built-in screen-sharing and recording features.

**NOTE-TAKING APPS**> When working remotely, teams exchange all kinds of information through different channels. This overabundance of data can quickly overwhelm people and make them forget important information. If that happens to your team, then the best thing is to adopt note-taking apps to help your employees stay organized.

**TO-DO LISTS** > With so many tasks floating around and coming from emails, communication apps, and video calls, remote workers can get easily lost. That's why using to-do lists can be such a blessing—they can help remote workers remember everything they need to do and even provide them with a visualization of the things they've completed and the ones that await completion.

**MIND-MAPPING TOOLS** > Another common task when working remotely is to brainstorm to tackle new projects. If you were in an office, you'd use a whiteboard to scribble down what comes out of those meetings. When you're online, though, you'll have to use mind-mapping tools, which are perfect to organize ideas in a highly visual and extremely simple manner.



# Is Remote Work Right for You?

You probably won't like the short answer to this question: It depends. Remote work can be perfect for you just like it's been for us here at BairesDev. But it can also be impossible for your company, given the kind of services you provide or the type of industry you're in. How can you know for sure, then? You'll have to analyze your needs and those of your workforce, understand the pros and cons of remote work, and basically, take into consideration everything we've discussed so far in this guide.

While that may seem like a daunting task, the reality is that you can greatly simplify it by following these steps.





# Is Remote Work Right for You?

## 1. UNDERSTAND ALL YOUR TEAM TASKS

Migrating on-site tasks to an online environment is a challenging endeavor. That's because some tasks that are fairly simple to do in an office might need big adjustments in a remote setting. At the same time, some tasks might be impossible to do remotely. Thus, you can make your whole accounting department work remotely but you might not be able to send your warehouse workers home.

While this may seem too specific, analyzing all your team's tasks is something you must do to properly define whether you can adopt remote work or not. In other words, listing the tasks your employees do every day can provide you with a big picture of the work your company needs to tackle every day. This, in turn, can help you define which of those tasks can be done remotely and which can't.



*In-office roles don't necessarily translate into equal remote roles. While considering migrating to a new work model, you'll have to redefine certain roles based on tasks rather than on worker profiles.*

## 2. CHECK YOUR PROCESSES AND HOW THEY FIT WITH REMOTE WORK

Tasks aren't disconnected activities—they are part of different processes. That's why, when you analyze your team's tasks, you should always keep in mind the processes they are part of. This will let you examine whether the processes themselves are remote-ready. In other words, you'll have to see if the processes can be done online or not.

As it happens with tasks, you might see certain processes as impossible to be done remotely because most of its tasks aren't remote-ready. However, you should keep in mind that your processes don't necessarily have to be exactly the same in a remote setting. For instance, you might separate the tasks of processes that have to be done on-site from those that can be remote, and create 2 new processes. That way, you can aim for a hybrid model and not dismiss remote work altogether.



*Adopting remote work doesn't mean you have to turn your company into a remote-only business. There are different "flavors" you can choose and benefit from.*

## 3. TAKE A LOOK AT COSTS AND SAVINGS

The third and final step is to take a look at how much it will cost you and how much it will save you to adopt remote work. On one hand, preparing your infrastructure and your workforce for remote work might be a costly ordeal. Think about it: Costs can include developing custom-made software or hiring services from third-party vendors, buying new equipment, and investing in training programs. There are also other costs you might not consider at first, such as hiring IT support or paying employee expenses mandated by local regulations.

On the other hand, there are the potential savings you might get. By going remote, you'll save money on office leases and rent, relieve yourself of cleaning services and certain perks, and avoid some taxes. But that's not all. Remote work also means increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, and less employee attrition, all of which represent savings on their own.



*Not all costs nor savings are evident. While migrating to remote work implies investments right now, inform your decisions with cost and savings projections for a more strategic perspective.*



# Making the Decision

While 3 steps might seem like too simple of a process to define whether remote work is for you or not, the reality is that the process is deeper than it appears at first glance. Each of these steps will have you researching a lot about your company and your team and considering a multitude of aspects. It'll take time and effort but we promise it's all worth it.

If you finally decide to adopt remote work, all the information you gathered through these steps will help you create a roadmap for migrating toward a remote environment. If you find out that remote work isn't for you, don't worry. Just because a lot of companies are adopting it doesn't mean you have to.

Besides, things aren't so black and white. The hybrid model might be the proper answer for you to some extent. What we're trying to tell you is that dismissing remote work might be the easiest way out, but if you're imaginative enough, you might enjoy the benefits of remote work and the pros of in-office work at the same time.







## Why BairesDev

The Top 1% of Tech Talent is the backbone of our business. We deliver end-to-end technology solutions created by the most highly vetted, expert-level teams in the business.

