



The Modern Workplace Report

A Care.com and Mother Honestly report on the status and future of flexible work, according to employee caregivers and benefits decision makers.

care. x **MOTHER HONESTLY**





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Both employees and managers have a surprisingly optimistic view of how the workplace has evolved into one that's fairer, more understanding, more flexible and more productive.

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A Letter to Our Readers:

As moms whose jobs are devoted to serving working parents—and whose organizations are staffed with working parents, too—it's safe to say we are acutely aware of how the pandemic has impacted caregivers in this country. Like most advocates, we were deeply worried that women would fall behind in the workplace. In the spring of 2020, roughly 3.5 million mothers with school-age children either lost jobs, took paid or unpaid leave or left the labor market altogether.¹ Over the next two years, many caregivers sacrificed their careers to take care of their children or senior parents, or sacrificed their sleep and sanity to manage it all at once.

There were plenty of reasons to be worried. Before the pandemic, research repeatedly showed that employers were pretty clueless about the burdens caregivers shoulder.² But when work began taking place at home—and kids and elderly relatives began popping up in Zoom calls—it revealed just how many workers are caregivers. Remote work not only illuminated this reality to employers, who responded by introducing an array of benefits to support their teams, it also served as a massive real-time experiment that confirmed what many advocates have been saying for decades: Flexible workplaces produce happier and more productive employees.

That's what we observed at our own organizations, but we weren't sure if these results were universal. As we read article after article about the “remote work revolution,” we still had

more questions than answers. We wanted to know: Have employers really shifted where their employees work? Are they truly supporting their caregiving employees? And, importantly, do all of these changes equal a better future for women, who make up three quarters of all caregivers?

This survey answers these questions in depth, comparing responses from more than 1,000 employee caregivers with 500 C-Suite level executives or HR and senior level managers at organizations with more than 200 employees. The results provide a much-needed silver lining to a pandemic that's taken such a profound emotional toll on caregivers: **Both employees and managers have a surprisingly optimistic view of how the workplace has evolved into one that's fairer, more understanding, more flexible and more productive.**

While the decision makers and employees we surveyed don't always see eye to eye—especially when it comes to whether in-office or remote work is better for career advancement—what's remarkable is their widespread agreement on the benefits of remote work. For example, **76% of caregivers say remote work improves their overall quality of life, and 77% of managers agree.** Caregivers and managers also agree that employees are more productive when they work from home, and that their employer's support for caregivers is strong. It's a pretty ringing endorsement for the efforts employers have made to create more flexible, caring environments.

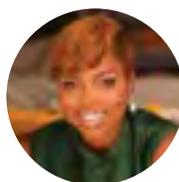
Given all the hardships mothers have endured during the pandemic, in particular, we were especially excited to see that respondents believe remote work is leveling the playing field for women, with 77% of both men and women agreeing that it has created a more even playing field for career advancement across gender lines.

Of course, remote work isn't a panacea for pandemic-era setbacks for caregivers. And when it's not done well—when in-office employees get preferential treatment, for example—it can negate the benefits. We hope this report will serve as a clarion call for leaders to continue creating flexible environments that enable caregivers to shine at work and at home.

Sincerely,



Natalie Mayslich,
President, Consumer,
Care.com



Blessing Adesiyun,
Founder & CEO,
Mother Honestly



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

From September 2, 2022 to September 5, 2022, Care.com and Mother Honestly polled 1,000 employee caregivers and 500 decision makers, as defined below. The surveys were conducted using the online survey platform, Pollfish, and compiled by DKC Analytics.

Employee Caregivers

- Directly responsible for a substantial portion of care for at least one senior adult or child under 15
- Employed full-time and have experience with both in-office and remote work
- 78% are caregivers of children under 15 years old and 50% are caregivers of senior citizens
- 38% are under 35 years old; 41% are between 35 and 44 years old; 22% are 45 or older
- 45% are male, 45% are female and 10% express a non-binary gender identity
- 12% are parents in a same-sex relationship, and 16% say they're part of the LGBTQ+ community
- Throughout this report, we refer to this cohort as “employee caregivers,” “employees,” and “caregivers”

Benefits Decision Makers/Managers

- Executives, HR management or senior management at employers with more than 200 employees who make decisions regarding employee benefits
- 60% are C-Suite executives, owners or partners; 40% are HR management or other senior management
- 45% are lead decision makers in charge of benefits; 55% are part of the HR leadership team or managers whose responsibility includes employee benefits
- 24% run organizations with 201 to 500 employees; 42% have 501 to 1,000 employees; 16% have 1,001 to 2,000 employees; 19% have over 2000 employees
- Throughout this report, we refer to this cohort as “benefits decision makers,” “decision makers” and “managers”



**THE REMOTE WORK
REVOLUTION IS REAL
AND HERE TO STAY**

In March 2020, many employers made a swift, and previously unimaginable decision: to allow employees to work remotely. At the time, leaders were wary. Teleworking was a relatively rare and underutilized benefit. Before the start of the coronavirus outbreak, nearly two-thirds of Americans say that they rarely or never worked from home. ³

Our data proves that the paradigm has permanently changed: Now, only 32% of managers currently have full-time mandatory in-office work locations, and 25% of employees say the same. While 9% of respondents say their company has moved to a mostly-remote model going forward, a hybrid approach is by far the most popular new way of working. More than a third of respondents (38%) say their employer has switched to a hybrid model permanently, while another 19% have switched to a hybrid model temporarily. Taken together, that means more than two thirds (66%) of our respondents are able to work from home more frequently than before the pandemic. It's a massive shift.

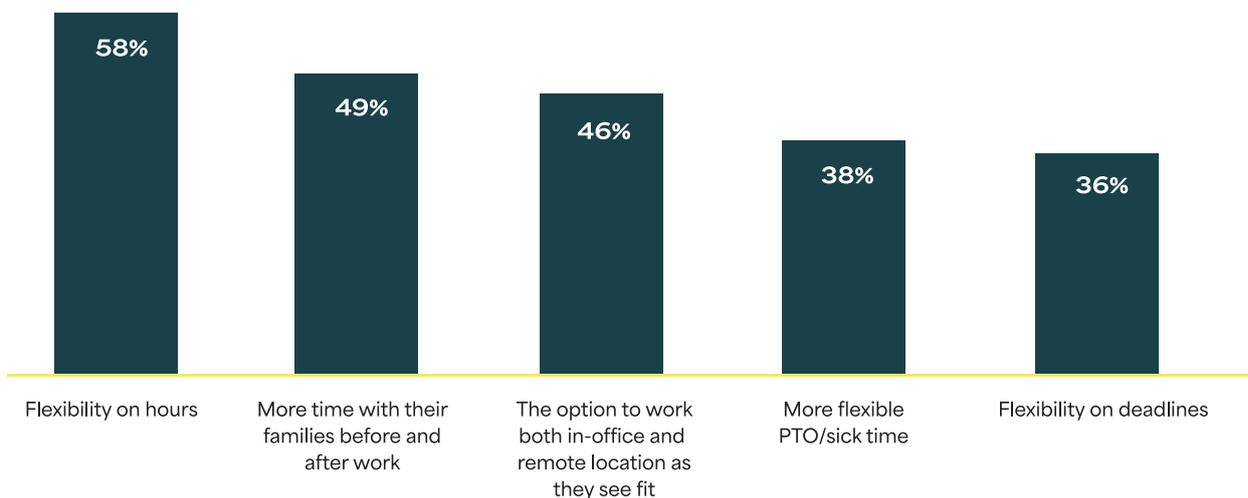
66%
of employees are able to work from home more now

62%
of employees have more flexibility now

Employers aren't just offering more flexibility when it comes to where their employees clock in—they're also allowing greater latitude about when their employees work. Over a quarter (27%) say there is "a lot more flexibility now" at their organization, for example, if they need to leave or sign off early to care for a child. Another one-third (35%) say there is "a little more flexibility."

Those employees have more flexibility in a variety of ways, according to managers. When asked to select the ways their employees have more flexibility now, they reported the following:

HOW EMPLOYEE CAREGIVERS HAVE MORE FLEXIBILITY NOW:





Accordingly, managers have revised their policies and benefits to fit a more flexible workplace. Nearly all report at least one major way their organization has changed to adapt to shifting work environments, including a change in vacation policy (45%), home office setup stipend (46%) and adjustment of work schedules/flexible hours (61%).

Of course, some of this shift can be attributed to necessity. Employers are locked in a fierce competition to attract and retain workers in today's tight labor market. Our survey confirms this continues to be the case. Over half (56%) of managers say turnover has increased since the start of the pandemic. They're not wrong. Over half (51%) of employees say they have changed employers since the start of the pandemic, and 22% have done so multiple times.

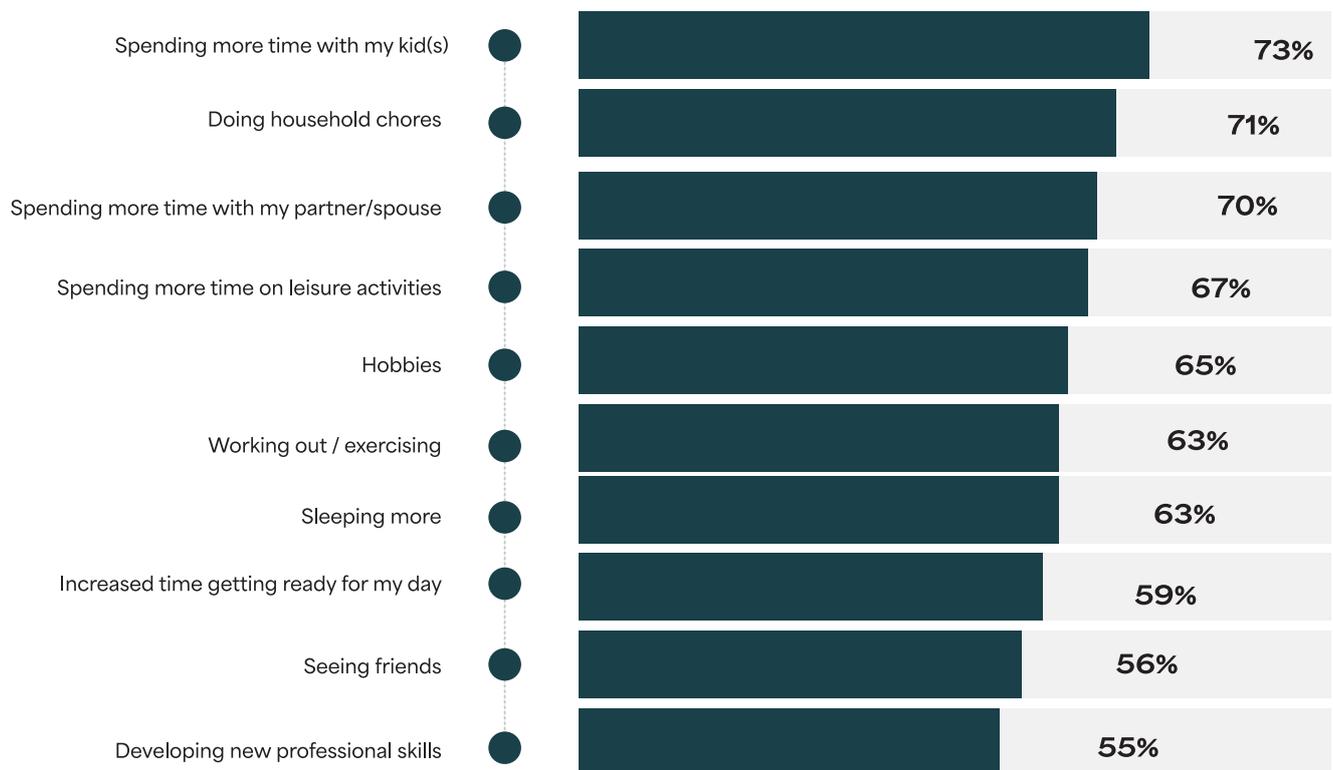
Employees also want the option to work from home: When asked to select all of the work environments they desire most, the majority of employees prefer having a remote option (53%). Next, they prefer a hybrid arrangement (44%), then full-time in-office (43%). Reflecting this surging interest in remote work, 39% of managers are currently hiring employees to work fully remote in areas that are inaccessible to office locations, 16% have done so in the past, and 32% are considering it. Managers understand that most employees want flexibility and are pursuing new jobs that will provide it—and they are adapting their policies accordingly.



**REMOTE WORK IS
WORKING FOR CAREGIVERS**

Employee caregivers and decision makers are largely in agreement that today’s more flexible workplace is working out. First, it saves employees an enormous amount of time: 88% of employees say they save more than 30 minutes a day by avoiding a commute when working remotely, while 67% save an hour or more. For caregivers, that time is well spent: 73% use it to spend time with their kid(s), 70% use it to spend time with their partner or spouse, and 63% use it for sleep. Many caregivers devote the time to working out, seeing friends and leisure activities:

HOW EMPLOYEES SPEND TIME SAVED ON COMMUTING:

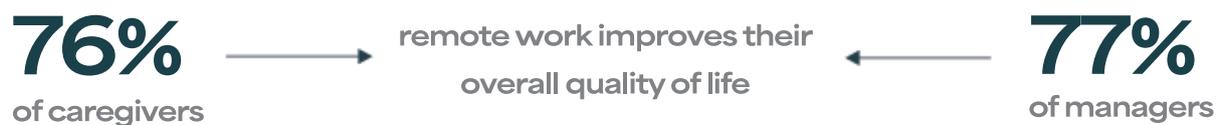


Further, two-thirds of those caring for seniors (66%) say they’re able to spend more time with their aging loved one, and 60% say remote work enables them to better track the health and wellbeing of their senior.

These activities aren’t frivolous for caregivers; they’re crucial for their emotional wellbeing. One recent study of working parents found that 66% percent of respondents met the criteria for parental burnout.⁴ Among other recommendations for reducing burnout, the researchers suggested parents stay connected to family and friends and spend a few minutes a day on activities that bring joy, such as exercise. Clearly, caregivers are doing just that with the time they save when they don’t commute to work.



Working from home isn't beneficial just because employees are spared a long commute—it also gives caregivers the flexibility to tackle domestic tasks during the day, whether that's calling the pediatrician or dispensing medicine to an aging parent. Managers and caregivers overwhelmingly agree that remote work improves overall quality of life. In fact, when asked to compare a hybrid arrangement to full-time in-office work, caregivers strongly prefer hybrid for career fulfillment (46% vs. 29%), life balance (49% vs. 27%), happiness (56% vs. 22%) and less stress (54% vs. 24%).



In addition to allowing caregivers to efficiently handle household tasks, remote work also enables employees to efficiently handle work tasks. Compared to working in an office, 55% of employees say they're more productive working remotely, and 58% of managers agree. Contrary to fearful early pandemic predictions that working from home would allow employees to slack off, 46% of employees say they work more hours remotely, while just 26% say they work fewer hours. Managers report similar observations: 50% say employees clock more hours when working remotely, and 30% say employees work fewer hours. Some of this uptick in productivity can be tied to avoiding a commute, but decades of research⁵ have shown that less-stressed and happier employees are more productive. Given that so many employees prefer remote work, despite the longer day, it's likely they don't mind clocking more hours when working from home, since it enables them to handle family duties during the day and provides the life balance they prefer.

The flexibility afforded by working from home isn't just a win for caregivers—it's a boon for companies, too.





**REMOTE WORK IS
LEVELING THE PLAYING
FIELD BETWEEN WOMEN
AND MEN**

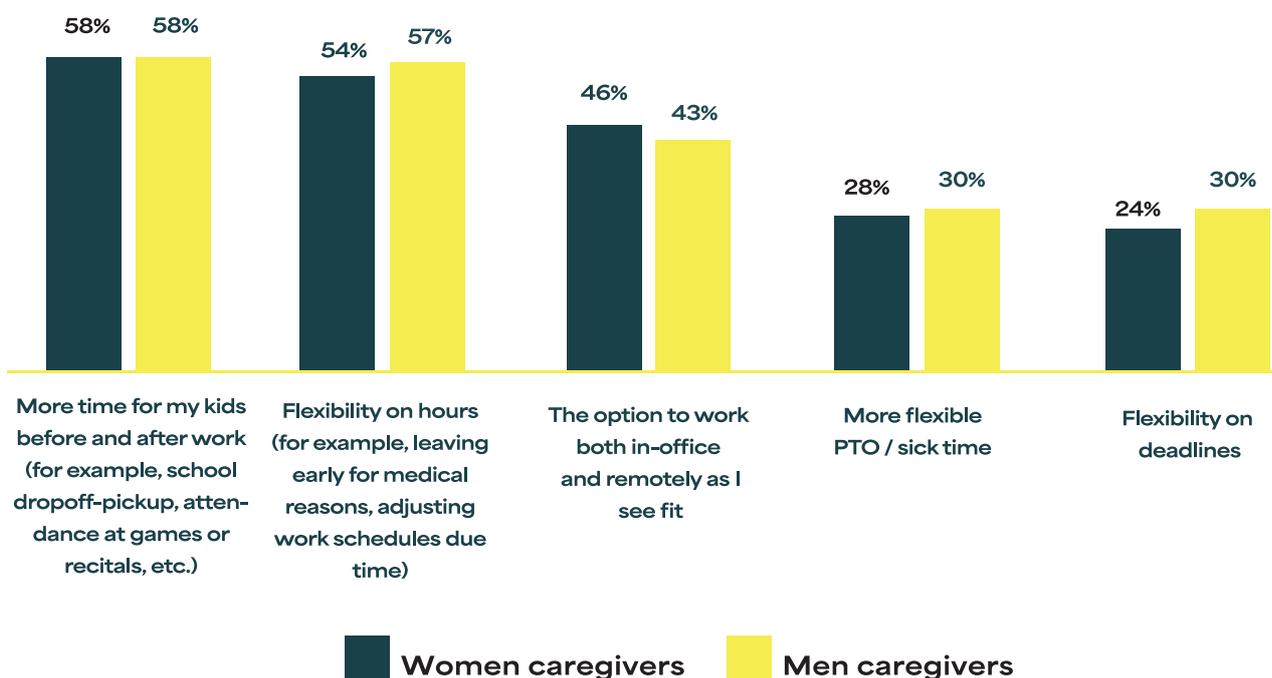
Flexible work proponents have long advocated that a more accommodating workplace will help women advance, since women perform the bulk of unpaid caregiving labor in America. When that labor conflicts with work, women are more likely than men to make career compromises, such as reducing their work hours or quitting altogether.⁶

77% of employees say remote work is good for career advancement across gender lines

By making it more manageable to balance both personal and professional duties, remote work means caregivers can continue to build their careers, creating a more equal workplace for women and men. Our respondents agree: Men and women equally report that the wide adoption of remote work has created a more even playing field for career advancement across gender lines (at 77%). This is markedly different from how men and women see the job market overall, where only 33% of women think men and women have equal job opportunities, but 61% of men say they do, according to Pew Research.⁷ It suggests that remote work is seen by employees—and especially by women—as uniquely beneficial for creating equal opportunities.

Some experts worried that women would opt to work from home and take advantage of flexible benefits more than men, putting them at a disadvantage.⁸ While this report doesn't capture how often women and men utilize these perks, it's clear that women and men have roughly equal access to them, with men generally having greater access than women:

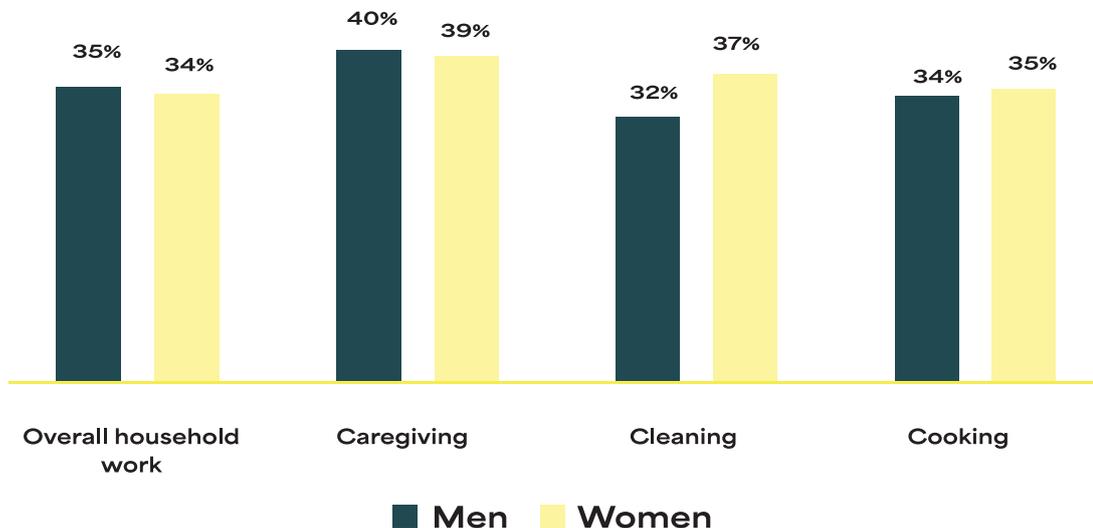
HOW JOB FLEXIBILITY HAS CHANGED SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC:





Others feared that remote work could “trap” women into taking on an uneven share of the household burden.⁹ But our survey suggests that men and women are taking advantage of their newfound flexibility in very similar ways. An identical percent of men and women (73%) say remote work has given them more time with family, and an identical percent (70%) say it’s given them more time with their spouse. In fact, male and female caregivers report that shifting from in-office to hybrid work impacted their share of household duties fairly similarly. (All spend more time on caregiving, cleaning and cooking.)

HOW DID CHANGING WORK ENVIRONMENTS FROM IN-OFFICE TO REMOTE OR HYBRID IMPACT YOUR SHARE OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING HOUSEHOLD DUTIES?



This is significant. Since women began moving into the workforce en masse, they have handled the bulk of the “second shift,” i.e. the chores and child care that happen before and after paid work. It’s likely that remote work makes this domestic labor more visible, and gives men more opportunities to tackle it. Nearly half (47%) of male caregivers with a child under the age of 15 say, “I personally spend more time on child care when working remotely, which saves my spouse or partner some time.” In other words, the rise of remote work could chip away at gender inequity in the home.



**CAREGIVING SUPPORT
IS TABLE STAKES**

Not only do more managers recognize the benefits of flexible work, they're also realizing that it's crucial to have benefits that support caregivers more broadly. That's in part because it's needed more than ever. An ongoing labor shortage in the child care sector—there are nearly 100,000 fewer people working in the industry today than before the pandemic—is leading to fewer spots, long waitlists and higher prices for parents seeking child care.¹⁰ Additionally, more than 16,000 child care centers have permanently closed since the start of the pandemic.¹¹ The labor shortage is even more acute in long-term care facilities, where more than 400,000 employees have quit since the start of the pandemic, leaving families without care for elderly or disabled loved ones.¹² Nearly half of senior caregivers (48%) say they are spending more on care now than before the pandemic, while 38% of child caregivers say the same.

Without government solutions, employees are looking to their employers to address the crisis. More than half (55%) of managers report more demand for child care support now, compared to before the pandemic. Similarly, 49% of managers say the same for senior care. To meet this demand, many companies have boosted their benefits for caregiving employees. Over half (51%) changed their care benefits and nearly a third (32%) changed their stipends for care, according to managers.

75% of employees caring for seniors say their company's level of support is strong

83% of employees caring for children say their company's level of support is strong

Even better, this new effort to aid caregiving employees is working: 83% of employees with child care responsibilities say their employer's level of support is strong, and 82% of managers agree. Similarly, 75% of employees with senior care responsibilities say their employer's level of support is strong, and 76% of managers agree.

This is a crucial finding during a moment when organizations debate which pandemic-era policies to retain going forward and have even rolled back some parent-friendly benefits, such as paid maternity and paternity leave.¹³ Our survey shows that employees are overwhelmingly satisfied with their employer's support for caregivers. Leaders who retreat on these benefits risk putting their organizations at a competitive disadvantage in an era where caregiving support is seen as table stakes and turnover is high. Additionally, child care benefits have been shown to boost recruitment and retention rates, increase worker productivity and reduce burnout.¹⁴ With fears of a recession looming, leaders will inevitably look for cost savings, but given the strong business case for child care benefits, cutting back would be a mistake.

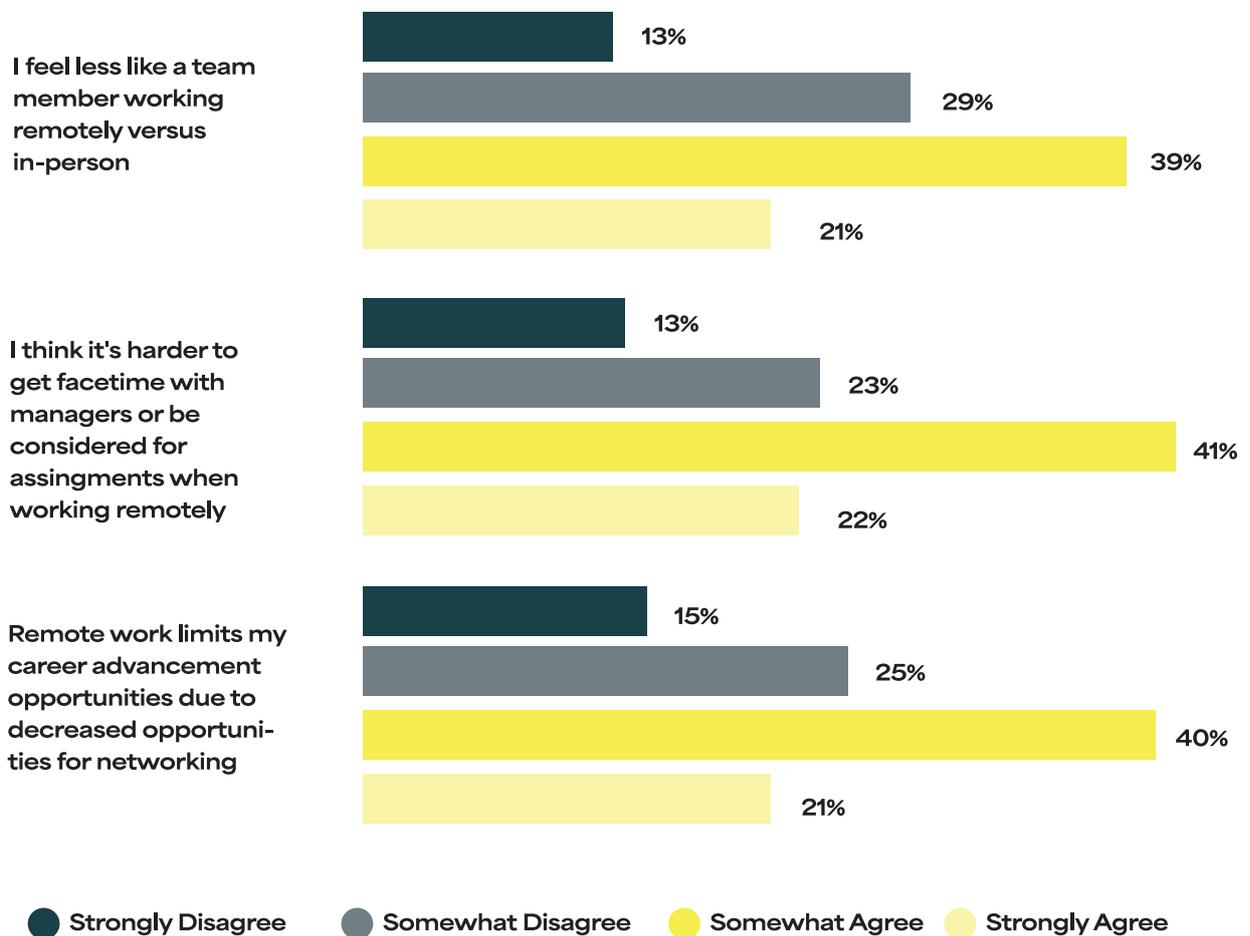


**EMPLOYERS MUST GET
REMOTE RIGHT**

While employees and managers are in agreement that remote work is a win for wellbeing, they also recognize the career risks that come with it. Workplace experts have warned that “proximity bias”—the tendency for in-person managers to favor in-person employees over remote ones—could disadvantage people who work from home more often.¹⁵

We do find some trepidation: 58% of women say remote work limits their career advancement, while 64% of men say the same. They worry it will limit their advancement opportunities, exposure and camaraderie with colleagues:

HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?



Accordingly, employees are somewhat more likely to say in-office work is better for career advancement (42%) than remote (39%), while managers are much more likely to say in-office work is better for career advancement (48%) than remote (39%). A majority of managers believe working in-office is better than remote for camaraderie and relationship building (62%), efficiency (62%), mentorship (64%) and understanding office politics (58%).



While the perils of proximity bias are real, this doesn't mean employers should abandon remote work, particularly in light of the other advantages this research spotlights. It's a wake-up call for managers to make sure their work model doesn't favor a particular set of employees. The answers above provide a good framework: Managers must create systems that ensure the downsides of working from home are mitigated and the benefits of being in-office are replicated in a virtual format. Employers must ask themselves: How can they bring the best of remote work to the office, and the best of the office to the home? In addition, leaders should periodically check their promotion data, to make sure their model is serving all employees equally.

Getting remote right won't be easy, but as this data shows, it's crucial for companies that truly want to support their caregiving employees.

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