

Full-Time Remote Work Is Falling—But Still Five Times Pre-Pandemic Levels, Survey Finds

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An installation titled 'Garden of Eden,' representing an abandoned workspace, during the press preview of the exhibition 'Useless Bodies?' by Scandinavian artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset during Milan Art Week in 2022. (Photo by Emanuele Cremaschi/Getty Images)

Don't say RIP to the work-from-home era quite yet. A new Pew Research Center analysis, released with a broader report on worker satisfaction, finds that hybrid work schedules are rising, but roughly a third of workers whose jobs can be done remotely say they still work from home full-time.

Amid countless layoffs, calls from corporate chieftains to return to the office and the pendulum of power swinging back to employers, it may feel like the work-from-home era is coming to an end. But while the practice is shrinking, it's also showing resilience, with about a third of workers in jobs that can be done remotely saying in one new survey they're still working from home full-time.

A new analysis from Pew Research Center, which was released as a companion to a broader new report on how U.S. workers view their jobs, finds that some 35% of workers with jobs that can be done remotely say they are working from home all of the time. While that's down from 43% in January 2022 and 55% in October 2020, it still far exceeds the 7% of workers who have told Pew they worked from home full-time before the pandemic.

"It does seem like there has been a shift that could be permanent in how people with teleworkable jobs think about where they work," says Juliana Horowitz, Pew's associate director of social and demographic trends research. "A third is a sizable share working from home all of the time."

The decrease in people with jobs that can be done remotely who are working from home full-time came close to matching a corresponding rise in the percentage of them working a hybrid schedule. Those who reported working some or most of their time at home in Pew's survey, which surveyed 5,775 U.S. adults who work full- or part-time from its American Trends Panel, grew from 35% in January 2022 to 41% in February 2023. Workers with jobs that can be done remotely who said they rarely or never work from home grew only slightly, from 11% to 12% in each group.

"It's interesting to see the extent to which hybrid work has really stuck with workers," Horowitz says. Some level of remote or hybrid work "really seems to be becoming more of the norm."

The survey comes amid headlines that appear conflicting about trends in remote and hybrid work. Researchers that include Stanford University's Nicholas Bloom, who has been studying trends on remote work since before the pandemic started, found that despite calls for office returns, the number of job postings for remote-work roles is actually growing, Bloomberg reported recently. From 2019 to early 2023, the share of job postings that say employees can work remotely at least some days of the week grew more than three-fold in the U.S., the study found, though trends vary widely by city and region.

Meanwhile, other media outlets reported on a new U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report in which 72.5% of business said employees "teleworked" rarely or not at all last year. Yet that data stems from a question that appears to be problematic, Bloom said in a post on LinkedIn, pointing to one that's "worded so WFH includes just one employee doing work email once for just 10 minutes at home," which differs from the way remote work is typically defined.

Whatever the actual figure, what's clear is that workers' appetite for work-from-home remains strong, and a smaller but not insignificant group of people appear to be keeping those arrangements, some even on a full-time basis. Pew's survey found that many hybrid workers would prefer to work from home more than they do. Among those who work from home "some of the time," for instance, half said they'd like to do so all (18%) or most (32%) of the time.

Pew's survey also asked workers whether they feel working from home inhibits their career advancement or opportunities, and the majority said they did not think it did. Some 77% of those who work from home at least some of the time said they don't believe it either helps or hurts their access to important assignments, for example.

More do see an impact when it comes to mentoring, however. While a little more than half said it has no impact, 36% said they perceive working from home hurts their access to mentoring opportunities, while just 10% said it helps.

Pew released the work-from-home survey to accompany a broader, more extensive report that asked about worker satisfaction on a range of issues, from the benefits people receive to the hours they work, the perceived safety of their workplaces and their experiences with discrimination.

The report found that about 51% of U.S. workers are highly satisfied with their job overall, with the lowest share saying they are extremely or very satisfied with how much they are paid (just 34%) and their opportunities for promotion (33%). Older workers and those with higher incomes were most likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

The report also showed many are struggling to balance work and personal time. Nearly 30% of workers said they answer work-related messages or emails outside of regular hours often or extremely often—a figure that is higher among those with postgraduate degrees—and nearly half (46%) of workers who have access to paid time off said they don't take all the time their employer offers.