TRENDS IN REMOTE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

June 2025

INTRODUCTION

Remote work has existed for decades, but only became widespread during the pandemic and with the rise of modern technology. The concept began to take shape in the 1970s when Jack Nilles, a former NASA engineer, coined the term "telecommuting." However, it wasn't until the internet and advancements in communication technologies emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries that remote work became a practical option for many businesses.

Remote work gained unprecedented momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. As lockdowns and social distancing measures were implemented, organizations had to rapidly adapt to maintain business continuity. This shift proved remote work's viability, encouraging many organizations to adopt it long-term. The pandemic underscored the potential for increased flexibility, improved work-life balance, and access to a broader talent pool.

In the post-pandemic landscape, organizations are re-evaluating their remote work strategies. Some are embracing hybrid models that allow employees to split their time between remote and in-office work, while others are moving toward fully remote setups to reduce overhead costs and attract geographically diverse talent. At the same time, some organizations are asking employees to return to the office, either partially or fully, in an effort to restore in-person collaboration and oversight.

WCBC's survey on remote work arrangements captures current trends, practices, and organizational perspectives as they navigate this evolving landscape. Understanding these evolving practices offers a roadmap for shaping resilient, flexible workplaces of the future.

KEY INSIGHTS

WCBC's Trends in Remote Work Arrangements Survey was conducted in May 2025 and included data from 261 organizations across Canada. The main takeaways include:

Remote and Hybrid Work Are the Norm

- 91% of organizations offer hybrid arrangements, and 71% offer formal remote work. Only 4% do not allow remote work at all.

Hybrid Employees Typically On-Site Half the Month

- Most hybrid models require employees to be on-site about 11 to 15 days per month. Public sector employers tend to set more defined requirements, whereas not-for-profits often allow for greater flexibility.

Retention and Competitiveness Are Key Drivers

- The most cited reasons for offering remote work are improving retention (89%) and staying competitive in the talent market (86%).

Most Organizations Have Formal Policies

- 81% have formal remote work policies, especially the public sector (87%). Private sector lags slightly behind (77%).

Geographic Flexibility Varies Widely

- 63% limit remote work to areas within travel distance of a business site. The private sector is more likely to permit remote work across Canada or even globally.

Few Organizations Monitor Productivity Rigorously

- Just 19% of organizations actively track remote employee productivity.

Remote Work Is Expected to Support Talent Strategy

- 59% expect remote work to positively impact talent acquisition and retention. Most anticipate growing employee demand for remote options over the next 1 to 2 years.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The results of WCBC's Trends in Remote Work Arrangements Survey are summarized below.

CURRENT WORK ARRANGEMENTS

Formal/Structured Remote Work Arrangements
Remote work has become a prominent feature in organizational policies, with 71% of Canadian employers offering formal remote working arrangements that allow employees to work remotely on a regular basis. A further, 23% of employers provide remote work on an ad hoc basis, accommodating occasional work-from-home days for specific needs. Only 4% of employers do not offer any remote work options at all. Among large employers (those with over 500 employees), the trend is even more pronounced with 82% having formal, structured remote work arrangements in place and just 2% offering no remote work options.

Figure 1: Formal/Structured Remote Work Arrangements
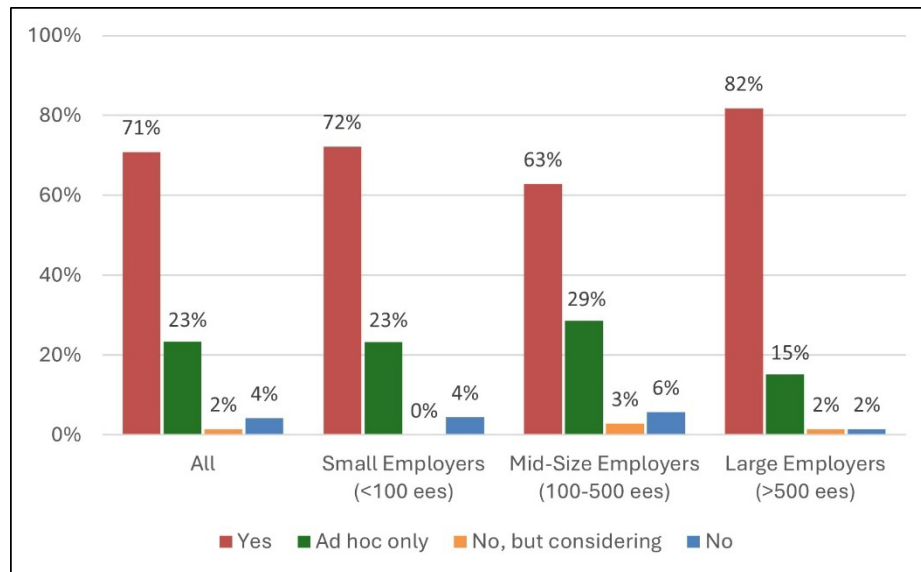
These findings underscore the acceptance and integration of remote work into organizational policies. Most organizations recognize the benefits of structured remote work arrangements, such as increased flexibility and improved work-life balance. However, approximately one-quarter of organizations still prefer to maintain traditional in-office/on-site work environments, or only offer remote work on an as-needed basis.
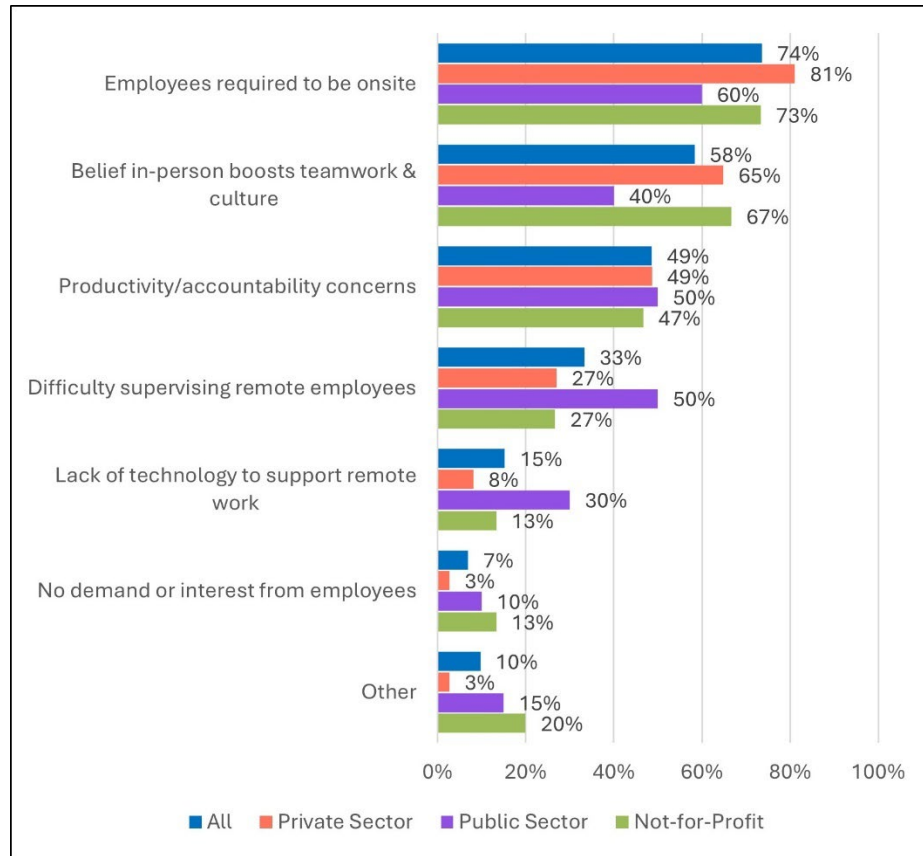
Reasons For Not Offering Remote Work Arrangements
Among employers that do not offer formal remote work arrangements, the most commonly cited reason is that employees are required to be on-site (74%), followed by a belief that in-person work enhances teamwork and culture (58%) and concerns about productivity and accountability (49%). Roughly one-third (33%) also cite difficulty supervising remote employees, while fewer point to a lack of technology (15%), lack of employee demand (7%), or other reasons (10%).

Sector-specific differences are notable. Private sector employers are more likely to emphasize the importance of in-person work for teamwork and culture (65%) and the need for employees to be on-site (81%), and they report fewer issues with technology (8%) or supervision (27%). Public sector employers, by contrast, more frequently cite technology limitations (30%) and supervision challenges (50%), while placing less emphasis on in-person culture benefits (40%). Not-for-profits are more likely than others to cite a lack of employee interest (13%).
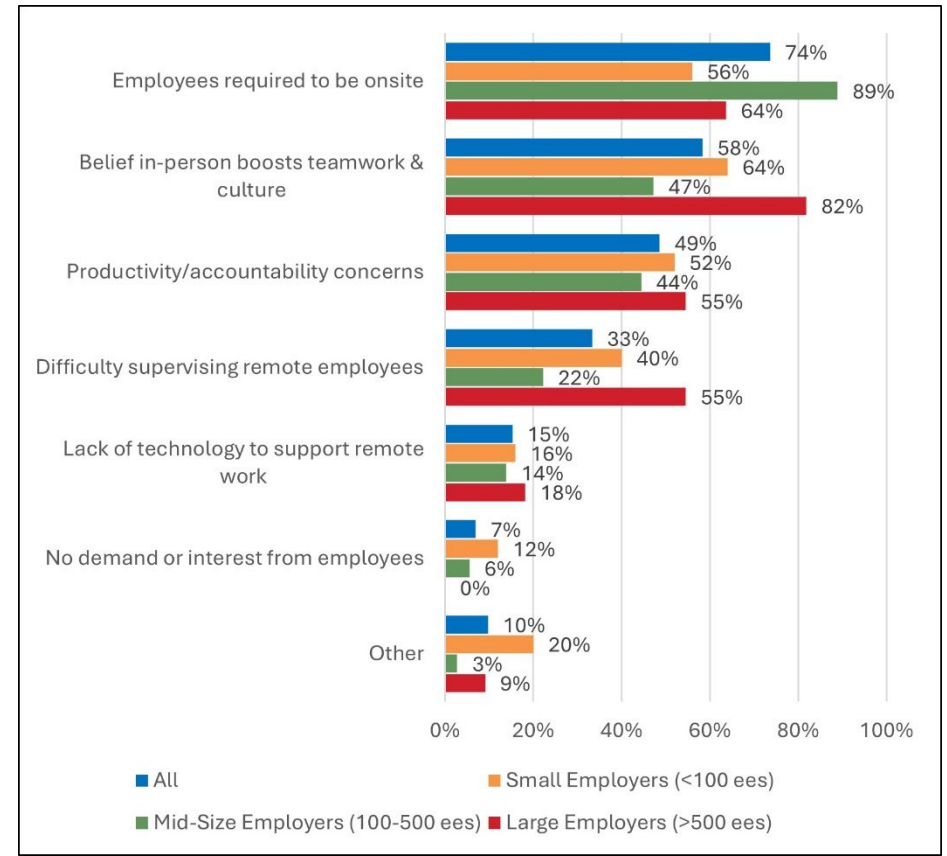
Figure 2: Reasons For Not Offering Remote Work Arrangements (by Economic Sector)

Bar chart — Reasons For Not Offering Remote Work Arrangements (by Economic Sector). Legend: All, Private Sector, Public Sector, Not-for-Profit.

- Employees required to be onsite: All 74%, Private Sector 81%, Public Sector 60%, Not-for-Profit 73%
- Belief in-person boosts teamwork & culture: All 58%, Private Sector 65%, Public Sector 40%, Not-for-Profit 67%
- Productivity/accountability concerns: All 49%, Private Sector 49%, Public Sector 50%, Not-for-Profit 47%
- Difficulty supervising remote employees: All 33%, Private Sector 27%, Public Sector 50%, Not-for-Profit 27%
- Lack of technology to support remote work: All 15%, Private Sector 8%, Public Sector 30%, Not-for-Profit 13%
- No demand or interest from employees: All 7%, Private Sector 3%, Public Sector 10%, Not-for-Profit 13%
- Other: All 10%, Private Sector 3%, Public Sector 15%, Not-for-Profit 20%

Figure 3: Reasons For Not Offering Remote Work Arrangements (by Employee Size)

Bar chart — Reasons For Not Offering Remote Work Arrangements (by Employee Size). Legend: All, Small Employers (<100 ees), Mid-Size Employers (100-500 ees), Large Employers (>500 ees).

- Employees required to be onsite: All 74%, Small 56%, Mid-Size 89%, Large 64%
- Belief in-person boosts teamwork & culture: All 58%, Small 64%, Mid-Size 47%, Large 82%
- Productivity/accountability concerns: All 49%, Small 52%, Mid-Size 44%, Large 55%
- Difficulty supervising remote employees: All 33%, Small 40%, Mid-Size 22%, Large 55%
- Lack of technology to support remote work: All 15%, Small 16%, Mid-Size 14%, Large 18%
- No demand or interest from employees: All 7%, Small 12%, Mid-Size 6%, Large 0%
- Other: All 10%, Small 20%, Mid-Size 3%, Large 9%

Organization size also plays a role: mid-size employers (those with 100–500 employees) are the most likely to report that employees must be on-site (89%), while large employers (500+ employees) are more concerned with supervision (55%) and productivity (55%), and most strongly believe that in-person work supports culture (82%).

Reasons For Offering Remote Work Arrangements

Employers that offer remote work arrangements most commonly cite employee retention (89%) and the need to remain competitive (86%) as key drivers. Improving employee wellness and mental health is also a major factor (74%), followed by accommodating family obligations (55%) and aiding in attraction of new talent (50%). Fewer employers offer remote work to reduce overhead costs (23%).

There are several noteworthy differences by sector. Public sector employers are particularly likely to offer remote work to retain employees (93%) and stay competitive (89%), and cite reducing overhead costs more frequently (33%) than private sector (24%) or not-for-profits (14%). Private sector employers emphasize attraction (56%) and accommodating family needs (62%), while not-for-profits are less likely to cite these reasons and more likely to focus on wellness and mental health (78%).

Figure 4: Reasons For Offering Remote Work Arrangements (by Economic Sector)
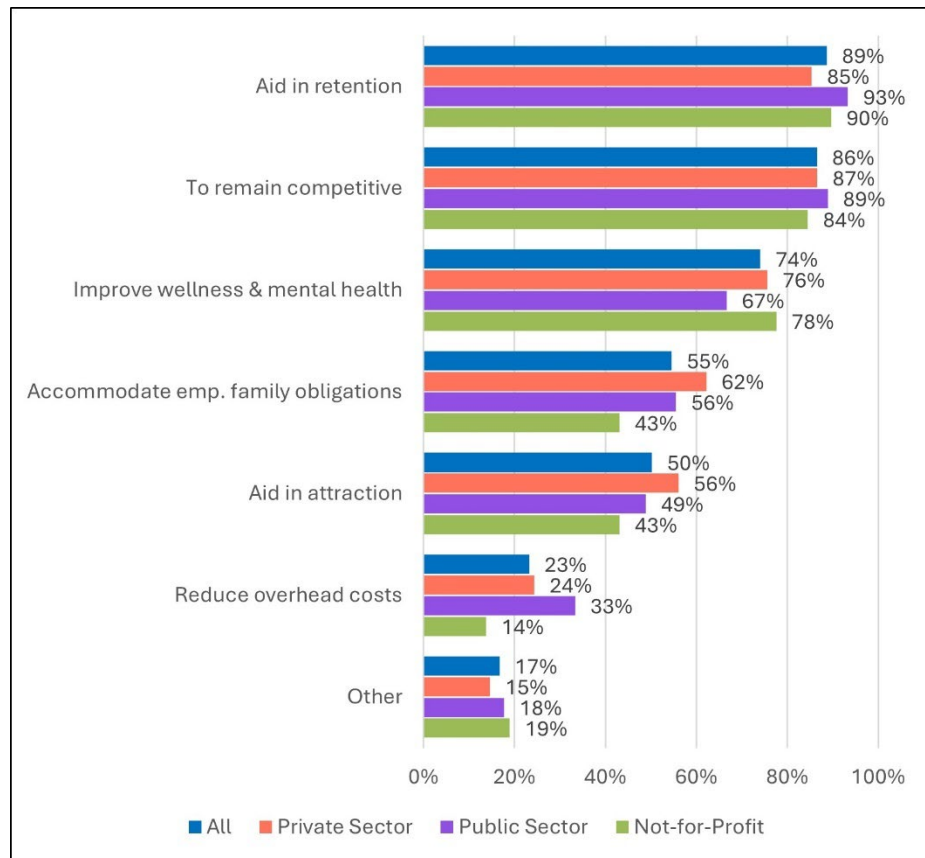
Large employers are the most likely to report that remote work aids in both retention (93%) and attraction (65%), and they cite cost savings (33%) more often than smaller employers. Small and mid-size employers are generally aligned with the overall trend, though small employers are slightly less likely to cite attraction (43%).

Figure 5: Reasons For Offering Remote Work Arrangements (by Employee Size)
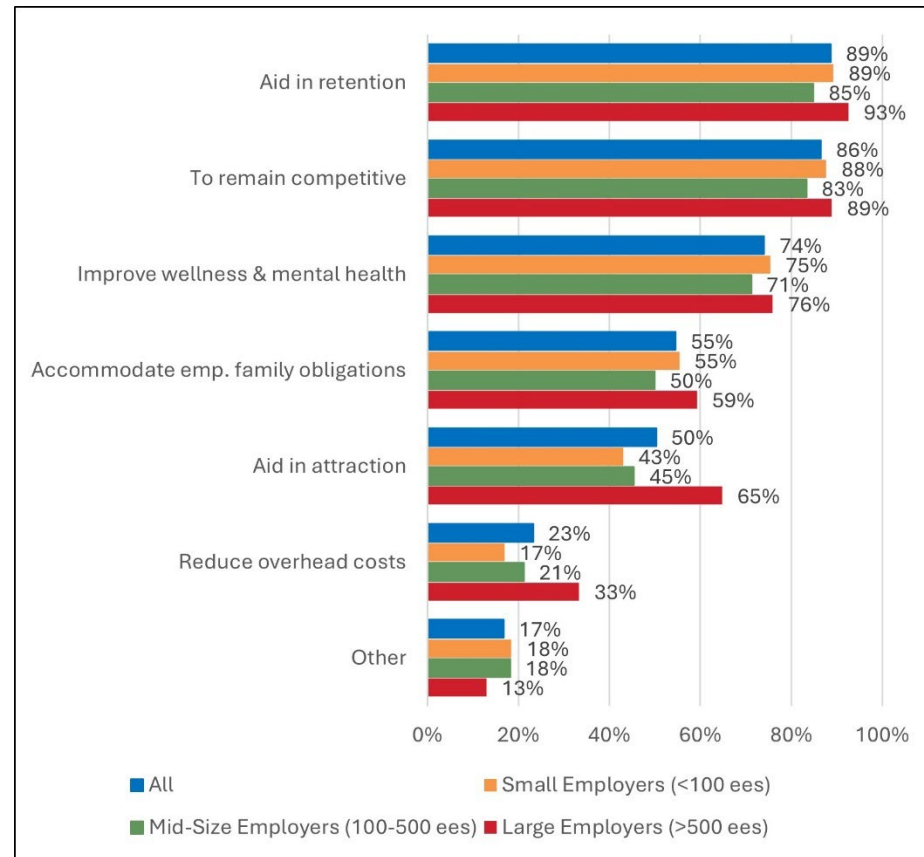
Overall, while the strategic use of remote work is broadly consistent across employers, larger employers and those in the public sector appear more likely to view it as a tool for retention and cost management, whereas private sector employers place more emphasis on flexibility and family accommodations.

Although only 23% of organizations cite reducing overhead costs as a reason to support remote work, the financial benefits remain significant—especially when considered alongside office space trends. As of Q1 2025, Canada's national office vacancy rate declined slightly to 18.7%, down 10 basis points from the previous quarter. Downtown Toronto and Vancouver saw rates fall to 18.5% and 10.7%, respectively. These are the first declines since early 2020, suggesting a modest shift as some employers begin encouraging a return to the office.

Nevertheless, vacancy rates remain well above pre-pandemic levels, when downtown Toronto and Vancouver were closer to 2%. The persistently elevated rates reflect a broader trend: many organizations are reevaluating their long-term need for physical office space, with some opting to downsize or eliminate offices altogether to reduce costs and enhance flexibility.

When Remote Work Was Introduced

The vast majority of employers (79%) introduced remote work arrangements during the pandemic, while only 14% had such arrangements in place beforehand. A smaller group (7%) adopted remote work after the pandemic had ended. These patterns were generally consistent across economic sectors and organization sizes. However, private sector employers were somewhat more likely to have offered remote work pre-pandemic (20%), and not-for-profits were more likely than others to implement remote arrangements after the pandemic (10%).

This delayed adoption among not-for-profits may reflect a combination of factors. Many NFPs operate with limited budgets and early on may have lacked the infrastructure to support remote work. During the height of the pandemic, their focus was often on urgent service delivery and crisis management. As remote work became more mainstream and employee expectations around flexibility evolved, many NFPs likely re-evaluated their practices and introduced remote options where feasible—both to stay competitive in attracting talent and to support employee well-being.

Figure 6: When Remote Work Was Introduced
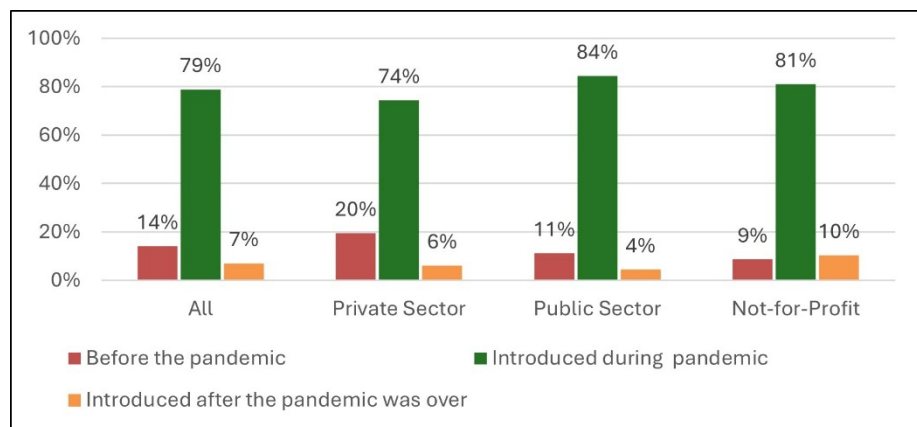
ELIGIBILITY & ROLE REQUIREMENTS

Roles Restricted From Remote Work

Most employers (82%) report having some roles that are explicitly restricted from remote work. This is most common in the public (91%) and private (84%) sectors. Not-for-profits are less likely to have such restrictions, with just under one-third (29%) indicating that all roles are eligible for remote work.
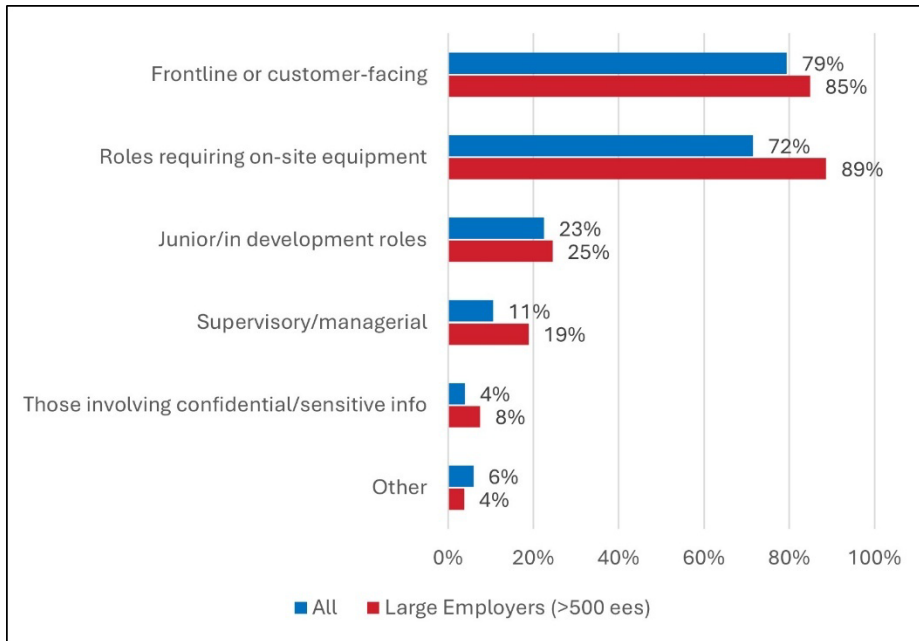
Figure 7: Percent of Organizations With Roles Restricted From Remote Work
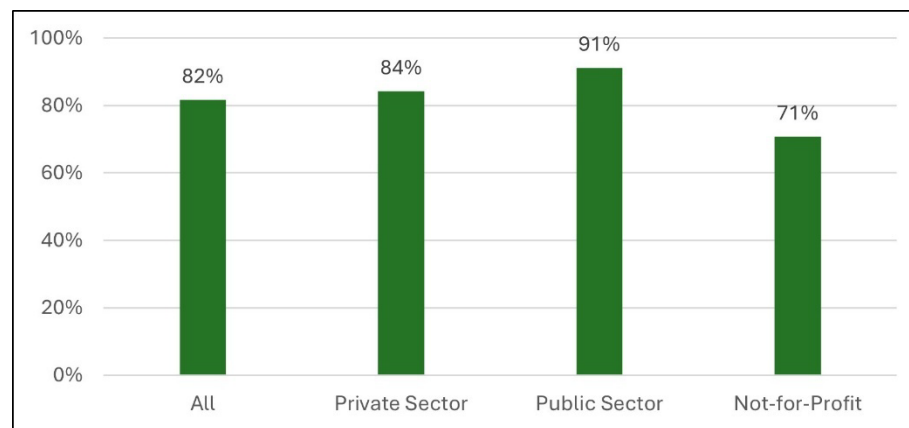
Among the roles restricted from remote work, the most common types include frontline or customer-facing positions (79%) and those requiring on-site equipment (72%). Additionally, 23% of employers restrict junior or in-development roles, likely due to the need for closer supervision and training. Supervisory or managerial roles (11%) and those involving confidential or sensitive information (4%) are less commonly restricted, but restrictions on supervisory roles are more common in larger organizations (19%). This may reflect a greater emphasis on in-person oversight, the need for managerial visibility, or more formalized structures that prioritize consistency and control in leadership practices.

**Figure 8: Types of Roles Restricted From Remote Work (All Organizations vs. Large Employers)**

Role	All	Large Employers (>500 ees)
Frontline or customer-facing	79%	85%
Roles requiring on-site equipment	72%	89%
Junior/in development roles	23%	25%
Supervisory/managerial	11%	19%
Those involving confidential/sensitive info	4%	8%
Other	6%	4%

■ All ■ Large Employers (>500 ees)

Factors Considered When Determining Eligibility

When determining eligibility for remote work, employers consider several factors. The nature of the job role (95%) and department-specific needs (73%) are the most significant. This suggests that roles requiring specific on-site tasks or those integral to certain departments are less likely to be eligible for remote work. Employee job performance is also a key consideration, with 51% of organizations factoring this into their decisions. Other factors include the level of seniority (11%) and tenure (9%), indicating that more experienced or long-term employees may have greater access to remote work arrangements.

Figure 9: Factors Considered When Determining Eligibility

Factor	Percentage
The nature of the job role	95%
Department-specific needs	73%
Employee's job performance	51%
Level of seniority	11%
Tenure	9%
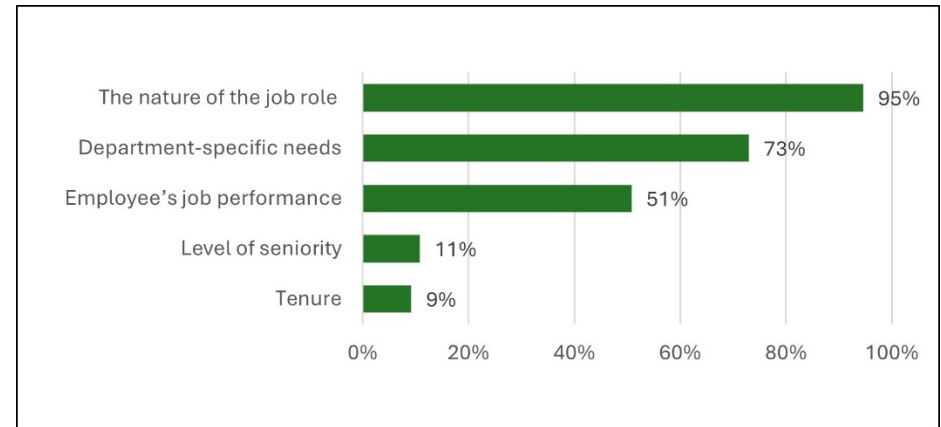
These findings highlight the complexities employers face in balancing remote work opportunities with operational requirements. By carefully evaluating the nature of job roles and individual performance, employers aim to maintain productivity and ensure that essential tasks are effectively managed, whether on-site or remotely.

LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

Autonomy in Work Location

The survey results reveal that a vast majority of employees, 94%, have the choice to work remotely, highlighting the flexibility offered by organizations. Only 10% of employees are required to work remotely, indicating that most employers prioritize employee preference and autonomy in their work arrangements.

Figure 10: Autonomy in Work Location

|	Percentage
Employees choose	94%
Employees required	10%
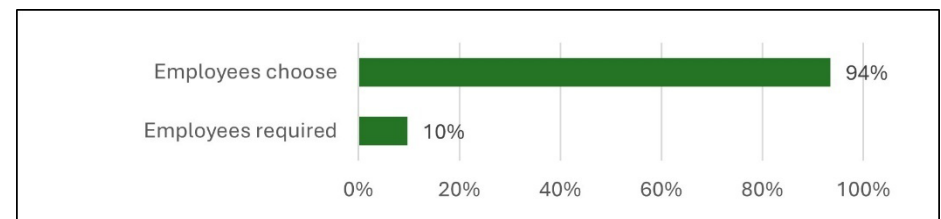
Note: In some organizations, employees are required to work remotely, while others are given the choice. Therefore, the above graph does not equal 100%

Types of Remote Work Arrangements

Hybrid work arrangements which consist of a mix of remote and on-site attendance are far more common than fully remote setups, with 91% of employers offering hybrid options. Public sector organizations are especially likely to offer hybrid work (98%).

Fully remote arrangements in which employees have no requirements to be on-site are most common in the private sector (68%) and less prevalent among public sector (49%) and not-for-profit organizations (50%).

Figure 11: Types of Remote Work Arrangement
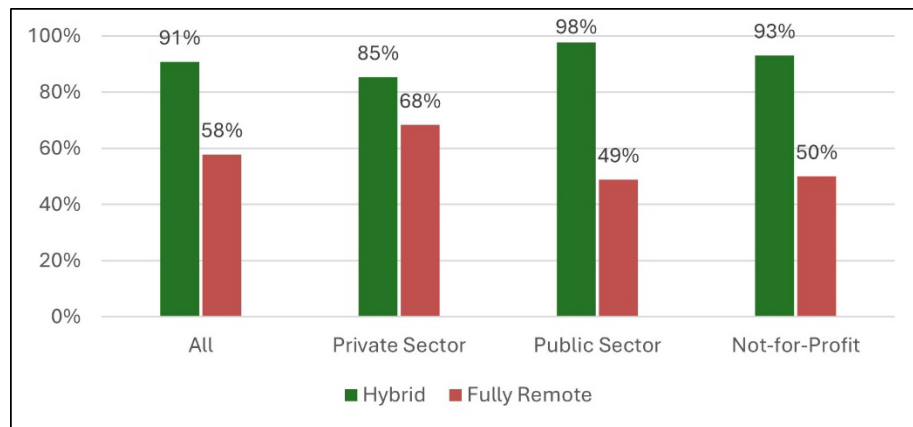
Proportion of Employees Working Fully Remote

As illustrated above, more than half of organizations permit some employees to work fully remotely. However, 76% indicate that only a small portion of their workforce has this option. This pattern holds steady across economic sectors, with the private sector showing a slightly higher share of fully remote employees.

Figure 12: Proportion of Employees Working Fully Remote
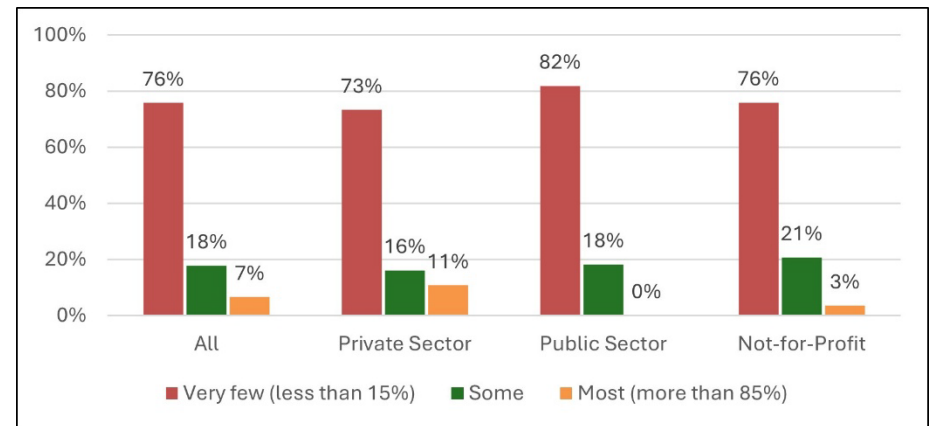
Proportion of Employees Participating in Hybrid Work

Hybrid work is more widely adopted. Forty percent of employers report that most of their employees (more than 85%) participate in hybrid work. Not-for-profits stand out, with 61% reporting widespread hybrid arrangements, while the public and private sectors are more likely to have a mix of employees participating.

Figure 13: Proportion of Employees Participating in Hybrid Work
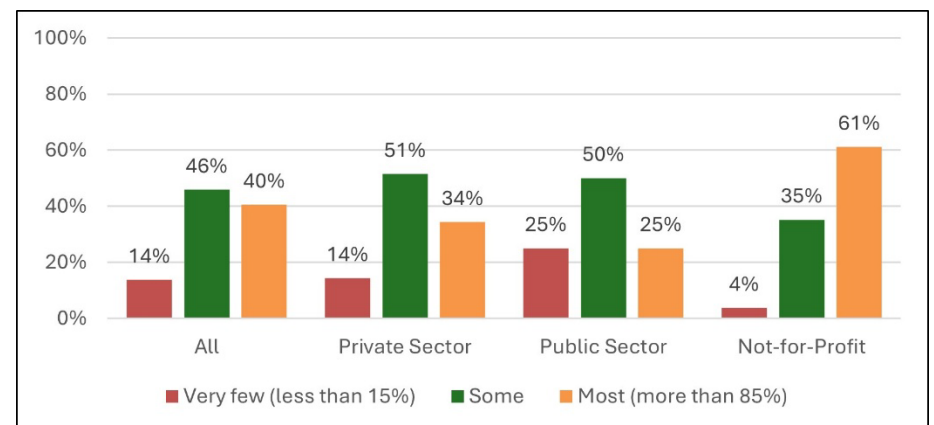
On-Site Requirements for Hybrid Employees

When it comes to on-site requirements for hybrid employees, most employers expect employees to be present between 11 to 15 days per month (36%), followed by 6 to 10 days (26%). A small portion report very minimal (1 to 5 days) (9%) or extensive (16+ days) (9%) on-site requirements. Some employers (13%) say requirements vary widely, and a few (7%) have no on-site requirement.

Not-for-profits are the most flexible as they are more likely to report no requirement (13%) and lean toward fewer on-site days, with 39% requiring only 6 to 10 days.

**Figure 14: On-Site Requirements for Hybrid Employees (by Economic Sector)**
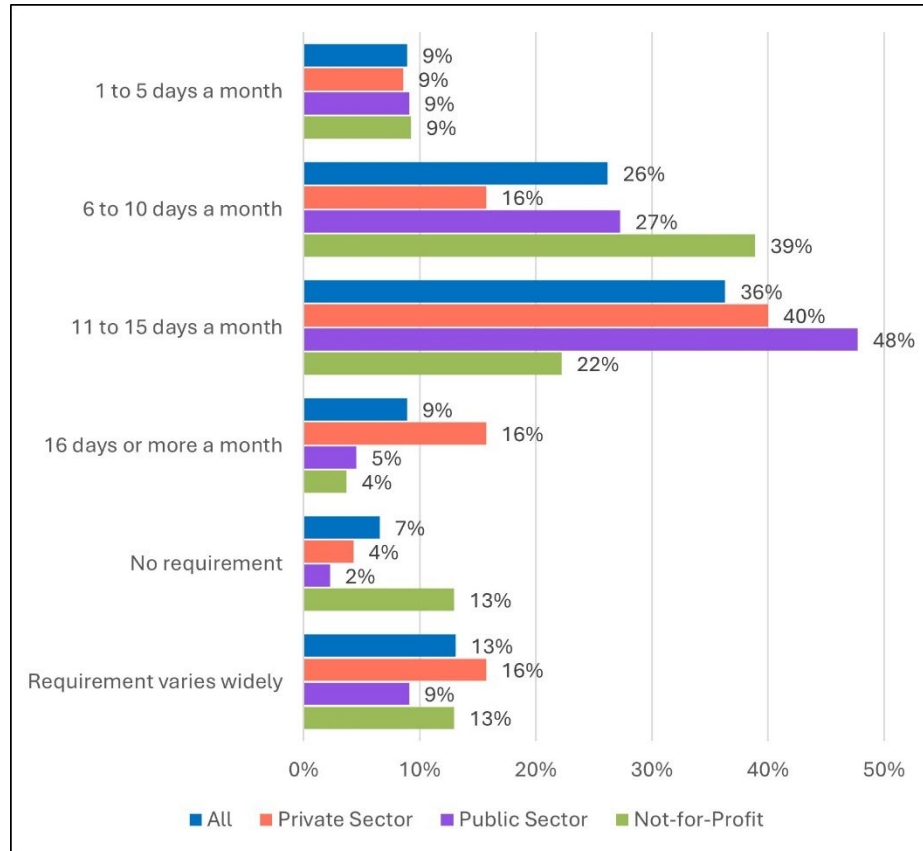
By organization size, large employers show a relatively even distribution across categories but are more likely than mid-size employers to have higher on-site expectations (16+ days) (14%) and fewer instances of no requirement (0%). Mid-size employers show the strongest preference for 11 to 15 days (43%), while small employers are the most likely to report no requirement (12%) and the most variation in on-site requirements.
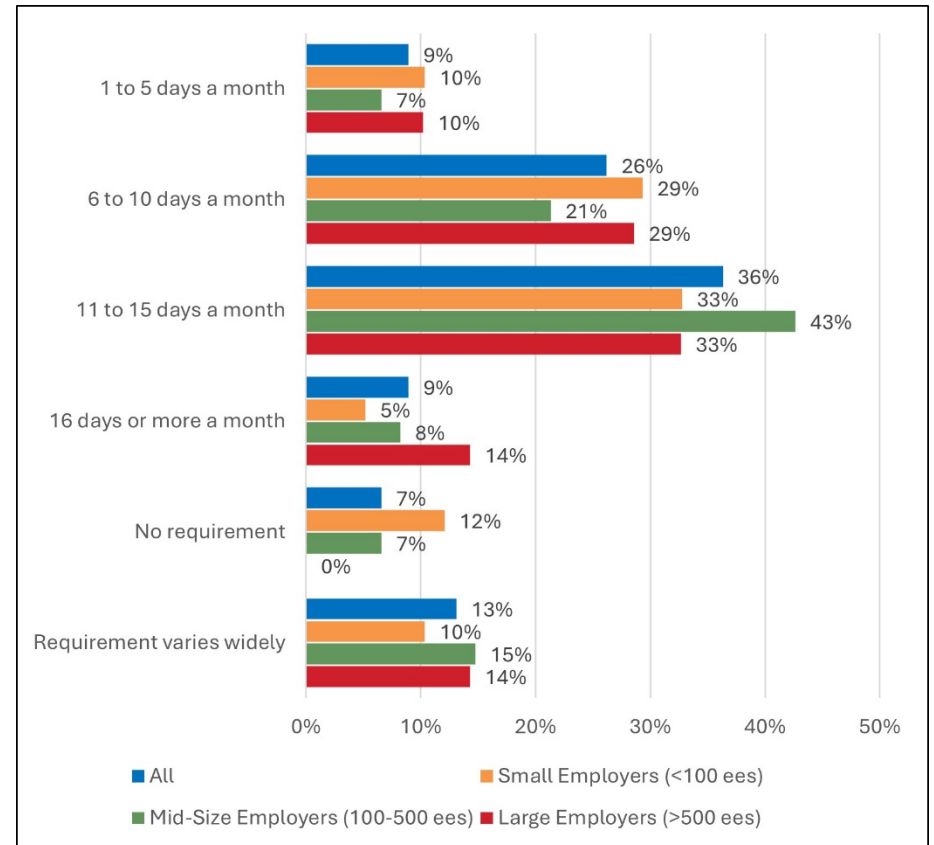
Overall, the most common hybrid model includes employees being on-site about half the month, but flexibility varies. Public sector and mid-size employers appear to have more structured expectations, while not-for-profits and small employers tend to offer greater flexibility or less prescriptive arrangements.
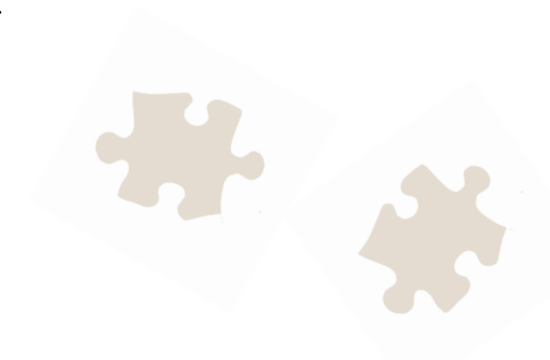
REMOTE WORK POLICIES

Where Employees Can Work Remotely

Organizations vary widely in how much geographic flexibility they allow for remote work. While some permit employees to work from anywhere—even globally—others limit remote work to within commuting distance of a physical workplace. The following results show how these policies differ by economic sector and organization size.

Most organizations (63%) limit remote work to locations within travel distance of a business site. This is especially common in the public sector (87%). The private sector is notably more flexible: 24% allow remote work from anywhere globally (compared to just 2% in the public sector), and 40% allow it from anywhere within Canada. Not-for-profits are most likely to limit remote work within their own province or territory (45%).

Figure 16: Where Employees Can Work Remotely (by Economic Sector)
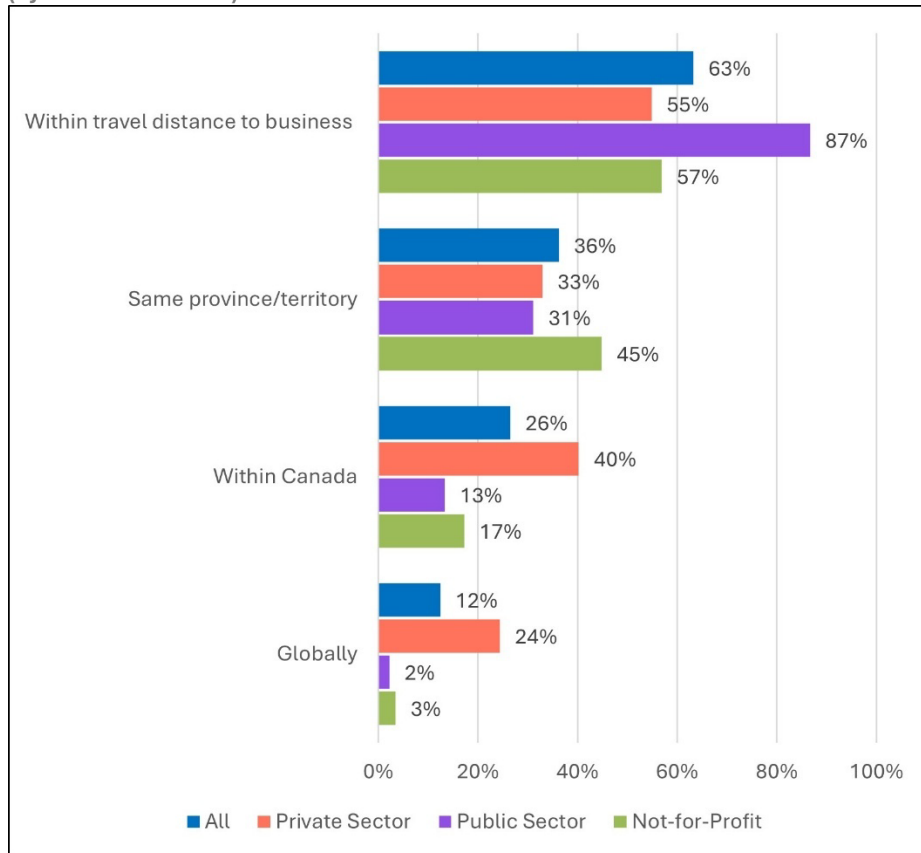
Large employers are more likely to require remote employees to be within commuting distance (72%), while small employers show greater flexibility—17% allow global remote work and 32% allow it within Canada. Medium-sized employers fall somewhere in between but are the most likely to limit remote work within the same province or territory (41%). In contrast, only 6% of large employers permit global remote work, indicating a more conservative approach to geographic flexibility.

**Figure 17: Where Employees Can Work Remotely (by Employee Size)**
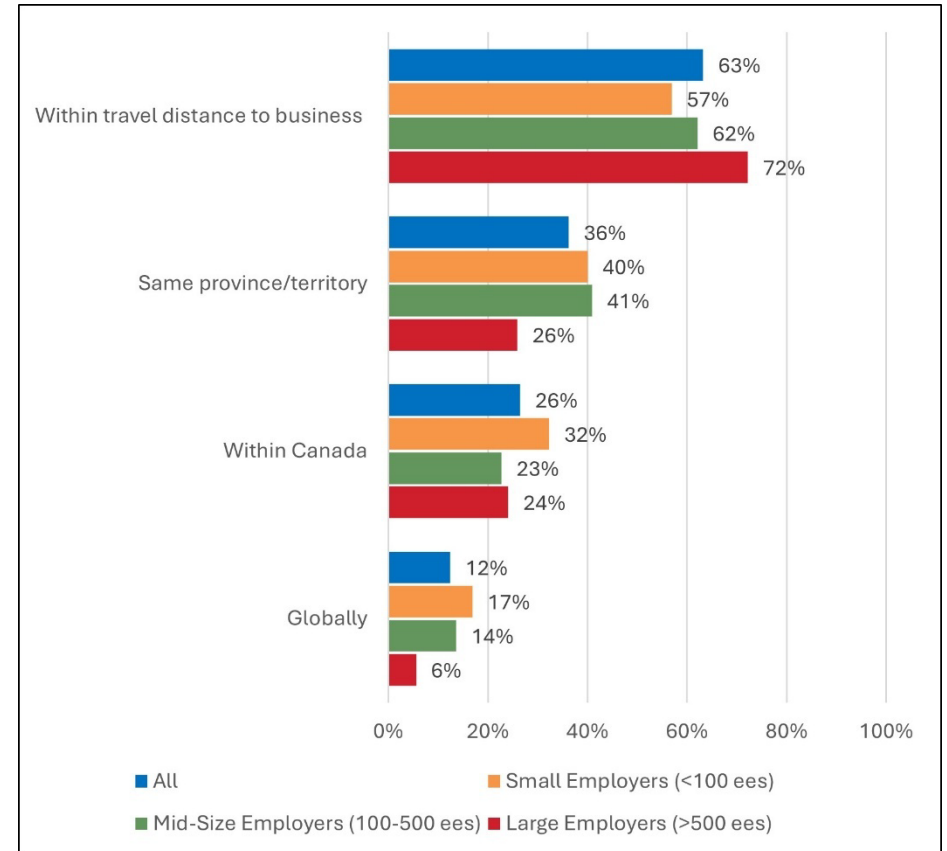
Basis for Compensation

Among organizations that allow employees to work from different geographic locations, most (87%) base compensation on market rates at the business location, rather than where the employee resides. This approach is especially dominant in the public sector (100%) and not-for-profits (97%).

The private sector shows more flexibility, with 23% basing pay on the employee's location, compared to none in the public sector and very few (3%) not-for-profits. This approach can help ensure fairness and competitiveness in different regions, but it also highlights the complexities of managing a geographically dispersed workforce.

Figure 18: Basis for Compensation

Legend: ■ Market rates in our business location ■ Market rates of the employee's location
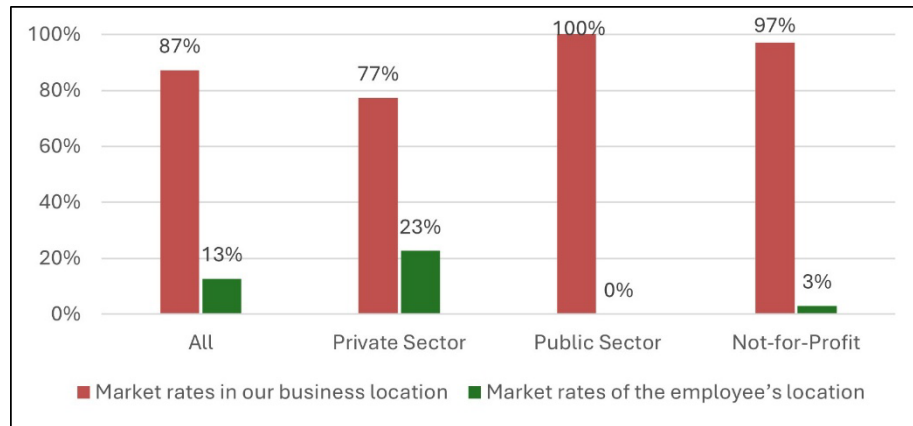
Responsibility for Travel Expenses
Among organizations with employees working at locations away from the main business site, responsibility for covering travel expenses to attend in-person meetings varies considerably. Overall, 32% of employers require the employee to cover the costs, while 27% fully cover the expenses. Another 25% say it depends on the circumstance, while only 5% of employers partially cover costs.

There are clear differences by sector. Public sector employers are more likely to take a case-by-case approach (38%) and are less likely to fully cover expenses (19%). Notably, they are also likely to place the cost burden on employees (38%). Not-for-profit employers are even more likely to make employees responsible (48%) and least likely to fully cover costs (21%) or handle it situationally (15%).

Figure 19: Responsibility for Travel Expenses (by Economic Sector)
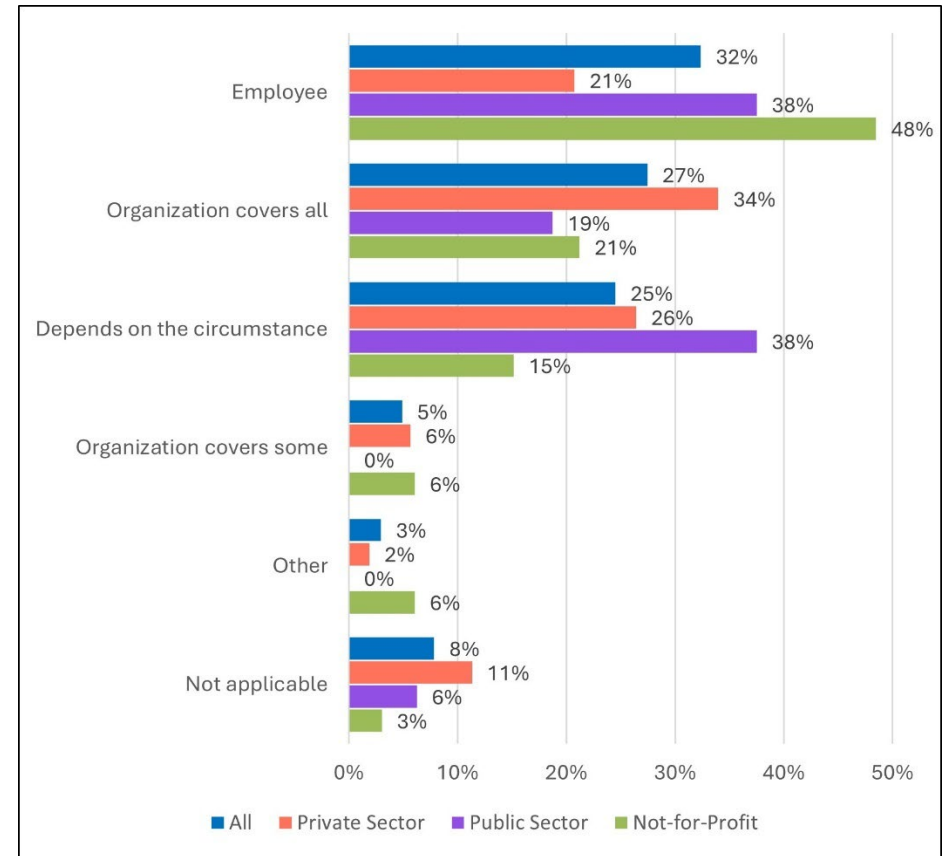
Prevalence of Formal Remote Work Policies

The vast majority of employers (81%) have a formal, documented policy on remote work arrangements. This figure is even higher in the public sector (87%), reflecting the sector's strong emphasis on formalization and compliance. In contrast, the private sector lags slightly behind at 77%, with a higher proportion (16%) still considering implementing such policies. Among not-for-profits, 83% have formal policies, which is on par with the overall average.

Figure 20: Prevalence of Formal Remote Work Policies (by Economic Sector)
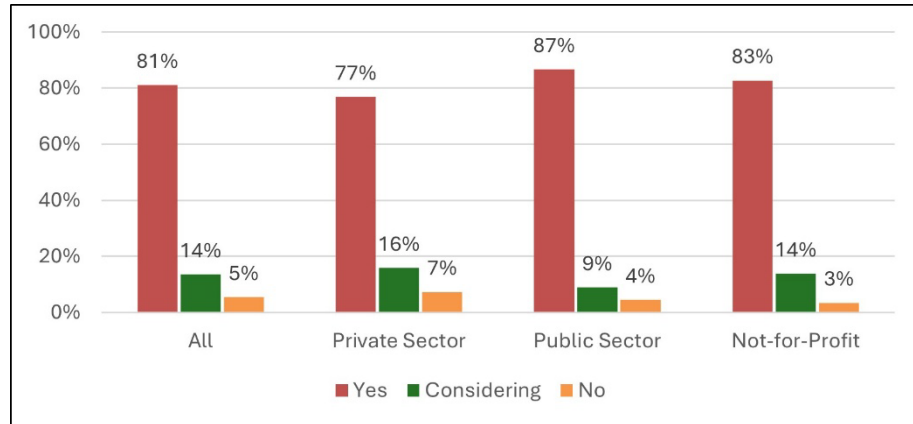
Content of Formal Remote Work Policies

Organizations with formal remote work policies primarily address logistics, security, and compliance. Most include guidance on workspace suitability (91%), equipment (85%), work hours and accountability (85%), cybersecurity and information protection (82%), and health and safety (76%).

Fewer policies cover interpersonal or cultural aspects—only 42% address employee conduct (e.g., dress codes), and 29% mention caregiver or family accommodations.

Collaboration practices like scheduled check-ins (47%), eligible positions (47%), and communication tools to be used (63%) appear in many policies, though not universally.

Less common are provisions for performance management (36%), communication response times (27%), and insurance (16%). Just 7% include unique or unconventional elements.

Figure 21: Content of Formal Remote Work Policies
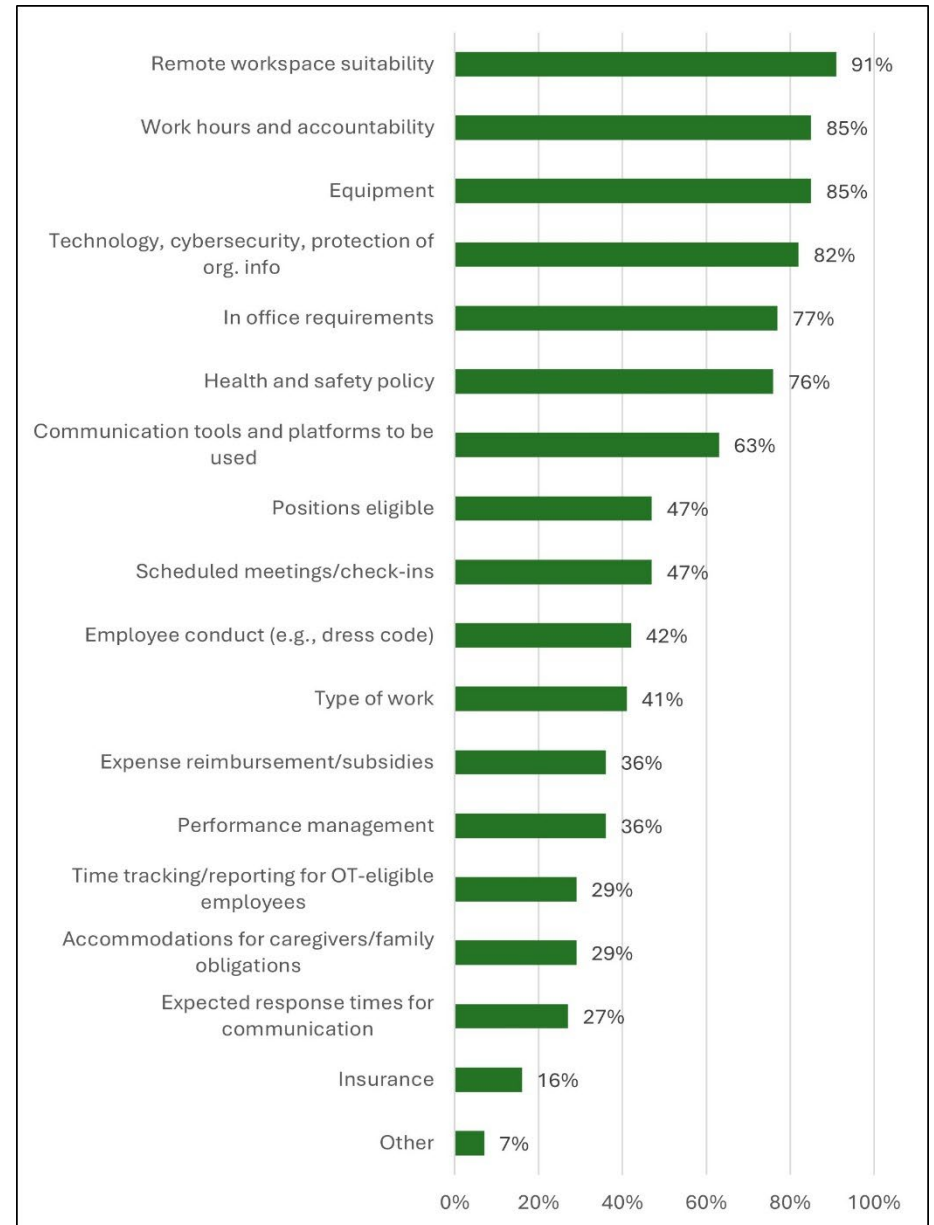
Overall, the data suggest that while most organizations are focused on ensuring safe, secure, and clearly structured remote work environments, there is less consistency in addressing cultural, performance, and employee experience considerations.

## EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE & ENGAGEMENT

Gathering Employee Feedback on Remote Work

Understanding employee experiences and engagement with remote work is crucial for employers aiming to optimize their remote work policies. Organizations are fairly evenly split in how they gather feedback on remote work experiences: 35% conducted formal surveys, 32% used informal or ad hoc methods, and 32% have not surveyed employees at all.

Economic Sector Differences:
- Public sector employers are the most likely to have used formal surveys (44%), but also the most likely to have not surveyed at all (42%), indicating a polarized approach.
- Not-for-profits are the most likely to gather feedback informally (43%) and the least likely to report no employee input (only 21%), suggesting a more grassroots approach.
- Private sector employers show the highest proportion of not surveying employees (35%) and are least likely to have used formal surveys (29%).

Figure 22: Gathering Employee Feedback on Remote Work
(by Economic Sector)
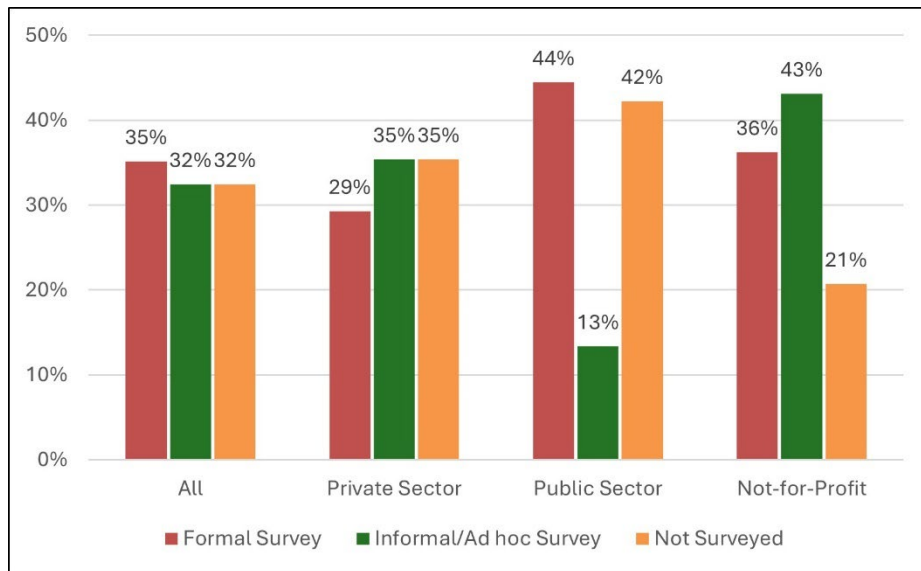
Organization Size Differences:
- Large employers are the most likely to not have surveyed employees (43%), despite having the resources to do so, and have the lowest use of informal methods (22%).
- Small employers are more likely to have used informal surveys (43%), while less than a quarter (23%) have not gathered any feedback.
- Medium-sized employers reflect the overall averages closely, with a balanced mix of formal, informal, and no feedback.

Figure 23: Gathering Employee Feedback on Remote Work
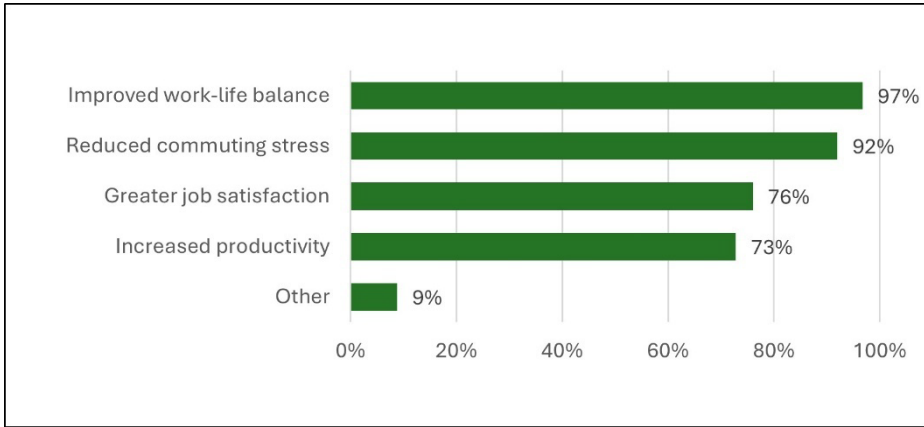(by Employee Size)
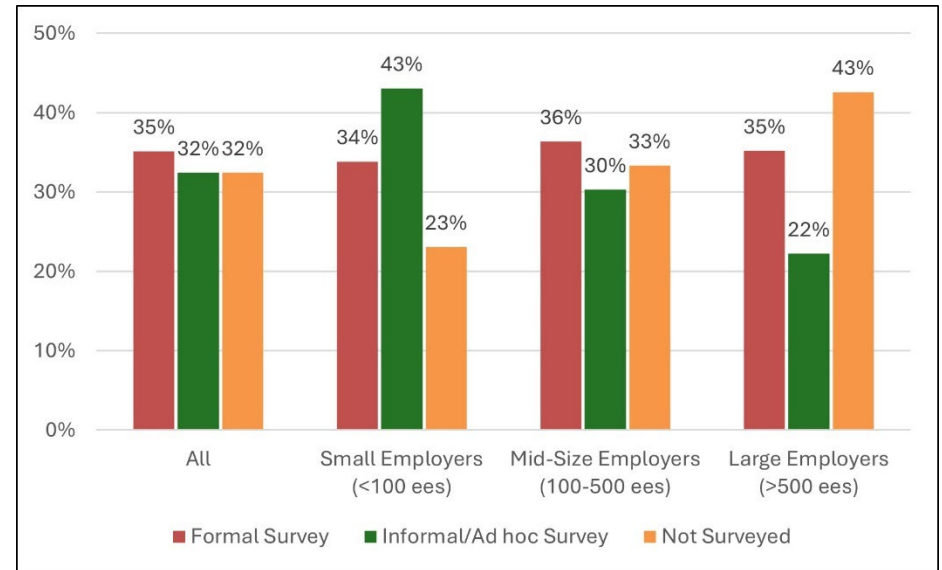
In summary, formal employee surveys are more common in the public sector, while informal approaches dominate among not-for-profits and smaller employers. Larger employers, surprisingly, are the most likely to have gathered no feedback at all.

Employee-Reported Benefits of Remote Work (as observed by employers)

According to organizations which utilize surveys, employees have reported several benefits from remote work, with improved work-life balance being the most universally acknowledged, cited by 97% of respondents. This highlights the significant positive impact remote work can have on employees' personal and professional lives. Reduced commuting stress is another major benefit, reported by 92% of employees, underscoring the relief from daily travel. Greater job satisfaction (76%) and increased productivity (73%) are also notable advantages, reflecting how remote work can enhance both efficiency and morale.

**Figure 24: Employee-Reported Benefits of Remote Work (as observed by employers)**

These benefits collectively demonstrate the value of remote work in fostering a more balanced and satisfying work environment.

Employee-Reported Challenges of Remote Work (as observed by employers)

According to employers who have surveyed their remote workforce, the most frequently reported challenge is isolation, cited by 55% of employees. Half (50%) struggle to separate work from personal life, while 36% experience communication difficulties and 30% face technology issues. Interestingly, 17% of employees reported no challenges, suggesting a smooth transition for some. Only 7% noted decreased productivity, indicating that most employees are maintaining or even improving their performance while working remotely.

Figure 25: Employee-Reported Challenges of Remote Work (as observed by employers)
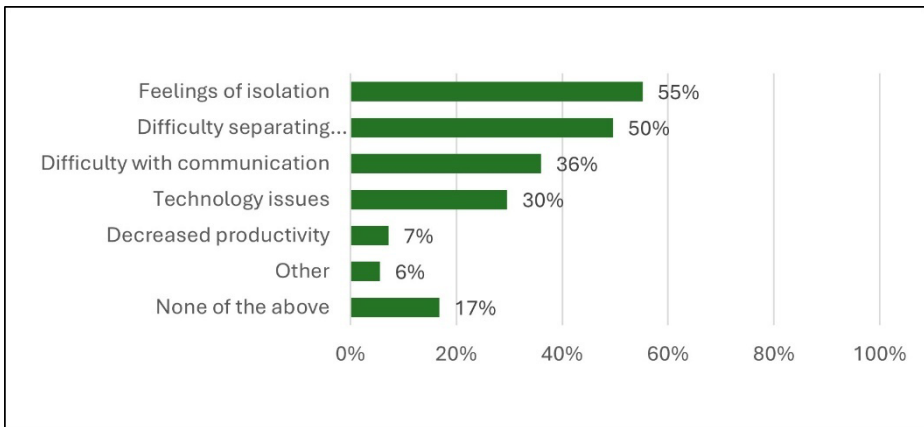
These insights into employee experiences and engagement with remote work provide valuable guidance for employers looking to refine their remote work policies. By addressing the common challenges and leveraging the reported benefits, employers can create a more supportive and effective remote work environment.

WORKPLACE CULTURE & COMMUNICATIONS

Impact on Workplace Culture

Most organizations (59%) report that remote work has had a positive impact on their culture, while relatively few (10%) say the impact has been negative. However, perceptions vary notably by employers' size:

- Small and medium-sized employers (62% and 61%, respectively) are most likely to report a positive cultural impact.
- Large employers, while still more positive than negative, are less enthusiastic (56%) and report the highest level of negative impact (17%), which is significantly above the overall average.

**Figure 26: Impact on Workplace Culture (by Employee Size)**
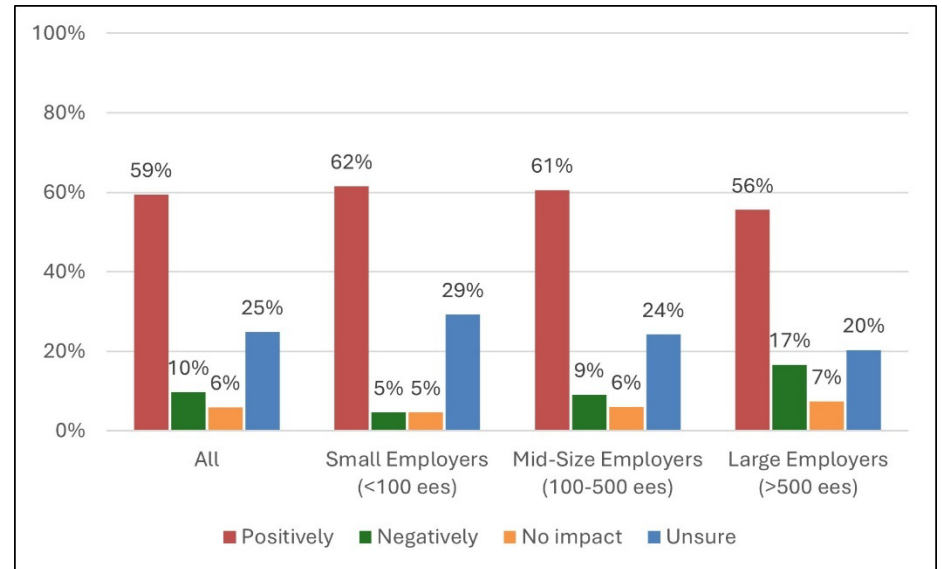
Frequency Remote Workers Included in Team Building or Social Activities
Most organizations include remote workers in team-building or social activities. The most common frequency is monthly (39%), followed by quarterly (34%), and weekly (19%). Only 9% report rarely or never including remote workers.

Notable differences emerge by organization size:
- Medium-sized employers are the most likely to include remote workers weekly (23%), suggesting more frequent efforts to maintain connection.
- Large employers show a different pattern: they are the most likely to include remote workers monthly (52%).
- Small employers fall closer to the overall averages, with no major differences.

Figure 27: Frequency Remote Workers Included in Team Building or Social Activities (by Employee Size)
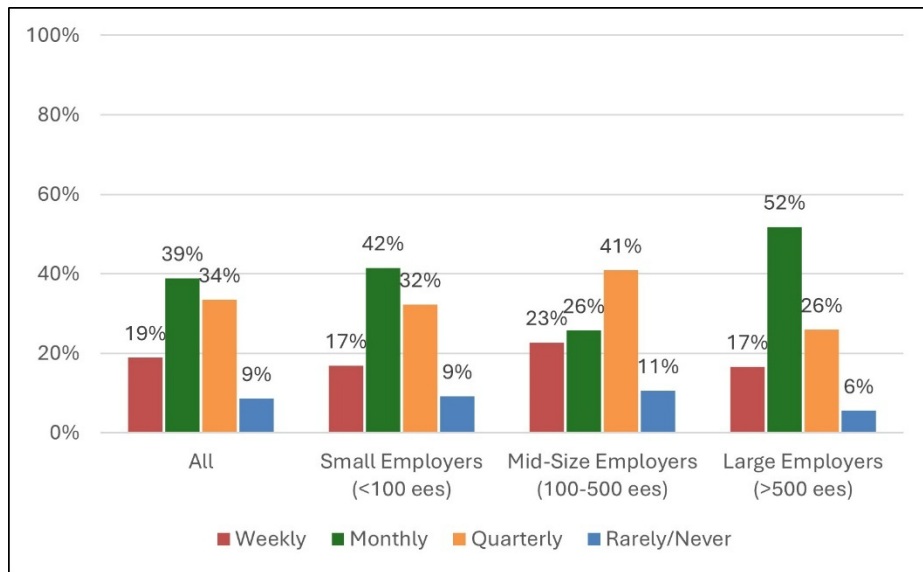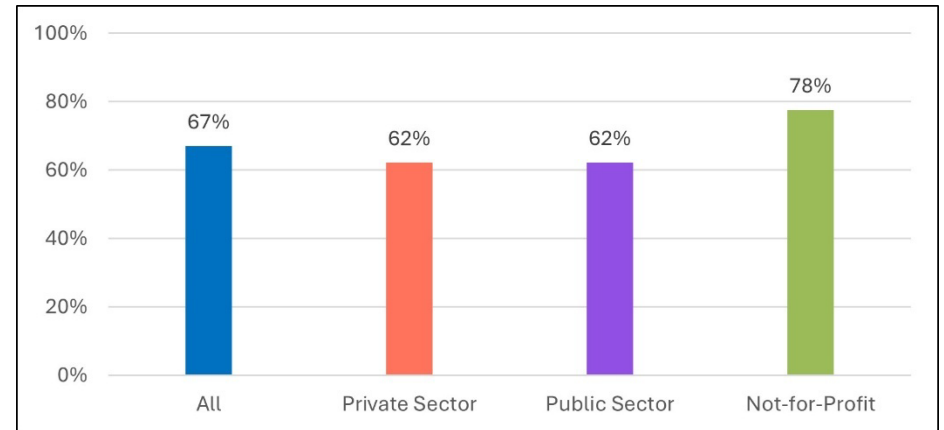

Tools to Maintain Engagement & Communication
Overall, 67% of employers use specific tools to maintain engagement and communication with remote employees. This practice is especially common among not-for-profits (78%), suggesting a strong emphasis on staying connected with distributed teams.

By contrast, both public and private sector employers are less likely to use these tools, with 38% of employers in both sectors not using any specific tools.

Figure 28: Percent of Organizations Using Tools to Maintain Engagement & Communication (by Economic Sector)


PRODUCTIVITY & PERFORMANCE TRACKING

Tools Used for Remote Employee Engagement & Communication
As shown above, to maintain engagement and communication with remote employees, 67% of employers use specific tools. Within those organizations, video conferencing is the most widely used tool, with 100% of respondents indicating its use. Instant messaging platforms are also popular, used by 94% of organizations. Pulse surveys/feedback tools (42%) are also commonly employed, as are learning/development tools (35%), project management tools (33%) and employee engagement tools (15%). These tools play a crucial role in ensuring that remote employees remain connected and engaged with their teams and the broader organization.

Figure 29: Tools Used for Remote Employee Engagement & Communication
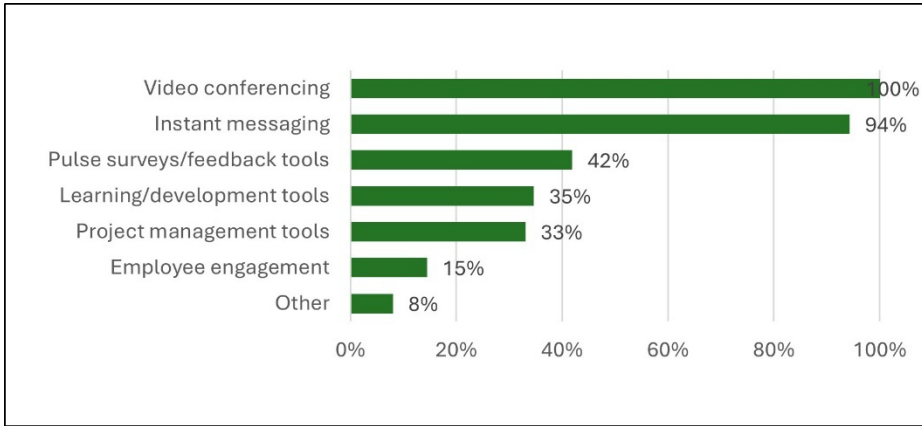
Plans to Invest in New Tools for Remote Work Support

Despite the widespread use of these tools, 66% of organizations believe that their current tools are sufficient and do not plan significant investments in new communication technologies. However, 14% of employers have minor upgrades planned, and 17% are unsure about future investments. This indicates that while most employers are satisfied with their existing communication infrastructure, there is still room for improvement and adaptation to better support remote work.

Figure 30: Plans to Invest in New Tools for Remote Work Support
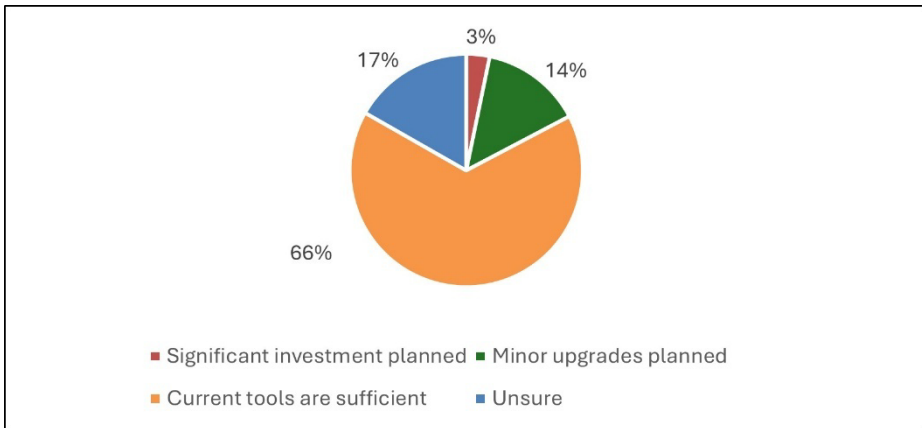
Tracking Remote Employee Productivity

Only 19% of employers report actively tracking the productivity of remote employees. This practice is slightly more common in the private sector (22%) and least common among not-for-profits (17%). The public sector (18%) aligns closely with the overall average.

Figure 31: Tracking Remote Employee Productivity
(by Economic Sector)
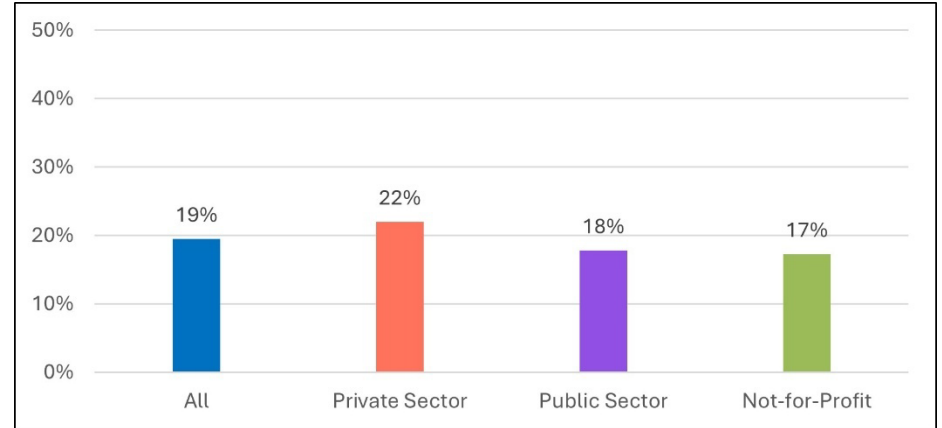
Methods for Monitoring Remote Employee Productivity

Across organizations that monitor remote employee productivity, the most commonly used methods are supervisor assessments and tracking project completion or deadlines—each cited by 78% of respondents. Self-assessments are used by 36%, while 31% of organizations employ software tools to monitor activity.
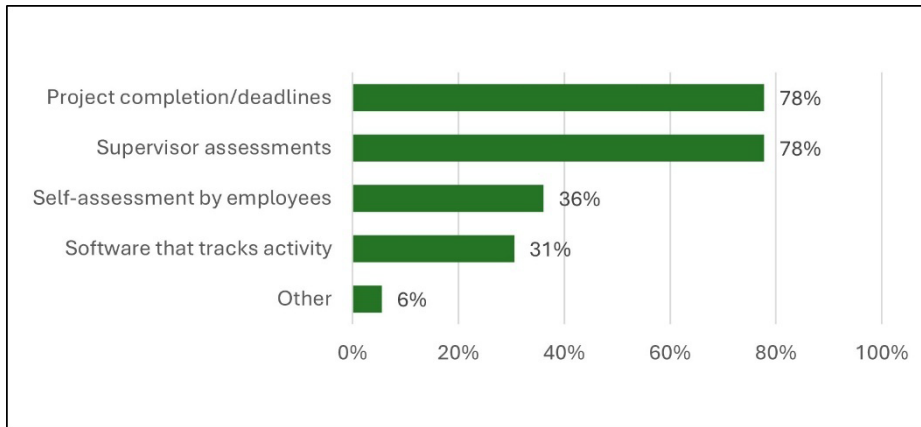
These findings indicate that traditional, trust-based oversight remains the dominant approach, with digital monitoring tools playing a secondary role.

Legal Considerations for Activity-Tracking Software

While only a handful of employers reported using software to track remote employee activity it's important to consider the legal implications of this approach. In Canada, employee monitoring must comply with privacy laws such as the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)*, as well as applicable provincial legislation.

Employers are required to show that monitoring is reasonable, necessary for a legitimate business purpose, and conducted in a manner that respects employee privacy. In most cases, this includes informing employees about what is being tracked, how the data will be used, and their rights regarding access and correction. Clear communication and well-defined policies are essential to ensure legal compliance and maintain employee trust in remote work settings.

AI/AUTOMATION IN REMOTE WORK

Adoption of AI-Powered Tools or Automation for Remote Work

Over half of employers (51%) report not using any AI-powered tools or automation to support remote work, although 25% are currently considering such tools. Only 4% have adopted AI extensively, and 19% have done so to a limited extent.
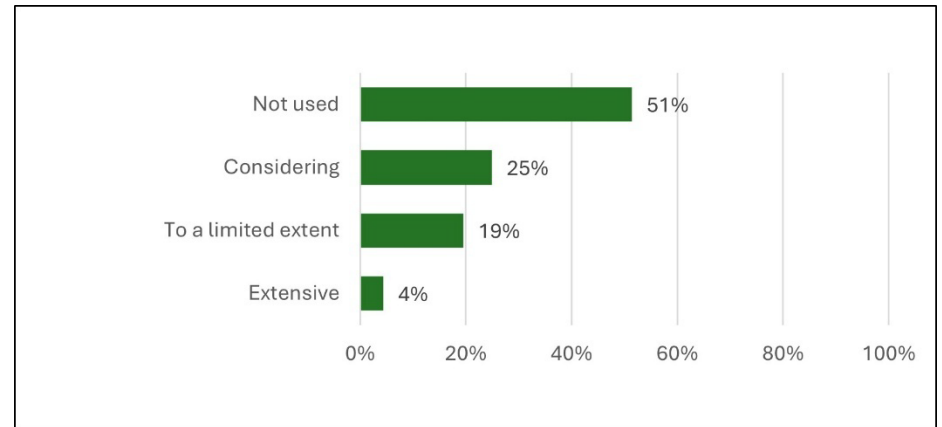
Areas AI or Automation Have Been Integrated Into Remote Work Processes

Among employers that have integrated AI or automation into remote work, the most common application is workflow automation (64%), followed by virtual assistants or chatbots (52%) and AI-enhanced collaboration tools (50%). These findings suggest a focus on improving efficiency, streamlining communication, and reducing manual tasks.

Other areas of integration include cybersecurity and fraud detection (30%) and HR functions (25%), indicating targeted use of AI for safeguarding operations and supporting administrative processes. Only 2% use AI for productivity tracking, showing limited uptake in direct monitoring applications. A small portion of respondents (5%) reported no usage in any of the listed areas.
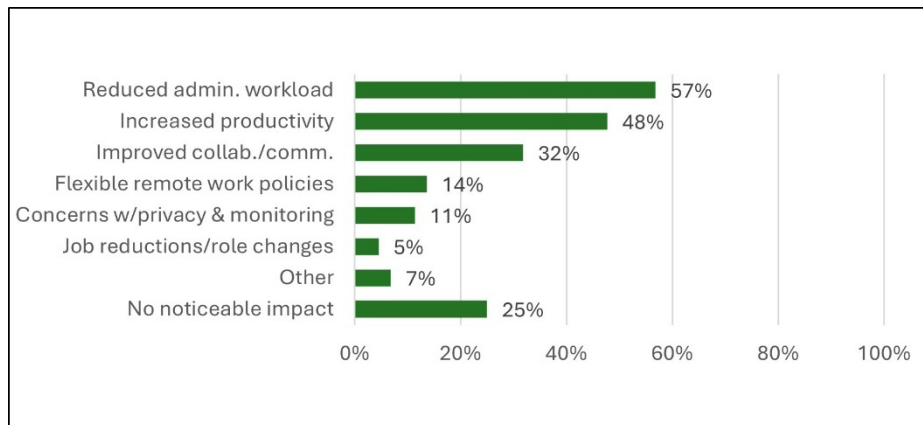
Figure 34: Areas AI or Automation Have Been Integrated Into Remote Work Processes

Workflow automation	64%
Virtual assistants or chatbots	52%
AI-enhanced collaboration	50%
Cybersecurity/fraud detection	30%
HR functions	25%
Productivity tracking	2%
Other	5%
None of the above	5%
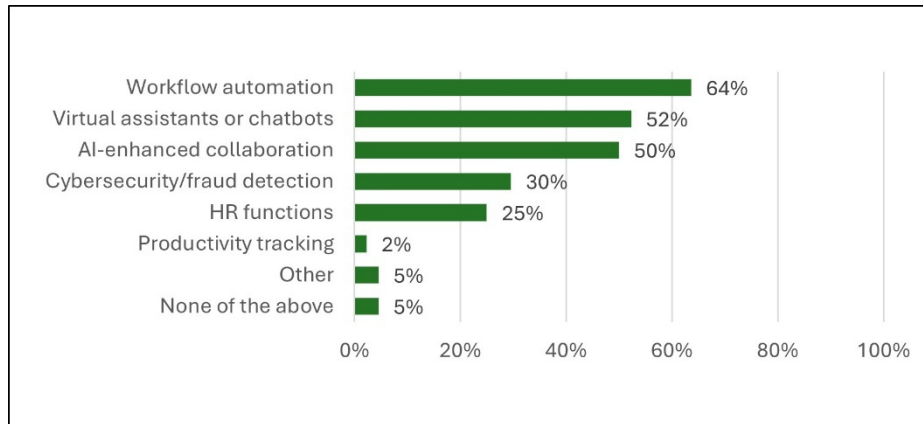
Impact of AI and Automation on Remote Work

Among employers using AI or automation for remote work, 57% report reduced administrative workload, 48% see increased productivity, and 32% note better collaboration. Less common effects include more flexible policies (14%) and privacy concerns (11%). Only 5% cite job reductions or role changes. Notably, 25% report no noticeable impact, suggesting early or limited adoption.

Figure 35: Impact of AI and Automation on Remote Work

|	
Reduced admin. workload	57%
Increased productivity	48%
Improved collab./comm.	32%
Flexible remote work policies	14%
Concerns w/privacy & monitoring	11%
Job reductions/role changes	5%
Other	7%
No noticeable impact	25%

Future AI/Automation Investment for Remote Work

When asked about plans to invest in AI-driven technologies to enhance remote work over the next one to two years, 42% of employers are unsure, indicating a high level of uncertainty. A further 28% have no plans to invest, while 26% anticipate minor investments. Only 5% expect to make significant investments.

These findings suggest that while there is some interest in exploring AI tools, most employers are either uncertain or taking a cautious, limited approach.

Figure 36: Future AI/Automation Investment for Remote Work (within next 1 to 2 years)


Significant 5%
Minor 26%
None 28%
Unsure 42%
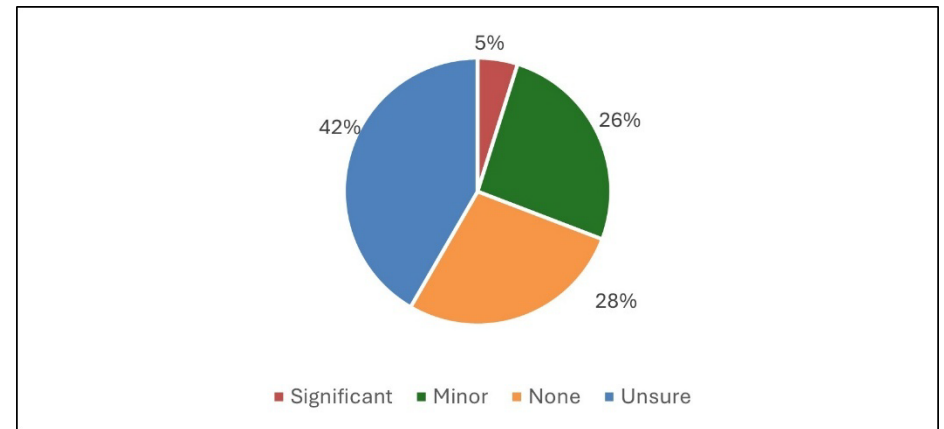
Future Impact of AI/Automation on Remote Work

When asked how AI and automation will affect the feasibility of remote work over the next five years, nearly half of respondents (47%) said they are unsure, indicating a high level of uncertainty or early-stage exploration. Among those with a view, 28% believe the impact will be minimal, while 21% expect AI to increase remote work by enhancing efficiency and collaboration. Only 4% believe AI will reduce the need for remote work by automating roles. Overall, the results reflect a high degree of uncertainty, with relatively few expecting significant disruption in either direction.

Figure 37: Future Impact of AI/Automation on Remote Work (over next 5 years)

- Increase remote work by improving efficiency & collaboration
- Reduce need for remote work by automating roles
- Minimal
- Unsure
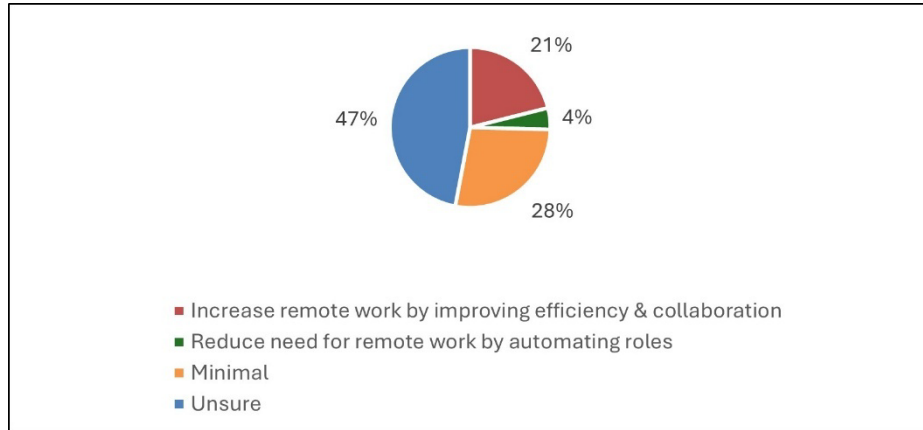
CHALLENGES & BARRIERS

Challenges Faced in Implementing Remote Work

The most commonly reported challenges with remote work are communication barriers (58%) and employee engagement or morale (52%), suggesting that maintaining connection and team cohesion remains a key concern across organizations.

Cybersecurity and data protection (45%) and supervision challenges (39%) were also frequently cited, while technology or IT support (28%) was a less common issue overall.

Figure 38: Challenges Faced in Implementing Remote Work
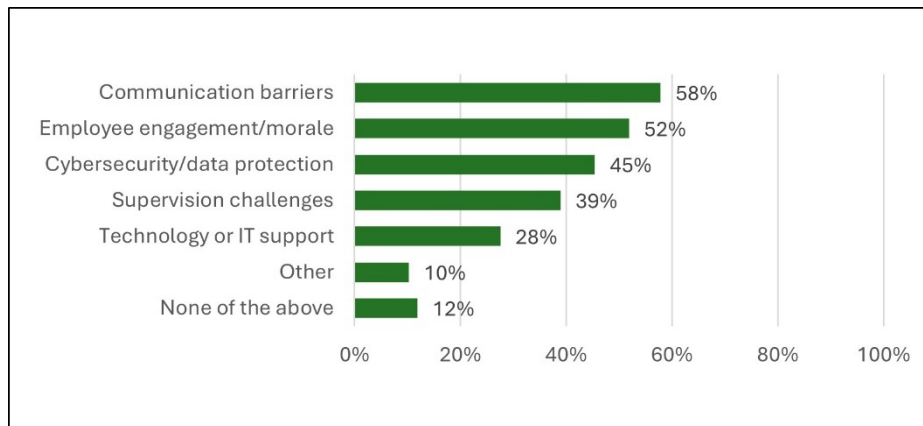
Effective Strategies for Overcoming Remote Work Challenges

Among organizations addressing challenges with remote work, the most widely reported strategy is providing regular feedback (85%), highlighting its importance in maintaining communication, accountability, and engagement in remote environments.

Other commonly used strategies include investment in technology (55%), regular team check-ins (52%), and providing technical support (39%), all of which support smoother remote operations and stronger team connectivity.

Figure 39: Effective Strategies for Overcoming
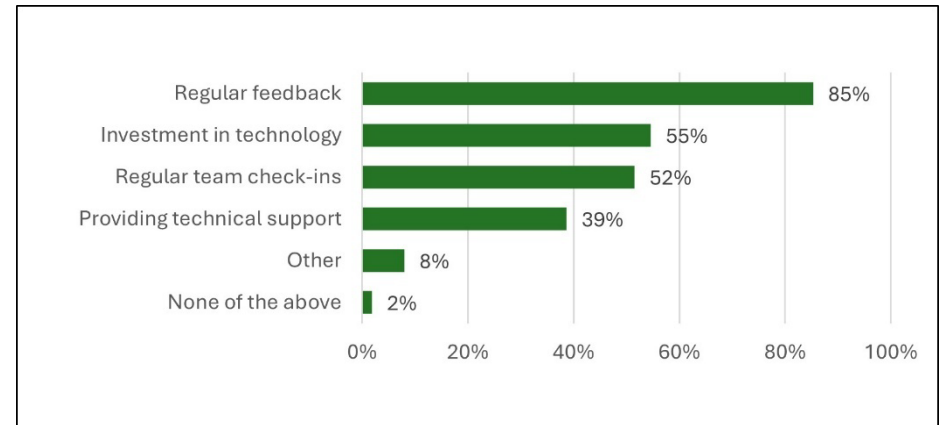
FUTURE OF REMOTE WORK

Future Plans for Remote Work

When asked about future plans for remote work, 66% of employers said they intend to maintain their current arrangements. Only a small portion plan to expand (7%) or reduce (10%) remote work. Meanwhile, 16% have not yet determined their future approach.
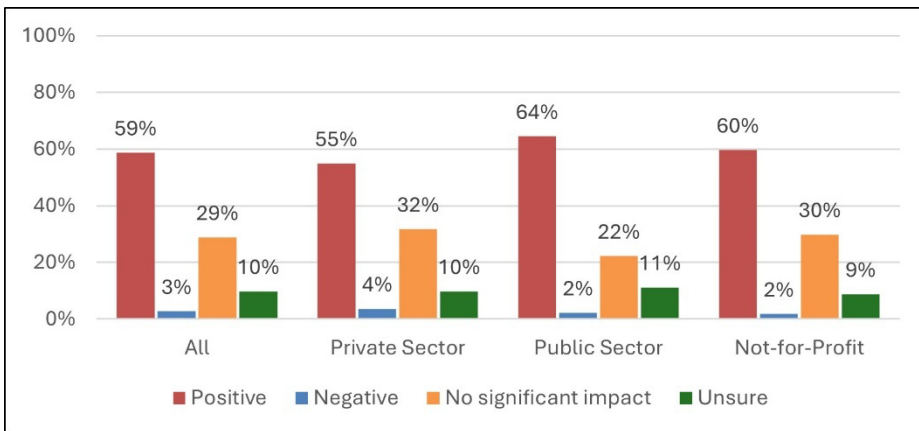
Figure 40: Future Plans for Remote Work

Pie chart:
- Expand: 7%
- Reduce: 10%
- Maintain: 66%
- Not yet determined: 16%
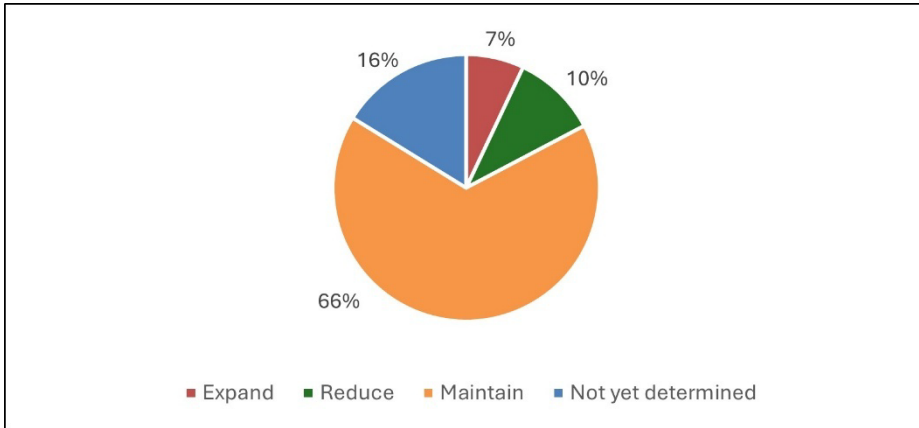
Overall, the data suggests a trend toward stability rather than significant change in remote work strategies.

Future Impact of Remote Work on Talent Acquisition and Retention

Most employers (59% overall) expect remote work to have a positive effect on talent acquisition and retention. This view is especially strong in the public sector (64%), compared to 55% in the private sector and 60% among not-for-profits.

Very few employers across all sectors anticipate a negative impact (3% overall). However, private sector (32%) and not-for-profits (30%) are more likely to believe remote work will have no significant impact, compared to only 22% in the public sector.

Figure 41: Future Impact of Remote Work on Talent Acquisition and Retention

Bar chart (Positive, Negative, No significant impact, Unsure):
- All: 59%, 3%, 29%, 10%
- Private Sector: 55%, 4%, 32%, 10%
- Public Sector: 64%, 2%, 22%, 11%
- Not-for-Profit: 60%, 2%, 30%, 9%

In summary, public sector employers are the most optimistic about the benefits of remote work for attracting and retaining talent, while the private and not-for-profit sectors are more cautious, with a larger proportion expecting limited or no effect.
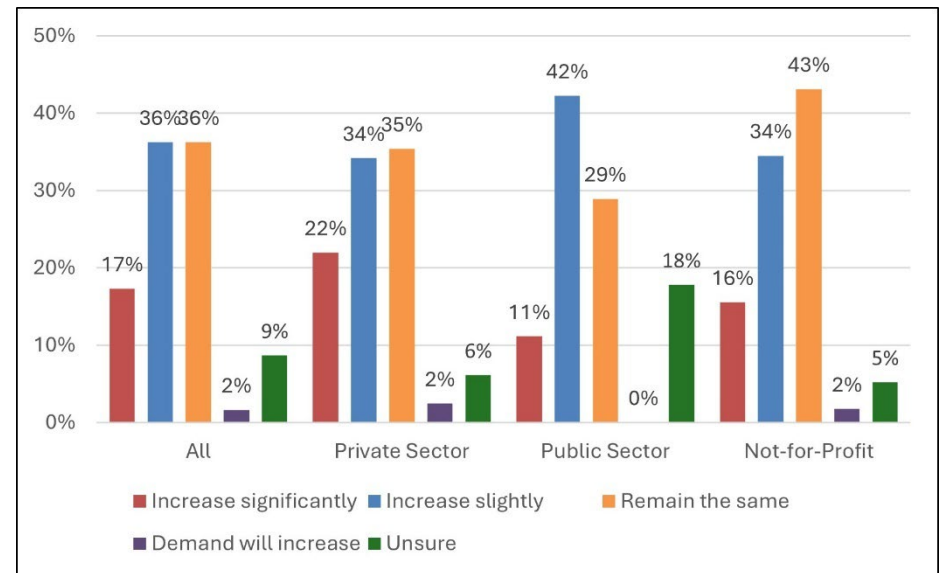
Expected Increase in Employee Demand for Remote Work

Most employers expect employee demand for remote work to increase over the next 1 to 2 years, with 17% anticipating a significant increase and 36% expecting a slight increase.

Public sector employers are the most likely to anticipate a slight increase (42%) but are less likely to expect a significant rise (11%). In contrast, the private sector is more inclined to anticipate a significant increase (22%).

Not-for-profits are more likely to believe demand will remain the same (43%), while public sector organizations are the least likely to expect no change (29%).

Figure 42: Expected Increase in Employee Demand for Remote Work (1 to 2 years)

Bar chart (Increase significantly, Increase slightly, Remain the same, Demand will increase, Unsure):
- All: 17%, 36%, 36%, 2%, 9%
- Private Sector: 22%, 34%, 35%, 2%, 6%
- Public Sector: 11%, 42%, 29%, 0%, 18%
- Not-for-Profit: 16%, 34%, 43%, 2%, 5%

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey findings show that remote work is firmly embedded in organizational strategy, with most employers offering structured hybrid or remote arrangements. These practices are driven not just by operational need but by employee expectations and talent market dynamics. While large employers tend to adopt more formalized and supervised approaches, smaller and not-for-profit employers show more flexibility and responsiveness to individual needs.

However, challenges persist—particularly in maintaining communication, team cohesion, and equitable access to remote work opportunities. Organizations that proactively address these issues are better positioned to sustain remote work as a long-term option.

To optimize remote work effectiveness, WCBC recommends:

- **Tailoring remote work eligibility** based on job function and performance while ensuring transparency and fairness in criteria.
- **Reviewing and updating formal policies** to cover not just logistics and security, but also equity, caregiving needs, and performance management.
- **Actively soliciting employee feedback** to refine remote work practices and foster engagement.
- **Investing in tools and training** to support communication, collaboration, and supervisor effectiveness in remote settings.
- **Monitoring emerging trends in AI and automation** to identify opportunities that can support, not replace, flexible work practices.

By staying responsive to both employee needs and organizational realities, employers can continue to leverage remote work as a strategic advantage.

ABOUT WCBC

WCBC is a leading compensation and benefits consulting firm serving clients for over 40 years. We specialize in assisting organizations determine how much and how to pay, motivate and retain employees. We offer a fully-integrated total compensation service, including strategic direction, benchmarking, design, implementation, and management of all aspects of the employee value proposition.

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