



The Hybrid Era in Adland

10 Key Questions Answered

CREDOS

Advertising's
Think Tank

About Credos

This report is brought to you by Credos, the UK advertising industry's think tank. We produce research and insights about advertising's impact on society, culture and the economy.

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Executive Summary

1. Are people spending more time in the office in 2025?

On average, an advertising professional now spends 2.6 days per week in the office – up from 2.2 days in 2023. While preferences have also shifted towards more time spent in the office, they have not risen at the same pace as actual days spent in the office.

2. How many are happy with their current working patterns?

Just under half (45%) of advertising professionals are happy with their current office to home ratio.

3. Which roles are most suited to hybrid work?

Some roles are more suited to remote work than others. Those in creative roles are more likely to spend four or five days per week in the office than the industry average. Those in IT and technology roles remain more likely to spend large portions of their week away from the office.

4. Does hybrid work improve work-life balance?

Hybrid work has a profound effect on work-life balance and flexibility to meet personal needs outside of work. Those spending more days in the office than they would prefer are especially likely to lack the flexibility to meet their personal/family needs.

5. Does hybrid work reduce productivity?

93% of hybrid workers in advertising feel that they are just as, if not more, productive than before their move to a hybrid working pattern.

6. Does hybrid work damage company culture?

In a change from 2023, there is no longer a relationship between days spent in the office and feelings of belonging and value. Older employees are more likely to feel that hybrid working has negatively affected relationships with colleagues, though.

7. Does hybrid work limit development and career progression?

Spending more days per week in the office is linked to a greater chance of feeling professionally supported.

8. What do employees dislike about hybrid work?

'Informally learning from colleagues' and 'networking opportunities' are the two factors of work that were most negatively impacted by a shift to hybrid work, according to All In respondents.

9. Do return-to-office mandates impact employee retention?

Sudden and dramatic shifts in hybrid working policies are likely to risk mass disaffection. Those spending two days more in the office per week than they would prefer are considerably more likely to be planning to leave their company.

10. Should junior employees spend more time in the office?

Completely remote work appears particularly unsuitable for junior employees. Their likelihood of feeling supported in their career development and belonging within their company reduces significantly when working completely remotely.

A note on the research and methodology

The research contained within this report is derived from the 2025 All In Census. The All In Census is a recurring survey of the advertising industry that seeks to understand the experience of advertising employees in a bid to inform companies in the sector in their support of employees.

The data from the All In Census should be read with the following in mind:

- 1** As the survey is voluntarily filled out, it is likely that the spread of jobs, company types and sectors is not representative of the entire industry. Companies and sectors which are most actively engaged with advertising industry activity (such as agencies within major holding companies) are more likely to have been involved in the census. While the survey has strong representation throughout role and organisation type, any bias may slightly affect industry averages.
- 2** There may also be biases within organisations and sectors. There may be a higher proportion of people either very happy or very unhappy in their roles filling out the survey, either because they are very invested in the industry or disillusioned with it. Determining this level of bias is not possible but may well exist within the data.
- 3** The questions related to the impact of hybrid working are subjective. Given that hybrid working is a desirable job perk for most, few employees are likely to report negative impacts resulting from it. The extent of this potential bias is unclear but should be considered.
- 4** Many of the youngest employees in the industry will not have experienced working life pre-covid. As such, caution should be applied when interpreting young people's responses in relation to hybrid working.

As for the methodological approach, readers should be aware of the following.

The All In Census question on hybrid working splits used a percentage response instead of actual days in the office. Respondents were asked to estimate what percentage of their week they spent in the office, what percentage they spent at home and what percentage they spent elsewhere.

To convert these percentages into days in the office, Credos have categorised them as follows:

- 0** days in the office = **0-9%** of a typical week spent in the office
- 1** day in the office = **10-29%** of a typical week spent in the office
- 2** days in the office = **30-49%** of a typical week spent in the office
- 3** days in the office = **50-69%** of a typical week spent in the office
- 4** days in the office = **70-89%** of a typical week spent in the office
- 5** days in the office = **90-100%** of a typical week spent in the office

This means that for anyone working part-time, their week has been scaled up to a full working week (5 days) to standardise.

This methodology provides what we believe to be the most accurate approximation of employees' days per week in the office based on the All In data available.

Introduction

The when, where and how of work have become defining questions of today's professional world. At first a lifeline during lockdown, remote and hybrid work is now key to the future of employment. The ad industry is no exception; known for creativity, collaboration and rapid communication, remote work continues to challenge the industry's working norms while raising deeper questions around productivity, culture and trust.

Now, over five years on from the first UK lockdown, the early promises of hybrid work are under greater scrutiny, with hopes that it would decentralise talent and close long-standing gender gaps proving overly optimistic. Most hybrid workers remain clustered around urban centres, and women often face additional layers of domestic and professional responsibility.

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For many, hybrid working therefore means freeing up time to spend on responsibilities and interests outside of work that are crucial to people's wellbeing.

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And yet, for many, hybrid work works. Employees deeply value the autonomy and balance it offers. And work-life balance itself is growing in importance. In Randstad's global survey of over 26,000 individuals across 35 markets¹, work-life balance was named the top driver for job choice globally, outranking pay for the first time in over two decades. Understanding the relationship between hybrid work and work-life balance is more important than ever for employers.

But flexibility can come at a cost. As reported in our first Hybrid Working report, employees who spent fewer days in the office had a lower likelihood of:

- » Feeling supported to develop skills and progress their career
- » Feeling valued and essential to their company
- » Feeling that they belong at their company

For some in the industry, additional concerns about productivity and innovation have begun to outweigh hybrid work's benefits. High profile return-to-office mandates raise the question: are we witnessing the beginning of the end of hybrid working?

This report does not aim to take sides. Happy, motivated, well-supported employees are productive and efficient employees, so finding the right balance between office and homeworking is in the best interests of employee and employer and will vary from company to company.

Instead, we interrogate how hybrid work is functioning in 2025: what has shifted, what has stayed the same and what it all tells us. We do this by answering 10 key questions in relation to hybrid working. Drawing on the latest data from the All In Census, based on a sample of over 14,000 employees working across agencies, brands, media owners and ad tech, we explore the nuanced reality of hybrid work across the advertising industry, looking for insights that go beyond assumptions and biases.

Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all recommendation, this report is designed to inform. By looking not just at sentiment (how we feel about hybrid work) but also at reported impacts on factors such as career development, belonging and work-life balance, we aim to equip both leaders and employees with insights to make decisions that support productivity, wellbeing and development.

1. British Safety Council. (2025). Work-life balance trumps pay as top motivator for workers, survey finds. [online]

1) Are people spending more time in the office in 2025?

Return to office mandates have been highly publicised and widely covered over the past couple of years. Industries like banking are seemingly seeing the greatest shift, with five-day in-office weeks² now commonplace. Tech companies like Amazon have followed suit³, while WPP has become the first major advertising holding company to set a four-day in-office policy.

Four of the six major holding companies now have three-day in-office policies, while 23% of agencies in Campaign's School Reports survey have stricter in-office policies than in 2023⁴.

The first question to ask, then, is this: have these changing policies translated into more days spent in the office?

In short, yes. The shift towards more days spent in the office is largely borne out in the All In data. However, employees being ordered back into the office *en masse* is still far from reality.

Put as an industry average per week, there has been a shift from 2.2 days per week in 2023 to 2.6 days per week in 2025. So, on average, we are spending about half a day per week more in the office than we were in 2023.

Not a huge shift when put in those terms, but a significant one, nonetheless.

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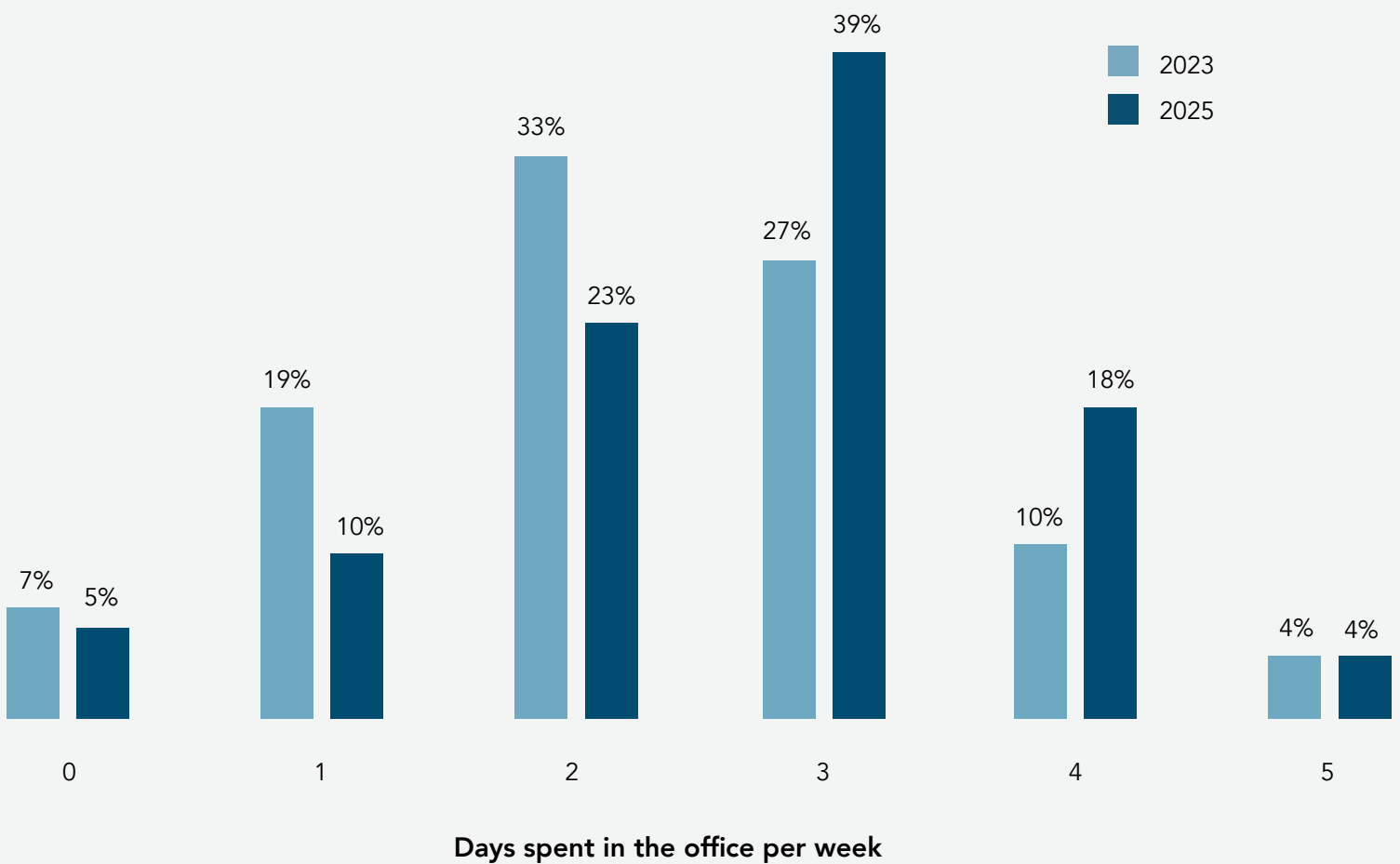
In 2025, three days per week is easily the most common working pattern

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2. News Direct. (2025). Watch out GTA commuters: RBC latest big company to mandate back-to-office mandates in 2025 - News Direct. [online]
3. Jassy, A. (2024). Message from CEO Andy Jassy: Strengthening our culture and teams. [online] aboutamazon.com
4. Arrigo, Y. (2025). This is adland 2025: Hybrid working. [online] Campaignlive.co.uk.

As Figure 1 shows, two days per week in the office was the most common working pattern in 2023, closely followed by three. In 2025, three days per week is easily the most common working pattern. Two days per week in the office (23%) is now only slightly more common than four days (18%).

Figure 1: 2023 vs 2025 days spent in the office per week - % of employees



It is notable that the extremes have stayed relatively level, however. The number of people working fully remotely or fully in-office has not changed significantly since the last survey, suggesting that around 10% of the industry will work from home or fully in office for the foreseeable future, regardless of general shifts in industry policy.

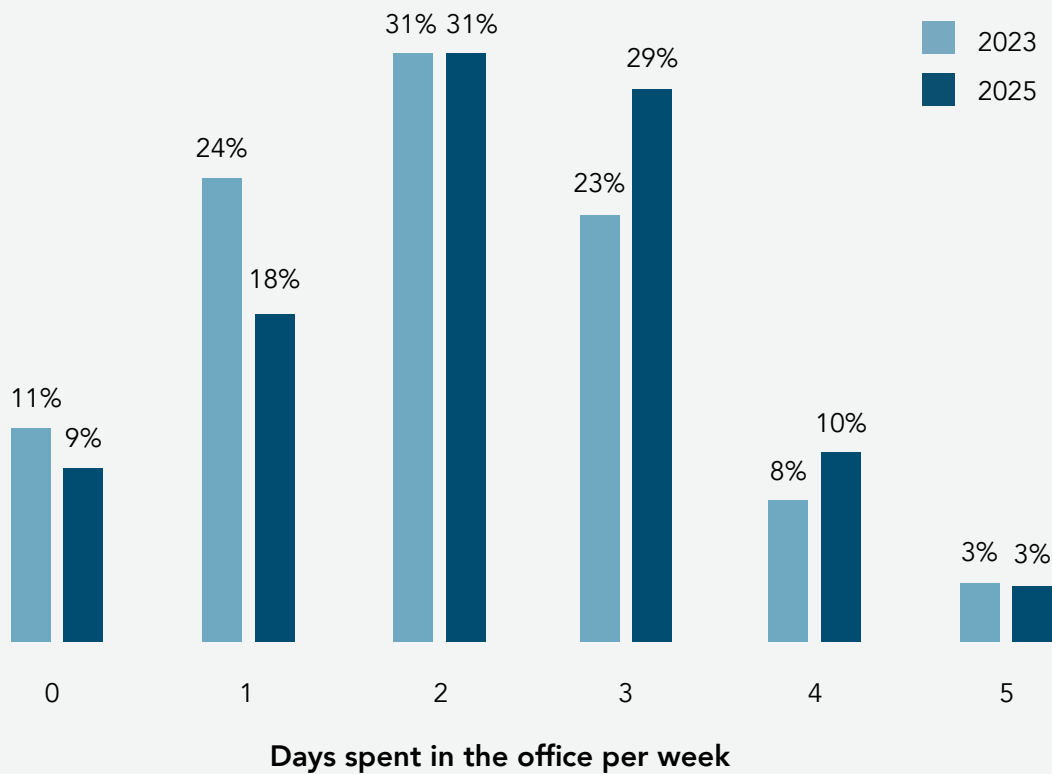
The second question that arises from this general shift to more days spent in the office is whether preferences have shifted with it.

Again, put in terms of average days preferred, there has been an increase from 1.9 days in 2023 to 2.1 days in 2025. This 0.2-day increase is half that of the 0.4-day increase seen in actual days spent in the office.

While preferences have increased slightly, then, we are likely further from our preferred working patterns than we were in 2023.

The shift in preferred working patterns is shown in Figure 2. Employees seem to prefer more days in the office in greater numbers than in 2023. In 2025, three days per week in the office is almost as popular as two.

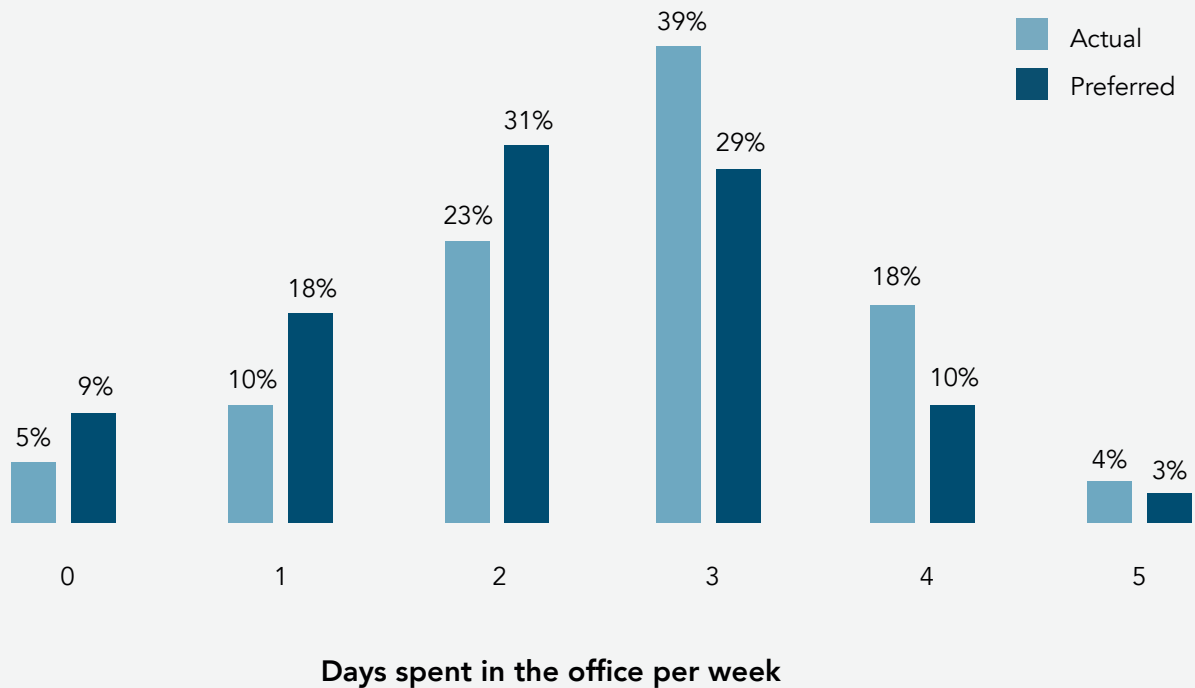
Figure 2: 2023 vs 2025 preferred days spent in the office per week - % of employees



Comparing our actual working patterns with our preferred working patterns demonstrates this slight misalignment.

As Figure 3 shows, there is a significant number of people spending 3 or 4 days in the office who would prefer to spend more time away from it.

Figure 3: Actual vs preferred days per week in the office, 2025



On the whole, though, these numbers are not worrying for the industry, as some displacement of actual to preferred is always to be expected.

Over time, as the new 'normal' becomes more established, it is possible that the disparity between actual and preferred working patterns diminishes. It is likely that, as the years pass, employees will look for work at companies whose policies suit their own preferences, while employers will actively seek employees who will thrive in their environment.

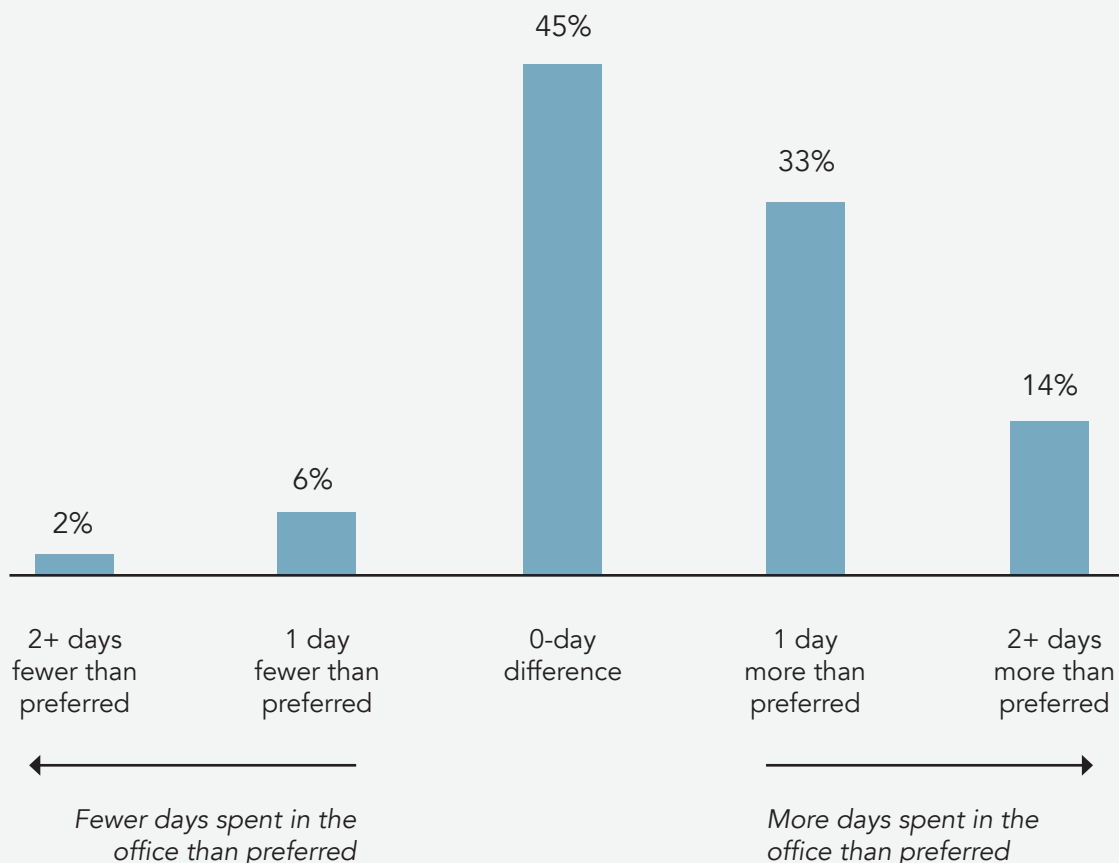
It is clear, then, that calls for a return to the office have begun to translate to actual time spent in the office. What remains to be seen, however, is whether our preferences will align more closely with these changing policies in the future.

2) How many are happy with their current working patterns?

To capture the effect of employees being unhappy with their working arrangement, we categorised respondents into those who are 0 days away from their desired pattern, 1 day away, and 2+ days away.

Encouragingly, as shown in Figure 4, nearly half (45%) of the industry are now working at their desired work pattern. This is the middle bar, labelled, '0-day difference'.

Figure 4: Advertising employees' weekly days away from preferred working pattern



Considering the range of patterns available, and the endless differences in job role, company type, and personal preference, this is not to be underestimated. It reflects an industry which has attempted to allow flexibility where possible, while maximising business performance.

Unsurprisingly, far more people spend more days in the office than they would like than those spending fewer days in the office. This is because most businesses have an office location which employees are welcome to use as often as they prefer; people are thus usually free to spend more time in the office than the mandated company policy, while the reverse is not the case.

Just under half (47%) of the workforce are spending at least one day more in the office than they would prefer, which may have some consequences for their working experience, as will be explored later in this report.

3) Which roles are most suited to hybrid work?

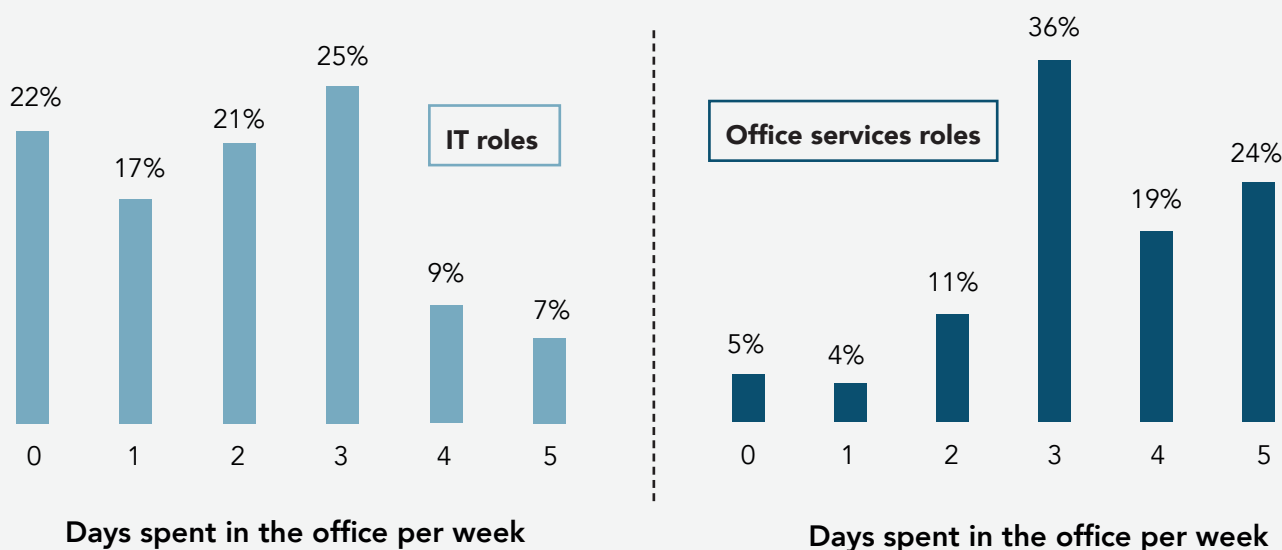
Ask a member of the public to describe an employee of the advertising industry, and the chances are they will picture a Don Draper-style agency executive. But not only has the industry (mostly) moved on from that, but it now comprises a huge variety of job roles.

In the past quarter century especially, the disciplines required have multiplied rapidly. Completely new tech-focused roles, constantly evolving ad planning and buying jobs, and rapidly evolving methods of creative production and expression means one style of work no longer suits all.

The nature of the role is probably the single most important factor in determining an employee’s working pattern. Some roles have historically been highly suited to remote work, with IT specialists developing a culture of remote work long before covid-enforced lockdowns. A pre-covid 2019 ONS study found that 33% of employees in information and communication had worked from home the week prior to the survey⁵.

Other roles, such as those in office services, often require in-person interaction far more frequently, making them less suitable for remote working, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Days per typical week spent in the office – IT vs Office Services

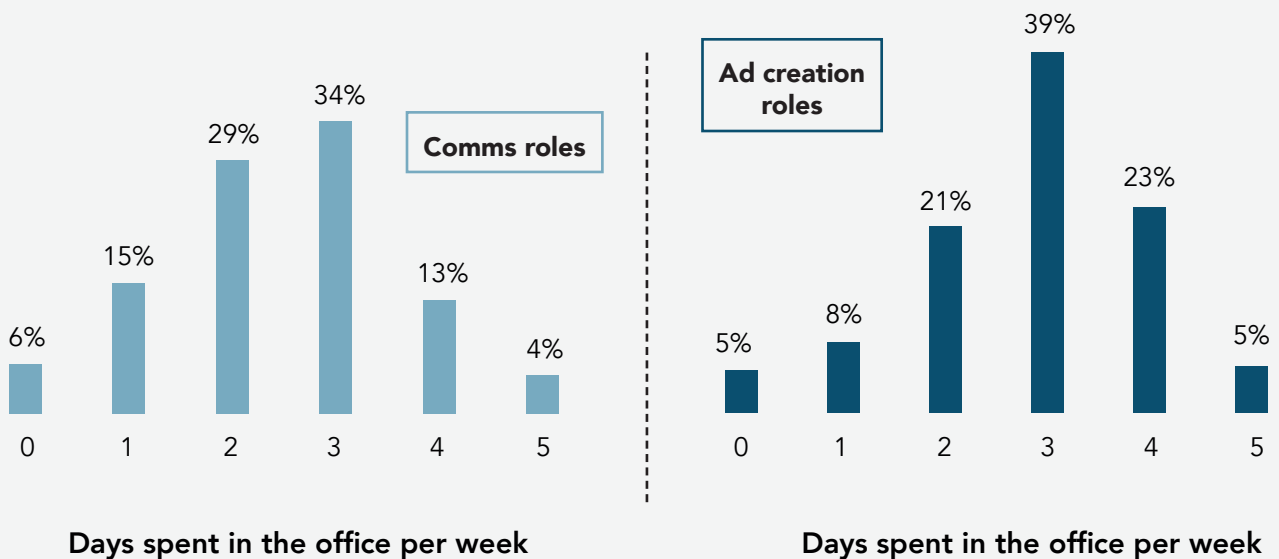


5. Office for National Statistics (2020). Technology intensity and homeworking in the UK - Office for National Statistics. [online] www.ons.gov.uk.

22% of IT/technology employees are spending every day out of the office, compared to just 5% of those in office services. Though IT roles have always been more suited to remote work, the pandemic shifted the needle even more, demonstrating that the work could be done just as, if not more, efficiently, at home than in the office.

There is still significant variation between job types in the way that people approach hybrid work. For instance, those in traditionally 'ad creation' roles⁶ tend to spend more days per week in the office than the average employee. Those in 'Communications'⁷ are far more likely spend one or two days per week in the office, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Days per typical week spent in the office – Communications vs Ad creation roles



The elevated number of days spent in the office per week amongst those in ad creation roles speaks to the prevailing belief that in-person collaboration remains optimal for creative expression.

The lesson to take from these variances in office vs homeworking days is not to celebrate or castigate particular roles, but to highlight the fact that variety is to be expected.

6. 'Ad creation' roles are a combination of job roles: Planning and strategy, creative services/project management, creative, design and studio, Production / Production Administration / Art and Print Buying

7. 'Communications' roles are a combinations of job roles: Social media/communities, marketing, communications/PR

4) Does hybrid work improve work-life balance?

Work-life balance has become a key measure of career satisfaction. In fact, recent research has found that, for the first time in 22 years, work-life balance ranks above compensation as the leading motivator for workers around the world⁸, surpassing pay as the most important factor.

It is often treated as a given that hybrid work automatically improves employees' work-life balance. This is not necessarily the case, though. Some may find that increased homeworking leads to increased pressure to be 'always on' at work due to a lack of physical separation, while others may feel that it makes them feel more isolated and homebound, also reducing work-life balance.

In 2025's All In Census, new questions were added to ask people directly about their experiences with hybrid work. We listed several aspects of work, asking whether they had improved, stayed the same or worsened since adopting hybrid work.

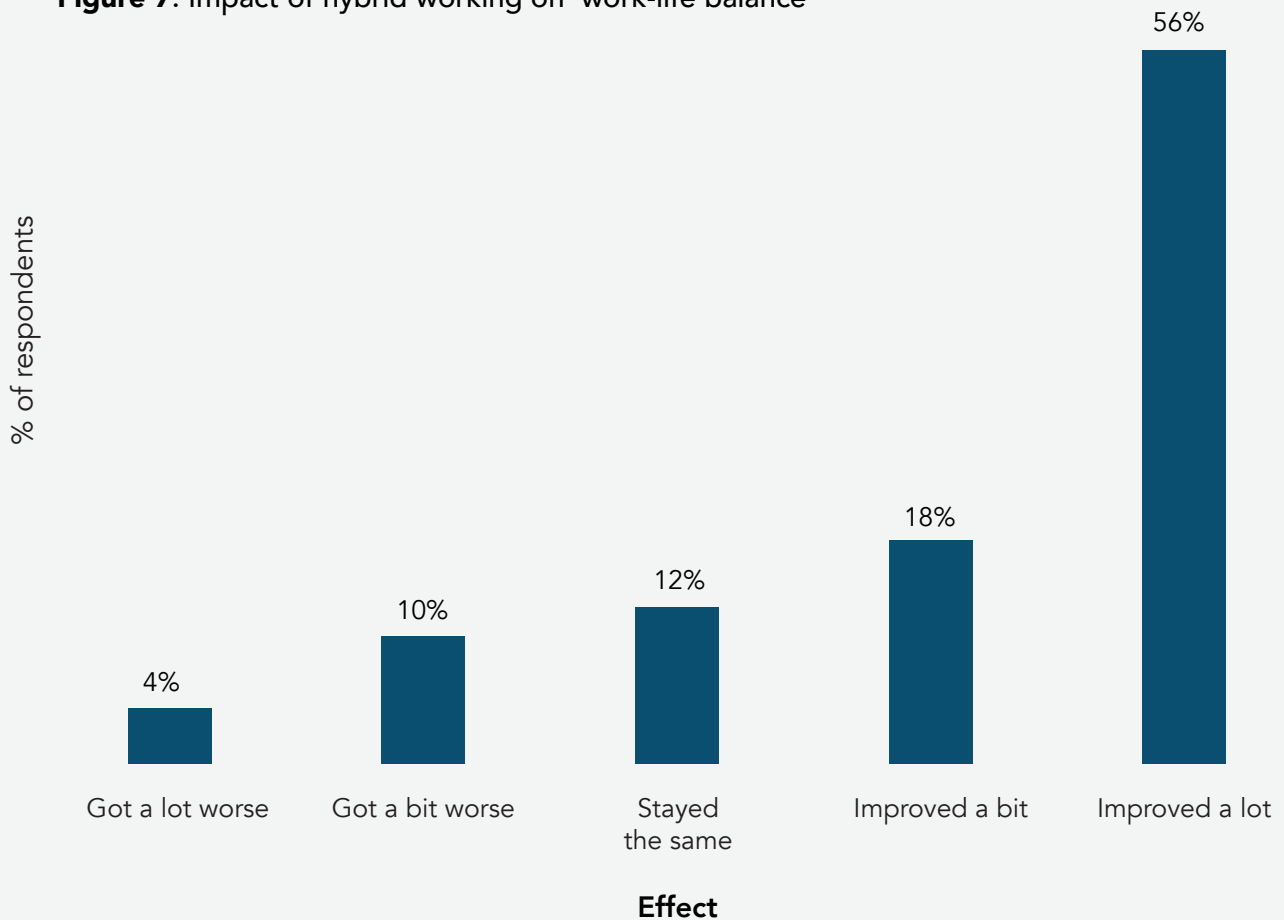
Unsurprisingly, "work-life balance" and "freedom to choose when and where I work" were two of the factors most positively impacted by a shift to hybrid working arrangements. Over half (56%) of respondents said that their work-life balance had improved a lot due to hybrid working, as shown in Figure 7.

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The impact on employee satisfaction and, by extension, talent retention, should not be overlooked

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8. British Safety Council. (2025). Work-life balance trumps pay as top motivator for workers, survey finds. [online]

Figure 7: Impact of hybrid working on 'work-life balance'

Though unsurprising, the impact on employee satisfaction and, by extension, talent retention, should not be overlooked. Finding a solution that promotes work-life balance is clearly advisable for employers looking to create a happy, fulfilled workforce.

Our data does also support the idea that not everyone feels that hybrid working improved their work-life balance. As previously mentioned, there are ways in which hybrid working can damage an employee's work-life balance.

14% of the industry feel that their work-life balance was worsened by hybrid working, which is something to be particularly mindful of. This is supported by 2023 research which found that 22% of people report 'not being able to unplug' as their biggest challenge with remote work⁹.

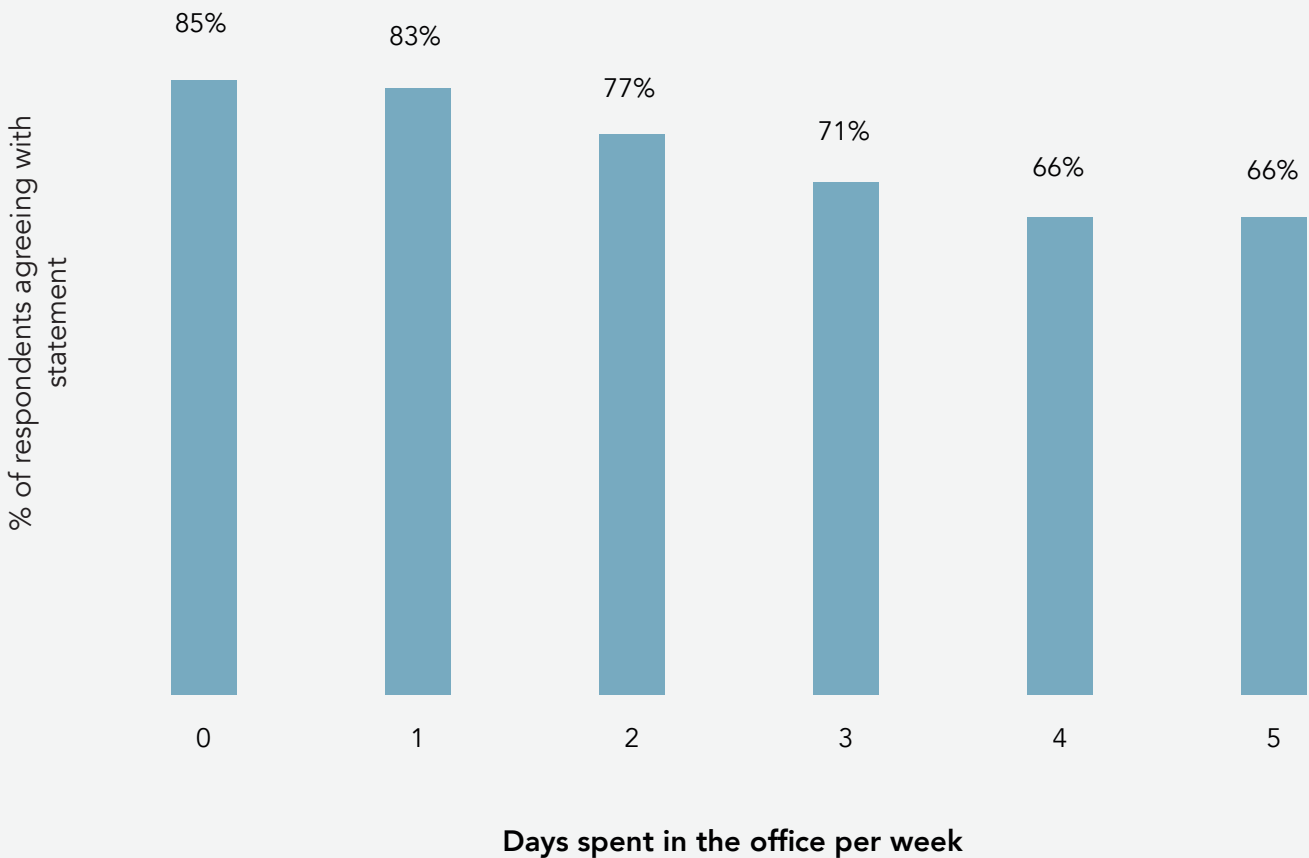
9. Buffer (2023). State of remote work 2023. [online]

Meeting personal/family needs

As evidenced in the All In 2023 data, more time spent in the office negatively impacts people's ability to meet personal and family needs. As shown in Figure 8, this trend remains true in 2025, with employees spending four or five days in the office significantly less likely to experience sufficient flexibility compared to zero or one day(s) in the office.

The negative impact of days spent in the office on flexibility has increased since the last survey. It is possible that this is due to a greater number of employees having to adjust to changing hybrid policies that are being enforced more rigorously than in 2023.

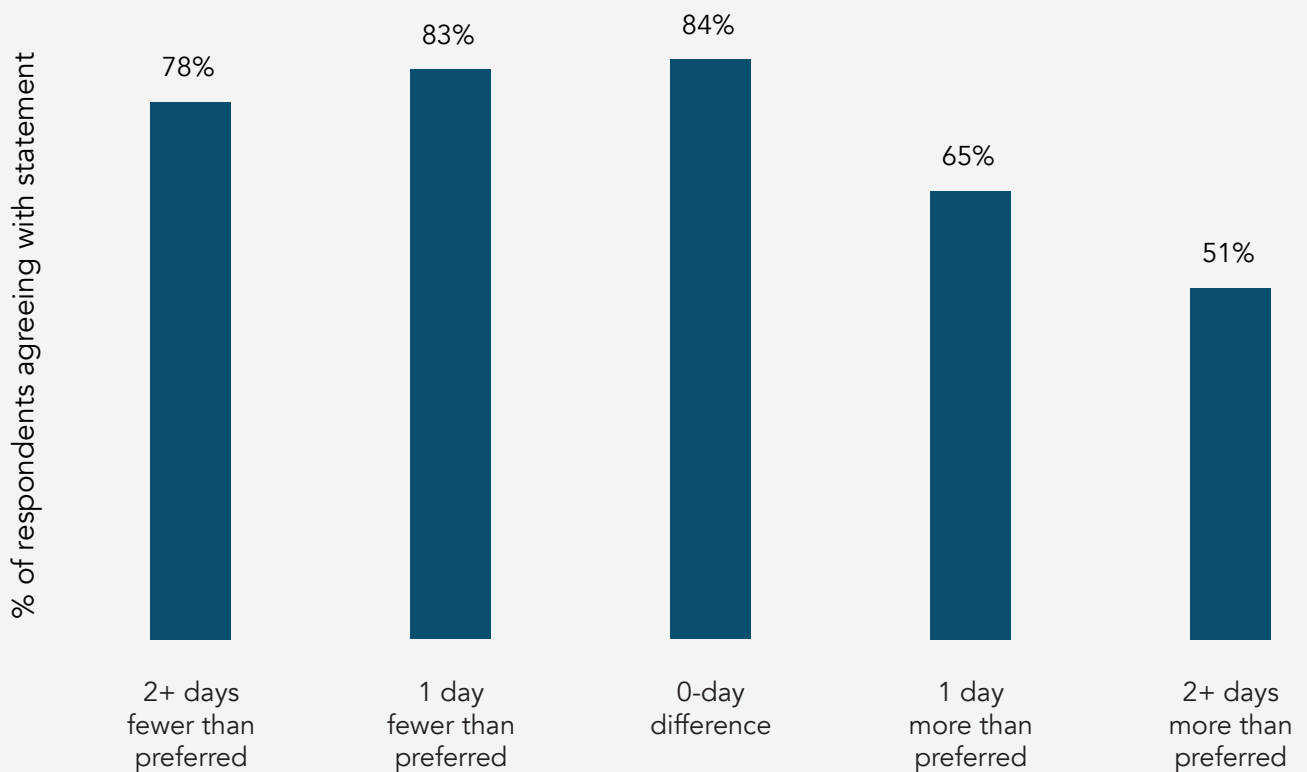
Figure 8: 'I have sufficient flexibility to meet my family/personal needs'



The impact of flexibility on the ability to meet family/personal needs partly explains one of the findings from Major Players' 2025 creative industries census¹⁰. They found that those in middle and older age value work-life balance more highly than those at the start of their careers, who remain more focused on pay, salary progression and interesting work/projects. Such work flexibility can be crucial for parents to juggle careers and family responsibilities.

The importance of flexibility is even clearer when looking at those who are spending more days in the office than they would prefer. This is shown in Figure 9, with a huge drop-off in likelihood of meeting personal/family needs when spending more days in the office than the preference.

Figure 9: I have sufficient flexibility to meet my personal/family needs'



As the chart demonstrates, spending more days in the office than one would prefer has a profound effect on the ability to meet personal/family needs outside of work. This should act as a note of caution to any organisations planning to enact radical changes to policies. If there are large sections of the workforce being asked to spend more days in the office than they would prefer, many may seek greater flexibility and work-life balance, perhaps elsewhere.

Clearly, hybrid working does have a profound effect on work-life balance. That nearly three-quarters of the industry report their work-life balance improving since moving to a hybrid working pattern is a strong indicator of the value employees place on it.

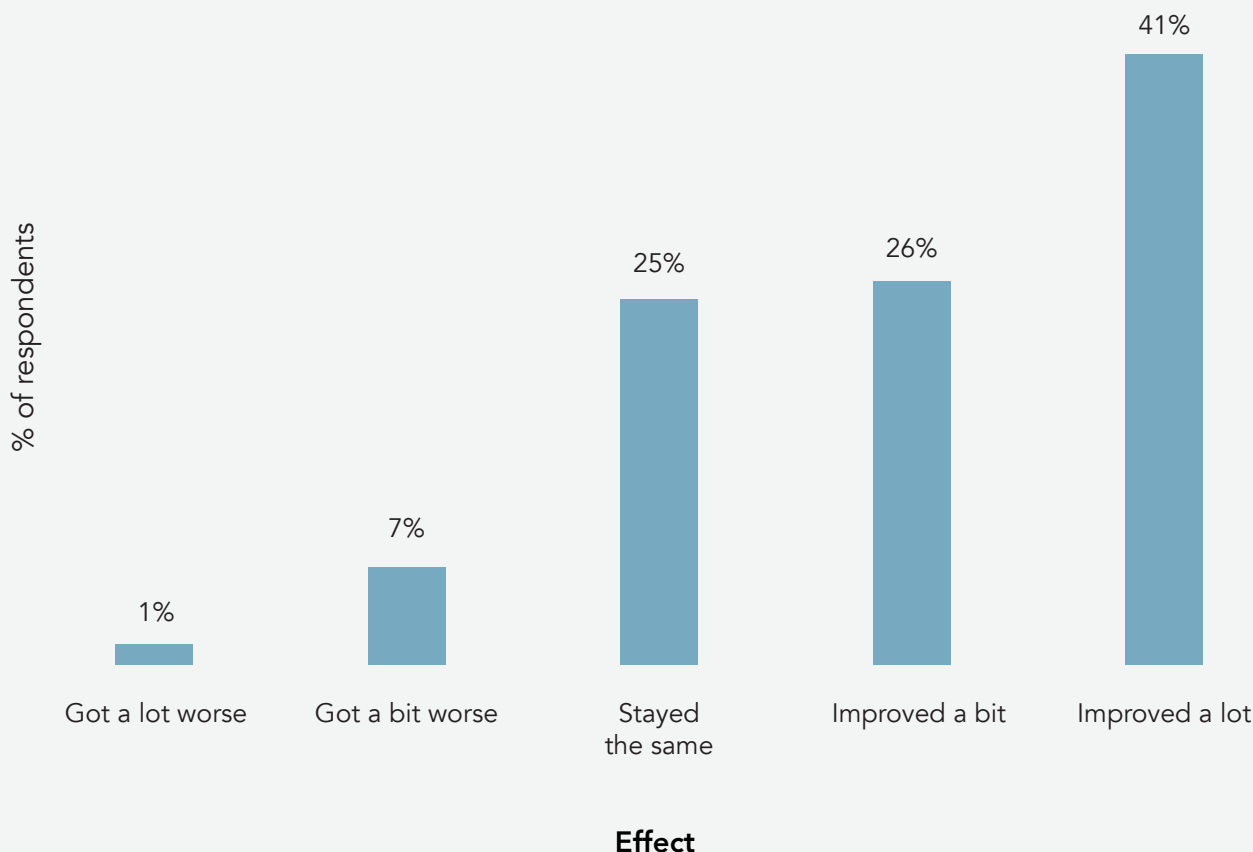
10. (2025). UK Creative Industries Census, Major Players, www.majorplayers.co.uk/the-creative-industries-census

5) Does hybrid work reduce productivity?

Now we're getting into the meaty stuff. Alongside company culture, the most cited reason for return-to-office mandates is to improve productivity. It is perhaps surprising, then, that 'productivity' is beaten only by work-life balance as the factor most positively impacted by hybrid work, according to All In respondents.

As shown in Figure 10, only 7% of hybrid workers feel that hybrid work has made them less productive, while a huge 41% of respondents feel that their productivity has "improved a lot" since moving to a hybrid pattern.

Figure 10: 'Hybrid work improved my productivity'



The high percentage of respondents feeling that their productivity ‘improved a lot’, meanwhile, are likely responding to positive effects such as avoiding exhausting commutes and experiencing a quieter working environment¹¹.

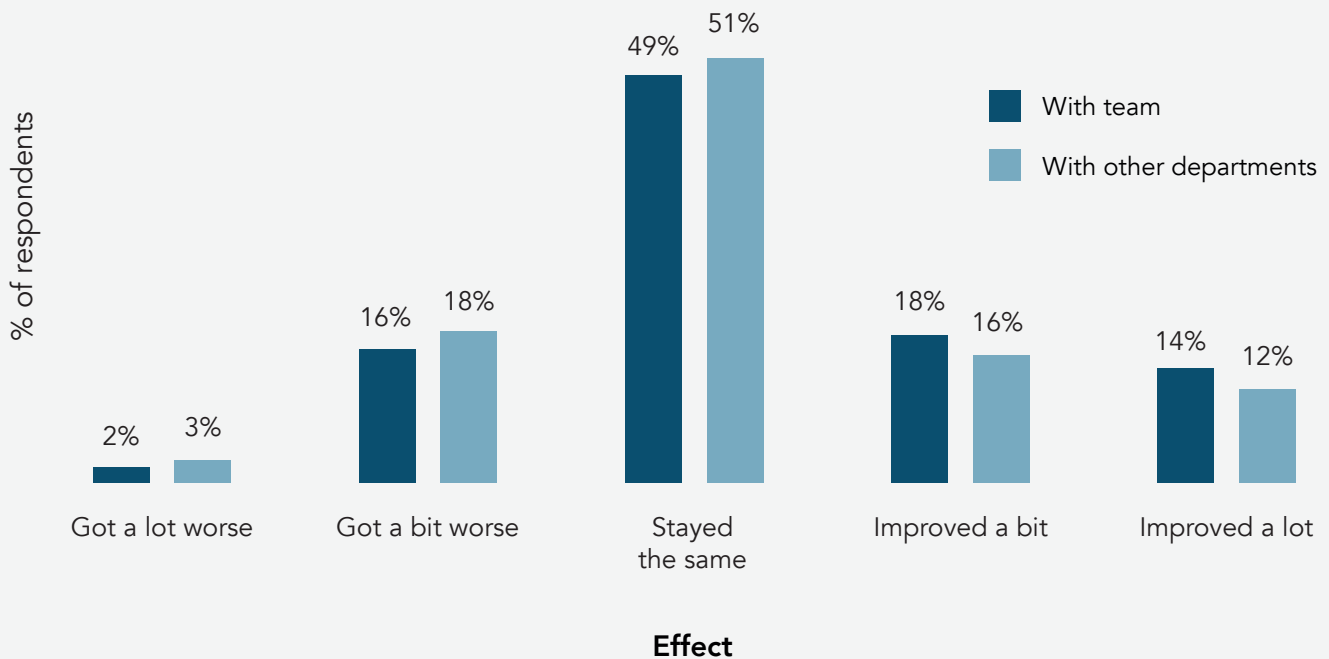
This is fairly consistent across all levels of seniority, with the majority of management agreeing that switching to hybrid work improved their own productivity levels.

One element of productivity that is often seen as being particularly vulnerable to damage from remote work is collaboration and coordination. The forced move to remote and hybrid working patterns simultaneously reduced in-person communication and accelerated the availability and use of digital communication tools such as zoom, Microsoft Teams and Slack.

For many, the ability to communicate virtually provides significant productivity benefits; instead of travelling to and from a meeting place, meetings can now be held back-to-back from the regular work desk. This ability to conduct more conversations more efficiently can often outweigh any negative impacts from the reduction of in-person meetings.

However, for some, the reduction of in-person meetings, and a reduced ability to informally and verbally communicate with colleagues in a shared space may have damaged collaboration. Views towards collaboration and coordination, both within teams and with departments outside of direct teams, are shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: ‘Hybrid work improved team collaboration and coordination’ and ‘Hybrid work improved collaboration with departments outside of my team’



11. Bloom, N. (2024). Working From Home Is Powering Productivity. [online]

Hybrid workers marginally feel that communication and collaboration more positively impacted intra-team communication than inter-team communication.

What we may be able to infer from figures 10 and 11 is the following: people feel confident in hybrid work's effectiveness for the completion of their own work, but less so for the productivity of their teams as whole.

There are, of course, some limitations to these data.

Firstly, as mentioned in the note on the research (see page 3), there is an inherent bias with some questions. Employees enjoy the flexibility that hybrid work offers them, so are less likely to respond negatively about it.

Secondly, it doesn't tell us how people feel hybrid work affects *other* people's productivity. As the people ultimately in charge of hybrid work policies, CEOs are not only concerned with their own productivity, but the productivity of their workforce. It may well be that Figure 10 would show something very different if we asked whether hybrid work had improved their organisation's productivity.

Finally, the either/or does not tell us anything about people's views on how many days per week make them *most* productive. What it does tell us, is that adopting hybrid working practices, whatever the exact split, often allows employees to be as productive as possible.

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People feel confident in hybrid work's effectiveness for the completion of their own work, but less so for the productivity of their teams as whole.

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Other research

Finding that productivity is not negatively impacted also aligns with many of the most comprehensive studies conducted on the topic; the 93% of hybrid workers who feel that they are just as, if not more, productive echoes Owl Labs' 2023 research which found that 91% of respondents are the same or more productive in their hybrid working style¹².

Meanwhile, in 2024, a large scale, randomised controlled trial found that “employees who work from home two days a week are just as productive, likely to get promoted, and far less prone to quit.”¹³ Nick Bloom, the Stanford professor leading the study, distinguishes between hybrid and fully remote roles, acknowledging that problems with fully remote work can arise when not managed well.

12. Owl Labs (2023). State of Hybrid Work 2023 | US Report. [online] owlabs.com.

13. Bloom, N., Han, R. and Liang, J. (2024). Hybrid Working from Home Improves Retention without Damaging Performance. Nature, [online]

At a macro level, productivity, expressed in terms of output by labour hours, was not negatively impacted throughout the remote working period of covid. In fact, hourly labour productivity has been estimated to have been positive during the pandemic¹⁴. However, this is because employment reductions outweighed outputs in the period, and likely not because of structural improvements.

Companies with a greater ability to operate effectively from home and where sales rely less on face-to-face contact with customers were the most likely to have seen productivity increases in this period¹⁵.

However, concerns around productivity loss have also been supported by some research. For instance, research into an Indian technology company found that hours worked increased and output declined during the working-from-home period, resulting in an 8-19% drop in productivity¹⁶.

A large study also found that researchers in remote teams are less likely to make breakthrough discoveries due to remote teams been less likely to integrate the knowledge of their team members¹⁷. This has been taken as evidence to support the idea that high levels of remote work are damaging for creativity and innovation.

It should be made clear that All In respondents were responding to whether hybrid work (anything from 0 to 4 days per week in the office) had improved their productivity—not remote work. Many All In respondents may believe that moving to fully remote work would damage their productivity.

Separating hybrid work—where employees often find the balance that works most effectively for them—from remote work—where no time is spent in an office—is crucial to understand the near unanimity of the industry’s response to hybrid work’s effect on productivity.

People overwhelmingly feel positive about hybrid work’s impact on their productivity. Though having employees out of the office can make management, oversight and control more difficult for employers, if people’s assessment of their own productivity has any value at all, industry may conclude that productivity is not a major concern.

14. Bloom, N., Bunn, P., Mizen, P., Smietanka, P. and Thwaites, G. (2020). The Impact of Covid-19 on Productivity. SSRN Electronic Journal. [online]

15. Ibid

16. Gibbs, M., Mengel, F. and Siemroth, C. (2022). Work from Home & Productivity: Evidence from Personnel & Analytics Data on IT Professionals. *Journal of Political Economy Microeconomics*, [online]

17. Lin, Y., Frey, C.B. and Wu, L. (2023). Remote collaboration fuses fewer breakthrough ideas. *Nature*, [online]

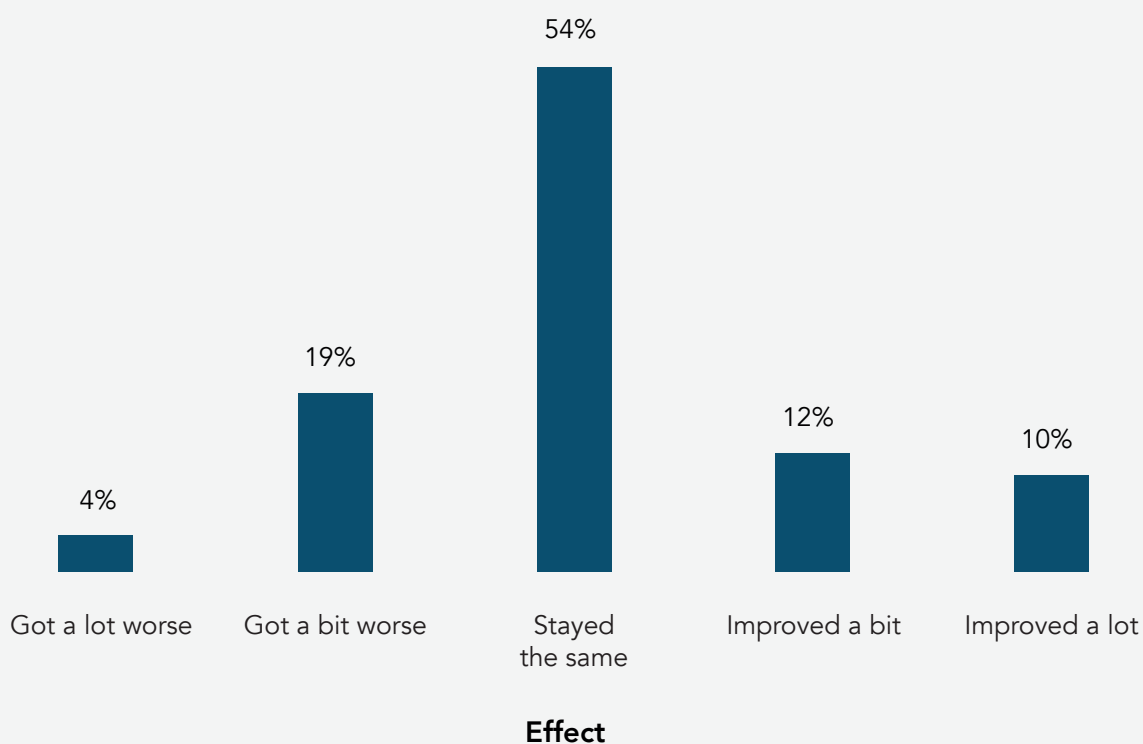
6) Does hybrid work damage company culture?

Alongside improving productivity, restoring company culture is one of the most commonly cited reasons for introducing return-to-office mandates.

Understanding the impact of hybrid work on culture is crucial, then. The first metric we can look at is whether people feel that hybrid work has worsened their connection to their company's culture, as well as their relationship with colleagues.

Opinion is divided on how hybrid working has impacted people's connection to their company's culture. For most (54%), there has been no discernible change, but 23% of people feel that it damaged the connection, whilst 23% feel that it has improved, as shown in Figure 12.

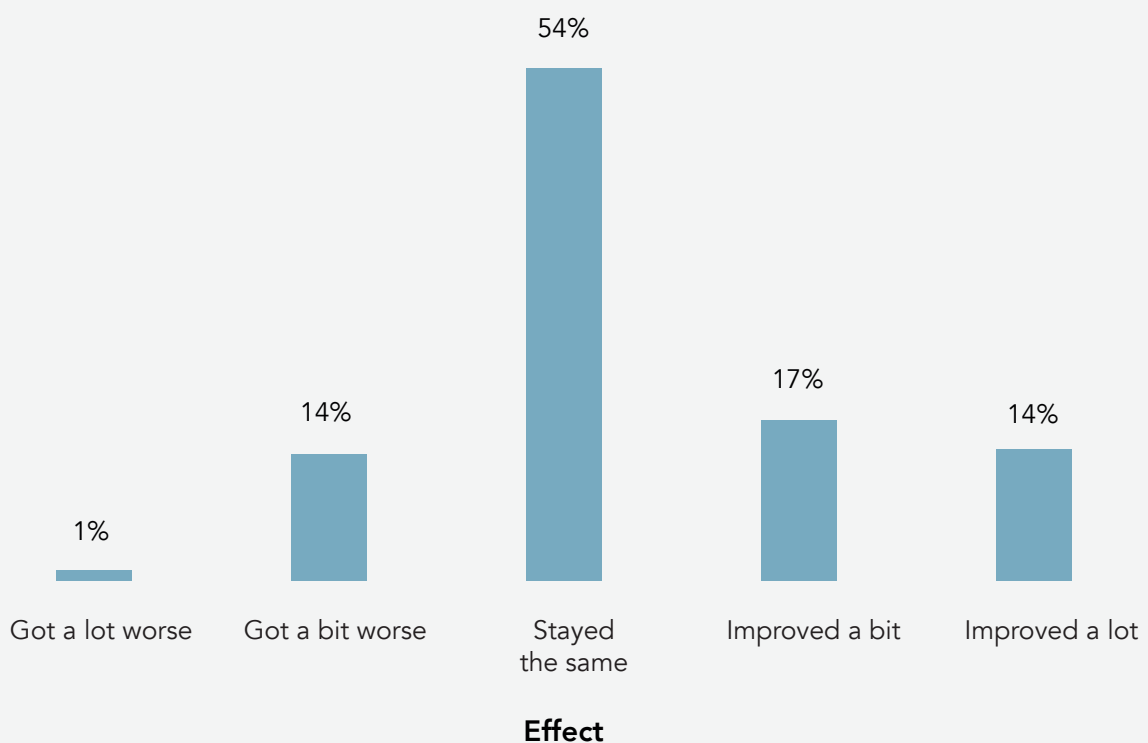
Figure 12: Hybrid work's effect on connection to company culture



Though the industry is net neutral on hybrid work's effect on company culture, a significant number of people in hybrid roles do feel that culture has taken a hit. For employees, this may feel like a sacrifice worth making. For employers, any impact on connection to culture may sound alarm bells.

As shown in Figure 13, the picture is similar in terms of employees' relationships with their colleagues.

Figure 13: Hybrid Working's effect on relationships with colleagues



Relationships with colleagues does have a net positive effect, at 16%, with very few employees feeling that the move to hybrid work made it a lot worse. This suggests that some people feel that culture is more than just interpersonal relationships; it is also about shared spaces, environments and experiences.

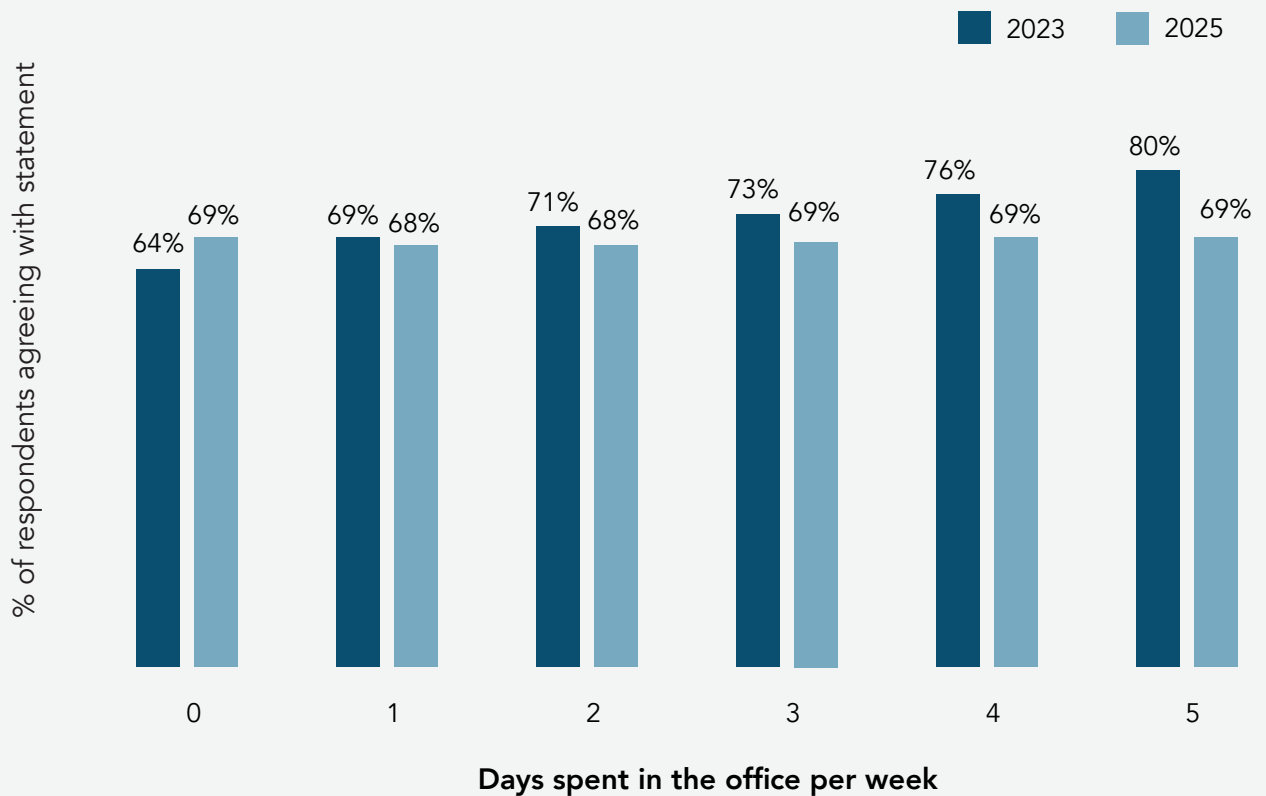
A changing picture

In the All In 2023 dataset, one of the clear trends was the positive correlation between days spent in the office and indicators of company culture. People who spent more days in the office were more likely to:

- » Feel valued and essential to their company
- » Feel that they belonged at their company

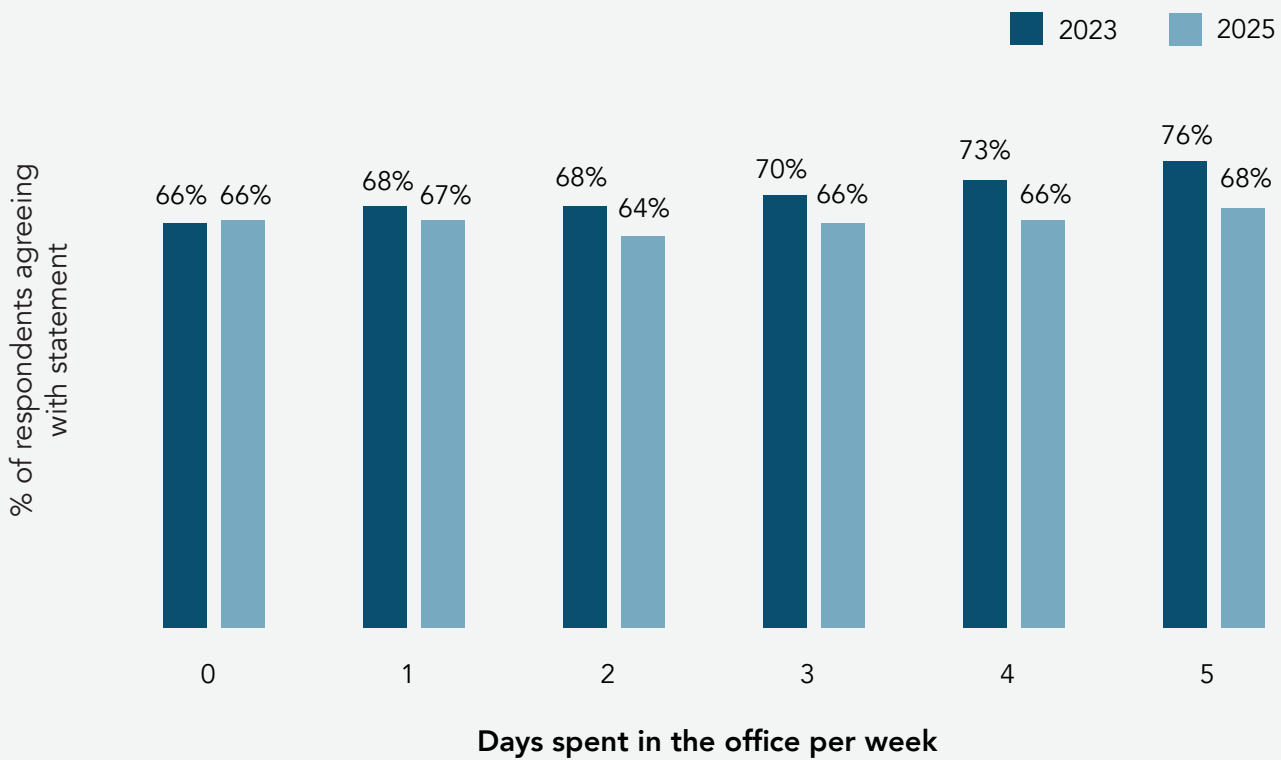
As shown in Figure 14, in 2023, the more days spent in the office, the more likely an employee was to feel that they belonged. In 2025, this trend is no longer true; someone working fully remotely is now just as likely as someone spending five days per week in the office to feel that they belong at their company.

Figure 14. 'I feel like I belong at my company': 2023 vs 2025



The same is true when looking at employees' feelings of being valued within their companies, as shown in Figure 15; what was a relationship in 2023 is no longer one in 2025.

Figure 15. 'I am a valued and essential part of my company': 2023 vs 2025



There are several possible explanations for such a change. The first is that the previous data was demonstrating a response bias. In 2023, when fewer companies had rigorously enforced policies, a higher proportion of those spending 3+ days per week in the office were likely doing so out of choice – i.e., they worked in the office because they felt they belonged, rather than feeling belonging because they spent more time in the office. In 2025, when policies are more strictly set, many of the people spending three, four, or even five days per week in the office are doing so to abide by company policy rather than out of choice, thus removing some of the response bias.

It is also possible that companies are becoming more adept at building teams and structures that support belonging and culture within hybrid working arrangements. This is especially important for those spending less than three days per week in the office.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, many preferring to spend more days out of the office may have since moved companies offering arrangements in line with their preference. This has likely happened across hybrid work patterns, meaning that people more often select employers where the days spent in the office closely matches their preference. Feelings of belonging and value are therefore less negatively impacted by being forced to work in a way that they dislike.

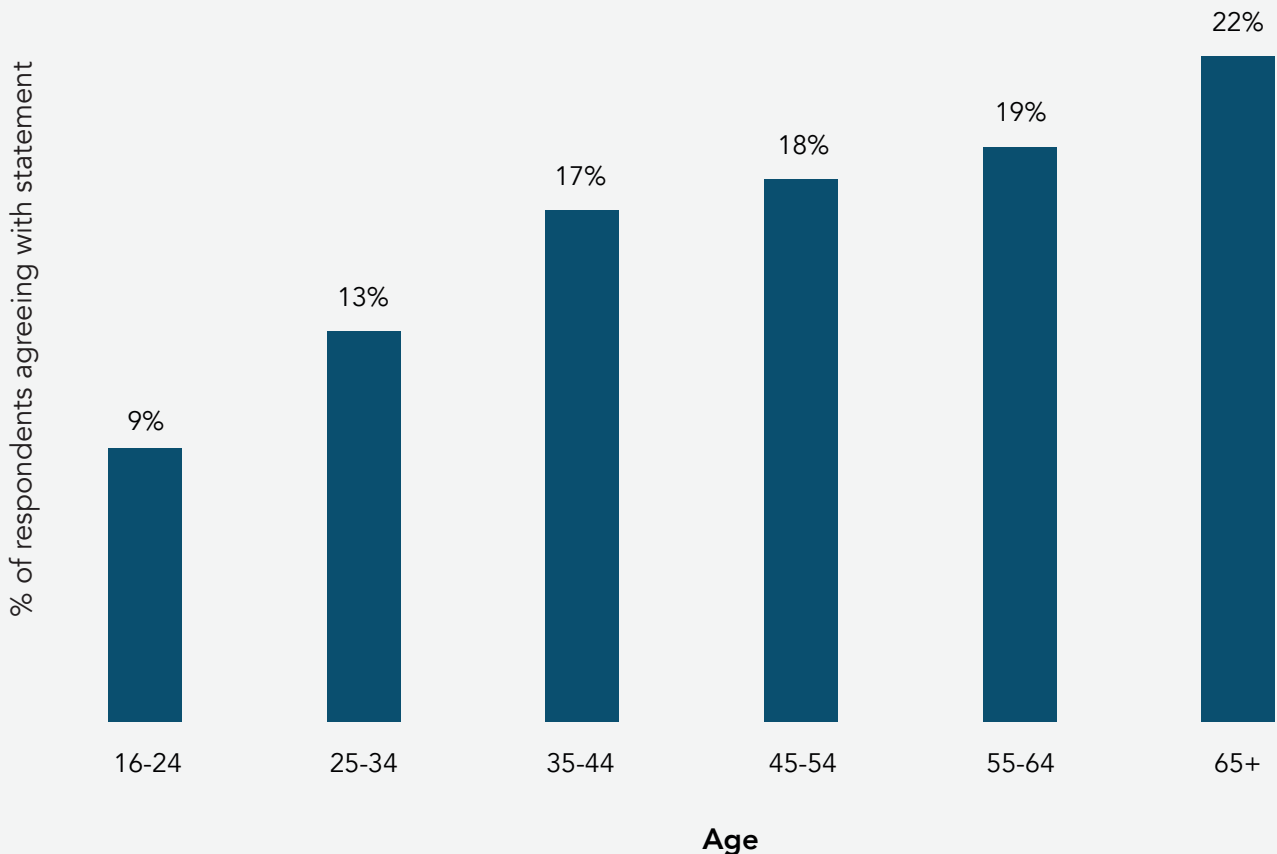
Nevertheless, it is striking that there is almost no difference between days at all.

What is perhaps concerning, though, is that feelings of belonging and value have decreased overall since 2023. Changes to hybrid working policies may have played a part in this, but there are likely other factors at play, as well, especially as a drop-off is still seen amongst those spending two or three days per week in the office. This may be a future topic of focus for Credos.

An age effect

The final element of company culture to consider is that not every demographic responds in the same way. For instance, our data suggests that older employees are more likely to feel that the move to hybrid working worsened their relationship with their colleagues, as Figure 16 demonstrates.

Figure 16. 'Hybrid working has made my relationship with colleagues worse'



“

The more years spent in the office, at lunch meetings in town and in-person meetings, the harder the transition to hybrid work.

”

It seems likely that this age effect is partly due to comfort and familiarity with virtual working tools, but also to the difficulty associated with relearning working patterns that have become entrenched and concretised over the years. The more years spent in the office, at lunch meetings in town and in-person meetings, the harder the transition to hybrid work.

However, the net effect of hybrid work on relationships with colleagues was still positive amongst All In respondents overall (+16%).

Conclusion

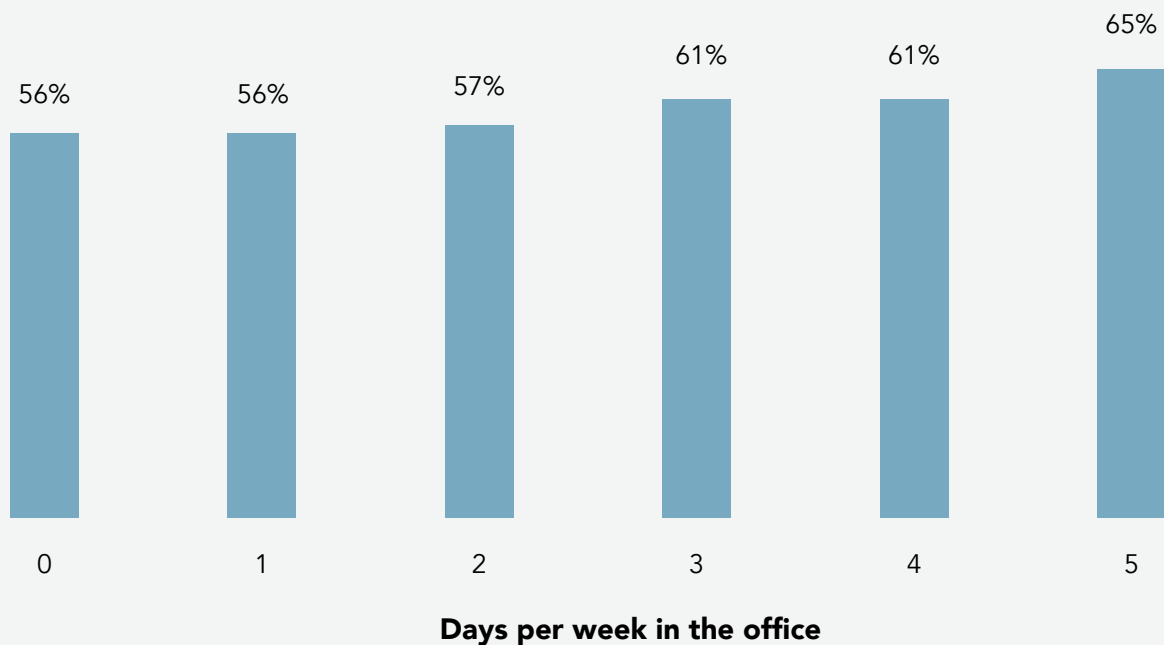
Perhaps unhelpfully, the impact of hybrid working on company culture varies greatly. The industry is split on whether hybrid working improved their connection to their company's culture, while older employees may be struggling more than most to adapt their personal relationships in the world of remote work.

What does seem to be true, is that time has ironed out some of the early discrepancies in experience. That someone working completely remotely is now just as likely as someone working in the office four of five days per week to feel that they belong at their company is particularly notable. It may be that company culture requires more time and energy from management in highly flexible organisations, but for those companies who manage it well, there is no reason why a hybrid organisation can't foster a great culture - even those with high levels of remote work.

7) Does hybrid work limit development and career progression?

The impact of hybrid working practices on professional development and career progression is often assumed to be negative, which our analysis of All In data seems to support. As shown in Figure 17, more days spent in the office is associated with a higher likelihood of employees feeling supported to develop their skills and progress their career.

Figure 17. 'I am provided with sufficient support to develop my skills and progress my career' by days spent in the office



This trend is remarkably consistent with the All In data collected in 2023, in which 56% of those spending 0 days per week in the office agreed with the statement, compared to 66% spending five days per week.

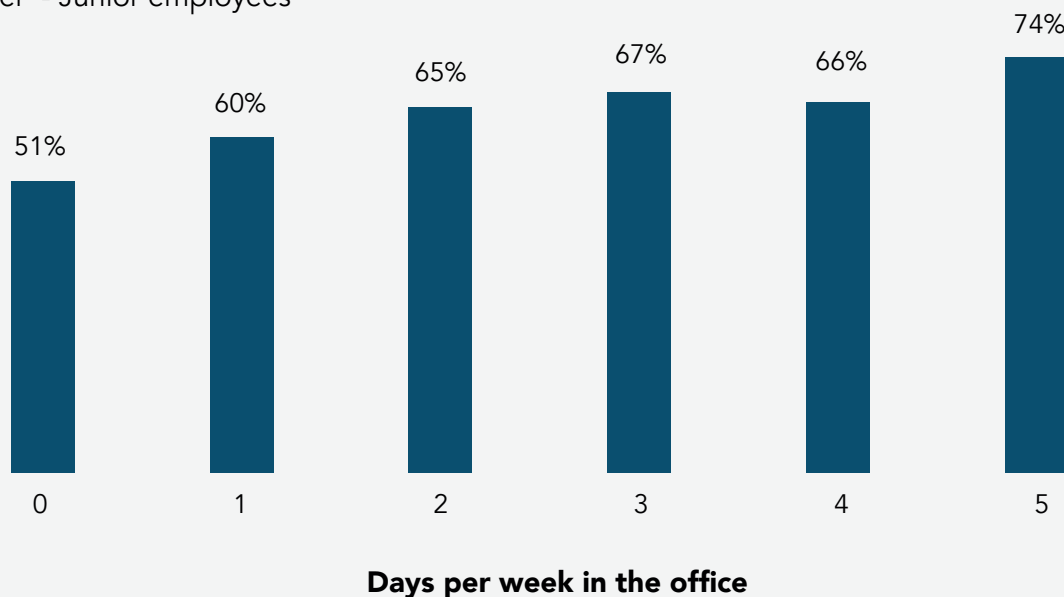
Unlike other drawbacks of hybrid working then, the effect on career support and development has not changed over the past two years, while the industry's working patterns have shifted.

Though far from suggesting that hybrid working prevents career progression, the evidence suggests that more time spent in the office can increase support in this area.

The possible negative effect of hybrid work on career development is of particular concern for those at the early stages of their careers. The data for junior employees is more polarised than for the overall workforce.

As Figure 18 shows, there is a significant increase in likelihood of feeling professionally supported between 0 days and 1 day per week in the office, suggesting that junior employees looking to maximise their career progression should consider avoiding entirely remote jobs, unless the role is particularly suited to it, or if the employer has clear strategies in place for career support.

Figure 18. 'I am provided with sufficient support to develop my skills and progress my career' - Junior employees



At the other end of the spectrum, those spending five days per week in the office are particularly likely to feel adequately supported at work. It may be that some companies without hybrid working perks choose to offer increased training and development programmes as an alternative job perk to flexibility.

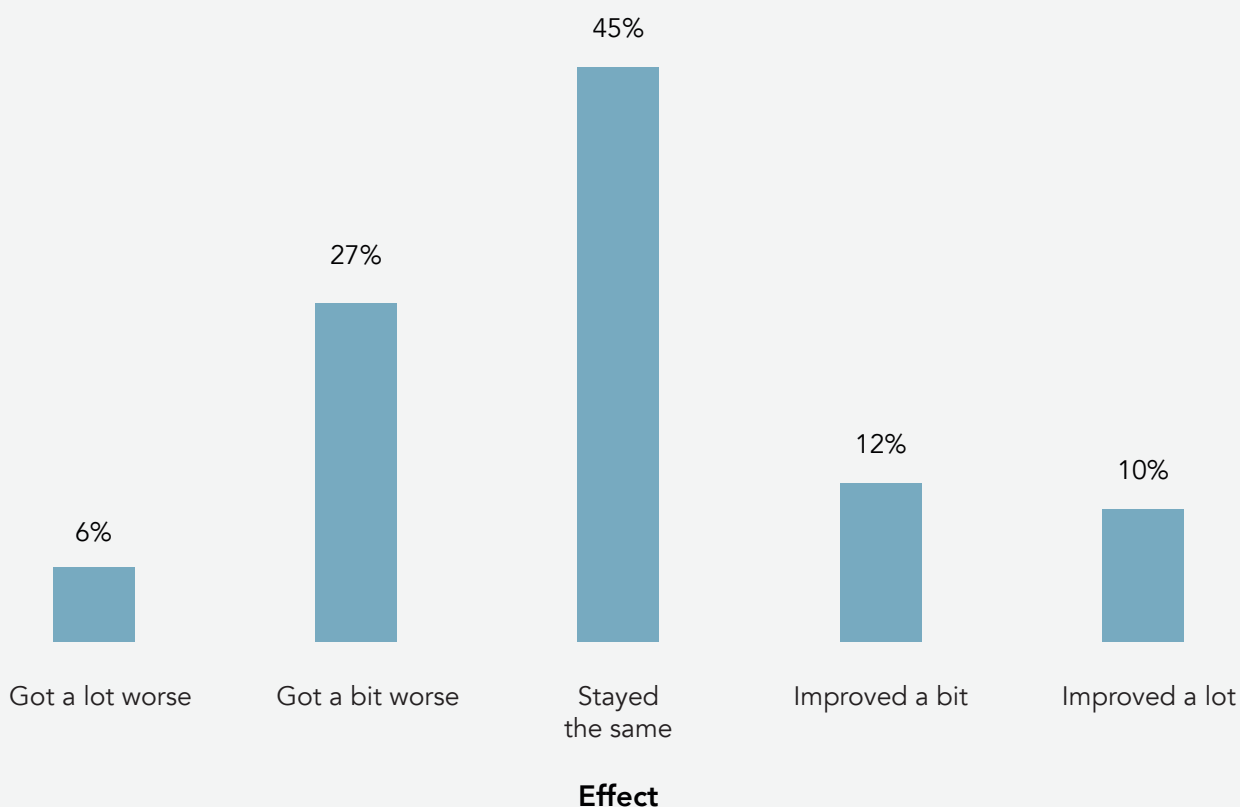
70% of people spending five days per week in the office put five days per week as their preference – far higher than the industry average of 45% working at their preferred days per week, suggesting that many are choosing to work this way in recognition of its benefits. Trading flexibility to focus on career progression may therefore be a conscious decision for many junior employees.

8) What do employees dislike about hybrid work?

When it comes to asking employees about their views on hybrid working, the overall picture is overwhelmingly positive. As discussed earlier in this report, just two of the fourteen aspects of work we asked about show a net negative impact from hybrid work. But, for the two aspects which are net negative, understanding employees' experiences is key to mitigating downsides.

The first is the oft-cited 'water cooler' effect. As shown in Figure 19, a third of respondents feel that their ability to informally learn from colleagues has worsened due to a shift to hybrid working.

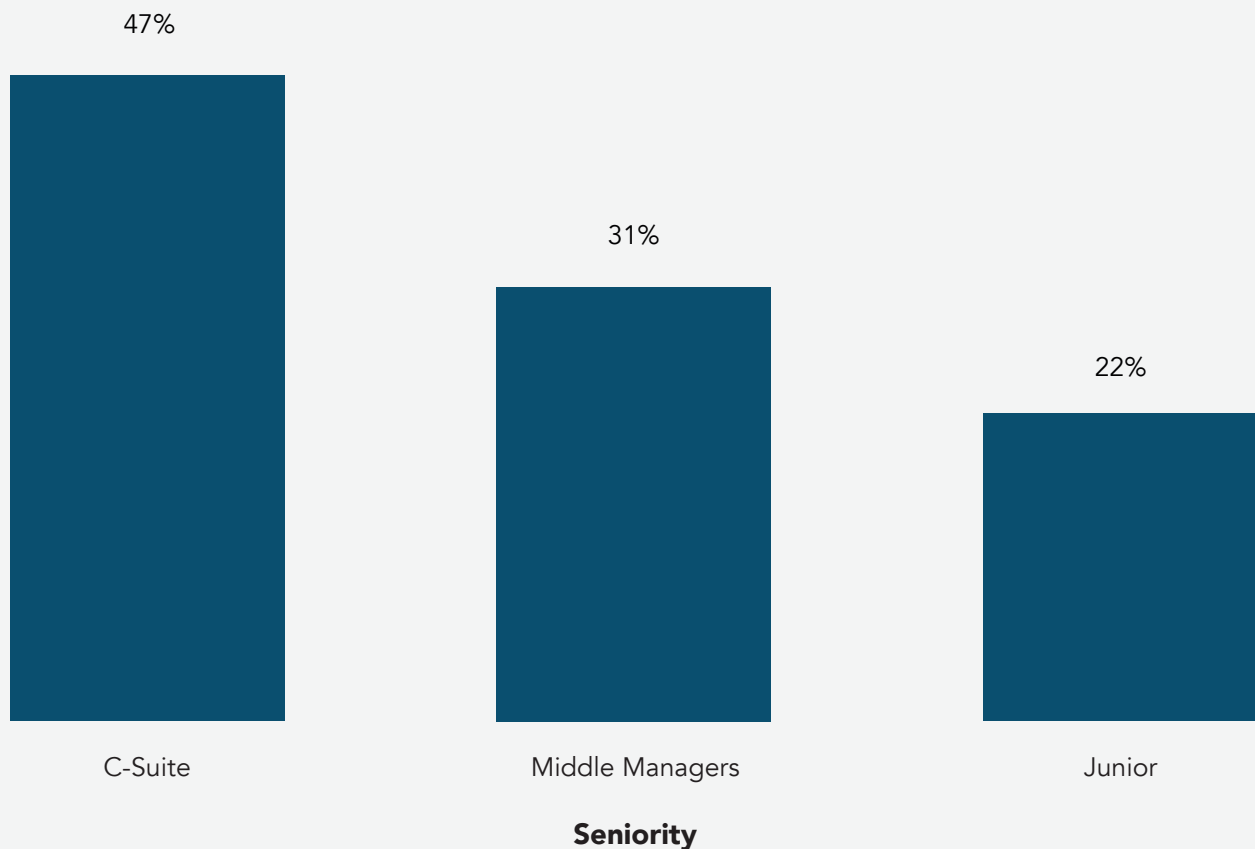
Figure 19. Effect of hybrid work on 'ability to informally learn from colleagues'



Informal learning is particularly important for those at the early stages of their career. Especially for an industry which incorporates high levels of creativity, collaboration and imagination, spending time with more experienced colleagues can be vital for the progression of junior staff.

It is perhaps counterintuitive then, that it is the most senior employees in particular who feel that hybrid work has damaged the informal learning process. As Figure 20 shows, those in leadership positions are for more likely to feel that informal learning 'got worse' following a switch to hybrid work.

Figure 20. 'Hybrid work reduced my ability to informally learn from colleagues'

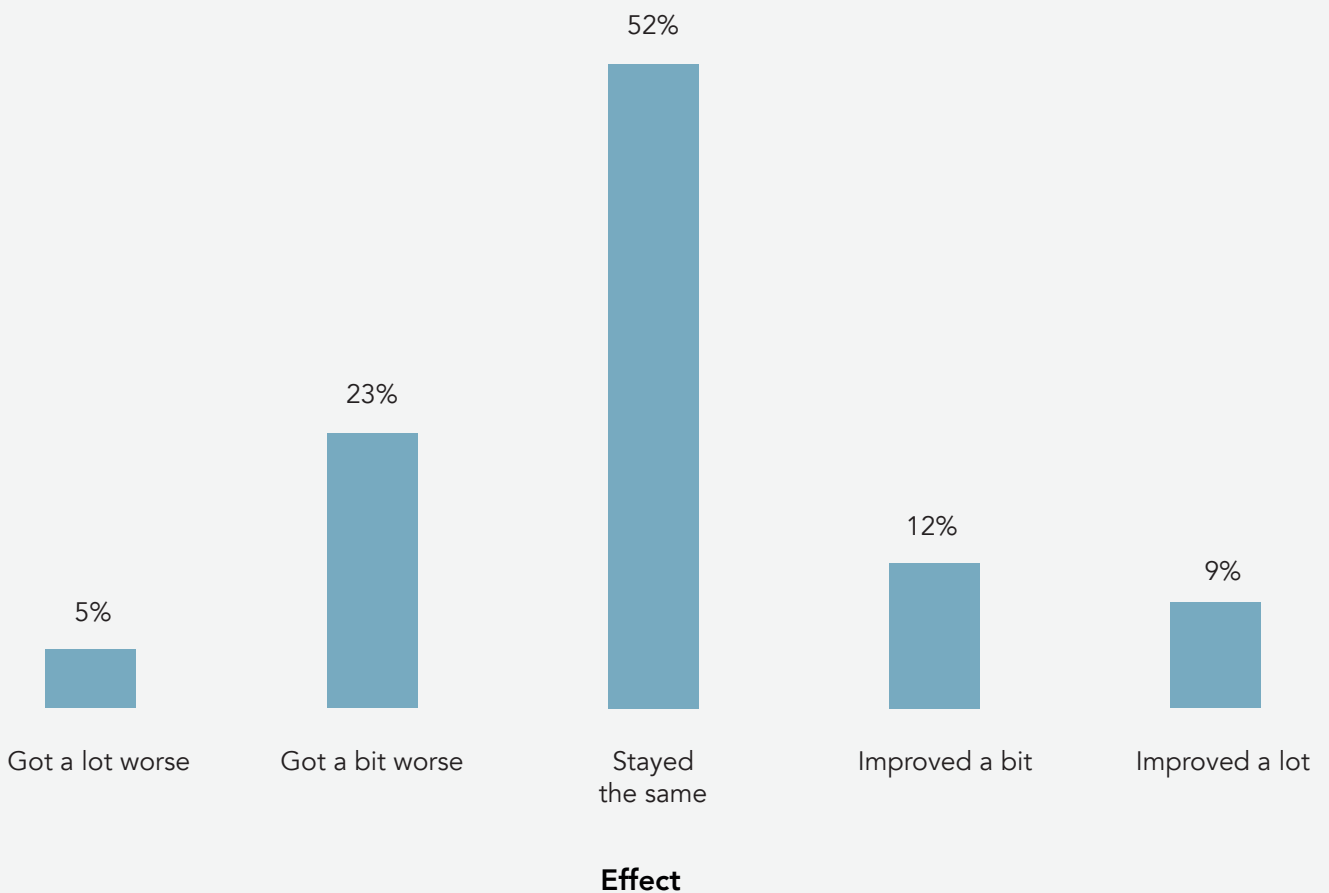


There are a few possibilities to explain this significant difference in outlook. Firstly, it may be that more junior employees already have more structured, formal learning plans in place. This means that any loss to informal learning would be less noticeable. For those in leadership positions, whose development may be seen as less of a priority, any loss of informal learning may be noticed more acutely and result in overall learning opportunities becoming highly limited.

It is also possible that junior employees are more adept at, and comfortable with, learning informally through digital channels. Junior employees tend to be younger, and often more confident navigating digital tools. It should also be noted that many junior employees have only known hybrid work as the reality of the workplace.

The other aspect of work that displayed a net negative effect from hybrid work was networking opportunities, a small majority of respondents felt that this had stayed the same, as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21. Effect of hybrid work on 'networking opportunities'



Just as 'work-life balance' is a predictable positive of hybrid work, networking opportunities can be seen as a predictable casualty. Networking, like informal learning, often exists outside scheduled meetings, formal workloads and structured systems.

Remote work, meanwhile, lends itself to pre-planned meetings with set agendas, making it less suited to informal chat and relationship building.

For some employees, though, hybrid working may open new opportunities for networking, allowing them to meet some people in town during their in-office days, and others closer to home when working remotely. Not commuting frees up time to pursue networking that may otherwise have felt unmanageable, potentially explaining the 20% of hybrid workers who feel that their networking has improved since shifting to a hybrid pattern.

Conclusion

For most people working in a hybrid way, there is often something that is compromised, most commonly informal learning and networking. Though these were the only two factors that were impacted in a net negative way according to the All In Census 2025, it should be noted that all other factors had some people responding that hybrid work made it worse.

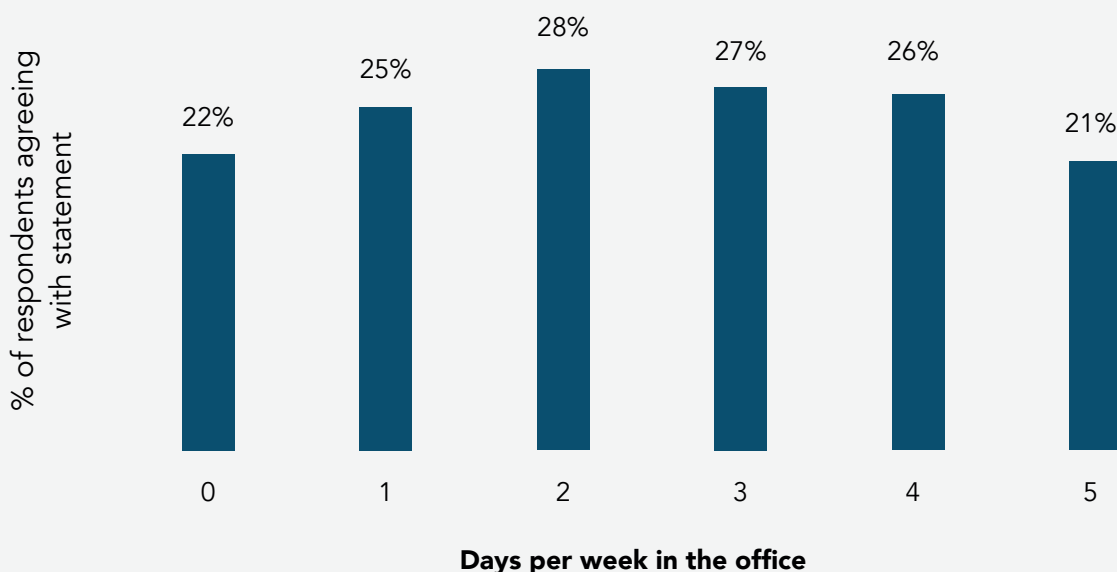
9) Do return-to-office mandates impact employee retention?

With all news of return-to-office mandates comes the prediction that mass quitting will soon follow. The value employees place on their work-life balance is now powerful enough to force many to look elsewhere for work. But does the data support this?

Research from Kings College London does suggest that employees are willing to quit if ordered back into the office. It found that the percentage of workers saying they would look for a new job with hybrid options if their current employer ordered them into the office full-time rose from 40% in 2022 to 50% in 2024. Over the same period, the share of workers saying they would quit straight away if forced to go in five days a week doubled from 5% to 10%.¹⁸

But does this apply to advertising, and what happens when we look beyond what people say, and focus more on what they intend to do? Firstly, there is no longer a correlation between an employee's days spent in the office and their desire to leave their company as shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22. 'I am likely to leave my company in the next 12 months', by days spent in the office per week

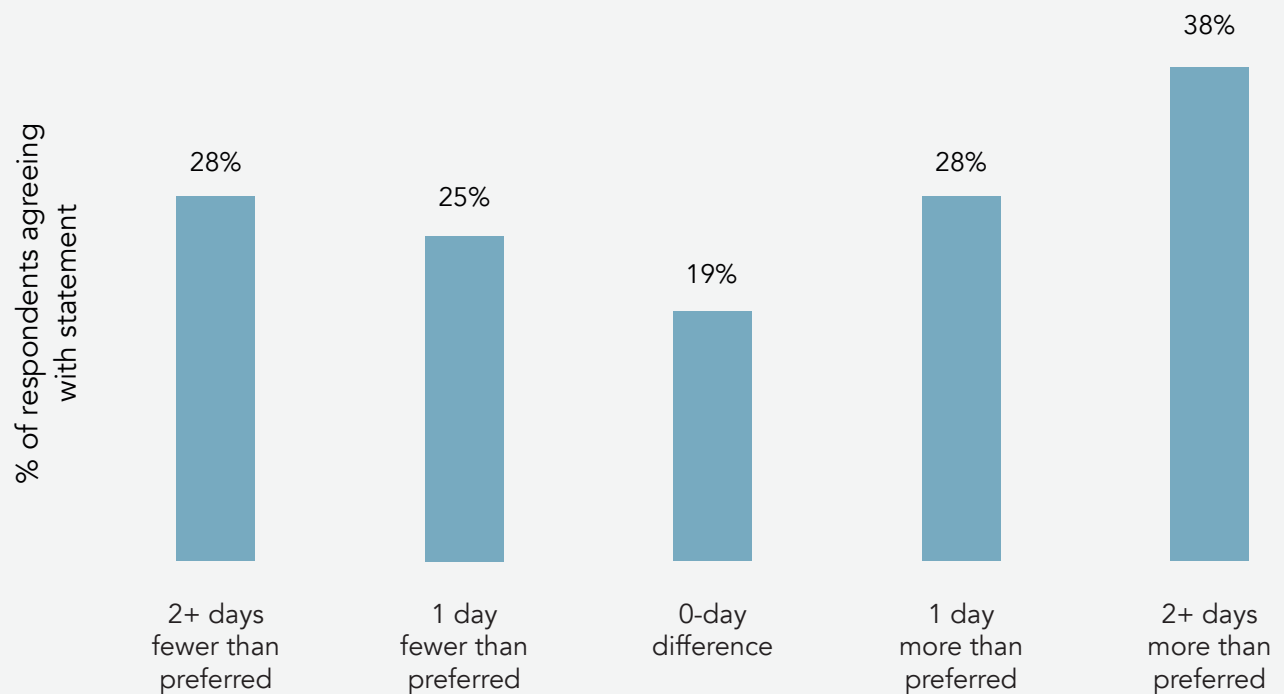


18. London, K.C. (2025). UK workers increasingly rejecting return-to-office mandates, study finds. [online] King's College London.

As has been suggested previously in this report, this change is likely due to people in the industry increasingly selecting workplaces whose hybrid policy matches their preference.

Conversely, those working in the way that they prefer are far less likely to plan to leave their company. As Figure 23 shows, those working in their ideal way (0-day difference) are the least likely to plan to leave their company in the next 12 months while those spending 2+ days extra in the office than they would like to are the most likely to plan to leave.

Figure 23. 'I am likely to leave my company in the next 12 months' by distance from preferred number of days in the office per week



This U-shaped trend becomes especially pronounced amongst those spending at least two days per week more in the office than they would prefer. As question 2 of this report explored, this group is relatively small (14% of the overall workforce). However, Figure 24 does suggest that radical changes in hybrid working policy are likely to result in a significant portion of the workforce considering quitting.

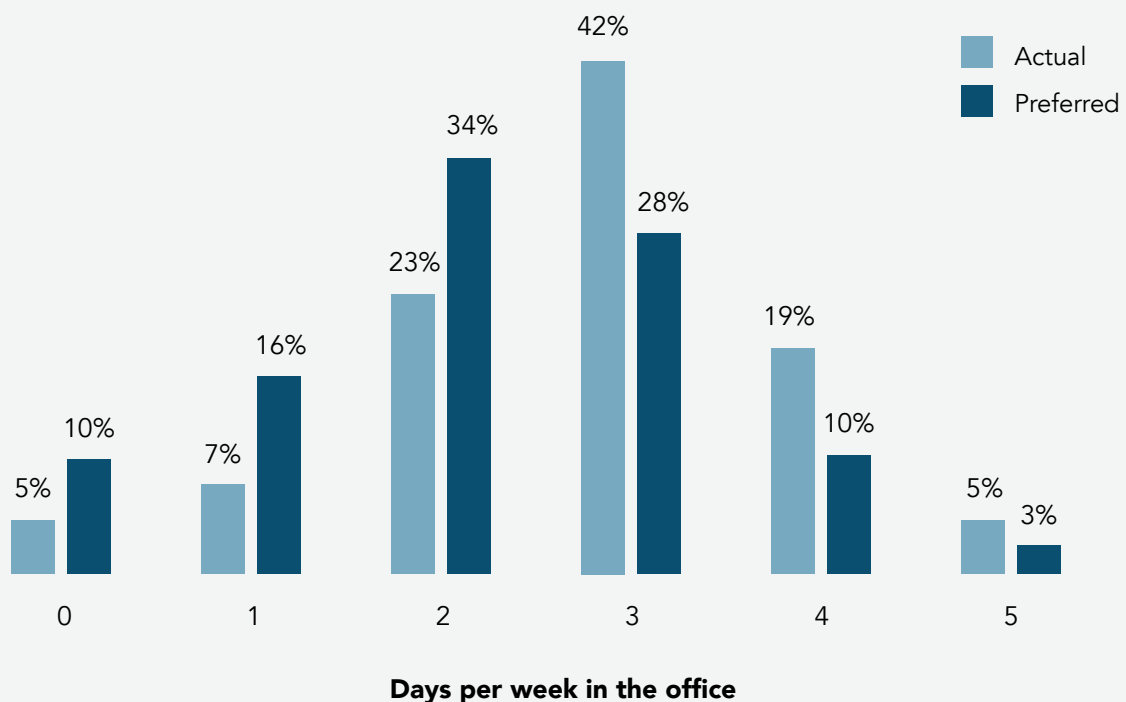
10) Should junior employees spend more time in the office?

Much of the conversation around the impacts of hybrid work is focused on junior employees. They are the ones who often need higher levels of training, development and guidance. Without as much experience in a role and its responsibilities, it is also a common worry that junior employees working from home may be distracted and less productive when not being supervised in an office.

Actual vs preferred

This question is particularly relevant because, in general, junior employees are the furthest from their desired working patterns. Figure 24 shows the actual and preferred days per week in the office amongst junior employees.

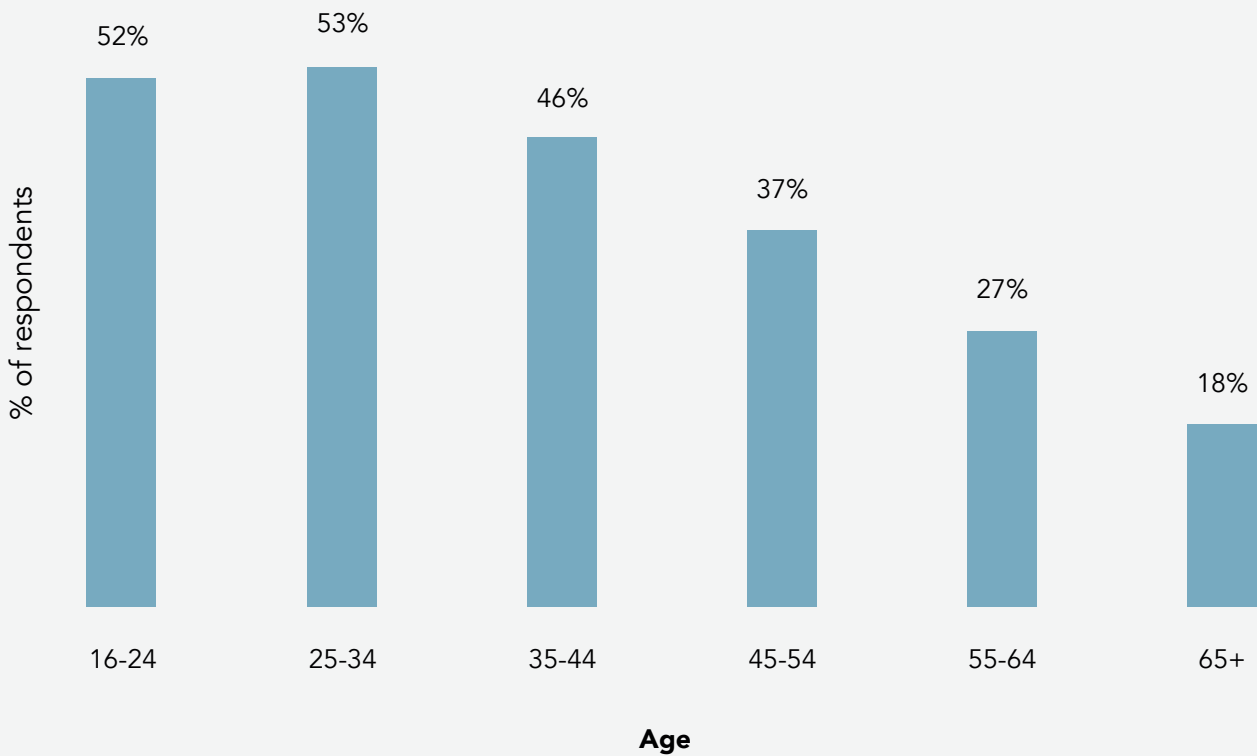
Figure 24. Actual vs preferred days per week in the office - Junior employees



The appetite for 0 or 1 days per week is considerable, with many desiring a more home-based working style. The fact that there is a larger discrepancy between actual and preferred working patterns for junior employees also suggests that employers are especially conscious of the potential ramifications on support and development.

This fact is displayed even more clearly when looking at the percentage of employees who are spending at least one day per week more in the office than they would like to and comparing by age. As Figure 25 shows, younger employees are far more likely to be spending more days in the office than their preference.

Figure 25. Percentage of employees spending at least one day per week more in the office than their preference, by age

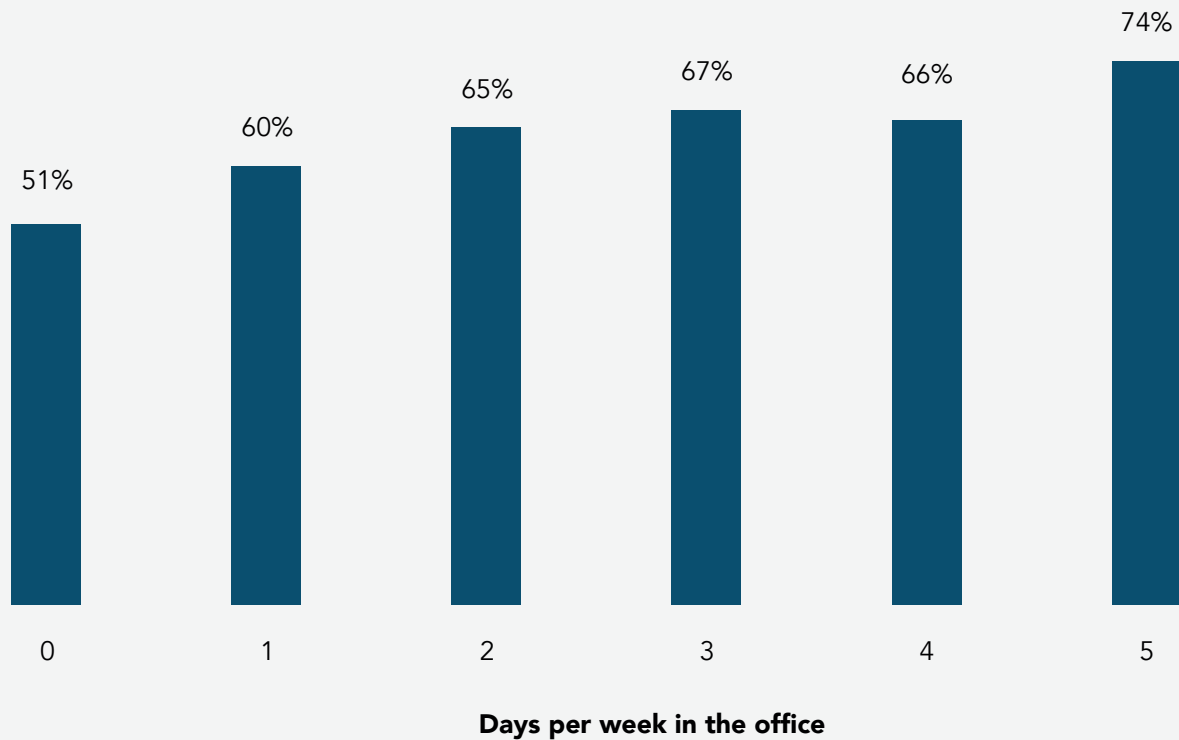


This is likely a combined effect – older employees tend to have slightly more office-based preferences, but they are also more likely to have the power to select their working style in the way they would like. More junior employees, meanwhile, may have less power to dictate their working patterns.

Career development

As Figure 26 demonstrates, there is a positive relationship between a junior employee's days spent in the office and the likelihood of feeling supported in their career.

Figure 26. 'I am provided with sufficient support to develop my skills and progress my career' - Junior employees



The significant drop-off from one day per week to fully remote is especially important. Those spending all their working week outside the office are far less likely to feel supported professionally. Those spending all their week in the office, on the other hand, are considerably more likely to feel professionally supported.

On the other hand, junior employees are more likely than other levels to feel that hybrid work has improved their access to learning and development. 35% of junior/executive level employees felt that hybrid had improved it, compared to just 8% feeling that it made it worse. 30% of All In respondents overall felt that hybrid working had improved this aspect of work.

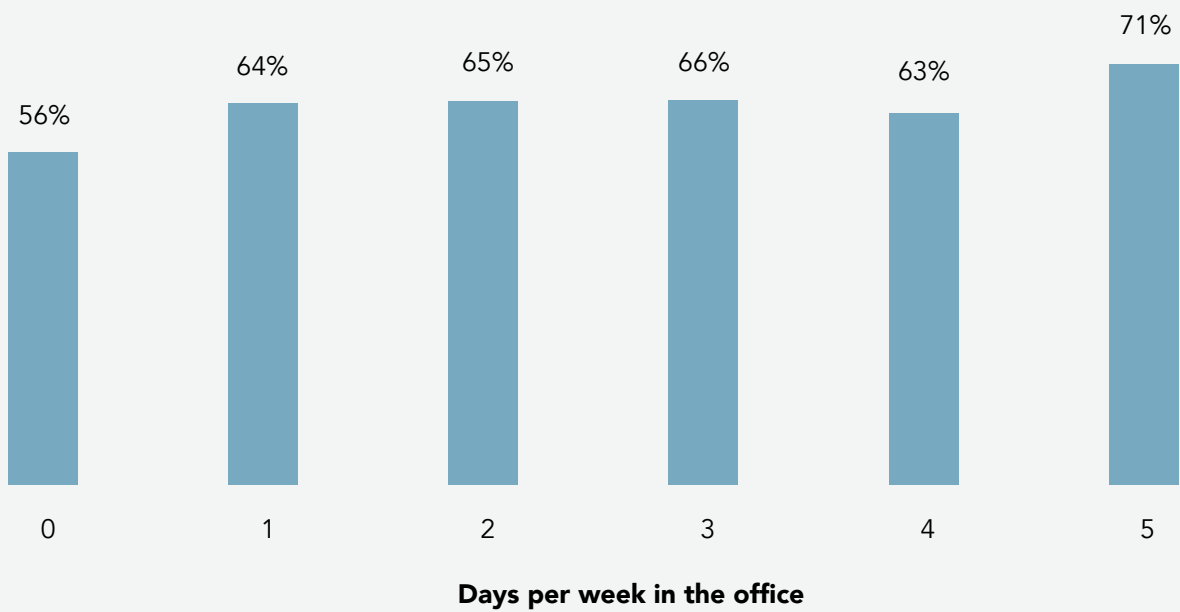
For more discussion and explanation of the relationship between days in the office and career support and progression, see Question 7 on page 28.

Belonging

Question 6 of this report explored the relationship between days spent in the office and employees feeling that they belong at their companies. For All In respondents overall, there was no relationship. For junior employees, the story is slightly different.

As Figure 27 shows, junior employees spending zero days per week in the office are less likely to feel that they belong than the average employee. Those spending five days per week in the office are most likely to feel that they belong.

Figure 27. 'I feel like I belong at my company' – Junior employees

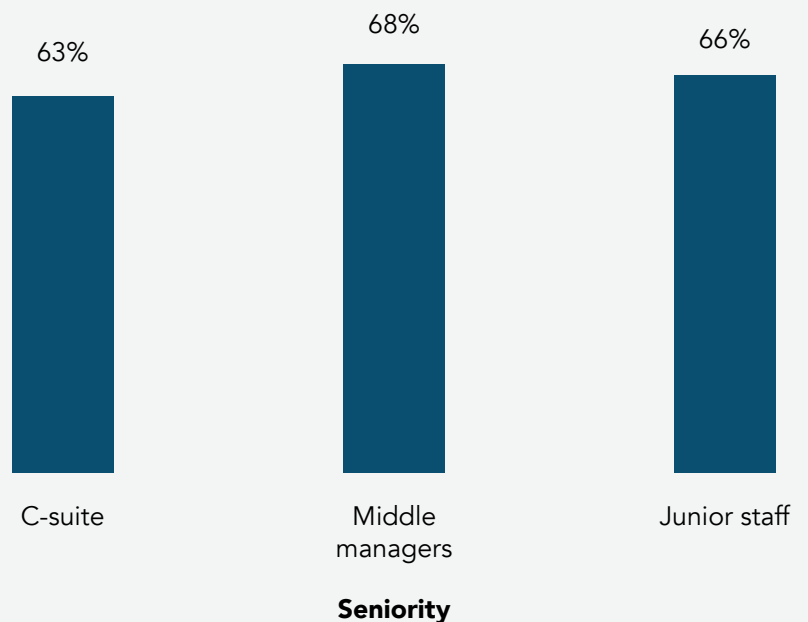


Productivity

Productivity was one of the aspects of work most positively impacted by the switch to hybrid work, according to All In respondents.

This is true of all seniority levels, as shown in Figure 28.

Figure 28. 'Hybrid work improved my productivity' – Junior employees

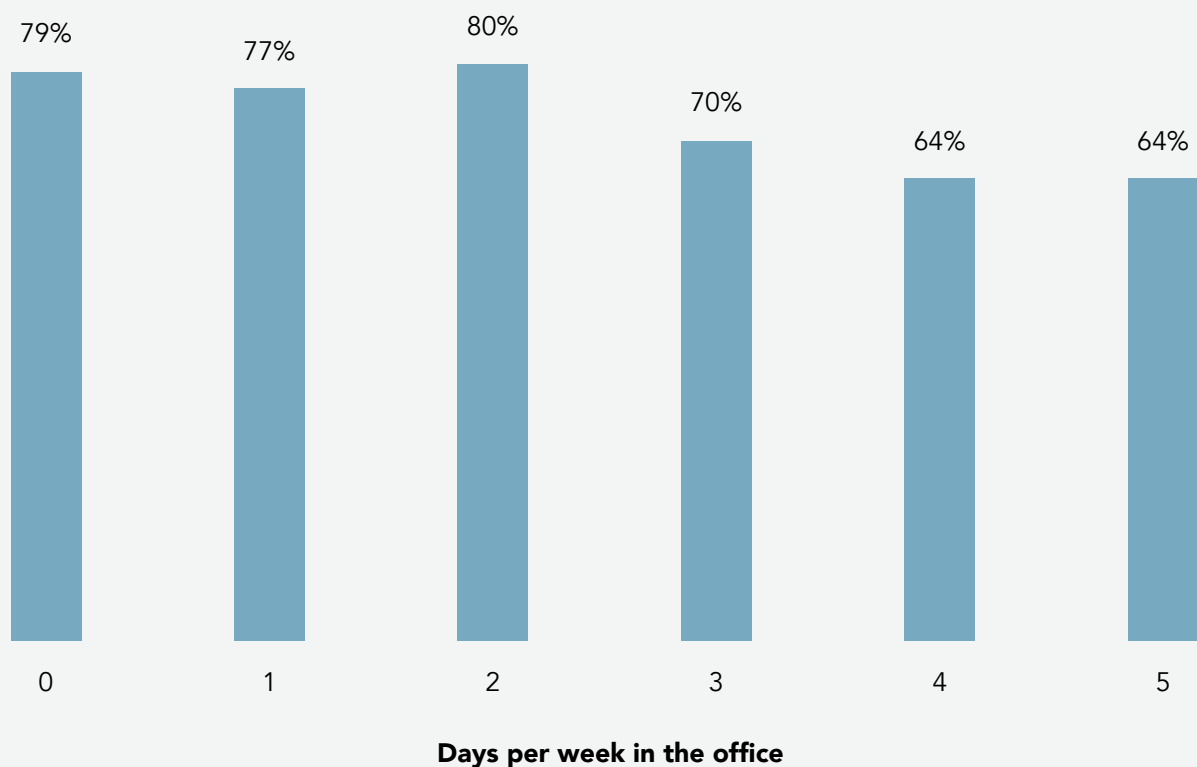


Most junior employees feel, just like managers and C-suite, that hybrid work has improved their productivity levels. Whether this self-reported effect is actually true is unclear, although most evidence in this area points to hybrid workers being just as productive and likely to be promoted as their office-based peers¹⁹. For more discussion on the relationship between hybrid work and productivity, see Question 5 on page 23.

Flexibility and Work-Life Balance

Flexibility and work-life balance are valued extremely highly across the workforce, including all generations and seniority levels. Figure 29 shows the negative correlation between flexibility and days per week spent in the office amongst junior employees in particular.

Figure 29. 'I have sufficient flexibility to meet my personal/family needs' – Junior employees



Unlike the overall numbers, there is not a linear relationship between days spent in the office and flexibility. Amongst the overall workforce, those spending 0 days per week in the office were the most likely to have sufficient flexibility (85%). For junior employees, it is those spending two days per week in the office who are most likely to have sufficient flexibility to meet their personal/family needs.

19. Crawford, K. (2024). Study finds hybrid work benefits companies and employees. [online] news.stanford.edu.

This is partly because younger, more junior employees are less likely to have families, meaning that three days per week at home is often plenty for meeting their needs outside work. Two days per week in the office may even allow greater ability to meet friends and family after work by providing a common location.

Conclusion

The picture for more junior employees is certainly a more complicated one than the overall workforce. While junior employees' preferences for homeworking exceed the general population, the specific benefits of in-office days for junior employees means that high levels of remote work are often unsuitable for optimal career development and progression.

Though over half (52%) of 16-24-year-olds are spending more days per week in the office than they would like, this is in part a reflection of employers recognising the additional benefits of in-office days to support progression.

However, it should be reiterated that well managed and clearly led remote teams can support their junior employees' development just as well as in-office teams, especially when online training resources are properly utilised.

The general advice for most junior employees would be to avoid completely remote jobs unless the role is specifically suited to it; the employee is particularly suited to remote work for any reason (including disability); or the employer has demonstrated a commitment to career development.

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