



# How working from home is affecting the workplace

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**Canada**

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The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

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# About the Survey on Employment & Skills

The [Survey on Employment and Skills](#) is being conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the [Future Skills Centre](#) and the [Diversity Institute](#) at Toronto Metropolitan University.

In early 2020, the survey began as a project designed to explore people's experiences with the changing nature of work in Canada. Such changes included technology-driven disruptions, increasing insecurity and shifting skills requirements. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was expanded to investigate the impact of the crisis on employment, earnings and work environments in Canada. Additional waves of the survey (Waves 2 to 6) were conducted between December 2020 and November 2023.

This seventh wave of the study consists of a survey of 5,855 Canadians aged 18 and over, which was conducted between May 30 and July 4, 2024, in all provinces and territories. It was conducted both online (in the provinces) and by telephone (in the territories). This wave of the survey includes oversamples from smaller provinces and territories – New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Manitoba – as well as individuals under the age of 34, racialized Canadians and Indigenous Peoples. This approach aims to create a more comprehensive portrait of the diverse experiences across the country. The survey results in this report are weighted by age, gender, region, education and racial identity to ensure that they are representative of the Canadian population as a whole.

Survey reports can be found online at:

> <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/listing/-in-tags/type/survey-on-employment-and-skills>

> [fsc-ccf.ca/research/survey-on-employment-and-skills/](https://fsc-ccf.ca/research/survey-on-employment-and-skills/)

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## Key findings

- In the spring of 2024, 42% of Canadian workers said they typically worked from home at least one day per week.
- Working from home was more common for executives, managers and business owners, and for office and administrative workers, compared to those in other occupations. It was also much more common for those with a university degree compared to those with other types of education.
- Going forward, two out of three Canadian workers (68%) said they would like to have the option of working from home at least one day per week.
- The proportion of those currently working from home *less often* than they would like (37%) was much greater than the proportion working from home *more often* than they would like (7%).
- The majority of workers, regardless whether they worked from home or not, agreed that people who work at home are just as productive as those who work in their regular office or workplace. Similarly, the majority agreed that allowing people to work from home as much as they want has made their workplace a more enjoyable place to be.
- At the same time, 55% agreed that “people who work at home are missing out on too many things that happen when we come together in our regular office or workplace.” And about one in two agreed that “it is impossible to work together as a team when some people are working at home and not in our regular office or workplace,” and that “allowing some people to work from home is unfair to those workers who can’t perform their jobs at home.”
- Racialized workers and Indigenous workers tended to be a bit more likely to agree that allowing people to work from home as much as they want has made their workplace a more enjoyable place to be. But they also tended to be more likely to express concerns that people who work at home are missing out on too many things.
- The more regularly respondents worked from home, they more likely they were to agree that (1) allowing people to work from home has made the workplace a more enjoyable place to be, and that (2) people who work at home are just as productive.
- The majority of those *who do not work from home* agreed that (1) people who work from home are missing out, (2) having some people work from home impedes teamwork, and (3) allowing some people to work from home is unfair. Still, the majority of those *who work from home almost every day* disagreed. These results point to a possible rift emerging in the workplace.
- Despite these disagreements, there was very little difference in job satisfaction between those who work at home most or some of the time and those who do not.



# Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an enduring shift in workplace culture in Canada by dramatically increasing the number of employees who work from home. Initially, the remote work was imposed on workers as an emergency measure to help contain the spread of the virus. But it quickly became apparent that, despite the disruptions, most of those who had shifted to working from home preferred it to working in their regular workplace and wanted the arrangement to continue after the pandemic ended.<sup>1</sup> As workplaces reopened, those whose jobs were difficult (if not impossible) to perform from home returned to their workplaces; but many others did not. For a significant part of the workforce, having the flexibility to work from home on some days, if not every day, is now the expected and accepted practice.

Employers, too, have had to adjust to this new reality. For some, there are clear advantages. For instance, they can spend less on leases for office space or hire talented workers who may not live within commuting distance. Others may feel more frustrated with not having their workforce back together in one place, and may be implementing policies requiring more to return to the office.

Exploring how the shift to working from home is affecting job satisfaction, productivity, teamwork, and equity and inclusion is an important step in assessing the current state of the workplace in Canada. Accordingly, this report updates the profile of who is and is not working from home, and how often, over four years after the onset of the pandemic. But it also explores the question of whether a rift is opening in the workplace between those who are and are not working from home. And it considers whether some workers feel they are missing out on some of the positive things that can happen when teams are able to work or gather together in person.

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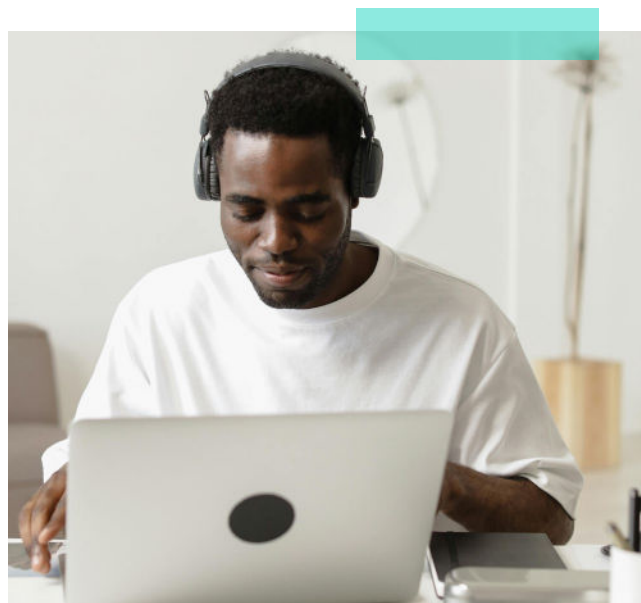
<sup>1</sup> See the reports from earlier waves of the Survey on Employment and Skills, including *Work at Home or Live at Work: The Complexities of New Working Arrangements* (April 2021) (<https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/work-at-home-or-live-at-work-the-complexities-of-new-working-arrangements>); *The Shift to Remote Work: How Workers in Canada are Adapting to Working from Home* (September 2022) (<https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/the-shift-to-remote-work-how-workers-in-canada-are-adapting-to-working-from-home>); and *The Shift to Working from Home will be Difficult to Reverse* (July 2023) (<https://www.environicsinstitute.org/insights/insight-details/the-shift-to-working-from-home-will-be-difficult-to-reverse>).

The findings are based on Wave 7 of the Survey on Employment and Skills, conducted in June 2024. The survey had a total sample of 5,855 adult Canadians, of which 4,043 were currently employed.

The survey found that about two in five Canadian workers typically work from home at least one day per week. Even more (about two in three) said that, going forward, they would like to have the option of working from home at least one day per week. The proportion of those currently working from home *less often* than they would like was much greater than the proportion working from home *more often* than they would like.

Most workers, regardless of whether they work from home or not, agreed that people who work at home are just as productive as those who work in their regular office or workplace, and that allowing people to work from home as much as they want has made their workplace a more enjoyable place to be. But at the same time, respondents expressed concern about the impact of working from home on the workplace. For instance, about one in two workers agreed that (1) people who work at home are missing out on too many things that happen in the regular workplace, (2) working from home impedes teamwork, and (3) allowing some people to work from home is unfair to others who cannot.

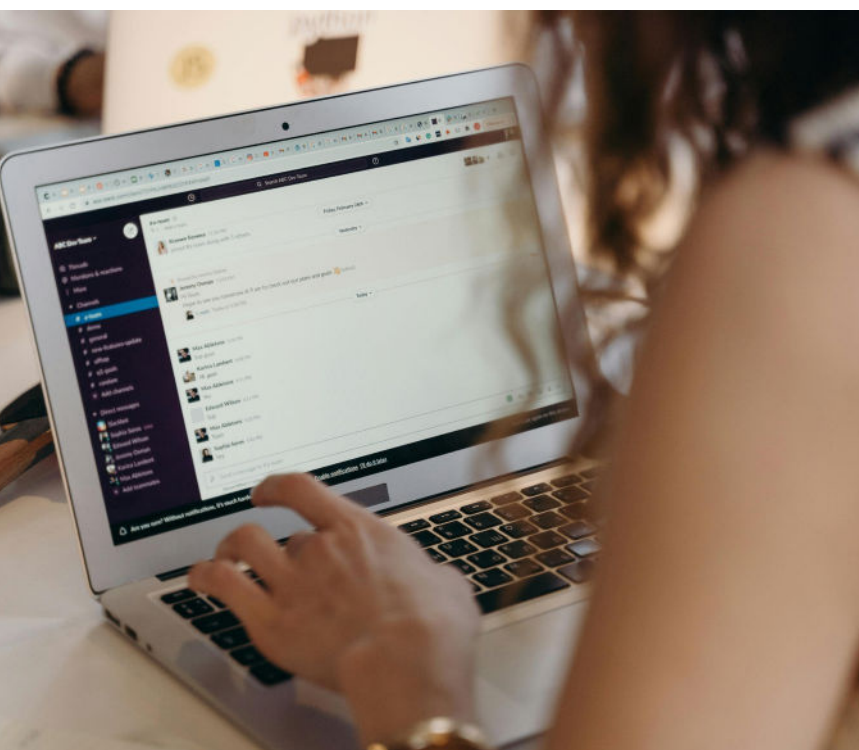
Moreover, opinions differed between those who were and those who were not working from home. Specifically, the majority of those *who do not work from home* agreed that people who work from home miss out, that having some people work from home impedes teamwork, and that allowing some people to work from home is unfair. Meanwhile, the majority of those *who work from home almost every day* disagreed. These results point to a possible rift emerging in the workplace that employers and managers may need to address.



# Working from home: An update

In the spring of 2024, the majority (57%) of respondents said they never or hardly ever worked from home. Of the remainder, 18% said they typically worked from home about one or two days per week, 10% did so about three or four days per week, and 14% worked from home just about every day.<sup>2</sup>

The proportion working from home at least some days per week following the onset of the pandemic, as measured by the different waves of the Survey on Employment and Skills, peaked in late 2020, at 51%. It then declined somewhat, reaching 43% in the spring of 2023, and 42% in this latest survey conducted in June 2024.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the pandemic, the proportion is estimated to have been between 5% and 10%. This estimate is based on both earlier [findings from Statistics Canada](#) and from workers' recollections reported in the Survey on Employment and Skills.



The proportion who worked from home at least one day in a typical week varied by type of employment; it was highest for those who are self-employed (73%), closer to the overall average for those employed full time (40%), and lower for part-time employees (33%).

There were also major differences by occupation. Work-from-home rates were highest among executives, managers and business owners (62%) and office and administrative workers (52%), and lowest among workers in sales and service occupations (33%) and in trades, transportation or labour (30%).

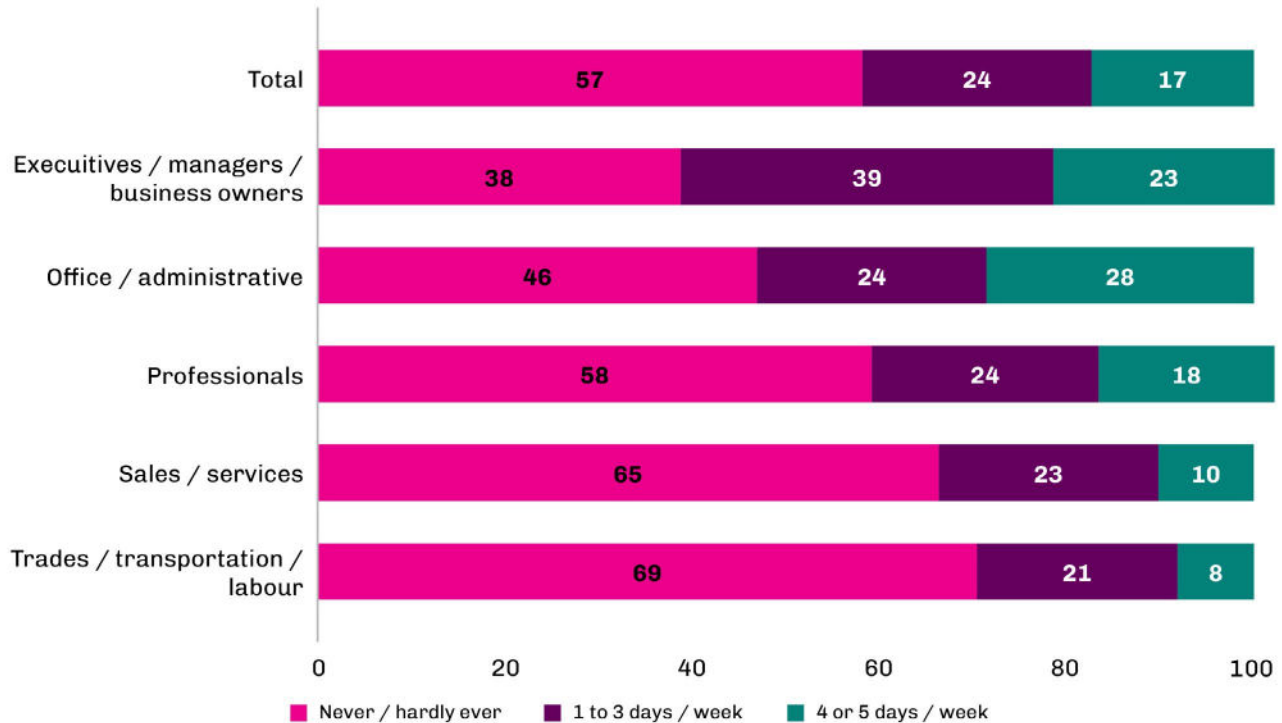
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2 The proportion working from home based on the Survey on Employment and Skills tends to be higher than that reported by Statistics Canada through the Labour Force Survey (LFS). This is partly because the LFS asks about the work situation in a specific week, whereas the Survey on Employment and Skills asks about experiences over several months. The LFS question about work location is also worded differently, and the age range and work status of those included in the survey differs from that of the Survey on Employment and Skills.

3 Note that earlier waves of the survey asked a slightly different question about work location (the wording referred specifically to changes due to the pandemic).

**CHART 1:**  
**Working at home, by occupation**  
 Subsample: employed

*Q24D\_W7. During the last three months, about how many days per week did you typically work at home rather than in a place of work outside the home?*



*Note: Figures may not add up to 100% exactly due to a small percentage of respondents who did not answer or otherwise due to rounding.*

Relatedly, working from home (at least some days per week) was much more common for those with a university degree (55%) compared to those with other types of education (36%), and also more common among those with high household incomes (47%) compared to low (33%).<sup>4</sup>

Regionally, Ontario's work-from-home rate was 47%, slightly higher than the national average of 42%. In contrast, Canada's North had the lowest work-from-home rate at 27% in the nation.<sup>5</sup>

The proportion of Canadian workers who work at least one day at home in a typical week did not vary that much by age, though it was slightly higher than average for those aged 25 to 34 (47%). However, older workers were more likely to work from home most days (at least four or five days per week), while younger workers were more likely to work from home only some days (one to three days per week).

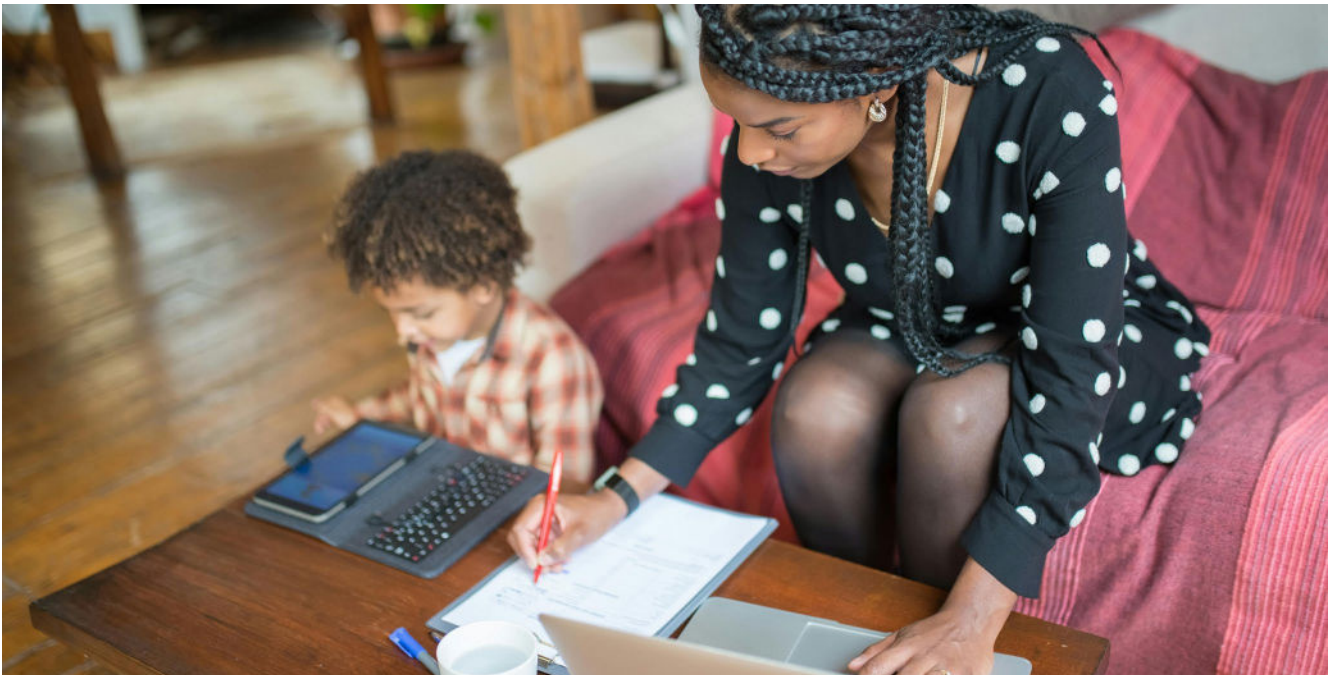
<sup>4</sup> High household incomes are those \$150,000 per year or higher; low incomes are below \$30,000 per year.

<sup>5</sup> Results for the three territories are based on unweighted survey data (n=287).

Working from home was only slightly more common for parents aged 25 to 54 with a child under the age of 19 in their household (46%) compared to those in this age group with no children in their household (43%). For those with children at home, there was no difference in the likelihood of working at home at least some days between mothers (46%) and fathers (46%). Parents with children at home were less likely to work from home four or five days per week (16% compared to 22% for those with no children in their household), but more likely to work from home one to three days per week (30% compared to 21%).

Working from home at least one day in a typical week was more common for racialized workers (48%), but especially those who identified as South Asian (54%) or Chinese (51%). There was no significant difference between the work-from-home rates of those who identified as Indigenous (45%) and those who did not (41%).

Working from home for at least one day in a typical week was also more common among those who said they have a disability that always or often limits their daily activity (56%). However, while the figure was higher than the average for those who said their disability is related to their mental health (60%), it was only about average for those with a disability related to their physical health (43%). Note that these figures include only those who are employed. People affected on a daily basis by a physical disability are less likely to be employed.



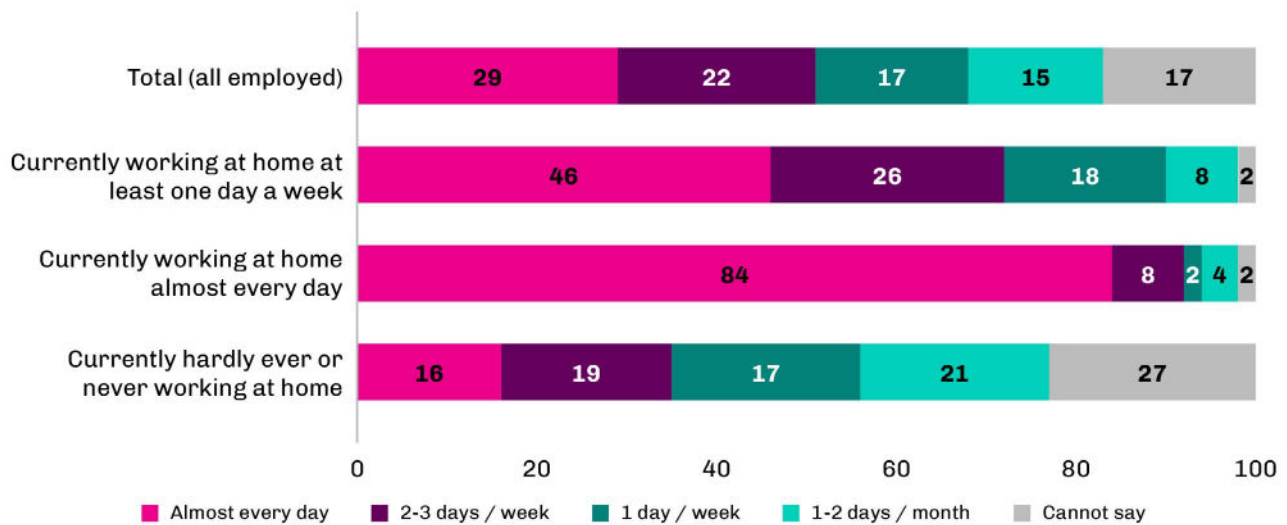
# Interest in working from home in the future

Going forward, the majority of respondents (68%) said they would like to have the option of working from home at least one day per week. This includes 22% who would prefer to work from home two to three days per week, and 29% who would prefer to do so almost every day.

In general, the more often someone was currently working from home, the more they wanted to continue to do so in the future. For instance, 84% of those who were currently working at home every day said that, going forward, they would prefer to work from home this frequently, indicating that their preference matched their current situation.

**CHART 2:**  
**Working from home: preferred frequency going forward**  
 Subsample: employed

*Q24F. Looking forward, how often would you like to work from home, instead of working in your regular workplace?*



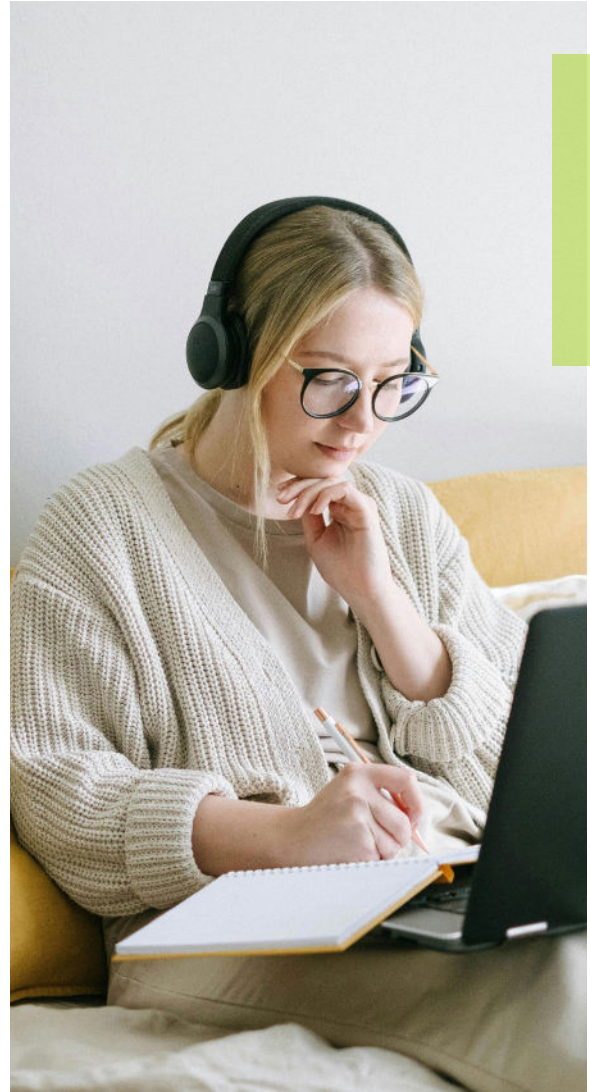
However, many of those not working at home would nonetheless like to do so. More than one in three (35%) of those who hardly ever or never work from home, for instance, indicated that going forward, they would like to work from home at least two to three days a week. These workers may be disappointed that they do not have more work-from-home opportunities.

Moreover, the proportion currently working from home *less often* than they would like is much greater than the proportion working from home *more often* than they would like.

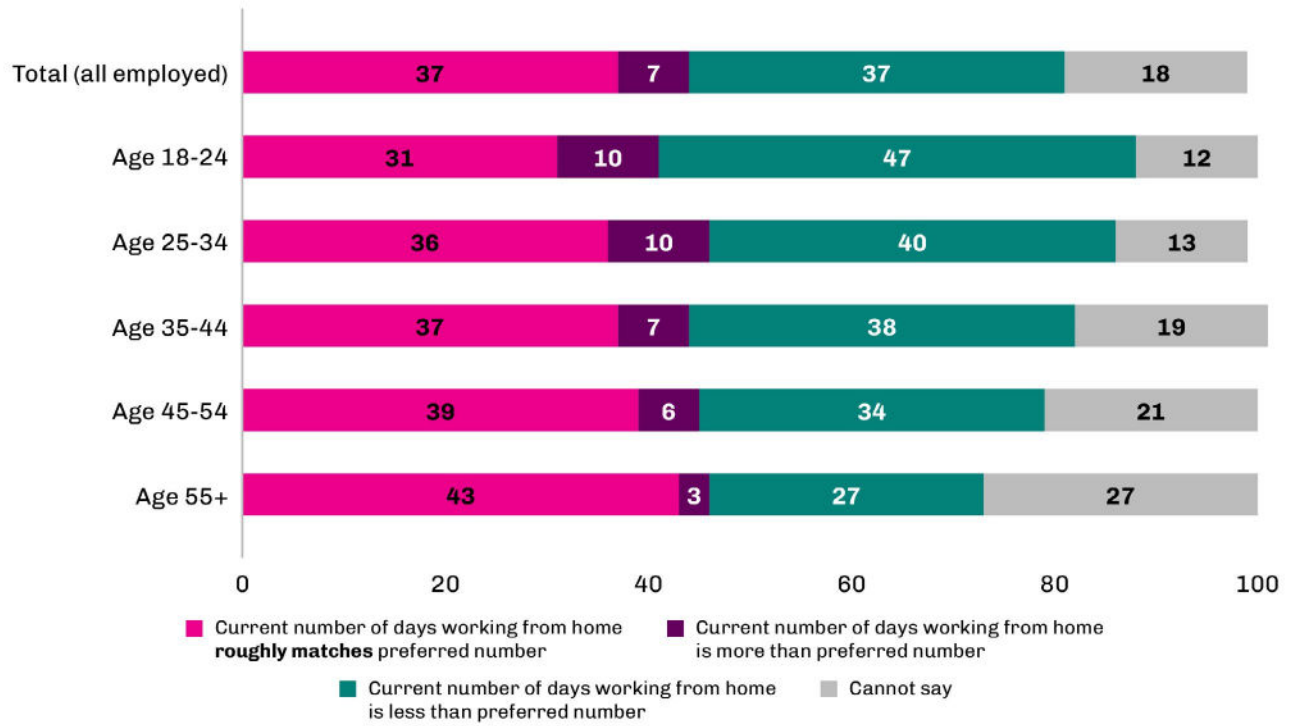
The overall situation of all workers can be summarized as follows:

- Current number of days working from home **roughly matches** the number of days they would prefer to work from home: 37%
- Current number of days working from home **is less than** the number of days they would prefer to work from home: 37%
- Current number of days working from home **is more than** the number of days they would prefer to work from home: 7%
- Preference not stated: 18%

These figures varied somewhat by age. The proportion working from home roughly as much as they would like rose with age (from 31% for those aged 18 to 24, to 43% for those aged 55 and older). Younger workers were more likely to be working at home more often than they would like to, but this proportion remains relatively small (10%). Younger workers stand out because they are more likely to work from home less than they prefer; almost one in two (47%) of those aged 18 to 24 were in this situation, compared to closer to one in four (27%) for those aged 55 and older. Note, however, that this difference exists partly because older workers are less likely to state a preference.



**CHART 3:**  
**Alignment of actual and preferred frequency of working from home, by age group**  
 Subsample: employed



Compared to those aged 25 to 54 with no children at home (34%), parents aged 25 to 54 with children at home under the age of 19 (40%) were somewhat more likely to say that the current number of days they work from home is less than the number of days they would prefer to work from home.



## How working from home is affecting the workplace

Previous waves of the Survey of Employment and Skills asked those who were working at home about their experiences; for instance, the survey asked whether they preferred working at home to working in their regular workplace, or whether they worried that working from home would have a negative impact on their careers.<sup>6</sup> The seventh wave of the survey takes a different approach by asking all employees, regardless of their work location, how working from home is affecting their workplace. For each of the five questions, roughly 10% to 20% of respondents said they could not provide an answer because the question did not apply to their work situation. This might arise, for instance, because they work in a sector where almost all employees work outside their homes. These respondents have been excluded from the analysis presented in this section.

The majority of respondents (69%), regardless whether they work from home or not, agreed that people who work at home are just as productive as those who work in their regular office or workplace, while far fewer (27%) disagreed.

Similarly, the majority (69%) also agreed that “allowing people to work from home as much as they want has made my workplace a more enjoyable place to be,” while only 23% disagreed.

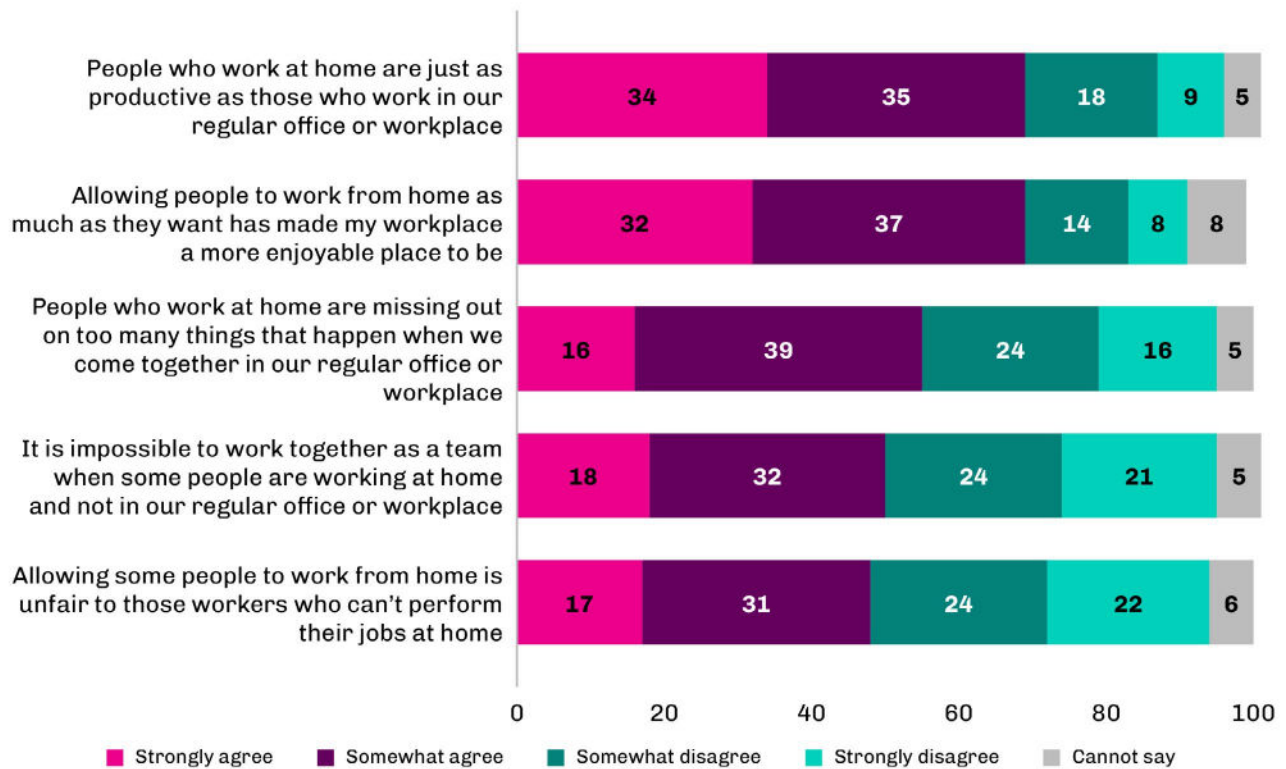
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<sup>6</sup> See note 1.

## CHART 4: Views on working from home

Subsample: All employed (excluding those who say they cannot answer because the question does not apply to their work situation)

*Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home?*



These positive views notwithstanding, some workers also expressed some concerns. Specifically, 55% agreed that “people who work at home are missing out on too many things that happen when we come together in our regular office or workplace.” In this case, 40% disagreed.

Views on two other questions were more evenly divided. One in two (50%) agreed that “it is impossible to work together as a team when some people are working at home and not in our regular office or workplace,” while almost as many (45%) disagreed. Similarly, 48% agreed that “allowing some people to work from home is unfair to those workers who can’t perform their jobs at home,” while the same proportion (47%) disagreed.

Women were slightly more likely than men to have positive views on the impact of working from home. They were more likely to agree that people who work at home are just as productive (72%, compared to 65% for men), and less likely to agree that people who work at home are missing out (51% compared to 60%) or that having some people at home makes it impossible to work together as a team (46% compared to 53%).

Racialized workers (compared to those who are not racialized) and Indigenous workers (compared to those who are non-Indigenous) tended to be a bit more likely to agree with the positively worded statements about working from home — for instance, that allowing people to work from home as much as they want has made their workplace a more enjoyable place to be. But they also tended to be more likely to agree with some of the negatively worded statements. For instance, while 52% of non-racialized workers agreed that people who work at home are missing out on too many things, agreement rose to 62% among those who identified as Black, and 64% among those who identified as South Asian; similarly, agreement is higher among those who are Indigenous (67%) compared to those who are non-Indigenous (55%). South Asian and Indigenous workers in particular were also more likely to agree that it is impossible to work together as a team when some people are working at home and not in their regular office or workplace.



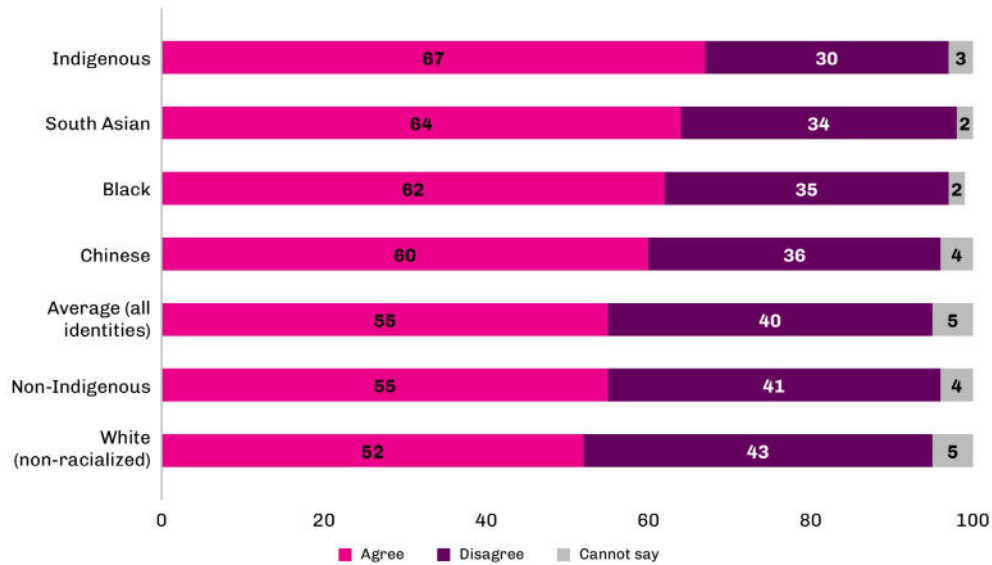
### CHART 5:

#### Views on working from home, by identity

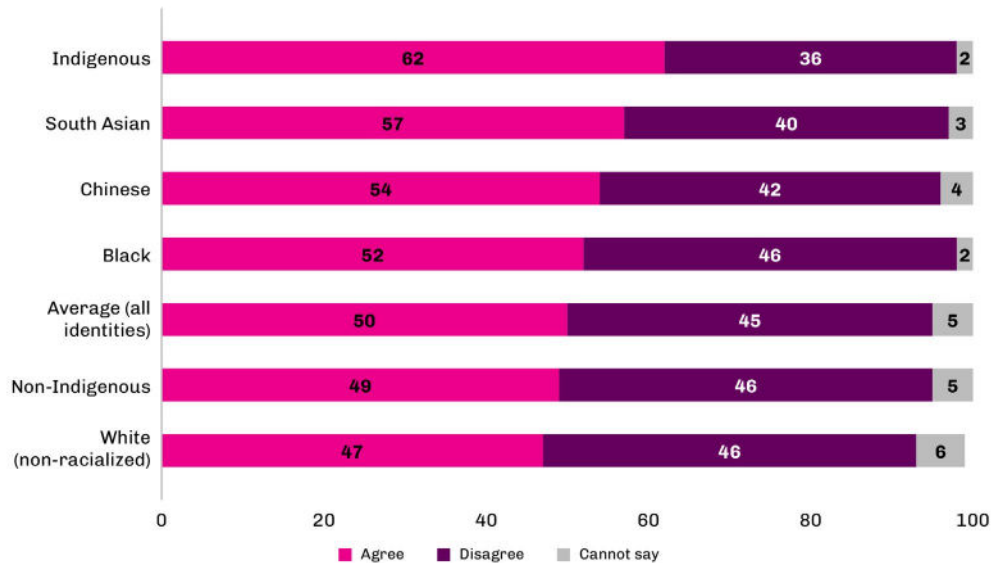
Subsample: All employed (excluding those who say they cannot answer because the question does not apply to their work situation)

*Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home?*

#### People who work at home are missing out on too many things that happen when we come together in our regular office or workplace



#### It is impossible to work together as a team when some people are working at home and not in our regular office or workplace



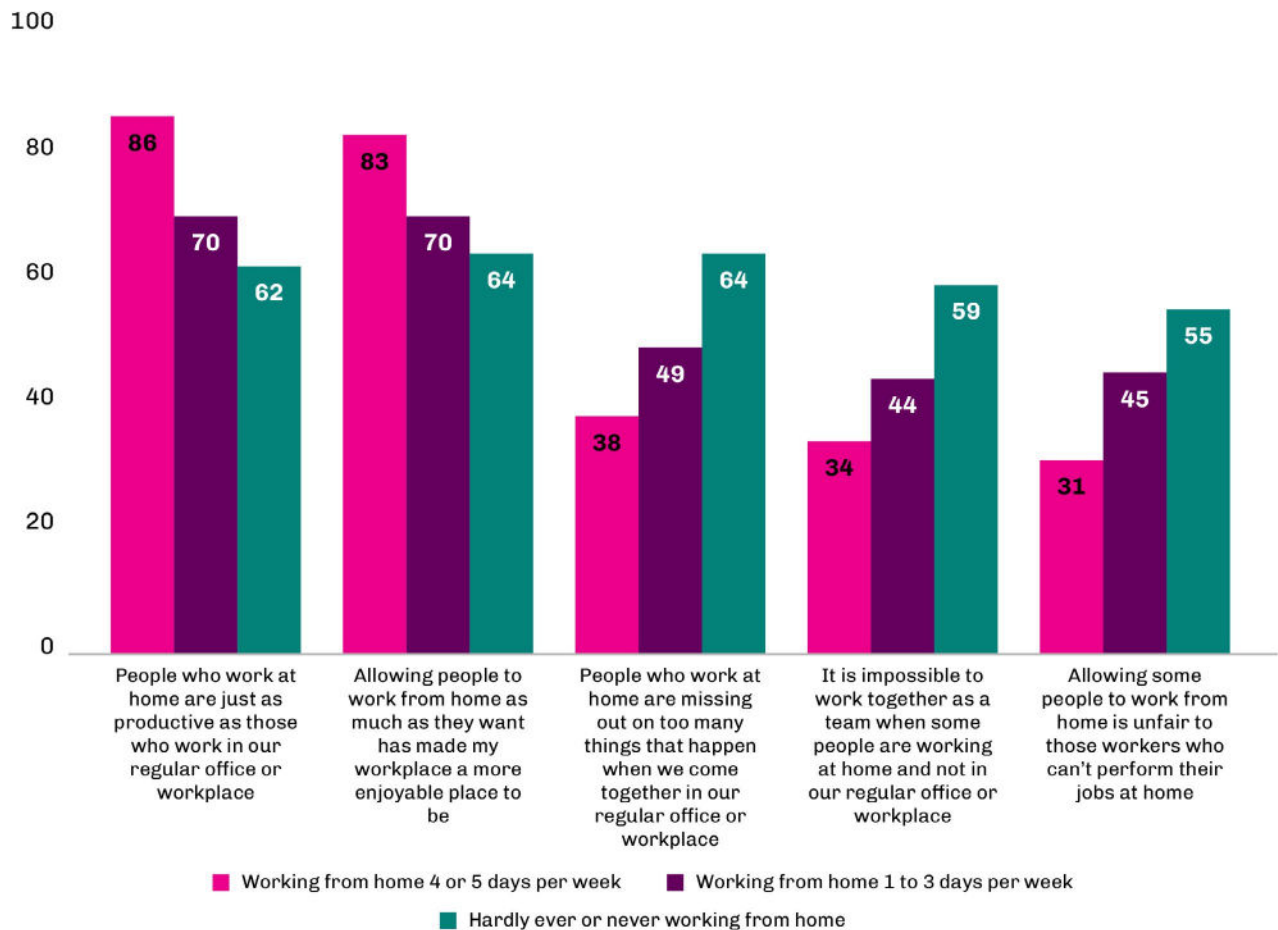
The most striking difference in the opinions about the impact of working from home, however, were between those who *were* and *were not* working from home.

The majority of workers agreed that “allowing people to work from home as much as they want has made my workplace a more enjoyable place to be,” regardless whether they themselves were working from home most days a week, only some days a week, or not at all. However, the likelihood of agreement increased as the frequency of working from home rose. The same was true in the case of the statement about whether people who work at home are just as productive.

### CHART 6: Views on working from home, by work location

Subsample: All employed (excluding those who say they cannot answer because the question does not apply to their work situation)

*Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home?*



In the case of the three other statements — about whether people who work from home are missing out, whether having some people working at home impedes teamwork, and whether allowing some people to work from home is unfair — the pattern was different. In each of those cases, the majority of those who do not work from home agreed, while the majority of those who work from home almost every day disagreed. The likelihood of expressing concerns about the downsides of working from home decreased as the frequency of working from home rose, to the point where, on the whole, those who are and are not working from home ended up on opposing sides of the issue.

These results point to a possible rift emerging in the workplace.

- The majority of those who never or hardly ever work from home (64%) agreed that “people who work at home are missing out on too many things that happen when we come together in our regular office or workplace,” while the majority of those who typically work from home four to five days a week disagreed (59%).
- The majority of those who never or hardly ever work from home (59%) agreed that “it is impossible to work together as a team when some people are working at home and not in our regular office or workplace,” while the majority of those who typically work from home four to five days a week disagreed (60%).
- The majority of those who never or hardly ever work from home (55%) agreed that “allowing some people to work from home is unfair to those workers who can’t perform their jobs at home,” while the majority of those who typically work from home four to five days a week disagreed (63%).



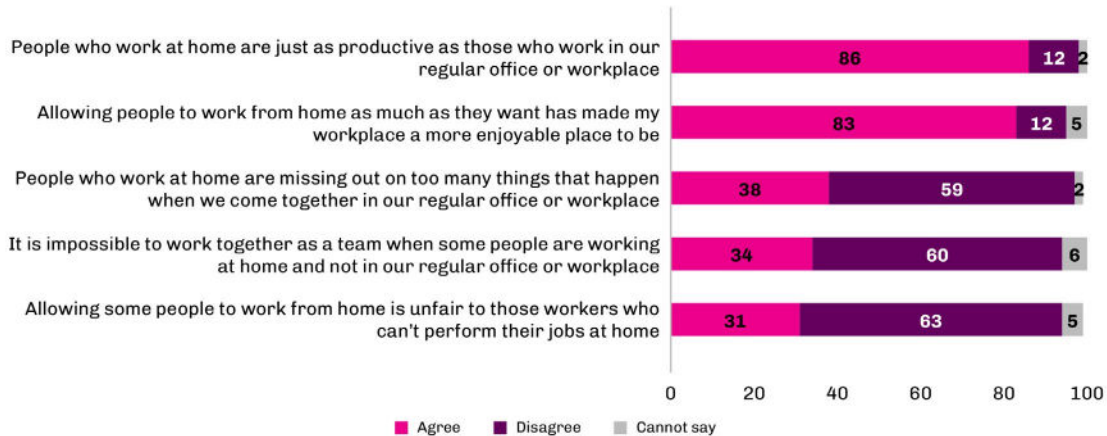
## CHART 7

### Views on working from home, by work location

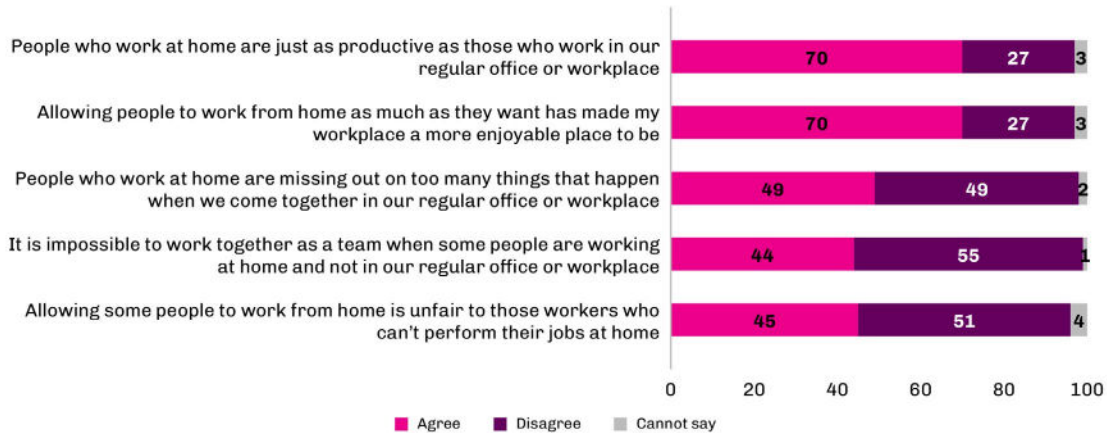
Subsample: All employed (excluding those who say they cannot answer because the question does not apply to their work situation)

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home?

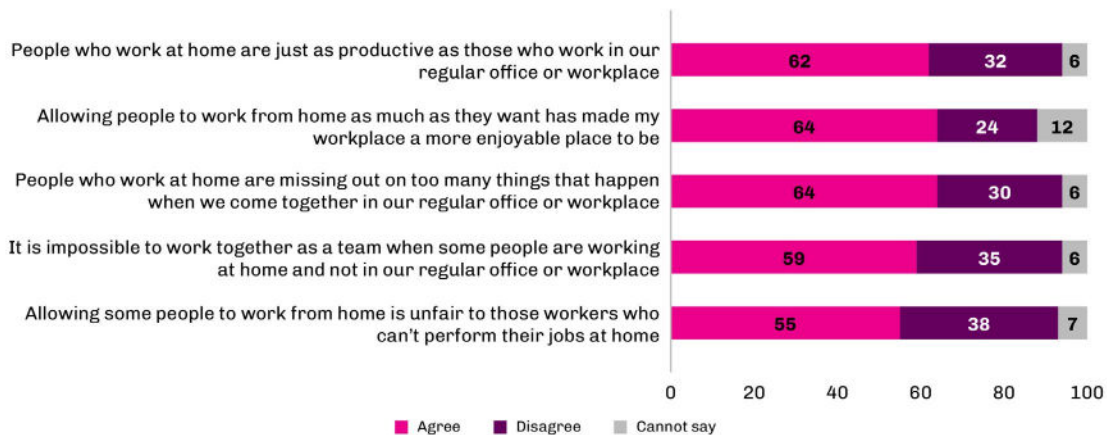
#### Working from home 4 or 5 days per week



#### Working from home 1 to 3 days per week



#### Never or hardly ever working from home

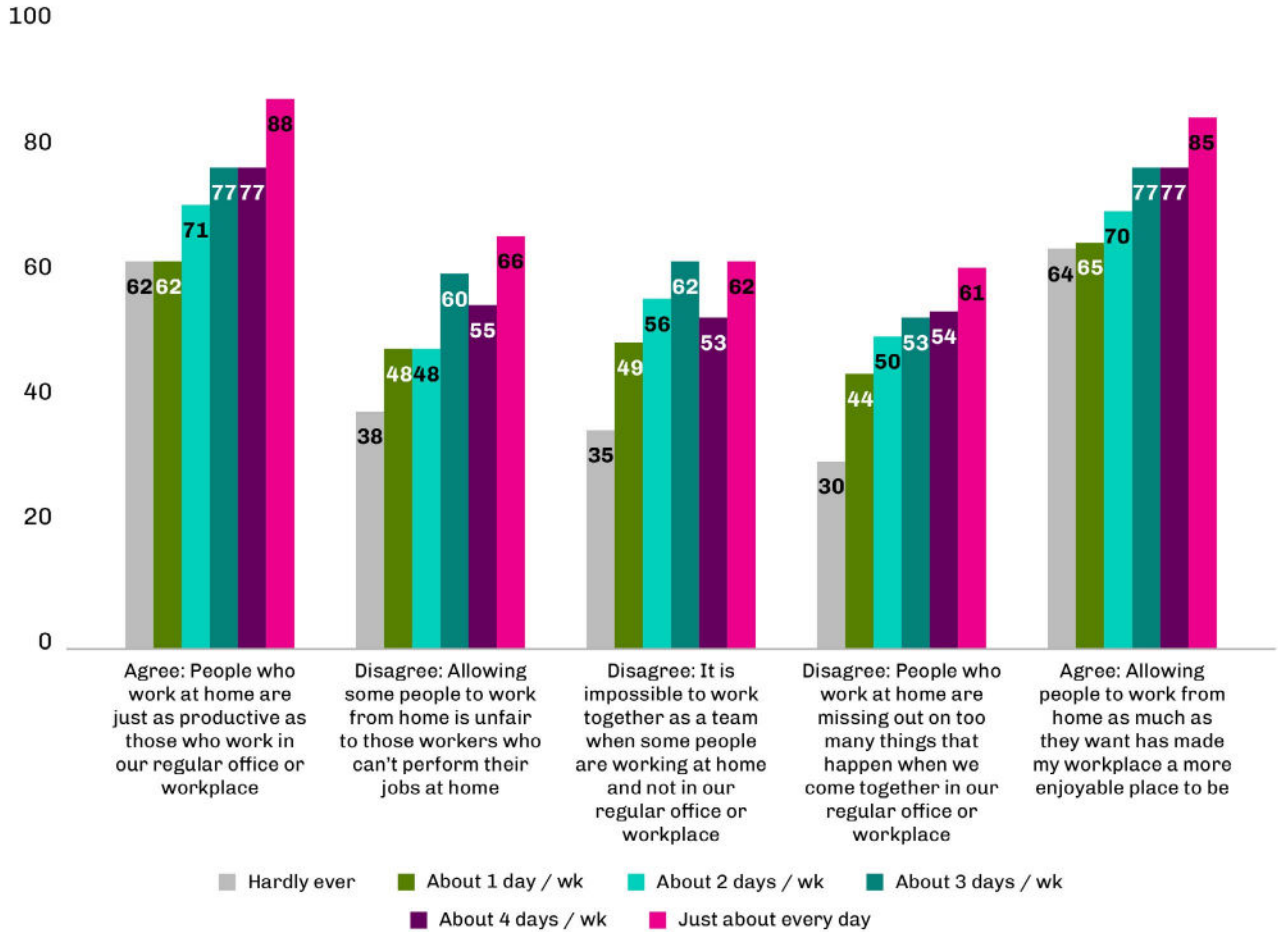


### CHART 8:

#### Views on working from home, by work location

Subsample: All employed (excluding those who say they cannot answer because the question does not apply to their work situation)

*Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about working from home?*





## Working from home and job satisfaction

Despite these disagreements, there appeared to be very little difference in job satisfaction between those who work at home most or some of the time and those who do not. Results from the earlier waves of the survey, which used a slightly different question about working from home, suggest that those who said they had switched to working at home due to the pandemic were slightly more likely to say they were very satisfied with their jobs. However, this could be related to the type of occupations they held and not only to the location of work.

Overall, four in five workers (80%) said they were very or somewhat satisfied with their current job. This level of satisfaction was just as high for those working from home four or five days in a typical week (82%), those who work from home one to three days per week (81%) and those who never or hardly ever work from home (80%).

Similarly, most workers (76%) said they can often or sometimes find the right balance between work, caring for their household, and recreation, while only 21% said they can seldom or never find this balance. But the proportion that can often or sometimes find the right balance was only slightly higher than the average for those who are working from home four or five days in a typical week (80%), and only slightly lower (74%) than the average for those who never or hardly ever work from home.

There was more variation, however, in how many days a person would like to work from home — that is, their preferred work situation rather than their actual one.

- Those who would prefer to work from home only one or two days per month (47%) were twice as likely to be very satisfied with their current job than those who would prefer to work from home almost every day (24%).
- Similarly, those who would prefer to work from home only one or two days per month (41%) were more likely to say they often feel their life is in balance than were those who would prefer to work from home almost every day (30%).

Not surprisingly, job satisfaction was particularly low among those who never or hardly ever work from home, but who would prefer to be working from home almost every day: only 12% in this group are very satisfied with their current job (64% are very or somewhat satisfied).



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