

# Young people most likely to see career benefits to remote working

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Despite warnings that working from home will be detrimental to young people's careers, young people themselves are particularly likely to feel that remote working has benefits that could help their career

progression, according to new research.

The Policy Institute at King's College London and King's Business School surveyed over 2,000 people with a workplace in London. They found that, among London workers who work from home at least one day a week:

- 40% of those aged 16 to 24 say it's easier to put themselves forward for important tasks when working with colleagues remotely rather than in-person—compared with 25% of 25- to 49-year-olds and 13% of those aged 50 and above who say the same. (But at the same time, the youngest surveyed [27%] are also more likely than both older age groups [17%] to say remote working makes it harder to put themselves forward, highlighting a spectrum of views.)
- 45% of those aged 16 to 24 say remote working has made it easier for them to ask questions on things they're unsure about—roughly double the proportion of 25- to 49-year-olds (24%) and three times the proportion of those aged 50 and above (14%) who also feel this way.
- 8% of those aged 50+ say remote working makes it easier to build rapport with colleagues, but this rises to 21% among 16- to 24-year-olds.

However, there are clear trade-offs to new ways of working: overall among London workers who work from home at least once a week, seven in 10 (70%) feel remote working has made it easier to avoid awkward social interactions with colleagues—but on the other hand, more than half (55%) say they find it harder to build a rapport with colleagues when working virtually rather than in person.

**Remote workers are particularly likely to feel better**

## **able to do their job compared with before the pandemic, and to say they now have more freedom and control**

Around half of London's hybrid workers (47%) and those who work from home all of the time (53%) say they now feel better able to do their job well than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic began—more than double the proportion (21%) who feel this way among those who commute to their workplace in the capital every day of the week.

Similarly, 63% of hybrid and 60% of home-only workers in the capital say they feel a greater sense of freedom at work now than they did before the pandemic. This compares with 24% among those who are in their London workplace full-time.

And 82% of London workers who work from home at least a day a week and feel positive about doing so say it has increased their level of control over their [work-life balance](#), including 52% who say it has greatly increased it.

## **This new freedom may lead some to leave the capital altogether**

Four in 10 (39%) people who live in London and work from home at least a day a week say they are more likely to leave the capital because of the increased availability of remote working. And among those who say they are now more likely to leave the capital, four in 10 (43%) cite having more space as a key reason—the top answer given. Other reasons given include living somewhere cheaper (22%) and living somewhere less busy (12%).

## **Greater freedom and control are seen as less important than practical benefits**

Among London workers who work from home at least a day a week and feel positive about doing so, 63% say the practical benefits of working from home, such as avoiding commuting or saving money, are the key aspects they value, compared with 33% who cite the freedom and control it gives them in their working life.

## **Most say they'd quit rather than follow a schedule that doesn't work for them**

65% of London workers in organizations of two or more people say they would look for a new job if their employer made them follow a work pattern they didn't like, while 9% say they wouldn't. However, those who work from home at least a day a week are generally willing to travel to their workplace for a [specific task](#) or event, such as a presentation or client meeting. Six in 10 (59%) say they'd feel positive about doing so, compared with around one in 10 (11%) who say they'd feel negative.

## **Employers are generally trusted to be considerate and fair when deciding work patterns**

Among London workers in organizations of two or more employees, most trust their employers to keep their well-being in mind (58%), treat people fairly (57%) and keep their promises (53%) when planning employees' return to their workplace or making decisions about future working patterns.

Looking ahead, around half (47%) of London workers feel that in the next few years future working patterns in the capital will be decided

through a compromise between employee and employer preferences. This compares with a quarter (26%) who think it will mainly be employers that decide, and a fifth (20%) who say employees will have most responsibility for such decisions.

Professor Bobby Duffy, director of the Policy Institute at King's College London, said, "A key concern for many [business leaders](#) is how our new hybrid way of working will affect the development of younger staff just starting out in their careers. Development often comes from observing others, and opportunities from chance connections made when people get together. But our study shows that younger workers don't share these concerns to the same extent as older workers.

"This could be because younger workers don't realize what they're missing—but it could also be that older workers are stuck with an outdated view of how development can happen. Younger workers are more likely to see the positive potential in how the use of technology can flatten hierarchies to allow them to ask questions, put themselves forward and build connections. But concerns do remain among both old and young about what we might lose, so, as with hybrid working generally, the task for leaders is to focus on extracting the best from both ways of working."

Dr. Amanda Jones, lecturer in human resource management and organizational behavior at King's Business School, said, "While employees continue to value face-to-face collaboration for building rapport with colleagues, many now see choice over working methods, and the freedom and flexibility which accompanies this choice, as a non-negotiable condition of employment.

"Even younger employees, often considered to lose out the most from remote working in a professional sense by older age groups, state a strong preference for retaining their hybrid working status going

forward. Employees' discovery that hybrid working enables them to manage and perform their professional and personal roles in an optimum way while simultaneously achieving life goals, such as living in a preferred location or property, provides an explanation for this preference.

"With rising living and commuting costs and escalating work demands, organizations' continued willingness to facilitate employees' flexibility through hybrid working may contribute to their positive feelings of trust and support. It seems that employers who are willing to accommodate employees working preferences where feasible will be best placed to compete in the ongoing war for talent."

Michael Clinton, professor of work psychology at King's Business School, said, "The benefits of hybrid working for London workers are clearly laid bare by our survey findings. But what we are also seeing now is some potential trouble on the horizon: while workers can maybe complete more tasks from home in a more stress-free environment, organizations allowing too much of this are probably missing out on the complex, messy and collaborative outcomes workers only achieve together in a room. But if employers start to force people back into offices there will be a backlash and workers may quit. So, striking the right balance is going to be key—both for workers who want to retain their new-found sense of control, but also for the workers looking for a vibrant work culture."

## **Survey details**

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,030 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between June 23 and July 12, 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of London workers, defined as those who have a regular workplace in the capital.

**More information:** Embracing the "new normal"? How London is living with hybrid working. [www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute ... g-the-new-normal.pdf](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute...g-the-new-normal.pdf)

Provided by King's College London

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