



People at Work 2022: A Global Workforce View

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Executive summary




More than two years since the onset of the COVID-19 virus, workers and employers continue to be rocked by the forceful winds of the pandemic, which has destroyed numerous old certainties. At the same time, the economic and political landscape has become extremely challenging amid issues such as rising inflation and supply chain delays. All of which combines to create a formidable mix of pressures that will affect businesses for some time to come. Against this backdrop, the sentiment and needs of the global workforce today are changing rapidly. It is imperative that employers understand the drivers and potential impact of this shift, so that they can attract and retain talent to create stronger, more resilient businesses.

Key findings include:



1 Workers want change: re-evaluating the importance of job security and business ethics



Seven in 10 workers (71%) have contemplated a major career move this year, and there's a sense that they're questioning what job security means post COVID-19. Today, workers are thinking about more than just a steady paycheck. The pandemic has put personal wellbeing and life outside work into even clearer perspective than ever before, and intensified the desire for

more amenable working conditions, including greater flexibility, remote work options or better organisational culture. Workers are increasingly interested in a company's ethics and values. Employers beware: three quarters (76%) would consider looking for a new job if they discovered their company had an unfair gender pay gap or no diversity and inclusion policy.



2 Job satisfaction and outlook: employees have high expectations

Workers are surprisingly upbeat about how they feel about work. Nine in 10 (90%) say they feel satisfied in their current employment, although they could be happier still: a sizeable proportion are only 'somewhat satisfied'. Optimism about the outlook for the workplace, while still slightly below pre-pandemic levels, is also robust. Hopes are high for pay rises, with more than six in 10 workers (61%) anticipating one in the next year, and three quarters (76%) prepared to ask for one if they feel they deserve it.

However, meeting pay demands may not be enough to stop an exodus of talent: the drive to change jobs or move into industries believed to be more resilient to economic shocks and downturns is accelerating.

3 Pay and benefits: salary is a priority, but it's not all that matters

Salary is seen as the most important factor in a job, and two thirds of workers (65%) would like more hours for more pay. Yet workers are still effectively giving away the equivalent of more than a working day (8.5 hours) of

unpaid overtime each week: less than in 2021 but still more than pre-pandemic. Since seven in 10 (71%) would like more flexibility as to when they work, such as condensing hours into a four-day week, continuing to do so much extra time may be unsustainable. Although pay is a priority, around half would accept a pay cut if it meant improving their work-life balance or to guarantee flexibility in how they structure their hours – even if they still worked for the same amount of time each week. This reinforces the idea that employers may need (and want) to make a trade-off between pay and other factors to keep workers content and fulfilled.

4 Mental health: stress is increasing and work is suffering

Stress at work is at critical levels, with 67% of workers experiencing it at least once a week, up from 62% pre-pandemic. One in seven (15%) feel stressed every day. The impact on workers professionally, as well as personally, is likely to be profound, especially as mental wellbeing is under strain in other ways too, due to the pandemic. A staggering 53% believe their work is suffering because of poor mental health – clearly an untenable situation. Most employers are doing their best to support

staff, with wellbeing days off, stress management breaks, and counselling among the initiatives being tried. However, amid such intense and sustained pressure, questions persist around what else employers can do to minimise stress triggers and ease the burden more generally.

5 Remote work and living arrangements: people poised to make a move

Forcing people to return to the workplace full-time unnecessarily could backfire: two thirds (64%) would consider looking for a new job if this happened. Many are contemplating relocating and a substantial minority have already done so. Concerns that employers may overlook remote workers in favour of their colleagues in the workplace are unfounded. In fact, the reverse is true: remote staff feel more recognised and rewarded for their efforts and supported in their careers. Almost seven in 10 say they are paid fairly for their skills and role, compared with less than half of their peers in the workplace. Employers who are over-compensating by focussing on remote workers at the expense of others may need to redress the balance as a matter of urgency.

Introduction

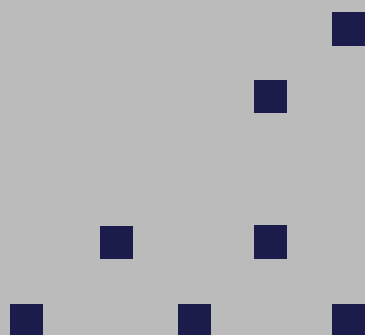
The COVID-19 pandemic has caused nothing short of a revolution in the world of work in the 21st century. Never in most people's living memory has there been a global phenomenon that has reshaped the employment landscape so dramatically in a multitude of countries, dominating economic activity and altering the outlook of the workforce, perhaps forever. This upheaval is still underway but it's clear that things will never be the same again.

This year's *People at Work* study captures these fascinating and unique developments in detail. It highlights just how widespread and globally consistent some of the emerging and escalating trends are, while underscoring how nuanced and complex the situation is at local levels.

As employers and workers grapple with sustained disruption and pressure, our findings highlight the extent to which recruitment and retention are among the most business-critical issues of today, and how that is impacting the workplace.

The total package of what workers want has taken on new meaning. No longer is it just about salary and other financial benefits plus a few perks: employers need to consider a much wider and deeper range of factors to foster a sense of job satisfaction and security among staff. As well as pay and progression, work-life balance, wellbeing and family considerations, a company's corporate values are also at issue. The stakes are higher than ever before. The pandemic has sparked a rethink of priorities and workers are signalling a willingness to walk away if employers don't meet their standards on a variety of fronts. The question is: can employers deliver what's most important to their workforce while meeting business goals?

For employers, managing this new dynamic and securing the workforce during this period of ongoing radical change must be a primary concern. To do that, they need to ask the right questions so they can understand workers better, including how the prevailing mindset has altered, and look at adjusting their approach accordingly. They may need to make bold decisions and challenge assumptions, but many companies have become adept at that. This research should help guide thinking around what key issues need to be addressed, and how to approach them.



Data and methodology

People at Work 2022: A Global Workforce View explores employees' attitudes towards the current world of work and what they expect and hope for from the workplace of the future.

ADP Research Institute® surveyed 32,924 workers in 17 countries around the world between 1 November and 24 November 2021 including over 8,685 working exclusively in the gig economy.

15,683 in Europe

- France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and the UK
- Including 4,133 in the gig economy

5,768 in Latin America

- Argentina, Brazil and Chile
- Including 1,547 in the gig economy

3,829 in North America

- USA and Canada
- Including 1,002 in the gig economy

7,644 in Asia Pacific

- Australia, China, India and Singapore
- Including 2,003 in the gig economy

Within the worker sample we identified gig workers and traditional workers. Gig workers self-identified as those who work on a contingent, temporary, or seasonal basis, or as a freelancer, independent contractor, consultant, gig worker, or use an online platform to source work. Traditional employees self-identified as those who are not working as gig and instead have a regular or permanent full or part-time position.

Respondents were also asked to self-classify whether they were an essential worker (including the definitions key worker or critical worker) or a non-essential worker. These definitions vary by location, organisation and government guidance. Generally, it includes those whose work is vital to the ongoing functioning of society and everyday life, such as healthcare or logistics workers, police, government officials, journalists and supermarket staff. In some countries those in the financial services sector are also included.

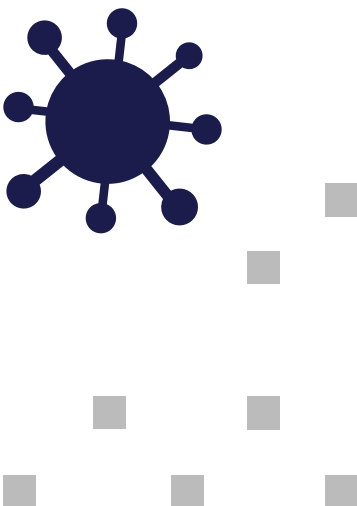
The survey was conducted online in the local language. Overall results are weighted to represent the size of the working population for each country. Weightings are based on labour force data from the World Bank¹, which is derived using data from the ILOSTAT database, the central statistics database of the International Labour Organization (ILO), as of 8 February 2022.

1. Source: The World Bank, total labor force data, February 2022

Workers want change

The nature of work has traditionally been transactional, with workers trading their time and skills in return for a guaranteed pay packet, preferably a sense of security and, ideally, a feeling of personal satisfaction in the work they are doing. Today, however, the terms on which that transaction is based appear to be changing – from the workers’ perspective at least.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown job security (which was already in decline) to be even more elusive than before, as many workers lost their jobs or had their careers put on indefinite hold via government support schemes such as furlough. As this has happened, there are signs that the pandemic has triggered a re-evaluation of what job security means to workers. What’s more, it’s becoming increasingly clear that workers want more from their employers, in that many want to work for companies with a culture and values that align with their own. More than ever, the sense of job security relates to the whole, increasingly diverse, array of things employers are – or are not - offering on an individual and on a corporate level, with major implications for recruitment and retention.

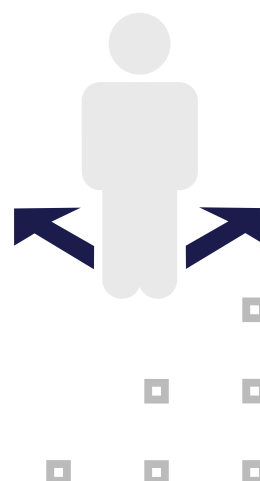


Job security: what does it mean today?

Worryingly, although more than half of workers (54%) say job security is important to them, a quarter of respondents (25%) think their job or industry is secure. That's down from more than a third (36%) in 2021, and falls to just 14% in Latin America.

Similarly, fewer than one in five of those who classify themselves as essential workers and those working in the gig economy say so (18% apiece), compared to nearly a third (32%) of non-essential workers and a quarter of traditional employees (26%). An important paradox is being highlighted here: the sense of insecurity runs counter to the popular narrative that workers hold all the power in a tight global jobs market. Is it a myth that workers are in the driver's seat? And if they aren't, how can they regain a sense of control?

One possible answer to that question comes from the finding that the vast majority (71%) of workers say they have considered a major career change over the last 12 months. Of those, one in four have contemplated changing industries or requesting a sabbatical. Around one in five have thought about starting their own business, taking a temporary break from employment or going part-time, and one in seven have considered early retirement. Women are more likely than men to want to move to part-time work (21% versus 17%), and essential workers are much more inclined than non-essential workers to be considering any or all of these options.



Workers weigh up their options

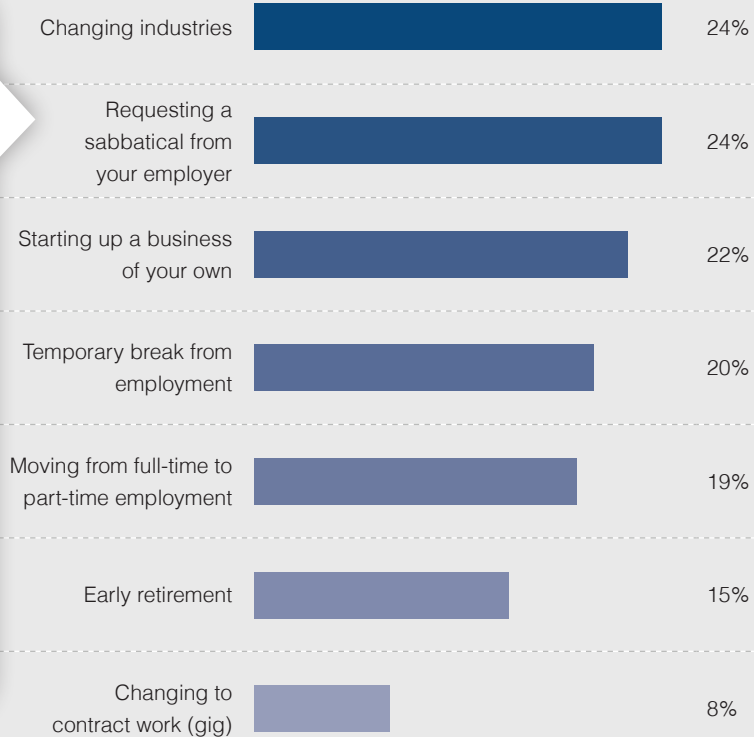


I have considered a major career change in the last 12 months.



The research suggests an emerging sense that a secure job is one that allows workers to earn a living on their own terms, without compromising on essentials like their health, wellbeing or family time or even their personal beliefs and values. For example, for around a third of workers, factors like flexibility of hours or enjoyment of the day's work are important to them in their jobs (33% and 32% respectively say so). Almost a quarter (23%) say career progression is important.

What major career changes have you considered over the past 12 months?



Flexibility of hours or flexibility of where they work are more important to the youngest (18-24 year olds) and oldest cohorts (55+) than those age groups in the middle. Only one in six 18-24 year olds (17%) say that career progression is important to them - lower than any other age range. Although, as an interesting aside, almost a quarter (23%) say their job title really matters - higher than any other age bracket.

Feelings around flexibility and work-life balance are not limited to certain groups. Almost three quarters of parents (74%) would like to be able to arrange their working hours to have more flexibility, but so would 68% of non-parents. 70% of those working from home would appreciate this, as would 58% of those working on-premise.

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) – a make-or-break issue

These days, what's important in a job goes well beyond directly personal concerns: more and more workers weigh up broader ethical or cultural considerations when deciding whether to join or remain with an employer. For example, workers are signalling a willingness to walk away if employers fall short when it comes to creating a diverse workforce and treating them fairly. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is therefore fast becoming a make-or-break issue.

Most employers recognise this: nearly six in 10 (59%) workers believe their employer has a gender pay equality policy and 57% are thought to have a diversity and inclusion policy, with the Asia Pacific region performing best on this front (64% and 61%). However, that still leaves around a third of employers (32% and 34% respectively) who either talk about the importance of such policies but don't have one, or who never mention them at all.

Such short-sightedness could act as a drain on talent. Employers risk putting themselves at a competitive disadvantage if they fail to seek out the best candidates from the widest pool, and they may struggle to retain highly-skilled or qualified women or people from a diverse range of ethnicities and backgrounds. The ramifications could go even further, adversely affecting the way the company as a whole and its values and brand are perceived by staff and candidates of any description, as well as other stakeholders such as customers and shareholders.

To illustrate this point, the research found that approximately three quarters (76%) of workers would consider looking for a new job if they discovered there was an unfair gender pay gap or no diversity and inclusion policy at their company. Though women are more likely to say so, men are not far behind, and younger workers feel particularly strongly. It is a point of principle which has greatest resonance in Asia Pacific and Latin America, more so than in Europe or North America. Clearly, the corporate moral compass is under scrutiny from all sides, and the onus is on companies to demonstrate they are taking the lead on good practice – or at least not lagging behind. Since pay inequity is more of a dealbreaker for younger workers, there is likely to be a permanent expectation among both current and future workers that employers take DEI seriously as part of their corporate culture.



Approximately three quarters (76%) of workers would consider looking for a new job if they discovered there was an unfair gender pay gap or no diversity and inclusion policy at their company.





The impact of DEI on recruitment and retention

If I found out that there was an unfair gender pay gap, or no diversity and inclusion policy in my company, I would consider looking for another job.

	All	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Unfair gender pay gap	76%	72%	79%	82%	78%	74%	66%	69%
Lack of diversity and inclusion policy	76%	74%	78%	83%	78%	73%	67%	66%

Reassuringly, half of workers (50%) say their employer has got better at gender pay equality and almost as many (48%) think diversity and inclusion has improved compared to three years ago. However, it's worth noting that more than one in 10 think they have got worse (11% for pay equality and 13% for diversity and inclusion). Europe has the weakest performance, with just over a quarter (26%) of workers saying the situation on either front has improved and one in six (16% and 17%) saying it has deteriorated.

While management teams, company owners and HR departments are cited as the primary drivers of gender pay equality and a diversity and inclusion policy within companies, in a third of cases (33%) it is left up to employees. And one in seven (15%) say no-one is driving it: an answer that's far more common in North America and Europe (22%) than in Latin America (11%) or Asia Pacific (13%).

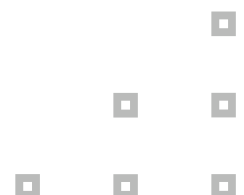




Approximately 2/3 of most workers feel that there's an equal mix of ethnicities (64%) and genders (63%) in their companies, although European workers are noticeably less convinced of this than their colleagues elsewhere in the world (46% and 54% respectively). However, the proportion who think that disabilities are equally represented is far lower across the board: overall, just 37% say so. Given that some one billion people, or around 15% of the world's population, are living with a disability (according to the charity ADD International), it is an issue that cannot be ignored.



Employers need to consider how best to support those with physical disabilities as well as those with invisible disabilities, especially at a time when many people with disabilities may be more vulnerable to health issues due to the pandemic. Employers' strategies could also benefit from encompassing how to support and champion neurodiversity, such as dyslexia or autism, among the workforce.

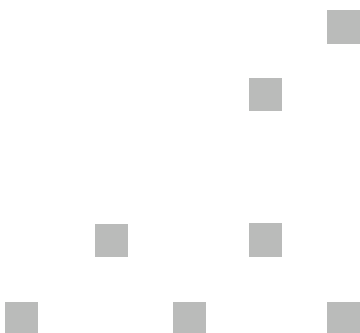




Job satisfaction and outlook

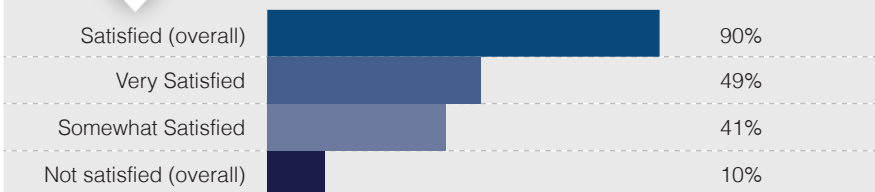
For a long time now, many workers have felt tested in their roles in unexpected ways. It's vital for all organisations to understand how satisfied they feel in their jobs now, as well as how confident they feel about their future prospects.

Given what a turbulent time they've had in the past two years, it's surprising to see that nine in 10 workers (90%) say they're satisfied in their current employment. This upbeat assessment is most prevalent in Asia Pacific and North America (91% and 90% respectively), compared to 86% who feel this way in Latin America and Europe. It is worth noting, however, that while half (49%) describe themselves as 'very satisfied', the rest are lukewarm, meaning that employers may need to think carefully about how to maintain positive sentiment.



Satisfaction prevails

How satisfied, if at all, are you in your current employment?



For the one in 10 who are not satisfied with their current employment, almost half (49%) say it is due to being given increased responsibility for no extra pay, rising to 53% in Asia Pacific compared to 37% in Europe. Lack of progression was cited as the second biggest cause of dissatisfaction (by 46% overall), and 41% put their dissatisfaction down to receiving fewer benefits than expected.

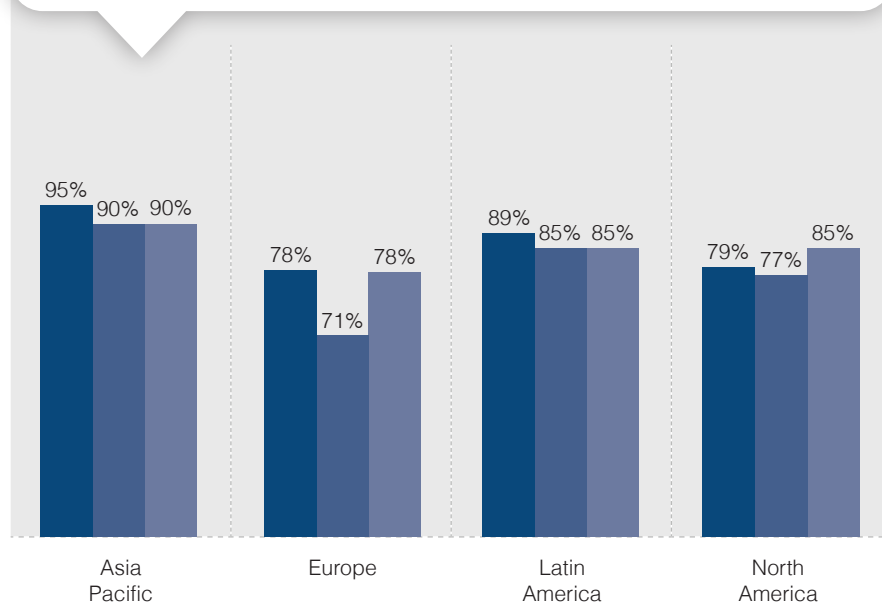
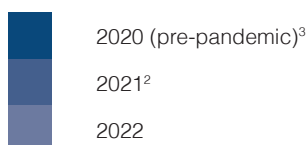
That may be the case for a small fraction of respondents, but six in 10 (61%) expect to get a pay rise in the next 12 months and more than four in 10 (43%) expect a promotion. This is despite the fact that only a third expect increased responsibility (34%) and just one in seven (15%) think they will get a formal review. Expectations of a pay rise or a promotion are highest in Latin America (73% and 38% respectively) and Asia Pacific (63% and 48%), while North America (58% and 34%) leads Europe (46% and 22%).

The extent to which workers feel there are opportunities for better pay and progression doubtless feeds into how positive they feel about the future. When asked to describe their levels of optimism for the next five years in the workplace, almost nine in 10 (88%) put themselves in the optimistic category, with responses similar across age groups and between genders. This level of optimism is marginally higher than in 2021 (when 86% chose this option) but remains below pre-pandemic levels (92% in early 2020). However, there are noticeable variances in the rate at which it is rebounding across regions. North America is the only region where workers feel more optimistic today than before the pandemic.

Optimism is rebounding at different rates across regions

I feel optimistic about the next five years in the workplace

Key



Of course, optimism means different things to different people: whether that's positive prospects for the sector they're in or with their current employer, or conversely, opportunities to do something else (for instance, by moving jobs or even developing skills in a new industry entirely).

- ADP Research Institute surveyed 32,471 workers in 17 countries around the world between 17 November and 11 December 2020
- ADP Research Institute surveyed 32,442 workers in 17 countries around the world between 29 October 2019 and 6 January 2020

Nearly one in four workers (23%) say they are actively trying to change their job and/or move into another industry that they believe is more future-proof (i.e. in growth sectors where their skills are likely to be in higher demand long-term, and where they see the best career development prospects and future earnings potential).

This is an increase from one in seven (15%) who said the same in 2021. And, as in 2021, younger workers were more likely to say so than their older colleagues, with almost three in 10 (29%) of 18-24 year-olds taking such steps, compared to 16% of 45-54-year-olds and 14% of the 55+ age bracket. One in 14 (7%) have already made a change to their job.



	2021	2022
I think my job/industry is secure and I am not considering a change	36%	25%
I have considered making a change but I am not actively trying	24%	32%
I have not considered making a change even though I have concerns	17%	14%
I am actively trying to make a change	15%	23%
I have already made a change	7%	7%

The impetus to change jobs and future-proof careers is growing

Which of the following best describes how you feel about changing jobs and/or moving into another industry or sector that you believe is more future-proof?



Pay and benefits

Our findings highlight that pay is the priority for workers around the world. When asked what's most important to them in a job, workers placed salary at number one, with almost two thirds (63%) of respondents saying it is important.

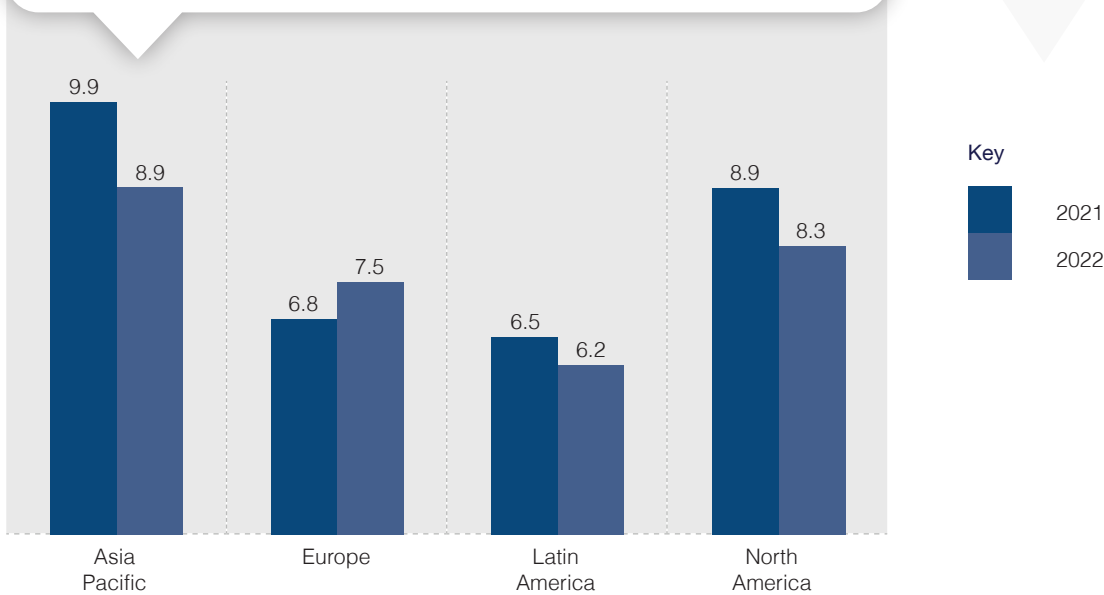
It makes sense, then, that more than three quarters of workers (76%) indicate they are likely to ask for a pay rise if they think they deserve it. Women are just as bullish as men on this front, but there are stark regional differences. More than four out of five (81%) are prepared to do so in Asia Pacific, but that falls to just three in five in Europe (59%). Parents are more inclined to request a pay rise than those without children (79% versus 72%), as are those who classify themselves as essential workers (79% compared to 72% of non-essential workers). Several factors could be at play here, from the demands on their finances, to the nature of the work they do, to the strains of working through the pandemic.

One reason that workers may feel they deserve a pay rise is the number of extra hours of unpaid work many of them are doing, for example by starting early, staying late or working over breaks. On average, workers are putting in an additional 8.5 hours of overtime for no extra pay each week, rising to 8.9 hours in Asia Pacific. Though that's less than in 2021 (when the global average was 9.2 hours), it is still higher than before the pandemic, when workers did an average of 7.3 extra unpaid overtime hours per week. European workers are the only ones bucking the downward trend.



Asia Pacific continues to give away the most 'free time'

On average, how many hours per week do you believe you work for free (i.e. hours worked over lunch breaks, staying late, etc.)?



Essential workers are carrying out an average of two hours more unpaid overtime than the rest of the workforce (9.4 hours versus 7.3), and gig workers are doing more than their employed counterparts (9.4 versus 8.2). Concerningly, part-time workers are giving away almost as much time for free as their full-time colleagues, averaging 8.4 hours extra (against 8.5 for full-timers). Given that two thirds of workers (65%) would like more hours for more pay, it's debatable how long workers will continue to give away the equivalent of a day's work for free to their employers, with no questions (or compensation) asked.

However, although pay is front of mind, it is by no means all that matters and there may be a trade-off to be made between a higher salary and a better work-life balance or more flexibility. Workers are demonstrating strong demand for other, often innovative, options to keep them satisfied at work. For example, seven in 10 (71%) would like more flexibility as to when they work, such as compressing their hours into fewer, longer days. Doing so would inevitably reduce their spare capacity to carry out so much unpaid overtime.



More than half (53%) would accept a pay cut if it meant improving their work-life balance, and a similar proportion (50%) would take a pay cut to guarantee flexibility in how they structure their hours – even if it meant the total hours worked did not change. Not so long ago, such ideas might have been laughed off: now they merit serious consideration, especially if granting requests for higher wages is not a viable option. With some employers starting to trial modernisations like a four-day working week, creative thinking is starting to translate into real world change.

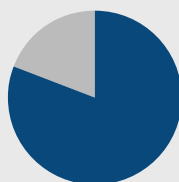
Pay is a priority ... but it's not all that matters



Workers are prepared to ask for a pay rise...

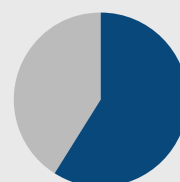
How likely are you to ask for a pay rise, if you feel you deserve it?

Asia Pacific



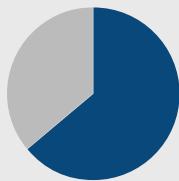
81%

Europe



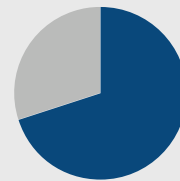
59%

Latin America



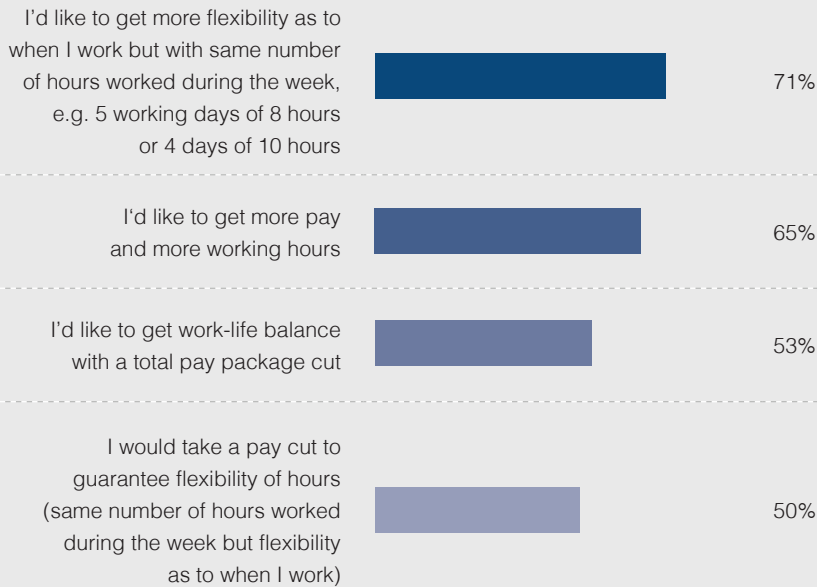
64%

North America



70%

To what extent do you agree with the following?



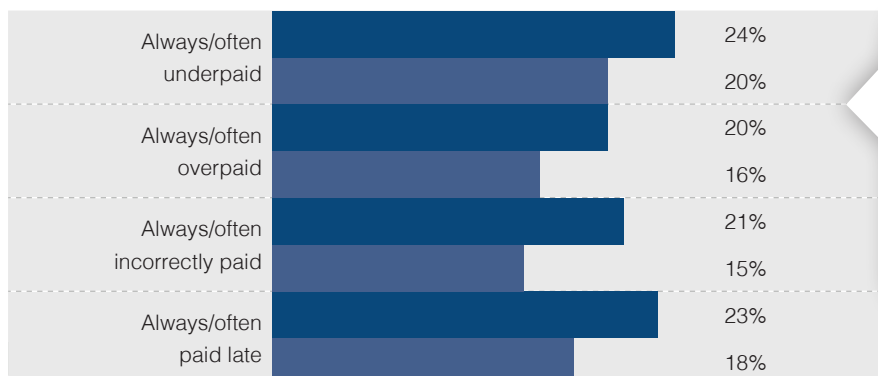
...but there may be a trade-off between pay and other priorities.

As well as flexibility, employers are recognising the importance of providing other benefits and support to their workers. For instance, two thirds (66%) are now offering financial wellbeing advice to staff, up from six in 10 (59%) in 2021 – but that is far more likely to happen in Asia Pacific and North America (74% and 56%) than Latin America (49%) or Europe (36%).

Payment problems continue to plague both workers and employers, and the situation appears to be becoming more acute. A quarter of workers (24%) say they are always or often underpaid, up from one in five (20%) in 2021 and, disturbingly for employers, 20% are always or often overpaid. Essential workers are far more likely to experience these issues than non-essential workers (for example 31% are always or often underpaid versus 15%). So too are those working

mostly from home (24% always or often underpaid, versus 15% for on-premise workers), and gig workers (30% versus 22% for traditional employees). This is a real concern as the workforce evolves to become more contract-based and remote, suggesting that procedures may need to be tightened or systems adjusted to prevent inconsistencies emerging for certain types of workers.

Instances of any of these errors happening is highest in Asia Pacific, followed by North America, then Europe, while payment accuracy appears to be best in Latin America. Given that almost seven in 10 workers (68%) now have access to their pay information online, they are in a better position than ever to spot mistakes and delays.



Payment errors are becoming more acute

How often are you paid incorrectly?

Key ■ 2022 ■ 2021



Mental health

67% of workers say they experience stress at work at least once a week.



It is another paradox of the world of work today that while workers are surprisingly positive in some senses, they are simultaneously struggling in others. Despite the upbeat sentiment around job satisfaction and the outlook for the next five years at work, mental health is under real strain, with the frequent stress that many workers were already feeling exacerbated by the pandemic.

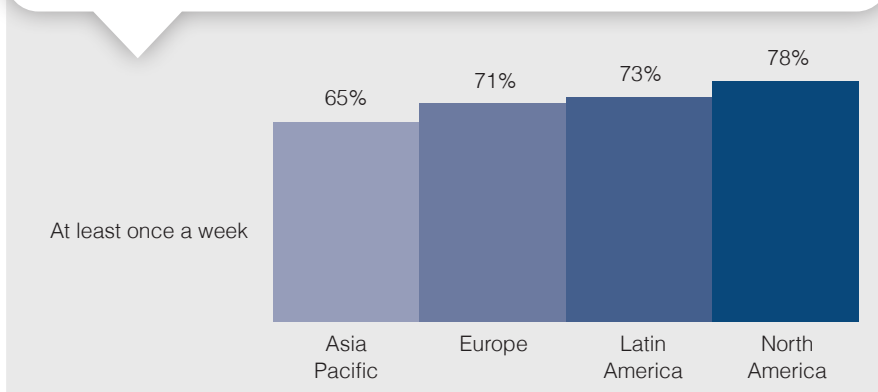
According to the charity Mind, a third of adults and young people say their mental health has got much worse since March 2020⁴. Studies⁵ indicate that, in addition to the anxiety induced by health fears and the uncertainty and disruption caused by lockdowns, COVID-19 infection itself can increase the risk of mental health problems developing, and mental health services have been interrupted in many countries. All this is putting individuals - and the quality of the work they do - under intense pressure. Even the most enlightened employers must remain vigilant about this health crisis within a health crisis.

4. Source: Mind report "Coronavirus: the consequences for mental health: The ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people with mental health problems across England and Wales", July 2021
5. Sources include: Xie, Y; Xu, E and Al-Aly, Z, "Risks of mental health outcomes in people with Covid-19: cohort study", February 2022, British Medical Journal (BMJ 2022;376:e068993). Geneva: World Health Organization, "The impact of COVID-19 on mental, neurological and substance use services: results of a rapid assessment", 2020 (Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO). Peters, S; Dennerlein, J; Wagner, G; Sorensen, G, "Work and worker health in the post-pandemic world: a public health perspective", February 2022, The Lancet. And Gordon, J, "One Year In: COVID-19 and Mental Health", National Institute of Mental Health

Almost seven in 10 (67%) workers say they experience stress at work at least once a week, up from 62% pre-pandemic, and one in seven (15%) feel stressed every day. For those struggling with stress, the most common cause is having increased responsibility as a result of the pandemic (41% say so), which is also a major contributor to job dissatisfaction, as discussed above. Other key sources of stress include the length of the working day (28%), problems with technology (26%) and concerns over job security (25%). The pandemic has also impacted in other ways, for instance, for one in 11 (9%), being asked if they are vaccinated is a cause of stress, while for one in 12 (8%) it's having to share a workspace with someone they live with. Clearly, this is a complex and highly charged issue, with many contributing factors for employers to navigate if they are to try and ease the burden on their staff.

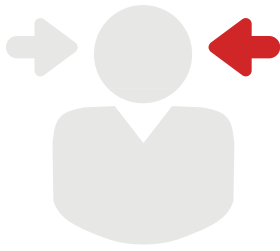
The stress toll

How often have you experienced stress at work?

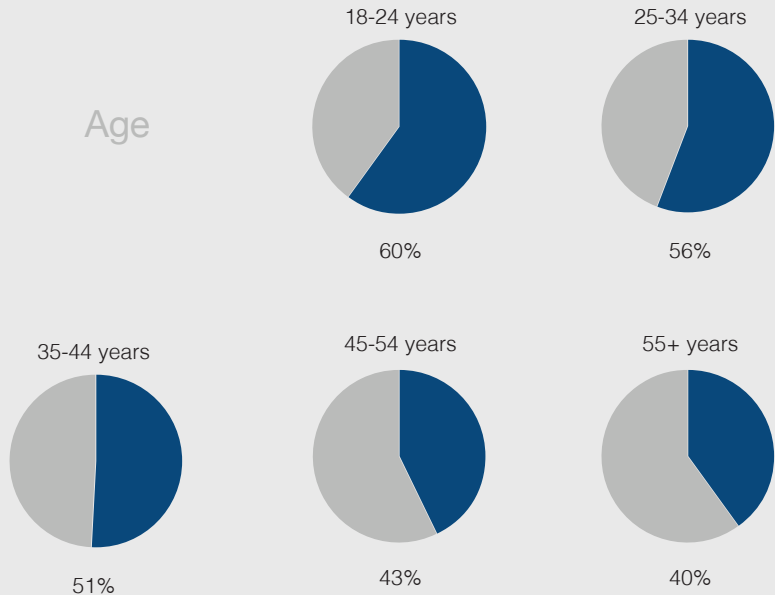


Alarmingly, as many as 53% believe their work is suffering as a result of poor mental health, and this is higher in Asia Pacific (56%) and Latin America (51%) than in North America or Europe (44% apiece). Younger workers appear to be most affected.

Many employers are aware of the risks and are striving to find new ways to support the mental health of their workforce. Seven in 10 workers (70%) feel supported by their managers when it comes to mental health at work, and three quarters (75%) feel supported by their colleagues.



I feel my work is suffering due to poor mental health.



Only one in eight (13%) say their employer is doing nothing to promote positive mental health at work, and employers in Asia Pacific are the most engaged and proactive of anywhere in the world, with just one in 11 (9%) of workers saying they are doing nothing on this front. Europe, by contrast, appears to be lagging. There, almost three in 10 (29%) say employers are doing nothing to promote positive mental health.

Most employers who are being proactive in this area are trying out a wide variety of initiatives. Chief among them are: checking-in/communicating with employees more (33%), allowing wellbeing days off (31%), and providing stress management breaks such as access to a zen room, wellbeing activities, meditation classes, or additional breaks in the day (30%). Offering access to special counselling (25%), implementing team-building or bonding activities (24%) and granting the right to disconnect from messages after working hours (22%) are also high on the agenda.

However, unless the causes of stress are identified and dealt with, the impact of all these well-intentioned schemes could be undermined.

Remote working and living arrangements



Remote and hybrid working are now an established feature of the working world, although to what extent such set-ups should be permanent is still being thrashed out⁶. What is certain is that the blurring of the distinction between home and the workplace is here to stay and the erosion of the 9-to-5 office-based model cannot be undone. This has long-term implications for workers' living arrangements, the kind of work they do and how, where and when they do it, and therefore for the jobs market.

As lockdowns have eased and then been reimposed in many countries at a time when populations are still vulnerable to COVID-19, the question of whether workers can be asked or compelled to return to the workplace if they don't need to is fraught with controversy. For many it could be a pivotal issue, potentially triggering a decision to leave.

6. As explored in another recent ADPRI report, "On-site, Remote or Hybrid: Employee Sentiment on the Workplace", 2021

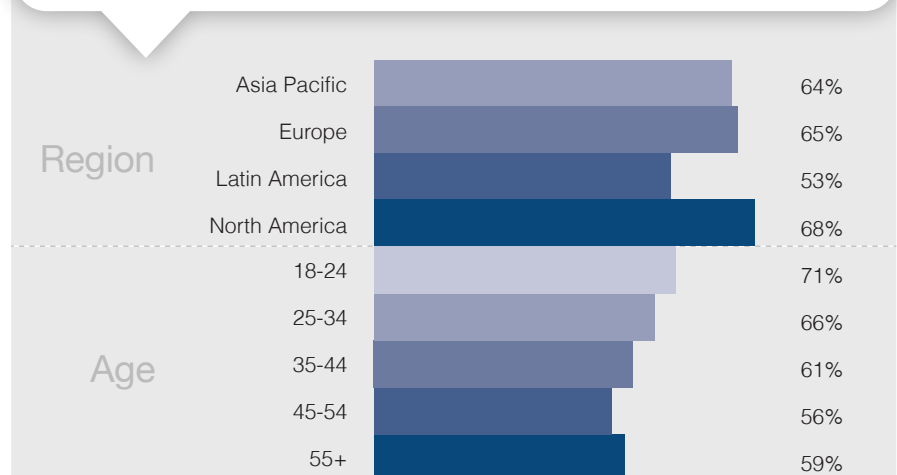


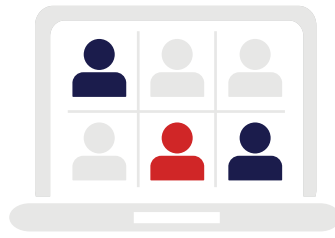
Indeed, two thirds of the global workforce (64%) have already, or would consider, looking for another job if their employer insisted that they return to the workplace full-time.

Contrary to assumptions in some quarters that younger people are desperate to return to the workplace, almost three quarters of 18-24-year-olds say so – far more than their older colleagues. Whether this reluctance is due to health worries or other reasons would be worth investigating before employers make any firm decisions, in order to alleviate any concerns and find a way forward that suits all concerned.

Wedded to remote working

If my employer insisted on me returning to my workplace full-time, I would consider looking for another job.





However, for those employers who can offer flexibility in terms of working location, there is evidence that employees would not only appreciate it, but that they would be prepared to make compromises to make it happen. More than half (52%) say they would accept a pay cut to guarantee that they could, for example, work remotely only or agree to split their time between home and office. When asked what reduction in pay workers would be prepared to accept to achieve this flexibility, responses averaged out at a cut of 11%.


Doing so could enable workers who want to work this way to have a better quality of life, spend less time commuting and even move to somewhere new (and perhaps cheaper) because they are no longer tied to being within easy reach of work. In fact, a major migration is already underway.

Globally, over half (52%) have thought about relocating within the country where they currently reside. This is highest for those living and working in Asia Pacific (at 56%) and lowest in Europe (at 40%). And more than four in 10 across the world (43%) have considered returning to live in the country of their

citizenship, while the same proportion (43%) have contemplated relocating elsewhere overseas. Again, employees in Asia Pacific are most likely to have considered these options. In almost half of cases where people have had moving in mind, the relocation has already happened or is underway. Employers may need to think again about where their talent pools now lie and how they can best continue to tap into them. The gap between the availability of local versus remote skills may start to widen as those working from home become even more geographically remote.

How, if at all, has the pandemic affected any thoughts you may have had about relocating in your country or relocating to work abroad?

	I have thought about relocating	Of those who have thought about relocating, percentage who have relocated/are in the process of relocating
Within the country I currently reside	52%	27%
Back to the country of my citizenship	43%	19%
Elsewhere overseas	43%	16%

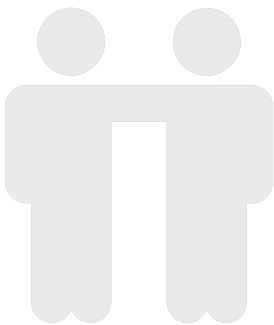


Working from home versus on-premise – a complex picture

There are many benefits to working from home or working remotely, but it is by no means a panacea. The research shines a light on where some of the biggest advantages and drawbacks are.

Those working from home are more inclined to say they feel optimistic about the next five years in the workplace, with 89% saying so compared to 77% of their peers who travel to work. They are also more likely to say they're satisfied in their current employment compared with those working on-premise (90% versus 82%). On another positive note, almost half of workers (46%) believe that working from home has made it easier to be a working parent, although a quarter (25%) say it has made it harder.

However, people working from home are more likely to feel that their work is suffering due to poor mental health than their colleagues in the workplace (55% versus 36%).



The good news is that help is at hand. Seven in 10 remote workers (69%) say they feel supported by managers when it comes to mental health at work, falling to half (50%) among on-site workers. And only one in 11 remote workers (9%) say their employer is not doing anything proactively to promote positive mental health at work, as opposed to around one in three (34%) of those in the workplace. Working remotely does not seem to have made it harder for managers to spot mental health issues among team members either, or to notice when they are struggling with stress or their workloads. Respondents were fairly evenly split as to whether problems would be more or less likely to be picked up when working from home.

The amount of additional unpaid overtime being undertaken is worrying, though. Workers from home provide employers with an extra 8.7 hours of 'free time' on average per week, over and above their expected paid hours, in contrast to the 6.5 hours averaged by those in the workplace. There's a risk that having the flexibility to work from home could end up meaning that workers are more prone to log on earlier, stay later, take fewer breaks, make themselves available outside normal working hours and effectively be 'always on'.

Therefore, employers who accede to long-term remote working requests may still find, if they are not careful, that rather than guaranteeing healthier, happier workers, such arrangements could just as easily lead to burn-out and stress as being in the workplace – perhaps even more so. Given that almost two thirds (63%) of those working from home say that their employers are monitoring employees’ timekeeping and attendance more closely than ever before (against 45% of staff working on-premise), employers should be mindful that these activities don’t add to the stress.

Thankfully, those working from home feel their efforts are acknowledged and appreciated. In fact, concerns that they could end up being overlooked in favour of colleagues on-premise who are more ‘visible’ and ‘present’ may in reality be the other way around. For instance, almost seven in 10 say they are being paid fairly for their skillset and their role and responsibilities, against fewer than half of their peers in the workplace. More conversations are being had with employers about career progression or skills and training requirements. Workers-from-home are more likely to feel they are noticed and recognised for their contributions too.

While this is good news, employers may need to re-balance their efforts, to ensure that those who are making the journey into work every day feel just as valued and nurtured, with as much attention being given to their career progression - and their mental health and stress levels - as those working in their own homes.

Are those working from home overlooked – or the other way around?

	Working from home	Working on-premise
I am noticed and recognised for my contributions	67%	51%
My employer and I talk about career progression	64%	43%
My employer and I discuss my skills and training requirements	68%	45%
I am paid fairly for my skill set	68%	47%
I am paid fairly for my role/responsibilities	69%	49%
My employer is monitoring timekeeping and attendance of employees more closely than ever before	63%	45%

Despite employers’ efforts to keep remote workers engaged and satisfied, there is a sense that all this newfound freedom could be opening individuals’ minds to a range of other possibilities. The research found that those working from home are much more inclined than their counterparts working on-premise to have thought about a major career change in the last 12 months (72% against 53%).

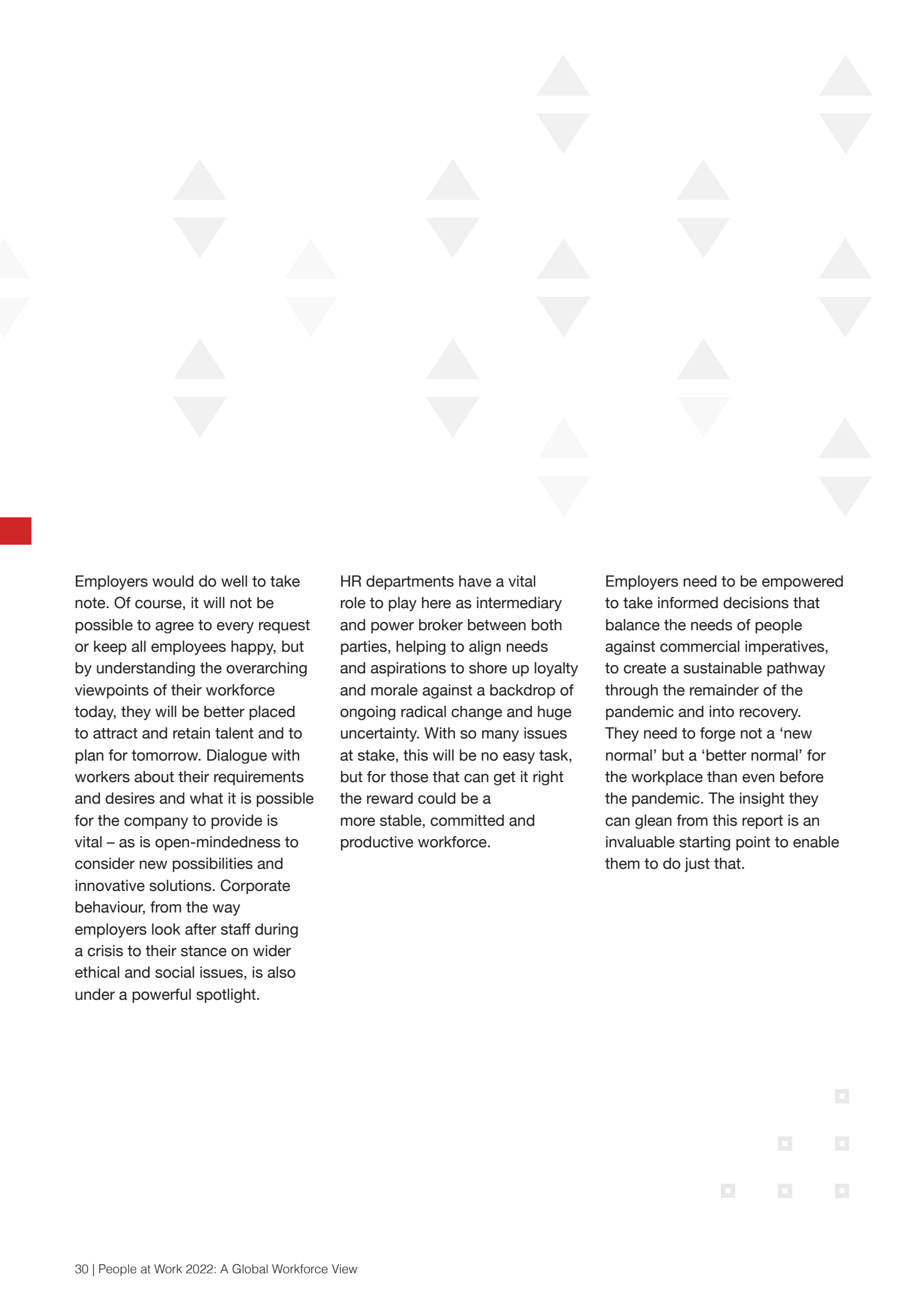
That ranges from starting their own business (21% versus 15%), taking a temporary break from employment (19% vs. 11%), or moving from full-time to part-time (18% vs. 11%), to requesting a sabbatical (27% vs. 10%) or taking early retirement (13% vs. 10%).

Conclusion

Two years on from the start of the COVID-19 crisis, many big questions remain.

Workers are thinking harder than ever before about what they really want out of work and out of life. They're reassessing – and in some cases, inverting – ideas around what they're worth, what job security means, what they want from their employers and what they're prepared to deliver in return. Whether through a sense of empowerment, disillusionment or simply as a natural consequence of the changes that have been imposed on them, they are signalling strongly that they need and expect a new paradigm in their working relationships with employers. That might be higher pay, greater flexibility, better support, new challenges, increased recognition, improved prospects or a more inclusive and fairer culture: the list of what it could take to keep workers engaged and fulfilled is long and varied.





Employers would do well to take note. Of course, it will not be possible to agree to every request or keep all employees happy, but by understanding the overarching viewpoints of their workforce today, they will be better placed to attract and retain talent and to plan for tomorrow. Dialogue with workers about their requirements and desires and what it is possible for the company to provide is vital – as is open-mindedness to consider new possibilities and innovative solutions. Corporate behaviour, from the way employers look after staff during a crisis to their stance on wider ethical and social issues, is also under a powerful spotlight.

HR departments have a vital role to play here as intermediary and power broker between both parties, helping to align needs and aspirations to shore up loyalty and morale against a backdrop of ongoing radical change and huge uncertainty. With so many issues at stake, this will be no easy task, but for those that can get it right the reward could be a more stable, committed and productive workforce.

Employers need to be empowered to take informed decisions that balance the needs of people against commercial imperatives, to create a sustainable pathway through the remainder of the pandemic and into recovery. They need to forge not a 'new normal' but a 'better normal' for the workplace than even before the pandemic. The insight they can glean from this report is an invaluable starting point to enable them to do just that.

People at Work 2022: A Workforce View in Asia Pacific

Introduction

The Asia Pacific region is home to some of the biggest and fastest growing economies¹ on earth. Strong in both the manufacturing and services sectors, businesses in the region – powered by their highly-skilled and dynamic people - are driving forward much of the world’s output and increasingly, its innovation. Governments and employers will want to keep it that way.

Workers want change

Indian workers are the most likely of any country studied globally to have considered a major career change in the last 12 months. Almost nine in 10 (88%) have done so, compared to 75% in Singapore, 68% in Australia and 61% in China. This may be due, in part at least, to only one in eight (12%) Indians and Singaporeans feeling that their job or industry is secure. Indians are the most entrepreneurial regionally, with almost three in 10 (29%) contemplating starting their own business.

Flexibility of hours is important to 43% of workers in Australia, 42% in Singapore, and 31% in India and China. Enjoyment of the day’s work is key for around two in five Chinese and Australian workers (39% and 38%) and a third in Singapore (32%), but only just over one in five in India (22%).

The most uncompromising feelings about the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) of any region in the world are to be found in Asia Pacific. Workers in India and China in particular would consider leaving if they discovered there was an unfair gender pay gap at their company or no diversity and inclusion policy. Businesses in those countries are taking the lead on having DEI policies in place. Concerningly, more than one in five Australians and Singaporeans say that no one is driving gender pay equality and diversity and inclusion at their companies (22%), compared to around one in eight in India (12%) and in China (14%).

1. Source: International Monetary Fund, Real GDP growth, annual percentage change, 2021 and GDP current prices, 2021

Job satisfaction and outlook

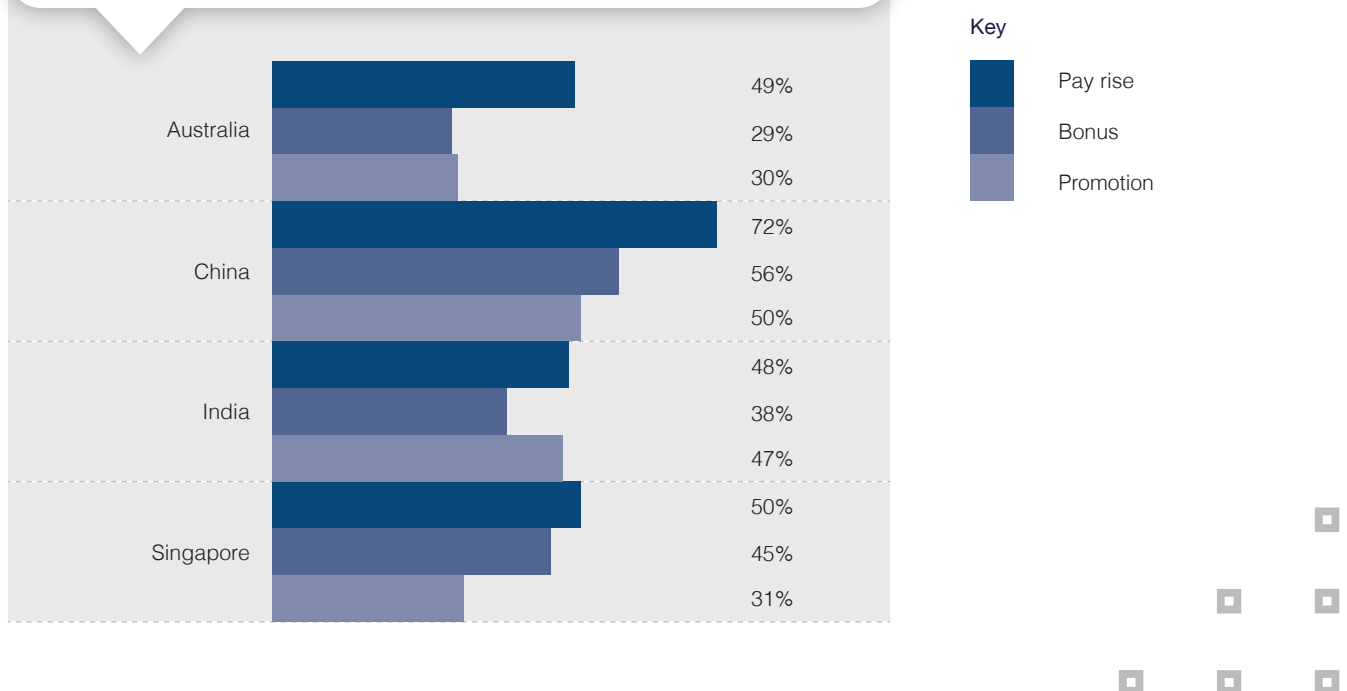
Job satisfaction is widespread, particularly in India, where more than nine in 10 workers say they're satisfied in their current employment. In Singapore, however, the feeling is more muted. There, less than a third (31%) describe themselves as very satisfied; while just over half (52%) are 'somewhat' satisfied (compared to 61% and 31% in India respectively).

Similarly, despite feelings of insecurity around jobs or industry sectors in some quarters, optimism about the next five years in the workplace is strong, with 90% of Indian and Chinese workers feeling this way, though again, sentiment in Singapore is less bullish. This might suggest some people see any changes they may have to make to their careers as an opportunity, rather than a threat.

	Australia	China	India	Singapore
I am satisfied in my current employment	88%	90%	93%	83%
I feel optimistic about the next five years in the workplace	83%	90%	90%	74%

Workers in China are extremely confident about getting a pay rise, a bonus or a promotion in the next 12 months – much more so than they are in India (despite the positive outlook there), and well above Australia and Singapore too.

Which of the following, if any, do you expect to achieve in your current company within the next 12 months?



Pay and benefits

Although salary is the number one priority in a job right across the region, it is by far the most important factor for Singaporeans, 71% of whom put it top, followed by two thirds (66%) of Chinese workers. Despite this, it is Indians who are most likely to ask for a pay rise if they feel they deserve one (86%) versus 78% of Chinese, 63% of Singaporeans and 61% of Australians.

Whilst Indian workers may not have high expectations of being offered a pay rise, they may feel more inclined to ask for one because they have earned it by putting in so much unpaid overtime. Each week they are giving away around two hours more free time than their peers in other parts of Asia Pacific, and the most in the world.

	Australia	China	India	Singapore
On average, how many hours per week do you believe you work for free? (i.e. hours worked over lunch breaks, staying late, etc.)?	8.2	8.1	10.3	8.4

How long will this continue? Across the region, almost three quarters of workers (74%) would like more flexibility as to when they work, such as compressing the same number of hours into a four-day week, leaving little scope for overtime. 76% of Indians are keen on this idea, as are 73% of Chinese, 72% of Singaporeans and 61% of Australians.

Mental health

Mental health issues are putting the quality of work under particular strain in India and China, whereas it's less of a problem in Australia and Singapore. Perhaps in recognition of this, employers in India and China appear to be doing the most to help promote positive mental health at work, with only around one in 20 (4%) and one in 10 (11%) workers respectively saying their employer is doing nothing proactive to promote it, against almost one in five (18%) in Australia and Singapore.

	Australia	China	India	Singapore
I feel my work is suffering due to poor mental health.	46%	56%	57%	41%

Stress is prevalent. More than eight in 10 workers (81%) experience stress at least once a week in India, as do 74% in Singapore and 70% in Australia, falling to 56% in China.

Increased responsibility due to the pandemic is the primary reason region-wide, but there are many other factors at play. Interestingly, possibly due to different dynamics of living and working, commuting into the office is a cause of stress

for almost a quarter of Chinese workers (24%) - higher than elsewhere in the region. But in India, a similar proportion (26%) attribute stress to working from home. Again, this is much higher than anywhere else in Asia Pacific.



Remote work and living arrangements

Even more intriguingly, that does not mean that most Indians would prefer to return to the workplace full-time. More than eight in 10 (82%) would consider looking for another job if their employer insisted on a full-time return to on-premise working. That compares with 67% in Australia, 60% in Singapore and 54% in China.

Three quarters of Indian workers say they would be willing to take a pay cut to guarantee flexibility of location in where they work (73%), almost twice as many as would do so in Singapore (38%). And while Australians who say they would be prepared to take a pay cut to achieve it are in the minority (at 41%), Australia has the highest proportion of workers of anywhere in the world who say that flexibility of location is an important factor in a job (22%).

There are other downsides to remote working, however. In Singapore and Australia, a higher proportion of workers (57% and 49%) felt that managers were less likely to spot when team members were struggling with their workload, or were suffering from mental health issues or stress if they were working from home than if they were in the workplace (27% and 29%). Whereas in India, the balance was tipped in the other direction, and in China, the results were fairly evenly split.

What does this mean for employers?

In such a culturally and economically diverse region, it's not surprising to see often quite significant differences in perspectives and outlook among workers in different countries. Across the board, however, it's clear that confidence remains strong and workers continue to be extremely dedicated and hard-working. Managing stress and poor mental health during the strains of the pandemic is not easy, but many employers are being pragmatic and creative in supporting workers, and that must continue. Asia Pacific is also leading the way on concern for DEI issues, and the bar is being raised on what is expected, and what is common practice in terms of corporate behaviour.



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