



The Future of Work: Productive anywhere

May 2021

Work has changed **forever**

We're all wondering: **What will work look like in the future? Our new study gives a glimpse.**

We'll never go back to business as usual.
Where will we go instead?

It's less about a place.
It's more about people's potential.



Most employees want the future of work to be hybrid.

83% of workers in our study said a hybrid model would be optimal. The future of work will be characterized by complexity and managing differences. Organizations will struggle to provide working models that satisfy the needs of all workers, all the time.

Workforce policies were built around in-person workers.

HR policies and leadership support have largely catered to onsite workers (90% of the global workforce was onsite prior to COVID), but new workforce segments are now emerging.

With the right resources, people can be productive in any environment.

An important workforce segment is emerging: a group of people who can be productive and healthy anywhere, whether they're remote, onsite or both.

Business growth in an uncertain world depends on a healthy and productive workforce.

63% of high-growth companies have already enabled productivity anywhere workforce models.

“Productive anywhere” doesn’t describe people who are free of dissatisfaction or stressors.

Nearly 1 in 3 workers report feeling only frustration with work today. But surprisingly, the most healthy and effective individuals were not those who had an absence of negative work stressors, but those who had the most positive resources.

Location should no longer be the focus for leaders.

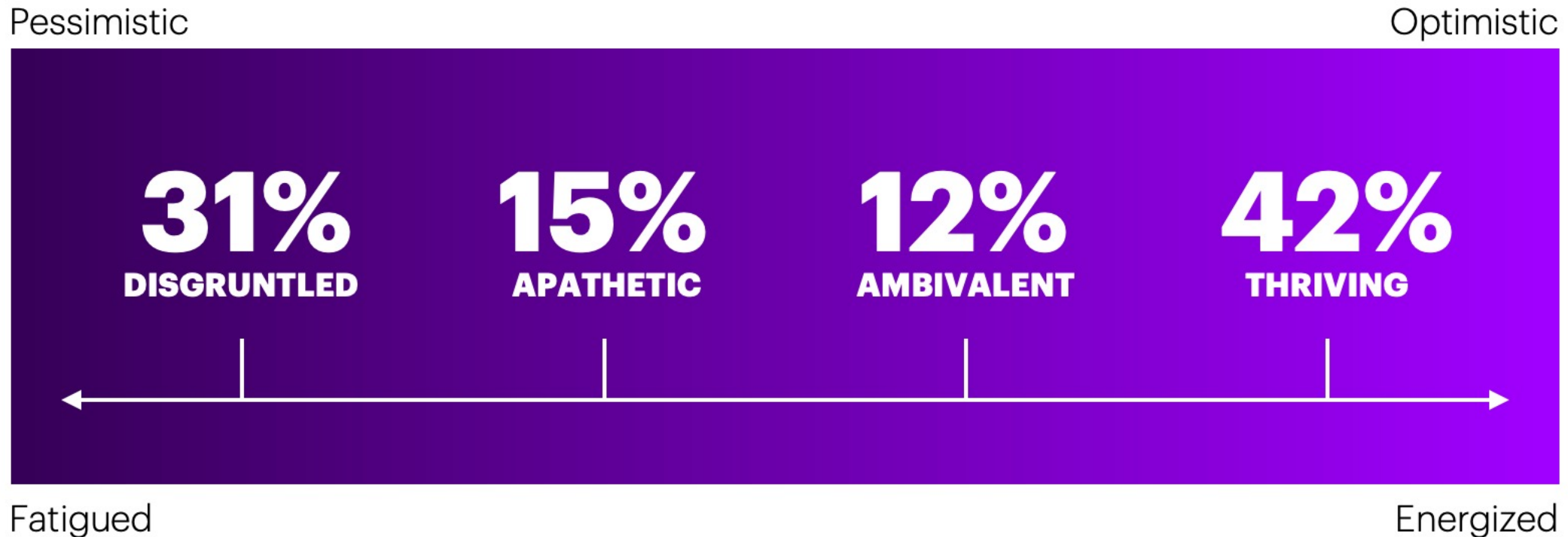
By offering the right resources, workers can be healthy and productive—wherever they work.

**How are people
feeling about
work?**



Four mindsets of today's workers

Our research found four mindsets that workers are experiencing toward the future of work. Hybrid workers are more likely to be thriving, while onsite workers are more likely to be disgruntled.



**Where do
people want
to work?**



People want the future of work to be **hybrid***

Workers fare better in hybrid environments

Those who had a hybrid work model during COVID-19 had **better mental health, stronger work relationships** and were more likely to feel [Net Better Off](#) as a result of working for their organizations.

They also experienced **less burnout than those who worked entirely onsite** or entirely remote.

*Hybrid: The ability to work remotely between 25% and 75% of the time.

58%

of our sample had already been working in a hybrid model during COVID-19

83%

identified a hybrid model as being optimal in the future

But **hybrid** isn't possible for everyone

Approximately 25% of our sample worked fully onsite throughout the pandemic and are likely to remain onsite for the foreseeable future.

These workers tended to be in healthcare and retail industries, at lower organizational levels, and working for smaller and more localized businesses.

In the quest to optimize remote work, we must also reimagine onsite work and provide resources to enable people to be healthy and productive.



**Why do people
like the hybrid
model?**

**It's the best
of both worlds**



What drives people to want to be onsite?

Technology

Easier access to technology onsite than at home

Colleagues

Collaborate with colleagues in face-to-face settings

Routine

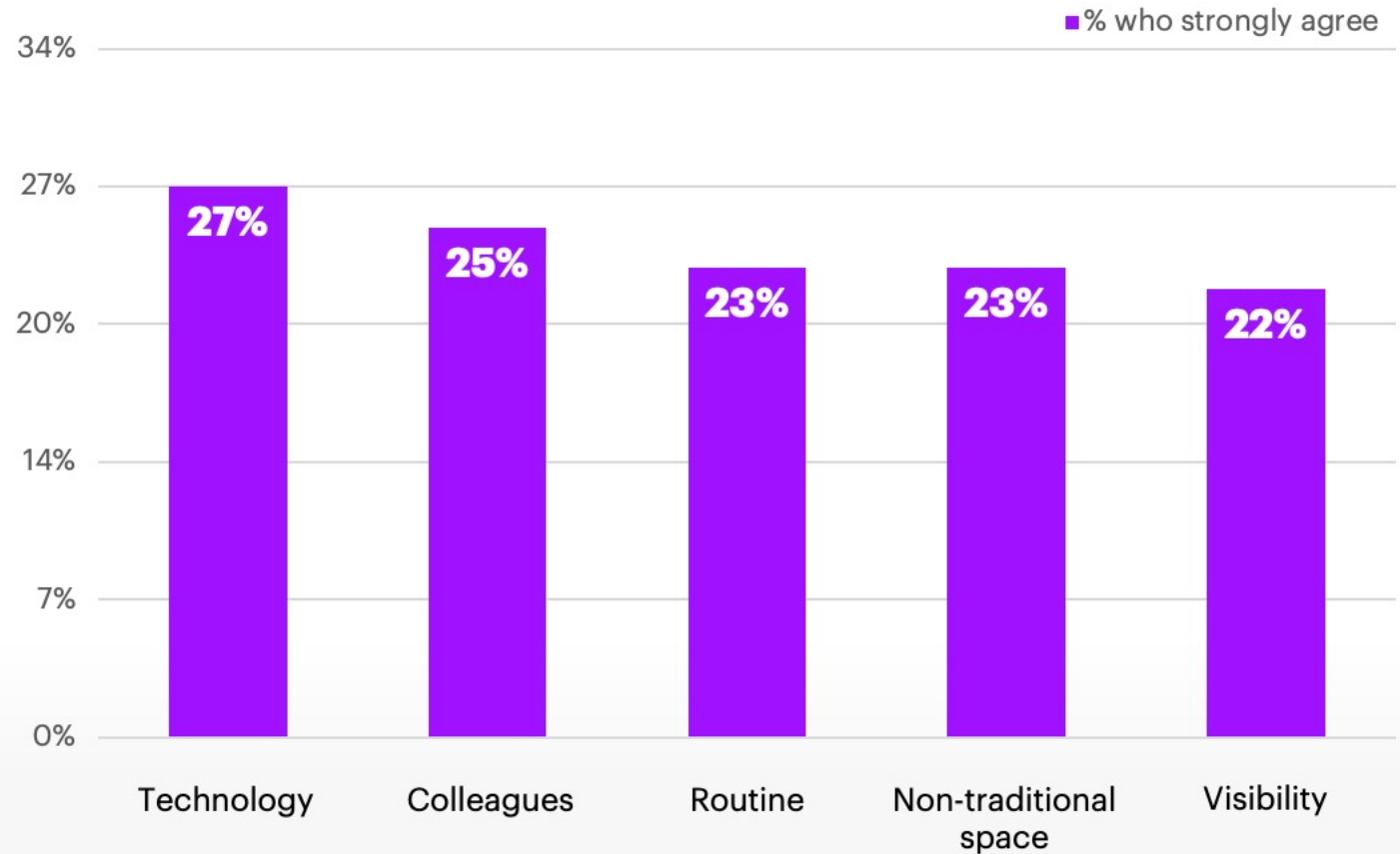
Benefit from the routine that going onsite creates

Non-traditional space

Need non-traditional space to ideate and innovate

Visibility

Improved visibility to leaders



What drives people to want to be remote?

Safety

Remote work makes me feel safer

Quality of life

I have a better quality of life working remotely

Freedom

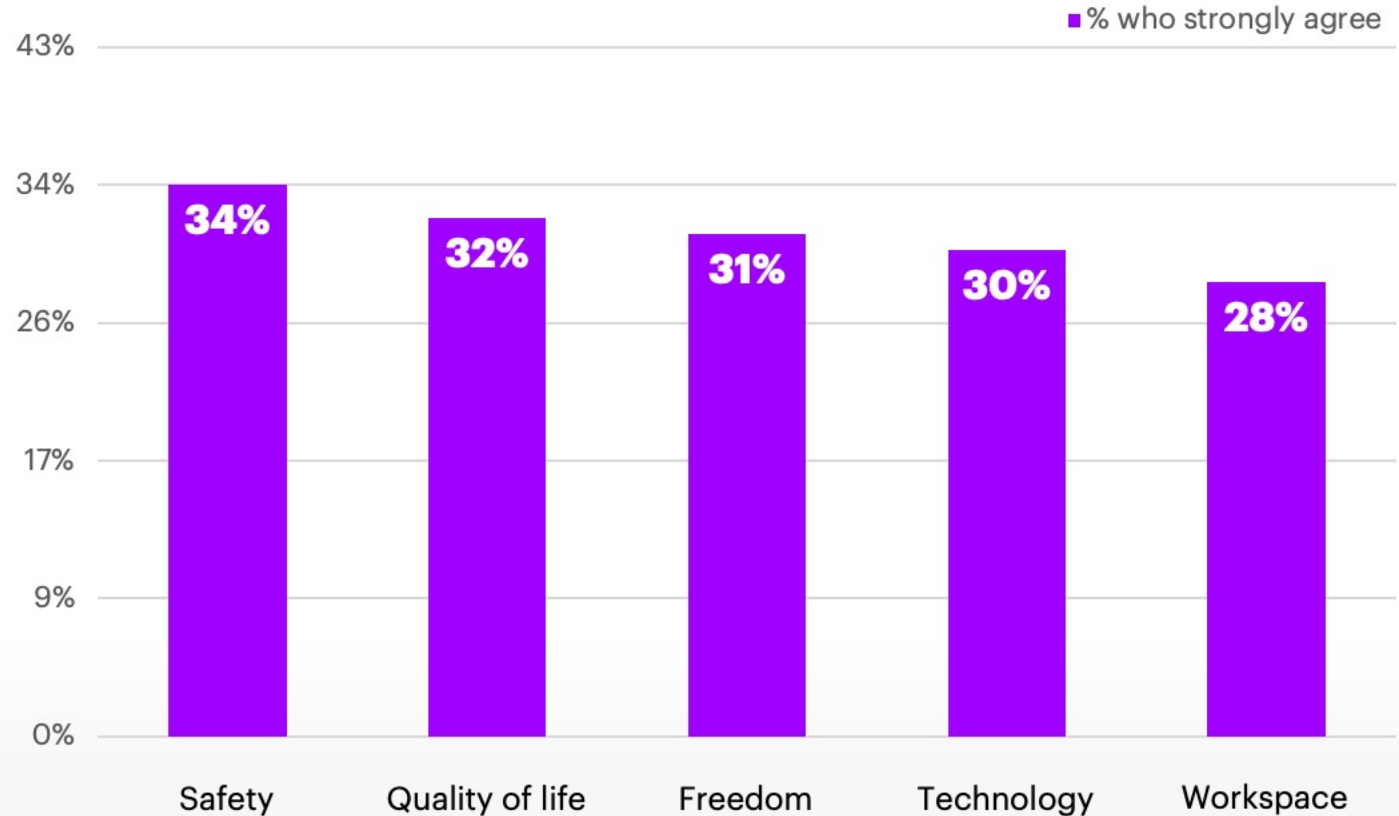
Remote work gives me the freedom to take more productive breaks from work when I need to

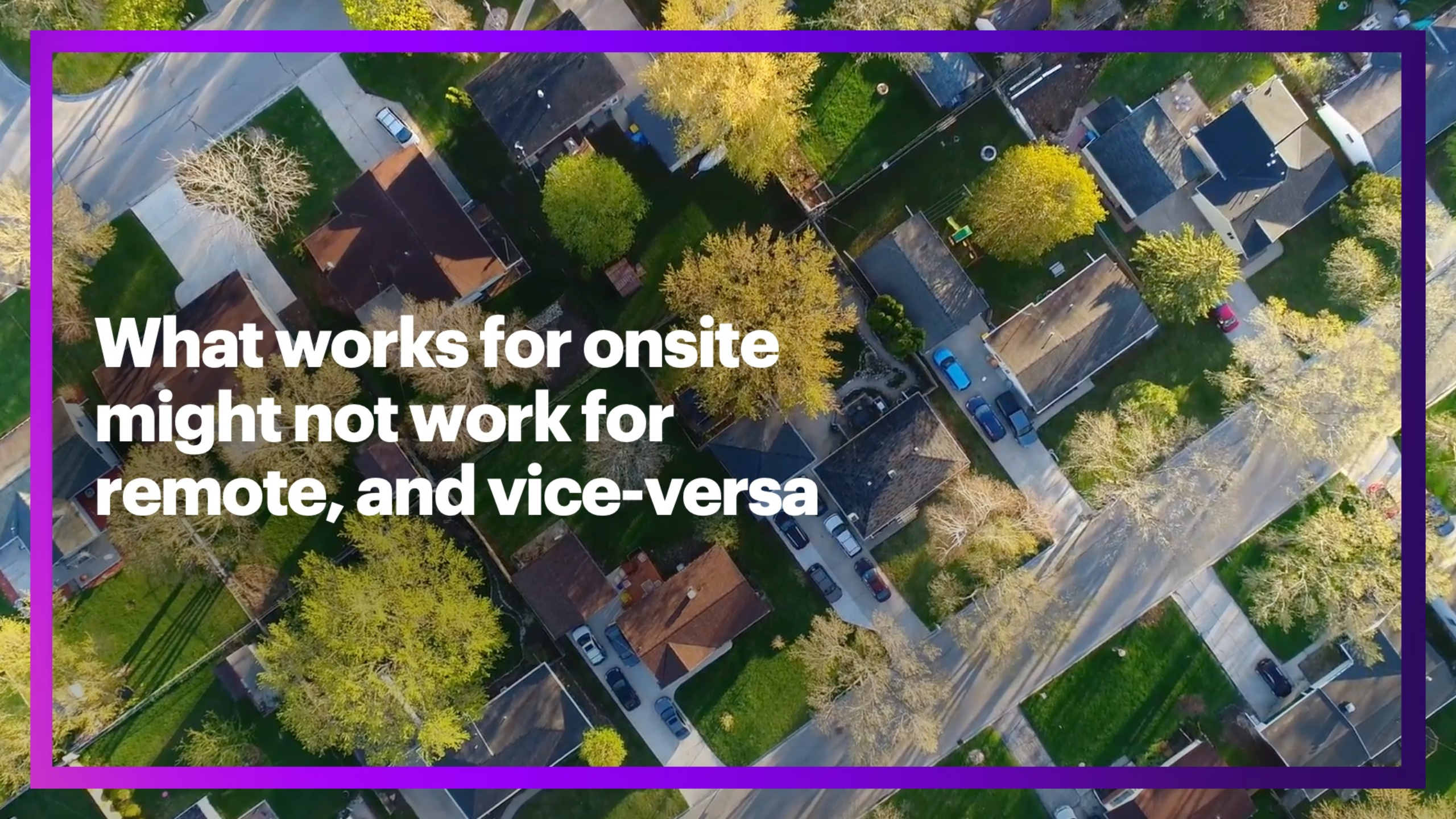
Technology

I have the tools and technology to effectively work remotely

Workspace

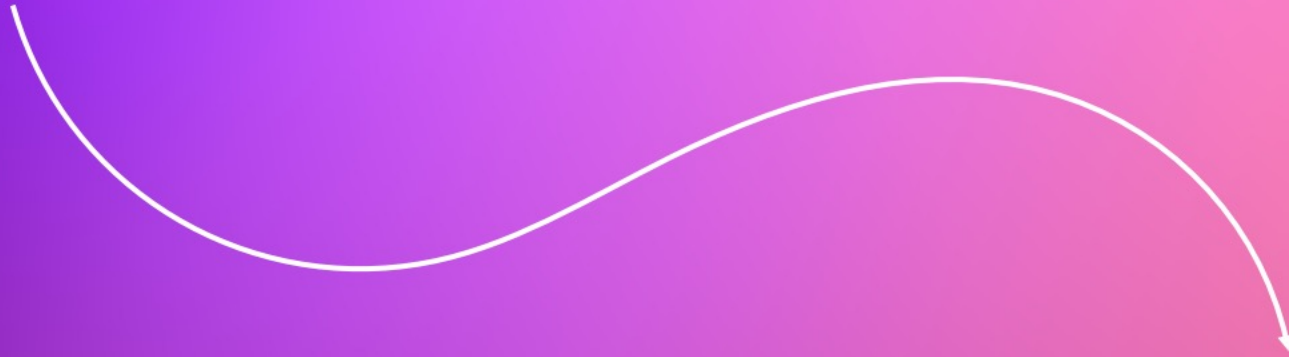
I have sufficient work-from-home space



An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. The image shows several houses with various roof colors (brown, grey, blue), green lawns, and trees with yellow and green foliage. A road with several cars is visible in the center. The entire image is framed by a thick purple border.

**What works for onsite
might not work for
remote, and vice-versa**

**“Where do you want to work?”
might be the wrong question.**



**A better question to ask is, “What
unleashes a person's potential, enabling
them to be healthy and productive,
regardless of where they work?”**

So we asked more than 9,000 global workers

We wanted to understand what would drive people to be productive, healthy and effective in hybrid work situations.



40% say they could be productive whether they were onsite or remote

8% say they're disconnected, frustrated and inefficient

What separates the two groups? **Not stress.** Productive people report as much or more burnout, fatigue and frustrations as others.



What they do have are **resources**, on both the individual and organizational level, that have made them net better off. That's why they can be productive anywhere.



**Why are some
people productive
anywhere?**

They have resources to be **healthy and productive**

People who can be productive everywhere have significantly greater personal and organizational resources than those who can't be productive anywhere.

Personal resources	Organizational resources
Autonomy in job	Organization is agile
Positive mental health	Organization is intelligent
Desire to participate in learning	Organization has health policies
High degree of digital skills	Organization supports vaccination
Strong social bonds at work	Organization is digitally mature
Work-life enhancement	Leadership is supportive

These resources were identified as key differentiators for workers who can be productive anywhere, based on an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) comparing workforce groups.

A closer look at 12 key resources

1 Autonomy in job:

The extent to which people feel they are held to realistic performance expectations, given the freedom to manage their own time and provided with continuous feedback to improve their work.

2 Positive mental health:

The extent to which people's work, colleagues and organizations have helped them feel more positive.

3 Desire to participate in learning:

The extent to which people want to participate in learning opportunities like virtual training courses, mentoring and peer-to-peer coaching, and apprenticeships with highly skilled teams.

4 High degree of digital skills:

Skill levels across emerging technologies such like cloud computing, cyber security, robotics, virtual reality and digital collaboration tools.

5 Strong social bonds at work:

The extent to which people feel connected to others and included as part of a strong social network at work.

6 Work-life enhancement:

The extent to which people feel their work enhances their energy and mood when pursuing activities in their personal lives.

A closer look at 12 key resources

7 Organization is agile:

The extent to which individuals and teams fully understand their role in the bigger picture, and action plans are in place to address unexpected issues that may arise.

8 Organization is intelligent:

The organization has policies and technologies that can be intelligently adapted to keep workers safe in a crisis (for example, touchless technologies, intelligent tracking and reporting systems, and job-specific education and training around stopping the spread of COVID-19).

9 Organization has health policies:

The extent to which the organization has adopted policies like routine cleaning and disinfecting workspaces, restricting the number of personnel in the office at one time and ensuring flexible sick leave policies.

10 Organization supports vaccination:

The extent to which employers provide credible, factual information about COVID-19 vaccination and remove barriers to getting the vaccine.

11 Organization is digitally mature:

The extent to which an organization has a strong digital vision that is clearly communicated and endorsed through employee training and upskilling opportunities and the use of digital tools to drive employee innovation, collaboration and mobility.

12 Leadership is supportive:

The extent to which organizational leaders are active listeners that demonstrate care and consideration for the well-being, productivity and personal development of employees.

It's time to **rethink** how to best support workers everywhere

Work can no longer be viewed as a transaction or grouped simply in terms of onsite and remote.

New emergent hybrid models are requiring leaders to manage differences and complexities.





**The future of work
starts today**

Where can companies **begin?**

No one knows exactly what the future will look like, but we do know what workers need to thrive anywhere. Leaders can begin by redefining work policies and strengthening worker-employer relationships.

Accelerate Modern HR	Develop a strategy that ensures workers are Net Better Off as they transition to new workspaces, teams and roles. Cut through new complexities that have emerged to unlock human ingenuity.
Design work around people	There is no one-size-fit-all model, so organizations must respond to the needs of all types of workers. Organizations that support psychological and physical safety will foster trust.
Build digital fluency	Digitally fluent organizations have higher growth and are better places to work. Build digital fluency at all levels, designing tailored skilling and learning paths that serve different needs.
Lead with humanity	Responsible leaders create environments in which the Modern Board, CEO and C-suite make sure workers are Net Better Off. They build a fail-fast culture of ongoing experimentation and improvement.

For more information



CHRISTIE SMITH

Senior Managing Director
Global Lead of Talent
& Organization/
Human Potential



YAARIT SILVERSTONE

Senior Managing Director
Talent & Organization/
Human Potential



NICHOLAS WHITTALL

Senior Managing Director
Talent & Organization/
Human Potential



DAVE SHAW

Senior Managing Director
Talent & Organization/
Human Potential



KENT MCMILLIAN

Senior Managing Director
Talent & Organization/
Human Potential

Acknowledgments

Research Lead: Kelly Monahan

Marketing Content Lead: Courtney Bonanno

Project team

Heather Parker, Christine Yiannakis, Karen Saverino, Sarah Berger, Tracey Seward, Marjorie Arnold, Melissa Wehmeyer, Ike Omoruyi, Heather Spring, Noelani Kimura, Justin Chatigny, Carlin Flora, Gabriela Burlacu, Tourang Nazari

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About the research

Accenture Research fielded a survey during the month of March 2021 to 9,326 global workers across the following countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, Singapore, Sweden, UK, and US and the following industries: Banking, Insurance, Capital Markets, High Tech, Retail, Customer Goods & Services, Public Sector, Healthcare, Communications and Media, Utilities, Energy and Life Sciences. Extensive statistical cluster and regression analyses were completed to determine mindsets of the workforce and what resources were necessary to make people feel healthy and productive remotely, onsite or in hybrid models.