

REMOTE WORKING IN 2021



See how remote work has changed in 2021 with our research report findings.

Introduction

Things have come a long way since I wrote the introduction for our 2020 Remote Working Report. What a year it's been. While we may not be clear of Covid and it's related difficulties just yet, many are finding their feet on the road to recovery – and for that, I'm grateful.

Over the past 12 months we've worked in ways that are completely new to most of us. As a result, many business owners are questioning everything. Do I need to be working in the same space as my team? Will we remain connected if we work mostly from home? What opportunities are available to my business when my staff can be located anywhere?

In many ways, we're standing at a crossroads right now. Some businesses have already made the call to return to a full-time office schedule. Some have seen the benefits of remote working and have dived into the new model headfirst.

Many are floating somewhere in-between, waiting to decide on next steps.

How do Australian employees feel about remote working one year on? We wanted to do a temperature check. We want to equip business leaders with the best knowledge to make confident and informed choices over the future of their workforce.

Employment Hero surveyed over 1,000 people that have had all kinds of working experiences over the last year. Not only did we find their thoughts incredibly helpful, we were able to position these against our [2020 Report](#) statistics. We hope you find these findings equally useful for your business.

We wish you and your business all the best as we look towards a better world of work – whatever your physical location may be.

Ben Thompson

CEO and Founder of
Employment Hero



KEY FINDINGS



Key Findings

Remote working remains a popular option

In fact, it's popularity has risen from 92% (2020) to 94% (2021). It's a small change, but a big piece of the pie saying they want to work from home for at least one day a week.

Of those, 28% would like to work from home everyday, 50% want to work from home 2-3 days per week and 16% would like to work from home at least one day per week.

It seems that workers around Australia are looking forward to a future of flexible remote work. It's no longer just a response to the pandemic. We can now see it as a long term model that could work for us. When asked if they would consider remote work on a permanent basis, 36% of respondents said definitely, up from 28% in 2020.

With so much demand for working from home on a permanent or hybrid (the option to work from home or the office) basis, this could see major preference for workplaces that are offering these models.

Most of us are still working at home

If your business has returned staff to work full time, you're in the minority. At least 72% of knowledge workers surveyed are working from home at least some of the time, with just 27% back in the office full time.

Of that 72%, 27% are working remotely full time and 45% are working to a hybrid model - going into the office sometimes.

Generational differences are coded into the responses. Workers aged 55+ were the group that was most likely to return to the office, while workers aged between 18-34 were the most likely to still be working remotely full time. Workers aged between 45-55 were the most likely to be hybrid working.

Our concerns around remote work are settling

By the same token, our 2020 concerns around remote work have neutralised one year on. We're starting to get a knack for this thing.

In 2020 we found ourselves forgetting to get up from our desks during the day, with 31% of respondents flagging this as an issue. Now only 21% perceive this to be a problem.

We also found it difficult to distinguish between work and home life, with 28% finding these lines to be blurred. This has also reduced in 2021 to 22%.

We still hate commuting

The memories of crowded busses and traffic jams must run deep. Although it's dropped slightly since 2020, 51% of us still rank commuting as the worst thing about the office.

The commute was far ahead of other factors we dislike. Our second least-favourite was people interrupting us at our desk (33%) and in equal third, sick people coming into work and waking up early (26%).

Many workers have taken the opportunity to fully embrace the remote working lifestyle by seeking a 'tree change'. [2021 ABS data](#) shows that Australian capital cities had a net loss of 11,200 people during July, August and September last year. Embracing cheaper house prices and a slower lifestyle has been of interest to many, as they ditch the commute for good.



Younger people have found the adjustment easier

People of all generations have had a tough time adjusting to the pandemic. In some ways, young people have been hit hardest by the situation, with job instability and concerns about their future causing major upset.

In fact, in our [Covid-19 and Mental Health in the Workplace Report](#), 72% of people under the age of 35 reported an increase in stress, compared to 40% of those over 55.

But it hasn't been all bad for our younger working population. Millennials and Gen Z have easily adapted to remote working. Not only has this age group found it easier to adopt the necessary technology and routine to make remote work possible, many are genuinely enjoying the experience.

Younger employees were found more likely to have applied several changes to their way of working, whether that be with new digital tools, flexible working hours or the purchase of new office equipment. 23% of workers aged 45+ said they had experienced no changes, compared to only 6% of 18-34 year olds.

Possibly due to these adapted work environments, workers aged 18-34 were 24% more likely to say that they would like to work remotely full-time, indefinitely.

SURVEY RESULTS

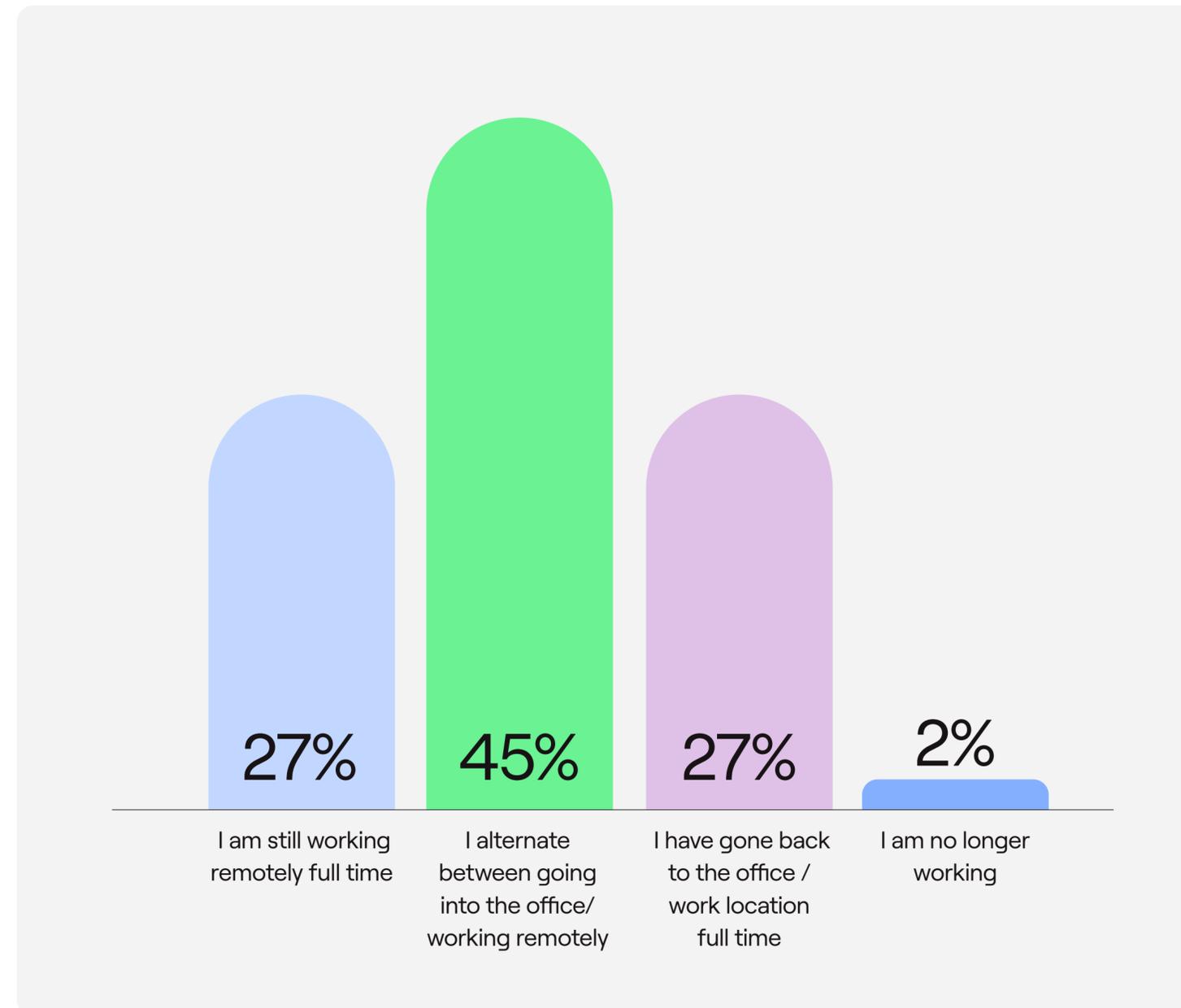
A complete breakdown
of our 2021 findings.



How many people are still working remotely?

In 2021, 72% of knowledge workers are still working remotely some or all of the time. 27% of workers have returned to the office full time.

What is your current work situation?



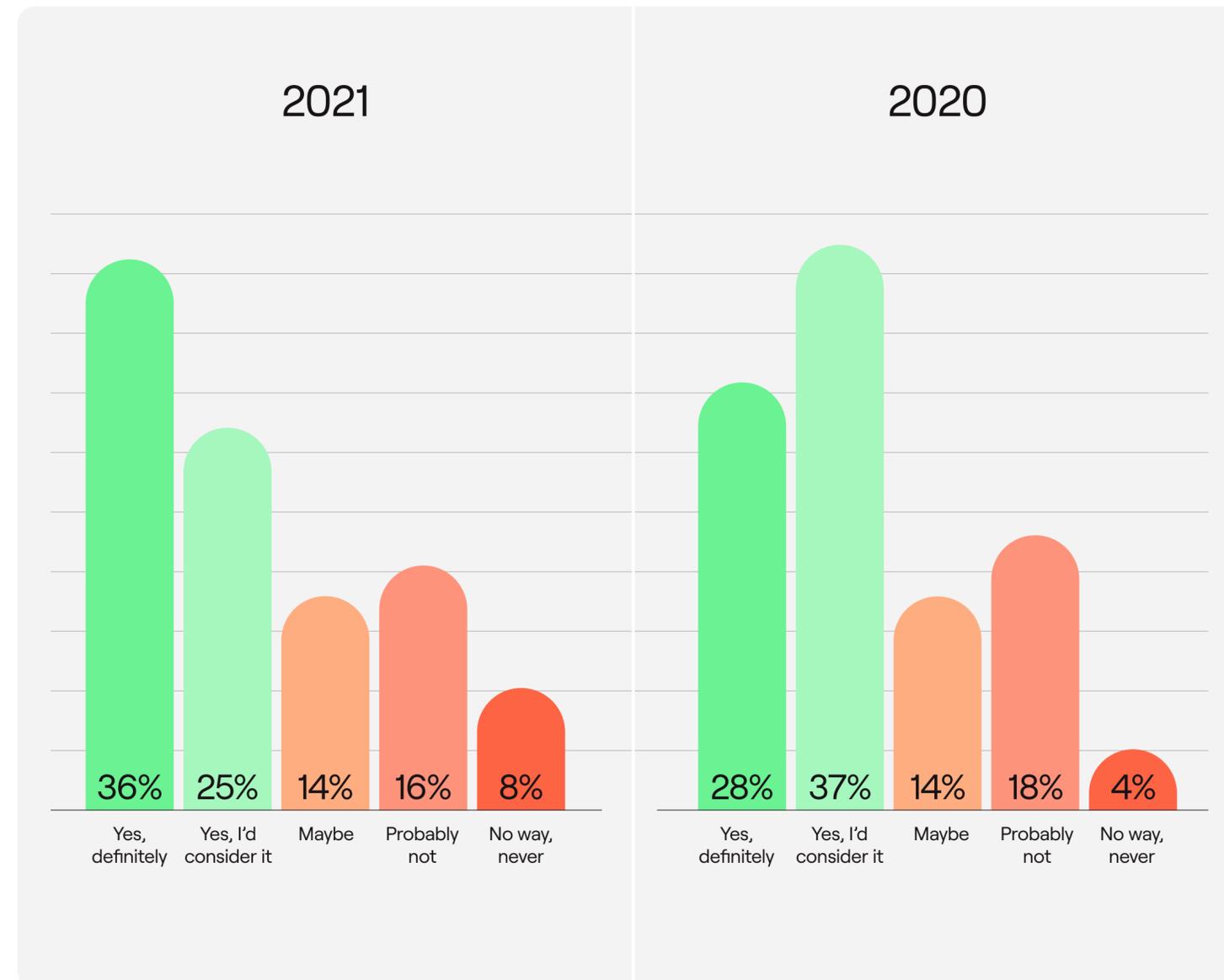
Advice from our respondents:

“To make working from home work best, it’s important to do these few things if you can. One, separate your office space from your living space as much as possible. Two, get ‘ready’ for work as you normally would each morning when you worked in the office. Three, have a hard stop at the end of the day.”

How many people want to continue remote working?

Sentiments haven't changed dramatically in a year, but results have been slightly more polarised.

Would you consider working remotely on a permanent basis, presuming salary and benefits remain on par?



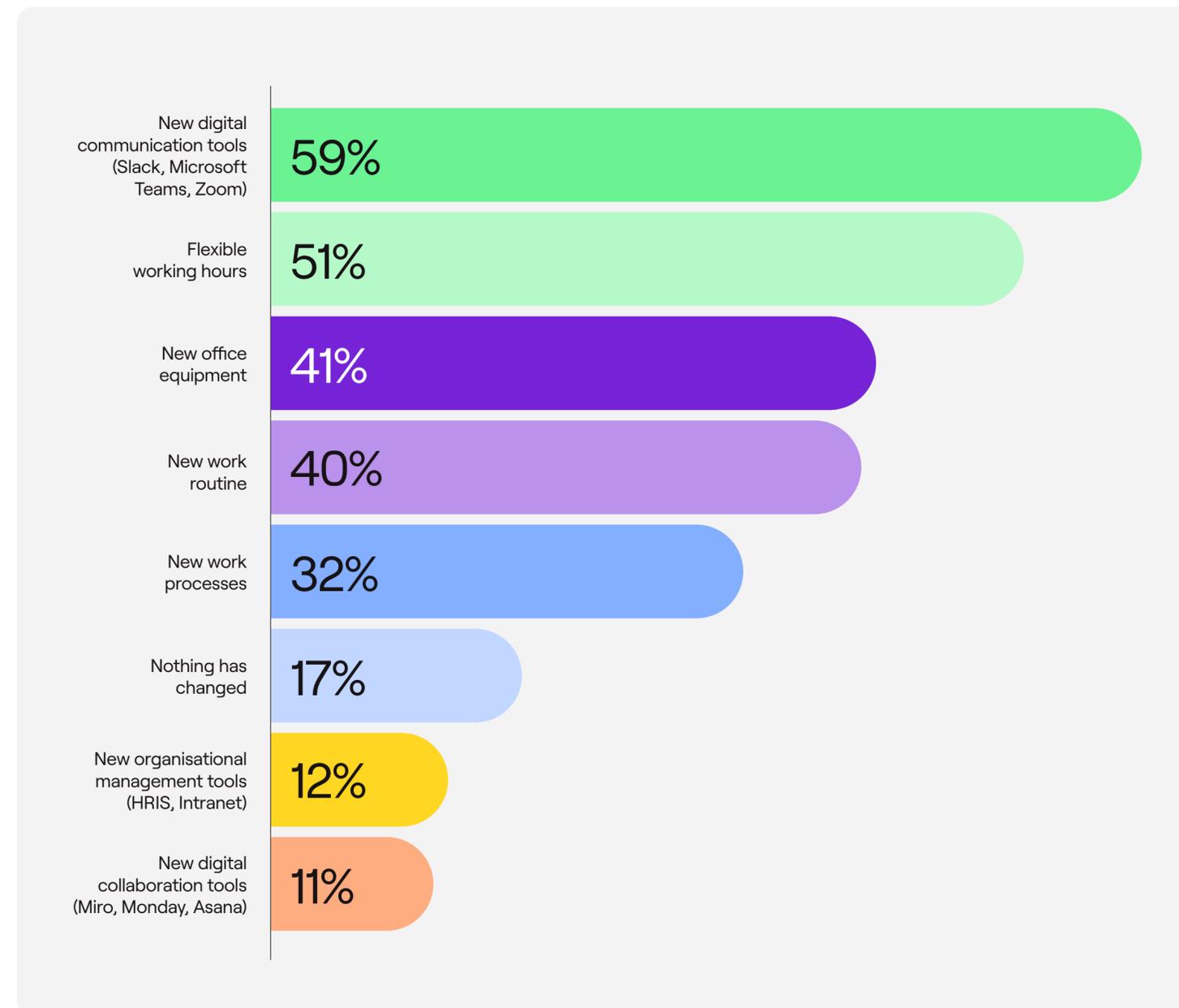
Generational Difference

Those aged 55+ are 23% less likely to be interested in remote working. 30% said they would probably not or never consider remote working in the future.

How has day-to-day working changed?

Remote working has come a long way in a year. After a rush into it in 2020, how has it evolved in 2021?

In which ways has your way of working changed?



Generational Difference

Younger people (18-34) were more likely to have experienced several changes.

23% of workers over 45 said they had experienced no changes at all.

What do we like about working from home?

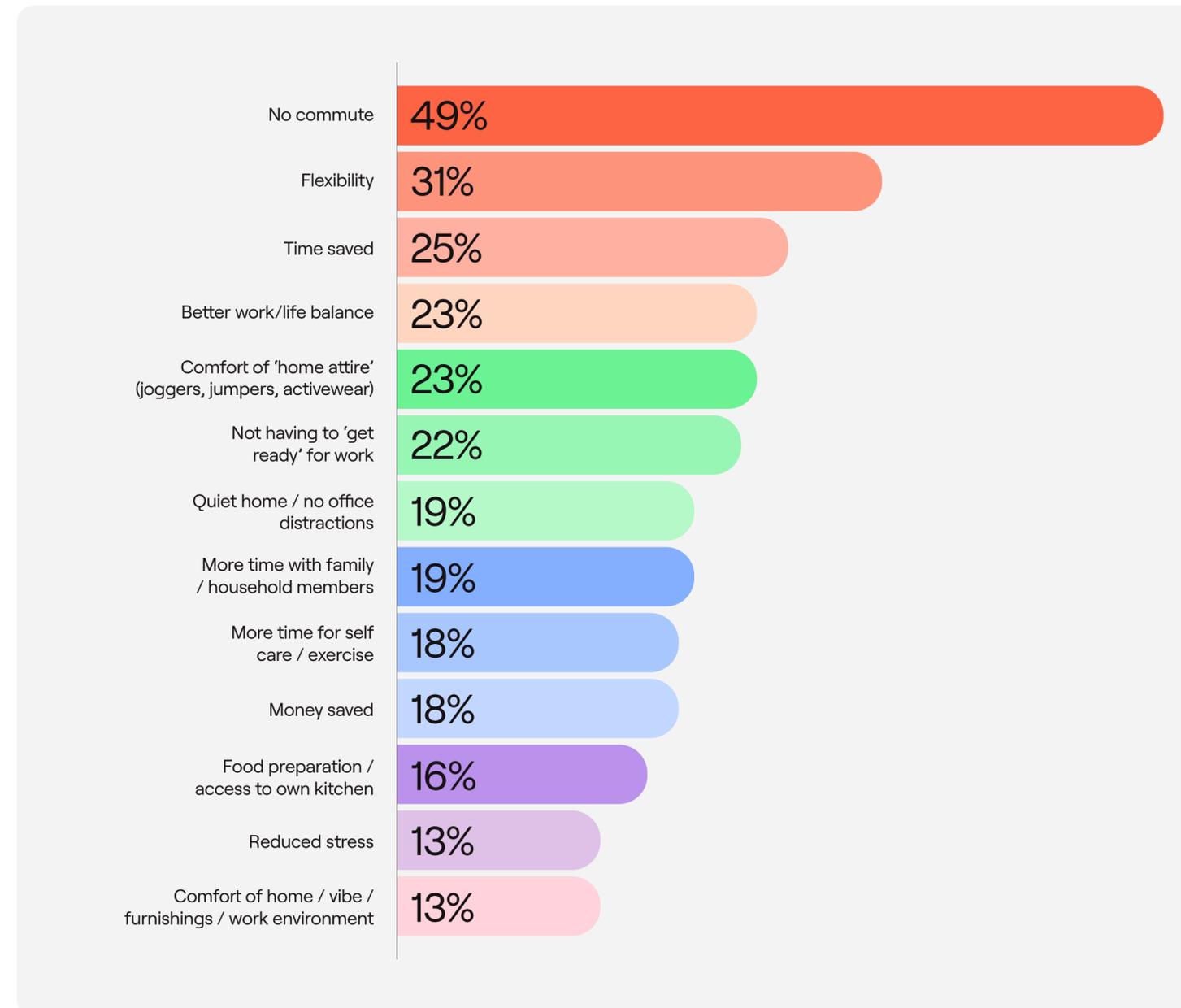
The top 3 things we like about working remotely are:

49% No commute

31% Flexibility

25% Time saved

List the top 3 things you do like about working remotely?



Other thoughts from our respondents:

"I have been amazed by how productive I am since working from home away from constant disruptions and distractions."

"Working from home started as a novel idea and a bad idea - how could I do it? But I have lived through it and now know no better way to work. Technology has made it not about the office is the place to work but work from anywhere is a real possibility."

"My cats like me being home :)"

What don't we like about working from home?

The top 3 things we don't like about working remotely are:

34%

Harder to "switch off"

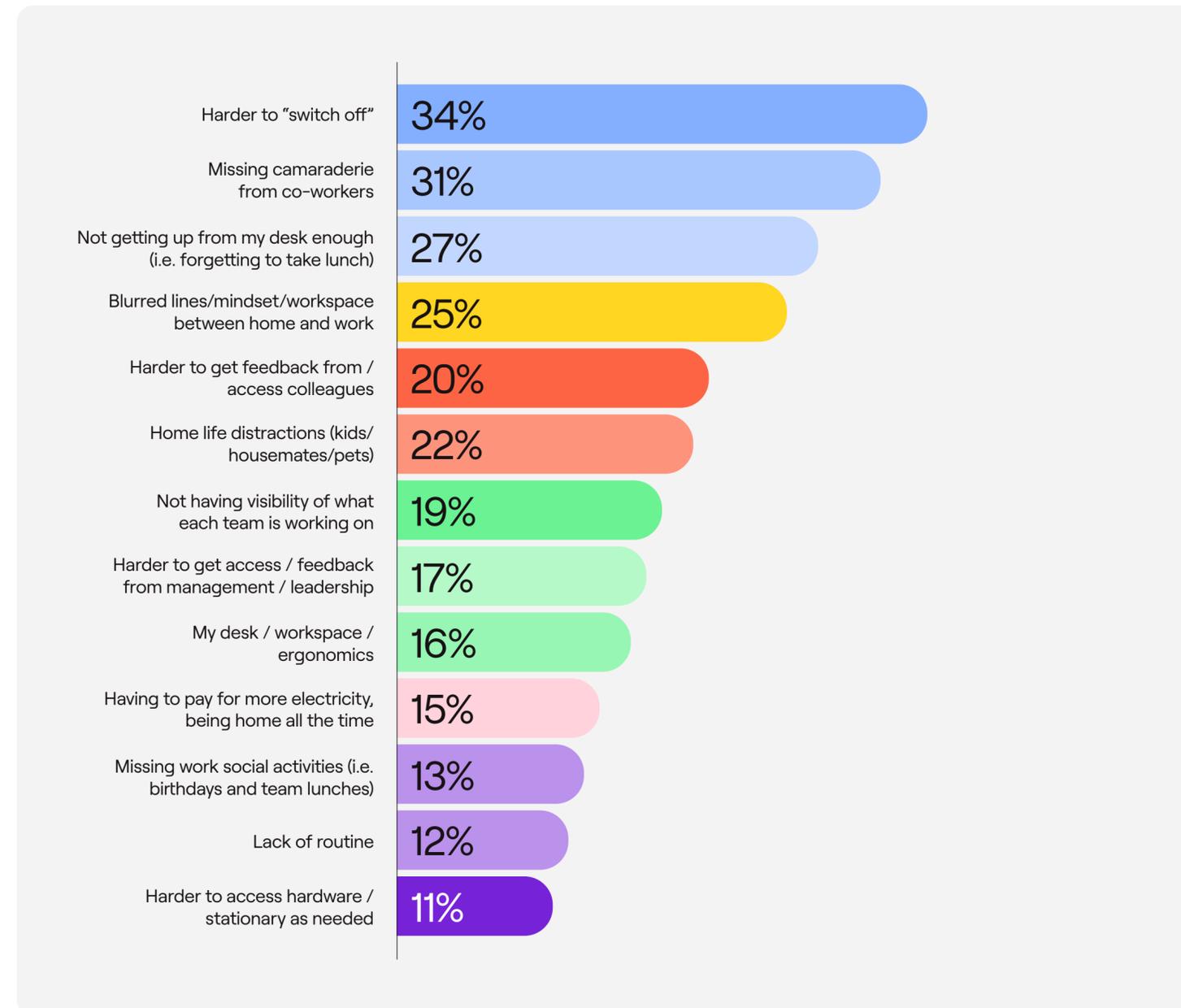
31%

Missing camaraderie from co-workers

27%

Not getting up from my desk enough

List the top 3 things you do not like about working remotely?



HR Tips

Do you think that your workers are finding it harder to 'switch off' when working from home?

This is a great moment for HR and leadership teams to step in and lead by example.

- Make it clear that leaders are taking holidays, just as anyone else would
- Do not reward people for working overtime on a consistent basis
- Have transparent conversations with your staff if you feel like they're becoming burnt out
- Encourage people to log off if they appear sick

What don't we like about the office?

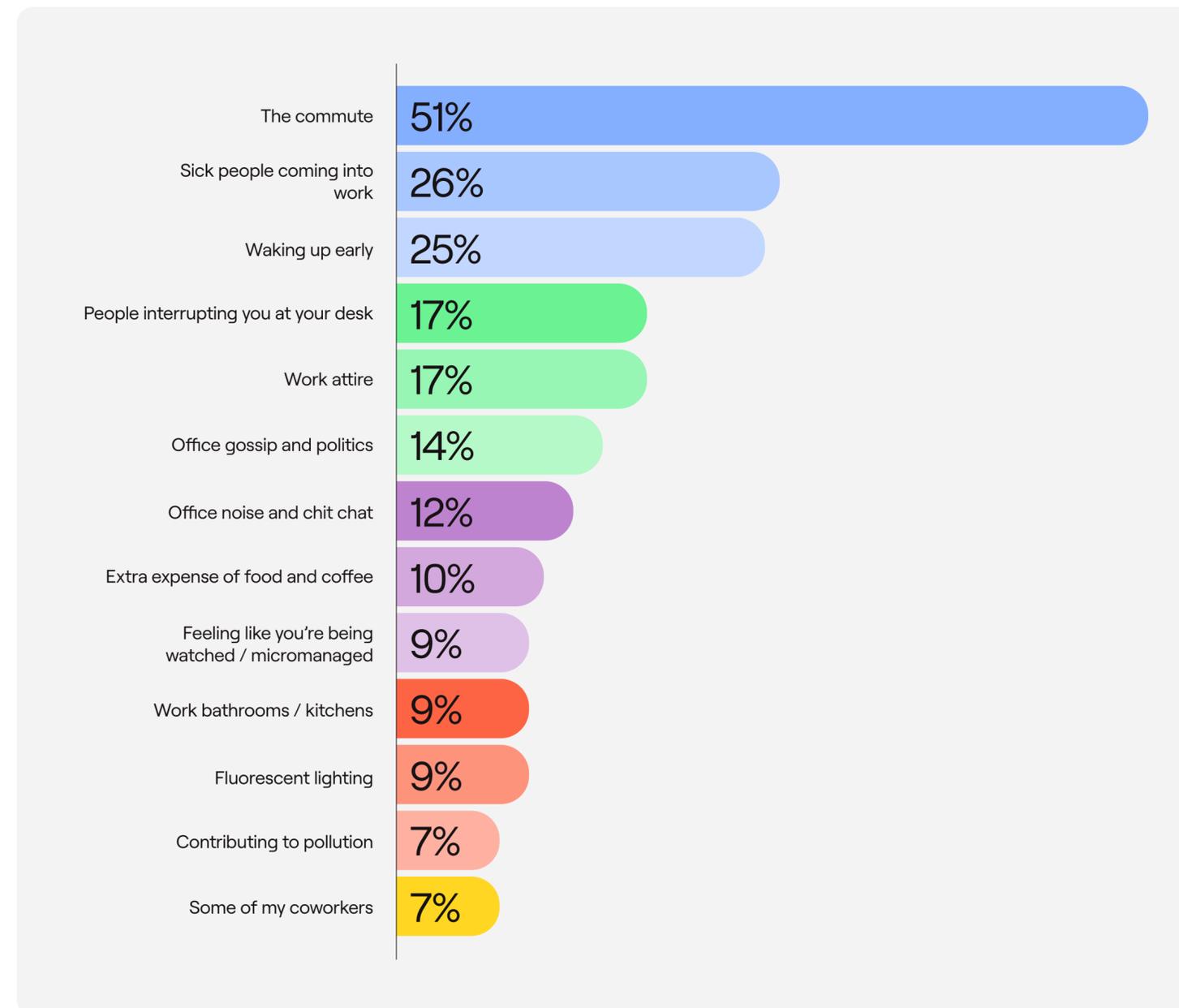
The top 3 most disliked elements of the office are:

51% The commute

26% Sick people coming into work

25% Waking up early

List the top 3 things you don't like about office working?



Bonus fact

What were our top 3 in 2020?

59% The commute

34% People interrupting you at your desk

28% Sick people coming into work

What do we miss about the office?

The top 3 most missed elements of the office are:

54%

Being able to easily speak to/ bounce ideas of coworkers

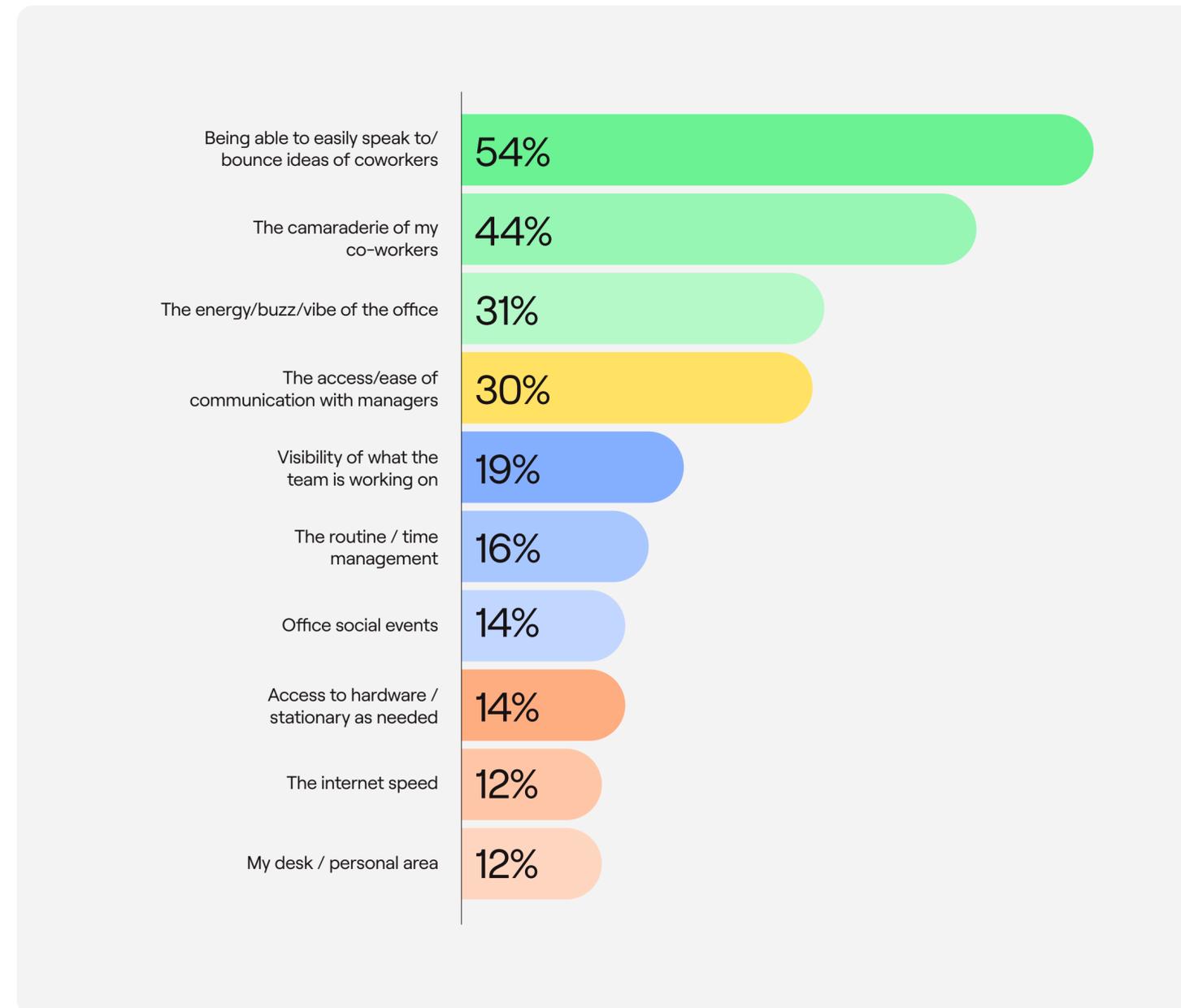
44%

The camaraderie of my co-workers

31%

The energy/ buzz/vibe of the office

List the top 3 things you do miss about office working



Other thoughts from our respondents:

“During the past 12 months I have been fortunate enough to be able to work in the office which was a life saver with 3 teenage boys, a husband and dog all at home fighting over the internet (the dog wasn’t).”

“Would go back to an office environment in a heartbeat. Really miss the interaction.”

What do remote workers want from their employers?

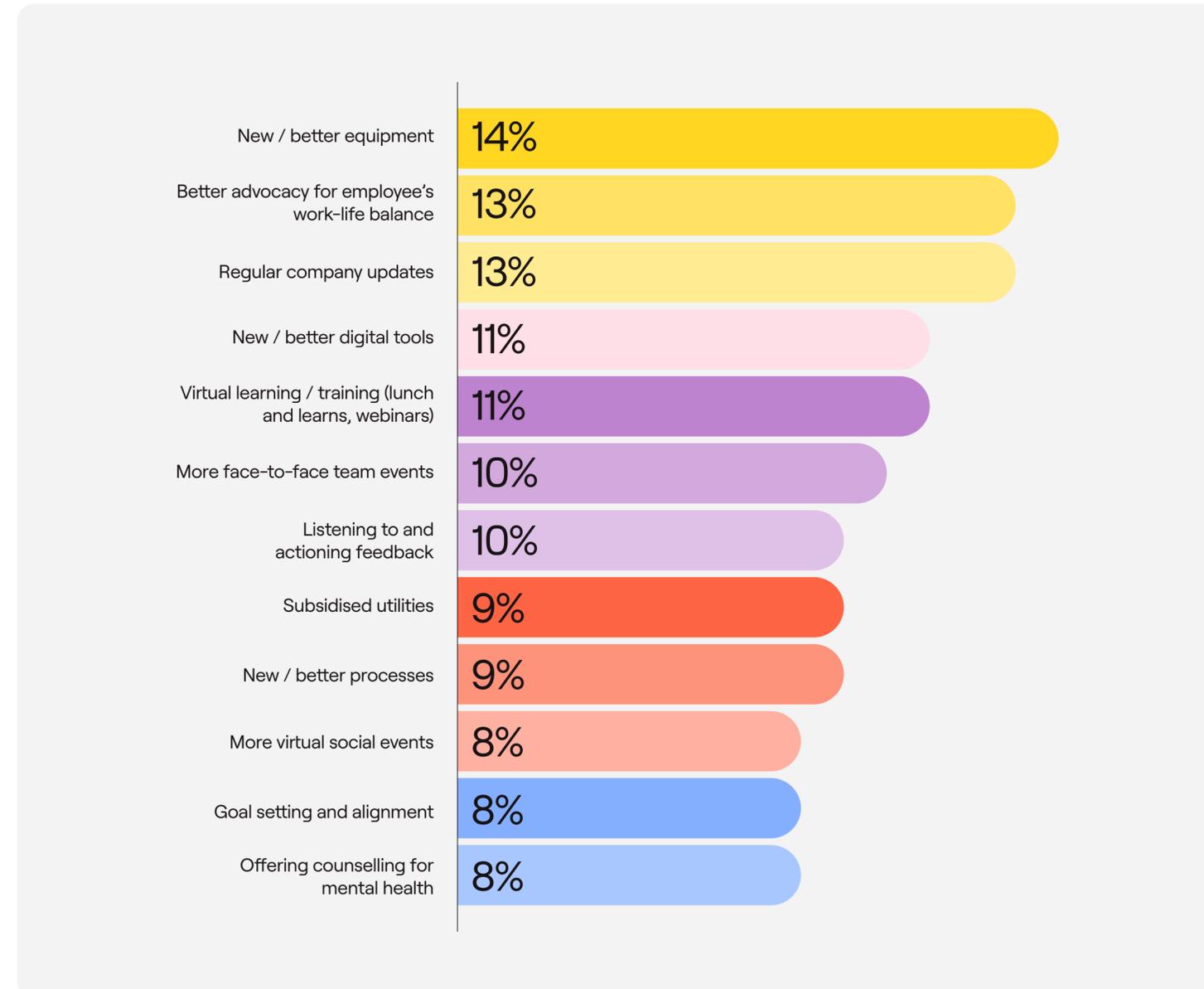
The top 3 types of support employees are seeking from their employers are:

14% New / better equipment

13% Better advocacy for employee's work-life balance

13% Regular company updates

What type(s) of support can your employer provide to make your remote work experience more enjoyable?



Other thoughts from our respondents:

"I like working from home but employers need to recognise that home office expenses need to be reimbursed. We are not provided with rent from the company for our space and on top of that they expect us to pay for all the overheads and consumables of a home office."

"I think working remotely is great for people with families, but young people need the office buzz to meet others and socialise and connect and learn from others. When a team is split though, it's hard to do this half and half. How do we create the office buzz for the people that want it?"

More thoughts from our respondents.

"Will never return to working full time in an office again. I'm much more productive and less stressed at home."

"Hard to pick 3 good things about remote working, I wanted to pick all of them!"

"Self-care should be a focus of each company especially those who have employees greatly affected by COVID lockdown and thus have to switch from office work setup to work from home."

"Working from home every day of the week is lonely, and it feels like your world becomes so much smaller. Work relationships also become more tense, as it's much harder to find purely social moments (grabbing lunch together, water cooler chats) that build relationships and balance the frustrations that come from meetings and projects."

"I have no intention of ever going back to the waste of life that is commuting to an arbitrary place at a set time to do exactly what I can do at home. The only reasons I go in occasionally are to meet a client or for a team dinner."

"My manager is anti home working. It seems to be due to an unfounded lack of trust. He uses technology to micromanage everything and wastes time every day on meetings with the whole team that cover details that are unnecessary."

"Let's keep working from home and not fall back into the old trap of just doing what we have always done."

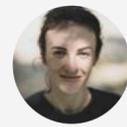
"Homeschooling made WFH harder - now it's great."

"Our WFH experience was pretty good and overall a great success."

Are you embracing remote working? Employment Hero can help.

Speak with one of our [small business specialists today](#).

Follow Employment Hero on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to be the first to know about future original research.



Mary Wilson
CEO & Co-Founder

Huge shout out to the incredibly hard working [@Anna Mae-Wong](#) ! She really went above and beyond with the Simpson project.



Barry Farou
Head of Technology

I'd like to give a huge shout out to [@Sarah Marks](#) ! She really helped me out at the last minute when we had a client presentation change a day out. Thank you!



Jamie Keegan
Software Developer

RECOGNITION



Amanda Keller
Values champion

Amanda is constantly smashing it, and is always there to support me as an amazing manager. Thank you for being such a good mentor and positive influence!

If you're looking for an all in one HR system that can assist with managing your remote team, Employment Hero is the dynamic tool you've been looking for.

Employment Hero can help your team stay engaged, motivated and strategically aligned in their goals wherever they are with:

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- Timesheets
- Leave management
- Access to the Employment Hero portal and app
- Happiness surveys
- Reward and recognition
- Custom surveys
- Learning management system
- Access to Discounts, Employment Hero's online marketplace with savings on thousands of everyday items
- OKRs (Objectives & Key Results)
- Employee Assistance Program (Counselling)

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