



# European Work Voices 2022/23

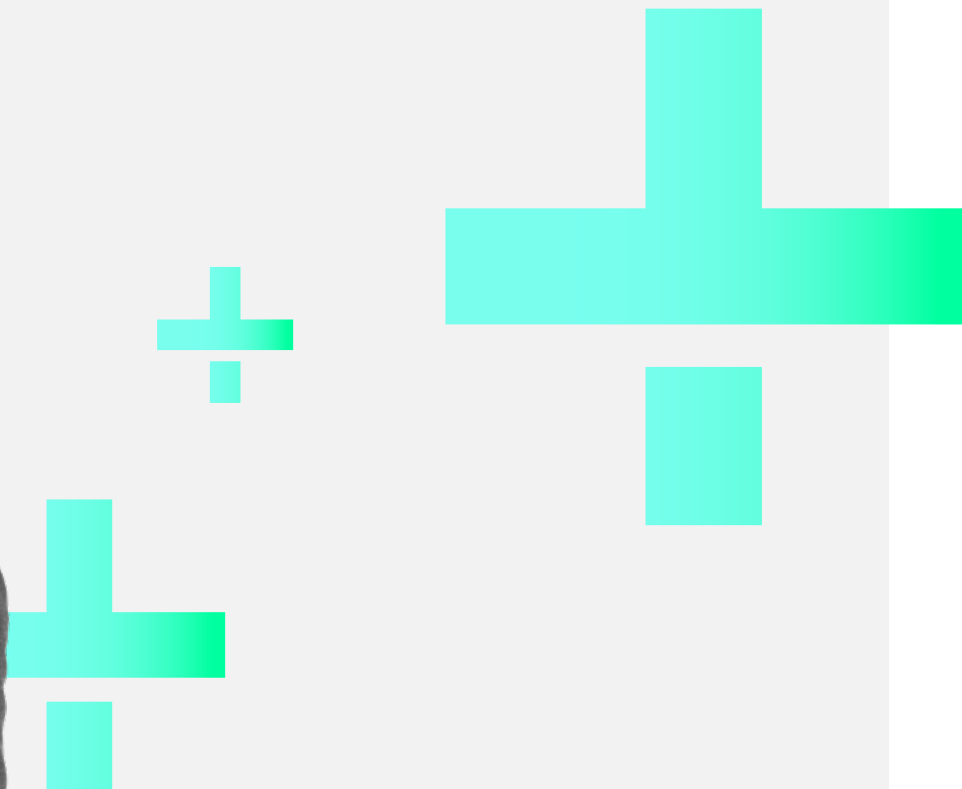
Discover what's driving  
candidates today

5,600+ workers  
8+ countries  
15+ Industries



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**Kelly®**

# Introduction

## How do people really see work today?

We live in turbulent times. The past few years have accelerated change in every corner of society, and the world of work is no exception. The pandemic. Economic instability. The rise of social justice issues. They have all contributed to a shifting work landscape that has transformed the way organisations everywhere engage and support their workforces.

## But how has constant disruption impacted workers and candidates?

We surveyed over 5,600 workers across Europe to uncover the hidden story of work in 2022/23. The voices of European workers from nearly every industry create a unique picture of work culture in flux – and understanding their expectations and experiences can empower businesses to build better strategies to find and keep hold of the people they need.

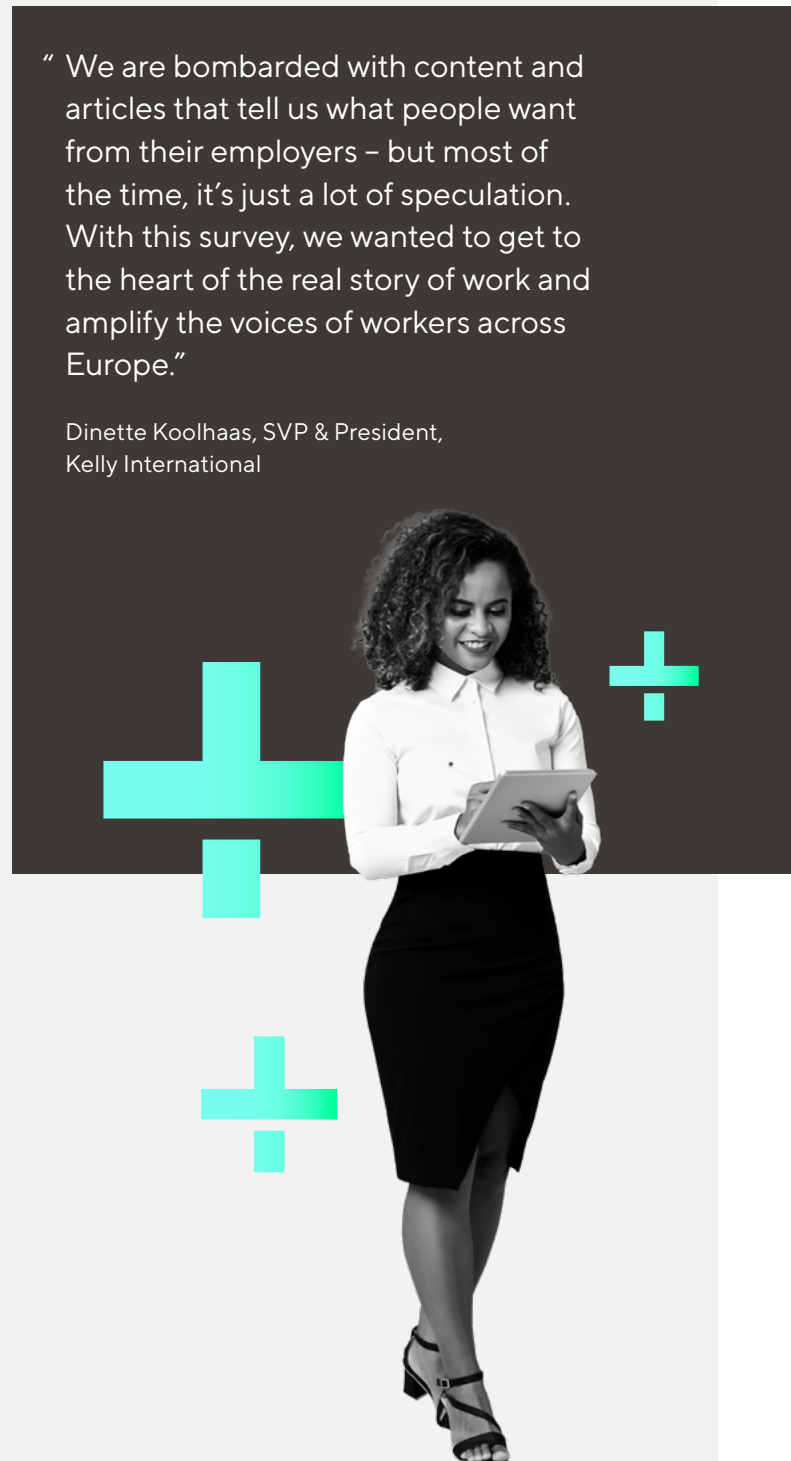
## In this guide, we break our findings and insights into four key categories:

- **Meaning Matters**
- **The Future View**
- **The Remote Revolution**

Keep reading to discover the story of work in 2022/23.

“ We are bombarded with content and articles that tell us what people want from their employers – but most of the time, it’s just a lot of speculation. With this survey, we wanted to get to the heart of the real story of work and amplify the voices of workers across Europe.”

Dinette Koolhaas, SVP & President,  
Kelly International

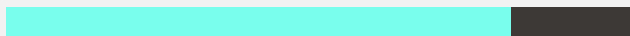


# Meaning Matters: Overview

**Meaningful work is work that increases satisfaction and happiness, provides a sense of purpose, and often has a positive impact on individuals, the community, and the wider world.**

**How important is it to you to perform meaningful work?  
Scale 0-10**

**8.7**



All workers want to do meaningful work, and it transcends age, gender, type of work, and culture. The good news is that most workers are engaged in meaningful work – at least some of the time.

**Does your current job allow you to perform meaningful work?**

Some or all of the time: **71%**

None of the time: **29%**



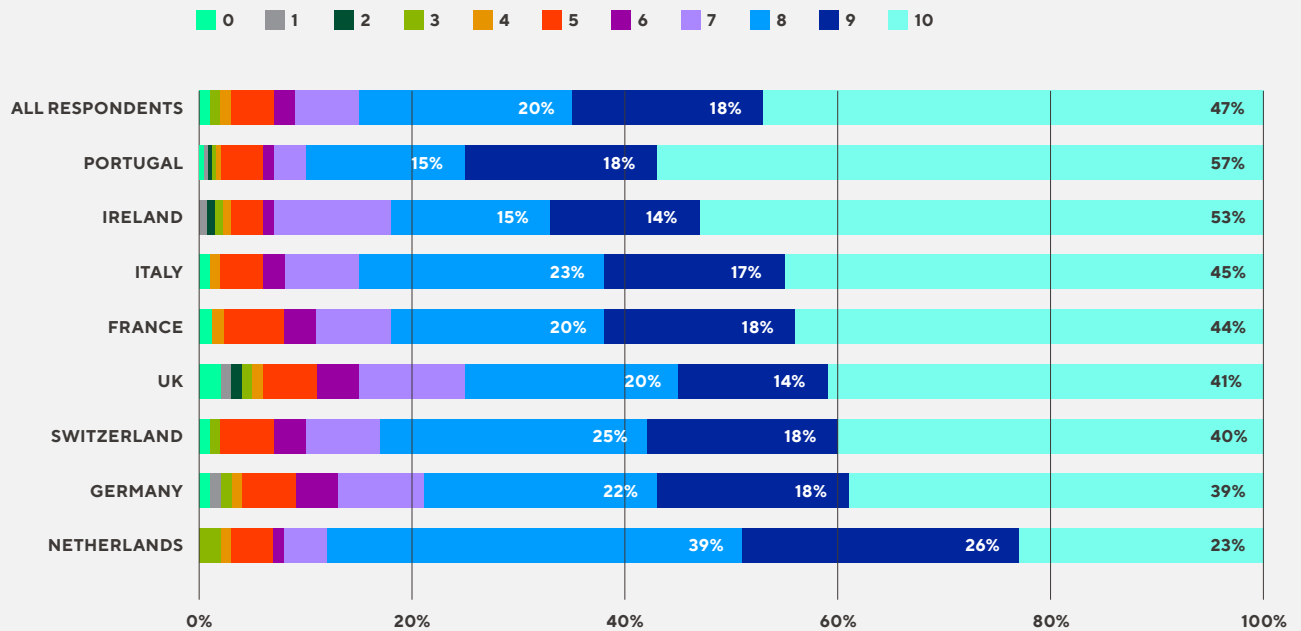
**Do independent workers find more meaning?**

Interestingly, freelancers report the highest levels of meaning at work – 86% say their current role allows them to do meaningful work.

**Would you take a pay cut from meaning?**

9 out of 10 career professionals in a 2017 BetterUp survey would sacrifice **23%** of their future earnings – **\$21,000** a year on average – for “**work that is always meaningful**”.

**The need for meaning varies by location.  
This is how workers across Europe value meaningful work from 0-10**



**“Respect and think about me as a human,  
not a robot.”**

UK Respondent, Retail & Consumer Industry



# Meaning Matters:

## The meaning problem

Stand up for good people.

### Does your industry have a meaning problem?

Although nearly all the workers we surveyed said meaningful work was important to them, some industries are falling behind the rest when it comes to offering meaningful work.

These are the industries where the biggest proportion of workers said they **didn't enjoy meaningful work**:

**Retail and consumer products - 39%**

**Administration and support - 39%**

**Customer service - 38%**

**Banking and financial services - 34%**

**Sales - 32%**

On the other end of the scale HR, and R&D lead the way on industries where workers are **MOST likely to say they enjoy meaningful work**:

**HR & Recruitment Industry - 89%**

**Hospitality and Tourism - 83%**

**Science - 81%**

**Education & Training - 79%**

**IT & Tech - 79%**

Percentage of respondents that said they enjoyed meaningful work some or all of the time.

# Meaning Matters:

## Meaning demographics

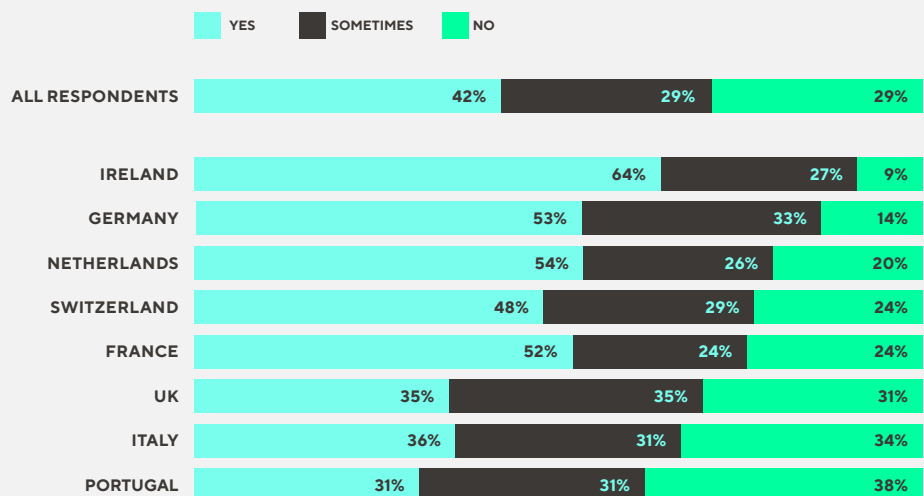
### Inside Meaning Demographics

#### Meaning changes with geography

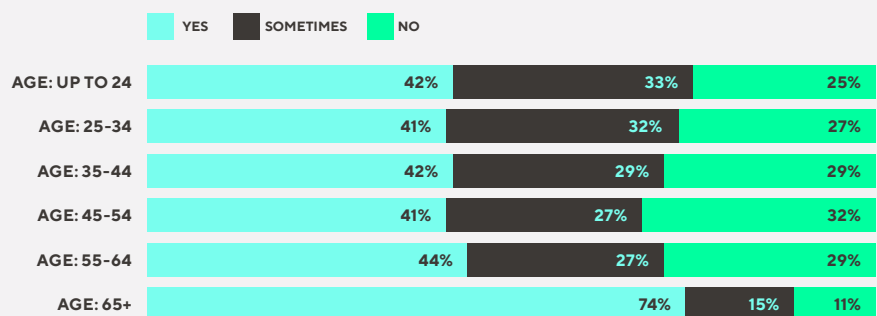
There are big differences in meaningful work by location. **62%** of workers in Portugal find meaning in their work, compared to **91%** in Ireland.



#### Does your current job allow you to perform meaningful work?

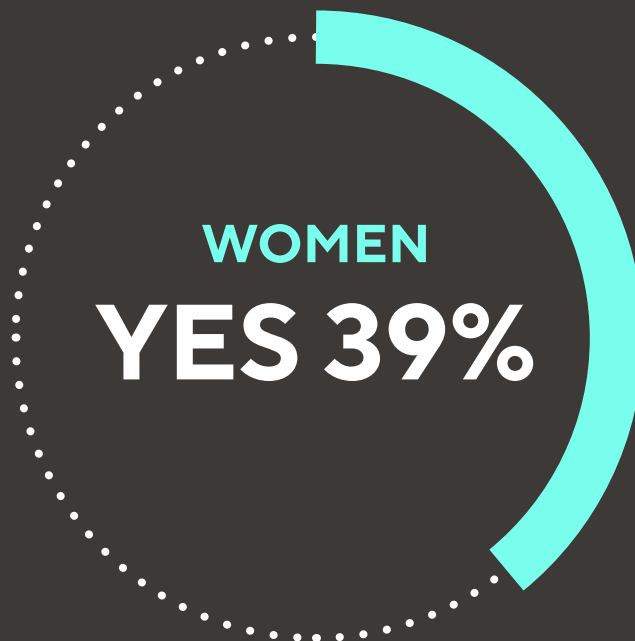
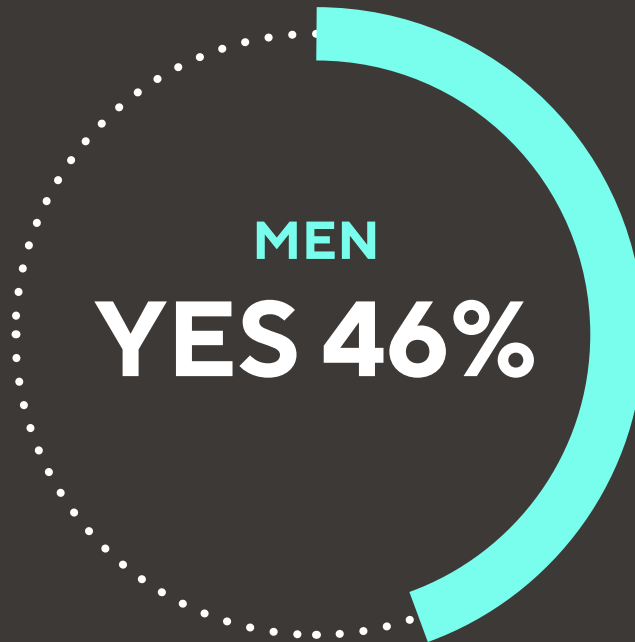


#### And grows with age...



Interestingly, men tend to find more meaning in their work than women...

**Does your current job allow  
you to perform meaningful work?**





## Meaning Matters: What is meaning?

### What does meaning look like?

Most people want more than work from a pay cheque. That's nothing new. But what does meaning really mean for workers? And with **3 in 10** workers (29%) saying that don't enjoy meaningful work, how can organisations do more?



### How does your current job add meaning to your life?

Grow and develop myself

**36%**

Connect to others

**29%**

Support people and the community

**24%**

Share knowledge

**19%**

Feel Empowered

**19%**

Create New Ideas

**14%**

Protect our planet

**4%**

**“ It gives me the opportunity to work relatively independently and to be able to make a good living from my work (together with my family).”**

Respondent from Switzerland



# Meaning Matters:

## Value me as a whole person



### Value me as a whole person

The top action businesses can take to turn up meaning according to our European Work Voices 2022/23 survey was to value them as a whole person. **45% said this was the most important way to add value to their work.**



#### But this need shifted amongst different groups of respondents:

- It grew (51%) for the 29% of respondents currently unable to derive meaning from their work.
- It was less important for respondents from the Netherlands (26%) and Ireland (33%).
- It was also less important to freelancers and independent workers (14%) than to permanent (47%) or temporary employees (48%).
- It was also less important to those working from home (39%) than those working on-site (48%).

# Meaning Matters:

## The secret to turning up meaning at work

### The secret to turning up meaning at work

Employers who offer meaningful work are likely to find it easier to attract, retain, and motivate employees. **The BetterUp Labs' "Meaning and Purpose at Work"** survey found that professionals who view their work as "very meaningful" put in an extra hour of work per week and generate an extra \$9,078 in output per year.

But meaningful work is so personal that it can be difficult for organisations to take concrete action to create it. Our respondents said that valuing them as a whole person (45%) was the single most important way to add meaning to their role, followed by being involved in projects outside of their specialism (25%) and having more leadership responsibilities (25%). Here are 3 ways to create more meaningful experiences for employees based on key themes across our research:

1. **Focus on development and empower employees to grow new skills.**
2. **Provide opportunities for workers to collaborate across business areas.**
3. **Offer stable and long-lasting employment that allows workers to effectively support their lifestyles.**

**"Give me a stable and lasting job, to be able to start long-term projects, both at work, training, and private life level."**

Respondent from Italy

## How could things be improved to add value to your current work?

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Value me as a whole person **45%**

Being involved in projects outside my specialism **25%**

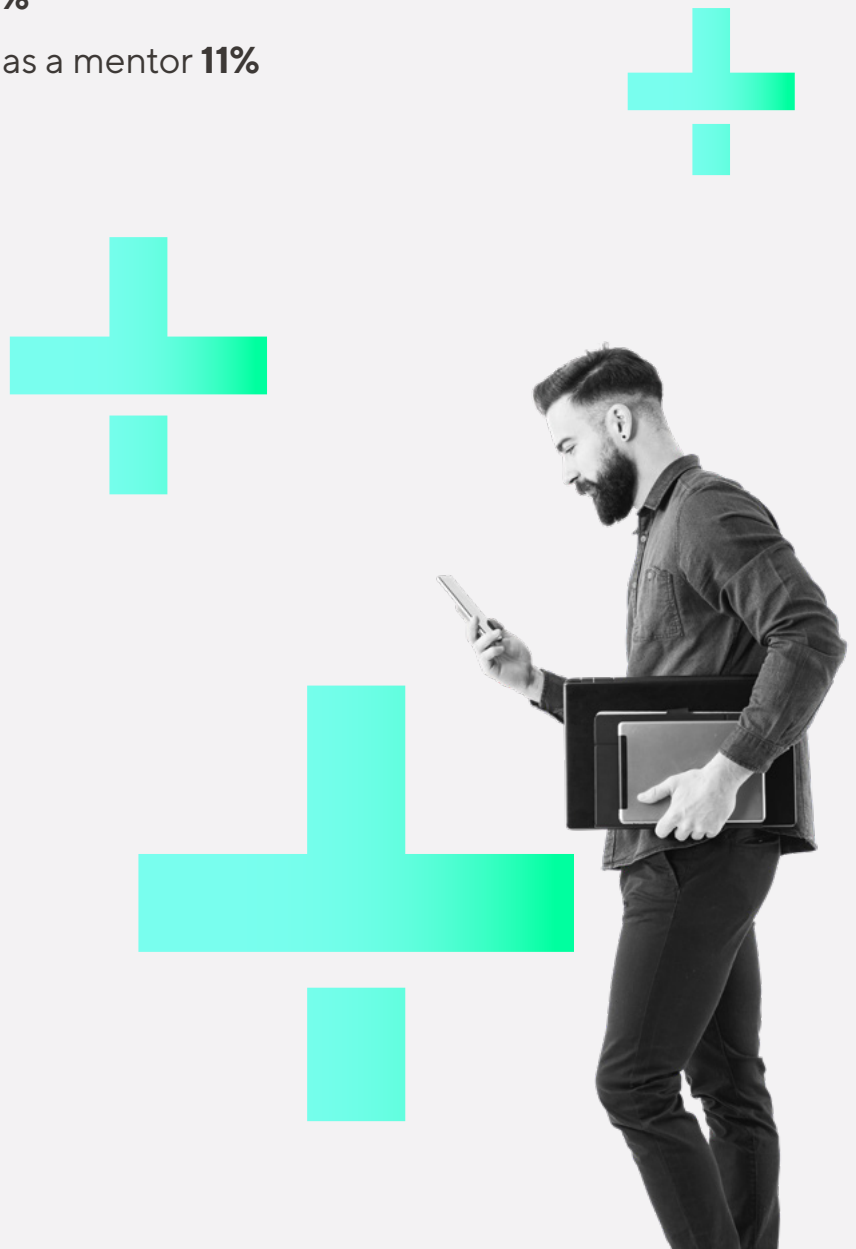
Having more leadership and responsibilities **25%**

Offering more opportunities to collaborate with others **21%**

Giving me more freedom to be creative **18%**

Taking part in CSR projects **14%**

Having the opportunity to act as a mentor **11%**





# The Future View: Overview



## The Future View

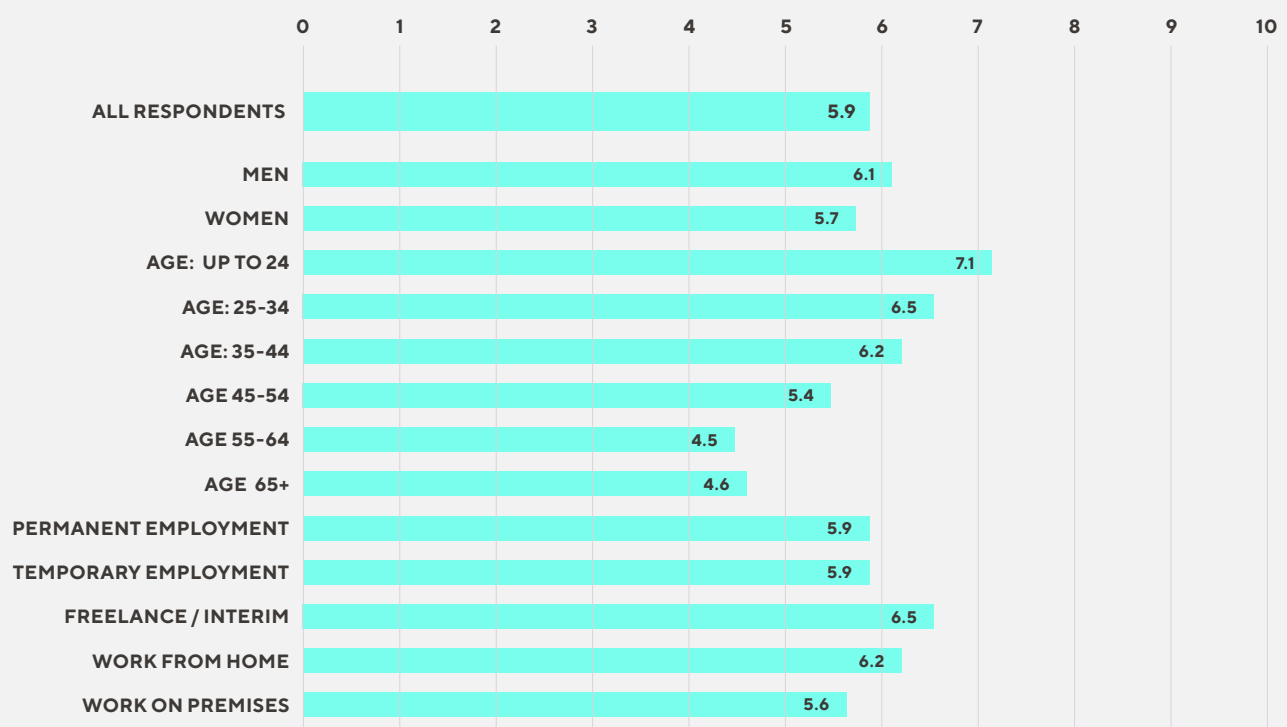
During turbulent times, it's tough to know what the future might hold. Despite this, career confidence levels amongst survey respondents remained fairly high – with those under 24 (7.1) and Irish workers (7.2) feeling the most optimistic about what's to come. While freelancers (6.5) are also noticeably more positive than their permanent (5.9) colleagues. No one has a crystal ball, but confidence in the future is a positive sign for workers and employers in an uncertain economic climate.



## Do you feel confident that you will advance your career in the next five years?

Average rating out of 10:

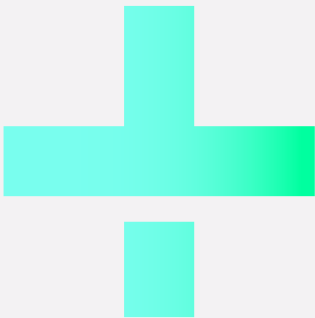
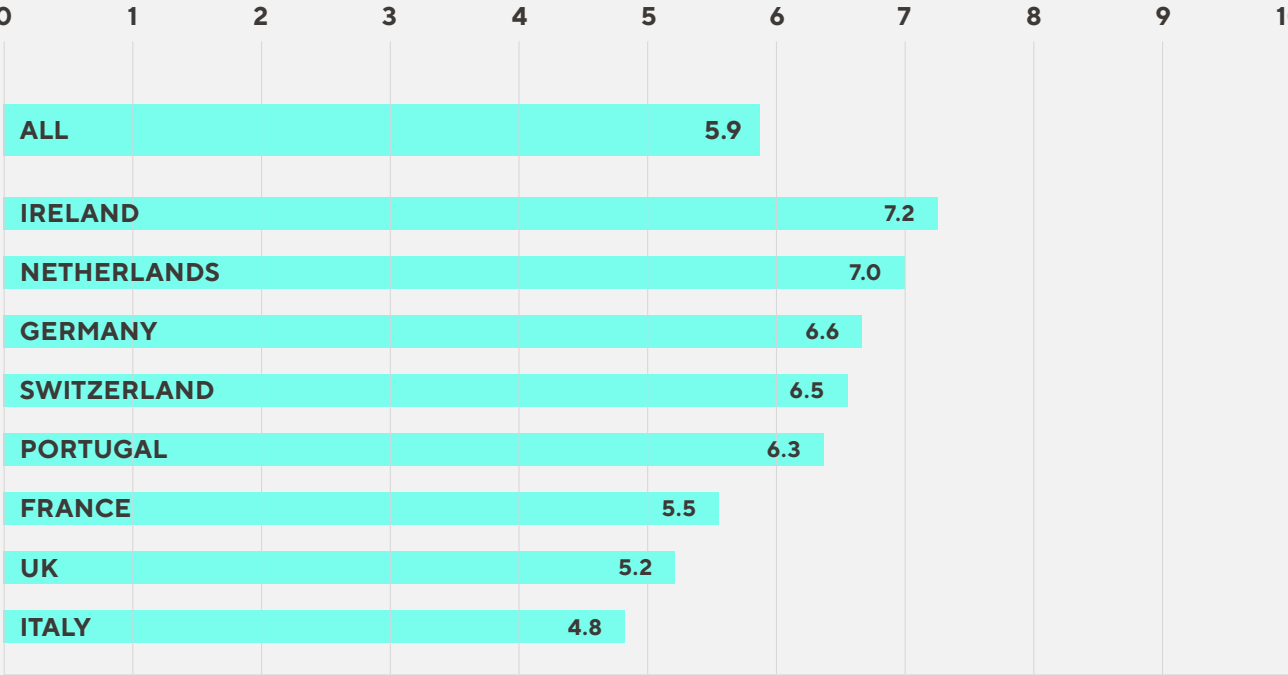
Prospects of career advancement in the next five years.





Do you feel confident that you will  
advance your career in the next five years?

Average rating out of 10:  
Prospects of career advancement in the next five years, by country.



## The Future View: Digital skills



### The skills of the future

Digital skills are essential for the future of work, and our European Work Voices 2022 respondents are well ahead of this trend. Workers across all locations and occupations felt strongly that they would need to develop new skills to prepare for the future of work, rating it 8.7 on a scale of 0-10.

Digital literacy (46%) and emotional intelligence (41%) came out top as most-important future skills, although remote and on-site workers ranked things slightly differently – with WFH professionals ranking technology skills more highly than their in-house colleagues. (44% vs. 37%). This could mean that organisations need to look again at on-site tech skills training.

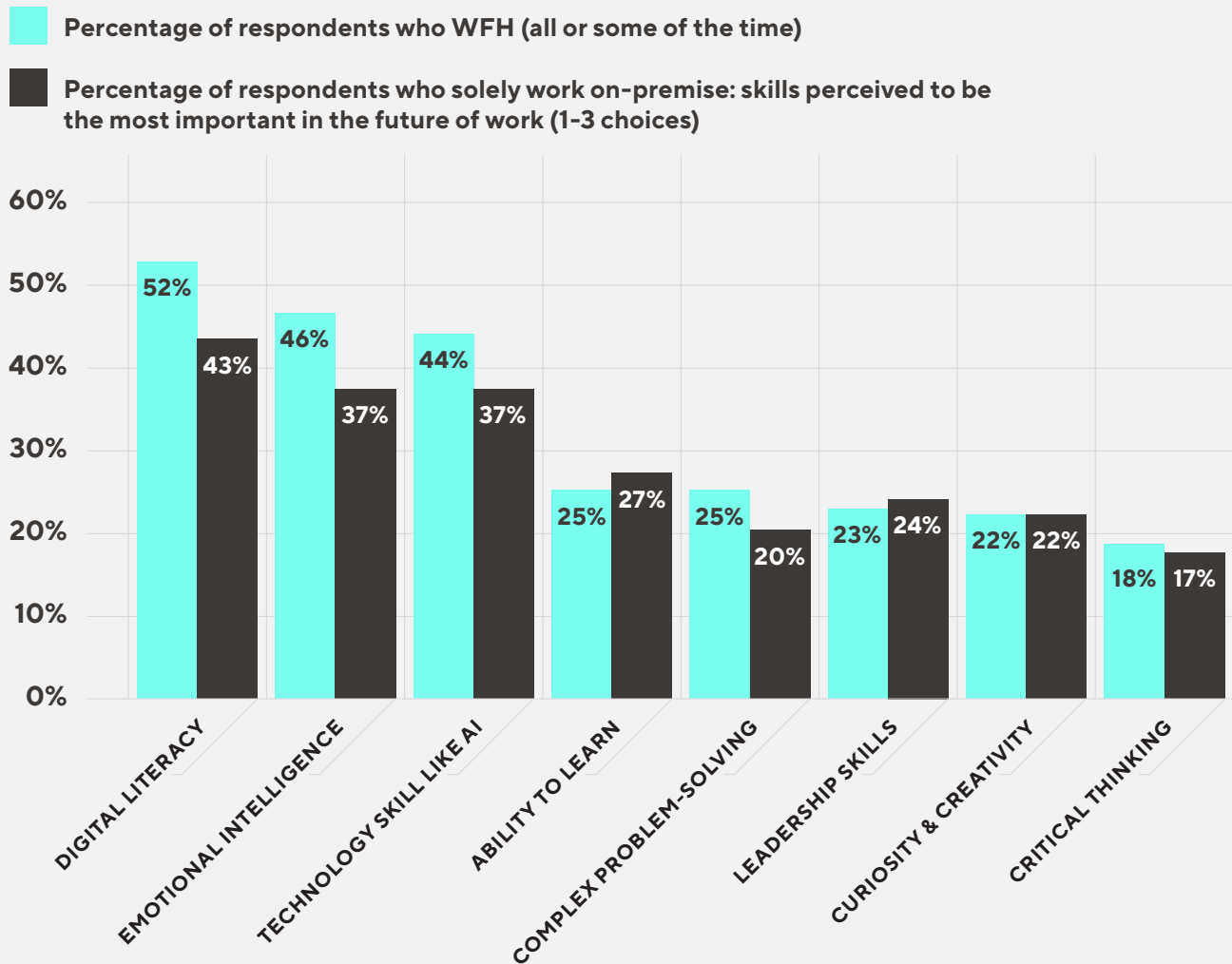
**76%** of businesses say that a lack of digital skills would affect the profitability of their business <sup>1</sup>

**88%** of young people say that digital skills will be essential for their career <sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> [Disconnected? Exploring the digital skills gap – WorldSkills UK, Learning and Work Institute, & Enginuity](#)

## Which skills do you think will be most important in the future?



## The Future View: The talent exodus

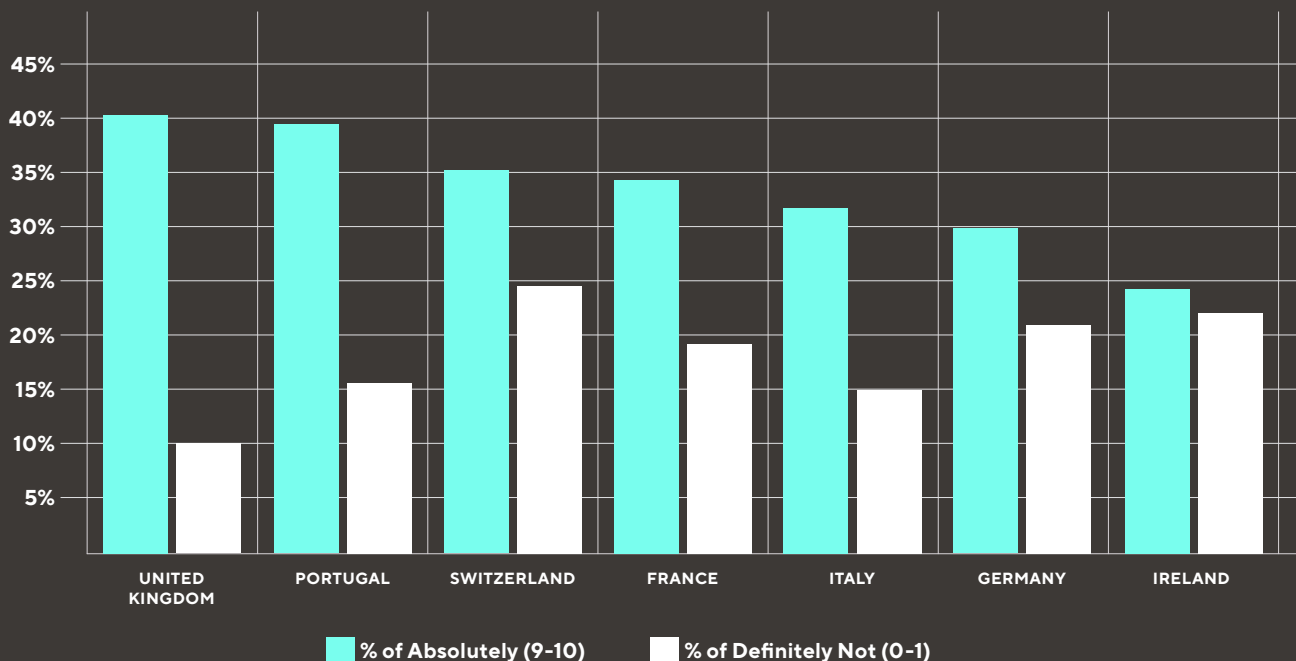
### The talent exodus

Many of our respondents thought it was more likely than not that they would change jobs in the next 12 months, with workers in the UK the most confident about making the leap. But in a competitive talent marketplace, is there anything that organisations can do to stem the flow of skilled workers?

**“It’s highly competitive out there right now, but great workers will always want to work for great companies. By focusing on employee engagement, upskilling and developing current workers and – perhaps most important of all – rewarding and recognising great work – leaders can stop their best talent heading out of the door.”**

Dinette Koolhaas, SVP & President,  
Kelly International

### Do you expect to change your job in the next 12 months?



**Worried about retention?**

**Here are 5 ways to keep hold of skilled staff for longer:**

- 1. Recognise good work and be vocal in your praise.**

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- 2. Offer regular development opportunities for workers to grow their skills.**

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- 3. Gather honest feedback – and really listen to what employees are telling you.**

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- 4. Promote an industry-leading work-life balance.**

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- 5. Ensure benefits and compensation are competitive.**

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# The Remote Revolution: Overview

## The Remote Revolution

Remote work made headlines around the world over the last couple of years as the global health crisis saw uncertain employers take the plunge on off-site work. And despite a general easing of pandemic restrictions, remote work remains popular with workers – the [GitLab 2021 Remote Work Report](#) found that 52% of respondents would leave a co-located company for a remote role.

Today, it's still a hot topic – with fierce debate around the benefits (and potential disadvantages) of hybrid and remote working. Our European Work Voices 2022 survey found that remote work opportunities differ widely from country to country, even though the positive impacts of remote work outweigh the negatives.

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# 39%

Of all respondents work from home some or all of the time.

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# 57%

Of remote workers say they have a better work-life balance.

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# 14%

Of remote workers say they struggle to switch off.

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# 45%

Of remote workers say they feel relaxed and happier.

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# 28%

Of remote workers say they end up working longer hours than they would do in the office.

## Do you work from home?

The UK and Germany are leading the way on home working, with 55% and 54% of respondents respectively working from home at least some of the time. Meanwhile, Ireland has a WFH rate of only 19%.

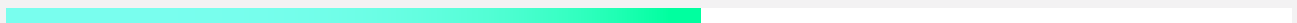
**ALL RESPONDENTS 39%**



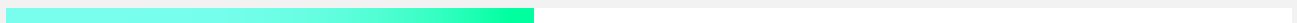
**UK 55%**



**GERMANY 54%**



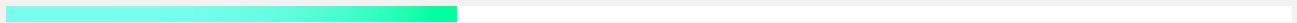
**ITALY 41%**



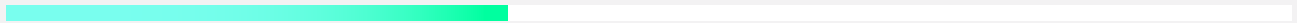
**PORTUGAL 36%**



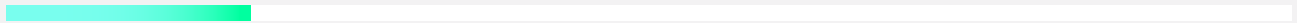
**SWITZERLAND 35%**



**FRANCE 39%**



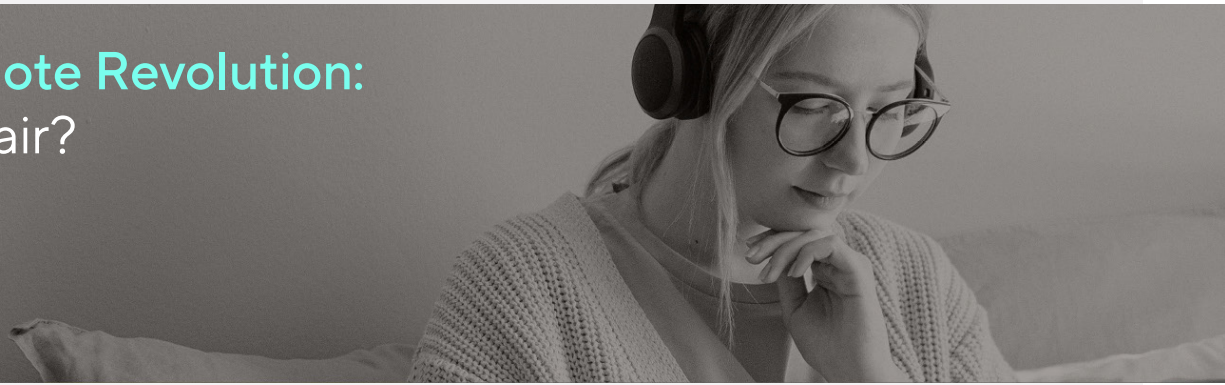
**IRELAND 19%**



**“ It does give my home less of a relaxed feeling and more of a professional feeling, but it also allows me to have more of a life outside of work.”**

UK Respondent, Sales Industry

# The Remote Revolution: Is WFH fair?



## Is WFH fair?

**The playing field is not always equal when it comes to remote work. Workers may find they have more or less access to remote work, depending on the type of work they do, where they are based, and what industry they support.**

## Is remote work increasing inequality?

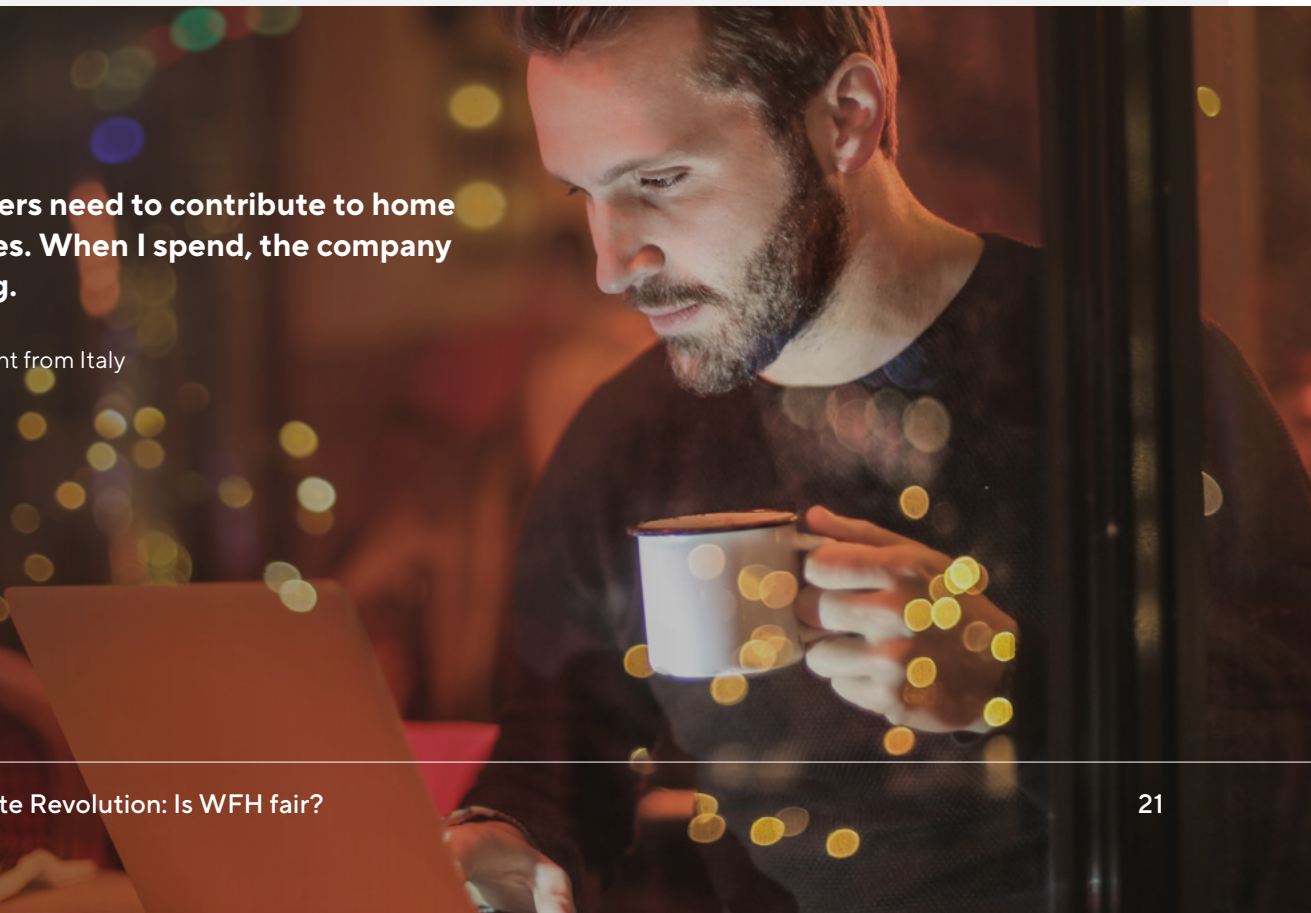
A 2020 academic study by economists at the Booth School of Business examined 800 occupations to find out how many could be done remotely. Around 37% of roles had the potential to go remote, but these tended to be white-collar, well-paid roles. In fact, these remote jobs accounted for 46% of all wages. The research also found that lower-income economies have a smaller share of jobs that can be done at home, and highlighted the risk of a growing remote shift leaving some people behind.

## What's the cost of home working?

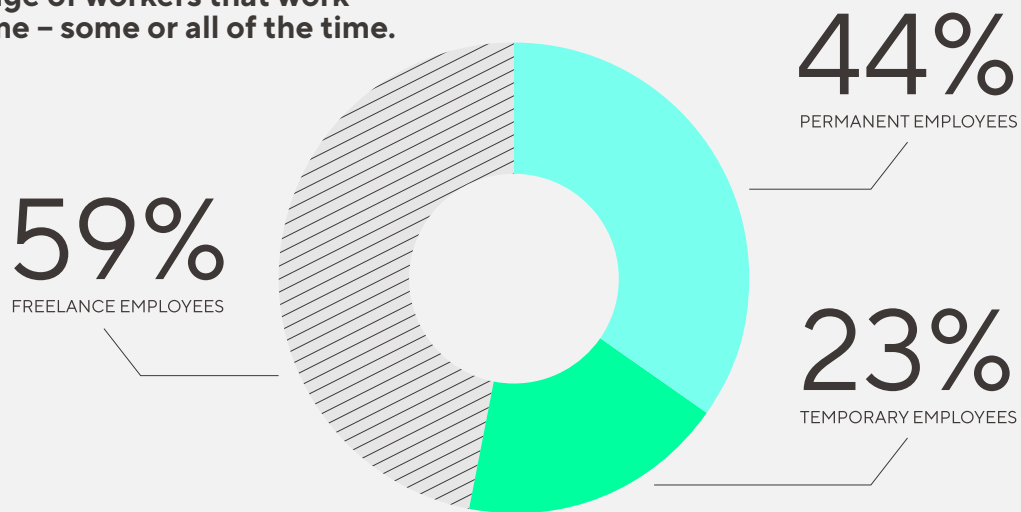
With rising cost of living impacting countries across the continent, it's unsurprising that many of our respondents also highlighted concerns about home working expenses – particularly the cost of utilities.

**“ Employers need to contribute to home expenses. When I spend, the company is saving.**

Respondent from Italy

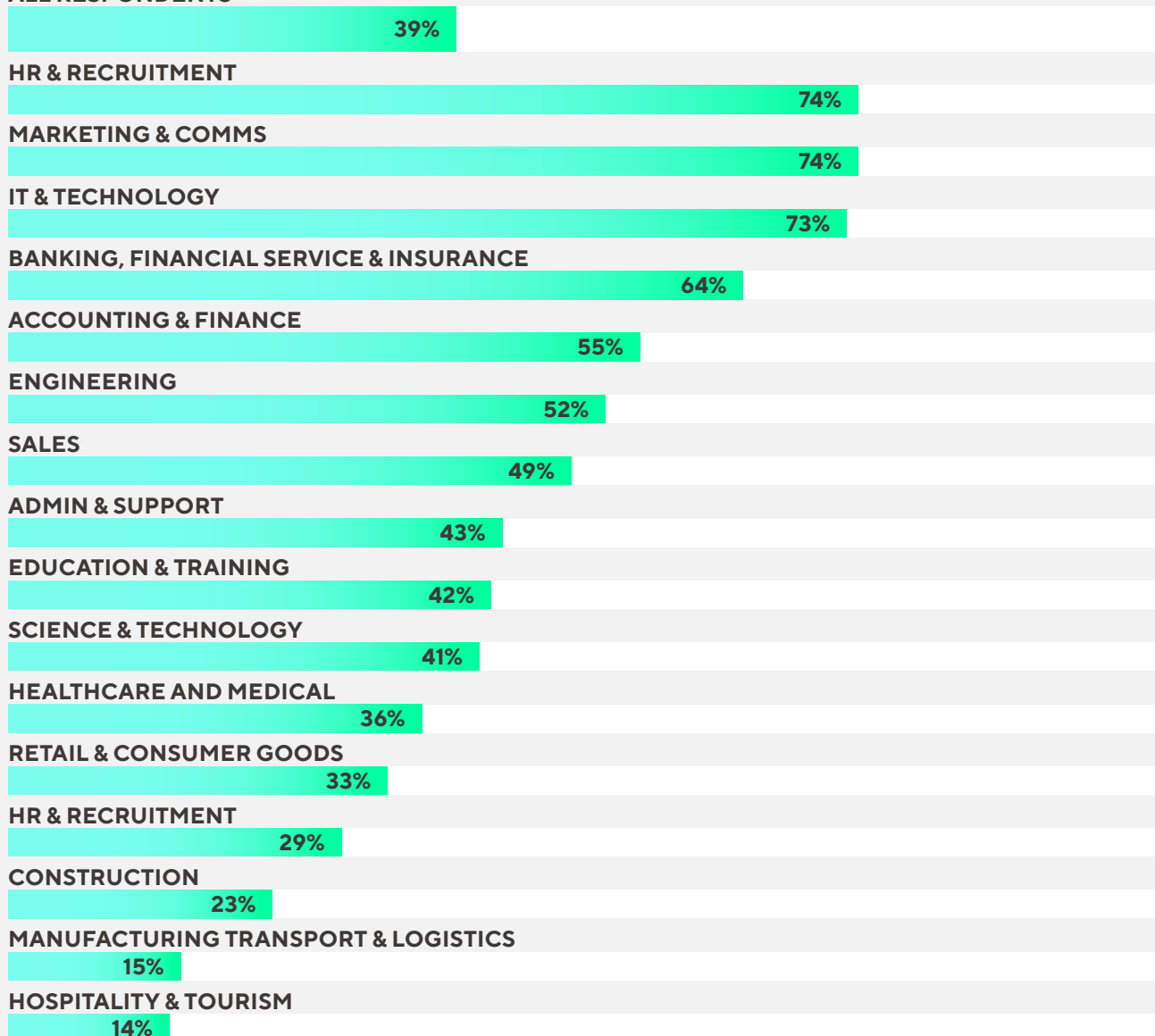


**Percentage of workers that work from home – some or all of the time.**



**Percentage of workers that work from home – some or all of the time.**

**ALL RESPONDENTS**





# The Remote Revolution:

## Making remote work



### How can organisations make remote work?

The home working revolution is already here, and organisations can't turn back the clock on remote work. This means finding ways to support remote and hybrid work that serve both workers and businesses.

Surprisingly, technology was top of the wish list for remote workers in our survey – with **45%** asking for better access to remote tools and technology, and just **20%** requesting regular, in-person support.

### What additional support would make remote working more productive/better for you?

BETTER ACCESS TO REMOTE TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY

**45%**

BETTER ONLINE TOOLS TO VISUALISE AND CONTROL WORKLOADS

**32%**

STRONGER GUIDELINES ON WORKING HOURS AND PRACTICES TO ENSURE EMPLOYEES GET PROPER DOWNTIME

**32%**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

**28%**

EFFECTIVE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

**28%**

REGULAR IN PERSON SUPPORT

**20%**

**“ This is a genie we can't put in the bottle – and it's important to realise that this isn't a 'remote work = good', 'office = bad' situation. It's about recognising that every worker and every business is different and has unique needs. A flexible, forward-thinking approach that moves beyond bias and assumption is the best way to create remote work that works for everyone.”**


Dinette Koolhaas,  
SVP & President, Kelly International

**“ Stronger guidelines on working hours and practices would ensure employees get proper downtime.”**

Respondent from the Netherlands







## The Remote Revolution: Wrap up

### Wrap up

#### Workers are talking. Are you listening?

In a competitive talent market, many organisations are looking at innovative ways to attract and retain talent. But to really understand what workers want, you have to ask them.

#### The search for meaning

One of the most compelling findings from our European Work Voices 2022/23 research was that workers want to be 'valued as a whole person' (45%). This means businesses have to see people, not assets – and offer truly meaningful work that celebrates contributions from all types of workers.

#### What does this mean for the future of work?

We've seen from our survey that most workers are optimistic about their career future. Employers can harness that optimism by providing clear opportunities to grow and develop within a role – standing still in the same job for years and years is simply not enough for most workers today. Businesses should also focus on helping people to access meaningful work, offering flexibility, and building inclusive cultures where innovation can flourish.

We may be living in turbulent times, but the future of work is bright for those organisations that are willing to have honest and open conversations with the workers that support them.

### **European Work Voices 2022/23**

To create European Work Voices 2022/23, we surveyed more than 5,600 workers across more than 8 European countries via an online, anonymous survey. These respondents came from almost every industry and seniority level to create a picture of work today that includes voices from all types of workers – including temporary and freelance workers.

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