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# Hybrid working in Scotland

How does it look now?  
How do employers get it right?

September 2022





# Hybrid Working Now

Hybrid working is a now very familiar term. But it's vague too. It's become a catch-all phrase for a wide range of location-based working patterns.

The media is full of stories about companies mandating, or worse shaming, people back into the office. Or it features those who have sold up and are going fully remote. But these are the extreme stories. We wanted to understand the fuller picture of what's been proposed around hybrid working to workers in Scotland.

Over the summer we collected new data from 1,000 Scottish workers in office or desk-based jobs, to understand the current reality of how hybrid working is being implemented by Scottish employers.

This short white paper shares our findings, which we hope you will find useful as you shape your organisation's approach to hybrid and other forms of flexible working.

## Why Hybrid Working Matters

Here's a quick re-cap on why getting hybrid working right is important for employers.

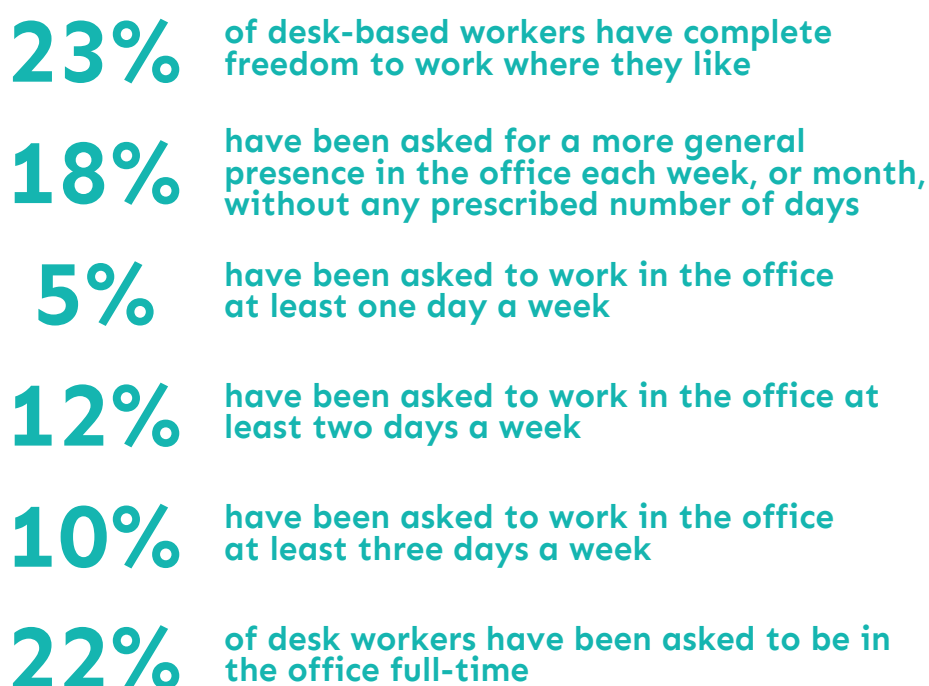
- Hybrid is what workers want – **84%** of workers who had to work from home because of the coronavirus pandemic said they planned to carry out a mix of working at home and in their place of work in the future, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
- People changing jobs value flexibility - Our research published earlier this year showed that more than a third (**35%**) of all Scottish workers are thinking about changing jobs, and that [flexibility is a priority for more than salary](#).
- People will leave employers if they don't get flexibility - A global report by consultancy McKinsey shows that **26%** of workers who quit in the year to April 2022, said this was because of a lack of workplace flexibility.

The vast majority of office and desk workers want to continue some home or remote working as part of a hybrid model as we transition out of Covid measures for good. Employers risk losing talent, or finding it difficult to recruit good people, if hybrid and flexible working aren't part of their offer.



## What does hybrid working in Scotland look like?

We asked desk workers how often they've been asked to work in the office and found a mixed picture. Nearly a quarter say they now have complete freedom to work where they like, and just under one in five have been asked for a general weekly or monthly presence without any prescribed number of days. Just over a quarter have been asked to come in to the office one, two or three days a week, and one in five have been asked to come in to the office full-time.



## Do employees feel their views have been taken into account?

The majority of employees felt their opinions had been taken into account around returning to the office. But a significant minority - **27%** - said their views had not been taken into account.

Interestingly, workers who've been asked to come in to the office three days each week were the most likely to say their views had not been taken into account. A total of **36%** felt their views had been ignored. This has implications for how happy employees feel about returning to the office, and whether they actually follow their employer's instructions.



## Are employees following their employers' instructions?

Seven in ten (**69%**) of office workers say they're following their employer's instructions exactly on how frequently they work in the office.

Employees asked to work in the office two or three days a week were most likely to say they were going in less than requested. The new data shows a quarter (**25%**) of this group saying they go in less frequently, compared with an average **10%** across all other groups of office workers.

At the other end of the spectrum, a third (**33%**) of workers asked to be in weekly or monthly without any prescribed number of days have been in the office more than requested, more than any other group.


This suggests many workers with more autonomy over when they work in the office actually spend a similar proportion of time in the office over a given period as workers who are mandated to be in the office a set number of days.

Crucially however, a greater proportion of workers with more freedom are happier with their employer's proposals, compared with those whose working mandated office days. While fewer people with complete freedom feel that following their employer's instructions means they'd be doing tasks in the office that would be better done at home. By comparison, more than half of workers required to be in the office one, two or three days a week felt they were doing tasks in the office that would be better completed at home.

## Are employees happy with what's been proposed?

Nearly three quarters (**73%**) of all desk-based workers are happy with what their employer has asked them to do.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, people with complete freedom over how often they work in the office are most happy – a whopping **91%**. This group was also most likely to recommend their place of work to a friend or family member. A total of **50%** said they'd recommend their employer, which is more than double the proportion of those asked specifically to be in the office either one or two days per week.



One in six (**16%**) office workers are not happy with what they've been asked to do. The figure is highest among people asked to work in the office two or three days a week at **30%**.

In addition, **45%** of all office workers said that by following their employers' instructions on where they should work, they were doing jobs in the office that could be better done from home. This suggests there is still considerable room for improvement for many employers in finding the most effective balance between home and office working.

## Which tasks are best at home and in the office?

The vast majority of Scottish desk workers told us there was still an important role for their office. Seven in ten said the office was best for on-boarding new employees and helping younger workers learn from more experienced colleagues. Six in ten felt being in the office was best for team cohesion.

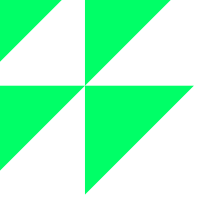
When it came to team creativity, just over half (**55%**) said the office was best. But **44%** said hybrid or home were best, which may challenge some employers' perceptions about how to get the best from their teams, and require more conversations with workers to find the best format for creative team tasks.

Where workers felt they got the best line manager support was also mixed. Nearly half (**44%**) preferred being in the office. But more people – **51%** - said they felt line manager support was best when they worked hybrid or at home.

For the best work life balance, a quarter preferred being in the office, a third said hybrid and nearly four in ten preferred home working.

This all shows there's no 'one size fits all' approach for hybrid. Individuals and their teams will have different needs and preferences to perform at their best.





The majority of Scottish employers are already seeking input and feedback from staff on new ways of working. But our research suggests most could go further to create more productive and effective work patterns that benefit both the organisation and its people.

**70%** felt the office was the best for on-boarding new recruits and helping younger workers learn

**60%** felt office working was best for team cohesion.



For the best personal creativity **44%** of all office workers said they preferred to be at home, **27%** said the office and **25%** said hybrid.



For the best team creativity **55%** of all office workers said they preferred to be at home, **28%** said the office and **14%** said hybrid.



**44%** of office workers said the office was best for line manager support, **35%** said hybrid and **16%** said home.



When asked how people best achieved a good work life balance, **26%** said the office and **34%** said hybrid and **38%** preferred home working.



## Take Away Points and What's Next?

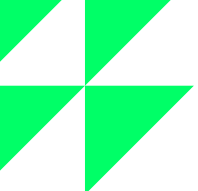
The pandemic has had a huge impact on how many of us work, with our data showing four in five desk workers can now work hybrid – albeit with a lot of variation in what hybrid means and how it is shaped in practical terms.

We found most people still really valued having an office. But we were surprised that one in five desk-based workers are still being asked to work in the office full-time, suggesting some employers still think flexible and hybrid working are too complicated, or they still don't trust workers when they're out of sight. We hope these employers will take our findings on board because we know the vast majority of office workers now want and expect hybrid, and many are prepared to change jobs to get it.

While employers that have implemented hybrid with specific expectations around the number of days in the office, should also hear a note of caution in our data. Hybrid is generally what people want. But having choice and control over where tasks will be best completed is key.

This is the nub of all forms of flexible working. Well-meaning employers may now allow people to work from home more often than before the pandemic. But the fact 45% of workers feel they're still doing tasks in the office that could be better done at home confirms that many employers could give workers more control over where they work.

The reality is that many workers will end up spending similar proportions of time in the office, regardless of whether they're asked to be in a set number of days, or are trusted to judge and choose for themselves. But importantly, we can expect people to be happier and more productive if they're given more freedom to choose, allowing their office-based time for tasks that make sense to be done in the office, rather than being compelled to visit on arbitrarily designated days.



We know that changing how people work is no easy feat, and our figures show Scottish employers are making good progress navigating our uncharted territory post-pandemic.

But we're not 'done' yet on getting hybrid and flexible working right.

Our gentle but firm point is that people are happier, more motivated and productive the more choice and control they have around where, when and how much work they do.

For employers to nurture truly high-performing teams – and prevent skills shortages by enhancing recruitment prospects and reducing the risk of by people leaving for greater flexibility elsewhere – they must involve workers and listen to their views about new ways of working, and give them more autonomy to decide for themselves where and when they work best.

## Need Help?

We're always happy to help employers who need a hand implementing greater flexible working.

Contact us on:

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# Thank You.

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