

Hybrid workers are happier, healthier, more productive - global survey

A new report says that returning to the old ways of doing things is not an option for companies serious about competing for the best talent. SA respondents who participate in hybrid working models reported having a positive effect on all areas of employee well-being. Hybrid work has improved employee performance, work-life balance, well-being and company culture.



Image source: Tirma Miroshnichenko from [Pexels](#)

For South Africans, participating in hybrid work can lead to better mental, physical, and financial well-being. This is according to the latest [Cisco Global Hybrid Work Report](#), a study looking at the impact of hybrid working around the world.

The report, which included a survey of 28,000 full-time employees in 27 countries, reveals that for most people, work performance improved along with employees' relationships and even personal confidence.

Highlights

- According to South African employees surveyed, 86% felt hybrid and remote working had improved all aspects of their well-being, which was above the worldwide average of 78%.
- Just over 60% also reported that this type of work had saved them at least four hours per week, while 27% said working from home had saved them eight or more hours per week.
- India (53.3%), South Africa (47.9%) and Vietnam (44.3%) had the largest numbers of respondents who had seen 'significant improvements in well-being. At the other end of the scale were Indonesia (14.8%) and Korea (16%).
- The countries with employees most in favour of fully remote work were the Philippines (37.7%); Canada (34.8%), and South Africa (33.5%), while the Netherlands (9.5%); UAE (9.7%) and Mainland China (10.1%) were least in favour of this work model.

"While initially, many employees were challenged by the sudden shift to hybrid and remote working arrangements, our study shows that two years on, as businesses have pivoted to survive, hybrid work has yielded many positive and lasting

benefits for both employers and employees. In fact, this mode of working has become the norm and is set to stay,” the report reads.

Survey respondents worked across a wide range of industries, including agriculture; consumer goods; construction and engineering; education; financial services; government and public service; healthcare; IT; technology & telecommunications; media and communications; NGOs, and tourism and hospitality.

Generational contrast

Interestingly, there were some significant differences among the working generations, where over two-thirds (70.3%) of Gen Zs said that their quality of work improved with hybrid work, compared to 49% of baby boomers.

“At last, there is recognition that people are not commodities. Rather than HR standing for human resources, it can be rebranded as 'human relations' in the hybrid world. This is because companies realise that happier employees are more productive, and they are therefore investing in mental health, employee well-being and improved lines of communication,” says Joanne Bushell, MD, IWG, South Africa.

“At its best, hybrid working embodies respect and personalisation, meaning that no matter what an employee’s needs are, they will always have a place to work that best suits them and the flexibility to deliver what is required of them outside the confines of a traditional 9-5 working week,” she adds.

With this in mind, the hybrid model naturally aligns with better mental health because people are less frequently forced to compromise their own needs for those of the company. We have already seen employers such as Nike, Bumble, KPMG, The New York Times and LinkedIn giving staff impromptu ‘pop-up’ paid leave to reboot or spend some time on a passion project in a bid to avoid mass burnout.

Stress fractures

The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the way most of us work. This is because they are realising that stress is a significant problem not just for individual workers but for businesses as well (and the pandemic has been highly stressful for almost everyone). For many, a hybrid future is imminent, says the global consulting firm McKinsey.

Modern life has led many of us to live in a high-speed world, leaving us with little time to spend with our loved ones. Therefore, it is no surprise that more than half (52%) of surveyed South Africans had reinvested extra time from hybrid working into “time with family, friends, and pets”.

Nearly 90% of those surveyed also said hybrid working had improved their family relationships, while 56% said it had improved their relationships with friends.

Just over 80% of South Africans said hybrid working had helped them save money, while 92% believed these savings could

be maintained over the long term.

More than 90% of South Africans said hybrid work had made them happier, while 67% said it helped reduce stress levels. Hybrid working was more relaxing and resulted in a less pressurised environment, said 34% of respondents.

Around 70% of surveyed South Africans said they exercise more when working remotely, while 67% said their physical fitness had improved. The eating habits of the majority of surveyed respondents had also improved.

Happy medium

This study shows that employees don't want either end of the extremes – to be back in the office or to be working entirely remotely – they want a middle ground that offers flexibility to achieve their own personal version of work-life integration that works for them and their employer.

Building trust

The study also indicates that managing and maintaining high levels of trust will be critical for businesses to operate as they grow hybrid-working arrangements. While 70.5% of respondents believe their manager trusts them to be productive when working remotely, a far lower number (58.9%) believe their colleagues can be trusted to work remotely.

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