# Shift in employee priorities: flexibility over salary



The landscape of employment in the United States is undergoing a significant transformation as the end of the COVID-19 pandemic brings about a stark contrast between employer expectations and employee desires regarding work arrangements. This shift is most evident in the persistent demand for remote and hybrid work options, which many employees are prioritising over salary. The current job market reflects such sentiments, with recent analyses revealing that a notable number of workers are willing to accept reduced compensation in exchange for the flexibility that remote work provides.

According to a report by HR consulting firm Robert Half, the availability of remote and hybrid positions has risen considerably, with 35 percent of new job postings categorised as such in the third quarter of last year, an increase from 30 percent the previous year. "While some employers are requiring workers to come back to the office full- or part-time, flexibility remains a leading factor influencing workers' decisions to stay in their current roles or seek new opportunities," Michelle Reisdorf, district president at Robert Half, informed Newsweek.

A survey conducted by FlexJobs corroborates these findings, indicating that approximately 50 percent of participants were willing to accept a pay cut to maintain the option of working remotely—26 percent indicating a willingness to accept a 5 percent reduction, while 24 percent would consider cuts of 10 percent or more. Dr. Alison Collins, an associate professor at Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, noted that various studies demonstrate that around a quarter of employees would rather forfeit salary in favour of remote or hybrid working opportunities.

The dynamic also extends to potential sacrifices in other areas, with some workers willing to give up career development opportunities, vacation days, health insurance, and even company-sponsored retirement contributions in exchange for work flexibility. Collins remarked, “This is an ongoing debate... it seems clear, however, that employers can improve employee attraction and retention by offering remote/hybrid working to those who want it.”

Looking towards 2025, Robert Half's "State of U.S. Hiring" report indicates an anticipated increase in hiring, particularly for skilled roles. The analysis predicts that 63 percent of surveyed companies plan to create new positions in the first half of that year. "As companies anticipate growth and the acceleration of new projects, competition for skilled talent will remain at a premium," Reisdorf stated. The report further highlights that remote and hybrid work arrangements are becoming essential strategies for companies aiming to attract skilled talent, with 41 percent of firms enhancing their hiring processes through the provision of flexible work options.

Additionally, while competitive compensation remains a crucial factor, flexible work arrangements are significant priorities for job seekers. Reisdorf explained that employers who do not offer remote accommodations may need to implement other incentives, such as extra paid holidays or enhanced health benefits, to attract candidates. The flexibility in negotiating benefits can vary significantly among job candidates, with approximately 76 percent indicating a willingness to work entirely in-office for a higher salary, envisioning an average raise request of 23 percent.

The continuing tension between employers and their workforce over return-to-office mandates has led to some companies exploring work-from-anywhere policies. Theresa L. Fesinstine, founder of the human resources advisory peoplepower.ai, referenced an “unspoken exchange rate between flexibility and comp,” suggesting that, for certain candidates, the trade-off between flexibility and compensation is substantial.

As businesses prepare for the upcoming hiring boom driven by pent-up demand, they are expected to balance the dual objectives of offering flexible work options alongside competitive remuneration to secure top talent. Despite the inclination of some workers to accept lower salaries for continued remote work, the overarching takeaway from this evolving job market is clear: remote work, in its various forms, is likely to be a fixture of the work environment for the foreseeable future.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.upwork.com/press/releases/upwork-study-finds-22-of-american-workforce-will-be-remote-by-2025> - Corroborates the significant increase in remote work, predicting 22% of the American workforce will be remote by 2025, and highlights the growing acceptance of remote work.
2. <https://www.strongdm.com/blog/remote-work-statistics> - Supports the growth of remote jobs, indicating that remote jobs now make up more than 15% of total job opportunities in the U.S., a significant increase from pre-pandemic levels.
3. <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/remote-work-statistics> - Provides statistics on the prevalence of remote work, including that nearly 2 in 3 workers are fully remote and around 9 in 10 people enjoy working from home.
4. <https://www.upwork.com/press/releases/upwork-study-finds-22-of-american-workforce-will-be-remote-by-2025> - Highlights that hiring managers are seeing positive benefits to a distributed workforce and plan to continue leveraging remote talent, aligning with the trend of prioritizing remote work.
5. <https://www.strongdm.com/blog/remote-work-statistics> - Mentions that the growth of remote roles would have happened even without the pandemic, but the pandemic accelerated this process, supporting the ongoing demand for remote work.
6. <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/remote-work-statistics> - Indicates that many workers are willing to accept reduced compensation for the flexibility of remote work, with around 50% of participants willing to take a pay cut to maintain remote work options.
7. <https://www.upwork.com/press/releases/upwork-study-finds-22-of-american-workforce-will-be-remote-by-2025> - Discusses how businesses are adapting to remote work and altering their long-term plans to accommodate this shift, reflecting the strategic importance of remote work in hiring processes.
8. <https://www.strongdm.com/blog/remote-work-statistics> - Supports the idea that remote and hybrid work arrangements are essential for attracting skilled talent, as companies enhance their hiring processes through flexible work options.
9. <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/remote-work-statistics> - Highlights the flexibility in negotiating benefits, with some workers willing to give up various benefits in exchange for work flexibility, aligning with the trade-off between flexibility and compensation.
10. <https://www.upwork.com/press/releases/upwork-study-finds-22-of-american-workforce-will-be-remote-by-2025> - Emphasizes that despite some resourcing issues, hiring managers are finding relief with independent professionals and unlocking the potential of remote teams, reflecting the ongoing adaptation to remote work.
11. <https://www.newsweek.com/why-americans-are-accepting-lower-salaries-2010733> - Please view link - unable to able to access data