

The hybrid work stalemate: Teams hold the key to trust and productivity

RESEARCH BRIEF

Despite return-to-office mandates making headlines, **hybrid work declined only modestly** from 55% to 51% over two quarters, while both **fully remote and fully on-site work each grew** by just 2 percentage points—revealing general consistency rather than clear directional shifts.

Why it matters

The **hybrid work model has reached a stability plateau**, but trust deficit between managers and employees threaten to undermine productivity gains. Organizations are struggling with policy clarity while teams remain geographically distributed regardless of official work location mandates.

- ▶ Only **54%** managers trust remote teams to be productive while **57%** employees feel trusted
- ▶ Team-determined hybrid schedules achieve 91% fairness ratings—equal to self-determined schedules but with lower burnout
- ▶ Jump in fully on-site teams across locations (**13%** in 2023 to **27%** in 2025)
- ▶ Hybrid workers spend **46%** time in office

How we know

Analysis of US workforce data tracking remote-capable employees (approximately half the total workforce) across multiple quarters, measuring work location preferences, schedule autonomy, trust metrics, and productivity outcomes through Gallup's ongoing workplace research methodology

What Gallup researchers found

- ▶ **Hybrid work remains dominant** for remote-capable workers (51%), with minor decreases suggesting clarification, not wholesale retreat
- ▶ **Tech sector bucked the trend:** 47% remote, 45% hybrid, 9% on-site—since 2022
- ▶ **Federal workforce experienced dramatic shift:** Hybrid work plummeted (61% to 28%) after Trump administration's remote work ban
- ▶ **Self-determined schedules create hidden costs:** 76% more likely to report burnout, 57% more work-life balance issues compared to team-determined schedules

What this means

- ▶ **For CHROs:** The trust gap between managers and remote employees is a fundamental management capability crisis requiring immediate intervention and training.
- ▶ **For organizations:** Location policies matter less than team coordination and trust—real competitive advantage lies in execution.
- ▶ **For executives:** Headlines of return-to-office mandates mask the actual hybrid struggles.

Now what?

- ▶ Focus on **team-level schedule coordination** rather than individual flexibility; team-determined schedules achieve equal fairness with lower burnout rates
- ▶ Implement **4 trust-building practices:** consistent communication, community building, accountability, equitable development opportunities across locations
- ▶ Review **geographic distribution** to look for ways to optimize for it rather than fighting it—even on-site teams are increasingly distributed
- ▶ Measure hybrid work success by **team productivity** and **trust metrics**, not physical presence or policy compliance

LINK TO THE STUDY

