



CURRENTS

Remote work edition

Introduction

Trends in the developer community move quickly. As a developer-focused company, it's vital to keep up with the technologies and tools developers are interested in so we can help them achieve their goals.

Currents is DigitalOcean's seasonal report on developer trends that we created to share knowledge with the community. For the sixth edition, we surveyed more than 4,500 developers around the world about remote work — including how they work, their experiences working remotely, how they connect with the larger community, and how they maintain work-life balance.



Key findings:

- **Remote work is the new normal for developers.** It's not only something they prefer, but something they increasingly demand from employers. Eighty-six percent of respondents currently work remotely in some capacity, with nearly 1/3 working from home full time. Forty-three percent say the ability to work remotely is a must-have when considering an offer with a company.
- **Remote workers are connected.** The traditional narrative of remote workers as isolated and disengaged from their companies is proving false for many. Seventy-one percent of developers who work remotely said they feel connected to their company's community.
- **But the issue hasn't disappeared entirely.** The twenty-nine percent who don't feel connected say they feel excluded from offline team conversations or don't feel integrated into their company's culture when working remotely.
- **The burnout problem is real.** Two-thirds of all respondents said their stress levels have caused them to feel burnt out or work fatigued, regardless of whether or not they work remotely.
- **Developers expect remote work to improve work-life balance.** But the reality doesn't always line up with that hope. Seventy-six percent of respondents said they think working remotely improves work-life balance, yet many remote workers reported working longer hours and ultimately rated their work-life balance as only slightly higher than in-office workers.

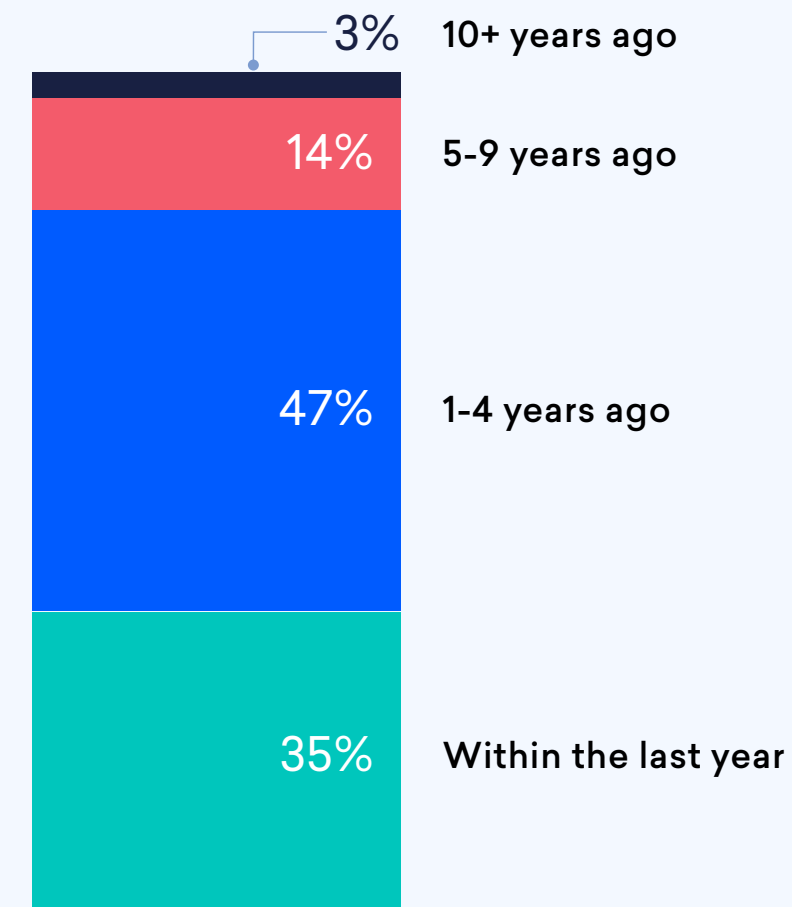
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Remote Work: The New Normal

Many developers only started working remotely within the last one to four years, but this option is quickly becoming more accepted and even demanded. Eighty-six percent of those surveyed currently work remotely in some capacity, mostly full time (29%) or multiple times a week (25%). Of respondents who do not work remotely, 62% indicated it is only because their company does not let them.

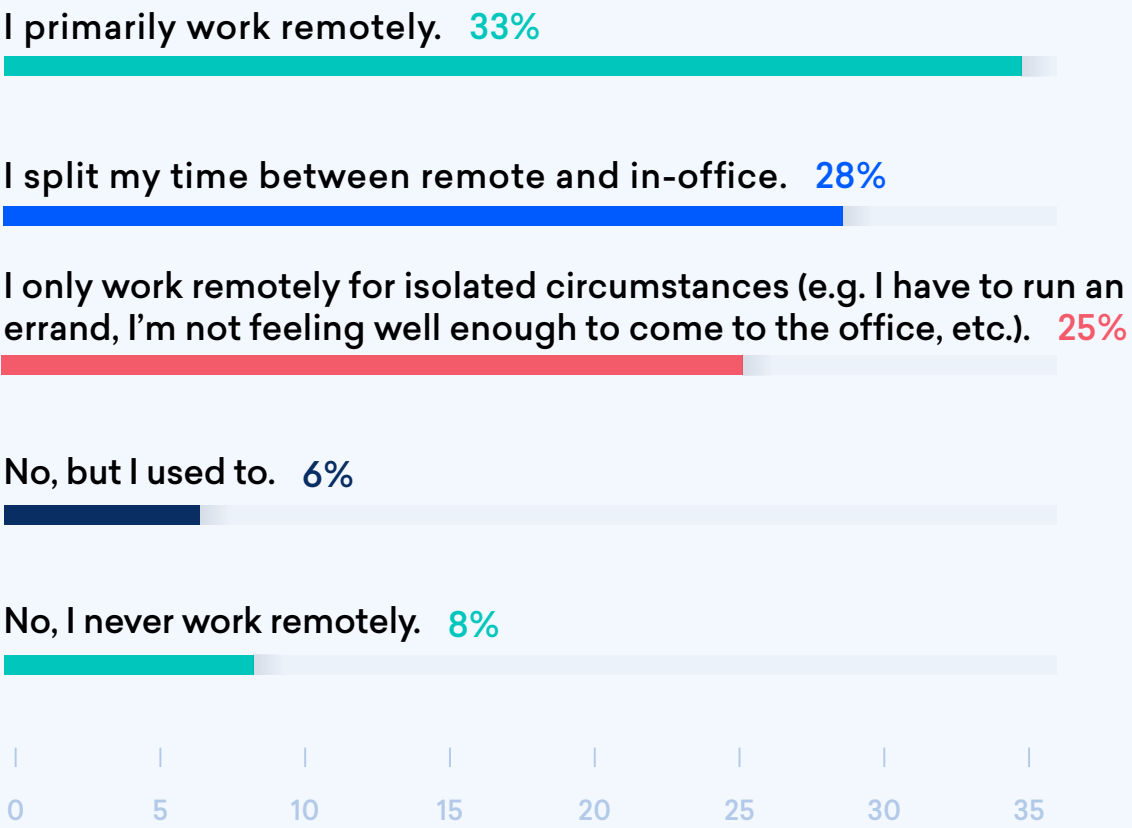
Canada is leading other countries in its remote workforce, with 94% of those surveyed working remotely in some capacity, followed by the United States (89%), the United Kingdom (88%), and India (80%). But remote work comes in various degrees, and the U.S. leads with the most developers who primarily work remote (44%).

How recently did you switch from primarily working out of a central office to remote?

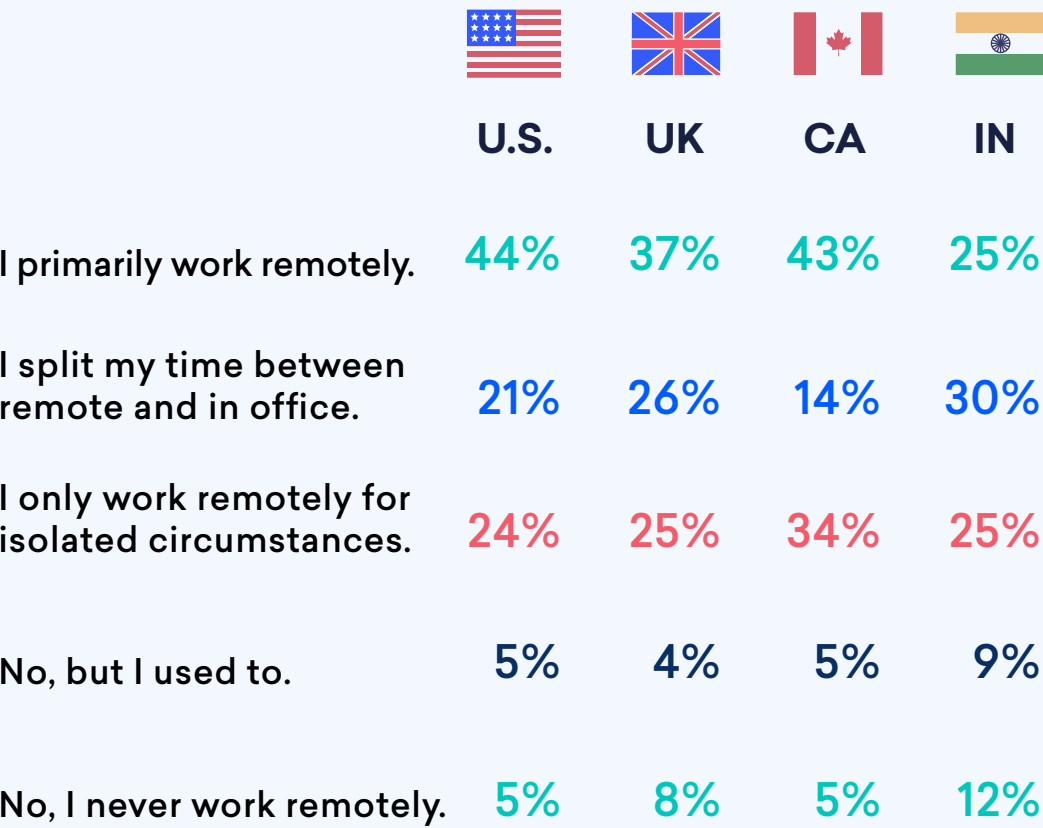


The percentages may not add up to 100%, as they are rounded to the nearest percent.

Do you ever work remotely?



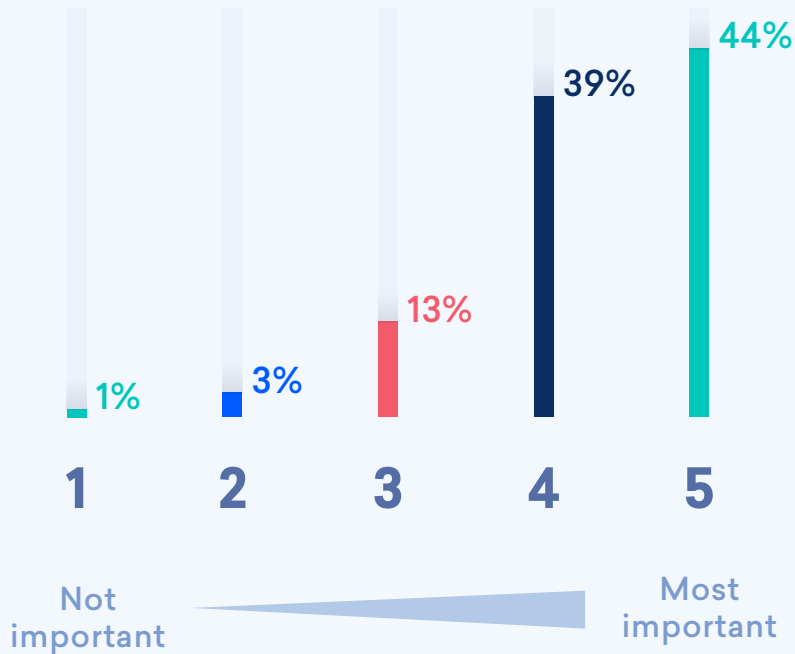
Do you ever work remotely?



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Forty-three percent of the developers we surveyed say the ability to work remotely is a must-have when considering an offer with a company, while over half (53%) say they think less highly of a company that does not offer remote work options. Developers say it gives the impression that the company is behind the times.

On a scale of 1-5, how important a factor was a flexible work schedule in your career decision?
(1 = Not important, 5 = Most important).



Being more productive at home is the most common reason people choose to work remotely (45%), followed by those who work remotely when they need to run an errand (32%). Nearly a quarter say they work from home because they have a long commute.

Most developers who work remotely work fragmented hours throughout the day (47%), while 44% work consecutively through standard office hours. There are particularly prominent differences between countries: 66% of respondents in India work fragmented hours vs. 35% in the U.S., 40% in the UK, and 41% in Canada..



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Remote Work and Isolation: Breaking the Stereotype

A common stereotype surrounding remote workers is that they feel isolated or alone in their homes and don't benefit from a connection to their work teams or to the larger industry community. Our survey found this is often untrue. In fact, many respondents who work from home are embracing the larger developer community.

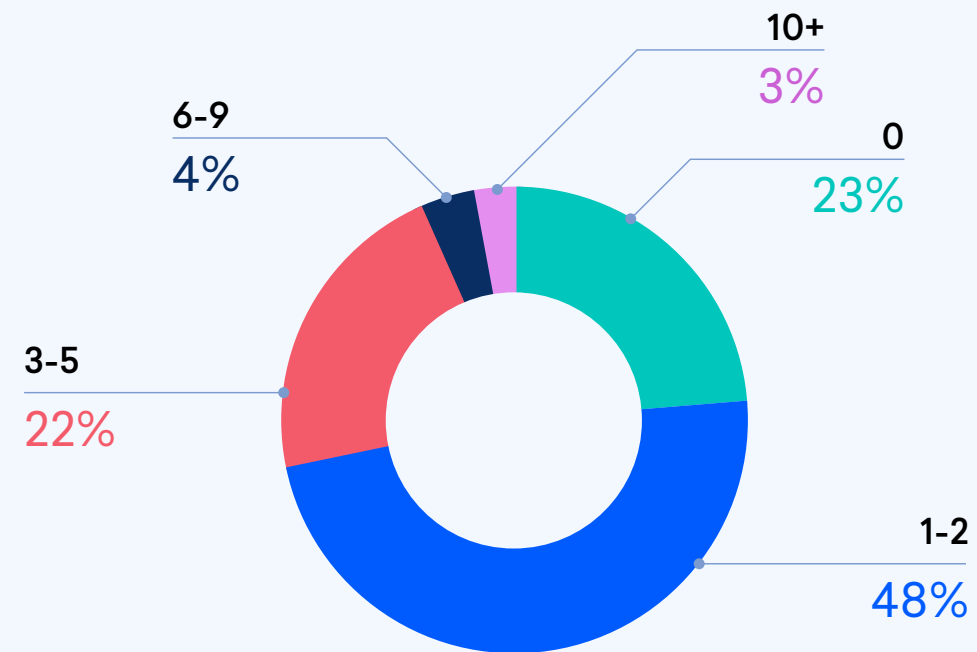
Seventy-one percent of respondents said they feel connected to their company's community when working remotely. Advances in cloud computing and workplace communication tools could be driving improved connections between remote and in-office employees. Business collaboration software like Slack, Skype for Business, and Salesforce Chatter is the most preferred communication method for developers when they work remotely. Instant messaging like Google chat was rated second, while traditional email still beat out phone or video options.

When working remotely, what is your preferred communication channel to connect with colleagues?

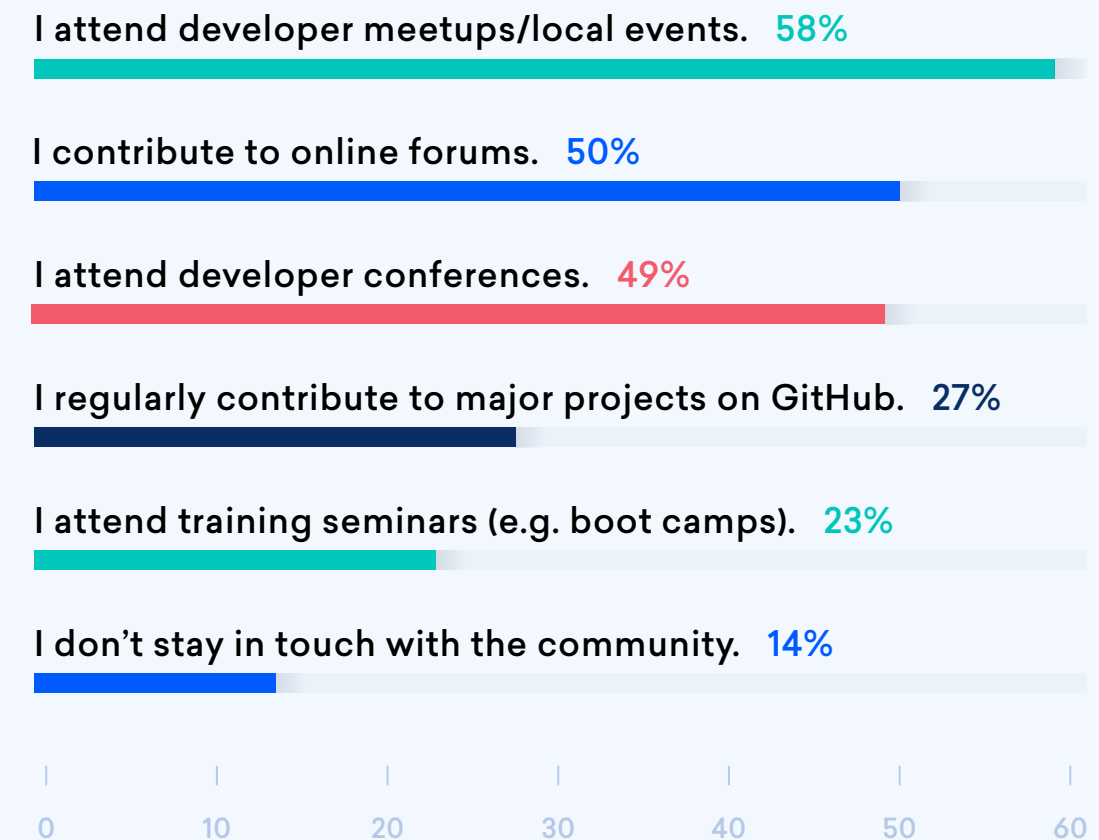
(1 = Most preferred, 5 = Least preferred).

-  **Business collaboration software (Slack, Skype for Business, etc.)**
-  **Instant messaging (e.g. Google chat)**
-  **Email**
-  **Phone (texting or calling)**
-  **Video (GoToMeeting, Zoom, Hangouts, etc.)**

How many industry events and conferences have you attended in the last 12 months?



How do you stay in touch with other developers and the dev community at large?



Developers aren't just engaging with their colleagues, they're staying in touch with the wider developer community as well. Many respondents choose to connect with developers and the larger community by attending developer meetups and local events, developer conferences, and by contributing to online forums. In fact, 77% have attended an industry event or conference in the last 12 months.

But this isolation still persists for some, so engaging remote employees is still an issue worth paying attention to. More than a quarter of remote workers do not feel connected, often citing they feel excluded from offline team conversations or don't feel integrated into the company's culture.

Why don't you feel connected to your company's community when you work remotely?

I feel excluded from offline team conversations. 61%

I don't feel integrated into the company's culture. 49%

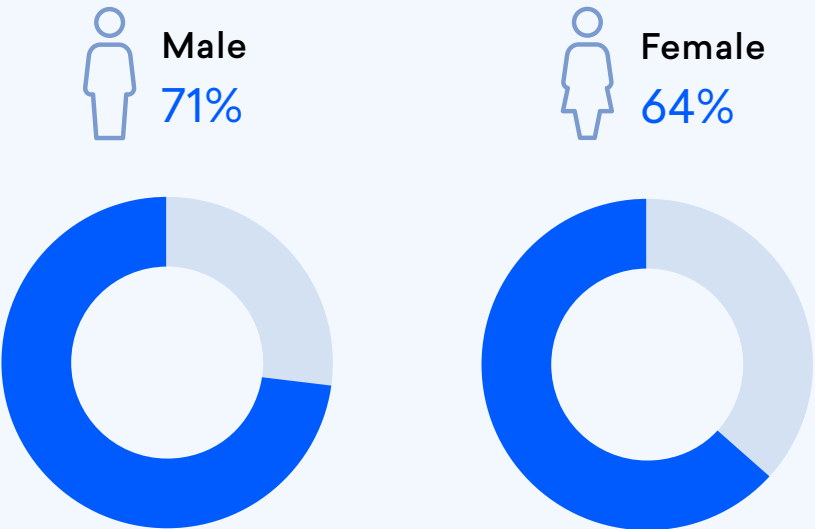
I'm not able to communicate with my team easily. 24%

Other 6%

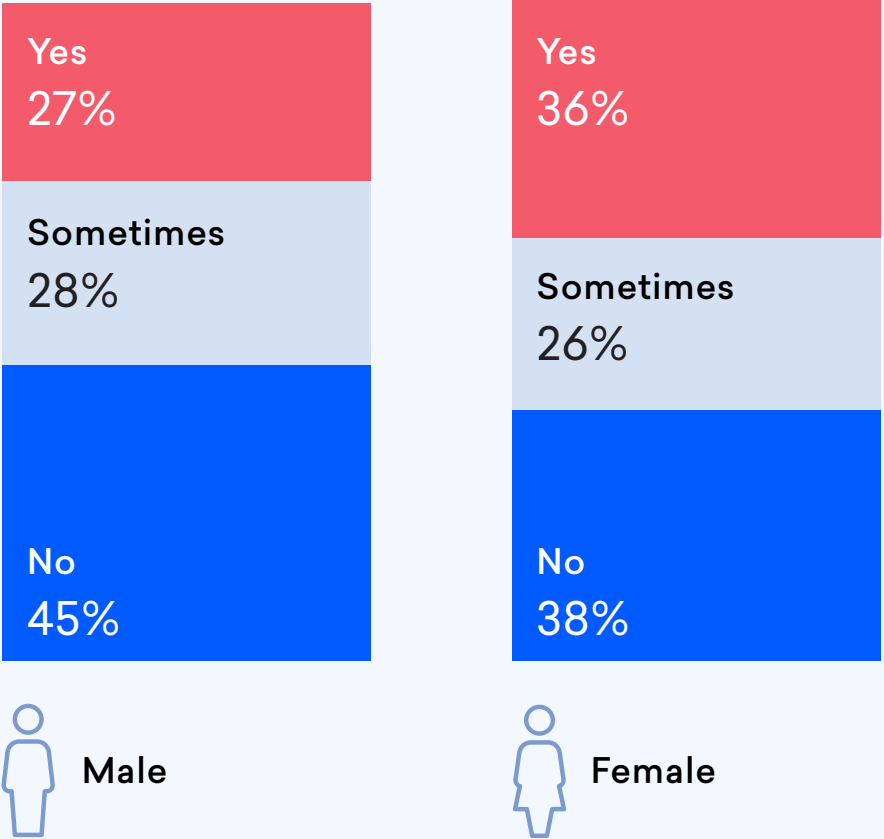


Remote work experiences also tends to differ between genders. Women are more likely to report feeling disconnected from their communities when working remotely and are more likely to feel added pressure to contribute to projects.

Do you feel connected to your company's community when you work remotely?

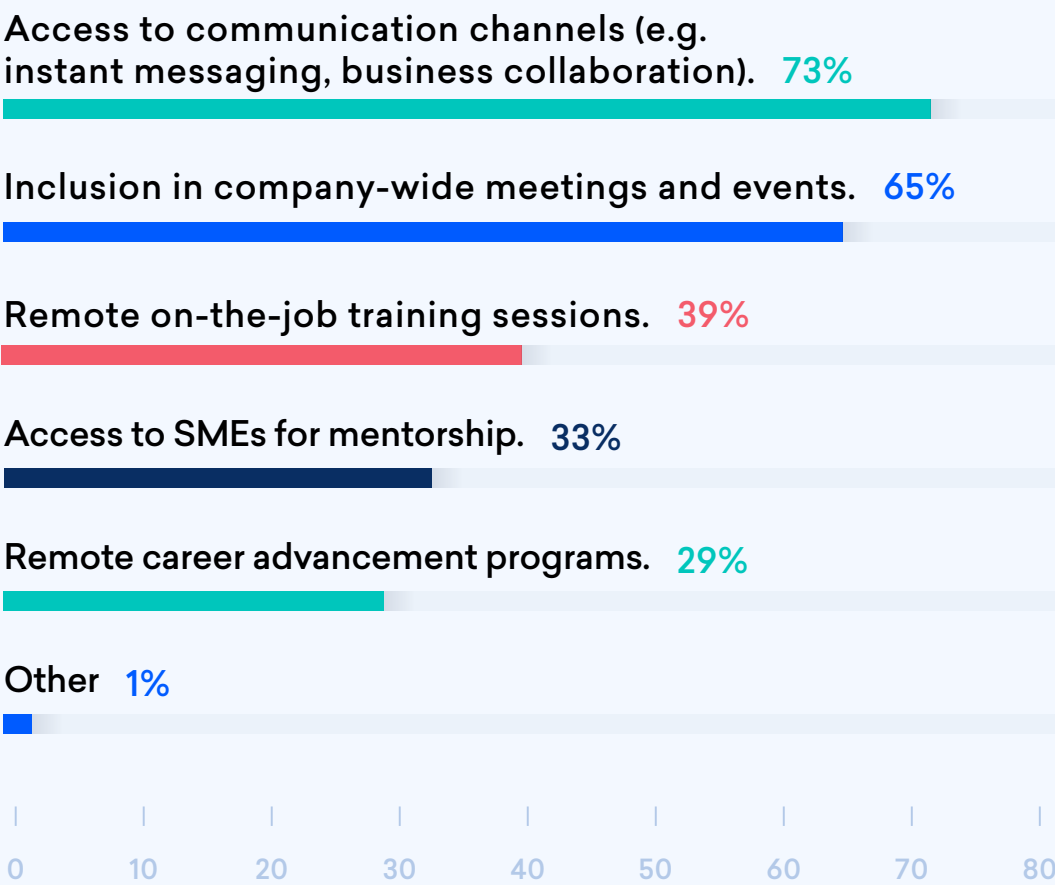


Have you ever felt pressure to contribute more work than usual on a project because you were working remotely?



While issues like not feeling connected do still exist for nearly a third of remote workers surveyed, only 32% of respondents were aware of any specific programs or policies their company had in place to ensure remote employees feel included. Forty percent indicated their companies have no such programs, while the remaining 28% were unsure if these programs existed.

What specific programs or policies does your company have to ensure remote employees feel included?



But many developers do believe these programs have the potential to improve the experiences of remote workers. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents who were aware of these programs at their companies reported that they're having a positive impact on creating an inclusive environment for remote employees. This will be an important investment for companies as they grapple with the shifting needs of both remote and in-office workers.



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Work from Home Wellness: Making Remote “Work”

Cultural issues like work-life balance and workplace experience are ones many companies are working to address regardless of industry, and developer-focused organizations are no exception. Burnout in the developer community is widely discussed, and our survey found that burnout impacted development regardless of where they worked. Sixty-six percent of respondents noted that their stress levels have caused them to feel burnt out or work fatigued. This jumps to 72% for women, while 65% of men noted this. More than half of the respondents who have felt burnout have taken a mental health day to relieve work-related stress, frustration, or anxiety.

Remote work is seen as a solution to this stress. The majority of developers who work from home (76%) believe that it helps them improve their work-life balance. Reducing stressful commutes and having greater flexibility in living options were the top reasons, perhaps driven by the rising cost of living in major cities.

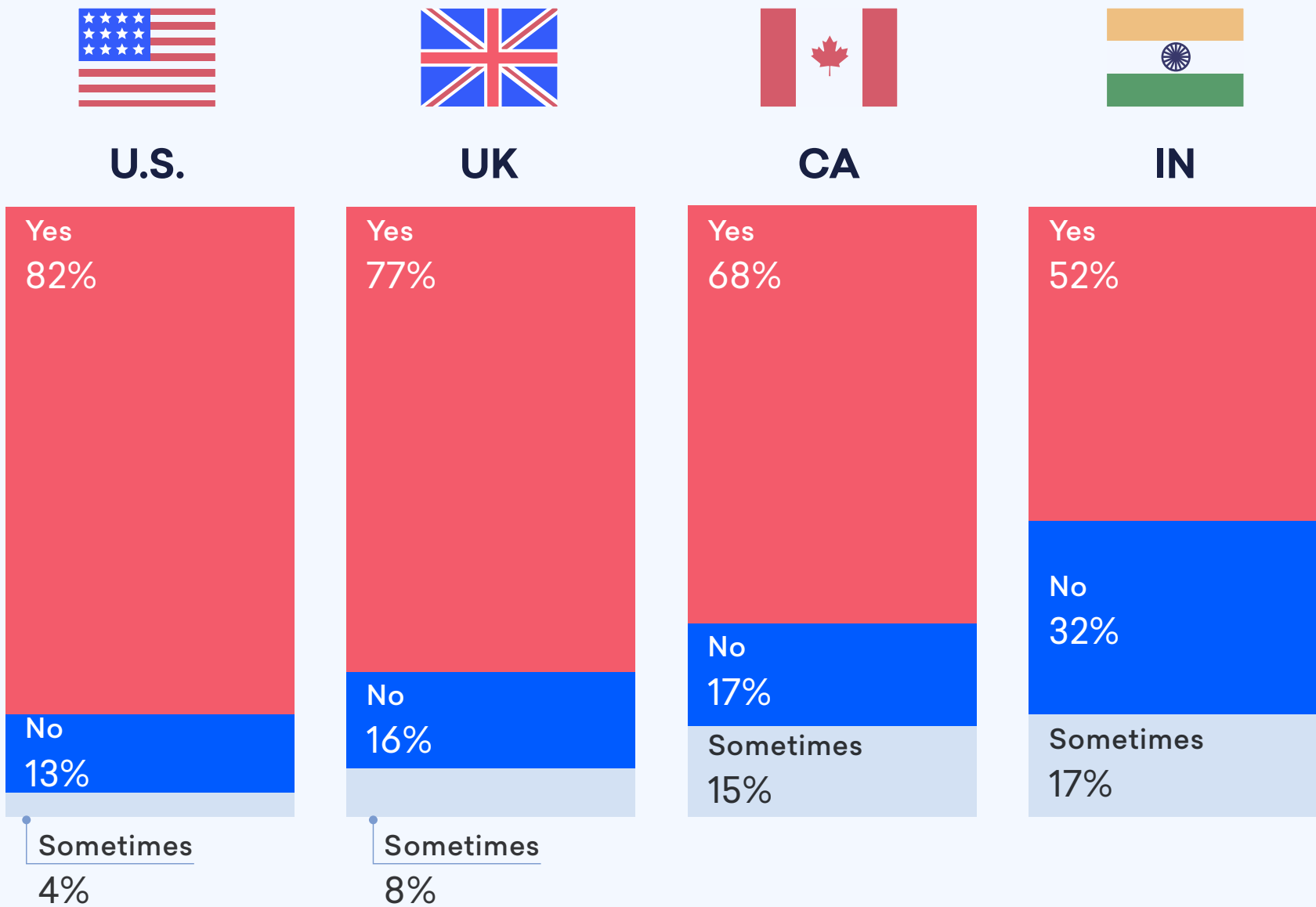
Reasons people think remote work improves work-life balance:



Reported Burnout by Region: A Geographical Breakdown

But there seems to be a disconnect between the perception of remote work and the reality of it. Despite the optimism, remote workers reported slightly higher levels of burnout than in-office workers — 66% vs. 64%, respectively.

Over half of remote workers report scheduling structured breaks throughout the day, but this showed no real change in reported burnout when compared with those who didn't schedule breaks. Burnout skyrockets in the U.S. as well, with 82% of respondents saying they have experienced it.



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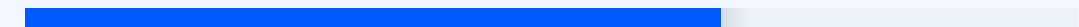
When it comes down to day-to-day levels of work stress/frustration/anxiety, a quarter say remote work has no impact, while 11% say it actually worsens these issues. Working longer hours from home and the pressure to contribute more to projects were the top reasons for the drop in work-life balance for remote workers. In fact, a full 34% of developers say they work more than 8 hours a day when they work from home.

Why doesn't working from home improve work-life balance?

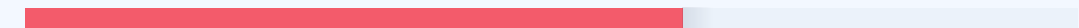
I end up working longer hours. 52%



I feel like I'm expected to contribute more. 40%



It increases my stress/frustration/anxiety levels. 37%

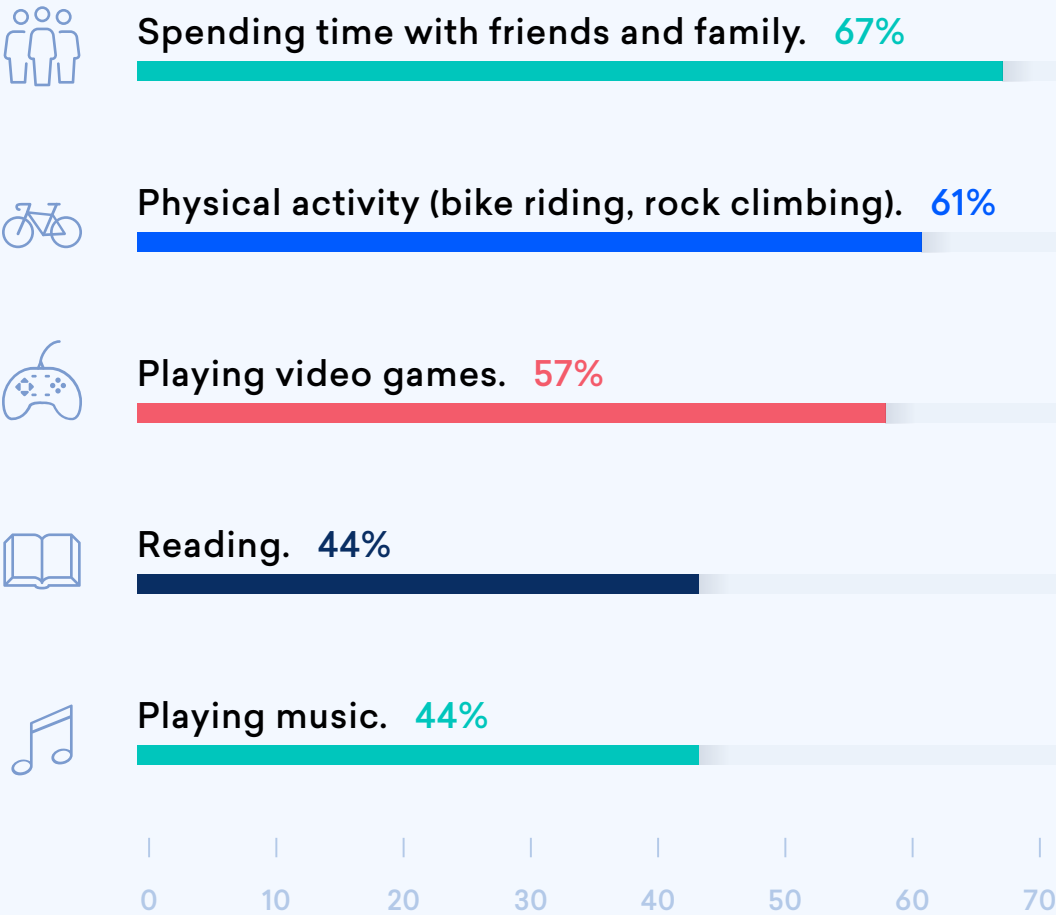


Total respondents rated their work-life balance as only a 6.95 out of 10.



- 48-55 had the highest average by age: **7.28**
- Men rated their work-life balance as slightly better than women: **6.98 vs 6.77**
- Remote workers rated their balance only slightly higher than in-office workers: **7.02 vs 6.57**

Top ways people de-stress:



So what does this mean?

While remote work options have become increasingly popular and more widely accepted among developers, companies must continue to support these workers to ensure they feel included, avoid burnout, and maintain a positive work-life balance.



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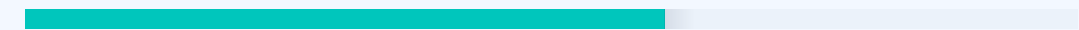
Demographics

Of the 4,562 survey respondents, 66% self-identified as developers, 11% as DevOps, and six percent as students. The rest identified as administrators, managers, technical support or, “other.”

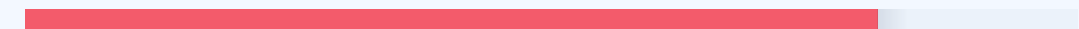
What size is your company?

(Number of employees).

1 - 5 18%



6 - 25 25%



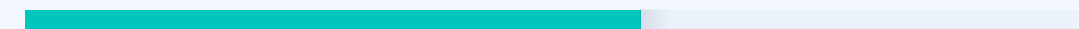
26 - 99 18%



100 - 999 22%



1000 + 17%



Please specify your gender.

