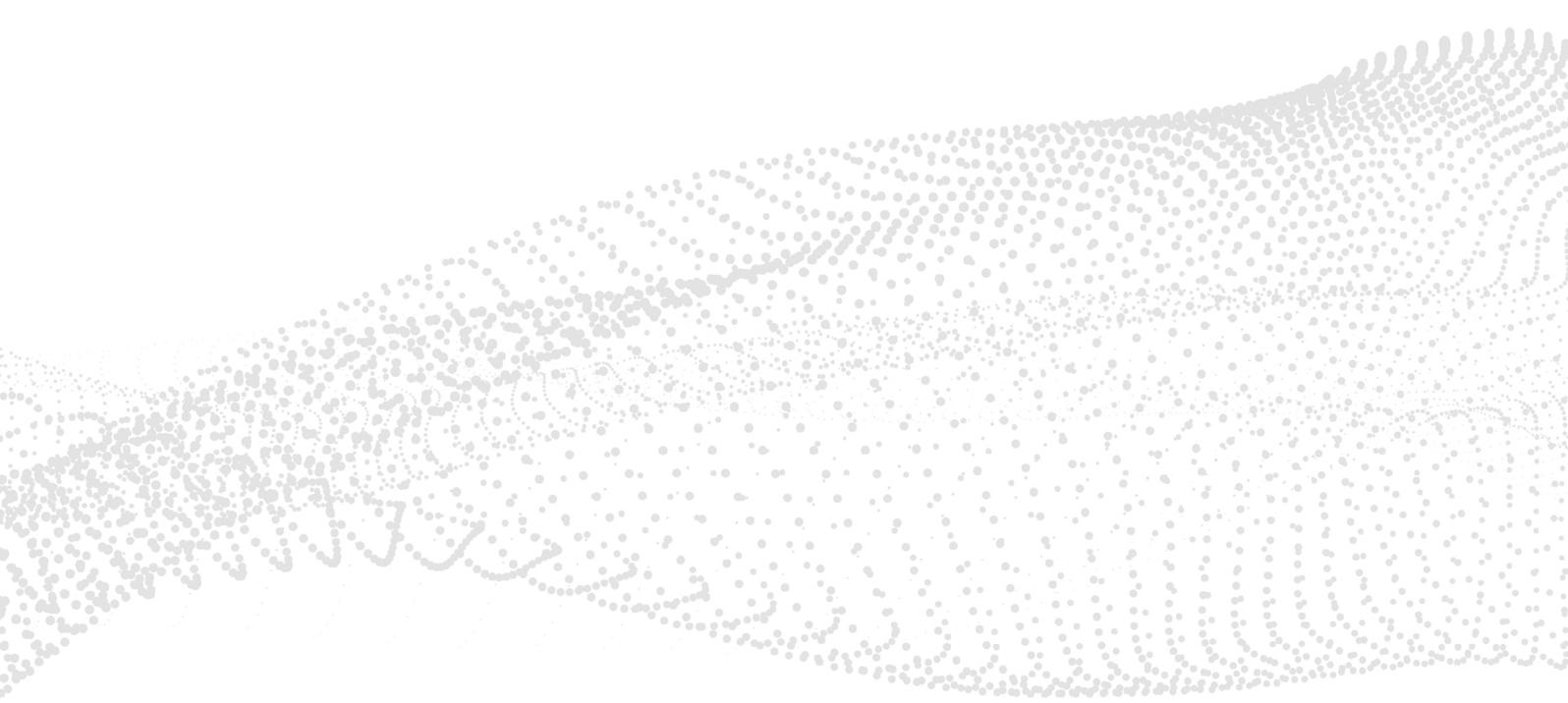


# BEYOND THE OFFICE?

## HOW REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKING CAN HELP CLOSE THE DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT GAP

Interim report of the Inclusive Remote and Hybrid Working Study | March 2025

Rebecca Florisson, George Williams, Alice Martin, Calum Carson, Paula Holland, Alison Collins and Jacqueline Winstanley



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## ABOUT THIS INTERIM REPORT

Five years on from the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a heated societal debate on the merits and downsides of working from home. Despite 'return-to-office' mandates hitting the headlines on a regular basis, there has been limited attention paid to the experiences of disabled workers.

This interim report aims to fill this evidence gap by providing initial insights from the Inclusive Remote and Hybrid Working Study. It features a survey of disabled workers with experience of remote and hybrid work, interviews with disabled workers and employers across the UK, and a survey of senior business leaders.

The full results of the study be published later this year.

## ABOUT THE INCLUSIVE REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKING STUDY

The Inclusive Remote and Hybrid Working Study (IRHWS) is funded by the Nuffield Foundation and led by Dr Paula Holland at Lancaster University and the Work Foundation at Lancaster University, Manchester Metropolitan University and Universal Inclusion.

The study explores the experiences of disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions regarding remote and hybrid working (working both at home and from the office), specifically in how to make remote and hybrid working more inclusive to promote their recruitment, job retention and progression.

## FUNDER

The project has been funded by the Nuffield Foundation, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily the Foundation.

The Nuffield Foundation is an independent charitable trust with a mission to advance social well-being. It funds research that informs social policy, primarily in Education, Welfare, and Justice. The Nuffield Foundation is the founder and co-funder of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, the Ada Lovelace Institute and the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory. Bluesky: @nuffieldfoundation.org X: @NuffieldFound LinkedIn: Nuffield Foundation Website: [nuffieldfoundation.org](https://nuffieldfoundation.org).



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overnight, the Covid-19 pandemic ushered in a new era of workplace flexibility, with millions of people working remotely for the first time.

Today, one in five workers (20.6%) work mainly from home, quadrupling since 2019 when only one in 20 people did (5%). Recent data from a new Government survey suggests that an even greater proportion (41%) have some remote working as part of their job.

Despite a heated societal debate on the merits and downsides of working from home, there has been limited attention paid to the experiences of disabled workers.

Government statistics suggest nearly one in four of the working-age population are disabled, but disabled people continue to face substantial disadvantages in the labour market, illustrated by the stubborn 28.6% disability employment gap. Currently, the UK is experiencing near record levels of economic inactivity due to long-term ill-health.

The new Government is promising to get two million more Britons working. This interim report asks what role remote and hybrid working can play in helping disabled people and those with long-term health conditions stay in – or re-join – the labour market. It provides initial insights from a survey of 1,221 disabled workers who have experience of remote and hybrid work, over 90 interviews with disabled workers and employers across the UK, and a survey of 1,167 senior business leaders.

### There is high demand for remote and hybrid work to manage impairments and health conditions:

- Eight in ten disabled workers (85%) in the study report that access to remote and hybrid working is essential or very important when looking for a new job
- Nearly one in three (30%) who already have hybrid working arrangements, want to spend more of their work time working remotely
- Four in five (83%) senior business leaders report that their organisation offers some remote working, and 43% indicated that employee demand for remote working as a way to manage health conditions has increased over the past four years
- There is, however, a remote work 'advertising gap' whereby only 3.8% of vacancies on the Department for Work and Pensions Find a Job portal include an option for hybrid or remote work. This can deter disabled workers who may need to know which flexible work arrangements are available before applying.

### Remote and hybrid working is beneficial to disabled workers but opportunities are not open to all:

- Four in five (80%) disabled people in fully remote roles reported a positive impact on their ability to manage their health, reducing to 38% for those who work remotely less than half of the time
- Other benefits include improved work-life balance and productivity. Workers and employers interviewed note working from home has reduced sickness absence
- Disabled participants, however, reported unequal treatment from employers depending on their condition – those with conditions with limited public understanding such as Long-Covid reported lower levels of manager support.

### Generating high-quality remote and hybrid jobs to boost labour market participation

Despite a global shift towards remote working, legislation has not kept pace and headline grabbing 'return-to-office' mandates by major employers like Amazon and Asda are a source of concern for disabled workers who may rely on having access to remote or hybrid working to remain in employment.

Whilst the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 allows all employees the right to request flexible working from day one, there are a raft of business grounds on which requests can be denied, meaning workers cannot rely on this route. Some workers may not ask due to stigma around flexible working or fear of negative treatment. Requests for flexible working as a reasonable adjustment have a different status in law, but even then are not always fully implemented. Yet flexibility is key, with a Department for Work and Pensions study showing that a quarter (25%) of those who are out of work and claiming health and disability benefits might be able to work, if they could do this from home.

## Areas for action

In anticipation of the final report of the Inclusive Remote and Hybrid Working Study later in 2025, the Government can start taking action to drive up and sustain employment levels among disabled people now. The aim of the Government should be to embed remote and hybrid jobs in the economy and update employment protections and employer support to ensure these jobs are inclusive of disabled workers' needs.

### 1) Expand remote and hybrid job opportunities

The Employment Rights Bill aims to increase access to flexible work through a strengthened right to request, but more action is needed to increase remote and hybrid work availability.

The UK Government should:

- Ensure the Mayfield Review identifies strategies to expand hybrid jobs, using international best practices
- Promote remote and hybrid work in the public sector and support pilot schemes in sectors like healthcare and education
- Consider requiring employers to advertise flexible work options in job postings.

### 2) Strengthen disabled workers' rights to remote and hybrid work

While the Equality Act 2010 mandates reasonable adjustments for disabled workers, many struggle to secure them due to employer hesitancy, stigma, and slow implementation. Some avoid making requests for fear of negative career impacts.

The UK Government should:

- Shift the responsibility for initiating reasonable adjustments from employees to employers
- Evaluate and improve statutory guidance on remote work as a reasonable adjustment
- Resource the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Fair Work Agency to comprehensively enforce rights.

### 3) Reform the DWP Access to Work Scheme

The Access to Work programme provides vital support but is hindered by long delays, poor awareness and difficulties in transferring support between employers.

The UK Government should:

- Increase funding to clear backlogs and speed up decisions
- Improve outreach to boost awareness among workers and employers
- Allow Universal Credit claimants to apply before securing employment.

### 4) Overhaul the Disability Confident Scheme in step with the proposed Equality (Race and Disability) Bill

The Disability Confident Scheme lacks independent oversight and enforcement.

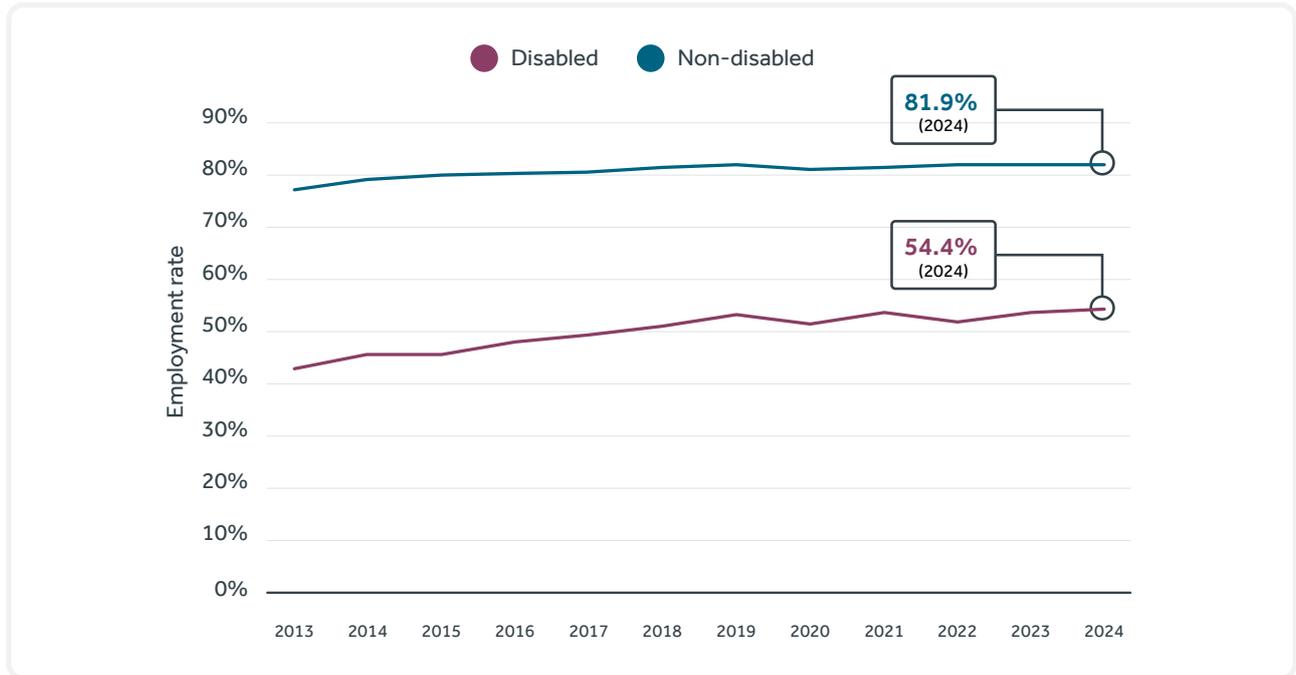
The UK Government should:

- Require large employers (250+ staff) to publish data on reasonable adjustment requests and access to hybrid work
- Mandate minimum disability representation for Level 2 and 3 accredited employers
- Remove accreditation from employers failing to progress beyond Level 1 within three years.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The UK is currently grappling with a health-related workforce participation crisis. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the number of people outside of the labour market due to long-term illness has risen by 689,000 and now sits at 2.77 million.<sup>1</sup> This shift has pushed up annual welfare spending at a time when many employers are struggling to fill vacancies. Meanwhile, progress in narrowing the disability employment gap has been painfully slow and in recent years has almost ground to a halt.

Figure 1: Disability employment gap has narrowed but remains substantial



Source: Work Foundation estimates using Office for National Statistics dataset: *A08 – labour market status of disabled people* (12 November 2024). Table: *Economic activity of people with disabilities aged 16-64: GSS standard levels people, July-September 2013 to 2024*. Due to discontinuity in the data this is only available from 2013 onwards.\*

As a result, supporting more of those who are disabled or have long-term health conditions to remain in, or re-join, the labour market has become a key ambition of the UK Government as part of its wider efforts to boost employment by two million people. Almost one in four working age people are now disabled – meaning that halving the disability employment gap alone would see the Government reach its 80% employment target.<sup>2</sup>

This ambition has been reflected in the publication of a new **Get Britain Working White Paper**, commitments to **reform the Work Capability Assessment**, deliver **welfare spending reductions of more than £3 billion**, and the recently announced **Mayfield Review** into the role of UK employers in promoting healthy and inclusive workplaces.

One area of policy focus has been the role that access to flexible forms of work – including remote and hybrid models – can play in creating pathways into employment.

The huge rise of homeworking over the last five years has meant that for many people who are disabled or have long-term health conditions, this workplace flexibility, which they may have previously sought and been denied or stigmatised for, has now been introduced across whole organisations, providing new opportunities for disabled people to access and sustain healthier work lives. But these gains are precarious – and with any big shift in working practices, there are both advantages and drawbacks.

In the previous Parliament the right to request flexible working from day one was introduced, and the current Government intends to further widen access through the Employment Rights Bill which proposes a new requirement for any refusal of requests to be reasonable. But significant pushback against remote and hybrid work is building. Many organisations have issued 'return-to-office' mandates since the pandemic ended and have begun petitioning Government to dilute or abandon proposed changes.

\* Note: Data from July to September 2022 onwards have been reweighted, causing a step change discontinuity.

Given this contention, policymakers cannot in good faith proceed with the plans of the previous administration to roll back access to health-related welfare benefits on the grounds that “new flexibilities in the labour market” make work accessible to more people.<sup>3</sup>

The reality is, as this report will explore, whilst at their most successful, remote and hybrid working models have the potential to break down barriers to employment for disabled people or those with long-term health conditions, there is some way to go before these jobs are accessible to all.

To inform debate, this interim report provides initial insights from the Inclusive Remote and Hybrid Working Study. It features a survey of 1,221 disabled workers who have experience of remote and hybrid work, over 90 interviews with disabled workers and employers across the UK, and a survey of 1,167 senior business leaders. The full results will be published later this year.

It highlights that demand for remote and hybrid work is outstripping the supply of suitable jobs and underlines the need for employers to design flexible roles well, taking account of the needs and voices of disabled workers. It concludes with recommendations for Government to ensure that remote and hybrid work is made accessible and inclusive for more people.

## 2. DEMAND FOR REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK OUTSTRIPS SUPPLY

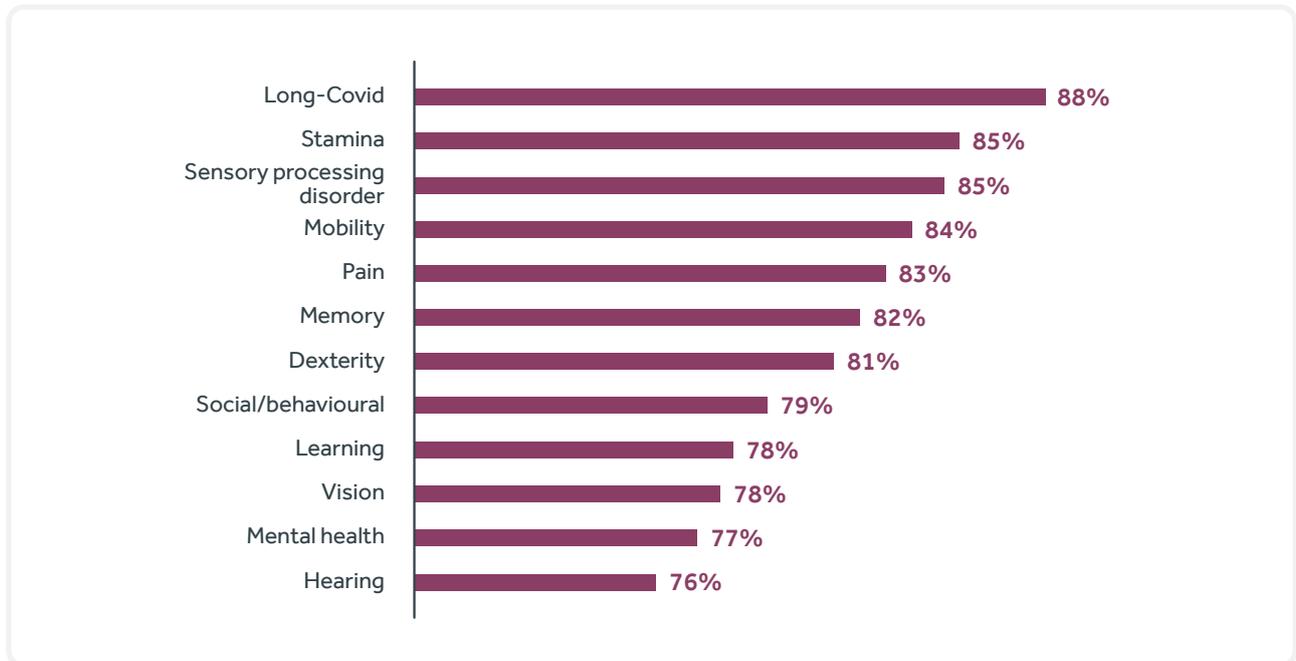
There has long been demand for remote and hybrid working among disabled workers – for many it is a prerequisite to being able to take up and remain in work. But there has been little research into how employment opportunities for disabled people have been impacted by the growth in remote working since the pandemic.

### Demand for remote work is high among disabled people, and varies by condition

The vast majority (85%) of the survey respondents reported that they consider access to remote and hybrid working to be essential or very important when looking for a job. This means that workers with specific needs will be unlikely to apply for a job if they are not guaranteed to obtain some flexibility over their work location.

The need and desire for more remote working is influenced by the type and the severity of the impairment or health condition that people have. For instance, only 12% of workers with Long-Covid indicated they would consider taking a new job where remote work was not available, compared with nearly a quarter (24%) of those who are Deaf or have hearing difficulties.

Figure 2: Proportion of workers who would not consider a job where remote was not available, by reported impairment or long-term health condition



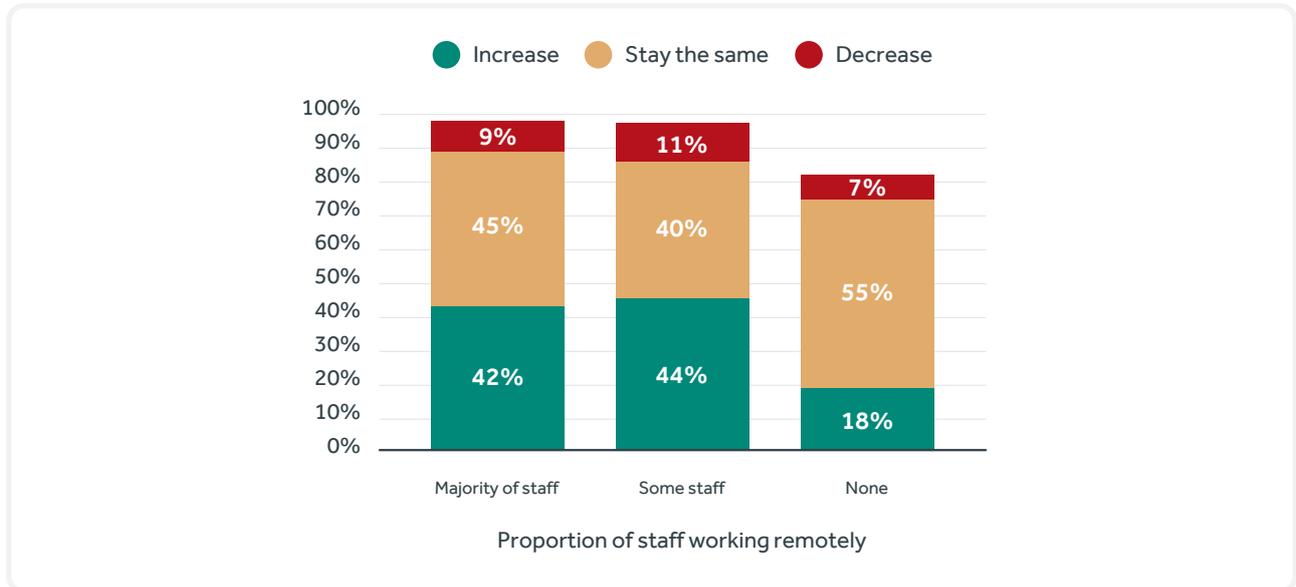
Source: IRHWS survey of 1,221 disabled workers and those with long-term health conditions who were working remotely or in a hybrid way, conducted between 5 June 2023 and 4 February 2024.

### Demand for more remote work is also recognised by employers

Employers themselves indicate that the demand for remote and hybrid roles due to health reasons is on the rise. A recent Work Foundation survey found that 83% of businesses had staff working remotely or in a hybrid way.<sup>4</sup> A significant proportion (43%) of businesses indicated that employee demand for remote working as a way to manage health conditions had increased over the past four years.

This proportion was much lower (18%) for businesses where no staff were on remote or hybrid working arrangements, which suggests that in organisations where there is no culture or support for these ways of working, demand may be suppressed, although not eradicated. It is also likely that the lower perceived demand is due at least in some part to workers self-censoring, as they think a request for remote or hybrid work may not be well received.

**Figure 3: Change in number of workers seeking remote working to manage impairments or long-term health conditions over the last four years**



Source: Work Foundation survey of 1,167 business leaders (C-level or above) in Great Britain between 29 April and 6 May 2024.

### Who works remotely?

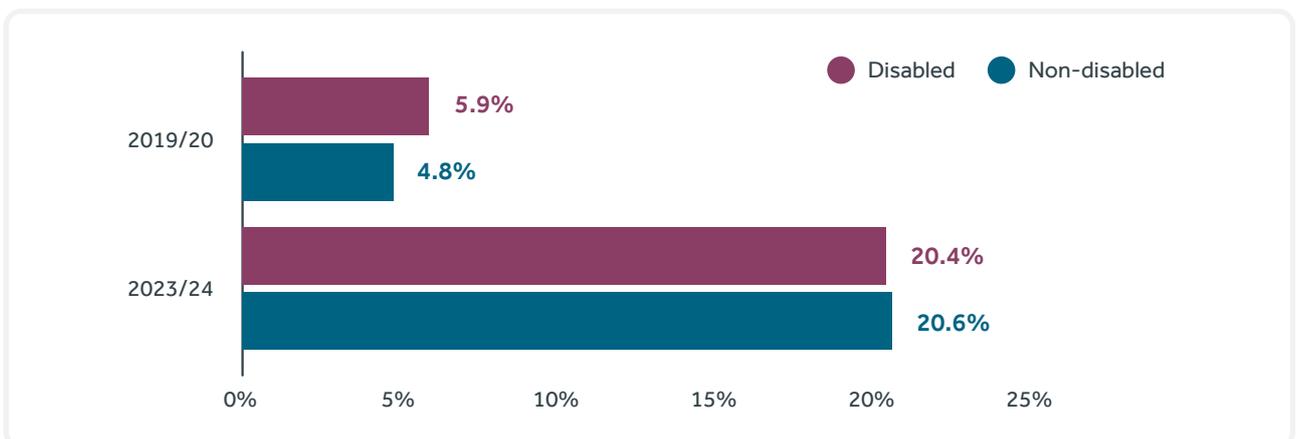
Since a peak following the pandemic, the growth in remote and hybrid work appears to have levelled off and access to these jobs remains unequal.<sup>5</sup> Remote working is dominated by people in senior positions such as managers, directors, and those in professional occupations. Almost one third (32%) of workers in higher managerial occupations indicate they are working mainly from home, compared with 2% in semi-routine occupations such as security guards and 0.5% in routine occupations, such as cashiers and warehouse workers.<sup>6</sup>

In 2024, over two thirds (70.3%) of UK employees reported they did not work remotely.<sup>7</sup> Among the quarter of employees with some remote working:

- 20.6% indicated they mainly work from home
- 8.1% work from different places with home as the base.

Analysis shows that of the 6.64 million workers (20.6%) who mainly work from home, 1.16 million are disabled.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 4: Change in percentage of disabled and non-disabled workers mainly working from home in the UK from between 2019/20 and 2023/24**



Source: Work Foundation estimates using Annual Population Survey microdata provided through the UK Data Service, April 2019–March 2020 and July 2023–June 2024.

The prevalence of remote working was higher among self-employed workers, among whom 28.2% worked mainly from home, and 22.3% worked from different places with home as the base, with 46% of self-employed working in a location separate from home. Furthermore, access to remote work strongly depends on the industry and the job role that people occupy, with 57.4% of IT workers working from home, compared to 10.5% of those working in wholesale and retail.

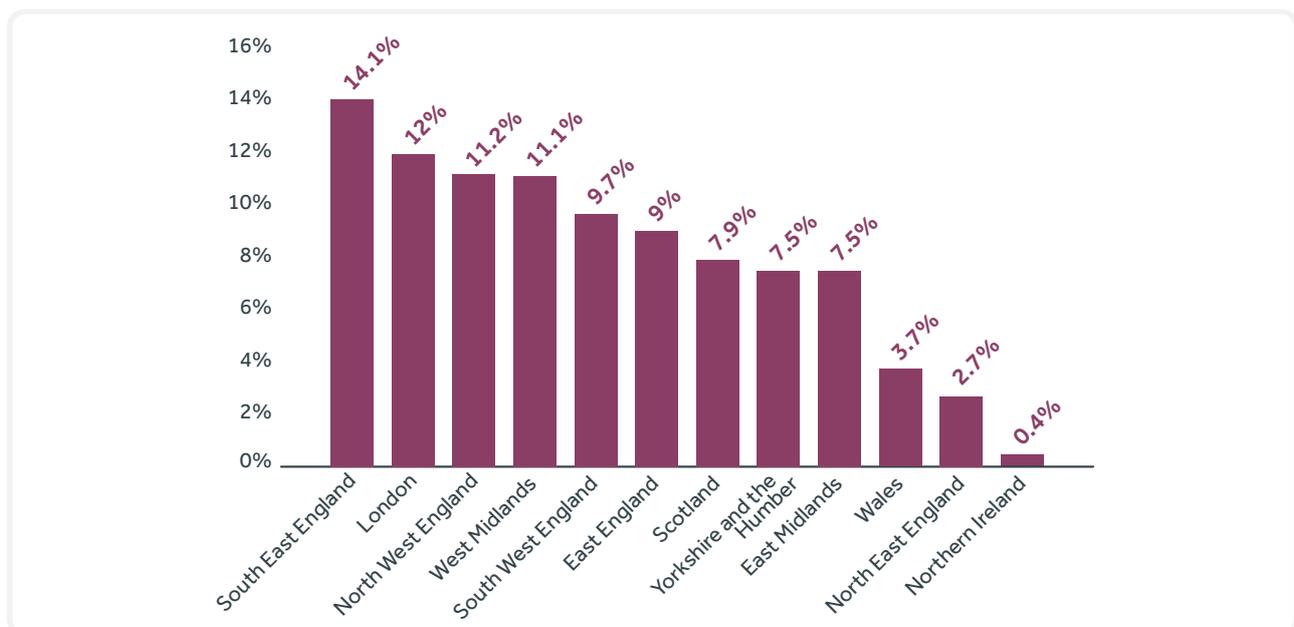
## Advertising gap

Analysis of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) jobs portal, designed to support jobseekers including those in receipt of out-of-work benefits, indicates that there is a dearth of remote jobs being advertised to this audience.

The data shows that in the space of one month (8 December 2024 - 7 January 2025), out of the 94,827 new jobs advertised, only 3.2% had the option of hybrid working while 0.6% were advertised as fully remote. This portal provides a partial picture as vacancies will be concentrated in lower paying sectors, whereas remote work vacancies tend to be concentrated in professional occupations at the top end of the pay distribution.<sup>9</sup> But it is an important lens nonetheless, given the Government's current focus on pathways from welfare to work.

The availability of remote and hybrid jobs advertised on the DWP portal varied by region too, one in four (26%) being advertised in London and the South East of England. This indicates that access to flexible working options varies significantly across regions which can entrench inequalities in labour market participation, especially since the lack of availability and high costs of transport make it difficult for people to commute to places with better jobs.

Figure 5: Distribution of remote and hybrid job vacancies across UK regions



Source: Work Foundation analysis of vacancies data from the DWP Find a Job portal between 8 December 2024 - 7 January 2025.

This inequality in the availability of remote and hybrid work can act as a barrier for disabled people and those with long-term health conditions to entering and progressing in work. People who would like to try out work may find it difficult to do so without some flexibility over their work location, meaning they face a trade-off between progressing in their careers and managing their condition. This new evidence of a supply and demand gap for remote and hybrid work highlights two important points:

- First, explicitly offering **remote and hybrid work is likely to be an attractive feature during recruitment and will expand the pool of applicants**. This is particularly true in regions and sectors of the economy where unemployment is high and flexible working availability is very low.
- Second, **the advertising gap puts disabled workers at a disadvantage**. Although people can request flexible working once having obtained a job, many disabled workers would not apply unless they knew from the onset that remote or hybrid working is possible.

These points emphasise the importance of delivering on flexible work commitments in the Employment Rights Bill in full. It also suggests the need to place a greater expectation on employers to proactively identify and advertise the level of remote and hybrid working available in a vacancy.

### 3. INCLUSIVE REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKING

Remote and hybrid working arrangements have expanded significantly, but their suitability for workers – particularly those who are disabled or have long-term health conditions – varies. These job roles can fall short in addressing the specific needs of individuals, such as younger workers in shared accommodation who lack dedicated office space or disabled workers for whom even infrequent in-person meetings are unfeasible.

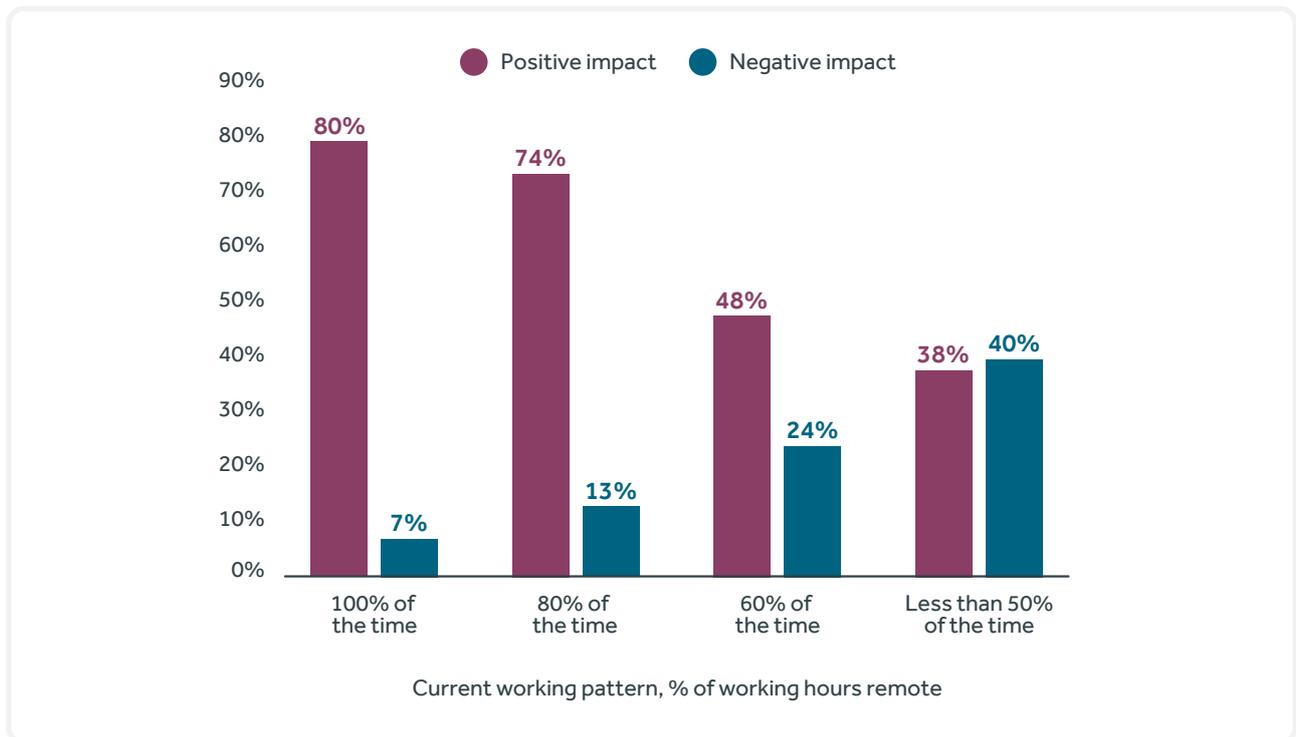
However, when aligned with individual needs, remote and hybrid roles can offer substantial benefits.

#### Benefits

**Health management:** The study participants raised that the flexibility to rest, particularly during flare-ups, and avoid exhausting commutes allows them to continue working effectively. The majority (64%) of fully remote workers surveyed reported positive impacts on their physical health. Similarly, 62% of fully remote workers noted a positive impact on their mental health.

The effects vary, however, based on working patterns and levels of remote work. For many disabled workers, having access to a *fully* remote role better enabled them to manage their health condition. A large majority (80%) of those working remotely the whole week found this working pattern to impact positively on their ability to manage their health condition. This proportion reduces to 38% for those who work remotely less than half of the time and, together with this, the negative impact grows as time spent working remotely decreases.

Figure 6: Ability to manage impairment or long-term health condition, by working arrangement



Source: IRHWS survey of 1,221 disabled workers and those with health conditions who were working remotely or in a hybrid way, conducted between 5 June 2023 and 4 February 2024.

**Productivity:** Study participants reported that their home environment was often more suitable for working. Some also referred to focussed work being easier to complete at home. In addition, being able to better manage their health at home, and the time and energy saved from not commuting to work, led most participants to report that remote work enables them to maximise their productivity. This builds on a previous finding from a study in 2022 that 85% of disabled workers felt more productive when working from home.<sup>10</sup> Reduced sick leave was an advantage noted by both employers and workers, highlighting the mutual benefits of such arrangements.

**Retention:** Interview participants reported that flexible roles can help them remain in work long-term by accommodating health needs. In line with this, a recent Work Foundation study found that autonomy and control can play a critical role in retaining people in employment following a health decline, with access to flexibility making it four times less likely an individual would leave their job.<sup>11</sup>

**Work-life balance:** Remote work enables survey participants to manage fluctuating conditions alongside other responsibilities such as caring. Three in five respondents (59%) with caring and parenting responsibilities reported their current work pattern positively affected their ability to manage these.

## Challenges

Despite such positive impacts, and sometimes concurrent with them, some respondents report downsides to working from home.

**Progression:** A quarter (24%) of disabled workers perceived that working remotely or in a hybrid way had negatively impacted their career progression.

**Unequal support:** The survey highlighted that workers with certain conditions such as Long-Covid or Sensory Processing Disorder faced additional barriers. They reported lower levels of support and understanding from their employer. For instance, only 51% of those with Long-Covid reported their manager had shown they appreciated them. This compares to 71% of those who are Deaf or have hearing impairments and suggests that differentially perceived levels of support at work may be related to the nature, visibility, public comprehension and notions of 'deservingness'<sup>12</sup> of a specific condition.

**Isolation:** Some respondents reported feeling isolated from their colleagues, alongside issues of presenteeism and being unable to "switch off" from their working lives without the experience of a commute outside of the home.

**Equipment and mandated office working:** Participation in hybrid meetings when working from home can also be a challenge, with an absence of accessible technology often resulting in home workers not feeling as part of proceedings as their in-office colleagues. Some interview respondents experienced problems in retaining access to previously agreed reasonable adjustments under new hot-desking systems, as well as negative impacts on their conditions of having to comply with changing goal posts and newly enforced 'return-to-office' mandates.

## One size does not fit all

Nearly one in three (30%) survey respondents indicated an unmet need for more remote working. This suggests that even when remote or hybrid work is offered, this may still partially or fully fail to meet the needs of workers.

It is, however, important to note that going fully remote is not always the right option for everyone. Just over one in ten workers (12%) wanted to work remotely less often than they were currently doing. This highlights that one size does not fit all – autonomy and choice for workers is key.

Study interviews also highlighted a 'policy to practice' gap. Despite organisational policies which may allow remote or hybrid working, individual managers can restrict or increase the number of hours or days spent working remotely. This creates a lottery whereby some workers are appropriately consulted, and others are required to adopt working patterns that do not suit their needs.

This all serves to underline that remote working arrangements must be thoughtfully organised and managed. Crucially:

- workers must be consulted on their preferences for working patterns and have adequate autonomy and choice
- there must be appropriate equipment and procedures, ensuring that workplace adjustments are implemented in all work locations for disabled hybrid workers
- there must be policy and good practice on safe working hours and disconnecting from work
- teams and individuals should be supported to work together productively regardless of location.

The risks involved in failing to manage this are substantial, and may include inadvertently creating new workplace inequalities.

## 4. ROLLING OUT REMOTE AND HYBRID JOBS FOR INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

Employers who push back on remote and hybrid models risk undoing the progress that has been made since the pandemic. Good work design is essential, and Government can play a key role in supporting employers to improve working arrangements.

To drive up employment levels and particularly sustainable employment among disabled people, the aim of the Government should be twofold:

- Increase levels of remote and hybrid jobs in the economy
- Encourage employers to comply with employment protections that enable more workers to have control and flexibility over their work location.

### 1) Stimulate the provision and visibility of remote and hybrid working opportunities

Remote and hybrid working is far from the norm in the UK. Analysis by the Work Foundation has found that 70.3% of UK employees did not work remotely and that in the span of a month (7 December – 7 January 2025) only 3.8% of jobs on the DWP Find a Job portal were advertised as remote or hybrid.

This lack of remote and hybrid jobs creates a barrier to sustainable employment for many disabled people, which is further compounded by the overrepresentation of disabled people in industries with lower prevalences of hybrid working.<sup>13</sup>

The Government is looking to promote the option of remote and hybrid working through measures in the Employment Rights Bill by preventing employers from rejecting requests for flexible working, unless their grounds for rejection are reasonable. This is a positive step, however, greater intervention is required if remote and hybrid working is to become accessible for more people.

The UK Government should:

- Ensure the forthcoming Mayfield Review examines ways for Government to proactively boosting the number of remote and hybrid jobs in the labour market, including by looking to international examples for inspiration
- Promote remote and hybrid working in the public sector and support pilot schemes across the economy in sectors where arrangements are more difficult to implement, such as teaching and healthcare
- Explore a legal duty to publish flexible working options in job advertisements building on research commissioned by the Government Equalities Office<sup>14</sup> on the benefits of proactive advertising.

### 2) Strengthen disabled workers' ability to access remote and hybrid work as a reasonable adjustment

Under the Equality Act 2010 employers must make any adjustment that is reasonable to avoid specified disadvantages experienced by disabled workers. While this serves as a vital protection, and is one route through which disabled workers can access remote and hybrid working, it can be a complex process in which the exact adjustments required are not clear.<sup>15, 16</sup>

An employer's duty is often mediated by a lack of awareness, fear of getting it wrong and broader societal discrimination.<sup>17</sup> Are the decision by an individual to submit a request for reasonable adjustments is often informed by fear of stigmatisation, rejection and the harm it could cause to a career.<sup>18</sup> As a result, many decide it is in their interest not to make a request or opt to delay, which may undermine their ability to sustain employment.<sup>19, 20</sup>

Those who do submit a request often find the process to be long and arduous,<sup>21, 22</sup> with many people having to rely on their own assertiveness to secure the necessary changes.<sup>23</sup> Even when successful, many find the implementation of adjustments to be slow and that they do not meet all of their needs.<sup>24, 25</sup> Those who have requests rejected have the option to challenge their employer's decision at a tribunal, however, this is expensive and time-consuming.<sup>26</sup>

The UK Government should:

- Engage employers and disability rights groups through the Mayfield Review to identify effective mechanisms for rebalancing the responsibility for initiating reasonable adjustments from employee to employer
- Undertake an evaluation of statutory guidance for employers including on remote and hybrid working as a reasonable adjustment and timeframes for responding to requests
- Resource the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Fair Work Agency to comprehensively monitor and enforce rights.

### 3) Reform the DWP Access to Work service to improve awareness of the scheme, increase funding and ensure awards are passported between employers.

Access to Work provides extra financial support to people with long-term physical or mental health conditions to obtain or remain in employment. Independent evaluations have praised the scheme for providing vital support for claimants to remain in work, enhancing wellbeing and reducing sickness and absenteeism.<sup>27, 28, 29</sup>

Access to Work currently has a substantial backlog of cases with many applicants waiting months for a decision, contributing to job losses and preventing disabled people from starting employment.<sup>30, 31, 32</sup> Further shortcomings of the scheme include poor awareness and understanding of Access to Work, issues with passporting awards between organisations and an inability for jobseekers to pre-emptively apply for support.<sup>33, 34</sup>

The UK Government should:

- Increase funding for Access to Work to enhance the programme's capacity to address existing backlogs and reduce wait times
- Step up Government outreach efforts to enhance awareness and understanding of the scheme among both employers and workers, including a specific focus on supporting remote and hybrid working
- Allow Universal Credit claimants to apply for Access to Work support during their job seeking trajectory and ensure awards can be passported between employers.

### 4) Overhaul the Disability Confident Scheme and align with the proposed Equality (Race and Disability) Bill

Disability Confident is a three-tiered accreditation scheme designed to promote the employment of disabled people. It has faced criticism for its failure to achieve this aim and has come under scrutiny for its lack of an independent inspection regime.<sup>35, 36</sup> The proposed Equality (Race and Disability) Bill sets out a series of measures that will expand the available data on disabled people's experience of work including mandatory disability pay gap reporting for large employers. This provides an opportunity to align these initiatives and provide disabled people with information to inform their employment choices, including on flexible working availability.

The UK Government should:

- Expand the proposed Equality (Race and Disability) Bill to require all large employers (more than 250 staff) to publish rates of reasonable adjustment requests and implementation, and the proportion of workforce who have access to remote and hybrid working
- Implement the recommendation of the Disability Employment Charter requiring all employers at Disability Confident Levels 2 and 3 to meet minimum thresholds regarding the percentage of disabled people in their workforce. This should include removing accreditation from employers that do not move up from Level 1 to Levels 2 or 3 within three years.<sup>37</sup>

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For further information about this policy briefing, please contact: [info@theworkfoundation.com](mailto:info@theworkfoundation.com).

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research employs mixed methods, combining quantitative and qualitative elements:

1. Initial insights from a new online survey of over 1,221 disabled workers on their experience of remote and hybrid working between 5 June 2023 and 4 February 2024, supplemented by 49 interviews with employers and managers and 45 interviews with disabled workers. The full results will be published later this year.
2. Annual Population Survey data: Work Foundation analysis of survey microdata available through the UK Dataservice, April 2019-March 2020 and July 2023 to June 2024.
3. DWP Find a Job portal: Analysis of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) jobs portal of 94,827 new jobs advertised from 8 December 2024 to 7 January 2025.
4. Survey of business leaders: The Work Foundation commissioned Survation to conduct a survey with 1,167 senior business leaders across Great Britain in May 2024 to gather insights into employer perspectives on health-related job retention and workplace support.

