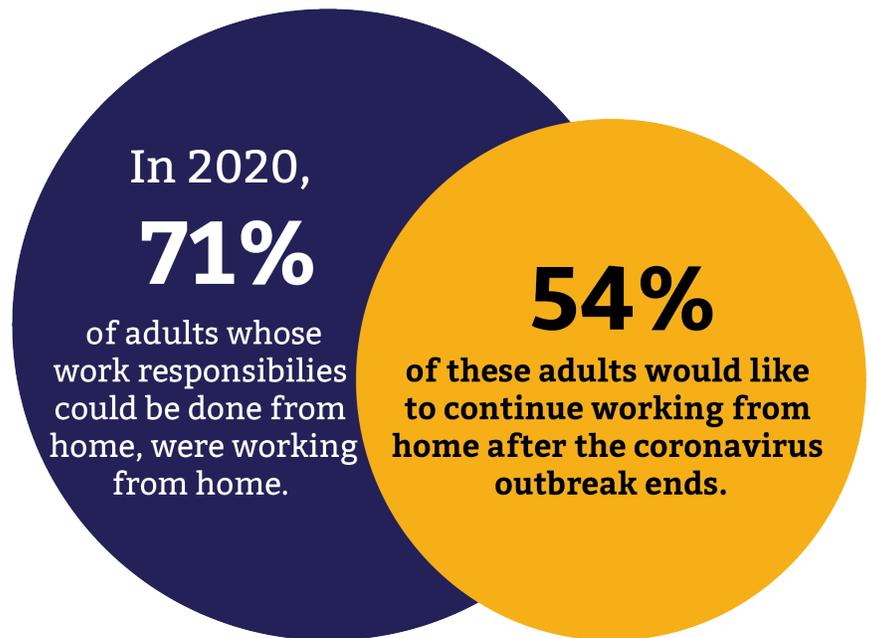


# TELEWORK IN ACTION: A DISABILITY INCLUSION PRACTICE WHOSE TIME HAS ARRIVED

## Telework as the “New Normal”

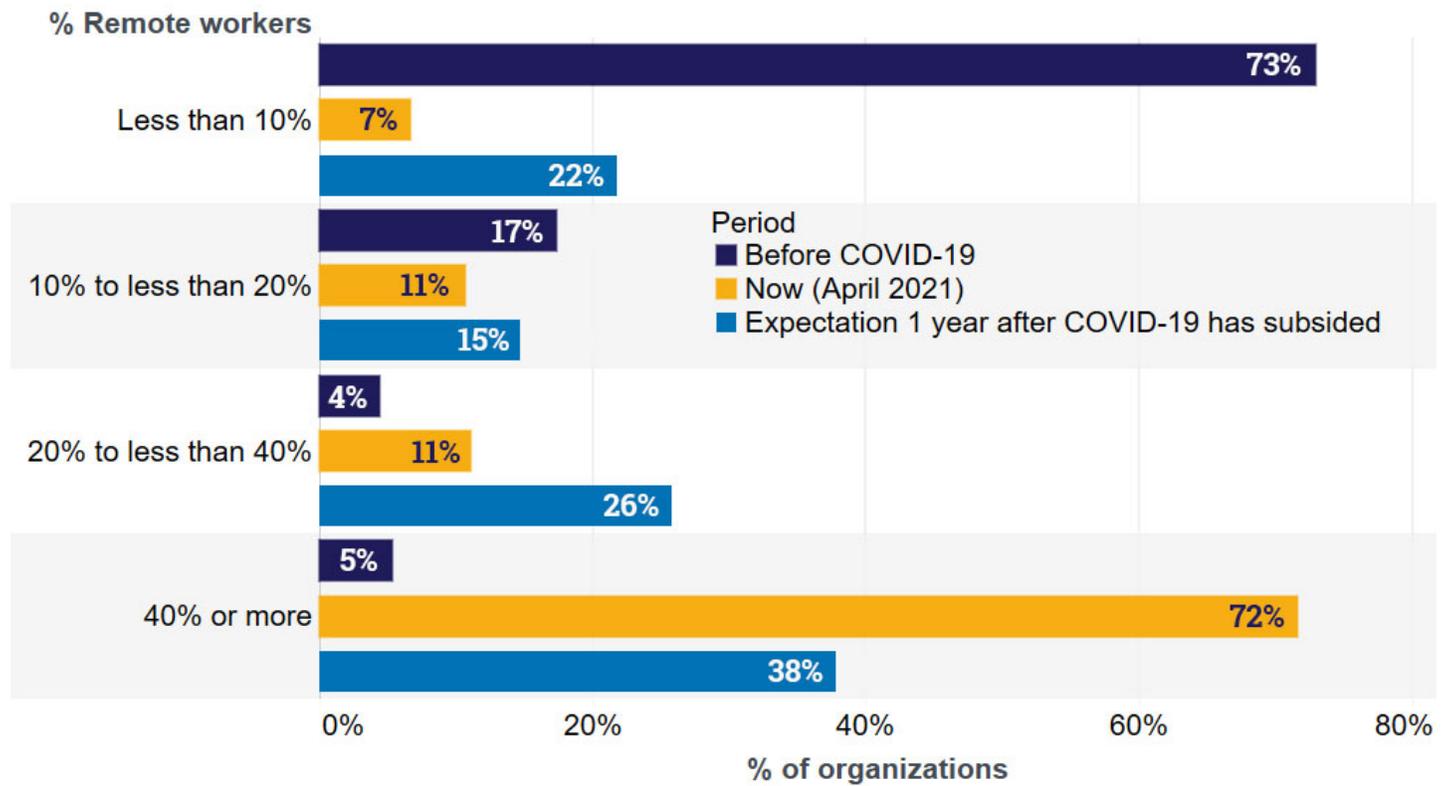
The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant changes to the American workforce, including how organizations recruit, hire, onboard, compensate and evaluate their employees. It has also caused an unprecedented shift to telework for a large percentage of the U.S. workforce, including many occupations that did not previously offer opportunities for remote work. In a survey conducted by the [Pew Research Center](#) in October 2020, 71% of respondents whose work responsibilities could be done from home were teleworking, and 54% of those respondents indicated that they would like to continue working from home after the pandemic is over.



Information from the Pew Research Center

As the Pew survey indicates, telework is likely to remain an integral part of the workplace of the future. According to a [survey](#) conducted by The Conference Board in April 2021, more than one third of human capital executives reported that they expect a significant number of their employees (40% or more) will continue to work primarily from home one year after the pandemic subsides.

## What percent of your US full-time employees are working primarily virtually/remotely (at least three days a week)?



n = 225

Source: The Conference Board

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This dramatic shift to remote work has the potential to create new opportunities for employers and workers, including those with disabilities. This could be possible if efforts are made to ensure fairness, equity and inclusion so that all who are able to and want to telework can do so.

## Benefits of Telework for Employers and People with Disabilities

One of the main benefits to employers of allowing telework is access to a much [wider talent pool](#). If geographic considerations are no longer a factor, organizations can select the best person for the job regardless of where they live. In addition, employees who have the opportunity to telework have reported being happier and more productive. [A survey conducted by McKinsey & Company](#) found that 80% of remote workers said they enjoy working from home and 69% said they are just as or more productive at home as in the office. Similarly, [more than half](#) of the 1,000 U.S. workers surveyed by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) said they would choose to work from home on a full-time basis if given the option, and 35% would accept a reduction in salary to do so.

For people with disabilities, telework helps [reduce or completely remove barriers](#) such as lack of accessible transportation, limited job opportunities where they live and the need to take time off for medical appointments. In addition, working from home can be considered a [reasonable accommodation](#) under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Disability advocates believe widespread use of telework could make [federal employment](#) more accessible to people with disabilities. There are similar opportunities in the private sector as well as many companies are considering moving to a [hybrid work model](#) for the immediate future.

## Ensuring Remote Work is Equitable, Inclusive and Accessible

According to the [Census Bureau](#), more than a third of U.S. households reported working from home more frequently during the pandemic, but the percentage who made the switch to remote work varied widely across sociodemographic groups. Respondents who indicated they were offered the opportunity to telework generally reported higher levels of income and education and better health status. [Studies](#) have also shown that the opportunity to telework differs greatly depending on race, with Black and Hispanic workers less likely to have jobs that allow them to telework than White and Asian workers.

To ensure fairness, equity and inclusion for everyone, it's important that organizations evaluate their telework policies and practices. As part of this review, organizations should consider the accessibility and usability of all information and communication technology (ICT) used for teleworking, including meeting platforms and software applications and operating systems used for email and other electronic correspondence. To learn more about digital accessibility, watch the archive of the EARN webinar, [Digital Accessibility: Driving Disability Inclusion in the Workplace](#) and read the accompanying [learning guide](#). To learn more about developing disability-inclusive telework policies, read EARN's [Adopting an Integrated Telework Policy for Employees With and Without Disabilities](#).

Read more about the future of remote work and considerations for people with disabilities in EARN's "[Leveraging the Shift to Remote Work to Increase Employment of People with Disabilities](#)."

## RESOURCES

- [EARN Guide: Adopting an Integrated Telework Policy for Employees With and Without Disabilities](#)
- [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\) Guidance: Work at Home/Telework as a Reasonable Accommodation](#)
- [The Conference Board Report: The Reimagined Workplace a Year Later: Human Capital Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Economic Policy Institute Blog Post: Not everybody can work from home: Black and Hispanic workers are much less likely to be able to telework](#)
- [Forbes Article: Working From Home Opens The Door To Employing People With Disabilities](#)

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