

# Who Works from Home?

Remote Work, Gender Equity, and the Access Gap

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# Executive Summary

Despite ongoing headlines suggesting a mass return to office, the work from home revolution jumpstarted by the pandemic is in full effect. Work from home rates are nearly quadruple what they were before the COVID-19 pandemic and nearly 36 million people — more than one in five workers — telework at least some of their hours. Nevertheless, research shows that many workers would like to telework more than they already are, raising questions for policy-makers, businesses, unions and workers themselves on how to equitably and effectively approach this new way of working. But the conversation about telework goes beyond workplaces. It is also a conversation about workers' experiences managing work and family responsibilities in the modern era — especially women workers.

In light of these significant trends reshaping work, flexibility and caregiving, we offer a new analysis of telework. We illuminate who is teleworking — and who isn't. We detail how telework impacts a range of gender-equity concerns, both on the job and at home. Finally, we offer policy options designed to capitalize on the positive impacts of telework while mitigating its downsides.

Our new analysis finds that, though differences in telework by race, education level and age are the most pronounced, there is a notable — and persistent — gender gap. Across nearly every demographic group — race, age, disability, marital status, parental status and more — women workers are more likely to work from home at least some hours than are men. We find:

- Women are the majority of teleworkers, and a quarter of working women work from home at least some hours, compared to one in five working men.
- Half of women who telework — more than 9 million women — are fully remote, working all their hours off-site.
- Women are more likely to telework than men across nearly all racial and ethnic groups.
- Parents are more likely to telework than non-parents — and mothers are more likely to telework than fathers.
- Among workers with less educational attainment, women are substantially more likely to telework than men. Among workers with advanced degrees, men are more likely to telework than women.
- Telework rates are very low among low-paid workers, though even these workers have a gender gap.

Our analysis also suggests that factors that shape women's employment overall — undervaluing women's work and underpaying women for their labor — also shape access to telework opportunities. These patterns, which particularly impact women of color and disabled women, mean that women are overrepresented in jobs with lower wages and worse benefits and conditions, a phenomenon researchers call occupational segregation. The consequences of occupational segregation are also evident in disparities in telework rates among women, with highly educated women teleworking more than women with lower educational attainment, and white women and Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) women teleworking more than Black, American Indian/Alaska Native and Latina women.

While we find that women workers have the same or higher rates of telework than men in nearly three-quarters of jobs; we also document that in some of the most common occupations for women, including nurses, teachers, cashiers, retail salespersons and waitresses, women's telework rates are far below average — and in some cases are

close to zero. We examine implications for both groups of women — those teleworking and those in jobs where they do not have this option.

The ability to telework has substantial implications for gender equity. Early evidence suggests that the flexibility that comes with telework can especially support women's, disabled workers' and caregivers' labor force participation, economic security and ability to manage work and family responsibilities. Research shows that:

- Work from home opportunities improve women's labor force participation by removing barriers and decreasing their likelihood to exit the workforce, particularly for mothers of young children.
- Telework positions may reduce or eliminate discrimination in hiring for mothers.
- Improved flexibility for working fathers may result in more equitable caregiving by parents.
- Working from home can be a critical accommodation for some disabled workers, better enabling their participation in the workforce.

Though many CEOs have cited productivity as the impetus to bring workers back to the office, there is little evidence supporting this rationale. In fact, researchers have documented that return-to-office mandates drive down employee satisfaction while not improving firm financial metrics. Instead, telework opportunities often benefit employers, including through reduced costs, improved morale and retention, and access to a more diverse applicant pool.

Despite the scope of telework's implications for women's labor force participation, families' economic security, job quality and the economy, decisions about telework access have largely been left in the hands of employers. This has created a chaotic environment where employers, including government employers, can make capricious yet consequential decisions for workers with few constraints. We make the case that telework should be governed by laws and policies. We conclude with policy proposals for how to equitably increase telework opportunities. We contend that:

- Firms considering mandatory return-to-work policies should evaluate the existing data on benefits for workers and employers before mandating full-time in-office policies without evidence-based justification.
- Thoughtful design and implementation of a telework program is essential to prevent discrimination and ensure accessibility.
- Anti-discrimination training, policies and enforcement must account for telework.
- Policymakers should consider policies that enable workers to equitably access telework and other workplace flexibilities, such as laws that support flexible work arrangements in Australia, the United Kingdom and the European Union.
- To ensure that implementation of telework policies — and the resulting benefits — does not exacerbate existing systemic inequities, it is even more important to guarantee that women are equitably represented in high-paying jobs. We must also raise wages and improve the quality of all jobs.
- We should invest in research and data to better understand the impact of telework on workers' wages, caregiving responsibilities and labor force participation.

However, telework is but one tool for empowering workers and improving gender equity — and it's a tool that is not available to millions of workers. All workers — especially women — still need living wages and workplace supports, including equal pay, affordable child care, paid family and medical leave, paid sick days, aging and disability care supports, fair and predictable work schedules, and protections from discrimination.

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# Introduction

Despite months of headlines highlighting return-to-office policies, working from home continues to shape the nation’s workplaces.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 36 million people — 22 percent of the U.S. workforce — telework<sup>2</sup> at least some of their hours.<sup>3</sup> Women are the majority of teleworkers. They are also especially likely to telework: A quarter of women work from home at least some hours, compared to one in five men.<sup>4</sup>

Research suggests that teleworking has numerous benefits, especially for women, when it comes to balancing work and family responsibilities. It has been linked to increasing women’s participation in the labor force, reducing the motherhood penalty — women often face declines in employment and wages after becoming parents — and more, making it an important tool for increasing gender equity.<sup>5</sup> But workers want more telework opportunities than employers offer<sup>6</sup> and more than half of jobs are not eligible for telework,<sup>7</sup> with notable industry disparities by gender, race and ethnicity.<sup>8</sup> This means many workers cannot access these benefits, including many hourly workers in industries that have high rates of scheduling instability,<sup>9</sup> as well as the vast majority of workers with lower educational attainment.<sup>10</sup> As a result, many workers in low-wage occupations that employ large numbers of women, such as cashiers, retail salespersons and waiters and waitresses, cannot telework.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, despite the positive implications of telework for workers’ labor force participation, economic security and caregiving responsibilities, we have largely treated telework as a business decision, rather than a public policy concern. This leaves workers at the mercy of winning the “boss lottery” at a time when bosses are pressuring or mandating workers’ return to the office, despite little evidence for increased productivity or business gains. While telework rates have remained relatively steady since 2023, recent trends<sup>12</sup> suggest we could miss out on these benefits if we do not prioritize telework as a key workplace flexibility.

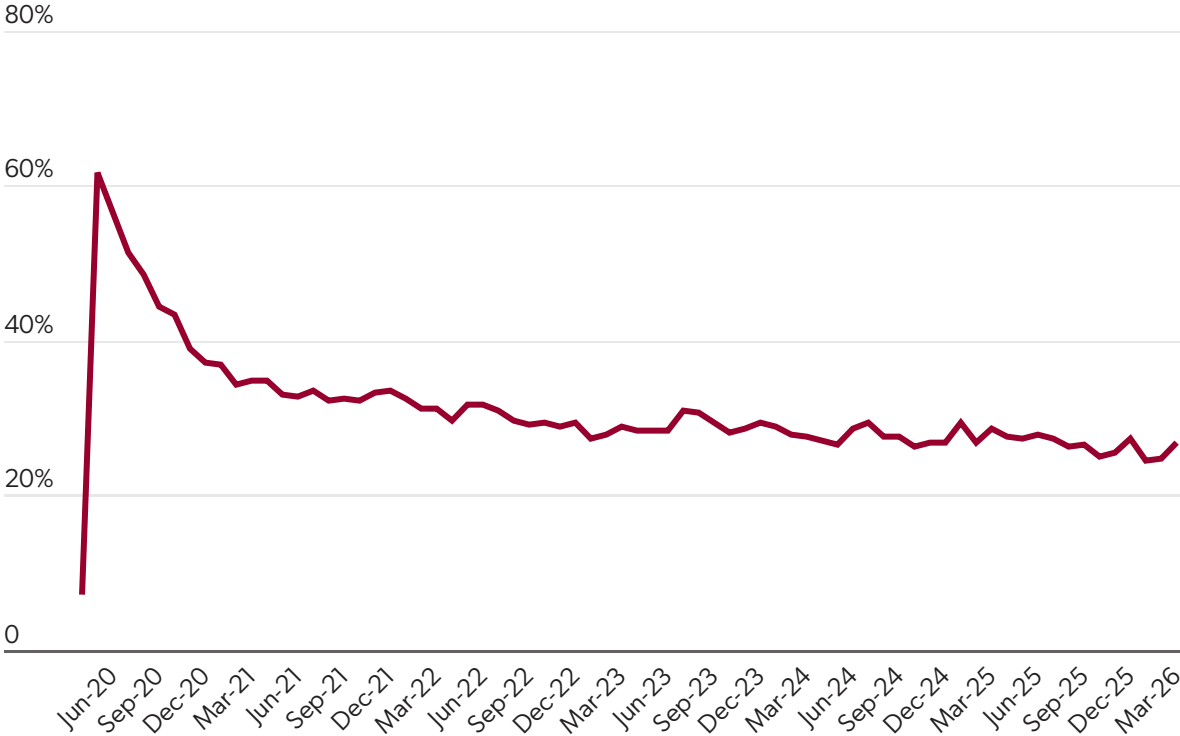
We make the case that it is time for thoughtful policy proposals and guardrails to capitalize on the gender equity and business benefits of telework while mitigating downsides. This report analyzes who is teleworking — and who isn’t. We assess why telework is an important tool for workers, providing additional flexibility and opportunities for balancing their work and lives, which is particularly important for working moms, caregivers and disabled workers. We offer proposals for how to thoughtfully and equitably increase telework opportunities when possible and suggest options for new policy proposals.

To be clear, these proposals are part of a broader economic agenda to address the inequities women face in the workplace. They exist alongside the other policies workers need, including fair pay, anti-discrimination enforcement, paid family and medical leave, paid sick days, aging and disability care supports, child care and predictable scheduling. Telework is not a replacement for these critical workplace labor standards. It is, however, a long-ignored public policy lever that has the potential to improve the lives of workers — at home and on the job — while increasing gender equity and boosting economic growth.

# Rates of Telework have Remained Fairly Steady in Recent Years — But are Trending Slightly Down

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically accelerated a long-growing trend toward increased telework.<sup>13</sup> Data from the U.S. Survey of Working Arrangements and Attitudes shows that the overall rate of telework skyrocketed during the early days of COVID, with the share of full paid days worked at home peaking at more than 60 percent in the spring of 2020.<sup>14</sup> After this peak, the share of days worked from home declined steeply, stabilizing in 2023 at four times pre-COVID levels — though rates have ticked down slightly since early 2025.<sup>15</sup>

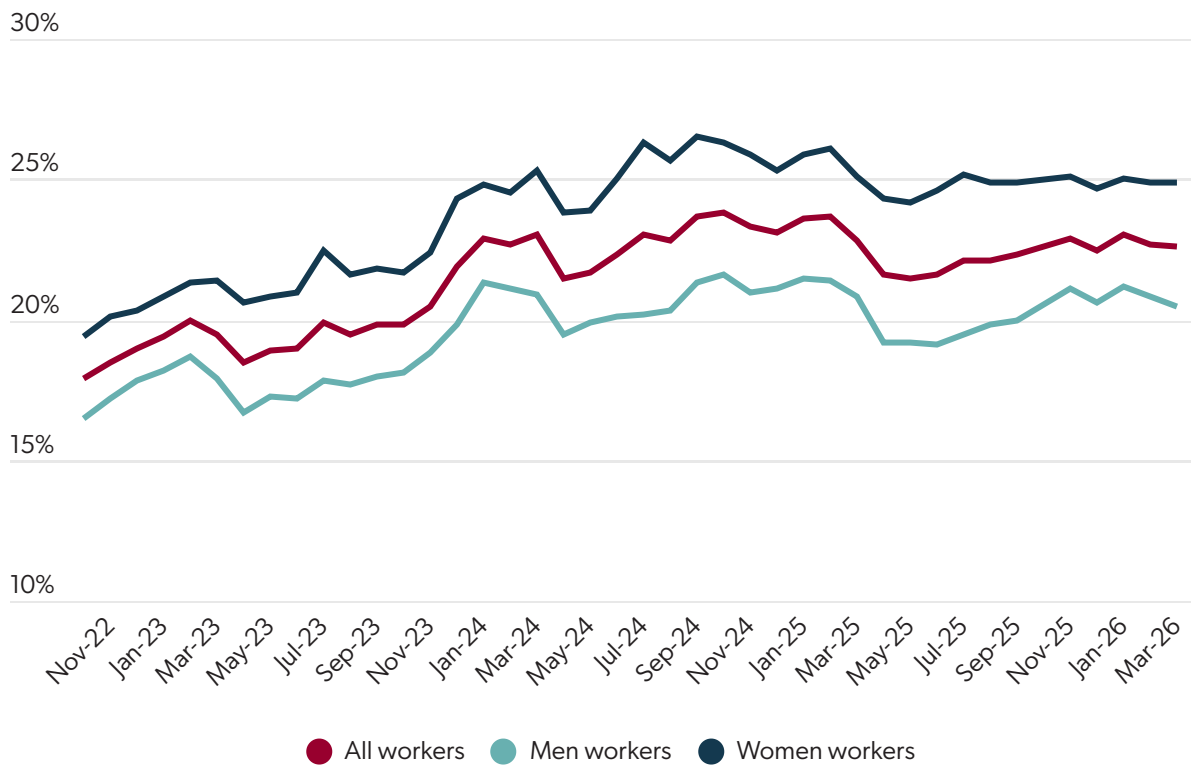
The telework rate is fairly steady in recent years



Source: Survey of Working Arrangements and Attitudes (SWAA)  
Share of days worked from home, retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey uses a slightly different measure of working from home<sup>16</sup> but demonstrates the same general trend — fairly steady rates of the share of workers who telework in recent years, with current rates slightly below those from a few years ago.<sup>17</sup> These data also reveal a steady gender gap, with women workers consistently reporting somewhat higher rates of telework.

## Women are more likely to telework than men



Source: Current Population Survey. Telework rates by gender and for workers overall.

While we focus on all teleworkers, it is notable that close to half of all those who telework — nearly 17 million workers — work remotely, spending all of their hours off-site.<sup>18</sup> The share of teleworkers who are fully remote is down compared to 2023,<sup>19</sup> likely due in part to return-to-office policies. We find that among teleworkers, women are more likely to be fully remote, compared to men. Half of women who telework — more than 9 million women — work fully remotely, compared to 43 percent of men who telework.<sup>20</sup> Among teleworkers, disabled workers — both men and women — are more likely to work remotely, compared to their nondisabled counterparts. Among teleworkers, mothers are far more likely to work remotely than fathers, with the largest gender differences among parents with a child under 5. Within racial and ethnic groups, women teleworkers are more likely to work remotely than men of the same group. Disabled, American Indian/Alaska Native and Black women have the highest shares of teleworkers who work remotely: among these groups, at least 55 percent of teleworkers are fully remote.<sup>21</sup>

# Who is Teleworking — and Who Isn't<sup>22</sup>

**Women's role in the paid labor market has long been shaped by a variety of factors**, including women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work and the lack of investment in family friendly policies;<sup>23</sup> their concentration in certain occupations, especially low-wage jobs; their lack of representation in STEM industries and more.<sup>24</sup> The nation's history of undervaluing and underpaying women's labor — particularly the labor of women of color and disabled women — has resulted in occupational segregation, where women are overrepresented in jobs with lower wages and worse benefits and conditions.<sup>25</sup> Women of color and disabled women face particular barriers in the paid labor force due to compounded discrimination, which can affect all aspects of their jobs, including hiring, pay and promotions. Women also face harassment in the workplace.<sup>26</sup> Just as these forces shape women's wages and employment opportunities, they can also shape women's access to workplace benefits and flexibilities, including telework. Our work suggests that many of these same factors may play a role in access to telework opportunities and that we must understand who is and isn't teleworking against a broader backdrop of history, social forces and policy choices that have shaped this employment landscape.

The importance of telework — especially for women — indicates a huge unmet need for flexibility in the workplace. The need for flexibility is particularly acute because policymakers have largely failed to create family-supportive policies that help workers manage work and caregiving needs. As a result, telework policies can especially benefit workers who are also caregivers.<sup>27</sup>

Workers with higher educational attainment who work in well-compensated fields are the most likely to telework. Even though these workers are more likely to have access to family supports like paid leave and child care, their high rates of telework indicate that workers benefit from the flexibility of telework in conjunction with other family-supportive policies.

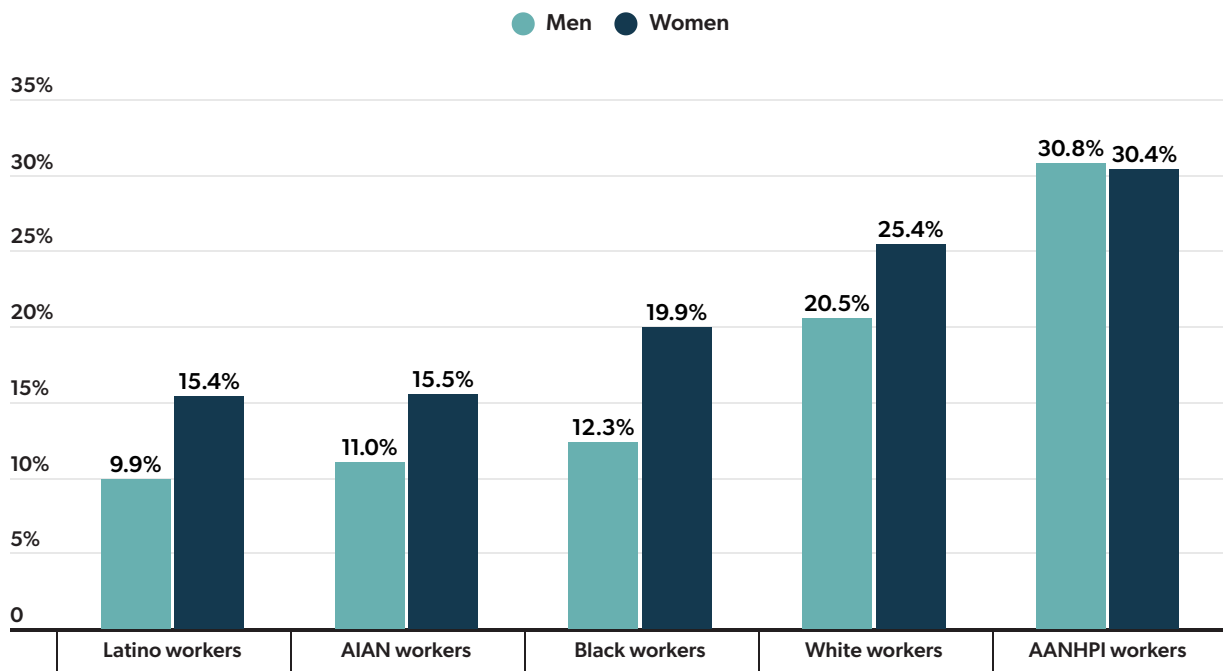
At the same time, the lack of telework availability for many workers — especially those who are least likely to work in jobs that offer paid leave, paid sick days and more — underscores the bind these workers are facing. These workers have even fewer options that provide flexibility in managing their work and lives.

**Women are more likely to telework across nearly all demographic groups.** Our analysis shows that nearly 36 million workers — 22 percent of the U.S. workforce — telework at least some of their hours. Many of the largest differences in telework rates are by race, education and age. But across nearly every demographic group — race, age, disability status, marital status, parental status and more — women workers are more likely to report teleworking at least some hours than are men, with only a few exceptions.<sup>28</sup> And gender gaps tend to be especially large for some workers with lower rates of telework, such as workers with lower levels of educational attainment.

**Teleworking is most common among workers in middle age**, though their rates are not substantially higher than workers age 55 and older. Young workers — especially those under 25 — are least likely to telework. Women are more likely to telework than are men in every age group, though the gaps are the narrowest among the youngest and oldest workers. The gender gap in telework is largest for men and women ages 25 to 44, where 28 percent of women workers telework, compared to 21 percent of men.

**Women are more likely to telework than men across nearly all racial and ethnic groups.**<sup>29</sup> Gender gaps by race and ethnicity vary dramatically, with Black, Latino and American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) workers experiencing the largest differences, while AANHPI workers have virtually no gap. However, the more dramatic differences in telework are across race. More than three in 10 AANHPI workers (31 percent) telework, as do close to one-quarter (23 percent) of white workers, compared to 16 percent of Black workers, 13 percent of AIAN workers and 12 percent of Latino workers. Racial disparities in telework rates are smaller among women than men. Among women, AANHPI women workers have the highest rates of telework at 30 percent, nearly double the rates of Latina workers (15 percent). Among men, 31 percent of AANHPI men telework at least some of their hours, triple the rates of Latino men (10 percent).

## Women are more likely to telework than men across nearly all racial and ethnic groups



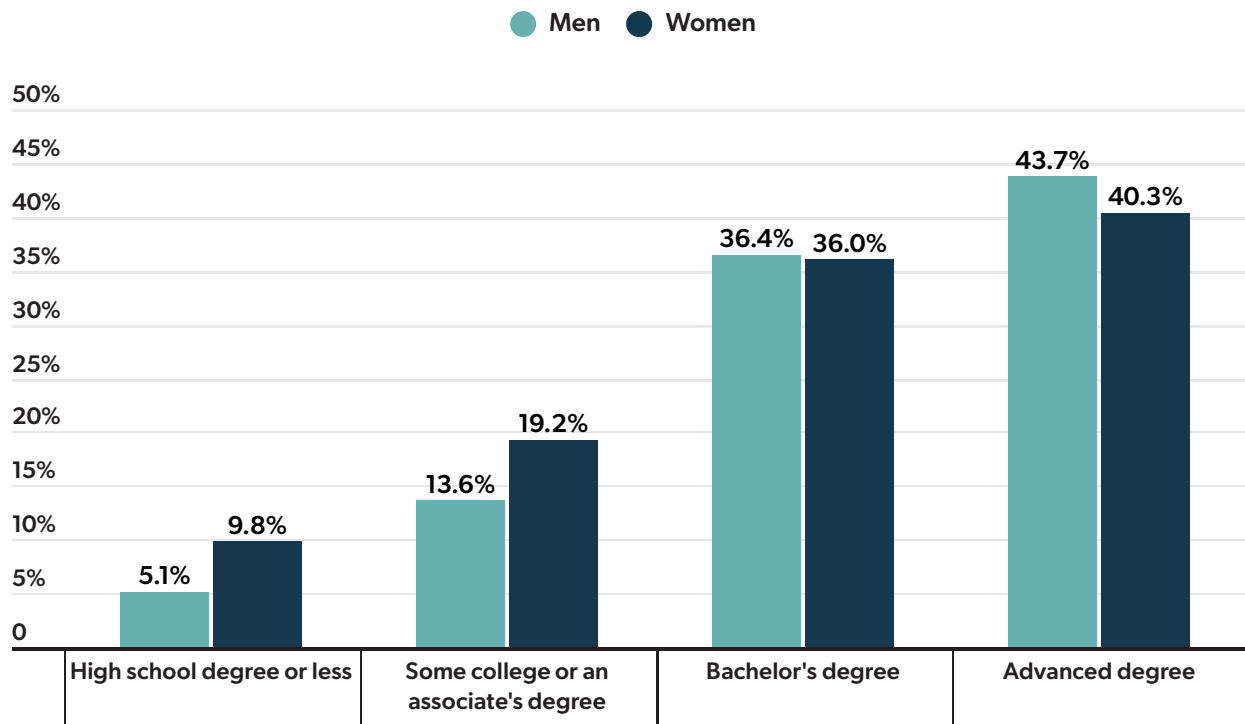
Share of each group's workforce in the U.S. that teleworks at least some hours.

Source: National Partnership analysis of Current Population survey data, 2025 annual averages. Latinos can be of any race.

**Gender differences in telework rates are largest among workers with lower educational attainment — and reverse among workers with the highest educational attainment.** Workers with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to telework than those with less than a bachelor's degree, but the disparities are greater among men than among women. Men with an advanced degree are 8.5 times more likely to telework at least some hours, compared to men with a high school education or less. Among women, those with an advanced degree are more than four times as likely to telework some hours, compared to women with a high school degree

or less. Among workers with a high school degree or less, women are nearly twice as likely to telework as men, while among workers with an advanced degree, men are slightly more likely to telework than women.

## Women are more likely to telework than men among workers with lower educational attainment



Share of each group's workforce in the U.S. that teleworks at least some hours.

Source: National Partnership analysis of Current Population survey data, 2025 annual averages.

**Telework rates are very low among low-paid workers.** Among workers who make \$15 per hour or less, 7 percent of men telework, as do 9 percent of women.<sup>30</sup> These figures are roughly one-third of the overall telework rates for all men and women workers, respectively.

**Across all types of disability, women workers are more likely to telework than men.** Overall, just over a quarter of disabled<sup>31</sup> women workers telework, similar to rates for nondisabled women workers, and higher rates than for men (roughly one in five men, regardless of whether they have a disability, teleworks). About three in 10 women workers who have difficulty with self care teleworks.

**Parents are more likely to telework than non-parents — and mothers are more likely to telework than fathers.**<sup>32</sup> Mothers are more likely to telework than fathers, particularly among parents with a child under the age of five.

Both mothers and fathers are more likely to telework than women or men overall, respectively. All parents are more likely to telework compared to men and women who do not currently have their own minor children living at home.

## The Role of Occupation in Telework Opportunities

Our analysis shows that within occupations, women are generally more likely to telework. In the more than 120 occupations for which telework rates are available for both women and men, women have the same or higher rates of telework than men in nearly three quarters of those occupations.<sup>33</sup>

However, occupational segregation — the concentration of different groups of workers in different occupations that results from an ongoing legacy of historical policy choices<sup>34</sup> — plays an important role in telework opportunities. The table below lists the 10 occupations where women have the highest rates of telework. The occupations are largely computer based. The top occupation is technical writers: 94 percent of women technical writers telework at least some of their hours. However, occupational segregation plays a role in who holds these jobs. For example, Latinas only account for 10 percent of women working in these 10 occupations, which is roughly half their share of women’s workforce overall (19 percent).

Jobs with the highest telework rates for women	
	Share of women who telework
Technical writers	94.3%
Web developers	79.9%
Web and digital interface designers	76.9%
Editors	76.6%
Insurance underwriters	75.7%
Computer systems analysts	74.7%
Claims adjusters, appraisers, examiners, and investigators	74.6%
Management analysts	74.3%
Writers and authors	73.7%
Market research analysts and marketing specialists	73.0%

Source: Authors’ calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information.

However, high rates of telework are only one way to examine the impact of telework on women workers. Another consideration is the number of women teleworking across different occupations. The table below shows the jobs with the largest number of women who telework.<sup>35</sup> By far, the largest number of teleworking women are managers in a particular set of industries,<sup>36</sup> followed by accountants and auditors, then customer service representatives. Black women, Latinas and AIAN women are underrepresented among women workers in this group of occupations.

<b>Jobs with the largest number of women teleworkers</b>		
	<b>Number of women teleworkers</b>	<b>Share of women who telework</b>
<b>Managers, all other</b>	1,070,000	50.1%
<b>Accountants and auditors</b>	545,000	53.6%
<b>Customer service representatives</b>	518,000	31.7%
<b>Bookkeeping, accounting and auditing clerks</b>	386,000	38.2%
<b>Financial managers</b>	358,000	47.5%
<b>Human resources workers</b>	349,000	50.7%
<b>Project management specialists</b>	346,000	71.1%
<b>Chief executives</b>	344,000	59.3%
<b>Real estate brokers and sales agents</b>	340,000	60.5%
<b>Lawyers</b>	332,000	65.6%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information.

Yet in some common occupations for women, telework rates remain low, failing to provide women the flexibility they need. The table below includes the jobs that employ the largest number of women and the rates of telework in those jobs. In some of the largest occupations — including nurses, teachers, cashiers, retail salespersons and waiters and waitresses — telework rates are far below average, and in some rates are close to zero.

There are clear racial inequities in patterns of employment and access to telework in some of these occupations. For example, among women working as cashiers — an occupation with virtually no telework — Black, Latina and AIAN women are overrepresented, compared to their shares of the overall women’s workforce. But Black, Latina and AIAN women workers are underrepresented among women who work as managers in specific industries (classified as “managers (all others)”). And while occupational segregation plays a role in telework opportunities, there can also be differences in telework rates within an occupation. For example, among this group of women managers, only 41 percent of Black women and 38 percent of Latinas telework, compared to half of all women.

## Jobs with the largest number of women workers

	Number of women workers	Share of women who telework
Registered nurses	2,965,000	10.4%
Elementary and middle school teachers	2,498,000	8.5%
Managers, all other	2,135,000	50.1%
Cashiers	1,659,000	0.9%
Customer service representatives	1,634,000	31.7%
Personal care aides	1,426,000	18.0%
Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical and executive	1,335,000	21.8%
First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	1,257,000	15.7%
Retail salespersons	1,208,000	9.5%
Waiters and waitresses	1,191,000	1.6%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information.

## The Potential for Telework to Support Women's and Disabled Workers' Labor Force Participation

When available, work from home can support women's, disabled workers', and caregivers' labor force participation and their family's economic security, though it can also present trade-offs for wages and other aspects of employment. Workers continue to seek increased flexibility and control over where and when they work.

Women, and working moms in particular, have many demands on their lives and need supports to enable their successful participation in the workforce and in their homes and communities. Telework is one form of workplace flexibility that can support women in staying connected to work.

Women's participation in the labor force is critical to their families' economic security. Forty-five percent of working moms and almost 70 percent of Black mothers are the breadwinners for their families.<sup>37</sup> In two-thirds of married-couple families with minor children, both parents are working.<sup>38</sup> While women are nearly half of the labor force and a key source of economic support for their families,<sup>39</sup> they also provide unpaid labor to their families and loved ones valued at more than \$683 billion annually.<sup>40</sup> With increased life expectancy<sup>41</sup> and a growing older population,<sup>42</sup> these demands on women will continue to grow.<sup>43</sup>

Increasing women’s participation in the labor force is important not just for individual families’ economic security, but also for the overall strength and economic competitiveness of the country. Our research shows that the gap between women’s labor force participation in the U.S. and peer countries with more family-friendly workplace policies has cost the U.S. nearly \$7 trillion dollars over a decade.<sup>44</sup> Telework is one of many benefits that can support women’s employment and the nation as a whole.

## Supporting women’s employment and economic security

There is evidence that telework supports women’s employment, disabled workers’ employment, family goals, provides increased time for caregiving, work and other activities, and may enhance scheduling flexibility.

Telework opportunities — and fully remote work in particular — may benefit mothers’ employment, from the hiring process through enabling them to stay connected to the workforce after having children. In one experiment, researchers tested decision-makers’ biases about gender and parental status in the hiring process.<sup>45</sup> They found that the “motherhood penalty” as it pertains to hiring decreased when employers were hiring for hybrid positions, and disappeared for fully remote positions. They did find, however, a small fatherhood penalty for remote jobs.<sup>46</sup>

In another simulation, the researcher estimated that additional availability of jobs with remote work increases women’s employment, particularly for mothers, especially mothers of young children. Specifically, a 25 percent increase in remote work opportunities results in a 3 percent increase in women’s labor force participation, and increases mothers’ labor force participation by 4 percent. For a 50 percent increase in remote work opportunities, those figures more than double, rising to 6.8 percent for women in general and 8.7 percent for mothers.<sup>47</sup>

Limited evidence also suggests that working from home reduces the motherhood penalty because women are less likely to exit the workforce after having children.<sup>48</sup> Another study similarly concluded that prime-age women with access to remote work were less likely to leave the labor market than is typical for that demographic.<sup>49</sup> In other words, work from home opportunities could improve women’s labor force participation by removing barriers and decreasing women’s likelihood to exit the workforce.

One potential downside for people who telework is that employers may offer lower wages in exchange for the flexibility of telework. At least one paper has concluded that workers in remote-eligible occupations experienced lower post-pandemic wage growth than workers in on-site occupations.<sup>50</sup> Survey data also suggests many workers strongly value the ability to telework — so much so that they would be willing to accept lower wages in exchange for telework,<sup>51</sup> again underscoring the importance of this flexibility. This could put workers at a disadvantage if employers exploit their need for flexibility by offering lower wages. For many workers, deciding between wages and flexibility is no choice at all, but rather the only way to manage other priorities and commitments, such as caregiving responsibilities, medical appointments, attending classes or being able to work other jobs to make ends meet.

Telework could also impact women’s promotional opportunities, with resulting implications for career advancement, skill development and wages. In one experiment, hybrid work arrangements did not have a significant

impact on workers' performance reviews or promotion rates, including by gender.<sup>52</sup> A study of corporate America, however, found that women who teleworked three or more days a week were "far less likely" to receive a promotion than women who worked primarily on-site.<sup>53</sup> Men who consistently teleworked were not as negatively impacted, suggesting gender biases and assumptions about women's productivity when they telework might affect their advancement.

However, if the alternative to telework is time away from the labor force entirely, making wage and other trade-offs in order to be able to continue working may ultimately lead to greater economic security. Taking time out of the labor market dramatically reduces earnings, especially for women,<sup>54</sup> and has life-long implications for economic security in retirement.<sup>55</sup> Additional research looking at the intersection of telework, women's labor force participation and potential wage and career trade-offs would provide more detailed information on implications for women's long-term economic security.

## **Supporting disabled workers' employment and access to reasonable accommodations**

Although still extremely low compared to other workers, disabled workers' labor force participation in 2025 was historically high at 24.8 percent, reflecting a trend in employment growth for disabled workers since the pandemic.<sup>56</sup> While the data may reflect in part an increase in the total number of disabled workers as a result of newly acquired disabilities since the pandemic, it also illustrates the opportunity for increasing employment when workers are given more opportunities and access, including through telework.<sup>57</sup>

The ability to work from home can be a critical accommodation for some disabled workers, better enabling their participation in the workforce. In reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, employers increased their use of telework technology and telework, with significant benefits for disabled workers.<sup>58</sup> Telework can also help mitigate the additional transportation-related costs that workers with disabilities incur. These can include higher costs and logistical barriers associated with unreliable transit, inaccessible public transit, insufficient funding for paratransit and more.<sup>59</sup>

The pandemic also fundamentally altered employers' and judges' understanding of telework as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees employees with disabilities a right to a reasonable accommodation in the workplace to perform the essential functions of their job, unless providing that accommodation would be an undue hardship for the employer, such as by being prohibitively expensive.<sup>60</sup> While remote work has long been considered a reasonable accommodation for workers with a disability,<sup>61</sup> many employers objected to it as an accommodation, and judges were hesitant to overrule their assessments.<sup>62</sup> Now it is well understood that telework is an available accommodation when needed, and it is harder for many employers to argue that it is an undue hardship, particularly with the increased integration of telework and telework-related technologies into the workplace.<sup>63</sup> This should result in greater opportunities for certain disabled workers.<sup>64</sup>

## Enabling better work-life balance

Without having to commute and prepare for being in the office, telework can also provide workers with additional time, one of the most valuable commodities for working women. With the shift to working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, a global survey found that workers in the U.S. saved an average of 55 minutes per day (or 9.5 days of commute time in a given year).<sup>65</sup> Workers used this additional time to work (42 percent of time savings), for leisure activities (35 percent) and for caregiving (8 percent). Workers with children spent a larger share of their time savings on caregiving.<sup>66</sup> A survey of U.S. workers found that those with children spent 18 percent of their saved commuting time on child care.<sup>67</sup>

Telework can provide opportunities for improved work-life balance and the ability to manage non-work obligations and activities. Telework enhances working women's flexibility, not just by reducing commuting hours, but by sometimes enabling flexible work schedules. This may be one reason women in corporate positions report that opportunities to work remotely and have control over their schedules are among their most important company benefits, just behind health care.<sup>68</sup>

Telework sometimes allows for increased flexibility not just in where work is performed, but when it is performed. That type of scheduling flexibility helps workers better manage other aspects of their life, such as dropping off and picking up children, managing medical appointments, or coordinating home repairs. Claudia Goldin has documented a connection between inflexible work hours and gender pay gaps.<sup>69</sup> In particular, work cultures that require workers to be physically present in their office continuously for long hours can penalize women with children.<sup>70</sup> While telework is not always synonymous with flexible schedules, for certain women workers, it can be significantly easier to manage work and other obligations from home than during continuous hours in the office.<sup>71</sup>

Access to telework may also increase gender equity in caregiving responsibilities. Women do nearly two-thirds of the nation's unpaid care work.<sup>72</sup> In addition to workplace flexibility helping women manage their unpaid care and work responsibilities, some research shows that for partnerships between men and women, increased access to remote work opportunities for men enables them to do more caregiving and housework.<sup>73</sup>

Lastly, some evidence indicates that access to telework is linked to a slight increase in the number of births. This signals that working people whose family goals were previously constrained by job limitations, including inflexible hours, have more freedom to have children — if they want to do so — due to telework opportunities. For example, research shows that telework is associated with having more children, especially if both partners in a couple telework.<sup>74</sup> The authors find that in the U.S. "estimated lifetime fertility is greater by 0.32 children per woman when both partners [work from home] one or more days per week as compared to the case where neither does."<sup>75</sup> Findings on increased U.S. birth rates during COVID-era lockdowns, especially among college-educated women (who have higher telework rates), echo this finding.<sup>76</sup> Research has long demonstrated the freedom to decide if and when to have children — and the access to health care such as contraception, abortion and more to enable people to do so — is an influential component of employment and educational opportunities and, in turn, economic security for women.<sup>77</sup> This new research builds on that work to underscore the importance of economic security and flexibility on childbearing decisions.

## Supporting businesses and left-behind local economies

Telework opportunities also benefit employers. In addition to the economic benefits of reduced costs associated with office space and overhead, research shows that businesses providing hybrid work opportunities benefit financially from improved employee morale and retention, without detrimental effects on performance.<sup>78</sup> In one experiment performed with call center workers in China, attrition rates for the cohort that worked from home dropped by 50 percent compared to the in-office workers.<sup>79</sup> Increased retention can provide significant savings, as some estimates of employee turnover place the cost at up to double a worker's annual salary.<sup>80</sup> Flexible work schedules, which are often enabled by telework, can also reduce absenteeism,<sup>81</sup> which is estimated to cost an average of approximately \$4,000 a year for a full-time employee.<sup>82</sup>

The impacts of telework on productivity have largely been found to be neutral, though they vary depending on industry and implementation<sup>83</sup> and some studies have documented positive impacts in the aggregate. For example, research from the Bureau of Labor Statistics finds a positive association between the share of workers who primarily work from home and productivity across more than 60 industries.<sup>84</sup>

Beyond specific cost savings, telework may aid in recruitment efforts. Not only do many potential applicants see telework as a valuable benefit, making a position more desirable,<sup>85</sup> telework also provides employers greater flexibility and access in recruiting workers and talent.<sup>86</sup> This enables employers to draw from a more diverse pool of applicants, which can also boost productivity.<sup>87</sup> And because workers view telework opportunities as part of an overall compensation package, other costs of the compensation package may be lower for telework-eligible employees.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to the overall economic boost that telework can provide by increasing labor force participation, it can also improve the economy in other ways. For example, telework is seen as a potential new source of growth for rural economies,<sup>89</sup> which have often been left out of economic gains driven by the growth in the knowledge economy.<sup>90</sup> While the additional flexibility of telework may enable some workers to stay in their current jobs or take on roles in existing companies,<sup>91</sup> there are also potential benefits for start-ups and entrepreneurs. These include the comparatively lower start-up costs of telework, which may especially benefit small- and medium-sized businesses and newer entrepreneurs by enabling them to scale up more quickly with fewer fixed costs.<sup>92</sup> Cross-national research has also found that well-implemented hybrid workplace models can improve the productivity of small- and medium-sized enterprises.<sup>93</sup> Research also shows that remote work can increase the number of entrepreneurs,<sup>94</sup> which is linked to overall economic growth.<sup>95</sup>

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## Return-to-Office Mandates

Despite the many advantages offered by telework, numerous companies are pursuing return-to-office (RTO) policies.<sup>96</sup> Chief executive officers frequently cite productivity, culture, collaboration and innovation as key reasons for RTO policies, though research often provides tenuous evidence for a strictly on-site requirement, often finding many of these goals are addressed in a hybrid environment.<sup>97</sup> To specifically address culture or collaboration concerns, Nicholas Bloom, an expert on remote work, suggests hybrid models with synchronized in-office days, while also noting that organizational needs will differ.<sup>98</sup>

Research shows that firms announcing mandatory RTO policies are more likely to have CEOs who are older or men, indicating such “policies may reflect managerial or organizational preferences more than economic tradeoffs.”<sup>99</sup> Additional work shows that such mandates are often driven by “intuition, rather than facts” and a desire to “control” workers and “blame employees as a scapegoat for bad firm performance.”<sup>100</sup> These mandates drive down employee satisfaction while not improving firm financial metrics.<sup>101</sup> Such RTO mandates also disproportionately result in the loss of high performers,<sup>102</sup> further indicating they are not driven by company success.

Rather than foster an environment based on ill-founded management preferences that treat surveillance as a substitute for performance, companies should strive to build a culture of autonomy and trust with their employees. The evidence suggests that, where feasible, including telework opportunities is often going to save money and result in better morale and retention.

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## Unequal Opportunity to Telework may Exacerbate Workplace Inequities

Women are more likely to telework than men, but the opportunity to work in a telework-accessible job or environment varies significantly among women workers. Highly educated, white and AANHPI women, for example, telework more than women with less educational attainment, Black women and Latinas.<sup>103</sup> While workers desire more telework opportunities, as a result of factors such as occupational segregation, many workers will not realize the economic and other benefits of telework we discuss in this paper. This may further exacerbate poor job quality for many low-paid women workers and compound related workforce shortages.<sup>104</sup> We explore in this section some potential implications from inequitable access to telework, which should continue to be studied over time.

## Workers want more telework

Across demographics, workers' desire to telework is greater than their current telework opportunities, though women want to telework at higher rates than men.<sup>105</sup> Despite already having the highest rates of telework, the desire for more telework is particularly strong for workers in middle age.<sup>106</sup> In a global survey, workers with children, with more education, and those with longer commutes placed a high value on telework.<sup>107</sup>

## Inequitable access to telework, particularly for women of color, affects job quality

The majority of employees still work full time on-site.<sup>108</sup> Workers in industries including hospitality and food services, retail, health care, transportation and warehousing, manufacturing, construction, and education, are particularly unlikely to be able to telework.<sup>109</sup> Women are especially affected by low telework access in certain occupations due to high levels of occupational segregation. Some jobs employing very large numbers of women and usually requiring high levels of in-person work include registered nurses, elementary and middle school teachers, retail salespeople, waiters and waitresses, and cashiers.<sup>110</sup> These jobs in which women, and women of color, are often overrepresented, also frequently pay less and are less likely to have basic work supports like paid sick days and paid family and medical leave.<sup>111</sup> For some workers, even if the nature of their job allows for telework, they may lack the necessary infrastructure, such as a spare bedroom, high-speed Internet, or other tools to do their work that way. Collectively, this means that women who are working in jobs with fewer benefits and lower pay may not be able to reap the same benefits of telework as other workers.

There may also be some occupations where the inability to telework and low job quality could exacerbate growing workforce shortages. For example, the United States is facing teacher shortages, with the number of college graduates entering the profession at its lowest level in 50 years.<sup>112</sup> A decline in the profession's prestige, drop in the real wages for teachers, and an increase in uncompensated hours are some of the factors driving these changes.<sup>113</sup> A similar story is true for nurses, who may not want to work in understaffed, underpaid and, at times, dangerous jobs.<sup>114</sup> A lack of access to telework for primarily in-person jobs with actual or perceived labor shortages could further exacerbate those shortages and make it harder to ensure a pipeline into those professions. This is yet another reason it is important to improve other aspects of job quality and provide workers more input and control in these positions, including through federal investments and increased compensation.<sup>115</sup>

## Risks of increased fissuring

For those low-wage women workers who have the opportunity to telework, there is still a risk it could exacerbate long-term barriers to economic security. These risks include increased subcontracting, with negative implications for wages and benefits, the risk of job loss from offshoring, and the introduction of new forms of workplace surveillance and monitoring metrics.

Just as technological advances contributed to the growth of app-based work and employers designating — often improperly — a vast app-based workforce as primarily independent contractors,<sup>116</sup> the growth of telework could also promote “fissured workplace” business models. In the fissured workplace, many companies manage workers

like employees — including specifying their behaviors and closely monitoring their outcomes — but they classify workers as independent contractors, engaging them at an arm’s length and denying them the rights, workplace protections and benefits tied to employment.<sup>117</sup>

Businesses may see telework as an opportunity to further contract out aspects of work. Some fast-food restaurants, for example, have introduced software to either enable remote workers to serve drive-thru customers, or even contract out that service to a third-party company.<sup>118</sup> There are media reports of restaurants experimenting with virtual assistants, sometimes outside the country, who are employed by third-party brokers, not the restaurant.<sup>119</sup> These workers are not paid the minimum wage, illustrating how companies use telework technology and subcontracting to avoid labor and employment laws.<sup>120</sup>

This trend of telework leading to contracting out, misclassification, and related downward pressure on wages has also occurred with the millions of — predominantly female — call center workers in the United States.<sup>121</sup> It is an industry that has subcontracted much of its work, resulting in inferior wages and working conditions. Call centers have also increased their surveillance and monitoring, which, in addition to impeding activities that may allow for improvements for the workforce, also detrimentally affects workers’ mental well-being.<sup>122</sup> While subcontracting was increasing long before the surge in telework, the growth of telework could have implications for increased fissuring and loss of wages and benefits for workers, or complete job loss from offshoring. Once work is off-site because it is telework-eligible, it may further encourage employers to consider whether they can fully contract out the work as well.

## Policy Landscape and Recommendations

The government, researchers and academics have long recognized telework as an important tool for workers in balancing their lives and careers. The 2014 White House Summit on Working Families recognized telework as a component of expanding workplace flexibilities.<sup>123</sup> With over a fifth of the workforce working from home at least some of their hours, understanding the benefits and risks of telework is incredibly important. So far, telework policies have been left largely to employers, and in some cases, collective bargaining agreements.<sup>124</sup> But given the scope of telework’s implications for women’s labor force participation, families’ economic security, job quality, and the economy, it is time for more thoughtful and concerted policy development. In particular, employers considering mandatory return-to-work policies should evaluate the existing data on benefits before mandating full-time in-office policies without evidence-based justification.

Additionally, while enhanced flexibility in the form of telework opportunities can significantly benefit women, caregivers and disabled workers, it is not a silver bullet nor a replacement for other critical benefits. Telework is but one tool for enhancing workplace flexibility. Women still need living wages and workplace supports, including equal pay, affordable child care, paid family and medical leave, paid sick days, aging and disability care supports, fair and predictable schedules, and protections from discrimination. Poorly implemented telework can also pose some unique risks to women’s wages and career advancement, in addition to presenting new avenues for discrimination and workplace inequities. Many of these risks can be ameliorated by thoughtful implementation.

Finally, as discussed above, many women workers are not able to telework, particularly many women workers of color. This makes it even more urgent to improve the job quality of these occupations and support workers, such as nurses and elementary school teachers, with other workplace flexibilities and benefits where telework is not usually an option.

The following policy recommendations, designed to enhance equity and accessibility, can help ensure that workers and businesses can collectively reap the benefits of telework.

## **Thoughtful implementation of telework opportunities**

Telework can be a huge benefit for workers and businesses alike. As discussed above, businesses reap economic benefits in the form of increased retention, reduced office space and overhead, and increased morale. Telework can also be useful for recruitment. For fully remote workers, businesses additionally benefit from increased access to talent not constrained by geography.

Employers need to thoughtfully design and implement telework programs, however, to achieve these benefits and not disadvantage teleworkers who have less “face time” in their assignments, evaluations and promotions. Companies can employ guardrails, such as training and long-term analyses comparing teleworkers to in-person employees to identify and address any biases reflected in access to telework opportunities, assignments, promotions or performance reviews.<sup>125</sup>

While telework can support disabled workers’ employment, this also requires that telework tools are accessible and that policies do not disadvantage disabled workers. Without guardrails, telework technologies can negatively impact both disabled workers using telework and those on-site who now must rely on those same systems. For example, the introduction and use of online chat tools should not outpace their accessibility with screen readers. Failure to thoughtfully implement such technology will affect workers with disabilities, whether they are teleworking or on-site.

Managing teleworkers can also lead employers to introduce new forms of monitoring and productivity metrics that can further degrade workers’ autonomy, job quality<sup>126</sup> and well-being and exacerbate disability discrimination.<sup>127</sup> For example, keystroke or “active time” monitoring may penalize workers who use screen readers, speech-to-text or other assistive technologies, as well as penalize workers who need more flexible or nonstandard pacing. Businesses should therefore ensure that there is an evidence-based business necessity and benefit before introducing new monitoring technologies for remote workers and should assess the new technologies for unexpected impacts on their workforce. Some unions are now including provisions on monitoring and surveillance of remote workers in their collective bargaining agreements.<sup>128</sup> Workers and businesses should also include telework provisions in labor management discussions and collective bargaining agreements, both to reap the benefits for workers and businesses and to include safeguards.

## **Enforce anti-discrimination laws and other worker protections**

Discrimination and harassment too often go unchecked and prevent women’s full workplace participation.<sup>129</sup> Discrimination also affects economic growth.<sup>130</sup> Telework raises new implications for workplace discrimination that employers need to address. Some legal scholars and experts suggest telework may provide important benefits for

some workers of color, including reducing the toll workers experience from microaggressions and biases present in many workplaces, as well as the pressure and burden of assimilation in non-inclusive environments.<sup>131</sup> According to one poll, remote workers were also less likely than those who work in person to report workplace sexual harassment in the past three years.<sup>132</sup> But this type of data is very hard to track; in addition to disparities in who can work from home, which could influence the numbers, in general it is hard to measure prevalence of sexual harassment given underreporting and the difficulty for workers in understanding when it is legally actionable.<sup>133</sup>

On the other hand, telework has also created new avenues for digital discrimination and microaggressions.<sup>134</sup> In addition to new forms of harm using digital means, higher rates of telework can also impact conditions in offices or in-person workspaces. While a safe office to leave home and travel to can be a respite for some workers, emptier office spaces can also contribute to unsafe working environments.<sup>135</sup> Employer decision-making and policies around telework arrangements may also result in unlawful discrimination.<sup>136</sup> In addition, some employers may penalize and question the commitment of workers who want to telework when considering promotions and opportunities.<sup>137</sup>

One clear takeaway is that anti-discrimination training and policies must account for telework. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) 2024 update to its Enforcement Guidance on Harassment in the Workplace had provided examples of ways in which harassment might happen in a virtual work environment.<sup>138</sup> In addition, the guidance addressed the growth of virtual work environments and the increasing impact of digital technology and social media on how harassment occurs in the work environment.<sup>139</sup> Under the Trump administration, however, the EEOC chair has rescinded this critical guidance.<sup>140</sup>

The Trump administration is also attacking the disparate impact theory of liability, which could be an important tool for rooting out discriminatory implementation of telework policies.<sup>141</sup> Employment policies that appear neutral can violate civil rights laws if they disproportionately harm certain workers and are not necessary for the employer or related to the workers' job.<sup>142</sup> The Trump administration issued an executive order claiming that disparate impact liability is unconstitutional.<sup>143</sup> In response, the EEOC directed the dismissal of all complaints based on disparate impact theories, a seismic shift that abandons half a century of enforcement precedent and leaves workers vulnerable to discriminatory policies that may appear neutral on their face.<sup>144</sup>

The EEOC and other civil rights agencies should be prioritizing enforcement and ensuring employers and workers understand their rights and obligations, including when new tools and opportunities are introduced in the workplace.

## **Consider new policies to support workplace flexibilities, including telework**

We should further consider policies that provide workers with access to telework and other workplace flexibilities. Several other countries do this through laws that require employers to consider and respond to requests for flexible work arrangements, with provisions cabining and addressing denials, including dispute-resolution procedures and protections from retaliation. For example, the Australian Fair Work Act gives certain employees, including parents of school age and young children, caregivers, older workers and disabled workers the right to request flexible working arrangements, including the right to work from home.<sup>145</sup> Employers cannot refuse such a request unless they have "reasonable business grounds" to do so and have consulted with the employee,

tried to reach an agreement and considered the consequences of denying the employee's request.<sup>146</sup> Similar laws exist in the United Kingdom,<sup>147</sup> France<sup>148</sup> and Ireland.<sup>149</sup> The European Union rules on work-life balance also provide employees with young children the right to request a temporary flexible work arrangement.<sup>150</sup>

## **Reduce occupational segregation and improve job quality**

Not all jobs are telework-eligible and, due to a long history of racism, sexism and ableism, women are overrepresented in some low-paying jobs with low levels of telework. In order to ensure that implementation of telework policies — and its resulting benefits — does not exacerbate existing systemic inequities and poor job quality, it is even more important to ensure that women are equitably represented in high-paying jobs; that we raise wages and improve the quality of all jobs, including those predominantly occupied by women; and that we continue to strengthen workers' rights and anti-discrimination laws and enforcement.<sup>151</sup> The National Partnership continues to promote policy solutions for ensuring that women — particularly women of color — are equitably represented in high-paying jobs and for improving the quality of all jobs and eliminating pay inequities.<sup>152</sup> Improving job quality also includes workers having control over the hours they work, which can enhance workplace flexibility and address the myriad challenges unpredictable and unstable schedules cause for workers and their families.<sup>153</sup>

## **Invest in research and data to better understand the impact of telework on workers' wages, caregiving responsibilities and labor force participation**

Despite the large share of workers who telework and the impact this has on the economy overall, the federal government produces relatively little data and research on the topic. In fact, it has stopped publishing some of the most readily accessible information on the topic,<sup>154</sup> and does not produce easily available disaggregated data that allows the public to see the intersections of occupation, race, gender and disability. The government should invest in producing timely, easily accessible, disaggregated data on telework and a variety of relevant topics.

The government should also prioritize producing and supporting research on this topic. Additional research on the implications of telework for workers' wages would inform questions about potential compensation, benefits, and career advancement trade-offs and the longer-term implications of such trade-offs for women's economic security. Further exploration of how telework and remote work affect the motherhood penalty would inform policy priorities around increasing women's labor force participation. Collectively, this research could support employers in designing informed workplace policies that support both their employees and their bottom line, as well as supporting policymakers in designing policies that support workplace flexibility and gender equity. These research questions intersect with the government's interest in numerous issues, including workers' wages, labor force participation, economic growth, benefits usage and economic efficiency.

## Conclusion

Decades of deliberate policy choices to underinvest in women’s economic security and necessary caregiving programs undermine families’ abilities to prioritize their caregiving needs and have had enormous impacts on America’s women. Women are the unrecognized backbone of our nation’s economy. Women are nearly half the labor force and are a key source of economic support for their families. Yet women, disabled workers and caregivers continue to face numerous barriers to full participation in today’s economy, including insufficient work and caregiving supports, even while they continue to do the majority of paid and unpaid caregiving. These factors, as well as discrimination and occupational segregation, mean that many women do not have access to telework or other critically needed workplace flexibilities. Investment in job quality and workplace supports is therefore essential for women’s employment and the nation’s economic growth.

For a subset of women, the pandemic accelerated work from home opportunities, providing critical additional proof of concept that thoughtfully enhancing workplace flexibilities benefits workers and their employers. Rather than reflexively implement return-to-work policies, we should continue to study these opportunities, the public and private sector should thoughtfully implement such benefits, and policymakers should explore policies such as those discussed here that will further support women’s full employment.

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# Appendix

## Women are more likely to telework than men

	Number teleworking	Total number	Share who telework
All workers	35,548,000	158,595,000	22.4%
Men	17,050,000	84,493,000	20.2%
Women	18,498,000	74,102,000	25.0%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information.

## Women are more likely to telework than men across most racial and ethnic groups

	Number teleworking	Total number	Share who telework
White men	13,306,000	64,919,000	20.5%
White women	14,029,000	55,153,000	25.4%
Black men	1,221,000	9,891,000	12.3%
Black women	2,059,000	10,355,000	19.9%
AANHPI men	2,050,000	6,664,000	30.8%
AANHPI women	1,805,000	5,930,000	30.4%
AIAN men	104,000	952,000	11.0%
AIAN women	116,000	748,000	15.5%
Latinos	1,773,000	17,939,000	9.9%
Latinas	2,171,000	14,054,000	15.4%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information.

## Women are more likely to telework than men at all ages

	Number teleworking	Total number	Share who telework
<b>Men 16–24</b>	644,000	9,868,000	6.5%
<b>Women 16–24</b>	669,000	9,488,000	7.1%
<b>Men 25–34</b>	3,638,000	18,845,000	19.3%
<b>Women 25–34</b>	4,158,000	16,272,000	25.6%
<b>Men 35–44</b>	4,577,000	19,384,000	23.6%
<b>Women 35–44</b>	4,999,000	16,518,000	30.3%
<b>Men 45–54</b>	3,855,000	16,561,000	23.3%
<b>Women 45–54</b>	4,216,000	14,731,000	28.6%
<b>Men 55 and older</b>	4,335,000	19,835,000	21.9%
<b>Women 55 and older</b>	4,456,000	17,093,000	26.1%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information.

## Women are more likely to telework than men regardless of parental status

	Number teleworking	Total number	Share who telework
<b>Dad, child under 5</b>	2,271,000	9,455,000	24.0%
<b>Mom, child under 5</b>	2,268,000	7,485,000	30.3%
<b>Dad, child under 18</b>	6,144,000	25,668,000	23.9%
<b>Mom, child under 18</b>	6,675,000	23,387,000	28.5%
<b>Men, no children at home</b>	9,472,000	50,792,000	18.6%
<b>Women, no children at home</b>	9,817,000	41,856,000	23.5%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information.

## Women are more likely to telework than men among workers with less than a bachelor's degree

	Number teleworking	Total number	Share who telework
Men with a high school degree or less	1,633,000	31,711,000	5.1%
Women with a high school degree or less	2,038,000	20,826,000	9.8%
Men with some college or an associate's degree	2,786,000	20,430,000	13.6%
Women with some college or an associate's degree	3,754,000	19,540,000	19.2%
Men with a bachelor's degree	7,508,000	20,627,000	36.4%
Women with a bachelor's degree	7,428,000	20,636,000	36.0%
Men with an advanced degree	5,123,000	11,725,000	43.7%
Women with an advanced degree	5,278,000	13,101,000	40.3%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information.

## Women are more likely to telework than men regardless of marital status

	Number teleworking	Total number	Share who telework
Married men	11,240,000	45,096,000	24.9%
Married women	10,885,000	35,760,000	30.4%
Unmarried men	5,810,000	39,397,000	14.7%
Unmarried women	7,613,000	38,342,000	19.9%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information. Unmarried individuals include those whose spouse is absent.

## Women veterans are more likely to telework than men veterans

	Number teleworking	Total number	Share who telework
<b>Men veterans</b>	1,171,000	5,985,000	19.6%
<b>Women veterans</b>	268,000	966,000	27.8%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information.

## Low-wage women workers are more likely to telework than low-wage men workers

	Number teleworking	Total number	Share who telework
<b>Men paid less than \$15 per hour</b>	440,000	6,541,000	6.7%
<b>Women paid less than \$15 per hour</b>	826,000	9,250,000	8.9%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information. Workers' average hourly wages are less than \$15/hour. Figures are for wage and salary workers.

## Disabled women workers are more likely to telework than disabled men workers

	Number teleworking	Total number	Share who telework
Disabled men	819,000	3,933,000	20.8%
Disabled women	961,000	3,668,000	26.2%
Nondisabled men	16,230,000	80,560,000	20.1%
Nondisabled women	17,537,000	70,433,000	24.9%
Men with difficulty hearing	309,000	1,510,000	20.4%
Women with difficulty hearing	189,000	780,000	24.3%
Men with difficulty seeing	111,000	631,000	17.5%
Women with difficulty seeing	142,000	633,000	22.5%
Men with difficulty remembering	259,000	1,320,000	19.6%
Women with difficulty remembering	378,000	1,423,000	26.5%
Men with a physical difficulty	234,000	1,010,000	23.2%
Women with a physical difficulty	350,000	1,265,000	27.6%
Men with mobility difficulties	92,000	449,000	20.5%
Women with mobility difficulties	151,000	569,000	26.5%
Men who have difficulty with self care	40,000	180,000	22.4%
Women who have difficulty with self care	61,000	204,000	29.8%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. See report for additional information. Workers may have multiple disabilities.

**Working fully remotely is more common for women than men,  
across all groups of teleworkers**

	Number remote	Number teleworking	Share of teleworkers who are fully remote
<b>Total</b>	16,667,000	35,548,000	46.9%
<b>Men</b>	7,374,000	17,050,000	43.3%
<b>Women</b>	9,293,000	18,498,000	50.2%
<b>White men</b>	5,752,000	13,306,000	43.2%
<b>White women</b>	7,008,000	14,029,000	50.0%
<b>Black men</b>	535,000	1,221,000	43.9%
<b>Black women</b>	1,134,000	2,059,000	55.1%
<b>AANHPI men</b>	865,000	2,050,000	42.2%
<b>AANHPI women</b>	864,000	1,805,000	47.9%
<b>AIAN men</b>	53,000	104,000	50.6%
<b>AIAN women</b>	65,000	116,000	56.0%
<b>Latinos</b>	717,000	1,773,000	40.4%
<b>Latinas</b>	1,104,000	2,171,000	50.8%
<b>Dad, child under 5</b>	939,000	2,271,000	41.3%
<b>Mom, child under 5</b>	1,230,000	2,268,000	54.3%
<b>Dad, child under 18</b>	2,536,000	6,144,000	41.3%
<b>Mom, child under 18</b>	3,490,000	6,675,000	52.3%
<b>Men, no children at home</b>	4,218,000	9,472,000	44.5%
<b>Women, no children at home</b>	4,787,000	9,817,000	48.8%
<b>Disabled men</b>	424,000	819,000	51.8%
<b>Disabled women</b>	548,000	961,000	57.0%
<b>Nondisabled men</b>	6,950,000	16,230,000	42.8%
<b>Nondisabled women</b>	8,746,000	17,537,000	49.9%

Source: Authors' calculations using Current Population Survey 2025 annual averages via IPUMS. People who telework include anyone who works at least some hours off-site. Remote workers work all hours off-site. See report for additional information.

# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Shorb, M. (2026, April). *Essential Return-to-Office Statistics and Trends* (2026). Retrieved 9 April 2026, from <https://founderreports.com/return-to-office-statistics/>
- <sup>2</sup> This analysis uses the terms “work from home” and “telework” interchangeably to mean people who are working off-site for at least some of their hours. We use the term “remote” to indicate workers who are usually teleworking all of their hours and “hybrid” to indicate people who are working partly on-site, partly off-site.
- <sup>3</sup> Authors’ calculations based on Current Population Survey Basic Monthly sample for 2025 via IPUMS CPS, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org). Data are annual averages, though because of the government shutdown, data were not collected in October 2025, thus these annual averages only span 11 months of data. Figures are for workers at work in the last week.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Women account for 52 percent of teleworkers.
- <sup>5</sup> See our discussion in the section “The Potential for Telework to Support Women’s and Disabled Workers’ Labor Force Participation” below.
- <sup>6</sup> Barrero, J.M., Bloom N., Buckman S. & Davis, S.J. (2026, March). *SWAA March 2026 Updates\**. Retrieved 10 March 2026, from [https://wfhresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/WFHResearch\\_updates\\_March2026.pdf](https://wfhresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/WFHResearch_updates_March2026.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> Barrero, J.M., Bloom N. & Davis, S.J. (2021, April). *Why working from home will stick*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 28731, Retrieved 10 March 2026, from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w28731>; Barrero *et al.*, “SWAA March 2026 Updates,” *supra* note 6.
- <sup>8</sup> For telework rates by industry, see Barrero *et al.*, “SWAA March 2026 Updates,” *supra* note 6. Regarding industry composition by gender, race and ethnicity, see U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). *Employed people by detailed industry, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity*. Retrieved 9 April 2026, from <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>
- <sup>9</sup> For example, retail and food services have high levels of schedule instability (See Harknett, K. & Schneider, D. (2019, October). *It’s About Time: How Work Schedule Instability Matters for Workers, Families, and Racial Inequality*. The Shift Project at Harvard University. Retrieved 10 March 2026, from <https://shift.hks.harvard.edu/its-about-time-how-work-schedule-instability-matters-for-workers-families-and-racial-inequality/>) but low levels of telework opportunities (See Barrero *et al.*, “SWAA March 2026 Updates,” *supra* note 6).
- <sup>10</sup> See the section “Who is Teleworking — and Who Isn’t”
- <sup>11</sup> See the section “The Role of Occupations in Telework Opportunities.”
- <sup>12</sup> Barrero, J.M., Bloom, N. & Davis, S.J. (n.d.) *Work from Home Rate [WFHCOVIDMATQUESTION]*. Retrieved 6 April 2026, from <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/WFHCOVIDMATQUESTION>
- <sup>13</sup> Barrero, J.M., Bloom, N. & Davis, S.J. (2023, September). *The Evolution of Work from Home*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 31686. Retrieved 10 March 2026, from [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w31686/w31686.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w31686/w31686.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> Barrero *et al.*, “Work from Home Rate,” *supra* note 12. Note that due to widespread layoffs during the early days of COVID, these trends are likely due in part to a change in the composition of the workforce in addition to increased work from home among workers who were still employed.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>16</sup> Measures of telework result in different figures depending on the source of the data. See Buckman, S., Barrero, J.M., Bloom N. & Davis, S.J. (2025, February). *Measuring Work from Home*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 33508. Retrieved 9 March 2026, from <https://wfhresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NBERWP.pdf>. In many instances, this analysis uses Current Population Survey data which provides conservative estimates of telework. For more information on this measure see U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). *Telework or work at home for pay*. Retrieved 9 March 2026, from <https://www.bls.gov/cps/telework.htm>
- <sup>17</sup> The current Bureau of Labor Statistics question regarding telework was only introduced in October 2022, making it difficult to make direct comparisons to earlier years. For additional information, see “Telework or work at home for pay,” *supra* note 16.
- <sup>18</sup> Authors’ calculations based on the Current Population Survey,” *supra* note 3.
- <sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). *Current Population Survey. Series LNU0201BE23, Percent of persons who teleworked or worked at home for pay, Teleworked all hours*. Retrieved 9 April 2026, from <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNU0201BE23>
- <sup>20</sup> Authors’ calculations based on the Current Population Survey,” *supra* note 3.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* The data in this section are from the Current Population Survey unless otherwise noted.
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- <sup>26</sup> Salas-Betsch, I. (2024, March). *Ending Discrimination and Harassment at Work*. Retrieved 9 March 2026, from Center for American Progress website <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/playbook-for-the-advancement-of-women-in-the-economy/ending-discrimination-and-harassment-at-work/>; Ditekowsky, M. (2023, September). *Disabled women face unique barriers at work. Our systems transformation guide seeks to address them*. Retrieved 10 March 2026, from National Partnership for Women & Families website <https://nationalpartnership.org/disabled-women-face-unique-barriers-at-work-systems-transformation-guide/>
- <sup>27</sup> See discussion in the section “Enabling better work-life balance”
- <sup>28</sup> See the appendix for overall numbers and rates of telework for different demographic groups of women and men. AANHPI women and men have similar rates of telework, as do women and men with bachelor’s degrees. Among workers with advanced degrees, men are more likely to telework than women. Unfortunately the data source for this section does not permit analysis of genders beyond women and men.
- <sup>29</sup> All racial groups include people who identify as Hispanic or Latino, and people who identify as Hispanic or Latino may be of any racial group.
- <sup>30</sup> These data are for wage and salary workers only and use Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data.
- <sup>31</sup> This analysis uses the best available measure of disability in the data set (See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.) *Frequently asked questions about disability data*. Retrieved 12 March 2026, from [https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability\\_faq.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability_faq.htm)), though this measure has limitations and is likely an undercount (See Popkin, S.J. & Morriss, S. (2023, November). *Proposed Census Changes Would Drastically Undercount Disabled Americans*. Retrieved 12 March 2026, from Urban Institute website <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/proposed-census-changes-would-drastically-undercount-disabled-americans>).
- <sup>32</sup> This analysis defines “parent” as having at least one own child (including step, adopted or biological) under the age of 18 in the household. Due to data limitations, there are parents who are not included in this definition, including those who have non-resident or older children or those whose children have passed away.
- <sup>33</sup> Specifically, women’s telework rates are the same or greater than men’s for 88 out of 121 occupations. Within occupations, differences in seniority and other factors may also impact workers’ ability to telework.
- <sup>34</sup> Mason & Robbins, “Women’s Work Is Undervalued,” *supra* note 24.
- <sup>35</sup> Figures are annual averages for 2025.
- <sup>36</sup> Specifically, this field is classified by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as “Managers (all other)” which captures managers not separately classified within specific industries. Common industries for these managers include government, sound recording, research and development and more. See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.) *Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2023, Managers, All Other*. Retrieved 9 March 2026, from <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes119199.htm>. For additional details and a list of managers in other industries, see U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.) *Table 1. National employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics survey by occupation, May 2024*. Retrieved 9 March 2026, from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.t01.htm>
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- <sup>40</sup> Robbins & Mason, “If Americans Were Paid for Their Caregiving,” *supra* note 23.
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- <sup>46</sup> Ibid.
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