NORTHWEST MICHIGAN
HYBRID AND REMOTE WORKER STUDY

Completed by the Community Development Department Staff of:

Networks Northwest
Talent / Business / Community

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THE GROWTH OF AN ALTERNATIVE WORKING ARRANGEMENT

Remote work (also called telecommuting, telework, work from home or work at home) is the practice of working at or from one's home or another space rather than from an employer's designated office or workplace. The term "hybrid work" is a form of remote work where workers are required to work in a designated organizational workplace amongst other employees for part of the week, and can work at home or elsewhere the remainder of the week.

There is a national and regional trend of more people teleworking, but for fewer hours per week between 2022 and 2024. Hybrid work is becoming the most common form of remote work.

This study was completed to gain insights into the prevalence, preferences, challenges, needs and demographics of remote and hybrid workers in the northwest lower Michigan region, particularly since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data sources include an online survey administered across the region that received nearly 800 respondents, regional in-person focus groups, and review and analysis of national teleworker studies, surveys and statistical data sets.

The findings and recommendations of this study can inform the decisions of economic development organizations and local governments in their efforts to support the growth and needs of hybrid and fully remote workers in the region.
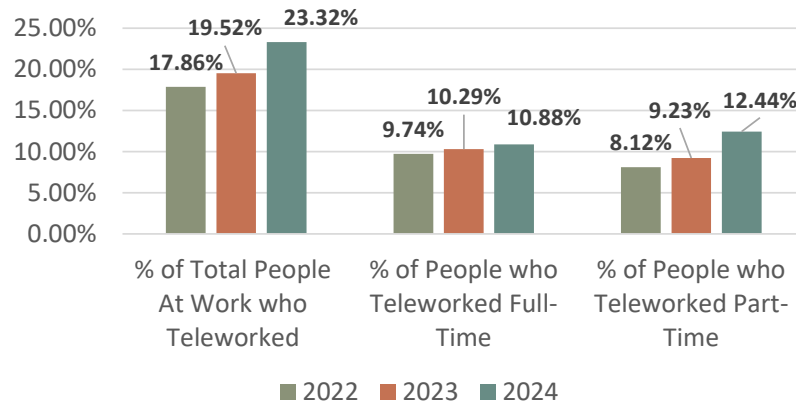
NW LOWER MI STUDY AREA

Trends

HOW MANY PEOPLE TELEWORK?

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey includes questions that capture data about people teleworking (working remotely). Data collected from this survey indicates **the number of teleworkers is on the rise**, with 23% of U.S. workers teleworking in 2024. However, by 2024, there were **more people who were teleworking on a part-time basis** than full-time. The estimates of remote workers in the 10 counties of northwest Michigan mirror this trend.
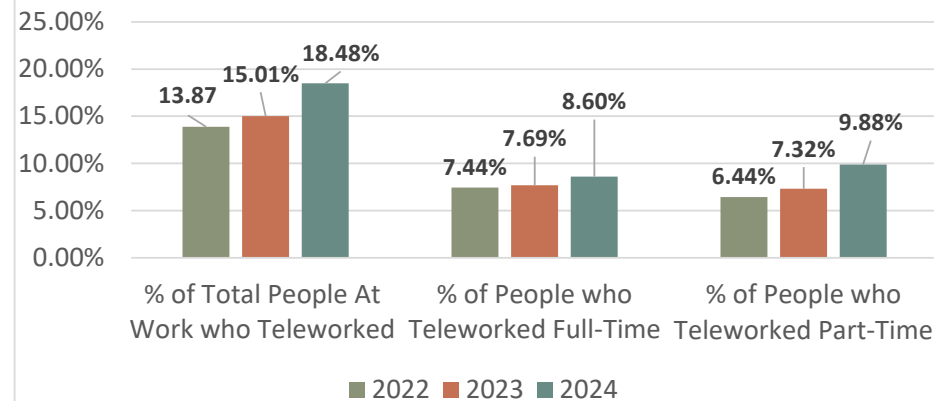
Estimates of Remote Workers in the U.S.

	2022	2023	2024
% of Total People At Work who Teleworked	17.86%	19.52%	23.32%
% of People who Teleworked Full-Time	9.74%	10.29%	10.88%
% of People who Teleworked Part-Time	8.12%	9.23%	12.44%

Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (Current Population Survey) 2022, 2023, 2024

Estimates of Remote Workers in NW MI

	2022	2023	2024
% of Total People At Work who Teleworked	13.87	15.01%	18.48%
% of People who Teleworked Full-Time	7.44%	7.69%	8.60%
% of People who Teleworked Part-Time	6.44%	7.32%	9.88%

Data Source: Teleworker Employment estimates for NW Lower MI based upon BLS ratioed teleworker data using ACS 5-Year estimate base employment numbers

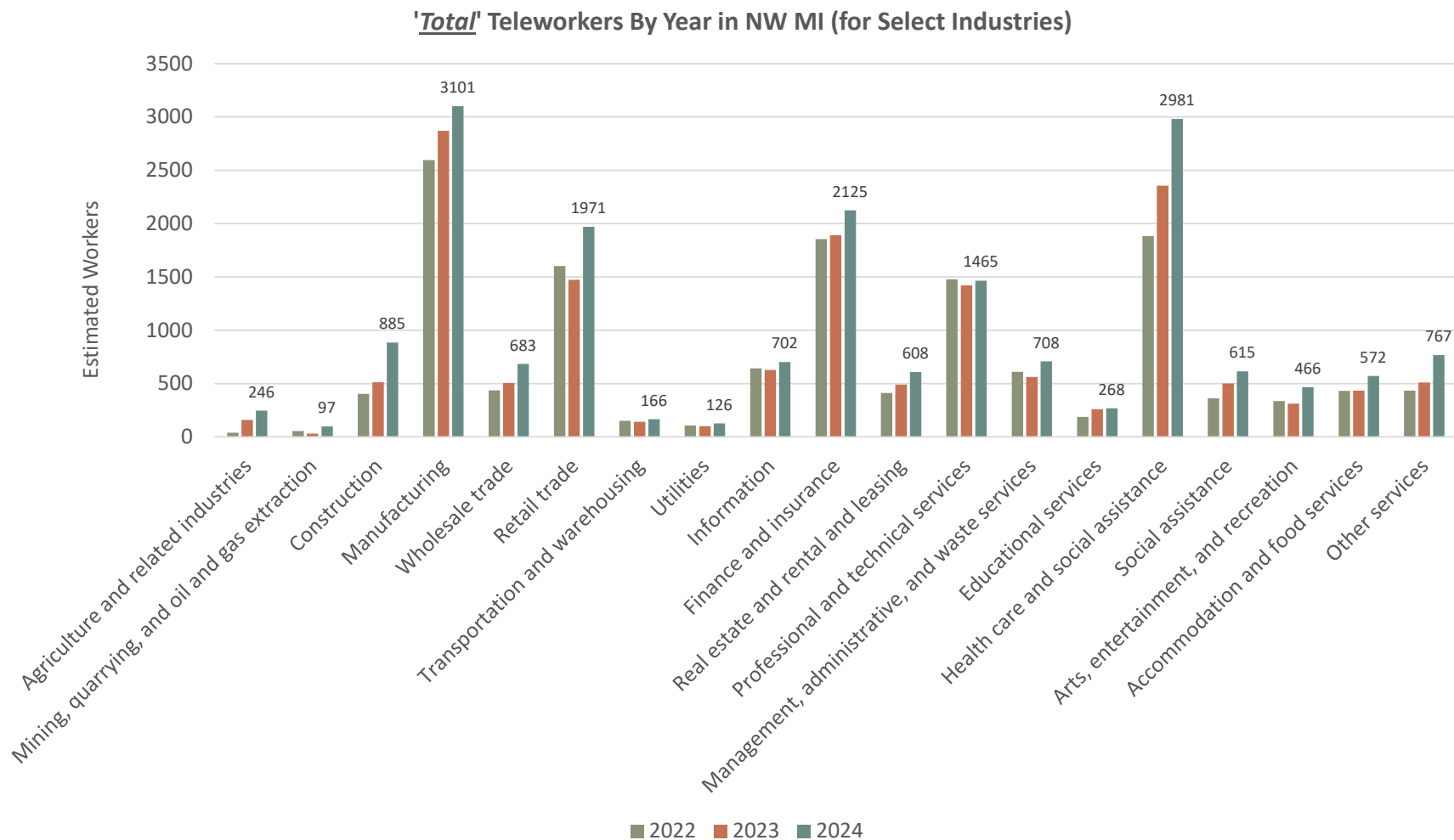## A GROWING PREFERENCE FOR HYBRID & FLEXIBLE REMOTE WORK

Hybrid work continues to be the dominant remote work model among Michigan employers, according to the The American Society of Employers' (ASE) 2025 Remote Work Pulse Survey.

In **2025, 48.2% of organizations** reported to the ASE they offered **formal remote work options** for all or part of their workforce. While this represents a decline from 66% reported in a similar 2023 ASE survey, it remains the **most common long-term approach**. Meanwhile, **employers allowing "as-needed" or "on-demand" remote work rose** from 26% in 2023 to **38.9% in 2025**, suggesting a **growing preference for informal flexibility** that incorporates remote work. *"While many organizations continue to offer flexible schedules with several remote days per week, we're also seeing a shift—more employers are increasing in-office requirements. This signals an evolving, more structured approach to workplace flexibility,"* said Mary Corrado, ASE President & CEO.

INDUSTRIES

The estimated total number of teleworkers in the 10-county region of northwest Michigan has increased across most industries between 2022 and 2024. The top five industries with the most teleworkers in 2024:

1. Manufacturing
2. Healthcare and Social Assistance
3. Finance and Insurance
4. Retail Trade
5. Professional and Technical Services

'_Total_' Teleworkers By Year in NW MI (for Select Industries)

Bar chart legend: ■ 2022 ■ 2023 ■ 2024

Y-axis: Estimated Workers (0 to 3500)

Selected 2024 values by industry:
- Agriculture and related industries: 246
- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction: 97
- Construction: 885
- Manufacturing: 3101
- Wholesale trade: 683
- Retail trade: 1971
- Transportation and warehousing: 166
- Utilities: 126
- Information: 702
- Finance and insurance: 2125
- Real estate and rental and leasing: 608
- Professional and technical services: 1465
- Management, administrative, and waste services: 708
- Educational services: 268
- Health care and social assistance: 2981
- Social assistance: 615
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation: 466
- Accommodation and food services: 572
- Other services: 767

Top 5 Industries with the Highest and Lowest Growth Rates of Teleworkers in NW MI, 2022-2024*

% CHANGE

Industry	% Change
CONSTRUCTION	119%
MINING, QUARRYING, OIL	77%
OTHER SERVICES	77%
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	70%
HEALTHCARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	58%

% CHANGE

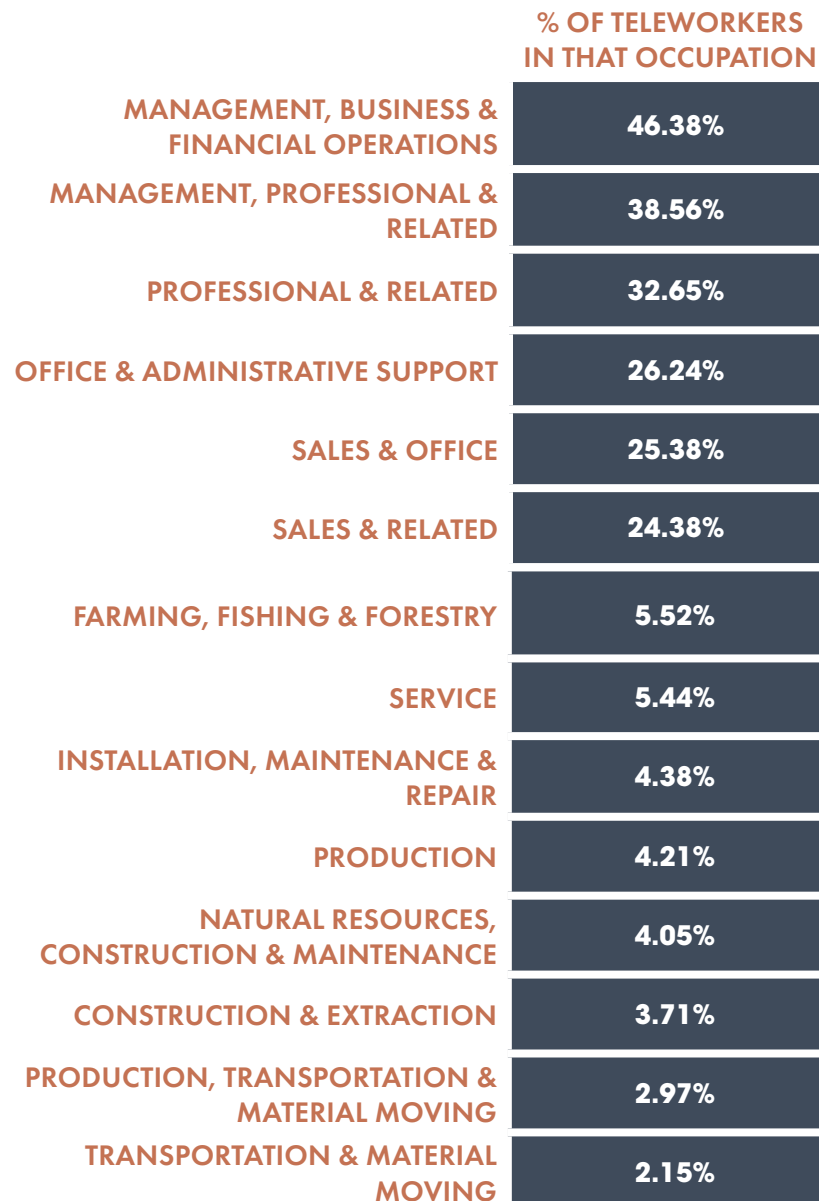| Industry	% Change
PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL SERVICES	-1%
INFORMATION	9%
TRANSPORTATION & WAREHOUSING	10%
FINANCE & INSURANCE	15%
MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND WASTE SERVICES	16%
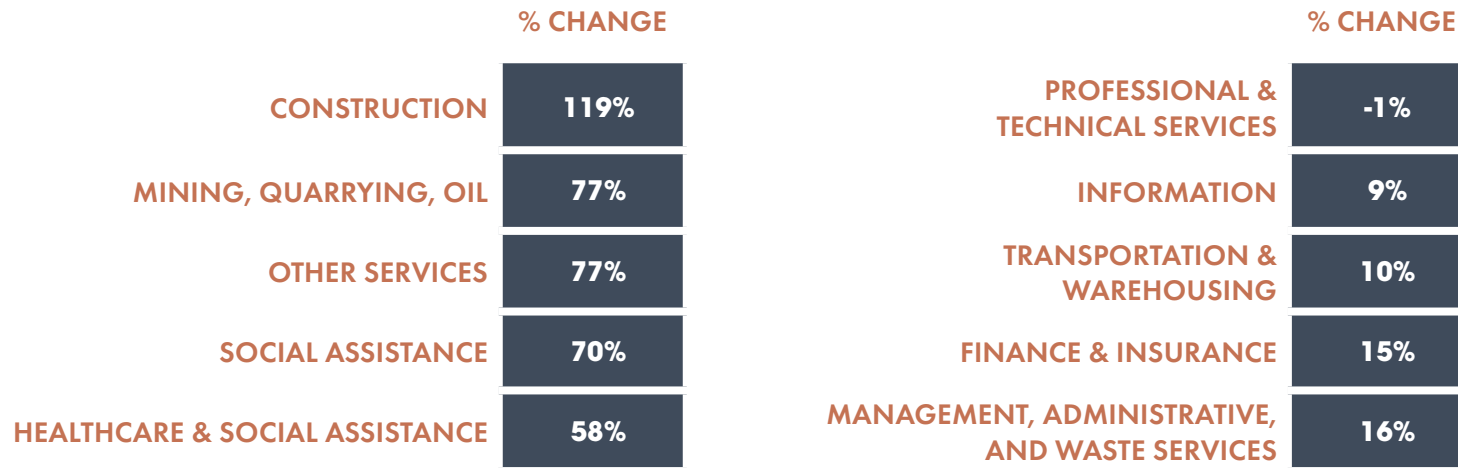
* Excludes "Agriculture & Related Industries". Teleworker Employment estimates for NW Lower MI based upon BLS ratioed teleworker data using ACS 5-Year estimate base employment numbers

The industries associated with the regional remote worker survey respondents are shown to the right, with the top five including three* of those in the top five according to BLS survey data for the region:

1. Professional, Scientific & Technical Services*

2. Health Care & Social Assistance*

3. Government - Public Service

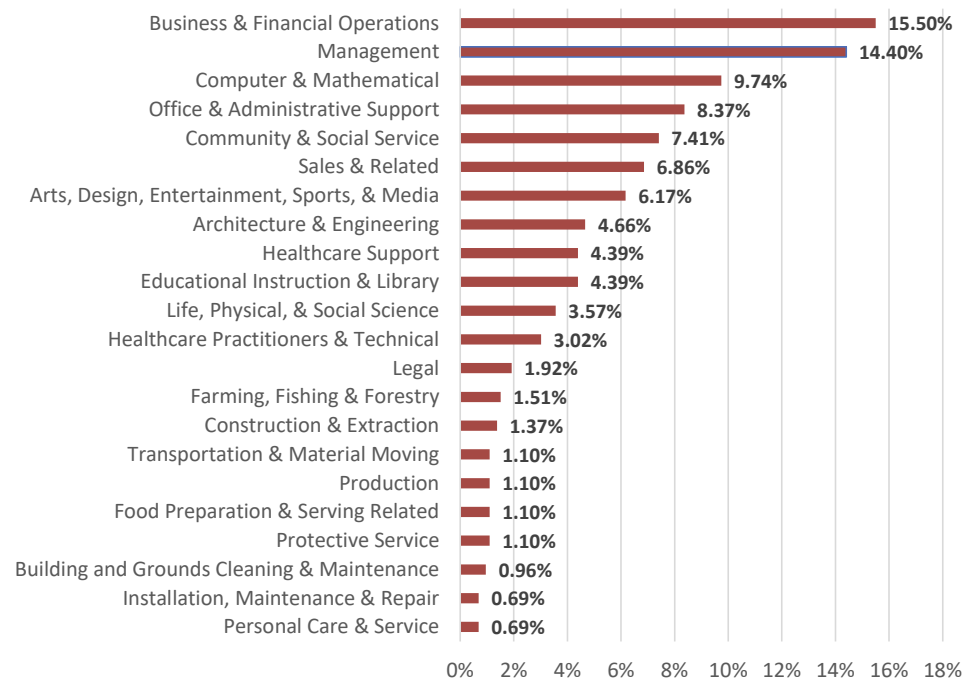4. Other Services (except Public Administration)

5. Manufacturing*

What Industry best desribes your employer?

Industry	%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	12.67%
Health Care & Social Assistance	9.40%
Government - Public Service	8.45%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	8.17%
Manufacturing	8.17%
Finance & Insurance	7.90%
Educational Services	6.27%
Information	5.04%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	4.36%
Construction	4.22%
Retail Trade	3.68%
Wholesale Trade	3.54%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	3.27%
Utilities	2.72%
Transportation & Warehousing	2.59%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	2.45%
Accommodation & Food Services	2.04%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	2.04%
Administrative & Support & Waste Management	1.23%
Mining	1.09%
Central Administration Office Activity	0.68%

OCCUPATIONS

% OF TELEWORKERS IN THAT OCCUPATION

Occupation	%
MANAGEMENT, BUSINESS & FINANCIAL OPERATIONS	46.38%
MANAGEMENT, PROFESSIONAL & RELATED	38.56%
PROFESSIONAL & RELATED	32.65%
OFFICE & ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	26.24%
SALES & OFFICE	25.38%
SALES & RELATED	24.38%
FARMING, FISHING & FORESTRY	5.52%
SERVICE	5.44%
INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE & REPAIR	4.38%
PRODUCTION	4.21%
NATURAL RESOURCES, CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE	4.05%
CONSTRUCTION & EXTRACTION	3.71%
PRODUCTION, TRANSPORTATION & MATERIAL MOVING	2.97%
TRANSPORTATION & MATERIAL MOVING	2.15%

Source: 2024 BLS Population Survey Data

Nationally, remote workers tend to have occupations that involve **management**, **business**, **financial**, and **professional** roles, **office** and **administrative support**, and **sales** and related services (per the chart to the left).

The regional survey results below provide a more detailed look at the occupational characteristics of remote workers in NW MI.

What occupation best describes your employment?

Occupation	%
Business & Financial Operations	15.50%
Management	14.40%
Computer & Mathematical	9.74%
Office & Administrative Support	8.37%
Community & Social Service	7.41%
Sales & Related	6.86%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media	6.17%
Architecture & Engineering	4.66%
Healthcare Support	4.39%
Educational Instruction & Library	4.39%
Life, Physical, & Social Science	3.57%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	3.02%
Legal	1.92%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	1.51%
Construction & Extraction	1.37%
Transportation & Material Moving	1.10%
Production	1.10%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	1.10%
Protective Service	1.10%
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	0.96%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	0.69%
Personal Care & Service	0.69%

79%
The percentage of the regional remote worker survey respondents who worked remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic
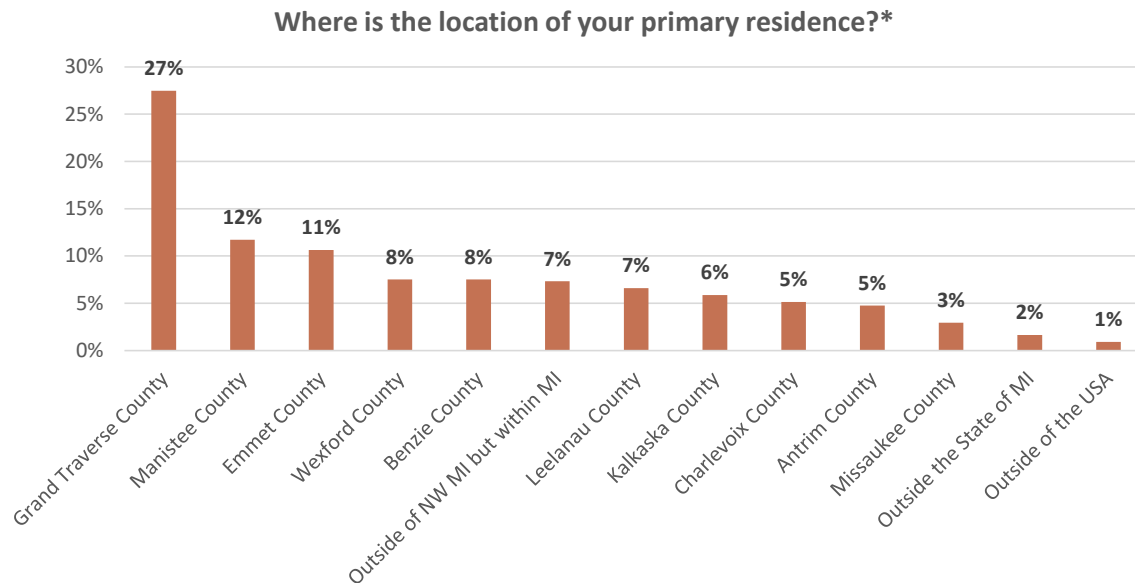
Worker Profiles

LOCATION

Over a quarter of the respondents to Networks Northwest's 2025 NW MI Remote Worker Survey indicated their primary residence was in Grand Traverse County, followed by 11.7% in Manistee County and 10.6% in Emmet County. Many of the survey respondents **(59%) have only lived at their primary residence for five years or less**.
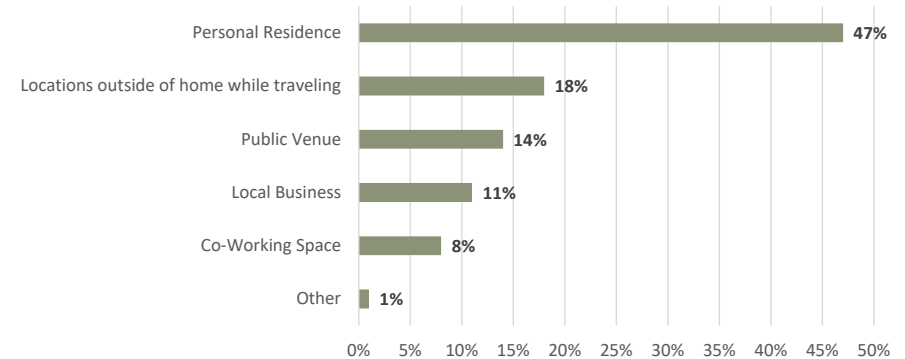
The **locations of employers themselves vary**: 35% of survey respondent's employers were based out of the region, followed by 25% in the U.S. (outside of MI), 20% being fully remote (no main location), and 19% were based elsewhere in Michigan.

Nearly **half of survey respondents worked from their personal residence.** Eight percent of people indicated they also utilize local co-working spaces.

Where do you perform your remote work?

Personal Residence	47%
Locations outside of home while traveling	18%
Public Venue	14%
Local Business	11%
Co-Working Space	8%
Other	1%

Where is the location of your primary residence?*

County	Percentage
Grand Traverse County	27%
Manistee County	12%
Emmet County	11%
Wexford County	8%
Benzie County	8%
Outside of NW MI but within MI	7%
Leelanau County	7%
Kalkaska County	6%
Charlevoix County	5%
Antrim County	5%
Missaukee County	3%
Outside the State of MI	2%
Outside of the USA	1%

*546 total respondents to this question

Do you use any of these coworking spaces?

Coworking Space	Number of Users
Commonground-Grove (Traverse City)	25
Space - Coworking Space (Traverse City)	24
20Fathoms (Traverse City)	18
The Loft - Coworking Space (Harbor Springs)	15
The Vault - Coworking Space (Charlevoix)	10
Northcoast Works (Petoskey)	10
Other	8
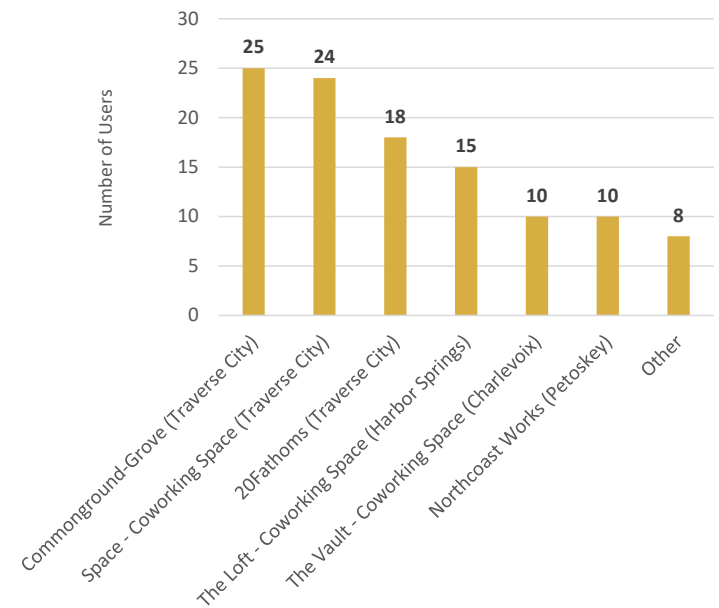
DEMOGRAPHICS

The graphs below illustrate some demographics of the respondents to the regional remote worker survey. Remote workers tend to be **younger** and within the **prime working ages of 25-54**, and have **higher educational attainment levels**. These results align with the findings obtained from national-level data on the demographics of remote workers.

Age Range

Highest Level of Educational Attainment

Annual Personal Gross Income
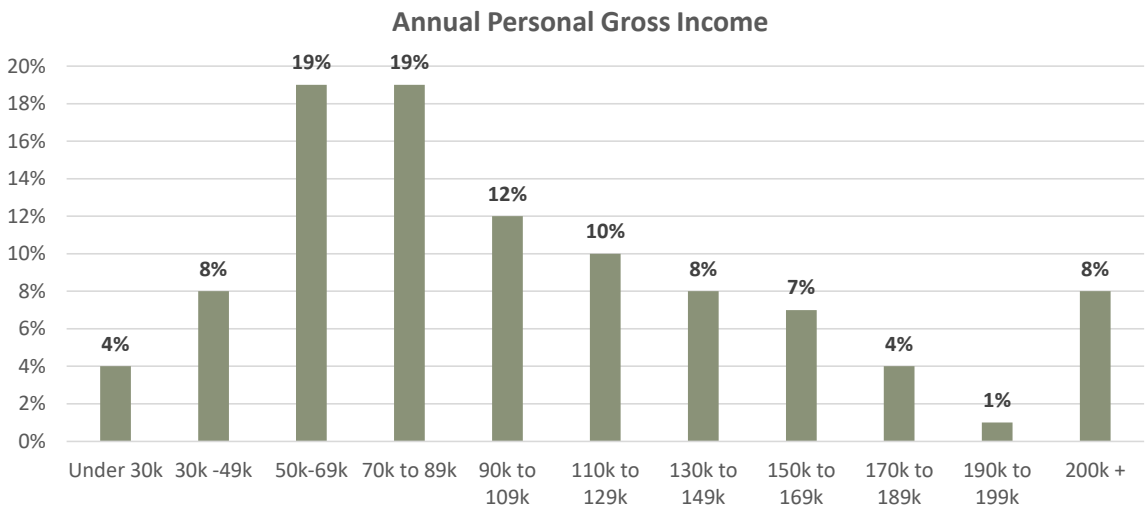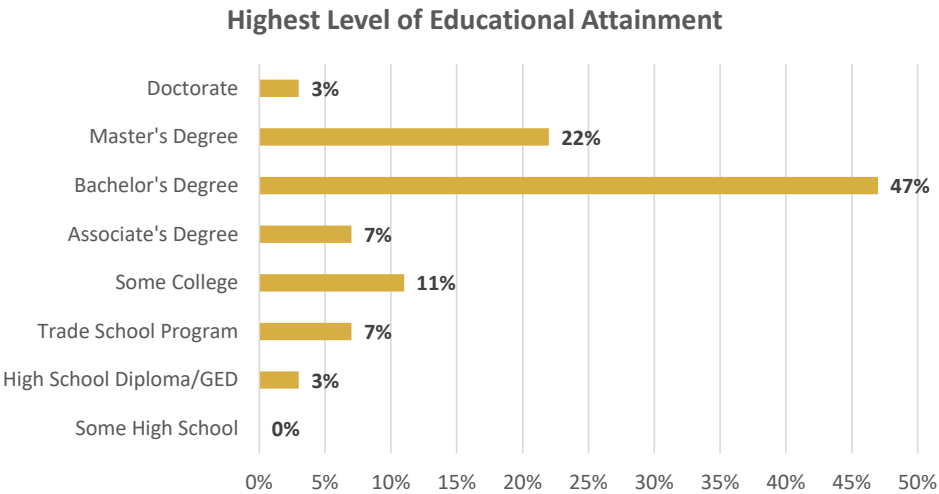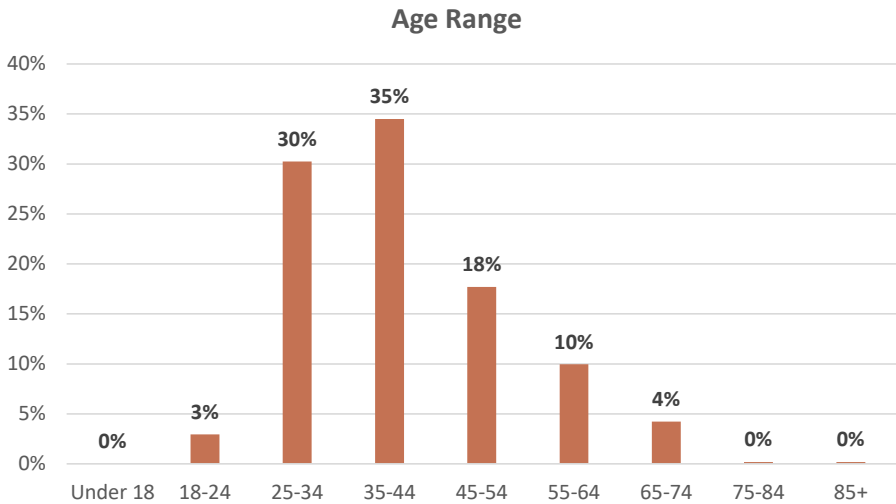
Gross income levels of survey respondents varied, but their **median annual personal gross income is between $90,000 to $109,999**.

A 2024 national study from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that while wages grew only slightly faster from 2019 to 2021 for U.S. remote workers than for on-site workers within occupations, **increases in remote work intensity within occupations** were **positively associated** with occupation-level **wage growth**.

PREFERENCES

43% of regional remote worker survey respondents preferred to conduct their work remotely on a **full-time basis**; nearly **a third preferred a flexible schedule** (where they set the times and/or locations to work), and nearly **a quarter preferred a hybrid schedule** of scheduled in-office times and remote work times. There is a desire to **maintain employment for a company that offers remote work**, and to **continue living in the region**. There is also a need to **provide support and connection opportunities** for remote workers.
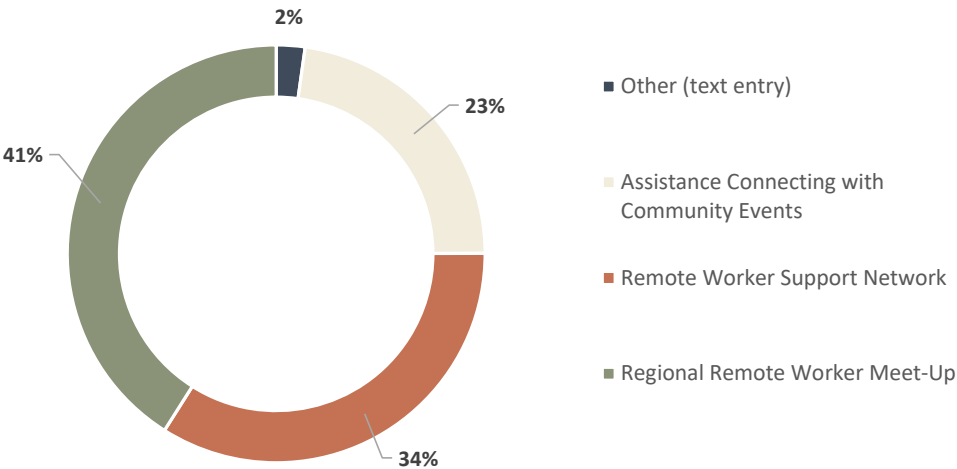
What is your preferred remote work arrangement?

- 3%
- 24%
- 30%
- 43%

■ Hybrid Schedule ■ Flexible Schedule ■ Full-time Remote Work ■ Other (text entry)
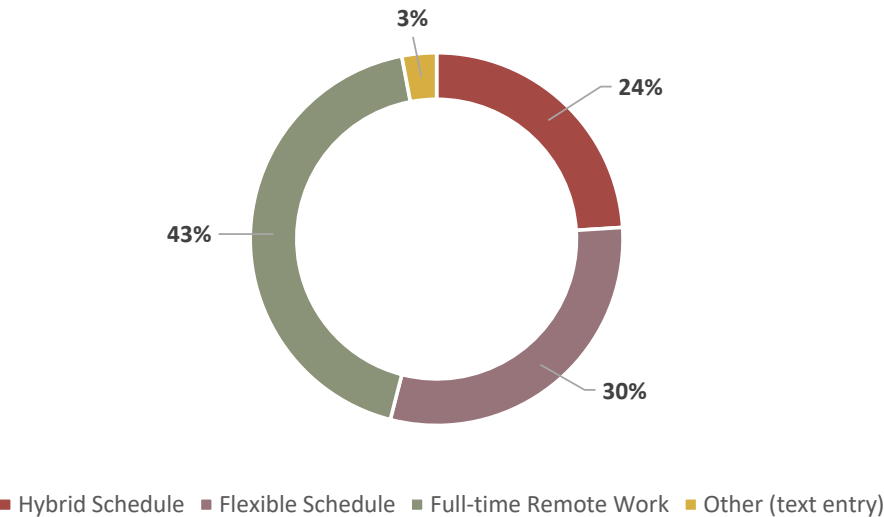
If the availability of remote work were removed, would you remain in NW MI?

- 12%
- 35%
- 53%

■ No ■ Maybe ■ Yes
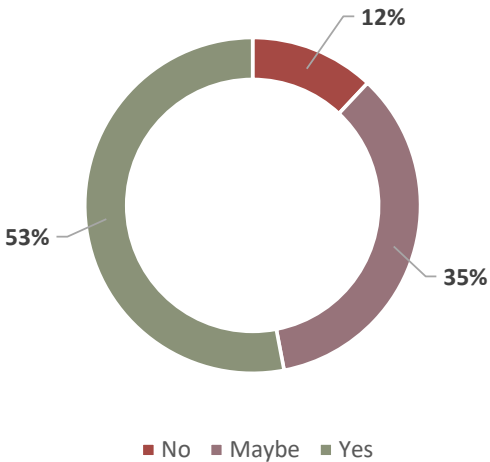
Are you more apt to work for a company that offers remote work?

Definitely yes	56%
Probably yes	17%
ht or might not	17%
Probably not	7%
Definately not	3%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%
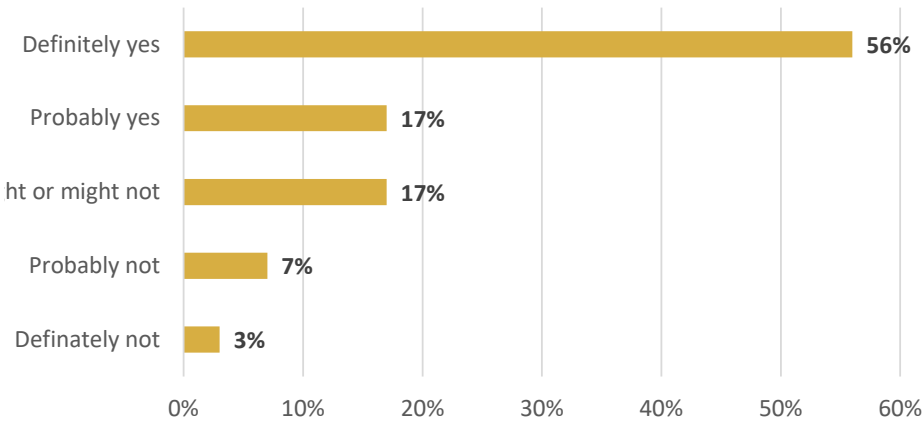
Do you need or would you like to be a part of any of the following?

- 2%
- 23%
- 34%
- 41%

■ Other (text entry)

■ Assistance Connecting with Community Events

■ Remote Worker Support Network

■ Regional Remote Worker Meet-Up

9

Feedback from the four regional focus groups and the online survey provided the following insights into what hybrid and remote workers see as benefits and challenges to their work models.

PROS +	CONS -
A Flexible Schedule allows for a sense of autonomy over one's time to better incorporate time for personal responsibilities, self-care, and social activities.	**Social Impact.** Loss of organizational group work culture and team cohesion. Worker feelings of isolation and loneliness.
Increased Efficiency and Productivity. Save time, money and stress without a commute. A personalized, controlled and quiet space with minimal interruptions can result in increased focus and productivity. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are more quickly achieved. A sense of co-worker autonomy, where people have to rely more on themselves than others to complete projects, can result in a more proportionate workload per person.	**Productivity Pitfalls.** Sometimes the increased productivity from working remotely can result in the employee looking for busy work to do, or just more work responsibilities being immediately placed on them after achieving their goals. Also, some "hands on" work tasks just cannot be done remotely.
Improved Well-Being. Reduced overall work stress, autonomy to create a flexible work schedule and a comfortable personal working environment. More time to sleep, eat healthier, exercise, and maintain social connections can increase mental and physical health.	**Communication & Collaboration.** Virtual meetings do not provide the same communication experience compared to in-person meetings. Some people may not participate in the same way. Difficult to perceive the intent and emotions of another person. Virtual meeting participants can feel unseen or unheard. Difficult to work virtually across time zones. Can't just walk down the hall to ask a quick question/chat with a colleague. Difficult to find places outside of one's home to conduct in person meetings.
Career and Skill Development. Remote work offers broader job opportunities with better pay compared to locally available non-remote jobs. Use of technology increases digital literacy skills.	**Career Concerns.** Potential disadvantage for remote workers competing with in-person workers who are "seen" more and may get more recognition or career advancement. The "convenience of employer" rule can result in some employees having to pay taxes in two states if they reside in a different state than their employer.
	Technological Challenges. "Tech use fatigue". IT problems. Slow internet speed or lack of broadband. IT security risks. Use of too many communication platforms. Difficulty hearing/seeing people on calls.
Business Adaptation. Remote work enables companies to be more agile in responding to disruptions and provides access to diverse opportunities through collaboration across geographies.	**Management of Remote Employees.** It can be difficult to manage and evaluate worker performance without physically seeing them put in the work. Developing workflows that are "remote first" is a shift in thinking. Some employees do require in-person management.
	Work/Life Boundaries. Can be distracted by home tasks or struggle with setting boundaries with work calls, emails, texts being ever-present. Food in the home kitchen is too accessible.

Supporting the Hybrid and Remote Workforce in Northwest Michigan

ACTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS

1. **Focus workforce development efforts on skills aligned with some of the occupations that tend to utilize a hybrid or remote work model**, such as management, business, financial, computer and mathematical, office and administrative support, and sales.

2. When **recruiting** remote/hybrid workers, **leverage existing relationships and connections to the community**. Target marketing efforts to workers who grew up in or attended school in the community. During the pandemic, people who left urban cores to work remotely in rural areas were more likely to move to a place where they had pre-established relationships.

3. Employers that offer or are considering offering hybrid or remote work options to their employees can:

- Foster a **supportive company culture**, providing **regular employee check-ins** and **communication,** and **streamlined communication platforms**.

- Set clear expectations about **remote work policies**.

- Provide **technical training** on remote work collaboration methods and tools.

- Provide **metrics** for employee **career progression** and provide **recognition of achievements**.

- Have **contingency plans** in place in case of disruptive events, such as power outages.

- Consider offering **benefits** such as **internet/tech support** payment assistance, **equipment**, **intuitive software**, **more remote days** if working a hybrid schedule, or provision of **leased meeting/work spaces**. Co-working spaces can also serve as remote work hubs for pods of distributed workers working for a single company, allowing for productive work collaboration.

Supporting the Hybrid and Remote Workforce in Northwest Michigan

1. Provide **places and programs** where remote workers can **hold business meetings**, **work outside the home efficiently**, **network** to build personal and professional connections, and **combat isolation**.

   - Increase the availability of **co-working space venues or meeting rooms in institutional buildings.** These can serve as spaces in which to work while traveling, to hold business meetings, to utilize resources such as high-speed internet and printing, and to participate in the social fabric of a community.

   - A local Chamber of Commerce could consider **hosting networking events specifically for remote and hybrid workers**.

2. Encourage the development of **mixed-use neighborhoods with smaller multi-use office and retail spaces** that can be utilized by remote workers and various other tenants. Encourage the creation of **"hybrid buildings" that can easily be re-purposed to another use** in the future.

3. Continue to expand and improve **broadband infrastructure**, and clearly communicate where broadband is available to potential residents and businesses.

4. Continue to invest in the **region's quality of life assets**, such as vibrant, safe and welcoming downtowns and destination parks and trails.

5. Continue efforts to **increase the availability and affordability of childcare services** through the Northwest Regional Childcare Coalition and **workforce housing** through utilizing the tools and resources on Housing North's website.

6. **Incentivize remote workers** through **state or local government programs**, such as housing or relocation assistance.