

# Addressing Gender Equality Issues in Hybrid and Remote Work (HRW)

**“It is important that managers understand how remote, and hybrid work can reinforce gender inequalities and take steps to mitigate these risks.**



## Introduction

Hybrid and remote work have often been celebrated as methods of reducing gender inequality in the workplace by providing women, who commonly bear a disproportionate share of household and caregiving duties, greater opportunities to work full-time. However, HRW can also blur work-life boundaries, with women more likely than their male counterparts to take on household tasks during work hours, potentially reinforcing gender inequalities.

This guide serves to provide strategies to mitigate these discrimination risks in HRW.

# Understanding the issue

## What are the risks to gender equality that arise from hybrid and remote work ?

### Decreased work-life balance

Recent research on the gender dimensions of hybrid and remote work reveals that women who work from home are more likely than men to take on household and caregiving demands during work hours.<sup>1</sup> For instance, a study conducted by The Ohio State University<sup>2</sup> shows that in a two-income household, men who work from home while their female partner works at the office are much less likely to take on shared household responsibilities during work hours. Women are also more likely to feel guilty about neglecting household or caregiving duties when working from the office.

This dual burden of domestic and work-related tasks can lead to a blurring of the lines between professional and personal life as well as insufficient work breaks, often fostering unhealthy habits, such as feeling the need to be constantly available. Furthermore, this increase in non-work interruptions can leave women with a persistent sense of needing to catch-up, creating a cycle of overworking and leading to increased stress, and risk of burnout.

### Stigmatisation of HRW

In some companies, women who opt to work from home or in a hybrid format may experience stigmatisation, as they are perceived to be prioritising their family over work. This stigmatisation working in tandem with the corporate culture of “presenteeism” has been known to result in decreased pay and promotion opportunities for women in comparison to male counterparts, who spend most of their time at the office. This has also been referred to as the “fatherhood premium” and the “motherhood penalty”.

### Isolation

A decreased presence in the office can also increase feelings of isolation. While isolation is a risk for all remote workers, women are disproportionately affected due to their higher rates of working from home. This heightened isolation can contribute to a decline in mental health and overall well-being among female employees.

## How can we mitigate these risks ?



### **Inclusive policies and fair performance evaluations**

Employers must establish policies that support work-life balance and foster a culture where remote work is not penalised. Employees should be evaluated based on performance outcomes, rather than physical presence in the office.

To prevent remote work being perceived as a policy primarily for women, employers should actively encourage male employees to take advantage of remote work opportunities.

Employers should implement and communicate realistic deadlines and provide workloads that fit into workhours, regardless of work location.

### **Foster team dynamics and employee well-being**

To mitigate risks of isolation, employers should offer opportunities for in-person interaction and networking. These could be done in the way of team building activities, coworking spaces, or non-work-related social events.

Employees should be given access to mental-health and well-being services.

# What is the role of Managers and Human Ressources ?

## Managers



- Facilitate a work culture that supports both men and women in choosing remote work if desired and emphasises employee well-being.
- Ensure performance evaluations are fair and consistent, regardless of whether employees work remotely or in the office.

## Human ressources



- Provide support and trainings to managers on the opportunities and risks to gender equality that arise from remote and hybrid work.
- Use employee feedback mechanisms to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, women's access to remote work does not change the division of labour in many households. For this reason, it is important that managers understand how remote, and hybrid work can reinforce gender inequalities and take steps to mitigate these risks.



### Further reading

- Double challenges: How working from home affects dual-earner couples' work-family experiences: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/peps.12559>
- Gender, Parenting, And the Rise Of Remote Work During The Pandemic: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9122150/>