



AlixPartners

Are women leaders driving our digital future?

Insights from AlixPartners'
Disruption Index 2025



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Foreword

The urgency for change extends beyond equality – it's driven by an undeniable economic and competitiveness case. Recent analysis from the FTSE Women Leaders Review and the Chartered Management Institute found that FTSE 350 companies with higher numbers of women in leadership correlate with smaller gender pay gaps, and experience [double-digit revenue growth](#). Furthermore, King's College London's Gender Equality Index found that gender equality also correlates with increased [productivity and economic activity](#) in the United Kingdom. This is no coincidence.

This report indicates a positive – yet only incremental – shift in the representation of women at leadership levels, at 21% of survey respondents vs. 19% last year. Within the FTSE 350, women now hold 35% of leadership positions but make up only 7% of the CEOs in this group. Addressing this imbalance is vital to ensuring that progress achieved at other leadership levels is reflected in the top executive ranks.

The findings in this report show that women leaders are confidently navigating disruption, and consistently leaning into innovation, seeing digital transformation as an enabler to reshape organisations. They tend to bring a holistic approach to leadership – prioritising not only the P&L and balance sheet, but also culture, inclusion, flexible work models, and the human impacts of rapid technological change.

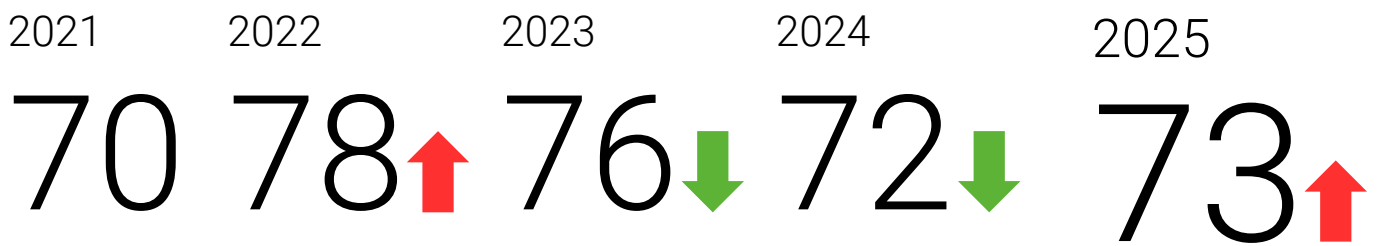
The seismic rise of AI and machine learning – coupled with the issues of data privacy and cybersecurity – present our greatest threats and opportunities. Agentic AI and the imminent scale of humanoid robotics may dramatically reshape global workforces, and the absence of women's perspectives in leadership and technology risks compounding biases and producing solutions that fail to serve everyone.

Crucially, every leader should ask themselves whether their organisation reflects the diversity of talent, thought, and experience required to navigate this disruptive era. Inclusion must not be a separate initiative but be embedded in the DNA of how we work and succeed.

It would also be naïve to ignore the heightened vulnerabilities that women and underrepresented groups are feeling in the current climate. For all of us, it reinforces the importance of action, not tokenism – and of mission, values, and allyship.

My hope is that, as you read this report, you reflect deeply on the data it presents. Consider how much more resilient our organisations could become if more women were empowered to lead. The pace of change will remain relentless; so too is our responsibility to build businesses that harness the full spectrum of the talent that our world has to offer.

Disruption levels in recent years (/100)



3,200 senior executives
50% at C-level
10 industries
\$100m+ company revenue

Men: **79%** Women: **21%**
Non-binary/Other: **0.1%**

About AlixPartners' Disruption Index – and this report

At AlixPartners, we conduct an annual survey of more than 3,000 C-level and senior executives around the world, looking at the challenges those executives identify, as well as the behaviours of those companies that are thriving in this disrupted world. We publish the findings in our annual [Disruption Index](#), released earlier this year.

Our research enables us to calculate a Disruption Score – tracking how much disruption exists, and how much it is impacting companies around the world. To calculate this, we take the complexity of disruption – the number of forces simultaneously affecting a company – and multiply this by the magnitude, i.e., how disrupted those companies have been, according to their leaders.

The 2025 score tells us that disruption is back on the rise after a two-year decline – indicating that, while companies may have become more resilient in the years immediately following the pandemic, external pressures are intensifying.

For the second consecutive year, we've examined the global findings through the lens of gender – enabling us to explore how women and men in leadership roles are responding to disruptive challenges. Last year, women leaders made up 19% of our sample – this year, that's up to 21%. We share our findings in this report.

Key findings

Women leaders:

01 **Are highly confident in navigating disruption – as confident as men**

90% of women leaders say their natural leadership style thrives in a disrupted environment, compared with 89% of men leaders.

02 **Anticipate higher levels of disruption than men – and are more likely to embrace technological solutions**

47% of women leaders expect significant change to their business model this year, vs. 39% of men leaders. Women leaders are more likely to have an extremely optimistic outlook regarding generative AI's potential (40% of women leaders vs. 32% of men leaders), and are leaning into AI as a driver of revenue growth, with 67% citing this as a priority vs. 59% of men leaders. Women leaders are also more likely to anticipate humanoid robots at scale within five years (55% of women leaders vs. 50% of men leaders).

03 **Are driving greater success with digital transformation**

The proportion of women C-suite executives reporting >15% ROI from digital transformation in the past year is almost 3x higher than men C-suite executives (11% vs. 4%).

04 **Are more likely to say they set the pace in their industry when it comes to growth**

20% of women leaders say their organisations are industry pace-setters when it comes to growth, vs. 15% of men leaders. Women C-suite executives are slightly more likely to report over 10% net profit growth (24% vs. 21% of men C-suite executives).

05 **Are less concerned by remote work models**

Women leaders are less likely to say that remote work models negatively impact productivity (45% of women leaders vs. 49% of men leaders) or career advancement (44% of women leaders vs. 50% of men leaders).

06 **Remain underrepresented**

Women leaders accounted for 21% of our sample of more than 3,000 senior executives, up slightly from 19% last year. Women now hold 35% of leadership roles across FTSE 350 companies yet constitute only 7% of CEOs among this group.



26%

of CEOs say they feel
anxious in their roles,
vs. 30% in 2024

43%


of CEOs worry about
losing their job,
vs. 59% in 2024

How leaders are navigating disruption

From tariffs, regulation, and taxation to cybersecurity, businesses find themselves navigating increasingly complex challenges, but not without significant technological opportunity.

Our overall data set (combining responses from all genders) reveals that, amid rising disruption, leaders exhibit optimism and resilience. The proportion of CEOs reporting anxiety in their roles decreased from 30% to 26% from 2024 to 2025, while those worried about job security fell from 59% to 43%.

Are organisations becoming better at adapting?



Despite high levels of disruption, there are signs that organisations are becoming more resilient in the face of ongoing change. Compared with our 2024 findings, fewer CEOs stated their company and executive team lack the necessary agility or adaptability.

In 2024

Our 2025 results

61%

of CEOs say their
company is not
adapting fast enough



41%

63%

of CEOs say their
executive team lacks
necessary agility



45%

59%

of CEOs say
employees are stuck
in their ways



47%

Greatest threats and opportunities in 2025

We asked leaders to rank the foremost business threats and opportunities for the year ahead. Unsurprisingly, regulation, taxation, and cybersecurity topped the long list of threats, while technology and AI were consistently rated as the leading opportunities.

Greatest threats

- 01 Regulation and taxation
- 02 Data privacy and cybersecurity
- 03 Interest rates

Greatest opportunities

- 01 Pervasive connective technology infrastructure
- 02 AI and machine learning
- 03 Technological advances in materials

Notably, among CEO respondents, 72% predicted that humanoid robots would be present at scale within five years, reflecting the rapid expected integration of advanced technologies.

The double-edged promise of AI

AI remains a critical area of focus: 65% of leaders view AI and machine learning as an opportunity rather than a threat, while 80% of leaders are optimistic about the potential of generative AI (GenAI). However, 35% of leaders raised concerns regarding AI's potential to diminish critical thinking among employees. As adoption accelerates, a critical conversation persists – how do we augment human capability rather than diminish or supersede its necessity?

How do women leaders see the future?

As we saw earlier, women leaders made up 21% of our sample this year – a slight increase from 19% in 2024.

Women leaders are highly confident in navigating disruption – as confident as men

90% of women leaders and 89% of men leaders stated that their natural leadership style thrives in disrupted environments. Both groups expressed strong confidence in their ability to succeed in their roles, as well as to keep up with the necessary knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, both groups are similarly likely to acknowledge the need for support from personal or professional advisors to succeed, with 77% of women leaders and 75% men leaders highlighting this requirement.

90%

of women leaders

89%

of men leaders

say their natural leadership style thrives in a disrupted environment

76%

of women leaders

75%

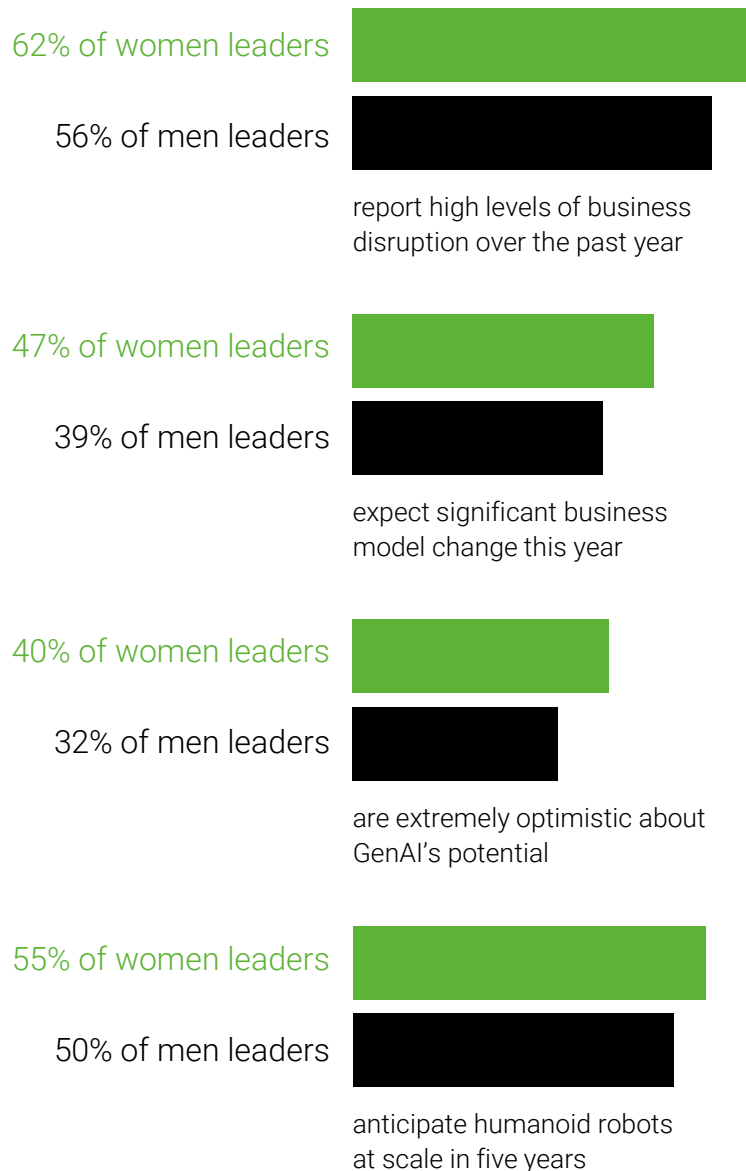
of men leaders

feel confident in their roles, and confident they're keeping up in terms of knowledge and skills

Women leaders anticipate more disruption – and are more likely to embrace technological solutions

Women leaders reported higher levels of recent business disruption (62% of women leaders vs. 56% of men leaders) and a greater expectation of significant business model change this year (47% of women leaders vs. 39% of men leaders). They are also less likely than men leaders to say their companies are “set in their ways and not open to change” (30% of women leaders vs. 35% of men leaders).

When it comes to solutions, more women leaders are seeing and grasping the opportunities that technology presents. Women leaders were more likely to have an extremely optimistic outlook regarding GenAI’s potential (40% of women leaders vs. 32% of men leaders) and to anticipate humanoid robots at scale within five years (55% of women leaders vs. 50% of men leaders).



Which of the following best describes the ROI your company has experienced as a result of its digital transformation efforts over the past 12 months?

Men C-suite executives Women C-suite executives

ROI of 15% or more

4% 11%

ROI of 10% to <15%

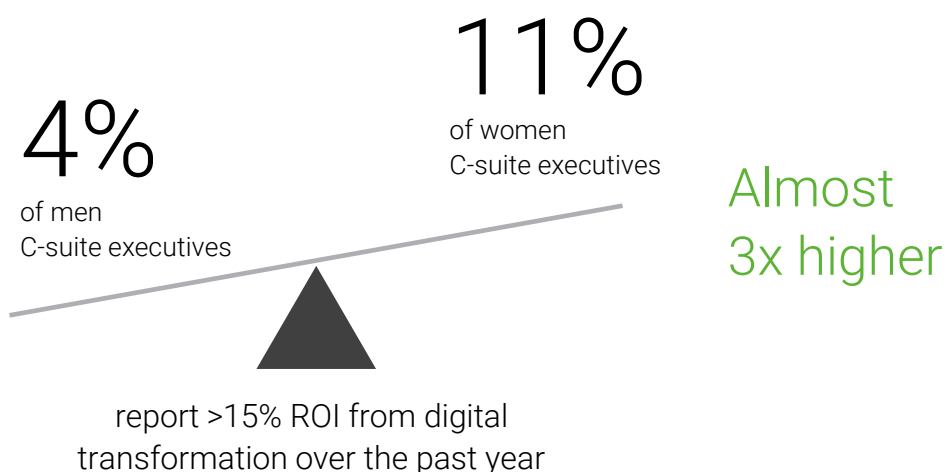
14% 18%

ROI of 5% to <10%

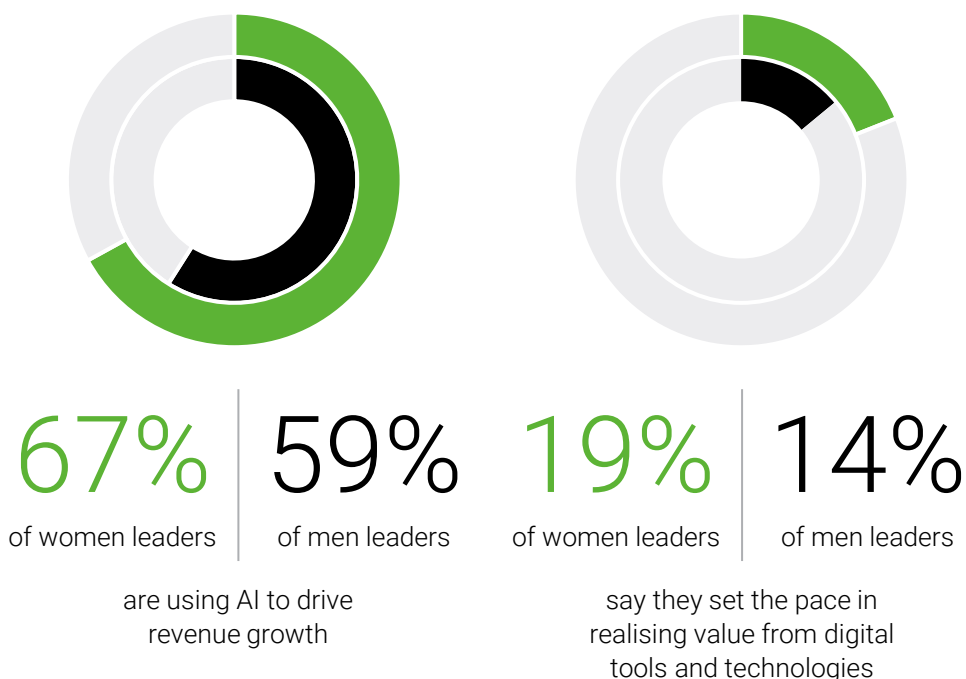
44% 47%

Women leaders are driving greater success with digital transformation

A distinctly digital story emerged from this year's findings. 11% of women C-suite executives reported achieving more than 15% ROI from digital transformation initiatives over the past year, compared to only 4% of their men counterparts. A similar trend, though less pronounced, can be seen at the two next levels of reported ROI (10-15% and 5-10%).



Women leaders are also leaning into AI as a driver of revenue growth, with 67% citing this as a priority compared to 59% of men leaders. A higher proportion of women leaders (19%) indicated that their organisations were industry pace-setters in realising value from digital tools and technologies, compared to men leaders (14%).





Catherine Brien

Partner and Managing Director,
EMEA AI and Data Lead,
AlixPartners

"Breakthroughs in AI and data science are unlocking possibilities we could once only imagine. As we steer our organisations through successive waves of disruption – from market shocks to technological advances – we must ask ourselves not only how we adapt and thrive, but who we empower to lead the way.

However, the efforts of a technology team alone – whatever its gender balance may be – will not suffice; true success demands cross-functional collaboration. So not only do organisations need more women leaders in technology, but it is also imperative to have more women in leadership roles across the whole business. If organisations are to stay competitive and resilient in this era of rapid change, empowering women in leadership across an entire business is not just a moral imperative but a practical necessity.

The data is clear: organisations with more women in senior roles outperform those with fewer or no women in senior roles on multiple fronts. Diverse teams deliver a broader perspective, forge more resilient strategies, and foster the kind of adaptive cultures that today's world demands. Yet, as the numbers show, the rise in women leaders is slow, often incremental, and nowhere near representative of the talent available.

AI, machine learning, and rapid advances in digital infrastructure are creating new winners and exposing those who are behind the curve in every industry. The organisations that thrive will embrace diverse leadership to drive better, more holistic decision-making, amplify innovation, and ultimately future-proof themselves."



Concerns about remote work and career advancement are easing

Attitudes toward remote work and career advancement are shifting in a positive direction. In 2024, 51% of women leaders and 57% of men leaders said remote work models have a negative impact on career advancement – this is down to 44% and 50% in 2025, respectively.

In 2024

51%
of women leaders

57%
of men leaders

say remote
work models
have a
negative impact
on career
advancement

In 2025

↓ 44%

↓ 50%

45%

of women leaders

49%

of men leaders

say remote work
models have a **negative
impact** on productivity

Women leaders are less concerned about remote work impacting productivity

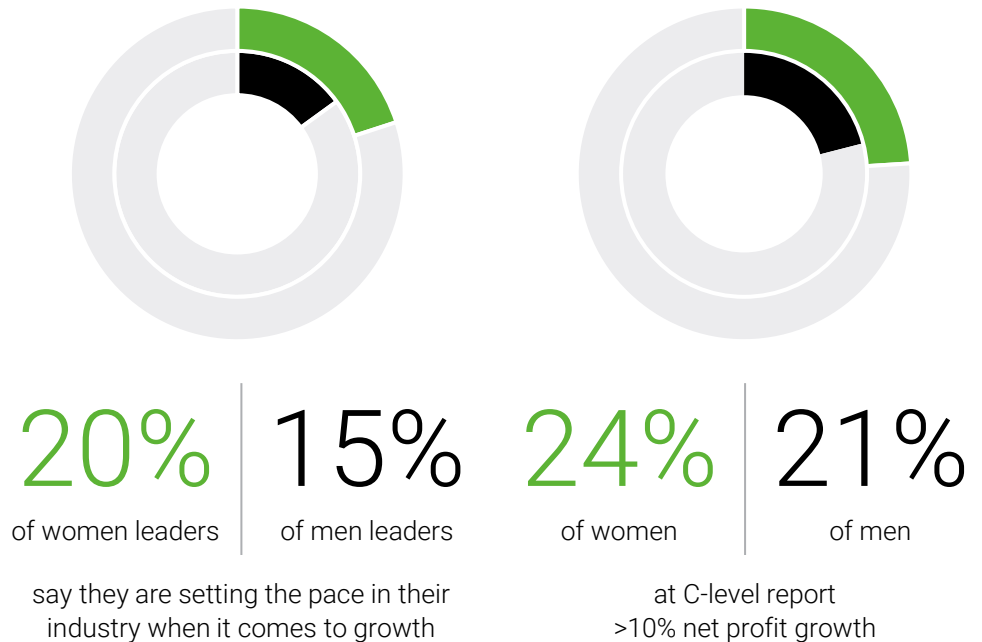
Women leaders demonstrate greater support for remote work models: 45% of women leaders (vs. 49% of men leaders) believe these models negatively impact productivity.

It should be noted that responses differ by region: respondents from the Middle East and Asia are most likely to say that remote work negatively impacts productivity and career advancement. Businesses in Japan are most likely to mandate a fully in-office model, while Canada is most likely to embrace fully remote models (see appendix for a breakdown of responses by country).

Additionally, 54% of women leaders express optimism about their company's ability to hire qualified talent, compared to 50% of men leaders – potentially reflecting this more open-minded approach to remote work models and location flexibility.

Women leaders are driving business growth

Women leaders are more likely to say their organisations are industry pace-setters when it comes to growth (20% vs. 15% of men leaders). Women C-suite executives are slightly more likely to report greater than 10% net profit growth compared to their men counterparts (24% vs. 21%).



Yet women remain underrepresented in leadership roles

Despite exhibiting these strengths, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles.

- Women leaders made up only 21% of our sample, up slightly from 19% last year
- Women now hold 35% of leadership roles (executive committee members and their direct reports) across FTSE 350 companies, yet account for only 7% of CEOs among this group
- Women make up less than a third of the world's tech workforce
- Beyond leadership roles, it would take 134 years to reach full gender parity at the current rate of progress

These statistics highlight systemic challenges, and demand sustained efforts from organisations to attract, retain, and promote women in leadership. By failing to bring more women into leadership roles – particularly in tech – are we limiting our ability to successfully navigate disruption?

Sources: AlixPartners' Disruption Index 2025, FTSE Women Leaders Review 2025, World Bank Group: Closing Gender Gaps in Digital Development 2023, WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2024



Kathryn
Britten

Partner and Managing Director,
AlixPartners

The future for women leaders

There is no question that the past year has delivered more uncertainty, more complexity, and, crucially, more opportunity.

This report is not only a reflection of the current state; it is a call to action. The challenges and opportunities facing business leaders will not abate. If anything, they will intensify, especially as AI and new technologies rapidly scale. The data clearly shows that businesses with women in leadership roles can be more resilient, innovative, and commercially successful.

What concerns me most from this year's findings is how much remains to be done. Progress in women's representation at the highest levels is achingly slow. Even as the numbers inch in the right direction, the fact remains that women are very significantly underrepresented in leadership. This weighs heavily – not because it is new, but because it persists despite our collective efforts and growing evidence that gender balance enhances greater productivity and economic value.

Our data shows that women leaders adopt a multifaceted approach to addressing the disruptive forces impacting their businesses. They continue to champion technology and transformation, while demonstrating a strong understanding of the needs of their workforce. This holistic and motivational leadership style is exactly what is needed in today's uncertain environment.

Encouragingly, men and women in senior roles seek diverse perspectives and professional advice, recognising that none of us can be expected to have all the answers when disruption is the norm.

It is inarguable that technology is shaping our future and that women leaders are embracing it as they navigate disruption. But if women are not rising to leadership roles, particularly within the technology industry, we are missing out on a significant proportion of the talent and perspective that we need to break new ground. It is vital that women have the opportunity to contribute equally. This is about bringing more women into tech and, importantly, ensuring they want to stay, grow and lead. I see these women as the pioneers shaping our future – they must be supported. It's not just about representation – it's about ensuring that technology reflects and serves everyone.

Imagine the impact on digital transformation and our ability to navigate disruption if we were to have gender parity at the top across industries. It is important that we all continue to challenge assumptions, advocate for inclusion, and empower more women to lead alongside men.

Thank you for engaging with this report, for your openness to these discussions, and for your commitment to turning insight into action.

Appendix

AlixPartners' Disruption Index 2025: Gender insights

3,200

business executives in 11 countries: United States, Canada, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

Across 10 industries: Aerospace & Defence, Automotive, Consumer Products, Energy & Power Generation, Financial Services, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Media & Entertainment, Retail, Technology, Telecom & Cable

320

per industry

200-600+

per country

Business executives are defined as:

- Ages 25-65
- Director level or above (50% at C-level)
- Company revenue of \$100m+ (50% \$1b+)
- Possess insight into disruption trends facing their industry

Most fieldwork was conducted from August 14-September 30, 2024, with a supplementary survey after the U.S. election conducted from November 12-December 2, 2024.



Which of the following best describes the work model your organisation currently enforces?

	Average across countries	U.S.	Canada	U.K.	Germany	France	Italy	Switzerland	Japan	China	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Fully remote work/no office space	3%	3%	6%	3%	2%	1%	3%	4%	0%	3%	3%	8%
Fully flexible for employees to decide	14%	13%	12%	15%	13%	23%	20%	17%	7%	14%	22%	17%
1-2 days in-office mandated	14%	18%	10%	20%	26%	14%	8%	13%	7%	12%	12%	6%
3-4 days in-office mandated	29%	30%	42%	31%	24%	31%	30%	34%	21%	28%	20%	15%
Mandatory 5 days in-office	40%	36%	30%	31%	35%	31%	39%	32%	65%	43%	44%	54%

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Agree: Remote work models have a negative impact on...

Employee career advancement	49%	51%	32%	42%	47%	41%	49%	39%	54%	56%	61%	65%
Productivity	48%	49%	34%	42%	44%	43%	43%	31%	57%	58%	69%	60%



About AlixPartners

For more than 40 years, AlixPartners has helped businesses around the world respond quickly and decisively to their most critical challenges – circumstances as diverse as urgent performance improvement, accelerated transformation, complex restructuring and risk mitigation.

These are the moments when everything is on the line – a sudden shift in the market, an unexpected performance decline, a time-sensitive deal, a fork-in-the-road decision. But it's not what we do that makes a difference, it's how we do it.

Tackling situations when time is of the essence is part of our DNA – so we adopt an action-oriented approach at all times. We work in small, highly qualified teams with specific industry and functional expertise, and we operate at pace, moving quickly from analysis to implementation. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our clients until the job is done, and only measure our success in terms of the results we deliver.

Our approach enables us to help our clients confront and overcome truly future-defining challenges. We partner with you to make the right decisions and take the right actions. And we are right by your side. When it really matters.

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