



## PART 2

Read the text below and answer questions 14–26.

### THE SOCIAL FABRIC OF WORK: ISOLATION, COMMUNITY, AND WELL-BEING

Remote and hybrid work have changed not only where people work but also how people relate to colleagues, managers, and the organisations that employ them. Standard productivity indicators can capture deliverables and response times, yet they often miss the social capital that makes coordination smoother: trust, shared norms, and the quiet confidence that help is available when problems arise. When that social fabric weakens, output may remain stable in the short term, while motivation, learning, and commitment erode in ways that are harder to see.

Isolation in distributed work is not simply the absence of conversation. Many employees report that online meetings transmit information efficiently but feel transactional, with little space for the small interactions that signal belonging. Casual feedback, quick clarification, and low-stakes humour do more than entertain; they communicate psychological safety, telling people that questions are welcome and mistakes will not be punished. Without these cues, workers may hesitate to seek support, worrying they will look incompetent or that they are interrupting someone else's tightly scheduled day.

At the same time, office life is not automatically protective. Commuting stress, open-plan interruptions, and the social pressure to appear constantly available can harm wellbeing. For some people, working from home improves concentration and reduces sensory overload, particularly when tasks require deep focus. The overall effect therefore depends on context: job design, personality, home environment, and the quality of management. The same arrangement can feel liberating for one employee and draining for another.

A central variable is boundary theory: how clearly people can separate work roles from recovery time. When teams operate across time zones and devices, messages can arrive at any hour, and boundaries can blur. Employees may extend their working day in small increments—checking email late at night, replying “just in case”, or returning to tasks during weekends. Over time, this always-on pattern increases fatigue even if total hours do not rise dramatically, because recovery becomes fragmented and attention is repeatedly pulled back into work mode.

Management choices often determine whether remote work becomes supportive or stressful. Teams with clear goals, predictable rhythms, and explicit norms about response times tend to report better wellbeing, because uncertainty is reduced and employees can plan their time. By contrast, vague priorities can generate continuous urgency, leaving people unsure what “good enough” looks like. Some organisations respond by increasing



digital surveillance or adopting algorithmic management systems that track activity signals. Critics argue that heavy monitoring can erode trust and encourage presenteeism: behaviour that looks busy on dashboards but does not necessarily create value.

Community, however, can be designed. High-performing remote teams often rely on deliberate rituals rather than spontaneous interaction: structured check-ins, peer mentoring, shared documentation, and rotating facilitation so quieter voices are heard. The goal is not constant socialising but reliable connection—employees need to feel supported when challenges arise, and they need consistent pathways to ask for help without reputational risk. In this sense, remote work can strengthen inclusion for some workers if norms are explicit and participation is actively managed.

Individual differences complicate one-size-fits-all policy. New hires and junior staff may need more frequent contact to learn norms, build networks, and interpret organisational signals that are otherwise invisible online. Workers living alone may experience isolation more intensely, because workday interaction is not balanced by at-home social contact. Conversely, caregivers may value flexibility yet struggle if meetings shift unpredictably or if “urgent” requests arrive late in the day. Effective systems therefore offer options while making expectations legible and fair.

Some companies now treat wellbeing as an operational risk rather than a private matter. They track indicators such as turnover, sick leave, and internal mobility, and they train managers to notice early signs of withdrawal, such as silence in meetings or reduced initiative. Many firms also offer mental-health resources, but evidence suggests these supports work best when paired with workload planning and realistic deadlines; otherwise they function as coping tools in a system that continues to overload people. The broader lesson is that remote work is a social system: technologies can connect people, but they do not automatically create belonging, psychological safety, or fairness.

### Questions 14–18

Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text, choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.

**14** The passage suggests that measures of output may fail to capture factors such as trust and motivation at work.

**15** The passage suggests that isolation in remote work is only the result of being physically alone.



**16** The passage states that commuting stress is identified as the main cause of employee burnout.

**17** The passage suggests that unclear priorities can create an ongoing sense of urgency.

**18** The passage suggests mental-health resources work best when combined with workload planning and realistic deadlines.

### Questions 19–23

Complete the notes below. Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the text for each answer.

#### Social and psychological effects of remote work

- Informal comments on performance can provide casual **19** ....., helping employees feel that they belong.
- Without these cues, some employees avoid asking for help because they fear appearing **20** .....
- When communication arrives across devices and time zones, boundaries can **21** .....
- An “always-on” routine can increase long-term **22** ..... even without dramatic hour increases.
- Excessive monitoring may erode **23** ..... and push workers toward presenteeism.

### Questions 24–26

Complete the table below. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the text for each answer.

#### Different needs in remote work

| Group or situation         | Need or effect                                                 | Reason or context                                              |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| New hires and junior staff | Need frequent contact to learn norms and build <b>24</b> ..... | Some organisational signals are difficult to detect online.    |
| Workers living alone       | May experience <b>25</b> ..... more intensely                  | Workday interaction is not balanced by social contact at home. |



| Group or situation | Need or effect                       | Reason or context                                                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 26 .....           | May appreciate flexible arrangements | Can struggle with unpredictable meetings or urgent requests arriving late. |

#### Answer Key

14. TRUE

15. FALSE

16. NOT GIVEN

17. TRUE

18. TRUE

19. feedback

20. incompetent

21. blur

22. fatigue

23. trust

24. networks

25. isolation

26. caregivers