

A man with reddish hair and glasses, wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a grey t-shirt, is looking at a laptop. A woman with dark curly hair and glasses, wearing a red button-down shirt, is sitting next to him, resting her chin on her hand and looking at the laptop. They are in a modern office with large windows in the background.

# Staffing Critical Functions: 2022 Benchmarking Report

A data-forward exploration of how North American companies are positioning themselves for growth



# About This Report

Featuring deep data insights from C-suite executives and senior managers, Robert Half's 2022 Benchmarking Report sheds light on how firms are managing hiring and retention challenges and staffing specialized teams for:

- Administrative and customer support
- Finance and accounting
- Human resources (HR)
- Legal
- Marketing and creative
- Technology







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# Key Findings

- Companies are overwhelmed with hiring and recruiting challenges, and employers have ramped up efforts to attract skilled talent. Those who haven't adjusted their approach may be losing out in this very competitive landscape.
- Staff retention is a significant concern for most managers in North America — 87% of employers in the United States and 84% in Canada — worry they will lose employees to new opportunities. Many senior managers also cited struggles in keeping their employees motivated and engaged, and in leading their teams through pandemic-related uncertainty and unfamiliar territory.
- Senior managers have realized several benefits of remote hiring, including an increased volume of qualified applicants and ability to find a candidate without bending on qualifications.
- Many organizations — 71% in the United States and 52% in Canada — plan to increase their use of contract professionals. Employers also report that they are using managed solutions to advance critical projects, including those related to digital and business transformation.
- The percentage of employees who work in the office full time (40% in the United States and 36% in Canada) is increasing, but many professionals prefer to work remotely. Also, managers are more likely to want their employees in the office full time than they are to offer a remote work option. This may lead to turnover, as most workers want flexibility in where they work.

# What's the Outlook on Hiring and Retention?

## It Depends on Who You Ask.

### From the executive seat

Most senior executives in North America have a positive outlook on their company's future growth in the near term, including their organization's ability to attract in-demand talent.<sup>1</sup> This sense of optimism persists despite a historically tight labor market, rising inflation and growing concerns about the strength of the economy.

### How managers feel

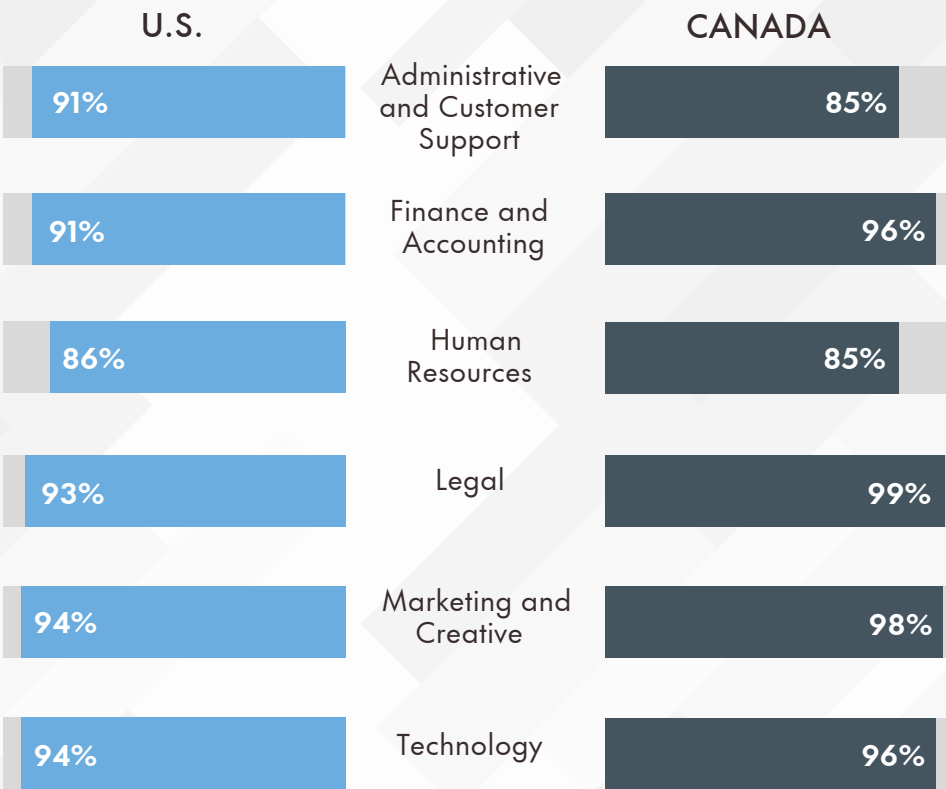
Senior managers, however, have a decidedly different perspective on hiring and retention for their organization, as they grapple

with the dynamics of this unprecedented market. In fact, Robert Half's 2022 Benchmarking Survey revealed that most senior managers across various critical business functions reported that it is very or somewhat challenging to find skilled talent for their teams.

### Behind the disconnect

These different perspectives likely stem from the fact that senior managers are typically much closer to the recruiting and retention processes than C-suite executives are. And in this highly competitive environment for skilled talent, it can be difficult for them to feel optimistic.

**Fig. 1. Percentage of senior managers who report that it's challenging to find skilled talent**



<sup>1</sup> 2022 C-Suite Survey with over 600 responses, Robert Half, March 2022

# Strategies to Overcome Hiring Hurdles

Senior managers surveyed for the Benchmarking Report cited common challenges in recruiting talent. They report struggling to create compelling job descriptions, attract a diverse pool of candidates and develop effective compensation packages.

The failure to create compelling job descriptions and standout compensation packages is likely a result of the current hiring environment. Many skilled job candidates, who understand they are in high demand, are being very selective about the job offers they pursue and accept.

Separate research from Robert Half found that many workers in the United States and in Canada who are planning a job search in the second half of 2022 are looking to make a move for a salary boost, greater opportunities for career advancement, a career change after experiencing burnout and the ability to work remotely permanently.<sup>2</sup>

As for the challenge of attracting a diverse talent pool, improvement on this front will require companies to rethink how they approach hiring in general and make sure they're doing so through a DEI lens.

Many employers have already made this a top priority, and in the C-Suite Survey, most senior executives in the United States (85%) and in Canada (79%) agreed company leadership must ensure DEI initiatives receive the proper support.

“

“Many of today’s workplace adaptations that stemmed from the pandemic have led to permanent changes in how leaders view and approach DEI so that initiatives can be accessible by all, whether in person or remotely. Instead of seeing these as separate efforts, leaders can collectively overhaul corporate culture and focus on flexible work and DEI strategies in tandem.”

Future-Proofing Your Workforce:  
An Employer’s Guide  
from Robert Half

<sup>2</sup> Job Search Plans, press release, Robert Half, June 2022

## Embracing the Hybrid Work Model

Beyond the more traditional methods of increasing pay or providing more time off, offering employees long-term hybrid schedules and flexibility has quickly moved up the list of go-to strategies.

And rightfully so when you consider

**50%**

of professionals in the United States and

**53%**

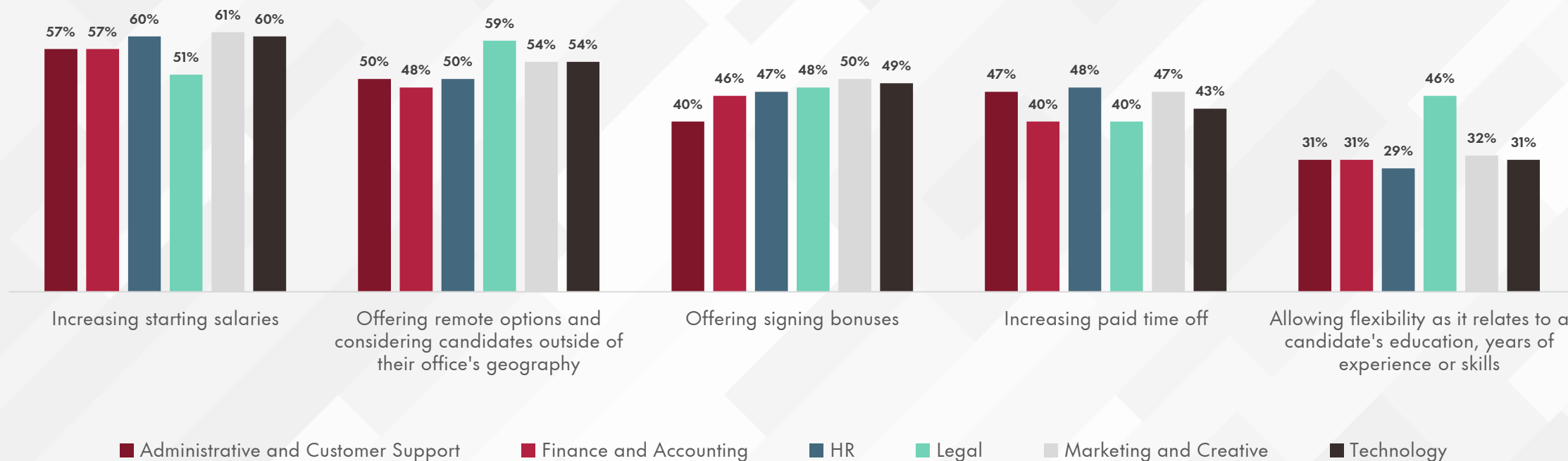
in Canada who work from home would look for a new job if their company required them to return to the office full time.<sup>3</sup>

For a deeper dive into remote work hiring trends, go to page 15.



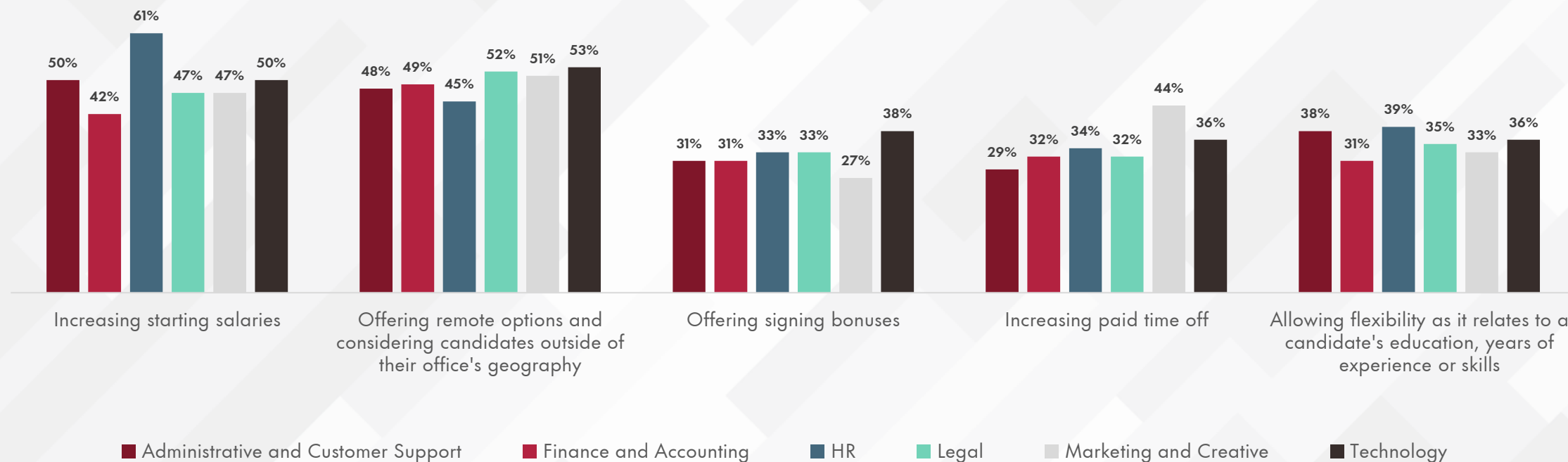
<sup>3</sup> Are Workers Ready to Return to the Office? press release, Robert Half, March 2022

**Fig. 2. Actions employers are taking to attract and hire skilled candidates (U.S.)**





**Fig. 3. Actions employers are taking to attract and hire skilled candidates (Canada)**



## Retention worries running high

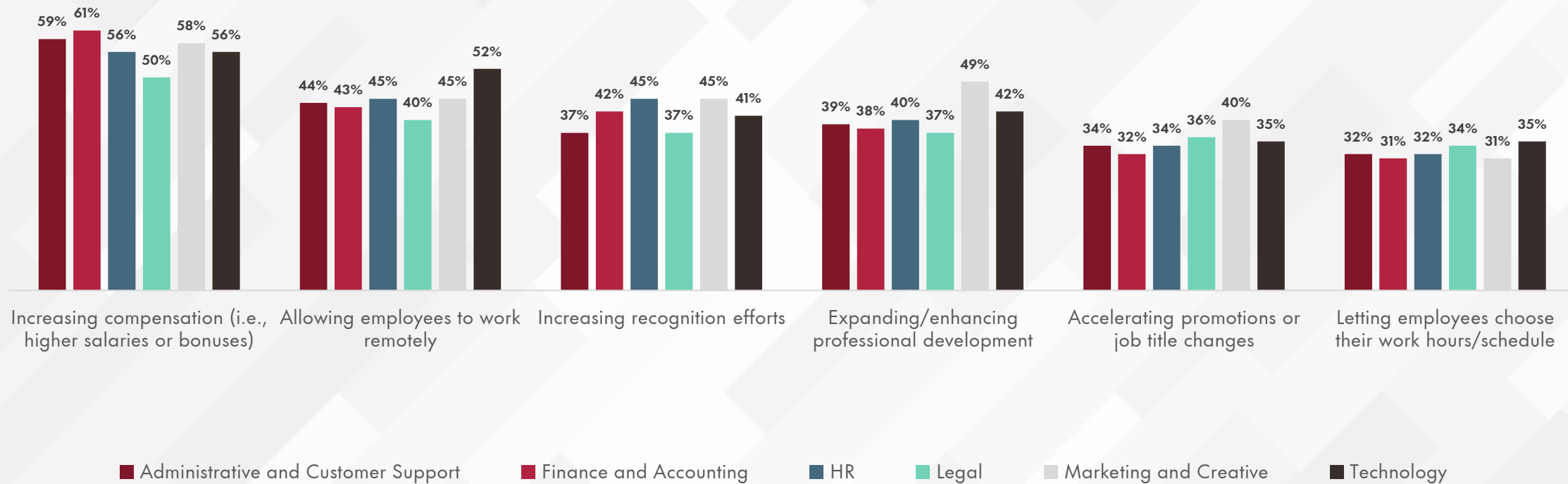
Most employers in the United States (87%) and in Canada (84%) are concerned about losing employees this year, according to the Benchmarking Survey. And other research underscores just how worried businesses are about securing talent for their workforce. In its latest Executive Perspectives on Top Risks Survey, Protiviti, a global consulting firm and Robert Half subsidiary, and North Carolina State University's ERM Initiative found that succession challenges and the ability to attract and retain top talent jumped from the eighth-greatest risk in 2021 to the second-greatest risk in 2022.<sup>4</sup>

Many companies are trying to address employee retention issues by applying the same strategies they use to attract skilled talent in the first place, namely increasing compensation and allowing remote work arrangements. Additionally, some organizations are offering more opportunities for career advancement such as increased professional development, mentorship programs and succession planning.

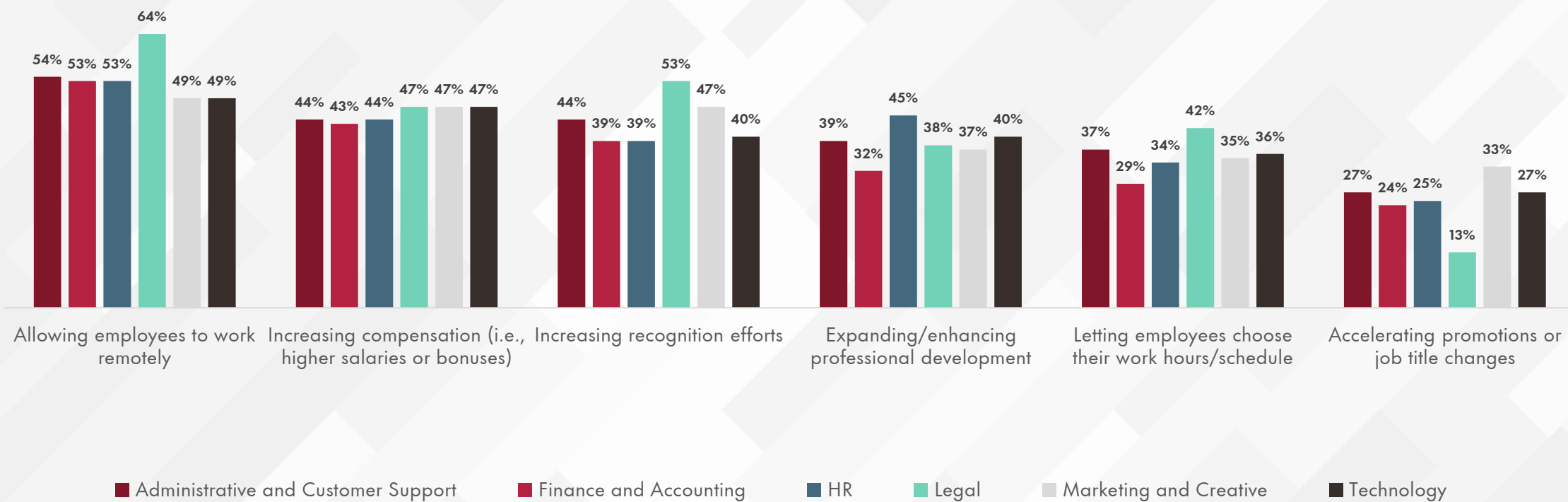


<sup>4</sup>2022 and 2031 Executive Perspectives on Top Risks report, Protiviti, 2022, available at: [protiviti.com/US-en/insights/protiviti-top-risks-survey](https://protiviti.com/US-en/insights/protiviti-top-risks-survey)

**Fig. 4. Actions employers are taking to help retain employees (U.S.)**



**Fig. 5. Actions employers are taking to help retain employees (Canada)**





Compensation can be a critical factor in hiring and retention. It's a good idea to regularly review compensation plans and increase salaries for existing employees, when appropriate, to align with current market rates. The majority of C-suite executives (56% in the United States and 69% in Canada) have observed salary discrepancies between new hires and more tenured staff in the past year.

Leveraging research and salary-focused resources like Robert Half's Salary Guide can also help you verify that your business is offering compensation that is in line with your industry and local market.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Robert Half's U.S. Salary Guide can be accessed here: [roberthalf.com/salary-guide](https://roberthalf.com/salary-guide). Our guide for Canada is available at: [roberthalf.ca/en/salary-guide](https://roberthalf.ca/en/salary-guide).

## Hardest-to-Staff Positions



### Administrative and Customer Support

#### U.S.

- Customer service/customer experience
- Administrative/executive assistant
- Project management/coordination

#### Canada

- Customer service/customer experience
- Account management
- Call center



### Finance and Accounting

#### U.S.

- Finance, and financial planning and analysis
- Accounts payable/accounts receivable/bookkeeping
- Budgets and analysis

#### Canada

- Budgets and analysis
- Finance and financial planning and analysis
- Accounts payable/accounts receivable/bookkeeping



### Human Resources

#### U.S.

- Human resources information systems (HRIS)
- Recruiting and talent sourcing
- Employee training and development

#### Canada

- Management and leadership
- Recruiting and talent sourcing
- HRIS



## Legal Law Firms

### U.S.

- Legal research and analysis
- Document review and management
- Data entry and word processing

### Canada

- Data entry and word processing
- Document review and management
- Legal research and analysis



## Legal Legal Departments

### U.S.

- Contract management
- Data entry and extraction
- Compliance

### Canada

- Data entry and extraction
- Paralegal and legal secretary support/law clerk and legal assistant support
- Document review and management



## Marketing and Creative

### U.S.

- Digital design and production
- Digital marketing
- Project management, traffic and operations

### Canada

- Project management, traffic and operations
- Digital design and production
- Design and production



## Technology

### U.S.

- Data science and database administration
- Business intelligence, analysis and reporting
- Cloud architecture and operation

### Canada

- Data science and database administration
- Business intelligence, analysis and reporting
- Cloud architecture and operation

# Remote Hiring: Opening the Door to a World of Skilled Talent

Company leaders are beginning to put the framework of a future-ready workforce into action.

For example, many employers in North America intend to adopt a remote or hybrid work model for the long term, recognizing the positive impact that flexible work arrangements can have on employee productivity, retention and work-life balance — as well as the company's bottom line.

By supporting off-site work and targeting remote workers for recruitment, these organizations have more access to skilled talent, which can help them overcome hiring challenges.

Many firms in the United States and in Canada are also expanding their use of contract professionals and managed solutions. They are using these staffing strategies to stay agile and meet critical objectives in a still-disrupted and evolving business landscape.

Still, many of the decisions executives are considering relate directly to hiring and retention — such as whether to embrace a fully remote, hybrid or in-office work model for the long term and how to identify and develop future leaders for the organization.

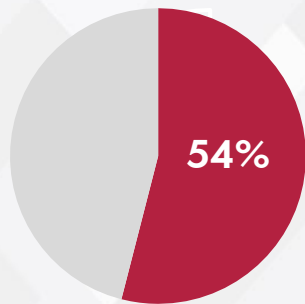
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“Companies already face retention challenges, and taking away remote options will only exacerbate the problem. Hybrid work models give employers and employees flexibility and choice and are the way forward.”

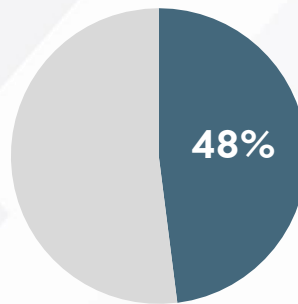
—Paul McDonald

Senior Executive Director, Robert Half

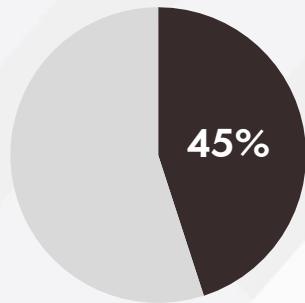
Percentage of senior managers who found benefits by considering fully remote candidates:



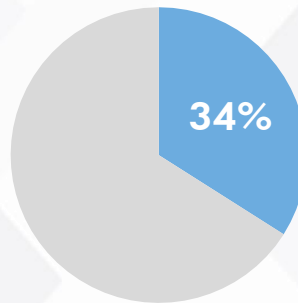
Increased the volume of qualified applicants



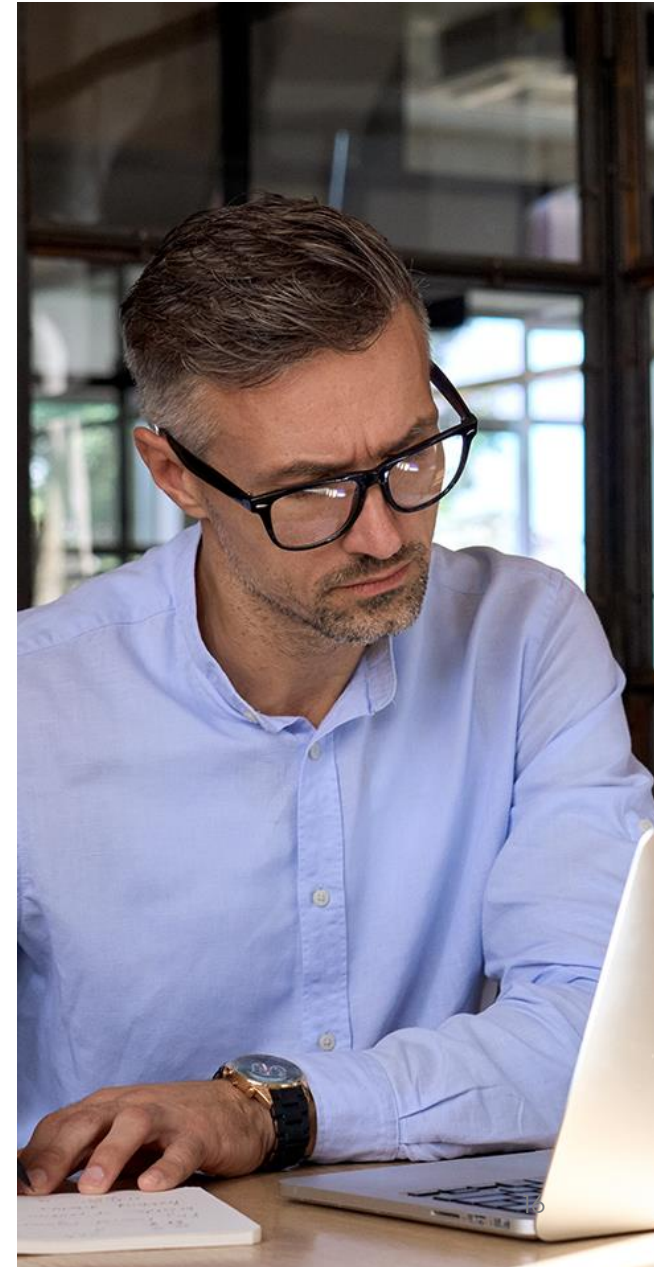
Found a strong candidate without bending on qualifications



Identified more room for compensation flexibility



Shortened the hiring process



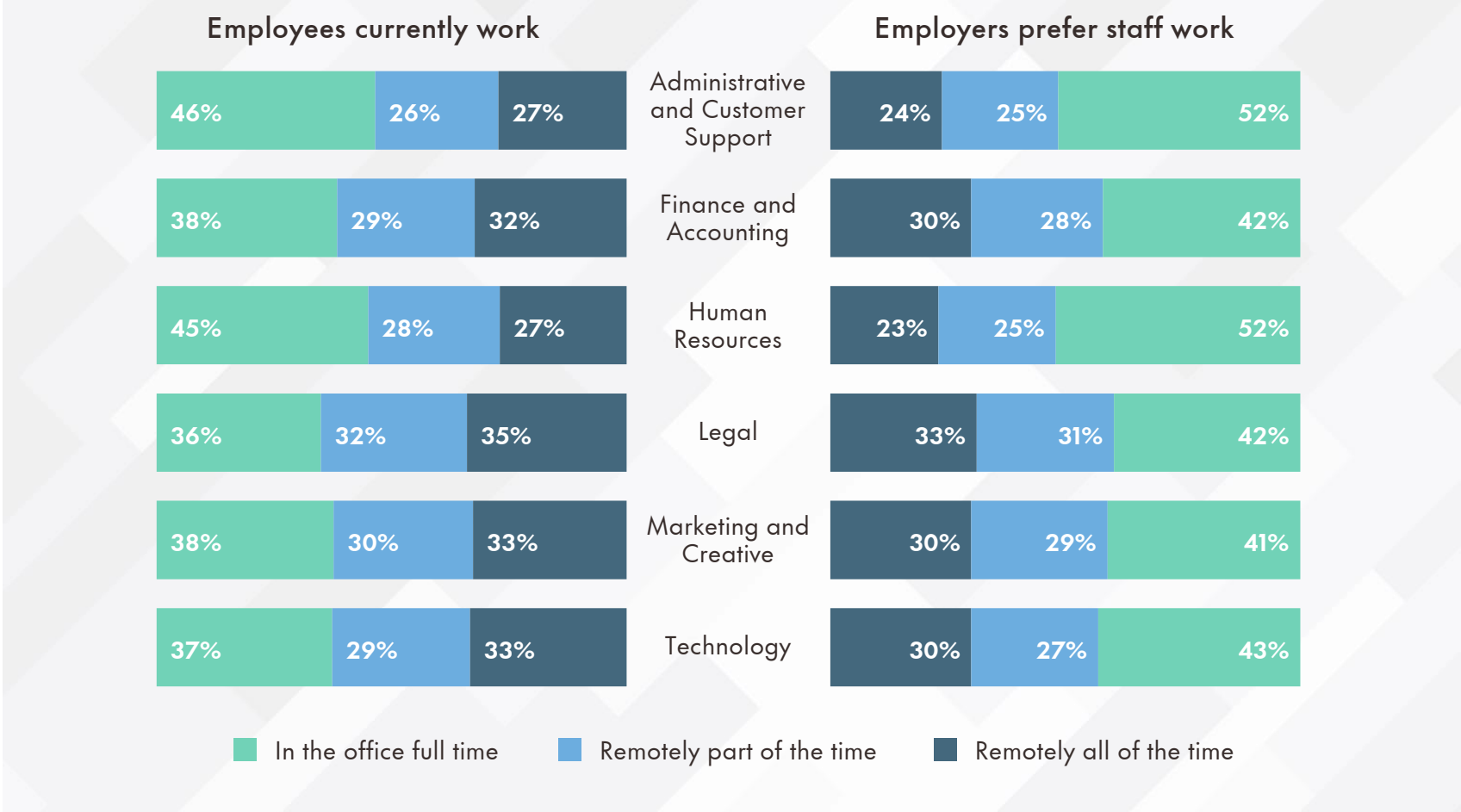


# Some hesitation over the prospect of long-term remote work

Despite the potential upside of offering fully remote or hybrid work arrangements, the Benchmarking Survey findings suggest not all employers are on board with making off-site work a permanent part of their workforce model.

In fact, most senior managers in the United States said they would like to see their workers in the office on a full-time basis. Senior managers in the human resources and administrative and customer support fields are especially eager to have their employees return to the office.

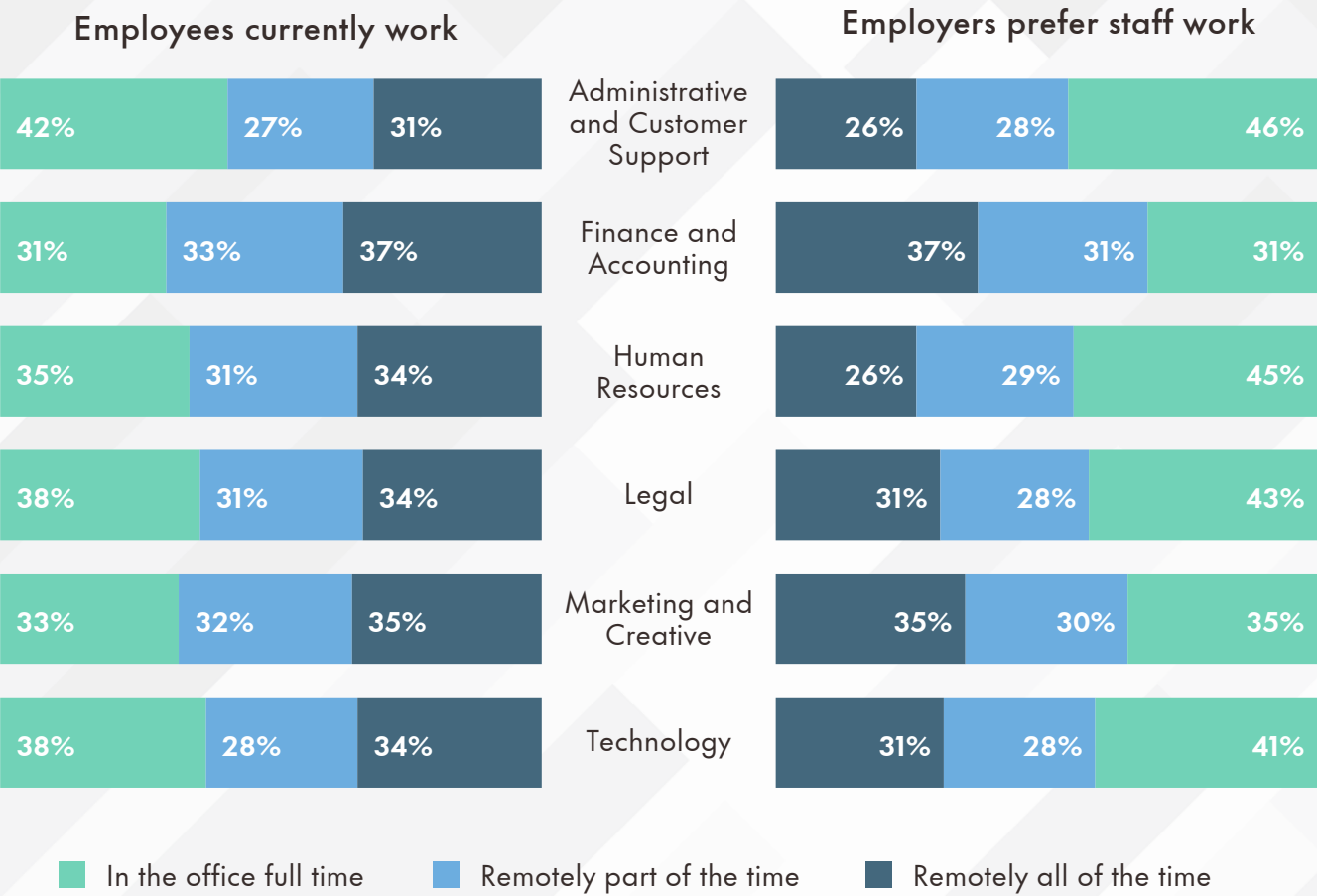
Fig. 6. Employers' preferences: remote vs. in-office (U.S.)



Most senior managers in Canada also reported they would like to see their department's workers in the office full time. Here again, respondents in human resources and administrative and customer support organizations had a strong preference to see their employees in the office.

Given that many professionals want to work remotely all or part of the time permanently, inflexible return-to-office plans could lead to higher turnover for many firms.

**Fig. 7. Employers' preferences: remote vs. in-office (Canada)**



## Making remote hiring work

For many organizations, instituting remote work during the pandemic was a bumpy road. Hiring remote employees hasn't always gone smoothly either. For example, senior managers in the U.S. and in Canada said the most challenging aspect of the remote interview process is assessing a candidate's technical and soft skills.

Another top issue, for both sets of respondents, has been developing compensation packages for candidates outside of the company's city, state or province.

Also, it appears many organizations need to improve their remote onboarding process. Human resources managers surveyed in the U.S. and in Canada said building engagement and connection with new hires during the onboarding process has been difficult. They also cited providing support and training and having adequate technology to onboard remote hires as additional challenges.



### Remote Onboarding Tips for Success

Onboarding remote employees does create some unique challenges for employers. For tips on how to help the process go more smoothly, [see this checklist](#) developed by Trisha Plovie, Robert Half's senior vice president, Future of Work.

## Be on the Lookout for Burnout

Burnout is a growing concern for many workers, including those who have flexible schedules. In separate surveys conducted by Robert Half, 41% of professionals in the United States and 38% in Canada said they are more burned out now than they were a year ago.<sup>6</sup>

So, as your business looks to support a remote or hybrid workforce for the long term, or expand its contingent of remote workers, make sure you're taking steps to help ensure these workers can access programs designed to support employee health and well-being that are the same or similar to what on-site employees can enjoy. Broadened perk offerings, added as a result of the pandemic, include wellness programs, mental health resources, stipends for home office equipment, additional family leave and childcare assistance.

### [5 Workplace Wellness Trends to Watch](#)



<sup>6</sup>Rising Burnout, press release, Robert Half, May 2022



# Bridging Gaps With Outside Resources

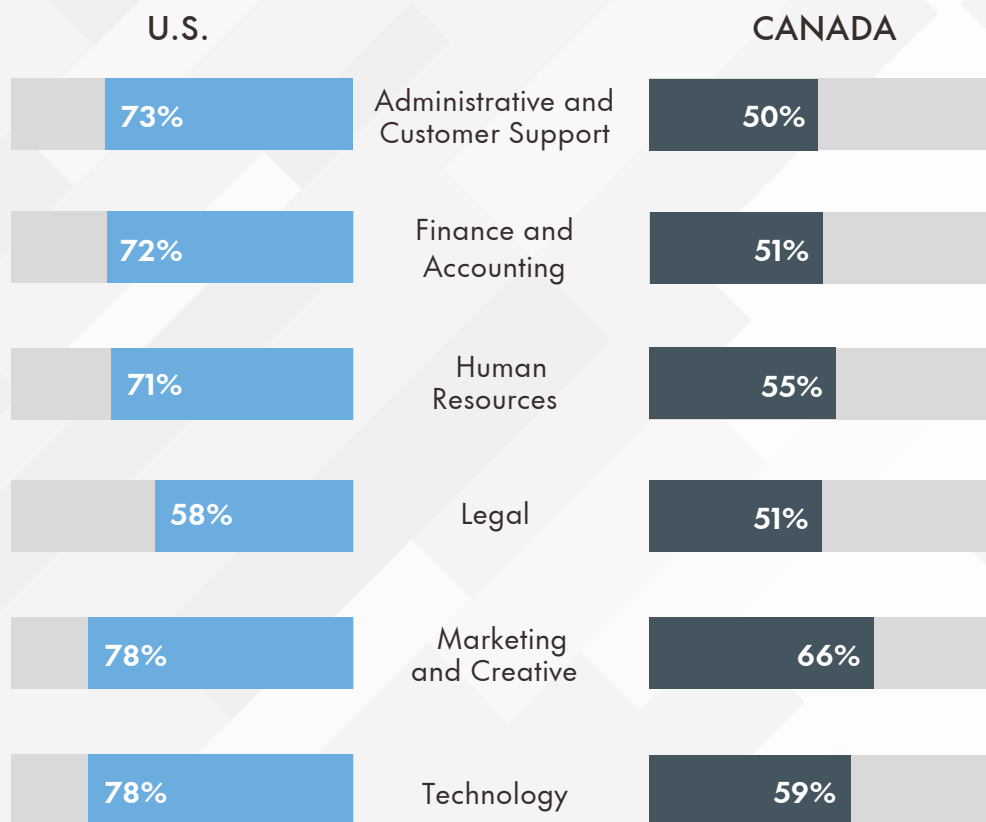
For years, leading companies have embraced the idea of using a flexible labor force that includes contract professionals and specialized solutions, like managed services, to help move critical projects forward and access capabilities they lack in-house. Digital initiatives, like systems implementations and cloud migrations, have often called for this approach due to their finite nature and demand for targeted expertise.

The pandemic's disruption and the urgent need to accelerate digital transformation have made the strategic use of these resources even more vital. And now, as low unemployment collides with the need to staff up to support new business growth, many employers are widening their embrace of contract professionals for remote or on-site engagements and increasing their use of managed solutions and outsourcing.

Leaders across business functions are looking to increase their use of contract and project-based employees in their departments as they aim to bridge staffing gaps and access in-demand skills. Many are already outsourcing numerous critical functions.



**Fig. 8. Percentage of senior managers who expect to increase their use of contract/project professionals in 2022**



## Functions Most Likely to Use Contract Professionals



### Administrative and Customer Support

#### U.S.

- Travel, event and meeting planning
- Customer service and call center
- Claims processing

#### Canada

- Travel, event and meeting planning
- Customer service and call center
- Data entry



### Finance and Accounting

#### U.S.

- Finance, and financial planning and analysis
- Accounts payable/accounts receivable/bookkeeping
- Budgets and analysis

#### Canada

- Budgets and analysis
- Finance, and financial planning and analysis
- Credit and collections



### Human Resources

#### U.S.

- Training and development
- Benefits and compensation administration
- Performance management

#### Canada

- Training and development
- Employee labor relations
- Benefits and compensation administration



## Legal Law Firms

### U.S.

- Legal research and analysis
- Document review and management
- Litigation support and eDiscovery

### Canada

- Legal research and analysis
- IT functions
- Document review and management



## Legal Legal Departments

### U.S.

- Data entry and extraction
- Contract management
- Legal database creation and management

### Canada

- Legal database creation and management
- Paralegal and legal secretary support/law clerk and legal assistant support
- Data entry and extraction



## Marketing and Creative

### U.S.

- Communications and public relations
- Digital marketing
- Marketing
- Content development and management

### Canada

- Communications and public relations
- Design and production
- Digital design and production
- Digital marketing



## Technology

### U.S.

- Data science and database administration
- Cloud architecture and operation
- Business intelligence, analysis and reporting

### Canada

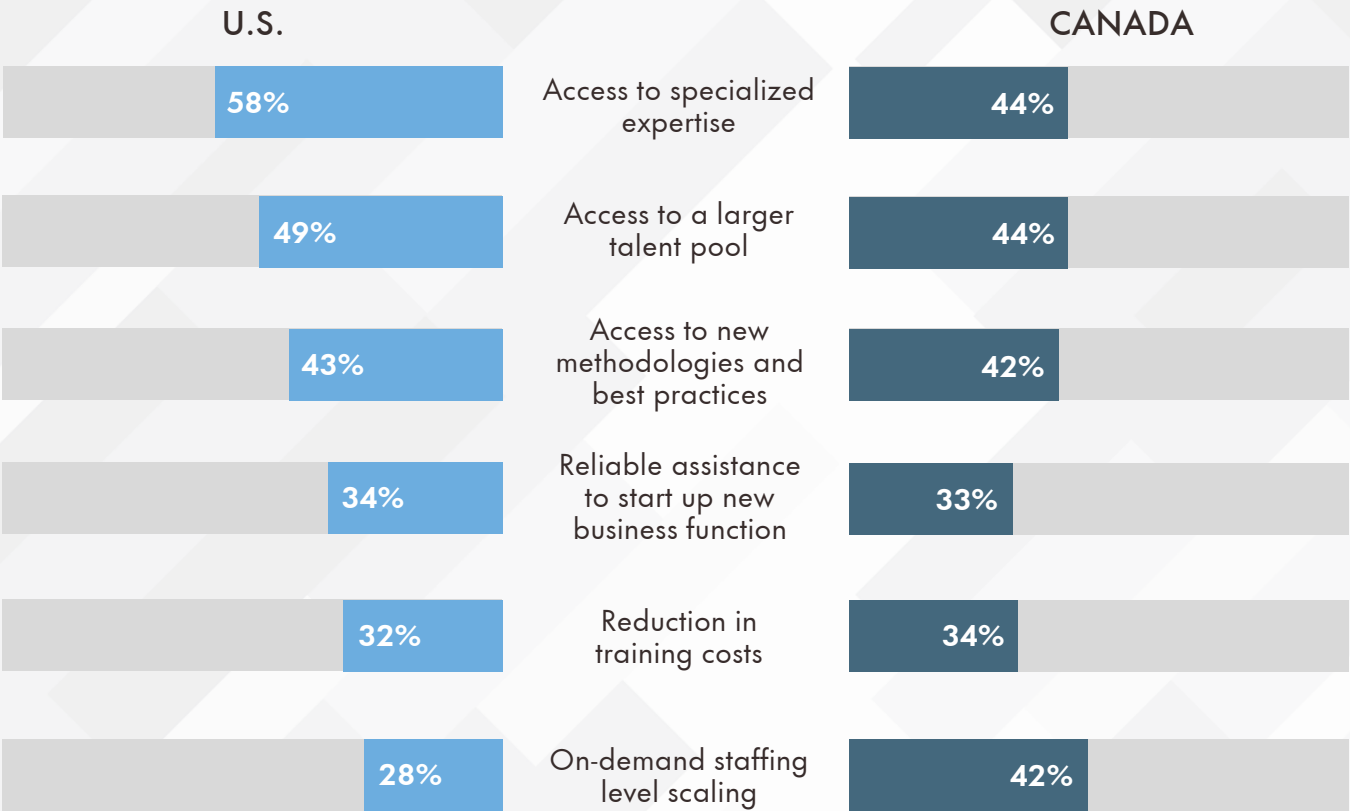
- Data science and database administration
- Business intelligence, analysis and reporting
- Cloud architecture and operation



Most senior executives in the United States (73%) and in Canada (77%) who took part in the 2022 C-Suite Survey said their organization uses managed services. The top functional areas where their firm uses these resources include IT operations, data security, digital marketing solutions and digital innovation. Additionally, many respondents said they are tapping managed services resources to help them accelerate their firm's leadership in the digital space.

The C-Suite Survey findings also shed light on some of the top benefits companies can realize from using managed services.

**Fig. 9. What do you see as the greatest benefits of managed services?<sup>7\*</sup>**



<sup>7</sup>2022 C-Suite Survey with over 600 responses, Robert Half, March 2022  
<sup>\*</sup>Survey respondents who are currently using managed services providers

## Consulting Attracts Seasoned Professionals

Many retired professionals have launched, or would like to pursue, second careers as consultants, according to Robert Half's research. Among workers in the United States who we surveyed:

**32%** returned to the workforce because they were offered flexibility never given before.

**18%** returned because they were offered more money than before due to increased demand for their skills.

And when asked about their "unretirement" experience, 37% of the respondents said having more flexibility makes returning to the workforce more enjoyable.<sup>8</sup>

The finance and accounting field appears to be a haven for second-career consultants: 87% of CFOs reported in a separate Robert Half survey that they've worked with finance and accounting consultants and/or contract professionals who retired but are now on their second career path.

The tech field is also ripe with opportunity for second careers in consulting. In fact, almost all (99%) of the senior-level technology professionals surveyed said they consider a career in consulting attractive.



<sup>8</sup> Robert Half survey of more than 100 previously retired workers in the U.S.

# More Challenges Ahead — Build Your Future-Ready Workforce Now

As companies position for future growth, it's clear that they will need to remain flexible in how they staff their teams and projects if they want to access the skilled talent they need to thrive. Most employers already understand this, even though many are still adjusting to new ways of working and have yet to fully embrace the idea of flexible work arrangements for all or some of their team members for the long term.

Protiviti's 2022 and 2031 Executive Perspectives on Top Risks report indicates that executives see "succession challenges and the ability to attract and retain top talent" not only as their company's second-highest risk this year, but also over the next decade.<sup>9</sup>

In Robert Half's 2022 Benchmarking Survey: 32% of senior managers in the United States and 29% in Canada said they are concerned about keeping their employees motivated and engaged.

Furthermore, 23% of respondents in the United States and 25% in Canada said they see "leading through uncertainty and unfamiliar territory due to the pandemic" as their greatest management challenge currently.

There are no one-size-fits-all solutions for hiring and retention challenges in a job market that is highly unusual and unpredictable. But employers have the opportunity to start building their workforce of the future right now.

<sup>9</sup> 2022 and 2031 Executive Perspectives on Top Risks report, Protiviti, 2022, available at: [protiviti.com/US-en/insights/protiviti-top-risks-survey](https://www.protiviti.com/US-en/insights/protiviti-top-risks-survey)

Creating a more engaged, productive and satisfied workforce — and a future-fit business — requires, among other things:



Listening closely to your employees' needs and concerns, particularly around flexible work options and work-life balance.



Giving your workers the tools and time to upskill and reskill and fully develop as professionals.



Amplifying your company's ESG and DEI efforts and building a welcoming and supportive workplace culture for all employees.

And by hiring great talent wherever they may be located and taking full advantage of flexible resources when needed — including contract professionals and managed solutions — you can build both a stronger workforce and more future-ready business faster.



### **Stay Informed About the Latest Hiring Trends in Your Industry**

The Demand for Skilled Talent report from Robert Half provides current data on hiring trends and top positions for several key industries at a glance. View our latest editions here: [U.S.](#) | [Canada](#)

# About Robert Half

Robert Half is the world’s first and largest specialized talent solutions and business consulting firm. We connect opportunities at great companies with highly skilled job seekers. The company offers contract and permanent placement solutions for finance and accounting, technology, marketing and creative, legal, and administrative and customer support roles.

Named one of FORTUNE’s “Most Admired Companies®” and a Forbes Best Employer for Diversity, Robert Half is the parent company of Protiviti, a global consulting firm that provides internal audit, risk, business and technology consulting solutions.

Robert Half has operations in more than 400 locations worldwide.

## Industry Recognition





# Research Methodologies and Demographics

## Benchmarking Survey

Data referenced in the Benchmarking Report is based on online surveys developed by Robert Half and conducted by independent research firms. Respondents include executives, senior managers and employees from small (20-249 employees), medium (250-499 employees) and large (500+ employees) private, publicly listed and public sector organizations across the United States and Canada.

## 2022 C-Suite Survey

The 2022 C-Suite Survey engaged with top executives around the United States and Canada to provide evidence surrounding the direction of the future of work. This survey was fielded throughout the United States and Canada with over 600 responses from C-level executives.

## "Are Workers Ready to Return to the Office?"

Online surveys of senior managers and workers were developed by Robert Half and conducted by independent research firms.

U.S. surveys include responses from more than 2,300 senior managers in finance, technology, marketing, legal, administrative and customer support, human resources, and other areas at companies with 20 or more employees, and more than 1,000 workers 18 years of age or older in the United States.

Surveys for Canada were developed by Robert Half and conducted by independent research firms. They include responses from more than 800 senior managers at companies with 20 or more employees and more than 500 workers 18 years of age or older in Canada.

## "Job Search Plans"

Online survey developed by Robert Half and conducted by an independent research firm. It includes responses from more than 2,400 workers 18 years of age or older in finance, technology, marketing, legal, administrative support, human resources and other areas at companies with 20 or more employees in the United States.

Survey for Canada includes responses from more than 500 workers, 18 years of age or older at companies with 20 or more employees in Canada.

## "Rising Burnout"

Online surveys of workers were developed by Robert Half and conducted by independent research firms.

U.S. survey includes responses from more than 2,400 workers 18 years of age or older in finance, technology, marketing, legal, administrative and customer support, human resources, and other areas at companies with 20 or more employees in 24 major U.S. cities.

Survey for Canada includes responses from more than 500 workers, 18 years of age or older at companies with 20 or more employees in Canada.