



**STRATEGIC  
ORGANIZING  
CENTER**

# **AMAZON CORPORATE WORKER RETURN-TO-OFFICE SURVEY**

**DECEMBER 2024**

# Amazon Corporate Worker Return-to-Office Survey

December 2024

## Overview

In September 2024, following more than four years of remote and hybrid work, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy announced that Amazon corporate workers would be required to work in an assigned office five-days per week beginning in January 2025.<sup>1</sup> In the days following Jassy’s announcement, many workers spoke out, inside and outside the company, expressing deep frustration and anger with Jassy’s leadership.<sup>2</sup> Now, with January looming, an in-depth survey by the Strategic Organizing Center (SOC) finds that many Amazon corporate workers are beginning to take concrete steps to leave the company: 48% of Amazon workers surveyed report that they have already applied to new jobs outside of Amazon and 68% report they are somewhat or very likely to leave the company within the next year.

While Andy Jassy and other Amazon Senior Leadership Team (S-Team) members have defended the return-to-office policy as a strategy to increase collaboration and inventiveness, the Amazon workers who responded to the SOC’s survey are not buying it.<sup>3</sup> More than eight in ten surveyed workers expect that the new policy will reduce their personal productivity and will not improve their relationship with coworkers. Workers responding to the survey report that, in many cases, their team members are not present in the offices they are required to report to, and nearly half of workers report that they are not assigned to the same office as their manager. Instead, workers seem to view Jassy’s announcement as a betrayal of their trust due to Amazon’s previous commitments around remote work, with five of six surveyed workers saying they disagree that Amazon can be trusted to keep its promises and commitments. Amazon’s five-day in-office policy is also out of sync with other major tech companies, such as Meta, Google, and Apple, which currently retain three-day — rather than five-day — in-person requirements.<sup>4</sup> Surveyed workers also anticipate their personal lives will suffer as a result of the mandate, with the overwhelming majority expecting that it will cause their stress levels, relationships with their loved ones, and physical and mental health to suffer. These survey results suggest that, in addition to negative effects on existing workers that are likely to affect retention, this policy could create major challenges for Amazon in recruiting, as more than three quarters of respondents indicate they would not recommend that a friend apply for a job with the company.

## Methodology

The Strategic Organizing Center conducted an online survey of Amazon tech, sales, and other corporate employees on the subject of the five-day return-to-office policy announced by Amazon in September 2024. The survey ran from November 4, 2024, to November 26, 2024. SOC distributed the survey through online discussion forums and social media platforms frequented by Amazon

corporate workers, as well as through targeted digital advertising. A total of 1,065 current Amazon corporate workers responded to the survey.

## Background

Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Amazon required most of its corporate employees to work in an office five days a week. However, the policy allowed for flexibility: Amazon allowed some employees to work from home on some days.<sup>5</sup> When COVID-19 began to spread in the US, Amazon was one of the first major businesses to shift to remote work among its corporate staff.<sup>6</sup>

During the height of COVID-related lockdowns in the US during 2020, Amazon and other large tech companies were strongly supportive of remote work arrangements and were hesitant to reopen their offices despite pressure from some politicians to do so.<sup>7</sup> Andy Jassy's strategy for remote work, which was touted as an example for others to follow, relied on setting clear expectations among workers, giving teams autonomy to decide what model works best for them, and having a strong focus on the company's mission.<sup>8</sup>

Amazon also used the pandemic as an opportunity to sell remote work products to other businesses.<sup>9</sup> One product was Amazon Connect, an application that allowed businesses to set up and run remote customer service networks.<sup>10</sup> Amazon embraced work from home at its many call centers, where it pushed workers to work remotely and closed all but one physical call center facility in the US.<sup>11</sup>

Amazon also maintained a partnership between Zoom and AWS, its cloud computing business.<sup>12</sup> Amazon boasted that "AWS and Zoom are collaborating to develop new solutions for Zoom's enterprise users, leveraging the breadth and depth of AWS to integrate Zoom services with Amazon devices and capabilities to make it easier for organizations to run hybrid office and remote work models."<sup>13</sup>

After leading the charge on remote work, Amazon subsequently reversed course and sought to pressure its corporate workers to return to physical offices. Amazon's first attempt was in June 2021, when it announced it was requiring workers to work in office a minimum of three-days per week.<sup>14</sup> CEO Andy Jassy publicly advocated for the policy, arguing that in-office work enhanced invention and collaboration.<sup>15</sup> However, Jassy walked back the policy in October 2021 as the Delta variant of COVID-19 surged, allowing individual teams at the director letter to determine their own remote work policies.<sup>16</sup>

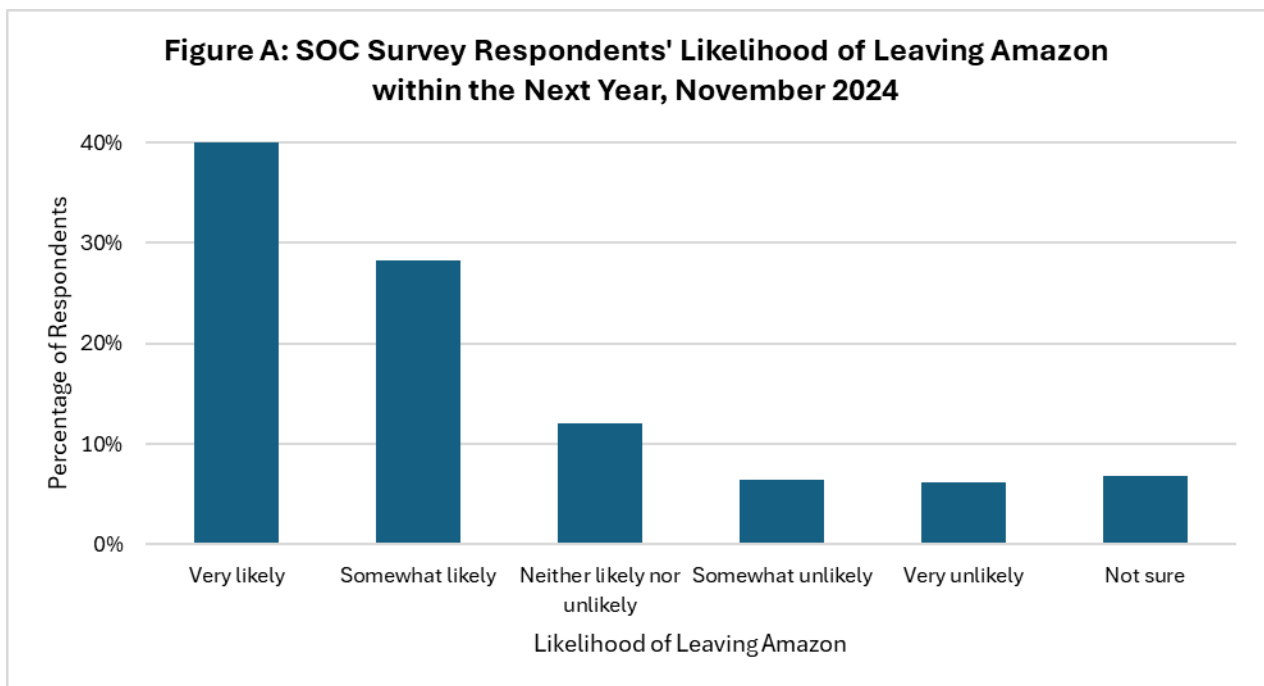
Amazon attempted once again to return workers to the office at the beginning of 2023, reinstating its previous three-day per week in-office mandate.<sup>17</sup> This time, the mandate sparked major resistance from workers, who criticized the decision publicly and pushed Jassy ultimately to rescind the policy.<sup>18</sup> In May 2023, shortly after the three-day in-office mandate took effect, workers staged a walkout in protest of "lack of trust" in Amazon due to its handling of remote work policies.<sup>19</sup> Amazon responded to worker discontent by threatening to withhold promotions from workers who did not comply with the mandate.<sup>20</sup>

Amazon escalated its return-to-office demands in September 2024, when Jassy announced that workers would be required to work in-office five-days a week starting in January 2025.<sup>21</sup> As of early

2023, Amazon employed approximately 350,000 corporate workers, all of which would likely be impacted by Jassy’s sweeping return-to-office policy.<sup>22</sup> This policy is largely out of sync with other major tech companies, such as Meta, Google, and Apple, all of which require workers to work in-office three-days per week.<sup>23</sup> Amazon workers have voiced dissatisfaction with this policy, and many have pushed back against it, including over 500 workers who sent a letter asking Amazon to reconsider.<sup>24</sup>

### Amazon Workers Looking for New Jobs

Amazon has dismissed the many concerns raised by workers over the return-to-office policy. Matt Garman, CEO of AWS, told Amazon workers that if they are dissatisfied with the mandate then they can quit their jobs.<sup>25</sup> Respondents to SOC’s survey report that they are already taking steps to leave the company: 48% of surveyed workers have applied to jobs outside Amazon, and over two-thirds of respondents (68%), indicated they’re somewhat likely or very likely to leave Amazon in the next year, as shown in Figure A.



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*“After 7+ years of service I’ve decided to resign because of the 5-day RTO. It makes no sense for me to commute 3 hours a day (15 hrs a week) to go into an office where I work with no one day-to-day because I work with a global team. That is 15 hours that I would use to work if I were at home. They expect me to take early morning meetings and late-night meetings but still want me to go into an office to take virtual meetings. It makes no sense. The decision should be made at a team level.”*

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## Amazon's Return-to-office Claims Fall Flat with Workers

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*“I am less productive when needing to commute to the office and work in a noisy environment.”*

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When Jassy announced the new return-to-office policy, he outlined its perceived benefits and goals. According to Jassy, the primary goal of the five-day in-office policy was to “set [Amazon] up to invent, collaborate, and be connected enough to each other . . .”<sup>26</sup> Jassy also stated that he believed “teams tend to be better connected to one another” when they work together in person.<sup>27</sup> However, the vast majority of Amazon workers who responded to SOC’s survey do not believe that these purported benefits of return-to-office work will materialize.

Amazon workers responding to SOC’s survey do not believe that additional days in the office will improve their work: 87% of respondents anticipate that their productivity will become worse as a result of the return-to-office policy. Conversely, only 4% of workers surveyed believe that their productivity will become somewhat or much better.

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*“Office setup (open floor plan, no private office) will make it impossible for me to comply with confidentiality policies, because most of my meetings/calls are highly confidential in nature. Also, my assigned building has only about 50% of the space required to accommodate all of the builders assigned to work there.”*

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Amazon teams are dispersed around the globe and many workers will not work in-person with team members even after the five-day in-office mandate comes into effect. For example, 38% of Amazon workers surveyed report that they work in the same office as 20% or less of their team members. Nearly half (45%) of workers surveyed report that their manager works in a different office than them. When asked how they anticipated the five-day return-to-office policy to impact their relationships with their coworkers, the vast majority (81%) of surveyed workers said they anticipated their relationship with their coworkers would be unchanged or would become worse as a result of the new policy.

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*“What collaboration? We come in and interact via Slack meetings.”*

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*“I am in [U.S. city]. Nobody I work with is in [U.S. city].  
My manager is in New Zealand.”*

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## Amazon Losing Workers’ Trust

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*“After fully embracing a remote work culture and then fully reversing  
course within a couple of years, making failure to comply a voluntary  
resignation, the current company leadership has irreversibly lost my trust.  
I think that Jassy should be removed as CEO.”*

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In the aftermath of Jassy’s new in-office policy announcement, workers responding to SOC’s survey report that their trust in Amazon is very low, and some report that they feel deceived by the company. Nearly 6 in 10 (59%) surveyed workers report that Amazon hiring managers recruited them with the expectation that they could work fully remote or hybrid schedules at the company. Now that Amazon is requiring workers to return-to-office five days a week, multiple workers are characterizing such earlier promises as a “bait and switch.” When asked if they agreed with the statement “I can trust my employer to follow through on its promises and commitments,” 84% of surveyed Amazon workers disagreed.

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*“I have a great deal of difficulty trusting that anything the S-Team says is  
truthful now, even not related to RTO, due to the  
about face they've done on this issue.”*

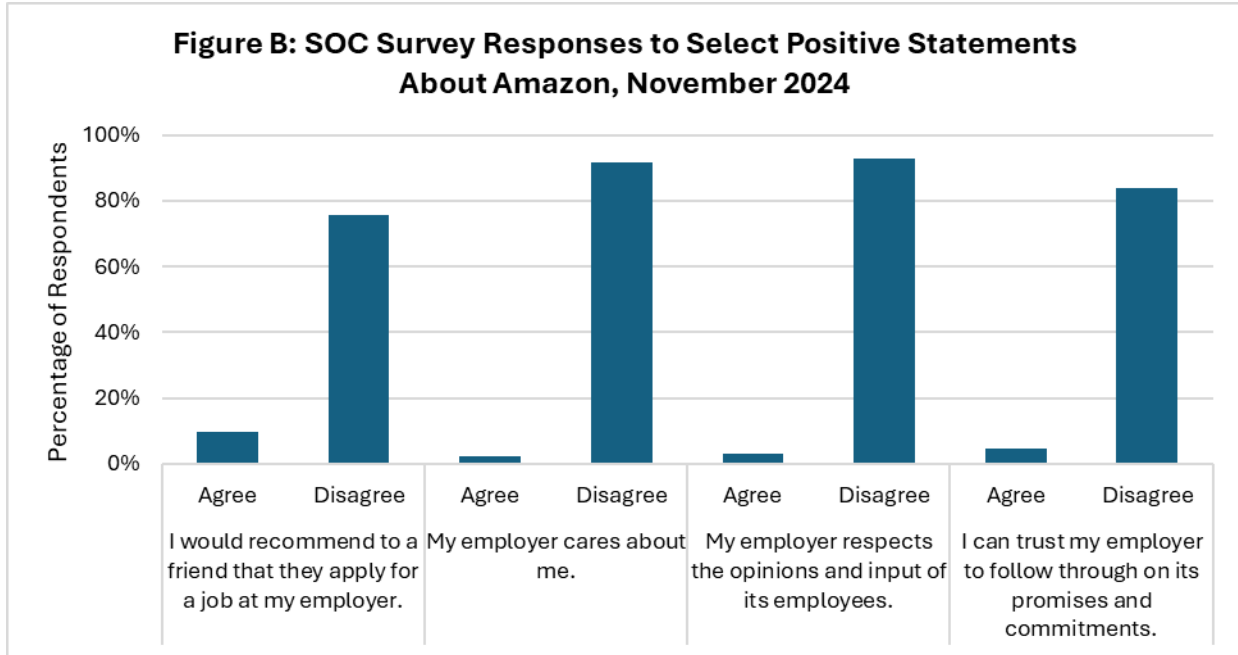
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Not only is the return-to-office policy impacting existing workers, but it may also be making it more challenging for Amazon to recruit new talent. When asked if they agreed with the statement, “I would recommend to a friend that they apply to a job with my employer,” 76% of survey respondents answered that they disagreed.

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*“It has been difficult to hire talent with the RTO policy. We are receiving a  
lower rate of bar-raising candidates for our organization.”*

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## Anticipated Challenges for Workers

While surveyed workers dispute Jassy’s claims that Amazon’s five-day return-to-office policy will have a positive impact on collaboration, they also believe it will have a host of negative impacts on their lives.

### Commute

Workers anticipate that the new Amazon return-to-office policy will make their commute more challenging for them. In 2022, the average one-way commute for Americans was 26 minutes.<sup>29</sup> However, surveyed Amazon workers face much longer commutes with 60% of workers reporting that they live further than 45 minutes from their assigned Amazon office. Amazon’s return-to-office mandates have been extremely disruptive for some workers and their families: 23% of surveyed workers report that they have already had to move at least once to comply with Amazon’s policies. The latest policy announcement will likely cause more disruption, as 26% of surveyed workers expect that they will have to move to comply with the new policy in January 2025.

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*“I do not live in a state with a corporate office as I was hired as a remote worker and told this would not change. I am a top performer on a global team, 50%+ of which are remote. 4 people have resigned, and more have indicated they plan to do so.”*

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### *Personal Impacts*

Surveyed workers anticipate that the five-day a week return-to-office policy will not only affect their work experiences but will also negatively impact their personal lives. When asked how the five-day return-to-office would impact various dimensions of their lives outside of work, the vast majority of surveyed workers responded that they believe the new policy will make their stress levels (94%), relationships with loved ones (85%), and mental health (91%) worse.

### *Caregiving*

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*“I wish I had known this when applying for daycare, as it took us 14 months (earliest) to get a spot in a daycare, and it's right next to our house (>60 mins away from office during rush hour).”*

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More than a third (38%) of Amazon workers surveyed report that they have regular childcare or other caregiving responsibilities. Among respondents with caregiving responsibilities, nearly all workers (93%) report that they anticipate that performing their caregiving responsibilities will become worse after the five-day return-to-office policy goes into effect. Caregiver respondents are also more likely to have already applied to jobs outside of Amazon than non-caregivers, with 57% of surveyed caregivers having already sent out applications compared to 43% of non-caregivers.

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*“We need to talk about the impact to women's ability to return to work after becoming a mother. Amazon doesn't have enough mother rooms for pumping. They should establish a nursing exception for the health of the baby and the mother.”*

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### *Workers with Disabilities*

The return-to-office policy is a particularly large burden on workers with disabilities. Remote work flexibility can be critical for workers with disabilities that make it difficult for them to work in office or to navigate a lengthy commute.<sup>30</sup> According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, remote work can be a reasonable accommodation for workers with disabilities.<sup>31</sup>

SOC's survey found that Amazon's system of exceptions and accommodations is not meeting the needs of many Amazon workers. Twenty-one percent of surveyed Amazon workers indicated that they have a disability or health need that would impact their ability to work in an office five days per week. Among respondents with disabilities who requested exceptions to Amazon's current remote work policy and have received a response, nearly half (45%) report that their request for an exception was denied. These results, combined with recent reporting that found Amazon has



changed its approval process, suggest that workers with disabilities may have a more difficult time accessing remote work exceptions in the coming year.<sup>32</sup>

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*“I’ve had a remote work accommodation in place since I began in 2022. This month [November 2024], the accommodation was denied despite being previously approved. I am experiencing significant discrimination due to my disability and remote work.”*

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## Conclusion

In stark contrast to its embrace of remote work early in the pandemic, Amazon’s leadership has decided to make an about-face on the issue, putting it out of step with its peer companies and many of its own workers. Despite Andy Jassy’s claims about fostering collaboration and team connectivity, corporate teams at Amazon are often geographically dispersed. When the five-day return-to-office policy is fully implemented, many workers will still work with their teams primarily remotely, but they will be required to do so from an office. However, as a result of Jassy’s flip-flopping on Amazon’s remote work policy, worker trust is incredibly low, with workers accusing Amazon of pulling a “bait and switch” on them. Surveyed workers indicate that they are unlikely to recommend that friends apply to work at Amazon and are increasingly distrustful of Amazon keeping its promises generally.

Surveyed workers anticipate that the new in-office policy will create new challenges in their work and personal lives. Most surveyed workers believe the policy will inhibit their productivity and increase their stress levels, harm relationships with their loved ones, and that their mental health will suffer. Workers will also deal with increased commute times due to working in-office two additional days per week, which may exacerbate the difficulties workers anticipate they will face in their personal lives. Some workers, who live outside of commuting distance from the nearest office, expect they will have to move in order to keep their jobs. A majority of Amazon workers surveyed are considering resigning in the next year, and nearly half (48%) have already applied to jobs outside the company. The five-day in-office mandate is out of step with major tech competitors, with whom Amazon competes to hire and retain highly-skilled workers. If Amazon executes the five-day in-office policy in January as planned, it will likely have difficulty retaining and recruiting talent and may harm the very spirit of innovation and collaboration that its leaders claim to value.

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