Elon Musk Says Remote Work Is ‘Morally Wrong,’ Calls It ‘Messed Up’

If you’re reading this while working remotely, Elon Musk is judging you.

In a recent interview with CNBC, the tech CEO came down hard on work-from-home culture, saying he thinks it’s “morally wrong.”

Musk, who told Tesla workers last year to return to the office or “depart Tesla,” has long been vocal about his belief that people are more productive in person. However, on Tuesday, he said it’s not only about productivity, it’s also a “moral issue.”

“The people who make your food that gets delivered can’t work from home. But you can? Does that seem morally right?” he said in the interview. “It’s messed up to assume that they have to go to work, but you don’t.”

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Musk, also the CEO of SpaceX, said he believes people should “put 40 hours in” and that it doesn’t “necessarily need to be Monday through Friday.” He said he works seven days a week, and that days in a year where he does not put in “some meaningful amount of work” only add up to “about two or three.”

Despite Musk’s opinion, in a 2022 Cisco survey, 78% of respondents said remote and hybrid work improved their overall

well-being. Still, there is an argument for one glaring problem posed by remote work beyond the CEO's argument of productivity and morality: commercial real estate.

Remote work has upended the commercial real estate industry

Across the U.S., nearly 20% of office spaces are vacant, and those numbers almost double in big cities like New York and San Francisco, where less than half of the cities' office spaces are occupied, according to property management company, Kastle Systems.

The trouble with vacant buildings isn't just the eeriness they possess or the dust they collect, but the trillions in debt they potentially foreshadow. According to Morgan Stanley, nearly $1.5 trillion in commercial real estate debt will be due by the end of 2025, and a potential surge of loan defaults could be catastrophic for an already fragile banking system plagued by three bank failures in 2023 thus far.

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However, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 72.5% of businesses said their workers rarely or never worked from home in 2022, marking a close return to the pre-pandemic number of 76.7%.

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