



# COVID-19's Impact on the Workplace

How employers and employees have  
adjusted during the pandemic

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## Introduction

***The year of 2020 is certainly one for the record books. There is no denying that the COVID-19 pandemic will have an impact on the future workplace.***

If you are old enough, you might remember how travel changed after 9/11. How much of an impact the pandemic will have on the workplace and what should employers consider when getting employees back to the workplace? While it's still too early to determine the lasting effects the pandemic will have on the workplace, ClaimVantage conducted a recent study – with support from Matrix Absence Management – to better understand how employers and employees have adjusted during the pandemic.

# Methodology

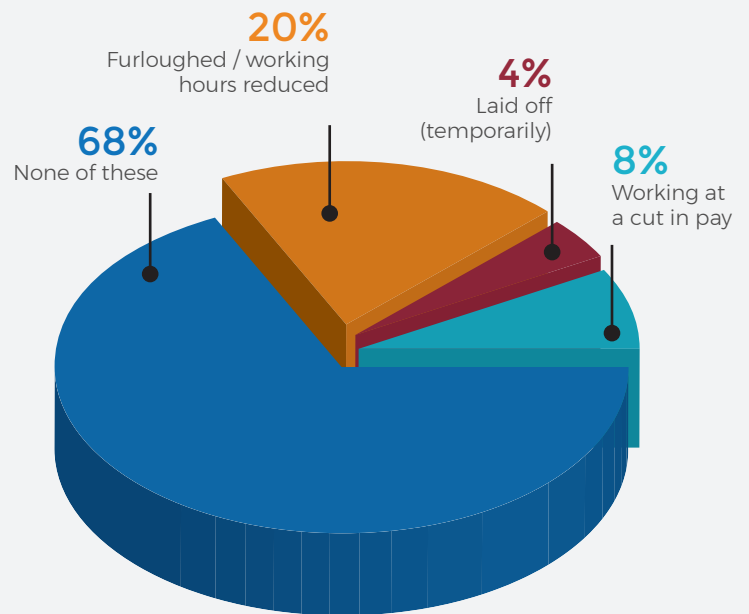
Employees and employers were invited to participate in an online survey in July 2020. The data collection coincides with when some companies in the U.S. were starting to move employees back to the workplace. Other parts of the country, however, were dealing with a surge in cases (i.e. Florida, Texas, etc.).

Due to our objectives, the participation was limited to employees whose...

- ▶ Employment was not permanently terminated due to COVID-19
- ▶ Primary job required them to report to a building/office setting before COVID-19 (i.e. did not already work remotely)
- ▶ Work for an employer with over 50 U.S. employees

**32%** of the individuals reported an impact to their income.

**68%** saw no change.

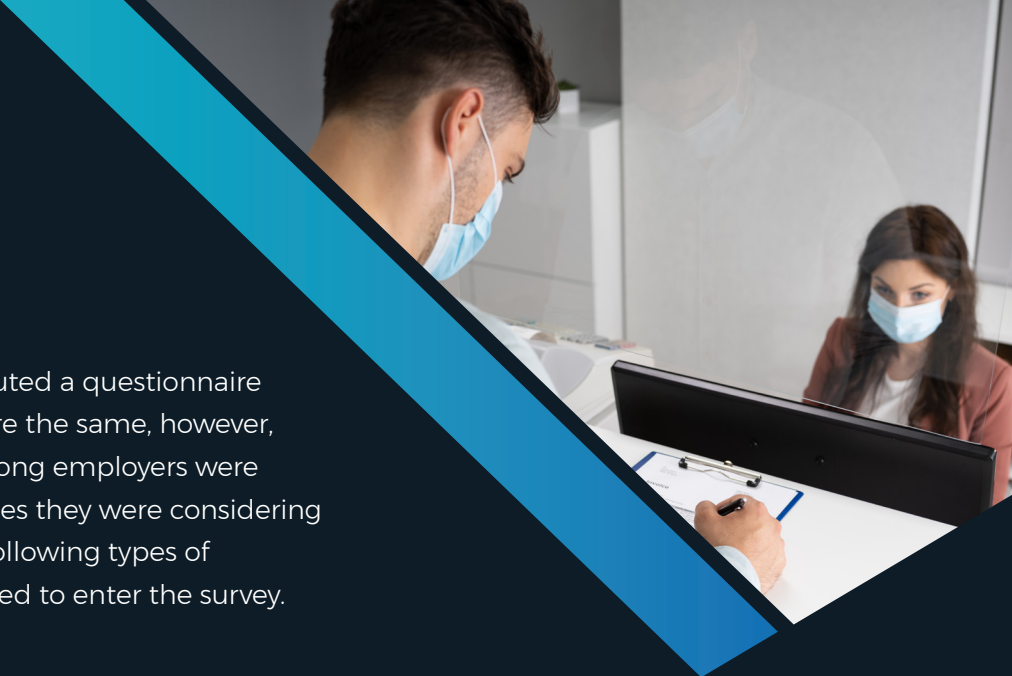


**Employment Situation Because of COVID**



***More details regarding the participants can be found at the end of the report. In the end, 770 employees participated in the research.***



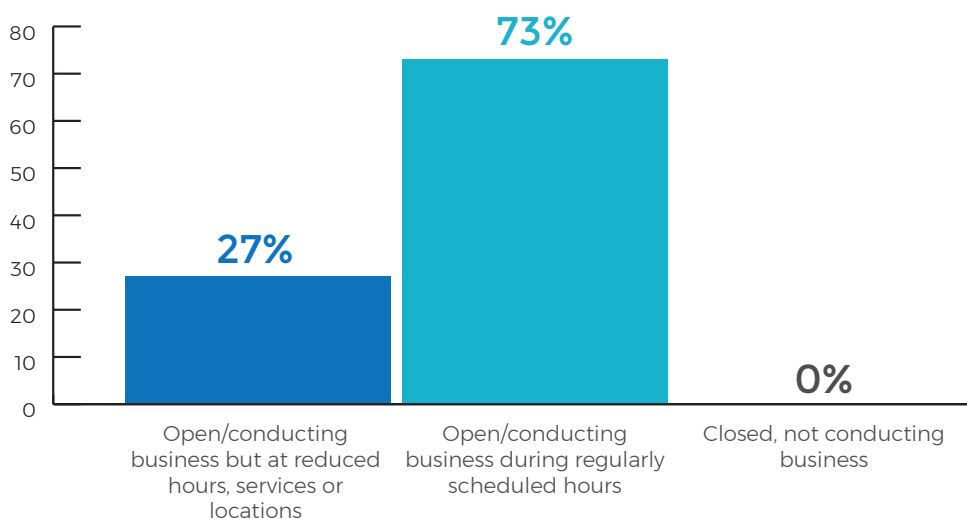


As mentioned above, we also distributed a questionnaire to employers. The topics covered were the same, however, we wanted to understand how far along employers were in their plans and what, if any, changes they were considering at time of data collection. Only the following types of employer representatives were allowed to enter the survey.

- ▶ Person completing the survey had to have some responsibility for setting policies and procedures for work environment and employee benefits/leave policies
- ▶ Had to have at least 50 U.S. employees
- ▶ Employers that were temporarily closed were excluded from the survey

**More details regarding the type of employers that participated can be found at the end of the report. A total of 122 employers participated.**

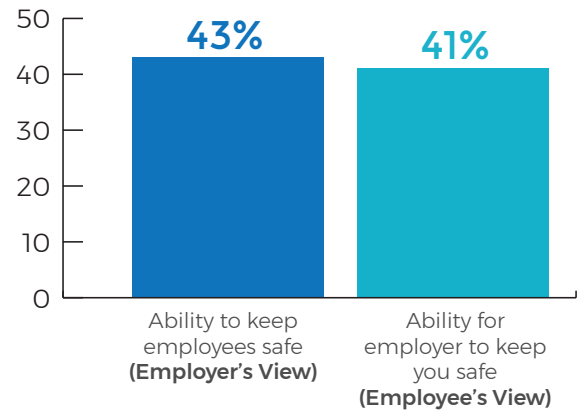
#### Which of the following best describes your company at this time?



**27%** of employers stated their ability to generate revenue has been extremely or very negatively impacted.

## Level of Concern (Reminder, data collected in July, 2020)

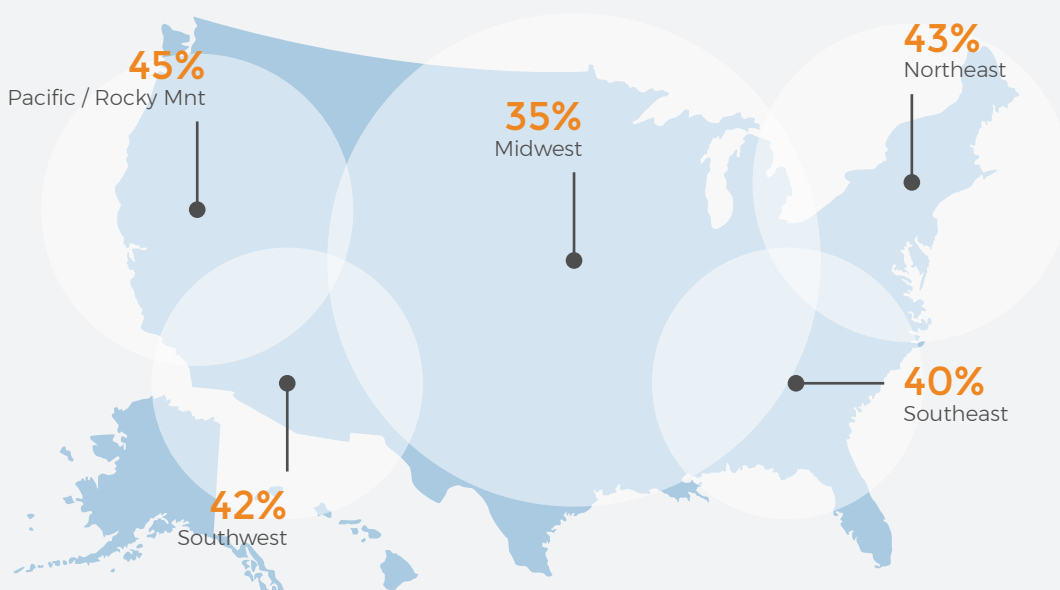
At the time of data collection, it is fair to say both employers and employees were concerned about safety in the workplace. Over 4 in 10 employers and employees surveyed stated they were either extremely or very concerned. The percentage of employees concerned does increase for those individuals in a high risk category or living with individuals of high risk. This concern is real and impacting an employee's view on returning to the workplace, as we will demonstrate later in the report.



**Level of Concern Regarding Safety in the Workplace**  
(% Extremely or Very)

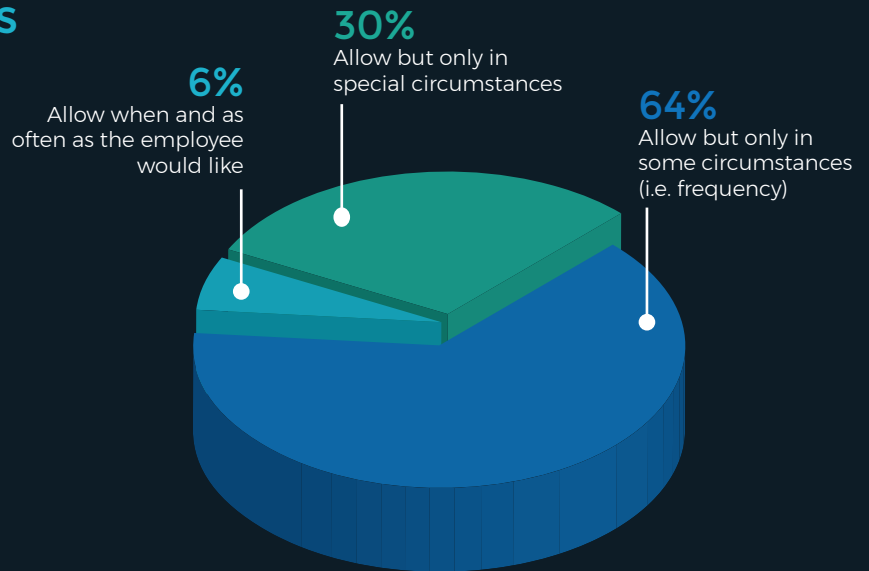
### How concerned are you with your employer's ability to keep you safe in the workplace? (% of Employees Extremely or Very Concerned)

High risk individual or caretaker .....	49%
Not a high risk .....	35%



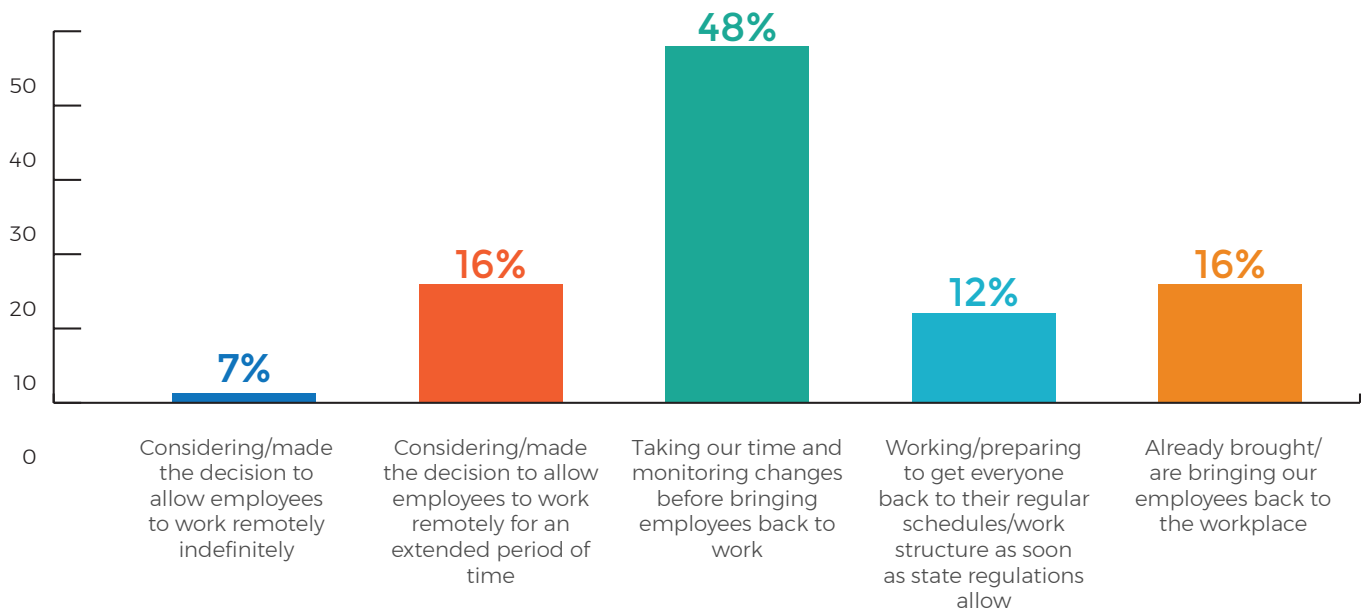
## Remote Working Status

Prior to the pandemic, most employers reported allowing employees to work remotely but with some restrictions such as limiting the number of days or the reasons an employee may work remotely. Almost half (48%) of the employers in our survey reported they are taking their time and monitoring changes before having employees return to the office.



**Prior to the pandemic, which best describes your company's stance with regard to remote working, assuming the job description would allow?**

**Which of the following best describes where your company stands right now with regards to remote working?**



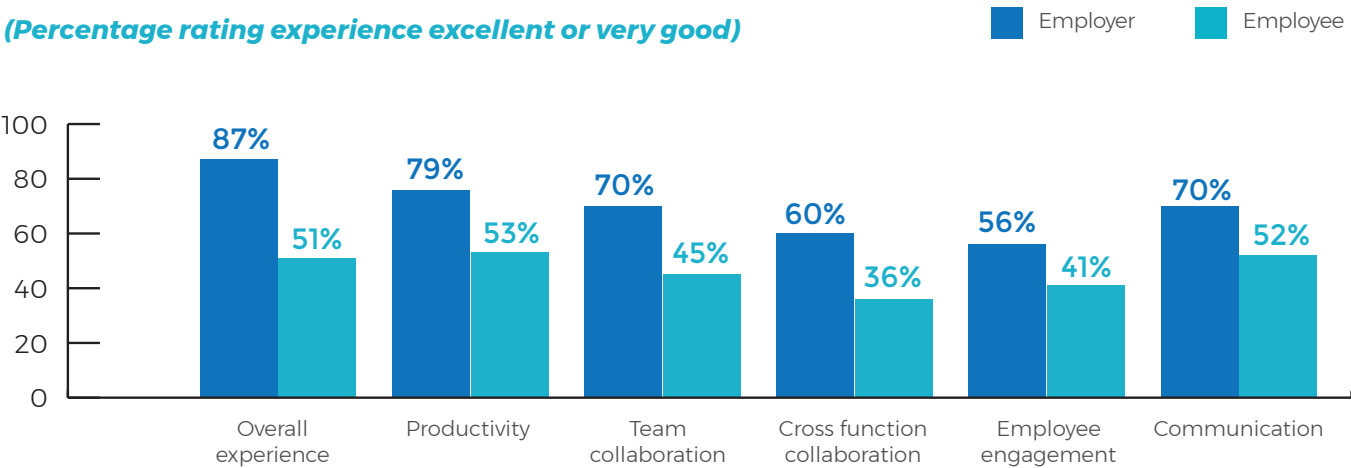


The transition to remote working seems to be going well, especially in the eyes of employers. While employees also generally view the experience positively, there is a notable discrepancy between how employers have viewed the remote working experience and how employees have viewed it. Most employers (87%) rated the overall experience as excellent or very good compared to 51% of employees. All

other aspects of the remote working experience were rated lower by employees than employers, signifying there may be a disconnect between how the experience is going at the business level and at the individual worker level. Both employers and employees gave the lowest scores to cross function collaboration and employee engagement, underscoring how challenging it is to find the right solution.

**Rating of remote working experience with regards to...**

**(Percentage rating experience excellent or very good)**



Productivity appears to be a bright spot with both employers and employees rating it higher than other categories. When pressed further regarding how productivity is measured several employers reported monitoring such items as timeliness of completing projects and employee responsiveness. For some employers these measures are not tracked as much as evaluated based on a manager's perception.

**“** *“Productivity is measured based on employee responsiveness. Are employees responding timely when contacted. Are employees completing work and projects timely.”*

**“** *“Sales trends and project completion.”*

**“** *“Not formally but deadlines are being met and work completed.”*

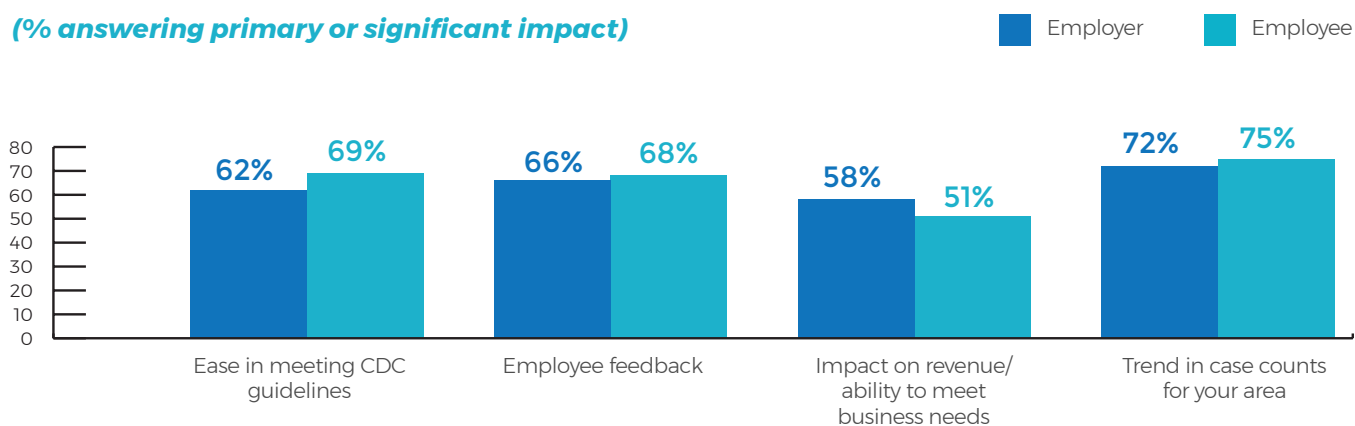
**“** *“We have a result-oriented culture and everyone’s productivity is measured by their results. We have small team working together: back end team, front end team, marketing team etc. every team set their goals and works towards achieving them. We actually also track time but the productivity is measured based on the results and not on how many hours you have been working. This works perfectly for us as we put a lot of trust into our workers of trust.”*

## A big question on everyone’s mind whether you are an employer or an employee...

When is the right time to bring employees back to the office? Both groups feel case counts in the area should have more consideration while the impact on revenue rated lower.

### As states reopen for business, how much of an impact should the following have on determining whether to allow employees to continue working remotely?

(% answering primary or significant impact)



Results to this question were segmented by whether or not the participant’s income or job was negatively impacted by COVID-19. As one might expect, those impacted were significantly more likely to state the impact on revenue and meeting their business needs as a primary or significant determinant of whether to continue to work remotely.



## Factors on whether to continue working remotely (% stating primary or significant)

Responses segmented by whether participant's income or job was negatively impacted by COVID-19.

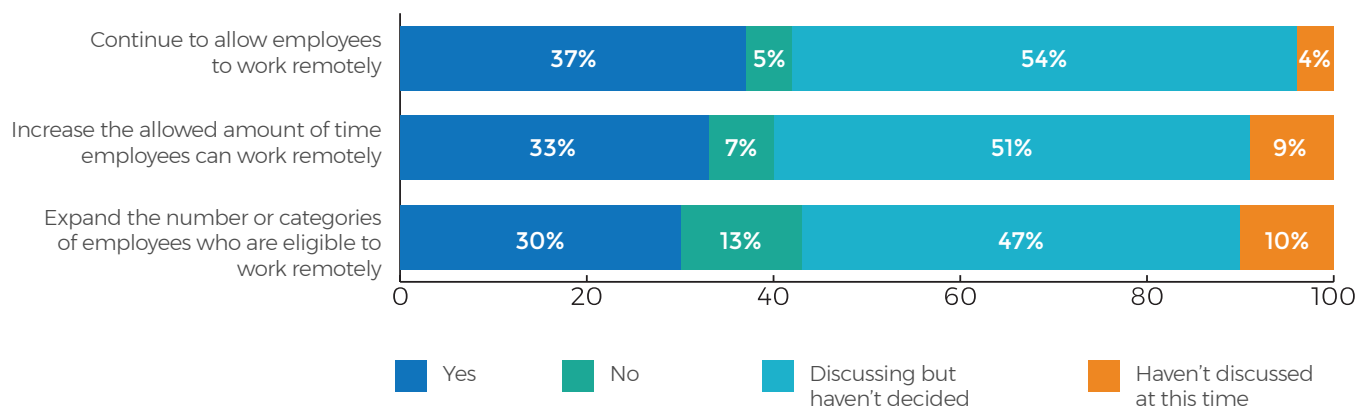
	Impacted	No Impact
Ease in meeting the CDC guidelines.....	63%	72%
Employee feedback/wishes.....	65%	69%
Impact on company revenue/ability to meet business needs.....	64%	46%
Trends in case counts in your area.....	69%	77%

As we found with several of our questions, most employers (47% to 54%) are still in discussions regarding how the workplace is going to change once we return to the office. Employers who have made a decision appear to be leaning towards expanding their remote working policy. In fact, 30% of employers now plan to expand the number of roles within their company who will be eligible to work remotely.

*"Companies are seeing how unimportant it is to have people working in the office. Remote work will be much more widely accepted."*

**- Employer Respondent**

## After the pandemic, is your company planning to...?



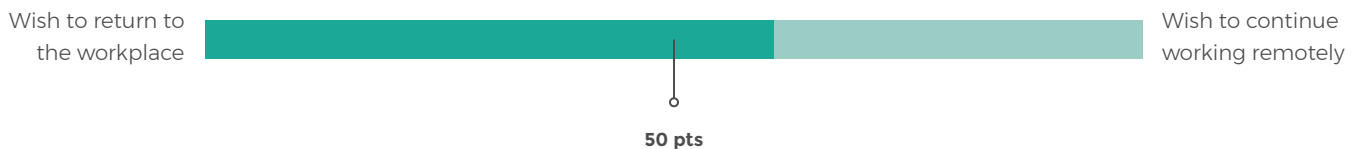
The pandemic has also led to employers evaluating their workplace environment and space. When asked how, if at all, employers may change the size of their workplace, most employers have yet to make the decision with 44% still discussing. Some employers (14%) have already decided to reduce their footprint or close some locations.

## Returning to the Workplace

Returning employees to the workplace may require some effort. For those still working from home, a majority indicated their desire to continue working remotely. Employee participants were asked to rate their desire to return to the workplace or continue to work remotely. The higher the score the greater the interest in continuing to work remotely. The average rating was 68%, indicating that the group is leaning towards a preference to continue to work at home.

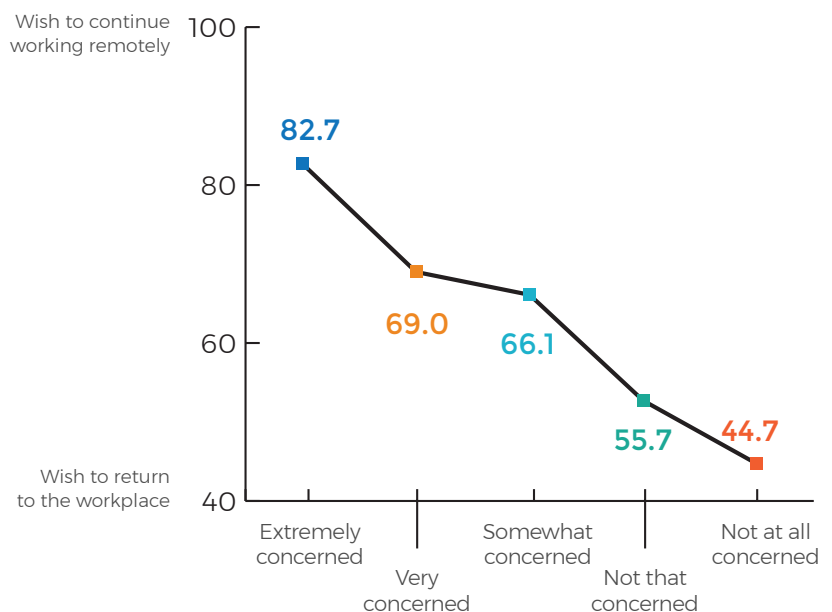


### Once your company has given the okay, rate your interest in...



When the results to this question are compared to an individual's level of concern with workplace safety, there appears to be a correlation between the two. Those that are most concerned are also more likely to want to continue to work remotely. Only those that are not at all concerned averaged an interest rating of below 50, indicating that this group is leaning towards returning to the workplace.

### Average interest in working remotely by level of concern with employers ability to keep workplace safe



So what must employers do to help their employees feel safe in returning to the workplace? The CDC has distributed several suggestions for employers to consider – from reducing the number of employees to requiring

masks. These measures were put to the test to see which employees think will have the greatest effectiveness. Employers, in turn, were asked how many of these measures they have already implemented or planning to implement.

### Changes employers are/have made to workplace and employees view of effectiveness



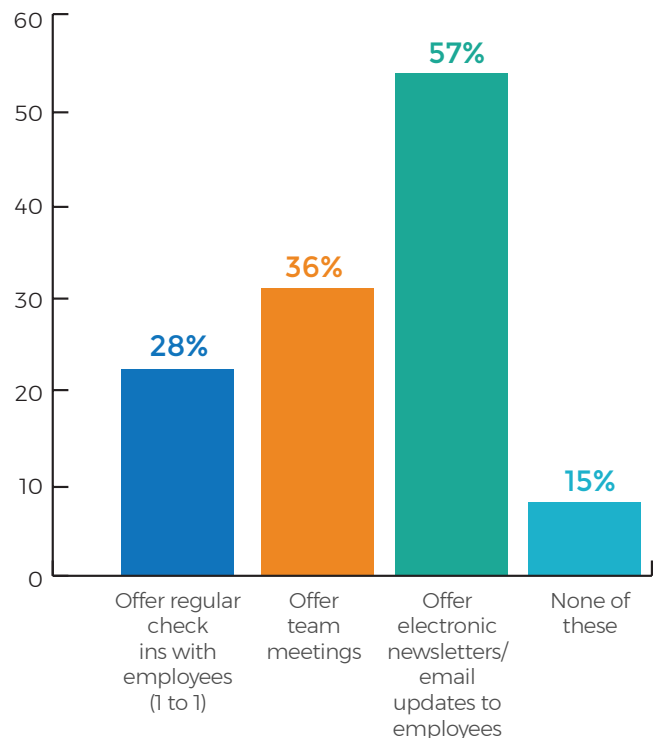
The most effective measures, as rated by the employees, include sanitization stations and requiring masks. Where the results seem to deviate is with regards to air quality equipment and adding barriers/dividers. Both of these measures were rated extremely or very effective by at least half the employees although these were among the least utilized measures employers have or are planning to make.



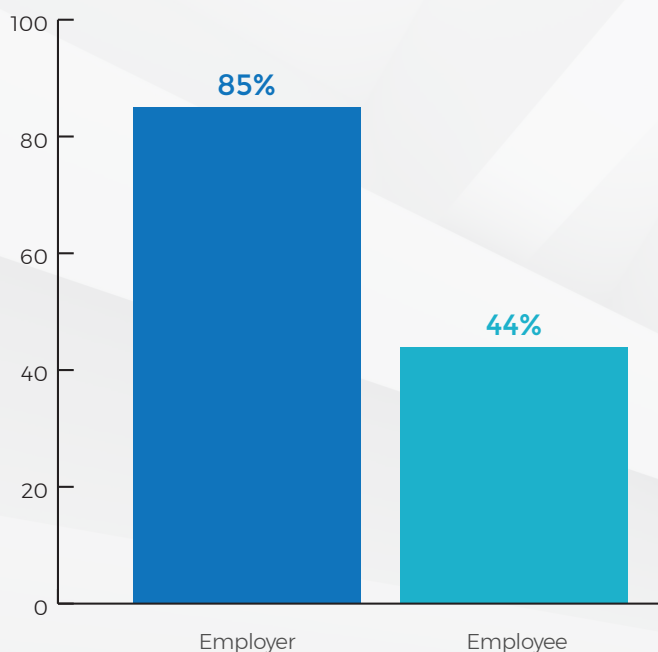
# Communication

Most employers would agree that communication during the pandemic is critical to helping employees feel supported. There are a variety of ways to communicate but our survey explored three different options. While 15% of employers reported their employer did not use any of these options several offered more than one. The most utilized method was via electronic newsletters and email. Overall, employers gave themselves higher ratings than our employee participants gave their own companies. Less than half (44%) of employees rated their company's communication as excellent or very good.

## How is your employer communicating with you about safety measures and how is your company responding during the pandemic?



## During the pandemic, how would you rate your company with regards to communicating with employees and keeping them up to date? (% rating excellent or very good)

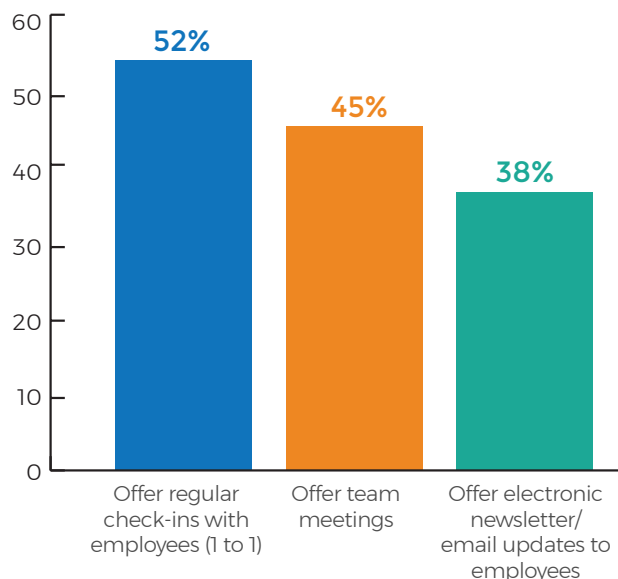


To better understand which method was having the greatest impact, results for each were compared to the employee's rating of their employer. Each method was looked at in isolation, resulting in a smaller sample so the results are only intended to provide some direction and are not an indication of cause and effect. Employees whose employer uses 1 to 1 check-ins to communicate were the most pleased, with 52% of employees rating their employer as excellent or very good. Receiving the lowest score was electronic newsletters/emails with only 38% of those employees rating their employer as excellent or very good.



## Rating for the employer's communication by method of communication

(% of employees rating excellent or very good)

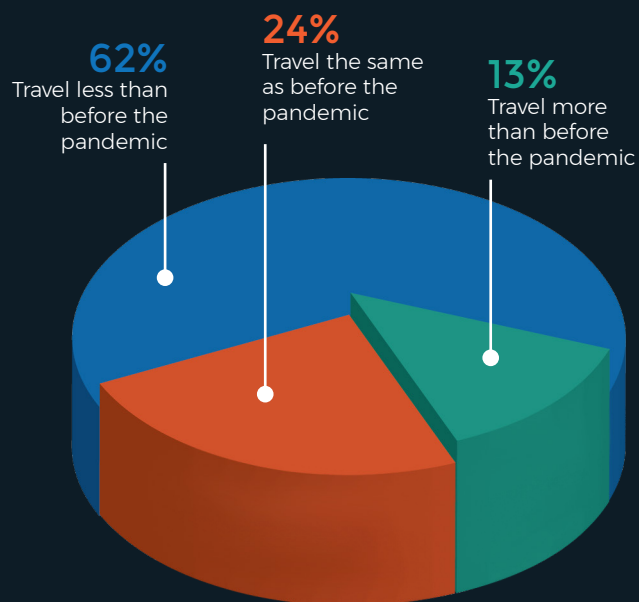


Employers looking to improve their communication should consider a variety of methods. The more the better. If, however, an employer is looking for the best method, regular 1 to 1 check-ins could result in the highest level of satisfaction.

## Travel

As the pandemic spread, business travel came to a halt. Even at the time of this report, airlines, hotels and businesses are all expressing doubts that business travel will return to pre-pandemic levels anytime soon...if ever.

As employers continue to think about how best to adjust their travel policies, it might be helpful to know that employees want to reduce their travel. Asked of only those employees who need to spend a night away from home for the purpose of a business trip, 62% stated they would like to reduce their travel and only 24% are willing to keep it at the same level.



**Following the pandemic, what are your travel preferences?**

*"9/11 impacted travel and that was more of a NY based event. This is on a global scale and will significantly impact business travel."*

**- Employer Respondent**

## Summary

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It's clear that at the time of this report there are still so many decisions to be made.

Employers continue to evaluate how they will adjust the workplace safely, pre and post vaccine. Employees are expressing a very real concern for their safety or the safety of their loved ones when thinking about returning to the workplace. It's also apparent that the safety measures employers are looking to incorporate aren't necessarily the ones that will make employees feel the most secure.

Worth deeply investigating is the difference in perceptions between employers and employees on the success of their work from home time. In addition, the difference in perception about communication effectiveness. Employers rated the success of both of these items, in every measure, much higher than employees. This could be attributed to the employees perception of the distractions of at home work, but what they aren't considering is the distractions of the office space. Water cooler talk, and people dropping by your workspace eats more time than most people consider. Since employers found the work at home time to be incredibly productive, perhaps better communication would serve employees. A virtual pat on the back, and reassurance that they're doing great. Do it more often and differently than you're doing it today, since employees aren't seeming to hear it.

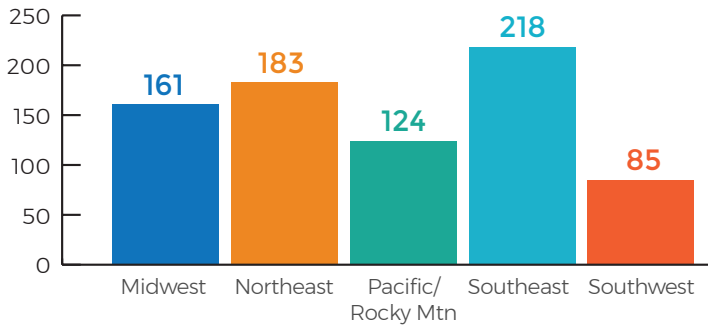
**One thing is clear, however.**

***Many things will be different in our future - whether it is remote work, office space, travel plans and or how employers communicate with their employees.***

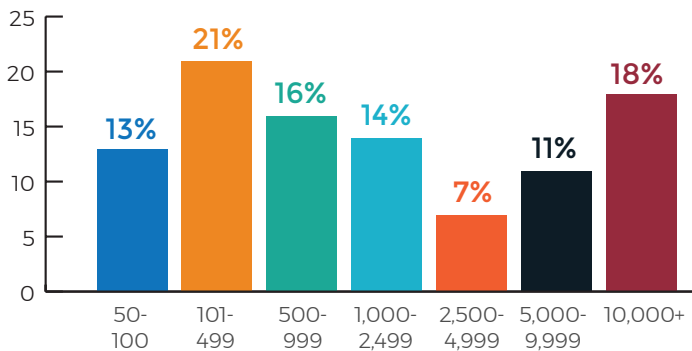


# Respondent Details

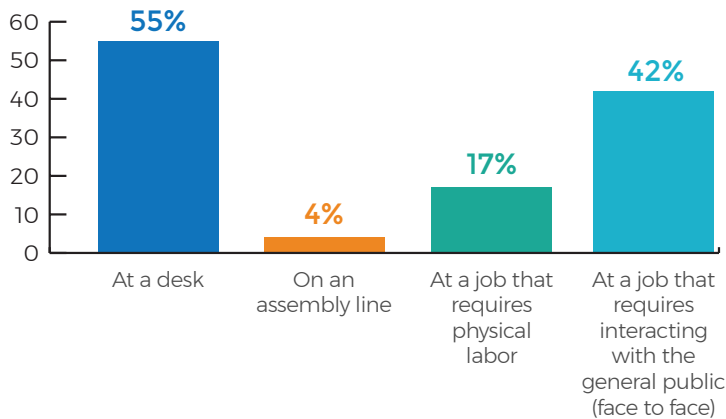
## Employee Respondents



Number of Participants by Region



Size of Employer (Number of US Employees)



Work Environment\*

\* Does not add to 100% because people selected more than one option. A few individuals wrote in their work environment. They consisted of things like working in a lab.



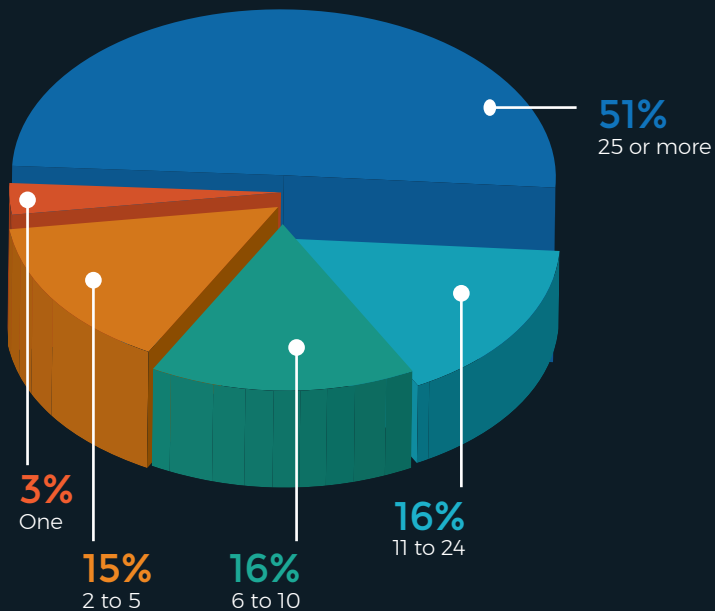
## Industries Represented

Accommodations and food services.....	4%
Arts, entertainment and recreation.....	1%
Construction.....	2%
Educational services.....	27%
Financial and insurance.....	5%
Government.....	6%
Healthcare and social assistance.....	15%
Information services.....	3%
Manufacturing.....	6%
Non-profit.....	2%
Other services (except public admin).....	6%
Professional services.....	3%
Real estate, rental and leasing.....	1%
Retail trade.....	9%
Technology / software.....	6%
Transportation and warehousing.....	3%
Utilities.....	1%
Wholesale trade.....	1%

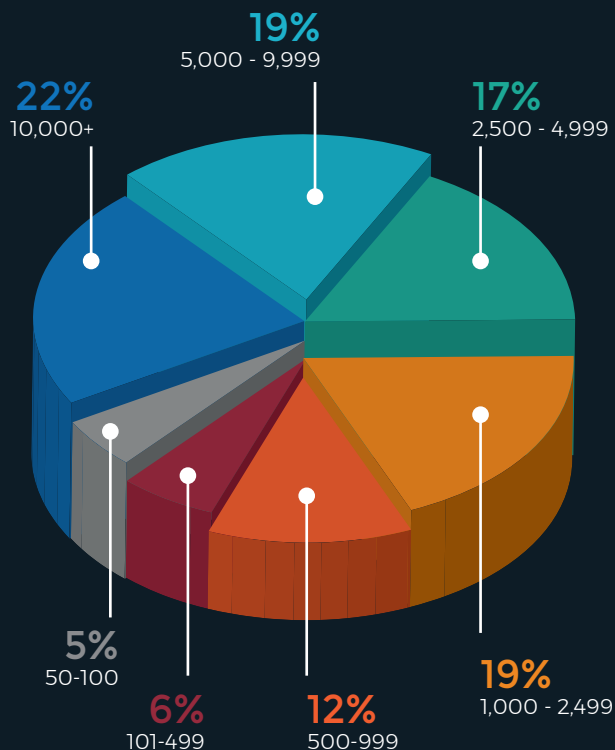


## Employer Respondents

How many different locations does your company operate?



### Employer Size (Number of US Employees)



### Industries Represented

Accommodations and food services.....	6%
Arts, entertainment and recreation.....	1%
Construction.....	3%
Educational services.....	1%
Financial and insurance.....	11%
Government.....	1%
Healthcare and social assistance.....	16%
Information services.....	1%
Manufacturing.....	16%
Non-profit.....	1%
Other services (except public admin).....	7%
Professional services.....	3%
Retail trade.....	7%
Technology / software.....	17%
Transportation and warehousing.....	4%
Utilities.....	5%
Wholesale trade.....	1%





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