HOME UNBOUND: #2

Transitioning back to the office after COVID

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HYBRID WORKFORCES ARE HERE TO STAY.

Pre-pandemic, working from home was slowly gaining traction. However, there were still plenty of concerns about productivity, security (keeping confidential IP under tight wraps), employee wellbeing and team morale, to name a few. But when lockdowns hit, organizations who were not already set up for remote working had to invest in new infrastructure and processes to adapt. Changes included everything from security measures to protect IP to buying employees new home workstation gear —and the reported results from over a year of remote working have proven there has been a huge shift in both employee and employer attitudes to working from home.

This survey of over **1,000 workers** was conducted as a follow-up to a previous survey 6 months prior. The purpose of these surveys was to gather responses across more than a dozen sectors and explore peoples' health and safety concerns about returning to work and their preferred working arrangements (on-site, remotely or a hybrid of the two).

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

78% of workers prefer working from home at least some of the time.

- 43% of workers prefer working from home full time, and 35% like to have a balance of working from home and on-site.

- The c-suite is most likely to continue working at home; middle-management are least likely.

- Only 22% of respondents didn't want to work from home at all—nearly a third of these people were working in the social services or service industry.

- Results were consistent with the initial survey, in which 75% of respondents preferred to work from home some or all of the time.

Do you feel you are more or less productive when working from home?

39%
More

35%
About the same

5%
Unsure

21%
Less
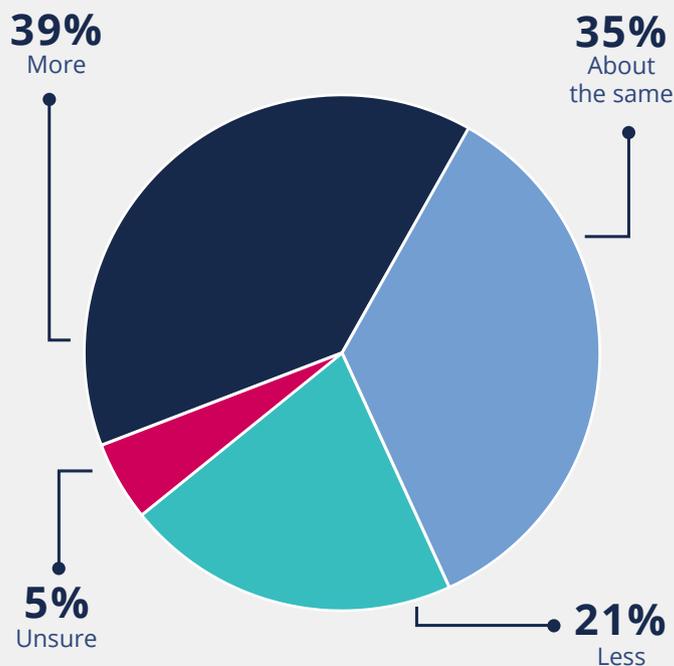
Of the workers who are not back at the workplace full time, 45% expect to be back full time within 6 months, down from 53% in the previous survey.

- A third (33%) of all respondents don't expect to return to full time on-site work again.

- 36% of men indicated they would continue working from home indefinitely, compared to 28% of women.

- 77% of respondents with c-level titles indicated they would never return to on-site work full time.

- Non-managerial employees were the most likely to return to the workplace full time (although 23% said they would continue working on a hybrid work schedule or work remotely full time).

- People in creative or professional services are the most likely to continue working from home indefinitely, while people working in the service industry are the least likely.

52% of workers have safety and health concerns about returning, down from 62% in May 2021.

- 59% of respondents in the service industry had no concerns about returning to the workplace full time.

- People in professional services were the most apprehensive, with 61% reporting they had concerns about returning full time.

- Overall, vice presidents and c-level respondents had the lowest levels of concern, while directors and associates were the most concerned.

53% of respondents want to see their workplace introduce the ability to record proof of vaccination.

- Although relatively consistent across the regions, this was felt the strongest in the western United States, with 64% of respondents in western states adding this to their wish list.

- Male respondents felt more strongly about this than their female counterparts, with 61% of men calling to record proof of vaccination compared to 44% of women.

HYBRID WORKFORCE

A clear majority (78%) felt that working from home or having some kind of hybrid work schedule was best. More than a third (35%) of respondents felt that their productivity was unaffected when working from home, and nearly 40% actually felt more productive. This insight was most significant among directors, with 96% reporting the same or more productivity at home; however, it was felt across the board regardless of position.

For those who preferred a hybrid arrangement, the primary reasons for wanting time in the office were for better collaboration (60%) and to interact with other people at work (56%). Other factors included maintaining working relationships (41%) and having a better workstation or set-up (36%).

For those who wanted to continue working from home full-time, the biggest concerns cited were:
· proximity to other people,
· office hygiene and protective measures, and
· contact with other people during their commute to the workplace.

Some respondents noted that they have always worked remotely, so the pandemic measures have not been felt as much. "My whole company works from home, I've never worked in an office," says Texas social care worker Kate.

Overall, what is your preferred working environment?

43%
Prefer working from home

35%
Would prefer a balance

<1%
Unsure

22%
Prefer working on-site
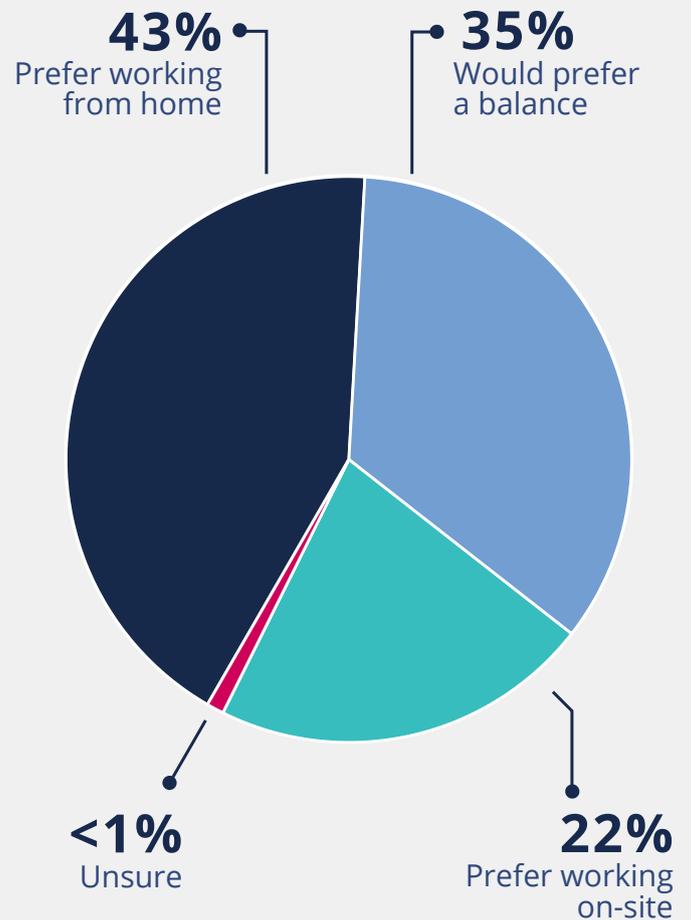
Sector Insights

People in creative or professional services felt the most strongly about working from home. Understandably, a quarter (25%) of people in the service industry and in industrial sectors felt that they were less productive working from home.

Regional Breakdown

Would you prefer to work from home, work on-site, or work in a hybrid arrangement (a balance of hours at home and on-site)?
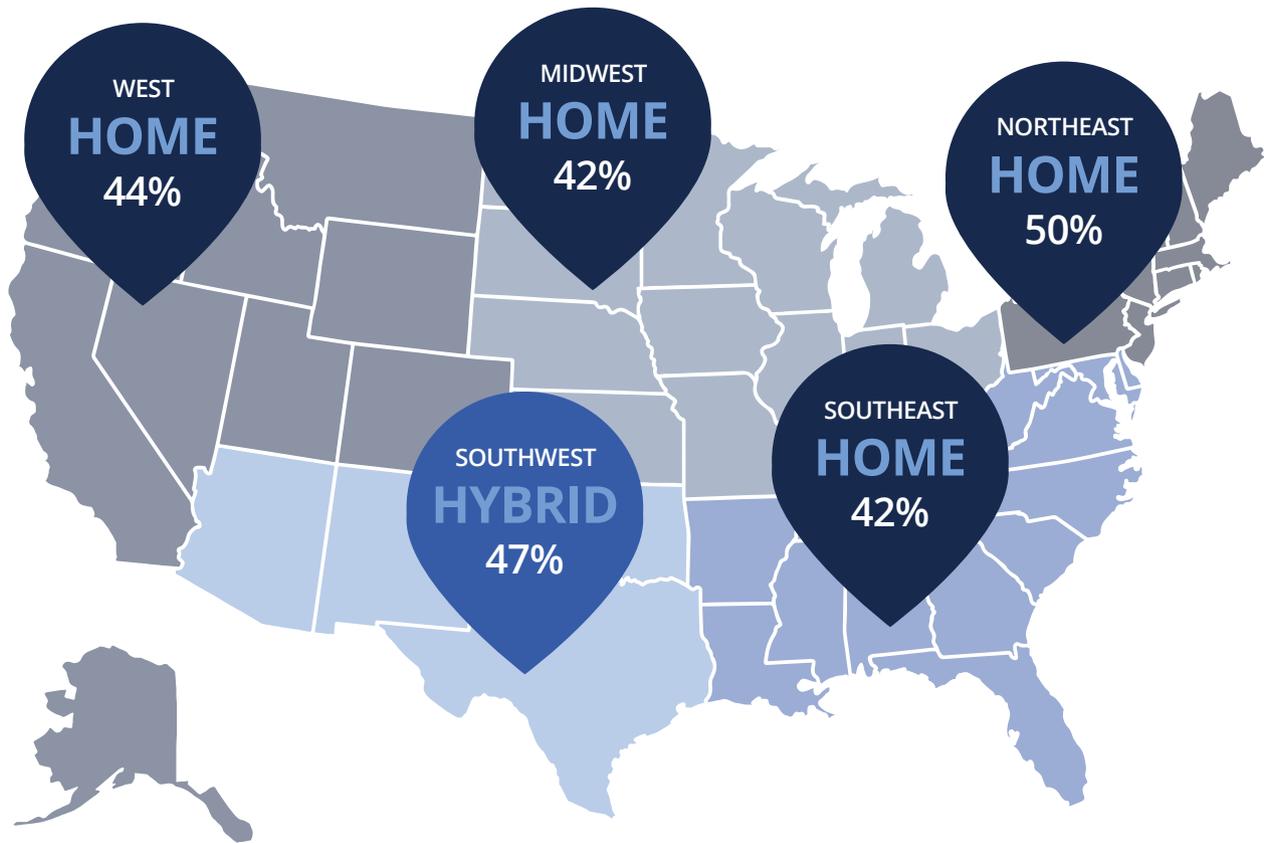
Region	Home	On-site	Hybrid
West	44%	18%	36%
Southwest	26%	26%	47%
Southeast	42%	30%	28%
Midwest	42%	10%	38%
Northeast	50%	18%	32%

Then vs Now: Why Return?

This table compares the responses between the first and second surveys. In both surveys, respondents' reasons for wanting at least some time in the office were highly motivated by a desire for maintaining interpersonal relationships (with other team members, clients, mentors or stakeholders) and to have in-person collaboration.

Main reasons for returning to the workplace are:	
May 2021	**↑ January 2022**
1. To resume human interaction 2. To maintain relationships with clients and stakeholders 3. To better collaborate with colleagues 4. To re-establish a sense of routine 5. To access a better office/workstation setup	1. To better collaborate with colleagues 2. To resume human interaction 3. To maintain relationships with clients and stakeholders 4. To have more face-to-face time with managers/mentors 5. To access a better office/workstation setup

PANDEMIC WORRIES

Three quarters (75%) of all respondents felt that they were made sufficiently aware of any new protocols and trained adequately on any changes and protective measures in the workplace.

But while 72% of those working on-site full time are happy with their workplace's protective measures, 17% are not. For some, such as Kansas charity worker Flo, the hardest part is the culture and attitude of other staff members. "I protect myself from others with double masking, social distancing, hand sanitizers and minimizing contact with others and surfaces," but she is beginning to feel like "no one cares anymore."

29% of those who felt dissatisfied with the measures taken by their workplace said they would continue working from home if they could, compared to just 18% of those who had no concerns about being in the workplace.

> "I protect myself from others with double masking, social distancing, hand sanitizers and minimizing contact with others and surfaces"

Regional Breakdown

Do you have concerns about returning to the workplace full time?
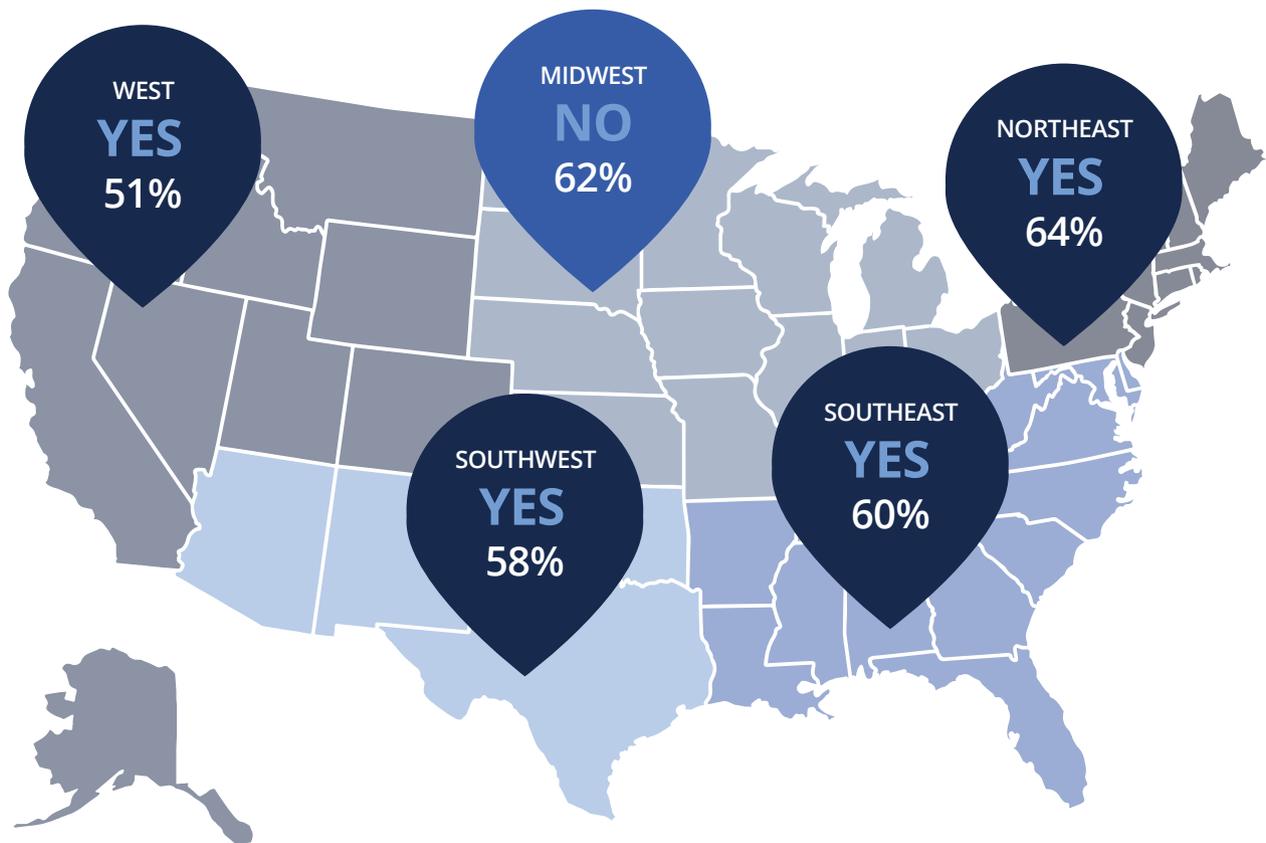
Region	Yes	No
West	51%	49%
Southwest	58%	43%
Southeast	60%	40%
Midwest	8%	62%
Northeast	64%	36%

Then vs Now: Pandemic Protective Measures

This table compares the responses between the initial and follow up surveys. On these two questions, respondents were fairly consistent on both currently-implemented and desired protective measures. In the second survey, every single region listed digital proof of vaccination as their top preferred protective measure.

The most desired measures for organizations with on-site staff are:

May 2021	↑ January 2022
1. Limiting the number of people on site 2. Touchless door entry 3. Temperature taking 4. Digital proof of vaccination	1. Digital proof of vaccination 2. Limiting the number of people on site 3. No touch door entries 4. Contact tracing

The most common currently used measures for organizations with on-site staff are:

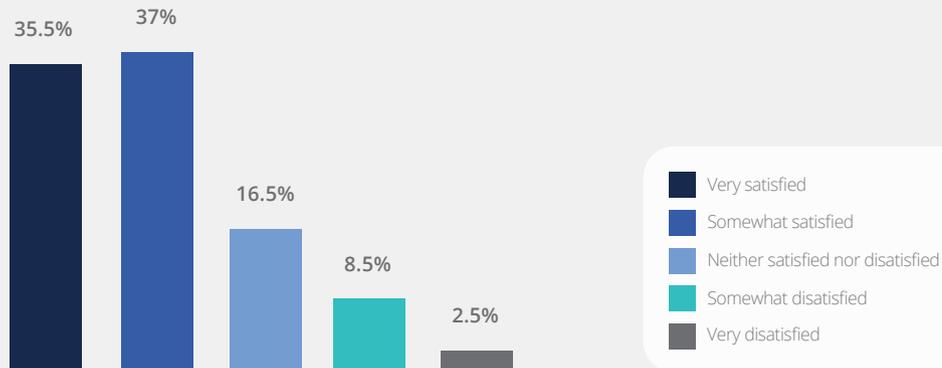| May 2021	↑ January 2022
1. Providing masks, sanitizer, other protective gear 2. Increased cleaning protocols 3. Limiting the number of people on site 4. Enforcing physical distancing	1. Providing masks, sanitizer, other protective gear 2. Increased cleaning protocols 3. Enforcing physical distancing 4. Contact tracing (logging everyone on-site each day)

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted via email between September 01, 2021, and September 03, 2021, using an audience of Survey Monkey users as respondents. A total of 1043 persons participated in the survey. Responses came from all U.S. states, with highest numbers coming from California, Texas, New York, and Ohio. Twenty-five industries were represented, with the highest percentages from healthcare, education, IT/computing, and engineering/manufacturing. A plurality of respondents occupied the staff level (50%), followed by manager (21%), administrator/associate (19%), director (6%), C-suite (3%), and vice president (2%). Slightly more females than males (51% to 49%) participated. Age brackets broke down as follows: 30-44: 32.95%; 45-60: 27.84%; 18-29: 21.19%; 60 and older: 18.02%.
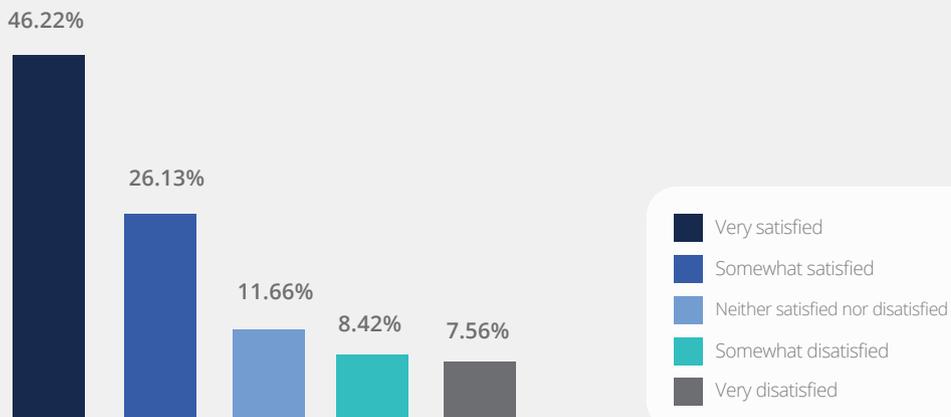
PANDEMIC-RELATED HEALTH & SAFETY

For those working on-site some of the time:
How satisfied are you with the precautions your organization is taking?

35.5% 37%

16.5%

8.5%

2.5%

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor disatisfied
- Somewhat disatisfied
- Very disatisfied

For those working on-site most of the time:
How satisfied are you with the precautions your organization is taking?

46.22%

26.13%

11.66%

8.42% 7.56%

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor disatisfied
- Somewhat disatisfied
- Very disatisfied

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