



COVID-19 Pulse Survey: Wave IV Results

To better understand how companies are managing their workforce in the wake of the worldwide pandemic, *HRO Today* is conducting a series of pulse surveys. The *HRO Today* Coronavirus Knowledge Portal addresses how businesses and HR leaders are handling the outbreak. As the number of countries and U.S. states gradually reopen, employers need to have plans in place to accommodate workers back into the office. *HRO Today* is conducting a very brief study about worker anxiety and how organizations are planning for their post-coronavirus workforce needs.

During the period of May 28- June 8, 2020, a survey link was emailed to a sample of the *HRO Today* network, and links were posted on the *HRO Today* website. Further, social networking was used via a link sent on Twitter. A total of 50 surveys were completed. Because of the small sample size, these results should be considered as directional.

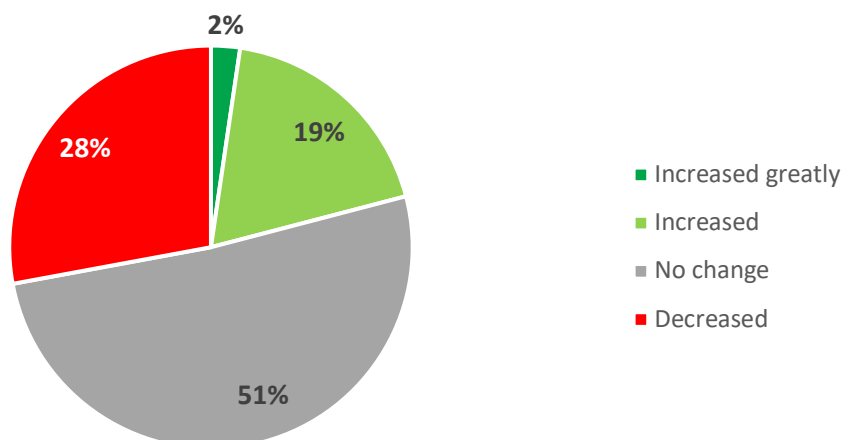
Changes in Employee Engagement

How has the level of employee engagement changed for those employees who are working outside the office because of the pandemic?

As a result of the global pandemic, two-thirds of U.S. employers took steps to allow employees to work from home who do not normally do so.¹ Within a few weeks of the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, an estimated 16 million U.S. workers had switched to working remotely to flatten the curve of the health crisis. That number greatly increased over the ensuing weeks.²

One of the major concerns employers had when much of their workforce shifted to home-based work was a decline in employee engagement and its resulting impact on productivity. Despite that concern, study participants reported that for most (51 percent), the level of employee engagement largely remained unchanged, with nearly equal amounts indicating engagement increased (21 percent) as decreased (28 percent).

Changes in Employee Engagement



Measures Taken When Employees Return-to-Office

What measures do you plan to take/are taking when employees return to the office? Please select all that apply.

As of June 10, 2020, 19 U.S. states report that coronavirus cases still increasing. While 24 are trending downward, trends in seven states are holding steady. Nationally more than 1.9 million people have been infected by the virus and more than 112,000 have died, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.³ The ongoing threat from COVID-19 means that companies must take precautions to ensure their workforce is safe as they return to the office.

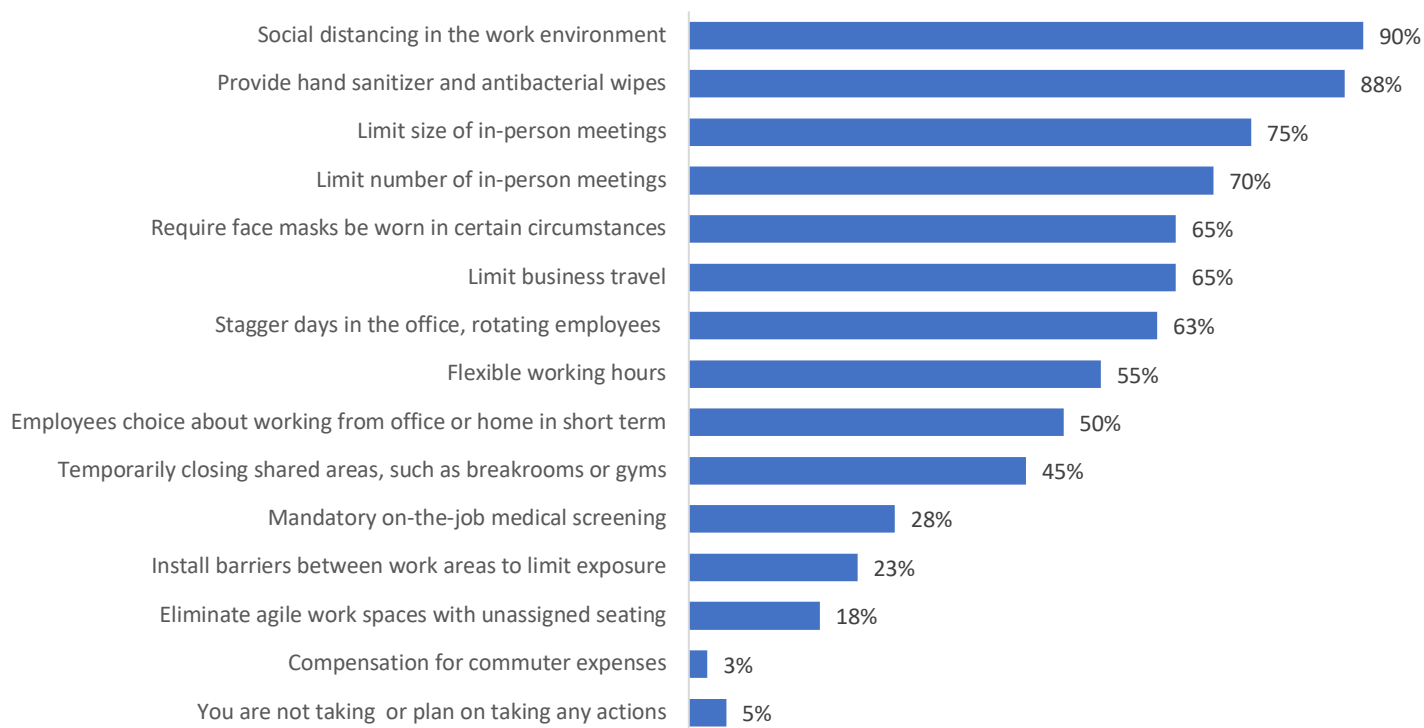
In total, there were nine measures selected from a list of 14 that at least one-half (50 percent) of employers plan to implement as employees return to the office. Overall, 95 percent plan to take some measures to impede the spread of coronavirus when employees return to the office, resulting in an average of 7.5 specific measures to protect employees.

Social distancing has consistently been the primary message delivered by medical experts in the U.S. since the onslaught of the pandemic. Nine-in-ten (90 percent) of employers plan to implement this procedure when employees return to the office, the most of any measure.

Closely following social distancing is providing hand sanitizer and antibacterial wipes, selected by 88 percent. Even the employers not providing these items are likely to encourage their use.

Limiting contact is also planned to be widely used. This includes limiting the size of in-person meetings (75 percent) as well as the number of in-person meetings (70 percent).

Measures Taken When Employees Return-to-Office



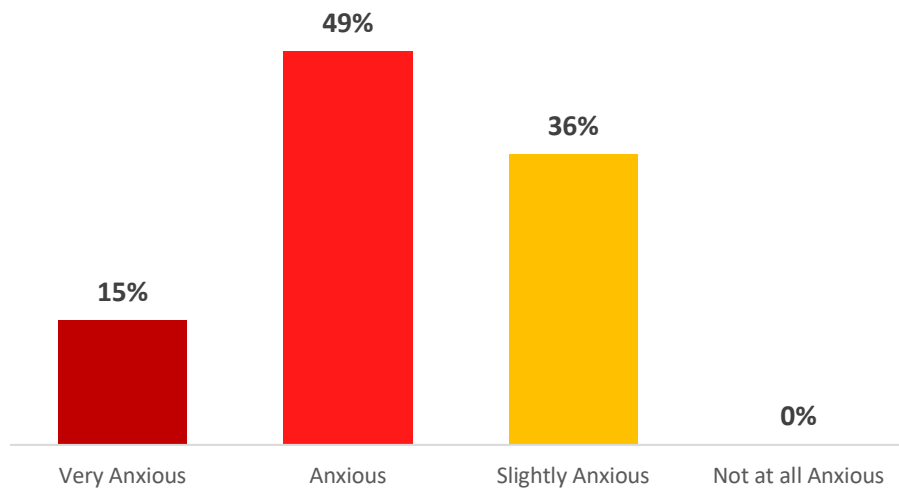
All Employees Anxious about Return-to-Work

What is the level of anxiety about health concerns specific to COVID-19 your organization is anticipating when employees return to the office?

The level of anxiety about health concerns specific to COVID-19 is high, as at least some degree of anxiety was prevalent among all study respondents. Further, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) feel the anticipated level of anxiety will be “very anxious” or “anxious.”

The high level of anxiety reported is not surprising, and clearly organizations are trying to alleviate those concerns by taking a high number of measures to prohibit the spread of the virus. Anticipation about returning to work has simmered for three months for many workers in the U.S., and most organizations are aware of worker anxiety and are trying to offset it with the kind of very transparent efforts the workforce hopes to see implemented.

Level of Anxiety about Returning to Work



Notes:

1. Zeidner, Rita. “Coronavirus Makes Work from Home the New Normal,” *SHRM.com*, March 21, 2020 shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/remote-work-has-become-the-new-normal.aspx.
2. Holcombe, Madeline. “12 States See Rising Covid-19 Hospitalizations” *CNN*, June 11, 2020 cnn.com/2020/06/10/health/us-coronavirus-wednesday/index.html
3. Holcombe, “12 States See Rising Covid-19 Hospitalizations.”

