

The Great Return

What **Candidates** Want & How **Employers** Are Adapting



built in

Talent Activated.

Introduction.

As the pandemic begins to subside and a new normal starts to take shape, work environments are getting a massive overhaul. Companies haven't quite figured out what a post-pandemic world looks like but a majority of employees know what they want and are anxious for answers.

The pandemic has changed employees' expectations of how they want to work and what they care about when looking for jobs, and employers are struggling to adapt to these changes quickly. But the race is on as hiring is expected to ramp up very quickly.

A whopping zero percent of companies believe their hiring needs will decrease post-pandemic — meaning every company will be going after great talent. Without a solid return to work plan and long-term flexible work options, companies will be desperate for talent.

We surveyed employees and companies on how work has changed during the pandemic, the ideal plan for returning to work and remote work's impact on the future. The results will help employees be heard and companies to retain their workforce during the next wave of workplace changes and the impending fight for talent.



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About the Report.

This report analyzes survey data collected by Built In from March through May of 2021.

A majority of the data throughout this report comes from two surveys which collected information on tech professionals' attitudes and tech employers' efforts for a return to work and remote work preferences long-term.

These surveys were geared to one of two groups: tech professionals and tech employers. Both surveys used a combination of Likert scales, multiple choice questions and open-ended responses. They were voluntary and anonymous. A total of 120 tech professional responses and 172 tech employer responses were analyzed.

Some additional data from a third party survey Built In conducted is included within the "The Job Hunt Post-Pandemic" section of this report. This survey had a total of 3,025 tech professional responses. We will note which data points come from this survey.

The following pages contain proprietary information obtained by Built In that provides an in-depth analysis of how companies are getting back to work and tech employees' thoughts on the matter.

SECTION I

How Work Shifted During COVID

It's no secret that the way in which every person works changed during COVID, much like many other aspects of a person's life. Before we dive too deep into what work will look like post-pandemic, we thought we'd take a step back and hear from employees and companies directly about what changed during COVID. Here's what we found.

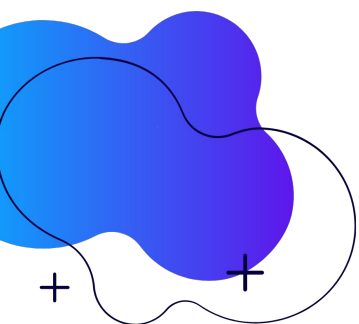
Remote Work Became the Norm

You might be thinking, obviously remote work became “normal” for everyone during the pandemic, but it’s the long-term effects of this change that’s important to note. Let’s take a look at the number of employees who worked remotely pre-pandemic to fully understand how COVID changed remote work forever.

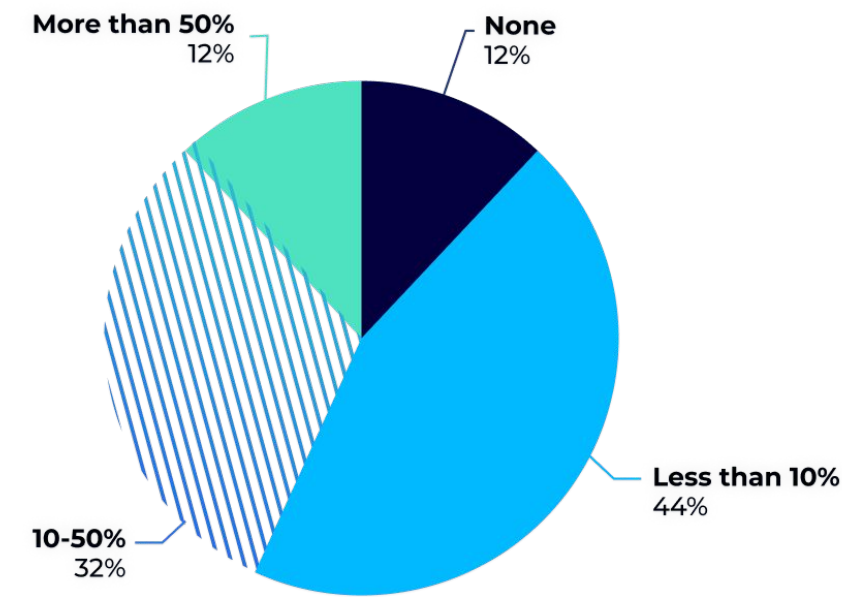
Our survey data shows that a majority of employees (75 percent) were forced to work from home during the pandemic despite being located near an office. Only seven percent of employees were working 100 percent remotely before COVID hit and a mere three percent are currently working in the office.

We see a similar story when asking companies how much of their workforce worked remotely prior to COVID. More than half (56 percent) of companies had zero to nine percent of employees working remotely pre-pandemic, with only 12 percent of companies having more than 50 percent of their workforce remote.

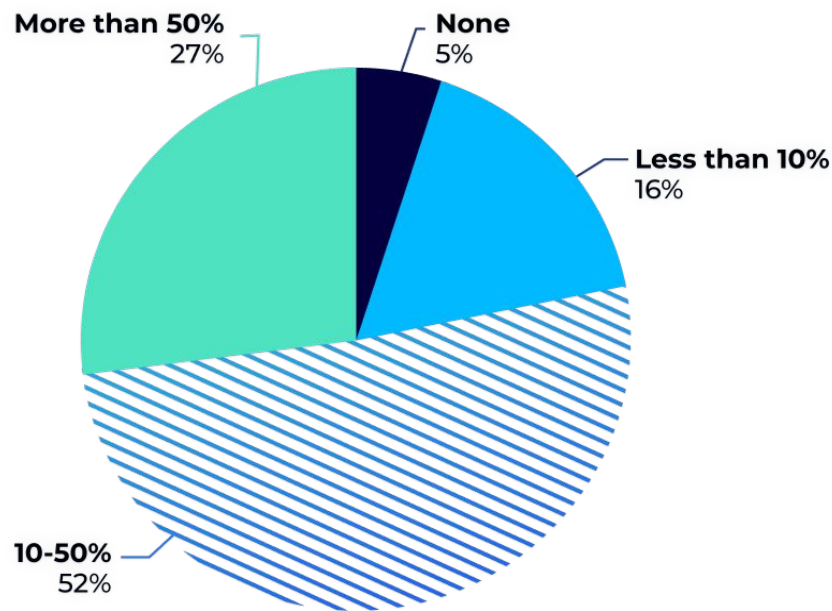
But we see these numbers shift when predicting work life post-pandemic.



Pre-Pandemic Remote Workforce Size

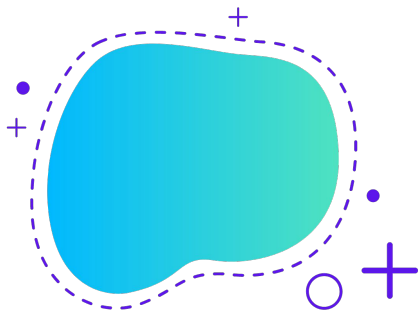


Post-Pandemic Remote Workforce Size



SECTION I

After COVID, 27 percent of companies will have more than 50 percent of its workforce working remotely — which is more than double the 12 percent of companies who had that size of a remote workforce pre-pandemic. We also see a large dip in the number of companies who will have a smaller remote workforce post-pandemic — 21 percent of companies predict they will have zero to nine percent of employees working remotely after COVID, a big drop from the 56 percent with a workforce this size pre-pandemic.



It's a good thing most companies will have a greater percentage of their workforce working remotely post-pandemic since our data shows users no longer see it as a nice to have but an assumed benefit.

We analyzed the most searched for perks and benefits by candidates on the Built In sites throughout 2020 and found that remote work was number one last year. However, when you look at the data quarter by quarter, remote work completely disappears from the top ten in Q4 of 2020. If you consider all of the drastic changes workplaces went through in 2020, this behavior makes sense. Almost every company in the U.S. was forced to work remotely throughout some portion of the year. During this time, candidates got a taste of what it's like to work remotely and don't want to give up this benefit any time soon.

We'll discuss the importance of remote work for employees further in upcoming sections of this report but this is just one signal of its importance when thinking about a return to work plan.



Employees Were on the Move

Prior to the required remote working environment, employees were often forced to find a new employer if they wished to move to a new city. But as remote work became the assumed work environment in 2020, that changed.

Our survey indicates that 22 percent of employees moved during the pandemic. Why? A majority of them relocated to be closer to family and friends and for a more preferred lifestyle. Further confirming employees' desires to relocate is the fact that it was the sixth most searched for benefit by candidates nationwide on Built In's sites in 2020.

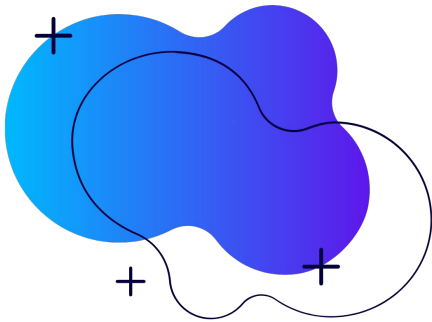
The freedom to work from anywhere gave employees a chance to really assess what mattered most to them and where they truly wanted to live to fulfill these desires.

22%

OF EMPLOYEES MOVED DURING THE PANDEMIC.

SECTION II

So how did this impact companies? Not too much, yet. Despite the rise in relocation, 57 percent of companies indicated their voluntary turnover rate remained stagnant during COVID. And companies don't seem to be worried too much about any long-term effects of this trend — 48 percent of companies predict their voluntary turnover rate will remain stagnant post-pandemic.



This is likely because almost half of companies (49 percent) indicated that a candidate's location won't matter when it comes to hiring post-pandemic.

Only a mere one percent shared that a candidate must be located within a certain distance to an office location. Companies are more open to having a remote workforce so employees can continue to move at their leisure.

Voluntary Turnover

57%

**OF COMPANIES
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DURING COVID**

&

48%

**OF COMPANIES PREDICT
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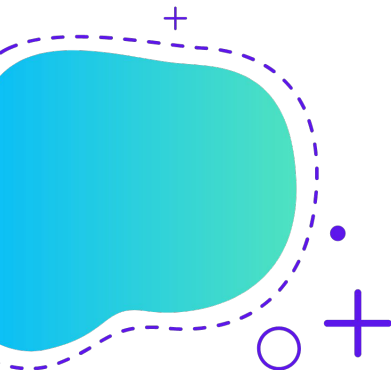


A One Size Fits All Workplace Is Nearly Impossible

With a greater sense of work flexibility being the norm during the pandemic, the likelihood of this employee desire changing anytime soon is slim. Employees had greater choices than ever before in how they worked the past year. This taste of flexibility has employees craving more, making it difficult for companies to find a solution that fits every individual employees' desires.

We're seeing this struggle in how companies are handling the in-between period of the pandemic slowing, but not being over yet — 43 percent of companies are allowing any employee who wishes to work in the office right now to do so, while 32 percent aren't allowing any employees to work in the office currently.

This near split of opinions is just one example of the difficulties companies will face when it comes to the safety of their employees and how to handle a return to the office, if at all.



SECTION II

Planning for a Return to Work

With vaccines on the rise and the COVID infection rate steadily declining, employers are starting to plan for a mass transition back into the office. We surveyed both employees and companies to hear how they feel about the planning process for returning to work.

Who Is Planning Companies' Return to Work Plans?

With such an undertaking, the team behind a company's return to work plan is crucial. They must be able to factor in things like employee safety, business priorities and candidate desires. It's a complicated process to build a plan that keeps everyone safe and happy.

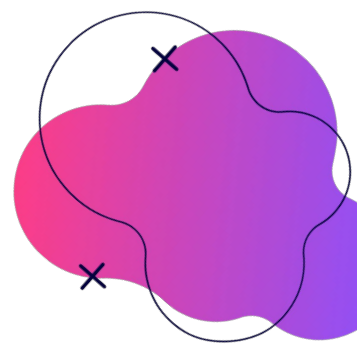
According to our survey, a majority of companies are involving their leadership and HR teams in the planning process for their return to work. Given the high stakes surrounding this plan and the large impact it will have on a company's workforce, this is the ideal team to be in charge of a company's return to work plan.

Companies Still Have a Lot of Work to Do

While COVID might be slowing down, companies still have a lot of work ahead of them to make their employees' return a success. More than half (56 percent) of companies are still in the discovery phase of their return to work plan, with only 23 percent of employers have announced their plans already. In our survey of employees, we see a similar sentiment — 63 percent haven't seen their company's return to work plans yet.

When thinking about planning a return to work, companies with multiple offices have an even bigger job to do. More than half (53 percent) of companies we surveyed have multiple office locations, and of those, 64 percent said each of their offices will have a different return to work plan.

As the world begins to find its new normal, companies must move quickly and strategically to determine what a return to work will look like for their organization.

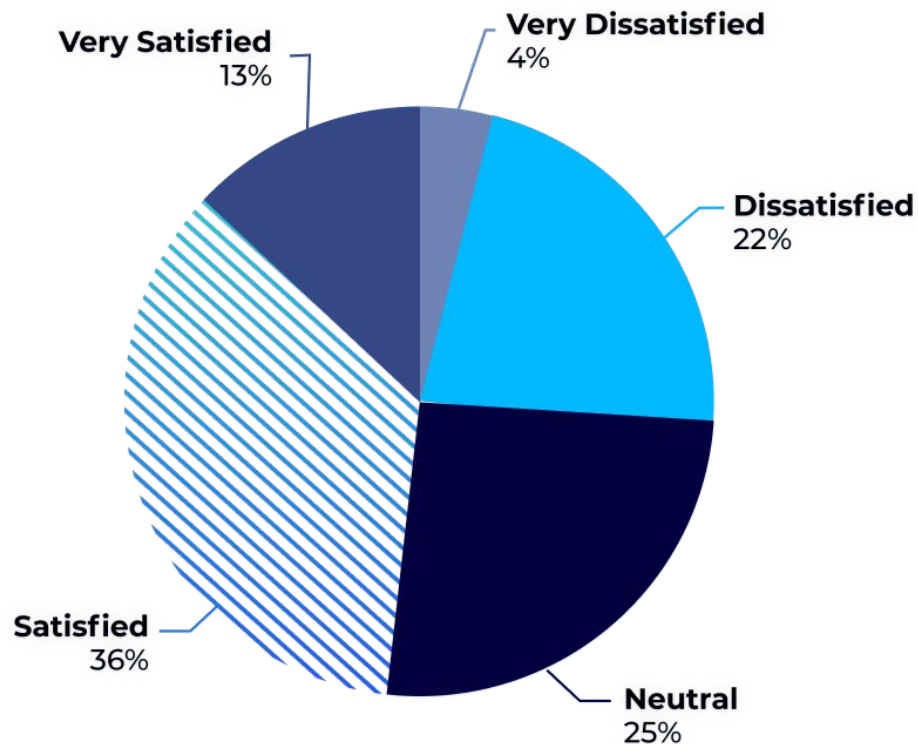


Employees Don't Feel Heard

As we mentioned, a majority of employees have not yet seen their company's return to work plans, however of the 38 percent of employees who have, quite a few aren't impressed — 26 percent of employees are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their company's return to work plans.

This data is worrisome as many are predicting an employee mass exodus in the near future. And if employees aren't happy with a company's return to work plans, it's all the more reason to find a new employer.

Employee Satisfaction With Return to Work Plans





SECTION II

So how can companies mitigate this dissatisfaction? Make them feel heard. While 84 percent of companies indicate they plan to or already have asked their employees about their return to work preferences, only 21 percent of companies plan to use the preferences as a driving force behind their return to work plans.

If companies want to keep employees happy during this next wave of work environment changes, they must not only ask for their thoughts but actually use the information they're collecting to make decisions. Doing so will help boost the satisfaction of employees and keep them retained for a longer period of time.

Usage of Employee Return to Work Preferences

84%

**OF COMPANIES PLAN
TO OR ALREADY HAVE
ASKED EMPLOYEES
ABOUT RETURN TO
WORK PREFERENCES**

BUT

21%

**ONLY 21% OF
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BEHIND THEIR PLANS.**

SECTION III

When to Return to Work

One of the biggest sticking points to a return to work plan is when it is actually safe to have a workforce back in the office — if at all. We asked employees and companies when they planned to return and how vaccinations factored into their decisions. Keep reading to hear what they have to say.



When Employees Plan to Return to Work

When asked, most employees prefer to return to the office when they no longer need to wear a mask in public places. Others indicated they'd feel most comfortable returning when the United States reaches herd immunity and when all employees have been vaccinated.

What's interesting though is that 16 percent of employees said they do not plan to return to the office at all post-COVID.

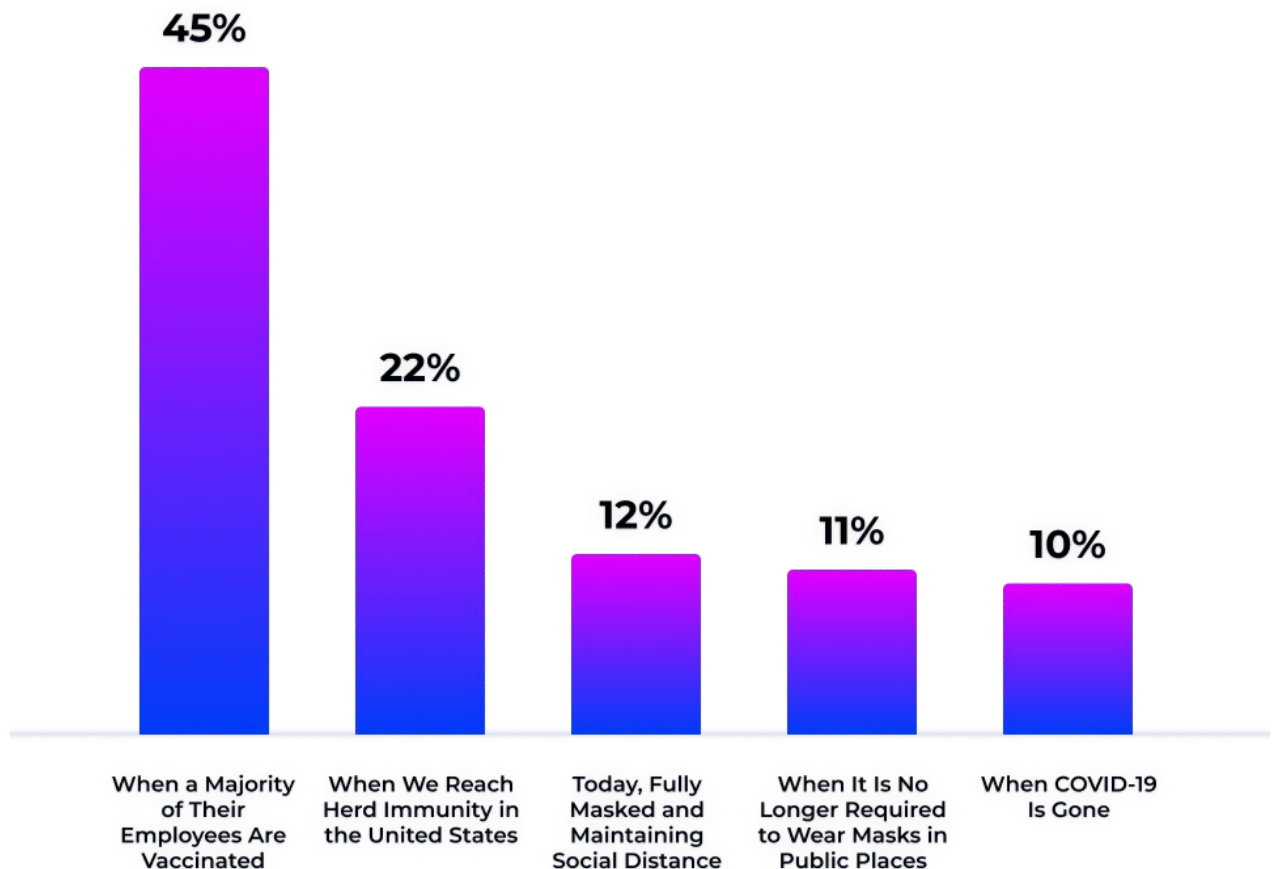
16%

OF EMPLOYEES DO NOT PLAN TO RETURN TO THE OFFICE POST-COVID.

When Companies Plan to Return to Work

Companies are fairly split when asked whether or not a majority of their workforce will return to the office post-pandemic — 55 percent said yes, a majority will return, while 45 percent said no.

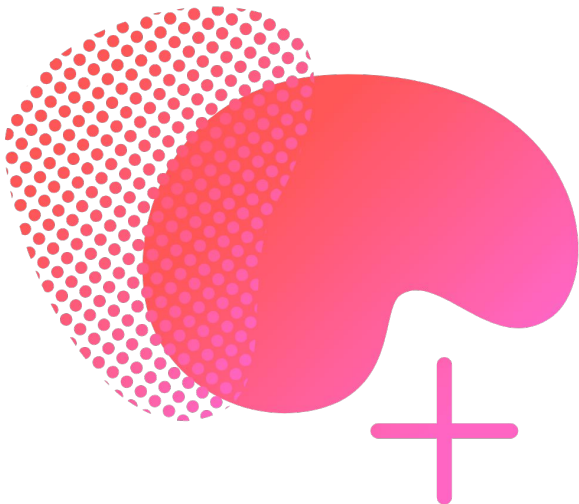
For those that will be returning, almost half of companies (45 percent) plan to have their workforce return to the office when a majority of their employees are vaccinated, while 12 percent said employees can return today fully masked and maintaining social distance.



How Vaccinations Factor Into the Return to Work

Vaccinations are also a heavily debated factor in a company's return to work plan. Both employees and companies shared their thoughts on how vaccines should play a role in the return to work. Here's what they think:

- More than half (57 percent) of employees feel employers should require all employees to be vaccinated prior to returning to the office. 23 percent feel it shouldn't be required and all others are unsure of how they feel.
- Despite the majority of employees wanting vaccinations to be required prior to returning to the office, only 21 percent of companies are requiring employees to be vaccinated before going back into the office.
- More than half of companies (52 percent) aren't collecting information on who in their workforce is vaccinated and who is not.



SECTION IV

Remote Work Preferences

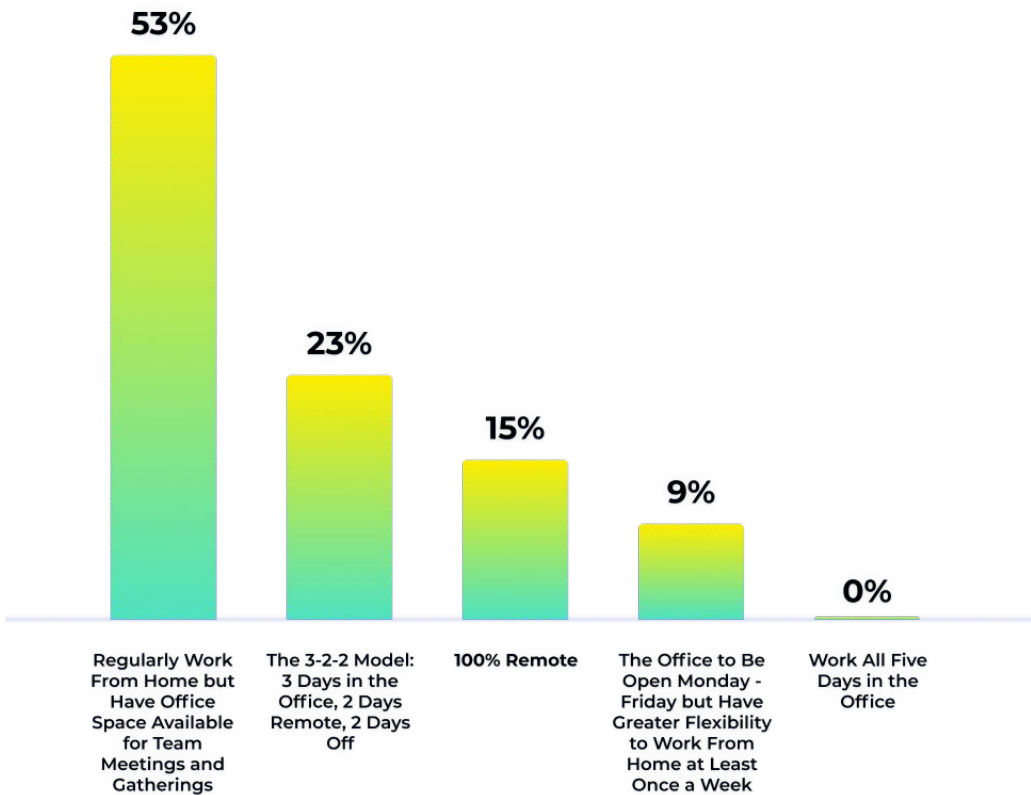
While return to work plans are important, companies must also be thinking about how their remote work policies need to change long-term. As we've already discussed, remote work is here to stay. And since most companies pre-pandemic had a small remote workforce, their policies are likely not aligned with what candidates actually need from a work environment in the future. Let's dive into how employees feel and companies are planning for a remote work environment long-term.

Employees' Remote Work Preferences

As we noted earlier in this report, employees have gotten a taste of what true work flexibility looks like and they don't want to lose it after the pandemic subsides.

When asked about their ideal work scenario post-COVID, no employees indicated they wanted to work in an office five days a week. And more than half (53 percent) preferred to regularly work from home but have office space available for team meetings or gatherings. This goes to show how important a company's remote work policy will be post-pandemic, and if it doesn't include flexibility, don't expect employees to stick around.

Employees' Ideal Work Environment Post-COVID



SECTION IV

While it's great to know exactly what employees prefer, there are some scenarios they don't want as well. A majority of employees indicated they did not want the companies they work for to require attendance for in-person meetings. Many others did not want hotel-style seating — they want assigned desks — and mandatory work from home days company-wide, they prefer choosing them on their own accord.

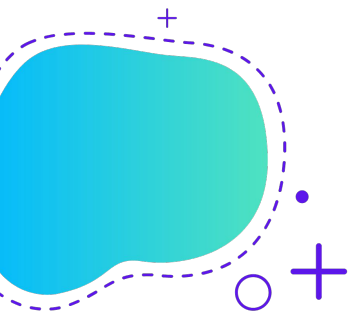
Factoring in an employees' remote work preferences is vital to ensuring companies keep their existing workforce happy and are able to attract candidates to their new working environments.

Companies Remote Work Plans

Despite the importance of work flexibility for employees, 22 percent of companies are still unsure of whether or not they will offer flexible work options in the future and 16 percent said it depends on the department they work in.

While many companies are still in the midst of planning what their future work environments will look like, it's crucial employers re-assess their existing flexible work options and seriously consider offering more in the future.

While 41 percent of employers did say they plan to offer weekly work from home days for the entire company, it'd be wise for companies to assess whether this will keep their current workforce happy or if their employees have other ideas in mind when it comes to flexible work options.



SECTION V

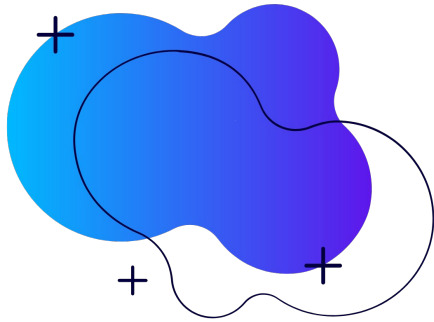
The Job Hunt Post-Pandemic

Not only will work environments be impacted by the drastic shift in behaviors in 2020, but the job search process will as well. Candidates no longer behave how they used to. Let's dig into the data on how finding and filling jobs will change.

SECTION V

According to our survey, a staggering 84 percent of companies believe their hiring rates will increase post-pandemic. And even more shocking, zero percent of companies believe it will decrease.

Companies aren't wrong in predicting that hiring will increase — a third-party survey Built In conducted to more than 3,000 tech professionals found that 75 percent are at least slightly likely to apply for a new job in the next 12 months.



These predictions indicate just how vital it will be to understand the ways in which a candidate's mindset has changed when looking for a new employer. But don't worry, we have you covered.

Candidates have a factor in mind during their job search: flexible work options. Of the 3,000+ technology professionals we surveyed, 50 percent will factor in the ability to work remotely when looking for a new job within the technology industry. And 55 percent care about having flexibility around their life schedule.

This same sentiment is seen in our survey to users about their remote work preferences — 85 percent said that when looking for their next job, remote work options will be very important in their decision making process.



85%

85% of employees said remote work options will be very important in their decision making process when looking for their next job.

Key Takeaways

Flexible Work Options Are No Longer up for Debate

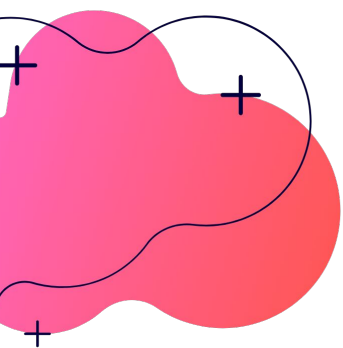
The great experiment of almost everyone working remotely has a result: employees don't want to give it up. While most are open to a hybrid working environment, none are interested in working five days in the office, despite what companies might want. If companies don't offer flexible work options, they'll see turnover increase and struggle to attract top talent in the future. It's no longer a nice to have, it's a requirement for employers to be seen as an employer of choice.

Competition for Talent Is About to Heat up

The return to work isn't the only thing companies need to be worried about post-pandemic. The combination of a mass employee exodus and our data indicating a majority of tech professionals plan to look for a new job in the next year means the competition for talent is going to be tough. Candidates are likely to have their choice of jobs and any company not meeting their needs will quickly be removed from consideration.

Listen to Your Employees or Risk Future Problems

While many companies haven't fully finalized their return to work plans, of those that have, employees aren't impressed. Employers are missing an opportunity to truly listen to what their workforce wants and needs post-pandemic. Another big shift in the work environment is on the horizon and not hearing employees out is a big mistake. The companies that make reaching out to employees a priority will be more successful when the competition for talent gets tough.



United We Tech.

Built In helps tech professionals stay on top of trends and news, expand their networks and carve out futures at companies they believe in.



Let's work together.

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