



FP Flash Survey Reveals: Great Remote Work Migration May Be Largely Temporary and Isolated

Insights

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Most businesses are eager to return their workers to their physical workspaces and envision the majority of them putting remote work behind them once the pandemic is over. That's according to a recent Flash Survey conducted by Fisher Phillips, with over 750 respondents providing their thoughts in early March 2021. Further insights: most businesses don't envision reducing their brick-and-mortar presence, and the companies that have set a return-to-work date for their remote workers are hoping to have their employees back in person sometime this summer.

1. Most employers are eager to get their workers back to in-person work, as the shift to permanent remote work may not be as prevalent as some believe.

When we asked businesses what percentage of their workers who primarily worked in-person before the pandemic will work remotely indefinitely all or most of the time from here on out, a very high number of respondents (64%) said they will return nearly all their workers (90-100%) to in-person work once the pandemic is over. Meanwhile, a small number of companies – just 13% – say that they envision the majority of their workforces (over 50%) remaining remote indefinitely or permanently. This could signal that the “great remote migration” is mostly temporary in nature, as most businesses are hopeful of returning to business-as-usual as soon as they can.

The industry breakdown of this question is interesting. The types of organizations that will be most eager to get their workers back in person and will only see a small percentage of workers remaining remote (under 25%) include:

- Education: 94%
- Automotive: 91%
- Retail: 90%
- Hospitality: 89%
- Manufacturing: 86%

Meanwhile, there are a few industries that envision shifting a portion of their workforce to remote work on a permanent or fairly consistent basis even after the pandemic is behind us. The industries in which companies see more than half of their workers remaining remote all or most of the time include:

include:

- Professional and Technical Services: 39%
- Technology: 33%
- Staffing, PEO, and Employment Services: 26%
- Finance & Insurance: 25%

2. Whether a businesses' employees currently remain remote is largely dependent on the industry in which it operates.

Nearly half of the survey's respondents (48%) indicate that their workforce is largely working in person at the current time (less than a quarter of their staff working remotely). But on the other end of the spectrum, about a third of companies responding to the survey (31%) still have over 75% of their workforce remote at present. Which means that the decision to allow workers to do their job remotely is an industry-by-industry choice.

When we dive deeper into the responses, we see that the kinds of businesses that have few remote workers (under 25%) are generally operating in industries that demand in-person service:

- Hospitality: 92%
- Automotive: 85%
- Agriculture and Food Production: 80%
- Construction: 72%
- Transportation: 70%

Meanwhile, those businesses that still maintain a largely remote workforce (with over 75% of workers telecommuting) are in industries that can generally support this type of work arrangement:

- Technology: 70%
- Professional and Technical Services: 67%
- Finance & Insurance: 61%
- Staffing, PEO, and Employment Services: 53%
- Nonprofit, Industry, or Civil Organizations: 52%

3. Remote work practices will not lead to a reduction in physical space for most businesses.

Once again looking to the future, the vast majority of businesses responding to our survey (70%) say they don't anticipate reducing their physical footprint at all or will only shrink it slightly (by less than 10%) as a response to their future remote work practices. And only a very small number of businesses – less than 10% – will see their physical space demands reduced by half or more, with

only 1% on survey respondents planning on going fully virtual and eliminating all of their physical work locations.

The businesses that don't envision reducing their brick-and-mortar presence at all, or only shrinking by less than 10%, include:

- Hospitality: 100%
- Automotive: 94%
- Education: 91%
- Agriculture and Food Production: 87%
- Construction: 86%

And those businesses that estimate they will cut back on their physical space by more than 50%:

- Technology: 19%
- Professional and Technical Services: 17%
- Finance & Insurance: 16%
- Staffing, PEO, and Employment Services: 16%
- Nonprofit, Industry, or Civil Organizations: 15%

4. Most businesses with a large remote work presence are still taking a wait-and-see approach when it comes to establishing a date for returning their workers.

Nearly 2/3 of employers responding to our survey (64%) haven't yet set a date for returning all or most of those who can work remotely to their physical workspaces. But of those that have established a return-to-work date, nearly 40% will return their employees by Memorial Day and another 20% will return workers sometime this summer before Labor Day.

Conclusion

We will continue to monitor developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic and related workplace questions that arise. Meanwhile, we will continue to survey employers on the most pressing topics of the day on a regular basis and report back on the results. To ensure you are part of the process, please subscribe to [Fisher Phillips' alert system](#).

If you have questions about pandemic compliance issues, visit our [COVID-19 Resource Center For Employers](#) or contact your Fisher Phillips attorney.

This Insight provides an overview of developing workplace issues. It is not intended to be, and should not be construed as, legal advice for any particular fact situation.

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