

The Voice of Talent

Return to the office report

More than 1,000 knowledge workers give insights into how and where they want to work in a post pandemic work world.

2021





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The Procom Voice of Talent is based on a study conducted by Procom among 1,092 workers in North America between August 15th and August 26th, 2021 using an e-mail invitation & online survey.

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"Over the past 18 months, our lives - both work and personal - have been thrown into upheaval. Yet, the Procom Voice of Talent report shows that for the most savvy amongst us, these changes may breed fertile new grounds from which to find, attract and retain top professional and technical talent. In the prior three months, more people have quit their jobs than at any time in the past two decades, and according to Procom's insightful report, more churn is expected in the coming months. The 2021 Voice of Talent report offers a blueprint of what successful recruiting can look like and is a helpful resource for recruiters, business leaders, and anyone trying to get or stay ahead in the race to build the most talented teams."

Eric Gregg
Founder & CEO
[ClearlyRated](#)

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Introduction

The monumental shift into a remote work model has turned flexible employment options from a novelty into a necessity, and worker expectations have evolved with the emergence of the re-imagined office.

As offices begin to re-open, more organizations in both the private and public sectors are unveiling their COVID-19 vaccination policies. Returning to the workplace means employers must consider how their return-to-office strategies will align with the acquisition and retention of skilled talent.

As offices re-open, employees are resigning in unprecedented numbers and vaccination policies are beginning to take shape. This report was created to provide data-driven insights into how employers can design their return-to-office strategies to align with worker expectations and attract talent.



Key Findings

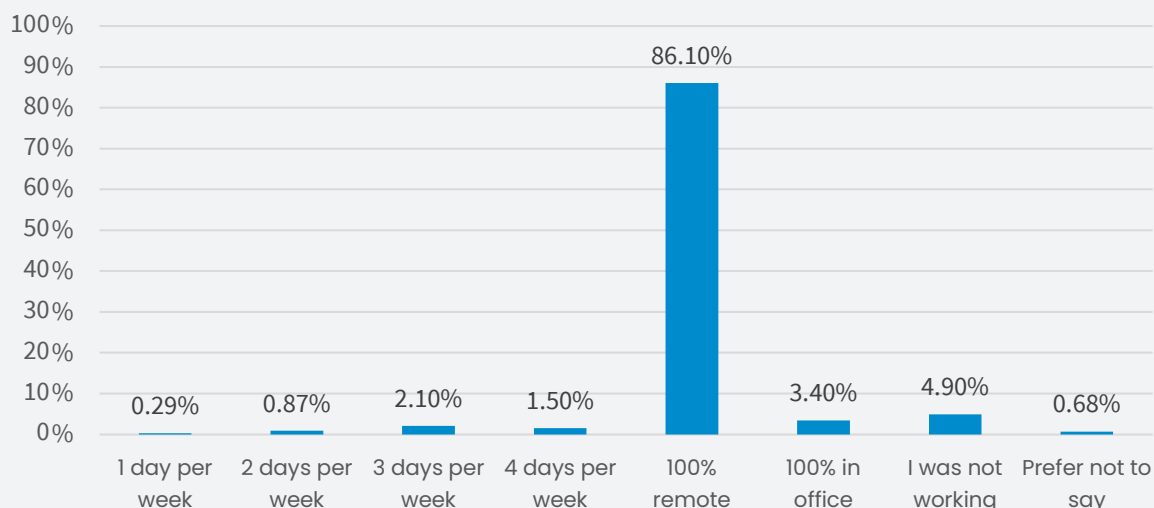
1. After getting a taste of remote work, talent is eager to leave the office behind.

A whopping 90% of respondents want to work remote two or more days a week.

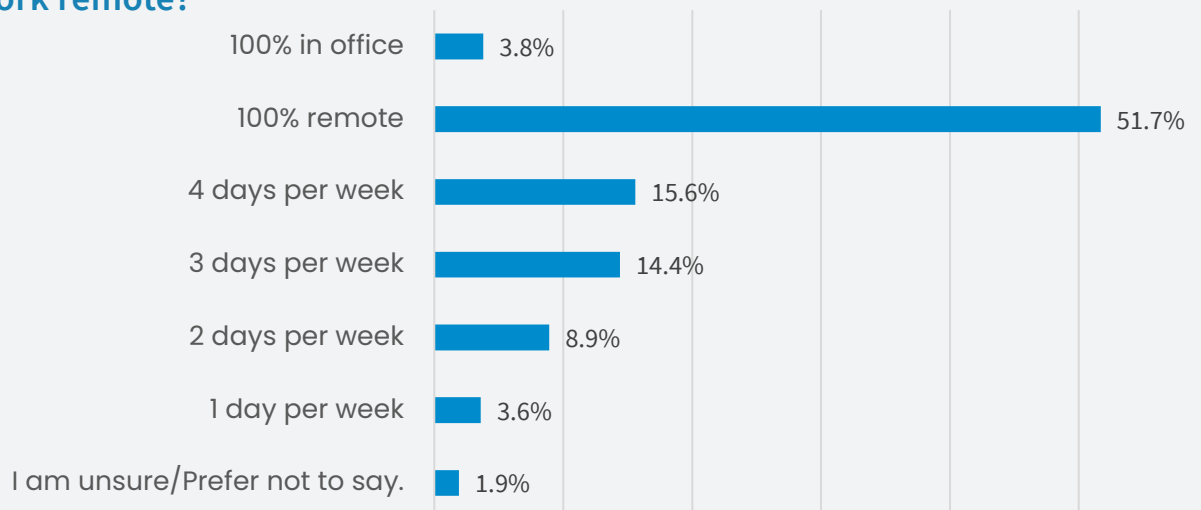
Remote work has proven to be a successful model for both employers and talent, and over half of workers prefer to continue working fully remote.

Out of the 889 of total respondents who were working fully remote during the pandemic, 51.7% prefer to continue doing so, and a whopping 90% want to work remote two or more days a week.

During the Pandemic, how many days a week were you working remote?



After the COVID-19 pandemic, how many days a week would you prefer to work remote?



Less than 4% of respondents want to return to the office full time



It might be a mistake to force talent back on site 5 days a week

This study finds that while the majority of full-time employees, 3rd party workers and freelancers prefer to continue working fully remote, those who do want to return to the office in some capacity want flexibility in how they choose to do so – very few people still favor the five-day on site work week.

Key Findings



2. The way remote work happens has changed.



When asked what type of remote work respondents prefer, most answered working globally in a Work-from-Anywhere environment (34%).

What does Work-from-Anywhere mean? This newly adopted work model provides talent with the flexibility to work globally from anywhere in the world, regardless of where the office is located.

In order to make Working-from-Anywhere work within an organization, a belief structure about what work can be and how it can be performed must be in place.

Every employer's approach to Work-from-Anywhere will differ, but employers should take three core ideas into consideration when establishing their policies:

Autonomy in how work is done, how to keep culture intact and performance metrics. Investing in these key principles can net benefits that include happier talent, increased productivity and property cost savings.

Work from Home
Work anywhere in the world.

Remote work preferences

After COVID-19, What type of remote work do you prefer?

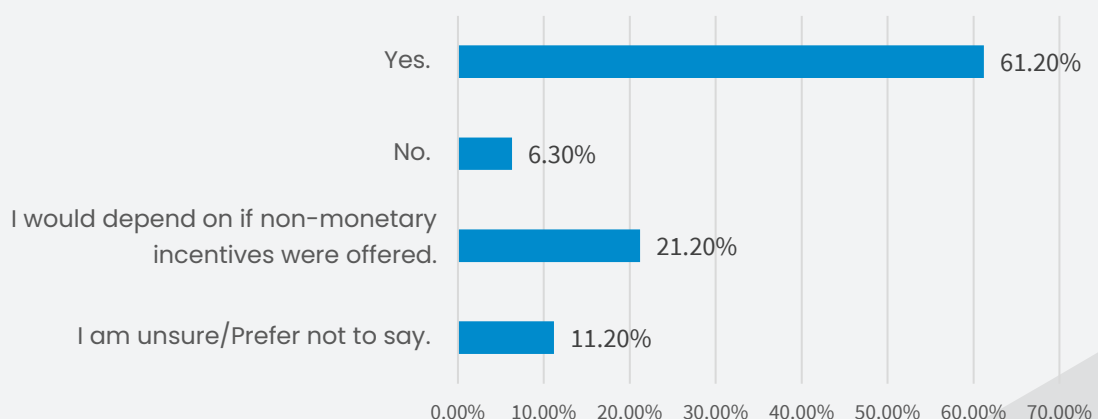
I prefer to work in the office.	3.5%
Working from home or another location in the same city as my employer.	28.6%
Working from home or another location in the same country as my employer.	8.4%
Working from home or another location in the same state or province as my employer.	13.2%
Working from home or another location in the same state as my employer.	0.10%
Working from home or another location in the same time zone as my employer.	11.1%
Working globally in a 'Work from Anywhere' environment.	34%
Prefer not to say.	1.3%

Expect a fight if you think remote workers will accept a pay cut. 61% of talent expects the same remuneration regardless of where they work

If talent chooses to move from their current location to another location that has a lower cost of living in a Work- from-Anywhere model, the majority will still require the same pay rate or salary from their current employer regardless of the change in living expenses.

The data suggests that talent views remuneration as a function of their performance and value, rather than a reflection of where they live.

If you chose to move from your current location to another location that has a lower cost of living, would you require the same pay rate or salary from your current employer regardless of the change in living expenses?



Employers can provide a better work-life balance by setting better boundaries

The COVID-19 Pandemic has workers re-evaluating what's important when it comes to a better work-life balance, and they expect employers to provide clear expectations in order to unblur the lines between work and home.

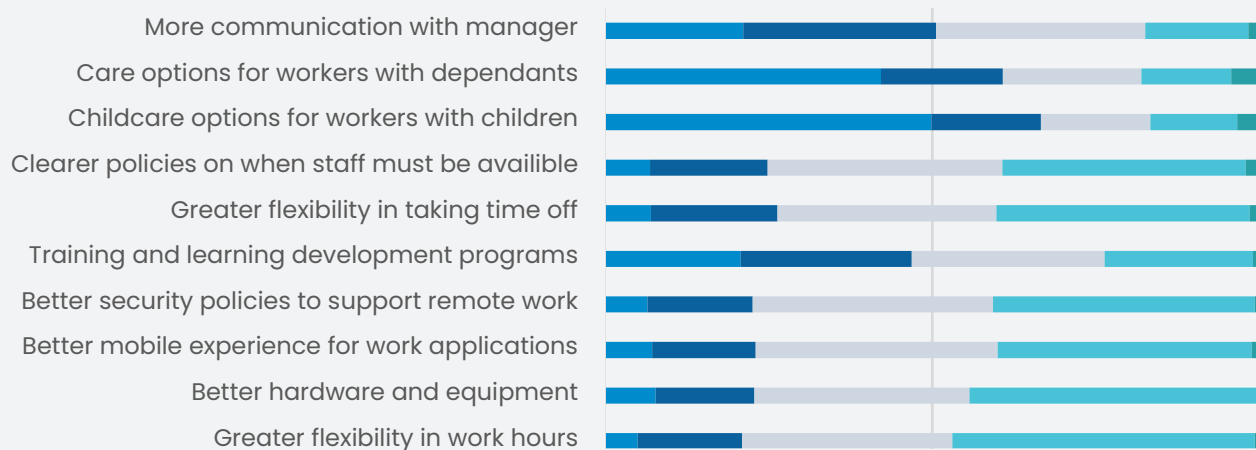
To remain productive while working remotely, talent expects employers to not only provide greater flexibility in working hours, but also do a better job at setting clear policies to establish when staff must be available - with 72% of respondents listing this as 'important' or 'very important' to ensuring productivity.

However, data also suggests talent doesn't want to be micro-managed – **with 51% citing more communication and check-ins with managers are 'somewhat' or 'not important at all.'**

72% of respondents cite setting clear policies to establish when staff must be available as 'important' or 'very important' to ensuring productivity.

If you plan to work remote, how important are the following factors in ensuring you are productive in your role?

■ Not Important at all. ■ Somewhat Important. ■ Important. ■ Very Important. ■ I am unsure/Prefer not to say.



72% of respondents cite setting clear policies to establish when staff must be available" is 'important' or 'very important' to ensuring productivity.



Employers need to invest in better tech in order to keep remote workers productive

Freedom and autonomy are the top priorities for modern workers and talent wants to be better equipped. 76% of respondents believe it's 'Important or very important' for the organization they work with to provide better hardware and equipment and an additional 75% believe it to be 'important or very important' that better security policies should be in place.

Employers need to work to find a balance between protecting their interests and creating an environment where remote workers feel trusted and valued. As organizations consider their back to office strategies, they should also re-evaluate their current infrastructures and policies to identify areas for improvements and upgrades.

Key Findings

3. Employers now have two new levers to pull to attract talent – and they rival compensation in importance.

Flexibility is the new ‘high pay’

In midst of the Great Resignation period, engaging & retaining talent is incredibly difficult – especially if they have competing offers. Flexible work options, such as remote and hybrid work models, have accelerated to major selection criteria when seeking new opportunities.

Flexibility is now just as important as compensation for talent when choosing work opportunities – with 67% and 68% respectively citing each as ‘very important’.

As a deciding factor for talent, COVID-19 workplace safety measures rival commute times

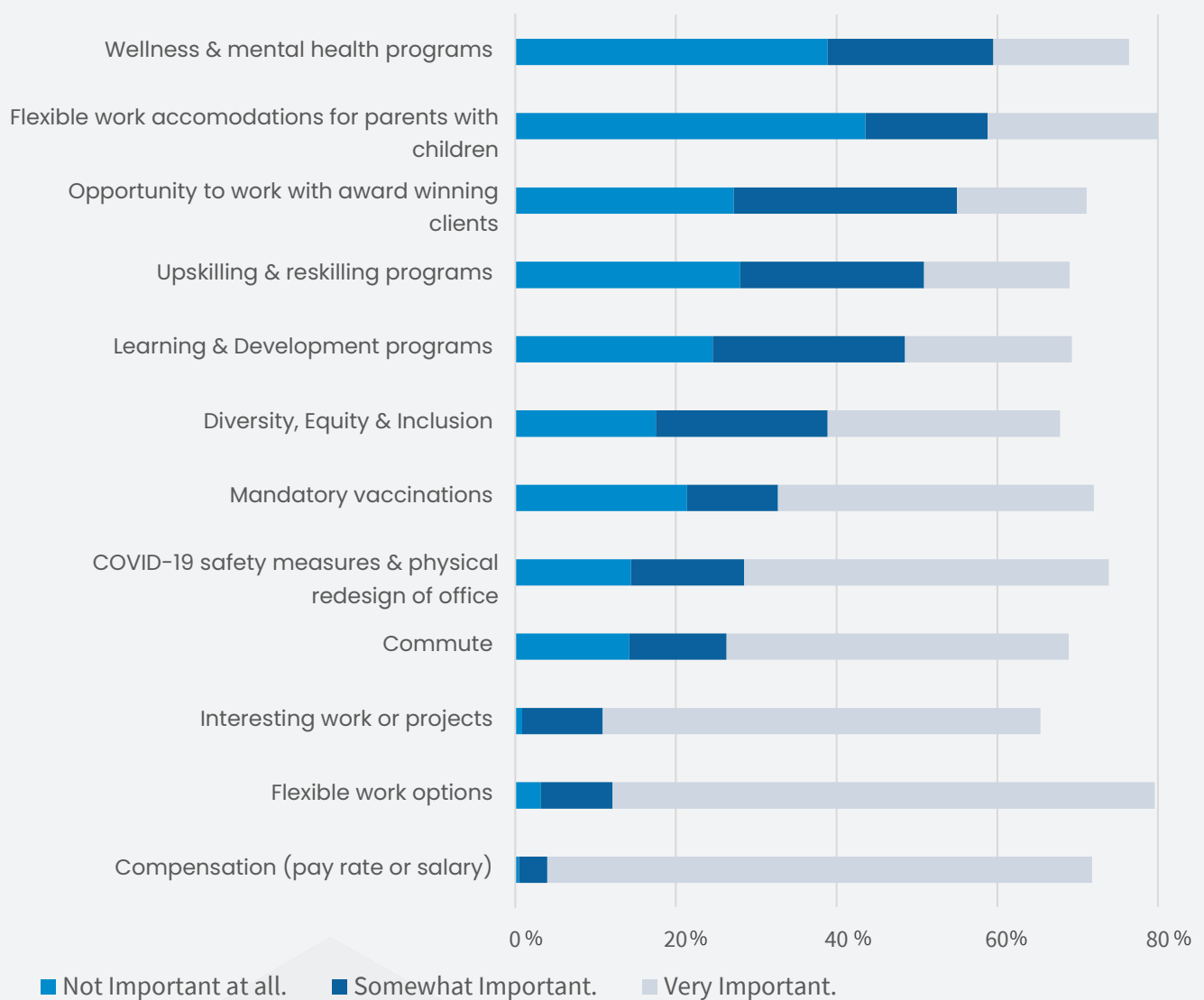
Commutes, traditionally a top consideration, remain an important deciding factor for talent, but now equally important is the COVID-19 safety measures an employer implements – with 43% and 45% respectively citing each as ‘very important’.

43% and 45% of respondents respectively cited Commute and COVID-19 safety measures as ‘very important’ deciding factors when considering between competing opportunities.



Flexibility is now as important as remuneration for talent when choosing work opportunities – with equal numbers, 67% and 68% respectively citing each as ‘very important’.

If you were offered more than one work opportunity, what motivating factors are most important to you when choosing one organization over another?



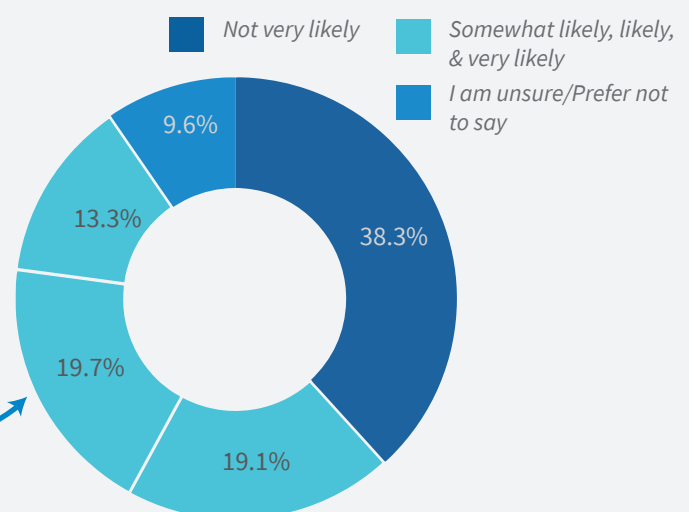
Key Findings

4. Employers must act now to rescue talent from joining the Great Resignation

When it comes to current employment, 52% of talent cited they are “likely” to “very likely” be looking to leave their current position with the next 12 months.

Pandemic burnout, poor career growth and a collective reassessment of what matters most has 52% of respondents are inclined to leave their current positions within the next year.

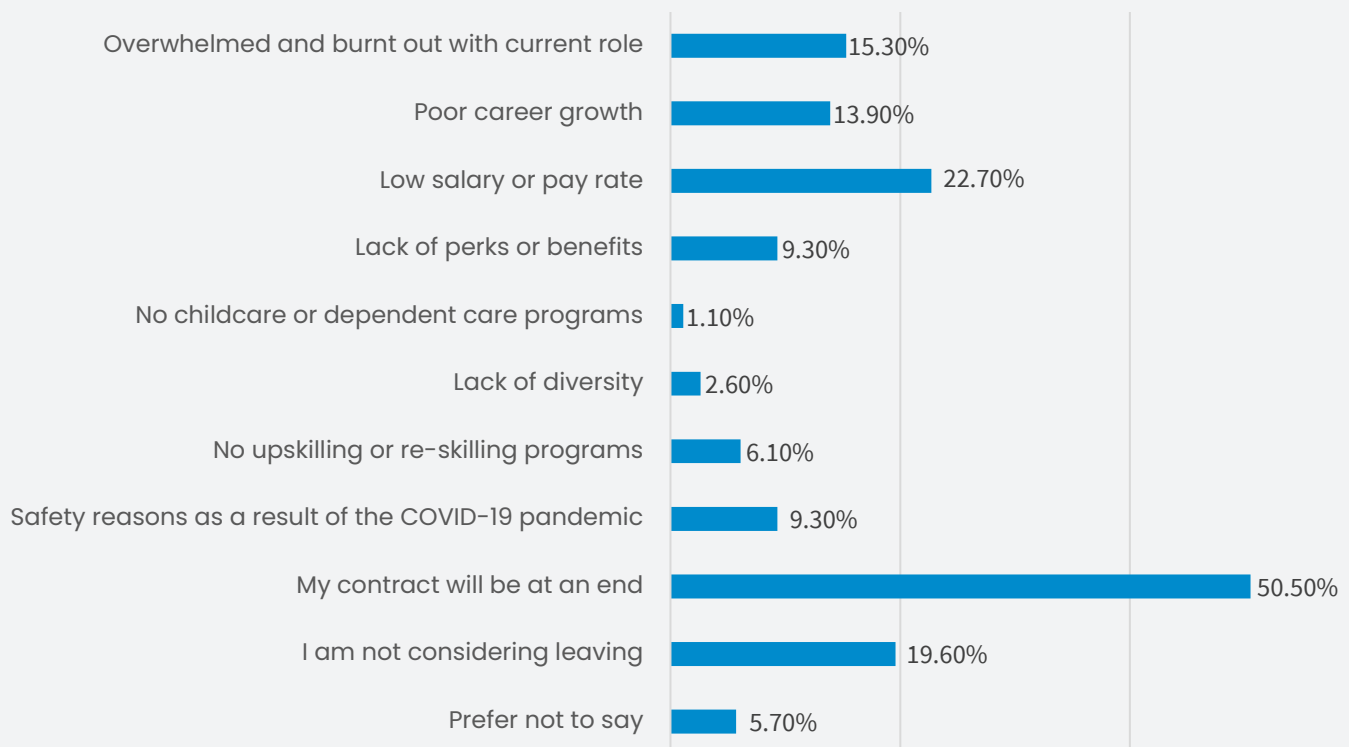
How likely is fulltime talent to leave their current organization within the next 12 months?



While workers once craved job security amid a national health and economic crisis, more full-time workers are quitting their jobs than at any time in the last 20 years. The wave of resignations, 4 million in April of 2021 in the United States alone, isn't slowing down within the next 12 months.

Data shows talent is optimistic about their careers, and they have choices. Organizations must put an emphasis on valuing what the best work environment may be for employees, such as flexibility in how and where they work, and provide clear paths for growth in order to maintain retention and risk losing valuable resources.

Why would workers leave their current organization?



Despite the uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, talent is optimistic about the future of work – they have choices

While the office is being re-imagined, talent is optimistic about how and where work will get done. Over the next 12 months, 73% of talent are 'very optimistic or optimistic' and less than 5% are not optimistic at all.



Over the next 12 months, 73% of talent are 'very optimistic or 'optimistic'



How optimistic are you regarding your career over the next 12 months?

Not optimistic at all.	Somewhat optimistic.	Optimistic	Very Optimistic	Prefer not to say
4.2%	19.4%	35.9%	36.8%	3.7%

Key Findings



5. Building trust that offices are safe is key to attracting and retaining talent post pandemic



64% of respondents cite they 'would not return' or would 'feel uncomfortable' returning to the office without mandatory vaccination policies.

How and when employers bring talent back to the office will have long-lasting impacts on both corporate culture and worker trust. Sixty-four per cent of respondents cite they would 'feel uncomfortable' or 'would not return' to the office without mandatory vaccination policies.

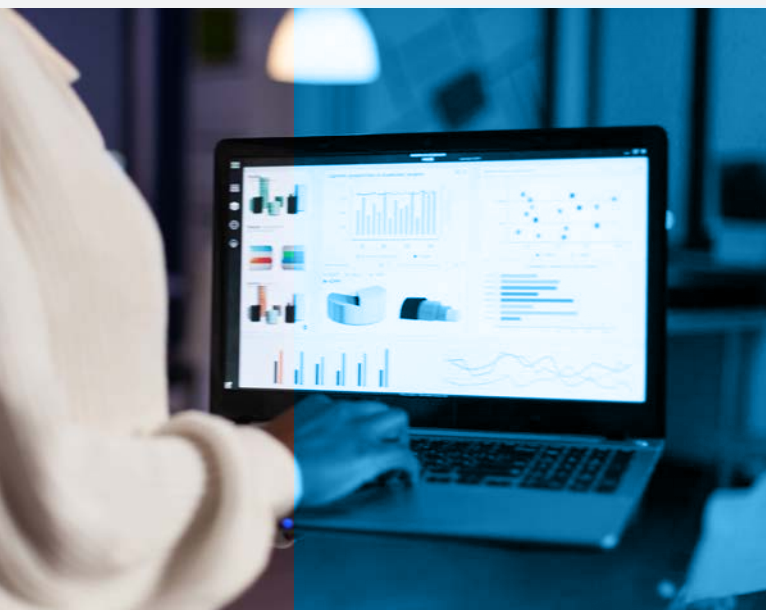
Before bringing talent back in any capacity, it's critical for employers to pay careful attention to demonstrating offices are safe or risk losing key contributors.

When returning to an office environment, how would you feel going back to work in person before all onsite workers receive a vaccine?

I would not return	17.9%
I would feel uncomfortable	46.3%
I would feel comfortable	28.7%
I am unsure/Prefer not to say	7%

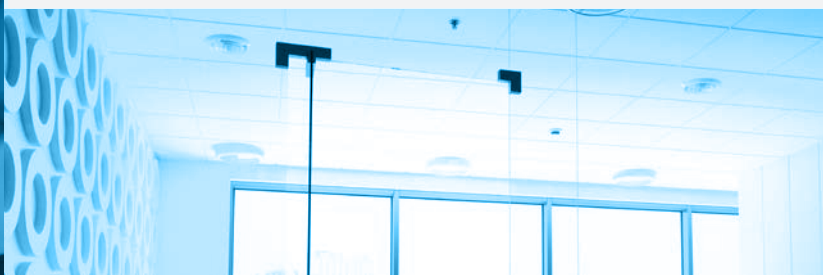
Talent has mixed views on mandatory vaccination policies

Less than half of respondents 46% believe organizations should require workers to get a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination before they are permitted to go back to the office in person.



Less than half of respondents (45.8%) believe organizations should require workers to get a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination before they are permitted to go back to the office in person.

However, an additional 26% believe restrictions should be in place for non-vaccinated workers – putting an emphasis on office safety and office redesign.



What stance does your preferred work environment take on COVID-19 vaccination?

COVID-19 vaccine should be mandatory	45.8%
COVID-19 vaccine should be voluntary with restrictions for non-vaccinated workers.	25.6%
COVID-19 vaccine should be voluntary with no restrictions for non-vaccinated workers.	16.2%
I am unsure/Prefer not to say	12.3%



Data suggests that hard COVID-19 vaccine postures, such as mandatory vaccination policies, will shrink accessible tech talent pools by 16+ per cent.

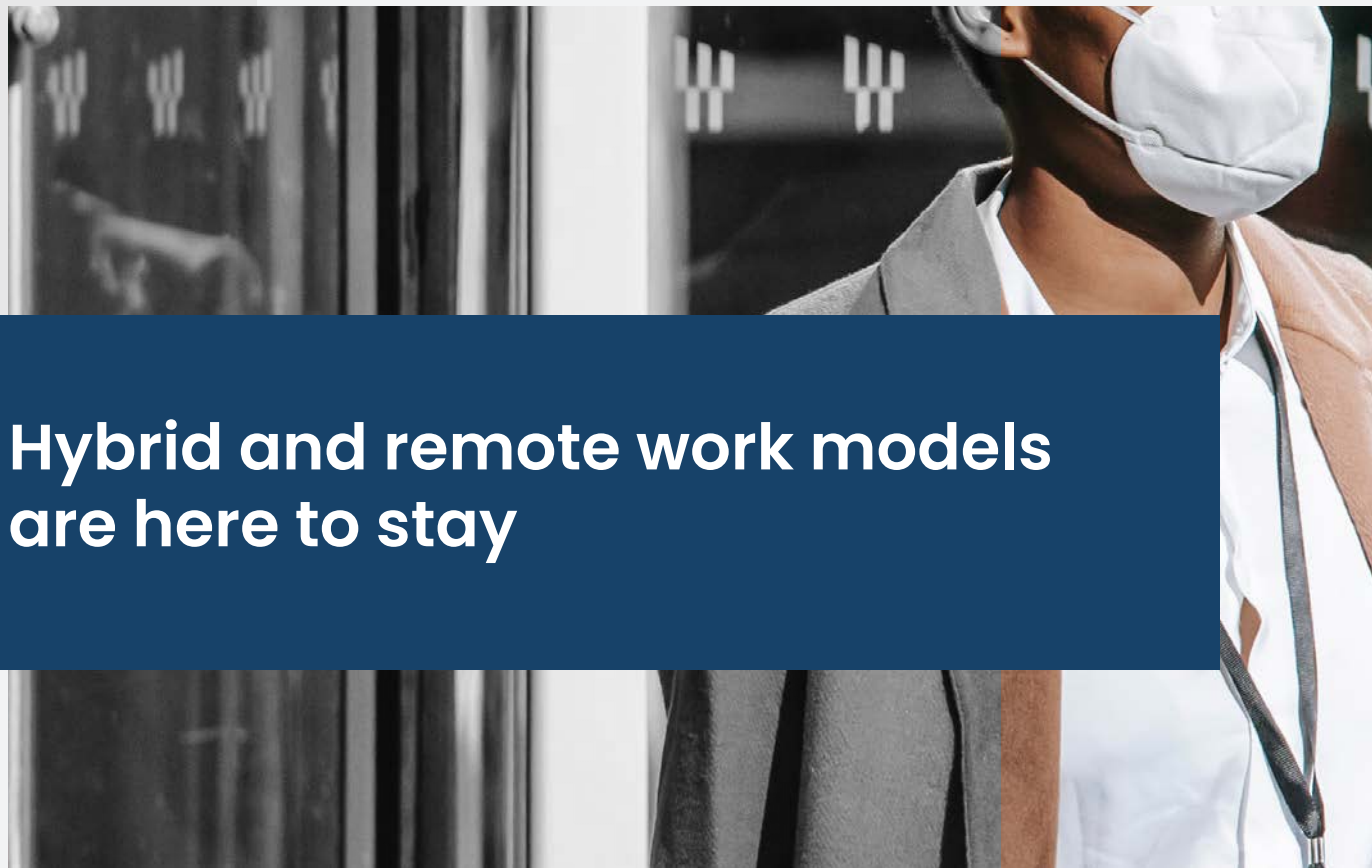


Vaccination policies must clearly communicate employer commitments and expectations for worker safety

Employers must be thoughtful in their approach to mandatory vaccinations or risk alienating a large pool of skilled talent. An organization's posture on mandatory

vaccinations should include the consideration of whether the vaccination is absolutely necessary to ensuring worker safety.

Impact on Talent Strategy



Hybrid and remote work models are here to stay

The major shift in preferences towards Remote/Hybrid work will be a new consideration for retaining existing workers and engaging future candidates. Furthermore, the onboarding approach in a mandatory vaccine environment must be smooth with clear pathways for exceptions and accommodation decisions to be made.

What talent wants has dramatically changed.

Talent's preferences for work have changed dramatically, with less than 5% of our surveyed consultants still favoring a 5 day onsite work week.

As organizations consider the next phase of workplace strategy, we believe it would be wise to include hybrid and remote options in order to stay relevant as a competitive place to work.

For many, remote work now means global

We also see the span of remote work changing, with 34% of respondents indicating they expect to remote to include engagements that cross global boundaries and only 28.6% believe they should be remote but in the same city as their employer.

The expanding scope of Work-from-Anywhere means employers need to consider how their workforce will span a larger geographic footprint. How will this be impacted by jurisdictional global employment laws and other corporate tax implications? This type of remote work model will open organizations up to new risks associated with health, safety and financial considerations.

Safety posture affects talent appeal

Talent wants to feel safe at work, and COVID-19 safety has emerged as a major issue that will impact turnover of current workers and ability to attract new hires. Safety measures must be credible, communicated clearly and implemented in a thoughtful way, particularly

when concerns are raised or accommodations required. It will be a tricky conversation to navigate across the enterprise. Workers need a very particular approach that engages the organizations they work for and brings them into the core communication plan.

Slowing down your hiring process will put you at a disadvantage

Vaccination mandates are a relatively new phenomena but are not dissimilar from other types of job specific requirements that are already present in your recruitment process (think background checks or credential requirements).

To stay competitive in the battle for hiring top talent, it's essential recruitment processes stay fast and nimble, even as these new checks are added in.

Careful and legally compliant screening for any new workplace safety requirements need to be inserted at the right stages of the process with close partnerships between the employer, MSP and vendors to ensure processes stay nimble and candidates have a great experience.

This process must be further supported by a clear and responsive approach to supporting exceptions and accommodations when required.

Above all, organizations must be vigilant to avoid introducing bottlenecks or delays that can negatively impact their ability to secure top talent.

With the Great Resignation underway, competition for talent is sharper than ever, and being even one day slower in making an offer can easily result in missing an essential hire.

Procom engages with thousands of knowledge workers every day - and we know what your return-to-office strategy will directly affect how you attract talent in the re-imagined office.

Contact Procom today for a complimentary assessment of your recruitment strategy.



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