

## **The Partial Return to Work — and the (Dis)Comfort Doing So**

***87% of Employees Say Companies Can Do More to  
Protect Workers***

***Latest Results from The Harris Poll***

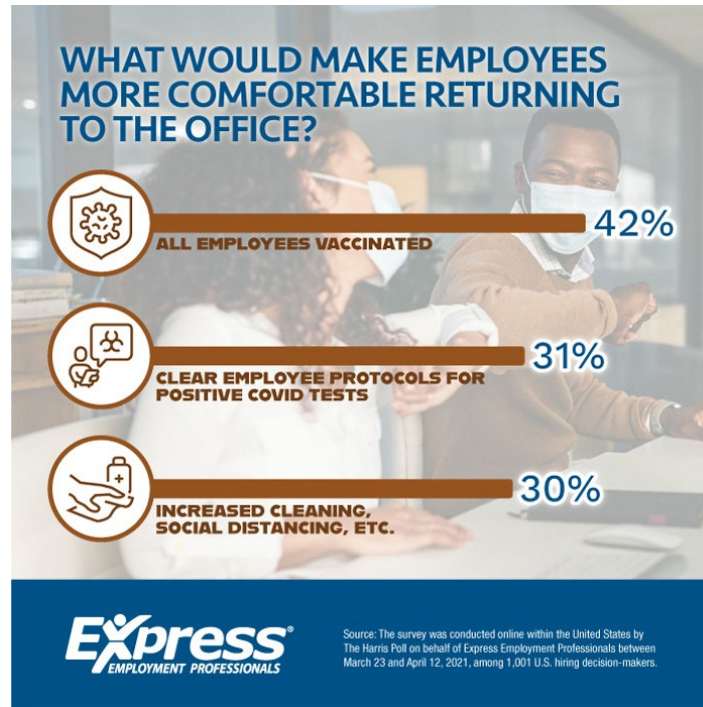
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**OKLAHOMA CITY, Aug. 25, 2021** – The majority of U.S. workers (81%) are comfortable returning to the office during the COVID-19 pandemic, but 87% still believe their employers can do more to mitigate the virus risks.

This is according to a new survey from The Harris Poll commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

Roughly 3 in 4 workers go to their company’s physical workspace at least once a week currently with 40% attending every day. Positive sentiments about returning to in-person work have notably increased from the second half of 2020 with 75% saying they feel completely safe in the office compared to 71% at the time last year.

Despite the increased optimism, 87% still believe businesses can do more to make them feel comfortable around colleagues, such as making sure all employees are vaccinated (42%), clear protocols on what will happen if an employee tests positive for COVID-19 (31%) or greater cleaning efforts and social distancing (30%).



By company size, those with 2 – 9 employees are the most likely to say they would be very comfortable going into physical workspaces right now and the least likely to request protocol changes for safety.

With remote work still in place for several businesses across the country, certain industries report in-person attendance more frequently than others, including:

- Office and administrative support employees (e.g., accountants, HR professionals): 74% at least once a week, 33% every day
- Skilled trades employees (e.g., carpenters, electricians, hairdressers, or specialize in other consumer services): 72% at least once a week, 30% every day
- Professional employees (e.g., lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers): 70% at least once a week, 28% every day
- Sales and customer service employees (e.g., sales agents, call center employees): 72% at least once a week, 28% every day
- Light industrial employees (e.g., factory line employees, quality control, packaging): 72% at least once a week, 28% every day

Those at smaller companies who may have lower COVID-19 risks, such as fewer people to socially distance or less work areas to clean, are most likely to say each of these employee groups go to their company’s physical workplaces every day.

Nearly all employees placed through her Washington Express franchise are physically back at work with the rest expected by the end of the year, owner Stacey Snodgrass said.

“I would imagine the more people they have working within larger facilities would make employees feel a little worried for their safety,” she added.

Express offices are careful to vet potential client companies for adequate COVID-19 policies and make sure applicants are comfortable with the environment.

“Companies caring about the current pandemic situation and being empathic have helped our employees feel safer, along with following COVID-19 rules and regulations, extra cleaning of office space and a COVID-19 policy for sick employees,” Snodgrass said. “We get feedback from our associates if any clients are not adhering to that in our frequent communication with them. Safety is our top priority.”

The majority of employees at Express franchise owner Reggie Kaji’s offices in Michigan have also already returned to the office but he says too much is unknown about the coronavirus right now to predict when everyone will be back in person.

“I feel like an organization that is cognizant of the safety of their employees will have most of these safety measures implemented,” he said. “It’s important to address and protect workers if you, unfortunately, do have a positive COVID-19 case.”

Kaji still believes a number of people are nervous to return to the office and companies don’t have a “magic bullet” for a solution.

“Flexibility and proper safety protocols can go a long way in business continuity as the COVID-19 pandemic continues,” Express CEO Bill Stoller said. “As someone who enjoys interacting with my colleagues, I look forward to moving closer to an in-person workforce, in some capacity, once again.”

### **Survey Methodology**

The survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between March 23 and April 12, 2021, among 1,001 U.S. hiring decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in the U.S. who are employed full-time or self-employed, work at companies with more than one employee, and have full/significant involvement in hiring decisions at their company). Data was weighted where necessary by company size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

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If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Hollander, Director of Corporate Communications and PR, at (405) 717-5966.

### **About Bill Stoller**

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing company has more than 830 franchises in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Since inception, Express has put more than 9 million people to work worldwide.

**About Express Employment Professionals**

At Express Employment Professionals, we're in the business of people. From job seekers to client companies, Express helps people thrive and businesses grow. Our international network of franchises offers localized staffing solutions to the communities they serve across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, employing 526,000 people globally in 2020. For more information, visit [www.ExpressPros.com](http://www.ExpressPros.com).