

## PURPOSE

To understand the application of COVID-19 workplace safety practices and policies and advise on future pandemic-related employer actions.

## METHODS

A wide array of surveys, structured and semi-structured interviews, and group discussions with representatives of businesses and labor unions was conducted between June and August 2021 with responses representative of 300 U.S.-based employers and 3,785 individuals.



## KEY FINDINGS

### 1. Workplace vaccine requirements are shown to be effective; the majority of the U.S. workforce is in favor.

- Employer vaccine requirements increased vaccine uptake by 35%.
- Consumers prefer to enter businesses where workers are vaccinated.
- Workplaces can achieve a level of community immunity if employers consistently and unanimously apply vaccine requirements to their entire workforce.

### 2. Among the vaccinated, there is a ceiling for future protection without interventions or sufficient incentives.

- Approximately 13%–15% of fully or partially vaccinated individuals will not become fully vaccinated by receiving a second dose of a two-course shot, or remain fully vaccinated when booster shots are needed.
- On-site vaccinations at places of work are widely seen as an effective measure to increase vaccine access across a variety of disadvantaged populations, including people born outside the U.S. who believe their citizenship or residency

status negatively impacts their health, safety and health care access; people with disabilities; and rural residents.

### 3. Employment-related factors may contribute to higher COVID-19 rates and lower vaccination rates among people of color.

- People of color in the U.S. tend to have less paid time off from work, and are less likely to have employer-provided health insurance.
- People of color are also more likely to work in frontline, essential worker positions, where they are more likely to be exposed to individuals infected with COVID-19.

### 4. Today, most workers do not want to return to an in-person setting.

- Returning to a traditional, in-person work environment can be unappealing, especially for parents who may face uncertainty around whether their children will be returning to school full-time and the barrier of high childcare costs.
- Decreased travel and increased remote work are the most common policies businesses plan to keep in place following the pandemic.

### 5. Employers need to stay ahead of ongoing COVID-19 challenges as the pandemic continues.

- Keep track of and understand the relative risk associated with COVID-19 variants, such as Delta and Mu.
- Maintain contact tracing protocols amidst resourcing challenges and “pandemic fatigue.”
- Ensure safe, healthy and highly productive operations in a diminishing labor market where people might be performing more duties and working longer hours.
- Address ongoing worker burnout, as well as the potential downsides of remote work, such as “Zoom fatigue.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Implement vaccination requirements for in-person work and require frequent, regular PCR testing of individuals who can't or won't get vaccinated.

2. Reduce barriers to access and increase vaccine uptake.

- Offer on-site vaccinations.
- Provide transportation to vaccination sites or on-site vaccination at workplaces.
- Provide free information in other languages (regardless of residency status, etc.).
- Work with employee resource groups to address specific concerns.
- Give paid time off for workers to get vaccinated or to get booster shots at community locations.

3. Encourage employee discussion around emerging COVID-19 issues, such as boosters, variants and the changing landscape of COVID-19 workplace safety guidelines.

4. Reduce in-person work to the extent possible.

- If a job can be done remotely, prioritize keeping workers remote until your workforce is fully vaccinated.
- Reduce or eliminate business travel, events and meetings with outside companies or clients.
- When and where events are held, consider appropriate exposure mitigation strategies such as masking, social distancing, regular negative tests for event entry and/or proof of vaccination status.

