

Returning to the Office in the Time of COVID-19

The data says we won't be at home forever. Explore the research about how workplaces and home offices will need to adapt in the future (click on the tabs below).

This article is part of a series of updates to "[Navigating What's Next: The Post-COVID Workplace.](#)"

Published July 20, 2020

Explore Workplace

Explore Home Office

Workers desire and leaders expect to return to the office.

Executives expect to bring people back to the office in waves over time.

65% of employees back on-site by end of June

80% of employees back on-site by end of September

88% of employees back on-site by end of December

Qualitative research about returning to the office fell into three main groupings.

Most people want to return to the office when it is less risky.

Some people want to return as soon as it's ready.

A few people want to continue working from home long term.

Increase in remote work and office work.

Leaders expect people will still want to come into the office, but also will be more likely to take advantage of existing work-from-home policies.

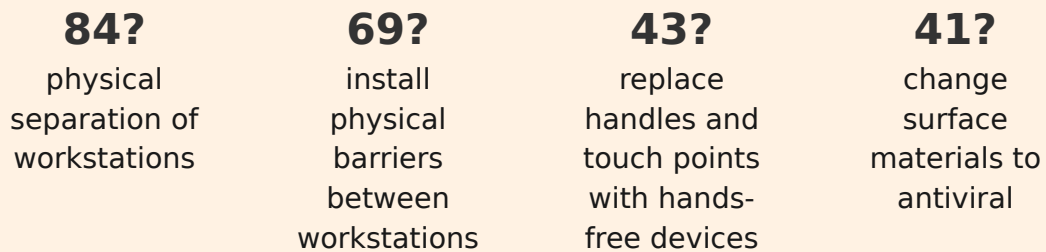
70% expect increase in remote work

47% expect an increase in office work

An ecosystem of places can provide people with more choices for where they work. Organizations are starting to consider adding alternative or satellite locations to offer more options.

Leaders know they'll need to make changes to the office.

Types of changes leaders have made, or plan to make in the physical workplace



McKinsey & Company: How US Companies Are Planning for a Safe Return to the Workplace, June 2020 (Percentage of respondents)

Decision makers expect major shifts to happen post pandemic.

79? - infection control will become a top priority for furniture selection

63? - need for collaboration rooms that support distributed workers will increase

70? - employees will social distance upon returning to the office

58? - need for modular, flexible furniture will increase

Steelcase COVID-19 Global Study, April 2020

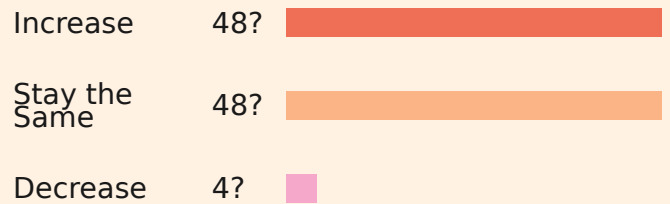
The Need For Change: Retrofit and Reconfigure

Today, 98% of workstations and meetings rooms need to change to support distancing requirements or provide a space divider that is at least 54 inches high.

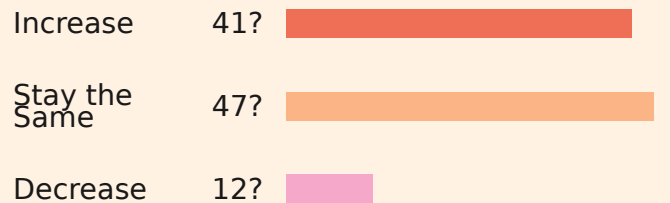
Steelcase review of global customer data

Despite more people working from home, leaders expect their real estate footprint to increase or stay the same.

Office Square Footage



Workstation Square Footage



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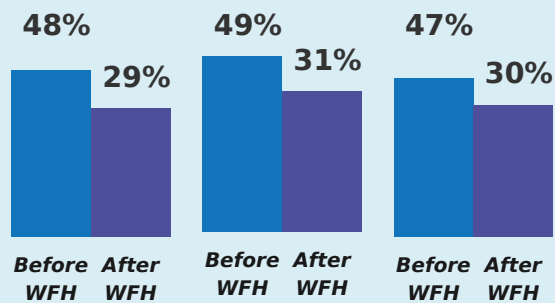
Steelcase COVID-19 Global Study, April 2020

Explore how our home offices need to change too.

Discover more strategies to plan your workplace and home office.

Working from home full time is hard.

Productivity suffers while working from home.



I am able to complete the **quality** of work necessary to meet my company standards.

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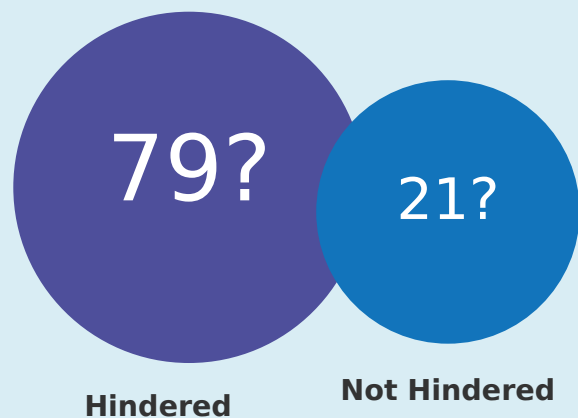
I can **consistently** complete a significant amount of work.

Steelcase COVID-19 Study, U.S., April 2020

Steelcase COVID-19 Study, U.S., April 2020

It's harder to support your teammates.

Most said their ability to help co-workers, take on extra assignments, offer suggestions or coach and mentor has been hindered.



Steelcase COVID-19 Study, U.S., April 2020

Steelcase COVID-19 Study, U.S., April 2020

People struggle finding a great place to work.

Home distractions

Delivery people, kids, pets... the home offers its own distractions.

People say they lack a place:

36% free from distractions

35% with enough acoustical privacy

28% physically comfortable

28% with enough visual privacy

Steelcase COVID-19 Study, U.S., April 2020

Where people work

50% Desk	20% Dining Table	15% Couch or Lounge
9% Bed	7% Kitchen Counter	5% Outdoor Furniture

On average, only half of people say they always or almost always work at a desk.

**Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because some people use multiple locations within their home.*

Steelcase COVID-19 Study, U.S., April 2020

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Steelcase COVID-19 Study, U.S., April 2020

Leaders may not realize how hard it is. They face fewer challenges than their employees working from home.

Those who always or almost always work at a desk

Directors or above

75% 

Individual contributors


48% 

Those who have an ergonomic chair

Directors or above

46% 

Individual contributors


24% 

Those who have a secondary monitor

Directors or above

43% 

Individual contributors

29% 

Steelcase COVID-19 Study, U.S., April 2020

A better work-from-home setup can boost productivity.

Workers experience higher productivity when they have access to:

**High Speed
Internet**

**Ergonomic
Chair**

**Second
Monitor**

**Visual and
Acoustical
Privacy**

**Comfortable
Spaces**

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