

## How are Australian workers feeling about returning to the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we live and work. A big change for many people was to work from home in order to help reduce the spread of infection. As the number of infections in Australia decreased a lot of people started going back to their usual workplaces.

The Monash COVID-19 Work and Health study surveyed a large group of Australians four times during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The survey asked people questions about their work, mental and physical health, social interactions and finances. During the third survey, we asked 1145 workers how they felt about returning to their usual workplace, if they were worried about getting COVID-19 and if their employer had prepared them for returning to their workplace.

Most (67%) workers did not think workplaces were reopening too soon but almost all of them (87%) were worried about returning in some way. Less than half of the workers in our study reported getting clear instructions from their employer about returning to their usual workplace. Although only a quarter of workers thought they were at high risk of COVID-19 infection in their workplace, half of the workers were worried about either getting COVID-19 themselves or infecting someone else. Workers were also anxious about colleagues coming to work when sick, being able to physically distance from people and proper cleaning of their workspace.

Some workers were worried about how going back to their usual workplace would affect their ability to work (23%) and were unsure if their jobs would change when they returned (17%). Working from home may have helped some workers manage their work-life balance. One in five workers were worried about spending less time with family and friends and one in six were concerned about how returning to work would impact their home responsibilities. Despite these concerns, the number of workers reporting that they would continue working from home in the coming months reduced from 94%, 1-month after taking the survey, to 61% in 12 months' time.

As more workers are returning to their usual workplace it is important for employers to ensure that they feel safe and have clear instructions on how to their return to work will work. In order to ease the transition of workers back to the usual workplace employers need to consider the benefits of flexible work arrangements.

A more detailed description of these findings from the COVID-19 Work and Health study can be accessed via this link <https://doi.org/10.26180/13356728>

If you experience any discomfort after reading this information, you can access immediate support from the [National Coronavirus Helpline](#) (call 1800 020 080). Information on creating a COVIDSafe workplace can be found from the [Victorian Government webpage](#).

For more information on the study please visit [covidstudy.net](https://covidstudy.net).