

## **Returning to Work After COVID-19**

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## **Abstract**

Return to the office is a significant topic for employers and employees amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Our study set out to gauge how employees, specifically extroverts, are responding to the idea of returning to the office. We also sought to examine if gender played any role in attitude toward return to work. An online survey was sent out to members of Linked:HR, current Drake Masters of Leadership Development (MSLD) students, and Drake MSLD program alumni. 273 participants actively participated in the study. The results supported a weak positive correlation between extraversion and attitudes to returning to the office. Males had a more positive attitude towards returning to the office than females. The study results suggest that work life balance is more important to both extroverts and introverts than returning to the office full time. Employers need to get creative to keep their employees satisfied.

## **Returning To Work After Covid-19**

In the spring of 2020, many employers unexpectedly shut their doors and sent employees to work from home. It has been over 100 years since the U.S. and the world faced a pandemic that was as disruptive as COVID-19 (Jernigan, n.d.). To no one's surprise, this unprecedented time has come with unfamiliar change and high emotion.

The ability to send employees to work from home eliminated over-populated spaces and close quarters with co-workers. However, it also changed the way employees work and how they may expect to work in the future. Employers are discussing return-to-work strategies as more people are vaccinated against COVID-19, and more employees are expressing concerns with returning to work and being able to work from home.

Based on research conducted by Pew Research Center (2021), 20% of employees were working from home prior to the pandemic. Now, over one year since the start of the outbreak, this percentage has grown to 71% of employees working from home. Out of these 71%, 54% would like to continue working from home post-pandemic. Most employees feel they handle all responsibilities of their job, have access to all necessary resources and technology, and have an even greater understanding of their job expectations since working from home. This feedback is likely coming from workers who do not desire to return on-site for the majority of their work week. The option to work flexible hours at home and balance work with family responsibilities is more important than in person working interactions (Parker, 2021).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Workers with a positive attitude toward returning to the office are often ready to get out of the house, get back in touch with co-workers, have daily adult interactions, more stimulation and a more suitable work environment. The majority of these reasons are social and one could

make a reasonable assumption that workers who fall into this list get more energy from social interaction.

For this study, we wanted to explore the relationship between extraversion and employees' attitudes returning to the office. We also wished to compare male and female attitudes. The hypotheses for the quantitative portion of the study are:

H1: Extraversion is positively related to employees' attitudes towards returning to work.

H10: Extraversion is not positively related to employees' attitudes towards returning to work.

H2: Men and women differ in their attitudes towards returning to work.

H20: Men and women do not differ in their attitudes towards returning to work.

The study included a qualitative portion. Our qualitative question was: How do people experience the connections between their extraversion and returning to the office?

## **Literature Review**

### **Return to Work & Personality**

The social isolation experience during COVID-19 can be very different from one employee to the next. One indicator of how individuals may respond to isolation is where their personality traits fall on the extroversion scale in the Five-Factor Model of personality (Howard & Howard, 2010). A highly extroverted individual "Enjoys working with people a majority of the time. Asserts opinion often and enjoys managing people. Tends to be warm and has plenty of extroverted energy each day. Takes effort if required to work alone for long periods. Suited for customer-facing positions such as sales and customer service" (Narrative, 2016).

Extraversion could very well play a part in employees' emotions toward returning to work. Social isolation can be draining for the high extrovert (Narrative, 2016). Although they can work alone for periods of time, social isolation requires extraverts to exert higher amounts

of effort to perform tasks that would otherwise be more enjoyable in a social setting. If required to perform at this level month after month, without relief or a social reboot, an extrovert may burn out quickly. Interestingly, there have been mixed reviews reported back from extroverts and their attitude toward returning to the office. One introvert was quoted, “I'm a person I didn't know existed in March. And I actually really like being by myself.” Another extrovert stated, “I don't know how much more of this I can take.” (Mehling, 2021).

Some extroverts have been able to adapt to the environment more easily than others. Getting involved with friends, hobbies, and the community has been a new outlet for some extroverts to get the social fix they need, while still maintaining the flexible and balanced work from home schedule. Having a partner, roommate or a coffee shop nearby has made the difference for some. And we can't forget Zoom. Extroverts who seek social engagement are finding that their desire to socialize doesn't end with going to work; they often have the means to find an alternative.

### **Return to Work & Anxiety**

Nerves and anxiety also play a major role in the topic of employees return to work experience. (Cancialosi, 2021). Cancialosi argued we are now experiencing a unique time in history; although we are all having different experiences, we have a commonality in experiencing the same event. That's powerful. What we also have in common is no one in the workforce today has navigated work culture change at this scale before.

Employers will need to have a vested interest and focus on employees' unique experiences, some with more angst than others. Experts recommend that anxious employees be prepared, talk to co-workers and their leaders, get help, and take a moment to breathe (Cancialosi, 2021). Suggested tips for leaders were to be patient, create space for processing, be

honest, overcommunicate, and don't ignore warning signs of distress. Employees and leaders will all react to the changing environment, uncertainty, and resocialization differently. The common theme is to have grace for self and others (Cancialosi, 2021).

### **Study Design and Methods**

This study followed a mixed-methods design. The data were collected through an online survey using Qualtrics, including both quantitative and qualitative questions. The survey was distributed to the following groups: Linked:HR, current Drake Masters of Leadership Development (MSLD) program members, and Drake MSLD program alumni.

All data collected from the Qualtrics survey was analyzed using SPSS, a statistics software. Researchers used open-ended questions from the Qualtrics survey to collect the qualitative data. The researchers entered the data in Dedoose, an online application for analyzing qualitative research, grouped the responses into similar themes, and coded accordingly.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this survey consists of professionals returning to the office after COVID-19. The sample included individuals from 35 different countries comprised of various gender identities and seven identified races. All participants were guaranteed anonymity and were asked to consent to the survey prior to proceeding. Participants did not receive any compensation for completing the survey and those who did not consent were not included in the results.

We collected 365 answers. After removing outliers, non-consents, participants who did not qualify for the study, and missing answers, we analyzed 273 responses. The study sample included members of Linked:HR group on LinkedIn, current Drake Masters of Leadership Development (MSLD) program members, and Drake MSLD program alumni.

## **Instrumentation**

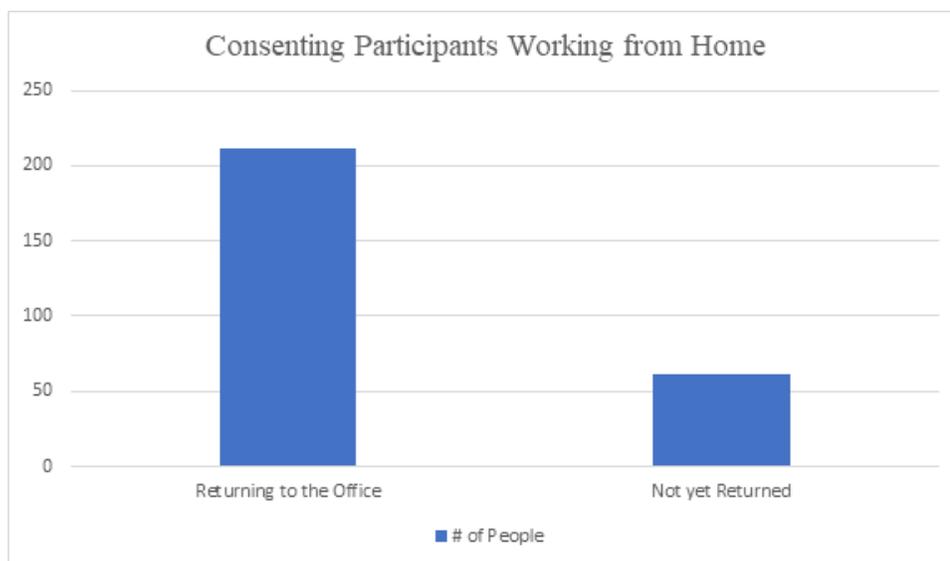
The study instrument consisted of 56 questions, including three open-ended qualitative items. The first part of the survey assessed differences in personalities utilizing various statements and participants choosing options on a scale from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’. The second section contained questions related to determining varying levels of anxiety disorders. Participants chose their responses based on how frequently they experience the disorders on a scale of ‘Not at all’ to ‘Nearly every day.’ Finally, the last two sections include open-ended and demographic questions. Results and Analysis

## **Data Screening**

Three hundred and sixty five participants responded to the survey. Out of the 365 responses, 17 participants did not consent, and were removed. Of the 348 participants that consented, 27 responded that they did not work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic and were also removed. An additional 48 participants were removed due to missing information, or abandoning the survey, leaving 273 participants.

## **Data Demographics**

Through the data collection process, it was determined that all 273 consenting participants worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 273 participants, 212 participants have identified that they will return to the office, and 61 participants have not yet returned to the office.

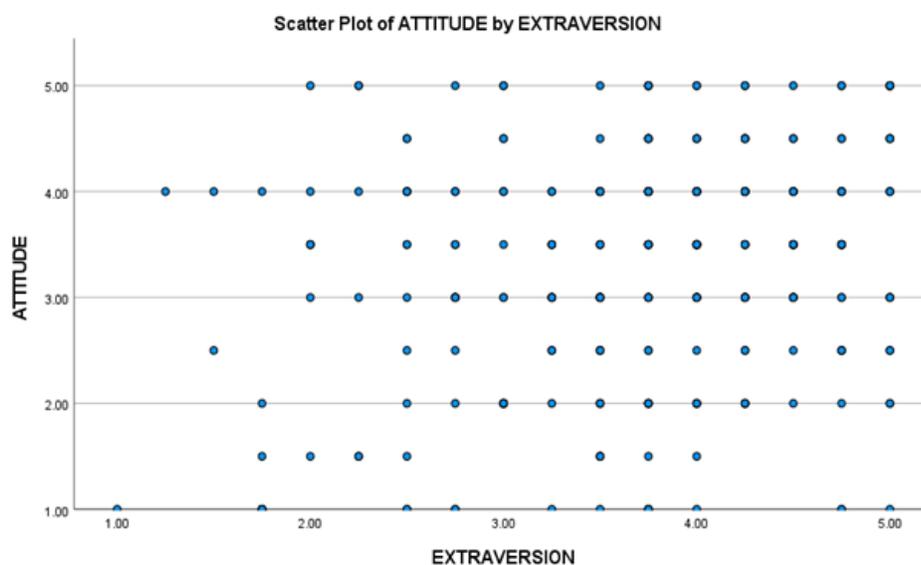


## Quantitative Data Analysis

### *Hypotheses 1: Extraversion and Attitudes Towards Returning to Work*

To test our hypothesis, H1: Extraversion is positively related to employees' attitudes towards returning to work, we first needed to determine if there is a linear relationship between our two variables. The researchers determined if a linear relationship existed by creating a scatterplot of the two variables. Using SPSS Statistics, the Pearson's correlation test verified the relationship between two variables: (a) extroversion and (b) attitudes returning to work. The scatterplot depicted a positive linear relationship between extraversion and attitude, and no significant outliers were identified or removed from the data set (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Linear Relationship, Extraversion and Attitude



To test for normality, we measured skewness and kurtosis for both extraversion and attitudes. The skewness and kurtosis for both extraversion and attitude are less than 1, therefore both variables are reasonably distributed and the assumption of bivariate normality was satisfied (See Table 1).

Table 1. Variable Distribution, Extraversion and Attitude

	Extraversion	Attitude
Skewness	-0.637	-0.408
Std. Error of Skewness	0.147	0.147
Kurtosis	-0.189	-0.621
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.294	0.294

Although there is a positive correlation between extraversion and attitude towards returning to work, the correlation is weak. To interpret effect size, we evaluated the correlation value of .237 for extraversion and attitude. There was a statistically significant weak positive correlation between extraversion and attitude returning to work,  $r(271)=.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ., with

extroversion explaining 4.7% of variation in attitudes returning to work. A correlation coefficient of .237 represents a small or weak association in the strength of the relationship between the two variables, extroversion and attitudes (See Table 2). There was a statistically significant relationship between attitudes toward returning to work and extroversion, therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

*Table 2. Correlation Value for Extraversion and Attitude*

		Extraversion	Attitude
Extraversion	Pearson Correlation	1	.237**
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.237**	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

\*\* means a significance value lower than 0.001

N = Number of participants (273)

***Hypothesis 2: Men and women differ in their attitudes towards returning to work.***

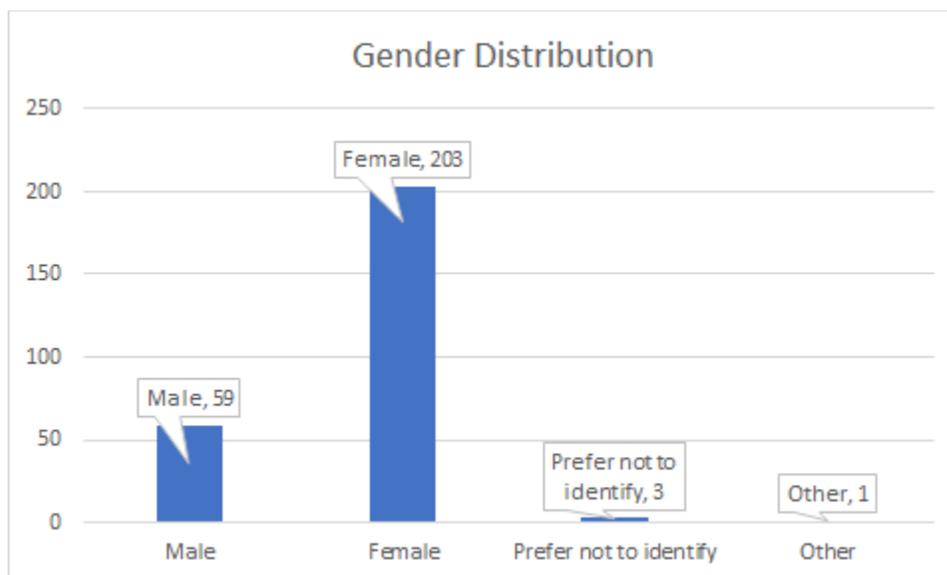
For our second hypothesis, we evaluate if attitudes toward returning to work differ in men and women. We first evaluate the correlation between gender (independent variable) and attitude (dependent variable). We used boxplot graphs in SPSS to identify outliers from the analysis of Gender and Attitudes and three data points were removed from the Male analysis. In Figure 2, we look at the demographics of our population of the sample to understand how many participants identify as male or female.

*Gender*

- 59 participants (22.7%) identified as Male

- 203 participants (74.4%) identified as Female
- 4 participants (1.5%) preferred not to identify, or identified as Other

*Figure 2: Gender Distribution*



An independent samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in the attitudes towards returning to the office between males and females. Males were more interested in returning to the office ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ) than females ( $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ), a statistically significant difference,  $M=.39$ , 95% CI [0.07, .69],  $t(260)$ ,  $t=2.431$ ,  $p=.016$ . (See Table 3)

*Table 3. Independent Samples Test*

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances							T-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Attitude	Equal variances assumed	.826	.364	2.431	260	.016	.38632	.15889	.07346	.69919
	Equal variances not assumed			2.567	102.641	.012	.38632	.15049	.08785	.68480

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Participants' answers to a public Qualtrics survey were the source of data for the qualitative portion of our analysis. Responses to three questions were downloaded and reviewed in a word document by our lead coder. Each group member individually reviewed the responses to the three different questions and recorded their initial thoughts. These initial thoughts were then compiled together and used to support the lead coder's creation of each code. The data was then uploaded and analyzed via Dedoose, where initial coding was done. The group discussed preliminary themes based on the initial coding process. The lead coder then conducted additional coding and analysis before selecting themes for the study.

### ***Subjectivities***

Going into our research, our group formed our own opinions and predictions of what the data would uncover. This could lead to confirmation bias within our analysis where we would focus more on the data that supports our predictions, especially when coding and selecting

excerpts. To avoid this bias, we would spend time looking for specific examples that would go against our initial predictions, aiming to provide a true analysis. We acknowledge that confirmation bias is the most common and hardest to avoid, so our analysis may contain a slight bias.

A portion of our analysis relies on the honesty and accuracy of our respondents. When dividing respondents by their level of extraversion, we looked at clear-cut identification in their answers. For example, we would consider someone to be highly extroverted if they responded to the survey question mentioning they have a relatively extroverted personality. This means that we would be assuming that the respondent accurately understands their personality and is telling the truth. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee the trustworthiness of the respondents. This would mean there is a possibility of subjectivity and inaccuracy in our research.

Our group acknowledges there is a trustworthiness component in our coding. To increase this as much as possible, our group met frequently to go through the coding process. Two of our group members worked together to agree on the codes being used. After multiple extensive discussions, we reviewed our codes and themes to agree upon them before reporting them in our research.

## **Qualitative Results**

All of our identified themes displayed factors that influence employee attitudes towards returning to work. Analysis of our data uncovered employee themes relating to extraversion, hybrid work environments, and COVID safety protocols.

### ***Extraversion Matters***

The data revealed that individuals who identified themselves to be on the extreme ends of the extraversion spectrum experienced a connection between extraversion and their attitude to

return to in-person work. Highly extroverted employees were more excited to return to work, typically due to their desire for in-person social interaction. Throughout the pandemic, when work was primarily virtual, many employees cited how they missed social interactions with other employees that working in an office provided:

- “I am one who needs the everyday interaction with people. I love it when colleagues pop in my office to chat. You don’t get that at home!”
- “Yes, I do not like working in isolation and prefer an environment filled with colleagues to simply chat with generally, or to collaborate on substantive work issues.”
- “I am relatively extroverted, and I dearly miss the basic interaction and camaraderie that comes from being around other people.”

Many other extroverted respondents felt as though returning to the office would provide a much-needed spark of energy, motivation and give a chance to re-connect with coworkers:

- “I am an outgoing person who is energized by being around people, so I am looking forward to being around and working with others in person. I think this helps reduce any anxiety that I would feel about returning to the office.”
- “I started my job in the pandemic, so I do not feel very connected to many of my coworkers. I am excited to be able to build stronger relationships in person.”

This theme of highly extroverted individuals looking forward to returning to the office was consistent throughout the data. The two codes of “Extraversion” and “Social Interaction” were each other’s highest co-occurrence, contributing further to the theme that highly extroverted individuals have a more positive attitude towards returning to the office due to increasing social interaction provided in the office.

- “Yes I do feel my personality affects my feelings about returning to my previously normal work environment. For example, I naturally enjoy being around people and identify as an extrovert therefore I am more eager to be back in-person”

The data also revealed employees who identified themselves as lower on the extraversion spectrum (introverts) tend to desire remaining in the current structure of virtual work. The common themes shown with introverted employees were that they were more productive at home, staying home reduced anxiety levels, and they do not have the same desire for social interaction as those who are highly extroverted.

- “Yes. I know I am an introvert & am not particularly energized by being around others. I do not mind being alone & in fact require some alone time every day. Interaction via phone & Zoom is quite enough for me! Others really seem to need being around other people all the time.”
- “Yes; being more introverted I do not have the desire to be around/ interact with individuals on a daily basis, the interaction does not affect my ability to perform my work.”

There is another common pattern in the data where introverted individuals felt they were much more productive at home than at the office. Our coding analysis revealed that the code “Introversion” had the highest co-occurrence with “Productivity”, showing that many introverts correlated their personality and working from home with higher productivity. The common reasons shown in the data were that the environment at home led to fewer distractions and more peace and quiet than at the office:

- “I am mostly worried about not being able to get the same level of work done in the office. My office is very chatty and I am more of an introvert. ”

- “My personality is one that has allowed me to be more self-directed and more productive without office disruptions.”
- “Yes, I am an introverted person and working from home allows me to be more quiet and to receive less useless stimulus. For example, I don't like small talks that distract me from my work, or people who talks loud; at home I can work more quietly.”

There were a few cases in the data where introverts cited anxiety and predicted fatigue when returning to the office due to the social interactions in the office and energy it will require.

Although there were only a few, it is notable enough in the data to be an underlying pattern for further research.

- “I perceive myself to be more introverted in comparison to the majority in my surrounding, e.g. I do not feel comfortable talking about my personal life events, sharing my feelings during/around pandemic times, and I do not tend to start any kind of small talks which the majority enjoys doing. The result is: I feel anxious about working from the office since I do not enjoy and I tend to avoid socializing”
- “I find it hard to work when others are talking around me. I like to be in my head. I am introverted. too much people interaction can drain me, but I enjoy people sometimes.”

It would seem that whether an individual is high or low on the extraversion spectrum, their attitude about returning to work is affected by where they place on the spectrum.

### ***Employees like the Hybrid Work Environment***

The majority of employees feel it is no longer necessary to work in person full time, opting for a more progressive hybrid work environment that has been utilized thus far throughout the pandemic. In our analysis, we used the codes *structure, flexibility, work life balance, and productivity*. ‘Structure’ covered anything in the data that reflected the type of work environment

being discussed such as 100% virtual at homework. 'Flexibility' refers to the degree to which an employee gets to influence their work schedule and/or structure. 'Work life balance' refers to how people feel they are spending their time at or outside of work. 'Productivity' covers any data mentioning employee output.

The most common theme shown in the data is that employee attitudes were greatly influenced by what type of work structure they are returning to and the amount of flexibility in that work structure. In the responses to the question, "Overall, is there anything you wish your leaders knew about returning to your office or normal place of work after the COVID-19 pandemic?", structure and flexibility were coded more than any other code. Structure and flexibility were also the most co-coded combination out of all the options in the entire analysis, showing that employees not only care about what the work structure is but how much flexibility is given to them.

- "Originally, our senior leaders were not interested in any flexibility because they were afraid it would harm our culture. Now, we are allowing employees to be at home up to two days a week. I am really excited about this approach because I feel like it will make coming to the office a more enjoyable experience."
- "What I would advise other companies and leadership teams is to understand that remote work is not going away and that forcing your teams to be onsite is both demoralizing and a real potential health/liability risk, ... Frankly, businesses that have a strict in-office policy are shooting themselves in the foot."
- "I think understanding that there will still be some flexibility to work from home makes me feel better about returning to the office. Since I have been back, we are still able to work from home some days which has been helpful."

- “The need of investing on creating a culture of hybrid ways of working. Invest on digital resources, change physical space at office, adapt to flexible working time, focusing on results deliverables instead of hours in the office.”

The data further shows that employees want the flexibility in their work structure because it can give them the ability to have a greater work life balance while being just as productive. The most common solution employees have is a hybrid work structure that provides the flexibility to dictate when they are in the office. Employees feel like they were able to be just as productive in a hybrid environment yet contribute more time to their personal life.

- “I wish [leaders] knew that offering a hybrid style of work would make people a lot happier. They are going to lose great people because they refuse to accommodate a work/life balance.”
- It's not necessary! If we can manage our jobs- and be more productive- from home, why make us gather in an office? Think of the good we could do with fewer cars on the road driving less miles, minimized overhead expenses, and happier employees. Work/life balance made easier through disconnection.
- “My long to-do list wishes I had the flexibility to work from home, I was able to get more accomplished at home without my long commute and being able to run errands/clean during my lunch break. Seems like I have less time now that I am in the office.”

The impact of structure and flexibility being provided in a job is significant, so much so that many employees believe it influences their attitude towards returning to work greater than their personality.

- “Not wanting to return to the office has more to do with inconvenience than my personality. I can be more efficient if I don't have to waste time driving to work and

driving home. Rather I could be using that time to work or to rest, which would still make me more effective at my position.”

- “I’m on the border of introvert and extrovert and therefore indifferent about going in; it’s more about the time and money for me to travel to London isn’t cost effective or sensible most meetings start at 8am and it takes 1.5 hours to travel. We’ve managed for 18 months why change it. I don’t mind the odd day for a workshop or team event.”

In some cases, flexibility helps employees cope with the shortcomings of their personality.

- “Yes, while I am a people person, the demands can be draining. Having a remote option lets me refill my cup and come on site when I need to.”

The hybrid environment is something that many employees have embraced over the pandemic and do not want to revert back to the traditional in-office work structure.

### ***COVID Safety and Protocols will cause a Divide in how Employees React to Returning to Work***

Returning to office might mean the end of virtual work, but does not mean it is the end of COVID-19. Many employees have dividing views on COVID-19, with company protocols and an employee’s individual stance on COVID playing a factor in their attitudes on returning to work. We used the codes *Safety, Trust, and Anxiety*, to uncover employees’ attitudes on returning to the office still in a pandemic. ‘Safety’ covers data mentioning anything to do with the health and safety protocols. ‘Trust’ refers to the belief that employees have in others to follow the correct protocols, safety procedures, and that they will be safe around them. ‘Anxiety’ refers to fears and worries employees have on the topic.

The data reveal there is a large majority of employees who worry about their health and want to remain safe at work and hope there are protocols in place. Their attitude is affected

mostly by their perception of how safe their office will be and how prepared their organization is to handle their return to work.

- “Whether proper safety measures and precautions were put into place to help reduce the risk of getting the virus. I am fortunate that the company where I work, and also building management, have a mask policy, they are enforcing social distancing with work spaces and conference rooms, and each employee was given a mask and a small hand sanitizer. With many companies still remote, there aren't a ton of folks in the building and this helps to reduce elevator crowding. I think it's very important that workers are made to feel they are returning to an environment that is reasonably safe.”

Despite organizations' best efforts to ensure safety, many employees also felt a lack of trust toward other employees. People who care about their health and safety felt that the protocols in place would be undermined by others inability to comply to protocols.

- “My concerns about returning to the office relate to other people either not being vaccinated but still expecting to work directly with me, other people lying about their vaccination status, or people not respecting reasonable distancing. So, I guess at least part of my concern is based in not feeling like I can trust a portion of the population to take action for the better good.”
- “I normally trust people a lot. During the pandemic, however, I have had many experiences with people who were lying (about being vaccinated) or just inconsiderate (refusing masks, tests etc.) which really made me question if the way I was before is safe enough. I am an open person and feel that's not the best way now. My sense of safety has suffered. I am not sure anymore my colleagues and the management team are people I can trust. So many intelligent, ethical people have turned out to be inconsiderate pricks.”

The anxiousness that comes with the concern over protocols and lack of trust in others show how those employees who are health conscious pertaining to COVID have their attitude toward work influenced. They want to feel safe and if they are not assured of their safety, they will be less eager to return to the office.

Further data also shows there is a group of employees who have more opposing views towards COVID protocols and wanting to return to work in a pre-COVID type environment. Their attitudes towards returning to work are affected by the presence of these protocols as they feel it may be unnecessary and/or an obstacle in the way of productivity and social interaction.

- “yes, issues on the pandemic add to personal inconvenience like maintaining social distance / avoiding people all together, plus the stress on wearing face masks/ face shield. I am guessing the face mask will become a staple in our everyday lives. (yes I am from the Philippines and do not work in a hospital), all these may affect work performance”
- “I do not want to be required to wear a mask at any point in my workday. I do not wear a mask when working from home. I do not mind if others wear a mask if it is their preference.”

Comparing the two different groups of employees based on their attitudes towards COVID and protocols, you can see the divide in employees’ reactions to returning to work under the circumstances of the pandemic. The data shows that no matter the degree of safety protocols an organization puts in place, there is going to be a group of employees whose attitudes are positively affected and a group whose attitudes are negatively affected.

## **Discussion**

Overall, we found a very weak correlation between extraversion and attitudes to returning to the office. In addition, people who consider themselves extroverted miss social interaction the most and mentioned this as the primary motivation for wanting to return to the office.

Work/life balance was a commonality mentioned by both introverts and extroverts and each group agreed that a hybrid work structure allows them to have a better work/life balance. There were variations on how safe participants felt about returning to work. Some shared needs for additional safety protocols to be implemented in their organization and others have a desire for things to return to “normal” with a lesser focus on safety.

Organizations that are considering bringing their employees back to work have a difficult job of trying to accommodate all of their employees’ comfortability levels. Unfortunately there is no one-size-fits-all answer. Organizations need to be agile to flex with the needs of their employees. Those who implement a hybrid work structure might want to provide different options and consider employees’ diverse personalities. This approach could answer to providing better work/life balance for their employees, allow employees to get their work done where they work best, and provide an alternative option to those who feel unsafe to return to work. All of these goals can be accomplished while still aligning with the organization’s business needs.

## **Limitations**

Sample bias could play a factor into the limitations of this research. First, we sent the study to three different groups: (1) Linked:HR, (2) current Drake Masters of Leadership Development (MSLD) program members, and (3) Drake MSLD program alumni. Our sampling method omitted various other industries of work and educational levels. Another limitation to

consider is the cultural aspect of the sample. The majority of the population from the sample resided in the United States, so it would be beneficial to consider various cultural norms that may influence the data if there was a larger size from other countries. Lastly, the sample contains a large majority of females so this could potentially skew the data in regards to attitudes and comfortability levels in returning to work.

### **Topics for Future Research**

Men were more enthusiastic about returning to work than women. The reason for this difference in attitudes may be helpful to understand. One example could be to collect more information in order to ascertain if there is a correlation with households that include children and childcare concerns based on societal norms for who is responsible for caregiving in certain countries.

It may also be valuable to repeat the study in six months to a year after COVID positivity rates have decreased to minimal levels and the majority of the workforce has returned to the office. This would be more of a reflection survey versus a collection of what an individual's feelings are in anticipation of what is to come. Feelings and attitudes could significantly change as individuals adapt to their new routines and situations.

To this point, some of the data revealed a notable pattern where introverts cited anxiety and predicted fatigue after returning to work, which would indicate a future research opportunity once employees have returned to understand the effects on this group specifically.

The unknown variables are whether a hybrid workplace is here to stay and how long COVID will be a factor in decision making for companies. There is still more research and change organizations will need to determine what makes people more comfortable in the

workplace. A future study could include additional questions that focus on safety and work/life balance to gain a broader understanding.

### **Conclusion**

Extraversion may minimize employees' reluctance to return to the office. On the other hand, working from home may bring benefits. We found new pleasures in working alone, which allowed us to become more critical thinkers and better decision makers.

A flexible, hybrid schedule continues to be the desired option allowing for a pleasing work-life balance. Working from home allowed introverts to lessen social interactions throughout the day, providing a sense of focus and energy.

Interestingly, our findings suggest that both introverts and extraverts appreciate the work-life balance working from home or hybrid work provides. Thus, while extraversion plays a small part in employees' feelings about returning to the office, many other factors affect employees' attitudes. COVID-19 has provided a platform for employees to advocate for a better work-life balance as a result. We predict that allowing more remote work will become a permanent cultural shift.

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## Appendix A

### Returning to Work after Covid Survey Questions

1. I wish to participate in this study.

Once again, many thanks for your participation! Please indicate in the question below if you wish to continue answering the survey.

**I wish to participate in this study.**

- Yes, I wish to participate (1)
- No, I do not wish to participate (thank you, please close your browser) (2) *SkipTo: End of Survey If Thank you for your interest in our Covid-19 Return to Work Study!*

### WORK HOME

Did you work from home during the Covid-19 pandemic?

- Yes (1)
- No (this survey is for people who worked from home during the Covid-19 pandemic - thank you for your interest!) (2)

### GOING BACK

Are you being asked (or are you likely to be asked) to return to your normal place of work after the Covid-19 pandemic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

### Section 1: Personality

The questions that follow are adapted from those found in the page <https://ipip.ori.org/>. These questions are in the public domain. The survey was compiled by Dr. Cris Wildermuth. For all personality questions, please consider how you behave *normally, at work, and in the absence of significant constraints or pressures*. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. When you finish the survey, you will see how your scores compare to the scores of others who have answered the same questions.

O1 I have a vivid imagination.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat agree (4)

Strongly agree (5)

C1 I am highly organized.

Strongly disagree (1)

Somewhat disagree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat agree (4)

Strongly agree (5)

E1 I make friends easily.

Strongly disagree (1)

Somewhat disagree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat agree (4)

Strongly agree (5)

A1 I tend to trust others.

Strongly disagree (1)

Somewhat disagree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat agree (4)

Strongly agree (5)

R1 I tend to worry.

Strongly disagree (1)

- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

O2 I enjoy wild flights of fantasy.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

C2 I am a planner.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

A2 I tend to be modest.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

R2 I fear for the worst.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

O3 I love to daydream.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

C3 I am goal oriented.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

E3 I tend to feel comfortable around people.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)

- Strongly agree (5)

A3 I believe in human goodness.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

R3 I tend to get stressed out easily.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

O4 I am bored by routine.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

C4 I am a perfectionist.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)

- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

E4 I am energized by people.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

AR1 I like to do things for others.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

R4 I tend to fret about things that have already happened.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

O5 I love new toys.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

C5 I am highly reliable.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

E5 It's easy to get to know me.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

A5 I am careful not to offend anyone.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

OR1 I get excited by new ideas.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

C6 I am always prepared.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

A6 I anticipate the needs of others.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

O7 I enjoy complex problems.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)

- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

C7 I carry out my plans.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

A7 I love helping others.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

O8 I like to invent new ways of doing things.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

C8 I focus on pre-determined goals.

- Strongly disagree (1)

- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

A8 I have a good word for everyone.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

OR2 I am interested in many things.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

CR1 I prefer to focus on one thing at a time.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

CR2 I get my work done right away.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

AR2 I respect authority.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

### **Section 3: Anxiety**

The questions in this section were developed by Pitzer RL, Kroenke K, Williams JBW, Lowe B. (2006). A brief measure for assessing generalized anxiety disorder - The GAD-7. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 166, 1092-1097. This survey is in the public domain. As you answer the questions below, please consider how often you have been bothered by the following in the past 2 weeks.

AN1 Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge

- Not at all (1)
- Several days (2)
- More than half the days (3)
- Nearly every day (4)

AN2 Not being able to stop or control worrying

- Not at all (1)

- Several days (2)
- More than half the days (3)
- Nearly every day (4)

AN3 Worrying too much about different things

- Not at all (1)
- Several days (2)
- More than half the days (3)
- Nearly every day (4)

AN4 Trouble relaxing

- Not at all (1)
- Several days (2)
- More than half the days (3)
- Nearly every day (4)

AN5 Being so restless that it's hard to sit still

- Not at all (1)
- Several days (2)
- More than half the days (3)
- Nearly every day (4)

AN6 Becoming easily annoyed or irritable

- Not at all (1)
- Several days (2)
- More than half the days (3)
- Nearly every day (4)

AN7 Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen

- Not at all (1)
- Several days (2)
- More than half the days (3)
- Nearly every day (4)

### **Covid-19 Part I Section 4: Covid-19 - Part I (Quantitative Questions)**

#### **RETURN**

Are you planning to return to your office or normal place of work?

- I have already returned (1)
- I am planning to return (2)
- No, I am not coming back to my office or normal place of work (3)

#### **ATT1**

How comfortable are you returning to your office or normal place of work?

- Extremely uncomfortable (1)
- Uncomfortable (2)
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (3)
- Comfortable (4)
- Extremely comfortable (5)

#### **ATT2**

How happy are you about returning to your office or normal place of work?

- Extremely unhappy (1)
- Unhappy (2)
- Neither unhappy nor happy (3)
- Happy (4)

- o Very happy (5)

## **Covid-19 Part II Section 5: Covid-19 - Part II (Open Ended Questions)**

### **QUAL1**

Do you feel your personality affects your feelings about returning to the office or normal place of work after the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, how? Please provide examples.

### **QUAL2**

Other than personality, what else might affect your feelings about returning to the office or normal place of work after the COVID-19 pandemic?

### **QUAL3**

Overall, is there anything *you wish your leaders knew* about returning to your office or normal place of work after the COVID-19 pandemic?

## **Demographics Section 1: Demographics**

The demographic questions below are asked so that we may better describe our sample.

### **GENDER**

With what gender do you identify?

- o Male (1)
- o Female (2)
- o Non-binary (3)
- o Gender fluid (4)
- o Prefer not to identify (5)
- o Other (please indicate your preferred choice) (6)

### **RACE**

With what race/ethnicity do you identify?

- o Native American or Alaska Native (1)
- o Asian (2)
- o Black or African-American (3)
- o Hispanic or Latino (4)

- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (5)
  - White (6)
  - Multiracial (7)
  - Prefer not to identify (8)
  - Other (please indicate your preferred choice) (9)
- 

**AGE**

How old are you? Please enter a number, for example, 18.

If you prefer not to answer this question, just leave it blank.

**COUNTRY**

In which country do you currently work?

If you prefer not to answer this question, just leave it blank.

- Afghanistan (1)
- Albania (2)
- Algeria (3)
- Andorra (4)
- Angola (5)
- Antigua and Barbuda (6)
- Argentina (7)
- Armenia (8)
- Australia (9)
- Austria (10)
- Azerbaijan (11)
- Bahamas (12)
- Bahrain (13)

- o Bangladesh (14)
- o Barbados (15)
- o Belarus (16)
- o Belgium (17)
- o Belize (18)
- o Benin (19)
- o Bhutan (20)
- o Bolivia (21)
- o Bosnia and Herzegovina (22)
- o Botswana (23)
- o Brazil (24)
- o Brunei Darussalam (25)
- o Bulgaria (26)
- o Burkina Faso (27)
- o Burundi (28)
- o Cambodia (29)
- o Cameroon (30)
- o Canada (31)
- o Cape Verde (32)
- o Central African Republic (33)
- o Chad (34)
- o Chile (35)
- o China (36)

- o Colombia (37)
- o Comoros (38)
- o Congo, Republic of the... (39)
- o Costa Rica (40)
- o Côte d'Ivoire (41)
- o Croatia (42)
- o Cuba (43)
- o Cyprus (44)
- o Czech Republic (45)
- o Democratic Republic of the Congo (47)
- o Denmark (48)
- o Djibouti (49)
- o Dominica (50)
- o Dominican Republic (51)
- o Ecuador (52)
- o Egypt (53)
- o El Salvador (54)
- o Equatorial Guinea (55)
- o Eritrea (56)
- o Estonia (57)
- o Ethiopia (58)
- o Fiji (59)
- o Finland (60)

- o France (61)
- o Gabon (62)
- o Gambia (63)
- o Georgia (64)
- o Germany (65)
- o Ghana (66)
- o Greece (67)
- o Grenada (68)
- o Guatemala (69)
- o Guinea (70)
- o Guinea-Bissau (71)
- o Guyana (72)
- o Haiti (73)
- o Honduras (74)
- o Hong Kong (S.A.R.) (75)
- o Hungary (76)
- o Iceland (77)
- o India (78)
- o Indonesia (79)
- o Iran (80)
- o Iraq (81)
- o Ireland (82)
- o Israel (83)

- o Italy (84)
- o Jamaica (85)
- o Japan (86)
- o Jordan (87)
- o Kazakhstan (88)
- o Kenya (89)
- o Kiribati (90)
- o Kuwait (91)
- o Kyrgyzstan (92)
- o Lao People's Democratic Republic (93)
- o Latvia (94)
- o Lebanon (95)
- o Lesotho (96)
- o Liberia (97)
- o Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (98)
- o Liechtenstein (99)
- o Lithuania (100)
- o Luxembourg (101)
- o Madagascar (102)
- o Malawi (103)
- o Malaysia (104)
- o Maldives (105)
- o Mali (106)

- o Malta (107)
- o Marshall Islands (108)
- o Mauritania (109)
- o Mauritius (110)
- o Mexico (111)
- o Micronesia, Federated States of... (112)
- o Monaco (113)
- o Mongolia (114)
- o Montenegro (115)
- o Morocco (116)
- o Mozambique (117)
- o Myanmar (118)
- o Namibia (119)
- o Nauru (120)
- o Nepal (121)
- o Netherlands (122)
- o New Zealand (123)
- o Nicaragua (124)
- o Niger (125)
- o Nigeria (126)
- o North Korea (127)
- o Norway (128)
- o Oman (129)

- o Pakistan (130)
- o Palau (131)
- o Panama (132)
- o Papua New Guinea (133)
- o Paraguay (134)
- o Peru (135)
- o Philippines (136)
- o Poland (137)
- o Portugal (138)
- o Qatar (139)
- o Republic of Moldova (141)
- o Romania (142)
- o Russian Federation (143)
- o Rwanda (144)
- o Saint Kitts and Nevis (145)
- o Saint Lucia (146)
- o Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (147)
- o Samoa (148)
- o San Marino (149)
- o Sao Tome and Principe (150)
- o Saudi Arabia (151)
- o Senegal (152)
- o Serbia (153)

- o Seychelles (154)
- o Sierra Leone (155)
- o Singapore (156)
- o Slovakia (157)
- o Slovenia (158)
- o Solomon Islands (159)
- o Somalia (160)
- o South Africa (161)
- o South Korea (162)
- o Spain (163)
- o Sri Lanka (164)
- o Sudan (165)
- o Suriname (166)
- o Swaziland (167)
- o Sweden (168)
- o Switzerland (169)
- o Syrian Arab Republic (170)
- o Tajikistan (171)
- o Thailand (172)
- o The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (173)
- o Timor-Leste (174)
- o Togo (175)
- o Tonga (176)

- o Trinidad and Tobago (177)
- o Tunisia (178)
- o Turkey (179)
- o Turkmenistan (180)
- o Tuvalu (181)
- o Uganda (182)
- o Ukraine (183)
- o United Arab Emirates (184)
- o United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (185)
- o United Republic of Tanzania (186)
- o United States of America (187)
- o Uruguay (188)
- o Uzbekistan (189)
- o Vanuatu (190)
- o Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of... (191)
- o Viet Nam (192)
- o Yemen (193)
- o Zambia (580)
- o Zimbabwe (1357)