

Cultivating Resilience in a Post-COVID World

HOW ORGANIZATIONS CAN REBOUND FROM THE PANDEMIC WITH BOLD WORKPLACE POLICIES



WHITE PAPER 1 (OF 3)
Why it's critical to develop a vaccination
policy as part of your overall health and
safety workplace strategy





-  IMMUNITY
-  RESILIENCY
-  WELL-BEING
-  FUTURE PROOF WORKFORCE

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WHITE PAPER 1

Why it's critical to develop a vaccination policy as part of your overall health and safety workplace strategy

This is the first in a series of three white papers that provide senior leadership with a bold path forward to future-proof their workforce. As we rebound from lockdown and enter a new post-pandemic world, we need our teams to regain their sense of physical and mental resilience, as well as their sense of inner strength, so that they may thrive again in the workplace.





Innovation Health

Innovation Health Group believes we're at a critical inflection point of the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, public health directives are inadequate and inconsistent, and many of us are languishing – suffering from myriad emotional and physical stressors that have left us feeling depressed and burned out. The time is now for senior leadership teams to step up and introduce bold policies and actions to help future-proof their organizations, while reprioritizing mental health and resiliency with innovative approaches.

In our first white paper, we share reasons why organizations of all types and sizes must update their health and safety policies to eventually include mandating COVID-19 vaccinations. This strategy is part of a holistic plan to bring employees back to work safely and support them to be their best.

Our experienced team of senior thought leaders across medical wellness, mental health, people and culture, change management and communications are supporting organizations and their senior leadership teams with strategies to help get them to a safer, more secure place. And we're open to hearing from you if you'd like to learn more about how we can help put in place the strategy set forth in this white paper.



INTRODUCTION

With COVID-19 vaccinations now picking up steam, executives are turning their attention to helping their teams return to the office safely in 2021.

The rollout may be slower than we had all hoped, but it represents a real opportunity for a reset where organizations can step up and help employees make it through this difficult period while at the same time fostering resilience.

Right now, the focus is understandably on reopening and stabilizing business operations, but the challenges that leaders face in re-energizing their teams and making sure their workplace is safe is unprecedented.

Knowing how best to support employees in this transition back to the workplace will be critically important to every organization.

It will require a different kind of leadership – one that is grounded in empathy, but also one that is backed by an evidence-based bold business continuity strategy.

Since the pandemic began in March 2020, we have all been feeling a range of emotions. Many describe themselves as being sad, stressed or even hyper. In fact, it's been a challenge to navigate not just our emotional state but also our physical state.

But why?

During each wave of the pandemic, our brain has sensed a threat to our survival. The enemy, the SARS-CoV2 virus, is invisible and could be anywhere – in our workplace and even in our homes. COVID-19 can be asymptomatic, but it can also kill a loved one in just days. This anguish causes our body to go into a fight or flight mode, resulting in the secretion of several hormones, most notably cortisol, which triggers an adrenaline rush. This chemical increases our heart rate, blood pressure and makes us hyper to get us ready to fight. Yet, the enemy is unclear at times, and we sit nervously in our chairs, waiting for something unknown to happen.

- Elaine Chin M.D., M.B.A.



As we all learned to mask up, wash our hands and physically distance ourselves from loved ones, colleagues, friends and family, we developed routines that eased our fears.

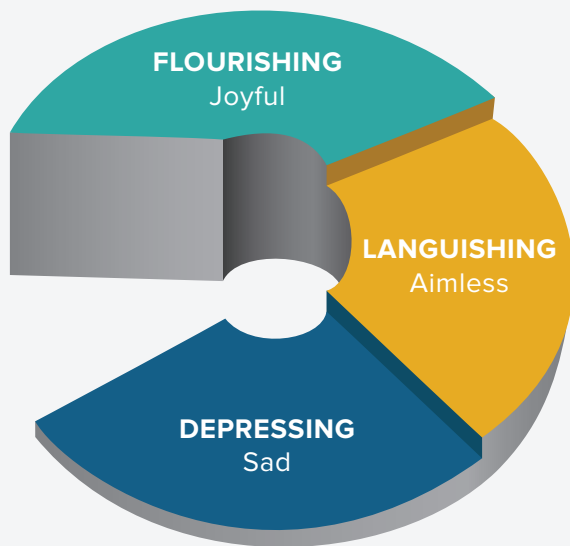
This acute state of anxiety and grief has given way to a chronic emotional state that is best described as languishing.

lang-gwi-shing

It's a sense of being joyless and aimless. A condition where we feel a sense of stagnation and emptiness, a sort of middle ground of the mental health continuum, where depression is at one end of the spectrum and flourishing is at the other.

SOURCE: New York Time Article: There's a Name for the Blah You're Feeling: It's Called Languishing ¹

Mental Health CONTINUUM



We need to find a way to move out of feeling stuck and begin to live again.

There's a belief that is starting to take hold that our political leadership has let us down. Whether it was a failure to take decisive public health measures early, or to adequately protect the most vulnerable among us, a certain cynicism is setting in. Vaccines across Canada are not being rolled out fast enough, and frankly a lot of decisions are starting to look politically motivated.

To make matters worse, the start and stop of the AstraZeneca and Johnson&Johnson vaccines have increased vaccine hesitancy, just as momentum was building to get many communities vaccinated.

For their part, infectious disease experts and the scientific community have tried to warn North American governments of impending waves of the pandemic and that more resolute action is needed. But much of that advice appears to have fallen on deaf ears.

There is no clear consensus around mandating vaccines, but the reality is, **if we don't achieve a herd immunity in the 90% range, we run the risk of never-ending waves of infection followed by lockdowns.**

There is a word that very few public health officials dare to utter to describe this type of pandemic, and that word is endemic.

This is where the private sector can step in and do what public-health bureaucrats and politicians didn't have the courage to do. Senior leadership teams are uniquely placed to access expertise, leverage their credibility to advocate and use the powers they possess to incentivize desired behaviours.

Take firm action, consider mandating vaccines and introducing other policies that help people regain a sense of control of their lives and get our economy back on its feet.



step up



Adopt Three Bold Policies

We propose organizations enable team members to regain control of their health and mental well-being.



1

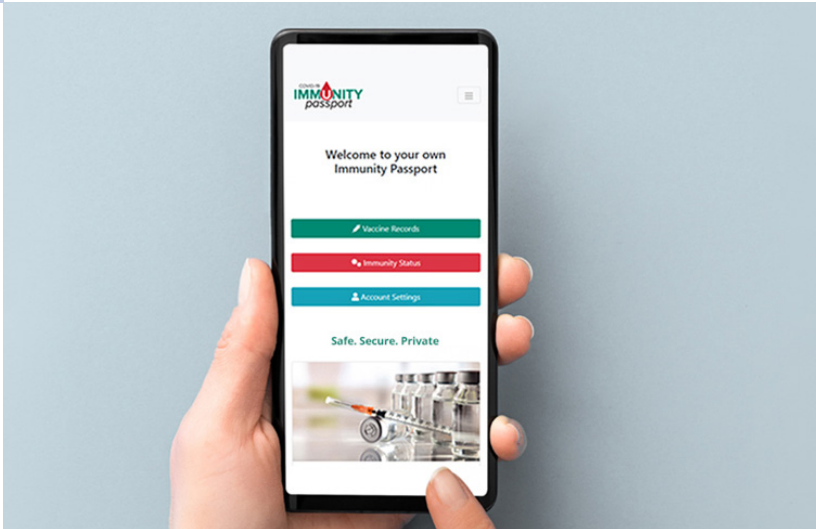
Incentivize, leading to mandating vaccinations as a part of an overall workplace health and safety policy

2

Adopt immunity passports

to provide a sense of security for team members, and customers

(Upcoming white paper #2)



3

Implement wellness curriculums that engage and encourage improved health outcomes

(Upcoming white paper #3)



OUR RESEARCH

The arrival of COVID-19 vaccines offers a hopeful way out of the pandemic. But as public health authorities grapple with getting the population vaccinated, businesses are just coming to terms with how COVID-19 is changing the definition of a “safe and healthy workplace”.

Barriers are emerging, including the very real issue of vaccine hesitancy, which causes some employees to not get their shot. Overcoming those barriers will be critical if businesses want to meet their own “**workplace immunity**” targets, up to **90% vaccination rate**, to get back to some version of normal operations.

Innovation Health Group (IHG) set out to understand those barriers to vaccination from the employee perspective. **To gauge employee sentiment, IHG recently conducted a COVID-19 Vaccination Sentiment Survey that reached more than 800 employees across Ontario from a diverse cross-section of industries.**

In addition to the surveys, IHG conducted interviews with senior leadership teams. Insights gained included what they have done to protect their teams and manage operations amid frequent lockdowns as well as encourage team members to take ownership of their health and safety.

We wanted their input on the following:

- 1 Do employees intend to get vaccinated?**
 - What are their concerns?
 - Where are they getting their information?
- 2 Is there a workplace vaccination policy?**
 - And do they want one?
- 3 Would they welcome mandating vaccines at some point?**
 - How would they react, if not?





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

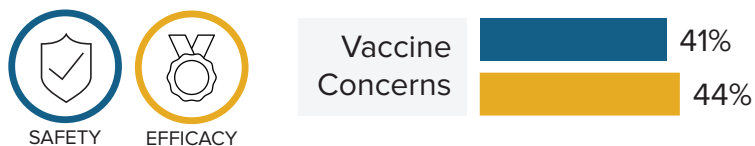
1

84% Most organizations have a high vaccine uptake rate.

Most employees plan to get vaccinated and want a vaccination policy but have yet to hear from their employer.

Our survey's positive response rate is slightly higher than the federal government's COSMO Study³, where 67 to 69% of respondents said they plan to get the vaccine when it's available. (February 2021).

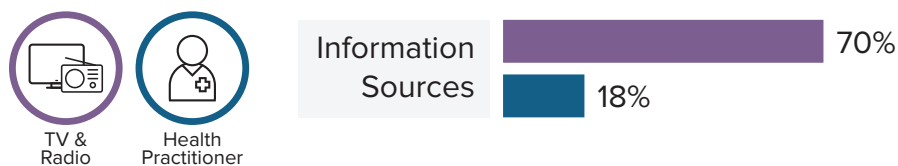
Vaccine hesitancy is driven by safety and efficacy concerns.



These worries are at the core of vaccine hesitancy. Despite having safety and efficacy concerns, apprehension doesn't seem to translate into a refusal to get vaccinated by the majority of respondents.

Communication strategies need to involve health practitioners.

More education must be done to support employees' concerns about the vaccines. While your employees' health practitioners are trusted content experts, they are the least sought out by employees when curating vaccine information.



Employers need to engage local health experts to support their workplace health and safety conversations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2

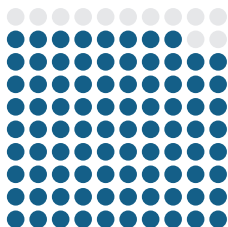
81%

There is a strong desire for a workplace vaccination policy.

This finding helps underscore that now more than ever, employees need to know and feel that their employer is providing good health and well-being support. For employers who have yet to communicate their organization's vaccination policy, the time to do so is now.

Your employees overwhelmingly want to hear from you on the subject and told us they haven't heard from you yet.

88%



Employees are looking to their workplace leaders for a more decisive and clear direction of what they plan to do to keep them safe when they return to their workplaces.

3

60%

Employees support a mandated vaccination policy if it leads to a safer workplace.

Most employees would get vaccinated and **10% would look for a new job** if their employer created a vaccination policy that mandated it.

Of those who plan to get vaccinated 70% would **feel safer to return to work** with such a policy in place.



YES

70%



Feel Safer



NO

29%



Take Vaccine Reluctantly

Of those who don't want to get vaccinated, some would reluctantly do so and a few would find another job if the organization made it mandatory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Employees across all industries are anxiously anticipating more meaningful communication and direction from their leadership. They want a framework to safely enable a post-pandemic workstyle, especially once the vaccinations are readily available in their communities.

As vaccine rollout picks up momentum, it's essential to return many employees gradually back to the workplace, especially for organizations that believe it will improve mental health and productivity. While indoor masking may be required in the short term, we see a time where this policy will evolve as more people get vaccinated and there is a better understanding of the balance between space, occupancy and hybrid workstyles.

We encourage leaders to speak with team members regularly about the pandemic and vaccination, promoting an open and honest dialogue, as well as providing support and clarity on the path forward.

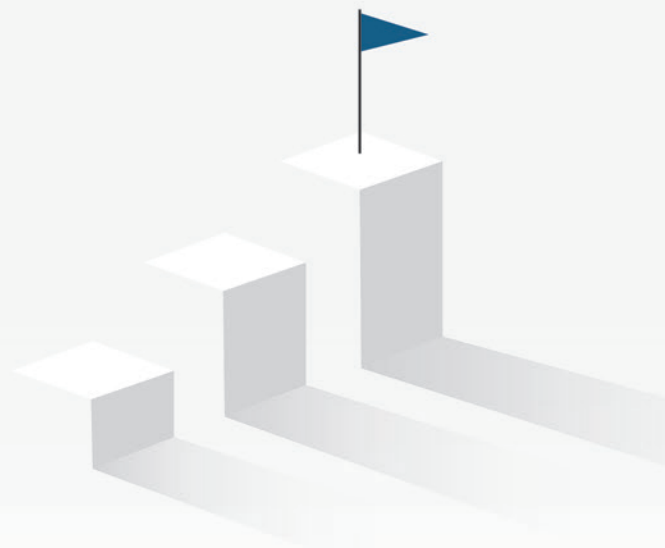
Regardless of the various workstyles within each organization, **it's incumbent on leadership to clearly articulate their present and future expectations** of how employees can create and maintain the safest possible workplace for each other and their customers.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the larger context of a workplace health and safety policy, your vaccination policy will minimize anxiety, reduce business risk and enable your organization to boost productivity and stimulate growth.

Based on the findings of this first of three white papers, our team at Innovation Health Group advises you to take the following steps:



1 Create your vaccination policy sooner rather than later. We recognize that this may be dynamic as vaccination uptake increases over time. Regardless of when you think most of your employees will get their first shot, they want to hear from you. They want to know your expectations of them, both in the near term and in the future. Set your organization's vaccination uptake goal and propose milestone targets in parallel with the vaccine rollout.

3 Support your employees' overall physical and mental well-being. Returning to a safer post-pandemic workplace once most people are vaccinated will lower fear and anxiety. However, there is more work to be done to support overall physical and mental well-being. For most employees, trying to manage increased workloads both at work and at home has become increasingly difficult this past year. Engage with health practitioners to support your wellness dialogue.

2 Plan to recommend vaccinations strongly. Your goal is to ensure a safe working environment for all employees and customers. Most eligible employees are already willing to take the vaccine. With more education and even incentives such as gift cards and time off, you can increase your vaccination uptake rate to a level that mandating vaccinations would become less challenging. *Note: we recognize that some employees will not be candidates for the vaccine on religious grounds or for health reasons.*

"It's pretty clear that there is no scenario for most companies where employees are returning unvaccinated to the office in 2021," he says. "This is a conversation that HR leaders need to be having with their people now."

- Justin Holland, CEO and founder of HealthJoy⁵

DETAILED FINDINGS

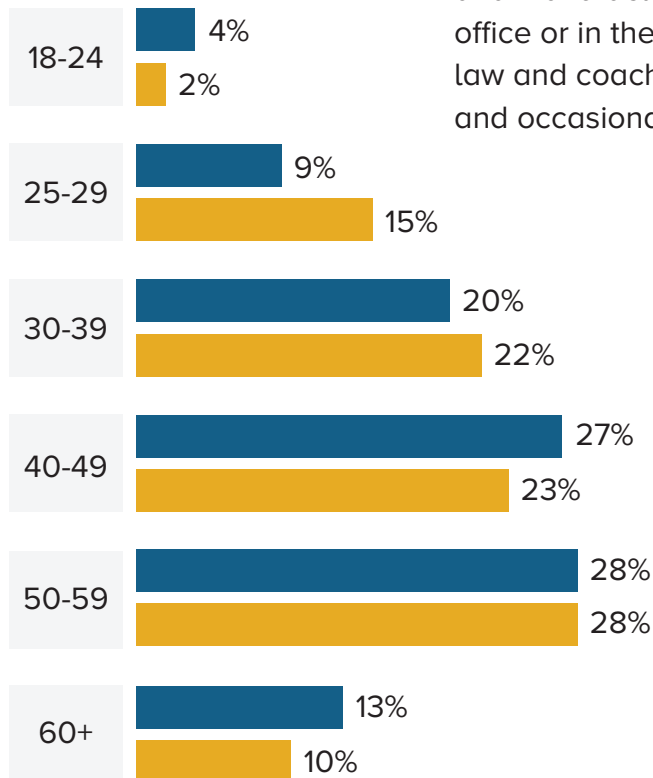
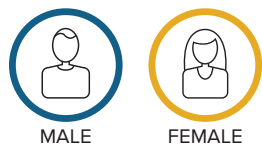
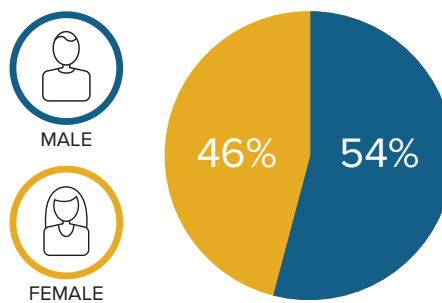
a Who completed the survey?

The average participation rate by organization ranged between 55% and 100% with an **average participation rate of 66%** higher than expected.

There was a slight bias of men to women. All working-age groups were represented.

Participation Rate:

537 Respondents / **817** Surveyed

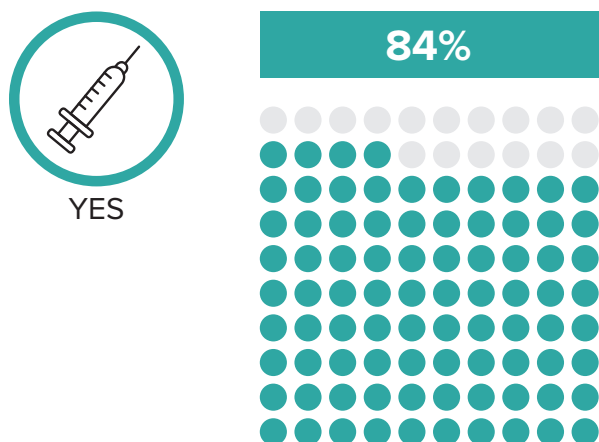


Of the companies surveyed, those in construction and manufacturing had employees work in the office or in the field, while other services, such as law and coaching services, worked from home and occasionally visited the office.

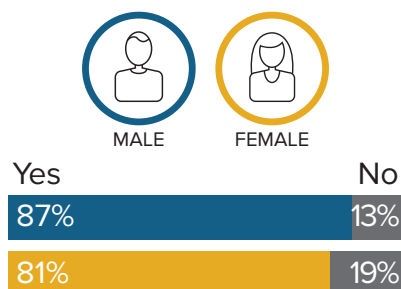
DETAILED FINDINGS

b Do employees intend to get vaccinated?

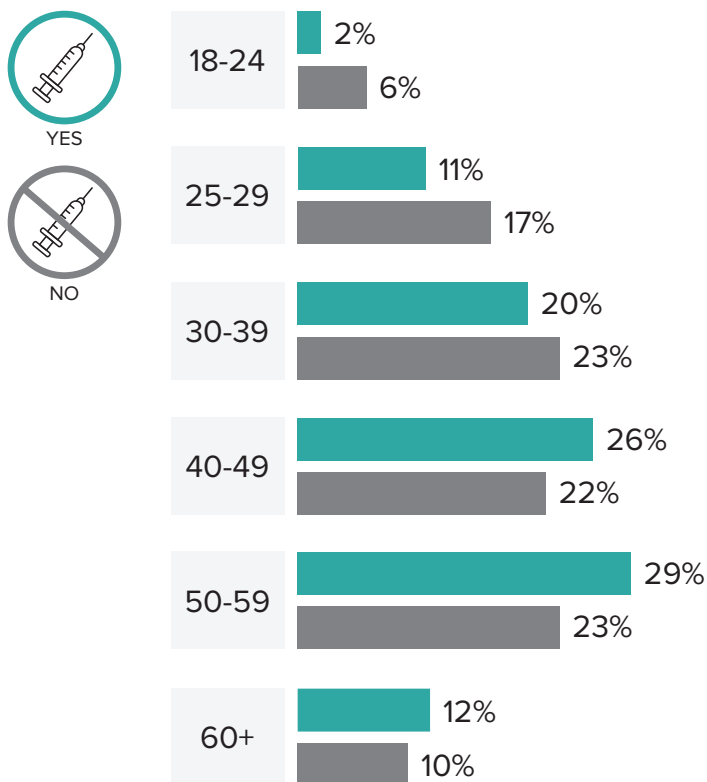
Most people surveyed said they intend to get vaccinated.



Surprisingly to us, there was a gender disparity where more women than men were more likely to say 'no' to getting the vaccine and had more concerns.



Slightly more people 40 years and older (87%) plan to get the vaccine compared to the under 40 group (80%). As expected, more younger people said 'no to vaccination' than the older demographic, and this transitions to a higher 'yes to vaccination' response around the 40-49 years of age group.

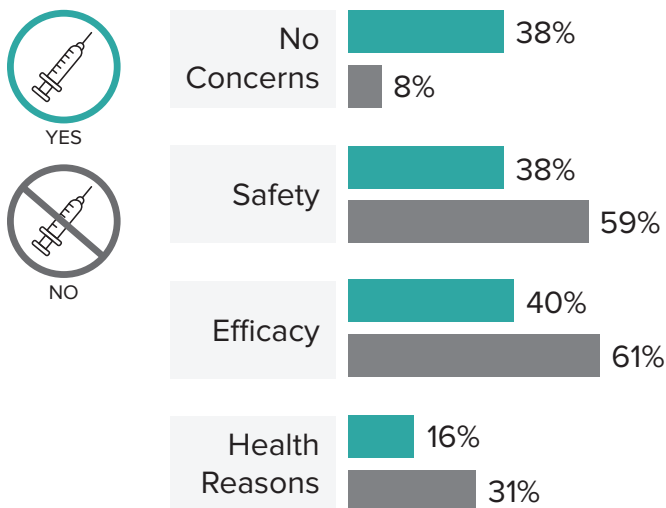


DETAILED FINDINGS

C What are their concerns?

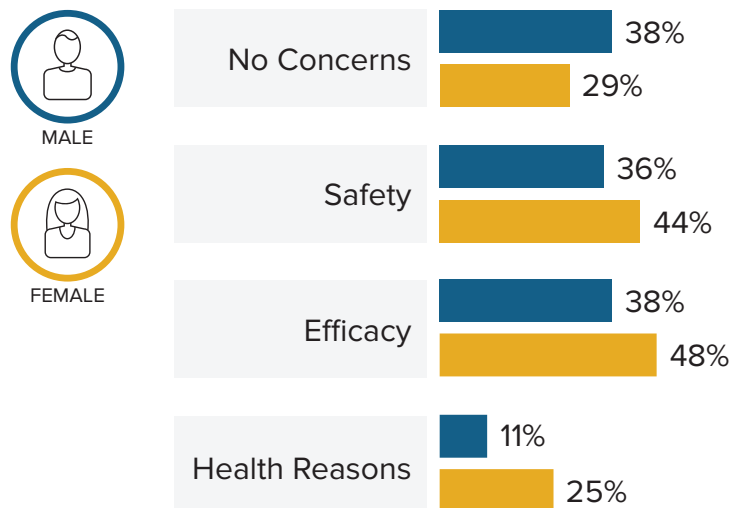
Despite concerns about its safety (41%) and efficacy (44%), most employees still plan to get the vaccine.

Of the 16% who don't plan to get vaccinated, they had a higher safety and efficacy concern, with 31% of them claiming they have health reasons or allergies for not getting the vaccine.

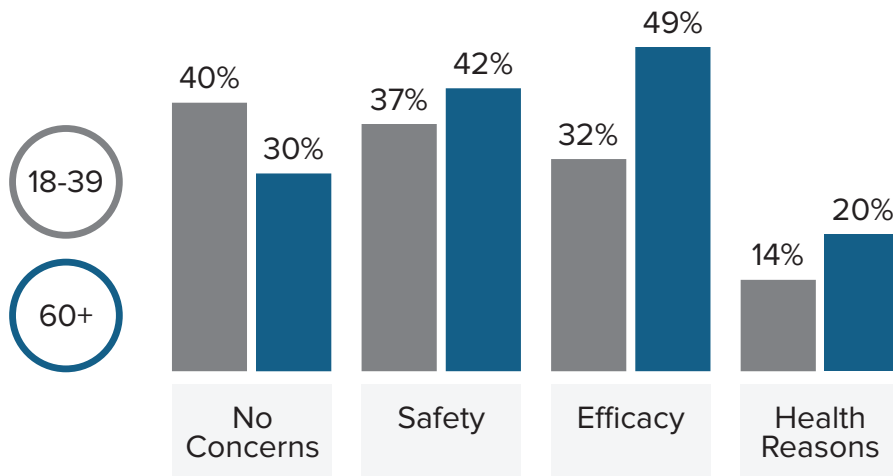


Workstyles doesn't impact their decision to get the vaccine or not, and all workstyles are concerned mainly about safety and efficacy.

More men than women have no worries about the vaccines.



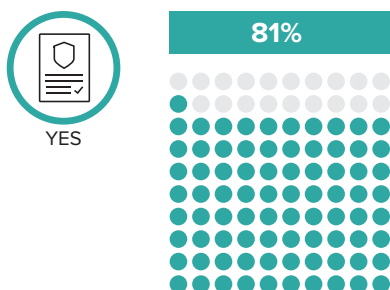
Interestingly, younger people have fewer concerns about the vaccine and know more people who are not going to get the vaccine.



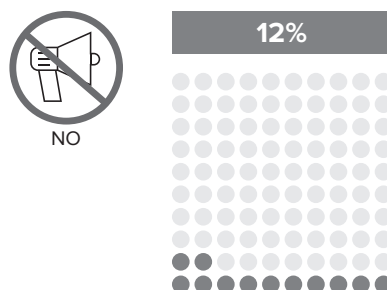
DETAILED FINDINGS

d Is there a workplace vaccination policy and do employees want one?

Many respondents want to hear from their employers about a COVID vaccination policy.

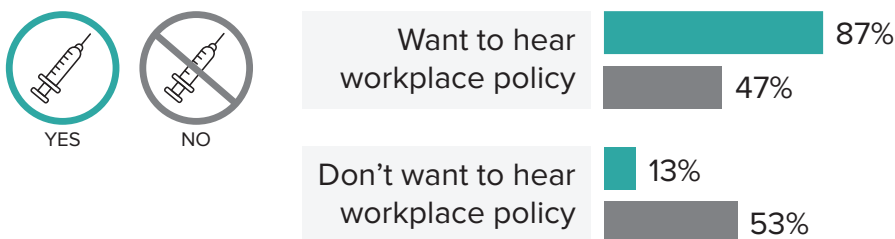


Only a few employees indicated to have heard from you.



(Note: The organizations we surveyed have not yet tabled a vaccination policy for their workplace. In fairness, the rapid and often unpredictable evolution of the COVID pandemic has not allowed organizations, until now, to create and communicate a new policy.)

Those who plan to get the vaccine are keener to hear from their employer.

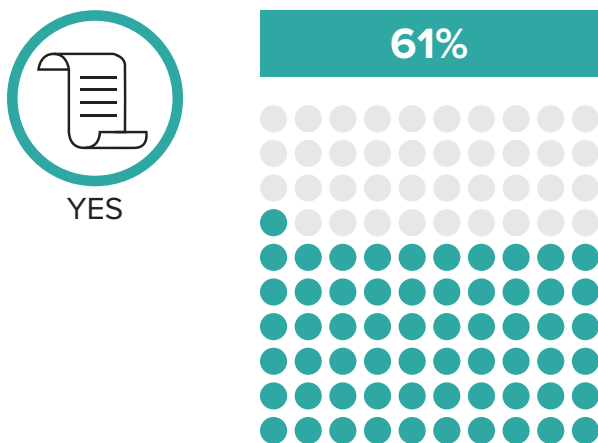


Workstyles don't impact the desire or lack of to hear from their employers about a vaccination policy.

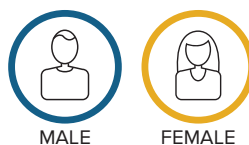
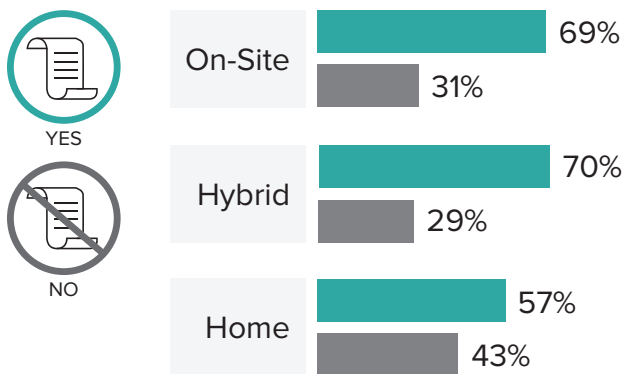
DETAILED FINDINGS

e Would they welcome mandating vaccines at some point?

Regardless of the “yes” or “no” vaccination position, a majority of those surveyed, men (68%) more than women (55%), would welcome a mandatory vaccine policy in their workplace.

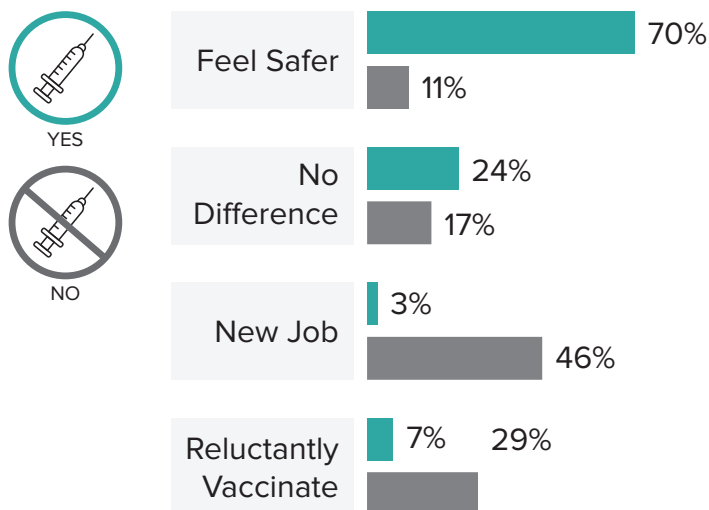


Those who decided to get vaccinated are more likely to support a mandated policy, especially those who work on-site or have a hybrid workstyle versus working only at home.



Furthermore, those who support a mandatory vaccination position would still feel safer, men (65%) more than women (55%) and those over age 40.

More importantly, if an organization mandates vaccinations, most would get the vaccine, even reluctantly, as only 11% of all respondents would find another job if their company adopted such a policy. Most of this latter group who don't plan to get the vaccine are below age 40.

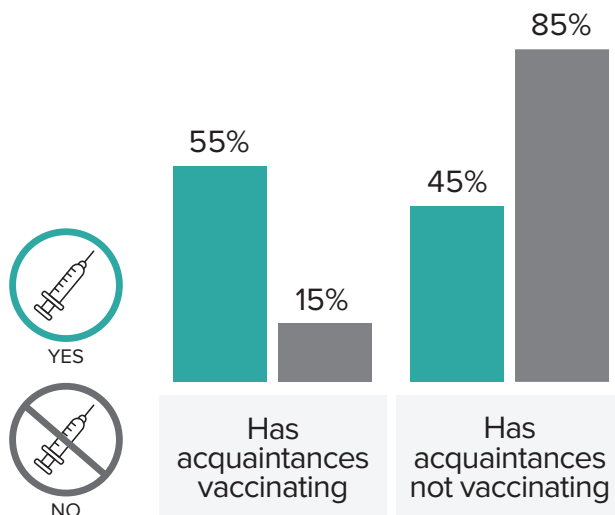
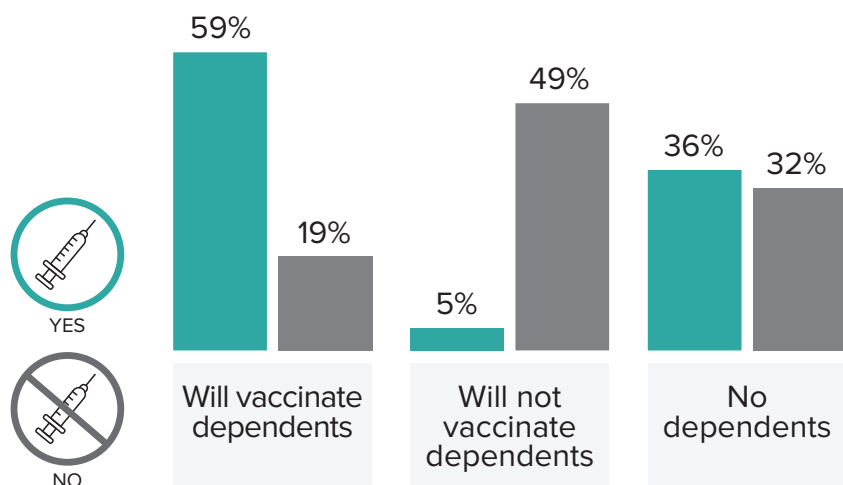


DETAILED FINDINGS

f How are other people influencing employees' thoughts and behaviours?

Not surprisingly, there is a group-think mentality at play, where those who don't plan to get vaccinated know more people with a similar mindset. This speaks to the challenge of individual, family and group vaccination hesitancy dynamics taking effect.

One person can negatively impact many more people close to them. We see this spillover effect, where those who say they don't want the vaccine also have no desire to have their dependents vaccinated.

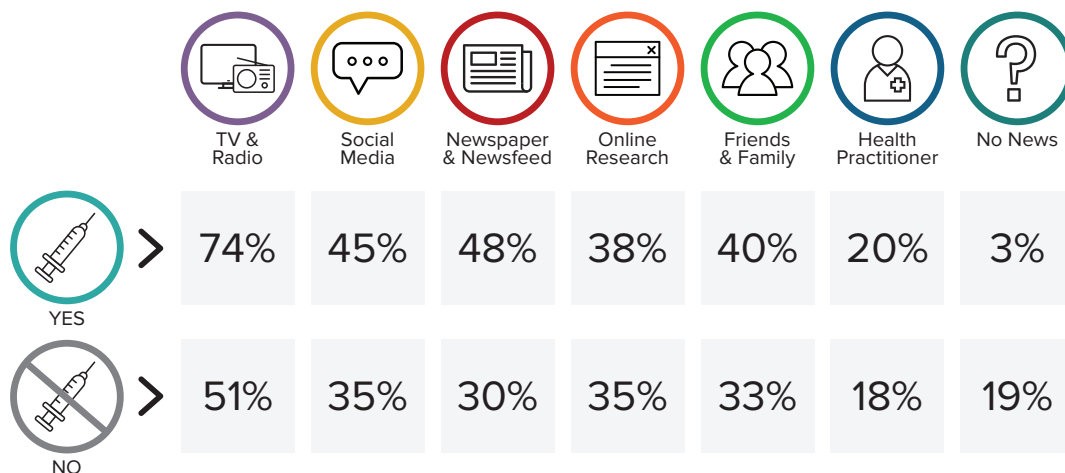


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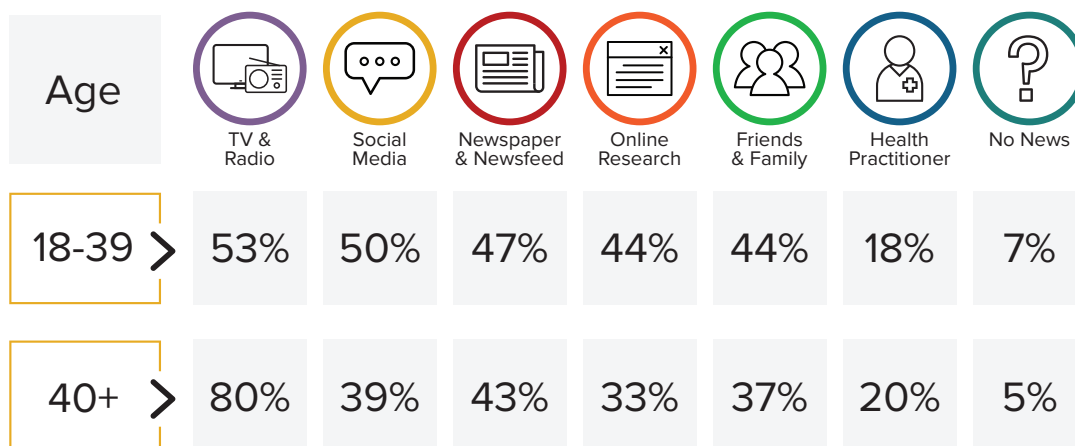
g Where are your employees getting their information?

We originally assumed those who consumed more non-traditional formats of news and more biased information would have an increased hesitancy to get vaccinated. However, this assumption was not validated in our survey.

People accessed many sources of information. Notably, the lowest-rated source of information was their health practitioner. This begs the question of why people have not used this source of information?



It will be more difficult to influence those below age 40 as they consume all forms of information. We can more easily communicate with the age 40+ via TV and radio.



COMMENTS

Intention to get the vaccine:

“I have concerns, but it is up to each individual if they want to be vaccinated.”

“It is necessary to have the vaccine for everybody to come to work.”

“My only concern with the vaccination effort is that not enough people will agree to get it and it will not be effective.”

“I believe if the vaccine is safe with little or no side effects, it will provide the gateway to normalcy in our lives.”

“Working safely, everyone should get this vaccine.”

Immunity Passport and Dashboard:

“A vaccination passport is a great idea for essential workers, not for non-essential workers.”

“Balancing the rights of the employee against the safety of the whole is difficult but I don’t believe there should be a database of any kind regarding this.”

Workplace Vaccination Policy & Mandating:

“There should be no challenge with mandating vaccinations in workplace.”

“... I would not be opposed if employees who do not want to be vaccinated had to wear masks in the office or had to take additional precautions.”

“I will not return to a physical office/workplace without confirmation that everyone has been vaccinated.”

“I do think that everyone who is able to get the vaccine should get the vaccine, and that their employers should enable them to do so.”

“The vaccine must not be mandatory, it is an experimental vaccine, people still get the virus, people have a lot of reactions, the vaccine doesn’t immunize us.”

Communications:

“It will be better to hear (research) updates about COVID from health care professionals rather than news as they are more biased nowadays. More transparency from the government.”

“I would like to see clearer communication from the government. I am fully aware we have not been through this before; however, frustrated by the government and distribution for vaccine.”

UPCOMING WHITE PAPERS

WHITE PAPER #2

HOW ORGANIZATIONS CAN REBOUND FROM THE PANDEMIC WITH BOLD WORKPLACE POLICIES

How leveraging the power of medical science and digital technology can create a secure workplace free of COVID-19

Most of us thought the end of this pandemic was in sight once everyone gets vaccinated. While we must remain hopeful, the third wave has been a wake-up call that more waves may be coming. The new variants are a whole new breed of viruses that can pose unknown risks and perhaps be resistant to the present group of vaccines.

While the vaccine can blunt person-to-person transmission and reduce mutations, we're uncertain if the vaccine itself generates enough antibodies in their host and will work against the wild and variant strains. The answer lies in a simple self-test collection kit where a few drops of blood sent to a laboratory for processing can give us this critical information.

Armed with both vaccinations and confirmation that each team member has immunity to return to work and travel safely improves your organization's overall security.

Documentation and tracking are also key, with the support of an Immunity Passport App and Dashboard.

[Click here to request our next white paper](#)

In our next paper, we ask employees how they feel about having a vaccine or immunity passport and sharing their information with their employer. Creating such a dashboard to track all members will improve overall safety and security for everyone.

Whether it's our workplace, community or country, we're not fully safe until everyone is safe. For each nation to get out of this pandemic, it's incumbent on all organizations to do their part to ensure their teams are safe and that their work environments are secure by reaching not only a high vaccination rate but also a high level of workplace immunity.



METHODOLOGY

Between February 8 and April 23, IHG emailed the survey to 817 people with 537 respondents. Each company employee received an email from their senior leadership team, advising them to complete an anonymous survey to gauge their sentiment around topics regarding COVID-19 vaccination. Each survey was open for approximately two weeks, and most companies sent out only one reminder to complete the survey.

Employees who participated work in the Greater Toronto Area. Survey participants were part of the workforce of 11 small to medium-sized businesses, representing a cross-section of industries, including manufacturing, construction, education, professional services and consumer services. The smallest organization has 24 employees while the largest has 181 employees. The average size is 74 employees.

Thank you to the companies that participated:

CGL Manufacturing Inc. – Manufacturing
Crescent School – Education
Cundari – Digital Agency
DPI Construction Management – Construction
Kain & Ball LLP – Law Firm
Keilhauer Industries Ltd. – Manufacturing
Malfar Mechanical Inc. – Construction
Ontario Real Estate Agency – Corporate Office
Richard Robbins International – Coaching
Sotos LLP – Law Firm
Tucker HiRise – Construction

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