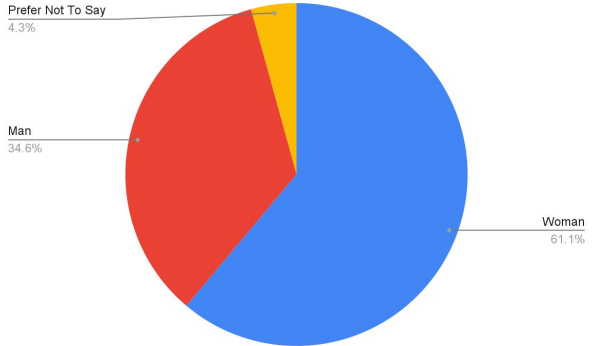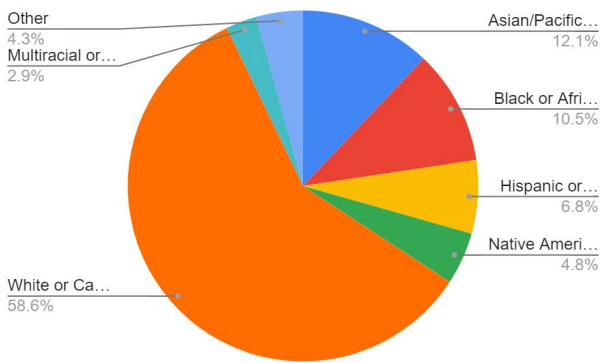# State of Employee Engagement Q2 2021

Methodology

Since the beginning of the pandemic and the great migration to work-from-home, the landscape of work has been permanently altered. Our survey of over 700 HR professionals and leaders around the world offers insight into the changing world of work.

- **Respondents**. Leaders and Human Resources were contacted through email, Linkedin, and professional networking sites with the opportunity to complete a survey on their priorities and challenges in the second quarter of 2021. In exchange, respondents were offered a report for benchmarking.
- **Timing**. Collected responses from May 10-24, 2021. A total of 769 responses were collected and analyzed.
- **Org size**. Organizations ranged in size from 1 employee to 2,200,000 employees. The median organization size was 76 employees.
- **Geography**. Over 40 countries included with the majority of respondents coming from the United States
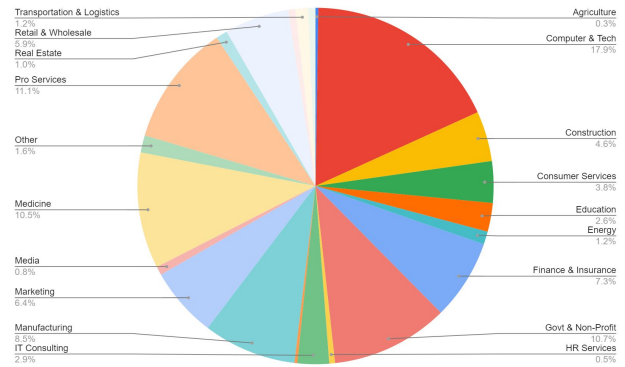
Gender

Category	%
Woman	61.1%
Man	34.6%
Prefer Not To Say	4.3%

Race

Category	%
Asian/Pacific…	12.1%
Black or Afri…	10.5%
Hispanic or…	6.8%
Native Ameri…	4.8%
White or Ca…	58.6%
Multiracial or…	2.9%
Other	4.3%

Industry

Category	%
Transportation & Logistics	1.2%
Retail & Wholesale	5.9%
Real Estate	1.0%
Pro Services	11.1%
Other	1.6%
Medicine	10.5%
Media	0.8%
Marketing	6.4%
Manufacturing	8.5%
IT Consulting	2.9%
Agriculture	0.3%
Computer & Tech	17.9%
Construction	4.6%
Consumer Services	3.8%
Education	2.6%
Energy	1.2%
Finance & Insurance	7.3%
Govt & Non-Profit	10.7%
HR Services	0.5%

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2

Executive Summary

- **Hybrid is here to stay**:
  - <u>Emotionally</u>. More in person interaction equates to less emotional exhaustion.
  - <u>Performance</u>. 63% of respondents believe hybrid work optimizes performance.
  - <u>Attrition</u>. Fewer days in the office equate to better retention.
- **Vaccinations encouraged and rarely required**. 48% of organizations encourage vaccinations, and 28% have no formal policy. A mere 7% of companies mandate vaccinations.
- **Pronounced shift of HR priorities to focus on hiring**. Biggest gains in HR priorities from Q1 to Q2 were Remote Onboard and Hiring Talent. The top two losses were Return to Work and Vaccine Policy.
- **Turnover tsunami versus trickle coming to a head**. Microsoft research predicts that 41% of employees are considering leaving their employer in 2021. Respondents overwhelmingly (68%) cited that only 0% - 9% of their workforce will quit.
- **Increasing demand for advanced attribution to optimize**. With so much change highlighted, the ability to pulse and view engagement trends by advanced attributions (level, gender, tenure, etc.) enables organizations to create more fine tuned programs to better retain and hire top talent.

Dr. Elora Voyles
Industrial Organizational Psychologist
People Scientist
TINYpulse

David Niu
Founder and CEO
TINYpulse

![TINYpulse logo]

3

Employee Stress and Burnout

The less an employee is in the office, the more Emotional Exhaustion they'll experience, from 69% for in person to 81% for Hybrid to 86% for Remote.

- Remote employees experience the highest level of Employee Exhaustion 85.65% (24% more than in person), when compared with in person or Hybrid employees.

- HR managers and leaders should be aware that remote workers may be at higher risk of emotional exhaustion.
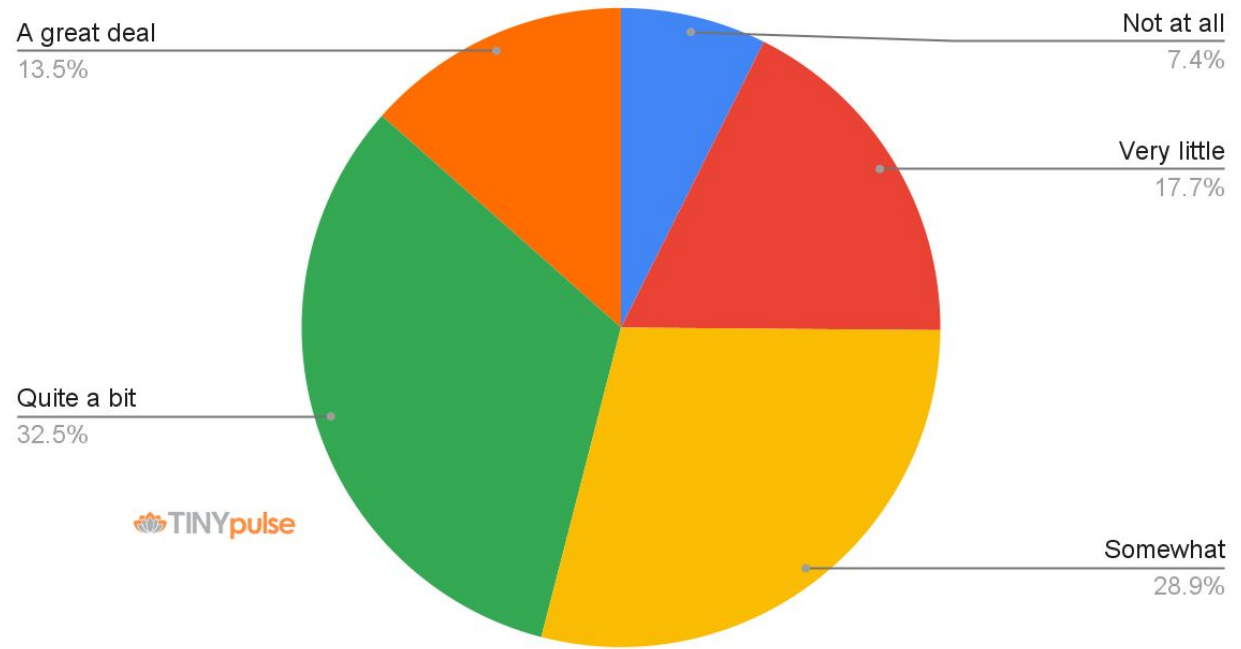
Employee Emotional Exhaustion by Work Location
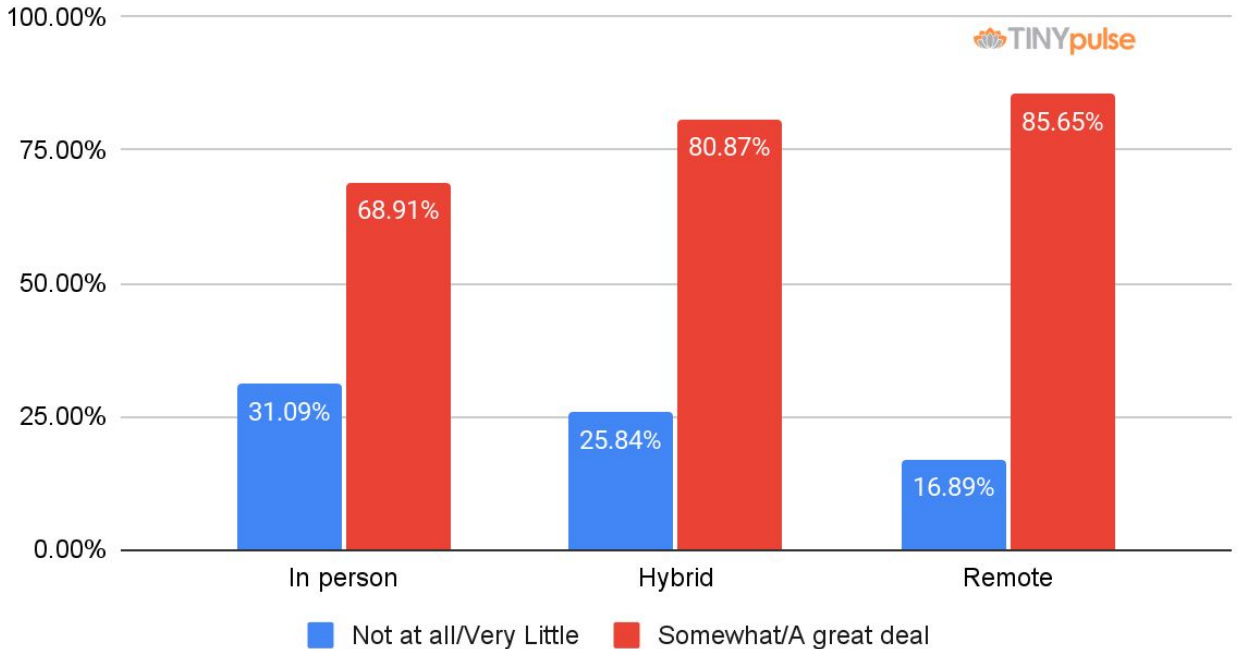
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3 out of 4 HR leaders reported that their employees are experiencing Somewhat to A great deal of burnout.
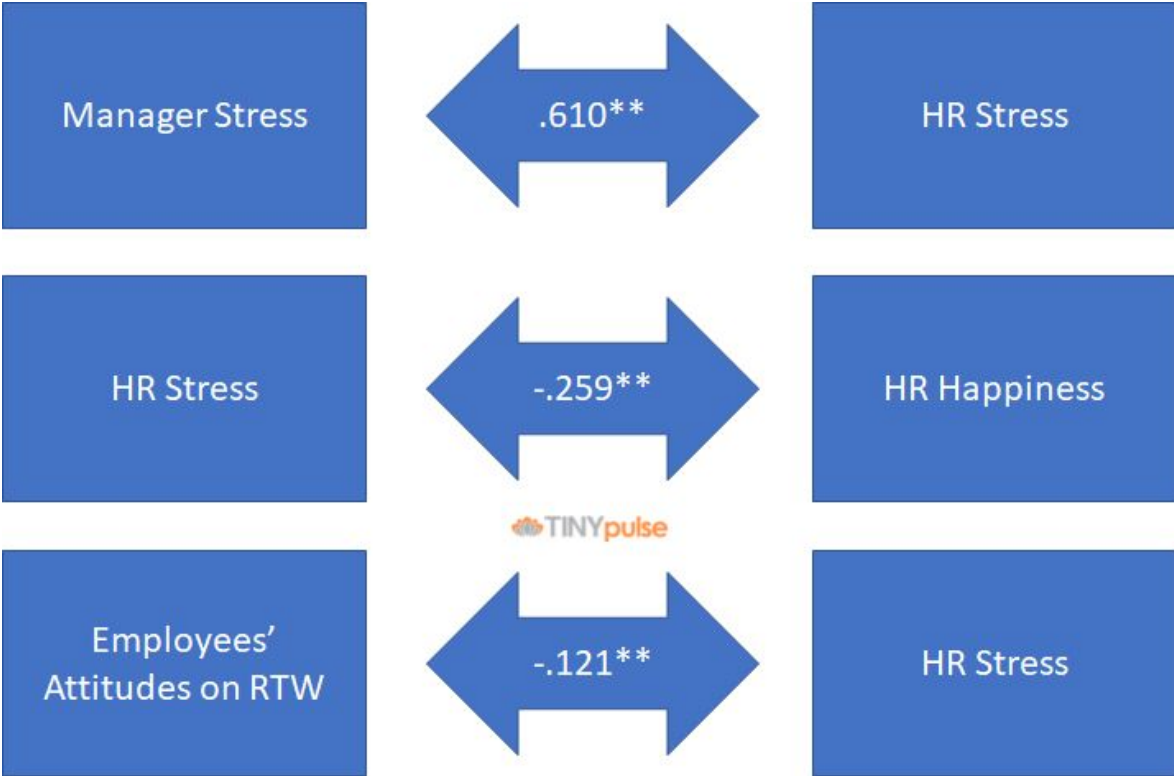
■ 3 out of 4 HR leaders reported that their employees are experiencing Somewhat to A great deal of burnout.

■ According to HR leaders , burnout is widespread among employees. Only 7.4% reported that their employees were not experiencing any burnout.

Employees Experiencing Burnout

A great deal
13.5%

Not at all
7.4%

Very little
17.7%

Quite a bit
32.5%

Somewhat
28.9%

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As for managers' stress level, it was highly correlated with HR leaders' reported stress levels. Stress also depresses happiness levels and decreases employees' enthusiasm about returning to work.
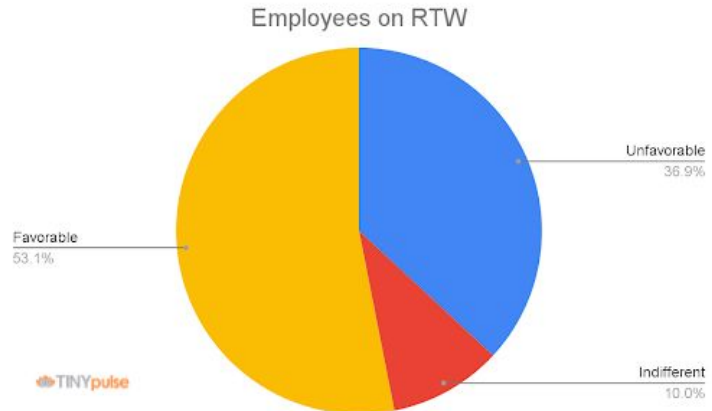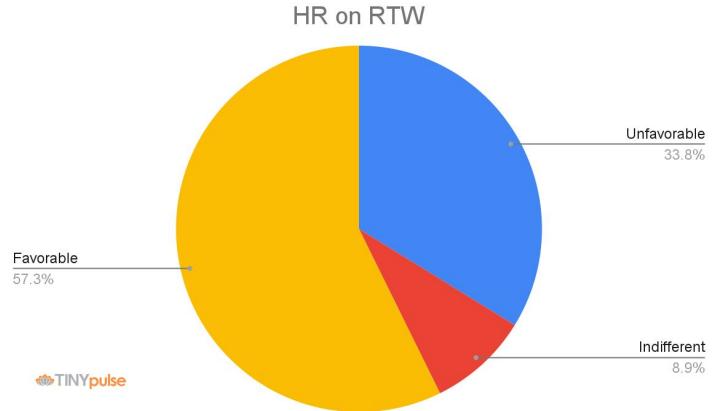
- Managers' experience of stress was highly correlated with HR Stress at 0.610 indicating that issues impacting managers are also impacting HR.

- HR leaders were more stressed when they reported more negative employee attitudes toward Return to Work at -0.121. Employees' negative RTW attitudes has proven to be a burden on management.

Manager Stress	.610**	HR Stress
HR Stress	-.259**	HR Happiness
Employees' Attitudes on RTW	-.121**	HR Stress

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**Correlations are significant at p < .001.

Overall HR leaders rated their favorability toward returning to work similarly to how they rated their employees' RTW attitudes.

- Slightly more HR leaders were Favorable (57.3%) toward returning to work compared to their opinions of employee favorability (53.1%).

- The link between HR attitudes on RTW and their belief about employee RTW attitudes is further supported by the strong correlation between their opinion and their belief on employees' opinions (.56**)

HR on RTW

Unfavorable
33.8%

Favorable
57.3%

Indifferent
8.9%

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Employees on RTW

Unfavorable
36.9%

Favorable
53.1%

Indifferent
10.0%

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**Correlations are significant at p < .001.

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To reduce employee burnout, HR leaders are opting for more hybrid work options because they are aware of the high level of emotional exhaustion that remote employees are facing.
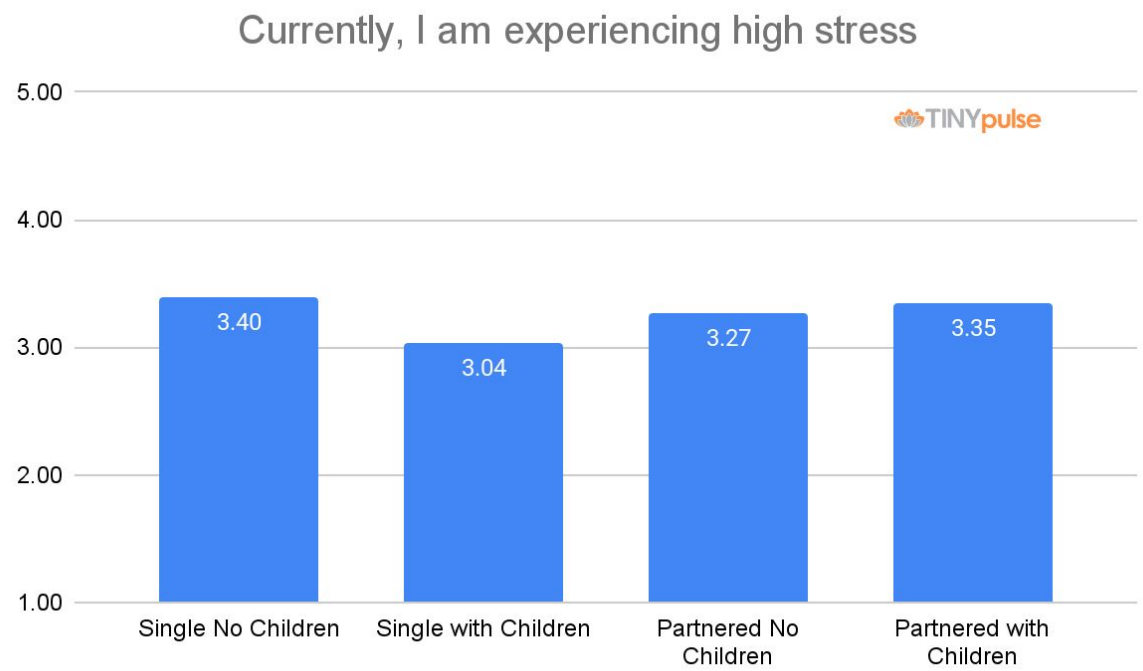
Key Insights and Implications

- HR leaders report that Remote work results in the highest level of employee emotional exhaustion.
- Burnout is rampant with 75% of HR leaders believing their people are experiencing burnout.
- Highly stressed HR leaders are less happy at work overall.
- HR leaders believe that they feel similarly to employees about returning to work.

To inform your organization's RTW plans, pulse employees to understand their feelings frequently (monthly is recommended) to calibrate and refine your approach which vary based on different roles and locales.

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Beyond One Size Fits All - Advanced Attribution Engagement

Single HR leaders with children reported the lowest Stress. In contrast, single HR leaders without children reported the highest levels of Stress.
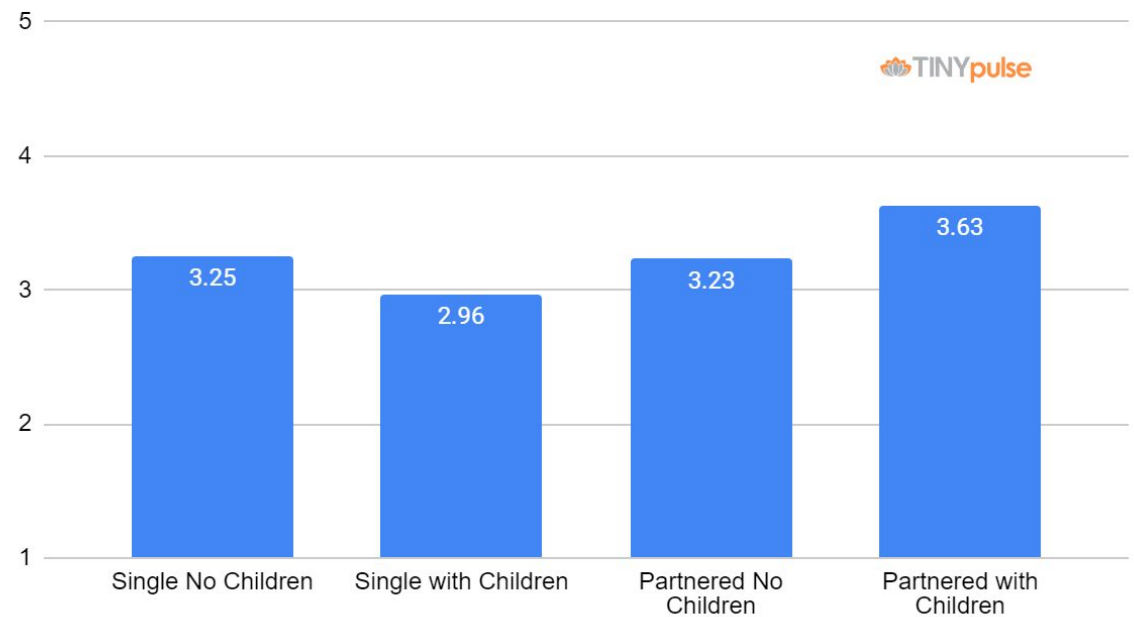
- Single HR leaders with children recorded the lowest stress level at 3.04, which was lower than people who were single with no children or who had a partner and children.

- Surprisingly, single, HR leaders with no children reported the highest levels of Stress at 3.40.

- For single HR leaders, Stress levels were either the highest or lowest depending on whether they had children.

Currently, I am experiencing high stress

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	Single No Children	Single with Children	Partnered No Children	Partnered with Children
	3.40	3.04	3.27	3.35

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Single Parents (with the lowest stress level from prior slide) correspondingly felt the least favorable toward returning to in person work.
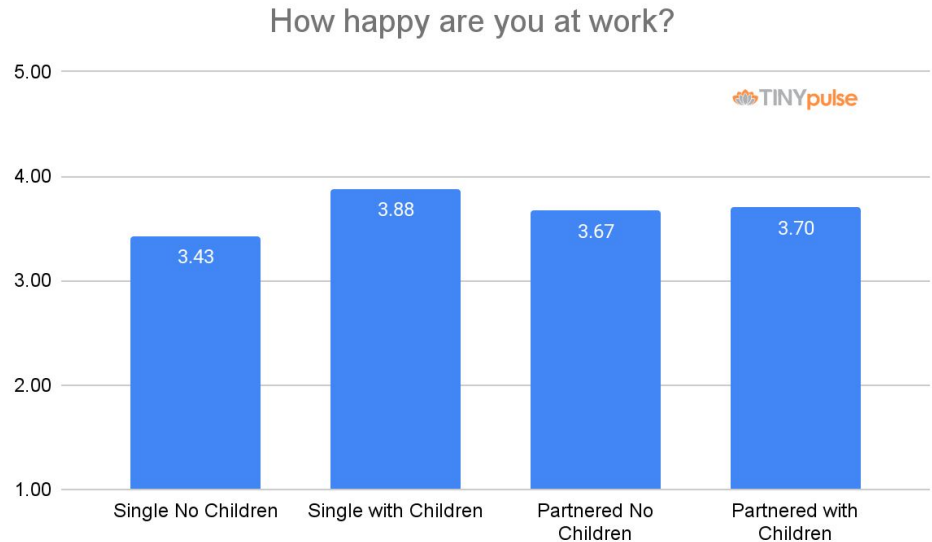
- ■ HR leaders who have children and a partner reported the most Favorable attitude toward returning to work in person at 3.63.

- ■ Given the responsibilities that single parents need to balance, it is no surprise that single HR leaders with children are the least Favorable about returning to in person work at 2.96.

How do you feel about the idea of returning to work in person?

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Single No Children	Single with Children	Partnered No Children	Partnered with Children
3.25	2.96	3.23	3.63

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Single parents reported being the Happiest at work while those who were single with no children reported being the most Unhappy at work.
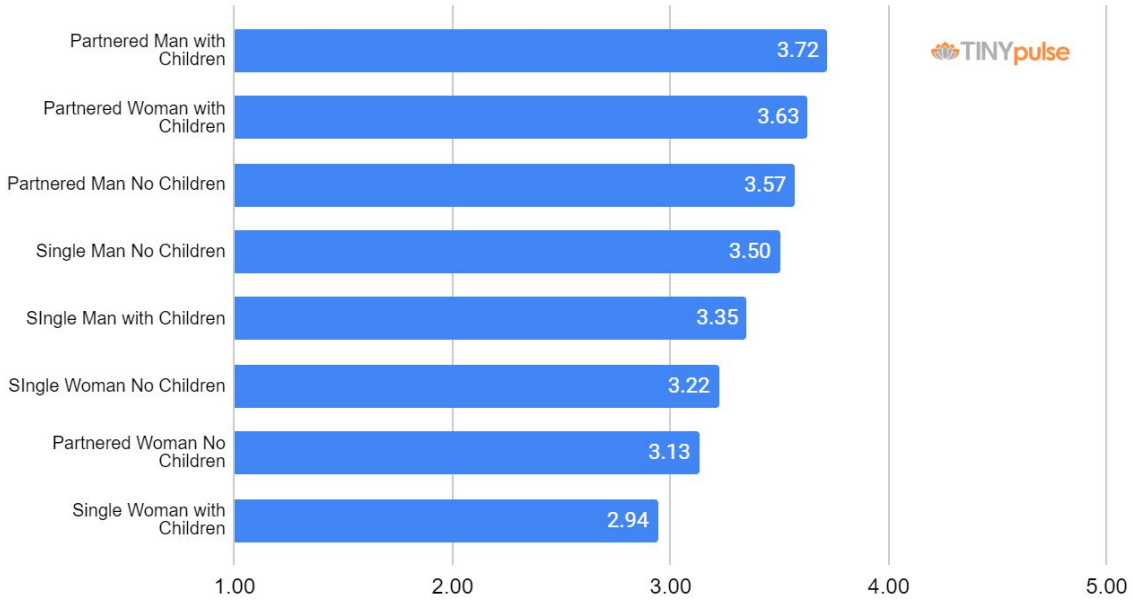
- HR leaders who are single with children reported being the Happiest at work at 3.88.

- HR leaders who are single with no children reported being the least Happy at work at 3.43.

- HR leaders with partners were sandwiched in between at 3.67 without children and 3.70 with children.

- There was a significant negative correlation of -0.259** between stress and happiness.

How happy are you at work?

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Single No Children	3.43
Single with Children	3.88
Partnered No Children	3.67
Partnered with Children	3.70

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**Correlations are significant at p < .001.

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Partnered HR leaders with children were most positive about returning to work.

- Single Female HR leaders had an average rating of 2.94 on Favorability toward returning to work. They were 26.5% less Favorable toward returning to work compared to married men with children.

- With the exception of partnered women with children (3.63), women were less Favorable toward returning to work compared to all groups of men.

Parental and Partner Status: Return to Work Favorability

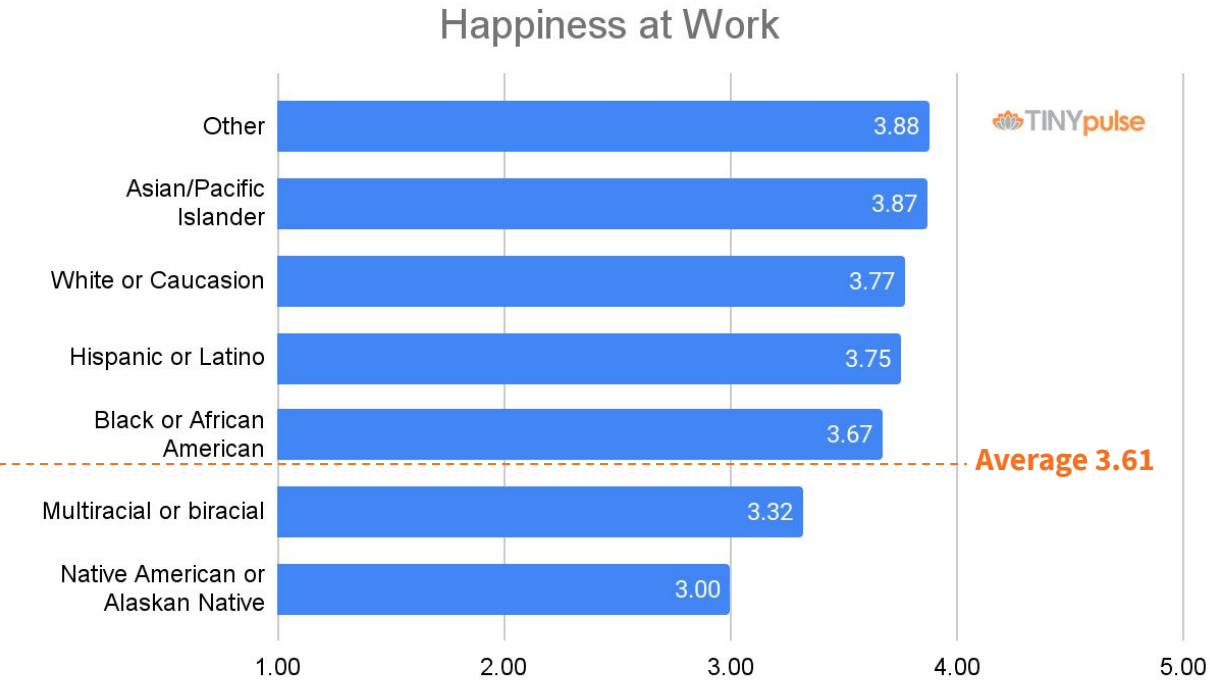| Category	Rating
Partnered Man with Children	3.72
Partnered Woman with Children	3.63
Partnered Man No Children	3.57
Single Man No Children	3.50
SIngle Man with Children	3.35
SIngle Woman No Children	3.22
Partnered Woman No Children	3.13
Single Woman with Children	2.94

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Men feel more positive about returning to work compared to women.

- Male HR leaders reported feeling 8% more Favorable (average score of 3.62) toward returning to in person work compared to female HR leaders (average score of 3.35).

- However, there were no gender differences in Happiness as work.

- These gender differences in return to work attitudes are small, but may reflect a desire to continue working from home because of added flexibility when juggling home and work demands.

Gender and Return to Work

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Favorability Toward RTW

Men	3.62
Women	3.35

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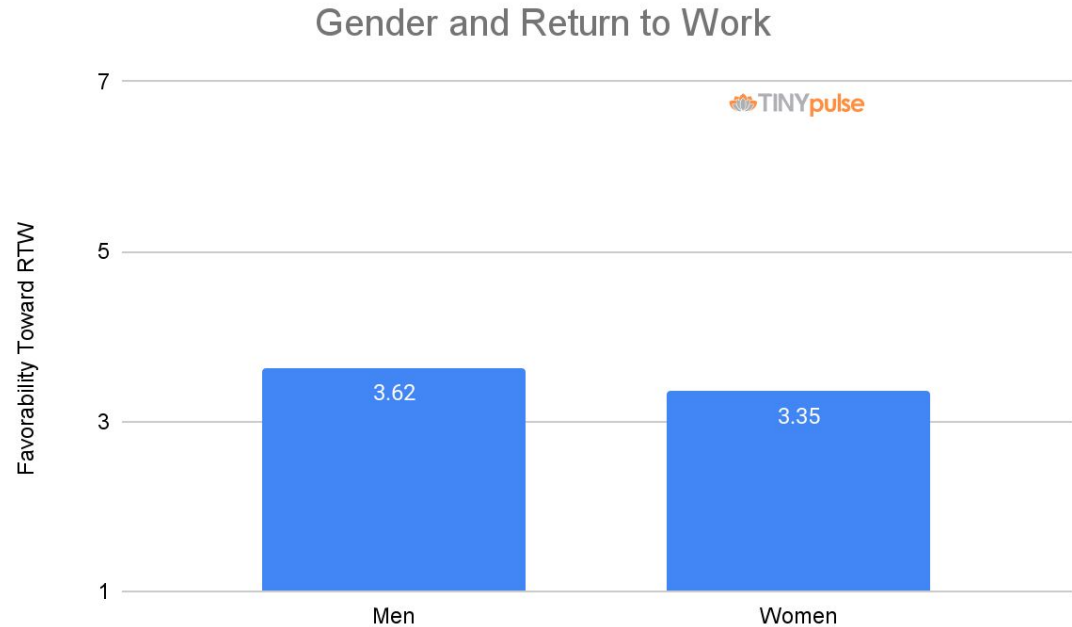
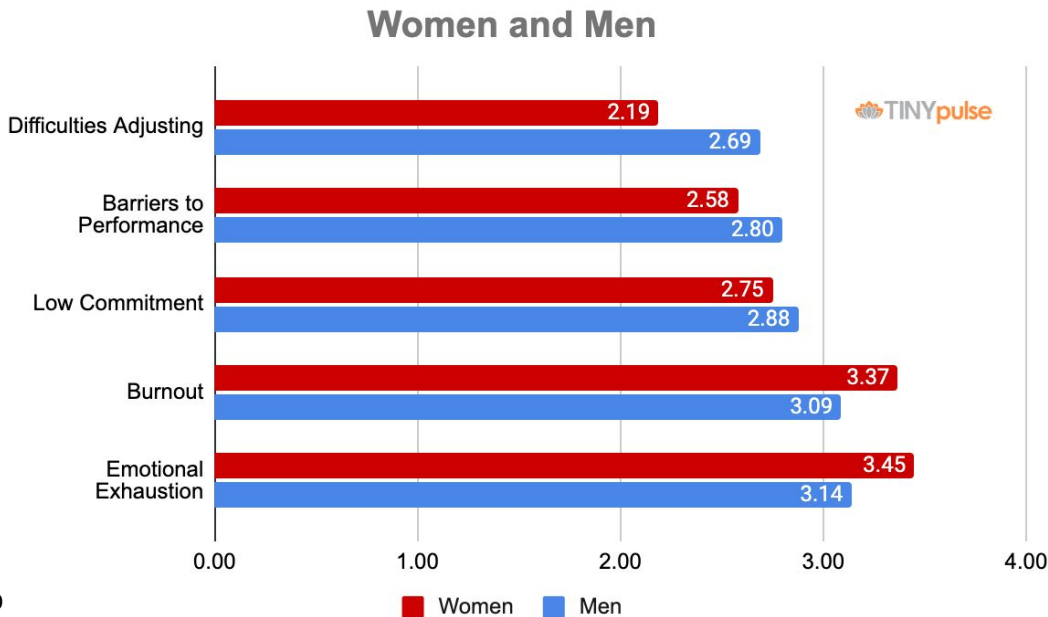# Native Americans and Alaskan Natives are the least Happy at work.

- There were significant racial differences in Happiness at work with the lowest group being 29% less Happy than the highest.

- HR leaders who identified their race as "Other" rated their Happiness at work the highest at 3.88, and they were followed closely by Asian/ Pacific Islander at 3.87.

- Multiracial/biracial and Native American/Alaskan Native respondents reported the lowest Happiness at work at 3.32 and 3.00, respectively.

Happiness at Work

Group	Score
Other	3.88
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.87
White or Caucasion	3.77
Hispanic or Latino	3.75
Black or African American	3.67
Multiracial or biracial	3.32
Native American or Alaskan Native	3.00

Average 3.61

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Female HR leaders reported more Burnout and Exhaustion among employees. Male leaders reported more concern regarding Performance and Commitment.

- Female HR leaders reported 9.9% more Emotional Exhaustion and 9.1% more Burnout among employees compared to male HR leaders.

- Male HR leaders reported that employees in their organization were experiencing more work-related issues such as Lower Commitment, Barriers to Performance, and Difficulties Adjusting to Remote Work.

- Difficulty Adjusting to Remote reflected the largest difference between men (2.69) and women (2.19), which saw men reporting 22.8% more difficulty among employees.

Women and Men

	Women	Men
Difficulties Adjusting	2.19	2.69
Barriers to Performance	2.58	2.80
Low Commitment	2.75	2.88
Burnout	3.37	3.09
Emotional Exhaustion	3.45	3.14

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Parental and partner status influence stress and happiness levels, which impacts favorability toward returning to the office.

Key Insights and Implications

- Single HR leaders with no children were the most stressed, and conversely single HR leaders with children were the least stressed.
- Not surprisingly, happier leaders were less stressed.
- Stress levels inversely correlated with return to office favorability.
- HR leaders who identify as Other or Asian/Pacific Islander were the happiest, while Native American/Alaskan Native were the least.
- Women reported higher levels of burnout and emotional exhaustion among employees compared to men.

Outcompete by creating and leveraging an advanced attribution engagement strategy to better understand, motivate, and retain your people.

The pay offered by my employer is competitive. ⌄

1 being strongly disagree, 5 being strongly agree.

All Attributes ⌃   All Segments ⌄

Group 1

Gender ⌄   Female ⌄

AND

Tenure ⌄   1-3 years ⌄

AND

Office Location ⌄   All ⌄

AND

Management Level ⌄   Manager ⌄

AND

Ethnicity ⌄   All ⌄

AND

Employee Type ⌄   Full-Time ⌄

AND

Department ⌄   Customer Success ⌄

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RTW / Hybrid Here to Stay

HR leaders in Q1 and Q2 of 2021 reported very similar expectations in terms of Returning to Business as Usual after COVID restrictions have been lifted.

- In Q2, 47% Disagree or Strongly disagree that once the pandemic is over that it will be Business as Usual versus 47% as well in Q1.

- The consistency between Q1 and Q2 indicates that HR leaders will continue to embrace new practices post pandemic.

Business as Usual after COVID Restrictions Lifted

Legend: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

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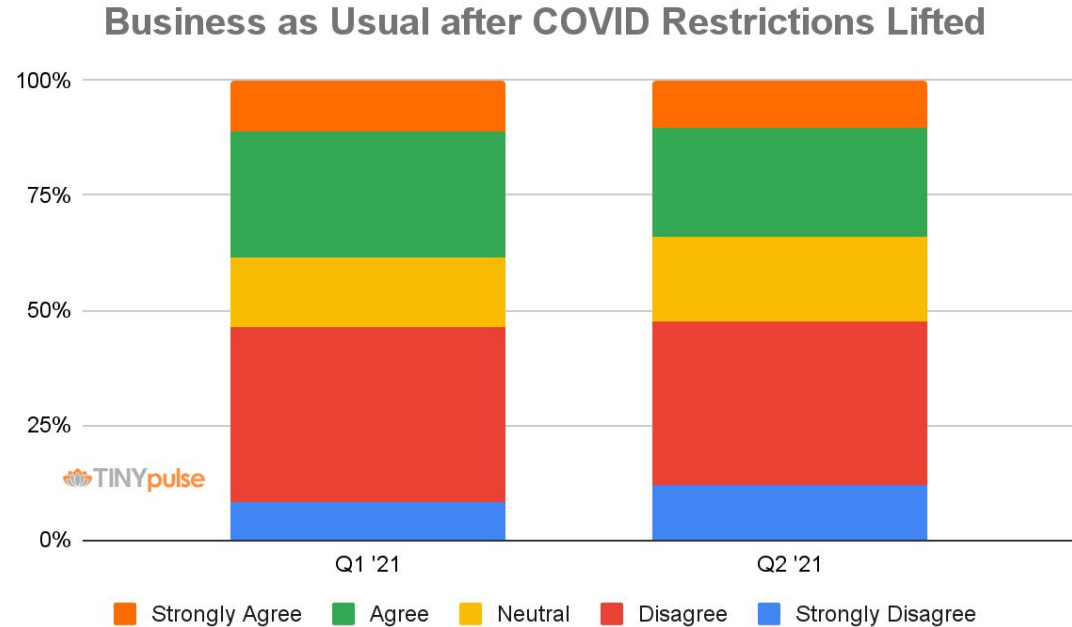
One of main driving benefits of Hybrid work is that HR leaders believe hybrid work is best for Employee Performance.
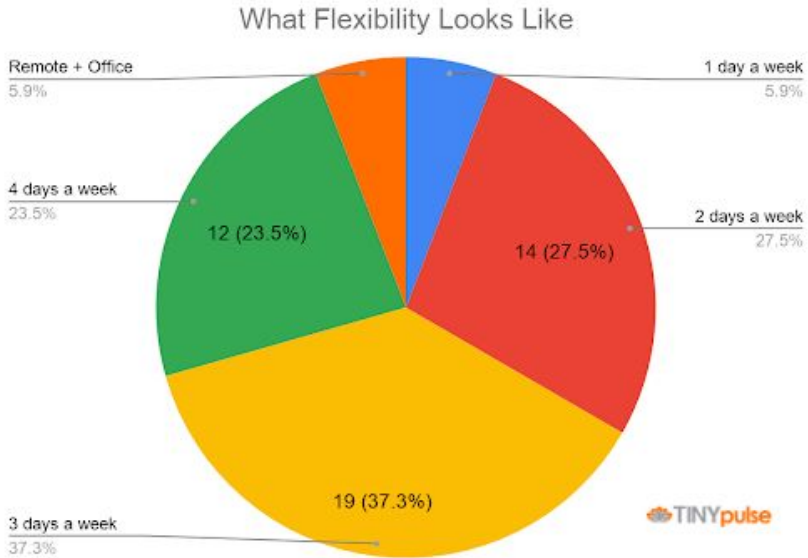
- 62.8% of HR leaders reported that Hybrid work optimizes Employee Performance in their organization.

- Only 5.3% of HR leaders reported that Remote work Optimized Performance.

- The results of this survey question suggest that work in the future may be increasingly hybrid rather than solely in person or remote.

- Interestingly, there were no significant differences by industry or size.

In your opinion, which work arrangement optimizes overall employee performance at your organization:
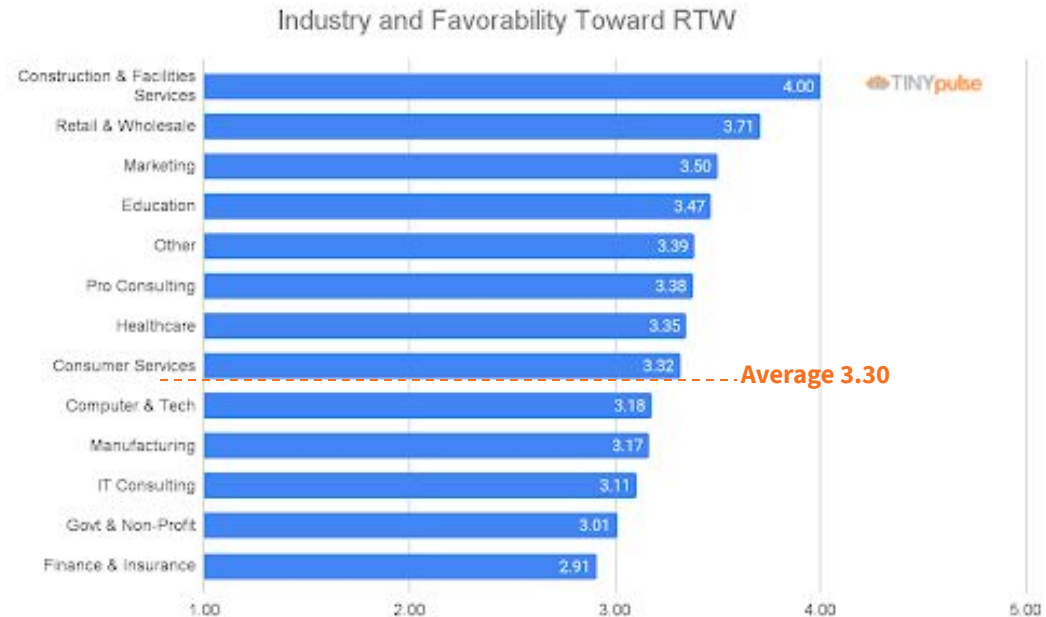
Remote work
5.3%

Performance is the same
11.8%

In person work
19.3%

Hybrid work
62.8%

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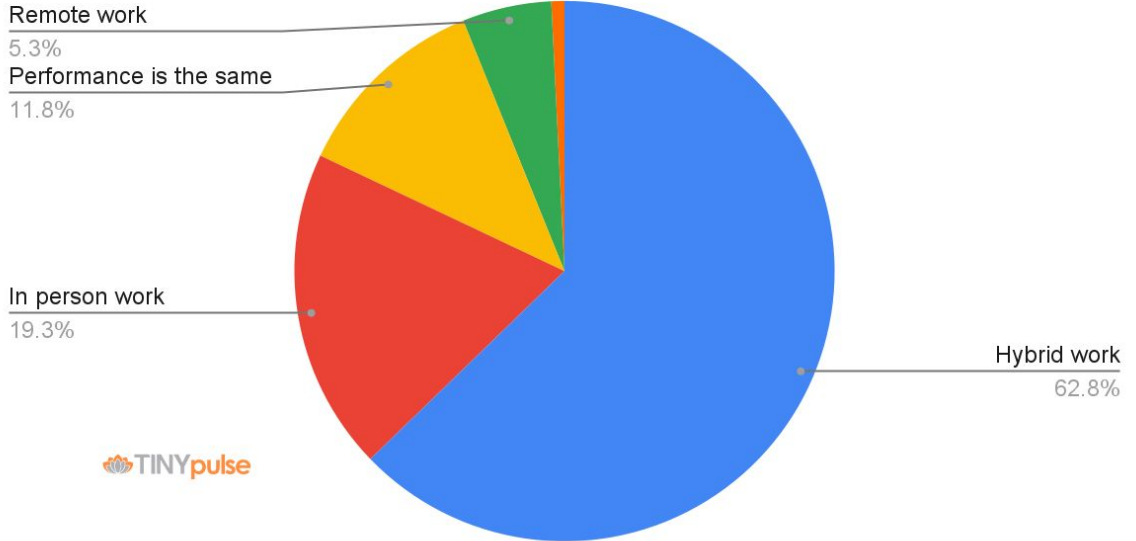
From our State of Employee Engagement Q1 2021 study, of the organizations going to a hybrid model, 3 days per week in office was most common.

- In Q1, 39% of HR leaders did not have a formalized RTW policy. For the other 61%, 3 Days a week in the office led the way as the preferred approach.

- 1 day per week was only at 6%.

- 2 and 4 days were at 24% and 28%, respectively.

- If you are still undecided, it's much easier usually to remove days in office requirements versus adding days.
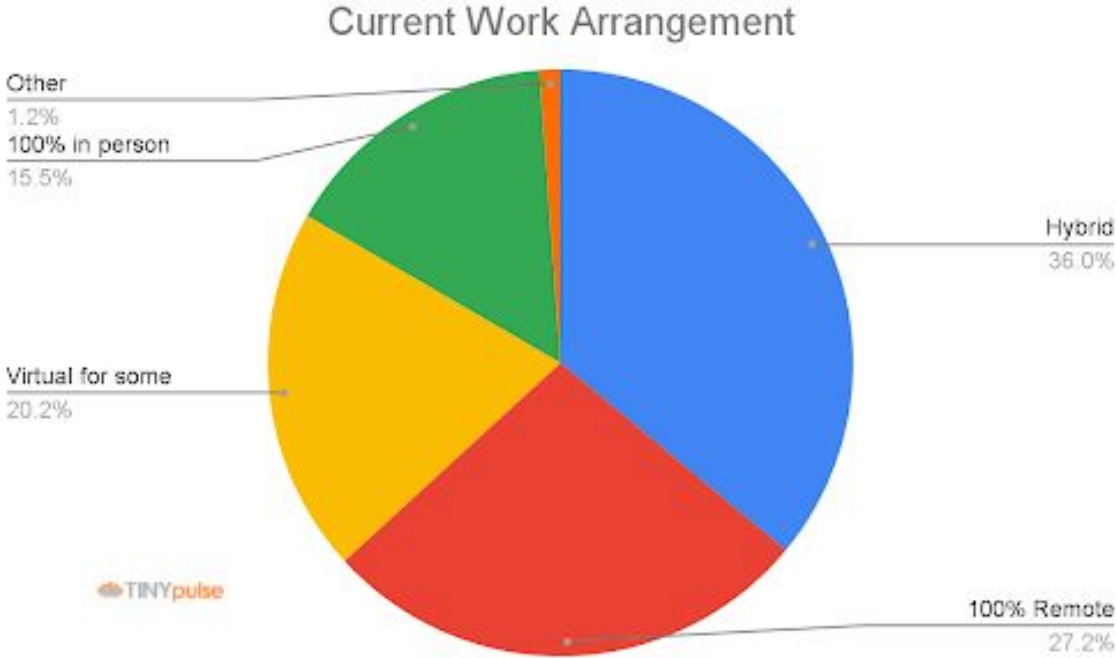

What Flexibility Looks Like

Remote + Office 5.9%

1 day a week 5.9%

4 days a week 23.5%

12 (23.5%)

2 days a week 27.5%

14 (27.5%)

3 days a week 37.3%

19 (37.3%)

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HR leaders in the Finance and Insurance reported the lowest favorability toward returning to the office.

- Construction and Facility Services felt most Favorable about returning to work at 4.00 followed by Retail and Wholesale 3.71.

- The Finance and Insurance industry was the least Favorable about returning to work at 2.91 with 52.2% indicating that they felt unfavorable toward RTW.

- Coupling the above point and that 42.9% of HR leaders in Finance and Insurance reported their workers feel negatively toward returning to the office, definitely highlights high attrition risks for financial services companies requiring employees to return to the office.

Industry and Favorability Toward RTW

Industry	Value
Construction & Facilities Services	4.00
Retail & Wholesale	3.71
Marketing	3.50
Education	3.47
Other	3.39
Pro Consulting	3.38
Healthcare	3.35
Consumer Services	3.32
Computer & Tech	3.18
Manufacturing	3.17
IT Consulting	3.11
Govt & Non-Profit	3.01
Finance & Insurance	2.91

Average 3.30

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As a result, it's not surprising to see that Hybrid is predominant current work arrangement.

- Hybrid is the most popular current work arrangement at 36.0%.

- The second-most common work arrangement was Fully Remote Work with 27.2% working from home.

- Full in person work was the least common of the main categories with only 15.5% working in the office full-time.


Current Work Arrangement

Other
1.2%
100% in person
15.5%

Virtual for some
20.2%

Hybrid
36.0%

100% Remote
27.2%

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For those companies that adopt a remote option, the majority plan to pay those employees the same regardless of location.

- 59.2% of companies intend to pay remote workers the Same Regardless of Location.

- 21.6% of organizations will Adjust Remote Workers' Pay based on locale.

- The industries that will most frequently adjust remote worker pay include IT consulting, consumer products and services, and computers and technology.

- It will be interesting to determine which organizations are more competitive in remote talent acquisition.
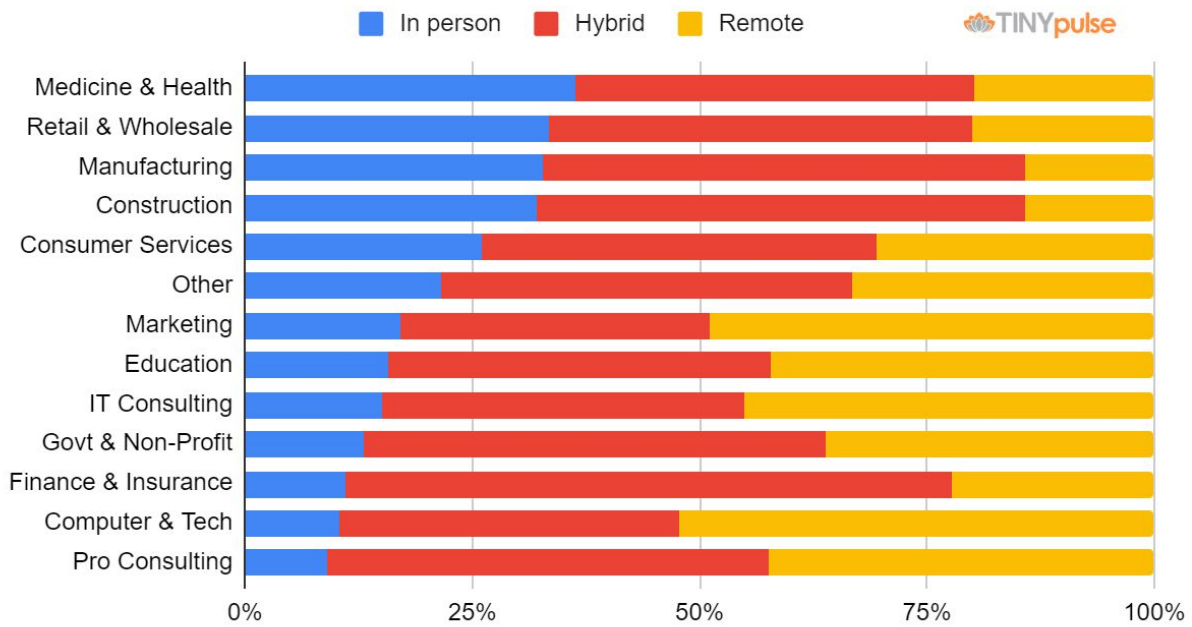
Remote Workers: Pay Adjustment by Location

Other
6.2%

Pay will be adjusted
21.6%

No remote wokers
13.0%

Same pay
59.2%

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TINYpulse
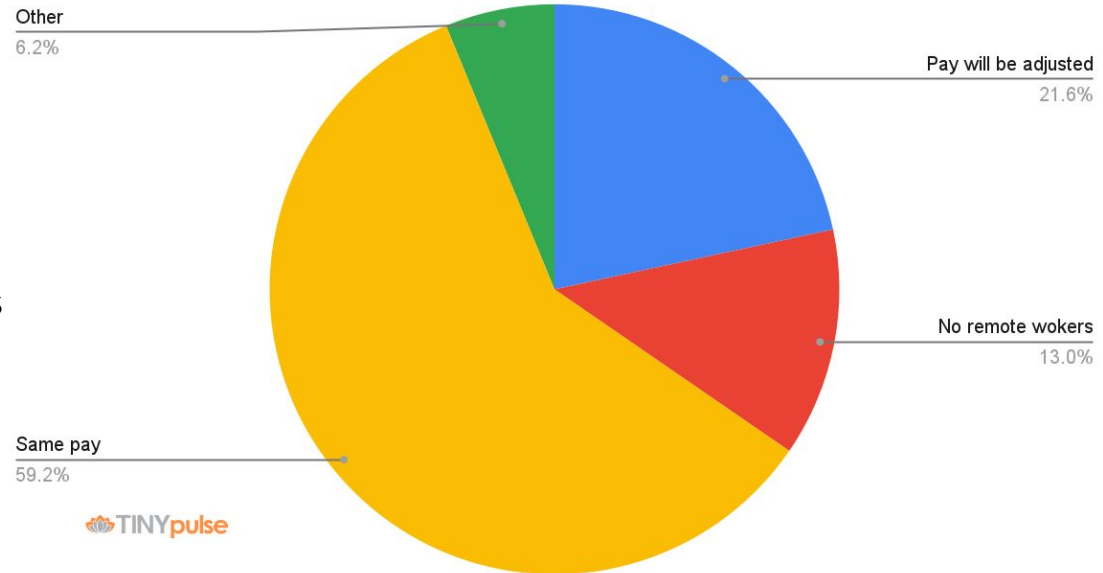
HR leaders in the Medicine and Healthcare industry reported the most in person work followed by Retail and Wholesale, Manufacturing, and Construction.

- Industries with the fewest In person workers included professional consulting services at 9.1% and computers and technology at 10.4%.

- Medicine and Health 36.4% in person workers and Retail and Wholesale included 33.3% In person workers.

- These results indicate that industries that are conducive to remote work have continued this work setting into quarter 2 of 2021.

Work Location By Industry

Legend: In person (blue), Hybrid (red), Remote (yellow)

Industries (top to bottom):
- Medicine & Health
- Retail & Wholesale
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Consumer Services
- Other
- Marketing
- Education
- IT Consulting
- Govt & Non-Profit
- Finance & Insurance
- Computer & Tech
- Pro Consulting

X-axis: 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%

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Hybrid is here to stay because the majority of HR leaders believe it optimizes performance. Three days per week in the office is the most common policy currently.

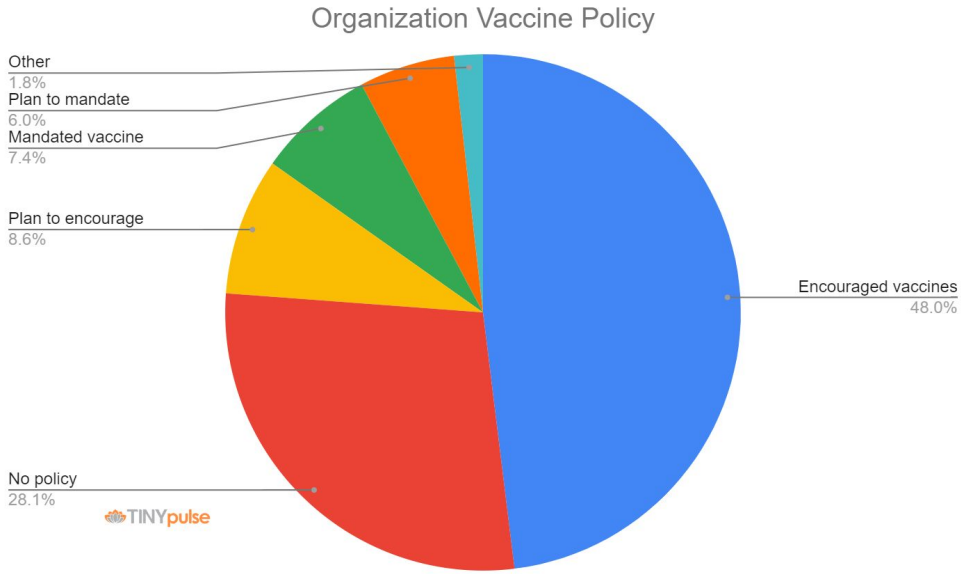## Key Insights and Implications

- About 50% of HR leaders shared that it's not going to be Business as usual moving forward.
- 63% of HR leaders cited that a Hybrid model is the best approach to optimize performance.
- And within the Hybrid context, 3 days per week is the most common approach.
- Already 36% of organizations have adopted a Hybrid model.
- Yet 59% will not adjust remote worker compensation despite different locales.
- The least favorable industry to returning to work in the office was Finance and Insurance.

Hybrid is reported as by far the best work arrangement to optimize performance. For those industries, like Finance, who are least favorable to returning to the office, they should keep a tight focus on potential turnover.

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Vaccine Status and Policies

Only 7% of companies have a vaccine mandate.

- The majority of organizations (48%) have chosen to Encourage Vaccines. The choice to Encourage Vaccines may be motivated by the overall success of work from home as well as an avoidance of potential backlash.

- The second largest percentage of HR leaders and managers (28%) indicated that they did not have a Vaccine Policy.

- Despite the extensive discussion in the media and among HR professionals, few organizations have been willing to Mandate Vaccines. Organizations may be hesitant to Mandate Vaccines because enforcing vaccines would be difficult and some employees may react negatively to mandates.

Organization Vaccine Policy

Other
1.8%
Plan to mandate
6.0%
Mandated vaccine
7.4%

Plan to encourage
8.6%

Encouraged vaccines
48.0%

No policy
28.1%

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n = 770 HR leaders and managers

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Slightly over half of HR leaders support vaccine mandates; however, 30% do not support the mandate and 6% would Consider Quitting in response to a Vaccine Mandate.
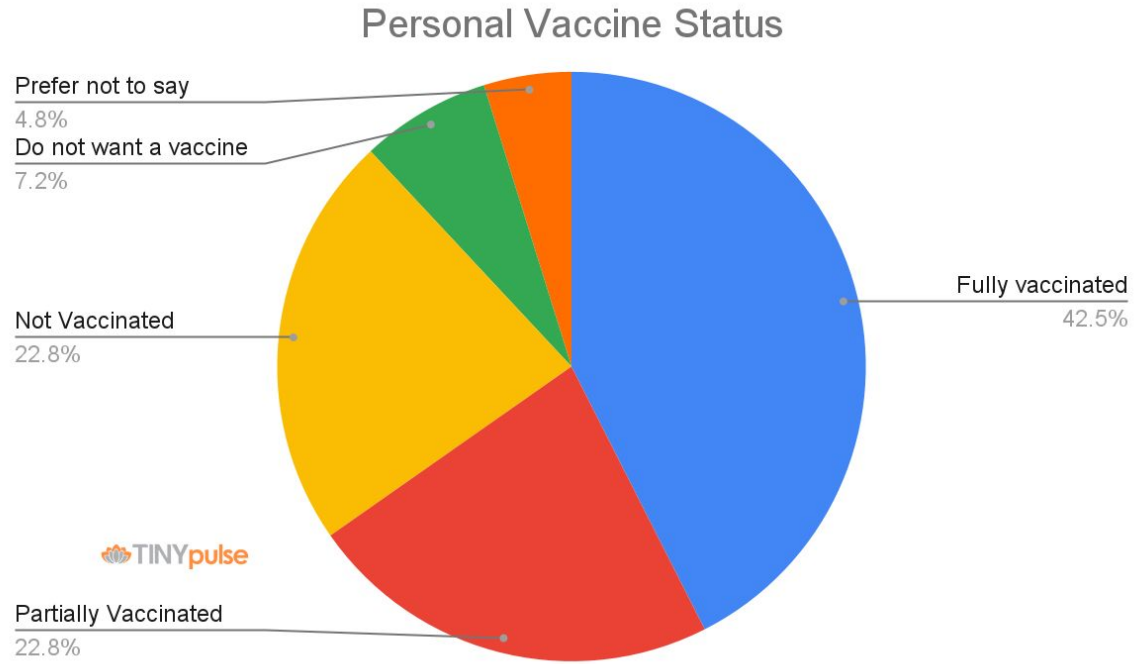
- HR leaders were divided on their support of Vaccine Mandates in their organizations.

- Interestingly, HR Leader reactions did not differ based on industry.

- The majority (30%) were in support of Mandating Vaccines. However, 6% were so against Vaccine Mandates that they would Consider Quitting.

- Given that some HR leaders would Consider Quitting over Vaccine Mandates, organizations should weigh these decisions very carefully.

HR Manager Reactions to Organizational Mandate

Other
7.8%
Consider quitting
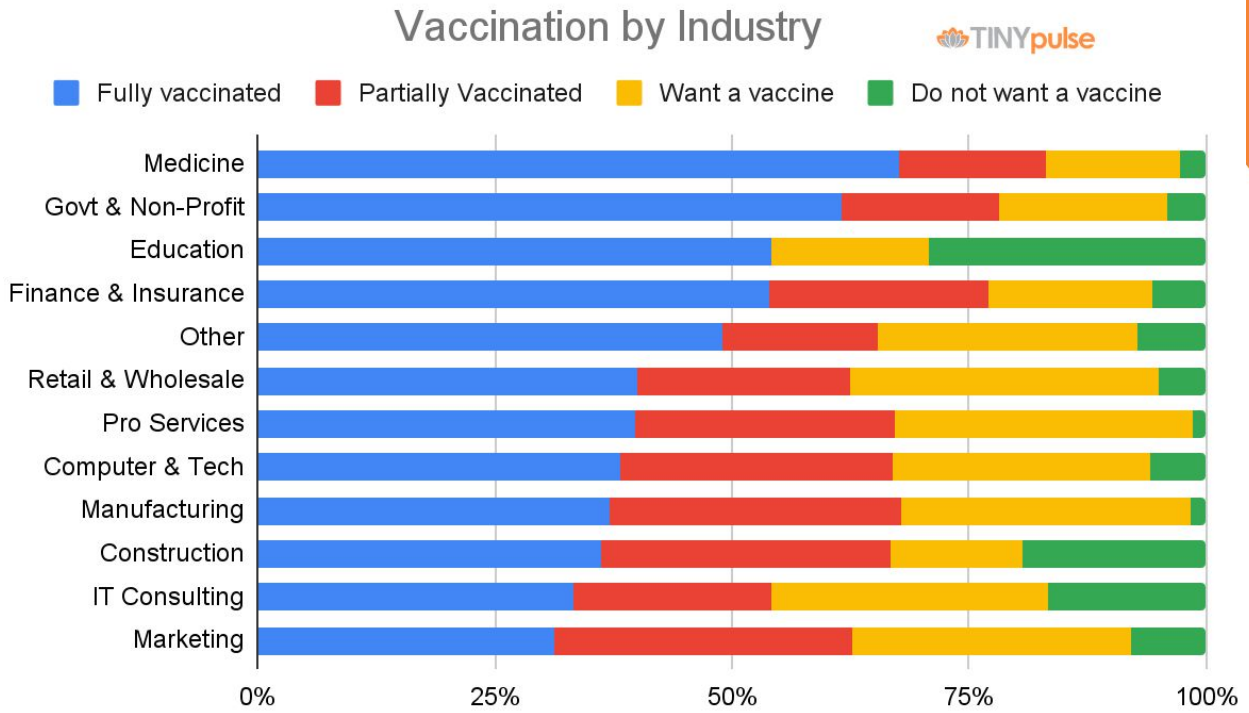6.0%

Not support
30.0%

Would support
56.2%

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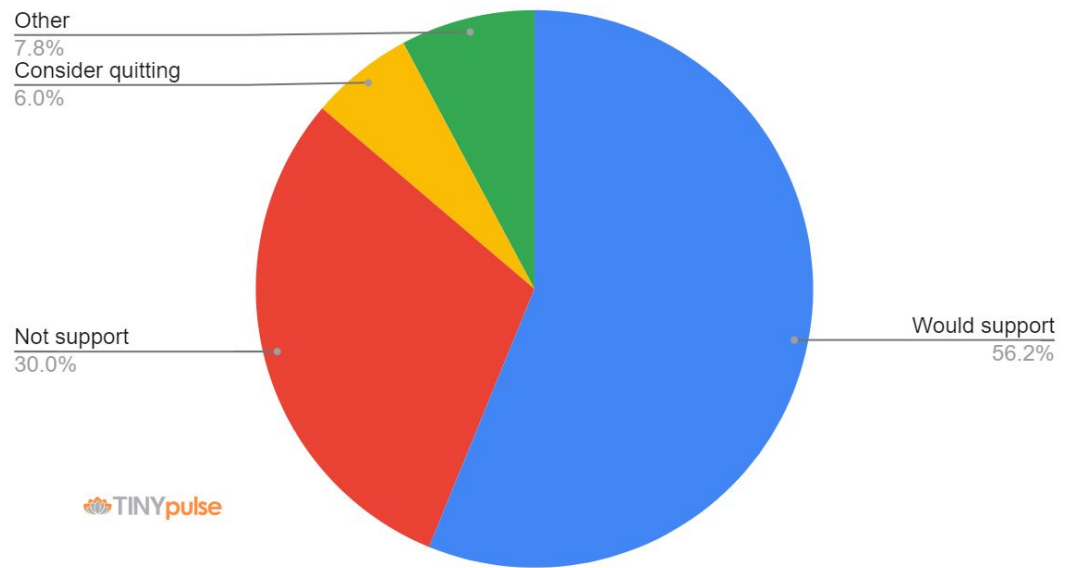
Only 7.2% do not want a vaccine. The remaining respondents who disclosed their status either Have the Vaccine or Want the Vaccine.

- The majority (88%) of HR leaders reported that they had or Wanted the Vaccine.

- This is good news for organizations concerned about how many employees will get the vaccine.

Personal Vaccine Status

Prefer not to say
4.8%

Do not want a vaccine
7.2%

Not Vaccinated
22.8%

Fully vaccinated
42.5%

Partially Vaccinated
22.8%

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There were systematic differences in vaccine status by industry

- Respondents in the medical field had the highest vaccination rate at 67.6% followed by government and non-profit workers (61.6%).

- Industries with the lowest vaccination rates were IT consulting (33.3%) and marketing (31.4%).

Vaccination by Industry

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Legend: Fully vaccinated (blue) · Partially Vaccinated (red) · Want a vaccine (yellow) · Do not want a vaccine (green)

Industries (top to bottom): Medicine, Govt & Non-Profit, Education, Finance & Insurance, Other, Retail & Wholesale, Pro Services, Computer & Tech, Manufacturing, Construction, IT Consulting, Marketing

X-axis: 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%

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Vaccinated leaders are more likely to support a mandatory vaccination policy; however, most organizations have sidestepped this issue for now. But this may pop up again if new variants explode.

Key Insights and Implications

- Only 7% of organizations reported a vaccine mandate.
- 48% of organizations encouraged vaccines, and 28% have no formal policy.
- Slightly half of HR leaders would support a mandate, while 30% would not, and 6% would consider quitting.
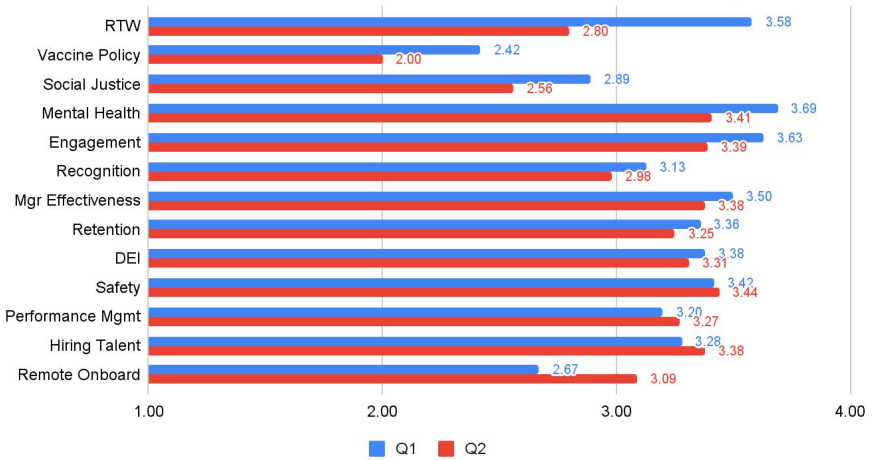- 7% of HR leaders reported that they do not want the vaccine.

Vaccines are a highly sensitive issue on many levels, which is why it's not surprising that many have opted to encourage without mandating vaccinations. To further encourage vaccinations, incentives and convenience are two leverage options to implement.

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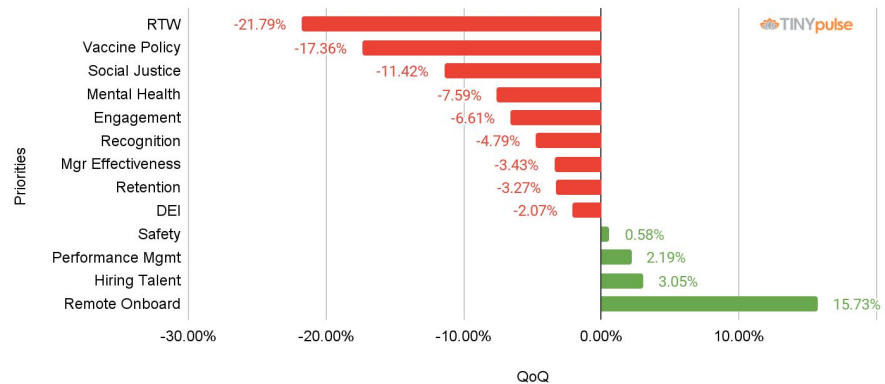
People, Priorities, and Turnover

Remote onboarding dramatically increased in priority level in Q2 of 2021

- Nearly every HR priority was rated higher in Q1 compared to Q2. In Remote onboarding dramatically increased in priority level (15.73%). Other areas that increased in in priority during Q2 were Safety (0.58% increase), Performance Management (2.19%), and Hiring Talent (3.05%).
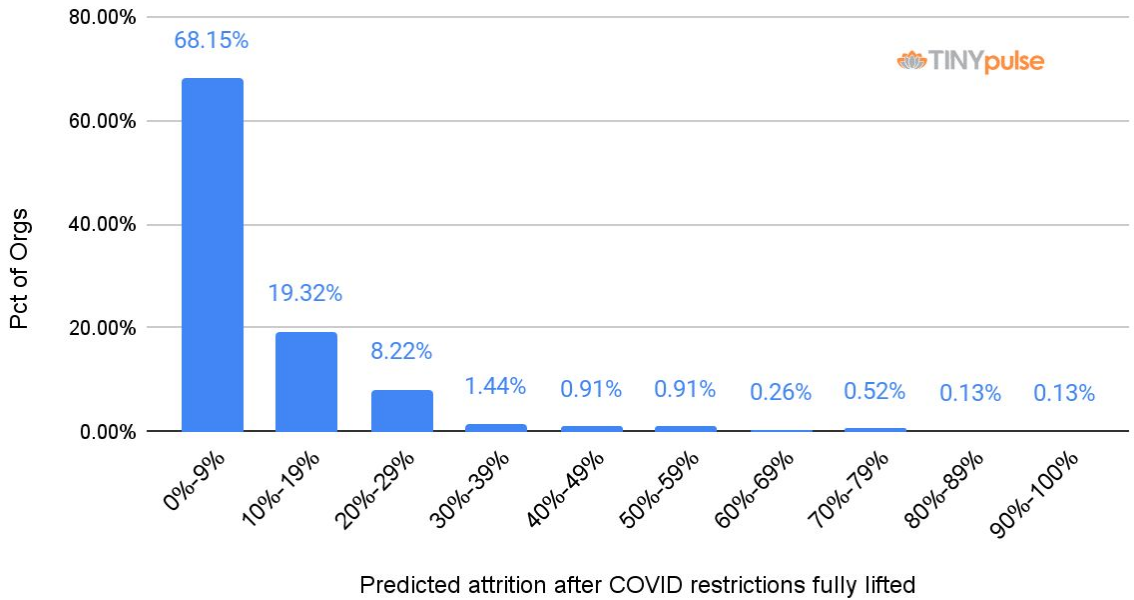

HR Priorities 2021: Q1 and Q2

Priority	Q1	Q2
RTW	3.58	2.80
Vaccine Policy	2.42	2.00
Social Justice	2.89	2.56
Mental Health	3.69	3.41
Engagement	3.63	3.39
Recognition	3.13	2.98
Mgr Effectiveness	3.50	3.38
Retention	3.36	3.25
DEI	3.38	3.31
Safety	3.42	3.44
Performance Mgmt	3.20	3.27
Hiring Talent	3.28	3.38
Remote Onboard	2.67	3.09

Q2 vs Q1 Change in HR Priorities

Priorities	QoQ
RTW	-21.79%
Vaccine Policy	-17.36%
Social Justice	-11.42%
Mental Health	-7.59%
Engagement	-6.61%
Recognition	-4.79%
Mgr Effectiveness	-3.43%
Retention	-3.27%
DEI	-2.07%
Safety	0.58%
Performance Mgmt	2.19%
Hiring Talent	3.05%
Remote Onboard	15.73%

Turnover tsunami or trickle? HR leaders reported only modest amounts of predicted Attrition post pandemic restrictions.

- 68.15% of HR leaders cited that they believe their Attrition will be 0% - 9% after restrictions are fully lifted.

- An amazing 25.46% of People leaders predicted that 0% or no one will quit after COVID restrictions are fully lifted.

- Industry was trending but not ultimately significantly different for predicted Attrition. The industry with highest predicted Attrition was Computers and Technology with an average predicted attrition rate of 11.1%

- Research from Microsoft counters this sanguine approach stating that over 41% of the global workforce is considering quitting in 2021.
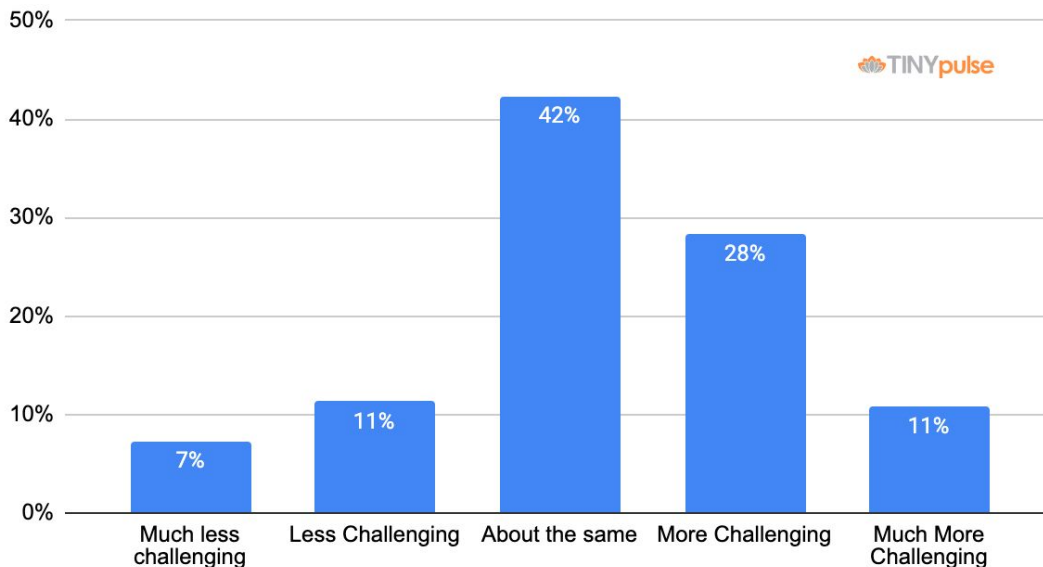
Predicted Attrition Percentage after Pandemic

Bar chart "Predicted Attrition Percentage after Pandemic". Y-axis: Pct of Orgs (0.00% to 80.00%). X-axis: Predicted attrition after COVID restrictions fully lifted.

- 0%-9%: 68.15%
- 10%-19%: 19.32%
- 20%-29%: 8.22%
- 30%-39%: 1.44%
- 40%-49%: 0.91%
- 50%-59%: 0.91%
- 60%-69%: 0.26%
- 70%-79%: 0.52%
- 80%-89%: 0.13%
- 90%-100%: 0.13%

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HR leaders are also currently reporting that it is More Challenging to Fill Open Roles compared to before the pandemic.

- 39% of HR leaders reported that it was More Challenging to Fill Open Roles compared to 18% of HR leaders reporting that it was Less Challenging to Fill Open Roles after the pandemic.

- These findings were consistent across geographic location and industry.

- This indicates that People leaders are more likely to experience talent acquisition challenges in 2021.
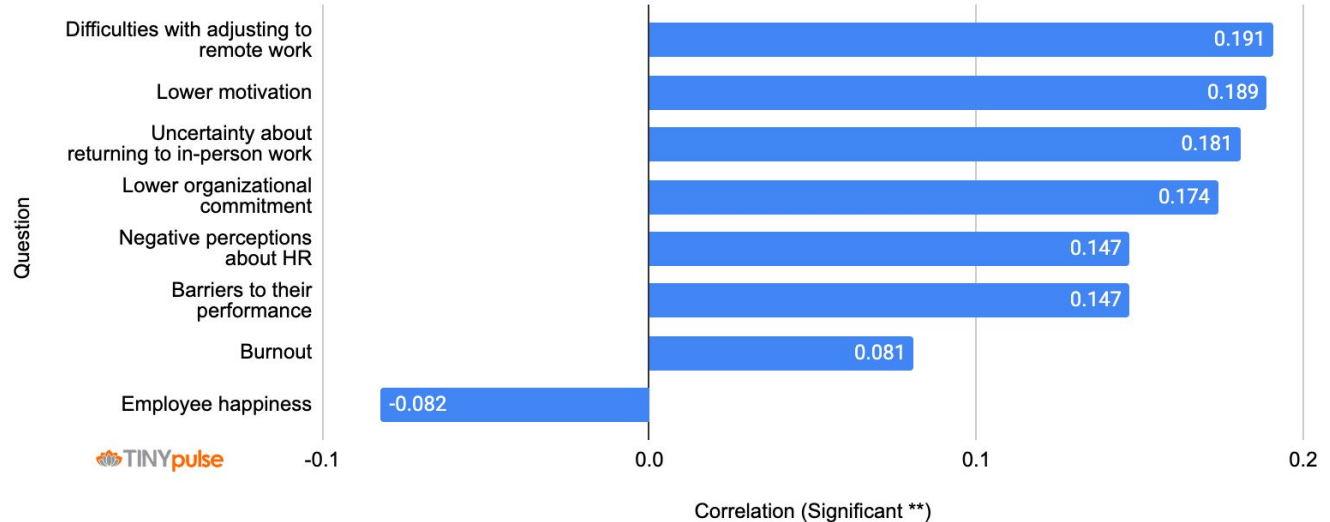
How challenging is it to fill open roles?

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Category	Percentage
Much less challenging	7%
Less Challenging	11%
About the same	42%
More Challenging	28%
Much More Challenging	11%

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HR leaders who reported that employees were facing difficulties with Adjusting to Remote Work and Lower Motivation levels also predicted higher Attrition.
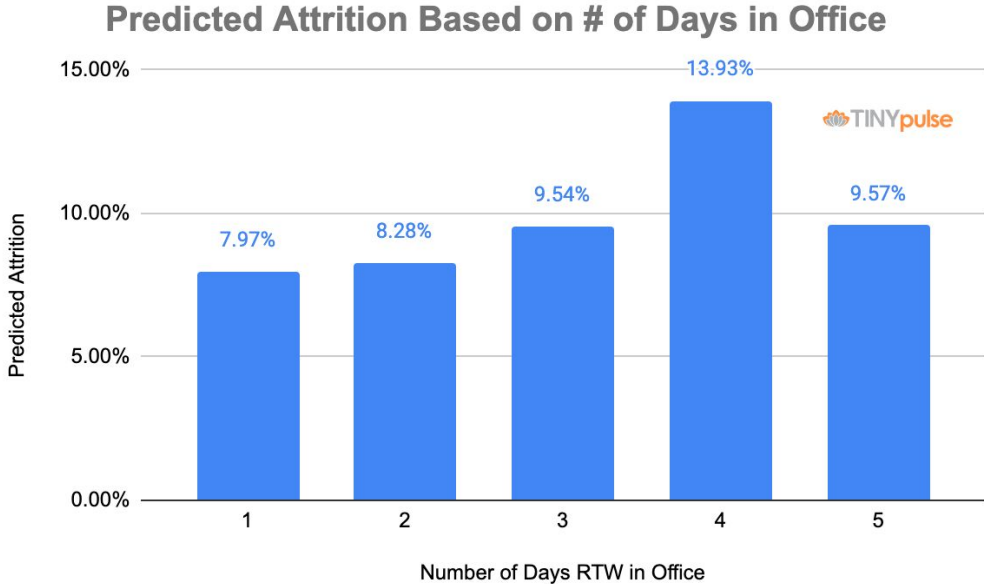
- HR leaders who reported more employee Happiness also reported less predicted Attrition (-0.082).

- The top two factors that drive predicted Attrition are Difficulties with Adjusting to Remote Work (0.191) and Lower Motivation (0.189).

- According to HR leaders, Burnout was not a top factor fueling Attrition.

Factors Fueling HR Managers' Predictions for Attrition

Question	Correlation (Significant **)
Difficulties with adjusting to remote work	0.191
Lower motivation	0.189
Uncertainty about returning to in-person work	0.181
Lower organizational commitment	0.174
Negative perceptions about HR	0.147
Barriers to their performance	0.147
Burnout	0.081
Employee happiness	-0.082

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Returning to the office for in person work 4 Days a Week was associated with the highest predicted Attrition rate.

- HR leaders predicted the highest Attrition percentage when RTW plans included 4 days a week in the office at 13.93%, followed by 5 Days in the office at 9.57%, then 3 Days in the office at 9.54%.

- HR leaders shared that requiring 1 or 2 days in the office is the optimal approach if they're trying to minimize Attrition.

Predicted Attrition Based on # of Days in Office

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Number of Days RTW in Office	Predicted Attrition
1	7.97%
2	8.28%
3	9.54%
4	13.93%
5	9.57%

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The shift this year from Q1's focus on engagement to Q2's focus on hiring has been mind boggling. People leaders may be emboldened to shift their priorities because they think they'll just experience a trickle versus tsunami of turnover.

Key Insights and Implications

- Q2 marked a shift in HR priorities from engagement to hiring.
- Most HR leaders think the "Great Resignation" will be more a trickle than tsunami of turnover.
- At the same time, 39% cited that it's harder to hire now.
- HR leaders believe that difficulty adjusting to remote work and lower motivation drives attrition. But if you're happy, you're less likely to quit.
- RTW policies that require 4 days a week in the office will likely translate into more turnover than 1-3 days.

This is a critical juncture for HR and organizations as they simultaneously navigate a massive RTW shift and hiring crunch with a tightening labor market. It's definitely important to keep the pulse on employee sentiment to avoid the "leaky bucket" of talent when hiring, especially if "Great Resignation" is underestimated.

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Recap

■ **Hybrid is here to stay**.

■ **Vaccinations encouraged and rarely required**.

■ **Marked shift of HR priorities to focus on hiring**.

■ **Turnover tsunami versus trickle coming to a head**.

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