

Concerns about Office Cleanliness and Hygiene Measures Weigh on American Workers as Many Begin Returning to the Office

Essity survey prompts question – will businesses step up to the challenge to meet the new hygiene expectations of post-pandemic work life?

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What hygiene measures make employees feel **confident and safe** returning to the workplace?

A recent survey of U.S. workers offers insights to stepped-up hygiene and cleanliness expectations for office and public spaces in post-pandemic life.



Source: Results of an online survey conducted within the United States by the Harris Poll on behalf of Essity, from May 5-7, 2021, among 2,064 adults ages 18 and older. <https://www.essityusa.com/media/us-news/2021/backtobusiness.html>



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PHILADELPHIA, June 30, 2021 /3BL Media/ - **Essity**, a leading global hygiene and health company, today announced the results of its **“Return to Workplace”** survey, conducted online on its behalf by The Harris Poll to better understand the hygiene issues that are of greatest concern to employees as they transition back to the office after more than a year of working remotely during the pandemic. In addition to providing insights on the changes in attitudes and behaviors when it comes to personal and workplace hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness, the survey specifically offers businesses a look into what people expect at work and other public places to facilitate office-wide adherence to hygiene protocols.

While “COVID fatigue” has Americans eager to put the pandemic behind them, survey results show that actions to increase health safety through better hygiene are here to stay. *Essity’s survey revealed that 84% of Americans intend to continue the enhanced hygiene practices they adopted during the pandemic such as more frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer, even as more Americans become vaccinated against COVID-19. However, employees question whether their workplace will maintain cleanliness protocols—with 65% of employed Americans who went into an office prior to COVID-19 expressing concern about the cleanliness and hygiene of the space before going back to the office. Moreover, as 59% of employed Americans who worked in an office prior to COVID-19 have at least some concern about being around coworkers, they also have heightened expectations of their employers when it comes to hygiene protocols in the office, and would like to see employers and building operators provide resources such as hand sanitization stations (58%), more frequent cleaning and sanitizing (58%), hands-free restroom fixtures (48%) and higher capacity paper towel dispensers in common areas and in bathrooms (35%).*

“As the world continues to open up and people resume interacting and living life in a more regular way, the role of hygiene will certainly remain more top-of-mind in the workplace and other public spaces than it was in the past, and this prioritized mindset comes across clearly in the research,” said Amy Bellcourt, Vice President Communications, Professional Hygiene, Essity North America. “We undertook this survey to prompt employers to ask themselves, ‘Are we ready?’ to welcome employees back by addressing their concerns, and then provide the insights needed to fully assess back-to-work plans so that there can be time to implement changes to ensure employees are in a consistently safe and healthy environment.”

The “Return to Workplace” survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Essity, from May 5-7, 2021 among 700 men and women 18 years of age and older who worked in an office setting prior to the pandemic. Key findings include the following:

Office workers have a significant concern about office hygiene and cleanliness.

- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of employed Americans who went into an office prior to COVID-19 are/were concerned about the cleanliness and hygiene of the office upon their return.

Office workers have high expectations on office hygiene.

- 84% of employed Americans who went into an office prior to COVID-19 are confident that their employer is/will enforce proper hygiene protocols in the office

The attitude toward extra hygiene is here to stay.

- More than half (58%) of employed Americans who went into an office prior to COVID-19 would like to see increased cleaning and sanitizing measures implemented at their office as a result of COVID-19

- 84% of Americans are likely to continue the enhanced hygiene protocols they adopted due to the pandemic even as more Americans become vaccinated against COVID-19, such as more frequent hand washing, using hand sanitizer and washing hands for a longer period of time.
- The overwhelming majority of American adults still believe increased cleaning and sanitizing are important in public places, such as doctors' offices/healthcare facilities (90%), restaurants (89%), hotels (88%), theaters (88%), fitness centers (87%), retail stores (86%), and entertainment facilities (stadiums/museums) (86%)

It's more than just having a place to wash your hands. The majority of employed Americans who went into an office prior to COVID-19 (89%) would like to see cleaning/hygiene measures implemented at their office as a result of COVID-19:

- Hand sanitizer stations (58%)
- Increased cleaning and sanitizing (58%)
- Hands-free restroom fixtures (48%)
- Increased communication and signage on safety and cleanliness protocols (44%)
- Higher capacity paper towel dispensers in common areas and in bathrooms (35%)

Old habits can be changed as those who have already returned to the office are noticing some new coworker behaviors:

- Using hand sanitizer more often 57%
- Washing hands more often 53%
- Shaking hands less 51%
- Sanitizing hands after coughing or sneezing 41%
- Washing hands after coughing or sneezing 37%
- Washing or sanitizing hands after touching public surfaces 36%
- Washing hands for a longer duration 35%
- Wearing gloves to touch public surfaces 34%
- Drying hands with a towel/paper towel vs. air drying 31%
- Using objects to touch public surfaces (e.g., on elevators, to open doors, utilize keypads) 30%

Survey methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of **Essity** from May 5 - 7, 2021 among 2,064 adults ages 18 and older (700 employed Americans who went into an office prior to COVID-19). This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact Carol Lungner (clunger@abccreative.com) or Jennifer Buchman (jbuchman@abccreative.com).

About Essity

Essity is a leading global hygiene and health company. We are dedicated to improving well-being through our products and services. Sales are conducted in approximately 150 countries under the leading global brands TENA and Tork, and other strong brands, such as JOBST, Leukoplast, Libero, Libresse, Lotus, Nosotras, Saba, Tempo, Vinda and Zewa. Essity has about 46,000 employees. Net sales in 2020 amounted to approximately \$13.3 billion. The company's headquarters is located in Stockholm, Sweden, and Essity is listed on Nasdaq Stockholm. Essity breaks barriers to well-being and contributes to a healthy, sustainable and circular society. More information at www.essityusa.com.

Philadelphia is Essity's North American headquarters. In addition to Pennsylvania, Essity has U.S. operations in Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, Oklahoma, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin.

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