

# Return to Workplace Survey 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges and opportunities across Colorado State University. All but essential employees, as defined by the Pandemic Preparedness Team, left CSU facilities in March 2020. Since then, some employees have returned to their workplace while most have not. As more units returned to the workplace through a phased approach and as the Fall 2020 semester approached, the institution sought to understand employee concerns and areas of confidence so that appropriate supports would be in place for the transition.

## Survey Design and Administration

The Return to Workplace Survey was short, with a median completion time of about seven minutes. Individual survey responses are confidential. The current report discusses strictly aggregate results and major themes. The survey was designed by a small group that included representation from the Office of the President, Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President, Human Resources and the Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity and Title IX and the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness. The survey questions can be found in Appendix A. The survey was sent on July 31 to all current employees (N = 10,854) except for student hourly employees; graduate assistants were included. The survey closed on August 10. The timeline of the administration (two weeks) and reporting (an additional three weeks) limit the utility of the results at this time because of the rapidly changing COVID-19 context. However, prior to reporting, initial findings were provided to the Office of the President to ensure they were acted upon in a timely manner and divisions were contacted as necessary to relay initial findings.

## Results

The response rate of the survey was 33.4% (3,630 people) although not every respondent answered every question. Table 1 displays the frequency counts, by demographic, for the survey distribution and the respondents as well as the proportion of the total that each represents. For example, the survey was sent to 3,913 administrative professional staff and 1,631 responded. They represented 36.05% of the distribution and 44.93% of respondents; they are over-represented in the results. Graduate students represented 16.81% of the distribution but only 10.65% of the respondents; they are under-represented.

Table 1. Demographics

Demographic	Counts		Percent of Total	
	Respondents	Total	Respondents	Total
Admin Professional	1631	3913	44.93%	36.05%
Faculty	772	1975	21.27%	18.20%
Graduate Assistant	394	1825	10.85%	16.81%
Non-Student Hourly	63	946	1.74%	8.72%
Other Salaried Employee	59	292	1.63%	2.69%
State Classified	711	1903	19.59%	17.53%
Female	2239	5807	61.68%	53.50%
Male	1391	5047	38.32%	46.50%
Minority	433	1687	11.93%	15.54%
Non-Minority	3197	9167	88.07%	84.46%
Academic Affairs	2106	7101	58.02%	65.42%
Student Affairs	411	1118	11.32%	10.30%
Operations	1113	2635	30.66%	24.28%

At the time of the survey, 900 respondents said they had already returned to the workplace or never worked remotely, 32% of them were uncomfortable with being in the workplace at that time. Of those who had not yet returned (2644 respondents), 70% were uncomfortable returning. Neither group was comfortable that students would take the virus seriously when they return for the fall semester. There were greater levels of comfort with supervisors, colleagues, and the availability of PPE. It is interesting to note that, generally, employees who had not yet returned to CSU facilities reported higher levels of concern about doing do than those that had already returned (or never went remote). Table 2 displays the response frequencies.

Table 2: Please share your level of comfort with the following statements. In your daily workplace(s) (office, lab, classroom, etc.)...

Question and Employee Status	Extremely uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Neither	Somewhat comfortable	Extremely comfortable	Total
<b>Public health regulations are/will be followed</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	5%	14%	9%	38%	34%	850
Have not returned yet	15%	28%	8%	33%	17%	2513
<b>Necessary personal protective equipment is/will be provided</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	7%	13%	11%	30%	38%	847
Have not returned yet	9%	20%	15%	36%	21%	2512
<b>Mandatory symptom reporting is/will be required before entering the workplace</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	5%	10%	18%	29%	38%	848
Have not returned yet	9%	16%	16%	34%	25%	2510
<b>Cleaning/sanitizing occurs/will occur daily</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	7%	13%	13%	29%	38%	847
Have not returned yet	9%	19%	12%	36%	24%	2507
<b>Cleaning/sanitizing supplies are/will be made readily available</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	5%	12%	11%	30%	42%	848
Have not returned yet	7%	16%	13%	37%	25%	2503
<b>Social distancing protocols are/will be maintained by my colleagues</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	8%	14%	12%	34%	31%	849
Have not returned yet	12%	26%	11%	34%	17%	2505
<b>My colleagues take/will take the virus threat seriously</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	6%	14%	13%	31%	36%	849
Have not returned yet	9%	21%	11%	33%	26%	2506
<b>My supervisor encourages/will encourage employees to stay home if they or a family member are sick</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	1%	4%	7%	19%	68%	850
Have not returned yet	4%	5%	6%	21%	64%	2506
<b>My colleagues understand/will understand what is expected of them in maintaining a healthy environment</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	2%	10%	11%	33%	44%	849
Have not returned yet	6%	16%	12%	39%	27%	2506
<b>Appropriate health measures are being/will be taken</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	6%	10%	15%	33%	37%	848
Have not returned yet	12%	22%	15%	36%	15%	2507
<b>Personal protective equipment is/will be used as necessary</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	4%	10%	11%	32%	43%	850
Have not returned yet	11%	26%	13%	35%	15%	2506
<b>Students will take the virus threat seriously when they return for the fall semester</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	45%	27%	15%	8%	5%	846
Have not returned yet	49%	31%	9%	7%	3%	2503

Table 2 (cont.): Please share your level of comfort with the following statements. In your daily workplace(s) (office, lab, classroom, etc.)...

Question and Employee Status	Extremely uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Neither	Somewhat comfortable	Extremely comfortable	Total
<b>I am/will be provided health information for my area as needed</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	8%	15%	19%	27%	31%	847
Have not returned yet	8%	15%	18%	35%	23%	2507
<b>Masks are/will be worn as required</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	6%	12%	10%	30%	43%	850
Have not returned yet	15%	24%	11%	33%	17%	2507
<b>How comfortable are/will you be at your workplace?</b>						
Already returned or never worked remotely	8%	24%	11%	30%	27%	890
Have not returned yet	32%	38%	9%	15%	6%	2648

Table 3 displays the level of concern respondents reported about being in their workplace. The questions are ordered with those posing the most concern at the top. Seventy-three percent of respondents expressed concern about an outbreak at their workplace later this fall, while 67% were concerned about having in-person interactions with students and with transferring the virus from the workplace to a loved one at home. Almost half of all respondents expressed concern that colleagues would come to work sick.

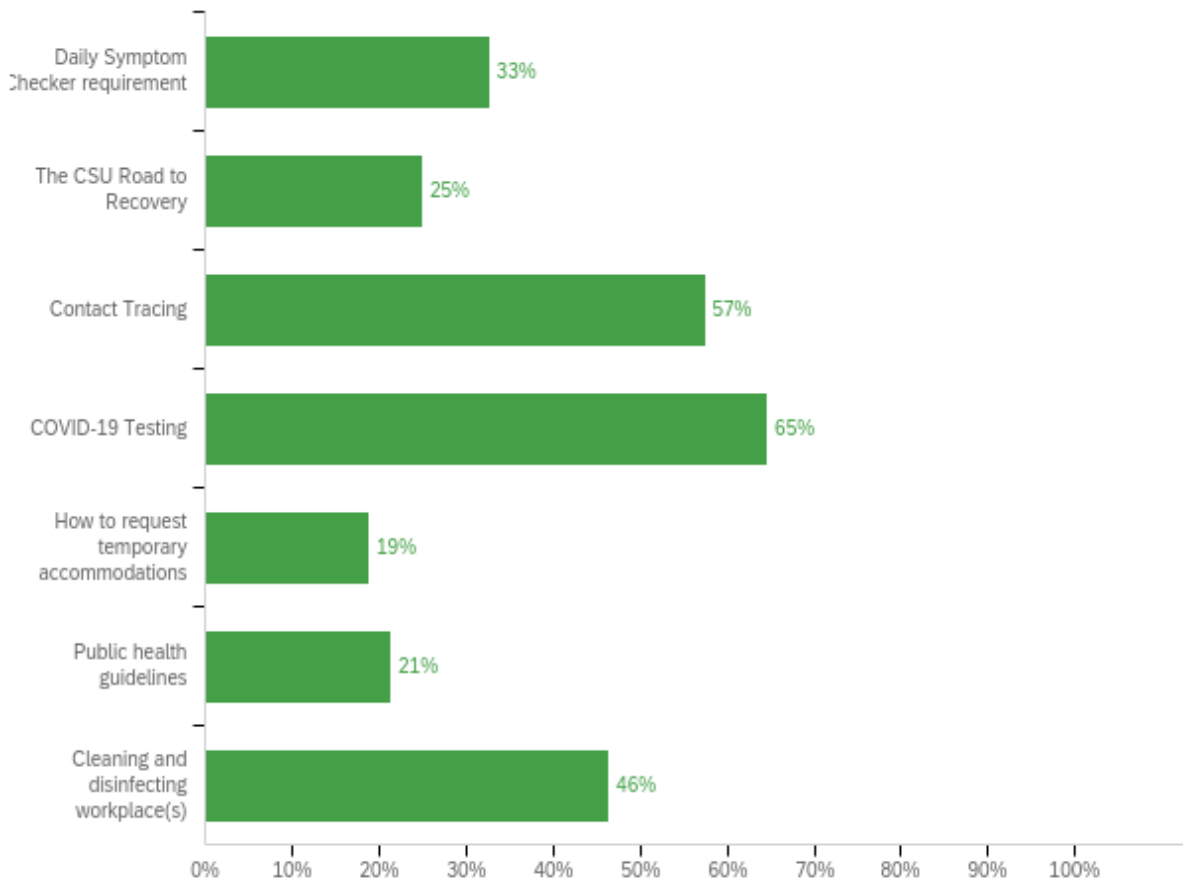
Table 3. How concerned are you about each of the following?

Question	Not Concerned at All	Somewhat Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Extremely Concerned	Total
An outbreak at my workplace(s) later in the fall semester	6%	21%	24%	49%	3255
Having in-person interactions with students	15%	19%	23%	44%	3250
Transferring the virus from my workplace(s) to a loved one at home	12%	21%	20%	47%	3249
Contracting the virus at my workplace(s)	9%	28%	25%	38%	3254
Colleagues coming to the workplace sick	18%	33%	26%	23%	3254
Personal issues that require special accommodation (i.e. schools/daycare being closed)	34%	22%	17%	26%	3249
Having in-person interactions with colleagues	21%	38%	24%	17%	3248
Colleagues taking adequate health precautions	25%	41%	21%	13%	3256
Changes in my role due to the COVID-19 virus	40%	28%	18%	15%	3249
Having the tools/equipment I need to be successful	39%	29%	19%	13%	3253
Staggered return of employees	42%	34%	17%	8%	3236
Needing to request temporary accommodations because I am at increased risk for severe illness with COVID-19	57%	21%	11%	11%	3245
My commute (e.g., using public transportation, different commute)	72%	13%	7%	9%	3245
My supervisor appropriately addressing health concerns if they are raised	64%	21%	9%	6%	3252

Results also indicated that most respondents (70%), if given the opportunity, would be interested in continuing to work remotely even though 81% of respondents reported being able to do what is expected of them as described in the CSU health protocols in place as a result of COVID-19.

While 90% of respondents reported being aware they could apply for a temporary work adjustment through the Office of Equal Opportunity and Human Resources, at the time of survey (July -August), respondents reported they would like additional clarity on a variety of topics. More than 50% reported they would like further clarity on COVID-19 testing and contact tracing at CSU. Chart 1 shows the topics of interest.

Chart 1: Topics



## Discussion

A major limitation of the survey was the response rate by division or department. The results were not able to be reported out at that level in order to protect the respondents’ confidentiality. However, as previously stated, areas with higher levels of reported concern and/or less comfort were contacted to share those findings so that steps could be taken to mitigate them.

As formerly noted in Table 2, employees who had not yet returned to CSU facilities reported higher levels of concern about doing so, than their peers who had either returned or never went remote. There are a multitude of explanations for this, but experience and communication may be two.

- It could be that employees who had already returned (or did not go remote) had experienced the health protocols and COVID-19 processes in place. Experiencing for themselves social distancing in practice, the availability of PPE, [daily symptom tracking](#), etc.

- It could also be that employees who were not remote had easier access to university communications and/or were able to talk with supervisors/colleagues on a more frequent basis to mitigate their concerns.

Student adherence to public health guidance was reported in the survey as the top concern of employees. Since the beginning of summer, the university has worked to [message public health precautions and university expectations to students](#). Specific strategies include the following:

- campus-wide graphic signage reinforcing key public health precautions;
- a social norming campaign led by the Division of Student Affairs;
- a university-wide branded messaging campaign created by University Communications;
- the assurance of Student Conduct Code implications for violations of public health precautions;
- classroom and workplace scripts for faculty and staff to use in addressing non-compliant individuals;
- a form to report violations of public health precautions by any individual.

The Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, and the CSU Pandemic Preparedness Team also held multiple [Town Halls](#) that touched on many topics including student compliance with public health protocols both inside and outside the classroom. Other topics were specific to faculty and staff. Since then, the Pandemic Preparedness Team created a [training](#) for faculty and staff about proper disinfecting, public health requirements on campuses, and other important COVID-19 information.

Survey respondents requested information on a variety of COVID-19 topics. All university communications and resources are accessible through <https://covidrecovery.colostate.edu/>. This web page has continued to be updated and streamlined as additional information and communications have become available. The large number of requests from the survey for more information led to a review of previous university COVID-19 communications and improvements to subsequent communications including more focused messaging, additional distribution strategies, and format changes. A description of the [contact tracing process](#) and [close contact criteria](#), for example, are now available in graphic format, rather than just as a text-heavy document.

Results also indicated potential gaps in University communications with Facilities and Housing/Dining Services. This has led to alternative methods for distributing information (in addition to emails and Source stories) and, with the adoption of additional tools, to Spanish translations that will soon be available for all COVID materials (ex: <https://www.fm.colostate.edu/node/2386>) and future employee surveys.

Most respondents reported a desire to continue to work remotely if possible. While this accommodation is not possible for all employees, [communications](#) have been shared with supervisors to encourage flexibility in both work time/place as appropriate based on position duties. Along with this flexibility, in an effort to ensure equity and accountability, supervisors have been provided with best practices for managing positions that telecommute, use flextime, or compress the workweek. The university is also updating the existing telework policy to account for COVID-19 concerns and practices.

Many respondents commented on the timeline of the administration of this survey and suggested a follow-up pulse survey after fall semester started. That survey will be sent soon. Please take the time to respond if you receive an invitation to participate.

**Appendix A.**

**Return to Workplace Survey**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges and opportunities across Colorado State University. As we prepare for more units to return to their workplace, we would like to understand your concerns and areas of confidence so that we can best support the transition. Please note that because employees will return to their workplace(s) through a phased approach, there is a formal application that must be completed to do so and it is likely that some units will continue to work remotely well into (or possibly through) the Fall semester.

This short survey should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. All responses are confidential. Results will be provided, in aggregate form only, to college and division leadership to inform efforts to support employees returning to the workplace. Results will not be attributed to any single individual or to any small group of individuals to protect confidentiality.

Your open and honest responses are greatly appreciated.

Q1 Please select which of the following best describes your circumstance since March.

- I did not work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic
- I worked remotely but have already returned to my workplace
- I worked remotely but anticipate returning to my workplace for the fall semester
- I worked remotely and do not anticipate returning to my workplace for the fall semester
- I worked remotely and do not know when I will return to my workplace

Q2 Please respond with your level of comfort with the following statements.

	Extremely comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Extremely uncomfortable
How comfortable WERE you staying at/returning to your workplace(s) (e.g., office, lab, classroom, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How comfortable ARE you now at your workplace(s) (e.g., office, lab, classroom, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

CSU | Institutional Research, Planning & Effectiveness

Q3 Please share your level of comfort with the following statements. In your daily workplace(s) (office, lab, classroom, etc.)...	Extremely comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Extremely uncomfortable
Public health regulations are/will be followed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Necessary personal protective equipment is/will be provided	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mandatory symptom reporting is/will be required before entering the workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleaning/sanitizing occurs/will occur daily	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleaning/sanitizing supplies are/will be made readily available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social distancing protocols are/will be maintained by my colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My colleagues take/will take the virus threat seriously	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My supervisor encourages/will encourage employees to stay home if they or a family member are sick	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My colleagues understand what is expected of them in maintaining a healthy environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriate health measures are being/will be taken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal protective equipment is/will be used as necessary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students will take the virus threat seriously when they return for the fall semester	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am/will be provided health information for my area as needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Masks are/will be worn as required	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q4 Overall, how comfortable are you returning to your workplace(s) (e.g., office, lab, classroom, etc.).

- Extremely comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Extremely uncomfortable

Q6 Please provide more information about areas in which you have lower levels of comfort and how we can address them.



CSU | Institutional Research, Planning & Effectiveness

Q7	Not Concerned at All	Somewhat Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Extremely Concerned
Colleagues taking adequate health precautions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An outbreak at my workplace(s) later in the fall semester	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Colleagues coming to the workplace sick	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal issues that require special accommodation (i.e. schools/daycare being closed)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transferring the virus from my workplace(s) to a loved one at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My commute (e.g., using public transportation, different commute)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having in-person interactions with colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My supervisor appropriately addressing health concerns if they are raised	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changes in my role due to the COVID-19 virus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staggered return of employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contracting the virus at my workplace(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having in-person interactions with students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having the tools/equipment I need to be successful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Needing to request temporary accommodations because I am at increased risk for severe illness with COVID-19	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 Please provide more information about areas in which you have higher levels of concern and how we can address them.

Q9 Under state executive and public health orders, employees who are at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (as defined by the CDC) are not required to work in-person. Are you aware that, should it be/become necessary for you, you can apply for a temporary work adjustment through the Office of Equal Opportunity and Human Resources?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Q10 When I return to the workplace, I will be able to do what is expected of me as described in the Colorado State University health protocols in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Not applicable

Q11 I am able to do what is expected of me as described in the Colorado State University health protocols in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Not applicable

Q12 Describe what limits your ability to do what is expected as described in the Colorado State University health protocols in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q13 Is there a topic on which you would like additional clarity (check all that apply)?

- Daily Symptom Checker requirement
- The CSU Road to Recovery
- Contact Tracing
- COVID-19 Testing
- How to request temporary accommodations
- Public health guidelines
- Cleaning and disinfecting workplace(s)

Q14 Do you have any suggestions on how we can effectively help employees transition back to their workplace(s)?

Q15 If given the opportunity to continue to work remotely, would you be interested?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Resources for employees are available online at <https://covidrecovery.colostate.edu/>